

Trekking the Ridges & Summits of Bulgaria

Trip Code: BUL

Version: BUL Trekking the Ridges and Summits of Bulgaria



WALK & TREK



GUIDED GROUP



MODERATE



HIGHLIGHTS

- Summit the big Bulgarian four - Vihren, Kotelo, Maliovitsa and Musala
- Go off the beaten track on the spectacular Marble Ridge
- Remote trekking via the Pirin Ridges to the atmospheric Dark Lake

- Wander through Sofia and visit UNESCO-listed Rila Monastery

AT A GLANCE

- 6 days trekking
- Max altitude - 2925m
- Join at Sofia

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

- All meals included
- 1 nights Hotel
- 5 nights Guesthouse
- 1 nights Mountain Hut / Refuge

[VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE](#)

Introduction

Rugged, wild and dramatic the Rila and Pirin mountains of Bulgaria have some of the most breath taking and remote mountain scenery in Europe. With a wonderful mix of Greek and Ottoman influences, this fascinating country manages to combine jaw-dropping trekking with wonderful hospitality. We kick off KE style with a superb ascent of the country's highest peak, Mount Musala (2925m) before traversing the magnificent Rila Mountains via the Seven Lakes. After the second Rila peak of Maliovitza (2730m), we transfer through spectacular scenery and visit the fantastically located UNESCO World Heritage Site of Rila Monastery. Next we leave the Rila Mountains and head to the striking Pirin Mountains where we follow ridge-top paths and traverse alpine meadows up to the shores of the atmospheric Dark Lake.

This wonderful location is a highlight of the holiday as we stay in a remote mountain refuge, surrounded by amazing scenery. Finally we leave the best till last with an ascent of magnificent Vihren (2917m) before attempting Kotelo (2911m) along the airy Marble Ridge. Bulgaria never disappoints so if you're looking for one of Europe's greatest "off the beaten track" destinations, an unforgettable mountain journey and a true cultural experience, then KE's Trekking the Ridges and Summits of Bulgaria is the only choice.

Is this holiday for you?

This is a wonderful mountain journey with significant amounts of ascent and descent on most days. Trails are predominantly good but you need to be prepared for sections of stony ground and boulders which will be encountered. Other than the Marble Ridge (which is optional) there is very little exposure on either the ridges or summits and any exposed sections are cable protected. For the Marble Ridge a via ferrata harness is provided for extra security. Each day you'll walk for an average of 6 to 10 hours and therefore need to be physically prepared for the trek. This holiday is suitable for experienced and fit hillwalkers looking for an excellent week's mountain walking in an undiscovered part of Europe.

Itinerary

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DAY 1

Meet at the group hotel in Sofia. A single timed transfer from Sofia Airport is provided.

Meet at the group hotel in Sofia. A single timed transfer from Sofia Airport is provided. If your flight arrives in the morning it is very easy and low cost to get a taxi from the airport to the group hotel. Time permitting, a must see in Sofia is The Crypt Icon Museum in the Aleksander Nevski Cathedral which holds the largest collection of Orthodox icons in Europe.

Meals: **D**



Accommodation
Hotel

DAY 2

Transfer to Borovets. Spectacular ascent of Musala (2925m). Short transfer to Samokov.

Our first trekking day and the opportunity to ascend the country's highest peak Mount Musala (2925m). After leaving the city, we head for the Rila Mountains by transferring (1.5hrs) to Borovets, Bulgaria's most famous ski and alpine resort. We use the gondola lift from the centre of town to ascend approx. 1000m (up above the forest) to Jastrebac. After around 90 minutes of level walking we ascend steadily to reach our first mountain hut of the trip, the Musala Hut. From here we head to the summit along the bouldery and cabled north ridge. On reaching the summit we'll take time to admire the breath-taking panorama and take our first Bulgarian Summit Photos! At 2925m, Musala is the highest peak in Bulgaria.

Meals: **B L D**



Accommodation
Guesthouse



Ascent
800M



Descent
900M



Time
5 - 6 hrs trekking



Distance
13KM

DAY 3

Start our mountain Traverse of the Rila Mountains via the Seven Lakes and Green Ridge.

Today starts with a short transfer to the Vada Hut (1465m) from where we begin our traverse of the Rila Mountains via the picturesque Seven Lakes. The footpaths are well graded as we trek upwards through a series of lakes to the open summit of Razdela (2620m), which offers splendid views over the Urdinite lakes and to the summit of Mt. Maliovitsa (2729 m), our goal for tomorrow. After taking in the panorama of the whole Maliovitsa region, we descend via the "Zeleni rid" (or Green ridge), initially on gentle grassy slopes before the trail descends steeply down into the valley of the Urdina river. Shortly after, we reach the start point of our walk, the Vada hut, for our short transfer (40 min) back to our hotel in Samokov.

Meals: **B L D**


	Accommodation Guesthouse		Ascent 1200M		Descent 1200M		Time 7 - 8 hrs trekking		Distance 17KM
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DAY 4

Ascent of Maliovitsa (2729m) in the Rila National Park. Transfer to Bansko.

Today we set our sights on our second peak - Mount Maliovitsa. A national mountain so well respected, that its North Face is the symbol of the Bulgarian Alpine Association. A short drive (30min) takes us to the small alpine ski resort of Maliovitsa, where during the times of Communist Bulgaria, the country's only mountain leader school was situated. The first part of our walk starts gently as we follow the valley to the Maliovitsa hut (1960m). From here the real ascent begins as we initially zig-zag our way up to Elenino Lake (2470m). On reaching the lake we continue ascending up onto the main ridge and a further 10min takes us onto the summit of Mount Maliovitsa (2729m). The view from the summit is well worth the effort as we gaze across the Rila Mountain Range. We re-trace our steps for the descent back down to Maliovitsa where we pick up our transport and drive to UNESCO Rila Monastery. This UNESCO World Heritage site is situated at 1147m and one of Bulgaria's most celebrated.

Meals: **B L D**

	Accommodation Guesthouse		Ascent 1050M		Descent 1050M		Time 6 - 7 hrs trekking		Distance 14KM
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DAY 5

Start of two day trek into the Pirin Mountains via the Hanging Valley and Dark Lake.

The jagged and rocky peaks of the Pirin Mountains present an altogether more rugged environment than our previous days of trekking. After breakfast we take a short transfer to the Doze Delchev Hut to begin our 2 day trek deep into the Pirin Range. We can leave the bulk of our belongings at our hotel but will need to pack a couple of extras into our day sacks, as tonight will be spent in a remote, high mountain hut. From Doze Delchev we take advantage of the chairlift up to the hut at Lake Bezbog before

beginning our walk to the largest of the Pirin lakes – Popova. t on view. Ascending through dramatic high valleys with rocky ridges and late-lying snow patches, we eventually arrive at the hanging valley of Tevno Ezero, or “Dark Lake”. Our overnight accommodation is a pine built mountain hut (.2500m) in an idyllic setting beside the Tevno Ezero Lake. The hut offers simple but clean and comfortable accommodation. There is a large attic with approximately 30 bed spaces. Each space has a mattress bedding.

Meals: **B L D**

	Accommodation Mountain Hut / Refuge		Ascent 1040M		Descent 260M		Time 5 - 6 hrs trekking
	Distance 10KM						

DAY 6

Fantastic day of ridge walking to the Vihren Hut. Transfer to Bankso

Today is all about ridges, and we leave the comforts of the hut behind and walk through a high col, the Mozgoviska Porta. From this point we follow an undulating, sinuous ridge with seriously spectacular views. The terrain varies from alpine meadow to rough and rocky ground. We trek through a beautiful mountain landscape of peaks, sparkling streams and lakes. Finally we arrive at the Vihren hut, from where we transfer to our accommodation in Bankso.

Meals: **B L D**

	Accommodation Guesthouse		Ascent 390M		Descent 930M		Time 5 - 6 hrs trekking		Distance 12KM
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DAY 7

Memorable day on the airy Marble Ridge and the ascent of Vihren (2917m). Transfer to Bankso.

The distinctive peak of Vihren is an obvious objective for today and many find Vihren more rewarding than Musala. To ascend Vihren we return by road to the Vihren hut. From here we ascend steeply at first through forest opening out into meadow affording us fine views of Vihren’s towering west face. From here the well-marked trail ascends steadily, before we make a short, steep scree scramble, followed by a steady climb to a col. Here we make the exciting, optional return traverse of the Koncheto, Marble Ridge. The Koncheto is a genuine knife edge ridge. A traverse across the ridge to the summit of Kotelo (2911m) is an exposed and airy undertaking, although aided by a fixed wire cable for support and solid rock underfoot. Via ferrata harnesses giving extra security are provided locally (and must be carried on this day). For those not wishing to make the 2 hour round trip traverse of the Koncheto it is possible to wait at the col and enjoy the extensive views. Back at the col, on a clear day, we will be rewarded with a magnificent 360° panorama of not only the Pirin and Rila Mountains, but also the lesser known Rhodopi

Mountains and on occasion even into Greece and Macedonia.

Meals: **B L D**



Accommodation
Guesthouse



Ascent
1200M



Descent
1200M



Time
8 hrs trekking



Distance
11KM

DAY 8

Departure Day. A single timed transfer from Bankso to Sofia Airport is provided.

Your holiday ends after breakfast. A single timed group transfer will depart Bankso early morning and is due to arrive at the airport mid-morning.

Meals: **B**

Holiday Information

What's Included

- A professional and qualified tour leader
- Single timed airport transfers on arrival and departure
- All accommodation as described
- All meals
- Vehicle support throughout the trek (except Day 6)

What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Airport transfers other than group transfers
- Tips
- Miscellaneous personal expenditure - drinks and souvenirs etc

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

TRAVEL TO YOUR DESTINATION

If flying from the UK there are low cost airlines available to the start and from the end of your holiday.

To benefit from full financial protection, ease your holiday planning, and avoid dealing with airlines, we can book scheduled flights from the UK as part of a flight inclusive package. Scheduled flights are usually more expensive than low cost alternatives, however potentially less stressful if your flight is cancelled or delayed. If you book flights through KE Adventure Travel we will offset the carbon of your flight.

The group will meet at the hotel in Sofia.

Single timed Airport transfers to/from Sofia Airport are provided.

Anyone may join the group transfers by prior arrangement. Travelling as a group or on public transport saves energy. If this is not practical, we can provide private transfers at an additional cost. Taxis are also available.

Hotel contact details and an emergency number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

Meal Plan

All meals are included in the holiday price.

Food & Water

Breakfasts are generally continental in style with a mixture of muesli, yoghurt, jams, honey, bread, cheese and ham, with occasional eggs, cucumber, tomato, tea and coffee. Lunches will be a simple, but filling picnic lunch carried by the guide or shared amongst the group to carry each day. They will usually consist of ham, cheese or tuna sandwiches with fruit and a cereal bar. In the evening we will enjoy a three course meal which generally starts with a mixed salad followed by pork, chicken, beef with potatoes and vegetables cooked Bulgarian style. Desserts may be ice cream, baklava, local cakes etc. Vegetarian and other special diets can be catered for, although choices are usually limited but adequate. All meals are included in the trip price but you may wish to buy additional snacks for the trekking day. On most days we will come across a mountain hut where we can buy a hot or cold drink and light snacks.

Special Diets

Whilst we can cater for vegetarians, albeit sometimes with a more limited choice, we cannot always provide special diets. Due to the nature of some of the trips that we operate and the countries in which we operate them, it can be very hard (and sometimes impossible) to cater for a wide range of dietary choices and you may have to supplement your diet with food/snacks from home. If you have specific dietary requirements please do speak to our sales team and they will be able to advise you whether or not we will be able to offer your specific choice. Please note that we are unable to provide separate menus and cannot accept liability for any problems arising from special dietary requirements or intolerances.

Accommodation

We will spend 1 night in a centrally located hotel in Sofia, 5 nights in guesthouses in Samakov and Bankso, and 1 night in a mountain hut.

All hotel and guesthouse rooms are twin share and en-suite. If you are travelling by yourself, you will be paired with another single client of the same sex.

At the Tevno Ezero mountain hut accommodation will be dormitory style, with shared facilities. Sleeping bags are not required as blankets are supplied, however you may wish to carry a sheet sleeping bag. Mountain huts in Bulgaria are basic, with washing and toilet facilities being particularly rudimentary. However, the atmospheric location of the Tevno Ezero hut makes this an unmissable experience and more than compensates for modest facilities.

Single rooms are available for a supplementary cost (not available at the mountain hut). If you are planning to extend your holiday, additional nights at the group hotel in Sofia are available on request.

Group Leader & Support Staff

The group will be led by a professional and qualified tour leader.

Altitude

This holiday involves going to moderately high altitude. During the course of your trip you will reach altitudes in excess of 2500 metres. Most people will have no difficulty with this level of altitude but before coming on the holiday, we recommend you read the advice on [trekking at high altitude](#). You can also talk to one of our trekking experts if you have any concerns about altitude.

Spending Money

Approximately £75 - £100 (or equivalent in euros or dollars) should be allowed for miscellaneous expenses. We recommend that you carry your travel money in the form of currency rather than travellers cheques, since you will exchange the majority of this on the day of your arrival in Bulgaria. If you are intending to buy expensive souvenirs, you should budget accordingly (credit cards can be useful in this respect). There are ATM's at Sofia Airport, Samokov and Bansko. Note that the local currency is the Bulgarian Lev.

Guidance on Tipping

Tipping is the accepted way of saying 'thank you' to your leader and local team. Tipping is entirely voluntary and should be dependent on good service. We advise you to tip as a group.

Baggage Allowance

Baggage will be transported between overnight stops (except on Day 6) by the support vehicle. A 35 litre rucksack should be adequate for the two day trek into the Pirin Mountains. There is no weight restriction other than that imposed by your international carrier but we do ask you to limit your luggage to one piece plus your day pack.

Group Size & Holiday Status

For each holiday there is a minimum number of participants required to enable it to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to run'. You can check the trip status for each departure in 'Dates and Prices' table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status and so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.

Flight payment

We sell this holiday on a Land Only basis and recommend that you book your flights to Sofia Airport. Please refer to the 'Joining arrangements and transfers' section of the trip dossier for further details.

Flights SHOULD NOT be booked until you have received your booking confirmation and the trip is showing 'Guaranteed to Run' or 'Limited'.

If flying from the UK there are a number of low cost airlines offering flights to Sofia. These include Easyjet who have flights from London & Manchester, and Wizzair who have flights from London and Ryanair who have flights from Stansted. Click on the 'Flight information' link below for further information on booking low cost airlines. Alternatively if you would prefer to book a 'flight inclusive package' using scheduled airlines from the UK please contact our flights department for a quote. Whilst flight prices are likely to be more expensive you will benefit from full financial protection.

General Information

Passport & Visas

Europe

Your passport must meet 2 requirements. It must be:

- less than 10 years old on the day you enter (check the 'date of issue')
- valid for at least 3 months after the day you plan to leave (check the 'expiry date')

For the latest details on visiting countries within the EU or the European Economic Area (EEA), please check the UK Government website

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders. A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required, and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents and visas for your holiday. Please ensure that you check for the latest advice before travel. For the most up to date information on entry requirements, please visit the [UK Government website](#).

Health & Vaccinations

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips. You will need to carry your own treatment for the allergy with you, as 'adrenaline auto-injectors' are not carried as standard by KE leaders and staff. You should inform your leader on arrival of your allergy, and let them know where you keep your adrenaline pen.

Currency

The unit of currency in Bulgaria is the Lev.

Preparing for your Holiday

Getting some additional exercise before coming on an active holiday makes a lot of sense. The fitter you are, after all, the more enjoyable you will find the experience.

You should be aerobically fit and comfortable with walking 4 - 7 hours for consecutive days. Hill walking, with a good amount of ascent and descent, is the best training. Running, cycling and swimming are also good for developing cardiovascular fitness and stamina.

Climate

From July to September the weather is generally very good. We can expect daytime, valley temperatures of between 18°C and 28°C in August, dropping to 12°C to 15°C overnight. September and July temperatures can be a few degrees cooler. Temperatures will also be cooler at altitude, but usually very pleasant for mountain trekking. For our night at the Tenvo Ezero hut, outside temperatures can be close to freezing. As with any mountain area there is the risk of some poor weather, with rain and wind. There is always the possibility of encountering occasional late lying snow in gullies, particularly in July. But we should encounter mainly clear and sunny days even in September. This area usually enjoys a very pleasant and stable climate in summer.

Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's [‘Travel Aware’](#) campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that prior to travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at travelaware.campaign.gov.uk and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: www.travel.state.gov for essential travel advice and tips.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates direct from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

Books

- The Rough Guide to Bulgaria.
- Lonely Planet. Bulgaria.
- The Mountains of Bulgaria. Julian Perry (Limited descriptions of our route).

Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our [Travel Insurance](#) page for further information and to get a quote.

Equipment Information

Equipment List

The following checklist should help you with your packing. As a general rule, you should always try to keep the weight of your equipment to a minimum.

You should bring the following items:

- Hiking boots
- Socks
- Trekking trousers
- Lightweight waterproof overtrousers
- Underwear
- Baselayer shirts
- T-shirts and/or casual shirts
- Fleece jacket or warm jumper
- Waterproof jacket
- Warm jacket (down)

- Gloves or mittens
- Sunhat or cap
- Sunglasses
- Warm Hat
- Daypack 30 litres
- Headtorch and spare batteries
- Sun protection (including for lips)
- Water bottles x2 1 Litre (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic)
- Water purification tablets
- Sleeping bag liner (for the night in the hut)
- Washbag and toiletries
- Small Towel
- Antibacterial hand wash
- Small padlock (to lock your bag)
- Lunch box (highly recommended to avoid plastic bags and squashed fruit)
- Mug or cup (as opposed to using throw away plastic cups in mountain huts)
- Basic First Aid Kit including: Antiseptic cream, throat lozenges, diarrhoea treatment (Imodium)
- painkillers, plasters and blister treatment, Insect repellent (DEET), and re-hydration salts (Dioralite).
- Glucose tablets and multi-vitamin tablets are a good idea

The following items are optional:

- Trekking poles
- Gaiters

- Trainers to travel in and for the huts
- Thermal baselayer - leggings
- Shorts
- Earplugs (Especially if you are not the one snoring)
- Insect repellent
- Camera
- Travel clothes
- Pen-knife (note: always pack sharp objects in hold baggage)
- Repair kit - (eg. needle, thread, duct tape)
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping (to avoid plastic bags)

NB. A via ferrata harness will be provided locally to all clients who wish to take part in the Marble Ridge traverse. This will be provided on the day of the walk to Marble Ridge (day 7) and will need to be carried in your own daypack for that day only. It will not take up much space, and will weigh a max 1.5kgs.

Cotswold Outdoor



Many of the Equipment items listed above are available from [Cotswold Outdoor](#) - our '**Official Recommended Outdoor Retailer**'. When you book a holiday with KE you will receive 12.5% discount voucher from Cotswold Outdoor and other retailers. [-> Find out more](#)

Land Only Information

We sell this holiday on a Land Only basis allowing you the flexibility to choose the travel method which best suits you. The holiday starts at the hotel in Sofia and a single timed transfer is provided from Sofia Airport.

Transport SHOULD NOT be booked until you have received your booking confirmation and the departure is showing 'Guaranteed to Run' or 'Limited'.

If flying from the UK there are a number of low cost airlines offering flights to Sofia. A flight search website such as Skyscanner or Kayak may be useful to research your options.

If you would prefer to book a 'flight inclusive package', using scheduled airlines from the UK, please contact our flights department for a quote. Whilst flight prices are likely to be more expensive, you will benefit from full financial protection.

Why Choose KE

Why KE

A genuine small group experience in Europe's undiscovered mountains. Pioneered by KE over 12 years ago, this holiday offers the ultimate off the beaten track mountain experience with all the elements for a KE classic – airy ridges, dramatic peaks and full mountain days plus an excellent European city. Want to know more? Call Emily our Bulgarian Expert!

Please Note This document was downloaded on 13/05/2024 and the trip is subject to change