

Tastes and Trails of North Macedonia

Trip Code: MAC

Version: MAC Tastes and Trails North Macedonia



WALK & TREK



GUIDED GROUP



MODERATE



HIGHLIGHTS

- Spectacular views and wonderful flora in Mavrovo and Galicica national parks
- Sample herb rakija, taste local dishes and enjoy a home-cooked dinner
- Stroll along the shores of Lake Ohrid and sail through Matka Canyon
- Hike trails to stunning viewpoints, flower meadows and mountain pastures

AT A GLANCE

- 6 days walking and sightseeing
- Max altitude 2747 metres
- Join at Skopje

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

- 7 Breakfasts
- 5 Lunches
- 6 Dinners
- 7 nights Hotel

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

Introduction

In the heart of the Balkans you'll find welcoming North Macedonia, a land of dramatic mountains, stunning lakes, breath-taking monasteries and mouth-watering national cuisine. North Macedonia is perfect for a true off the beaten track walking holiday as you encounter pockets of solitude where time has stood still. Meandering trails will lead you through vibrant forest, deep gorges and sleepy hamlets enriched with a kaleidoscope of flora and fauna. Alongside excellent walking you'll get to sample some excellent local dishes as Tastes and Trails of North Macedonia takes you on a culinary delight for walkers. After the bustle of Skopje it's a boat ride through Matka Canyon and a fantastic variety of daily walks. Each day you'll find yourself following the best trails in the country as you take in the wild beauty of Mavrovo and Galicica National Parks, plus atmospheric monasteries and decorated mosques. A highlight of the country is Lake Ohrid, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the world's oldest lakes. Here you can relax on a free day before enjoying dinner with a local family. North Macedonia is a fascinating melting pot for walking, cuisine and culture and one of Europe's best kept secrets for walkers.

Is this holiday for you?

This holiday in North Macedonia includes 5 wonderful days of walking which starts out with a morning's hike from the summit of Mt Vodno through the Matka Canyon. Each day you'll only need to carry a day pack with your personal items and picnic lunch in. The other 4 days are longer and include a mix of forest trails and open moorland, with slightly rockier footpaths as you ascend. There is a free day in Ohrid which includes a walking tour and time at leisure. This is a wonderful walking holiday for active, regular hikers who are looking for a holiday in a unique country and the opportunity to sample a rich variety of North Macedonian dishes.

Itinerary

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DAY 1

Meet at the group hotel in Skopje. A single timed transfer from the airport is included.

Meet at the group hotel in Skopje, a single timed airport transfer is included. After checking in at the group hotel we'll take a walking tour of Skopje, passing the statues and monuments of old and new Skopje. The city is an eclectic mix of Ottoman and Byzantine architecture alongside colourful fountains and towering statues. From the city we'll be able to see Mount Vodno and the towering Millennium Cross where we walk tomorrow. Keep your eyes open for historical links to Mother Teresa who was born in Skopje and the city is home to the Memorial House of Mother Teresa. Other sights include the Tvrđina Kale Fortress plus a number of interesting town squares, museums, churches and mosques. We'll pass the Kamenit Most (Stone Bridge), Alexander the Great's Fountain and the old Turkish quarter of Carsija before heading for dinner.

Meals: **D**








Accommodation
Hotel

DAY 2

Walk up Mount Vodno, boat ride through Matka Canyon and visit Tetovo Painted Mosque.

After breakfast we'll have a full briefing on the week ahead before we take a short transfer to the base of Mt Vodno, close to Skopje. We'll start our walk which takes us to the summit at 1066 metres from where there are spectacular views of Skopje and beyond. From the summit we'll hike to the Monastery of St Panteleimon from where we'll take a short transfer to the spectacular Matka Canyon. There are some beautiful and important cultural landmarks in the canyon, including the 17th century Monastery of St Nikola Shishevski which sits in a spectacular location beside the waters of the canyon, as well as the Monastery of St. Andreja, built in the 14th century. We'll take a short boat journey in the canyon before transferring to the Mavrovo National Park area. Enroute we'll make a stop to visit the painted Mosque of Tetovo which is famed for its remarkable and elaborately decorated facade. After a spectacular first day of walking we'll check into our in hotel accommodation in the Mavrovo National Park for a 2-night stay.

Meals: **B L D**

	Accommodation Hotel		Ascent 610M		Descent 290M		Time 3 - 4 hrs of walking		Distance 9KM
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DAY 3

Hike through meadows and mountain pastures to Mount Medenica in the Mavrovo National Park.

After breakfast we take a short vehicle transfer to the start of our walk in the national park. Initially the trail ascends across flowers and areas of grassland as we make our way towards Mount Medenica (2166 m). Next we reach terrain which is open and rocky with glorious views of Mt Korab (2764 m), the highest peak of North Macedonia situated on the border with Albania. As we reach the summit of Medenica we'll keep our fingers crossed for clear weather. After enjoying views as far as Lake Mavrovo and a picnic lunch we descend through flower meadows and pastures where local shepherds graze their cows in the summer. We walk down through the village of Galicnik before arriving in Jance. Tonight we take a short drive to a wonderful restaurant in a beautiful stone building below the Saint Jovan Bigorski Monastery. The proud and colourful Mijak people preserve ancient traditions including intricate woodcarving and wonderful stone masonry. The Saint Jovan Bigorski Monastery which we visit tomorrow is a Mijak masterpiece. In a lovely traditional setting we'll sample dishes from the Mavrovo region including tasty pies, rich cheeses and kachamak, a delicious combination of cornmeal and potato.

Meals: **B L D**

	Accommodation Hotel		Ascent 520M		Descent 1400M		Time 6 - 7 hrs of walking		Distance 16KM
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DAY 4

Spectacular walk to Golem Krchin and transfer to Lake Ohrid.

Today we start with a short drive to the village of Bitushe and the start of our walk. We begin in the village and ascend through rich woodland before the trail opens out into an alpine landscape. On reaching a small church we'll prepare for the final ascent to the summit of Mount Golem Krchin (2345m) which sits on the border between Albania and North Macedonia. The view from this dramatic peak is breath-taking, stretching as far as Mount Olympus, the highest mountain in Greece. After taking in the views we'll descend via a different route towards the village of Rostushe and enjoy lunch on the trail. Our footpath winds through meadows, alpine pastures and beech forest to where we meet our vehicle. After a lovely walk we transfer towards the town and lake of Ohrid via the incredible Macedonian orthodox monastery of Saint Jovan Bigorski. Dedicated to St. John the Baptist, the monastery was originally constructed in the 11th century and is known worldwide for its incredible stone work and valuable wood carved icons. Towards the end of the day we reach the wonderful town of Ohrid where we spend the next three nights.

Meals: **B L D**



Accommodation
Hotel



Ascent
1100M



Descent
1100M



Time
8 hrs of walking



Distance
15KM

DAY 5

Morning walking tour of Ohrid before a day at leisure.

Overlooking an incredible mountain landscape and Ohrid Lake itself, this charming town is one of North Macedonia's finest. A jumble of terracotta roofs and century old churches (said to number 365), Ohrid is one of the oldest settlements in Europe and a wonderful spiritual centre. This morning we'll enjoy a walking tour to a number of cultural sites which include the Roman Amphitheatre and Tsar Samuel's Fortress. The rest of the day is free and Lake Ohrid has a number of public beaches where you can take a dip. Alternatively you could explore the old Slavic monastery of St Pantelejmon, where you can see some of the 800 Byzantine icons. The old cobbled streets of Cinar are perfect for ordering a traditional Macedonian coffee to watch the world go by. In the evening, the guide will recommend a local restaurant for dinner (not included).

Meals: **B**



Accommodation
Hotel

DAY 6

Walk in the Ohrid area. Mount Crn Vrv and the glacier lake of Vevcanska Lokva. Family style dinner in Kuratica.

This morning we start with a transfer (1 hour) from Ohrid to the village of Gorna Belica. Situated at the base of the Jablanica Mountains, this is where we start today's walk. This area is known as the Balkan Green Belt and is home to brown bear, Balkan chamois, common spadefoot toad, blue-throated keeled lizard and the Albanian lily. This spectacular mountainous area runs between North Macedonia and Albania and before the break-up of former Yugoslavia was part of a restricted border area. During those times the region was off-limits to visitors and even today it still feels very much off-the-beaten-track. The upper pastures of Jablanica have a wonderful Mediterranean climate and we'll come across small mountain lakes, plus wonderful views of Lake Ohrid. Described as one of the most beautiful areas of North Macedonia, today we walk in an area still very much undiscovered by tourists. After joining the trail in Gorna Belica (1316m) we'll slowly make our way up towards Mount Crn Vrv (2257m) which translates as 'black rock'. We will also visit the beautiful glacier lake of Vevcanska Lokva. From the summit we'll be treated to a stunning panorama which we can enjoy before heading down to the valley and transferring back to Ohrid. This evening dinner will be arranged at a family home in the village of Kuratica. We'll be well looked after by our host Goran who'll arrange a home cooked dinner alongside his homemade rakija which is infused with local herbs.

Meals: **B L D**

	Accommodation Hotel		Ascent 900M		Descent 900M		Time 5 hrs of walking		Distance 12KM
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DAY 7

Hike in the Galicica National Park including Mount Magar. Transfer back to Skopje.

A great way to end the week is by hiking to the summit of Mount Magaro (2255 m), the highest point in Galicica National Park. This morning we transfer between Lake Ohrid and Lake Prespa and take a forest trail which gradually ascends. As we slowly climb we'll be rewarded with wonderful views of the lake and the town of Ohrid below. The national park is known for its rich variety of flora and fauna and today our guide will help us identify some of the 1000 species found within the national park. Vertebrates number 170 different species, alongside 18 species of reptiles, 124 species of birds and 18 different mammals. The park is known for its rich variety of butterflies. On reaching the summit of Magaro we'll have a wonderful panorama of Albania and Lake Prespa to the east, whilst Lake Ohrid lies to the west. After enjoying our final mountain walk, we'll descend and transfer to Skopje. After checking in at the group hotel we head out for our final dinner. Skopje comes alive at night and tonight we eat in a restaurant that has had excellent reputation with the residents of Skopje since the times of the Former Yugoslavia and Marshal Tito.

Meals: **B L D**

	Accommodation Hotel		Ascent 655M		Descent 655M		Time 3 - 4 hrs walking		Distance 8KM
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DAY 8

Departure day. A single timed transfer to Skopje Airport is included.

Your holiday ends after breakfast. In the morning there will be a single-timed transfer to the airport. If you want to extend your time in Skopje and explore a little more than please don't hesitate to contract the KE office to book extra nights in the group hotel.

Meals: **B**

Holiday Information

What's Included

- English-speaking local guide
- A single group return airport transfer
- All accommodation as described in the trip notes
- Meals as described in the trip notes
- All land transport required by the itinerary
- National park entrance fees
- All excursions mentioned in the itinerary.

What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Visas if applicable
- Airport transfers other than group transfers
- Extra activities and excursions
- Tips for local staff
- Miscellaneous personal expenditure

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The group will meet at the hotel in Skopje.

Single timed airport transfers are provided from / to Skopje Airport.

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

Meal Plan

All meals are included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 8. Lunches will be either a lunch box provided or we may stop at a cafe or restaurant on our route.

Food & Water

Many places on this holiday have drinkable water from the tap to fill your personal water bottles. Please check with the leader at the various locations. Please take purification tablets or a filter bottle (such as a [Water-To-Go bottle](#)) for days when drinking water out of the tap is not available. We do not encourage the purchasing of single use plastic bottles.

A highlight of this holiday is the colourful local food and with a mix of Balkan, Turkish and European influences, Macedonian food is wonderful. Macedonian recipes haven't changed for centuries and food is still cooked the traditional way and is an important social event. Shopska salad is wonderfully fresh, as are slow cooked baked beans which are rich and delicious. Potato stew, traditional bread, sauerkraut casserole, kebabs, stuffed trout, cooked vegetables, baked cheeses, village casseroles plus stuffed peppers or cabbage rolls are all in abundance alongside slowly cooked meats and excellent mouth-watering pies. Vegetarians will love the freshly prepared vegetable dishes and salads plus excellent cheese and egg dishes, tasty pies and the wonderful Macedonian pizza! Burke is a tasty lunchtime treat and served all over the Balkans as a snack. Tuluba (pastry with syrup) is a traditional desert from the Ottoman Empire, sutlijash is a Turkish inspired rice pudding, ravanija is a delicious doughy cake and mekici are lightly fried doughnuts. Rakija is Macedonian brandy and comes under the category of a natural medicine! They say a small glass of Rakija is a cure for everything. Try the local wine as the country has a rich history of wine making. Breakfast are continental style, with cereals, bread and jam, tea, coffee and sometimes eggs and you'll have the chance to try a more traditional breakfast of eggs, tomato and fresh feta cheese. Lunches will be a packed lunch of bread and a variety of either meat, cheese, tomatoes and cucumber, fruit, cereal bar and a bottle of water which will be eaten along the trail at a suitable picnic spot. (Water is from local wells or mountain streams and is not chlorinated so if you are concerned about drinking untreated water, we suggest you bring a supply of water treatment tablets).

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

During this holiday we use a combination of hotels and lodges. There are 2 nights in Skopje, 2 nights in Mavrova and 3 nights in Ohrid. All accommodation is based on twin sharing, or occasionally triple sharing. If you are travelling by yourself, you will be paired with another solo traveller of the same sex.

Group Leader & Support Staff

The group will be accompanied throughout by a professional English-speaking local tour leader.

Spending Money

Approximately £150 should cover miscellaneous expenses including your drinks bills and reasonable tips to crew. Macedonia's unit of currency is the denar. By far the easiest way to obtain your travel cash is from ATM's using a credit card or a debit card. ATM's are widely available at the airport in Skopje and Ohrid. Credit cards can be used to purchase goods in larger shops, hotels and restaurants.

Guidance on Tipping

Tips do not form part of the wages of local staff but they are very much appreciated. It is important to remember that tipping is voluntary and should be dependent on good service. It is best if the tip is given at the end of the trip by the group as a whole. We recommend that each group member contributes around £25 and that tips are then distributed between the guide and support staff as the group feels is appropriate.

Baggage Allowance

Baggage will be transported between overnight stops by vehicle. There is no weight restriction other than that imposed by your international carrier but we do ask you to limit your luggage whilst on trek to one piece which weighs no more than 15kgs plus your day pack. You may leave unwanted items and clothes that you don't need whilst trekking, at the hotel in Skopje for your return.

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.

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.

VACCINATIONS

You should contact your doctor or travel clinic to check whether you require any specific vaccinations or other preventive measures. You should be up to date with routine courses and boosters as recommended in the UK e.g. diphtheria-tetanus-polio and measles-mumps-rubella, along with hepatitis A and typhoid. A good online resource is [Travel Health Pro](#).

Currency

The unit of currency in North Macedonia is the Macedonian Denar.

Preparing for your Holiday

It makes a lot of sense to spend some time before coming on an active holiday getting some additional exercise. Regular hiking is the best preparation, whilst running, cycling and swimming are good for developing better cardiovascular fitness and stamina. Before departure, we suggest that you try to fit in a number of long walks in the boots you plan to walk in.

Climate

Daytime temperatures in the lower valleys will vary between 20°C and 30°C during June to September. The weather in summer is generally excellent - with warm days, clear skies and little rain. Temperatures do drop in the evenings so it's good to pack a fleece or warm sweater. In the mountains we may encounter cooler conditions and a mixture of alpine style weather.

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.

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 must bring the following items:

- Hiking boots
- Socks
- Trekking trousers
- Waterproof over-trousers
- Underwear
- Base layer shirts (2 short sleeve, 2 long sleeve)
- Light fleece shirt or mid-layer
- T-shirts or casual shirts
- Waterproof jacket
- Fleece jacket or warm jumper
- Sunhat
- Fleece hat
- Sunglasses
- Thermal / fleece gloves
- Daypack 30 litres
- Sun protection (including total bloc for lips, nose etc.)

- Water bottles 1 Litre (x2) (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic)
- Water purification tablets
- Washbag and toiletries
- Travel towel
- Antibacterial handwash
- Selection of dry bags (to keep trek bag contents dry)
- Small padlock (to lock your KE kit bag)

Basic First Aid Kit, consisting of the following: Antiseptic cream, throat lozenges, diarrhoea treatment

- (Imodium) painkillers, plasters and blister treatment, Insect repellent (DEET), and re-hydration salts (Dioralite).

◆ **The following items are optional:**

- Trainers / sandals for after trekking
- Shorts
- Travel clothes
- Thermal baselayer - leggings
- Insect repellent
- Trekking poles
- Camera
- Pen-knife (note: always pack sharp objects in hold baggage)
- Repair kit - (eg. needle, thread, duct tape)

- Head torch
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping (to avoid plastic bags)

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

The LAND ONLY dates and prices are for the itinerary, joining at the hotel in Skopje. Single timed transfers are included from/to Skopje Airport.

Flight Inclusive Information

The FLIGHT INCLUSIVE dates and prices are based on UK flights from London to Skopje with Austrian Airlines. Outbound flights will depart from the UK in the morning, arriving early afternoon. Return flights will depart Skopje in the early afternoon of the last day of the itinerary, arriving in the UK later the same day.

Why Choose KE

Why KE

As you'd expect from KE the walking experts, this fantastic holiday to North Macedonia includes the very best trails in the country. With 5* reviews for food we've also included an excellent variety of tasty dishes in local restaurants for you to sample on your walking adventure. Call Sarah to talk North Macedonia - she calls it A Must See Destination

Please Note This document was downloaded on 17/05/2024 and the trip is subject to change