

# Through the Heart of the Balkans

Trip Code: SER

Version: SER Through the Heart of the Balkans



WALK & TREK



GUIDED GROUP



MODERATE



## HIGHLIGHTS

- Enjoy an off the beaten track two day trek through the Bjelasica Mountains
- Watch Serbia's majestic griffon vultures soaring above Uvac Canyon
- Hike the remote Bear Summit Circuit and follow an ancient caravan route
- Stay in alpine shepherds huts and walk to hidden glacier lakes
- A unique opportunity to combine trekking and fascinating Balkan culture

## AT A GLANCE

- 7 days walking
- Max altitude - 2145 metres
- Join at Dubrovnik

## ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

- 8 Breakfasts
- 7 Lunches
- 4 Dinners
- 5 nights Hotel
- 2 nights Cabin
- 1 nights Monastery

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

# Introduction

This superb walking holiday takes you on a unique journey as you hike along hidden trails through an undiscovered corner of the Balkans. Montenegro and Serbia's mountains are still very much off the beaten track, extremely dramatic and culturally diverse. Combining Montenegro's stunning mountain ranges of Komovi and its UNESCO National Park of Durmitor, you'll walk in an area of the Balkans that sees very few tourists. A superb two day trek takes you through the magnificent Bjelasica Mountains as you stay in nomadic shepherd huts perched on alpine pastures. From Montenegro you'll cross into neighbouring Serbia to walk in the beautiful canyon of Uvac. This amazing natural site is home to one of the largest breeding colonies of griffon vultures in Europe. A night spent in a monastery offers a wonderful insight into Serbian Orthodox life, before you cross the border once again to finish your journey in Montenegro. Here you'll hike the spectacular Bear Summit Circuit and walk to glacier lakes hidden in lush forests. The final night is spent in the walled town of Trebinje in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which offers a unique cultural end to this very special Balkans journey.

## Is this holiday for you?

The walking on this superb holiday starts with a wonderful warm up day in the Komovi Mountains before the two day trek into the Bjelasica Mountains and Biograd National Park. For the two day trek we stay in the heart of the mountains away from roads. You will not have access to your main item of luggage from breakfast on Day 3 until the arrival at the hotel on Day 4. Bedding is provided for the night at the shepherd huts and there are no shower facilities. So, all you need to carry are your lunches and a few personal items for two days. The majority of walking days are between 5 and 7 hours with one longer day of 8 hours. Daily ascents and descents are between 200 and 850 metres, on trails which vary from rugged and rocky to forest footpaths and easy, open meadows. This excellent holiday is suitable for active walkers with a good level of fitness who are looking for a unique week of adventure in a remote part of Europe.


# Itinerary

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## DAY 1

### Meet at Dubrovnik Airport and transfer to Podgorica, the capital of Montenegro.

The group will meet at Dubrovnik Airport at 1pm in the afternoon. From the airport we transfer (3hrs) to Podgorica, the capital of Montenegro. Podgorica was part of the Ottoman Empire until 1878 and has an eclectic variety of architecture. Stara Varos (the 'old town') is the Ottoman-era neighbourhood, home to the Turkish Clock Tower and narrow meandering streets. The Ribnica Fortress also dates from the Ottoman period - 15th century - and was built at the confluence of Ribnica and Moraca rivers. After checking in at our hotel we'll head out for dinner in a local restaurant.

 **Accommodation**  
Hotel

## DAY 2

### Transfer to the Komovi Mountain Range for a superb day of hiking.

This morning we leave the capital and drive (2 hours) to our simple wooden cabin accommodation in the eco village of Katun Stavna, nestled at the base of the Komovi Mountains, one of three main mountain groups in Montenegro and part of the Dinaric Alps. Today's walk will introduce us to the spectacular landscape of Montenegro as we head up on a trail that takes us between the peaks of Kucki Kom and Vasojevacki Kom and then down into the valley of Medjukomovi and back to our cabin accommodation in Katun Stavna. Before dinner we'll have time to pack and prepare for the next two days of trekking away from civilisation.

Meals: **B L D**

 **Accommodation** Cabin     **Ascent** 750M     **Descent** 750M     **Time** 5 hrs walking     **Distance** 13KM

## DAY 3

### Trek in the Bjelasica Mountains, to Katun Vranjak (1750m).

After breakfast, we set off on a 2-day trekking adventure into the heart of the beautiful Bjelasica

Mountains. Volcanic in origin, this range presents a green and pristine landscape of rolling hills, rich in flora. Our walk today will take us through the heart of the range in an area which sees very few visitors. Following scant trails across mountain pastures, we'll finally arrive at our alpine cabin accommodation - Katun Vranjak (1750m) in the Biogradska Gora National Park. The cabins here, dotted across the hillside, were originally shepherds' huts, traditionally used during the summer months. Herds of goats and cows wander freely in this area. Tonight's dinner will be freshly prepared on a campfire and served on the outside dining area.

Meals: **B L D**

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	<b>Accommodation</b> Cabin		<b>Ascent</b> 600M		<b>Descent</b> 600M		<b>Time</b> 7 - 8 hrs walking		<b>Distance</b> 20KM
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#### DAY 4

### Trek through the heart of Biogradska National Park, then transfer to Serbia.

After a breakfast of alpine cheeses, freshly cooked sweet dough balls, local jam and honey, washed down with mountain tea, we set off for another day of spectacular walking. Established in 1952, this was Montenegro's first national park and holds a rich diversity of flora and fauna. Here you'll find over 220 different plants, as well as 150 species of birds and animals, including eagles, deer, wolf and wild boar. Our trail takes us through impressive forest and over rolling hills to the true jewel of the park - Biogradsko Lake, where we finish the day's walking. At an elevation of just over 1000 metres, the lake is particularly picturesque. On the completion of our walk, we transfer (2.5 hrs) into neighbouring Serbia, where we overnight at Mileseva Monastery. This Serbian Orthodox monastery dates from 1236 and is home to the most beautiful frescos in the country. The en-suite accommodation here is twin and triple-share. Dinner tonight will be taken in the monastery.

Meals: **B L D**

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	<b>Accommodation</b> Monastery		<b>Ascent</b> 250M		<b>Descent</b> 900M		<b>Time</b> 6 hrs walking		<b>Distance</b> 12KM
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#### DAY 5

### A walk on ancient caravan trails in the spectacular Milesevska Gorge.

Before leaving, we'll check out the monastery, famous as the resting place of Saint Sava, the national saint of Serbia. The frescoes include the 'White Angel' a depiction of the Angel Gabriel waiting at Christ's empty tomb. In excellent condition, it is one of the treasures of the Serbian Orthodox religion. A short transfer then takes us to Milesevska Gorge with its towering limestone walls. Here, we'll walk on a trail that was a part of the Ottoman-era caravan route from Dubrovnik to Constantinople. This whole area is rich in history and we'll see a number of traditional villages. Deep in the gorge, we'll also see the ruins of a medieval settlement. At the end of the walk, we transfer (1hr) to our hotel accommodation in Sjenica,

which was a fortified town during Ottoman times. This is the perfect location for tomorrow's easier walk and Griffon vulture spotting adventure.

Meals: **B L D**

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	<b>Accommodation</b> Hotel		<b>Ascent</b> 550M		<b>Descent</b> 900M		<b>Time</b> 5 - 6 hrs walking		<b>Distance</b> 14KM
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## DAY 6

### Griffon vulture spotting and walking in Uvac Canyon.

Today we visit the spectacular Uvac Canyon which was set up as a reserve for griffon vultures in 1991. There are now 70 breeding pairs of these impressive birds which have a wingspan of 3 metres. Alongside the vultures, the canyon is also home to many other species of birds. Our walk will take us on a trail above the river and across to a viewpoint at Molitva. In the afternoon, we transfer to our hotel in the town of Zabljak (1456m) the so-called gateway to the Durmitor National Park. In the winter this little town is bustling with skiers but in the summer it's quieter and a wonderful place to start the 'Bear Summit Circuit' from.

Meals: **B L**

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	<b>Accommodation</b> Hotel		<b>Ascent</b> 350M		<b>Descent</b> 350M		<b>Time</b> 3 - 4hrs walking		<b>Distance</b> 9KM
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## DAY 7

### Hike the 'Bear Summit Circuit' in Durmitor National Park.

Added to the World Heritage List in 1980, the Durmitor National Park is home to 17 glacier lakes, locally known as mountain eyes. Today's walk will take us via Black Lake on our way up into the mountains. From a rich forests of fir trees, we ascend to the Previja Pass (2145m) beneath peak of Medjed (2287m) whose name means 'bear'. Here we can take our picnic lunch, surrounded by spectacular scenery, whilst looking out for the shy chamois which inhabit the rugged mountain slopes. During the summer trekking months, the alpine meadows are blanketed in gentians, anemones, violets and wild strawberries. After lunch, we'll head back down via a shepherd's camp at Lokvice to our hotel in Zabljak.

Meals: **B L**

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	<b>Accommodation</b> Hotel		<b>Ascent</b> 900M		<b>Descent</b> 900M		<b>Time</b> 7 hrs walking		<b>Distance</b> 16KM
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**DAY 8****Explore Durmitor's glacier lakes and transfer to Trebinje in Bosnia.**

Today we'll revisit Crno Jezero (Black Lake), the largest of the lakes in the park, and this time follow the shoreline trail with its information boards about local plants and animals and historical facts. We can take a short detour to a cave where Marshall Tito, former president of Yugoslavia, hid in while fighting in WWII. We'll then make our way to the second lake, Zminje (Serpent Lake) which is surrounded by pine trees, with glimpses of mountain ridges and peaks in between. Heading back towards Zabljak, our route takes us via the day's third lake, known as Barno. Once back at the hotel, we transfer (3hrs) to Trebinje in Bosnia where we spend our final night. Located on the Bosnia-Croatia border, Trebinje has several Serbian Orthodox churches, a pretty main square, some Ottoman architecture and the Arslanagica Bridge which is a national monument of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Meals: **B L**



**Accommodation**  
Hotel



**Ascent**  
300M



**Descent**  
300M



**Time**  
4 - 5 hrs walking



**Distance**  
10KM

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**DAY 9****Transfer to Dubrovnik Airport.**

This morning we take a short transfer to Dubrovnik Airport where the holiday ends.

Meals: **B**

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## Holiday Information

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## What's Included

- A professional and qualified tour leader
- Single timed airport transfers on arrival & departure
- All accommodation as described
- Meals as described in the Meal Plan
- National Park entrance fees
- All land transport required by the itinerary

## What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Tips for local staff
- Some meals as described in the Meal Plan
- Tips
- Miscellaneous expenses - drinks and souvenirs etc.

## Joining Arrangements & Transfers

A single transfer from Dubrovnik Airport to the group hotel in Podgorica is provided at lunchtime of Day 1 of the Land Only itinerary. On the last day of the Land Only itinerary, there will be a single transfer back to Dubrovnik Airport from Trebenje in Bosnia. This is timed for the check in of the morning flight.

Anyone can join these airport transfers by prior arrangement.

If your flight schedules do not fit with these single timed airport transfers we can provide private transfers at an additional cost.

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

## Meal Plan

All breakfasts, 7 lunches and 4 dinners are included.

## 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.

The food of Montenegro and Serbia has been shaped by its geographical position. Turkish, Mediterranean, Hungarian and other European cooking styles are common throughout the country and typical dishes of all these cultures are available in most places in Montenegro. Soups, stews, and goulashes are common as are meatballs and both countries love food from the grill, especially the tasty cevapi (kebab) and grilled meat patty which go excellent with onion. There is always plenty of bread which is usually Italian style, often served with a tomato and olive salad and various cheeses.

## 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 the group will spend 5 nights in comfortable small hotels, 2 nights in basic alpine (shepherd hut) accommodation and 1 night in a Serbian Orthodox monastery. In Podgorcia, Zabljak and Trebenje accommodation is on a twin sharing basis and all rooms are en- suite.

For the 1 night in the Mileseva Monastery, rooms are either twin or triple share and as expected in a monastery, simple in style. Although the rooms here are simpler than in a hotel or guesthouse, staying here is a wonderful cultural element of the holiday, and offers the chance to stay in a Serbian Orthodox monastery. Bathroom facilities in the monastery are simple, but toilets and hot water is available. For the two nights in the mountains we stay in rustic shepherd cabins and all bedding is provided to avoid any heavy back-packing. This gives the perfect opportunity to get right into the mountains. Rooms here are mixed-sex dormitory style and bathroom facilities are basic (toilets but no showers), but staying in such a pristine alpine environment more than makes up for the lack of hotel facilities.

If you are travelling by yourself, you will be paired up with another single client of the same sex for the 5 nights in the hotels. Single rooms for these 5 nights are available for a supplementary cost. If you are planning on extending your holiday additional nights at the group hotel are available on request.

## Group Leader & Support Staff

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



## Spending Money

We estimate that 150 - 200 Euros should be sufficient to cover all personal expenses such as drinks, snacks, tips for the local staff and non-included meals. Cash can be withdrawn from ATMs in Dubrovnik, Podgorica and Zabljak.

## Guidance on Tipping

Tipping is the accepted way of saying thank you to your local staff. It is important to remember that tipping is voluntary and dependent on good service. Most people will want to tip their guide and drivers on the trip and we recommend you do this as a group rather than individually. The group should decide on a level of tipping that all are comfortable with. We recommend 30 - 35 euro for the leader and 10 Euro for the driver.

## Baggage Allowance

We ask you to restrict your luggage to a single trek bag and small daypack. There is no weight limit other than that imposed by your international carrier but you will find travelling easier with lighter luggage.

## 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

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## Passport & Visas

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.

## Preparing for your Holiday

It makes a lot of sense to spend some time before coming on any active holiday getting some additional exercise. The fitter you are, after all, the more enjoyable you will find the experience. Regular hill walking is the best preparation but if this is not possible, a regular exercise regime is good for developing cardiovascular fitness and stamina.

## Climate

Montenegro and Serbia's climate in the mountains is typically alpine. In June to September the range is from 8 - 20°C rising to a daytime maximum of 24°C in August. Both countries are relatively dry, however showers, cloud and cool temperatures can occur in the mountains at any time of the year. During the summer months, as with most European mountain ranges it is not unusual to experience thunder storms in the afternoon. It is therefore best to come prepared for a variety of 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](http://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](http://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

- Western Balkans. (Lonely Planet)
- Montenegro. (Lonely Planet)
- Montenegro. (Rough Guides)
- The Mountains of Montenegro – A Walkers and Trekkers Guide. Rudolf Abraham. (Cicerone)

## 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

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## 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
- Gloves or mittens
- Sunhat
- Sunglasses
- Warm Hat
- Daypack 25-30 litres
- Headtorch and spare batteries
- Sun protection (including for lips)

- Water bottles x2
- Washbag and toiletries
- Small Towel
- Antibacterial hand wash
- Basic First Aid Kit including headache tablets, medicine for upset stomach (e.g. Imodium or Pepto Bismol), plasters and blister treatment.
- Small padlock (to lock your main bag)

**The following items are optional:**

- Trekking poles (recommended)
- Trainers
- Shorts
- Binoculars
- Insect repellent
- Camera
- Travel clothes
- Pen-knife (note: always pack sharp objects in hold baggage)
- Repair kit - (eg. needle, thread, duct tape)

**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. It starts and ends at Dubrovnik Airport. Please refer to the 'Joining arrangements and transfers' within Holiday Information for further details.

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 Dubrovnik. 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

This new trekking holiday combines the two fascinating Balkan countries of Montenegro and Serbia. We've included everything you'd expect from KE - excellent off the beaten track walking trails, a trekking route through the mountains and unique accommodation including a monastery overnight. At KE we work hard to respect and understand local cultures and wildlife conservation, so you'll sleep in local shepherd huts and walk to see Serbia's wild Griffon Vultures.

**Please Note** This document was downloaded on 18/05/2024 and the trip is subject to change