



Treasures of Travel

Treasures of the Balkans, 2024

*Romania, Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia,
Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo, and Bulgaria*

~ 28 days/26 nights ~

Please note: This tour is not offered as a pre-planned group tour.

We would be delighted to meet the expectation of the interested individuals and/or groups with the below example outline of the trip to the Balkans, based on the highlights of the mentioned countries, or custom design one working around the offered itinerary according to your special interest and desire to make it unforgettable experience of your own trip to the Balkans.

This tour gives a wonderful opportunity to explore the Balkan countries - true mosaic of people of different cultural, religious and historical backgrounds. Many of the cities and towns in the area are living museums, generously sprinkled with historical remains from the Roman times and onwards; although having a lot of influence of bigger powers throughout the history, which left their mark, the countries of the Balkans and the people retain their national identity and characteristic cultural inheritance. The birthplace of the Cyrillic alphabet and home to some well-known, important citizens such as Tito and Mother Teresa, is also blessed with one of the most beautiful stretches of coastline, unspoiled countryside and breathtaking mountains.

Day 1

Depart the USA on overnight flight to Bucharest, Romania.

Day 2 ~ Bucharest (Romania)

Upon Arrival in Bucharest, you will be met and **transferred** to your hotel.

Day 3 ~ Sinaia

In the morning we will have a panoramic tour of the Romanian capital city, which includes: the **Parliament Palace**- the world's largest civilian administrative building, **Romanian Athenaeum**, the **Royal Palace**, **Arch of Triumph** and **Victory Square**. Next, our journey will take us to **Peles Castle** - the former summer residence of King Carol I of Romania, dating from 1875-83 and built in neo-renaissance German style. In the evening we will arrive in Sinaia- the old summer residence of the kings of Romania.

Day 4 ~ Sibiu

Today we will leave for Sibiu, making a stop in Brasov on the way, which is the most visited city in Transylvania. It is located almost in the center of the country and surrounded with the Carpathian Mountains. We will visit the **Black Church**, **first Romanian school**, **Schei neighborhood** and **St. Nicholas church**. Next we'll head to explore **Bran Castle**, also called **Dracula's Castle**.

Day 5 ~ Deva

This day will be dedicated to the sightseeing of **Sibiu**- one of the most important cultural centers of Romania, designated as European Capital of Culture for 2007. The old city of Sibiu was ranked as Europe's 8th most idyllic place to live by Forbes. Here we will visit **the upper and lower town, the churches' square, Liars' Bridge, and the fortifications**. We'll carry on with our journey to the town of Deva.

Day 6~ Belgrade (Serbia)

In the morning we will depart to the capital of Serbia. Upon arrival and after checking in at the hotel, we will start afternoon city tour of Belgrade, which has a beautiful setting at the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers. Exploration of the town will include the **Kalemegdan archaeological and historical park**, as well as **the heart of this ancient city**. You will admire the architectural diversity of the old town and stroll through the bohemian **Skadarlija quarter**.

Day 7 ~ Belgrade

Today we will drive north via 16th century **Krusedol Monastery** to picturesque **Sremski Karlovci** with its Baroque Four Lions Fountain, fine Cathedral and wine cellars, on to massive **Petrovaradin Fortress**- often referred to as the '**Gibraltar of the Danube**' with its huge defensive walls, clock tower and subterranean galleries. We'll also stop in **Novi Sad**, which is termed as the 'most westerly city in eastern Europe' and 'the most easterly city in western Europe' such is its diverse mix of cultures and peoples.

Day 8 ~ Zagreb (Croatia)

In the morning we'll start our journey to Zagreb, the capital and the largest city of the Republic of Croatia, as well as the city with rich history dating from the Roman times to the present day. Upon arrival, we will have a guided walking tour of Zagreb, which includes: **the fortified Upper Town, the city's historical center and market, St. Mark's Church** with its multicolored tile roof, **the Cathedral, Croatian National Theatre and University**.

Day 9 ~ Ljubljana (Slovenia)

Our next destination is Ljubljana - the small picturesque capital city of Slovenia, thus its cultural, educational, economic, political and administrative center, independent since 1991. Upon arrival we'll tour the highlights of the city: **Town Square, St. Nicolas Cathedral, the Dragons' bridge** and **Ljubljana Castle**.

Day 10 ~ Ljubljana

Today we'll have a day trip to **Bled**, an Alpine town and resort well known for glacial **Lake Bled**—romantic spot surrounded with snow-tipped mountains. We'll visit the iconic **Bled Castle** perched on a rock overlooking the lake. The town is also known in Slovenia for its vanilla and cream pastry.

Day 11 ~ Crikvenica (Croatia)

Today we will visit **Lipica Stud Farm**- the cradle of the Lipizzaner horse, where the thoroughbred white **Lipizzaner** horses have been bred for more than 400 years. It is regarded as a jewel among the cultural and historical monuments of the Republic of Slovenia.

Next we'll head to one of the major visitors' attractions in southwestern Slovenia - the **Postojna Cave** - 5.3 km of the caves are open to the public, the longest publicly accessible depth of any cave system in the world. We will also visit the nearby picturesque **Predjama Castle**, dating from the 16th century and built in the mouth of another Karst cave. The rest of our journey along the Croatian Adriatic coast and via Rijeka will get us to Crikvenica for overnight. We will possibly have some free time in Rijeka

to stroll along the pedestrianized **Korzo**, the city's main shopping area, the real landmark here is the **City Tower** or Zadar.

Day 12 ~ Split

On the way to Split we will have a breathtaking drive along **the Adriatic coast** with some stops en route to enjoy wonderful, picturesque coastline, small islands, peninsulas and fishermen settlements.

Day 13 ~ Mostar (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Morning sightseeing tour of **Split** will include the **Diocletian's Palace** which is on **the UNESCO's List of World Heritage Sites**, with **the Peristyle, the Jupiter's Temple and the Cathedral**.

Once we cross border into Bosnia and Herzegovina, en route to Mostar, we'll stop in **Blagaj**, situated at the spring of **the Buna River and a historical tekke** (Dervish monastery). The Blagaj Tekke was built around 1520, with elements of Ottoman architecture and Mediterranean style and is considered a national monument; recognized as one-of-a-kind, like the old bridge of **Mostar**.

Day 14 ~ Sarajevo

We'll start our day with a **walking tour of Mostar**, beautifully set on both banks of the Neretva River, to see the old bridge, built by the Ottomans in the 16th century, which is one of Bosnia and Herzegovina's most recognizable landmarks; the old Bazaar, Gymnasium, historical mosques, and old craft shops. In the early afternoon we will depart for Sarajevo. Upon arrival you will have some free time to spend at your leisure.

Day 15 ~ Dubrovnik

Before we start our journey to Dubrovnik, we'll enjoy the **sightseeing tour of Sarajevo** – the capital city of Bosnia and Herzegovina, famous for cultural and religious diversity, with adherents of Orthodoxy, Islam, Judaism and Catholicism coexisting here for centuries, due to which it has often been called the "Jerusalem of Europe". We'll see **Bascarsija- old town of Sarajevo, Gazi Husrev-Beg Mosque and Tunnel War Museum**. After lunch, we will leave for Dubrovnik.

Shortly before reaching our final destination, we'll stop in the town of **Trebinje**, which lies in the Trebišnjica River valley in southeastern Herzegovina and is part of Republika Srpska, one of the two main political entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The town was first mentioned in the 10th century, and nowadays represents a wonderful blend of Christian and Ottoman architecture.

Day 16 ~ Dubrovnik

We will have a morning sightseeing tour of **Dubrovnik**, which is included on the **UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites**. We will visit the complex of the **Franciscan Monastery** with Europe's third oldest pharmacy, the **Rector's Palace** and **the Cathedral**. You will have free afternoon for own discoveries.

Day 17 ~ Budva (Montenegro)

Today we'll cross border yet into another new country Montenegro. Our first stop after border formalities, will be at **Kotor**, which has one of the best preserved medieval old towns in the Adriatic and is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**. It is home to numerous sights, such as **the Cathedral of Saint Tryphon** in the old town (built in 1166), **the ancient walls** which stretch for 4.5 km (3 mi) directly above the city, the **Church of St. Nikolas**. On the way to Budva, we will see the most beautiful part of the Montenegrin coast, Boka Bay.

Day 18 ~ Tirana (Albania)

Before leaving Montenegro for Albania, we will visit **Podgorica** – the capital city of Montenegro with mixture of architectural styles, reflecting its rich and turbulent history. The city is located not far from the largest lake in the Balkans – Skadar, which is declared as the National Park in Montenegro. After border crossing, we'll pass by Durres before arrival in Tirana. Durres- home to Albania's main port, is also one of the most ancient and economically significant cities in the country.

Day 19 ~ Ohrid (Macedonia)

In the morning we will have a **sightseeing tour of Tirana**, the capital of Albania, including **Skanderbeg Square, the Clock Tower and the Mosque of Ethem Bey**. Next we'll take a trip to **Kruja**, a medieval town near Tirana, located on the slope of a mountain, where we'll tour the castle, housing **the Skanderbeg Museum and Ethnographic museum**. In the late afternoon we will cross the border for Ohrid, driving via Elbasan.

Day 20 ~ Ohrid

We will have a full day in the lakeside resort of **Ohrid**, classified as **UNESCO World Heritage site**. The lake itself is one of the world's oldest, belonging to the ranks of Lake Baikal and Lake Titicaca. The town's history goes back to Neolithic times, and much of it can be still seen in the historical, architectural and cultural inheritance. In order to learn more about it, we'll visit **Tsar Samoil's Fortress** in the old town, **Church of St. Sofia**- the most notable medieval monument in Macedonia with magnificent Byzantine frescoes, dating from 11th century, and **Church of St. John at Kaneo**, high above the lake. In the afternoon we will have a short trip to **St. Naum Monastery**, built on the shores of Ohrid Lake in 900 AD.

Day 21 ~ Pristine (Kosovo)

This morning we head to Pristina the capital of Kosovo. Once in Pristina we will walk through the city to explore its main attractions such as **Mother Teresa Boulevard, The Monument of Scanderbeg, the clock tower**, Government building, **the new born monument**, the Ottoman **Fatih mosque** from 1461 and the **Ethnographic museum**.

Day 22 ~ Skopje

We drive back to Macedonia again to visit Skopje, the capital. While in Skopje we will visit the **Kale** the fortress of Skopje, **The Church and Monastery of Sveti Spas, Chifte Amam Gallery, Suli An** which houses of the old Skopje Bazaar, **Kursumlu Han Bazaar** and **The museum of Macedonia**.

Day 23 ~ Kyustendil (Bulgaria)

Today we will drive northeast to reach Kyustendil in Bulgaria, making a short stop on the way in **Skopje** – the capital city of Macedonia. Once we arrive in Bulgaria, we'll stay at a family-run hotel in Osogovo Mountain near Kyustendil spa town.

Day 24 ~ Plovdiv

In the morning we will head to **Rila Monastery**, located in Rila Mountain National park - the **UNESCO World Heritage Site**, which was founded in the 10th century. The Rila Monastery is the largest complex in Bulgaria and is regarded as the country's one of most important cultural, historical and architectural monuments. Next, our journey along mountain roads will get us to Plovdiv – the second largest city in Bulgaria, once conquered and renamed as Philippopolis by Philip II of Macedonia, in his own honor – the father of Alexander the Great.

Day 25 ~ Plovdiv

Plovdiv's history spans 6,000 years, with traces of a Neolithic settlement dating to roughly 4000 BC, ranking it among the world's oldest cities.

We will tour old Plovdiv architectural reserve to see its rich architectural and cultural heritage, as well as the remains preserved from antiquity, such as: **the Roman theatre, Ethnographic Museum or Hindlian House, St. Konstantin and Elena Church, the Roman Stadium, Cuma Mosque, and Trakart Exhibit of Roman Mosaics.** In the afternoon we'll have a visit and wine tasting at Todoroff Boutique wine cellar.

Day 26 ~ Veliko Tarnovo

Today we'll leave Plovdiv for Veliko Tarnovo, making the first stop in Kazanluk – the centre of the Valley of Roses, where once 75% of the world rose attar was produced. Next will be Thracian heritage sites dating from the 5th-3rd century BC. We'll drive via Shipka memorial peak, crossing the highest part of the Balkan Mountains in order to get to Veliko Tarnovo, often referred to as the "City of the Tsars", attracting many visitors with its unique architecture. Veliko Tarnovo is the medieval capital city of Bulgaria, picturesquely located on four hills above Yantra River. Once we are there we will go to **Tsarevets Royal Hill** with Baldwin tower (the leader of the 4th Crusade), and stroll through **Samovodska Charshia**- the street of crafts, before taking an evening walk in **Arbanassi museum village.**

Day 27 ~ Sofia

Today we will depart to Sofia – the capital of Bulgaria. Upon arrival, we will check in at the hotel first, and then have a city tour of **Sofia**, which Constantine the Great once called 'My Rome'. Sightseeing includes: **Alexander Nevski Cathedral, 6th century St. Sofia basilica, the Parliament Square, 4th century St. George rotunda, the Presidency and the ruins of Ancient Serdica.**

Day 28

You will be transferred to the airport for your flight home.

Best time to travel:

Spring and Fall