

11 Nights / 12 Days

THE BEST OF SERBIA, ROMANIA AND BULGARIA

Serbia – Romania – Bulgaria

- Take a cruise on Danube and Sava and meet Belgrade and its fortress from a different perspective
- Travel through time as you seek inspiration from Bram Stoker for the story of the infamous Count Dracula
- Visit a complex of rock-hewn churches and monasteries, a UNESCO World Heritage site located in Ivanovo, Bulgaria
- Be shocked by the famous Skull Tower in Niš and meet the birthplace of Constantine the Great



The good thing about our tours is that they can be customized to suit your desires. If you need more time to settle in and adjust before the tour, we'll be glad to book additional overnights for you. You are welcome to contact us for more details!

Day 1

Arrival to Belgrade

Upon arrival in Belgrade, the capital of Serbia, you will be welcomed by your driver and escorted to your hotel. On the short coach ride from the Nikola Tesla airport, sit back, relax and enjoy the sights of New Belgrade with its prominent 'blocks' – a classic example of Socialist architecture, built after World War II – and modern business centres, including the imposing Ušće Tower. Along the way, your driver will show you and tell some stories about the Western Gate of Belgrade, the famous Belgrade Arena and the monumental Palace of Serbia. Check-in at your hotel.



Belgrade

Use your free time to rest and prepare for the trip. At 7pm in the hotel reception, you will be greeted by your guide who will introduce himself and provide you with detailed information about the entire trip. You will also meet the other travellers in the group. For the rest of the evening, we recommend you take a short, leisurely walk through one of the oldest quarters towards the bohemian heart of Belgrade - Skadarlija. In a charming 19th century cobbled street you will find many numerous 'kafanas' where you can try delicious local specialties while listening to traditional music. Overnight.

Day 2

Leisure day

Belgrade Great Sightseeing Tour

After breakfast, you will embark on a tour (driving and walking) around

Belgrade, a capital city well known for its various architectural styles, dynamic history and fantastic views of one of the biggest river confluences in the whole of Europe. Start the tour visiting the Museum of Yugoslav History, a memorial complex devoted to the life and deeds of Josip Broz Tito, the political leader of Yugoslavia. Next, you will pass by the stadium of FC Red Star – the former European and World Cup champions, and proceed to the Temple of Saint Sava, Belgrade's patron saint. Very much a symbol of the city, this impressive building can be seen from any part of the capital. After a short break at the Temple's plateau, the panoramic tour will then take you from Slavija Square, to Saint Mark's Church, the Serbian National Parliament and White Palace, and on to Republic Square. This most central point of Belgrade is surrounded by such cultural institutions as the National Theatre and National Museum. The tour will then head along the lively Knez Mihailo Street, the main pedestrian and shopping zone, before stopping for a visit to the Orthodox Cathedral Church of Saint Michael the Archangel, which is located just across from the Building of Patriarchate. Your guide will tell you about the tavern around the corner, the oldest in the city and intriguingly known as "?" (Question Mark), before continuing on to Kalemegdan Park and Belgrade Fortress, the most important cultural-historic complex of the city, situated on the confluence of the rivers Sava and Danube.



Panoramic View from Sava River

Optional excursions in Belgrade:

- Belgrade rivers cruise and Zemun: Danube & Sava, two great rivers and their shores will help you feel the Belgrade's spirit. You'll meet this great city from a different perspective and in the evening, explore the charming Zemun neighbourhood, enjoying dinner in one of the traditional fish restaurants.
- Skadarlija bohemian night: a traditional Serbian dinner in Skadarlija

- the bohemian heart of Belgrade (drinks not included).

Day 3

Belgrade – Fruška Gora – Sremski Karlovci – Novi Sad – Belgrade

Breakfast. On this tour, you will explore the most interesting sights of Vojvodina, a province in the north of Serbia. You will be driven through picturesque scenery and Serbia's famous wine region towards the 'Serbian Holy Land', home to 17 functioning Serbian Orthodox monasteries. You will visit well preserved monastery Krušedoł, where you'll have the opportunity to buy wine and rakija made by the monks. The tour continues on to town of Sremski Karlovci. A real gem of Serbian culture and spirituality, Sremski Karlovci feels like a 'museum town' with its Baroque centre, the Patriarchal Court, the Orthodox Cathedral of Saint Nicholas and the first Serbian secondary school (gymnasium). It is also famous for wine production and the town's annual Wineball festival. You will finish your tour of this charming town with a visit and wine tasting at one the region's most prominent wineries. Further on the tour, you will visit the 2021 European Capital of Culture, Novi Sad. Located on the historical border of two former empires – the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman – as a result, the capital of Vojvodina is a multi-cultural city with an interesting mix of architectural influences. On a sightseeing tour around the city, you will walk around the city's pedestrian zone, past the City Hall, a Catholic church, the old city centre, the former house of Albert Einstein's wife Mileva, the cultural foundation Matica Srpska and a synagogue. Then you'll follow the right bank of Danube and visit Petrovaradin, or the so-called 'Danube's Gibraltar', where the fortress is located. Drive back to Belgrade. Overnight.

Day 4

Belgrade – Timișoara – Sibiu

Breakfast. Hotel check-out. The tour continues to Timișoara, the largest city in western Romania and one that has been influenced by many cultures. The charm of this city, settled on the northern bank of the River Bega, lies in its distinctive architectural character and vibrant cultural life, and it is frequently referred to as 'Little Vienna'. Its historical significance is further

confirmed by the fact that it was the first European city to have electric street lighting. A guided tour will leave from Unirii Square, the city's main square surrounded by beautiful mediaeval buildings among which the Catholic Cathedral of Saint George is a decorative highlight. The tour will take you to Liberty Square, Victory Square home to the Romanian National Opera and National Theatre, and the 15th century Huniade Castle which today represents the best example of Gothic architecture in this region. Continue on to Sibiu, the European Capital of Culture in 2007.



Before sightseeing tour check-in to the hotel and take a short rest. Sibiu was the largest and richest of seven fortified towns built by German settlers in the 12th century. In Sibiu, the first hospital and pharmacy in Romania were established, the first Romanian book was printed and the oldest museum in Romania, the Brukenthal National Museum, was built. The wealth acquired by the trade guilds of Sibiu was used to build impressive buildings and fortification, and today the old town has retained its former splendour. Parts of the mediaeval walls still surround the historic centre, where narrow streets intersect 17th century buildings. During the tour you will visit the Large Square with Brukenthal National Museum, the Small Square, the Council Tower, the Bridge of Lies, Stairs Passage and the Orthodox Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, modelled on the magnificent Agia Sofia. Overnight.

Day 5

Sibiu – Sighișoara – Brașov

Breakfast and check-out. From Sibiu you will travel to Sighișoara, a town in Transylvania, with a history dating back to the 1100s. With cobbled streets and colourful buildings, this UNESCO World Heritage Site is a must during your visit to Romania. Sighișoara is also famous as the birthplace of Vlad III, also known

as Vlad the Impaler or Vlad Dracula. His birthplace is still there, marked with the placard 'Casa Vlad Dracul'. You will also see the Church of the Dominican Monastery, the Clock Tower, Saint Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, the Tailors' Tower, the Covered Stairway and other important sights.



The tour continues to Brașov. Founded by the Teutonic Knights in the 13th century and built as one of the seven walled citadels, this amazing city exudes a distinctive mediaeval setting and has been used as a backdrop in many recent films. Numerous mediaeval towers continue to glitter over the city. Between them sparkles baroque buildings and churches, while relaxed cafés line the main square, Piața Sfatului. In Brașov, your sightseeing will start with the story of the main square and the House of Council (Casa Sfatului). You will then walk down one of the narrowest streets in the world toward the Gothic style cathedral Biserica Neagră, famously called the Black Church, and further on to Catherine's Gate, the only original city gate to survive from mediaeval times. After a pleasant afternoon spent in this picturesque city, check-in to the hotel. Overnight.

Day 6

Brașov – Bran Castle – Peleș Castle – Bucharest

After breakfast, check-out and drive through the beautiful landscape to Bran Castle, the former residence of the Romanian royal family and commonly known as Dracula's Castle. The fairy-tale appearance of this gothic fortress built in the 13th century, set strategically atop a 60 metre cliff, provides visitors with an irresistible journey back to middle ages and an era that housed Bram Stoker's horror novel, entitled 'Dracula'. Stoker was fascinated by stories of the dark mysteries of the Carpathian Mountains and the legend of Vlad Cebes, a Romanian hero known as a very cruel

ruler, and used it all as inspiration for his world-famous novel. Thanks to the fact that Vlad the Impaler was held as a prisoner in this beautiful mediaeval castle, a belief was created that Bran Castle is the place where Stoker placed his story and it became known as Dracula's Castle.



Afternoon hours will be devoted to the visit to Sinaia and Peleș Castle. When King Carol I of Romania visited the location on which the beautiful Peleș Castle now stands, he was amazed by the stunning scenery of the Carpathian Mountains that surrounded it.

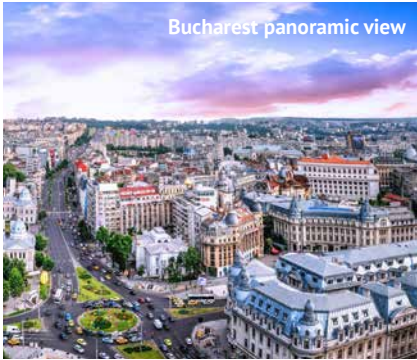


The royal family decided to build their summer residence there and they made a splendid creation of noble taste and intelligent engineering. The castle, with its stunning turrets, great attention to detail and unbelievable views across the mountains, is considered a Neo-Renaissance masterpiece. In addition to the magnificent exterior with hand-painted stained glass windows and numerous sculptures surrounding the castle, the interior of over 160 rooms was decorated by more than 400 artisans and artists. After sightseeing, you will depart for the Romanian capital, Bucharest. Hotel check-in and free time. Overnight.

Day 7

**Leisure Day
Bucharest Sightseeing Tour**

Breakfast. Start the sightseeing tour of Bucharest. Known for its wide, tree-lined boulevards, glorious Belle Époque buildings and a reputation for the high life (which in the 1900s earned it the nickname of 'Little Paris'), today Bucharest is a bustling metropolis.



While exploring this magnificent city adorned with parks, you will see the fascinating blend of French, Byzantine and communist architecture in the many stylish buildings. Though much of the centre is modern and garish, you will find splendid 17th and 18th century Orthodox churches and graceful art nouveau villas tucked away in quiet corners. You will visit all of the city's best-known sights, including the Piața Unirii for a view of the colossal Palace of the Parliament, the second-largest building in the world (after the Pentagon).



From there, the tour continues to the mediaeval Old Town, one of Bucharest's earliest settlements, which has been the seat of Romanian princes. You will see the Old Princely Court and its church, the peaceful Stavropoleos Monastery, Lipscani Street and the National Museum of Romanian History. Continue toward the Calea Victoriei Avenue, and see the beautiful French-style buildings. When you arrive at Revolution Square,

hear the story about what communist rule meant for Romania and how this square earned its name, and don't forget to take a photo in front of many of its important sights.

In the afternoon, use your free time to rest or head to the old city centre and enjoy the open air terraces, bars, coffee shops, pubs and clubs that can be found at every turn. This is the perfect place to go out for dinner and enjoy the vibrant atmosphere of Bucharest while sipping *Țuică*, Romania's national drink made from plums.

Day 8

Bucharest – Rock-Hewn Churches of Ivanovo – Arbanasi – Veliko Tarnovo

Breakfast and check-out. Start the day tour of Northern Bulgaria and visit its most important sights. As soon as you enter the territory of Bulgaria close to the village of Ivanovo, you will visit the UNESCO World Heritage site, a complex of rock-hewn churches, chapels, monasteries and cells. This is where the first hermits dug out their cells and churches in the rock during the 12th century. The 14th century murals are wonderful examples of mediaeval art and testify to the exceptional skill of the Bulgarian artists. Admire and find out why this authentic preserved heritage is attractive and popular with tourists. Continue your tour with a short photo stop in the small village of Arbanasi, an architectural and museum reserve. A picturesque open-air museum of cultural heritage includes 80 houses, some of which still have original Ottoman decor and design. If you are lucky you may catch performance by traditional Bulgarian dancers, with colourful costumes and positive energy. In this small village you can also visit one of its five churches, which together house more than 3,600 frescoes.

The final stop of the day will take you back in time to the rise and fall of the mighty capital of the Second Bulgarian Empire (1185 – 1396). By walking the winding cobblestone streets of Veliko Tarnovo, you will learn and feel how its proud population lived under Turkish rule, developed fabulous architectural masterpieces and established a cohesive and powerful craftsmen's guild. The legends and stories, interesting history and picturesque location of Veliko Tarnovo and the Tsarevets fortress have gained them numerous admirers in both Bulgaria and abroad, making the

region a top tourist attraction in the Balkans. Check-in to the hotel and free time to enjoy the evening in this charming town. Overnight.

Day 9

Veliko Tarnovo – Etar Ethno Village – Plovdiv Sightseeing – Sofia

Breakfast and check-out from the hotel. Drive to the Open Air Ethnographic Museum Etar, which contains a collection of 50 objects including water-powered installations and houses with craftsmen's workshops. The complex exhibits the architecture, way of life and economy of central Bulgaria during the Bulgarian National Revival. Using original instruments and following old traditions, it presents the Bulgarian customs, culture and characteristics of 20 regional crafts. Etar has gained popularity for being the only unique collection of old water-powered machines in Bulgaria, 10 of which are still active today and work as they would have done back in the day, and it is considered one of the best kept active technical collections in European open air museums.



Continue the tour and explore the beautiful and ancient city of Plovdiv, one of the oldest cities in Europe and the European Capital of Culture for 2019. Located on the banks of the Marica River and built around seven hills, the city has a cultural mix of different civilisations and a unique blend of architectural elements, itself a museum under the open sky. You will visit one of its most famous landmarks, the architectural complex of the Ancient Plovdiv, where many beautiful houses from the time of the Bulgarian Renaissance have been preserved and restored. The most significant monument of the cultural capital of Bulgaria is certainly the Ancient Theatre of Philippopolis; built in the 2nd century with perfect acoustics, in which theatrical performances,



concerts and various cultural events are still held today. You will also visit the Roman Stadium and the Church of Saint Constantine and Helena before finishing the tour in Kapana, the creative heart of the city and a pedestrian area full of shops, restaurants and galleries. Drive to Sofia and check-in to the hotel.

Optional excursion in Sofia:

- Dinner at a traditional restaurant: Enjoy a delicious dinner at a traditional Bulgarian restaurant and try the best local specialties, such as: banitsa pastry (phyllo cheese pie), lukanka salami, lyutenitsa (spicy red pepper chutney), tripe soup, stuffed vine leaves, kebabche (grilled, spiced mince meat) and moussaka. To drink, why not try boza (a fermented drink) or rakia (brandy), the two favourite drinks of the Bulgarians.

**Day 10
Leisure Day
Sofia Sightseeing**

Breakfast. Today, you will explore Sofia, a modern, youthful Eastern European capital, distinguished by a unique combination of communist-style architecture, Ottoman mosques and



onion-domed churches. The home to many of Bulgaria's finest museums, galleries and restaurants, Sofia will reveal to you its most interesting landmarks, such as the impressive Saint Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, the colourful Church of Saint Nicholas the

Miracle-Maker, the Ivan Vazov National Theatre, the Church of Saint George, the Banya Bashi Mosque, the Sofia Synagogue, the National Palace of Culture and Largo, one of the prime examples of Socialist Classicism architecture and one of the Sofia's main landmarks.

Optional excursion in Sofia:

- Half-day tour of Rila Monastery: High up in the Rila Mountain, where the forest touches the sky, you will find the largest and most famous monastery in Bulgaria, the Monastery of Saint Ivan of Rila.



Surrounded by beautiful mountainous nature and nestled beneath Bulgaria's highest peak, Musala, it is the most photogenic, peaceful and authentic place in Bulgaria. Despite its remote location, it attracts thousands of visitors every day. The significance of this literary and cultural centre of the region was confirmed in 1983 when it was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List. When you stand in the huge, stone-paved courtyard, surrounded by 24 metre high walls, you will see that the monastery is also an impenetrable stronghold. The natural beauty of this monastery is enhanced by the main church The Nativity of the Virgin Mother, covered wooden stairs, carved verandas, arches and colonnades, 300-400 monastery cells and incredible sacred frescoes.

**Day 11
Sofia – Niš – Belgrade**

Breakfast and check-out. Return to Serbia, this time to the eastern region, of which the city of Niš is the most important destination. Niš, mostly known for being the birthplace of the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great, is a crossroad between East and West and therefore sometimes called the 'Gate of East and West'. As the host of the most visited jazz festival of

Southeast Europe, you will remember it for its frequent restaurants and cafés, always filled with the warmth and hospitality of the local people. During the tour of Niš, you will see several unique sights of global significance. The most important landmark of Niš is the archaeological park Mediana (temporarily closed), a cultural property of exceptional importance as it contains the remains of the residence of one of the most important Roman emperors, Constantine the Great. Another landmark you won't forget easily is Skull Tower. Made of 952 human skulls, it is one of the most macabre historical sites in the world. You will also visit the Niš Fortress, the largest monument in the city of Niš and the best preserved Turkish military fortress in Serbia, located in the city centre, on the bank of the Nišava River. At the end of the tour, head to the cobbled Tinkers Alley and feel the spirit of the only remaining part of Niš's old čaršija (market), now home to numerous cafés and restaurants. For an authentic local experience try the grilled meat, arguably the best in the country. After an exciting day, drive to Serbia's capital city, Belgrade. Check-in to the hotel. Overnight.

**Day 12
Belgrade Departure**

Breakfast and hotel check-out. As most of our clients decide to extend their trip within their own organisation, transfer to the airport at the end of the tour is not included in the overall price. Any guests who would like their agent to organise a departure transfer on their behalf are welcome to contact us. End of services.

If you feel like you are not ready to end this trip and would like to spend more time on your vacation, let us know and we will book some more overnights for you. You are welcome to contact us for more details!

GENERAL INCLUSIONS / VALID BOTH FOR STANDARD AND SUPERIOR PACKAGE

- Airport arrival transfer
- All sightseeing tours and transfers that are written in this program, except those marked as optional tours
- Entrance tickets to the Museum of Yugoslav History, Skull Tower, Bran Castle, Peleş Castle and Open Air Ethnographic Museum "Etar", monastery Krušedol
- 1 bottle of water (0.5 l) daily for each passenger
- Professional tour guidance throughout the tour
- VAT, Accommodation taxes and City taxes in every country
- Tour logistics and organization by licensed incoming agency

STANDARD package / ACCOMMODATION

4 BB in Belgrade in Hotel Royal Inn 4* / Hotel Mark 4* / Hotel Prag 4* or similar

1 BB in Sibiu in Hotel Best Western Silva 4* / Hotel Continental Forum 4* / Hotel Mercure Sibiu Airport 4* or similar

1 BB in Braşov in Grand Hotel Belvedere 4* / Hotel Golden Time 4* / Hotel Ambient 4* or similar

2 BB in Bucharest in Hotel Capital Plaza 4* / Hotel Parliament 4* / Hotel Ambassador 4* or similar

1 BB in Veliko Tarnovo in Hotel Premier 4* / Hotel Tsarevets 3* / Hotel Alegro 3* or similar

2 BB in Sofia in Hotel BW Premier Collection City 4* / Best Western Terminus Hotel 4* / Triada Hotel 4* or similar

SUPERIOR package / ACCOMMODATION

4 BB in Belgrade in Hotel Saint Ten 5* / Hotel Hyatt Regency 5* / Hotel Hilton 5* or similar

1 BB in Sibiu in Hotel Ramada by Wyndham 4* / Hotel Golden Tulip Ana Tower 4* / Hotel Hilton Sibiu 5* or similar

1 BB in Braşov in Hotel Aro Palace 5* / Hotel Kronwell 4* or similar

2 BB in Bucharest in Hotel Grand Continental 5* / Hotel Athénée Palace Hilton 5* / Hotel Hilton Garden Inn Old Town 4* or similar

1 BB in Veliko Tarnovo in Hotel Yantra Grand 4* / Hotel Augusta Spa 3* / Hotel Studio 3* or similar

2 BB in Sofia in Grand Hotel Sofia 5* / Hotel Hilton 5* or similar