

BALKAN ADVENTURE

14 Days 7 Countries 14 Cities

The Balkans reveal their rare beauty, warm culture and colourful history for all to enjoy. Explore ancient crossroads and delve into the revival of a region once scarred by conflict and communism.



THE ITINERARY

Day 1 Arrive Bucharest

You'd be forgiven for thinking you were in Paris when you explore the Belle-Époque atmosphere of Romania's capital, Bucharest. Your first day will be free to explore the city your way, admiring the elegant boulevards that once hosted high society and an Old City filled with cobbled streets, Baroque architecture and vintage cafés. Later, join your Travel Director and fellow travellers for a Welcome Reception. Why not toast to new friends with a shot of the local Pálinka to set the tone for your memorable journey?

- ★ Hotel – Mercury City Center
- ★ Included Meals - Welcome Reception

Day 2 Bucharest – Sinaia – Braşov (2 Nights)

A full day of sightseeing stretches ahead, beginning in Bucharest where you'll join a 'Local Specialist' to delve into the city's tumultuous history. See the immense Palace of the Parliament, one of the lasting legacies left behind by dictator Nicolae Ceauşescu, whose extravagant tastes culminated in the world's second-largest administrative building in stark contrast to the poverty of his people. Venture deep into the Carpathian Mountains to Sinaia and view Peleş Castle, the summer retreat of Romania's first king. Then, continue to Braşov and check in to your hotel in Poiana Braşov ski resort. Enjoy traditional Romanian cuisine for dinner at your hotel against the backdrop of panoramic mountain views.

- ★ Hotel - Teleferic Grand
- ★ Included Meals – Breakfast, Dinner

Day 3 Braşov Sightseeing and Free Time

The highlight of the day is this morning's visit to Bran Castle, the legendary home of Dracula. 'Dive Into Culture' with a 'Local Specialist' and learn about its history as the favourite royal residence of Queen Maria of Romania. Although the connection between the castle and Bram Stoker's famous literary figure are tentative at best, its imposing walls,

towering spires and secret passageways may convince you otherwise. Next, we journey to the medieval streets of Braşov. The city once stood at the crossroads of trade routes linking the Ottoman Empire and western Europe, forging a melting pot of influences that can be seen to this day. Join a 'Local Specialist' who will reveal the city's trading history and Saxon roots as you walk around Town Hall Square and see the Black Church, so named following the damage caused by the Great Fire of 1689. Your evening is free to indulge in some of the local Transylvanian favourites, or consider joining your travel companions for an optional dinner.

- ★ Included Meals – Breakfast

Day 4 Braşov – Veliko Târnovo

Head south, through ancient villages and tranquil landscapes across the Danube River into Bulgaria. Your journey ends in Veliko Târnovo, the 'City of the Tsars' and former capital of the Bulgarian Empire. Relax after your scenic drive and join your travel companions for dinner at your hotel. After dinner, resist the urge to retire early and take a stroll through the Old City admiring the Renaissance gems that line its winding streets.

- ★ Hotel - Yantra Grand
- ★ Included Meals - Breakfast, Regional Dinner

Day 5 Veliko Târnovo – Arbanasi – Sofia (2 Nights)

The fairy-tale façades of Veliko Târnovo exude medieval history around every turn and your 'Local Specialist' will reveal a rich history and culture befitting a former imperial capital. At the heart of the city is Tsarevets Fortress, which you'll have an opportunity to visit as part of your sightseeing tour. Our next stop is the UNESCO-listed town of Arbanasi, renowned for its Bulgarian National Revival architecture and rich spiritual history reflected in the beautiful medieval frescoed churches that can be found here. Visit the Church of the Nativity before we continue to Sofia, where you'll join a 'Local Specialist' for an in-depth sightseeing tour of Bulgaria's modern-day capital including views of the golden-domed St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral and St. Sofia Church.

- ★ Hotel - Marinela
- ★ Included Meals – Breakfast

Day 6 Sofia Free Day

You'll have a full day to explore this modern city built on Roman ruins. Once a thriving centre for trade and crafts, Sofia's history, culture and architecture have been influenced by Greeks, Romans, Ottomans and communists. Settle in to the relaxed atmosphere and take a stroll along its elegant boulevards or sit in a park and people-watch. You could choose instead to join an Optional Experience to the UNESCO-listed Rila Monastery, founded by the hermit St. Ivan of Rila in the 10th century. Later this evening, you may wish to get your foot tapping to the flurry of red skirts at a traditional folklore show.

- ★ Included Meals – Breakfast

Day 7 Sofia – Skopje

Cross the Macedonian border today, bound for Skopje, the capital, religious crossroads and a vibrant medieval trading centre. See the legacy of the Ottomans in the mosques and bazaars as you join a 'Local Specialist' for a sightseeing tour this afternoon. Local flavours and stories are on the menu tonight as you 'Connect With Locals' for an exclusive 'Be My Guest' dinner, perhaps with some of the local rakija on hand to toast to new friends.

- ★ Hotel - Holiday Inn
- ★ Included Meals - Breakfast, Be My Guest

Day 8 Skopje – Tirana

Leaving Macedonia behind, head to the Albanian capital of Tirana where you'll join a 'Local Specialist' on arrival for a sightseeing tour. Delve into how the city has emerged from decades of communist rule into a vibrant, trendy tourism centre - one where dour grey city blocks have been transformed into a kaleidoscope of colourful façades. You'll view such highlights as the Palace of Culture, the National Library and the Clock Tower before enjoying dinner at your hotel.

- ★ Hotel - Hilton Garden Inn
- ★ Included Meals – Breakfast, Dinner

Day 9 Tirana – Kotor – Budva

Soak up Montenegro's natural beauty as you drive towards Kotor. You'll have some time for lunch on your own and an orientation tour of this fortified town, tucked deep within enchanting fjord-like surrounds. Travel to Budva next where your Travel Director will provide an orientation tour before you have the rest of the day to explore 'Montenegro's Miami' on your own. Head to Stari Grad (the Old Town) surrounded by 15th-century ramparts to explore its labyrinthine lanes and small squares where you could choose to sit back and watch the world go by.

- ★ Hotel - Falkensteiner
- ★ Included Meals - Breakfast

Day 10 Budva – Mostar – Sarajevo (2 Nights)

Leave the shimmering Adriatic coast for Mostar, a multicultural city that has restored itself with enviable verve following the Bosnian War. A 'Local Specialist' will lead you through its colourful cobbled streets and you'll view the Stari Most Ottoman-style bridge reconstructed entirely using traditional methods. Head to Sarajevo next where you'll delve into the rich religious and multicultural heritage that has earned it the nickname, the 'Jerusalem' of Europe. Tonight you'll enjoy dinner at your hotel.

- ★ Hotel - Novotel Bristol
- ★ Included Meals - Breakfast, Dinner

Day 11 Sarajevo Sightseeing and Free Time

Join a 'Local Specialist' for a guided walking tour of Sarajevo, which will reveal centuries of religious history reflected in its beautiful synagogues, mosques and Orthodox and Catholic churches. Visit the War Tunnel, an underground tunnel of hope that was built in 1993 during the Siege of Sarajevo, allowing war supplies and humanitarian aid to reach the city at the height of the Bosnian War. Then, enjoy a free afternoon to explore on your own. Visit the Old Town and trace the Sarajevo Roses, dotted across the city as a stark reminder of that tumultuous time in the city's history. You could choose to join your travel companions for an optional dinner this evening.

- ★ Included Meals - Breakfast

Day 12 Sarajevo – Belgrade (2 Nights)

Travel through lush forests, pastures and the Bosnian Mountains into Serbia - a scenic day of driving that will end in Belgrade. The 'White City' has a long history which you'll have an opportunity to explore tomorrow.

- ★ Hotel - Mercure Excelsior
- ★ Included Meals - Breakfast

Day 13 Belgrade Sightseeing

Your 'Local Specialist' will share the sights and sounds of Belgrade from an insider's perspective this morning. Delve into its Celtic, Roman, Serbian, Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian history, then visit Kalemegdan Fortress, the symbol of the Serbian capital and perched perfectly on a ridge overlooking the confluence of two great rivers. Discover how each of these empires have had a hand in rebuilding the fortress over the past 16 centuries. This evening, we reunite one final time for a rousing Farewell Dinner to reminisce over our shared travel experience.

- ★ Included Meals - Breakfast, Farewell Dinner

Day 14 Depart Belgrade

Our journey through the Balkans has come to an end. All that's left is to say a fond dovidenja as you bid your new friends farewell and take your transfer to the airport. Conditions apply.

- ★ Included Meals - Breakfast

ABOUT THIS TRIP

What's included

- **13 NIGHTS** Accommodation
- **20 MEALS** 13 breakfasts, 7 dinners (including Be My Guest)
- **ON-TRIP TRANSPORT** Land transportation included. Where applicable, Intra-air between cities are not included.

The Trafalgar difference

- **CONNECT WITH LOCALS** Spend quality time with the locals when you join an exclusive 'Be My Guest' experience featuring local hospitality and cuisine. (Day 7)
- **DIVER INTO CULTURE DIVE** Visit the infamous mythical home of Count Dracula and favourite residence of Romanian royalty - Bran Castle. (Day 3)
- **LOCAL SPECIALISTS** For included sightseeing in Bucharest, Braşov, Veliko Târnovo, Sofia, Skopje, Tirana, Mostar, Sarajevo and Belgrade

Sightseeing highlights

- **ORIENTATION** of Kotor and Budva
- **VISIT** Bran Castle in Braşov, Tsaravets Fortress in Veliko Târnovo, the Church of the Nativity in Arbanasi, Sofia, Skopje, Tirana, Kotor, Budva, Mostar, the War Tunnel in Sarajevo and Kalemegdan Fortress in Belgrade
- **VIEW** Peleş Castle in Sinaia, St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral and St. Sofia Church in Sofia, the Palace of Culture and the National library in Tirana and the Stari Most in Mostar
- **SEE** the Palace of Parliament in Bucharest

Travel highlights

- ✓ Audio Headsets for flexible sightseeing
- ✓ Daily breakfast and an average of 50% of evening meals
- ✓ Luxury air-conditioned coach with Wi-Fi in most countries or alternative transportation (such as rail journeys)
- ✓ Cherry-picked hotels, all tried and trusted
- ✓ Optional Experiences and free time
- ✓ All portorage and restaurant gratuities
- ✓ Must-see sightseeing and surprise extras
- ✓ An expert Travel Director, Driver Guide or Trafalgar Representative
- ✓ All hotel tips, charges and local taxes
- ✓ Handcrafted Highlights
- ✓ VIP entry to many sights