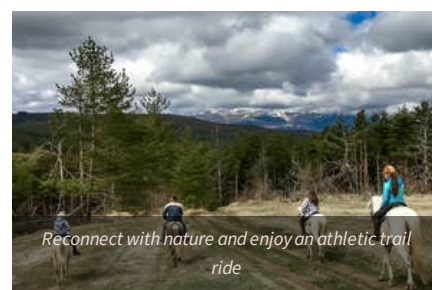
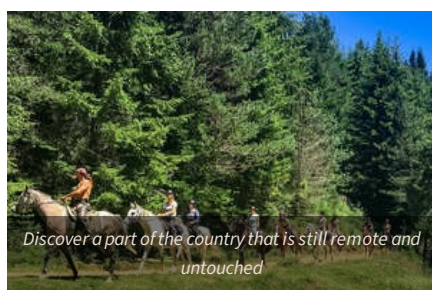


The Three Mountains

BULGARIA / BULGARIA

A **trail ride in Bulgaria** across three mountain ranges - Plana, Vitosha and Rila. This is a semi-mountainous ride with mild relief, numerous forests and enchanting meadows. **On horseback**, you will discover a part of the country that is still remote and untouched, offering excellent opportunities to relax and reconnect with nature.

Trail Riding	 8 days / 6 riding days	 From £1,415	
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


ITINERARY

Highlights

- Experience the Bulgarian life and culture
- Ride through stunning and varied landscapes with opportunities for long gallops
- Ride energetic, well-trained and forward-going horses
- The groups are rather small, around 6 riders maximum.


Day 1 — 1 : EUROPE - SOFIA - PLANA - None

 Plana guesthouse

Flight to Sofia. Flights are not included but please contact us if you would like us to book flights for you. You need to arrive before 4:00 pm on time for the 5:00 transfer.

Upon arrival at Sofia airport, your guide will meet with you and you will be driven south to the village of Plana (40-minute drive), where his home is. Together, you will head to the stables, a short drive from the house, where you will meet the horses. Home-made dinner at guide's guesthouse. Rosen will also take the time to go through the week's programme with you. Overnight at the guesthouse.


Day 2 — 2 : PLANA - 5 hours riding

 Plana guesthouse

After a home-made breakfast, you will start your riding adventures around the village of Plana. The mountain is located between the Vitosha mountain, Iskar river, Rila Mountain and Samokov valley in western Bulgaria. The landscape of Plana is fascinating - the land is covered by forests and glades, and showered with flowers and fresh grass. In the past, the forests were mostly century-old beeches, but most of them were cut down for fuel, and then were replaced by


pines, white pines and birches. The highest peak is “Manastiriste” (Monastery Place) – 1338m. Back to the guesthouse for the night.

Day 3 — 3 : PLANA - BELCHIN BANYA - 5 hours riding

 Belchin View guesthouse

This morning’s trail leads through pristine forests and across meadows, with beautiful views. Stop for a picnic lunch at a secluded wooden forest shelter next to a little orthodox chapel in the area of the Shiroki Dol village. After lunch, you will ride to Belchin Banya. This village is famous for its thermal waters – 41 degrees with proven healing and prophylactic effects. Your group will spend the night in the remarkable family hotel ‘Belchin view’. Next to the hotel is a public swimming pool with mineral waters that you can enjoy in the afternoon.

Day 4 — 4 : BELCHIN BANYA - SAPAREVA BANYA - 4 hours riding

 Verila campsite


Another day in the saddle in Bulgaria. Departing from Belchin in the morning, you will start the climb up Verla mountain. Today, you will take your lunch break in another wooden forest shelter. You will then ride down to Sapareva banya, a town that is located on the northern foothills of the Rila mountain. The town is known for its hot mineral (103°C/217°F) and clear mountain water, as well as the geyser in the town centre. Mineral water from Sapareva banya was highly regarded and used as a cure by the Thracians and Romans.

Accomodation on that day is in bungalows at a local camping ground, with an aquapark nearby for those who would like to enjoy a swim and a soak in thermal waters!

Day 5 — 5 : SAPAREVA BANYA - GOVEDARTSI - 5 hours riding

Leave the village of Sapareva banya. Today, your trail ride takes you to the Rila mountain, and then on to the village of Govedartsı. The village is situated in the central part of the Rila mountains, on the right side of the Iskar River and is the starting point of classic hiking routes - Musala peak, Seven Rila lakes, Mechit peak, Maliovitsa peak, Yonchevo lake, Urdini lakes... Tonight, you will stay in a small, cosy family hotel. There is a small swimming pool and a sauna that you can enjoy before get ready for a home-cooked dinner.


Day 6 — 6 : GOVERDARTZI - BELCHIN BANYA - 3 - 4 hours riding

 Belchin View guesthouse

Today's equestrian adventures will take you on a ride through the valley of Lakatnitsa, then you will cross the Velchanitca mountain ridge and descend towards the valley of the Palakaria river. Make your way to the village of Belchin banya where you will stop to have lunch. The afternoon will be spent in various SPA complexes.

Please note that the time spent in the saddle today is shorter to allow both horses and riders to rest.

Day 7 — 7 : BELCHIN BANYA - PLANA - 4 hours riding

 Plana guesthouse

This morning, you follow the mountain ridge to Plana village until you reach your final destination at Plana Kon stable. Tonight you stay in the same guesthouse you stayed at the first two nights.

Day 8 — 8 : PLANA - SOFIA - EUROPE - None

After breakfast, you will say your goodbyes to the team and be driven to Sofia airport to catch your flight back to Europe. Please make sure to book a flight departing after 12:00 noon.

DATES & PRICES			
DEPARTURE	RETURN	PRICE WITHOUT FLIGHTS	STATUS
25/05/2024	01/06/2024	£1,415	Open
08/06/2024	15/06/2024	£1,415	Open

22/06/2024	29/06/2024	£1,415	Open
06/07/2024	13/07/2024	£1,415	Open
20/07/2024	27/07/2024	£1,415	Open
03/08/2024	10/08/2024	£1,415	Open
17/08/2024	24/08/2024	£1,415	Open
31/08/2024	07/09/2024	£1,415	Open
14/09/2024	21/09/2024	£1,415	Open

Price details

- International flights to Sofia are not included.

- Rates are per person, based on two riders sharing a twin or double room.

- Groups are composed of a minimum of 4 international riders and a maximum of 6 riders, plus guides.

- Please note: the ride will also confirm for 3 riders on payment of a supplement of c. €100/£90/\$110 per person (3 riders) or €300/£210/\$320 per person (2 riders). Once the group has reached 4 people, we will remove this supplement from your invoice and refund you if you have already paid it.

- There is no single supplement if you are willing to share a room with another guest of the same sex. To guarantee your own room there is a single supplement of €140/£125/\$135. Single room availability at the guesthouse is limited.

- Please note that at the end of each day, guests must pay the total amount of money they have spent on their personal extras (beverages and so on), to the hotel.

- Transfers to/from Sofia are included. Please make sure to book a flight that arrives within reasonable hours on the first day. On the first day, you need to arrive before 4:00 pm on time for the 5:00 pm transfer. On the last day, you need to book a flight departing after 12:00 noon. Outside of these times a private transfer can be organised (€40 per car each way)

- There is a rider weight limit of 95 kg/ 15 st/ 210 lbs - if you weigh more than 95kg and wish to ride, please contact us

- Short programmes/additional nights can be organised on request, starting from €190/£170/\$225 per day per person, fully inclusive. Please contact us.

Please Note

The itinerary may be modified at anytime for security reasons, meteorological or events beyond our control such as blocked roads, rivers in flood, drought, strikes and local holidays. Equus Journeys, our local partners and their local guides will always strive to find the best solution and will alter the itinerary as needed.

The names of the hotels and accommodation are given for information only and depending on availability, they may be modified without notice and replaced by another of a similar standard.

Price includes

SUPPORT TEAM

1 English speaking horse guide

LOGISTICS

1 horse equipped with saddle and bridle per rider

1 vehicle and driver

INLAND TRANSPORT

Airport transfers at normal hours

ACCOMMODATION

Double/three bed rooms in guest houses, bungalows and small hotels

MEALS

Full board from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on the final day (day 8)

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT

Saddle bags
First aid kit

Price doesn't include

MEALS

Beverages and personal extras
Meals organised by you on day 1 and 8 - depending on your arrival and departure time. Expect to spend around £5 per meal
Alcoholic beverages are not included in the price

TRANSPORT

International flights

EXTRAS

Tips to the local team
Small group supplement. See above for the price details.
Park, museum and other tourist site fees.

INSURANCE

Cancellation and travel insurance are not included. Please note that insurance is mandatory. We recommend taking out an insurance policy as soon as your trip is booked in case of cancellation.

Optional

ACCOMMODATION

Single room supplement
For an extra night in Sofia and airport transfer fee information, please contact us

EQUESTRIAN INFO

Horses

The horses are Shagya and pure Arabs, Anglo-Arabs, and Arab cross and are all well-trained and calm. They are even tempered, brave, and well suited for the mountainous landscape! They will easily carry you over natural obstacles such as rivers, small gullies, and fallen trees. They are not very big but resilient and hardy, with good stamina.

Guide & local team

English speaking guides. Your guide has an excellent knowledge of his country and is a competent guide.

Minimum riding ability

MINIMUM RIDING ABILITY

You should be able to ride at all paces and have a good control over rough terrain.

There is a rider weight limit of 95 kg/ 15 st/ 210 lbs - if you weigh more than 95kg and wish to ride, please contact us

PACE

This ride will see you using all 3 paces. Each day, depending on the terrain, weather and general conditions you will walk, trot, canter with the opportunity for some gallops during the ride.

TACKING ABILITY AND PARTICIPATION

Each rider grooms and tacks their own horse and helps the team to distribute the water and the food to the horses.

TRIP CONDITIONS AND REQUESTED EXPERIENCE

A good level of fitness and endurance is required as you will spend between 4 and 6 hours in the saddle each day.

The ride will cover rough mountainous terrain with a lot of ascents and descents. Wider roads will allow you to canter. Some natural obstacles; rivers gullies, ditches, fallen trees (and others) will have to be crossed.

EQUESTRIAN EQUIPMENT

Leather saddles. The saddles are large and comfortable, perfect for long hours in the saddle. Saddlebags are provided.

Helmets are not provided and you should bring your own.

TRAVEL INFO

COMFORT

Accommodation is varied on this ride, including guesthouses, bungalows and cosy family-run hotels.

MEALS

You will have a chance to enjoy local Bulgarian cuisine.

Picnic lunches, carried by each rider in their saddle bags (vegetables, soup, BBQ, fruit or sandwiches).

Dinners at local restaurants and at the hotels.

Alcoholic drinks are payable locally.

Traditional Bulgarian cuisine is influenced partly by the culinary customs of the other Balkans nations and shares common features with Greek, Turkish and Serbian cuisines. Bulgarian food is tasty and diverse. The geographical location of the country and its mild climate allow perfect conditions for growing different vegetables, fruits, spices and herbs which are fundamental ingredients in all Bulgarian dishes. Bulgaria is also famous for the diversity and quality of its dairy products which are widely used in the preparation of typical Bulgarian food.

Another interesting feature in Bulgarian cuisine is the fresh bread, made mainly from white or wholegrain flour, which is an accompaniment to every main meal.

CLIMATE

The location of the Rhodopes in the south eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula determines the region's climate to a great extent. The climate is influenced both by the colder air coming from the north and by the warmer breeze from the Mediterranean. The average annual temperature in the Eastern Rhodopes is 13 °C (55 °F), the maximum precipitation is in December, the minimum in August. In the Western Rhodopes, the temperature varies from 5 to 9 °C (41 to 48 °F) and in the summer rainfalls prevail.

The mild climate, combined with some other factors, works in favour of outdoor activities.

TIPS

Tipping is not compulsory but will be very much appreciated if you enjoy the services provided by the team. Tipping is totally at your discretion.

PACKING LIST

Head

- Equus Journeys strongly recommend that you wear a riding helmet and that you take your own to ensure a correct fit. There are many lightweight options available nowadays.
- Sunhat for when not riding
- Sunglasses - with a cord attached so they don't fly off when riding
- Buff or bandana
- Warm hat for cold nights when camping

Upper body

- Thermals (long or short sleeved)
- Long sleeved shirts provide protection from the sun and are an extra layer
- T-shirts
- Lightweight fleece or jumper

- Warm fleece or jumper (and a spare in case one gets wet)
- Warm and waterproof jacket - it can rain at any time of year and the evenings can be particularly cold
- Swimming costume

Legs

- Lightweight, comfortable riding trousers or jodhpurs - we recommend riding in them at home before taking them on holiday to ensure they don't rub
- Thermals
- Casual trousers for the evenings, such as jeans or tracksuit bottoms
- Waterproof over trousers

Hands and Feet

- Comfortable riding boots. We recommend short boots or hiking boots (with a heel) with half chaps but you may wish to take long chaps as an extra layer against inclement weather. We don't recommend taking your favourite long leather boots in case they get damaged
- Waterproof shoes/boots can be useful for abundant dew in the mornings or when it rains
- Trainers or equivalent light shoes for moving around the camp in the evenings
- Several pairs of warm, thick socks
- Gloves - your hands are particularly exposed to the sun, cold or rain whilst riding. Waterproof gloves can be particularly useful

Nightwear

- Pyjamas, tracksuits or thermals for sleeping in

Other useful items

- A soothing cream to alleviate any areas irritated by long days spent in the saddle
- Small backpack for accessing items required during the day (carried by support crew)
- Camera and high capacity memory card. Spare battery
- Bumbag for carrying your camera and small items whilst riding
- Water bottle (2 litres or 2 x 1 litre)
- Small plastic bags for rubbish
- Ear plugs (for light sleepers)

In your hold luggage

- Any liquids, such as shampoo, moisturiser, deodorant unless they are less than 100ml and all bottles can fit in a small, clear, plastic Ziplock bag. We recommend biodegradable washing products where possible.

In your hand luggage

- Any valuables, such as your camera, ipod, ipad etc.

Medical kit

- Any medication you regularly take
- Sunscreen and lip balm - should be high factor
- Insect repellent, preferably containing DEET
- Blister plasters in case of any rubs
- Antiseptic cream, plasters, aspirin, anti-histamine, insect-bite salve etc...
- Spare prescription glasses/contact lenses
- Eye drops
- Imodium or similar anti-diarrhoea medication
- Re-hydration sachets
- Water purification tablets
- Antiseptic wipes
- Handwash gel

Our Recommendations

- Backpacks cannot be worn whilst riding. We recommend a small bumbag or a coat with pockets so that you can carry small items with you during the day (passport, camera, sunscreen, lipbalm etc)
- We recommend travelling in your riding boots and carrying your hat and some riding clothes in your hand luggage - then if your luggage goes astray you are still able to ride!
- We recommend taking a copy of your passport and insurance documents with you in case you lose your originals

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

1. **Travel light.** It's a little known fact, but the lighter you pack, the better for the environment as heavy bags will produce higher emissions (when

flying a plane or driving a car!).

2. **Reduce plastic waste.** Take your favorite reusable bottle with you. Avoid single-use bags, cups, or straws.
3. **Preserve nature.** Always take your rubbish with you during the ride and recycle them. Leave all the flowers or plants as you found them, and never get too close when observing wildlife. Make sure to use eco-friendly products such as body wash or laundry detergent (if camping) to protect both your skin and the environment.
4. **Choose your experiences carefully.** Respect animal life by not participating in any activities that abuse wild animals (shows, elephant rides, etc.).
5. **Support local populations.** Buy local handicrafts, be respectful of customs, and learn about the culture of local communities.
6. **Share!** Raise awareness among your family and friends about sustainable tourism.

For more information please [see this page](#) .