



# Equus Journeys

HORSEBACK TRAVEL & EQUESTRIAN TRADITIONS SINCE 1972

14a Forest Gate, Pewsham, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 3RS - UK

+44 (0) 1905 388977

info@equus-journeys.com

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## Riding in the Thrace Empire

### BULGARIA

This **holiday on horseback across Bulgaria** offers a well-balanced combination of spectacular **rides** along river banks and up picturesque mountains, relaxation in thermal baths and spas and the exploration of Thracian and Roman buildings and ruins. Learn more about Bulgaria's history by visiting archaeological sites dating from 400 BC. **Canter** across Sredna Gora, through countryside perfumed by lavender and Damascan roses. Stay in accommodation offering massages and mineral water treatments after long, invigorating days spent **in the saddle**.

Trail Riding	 8 days / 6 days riding	 From £1,555	
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An active trail riding holiday in Bulgaria



Explore Bulgaria in the saddle on a riding holiday



Trail riding holiday in Bulgaria

### ITINERARY

## Highlights

- Ride energetic and well-schooled horses
- Explore the impressive archeological sites of the Thrace empire in stunning Bulgarian countryside
- Ride through a wide range of landscapes and enjoy canters along the river banks
- Relax in a spa hotel and enjoy thermal and mineral water treatments

## Day 1 — 1 : EUROPE - SOFIA - HISARYA - None

On your arrival in to Sofia, you should arrive between 12:00 and 16:00 pm. You will be welcomed at the airport by one of the team and be driven to the town of Hisarya. For riders arriving later, a private transfer can be organised - but please contact us in advance. Flights are not included but can be booked upon request.

Hisarya is a small resort town in central Bulgaria, located in the Plovdiv province. It sits at an elevation of 368 m. Hisarya has 22 hot water springs that have been actively used since ancient times: water temperatures vary from 44-55°C. This area has always attracted settlers due to the abundance of water. Thracians first settled here IV-III century BC. Later, the Romans arrived to these lands, transforming the town. They built a beautiful city, wide streets, stunning courtyards, villas, marble baths, aqueducts, sewage systems and an amphitheater. Ruins from the Roman period are still well-preserved in the modern city of Hisarya.

## Day 2 — 2 : HISARYA - MATENITSA - KRASNOVO - 4-5 hours riding

After breakfast, you will be taken to the stables to meet the horses and local team. After making the final preparations you will set out on horseback for your first trail ride in Bulgaria. This morning's ride takes you to a nice wooden hut close to the village of Matenitsa, where you will stop for your picnic lunch. After your break, you ride to the village of Krasново, located on the southern slopes of the Sredna Gora and famous for its mineral baths. Dinner and overnight at the new Spa Hotel Aqua Termi. Before dinner you can enjoy spa treatments and massages, and swim in the mineral water pool.

(please note spa and massages or not included at each hotel).

### Day 3 — 3 : KRASNOVO - KOPRIVSHTITSA - Approx. 6 hours riding

Starting from Krasnovo, today's ride passes through rose gardens as you head towards the mountain. Lunch will be had at Buntovna hut at an altitude of 1180m. It is located in an old beech forest in the historic area of KonskaPolyana, Kulata and Kanara, with lovely views. Ride through the deep beech forest and the lovely open mountaintop, ending up near the town of Koprivshtitsa. Accommodation in the new hotel "Eagle Rock", where you can hear the sheep's bells ringing in the valley. The hotel has a swimming pool, a Jacuzzi and a sauna. Dinner of local food and wine.

### Day 4 — 4 : KOPRIVSHTITSA - Approx. 4.5 hours riding

After a delicious Bulgarian breakfast at the hotel, ride through the untouched forest to the Spa Resort Strelcha and reach the very top of the beautiful "Wolf Peak" - 1240m, with amazing panoramic views of the Upper Thracian Plain and the surrounding mountains. Picnic under a cosy wooden shelter just a few kilometres down the mountain. Overnight in a Spa hotel with a hot mineral pool and massage centre.

### Day 5 — 5 : KOPRIVSHTITSA - STRELCHA - Approx 2.5 hours riding

After breakfast, you will have a short ride in the beautiful area of Strelcha. Lunch at a local restaurant, followed by a guided tour of the Hisyorical Museum in the town of Panagyurishte. Enjoy a brief shopping break before returning back to the hotel for dinner.

### Day 6 — 6 : STRELCHA - STAROSEL - 5 hours riding

Today's riding adventures take you through rose fields, vineyards, and along sandy lakes. Picnic in a cherry garden next to the village of Krastevich. Accommodation tonight is at the luxurious Wine & Spa Complex Starosel. Before dinner you can enjoy the spa centre or join a wine tour (not included).

### Day 7 — 7 : STAROSEL - HISARYA - 4 hours riding

You start the day with a visit of the Starosel Thracian Cult Complex. It is the largest preserved Thracian King Complex with a temple-mausoleum in Southeast Europe. It dates back to the 5th century BC. You get to learn about the mysterious Thracians and their amazing cultural heritage and historic significance.

Today you will enjoy beautiful, long gallops among meadows, riding near Pyasachnik artificial lake - the biggest in the area - with a panoramic view of the mountain. Picnic in the meadows near Panicheri village before spending the afternoon riding through forests, meadows and along lakes. Back to Hisarya for the night, tonight you will stay in a Spa hotel with a mineral swimming pool and sauna. Visit the remains of a fortress wall, belonging to the ancient Roman town Diocletianopolis - the third largest in the ancient Thrace province. Hisarya was an active Roman Spa Resort and was at one point used as a rehabilitation centre for wounded Roman soldiers. Farewell dinner.

### Day 8 — 8 : HISAR - SOFIA - EUROPE - None

After breakfast, you will be driven to Sofia airport to catch your flight back to Europe. Your flight should depart between 11:00 and 15:00 pm

DATES & PRICES			
DEPARTURE	RETURN	PRICE WITHOUT FLIGHTS	STATUS
18/05/2024	25/05/2024	£1,555	Full
01/06/2024	08/06/2024	£1,555	Open
21/09/2024	28/09/2024	£1,555	Guaranteed departure
05/10/2024	12/10/2024	£1,555	Open

### Price details

- International flights 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 10 riders, plus guides.
- Please note: the ride will also confirm for 2-3 riders on payment of a supplement of c. £345/€400/\$440 in 2023. Once the group has reached 4

people, we will remove this supplement from your invoice and refund you if you have already paid it.

- If you sign up to the ride as a solo rider and there are no other riders likely to share your room, you will be charged a single room supplement of approx. £155/€200/\$220 in 2024. You will then be reimbursed if a sharer is found for you at a later date.

- Transfer from Sofia airport is between 12:00 and 16:00 pm. Your flight should depart between 11:00 and 15:00 pm. If your arrival/departure time at Sofia airport is outside of those times, we can organise a private transfer to and from the airport at £85/€100 per person.

- Rider weight limit is 95kg/14.9 st/209 lbs. If you are over this limit, please contact us.

- Younger riders aged 12+ can join be they must be accompanied by an adult and meet the riding requirements.

- Additional activities: cultural tour of the Historical Museum - Panahyurishte Trasure; visit of Thracian Temple Complex, Starosel; visit to the impressive remains of the ancient Roman city of Diocletianopolis, wine tour. Massages are available every night upon request for a small additional payment.

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

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### SUPPORT TEAM

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1 English speaking horse guide

### LOGISTICS

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- 1 horse equipped with saddle and bridle per rider
- 1 vehicle and driver
- 2 logistic assistants

### INLAND TRANSPORT

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- 2 private cars (5 passengers per car)
- Airport transfers at set times

### ACCOMMODATION

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Standard spa hotels on a shared room basis

### MEALS

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

### ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT

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- Saddle bags
- First aid kit

### EXTRAS

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- One massage during the week
- Entry fees to sites mentioned in the itinerary

## Price doesn't include

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### MEALS

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- Beverages and personal extras (spa treatments)
- 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

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Private airport transfers outside of normal transfer hours

International flights

## EXTRAS

Tips to the local team

Small group supplement. See above for details

## 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

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### ACCOMMODATION

Single room supplement

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

### EXTRAS

Optional activities, see above for price details

## EQUESTRIAN INFO

## Horses

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Arabs, Anglo-arabs, shagya and eastern Bulgarian horses. All are good-tempered, energetic, forward going and friendly. They are well suited to the mountainous terrain and are well trained. They measure between 150 and 160 cms.

## Guide & local team

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English speaking guides.

Rossen will be your host and guide. He has an excellent knowledge of his country and is a competent guide.

## Minimum riding ability

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### MINIMUM RIDING ABILITY

You should be able to ride at all paces and have a good control over rough terrain. Although the horses are well behaved, this is an athletic and you should be a competent rider.

Rider weight limit is 95kg/14.9 st/209 lbs. If you are over this limit, please contact us.

### PACE

This ride will see you using all 3 paces. Each day, depending on the terrain, weather and general conditions there will be regular trots and canters.

### 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 ascents and descents. Wider roads will allow you to canter and open plains will call out for a gallop.

### EQUESTRIAN EQUIPMENT

Leather saddles. The saddles are large and comfortable (endurance type), perfect for long hours in the saddle. Some of the horses are ridden in bitless bridles. Saddlebags are provided.

Helmets are not provided and you should bring your own. Helmets are mandatory.

## TRAVEL INFO

### COMFORT

Your accommodation throughout the trip will mainly be 2 star or 3 star hotels, most of them offering spa services.

### MEALS

You will have a chance to enjoy local Bulgarian cuisine.

Picnic lunches carried by each rider in their saddlebags or organised by the local team (vegetables, warm soup, BBQ, fruit or sandwiches).

Dinners at local restaurants and at the hotels.

Alcoholic drinks are payable locally but beer is provided with your picnic.

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.

Vegetarian and gluten-free diets can be accommodated - please let us know at the time of booking. Vegan diet can be difficult in rural Bulgaria!

### 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

- Helmets are mandatory 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 - for swimming/bathing in rivers/hot springs

#### 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 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

- Towels - camping ones will both dry and pack more easily
- 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
- Headtorch or small torch for moving around camp at night - bring spare batteries and bulbs
- Water bottle (2 litres or 2 x 1 litre)
- Swiss army knife (or equivalent)
- Field glasses
- Wet Wipes or equivalent (for when washing facilities aren't available)
- Toilet paper and a lighter to burn it with
- 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](#) .