Equus Journeys
HORSEBACK TRAVEL & EQUESTRIAN TRADITIONS SINCE 1972

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Thrace Empire Trail

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**.

Fast Ride	**8 days / 6 days riding**	**From £1,912**	


Thrace Empire trail


An active trail riding holiday in Bulgaria


Thrace Empire trail

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
- This trail is operated by a local family

Day 1 — 1: Sofia - Hisarya

Hotel Chinar

On your arrival in to Sofia, you should arrive between 12 to 4pm. 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 - Zhitnitsa - Approx. 4h riding

Boutique Hotel Trakiets

After breakfast, you will have a walking tour to the remains of a fortress wall, belonging to the ancient Roman town Diocletianopolis - the third largest in the ancient Thrace province.
After the visit, you will be taken to the stables to the meet the horses.
During this morning trail you will ride south, crossing vineyards and passing by lovely lakes. You will stop for a picnic lunch in the meadows near the village of Staro Zhelezare.

In the afternoon, the ride offers plenty of opportunities for canters across the open fields on the way to the village of Zhitnitsa.

Dinner and overnight at the Hotel Trakiets, which offers lovely spa facilities.

Day 3 — 3 : Zhitnitsa - Krasnovo - Approx. 4h riding

Hotel Aqua Termi

Today's ride offers beautiful, long gallops through open meadows, taking you near Pyasachnik artificial lake—the largest in the area—with sweeping panoramic views of the surrounding mountain landscape. In the afternoon, you continue toward the village of Krasnovo, nestled on the southern slopes of the Sredna Gora Mountain.

Dinner and overnight at the Spa Hotel Aqua Termi.

Day 4 — 4: Krasnovo - Koprivshtitsa - Approx. 5h riding

Eagle Stone Hotel

After breakfast, you begin your ride from Krasnovo, passing through rose gardens and gradually climbing into the heart of the mountain. You will stop for lunch at the Buntovna Hut (1180m), located in an old beech forest within the historic area of Konska Polyana, Kulata, and Kanara.

In the afternoon, you continue riding through deep beech woods and across the mountaintop. Eventually, you will reach the area near the town of Koprivshtitsa.

Dinner and overnight at the “Eagle Rock" hotel, which features a swimming pool, hot tub and sauna.

Day 5 — 5: Koprivshtitsa - Panagyurishte - Approx. 3,5h riding

Nomad Cabins

After breakfast, you will ride in the beautiful area of Strelcha. From there, you ascend to the very top of the stunning "Wolf Peak" (1240m), where you’re rewarded with a breathtaking panoramic view of the Upper Thracian Plain and the surrounding mountains.
Lunch is enjoyed at the camping site.

In the afternoon, you leave the horses behind and are transferred by car for a guided visit to the Historical Museum in the town of Panagyurishte. The museum complex includes the renowned vault hall of the Panagyurishte Treasure, along with the Historical Exposition dedicated to the April Uprising.

Dinner and overnight in huts.

For anyone who doesn't want to camp, there is the alternative to stay at hotel Mitiovata kashta.

Day 6 — 6: Panagyurishte - Starosel - Approx. 4,5h riding

Wine & Spa Complex Starosel

During today's trail you will have plenty of opportunities for long canters along rose fields and vineyards.
Around midday, you will stop for a picnic lunch in a cherry garden near the village of Krastevich.

In the afternoon you will ride towards the hotel for the night - Wine & Spa Starosel. Before dinner you can enjoy the spa centre or join a wine tour (not included).

Day 7 — 7: Starosel - Hisarya - Approx. 4h riding

Hotel Chinar

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.

Back in the saddle, today's ride begins with long, exhilarating canters across wide meadows and open fields.
In the afternoon, you will continue the trail through a mix of forests, grassy plains, and lakes, completing a full circle that brings you back to the historic town of Hisarya.

Dinner and overnight at the Spa Hotel Chinar, where you can unwind in the jacuzzi or sauna after your last day in the saddle.

Day 8 — 8: Hisarya - Sofia

After breakfast, you will be driven to Sofia airport to catch your flight back to Europe. Your flight should depart after 11am.

DATES & PRICES

DEPARTURE	RETURN	PRICE WITHOUT FLIGHTS	STATUS
10/04/2027	17/04/2027	£1,912	Open
24/04/2027	01/05/2027	£1,912	Guaranteed departure
08/05/2027	15/05/2027	£1,912	Open
02/10/2027	09/10/2027	£1,912	Guaranteed departure
16/10/2027	23/10/2027	£1,912	Open
30/10/2027	06/11/2027	£1,912	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. €400/£345/$465. 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. €250/£215/$290 in 2026 or €320/£280/$375 in 2027. You will then be reimbursed if a sharer is found for you at a later date.
Please note: Accommodation on day 5 is always shared (triple rooms). It may be possible to arrange an alternative hotel for an extra cost (single or double room - twin rooms are not available). Please contact your advisor for further details.

- Scheduled transfer from Sofia airport are included. The pick up is usually scheduled for 4pm. On the last day you should book a flight departing after 11am. If your flights do not match this schedule private transfers can be arranged at €220/£190/$260 (each way, paid locally, 2026/2027).
Pick ups from hotels cannot be arranged.

- Rider weight limit: 85kgs / 187 lbs / 13.3 st. Depending on the departure, heavier riders may be welcomed provided they are experienced riders, please contact us.

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

- Optional activities (booked and paid locally):

> Wine tasting (D6) - Between €20-€25
> Massages - Between €25-€80
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
2 logistic assistants

INLAND TRANSPORT

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

ACCOMMODATION

Standard spa hotels on a shared room basis

MEALS

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

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT

Saddle bags
First aid kit

EXTRAS

One massage during the week (NOT INLCUDED IN 2027)
Entry fees to sites mentioned in the itinerary

Price doesn't include

MEALS

Beverages and personal extras (spa treatments)
Alcoholic beverages are not included in the price

TRANSPORT

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

ACCOMMODATION

Single room supplement

EXTRAS

Optional activities, see above for price details

EQUESTRIAN INFO

Horses

You will be riding Shagya and pure-bred Arabs, East-Bulgarian breed, and cross-bred with Arab horses. They are very well-trained and spirited, and range between 14.7hh and 16.2hh

Guide & local team

You will be guided by Maria and Vasko. They grew up in the family business and are very familiar with the trails. They look very well after both horses and guests.

Katherina will be around to help with the logistics.

Minimum riding ability

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, you must be a competent rider.

Rider weight limit: 85kgs / 187 lbs / 13.3 st. Depending on the departure, heavier riders may be welcomed provided they are experienced riders, please contact us.

PACE

Each day, depending on the terrain, weather and general conditions there will be regular trots, canters (including longer ones), and even maybe a gallop.

The days spent in the mountain (4 and 5) aren't as active as the others due to the terrain.

TACKING ABILITY AND PARTICIPATION

The team will look after 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.

There are plenty of opportunities for trots, canters and maybe even gallops.

EQUESTRIAN EQUIPMENT

Endurance or Western saddles.
Some of the horses are ridden in bitless bridles.
Saddlebags are provided.

Important: Helmets are not provided but are mandatory.

TRAVEL INFO

COMFORT

Your accommodation throughout the trip will mainly be 3* and 4* hotels, most of them offering spa services.

The night of day 5 is spent in shared rooms of 3-4 people. Bathrooms are shared.

MEALS

You will have a chance to enjoy local Bulgarian cuisine.

Picnic lunches are 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.

Vegetarian and gluten-free diets can usually be accommodated if mentioned in advance - please inform your travel advisor upon booking.

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

Please pack carefully and sensibly: the following guide is here to give you an idea of what to bring. This list must be adapted depending on the season and individual needs.

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

Upper body
- 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
- Swimming costume

Legs
- Lightweight, comfortable riding trousers or jodhpurs
- Casual trousers for the evenings, such as jeans or tracksuit bottoms
- Waterproof over trousers may come in handy depending on the weather

Hands and Feet
- Comfortable riding boots. We recommend short boots with half chaps.
- Waterproof shoes/boots can be useful for abundant dew in the mornings or when it rains
- Trainers or equivalent light shoes for the casual evenings
- Several pairs of warm, thick socks
- Gloves

Nightwear
- Pyjamas

Other useful items
- Bumbag

- Water bottle
- Ear plugs (for light sleepers)

Medical kit
- Any medication you regularly take
- Sunscreen and lip balm - should be high factor
- Insect repellent
- 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 original.

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 .