



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 £1,290	
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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 canter 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 - KOPRIVSHTISTA - Approx 5-6 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 Koprivshitsa. 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. 2.5 hours riding

After breakfast, you will have a short ride outside of the historical town of Koprivshitsa. Lunch at a local restaurant, followed by a tour of the old town of Koprivshitsa. You will get to visit some of the most interesting museums with some free time for a spot of shopping.

The town of Koprivshitsa is located in the heart of the Sredna Gora mountain range at 1060 metres above sea level. It is a town-museum and a unique settlement in Bulgaria, which has preserved over 250 patterns of the Bulgarian Revival Period architecture. Koprivshitsa was once centre of Bulgaria's revolution against the Ottomans. It was here that the first shot of the April Uprising against the Ottoman domination was fired in 1876.

Day 5 — 5 : KOPRIVSHTITSA - STRELCHA - 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 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	PRICE INCLUDING FLIGHTS	STATUS
24/04/2021	01/05/2021	£1,290		Open
22/05/2021	29/05/2021	£1,290		Guaranteed departure
05/06/2021	12/06/2021	£1,290		Open
09/10/2021	16/10/2021	£1,290		Open
16/10/2021	23/10/2021	£1,290		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. €350/£310 for 3 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.
- 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. €160/£140. 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 €100/£85 per person.
- There is a rider weight limit of 100kg/ 15½ st/ 220 lbs - if you weigh more than 100kg and wish to ride, please contact us
- Younger riders aged 12+ can join but they must be accompanied by an adult and meet the riding requirements.
- Additional activities: cultural tour of the Town of Koprivshitsa Architectural and Historical Reserve; 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

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 2*; 3* and 4* 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

Two massages during the week

Price doesn't include

MEALS

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

Private airport transfers outside of normal transfer hours

International flights

EXTRAS

Tips to the local team

Small group supplement. See above for details

Park, museum and other tourist site fees. Yagodina cave 4lev (£1.60) and the Devil's Throat 3lev (£1.20)

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

EXTRAS

Optional activities, see above for price details

EQUESTRIAN INFO

Horses

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.

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, this is an athletic and you should be a competent rider.

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 there will be regular trots and several canter and gallops. There may be some natural jumps for those who wish to try them (optional). The overall pace is 40% walking, 30% trotting and 30% cantering. This proportion can be changed according to the requirements and the abilities of the riders or weather conditions.

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.

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.

GUIDE AND LOCAL TEAM

English speaking guides.

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

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

- Please don't take a hard sided suitcase. Your luggage should be soft sided with a capacity of 60-80 litres. We recommend taking a backpack or similar
- 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

Formalities

British citizens: other nationalities, please contact us.

Visas

If you hold a British Citizen passport, you don't need a visa to enter Bulgaria.

The rules on travel will stay the same until 31 December 2020.

Visas from 1 January 2021

The rules for travelling or working in Europe will change from 1 January 2021:

- you will be able to travel to Bulgaria for up to 90 days in any 180-day period without a visa as a tourist, to visit for family or friends, to attend business meetings, cultural or sports events, or for short-term studies or training.
- as Bulgaria is not within the Schengen area, visits to other EU or Schengen countries will not count towards the 90-day limit
- The 90-day limit for visa-free travel will begin on 1 January 2021. Any days you stay in Bulgaria before 1 January 2021 will not count towards the 90-day limit.

At border control for Bulgaria, you may need to:

- show a return or onward ticket
- show you have enough money for your stay, and
- use separate lanes from EU, EEA and Swiss citizens when queueing
- Your passport may be stamped on entry and exit.

Passport validity

The rules on travel will stay the same until 31 December 2020.

Your passport should be valid for the proposed duration of your stay; you do not need any additional period of validity on your passport beyond this.

Passport validity from 1 January 2021

From 1 January 2021, you must have at least 6 months left on an adult or child passport to travel to most countries in Europe (not including Ireland).

If you renewed your current passport before the previous one expired, extra months may have been added to its expiry date. Any extra months on your passport over 10 years may not count towards the 6 months needed.

Check your passport is valid for travel before you book your trip. You will need to renew your passport before travelling if you do not have enough time left on your passport.

Please visit for the FCO website for up-to-date information - <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/bulgaria/entry-requirements>

ADDRESSES OF CONSULATES

- Amabassade de Bulgarie en France
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Fax : 01 45 51 18 68
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- Ambassade de France en Bulgarie
29 rue Oborichté
1504 Sofia
Tél. : [359] (2) 96 51 100
Fax :
- Ambassade Bulagrie
Avenue Hamoir 58 Avenue Hamoir 58
1180 Uccle , Bruxelles
Tél. : 02/374-59-63, 02/374
Fax : 02/375-84-94
secretary@bulgaria.be
- Ambassade Bulgarie

Bernastrasse 2
3005 Bern
Tél. :
Fax :
bulembassy@bluewin.ch

Health

Bulgaria has a universal healthcare system financed by taxes and contributions. The number of doctors is above the EU average with 181 physicians per 100,000 people but distribution by fields of practice is uneven, there is a severe shortage of nurses and other medical personnel, and the quality of most medical facilities is poor.

Bulgaria ranks 113th globally by average life expectancy, which stands at 73.6 years for both genders.

Insurance

It is a condition of your booking with Equus Journeys that you have travel insurance which covers you for the riding activities to be undertaken. Your travel insurance should cover you for medical expenses and repatriation. Your guides will require your travel insurance details before they allow you to ride and may refuse to let you ride if you cannot provide them. You should take your insurance documents with you.

Voltage

Voltage in bulgaria: 220 V
Frequency in bulgaria: 50 Hz

Budget and money

The lev (Bulgarian: лев, plural: лева, левове / leva, levove) is the currency of Bulgaria. It is divided in 100 stotinki.

Exchange rate on the 19/01/2016 :

£1 = 2,54 BGN

Telephone and jetlag

Code pays = +359
+2 heures UTC/GMT