

Mursalitsa National Park Trail

Weight limit: 90kg
Nearest airport: Sofia
8 days / 7 nights / 6 days riding



Ride through one of the most biodiverse mountain ranges in Europe on a one way, rather than circular ride, meaning that you get to travel further, explore more and finish close to Greece. Explore the hidden valleys and rare rock formations found only in this remote region of pristine lakes, evergreen forests and mountain scenery.

Bulgaria is truly unspoilt and is a destination not to be missed by those wishing to explore lush scenery on fit and forward-going horses.

The Riding

Our partners at this destination have been running riding holidays since the 1990s and offer fantastic riding in the picturesque Bulgarian countryside on board safe and forward going horses. Enjoy long canters across open fields and meadows, riding in all paces each day on

varied terrain. This is a thickly forested landscape with an abundance of rivers, lakes and mineral springs that are rich in plant and animal life.

Level of riding and fitness

This trail is suitable for riders from confident intermediate riders upwards. All participants should be in control at all paces out in the open and over varied terrain. You will be spending between 4-6 hours in the saddle each day so a good level of current riding fitness is required.



Guides & Group sizes

Departure dates are confirmed for 2 riders. The maximum number of riders in a group is 8. You'll be guided by the company owner, Bogdan. An experienced vet and guide, Bogdan speaks perfect English and possesses an extensive knowledge of the region as well as the horses.

Horses and Tack

The horses are the pride and joy of our partners in Bulgaria. They are much loved and well looked after. Their horses are Trakehners, Shagya Arabs and Eastern Bulgarian horses, ranging from 14.3hh to 16.1hh. They are responsive, willing and surefooted on difficult terrain.

The tack used on this trail is English style, mostly made by Wintec, and in good condition.



Accommodation & Dining

The accommodation during the trail is in simple, clean and comfortable hotels and guesthouses. Single rooms are available for a supplement.

During the trail riders can enjoy the fresh, local cuisine. Breakfasts and dinners are served in overnight accommodations and lunches are on route picnics or alternatively a packed lunch carried in your saddle bags. On two of the riding days you will have lunch at a local bar. Expect hearty local meat and cheeses and the chance to try several traditional dishes. Bread is served with every meal and vegetarians and other dietary requirements can be catered for. Dinners in the evenings are always three courses starting with a salad.



Itinerary

Day 1

Arrival and transfer from Sofia airport to Plovdiv, a city which is considered to be the cultural capital of Bulgaria and is more than 8000 years old. Plovdiv features the remains of a civilisation older than Rome itself and is a contemporary of ancient Troy. Your holiday begins with a tour of the old town of Plovdiv, including a visit to the Ethnographic Museum and the antique theatre, one of the best-preserved in the world. Dinner and overnight at a local hotel where you can get to know your fellow riders.

Day 2

After breakfast you will be transferred to the stables (40 minute drive) where you will be paired with a suitable horse. Today's ride will take you to the village of Orehovo which is around 500 years old. From here starts the longest eco-trail in Bulgaria, ending close to the Aegean sea.

The route today offers stunning views of the Sredni Livadi protected area and a gentle pace while you get to know your horse. The ride will also take you through the old Roman road

passing ancient chapels and hedgerows bursting with wildflowers. Stop for lunch at a restaurant overlooking the rare 'Wonderful Bridges' rock formations.

Dinner and overnight in a 3* family hotel.

Approximate riding time: 4 hours.



Day 3

After a hearty breakfast you will saddle up and make for the village of Zabyrdo, a small mountain village standing at 1400m above sea level which is famous for its production of traditional Rhodope cheese. Lunch today is at a beauty spot with a unique panoramic view stretching across the border into Greece. After lunch continue riding through the 'Ilinden' meadows, where the biggest bagpipe festival of the Balkans takes place each year.

Dinner and overnight at a local guesthouse

Approximate riding time: 5 hours 30 min

Day 4

Today you will ride towards one of the so-called "Rhodope Pearls", an architectural and folklore reserve! The charming village of Shiroka Laka is known for its cobblestone streets and intriguing bazaars. Reaching the village on horseback is like an adventure from the 19th century.

Dinner and overnight in a family guesthouse.

Approximate riding time: 6 hours.



Day 5

Today you will ride into the heart of the Mursalitsa national park, in the morning visiting Devil's Throat Cave, a spectacular sight before riding towards the village of Trigrad where you will see the Trigrad Gorge, a canyon made of vertical marble rocks. Today you will pass between some of the most beautiful natural lakes in the region - formed by the sliding of glaciers during the Ice Age. You will also pass by the Drunken Forest where the trees grow in all directions. Lunch today is in a small, friendly bar within a traditional village.

Overnight tonight in an authentic traditional family owned hotel

Approximate riding time: 6 hours.

Day 6

After today's breakfast you will ride back towards the village of Gela, covering the same stunning route as yesterday but in reverse. There is time to explore the Chairi Lakes on foot, you

can step out across the old walkways for a peek into the clear waters before stopping for lunch at the same bar as yesterday.

Dinner and overnight in a family-run guesthouse in Gela
Approximate riding time: 6 hours.

Day 7

This is the last riding day and you'll begin with a ride on the famous panoramic road leading to Mount Snezhanka. This path will take you to almost 2200m above sea level, to the foot of the Snezhanka Tower which overlooks the winter ski slopes. Enjoy a final lunch in the tower restaurant before taking in the views from the top - a 360 degree vista revealing the beauty of all the Rhodopes and even parts of the Aegean Sea. After lunch you will be transferred back to Plovdiv (2 hours drive) with a stop to visit the Baachkovoone monastery, one of the oldest in Bulgaria.

Dinner and overnight in a local hotel
Approximate riding time: 4 hours.



Day 8

After breakfast it is time to say goodbye and head back to Sofia airport (approximately 3 hours drive).

International flights & Airport transfers

Do not book flights until you have received the Booking confirmation email from saddletravel.com.

Riders can fly into Sofia or Plovdiv. The trail starts in Plovdiv but most guests fly to Sofia as there are a lot of flights into and out of the capital city.

Transfers are included from the two airports at set times. You should ideally arrive into Sofia no later than 16:00, in order to allow time for sightseeing in Plovdiv. On departure day your flight should not leave Sofia before 12:00.

If you are coming into Plovdiv instead then please contact us for timings.

What to bring

We recommend wearing your riding boots when travelling and carrying one set of riding clothing and your helmet in your hand luggage, so should your luggage not make it to the destination you'll still be able to ride.

Please use the packing list as a guideline, bearing in mind the time of year you are riding.

- Your own well-fitted hard hat
- Comfortable jodhpurs or riding trousers
- Riding / hiking boots with good grip
- Chaps
- Riding gloves
- Long sleeved T-shirts to protect against the sun
- Warm layer such as fleece or woollen jumper
- Water- and windproof coat
- Swimwear
- Comfortable clothes for the evening
- Light weight shoes for after riding
- Sun cream & lip balm
- Sunglasses & sunhat
- Plug adapter
- Copy of your travel insurance
- Personal medication



Climate

This region of Bulgaria has a mild climate and is influenced both by the colder air coming from the north and by the warmer breeze from the Mediterranean. April and October have average daytime temperatures of 18-19°C with cooler nights at 6-8°C. Between May-September the temperature is normally between 22°C and 30°C during the day and above 10°C at night. Summer months tend to be mostly sunny with occasional showers in the afternoons.

Health

For health and vaccine recommendations, please consult your healthcare provider at least 8 weeks before your trip.

Country specific information can also be found at National Travel Health Network and Centre website: <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>.

Travel documents

For entry requirements to Bulgaria for UK citizens, please visit the Foreign Travel Advice website:

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/bulgaria>

For any other nationalities, please contact your local embassy to check entry requirements.

Having the correct travel documents is entirely your responsibility.

Currency & Tipping

The local currency in Bulgaria is Bulgarian Lev. Your holiday is fully inclusive so we recommend not bringing too much local currency, just enough for buying drinks outside of mealtimes and souvenirs.

Tipping your guide is at your discretion.

Cancellation policy

Payment & Cancellation Terms

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Holidays are confirmed with a 20% non-refundable deposit. The full balance is due 56 days before the start date.

If you cancel your booking less than 56 days before the start date of your trail we are entitled to receive full payment, less refunds as follows:

42 days or more before booking date - 50%

30 days or more - 30%

less than 30 days - nil

Insurance

All saddletravel.com customers are required to take out appropriate travel insurance that covers horse riding and holiday cancellation. Proof of insurance details will be required during the booking process.

Contact details

+44 1497 888 228 WhatsApp
trails@saddletravel.com

saddletravel.com
27 Old Gloucester Street,
London,
WC1N 3AX

CN: 05411320
saddletravel.com

