

HOLIDAY PEARLS COLLECTION

THE BEST OF TRADITIONAL BULGARIAN HOSPITALITY

Welcome to Bulgaria

If, while planning your holiday, you ask yourself: Should I visit Bulgaria?, there is a very simple answer: “Bulgaria is a beautiful country, with majestic mountains, sandy beaches, picturesque villages, good food, and hospitable people”. These words come from Iowa-born Israeli writer Ellis Shuman, written for The Huffington Post. For the last two years the writer himself lives in our country.

Bulgaria came into existence in 681. Many different people have lived in and traversed these lands through the centuries and have left a lasting imprint. Bulgaria boasts a wealth of historical monuments, of caves and rocks, mountains, lakes, rivers and sea.

It would be difficult to enumerate all the places a visit to Bulgaria could include to provide both recreation and entertainment. To help you envision your stay, we propose the following **five-day** schedule which covers some of the options for a lovely holiday in Bulgaria.

HERITAGE AND WINE PACKAGE

DAY ONE

You will be met at Sofia Airport by our representative (English- and German-speaking), and will be transferred to the town of Velingrad located at a distance of one hundred and thirty kilometers (1.5 hours). Modern mini-buses will be used.

Arrival at the five-star Villa Vuchev in Velingrad.

Villa Vuchev is an elegant, uniquely-styled five-star villa that exudes comfort with its tastefully furnished comfortable rooms in Velingrad, Bulgaria.



Upon your arrival you will be welcomed by the hospitable hosts. They will show you around the facilities and help you feel at home in the room of your choice.

Once you have settled in, our kind hosts will greet you with a glass of wine, refreshing drinks and seasonal fruit.



Enjoy wonderful afternoons in the villa's courtyard. The exquisitely landscaped grass plots and abundant flowers, the heated outdoor pool and jacuzzi and the lounge area outside will serve as a good starting point to an unforgettable stay.



A glass of sparkling wine, beer and soft drinks next to the roaring outdoor fireplace will help you break free from daily stress.



17:30 – 19:30 – A walk in downtown Velingrad

Villa Vuchev is located in one of the most beautiful places in Bulgaria – the town of Velingrad. Nestled in the Chepin valley in the western portion of the Rhodope Mountains, the town enjoys a mountain climate – cool summers and mild winters. Velingrad is among the sunniest Bulgarian towns, boasting clear skies all year round.



The region of Velingrad abounds in water resources – rivers, karst and mineral springs. Some of Bulgaria's biggest hot springs are concentrated in Velingrad. The mineral springs

(numbering almost 80), the mild climate and the stunning vistas are the city's wealth. Velingrad is a major spa resort, having gained the reputation of the "Spa capital of the Balkans".



Free time for strolling along Velingrad's central pedestrian zone.



20:00 – Dinner at the 5* Villa Vuchev

Yours hosts will be waiting by the splendid dinner table laden with dishes prepared with natural, regionally-selected products. Different Bulgarian red wines and Bulgarian grape rakia are included in the menu.



Take advantage of the villa's amenities in order to recharge and prepare for the next interesting day.



DAY TWO

8:00 – Breakfast at the villa

A rich breakfast will be ready and waiting and will include:

Tea, espresso, mineral table water, fruit juices, yoghurt, 4-5 varieties of natural jams, white brine cheese, natural honey, home-made banitsa/pancakes/ homemade mekitsi/French toast/ and other delicious treats.

10:00 – A visit to Plovdiv's Old Town

You are on the Balkan Peninsula, in a town sprawled over several hills and along a river, a town with many names and many faces. This is Plovdiv, located on the crossroads of the West and East, in fertile Thrace, where history and the present go hand in hand, where culture and art have always thrived, from ancient days to present days in a colourful diversity of forms, styles and hues.



Unique, ancient, fascinating, artistic, spiritual and provocative – this is Plovdiv today.



Immerse yourself in the magic of the Old Town – its architecture, museums and picture galleries.



13:00 – Lunch at the unique Hebros restaurant in Old Town, Plovdiv.

HEBROS Hotel and Restaurant is located in a house dating from the Bulgarian Renaissance – built around 200 years ago by an affluent Plovdiv fabric and leather merchant.



The restaurant is winner of the Restaurant of the Year Award for 2003 awarded by Bacchus Magazine and remains one of the finest in the country. The menu includes gourmet dishes from Bulgarian national and international cuisine prepared with fresh seasonal products.



Wine tasting is also on the menu, led by experienced sommeliers and combined with suitable dishes. The restaurant is also an established scene for prominent musicians and artists.



14:00 - Visit Bessa Valley wine cellar.

Visit the valley of the Bessi and enjoy the taste of Enira wine.



Tour the winery and get acquainted with the wine-making process. Taste different wines and sorts under the guidance of a professional sommelier.



16:30 – Leisurely walk to Chepino district

Visit Kleptuza lake – the symbol of Velingrad .

The largest karst spring in Bulgaria – Kleptuza – is located on the right bank of Chepinska River, by the mountain slope of Chepino residential district. The spring waters fill two beautiful artificial ponds serving as one of the most popular recreation and relaxation spots in the resort for guests and residents alike.

Pedalos are on offer and the ponds are surrounded by a scenic park housing several restaurants. The St Petka chapel is located above the lakes, at a brief walking distance.



18:30 – Recharge at Vuchev Villa spa centre

After your busy day, the sauna and indoor jacuzzi at the Villa's spa centre will provide the perfect way to relax before night-fall. We can also provide a professional masseuse at your request.





20:00 – Dinner at Rodopsko Selo Restaurant

The restaurant serves Bulgarian national cuisine and local Rhodope specialties. The wine list offers an extensive selection to be enjoyed under the sounds of the lively folk music programme.



22:00 – A nightcap before the fireplace

Take a glass of red wine by the cosy fireplace in the garden of 5* Vuchev Villa



DAY THREE

8:00 – Breakfast at the Villa

A rich breakfast will be ready and waiting and will include:

Tea, espresso, mineral table water, fruit juices, yoghurt, 4-5 varieties of natural jams, white brine cheese, natural honey, home-made banitsa/pancakes/ homemade mekitsi/French toast/ and other delicious treats.



10:00 – Trip to Dorkovo Vilage:

Medieval Tsepina Fortress and its museum.

The first written records of Tsepina Fortress date from 1220. This source is a grant certificate (Sigillion) issued by Despot Alexius Slav to the St. Bogoroditsa Monastery in Melnik. Currently the certificate is kept at the Vatopedi Monastery in Mount Athos (Holly Mountain) The Certificate mentions that Alexius Slav's residence was located in Tsepina and thereafter in Melnik.



Pliocene park – travel five million years back to the lost world of mastodons.



Sv Prorok Ilia Church in the village of Dorkovo



12:30 – Lunch at the 5* Vuchev Villa

A light lunch will await you at the Villa, prepared with environmentally clean, carefully selected regional products.

13:30 – Departure from Vuchev Villa to the town of Karlovo



16:00 – Reception at the Zoev House in Karlovo

Authenticity and style since 1871.

The Zoev House Complex is located in the Old Town, in the heart of Karlovo. The complex was built in 1871 and is a cultural monument of national significance. Restored and brought to its former glamour while preserving its original atmosphere, the complex combines the romantic presence of an era long gone with all modern amenities.



20:00 – Dinner in the sophisticated salon with its unique carved wooden ceiling and authentic furniture.



DAY FOUR

8:00 - Breakfast

Continental breakfast served in the dining room of The Zoev House



10:00 – Visit to the Thracian Tomb in Kazanlak

This is a vaulted-brickwork tomb near the town of Kazanlak, part of a large Thracian [necropolis](#) located close to the ancient Sevtopolis capital of the Odrysian Kingdom. The monument dates back to the end of the 4th century BCE – beginning of 3rd century BCE and has been on the UNESCO Protected World Heritage Site list since 1979.

It owes its world-wide fame to its unique murals in the corridor and the round burial chamber – some of the best preserved artistic masterpieces from the Early Hellenistic period.



The walls of the narrow brick corridor (dromos) and the burial chamber are covered in picturesque frescos with an area of 40 m². These reveal different aspects of the earthly, military and after life of the Thracian chieftain laid to rest inside.



13:00 – Lunch at the Copsa Chateau.

The oldest traces of inhabitation found in the Copsa Valley (Karlovo) date from the Neolithic age.

Wines from the Rose Valley preserving the Thracian spirit.

The art of wine-making is a legacy from Ancient Thracians. As part of their cult to Dionysius they grew vines and mastered the skill of preparing the holy elixir.



The new spirit – inspired by the history of these lands and the rich atmosphere of the Rose Valley, the tradition continues, following the main principle that good wine can only be made from properly looked-after vines.



16:00 – Departure for Bulgaria’s capital – Sofia.

18:00 - Arrival at the Casa Boyana Boutique Hotel.

The charming Casa Boyana Boutique Hotel is located close to the Boyana church in a picturesque residential area, at a mere 10-minute drive from the centre of Sofia. The hotel offers a cosy, intimate atmosphere. The rooms open to a majestic view to Vitosha Mountain and downtown Sofia.



20.00 – Dinner at the hotel restaurant.

The elegant restaurant serves first-class dishes a la carte. The menu has been approved by the Culinary Institute of Modena – Italy and comprises Mediterranean, Italian and international specialties.



DAY FIVE

8:00 - Breakfast

A wide variety of breakfast options served in the restaurant of Casa Boyana Boutique Hotel.

9:30 - A stroll in downtown Sofia



Sofia is one of the oldest European capitals. Its history can be traced back to the Neolithic era. Traces from several Neolithic dwellings have been found on its territory (in the vicinity of today's Palace and present-day Slatina district) which date back to 5000 BCE.

The Thracian town which came to be known as Serdonpolis or Serdika emerged in the 7th century BCE to the north of the warm mineral spring in the vicinity of today's Vladaia river. For a brief period of time during the 4th century BCE the town was controlled by Philip II, and thereafter by his son Alexander of Macedon.

The most noteworthy places to visit in Sofia:

Church	Description	Photo
St. George early 4 th century	The church was erected over the foundations of several older churches dating from the period of the Roman town of Serdika and destroyed by the raids of Goths and Huns. In the 2 nd century a Roman theatre stood in the same location and several temples were erected consecutively. The church is a cross-dome three-nave basilica with three-walled apse and parvis.	
Boyana Church 10 th century	The Boyana church of Saints Nicola and Panteleymon is a medieval Bulgarian church located in the district of Boyana at the foot of Vitosha mountain. Built as a court chapel for the local feudal ruler, it is one of the cultural symbols of	

	Bulgaria and is a UNESCO world heritage site since 1979.	
Sveti Sedmochislenitsi Church 1528	The Sveti Sedmochislenitsi Church is a Bulgarian Orthodox church in the capital, located in the small courtyard between Tsar Ivan Shishman, Graf Ignatiev, 6 th September and General Parensov streets. Remains of an older Christian temple dating from the 5 th -6 th century were uncovered during excavations in 1901, as well as remains from an even older construction - temple of Asclepius. The building was converted into a church between 1901 and 1903 and inaugurated on 27 th July 1903.	
St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral 1912 година	The St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral with its gold-plated domes was built in the beginning of the 20 th century in memory of the 200 000 Russian, Ukrainian, Belarus and Bulgarian soldiers who perished in the Russo-Turkish war. It is one of the largest Eastern Orthodox churches in the world. The cathedral rises to a height of 45 m, with the bell tower reaching 50, 52 m.	
Church of St. Paraskeva 1930	The church of St. Paraskeva is an Orthodox temple located at 58, Georgi Rakovski Street. The church is dedicated to the Bulgarian female saint Petka of Bulgaria, also known as Paraskeva. It is the third largest church in the capital. The construction of the church was	

	complete by 1930, but the finishing works did not cease until 1940.	
The Holy Sunday Church (Sveta Nedelya) 1863	The Holy Sunday Church (Sveta Nedelya) is a medieval church which has suffered destruction through the ages and has been reconstructed many times. The church was razed in 1925 in one of a series of notorious assaults which claimed over 150 lives.	
St. Petka of the Saddlers 11th century	The church (chapel) is small, located in the centre of the city and dates back from the 11th century although the crypt is much older which means that there was a previous ritual structure in the same location. The church is dedicated to St. Petka of Iconia, patron of saddlers (saddle-makers) who, in the Middle Ages, populated the area around the church. The church is a small, single-nave structure partially dug into the ground.	

Church of St Nicholas the Miracle-Maker (Sv. Nikolay Chudotvorets) 1914	The Church of St Nicholas the Miracle-Maker, popular as the Russian church, is an Orthodox church in the capital of Bulgaria, one of the symbols of the city. Built in 1914 in honour of the Russian king Nicholas II of Russia. The architectural style of the church was inspired by the traditions of Russian church architecture of the 19th century. The crypt houses the remains of Saint Archbishop Seraphim Sobolev, regarded by many Orthodox Christians as a miracle-maker.	
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The capital is also the home of numerous galleries and museums. The National Museum of History is the largest museum in Bulgaria and among the biggest in Europe. The National Ethnographic Museum and the National Art Gallery are located in the centre of the city, in the building of the former royal palace. The National Museum of Natural History at the Bulgarian Academy of Science is the richest natural science museum on the Balkans, dating from 1889. Other popular museums are the National Gallery for Foreign Art, National Museum of Military History, the Institute and Museum of Archeology, Sofia Arsenal-Museum for Contemporary Art (SAMCA) and the Museum of Socialist Art.



The National Palace of Culture (NDK) is a large building in the centre of Sofia, used mainly for concerts and other cultural events. It is visited by close to 1 600 000 people per year.



Sofia Mineral Baths are also located in the centre of the city, built in the beginning of the 20th century in the place of an old Turkish bath.



St. Sofia is the statute rising in the centre of Sofia.



Depending on flight times, transfer to Sofia Airport.

