WALKING TOURS of BULGARIA

Guided hiking tours
Self-guided walking tours
Snow-shoeing tours
Centre-based walking programmes
One-day walking tours from Sofia

TRAVENTURIA Ltd.
www.bulgariawalking.com
TRAVENTURIA Ltd. is an expert agent on adventure tours in Bulgaria, covering the whole range of guided and self-guided hiking, snowshoeing and mountain trekking holidays in the Rila, Pirin, Balkan, Rhodope and Vitosha mountains. The company specializes in offering individual solutions and aims to provide excellent quality at optimum prices, combining a deeply professional approach, flexibility and know-how.

Certificates of Excellence by TripAdvisor for four years in a row (2012-2015) top the progress of our company through the years.

**WHY BOOK WITH TRAVENTURIA?**

**Outstanding reputation**
Check what TripAdvisor says about us... and for our competitors.

**Choice**
We offer the biggest variety of guided and self-guided hiking tours in Bulgaria.

**Unbeatable value for money**
Be sure you will get the right cost for your holiday.

**Flexibility**
All programs can be additionally tailored to meet your needs.

**Local experts**
Expert staff in the office and expert guides in the field.

**Outstanding customer service**
We won’t keep you waiting for an informative answer more than 24hrs.

**Emergency support**
We know what 24/7 means.

**Quality accommodation**
Clean and friendly hotels and family pensions with en-suite rooms.

**Reliable luggage transfers**
No damages or left behind luggage.
On time and always there for you.

**All ground transfers included**
No need to use public transportation on any of our hiking tours.

**Financial security**
Traventuria is fully bonded tour operator and holds tour operators license No PK-01-6434.

**Transparency**
Transparent and swift booking process.

**Group discounts**
Hiking clubs, families or groups of friends - try our offer first.

**Loyalty scheme**
Repeat customers? Just let us know during the booking process.

**Responsible travel adoptions**
Small groups, no wild camping, transfer vehicles with low carbon emissions, respecting wildlife and respect for cultural values, using suppliers from local communities, sustainable practices for use of natural resources, close cooperation with WWF-Bulgaria, Balkan Wildlife Society, Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation etc.
OUR TRAIL DIFFICULTY RATINGS

We have tried to categorize the day-by-day difficulty of our hiking tours using the below outline. Please consider these before booking a certain holiday, making sure that you will be able to handle and enjoy all walks.

Time spent on walking only is mentioned above and inside the tour descriptions; it does not include stops for pictures, picnics, breaks etc.; this is based on an average hiker’s speed of 4-5km/2,5-3miles per hour on flat terrain, additional 30min for each 300m/1000ft elevation gain, and a backpack weighing not more than 10-15% of your body weight. Rocky stages, group size, hikers’ fitness etc. may additionally affect this time.

Easy:
Treks over low mountains or relatively flat terrains. Daily walking: up to 3-4hrs and/or up to 15km/9,5miles. Climbing/descending: 100-400m/330-1300ft per day.

Moderate:
Treks over varied terrain, but generally below the tree line. Short steep stages might be present. Daily walking: up to 5hrs and/or up to 20km/12,5miles. Climbing/descending: 400-800m/1300-2600ft per day.

Difficult:
Treks, starting and ending normally below the tree line but going in-between in the high alpine zones above 2000m a.s.l. Suitable for fit hikers. Steep stages might be a bit longer and strenuous. Daily walking: up to 6-7hrs and/or up to 25km/15,5miles. Climbing/descending: 800-1000m/2600-3300ft per day.

Challenging:
Treks for experienced and/or very fit hikers, tracing most of the time high alpine terrains, and covering not too long but rather strenuous routes. Daily walking: up to 7-8hrs and/or up to 25km/15,5miles. Climbing/descending: 1000-1300m/3300-4250ft per day.
Enjoy Bulgaria's most picturesque alpine treks, climbing the Balkans' tallest summits: Musala (2925m/9596ft) in the Rila and Vihren (2914m/9560ft) in the Pirin. Our route crosses huge national parks with broad alpine meadows and serrated summits, glacier lakes, stone rivers, encountering rare plant and animal life. The programme includes a visit of the Rila Monastery, listed by UNESCO and one of Bulgaria's best-known sights.

The treks are rather arduous and suited to very fit people experienced in alpine walking. The programme is based in two centres (one each in the Pirin and the Rila), allowing the routes to be additionally adapted to group specifics, and to be undertaken with only a small backpack with a day's supplies of water, food, and clothing. There are sufficient alternative routes in case of bad weather.
ITINERARY
Day 1: We meet you at Sofia Airport and transfer you to Bansko at the foot of Mount Pirin.
Day 2: Chair cable car to the Bezbog Hut. This is the setting-off point for the trek to the Polezhan Summit (2851m/9354ft) which offers one of the most beautiful panoramas in the Pirin, over 17 stunning glacier lakes, including the largest Popovo Lake (30m/100ft deep). (6hrs of walking; 8km/5miles; climbing and descending 650m/2100ft.)
Day 3: Today, we visit one of the most picturesque parts of the Pirin: the Bandershki Lakes Cirque. The trek through the Todorna Porta takes us directly to the Yulen Nature Reserve, from where, by way of the Todorini Ochi Lakes, we descend into virgin fir groves to the Demyanitsa Hut. From here, we follow a shady path along the Demyanitsa River. (6-7hrs of walking; 16km/10miles; climbing 700m/2300ft and descending 1100m/3650ft)
Day 4: The idea today is to climb Vihren: Bulgaria’s second-highest and the Pirin’s highest summit. Breathtaking views offer themselves to us as we climb through the Golem Kazan (The Giant Cauldron) area bounded by the 400m/1300ft tall northern face of Vihren. Today you will explore the Karst parts of Pirin, which are also home to the endangered Edelweiss, the elusive Wallcreeper and the shy Balkan Chamois (wild goats). (6-7hrs of walking; 9km/5.5miles; climbing and descending 1000m/3300ft.)
Day 5: We bid farewell to Pirin and set off for Rila. Our first stop is the Rila Monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This is the most famous and largest Christian monastery in Bulgaria. The exceptional frescoes in the central church form a gallery of masterpieces of Renaissance art and could be considered a Bulgarian analogue of the frescoes of the Sistine chapel. Hence, we proceed to the Panichishte Resort, where we visit the Skakavitsa Waterfall (70m/230ft) before supper. (3-4hrs of walking; 7km/4.5miles; climbing and descending 300m/950ft.)
Day 6: We go by cable car to the foot of the Seven Rila Lakes Cirque. Trekking past the Lakes (each named after their most characteristic feature, like The Kidney Lake, The Twin Lake, The Trefoil Lake etc.), we continue along the crest where we enjoy further stunning views towards the Urdini and Elenski Lakes and the Rila Monastery in its deep valley beneath us. Passing the Malyovitsa Summit (2729m/9000ft, know as the cradle of Bulgarian rock climbing and mountaineering), we descend into the valley of the same name and settle into a family hotel at the village of Govedartsi for two nights. (3hrs of walking; 18km/11miles; climbing 800m/2600ft and descending 1200m/3960ft)
Day 7: Today, we climb the Balkans’ highest summit: Musala (2925m/2596ft). A cable car takes us from the Borovets Resort to the setting-off point for the trek. The serrated wall of Musala never leaves our sight as we ascend through stone rivers and past glacier lakes and alpine huts. The genuinely impressive view from the peak to the surrounding mountains offers a deserving end to the whole adventure. As we celebrate with a cup of fragrant herbal tea, we can enjoy the summits of all major mountain ranges in Bulgaria – Balkan, Sredna Gora, Vitosha, Rhodopes, Pirin and of course – Rila. (6hrs of walking; 13km/8miles; climbing and descending 750m/2460ft.)
Day 8: Transfer from Govedartsi to Sofia Airport.

DATES AND PRICES:
visit our website for further information: www.bulgariawalking.com
Private departures: welcome anytime between mid-June and mid-September; contact us for a quote
Group size on scheduled departures: 4-12 pers.
Difficulty grade: Difficult/Challenging
Hiking specifics (per day): check the itinerary
Price includes: three-star and family hotels; rooms with en-suite facilities; breakfast and supper; transfers from and to Sofia Airport (on first/last four days only) and all other transfers in the itinerary; English-speaking mountain guide; cable car tickets, and all local taxes.
Price does not include: museum entrance fees; extra food and drink; mountain maps; travel/medical insurance.
A TREK ACROSS THE RHODOPES, PIRIN, RILA AND VITOSHA

A well balanced programme with trekking routes of half-day (or shorter), easy to moderate walks, offering more opportunities to visit also culture sites. The stress is on the Rhodope Mountains (famed birthplace of mythical musician Orpheus), Mount Pirin (arguably Bulgaria’s most beautiful mountain), Mount Rila (housing more than 200 glacial lakes and the highest peak on the Balkans - Musala, 2925m/9596ft) and Mount Vitosha (the preferred escape of Sofianites). Famous sites of cultural importance are also included: Koprivshtitsa (housing well-preserved architecture from the Revival Period), Plovdiv (the second biggest town in Bulgaria), Bachkovo Monastery, Rila Monastery (UNESCO), Shiroka Laka etc. An exceptional kaleidoscope of beautiful caves, deep gorges, alpine meadows, glacier lakes, monasteries, and museum villages with authentic old-time architecture, traditional cuisine and hospitality.

The hiking programme is moderately difficult and designed for people who would not be comfortable on very long and tiring treks, who would yet like to savour the best the landscape and local culture have to offer. Steep but short stages also occur along the trails.

ITINERARY
Day 1: Meet up at Sofia Airport and transfer to the museum town of Koprivshtitsa.
Day 2: Explore the cobblestone alleys and the National Revival houses of Koprivshtitsa. Transfer to Plovdiv and sightseeing tour in the Old Quarters. Visit to Bachkovo Monastery. Explore the stone houses of Kosovo village and stay there for the night.
Day 3: Transfer further deep to the heart of the Rhodopes. Ramble in the architectural reserve Shiroka Laka village, presenting some of the best examples of the local mountain houses. Hike along the adventurous eco-path, weaving on wooden bridges over Devinska River. Have a traditional dinner with local family in the rustic village of Lyaskovo. Overnight in Devin.
Day 4: A tour inside Yagodinska Peshtera Cave to enjoy its unique formations. Hiking over the hills with their smallholdings, on to a thick fir forest right to the edge of the Trigradsko Zhdrelo Gorge and its 300m high vertical cliffs. Overnight in the village of Trigrad.
Day 5: Transfer to Bansko at the foot of Pirin National Park. Hiking through the pretty Cirque of the Banderishki Lakes. Rest on the lakes’ shores and enjoy the serenity of the rocky outcrops around them. Dinner in a traditional tavern and overnight in Bansko.
Day 6: Chairlift ride to the Pirin’s greenest parts near the Bezbog Hut. Picturesque walk to the largest and deepest of all lakes in Pirin – Popovo Lake. Time in the afternoon to explore the cobble streets of Bansko or maybe try some of the local thermal SPAs. Overnight in Bansko.
Day 7: Transfer to the impressive Rila Monastery – UNESCO heritage listed site and one of the most famous tourist attractions in Bulgaria. Continue to the Cirque of The Seven Rila Lakes, reached by a charilift. Loop hike among the glacier lakes and transfer to Sofia for last dinner and overnight.
Day 8: Depending on your flight time: transfer to Sofia Airport in the morning, or a hiking tour to Vitosha Mountains (including circular hike to the local summit of Cherni Vrah (The Black Peak – 2290m/7513ft) and late afternoon transfer to Sofia Airport.

DATES AND PRICES:
visit our website for further information: www.bulgariawalking.com

Private departures: welcome anytime between mid-June and end of September; contact us for a quote
Group size on scheduled departures: 4-12 pers.
Difficulty grade: Moderate
Hiking specifics (per day): 2-4hrs of walking, routes of 5-10km/3-6miles, climbing and descending 100-500m/330-1650ft;
Price includes: three-star and family hotels; rooms with en-suite facilities; breakfast and supper; transfers from and to Sofia Airport (on first/last tour days only) and all other transfers in the itinerary; English-speaking guide; cable car tickets, and all local taxes.

Price does not include: entrance fees; extra food and drink; mountain maps; travel/medical insurance; spa procedures.
THE GREAT TRIAD – THREE SUMMITS, THREE MOUNTAINS

This is probably the most challenging of all guided hiking tours we run. Within a week time you will be able to climb the giants of the three most notorious mountains in Bulgaria – Rila (Mt. Musala, 2925m/9596ft, being also the highest on the Balkan Peninsula), Pirin (Mt. Vihren, 2914m/9560ft) and the Balkan Mountains (Mt. Botev – 2376m/7795ft). Incidentally these three summits are located in the territory of the three national parks in Bulgaria and along with their purely hiking merits you will have the opportunity to enjoy stunning panoramas, unique nature phenomena, diverse and rare flora and fauna. Carefully chosen and scenic walking routes will allow you to explore on foot the best of Bulgarian mountains and test your personal stamina.

Very difficult/challenging itinerary for really fit hikers with previous experience in mountain trekking. There are no acclimatization or preparation walks planned in this itinerary, so please do your best to get in shape prior departure in order to fully enjoy the climbs and the majestic beauty of the three summits.

ITINERARY
Day 1: Meet up at Sofia Airport and transfer to the town of Plovdiv – one of the oldest settlements in Europe and the second biggest in Bulgaria. Time permitting we can tour the old quarters before dinner.
Day 2: Transfer to the trailhead at the foots of the Balkan Mountains. Hike up through the mighty beauty of The Southern Dzhendem Reserve, all the way to the Rai (Heaven) Hut. The latter is located just below the highest waterfall on the Balkan Peninsula (The Heavenly Waterfall, 125m/410ft). Overnight stay in Rai Hut.
Day 3: Follow The Tarzan’s Trail towards Mt. Botev. Sheer slopes, lush green meadows and vertical rock faces will be accompanying us on our way to the highest peak in the Balkan Mountains. Long descend back to the transfer vehicle for a ride to the Rila Mountains and the village of Govedartsi – our base for the next three nights.
Day 4: Hiking trek to one of the most eminent parts of the Rila Mountains – The Seven Rila Lakes. Start along a shady path through a dense spruce forest, which will bring us up in the alpine zone of the mountain. The views from the highest lake to the lakes below us and the ridges around, are impressive.
Day 5: Target today is Mt. Musala – the highest peak on the Balkans. A cabin lift ride from Borovets resort will bring us to the trail head. The jagged massif of Musala will be enjoyed during the whole trip as we walk through rocky cirques, glacial lakes and mountain refuges on our way to the top. And the views from there will be really rewarding!
Day 6: Relaxing day, devoted to visiting the most famous tourist attraction in Bulgaria – Rila Monastery. In the afternoon we reach Bansko – our base for two nights. We can opt for the local thermal SPAs just before dinner in a traditional „mehana“ (tavern).
Day 7: Transfer to Vihren Hut for an ascent of the local giant – Mount Vihren, the second highest peak in Bulgaria. A scenic path goes steeply up to the Golyam Kazan (The Big Cauldron) cirque, bounded by the dramatic 400m/1320ft high north wall of Mount Vihren. After a strenuous climb, we reach the peak and enjoy the breath-taking view of the surrounding mountains.
Day 8: Transfer to Sofia Airport for departure.

DATES AND PRICES:
this tour is organized on a private basis anytime during the period mid-June – mid-September; rates vary depending on the group size; contact us for a quote or visit www.bulgariawalking.com for further information;
Difficulty grade: Difficult/Challenging
Hiking specifics (per day): 4-8hrs of walking, routes of 8-18km/5-11miles, climbing and descending 750-1100m/2450-3600ft (1600m/5280ft descent on Day 3 only);
Price includes: mountain hut in a dormitory with shared facilities (Day 2) and 3-star hotels/family-run pensions (rest days) in rooms with en-suite facilities; breakfast and supper; transfers from and to Sofia Airport (on first/last four days only) and all other transfers in the itinerary; English-speaking mountain guide; cable car tickets, and all local taxes.
Price does not include: museum entrance fees; extra food and drink; mountain maps; travel/medical insurance; spa procedures.

www.bulgariawalking.com
SNOWSHOE TREK ACROSS THE VITOSHA, RILA AND PIRIN MOUNTAINS

Revel in the beauty of nature amid winter. Sense the calm of winter magic in two of Bulgaria’s best-loved mountains: the Vitosha Nature Park and the Rila National Park. Our trek passes old mountain forests, high plateaus, and valleys, tiring us pleasantly before an evening spent in a peasant family hotel with a glass of red wine with appetizing local specialities. The itinerary includes a call at one of Bulgaria’s most renowned sights: the UNESCO-listed Rila Monastery.

Snowshoe walking appears easy fun, yet calls for some stamina because any walking through snow can be tiring. Even if you have not tried this type of locomotion, you will rapidly get used to using the poles and snowshoes on thick, fluffy virgin mountain snow. The programme is arduous and suitable for people in very good physical shape. Depending on the weather and snow cover, your guide may change the proposed routes.

ITINERARY
Day 1: Meet up at Sofia Airport and transfer to a downtown hotel for dinner and overnight.

Day 2: Today, we traverse Vitosha: the most popular destination for Sofianites. Transfer to the trail head at Aleko Hut. Snowshoeing along the crest through the Torfeno Branishte Nature Reserve to the famous Zlatni Mostove (Golden Bridges) stone rivers. Transfer to the village of Govedartsi at the foot of Rila, where we stay for three nights.

Day 3: Short ride to the Malyovitsa Resort. Climbing up towards Yonchevo Lake. As we walk out of the woods we will enjoy the panorama to the neighbouring peaks and deep valleys of Rila. Walk down through an old coniferous forest to get back to Govedartsi village.

Day 4: Today’s aim is Bulgaria, and the Balkans’, highest summit: Musala (2925m/9596ft). We climb to the starting point of the route by cable car from the Borovets Resort. If weather permits and we make the summit, we shall enjoy stunning prospects to the surrounding mountains.

Day 5: Transfer to the Panchishte Resort. Board the cable car to the Seven Rila Lakes Cirque for a full tour among the frozen and covered in thick snow lakes. The day ends in the famous ski resort of Bansko in Pirin Mountains, where we base for two nights. Option to try the local thermal SPAs.

Day 6: Board the chair cable car above Dobrinishte Resort to the Bezbog Hut. This is the setting-off point for the snowshoeing trek to the Popovo Lake which will be deeply frozen at that time but the route there and back offers one of the most beautiful panoramas in the Pirin.

Day 7: Low-altitude trek on snow shoes among some of the typical villages, lying at the hollow among Rila, Pirin and Rodope mountains. Later today, on the way to Sofia we visit also one of Bulgaria’s top tourist attractions: the Rila Monastery listed by UNESCO. Dinner and overnight in Sofia.

Day 8: Transfer to Sofia Airport.

DATES AND PRICES:
This tour is organized on a private basis anytime during the period January – March; rates vary depending on the group size; contact us for a quote or visit www.bulgariawalking.com for further information;

Difficulty grade: Difficult
Hiking specifics (per day): 4-5hrs of walking, routes of 7-13km/4.5-8.5miles, climbing and descending 100-500m/330-1640ft (6hrs of walking with climbing/descending 750m/2460ft on Day 4 only in case weather and group’s fitness allows to attempt the summit);
Price includes: 3-star hotels and family-run pensions in rooms with en-suite facilities; breakfast and supper; transfers from and to Sofia Airport (on first/last tour days only) and all other transfers in the itinerary; English-speaking mountain guide; hire of snow shoes and poles; cable car tickets, and all local taxes.
Price does not include: museum entrance fees; extra food and drink; mountain maps; travel/medical insurance; spa procedures.
ITINERARY
Day 1: Early morning transfer from Sofia to the Malyovitsa Valley and thence high over the alpine Cirques and small lakes reaching Strashno Ezero (The Scary) Lake. Descend to the Yonchevo Lake and finish the loop again at Malyovitsa resort. Overnight in Govedartsi village. (walking: 12km/7miles, climbing and descending 900m/3000ft.)

Day 2: Transfer to Panichishte resort and chairlift ride to the Cirque of the Seven Rila Lakes. Loop hike among the lakes. (walking: 6km/4miles, climbing and descending 500m/1700ft.). Transfer to Bansko at the foot of the Pirin Mountains National Park for two nights.

Day 3: Transfer up to Vihren Hut. Two options depending on the group’s fitness: loop hike in the Cirque of the Bynderishki Lakes (moderate) or climb to the Pirin’s premier summit, Vihren (2914m/9560ft) (difficult/challenging).

Day 4: Chairlift ride from Gotse Delchev Hut to the Bezbog Hut. Again two options to choose from depending on your physical shape: hike to the biggest lake in Pirin – Popovo Lake (moderate) or climb to one of the most scenic peaks in Pirin – Polezhan (2851m/9354ft) (difficult). Transfer back to Sofia in the evening.

An intense tour, designed to reveal you some of the most scenic trails of Bulgaria’s highest mountain ranges – Rila and Pirin. The program as it is, is meant for people who already stay in Sofia and continue their stay in Bulgaria right after the trek. More hiking days can be added in either Rila and Pirin (for example including a hike to Mt. Musala (2925m/9598ft).

DATES AND PRICES:
this tour is organized on a private basis anytime during the period mid-June - October; rates vary depending on the group size; contact us for a quote or visit www.bulgariawalking.com for further information;
Difficulty grade: Moderate/Difficult
Hiking specifics (per day): 3-6hrs of walking, routes of 6-9km/4.5-6miles, climbing and descending 500-1000m/1640-3280ft (depending on which option you take)
Price includes: 3-star hotels and family-run pensions in rooms with en-suite facilities; breakfast and supper; transfers from and to your hotel in Sofia (on first/last tour days only) and all other transfers in the itinerary; English-speaking mountain guide; cable car tickets, and all local taxes.
Price does not include: museum entrance fees; extra food and drink; mountain maps; travel/medical insurance; spa procedures.

THE SEVEN RILA LAKES AND MALYOVITSA PEAK RIDGE WALK (2 DAYS)
Two-day hike in the most pristine and panoramic part of Rila Mountains. We will start with a hike to the remote Ivan Vazov hut passing by the crystal clear waters of each of the Seven Rila Lakes – the pearls of Rila Mountains, and continue with a superb traverse on the main ridge of the mountain, climb the symbol of Bulgarian mountaineering – Malyovitsa summit (2729m/9088ft) and descend to the big glacier valley of Malyovitsa River.

ITINERARY
Day 1: Transfer to Panichishte resort. Chairlift to The Seven Rila Lakes. Tour around the lakes. End of the day and overnight in Ivan Vazov Hut. (5hrs of walking, climbing 850 and descending 200m)
Day 2: Hike along the main ridge of the mountain with stunning views to the pristine lakes, valleys and summits. Descent to Malyovitsa Resort and transfer to Sofia in the evening. (5 hrs of walking, climbing 250m and descending 1000m)

DATE AND PRICES:
this tour is organized on a private basis anytime during the period mid-June - October; rates vary depending on the group size; contact us for a quote or visit www.bulgariawalking.com for further information;
Difficulty grade: Moderate/Difficult
Hiking specifics (per day): 5hrs of walking, routes of 7-15km/4,5-9,5miles, climbing and descending 250-1000m/820-3280ft
Price includes: mountain hut in a dormitory with shared facilities, transfers from and to your hotel in Sofia (on first/last tour days only) and all other transfers in the itinerary; English-speaking mountain guide; cable car tickets, and all local taxes.
Price does not include: food and drink (available in the hut); mountain maps; travel/medical insurance.
A CENTRE-BASED MOUNT RILA PROGRAMME

Rila is like a chunk of the Alps set upon the Balkans. Delight in an amazing adventure in Bulgaria’s largest national park. Among the numerous jagged summits rising to over 2700m/8900ft stands the Balkans’ highest peak Musala (2925m/9596ft). Rila, an Old Slav word meaning Water Mountain, looks like a stormy sea of mountain crests and summits traversed by deep gorges amid which huddle over 180 glacier lakes, the Seven Rila Lakes being just the best known of them.

ITINERARY

Day 1: Meet up at Sofia Airport and transfer to the village of Govedartsi for four nights.
Day 2: Today, we tour the famous Cirque of the Seven Rila Lakes. A shady path takes us through an enchanted spruce forest to the alpine part of the mountain where the Lakes are. In good weather, the views from the highest part of the route to the Lakes, which fall below us, are impressive. (6-7hrs of walking, climbing 750m/2500ft and descending 1000 m/3300ft.)
Day 3: The Maliovitsa River valley is the starting point for our climb to the Strashno Ezero (The Scary) Lake or else to the summit of Maliovitsa (depending on group’s fitness). Either trek is particularly beautiful and picturesque, opening up unexpected surprises from the alpine area of the Rila. (6-7hrs hours of walking, climbing and descending through 900m/3000ft.)
Day 4: Today’s adventure is dominated by Musala, the Balkans’ highest peak at 2925m/9596ft. The entire route passes Cirques, lakes and mountain shelter huts, with the rocky face of Musala in view the whole time. Once there, the view over a sea of jagged ridges, peaks, and valleys is truly something you will never forget. (8hrs of walking, climbing and descending through 750m/2500ft.)
Day 5: Transfer from Govedartsi to Sofia Airport.

A CENTRE-BASED MOUNT PIRIN PROGRAMME

The Pirin is perhaps Bulgaria’s most picturesque and most alpine mountain. The rocky outcrop known for its marble and granite peaks and rich flora and fauna is listed by UNESCO as a world natural heritage site. The Pirin has over 60 peaks rising to over 2500m/8200ft, with the highest, Vihren (2914m/9560ft) the target of one of our treks. The routes transit ridge crests or weave among Cirques dotted with crystal-clear blue glacier lakes and offer an exceptional variety of incredible views.

ITINERARY

Day 1: Meet up at Sofia Airport and transfer to the town of Bansko for four nights.
Day 2: We transfer to the Vihren Hut where we set off on a trek through the pretty Cirque of the Banderishki Lakes. From there, we go across into the neighbouring valley and the Todorini Ochi Lakes and thence through the thick spruce forests of the Yulen Nature Reserve on to the valley of the playful Demyanitsa River. (6-7hrs of walking, climbing 800m/2600ft and descending 900m/3000ft.)
Day 3: Today, we visit one of the Pirin’s greenest parts near the Bezbog Hut. This is the setting-off point for an extraordinarily panoramic trek to the Polezhan summit (2851m/9354ft). The summit offers perhaps the most wonderful view in the Pirin, with no fewer than 17 lakes visible, including the largest and deepest glacier lake in the mountain: the Popovo Lake. (5hrs of walking, climbing and descending 650m/2100ft.)
Day 4: Time to attempt the Pirin’s premier summit, Vihren. We trek through the Golem Kazan area beneath the breathtaking sheer 300m/1000ft northern wall of Vihren, whose dolomite precipices offer shelter to rare edelweiss flowers and fretful herds of Balkan Chamois. The views are genuinely overwhelming, yet they are just the prelude to the panoramas that open up from the summit over a sea of jagged peaks all around. (7-8hrs of walking, climbing and descending 1000m/3300ft)
Day 5: Transfer from Bansko to Sofia Airport.

DATES AND PRICES:

these tours are organized on a private basis anytime during the period mid-June – October; rates vary depending on the group size; contact us for a quote or visit www.bulgariawalking.com for further information;
Difficulty grade: Moderate/Difficult/Challenging
Hiking specifics (per day): 5-7hrs of walking, routes of 6-16km/4,5-10miles, climbing and descending 750-1000m/2460-3280ft (depending on which option you take)
Price includes: 3-star hotels (Pirin) or family-run pensions (Rila) in rooms with en-suite facilities; breakfast and supper; transfers from and to Sofia Airport (on first/last tour days only) and all other transfers in the itinerary; English-speaking mountain guide; cable car tickets, and all local taxes.
Price does not include: museum entrance fees; extra food and drink; mountain maps; travel/medical insurance.

www.bulgariawalking.com
ARE YOU READY TO HIKE SELF-GUIDED?

INDEPENDENCE
No guides, no other tourists - just you and the trail! Choose the dates that suit your travel plans and enjoy the hikes at your own pace. Interact with local people and get a first-hand experience, not spoiled by a guide’s mediation.

ALL TRANSFERS INCLUDED
Our treks include all ground transfers, including the ones from and to Sofia Airport. In no single point you will be left or expected to use local public transportation.

EMERGENCY HOTLINE
Weather conditions, your personal plans or even your health status may rapidly change, and we are aware of that. In case you need assistance you can always find us on our emergency phone numbers.

PRE-BOOKED ACCOMMODATIONS
We take care picking up the most appropriate accommodations on your way and make all necessary arrangements with them.

LUGGAGE TRANSFERS
Get the most out of your holiday and explore the mountains carrying just a small rucksack with your essential, while your main luggage gets transferred safely between the inns.

ROUTE NOTES & NAVIGATION
Common sense for orientation and use of maps are something we believe you have when booking an independent hiking trek with us. We realize Bulgarian mountains are not that well marked like the Alps. But we are certain that our route notes are clear enough and easy to follow, especially accompanied with the proper maps. And this is what our customers say too. Some trails are marked by us, and waymarks are been refreshed regularly. This enables us to provide hiking packages in remote areas, where you can hike for days without seeing other tourists.
A memorable transit through some of the least-known and most authentic parts of the Rhodopes. Bulgaria’s most lyrical mountain famed as birthplace of the legendary musician Orpheus. Along with its wonderful climate, the mountain offers the perfect setting for gentle rambling amid pastoral landscapes, valleys dotted with picturesque villages, verdant meadows with grazing flocks of goats and sheep, ancient deciduous forests, Roman roads and bridges, and an enormous diversity of natural phenomena like the Trigradsko Zhdrelo Gorge, the Yagodinska Peshtera and Dyavolsko Garlo (The Devil’s Throat) caves, and the Chudni Mostove (The Wonderful Bridges) rock bridges.

Treks are of medium difficulty. Paths are well marked and in addition each client receives a map and detailed route notes in English.
ITINERARY

Day 1: We meet you at Sofia Airport and transfer you to overnight in Devin.

Day 2: Your first trek across the Rhodopes follows a picturesque nature trail along the valley of the Devinska River. A short transfer takes you then to the entry of the Yagodinska Peshtera Cave: one of Bulgaria’s longest and prettiest caves, which you can opt to view. The afternoon brings a colourful kaleidoscope of landscapes that immerse us in the traditional lives of local people and the idyll of rolling crests, forests, and valleys. Three overnight stays at Trigrad. (5-6hrs of walking; 18km/11miles; climbing 700m/2100ft and descending 450m/1350ft.)

Day 3: Today, you enjoy a particularly pleasant trek to the village of Vodni Pad right by the Greek border, until recently within a closely guarded strip proscribed even for those living down the road. A circular trail takes you up panoramic crests, through pine forests dotted with green meadows and smallholdings, sheltered valleys, and traditional stone houses. The valley of the Trigradska River takes you back to Trigrad. (5-6hrs of walking; 18km/11miles; climbing and descending 700m/2100ft)

Day 4: Magnetic sights follow each other on another circular tour around Trigrad, with the authentic village of Zhrebevo at its distant end. Legend has it, the village was named after a stallion which shielded it from trouble and strife. Along our route, you observe the entry to the Trigradsko Zhrelo Gorge and enjoy the wonderful panorama to surrounding parts. (5-6hrs of walking; 18km/11miles; climbing and descending 700m/2100ft)

Day 5: A transfer to the village of Beden begins today’s particularly panoramic trek. The views of the Rhodopes’ green crests change at each turn. The day ends at the village of Lyaskovo, one of the most distinctive local communities, with unforgettable charm and unique atmosphere. Your stay here will leave you wonderful memories of Rhodope hospitality. (6hrs of walking; 21km/13miles; climbing 800m/2650ft and descending 850m/2800ft)

Day 6: A picturesque route through one of the Rhodopes’ most beautiful forests (yet one little known among tourists) takes you to the amazing rock formations of the Chudni Mostove: a natural phenomenon that will impress you. From here, you are transferred to the village of Kosovo: a unique mountain community where you overnight in a traditional stone house. (5-6 hrs of walking; 18km/11miles; climbing 950m/3150ft and descending 550m/1800ft.)

Day 7: After breakfast, you may walk the cobble streets of Kosovo and imbibe the ancient atmosphere that still pervades its venerable stone walls and houses. You are then transferred to Bulgaria’s second-largest monastery at Bachkovo where you may view the miracle-working icon of Virgin Mary. A transfer then takes you to Sofia, with time to tour the city’s major sights in the afternoon.

Day 8: Transfer to Sofia Airport.

DATES AND PRICES:

this tour can start anytime during the period mid-April – October with min. 2 persons (Traveling solo? Ask us to join you to an existing reservation in order to reduce costs.); visit www.bulgariawalking.com for further information;

Difficulty grade: Moderate/Difficult

Hiking specifics (per day): check the itinerary

Price includes: three-star hotels (Sofia, Devin) and rural family pensions/guesthouses (Trigrad, Lyaskovo, Kosovo); rooms with en-suite facilities; breakfast and supper (except for Day 7 when no supper is included); transfers from and to Sofia Airport (on first/last tour days only) and all other transfers in the itinerary; detailed route notes in English and maps; luggage transportation; 24/7 emergency support.

Price does not include: caves entrance fees; extra food and drink; travel/medical insurance.
Looking for an independent trekking tour to test your hiking fitness? Bored of the popular walking destinations in the Alps or the Pyrenees? You have come to the right place. Looking at our most scenic self-guided hiking trek, which covers the very best of the highest Bulgarian mountains: Rila and Pirin. And for peace of mind – with all ground transfers included…. as usual!

Climb the giant of Rila, Mount Musala (2925m/9596ft), highest in Bulgaria and on the Balkan Peninsula, trace dramatic ridges, visit the world-famous UNESCO site Rila Monastery and thrill on the challenging climb to the Pirin summit of Mount Vihren (2914m/9560ft). Panoramic mountain views will take your breath away along an almost infinite series of trails to alpine meadows, rocky Cirques, remote glacial lakes and onto spectacular ridges and summits.

This trip is not suitable for novices as you’ll be trekking in alpine zones above the tree line. No rock climbing experience is needed and no „via ferratas“ are present. It is meant for well-trained hikers with an ample experience of dealing with bad climate conditions up in the mountains (incl. fog, thunderstorms etc.) and for people used to walk over rocky slopes, overtaking steep ascents/descents now and then. Patches of snow may still be present on some of the trails until July.

SUMMITS AND LAKES OF THE RILA AND PIRIN MOUNTAINS
ITINERARY

Day 1: We meet you at Sofia Airport and take you to the village of Govedartsi, where you will have three overnight stays.

Day 2: The attempt on the Balkans’ highest summit Musala (2925m/9596ft) is left for the first hiking day (based on the day of the week Day 2 and Day 3 can be twisted). To do so you get a transfer from Govedartsi to Borovets resort, where you board the cabin lift to the trailhead. The path is not particularly arduous, yet is particularly panoramic, with the rocky face of Musala visible the whole time while you transit a number of Cirques, glacier lakes and mountain shelters. The view from the peak to surrounding uplands and peaks is head-turning. (6hrs of walking; 13km/8miles; climbing and descending 750m/2460ft)

Day 3: A shaded path through the Rila’s ancient spruce forests takes you up to the alpine parts of the mountain and the Cirque of the Seven Rila Lakes. Located at between 2100 and 2500 metres (6900 to 8200ft) above sea level, these famous glacier lakes will charm you with their magnificent scenery which you can survey from the edge of the highest one. (6hrs of walking; 16km/10miles; climbing and descending 750 to 1000m/2500 to 3300ft)

Day 4: You bid farewell to Rila and set off for Pirin. During this day, which is meant for relax, you will stop for a short visit at Rila Monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This is the most famous and largest Christian monastery in Bulgaria. The exceptional frescoes in the central church form a gallery of masterpieces in Bulgarian art and could be considered a Bulgarian analogue of the frescoes of the Sistine chapel. Thence, you proceed to Bansko at the foot of Pirin Mountains, which will be your base for the following four nights. In the afternoon you can stroll along the cobbled streets and the charming ancient houses in the old part of the town.

Day 5: Car transfer brings you above Dobrinishte resort, at Gotse Delchev Hut. Chair cable car then takes you up to the Bezbog Hut. This is the setting-off point for the hiking trek to the Polezhan Summit (2951m/9354ft) which offers one of the most beautiful panoramas in the Pirin, over 17 stunning glacier lakes, including the largest Popovo Lake (30m/100ft deep). Polezhan is the 5th highest summit in the Pirin. It is surrounded by three Cirques with three groups of lakes - Disilishki in the north, Polezhsanski in the south and Strazhishki in the west. You use the classic route trough the northeast ridge, which is not difficult or too steep, except of the last 15-minute stage of the summit. (5hrs of walking; 8km/5miles; climbing and descending 650m/2100ft.)

Day 6: Pre-arranged transfer brings you up to the Vihren Hut where you sat off on a hiking trek through the pretty Cirque of the Banderishki Lakes. From there, you go across into the neighbouring valley and the Todorni Ochi Lakes and thence through the thick spruce forests of the Yulen Nature Reserve on to the valley of the playful Demyanitsa River. Stunning sceneries will be expecting you behind every corner. (6-7hrs of walking; 16km/10miles; climbing 700m/2300ft and descending 1100m/3650ft)

For those, who do not want to exhaust themselves before the most difficult climb to Mount Vihren on Day 7 (or in case of bad weather conditions), we have prepared an easier and shorter version, which is not at all less panoramic. Loop walk among the lakes in the Banderishki Lake Cirque will take you to five of them, where you can have rest on their shores and enjoy the serenity of the rocky outcrops around you. (3-4hrs of walking; 7km/4,5miles; climbing and descending 700m/2300ft)

Day 7: Time to attempt the Pirin’s premier summit, Vihren. You trek through the Golem Kazan (The Giant Cauldron) area beneath the breathtaking sheer 400m/1300ft northern wall of Vihren, whose dolomite precipices offer shelter to rare edelweiss flowers and fertile herds of Balkan Chamois (wild goats). The views are genuinely overwhelming, yet they are just the prelude to the panoramas that open up from the summit over a sea of jagged peaks all around. (6-7hrs of walking, 9km/5,5miles; climbing and descending 1000m/3300ft.)

Day 8: Transfer from Bansko to Sofia Airport in connection with your flight (appr. 2,30-2,45hrs).

DATES AND PRICES:
this tour can start anytime during the period mid-June - mid-September with min. 2 persons (Traveling solo? Ask us to join you to an existing reservation in order to reduce costs.); visit www.bulgariawalking.com for further information; Difficulty grade: Difficult/Challenging
Hiking specific (per day): check the itinerary.
Price includes: three-star hotels/family pensions; rooms with en-suite facilities; breakfast and supper (except for Days 4-7 when no supper is included); transfers from and to Sofia Airport (on first/last tour days only) and all other transfers in the itineray; detailed route notes in English and maps; luggage transportation; 24/7 emergency support.
Price does not include: museum entrance fees; cable car tickets; extra food and drink; travel/medical insurance.

www.bulgariawalking.com
**ITINERARY**

**Day 1:** We meet you at Sofia Airport and transfer you to a city centre hotel.

**Day 2:** A panoramic route takes you across the crest of Mount Vitosha, including climbing the local high point of Cherni Vrah (The Black Peak - 2290m/7513ft) as a prelude to the arduous, yet more picturesque treks across the Rila. Along the way, you cross the broad alpine meadows of the Torfeno Branishte (The Peat) Nature Reserve, dip into old spruce groves and follow a path to the stone rivers of the Zlatni Mostove (Golden Bridges) natural feature. From here, you are transferred to the Rila Mountains and the village of Govedartsi for three overnight stays.

**Day 3:** A circular route through the low parts of the Rila above Govedartsi prepares you for more difficult treks to come. Rambling along the path, you enjoy a fascinating kaleidoscope of changing landscapes and wonderful panoramas of rocky peaks and deep valleys in the Malyovitsa part of the mountain.

**Day 4:** A shaded path through the Rila’s ancient spruce forests takes you up to the alpine parts of the mountain and the Cirque of the Seven Rila Lakes. Located at between 2100 and 2500 metres (6900 to 8200ft) above sea level, these famous glacier lakes will charm you with their magnificent scenery which you can survey from the edge of the highest one.

**Day 5:** Today’s route takes you to the beautiful Malyovitsa Valley and thence high over the alpine peaks sheltering the secretive Strashno Ezero (The Scary) Lake. More enthusiastic mountaineers may opt for an alternative route to the Malyovitsa summit which offers incredible views over the nearby crests and peaks of the Rila. At the end of the trek, you are transferred for three overnight stays at the Borovets ski resort.

**Day 6:** Today, you can opt between a brisk morning walk and a rather longer (yet not steep) trek to another less-visited part of the Rila. The route passes through ancient coniferous woods and continues along the Maritsa River valley, gently climbing to the Royal hunting lodge at Saragiol, from where you return to Borovets along a different route.

**Day 7:** The attempt on the Balkans’ highest summit Musala (2925m/9596ft) is left for the ultimate day. The trek is not particularly arduous, yet is particularly panoramic, with the rocky face of Musala visible the whole time while we transit a number of Cirques, glacier lakes and mountain shelters. The view from the peak to surrounding uplands and peaks is head-turning.

**Day 8:** Transfer from Borovets to Sofia Airport.

(*most people add a visit to Rila Monastery (UNESCO) on Day 8 and stay one more night in Sofia (check www.bulgariawalking.com for details)*

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**DATES AND PRICES:**

This tour can start anytime during the period mid-June – mid-September with min. 2 persons (Traveling solo? Ask us to join you to an existing reservation in order to reduce costs.); visit www.bulgariawalking.com for further information;

Difficulty grade: Difficult

Hiking specifics (per day): 5-7hrs of walking, routes of 10-22km/6-14miles, climbing and descending 350-1000m/1150-3280ft (depending on which option you take)

Price includes: three-star hotels/family pensions; rooms with en-suite facilities; breakfast and supper (supper is only included from Day 2 to Day 4 (incl.)); transfers from and to Sofia Airport (on first/last tour days only) and all other transfers in the itinerary; detailed route notes in English and maps; luggage transportation; 24/7 emergency support.

Price does not include: cable car tickets; extra food and drink; travel/medical insurance.
Do you want to spend two full weeks, hiking along the most scenic walking routes in the most famous Bulgarian mountains? An impressive self-guided trekking holiday, revealing the very best of the most enchanting and famous Bulgarian mountains: the Rhodopes, Pirin, Rila and Vitosha. Starting with the lowest one—the Rhodopes, with their rolling landscapes, unique nature phenomena and people’s hospitality, the program takes you higher to a sea of countless rugged peaks and glacial lakes of the Pirin Mountains. Further, passing through the most famous tourist attraction in Bulgaria, and a heritage site of UNESCO - the Rila Monastery, you continue on to the mountains of the same name, housing the highest peak on the Balkan Peninsula (Musala, 2925m/9596ft). Again here you will have the possibility to find out by yourself why Rila means „well-watered mountain“.

Walking treks are moderately arduous to difficult, with some short challenging stages. No rock climbing experience is needed and no „via ferratas“ are an option to stop for a visit at the Dyavolskoto Ezero (The Scary) Lake. Descent back through Yonchevo Lake.

A day meant for relax. Transfer from Govedartsi village in the Pirin Mountains (your base for the next three nights) with a stop on the way at the famous Rila Monastery (UNESCO).

A day to summit the highest peak of Rila and the Balkan Peninsula - Mount Musala (2925m/9596ft). Transfer to Sofia in the afternoon.

Another scenic loop hike starting from Maliovitsa Valley and thence high over the alpine peaks storing the secretive Stara Reka (The Scary) Lake. Descent back through Yonchevo Lake.

A day to summit the highest peak of Rila and the Balkan Peninsula - Mount Musala (2925m/9596ft). Transfer to Sofia in the afternoon.

A panoramic walking route takes you across the crest of Mount Vitosha, including climbing the local high point of Cherni Vrah (The Black Peak – 2290m/7513ft).

A panoramic walking route takes you across the crest of Mount Vitosha, including climbing the local high point of Cherni Vrah (The Black Peak – 2290m/7513ft).
This tour, a combination of our classic unguided treks in the Rhodopes and the Rila, takes in the best of the two as regards routes, natural phenomena, and interaction with local people. Beginning with the lower, rounded crests of the mountain of Orpheus, you will gradually move across to the arduous steep slopes and rocky outcrops of the Rila. You will have the opportunity of visiting natural and cultural sites such as the Yagodinska Peshtera Cave (considered one of Bulgaria’s most beautiful), the Trigradsko Zhdrelo Gorge with its 300m/1000ft sheer walls, the Shiroka Laka architectural reserve, Bulgaria’s second-largest monastery at Bachkovo, the Old Town of Plovdiv (an architectural and historical reserve) and many others.

Transits are of medium and high difficulty. Paths are well marked and in addition each client receives a map and detailed route notes in English.

ITINERARY
Day 1: We meet you at Sofia Airport and transfer you to the rustic village of Lyaskovo: a fascinating place combining the beauty of the mountain and the warmth of Rhodope hospitality.
Day 2: A short transfer takes you to the entrance of the Yagodinska Peshtera Cave, where you will have the opportunity of enjoying its unique formations. From here, the route takes you through the pretty village of Yagodina and over the hills above it with their smallholdings, on to a thick fir forest that takes you to the edge of the Trigradsko Zhdrelo Gorge. You base for two nights in the village of Trigrad.
Day 3: Today, a particularly pleasant circular route awaits you to the village of Vodni Pad hard by the Greek border which until recently cut across the village. Only a handful of people remain in the old stone houses. A colourful diversity of woods, meadows, smallholdings, crests, and rivers accompanies you on your way back to Trigrad.
Day 4: Today’s trek reveals to you another part of the Rhodopes near Trigrad. The distant end of the trek is the village of Zhrobove whence you return to Trigrad along a different route. The tiny village charms with the hospitality of its people, its virgin nature, and its traditional occupations of farming, livestock rearing, and timber felling.
Day 5: Time to leave the Rhodopes for the Rila. Today is intended to relax you, with many stops at heritage sights, beginning with a walk along the cobbled streets past the stone houses of Shiroka Laka. We then stop at the Bachkovo monastery with its miracle-working icon of Virgin Mary, while the afternoon is spent in the Old Town of Plovdiv. You reach the village of Govedartsi in the early evening. It will be your base for the next four overnight stays in the Rila.
Day 6: A path winding through ancient thick spruce forests takes you beyond the upper edge of the forest to the magical Cirque of the Seven Rila Lakes. In the alpine zone at between 2100 and 2500m/6900 and 8200ft above sea level, this group of glacier lakes charms you with the magnificent views that open from the edge of the highest one.
Day 7: Following the Malyovitska River valley, you again rise above rocky peaks to reach the secretive Cirque sheltering the Strashno Ezero (The Scary) Lake. Fitter trekkers may opt to climb the Malyovitsa summit which offers incredible panoramas over surrounding crests and outcrops.
Day 8: Today, you will attempt to climb the Balkans’ highest summit of Musala (2925m/9596ft). A brief cable car climb and a three hour trek take you past a number of Cirques, glacier lakes and mountain shelters on your way up. The views from the Musala over surrounding summits and crests are definitely something that will stay with you forever.
Day 9: Transfer from Govedartsi to Sofia Airport.

(*most people add a visit to Rila Monastery (UNESCO) on Day 9 and stay one more night in Sofia (check www.bulgariawalking.com for details)

DATES AND PRICES: this tour can start anytime during the period mid-June - mid-September with min. 2 persons; May and October are also possible with a change of the program of Day 8 (Traveling solo? Ask us to join you to an existing reservation in order to reduce costs.); visit www.bulgariawalking.com for further information;

Difficulty grade: Moderate/Difficult
Hiking specifics (per day): 5-7hrs of walking; routes of 7-21km/4.5-13miles; climbing and descending 350-1000m/1150-3300ft
Price includes: three-star hotels/family pensions; rooms with en-suite facilities; breakfast and supper; transfers from and to Sofia Airport (on first/last tour days only) and all other transfers in the itinerary; detailed route notes in English and maps; luggage transportation; 24/7 emergency support.
Price does not include: museum and caves entry fees; cable car tickets; extra food and drink; travel/medical insurance.

www.bulgariawalking.com
DAY-LONG TREKS FROM SOFIA TO THE VITOSHA OR RILA MOUNTAINS

1. MOUNT RILA AND THE SEVEN RILA LAKES
Spend the day in the Rila, trekking around its pearl: the Seven Rila Lakes. A transfer from Sofia takes us to the Panichishte Resort cable car which takes us to the Seven Rila Lakes Cirque. We have enough time to reach the highest lake, Salzata (The Tear) at 2500m/8200ft above sea level, from where we have a bird’s eye view over all seven lakes in their Cirque, as well as surrounding outcrops and deep valleys. The route is moderately arduous, with individual brief paths featuring steep inclines.

Hiking specifics: 4-5hrs walking; 6-8km/4-5miles; climbing and descending 500m/1640ft.
Best period: mid-June – September
Tour type: GUIDED or SELF-GUIDED (check www.bulgariawalking.com for prices and further details)

2. MOUNT RILA: THE SEVEN RILA LAKES AND THE RILA MONASTERY
An intensive programme begins with an early transfer to the Rila, followed by a brief cable car ride to the Seven Rila Lakes Cirque. The glacier lakes are at between 2100 and 2500m/6800 and 8200ft above sea level, with name fitting their shapes, like Babreka (the Kidney), Okoto (the Eye), and Salzata (the Teardrop) etc. After a thorough trek around one of the Rila’s most remarkable and beautiful parts, we are transferred to the Rila Monastery (UNESCO): the largest and most significant Bulgarian Orthodox Church establishment. The 20m/70ft high walls shelter impressive cloisters, a church, and a chapel with unique murals and museum collections. The route is moderately arduous, with individual brief paths featuring steep inclines.

Hiking specifics: 4hrs walking; 6km/4,5miles; climbing and descending 400m/1310ft.
Best period: mid-June – September
Tour type: GUIDED (check www.bulgariawalking.com for prices and further details)

3. MOUNT VITOSHA AND THE CHERNI VRAH SUMMIT (2290M/7513FT)
Vitosha looming is the first thing visitors to Sofia notice on their way from the airport. Few cities and even fewer capitals possess such a natural feature. Vitosha is the Balkans’ oldest National Park and Bulgaria’s most visited mountain. Each year, thousands of tourists enjoy the beauty of its scenery and its plant and animal life. Our trek takes us along the entire crest of the Vitosha. We first climb Cherni Vrah (The Black Peak) and then traverse the Torfeno Branishte (The Peat) Nature Reserve to reach the stone rivers of the Zlatni Mostove (Golden Bridges) natural feature. The route is moderately arduous, with individual brief paths featuring steep inclines.

Hiking specifics: 4-6hrs walking; 11km/7miles; climbing and descending 500m/1640ft.
Best period: June to October
Tour type: GUIDED or SELF-GUIDED (check www.bulgariawalking.com for prices and further details)

4. MOUNT RILA AND THE MUSALA SUMMIT (2925M/9596FT)
Rila is the highest mountain in the Balkans and all of Southeastern Europe, the Musala summit rising to 2925m/9596ft. Rila (an old Slav word meaning Water Mountain) looks like a stormy sea of crests and peaks, deep gorges, and over 150 crystal-clear lakes. Much of the National Park area is under UNESCO protection. After an early transfer to the Borovets Resort, we take the cable car to the Yastrebets summit, from where we follow a path through the Musala Hut and the Ledeno Ezero (Icy Lake) mountain shelter to the Musala summit. Along the way, we enjoy magnificent views over surrounding outcrops and peaks, deep valleys, and pristine glacier lakes. The route is moderately to very arduous, with some paths rather steep.

Hiking specifics: 5-6hrs walking; 13km/8miles; climbing 500m/1600ft and descending 750m/2460ft.
Best period: mid-June – mid-September
Tour type: GUIDED or SELF-GUIDED (check www.bulgariawalking.com for prices and further details)