

# BULGARIA - BALKAN RIDES - THE DEVETAKI PLATEAU

## ITINERARY

### Day 1

Return transfers from Sofia are included at set times. Flights should arrive between 12:00 noon and 16:00. The transfer vehicle will depart once everyone has arrived, but no later than 16:00.

Your return flight should depart after 11:00. If you have an evening flight, you can be dropped off in Sofia city centre where there is a luggage storage area while you explore.

Hotel collections and drop offs are also available on the first and last day.

If your flight times do not fit with the standard times, then it is possible to have a private transfer at extra cost.

Overnight Incanto Hotel. Arrive in Sevlievo and settle into your hotel.

Later meet your guide over dinner and learn about the week ahead.

The following is the proposed itinerary but it is subject to change due to local conditions.

This itinerary is designed to show you castles, towers, monasteries and fortresses from the Middle Ages, together with the old houses and traditional crafts. The trail takes you to the Krushuna waterfalls on the Devetaki plateau, one of the most attractive landmarks of Bulgaria.

Riders should be competent at walk, trot and canter. There will be some long and fast canters in wide open spaces. Riding times and distances are approximate. Sometimes it is necessary for the horses to overnight a short distance away from where you are staying and then you transfer to and from the horses by vehicle.

The Incanto Hotel is a family run hotel with a sauna, hot tub and turkish bath. Massage treatments can also be arranged locally.



One of the bedrooms at Incanto Hotel

## Day 2

This morning you are taken to the riding centre where you meet the horses, saddle up and prepare for the week ahead.

The Alfa Riders equestrian centre is a few kms from the town of Sevlievo.

Today's ride takes you through hills and forests with small creeks and lakes towards Dryanovo Monastery, southeast from Sevlievo.

On the way you are met by the support vehicle with a picnic lunch.

About 23 km/4.5 hours riding.



This afternoon there is an optional visit to the folk museum of Etara. You have about one hour here before heading onto the hotel. (For 2024, this is not available).

Situated near to the town of Gabrovo the Etara Folk Museum is a beautifully rebuilt and restored village from the 19th century which illustrates the main trades of that time. The machines are powered by running water and the craftsmen produce craftwork that is available to buy.



Etara Village

Overnight Gesha Guesthouse. All the rooms at the small Gesha Guesthouse are en-suite and there is WiFi throughout. There is a large outdoor swimming pool (open only in the summer months).



## Day 3

This morning you visit (by car) the Dryanovo Monastery.

Dryanovo is a working monastery founded in the 12th century and restored in the mid 19th century.



Dryanovo Monastery

After the monastery there is a visit to the nearby caves.

The Bacho Kiro Cave extends for several km and has yielded some of the earliest human artifacts in Europe.

After the sightseeing visits you are driven back to the horses. You ride northwards to the village of Ledenik with the opportunity for some fast riding through beautiful meadows and slower riding through the forests.

Picnic next to Kereka villige.

Continue riding and arrive in Ledenik village.

About 29 km/5 hours riding.



Overnight Complex Chiflika. This small hotel has a traditional style but with all the modern facilities. There is a swimming pool in the garden (summer months only).



Complex Chiflika

## Day 4

This morning you visit (by car) the old Bulgarian capital Veliko Tarnovo.

Veliko Tarnovo was the Bulgarian capital during the second Bulgarian Kingdom (1185-1396). This well-fortified hill was the home of the Bulgarian tsar (king) and the aristocracy for two centuries. The castle and Orthodox churches that have survived from the Middle Ages tell stories of an impressive history. The year 1185 began with omen: the winter happened to be so mild that the fruit trees all over Europe blossomed even in January. The Bulgarians believed this to be 'God's omen' for the hope of restoring their state, which had been subdued by the Byzantium empire for 167 years. Brothers, Assen and Peter, who owned

a miraculous icon, motivated the people in church on the day of St Dimitar and led them in an armed uprising. Both brothers were kings for 12 years and they succeeded in restoring Bulgaria almost to the size of its First Kingdom (681-1018). Unfortunately both brothers were killed by traitors.

On 9th April 1205 the army of the Fourth Crusade took the capital of Byzantium- Constantinople and founded their own Latin Empire, led by the Count of Flanders, Boduen. Tsar Kaloyan (the younger brother of Assen and Peter) attempted to make peace with the Knights, but they refused the offered hand. This eventful clash occurred on 14th April 1205 near to Adrianopolis (present day Edirne). The army of Count Louis was defeated and the Emperor Boduen was captured and taken to the capital Veliko Tarnovo, where he later died.



After visiting Veliko Tarnovo you set off riding towards the village of Emen, along the Yantra River and through fields and forests.

Picnic next to Balvan village and continue onto your new accommodation.

About 22 km / 4 hours riding.



Overnight Hotel Imeniето. The hotel complex is made up of a number of buildings, all within beautiful gardens. The bedrooms are en-suite and there is an outdoor swimming pool (seasonal).



One of the bedrooms at Hotel Imeniето

## Day 5

After breakfast you ride in a northwest direction to the village of Karpachevo. The ride takes you through beautiful forests with meadows and fields towards the plateau of Devetaki with its extraordinary caves, waterfalls and lakes. This is the longest day's riding and there will be opportunities for many long canters.

Picnic lunch near Krasno Gradishte village. Continue riding to the village of Karpachevo where you stay for two nights.

About 30-35 km/6 hours riding.



Overnight Ongle Guest House. The Ongle Guest house has a large garden with a seasonal outdoor swimming pool and sauna.



One of the bedrooms at Ongle Guest House

## Day 6

This morning you have a short but beautiful ride over the Devetaki plateau and the horses have the afternoon to rest.

Return to the guest house for lunch.

About 12 km/2 hours riding.



In the afternoon you are taken by car to Devetaki Cave.

The Devetaki Cave was featured in the movie 'The Expendables 2' with Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sylvester Stallone and Bruce Willis (filmed in 2011).



Later walk to the beautiful Krushuna's Waterfalls.

The Krushuna's Waterfalls consist of many rapids and small basins. The region is green and wild with a large variety of plant and animal species.

The area of Krushuna waterfalls is a National park. It comprises limestone caves with springs, streams and rivers. The biggest cave, called Boninska, contains the longest underground lake (800 m) in Bulgaria.



Overnight Ongle Guest House.

## Day 7

Today is another long riding day as you ride from Karpachevo village towards the vertical cave 'Garvanitsa' on the plateau and then on to Kramolin Lake.

Picnic at the lake.

After lunch you ride through the valleys of Magara and Krapets before arriving at the village of Kurmiansko. Here you say farewell to the horses who are transported back to the equestrian centre and you are taken to Sevlievo for a final dinner.

About 35 km/6 hours riding.



Overnight Incanto Hotel.