SPICE ROADS
CYCLING



TOURING

CYCLING BULGARIA: SOFIA TO THE RHODOPE MOUNTAINS

Tour Code
BGR-BBH

8 DAYS
7 NIGHTS

Destinations	Bulgaria
Tour Meets	Sofia, Bulgaria
Tour Ends	Sofia, Bulgaria
Fly in to	Sofia Airport (SOF)
Fly out of	Sofia Airport (SOF)
Group Size	4-16 riders
Minimum Age	18 (on scheduled departures)

ACTIVITY PROFILE

6 Cycling days	**360** km Total cycling distance
60 km Avg distance / day	**700** m Avg climbing / day

PRICING

Price	US$ 2,990
Bike Hire (Mountain Bike)	US$ 315
Bike Hire (E-Bike)	US$ 490
Single Supplement	US$ 470

**E-bikes are in limited supply, please enquire to reserve one.*

DEPARTURES

23 May - 30 May 2027
18 Jul - 25 Jul 2027
29 Aug - 05 Sep 2027
03 Oct - 10 Oct 2027

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ✓ SpiceRoads jersey
- ✓ Water bottle
- ✓ Support vehicle
- ✓ Guide(s)
- ✓ Meals (as indicated)
- ✓ Accommodation
- ✓ Snacks and drinks

WHAT'S EXCLUDED

- ✗ International flights
- ✗ Airport pick up
- ✗ Airport drop off
- ✗ Visa fees
- ✗ Alcohol
- ✗ Tips

TRIP PROFILE

We ride a total of 374 km over six days of cycling, with up to 900 metres of elevation gain per day (the average gain is 683 m). However, all days except one feature more descent than climbing, meaning there is ample opportunity to recover from the climbs. Days 2 and 3 are challenging, while the climbing eases off on a longer, flatter Day 4. Days 5 ,6, and 7 once again present more climbs, but always spread out over distances of 50 km to 70 km. We all ride at different speeds, and our progress may vary depending upon how we feel on the day. The guides tend to ride through the group, but stop on the top of passes to regroup. It is not essential that you try and keep up with everyone. Just ride at your own speed and enjoy it. Remember, the vehicle is there for you, driving behind the group.

Suitability: This trip is suitable for anyone with a reasonable fitness level. Average climbing per day is 683 m spread over distances averaging 60 km. This trip is not too arduous, but there are climbs every day, so the fitter you are, the more you will enjoy it.

Biking Conditions: This tour follows a mixture of good sealed roads with occasional rougher road surfaces for short distances. No off-road riding experience is required. We will ride mainly on quiet countryside roads, but sometimes we will enter towns and villages which may have moderate traffic. A support vehicle is almost always available to help you, and you will have your guides nearby you at all times. Bulgaria can be hot during the day, and cooler at night, so you may want to have a layer or two for the mornings along with your light cycling gear.



Day 1: Arrival in Sofia

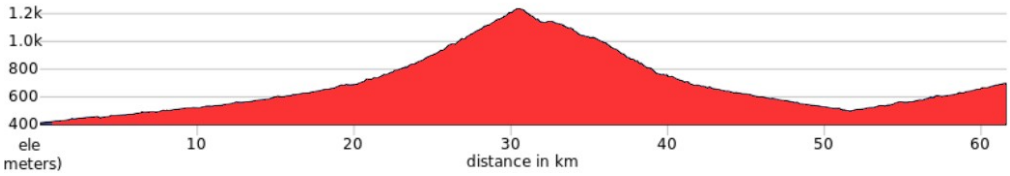
Arrive in Sofia and make your way to the hotel. Enjoy exploring this newly-prosperous city of old-world elegance and richly-layered history. Vintage trams clatter along cobbled streets and past trendy cafes, overlooked by great churches, galleries and monuments. We will meet in the early evening for a trip briefing and welcome dinner in a traditional Bulgarian restaurant.

Eurostars City Hotel Dinner

Day 2: Sofia - Tetevan - Chiflik spas

Today, we transfer around 1h45m from Sofia to the start of our ride in the village of Teteven, famous for its beautiful views to the Balkan Mountains. Here in the northern foothills, we slowly wind upwards to the resort village of Ribaritsa, following the Vit river upstream. We reach the highest point for the day, the Bogoi pass, on a challenging ascent to the summit through idyllic countryside. It's a great way to warm up for the journey ahead. We then enjoy a glorious descent, followed by lunch in a small spa resort set amidst the pine trees. We highly recommend taking to the warm waters to relax your legs before dinner this evening!

Feya Hotel Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

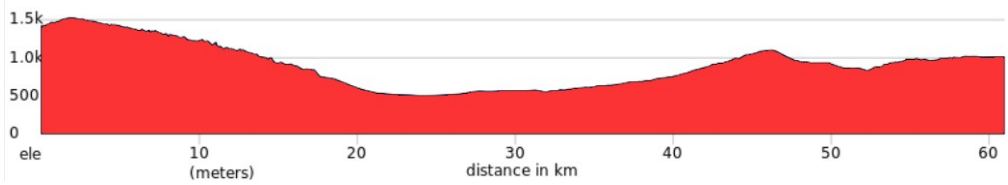


Ride 50km +900m -800m

Day 3: Chiflik - Koprivshtitsa

After breakfast, a short transfer takes us to the highest pass in the Balkan Mountains; the Beklemeto Pass at 1500 m (we have already climbed considerably, so you do not have to pedal this entire elevation!). This is the ancient Roman Via Trayana (the Road of Trajan), and some of the Roman remains can still be seen. We make a short ascent to the zenith before commencing a scenic route down into South Bulgaria. Lunch will be a picnic next to the river, as our route heads into the south foothills of the Balkan Mountains and enters the gorgeous forests of the Sredna Gora Mountains. Our accommodation is in the beautifully-preserved historic town of Koprivshtitsa, full of characteristic architecture and ambience of the 19th century. We will meet up for dinner in an authentic local restaurant.

Gozbarov Guesthouse Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

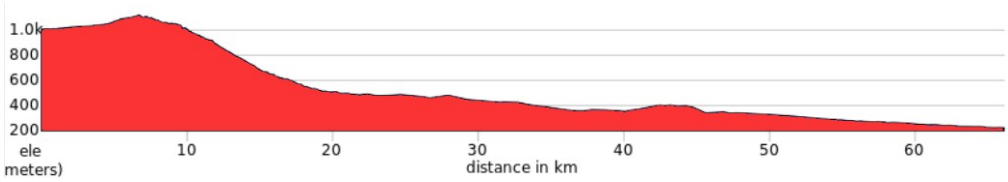


Ride 63km +700m -1300m

Day 4: Koprivshtitsa - Plovdiv

After breakfast, we will visit a famous local 'house museum' to learn more about Koprivshitsa's illustrious history and culture. We then saddle up and pedal through rolling terrain among the vast meadows that sprawl across this land. A long descent into Strelcha town passes the "Crooked Beech Tree" and some interesting rock formations once used by the ancient Thracians for their sacred rituals. On the way, we visit an ancient Thracian cult temple from the 5th century BCE and have lunch at a local winery. From here on, the road rolls calmly all the way to our final riding destination, the village of Kaloyanovo(famous for its home made ice cream). Here, we will get in the van and travel for 20 minutes to the town of Plovdiv. Known as "The City of the Seven Hills," it is one of the world's oldest cities, and has a fascinating history of Thracian, Greek, Roman and Ottoman rule. Plovdiv is among the few cities with two ancient theatres; remains of the medieval walls and towers; Ottoman baths and mosques; and a well-preserved old quarter from the National Revival period with beautiful houses, churches and narrow paved streets. We will do a late afternoon walk in the old town and have dinner in the city center.

Doubletree by Hilton Hotel Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

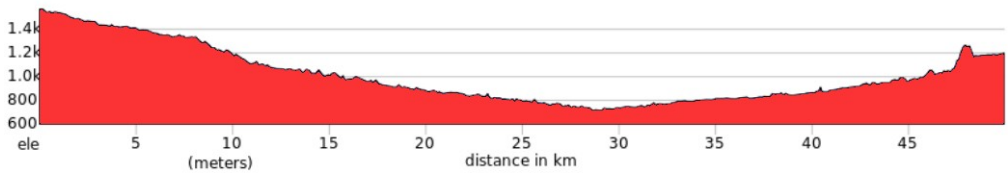


Ride 75km +300m -900m

Day 5: Plovdiv - Trigrad

An amazing day awaits us! We transfer up to the Pamporovo Ski Resort in the Rhodope (Rodopi) Mountains, stopping on the way to visit Bachkovo Monastery, the country's second largest, with its unique 17th century interiors. We jump on our bikes at Pamporovo and ride down to the village of Shiroka Laka with its many authentic Rhodopean houses. This was a restricted frontier region during the Cold War, so the villages became like time capsules. These two-storey homes feature a small cellar with a hiding place and thick white walls to conceal the courtyard from the outsiders. We will have lunch in this quaint town, then continue our ride upstream along the Trigrad River and the stunning marble rock gorge it has created over time. Once we reach the famous Rodopi village of Trigrad, we can enter the thrilling Devil's Throat Cave, which features a 40 m high underground waterfall. We will spend the night at a cozy family hotel and feast on local Rodopi specialties at dinner.

Zdravets Guest House Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

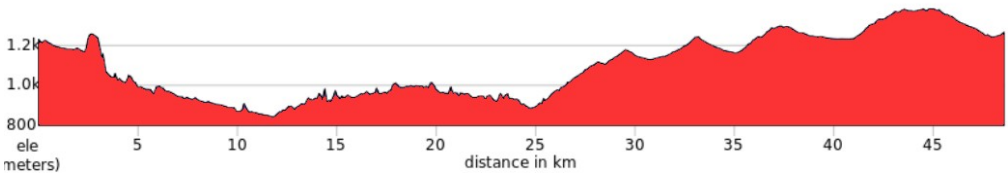


Ride 52km +600m -900m

Day 6: Trigrad - Dospat

This morning, wake up and take in the pristine mountain scenery, then start a descent back through the 300m high walls of the Trigrad Gorge before a gradual incline takes us up into and through Bulgaria's longest gorge, Buinovo. Known by locals as The Wolf's Leap, the 10 km-long gorge narrows to just a few metres at some points. You'll spot entrances to many caves along the way, and we'll stop to visit the beautiful 5-story tall Yagodina cave filled with fascinating formations. The terrain opens up once more to pastures and coniferous forests as we pedal to Dospat town and its dam, which dates to the 1960s and created a huge reservoir. The last section follows a quiet and scenic road very close to the lake shore, leading us to our picturesque waterfront hotel.

Hotel Panorama Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



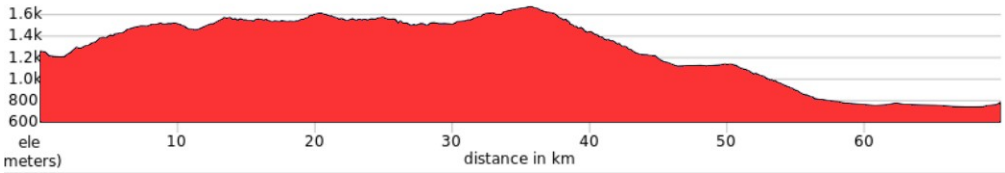
Ride 64km +900m -1000m

Day 7: Dospat - Velingrad

This morning, we will ride through ancient woodlands and open meadows, passing three more Soviet-era dams along the way, to finish in charming Velingrad, the spa capital of Bulgaria that sits in a serene valley. The thermal waters here have been an attraction since pre-Christian times,

as Roman clay pipes found in the region attest. Choose from dozens of hot and an ice-cold karst spring as you recover and reflect on a great ride. Wander through the quiet tree-lined streets of the town and take in this relaxing milieu. Later, we will gather for our sumptuous farewell dinner. Na zdrave!

Vella Hills Park Hotel & Spa Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Ride 70km +700m -900m

Day 8: Velingrad - Departure from Sofia

This morning, transfer 2.5 hours back to Sofia for your departure flight or further exploration of the city.

Breakfast

Disclaimer: The adventure cycling tours we operate often go beyond the beaten track, and the countries where we ride are not always predictable. Due to these reasons, it is occasionally necessary to reroute or update itineraries. Our guarantee is that we will not change a trip unless for safety or to improve it. Our listed hotels are always accurate at the time of writing, but should we have to change any hotel, it will always be for a similar or better one.

NUTS & BOLTS

Bikes

Because some people can't imagine going on a trip without their own beloved bicycle, we do not provide them as part of this tour. However, you can hire bikes locally for the price listed in the tour pricing section.

If you bring your own bike, please make sure it is a mountain bike or gravel bike in good mechanical order, with any specific spare parts and tools you may need.

Bike Repairs

Basic spares and tools are carried by the guide and on the support vehicle, though we cannot guarantee having spares for every conceivable problem. Carrying a basic tool kit, a spare tube and a pump while riding is recommended.

Safety

Wearing a helmet is required on all our biking adventures and is non negotiable. If you do not wear a helmet you will not be allowed to cycle. Your tour leader is trained in first aid and emergency rescue, but to a large degree you must be responsible for your own safety while riding. It is therefore compulsory that you take out travel insurance that will cover you for a mountain biking tour.

Guides

You will be led by a local English-speaking guide and if the group is 9 people or more we will add another guide to the tour. All our guides are well informed in the history, culture and religions of the area where you are biking and are skilled at passing that knowledge on to you. Your guide is also medically trained and an experienced cyclist, able to handle most minor repairs en route.

THE NITTY GRITTY

Passports and Visas

Bulgaria is a member of the Schengen Area. Citizens of the UK, US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand don't need a visa for short-term tourism and can stay up to 90 days in any 180-day period. Citizens of the EU, Switzerland and Norway can enter with a valid national ID card or passport. Everyone else should check with their nearest Bulgarian embassy. Your passport needs to be valid for at least three months beyond the date you plan to leave, and issued within the last ten years. The Entry/Exit System (EES) now runs at all Schengen borders, so on arrival you'll have your facial image and fingerprints registered in place of the old passport stamp. The first registration takes a few minutes and can mean longer queues at busy airports, so allow extra time when you land. The EU is also introducing ETIAS, a paid travel authorisation for visa-exempt visitors. It isn't in operation yet and the start date has moved more than once, so check the official EU ETIAS page for the current position before you travel.

Health & Insurance

No vaccinations are compulsory for Bulgaria. Make sure your routine vaccinations are up to date, including MMR, tetanus and polio, and speak to your doctor about hepatitis A and B. The CDC's Bulgaria page covers the current recommendations. Travel insurance is essential and needs to cover cycling and medical evacuation, which matters most in the mountains where help takes longer to reach you. EU citizens should carry a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) and UK citizens a Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC), giving access to state healthcare on the same terms as Bulgarian residents. Neither replaces travel insurance.

Weather

The riding season runs from late April to early October. June and September give the most comfortable conditions, usually 20°C to 25°C (68°F to 77°F). July and August are hot on the plains and in the Rose Valley, often above 30°C (86°F), which is when the Rhodopes and the higher ground are worth the climb. Snow lingers above 2,000 metres in the Rila and Pirin ranges into early June. Mountain weather turns fast in any month and the descents are long, so pack a waterproof shell and a warm layer whatever the forecast says.

Food

Bulgarian food is built on bread, brined cheese, yoghurt and grilled meat. *Banitsa*, a coiled filo pastry filled with egg and *sirene* cheese, turns up at breakfast everywhere. *Shopska* salad, tomatoes and cucumber under a heap of grated *sirene*, starts most meals. In the Rhodopes, *patatnik* is grated potato baked with onion and herbs, and the smoked cheese and lamb from the region are worth ordering. Bulgarian yoghurt, *kiselo mlyako*, comes with almost everything, and the bacterium that makes it is named *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* after the country. Portions are large and dishes are usually shared from the middle of the table. Most dietary requirements can be catered for if you tell us at the time of booking.

Drink

Tap water is safe to drink across the country, and in the mountain villages it often runs straight from a spring. Coffee is espresso by default. Bulgaria has been making wine since Thracian times and the reds are the ones to look for: Mavrud from around Plovdiv, and the dark Shiroka Melnishka Loza grown near Melnik in the southwest. *Rakia*, a fruit brandy usually made from grapes or plums, comes before the meal rather than after, served alongside a salad. Alcohol isn't included in the tour price.

Solo Travellers

SpiceRoads welcomes solo adventurers and does not charge a mandatory single supplement. We arrange for you to share a room with another traveller of the same gender. If no match is available, you receive a single room at no additional cost. If you prefer to guarantee your own private room for the duration of the trip, a single supplement is available at the rate listed in the tour pricing.

Extra Expenses

Bulgaria is inexpensive by European standards, particularly outside Sofia. Set aside cash for meals on the days they aren't included, drinks, cave and museum entry that isn't part of the tour, and anything you want to take home. Village shops and small restaurants often don't take cards. Honey, rose oil and Troyan pottery are what people usually come back with.

Tipping is voluntary in Bulgaria and isn't built into prices. In restaurants and cafes, rounding up or adding around 10 percent is normal for good service, though check whether a service charge is already on the bill in smarter places. Taxi fares are usually rounded up. A euro or two per bag for porters and per night for housekeeping is common.

Money

Bulgaria uses the euro. Cards work in hotels, larger restaurants and shops in Sofia, Plovdiv and the bigger towns, and cash machines take most international cards. In the mountain villages the economy still runs on cash, so carry notes for markets, small cafes and anywhere without a terminal. Small denominations are more useful than large ones.

GENERAL BOOKING INFO

If this is the tour for you here's what you need to do to confirm your place:

FLEXIBLE BOOKING CONDITIONS

Booking a SpiceRoads cycling adventure is easy and we try to do everything possible to make sure you have full flexibility and peace of mind. We do not require a deposit to hold your place on a tour and once full payment has been made your money is protected in our client account and you have the flexibility to cancel or change your booking if needed.

CONFIRMING YOUR BOOKING

Just complete our online booking form or send your booking details offline (email or post), and we will confirm your participation. No deposit is needed to confirm your place on a SpiceRoads tour.

You are advised to read our Booking Conditions in full before you make your payment and should you require further clarifications of any of the conditions below, please email us or call our office.

TRIP STATUS

There is a minimum number of participants (usually 2) required to enable the trip to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to Depart'. Once a trip is guaranteed to depart you are free to book your flights and make other travel arrangements. If the trip status is 'Limited' will mean we have only a small number of spaces available for booking. If you are unsure about the trip status, please email us or call our office.

BOOKING ONLINE

From the tour page, click the 'Book Now' link. All departures for this tour will appear, just select the date you'd like to travel. For the next steps, you'll need to know the names of the people travelling. If you wish you can also provide extra details such as passport numbers, height (for bike hire), or you can add that later by logging into Manage My Trip (we'll set up an account for you automatically if you don't already have one). Our system will contact you from time to time to fill in the missing information, as it will be required before departure. However, if the trip that you are booking offers a child discount, you will have to fill out the date of birth of each rider (so we can calculate the appropriate discount).

If you are having any problems please send us an email, or give us a call (+66 026 3295) and one of our travel specialists will assist you with your booking.

BOOKING OFFLINE

Just call us or send an email indicating which trip you want to join and we will happily send you a list of questions and process your booking for you.

DEPOSITS AND PAYMENTS

We do not require a deposit or full payment to book a place for you on a tour.

The balance of the tour's cost (final invoice) will need to be paid 60 days before the departure date with fees for any bicycle rental(s), single supplement(s) and extra hotel nights.

In the case where a booking is made when there are less than 60 days until the tour departure date, the tour's cost should be paid in full within 72 hours of receiving an invoice from SpiceRoads. Payment can be made by credit card using our online payment gateway or by bank transfer. When making payment online you will need to confirm that you have read these booking conditions during the "checkout" process, which equates to agreeing to the terms of services and stipulations as indicated in this document.

In all cases, tour fees need to be paid "in full" before participation in a tour. No person(s) will be allowed to join a tour without fully settling their invoice and receiving a confirmation number from SpiceRoads.

The exception can be made for last-minute miscellaneous fees that can be paid locally (visas, additional local hotel bookings, etc.) can be settled on the day of arrival.

FULL FLEXIBILITY FOR TOUR CANCELATIONS

If the tour is cancelled or postponed by SpiceRoads because we didn't make the trip numbers and the tour can't run, we will make a full cash refund (by bank transfer or on your credit card).

If the tour is cancelled for any other reason, including due to Covid related travel restrictions, we will give you a full credit (with no deductions for admin or any other small-print item) to use on any SpiceRoads tour with no time limit. (Exceptions being flights, special permits and other non-refundable items and these will be advised when booking the trip).

Before paying for your tour, you can cancel your booking with no charge and up until 40 days before departure, you can change your booking to another travel date or move your booking onto another SpiceRoads tour with no charges.

If you need to cancel after you have made full payment, please see our cancellation policy.

Loyalty Riders Club

For those who have been on several long tours with us, we reward customer loyalty by offering repeat customers a special discount off the tour price (excludes single supplement and bike rental). If this is your fourth scheduled tour or more you will receive a 5% discount. If this is your eighth scheduled tour or more we will extend a 10% discount. The discount will be reflected in your online booking, but please contact us if any questions. Loyalty discounts cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer. Note: Only tours of 7 days or more will be applicable for a loyalty discount.

International Flights

International flights, to and from the start and finish points are not included in the tour price. Once your tour is Guaranteed to Depart you can book your flight. Please contact us for advice before arranging flights for the best arrival and departure times. We would only cancel a trip for an extreme circumstance, but in that case, where we cancel your trip, we cannot be liable for losses incurred relating to any flight booking you have made. Please claim any losses from your travel insurance that you acquired when you booked your holiday.

Newsletter

Our adventure travel e-newsletter is full of travel news, trip information, interesting stories and contests. To avoid missing out on special offers and updates from SpiceRoads, be sure to subscribe.

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