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Bulgaria & the Black Sea: Painted Towns, Byzantine Monasteries & Thracian Treasures 2024

8 MAY – 22 MAY 2024 *Code: 22411*

Tour Leaders Dr Katya Melamed, Russell Casey

Physical Ratings

Bulgarian archaeologist Dr Katya Melamed leads this tour, travelling from Sofia across to the Black Sea coast visiting painted towns, Byzantine monasteries & Thracian treasures.

Overview

- Bulgarian archaeologist Dr Katya Melamed leads this tour, travelling from Sofia across to the Black Sea coast. Katya will be assisted by Russell Casey.
- The cosmopolitan capital of Sofia, including the National Archaeological Museum and the World Heritage-listed Boyana Church – its stunning, richly coloured, 13th-century frescoes are among the oldest and most interesting examples of Eastern European medieval art.
- Rila Monastery – spectacular UNESCO World Heritage Site with brightly coloured frescoes.
- A journey through the Pirin Range to the town of Bansko with fine timber-framed stone houses; home to the Holy Trinity Church and the famous 18th-century icon painting school.
- Roman archaeological sites of Plovdiv including the Bishop Basilica. Discovered in 1982, the basilica features almost 2000 square metres of multi-coloured mosaics.
- A well-preserved group of Neolithic dwellings at Stara Zagora.
- Important Thracian (Greek) tombs of Kazanluk, Goliama Kosmatka, Ostrusha and Sveshtari with beautiful 4th-century BC frescoes and reliefs; and the Thracian Art Museum containing the exact replica of the Tomb of Alexandrovo.
- Unique regional architecture – especially the National Revival architecture of Bulgarian towns such as Veliko Turnovo and distinctive local arts and cultures, such as the wood carving of Tryavna and artisans' workshops of Etara.
- Music performances including a concert by the Orthodox choir in Arbanassi.
- Extraordinary natural beauty of diverse landscapes: lofty mountain ranges, lovely valleys, plains and meadows and ancient mineral springs.
- A three-day excursion to the Black Sea coast including visits to the Horseman of Madara bas relief, Varna's Archaeological Museum (housing an extraordinary collection of 6000-year-old gold ornaments) and the Byzantine churches of Nessebar.
- The Rock-hewn Churches of Ivanovo, a UNESCO World Heritage site containing wonderful examples of Bulgarian medieval art.

Overnight Sofia (3 nights) • Bansko (1 night) • Plovdiv (3 nights) • Kazanluk (1 night) • Veliko Turnovo (2 nights) • Varna (3 nights) • Bucharest, Romania (1 night)

Introduction

From bustling Sofia, we journey over the deeply forested Balkan Mountains to the historic maritime highway of the Black Sea, crossing the broad waters of the Danube to Bucharest. Contemporary Bulgaria owes much to its Thracian, Slavic and Turkic history. Golden Byzantine beauty and Ottoman sophistication meld into Bulgaria's unique, richly coloured culture. Opulent painted hues animate intricate frescoes at the UNESCO world heritage sites of Boyana Church and remote, mountainous, glinting gold-leafed Rila Monastery. Arbanassi, Bachkovo monasteries, and Bansko, bring medieval pilgrimage and faith to life. Christian belief and strong citadels succoured medieval Bulgarian identity. Hilltop Veliko Turnovo, former capital of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom, combines fine churches with an unconquerable fortress; Baldwin I of Flanders was imprisoned in one its towers. At the well-preserved prehistoric village of Stara Zagora and Thracian Sveshtari and Kazanluk we plunge back into deep time to explore Bulgaria's roots. The subterranean Thracian tombs at Kazanluk were once filled with the finest gold of the ancient world, which we view in Sofia's National Museum. Aleksandrovo's Museum of Thracian Art displays a reconstructed tomb with colourful painted hunting scenes. Sveshtari has extraordinary sculpted caryatids, exceptional in the ancient world. At Kazanluk, once the centre for Rose Attar, an elixir gracing the Courts of Ottoman Sultans and European aristocrats, the Orthodox choir of St Elias will enchant. We wander the cobbled streets of Roman Plovdiv's old medieval town, with painted houses redolent with Balkan atmosphere. In Tryavna we explore stunning vernacular National Revival architecture decorated with traditional woodcarving. Ancient

gold glitters again at Varna, home to master metalworkers 6000 years ago – their creations unequalled for two millennia. The rock-hewn Churches of Ivanovo arguably best exemplify the Bulgarian tradition of rich decoration, light and energy. Their expressive interiors shimmer with naturalistic landscapes of intense drama and thrilling atmosphere. Bulgaria offers a heady mix of folk music, roses, sultans and warlords, woodcarving and frescoes, saints, slaves and kings.

Testimonial

This tour gave me an in-depth insight into a past I was only partially familiar with, and a present that is fast changing. I knew nothing of the riches of Thracian culture and history, nor of present-day Bulgaria, which is fast nearing the end of its transition from communism, and is in the present day straddling of the two worlds of the EU and Putin's Russia. Our guides were exceptional, always knowledgeable about the topic and following up on questions. Elizabeth, VIC.

Leaders

Dr Katya Melamed

Foremost Bulgarian Archaeologist specialising in burial practices from the Thracians to Christianity. Retired from the Bulgarian Inst. of Archaeology, she continues to direct excavations and publish widely in Bulgarian and English. ASA lecturer since 2005.

Katya Melamed, PhD, is one of Bulgaria's foremost experts in Medieval Archaeology. Recently retired from the Bulgarian Institute of Archaeology, she continues to direct a number of excavations. She has a particular interest in the continuation of burial practices from the Thracians to the Christian era. Educated at St. Cyril and Methodius University, Veliko Turnovo, the Institute of Archaeology in Poland, and London University's Institute of Archaeology. She has published many works in her particular research fields: the development of Balkan culture in the Late Roman and Early Byzantine periods; the pagan period of the early Middle Ages; continuities between antique and medieval culture; the archaeology and culture of the great migration period in Balkan history, and ethnography and ethno-archaeology. Katya is at present compiling a Bulgarian-English archaeological dictionary. From the very beginning, Katya has made crucial contributions to the development of ASA's tour in Bulgaria. Her vast knowledge of Bulgarian history, her eloquence, and her kind and convivial nature have earned her many devotees among ASA travellers.

Russell Casey

A dedicated traveller with a passion for calligraphy, miniature paintings and textiles, Russell has travelled extensively through the Middle East, Iran & Central Asia. His language studies include French, German, Japanese, Arabic, Persian & Mandarin. Russell has led ASA's tours since 2009.

Russell Casey has led tours for ASA since 2009. He has held a fascination for the Middle East, Persia, Central Asia and the Silk Route since studying Latin at school. With a keen interest in languages, Russell studied French, German, Japanese, Arabic, Persian and Chinese (Mandarin). Learning Japanese generated an interest in calligraphy and woodblock prints. Persian and Arabic studies added to the appeal of calligraphy and 'The Art of the Book', which in turn led to visiting some of the great libraries and museums of the United Kingdom and Ireland to view their collections. After independently visiting Turkey, Syria and Jordan, Russell travelled to Iran on the ASA Art and Culture of Persia tour in 2002. In 2005 after completing the ASA Silk Route tour, he revisited Iran to further his understanding of Persian speaking peoples and their

arts – including textiles, architecture, gardens and cuisine. He holds a Queensland Ambulance Service first aid certificate, a Master's degree in Medical Physics and is undertaking independent study in the art, history and culture of Central Asia, the Silk Route and surrounding regions. Russell consults in radiation protection and eHealth, including working as an expert advisor to the IAEA.

Combine this tour with

Romania Revealed: Saxon Villages, Transylvanian Cities and Byzantine Monasteries 2024
22 MAY – 4 JUN 2024

The Scottish Highlands: Great Country Houses, Castles & Gardens 2024
27 MAY – 10 JUN 2024

Itinerary

The following itinerary lists a range of site visits which we plan to visit. Many are accessible to the public, but some require special permission which may only be confirmed closer to the tour's departure. The daily activities described in this itinerary may change or be rotated and/or modified in order to accommodate alterations in opening hours, flight schedules and confirmation of private visits. Participants will receive a final itinerary together with their tour documents. The tour includes breakfast daily, lunches and dinners indicated in the itinerary where: B=breakfast, L=lunch & D=dinner.

Sofia - 3 nights

Day 1: Wednesday 8 May, Arrive Sofia

- Tour commences at 5.30pm in the foyer of the Grand Hotel Sofia
- Welcome Meeting & Orientation Walk
- Group Dinner at the hotel

Meeting Point: The tour commences at 5.30pm in the foyer of the Grand Hotel Sofia, located in the heart of the city, overlooking the city garden and the National Theatre.

We commence the tour with a brief welcome meeting followed by a short orientation walk within the vicinity of our hotel. Tonight we shall have an early dinner together at the hotel. (Overnight Sofia) D

Day 2: Thursday 9 May, Sofia

- National Archaeological Museum
- St George Rotunda
- Serdica Archaeological Complex incl. Roman Walls
- Walking tour viewing exterior of the Presidency, Parliament Square, National Theatre & City Garden
- Alexander Nevsky Memorial Church

- St Sofia Church
- Welcome Dinner at the Clock House

Sofia has an ancient history. Numerous Neolithic villages have been discovered in the area, and a Chalcolithic settlement has been recently discovered in the very centre of the modern city. The Thracian Serdi tribe settled here in the 7th century BC, and they gave Sofia its first recorded name – Serdica. The Byzantines called it 'Triaditsa' and the Slavs, 'Sredets'. In the third century AD, the Romans built strong walls around Serdica, their capital of Inner Dacia and an important stopping point on the Roman road from Naisus (present Nish, Serbia) to Constantinople. Today there are many interesting archaeological sites in Sofia that display the city's diverse history – the castle gates and towers of Serdica, public buildings and streets thousands of years old. Unfortunately many of the most important sites are inaccessible, hidden beneath modern buildings. But despite extensive reconstruction in the 20th century, Sofia does contain hidden pockets of great beauty, remnants of the Orthodox Bulgarian Empire.

We begin today with a visit to Sofia's National Archaeological Museum, which occupies a former Ottoman mosque in the heart of the city. This collection has priceless treasures from antiquity as well as the first and second Bulgarian kingdoms.

Next, we view the small Rotunda of St George. This 4th-century brick building in the courtyard behind the Sheraton Hotel is adorned with finely preserved early medieval frescoes. There are also remains of a 2nd-century street and other Byzantine ruins on the site.

We also visit Sofia's ancient Serdica Archaeological Complex, which opened in April 2016. This new complex offers visitors a glimpse into the Bulgarian capital city's ancient Roman past. The complex, largely below street level and covering an area of about 9000 square metres, includes eight streets, an early Christian basilica – believed to have been built in two stages in the 4th to late 5th centuries, and the late 5th to late 6th centuries, and the largest and earliest found from ancient Serdica – six large buildings and a late medieval church.

After lunch we shall see the Presidency, the National Theatre, Alexander Nevsky Memorial Church and the Basilica of Saint Sofia. Alexander Nevsky Memorial Church was completed in 1912 in honour of the Russian casualties of the 1877-78 War of Liberation from Ottoman Rule. Gold-domed, it is one of the most ambitious and richly elaborated churches in the Balkans. Craftsmen and artists from six countries worked on the five-aisle church in the course of thirty years and created real masterpieces in the form of icons, frescoes, murals and huge chandeliers. The interior decoration, with Italian marble, Egyptian alabaster, Brazilian onyx, gold and beautiful mosaics, embodies the spirit of the finest Eastern Orthodox traditions.

St Sofia church is of profound symbolic importance because, in the 14th century, it gave the city the name it retains today. This Byzantine basilica was built during the reign of the great emperor Justinian in the 6th century. It has survived intact, preserving its 1600-year-old mosaic details. An optional visit to the basilica's basement reveals the remains of two or maybe even three earlier churches, destroyed in the barbarian invasions of Goths in the 4th century and Huns in the 5th century.

This evening we enjoy a Welcome Dinner in one of Sofia's local restaurants. (Overnight Sofia) BLD

Day 3: Friday 10 May, Sofia

- National History Museum
- Boyana Church
- Introductory lecture at the hotel

- Time at leisure

We begin today by visiting Boyana, a suburb at the foot of Mount Vitosha, which overlooks Sofia. Here we visit the National History Museum which has an excellent didactic display tracing the history of Bulgaria from prehistory to the 19th century. Nearby, is the small 11th-century Boyana Church. Its stunning, richly coloured, 13th-century frescoes are among the oldest and most interesting examples of Eastern European medieval art. Their naturalism is arguably in advance of that of the proto-Renaissance in Italy. The Boyana Church has been heritage listed by UNESCO. Following an introductory lecture at the hotel, the remainder of the day is at leisure. (Overnight Sofia) BL

Bansko - 1 night

Day 4: Saturday 11 May, Sofia – Rila Monastery – Bansko

- Rila Monastery
- Permanent Icon Exhibition 'Bansko Art School'
- Dinner in a *mehana* (traditional restaurant)

This morning we depart for Rila Monastery, Bulgaria's largest monastery, holiest place and greatest pilgrimage centre. Located in a narrow valley of the Rila Mountains, it grew from an original 10th-century foundation by Ivan Rilski, leader of a community of hermits. The present monastery was founded in the 14th century and, despite periods of decline, became a dominant feudal institution, instrumental in preserving Bulgarian religion and culture when the country was part of the Ottoman Empire. It consists of a huge enclosure protected by lofty walls. On the interior side of the walls are lovely, painted wooden balconies, behind which are the monks' cells and areas designated to services like hospitals and a massive kitchen which could serve thousands of pilgrims at a time.

Following lunch at a local restaurant whose dishes include grilled trout, we drive to the pretty town of Bansko, nestled in a verdant landscape set against the ice-capped Mt Vihren, highest peak of the Pirin range. On arrival we visit the exhibition of icon paintings containing original 18th-century icons, painted by representatives from the famous Bansko Icon-Painting School, some of which are from the Rila Monastery.

This evening we dine in a local *mehana*. *Mehanas* are small cosy restaurants which serve traditional food and entertain guests with Bulgarian folk music. (Overnight Bansko) BLD

Plovdiv - 3 nights

Day 5: Sunday 12 May, Bansko – Velingrad – Bachkovo Monastery – Plovdiv

- Walking Tour of Bansko
- Holy Trinity Church, Bansko
- Bachkovo Monastery

Bansko became a sleepy backwater in the 20th century, and hence preserves much of the style of the former agricultural life of the country. The old town of Bansko has fine timber-framed stone houses protected by stout walls built to withstand siege, and great double doors. Many of these houses were built in the 19th century when Bansko grew wealthy from its role as an entrepôt on the trade route to the Aegean port of Kavalla.

Many of the merchants who benefitted from this trade endowed a beautiful church dedicated to the Holy Trinity, that we will visit as we stroll through the old town. Built in 1835, the Holy Trinity complex consists of

a church and bell tower, surrounded by a one-metre thick and four-metre high stone wall. At its main entrance a Christian cross and a Turkish crescent symbolise tolerance between religions. The interior of the three-naved sanctuary is impressive, featuring a magnificent iconostasis carved in hazelnut wood and beautiful frescoes. These masterpieces are the work of the 18th-century artist, Veljan Ognev. The most outstanding representative of the Bansko art school – Dimitar Molerov, decorated the icons. Until Sofia's Alexander Nevsky Cathedral was completed in 1912, this was Bulgaria's largest church.

We next drive into the Rhodopes, headed for Plovdiv. These mountains formed in legend when Rhodopis, the lover of Hem, was transformed for daring to call herself Hera. This mountainous area of Bulgaria has powerful memories, for it gave birth in antiquity to Orpheus and the Orphic cult. It has only recently been made accessible to travellers. It has a large Turkish population and is the one region which saw large-scale conversion to Islam after the Ottoman invasion.

We lunch at the popular spa town of Velingrad before driving to Bachkovo Monastery, second in size only to Rila Monastery and is also heritage listed by UNESCO. Inaugurated in 1083, it was restored many times. Its oldest building is its church, Sveta Bogoroditsa, which has a rich program of murals, including a powerful *Last Judgement*. Elsewhere, paintings depict a varied iconography such as a narrative of the monastery's history and the slaying of a dragon, a Thracian archetype which was transformed by Christians into the personae of St George and St Demetrios. This image can be interpreted as symbolising the Bulgarian struggle against the Turks. (Overnight Plovdiv) BLD

Day 6: Monday 13 May, Plovdiv

- Traditional Houses of Plovdiv's historic centre
- Roman Theatre
- Small Basilica and Late-Antique Mosaics of Philippopolis
- Trakart Cultural Centre
- Bishop's Basilica
- Time at leisure

Bulgaria's second city, Plovdiv, is a worthy rival to Sofia. Its situation astride the River Maritsa, and its three hills which are prominent features on the Thracian plain, indicate its strategic significance and account for its long history. Thracians, Romans, Byzantines, Ottoman Turks and Bulgarians have all left their architectural mark on the city. High up on its hill, for example, is the ruined citadel of Nebet Tepe, first fortified in the 5th century BC by a Thracian tribe, and subsequently seen as an essential target by every successive conqueror of this region.

This morning we visit the historic centre of Plovdiv. The old town is a feast of traditional architecture, especially of the National Revival style, here more sophisticated than in Bulgaria's small towns and villages. There is a veritable warren of cobbled alleys, along some of which ancient fortress walls from the Byzantine period are to be seen. A prominent house with a striking symmetrical appearance is the Lamartine House, named after the French poet who stayed here in 1833 while writing his *Voyage en Orient*. Several of the old houses are now delightful restaurants, for example the Alafrangite and Puldin, and these give a good idea of the opulence of these mansions in their heyday.

Plovdiv is the heir to one of the biggest and most famous ancient towns in the Balkan Peninsula – Philippopolis. We visit the Roman theatre, which was discovered after a landslide in 1972. This magnificent 2nd-century AD amphitheatre, built during the reign of Emperor Trajan, once held around 6000 spectators.

Nearby is the Small Basilica which was discovered in 1988 and restored in 2013. This small church, dating from the 5th and 6th centuries, also contains fine mosaics including a beautiful stag and doves found in the baptistery.

After lunch at a local restaurant in this historic core of the city, we visit the Trakart Cultural Centre, which contains an excellent exhibition of floor mosaics from a residential building from the 4th century AD, left *in situ*. The large mosaics show a female head surrounded by geometric patterns and the name Eirene.

We also visit the early 5th-century Bishop Basilica. Discovered in 1982, the basilica is believed to be the largest Early-Christian temple found in the lands of the Roman province of Thrace. Little from the remarkable architecture of the three-nave basilica with an apse, a narthex, and a colonnaded atrium has survived through centuries. However, it features almost 2000 square metres of multi-coloured mosaics spread across two floors. These intricate mosaics include geometric patterns, including figurative images of vases, flower baskets, plants and birds. The decoration and patterns were strongly influenced by the early-Christian centres in Asia Minor and Syria. The most impressive of them are: *The Spring of Life* scenes laid in the centre of each side aisle, the images of over 100 birds in the middle panel of the nave, as well as the rosette-like peacock with an opened tail, surrounded by other birds and two *kantharoi*, located in the middle of the narthex.

The remainder of the day is at leisure for you to further explore Plovdiv. You may wish to visit the Georgiadi House, which also has a remarkable exterior. Inside, there is a small Museum of the National Liberation Struggle. Another handsome building houses a permanent exhibition of the works of Zlatyu Boyadjiev (1903-1976), who painted many scenes of Bulgarian village life. (Overnight Plovdiv) BL

Day 7: Tuesday 14 May, Plovdiv – Alexandrovo – Haskovo – Plovdiv

- Thracian Art Museum containing an exact replica of the Alexandrovo Tomb
- The Regional Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv

This morning we make an excursion to the village of Aleksandrovo, where in 2000, the Tomb of Aleksandrovo was discovered during excavations of the Roshava Chuka ('Rockpile Peak') Thracian burial mound. This Thracian tomb is one of the most important archeological discoveries ever made in Bulgaria. It was built during the second half of the 4th century BC as a final resting place for an unknown wealthy Thracian ruler. The Aleksandrovo Tomb is one of the largest complexes of its type, and its unique frescoes on a variety of subjects cover the whole tomb, from the corridors to both burial chambers. The most complex of the frescoes are in the circular chamber. Most of the images depict hunting scenes. In 2009, the Museum of Thracian Art in the eastern Rhodopes was opened in the immediate vicinity of the tomb. Here we view an exact replica of the tomb.

We transfer to Haskovo for lunch at a local restaurant housed in a building of the National Revival architecture style before returning to Plovdiv to visit the Regional Archaeological Museum (RAM). One of the first Bulgarian cultural institutions, the museum officially opened in 1882. Its funds initially consisted of a numismatic collection of 1500 coins, ethnographic and historical documents, church plates, and incunabula from the 8th-17th centuries AD, as well as 300 icons and paintings by some of the most famous Bulgarian painters Stanislav Dospevski, Ivan Lazarov, Tzanko Lavrenov, Nikolay Rainov, Zlatju Boiadjiev, and many others. Today the museum boasts one of the richest collections of 100,000 exhibits of artefacts related to the history of Plovdiv and its region. (Overnight Plovdiv) BL

Kazanluk - 1 night

Day 8: Wednesday 15 May, Plovdiv – Stara Zagora – Kazanluk

- Neolithic Dwellings Museum, Stara Zagora
- Kazanluk Thracian Museum & Thracian Tomb replica
- Goliama Kosmatka Thracian Tomb (original tomb)
- Ostrusha Tomb (original tomb)
- Shushmanets Tomb (original tomb)

Today we drive north-west into the Valley of the Roses via the provincial city of Stara Zagora, where we visit the best-preserved prehistoric site in Europe. The site, now incorporated into a purpose-built museum, consists of the remains of two dwellings. These are so extraordinarily well preserved that it is possible to discern where people stored food, cooked and performed other household tasks, and slept. Within these spaces lies a large amount of pottery which was used for a variety of purposes.

After visiting this site, we turn north to Kazanluk, located in the Valley of the Roses. The valley takes its name from roses originally imported from India and which, until recently, supplied 70 per cent of the world's rose oil.

After lunch we visit the Thracian Tomb in Kazanluk (we hope for permission to enter the original Kazanaluk tomb, if not possible there is an excellent replica), decorated with beautiful 4th-century BC frescoes. This mausoleum of the 4th century BC was discovered in 1944. The style is typical of Thracian tombs from the 5th to 4th century BC, with a vaulted entrance corridor and a chamber topped by a beehive dome. The tomb has fine reliefs and interesting early paintings. The reliefs depict architectural and plant motifs and battle scenes. The dome paintings are the greatest treasure of the tomb. They are a masterpiece of Hellenistic art and depict a funeral feast and racing chariots.

Next, we visit the Goliama Kosmatka ('Big Hairy') Mound. Inside is situated one of the most majestic and rich Thracian tombs with a completely preserved grave of a Thracian king, buried with his horse. It was built in the 5th century BC and consists of three chambers and a corridor with a total length of 26 metres. The first room is rectangular, and a skeleton of a horse has been discovered in it. The second room is round, with a beautiful 450-centimetre-tall dome-shaped roof. There is a marble door with images of people at the entrance of this room. The third room is actually a monolithic granite block – a sarcophagus weighing about sixty tons. There is an inner room, carved into it with great precision, and inside it is the stone bed of the Thracian ruler who was buried here. More than twenty gold objects with great artistic value have been discovered inside the sarcophagus – a gold wreath with oak leaves and acorns, a wine chalice, horses' appliques, a wine glass, gold coins from the time of King Sevt, a deer's head, a goddess's head, as well as numerous silver and bronze vessels. Of no lesser value is the iron sword with golden application, a bronze sword, a helmet, an armour-plate, as well as other weapons. The life-size bronze head of a bearded man with eyes made of precious minerals is quite intriguing. The size of the tomb and the great value of the treasures it contained prove that an important Thracian ruler was buried here.

Nearby we also visit the Thracian tomb of Ostrusha located near the Bulgarian town of Shipka. The Ostrusha mound, a Thracian burial tumulus, was constructed in the middle of the 4th century BC. The stone structures under the more than 18-metre-high mound form one of the biggest representative tomb-cult complexes, with six rooms on an area of one hundred square metres. It was professionally excavated in 1993. One of the chambers is fully maintained. It is made of two carved-out solid granite blocks, weighing a total of more than 60 tons. The roof block is divided into dozens of square and circle shaped niches filled with masterfully painted portraits, scenes with people, fighting between animals, plants and geometric decorations. Most of the frescoes are severely damaged apart from a portrait of a young noblewoman. A horse with full set of silver appliques, as well as a gilded armour collar and two silver vessels, were found in

one of the other rooms that was not robbed in antiquity.

We end the day with a visit to the tomb at Shushmanets Mound. Recently opened, this is another masterpiece of Thracian architecture. It was built as a temple in the 4th century and later used as a tomb. (Overnight Kazanluk) BLD

Veliko Turnovo - 2 nights

Day 9: Thursday 16 May, Kazanluk – Shipka Pass – Etara – Tryavna – Veliko Turnovo

- Shipka Memorial Church
- Shipka Pass Monument
- Etara Architecture and Ethnographic complex
- Museum of the Wood-Carving and Ethnographical Arts, Tryavna

This morning we drive to the magnificent Russian-style Shipka Memorial Church (1902) which is dedicated to some 7000 Russian troops and Bulgarian volunteers who died at the nearby Shipka Pass resisting attempts by 27,000 Turkish soldiers to break through to relieve their comrades besieged in nearby Pleven. The Russian-Turkish war of 1877-78 was a watershed in the development of modern Bulgaria.

From the Shipka Memorial Church we continue north to Veliko Turnovo via the Shipka Pass, Etara and the village of Tryavna. Our journey provides beautiful panoramas of the Valley of the Roses, relieved everywhere by the mounds of Thracian tombs.

Etara is a fascinating open-air museum in which priceless examples of old Bulgarian architecture and artisan workshops have been gathered. The centre functions like a town in which artisans use 19th-century water-power to turn wood, weave, etc. There are blacksmiths, carpet weavers, cobblers, tinsmiths, makers of delicious cakes and buns, an original Turkish coffee house, and a studio where some of Bulgaria's most famous icon painters work.

After lunch in Etara, we drive to Tryavna. This is a national centre of wood carving, and most of its lovely nineteenth century houses post-date the creation of the Guild of Master-builders and Woodcarvers (1804). The carvings which grace the houses are a delight. The town has a beautiful square from the National Revival period dominated by a stone clock tower with a picturesque wooden belfry. Ulitsa Slaveykov is arguably the best National Revival streetscape in Bulgaria. We shall spend the early afternoon in Tryavna and then drive north to the dramatically situated Veliko Turnovo. (Overnight Veliko Turnovo) BLD

Day 10: Friday 17 May, Veliko Turnovo – Arbanassi – Nikyup – Veliko Turnovo

- Tsarevets Royal Hill & Fortress, Veliko Turnovo
- Konstantsaliev's House, Arbanassi
- Church of the Nativity of Christ, Arbanassi
- Short concert by an Eastern Orthodox choir, Arbanassi
- Roman town of Nicopolis ad Istrum, Nikyup
- Samovoden Street, Veliko Turnovo

The old quarter of Veliko Turnovo is one of the most dramatically situated towns in the world. Its houses cling to the steep sides of three hills in the Tsarevets Massif overlooking the Yantra River, interspersed with highly evocative fortifications. Le Corbusier saw the town as a stunning example of organic architecture. Veliko Turnovo was the capital of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom which held sway between 1185 and 1396

and then became a centre of resistance against the Turks. It is also surrounded by monasteries and small towns huddled in the mountains which were founded when the town's aristocracy left the city after it was finally conquered by Ottoman forces. Veliko Turnovo is dominated by the medieval citadel of Tsarevets, which we view from nearby hills. Its profile is inflected by the highly evocative Baldwin's Tower which takes its name from the fact that the first Frankish emperor of Byzantium, Baldwin of Flanders, was incarcerated here in 1205 (the soldiers of the Fourth Crusade had sacked Constantinople a year earlier and set up a western kingdom there).

We then drive the short distance to the picturesque mountaintop village of Arbanassi, where we will have lunch. Arbanassi's wealthy merchants, aristocrats who had fled the capital below, built large, fortress-like stone houses around a beautiful urban centre endowed with churches, chapels and public drinking fountains. We spend the afternoon visiting the village. Here we shall visit the lovely Church of the Holy Nativity. Its exterior has little that is church-like, as it had to conform to Ottoman restrictions on church-building. But within the walls everything changes. Every centimetre of its interior is covered by brilliantly coloured frescoes, one of the most extensive Byzantine iconographic cycles in existence. We also attend a short concert by an Eastern Orthodox choir.

Mid-afternoon we travel north to the ancient town of Nicopolis ad Isturm, founded by the Roman Emperor Trajan (Marcus Ulpius Traianus r. 98-117 AD) to honour his famous victories over the Dacian tribes in 102 AD. This predominately Greek city developed under Trajan's successors, particularly Hadrian and Septemius Severus, beautified by the emperors with an array of fine civic buildings including a new Forum, Council Chamber, Imperial Cult temple and a small theatre. The city was devastated by the Huns in the 5th century and Justinian the Great rebuilt a fort from the *spolia* of the earlier Roman *colonia* at the beginning of the 6th century. The Byzantine fort was in turn destroyed by Avar raiders crossing the Danube from the Pontic steppe at the end of the 6th century, burying the earlier Roman construction. A small town was rebuilt on the site by Bulgars in the 10th century, before being entirely abandoned in the 14th century in favour of medieval Veliko Turnovo, a mere 20 km away. The small museum on site holds a lovely collection of material from the city's Roman heyday, but the finest artefacts excavated from Nicopolis including a 2nd century AD Roman marble-copy of the famous 5th century BC bronze 'Eros of Praxiteles' and a beautiful bronze head of the emperor Gordian III are now in the National Museum in Sofia.

We shall then return to Veliko Turnovo to allow you to stroll along some of the city's quaint streets, including Samovoden Street, which has a number of antique and craft shops. (Overnight Veliko Turnovo) BLD

Varna - 3 nights

Day 11: Saturday 18 May, Veliko Turnovo – Sveshtari – Madara – Varna

- Sveshtarska Tomb, Sveshtari
- Madara Horseman

This morning we drive west to the Black Sea via the small village of Sveshtari. Near this village we visit a most important Thracian tomb that was discovered in 1982. This tomb of the 3rd century century BC gives you a clear vision of the structure of Thracian cult buildings. It is distinguished from other Thracian structures, however, by unique architectural decor, with polychrome half-human, half-plant caryatids and wall paintings. Ten of these high-relief female figures decorate the walls of its central chamber. These and the tomb's vault decoration are the only examples of their type found so far in the Thracian lands. The tomb provides a vivid image of the culture of the Getes, a Thracian people who were in contact with the Hellenistic world.

We shall also see the great carving of the so-called Madara Horseman etched twenty-three metres above ground level into the living rock of an almost vertical 100-metre high cliff. The horseman is thrusting a spear into a lion lying at his horse's feet. A dog runs after him. The Madara Horseman was carved at the very beginning of the 8th century AD, some three decades after the foundation of the Bulgarian State (681). Large rock-cut images of this type have a long heritage leading back to the ancient Achaemenid and Sasanian cliff sculptures of Persia. Sculptures like these portrayed the power of regimes for millennia. The Madara Horseman marked the recognition of the Bulgarian Kingdom by the Byzantine Empire. (Overnight Varna) BLD

Day 12: Sunday 19 May, Varna – Pobiti Kamani – Varna

- Varna Archaeological Museum
- Pobiti Kamani (The Stone Forest)

This morning we visit the Varna Archaeological Museum, one of Bulgaria's principal collections that displays treasures from all periods of the city's history. In 1972, excavations in the Varna Necropolis revealed almost two thousand gold artefacts from about 4000 BC; these are arguably the oldest worked gold pieces ever discovered. A highlight is the remains of a tribal leader wearing skillfully-made jewellery and surrounded by personal possessions. Many displays have magnifying glasses which reveal the complex, minute details of the consummate craftsmanship of these gold workers. Other exhibition halls contain Greek and Roman antiquities, including some fine ceramics, icons, weapons and materials from the 19th-century struggle for independence.

In the afternoon we drive some 18 kilometres west of Varna to visit one of Europe's two deserts (the other is in Spain) to explore the 'stone forest' known as Pobiti Kamani, translated to English as 'hammered stones'. The desert consists of sand dunes from which, over an area of 13 square kilometres, protrude myriad hollow stone columns that are between 5 and 7 metres high and from 0.3 to 3 metres thick. For centuries this extraordinary forest of stones was thought to be man-made, and myths proliferated about their origins. They are now known to be natural underwater chimneys. Some 590 million years ago, when much of Bulgaria and Romania were beneath the sea, gases were released from the seabed to rise through the layers of sludge as bubbles. As the sludge hardened to a crust these bubbles would force their way up through flues in the layers of sediment, and over millions of years these created a series of stone 'chimneys'. When the sea finally receded the area dried to form a barren, sandy landscape. Much of the limestone was eroded away, leaving only solitary stone chimneys rising out of the desert. (Overnight Varna) BL

Day 13: Monday 20 May, Varna – Nessebar – Varna

- Archaeological Museum
- St John Baptist Church (exterior)
- St Stefan Church
- St Spa Church
- Basilica of the Holy Mother of God Eleusa (exterior)
- Time at leisure in Nessebar
- Farewell Dinner at the Sea Terrace Restaurant

This morning we drive south along the Black Sea coast, to visit the old city of Nessebar and its fine churches. Founded by Megarans, who called it Messembria, it prospered as the only Dorian colony on the Black Sea; all other colonies here were Ionian. Conquered by Rome in the 1st century BC, it remained a substantial Byzantine city until incorporated into the first Bulgarian kingdom by Khan Kroum (812 AD). It was at this time that many of the city's myriad churches were built.

We shall visit the remains of the Byzantine basilica, and two beautiful churches from the period of the first Bulgarian kingdom. Of these, St Stefan Church has a particularly interesting façade decoration and 14th- and 15th-century frescoes. These Bulgarian masterpieces show the way in which the first kingdom derived much of its architectural culture from the Byzantines. After lunch at a local restaurant, there will be some free time to explore Nessebar before returning to Varna.

We celebrate our final evening in Bulgaria with dinner at the Sea Terrace Restaurant which offers spectacular views of the Black Sea. (Overnight Varna) BLD

Bucharest - 1 night

Day 14: Tuesday 21 May, Varna – Ivanovo – Ruse – Bucharest

- The UNESCO Rock-Hewn Churches of Ivanovo
- Leventa Complex, Rousse
- Evening Meal at the Mahala Restaurant

This morning we depart Varna and travel 200 kilometres north-west to the valley of the Roussenski Lom River, where a complex of rock-hewn churches, chapels, monasteries and cells developed in the vicinity of the village of Ivanovo. This complex, noted for its beautiful and well-preserved medieval frescoes, was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1979.

The frescos of the Ivanovo churches reveal an exceptional artistry and a remarkable artistic sensitivity for 14th century painting and Bulgarian medieval art; they are an important achievement in the Christian art of South-Eastern Europe. Posterior to the Khora monastery mosaics (Karia Djami) of 1303-10, these frescoes, by their very expressiveness surpass any other historical monuments discovered, characteristic of the Palaeologues' style. Neo-classical in spirit and in elements of their subjects, the frescoes represent a departure from the canons of Byzantine iconography. They show close ties with expressive Hellenistic art and a clear preference for the nude, the landscape, an architectural background in a composition, drama, an emotional atmosphere – qualities which combine to make an exceptional masterpiece of the Turnovo school of painting and monumental art.

The five historical monuments in this group (chapels, churches, etc.), dating from the 13th and 14th centuries, serve as examples that pave the way for the distinctive character development, and mastery in the art of the Second Bulgarian State (1187-1396). The richness, the variety of the cells, chapels, churches, monastery complexes, the original architectural solutions – all set in a magnificent natural environment – confirm the value of this extraordinary historical grouping.

Following lunch at the historic Leventa complex in Ruse we drive to Bucharest. This evening we dine at the modern Mahala Restaurant, where chef Sorin Cucu has created a menu that combines classical techniques with modern cuisine and Romanian influences. (Overnight Bucharest) BLD

Day 15: Wednesday 22 May, Depart Bucharest

- Tour concludes in the morning
- At leisure/Check out

Our tour ends in Bucharest after breakfast. In the morning you will be required to check out of the hotel. Please contact ASA if you require assistance with a transfer to Bucharest Airport. B

Accommodation

All hotels are rated 3, 4 and 5-star locally and are comfortable and conveniently situated. All rooms have en suite bathroom. Further information on hotels will be provided in the 'Tour Hotel list' given to tour members prior to their departure.

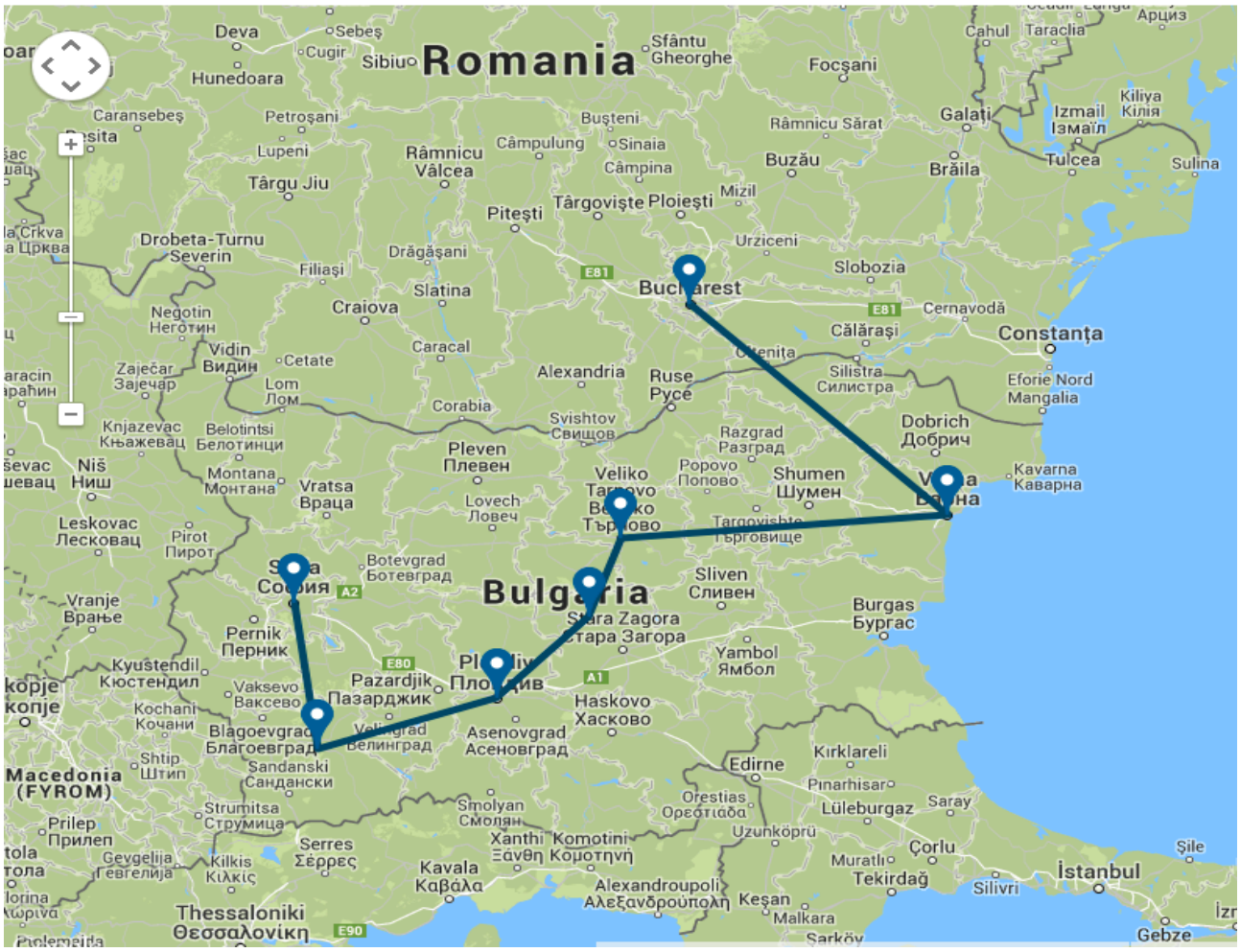
- Sofia (3 nights): 5-star Grand Hotel Sofia – located in the heart of the city, overlooking the city garden and the National Theatre. www.grandhotelsofia.bg
- Bansko (1 night): 4-star Molerite Boutique Hotel & Restaurant – this traditional boutique hotel is a ten-minute walk from the town centre. https://molerite.com
- Plovdiv (3 nights): 4-star DoubleTree by Hilton Plovdiv Center – located 800m from the Roman theatre and 280m from the Bishop's Palace of Philippopolis. www.hilton.com/en/hotels/pdvdtdi-doubletree-plovdiv-center/
- Kazanluk (1 night): 4-star Residence Konstantina Palace – opened in 2021, and located in the town centre 700m from the Rose Museum. konstantina-palace.eu
- Veliko Turnovo (2 nights): 3-star Hotel Gurko – a delightful and charming family-run hotel offering 21 comfortable rooms, located in the historic centre.
- Varna (3 nights): 5-star Graffit Gallery Hotel – a modern hotel located in the city centre, 400m from the coast of the Black Sea and a 5-6 min walk to Slivnitsa Str, which is the pedestrian street that leads to the city garden. www.graffithotel.com
- Bucharest (1 night): 4-star Mercure Bucharest City Center – a modern hotel located in the city centre, 350m from the National Museum of Art of Romania; various luxury stores, shops, restaurants and cafes can be reached within a 10-minute walk. mercurebucharestcenter.com

Note: *hotels are subject to change, in which case a hotel of similar standard will be provided.*

Single Supplement

Payment of this supplement will ensure accommodation in a double room for single occupancy throughout the tour. The number of rooms available for single use is extremely limited. People wishing to take this supplement are therefore advised to book well in advance.

Tour Map


Romania
Bulgaria
Macedonia (FYROM)
Deva
Sebeş
Cugir
Sibiu
Hunedoara
Caransebeş
Petroşani
Lupeni
Târgu Jiu
Râmnicu Vâlcea
Câmpulung
Sinaia
Câmpina
Buşteni
Târgovişte
Piteşti
Ploieşti
Mizil
Drobeta-Turnu Severin
Drăgăşani
Filiaşi
Slatina
Craiova
Negotin
Vidin
Видин
Zaječar
Cetate
Lom
Caracal
Corabia
Alexandria
Ruse
Pleven
Плевен
Vratsa
Враца
Lovech
Ловеч
Veliko Tarnovo
Велико Търново
Svishtov
Свищов
Razgrad
Разград
Popovo
Попово
Shumen
Шумен
Targovishte
Търговище
Dobrich
Добрич
Varna
Варна
Kavarna
Каварна
Bucharest
Slobozia
Cernavodă
Călăraşi
Constanța
Eforie Nord
Mangalia
Silistra
Силистра
Galați
Brăila
Buzău
Focşani
Râmnicu Sărat
Urziceni
Cahul
Taraclia
Izmail
Ізмаїл
Kiliya
Кілія
Tulcea
Sulina
Knjazevac
Княжевац
Belotintsi
Белотинци
Niš
Ниш
Montana
Монтана
Leskovac
Лесковац
Pirot
Пирот
Botevgrad
Ботевград
Sofia
София
Vranje
Врање
Pernik
Перник
Kyustendil
Кюстендил
Vaksevo
Ваксево
Kochani
Кочани
Blagoevgrad
Благоевград
Pazardjik
Пазарджик
Plovdiv
Пловдив
Velingrad
Белинград
Asenovgrad
Асеновград
Haskovo
Хасково
Stara Zagora
Стара Загора
Sliven
Сливен
Yambol
Ямбол
Burgas
Бургас
Edirne
Kırklareli
Pınarhisar
Lüleburgaz
Saray
Uzunköprü
Çorlu
Tekirdağ
Muratlı
Silivri
İstanbul
Şile
Gebze
Keşan
Malkara
Alexandroupoli
Αλεξανδρούπολη
Komotini
Κομοτηνή
Xanthi
Ξάνθη
Smolyan
Смолян
Orestias
Ορεστιάδα
Kavala
Καβάλα
Serres
Σέρρες
Kilkis
Κιλκίς
Gevgelija
Гевгелија
Prilep
Прилеп
Strumitsa
Струмица
Sandanski
Санданski
Shtip
Штип
Thessaloniki
Θεσσαλονίκη
Arpuiz
E81
E80
E90
A1
A2

Tour Price & Inclusions

AUD $8780.00 Land Content Only – Early-Bird Special: Book before 30 June 2023

AUD $8980.00 Land Content Only

AUD $1180.00 Single Supplement

Tour Price (Land Content Only) includes:

- Accommodation in twin-share rooms with private facilities in 3, 4 and 5-star hotels
- Breakfast daily, lunches and dinners indicated in the tour itinerary, where: B=breakfast, L=lunch & D=dinner
- Drinks at welcome and farewell meals. Other meals may not have drinks included
- Transportation as outlined in the tour itinerary by air-conditioned coach
- Porterage of one piece of luggage per person at hotels (not at airports)
- Lecture and site-visit program
- Tour Notes
- Entrance fees
- Use of audio headsets during site excursions
- Tips for the coach driver, local guides and restaurants for included meals.

Tour Price (Land Content Only) does not include:

- Airfare: Australia-Sofia, Bucharest-Australia
- Personal spending money
- Airport-hotel transfers
- Luggage in excess of 20kg (44lbs)
- Travel insurance
- Visas (if applicable)

Physical Endurance & Practical Information

Physical Ratings

The number of flags is a guide to the degree of difficulty of ASA tours relative to each other (not to those of other tour companies). It is neither absolute nor literal. One flag is given to the least taxing tours, seven to the most. Flags are allocated, above all, according to the amount of walking and standing each tour involves. Nevertheless, all ASA tours require that participants have a good degree of fitness enabling 2-3 hours walking or 1-1.5 hours standing still on any given site visit or excursion. Many sites are accessed by climbing slopes or steps and have uneven terrain.

This 15-day cultural tour of Bulgaria involves:

- Visiting some sites and towns (eg Plovdiv) that require walking up steps or uphill on uneven/cobbled streets. Cobbled streets can be very slippery during rain showers!
- A moderate amount of walking and standing during museum and other site visits.
- Extensive coach travel including winding mountain roads.
- 3, 4 and 5-star hotels with six hotel changes.
- You must be able to carry your own hand luggage. Hotel porterage includes 1 piece of luggage per person.

It is important to remember that ASA programs are group tours, and slow walkers affect everyone in the group. As the group must move at the speed of the slowest member, the amount of time spent at a site may be reduced if group members cannot maintain a moderate walking pace. ASA tours should not present any problem for active people who can manage day-to-day walking and stair-climbing. However, if you have any doubts about your ability to manage on a program, please ask your ASA travel consultant whether this is a suitable tour for you.

Please note: it is a condition of travel that all participants agree to accept ASA's directions in relation to their suitability to participate in activities undertaken on the tour, and that ASA retains the sole discretion to

direct a tour participant to refrain from a particular activity on part of the tour. For further information please refer to the ASA Reservation Application Form.

Booking Conditions

ASA RESERVATION APPLICATION FORM

Please complete the ASA RESERVATION APPLICATION and send it to Australians Studying Abroad together with your non-refundable deposit of AUD $1000.00 per person payable to Australians Studying Abroad.

Reservation Application

TOUR NAME _____

TOUR DATES _____

Please complete **one application, per person in block letters and sign**. Parental signature is required for participants under 18 years of age. Please mail this form with the appropriate deposit to: **P.O. Box 8285, ARMADALE, VICTORIA, 3143**. On receipt of this Reservation Application and deposit, ASA will process your booking and if approved, send you a tour confirmation.

Applicant Details (as in passport)

TITLE Mr ☐ Mrs ☐ Ms ☐ Miss ☐ Dr ☐ Other _____

FIRST NAME _____ Preferred FIRST NAME _____

MIDDLE NAME _____ SURNAME _____

POSTAL ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ COUNTRY _____ POSTCODE _____

TEL. (AH) ( ) _____ TEL. (BH) ( ) _____ Mobile Tel: _____

EMAIL address _____

Date of birth / / _____ GENDER Male ☐ Female ☐

Passport

Number _____ Expiry date / / _____ Nationality _____

☐ Colour copy of my current valid passport enclosed ☐ I'm renewing my passport ☐ ASA has a colour copy of my current passport

Covid Certificate

☐ A copy of my current international certificate enclosed

Travel Plans

☐ I plan to leave Australia before the tour commences. Planned departure date / / _____

☐ I will be arranging my airfare independently and taking the Land Content Only option.

Tour Accommodation (rooming preferences)

I/we would like: ☐ a twin-bedded room ☐ a double-bedded room ☐ a room for sole occupancy

I am travelling: ☐ on my own ☐ with a friend/family member Travel Companion _____

Meals

☐ I do not have any specific dietary requests

Allergies: Refer to the Medical Information

Please **X** the box if you **CAN NOT** eat any of the following:

☐ fish ☐ poultry ☐ red meat ☐ dairy products

☐ eggs ☐ pork ☐ nuts

☐ Other _____

Correspondence

Your preferred method of correspondence ☐ Postal Mail ☐ Email Address _____

Emergency Contact Details

Note: this person MUST be available by telephone and be present in Australia for the duration of your tour with ASA

Name _____ Relationship to Traveller _____

Address _____

TEL. (AH) ( ) _____ TEL. (BH) ( ) _____ Mobile Tel: _____

EMAIL address _____

Medical Information

The purpose of seeking this information is to assist ASA to determine, where necessary, whether ASA is able to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate your specific needs and whether your health and safety (or that of your fellow travellers) is likely to be compromised given your choice of tour. It will also assist you and ASA if you fall ill or have an accident whilst travelling.

- ASA reserves the right to decline your Reservation Application if this Medical Information section is not completed properly and may reject or cancel your reservation, or terminate your participation on any tour, if ASA subsequently learns that you have failed to make full and proper disclosure.
- ASA is committed to protecting the privacy of your personal information. ASA's privacy policy is available for viewing at **www.asatours.com.au**
- If ASA has any concerns about the information you have provided, it will contact you to request clarification before considering your Application.
- ASA requires you to consider carefully your limitations in light of ASA's Physical Endurance Star Rating System in ASA's Brochure and Itinerary when choosing your tour.
- If you are not likely to satisfy ASA's Participation Criteria (see below), ASA, in its sole discretion, may reject your Reservation Application.
- It is a condition of your tour that you agree to accept the directions of ASA's Tour Leaders in relation to your suitability to participate in activities planned on tour.
- ASA reserves the right to cancel your participation on a tour if your behaviour is in ASA's opinion causing undue distress or damage to any person or their property.
- If your participation is discontinued during a tour, ASA will assist by arranging your onward travel (if required) at your own cost, but you will not be refunded for forfeited parts of the tour.
- ASA tour groups are not accompanied by a medical practitioner. ASA recommends that you see your doctor for advice about your specific needs while overseas. You may also wish to contact a travel and vaccination clinic for advice. www.traveldoctor.com.au tel:1300 658 444; www.travelvax.com.au tel: 1300 360 164.
- Travel insurers require you to declare all existing medical conditions.
- Please carry a complete list of medications with you during the ASA tour. Include **generic names** of each medication (consult your local pharmacy for information).

Please mark **X** in the YES or NO box to every question below and provide details where necessary:

Participation Criteria

To participate in an ASA tour, you must be reasonably fit, in good health and able to participate in all activities without assistance from Tour Leaders or other tour members. **You must also be fully vaccinated against Covid-19.** If you require assistance, a fit and able travel companion must undertake to accompany and assist you with all tasks for the duration of the whole tour. The responsibility of the Tour Leader is to ensure that the larger group enjoys a relaxing and informative journey, and he or she cannot be relied upon to provide ongoing individual assistance to any one guest.

	YES	NO
1. Can you walk and stand unassisted for at least 2-3 hours a day in hot, humid conditions?	◯	◯
2. Can you walk unassisted on and over uneven surfaces?	◯	◯
3. Can you climb at least 3 flights of stairs and/or walk up and down steep slopes unassisted?	◯	◯
4. Can you walk at a steady pace and no less than 1km every 15 - 20 minutes unassisted?	◯	◯
5. Can you organise, manage and carry your own luggage?	◯	◯
6. Can you follow and remember tour instructions and meet punctually at designated times and places?	◯	◯
7. Can you administer your own medication?	◯	◯
8. You do NOT have impaired vision or hearing which may impact your capacity to participate on this tour?	◯	◯

Mobility and Fitness

As many of ASA's international sites do not provide access to wheelchairs or similar mobility aids, we regret that ASA tours are not suitable for people who require the use of a walking frame, wheeled walker, wheelchair or motorised scooter.

	YES	NO
1. Do you suffer from any medical conditions that may compromise your mobility and/or fitness to participate on this program?	◯	◯

If yes, please specify

_____

If yes, how will you manage this on tour?

_____

Allergies and/or Food Intolerances

ASA will make reasonable endeavours to organise meals to suit you, provided that you give ASA adequate notice of your specific dietary requirements or allergies. You may be required to research dietary alternatives, as not all destinations may be able to offer suitable food substitutes.

	YES	NO
1. Do you have any food allergies or intolerances?	◯	◯

If yes, please specify

_____

_____

2. Have you ever had an anaphylactic reaction to anything?	◯	◯

If yes, please specify

_____

_____

Do you carry an epipen?	◯	◯
3. Do you have any other allergies or reactions to anything, including medical drugs?	◯	◯

If yes, please specify

_____

_____

Existing Medical Conditions

You alone are responsible for managing any existing medical conditions, your medication and any medical equipment that you may need when on your tour. Please plan for contingencies and take extra medication, dietary supplements and/or fully charged batteries for medical equipment if your health and safety depends on these. You should take into consideration that power sources at some destinations may be unavailable, inadequate, inconvenient or unreliable.

	YES	NO
1. Have you any significant medical conditions that may impact your capacity to complete this tour?	◯	◯

If yes, please specify

_____

If yes, how will you manage this on tour?

_____

2. Do you require some form of powered medical aid, such as a CPAP machine?	◯	◯

These machines may not be operable on certain international flights, modes of transport, in remote or other areas with inadequate or unreliable power sources without a fully charged independent long life battery or batteries.

Diabetics: You may be travelling and sightseeing for many hours at a time. Insulin dependent diabetics must carry extra supplies of insulin (as this medication cannot be obtained in some destinations), regulators, applicators, storage and refrigeration equipment, as well as any necessary supplements. Accommodation may not provide refrigerators in rooms.

3. Are you diabetic?	◯	◯
Are you insulin dependent?	◯	◯
4. Do you suffer from travel sickness? Remember to use an appropriate medication while on tour.	◯	◯

Declaration, Liability and Booking Conditions

Declaration

I declare that: I have read and understood the ASA Tour Itinerary, Reservation Application and Booking Conditions. I am aware of ASA's terms as relating to refunds, cancellations, responsibility and liability. I understand that ASA relies upon this declaration when considering this Application. I accept the inherent dangers, risks and uncertainties in travel and those beyond ASA's control and understand they may occur before or during any tour. I have made full and complete disclosure and have not knowingly withheld any medical information about myself from ASA. I have completed this Reservation Application honestly and accurately. I warrant that I am able to participate independently in all activities described by ASA in the itinerary without assistance from any person.

I will advise ASA in writing if any aspect of my fitness and or health conditions change materially at any time before my departure date. I understand and accept that the itinerary, accommodation and lecturers scheduled for this tour may change.

I agree and consent that ASA may give my personal information in this Reservation Application to tour service providers and relevant authorities as required by law, but only for the purpose of making bookings with and engaging services associated with the tour. I understand that if I do not consent to the use of my personal information for this purpose, ASA will decline my Reservation Application.

In consideration of ASA's acceptance of my Reservation Application, I irrevocably release and indemnify ASA from all claims that I, or any other party, may have against ASA its employees, invitees, agents and contractors, however arising in respect of any loss, damage, injury, death or expense incurred in the course of booking, preparing for, travelling to, on and from or cancelling any tour.

I release and indemnify ASA with respect to:

1. Every general risk to which I or my personal belongings may be exposed in the course of preparing for, travelling to, on or from any ASA tour;
2. Every special risk, in particular medical risks, to which I may be exposed in the course of preparing for, travelling to, on or from any ASA tour arising from, including, but not limited to:
   a. intermittent power cycles and/or the temporary or permanent loss of power (beware CPAP or any other medical machine users);
   b. dietary, food or other allergies (ASA cannot guarantee that traces of items to which you are allergic are not present in food or drink you are served, medication you are administered or other substances with which you may come into contact);
   c. any event or situation that may compromise the administration of necessary medication or my health, safety and wellbeing generally; and
   d. any event or happening beyond ASA's control
3. All claims arising as a result of my or ASA's cancellation or termination of any tour, part of a tour or of my continued participation on a tour for any reason (subject to ASA's refund conditions below).

Limitation of Liability

ASA is not a carrier, event or tourist attraction host, accommodation or dining service provider. All bookings made and tickets or coupons issued by ASA for transport, event, accommodation, dining and the like are issued as an agent for various service providers and are subject to the terms and conditions and limitations of liability imposed by each service provider. ASA is not responsible for their products, services, terms and conditions. If a service provider cancels or does not deliver the product or service for which you have contracted, and does not give a refund, your remedy lies with the service provider, not ASA.

ASA will not be liable for any claim (e.g. sickness, injury, death, damage or loss) arising from any change, delay, detention, breakdown, border closures, cancellation, failure, accident, act, omission or negligence of any tour service provider or authority however caused (contingencies). You must take out such travel insurance as is available against such contingencies.

ASA's liability in respect of any tour cancelled or changed will be limited to the partial refund of amounts you have paid, less an administration fee of $500 and other costs and charges of third party service providers. No compensation will be payable to you by ASA where ASA cancels or changes a tour, or any part of a tour.

ASA reserves the sole discretion to cancel any tour or to modify itineraries in any way it considers appropriate and in the best interests of health, safety and wellbeing of tour participants. Tour costs may be revised, subject to unexpected price increases or exchange rate fluctuations.

Booking Conditions

DEPOSITS

A non-refundable deposit of $1000.00 AUD per person is required to reserve a place on an ASA tour.

CANCELLATION FEES

If you cancel your booking the following charges apply:

More than 75 days before departure: your initial deposit of $1000.00 is non-refundable.**

75-31 days prior 50% of total amount due

30-0 days prior 100% of total amount due

**$500.00 of this amount (ie 50% of your deposit) may be credited to another ASA tour departing within 12 months of the original tour you booked. We regret, in this case early-bird discounts will not apply.

We take the day on which you cancel as being that on which we receive written confirmation of cancellation.

UNUSED PORTIONS OF THE TOUR

We regret that refunds will not be given for any unused portions or services of the tour, such as meals, entry fees, accommodation, flights or transfers.

WILL THE TOUR PRICE OR ITINERARY CHANGE?

If the number of participants on a tour is significantly less than budgeted, or if there is a significant change in exchange rates ASA reserves the right to amend the advertised price. We shall, however, do all in our power to maintain the published price. Occasionally circumstances beyond the control of ASA make it necessary to change airline, hotel or to make amendments to itineraries. We will inform you of any changes in due course.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

ASA requires all participants to obtain comprehensive travel insurance. A copy of your travel insurance certificate and the **reverse charge** emergency contact phone number must be received by ASA no later than 75 days prior to the commencement of the tour.

FINAL PAYMENT

The balance of the tour price will be due 75 days prior to the tour commencement date.

PLEASE READ THE ABOVE CAREFULLY, PRINT AND SIGN BELOW

☐ I accept the conditions on this booking form

☐ I have read the information about the physical requirements of the tour in the detailed itinerary and confirm that I am able to meet these requirements

Applicant's Signature

Print Full Name Dated

ASA CULTURAL TOURS

Payment Form

Tour / Course Name

Name of Traveller 1 _____

Name of Traveller 2 _____

I have enclosed a payment to the value of $ _____ (including CC or bank fee if applicable) for this tour

The above amount is payable for:

- ☐ Intention to Travel
- ☐ Tour Deposit
- ☐ Balance of Payment
- ☐ Upgrade from Intention to Travel to a Deposit
- ☐ Travel Insurance
- ☐ Other (eg. Airfares, Accommodation) _____

International Payments

Welcome to our international travellers! If you are making a payment and do not have an Australian bank account/credit card, we can only accept payment as follows:

- *via credit card with the applicable fee - the credit card company/bank will set the exchange rate*
- *via bank transfer; please give your surname and tour code (eg.Smith 21705) as a reference and ask your bank to allow for all charges.*

Bank cheques or personal cheques will not be accepted.

By Cheque (accept Australian cheques only)

Please make cheques payable to *Australians Studying Abroad*

Direct Deposit or Internet Banking

You will need to:

1. Provide your bank with ASA's bank details (see below) and the amount you wish to transfer OR make a direct deposit through any ANZ branch
2. Include any fees levied by the banks
3. Provide a reference number (Mobile or last name recommended).
4. Complete section below, including confirmation no. (given when transaction completed).

Australians Studying Abroad bank details

Bank	ANZ
Branch	420 St Kilda Road, Melbourne Vic
Swift Code	ANZBAU3M
BSB	013-423
Account No	3472-32759

Bank confirmation No. _____

Reference used: Mobile or last name recommended

_____

Date Money Transferred _____

Credit Card Payment

Credit card fees apply: Mastercard, Visa & American Express 2%

Please debit my: ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐ American Express

I authorise ASA to debit my credit card for the amount due plus the applicable fee as above

Credit Card Number _____

Expiry Date _____ Security Code (CVC) _____

Bank the Card is linked to (eg. NAB or ANZ) _____

Cardholders Name _____

Cardholders Billing Address _____

_____

Postcode _____

State _____ Country _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Cardholders Signature _____

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