

Balkan Glacial lakes and Mountains tour

Offer available between: 2021-09-11 and 2021-09-12

Duration: 15 d

Highlights:

Greece

Visit the Corfu old town, famous for its Venetian style and narrow alleys

Trek across Greek alpine landscapes and reach the Drakolimni glacial lake at 2000m.

Cross Vikos Gorge, one of the deepest in the world

Visit iconic Meteora, a geological phenomenon

Explore one of the most important bird breeding areas in Europe, Kerkini lake, by boat, accompanied by a specialist

Bulgaria Balkan Glacial lakes and Mountains tour is a collaboration between three local agents from the chosen countries.

Wine tasting in Melnik

Impressive alpine panoramas in the Pirin Mountains

We take you straight in the heart of **four national parks in the Balkan peninsula** and the highest peak of the Transylvanian Alps.

Relax in the natural thermal springs and baths high in the mountains

This amazing **two-week adventure** is focused on the geological and natural wealth that Greece, Bulgaria and Romania can offer. We

cross **high mountains** over 2000m, **visit deep gorges**, we visit *glacial lakes*, sitting high up on impressive *alpine landscapes*, we bathe

Romania *hot springs* and breathe in the *historical aura* of important *European centers*.

Meet the city of Bucharest, a Balkan gem

Drive on the Transfagarasan Highway known as „the Road to the Clouds,„

General Highlights Explore the Southern Carpathians and the impressive Fagaras mountains

Â Climb the highest peak of Romania, Moldoveanu Peak

Walk around the medieval Brasov, with gothic, baroque and renaissance architecture

Greece Visit the Corfu old town, famous for its Venetian style and narrow alleys Trek across Greek alpine landscapes and reach the Drakolimni glacial lake at 2000m. Cross Vikos Gorge, one of the deepest in the world Visit iconic Meteora, a geological phenomenon Explore one of the most important bird breeding areas in Europe, Kerkini lake, by boat, accompanied by a specialist

Bulgaria Wine tasting in Melnik Impressive alpine panoramas in the Pirin Mountains Relax in the natural thermal springs and baths high in the mountains Loop hike the 7 Rila lakes Visit the capital city of Bulgaria, Sofia

Romania Meet the city of Bucharest, a Balkan gem Drive on the Transfagarasan Highway known as "the Road to the Clouds" Explore the Southern Carpathians and the impressive Fagaras mountains Climb the highest peak of Romania, Moldoveanu Peak Walk around the medieval Brasov, with gothic, baroque and renaissance architecture

Snapshot of the Tour

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Pindos mountain range and lake Kerkini in Greece

Melnik and Banya villages and Pirin and Rila National Parks in Bulgaria

Fagaras range in Romania's Southern Carpathians mountains

Trekking x 10 days

Trek Grade: Moderate to hard in fine weather conditions. Carpathians mountains in Romania are moderate to hard.

Type: Moving between three countries

Min. group size: 7

Max. group size: 16

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BRIEF ITINERARY

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Day 1 - Arrival Day

Meet at our accommodation in Corfu Town. You can enjoy a free day in the old Venetian town which is characterized as an UNESCO Heritage. After dinner we can enjoy an optional night walk in the old town!

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Day 2 - Transfer to Zagoria - Walk from Papigko bridge to Kleidonias bridge along the Voidomatis river and its crystal transparent waters

After breakfast we ride the ferry across to mainland Greece where our mini-bus awaits to transfer us to the mountainous region of Zagoria. Once there, we stop at Papigko bridge and we start to follow on foot the path that goes along the banks of the Voidomatis river. We enjoy a very relaxing and walk through the plane forest that spreads in the area and creates a magical atmosphere. The land which we cross today has had human presence for the past 20,000 years. Evidence of human presence can be found in several caves from before the last ice age and can also be found in abandoned churches of the mid-17th century and stone bridges of the 19th century. Transfer to Mikro Papigko by mini-bus- check in the guesthouse(s)

Length: 6 - 9 km (3.5 - 5.5 miles)

Approx. Walking Time: 2.5 - 3.5 hours

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Day 3 - Walk from Mikro Papigko up to the famous Drakolimni glacial lake

Today we will climb high up in Tymfi mountain. We will walk through the alpine grasslands all the way up to the most famous glacial lake of Greece - Drakolimni -the Dragon Lake. From the altitude of 2050m we will start descending back to Mikro Papigko village discovering beautiful vistas.

Length: 17.5 km (10.8 miles)

Approx. Walking Time: 6 - 6.5 hours

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Day 4 - Walk from Monodendri to Vikos village via Vikos gorge

The crossing of Vikos gorge is one of the most esteemed hikes in Greece. It is an unspoiled sanctuary with a great diversity of flora and fauna. In the heart of the gorge is the source of the Voidomatis which is the cleanest river in Europe. This is a trek on the floor of the gorge, crossing dry riverbeds, passing next to bear caves engulfed by the dense foliage. Vikos gorge has been a central feature of life in the region for the past 40,000 years and stays untouched to this very day.

Length: 13 km (8 miles)

Approx. Walking Time: 5.5-6 hours

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Day 5 - Drive to Meteora and visit one of the iconic monasteries hanging on the top of the vertical rock formations. Next stop, Kerkini Lake at the Greek / Bulgarian borders

After breakfast, it will be time to leave behind the beautiful Zagoria and change scenery. This is a driving day with our private mini bus from north-west Greece to the northern borders with Bulgaria. We will make an important stop at the impressive Meteora, visiting one

of the famous monasteries and having a short walk to stretch our legs. We will, then, head north towards Kerkini Lake where we arrive in the evening.

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Day 6 - Morning activity in Lake Kerkini and then drive to Melnik in Bulgaria

A morning full of activities awaits us in Kerkini Lake. We will drive at the northern harbor of the lake where a boat will await to pick us up and take us on a journey through the lake. With us, a specialist will offer his knowledge about the significant

bird life that the lake attracts, the natural environment that surrounds us and he will reveal the lake's various secrets based on our interests. After our boat ride, we will enjoy a short walk along the lake's banks, gaining another perspective of this beautiful site. We will enjoy our lunch in one of the villages and then, we will start driving to Melnik in the mountains which separate Greece and Bulgaria. Once we reach the Rozhen monastery we will enjoy a short walk across the fairyland sandy-stone formations all the way to Melnik where we can visit Kordopulova house museum where we will have the chance to enjoy wine tasting locally produced. Check in at our hotel.

Length: 6.5km (3.5miles)

Approx. Walking Time: 1.5 hours

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Day 7Â -Â Trek the Banderitsa cirque and bathe at the hot thermal springs of Banya villageÂ

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After breakfast, we drive to the beginning of our walk at Vihren hut situated in the foothills of the highest peak of the Pirin mountains - Vihren, 2914 m. the third highest of the Balkans and its impressive 400 m tall marble North Wall. Banderitsa cirque is a loop walk visiting a group of 16 glacial lakes, around a picturesque valley which hosts some of the oldest Bosnian and Macedonian pine trees in the mountain with approx. age of over 1300 years. On the way to our accommodation, as a final touch, we will relax at Banya village to enjoy its numerous hot thermal springs and baths.

Length: 4 - 7 km (2.5 - 4.5 miles)Â

Approx. Walking Time: 4.5 - 5.5 hours

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Day 8Â - Climbing Polezhan, at 2851m of the UNESCO's Pirin National Park.

The view from the top is simply stunning - one can see over 13 glacial lakes, including Popovo, the second largest and deepest mountain lake in Bulgaria.Â

In order to get there, we will start our day with a chairlift ascent to Bezbog hut at 2240m where our trek starts towards one of the most impressive alpine panoramas in Bulgaria. After our descent from the national park's mountains, we will head to

Sapareva Banya spa resort, famous for the hottest thermal springs in Europe, where our nights' accommodation is located.Â

Length: 7 km (4.5 miles)Â

Approx. Walking Time: 5 - 5.5 hours

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Day 9 - Explore Rila National Park via the picturesque Seven Rila Lakes cirque

Rila National Park is one of the largest in Europe, famous for its rich biodiversity and over 170 lakes with glacial origin. The day will start with a chairlift ascent to the beginning of our loop walk in the 7 Rila Lakes area. As we descent on the 'Dry Ridge', we will enter Skakavitsa Nature reserve, declared as a protected area to preserve the ancient woods. Once there, keep an eye for a 75m high waterfall, the tallest of these mountains. At the end of our trek, our mini bus will transfer us to Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria. An evening stroll through the historic city before dinner is the best way to finish a magical day.

Length: 11 km (7 miles)Â

Approx. Walking Time: 5 hours

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Day 10 - Transfer from Sofia to Bucharest with cultural stops on the way

Today we are heading to Romania. On the way we will visit some very interesting sites. At Karlukovo karst region we will enter Prohodna cave known as "The God's Eyes" cave. The next activity is a sightseeing stroll at Veliko Tarnovo city where we can have lunch. If there is still a desire for more exploration, UNESCO's Ivanovo monastery can offer us a short visit opportunity before we reach Bucharest where we will spend the night.

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Day 11 - Bucharest City tour and transfer to Balea lake in Fagaras mountains

This morning we wake up in "Little Paris". Bucharest is known for its wide, tree-lined boulevards and glorious Belle Époque buildings. We will venture on few hours' city tour in Romania's largest city and capital, where we include the Palace of the Parliament, the heaviest building in the world! We then drive to the emblematic Balea Lake which located in the heart of Fagaras Mountains. To get there we will follow the Transfagarasan Highway known as 'the Road to the Sky ', 'the Road to the Clouds' or 'A spectacular Monument to Earth-Moving Megalomania!'Â

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Day 12 - Trek from Balea Lake Chalet to Podragu Chalet on the Fagaras Mountains

This day includes medium to hard trekking on the main ridge of Fagaras mountains. Walking high up on the Southern Carpathian Mountains with magnificent views to Capra and Podragu Glacial Lakes, we continuously gain altitude reaching up to 2136m and Podragu Chalet, a mountain hut to accommodate us in the heart of the Transylvanian Alps.Â

*Consult the 'Preparing for the Trip' section for further information about Day 12 & 13Â

Length: 15 - 18 km (9.5 - 11.3 miles)Â

Approx. Walking Time: 5 - 6 hours

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Day 13 - Podragu Chalet - Moldoveanu Peak and return to mountain hut

This is the day we climb the highest peak of Romania! Moldoveanu Peak (2545m) is towering the relatively isolated and inaccessible 70-kilometre-long Fagaras Mountain range and today's goal is to stand on its top. Bonus of the day: reaching

the Vistea Mare Peak, the third highest peak of Romania. Descend back to the mountain hut for a last sleep on the high mountains.

Length: 16 - 18 km (10 - 11.3 miles)

Approx. Walking Time: 6 - 7 hours

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Day 14 - We walk down to Victoria town and then drive to Brasov

Today we go down to Victoria town following the trail on the beautiful Podragu glacial valley. We drive to Brasov where tonight, fringed by the peaks of the Southern Carpathian Mountains, we enjoy a City tour by night in the middle of Gothic, baroque and renaissance architecture. Brasov and its medieval ambiance, is the perfect setting for our farewell dinner.

Length: 15 - 18 km (9.5 - 11.3 miles)

Approx. Walking Time: 5 - 6 hours

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Day 15 - Departure Day

Our two weeks adventure is ending today. After breakfast a mini bus will transfer us to the Otopeni airport in Bucharest. The time to start will be determined by the departures of the individuals. It is of high importance to communicate us your departure details on the Booking form.