

Day - 1 City tour Skopje (D)

Welcoming you at Skopje airport. Transfer to your hotel and little bit free time. In the relaxed afternoon, our local guide will give you brief explanation of the tour and he will take you on a walking tour starting from the centuries old Kale – Skopje fortress. We will continue to the Old Turkish Bazaar, mingling with the locals, meeting different cultures and religions, old forgotten crafts, as well. The second part of the afternoon we visit museums - Museum of Macedonian struggle, possibilities to visit the Archaeological museum of Macedonia with one of the biggest ancient coins collection in the world exclusively from the Macedonian territory. We walk across the Stone Bridge, the land mark of the city, and stop in front of the monument and fountain of Alexander the Great. The next stop will be the memorial house of Mother Teresa. She was born in Skopje in 1910. Welcoming dinner in a national restaurant.

Day - 2 Skopje - Skupi - Aqueduct - Matka - Skopje (39 km) (B, L, D)

After breakfast we depart to the archeological site of Skupi, where we will start our day tour. Skupi is one of the largest Roman towns dating from the Late Antiquity. The site contains structures which date from the first to the sixth century, as well as remains of an early Christian church and tombs around it. It is estimated that the territory of Skopje has been inhabited for at least 4000 years with evidence of Neolithic settlements found in the Kale Fortress in the city center. During the era of Philip of Macedon and his son Alexander, Skopje became more important during their expansion of ancient Macedonia. In the first century under Roman rule it became a legionary camp. After the ninth century Skopje became a significant Byzantine seat for the Orthodox Church in Macedonia. In 1392 it was conquered by the Ottoman Turks for the next 5 centuries. Next to the center of Skupi, we will visit an ancient very well preserved aqueduct. In the afternoon we depart to Matka Canyon, which is a protected nature reserve and home to several medieval monasteries, caves, and rich flora and fauna. We will visit the church St. Andrea built in 1389. The frescoes are very realistic and not typical of other frescoes of the same period. We will take a boat trip visiting Vrelo Cave. In the late afternoon we will enjoy in the lunch and the picturesque lake from the restaurant terrace. Back to Skopje, dinner in a national restaurant.

Day - 3 Skopje - Staro Nagorichane - Kokino - Skopje (140 km) (B, L)

Breakfast at hotel. In the morning we depart to Kumanovo region, to explore the northeast part of the country where various ancient archaeological sites are located. We will visit the cave dwelling of the ascetic St. Joakim who lived in the 12th century near the village of Staro Nagoricane. Continue to the megalithic observatory of Kokino. The ancient observatory discovered in 2001 was determined to be around 3,800 years old. The oldest archaeological finds from the site date back to the Early Bronze Age. Volcanic activity from the lava at the crater peak created rocks that became major markers for the purpose of following the cycles of the Sun and the Moon and measuring time. It is believed to be the oldest ancient observatory in Europe. It is ranked fourth on the list of old observatories by NASA. We will have lunch in a traditional village restaurant with local dishes. Transfer back to the hotel in Skopje and free evening.



Day - 4 Skopje - Tetovo - Mavrovo - Ohrid (204 km) (B, L)

After the breakfast we check out from the hotel and depart to Tetovo. The town lies at the intersection of several trade routes. Archaeologists have found evidence of human settlement dating back more than six thousand years. In Tetovo there is an old fortress dating back to 1820 and many beautiful churches and mosques. We will visit the Aladza Painted Mosque with its beautifullydecorated exterior located in the old part of Tetovo. The mosque was built in 1495 and is example of early Constantinople style, adorned with a unique elaborate painted facade and interior, making it unique in Macedonia and wider. We continue our drive to the National Park of Mavrovo. On the way to Ohrid we will visit the Monastery of St. John the Baptist - Bigorski, founded in 1020. Inside the church we will see the Miraculous Icon of St. John the Baptist, more than 12 centuries old. The main attraction is the wood carved iconostasis from 19th century depicting biblical scenes. The monastery is rich in icons painted from the 16th to 20th centuries and is a synthesis of Byzantine, Renaissance, and Baroque influences. Before we arrive in Ohrid, we make another stop for a lunch in a typical Macedonian village of this region - Vevchani. Arrival in Ohrid. Free evening and overnight.



Day - 5 Ohrid - Bay of bones - St. Naum - Ohrid (60 km) (B, L, D)

Breakfast at hotel. Ohrid itself is a jewel of Macedonia, the city of Macedonian Orthodox churches, in their narrow alleys history dating back over 3.000 years. Both the city and the lake are inscribed on the UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage. In the morning we walk through the streets of Ohrid to reach the highest point – Samuil's Fortress, which offers wonderful landscapes of this area. We will visit the cathedral Church of St. Sofia, the Ancient theatre, and from the medieval church St. John the Evangelist, we get back in the centre by small boats. In the noon we drive by bus or sale by boat to prehistoric settlement from the Bronze age, called The Bay of bones or Museum on water. Than we drive to St. Naum monastery and the lake springs. In the monastery from 9th Century, we can see the tomb of St. Naum – student of Cyril and Methodius. According to the legends, we can still listen to his heartbeat. Today we have a chance to sail with small boats through the springs of the lake. On the way back, we stop in the picturesque village of Trpejca located in the heart of national park. Here on the lunch menu we have the famous Ohrid trout grilled. Nice opportunity to mingle with the locals. Back to Ohrid and farewell dinner including Macedonian folklore dancing group. Overnight in Ohrid.

Day - 6 Ohrid - Galicica National Park - Kurbinovo and Brajcino - Bitola (128 km) (B, L, D)

After the breakfast we depart for National park Galicica situated on mountain Galicica. The mountain separates the two big Lakes of Ohrid and Prespa. We will stop on several view points to relax, enjoy and admire the natural beauty of the natural park, with magnificent panoramic views of both lakes. The park has become a protected breeding ground for many species of birds. We continue to Prespa region, well known in Macedonia and wider for its apple fields. In the village of Kurbinovo in the northeast part of Prespa Lake we will visit the small church of St. George with the frescoes masterpiece of the Annunciation from the Byzantine era, painted in 1191. In the village of Brajchino, an example of the typical rural architecture of the region, we will take a walk around the village meeting the locals and enjoy a meal in a village house with real homemade specialties. After lunch a short nature walk to the Monastery of St. Petka. In the evening we are in Bitola. Dinner in a national restaurant in the city centre.



Day - 7 Bitola city tour (30 km) (B, L)

Today the first think to see in the morning is an ancient archeological site of Heraclea Lyncestis, 2.5 km south of the modern town of Bitola. Heraclea was a strategically important town during the Hellenistic period, and it was founded by King Philip of Macedon (father of Alexander the Great) in the middle of the fourth century BC after he had conquered the surrounding region of Lynkestis. In the middle of the second century BC the Romans conquered the city. Heraclea retained its importance due to its location on the Via Egnitia, the route connecting two the most important centers in that world - Rome and Constantinople. The Roman Emperor Hadrian built the impressive ancient theatre which was both a stage for theater and an arena for performing animals. In later centuries the city was important as a Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman center. Bitola is the second largest city in Macedonia. We stroll downtown because Bitola is noted for its unique centuries old preserved architecture with beautiful balconies and the usage of rich ornaments. Until 1912 many European consulates were located in Bitola, and it was once called the City of the Consuls. Visit the museum in the Old Barracks Military Academy with the memorial room dedicated to Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, who studied in Bitola as a young man. Continue by foot in the old town center with the Clock Tower from the 17th century and the Church of St. Dimitri built in 1830 with the a lavishly decorated interior. Lunch in a typical restaurant with local specialties. In the afternoon we drive in the nearby mountain, walk along the History Trail in the National Park Pelister. Back to the city and free evening.

Day - 8 Bitola - Prilep - Styberra - Stobi - Kavadarci - Demir Kapija (134 km) (B, L)

After breakfast depart for Prilep, the center of the tobacco growing region. We stop at the old quarter Varosh and visit the beautifully-frescoed church of St. Nicolas. The town its self also was the capital of the last Christian king in Macedonia in the late 14th century, King Marko. Strolling through the central streets of the town, in a distance we will be able to see King Marko's fortress, the monument of Alexander the Great, the Leaning Tower from 19th century. Coffee break and we continue to the archaeological site Styberra, an important urban center that existed from the end of the 4th century BC to 4th century AD. The city's has collapsed after the raid of the Goths in 267/8 or 268/9 AD. In the ancient written sources about the Roman–Macedonian wars, it is recorded that during the expedition of the consul Sulpicius against the Macedonian king Philip V (200 BC),the

Roman armada arrived in Styberra, where they renewed their supplies with grain. According to the same records, we also learn that the last king of ancient Macedonia, Perseus in the year 169 BC organized his military command post in the city of Styberra, against the Romans. In the afternoon and we continue to the most important wine region of Tikvesh which is the largest wine region in Macedonia. On our way we will pass through the towns of Negotino and Kavadarci, both known for their vine growing and wine production. Before arrival at Popova Kula winery in the small town of Demir Kapija, we visit the ancient city of Stobi, at the intersection of the Via Militaris and the Via Diagonalis. Located between Veles and Negotino, Stobi is the most important archeological site in Macedonia, once the biggest Roman city on the Balkans. Archaeologists have discovered traces of the Paeonians, an ancient civilization in Macedonian, as well as traces of the Macedonian-Hellenistic, Roman, and early Christian periods. At the time of Philip II of Macedon it was already an important strategic military center and also a significant cultural, trade, and communication center. Stobi maintained its status under the Roman Empire and experienced major growth. We will walk through the site and view basilicas, palaces, the Forum, Theatre, ancient synagogue, casino, and the museum. Arrival in the winery, check in and a short tour of the winery premises will be organized together with an enologist. After lunch we will have free time. For those willing we can organize a bike tour of the surrounding area. Overnight in the winery hotel.

Day - 9 Demir Kapija - Isar Marvinci - Strumica (136 km) (B, L, D)

After the breakfast, check out from the winery and transfer to Strumica. On the way we make a stop to visit archaeological site Isar Marvinci. The discovered "stadium" milestone from the 3rd or the beginning of the 2rd century BC leads to the conclusion that the name of the ancient city was Idomene, who belonged to the southern Macedonian area called Amphacsitida. The archeological site contains remnants of a temple, dated from 181 BC and designed according to the Roman concept, dedicated to the Roman emperor Comodus. The archeological findings are dated from the Bronze Age to the late Antiquity, and are especially significant in clarifying the culture of pre-Roman Payonia and Macedonia. We continue to Strumica. First we make check in, and then we head to the mountain Belasica, to experience the natural beauty of the area. After a short driving, we continue on foot to visit two local waterfalls, Smolare and Koleshino. On the way back, we will have a chance to mingle with the local peasants from the villages around and to take our homemade lunch in some of the guest's houses in the area. Back in town and organized dinner in a National restaurant.









Day – 10 Strumica – medieval monasteries - Roman bath – Vinica - Skopje (159 km) (B, L)

After check out, in the morning we go to visit medieval monasteries in the region St. Leonthius – Vodocha and Holy Mother Merciful – Veljusa, dating back in 11th century. Next stop will be another ancient attraction, the Roman baths, hot water springs with a temperature of 72 ° C.

The Roman bath was built in the II century AD. This area covers more than 1500 m2 and is one of the largest baths in the Balkans. Most of the 11 rooms have different functions and are mainly built of brick and stone combined with the mortar. Heating inside was designed and constructed with a special system in which hot water was used to heat the floors and walls. On the way to Skopje, we will make a stop at Vinica fortress. Here in 1985 excavations an exceptional discovery from 4th Century AD was made: 26 whole, 20 fragmentary and more than 100 smaller and larger fragments of terra-cotta icons, unique in the Christian world were found. After many efforts, from the fragments another 14 whole icons were formed, so the collection now consists of 40 icons. We continue to Skopje. Accommodation in a hotel and free evening.



Day - 11 Skopje - Millennium cross - St. Panteleymon - Skopje (20 km) (B, L, D)

After the breakfast we head directly to the cable car in the mountain of Vodno to visit the Millennium Cross, a 66 meter-high cross situated on the top of the mountain. It is one of the biggest crosses in the world, constructed to serve as a memorial of 2,000 years of Christianity in Macedonia and the world. On the way back from the cable car, we will visit the monastery of St. Panteleymon, which contains remarkable frescoes of a great artistic value of a non-static but more emotional style of Byzantine Art. Late lunch will be organized in the nearby complex called Ethno village that presents various houses built in typical Macedonian architecture from different regions in the country. Transfer to the hotel. In the evening we have our farewell dinner. Overnight in Skopje.

Day - 12 Departure to Skopje airport (26 km) (B)
After the breakfast, transfer to the airport

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Our services for the tour includes:

- -Professional local tourist guide
- -All transfers with our vehicle
- -Accommodation in hotels 4* or 5* on BB basis (5 BB in Skopje, 2 BB in Ohrid, 2 BB Bitola,
- 1 BB Demir Kapija and 1 BB Strumica)
- -Meals in restaurants, according the program
- -All entrance fees for museums and churches

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