

BOOKING CONDITIONS for Balkania Travel and B-BS Tours

All bookings are made and accepted subject to the following terms and conditions, and by signing the booking form you agree to this. Our acceptance of your booking means that we agree to operate your holiday as defined in our brochure, itineraries, flight information, booking forms and other information provided to you. The contract is between the signatory, acting on behalf of all members of his/her party, and Balkania Travel Limited, Company Reg. No. 2949098, registered and trading address as above (subsequently referred to as 'we'/'us'). This agreement is made subject to, and is to be interpreted and enforced in accordance with English law in an English court.

MAKING A BOOKING

We can accept a provisional booking which we can keep open for 5 days. A reservation is complete when we receive from you a completed booking form together with the applicable deposit and we confirm in writing to you with our confirmation invoice. The deposit is set at £300 per person, unless otherwise advised, subject to contract commitments in respect of air tickets and/or land arrangements. The balance is due 8 weeks before the start of the holiday. If the balance has not been paid by the due date we reserve the right to treat the booking as cancelled by you and levy appropriate cancellation charges.

Booking Procedure

Please call Balkania Travel on 020 7536 9400 to check availability and request a Booking Form and Booking Conditions, if you haven't got them already. We can at that stage accept a provisional booking which we can keep open for 5 working days. Read the booking conditions, complete the booking form, sign the declaration and return the booking form to us with your deposit of £300.00 per person (unless otherwise stated).

Payment can be made by cheque, bank transfer or credit or debit card (card details over the phone for security reasons). There is a 1.8% handling charge for credit cards, 2.5% on AmEx, no charge for debit cards. For the sake of your data security, do not fill in your card details on the booking form, but please phone us with them.

To confirm your booking

On receipt of your completed booking form and deposit, a Confirmation Invoice will be issued and sent to you. If you have any queries about any details on this invoice, please contact us at once. If such notification is not received within 14 days of the issue date, we shall consider the invoice details to be correct. We reserve the right to decline any booking, at our discretion.

Payment of the balance

Full payment of the balance is due 8 weeks before departure. This date will be shown on the confirmation invoice. Do make a note of this date, as no reminder will be issued. If the balance is not paid by the due date, we reserve the right to treat the booking as cancelled by you and levy appropriate cancellation charges (see Booking Conditions). If you are booking less than eight weeks before the departure date, full payment will be required with the booking form.

Travel documents

Approximately two weeks before departure we shall send you all your travel documents. Please take them with you on holiday.

Notes on Filling in the Booking Form

1. Please take care to put your full name on the booking form, exactly as per your passport, as this will be used for your airline ticket and must precisely match your passport.
2. The Booking Reference box is for office use only.
3. Double beds are not always available, sometimes double rooms have twin beds.
4. For single travellers who wish to share their accommodation with another tour member, we are always willing to give their contact details (with such person's presumed permission), so that you can agree matters between yourselves. If no one else on the tour wishes to share, then a supplement will be payable for your single room..
5. Please give accurate details of any ongoing medical conditions, so that we can arrange effective help if any problems arise.
6. Emergency phone number of next of kin should be exactly that, we don't need a postal address.

NOTE ABOUT FLIGHTS

All B-BS Tours are usually by air and as such are licensed by the UK Civil Aviation Authority and financially protected under its ATOL Bonding System for your peace of mind. Our ATOL Number is 4465. We are members of the Air Transport Association, IATA Number 91-2 7839. Our accreditation gives us access to the best consolidated air fares anywhere in the world on any airline. And to you, it gives additional financial security through the IATA bonding scheme.

Our prices are inclusive of return flights, all government, airport, etc. taxes and charges, usually 20 kgs checked-in hold baggage and 10 kgs hand cabin baggage plus all the land arrangements described in the tour leaflet. We normally use direct day-time scheduled flights by national carriers such as British Airways and Bulgaria Air from Heathrow to Sofia. Sometimes, for scheduling reasons, we may use holiday charter flights or "no frills" airlines. Flight information is available in advance of booking from our office and flight details will be confirmed in our Confirmation and Invoice. We usually cost £250 for return flights to Bulgaria into our prices and should they become more expensive (especially for late bookings) a flight supplement will apply, or, we may use other flights, if feasible. **We strongly recommend booking early not only to ensure a place on the tour but also to avoid late booking surcharges. In some cases we will be able to give you an early booking discount.**

Most airlines operate advance **online check-in** procedures which require filling in your passport details, answering baggage security questions, choosing your seat in some cases, and issuing your boarding pass in advance of going to the airport. Boarding passes are available to print from several weeks to 24 hours before the scheduled time of departure. This saves time at the airport. You have the choice to either ask us to do online check-in for you with your passport and baggage information, or doing it yourself, for which purpose we shall provide you with the details of your flight booking. In either case you will have to have a printed **boarding pass** with you before reporting to the airport 'drop bag' desk for your flight.

Should clients in some cases wish to arrange their own flights or join our tour from Bulgaria, we shall be happy to quote without our costed air fare. Such clients must arrange to join the group either on arrival at the airport or at the first hotel and we shall provide its address and contact details to help them get there at the right place and the right time.

Clients should note that if they book their own flights separately they are no longer buying an air package from us and will therefore not come under the financial protection of the CAA ATOL bonding scheme. We advise you in such cases to seek information about what protection carriers and operators you intend to use, will offer you.

CHANGES

a. If you change your booking

If you wish to amend your booking, we will always try to assist you. These alterations may incur administrative charges, usually £25 per person on top of any charges airlines and other providers may impose, depending on the nature of the changes and the amount of notice we receive.

b. If we have to make a major change to your tour

Our tour itineraries are prepared many months in advance and may be subject to amendment due to changing local conditions. Sometimes, circumstances beyond our control oblige us to make a major change to your tour arrangements, e.g. a change of departure airport, accommodation or departure date. In such cases we will inform you immediately, and our objective will always be to minimise any inconvenience. Wherever possible we will offer you alternative arrangements as close as possible to your original choice. They may be of superior value, at our expense, or of a similar value. In the unlikely event that they are of inferior value (e.g. lower grade accommodation) we will refund the difference in the tour price. You will then have a choice of accepting the changes, taking another available tour at a similar price, or cancelling. If you choose to cancel, you will be reimbursed all monies paid to us, but no other compensation will be payable.

c. Extensions

In most cases we can arrange flights on dates, different from the ones reserved for the particular tour so that clients, if they so desire, may enjoy an extension to their holiday. Please request these different flights and any extra land arrangements you may wish to consider, at the time of making the booking.

CANCELLATION

a. If you cancel your holiday

All cancellations must be in writing, by the person who signed the Booking Form, and the fees for the exercise of this option are as follows:

| Days (working) before departure | Charges (% of total cost) |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| More than 56 | Deposit |
| 56-29 | 50% |
| 28-15 | 75% |
| 14-7 | 85% |
| 6 days or less | 100% of total invoice cost |

All charges come into effect from the date on which written notification is received. Amendment fees are non-refundable. If the reason for cancellation is covered by your holiday insurance, cancellation charges will normally be refunded by the insurance company (less the premium cost/excess applicable).

b. If we cancel your holiday

In certain circumstances (e.g. lack of sufficient numbers) we reserve the right to cancel the tour up to 56 days prior to departure. In such cases, we will offer an alternative tour or refund all payments, but we shall be under no other liability.

PRICE GUARANTEE

These holidays are costed many months in advance, and for a minimum number of people on each tour (normally eight to ten). We reserve the right to change the price or to impose surcharges due to unfavorable exchange rate changes, air fare and other transport cost increases, or government action. We may have to impose surcharges also when the group size falls below the minimum number. If any surcharge exceeds 10% of the basic tour cost, you have the right to cancel your booking. We will then refund money paid to us in respect of the tour, but not incidental expenses.

PLEASE NOTE!

Some of our tours visit remote areas, where local conditions are often different from those you are used to. You must be prepared to accept and cope with local difficulties or unusual situations if they arise. Your booking is accepted on the understanding that you realise this and are prepared to accept a degree of on-tour flexibility, particularly concerning changes caused by local bureaucracy and conditions, including weather, politics, travel arrangements, access, breakdowns or sickness. (These are not hotel package holidays, the itineraries and accommodation described are what we intend to provide, and though we do not normally do so, we reserve the right to alter the itinerary or accommodation at any time, and will not be liable for any loss as a result of such alteration or delay).

You should at all times accept the decisions of the tour guide, and if your conduct is considered disruptive or detrimental to the safety, welfare or enjoyment of other members of the group, you may be asked to leave the party, without any right to a refund, compensation or payment of any other costs incurred. We anticipate that only people in normal good health will book our tours, if there is any doubt about this, your booking must be accompanied by a doctor's certificate stating that it is safe for you to travel on your chosen holiday. All clients must be covered by insurance, with adequate cover for medical expenses, including repatriation, helicopter rescue and air ambulance. All insurance claims must be directed to your insurers, and not to Balkania Travel, who are unable to act in such matters.

LIMIT OF LIABILITY

Balkania Travel Ltd. acknowledges responsibility for the correct description of services in the itinerary and for the preparation of the travel arrangements. Only limited responsibility for the performance of the services by airlines, coaches, hotels, agents and other suppliers can be accepted by Balkania Travel Ltd. No responsibility is accepted for loss or expenses due to sickness, weather, strikes, war, acts of terrorism, quarantine, negligence (other than the proved negligence of Balkania Travel), loss of baggage or other causes, such losses being the responsibility of the traveller, and for some of which insurance is available. When we are found to be liable for damages, the maximum amount of such damages will be limited to the price for the affected services. Any complaint should be put in writing to Balkania Travel within 28 days of the scheduled end of the holiday.

FINANCIAL PROTECTION

Balkania Travel is a tour operator, licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority, ATOL number 4465. In accordance with their requirements we operate their financial security scheme and all monies paid by our customers are safe. In addition, we are bonded and accredited members of IATA, number 91-2 7839.

Privacy Policy

Balkania Travel is committed to protecting your privacy. When you provide personal information such as your name, email address, passport, card payment details and any other information about yourself, we will not disclose this information to any person, company or organisation. The only circumstances under which such information may be made known, is for (a) completion of ticketing, airline check-in, accommodation and other formalities; (b) if disclosure is reasonably necessary to comply with the law or legal process or protect the rights of Balkania Travel, such as enforcing our Booking Conditions.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Location

Bulgaria is a south-east European country, bordered by Greece, Turkey, Romania, Serbia and FYR of Macedonia. It has a population of about 7.5 million, and an area of 70,000 square miles. Its capital, Sofia, is 1,300 miles from London. The Black Sea coast is about 300 miles to the east of Sofia. The time in Sofia is 2 hours ahead of British time.

People, Language and Alphabet

The present day Bulgarians are white Europeans descending from a long list of ethnic influences, the majority of which are ancient Thracian tribes and the migrant Slavs and Bulgarians, who settled here by the 7th Century. Most are dark haired and dark eyed, but there are some fair haired and blue-eyed. There are Turkish and Roma minorities. Bulgarian is a South Slavonic language, with similarities to others, such as Serbian, Croatian and Russian. Bulgarians nod their heads when meaning „no” and shake them sideways when meaning „yes”. The Bulgarian alphabet is a Cyrillic alphabet created and developed locally in the 9th-10th Century by the Byzantine missionary saints Cyril and his brother Methodius and their students. Its purpose was to help introduce Christianity, adopted by the Bulgarian state, by translating holy texts, reading and preaching in Bulgarian. The alphabet also spread to other Slav lands. Road signs are first in Bulgarian and with smaller letters in Latin on main roads. You may find a convenient conduit to Bulgarian culture through the Bulgarian Cultural Institute, www.bcilondon.co.uk.

Climate

Bulgaria's climate is generally temperate continental influenced by its mountainous terrain and neighbouring Mediterranean weather systems. Air is drier with noticeable fluctuations between day and night temperatures, even in summer it can be chilly in the early morning, especially in the mountains. Winters tend to be much colder than in Britain, often with heavy snowfall, while summers are drier and hotter. Spring and autumn are often rainy.

Passports and Visas

A valid British passport with at least 3 months validity after the date of return is required for all British citizens and they do not need a visa. Holders of other British or other nationalities' passports should check with the Bulgarian Embassy www.bulgarianembassy-london.org/ (Visa and Consular Section). This is open on week days from 09:30 to 13:30 hrs. You can also enquire on telephone 020 7589 7363 from 13:30 to 16:00 hrs. If the number is very busy, the best thing to do is to send an email with your enquiry to consular@bulgarianembassy.org.uk and you should get a reply by the following day.

Health

At present no vaccinations or inoculations are compulsory, though they may be recommended. Please check with your GP before departure. A Department of Health leaflet "Health Advice for Travellers" is available free from your doctor and main post offices. The Department of Health's website www.dh.gov.uk has constantly updated health advice for travellers, as does that of the Foreign Office www.fco.gov.uk For natural history tour participants who spend a lot of time in the countryside, ticks are a possibility, so it is wise to dress defensively in long trousers which can be tucked into socks when necessary. In Bulgaria local polyclinics normally treat minor complaints free of charge, though you will have to meet the cost of any medicines. There are also private clinics where you should expect to pay. In large purpose built resorts, local clinics will normally be private. Your travel insurance normally covers medical expenses, so do keep all receipts and contact your insurers direct, on your return.

Special Requirements

Vegetarian meals may be of limited choice. Our coach tours are not really suitable for disabled holidaymakers, especially those confined to a wheelchair or needing regular medical treatment.

Money

The local currency used in Bulgaria is Leva (BGN), pegged to the Euro at a rate of approximately 2 BGN = 1 EUR. Leva are available outside the country, but the exchange rates are not competitive. We advise you to take your spending money in Sterling notes in good condition, which can be exchanged in Bulgaria shortly after arrival. Airport bureaux also give poor rates. No Scottish or Northern Ireland bank notes are accepted. Credit and debit cards are still not widely accepted in shops, restaurants and other establishments, though there is a growing number of ATMs where cards can be used to obtain Leva at not very good rates plus charges. You can check the central bank rate of the Bulgarian National Bank on www.mobile.bnb.bg/ExchangeRates/EN/.

Wine and Spirits

Bulgarian wine and local brands of spirits are of very good quality and considerably cheaper than in the UK. Note that spirits are served in 50g and 100g measures, and even the "small" local measure of 50 ml is larger than a British double! When travelling to and from Bulgaria, you can import for your own use unlimited amounts of spirits, wine, cigarettes, etc. Check regulations on <https://www.gov.uk/duty-free-goods/arrivals-from-eu-countries>. There will be a greater choice of goods at the airport shops than on the plane.

What to take

A small personal first aid kit (including an insect repellent) is useful, and any preferred brand cosmetics and toiletries, and also any proprietary medication you are currently taking. If a change of diet or climate sometimes upsets your stomach, bring the appropriate remedies such as Imodium with you. If you like an early morning cup of tea, take powdered milk, tea bags and the heating element with you. When travelling in early spring and late autumn, especially in the mountains, warm sweaters and waterproofs, as well as stout walking boots or shoes are sensible. In the warmer parts of the country, near to the Greek border and on the Black Sea coast lightweight clothing should be more appropriate.

Remember your two pin continental adaptor.

Some villages and historic town centres are not well lit, so a pocket torch is useful. The period around 24 May is celebrated by school leavers both lengthily and loudly – bring some wax earplugs to ensure a good night's sleep!

What to buy

Good value souvenirs include pottery, marble, glassware, carved wood, lace and embroidery, leather and suede goods, including shoes, excellent rose oil products and cosmetics.

Important

In the unlikely event of loss or damage to your baggage while in the airline's care, fill in a Property Irregularity Report before leaving the airport and retain a copy. The airline will not accept responsibility if you do not do this, and holiday insurers may not accept a subsequent claim. Most hotels offer to deposit small valuable items in an envelope in the hotel safe, for a small charge. Be sure to list the items included and obtain a receipt for them, and for any subsequent additions or withdrawals. For security reasons we recommend you to use this service. Many hotels make a small charge to all (including hotel guests) that use their swimming pools, fitness centres, night-clubs and public toilets.

Bradt Travel Guide to Bulgaria

This in our opinion is the best guide book to Bulgaria with the most thorough insight into the history, natural beauty, wildlife habitat diversity, cultural monuments and the national character, traditions and culture of its local people. We are holding a limited supply of the book and will be happy to send a complimentary copy to first-time visitors and even those, who have not travelled with us during the last two years.

Leaflet Accuracy

All information in our brochures and leaflets is given in good faith, and to the best of our knowledge was correct at the time of printing. (July 2017).



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

We are partners in the British Foreign Office Know Before You Go campaign, and you can find additional information on travel to Bulgaria on www.fco.gov.uk.

ABOUT B-BS TOURS

The British-Bulgarian Society has been running a variety of special interest tours for nearly 40 years and with Balkania Travel Ltd for the last twenty years. We aim to satisfy our clients' specific interests as well as giving them a taste of Bulgaria, its scenery, customs and folklore, wine and cuisine, history and way of life. No-one knows the country better than we do!

Our groups are usually a mixture of couples and single travellers and are noted for their friendly atmosphere. We prefer to run a small group rather than disappoint clients by cancelling, and rarely impose surcharges for small groups unlike most commercial operators. For Natural History and Ornithology groups, numbers don't normally exceed 14, though occasionally if the final booking is a couple there may be 15.

Our tours are holidays and we aim to avoid long journeys and frequent hotel changes on most of our tours. We co-operate with local conservation organisations and aim to make our tours a benefit to rural areas – by shopping locally for lunches, patronising restaurants in remote villages where possible etc.- and for every tour participant on a natural history tour we make a donation to nature conservation and bird protection NGO-s in Bulgaria. Tour profits are also donated to a mixture of educational and conservation projects.

Clients are asked to behave responsibly to all wildlife, no specimens of any kind must be taken. By setting a good example we can show local people that we value their flora and fauna, thereby encouraging them to conserve it.



BOOKING CONDITIONS

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