



BON VOYAGE  
TRAVEL AGENCY

# GRAND BALKAN TOUR

## **Day 1. Arrival Belgrade, SERBIA**

Our journey of the bewildering Balkans start at the heart city of Serbia, Belgrade. We find a beautiful romantic and medieval city competing amongst the most charming cities in Eastern Europe as we are warmly received and transferred to our hotel.

Overnight: **Hotel, Belgrade (2 nights)**

## **Day 2. Belgrade**

The capital city of Serbia since 1403, our Belgrade tour starts with the Republic Square, where we see the architectural wonders in monuments such as the National Theatre, National Museum, Serbian Academy of Science & Arts in the famous Knez Mihajlova Street. At the old town we see 19thC quarters, the 'Question mark sign' Inn, Princess Ljubica's Residence (now housing a permanent exhibition of original furniture), the Patriarchy and the Orthodox Cathedral. No visit to Belgrade is complete without the fortress area which includes well-preserved artillery structures dating from the 18thC, acropolis with original ramparts, gateways, towers, some Turkish monuments and some older, ancient Roman. Evening is a welcome dinner at the local Bohemian quarters of Skadarlija with Serbian cuisine and music.

## **Day 3. Belgrade / Zlatibor / Sirogojno**

Continuing our journey we drive south and ascend Mount Zlatibor National Park known for its beauty and intact nature. It is a mountain of golden pines, after which it got its name (Zlatan - golden Bor – pine tree). A short drive through the beautiful countryside gets us into an area where the vegetation changes into a jungle. Here we find flora and fauna such as the Omorica. This is also one of the last refuge areas for Bears. Our final destination for today is the unique and charming ethno village of Sirogojno. It is an open-air museum of traditional architecture, as well as an exhibition of handicrafts and world famous hand-knitted [clothes](#). We walk through the village before checking in at our hotel.

Overnight: **Hotel, Zlatibor (1 night)**

## **Day 4. Mokra Gora / Sargan / Studenica / Kopaonik**

An interesting 15Kms. train ride on the old narrow gauge steam engine "Sarganska Osmica". we cross breathtaking scenery through 20 tunnels, 10 bridges and as many viaducts. The trail cut its path through astonishing landscapes of Serbia and Bosnia, on its way from Belgrade to Sarajevo and Dubrovnik. This will be a day for rail and steam buffs, photographers and lovers of nature. We visit the World Heritage Site of Studenica Monastery considered to be the crowning achievement of medieval culture and art in Serbia. After visiting the monastic site including Churches of the Virgin (1183-1196), SS Joachim & Anne (also known as the King's Church) and St. Nicholas, we continue for the final destination of the day - Kopaonik Park. Among Serbian mountains, Kopaonik is unrivalled by its natural beauty and mineral wealth.

Overnight: **Hotel, Kopaonik (1 night)**



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### **Day 5. Podgorica (MONTENEGRO) / Budva**

Another interesting day as we drive to the capital, Podgorica. We take a scenic drive alongside Lake Skadar to the Montenegrin coast to Budva. Budva is a medieval town and is definitely the most attractive tourist place on the Riviera. The old part of the town is fortified with typical architecture of narrow streets and stone buildings placed around the main cathedral. This area is a popular tourist hang out with now many shops and taverns. Budva also has several attractive beaches and hotels.

Overnight: **Hotel, Budva (1 night)**

### **Day 6. Budva / Cetinje / Kotor / Dubrovnik (CROATIA)**

A scenic drive up the mountain gets us to Cetinje, capital of Montenegro during the Njegos era. It doesn't have a strong fort like many other important capitals from its time as nature blessed this place with natural stone protections. The town was founded in 1482, when Ivan Crnojevic, the last ruler of the medieval country of Zeta, built here a palace and church. Cetinje remained as the heart and soul of Montenegro up to WW1. We visit the royal palace of King Nikola II, last King of Montenegro which contains both a beautiful small museum as well as the Monastery of St. Petar. Next we visit the World Heritage Site of Kotor - a town museum which was inhabited from the times of the Illyrians and the Romans. Our walk through the city takes us back to medieval times, as most of the monuments we observe are from the 14th to 18th C's. We visit the Cathedral of St. Tryphon, St. Luka Church, St. Mihail Church, amongst other sites. Late afternoon we continue on a spectacular drive to Dubrovnik. This drive will be witnessing beautiful Boka Kotorska Bay and many old fishing villages, churches, monasteries, marinas and beaches. We cross the border into Croatia before arriving Dubrovnik.

Overnight: **Hotel, Dubrovnik (2 nights)**

### **Day 7. Dubrovnik**

This morning we start with a walking tour through the old walled heart of Dubrovnik. All motor vehicles are banned from the center and our transport drops us outside the Pile Gate where we visit the Franciscan Monastery, housing one of the world's oldest pharmacies, the old harbor, St Laurence Fortress, the Sponza and Rector's Palaces and other points of interest in this best preserved European walled city. Afternoon, we are free to enjoy Dubrovnik's old city or its popular Adriatic Sea beach.

### **Day 8. Dubrovnik / Trebinje / Sarajevo (BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA)**

After a leisurely day at Dubrovnik coast, we drive inland up the mountains where we cross the border into Bosnia and Herzegovina. We pass through the picturesque little town of Trebinje famous for its Old Town and by the church Mausoleum of the very famous poet Jovan Ducic. We proceed through the bare mountains of the area, then through the National Park of Sutjeska, crossing the river Sutjeska and driving through its Canyon before arriving Sarajevo, capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Overnight: **Hotel, Sarajevo (2 nights)**



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### **Day 9. Sarajevo**

Enchanting Sarajevo, to some it competes with Isfahan in Iran. We start with a walking tour of Sarajevo. This magical town with all its charms takes us instantly back to the Ottoman day as we visit beautiful Ottoman mosques, old quarters and the authentic Turkish “carsija”, with its oriental sweets shops, cafes and traditional Bosnian food. Sarajevo is also a town in which for more than 400 years mosques, orthodox churches, roman-catholic churches and synagogues have been standing together.

### **Day 10. Sarajevo – Mostar**

No visit of Bosnia & Herzegovina is complete without a visit to Mostar. We start the day with a breathtaking drive along River Neretva and through the Bosnian Mountains before arriving Mostar. Afternoon, we tour Mostar, a picturesque town, more than 5 centuries old and made famous by the old Turkish bridge that once was the only means uniting the city over the emerald waters of the Neretva River. The bridge always played a central role in lives of its inhabitants. The original bridge was wooden, built at the beginning of the 15th century, and it was a very important link of the two parts of Herzegovina, not only strategically but also in respect of trade linking the sea to the interior. This soon brought the urgent need to replace the old unsafe wooden chain bridge with a new which could meet the growing requirements. The construction of the bridge began in 1557 and continued for nine years making it the masterpiece of Hajrudin, and under the close observation of the Caliph, Suleyman The Magnificent (builder). We stroll through the narrow medieval style old bazaar with astounding Ottoman Islamic architecture.

Overnight: **Hotel, Mostar (1 night)**

### **Day 11. Mostar**

Free time to explore Mostar. Transfer to Croatia and the Plitvice Lakes.

Overnight: **Hotel Jezerao Plitvice Lakes area (1 night) (B, D)**

### **Day 12. Plitvice Lakes / Lipica Stud Farm / Postojna Cave / Ljubljana (SLOVENIA)**

Today we walk on one of the most magnificent sites in Croatia, the Plitvice Lakes. Here sixteen lakes, each at a different level join the other in a series of cascading waterfalls. Surrounded by dense woods, the region, UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site is a natural phenomenon of rare and unique beauty. Wooded paths follow the succession of lakes and waterfalls where streams burst out of rocks creating a unique place. The colors of the pools are reminiscent of Lake Louise in the Canadian Rockies. Afternoon, we depart for Slovenia. Our first stop is to tour Lipica Stud Farm. The impact of Lipica has been far greater than its tiny size would suggest. In 1580, the Austrian Archduke Charles, son of Ferdinand I, established a stud farm (kobilarna) to breed horses for the Spanish Riding School in Vienna. The stud farm remained the property of the court in Vienna until the end of WWI when the Italians took control of Primorska province and herds were moved to Hungary and then to Austria, but the change in climate took its toll on the horses.



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In 1943, with WWII still raging, the Germans moved more than 200 horses to the Sudetenland in Bohemia (now Czech Republic). When the area was liberated by American forces in 1945, most of the horses and the stud farms' archives were shipped off to Italy. Sadly, only 11 horses returned to Slovenia when operations resumed in Lipica in 1947. We later visit Postojna. The cave at this scenic town is one of the largest in the world, and is among Slovenia's most popular attractions. The Postojna Cave (Postojnska Jama) system, a series of caverns, halls and passages some 27 km (17 miles) long and 2,000,000 years old, was hollowed out by the Pivka River, which enters a subterranean tunnel near the caves' entrance. The river continues its deep passage underground, carving out several more series of caves, and emerges again as the Unica River.

Overnight: **Hotel, Ljubljana (1 night)**

### **Day 13. Ljubljana / Bled**

We start the day with a tour of "Bela Ljubljana." This was the nickname given to this delightful city after it was entirely rebuilt in the 16th century following the massive earthquake of 1511. A drive through the streets of this sunny city reminds us of the buildings of both Vienna and Prague. The difference, however, is that the Slovene capital is tiny by comparison, small enough to be easily visited on foot. We go up to the city's highest point to visit the 16th century castle, then descend to the lower city to see Trg Naradnih Herojev, the square housing one of the worlds newest parliaments. Here the Slovene flag was raised for the first time in 1991. We continue on foot to visit the old town with its large university, philharmonic hall, and beautiful square of the three bridges. Across the bridge in the old town we will see the city cathedral. Perhaps the most interesting parts of the building are the brand new bronze doors. Commemorating centuries of struggle towards independence, these doors recount major events in the history of Slovenia. Our walking tour is not complete without time spent wandering through the open air and indoor city market. People come here to buy fresh mountain herbs and flowers, famous forest honey, wild mushrooms, and fresh fruit and vegetables from local farms. Fresh cheeses made each morning for the market are also on display. Our next visit is Lake Bled. Reflecting the high peaks of the Julian Alps, the lake has always been considered sacred to the locals. We start with a visit of the castle perched on a cliff overlooking the town. Offering stunning views over the still morning waters, the castle is also home to a small historical museum with artifacts dating back to the time of the Romans. At the shores of Lake Bled we embark on a boat ride to Slovenia's only island. Legend has it that this little island was originally inhabited by fairies. Today the island is home to a Baroque church dedicated to Our Lady of the Lake. Near the altar of the church hangs a rope attached to the bells in the tower. Legend has it that if you make a wish while ringing the bells the wish will come true.

Overnight: **Hotel, Bled (1 night)**

### **Day 14. Bled/ departure**

Completing the historical trail of the Balkans, of Yugoslavia – the country that has played a major role in the 20th C., we bid farewell to this aspect of history with our transfer to Ljubljana airport for



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our onward flight.