



Rediscover the
meaning of travel

Tour Notes

Balkan Explorer

Tour Duration – 15 Days



Tour Rating

Fitness ●●○○○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●○○ | Culture ●●●●○ | History ●●●●○ | Wildlife ●●●○○

Tour Pace

Moderate

Tour Highlights

- ✓ Travel through the Danube Valley
- ✓ UNESCO sites of Studencia and Sopocani Monasteries
- ✓ Visit Biogradska Gora, one of Europe's last 3 remaining primeval forests
- ✓ Explore Dubrovnik, one of Croatia's most attractive cities
- ✓ Visit the Latin Bridge, site of the start of World War I



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Tour Map



Tour Essentials

- Accommodation:** Mix of Comfortable hotels
- Included Meals:** Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary
- Group Size:** Belgrade – you can arrive any time on day 1
- End Point:** Belgrade – you can depart any time on day 15
- Transport:** Minibus
- Countries:** Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina



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Balkan Explorer

Mention the Balkans to anyone and it can conjure up a plethora of images - flashpoint of the First World War, the atrocities of the recent civil war, Tito's Communist dictatorship. We get to look beyond these clichéd stereotypes on our two-week trip through four stunningly beautiful countries – Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. We explore the crossroads of cultures, of Christianity meets Islam in fascinating historical cities such as Sarajevo and Belgrade, as well as some of the best landscapes in Europe at Durmitor and Biogradska Gora. Learn about the recent tragic history of the region in old Mostar and explore the medieval walled city of Kotor. This is a highlight packed tour that delves deep into the culture and history of one of Europe's most fascinating regions.

Tour Itinerary Notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested and on occasions alternative accommodation, of a similar standard to that named below, will be used.

Tour Guide

Our guides are a key strength, chosen for their knowledge of and passion for the areas in which they work. All of our guides are carefully hand-picked, and are not just passing through these countries, but are usually locally born. Unlike some companies it should be noted we do not send a guide or tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations in the UK as we have every confidence in our locally appointed representative who is responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. Where possible you will have the same guide throughout your trip but on occasions it may be necessary to change the guide at one or more points during the tour.

Itinerary

Day 1: Belgrade, Serbia

On your arrival in Belgrade you will be met and transfer to hotel. The rest of the day is free time. Overnight Hotel Rex or similar

Day 2: Belgrade

Today we start with a tour of Belgrade, taking in the temple of St Sava, the parliament buildings and Republic Square, and the Kalemegdan Fortress and the museum of Yugoslav history. Later on we will join up with a cruise on the Danube to see more of the city's sights, before some free time to explore the city on your own. (Note: cruise is dependent on the weather conditions). Overnight Hotel Rex or similar (B)

Day 3: Fruška Gora, Sremski Karlovci and Novi Sad

An early morning start as we set off to explore the Fruška Gora National Park, also referred as the "Serbian Athos" and "The Holly Mountain", due to the 16 Orthodox monasteries from the late 15th and 16th centuries that are situated on its territory. We continue to Sremski Karlovci, a Serbian cultural centre in 18th and 19th centuries. Here we have a city tour and can partake in a wine tasting of local brands with appetizers at the local cellars. We will visit the Petrovaradin Fortress, known as "The Gibraltar of the Danube" before exploring the historical attractions of Novi Sad, including the iconic clock tower. Overnight Hotel Rex or similar (B)

Day 4: Danube Valley (300km, approx. 5hrs driving)

This morning we leave Belgrade behind as we travel along the winding valley of the River Danube. We visit the medieval fortress of Golubac, located near the border with Romania. The fortress is situated at the very entrance of the Djerdap Gorge, which is known also as the Iron Gates, on the section where the Danube



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River is at its widest. We continue to the archaeological site of Lepenski Vir, located in the Đerdap Gorge. It was the centre of one of the most important prehistoric cultures and the remains of religious architecture dating from 6500 to 5500 BC have been found here. Overnight Hotel Djerdap or similar (B)

Day 5: Rajac Wine Cellars, Felix Romuliana and Vrnjčka Banja (200km, approx. 4hrs driving)

This morning we travel to Rajac wine cellars, located near the village of the same name. It is a unique architectural complex of wine cellars built from the mid eighteenth century. The complex consists of 270 wine cellars and a central square with fountain. We will visit The National Museum in Zaječar before continuing to the ancient Roman complex of palaces and temples, Felix Romuliana. This is one of the most important late Roman sites in Europe. After exploring the site we will head to Vrnjčka Banja and our hotel for the evening. Overnight at Hotel Lidars or similar (B)

Day 6: Studenica and Sopocani-Kolasin Monasteries (350km, approx. 7hrs driving)

Today we visit two UNESCO World Heritage Sites- the Studenica and Sopocani Monasteries, which are the largest and wealthiest of Serbia's Orthodox monasteries, with fine Byzantine paintings; Sopocani is part of Stari Ras, Serbia's first capital, a cluster of medieval fortifications and churches. Sopocani Monastery, built in 13th century, has frescoes that are considered to be masterpieces of European fresco painting of the time. We cross the border in to Montenegro and stay in the town of Kolašin. Overnight at the Hotel Cile or similar (B)

Day 7: Biogradska Gora and Durmitor National Park (120km, approx. 3hrs driving)

We continue on to Biogradska Gora, an isolated area of forests and mountains surround nine glacial lakes. This is one of Europe's last three remaining primeval forests. Our journey continues to the Durdevica Tara Bridge, which at 172 meters above the Tara River, was at the time building was finished, the biggest vehicular concrete arch bridge in Europe. This is a great place to for a photo opportunity before we travel to Durmitor National Park with its breathtaking scenery of mountains, forests, lakes and high pastures. We will visit the Black Lake and, time permitting, take a walk around lake. Overnight Pavlovica Konaci or similar (B)

Day 8: Sedlo pass, Ostrog and Cetinje (200km, approx. 5hrs driving)

The Sedlo Pass (1907 m) on the road from Zabljak to Piva Lake is the highest road pass in Montenegro and we will stop here for a photo break with views over the Piva River Canyon. We continue our journey with a visit to the Ostrog monastery, with its chapels set in a sheer rock face and linked by beautifully decorated caves, passages and stairways. There is a visit to Podgorica where we have a few hours of free time before we end our day in Cetinje, an important historical centre dating from the 15th century and the cultural and spiritual heart of Montenegro. Overnight Hotel Sport Inn or similar (B)

Day 9: Cetinje to Lovcen and Kotor (40km, approx. 2hrs driving)

This morning we visit the former palace of King Nikola, now Montenegro's National Museum in Cetinje before we set off to Kotor. On the way we will stop for a visit at the Lovcen National Park and view the mausoleum of Peter II Petrovic Njegos. Our journey today ends in Kotor (or Prcanj a few kilometres from the city), where we will have a walking tour to discover the old city, the Cathedral of St Tryphon and the fortress of Saint Ivan. Overnight Hotel Galia or similar (B)

Day 10: Kotor and Dubrovnik (Croatia) – Trebinje (Bosnia & Herzegovina) (150km, approx. 4hrs driving)

After breakfast we will take a cruise around some of the islands in Kotor bay. (Note: Subject to weather conditions). We then cross the border in to Croatia and head to Dubrovnik, which is one of the most attractive cities in the region. Here we will take a walking tour with a local guide and visit the Dominican Monastery. We leave Dubrovnik and head to our stopover for the evening, Trebinje, just over the border in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Overnight at Platani Hotel or similar (B)



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Day 11: Trebinje, Radimlja, Blagaj Tekija and Mostar (60km, approx. 1.5hrs driving)

Today we will start with a morning sightseeing tour of Trebinje before travelling to the necropolis on Radimlja. This is the best-known site of the medieval tomb stones in the country and is among the most valuable monuments of the medieval period in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Our next stop is the village of Blagaj Tekija, a Dervish monastery outside Mostar that is nearly 600 years old. Situated at the base of a cliff, next to the source of the river Buna, it's a unique and picturesque series of buildings. The last stop of the day is Mostar, where we check in at our hotel for the evening. Overnight Hotel Rivero or similar (B)

Day 12: Konjic and Sarajevo (70km, approx. 2hrs driving)

We leave Mostar this morning to head to the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo. On the way we will stop off at Konjic. The city is one of the oldest permanent settlements in Bosnia, dating back almost 4000 years and is set in a beautiful wooded area that is popular with outdoor sports enthusiasts and walkers. Our journey continues to Sarajevo where we will take a tour through the old oriental part of Bosnia and Herzegovina's capital city, with its beautiful architecture, sweet shops and cafes. We visit the Latin Bridge, site of the start of World War I and where you can spot various markings on the pavements which are 'mini-memorials' to the sniper victims of the recent war. We also visit the tunnel museum, a section of the tunnel that was the only way of accessing the city during the siege of 1992-1995. Later there is free time to explore the city on your own. Overnight Hotel Saraj or similar (B)

Day 13: Sarajevo

We will visit the River Bosna and have free time today to explore Sarajevo at your own pace. Overnight Hotel Saraj or similar (B)

Day 14: Visegrad and Belgrade (350km, approx. 6hrs driving)

We leave Sarajevo and stop to visit the Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge, the historic bridge in Višegrad widely known from book "The Bridge on the Drina", the best-known novel of Serbian writer and winner of the Nobel prize, Ivo Andrić. It was built in 1577 by the Ottoman court architect Mimar Sinan on the order of the Grand Vizier Mehmed Paša Sokolović. From Visegrad we take the road via the Tara Mountain and the Drina River valley (with photo stops) back to Belgrade. Overnight Hotel Rex or similar (B)

Day 15: Depart Belgrade

At a suitable time, you will be collected from the hotel and transferred to the airport for your onward flight (B)

Inclusions / Exclusions

Inclusions:

Arrival and departure transfers
All accommodation on twin share basis
Transport throughout the tour
Services of English-speaking guide / tour leader
Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)
Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary

Excluded:

International flights
Any airport taxes
Travel Insurance
Visas
Drinks



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Important Information

Foreign Office Travel Warnings

Before booking your tour please familiarise yourself with the country specific information provided by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) - <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>. This includes important information such as latest immigration requirements, and details of any travel advisories.

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At present there are no warnings against travel to Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

Accommodation and Meals

Hotel Check-in Times

As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 2pm. Please note that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore please advise us if you would like to ensure that your room is available for an earlier arrival. This is particularly relevant on the first day of the tour and for early morning arrivals. One option is to pre-book and pay for an extra night at the beginning of your tour which will guarantee your accommodation is available irrespective of what time you arrive. Please contact us for information and costs.

It should also be noted that on many of our tours we have set-aside Day 1 of the itinerary as an 'arrival day'. For this reason and because tour participants are likely to be arriving at different times, and often from different countries, guided sightseeing or other activities are not included. If you are arriving early or before the start date of the tour and would like to organise some extra arrangements on a private basis please contact us.

Accommodation Rating

At Undiscovered Destinations we know our travellers prefer to stay in comfortable, mid-range accommodation which meets our own exacting standards. With a few exceptions you can expect rooms to be en-suite, with private bathroom and when necessary air-conditioning will be provided. In general you will find your hotel has a restaurant and/or bar.

We welcome solo travellers and single rooms will be allocated subject to the applicable tour supplement. Please note that on occasions you may not always be allocated a double or twin room, as some hotels have designated single rooms. These may be smaller in size. However, the supplement payable takes this into consideration.

Food & Drink

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D). Please note that lunch may be a picnic. Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.

Dietary Requirements

If you have any special dietary requirements you must notify us at the time of booking. While we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.



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Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch £4 - £6

Dinner £8 - £10

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Water £0.80

Beer £2

Tipping – Guide and Drivers

Tipping is commonly recognised as a way of rewarding guides and drivers for good service. If you are happy with your guide and driver, please consider leaving a tip for them. For our European group tours, a reasonable amount would be between EUR3-5 per person per day for the guide, and EUR1-2 for the driver (you may have different guides in different countries). If you are travelling privately, then a reasonable amount would be around EUR7-10 per day for the guide and EUR3-5 per day for the driver. Waiters and bar staff in the region are generally low paid and it is common practice to leave a small tip – around 10% of the bill.

Foreign Exchange

ATM Availability: ATM machines are found in many towns

Credit and Debit Card Acceptance: Cards can only be used at the better hotels and restaurants

Local Currency: Euro, Croatian Kuna, Serbian Dinar, Bosnian Mark.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Euro

Where to Exchange: Your guide will advise you

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive an airport transfer, both on arrival and departure include in the tour price. In order that the transfer can be arranged please ensure that you advise us of your flight information once available. Please advise the date, time and flight number for your arrival/departure. If we have not been advised of this information at least 2 weeks before travel, then you will be required to make your own way to the hotel on Day 1 of your tour.



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Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

Visa Information

At the time of writing British, US and Australian nationals do not require a visa for a short-term tourist visit to Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro or Bosnia-Herzegovina.

As it is the travellers' responsibility to ensure that they meet all entry requirements it is essential that you check the rules and any other conditions at the time of booking and again when making your balance payment. In addition, we would strongly advise that you make a final check around two weeks before your arrival. This is important as requirements can change at short notice. Undiscovered Destinations, when possible, will provide guidance about entry rules, but in the first instance please contact the relevant authorities, including the applicable embassy or consulate for assistance. Contact details can be found by visiting the following websites.

British Nationals - www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

US Nationals - <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>

Australian Nationals - www.smartraveller.gov.au/

Other nationals should check the latest requirements with the authorities in their home country, or with the destination's nearest embassy or consulate.

Passports

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to the UK.

We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities. In addition certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities.

For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country's embassy or consulate. Alternatively UK citizens can visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice.

Vaccinations & Protection

We strongly recommend that you contact your doctor's surgery or a specialist travel clinic for up-to-date information, advice and the necessary vaccinations. There are no compulsory vaccinations, but we recommend protection against Hepatitis A, Polio, Tetanus, and Typhoid. Tick-borne encephalitis is recommended by some medical sources if travelling in certain areas of Eastern Europe, at specific times of the year.

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in your home country can be different in other countries. If you're travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on best practice when travelling with medicines. For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you'll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you're travelling to.



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Preparing for your tour

Climate

The Balkan region experiences cold winters and hot summers. Spring and autumn offer the best chance of moderate temperatures. There is a chance of sporadic rain in spring and autumn, though generally this is in the form of short showers. Thunderstorms occur in summer generally helping to cool the air.

Clothing

July and August are the hottest months, but early and late in the season go prepared with clothing to suit drops in temperature and the odd shower. Please note air conditioning may not be available in some accommodations.

Driving Times and Distances

All driving times and distances stated in this itinerary are given in good faith, and are approximate distances and times only. They are dependent on the traffic and driving conditions of that day.

Equipment

The first thing on your list should be a first aid kit. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared: adequately immunized, with sufficient supplies of prescription drugs, along with a medical kit. A torch, water bottle, insect repellent, hat, suncream (at least factor 15), good quality sunglasses and a lipsalve with sun protection. Also bring a swimsuit for swimming opportunities on the trip.

Footwear

Comfortable shoes/trainers plus sandals/flip flops for relaxing.

Luggage on tour

Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). One large rucksack, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable.

Electric Supply & Plugs

Electrical supply is 220-230V and plugs usually have the European 2 Pin Round style.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These tour notes updated 11 July 2023.