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19 Historic Days **Belgrade to Sofia**

Crossroads of Balkan Empires featuring Romania & Transylvania, Serbia & Bulgaria

Explore the historic Balkan Empires

The Danube, Transylvania and historic Balkans

What a unique adventure! From Serbia's vibrant capital of Belgrade, through to delightful Sofia in Bulgaria. In the middle? Romantic Romania, alluring Transylvania, the Carpathian Mountains and Wallachia. A land rich in history, culture and colour... a land where you will still be able to see horse and carts pulling giant piles of hay, where bears thrive in the deep forests, where UNESCO listed, perfectly preserved Saxon towns and villages litter the countryside, and where churches are fortified with giant walls to fend off attack. You will visit ancient castles like Golubac built to defend Europe's biggest gorge, you will cruise through the Danube's Iron Gates, see a monstrous kingly rock carving, take in Lepenski Vir Europe's oldest settlement, enjoy lunch in a local restaurant with views of the Danube and visit the strange, but oh so photogenic, Negotin Wine villages for lunch accompanied by local wines! Three nights in Sibiu will entrance you, the hairpin bends of the stunning Transfăgărășan mountain road will enthuse you, the Libearty Bear Sanctuary will warm you, the perfect gem city of Sighișoara will stimulate you. In ancient Veliko Tarnovo we experience an amazing Sound and Light Show, at Bran we enjoy a private tour of 'Dracula's Castle', we dine in a huge Transylvanian Forest igloo, and lunch in a Rose Distillery where the divine dessert cake is actually made with Rose petals! What an awesome tour, come join us!

Travel in a first-class air-conditioned touring coach

A complimentary glass of wine, beer or soft drink with all included dinners
31 meals including breakfast daily (B), 4 lunches (L) and 9 evening meals (D)
Welcome drink on Day 1

Hotel porterage of 1 bag per person (where available)
18 nights specially selected hotel accommodation
Free WiFi at most hotels (where available)

ALL tips for your Tour Manager, Driver and Local Guides
Fully escorted by our experienced Tour Manager
Local guides as described in the itinerary
Personal audio system whilst on tour (where available)

Hand Selected Albatross Inclusions : Visit Golubac Fortress, Lepenski Vir, cruise the Djerdap Gorge, enjoy lunch in a historical wine village, travel the Transfăgărășan mountain road, enjoy a sound and light show in Veliko Tarnovo and an after hours visit to Bran Castle and dinner in Queen Maria's Tea House.
ALL excursions, scenic drives, sightseeing and entrances as described


Carpathian Mountains
Jidvei
Sighișoara
Alba Iulia
Viscri
Timișoara
1
Sibiu
3
Transfăgărășan
Prejmer
Brașov
Hunedoara
3
Poiana Brașov
Transylvania
Bran
Peles Castle
Sinaia
Zarnesti Bear Sanctuary
The Danube
Belgrade
2
Golubac Fortress
Iron Gate
Romania
Lepinski Vir
2
Kladovo
Bucharest
2
Danube Cruise
Wallachia
Rogljevačke Pivnice
Serbia
River Danube
Bulgaria
Arbanasi
Veliko Tarnovo
2
Shipka
Kazanlak Thracian Tombs
1
Sofia
Damascena Rose Complex
2
Plovdiv
North Macedonia
Tour commences
3
Nights
Included excursions

Belgrade Welcome

Day 1 | **Marriott Courtyard Belgrade City Centre** | **D**

Your tour commences this evening in the Serbian capital of Belgrade. If you have arrived today on your international flight, experience tells us it is best to keep active through this afternoon and Belgrade is such a wonderful city at this time of year with so much to see and do. Belgrade is such a wonderful city at this time of year with so much to see and do. Our hotel is exceptionally located right on Republic Square so provides perfect access to the main street pedestrian shopping and dining areas.

Dinner tonight is included but first enjoy a welcome drink. This is an ideal opportunity to meet your Tour Manager and fellow travellers.

Belgrade orientation walk and 'My Time'

Day 2 | **Marriott Courtyard Belgrade City Centre** | **B**

A local guide joins us this morning for an orientation walk through town. Starting from the hotel we will follow the Pedestrian Mall to the imposing Fortress. The Kalemegdan parks and gardens surround the Fortress and it is such a pleasure to amble through the shady terraces and along the winding walkways. The Fortress sits perched above the Danube, and the views from the gardens and walls are excellent. The rest of the day is entirely free. 'My Time' to enjoy as you wish. The Pedestrian Mall is lined with restaurants, bars and coffee shops. In the evening maybe take a short walk to Skadarska, one of Belgrade's gourmet hubs to dine on typical Serbian fare.

Golubac Fortress, ancient Lepinski Vir and lunch in a local restaurant

Day 3 | **Hotel Aquastar Danube, Kladovo** | **B,L,D**

First stop this morning will be at the impressive Golubac Fortress. This incredibly striking Fortress was strategically built on the banks of the Danube at the entrance to the Iron Gate Gorge. In the 14th and 15th century this was a vital military stronghold on the borders of the Serbian, Hungarian and later Ottoman Empires.

Entering the Djerdap National Park we enjoy a short drive into the hills where we enjoy lunch in a local restaurant and take in the sweeping panoramic views of the Danube from the restaurant's terrace.

Afterwards, we stop to visit one of Europe's most important archaeological sites – Lepenski Vir. Nestled on the banks of the Danube, this is Europe's oldest human settlement which dates back 9,000 years, and the site is protected within a massive glass and white steel structure. Inside you will find a fascinating museum and audio-visual show of these settlers from the Mesolithic Iron Gates Hunter-Gatherers period.

Later we continue to Kladovo which sits on the Danube, where we stay the next two nights. Dinner tonight is included.

Danube 'Iron Gate' Cruise, Wine Village Lunch

Day 4 | **Hotel Aquastar Danube, Kladovo** | **B,L**

This morning, we will enjoy a relaxing cruse on the Danube, through the Djerdap Gorge – also known as 'the Iron Gates". This is part of a network of canyons creating the largest and longest gorge in Europe. On our cruise we will get a close-up view of the enormous rock carving of the last Dacian King – Decebalus. At 55 metres high it is the tallest stone sculpture in Europe.

For lunch we have a special treat as we drive into the hills around Negotin to visit one of the unique wine cellar villages. Nominated for UNESCO listing these villages are dedicated to wine cellars and not people in houses. The only time people live in these villages is during a handful of days when they are making, or 'testing' the wine. Rogljevačke Pivnice is a classic example of one of these historical wine towns with the whole village lined with stone, brick and tiled wine houses surrounding the dusty square with its Sacred Tree. Incredibly, even though the village is still fully active, since no one lives here it is silent and empty. Such tradition, a time capsule, so photogenic. Later we will enjoy lunch, and the chance to taste the local wine. What a unique experience!

Romania and City of Culture Timișoara

Day 5 | **Atlas Hotel, Timisoara, Romania** | **B**

Crossing the border into Romania we reach Timișoara where we stay overnight. In 2023 Timișoara was voted the European Capital of Culture, and the architecture stands out, showing its rich cultural heritage. The central square, Piața Victoriei, is surrounded by baroque buildings, and nearby is the Habsburg-era square Piața Unirii, which helped the city get its sometimes nickname of 'Little Vienna'. Your afternoon and evening are at leisure. 'My Time' to explore at your own pace.

Corvin Castle & Alba Iulia citadel

Day 6 | **Hotel Imparatul Romanilor, Sibiu** | **B,D**

First stop this morning will be a guided tour around Corvin Castle, also known as Hunyadi Castle, a spectacular Gothic-style creation. Considered one of the most beautiful castles in Romania it is also one of the largest castles in Europe. In the afternoon we enjoy free time to explore Alba Iulia (nominated for UNESCO status) which sits on the site of a 2nd century Roman camp. Today the medieval centre is surrounded by 18th century bastions. Later we continue to the glorious town of Sibiu where we stay the next 3 nights.

Our hotel is a listed property, set in a fantastic location right on the pedestrian mall and barely 50 metres from the Piata Mare, main historical square. This evening we dine in a local restaurant.

Sibiu Old Town Squares and 'My Time'

Day 7 | **Hotel Imparatul Romanilor, Sibiu** | **B**

Sibiu is a delight, and it is also nominated for UNESCO status. Founded by Transylvanian Saxons, about 800 years ago, there are actually three large interconnecting pedestrian squares in the city. The architecture ranges from Gothic to Renaissance to Baroque. After a very leisurely start, a local guide will take you on a short walk through the squares, including visiting the 'Bridge of Lies'. Each lovely square is surrounded by churches, grand buildings, shops, cafes and umbrellas providing shade for 'al fresco' dining. The rest of your day is entirely free. 'My Time' in stunning Sibiu!

Jidvei Winery lunch or Transfăgărășan Road experience

Day 8 | **Hotel Imparatul Romanilor, Sibiu** | **B,L**

The Transfăgărășan Road was originally built as a military route over the Carpathian Mountains. 90 kilometres long, it is considered the most beautiful road in Romania and amongst the top 10 drives in the world. It is littered with spectacular hairpin bends opening up to huge panoramic views as it winds its way up and over the Fagarasan Mountains. Along the way it is common to see groups of wild mountain bears beside the road. Unfortunately, the road is closed due to weather for most of the year, generally opening on July 1st each year for just a few months. You will note we have early and later season departures of this amazing Balkans tour. Our later season departures will enjoy a stunning day on the Transfăgărășan, with lunch included in a local restaurant beside the mountain lake at Bâlea.

For departures in the early part of the season this day out is not possible and so we will instead drive north, passing the famous wine producing vineyards of Jidvei, to enjoy a tasting and lunch at Bethlen-Haller Castle. So, the time of year you choose to travel with us will determine which exciting excursion you will experience. Most importantly, both activities are excellent and very rewarding.

Your evening is at leisure back in Sibiu.

UNESCO Sighișoara & Saxon Viscri, Romanian Forest Dinner

Day 9 | **Aurelius Imparatul Romanilor, Poiana Brașov** | **B,D**

This morning will be spent in Sighișoara, the birthplace city of Vlad Dracul – otherwise known as Vlad Tepes (Vlad the Impaler). Walking through the well-preserved historical centre is like stepping back in time. Founded back in the 12th century by the Transylvanian Saxons, this fortified medieval town is now a perfectly intact 16th century gem. Boasting nine towers including the enormous 14th century Clock Tower, cobbled streets lined with colourful burgher houses and narrow alleys surrounded by defensive walls. Exploring this delightful town will be an absolute highlight. Maybe enjoy coffee or lunch inside Casa Vlad Dracul – the fascinating house where Vlad Tepes was born.
In the afternoon we will stop at the beautiful village of Viscri, with its fortified church and broad main street lined with perfect Saxon era houses. King Charles III was captivated by Viscri, and used to visit every year, investing in the preservation of this ancient town of traditions.
Later we wind our way into the mountains up to the winter ski resort of Poiana Brașov where we stay the next three nights. Our hotel, Aurelius Romanilor, is set on its own small lake with a walkway across to the forested hills and winter ski resort village. Your rooms are absolutely enormous and lining the lakeside, its café and restaurant make a perfect place to relax and enjoy coffee or a glass of wine under the shady umbrellas.
Tonight, we have included a special treat as we walk into a local forest restaurant to dine on Transylvanian fare, inside a giant igloo style structure. What fun!

Libearty Bears, UNESCO Prejmer Church and Brașov

Day 10 | **Aurelius Imparatul Romanilor, Poiana Brașov** | **B**

First stop of the day will be at the Libearty Bear Sanctuary in Zarnesti. The largest animal welfare project in Europe, this is home to over 130 mistreated bears and is recognized as the most ethical sanctuary in the world. After a guided tour through the 70 hectares of oak forest we continue to delightful Brașov where we enjoy free time to explore and find a cosy café for lunch or ice cream.
In the afternoon we will visit the incredible fortified church of Prejmer. One of a collection of seven fortified churches that are UNESCO listed, Prejmer will intrigue and amaze you. From the outside you just see big blank whitewashed walls lined with defensive arrow slits. Entering the narrow-fortified tunnel, you emerge in front of a small, relatively unimpressive church, surrounded by a whole village of rooms built up over four stories embedded in the inside walls. All of which are interconnected with wooden ladders and walkways. The entire perimeter defences on the 5th level can be explored as well. Quite unique and memorable!

Mountain Cable Car, 'My Time', Bran Castle private Dracula tour and dinner

Day 11 | **Aurelius Imparatul Romanilor, Poiana Brașov** | **B,D**

Most of your day is free - 'My Time' to relax and enjoy your hotel facilities and explore the local walkways. Mid-morning we will take you on the Telegondola Postavaru Express cable car up to the peak to enjoy the panoramic views down over the Transylvanian countryside. There is a restaurant up there so take your time and relax on the outdoor terrace.
Late afternoon we will visit the nearby town of Bran. Above the busy little town is the imposing castle made famous in Bram Stoker's novel Dracula. After time to stroll around town, and once the castle is officially closed, we have arranged a private castle tour (without the crowds!). A fascinating visit including museums of torture, demons and local folklore that inspired Stoker to create his ghoulish creature. To cap the evening off, we have included dinner in a private salon in Queen Maria's Tea House. That is something to write home about... Dinner at Dracula's Castle. Fang-tastic!

Sinaia Monastery, Peleș Castle and Bucharest

Day 12 | **Hotel InterContinental Athénée Palace, Bucharest** | **B,D**

Heading south we stop at Sinaia to visit the Monastery before we visit the amazing Peleș Castle. Built by King Carol 1 of Romania at the end of the 19th century on the trading route between Transylvania and Wallachia, Peleș Castle is an utterly extravagant architectural masterpiece. Set in the Carpathian Mountains, it was the first castle in Europe to have central heating and electricity, and the décor inside is utterly extravagant and amazing. It is no wonder it has been tentatively listed for UNESCO heritage.
Later we continue to Romania's capital where we spend the next two nights. We have included dinner tonight in the famous local restaurant Caru Cu Bere.

Bucharest Palace of Parliament and 'My Time'

Day 13 | **Hotel InterContinental Athénée Palace, Bucharest** | **B**

This morning, we are joined by a local guide who will show us around this buzzing capital city. Highlight of the tour will be a visit to the utterly enormous Palace of Parliament. Built as the Casa Republicii, or People's Palace, by the Romanian Dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu, it took a team of approximately 700 architects to design what is still the heaviest building in the world, the world's third largest administrative building, and the world's most expensive building! Inside is extravagant and only 30% is currently being used as the seat of the Romanian Parliament.
The rest of the day is free – 'My Time' in Bucharest.

Arbanesi Village, and a special Sound and Light Show

Day 14 | **Yantra Grand Hotel, Veliko Tarnovo** | **B,D**

Crossing the Danube and entering Bulgaria, we arrive at Arbanesi. Known for its rich history, and churches we will enjoy lunchtime at leisure here. Veliko Tarnovo is just a few kilometers away and we arrive there mid-afternoon. Your hotel is right in town so after checking in take time to explore the vibrant town packed with shops and cafes. Dinner tonight is in your hotel. Located on a ridge the views from the restaurant terrace across the valley are fantastic.
After dinner we have included a special treat. We walk to a terrace for a private meeting with our local guide who will explain to us the history of Veliko Tarnovo. In prime seating with perfect views, we will enjoy an amazing Sound and Light Show programme set to music, as the enormous Fortress Hill of Veliko Tarnovo is totally illuminated by giant flood lights and bathed by laser lights. Amazing!

Veliko Tarnovo Fortress, Museum and Wine Tasting

Day 15 | **Yantra Grand Hotel, Veliko Tarnovo** | **B**

Meeting our local guide, we will cross the ravine to explore the fortress ruins of ancient Veliko Tarnovo which for 200 years was the capital of the 2nd Bulgarian Empire. Returning to town, our guide will take us through the Ethnological Museum with its brilliant wax models of people, dressed through the ages, in stylized scenes showing the region's rich historical past. Your afternoon is entirely free – 'My Time' to explore the city by foot.
Early evening, near your hotel, we have included a wine tasting where you will sample a variety of excellent local wines. The rest of your evening is free.

Shipka Monastery, Thracian Tombs and Rose Distillery Lunch

Day 16 | **Vizualiza Residence Hotel, Plovdiv** | **B,L,D**

We could just go straight to Sofia but instead we take two days! First stop of the day will be at Shipka Orthodox Monastery. Set high on a wooded hill, built to commemorate the fallen Russian and Bulgarian soldiers of the 19th century Liberation War from Turkey, this pink and white creation is just... beautiful, both outside and inside. Driving on to nearby Kazanlak we cross a flat plain which is littered with giant mounds – the ancient Thracian tombs dating back to the Hellenistic period – the 4th century BC. In the immediate area over 1,000 tombs of Thracian royalty can be found. We stop on the outskirts of Kazanlak where we visit a 'beehive' royal tomb, with glorious frescoes and paintings. It is no wonder these mural masterpieces are UNESCO listed. At the nearby Damascena Rose Distillery we have included a typical Thracian lunch, the standout being the dessert called Kunefe which is made with roses, and the taste is sublime. With time to explore the distillery, make sure you visit the rose amphitheatre.
Later we continue to Plovdiv where we spend the next two nights.

Plovdiv Hippodrome and 'My Time'

Day 17 | **Vizualiza Residence Hotel, Plovdiv** | **B**

Inhabited since pre-history, Plovdiv boasts some remarkable ruins as well as a thriving city heart, long pedestrian mall, an Ottoman quarter and a thriving 'al fresco' dining scene. Tentatively listed for UNESCO heritage, on the hill there is a Roman Amphitheatre and stadium, and underneath the city they have partially revealed a massive Roman hippodrome. Our guided tour will show us around all the sights and take in the brief 3-D show and the stunning underground hippodrome. The rest of the day is free, 'My Time' to enjoy this excellent city.

Sofia Walking Tour, 'My Time', Farewell Dinner

Day 18 | **Grand Hotel Sofia, Sofia, Bulgaria** | **B,D**

Arriving in Sofia mid-morning we are joined by a local guide for a walking tour of the main sights of the city centre. Our hotel is right in the heart of town and after checking in, your afternoon is free.
This evening, we will enjoy a Farewell Dinner in our hotel.

Tour ends

Day 19 | **Grand Hotel Sofia, Sofia, Bulgaria** | **B**

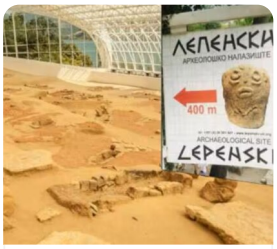
Our Crossroads of Balkan Empires featuring Romania & Transylvania, Serbia & Bulgaria Romania tour ends after breakfast.

Hand Selected Inclusions

These are just a few of the very special hand selected inclusions that will really make your touring experience exceptional and unique, and don't forget, with Albatross they are always included.



Golubac Fortress
Perched on the banks of the Danube River



Lepenski Vir
One of Europe's most important archaeological sites



Djerdap Gorge
Danube cruise through the 'Iron Gates'



Rogljevačke Pivnice
Historical Wine Village



Transfăgărășan Highway
Travel the hairpin bends of the stunning Transfăgărășan mountain road



Prejmer Fortified Church
One of a collection of seven UNESCO listed fortified churches



Libearty Bear Sanctuary
Europe's largest animal welfare project



Veliko Tarnovo
Sound and Light show



Kazanlak
Thracian Royal Tomb



Bran Castle
Private tour of 'Dracula's Castle' and Dinner

Dates and Prices

Correct as of 01:12 on 06th November 2026

Start Date	End Date	Twin Price	Solo Price	Guaranteed to Depart	
24 May 2027	11 Jun 2027	AUD$11,687	AUD$14,187	✓	Space Available
23 Aug 2027	10 Sep 2027	AUD$11,687	AUD$14,187		Space Available
22 May 2028	09 Jun 2028	TBC	TBC		Pre-Register
21 Aug 2028	08 Sep 2028	TBC	TBC		Pre-Register
11 Sep 2028	29 Sep 2028	TBC	TBC		Pre-Register

* The itinerary, inclusions and hotels featured are based on 2027 tour departures and may be subject to change. Any questions, please contact our European Tour Specialists for further details.

Tour Suitability

- In mid-summer, the heat may be energy sapping.
- There are a number of beautiful towns and historic sites we visit which require exploring on foot.

Please refer to our Tour Suitability section for more information.

Terms & Conditions

- Information provided is true and correct at time of issue. Airfares not included. For further details please contact your consultant or full terms and conditions may be found at www.albatrosstours.com.au/booking-conditions. Albatross Tours ABN 45 010 585 143. ATIA Accreditation No: A11341. CATO Accreditation No. 69562707