Snowshoeing in Bulgaria



Trip style:	Destination:	Walking Grade	Carbon Footprint:
Guided Walking Holidays	Bulgaria	5	1686kg CO2

HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Discover two very different sides of Bulgaria on a winter break that pairs Sofia's standout sights with guided snowshoe walks in the Rila Mountains – the nation's tallest range. It all starts with a guided tour of the capital which includes highlights like the remarkable 4th-century Church of St George, the Roman ruins of the ancient city of Serdica, and the Ivan Vazov National Theatre. Then, move on to the mountain ski resort of Borovets, our base for exploring Rila National Park's forests and frozen lakes on snowshoes. We'll also enjoy a relaxing soak in the natural hotsprings of Sapareva Banya and visit UNESCO-listed Rila Monastery to follow in the footsteps of its patron saint on a walk to the sacred cave of St Ivan Rilski.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE

- A guided walking tour of Sofia, Bulgaria's charming capital
- Snowshoeing walks in Rila National Park, home to Bulgaria's tallest mountain range
- Soaking in the natural hot springs at Sapareva Banya
- Visiting the remarkable UNESCO-listed Rila Monastery
- Discovering the history of the monastery and its patron saint on a walk to the Cave of St Ivan Rilski

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- 3 nights' accommodation in Sofia
- 3 nights' accommodation in Borovets
- Half board: breakfast & dinner
- An English-speaking tour and mountain guide
- Chairlift to the Seven Rila Lakes
- Entrance to Rila Monastery
- Guided walking tour of Sofia
- Snowshoes and trekking poles
- HF Tour Manager

ITINERARY - ITINERARY

Day 1 **Arrive in Sofia**

Arrive in Sofia and transfer to your hotel. Meet your guide and get to know the rest of the group at a welcome dinner.

Day 2 **Sofia**

This morning, enjoy a guided walking tour of Sofia, taking in the city's best-known landmarks. Highlights include the "Yellow Brick Road", the Ivan Vazov National Theatre, Roman ruins, and the 4th-century Church of St George. This afternoon is free for you to explore at leisure before meeting in the evening to go for dinner in a traditional restaurant.

Day 3 **The Rila Mountains: Snowshoe introduction & Beli Iskar Eco Trail**

Distance: 4.35 miles (7km)

Ascent / Descent: 280m / 918 feet

After breakfast, learn the basics of snowshoeing before transferring (around 2 hours) to the Rila Mountains. Today's gentle snowshoe walk follows the Beli Iskar Eco Trail, an easy route beside the Beli Iskar River – a great introduction to walking on snow. At the end of the walk, transfer to Borovets, one of Bulgaria's most popular ski resorts and our base for the next 3 nights.

Day 4 **Malyovitsa & Yonchevo Lake**

Please note that this day is graded 6, which is above the overall holiday grade

Distance: 5.6 miles (9km)

Ascent: 450m / 1476 feet

Descent: 600m / 1968 feet

Transfer (around 30 minutes) to Malyovitsa, where today's snowshoe walk begins. Starting on easier, flatter terrain, we pass ski runs before reaching the frozen Yonchevo Lake. We then descend to Ovnarsko for our pick-up and return to Borovets.

Day 5 Seven Rila Lakes & Sapareva Banya hot springs

Distance 7kms / 4.35miles

Ascent / Descent: 350m / 1148 feet

We make an earlier start and transfer (around 1 hour) to Panichiste. Take the chairlift to reach Rila Lakes Hut, then begin a scenic snowshoe loop around several of the famous lakes, gradually working up towards the fifth lake. This afternoon, enjoy a relaxing soak in the natural hot springs of Sapareva Banya before returning to Borovets.

Day 6 Rila Monastery & the cave of St Ivan Rilski

Distance: 6km / 3.72 miles

Ascent: 200m / 656 feet

Descent: 250m / 820 feet

After breakfast, transfer to the Rila Monastery. Before our visit, we walk to the cave of St Ivan Rilski, following in the footsteps of the monastery's patron saint. Then, enjoy a guided tour of the UNESCO-listed monastery. Later, return to Sofia for our final night and a farewell dinner in a traditional restaurant.

Day 7 Depart Sofia

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for your flight home.

DAILY WALK OPTIONS



Moderate walking grade 5

Some walking experience needed. Full day walks which may include some short but steep ascents and descents throughout the day, and varied terrain. Regular stops. Typically, 8-9 miles (13-15km) with around 1,300ft (400m) of ascent.

ACCOMMODATION

Crystal Palace Hotel – Sofia

Set beside the Doctor's Garden and within easy reach of the National Library, Sofia University, and the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, this boutique hotel is a comfortable 4-star base in central Sofia. Behind its listed, historic façade you'll find 63 smart, spacious rooms and apartments, all with modern comforts. The lobby bar is ideal for a relaxing drink after a day of sightseeing, and the hotel also boasts a wellness centre, and a restaurant that comes highly regarded by locals.

Hotel Ela, Borovets

The 4-star Park Hotel Ela is located in Bulgaria's popular mountain resort of Borovets. At 1350 m. above sea level on the northern slopes of the Rila Mountain, it sits amongst spectacular winter landscapes and on the doorstep of excellent mountain walking routes. After a day of exploring, return to the comfort of stylish, modern rooms furnished with natural materials, and reward yourself with a glass of local Bulgarian wine by the fireplace. When it's time to dine, the hotel's sleek, spacious restaurant serves up the best of both Bulgarian and international cuisine.

Hotel Iglika - 25 Jan

Hotel Iglika is a stylish 4-star property enjoying a central location in the heart of Borovets, just a short walk from the resort's main ski lifts, shops, restaurants and cafés. The hotel combines contemporary alpine design with warm Bulgarian hospitality, making it an excellent choice for both winter sports enthusiasts and mountain visitors. The comfortable guest rooms and apartments are modern and well-appointed, offering a relaxing retreat after a day exploring the Rila Mountains. Each of the rooms has TV, Wi-Fi, safe, minibar, coffee machine and electric kettle. Hotel facilities include a restaurant serving buffet-style meals, a welcoming lobby bar, and wellness facilities including an indoor pool, saunas and steam room and a fitness area.

PASSPORTS & VISAS

Passport & Visa information

This information is for those travelling with a full 'British Citizen' passport; for all other nationalities or passport holders, please check with your local consulate for advice.

Passport Requirements

This information applies to travellers holding a full British Citizen passport. Entry requirements vary by destination and can change at short notice. For most EU and worldwide destinations, passports must be valid for the entire duration of your stay. Some countries also require a minimum period of validity remaining on your passport (often up to 6 months beyond your return date), even if you are not staying that long.
We strongly recommend ensuring your passport has at least six months' validity remaining at the time of travel to avoid any issues.

If you hold a different type of British passport or a passport issued by another country, you must check the requirements with the relevant embassy, consulate, or official government website.

Visa Requirements

Visa rules depend on your nationality, destination, length of stay, and purpose of travel, and they can change frequently. It is your responsibility to check whether you require a visa before travelling.
British passport holders should check the latest entry, passport validity and visa requirements for their destination on the UK government's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) website:
https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Packing list

It's best to be prepared for all weather conditions. To make it easier, here is a list of items you should consider packing.

Essentials

- Walking boots
- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trousers
- Insulated jacket/top
- Walking clothing
- Walking socks (plus spares)
- Sunhat
- Gloves/mitts and warm hat
- Water bottle (minimum 2 litre capacity)
- Headtorch
- High-factor sunscreen (minimum SPF 30)
- Swimcap (compulsory in Itialian resorts)
- Sunglasses with a dark lens
- Rucksack (15-30 litres)
- Mobile phone
- Personal first aid kit (containing your medication, blister plasters, etc.)
- Passport
- Visa (if applicable)
- Copy of your travel insurance policy
- UK Global Health Insurance Card (**formerly known as EHIC**)

Recommended

- Collapsible walking poles
- Swimwear and travel towel
- Snacks
- Dry bags

- Rubbish bags
- Insect repellent

Optional extras

- Camera
- Sit mat
- Flask for hot drinks
- Durable lunch box
- Gaiters
- GPS device (excluding Bhutan, Georgia and India)

JOINING INSTRUCTIONS (WITH FLIGHTS)

With flights

Book your holiday 'with flights' and you can choose to depart from selected UK airports* to your destination. For latest flight times and prices please call us on 0203-974-8865 or email reservations@hfholidays.co.uk

If you choose to book your flights with us, we automatically include return transfers between the destination airport and hotel.

JOINING INSTRUCTIONS (WITHOUT FLIGHTS)

Without flights

If you are booking on a land-only basis, you can join the group transfer at an additional cost. To do so, your arrival and departure times must be in line with the scheduled group flight timings. Guests travelling at different times will need to arrange their own transfers. Please contact us before booking to discuss the available options and costs.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is a condition of booking. Therefore, if you have not already arranged insurance, it is imperative that you do so before you travel.

For more information about healthcare and its costs, please visit: https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/

Drinking Water

Drinking Water

Standards for drinking water vary widely around the world. In many destinations, tap water may not be safe to drink, brush your teeth with, or use for making ice. Where advised, you should drink only bottled or treated water and ensure that bottle seals are intact before use. If bottled water is unavailable, water should be boiled or filtered.

Staying well hydrated is particularly important in hot climates and during active holidays. Carry water with you and drink regularly.

If you are unsure about local water safety, check official country-specific health advice before travel, or ask your accommodation or local guides for guidance once you arrive.

TRIPNOTE VALIDITY

TRIP NOTE VALIDITY These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred. In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary. The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

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