BULGARIA – Rila and Pirin

TREK OVERVIEW
If you are looking for a holiday where you can enjoy decent length days out on the hill, look forward to a shower and a comfy bed each night, keep the costs down and not have to travel too far then this will tick all the those boxes. Bulgaria, a fascinating country where east meets west, is the home to some surprisingly beautiful mountains which are easily accessible from the capital, Sofia. By utilising short transfers by vehicle and some chairlifts, we are able to get high into the mountains each day, bag a few summits but return a hotel each night. Along the way you will be able to visit one of Bulgaria’s most famous landmarks, the beautiful Rila Monastery, and enjoy wonderful hospitality, traditional food, folklore and music in the valley bases where we stay.

Participation Statement
AdventurePeaks recognises that climbing, hill walking and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.

Adventure Travel – Accuracy of Itinerary
Although it is our intention to operate this itinerary as printed, it may be necessary to make some changes as a result of flight schedules, climatic conditions, limitations of infrastructure or other operational factors. As a consequence, the order or location of overnight stops and the duration of the day may vary from those outlined. You should be aware that some events are beyond our control and we would ask for your patience.
PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE/FITNESS
If you are used to regular multi day hill walking you will have the right level of fitness to fully enjoy your time on this trek. Non hill walkers must come with a reasonable degree of fitness. Most days involve 4 - 6 hours walking plus plenty of rest stops.

GROUP AND LEADERS
A fully qualified, English-speaking, Bulgarian leader will accompany all groups. He / she will ensure your safety and provide an insight into the local life.

WEATHER
The weather should be pleasant during the day with cooler evenings and nights. Bulgaria usually enjoys a pleasant and stable climate during the summer, with temperatures in the mid 20ºs, but you should expect rain at times. The higher you are the cooler it will be. Walkers should realize however that weather in the high mountains is unpredictable and should be prepared for this. It will be coolest in the evenings at altitude in early and late season down to about 10ºC.

WHAT TO CARRY
Your main baggage will be transported to your next overnight stop (except on day 6 when you overnight in a remote mountain hut). You will only need to carry a light daypack during the day. A 35 litre rucksack is a useful size to comfortably fit in essential items such as water bottle, camera, wet-weather gear and extra layers etc.

CATERING ARRANGEMENTS
Three course evening meals are provided each evening, with a continental breakfast in the morning. Dinner is usually between 7.30 and 8.00pm. Bulgarian dishes are usually prepared from pork, chicken or fish along with fresh, crispy salads. Please note that vegetarian options may be very limited. We ask that you pay for any drinks the same night. Lunches (usually pack lunches for you to carry) are also provided on this trip.

ACCOMMODATION
In the mountains small family run hotels are used offering en-suite rooms, traditional food and sometimes some cultural entertainment. One night is spent in a mountain hut fully equipped with beds, sheets and blankets.

LANGUAGE AND TIME
Language: Bulgarian. English is spoken by your guide and is fairly widely spoken in the towns and villages.

Time: GMT+3. Daylight saving time from end of March to end of October.

HEALTH
You should bring your own supplies of plasters, blister prevention pads (Compeed), Paracetamol etc. and any medication you are taking. There are no compulsory vaccinations for Greece but the following is recommended: Tetanus. Contact your GP around eight weeks before your trip to check whether you need any vaccinations or other preventive measures. Country specific information and advice is published by the National Travel Health Network and Centre, and useful information about healthcare abroad, including a country-by-country guide of reciprocal health care agreements with the UK, is available from NHS Choices. Village water supplies are good and springs are clean but stream water should never be drunk without first sterilizing with chlorine dioxide tablets.

INSURANCE
Insurance which covers mountain rescue, evacuation and medical expenses is essential. We will require a copy of your insurance prior to departure. Your standard travel insurance should be sufficient for this trip as there is no technical climbing and we do not go above 4000m.

ALTITUDE
This is not a high altitude trip. However if you are new to altitude you may have concerns about the effects. Don’t worry because our itineraries allow sufficient time to acclimatise, and altitude rarely causes anyone any problems on this trip. The best way to avoid such symptoms is to walk at a gentle steady pace and drink plenty of fluid.

USEFUL TIPS
Just in case your main luggage goes missing en route, it is a good idea to wear your boots on the plane. Most other things can be replaced but comfortable, well worn-in boots cannot. Pack important items in strong plastic bags.

EQUIPMENT
A detailed equipment list is provided on booking but normal summer walking equipment is all that is required. For equipment purchases AdventurePeaks offers a 15% discount off the RRP from their shop in Ambleside or online.
BAGGAGE
For your own comfort travel light. Normally airlines restrict baggage to 20kg, but you should be carrying far less. On trek you will need to carry just a daypack except days 6 and 7 when you need to pack a few extra items for the night in the hut.

VISAS AND PERMITS
Visas are not required for most nationalities. If you are not travelling on a UK passport please check requirements via the website below. Visa requirements for all destinations can be found at www.cibtvisas.co.uk. You can either use their services to obtain your visa, or apply direct to the country’s consulate or embassy.

LOCAL COSTS
All accommodation and most meals are included; please see the itinerary page for full details. Additional costs would include any drinks, snacks outside of mealtimes, tickets for museums and historical monuments, tips and personal spending.

CURRENCY
The currency in Bulgaria is the Lev (BGN). ATMs and change bureaux are available in airports and in main towns only. Expect limited change facilities on trek.

TIPPING
Tipping at meals and in hotels is normal practice. It is customary to give your guide and/or driver an tip if you have received good service. The amount is entirely at your discretion, although an amount of £15 for your guide and £5 for your driver per person is reasonable.

ADVENTURE PEAKS KITBAG
All Adventure Peaks clients who reside in the UK will receive a FREE kitbag for any treks outside the UK. The bag will be posted to you approx. 3 weeks prior to your departure. If you have travelled with us before and already have an Adventure Peaks kitbag, or reside outside the UK, we will send you a lightweight AP branded fleece.

FLIGHTS AND JOINING ARRANGEMENTS
Flights are NOT included as part of this holiday. Scheduled, budget and charter airlines offer a lot of flights to Sofia from many regional UK airports, and sometimes very cheap deals can be found.

The rendezvous for this trip is the ARRIVALS HALL IN SOFIA AIRPORT at 1700 on Day 1.

Return flights can be booked for anytime on Day 8, or later if you wish to extend your stay in Bulgaria.

PLEASE ENSURE YOU DO NOT PURCHASE YOUR INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL (FLIGHTS OR OTHER) UNTIL WE HAVE GUARANTEED YOUR TRIP IS RUNNING.
### BULGARIA'S RILA AND PIRIN ITINERARY

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Day, date</th>
<th>Today we...</th>
<th>We stay at...</th>
<th>Accommodation is...</th>
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<td>Fly to Sofia</td>
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<td>Mon</td>
<td>Trek 2</td>
<td>Rila Monastery</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Thu</td>
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<td>Tevno Ezero</td>
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<td>Trek 6</td>
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**Day 1**
Fly to Sofia. Your tour guide will met you at the airport and transfer you to a nice family hotel deep in the forests of the Rila Mountains. In the evening your guide will brief you on the challenges of the next few days. *90 minutes drive approx.*

**Day 2**
Ascent of Mount Malyovitsa – one of the symbols of the region. The summit offers an amazing 360° panorama across countless peaks and glacial lakes. After lunch we follows ridge, which leads to the famous Seven Rila Lakes. We drop down from the ridge to a nice hotel in the dense pine forests. *7 hours walking.*

**Day 3**
We start the day with a gondola ride up towards the famous Seven Rila Lakes which are scattered at the foot of a massive cirque and have been named after their shapes and qualities, such as Tear Lake, Eye Lake and Kidney Lake. We stop at the Razdela pass (2600m) for our picnic and then descend through some very old pine and oak forests, straight to the Rila monastery - the biggest and the oldest in Bulgaria. Other lakes and many of the mountain's highest peaks can be seen today. There should be time in the late afternoon to visit the monastery. *7 hours walking.*

**Day 4**
After a short 20 minute transfer we set off again through the beautiful southern part of the mountains. We descend past the Makedonia hut to the little village of Dobarsko, from where we make a transfer to Bansko, a town of old traditional buildings and typical Bulgarian folk music, at the foot of the impressive Pirin Mountain. *6 hours walking.*

**Day 5**
After breakfast we will take a short transfer to a mountain hut at 2000m. From here we make our ascent of Mount Vihren (2914m) - the highest peak of Pirin and the most technical part of this trip. We are rewarded with some incredible views of alpine peaks, marble rock walls and glacial lakes. We return back to Bansko where you will be able to enjoy the traditional food and music. *6 hours walking.*

**Day 6**
We start with a 30 minute transfer to Vihren hut. From here today's walk takes us along the central ridge of the Pirin Mountain. During this trek we will be rewarded with stunning views of many lakes and the whole Pinin range. Our destination is the little Tevno Ezero (Dark Lake) hut at 2515 m in the very heart of the mountains. The hut is equipped with proper bed so you will only need to pack a few extra items for the night spent here. *6 to 7 hours walking.*

**Day 7**
It is an easy trek today. We descend from the Tevno Ezero hut passing a clutch of glacial lakes and walking through cool pine forests to a beautiful village where our walk finishes. After lunch a short transfer takes us to the town of Melnik - the smallest town in Bulgaria, with just 300 inhabitants. Melnik is full of traditional old Bulgarian houses and is renowned for its excellent red wine - what better place to finish our exploration of the Bulgarian mountains! *4 hours walking.*

**Day 8**
Transfer to Sofia airport and departure.