

Macedonia

Macedonia is an ancient land, geographically located in the central part of the Balkan Peninsula. It is a country of nature, rich in culture, home to the greatest commander in human history, Alexander the Great. It is a crossroads of civilizations, a unique blend of ancient and modern, offering a rich multicultural experience. Home to three natural lakes, one of them is the deepest and oldest lake in Europe and to three national parks, cultural mysteries, ancient history and spectacular nature. Macedonian people, known as very friendly and hospitable, will make every visitor feel at home in this small yet magnificent country. If you are a big food lover, Macedonia cuisine is the right choice accompanied by wines that are quickly becoming internationally acclaimed.

DAY 1. – THE WELCOME (THURSDAY) – SKOPJE , THE CAPITAL

Skopje is the capital of Macedonia, situated in the Skopje Valley. It is a very attractive tourist destination with its fortress, cultural and historical monuments, archeological cities, caves in the canyon of the river Treska and Lake Matka and a health spa in the eastern part of the city. Skopje also is a modern, political, economic and cultural center. Skopje, and especially the downtown, hides interesting sites that need careful attention: the old station, (a reminder of the earthquake of 1963) the archaeological museum, the memorial house of Mother Teresa (Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu, winner of the Nobel peace in 1979, born in Skopje in 1910), Macedonia Square with numerous monuments like the monumental statue of Alexander The Great, the Stone Bridge, the Museum of Holocaust, the old bazaar, the church of St. Spas with the beautiful wood-carved iconostasis (19th century), the Daut Pasha Hammam, now an art gallery, one of the largest and finest examples of Ottoman architecture in the Balkans urban, Kapan an, (15th century), the Mustafa Pasha Mosque (15th century), etc.



Kapan Han. One of the three remaining Ottoman caravanserais still standing in the old bazaar. The ground floor used to house the horses and the goods of the merchants that visited the bazaar and the city, while on the first floor were the rooms where the people slept. The han was built in the 15th century. Today is a nice restaurant.

Suli Han. An Ottoman caravanserai built in the 15th century by Ishak bej. It was badly damaged during 1963 earthquake and today it houses the arts faculty of Skopje University. It also houses the Old Bazaar Museum.

Kurshumli Han. The "Lead Inn" is the largest and the most beautiful of the three remaining Ottoman caravanserais. It was built in 1550 by Mula Musledin Hodza, son of Abdul Gani scientist on the court of Sultan Selim II. Both the ground and the first floor are made of stone and beautiful arches line the courtyard. The roof was covered with lead, and that is how the han got its name (lead is used for making bullets, and bullet is called kurshum in Turkish). Today the Kurshumli Han is on the grounds of the Macedonian National Museum and houses the lapydarium.

Mustafa Pasha Mosque. Stands on a plateau above the old bazaar and is one of the most beautiful Islamic buildings in Macedonia. It was built in 1492 by Mustafa Pasha, Vesir on the court of Sultan Selim I. The mosque is quite elegant and intact, and no additions have been made through the years. The interior is beautiful, simple, and spacious. Take few steps back to observe the game of the domes of the fountain, the porch, and the mosque. In the turbe next to the mosque, the daughter of Mustafa Pasha is buried. The mosque has a pleasant rose garden and it offers fine views over the bazaar.

Daut Pasha Hamam. Daut Pasha was the grand vesir of East Rumelia in the second half of the 15th century. He was based in Skopje and the legend goes that he built the hamam (turkish bath) for the needs of his harem. Before he left, he donated the hamam to the city. It was a double bath both for males and females (who bathed separately of course), the male and the female part going parallel next to each other. The two big domes in the front covered the two dressing rooms, which had water fountains in the middle. Each of the small domes covered a separate room for bathing. The heating room was on the end. Today the bath serves as a national gallery with a great collection of late 19 and 20 century art, and even if you are not interested in the art, you should go inside to see the elaborate decorations of the domes.

Timescale Itinerary Day 1.

08:20 – 09:10 Passport control and board busses

09:10 – 10:00 Transfer to Skopje

10:00 – 10:30 Driven orientation Tour of Skopje

10:30 – 12:30 Visit Old Bazaar, Daut Pasha Hamam , Mustafa Pasha Mosque , Suli Han ,Kurshunli Han & Kapan Han

12:30 – 13:30 Traditional lunch

13:00 – 14:00 Macedonia square, Stone bridge, Museum

14:00 – 14:30 Check in to luxurious hotel where the guests will spend the night for relax

16:30 – 17:30 a welcome drink

18:30 – 20:00 Dinner in a traditional restaurant in center

DAY 2. – NATURAL BEAUTY (FRIDAY) – MATKA CANYON

Matka Canyon. The Canyon Matka is situated close to the capital Skopje, in one of the oldest artificial lakes in Macedonia and spreads over 5000 hectares making it one of the most popular natural destinations for nature lovers. In the canyon there are 10 caves. It is also referred to as the Butterfly Canyon. There are 119 species of diurnal and 140 species of nocturnal butterflies, 77 species of Balkan endemic small butterflies and 23 other species which are new to the science. You will visit also the Monastery of St. Andrea. It is located near the canyon of the river Treska.



Vrelo Cave. Located on the right bank of the Treska River, Vrelo Cave was listed as one of the top 77 natural sites in the world in the New7Wonders of Nature project and made it to the semi-finals. Vrelo Cave has many stalactites and two lakes within it making this a very interesting site. Though the exact depth of the cave is unknown, some speculate that it could be one of the deepest underwater caves in the world.



Timescale Itinerary Day 2

08:00 – 08:30 Breakfast
09:00 – 10:00 Transfer to Matka
10:00 – 10:45 Embark motor boats and navigate to the Vrelo Cave
10:45 – 11:30 Vizit Vrelo Cave
11:30 – 12:10 Take boat to return back to Matka
12:30 – 13:30 Lunch at Kanjon Matka
13:45 – 14:45 Return to Hotel
15:00 – 16:30 free time for relaxing
16:30 – 18:30 Visiting Macedonia square and free time
19:00 – 20:30 Dinner at restaurant Stara Kuka

DAY 3. – CULTURAL DELIGHT (SATURDAY) – OHRID CITY OF CENTURIES (UNESCO)

Known as cultural, artistic and education center in the Slavic world, it holds its roots from the XIV Century BC, in the area known as Desaretia. In the Ancient time, known by the name of Lychnidos (the City of Light), it became an important trading centre. Always attractive for various conquerors, the city was fought over by Romans, Ostrogots, Crusaders, Byzantines, Ottomans and many other invaders. In the IX and X Century AD Ohrid became a cradle of the Slavic literacy, in the times when St. Kliment of Ohrid established the First pan-Slavic University in Europe. By the end of the X and beginning of the XI Century, Ohrid was the centre of Samuel's Empire.

As an important Christian place of pilgrimage, Ohrid became a place where new styles of fresco and icon painting were found (appearance of the first elements of The Renaissance in 1295), as well as specific sacral architecture (St. Kliment, St. Sofia, St. Jovan of Kaneo, etc.).

In the medieval times it was the Seat of Ohrid Archbishopric. A city with 365 churches in XIX Century, and with more than 50 active churches today, and certainly, a city built on the shores of one of the most phenomenal natural beauties – Lake Ohrid, is a central Macedonian tourist destination.

Ohrid and Lake Ohrid are on the list of world protected heritage sites of UNESCO since 1980.



Old Bazaar - Since Ohrid was a big religious and cultural center, it never was an important trade center, which is evident by the size of its bazaar. It is a simple bazaar consisting of just one street. It starts with the food market and opens into a small square. On the square there is a 1000 year old tree and a nice fountain. Above the square the clock tower of Ohrid stands. In the past, the bazaar was covered with grape vines, protecting shoppers from the sun and the rain. Very few crafts are preserved. The bazaar ends with the main square that used to be the food market in the past.

Zeynel Pasha Teke - dating from 1590, this teke is situated close to the old oak tree. This teke belonged to the Halvet dervish order. A mausoleum of Mohamed Hayati, who was the founder of this dervish order, can be found in the yard of the complex.

Timescale Itinerary day 3

08:00 – 08:30 Breakfast
08:30 – 11:30 Transfer to Ohrid
11:30 – 13:00 Visit Old Bazaar, Zeynel Pasa Tekke
13:00 – 14:30 Lunch in traditional restaurant with live traditional music
14:30 – 16:30 Visit the old part of the city, St. Sophia, Plaoshnik
17:00 – 20:00 Return to Skopje
20:30 – 21:00 Dinner

DAY 4. – THE GOODBYE (SUNDAY)

Ethno village. Ethno complex “Macedonian Villages”, place where you should see different Macedonian typical houses and museum exhibition of traditional costumes. They represent the architecture in Macedonia and the culture of living with its customs and crafts which can be seen in every house.



Tetovo (KALKANDELEN). The main attractions of Tetovo are its historic areas and structures. The "The Painted Mosque" is located near the Pena River in the old part of town. The mosque was built in 1438 and rebuilt in 1833 by Abdurrahman Pasha, the son of Rexhep Pasha. It is one of the most important cultural and historical structures of Tetovo and represents the style of early Ottoman architecture. The painted mosque continues to be an important monument to the residents of Tetovo, and is the main tourist attraction for many foreign visitors.



Timescale Itinerary Day 4

08:00 – 10:00 late breakfast and check out
10:00 – 10:45 Transfer to Vodno
10:45 – 11:45 Visit Ethno Village
12:00 – 12:30 Cable cars Vodno
12:40 – 13:25 Transfer to Tetovo
13:30 – 15:00 Lunch in traditional restaurant
15:00 – 16:00 Visit the Painted Mosque
16:15 – 17:35 Transfer to Airport