

EXPLORE!

BEST SELLER

Ancient Macedonia
15 days

Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia - Trip code AM



Ancient Macedonia

Travel through eastern Bulgaria, northern Greece and Macedonia to uncover the lost empire of Alexander the Great. Discover the history at the ancient capital of Vergina, ruins of Heraclea and colourful mosaics at Pella. Experience the region's religious importance during an overnight stay at the Saint Joakim Osogovski Monastery, at the UNESCO-listed Rila Monastery and on a boat trip along the Mediterranean coast to the fabled Mount Athos. On this varied trip explore the shores of Lake Ohrid, beaches of Thassos Island, the Pelister National Park and take a boat trip through the dramatic Matka Gorge.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Lake Ohrid** - Enjoy a truly stunning lake and mountain setting; tour the historical buildings situated around the lake
- ★ **Rila Monastery** - Spectacular UNESCO World Heritage Site with its brightly coloured frescoes
- ★ **Matka Gorge** - Experience the natural wonder of Matka Gorge; chance for a boat trip
- ★ **Sofia** - Old town sightseeing
- ★ **Vergina** - Visit the ancient capital of Macedonian Kings
- ★ **Mt. Athos** - Boat excursion along the coast of Athos to reach 'the holy mountain'
- ★ **Thassos Island** - Day trip by ferry to visit its Roman remains and Medieval fortress

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:**Moderate**

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

GROUP SIZE:**12 - 18**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join trip in Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria

Join the trip in Sofia, Bulgaria's capital, and check-in to our hotel. Sofia has a long history which can be seen by the onion-domed churches, Ottoman mosques, Roman ruins and old Soviet monuments. However, it is largely modern and youthful with a wealth of museums, art galleries, cafes and restaurants.

Depending on your flight times or if you're extending your stay by a night then you may like to visit the Archaeological Museum where there are Thracian, Roman and Medieval artefacts on display in a former mosque dating from 1496. Or perhaps the Museum of Socialist Art where you'll find many of the items removed from around the country when the Soviet era came to an end such as unwanted statues of Lenin, the red star from Sofia's Party House and footage from old propaganda films. There are also the ancient ruins of Serdica, which were discovered during the building of a new metro station. Now partially excavated you can see a small section of eight streets, an early Christian church and a bathhouse from this old Roman city. A short distance from Sofia is the beautiful Vitosha Nature Park with a number of hiking routes up Vitosha Mountain and it is also home to the working Dragalevtsi Monastery, which is probably the oldest of its kind in the country. It contains colourful murals and is renowned as being one of the hiding places of the anti-Turkish rebel leader Vasil Levski.

This evening you'll have your first chance to sample the local cuisine. Food in Bulgaria tends to be hearty and made from fresh local produce and dinner usually starts with a salad such as 'shopska salata' consisting of tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers and white cheese. Other specialities include 'kebapche' small and spicy minced meat rolls and 'surmi' stuffed cabbage or vine leaves. Both red and white wines are popular, as is the local brandy 'rakia' or the aniseed spirit 'mastika'.



Accommodation: Hotel Budapest (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Sofia city tour; stay overnight in a Macedonian monastery

We start our day with a guided walking tour of Sofia where we visit the neo-Byzantine Alexander Nevski Cathedral, which was built to commemorate the 200,000 Russian soldiers who died fighting for Bulgaria's independence. Along the way we will also see the synagogue, Presidential Palace and Saint Sofia's Church.

After our walk we have free time for lunch before we leave the city and drive to the border with Macedonia and on to the Saint Joakim Osogovski Monastery. This well preserved historic monastery is nestled amongst the picturesque hillside forests and this is where we spend the night. The drive today will take us around three hours in total. Founded in the 12th century the monastery became a place of worship for both Christians and Muslims, situated as it was on the main route to Constantinople (modern day Istanbul). We will see the brightly coloured 18th century frescoes before settling in to our unique accommodation.



Accommodation: Monastery St. Joakim Osogovski (or similar)



Standard Monastery



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Explore Kratovo and Skopje including Kale Fortress

This morning we drive to the charming historical Roman mining town of Kratovo, located in the crater of an extinct volcano. A local guide will take us down the winding cobbled narrow streets and show us the main sights of this small town, known for its Ottoman towers and high stone bridges which cross the deep ravine which divides the town in two. We will also have the opportunity to sample a homemade lunch, which will often be accompanied by traditional music played on a sheepskin bagpipe, before we drive on to Skopje, Macedonia's capital.

This afternoon we will go on a guided walking tour of Skopje including Fortress Kale, the Church of Saint Spas and the old Turkish bazaar, which is the largest and most well preserved in south-east Europe. In 1963 a huge earthquake rocked the city and destroyed an estimated 75%, but it is still rich in historic culture and Ottoman heritage. Skopje has been used a pawn in many wars, including World War II and many empires have ruled over the city, all having influenced the architecture, religion and traditions. Despite the turbulent and sometimes violent history, Skopje is now a peaceful city where residents are free to practice all religions, the main faiths being Macedonian Orthodox and Islam. The city boasts many beautiful churches and mosques, although you'll notice mostly minarets on the skyline due to a historic law that was enforced by the Turks stating Christian buildings could not be taller than mosques.

This evening you are free to have dinner. A popular Macedonian dish is 'turlitava', a meat and vegetable stew baked in a terracotta pot. 'Ravanija' is a traditional dessert which originates from when the country was under Turkish rule; it's a type of cake with a sherbet top. Macedonian wine is a popular choice with red being the more dominate option; usually made using the Vranec grape or sometimes Stanusina Crna, which is indigenous to the country.



Accommodation: Hotel Centar (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Excursion to the dramatic Matka Gorge with the chance for a boat trip

A half-day excursion this morning takes us to Matka Gorge, on the outskirts of the city, where we visit the spectacular karst formations and the manmade Matka Lake, created by the damming of the Treska River. Fluctuating temperatures and the impact of the mountain rivers has resulted in a landscape of valleys, crevices and caves that carve their way through the 50 square kilometre canyon. Of the 1000 or so species of plants in the gorge some 20% are endemic, including the Kosanini Violet and the dainty lavender coloured Nataly's Ramonda. There are also 119 varieties of butterfly in the canyon. There is the option to take a boat ride out onto the lake above the dam and appreciate the canyon views and visit one of its numerous caves. Or you may prefer to take a walk along the gorge and visit an old church that is tucked in beside the water.

Returning to Skopje this afternoon the rest of the day is free for you to explore and perhaps to visit some of the museums, mosques and galleries dotted around the city, or maybe pay another visit to the bustling bazaar. Skopje is an excellent city in which to wander, given that much of the centre is pedestrianised.



Accommodation: Hotel Centar (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Scenic drive to Lake Ohrid via Mavrovo National Park

Today we drive a scenic route, largely through the Black Drim River Valley, to reach the shores of Lake Ohrid. En route we make a stop to visit one of Macedonia's finest monasteries - Saint Jovan Bigorski - dedicated to Saint John the Baptist. It is famous for its remarkable iconostasis, which is among the most beautiful in Macedonia, constructed by intricate wood carving between 1829 and 1835. We will also stop at the foot of Mount Jablanica in the typical Macedonian village of Vevchani. Here we have time for lunch and to see the pretty meandering streets and babbling waterfalls.

On arrival in Ohrid town late this afternoon we have time to settle into our hotel before heading into the centre for free time for dinner this evening. Alternatively, you may like to stretch your legs with a walk along the lakeshore.



Accommodation: Millennium Palace (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Guided walking tour of Ohrid; afternoon relaxing by the lake

Our setting for the next few days is simply sublime, with a dramatic mountain backdrop almost encircling the tranquil waters of Lake Ohrid. Founded over 2400 years ago, Ohrid has a wealth of heritage and is today an important cultural and spiritual centre. To help its protection both the town and lake were classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1980. Lake Ohrid is one of the oldest lakes in the world and allegedly there are some 365 churches, monasteries and other religious sites around the lake.

We start today with a walking tour of Ohrid including a visit to Tsar Samuel's Fortress, Saint Sophia's Church and the Roman amphitheatre for sensational panoramic views. When we reach Saint Clement's Church and the Plaosnik archaeological site we will walk down the steps to the Church of Saint John at Kaneo with its fantastic views out over the lake. From here we board a boat for the short ride back to the centre of Ohrid.

This afternoon is free for you to relax and further explore. You might like to stroll around the cobbled lanes of the Old Town or boats run frequent trips across the lake. The lakeshore also has a good array of beaches should you wish to take it easy. There's a good choice of restaurants and old Turkish shops in the lower town area. Each year, between mid-July and mid-August, the Ohrid Summer Festival takes place, with concerts and plays held in outdoor venues around town.



Accommodation: Millennium Palace (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Free day in Ohrid with the chance to visit Albania

Today is free for you to continuing discovering Lake Ohrid or you might like to join a full day excursion further afield to neighbouring Albania. Lake Ohrid straddles the border line and this morning our drive will take us through Struga at the northern tip of the lake and across the Albanian border. Our first stop is in the small fishing village of Lin, where we will hopefully have the opportunity to see mosaics dating from the Ottoman period (due to local conditions access to the mosaics might not always be possible). From here we continue to the town of Podgradec where we have four hours free time to relax in the town, enjoy the Ohrid springs or visit the summer villa of the former dictator Enver Hoxha. We will also have time for lunch and the opportunity to try the local specialty of Ohrid trout. We return to Ohrid crossing back over the border at the southern end of the lake near Saint Naum having driven the whole way around the lake.



Accommodation: Millennium Palace (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Visit to Saint Naum Monastery en route to Pelister National Park

Located close to Ohrid is Galicica National Park, part of the Sara-Pind mountain range. With its exceptional natural beauty and wealth of endemic flora and fauna the park was created in 1958, covering an area between the Ohrid and Prespa. Large, deep

valleys and a long mountain ridge typify the relief of the massif, with peaks reaching over 2000 metres. With the crest falling between the two lakes it ensures dramatic views over both on a clear day. Today we set out to explore this region by bus, a short walk and by rowing boat.

Firstly we drive along the lakeshore to the photogenic Saint Naum Monastery, located on a bluff stretching out into the lake and close to the Albanian border. Inside the monastery we can admire the 19th century frescoes and iconostasis dating from 1711. Next we enjoy a short trip by rowing boat to the bubbling springs that feed Lake Ohrid. Then we continue across Galicica National Park and over the Livada Pass (at 1568 metres), before heading down to Lake Prespa where we'll stop for photos. We drive on to Podmochani village to visit the privately owned Ethno Museum. A local farmer has amassed an impressive collection of jewellery, weaponry, coins and over 140 national costumes, some of which date back over 300 years. Lastly we drive on to the nearby Pelister National Park where we will spend the night. This evening there is the opportunity to join a cooking class in our hotel to make the Macedonian speciality Zelnik.



Accommodation: Hotel Sator (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 9 - Admire ancient Heraclea; guided tour of Thessaloniki (Greece)

This morning we visit the ancient site of Heraclea with a local guide. Founded in the 4th century BC by Philip II, the father of Alexander the Great, Heraclea grew to be an important trading town under the Romans, before being raided by the northern tribes and eventually falling into decay after an earthquake in AD518.

After our visit we leave Macedonia behind and drive to Thessaloniki, Greece's second city. Filled with the reminders of Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman rule, Thessaloniki is a vibrant city situated on the Thermaic Gulf. This afternoon on a guided tour we will discover the steep narrow streets and walk among the whitewashed houses with overhanging balconies leading to magnificent views down to the gulf and across the city. Along the way we'll see the Roman Rotunda, the White Tower, Acropolis and impressive Saint Demetrius Church. After our tour you will have the opportunity for a short visit to either the Archaeological Museum or Byzantine Museum.

This evening you're free to have dinner and sample your first taste of traditional Greek cuisine, such as scrumptious aubergines, tomatoes and cheese washed down with ouzo or raki or perhaps you'd prefer to sample some of the fresh local seafood. The city tavernas here are known for their delicious grilled meats and the slow-cooked pork shank is especially worth trying.



Accommodation: Hotel Vergina (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 10 - Visit the birthplace of Alexander the Great and UNESCO listed Vergina

This morning we drive to Pella to take a guided tour of the ancient site and visit the museum. Lying on the Macedonia Plain, Pella is most famous as the birthplace of Alexander the Great, who was born here in 356BC. Nowadays the main draw is the mosaics depicting mythological scenes in coloured stone.

Next we head for Vergina, which in ancient times was known as the city of Aigai and was the capital of the Macedonian kings. The ruins of Aigai were only rediscovered in 1977. With our local guide we will visit the spectacular royal tombs of King Phillip II and the young prince Alexander IV among others sights during our visit. After free time for lunch we will head back to Thessaloniki where you are free for the rest of the afternoon.



Accommodation: Hotel Vergina (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 11 - Drive to Kavala via Halkidiki Peninsula; boat trip to Mount Athos

Leaving Thessaloniki early this morning we head across the Halkidiki Peninsula to Kavala, set in the foothills of Mount Symvolon on the Gulf of Kavala. Travelling along scenic roads we pass through Arnea to the Athos Peninsula, the easternmost of the three-pronged Halkidiki. We continue to Ouranopoli at the northern end, from where we take a boat along the coast of Mount Athos. Known as 'The Holy Mountain', it is a semi-autonomous region of monastic orders originally settled in the 4th century and it's still forbidden for women to step foot on the island. At its peak there were said to be 40 monasteries, but today the number has declined by half. After viewing the monasteries from our boat we have free time back on the mainland for lunch and to relax on the beach before continuing our journey to Kavala, a very attractive city formed around a harbour with an old quarter dominated by a Byzantine fortress.



Accommodation: Esperia Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 12 - Excursion to Thassos Island to explore or relax on the beach

We begin today by driving to Keramoti to catch the ferry to Thassos Island (the crossing takes around 30 minutes). We have free time to explore the island on foot or local bus from the capital of Limenas, or relax on one of its superb beaches. Around Limenas there are a number of archaeological sites, including an ancient Roman theatre and a medieval fortress that offers stunning views of the surrounding area. Later in the afternoon we return by ferry to the mainland and to Kavala.



Accommodation: Esperia Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 13 - Explore historical Philippi; drive to Bansko (Bulgaria)

This morning we leave Greece and head back to Bulgaria. We drive to Bansko via the ancient site of Philippi for a guided tour. Philippi's claim to fame is twofold: it was the first European city to accept Christianity in the 5th century, but prior to that it was the scene of a decisive battle between two Roman armies in the 1st century AD. On one side was the army of imperial Rome, led by Mark Anthony and Octavian, and on the other representatives of republican Rome, led by Cassius and Brutus. The outcome of the battle was a victory for the imperialist and the death of the republic (not to mention Cassius and Brutus). We will also visit the Baptistery of Lydia, time permitting.

In winter Bansko is a popular ski resort, sitting at 927 metres above sea level in the foothills of the Pirin Mountains. It has a pretty old town centre with its winding cobbled streets and stone clad buildings with red terracotta tiled roofs. There are a variety of restaurants, bars and shops here.



Accommodation: Park Hotel Gardenia (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 14 - Discover the beautiful Rila Monastery; free afternoon in Sofia

Declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, Rila Monastery is an important religious and cultural centre for the Bulgarian people. Remaining in wonderful condition it has the most stunning brightly coloured frescoes and distinctive striped brickwork. Originally founded in the 10th century the monastery served to preserve Bulgarian culture during the 400 years of Turkish rule and was a hiding place for the Bulgarian revolutionaries. Today the magnificent church and its museum house a priceless collection of frescoes, gilded iconostasis and religious art and artefacts. This morning we will have time to explore the monastery complex.

This afternoon we complete our journey through ancient Macedonia when we return to Sofia for our final evening. On arrival there should be time to explore a little more of this charming city and maybe do some last minute shopping.



Accommodation: Hotel Budapest (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 15 - Trip ends in Sofia

The trip ends at our hotel in Sofia.

 Meals Provided: Breakfast



Why book this trip

This trip is ideal for those travellers who are interested in history and culture. Stunning scenery intersperses our journey as we make our way through the lost empire of Alexander the Great. Staying at a 12th century monastery sheds light on life of times gone by.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 14
Dinner: 1



Transport

Bus
Boat
Ferry



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Boat Crew
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

13 nights standard hotel
1 nights standard monastery

Trip information

Country information

Bulgaria

Climate

Bulgaria has a somewhat temperate climate, influence by the combination of Mediterranean and Eastern European weather

systems. The winters are mild and the summers warm and fresh. The alpine regions can be cooler, but Ezerovo is one of the sunniest areas in this part of Europe, with some 280 days of sunshine a year.

Time difference to GMT

+2

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Bulgarian Orthodox, Islam

Language

Bulgarian, Russian and English.

Greece

Climate

Greece has predominantly hot, dry summers, May - October with temperatures reaching into the mid thirties in July and August. May and October themselves can be less predictable and may have some rain and cooler evenings. Wild flowers bloom in April and May adding much colour to the trails. At the beginning and end of the season the villages tend to be very quiet. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Up to date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page.

Time difference to GMT

+2

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Orthodox

Language

Greek

Macedonia

Climate

Macedonia has a transitional climate from Mediterranean to continental. Summers are hot and dry and winters are moderately cold. It is a land locked country, so isn't cooled by coastal breezes and is separated from both the Adriatic and Aegean Seas by mountain ranges. The wettest time is in late spring and autumn, but rainfall isn't abundant in the valleys, such as around Skopje. Rainfall in summer is uncommon. Temperatures from May to October are generally in the mid to high 20's (in °C) and reach into the 30's (in °C) in July and August - although it can reach as high as 40°C sometimes.

Time difference to GMT

+1

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Orthodox Christian

Language

Macedonian

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note:

These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Kratovo: Homemade lunch €8.00.

Matka Gorge: Boat trip 400 Macedonian Denar (MKD).

Lake Ohrid: Boat trip €25.00 per boat; excursion to Albania €20.00-40.00 (depending on passenger numbers). If there are 6 or more participants this excursion will be accompanied by the Explore Leader or if not then it will be driver only.

Pelister National Park: Cooking class €10.00 (including instruction and local ingredients).

Thessaloniki: Archaeological Museum €8.00; Byzantine Museum €8.00 pp.

Clothing

Weather is changeable in the mountains and it can be cool, especially at night, so bring a warmer jacket/fleece. A raincoat is essential at all times in case of the odd shower. It can be hot in summer so wear light weight cotton clothing and layers.

Bring your swimming costume and a towel with you.

You should dress with respect in the rural villages so bring some long trousers, as wearing shorts is not permitted in monasteries. When entering some churches and mosques women should cover their head and shoulders, so it's handy to pack a scarf.

Footwear

Trainers/Walking shoes for any walks and comfortable shoes or sandals for visiting the sites and towns.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

You will need one main piece of baggage and a daypack. Please do not overload yourself with luggage as at some points during this trip you will be required to transport it yourself (e.g. from vehicles, to your rooms).

Equipment

Take a towel, a water bottle, binoculars, insect repellent, a sunhat and suncream. A torch is useful in case of powercuts/emergencies. Walking poles may also be useful.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly you should allow approximately 30 Euros for gratuities for local staff.

In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Country Information

Bulgaria

Food and drink

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 price

£9

Dinner price

£15

Beer price

£2.3

Water price
£1.8

Foreign Exchange

Local currency
Bulgarian Leva.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

All major currencies may be exchanged, but Euros are easiest to exchange. We suggest you travel with Euros cash.

Where To Exchange

Banks or 'Forex' offices in main towns/cities.

ATM Availability

Major towns.

Credit Card Acceptance

Larger hotels and restaurants - of very limited use on this trip.

Travellers Cheques

We do not recommend Travellers cheques. Places to exchange Travellers cheques are very limited.

Greece

Food and drink

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.

Dinner price
£12.00 - 16.00

Beer price
£3.5

Water price
£0.9

Foreign Exchange

Local currency
Euro

Recommended Currency For Exchange

GBP Sterling or US Dollars, cash.

Where To Exchange

We recommend that you change any currency into Euros prior to arrival. Bureau de Change are generally only found in major cities and large airports

ATM Availability

Cash can be drawn from ATMs from all types of cards in most areas in Greece, including the islands.

Credit Card Acceptance

In major restaurants.

Travellers Cheques

Banking hours may make exchanging Travellers Cheques more difficult.

Macedonia

Food and drink

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 price

£4

Dinner price

£8.5

Beer price

£2

Water price

£1

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Macedonian Denar.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Euros, US Dollars and Pound Sterling can all be exchanged for local currency. However, Euro is the best currency for exchange in most places. Please note if using Pound Sterling then only Bank of England issued bank notes are accepted. Scottish and Northern Irish bank notes are not accepted. Please consult your Explore Leader for more information on currency exchange.

Where To Exchange

Banks or official Forex Offices in the main towns and cities. British banks don't generally exchange Macedonian Denar, so you should exchange any unwanted local currency before you leave Macedonia. Your Explore Leader will advise you on arrival.

ATM Availability

Major towns and cities have ATMs for cash withdrawal, but these are limited in more rural areas.

Credit Card Acceptance

Accepted in major restaurants and hotels.

Travellers Cheques

Travellers Cheques can only be exchanged in some banks.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Boat, Ferry

Essential Information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa and Passport Information

Bulgaria: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens.

Macedonia: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens.

Greece: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens.

Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer click [here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore 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. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

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.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Non refundable permits

Bulgaria

Vaccinations

We recommend protection against typhoid, hepatitis A, polio and tetanus. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

Greece

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory but we recommend protection against tetanus and polio. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

Macedonia

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend being up-to-date with your routine vaccination courses and boosters as recommended in the UK including protection against measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, diphtheria, hepatitis A, typhoid and polio. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.
