

# Four days exploring the middle and western Rhodope Mountains in Bulgaria from Sofia - Final Trip Plan (sample)

*The pdf version of the Final Trip Plan is designed for easy printing and reading. It does not contain photos, maps or other graphics.*

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## A link to the web version of the tour

**Web version of the trip with maps, photos and video:** <http://guidetobulgaria.com/four-days-exploring-the-middle-and-western-rhodope-mountain-in-bulgaria-from-sofia-final-trip-plan-sample/>

## Short description (Resume)

During this trip you will visit and enjoy some of the most interesting places in the middle and partly in western Rhodope Mountain in south Bulgaria. The trip starts from Sofia and your first stop will be in the town of Smolyan. You can have here a short stroll before heading for the village of Smilyan, famous with the Clock Tower, the “Museum of beans” and the dairy called “Milky House”. Here you can taste the local Rhodope Mountain specialities. Then you continue to the village of Mogilitza, where you will visit “Agushevite konatsi”, the neighbourhood Bukata with its architectural group “Hadjiyski kashti” and the village of Arda, almost at the Bulgaria - Greece border. In the region you can also visit the Uhlovitsa cave. Then you continue to the village of Shiroka Laka, Teshel, Buynovo Gorge with the Yagodinska cave and the panoramic platform “Orlovo oko”. You will take a walk over the Trigard Gorge, will visit the Devil's throat cave and will take a walk on the

charming road between the villages of Jrebevo and Kesten. You can try the famous Dospat trout in the town of Dospat on the Dospat Reservoir. On your way back to Sofia/your place, you will pass along the Batak Reservoir, which is one of the most captivating places in Rhodope Mountain.

### **Basic Information**

**Duration:** 3 nights/4 days;

**Places to be visited:** the towns of Smolyan and Dospat; the villages of Smilyan, Bukata, Mogilitsa, Arda, Shiroka Laka, Jrebevo and Kesten; Buynovo and Trigrad gorges, Yagodinska and Devil's throat cave; the panoramic platform Orlovo oko, Dospat Reservoir, Batak Reservoir and Tsigov Chark area.

**Period of travel:** all year round;

**Tour mileage:** ca 616 km;

### **Price/budget**

Please download the detailed trip budget in pdf format here.

The budget depends on the package you chose: We offer 3 options: **Option 1** - a guided tour (the preparation of a guided tour program/offer is free of charge);

**Option 2** - Final Trip Plan/Book by Yourself (25 euro/day); **Option 3** - Final Trip Plan/Bookings & Reservations made by us/Support during the trip (50 euro/day for up to 4 people and up to 6 nights/7 days trip);

### **A Google map with the itinerary and bookmarks for places, hotels and restaurants**

Open the map here.

### **A link to a Google Earth interactive map with features like “Street view”, 3D etc**

This is a customised map of the tour using Google Earth, where you can use features like “Street view”, 3D etc. Open the map here.

Blue pointer marks - places, included in the trip; Red hotel pointer marks - recommended hotels; Green restaurant pointer marks - recommended places for food and drinks. Click on the marks for more information and photos.

### **A link to a Google KML file, which can be uploaded to a cell phone and used during the trip**

Please download a Google KML file with all the bookmarks from the map. You can upload it on your cell phone and use it during the trip. <http://guidetobulgaria.com/pdf/rhodope.kml>

**A detailed program day by day with activities and places to be visited, recommendations for accommodation and nice restaurants with links for bookings and reservations;**

**Day 1 Sofia - Smolyan - village of Smilyan - Mogilitsa - Bukata - village of Arda (approximately 282 km)**

You'd need to departure early in the morning from Sofia in order to reach the area at about noon.

The first stop from your journey will be the town of Smolyan. After a short stroll through the town, you continue south to the Greek border, and your first stop will be at the village of Smilyan. There you will see the preserved Clock Tower and the Museum of Beans, since this region is known for its cultivation of a special variety of big beans. There you may also see one of the biggest orthodox churches in Rhodopes - "St. Spas".

Next stop will be the "Milky House" dairy, where beside the traditional milky products, Dutch and Swiss cheeses are also manufactured, using special Swiss and Dutch technologies. In the dairy restaurant you can try some delicious Rhodopes dishes, made by local products.

Your next stop is the village of Mogilitsa, famous for Agushevi konatsi, the 19th-century winter estate of a rich Ottoman feudal lord, Agush Aga, and his son. Built in 1834 by local Bulgarian masters, the castle-like complex consists of three buildings with a separate yard surrounded by a common wall with a richly decorated tower in the southeastern corner. The estate has a total of 221 windows, 86 doors and 24 chimneys and is situated near the banks of the river Arda.

Two km away from the village is located the neighbourhood Bukata, where you may see the architectural group "Hadjiyski Kashti", also known as Konaka of Bukata hamlet. You will enjoy the beautiful wooden ceiling, will see an old oven and tools for ploughing, reaping, seeders, threshers and flour mill. You also will get familiar with the wool processing in the area.

You will finish the day in the village of Arda, where we will spend the night and will have a typical Rhodopes dinner.

Near the village of Arda, in the neighbourhood of Gudevitsa, the Arda river headwater source is located, from where the name of the village comes. In this neighbourhood you can find also a church, built in 1882.

### **Accommodation**

The offered accommodation will depend on your preferences. We provide at least 2 or 3 options (in bigger cities).

Hotel Izvorat web site (for reservations); You can find it here (Google location)

In case you have chosen Option 2, the accommodation price will be included in the total price.

### **Food/drinks**

Almost all hotels or guest houses have a restaurant attached to them. One of the most famous place is the restaurant “Dyadovata Ryaka” (Дядовата Ряка) or “Milky House” dairy.

**Distance for the day:** approximately 282 km (Google map route).

### **Day 2 Uhlovitsa cave - Shiroka Laka - Buynovo - Jagodinska cave and Orlovo oko (approximately 94 km)**

Your first stop for the day will be Uhlovitsa Cave, often called “the underground palace’ and it is one of the most beautiful caves in Bulgaria. The cave's entrance is 1040 m high, hence there's a path you have to walk until you reach the entrance (takes approx 30 mins). The visit takes about 40-50 minutes and is amazing. You walk down a long flight of stairs until you reach the main part of the cave where you can see impressive cave formations. The best thing in the cave is the crystal waterfall with its 7 lakes, positioned at the end of the 300 meter walking path inside the cave. The lakes get filled during the melting of the snow and are crystal clear.

After the cave, you continue to the village of Shiroka Laka, famous for its authentic Rhodopean houses set in tiers on both banks of the local river. The houses feature two storeys, oriels, built-in cupboards and a small cellar with a hiding place. The thick white walls hide the yard from the outsiders' eyes. The yard is small and slab-covered and has a typical stone drinking fountain in the middle. Some of the most famous houses are those of the Zgurov, Uchikov and Grigorov families. The old school, built in 1835, is located near the church. There is one more church in the village, the Church of St Nicholas.

You will stop at the family hotel Orpheus in Teshel, where we you will leave your luggage. There is a nice restaurant, where you can try the famous Rhodope trout for lunch before you head for the next place of the program - Buynovo Gorge, one of the most beautiful areas in the Rhodope Mountains.

The Buynovsko Zhdrelo is a famous limestone gorge, which is located near the village of Yagodina. The gorge was cut by the river Buynovska and has several narrow and steep parts. One section is especially narrow, it was rather difficult to construct the single lane road part and numerous tunnels were necessary. The most narrow spot of the gorge is called Wolf's Jump after a legend. The locals tell the story that hungry wolfs came in winter time here and jumped across the gorge to attack the herds on the other side. The place actually looks like it could be possible to jump, but we strongly discourage you to try.

You will visit here also the Yagodina cave, located in the Buynovo Gorge near the Rhodope village of Yagodina. It is one of the most famous and most-visited caves in Bulgaria. Its galleries extend to a length of 8,501 meters, which makes it the 4th longest cave in Bulgaria and the longest in the Rhodopes.

From the cave or from the village of Yagodina you will get on SUV's, which will take you to the only of its kind in Bulgaria panoramic site Orlovo oko (Eagle Eye) on top St. Ilia, built at a height of 1,563 m. The structure is powerful and robust, designed to support up to 3 tons of weight. The place has spectacular views to Buynovsko Zhdrelo, to the hills of Rhodope Mountains and even to Rila and Pirin. In the evening, you will spend the night in the family hotel Orpheus in Teshel, where you can taste again the local Rhodope cuisine.

### **Accommodation**

Family Hotel Orpheus in the village of Teshel or similar: [You can book it here](#), and [find it here](#).

### **Food/drinks**

[The restaurant at the Family Hotel Orpheus](#)

**Distance for the day:** approximately 94 km ([Google map route](#))

### **Day 3 Trigrad Gorge - village of Jrebchevo - Dospat and Reservoir Dospat (approximately 40 km)**

The first stop for today will be Trigrad Gorge, sheer limestone cliffs that surround the river Trigradska.

The Trigrad Gorge is a canyon of vertical marble rocks in the Rhodope Mountains. The gorge encloses the course of the Trigrad River, which plunges into the Devil's Throat Cave and 530 metres further emerges as a large karst spring. It later flows into the Byunovska River.

The gorge is 1.2 kilometres from the village of Trigrad at 1,450 metres above sea level and has a total length of 7 kilometres, of which the gorge proper comprises 2 to 3 kilometres.

Afterwards you continue the stroll along the road towards the villages of Jrebevo and Kesten, surrounded by some of the most pastorally looking landscapes in Rhodope Mountains.

Then you continue to Dospat and Dospat Reservoir, where you arrive in the early afternoon. The road here is particularly picturesque - ancient forests and lush meadows, herds of cows and sheep create the typical Rhodope pastoral atmosphere. In Dospat you can try again the famous Dospat trout. Locals say that coming to Dospat without eating trout is like going to Rome without seeing the Pope. In the afternoon you can take a stroll around the lake, where you will see fish farms. If

curious you can take a look at the process of cultivation of fish and/or buy special local fish products. You will spend the night in a hotel in Dospat.

### **Accommodation**

Romantica Forest Holiday Village or EldoSport Hotel

### **Food/drinks**

Restaurant Orpheus

**Distance for the day:** approximately 40 km (Google map route)

### **Day 4 Dospat - dam Lake Batak and Tsigov Chark area - Sofia/Your place (approximately 200 km)**

After breakfast and the coffee at ease at the hotel, you head north through the mountains for Batak Reservoir and Tsigov Chark area, one of the most beautiful and remarkable places in Rhodope Mountain. You can have lunch here, and then continue to Pazardzhik and Sofia. You will be in Sofia in the evening.

### **Food/drinks**

Restaurant "Mehanata"

**Distance for the day:** approximately 200 km (Google map route)