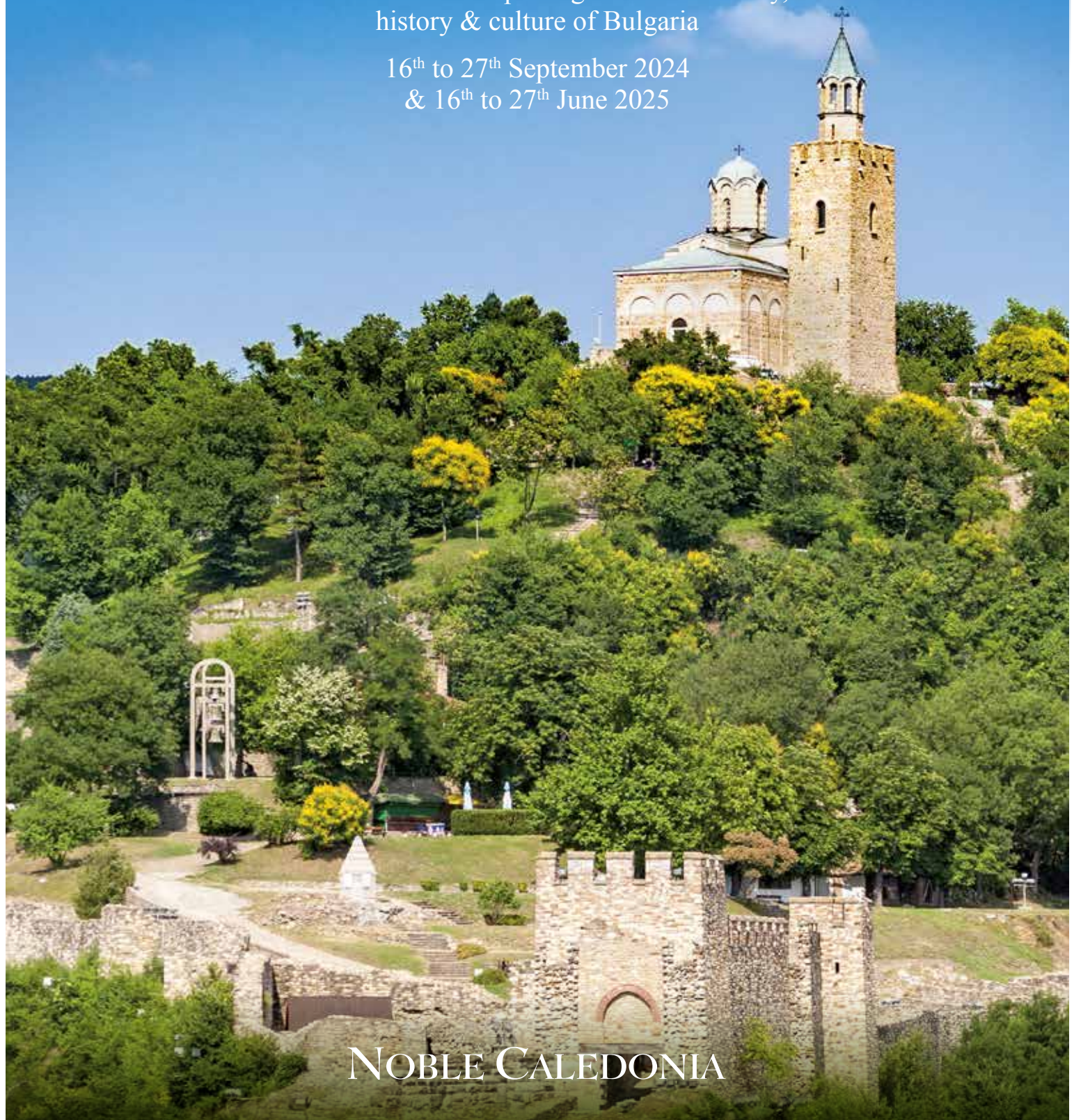


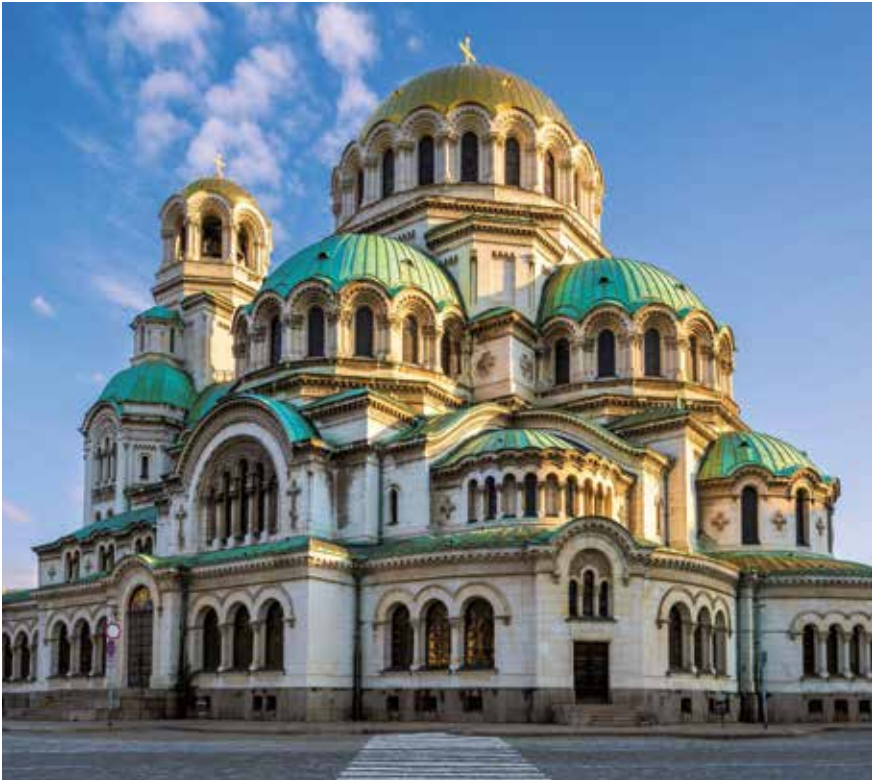
# BEST OF BULGARIA

An escorted tour exploring the scenic beauty,  
history & culture of Bulgaria

16<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> September 2024  
& 16<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> June 2025



NOBLE CALEDONIA



Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Sofia



Veliko Tarnovo



Nativity of Christ Church, Arbanasi

**B**ulgaria provides a captivating mix of scenic beauty and cultural diversity that is hard to match. From beautiful cities to untamed landscapes, mist-shrouded plains and soaring mountain peaks, our new escorted tour will provide an opportunity to discover one of Europe's best secrets. Founded in the 7th century, Bulgaria is one of the oldest states in Europe and having sat at the crossroads between so many cultures and influences, it possesses a rich historical legacy. Whilst most tourists flock to the Black Sea resorts, our in-depth exploration will instead venture into the heart of this ancient land where we will discover a wealth of marvellous sites including golden-domed churches, Thracian tombs, monastic retreats and historic cities and towns.



We will explore Bulgaria's many highlights including Veliko Tarnovo with its old lanes, 19th century buildings and the huge Tsarevets Fortress, the lovely ancient town of Plovdiv and its Roman Amphitheatre and magnificent churches and Sofia, Bulgaria's charming laid back capital. World Heritage Sites along the way will include the Thracian Tomb of Kazanlak and Rila Monastery with its distinctive black-and-white decorative archways and three yellow painted domes. As well as enjoying the local food and splendid wines of the region, we will experience the beautiful countryside and learn about rose cultivation and the production of the fragrant oil. Whilst in Bulgaria's wine capital of Brestovitsa, we will continue the ancient Thracian tradition and enjoy a tasting and in Bankso, at the foot of the magnificent Pirin Mountains, there will be the opportunity to join walks or relax and take in the stunning landscapes.

## The Itinerary

**Day 1 London Heathrow to Sofia, Bulgaria.** Fly to Sofia by scheduled flight. On arrival transfer to the Hotel Intercontinental for an overnight stay. Meet for dinner in the hotel this evening. (D)

**Day 2 Sofia to Veliko Tarnovo.** Depart Sofia after breakfast for the charming and historic town of Koprivshtitsa located in the Sredna Gora Mountains. Not only was it one of the main sites for the April Uprising against the Turks in 1876 but it is also famous for its architecture. Explore the cobbled streets with their half-timbered and brightly painted houses. From here we journey through the mountains to Troyan Monastery which, founded in the 17th century, is one of the most beautiful Orthodox monasteries in Bulgaria. Continue onto Veliko Tarnovo and check in to Hotel Yantra where we will spend the next two nights. Enjoy dinner in the hotel this evening. (B, L, D)

**Day 3 Veliko Tarnovo & Arbanasi.** This morning we will enjoy a tour of Veliko Tarnovo, the former capital of Bulgaria, which will include Tsarevets Hill, Assens' Monument and Samovodskata Charshia (craftsman's street). Walk the cobbled winding streets and learn about the city's rich history from its Byzantine Period to the Bulgarian Kingdom to life under Turkish

rule. The city has rich architecture thanks to its masterful and powerful craftsman's guild. In the afternoon we visit the pretty village of Arbanasi whose Church of the Nativity has beautiful murals depicting scenes from the Bible. Return to Veliko Tarnovo and enjoy some free time before we head out for dinner at a local restaurant. (B, L, D)

**Day 4 Veliko Tarnovo to Kazanlak.** After breakfast we depart Veliko Tarnovo for Kazanlak. Along the way we will stop at Triavana, a pretty 19th century town which is home to a range of local craftsmen before continuing to Etara, an open-air museum which demonstrates life in the 18th and 19th centuries. Drive through the mountains and the Shipka Pass, a famous battle site in the Russo-Turkish War before stopping at the Shipka Memorial Church with its golden domes and painted façade that stands out against the mountainous backdrop. Driving south we enter the Valley of the Thracian Kings, so called for the many Thracian tombs discovered in the area. Arrive at Hotel Konstantina Palace in Kazanlak for our overnight stay. (B, L, D)

**Day 5 Kazanlak to Plovdiv.** Today we visit the Thracian Tomb of Kazanlak, one of the nine UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Bulgaria. The tomb was discovered accidentally when soldiers were digging air raid shelters in 1944. The tomb dates from the 4th century BC and is believed to have



Bachkovo Monastery



Shipka Memorial Church



Roman theatre, Plovdiv



Thracian tomb, Kazanlak

belonged to the Thracian King Roigos. The unique Hellenistic frescoes are one of the highlights of the impressive tomb. After our visit we continue to a local rose oil distillery. Bulgaria is one of the biggest rose oil producers, which is celebrated in its annual rose festival each year. Learn about how they grow the roses and produce the fragrant oil. After lunch we visit a second Thracian Tomb in Starosel, which dates to the 6th century BC and was partially excavated in 2000. The temple sits on a hill offering beautiful views of the surrounding valley. Continue through the mountains to Plovdiv where we will stay for three nights at Ramada Hotel Trimontium. (B, L, D)

**Day 6 Plovdiv.** Today we will explore the city of Plovdiv, the second largest city in Bulgaria and one of the most beautiful in Eastern Europe. Like Rome, the city was built on seven hills and dates back to the 6th century BC making it Europe's oldest continuously inhabited city. Explore its cobbled streets that are filled with the history of the different cultures that have inhabited the city from the Romans to the Byzantine and Ottoman empires. The city's historic quarter boasts beautiful houses from different periods in history, ancient fortress walls, a Roman forum and magnificent churches. During a walking tour take in the Roman Theatre which has been restored and is used today for performances. There will also be a visit to the Ethnographic Museum, Hindliyan's house and the newly discovered Grand Basilica. (B, L, D)

**Day 7 Bachkovo Monastery & Brestovitsa.** After breakfast travel by coach to the Bachkovo Monastery, the second largest in Bulgaria and founded in 1083. It is one of the most important examples of Christian architecture in Bulgaria. From here we travel to the village of Brestovitsa, nicknamed the 'Wine Capital of Bulgaria'. Wine growing and production has always been present in Bulgarian history with archaeologists finding evidence of wine grapes being grown as far back as 4000 BC. Wine production was also an important part of Ancient Thracian culture. Enjoy a wine tasting at one of the numerous wineries in the region before returning to Plovdiv. Enjoy some time at leisure before dinner in a local restaurant this evening. (B, L, D)

**Day 8 Plovdiv to Bansko.** Today we continue our exploration of Bulgaria and set off for Bansko. Along the way we stop at a local open air market and take a narrow gauge train through the Rila and Rhodope Mountains to Belitsa. Continue by coach taking in the small Church of St Teodor Triton and Teodor Stratilat that dates from 1614 and has a unique painting of Jesus arriving on earth. There will also be a stop in Gorno Draglishte to enjoy some homemade Bulgarian food with a local family. Upon arrival in Bansko we will check in to the Hotel Kempinski Grand Arena for our two night stay. Located at the foot of the magnificent Pirin Mountains it offers some beautiful natural views. (B, L, D)

**Day 9 Bansko.** There will be a walking tour this morning exploring Bansko including its historic centre and the imposing St Trinity Church. The afternoon will be at leisure to relax or for those who would like there will be an option to take a walk in Pirin National Park. (B, L, D)

**Day 10 Bansko to Sofia.** This morning we head back towards the city of Sofia, stopping at Rila Monastery along the way. This is Bulgaria's largest and most beautiful monastery and one of the oldest in Europe. The cloister is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Behind its 20 metre high walls lie impressive monastic buildings, a church and a chapel with beautiful wall paintings. Continue to Sofia where we will stay at the Hotel Intercontinental for our final two nights. Enjoy dinner in the hotel this evening. (B, L, D)

**Day 11 Sofia.** Today we will explore Bulgaria's capital city, Sofia. Our tour will take in the Roman fortifications, the oldest preserved building in the city, the 4th century St Georges Rotunda, Alexander Nevski Cathedral, the National Theatre and the Church of St Sophia. Sofia is a city with a rich and long history, but it also enjoys numerous green spaces and in the summer is filled with outdoor cafes and markets. In the afternoon we will explore the Museum of History and Boyana Church which is a wonderful example of Medieval religious art. There will be a farewell dinner in a local restaurant this evening. (B, L, D)

**Day 12 Sofia to London Heathrow.** Check out this morning and transfer to the airport for the scheduled flight to London. (B)

## PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

	2024	2025
Twin:	£3595	£3795
Single:	£3995	£4195

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • 11 nights hotel accommodation • Meals as indicated (B - Breakfast, L - Lunch, D - Dinner) • Wine or beer with included lunches & dinners • Excursions as described • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Gratuities • Transfers • Airport taxes.

**Not Included:** Travel Insurance.

**Group Size:** We are restricting the group size to just 25 participants.

# YOUR ACCOMMODATION

For our escorted tour of Bulgaria we have selected some of the finest accommodations available and will be staying at the following properties:



Hotel Intercontinental

## Hotel Intercontinental, Sofia – Three nights

Located in the heart of Sofia, this modern and bright hotel offers the perfect location to explore the Bulgarian capital. The rooms are classically elegant with contemporary interiors and modern facilities and a range of amenities including tea and coffee making facilities, television, mini-bar and robe/slippers. The hotel also features two restaurants, a bar, spa and gym.



Hotel Yantra

## Hotel Yantra, Veliko Tarnovo – Two nights

Hotel Yantra is located in the heart of old Tarnovo and offers beautiful views over the city from its panoramic restaurant. The hotel features a spa, indoor pool, gym, patisserie and bar. The building itself is listed a cultural monument but the rooms come with all modern amenities including television, Wi-Fi and mini-bar.



Hotel Konstantina Palace

## Hotel Konstantina Palace, Kazanlak - Overnight

Located in the heart of the city, this elegant hotel provides a unique mix of furnishings including stone, antique furniture and contemporary art. Facilities include the restaurant with a beautifully painted dome, the terrace offering wonderful panoramic views towards Stara Planina and Sredna Gora and a bar. The rooms are spacious and feature all mod cons including air-conditioning, coffee machine, television and Wi-Fi.



Ramada Trimontium Hotel

## Ramada Trimontium Hotel, Plovdiv – Three nights

The Ramada Trimontium Hotel is located in the centre of Plovdiv making it ideal for sightseeing. Its location next to the city gardens also offers beautiful and calming surroundings. The hotel has an indoor and outdoor pool, sauna and gym as well as two restaurants and a bar. The newly renovated rooms offer all mod cons including television, air-conditioning and toiletries.



Hotel Kempinski Grand Arena

## Hotel Kempinski Grand Arena, Bansko – Two nights

Located at the footsteps of the Pirin Mountains this alpine-style hotel offers beautiful views of your surroundings. The hotel offers two restaurants, an indoor and outdoor bar, as well as a spa and swimming pool. The bedrooms are comfortable and spacious with a balcony and amenities including tea/coffee making facilities, mini-bar and air conditioning.



## NOBLE CALEDONIA

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Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request.  
Cover image: Tsarevets fortress, Veliko Tarnovo.