

## 5-day Pre-Congress Tour: 12-16 May 2018

### Sofia – Rila Monastery – Plovdiv – Nessebar - Varna – Albena

12 May, Saturday – Arrival in Sofia. Dinner in hotel. Overnight.

With 7000 years of history, Sofia is one of the oldest European cities. Its beneficial location at crossroads in the heart of the Balkan peninsula and the hot mineral springs have attracted different peoples since prehistoric times and later Thracians, Romans, Byzantines, Bulgarians, Ottoman Turks. Nowadays Sofia is the capital of Bulgaria and its largest city.

The central part of Sofia is compact and walkable, with traces of various civilizations. We will look at the Eastern Gate and some Roman remains (2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> c.), the oldest survived structure in the city - St George Rotunda (4<sup>th</sup> c.) and visit St. Sofia Basilica (6<sup>th</sup> c.) that gave its name to the whole city.

13 May, Sunday - Sofia city tour and Boyana church (30 km)



We will also admire landmark buildings such as Banya Bashi Mosque (16<sup>th</sup> c.) and Museum of Sofia (former Central Mineral Baths, early 20<sup>th</sup> c.), National Archaeological Museum (former Buyuk Mosque, 15<sup>th</sup> c.) and National Theater (early 20<sup>th</sup> c.), National Art Gallery (former Royal Palace, late 19<sup>th</sup> c.) and Russian Church (early 20<sup>th</sup> c.).

We will visit the patriarchal church St Alexander Nevsky (early 20<sup>th</sup> c.) and Boyana church (13<sup>th</sup> c., UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site), famous for its pre-Renaissance frescoes. The visit to the National Museum of History will acquaint us with the rich historic legacy of these lands.

We will continue with leisure time and shopping options in central Vitosha Blvd.

The day will cap off with folk-style dinner.

- 09:00            Transfer by bus from hotel to St. Nedelya square
- 09:15            Start walking tour of Sofia city center
- 09:30            St Petka Church (15<sup>th</sup> c.) – Roman remains (4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> c.) – Banyan Bashi  
Mosque (16<sup>th</sup> c.) – Museum of Sofia (former Central Mineral Baths, early 20<sup>th</sup> c.)
- 10:00            Eastern Gate and Roman remains (2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> c.) – President's office –  
St George Rotunda (4<sup>th</sup> c.) – National Archaeological Museum (former Buyuk Mosque, 15<sup>th</sup> c.)
- 10:30            National Theater (early 20<sup>th</sup> c.) – National Art Gallery (former Royal Palace, late 19<sup>th</sup> c.) - Russian Church (early 20<sup>th</sup> c.) – St. Sofia Basilica (6<sup>th</sup> c.) –  
St Alexander Nevsky (early 20<sup>th</sup> c.)  
Visit St. Sofia church and St. Alexander Nevsky cathedral
- 11:30            Transfer by bus from St. Alexander Nevsky square to Boyana church
- 12:00            Visit Boyana church (13<sup>th</sup> c., UNESCO site)
- 13:00            Lunch at Chepishhev restaurant, Boyana district
- 14:30            Visit National Museum of History, Boyana district
- 16:00            Return to hotel by bus
- 16:30            Leisure time / shopping in Vitosha Blvd.
- 19:30            Transfer from hotel to Hadjidraganovi izbi restaurant
- 20:00            Folk-style dinner
- 22:00            Return to hotel. Overnight.

14 May, Monday - Rila monastery and Plovdiv (350 km)

Rila monastery is the largest and most important Bulgarian monastery. Its architectural and spiritual merits put it on the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site in 1983. We will visit the monastery complex, founded in the 10th c. and undergone several stages of construction, its present building being from the 19th c. Its founder is St John of Rila, a renowned hermit and healer, considered the patron-saint of the Bulgarian people. We will enter the monastery church and museum, and have some free time for photos.

Borovets mountain resort (1200 – 1400 m altitude) is the oldest and one of the most popular skiing resorts in the country. Situated in the midst of century-old pine forests, it is also a starting point for hiking along marked tracking routes in the scenic Rila mountain.



- 09:00 Sofia - Rila monastery
- 11:15 Visit monastery complex (founded 10<sup>th</sup> c., present building from 19<sup>th</sup> c., UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site) – church, museum and free time
- 13:00 Lunch at Pchelina restaurant
- 14:30 Rila monastery – Borovets - Plovdiv
- 18:00 Accommodation at hotel
- 18:30 Orientation tour through city center
- 19:30 Dinner at Hemingway restaurant
- 21:30 Return to hotel. Overnight.

15 May, Tuesday - Plovdiv and Nessebar (300 km)



Plovdiv is Bulgaria's second largest city and home of the finely preserved Ancient Theater on top of the Old Town. We will explore Roman ruins and 19<sup>th</sup> c. cobbled streets and timber-framed painted houses with overhanging oriel windows. Plovdiv is one of the oldest cities in Europe, going back to 6000 BC. The Ancient Theater was built in 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD by Emperor Trajan and could seat 7000. Its rows of seats face the Rhodope mountains in the distance and the city center below.

We will also visit the Ethnographic Museum – a beautiful house with richly decorated façade. The rooms are laid out to replicate the living conditions in the region with costumes, musical instruments and traditional crafts.



Edoardo Miroglio winery is located in the Thracian valley in the village of Elenovo, near Nova Zagora town. The winery is surrounded by vineyards spreading on rolling hills, a lake and green lawns, which provide excellent conditions for the development of wine tourism.



- 09:00 Transfer from hotel to Old town
- 09:15 Start walking tour. Visit Ethnographic Museum and Ancient Theater.
- 11:30 Plovdiv – Nova Zagora
- 13:30 Wine tasting and lunch at Edoardo Miroglio winery
- 15:30 Nova Zagora - Nessebar
- 17:30 Accommodation at hotel
- 18:00 Leisure time

- 19:00            Transfer from hotel to Kapitanska Sreshta, Old town
- 19:30            “Drunken Sailors” dinner with tasting of three rakiya (hard liquors) for the brave and option to find their own way back to the hotel.
- 21:30            Return to hotel. Overnight.

16 May, Wednesday - Nessebar - Varna – Albena (130 km)

Nessebar peninsula and its surrounding area have probably the finest sands on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. The Thracians were here as early as 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC, later the Ancient Greeks followed through in 6<sup>th</sup> c. BC. The town experienced its greatest economic and cultural prosperity under Tsar Ivan Alexander in the 14<sup>th</sup> c. Nessebar churches from the Middle Ages are emblematic for the town. We will visit the new Metropolitan church of St. Stephan (built 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> c., frescoes 16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> c.)



Founded in the 6th century BC, Varna boasts lots of remains from Roman and Byzantine times, including the world’s most ancient golden art pieces, found in the Varna Necropolis. The orientation tour will include driving and/or walking by some of the most remarkable sights – Maritime Garden, Cathedral of the Assumption, Archeological museum (late 19<sup>th</sup> c. building), Roman thermal baths (2nd - 3rd century), that are the biggest ever found in Bulgaria.

- 09:00            Transfer to Old town of Nessebar
- 09:15            Start walking tour. Visit St Stephan church (16<sup>th</sup> c.). Leisure time.
- 11:30            Nessebar – Varna
- 13:30            “Sobering” lunch at Nuns’ restaurant with tasting of three local beers, none of them non-alcoholic
- 15:00            Orientation tour of Varna
- 16:00            Varna – Albena
- 17:00            Accommodation at hotels. Leisure time.
- 19:30            Dinner at hotels

## TERMS

**Price per person /accommodated in a double room/: 755 euro**

**Supplementary payment for a single occupancy accommodation: 82 euro**

**Price includes:** 4 overnights in 4-star hotels on bed and breakfast basis in a double occupancy room, 4 three-course dinners, 4 three-course lunches, wine-tasting of 5 wines in Edoardo Miroglio winery, tasting of 3 rakias /hard-liqueur/ in the town of Nessebut, tasting of 3 local beers, professional guide in English, all museum fees, transportation, meeting service at Sofia Airport and transfer to hotel.

**Price does not include:** other alcoholic beverages during meals except for the mentioned above, insurance, personal costs, tips.

Price is valid for a minimum of 10 persons.

Booking of the tour is valid and will be confirmed only if full prepayment is processed in advance till 16 March to Congress Management and Events Ltd. /CME Ltd./ at: <http://events.cmebg.com/xxiv-world-congress-on-echocardiography-and-cardiovascular-imaging/145/>

### **Cancellation policy:**

Only written cancellations to CME will be considered (not later than 31 March 2018)

⇒ before 16 March 2018 – full reimbursement less 30 % of the total amount

⇒ before 31 March 2018 – full reimbursement less 50 % of the total amount

⇒ after 31 March 2018 - no refunds will be made

In case of no-show prepaid services are non-refundable.