



MACEDONIA & ALBANIA

**MULTISPORT THROUGH THE BALKANS
BY BIKE, FOOT & KAYAK
8-DAYS**

This itinerary brings you to medieval monasteries, timeworn bazaars and ancient fortresses while navigating through Macedonia's storybook landscape by bike, kayak and foot. You will kayak through Matka Canyon's crystal clear waters; bike around Ohrid Lake into Albania; and hike through Mavrovo National Park, a UNESCO heritage site. At night, refuel over exquisite traditional meals, often paired with local wines and artisan cheeses. This 8-day journey is the perfect combination of cultural encounters, active pursuits and the region's culinary delights.

Day 1

SKOPJE

ARRIVAL

Upon arrival into the Skopje International Airport, you'll be met and transferred to your hotel in the city. After a brief break to get settled, if time allows, we will venture out on a short walking tour of Skopje's most famous sites including the Stone Bridge, Mother Teresa memorial house, the Old Bazaar and the Skopje Fortress. In the evening, we'll be treated to a Macedonian welcome dinner at a traditional restaurant. The local dishes served are specifically typical to Skopje.

Accommodation: Hotel

Meals: Dinner



Day 2

SKOPJE - MATKA CANYON

KAYAKING

After breakfast, we will transfer 30 minutes to Matka canyon, one of Macedonia's most popular kayaking, mountaineering and climbing areas. The vast Matka Canyon is a magnificent protected natural reserve. Available for your discovery within it are some medieval monasteries and caves along with an abundant variety of flora and fauna. Today, starting out from the Monastery of St. Andrew, we will kayak on our sit-on-top kayaks along peaceful Matka Lake to arrive at Vrelo cave. There, we will leave our kayaks and enter the cave to marvel at its interior. We will then paddle back to the day's starting point by kayak. Upon our return, we will have a short transfer to the village of Saraj. There, a delicious lunch of local traditional dishes will be waiting for us. After lunch, we'll transfer 1.5 hours to the village of Janche, in Mavrovo National Park, where we'll dine and overnight.

Kayaking Distance: 6 km / 3.7 mi

Kayaking Duration: 3 - 4 hours

Accommodation: Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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Day 3

MAVROVO NATIONAL PARK

BIKING

Today, we'll switch gears and get on our bikes for the day, riding 50 km / 30 mi through Mavrovo National Park's mountainous and alpine terrain. We will first have a 30 minute drive to Carevec, our starting point located at 1600 m / 5200 ft. From there, we'll cycle on dirt roads that wind through pastures and meadows, passing several flocks of sheep along the way. We'll eventually enter deep into a forest, the road gradually leading to the village of Leunovo. At the village, our ride will return to paved roads as we cycle toward Bunec, a national park known for its deer. Along the way, we'll have time for a short stop to explore an educational trail to learn about the national park's wildlife. We will then continue biking around the lake on the lookout for a perfect, picturesque picnic lunch spot. That evening, we'll return to our same hotel within Mavrovo National Park for dinner.

Biking Distance: 42 km / 26 mi

Biking Duration: 3-4 hours

Ascent: + 300 m (984 ft)

Descent: - 750 m (2460 ft)

Accommodation: Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 4

MAVROVO NATIONAL PARK - MT MEDENICA

HIKING

This morning, we will transfer 45 minutes to the small town of Galicnik. From there, we'll spend the day hiking in another area of Mavrovo National Park. The hike starts at 1400 m / 4600 ft and at Mount Medenica we will reach our highest point, 2160 m / 7100 ft. From there, we will descend on foot to Galicnik where we'll have a special lunch served by a local family in their small family restaurant. After lunch, we'll meet our driver and transfer to Ohrid, a UNESCO World Heritage site. En route, we'll stop briefly at the monastery of St. John the Baptist Bigorski, one of the region's most famous monasteries, famous for the wooden carved iconostasis created by local woodcarvers in the 19th century. The monastery is a must-see for any visitor to Macedonia. This evening, we'll be arriving in Ohrid in time for dinner.

Hiking Distance: 13 km / 8 mi

Hiking Duration: 5 - 6 hrs

Ascent: + 600 m (1969ft)

Descent: - 800 m (2625 ft)

Accommodation: Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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Day 5

MACEDONIA & ALBANIA - OHRID LAKE

BIKING

We're back on our bikes today, riding around Ohrid Lake and into Albania. Today's route is entirely on paved roads. Once we've passed the border crossing, we'll ride along the Albanian coast of Lake Ohrid, stopping for coffee in the small coastal town of Pogradec. We then continue back to Macedonia on a leisurely ride back to Ohrid, along the lake's east coast. This section has a few steep but short climbs. We'll stop for lunch in a quaint lakeside village where there is a small beach for a refreshing swim. Once back in Ohrid, we'll explore the city by foot, visiting the Church of St. Sofia, the Amphitheatre and the Tzar Samuil's Fortress. For dinner, we'll be transferred from the hotel to the nearby village of Kuratica, where we'll have a very special home-cooked dinner.

Biking Distance: 45 km / 28 mi

Biking Duration: 4-5 hours

Ascent: + 320 m (1050 ft)

Descent: - 560m (1837 ft)

Accommodation: Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



Day 6

PRILEP - KING MARKO'S TOWERS

HIKING

After breakfast, we will depart for the city of Prilep. From there, we will start our hike from King Marko's towers onward to the Treskavec Monastery, established in the 12th century and located at an elevation of 1250 m / 4100 ft. The hike entails a little bit of scrambling with some sections secured with a steel cable. Upon arrival, we will be rewarded with extraordinary views from this ancient monastery's exquisite location overlooking Prilep. The area's last remaining monk, Brother Kalist, runs the monastery. Once here, there is a good chance we will have the rare opportunity to meet him and learn more about him and of the monastery. We will then drive 1.5 hours to the Tikvesh wine region for an overnight stay at a winery estate. If time allows on the way, we'll stop to explore the Roman archaeological site of Stobi. This site is famous for its remains of the Roman city Stobensium, once an important trade and cultural centre. Tonight, we'll have a wine tasting during dinner, arranged at our hotel-winery.

Hiking Distance: 9 km / 5.5 mi

Hiking Duration: 4 - 5 hrs

Ascent: + 650 m (2133 ft)

Descent: - 100m (328 ft)

Accommodation: Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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Day 7

TIKVESH - SKOPJE

BIKING

Today, we will be biking in the picturesque Tikvesh wine region. Tikvesh is the largest wine region in the Balkans. After breakfast, we'll take a short drive to our starting point. We'll cycle on peaceful country roads, through an endless panorama of vineyards, tobacco fields and centuries-old village houses. After a stop in Barovo, we will cycle to a small family boutique winery in the village of Krnjevo. There, we will have a full wine tasting accompanied by an epic farewell lunch filled with dishes typical for the Tikvesh region. Our bellies filled, we'll be transferred to Skopje in the late afternoon hours. Tonight, our last Macedonian dinner will be enjoyed in Debar Maalo, Skopje's bohemian quarters.

Biking Distance: 25 km / 16 mi

Biking Duration: 3-4 hours

Ascent: + 350 m (1148ft)

Descent: - 200 m (656 ft)

Accommodation: Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8

SKOPJE

DEPARTURE

Today is the conclusion of the Macedonia and Albania Multi-sport through the Balkans Adventure. You will be transferred to the airport to connect with your flight home.

Meals: Breakfast

NOTE about Ascent/Descent numbers:

The ascent/descent numbers are usually generated using Ride with GPS. The numbers are TOTAL ascent/descent for the day and these numbers do not suggest altitude. There are usually multiple small ascents and descents added up throughout the day to reach this total ascent/descent for the day. (While our numbers are generally consistent with Ride with GPS, depending on the mapping technology used, numbers may vary).

TRIP INCLUSIONS

Trip Includes

All accommodation in 3-4 star hotels (twin shared), meals as indicated, land transportation, Specialized/Scott/RAM bikes, sit-on-top kayaks, airport transfers and English speaking guides.

Not Included

International airfare, airport departure taxes, gratuities, meals not indicated and items of a personal nature.

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