



From  
**€7,668** EUR

Single Room

€8,665 EUR

Twin Room

€7,668 EUR

Prices valid until  
 30th December 2023

19 days

Duration

Albania, Bosnia and  
 Herzegovina, Croatia

Destination

Level 2 - Moderate

Activity

# Balkans escorted small group tour

Sep 17 2024 to Oct 05 2024

## Balkans Small Group Tour: Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Albania, Serbia

The Balkans small group tour takes you over 18 days through Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Albania. With some of the best local guides to show you around each destination, you will have the chance to learn about the history and culture of each place we visit. Throughout the journey through this region, we will cover as far back as



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the [Roman settlements](#) through to the unfortunate events of the last century pausing for Medieval towns and meeting the Dervishers. It is a history tour with some terrific journeys deep into the Balkan region exploring beyond the tourist trail.

The Balkans small group tour starts and finishes in Dubrovnik. The tour uses nine locations as its base from which the program leader leads the tour. After Dubrovnik we move onto Sarajevo, Belgrade, Kragujevac, Nis, Skopje, Ohrid, Berat, Tirana and Kotor. The natural scenery is often breathtaking and the ancient Roman settlements lend a fascinating aspect to the region's history. We will also gain an insight into the role of religion and religious settlement and its influences in the towns and cities explored. Many attractions throughout our journey are recognised as a [UNESCO World Heritage Site](#).

The Balkans small group tour is for senior or mature or solo travellers who are seeking a tour that provides you with more than just a view from the road experience. This tour has an extension into Croatia.

## The Balkan Small Group Tour Itinerary

We'll visit many wonderful cities on this small group tour, read about some of the highlights:

### Sarajevo

The capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo is sometimes described as the city where east meets west. It is ringed by mountains and has a diverse heritage, once known for being a religious melting pot. Despite a dark history, including experiencing one of the longest sieges in European history in the 1990s, Sarajevo is a beautiful place to visit with vibrant architecture, colourful street life, quaint shops and an enduring spirit. During our time here, we will have the opportunity to see the spot where Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated, an event often seen as the trigger for World War One.

## Belgrade

A vivacious city, Belgrade, Serbia's capital, enjoys a reputation as a party city. However, it is also drenched in history with Roman ruins, Ottoman relics and remnants and the Hapsburg legacy. Lying where the Danube and Sava Rivers meet, Belgrade's riverside Savamala quarter is the city's lively, creative precinct.

## Kragujevac

Kragujevac is the fourth largest city in Serbia and was the chosen capital when the country broke away from the Ottoman Empire in 1818. It is the industrial centre of the country and is found on the banks of the Lepenica River.

## Nis

Nis is one of the oldest cities in Europe, founded in 279 B.C., and now Serbia's third largest city. One of the most popular sites in the city is the majestic fortress, which is one of the most well-preserved structures in the area. Here you can expect to find small, laneway bars, live music in the streets and summer funfairs. However, there is a dark history here and many sites in Nis, such as the Red Cross Concentration Camp, offer an insight into the horrors of WW2.

## Skopje

The capital of the Republic of Macedonia, Skopje has experienced Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman rule which has contributed to its rich history. With many historical monuments, a beautiful fortress and interesting archaeological sites, it is steadily becoming a popular destination for travellers.

## Ohrid

One of Macedonia's most appealing destination, Ohrid sits on the edge of the turquoise Lake Ohrid and is home to stunning churches and delicious local cuisine. Expect to enjoy food with hint of Mediterranean, Turkish and Italian flavours and plenty of fresh seafood.

## Berat

A world heritage city, Berat in Albania is often known as the White City for its collection of white Ottoman houses that cover its hillside. With a rugged mountain landscape, it oozes charm and is often considered to be one of the most beautiful cities in the country.

## Tirana

Albania's capital, and largest city, Tirana is a bright, colourful city that has undergone a significant transformation since the 1990s. The cultural and entertainment centre of the country, prepare to enjoy great cafe culture, the city's controversial concrete pyramid and bustling street life.

## Kotor

A fortified town on Montenegro's Adriatic coast, Kotor sits amongst rugged mountain ranges. A medieval town of churches and museums, this is one of Europe's most underrated holiday locations.

You can learn more about [Croatia](#), [Bosnia & Herzegovina](#), [Albania](#), and [Serbia](#) with our country profiles where all the other tour departures for these destinations are listed as well. For more details about this tour, click the 'Top 5' or 'Itinerary' buttons above! If you're keen to experience this tour, [please call](#) or [send an email](#). Or, to book, simply fill in the form on the right hand side of this page.

## Travel tips and articles of Interest

For Odyssey Travellers articles that maybe of interest are often published on this website to assist you with your tour planning. For this Tour of the Balkans these [articles on Clothing & Footwear](#), or suggestions on [Packing](#) or this two part article on [travel tips part one](#) and [travel tips part two](#). Plus these two pieces on the [how to manage queues](#) and [why take a small group educational tour](#)

may also be useful.

## Tour Notes

- Luggage limit of one medium suitcase with wheels and one carry on, that you can manage independently.

## Highlights

1. Explore the architectural and cultural wonders of Belgrade, with visits to the Roman fortress, Royal Palace, and the Residence of Princess Ljubica.
2. Experience the wonders of Ohrid, Macedonia, a beautiful and scenic city famous for having 365 churches, one for every day of the year.
3. Learn about the Skull Tower in Nis, Serbia, built by a Turkish general in 1809 using the skulls of the defeated Serbs.
4. Explore the pretty Roman port town of Apollonia, in Albania.
5. Take in the serene beauty of the Arabati Baba Tek?e Monastery in Tetovo, and discover the rich religious history of this part of Macedonia.

## Itinerary

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## Day 1

**Locations:** Dubrovnik

**Overview:**

After making your own way to the hotel we meet in the evening for a welcome dinner and program orientation with the group leader.

**Accommodation:**

Antica Regusa or similar

## Day 2

**Locations:** Sarajevo

**Overview:**

This morning, we travel into Bosnia, stopping on the way in Mostar, where we view the famous bridge. We take a guided, educational walk through the Ottoman and also take in the medieval quarter of the town. We then continue on to Sarajevo.

**Accommodation:**

Hotel President or similar

## Day 3

**Locations:** Sarajevo

**Overview:**

After breakfast, we take an extensive tour of Sarajevo, taking in the main sights of the city, including the spot where the Archduke Franz Ferdinand was shot, which that led to the start of the First World War. We also see the tunnel connecting the resistance under the city during the war of 1992-1995.

We then head north to see two most unusual sights: our first stop is Stone Ball park, an area where there are many very large stone balls – some believe these to have been man-made, others say they are natural. Afterwards, we visit the valley of the pyramids. Again, some believe that under three of the large hills here are hidden man-made pyramids, while others believe that they are natural – this is still a

matter of debate.

**Accommodation:**

Overnight Hotel President or similar

**Day 4****Locations:** Belgrade**Overview:**

Before crossing into Serbia, we stop to view the pretty UNESCO-listed Mehmed Pasa Sokolovic bridge. The first stop in Serbia is the Drven Grad village, which was created by a local movie director for one of his films. This site is now an interesting stop, sine it displays the old-style wooden buildings. We then take the scenic train ride known as the Sargan 8, it loops around and through the mountains in a figure of eight to cope with the elevation change on this section of the track.

**Accommodation:**

Hotel Prag or similar

**Day 5****Locations:** Belgrade**Overview:**

Morning city tour in Belgrade visiting the large fortress parts of which date back to the early Roman period. Visit to the Royal palace (so long as this day is a Saturday or Sunday), the palace is still occupied by the current royal family so closed on weekdays. Visit to the Residence of Princess Ljubica built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but now a museum with artefacts to show what it was like to live in at the time it was built – for the nobility.

Afternoon free to take in the market and old parts of the city.

**Accommodation:**

Hotel Prag or similar

## Day 6

**Locations:** Kragujevac

**Overview:**

This morning we head south, making a stop at the memorial dedicated to those who died in the Balkan wars and WWI. We then continue south to Topola, where we visit the Temple of Saint George and the mausoleum of the Karadjordjevic dynasty built in the early-19<sup>th</sup> century. This mausoleum has an absolutely stunning interior that must be seen to be believed.

The next stop is a very different site, a fortified monastery, Mansija, built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and in a wonderful location.

**Accommodation:**

Hotel Zelengora or similar

## Day 7

**Locations:** Nis

**Overview:**

After breakfast, we experience a picturesque drive through the hills and valleys to the pretty and architecturally significant Kalenic monastery. Here, we learn about the history of religion in the area and take a walking tour of the monastery ground. Our second stop of the day is the Dvorac Belimarkovica manor house, which has been transformed into a vibrant museum.

**Accommodation:**

Hotel Eter or similar

## Day 8

**Locations:** Nis

**Overview:**

This morning we enjoy a guided tour of Nis, taking in its fortress as well as the city's unusual tower of skulls, which was built by a Turkish general in 1809 using the skulls of the defeated Serbs. Later on, we



drive to one of the most important Roman sites in the region, Felix Romuliana in Gamzigrad. It is of an unusual design for the Romans, but you can still see many of the original floor mosaics in-situ.

On our return leg, we make a brief stop to see the Roman remains at Medijana, the birthplace of Emperor Constantine, who was the first Roman emperor to convert to Christianity.

**Accommodation:**

Hotel Eter or similar

**Day 9**

**Locations:** Nis

**Overview:**

This morning we visit two important sites in Nis: the Nazi concentration camp and the memorial at Bubanj to those that died. Today we also take a short trip to view the unusual Devil's Towers rock formations at Kursumlija.

**Accommodation:**

Hotel Eter or similar

**Day 10**

**Locations:** Skopje

**Overview:**

Today we head south again to visit another Roman ruin that features an overgrown mosaic floor. We stop for lunch in Vranje, where there is an opportunity to find a local meal of your choosing. This town features a noticeable change in architectural style from previous locations,

We then cross into Macedonia and visit the pre-historic archaeological site of Kokino, set high up in the mountains. A local guide gives us an extensive tour, with a particular emphasis on local history. Our time here takes in spectacular views, but some say that Kokino is orientated in such a way as to show the equinoxes. On our way to Skopje, we also

stop to see the magnificent aqueduct on the outskirts of the city.

**Accommodation:**

Alexandar Square Boutique Hotel or similar

**Day 11****Locations:** Skopje**Overview:**

After breakfast, we take a walking tour of Skopje, a city under transformation that is an unusual site in itself. We also stop to see the Ottoman Daud Pasha Baths, now named the National Gallery, and the Mustafa Pasha Mosque, which is unusual in that it has hardly been modified since it was built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Here, we visit the old bazaar area as well as the Memorial house built to honor Mother Teresa, who was born on the site.

In the afternoon, we explore two local vineyards, and enjoy a delicious seasonal-produce-based lunch together.

**Accommodation:**

Alexandar Square Boutique Hotel or similar

**Day 12****Locations:** Ohrid**Overview:**

Today we leave Skopje and head to Tetovo, where we visit the Arabati Baba Bektasi Teke with a local guide. Here, we learn about the fascinating history of this place, which was originally used by the Dervishes but was later taken forcibly by the Islamic community. It has since been returned to the Dervishes.

Heading south, we travel on winding, picturesque roads through the mountains and forests to the huge complex of the St John Bigorski monastery, which also claims to hold the forearm of John the Baptist.

**Accommodation:**

Hotel Aleksandrija or similar

## Day 13

**Locations:** Ohrid

**Overview:**

Today is primarily a rest day, with a short tour in Ohrid that takes in the museum with displays of the archaeology of the region. We also stop off at the Sveta Sophia church, which has wall paintings dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> century, some of the oldest in the world.

In the afternoon, we take a leisurely cruise across the lake to the monastery of Naum. We take in spectacular scenery along the way, passing by the Bay of Bones, a replica of a stick pile village built in the lake.

**Accommodation:**

Hotel Aleksandrija or similar

## Day 14

**Locations:** Ohrid

**Overview:**

Today is set aside as a free day to explore this pretty town to relax at your own pace, or else simply enjoy soaking up the scenery and local atmosphere. You might also like to visit the Roman amphitheater, walk through the old town, or take in the promenade beside the lake.

**Accommodation:**

Hotel Aleksandrija or similar

## Day 15

**Locations:** Berat

**Overview:**

Today we leave Ohrid and follow the route of the ancient Roman road, Via Egnata, passing into Albania and travelling up over the mountains. We make a key stop in Mirake to see the ancient bridge, which is possibly Roman. While on the Via Egnata, we see remnants of the old

Roman road here too.

We also stop in Elbasan, a staging post on the Via Egnata, to see the castle and eat lunch within the grounds.

After arriving in Berat, we take a guided walking tour of the citadel.

**Accommodation:**

Hotel Belgrad Mangalem or similar

**Day 16**

**Locations:** Tirana

**Overview:**

Today we drive to the coast, taking very small and slow roads to reach the pretty Roman port town of Apollonia. On the road leading to the town are many of the old communist era fortifications – including an extensive concrete tunnel network built for defence – that are unique to Albania.

We have allowed for some free time in Tirana upon arrival, where we will be free to explore this lively and cultural town.

**Accommodation:**

Xheko Imperial Hotel or similar

**Day 17**

**Locations:** Tirana

**Overview:**

Today we explore Tirana, a strange and intriguing city. We take in many of the important sights, from the Pyramid built originally as Hoxha's tomb, but now left empty, to the Ottoman era buildings. Across the day we see a complete contrast in architectural styles.

In the afternoon, we drive to Kotor, in Montenegro, with a short stop to view the Shkoder castle.

**Accommodation:**

Cattaro hotel or similar

## Day 18

**Locations:** Kotor

**Overview:**

After breakfast, we enjoy a brief walking tour in Kotor to learn about the history of the town, followed by an excursion to Lovcen national park.

The road up the side of the fjord is an experience in itself, with lots of hairpin bends as it climbs the steep gradient, taking in phenomenal views. We then venture into the park and up to the top of the mountain to see the mausoleum to Prince Njegos, who was buried here, then had his remains moved to Cetinje and moved back again. The views over the fjord and bay of Kotor are truly breathtaking.

We then take the longer route back via Cetinje, the old capital of Montenegro, with a short stop and walking tour to see some of the older houses. After, we head down the mountain to the seaside town of Budva. We stop enroute to take in the views over the sea and the small island of Sveti Stefan, a private resort.

Later on, we enjoy a farewell dinner in the hotel.

**Accommodation:**

Cattaro hotel or similar

## Day 19

**Locations:** Kotor

**Overview:**

After breakfast, we take a group transfer to the airport. After saying our farewells, the tour draws to a close.

## Inclusions / Exclusions

**What's included in our Tour**

- 18 nights of hotel accommodation
- Meals as Indicated
- Transport and field trips as indicated.

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- Applicable entry fees and services of local guides.
- Services of a Tour Leader.
- Gratuities and necessary tips.
- Detailed tour information booklet.

#### **What's not included in our Tour**

- Return international airfares and departure taxes.
- Comprehensive travel insurance.
- Items of a personal nature such as telephone calls and laundry.

#### **Level 2 - Moderate**

Participants must be able to carry their own luggage, climb and descend stairs, be in good health, mobile and able to participate in 3-5 hours of physical activity per day, the equivalent of walking/hiking up to 8 kilometres on uneven ground.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any requests for further information about this tour or any others offered by Odyssey Travel.