



Plovdiv & the Southern Mountains

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Why Go?

With spectacular and infinitely varied nature, and some of Bulgaria's greatest spiritual and cultural attractions, the south is a fascinating region that should be high on every traveller's itinerary. From the stunning Rila Monastery and the fabled Seven Rila Lakes, strung out like jewels in the mountains beyond it, to dynamic cultural capital Plovdiv, southern Bulgaria offers something for everyone. Its striking landscapes range from the sandstone 'pyramids' of Melnik, where you can sample the country's best wine in splendid serenity, to the rugged Pirin Mountains and the gentler Rodopi range, together hosting Bulgaria's best ski resorts.

The legacy of southern Bulgaria's colourful and complex history of ancient civilisations – from the mysterious Thracians and the Macedonians to the Romans, Slavs, Byzantines and Turks – is also abundantly evident, in Plovdiv's grand Roman amphitheatre, the enthralling medieval monastery of Bachkovo, numerous Ottoman mosques and other sites attesting to a glorious past.

When to Go

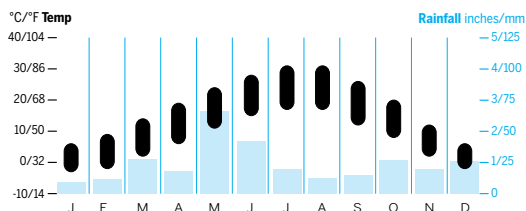
Best Places to Eat

- » Puldin Restaurant (p345)
- » Hebros Hotel Restaurant (p345)
- » Mehana Mencheva Kâshata (p336)
- » Pelelanovska Konak (p351)

Best Places to Stay

- » Hotel Renaissance (p344)
- » Park Hotel Gardenia (p333)
- » Hotel Bolyarka (p336)
- » Spa Hotel Evridika (p355)

Plovdiv



May & Jun Hike in the Rila and Pirin mountains while spring flowers are in full bloom and the air is cool.

Sep & Oct Indulge in Plovdiv's month of culture, and spa bliss in the nearby Rodopi Mountains.

Dec & Jan Ski by day and party by night over winter holidays in Bansko.

Plovdiv & the Southern Mountains Highlights

- 1 Skiing at **Bansko** (p330) and **Borovets** (p325), Bulgaria's baddest winter resorts
- 2 Sampling Bulgaria's best wine beneath sandstone cliffs in little **Melnik** (p334)
- 3 Diving into **Plovdiv's** (p337) Bohemian old town
- 4 Making a pilgrimage to the spellbinding **Rila** and **Bachkovo Monasteries** (p349), and considering their
- 5 Cleansing yourself with the spa waters and massage therapies of **Devin spa**

vivid frescoes of eternal damnation

resort (p355) in the Rodopi Mountains

