



Plovdiv & the Southern Mountains

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Hemingway (p349)
- ➔ Mehana Chavkova Kâshta (p339)
- ➔ Hebros Restaurant (p348)
- ➔ Mehana Dedo Pene (p336)
- ➔ Restaurant Bulgare (p329)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Todoroff Wine & Spa (p353)
- ➔ Kosovo Houses (p353)
- ➔ At Renaissance Square (p347)
- ➔ Villa Stresov (p328)
- ➔ Hostel Old Plovdiv (p347)
- ➔ Hotel Rojena (p338)

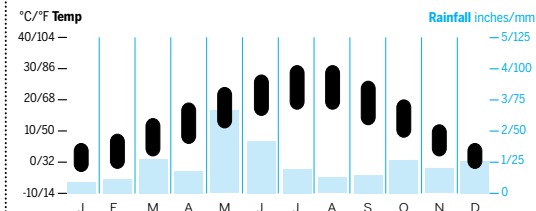
Why Go?

Spectacular mountains encircle spiritual sights in this swathe of inland Bulgaria. Europe's oldest continuously inhabited city, Plovdiv anchors the region. Roman ruins and a sparkling artistic quarter provide a thrilling backdrop to the city's calendar of festivals, which brims ahead of its reign as European Capital of Culture 2019.

Quiet winemaking villages snooze in Plovdiv's surrounds, while the Rodopi Mountains reach south, dotted with ski centres such as Pamporovo. To the west lie the Rila Mountains, home to a monastery that is a spiritual lighthouse for all of Bulgaria. Perhaps most spectacular is the Pirin Mountain range, which grumbles south of student-filled Blagoevgrad. High-octane Bansko is the region's leading ski and snowboard spot, but in spring and summer Pirin National Park comes to the fore: its hiking trails weave between gem-blue lakes, and up to arid peaks such as Mt Vihren.

When to Go

Plovdiv



May & Jun Hiking among spring flowers in Rila and Pirin, or enjoying jazz or folk festivals in Plovdiv.

Sep & Oct Savouring wines in temperate Thrace, or autumnal spa bliss in the Rodopi Mountains.

Jan & Feb Ski by day and party by night on a winter break in Bansko or Pamporovo.

Plovdiv & the Southern Mountains Highlights

- 1 Rila Monastery** (p324)
Standing awestruck among beautiful frescoes in a millennium-old monastery.
- 2 Plovdiv** (p339) Admiring Roman ruins and by day, then sashaying into the Kapana quarter's arty nightlife.
- 3 Skiing in Bansko** (p334)
Thundering down pistes at Bulgaria's premier winter-sports town.
- 4 Melnik** (p337) Peering at strange sandstone pillars while sipping famous wines.
- 5 Devin's Spas** (p357)
Sliding into silky spa waters in this fragrant town.

- 6 Historic Thrace** (p339)
Road tripping among wineries, ancient fortresses and enigmatic ruins.
- 7 Seven Rila Lakes** (p328)
Hiking wild mountain passes to reach inky blue lakes and mysterious forests.
- 8 Rocky Rodopis** (p352)
Walking amid surreal rock formations or touring caves.

