

Veliko Târnovo & Central Mountains

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Best Places to Eat

- Han Hadji Nikoli (p372)
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Best Places to Sleep

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Why Go?

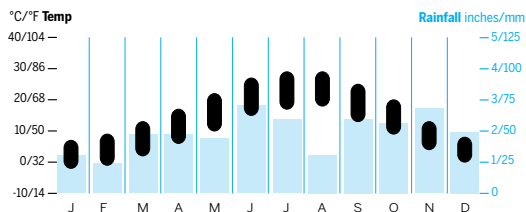
Forbidding mountains and floral valleys compose the varied landscape at Bulgaria's heart. What unites its perilous hills and colourful villages is revolutionary history, etched into the landscape.

In the Central Mountains, monasteries at Troyan and Dryanovo triumphed over repeated attempts to destroy them – even sheltering revolutionary fighters between their frescoed walls. Just south in Koprivshitsa, a town famed for its charming 19th-century mansions, the 1876 April Uprising brewed. Ensuing battles for Bulgaria's independence from Ottoman control unfolded in the thickly forested Shipka Pass.

The fortress at Veliko Târnovo, once the capital of the Bulgarian tsars, remains the region's crowning attraction. Just as captivating is Kazanlâk's Valley of the Roses, aflame with blooms each May and June, and the Thracian tombs in its surrounds. Little-explored intrigues lie east: Shumen's colossal monuments, Madara's archaeological reserve and the boulder-strewn hiking terrain around Sliven.

When to Go

Veliko Târnovo



May–Jun Rose festivals in and around Kazanlâk, and Koprivshitsa's uprising re-enactment.

Aug–Sep Escape the heat while hiking in cooler climates in the Stara Planina.

Oct Enjoy Veliko Târnovo's Sound and Light Show under clear skies, along with its student nightlife.

Veliko Târnovo & Central Mountains Highlights

- 1 Veliko Târnovo** (p365)
Striding along medieval ramparts and cobbled lanes.
- 2 Valley of the Roses** (p386)
Breathing the scent of fresh rose oil.
- 3 Shipka Pass** (p389)
Driving along medieval monuments, golden church domes and a Soviet UFO.
- 4 Koprivshitsa** (p385)
Delighting in lovingly painted mansions.
- 5 Founders of the Bulgarian State Monument** (p361)
Craning your neck at futurist sculpturines in Shumen.
- 6 Stara Planina** (p381)
Hiking the windswept wilds of Bulgaria's grand 'old mountain'.
- 7 Troyan Monastery** (p383)
Gazing at 19th-century frescoes in this sandstone monastery.
- 8 Emen Canyon** (p375)
Looking over steep views from this cliffside ecotrail towards a waterfall.
- 9 Tryavna** (p377)
Marvelling at hand-carved wood iconostases.
- 10 Etâr** (p379)
Strolling among quaint buildings and craft shops at touristy (but irresistible) Etâr.

