



# Macedonia

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## Best Places to Stay

- Vila Raskrsnica (p256)
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## Why Go?

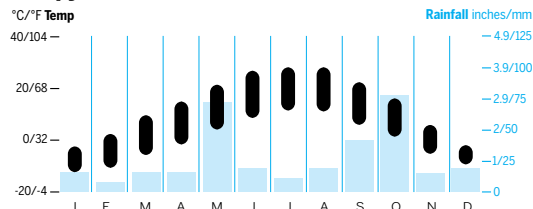
Part Balkan, part Mediterranean and rich in Greek, Roman and Ottoman history, Macedonia (Македонија) has a fascinating past and complex national psyche. Glittering Lake Ohrid and the historic waterside town of Ohrid itself have etched out a place for Macedonia on the tourist map, but this small nation is far more than just one great lake.

Skopje may be the Balkans' most bonkers and unfailingly entertaining capital city, thanks to a government-led building spree of monuments, museums and fountains. What has emerged is an intriguing jigsaw where ancient history and buzzing modernity collide.

The rest of Macedonia is a stomping ground for adventurers. Mountains are omnipresent and walking trails blissfully quiet. The national parks of Mavrovo, Galičica and Pelister are also cultivating some excellent cultural and food tourism initiatives; these gorgeous regions are criminally under-explored. If you want to get off the beaten track in Europe, this is it.

## When to Go

### Skopje



**Jun–Aug** Enjoy Ohrid's Summer Festival and dive into its 300m-deep lake.

**Sep–Oct** Partake in Skopje's jazz festival or the Tikveš region's Kavadarci Wine Carnival.

**Dec–Feb** Ski Mavrovo, snuggle up in chalet-style lodges and experience Ohrid out of season.



## Macedonia Highlights

- 1 Ohrid Old Town** (p249) Exploring the distinctive historic quarter, right to the end of the boardwalk and pebble beach, and up to the clifftop Church of Sveti Jovan.
- 2 Skopje** (p241) Diving into the historic Čaršija (Old Turkish Bazaar) of Macedonia's capital, then marvelling at its super-sized new riverside monuments.
- 3 Pelister National Park** (p255) Eating your fill at food-focused village tourism initiatives in this underrated national park, and walking it off the next day.
- 4 Golem Grad** (p254) Chasing ghosts, pelicans and tortoises around this eerie Lake Prespa island, fecund with overgrown ruins.
- 5 Popova Kula** (p115) Sipping and slurping your way through Macedonia's premier wine region, Tikveš, using this could-be-in-Italy winery hotel as your base.
- 6 Sveti Jovan Bigorski Monastery** (p248) Taking tea with monks at this majestic complex, teetering in the hills of Mavrovo National Park.

## SKOPJE

📍 02 / POPULATION 2.02 MILLION

In the past few years, the central riverside area of Skopje has hammered out the look of a set design for an ancient civilisation. Towering warrior statues gaze down on you and

## SKOPIJE

gleaming Italianate power buildings make visitors feel very small indeed. Marble-clad museums have mushroomed alongside hypnotic new mega-fountains, and the Macedonian capital has become a thoroughly entertaining Balkan metropolis – a bit surreal and at times garish, maybe, but never dull.