

ARCHAEOLOGY TOUR - BULGARIA'S AMAZING PAST. 24 June – 1 July 2012

(Tour Code: AT)

PRICE: £1,025 (Based on a group of 10 or more, a smaller group will incur a supplement).

Leaders and Guest Lecturers: Dr. John Chapman and Dr. Bisserka Gaydarska

The Black Sea zone is the 'dry littoral' of the Balkan Peninsula, with far less rainfall than the 'wet' Adriatic coast. It shares other ecological potentials with the Adriatic – namely a wide range of wonderful fish, shellfish and wild animals, as well as a good supply of sea-salt. However, the curious shortage of islands in comparison with the Adriatic is the biggest difference; this meant that good harbours were few and far between, often taking advantage of long inlets (e.g., Varna) and lagoons / lakes (e.g., Durankulak, Burgas). The great advantage of settling on or near the coast was access to the maritime trade routes spanning the Black Sea as far East as Novorossiysk and North to the Danube Delta and the Crimea. The prehistoric, Classical and Medieval communities of the West Pontic zone were invariably connected to long-distance trade networks and often exploited salt and fish on an industrial scale.

Your guides on this exploration of the West Pontic shore are two archaeologists who met at Durham University and married six years later. Dr. Bisserka Gaydarska is an Anglophone Bulgarian who took her M.A. from Sofia University and her PhD from Durham. She is now an Honorary Research Fellow there. Dr. John Chapman is a Balkanised British citizen who studied for his B.A. and Ph.D at London University's

Institute of Archaeology. He is currently a Reader in Archaeology at Durham. Their joint research has focussed on Balkan prehistory – especially the Neolithic and Copper Age. They have published on the Varna cemetery and written a joint book on the deliberate fragmentation of archaeological objects.

The British-Bulgarian Friendship Society has been organising a variety of special interest tours to Bulgaria for over thirty-five years. We shall be happy to introduce you to the country's friendly people, and excellent wine and food. For your financial protection our tour operators, Balkania Travel Ltd. are licensed by the UK Civil Aviation Authority and bonded both by the CAA, ATOL 4465 and IATA, number 91-2 7839.

Outline Programme (which may be subject to minor adjustments)

Sunday 24 June Charter flights from the UK to Burgas. One overnight stay at Sarafovo.

Monday 25 June Drive north to Varna, with a short visit to a current excavation on the way, for one of the highlights of the tour, the Varna Archaeological Museum where the Chalcolithic gold treasure is among the exhibits.

The Eneolithic cemetery is one of the key sites in Balkan prehistory, with over 300 burials from mid-5th millennium BC. The grave goods at Varna comprise the world's first sizeable assemblage of gold objects. Three night stay in Varna.

Tuesday 26 June Drive west from Varna to visit Pobiti Kamani, a geological landscape of stone pillars rising from the grey sand – a natural set of 'megaliths'. In the 9th – 6th millennia BC, local hunter-gatherers deposited their microlithic flints (exhibited in the Varna Museum) among the stones at what is the best dated Mesolithic site in Bulgaria.

Visit to recent excavations at Suvorovo, this Eneolithic site is one of the very few examples of dry-stone-walled house architecture in the Balkan Copper Age. Recent excavations have uncovered several good examples of stone houses full of decorated pottery.

Continue on to the Provadia tell, which lies inside a

modern industrial site. It is rare in having a prehistoric (and Roman) settlement next to what must have been active salt springs in the Eneolithic period.

Wednesday 27 June Drive north to Durankulak to see the largest prehistoric cemetery in the Balkans on the shore of the lake, with an Eneolithic settlement of stone-built houses, Late Bronze Age houses and a Hellenistic shrine to Cybele on the island in the lake.

Further south, the medieval cemetery at Kamen Bryag lies next to the Yayla nature reserve and includes the excavated remains of a large group of stone tombs (cists).

Balchishka Tuzla is a former Ottoman salt-water lake near Balchik, which was probably used from the late Bronze Age onwards, set beneath spectacular cliffs. There are significant Hellenistic remains in the old town.

Visit Varna Winery, a modern boutique wine house created by a team of Bulgaria's best wine-makers, led by Tsanko Stanchev. It uses carefully nurtured and processed grapes from its own young vineyards to give a new meaning to the centuries old tradition of the love of wine-making in Bulgaria.

Thursday 28 June Drive south back to Sarafovo for a further three night stay. Visit Nesebur, a gem of a peninsula on which the Greek colony of Mesambria was founded. Hellenistic settlement continued there, and Roman and Late Antique towns too, before the Byzantine period saw the construction of some of the most delightful churches in the Balkans.

Friday 29 June Today we visit Pomorie for its Classical tomb, museum and Classical salt exploitation, Burgas Historical Museum and marine garden.

The prosperity of Pomorie was based upon its rich sea-salt deposits. Roman salt exploitation is well-documented in the site museum and the modern evaporation tanks use the Roman grid. A well-preserved Hellenistic tomb lies several kms inland from the salt-works.

The city of Burgas has a rich Historical Museum with finds from all periods, especially the Classical era. In the marine garden we can observe an excellent range of maritime ecology.

Saturday 30 June Visit to Sozopol. Recent underwater excavations have revealed submerged prehistoric sites in the harbour with excellent organic preservation of finds. The best of these is exhibited in the Archaeological Museum. There is usually a summer excavation programme, enabling site visits. The Roman fortress and settlement of Debelt (Deultum) was founded by Vespasian and soon prospered as a colony in the reign of Flavian. Well-preserved remains from both the Roman and Byzantine periods can be seen.

Sunday 1 July Return flights to the UK. Later departures have some time at leisure at the beach or in Burgas.

OUR PRICE INCLUDES:

- Return charter flights from Gatwick to Burgas. For regional departures flight supplements apply: East Midlands £33 and Leeds/Bradford £29. See separate Note about Flights.
- Airport departure taxes.
- Half Board.
- Accommodation in small, friendly (often family-run) hotels with en suite facilities on a twin bedded shared occupancy basis.
- Coach for transfers and excursions.
- Specialist British and Bulgarian leaders.
- Bulgarian guide/interpreter.
- All museum entrance fees.
- An evening wine-tasting.

NOT INCLUDED:

- Lunches (about £4 - 5).
- Travel Insurance (Compulsory). Balkania Travel can advise.
- Drinks and other personal expenses such as gratuities.
- Single room supplement £70.

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