

## Explore Bachkovo Monastery, Asen's Fortress and Plovdiv

### About

A trip to two fascinating medieval sights just 30 km away from Plovdiv. We'll start with Asen's Fortress – a medieval stronghold with a history that dates back to ancient times. It is located atop a cliff in a picturesque area of the Rhodope mountains, surrounded by breathtaking scenery on all sides. We'll then head to Bachkovo Monastery – the second largest in all of Bulgaria. Apart from its beautiful architecture, the monastery is known for housing the miracle-working icon of the Virgin Mary.

After our excursion, we'll head back to Plovdiv and explore its top attractions.

### Highlights

- Climb to Asen's Fortress and enjoy a gorgeous view of the mountains
- Explore Bachkovo monastery, the second largest in Bulgaria
- See the miracle-working icon of the Virgin Mary, which is said to bring good health to those in need
- Browse the colorful marketplace on the road leading up to the monastery
- Try traditional Bulgarian cuisine at one of the authentic restaurants
- See Plovdiv's famous Roman Theatre, one of the best preserved in the world
- Immerse yourself in the old-timey atmosphere of the Old Town architectural reserve

### Description

Our day begins with a trip to the town of Asenovgrad, just 15km away from Plovdiv. It is a well-known place for cultural and religious tourism, with a few monasteries and a large number of churches and chapels in and around the town. That is why it is referred to by some as "the Little Jerusalem".

Just outside the city is Asen's Fortress – a medieval structure built into the rocky ridge of the Rhodope mountains over the Asenitsa river. This strategic place was first the location of a Thracian fortress, later used by the Romans, the Byzantines, and eventually the Bulgarians. It was renovated in the 13th century during the reign of Tsar Ivan Asen II to be used as a line of

defense against the Latin Empire. It was destroyed in 1410 by the invading Ottoman armies. Today, the fortress lies in ruins, with a small church functioning within what remains of its walls. The “Holy Virgin of Petrich” Church is the only preserved building in the complex and one of the most remarkable examples of Medieval Christian architecture. In 1991, after a full restoration of the church, it began its function as an Orthodox temple.

Bachkovo monastery “Assumption of Holy Virgin” is the second largest in Bulgaria and a national cultural landmark. Built on a spacious terrace next to one of the banks of the Chepelare river, it is easily accessible and surrounded by scenic landscapes on all sides. The cobbled road leading up to the monastery is lined with market stalls selling trinkets, folk craft, homemade jam, honey and spices. Bachkovo Monastery was founded all the way back in the 11th century by the Georgian Gregoriy Bakuriani, while the area was still part of the Byzantine Empire. It has since been partially destroyed, rebuilt and restored numerous times. The monastery has 2 courtyards, 4 churches and a total of 13 chapels, some of which are located well outside its bounds and even in Asenovgrad. The monastery has its own museum showcasing crucifixes, ceremonial garbs, manuscripts, icons and donated jewelry. The cathedral in the larger courtyard is called “Assumption of the Holy Virgin”, with the smaller “St. Archangeli” church built into its side. The “St. Nicholas” church is the centerpiece of the southern courtyard. In the cathedral there is an icon from 1311 known as the Miracle Working Icon of the Holy Virgin, with a silver repousse cover. It is believed that the icon has miraculous powers.

After we finish exploring Bachkovo Monastery, we head back to Plovdiv and go sightseeing in its central area.

We’ll start with a visit to the Old Town – a historical and architectural reserve known for its buildings in the style of the Bulgarian Revival Period, ancient Roman and Thracian ruins, various monuments and landmarks, all perfectly illustrating the complicated history that has shaped this city into the Plovdiv of today. We’ll visit its most famous and noteworthy landmarks, including the Balabanov and Hindliyan Houses, the Plovdiv Regional Ethnographic Museum, and, of course, the crown jewel of this city – the Ancient Roman Theatre.

After the Old Town, we’ll go down to the Main Shopping Street to see the ancient Roman Stadium and its uncovered northern part, which is open to visitors.

Next is Kapana (i.e. “the Trap”) – Plovdiv’s famed art corner, made up of a labyrinth of intertwining streets lined with modern art stores, stylish little cafes, building walls colorfully

painted by talented street artists and constantly changing pieces of modern art scattered around every corner.

#### Price per person

- For a group of 4 or more: 40 €
- For a group of 2-3: 60 €
- For a solo tourist: 70 €

#### The price includes

- Tour guide
- Car transfers

#### The price does not include

- Lunch
- Entrance fees

#### Notes

Visitors are advised to wear comfortable shoes.