Macedonia by bike

Cycling in Macedonia: the capital, rice fields, a volcano, the oldest vineyards of the Balkans and the world's oldest lakes.



Dates	20 – 29 September 2027
Price from	898 € per person
Hotel	Hotel ***/****
Transport	Coach with Bikeliner bike trailer
Meals	Half board

Highlights

- Hotel ***/****, half board
- Coach with Bikeliner bike trailer
- Tourist tax included

The price includes

- Accommodation and meals (half board)
- Transport by coach with bike trailer
- Resort tax

The price does not include

- Individual expenses and admissions

Description and programme

Programme and description of the tour:

Day 1: journey from Slovakia to Macedonia, departure in the afternoon.

Day 2: Skopje – Matka Canyon and the Vodno peak. Matka Canyon: the routes from the centre of Skopje to the canyon (approx. 15–18 km) lead through urban and suburban streets (Gjorče Petrov, Saraj). The terrain is mostly flat, but traffic on the way out of the city tends to be heavy. The entrance to Matka Canyon itself offers an exceptional backdrop. Vodno peak (Millennium Cross): a markedly uphill section. The asphalt road from Middle Vodno to the summit has a steady, steep climb.

Overnight stay in Skopje

Day 3: Skopje – Kumanovo. The terrain is mostly flat to gently rolling (approx. 34.1 km), the route goes via Harčino/Aračinovo, ascent 330 m. On the way we will see the Dëshmorve mosque, and have a burek

and strong Turkish coffee.

As you climb, panoramic views open up back over the Vardar river valley, the silhouette of Skopje and the Skopje basin. The road runs along the slopes of the mountain range and you pass orchards and tobacco fields, which are typical of this area. We will be welcomed by the third largest city in North Macedonia, which has a distinctive multicultural atmosphere. We will see the square and the city park: a lively centre with cafés, ideal for a well-deserved rest after cycling.

St Nicholas Church (Sveti Nikola): a significant Orthodox church in the city centre from the 19th century, the work of the well-known builder Andrei Damyanov. Kosturnica Memorial: a monumental Second World War memorial on a hill above the town, offering a view of the whole of Kumanovo. Overnight stay in Kumanovo.

Day 4: Kumanovo – Kratovo. Terrain: a gradual transition from flat to hilly and mountainous terrain, 55 km, 664 m of ascent. A very beautiful and authentic section. The entrance to Kratovo itself brings characteristic cobbled streets, old stone bridges and towers. On the way we will see the village of Konjuh and the archaeological site of Golemo Gradište. About halfway, near the village of Konjuh, there is a significant ancient and Byzantine site from the 6th century (from the time of Emperor Justinian). Rock rotunda: a unique early Christian church hewn directly into the rock. Acropolis on the rock: remains of an ancient city with carved steps, dwellings and water cisterns right in the rock massif. From there is a wonderful all-round view of the surrounding landscape. Cocev Kamen (Tcocov Kamen) – a prehistoric observatory. It is located near the village of Šopsko Rudare (a short detour from the Konjuh – Kratovo route). An imposing volcanic rock formation that served in prehistoric times as a place of sacrifice, a sanctuary and a natural observatory (similar to the better-known Kokino). Staircases, shelters, thrones and sacrificial bowls are carved into the rock. It is a great stop for a rest with a mysterious atmosphere. Kuklica (Stone Dolls): a few kilometres before Kratovo itself (near the village of Kuklica) lies a well-known natural rarity. These are more than 120 natural stone pillars resembling human figures, created by the erosion of volcanic rock. A well-known local legend of a petrified wedding procession is attached to them. The destination town Kratovo lies in the crater of an extinct volcano and is known for its unique architecture, medieval towers and stone bridges: the town has preserved 6 of the original 12 defensive towers and old stone bridges over the Tavlistika river, traditional houses and cobbled streets. An excellent place to end the stage in the evening, to taste local specialities (e.g. Kratovo pastrmajlija) and relax.

Overnight stay in Kratovo

Day 5: Kratovo – Kočani. Mountain terrain with longer climbs and descents across the Osogovo/Plačkovica mountains, 48 km, 600 m of ascent. We ride a less demanding route that bypasses the highest parts of Osogovo along its southern foothills.

Route: Kratovo → Probištip → Zletovo → Kočani.

Lesnovo Monastery: a significant detour (approx. 5 km of climbing above the village of Zletovo). One of the most beautiful and best-preserved medieval monasteries in Macedonia, from the 14th century, set in deep rock of volcanic origin. Landscape of volcanic origin: views of old craters and lead and zinc mines around Probištip. The descent to Kočani opens up a view of the rice fields for which this region is known. Traffic is light and the nature exceptionally unspoilt and picturesque. The roads may have poorer asphalt quality on some mountain sections.

Overnight stay in Kočani

Day 6: Kočani – Štip. Terrain: flat to gently rolling terrain along the Bregalnica river valley, route 35 km, ascent 100 m.

Kočani rice fields and stork nests (Kočani – Obleševo): on leaving Kočani you pass through a unique agricultural area known as the “rice granary” of North Macedonia. We will see a system of irrigation canals and extensive paddies. Storks: the village of Obleševo and its surroundings are known for the highest density of stork nests in the country (you will see dozens of nests on poles and roofs).

Banja (Kočani region) – thermal springs, a locality lying right next to Kočani. There are natural thermal springs here with a water temperature of around 55 °C. They are used for recreational baths and for heating greenhouses.

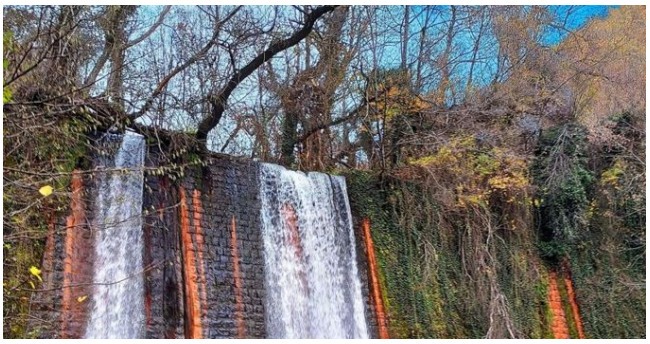
Archaeological site of Bargala (near the village of Kozjak / Karbinci): one of the most important historical stops on the route (it requires a short detour from the main road, approx. 2–3 km towards Karbinci). There are remains of a late-antique and Byzantine fortified city from the 4th–6th centuries. You will see preserved stone walls, city gates, the foundations of an early Christian basilica with stone columns and the remains of ancient baths. It is a very peaceful place with a beautiful view of the Plačkovica mountains.

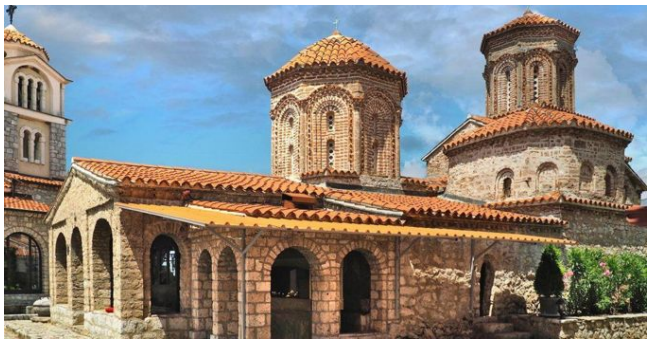
St George's Church (Sv. Gjorgji) – Kozjak: right next to Bargala in the village of Kozjak there is a small but exceptionally rare medieval church from the 9th to 10th century, which is among the oldest preserved churches in the whole region.

The Bregalnica river and picnic spots: the road crosses or runs alongside the Bregalnica river in several places. By the bridges and around the villages (e.g. Tarinci) you will find pleasant places for a short rest in the shade of the trees.

Destination town: Štip. After arriving in Štip it is worth visiting, by bike or on foot, the Isar fortress (Štip Kale): a medieval fortress on the hill above the town. The ride/climb up gives you a 360-degree panoramic view of the whole town and the valley.

Štip City Museum (Zavičajni muzej): a rich ethnographic and archaeological exhibition (including artefacts from Bargala).





Štip pastrmajlija: after arrival you must try the local speciality – traditional Macedonian baked dough in the shape of a little boat with juicy meat and butter (pastrmajlija), for which Štip is famous. Overnight stay in Štip

Day 7: Štip – Kavadarci. Rolling and hilly terrain through the Tikveš wine region, 60 km, 600 m of ascent. The road passes near Negotino and through the interior of the Tikveš basin. The landscape is dominated by endless vineyards and gentle hills. An exceptionally attractive cycle-touring route, especially in spring and early autumn. Traffic on local roads is moderate and the terrain allows a pleasant riding pace towards Kavadarci. From Štip along regional road P1103 / P1206 via Lakavica (Sofulari) → Pepelište → Negotino → Kavadarci.

Points of interest along the way:

1. Lakavica river valley and countryside (Štip – Pepelište): the first half of the route runs through the peaceful valley of the Kriva Lakavica river, with minimal car traffic, open agricultural landscape, pastoral scenery and small Macedonian villages. A smooth, rhythmic ride without steep climbs. 2. Crossing to the Vardar river and the Pepelište area: around the 35th kilometre you come close to the largest Macedonian river, the Vardar. Krivolak military area: nearby is the well-known Krivolak terrain, where the landscape takes on a drier, Mediterranean semi-desert character typical of the Vardar valley.

3. The Tikveš wine region (the Macedonian Bordeaux): as you approach the town of Negotino the landscape changes markedly – you find yourself among endless plains and hills covered in vineyards. The Tikveš region is among the oldest and most important wine-growing areas in the Balkans. In Negotino itself or its immediate surroundings there are several traditional and modern wineries (e.g. Bovin in Negotino or smaller family châteaux in the surrounding villages), where you can take a break for coffee or lunch.

4. The Negotino – Kavadarci section (last 10 km): this short connecting section is gently rolling and runs parallel to the local vineyards; in the autumn months there is lively activity here connected with the grape

harvest (Grozdober).

Kavadarci is the unofficial capital of Macedonian wine and industry. Tikveš Winery (Kavadarci): the largest and oldest winery in the Balkans (founded in 1885). A tour of the huge cellars with a tasting can be arranged (including well-known varieties such as Smederevka, Kratošija or Vranec). City park and Kavadarci lake: a pleasant place to relax after arrival. Položko Monastery (Sv. Gjorgji): a point of interest in the wider area – it stands on the shore of Lake Tikveš (south of Kavadarci). It is accessible mainly by boat, but a trip to the Tikveš lake dam is a great tip for a possible programme on the following day. Overnight stay in Kavadarci

Day 8: Resen – Sv. Naum. The route from Resen to the Sveti Naum monastery across the mountain massif in Galičica National Park is one of the royal cycle routes of the Balkans. 55 km, 1,100 m.

A combination of lake flatness, a mountain saddle (Galičica) and Galičica National Park:

It requires a demanding mountain climb from the Prespa side and a spectacular descent to Lake Ohrid and the monastery. One of the most beautiful areas in North Macedonia. The finish itself at the monastery

of St Naum on the shore of Lake Ohrid provides a superb finish to the ride from Resen. The route links two great spring areas and lakes – Prespa and Ohrid.

1. Resen → Stenje / Oteševo (Lake Prespa). From Resen you descend/proceed over flat terrain towards the south-western shore of Lake Prespa (direction Oteševo / Stenje). Lake Prespa: a calm, natural area surrounded by apple orchards (Resen is famous for growing apples). The Oteševo shoreline: a pleasant place to warm up and top up your water bottles before the climb itself.

2. The climb up Galičica (from the Prespa side): beyond Oteševo the mountain pass over Galičica begins. The road climbs smoothly in serpentines from an altitude of approx. 850 m above sea level to the mountain saddle (Baba / Lipona beach) at around 1,560 m above sea level. The Prespa side is more wooded and quieter. Panoramas of Lake Prespa and the island of Golem Grad (Snake Island) gradually open up. 3. The Galičica mountain saddle – viewpoint of two lakes: the most beautiful point of the whole stage and one of the most visually impressive moments in Macedonia. Viewpoint (Korita / Saddle): right from the saddle (or after a short walk up to selected rock viewpoints) you can see both lakes at once – Lake Prespa to the east and Lake Ohrid to the west. Nature conservation: Galičica is a national park with rich endemic flora and fauna.

4. Descent to Lake Ohrid (direction Trpejca / Ljubaništa): the descent from the saddle towards Lake Ohrid is breathtaking and technically extremely attractive. Serpentines with a view of Ohrid: the descent offers a constant open view of the deep blue surface of Lake Ohrid. Villages on the shore: the road brings you to the coastal road by the villages of Trpejca (nicknamed the Macedonian St. Tropez for its crystal-clear beaches) and Ljubaništa.

5. Finish: Sveti Naum Monastery (Sv. Naum): the descent ends right at the south-eastern tip of Lake Ohrid, only a few hundred metres from the Albanian border. Manastir Sveti Naum: a medieval monastery from 905, founded by St Naum of Ohrid. It lies right on a rock above the lake. Springs of the Black Drin river (Springs of St Naum): unique underground sources of crystal-clear water from Lake Prespa that flow through the limestone massif of Galičica and spring up right by the monastery (boat trips on wooden boats are possible). Free-roaming peacocks: the monastery grounds are known for dozens of peacocks that stroll around freely.

On the Galičica saddle (1,560 m above sea level) it is often much colder and windy. A windproof jacket is essential for the long descent to Lake Ohrid.

Overnight stay in Ohrid

Day 9: breakfast, a walk around the beautiful town of Ohrid, at 12:00 journey to the town of Vranje in Serbia, dinner, overnight stay in Vranje.

Day 10: breakfast, journey to Slovakia.