

## EMBRACE YOUR ADVENTUROUS SIDE AT THE BALKAN JEWEL

The Razlog Valley in the Southwest corner of Bulgaria might be best known as a winter sports destination, but the valley also offers a wide range of year-round adventures and activities, from mineral hot springs and ancient caves to adrenalin-filled extreme sports and hiking in Bulgaria's highest mountains.

The valley covers large parts of the Pirin National Park — a UNESCO World Heritage site — and the Rila National Park. For nature enthusiasts the mountain ranges are home to bears, lynx, rare birds and other species of wildlife now becoming scarce elsewhere in Europe.

For adventurous travelers seeking an alternative mountain experience, extensive networks of well-maintained hiking trails and horse-riding routes allow you to discover Bulgaria's lush mountainous and forested landscapes, vast alpine meadows and glacial lakes.

Go off the beaten track and conquer rugged terrain with guided tours on quad bikes, 4x4s or off-road buggies. Get your pulse racing with a rafting excursion on the Struma and Mesta rivers, or a daring bungee jump high above the valley. Top it all with a breathtaking bird's eye view of the valley from a motorised hang-glider.

In the Rila Mountains discover superb mountain vistas, hidden villages brimming with traditional culture and the treasured Rila Monastery. Dating back to the 10th century, explore one of Bulgaria's most famous cultural, historical and architectural monuments with stunning historic painted frescoes and spectacular mosaics.

Discover remote, rural corners where the traditional, slow pace of village life continues much as it has done for centuries. Visit Melnik, the smallest village in Bulgaria with just 230 inhabitants, where you can uncover ancient architecture and sample traditional Bulgarian wine, produced in the village since 1346.

Experience local craftsmen workshops, try your hand at traditional customs such as weaving, spinning and knitting. Enjoy traditional songs and culinary demonstrations at the Deshka House at the foot of the Rila Mountain.

Discover the spa village of Bania and experience over 76 hot water mineral springs that gush up from the bowels of a huge lake below the village and are famous for their healing properties. Nearby, enjoy the ancient spa resort of Dobrinishte with its ancient mineral springs that reach staggering temperatures of 30 — 43 degrees, or visit the historic mountain-side village of Dobarsko with its dramatic 25 metres waterfall and spectacular valley views.

A must-see for animal lovers, the Dancing Bear Park is the largest bear sanctuary of its type in Europe. Covering over 120,000 square metres of natural terrain, the park offers its inhabitants dense forests and hills, meadows, large pools for swimming, dens for hibernation and specially designed sunny places for resting.

Discover Yagodinska, one of Bulgaria's longest caves and a hidden gem featuring 22 beautiful cave formations including stalactites, stalagmites, stalactones, helictites, cave lakes, lichen, dendrites, draperies and one of the most unique formations — cave pearls.

### Where to Stay

The Balkan Jewel Resort is ideally located amongst the dramatic climbs of the Razlog Valley. This year-round resort provides easy access to these diverse activities and attractions, which can all be arranged for you by the resort.

The contemporary apartments are furnished to high standards and include parquet flooring, underfloor heating, cable television and kitchen facilities. Each apartment also features a wood-burning fireplace and a balcony or terrace, perfect for a cosy evening after a day of adventure, sight-seeing or discovery.

