



# MAGNIFICENT SEVEN TO THE BLACK SEA

A long weekend in the fascinating country of Bulgaria which will cover a considerable amount of new track for ex-BR Class 87s on tour in their new homeland. We expect to have five different locomotives in four different liveries including 87004 "Britannia" in BR blue. Plenty of photo stops en route.

**Friday 30 April** Late afternoon Easyjet flight from Gatwick for our 3-hour flight to the Bulgarian capital of Sofia. British Airways flight from Heathrow. A special 7-day (Wed-Wed) trip is also available from Manchester (please contact us for details). On arrival we transfer to our city centre hotel and check in.

**Saturday 1 May (B)** The start of our three-day land cruise using former British Rail class 87 locos, now in their new Balkan home and some in the green guise of their new owner BZK. We start our journey from Sofia through the eastern suburbs, past the large marshalling yard and electric depot at Podujane. The route to Pirdop, new home of the class 87 fleet, gradually takes us up into the central Balkan and Sredna Gora mountain ranges and through stunning scenery, especially the graceful sweeping viaduct spanning the bucolic calm at Bunovo. The pastoral feel gives way in several places to worn out industry straddling the river, until the copperbelt is reached. Pirdop station, with its interesting architecture, will be the changeover to a second class 87. We now head on through Koprivshitsa, another architectural gem of a station and today a popular tourist trap. The second of the two long tunnels takes us under part of the Sredna Gora, then round the spirals at Klisura and downhill to the small railway junction of Karlovo, deep in the Valley of the Roses, an area known for its rose plantations. Now with the massif of the Balkan range on the left, we climb up to the lonely station of Svezhen, then through verdant agricultural land to the junction at Tulovo, where we briefly join the north-south line from Ruse to Podkova. Very soon we head off again eastwards through mining villages that hug the mountain side, to the junction at Karnobat. Here we join the Varna main line proper, heading north east through Sindel to Razdelna, where we once again change our class 87 loco. The day ends after passing the giant Poveljanovo industrial complex, to finish in the compact terminus at Varna, one of the two Black Sea seaside cities with its wide tree-lined boulevards and package holiday resorts to the north and south.

**Sunday 2 May (B)** Heading out of Varna, we take the freight-only route to Varna feribotna and Razdelna. The ferryboat terminal handles both standard gauge and five foot gauge traffic. After changing to our fourth class 87 of the trip, at Razdelna, we rejoin the main line at Sindel and head due west through undulating scenery, with the area around Provadija an area of stunning ragged mountains interspersed with old bell-pit style mines, kilns and the ubiquitous crumbling factories. Industrially interesting in its own right. Then through Shumen, the home of Bulgaria's oldest brewery, to the "Crewe of Bulgaria" – the railway junction town of Gorna Orjahovica. Heading south past the diesel and electric depots and considerable marshalling yards, we reach our second overnight stop at Veliko Tarnovo, the former capital of the ancient Kingdom of Bulgaria. Here the railway passes under the old city, with its spectacular and much photographed vista of half timbered buildings literally clinging to the mountain side, and its fortress of Trapezica.

**Monday 3 May (B)** Our final part of the trilogy takes us south through the Balkan range, past the Dryanovo monastery which is just visible through the trees before our run-round point at Careva Livada. Once on the Gabrovo branch we climb steeply through a series of tunnels before arriving in the sizeable sprawling textile and shoemaking city of Gabrovo, with its ornate and recently renovated station. Retracing our steps, we return to the junction and thence south through the tourist centre of Trjavna. Onward along this heavily forested section of line, we climb to the summit at Krustec via a series of spirals, and one or two vistas of the Balkan range. South from Tulovo we retrace our steps as on the outward, changing locos once again at Pirdop, before making our return to Sofia. Requested route being Pirdop - Kremikovtsi - Svetovrachene - Illijanci - connection with Freight avoider - Birimirci - Podujane - Sofia

**Tuesday 4 May (B)** Transfer to the airport for flights back to the UK.



30 April to 4 May

## Holiday Prices (per person, half board)

- Full 5 day holiday from Gatwick in a twin/double room: £630/£669
- Full 7 night holiday from Manchester in twin/double room: £799/£849
- Full 4 night holiday from Sofia in a twin/double room: £499/£539
- Single room supplement is £80
- Charter train only: £99/£120 per day

reduced prices in yellow for bookings made before 31/01/2010

## Your Holiday Price includes

- All trains and excursions as listed in the itinerary
- Hotel accommodation with breakfast each morning
- Services of our tour manager (holiday is fully escorted)

## Getting to Bulgaria from the UK

British Airways and BulgariaAir operate direct flights from Heathrow and Wizz Air from Luton. Easyjet operate from Manchester (Wed/Sat) and Gatwick (daily).

## Recommended Flights

EZ8975 16.10 Gatwick to Sofia a.21.15  
EZ8974 11.50 Sofia to Gatwick a.13.10  
Bulgaria is 2 hours ahead of the UK