

# Trip Details

## Bansko Explorer: Standard Pack

Experience the full-blown attractiveness of Ski Bansko on Travel Talk's 8-day tour. From novices to experts, this ski holiday in the beautiful Balkan mountains caters for all levels of skiers and snowboarders. Ski the day before partying the night away! Get unparalleled value with a tour leader, all breakfasts and dinners with unlimited beer and wine, return airport transfers and a 3 or 4-star superior hotel on your tour. Not to mention the amazing slopes and the vibrant townlife.

<b>Duration</b>	8 Days	<b>Group Size</b>	13-35 People
<b>Destination</b>	Bulgaria /Bansko	<b>Age Req.</b>	18+
<b>Start/Ends in</b>	Bansko/Bansko	<b>Trip Theme</b>	Ski Holiday
<b>Hotels</b>	4 - 3 Star	<b>Departs</b>	December to April

## Why You Will Love This Tour

- \* Spend 8 days exploring the snow-covered mountain terrains of Bansko with new mates.
- \* The Standard Package is perfect for skiers and snowboarders who want to bring their own equipment or hire gear to match their skill level!
- \* Before and after a big day on the slopes, relax while we cover the meals with all breakfasts and dinners included in the tour package.
- \* Stay in hand-picked, 4 or 3-star Ski Resorts in prime locations for easy access to the Ski slopes.
- \* Enjoy unlimited beer and wine during an included dinner each night, as you get to know like-minded Travel Talkers before continuing into the evening to explore some of Bulgaria's best Apres-Ski!
- \* Sit back and take in the scenery en route to Bansko, with transits to and from Sofia International Airport included in this tour package.

## Arrival Details

The group welcome meeting with you guide and other travellers is held around 18:30 at the hotel lobby on Day 1 of your tour, unless otherwise notified.

### Meeting and Finishing Point

The meeting and finishing point for this tour is:

#### **Mountain Paradise By The Walnut Trees**

Address: Miss Stone 6 str., Area Parcaleto, 2770 Bansko, Bulgaria

**Phone :** +359 88 599 8199    **Emergency Number:** +44 (0) 208 099 75 36

### Airport Transfers

On the first day there is a shuttle departing from Sofia Airport Terminal 1 at 1pm and from Terminal 2 at 1:15pm. On the last day, the departure shuttle is at 3pm (arrives to Sofia Airport around 5:30pm). Please inform our call centre or [info@traveltalktours.com](mailto:info@traveltalktours.com) of your flight details (date of flight, flight number, arrival time and name of travelers) at least 15 days prior to your departure date. If you do not receive confirmation that your pick-up is arranged, please contact us. No pre-arrangement required for departure shuttle.

## Making Your Own Way to the Starting Point

A taxi ride from Sofia Airport to Bansko is approximately 80€ (156.50BGN) for a group of 4 passengers. You can choose to prebook with a private company in advance or use the official Sofia Airport taxi operator. The journey will take approximately 140 minutes under normal traffic. The shuttle bus option is also popular. There are different companies offering shuttle bus services from the airport of Sofia to Bansko.

## Itinerary

Please note that the itinerary may be subject to small changes depending on the conditions during the tour. Alternative accommodation of similar standards may be used depending on the group size and hotel availability.

### Day 1 : Sofia, Bansko

Arrive at the Sofia airport and keep an eye out for Travel Talk sign, hop on your free shuttle to the vibrant Bansko for a week packed with plenty of skiing/snow-boarding, endless fun and unforgettable experiences. Feel free to rest up for this incredible week, and ski off early in the morning, or discover the lively nightlife with your new tour mates. (Sofia to Bansko shuttle departs at 13:00 from Terminal 1 and 13:15 from

- **Accommodation**

Hotel Sunrise – 4 Star

- **Included Activities**

Dinner

- **Optional Activities**

Welcome Meeting

### Day 2 : Bansko

It is time to gear up and hit the slopes for an action-packed day on the Balkan Mountains, sister range of the Alps. Get yourself ready for a day of snow, eat up at breakfast and gear up! You can catch the shuttle or have a short walk to the lift and start the adventure. Discover the lively Apres Ski in Bansko at its most famous bars as the sun goes down and remember to spare time for Rakia tasting. Return to the hotel for a dinner with unlimited beer/wine or savour a delicious local dish.

- **Accommodation**

Hotel Sunrise – 4 Star

- **Meals Included**

Breakfast, Dinner

- **Included Activities**

Karaoke Party

### Day 3: Bansko

Start the day with a hefty breakfast before gearing up. Remember to charge up your cameras and tag along with your guide. You'll get to discover all the famous and uncovered bits of Bansko. Roam the slopes until the afternoon as you wish. Have a glass of hot wine, but remember to always ski responsibly! Finish up partying after sundown and join your travel mates for a delicious dinner. Later on, put on your battle face for some high-stakes karaoke.

- **Accommodation**

Hotel Sunrise – 4 Star

- **Meals Included**

Breakfast, Dinner

- **Optional Activities**

Outdoor Hot Springs Pool – 25 LEVA

#### Day 4: Bansko

Feeling tired yet? It is just getting started, follow your guide to the best slopes, weather, and crowd conditions. Take a break by a lovely wooden mountain hut, put your feet up by the fire and sip your warm drink – it feels like living out-of-this-world. As the slopes close down, the popular bars start to fire up with Apres Ski tunes and various traditional beverages. Meet with the group at dinner and plan out your night to your wants, your guide will point you in the right direction.

- **Accommodation**

Hotel Sunrise – 4 Star

- **Meals Included**

Breakfast, Dinner

- **Included Activities**

Live Rock Band Music in a Local Pub

- **Optional Activities**

Dinner at Traditional Bulgarian Mexhana – EUR 15-25

#### Day 5 : Bansko

Feeling tired yet? It is just getting started, follow your guide to the best slopes, weather, and crowd conditions. Take a break by a lovely wooden mountain hut, put your feet up by the fire and sip your warm drink – it feels like living out-of-this-world. As the slopes close down, the popular bars start to fire up with Apres Ski tunes and various traditional beverages. Meet with the group at dinner and plan out your night to your wants, your guide will point you in the right direction.

- **Accommodation**

Hotel Sunrise – 4 Star

- **Meals Included**

Breakfast, Dinner

#### Day 6 : Bansko

Rise and shine, and get ready to jump around the moguls and ride the half-pipes of the famous snow park. Adrenaline junkies may even jump off a helicopter for some off-piste split-boarding or paraglide at hundreds of feet up in the sky, overlooking charming snow-capped mountains and villages. Dig deep, going around town to discover its traditional restaurants and hidden cafes, blow off some steam at the Spa centre with an indoor swimming pool and jacuzzi, and enjoy some fine jazz at the famous piano bar.

- **Accommodation**

Hotel Sunrise – 4 Star

- **Meals Included**

Breakfast, Dinner

- **Included Activities**

Ski/Snowboard Tuition

Night Out in Bansko Center

## Day 7 : Bansko

Make the best of your last full day at Bulgaria's premier ski resort, skiing until you drop, watching the magnificent scenery at timber mountain huts whilst sipping your hot wine under the sun, nailing Apres ski in ice bars with local DJs, tasting the various traditional delicacies of the region, and crawling the many bars and clubs into the night.

- **Accommodation**

Hotel Sunrise – 4 Star

- **Meals Included**

Breakfast, Dinner

## Day 8 : Bansko, Sofia

Our trip will end after we say goodbye to our new friends over breakfast, and check-out of the hotel. Keep an eye out for the return shuttle to Sofia airport (at 3pm), and have safe travels!

- **Meals Included**

Breakfast

## Inclusions & Exclusions

**Accommodation:** 4 & 3 star hotels

**Airport Transfer:** Arrival shuttle on day 1 at 13:00, departure shuttle on the last day of the trip at 15:00

**Meals:** 7 Breakfasts | 7 Dinners including unlimited beer and wine

**Guide:** Services of experienced Travel Talk tour leader

### What is NOT included in the tour price?

- Any flights not mentioned above
- Travel insurance
- Meals not stated above
- Items of a personal nature
- Tips & gestures
- Entrance fees to the sights and museums
- Optional activities
- Other services not stated in the itinerary

## Hotels & Accommodation

Please note that the hotels are subject to change depending on the group size and availability. Hotels of similar standards will be used where available in case of a change.

Solo travellers will be roomed with another solo traveller of the same gender in a twin or triple room, or can upgrade to a solo room by paying the single supplement. You may choose the solo room option when booking online or contact us to arrange a private room. Solo rooms are not available on gulleys. Your tour leader will allocate rooms upon arrival at the starting hotel in accordance with the rooming lists, last minute changes may not be guaranteed.

### **MOUNTAIN PARADISE – BANSKO – 3 Star**

This hotel is located only 900 meters from the Gondola, Mountain Paradise Hotel offers an indoor swimming pool and a spa center with Sauna and hot tub, serves breakfast and dinner as open buffet.

## HOTEL SUNRISE – BANSKO – 4 Star

Sunrise Hotel is just a few minutes walk from the first ski lift station in Bansko. It is surrounded by a large garden, this hotel offers a spa center with sauna and hot tub to its guest.

## Budgeting

Please note that entrance fees to sights and optional activities are not included in the tour price. Optional activities are not operated by Travel Talk and may require a certain number of attendees to run. Your guide will be happy to inform you further about the available optional activities at the start of your tour. Optional activities are also listed under each day in your tour itinerary.

### Optional Activities

Outdoor Hot Springs Pool                              25 LEVA  
Dinner at Traditional Bulgarian Mexhana 30-50 LEVA

### Personal Spending

The official currency of Bulgaria is the Leva (LEV). We recommend carrying a small amount of local currency on you, which can be retrieved from ATMs in the local region. However, in larger tourist regions and major cities both debit and credit cards are widely accepted. While every traveller's spending habits may differ slightly, we have estimated the average daily expenses to help with budgeting for your next trip. Here you will find the average cost for a meal or drink and advice for best practice in tipping.

#### Meals

Lunch at restaurant                              US\$ 6-8  
Dinner at restaurant                              US\$ 8-13  
Sandwich at a stall                                  US\$ 1-2

#### Drinks

Bottle of water                                      US\$ 0.15  
Coffee    US\$ 2-4  
Bottle of beer                                        US\$ 2-3

#### Tipping

Tipping good service is common in Bulgaria, typically ~ 10% for a restaurant meal. No need to tip taxi drivers, however you can round up the fare for convenience. Your guide and driver would also appreciate this kind of traditional gratitude at the end of your tour. Tipping is usually expected in Bulgaria, although not

# Essential Information: Ski Bansko

## Passport & Visas

Passport holders from Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Canada, and United States of America can travel to Bulgaria for stays up to 90 days in any 180-day period without a visa. Visits to Bulgaria do not count towards your 90-day limit in other EU Schengen countries because it is not in the Schengen area.

Passport validity entry requirements: Travellers entering Bulgaria must also carry a passport or travel document valid for at least 6 months.

This information is provided as a guidance, we strongly advise that you check with the consulate or embassy as this information can change at any time and with little notice. It is your responsibility to make sure that all the required travel documents are ready when travelling.

## Travel Advice

We are closely monitoring the latest travel updates to Bulgaria and follow the advice of the UK Foreign Office (FCDO). For the latest travel advice from the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/bulgaria>

We recommend all travellers to check their Government National Travel Advisory prior to their departure:

Australia	-	<a href="https://www.smartraveller.gov.au/">https://www.smartraveller.gov.au/</a>
Canada	-	<a href="https://travel.gc.ca/">https://travel.gc.ca/</a>
New Zealand	-	<a href="https://www.safetravel.govt.nz/">https://www.safetravel.govt.nz/</a>
USA	-	<a href="https://travel.state.gov/">https://travel.state.gov/</a>

## Travel Insurance

All passengers travelling with Travel Talk are required to have personal travel insurance before participating in any of our tours. Your guide will collect your travel insurance details on the first day of your trip. It is your responsibility to make sure you have an adequate and suitable travel insurance for you in place, you may read more at <https://www.traveltalktours.com/travel-insurance>

## Health & Safety

The health and safety of our passengers, staff and communities visited is of utmost priority. As we monitor and comply with the official advice from the UK Foreign Office, as well as World Health Organization and government authorities regularly, we have implemented several policies and precautions on our tours for your wellbeing. You may find our Safe Travels Protocols at <https://www.traveltalktours.com/safe-travels>



Travel Talk Adventures has received the Safe Travels stamp by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTTC), which allows travellers to recognise companies around the world that have adopted health and hygiene global standardised protocols – so consumers can experience ‘Safe Travels’.

Please make sure to regularly check your Government’s travel advice before travelling and be well-informed of any requirements. Your tour guide will also notify you of the regulations and protocols to follow throughout your trip with us.

Please note that if any traveller is unable to complete the itinerary or possess a potential risk to themselves and/or the rest of the group, we reserve the right to remove them from all or part of a trip.

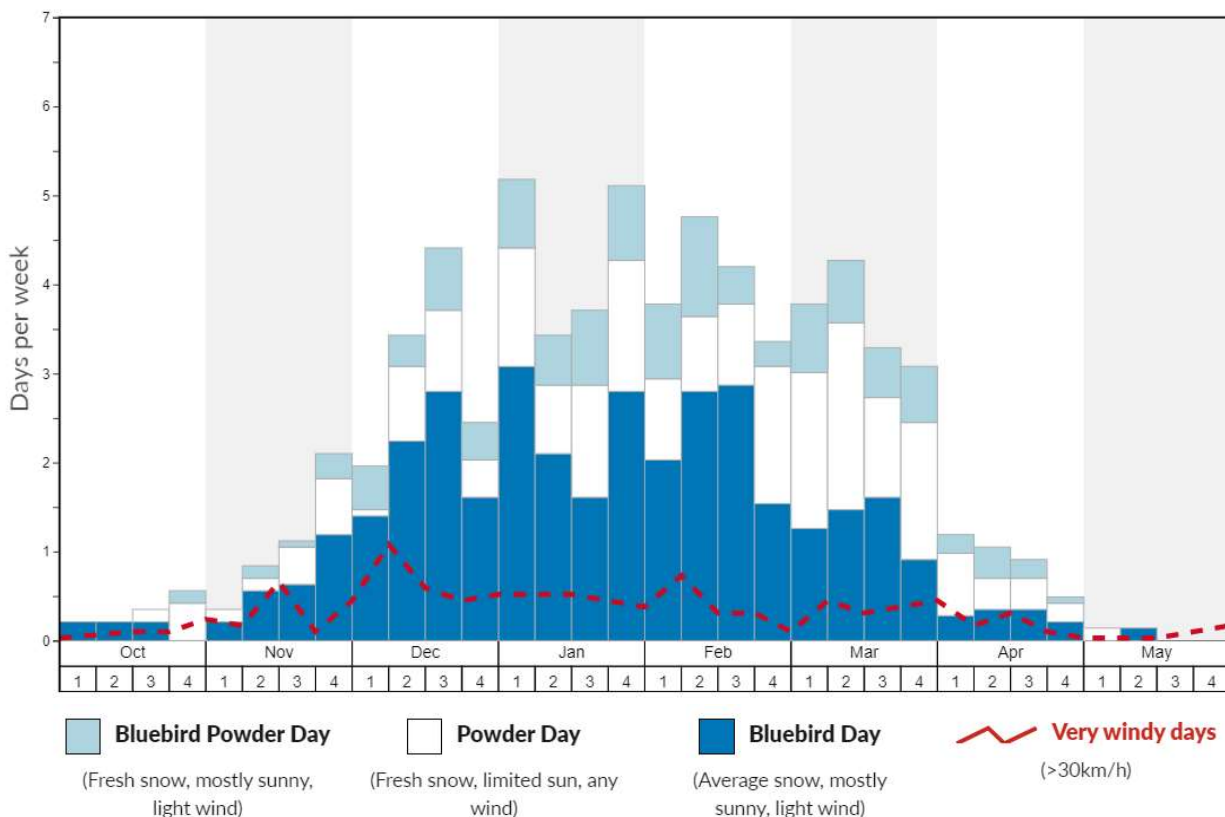
Please consult with your doctor for the latest medical travel information and any vaccinations you may need. We recommend that you bring any personal medical requirements and medications with you as these may be difficult to obtain while on tour.

## Weather & Snow Report

Bulgaria follows the seasonal pattern of Eastern Europe. Winter is considered to be snowy and chilly throughout the season. With over 75 kilometres of marked ski slopes at your disposal and the impressive Todorka Peak dominating the landscapes surrounding you, Bansko Ski Resort makes for the perfect winter escape. Bansko Ski Resort offers 18 pistes including six blue and two orange runs for beginners, while the advanced skiers and boarders can enjoy eleven red and two black pistes. When the snow is plentiful, generally between January and April, there is good off-piste options for the more advanced skiers and boarders also. Bansko also features high-class snowmaking facilities with more than 90% of the resort’s runs equipped for quieter snow days.

The quality and quantity of snow fall is affected by several factors, including temperature, snow base-depth and terrain type. While year to year the conditions may differ, the most up to date conditions for Bansko found at [www.banskoski.com/en](http://www.banskoski.com/en).

## Average Snow Conditions in Bansko



## Money Matters

The local currency of Bulgaria is Lev (lv) and comprised of 100 stotinki coins. The lev is considered a stable currency and linked to the Euro at a rate of around 2 leva per 1 Euro. In popular tourist hotspots, services and products are often promoted in Euro pricing with payments converted to and made in the local currency instead. It is wise to carry small amounts of Lev for minor purchases, attractions or local services while travelling through Bulgaria. ATMs that accept Visa or MasterCard are widely available across Bulgaria, including in Bansko village. Credit and Debit cards are commonly accepted in hotels, restaurants, bars and tourist resorts. We recommend you do not exchange bulk sums of money at the airport, as the exchange rates are usually more favourable in the major cities. Your Tour Guide will be happy to help if you need any

Please remember that everyone has different spending habits, some prefer to spend more on souvenirs, some on experiences and others on a night out! Make sure to budget your trip to your spending habits for shopping, drinking, and tipping.

Tipping in Bulgaria is not compulsory, but considered a common reward paid by both locals and tourists alike for quality service. We suggest rounding your bill up to the nearest Euro or few Leva when eating or drinking in local markets or basic restaurants and cafes. In more upmarket restaurants or services, a tip of 5-10% of your bill is appreciated. Your Tour Leader and Driver would also appreciate this kind of gratitude at the end of your tour or their service.

## Eating & Drinking

Bulgarian cuisine is heavily influenced by a number of key dishes found in the Balkan and Middle-Eastern Cuisine, sharing similar staple dishes with the Greeks, Turkish and Serbians. The flavours of meat, yoghurt, cheese and vegetables run at full force in a Bulgarian kitchen to set them apart from neighbouring cuisines. Searching for unique and authentic dishes can often be overwhelming if you are not a local, so here are a few must-try dishes to get you started in Bulgaria;

**Banitsa:** A traditional Bulgarian pastry made by layering a combination of beaten eggs and bits of cheese with filo pastry, baked in the oven.

**Tarator:** A delicious soup served throughout Bulgaria as a first course or side dish to a main meal. It is commonly made from fresh cucumbers, walnuts, garlic, Bulgarian yoghurt, dill, herbs, vinegar and lemon.

**Meshana Skara:** This traditional Bulgarian meal is a grill consisting of a platter full of meat and sides. The platter should contain one kyufte, one pork steak, one kebapche, and one pork skewer.

**Sarmi:** A Bulgarian-style cabbage roll stuffed with a tasty combination of fillings such as rice, spices and ground meat.

**Moussaka:** Quite unlike the Greek Moussaka, Bulgaria's take on a traditional dish is made with potatoes instead of eggplant. It also includes ground meat, eggs, onion, spices and milk and yoghurt on top to give it that distinctive tangy flavour.

**Gevrek:** Gevrek is a pastry akin to the bagel that is common in the Balkans, known in other countries as simit or Turkish bagel. Crusted in sesame seeds, these crunchy breads are sweet or savoury and found in practically every bakery you'll come across.

While staying with Travel Talk in Bansko, you can enjoy all breakfasts and dinners included in your tour package and prepared by local chefs. While you feast on an array of traditional local dishes each night and share stories from the slopes, make the most of unlimited beer and wine included in your tour package too!



## Where to go out in Bansko

When the sun sets, Bansko comes to life! There are many cafes, restaurants, bars and clubs open until late or the early hours of the morning. Most of Bansko's nightlife is located near the main gondola and town centre. A Travel Talk favourite is the local karaoke bar, where you'll find a friendly atmosphere and a brilliant sound system. Next to the gondola, you will also find the Happy End Bar; a converted barn turned bar that's buzzing during Apres Ski or in the early evening. Just opposite Happy End Bar, the bar Euphoria will serve you up some of the best cocktails on offer in Bansko. A short walk from the city centre is the Lido, which serves good coffee. This charming little coffee shop also has free Wi-Fi and a great view to enjoy whilst you sip your caffeinated beverage!

## Internet Access

Internet access has become increasingly common and available across hotels, cafes, and restaurants in Bulgaria. Visitors can expect to receive WIFI connection in the Ski Bansko accommodation and restaurant. If you wish to use 3G/4G abroad, make sure you enable data roaming on your mobile, although the connection may be unreliable on the ski slopes. Purchasing a Bulgarian SIM card for the duration of your tour may be a cost-effective option for keeping in contact with fellow skiers and mates on the mountain. Your Tour Guide will be happy to advise on this.

## Essentials to Bring

- \* Face mask/cover and hand sanitiser enough for your personal use throughout the trip – See more at <https://www.traveltalktours.com/safe-travels>
- \* Travel Documents: Passport, Visa (if required), flight or transport ticket (and photocopies)
- \* Travel Talk Tour Voucher (printed or digital)
- \* Travel Insurance Policy (and photocopy)
- \* Personal medical kit and medicine
- \* Money (cash, credit card, travellers' cheques)
- \* Reusable water bottle
- \* Ear plugs and eye mask
- \* Sun protection – hat, sunglasses, sunscreen
- \* Boots or snow shoes with decent tread for walking in snow
- \* Wind/water proof jacket
- \* Warm clothes, hat, and gloves for cold weather

## Ski Equipment and Passes

Whether it is your first-time seeing snow or your annual trip to the slopes, Ski Bansko tours are tailored to cater for everyone. Pirin Mountain is covered with a huge number of runs varying in difficulty from Blue (beginner), Red (intermediate) and Black (advanced). There is no shortage of skiing and snowboarding routes, whether you want to explore with new mates or stick to the well-worn tracks.

In terms of appropriate snow clothing such as jacket, pants, gloves, goggles and helmets – you can either;

- Bring your own with you.
- Hire the gear at ski hire shops in Bansko town, based on what you need and the number of days you require gear for.

**Lift passes can be simply purchased at the slopes for 56 lev (approximately 30 euros) per day.**

## Culture

The culture of Bulgaria is based on an interesting blend of Thracian, Slavic and strong Bulgar traditions, along with the influence of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Many ancient customs have lived on in the society, such as Thracian fire dancing, which is recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage! Even today, Bulgaria still has a strong folkloric tradition that pervades many aspects of art, literature, cuisine, music, celebrations, and daily life.

## Solo Travellers

We have many solo travellers joining our tours. Solo travellers will be roomed with another traveller of the same gender. If you would like a private solo room, please contact us.

## Rules to Follow

We are committed to ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience for everyone. We do not tolerate any form of violence (physical or verbal), bullying or harassment involving customers, partners, Travel Talk staff or locals. Sexual relationships between a tour leader and a passenger are forbidden.

We will not tolerate any illegal activity, including but not limited to: use and possession of illegal drugs, trespassing, and disrupting public order. If you consume alcohol, please ensure that you drink responsibly and follow the local laws and regulations.

You must follow the advice of your tour leader and local officials regarding health and safety measures. We operate all tours under Safe Travels protocols for the wellbeing of our passengers, staff and communities visited. Please ensure that you have read the <https://www.traveltalktours.com/safe-travels/> and are fully prepared for your trip.

If someone is acting inappropriately regarding these matters, please notify your tour leader immediately or contact us on the emergency contact number provided below.

Your tour leader has the right to remove from the group anyone not abiding by these rules, with no right of compensation or refund. See more at <https://www.traveltalktours.com/booking-terms/>

Please remember that our travellers come from different parts of the world and will have various needs and preferences. Be understanding and patient with your fellow travellers, and always strive to be on time.

## Responsible Travel

We believe that travel is a force for good and show our support through various initiatives and charity organizations, as well as keeping the principals of responsible and sustainable travel at the core of our ethos. These values are engrained in our business culture and the design of our trips just the same. Together with you, we strive to make a positive impact on local people and economies, respecting the local culture, environment, social fabric and customs; encouraging respectful and meaningful cross-cultural exchange.

Read more at <https://www.traveltalktours.com/responsible-travel/>