

DURATION**5 Days****BEST TIME TO GO****May, June & September**

North Macedonia's dry, warm season runs May to September, when Lake Ohrid is swimmable; May-June and September skip the hottest, most crowded weeks of July-August.

FROM**\$650 USD / person**

for 2 people, incl. 4 nights' hotels, the private Skopje-Ohrid transfer, the Matka Canyon boat tour & a Lake Ohrid boat tour (excl. int'l flights)

Five days through North Macedonia's two biggest draws — Skopje's Ottoman-era Old Bazaar and a canyon you reach by rowboat, then three days on Lake Ohrid, one of the oldest and clearest lakes on Earth, ringed by Byzantine churches and fortress ruins. A private transfer links the two halves, with real hotels, restaurants, and 2026 prices for every stop.

Day 1**Skopje's Old Bazaar & the Warrior on a Horse**

Touch down in Skopje, Ottoman-era alleys and a 600-year-old stone bridge before a kebab dinner in the Old Bazaar.

Airport Transfer — Skopje International to City Center

~25 min · taxi ~800-900 MKD (~€13-15 USD)

Skopje's airport sits about 17 miles east of downtown; a metered taxi from the official rank is the simplest way in, though some hotels can arrange a private pickup for a flat rate.

Old Bazaar & Stone Bridge Walk

~2-3 hours, self-guided · free

The Balkans' largest bazaar outside Istanbul, a tangle of Ottoman-era lanes lined with coppersmiths, jewelers, and tea houses, spilling down to the 15th-century Stone Bridge and Macedonia Square, where a 72-foot bronze 'Warrior on a Horse' statue dominates the plaza.

Hotel Check-In — Bushi Resort & Spa

From \$140-160 USD / night, for 2 people

A 5-star hotel built right into the edge of the Old Bazaar, with an indoor pool, Turkish hammam, and spa — the closest base to the bazaar's coppersmith alleys and the Stone Bridge.

Bushi Resort & Spa · Old Bazaar, Skopje

Dinner — Destan

~1 hour · ~\$10-15 USD / person

A kebab house inside the Old Bazaar known for its grilled ćevapi and fast, no-frills service, with old black-and-white photos of Skopje lining the walls.

Destan · +389 2 322 4063 · Old Bazaar, Skopje

Day 2 Matka Canyon by Boat

A short bus ride into the mountains for a canyon so narrow it's only reachable by water.

Bus to Matka Canyon — JSP Line 60

~25 min · 35-50 MKD (~€0.60-0.80 USD) one-way

City bus Line 60 runs from central Skopje out to the Matka dam roughly every 40 minutes, the cheapest way to reach the canyon without a rental car.

Boat Tour to Vrelo Cave

~45 min round-trip · ~500 MKD (~€8.50 USD) per person

A small wooden boat threads through Matka Canyon's limestone walls to Vrelo, one of Europe's deepest underwater caves, where the water turns a startling turquoise before the boat turns back.

Hike & Kayak — St. Andrew's Monastery

~1.5 hours, self-guided · kayak rental 200-500 MKD/hr (~€3-8 USD)

A short trail along the canyon's reservoir leads to the 14th-century Monastery of St. Andrew, with kayaks and canoes available to rent by the dam for anyone who'd rather paddle the canyon than walk it.

Dinner — Soul Kitchen Macedonian Wine & Cuisine

~1.5 hours · ~\$20-30 USD / person

A modern take on Macedonian cooking back in Skopje, pairing regional small plates with a wine list built around Vranec and Stanušina, the country's native red grapes.

Soul Kitchen · Skopje

Day 3 Transfer to Ohrid

A scenic three-hour drive south to Lake Ohrid, with the afternoon free to explore its UNESCO-listed old town.

Private Transfer — Skopje to Ohrid

~3 hours · €220 USD sedan (1-3 people), door-to-door

A 171-kilometer drive south through the Macedonian countryside, arranged hotel-to-hotel with tolls included; a public bus covers the same route for a fraction of the cost but takes longer and runs on a fixed schedule.

Easy Balkan Transfers · easybalkantransfers.com

Hotel Check-In — Inex Gorica Hotel

From \$100-120 USD / night, for 2 people

A lakefront hotel about 4 kilometers from Ohrid's old town, with private beach access and water views from most rooms — a quieter base than staying inside the old town itself.

Inex Gorica Hotel · Ohrid

Samuel's Fortress & Old Town Walk

~2 hours, self-guided · fortress entry ~100 MKD (~€1.60 USD)

Cobbled lanes climb past Ottoman-era houses and the Church of St. Sophia to a 10th-century fortress built by Tsar Samuel, with views over the lake and the old town's red-tiled roofs.

Sunset — Church of Sveti Jovan Kaneo

~1 hour, self-guided · free (donations welcome)

A small Byzantine church perched on a cliff above the lake, its sunset silhouette against the water one of the most photographed views in the Balkans.

Day 4

A Full Day on Lake Ohrid

One of the oldest and clearest lakes in the world, by boat and by foot.

Lake Ohrid Boat Tour

~1.5 hours · from ~€15-20 USD / person

A panoramic boat ride along the old town's waterline and out past Sveti Jovan Kaneo, with stops for swimming in water so clear the lake floor is often visible more than 10 meters down.

Swim — Lake Ohrid Beach

~2 hours, self-guided · free (sun loungers ~200-300 MKD)

One of Europe's deepest and oldest lakes, formed an estimated 1-2 million years ago and still home to species found nowhere else on the planet, with pebble beaches along the old town shore that stay cool well into the afternoon.

St. Naum Monastery

~2 hours round-trip by boat or taxi · entry ~100 MKD (~€1.60 USD)

A 10th-century monastery near the lake's southern tip, built where freshwater springs bubble up almost close enough to touch, with peacocks wandering its courtyard and centuries-old frescoes inside.

Dinner — Dva Bisera Fish Restaurant

~1.5 hours · ~\$20-30 USD / person

A lakeside restaurant in the fishing village of Radožda, serving Ohrid trout and other fresh catch on a deck built almost over the water.

Dva Bisera · +389 70 261 586 · Radožda, Lake Ohrid

Day 5

Old Town Market & Departure

One last morning in Ohrid's old town before heading home.

Morning Market & Coffee

~1.5 hours, self-guided · free

Ohrid's small morning market sells the lake's famous pearls alongside fresh produce and honey — a slower way to spend a last morning before the drive or flight home.

Souvenir Shopping — Ohrid Pearls

~1 hour, self-guided · pearls from ~\$15-40 USD

A local specialty made by a secret process using scales from the lake's own fish, sold in small family-run workshops throughout the old town since the early 1900s.

Transfer to Ohrid Airport or Return to Skopje

Ohrid Airport ~15 min · Skopje ~3 hours

Ohrid's small airport runs seasonal European routes, or arrange a final transfer back to Skopje for a wider choice of international connections.