

Bulgaria set to become golfing nirvana

Bulgaria is fast becoming first choice for many UK holidaymakers taking summer or skiing holidays, and now it looks set to become a mini-paradise for golfers too, as developers invest heavily in building a number of prestigious signature golf courses throughout the country.

Until recently there were only three 18-hole golf courses in the whole of Bulgaria, and even the oldest of those had only been open for seven years; but now developers are actively constructing six more quality golf courses across the country using them as the centrepiece for extensive and elaborate property developments.

Several star names from the world of golf have become the driving force behind the new Bulgarian developments. Ex-Ryder cup captain Ian Woosnam has designed two of the new courses currently under construction, while Gary Player has his signature on a couple, and the remaining two have been designed by less well-known golf architects.

Of the three existing courses in the country, two are near Sofia and the other is close to the Black Sea coast. The St. Sofia Golf Club & Spa in Ravno Pole is only a 15 minute drive from the centre of the Bulgarian capital and is frequently used to host business conferences as well as welcoming golfers and holidaymakers.

Slightly farther away, the first course ever built in Bulgaria is at the Air Sofia Golf Club, located 25 miles outside Sofia at Ihtiman, just off the Trakia E-80 highway. Over the last four years the development has been extensively improved and is now home to the prestigious Air Sofia Hotel and Country Club. This par-71, 5,810-metre course is often described as the Balkan's best kept secret and as well as golf, guests can also enjoy an extensive range of other sports and leisure facilities at the first-ever custom-built [golf resort in Bulgaria](#).

The only other golf course currently open in Bulgaria is the Sliven Golf Course which is a 55-mile drive from the Black Sea coast in the heart of the countryside. This relatively new and challenging par-71 golf course was opened in May 2004, at 6,010 yards is the longest in Bulgaria and offers spectacular views of the Balkans from the fairways.

Since Bulgaria entered the European community many hundreds of thousands of UK holidaymakers have visited the country, attracted by the appealing combination of low prices, cheap flights, superb Black Sea resorts and excellent Balkan skiing. And although most UK holidaymakers have headed for the beach or the slopes up to now, if new golf developments continue to be built at their current pace many more will be opting to take a golf holiday in Bulgaria, itching to test their ability against the brand new courses.

About the Author

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