

## *Bulgaria - Land of roses*



The first Rose Festival in Kazanlak was celebrated in 1903. Ever since the sensational feast took place, it became a colorful tradition held in respect. Every year from May 15 to June 15, rose collection is in progress. For a whole month, the so-called Valley of the Thracian Kings resounds with joyful hubbub and traditional songs. Every morning the rose gardens are filled with men and women crawling through the furrows. They arrive at daybreak when the dew still glitters on

the tender leaves of the blossoms. Huge baskets on their backs overflow with rose flowers, perfect for a Van Gogh painting from his early period. During 2011, the harvest seemed to be affluent and the people from the Rose Valley were even more excited, which actually guarantees the overwhelming ambience of the whole celebration. Local people are hospitable and their happiness is definitely contagious.



Once the visitors start to arrive and the string of buses is already visible, rose-pickers get together to welcome their new enthusiastic assistants. It is eight thirty in the morning and your bus will drop you right at the rose field. You have not yet opened your eyes when the strong scent of Red Kazanlak Rose /Damascena/ tickles your nose. Experienced hands will introduce you to the refinements of the art of rose picking.



Dressed in traditional Bulgarian costumes the most skilful rose-pickers welcome every newcomer with especially prepared bread. Each warm bite introduces you to the specific flavor of the Bulgarian cuisine - delightful refreshment before your rose-picking endeavor. At nine o'clock sharp all baskets are full and it is high time that dances begin. All visitors participate and it really looks like they are natural in Bulgarian folklore dancing.

Embark your coach for a short drive that will reveal the view of the somewhat thin chimney raising high up the buildings of the rose distillery. Everyone there seems to be too busy to notice the visitors; however, with the doors been wide open you could definitely notice the preliminary

preparation: tables littered with rose treats (jam, brandy, rose water, etc.) and ethnographic exhibits diligently arranged to tell the story of rose oil production. Your guide will acquaint you with the process of rose oil extraction and you will have the rare opportunity to observe the hectic buzz around the rose blossom purchase station right before your eyes.

The culmination of the festival is on the public holiday of the town when an outstanding street procession, that covers the main street with rose blossom, gathers visitors from all over the world. Rose-pickers, folklore ensembles and famous Bulgarian characters from our literature lively cheer the enraptured audience.



### Highlights:

#### Rose Museum



The scent of roses will follow you throughout your whole journey in the welcoming town of Kazanlak. However, the best souvenirs you could buy from the gift shop in the Rose museum. The century old building full of character houses an exquisite exhibition on rose oil cultivation and production. The biggest konkuma in the world as well as the first laboratory are

displayed for the visitors. Your guided tour will be complimented with fragrant curiosities straight from the royal court of England.

#### Thracian Tomb



The Thracian Tomb near Kazanlak is a brilliant example of pictorial art and the best preserved Hellenistic funerary art in Bulgaria. It dates back to IV - III century BC and it is considered that a famous Thracian king and his queen have found their eternal rest in the burial mound. Part of UNESCO cultural heritage list Kazanlak tomb was found

completely by chance in 1944 while soldiers were digging trenches into a toft near the town.

The talented Thracian master has skillfully decorated the walls of the tomb with murals depicting battle scenes with cavalry, infantry and warriors, probably the renowned victories of the unknown king.

