



# HAVE CLUBS WILL TRAVEL *BLACK KNIGHT ON THE BLACK SEA*

18th at Black Sea Rama

**Bulgaria is a fascinating blend of history, at the crossroads between Asia and Europe, a land cultivated since the dawn of civilization. It is a land of mountains, the Danube River and the Black Sea.**

Priceless gold treasures have been discovered there, and traces of ancient peoples, the heroic slave Spartacus was a Thracian born here, and the Panagyurishte and Rogozen gold artefacts date back to 3200 BC. There are at least nine World Heritage sites spread across the countryside. However the things that you would certainly not have unearthed, would be long nosed woods, feathery or gutty golf balls, and hickory clubs, for unlike in UK, the first golf course near to the capital Sofia was only created in 2002.

To make up for lost time, some of the best known names in the world of golf have been employed to design golf courses that will stand comparison with the best in the Western world.

The coastal region of the Black Sea is magnificent, high cliffs, sandy beaches, an area of natural untamed beauty, that has become the setting for some spectacular new golf courses. The region North of the town of Varna is home to three of them, two are complete and in play, and the third is in the course of construction.

The Lighthouse Golf Resort course was designed by Ian Woosnam, and was the first

we played on the visit to sample golf in the Balkans. This is a layout of over 6000 metres from the back tees, but with four choices, there is an option for all standards of player. The views from the cliff tops are spectacular, and as the sun begins to set, the sea is like a silver carpet.

The finishing three holes are ones to remember, a par 5, par 3 and a tough par 4, narrow fairways, abundant bunkering, and water in play on each. Woosie has set a tough examination, with fast undulating greens, but certainly one to be enjoyed. The clubhouse and the practice facilities are first class, and the completed accommodation of apartments is designed to the highest specifications. The on site hotel will be completed next year, and will be the final piece in the jigsaw.

The neighbouring BlackSeaRama is the newest and most luxurious completed to date. It has recently been christened by designer and golf legend Gary Player, who came to play the course and perform the formal opening, to much acclaim by the worlds media, including CNN television.

The course sits on a dramatic cliff top plateau, and the championship course is one to savour. Stunning views of Varna Bay and the Black Sea, north to the Kaliakra Cape and south to the popular resort of Golden Sands. Gary who has designed over three hundred courses to date, has weaved his magic and created a test that is typical of **The Black Knight**, tough but fair, and a



Black Sea Rama 5th



8th at Thracian Cliffs

different challenge set with every hole. Two loops of nine holes, with a spectacular central clubhouse, offering a golf academy, driving range, well stocked shop, fitness centre, indoor and outdoor pools, jacuzzi, sauna and spa, a selection of bars and restaurants, tennis courts, fishing in the well stocked lake, and mountain biking. Everything the golfer and sportsman could desire.

The course is over 7200 yards from the Championship tees, and the front nine has two lakes, the first of which comes into play with water on three holes, 4th, 5th and 6th, and the 7th also has a lake defending the green. The back nine is marginally the tougher of the two, with a lake separating the 15th and 16th holes, but the finishing hole is one that will be burned into the memory banks. A monster par three, 224 metres from the elevated back tee, to a plateau green set into the hillside. It is impossible to ignore the panoramic view, out over the sea, the well bunkered green and the backdrop of the clubhouse. This is a course that will stand the test of time, and will attract golfers from all over the world. Five star villa accommodation is set overlooking the ocean and the golf course, matching everything at the highest level.

Gary Player has also been commissioned to design the latest addition to the golf firmament. Thracian Cliffs is a few miles from the two existing courses, and will compliment them perfectly, but without doubt this will be the jewel in the crown. From the top of limestone cliffs, over 180 meters high, it is possible to look down on the course which winds it's way out and

back along the lower plateau adjacent to the sea. Designed in the traditional links style, out and back, it follows the coast out the farthest point at the 10th green, and then returns to the clubhouse located high on the hillside. Gary prophesies that this will rival the best in the world, and likens it to Pebble Beach, and that is praise of the most high. Six holes are complete and seeded, a further six are constructed, and it was the 8th, the signature hole that demanded attention, an awesome short hole set hard by the ocean, with a big carry over the cliff edge. The following hole is even more demanding, a tee set out on a stone promontory, with a shot back across the water to an angled fairway. Player's on site representative, Theo Geertshuis waxed lyrical about how the nature of the location had been preserved, and the course created with the minimum of disruption.

Set to open next year, Thracian Cliffs will make it a marvellous trio of courses, set to attract golfers from every country, and offering a delightful series of challenges.

Bulgaria may be Europe's newest golf destination, but it will be a serious contender once the playing public starts to sample the product.

For more information contact:  
[www.balkanolidays.co.uk](http://www.balkanolidays.co.uk)



Michael Rees



BlackSeaRama Clubhouse