



There's a lot to love about Plovdiv, just ask the Greeks, Romans, Byzantines and Turks, all of whom fought to claim it as their own. Originally established by the Thracians around 5000 BC, Plovdiv was proclaimed the sixth-oldest city in the world, and while it's not future-shy (it's recently been named the European Capital of Culture for 2019), Bulgaria's second city rightfully revels in its past. Soak up the ancient atmosphere on an afternoon amble through old Plovdiv.

A walking tour of *old Plovdiv*

Strap on your best boots: it's gonna be a bumpy walk. Much of Plovdiv's **Old Town** is beyond cobbled: it's positively craggy. Suitably shod, make your way to Plovdiv's Tourist Information Centre at the southern end of the vast, bustling **Central Square** and grab some handy maps. Whet your whistle with a taste of the timeless treats to come at the partially restored **Roman Odeon**, constructed between the 2nd and 5th centuries AD. Once used as the seat of the city council, it now hosts occasional performances in its tiny reconstructed **amphitheatre**: check out the original columns.

Head north, taking a slight detour to Bul Tsar Boris III Obedinitel before popping down the Podlez Arhaeologiski (**Archaeological Underpass**) for a peek inside the floor-to-ceiling windows of the **Cultural Centre Trakart** and a glimpse of extensive Roman mosaics left **in situ**. Loop back and continue north toward **Ploshtad Dzhumaya** for a Roman reveal: a **2nd-century-AD stadium** once used for gladiator matches. Though it's partially hidden under the pedestrian mall, you can clamber down any of the stairways to check out the recently renovated rows – a fraction of the original 30,000 seats – up close; for a truly immersive experience, catch an on-site showing of the 3D movie bringing the **Philippopolis** – as it was called in the Roman days – of old back to life. To your right, the **Dzhumaya Mosque** competes for attention, with its 23m-high minaret and claim on history: built in 1364, then demolished and rebuilt in mid-15th century, the still-working mosque is the second-oldest in Europe.

