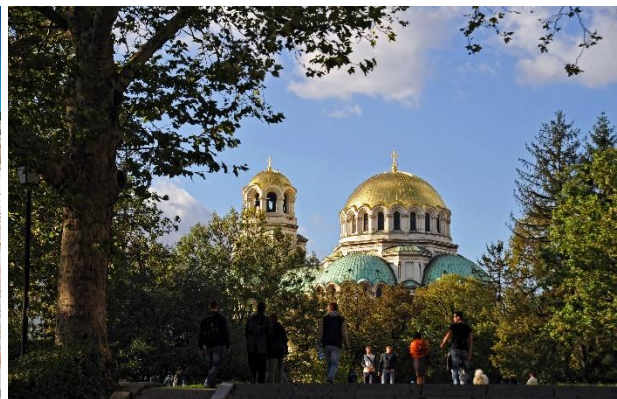


Tour
Information



Bulgaria – Europe’s Hidden Secret





Travel

Passports

Please ensure your 10-year British Passport is not out of date and is valid for a full three months beyond the duration of your visit. EU, Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino or Switzerland valid national identification cards are also acceptable for travel to Bulgaria.

Visas

British and EU passport holders are not required to have a visa.

For all other passport holders please check the visa requirements with the appropriate embassy.

Bulgarian embassy: 186-188 Queen's Gate, London SW7 5HL.

Tel: (0)20 7581 3144.

<http://bulgarianembassy-london.org>

For visa information: email

consular@bulgarianembassy.org.uk

Open Mon-Fri 0930-1330.



Tickets

Included with your detailed itinerary is an e-ticket, which shows your flight reference number. You will need to quote/show this reference number at the check-in desk and you will be issued with your boarding pass. Online check-in is not available for this booking.

Your Group Scheduled or Club Class ticket is non-transferable and non-refundable. No refund can be given for non-used portions.



Baggage allowance

We advise you to check the baggage allowances carefully as you are likely to be charged the excess if you exceed the weight limit. Maximum weights for single bags apply.

With British Airways your ticket includes one hold bag of up to 23kg plus one cabin bag no bigger than 56 x 45x 25cm including handles, pockets and wheels, and a personal bag (handbag or computer case) no bigger than 45 x 36 x 20cm including handles, pockets and wheels.

For more information please visit

www.britishairways.com

Labels

Please use the luggage labels provided. It is useful to have your home address located inside your suitcase should the label go astray.

Transfers

On arrival in Sofia, transfer by coach to Veliko Tarnovo (approx. 2 hours 50 minutes), for check in to your hotel.

Special Requests

If you haven't already, please notify Travel Editions of any special requests as soon as possible to allow sufficient time to make the necessary arrangements.



Accommodation

Hotel Bolyarski, Veliko Tarnovo

Perfectly located in the very heart of the old city of Veliko Turnovo, this 4-star hotel is situated close to the major historical and cultural landmarks of the town – the Medieval Tsarevets Fortress Hill, Samovodska Charshia Square, the picturesque Gurko street, and not far from main shopping area. Most of the bedrooms have views across the Yantra River and the old town, and feature satellite TV, Individually controlled air-conditioning and heating, Free high-speed Internet access, mini bar, telephone, Bathroom with bathtub and/or separate shower and hairdryer.

For more information, please go to the hotel's website at: <http://www.bolyarski.com/en>

Hotel Ramada Trimontium, Plovdiv

This 4-star hotel enjoys an ideal location near the main shopping and business district as well as the old town of this second largest Bulgarian city. The hotel offers diverse restaurants and bars as well as many great facilities, including swimming pools, a beauty salon, a sauna, a fitness centre and massage services. Free wifi is available throughout the hotel. All bedrooms feature satellite TV, telephone, mini-bar, air conditioning, hairdryer and tea and coffee making facilities.

For more information, please go to the hotel's website at: <https://www.wyndhamhotels.com/ramada/plovdiv-bulgaria/ramada-hotel-trimontium-princess/overview>

Hotel Central Park, Sofia

The 4-star luxury Central Park Hotel Sofia enjoys a prime location situated in the heart of Bulgaria's capital. With easy access to all sites of interest in Sofia it is the ultimate venue for the business and leisure traveller alike, with a welcoming lobby bar and the hotel restaurant has a terrace for you to enjoy views across the city. Free wifi is available throughout the hotel. Each of the bedrooms feature individually controlled air-conditioning, bath with shower, hairdryer, satellite TV, telephone, safe, mini-bar

For more information, please go to the hotel's website at: <http://www.centralparkhotel.bg/?lang=en>



Food

Bulgarian cuisine (Bulgarian: българска кухня, translit. bălgarska kuhnja) is a representative of the cuisine of Eastern Europe. It shares characteristics with other Balkans cuisines. Bulgarian cooking traditions are diverse because of geographical factors such as climatic conditions suitable for a variety of vegetables, herbs and fruit. Aside from the vast variety of local Bulgarian dishes, Bulgarian cuisine shares a number of dishes with Persian, Turkish, and Greek cuisine.

Bulgarian food often incorporates salads as appetizers and is also noted for the prominence of dairy products, wines and other alcoholic drinks such as rakia. The cuisine also features a variety of soups, such as the cold soup tarator, and pastries, such as the filo dough based banitsa, pita and the various types of börek.

Main courses are very typically water-based stews, either vegetarian or with lamb, goat meat, veal, chicken or pork. Deep-frying is not common, but grilling - especially different kinds of sausages - is very prominent. Pork is common, often mixed with veal or lamb, although fish and chicken are also widely used. While most cattle are bred for milk production rather than meat, veal is popular for grilling meats appetizers (meze) and in some main courses. As a substantial exporter of lamb, Bulgaria's own consumption is notable, especially in the spring.



Drink

Bulgaria has more than six hundred mineral water springs around the country, so the quality of Bulgarian traditional drinks is considered to be high. A yogurt called "ayrian" and millet ale called "boza" are two traditional non-alcoholic beverages in the Balkans.

A strong (40% vol) and clear grape brandy, called rakia (Ракия), is the Bulgarian national drink and is served neat, usually at the beginning of a meal with salads. In some smaller towns, some families still distil their homemade rakia and it is then usually

much stronger, starting at 50% vol. Another popular drink is Mastika (Мастика) (47% vol). It is similar to Greek Ouzo and Turkish Raki.

Bulgaria has several well known local wine varieties. These include Melnik, Mavrud, Pamid, Gamza (Гъмза) (red dry), Kadarka (red sweet) and Keratsuda (white dry). Local lagers like Zagorka, Kamenitza and Shumensko are among the best when it comes to inexpensive and widely available drinks.

Meals included in the price of your holiday are:

Breakfast – daily

Lunch – on days 3 and 6

Dinner – on day 1



Destination

Not many countries in the world have a longer or more varied history than Bulgaria. There are seven historical cultural strata in Bulgaria: of an unknown civilization from the fifth millennium BC, the Thracian civilization, Ancient Greece, the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, the Bulgarians, and the Ottoman Empire. Modern Bulgaria was born in 1878, when the five centuries of foreign rule were brought to an end by a war between czarist Russia and the Ottoman Empire. After the dramatic twentieth century, which included 45 years of communist rule (1944-1989) Bulgaria opened a new page in its history with its accession to the European Union on 1 January 2007.

Veliko Tarnovo

Veliko Tarnovo is one of the oldest towns in the country, as its history dates to more than five thousand years ago. In 1185 the town was declared a capital of the restored Bulgarian State by the brothers Asen and Petar, who declared the end of the Byzantine dominion, which had continued for 167 years. After its selection to be a capital, the town developed fast, as within the period 12th – 14th century it was the most unconquerable Bulgarian fortress, as well as a cultural and intellectual centre of Bulgaria.

For more information about Veliko Tarnovo, visit: <http://www.bulgariatravel.org/en/Article/Details/15/Veliko%20Tarnovo>

Arbanissi

It is known that the village existed during the time of the Second Bulgarian State (1185 - 1393). At that time the Bolyari living in the capital Tarnovo used it as a summer residence. According to legend, the Tsar of Tarnovo minted coins here. During the 17th century, Arbanasi rose to prominence as a trading center. Traders from Arbanasi were renowned and traded throughout the Turkish Empire. The houses of wealthy traders from this period resembled small fortresses. They appeared severe and forbidding from the outside, without balconies or terraces, with bars on the windows and sturdy armored entrances. Within, however, they were richly appointed and most impressive. The entire interior was decorated with doors, windows, closets, floors with exceptionally ornate woodworking and plaster

elements, all of which demonstrates the highly developed artistic skills of the builders.

For more information about Arbanissi, visit: <http://www.bulgariatravel.org/en/article/details/17/The%20Arbanasi%20Archeological%20Reserve>

Etura Museum

The museum presents the Bulgarian customs, culture and craftsmanship. The museum's goal is to illustrate the architecture, way of life and economy of Gabrovo and the region during the Bulgarian National Revival. The park features typical Bulgarian revival houses with two floors, bay windows, a clock tower, and a beautifully decorated house by Saakov featuring 21 windows. Using original instruments and following the old traditions, locals represent around 20 regional crafts such as wood-carving, pottery, coppersmith crafts, furriery, cutlery making, needlework etc. There are shops for souvenirs, and many restaurants where you can try local cuisine.

For more information about the Etura Museum, visit: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etar_Architectural-Ethnographic_Complex

Shipka Pass

Shipka Pass (el. 1150 m./3820 ft.) is a scenic mountain pass through the Balkan Mountains in Bulgaria. It marks the border between Stara Zagora province and Gabrovo province. The pass connects the towns of Gabrovo and Kazanlak. The pass is 13 km by road north of the small town of Shipka. It is crossed by a national road I-5, which runs between Ruse, on the Danube River, and Makaza border crossing to Greece. During the Russo-Turkish War in 1877 and 1878, Shipka Pass was the scene of a series of conflicts collectively named the Battle of Shipka Pass, fought between the Bulgarians, aided by Russian volunteers, and the Ottoman Empire.

For more information about Shipka Pass, visit: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shipka_Pass

Valley of the Thracian Kings

The name of this area was coined by Dr Georgi Kitov, the archaeologist, who worked in the area in the 1990s and 2000s and made some of the most fascinating discoveries there, obviously as a parallel

with the Valley of the Kings in Egypt. The region, he argued, was at the heart of the mighty Odrysian Kingdom and was the preferred burial ground for the Odrysian nobility for centuries, resulting in the creation of about 1,300 tumuli. Of these, about 300 have been archaeologically researched. Among so many mounds one stands out, the Kazanlashka Grobnitsa, or the Kazanlak Tomb. It was discovered completely by chance. On 19 April 1944, a group of Bulgarian soldiers were digging a trench in the 40-metre wide mound, when their shovels struck a stone wall. Curious, the men broke through the wall and found themselves in a short corridor. A stone door laid broken on the ground. The soldiers called for an archaeologist, who became the first person in centuries to enter the tiny burial chamber (2.65 m in diameter and 3.25 m in height) and to see its lavishly painted cupola and one of the best frescoes preserved from ancient Europe.

For more information about the Valley of the Thracian Kings, visit:
<https://www.vagabond.bg/travel/high-beam/item/3339-valley-of-thracian-kings.html>

Plovdiv

Plovdiv is one of the oldest cities in Europe, in the beginning the ancient settlement was situated on the natural elevation between Nebet, Taksim and Dzhambaz hills (the Three Hills). In ancient times Thracians inhabited the Three Hills and built a fortified settlement – the largest city in Thrace. In the 4th century BC Plovdiv was conquered by Phillip of Macedonia. He gave the city one of its many names – Phillipopolis, and had it surrounded by thick fortified walls. Later the Thracians regained their power over the city, but after a series of battles in the 1st century AD it became a part of the Roman Empire. The numerous archaeological finds of Thracian, Roman and Byzantine times not only recall the glorious past, but are successfully combined with the modern architecture of the city. An example of this is the Roman aqueduct, which has become an indispensable part of Komatevsko Shose road; the Amphitheatre was successfully restored and is presently used for performances. The city has several museums – historical, archaeological, ethnographic, and natural science museum, as well as an Art Gallery and a Drama Theatre. One of the most famous landmarks is the architectural complex of the Ancient Plovdiv, where many beautiful houses from the times of the Bulgarian Revival had been preserved and restored. Many of them are inhabited to the present day.

For more information about Plovdiv, visit:
<http://www.bulgariatravel.org/en/Article/Details/306/Plovdiv%20City>

Bachkovo Monastery

Bachkovo monastery is the second largest monastery in Bulgaria, beautifully situated on a ledge, on the right from the Valley of Chepelarska River, close to the village of Bachkovo. The climate is favourable, as the spot is in the heart of the Rhodope Mountains. The summers are breezy and the winters mild. Therefore, most vegetables and fruits could be successfully grown in the yards. The monastery estate is almost 8000 sq.m and about 440 meters above sea level. It includes two yards and four churches. The monastery has 18 chapels, 10 in Asenovgrad and 8 around it.

For more information about Bachkovo Monastery, visit:
<http://www.bachkovskimanastir.com/en/>

Brestovitsa Wine Tasting

Vine growing, and wine making have been part of Bulgarian culture since ancient times. Archeologist evidence shows that wine grapes have been thriving here since 4000 BC. This makes Bulgaria one of the oldest wine producing areas in the world. Some of these old varieties are still exist today – Mavrud, Dimyat, Pamid, Melnik, Gamza.

Rila Monastery

The Monastery of Saint Ivan of Rila, better known as the Rila Monastery is the largest and most famous Eastern Orthodox monastery in Bulgaria. It is situated in the southwestern Rila Mountains, in the deep valley of the Rilska River. The monastery is named after its founder, the hermit Ivan of Rila (876 - 946 AD), and houses around 60 monks. The monastery is depicted on the reverse of the 1 lev banknote, issued in 1999.

For more information about The Rila Monastery, visit:
<https://rilskimanastir.org/bg/about/>

Sofia

The city is located at a strategic crossroads. The route from Western Europe to Istanbul passes through Sofia via Beograd and Skopje, then through Plovdiv to Turkey. Sofia also connects The Near East and The Middle East, lying between the banks of The Danube and the shores of The White Sea on the one hand, and between The Black Sea and The Adriatic on the other. Sofia preserves many valuable monuments to its long and storied past. During the

sightseeing tour visit to the Roman Serdika Fortifications (Sofia oldest preserved building) and the 4th-century AD St. George's Rotunda, famous for its original structure and unique frescoes, Alexander Nevski Cathedral, Ivan Vazov National Theatre, The National Assembly, The Church of St. Sophia. Sofia is also full of delightful surprises offering a thriving and diverse street life, including open-air cafés and busy markets as well as many lovely parks and gardens to relax in.

For more information about Sofia, visit:

<http://bulgariatravel.org/en/object/234/sofia>.

Boyana Church

The Boyana Church, UNESCO listed, was built in three stages: in the late 10th and early 11th, the mid-13th, and the mid-19th centuries. The oldest section (the eastern church) was built in the late 10th and early 11th century. The first layer of frescoes, which originally covered the entire eastern church, dates from the 11th-12th-century. Fragments of those frescoes have been preserved in the lower parts of the apse and the north wall, and in the upper part of the west wall and the south vault.

For more information about the Boyana Church, visit:

<http://www.boyanachurch.org/abouten.htm>

Reading Suggestions

Cambridge Concise Histories: *A Concise History of Bulgaria*

This book offers a comprehensive thousand-year history of the land, people, society, culture and economy of Hungary, from its nebulous origins in the Ural Mountains to the elections of 1988. It tells above all the thrilling story of a people which became a great power in the region and then fought against - and was invaded by - Ottomans, Germans and Soviets.

DK Eyewitness Travel Guide: *Bulgaria*

The ideal travel companion, full of insider advice on what to see and do, plus detailed itineraries and comprehensive maps for exploring this captivating country.

Tour manager

Your tour manager will be on hand throughout the tour to ensure that everything operated according to plan. If you have any problems or questions please see him or her immediately – it is often possible to resolve complaints or problems very quickly on the

spot, and do everything to help you enjoy your holiday.

The Basics

Climate – The weather in Bulgaria at this time of year is likely to be pleasant, but there is the chance of the odd shower. Our best advice is to come prepared.

Time – GMT +2 hours (Summer time Apr-Oct); GMT + 1 (Standard time Nov-Mar).

Language – Bulgarian.

Religion – Bulgarian Orthodox.

National holidays – New Year's day (01 Jan); National Day (03 Mar); Labour day (01 May); St Georges Day (16 May); St Cyril and Methodius Day (24 May); Unification Day (06 Sep); Independence day (22 Sep); Day of the Bulgarian Revival Leaders (01 Nov); Christmas Eve (24 Dec); Christmas day (25 Dec); Boxing day (26 Dec); New Years Eve (31 Dec).

Currency – Lev. Лв1 = 100 stotinki. Notes are in denominations of Лв 100, 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1, Coins are in denominations of Лв 1, and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 stotinki. The exchange rate is tied to the Euro at a fixed rate 1 Euro = Лв1.955.

Banks – Cashpoints compatible with international banking networks are located in all towns and cities, as well as airports, major train stations and other spots. They usually offer an attractive exchange rate. Those banks that still exchange foreign currencies into local money will always charge a transaction fee, so withdrawing money from an ATM usually represents the most logical means of obtaining euros.

Credit cards – American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted across the country. If you're eating at a restaurant, check prior to the meal that your card will be an acceptable form of payment. Even in cities, it's advisable to carry a supply of cash with you at all times. Varying amounts of commission can be charged.

Electricity – 230 volt, two-pin continental plug.

Drinking water – Tap water is safe to drink. (Although you'll find a huge amount of bottled water for sale too)

Shops and museums – Shops are open Mon-Sat 1000-2000. Department stores often remain open longer, up to 2200 on Sunday. Supermarkets are open all day, every day. Outside main areas, some shops may close at lunchtime.

Please note that some museums may be closed on Mondays.

Clothes & shoes – You may like to bring a warm sweater for cool evenings. Light rain wear for the occasional storm and good grip/flat walking shoes are recommended.

Camera – bring plenty of memory cards/film and any spare camera batteries as these are not always available. Please check with your guide before photographing people.

Bath plugs – The hotel has plugs for basins, but it is useful to carry a 'universal' one with you.

Telephones/mobiles – You should be able to use your mobile phone, depending on your operator and contract.

Tipping – To keep our tours affordable, we do not increase the tour price by adding in tips. However, in the tourism industry, there is a certain level of expectation that when receiving a good service, one does award with a tip. Tour Managers, Representatives, Guides and Drivers appreciate a tip at the end of their involvement with the tour, but this is entirely at your discretion. We believe in allowing you to tip according to your level of satisfaction with their services, but for your guidance about £2-3 per person per day for the tour manager is the norm. We would like to reiterate that tipping is an entirely optional payment and this information is given purely to answer any questions you may have about it.



Health

Doctor/Dentist/Chemist

Please talk to your tour manager if you are feeling unwell and they will organise for you to see a doctor.

Keep receipts for insurance claims.



Hospital

Your tour manager/hotel reception will arrange hospital transport.

Keep receipts for insurance claims.

General Health Advice

We suggest you take a good supply of your own individual medicines with you and always keep some in your hand luggage in case you get delayed or your luggage goes astray. General-purpose supplies for bites, stings, or scratches, and your usual medication for headaches, or stomach upsets are always recommended. Oral re-hydration sachets are excellent for topping up salt and glucose levels.

Visit the NHS Fit For Travel website for more generally information specific to the country you are visiting – www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk

Inoculations

You should check with your own doctor and take their advice as to which inoculations are required for the country you are visiting, as only they know your medical history and recommendations are liable to change at short notice.



Insurance

To be covered under your Travel Insurance Policy, if you become ill, it is essential that you contact a local doctor and also telephone the emergency number of you insurance company. You will **NOT** be covered for any claim unless this procedure is carried out. Your insurance company will then decide on the best course of medical attention.

European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)

The EHIC replaced the old E111 in 2006. Valid in all EEA countries, the card lets you get state healthcare at a reduced cost or sometimes for free. It will cover you for treatment that is needed to allow you to continue your stay until your planned return. It also covers the treatment of pre-existing medical conditions.

Please note that the EHIC is not an alternative to travel insurance. It will not cover any private medical healthcare or costs such as being flown back to the UK, or lost or stolen property. Therefore, it is important to have both an EHIC and a valid private travel insurance policy. It is also important to note that each country's healthcare system is slightly different, so the EHIC might not cover everything that would be generally free on the NHS.

We strongly recommend that you take out an appropriate travel insurance policy when you travel abroad.

For more information about the EHIC please visit: <https://www.ehic.org.uk>



Emergencies

Should an emergency arise, please call our offices on:

00 44 20 7251 0045

Outside office hours (Mon-Fri 0900-1700), telephone our emergency staff on:

00 44 20 7431 8201 or

00 44 7899 796542 or

00 44 7831 133079 or

00 44 1235 850720

PLEASE USE THESE NUMBERS ONLY IN THE EVENT OF A GENUINE EMERGENCY.

If you find that you are in need of consular assistance during your holiday:

British Embassy, Sofia, Bulgaria

9 Moskovska Street

Sofia 1000

Bulgaria

Tel: +(2) 933 9222

britembinf@mail.orbitel.bg

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