



Bulgaria БЪЛГАРИЯ

Includes »

Sofia.....	150
Boyana.....	160
Central Balkans.....	171
Black Sea Coast.....	183
North Coast.....	189
Central Coast.....	190
South Coast.....	194
Northwest Bulgaria..	197
Understand Bulgaria.....	198
Survival Guide.....	201
Directory A-Z.....	201
Getting There & Away.....	204
Getting Around.....	204

Best Places to Eat

- » Dream House (p156)
- » Pri Yafata (p156)
- » Malâk Bunardzhik (p167)
- » Chiflika (p183)
- » Casanova (p193)

Best Places to Stay

- » Red House (p155)
- » Dedo Pene (p163)
- » Hotel Romantica (p166)
- » Hotel Bolyarski (p177)
- » Hotel California (p193)

Why Go?

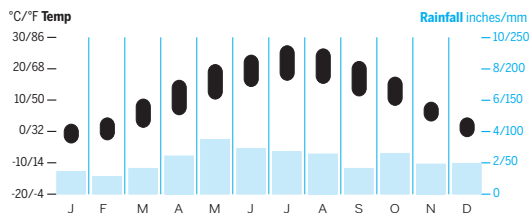
Tucked into the southeastern corner of Europe, Bulgaria is best known for its long Black Sea coast, speckled with historic seaside towns, remote beaches and brash clubland resorts. But elsewhere you'll find wild, heavily forested and hugely varied landscapes ideal for hiking, cycling, mountaineering and wildlife watching, as well as a number of modern ski resorts.

Across Bulgaria you'll find churches and monasteries full of vibrant icons and presided over by white-bearded priests, picturesque villages of timber-framed houses and cobbled lanes – seemingly lost in time – and dramatic reminders of the country's ancient heritage, from Thracian tombs and Roman ruins to medieval fortresses, Ottoman mosques and communist monuments slowly crumbling away into history.

Bulgaria's cities, too, reward visitors with treasure-filled museums and galleries and relaxed, cafe-sprinkled parks. Getting around is easy and still remarkably cheap, so brush up your Cyrillic, buy a bus ticket and get ready to explore.

When To Go

Sofia



January Skiing in Bansko or down Mount Vitosha is just the thing.

March–May The fine spring weather welcomes folk and music festivals across the country.

June–September Spend lazy days on the Black Sea beaches and the nights at Bulgaria's best clubs.

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Lev (lv)
- » **Language** Bulgarian
- » **Money** ATMs are everywhere
- » **Visas** Visas not required for citizens from the EU, UK, US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand

Fast Facts

- » **Area** 110,910 sq km
- » **Capital** Sofia
- » **Telephone country code** 359
- » **Emergency** 112

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	1.44lv
Canada	C\$1	1.42lv
euro	€1	1.95lv
Japan	¥100	1.64lv
New Zealand	NZ\$1	1.07lv
UK	UK£1	2.22lv
USA	US\$1	1.36lv

Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room** 40lv
- » **Two-course meal** 10lv
- » **Museum entrance** 4-10lv
- » **Beer** 1.80lv
- » **City transport ticket** 1lv

Resources

- » **BG Maps** (www.bgMaps.com)
- » **Bulgaria Travel** (www.bulgariatravel.org)
- » **Beach Bulgaria** (www.beachbulgaria.com)
- » **City Info Guide** (www.cityinfoguide.net)

Connections

Although Sofia has international bus and train connections, it's not necessary to backtrack to the capital if you're heading to Bucharest or İstanbul. From central Veliko Tŕrnovo, for example, there are daily trains both ways – and much of the country offers overnight buses to İstanbul. Heading to Greece or Belgrade by train means going through Sofia; for Skopje, you'll need to catch a bus from there, too.

ITINERARIES

One Week

Start off with a full day in Sofia, visiting the Archaeological Museum and Borisova Gradina, then take the bus to Veliko Tŕrnovo for a few days of sightseeing and hiking. For the rest of the week, head to Varna for some sea and sand.

Two Weeks

After a couple of days in Sofia, catch a bus to Plovdiv and wander the cobbled lanes of the Old Town. From there, take a day trip to visit the Roman spa town of Hisar or Bachkovo Monastery. After a few days in Plovdiv, make for the coast, staying a couple of nights in ancient Sozopol. Head north to overnight in Varna then get a connection to Ruse for a glimpse of the Danube and some fine museums, and finish in Veliko Tŕrnovo.

Essential Food & Drink

- » **Banitsa** The ultimate Bulgarian street-snack, the *banitsa* is a flaky cheese pastry, often served fresh and hot.
- » **Kebabche** There's no escaping this thin, grilled pork sausage, a staple of every *mehana* in the country. *Kyufte* is a round, flat, burger-like variation of the same, sometimes filled with cheese.
- » **Tarator** On a hot day there's nothing better than this delicious chilled cucumber and yoghurt soup, served with garlic, dill and crushed walnuts.
- » **Beer** You're never far from a cold beer in Bulgaria. Zagorka, Kamenitza and Shumensko are the most popular nationwide brands, but look for regional brews, too.
- » **Wine** They've been producing wine here since Thracian times, and there are some excellent varieties to try, including the unique, blood-red Melnik.