



# Bulgaria

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## Best Places to Eat

- » Manastirska Magernitsa (p247)
- » Puldin Restaurant (p254)
- » Dom na Arkitekta (p259)
- » Han Hadji Nikoli (p256)

## Best Places to Stay

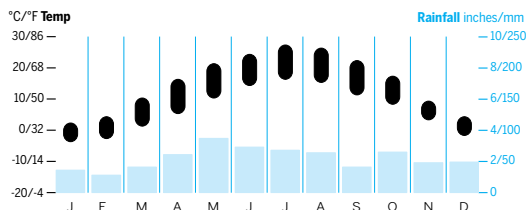
- » Hotel Niky (p247)
- » Residence Oborishte (p247)
- » Hotel Renaissance (p253)
- » Hotel Bolyarski (p256)

## Why Go?

Bulgaria (България) may be best known for its long, sandy Black Sea beaches, but there's much more to see. Bulgaria boasts no fewer than seven mountain ranges and varied landscapes ideal for hiking, cycling, climbing and wildlife-watching. The country has some of Europe's most modern ski resorts as well. You'll find churches and monasteries full of vibrant icons, picturesque villages of timber-framed houses and cobbled lanes, 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 parks sprinkled with cafes and restaurants. Getting around is easy and still remarkably cheap so brush up on your Cyrillic, buy a bus ticket and get ready to explore.

## When to Go

### Sofia



**Jan** This is a great time to go skiing in Bansko or down Mt Vitosha

**Mar–May** Fine spring weather welcomes folk and festivals across the country

**Jun–Sep** Spend lazy days on the Black Sea beaches and nights at Bulgaria's best clubs

## AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Lev (lv)
- » **Language** Bulgarian
- » **Money** ATMs everywhere
- » **Visas** Not required for citizens of the EU, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand

## Fast Facts

- » **Area** 110,910 sq km
- » **Capital** Sofia
- » **Country code** ☎359
- » **Emergency** ☎112

## Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	1.60 lv
Canada	C\$1	1.51 lv
Euro	€1	1.96 lv
Zone		
Japan	¥100	1.63 lv
New Zealand	NZ\$1	1.28 lv
UK	UK£1	2.32 lv
USA	US\$1	1.53 lv

## Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room** 50 lv
- » **Two-course meal** 10 lv
- » **Museum entrance** 4–10 lv
- » **Beer** 2 lv
- » **City transport ticket** 1 lv

## Resources

- » **BG Maps** (www.bgmaps.com)
- » **Bulgaria Travel** (www.bulgariatravel.com)
- » **Beach Bulgaria** (www.beachbulgaria.com)

## 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 Istanbul. From central Veliko Tŕrnovo, for example, there are daily trains both ways – and much of the country offers overnight buses to Istanbul. Heading to Greece or Belgrade by train means going through Sofia.

## ITINERARIES

### One Week

Start off with a full day in Sofia, visiting the Archaeological Museum and other sights, 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. More adventurous travellers may want to head further south along the coast to prettier resorts closer to the Turkish border.

### Two Weeks

After several days in Sofia, catch a bus to Plovdiv and wander the cobbled lanes of the Old Town. From there, make for the coast, staying in Varna and ancient Sozopol. Finish in majestic Veliko Tŕrnovo.

## Essential Food & Drink

- » **Banitsa** Flaky cheese pasty, often served fresh and hot.
- » **Kebabche** Thin, grilled pork sausage.
- » **Tarator** On a hot day there's nothing better than this delicious chilled cucumber and yoghurt soup.
- » **Beer** Zagorka, Kamenitza and Shumensko are popular nationwide brands.
- » **Wine** They've been producing wine here since Thracian times.
- » **Kavarma** This 'claypot meal', or meat stew, is normally made with either chicken or pork and is one of the country's most popular dishes.
- » **Shkembe chorba** Traditional stomach soup is one of the more adventurous and offbeat highlights of Bulgarian cuisine worth sampling.
- » **Shishcheta** This is a standard shish kebab, consisting of chunks of chicken or pork on wooden skewers with mushrooms and peppers, and is widely available.
- » **Musaka** Admittedly, Bulgarian moussaka bears more than a passing resemblance to its Greek cousin but it's a delicious staple of cheap cafeteria meals.