



Macedonia

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Best Places to Eat

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- » El Greko (p761)

Best Places to Stay

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- » Chola Guest House (p761)
- » Hi Skopje Hostel (p754)

Why Go?

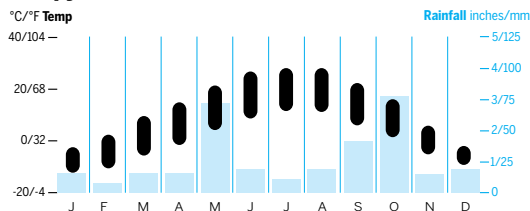
The mixed Balkan and Mediterranean heritage and landscape of Macedonia (Македонија), reflected in its rugged terrain and unique structures and sites, reveal a diversity unexpected in such a small country.

Easygoing Skopje remains one of Europe's more unusual capitals. Constant urban renewal makes it a continuous work in progress, with hip cafes and bars vying for attention with grandiose statues and arches. Underneath the surface, however, Skopje's a historic city with an impressive Ottoman old quarter, where Byzantine churches, mosques and converted hammams are topped by the imposing Tvrđina Kale Fortress.

In summer, try hiking, mountain biking and climbing in remote mountains, some concealing medieval monasteries. Be sure to visit Ohrid, noted for its Summer Festival, sublime Byzantine churches and great (34km-long) lake. Bitola, a charming and cultured city west of Ohrid, boasts cool cafes and historic and natural attractions.

When to Go

Skopje



Jun–Aug Enjoy Ohrid's Summer Festival and dive into its 300m-deep lake.

Sep–Oct Partake in Skopje's Beer Fest, Jazz Festival and harvest celebrations.

Dec–Feb Ski Mavrovo, and indulge in Macedonia's holiday carnivals.

Connections

Skopje's buses serve Sofia (Bulgaria), Belgrade (Serbia), Budapest (Hungary), Pristina (Kosovo), Tirana (Albania), İstanbul (Turkey), Thessaloniki (Greece) and more. The train from Belgrade to Skopje reaches Gevgelija on the Greek border. The long-awaited arrival of budget airlines has improved Skopje's air connections.

ITINERARIES

Four Days

Spend two nights in Skopje, marvelling at its bold new architecture on the square, and visiting its Čaršija (old quarter), with historic churches, mosques, museums and an Ottoman castle. Then travel southwest to Macedonia's most evocative and historic town, Ohrid, with its serene lake, via the lush forested mountains of Mavrovo and Bigorski Monastery, with its spectacular carved iconostasis.

One Week

Continue to cultured Bitola, the long-famed 'City of Consuls' known for its vibrant cafes and nearby ancient Heraclea and Pelister National Park. After Skopje, Ohrid and Bitola, visit Prilep, seeing its historic nearby monasteries.

Essential Food & Drink

- » **Ajvar** Sweet red-pepper sauce; accompanies meats and cheeses.
- » **Šopska salata** Tomatoes, onions and cucumbers topped with flaky *sirenje* (white cheese).
- » **Uviač** Rolled chicken or pork wrapped in bacon, filled with melted yellow cheese.
- » **Skopsko and Dab lagers** Macedonia's favourite brews.
- » **Rakija** Grape-based firewater, useful for toasts (and cleaning cuts and windows!)
- » **Vranec and Temjanika** Macedonia's favourite red- and white-wine varietals.
- » **'Bekonegs'** Not terribly traditional, but you will see this mangled rendition of 'bacon and eggs' on Macedonian breakfast menus.

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Macedonian denar (MKD)
- » **Language** Macedonian
- » **Money** ATMs wide-spread in major towns
- » **Visas** None for EU, US, Australian, Canadian or New Zealand citizens

Fast Facts

- » **Area** 25,713 sq km
- » **Capital** Skopje
- » **Country code** ☎389
- » **Emergency** Ambulance ☎194, fire ☎193, police ☎192

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	50.08MKD
Canada	C\$1	47.18MKD
Euro Zone	€1	61.27MKD
Japan	¥100	50.81MKD
New Zealand	NZ\$1	40.14MKD
UK	UK£1	72.54MKD
USA	US\$1	47.94MKD

Set Your Budget

- » **Skopje hotel room** 3000MKD
- » **Two-course meal** 400MKD
- » **Beer** 120MKD
- » **Skopje bus ticket** 35MKD
- » **Petrol (1L)** 100MKD

Resources

- » **Macedonian Welcome Centre** (www.dmwc.org.mk)
- » **Macedonian Information Agency** (www.mia.com.mk)
- » **Exploring Macedonia** (www.exploringmacedonia.com)