



# Sofia

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## Includes »

Around Sofia .....	315
Boyana .....	315
Vitosha Nature Park ....	316

## Best Places to Eat

- » Manastirska Magernitsa (p307)
- » Annette (p308)
- » Pastorant (p307)
- » Olive Garden (p308)
- » Before & After (p308)

## Best Places to Stay

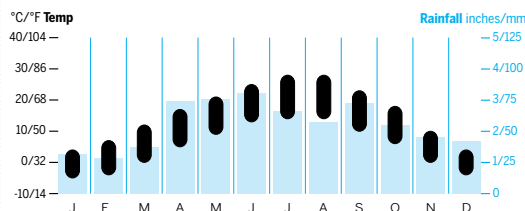
- » Hotel Niky (p305)
- » Residence Oborishte (p306)
- » Hotel Les Fleurs (p306)
- » Arena di Serdica (p306)
- » Canapé Connection (p306)

## Why Go?

Bulgaria's pleasingly laid-back capital, Sofia (*So-fia*) is often overlooked by tourists heading straight to the coast or the ski resorts, but they're missing something special. It's no grand metropolis, true, but it's a largely modern, youthful city, while its old East-meets-West atmosphere is still very much evident, with a scattering of onion-domed churches, Ottoman mosques and stubborn Red Army monuments sharing the skyline with vast shopping malls and glassy five-star hotels. Sofia's grey, blocky civic architecture lends a lingering Soviet tinge to the place, but it's also a surprisingly green city. Vast parks and manicured gardens offer welcome respite from the busy city streets, and the ski slopes and hiking trails of mighty Mt Vitosha are just a short bus ride from the city centre. Home to many of Bulgaria's finest museums, galleries, restaurants and entertainment venues, Sofia may persuade you to stick around and explore further.

## When to Go

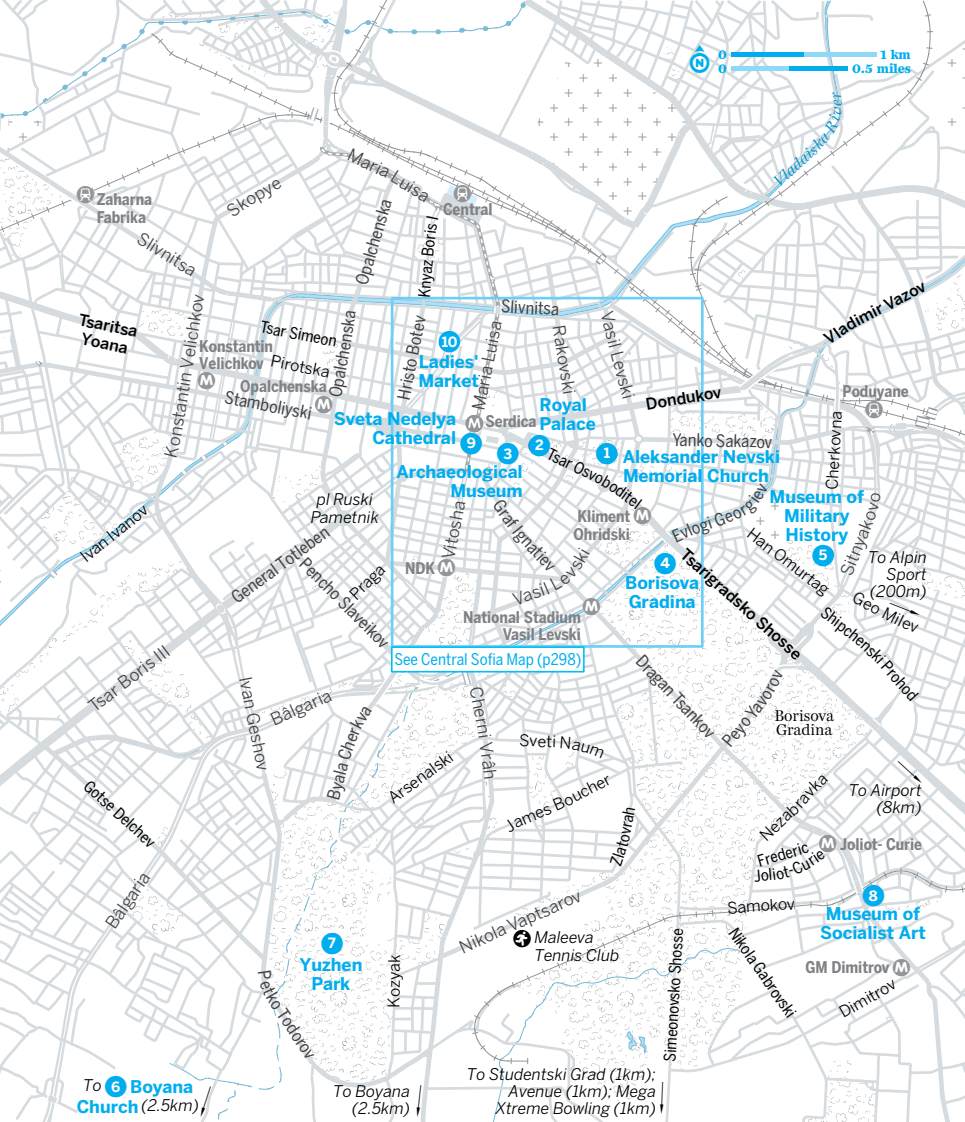
### Sofia



**Mar–May** Spring is warm and wet, and Easter is a colourful time to visit.

**Jun–Aug** Summer is very hot and dry, especially August, but there's plenty to see and do in the city.

**Nov–Feb** Winters in Sofia are often icy cold, with heavy snowfalls, but January is perfect for skiing.



## Sofia Highlights

- 1 Visiting impressive **Aleksander Nevski Memorial Church** (p303)
- 2 Viewing the paintings and artwork on show at the two **museums** (p297) inside the former Royal Palace
- 3 Looking over ancient treasures at the **Archaeological Museum** (p297)
- 4 Taking a leisurely walk around leafy **Borisova Gradina** (p302), with its statues, fountains and cafes
- 5 Exploring history at the **National Museum of Military History** (p303)
- 6 Taking a trip out to visit the lovely **Boyana Church** (p316), famous for its medieval murals
- 7 Getting lost in the wild landscape of **Yuzhen Park** (p303)
- 8 Uncovering the past at the **Museum of Socialist Art** (p303)
- 9 Experiencing Sofia's spiritual side in **Sveta Nedelya Cathedral** (p296)
- 10 Buying fruit and veg at the bustling **Ladies' Market** (p312)