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Bulgarian

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make the most of this phrasebook ...

Anyone can speak another language! It's all about confidence. Don't worry if you can't remember your school language lessons or if you've never learnt a language before. Even if you learn the very basics (on the inside covers of this book), your travel experience will be the better for it. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain when the locals hear you making an effort.

finding things in this book

For easy navigation, this book is in sections. The Tools chapters are the ones you'll thumb through time and again. The Practical section covers basic travel situations like catching transport and finding a bed. The Social section gives you conversational phrases, pick-up lines, the ability to express opinions – so you can get to know people. Food has a section all of its own: gourmets and vegetarians are covered and local dishes feature. Safe Travel equips you with health and police phrases, just in case. Remember the colours of each section and you'll find everything easily; or use the comprehensive Index. Otherwise, check the two-way traveller's Dictionary for the word you need.

being understood

Throughout this book you'll see coloured phrases on each page. They're phonetic guides to help you pronounce the language. Start with them to get a feel for how the language sounds. The pronunciation chapter in Tools will explain more, but you can be confident that if you read the coloured phrase, you'll be understood.

communication tips

Body language, ways of doing things, sense of humour – all have a role to play in every culture. 'Local talk' boxes show you common ways of saying things, or everyday language to drop into conversation. 'Listen for ...' boxes supply the phrases you may hear. They start with the foreign language and then lead in to the phonetic guide and the English translation.

about bulgarian8

map	8	introduction	9
-----------	---	--------------------	---

basics11

pronunciation	11	questions	27
vowel sounds	11	verbs	28
consonant sounds	11	word order	32
word stress & intonation	12	glossary	33
reading & writing	13	language difficulties	35
a-z phrasebuilder	15	numbers & amounts	37
contents	15	cardinal numbers	37
adjectives & adverbs	17	ordinal numbers	38
articles	18	fractions & decimals	39
be	19	useful amounts	40
demonstratives	19	time & dates	41
gender	20	telling the time	41
have	20	the calendar	42
negatives	21	present	43
nouns	22	past	44
personal pronouns	22	future	45
plurals	25	during the day	45
possessives	25	money	47
prepositions	27		

practical49

transport	49	accommodation	69
getting around	49	finding accommodation	69
tickets	51	booking ahead &	
luggage	52	checking in	70
plane	53	requests & queries	73
bus & coach	54	complaints	74
train	55	checking out	75
boat	56	camping	76
taxi	57	renting	77
car & motorbike	58	staying with locals	78
bicycle	62	shopping	79
border crossing	63	looking for	79
border crossing	63	making a purchase	80
at customs	64	bargaining	82
directions	65		

books & reading	83
clothes	84
hairdressing	84
music & DVD.....	85
video & photography.....	86
repairs.....	88
communications	89
the internet.....	89
mobile/cell phone.....	90
phone.....	91
post office.....	94
banking	95
sightseeing.....	97
sightseeing	97
getting in	98
tours	99
business.....	101
doing business	101
looking for a job.....	103
senior & disabled travellers	105
children	107
travelling with children	107
talking with children	109
talking about children	110

social111

meeting people.....	111
basics.....	111
greetings & goodbyes	112
addressing people	113
making conversation	114
nationalities	116
age	116
occupations & studies.....	117
family	118
farewells.....	120
interests.....	121
common interests.....	121
music.....	122
cinema & theatre	124
feelings & opinions.....	127
feelings.....	127
opinions	128
politics & social issues.....	129
the environment.....	131
going out	133
where to go	133
invitations.....	134
responding to invitations	136
arranging to meet	137
drugs.....	138
romance.....	139
asking someone out.....	139
pick-up lines	140
rejections.....	140
getting closer.....	141
sex	142
love	143
problems	144
leaving.....	144
beliefs & cultural differences	145
religion	145
cultural differences.....	146
art.....	147
sport	149
sporting interests	149
going to a game.....	150
playing sport	151
fishing	153
skiing.....	154
soccer/football	155
water sports.....	156
outdoors.....	157
hiking	157
beach	159
weather	160
flora & fauna	161

food163

eating out163
basics..... 163
finding a place to eat 164
at the restaurant 165
at the table..... 168
talking food 168
methods of preparation.... 170
nonalcoholic drinks 171
alcoholic drinks 171
in the bar 172

drinking up 174
self-catering 175
buying food 175
cooking utensils 178
vegetarian & special meals..... 179
ordering food..... 179
special diets & allergies 180
menu decoder 181

safe travel.....189

essentials..... 189
emergencies..... 189
police 190
health..... 193
doctor 193
symptoms & conditions 196

women's health..... 198
allergies..... 200
parts of the body 201
alternative treatments..... 202
pharmacist 202
dentist..... 204

dictionaries205

english–bulgarian dictionary 205

bulgarian–english dictionary 237

index251

finder.....255

bulgarian



official language

For more details, see the **introduction**.

Surprisingly, the name of the oldest South Slavic literary language, Bulgarian, isn't of Slavic origin at all. It's one of a handful of words remaining in Bulgarian from the language of the Bulgars, a Turkic people who invaded the eastern Balkans in the late 7th century. Along with their language, they assimilated with the local Slavs who had crossed the Danube and settled in the Balkan peninsula at the dawn of the 6th century.

As a member of the South Slavic group of languages, Bulgarian has Macedonian and Serbian as its closest relatives. However, it also shares similarities with the non-Slavic languages in the so-called Balkan linguistic union (Romanian, Albanian and Greek), as a result of multilingualism and prolonged contact between the Balkan peoples. These foreign influences explain many of its grammatical features – for example, its simplified noun system, which sets Bulgarian (and Macedonian) apart from other Slavic languages. In addition, numerous Turkish

words entered Bulgarian over five centuries of Ottoman rule. In the 19th century, many of these Turkish loanwords were eliminated from the language. Their place was partially filled by Russian words, as Russian has influenced Bulgarian through both Bulgaria's ties with the Orthodox Church and long-standing cultural links with Russia.

Old Bulgarian (which is very similar to Old Church Slavonic) was the first Slavic language recorded in

at a glance ...

language name:
Bulgarian

name in language:
български
buhl-gar-skee

language family:
South Slavic

approximate number of speakers: 9 million

key country: Bulgaria

close relatives:
Macedonian, Serbian,
Russian

written form in religious literature from the 9th century. The central figures in the development of the Slavic literary language were Saints Cyril and Methodius, missionaries of the Byzantine emperor who invented the Glagolitic alphabet around AD 863 and used it to translate Greek liturgical texts into Old Church Slavonic. Their disciples devised the Cyrillic alphabet (based on Greek and Glagolitic) in which Bulgarian has been written ever since.

In its modern version, standardised after the last spelling reform in 1945, the Bulgarian alphabet is very similar to the Russian Cyrillic alphabet. Today, Bulgarians celebrate St Cyril and Methodius Day as a national holiday on the 24th of May (also known as the Day of Bulgarian Culture or the Cyrillic Alphabet Day). On joining the European Union in January 2007, Bulgaria also had the honour of introducing the Cyrillic alphabet to the EU as its third official writing system, alongside the Roman and Greek alphabets.

Modern Bulgarian has about 9 million speakers and is the official language of Bulgaria, with Bulgarian-speaking minorities in Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Hungary, Greece and Turkey. The literary standard is based on the northeastern dialects. The transitional dialects spoken around the borders between Bulgaria, Serbia and Macedonia are very similar to one another and this has provoked sensitive political issues over the centuries.

This book gives you the practical phrases you need to get by as well as all the fun, spontaneous phrases that lead to a more successful interaction with Bulgarian people and a deeper understanding of their culture. Local knowledge, new relationships and a sense of satisfaction are on the tip of your tongue. So don't just stand there, say something!

abbreviations used in this book

a	adjective	n	(after English) noun
adv	adverb	n	(after Bulgarian) neuter
f	feminine	pl	plural
inf	informal	pol	polite
lit	literally	sg	singular
m	masculine	v	verb