



Bulgaria **guide** Discovered

*'Someday man will land on the Moon,
he will land on other planets as well.
And then he will see how beautiful the Earth was
and he will realise that he lived in Heaven,
but he didn't know and appreciate this.'*

Atanas Dalchev, Bulgarian poet, 1956



On the cover:

Bulgarian Rug

The craft of weaving was passed on from one generation to another within the family. Girls would grow up by the loom.

The materials from which the items are made were fine-quality (fleecy) wool, cotton, hemp, and cloth patches. They were tinted with natural and artificial dyes. The yarns were handspun, using a spindle and distaff, and the so-called mahalka, a large spindle without a distaff. The majority of items had a twisted weft.



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KUKERI

On several occasions during the year, special ritual games called Kukeri, take place in Bulgaria. These games are performed by men only, dressed in colourful hand-made costumes. The Kukeri games aim to scare away the evil spirits with their magic dances, so that the crops can grow well and the harvest is rich.



KUKER'S CLOTHES

One of the important elements of Kuker's clothes are the bells (hlopki, chanove), hanging on their waists. It is believed that hlopki and chanove are coming from ancient times, when shamans used them to enter a state of trance in order to make a journey to other dimensions. The bells are passed from father to son and are a token of public prestige and respect.

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General information



Republic of Bulgaria

Territory:	110 993, 6 sq. km.
Population:	7 364 570
Capital:	Sofia
Official language:	Bulgarian
Alphabet:	Cyrillic
Religion:	Orthodox
Political system:	Parliamentary Republic
National currency:	Lev
Time zone:	GMT +2



The coat of arms of the Republic of Bulgaria

The Lion: Greatness, strength, courage

The Crown: Honor, dignity, power

The Shield: Patronage

The Oak: Tenacity, protection

The Cross: Christian faith

Nature



Bulgaria is a miniature representation of many existing natural beauties all over the world. On a territory of about 111 000 sq. km you can see and enjoy a great variety of magnificent mountain ridges, cozy sand and stone beaches, scenic tectonic and glacial lakes, patchwork plains, green pastures and deep caves.

In the North is situated the Danube Plain, bordering with the Balkan Mountains that run through the middle of the country separating the territory in two. In the South lies the Thracian Lowland, bordering in the Southwest with Rila, Pirin and the Rhodopes Mountains. To the East is the 354 km Black sea coastline.



Some of the main rivers running through the territory of the country are: Danube, Maritza, Mesta, Struma, Iskar and Yantra. Furthermore, in the territory of Bulgaria you can find three national parks, nine natural parks and fifty five nature reserves.

The climate is continental influenced by the Mediterranean climate coming from the South. The average temperature in January is around -5°C , and in July – around 30°C . In addition, if you choose for a stay in Bulgaria you will be lucky to enjoy the beauties and aromas of all four distinct seasons: fresh spring, hot summer, colorful autumn and cold and snowy winter.

Nature





Mountains

Snow-capped peaks and soft green slopes, cool forests carrying the aroma of herbs and wild fruit, fast rivers and crystal-clear blue lakes, mineral springs and bio-reserves, rich plant and animal life, modern ski resorts and small picturesque villages with living traditions and folklore - each Bulgarian mountain has its own original aspect, mark, fascination and identity.

There are five main mountain wonders: Rila, Pirin, Rhodope, Stara Planina and Vitosha. Most of them are national nature parks because of the variety of plants and animals. The Rila Mountain prides to have the highest peak on the Balkan Peninsula – Musala (2925 m), over 219 lakes, 2000 plant varieties and 500 animal species. The jewels in the mountain's crown are the Seven Rila Glacial Lakes, which are one of the main tourist attractions, because of the special energy and nature of the place where they are located.

Nature



Belogradchik Rocks

These rocks resemble fantastic human figures up to 200 meters high and form a strip of land that is 30 km long and 3 km wide. The central group of rocks is situated to the South of Belogradchik town in Northwestern Bulgaria. There are some of the most interesting and impressive formations – Adam and Eve, The Schoolgirl, The Bear, The Shepherd boy, The Dervish, The First slabstone, The Camel, The Mushrooms, The Cuckoo, The Red Wall, The Madonna, The Horseman, The Monks, The Mental Stone, Rebel Velko and The Pine Stones. They are declared as natural landmarks.



Amongst these rocks is situated the pearl of the town – the Belgradchik Castle, built in the 1st and 2nd century.

'... The Alps, the Pyrenees, the most breathtaking of Tyrolean Mountains and Switzerland, cannot offer such a sight. The giant red pillars rising on both sides of a carved roadway under which a bubbly stream leaps in tiny waterfalls, the trees hanging at great height as if ready to fall at any moment, the endless seclusion only broken by the flight of eagles and vultures: all this would impress even the most hardened of souls...' ; wrote the traveler Adolph Blanqui about Belgradchik in 1841.

Nature

The Melnik Rock pyramids

The Rock pyramids in the region of Melnik in Southern Bulgaria rank among the most remarkable natural phenomenon in Bulgaria. An area of about 17 sq. km millennia-long erosion has created a truly unearthly world. It is up to the visitor's imagination to distinguish obelisks, ancient towers, pyramids and giant mushrooms among the various forms of erosion.



Raiskoto praskalo

Raiskoto praskalo ('Heaven's Sprinkle') is the highest waterfall in Bulgaria (125 m). It is situated into the DzhenDEM reserve in the middle of Stara Planina (Balkan mountain). It collects its water from the snowdrift located on the highest peak in Stara planina - Botev (2376 m).



Nature

Krushuna Falls

These waterfalls are situated in the North Bulgaria near Krushuna village, part of the natural park Maarata. They are famous because of the beautiful landscape, full of different colors owing to many travertines, which together with the beauty of the green forest make the landscape incredibly beautiful.



The Sea

The Bulgarian Black Sea Coast is 354 km (220 miles) long, offering marvelous beaches, blue sea and fresh air. The welcoming climate from late May to late September with average sea temperature of 25°C, the fine golden sands and the modern resorts attract more and more tourists.

The Black Sea coast is one of the best spa areas in the country. Tourists can enhance their holiday by enjoying the combination of sea water, mineral baths, hot springs and curative mud.

In addition, they can explore a variety of historical monuments from Roman and Thracian times. The two international airports in Varna and Burgas offer convenient connections from all over the world.



Nature

Kaliakra cape

Kaliakra is the most beautiful and mysterious place in the Bulgarian Northern Black Sea. The narrow rocky peninsula is cutting 2 km into the sea as a wedge and ends with 70 meters high vertical rocks. Its name 'Kaliakra' means 'a beautiful cape'.

Many legends are related to the cape's name. The most popular story tells of how 40 girls with hairs and arms entwined jumped into the sea to evade falling into Ottoman hands. Today, an obelisk called 'The gate of the 40 maidens' is erected at the entrance of the Kaliakra Cape.



Ancient City of Nesebar

Burgas region

Nessebar is one of the oldest towns in Europe and is under the aegis of UNESCO. Situated on a rocky peninsula on the Black Sea, more than 3,000-year-old site of Nessebar was originally a Thracian settlement (Mesembria).

The city's remains include an acropolis, a temple of Apollo, an agora and a wall preserved from the Thracian fortifications. Among other monuments, the Basilica 'Stara Mitropolia' and the fortress date from the Middle Ages, when Nessebar was one of the most important Byzantine towns on the west coast.



Nature

Sozopol

Burgas region

Sozopol is one of the oldest Bulgarian coastal towns and today it is a world heritage site protected by UNESCO. It is best known for its magnificent beaches and genuine architecture.

The town hosts an International music and art festival every September for ten days. It offers an excellent choice of restaurants and bars spread throughout the old town's cobblestone streets serving a variety of high quality local cuisine and wines.

In the summer of 2010 the remains of John the Baptist were found on an island near Sozopol. National Geographic produced a documentary on this discovery.





History and culture

Bulgaria is a cradle of ancient civilizations like Thracians, Romans, Slavs and Bulgarians. Bulgaria is the birthplace of the Cyrillic alphabet, which was developed in Preslav and Ohrid Literary Schools during the 10th century. Today, more than 200 million people from different countries use the developed version of the Cyrillic alphabet.

Moreover, Bulgaria has nine UNESCO World Heritage Sites, five of which have historical and cultural origin: the Boyana Church, the Madara Rider, the Kazanlak Thracian Tomb, the Rock-hewn Churches of Ivanovo, the Rila Monastery, the Ancient City of Nessebar and the Pirin National Park, the Srebarna Biosphere reserve and the Thracian Tomb near the village of Sveshtari.



Boyana Church

Boyana district, Sofia region

Located in the outskirts of Sofia, the Boyana Church consists of three buildings. The Eastern Church was built in the 10th century, and then enlarged at the beginning of the 13th century by Sebastocrator, the whole building was finished with a further expansion to the West in the middle of the 19th century. The church owes its world fame mainly to its frescoes from 1259. They form a second layer over the paintings from earlier centuries and represent one of the most complete and well-preserved monuments of Eastern European medieval art. A total of 89 scenes with 240 human images are depicted on the walls of the church.



History and culture

Rila monastery

Rila Mountain, Kyustendil region

Rila Monastery was founded in the 10th century by St. Ivan of Rila. He was revered as a saint when he was still alive and the legend says that wild animals were coming to him, and birds were landing on his hands.

Today, St. Ivan of Rila is honored as one of the most important saints of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. His ascetic dwelling and tomb became a holy site and were transformed into a monastic complex which played an important role in the spiritual and social life of medieval Bulgaria.

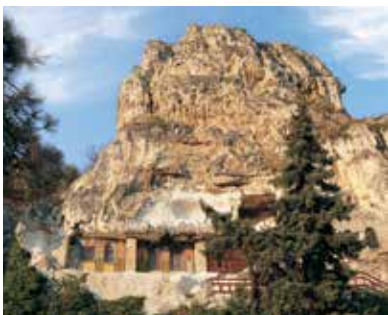


Rock-Hewn Churches of Ivanovo

Village of Ivanovo, Ruse region

In the valley of the Rusenski Lom River, in Northeastern Bulgaria, a complex of rock-hewn churches, chapels, monasteries and cells are situated. This is where the first hermits had dug out their cells and churches during the 12th century.

The 14th century murals testify to the exceptional skill of the artists belonging to the Tarnovo Painting School.



History and culture

Madara Rider

Village of Madara, Shumen region

The Madara Rider, representing the figure of a horseman, is carved into a 100-metre-high cliff near the village of Madara in Northeastern Bulgaria. The horseman, facing right, is thrusting a spear into a lion lying at his horse's feet. An eagle is flying in front of the horseman and a dog is running after him. Madara was the primary sacred place of the Bulgarian state before Bulgaria's conversion to Christianity in the 9th century. It is believed that the inscription depicts the Bulgarian ruler – Khan Tervel who is famous for saving Europe from the invasion of the Arabs in 718.



Thracian Tomb of Kazanlak

Kazanlak, Stara Zagora region

Discovered in 1944, this tomb dates from the Hellenistic period, around the end of the 4th century BC. It is located near Seutopolis, the capital city of the Thracian king Seutes III, and is part of a large Thracian necropolis.

The tholos (ceremonial room) has a narrow corridor and a round burial chamber, both decorated with murals representing Thracian burial rituals and culture. These paintworks are Bulgaria's best-preserved artistic masterpieces from the Hellenistic period.



History and culture

Perperikon

Kardzhali region

In recent years, Bulgaria has attracted world attention with numerous discoveries of ancient cultural monuments. In 2000, excavations unearthed what is now known as the European Machu Picchu – the sanctuary of Perperikon. The ancient Thracian city of Perperikon is located in the Eastern Rhodope, 15 km Northeast of the present-day town of Kardzhali, Bulgaria, on a 470-metre-high rocky hill.

Perperikon is the largest archeological megalith (large stone) ensemble in the Balkans. Legends and historical sources read that the Perperikon complex harboured sanctuary and oracular shrine dedicated to the Greek God Dionysius.



Etar

Gabrovo region

Architectural ethnographic complex 'Etar' is the first one of this type in Bulgaria. The museum is situated 8 km South of Gabrovo.

Inside the Etar is the only one and unique collection of old-times water-driven machinery in Bulgaria. It consists of ten objects and is one of the richest and well preserved open air museums in Europe.



History and culture

Melnik

Blagoevgrad region

The breath-taking Melnik sand pyramids rank among the most remarkable natural phenomenon in Bulgaria, as well as in the world. It is up to the visitor's imagination to distinguish obelisks, ancient towers, pyramids, and giant mushrooms among the various forms of erosion. What is even more intriguing is the practical use of a number of these pyramids around for nothing else but wine cellars!

Apart from the unique natural surroundings, the town also boasts for the fascinating architecture of its old Melnik houses, most of which were built during the Bulgarian Renaissance. In the southwest town of Melnik is situated the biggest Renaissance house in Bulgaria – Kordopulova, built in 1754.



Koprivshitsa

Panaguirishte region

Koprivshitsa is a town situated in the heart of Sredna Gora Mountain.

The town's greatest wealth are the preserved houses from 19th century with colorful courtyards, surrounded with high stone walls and gates, and the curved and narrow cobblestone streets.





History and culture

Plovdiv

Plovdiv (in ancient times known as Philippopolis and Trimontium) is the second largest city in Bulgaria, situated on the two banks of Maritsa River. Its unique location on these ancient crossroads has stimulated strong cultural and political influences from East and West civilizations, while in the same time the city has maintained its unique cultural identity. Plovdiv is one of the Europe's oldest cities. It was originally a Thracian settlement before becoming a major city ruled by Greeks and Romans in Antiquity. In the Middle Ages, it retained its strategic regional importance within the Byzantine and Bulgarian Empires.

Being older than most of the oldest towns like Rome, Athens, Carthage or Constantinople, and almost contemporary of the ancient city of Troy and Mycenae, Plovdiv is a town built upon layers of towns and a culture developed upon layers of cultures. The city has historically developed on seven syenite hills, some of which are 250 m high. Because of these seven hills, Plovdiv is often referred in Bulgaria as 'The City of the Seven Hills'. Plovdiv is a picturesque town, with many parks and gardens, museums and archaeological monuments. Its old part, called the 'Old Town', characterized by houses from the National Revival period (18th - 19th century), is an imposing open-air museum situated on the three hills of the ancient Trimontium.

One of the most remarkable sights of the town can be enjoyed from the well-preserved Roman theatre called 'the Ancient Theatre' which is still used for open-air performances. Moreover, Plovdiv hosts various economic and cultural events such as the Plovdiv International Fair, the International theatrical festival called 'A scene on a crossroad' and the TV festival 'The golden chest'.



History and culture

Golden treasures of Bulgaria

In the Antiquity Bulgarian lands were inhabited by the Thracians. They have left us amazing artifacts like unique stone tombs with preserved murals and precious golden and silver treasures.

The golden treasure of PANAGYURISHTE

A Thracian treasure excavated in 1949 near the town of Panagyurishte, dating back to the 4th-3rd centuries BC, is made of 24-karat, pure solid gold with total weight of 6,164 kg. It consists of a royal feast dinner set of nine vessels with original shape and decoration. There are rhytons with the shape of animal heads and heads of goddesses. The



jugs, amphoras and phials are decorated with scenes from the Homer's 'Iliad'.

The golden treasure of VALCHITRAN

The Valchitran golden treasure was unearthed in 1925 in the village of Valchitran, Pleven. The biggest golden treasure known to the Bulgarian archaeology – 12,5 kg of pure gold with natural alloys of silver, copper and iron was found by chance while digging up a vineyard.

A very interesting fact regarding the small cups found is that the master goldsmiths made them in a way that they would stand in upright



to the end of the Bronze Age, i.e. to the 16th – 12th century BC.

The Golden Mask of tsar Teres

Archeologists discovered a 2,400-year-old golden mask that was likely made for a Thracian monarch's funeral. The mask depicts a full face with moustache and beard. The rare artifact is made of 600 grams of solid gold and 'is without paragon in archeology', according to the archeologist Georgi Kitov and his team that unearthed the relic in the summer of



position only when filled with liquid. Probably we will never find out the right answers to our questions but the Valchitran golden treasure gives us the opportunity to touch on antiquity in a unique and mysterious way. The treasure dates back

2004 near the village of Shipka, in the so-called Valley of Thracian Kings.

Besides the mask, the archeologists also found a golden ring showing a rower, and many bronze and silver vessels. No remains have been found but archeologists continue to excavate the tomb.

History and culture

Historical figures

Bulgaria's contribution to the world cultural and historic heritage goes beyond ancient treasures. A constellation of prominent Bulgarians have worked and are working for enriching the intellectual and spiritual treasures of the country and the world.

Among them are: the creators of the Slavic alphabet and the first translators of liturgical books from Greek into Old-Bulgarian.



St. Cyril and St. Methodius

Creators of the Slavic alphabet and the first translators of liturgical books from Greek into Old-Bulgarian.

The contemporary Bulgarian (Cyrillic) alphabet:

А,а /A,a/	Б,б /B,b/	В,в /V,v/	Г,г /G,g/	Д,д /D,d/	Е,е /E,e/	Ж,ж /Zh,zh/	З,з /Z,z/	И,и /I,i/	Й,й /Y,y/
К,к /K,k/	Л,л /L,l/	М,м /M,m/	Н,н /N,n/	О,о /O,o/	П,п /P,p/	Р,р /R,r/	С,с /S,s/	Т,т /T,t/	У,у /U,u/
Ф,ф /F,f/	Х,х /H,h/	Ц,ц /Ts,ts/	Ч,ч /Ch,ch/	Ш,ш /Sh,sh/	Щ,щ /Sht,sht/	Ъ,ъ /A,a/	Ь,ь /Y,y/	Ю,ю /Yu,yu/	Я,я /Ya,ya/



Tsar Simeon I
Simeon Veliki -
Simeon The Great
(893 - 927)

The greatest ruler ever of Bulgaria, who was the driving force for The Golden Age of Bulgarian Medieval Civilization.

Paisiy Hilendarski
(1722 - 1773)

The father of the Bulgarian Renaissance and author of the first Bulgarian history book.



Vasil Levski
(1837 - 1873)

Theoretician and strategist of the struggle of Bulgarian people for liberation from Ottoman rule, called by Bulgarians 'the Apostle of Freedom'.



History and culture

Hristo Botev (1848-1876)

Genius of the Bulgarian literature. He is one of the most brilliant Bulgarian poets and revolutionaries. A verse of Hristo Botev is written in golden letters in the Sorbonne – Paris, as an example of his poetry masterpiece:

'Nastane vecher – mesets izgree,
zvezdi obspiat svoda nebesen, gora
zashumi, viatar povee, Balkanat pee
haidushka pesen.'

English version: 'The moon comes out and the day grows dim, on heaven's vault the stars now throng, the forest rustles, quiet stirs the wind, the mountains sing song of fighters.'



Ivan Vazov (1850-1921)

For more than fifty years Ivan Vazov was the most prominent figure in Bulgarian literature after The Liberation.



Petar Danov (1864-1944)

Worldly recognized spiritual leader.

'The entire world renders homage to me and I render homage to the Master Petar Danov from Bulgaria.'

Albert Einstein





John Atanasoff (1903-1995)

Creator of the world's first electronically digital computer between 1939 and 1942. Before him, a great number of mechanical calculating machines were built. However, he came to the idea of abandoning mechanics and designed electronic calculating circuits operating through a binary system of numbers. His invention opened the door to the world information revolution.



Vladimir Dimitrov – Maistora (1888-1960)

One of the most talented 20th century Bulgarian painters and probably the most remarkable stylist in Bulgarian painting in the Post-Russo-Turkish War era.



Zlatyu Boyadzhiev (1903-1976)

He is one of the most prominent Bulgarian painters. He is especially noted for his village portraits.

History and culture

Famous Bulgarians contemporaries

Raina Kabaivanska

Opera singer, one of the most renowned sopranos in the second half of the 20th century.

'Raina has the ability to focus on what is essential in a character. This is why her heroines are always stripped of any deceit. She possesses the honesty that allows her to reach down to the depth of her characters... When Raina appears, the stage becomes replete with her presence.' Mauro Bolognini



Ghena Dimitrova (1941–2005)

She is a Bulgarian opera soprano. She was nation and world wide famous with her performances in the Italian opera 'La Scala' where she performed Turandot, Aida, etc. 'Had one of the most formidably dramatic voices among sopranos of the past 25 years', wrote The Guardian.

Valya Balkanska

One of the most famous Bulgarian folklore singers, whose voice is traveling in deep space on NASA's 'Voyager'.



Mystery of the Bulgarian Voices (Le mystere des Voix Bulgares)



'These are the singers that won the Grammy Award and endorsement from such pop superstars as Paul Simon, Linda Ronstadt, George Harrison, Bobby McFerrin, Midori and many others all over the world. They

create a crossover sensation everywhere they perform as listeners of all music faiths gather in the presence of sounds more strangely wonderful than almost any they have heard before... Everyone could consider himself richer in spirit for having heard Le Mystere des Voix Bulgares', Chicago Tribune.

Teodosiy Spassov

Owing to his career, the Bulgarian word 'kaval' (shepherd's flute) has penetrated the vocabulary of thousands of music fans in various points of the planet. He has worked with River Dance and Glen Moore and is 1994 Grammy holder jointly with the Mystery of the Bulgarian Voices Choir.



Vasko Vasilev

He is a world-wide famous violinist. He is a concertmaster and creative director of the Royal Opera House – London. He was also a teacher of Vanessa May.

History and culture

Skiller (Alexander Deyanov)

A world-wide famous beatboxer from Sofia/Bulgaria. Known as the 'fast mouth' from the East, he has brought the art of beatboxing to mass attention in Bulgaria.

He is the first national beatbox champion (2007). He also won the 2012 World Beatbox Championship in Berlin. He is the first Bulgarian who ever won this competition.



Kamen Donev

A celebrated Bulgarian actor, producer, dramatist and choreographer. He has more than 40 roles on the scene and over 30 dramatic works. He has won 16 national and international awards for his exquisite talent.

Lyubomir Neykov

A famous Bulgarian comedian. He became popular with his participation in 'The Actor Trio', together with Krasimir Radkov and Viktor Kalev in the Slavi's show on BTV. In 2007 he started his own show named 'Komitsite' (The Comedians) together with other famous Bulgarian comedy actors.





Krasimir Radkov

A famous Bulgarian comedy actor. He is well known on television and in the theater. He has over 30 roles with two nominations for ASKEER (Bulgarian award for theater achievements).

Since 2004 he has worked in the most popular Bulgarian Talk Show – ‘Slavi’s show’.

Stephan Komandarev

One of the most promising Bulgarian producers. Among his most prized movies is ‘The world is big and salvation lurks around the corner’.



History and culture

Ivan Minekov

One of the most appreciated contemporary Bulgarian sculptors. As a graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts 'Nicolae Grigorescu' in Romania, under Prof. Paul Vasilescu's beneficial guidance, Minekov's striking talent quickly attracted the attention of the Bulgarian artistic society. Today Minekov's works are owned by private collectors in Europe, USA, Israel and Japan.

Kristalina Georgieva

She is a Bulgarian economist and politician, who is currently serving as European Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response in the second college of the Barroso Commission.



She was appointed as a Vice President and Corporate Secretary of the World Bank Group in March 2008; in January 2010 she announced her intention to resign from this post in view of her nomination to the Commission of the European Union. In 2010 Kristalina Georgieva was named European of the Year and EU Commissioner of the Year.

Bulgaria National Youth Mathematics Team

The Bulgarian youth mathematics team regularly participates in International Mathematics Olympiads and wins gold medals. Bulgaria is one of the best performers in international competitions and Olympiads together with China and the US.

Bulgarian Motocyclism

The Bulgarian Motocyclism is gathering momentum. In 2010 Bulgaria was awarded with the prestigious award – ‘Nation with the biggest contribution to the development of motorcycling’.

Bulgaria men’s Volleyball Team

One of the leading teams in Europe and the World. In 2009 the team won the bronze medals at the European volleyball championship in Izmir (Turkey). In 2012 the team finished the Olympics in the UK at the fourth place.

Petar Stoychev

The most successful marathon swimmer of the last decade, winner of nine consecutive FINA Open Water Swimming World Cups with over 50 wins in individual races, holder of the world record for crossing the English Channel ‘La Manche’ in 6 hours 57 minutes and 50 seconds.



Stanka Zlateva

One of the most famous Bulgarian wrestlers, she has won over 10 gold medals at World and European Wrestling Championships. She won silver medal at the Olympics in the UK in 2012.

History and culture

Dimitar Berbatov

One of the most prolific Bulgarian strikers, scoring 48 goals for 77 games for the National team, which is an all-time record. He is currently playing for Fulham in the English Premier League, after a record breaking transfer of £30.75 million. He is one of the three strikers, who managed to score 5 goals in a single match in the Premier League. The fans use to call him 'Berbo' or 'Berba'.



Ivet Lalova

A Bulgarian athlete who specializes in the 100 m and 200 m sprint competitions. She is the 9th fastest woman in 100 m history, and finished fourth in the 100 m and fifth in the 200 m competitions at the 2004 Summer Olympics. In August 2007 she reached the quarterfinals of the women's 100 m sprint at the IAAF World Championship in Osaka, finishing in fifth place with a time of 11.33 sec.

Veselin Topalov

A world famous Bulgarian chess grandmaster. Topalov became World Champion by winning the FIDE World Chess Championship 2005. He was awarded the 2005 Chess Oscar. In October 2006, Topalov had the 2nd highest Elo rating of all time (2813).





Mila Rodino ('Мила Родино', translated as 'Dear Motherland' or 'Dear Native Land') is the current national anthem of Bulgaria. It is based on the music and text of the song 'Gorda Stara Planina' by Tsvetan Radoslavov, written and composed as he left to fight in the Serbo-Bulgarian War from 1885. It was adopted as anthem in 1964.

Мила Родино

(Bulgarian Cyrillic)

Първи куплет:

Горда Стара планина,
до ней Дунава синей,
слънце Тракия огрява,
над Пирина пламеней.

Прпев (2 пъти):

Мила Родино, ти си
земен рай, твойта
хубост, твойта прелест,
ах, те нямат край.

Втори куплет:

Паднаха борци безчет
за народа наш любим,
майко, дай ни мъжка сила
пътя им да продължим.

Mila Rodino

(Transliteration)

First couplet:

Gorda Stara planina,
do nei Dunava sinei,
sluntse Trakiya ogriava,
nad Pirina plamenei.

Refrain (twice):

Mila Rodino, ti si
zemen rai, tvoita
hubost, tvoita prelest,
ah, te niamat krai.

Second couplet:

Padnaha borts bezchet
za naroda nash liubim,
maiko, dai ni muzhka sila
putya im da produlzhim.

Education

The education in Bulgaria is open to the world and the needs of the knowledge based economy. Most educational institutions have good computer facilities and broadband Internet connection. The teachers apply interactive methods in their classwork. The teaching of foreign languages is introduced from an early age in kindergartens and schools.

The Bulgarian universities are open to foreign students. The academic programs are developed in line with European trends as the Bologna process. The academic staff is being enriched by young specialists educated abroad. English taught courses are introduced in many universities.

People wishing to study in Bulgaria or to enroll their children should contact the relevant embassies or consulate offices of their country of origin (Education Office), or the Bulgarian Ministry of Education, Youth and Science.



More info on Bulgarian education system:

<http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice>

FORMAL EDUCATION


LEVELS	STAGES	AGE OF LEARNERS	TYPE OF PROVIDERS
BASIC EDUCATION	Pre-school Education	5-7	School based in pre-primary groups Kindergarten based
	Primary Education	6/7 – 9/10	General schools
	(General Lower secondary)	10/11 – 14-15	General schools
Diploma for completed Basic Education			
SECONDARY EDUCATION	Upper Secondary education 1 st stage Grades 8-10	14/15 – 18/19 Compulsory education age is 16	General schools Language schools Sport schools Art schools Vocational gymnasia
	2 nd stage Grades 11-12		
Certificate for completed 1 st stage of Secondary Education after 10 th grade. Diploma for completed secondary education after second stage (12 grade) and possibility for continuing education in Colleges and Universities			
UPPER SECONDARY NON-TERTIARY	College Education	After completed Secondary Education 19-22	Vocational colleges Art colleges Medical Colleges
Diploma for completed education as Specialist			
HIGHER EDUCATION	Bachelor	After completed Secondary or College Education	Humanitarian Universities Technical Universities Art Universities Sport Universities Medical Universities
	Master	After completed Bachelor degree	
	Doctor	After completed Master degree	
Diploma for completed respective degree level of higher education (bachelor, master, doctor)			
CONTINUING TRAINING	NON-FORMAL	INFORMAL	
CVET in VET Centers for up-grade or acquisition of vocational qualification Continuing training in University's Departments for additional qualification	Non-formal learning for key competencies, languages, art, sport, out of class activities	Informal learning: in the family, at the workplace, through media, libraries, etc.	



Practical guide

Upon Entry

- All children entering Bulgaria will need to have their own passport. Children included in their parents' passports will only be allowed in if the passport also contains their photograph.
- All foreign nationals who have entered the territory of Bulgaria are obliged to register within 48 hours after their entry into the country. Upon entry into Bulgaria, foreigners should declare in writing the purpose of their stay and the address at which they will reside. In order to register they should fill in a registration form. They have to register their address in Bulgaria either at the services for administrative control of foreign nationals, or at the nearest district police station, depending on the address where they are staying at. This registration includes: full name, date of birth, citizenship, as well as the number and series of their identity documents. Address changes also have to be reported within 48 hours.
- Exempt from this are citizens of the European Union member-states and the citizens of the countries in the European Economic Area. For more information you might find it useful to consult: http://europa.eu/eu-life/index_en.htm
- Foreigners entering Bulgarian territory on a motor vehicle have to present a document of ownership for that vehicle, if such ownership is not explicitly shown in the vehicle's registration documents.
- Natural persons or legal entities, which provide shelter to foreign nationals, are obliged to notify within 48 hours either the relevant service for administrative control of foreign nationals, or the nearest district police station. If a foreign national is staying in a hotel, the receptionists are obliged to perform this duty. If a foreign national is paying a private visit, the Bulgarian host is obliged to register the foreign guest.
- When you travel to any Bulgarian city, and you plan to stay for longer than



two days, you should go to the local police station and fill in address registration. You can find contact details of Bulgarian embassies, consulates and missions on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

<http://www.mfa.government.bg/>

Residence and work permit

- All foreigners are required to obtain a residence permit if they are to stay for a certain period of time, no matter the reasons for being in the country. In order to be an eligible applicant for a residence permit, you should obtain a Type D visa before you travel to Bulgaria. The national authority responsible for issuing the permit is National Service 'Police' (under the Ministry of Interior, <http://www.mvr.bg/>), section 'Traveling in Bulgaria'.
- If you are a citizen / family member of a citizen of the EU, the European Economic Area Agreement, Confederation Switzerland, you might find it useful to consult the European Union Citizens and Members of Their Families Entry and Residence in and Departure from the Republic of Bulgaria Act: <http://www.mfa.bg/en/> > **Consular Services** > **International Adoptions and** http://europa.eu/eu-life/index_en.htm
- If you are not a citizen/member of family of a citizen of the EU, the European Economic Area Agreement, Confederation Switzerland, you might find it useful to consult the Law for Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria, which can be downloaded from the website of the Ministry of Interior Affairs: <http://www.mvr.bg/> > **Legal Framework** > **Laws and Rules**
- The law, regulating the issuance and using Bulgarian identification documents, Law for the Bulgarian Identification Documents, can be downloaded from the website of the Ministry of Interior: <http://www.mvr.bg/> > **Legal Framework** > **Laws and Rules**

Practical guide

- Under the Foreign Nationals Act, foreign nationals who have been allowed to reside permanently in Bulgaria are allowed to work under the same conditions, which are valid for Bulgarian nationals. Foreign nationals with short term or long term residence permits on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria may enter into labour contracts only with a work permit issued by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.
- The National Employment Agency (NEA) is the authority responsible for issuing work permits. You might visit the NEA website for more information: <http://www.az.government.bg/>


Health Insurance

- If you are a citizen of an EU member state or of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland, and you plan to stay temporarily (usually up to 90 days) in Bulgaria, you might consider obtaining the European Health Insurance Card. Presentation of the European Health Insurance Card guarantees you reimbursement of the medical costs on the spot, or soon after your return home. For more information, see:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/healthcard/index_en.htm

- If you are not a citizen of any of these countries, you should check with your national authorities if you are entitled to free or subsidised health treatment in Bulgaria as part of a reciprocal health agreement between your home country and Bulgaria. If you are not, it might be a good idea to obtain health insurance for the period of your stay in Bulgaria.
- If you plan a longer stay in Bulgaria as a student/ researcher, you are entitled to the





same health care rights as a Bulgarian citizen if you are part of an academic programme (usually leading to a degree) approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science. You should check this information with the educational institution you are planning to attend. Still public health care security does not cover all kinds of medical services, so you might consider supplementing it with private health insurance.

Driving license

If you are non EU citizen your home-country driving licence may be used for up to three months in Bulgaria, after which it has to be replaced with a Bulgarian one re-taking driving tests. Exempt the citizens of the EU who can use freely their national driving license.

Currency & Exchange & Cards

The official currency is the Bulgarian Lev. It is fixed to the Euro. One Lev is worth around 0.50 euro. The Lev is divided into 100 stotinka. You could see banknotes and coins on the website of the Bulgarian National Bank: <http://www.bnb.bg/>. You can exchange money at banks and independent currency exchange bureaus. Avoid exchange offered by people in the street as they are usually not certified to perform this action. The usual banking hours are 09:00-16:00, while independent bureaus work until 18:00, some of them even 24 hours. There is an extensive ATM network, so you can obtain cash anytime almost anywhere. All major European and North American debit cards could be used to withdraw money. The number of retailers accepting card payment is growing. However, you still need to carry cash, especially in small towns and rural areas.



Practical guide

Communications

Phone Services & Internet

The landline phone service covers the whole country. The mobile phone network is operational except for high mountain regions. You can make cheap phone calls from Internet cafes and phone booths. There are a great number of Internet providers. However, quality and price vary, so you might wish to seek advice from local users, especially if you are to choose among local providers, operating in a limited area. In recent years the number of free wi-fi networks increases in big cities.

Postal and Courier Services

Postal and courier services in Bulgaria are provided by numerous national companies and branches of the most popular international companies. The biggest national company is the Bulgarian Posts (Български пощи). For more info: <http://www.bgpost.bg/>.

Transport

International transport

Bulgaria has four major airports – Sofia, Varna, Burgas, Plovdiv. They serve daily hundreds of flights from Western and Central Europe, as well as from Asia and The Middle East. All major airline companies have connections with Bulgaria and offices on the airports.

City transport

In the capital city you can enjoy variety of public transport means from buses to trolleys, trams and metro. This type of transport is relatively fast and cheap option for short distances. In rush hours (8:00-09:00 in the morning and 17:30-19:00 in the evening) it is advisable to use the metro.

Taxi

Ask your local friends about the cheapest and the most reliable companies in the region. Make sure you read the tariffs before you get into a car. They are posted on windscreens. Once you are in, make sure the driver has started the taximeter. The legitimate taxi colors are yellow or bright green (for the eco-taxis).

Metro

The Sofia metro is constantly expanding. At the moment it has 2 lines: Line 1 (red) – connecting the districts of Lyulin and Mladost; Line 2 (blue) – connecting the districts of Lozenets and Nadezhda. The two lines cross in the downtown of the city.



Practical guide

Intercity transport

Train

Bulgarian railway network covers the whole country and the Bulgarian State Railways Company offers a variety of ticket discounts. The company's website is convenient to use and provides you with thorough information: <http://bdz.bg/>

Bus

There are many private companies providing bus transportation. Traveling between cities and Sofia is easy: <http://www.centralnaavtogara.bg/>. However, traveling between many towns and smaller places might need complex planning and change of transportation means.





Accommodation

It is easy to arrange a short stay in Bulgaria. You may search in Internet for hotel and hostel accommodation. Renting private accommodation is a good option for people who love peace and quiet. These might vary a lot in price and quality. Surfing the Internet for a private apartment to rent will probably return the most expensive options. Much more reasonable is to rent a property advertised in newspapers.

Agencies will typically charge you half a month's rent. Bear in mind that most of the rented apartments are unfurnished. If you need to later provide official proof of your expenses, you should make sure your landlord is willing to provide you with the necessary papers.

Electricity

Household electricity is supplied at 220/240 volts (V) with a frequency of 50 Hertz (Hz). If you are moving from a country with a 110 V supply, your electrical equipment will require a converter or a transformer to convert it to 240 V.

Water

Tap water is safe to drink in most of the cities, while in many rural areas it is used for washing. If you have some doubts, buy mineral water. Bulgaria is famous for its mineral water, which is not only of high quality but also of a reasonable price. Water shortages are rare in towns and cities, but they are common in some rural areas.

More from Bulgaria

Musical Instruments & Food & Festivities

The caval

The caval is an ancient folk instrument carved in wood, sometimes dog-wood, cherry, maple or plum but mainly of yew. You can see both small cavals (ordinary) and large cavals (up to one meter in length) in Bulgaria. The caval can be played as a solo or an accompanying instrument. It harmonizes well with the gadulka, gayda and tambura and performs a basic role in folk orchestras. In modern times, the caval has found a new significance. By improving their playing technique, some musicians have succeeded in using the caval to interpret jazz music and in creating duets with the human voice (see Teodosiy Spasov). Recently, composers have written new symphonic works for caval and orchestra.



The gaida

The gayda is a Bulgarian folk instrument that can be seen in two varieties: the large bagpipes, called the kaba with a low register; and the small one called the dzhura with a highpitched register. The most famous is the so called Rhodope (mountain) gayda, which is used as a lyrical accompaniment of Rhodope songs and melodies.

The tupan

(bass drum)

The rhythmic deep sound of the tapan can be heard during weddings, village dances, the performances of kukeri (see Kukeri) and nestinari (see Nestinari). The tapan is primarily an accompanying instrument that marks the rhythm but it can also be played as a sol instrument. Well-tuned and with good acoustic construction, it has a beautiful tone.

An accomplished musician can get sounds from it not only by hitting the different sections of the drum heads but also by hitting the hoops and the body or even by rubbing the skins (friction percussion).



The gadulka

The gadulka is a simply-made Bulgarian folk instrument of the chordophone family, known mainly in Thrace, the Balkans and central Bulgaria. Sound is produced by rubbing its strings with a bow. The Gadulka is an important instrument in the traditional Bulgarian horo round dances.

More from Bulgaria

The horo

Horo is a traditional Bulgarian folklore round dance. There is a plethora of horo varieties around the country depending on the regional specifics. The most popular type of horo dance is called 'Pravo horo' and is performed by group of people (there is no limit to the number of people) holding each other to form a circle. The movement is two steps forwards, one step back.

Horo is played on weddings, local festivals and on New Year's Eve. It is mainly played on big holidays or family gatherings - such as weddings for example. On 2nd May 2005 the longest horo took place in Alexander Nevski Square in Sofia, involving more than 13 000 participants.



Nestinari – fire-dancers

This is a custom that can be seen only in some villages between Stran-dzha and the Black Sea, around Burgas. It is observed on the holiday of St. Konstantin and Elena (21st of May), and sometimes during some of the local village fairs and the patron Saint's days. A basic element of the custom is the dance on fire (glowing embers) holding icons of the saints in their hands. In their trance the nestinari divine and predict the future. The whole village takes part in the celebration but it is only the fire-dancers that participate in the ritual dance. They are chosen by the saint who is patron of the holiday. The dancers are able to 'see' his face, to 'hear' his voice and his spirit is transferred in them and on his behalf they can interpret omens and give guidance to people.



More from Bulgaria

Baba Marta – martenitsi

Martenitsa is a small piece of adornment, made of white and red yarn. It is worn from 1st of March until an individual sees a stork, swallow or a budding tree.

The name of the holiday is Baba Marta. 'Baba' is the Bulgarian word for 'grandmother' and 'Mart' is the Bulgarian word for the month of March. Baba Marta is a Bulgarian tradition related to welcoming the upcoming spring.



Kukeri - mummers

On New Year's Eve and Simni Zagovezni (40 days before Easter) in Bulgaria special rituals called Mummers' games take place. The Mummers' games are performed by unmarried men only. They put on special masks and costumes.

Some of the masks have two faces. On one of the sides the nose is snub and the face is good-humored and on the other the nose is hooked and the face is ominous. Those masks symbolize the good and the bad which coexist in the world. The Mummers' games aim to scare off and sweep away forever the evil spirits, so that the crops for the next year are rich.





More from Bulgaria



Bulgarian wine

Wine has been known in the land of Bulgaria since Ancient times. Archeology, folklore and literature provide sample evidence that wine grapes have thrived in these lands ever since the late Stone Age: grape growing and wine making were vital to the way of life of the Thracians, Romans, Greeks, Slavs and Bulgarians. Unique Bulgarian wines are: Mavrud, Gamza and Melnik.



Rose oil

Bulgaria is one of the biggest producers of rose oil in the world. The reason for this is hidden in the high qualities of the Bulgarian Kazanlak rose ('Kazanlashka roza'), a special type, that was cultivated in our country after many years of production and development.

The Bulgarian roses are inheritors of the so called Damascena rose, which was brought here ages ago. Each year right before the rose harvesting season the town of Kazanlak hosts the Festival of Kazanlak rose ('Kazanlashka roza'), a special type that was cultivated in our country after many years of production and development.



More from Bulgaria

Kiselo mlyako – Bulgarian yoghurt

The Bulgarian yoghurt is famous for its bacterium, called *Lactobacillus Bulgaricum*. The bacterium is observed in natural state only in Bulgaria. Thanks to this bacterium the quality of yoghurt produced through natural fermentation is so good and so distinctive that the product is exported simply as Bulgarian Yoghurt. Licenses and know-how for its production are currently used by companies in Japan, Germany, Switzerland, Finland and South Korea.



Sirene – Bulgarian cheese

Bulgarian cheese is traditionally made of cow or sheep milk. It is a typical Bulgarian food that goes well both with fruits, vegetables and wine.

Bob v garne – Bean in an earthenware pot

This is a traditional Bulgarian dish that can be tasted in every typical Bulgarian restaurant. It is prepared from beans, peppers, onion, tomatoes and savory and/or mint.





Banitsa - Baked cheese pastry

Banitsa is a traditional Bulgarian pastry made of eggs, flour and cheese. You can taste different variations of banitsa all around the country. It can be eaten for breakfast or as a dessert.

On New Year's Eve there is a tradition to serve banitsa with hidden fortune tickets inside. It is believed that the wishing, written on the ticket you find in your piece of banitsa (for example: 'health', 'love', 'joy', 'marriage', 'child', etc.) will show your luck for the coming year.

More from Bulgaria

Shopska salata – Shopska salad

The first thing you will notice in the salad menu of every Bulgarian restaurant will be Shopska salata. It is prepared from tomatoes, cucumbers, baked peppers and white Bulgarian Cheese and is perfect in the summertime, when all the ingredients are freshly picked from the garden.



Bulgarian honey

Honey is a traditional Bulgarian product. It has been produced in Bulgaria for more than 3000 years. Bulgaria has excellent conditions for the production of honey: a clean nature, a mild climate and a richly forested land.

Numerous types of blossoming plants and trees make for a variety of subtle honey flavors. A lot of the healing properties of the herbs and plants are in the honey and propolis. Honey products are 100% absorbed by the human organism. For best results should be consumed between 50 and 100 grammes daily.



Bulgarian herbs

Herb gathering in Bulgaria has a long tradition, dating back to Ancient times. More than 3000 different types of plants grow on the sunny slopes and in the shady forests of Bulgaria's four great mountains.

Over 300 of these plants are used in the pharmaceutical industry, while 750 types are used in alternative medicine. Some of the most popular herbs are mint, chamomile, thyme, lavender, wild marjoram and St. John's wort.



More from Bulgaria

Public Holidays

1st January – New Year's Day

3rd March – National Holiday

(Bulgaria's Day of Liberation from the Ottoman Rule)

1st May – Labour Day

6th May – St. George's Day, Day of the Bulgarian Army

24th May – Day of Bulgarian Enlightenment and Culture
and of the Slavic Alphabet

6th September – Bulgaria's Unification Day

22nd September – Bulgaria's Independence Day

1st November – Enlightenment Leaders Day – holiday for education institutions

24th December – Christmas Eve

25th and 26th December – Christmas

Easter – two days (Sunday and Monday); moveable holiday



Bulgarian useful phrases (in Latin letters)

Hello	Zdraveite
Good morning / afternoon	Dobro utro / Dobur den
Good evening	Dobur vecher
Goodnight	Leka nosht
Goodbye	Dovizhdane
How are you?	Kak si?
Fine	Dobre
Thank you / Thanks	Blagodaria
Please	Molia
Yes / No	Da / Ne
Nice to meet you	Priatno mi e
What's your name?	Kak se kazvate?
My name is _____	Kazvam se _____
Excuse me	Izvinete
How to get to?	Kak da stigma do?
Where is _____ ?	Kade e _____ ?
Central train / bus station	Tsentralna gara / avtogara
To the Airport	Do letishteto
To the City centre	Do/za tsentura
The _____ hotel	Hotel _____
The _____ street	Ulitsa _____
Left	Liavo
Right	Diasno
Straight ahead	Napravo
Where does this train/bus go?	Za kude e tozi vlak / avtobus?
One ticket, please.	Edin billet, molia
Food and Drinks	Hrana i Napitki
Bread, sugar, salt	Hliab, zahar, sol
Meat: pork, chicken, veal	Meso: svinsko, pilesшко, telesшко
Vegetables: tomato, cucumber	Zelenchuci: domat, krastavica
Fruits: apple, cherries, pears	Plodove: iabulki, chereshi, krushi
Water: warm, cold, mineral, sparkling	Voda: topla, studena, mineralna, gazirana
Coffee with milk	Kafe s mliako
Tea with lemon	Chai s limon



Your Discoveries

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Your Discoveries

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Please, don't throw away! When you decide that you don't need this guide any longer, think of somebody who can find it useful! Save paper to keep the nature green!





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