On the cover: Lazarka, this name is given to little girls, participating in the rituals on “Lazarovden” – a celebration dedicated to nature and life’s rebirth. The name Lazar is a symbol of health and long life. On the last Saturday before Easter all Lazarki go around the village, enter in every house and sing songs to each family member. There is a different song for the lass, the lad, the girl, the child, the host, the shepherd, the ploughman... This tradition can be seen only in Bulgaria.
Rachenitsa!

The sound of bagpipe filled the air. The crowd stood still in expectation. Posing for a while against each other, the dancers jumped simultaneously.

Dabaka moved with dexterity to Christina. She gently ran on her toes passing by him. Both looked at each other from head to toe as if wanting to show their superiority and continued their dance. Christina waved her white handkerchief, swayed her white neck like a swan and gently floated in the vortex of sound, created by the merry bagpipe. Her face turned hot…

Dabaka was in complete trance. With hands freely crossed on his back he moved like a deer performing wondrous jumps in front of her … Then, shaking his head to let the heavy sweat drops fall from his face, he made a movement as if retreating. Stalking his every step, Christina flew gently towards him, finding herself very close to him, feeling his breath and the warmth of his hot face. Little by little he moved away and unconsciously attracted her with his dance. Superiority spayed from every step he made and Christina started to fall under his power. Enchanted she tried to “fight back”, but after one hour she stopped and whispered panting with last efforts: “I can’t any longer… He overplayed me!”

From the Windmill, written by one of the most famous Bulgarian classic writers Elin Pelin in 1902.

If you want to learn more about the country of Rachenitsa (traditional Bulgarian folk dance) and people that prefer to dance instead of observing, read forward.
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NATURE

Bulgaria is like a miniature of all natural beauties. On a territory of nearly 111 000 square kilometers you can see and enjoy magnificent mountain ridges, cozy sand and stone beaches, scenic tectonic and glacial lakes, patchwork plains, green pastures and deep caves.
In the North is the Danube plain, bordering with the Balkan Ridge Mountain. In the South is the Thracian Lowland, bordering with the 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.

There are 3 national parks, 9 nature parks and 55 nature reserves.

The climate is continental with a Mediterranean influence from the South. The average temperature in January is around -5° C, and in July – around 30° C.

If you chose for a stay in Bulgaria you will be lucky to enjoy the beauties and aromas of all four distinct seasons.
WINTER SLOPES IN WESTERN BULGARIA

AUTUMN LAKE IN RHODOPE MOUNTAIN IN SOUTHERN BULGARIA
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 trademark, fascination and name. There are five main mountain wonders: Rila, Pirin, Rhodope, Stara Planina and Vitosha. The Rila Mountain prides to have the highest peak on the Balkan Peninsula – Moussala (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.
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 North-Western Bulgaria. Here are 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 Belogradchik Castle – built in the 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} 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 about Belogradchik rocks the French traveller Adolph Blanqui in 1841.
The Melnik Rock Pyramids

The Rock pyramids in the region of Melnik in Southern Bulgaria rank among the most remarkable natural phenomena in Bulgaria. Over 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 ("Heaven’s Sprinkle") is the highest waterfall in Bulgaria (125m). 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 (2376m).
**Magura Cave**

This is one of the largest caves on the territory of Bulgaria. It has several galleries, the biggest of which is the Triumph Gallery. The cave offers excellent conditions for the production of Champagne-like wines - steady temperature and humidity. In one of the branches of the cave a wine cellar is established where natural fizzy wines are produced with classical technologies applied.

**The Rabisha Lake**

Next to the cave is the Rabisha Lake - the largest inland lake in Bulgaria. It is up to 35-40 meter deep. The Rabisha lake is of tectonic origin.
HISTORY AND CULTURE

Bulgaria is a cradle and crossroad of ancient civilizations like Thracians, Romans, Slavs and Bulgars. 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. Bulgaria has nine UNESCO World Heritage Sites, 5 of which are with historical cultural origin.

Boyana Church – Boyana district, Sofia region

Located in the outskirts of Sofia, Boyana Church consists of three buildings. The Eastern Church was built in the 10th century, then enlarged at the beginning of the 13th century by Sebastocrator, the whole building being 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.
The Madara Rider, representing the figure of a horseman, is carved into a 100-metre-high cliff near the village of Madara in North-Eastern 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.
Rock-Hewn Churches of Ivanovo - Village of Ivanovo, Rousse region

In the valley of the Roussenski Lom River, in North-Eastern Bulgaria, a complex of rock-hewn churches, chapels, monasteries and cells developed in the vicinity of the village of Ivanovo. 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.
Ancient City of Nessebar - Burgas region

Situated on a rocky peninsula on the Black Sea, more than 3,000-year-old site of Nessebar was originally a Thracian settlement (Mesembria). At the beginning of the 6th century, the city became a Greek colony. The city’s remains, which date mostly from the Hellenistic period, include an acropolis, a temple of Apollo, an agora and a wall left from the Thracian fortifications. Among other monuments, the Stara Mitropolia Basilica and the fortress date from the Middle Ages, when Nessebar was one of the most important Byzantine towns on the west coast of the Black Sea.
Rila Monastery –
Rila mountain, Kyustendil region

Rila Monastery was founded in the 10th century by St. Ivan Rilski. 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 Rilski is honoured 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. Destroyed by fire at the beginning of the 19th century, the complex was rebuilt between 1834 and 1862.
Thracian Tomb of Sveshtari - Razgrad region

Discovered in 1982 near the village of Sveshtari, this Thracian tomb (3rd century BC) reflects the fundamental structural principles of Thracian cult buildings. The tomb has a unique architectural decor, with polychrome half-human, half-plant caryatids and painted murals. The 10 female figures carved in high relief on the walls of the central chamber and the decoration of the lunette in its vault are the only examples of this type found so far in the Thracian lands. It is a remarkable reminder of the culture of the Getes, a Thracian people who were in contact with the Hellenistic and Hyperborean worlds, according to ancient geographers.
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. The village of Gorna Krepost (“Upper Castle”) is located at the foot of the hill and the gold-bearing Perpereshka River flows near it. 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.
**DOBARSKO VILLAGE – RAZLOG REGION**

The village of Dobarsko situated in the Rila mountain is famous for its ancient church “St. Teodor Tiron and Teodor Stratilat” built in 1614. Inside the church there is a mural depicting Jesus Christ as stepping out a “space rocket”. The legend tells that the water spring in the church’s yard has the power to heal blind people.

**KOPRIVSHTITSA – PANAGUIRISHTHE REGION**

The town of Koprivshtitsa is situated in the heart of Sredna Gora Mountain, at 1050 meters above the sea level, at the distance of 110 km south-east of Sofia and 80 km north-west of Plovdiv. 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.
**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, and yet maintained its unique cultural identity. One of 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, an almost contemporary of the ancient city of Troy, 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 metre high. Because of these seven hills, Plovdiv is often referred to 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, with houses from the National Revival period (18\textsuperscript{th}-19\textsuperscript{th} 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, the Ancient Theatre (a well-preserved Roman theatre), is located there and is still used for open-air performances.

Plovdiv hosts various economic and cultural events such as the Plovdiv International Fair, the international theatrical festival “A scene on a crossroad” and the TV festival “The golden chest”.
**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 Etar is the only one and unique collection of old-times water-driven machinery in Bulgaria. It consist 10 objects and its one of the most richest and well preserved active technical collection around the European museums in the open air.
Bulgaria’s contribution to the world cultural and historic heritage goes beyond ancient treasures. A constellation of prominent Bulgarians has worked and are working for enriching the intellectual and spiritual treasures of country. Among them are:

**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 alphabet:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Аа</th>
<th>Бб</th>
<th>Вв</th>
<th>Гг</th>
<th>Дд</th>
<th>Ее</th>
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<td>Кк</td>
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Tsar Simeon I (Simeon Veliki - Simeon The Great, 893-927) - the greatest ever ruler of Bulgaria, who was the driving force for The Golden Age of Bulgarian Medieval Civilization.

Paisii Hilendarski (1722-1773) - the father of the Bulgarian Renaissance and author of the first Bulgarian history.

Vasil Levski (1837-1873) - theoretician and strategist of the struggle of Bulgarian people for liberation from Osman rule, called by Bulgarians “Apostle of Freedom”.
Hristo Botev (1848-1876) – genius of the Bulgarian literature. Brilliant Bulgarian poet and revolutionary. 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 obsipat svoda nebesen, gora zashumi, viatar povee, Balkanat pee haidushka pesen.”

English version:
“The moon comes out and 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.
Peyo Yavorov (1877-1914) - poet and play-wright, the founder of the Symbolist movement in Bulgarian poetry. One of his famous verses is from the poem “Craving” (Kopnenie):

Always this craving inside the soul,
Always this wandering on the road,
Of which I fail to see the end.
And eyes, always looking
Forward to the coming day,
Where no harbour I know...

Petar Danov – world spiritual leader

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

Albert Einstein
John Atanasoff – creator of the world’s first electronical digital computer between 1939 and 1942. Before him, a great number of mechanical calculating machines were built. However it was he who 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 world information revolution.

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 second highest Elo rating of all time (2813).
Valya Balkanska - one of the most famous Bulgarian folklore singers, whose voice is traveling in deep space on NASA’s “Voyager”.

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
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.

Zlatio Boyadjiev (1903-1976) - is one of the most prominent Bulgarian painters. He is especially noted for his village portraits.
Nedko Solakov – is one of the most famous artists in world contemporary art. He participated at the 52\textsuperscript{nd} International Exhibition of the 2007 Venice Biennale.

Stoimen Stoilov – is one of the most famous Bulgarian contemporary graphic artists. In 1991, Stoimen Stoilov was awarded Gottfried Von Herder Prize by The University of Vienna. His work resides in the National Museums of Art in Columbia, Merkel, Germany, Norway, Switzerland, the Pushkin Museum of Art in Russia, and the United States Library of Congress.
Georgi Tchapkanov - Tchapp is one of the most famous Bulgarian contemporary sculptors. His monumental works are in possession of many museums worldwide, such as Bulgarian National Art Gallery, Museum Hermitage in St.Peterburg, Pushkin Museum - Moscow, Museum in Stuttgart, Outzoukouchi-Ga-Hara Museum - Japan, Academy Lalit Kala - New Delhi, Moran Open Air Museum - South Korea, La Blade de Seprai - Switzerland, Peter Ludwig Collection - Germany, Moutier Museum - Switzerland.

Mystery of 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
**Teodosii Spasov** - 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** – is world famous violist and Concertmaster & Creative Director of The Royal Opera House – London. Teacher of Vanessa May.
Bulgaria Men’s Volleyball Team – is 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).

Petar Stoychev – is 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).

Dimitar Berbatov - is a Bulgarian striker, captain of the Bulgarian national football team, playing for Manchester United in the English Premier League. The fans use to call him “Berbo” or “Berba”.
SPIRIT

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 in 1885. The anthem was adopted in 1964.

Lyrics

Мила Родино
(Bulgarian Cyrillic)
Първи куплет:
Горда Стара планина,
до ней Дунава синей,
слънце Тракия огрява,
над Пирина пламеней.

Припев:
Мила Родино, ти си земен рай,
твоита хубост, твоита прелест,
ах, те нямат край.
(2 пъти)

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:
Mila Rodino, ti si zemen rai, tvoita hubost, tvoita prelest, ah, te niamat krai. (twice)

Second couplet:
Padnaha bortsi bezchet za naroda nash liubim, maiko, dai ni muzhka sila putia im da produlzhim.
The best way to feel Bulgarian spirit is through the songs. Below you can enjoy fragments from famous songs.

**Song “One Bulgarian Rose” (Pasha Hristova)**
In this wonderful day take this
Bulgarian rose from me.
Let it remind you with its fragrant voice
of the mountains,
of the sea and
all of us.

**Song “My Country, My Bulgaria” (Emil Dimitrov)**
How many nights I didn’t sleep,
How many roads I walked,
To come back.
How many songs I sang,
How much sorrow I felt,
To come back.
In my beautiful country, mother, father
and wife to embrace.

**Song “If two people are walking” (Maria Neikova)**
If two people are walking
on a long road,
and even if there is no road,
they won’t stop.
They will wander close to each other
on this land,
oh, how much I long
not to be alone.
EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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

The Bulgarian universities are opening to foreign students. The academic programmes are developed in line with European trends - 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 office of their country of origin (Education office), or the Bulgarian Ministry of education and science.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVELS</th>
<th>STAGES</th>
<th>AGE OF LEARNERS</th>
<th>TYPE OF PROVIDERS</th>
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<tr>
<td>BASIC EDUCATION</td>
<td>Pre-school Education</td>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>School based in pre-primary groups Kindergarten based</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Primary Education</td>
<td>6/7 – 9/10</td>
<td>General schools</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(General Lower secondary)</td>
<td>10/11 – 14-15</td>
<td>General schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma for completed Basic Education</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| SECONDARY EDUCATION | Upper Secondary education | 14/15 – 18/19  | General schools Language schools Sport schools Art schools Vocational gymnasia |
|                     | 1st stage                 | Compulsory education age is 16 |
|                     | Grades 8-10               |                              |
|                     | 2nd stage                 |                              |
|                     | Grades 11-12              |                              |
| Certificate for completed 1st stage of Secondary Education after 10th 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 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HIGHER EDUCATION</th>
<th>Bachelor</th>
<th>After completed Secondary or College Education</th>
<th>Humanitarian Universities Technical Universities Art Universities Sport Universities Medical Universities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Master</td>
<td>After completed Bachelor degree</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>After completed Master degree</td>
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</table>

Diploma for completed respective degree level of higher education (bachelor, master, doctor)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTINUING TRAINING</th>
<th>NON-FORMAL</th>
<th>INFORMAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CVET in VET Centers for up-grade or acquisition of vocational qualification</td>
<td>Non-formal learning for key competencies, languages, art, sport, out of class activities</td>
<td>Informal learning: in the family, at the workplace, through media, libraries, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing training in University’s Departments for additional qualification</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More info (in English) about the education system and learning opportunities in Bulgaria is available through the following sources:

- Portal on Learning Opportunities throughout the European Space (Ploteus) - [http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/](http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/)
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.

- Upon entry into Bulgaria, foreigners should declare in writing the purpose of their stay and the address at which they will reside. To this end they should fill in a registration form. Exempt of that are the citizens of the European Union member-states and the citizens of the countries in the European Economic Area.

- 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.

- All foreign nationals who have entered the territory of Bulgaria are obliged to register within 48 hours after their entry into the country. 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. 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.

- 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 2 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

• 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: 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

• 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 and 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 program (usually leading to a degree) approved by the Ministry of Education 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**

Your home-country driving licence may be used for up to one year in Bulgaria, after which it has to either be replaced with a Bulgarian one or you have to re-take driving tests to get a Bulgarian licence while keeping your foreign one.

**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/](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.
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 cafés 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**

**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.

**Metro**

The Sofia metro is constantly expanding. At the current stage it connects two major districts – Luilin and Mladost - with the city centre.
**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/](http://bdz.bg/)

**Bus**

There are many private companies providing bus transportation. Traveling between cities and Sofia is easy: [http://www.centralnaavtogara.bg/](http://www.centralnaavtogara.bg/). However, traveling between many towns and smaller places might need complex planning and allowing for change of vehicles.

**Accommodation**

It is easy to arrange a short stay in Bulgaria. You may search the 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.
A lot of reasonable to rent property is usually 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 110V supply, your electrical equipment will require a converter or a transformer to convert it to 240V.

**Water**

Tap water is safe to drink in most cities, while in many rural areas it is used only 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 of 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 dogwood, 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, gaïda 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 Teodosii Spasov). Recently, composers have written new symphonic works for caval and orchestra.

THE GAÏDA

The gaïda 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 djoura with a high-pitched register. The most famous is the so called Rhodope (mountain) gaïda, which is used as a lyrical accompaniment of Rhodope songs and melodies.
The tupan
(bass drum)

The rhythmic deep sound of the tupan can be heard during weddings, village dances, the performances of kukeri (see Kukeri) and nestinari (see Nestinari). The tupan is primarily an accompanying instrument that marks the rhythm but it can also be played as a solo 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.
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 2 steps forward, 1 backward. 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 the longest horo took place in Alexander Nevski Square in Sofia, involving more than 13000 participants.
**Baba Marta – Aunt Marta – Martenici**

Martenitsa is a small piece of adornment, made of white and red yarn and worn from 1st of March until around the end of March (or the first time an individual sees a stork, swallow or 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. The month of March, according to Bulgarian folklore, marks the beginning of springtime. Therefore, the first day of March is a traditional holiday associated with sending off winter and welcoming spring.
Nestinari – Fire-dancers

This is a custom that can be seen only in some villages between Strandzha and the Black Sea, around Bourgas. 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 church/patron saint’s days. A basic element of the custom is the dance in fire (glowing embers). 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.
**Kukeri - Mummers**

On New Year’s Eve and Sirni Zagovezni (40 days before Eastern) in Bulgaria special rituals called Mummer’s games take place. The Mummer’s games are performed by men only. They put on special masks. 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 mummer’s games aim to scare off and sweep away forever the evil spirits, so that the crops for the next year are rich.
**Bulgarian wine**

Wine has been known in the land of Bulgaria since Ancient times. Archeology, folklore, and literature provide ample 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, that was brought here ages ago. Each year right before the rose harvesting season the town of Kazanlak hosts the Festival of Roses.
Kiselo mliako – Bulgarian Yoghurt

The Bulgarian yoghurt is famous for its bacterium, called Lactobacillus Bulgaricum. The bacteria 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 a 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.
**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 the nectar is gathered from, are present in the honey and propolis. Honey products are 100% absorbed by the human organism. For best results one must consume between 50 and 100 grams 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.
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 Slavonic 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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Bulgarian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hello</td>
<td>Zdraveite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good morning / afternoon</td>
<td>Dobro utro / Dobur den</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good evening</td>
<td>Dobur vecher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodnight</td>
<td>Leka nosht</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodbye</td>
<td>Dovizhdane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are you?</td>
<td>Kak si?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine</td>
<td>Dobre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank you / Thanks</td>
<td>Blagodaria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please</td>
<td>Molia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes / No</td>
<td>Da / Ne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice to meet you</td>
<td>Priatno mi e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s your name?</td>
<td>Kak se kazvate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My name is _____</td>
<td>Kazvam se ___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excuse me</td>
<td>Izvinete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to get to?</td>
<td>Kak da stigna do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where is _____?</td>
<td>Kade e _____?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central train / bus station</td>
<td>Tsentralna gara / avtogara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To the Airport</td>
<td>Do letishteto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To the City centre</td>
<td>Do/za tsentura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The _____ hotel</td>
<td>Hotel ____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The _____ street</td>
<td>Ulitsa ____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left</td>
<td>Liavo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right</td>
<td>Diasno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straight ahead</td>
<td>Napravo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where does this train/bus go?</td>
<td>Za kude e tozi vlak / avtobus?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One ticket, please.</td>
<td>Edin billet, molia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and Drinks</td>
<td>Hrana i Napitki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread, sugar, salt</td>
<td>Hliab, zahar, sol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat: pork, chicken, veal</td>
<td>Meso: svinsko, pileshko, teleshko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables: tomato, cucumber</td>
<td>Zelenchuci: domat, krastavica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits: apple, cherries, pears</td>
<td>Plodove: iabulki, chereshi, krushi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water: warm, cold, mineral, with bubbles</td>
<td>Voda: topla, studena, mineralna, gazirana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee with milk</td>
<td>Kafe s mliako</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea with lemon</td>
<td>Chai s limon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Your discoveries
“Some day man will land on the Moon, he will land on other planets as well. And than he will see how beautiful the Earth was and he will realize that he lived in Heaven, but he didn’t know and appreciate this.”

Atanas Dalchev, Bulgarian poet, 1956

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!
This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication (communication) reflects the views only of the author and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of information contained therein.