
About Bulgaria

About Bulgaria in Brief:

Bulgaria is situated in the northeastern part of the Balkan Peninsula, Southeastern Europe. The country's total territory is 111 000 sq. km (43 000 sq. miles). The climate in the country is moderate and transitional continental with clearly marked four seasons. The hot and dry summer and cold winter with snowfalls in combination with the fantastic relief of Bulgaria provide excellent conditions for various types of tourism. Today, Bulgaria is estimated as one of the top tourist destinations in Eastern Europe. Foreign people are attracted not only by the historic wonders, ancient monasteries, churches, Greek, Thracian and Roman remains, but also by the perfect mountainous and seaside resorts, which Bulgaria offers. Together with the steadily developing tourist industry in Bulgaria, buying property in the country has become one of the most profitable investments that one can make nowadays. Many foreign persons have realized that they would benefit a great deal from their property investments in Bulgaria, because this Balkan country is the last unexplored real estate secret of contemporary Europe. On other hand, the political progress and the economical growth of Bulgaria have led to the acceptance of the country in NATO in 2004 and its full EU membership in 2007. The international observers consider Bulgaria as "a center of stability on the Balkans" and even they have recently took the view that it is an excellent example of safe, stable and liberal country. About Bulgarian People: Bulgarians are often recognized as extremely open to outsiders. They possess the typical Eastern hospitality and are closer to one another than many Western European people. In this regard, foreigners will find Bulgarians as rarely kindhearted and hospitable people which are proud to show visitors the best of what they have.

Language: The largest barrier faced by all visitors to Bulgaria is the language and the Cyrillic alphabet in particular. Most tourist resorts have signs and menus translated into English, service staff generally speak foreign languages (English or German). However, in the country side you may find that street signs are in Cyrillic and that there are few that speak English.

Food: Because of its geographical position and long tumultuous history, Bulgarian cuisine has evolved as a blend of the most enjoyable Slavonic, Greek and Turkish dishes. The harvest of the Black Sea brings nets full of fresh seafood, the fertile farms grow organic fruits and vegetables and local vineyards produce golden grapes and high quality red and white wines.
Public Holidays: January 1st - New Year's Day March 3rd - National Holiday Easter - changes every year May 1st - Labor Day May 24th - Day of the Cyrillic Alphabet September 6th - Day of Reunification (1885) September 22nd - Bulgarian Independence Day December 24th, 25th - Christmas December 31st - New Year's Eve Bulgarians observe a number of traditional customs as well: Trifon Zarezan on 14th February is the ancient festival of the wine growers. Vines are pruned and sprinkled with wine to ensure a bounteous harvest. On 1st March Bulgarians give one another "martenitsi" - red and white tasselled threads which are worn for health and happiness at the coming of spring. When wearers see their first stork of the season, the "martenitsa" is tied to the nearest tree. The Festival of Roses is celebrated with folk songs and dances at Kazanlak and Karlovo on the first Sunday in June. The Jazz Festival - August, Bansko Orpheus Music Festival - June, Smolyan Bagpipe Festival in Gela, Rhodope Mountains - Mid August, and many more. Official Religion: 85% Orthodox, 13% Muslim, 2% other Borders: Greece, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Turkey Capital: Sofia (1.2 m. population) Population: 7.7 million Weather in Bulgaria: Please, click here to check the weather in Bulgaria. Getting Bulgaria: By Car: If you would like to travel to Bulgaria by car you may use your national driving license if it complies with international standards. We highly recommend you to carry your international driving license. If you enter Bulgaria by car you must state which border crossing you 'll be using when leaving and paying a road tax accordingly. Here are the frontier checkpoints which you can use if entering Bulgaria by car: Bulgarian - Serbian Border Kalotina - Motorway E-6 Vrushka Chuka - Belgrad-Zajcar-Koulata-Sofia Motorway Strejimirovci - Tran-Silistra E-6 Otomansi Bulgarian - Macedonian Border Gyueshevo - Sofia-Kyustendil-Skopje Motorway Stanke Lisichkovo - Stip-Delchevo-Blagoevgrad-Sofia Motorway Zlatarevo - Strumica-Petrich-Sofia Motorway Bulgarian - Greek Border Koulata - Motorway E-20 Novo Selo - Motorway E-80 Bulgarian - Turkish Border Kapitan Andreevo - Motorway E-5 Malko Turnovo - Motorway E-95 Bulgarian - Romanian Border Rousse - Motorway E-97 Kardam - Constanta-Dobrich-Kula Motorway 14 Durankulak - Motorway E-95 Silistra - Motorway 7

The speed limit in the Bulgaria is as follows: 50 km/h in populated areas, 90 km/h outside populated areas, and 120 km/h on motorways. Petrol stations are located at every 30 to 50 km.

By Air: Airline companies which offer direct or non-direct flights to Bulgaria are: Air Bulgaria, Balkan Bulgarian Airlines (LZ), Turkish Airlines, Swiss Air, Olympic Airlines, Malev Hungarian Airlines, Lufthansa, LOT Polish Airlines, KLM, Czech Airlines, British Airways, Austrian Airlines, Al Italia, Air France, Aeroflot, Air Algerie , Hemus Air , Syrian Airlines, etc.

Sofia Airport is the country's main international airport operating all year round. The majority of foreign travellers arrive in Bulgaria at Sofia Airport, just 15-30 minutes drive from the city centre. The Airport's capacity is due to be increased with a new runway and terminals scheduled to be completed by the end of this year. There is a duty free shop at the Airport where you can purchase many typical goods from a large selection of tobacco's, spirits, wines and perfumes. When leaving the Airport you can get an OK Supertrans Taxi - currently this is the cities most reliable

taxi company permitted to operate from the Airport. The fare to the city centre should be no more than 6.00 BGN (3 EUR). Several hotels operate shuttles for their guests upon request.

Bourgas Airport is located 10 km from Bourgas city centre, most tourists going on holiday to the south-east coast arrive at this airport on domestic or international charters. Passengers arriving in and departing from Bourgas Airport are transferred mainly via bus by their tour operator. Bus No. 15 goes into the city centre, as do taxis parked in front of the Departure Terminal.

Varna Airport is located on the Northern Black Sea Coast and it is used by domestic flights, charter flights and international scheduled flights. There are regular internal flights from Sofia, which take less than an hour compared to the 6-hour car journey. Varna Airport is 7.5 km from the centre of Varna. Bulgaria offers flights to most major European capitals but as yet there are no direct flights linking Sofia with the major Asian hubs or North America. Visitors from Australia and New Zealand usually connect through more popular European destinations. For more information you can visit the official sites of the Bulgarian airports listed below:

- www.sofia-airport.bg
- www.bourgas-airport.bg
- www.varna-airport.bg

By Bus If you prefer traveling by bus we recommend using Internet site www.centralnaavtogara.bg where you will find more information about international and interurban bus schedules and where you will be able to make online reservations. You can also visit the official websites of different independent Bulgarian bus companies working online.

By Water: The main European railway routes pass through Bulgaria. If you prefer traveling to Bulgaria by train we recommend visiting the official site of the Bulgarian State Railways which provide direct or non-direct transportation to main European and Mediterranean cities: <http://bdz.creato.biz/en>. You may also use the well-known site of the German State Railways where you will be able to make online enquiries about the timetables of many international railway routes: <http://persoenlicherfahrplan.bahn.de/bin/pf/query-p2w.exe/en>.

Hotels in Bulgaria: Accommodation in Bulgaria is categorised according to the 5-star international system. Privatisation has had a favourable impact and today the country is progressively reaching this international standard. It is still best to arrive in Bulgaria with pre-booked accommodation, as it is often cheaper than booking the same accommodation locally. Reservations can be made through tourist agencies or local accommodation offices. Bulgaria boasts an extensive accommodation network ranging from luxury five-star to unpretentious two-star hotels, small cosy hotels and private rooms, meeting all modern requirements. Good accommodation can be found throughout the whole country, in all of the major Bulgarian resorts and popular tourist destinations. You can examine in detail most of the Bulgarian hotels located in the main cities, villages and tourist resorts by clicking some of the links in our Useful Links section at the bottom of this page.

Money Exchange: The official Bulgarian currency in circulation is Lev as 1 Lev is equal to 100 stotinki (Bulgarian coins). Foreign persons can safely exchange money at all Bulgarian banks and at most of the exchange bureaus without a commission for currency exchange. We recommend you not to use exchange desks at hotels and airports because they offer less favorable currency rates. You can use cash machines in all Bulgarian cities, most of towns and tourist resorts if possessing a debit card of Master Card, Visa, Diners Club International, JCB Cards, American Express, Access, Airplus. Cash is the accepted form of payment in Bulgaria, so we advise you not to use credit cards when paying any items or services, because they are accepted at a small number of hotels, restaurants and shops in Sofia and some other major Bulgarian cities as well as in some luxurious tourist resorts as Sunny Beach, Albena and Golden Sands, but you will not be able to use a credit card in smaller towns or rural areas. The average Bulgarian currency exchange rates of major international currencies are as follows: 1 Euro = 2 BGN (2 Leva), 1 US Dollar = 1.6 BGN, 1 Pound Sterling = 2.8 BGN.

About Sunny Beach The most popular summer resort in Bulgaria, Sunny Beach lies a 30 minute drive, some 35km north of Bourgas international airport. The largest of the southern Black Sea resorts it has expanded to accommodate the increasing number of international tourists flocking to its shores in search of a cheap summer holiday. Its golden bays and warm tranquil waters are ideal for families and there are plenty of activities to keep everyone occupied. The main seafront promenade houses a variety of cafes, lively bars and authentic restaurants, which cater for a wide range of European tastes. In the evenings you can get a feel for the local tradition with regular folklore entertainment and sample Bulgarian culture in its specialty restaurants. You can day trip to the main centres of Nessebar and Bourgas and visit sites of historic importance. The appeal of this resort has grown in past few years with the advent of low cost airlines and the noticeable investment by the Bulgarian government into its tourist resources to continue attracting regular visitors from Europe and beyond. Some 800 million euros has been invested since 2000 in developing high-class accommodation and improving infrastructure and tourist attractions. Its reputation has started to enjoy mainstream appeal and it is now Bulgaria's number one tourist resort. A top Bulgarian sea resort Sunny Beach is a great property investment opportunity. Here are just some of the reasons:

A wide semi-circular bay facing east and over 8km long beach strip, 30-60 m wide fine golden sands, natural dunes, a clean and gently sloping sea Over 1 700 hours of sunshine from May through October, average daily temperature in summer – 28 ° C. 170 hotels with over 80 000 beds, luxurious residential complexes, holiday villages, campsites Over 150 restaurants, entertainment and folk-style spots, night clubs, bars, discos, casinos.

- Kindergartens, children's playgrounds, children's pools, aqua parks, fun and games Every conceivable opportunity for sports: surfing, water skis and scooters, rowboats, tennis courts, beach volleyball, playing grounds, mini-golf, skittle alley, bowling, riding ground, fitness halls, sports tournaments for both amateurs and professionals. Open-air theatres, outdoor cinemas, spectacular music concerts performed by a variety of celebrity musicians, shopping centers,

arts and crafts bazaars, naturally produced goods. There is a local transport in the resort including mini-train, plenty of minibuses and ordinary taxis. Available is a regular bus transport to Nessebar – 5 km, Burgas – 35 km, Varna – 95 km as well as the rest of the country. Short excursions both inland and abroad are organized by the variety of tourist companies operating there.