



Welcome to Bulgaria



Useful Information for Relocated and Resettled Persons

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INFORMATION ABOUT BULGARIA

Bulgaria is located in Southeast Europe, in the northeast part of the Balkan Peninsula and borders to the south with Turkey and Greece, to the north with Romania, to the west with Macedonia and Serbia and to the east with the Black Sea. This location places Bulgaria on the crossroad between Europe and Asia. Bulgaria is also a transport crossroad, allowing access to Western Europe, the Near East and the Middle East, and the Mediterranean. A series of major European transport corridors pass through Bulgaria. These corridors include the international highways that connect Western and Central Europe to the Near East and Middle East.

POPULATION:

Bulgaria has a population of approximately 7.1 m people, and a land area of 111,000 km. Sofia, the capital, which has approximately 1.2 m residents, is the largest city in Bulgaria. Other main cities are Plovdiv, Varna, Bourgas, Stara Zagora, Ruse and Pleven.

More info about Sofia: http://www.sofia.bg/

The main religion is Bulgarian Orthodox. Around 8% of the people are Muslim.

There are also Roman Catholics, Protestants, Jews etc.

NATIVE LANGUAGE: Bulgarian.

Note: English, German, French and Russian are spoken in the country's resorts, hotels and restaurants.

POLITICAL SYSTEM: Democratic republic since 1990.

ALPHABET:

Cyrillic. Signs along international motorways, in airports and resorts are usually also written with Latin letters.



CURRENCY: The Bulgarian Lev (Leva for plural) is the currency of Bulgaria.

The currency code for Leva is BGN, and the currency symbol is lv.

One Bulgarian Lev is 100 stotinki – **st**. (coins).



Banknotes:

Frequently Used: 2 lv, 5 lv, 10 lv, 20 lv, 50 lv, 100 lv

Coins:

Frequently Used: 1 lv, 2 lv, 1 st, 2 st, 5 st, 10 st, 20 st, 50 st

Note: 1 EUR is approx. 2 BGN

CLIMATE:

Temperate continental with clearly marked four seasons – beautiful spring, dry and hot summer, long and pleasant autumn and cold and snowy winter with opportunity for skiing. The average annual temperature is 10.5°C.

CUISINE:

The geographical location of Bulgaria and the continental and Mediterranean climate determine the variety of Bulgarian national cuisine. Bulgarian cuisine is characterized by the use of fresh products. Traditional dishes of Bulgarian cuisine are soups, meats in sauce and roast meats, meats in the oven (guvetch), garnished with vegetables in season, grilled meats and puff



pastries (Banitsa). Various healing herbs are used for seasoning in many traditional dishes.



Sofia is the capital of Bulgaria. The city is one of the oldest European capitals. Humans have settled on its current territory since the Neolithic era. Sofia was an important city during Antiq-

uity, the Roman period and the Middle Ages. The city became the capital of Bulgaria after its liberation from the Ottoman domination in 1878, it represents a true crossroads of civi-





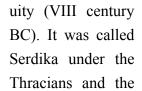
lizations and cultures. The motto of Sofia, inscribed on its coat of arms is "Ever Growing, Never Aging"

Sofia is the largest city in the country and the economic and social heart of Bulgaria. In constant development, it attracts a lot of workers and the unemployment rate is low. Sofia is also the university center of Bulgaria, its university "St. Clement of Ohrid" is the oldest and the most prestigious Bulgarian university.

Sofia is also one of the largest cities in Europe – 15th largest city in the European Union with an official population of about 1 million 350 thousand inhabitants (~2 million real). Sofia's development as a significant settlement owes much to its central position in the Balkans. It is situated in western Bulgaria, very close to Vitosha mountain, in the Sofia Valley that is surrounded by the Balkan mountains to the north. The

mountain rises above Sofia, giving the Bulgarian capital a special charm. For locals it is the favorite place for walks and in winter, Vitocha offers excellent conditions for skiing.

The history of Sofia goes back to Antiq-



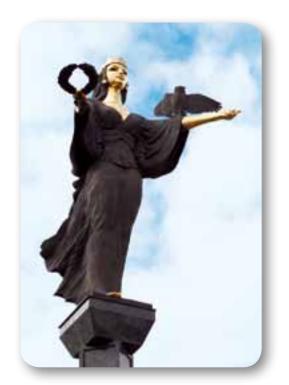
Romans, Triaditza under the Byzanthins, Sredetz for the first time under the Bulgarians and since XVI century – Sofia. An important city since ancient times, Sofia has a rich heritage both artistic and historical. Its city center is a major archaeological site; the remains of the

Thracian-Roman heritage are visible in many places.

Antiquity, Middle Ages, great museums in archeology, ethnography, fine arts, geology, military history, natural history – Sofia offers many avenues of exploration for heritage lovers.

The Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Sofia is the great Christian temple in Bulgaria, symbol of Bulgarian independence.





The Statue of Sofia

It depicts a young woman with a crown of a fortress wall, who holds in her right hand a laurel wreath, and on her left an owl – a symbol of wisdom – has perched.

Perceived as the town's symbol and patron, and guardian of the state, it radiates grandeur, peace and beauty.

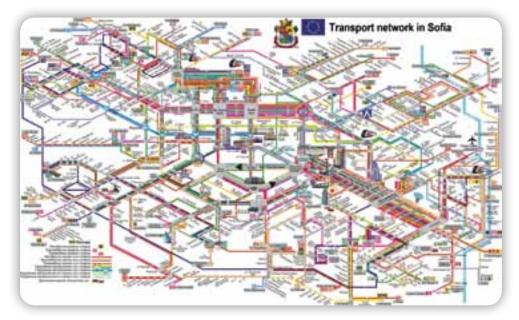
The entrances to the Serdika metro station, the "St. Petka Samardzijska" church (IV century), the Banya Bashi Mosque (1576, architect Mimar Sinan), the Sofia Synagogue and the Catholic Cathedral of St. Joseph (2006) are around it.



Transport network:

There are 4 means of public transport – bus, tram, trolley and metro. The Airport – City Center route is served by metro and bus line 84, at intervals of between 10 and 20 minutes. To access transport you need to buy a ticket at the price of $1.60 \text{ leva} (0.80 \, \text{€})$ per unit. Tickets for the metro can be bought at the ticket office or on ATMs. Bus, trolley and tram tickets can also be bought inside the vehicle from the driver or the machine just behind the driver's cabin. The ticket is only valid for the journey on that particular tram or bus.

In recent years the metro has become the main mean of transport in Sofia. There are two lines which are connected at the Serdica station. The tramway network articulated around the rail station and the main boulevards dates from 1901 and has about fifteen lines, which cross the city



from one side to the other. Travel by tram in the heart of the city is easy since they are regular, fast and for the most part unaffected by traffic jams.

The Sofia public bus system comprises 92 routes. As to Sofia trolleybus system there are 11 trolleybus lines in service.



For more information:

https://www.sofia.bg/en/web/sofia-municipality/sofia

https://visitsofia.bg/en/

https://www.sofiatraffic.bg/bg/transport/121/marshrutna-mrezha

PLOVDIV



Plovdiv is the second Bulgarian city, with a city population of 345 213 as of 2017. Plovdiv is located on the banks of the Maritsa river, southeast of the Bulgarian capital Sofia. The city is in the southern part of the Plain of Plovdiv that forms the western part of the Upper Thracian Plain.

The city is important administrative and industrial center.



Plovdiv has 6 universities, including the most prestigious in medicine, agriculture, food industry, engineering as well as an academy of music and dance. Plovdiv is a major city of heritage



which earned it the prize of European Capital of Culture for the year 2019.

The Roman Stadium is located under the shopping center of Plovdiv, on the square "Djoumaya". His stands were built on the heights of Sakhattépé and Taximtépé. The shape of



the stadium is that of a horseshoe, it is 250 meters long and 74 meters wide. The stadium could accommodate 30,000 spectators, which testifies to the importance of the ancient city of Philippopolis (Plovdiv). It represented one of the most grandiose buildings at that time.

Plovdiv is the oldest living city in Europe and among the six oldest cities in the world. The Old Plovdiv is a unique city within the city of Plovdiv, and its history goes back to a Neolithic

settlement dated at roughly 6000 B.C. The city offers an impressive architectural and historical reserve – archaeological sites, museums, art galleries, old houses and public buildings, religious temples, cafes and restaurants, romantic courtyards and picturesque cobblestone streets.



"Kapana" which literally means "The Trap" is the trendy and artistic district of Plovdiv which keeps rising.





The Bulgarian National Renaissance was a period that lasted from the 18th to the 19th century and saw the Bulgarian people assert their identity against the Ottoman Empire. This movement led to the proclamation of the autonomy of Bulgaria in 1878. The old town of Plovdiv has many beautiful bourgeois houses dating back to that time.

Among the most beautiful buildings are Kouyoumdjioglu House which serves for Museum of Ethnography and the house of Dimiter Gueorguiadi, where the Museum of History and the

Bulgarian National Revival is located. The house of Lamartine, where the poet stopped in 1833 during the writing of his "Voyage en Orien" and the small museum devoted to the writer are places that are worth seeing as well.



Transport network:

City visitors arrive most often at the Central station or at any of the bus stations, mostly these are "South" bus station or "Rodopi". In all cases you arrive close to the heart of the city – the central part of Plovdiv. You can safely head out on "Ivan Vazov" street and only about 15 minutes you will be on the Main Street. If you arrive at "South" bus station or at the Central station, there is bus stops right across with detailing the route of each of the lines, accompanied by a navigation card. The Plovdiv public bus system comprises 29 buses and 4 shuttles buses. Taking a taxi is a good idea as the price of the taxi cabs are very low-the initial rate is between 60 and 70 cents, and the rate per kilometer is around 80 cents.

For more information:

http://www.visitplovdiv.com/en

http://transport.plovdiv.bg/desktop;jsessionid=31B039AE34548CF43CDD8C375B1AA302/

BURGAS



Burgas is one of the biggest cities of Bulgaria. Burgas is located on the Black Sea in Burgas Bay, at a distance of 400 km from Sofia and 130 km from Varna. It is the administrative center of the

region of the same name. The population of the city is over 230,000 inhabitants. The port of Burgas is the biggest cargo port of Bulgaria.

The international airport is located at a distance of 10 km northeast of the city. It is easily accessible by public transport. The climate of Burgas is continental temperate and is



strongly influenced by the sea, with average summer temperatures of 26.4°C. The temperature of the water during the summer is 24.7°C on average. The first inhabitants of the region date



back to ancient times, attracted by the proximity of the sea and the nature of the region.

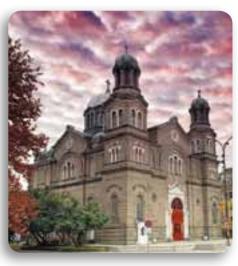
The oldest archaeological findings date back to the Bronze Age and the Iron Age. Several archaeological finds date back to the Thracian period (4th century BC). Some of the biggest battles between the

Bulgarian state and the Byzantine Empire were conducted in the region of Burgas. During Ottoman rule, the city developed as an educational and cultural center. It was not liberated until February 6, 1878. The city was subjected to intensive industrialization and modernization from the beginning of the 20th century. Near Burgas is located the city of Nessebar, the only Bulgarian town, part of the World Cultural Heritage (UNESCO); the ancient and medieval town of Apolonia Pontiuska (today Sozopol) and the ancient Thracian sanctuary Beglikta (near Primorsko).



spaces. Very close to the city center, a large number of restaurants, cafes and small shops are in its immediate vicinity. Burgas has been hosting an International Folklore Festival for more than 25 years. It takes place in summer, often outdoors, in small summer theaters in the Maritime Garden. The largest national floral exhibition – Flora, is held every year in Burgas. In a few days the colors of thousands of flowers invade the land-scape. The maritime garden is transformed and filled with artistic floral creations. The motto of this exhibition is "Nature – Man – Harmony"

Like Varna, Burgas has its maritime garden along the coast. It is comparable to that of Varna, smaller but it offers great attractions like the Dolphinarium, the Aquarium or the Planetarium. It is equally enjoyable for walks in the afternoon or summer evenings. It is very green and flowery, with a beautiful layout of





The Sand Figures Festival is another famous festival in the city that takes place annually in the northern part of the Sea Garden.

Among the interesting religious sites, there is the Cathedral Saints Cyril and Methodius. It is the largest church in the city, built over one hundred years ago by a well-known architect, Ricardo Toscani. The church is remarkable, first of all, for its inimitable design. Its door is adorned with clever mosaics, and inside you can see an elegant and preserved carved iconostasis.

Transport network:

The distance between the airport and the centre of Burgas is 12 kilometres / 7.5 miles, by car it takes you 20 minutes. With bus number 15 you can get from the airport into the centre of Burgas. There are two bus stations in the city. Bus station "West" serves the passengers from the interior of the Bourgas region and the country, as well as the buses passing through the city. Bus station South serves passengers traveling to resorts along the Southern and Northern Black Sea coasts as well as travelers to the cities of Sofia, Plovdiv, Rousse, Razgrad and Shumen. Bicycle rental system "VeloBurgas" runs daily from Monday to Sunday from 00:00 to 24:00. It has at its disposal 14 bicyclical stations. The Burgas public bus system comprises 17 buses and 2 tramways.



For more information:

https://www.gotoburgas.com/en

http://burgasbus.info/burgasbus/?page id=5714

NATIONAL HOLIDAYS

6 January - St. Jordan's Day



St. Jordan's Day is one of the largest Christian holidays, celebrated on January 6th. This is the day when John the Baptist baptizes Jesus Christ in the river Jordan. The main ritual on this day is throwing of the cross. It is believed that the man who first takes the cross out of the water will be blessed to be healthy and freed from evil spirits throughout the year.

3 March – National Holiday (Bulgarian Day of Liberation from the Ottoman Domination)



This holiday is Bulgaria's national day and honours the Bulgarian volunteers who, during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 liberated Bulgaria from almost 500 years of Ottoman rule. Many Bulgarians go to the peak of Shipka in Stara Planina to celebrate the day as the battle of Shipka is a symbol for 3th of March.

6 May – St. George's Day – Day of Valour and of the Bulgarian Armed Forces



In the Christian Orthodox calendar 6 May is the day of St. George the Victor. In Bulgaria St. George's Day, is an official holiday, declared a day of valour and of the Bulgarian army. For centuries, St. George has been depicted on Bulgaria's military flags and medals of honour.

24 May - Day of Bulgarian Enlightenment and Culture and the Slavic Letters



May 24 is the Day Of Slavonic Alphabet, Bulgarian Enlightenment and Culture. On 24th May, Bulgaria celebrates the day of the Bulgarian enlightenment and culture and the creation of the Slavic alphabet by the two brothers, Saints Cyril and Methodius. The Holiday of Letters, as it is also known in Bulgaria, is one of the most loved of all holidays. It is marked with festivities across the country. Local schools and cultural centres organise various events to honour the accomplishments of the two brothers, Saints Cyril and Methodius.

6 September – Bulgarian Unification Day



Unification Day on 6 September is a national holiday of Bulgaria. It commemorates the unification of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria in 1885.

22 September – Bulgarian Independence Day



Independence Day in Bulgaria takes place every 22 September to celebrate the nation's official declaration of independence from Ottoman rule on this date in 1908. The declaration formalised autonomy that had already basically existed for three decades since 1878, giving Bulgaria equal status amongst nations on the world stage.

- 1 May Labour Day Solidarity Day
- 24 December Christmas Eve
- 25 and 26 December Christmas

USEFUL INFORMATION

Refugee/Humanitarian status

If you receive refugee status, you will have the right to:

work without special permission;

receive education in state schools and universities;

be reunited with your family reunited on the territory of Bulgaria;

be granted Bulgarian citizenship 3 years after receiving the status;

travel abroad under the terms and following the procedure for Bulgarian citizens (without a visa and with the right to reside in the other EU Member States up to 90 days within half a year).

If you receive humanitarian status, you will have the right to:

work without special permission;

receive education in state schools and universities;

have your family reunited on the territory of Bulgaria;

be granted Bulgarian citizenship 5 years after receiving the status;

travel abroad under the terms and following the procedure for foreigners holding a permanent residence permit in Bulgaria (when they have received a visa from the embassy of the relevant state in Sofia and the right to stay within the term of validity of the visa).

Housing

Once you are granted protection, you have 14 days to move out from the reception facility. If you need help with finding an accommodation please contact Bulgarian Red Cross HQ, Integration-Information centre for refugees of BRC and Caritas Sofia.

Humanitarian aid

If you need baby diapers, clothing and other material assistance you can visit The Council of Refugee Women and Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC).

Legal aid

For legal advice, you can contact the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee or Centre for Legal Aid: Voice in Bulgaria. They can give you free legal advice. You can also use the website: www.asylum.bg to get information on your rights and obligations.

Education

Children aged up to 18 are entitled to free education in Bulgarian state or municipal schools. In relation to enrolling the children in a school you can approach for help both the Agency staff in the centre where you are accommodated and the organisations of the Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC), Caritas or The Council of Refugee Women.

Enrolment of children in schools is with the support of the Regional Inspectorate for Education, where you submit application.

Bulgarian language

If you want to learn Bulgarian language you can do that in the Integration-Information centre for refugees of BRC and St. Anna Center for refugees (Caritas Sofia), where language courses from A1 to B1 are taught. B1 language course is important for people, who wish to gain Bulgarian citizenship, as you can use the certificate when applying before the authorities. For further information on the latter, please contact Integration-Information centre for refugees of BRC.

Employment

During the asylum procedure you have the right to work legally. In order to exercise this right you have to file a written application to the director of the refugee camp where you are accommodated or, if you are accommodated outside a camp, to the director of the camp where your procedure is conducted.

You can do this within 3 months after you were registered by the Agency for Refugees.

For more information visit: www.asylum.bg

Healthcare

While you are in the asylum procedure the Bulgarian state will pay your health insurance. The health insurance is thus provided only for the duration of the procedure. Before you receive medical treatment, you need to be registered with a GP, who can then refer you to a specialist. In order to be examined by a doctor, you need to approach the medical staff in the centre, where you are accommodated or to seek assistance from the mediators of the Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC) or the Council of Refugee Women.

Thus you have the right to receive free healthcare during the asylum procedure, but not for all types of medical treatment. Some types of medical care – for example, surgery, dental interventions, are not included in the health insurance package, and you must pay for them the same way as Bulgarian citizens do.

Once you are granted protection, if you are unemployed, you need to cover yourself the monthly health insurance tax that amounts to: 22,40 BGN. If you need assistance with the payment of the health insurance tax, please contact: Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC) or the Council of Refugee Women.

Where to get advice

Now that you have been granted protection in Bulgaria it is important that you get help and advice on how to access the services to which you are entitled.

There are many organisations that provide free advice and information on various topics. They can also provide an interpreter if you do not speak the language, so you can receive the services you need. These are the organisations that can help you:

Bulgarian Red Cross

Location: 76, James Bourchier Blvd.

Phone number: +359 2 81 64 822

Wah: http://on_radarass.bg/activitias/activitia

Web: http://en.redcross.bg/activities/activities8

Working hours: 8:30-17:00

Service provided: Humanitarian/in-kind support; interpretation; accompaniment to hospitals; providing medicines; covering expenses for health services and health insurance; assistance with family tracing and restoring family links; financial support upon assessment; prevention of tuberculosis

Access: Asylum seekers, refugees and migrants



BRC Integration-information center for refugees

Location: 165, Evlogi & Hristo Georgievi Blvd.

Phone number: +359 2 99 50 192

Web: http://en.redcross.bg/activities/activities8

Working hours: 9:00-17:30

Service provided: Humanitarian/ in-kind support; Bulgaria/English language courses and vocational trainings; legalization and translation of documents; assistance with finding a suitable job; assistance with registering at a labor office and a GP; finding accommodation; enrolment in Bulgarian schools and kindergartens; filling applications for health insurance and ID documents; tutoring for children enrolled in Bulgarian schools; Organizing Job fairs and facilitating the meetings with potential employers; Organizing sport and cultural events; organizing visits of historical and cultural landmarks in the country;

Access: Asylum seekers, refugees and migrants

Humanitarian Center (Council of Refugee Women in Bulgaria)

Location: 52, Bacho Kiro Str.

Phone number: +359 878 136 231

Web: http://crw-bg.org/en/ Working hours: 9:00-17:00

Service provided: Humanitarian aid; interpretation; accompanying to public institutions.

Access: Asylum seekers and refugees living in external addresses

Center Nadja

Location: 166, Knjaz Boris I Str. **Phone number**: +359 2 981 93 00

Working hours: Appointment required

Service provided: Psychological consultancy and psycho-social support; psychiatric assess-

ment and treatment

Access: No prerequisites. You need to book an appointment



International Organization for Migration in Bulgaria

Location: 77, Tzar Asen Str.

Phone number: +359 2 93 94 774

Web: https://www.iom.bg/

Working hours: 09:00-12:00 and 13:00-18:00

Service provided: Legal, Psychological and/or Social Assistance; Assisted voluntary return;

Identification and assistance for human trafficking victims.

Access: No need of appointment. In case you need an interpreter to speak with IOM it would be

best to book an appointment in advance. Interpretation by phone is always available.

IOM Information center for Immigrants in Sofia

Location: 77, Tzar Asen Str.

Phone number: +359 2 93 94 720

Web: https://www.iom.bg/

Service provided: social consultations; Bulgarian language courses; support for integration in

the country

Services: Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees

IOM Information center for Immigrants in Burgas

Location: 33, Morska Str.

Phone number: +359 886 177 295/ +359 886 177 329

Web: https://www.iom.bg/

Service provided: social consultations; Bulgarian language courses; support for integration in

the country

Services: Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Bulgaria

Phone number: +359 2 980 24 54 Web: https://www.unhcr.org/bg/

Services: Support to asylum seekers and refugees

UNHCR

St. Anna Center for refugees (Caritas Sofia)

Location: 1, Struma Str.

Phone number: +359 2 869 63 35

Web: http://www.caritas-sofia.org/en/groups/refugees-and-asylum-seekers

Working hours: 09:30-17:30

Service provided: Case management and social mediation; Specialized care and service for children and adults with disabilities; Cultural orientation; Translation and accompaniment to public institutions; Bulgarian language lessons; Cereer Center; Psycho-social support; Recreational activities for women and children; Events and excursions

Access: Depending on eligibility criteria and availability

Bulgarian Helsinki Committee

Location: 1, Uzundjovska Str., 3rd floor

Phone number: +359 2 981 33 18/ 980 20 49

Web: http://www.bghelsinki.org/en/rights/refugees-and-migrants/

Working hours: 09:00-17:00

Service provided: Legal aid and Assistance

Access: Asylum seekers and refugees

B U L G A R I A N H E L S I N K I C O M M I T T E E

Center for Legal Aid "Voice in Bulgaria"

Location: 5B, Triaditza Str., 2nd floor, office 226

Phone number: +359 2 981 07 79

Web: https://www.centerforlegalaid.com/

Working hours: Tuesdays 10:30-14:30

Service provided: Legal aid, consultations and representation

Access: Asylum seekers, refugees and migrants

Center for Legal Ald Voice in Bulgaria

State Agency for Refugees of the Council of Ministers

Location: 1233 Sofia; Serdika District; 114-B, Maria Luiza Blvd.

Web: https://aref.government.bg/index.php/en



Regional Inspectorate of Education Sofia

Location: 1303 Sofia, 17, Antim I Str. **Phone number**: +359 2 935 60 50

Web: http://www.ruobg.com/news



Regional Inspectorate of Education Ploydiv

Location: 1, Tzaribrod Str

Phone number: +359 32 631 841

Web: http://www.ruobg.com/news

Regional Inspectorate of Education Burgas

Location: 150, William Gladstone Str

Phone number: +359 56 813 249

Web: http://www.ruobg.com/news

Employment Agency Sofia

Location: 3, Dondukov Blvd.

Phone number: +359 2 980 87 19

Web: https://www.az.government.bg/bg/



Regional Employment Service Plovdiv

Location: 7, Samara Str.

Phone number: +359 32 962 550

Web: https://www.az.government.bg/pages/direkcii-regionalna-slujba-po-zaetosta/

Regional Employment Service Burgas

Location: 3, Janko Komitov Blvd.

Phone number: +359 56 812 978

Web: https://www.az.government.bg/pages/direkcii-regionalna-slujba-po-zaetosta/



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www.redcross.bg