



Steph's Quick Budget Fact Sheet

Bulgaria - Sofia

Quick Facts

- ✓ **Capital:** Sofia
- ✓ **Language:** Bulgarian
- ✓ **Population:** ± 1.2 mln
- ✓ **Sq km:** ± 1310.8
- ✓ **Currency:** Lev (лв - BGN)
- ✓ **Country code:** +359 (2)
- ✓ **Visa:** For some nationalities, [info here!](#)
- ✓ **Emergency phone:** 122
- ✓ **Vaccinations:** None



History Recap Over 1 Drink

500BC: Thracian tribes. Alexander the Great. Roman Empire. 681: Bulgarian state. 890s: Cyrillic alphabet. 1018-1186: Byzantine Empire. 1396: Ottoman Empire (*5 centuries*). 1876: Uprising against Ottoman rule violently oppressed. '78: Treaty of San Stefano (*by Russia/Turkey*): autonomous Bulgaria. '78: Treaty of Berlin: smaller Bulgarian principality, eastern Rumelia Ottoman → merged with Bulgaria in '86. '87: Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (*later tsar*). 1908: Independent Kingdom. '14-'18: WWI, ally Germany → 100,000 Bulgarian troops killed, most severe loss of any country. '39-'45: WWII → Soviet army invades German-occupied Bulgaria in '44: Soviet-backed Fatherland Front: power. '46: Monarchy abolished → republic: Communist Party. '47: New constitution → 1-party state (*Zhivkov president*). Economy nationalized. USSR ally. '84: Government tries to force Turkish minority to take Slavic names: resistance, 300,000 flee country. '89: Democratisation → multi-party system, UDF formed. '90: Economic crisis, Communist Party back as Socialist Party (BSP). Mass demonstrations, strikes: government collapses. '93: Mass privatization program. '96: Financial turmoil. 2004: NATO. '07: EU. Corruption (*EU criticism*). '12: Suicide bomber kills 6 in Burgas. '14: Banking crisis.

Travel Seasons

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Spring												
Summer												
Autumn												
Winter												
Budget												

Altitude: 500-2290m. Climate: Moderate / Marine West Coast Climate (Cfb).

Bucket List For Free

☺ **Sights:** [Boyana Church](#), [Sofia University](#), Royal Palace, Palace of Justice, [Parliament](#), Communist's Palace, Sophia Statue, Soviet Army Monument, Unknown Soldier, Kambanite Bells, Vasil Levski Monument, Archaeological Complex Serdika & many churches (*St. Alexander Nevski most beautiful*). [Use Geocaching!](#)

☺ **Museums (free):** [Sofia City Art Gallery](#), [National Palace of Culture](#) (*tickets for events*), [National Library](#), [National Academy of Art](#), [National Museum of History](#) (*last Mon/month*), [National Museum of Military History](#) (*last Wed/month*), [Earth and Man Museum](#) (*last Mon/month*), [Archaeological Museum](#) (*last Sun/month*).

Worth The Extra \$€¥

👍 **Museums & sights:** [Rila Monastery](#), [Natural Museum](#), [Socialist Art Museum](#), [Kvadrat 500](#) (*Thru cheaper*), Alexander Nevsky Crypt Museum, [Ethnographic Museum](#), [Sofia Arsenal – Museum of Contemporary Art](#). *Student discounts!*

👍 **Skiing/Snowboarding:** Mount Vitosha.

👍 **'Free' (tip-based) Sofia Tour:** Daily.

☺ **Nature:** Vitosha Mountain (*many trails; take tram 5*), Boyana / Krushuna Waterfalls, Stob Pyramids, Devatashka Caves, 7 Rila Lakes, Belgradchik Rocks.

Budget Bites

⌘ **Big supermarkets:** Lidl, Billa.

⌘ **Markets:** Zhenski Pazar, Rimska Stena, Halite, Tsenralni Hali.

⌘ **Local food:** Moussaka (*potato-egg-pork oven dish*), Sarmi (*rice rolls*), Gyuvech (*beef-veggie-stew*), Kiufte (*köfte – minced pork*), Kebabche (*grilled meat*), Shishche (*meat-veggie skewers*), Sach (*meat stew*), Banitsa (*stuffed pastry*), Lyutenitsa (*tomato-pepper relish*), Shopska Salata (*salad*), Kyopolou (*eggplant with bellpeppers*), Tarator (*soup*), Meshana Skara (*mixed grill*), Lukanka (*salami*), Shkembe Chorba (*hangover tripe soup*), Job Sandwich, Princessa Sandwich, Rakia (*alcohol*) Oblak (*cocktail*), Mastika (*watermelon with alcohol*), Boza (*wheat-fermented drink*).

⌘ **Go vegan:** Being vegan is ridiculously easy in Europe, but can be challenging in meat-loaded Bulgaria (*but doable*). Local vegan dishes: Kyopolou, Lutenica, Bob Chorba, Lozovi Sarmi, Bean Soups. There are quite some vegan restaurants, especially in Sofia. Check them here: [Happy Cow – Sofia](#). I specifically recommend Salted Café and Dream House.

Mama Said

☠ Europe in general, and also Sofia, is very safe... but use your common sense like everywhere. Known pickpocket-areas are the Central Railway Station, Vitosha Blvd, Zhenski Market and public transport.

☠ Boycott zoos or aquariums like Zoo Sofia, where animals are held in captivity.

☠ Tap water is drinkable.

☠ Bulgarians shake their head up and down when they mean 'no' and left to right for 'yes'.

Next?

➔ **In Bulgaria:** Plovdiv, Bansko, Vratsa, Pleven.

➔ **International destinations close by:** Serbia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Greece, Turkey, Romania.

Sleep Cheap

❖ Hostels and alternative accommodation are pretty affordable in Bulgaria. Prices vary widely per day based on demand, so I recommend to get the cheapest deal for that day on Booking.com. Get an extra \$15 discount via this [Booking.com link](#)! (*Wild*) Camping is officially illegal, but tolerated if you're discrete and don't build fires.

❖ Go [Couchsurfing](#) or Housesitting ([20% discount for Trusted Housesitters via this link](#)!) Also check [WorkAway](#) or [HelpX](#) for work-exchanges.

Festivals

☼ Sofia Filmfest: Movie; Mar.

☼ Radio Park Fest: Music; Jun.

☼ A to Jazz: Music; Jul.

More festivals [here](#).

Nights Best Spent

◆ **Nightlife areas:** Vitosha Boulevard & surroundings, Tsar Ivan Shishman Street, Studentski Grad.

◆ **Theatres:** Ivan Vazov National Theatre, Salza I Smyah Drama Theatre, NATFIZ, Theatre 199, National Opera and Ballet, State Satirical Theatre, Bulgaria Hall Complex, National Music and Ballet Center, Sofia Theatre, Theatre Vazrajane, Little City Theatre.

Free-Riding?

■ Walking is an excellent option to see the more subtle details of Sofia.

■ Biking is rather dangerous due to the potholes and bad bicycle lanes, but possible. [Bike rental](#) available.

■ Sofia is connected by a cheap bus/trolleybus/tram/metro system. You need a new ticket for every vehicle change and a separate ticket for a big piece of luggage. Tickets must be bought in advance at ticket machines, kiosks or from the driver and punched manually (*every vehicle has a different pattern – they check regularly*). Daily/weekly/monthly tickets are available at kiosks. Separate tickets are required for night buses. The central bus terminal is located next to the main railway station. Budget bus lines are [Eurolines](#) and [Flixbus](#).

■ Airport: Sofia Airport (SOF). The blue metro line or bus 84 is connected with the airport.

■ Hitchhiking is relatively safe and quite common. You can also use apps like [Blablacar](#) for a cheap ride.