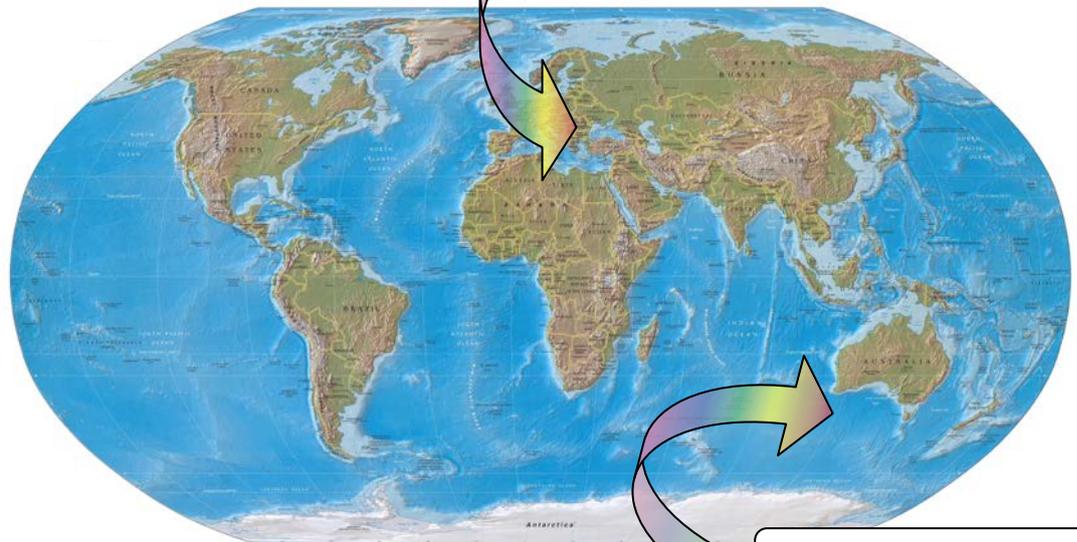


# BULGARIA



We were there



Now we are here

## FACTS:

- **Full name:** Republic of Bulgaria
- **Population:** 7.8 million (UN, 2005)
- **Capital:** Sofia
- **Area:** 110,994 sq km (42,855 sq miles)
- **Major language:** Bulgarian, alphabet – Cyrillic
- **Major religion:** Christianity
- **Life expectancy:** 69 years (men), 76 years (women) (UN)
- **Monetary unit:** 1 lev = 100 stotinki
- **Main exports:** Chemicals and plastics, food and drink, tobacco, machine-building equipment
- **GNI per capita:** US \$3,450 (World Bank, 2006)
- **Internet domain:** .bg
- **International dialing code:** +359

## **Bulgarian Community in WA**

### **Bulgarian Association**

21 Hoskin Street CLOVERDALE WA 6105

### **Bulgarian Association "Rodina"**

3 Bulbine Vista BEECHBORO WA 6063

## **Overview of cultural groups**

According to the 2001 census, Bulgaria's population consists mainly of ethnic Bulgarian 83.9%, with two large minorities, Turks 9.4% and Roma 4.7%. Of the remaining 2.0%, 0.9% comprises some 40 smaller minorities, most prominently in numbers the Russians, Armenians, Vlachs, Jews, Crimean Tatars and Karakachans.

The ethnic separateness of the Slavic Macedonians living in Bulgaria remains a matter of debate in many circles. The country has a Roma population estimated at between 200,000 and 450,000.

In the recent years Bulgaria has had one of the slowest population growth-rates in the world. Negative population growth has occurred since the early 1990s, due to economic collapse and high emigration. In 1989 the population comprised 9,009,018 people. In 2001 - 7,950,000 and in 2008 - 7,277,856. Now Bulgaria suffers a severe demographic crisis. Bulgaria has a fertility-rate of 1.4 children per woman as of 2007, with a predicted rate of 1.7 by the end of 2050. The fertility-rate will need to reach 2.2 to restore natural growth in population.

## **Language/dialects spoken**

96.3% of the population speak Bulgarian as their mother-tongue. Bulgarian, a member of the Slavic Language group, remains the only official language, but numbers of speakers of other languages such as Turkish and Romany correspond closely to ethnic proportions.

## **Dietary preferences**

Gourmets have long since esteemed the merits of Bulgarian cuisine with the verdict that it is tasty, spicy and varied, appealing to one and all. Indeed, who would not like the abundance of fresh vegetables and fruits, juicy meat, grilled or served with piquant sauces, mouth-watering vegetarian dishes, simmered slowly on low heat, the banitsa (cheese pie) which simply melts in your mouth, and famous Bulgarian yogurt.

The Bulgarian "culinary" geography abounds in delicious specialties and exotic dishes: Banskostyle **Kapama** (meat and vegetables stewed in an earthenware dish), **Rhodope cheverme** (lamb roasted on a spit over an open fire), **Thracian katmi** (a special type of pancake) and **Dobroudjanska banitsa**, **Danube fish soup** and **Sozopol-style mussels**.

The cosy, typically Bulgarian folk-style restaurants will tempt visitors with Shopska salad and chilled grape brandy, stuffed vine leaves or peppers, kavarma the Miller's Way, monastery-style **hotchpotch**, **moussaka** and **kebab**. The smell of oven-fresh bread rolls is mixed with the fragrance of savoury foods. Thinly sliced loukanka (flat dry sausage) from Smyadovo, pastarma, feta and yellow cheese are temptingly arranged on ceramic plates. The delicate white wines Dimyat, Misket and Riesling are followed by full reds such as Merlot, Cabernet and Gamza. Cups of steaming coffee are served with sweet jam, pancakes with honey and walnuts or baklava.

## **Religion/spirituality/observances**

There is religious freedom in the Republic of Bulgaria. Traditional religion is Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Most Bulgarians 82.6% belong, at least nominally, to this Church.

Other religious denominations include Islam 12.2%, various Protestant denominations 0.8% and Roman Catholicism 0.5% with other denominations, atheists and undeclared totaling approximately 4.1%.

### Public Holidays:

Date	English Name	Local Name
March 1	Grandmother Day	Baba Marta
March 3	National Holiday (Bulgaria's Day of Liberation from the Ottoman Rule)	Den na osvobozhdenieto
May 6	St. George's Day Day of the Bulgarian Army	Gergiovdan
May 24	Day of Bulgarian Enlightenment and Culture and of Slavonic	Den na azbukata, kulturata i prosveshthenieto
September 6	Bulgaria's Unification Day	Den na saedinenieto
September 22	Bulgaria's Independence Day	Den na nezavisimostta
November 1	National Revival Day	Den na narodnite buditeli

### Customs/traditions

Full of beauty, gaiety and a healthy love of life, the Bulgarian festivals and customs date back to ancient times when males tried to appease the natural elements and trembled before their power. One of the merriest and richest festivals in a ritual aspect are Christmas and the New Year, when the so called "sourvakari" make the round of houses with wishes for health and prosperity.

Other major festivals include "ladouvane" - a festive ritual for young girls on New Year's Day or Midsummer Day (24 June), Shrovetide and Mummers' Games which take their beginnings from the Dionysian festivals of the Thracians and mark the start of spring, "lazarouvane" - an Orthodox festival dedicated to love and the family, Trifon Zarezan (Vinegrower's Day) and St. George's Day, linked with health and abundance. And among them, the widely popular and typically Bulgarian customs and festivals – "martenitsas" and rose-picking. Every year on the 1st of March, the Bulgarians give each other "martenitsas" - small figures made of white and red threads, a symbol of the awakening, of spring, health and happiness. In late May and early June every year, the rose-picking season starts in the Valley of Roses which stretches between the Balkan Range and the Sredna Gora Mountains. Rose-picking starts at dawn, before sunrise and before the rose fragrance has had a chance to disappear.

The Bulgarian roses yield 70% of the world's essential oil used by every well known perfume company as an essential component of its products. This is the time of the Festival of Roses, celebrated with carnivals, processions, folk songs and dances in Karlovo and Kazanluk on the first Sunday in June.

### Recreational activities

Soccer has become by far the most popular sport in Bulgaria. Many Bulgarian fans closely follow the top Bulgarian "A" Professional Soccer Group, as well as the leagues of other European countries. The Bulgaria national soccer team achieved its greatest success with a fourth-place finish at the 1994 FIFA World Cup in the United States.

PFC CSKA Sofia - champion of Bulgaria 30 times, National cup holder 23 times, European Cup semi-finalist 2 times, Cup Winners' Cup semi-finalist.

PFC Levski Sofia - 25 times champion of Bulgaria and 26 times National Cup holder.

PFC Slavia Sofia - 8 times soccer champion of Bulgaria and 12 times holder of the National Cup, Cup Winners' Cup semi-finalist.

PFC Botev Plovdiv, established in 1912, is officially the oldest soccer club in Bulgaria and has become the most successful Bulgarian soccer-club. PFC Botev Plovdiv was 2 times soccer champion of Bulgaria, 3 times holder of the National Cup and once Balkans Cup.

Apart from soccer, Bulgaria boasts great achievements in a great variety of other sports: in rhythmic gymnastics, athletics and wrestling. Bulgarians also dominate in weightlifting, with around 1000 gold medals in different competitions.

The country has strong traditions in amateur boxing and in martial arts competitions. Bulgaria has achieved major success with its judo and karate teams in European and World championships.

## **Environment**

Bulgaria shares borders with Serbia, Macedonia, Romania, Greece, and Turkey. Two mountain ranges and two great valleys mark the topography of Bulgaria, a country the size of Tennessee and situated on the Black Sea. The Maritsa is Bulgaria's principal river, and the Danube also flows through the country.

Bulgaria has a temperate climate, with cool and damp winters, very hot and dry summers, and Mediterranean influence along the Black Sea coast. The barrier effect of the Balkan Mountains influences climate throughout the country: northern Bulgaria gets slightly cooler and receives more rain than the southern regions. Precipitation in Bulgaria averages about 630 millimeters per year. Drier areas include Dobrudzha and the northern coastal strip, while the higher parts of the mountains Rila and Stara Planina receive the highest levels of precipitation. In summer, temperatures in the south of Bulgaria often exceed 40°C, but remain cooler by the coast. The highest recorded temperature is 46.7°C near Plovdiv.

The country possesses relatively rich mineral-resources, including vast reserves of lignite and anthracite coal; non-ferrous ores such as copper, lead, zinc and gold. It has large deposits of manganese ore in the north-east. Smaller deposits exist of iron, silver, chromite, nickel and others. Bulgaria has abundant non-metalliferous minerals such as rock-salt, gypsum, kaolin, marble.

## **Your Notes and Comments:**