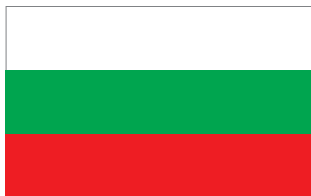


# Bulgaria **BEZMER** and adjacent regions **GUIDE** for **American military**

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## General Information

Bulgaria (Bulgarian: България, pronounced 'Bul-gab-ree-ya' with a schwa vowel in 'Bul') is a country on the Balkan Peninsula, in Southern Europe. It borders the Black Sea to the east, Greece and Turkey to the south, Serbia and the Republic of Macedonia to the west, and Romania to the north, mostly along the Danube River. Bulgaria shares the Black Sea Exclusive Economic Zone with Turkey, Romania, Ukraine, Russia, and Georgia. The capital city is Sofia.

Bulgaria is a country with an ancient history and pre-history going all the way back to the first man-made markings in Europe dated 1.4 million years ago, and found at Kozarnika Cave in northwestern Bulgaria; the Thracian, Hellenistic and Roman worlds of antiquity; and the powerful medieval Great Bulgaria, First and Second Bulgarian Empires.

Geographically and climatically, Bulgaria is noted for its exceptional nature heritage and diversity, with landscapes ranging from the Alpine snow-capped peaks in Rila, Pirin, Vitosha and the Balkan Mountains to the sunny Black Sea beaches, from the typically continental Danubian Plain (ancient Moesia) in the north to the Mediterranean valleys of Bulgarian Macedonia and southern lowlands of Thrace.

Bulgaria is a member of both NATO and the European Union. As a Consultative Party to the Antarctic Treaty, the country takes part in the governing of the vast territory south of 60° south latitude, and has an Antarctic base in the South Shetland Islands.

**Territory:** 110,993.6 sq. km (42,854.6 sq. mi), equal to Virginia

**Lowest elevation:** 0 m, at the Black Sea coast

**Highest elevation:** 2,925 m (9,596 ft), Musala Peak in Rila Mountain, summit of the Balkans

**Longest mountain range:** 530 km (329 mi), Stara Planina (Balkan Mountains)

**Longest river:** 368 km (229 mi), Iskar River

**Longest cave:** 15,535 m (16,989 yd), Duhlata on Mount Vitoshka

**Time zone:** GMT + 2 (EST + 7)

**Official language:** Bulgarian

**National flag:** A tricolor comprising three equal-sized horizontal stripes of white, green, and red

**Capital:** Sofia, population 1,381,406 (these and subsequent population figures refer to actual residents according to 2007 official statistics)

**Administrative division:** 28 regions (Bulgarian: 'oblast', pl. 'oblasti') comprising 262 municipalities

**National Day:** March 3, Day of the liberation of Bulgaria in 1878

**Official holidays:**

January 1: New Year's Day

Orthodox Easter: two days, the exact dates vary and may or may not coincide with those of Western Christianity in particular years

May 1: Labor Day

May 6: St. George's Day, Day of Bravery and Bulgarian Army

May 24: Saints Cyril and Methodius Day, Day of Bulgarian Education and Culture, and Cyrillic Alphabet

September 6: Unification Day, Day of the Bulgarian Unification in 1885

September 22: Independence Day, Day of the formal proclamation of independence in 1908

November 1: Day of the Bulgarian Enlighteners (a holiday for the educational institutions)

December 24, 25, and 26: Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and Second Day of Christmas

**Population:** 7,679,290 (7,322,858, CIA 2007 estimate)

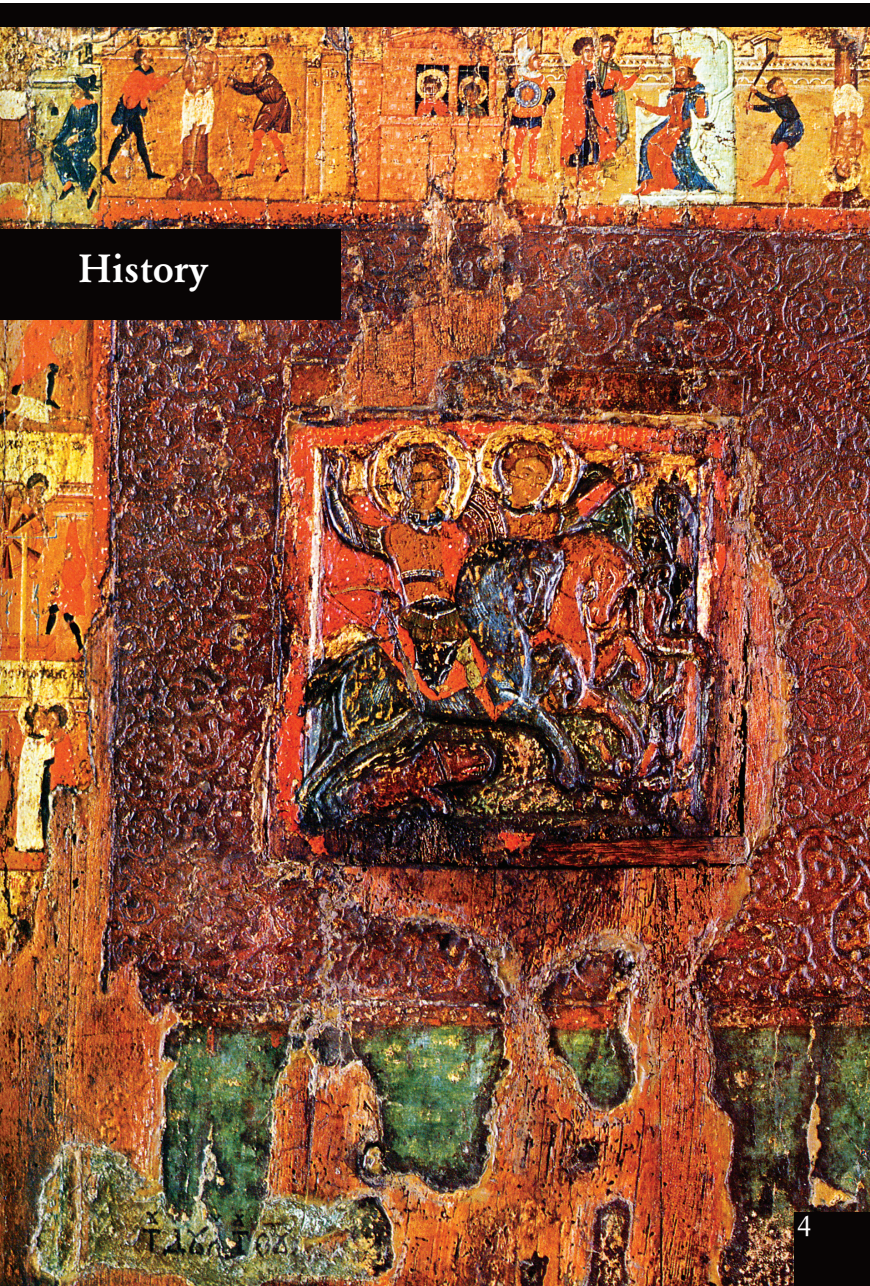
**Ethnic groups:** Bulgarian 83.9%, Turk 9.4%, Roma 4.7%, other 2% (including Armenian, Russian, Walach, Greek, Jewish etc.) (2001)

**Religion:** Bulgarian Orthodox 82.6%, Muslim 12.2%, Catholic 0.6%, Protestant 0.5%, other and non-believers 4.1% (2001)

**Currency:** Bulgarian Lev, ISO code BGN (pl. Leva; 1 Lev = 100 Stotinki), since 1997 pegged to Euro with 1 Euro = 1.95583 Leva

**Telecommunications:** One major fixed-line operator, the Bulgarian Telecommunications Company (BTC), and three mobile phone operators: M-Tel, GloBul, and Vivatel

# History

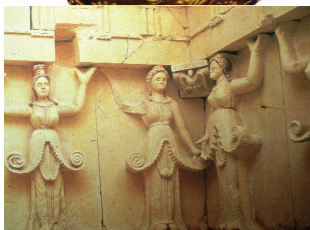


## **XLVI BC - I AD**

Thracians inhabited what is now Bulgaria in antiquity. They were divided in numerous tribes until King Teres united most of them in the Odrysian Kingdom around 480 BC. Thrace was conquered by Philip II of Macedon and his son Alexander the Great, but regained independence under Seuthes III. The Romans invaded Thrace in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC, and the ensuing wars continued until 46 AD when Thrace became a Roman province.

Dionysus, the god of wine worshiped by the Greeks and the Romans; Orpheus, the great poet and musician of antiquity; and Spartacus, a distinguished Roman military leader and folk hero - they are all among the mythical or historical Thracian personalities.

While the Thracians left no written records, their legacy survives in numerous tombs and treasures to reveal the amazing civilization of people rather more sophisticated than the "savage, blood-thirsty warriors" described by Herodotus. There are some 60,000 Thracian tumuli in the country, known to contain 2,000 undeveloped archeological sites. Most significant among the Thracian monuments are the Tombs of Sveshtari and Kazanlak, the Starosel Mausoleum, the capital town of Seuthopolis, and the Tatul and Perperikon Shrines. More than 80 Thracian treasures have been unearthed in Bulgaria too, including the famous Panagyurishte, Rogozen, and Valchitran treasures. Most of the gold is dated to 5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, although the pre-Thracian Varna treasure is dated more than 4,500 years BC. A number of artifacts including the golden mask of King Teres were found in the Rose Valley in central Bulgaria, branded 'Valley of the Thracian Kings' for that. The Thracian gold is gaining stunning popularity worldwide.



## VII BC - VII AD

During the early medieval Great Migration of peoples the Balkan Peninsula was invaded by a number of Celtic, Germanic, Bulgar, Hunnic and Slavic, tribes, with some of them staying for longer periods of time or remaining permanently to blend into the local populace. The ancient Bulgars are believed to have been of mixed stock themselves, originally Eastern Iranian (and thus 'cousins' to present Afghanistan and Iranian people), with later Ugric and Turkic influence.

The Bulgars came to Europe from their old homeland, the Kingdom of Balhara situated in Mount Imeon area (present Hindu Kush in northern Afghanistan), and built their cities of stone in Northern Caucasus. According to the 7<sup>th</sup> century chronicle 'Nominalia of Bulgarian Khans', the early European state of the Bulgars was established by Khan Avitohol in 165 AD. However, even BC some Bulgars migrated to Armenia, establishing the Principality of Vanand. During the 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries the Bulgars raided Central and Eastern Europe, and were known as fearsome warriors respectful of law and justice. In the 7<sup>th</sup> century they settled in Italy, Bavaria, Pannonia (present Hungary), Macedonia, and Volga Bulgaria (present Chuvashia, Tatarstan, Samara, and adjacent territories in Russia). Bulgar gold treasures were found at Nagyszentmiklós (Hungary), Vrap (Albania), and Mala Pereshchepina (Ukraine), the latter being Khan Kubrat's burial hoard.

In 632 AD Khan Kubrat united most Bulgar lands in the independent state of Great Bulgaria ('Old Great Bulgaria' in Roman chronicles), situated north of Black Sea and bounded by the Carpathian Mountains, the Caucasus, and Volga River. The Eastern Roman Empire (called Byzantium by modern historians) recognized the



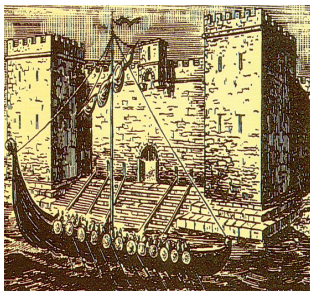
new state in 635 AD. Kubrat's successor Khan Asparuh expanded Great Bulgaria on the Balkan Peninsula, conquering the Byzantine territories of Moesia and Scythia Minor (present Miziya and Dobrudzha – the lands between the Balkan Mountains, the Danube, and Black Sea). A 681 peace treaty with Byzantium, and the establishment of the new capital Pliska south of the Danube River is considered the beginning of the First Bulgarian Empire.

## VII AD - XI AD

In the early 8<sup>th</sup> century the Arabs tried to invade Europe via the Balkans, but were defeated by the allied forces of Khan Tervel of Bulgaria and Byzantine Emperor Leo III in 717-18 AD. That victory was a milestone in history that turned back the tide of Muslim incursions into Europe from the east for more than 600 years, until the 14<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman invasion.

Khan Krum the Horrible conquered Serdica (present Sofia) and the Struma Valley in 809 AD, enabling the Bulgarian state in Macedonia established by Khan Kuber in 685 AD to merge with the First Bulgarian Empire. In Central Europe, Khan Krum's Bulgaria bordered the Frankish Empire of Charlemagne. That territorial consolidation of Bulgaria as one of the principal European states of the Middle Ages went in parallel with a process in which the Bulgars amalgamated with the local Slavs, and Slavized, Hellenized, and Romanized Thracians and other indigenous people. The Bulgars contributed their statesmen culture, while the common language of the country evolved from Slavonic. The formation of the new Bulgarian nation was completed by the Christianization of Bulgaria in 865 AD, which provided a common state religion.

By creating Great Bulgaria and the First Bulgarian Empire, the Bulgars introduced a





new model of nation-state building in Eastern Europe. Until then, the multiethnic Byzantine Empire claimed universality as a unique Earthly projection of the Celestial Kingdom. Following their long tradition of statehood however, the Bulgars denied that claim to establish a state of their own that successfully survived all the ups and downs of history to follow.

Besides breaking the 'political monopoly' of Byzantium in Eastern Europe, Bulgaria broke also the monopoly of Latin, Greek and Hebrew as the exclusive 'holy languages' of Christendom. Along with introducing Christianity as a common religion shared with Byzantium and Rome, Knyaz Boris I the Baptist ensured the approval by both the Pope and the Patriarch of Constantinople that the Church language in Bulgaria would be the spoken language of the country. In Western Europe the holy books became accessible to the common people much later, with Martin Luther's 1534 Bible in German, and the 1611 King James Version of the Bible in English.

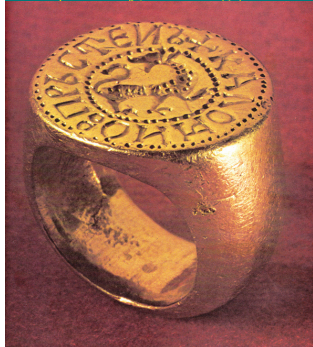
Boris commissioned the creation of the Cyrillic alphabet, together with setting up schools of higher education in Preslav and Ohrid run by St. Naum and St. Kliment respectively, where church books were rendered in Bulgarian, and clergymen were educated for the country's 20,000 churches. Thus in the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries, and especially during the so called 'Golden Age of Bulgarian culture' under Boris and his son Tsar Simeon I the Great, Bulgaria became the cradle of Cyrillic alphabet and Bulgarian Slavonic culture that in the next centuries spread to Byzantium, Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia, Transylvania, Walachia and Moldavia, as well as to Kievan Rus and the Principality of Moscow (predecessors of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus).



## XI AD - XV AD

Following a period of Byzantine domination in 1018-1165, Bulgaria regained her independence and role of major regional power in rivalry with the Kingdom of Hungary and the Byzantine Empire, the latter in turn overtaken by the Crusader Latin Empire of Constantinople in 1204-61. Bulgaria extended to Black Sea, Aegean Sea, Adriatic Sea, Bosnia, Hungary, and the Carpathian Mountains. The Second Bulgarian Empire prospered under Tsar Kaloyan and his successors Ivan Asen II and Svetoslav Terter, to enjoy under Ivan Alexander a period of cultural renaissance known as 'the Second Golden Age of Bulgarian culture'. The capital Tarnovo became a political, economic, cultural and religious center seen as 'the Third Rome' in contrast to Constantinople's decline after the Byzantine heartland in Asia Minor was lost to the Turks during the late 11<sup>th</sup> century. A number of monasteries and churches were built or renovated, literary activities flourished, and Bulgarian artists started to create realistic images – as those of Boyana Church in Sofia – already in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, well before Giotto and the early Italian Renaissance.

The Balkan history took a new turn with the Ottoman conquest, which was facilitated by a feudal fragmentation plaguing the region in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. In particular, Bulgaria split into the Tsardoms of Tarnovo and Vidin, the Principality of Dobrudzha, the vassal Principalities of Walachia and Moldavia (which remained autonomous under the Ottomans), and several smaller feudal possessions in Macedonia. The last Bulgarian state to fall was the Vidin Tsardom in 1422.

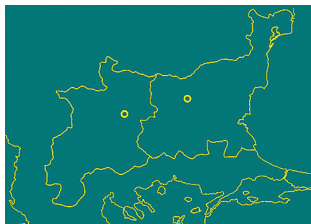


## XV AD - XIX AD

During more than four centuries of Ottoman domination the Bulgarians fought back as guerilla fighters ('haydut', pl. 'hayduti') and rebels. The liberation attempts included the Tamovo Uprisings in 1598, 1686 and 1835; Chirpovtsi Uprising in 1688; Karposh Uprising in 1689; Nish Uprisings in 1737 and 1835-41; Znepole Uprising in 1830; Vidin Uprising in 1850 etc.

The Bulgarians were treated as second-class citizens under the Ottoman system, and forced to pay higher taxes than the Muslims. Nevertheless, despite the oppression, and the Bulgarian aspirations for liberation, the ethnic Bulgarians and the Bulgarian Turks developed a strong tradition of mutual ethnic and religious tolerance that survived occasional deviations (most recently the coercive renaming campaign carried out by the communist regime in the 1980s). As the national hero and leader of the liberation movement Vasil Levski preached, his struggle was for "a pure and sacred republic" in which "Bulgarians, Turks, Jews and others will enjoy equal rights in every aspect".

In the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries the Bulgarian lands experienced a period of economic and cultural boom known as 'the Bulgarian Revival'. The Bulgarians were enterprising and industrious, selling their handicraft and industrial products throughout the Empire, and buying land to sustain the family owned farming that formed the nation's backbone. An autonomous Bulgarian education system was developed too, first with church-sponsored 'cellar schools' providing basic literacy, later with more advanced community-owned secular schools, along with the uniquely Bulgarian community cultural centers ('chitalishte', pl. 'chitalishta').



On the geopolitical side, the Bulgarians faced some disadvantages vis-a-vis other Balkan nations seeking to overthrow the Ottoman rule. Occupying the central area of the Peninsula, with their southeast extremity so close to the Imperial capital Istanbul (former Constantinople), the Bulgarian lands were naturally the last ones the Ottomans would be prepared to lose. Furthermore, the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century territorial appetites of certain major European countries had negative repercussions on the Bulgarian interests. Britain took over Cyprus; Italy annexed the Dodecanese Islands; Austria-Hungary possessed Transylvania and annexed Bosnia; Russia annexed eastern Moldavia (Bessarabia and Budzhak) to deprive Romania of her access to Black Sea north of the Danube, offering a sea outlet in Bulgarian Dobruzha instead. Thus Greece, Serbia, and Romania were motivated to seek expansion in predominantly Bulgarian ethnic territories. In addition, Britain and other West European powers disfavored the restoration of a large Bulgarian state, fearing (quite wrongly, as the subsequent Bulgarian-Russian relations would prove) that it may serve Russia's ambition of taking over the strategic Black Sea Straits.



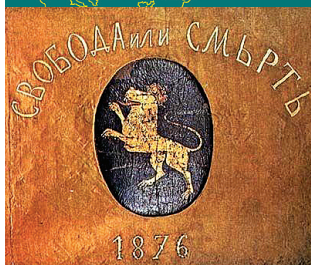
The political emancipation of the Bulgarians within the Ottoman Empire started by ridding the Bulgarian Church of its dependence to a Greek-dominated Patriarchate of Constantinople. Namely, a Bulgarian Exarchate was decreed by the Sultan in 1870 to include all the Bulgarian majority bishoprics in the Empire; in particular, the bishoprics of Skopie and Ohrid joined after plebiscites won with over 90% of the popular vote. The Exarchate played an important role in fostering Bulgarian interest, national awareness and education.



## XIX AD - XX AD

A decisive step towards Bulgaria's independence was the so called 'April Uprising' of 1876, which provoked the 1876 Constantinople Conference of the then Great Powers of Europe: Britain, Germany, Austria-Hungary, France, Italy, and Russia. The conference determined that, as of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Bulgarian ethnic territory extended to Tulcha (present Tulcea in Romania) and the Danube delta in the northeast, Ohrid and Kostur (present Kastoria in Greece) in the southwest, Lozengrad and Odrin (present Kırklareli and Edirne in Turkey) in the southeast, and Leskovets and Nish (now in Serbia) in the northwest. Furthermore, the Great Powers elaborated in detail the form of government for that territory, which was to be incorporated in two autonomous Bulgarian provinces of the Ottoman Empire: Eastern, with capital Tamovo, and Western, with capital Sofia. (Map on p. 10)

The Ottoman Government refused to implement the decisions of the Constantinople Conference, triggering the 1877-78 Russo-Turkish War that ended disastrously for Turkey. As a result, the preliminary Peace Treaty of San Stefano signed on 3 March 1878 stipulated the restoration of Bulgaria's statehood (because of which 3 March is the country's National Day). The subsequent Berlin Congress however amended the San Stefano provisions to postpone a comprehensive settlement, thus creating a Pandora box of future conflicts. In particular, the Bulgarian populace was split in five: present northern Bulgaria, and the region of Sofia formed an all but independent Principality of Bulgaria; northern Thrace became the autonomous Ottoman province of Eastern Rumelia with capital Plovdiv; the Bulgarian lands in Macedonia and southern Thrace remained under direct Turkish rule; the valley of Bulgarian (or South) Morava went to Serbia; and Northern Dobrudzha went to Romania.



The struggle for reunification of Bulgarian people remained the core of Bulgaria's national doctrine until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, involving diplomacy, organized resistance, one major uprising, and no less than five wars in sixty years. That struggle would prove successful, albeit partly, and at a high price. Bulgaria lost 140,000 troops killed in the 1912-13 Balkan Wars and WWI alone. A great many ethnic Bulgarian refugees fled their home places to settle in free Bulgaria, especially after the 1903 Ilinden-Preobrazhnie Uprising in Turkish-held Macedonia and Thrace (120,000 refugees), after the 1912-13 Balkan Wars and WWI (350,000), and in 1940 (67,000 from Northern Dobrudzha). In the opposite direction, ethnic Turks and Greeks emigrated to Turkey and Greece respectively.

After the unification with Eastern Rumelia and a victorious war with Serbia in 1885, the Principality of Bulgaria was proclaimed a fully independent Kingdom in 1908, during the reign of Tsar Ferdinand I of Bulgaria. The unified country became a leading military power on the Balkans in a series of three wars to follow.

The First Balkan War took place in 1912-13, followed immediately by the 1913 Second Balkan (or Inter-Ally) War. In the former, Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, and Montenegro defeated Turkey. In the latter, Bulgaria lost against Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Turkey, and Romania. As a result, the Turkish territories of Pirin Macedonia, the Rhodope Mountains, and the Mediterranean coast of Thrace between Mesta River and Maritsa River were ceded to Bulgaria, which in turn ceded Southern Dobrudzha to Romania. (Map on p. 12)

During World War I, Bulgaria sided with the Central Powers. The war effort was enormous; having a population of 4.5 million people, Bulgaria fielded a 900,000 army. However, despite the generally superior performance of the Bulgarian forces against those of Britain, France, Russia, Romania, Serbia and Greece, the country could hardly succeed with her allies Germany and Austria-Hungary lessening their effort on the Balkan Front in 1918. The defeat led to the loss of Tsaribrod, Bosilegrad, and Strumitsa districts to Serbia, and the Bulgarian Mediterranean coast to Greece. Those boundary changes were followed in 1940 by the negotiated recuperation of Southern Dobrudzha from Romania, which completed the formation of Bulgaria's modern territory.



## XX AD - XXI AD



Bulgaria sided with Germany again during World War II, a choice that had as much to do with telling the 'lesser evil' between Stalin and Hitler as with pursuing territorial ambitions. The country sent no troops to the Russian Front but facilitated the German invasion of Yugoslavia and Greece, and was entrusted the administration of territories with an area of 42,466 sq. km (16,396 sq. mi) and 1.9 million inhabitants comprising the Mediterranean coast between Struma River and Enos Gulf; Vardar Macedonia (present Republic of Macedonia), excepting the Albanian-populated western districts given to Italy; and part of Morava Valley in Serbia. Bulgarian authorities functioned in those territories in 1941-44, with citizenship granted to all ethnic Bulgarians (2/3 of the population), and others who wished so. Nowadays, that WWII status is being used by tens of thousands of people from the Republic of Macedonia to obtain Bulgarian citizenship.

The Jews were excluded though, being subject to German extermination policies: 11,363 of them were deported. Moreover, Hitler put strong pressure on Tsar Boris III of Bulgaria to send to Germany the 50,000 Jews of Bulgaria proper. Tsar Boris refused, supported by the Parliament (Deputy Speaker Dimitar Peshev played a leading role), the Orthodox Church, and the general public. The Bulgarian Jews remained safe, and after the war were permitted to emigrate to Israel, which most of them did.

Bulgaria provided several divisions for the occupation of Serbian and Greek territory under direct German control, thus relieving German troops for the front line. In December 1941 the country declared war on Britain and the USA (but not Russia). The hostilities were confined to air combat, with 168 Bulgarian settlements bombed, 2,434

buildings destroyed, 1,290 Bulgarians killed, and 117 Allied planes shot down. Near the end of WWII Bulgaria changed sides to fight the German army all the way to Austria, losing 30,000 troops killed.

The Soviet troops entered Bulgaria in September 1944, prompting a regime change that placed the country under Russian domination endorsed by a Churchill-Stalin agreement on the division of the Balkans. Within few years the country was transformed from monarchy into 'people's republic', the industry was nationalized, and the political power privatized by the Communist Party. In 1954 the party's (and thus country's) leadership was assumed by Todor Zhivkov, who stayed in power until the end of the communist project in 1989.

Despite some initial progress in economy, health care and education, already by the late 1970s the communist system had hit the limits of its sustainability, within a decade went bankrupt, and collapsed in Bulgaria as it did throughout Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

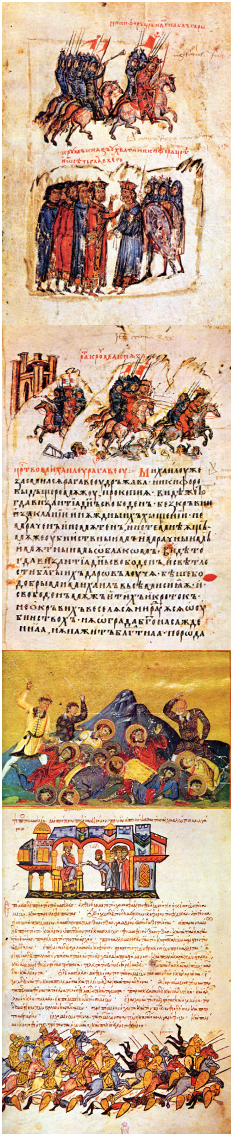
The last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the time of transition back to democracy and free market, which took place in the framework of Atlantic and European integration. Together with Romania, Bulgaria joined NATO in 2004 and EU in 2007.

NATO, the USA and the European Union provided guidance, support and incentives for Bulgaria's political and economic reforms; moreover, they helped put the regional relations in an entirely new perspective. For the first time in modern history the Balkan nations came to share common goals and common vision. Traditionally negative attitudes among the Balkan people are diminishing, and the Balkan identity is becoming a source of pride.

Nowadays Bulgaria is a vibrant liberal economy with robust public finances and low unemployment. Having lost some 800,000 people in emigration since 1989, today the country is increasingly attracting immigrants from Western Europe and North America, the Balkans, ex-Soviet, Asian and African states.



## Great Battles of Bulgaria



- 440 AD The Bulgars defeat and kill King Agelmund of Langobards in Silesia (present southwestern Poland).
- 499 AD The Bulgars defeat four armies of Emperor Anastasius of the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium) in Illyricum (western Balkans).
- 680 AD Khan Asparuh of Bulgaria defeats Emperor Constantine IV of Byzantium at the Danube delta.
- 718 AD Khan Tervel of Bulgaria defeats the Arab army of Caliph Umar II led by Gen. Maslama, relieving the Arab siege of Constantinople.
- 792 AD Khan Kardam defeats Emperor Constantine VI of Byzantium at Markeli (near present Karnobat in southeastern Bulgaria).
- 811 AD Khan Krum the Horrible defeats and kills Emperor Nikephoros I Genikos of Byzantium at Varbitsa Pass (in eastern Bulgaria).
- 813 AD Khan Krum defeats Emperor Michael I Rangabe of Byzantium at Versinikia (near Adrianople, present Edirne in Turkey).
- 896 AD Tsar Simeon I the Great defeats the Byzantine army at Bulgarophyon (present Babaeski in Turkey).
- 917 AD Tsar Simeon I defeats the Byzantine army led by Gen. Leo Phocas at Aheloy River near Anchialus (present Pomorie in southeastern Bulgaria).
- 986 AD Tsar Samuil of Bulgaria defeats Emperor Basil II of Byzantium at Trayan Gates (in central Bulgaria).
- 1014 Tsar Samuil of Bulgaria defeated by Byzantine Emperor Basil II at Klyuch (in southwestern Bulgaria).
- 1205 Tsar Kaloyan of Bulgaria defeats and captures Emperor Baldwin of the Latin Empire (formerly of Flanders) at Adrianople (present Edirne in Turkey).
- 1223 King Gabdulla Chelbir of Volga Bulgaria defeats the Mongol army of Ghengis Khan at Samara Bend (in present Russia).



- 1230 Tsar Ivan Asen II of Bulgaria defeats and captures Byzantine Emperor Contender Theodore Komnenos of Epirus at Klokotnitsa (near Haskovo in southeastern Bulgaria).
- 1279 Tsar Ivaylo of Bulgaria defeats the Byzantine army of Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos at Devnya (in northeastern Bulgaria).
- 1304 Tsar Svetoslav Terter of Bulgaria defeats the Byzantine army of Emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos at Sozopol (in southeastern Bulgaria).
- 1332 Tsar Ivan Alexander of Bulgaria defeats Emperor Andronikos III Palaiologos of Byzantium at Rusokastro (in southeastern Bulgaria).
- 1396 Joint European forces under Duke Jean de Nevers defeated by the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid I at Nicopolis (present Nikopol in northern Bulgaria).
- 1444 Joint European forces under King Władysław III of Poland and King Janos Hunyadi defeated by the Ottoman Sultan Murad II at Varna (in northeastern Bulgaria).
- 1878 Bulgarian volunteer units and Russian troops under Gen. Stolev defeat the Turkish army under Suleiman Pasha at Shipka Pass (central Bulgaria) in one of the crucial battles of the Russo-Turkish War.
- 1885 Prince Alexander I Battenberg of Bulgaria defeats King Milan I of Serbia at Slivnitsa (in western Bulgaria) during the Serbo-Bulgarian War.
- 1912 Gen. Ivan Fichev and Gen. Radko Dimitriev defeat the Turkish army at Lozengrad, Lyuleburgas and Bunarhisar (present Kirkclareli, Lüleburgaz





- 1913 and Pinarhisar in Turkey) during the First Balkan War.
- 1913 Gen. Georgi Vazov defeats Shukri Pasha to capture the reputedly impenetrable German-built Turkish fortress of Odrin (present Edirne in Turkey) during the First Balkan War.
- 1913 Gen. Vicho Dikov defeats the Serbian and Montenegrin army at Kalimantsi (in present Republic of Macedonia) during the Second Balkan War.
- 1913 The Bulgarian army under Gen. Radko Dimitriev surrounds Greece's 120,000-strong main army group north of Kresna Gorge (in western Bulgaria) during the Second Balkan War.
- 1916 Gen. Panteley Kiselov defeats the Romanian garrison under Gen. Constantin Teodorescu to capture the fortress of Tutrakan (in north-eastern Bulgaria) during WWI; Bulgaria occupies Bucharest.
- 1916 Gen. Ivan Kolev defeats the Russian 7 Cavalry (Cossack) Division under Gen. Evgeniy Leontovich, and captures the 25 Orenburg Battalion flag in Dobrudzha during WWI.
- 1917 6 Bdin Division under Gen. Hristo Popov defeats 11 and 16 French Divisions to keep the strategic Red Wall Peak near Bitolya (in present Republic of Macedonia) during WWI.
- 1918 Gen. Vladimir Vazov defeats the British army under Gen. George Milne at Doiran (on the border between Greece and present Republic of Macedonia) during WWI.
- 1945 Gen. Kiril Stanchev defeats and captures the flag of the German 'Prinz Eugen' SS Division at Nish (in Serbia) during WWII.

## US-Bulgarian Strategic Partnership

The strategic partnership with the USA is of particular importance for enhancing Bulgaria's military capabilities, its regional role, and its contribution to the joint efforts in strengthening world stability and security. The Bulgarian Armed Forces are engaged in multinational overseas missions, usually initiated by the United States, while Bulgarian training ranges are used for joint exercises by the USA and other NATO Allies. The civil airport of Sarafovo (Burgas) was used by the USAF during operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

A Defense Cooperation Agreement between the USA and Bulgaria was signed during the 2006 visit of US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to Sofia, providing for joint use of the Bulgarian military facilities of Bezmer Air Base, Novo Selo Training Range, Graf Ignatievo Air Base, and Aytos Logistics Center. That choice reflects both the favorable geostrategic location of Bulgaria vis-a-vis the Greater Middle East and the former Soviet Union, and the country's reputation as a responsible and reliable ally.



### Joint US-Bulgarian Bases

The **Bezmer Air Base** is situated 10 km (6.2 mi) west of the city of Yambol and 35 km (22 mi) southeast of the city of Sliven, between the villages of Bezmer and Bolyarsko. In the past, Bezmer served mainly as a base for Su-25 Frogfoot ground attack aircraft. The base has a modern communication, information and navigation system, and its runway is being upgraded to expand the range of planes that can be supported. Some experts rank Bezmer among the six most important American military bases outside mainland USA.

The **Novo Selo Training Range** has a surface area of 144 sq. km (55.6 sq. mi), and is situated just 45 km (28 mi) from Bezmer Air Base, and 40 km (25 mi) east of Sliven. The facility has its designated areas for tank shooting, and nuclear, biological, and chemical training. The Novo Selo Range is highly appreciated by NATO experts and troops, and has become the favored site of annual joint US and Bulgarian troops exercises since 2004.

The **Aytos Logistics Center** comprises military storage facilities located near the town of Aytos, and developed in support of the Novo Selo Range.

The **Graf Ignatievo Air Base** is the principal facility of the Bulgarian Air Force. It is situated 17 km (10.5 mi) north of Plovdiv, the second largest city in the country.

Gabrovo



Veliko Tarnovo

# Tourism

Sliven



Yambol



Slanchev Bryag



Bezmer



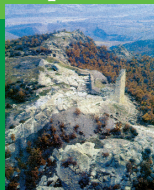
Burgas

Haskovo



Sozopol

Perperikon



Ahtopol

Thanks to its geographical diversity and rich historical and cultural heritage, Bulgaria offers unique opportunities for virtually all kinds of tourism, from extreme winter sports to scuba diving, rural, health, and golf tourism. Most popular Black Sea resorts are Zlatni Pyasatsi (Golden Sands) and Albena in the north, and Slanchev Bryag (Sunny Beach) and Dyuni in the south. There are also the top-class resort clubs such as Riviera or Slanchev Den (Sunny Day), although many Bulgarians prefer the authentic historical towns of Balchik, Nesabar and Sozopol, or the smaller exotic villages and campings south of Burgas.

Bulgaria boasts several major winter sports resorts, notably Bansko in Pirin Mountain, Borovets in Rila Mountain, Pamporovo in the Rhodope Mountains, and Aleko on Mount Vitosha.

The country is among the world leaders in balneology, with 1,600 springs drawing from 550 mineral water deposits of great diversity in chemical composition, biologically active microelements, and temperature. The healing properties of mineral water have been known since ancient times, with Thracians and Romans often building their cities around mineral springs, e.g. Augusta (present Hisar), Desudava (Sandanski), Germanea (Sapareva Banya), Pautalia (Kyuwendil), or Ulpia Serdica (Sofia).



## Yambol Oblast

Bezmer Air Base is situated in southeastern Bulgaria, on the territory of Yambol Oblast (Region). The latter borders Burgas Oblast to the east, Sliven Oblast to the northwest, Haskovo Oblast to the southwest, and Turkey to the south. Yambol Oblast covers an area of 3,356 sq. km (1,296 sq. mi), mostly fertile lowlands and low hills crossed by Bulgaria's second longest river Tundzha (ancient Tonzos). The region comprises the municipalities of Yambol, Tundzha, Straldzha, Elhovo, and Bolyarovo with total population of 150,380.

## Yambol (Bulgarian: Ямбoл)



Situated on Tundzha River, the city of Yambol is the administrative center of both the municipality and the oblast (region) of Yambol. The city was founded by Roman Emperor Diocletian in 293 AD, with its original name Diospolis evolving to Diamopolis, and eventually Yambol. Time has spared two magnificent architectural monuments built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century: the Arcade (popularly known as 'Bezistena'), which is the single covered old mart preserved in Bulgaria, and the Eski Mosque.

Yambol is the birthplace of the world-famous avant-garde artist Georges Papazoff, who worked mainly in Paris. The father of electronic digital computer, Bulgarian American John Atanasoff also has his roots in Yambol.

The strategic location and particularly favorable weather conditions of Yambol area were appreciated already during WWI, when the Imperial German Air Service built a base for zeppelins used for reconnaissance and bombing missions to Romania, Russia, Sudan and Malta. During the Cold War the city used to host numerous military formations, and the ex-military still account for a notable proportion of the senior citizens.

Population: 85,331

Distance from Sofia: 300 km (186 mi); the forthcoming completion of Trakiya Highway that goes just north of Yambol will shorten the distances and travel time to Sofia and Burgas)

Distance from Bezmer Air Base:  
10 km (6.2 mi)

## Leisure

The **Kabile** National Archeological Reserve and Museum is situated 8 km (5 mi) northwest of Yambol. Founded 2,000 years BC, Kabile was a major economic and trading center in antiquity, the residence of Thracian kings, and the base of a Roman legion.

### Cultural Centers:

'Georges Papazoff' Gallery of Fine Arts; 'Kiril Krastev' Gallery of Fine Arts; Museum of History; 'Nevena Kokanova' Drama Theater; and 'Georges Papazoff' State Theater of Culture

## Cultural and sports events in Yambol

- The Mummers Festival, and the 'Kukerlandia' photo exhibition; according to Bulgarian folklore, the mummers (Bulgarian: kykep / 'Kuker', pl. 'Kukeri') chase evil spirits; the event is held in February
- The 'Bikeweek', a national motor bike event at the Bakadzhdika site organized annually by the local Riders MC
- The National Puppet Theater Festival 'Mihail Lakatnik', held at the Yambol Puppet Theater; last week of April
- The 'Golden Diana' Music Festival at Yambol Concert Hall; May
- The 'Maestro Stoyan Gagov' National Festival of Folklore Choirs and Groups, held at the Probuda Chitalishte (community cultural center); biennial, takes place in odd-numbered years
- Day of Bulgarian Education and Culture and of the Cyrillic Alphabet, downtown; May 24
- City of Yambol Day; celebrated on the Orthodox Whit Monday
- Bezmer Day, an open day and public festivities at the Bezmer Air Force Base; June 1
- Christmas Eve and Christmas Dance Festival, a competition of youth dancing groups, Main Hall of the Yambol





#### Municipality

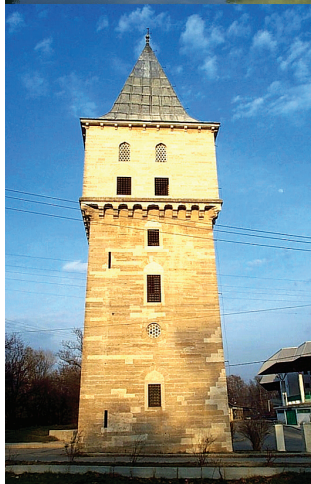
- National Christmas Folklore Feast ('Koledari'), in the open air, downtown; December 25
- New Year's Day, an open air celebration, downtown, December 31



**Bezmer** (Bulgarian: Бѐзмер) - named after a Bulgarian Khan who ruled in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD - is a village in the Tundzha Municipality of Yambol Oblast, situated 8 km (5 mi) from the city of Yambol. It has been inhabited since Thracian times, as evidenced by the 22 tumuli in the village area. Population: 1,243



The village of **Bolyarsko** (Bulgarian: Бoлѝрско) is situated in the Tundzha Municipality of Yambol Oblast, next south of the Bezmer Air Base. Population: 401



The town of **Elhovo** (Bulgarian: Елхо̀во) is situated in the south of Yambol Oblast, on the east bank of Tundzha River between the Strandzha and Sakar Mountains. Elhovo hosts an Ethnographic Museum specialized in the cultural heritage of the Strandzha-Sakar region of Thrace. Population: 11,802  
Distance from Bezmer Air Base:  
48 km (30 mi)

#### Edirne, Turkey (Bulgarian: Одрин/Odrin)

The westernmost Turkish city of Edirne is situated south of Yambol and Elhovo, at the confluence of Tundzha, Maritsa and Arda Rivers. The city witnessed many historical battles between Bulgarians and Byzantines, and served as capital of the Ottoman Empire in 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries. Nowadays Edirne is Turkey's gateway to the European Union. An emblematic city monument is the Selimiye Mosque, reputedly the finest creation of Turkish mosque architecture. The Bulgarian St. George's Church



in the city has recently been renovated.

Population: 128,400 (2002)

Distance from Bezmer Air Base:

140 km (87 mi)

## Sliven (Bulgarian: Сливен)

The city of Sliven, located in the southern foothills of the Balkan Mountains, is known as 'the city of the 100 chieftains', deriving from the active armed resistance of the local population against the Ottoman rulers. Sliven is a university town, and an old industrial center with its first factory built in 1835.

Population: 105,698

Distance from Bezmer Air Base:

35 km (22 mi)

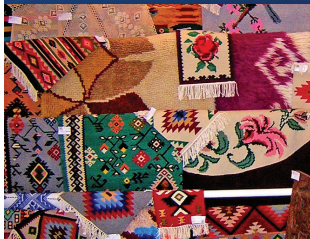
## Leisure

- The **Karandila** site is located in the 'Sinite Kamani' ('Blue Rocks') Nature Park, part of the Balkan Mountain range. Accessible with a chair lift; 32 km (20 mi) from Sliven by road. The place offers perfect conditions for recreation, sports and tourism.

- **Places to visit** in Sliven: the Museum of Traditional 19<sup>th</sup> Century Life; the Hadzhi Dimitar Museum; the National Textile Industry Museum; the Roman fortress of Tuida.

- The **Sliven Mineral Spa** is located 12 km (7.5 mi) southwest of the city, in the village of Zlati Voyvoda.

The town of **Kotel** (Bulgarian: Котел, 'cauldron') is situated 49 km (30 mi) north-east of Sliven in the eastern Balkan Mountains. It is an architectural and historical reserve with 110 houses preserved from the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century National Revival period. Kotel is known for its specific style in carpet weaving, which can be seen in a museum devoted to the craft. The Novo Selo Range is situated on Kotel Municipality soil.





Population: 6,772

Distance from Bezmer Air Base:

70 km (43.5 mi)

**Zheravna** (Bulgarian: Жеравна, from ‘zherav’ / ‘crane’) is a village in Kotel Municipality, a famous architectural reserve with houses of stone and wood, and cobbled streets and alleys from the Bulgarian National Revival period.

### Stara Zagora (Bulgarian: Стара Загора)

The city of Stara Zagora (Beroe in ancient Thrace) is situated at a strategic intersection of transport arteries linking Adriatic Sea and Black Sea, and Danube River and Aegean Sea. Stara Zagora is a university town, noted for its straight linden-lined streets.

Population: 154,593

Distance from Bezmer: 99 km (61.5 mi)

### Leisure

- The ‘**Mechi Kladenets**’ (‘Bear Well’) site situated 8 km (5 mi) northwest of the city hosts the earliest copper mines discovered in Europe (5<sup>th</sup> millennium BC).
- The **Stara Zagora Mineral Spa** is 15 km (9 mi) from the city center.
- **Places to visit** in Stara Zagora: Augusta Trayana Forum with ancient mosaics; the Eski Mosque; the Observatory and Planetarium.
- The **Karanovo Tumulus**, one of the oldest in Europe, is in the village of Karanovo located northeast of the city.

The city of **Kazanlak** (Bulgarian: Казанлък) is situated 36 km (22 mi) northwest of Stara Zagora in the Rose Valley, famous for its rose growing industry producing 70% of the world’s rose oil. An annual Rose Festival takes place every June.

The **Thracian Tomb of Kazanlak** (4<sup>th</sup> century BC) is on the UNESCO protected World Heritage Site list.

Situated in the southern foothills of the Balkan Mountains west of Kazanlak, the small town of **Sopot** is an internationally popular site for hang gliding and paragliding, with a cable lift taking one from the landing zone up to the 850 m higher take off. Both Kazanlak and Sopot are major centers of the Bulgarian defense industry.

## Veliko Tarnovo

(Bulgarian: Вeлuкo Търнoвo)

The city of Veliko Tarnovo – capital of the Second Bulgarian Empire – is situated on Yantra River in the northern periphery of the Balkan Mountains. The ruins of the Royal Castle and Palace on Tsarevets Hill; the museum of Bulgarian Revival; the Archeological Museum; and the ‘Tsarevgrad Tarnov: Sound and Light’ audio-visual show reveal the city’s glorious history and unique architecture. Veliko Tarnovo has two major universities, including the National Military University.

Population: 71,664

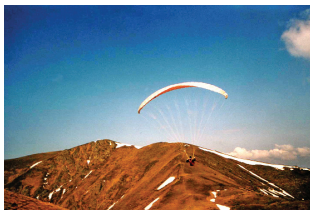
Distance from Bezmer Air Base:

142 km (88 mi)

**Elena** (Bulgarian: Елена) is a small town keeping the atmosphere of the National Revival period, situated 38 km (24 mi) southeast of Veliko Tarnovo. The Kapinovo Monastery built in 1272 is situated 25 km (15.5 mi) northwest of the town. The Yovkovtsi Dam Lake near Elena is a favored place for recreation, water motor sports, sunbathing and fishing.

## Gabrovo (Bulgarian: Гaбpoвo)

The city is situated 45 km (28 mi) southwest of Veliko Tarnovo, amidst the Balkan Mountains, in the geographical center of Bulgaria. Gabrovo is the country’s capital of humor, boasting even a House of Humor and Satire. The Gabrovians appear in numerous anecdotes, portrayed as brighter





than the Sofianites and less generous than the Scots. The city prides itself as the ‘Bulgarian Manchester’ for its strong industrial tradition in textile and machine building.

Population: 67,669

Distance from Bezmer Air Base:

159 km (99 mi)

**Etara** (Bulgarian: Етъра) is an architectural and ethnographic complex situated 8 km (5 mi) south of Gabrovo, with medieval houses and craftsmen’s workshops that demonstrate crafts typical of the Revival period.

The village of **Bozhentsi** (Bulgarian: Боженци) is an architectural reserve on the UNESCO list of cultural monuments, situated 15 km (9 mi) east of Gabrovo.

**Tryavna** (Bulgarian: Трявна) is a picturesque mountain town situated 20 km (12 mi) east of Gabrovo. Its museums present valuable icons, woodcarvings and other artifacts from the National Revival period. An Asian and African Art Museum hosts collections from Tibet, Nepal, China, India and some African countries.

## Haskovo (Bulgarian: Хасково)

The city of Haskovo is located in the south-east of Bulgaria, with convenient roads leading to neighboring Turkey and Greece.

Population: 82,681

Distance from Bezmer Air Base:

152 km (94 mi)

## Leisure

- The **Haskovo Spa** is well known since Roman times, with 14 mineral springs suitable for treating disorders of the supporting and muscle system.

- **Places of interest** in Haskovo: the Eski (Old) Mosque built in 1395, reputedly the first ever mosque on the Balkan Peninsula; the Virgin Mary Monument rising to 33 m (108 ft), with the statue itself 15 m (49 ft) high.

## Kardzhali (Bulgarian: Кърджали)

The city of Kardzhali is situated on Arda River in the Eastern Rhodope Mountains. Kardzhali Oblast is an ethnically mixed region bordering Greece, and inhabited mostly by Bulgarian Turks, and Christian and Muslim ethnic Bulgarians.

Population: 50,840

Distance from Bezmer Air Base:

205 km (127 mi)

## Leisure

- The ancient **Perperikon** complex is the largest megalith ensemble on the Balkan Peninsula. It is perched on a rocky peak of elevation 470 m (1541 ft). An impressively large fortress with 2.8 m (9 ft) wide walls had surrounded a huge palace.

- The ‘**Kamennata Svatba**’ (‘Stone Wedding’) natural phenomenon consists of 3 m (10 ft) tall sandstone towers, shaped by the erosion to resemble mushrooms.

- The **Dyavolski Most** (Devil’s Bridge) near Ardino is a remarkable example of medieval engineering built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

## Black Sea

(Bulgarian: Черно море / ‘Cherno More’)

Surface area: 436,400 sq. km

(163,321 sq. mi)

Maximum depth: 2212 m (7,257 ft)

Salinity: 17.3 permille, half the World Ocean salinity (35 permille).

The Black Sea is an inner European sea connected to the Mediterranean. The Bulgarian seaside features a superb combination of sand beaches, beautiful forests (including the tropical - like longoz wet forest) and picturesque settlements, pleasantly warm summer, safe and friendly environment (no sharks either), offering marvelous vacation opportunities.

Some American geologists and maritime





explorers believe that 7,000 years ago, following a post-Ice Age glacier melting, a wall of seawater sliced through the Bosphorus into the Black Sea – hitherto an isolated freshwater lake – to devastate the coastal farmland. According to the theory, that great flood survived as a tale to eventually become the Noah story.

## Burgas (Bulgarian: Бургас)

The Black Sea port of Burgas is the country's fourth largest city, founded in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC as a military and trading colony.

Population: 205,727

Distance from Bezmer Air Base:  
102 km (63 mi)

## Leisure

- The **Sea Garden**, full of flower beds, trees and sculptures
- The **Sts. Cyril and Methodius Cathedral** with frescoes and wooden altar
- The **Catholic Cathedral**

**Pomorie** (Bulgarian: Поморие) is situated 20 km (12 mi) to the northeast of Burgas. It is famous for its salt-pans and balneological sanatoriums. The Pomorie Tomb, a 26 ft high, 196 ft in diameter, brick mushroom-like structure, is a Roman mausoleum built in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

**Nesebar** (Bulgarian: Несебър) is situated on a rocky peninsula 37 km (23 mi) north-east of Burgas. The almost insular old part of the town has been designated as a UNESCO site of world culture.

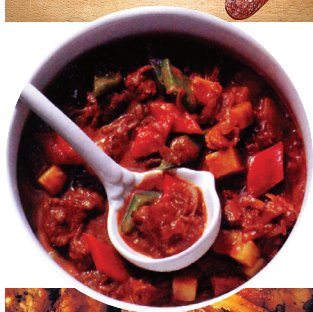
**Slanchev Bryag** (Bulgarian: Слънчев бряг, meaning 'Sunny Beach') is a major resort situated 42 km (26 mi) northeast of Burgas, with a fine 5-mile sand beach flanked by natural dunes, a hundred-odd hotels, and as many restaurants, cafés, and night clubs, etc.

**Sozopol** (Bulgarian: Созопол) is the oldest town on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast, established in 610 BC on a rocky peninsula 34 km (21 mi) southeast of Burgas. At the beginning of September each year the town hosts the Apolonia Festival of Arts.

**Dyuni** (Dunes) vacation village is situated 6 km (4 mi) south of Sozopol, and close to Arkutino swamp lake covered by water lilies and irises.

**Ahtopol** (Bulgarian: Ахтопол) is the southernmost town on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast, popular for its beaches, with rich oak forest in the adjacent Stranzha Mountain Nature Park. The nearby villages of Brodilovo and Kosti are famous for their ancient folkloric ritual of ‘Nestinari’ involving barefoot dancing on live embers, and held annually on the Day of Sts. Constantine and Helena observed by the Eastern Orthodox Church on 21 May.





**Tarator** - refreshing summer-time cold soup of yoghurt and chopped cucumber, seasoned with vegetable oil, fresh dill, garlic, and chopped walnuts.

**Shopska Salata** - a salad of chopped tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, and peppers sprinkled with parsley and feta cheese ('sirene'); seasoned with salt, vinegar, and vegetable oil.

**Chushki Byurek** - roasted peppers stuffed with egg and crumbled feta cheese, then fried, and seasoned with parsley.

**Snezhanka** - a dip of thick yoghurt with chopped cucumber, seasoned with garlic.

**Kyopoolu** - an eggplant dip of roasted and then peeled and chopped eggplants, peppers and tomatoes, seasoned with parsley, vegetable oil, salt, and vinegar.

**Sirene po Shopski** - a dish of feta cheese, egg, tomatoes, and peppers baked and served in a small covered pot.

**Lukanka** and **Sudzhuk** - local types of flat salami-like spicy sausages.

### Main Dishes

**Kebapcheta** - barbequed finger-shaped spicy minced pork and beef meat.

**Kyufteta** - barbequed or fried spicy meatballs.

**Shishcheta** - barbequed small cubes of pork, lamb or chicken meat threaded onto skewers.

**Kavarma** - a dish of small pieces of pork or beef meat, and vegetable stew.

**Musaka** - a baked dish of minced meat, potatoes, and tomatoes, seasoned with onion, parsley and typical Bulgarian spices, covered with a layer of beaten eggs, yoghurt and flour.

**Mish-Mash** - a type of omelet with peppers and tomatoes, and crumbled feta cheese.

**Sarmi** - several different types of cooked



dish of balls of minced meat seasoned with onions and wrapped with vine leaves (served with yoghurt) or sour cabbage leaves in winter time; the filling of the vegetarian version is plain rice, seasoned with onion, dill and lemon juice.

**Stuffed Peppers** – peppers stuffed with minced meat and rice, or with plain rice, and seasoned almost the same way as ‘sarmi’.

## Desserts

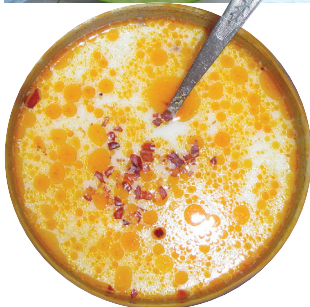
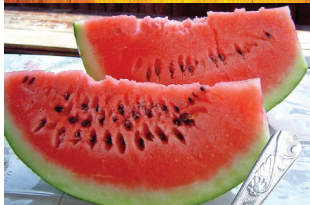
**Banitsa** – a baked filo pastry dish in many varieties depending on the filling of the layers, usually eaten with yoghurt; the most popular one is the filling of crumbled feta cheese, yoghurt and eggs. The ‘zelnik’ variety contains also spinach, leeks, or cabbage added. The sweet varieties are ‘mlechna banitsa’ (‘dairy banitsa’) with a filling of milk, eggs and vanilla sugar, and ‘tikvenik’ with grated pumpkin and ground walnuts filling.

**Baklava** – a filo pastry layered with a filling of ground walnuts soaked in syrup.

**Tolumbichki** – a finger-shaped soft dough pastry which is fried and then soaked in syrup.

**Lokum** – known as ‘Turkish delight’ in English, a confection made of starch, sugar, rose or lemon flavors, and sprinkled with powder sugar.

A good proportion of Bulgaria’s traditional food is common to other Balkan nations too, although dishes with the same names may taste differently in some cases. Moreover, Bulgarian cuisine includes certain specific food products, such as ‘sirene’ (white or feta cheese), and ‘kiselio mlyako’ (sour milk, often called yoghurt in English but actually a different product). Both ‘sirene’ and ‘kiselio mlyako’ could be made from cow, sheep, goat or water buffalo milk, making use of certain healthful bacteria endemic for Bulgaria. A popular Bulgarian spice is ‘sharena sol’ (‘motley salt’), a mixture of salt, red pep-





per, and grounded fenugreek leaves. The country is known for its tradition in vegetable production, with local soils and microclimate providing for particularly tasty and generally organic vegetables.

## Wine

Vine planting and wine producing goes back to Thracian times thousands of years ago, including a honorable record of promotion (with the first vine protection decree issued in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD) as well as prohibition (during the rule of Khan Krum in the 9<sup>th</sup> century).

Bulgarian wines are gaining popularity among consumers in Western Europe, United States, Canada, Russia, and even as far as China and Japan. The best wines are produced from the Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon varieties, high quality, rich, and Bordeaux-like. Local grapes include: Mavrud, a full bodied, spicy red wine; Melnik, grown in the extreme southwest, makes hefty red wines; Gamza, the most widespread sort that produces earthy, light bodied red wine; Pamid, fairly rustic but good enough for daily drinking. Whites are produced from renowned varieties such as Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, and Riesling as well as from the local Misket, Ottonel, and Dimyat.

## Rakiya

The aperitifs have a special place among Bulgarian drinks. The most typical one is 'rakiya', a grappa-like beverage of 40% alcoholic strength by volume, consumed with salad (especially 'shopska salata') or appetizers (Bulgarian: *mese* / 'meze'). 'Rakiya' is distilled from either grapes or fruits (mostly plums or apricots). The drink made even the Treaty on the accession of Bulgaria to EU, which specifically mentions the 'rakiya' brands produced in Sungurlare, Sliven, Straldzha, Pomorie, Ruse, Burgas, Dobrud-

zha, Suhindol, Karlovo, Troyan, Silistra, Tervel, and Lovech. 'Rakiya' has been known in Bulgarian lands since the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and even nowadays each village in the country boasts its own small distillery catering for the local dwellers. According to another tradition, unlike the USA 'a drink' in Bulgaria is 100 ml (3.4 fl. oz.), while 50 ml (1.7 fl. oz.) is a 'small drink'.

## Beer

Beer brewing was introduced to Bulgaria by Czech immigrants in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, replacing a similar but inferior local beverage. Nowadays the country has a dozen of beer brands, with the major breweries owned by leading Dutch, Danish, and Belgian companies. In general, the Bulgarians brew quite nice to very delicious pilsner-style lagers, all around 5% alcoholic strength by volume.

## Boza

'Boza' is a popular beverage made from fermented millet. It has a thick consistency, and a slightly acidic sweet flavor, with low alcohol content (usually around 1%). It is part of the traditional 'banitsa with boza' breakfast.

## Ayran

'Ayran' is a refreshing mixture of yoghurt ('kiselo mlyako'), water, and salt, preferably served cool.

## Mineral Water

Bulgaria is blessed with a great abundance of drinking mineral water. Marketed brands such as Gorna Banya, Devin, Bankya, Hissar, etc. are fresh, pure, curative and tasteful, with low mineralization allowing for their use as table water.



## Sports Legends

The legendary heavyweight world champion wrestler Dan Kolov missed only few wins in his 1500 official matches between 1918 and 1927, and was the first to win twice the heavyweight Diamond Belt.

Hurdling athlete Yordanka Donkova holds the European Championships record with 12.38 seconds, and the world record of 12.21 seconds.

Stefka Kostadinova, currently the president of the Bulgarian Olympic Committee, is still the reigning world record holder in the women's high jump with 2.09 m.

Sport Shooter Maria Grozdeva is the current holder of the final world record in 25 m Pistol from the Sydney 2000 Summer Olympics.

Weightlifters Galabin Boevski and Plamen Zhelyazkov are the world record holders in the men's 69 kg class with 357 kg (787 lbs), and 77 kg class with 377 kg (831 lbs) respectively, while Antonio Krastev has lifted the heaviest snatch of all times, 216 kg (476 lbs).

Skater Evgeniya Radanova is the world record holder in the 500 m short track distance with 43.671 seconds.

Veselin Topalov was the 2005-06 world chess champion (FIDE), while Antoaneta Stefanova was the 2004-06 women's world chess champion.

Skate dancers Albena Denkova and Maxim Staviski won the World Figure Skating Championships gold medals at Calgary 2006, and Tokyo 2007.



## Trivia

Thracian civilization upheld a cultural tradition older than Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, China or India: World's oldest gold made 6,500 years ago was discovered near Varna.

The first book written in Germanic language was the Holy Book translated into Gothic c. 350 AD in Nicopolis ad Istrum (present Nikyup near Veliko Tarnovo) by Bishop Wulfila (Ulfilas) who invented the Gothic alphabet for the purpose.

Founded in 632 AD, Bulgaria is the contemporary country in Europe with earliest internationally recognized independence (followed by France in 843 AD; among the countries of the wider European civilization Bulgaria is second to Armenia).

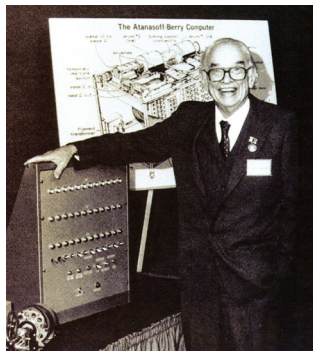
The first recorded Ferris wheel operated at a Plovdiv Fair on May 17, 1620.

The first air-dropped bomb in military history was developed by the Bulgarian Air Force during the First Balkan War, and used on 16 October 1912 by Lieuts. Radul Milkov and Prodan Tarakchiev. Rayna Kasabova was the first woman ever to take part in a combat air mission, accomplished during the same war on 30 October 1912.

No flag has ever been lost to the enemy in the modern military history of Bulgaria.

The Bulgarian test pilot, aeronautics engineer and inventor Assen 'Jerry' Jordanoff built the first Bulgarian airplane in 1915, and contributed greatly to America's airpower. The construction of WWII American planes P-40, P-38 and the famous B-17 was due to him. Jordanoff invented the safety airbag in 1957, as well as the so called 'Jordaphone' that preceded the modern answering machine and tape recorder.





The first electronic digital computer was invented and built by the Bulgarian American John Atanasoff and his assistant Clifford Berry at Iowa State College in 1937-42.

The oral contraceptive pill was co-developed by the Bulgarian American Carl Djerassi in 1951.

Bulgarian American Ivan Nochev invented a unique jet engine that ensured the soft landing of module 'Eagle' with Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin on the Moon in the historic Apollo 11 flight in 1969.



World's first digital wristwatch was invented by the Bulgarian American Peter Petroff in 1971.

The Golden Record selection of music arranged by Carl Sagan, the American astronomer and physicist, included the singer Valya Balkanska's performance of the Rhodope song 'Delyu Haydutin' in the two Voyager spacecraft launched in 1977.



There are more than 300 Bulgarian place names in Antarctica, mostly on Livingston Island, given in relation with the Bulgarian base St. Kliment Ohridski established on the island in 1988, and Camp Academia established in 2004.

### Reading the Cyrillic Alphabet

The Cyrillic alphabet is used by the Bulgarian language, as well as by sixty five other languages. It is an official script of the European Union too, by virtue of Bulgaria's accession to the Union on January 1, 2007. The alphabet was created in the Bulgarian capital Preslav in the 9<sup>th</sup> century by replacing the earlier set of letters designed by the holy brothers St. Cyril and St. Methodius by Greek letters and some ancient Bulgar letters (such as Ж, III, Ъ, Ь, etc.).



Cyrillic script Upper/lower case	American transliteration	American approximation
А а	a	<i>f</i> ather (short <i>a</i> ); as in Spanish ' <i>má</i> dre'
Б б	b	<i>b</i> it
В в	v	<i>v</i> oice
Г г	g	<i>g</i> o
Д д	d	<i>d</i> ay
Е е	e	<i>l</i> et
Ж ж	zh	<i>v</i> ision
З з	z	<i>z</i> one
И и	i	<i>c</i> ity
Й й	y	<i>y</i> es
К к	k	<i>k</i> id
Л л	l	<i>l</i> ink
М м	m	<i>m</i> ay
Н н	n	<i>n</i> et
О о	o	<i>b</i> ox
П п	p	<i>p</i> en
Р р	r	vibrating <i>r</i> as in Spanish ' <i>carro</i> '
С с	s	<i>s</i> ea
Т т	t	<i>t</i> op
У у	u	<i>b</i> ook
Ф ф	f	<i>f</i> ix
Х х	h	<i>loch</i> (Scottish)
Ц ц	ts	<i>t</i> sunami
Ч ч	ch	<i>c</i> hoice
Ш ш	sh	<i>s</i> hip
Щ щ	sht	<i>f</i> ishtail
Ъ ъ	a	<i>a</i> bout schwa sound (may be stressed)
Ь ь	y	soft sign; softens preceding consonants (as in <i>canyon</i> vs. <i>cannon</i> )
Ю ю	yu	<i>y</i> ou
Я я	ya	<i>Y</i> ankee

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GUIDE FOR AMERICAN MILITARY**

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