

BULGARIA DISCOVERED



HUMAN
RESOURCE
DEVELOPMENT
CENTRE



GUIDE 2008

On the covers: Europa Regina by Johannes Bucius and dates from around 1537. It artistically represents Europe, Queen of the World, in the form of a crowned woman holding an orb and sceptre and was included in Sebastian Münster's (1544 - 1628) immensely popular volume of maps Cosmographia Universalis published around 1580.

Bulgaria is situated in the bottom of the map.



HUMAN
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CENTRE



Education and Culture



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*“Some day man will land on the Moon, he
will land on other planets as well. And than
he will see how beautiful the Earth was and
he will realize that he lived in Heaven, but he
didn’t know and appreciate this.”*

Atanas Dalchev, Bulgarian poet, 1956

Feeling of Bulgaria

NATURE

5

HISTORY AND CULTURE

14

SPIRIT

37

Education and Training

39

Practical advice

UPON ENTRY

45

COMMUNICATIONS

55

TRANSPORT

57

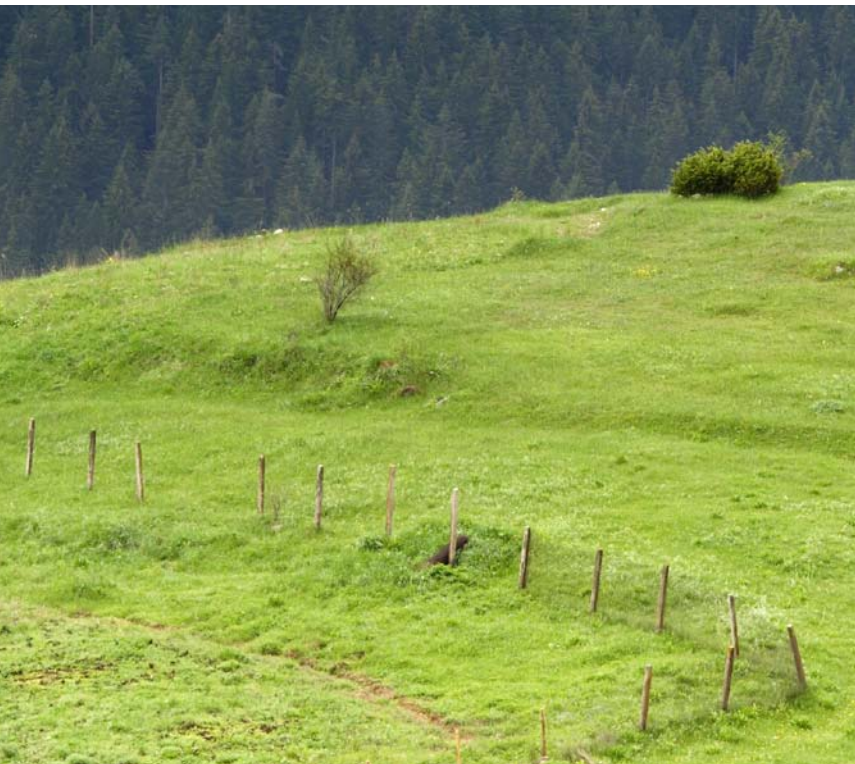


SPRING IN THE RHODOPA MOUNTAIN

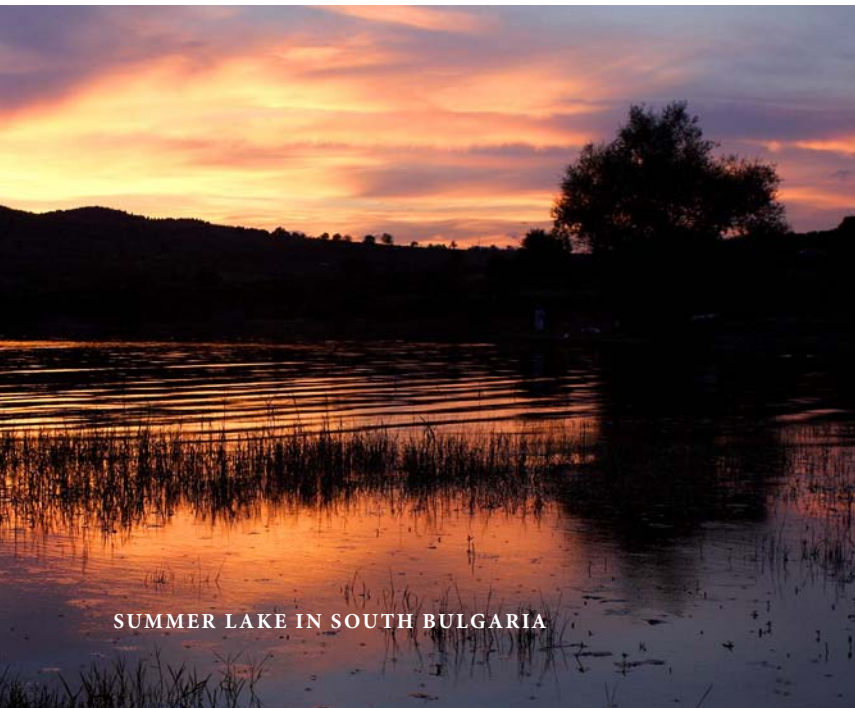
Feeling of Bulgaria

NATURE

Bulgaria's scenic mountain lakes, sand and stone seaside beaches, rose valleys, curative mineral springs and deep caves make Bulgaria seem like a miniature continent - a territory of 111 000 square kilometers bordering on Greece, Serbia, Macedonia, Romania, Turkey. It has a coastline on the Black Sea and to the North the Danube River follows its border line with Romania.



Bulgaria's relief is of diverse nature. On the North is the Danube plain, bordering in the South with the Balkan Range Mountain. In the South is the Thracian Lowland, bordering with the Rila, Pirin and the Rhodopes Mountains. The Black sea coastline is 354 km long and has a variety of beautiful beaches starting from steep rocky sites to flat sandy seacoast planes. Some of the main rivers running through the territory of the country are: Danube, Maritza, Mesta, Struma, Iskar and Yantra. There are various seaside and glacial lakes in the country, as well as hot and cold mineral springs. There are 3 National parks, 9 Nature parks and 55 reserves on the territory of Bulgaria.



SUMMER LAKE IN SOUTH BULGARIA

The climate is continental with a Mediterranean influence from the South. The average temperature in January is around -2 C, and in July – around 25°C.

With its unique diversity and astonishing beauty the Bulgarian nature is a true phenomenon rarely seen in the world.

Here are presented a very small part of the Bulgarian nature treasures.

Bulgarians are lucky to enjoy the beauty of all four distinct seasons.



AUTUMN IN THE TRAN REGION
(WESTERN BULGARIA)

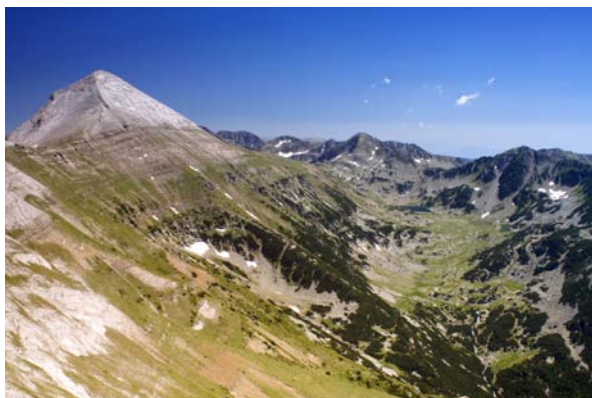
MOUNTAINS

Snow-capped peaks and soft green slopes, cool forests carrying the aroma of herbs and wild fruit, quick-flowing rivers and crystal-clear blue lakes, mineral springs and bio-reserves, rare plants and game, large ski resorts and small picturesque villages with living traditions and folklore - every Bulgarian mountain has its own characteristic appearance, fascination and beautiful name. As a whole Bulgaria has a lot of mountain ranges but there are five main mountain massifs in the country: Rila, Pirin, Rhodopes, The Balkan Range and Vitosha.





The most majestic of all is the Rila Mountain with its highest peak on the Balkan Peninsula – Moussala. With its 2925 meters above sea level the peak is higher even than the Olympus Mountain in Greece. The mountain is a National reserve and has over 219 lakes, over 2000 plant varieties and over 500 representatives of the animal kingdom.



BELOGRADCHIK ROCKS

These rocks are fantastic figures up to 200 meters high and forming a strip of land that is 30 km long and 3 km wide. The most impressive is the main group raised above the town of Belogradchik. Amongst these rocks is situated the inaccessible Belogradchik Castle – built in the 1st and 2nd century. The rocks are situated in the North-Western part of the country.



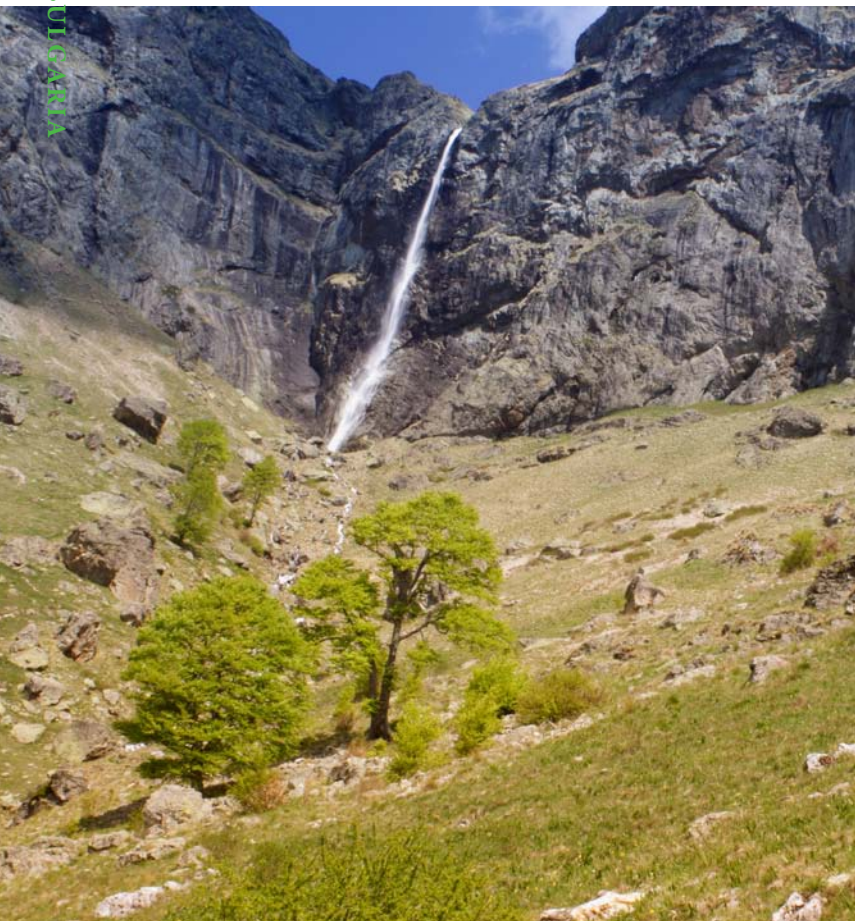
ARDA RIVER AND THE DEVIL'S BRIDGE

The beautiful Arda river flows in the Rhodopa Mountain, passes through part of Greece and runs into the Maritsa river on the territory of Turkey. The length of the river on Bulgarian territory is 241 km. Arda's name originates from Thracian times and means "white river". One of the most impressive beauties of the river is a man's creation and is called the Devil's Bridge. It was built on the 15th century and is 56 meters long, 3.5 meters wide and 12 meters high.



RAISKOTO PRASKALO

Raiskoto praskalo (“Heaven’s Sprinkle”) is the highest waterfall in Bulgaria. Its waters fall into the abyss from 125 meters height. It is situated into the Dzhendem reserve in the middle of the Balkan Mountain.



MAGURA CAVE

This is one of the biggest caves on the territory of Bulgaria. It has several galleries, the biggest of which is the Triumph Gallery. It is 128 meters long, 58 meters wide and 21 meters high. There were found prehistorical bones

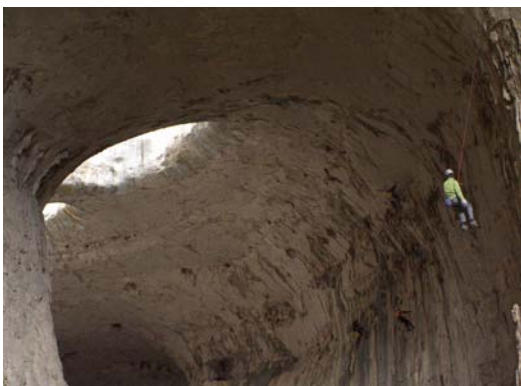
in these caves.

There are drawings on the walls dating from 3000 years B.C., which depict cult warrior scenes, man's and women's figures, animals, plants.



PROHODNA CAVE

Prohodna Cave is a unique nature creation. It is the highest cave in Bulgaria – 47 meters high. In the middle of the cave is the phenomenon “God’s eyes” – two holes on the ceiling of the cave, through which enters sunlight in the cave. The cave is a famous scenery shooting site for many Bulgarian movies.



HISTORY AND CULTURE

Bulgaria is a cradle and crossroad of ancient civilizations. Thracians, Romans, Slavs and Bulgars have left their mark in the past on the culture of Bulgaria contributing to a heritage that combines long history, fine literature and unique folklore. Bulgaria is the birthplace of the Cyrillic alphabet, which was developed in Preslav and Ohrid Literary Schools during the tenth century. More than 200 million people from different countries today use the developed version of the Cyrillic alphabet, which by 1 January 2007 with Bulgaria's accession to the European Union become its official alphabet.

Bulgaria has nine UNESCO World Heritage Sites, 5 of which are with historical cultural origin:

BOYANA CHURCH – BOYANA DISTRICT, SOFIA

Located on the outskirts of Sofia, Boyana Church consists of three buildings. The eastern church was built in the 10th century, then enlarged at the beginning of the 13th century by Sebastocrator Kaloian, who ordered a



second two storey building to be erected next to it. The frescoes in this second church, painted in 1259, make it one of the most important collections of medieval paintings. The ensemble is completed by a third church, built at the beginning of the 19th century. This site is one of the most complete and perfectly preserved monuments of east European medieval art.

MADARA RIDER - VILLAGE OF MADARA, PROVINCE OF SHUMEN

The Madara Rider, representing the figure of a knight triumphing over a lion, is carved into a 100 m - high cliff near the village of Madara in north-east Bulgaria. Madara was the principal sacred place of the First Bulgarian Empire before Bulgaria's conversion to Christianity in the 9th century. The inscriptions beside the sculpture tell of events that occurred between AD 705 and 801.



THRACIAN TOMB OF KAZANLAK - KAZANLAK, STARA ZAGORA

Discovered in 1944, this tomb dates from the Hellenistic period, around the end of the 4th century BC. It is located near Seutopolis, the capital city of the



Thracian king Seutes III, and is part of a large Thracian necropolis. The tholos has a narrow corridor and a round burial chamber, both decorated

with murals representing Thracian burial rituals and culture. These paintings are Bulgaria's best-preserved artistic masterpieces from the Hellenistic period.



**ROCK-HEWN CHURCHES OF IVANOVO -
VILLAGE OF IVANOVO,
15 KM FROM TOWN OF RUSE**

In the valley of the Roussenski Lom River, in north east Bulgaria, a complex of rock-hewn churches, chapels, monasteries and cells developed in the vicinity of the village of Ivanovo. This is where the first hermits had dug out their cells and churches during the 12th century. The 14th-century murals testify to the exceptional skill of the artists belonging to the Tarnovo School of painting.



ANCIENT CITY OF NESSEBAR - BURGAS PROVINCE

Situated on a rocky peninsula on the Black Sea, the more than 3,000-year-old site of Nessebar was originally a Thracian settlement (Menebria). At the beginning of the 6th century BC, the city became a Greek colony. The city's remains, which date mostly from the Hellenistic period, include the acropolis, a temple of Apollo, an agora and a wall from the Thracian fortifications. Among other monuments, the Stara Mitropolia Basilica and the fortress date from the Middle Ages, when this was one of the most important Byzantine towns on the west coast of the Black Sea. Wooden houses built in the 19th century are typical of the Black Sea architecture of the period.





**RILA MONASTERY –
29 KM EAST OF THE SOFIA-
THESSALONIKI HIGHWAY, RILA
MOUNTAIN , KYUSTENDIL PROVINCE**

Rila Monastery was founded in the 10th century by St John of Rila, a hermit canonized by the Orthodox Church. His ascetic dwelling and tomb became a holy site and were transformed into a monastic complex which played an important role in the spiritual and social life of medieval Bulgaria. Destroyed by fire at the beginning of the 19th century, the complex was rebuilt between 1834 and 1862. A characteristic example of the Bulgarian Renaissance (18th–19th centuries), the monument symbolizes the awareness of a Slavic cultural identity following centuries of occupation.

THRACIAN TOMB OF SVESHTARI - RAZGRAD PROVINCE

Discovered in 1982 near the village of Sveshtari, this 3rd-century BC Thracian tomb reflects the fundamental structural principles of Thracian cult buildings. The tomb has a unique architectural decor, with polychrome half-human, half-plant caryatids and painted murals. The 10 female figures carved in high relief on the walls of the central chamber and the decoration of the lunette in its vault are the only examples of this type found so far in the Thracian lands. It is a remarkable reminder of the culture of the Getes, a Thracian people who were in contact with the Hellenistic and Hyperborean worlds, according to ancient geographers.





PERPERIKON - KARDZHALI PROVINCE

In recent years Bulgaria has attracted world attention with numerous discoveries of ancient cultural monuments. In 2000 excavations unearthed what is now known as the European Machu Picchu – the ancient sanctuary of Perperikon. The ancient Thracian city of Perperikon is located in the Eastern Rhodopes, 15 km northeast of the present-day town of Kardzhali, Bulgaria, on a 470 m high rocky hill. The village of Gorna Krepost (“Upper Castle”) is located at the foot of the hill and the gold-bearing Perpereshka River flows near it. Perperikon is the largest archeological megalith (large stone) ensemble in the Balkans. Legends and historical sources read that the Perperikon complex harboured sanctuary and oracular shrine dedicated to the Greek God Dionysus.

Bulgaria's contribution to the world cultural and historic heritage goes beyond ancient treasures. A constellation of prominent Bulgarians has worked and are working for the recognition of Bulgaria as a intellectual and spiritual centre. Among them are:

St. Cyril and St. Methodius - creators of the Slavic alphabet and the first translators of liturgical books from Greek into Old-Bulgarian.





Tzar Simeon I
(**Simeon Veliki** -
Simeon The Great) -
the greatest ever ruler
of Bulgaria, who was
the driving force for
The Golden Age of
Bulgarian Medieval
Civilization.

Vasil Levski - theoretician
and strategist of the struggle
of Bulgarian people for
liberation from Ottoman rule
and celebrated in the hearts
of Bulgarians "Apostle of
Freedom".



Paisii Hilendarski -
the father of the Bulgarian
renaissance and author of
the first Bulgarian history.

Hristo Botev – genius of Bulgarian literature. Brilliant Bulgarian poet and revolutionary. A verse of Hristo Botev is written in golden letters in the Sorbonne – Paris , as an example of his poetry masterpiece:

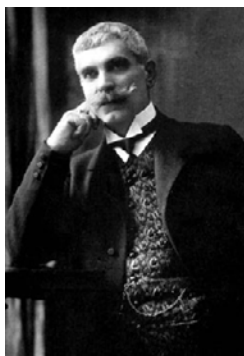


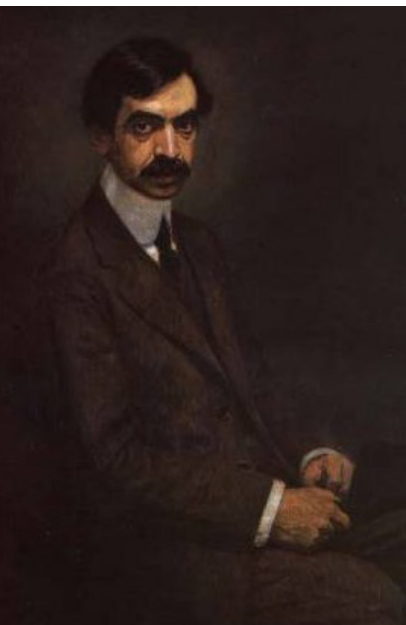
*“Nastane vetcher -
mesetz izgree,
zvezdi obsipiat svoda nebesen,
gora zachumi, viatar povee,
Balkanat pee haydushka pesen.”*

English version:

*The moon comes out and day grows dim,
on heaven's vault the stars now throng,
the forest rustles, quiet stirs the wind,
the mountains sing song of fighters.*

Ivan Vazov - for more than fifty years Ivan Vazov was the most prominent figure in Bulgarian literature after the liberation.





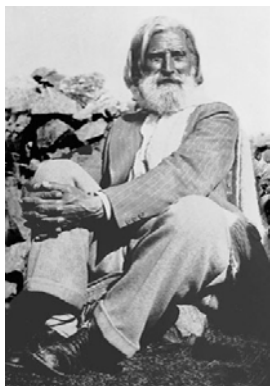
Peyo Yavorov - poet and play-wright, the founder of the Symbolist movement in Bulgarian poetry. One of his famous verses is from the poem "Come":

*"Your eyes to starry skies I
shall compare
Your hair to the transparent
veil
Of a late evening, such is your
hair!
The scent that lingers round
your maiden mouth
Is fresh, invigorating as the
South,
.....A breeze that browses in
a flowery dale."*

Petar Danov – world
spiritual leader

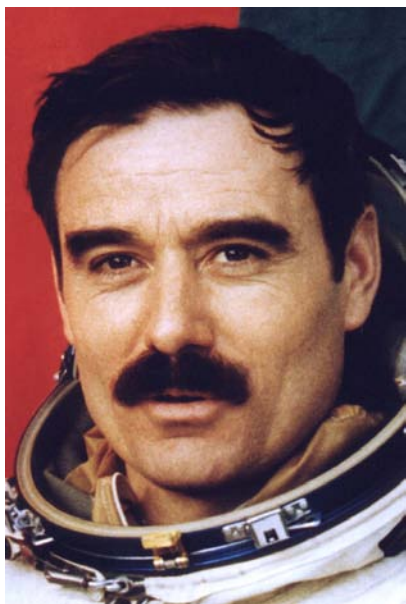
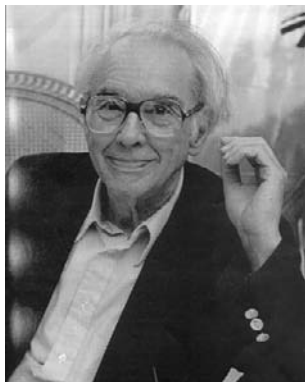
*"The entire world renders
homage to me and I render
homage to the Master Petar
Deunov from Bulgaria."*

Albert Einstein



John Atanasoff

– creator of the world's first electronical, digital, computer between 1939 and 1942.

**Georgi Ivanov**

- the first Bulgarian cosmonaut to fly in space.



Veselin Topalov
- a chess grandmaster and former FIDE world champion.

Elias Canetti - a novelist and playwright whose works explore the emotions of crowds, the psychopathology of power, and the position of the individual at odds with the society around him. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1981.



Julia Kristeva
- philosopher,
literary critic,
psychoanalyst,
feminist, and,
most recently,
novelist.
Kristeva
has become
influential
in today's
international
critical
analysis,
cultural
theory and
feminism after
publishing
her first book
Semeiotikè in
1969



Valya Balkanska - one of the
most famous Bulgarian folklore
singers, whose voice is traveling in
deep space on NASA's "VOYAGER".



Nicolai Ghiaurov - opera singer and one of the most famous bass singers in the second half of the 20th century.

He was admired for his powerful, sumptuous voice, and was particularly associated with roles of Verdi.



Boris Christoff - opera singer, one of the greatest basses of the 20th century.

Raina Kabaivanska
- opera singer,
one of the most
renowned
sopranos in the
second half of the
20th century.



Ghena Dimitrova
- one of the few
dramatic sopranos
of the second half
of the 20th century,
belonging to that
class of artists who
have tackled with
disarming ease the
most demanding
of the heavyweight
roles.

Christo (**Christo Yavashev**)

- artist practicing environmental, installation art. His works includes the wrapping of the Reichstag in Berlin, and the Pont Neuf bridge in Paris, the 24-mile-long Running Fence in Marin and Sonoma, counties in California, and The Gates, in New York City's Central Park.



Vladimir Dimitrov
- **Maistora** - one of the most talented 20th century Bulgarian painters and probably the most remarkable stylist in Bulgarian painting in the post-Russo-Turkish War era.





Zlatyu Boyadjiev
- is one of the most prominent Bulgarian artists. He is especially noted for his village portraits.



Teodosii Spasov - owing to his career the Bulgarian word “kaval” (shepherd’s flute) has penetrated the vocabulary of thousands of music fans in various points of the planet. He has worked with River Dance and Glen Moore and is 1994 Grammy holder jointly with the Mystery of the Bulgarian Voices Choir.



Vasko Vasilev – world famous violinist and Concertmaster & Creative Director of The Royal Opera House – London. Teacher of Vanessa May.

SPIRIT

Mila Rodino (“Мила Родино”, translated as “Dear Motherland” or “Dear native land”) is the current national anthem of Bulgaria. It is based on the music and text of the song “Gorda Stara Planina” by Tsvetan Radoslavov, written and composed as he left to fight in the Serbo-Bulgarian War in 1885. The anthem was adopted in 1964.



Lyrics

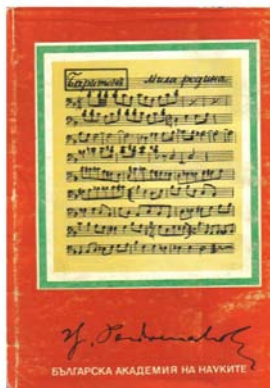
Мила Родино
(Bulgarian Cyrillic)

*Горда Стара планина,
до ней Дунава синей,
слънце Тракия огрява,
над Пирина пламеней.*

Припев:

*Мила Родино,
ти си земен рай,
твоята хубост, твоята прелест,
ах, те нямат край. (2 пъти)*

*Паднаха борци безчет
за народа наш любим,
майко, дай ни мъжка сила
пътя им да продължим.*



Mila Rodino (Transliteration)

*Gorda Stara planina,
do ney Dunava siney,
sluntse Trakiya ograva,
nad Pirina plameney.*

Pripev:

*Mila Rodino,
ti si zemen ray,
tvoyta hubost,
tvoyta prelest,
ah, te nyamat kray. (twice)*

*Padnaha bortsy bezchet
za naroda nash lyubim,
mayko, day ni muzhka sila
putya im da produlzhim.*

Dear Motherland (English translation)

*Stately Stara planina,
next to it the Danube sparkles,
the sun shines over Thrace,
flames over Pirin.*

Refrain:

*Dear Motherland,
you are paradise on earth,
your beauty, your charm,
ah, they are boundless. (twice)*

*Countless fighters fell
for our beloved nation,
Mother, give us manly strength
to carry on their course.*

Education and training

EDUCATION SYSTEM

FORMAL EDUCATION			
LEVELS	STAGES	AGE OF LEARNERS	TYPE OF PROVIDERS
BASIC EDUCATION	Pre-school Education	6-7	School based in pre-primary groups Kindergarten based
	Primary Education	6/7 – 9/10	General schools
	(General Lower secondary)	10/11 – 14-15	General schools
Diploma for completed Basic Education			

SECONDARY EDUCATION	Upper Secondary education 1st stage Grades 8-10	14/15 – 18/19 Compulsory education age is 16	General schools Language schools Sport schools Art schools Vocational gymnasias
	2nd stage Grades 11-12		
	Certificate for completed 1st stage of Secondary Education after 10th grade Diploma for completed secondary education after second stage (12 grade) and possibility for continuing education in Colleges and Universities		

UPPER SECONDARY NON-TERTIARY	College Education	After completed Secondary Education 19-22	Vocational colleges Art colleges Medical Colleges
Diploma for completed education as Specialist			

HIGHER EDUCATION	Bachelor	After completed Secondary or College Education	Humanitarian Universities Technical Universities
	Master	After completed Bachelor degree	Universities Art Universities
	Doctor	After completed Master degree	Sport Universities Medical Universities
Diploma for completed respected degree level of higher education (bachelor, master, doctor)			

CONTINUING TRAINING	NON-FORMAL	INFORMAL
CVET in VET Centers for up-grade or acquisition of vocational qualification	Non-formal learning for key competencies, languages, art, sport, out of class activities	Informal learning: in the family, at the workplace, through media, libraries, etc.
Continuing training in University's Departments for additional qualification		

The system of secondary education in Bulgaria includes kindergartens, schools and auxiliary units which can be state, municipal and private depending on the way in which they are managed and financed. According to the type of training and the level of education, schools in Bulgaria are divided into: primary schools, basic schools, secondary general schools, specialized secondary schools, vocational secondary schools, sports schools, art schools, schools for children with special educational needs.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

The institutions /colleges/ belonging to this type of higher education award qualifications in the field of professional higher education. The degree Specialist is awarded by the colleges after professional oriented studies with a duration of three years. Holders of that degree are given the rights to continue their studies at Bachelor's level.

The system of university higher education in Bulgaria organizes studies after completed secondary education, covering the following degrees:

First degree requires a minimum 4-year course of instruction and the graduates acquire the educational and qualification degree of Bachelor. Training for each speciality is finalized by sitting for state examinations or defence of a diploma thesis.

Second degree requires a minimum 5-year course of instruction, or an extra year after the Bachelor's degree, and the graduates acquire a Master's educational and qualification degree. Training for each speciality is finalized by sitting for state examinations or by defending a diploma thesis.

Third degree requires minimum a 3-year course of instruction after the Master's degree or minimum a 4-year course of instruction after the Bachelor's one. Graduates are awarded a Doctor's degree. The higher school may train for the third degree in a listed scientific speciality for which it has been accredited for. Doctorants are trained according to individual curricula and should prepare and defend a dissertation. The training is carried out under the guidance of a

scientific supervisor appointed by the Faculty Council of the higher school training the doctorant. Training for a Doctor's educational and academic degree can be also handled by such scientific research organizations as the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the Academy of Agriculture, etc. in the scientific specialities these organizations have been accredited for. The Doctor's degree is conferred on doctorants who have passed the examinations featured in the curriculum and have defended their dissertations under the requisite conditions and order of the Academic Degrees and Titles Act.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE EU CITIZENS

FOREIGN STUDENTS

Bulgarian higher education institutions are open to all foreign nationals who hold a secondary education certificate that makes them eligible for higher education in the country in which they have received their secondary education.

Students who have graduated from foreign higher education institutions can apply for doctoral programmes if their higher education degree has been officially recognized.

Foreign students can be admitted only to full-time study programmes in Bulgaria.

Foreign nationals can apply to study in higher education institutions in the Republic of Bulgaria:

- pursuant to intergovernmental agreements on educational, cultural and academic exchange;
- in compliance with Council of Ministers Ordinances;
- after paying the full tuition fee.

Foreign nationals can apply to study at Bulgarian higher education institutions under the same terms and conditions as those for Bulgarian nationals, provided that they:

- hold a permanent residence permit
- have a refugee status
- are of Bulgarian origin, certified in accordance with the 1993 Council of Ministers Decree No. 103 regulating the education of Bulgarian expatriates.

All documents must be translated and certified by the authorities in the applicant's country (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), by the Bulgarian Consular Office in the applicant's country (if the translation of the documents was made there), or by the Consular Office of the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sofia. All degrees and education certificates must be legalized at the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science.

University authorities forward approved applicants' documents to the Ministry of Education and Science, so that a D-type visa can be issued.

In most universities in Bulgaria the academic year begins on 1st October and ends on 30th June. In some universities classes start on 15th September and end on 15th June.

REFERENCES

Ministry of Education and Science

<http://www.minedu.government.bg>

National Agency for Evaluation and Accreditation

<http://www.neaa.government.bg>

Rectors' Conference of the Republic of Bulgaria

<http://www.bgrectors.com>

Association of the Private Higher Education

Institutions in Bulgaria

<http://aphei-bg.org/>

National Educational Portal – Bulgarian Virtual University

<http://www.bvu-bg.eu>

Department of Foreign Languages (St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia)

http://www.deo.uni-sofia.bg/index_en.html

Practical advice

UPON ENTRY

- All children entering Bulgaria will need to have their own passport. Children included in their parents' passports will only be allowed in if the passport also contains their photograph.

- Upon entry into Bulgaria, foreigners should declare in writing the purpose of their stay and the address at which they will reside. To this end they should fill in a registration form. Exempt of that are the citizens of the European Union member-states and the citizens of the countries in the European Economic Area.

- Foreigners entering Bulgarian territory on a motor vehicle have to present a document of ownership for that vehicle, if such ownership is not explicitly shown in the vehicle's registration documents.

- All foreign nationals who have entered the territory of Bulgaria are obliged to register within 48 hours after their entry into the country. They have to register their address in Bulgaria either at the services for administrative

control of foreign nationals, or at the nearest district police station, depending on the address where they are staying. This registration includes: full name, date of birth,



citizenship, as well as the number and series of their identity documents. Address changes also have to be reported within 48 hours.

- Natural persons or legal entities, which provide shelter to foreign nationals, are obliged to notify within 48 hours either the relevant service for administrative control of foreign nationals, or the nearest district police station. If a foreign national is staying in a hotel, the receptionists are obliged to perform this duty. If a foreign national is paying a private visit, the Bulgarian host is obliged to register the foreigner who is his guest.

- When you travel to any Bulgarian city, and you plan to stay for longer than 2 days, you should go to the local police station and complete address registration.

- You can find contact details of Bulgarian embassies, consulates and missions on the website of the Ministry of Foreign affairs: <http://www.mfa.government.bg/>

RESIDENCE PERMIT AND BULGARIAN ID CARDS

All foreigners are required to obtain a residence permit if they are to stay past a certain period of time, no matter the reasons for being in the country. In order to be an eligible applicant for a residence permit, you should obtain a Type D visa before you travel to Bulgaria. The national authority responsible for issuing the permit is National Service “Police” (under the Ministry of Interior, <http://www.mvr.bg/>), section “Traveling in Bulgaria”.

- If you are a citizen / family member of a citizen of the EU, the European Economic Area Agreement, Confederation Switzerland, you might find it useful to

consult the Law for entering, residing and leaving the Republic of Bulgaria of European Union citizens and members of their families.

- If you are not a citizen / member of family of a citizen of the EU, the European Economic Area Agreement, confederation Switzerland, you might find it useful to consult the Law for Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria, which can be downloaded from the website of the Ministry of Interior:

<http://www.mvr.bg/> > Legal Framework > Laws and Rules > Law for Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria

- The law, regulating the issuance and using Bulgarian identification documents, Law for the Bulgarian Identification Documents, can be downloaded from the website of the Ministry of Interior:

<http://www.mvr.bg/> > Legal Framework > Laws and Rules > Law for the Bulgarian Identification Documents

WORK PERMIT

Under the Foreign Nationals Act, foreign nationals who have been allowed to reside permanently in Bulgaria are allowed to work under the same conditions, which are valid for Bulgarian nationals. Foreign nationals with short-term or long term residence permits on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria, may enter into labour contracts only with a work permit issued by **the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy**. Foreign nationals with a short-term residence permit, who have obtained work permits, may apply for long-term residence visas in Bulgaria. This procedure is also valid for the

nationals of those countries, with which Bulgaria has signed Agreements for visa-free short-term residence. Foreign nationals, who have obtained work permits, may work only for the employer determined in the work permit and only for the duration of time specified in the permit.

No work permits are required for the following foreign nationals:

- Foreign nationals with permanent residence permits in the Republic of Bulgaria or with equal rights through right of asylum, refugee status or humanitarian status;
- Foreign nationals who have been hired or sent to work by force of an international agreement, to which the Republic of Bulgaria is a party, if the withdrawal of the obligation to possess a work permit is provided in the agreement;
- Foreign nationals who have been sent to the country by force of inter-governmental agreements and programmes for providing legal, financial, expert, humanitarian and other assistance to Bulgarian institutions, with which they do not have labour contracts;
- Foreign nationals who are managers of trade companies or branches of foreign legal entities;
- Foreign nationals who are members of boards of managers or boards of directors of trade associations, inasmuch as they do not work under labour contracts;
- Foreign nationals who are representatives of foreign trade associations, registered at the Bulgarian Chamber of Trade and Industry;

- Foreign nationals who are accredited as members of foreign diplomatic, consular and commercial missions, as well as representative offices of international organizations in the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Foreign nationals who are accredited officially by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria as correspondents of foreign news media;
- Foreign nationals who, while normally residing abroad, participate in scientific, cultural or sport events of public importance, if their activity in the Republic of Bulgaria does not exceed 3 months;
- Foreign nationals, who are applying for a refugee status, asylum or humanitarian status, have the right of labour at the specialized centres established by the State Refugees Agency.

The National Employment Agency (NEA) is the authority responsible for issuing work permits. You might visit the NEA website for more information: <http://www.az.government.bg>

HEALTH INSURANCE

- If you are a citizen of Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland, and you plan to stay temporarily (usually up to 90 days) in one of these countries, you might consider obtaining the European

Health Insurance Card. Presentation of the European Health Insurance Card guarantees you reimbursement of the medical costs on the spot, or soon after your return home. For more information, see: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/healthcard/index_en.htm

- If you are not a citizen of any of these countries, you should check with your national authorities if you are entitled to free or subsidised health treatment in Bulgaria as part of a reciprocal health agreement between your home country and Bulgaria. If you are not, it might be a good idea to obtain health insurance for the period of your stay in Bulgaria.

- If you plan a longer stay in Bulgaria as a student/researcher, you are entitled to the same health care rights as a Bulgarian citizen if you are part of a program (usually leading to a degree) approved by the Ministry of Education and Science. You should check this information with the educational institution you are planning to attend.

Still public health care security does not cover all kinds of medical services, so you might consider supplementing it with private health insurance.

DRIVING LICENSE

A foreigner (no matter if EU citizen or not) may drive a vehicle in Bulgaria with a driving license, issued in his home country for up to one year since the date of his entry in Bulgaria.

- If the foreigner's country has not ratified the Vienna convention on road traffic rules, the driving license must

be translated in Bulgarian (by any company licensed to offer translation services).

- If the foreigner's country has ratified the Vienna convention, he should obtain a Bulgarian driving license within one year.

- If his country has not signed the Vienna convention, he must take a Bulgarian driving test. However, he can take the test only if he has a long-term residence permit.

Foreigners may also use an International Driving Permit, accompanying the driving license issued in their country.

CURRENCY & EXCHANGE

The official currency is the Bulgarian Lev. It is fixed to the Euro. One Lev is worth around 0.50 euro. The Lev is divided into 100 stotinka. You could see banknotes and coins on the website of the Bulgarian National Bank: <http://www.bnb.bg/>

You can exchange money at banks and independent currency exchange bureaus. It is not recommendable to do that at hotel reception desks or airports as they offer the lowest rates. Avoid exchange offered by people in the street as they are usually not certified to perform this action.

The usual banking hours are 09.00-16.00, while independent bureaus work until 18.00, some of them even 24 hours.

IMPORTING AND EXPORTING MONEY

Regarding the import and export of leva and foreign currency cash the requirements of the Bulgarian legislation are as follows:

- **For import:** When the amount of the imported money is up to 8000 leva or its equivalent in another currency it is not declared in writing. When the amount of the imported money is over 8000 leva or its equivalent in another currency one has to fill out a currency customs declaration.

- **For export:** The local and foreign physical persons can export leva and foreign currency in cash amounting up to 8000 leva or its equivalent in a foreign currency without having to declare. If the sum amount is from 8000 to 25 000 leva it should be declared. When it exceeds 25 000 leva or their equivalent in a foreign currency the manner of acquiring the money is entered and a certificate from the tax administration must be presented that the person does not have any overdue tax liabilities, and its number is entered into the currency customs declaration. For the local physical persons the certificate is issued by the tax subdivision as per the permanent address of the person, and for the foreign physical persons – by the tax subdivision as per the address of the last residence of the person in the country. The foreign physical persons can export Bulgarian leva and foreign currency cash to the amount of over 25 000 leva without a certificate from the tax administration after making a declaration to the customs authorities if the value of the currency or leva being exported does not exceed the value of the imported and declared money

during the last entry of the person into the country, for which the traveller presents a previous import currency declaration.

For further information you could visit the site of the Bulgarian customs agency: <http://www.en.customs.bg>

CARDS

There is an extensive ATM network, so you can obtain cash anytime almost anywhere. All major European and North American debit cards could be used to withdraw money. The number of retailers accepting card payment is growing. However, you still need to carry cash, especially in small towns and rural areas.



TELEGRAPHIC (WIRE) TRANSFER

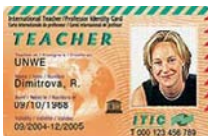
This is one of the quickest and safest methods of transferring cash, but it is also one of the most expensive. MoneyGram and Western Union operate through banks and exchange bureaus in Bulgaria.

BANK ACCOUNTS

If you plan a longer stay in Bulgaria, you might consider opening a bank account. Make sure you find a bank whose local branch staff can speak a language you know.

INTERNATIONAL ISIC CARDS

With an ISIC (International Student Identity Card) you might be eligible for many discounts when paying for accommodation, food and drink, entertainment, traveling, goods. For more information on obtaining a card, visit: <http://www.isic.org>. If you can read Bulgarian, you might visit the national ISIC website: <http://isic.bg>, where you can find a lot of information on current discounts and various types of cards.



COMMUNICATIONS

POSTAL AND COURIER SERVICES

Postal and courier services in Bulgaria are provided by numerous national companies and branches of the most popular international companies. The biggest national company is the Bulgarian Posts (Български пощи) and is the oldest one.

LANDLINE PHONE SERVICE

It is operated by BTC (Bulgarian Telecom). Bills come in monthly and can be paid by direct debit, online or in cash. For more information, please, visit: <http://www.btc.bg>

PUBLIC PAYPHONES

Public payphones operate with cards, which you could buy from newspaper kiosks.

MOBILE PHONES

The network is extensive and reliable throughout the country, except for high mountain areas. There are three service providers:

Globul: <http://www.globul.bg/eng/>

Mtel: <http://www.mtel.bg/>

Vivatel (owned by BTC): <http://www.vivatel.bg>

You might use a foreign mobile in Bulgaria by buying a SIM card, but you might need your phone to be “unlocked” from your home country network – a service, provided by most mobile phone shops.

INTERNATIONAL CALLS

International direct dialing is possible to make to most countries. Whenever it is not possible, dial 0123 to obtain help from an operator. BTC and mobile service providers are not the only ones who offer international calls. You might try Orbitel, a private telephone service provider: <http://www.orbitel.bg/en/>

You can buy a pre-paid international phone card from a kiosk. You can also make cheap phone calls from Internet cafés and phone booths. Usually the calls there are made with an “Internet phone”, so their quality may vary from country to country. Some Bulgarian Internet companies offer VoIP services.

INTERNET

There are a great number of internet providers. However, quality and price vary, so you might wish to seek advice from local users, especially if you are to choose among local providers, operating in a limited area.

Internet cafes are widespread, especially in towns.

TRANSPORT

CITY TRANSPORT

In the capital city you can enjoy variety of public transport means from buses to trolleys and trams. This type of transport is relatively fast and cheap option for short distances. It can be not that convenient in rush hours (8:00-09:00 in the morning and 17:30-19:00 in the evening).



TAXI

Ask your local friends which are the cheapest and the most reliable companies in the region. Make sure you read the tariffs before you get into a car. They are posted on windscreens. Once you are in, make sure the driver has restarted the meter.

CAR RENTALS

You can rent cars, jeeps, vans in Bulgaria. You might surf the Internet to shop for a service which suits you best.

BICYCLE

Bicycle is not popular in Bulgaria as a way of transport. However, you might enjoy cycling in parks and mountain biking. You can cheaply transport your bicycle while traveling by train around Bulgaria.

INTERCITY TRANSPORT

TRAIN

Bulgarian State Railways offers a variety of discounts. The company's website is convenient to use and provides you with thorough information: <http://bdz.bg/>



Bus

There are many private companies providing bus transportation.

Traveling between cities and Sofia is easy: <http://www.centralnaavtogara.bg/>



However, traveling between many towns and smaller places might need complex planning and allowing for change of vehicles.

CAR RENTALS

You can rent cars, jeeps, vans in Bulgaria. You might surf the Internet to shop for a service which suits you best.

ACCOMMODATION

It is easy to arrange a short stay in Bulgaria. You may search the Internet for hotel and hostel accommodation.

You might also become a member of an international hospitality organisation as these are getting popular among Bulgarians. This is a nice way to take a look at Bulgarian lifestyle. One of these is: <http://www.hospitalityclub.org/>

If you plan a longer stay in Bulgaria, you might need decent budget accommodation. It is a good idea to discuss the issue before you arrive with Bulgarians who might offer useful local tips and help you with arrangements.

Renting private accommodation is a good option for people who love peace and quiet. These might vary a lot in price and quality. Surfing the Internet for a private apartment to rent will probably return the most expensive options. A lot of decent reasonable to rent property is usually advertised in newspapers. Agencies will typically charge you half a month's rent. So, enlisting the help of a local is essential if you are on a tight budget.

Bear in mind that a lot of property is unfurnished, and a lot of furnished property might not include the appliances and furniture you might expect.

If you need to later provide official proof of your expenses, you should make sure your landlord is willing to provide you with the necessary papers.

ELECTRICITY

Household electricity is supplied at 220/240 volts (V) with a frequency of 50 Hertz (Hz). If you are moving from a country with a 110V supply, your electrical equipment will require a converter or a transformer to convert it to 240V, although some electrical appliances are fitted with a 110/240 volt switch. Converters are suitable only for appliances without circuit boards or microchips that don't need to be plugged in for long periods. Electronic appliances, such as computers, fax machines, TVs and video players must be connected to the supply via a step-down transformer. Converters and transformers can be bought in most DIY (Do it yourself) shops. Plug adaptors may be difficult to find for some countries, so you might consider bringing some with you.

Electricity bills are paid monthly by direct debit from a bank or in cash at some banks or other special places which vary from town to town. Failing to pay your bill on time will lead to switching off your supply.



WATER

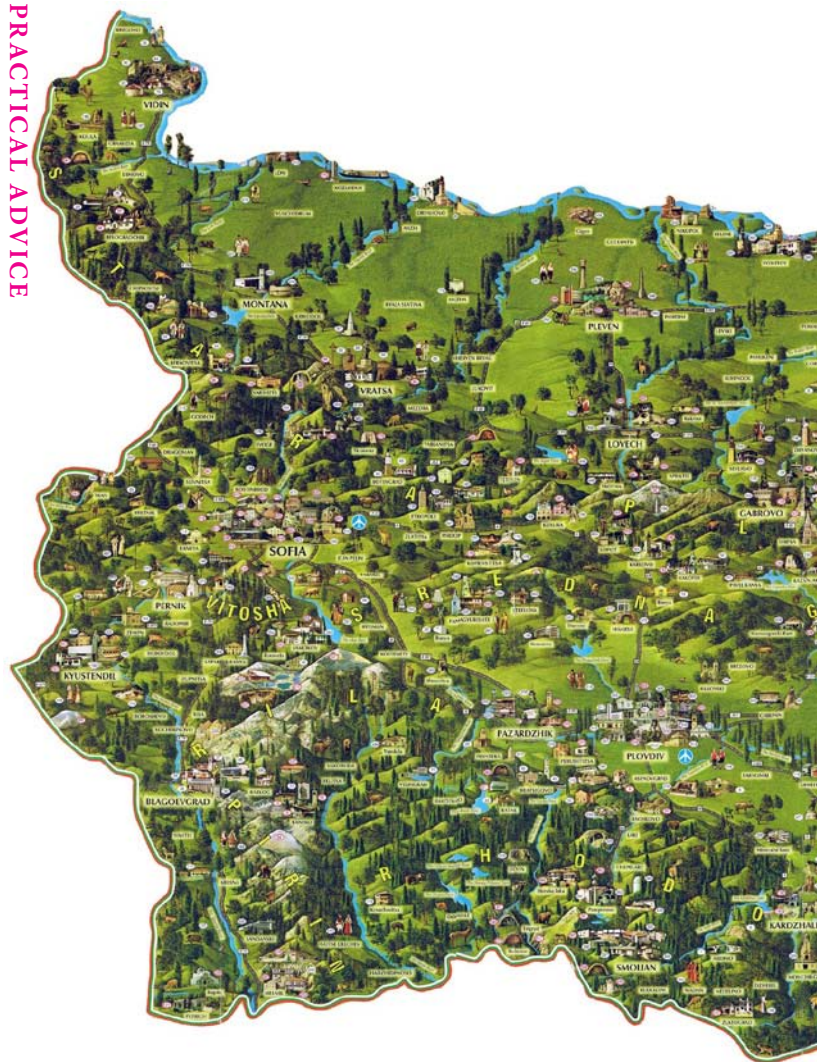
Tap water is safe to drink in most cities, while in many rural areas it is used only for washing. If you have some doubts, buy mineral water. You won't regret it. Bulgaria is famous for its mineral water, which is not only of high quality but of reasonable price. Water shortages are rare in towns and cities, but they are common in some rural areas.

LAUNDRY

If you do not have a washing machine in your home, you might need to use some laundry services.

If you are in a town or a city, you might have your laundry washed and folded (or even ironed) by a launderette. But in rural areas it is not so popular.

Self-service laundry services are not common in Bulgaria. Most often these are provided by hostels and guesthouses.









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