

Sofia: Quality of Life

Living in Sofia: everything you
need to know on how to make
Sofia, Bulgaria your home!



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WELCOME TO SOFIA!



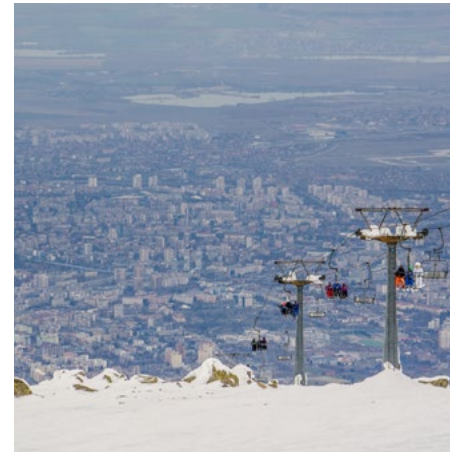
A MODERN AND VIBRANT CITY,

with rich cultural life, large number of cultural and sporting events and booming creative industries, offering...



GOOD QUALITY OF LIFE,

safe and enjoyable environment, great restaurant scene, vibrant nightlife and a rich cultural heritage...



AT THE FOOT OF THE MOUNTAIN

Vitosha Mountain Nature Park is minutes from Sofia and is accessible by public transport and...



A GREAT PLACE TO START AND GROW YOUR BUSINESS

...WITH MILLENNIA OF HISTORY

SOFIA: FACTS AND FIGURES

Sofia is Bulgaria's capital, the cultural, educational, economic and business heart, and the biggest city-economy in Bulgaria. Sofia is both modern and ancient. Sofia has one of the most vibrant and innovative start-up and entrepreneurial ecosystems in Central and Eastern Europe. Sofia is one of the oldest capital cities in Europe with cultural and historical heritage, diverse natural resources and numerous facilities for year-round leisure and entertainment and business activities.

DID YOU KNOW THAT

Sofia is the only European capital with large mountain so close to its city center. And it is not just Mt. Vitosha! Sofia is in fact surrounded by mountains incl. Stara Planina, that forms a part of the Balkan Range.

If you want to learn more about Sofia's business and entrepreneurial ecosystem, city life, and much more, check Invest Sofia's

SOFIA BUSINESS GUIDE!
[check here>>](#)



 **1.56 M**
inhabitants in Sofia Region

 **39.2%**
of Bulgaria's GDP

 **25%**
of Bulgaria's workforce

 **50%**
of the FDI in Bulgaria

 **1/3**
of exports

 **1/6**
of manufacturing

 **10% corporate**
and personal income tax

 **32**
city parks

 **30**
thermal springs

 **20 mountains**
within an hour drive

 **2 seas**
within a 3-hour drive

 **23% of Bulgaria's**
territory is mountainous

 **91% of residents are**
happy that they live in Sofia

 **40**
art galleries

 **2.5 M**
exhibition artefacts

 **25 cinema houses,**
including 11 cineplexes

 **22 theatres**
with 37 stages

 **4 700 theatre**
performances in 2018

 **25 concert halls,**
incl. Sofia Opera

 **25**
museums

 **1400 cultural**
monuments and landmarks

LANGUAGE

The majority of Sofia’s residents are fluent in English. Many also speak one or two other foreign languages. You can easily get by with English in Sofia, but as a common courtesy, we recommend learning a few words in Bulgarian.

To go beyond that, enroll in a course at Sofia University, New Bulgarian University's annual summer camp or one of the many language centres in the city that offer Bulgarian classes for foreigners.

USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES

DO YOU KNOW THAT

- The most commonly spoken languages in Sofia are English, German and Russian.
- Sofia ranked 28th out of over 400 cities and regions worldwide in English proficiency, according to the EF English Proficiency Index 2019.
- The high English proficiency in Sofia is facilitating global investment and improving the business environment.

<p>// Hello! Здравейте! Zdraveite!</p>	<p>// Do you speak English? Говорите ли английски? Govorite li angliiski?</p>	<p>// Yes Да Da</p>	<p>// No Не Ne</p>
<p>// Good morning! Добро утро! Dobro utro!</p>	<p>// Good day! Добър ден! Dobar den!</p>	<p>// Good evening! Добър вечер! Dobar vecher!</p>	
<p>// Please/you're welcome Моля Molya</p>	<p>// Thank you! Благодаря! Blagodarya!</p>	<p>// Goodbye! Довиждане! Dovizhdane!</p>	

ARRIVAL CHECKLIST

Moving to another country can be a stressful and overwhelming experience. Here is a short checklist to help you plan your move to Sofia.



NOT TO FORGET

- Registration with the local municipality
- Residence/work permit arrangement or collection*
- Arranging local health insurance

*only mandatory for non-EU citizens

OPTIONAL ON ARRIVAL

- Opening a local bank account
- Registering at my local embassy or consulate
- Finding accommodation (short-term/long-term)
- Getting connected: internet, telecom and utilities
- Registration with a local doctor/dentist
- Exploring schooling/childcare possibilities

SETTLING IN SOFIA

- Start learning Bulgarian
- Get in touch with the local and/or international community
- Join a local group/club/association to meet new people and make new friends.

"Sofia is an amazing city to work, live and get out. Bulgaria offers beautiful landscapes allowing many and diverse adventures thanks to a pleasant continental climate. The overall cost of life and quality of living is nothing else but great!"

WILFRIED DURAND,
FOUNDER OF ONVEY

HOW HAPPY ARE THE PEOPLE OF SOFIA?

91%

of Sofia's residents are happy that they live in Sofia.

The younger and wealthier the residents are, the happier they say they are.



93%

like the shopping opportunities



91%

like the availability of public transportation

2/3 of the residents commute primarily by public transportation



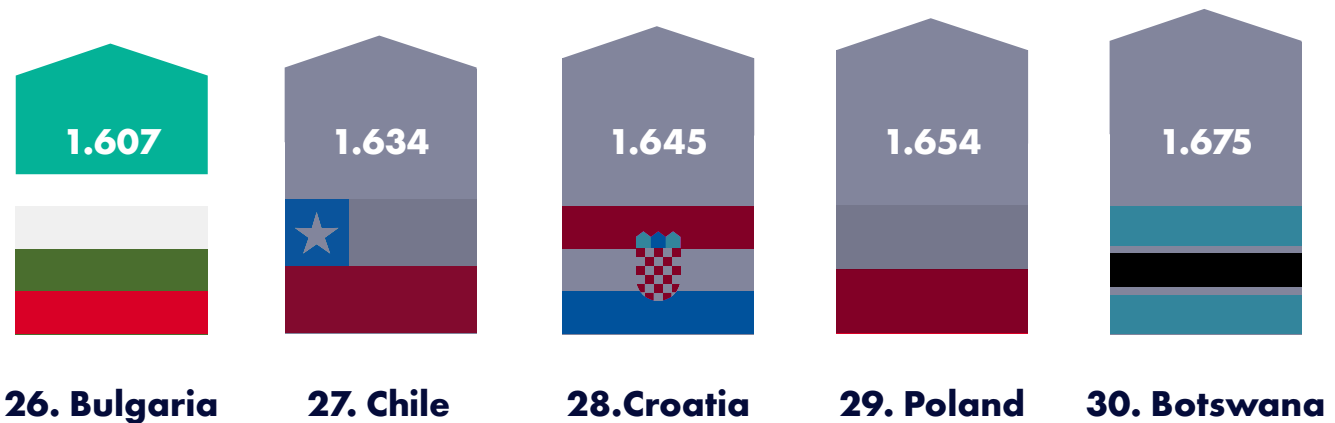
90%

like the opportunities for education

Source: Alfa Research and Vision Sofia, 2019 (in Bulgarian) >>

BULGARIA: SAFETY

Bulgaria ranks 26th in the world in terms of peace and safety according to the GLOBAL PEACE INDEX 2019*.



Source: Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP)

HOUSING

Growing residential stock, rising prices and a significant increase in the quality of the residential buildings characterize Sofia's housing market in the last decade. Neighbourhoods at the foot of Mt. Vitosha continue to be preferred locations for residents. New high-rise buildings and gated communities rise in popularity.

Midscale

- 1-bedroom: €350
- 2-bedroom: €450

Upscale

- 2-bedroom: €950 – 1 200
- 3-bedroom: €1 300 – 1 600
- house: over €2,000

Executive-level

City Centre

- 1-bedroom: €850
- 2-bedroom: €1 500
- 3-bedroom: €2 100

Outside of city centre:

- 1-bedroom: €650
- 2-bedroom: €1 200
- 3-bedroom: €1 800

PRACTICALITIES

A trusted real estate professional can save you a lot of time and hassle. The commissions ranges between 50-100% of the negotiated rent. The security deposit is equal to one month's rent. The contract are typically for one year, but in most cases can be terminated with a one month's notice.

Some of the large real estate agencies are Address, Yavlena, Mirela, Home2u, Bulgarian Properties, Unique Estates, Arco, Cleves.

Some of the real estate listing websites is Bulgaria are imot.bg, imoti.net, imoti.info, homes.bg.

Dedicated Facebook groups are becoming increasingly popular for finding accommodation. Most of the listings are in Bulgarian, but users usually speak English. To find the groups, type "Kvartiri" in the Facebook search bar, which is the word for rentals.

Before signing a contract, read thoroughly the terms and conditions (e.g. the coverage of the contract, the length of the contract, the termination terms, etc.)!

DO YOU KNOW THAT

Over 80% of Sofia's residents own the home they live in. This makes renting relatively affordable compared to other EU capitals.

SHORT-TERM ACCOMMODATION

There are over 200 hotels, hostels and motels in Sofia. The number of 5-star hotel rooms in Sofia will double by 2021 as several big international hotel chains will open new properties.

Short-term rentals and online platforms for shared accommodations are becoming a popular alternative to hotels in Sofia. Currently, there are over 3000 listed properties in the city across all platforms.

BIGGEST 4- AND 5-STAR HOTELS IN SOFIA

- InterContinental/IHG
- Hilton/Hilton Hotels
- Sofia Hotel Balkan, a Luxury Collection Hotel
- Holiday Inn Sofia/IHG
- Grand Hotel Sofia
- Sense Hotel/Design Hotels
- Arena di Serdica/FPI Hotels
- Anel
- Marinela Hotel
- Ramada Sofia/Wyndham Hotel Group
- Metropolitan Hotel Sofia
- Novotel Sofia/Accor Hotels
- Vitosha Park Hotel
- BW Premier Sofia Airport Hotel/Best Western
- Suite Hotel
- Festa Sofia Hotel
- BW Plus Expo Hotel/Best Western
- Grand Hotel Millenium Sofia*
- Hyatt Regency*
- Marriott*
- Swisshotel*
- Grand Hotel Bulgaria*
- Rodina*
- Novotel-2*

* under construction

WEEKEND DESTINATIONS ~ 3h



Ski & Hiking

Borovetz
Bansko
7 Rila Lakes



Spa Resorts

Sandanski
Velingrad
Sapareva Banya



Cultural Sites

Rila Monastery
Plovdiv
Koprivshitsa
Veliko Tarnovo

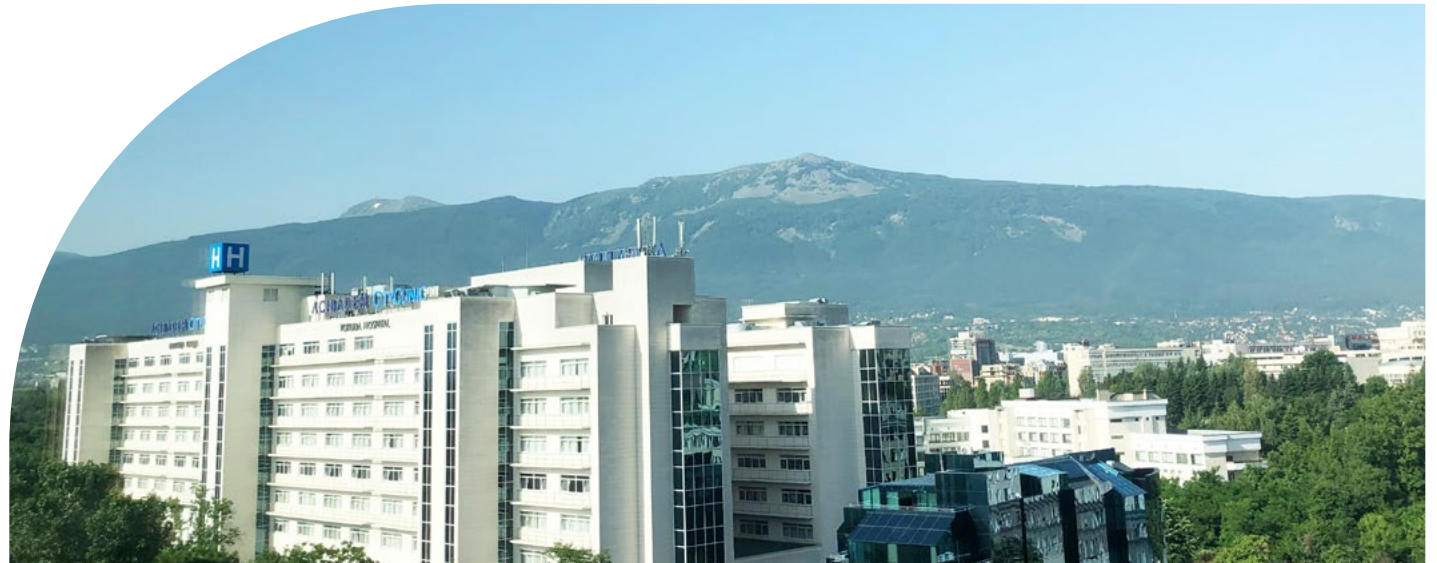

 Check Invest Sofia's **SOFIA TOURISM AND AIR TRANSPORT MARKET REPORT >>**
 to learn more about Sofia as a tourist destination.

HEALTHCARE

Healthcare in Bulgaria has been traditionally well-developed.

Apart from government-ran hospitals, a growing number of well-equipped public and private hospitals offer easy access to preventive care and treatment. Medical tourism is also well-developed.

The Medical University of Sofia has a great reputation with students from over 55 nationalities currently enrolled.



Citizens and permanent residents of EU countries have full access to public healthcare in Bulgaria if they possess a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). EU citizens permanently residing in Bulgaria but insured in another EU country have to register and to select a GP in Bulgaria. A visit to a GP will cost €1.50. Additional charges for additional medical procedures and specialists are possible. Non-EU citizens residing in Bulgaria can purchase health insurance for approx. €85 per year.

Most foreign nationals residing in Sofia opt for private healthcare and private health insurance. Seeing a specialist in a private hospital costs around €30 and many of the personnel speak English.

Many companies offer additional voluntary health insurance as a part of the remuneration package and a contract with a private hospital.

**CALL 112 FOR
EMERGENCY.**

HEALTHCARE IN SOFIA IN NUMBERS



GENERAL HOSPITALS WITH 24/7 MEDICAL EMERGENCY SERVICES

- Pirogov Emergency Hospital >>
- Military Medical Academy >>
- Acibadem City Clinic Tokuda Hospital [\(website in English\)](#) >>
- ISUL >>
- University Hospital "SofiaMed" >>

VETERINARY CLINICS

- Central Vet Clinic >>
- Sofia Vet Clinic [\(website in English\)](#) >>
- Vet Clinic "Blue Cross" [\(website in English\)](#) >>



In 90%
of cases the ambulance reaches the patient in less than 8 minutes



74 hospitals
with 12 042 beds



720+
general practitioners



720
pharmacies in Sofia

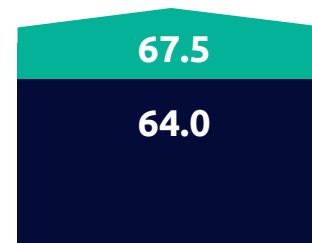
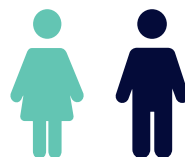


2 500
dental practices

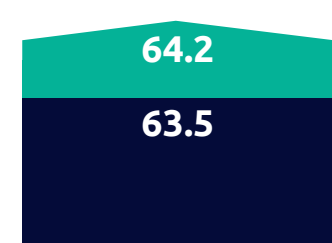


5 days
It takes less than 5 days to get an appointment even with the most sought-after specialists

Bulgaria ranks in the EU Top 10 in number of healthy life years (years spent in good health) for both men and women. 88% of Bulgarians consider their health "good" or "very good". The EU average is 67%.



Bulgaria

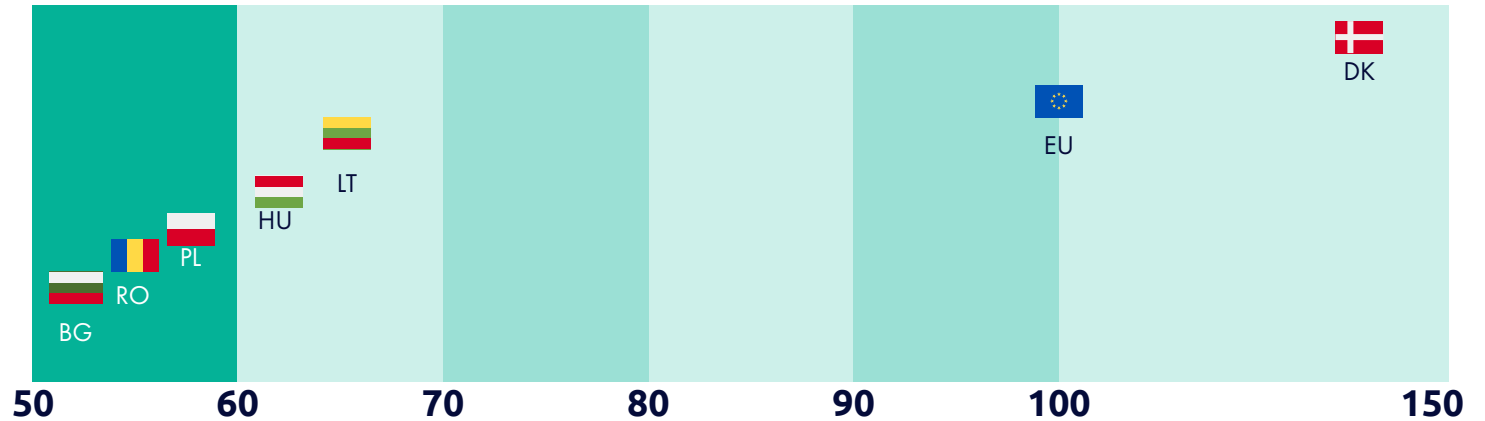


EU

COST OF LIVING

Sofia remains one of the most affordable EU capitals.

COST OF LIVING IN EU CAPITAL CITIES



Utilities

- Electricity, heating/cooling, water and waste tax for 85 m² apartment - €88.23/month
- Mobile tariff including 1000 min calls and 5 GB data: €10/month
- Internet (>60 Mbps, unlimited data, Cable/ADSL): €10.31/month

Transportation

- One-way ticket (public transport): 0.80 €
- Daily public transit card: €2
- Annual public transit card: €187
- Taxi 1 km (normal tariff): €0.41
- Gasoline (per litre): €1.17
- Shared scooters: €0.77+€0.16/min
- Shared vehicles: €2-3.25 starting price + €0.15-€0.25/min

Restaurants

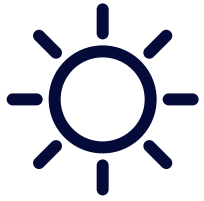
- Meal, inexpensive restaurant, 1 person: €5
- Meal, mid-range restaurant, 3 course, 2 people: €25.56
- Coffee: €1.2

At the supermarket

- Milk: €1/litre
- Bread: €0.60
- Chicken: €3/kg

Expats rank Bulgaria 1st in the world in terms of cost of living. Bulgaria ranks 6th in the "Finding Friends" and 7th in the "Feeling at Home" indicators. 91% of expats are happy with their costs in Bulgaria.

Source: the Expat Insider 2019 survey by Internations >>



28°C

average summer temperature (high)

CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT

Sofia sits at 500 m. above sea level, at the foot of Mt. Vitosha, surrounded by several mountains. The climate is temperate continental with 4 distinct seasons. Summers are hot, sunny and dry, winters are cold with occasional snowfall.

Over 30 city parks and gardens make Sofia one of the greenest cities in the region. Two large lakes offer water sports just minutes away and Vitosha is available year-round for skiing or hiking.

Skiing at some of the mountain resorts near Sofia is available 2-3 months per year. The seaside resorts at the Black Sea (≈3 h. drive from Sofia) welcome tourists from mid-June to mid-September, the beaches in neighboring Greece (≈4 h. from Sofia) can be enjoyed from May until the end of September.

WHAT IS THE QUALITY OF THE AIR?


The quality of the air in Sofia, and particularly the high concentration of fine dust particles in the winter months, is a challenge for the city. In 2018 Sofia Municipality introduced a set of 100 measures to help tackle the problem. Some of the measures include:

- **Green Ticket:** a daily public transit card in days of elevated air pollution for €0.50.
- **Airthings project:** 22 air pollution sensors were installed in Sofia. Monitor the air quality in Sofia in real time at <https://platform.airthings-project.com/>
- A pilot project for installing 20 000 chimney filters in private households that use solid fuel for heating.

WHAT IS THE QUALITY OF THE WATER?

Sofia's water is among the best in Europe. The main reservoir Iskar is located between the Rila and Vitosha Mountains. The tap water in Sofia is being tested over 10 000 times per month for some 50 indicators. Due to its low mineralization and moderate pH-level, Sofia's tap water is particularly healthy.





“My top 5 favorite things in Sofia are South Park, the small streets in the center, the tiny cozy cafes with decent coffee and great pastry, the Opera theatre and that you can see Vitosha from anywhere and it calms me down.”

ALEKSEY RUBTSOV,
DIRECTOR OF LUXOFT BULGARIA

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Sofia's buses, trolleys and trams follow a regular schedule and cover a wide network. Night public transport is also available. Travelling by public transport is an inexpensive, convenient and sustainable way to travel around the city.

€ 0.80 -
SINGLE RIDE

€ 187 -
ANNUAL PASS

€ 1 - NIGHT PASS

Navigate through the city's public transport using **Google Maps** or **Moovit App** or use this **intuitive map >>**

For Sofia Metro use **this metro map >>**



Bus

2 380 km/ 99 routes



Tram

267 km / 14 routes



Trolley

193 km / 9 routes



90%

of Sofia's public transport buses were renewed in 2014-2019



4 night lines

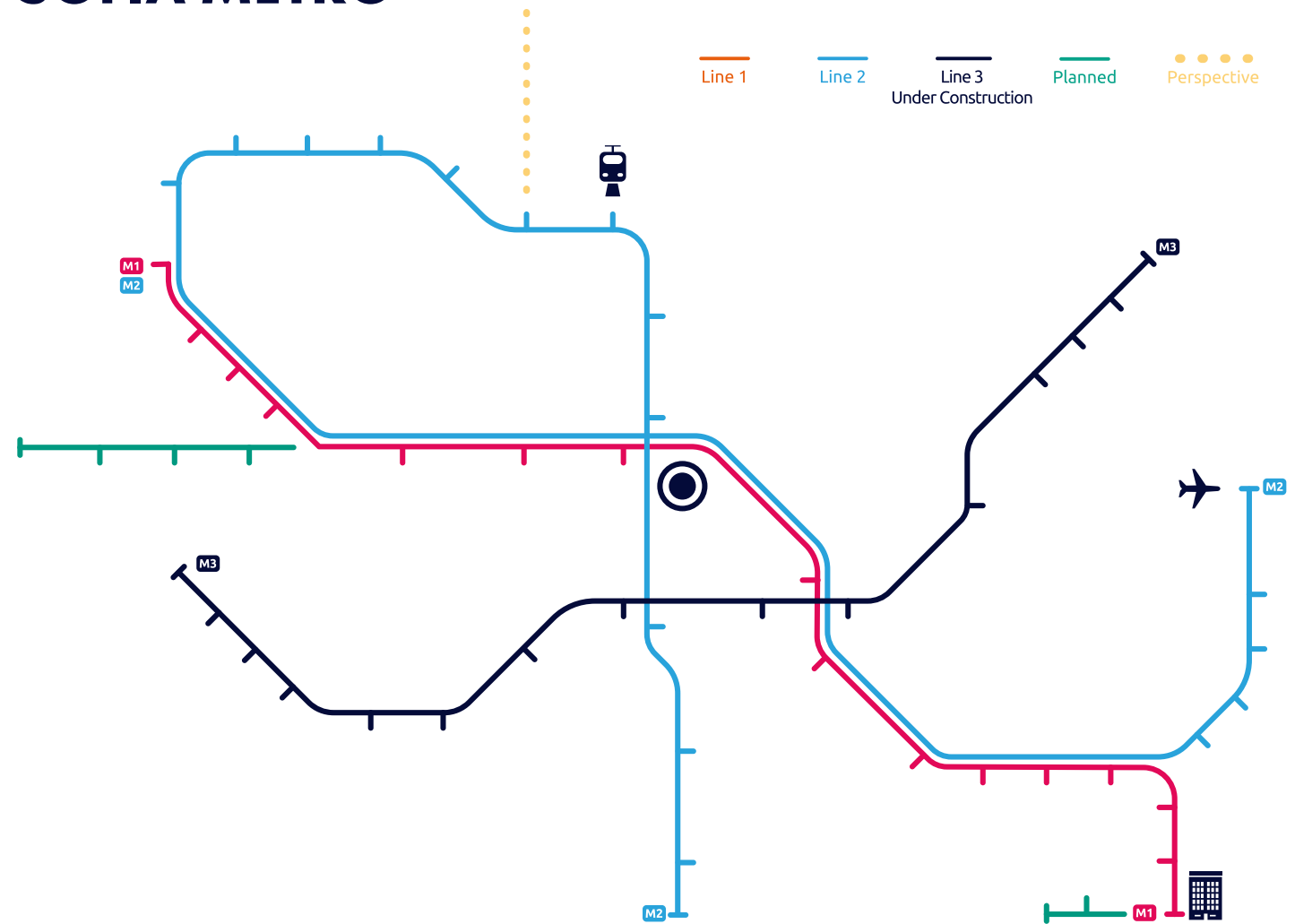
of night public transport from midnight to 4.30 AM



Passengers

350 000 passengers use the Metro every day

SOFIA METRO



METRO FACTS:

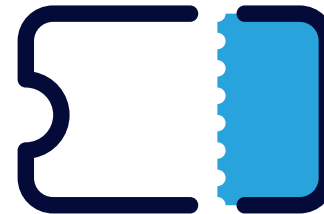
- The metro saves commuters 110 000h per day
- It is estimated that the new metro line 3 (52 km by end of 2020) will decrease the traffic in Sofia by further 20%
- In 2025, 60 km metro line will serve 50% of the population. In comparison, 94 km serve 48% of the population in Vienna.
- Metro stations in Sofia are built at a distance of approx. 1100 m. In London, the new stations are every 1.5 km and in Paris – every 3 km.

TRANSPORT CARDS AND TICKETS

Purchase or top up your travel card or purchase a ticket at over 60 points of sales, including Serdika metro station, Sofia University, National Palace of Culture, Sofia Airport, open between 7:15 and 20:00 every day.



Don't forget to bring a passport size photo to have a new transport card issued!



Tickets can be bought from the drivers from the driver* or from an on-board ticketing machine**

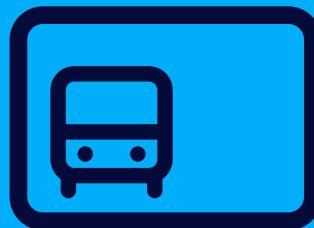


The fine for travelling without a ticket or a transport card is €20. It is also valid for oversized luggage, which should be ticketed as well.



Find detailed information about public transportation cards and ticketing options [here >>](#)

Daily passes and cards for all night transport lines could be purchased online at sofia.mpass.bg >>



Sofia Card is your tourist card! It is an electronic smart card giving access to all public transport lines in Sofia, valid for three days and offering discounts in many tourists and commercial sites in Sofia. You can purchase the Sofia Card from eighteen Sofia Urban Mobility Centre kiosks. **For a full list of kiosks, please click here >>**

* with exact cash, for above ground transportation only

** only in trams and trolleys coins only

TAXIS AND SHARED TRANSPORT

TAXI APPS

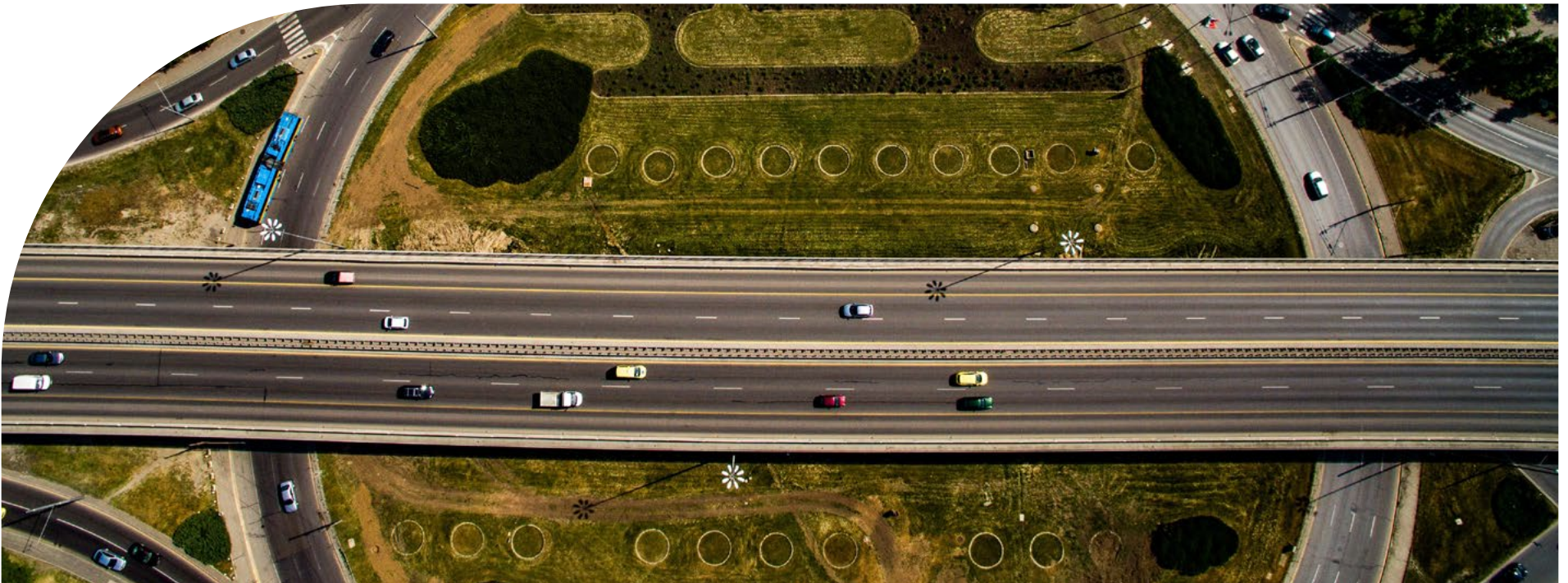
- TaxiMe
- Yellow Taxi App
- TaxiStar
- Ok Taxi App

SHARED CARS

- Spark

SHARED SCOOTERS

- Hobo
- Lime
- Bird&Broom Scooters



PARKING

If you chose to travel by car it is important to know that parking in the central areas of Sofia is not free. Also, parking spaces are typically hard to find. The Blue Parking Zone covers the historical centre of the city, whereas the "Green Zone" spreads over the wider city centre. The maximum stay is 2 hours for the Blue Zone and 4 hours for the Green Zone. The prices are as follows:

BLUE ZONE	
ON WORKING DAYS	8:30-19:30h
ON SATURDAYS	8:30-18:00h
PRICE	1€/h
MAXIMUM TIME	2h
WITH PARKING TICKET OR SMS TO	1302

GREEN ZONE	
ON WORKING DAYS	8:30-19:30h
PRICE	0.5€/h
MAXIMUM TIME	4h
WITH PARKING TICKET OR SMS TO	1303



21 000 parking spaces
in the 'green' and 'blue' zones

PARK & RIDE

Sofia operates 5 Park & Ride lots at the metro stations near Inter Expo Center (1 350 spaces), James Boucher (500 spaces), the National Stadium (193 spaces), the Business Park and Beli Dunav. Six more P&R locations are planned to open by 2021. P&R parking is free with monthly or annual metro pass and if you ride the metro to your destination and back. If not, you have to pay €0.25-€0.5 per hour. There are also many other public and private parking lots across the city.

DRIVING IN BULGARIA



VEHICLE TAXES

are approx. €100 annually for a 130 horse-power car that is less than 5 years old and has a Euro 5 emission standard.

VEHICLE INSPECTION

All cars older than three years are a subject to an obligatory annual vehicle inspection. It costs approx. € 25 and can be done at almost every auto repair shop.

VIGNETTE TAXES

E-vignette is required for driving on major intercity roads and highways in Bulgaria. Prices are among the lowest in Europe starting from €50 per year. You can purchase your e-vignette on [>>](http://www.bgtoll.bg/en/)

DRIVER'S LICENSE

Your driver's license is valid in Bulgaria if it is issued by a country that has ratified the Vienna Convention on Road Traffic or a EU/EEA country/Switzerland and you are 18 or older. You will need a legalized translation in Bulgarian or an international driving license/permit (IDL/IDP). If your driver's license is issued by a country that is not part of the Vienna Convention, you can only drive for 3 months, or 12 months in case you have a residence permit. Then, you have to start a driving course in Bulgaria.

GAS PRICES

Unleaded: approx.
€1.10 per litre

Diesel: approx.€1.20 per
litre

LPG: approx. €0.46 per litre



BEYOND SOFIA: TRANSPORT CONNECTIVITY

Sofia is at the geographical heart of the Balkan peninsula. Three Pan-European transport corridors pass through the city. Sofia is a 3-hour drive to both the Black and the Aegean Seas, 5 h from Istanbul and less than 4 h from Belgrade and Bucharest.

Sofia Airport is the biggest airport in Bulgaria and one of the fastest growing airports in Europe in terms of number of passengers (> 70% since 2015). In the last 4 years Sofia Airport added 44 new routes. In 2019, the new operator of Sofia Airport announced plans to build a third terminal, modernize the two existing terminals and continue adding new flight routes.

Bulgaria’s railway has an extensive but outdated network. Still, travelling by train offers a great opportunity to observe Bulgaria’s beautiful natural scenery. Tickets are inexpensive and can be purchased online at bdz.bg/en/ >> or at the Central Railway Station every day between 04:00 and 24:00.

NEAREST BEACHES



"Mixed architecture, street art, a perfect combination of quietness and plenty of great venues to hang out with friends."

LOIC LE PICHOUX,
CO-FOUNDER AT KLEAR P2P
LENDING PLATFORM

ARTS AND CULTURE

Sofia is a city with a 8000-year history. Remains of human settlements dating as far back as the early Neolithic era were found within the city limits. Explore Sofia's past and present by visiting the over 65 museums and galleries in the city.



NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM
With over 650 000 cultural artefacts, it is one of the largest history museums on the Balkans.



"IVAN VAZOV" NATIONAL THEATRE
is one of the major landmarks in Sofia and the largest and the oldest theater in the country.



NATIONAL ART GALLERY
With 9 branches around Sofia, this is the largest art institution in Bulgaria.



NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGY MUSEUM
hosting a collection of Bronze age Thracian gold and silver "treasures" and ancient artifacts.



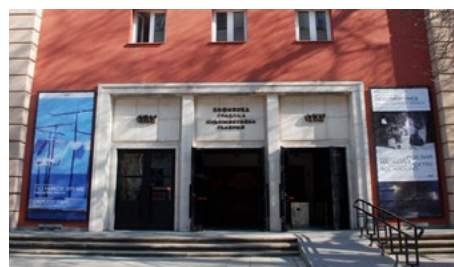
KVADRAT 500
28 halls featuring 2000 art pieces from the collection of the National Art Gallery.



SOFIA HISTORY MUSEUM
Eight halls telling the story of Sofia hosted in the building of the old city mineral bath, an architectural gem from the early 20th c.



"SOFIA" THEATRE
is the largest municipal theatre in the city. Some of the productions have English subtitles.



SOFIA CITY ART GALLERY
hosts thematic exhibitions from its vast collection of paintings, sculptures, graphics, contemporary art, photography, as well as visiting exhibitions.



ALEXANDER NEVSKY CATHEDRAL
is the largest Eastern Orthodox cathedral on the Balkans.



BOYANA CHIRCH
Famous for its medieval frescoes, in 1979 it was included in UNESCO's World Cultural and Natural Heritage list.



BASILICA ST. SOFIA
The 5th c BC necropolis of the ancient city of Serdika (current day Sofia) is now open to the public. The medieval St. Sofia Basilica, sitting on top of it, gave the current name of the city.



"ST. ST. CYRIL AND METHODIUS" NATIONAL LIBRARY
is the largest library in the country and the oldest cultural institute of modern Bulgaria.

CONCERT VENUES



BULGARIA HALL
The premier classical music venue in the country.



NATIONAL PALACE OF CULTURE
The biggest congress and cultural events centre in Bulgaria



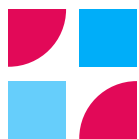
SOFIA OPERA
welcomes world-renowned performers and is one of the major cultural attractions in the city.

DID YOU KNOW THAT

Bulgaria ranks 3rd in Europe in number of cultural heritage landmarks?

There are over 1 400 historical and cultural landmarks in Sofia, including the UNESCO World Heritage site of the Boyana Church.

In 2014, UNESCO awarded Sofia the title 'Creative City of Film'.



EVENTS AND FESTIVALS

Sofia is a city for culture lovers. Visits to both theatres and museums increased by 50% in the last 10 years. The number of festivals in the city doubled to almost 100.

Artistic Sofia hosts numerous national and international forums and festivals. Follow the city's cultural calendar at ArtSofia.bg, VisitSofia.bg, www.sofia.bg/culture or check out the **Sofia CulTour app**.

SOFIA FILM FEST

Sofia Film Fest is the largest film festival in Bulgaria and one of the leading cinema events in Central and Eastern Europe. Sofia Film Fest was included in 'Variety' magazine's list of top 50 film festivals worldwide.

The International **A to Jazz Festival** is spreading the jazz spirit for three days in July. Since 2011, the festival has welcomed over 100 000 visitors and world-famous jazz musicians such as Branford Marsalis, Christian McBride, Robert Glasper, Kenny Garrett, Roy Hargrove, Dianne Reeves and many more.

A TO JAZZ

FOTO FABRIKA

FOTOFABRIKA: an annual international festival and platform for high-quality professional photography. Fotofabrika is part of the official Cultural Calendar of Sofia Municipality.

SOFIA SCIENCE FESTIVAL

Sofia Science Festival: the first and only festival in Bulgaria dedicated to the achievements of young scientists and researchers from Bulgaria and abroad, attracting both children and grown-ups.

SOFIA MUSIC WEEKS FESTIVAL

Sofia Music Weeks Festival is one of the most significant international music events in the region, taking place in Sofia since 1970. The festival's program includes an exclusive selection of concerts, operas, ballets, documentaries, photo exhibitions and master classes.

EUROPEAN MUSIC FESTIVAL

European Music Festival is one of the most celebrated events for classical music in Sofia. The program includes symphonic and orchestral concerts, jazz concerts, movie music concerts and events for children.

Opera in the Park
The Festival takes opera and ballet performances to one of Sofia's parks every summer for the last 10 years.

OPERA IN THE PARK

World Theatre in Sofia brings international theatre and dance productions and leading performers from all over the world to Sofia.

WORLD THEATRE IN SOFIA

SOFIA THEATRE FESTIVAL

Sofia Theatre Festival and the prestigious Ikar Award for performing arts take place in Sofia on March 27th, the World Theatre Day, every year since 1974.

SOFIA SPRING BOOK FAIR

Sofia Spring Book Fair is an annual event with literary readings, book presentations and more attracting visitors of all ages.

SOFIA FOOD GUIDE

Sofia's restaurant scene is booming. Restaurants catering to both locals and tourists offer a variety of cuisines and concepts. Just explore!

Bulgarian cuisine is rich in vegetables, dairy products and meat. The meal starts with a large salad accompanied by the local rakia - a grape brandy. Try classics like Shopska salad and the Bulgarian to-go legend Banitzza.



BANITZA



RAKIA



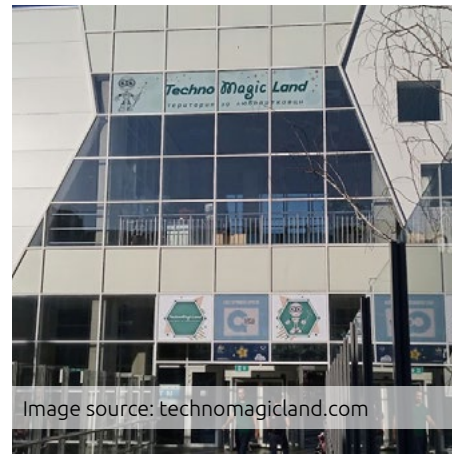
SHOPSKA SALAD



SOFIA FOR KIDS

SOFIA QUALITY OF LIFE

Sofia offers a great variety of activities for the little ones... and their parents!



MUZEIKO
the biggest science /educational centre for children in Eastern Europe with over 130 interactive games on over 2 000 m².

TechnoMagicLand
An interactive science centre for kids and teenagers who want to discover the magic of science and technology located @Sofia Tech Park.

SOFIA ZOO
the oldest zoo on the Balkans



FUNTOPIA
an indoor climbing and adventure center for kids

KOKOLANDIA ADVENTURE CENTER
an outdoor climbing adventure park in the heart of Borissova Garden, Sofia's largest park.

ROBOTICS, PROGRAMMING AND DIGITAL ACADEMIES FOR KIDS

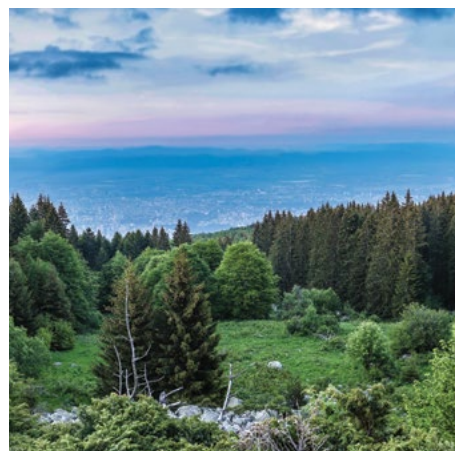
...PLUS 32 CITY PARKS, 100 PLAYGROUNDS AND ONE WHOLE MOUNTAIN TO EXPLORE!

DID YOU KNOW THAT

In June 2019 UNICEF placed Bulgaria among the Top 20 most family-friendly countries in the OECD.

The report >> focuses on two key policies: childcare leave for parents and early childhood education and care for preschool children.

NATURE & SPORTS



Vitosha mountain is just 30 minutes from Sofia's city centre. It offers hundreds of hiking trails, two ski centres and several ski runs with an option for night skiing.

The 84 km-long **Iskar River Gorge** is another popular area for hiking north of Sofia. Do not miss to visit the Lakatnik rocks.

Did you know? There are **30 thermal mineral springs** in and around Sofia (and over 3000 in Bulgaria). Book a relaxing spa weekend at one of the nearby spa resorts of Velingrad, Sandanski, Belchin Banya, Sapareva Banya, Bankya and more.



The **two large man-made lakes near Sofia** – Pancharevo and the Iskar Dam offer opportunity for water skiing, wakeboarding and rowing. Wakeboarding enthusiasts love the Hydropark Kazichene just next to Sofia's ring road. The Struma river to the south (an hour drive from Sofia) is the optimal place for kayaking and rafting in Bulgaria.

DID YOU KNOW THAT

78 new gyms and 15 swimming pools were constructed in kindergartens in Sofia in the last 10 years. The city offers 60 street gyms and over a 100 playgrounds for kids.

PUBLIC SWIMMING POOLS

- Spartak swimming complex >>
- Diana swimming pool (50m) >>
- Technical University (50m) >>
- National Sports Academy (25m) >>
- Sport Palace (25m) >>
- Orange Fitness (25m) >>



Sofia Marathon takes place in October of every year.

In 2019 5000 runners from 52 countries joined the race.



Image source: marathonsofia.com

Sofia Marathon first took place in 1983. It is part of the IAAF Bronze Label Road Race list by the International Association of Athletics Federations. The run is included in AIMS – the Association of International Marathons and Distance Races, and was certified a 5-Star Quality Road Race by the Running for All foundation.

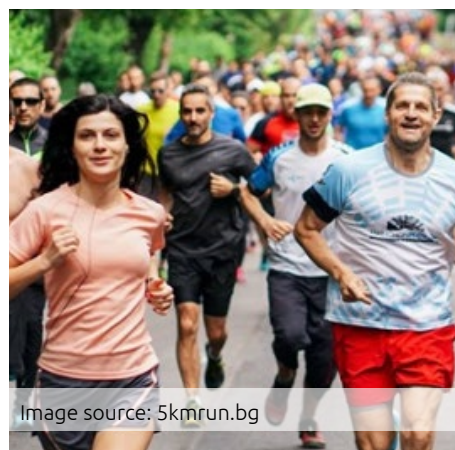
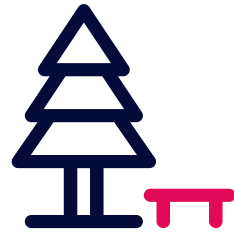


Image source: 5kmrun.bg

5KM RUN takes place every Saturday morning in Sofia's South Park and is open for children, seniors and people with disabilities, parents with strollers and dogs.

In 2018, Sofia was declared a permanent holder of the title European Capital of Sport. The city will host over 200 sports events as part of the campaign in 2020.

SOFIA URBAN DEVELOPMENT FACTS



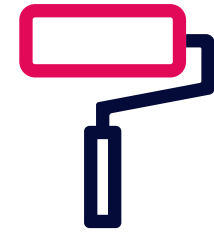
Sofia's newest park

Park Vuzrazhdane is a newly-built public park in Sofia's central part which will include a mineral water aqua park with an Olympic-size swimming pool, five outdoor pools and several water slides.



Sofia's New Forest

The city is planting the "New Forest of Sofia" on over 22.5 hca of rehabilitated former landfill. 60 000 of the planned 125 000 trees have already been planted by 6 500 volunteers and 50 Sofia-based companies.



Renovations

In the last several years the city invested € 90 M in the renovations of 200 000 m² urban area, including the renovation of 28 parks and gardens.



Traffic

Sofia has installed an intelligent traffic management system that also prioritizes emergency and public transport vehicles.



Historical sites

Sofia renovated 10 ancient and medieval tourist points of interest and opened the an underground archaeological site "Serdika" where visitors can walk the streets of the ancient city.



Waste treatment

In 2018, Sofia's waste processing plant processed over 410 thousand tons, or 85% of Sofia's residential waste.



Sofia is also planting over 2 000 new trees on its streets every year .

"Sofia offers some very educated people. In addition, the bar keeps rising and that is very positive for us as a growing company and for the new businesses to come."

LARS FREDENLUND,
CEO AT COBUILDER INTERNATIONAL LTD.

EDUCATION IN SOFIA

There are 300 schools and professional colleges in Sofia, including 63 private schools, 38 state secondary schools, 175 municipal primary and secondary schools and 23 professional colleges. Most students chose English as a first foreign language and select among the 25 other foreign languages for the required second foreign language course.

DID YOU KNOW

The grading system in Bulgarian schools:
6 - excellent,
5 - very good,
4 - good,
3 - satisfactory
2 - poor

Daycare centers and Kindergartens

entirely in foreign language

- Kinderoase
 - Deutsche Goethe Schule
 - The Small School "Victor Hugo"
 - Kindergarten "Germani"
 - Kindergarten "Doverie"
 - The Castle
 - Weda
 - Drita
 - Maria Montessori
- and many more...

Primary and Secondary schools

entirely in foreign language

- Anglo-American School of Sofia*
- British School of Sofia*
- The American College of Sofia
- American English Academy*
- Britanica Park School*
- Deutsche Schule Sofia*
- "Erich-Kästner" German School*
- Colegio Español "Reina Sofía"
- French Lyceum "Victor Hugo"*
- Italian Lyceum
- Russian Lyceum*
- St George International School*
- Maple Bear Canadian School*
- ESPA School
- Izzi Science for kids
- Darbi College

*with pre-school

UNIVERSITIES

Sofia is home to 23 of Bulgaria's 51 universities and to over 100 000 university students, including many international students. Some of the bigger universities in Sofia are:

EXECUTIVE EDUCATION

SDA Bocconi, business school and the American University in Bulgaria (AUBG) now offer an Executive Master in Finance, Banking & Real Estate.

AUBG, the University of Sheffield and other international universities offer MBA and other executive programs in Sofia entirely in English.

Harvard Business School offers two free courses on economic development in Sofia in a joint effort with Sofia University. The courses are taught in English by the Sofia-based Center for Economic Strategy and Competitiveness.

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY SOFIA

- Three engineering and two management tracks in partnership with Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), TU Braunschweig, FOM Essen and OVGU Magdeburg in Germany. (classes entirely in German, joint diploma upon graduation*)
- bachelor and masters tracks in Engineering (classes entirely in English)
- bachelor and masters tracks in Electrical Engineering (classes entirely in French)

SOFIA UNIVERSITY

- masters degrees offered in foreign languages incl. MA in Financial Management with the University of Montesquieu - Bordeaux IV.

UNIVERSITY OF NATIONAL AND WORLD ECONOMY

- joint MA program in European Business and Finance with Nottingham Trent University (classes entirely in English, joint diploma upon graduation*)

MEDICAL UNIVERSITY SOFIA

- degrees in Medicine, Dental Medicine and Pharmacy (classes entirely in English)

NEW BULGARIAN UNIVERSITY

- several master tracks in English

*additional requirements like attending the partner university for a semester may apply

DIGITAL ACADEMIES

There are over 30 private digital academies in Sofia. Programmes last between 18 and 30 months. Subjects range from software development and 3D design to IT project management and are taught by leading IT professionals.

Check out the digital academes in Sofia at investsofia.com/en/digital-skills-academies/ >>

"Sofia is a vibrant and dynamic city bringing together knowledge and innovation. The combination of young and talented individuals with the desire to grow and excel is what makes Sofia stand-out as a competitive destination."

MARTYN SMITH & GORDON FORSYTH,
FOUNDERS & DIRECTORS AT BRIGHTIVE

Image source: Puzl CowOrKing, Sofia

OPENING A BANK ACCOUNT

Opening a bank account in Sofia is quite easy – you just need to choose a bank and sign a contract. This can be done by both EU and non-EU citizens. The process takes 2-5 business day. If done by a representative, it may take several days longer.

IN ORDER TO OPEN A PERSONAL BANK ACCOUNT BY YOURSELF YOU WILL NEED



A valid ID card/passport



Personal or office address for correspondence



A minimum deposit (it can be a couple of euro)

Five out of the 6 largest banks in Bulgaria are members of major European banking groups.

For some type of bank accounts (savings, investment, etc.) the banks have the right to conduct additional due diligence in accordance with local and European Laws. In some cases the bank has the right to decline the request.

FINDING A JOB

It is possible to find an interesting and satisfying job in Sofia, where the unemployment rate is among the lowest in the EU – under 2%. The good news is that you don't need to speak Bulgarian in order to live and work in Sofia. Many companies based in Sofia are actively recruiting foreigners.

Some of the most popular job portals in Bulgaria include:

- [Jobs.bg >>](#)
- [Zaplata.bg >>](#)
- [Karieri.bg >>](#)
- [Jobtiger.bg >>](#)
- [Rabota.bg >>](#)
- [LinkedIn >>](#)

Networking remains the best way to find the perfect job in Sofia. See upcoming networking events on [investsofia.com](#), [eventbrite.com](#) or [meetup.com](#).

There is a strong expat community in Sofia and a number of expat-related blogs and websites also post interesting job opportunities.



Image source: Puzl CowOrKing, Sofia

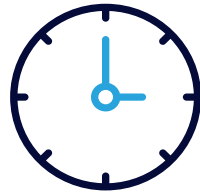


Sofia ranks 27th of concentration of knowledge-intensive jobs among 278 European regions, according to the 2020 edition of The Geography of Europe's Brain Business Jobs: 2020 Index by the European Centre for Policy Reform and Entrepreneurship. >>

According to the report, 10.1 % of the working age population in Sofia is employed in Brain Business Jobs, which is more than twice the national average and higher than the European average 6.3%.

LABOUR CODE

WORKING TIME



Working days
21 days per month
250 days per year



Annual paid leave
min. 20 days per year



Public holidays in 2020
13 days

LABOUR CONTRACTS



Indefinite contract
Duration: indefinite
Probation period: up to 6 months
Termination notice: 1 month



Term contract
Duration: up to 3 years
Probation period: up to 6 months
Termination notice: 3 months



Overtime and compensation
max.150 hours per year
On working days: 50%
On weekends: 75%
On national holidays: 100%

MATERNITY LEAVE

up to 3 years paid by the state, very small employer contribution

1st year – the state pays 90% of the gross salary, up to a fixed amount

2nd year – the state pays BGN 380 per month

3rd year – without pay

BECOME A VOLUNTEER

Volunteering is not only a cause, it is a fast and fulfilling way to become a part of the local community, meet new people and make new friends. There are plenty of options to volunteer in Sofia.

Time Heroes >>

is the largest online volunteering platform that currently hosts close to 1900 campaigns.

TIME HEROES

BULGARIAN RED CROSS

Bulgarian Red Cross >>

and Caritas Sofia >> also have multiple calls for donations and volunteer work.

Join the Sofia Municipality's tree-planting campaign for the **Sofia's New Forest >>** every Autumn

SOFIA'S NEW FOREST

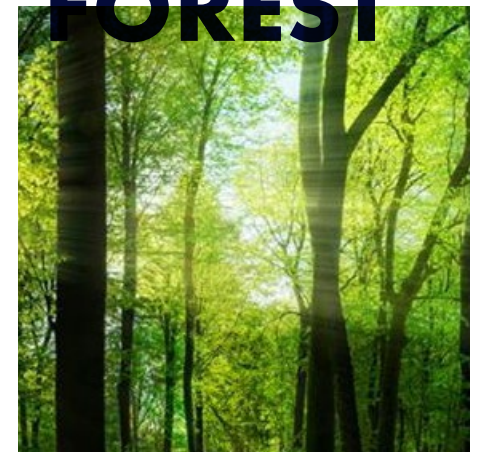
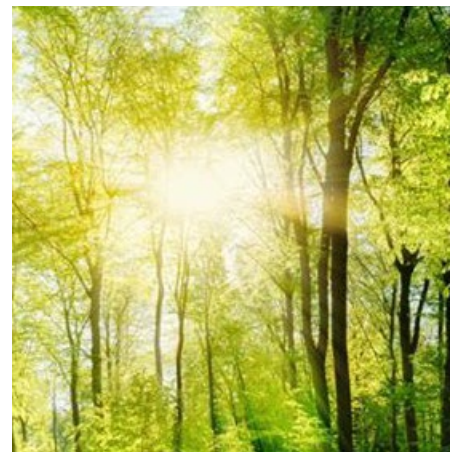


Image source: novatagora.bg



DIGITAL EVENTS IN SOFIA 2020

<p>TEDX VITOSHA January 25</p>	<p>SOFIA GAME JAM January 31 – February 2</p>	<p>INNOVATION EXPLORER February 20</p>	<p>ANNUAL FINTECH & INSURETECH SUMMIT February 27</p>
<p>E-GOVERNMENT FORUM March 5</p>	<p>WOMEN TECH SOFIA March 12</p>	<p>STARTUP EUROPE WEEK SOFIA March 19-20</p>	<p>SMART CITIES AND MOBILITY FORUM March 26</p>
<p>TEDX SOFIA April 4</p>	<p>18TH E-SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE April 2-4</p>	<p>SOFIA SCIENCE FEST May 14-17</p>	<p>JPRIME CONFERENCE May 27-28</p>
<p>DIGITALK May 28-29</p>	<p>TOTAL CHAOS May 29-31</p>	<p>TELUS INTERNATIONAL GAME SHOW 2020 May 30</p>	<p>AIBEST REGIONAL CONFERENCE May, TBA</p>
<p>AI AND IOT BULGARIA SUMMIT 2020 June 6</p>	<p>SUPERSONIC June, TBA</p>	<p>DEV.BG ANNUAL CONFERENCE August, TBA</p>	<p>ANNUAL DIGITAL FINANCE FORUM September, TBA</p>
<p>ANIVENTURE COMIC CON September 12-13</p>	<p>TUK-TAM CAREER HIVE September 17</p>	<p>BIOTECH ATELIER 3.0 September 24-25</p>	<p>URBAN DEVELOPMENT FORUM 2020 September 29</p>
<p>WEBIT BALKANS October 1-2</p>	<p>DEVFEST BULGARIA 2020 October 10</p>	<p>HACKCONF October, TBA</p>	<p>ROBOTICS STRATEGY FORUM 2020 October, TBA</p>
<p>SLAVCONF. 2020 PATHWAYS October 30-31</p>	<p>GROWTH SUMMIT November, TBA</p>	<p>EASTERN EUROPEAN GAMING SUMMIT November, 17-18</p>	<p>BALKAN ENTERTAINMENT AND GAMING EXPO November 18-19</p>
<p>GLOBAL TECH SUMMIT November, TBA</p>	<p>JS. TALKS BULGARIA November 20-21</p>	<p>SOFIA GAME NIGHT November, TBA</p>	<p>INTERNATIONAL LIFE SCIENCES & AI CLISTERS CONFERENCE November, TBA</p>



The 'Digitalisation, Innovation and Economic Development' department of Sofia Municipality was established in 2020 to support Sofia's development as a smart, digital, innovative, and tech city. The new Department will consolidate and guide all of the city's digital and smart city projects and will continue to support high-tech and R&D investors in Sofia. It will focus on increasing the number and quality of municipal e-services, open data and smart city projects implementation.

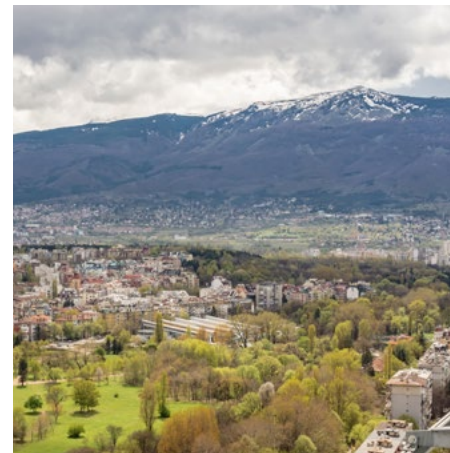
SOFIA IS A BEAUTIFUL CITY THAT IS GROWING AND CHANGING EVERY DAY. A CITY...



...that is developing as a startup, innovation and creative hub of Central and Eastern Europe.



...with constantly improving urban environment.



...surrounded by mountains, full of parks, gardens and mineral springs.



... with great cultural and night life

A CITY THAT HAS A GREAT STORY TO TELL!



MY FIRST MONTH IN SOFIA

SO^{FIA} QUALITY OF LIFE

Jogging in
Borissova
Garden

A weekend
getaway
to a SPA
hotel

Visiting
Muzeiko
Children's
Museum
with the
kids

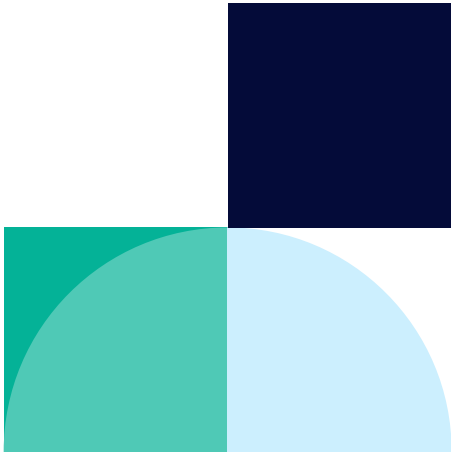
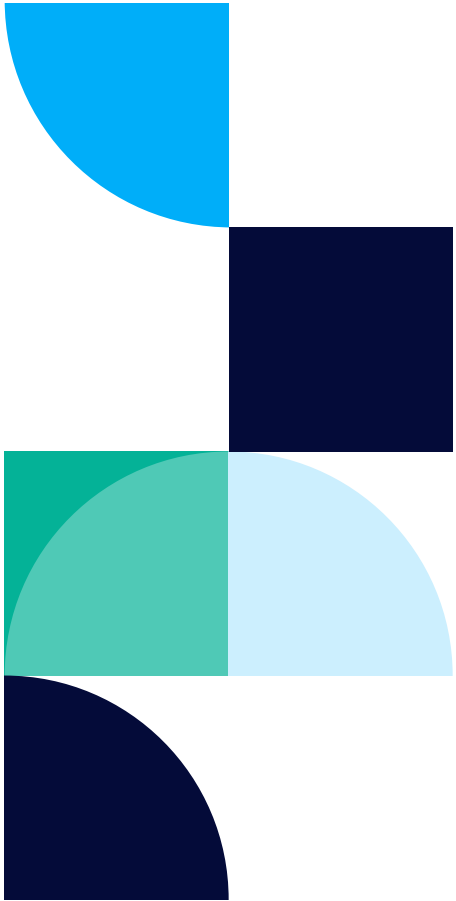
People
watching on
"Vitoshka"
Boulevard

Hiking to Cherni Vrah
the highest peak on
Mt Vitoshka (2290 m
above sea level)

Exploring
Bulgarian
wine

Drinking
beer in
the City
Garden

Visit one
of Sofia's
many
museums



digital. smart. dynamic.
innovativeSofia

33 Moskovska St.,
Sofia, Bulgaria
innovativesofia.bg

