A GUIDE FOR FULBRIGHT ENGLISH TEACHING ASSISTANTS TO BULGARIA

AY 2018 - 2019

FULBRIGHT
BULGARIA
# Table of Contents

## Essentials about Bulgaria

- The Land ................................................................. 5
- The People and Their History ........................................ 6
- State System ............................................................... 9
- Major Cities and Universities ......................................... 9
- The Bulgarian Educational System .................................... 11
  - Bulgarian Schools ...................................................... 11
  - Bulgarian Universities ................................................ 13
- Customs, Courtesies and Lifestyle .................................... 16
  - Meeting and Greeting .................................................. 16
  - Visiting ........................................................................ 16
  - Bulgarian Names ......................................................... 16
  - Smoking ........................................................................ 17
  - Dress Codes .................................................................... 18
  - Business Hours and Public Holidays ............................... 18
    - Bulgarian Orthodox Church ........................................ 18
  - Bulgarian Monasteries ................................................... 19
  - Bulgarian Festivals, Customs and Popular Beliefs ............ 19

## Going to Bulgaria .................................................................

- Sources of Preliminary Information ................................... 23
- Preparation for working in Bulgaria ................................... 24
- Preparation for Departure ............................................... 25
  - Entry Visa ...................................................................... 25
  - Travel ............................................................................. 27
  - Packing ........................................................................... 27
- Arrival in the Country ....................................................... 28

## Your Stay in Bulgaria ..............................................................

- General Tips ...................................................................... 30
- Language ........................................................................... 30
- Housing ............................................................................. 31
- Utilities .............................................................................. 32
- Safety and Security ........................................................... 32
  - Overall Information on Crime in Bulgaria ..................... 32
  - Emergency Contact Information .................................... 33
  - General Safety Advice While in Bulgaria ....................... 34
Safety Procedures in Specific Situations ........................................ 35
Loss or Theft of Important Documents ......................................... 35
Sexual Harassment ..................................................................... 36
Physical or Sexual Assault...............................................................37
Emergency Preparedness in Case of Natural Disasters, Civil Unrest or Other State Emergencies ........................................ 38
Earthquake ..................................................................................39
Severe Weather .........................................................................40
Protests and Civil Unrest ..............................................................41
Terrorist Attacks .........................................................................41
Money ..........................................................................................42
Managing Your Money in Bulgaria ...............................................43
Grant Payments ...........................................................................45
Tax Liability ................................................................................45
Cost of Living ..............................................................................46
Communications .........................................................................48
Transportation and Travel in Bulgaria and Abroad .........................51
Shopping ......................................................................................53
Bulgarian Cuisine .........................................................................55
Health ..........................................................................................56
Cultural Events and Recreation ....................................................60
Living in a Different Culture..........................................................60
USEFUL BACKGROUND TEXTS ..................................................63
USEFUL INTERNET RESOURCES .................................................67
H O L I D A Y S ..............................................................................69
Dear Fulbright grantee,

Congratulations! You have been awarded a very prestigious grant aimed at promoting the educational exchange between the people of the United States of America and other nations in the world. The Bulgarian nation, with its thousand-year-old history and culture, is relatively less known to Americans. In the last decade, however, and especially since 2007, when Bulgaria became a member of the European Union, we have reappeared on the world map as part of the process of democratization and integration of Eastern Europe.

An increasing number of Bulgarians, most of them young people, have gained access to the American culture and education. The vast majority of Bulgarian recipients of Fulbright grants have made a most favorable impression with their intellect, versatile talents, and flexibility.

The experience that awaits the American Fulbright grantees coming to Bulgaria for the first time will most certainly involve a dose of frustration, especially in the beginning, perhaps even fear of the unknown and the unfamiliar. At the same time, it will be a challenge and test of their ability to accept others, to overcome inhibiting stereotypes and form a balanced view of the globalized world as a unified whole.

The Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission is fully committed to helping the American Fulbright grantees make the best use of their stay in Bulgaria, adjust more easily to the new environment, and establish fruitful contacts with their Bulgarian colleagues and host institutions.

We look forward to meeting you and working together.

Angela Rodel
Executive Director
ESSENTIALS ABOUT BULGARIA

THE LAND

Bulgaria occupies the eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula. It is crossed by historically important roads from Northern and Eastern Europe to the Mediterranean region and from Western and Central Europe to the Middle East.

The territory of the country is about 43,000 square miles (111,000 square kilometers). Bulgaria borders on Romania to the north and the two countries are divided by the Danube River. The Black Sea lies to the east, Turkey and Greece - to the south. To the west are Macedonia and Serbia.

Within a relatively small area, Bulgarian landscape exhibits a striking topographic variety. Open expanses of lowland alternate with broken mountain country, often unexpectedly cut by deep river gorges, as well as high plateaux surrounded by mountains. The main geographic divisions in the country are: the Danubian Plain, the Balkan Range, the Rila-Rhodope Massif and the Black Sea coast.

The climate is temperate continental and tends to be Mediterranean in the southern and coastal areas. The country has a real four-season environment where people can experience the changing colors of a mild autumn, a snowy and icy winter, a lush, green spring and a fairly hot summer. Heavy snowfalls may occur throughout the country from December to mid-March,
especially if you are in the mountainous areas of Bulgaria. The annual average temperature depends on latitude and ranges from 46°F in the North and 51°F in the South, with temperatures of 37°F in the mountains and 53°F in the plains. Daytime temperatures vary from 32-41°F in the winter and 77-86°F in summer months.

THE PEOPLE AND THEIR HISTORY

Bulgaria has a population of 7.08 million. Most of the population (84 percent) is ethnic Bulgarian. Another 8.8 percent is Turkish, and 4.9 percent is Roma. Macedonians, Armenians, Jews and other groups also inhabit Bulgaria in small numbers. Most people live in urban areas.

The official language is Bulgarian – a Slavic language that uses the Cyrillic alphabet, which was developed in the ninth century by Cyril and Methodius.

Most Bulgarians are Christians, Muslims comprise about 12 percent of the population and another 2 percent is Roman Catholic. Orthodox monasteries are held in high regard for their religious and artistic significance and historical value.

Bulgarians take considerable pride in their cultural heritage which has been preserved despite centuries of foreign domination. Democracy has always been important to Bulgarians. In fact, the 1879 constitution was at the time one of the most progressive in Europe. Bulgarians are interested in politics, both domestic and foreign, and try to be well informed. Bulgarians are on the whole friendly and hospitable people.

The history of the Bulgarian nation starts with the advent of the Bulgars, warlike nomads from central Asia, to the Balkan Peninsula in the 7th century AD. The peninsula had already been occupied by numerous Slav tribes with which the Bulgars, headed by Khan Asparoukh, formed a military alliance. In 681 a Slav-Bulgarian state was formed in which the Bulgars, although a minority, played a leading role.

In 863 the Bulgarian King (Knyaz) Boris I was baptized along with the whole of his court. In a couple of years Christianity became the country's official religion. It was adopted from Constantinople in its east-orthodox version. Along with its territorial expansion, the first Bulgarian Kingdom also grew as the cultural center of the Slavonic script in the middle of the 9th century. This was the work of the two brothers of Slav-Bulgarian descent, Cyril and Methodius, who lived in Thessaloniki. They were men of exceptional intellect, talents and culture. The script they created, the so-called Glagolitic alphabet, was based on the Greek uncials although it contained other signs as well to denote specific sounds in the Slavonic language. The alphabet Bulgarians use today is called "Cyrillic". Most probably it was created by the disciples of Cyril and Methodius.
Between the 10th and the 14th century Bulgaria was a vast and powerful kingdom on a par with the Byzantine Empire. It bordered on three seas: the Black, the Aegean and the Adriatic. The political and economic expansion favored the development of Bulgarian letters, fine arts and architecture. In many ways the Bulgarian culture of that period foreshadowed the rise of the European Renaissance. However, the Ottoman conquest of Bulgaria in 1396 interrupted a long and rich cultural tradition for almost half of millennium.

Bulgaria became an independent state again as late as the second half of the 19th century, after the Russo-Turkish war in 1878. Between then and 1944 Bulgaria developed as a parliamentary democracy with a thriving economy and rich cultural life. Of course, the two major crises after World I and II affected the country very seriously and changed the course of its history. This is especially true of the situation after World War II when the Soviet Union imposed a communist dictatorship in Bulgaria, which lasted almost 50 years.

In 1989 most totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe collapsed under their own weight and inefficiency. Bulgaria too shook off communism but its post-totalitarian existence has been fraught with problems: political instability, deep economic crisis, unemployment, corruption, high rate of emigration, low birth rate etc.

In August 1990, the first non-communist political leader in 40 years, Zheliu Zhelev, was elected president. Economic reforms were introduced and the new Constitution (1991) laid the
foundations of parliamentary democracy in the country. Lasting political stability was difficult to achieve, and major economic reforms proved difficult to implement. For the last 26 years Bulgaria has gone through economic ups and downs, and political power has periodically shifted between left of center and right of center formations, coalitions and governments.

Bulgaria became a member of NATO in 2004 and on January 1, 2007, the country joined the European Union.

The most recent parliamentary elections were held on March 26, 2017. The center-right GERB (Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria) party led by scoring 32.65 percent of the vote, followed by the Socialist party (BSP) was in second place with 27.20 percent, followed by the nationalist alliance United Patriots with 9.07 pct. Two more political parties are set to enter the country's next parliament - the ethnic Turkish DPS (Movement for Rights and Freedoms) party scoring 8.99 percent and populist Volya (Will) party scoring 4.15 percent.

In October 2016, Rumen Radev, a former air force commander, won the presidential elections with 59.4 percent of the vote. In 2018 Bulgaria is holding the revolving presidency of the Council of the EU for the first time.

The leading industries in the country are tourism, information technology and telecommunications, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, and textiles. Bulgaria’s main export partners are Germany, Turkey and Italy while its main import partners are Russia, Germany and Italy.
STATE SYSTEM

Bulgaria is a parliamentary republic. According to the new Constitution, which was adopted in July 1991, the entire power of the state shall derive from the people and shall be exerted directly and through the bodies established by the Constitution. The Constitution proclaims pluralism of political views and freedom of religion.

The supreme legislative body in the country is the National Assembly (Parliament). The President is the Head of the State. He/she is elected through direct and secret ballot for a five-year term of office and personifies the unity of the nation.

The Council of Ministers is the supreme executive body for domestic and foreign affairs.

The territory of the Republic of Bulgaria is divided into administrative regions and smaller municipalities. The municipality is the primary territorial administrative unit. It is a legal entity where local self-government is exercised through a municipal council elected by the community population for a four-year term of office.

MAJOR CITIES AND UNIVERSITIES

SOFIA, the capital, is the largest city with a population of 1.3 million and a focal position in the country’s economic, political and cultural life.

The University of Sofia ”St. Kliment Ohridski” is the oldest and the largest higher educational institution in Bulgaria. It was established in 1888 and today it is an important educational, academic and research center.

Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
Other prestigious institutions of higher education in Sofia are: the University of National and World Economy, the Technical University, the University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, the Medical University, the Academy of Arts, the National Academy of Music, the National Academy of Theatre and Film Arts, the New Bulgarian University, etc. The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences is the largest state-supported institution for scientific research consisting of institutes and other self-governing units in a large variety of fields.

PLOVDIV, the second largest city in Bulgaria with a population of about 339 000, is situated in the Thracian Plain in Southern Bulgaria. The city has a characteristic charm, with its ancient history and beautiful location on the Maritsa River. The University of Plovdiv was established in 1961. During the 43-year period of its existence, it has grown into a prestigious institution of higher education offering a variety of majors combined with teacher training. Other higher educational institutions are the Institute of Agriculture, the Technical University, the Medical University and the University of Food Technologies.

VARNA is the third largest city with a population of about 334 000 and is often referred to as the sea capital of Bulgaria. It is internationally famous for its seaside resorts of Zlatni Pyassatsi (Golden Sands) and Sts. Constantine and Elena. Varna is also an important university center with the following major higher educational institutions: Varna University of Economics, Varna Technical University and Varna Free University.
VELIKO TURNOVO, the medieval capital of Bulgaria, is another university town in North-Central Bulgaria, famous for its archaeological and architectural heritage. The "Sts. Cyril and Methodius" University is a well-established university in Bulgaria with over 13 000 students.

BLAGOEVGRAD, about 100 km south of Sofia, is known for the American University in Bulgaria (AUBG), founded in 1991. At AUBG English is the language of instruction and curricula and evaluation procedures follow the US academic system. Most of the faculty is American and some of the lecturers are Fulbright grantees. The University offers ten majors and fourteen minors, spanning the traditional core liberal arts programs as well as computer science and business. Another institution of higher education in Blagoevgrad, that started as a subsidiary of Sofia University and gradually became independent, is the South-West University “Neofit Rilski”.

THE BULGARIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

BULGARIAN SCHOOLS

Education in Bulgaria is mainly supported by the state through the Ministry of Education and Science. Schools can be state, municipal or private. Both pre-school and school education in Bulgaria is secular. Spreading of ideological and religious doctrines are not allowed. School education is compulsory for children from seven to sixteen years of age. All schools in the country are co-educational. The official language of instruction is Bulgarian.

A new law, regulating the pre-school and school education, has been in effect since Aug 1st, 2016. It was designed with the idea to form the foundation for a much needed educational reform. The new law changes the structure of elementary and secondary education by splitting it into the following 4 phases: primary school (1-4 grade), middle school (5-7 grade), first secondary (8-10 grade, focusing on general subject) and second secondary (11-12 grade, focusing on electives according to the school’s profile). Certificate for Elementary Education is obtained upon successful completion of grade 7, after passing 3 national external school evaluations: in Bulgarian language and literature, in mathematics and in foreign language. High
schools use grades from the Certificate for Elementary Education as a major admissions criterion. Secondary education comprises selective/comprehensive high schools and vocational schools. The admission to comprehensive schools is based upon grades from entry exams, usually in literature and/or mathematics as well as grades in middle school. Some other changes the new law has introduced are: more autonomy of schools with regards to curricula design; opportunity for private schools to receive state subsidies under certain conditions; opportunities for “dual” education in professional schools, where students in grades 11-12, along with their regular classes also receive paid work experience in their chosen profession; more opportunities for recognizing additional qualifications and specializations of teachers, reflected in a professional portfolio; more opportunities for civil, health, environmental and intercultural education for the students through specially themed classes; opportunities for schools to introduce innovative educational methods, content and organization. In addition to the new Law for Pre-School and School Education, in effect is also a new Regulation for Inclusive Education, aiming to provide equal individual support for students with special needs, students falling behind in school and especially gifted students.

Schools operate on a five-day week schedule. September 15 or the workday closest to it marks the beginning of the school year. This is a festive occasion. Many students go to school carrying bouquets of flowers for their teachers and often accompanied by their parents. The duration of the school year varies according to the school level and grade and depends on the quantity of material that needs to be covered. The school year is divided into two terms, first (Sep-Jan) and second (Feb-Jun). There are official Christmas and Easter breaks along with an inter-term (in February) and a spring break (beginning of April). The summer vacation spans from the end of the school year until September 15.

According to the new law, students grades 1-7 need to be provided with the opportunity for an all-day education at school (regular classes plus opportunities for independent or assisted studying and homework). Students from grades 8 through 12 normally spend half a day in school; the other half is used for homework and independent study at home. Some schools in big cities operate according to a two-shift scheme (morning and afternoon) because of shortage of school premises. In small towns and villages the one-shift scheme is prevalent.

The grading system is based on qualitative and quantitative indices, where 6 is otlichen (excellent), 5 is mnogo dobar (very good), 4 is dobar (good), 3 is sreden (satisfactory), and 2 is slab (poor). Passing grades are 3 through 6; 2 denotes a failure. This grading system is used for grades 2-12, while first graders are only given qualitative marks. Grading is based on written and oral testing, homework, and in-class participation. Students do not pass automatically to a higher grade level. Students from grades 1-4 who receive poor marks are assigned to a mandatory summer school program. After grade 4, students who have poor grades in more than three subjects repeat the year. In case of three or less poor grades the student has the right to take a supplementary examination; in case of failure, he/she repeats the school year. There is no passing to a higher grade on probation. Students are not allowed to repeat grades more than twice in their school career.

Textbooks are subject to contest-based writing, publication, and distribution. All Bulgarian publishing houses that meet the criteria set by the Ministry of Education and Science can compete. Textbooks are provided free of charge to all students from grades 1-7.
Bulgarian schools in general face a lot of problems in securing contemporary computer hardware, software, Internet access and office equipment. The need to update information technologies is well recognized and guidelines have been developed for their introduction. Still, relatively few computers are available, and those tend to be outdated models with inadequate performance. Due to financial difficulties, insufficient funds have been allocated for purchase of new computers and any contributions in this field come primarily from sponsors. Nevertheless, quite a few Bulgarian schools have on-line access, and teachers and students communicate electronically. Most students have smart phones.

BULGARIAN UNIVERSITIES

There are fifty-one accredited state-supported and private higher educational institutions in Bulgaria offering degrees at undergraduate and graduate level. The academic year for most Bulgarian universities begins on October 1 and consists of fall and spring semesters. The academic year covers up to 30 weeks. The teaching load of full-time faculty, depending on academic rank, ranges from six to twelve hours a week. Classes usually meet once a week for 75 minutes or for two 45-minute periods with a 15-minute break in between.

Bulgarian students are accepted to universities after taking a variety of admission tests. The students with the highest scores qualify for a fixed number of slots for the whole period of their undergraduate studies. Each semester is followed by an examination session, which lasts up to four weeks. Exams are either written or oral and are assessed by the six-grade assessment system. Students who have finished course work defend a diploma paper or take a final (state) exam. Under the Higher Education Act of 1995, university education consists of three levels: Bachelor’s, Master’s and Doctoral. Bachelor’s studies normally last four years, Master’s programs take up to two years and Doctoral programs are about four years.

Institutions of Higher Education in Bulgaria are autonomous. They are responsible for program design and quality management. The external monitoring and evaluation is under responsibilities of the National Agency for Evaluation and Accreditation.

More information on types of institutions of higher education, types of programs offered, admission, curriculum and graduation requirement can be found here: www.euroeducation.net/prof/bulgaco.htm
Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”
A GUIDE FOR FULBRIGHT ENGLISH TEACHING ASSISTANTS
AY 2018/2019

HIGHER EDUCATION

MASTER
1 Year

BACHELOR
4 Years

SPECIALIST
3 Years
Higher Professional Education - Colleges

DOCTOR
3 Years

DOCTOR
4 Years

UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL
Profile Oriented 2 Years
General Education 3 Years

UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL
Professional Technical Education 4 Years
Specialized Vocational Education 5 Years

UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL
Professional Technical Education 3 Years

BASIC EDUCATION SECOND STAGE
3 Years

BASIC EDUCATION FIRST STAGE
4 Years

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

BACHELOR
4 Years

SPECIALIST
3 Years
Higher Professional Education - Colleges

DOCTOR
3 Years

DOCTOR
4 Years

UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL
Profile Oriented 2 Years
General Education 3 Years

UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL
Professional Technical Education 4 Years
Specialized Vocational Education 5 Years

UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL
Professional Technical Education 3 Years

BASIC EDUCATION SECOND STAGE
3 Years

BASIC EDUCATION FIRST STAGE
4 Years
CUSTOMS, COURTESIES AND LIFESTYLE

MEETING AND GREETING

When meeting, Bulgarians usually shake hands. The handshake might be accompanied in formal situations by “Kak ste?” (How are you?) or “Zdraveite!” (Hello!). Friends, relatives and colleagues use the informal terms for these greetings: “Kak si?” and “Zdrasti” or “Zdravei”. People do not shake hands when saying “Dobro utro” (Good morning), “Dobur den” (Good day), “Dobur vetcher” (Good evening) or “Leka nosht” (Good night). In informal meetings Bulgarians use first names but otherwise address others by title and family name. “Gospodin” (Mr.), “Gospozha” (Mrs.) and “Gospozhitsa” (Miss) are common titles too. “Dovizhdane” (Till I see you again) is a common parting phrase. Friends might also say “Ciao” (Good-bye). Urban people do not usually greet strangers passing on the streets, but this is considered polite in rural areas. Hikers in Bulgaria usually greet each other when meeting in the woods and on mountain trails.

In conversation Bulgarians generally do not use many gestures, but what confuses most foreigners is that in Bulgaria “yes” sometimes is indicated by shaking the head from side to side, and “no” is expressed with one or two nods. To avoid confusion, it is best to not only shake or nod your head, but also say “Da” for yes, or “Ne” for no.

VISITING

Visiting is an important part of Bulgarian life. Hosting friends for afternoon coffee is popular, as is inviting them over for dinner. In addition to visiting people often socialize at cafés. Outdoor cafés provide opportunities to spend warm summer evenings chatting with friends. Hosts usually offer refreshments and hard drinks. When invited to someone’s home, it is considered good manners to bring a gift, such as a bottle of spirits, flowers (odd numbers or a bouquet), or chocolates. Inexpensive but thoughtful gifts might include a nicely-wrapped basket filled with homebaked biscuits, apple pie and/or muffins or items which are typical of your home country. Bulgarians enjoy showing hospitality to guests by engaging them in long conversations, and often get offended if guests don’t eat and drink anything. Toasting (“Nazdrave”) is done throughout a meal; people maintain eye contact when clinking glasses during a toast. Most common is the continental style of eating with the fork in the left hand and the knife in the right. Bulgarians eat pork, chicken, fish or lamb with most main dishes. Dairy products such as yoghurt and cheese are common ingredients. Meals usually are accompanied by either a soft drink, alcohol, or coffee. Espresso and Turkish-style coffee are most popular.

BULGARIAN NAMES

The complete Bulgarian name consists of a given name, a patronym, and a family name. For their given names, Bulgarians use many traditional Slavic names in addition to Christian
European names. Typically, a Bulgarian person inherits the last name of his father's family (family name), as well as a patronymic based on his father's given name, with a gender-agreeing suffix usually added. For example, Milen Ivanov Petrov would be the son of Ivan Petrov. The same person's daughter would bear the names Ivanova Petrova. When marrying, today a woman may choose either to adopt her husband's family name, retain her maiden name or combine the two using a hyphen.

Most Bulgarian surnames end with "–ov/–ev" (masculine) and "–ova/–eva" (feminine) suffixes. The second most popular suffix is "–ski/–ska" (sometimes "–ki/–ka") (e.g. Zelenogorski, Stamboliiski, Sofianski).

There is also a plural form used when referring to the family as a whole or several members of it (as opposed to a single member). For "–ov/–ova" and "–ev/–eva" it is "–ovi/–evi", for "–ski/–ska" it is "–ski".

The celebration of name days is an important Bulgarian tradition. Unlike most of the old customs, this one has been preserved throughout the generations and is widely-spread today. The keeping of name days comes mostly from the Orthodox Christian religion and its saints. In the past, when the Christianity was establishing itself as a main religion in Bulgaria, the people started naming their children after the saints from this calendar. They believed that the child named after a certain saint will be looked after and blessed by him. Everyone named after that specific saint, or whose name is similar/somehow related has cause for celebration, similar to a birthday celebration. For example, on the day of St. Arhangel Mihail (November 8), it is not only Mihail who celebrates, but also Angel, Angelina, Arhangel, Gavrail, Gavril, Emil, Emilia, Emiliana, Mihaela, Ognyan, Ognyana, Plamen, Plamen, Rada, Radka, Radko, Rafail, Raia, Raina, Rangel, Radoslav, Radostina, etc.

Some name days are associated with certain specific traditions. For example, on St. Nickola's Day (December 6) a stuffed carp has to be cooked and served at dinner, while on St. George's Day (May 6) a lamb must be prepared.

Those who celebrate their name day should be greeted with “Честит имен ден” (Chestit imen den, Happy Name Day).

SMOKING

In line with EU policies to create a smoke-free environment across Europe, in 2012 Bulgaria adopted a new law banning smoking in public places. The ban aims to decrease the number of active and passive smokers.

However, the ban on smoking has not resulted in a dramatic reduction in the number of smokers. Recent statistics show that about 36% of Bulgarian adults smoke.
DRESS CODES

In general, Bulgarians are well-dressed and promptly follow fashions from Europe and the US. On special occasions they wear formal clothes, but most of the time they prefer to dress casually.

BUSINESS HOURS AND PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Offices are open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. in most cases, but private shops often have extra hours. Some close by noon on Saturday, and many are closed on Sunday, especially in smaller towns.

Public holidays are given in appendix III. The most festive period stretches from Christmas Eve to New Year’s Day and Orthodox Easter is one of the most significant religious holidays in Bulgaria.

BULGARIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

Bulgarians were converted to Christianity in 865 by Knyaz (King) Boris I through the mediation of the Byzantine Church in Constantinople.

The Bulgarian state became very powerful in the 10th century. In 927 Constantinople recognized the king as Emperor of the Bulgarians and the Archbishop of Preslav as their Patriarch. But the Byzantines were gaining strength in the Bulgarian State and the Church fell under Byzantine control. Independence was regained in 1186 and lasted until the late 14th century, when Bulgaria fell under Ottoman domination for nearly five centuries. The struggle for an independent Bulgarian church, started late in the 18th century, and culminated in the establishment of a Bulgarian exarchate in 1870. During the period of communist rule, which began in 1944, the government assigned a very passive role to the Bulgarian church. The political transition that occurred in Eastern Europe in the 1990s re-established the authority of the church, also guaranteed by the new Constitution of 1991. The current patriarch, Neophyte, was elected in February 2013.

About 6.7 million Bulgarians, 85 percent of the population, are officially registered as belonging to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. The church
has 12 dioceses and more than 2,000 priests. A theological academy in Sofia and minor seminaries train candidates for the priesthood. The church publishes a weekly newspaper, and a monthly periodical.

**BULGARIAN MONASTERIES**

Bulgarian monasteries are closely connected with the history of the Bulgarian state. From the very start, monasteries gained great importance as centers of Bulgarian literature and culture and preservers of national identity during difficult times.

Among the largest and most interesting monasteries are: Rila Monastery, Bachkovo Monastery, Troyan monastery, Dryanovo Monastery, Sokolski Monastery, Glozhene Monastery, Aladja Monastery, Zemen Monastery, etc.

More information about the monasteries in Bulgaria can be obtained from www.bulgarianmonastery.com

BULGARIAN FESTIVALS, CUSTOMS AND POPULAR BELIEFS
Considering the rich cultural, ethnographic and historical heritage of Bulgaria, there are hundreds of rites, rituals, festivals and celebrations across the country that are worth experiencing.

The Bulgarians are talented singers and composers. The remarkable range of the Bulgarian voice and the variety of folk songs has been recognized worldwide. The popular "Izlel e Delyu hiadutin" from the Rhodope Mountains sung by the renowned singer Valya Balkanska was placed on a gold record and sent to outer space on the Voyager in 1977. For its small size, Bulgaria has always had a remarkable number of world famous opera singers, classical musicians, music directors and composers, such as Boris Christoff, Ghena Dimitrova, Nicolai Ghiaurov, Nicola Ghiuselev, Raina Kabaivanska, Alexandrina Pendatchanska, Vasko Vassilev, Yordan Kamdzhalov and many more.

Folklore festivals are periodically held in the town of Koprivshtitsa, the small village of Gela in the Rhodope Mountains, the region of Blagoevgrad in the Pirin Mountain, etc. Artists from all over Bulgaria meet and demonstrate their performing skills. Not only musicians take part in the event – dancers, story tellers, folk custom groups participate too. The fests are also open to foreign groups illustrating Bulgarian folk dances and traditions.
The Festival of Roses is a lovely festival celebrated in the Rose Valley near the town of Kazanluk (at the foot of the Balkan Range) on the first weekend of June every year. The festival is a pageant of beauty in the unique Rose Valley. In the run-up of the event, a Queen Rose beauty contest is held in several rounds. Artists, actors, circus performers, writers and singers flock to Kazanluk at the start of June. The Bulgarian oleaginous rose yields 70 percent of the world's attar of roses used by most perfume companies as an essential component of their products. Experts claim that Bulgarian roses and rose oil owe their unique properties to the local climate and the generous soil.

The Kukeri (mummers) Festival held in the region of Dupnitsa and Pernik is a splendid festival of brightly colored masks and costumes which marks the beginning of the spring. Every participant makes his own multi-coloured personal mask, covered with beads, ribbons and woollen tassels. The heavy swaying of the main mummer is meant to represent wheat heavy with grain, and the bells tied around the waist are intended to drive away the evil spirits and the sickness.

Fire dancing is the most ancient mysterious ritual - barefooted dancers performing on burning embers. This religious and mystical ritual for expelling illness, for health and fruitfulness is still performed in some villages in southeast Bulgaria by people called Nestinari on the day of Sts. Constantine and Helen (May 21).

A popular spring celebration takes place at the beginning of March, when Bulgarians exchange red-and-white yarn designs called “martenitsa” that symbolize health. People wear the yarn designs on their clothing or on their hand (if it is in the form of a bracelet) until they see a blossoming tree and they tie the “martenitsa” on a tree branch.
Along with official rituals, some popular beliefs still exist in the more conservative parts of Bulgarian society. Those often encountered by foreigners are that flowers should be given in odd numbers as even numbers are meant only for funerals, putting a handbag on the floor would result in the owner losing money, and any bread on the table is always placed the right side up; bread left upside down will bring nothing but poverty. Seeing a chimney sweep might mean bucket loads of good luck, according to some; others believe that when you leave the house, you’d better go with the right foot first, otherwise you will be running into bad luck the whole day. An itchy left hand means that money is coming your way, whereas an itchy right palm means that you will be paying money out. Rather than touch wood, in Bulgaria you knock on wood three times, but its best to do this under the table so that the devil can’t hear.

Products of traditional applied crafts are also something worth seeing: Bulgarian embroidery with its intricate geometrical figures, Bulgarian rugs and carpets with their vibrant colours, exquisitely painted Bulgarian ceramics, or finely ornamented Bulgarian wood carvings. The Samovodene Market in Veliko Turnovo, the Permanent National Exhibition of Folk Art in Oreshak near Troyan and the Etura architectural and ethnographic complex near Gabrovo are all original museums of the revived beauty of Bulgarian handicrafts.
GOING TO BULGARIA

SOURCES OF PRELIMINARY INFORMATION

Most foreigners enjoy their stay in Bulgaria, although the first days of adjustment might require flexibility and open-mindedness. Bear in mind, however, that the Fulbright experience of each grantee is as universal as it is unique, especially in a situation, which is constantly changing, hopefully for the better. Of course, it is helpful to read the final reports of previous grantees. They will give you some idea about what to expect and how to prepare for your stay in Bulgaria. If you are a lecturer, it is important to find out from your host university department or institute as precisely as possible what you will be teaching and what texts and resource materials are already there.

Another indispensable source of information is the Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission, which provides pre-departure materials for each U.S. grantee and conducts orientation in Sofia prior to the beginning of the academic year.

The Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange was established in February 1993 under a bi-national agreement between the United States of America and the Republic of Bulgaria signed in September 1992. It consists of ten members. Five of them are citizens of the United States and five are citizens of the Republic of Bulgaria. The Chief of the Diplomatic Mission of the United States of America to the Republic of Bulgaria and the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria serve as Honorary Co-Chairmen of the Commission. The Commission has a staff of ten:

- **Angela Rodel**, Executive Director
  E-mail: arodel@fulbright.bg

- **Anastasia Miteva**, Financial Officer
  E-mail: amiteva@fulbright.bg

- **Tania Petrova**, Cashier
  E-mail: tpetrova@fulbright.bg

- **Maria Kostova**, Program Officer, Bulgarian Grantees
  E-mail: mkostova@fulbright.bg

- **Rada Kaneva**, Program Officer, U.S. Grantees
  E-mail: rkaneva@fulbright.bg

- **Iliana Dimitrova**, Program Officer, ETA Program
  E-mail: idimitrova@fulbright.bg

- **Snejana Teneva**, Educational Adviser
  E-mail: steneva@fulbright.bg

- **Adrian Zlatanov**, Fulbright Testing Center (TOEFL, SAT, GRE)
  E-mail: stcssofia@fulbright.bg

- **Lira Konstantinova**, Fulbright Testing Center (TOEFL, SAT, GRE)
  E-mail: stcssofia@fulbright.bg
As of June 2016, the Commission's head office has moved to 12, Vitosha Blvd., occupying the 5th floor of the building.

Office hours - 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Monday - Friday
Visiting hours – 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Monday - Friday
Tel.: (359 2) 981 8567, (359 2) 980 8211, (359 2) 980 8212; Fax: (359 2) 988 4517
E-mail: fulbright@fulbright.bg; web: www.fulbright.bg

www.facebook.com/fulbright.bulgaria

@FulbrightBG

www.youtube.com/user/BulgariaFulbright

bg.linkedin.com/in/fulbrightbulgaria

www.instagram.com/fulbrightbulgaria

You are welcome to the Commission during visiting hours. You are well advised to arrange visits by appointment at any other time because of security regulations in the building.

Sources of information in the U.S. are our contact agencies – the Council for International Exchange of Scholars (CIES) and the Institute of International Education (IIE). Our regional portfolio manager at the IIE is Kristina Hestvik:

**Kristina A. Hestvik**
Regional Portfolio Manager, Europe and Eurasia
Institute of International Education
809 United Nations Plaza • New York, NY 10017
Tel +1.212.984.5455
khestvik@iie.org • iie.org

In Appendix I you will find a list of books about Bulgaria. Most of them are available on Amazon.com, and are a great way to gain some background knowledge about the country and its people. Also, the U.S. Department of State provides comprehensive country Background Notes online. The ones for Bulgaria are posted at http://www.state.gov/p/eur/ci/bu/

**PREPARATION FOR WORKING IN BULGARIA**

Any resources you can bring will be greatly appreciated by your colleagues. If you have movies, songs, magazines, or books in English that are appropriate for the grade level you are about to teach, this will allow you more creativity in planning lessons. Items related to cultural topics, such as Halloween or Thanksgiving, are quite relevant. Depending upon your previous experience, a textbook on teaching English as a foreign language may be useful as you encounter opportunities to offer conversation or grammar classes to students. Your school will provide you with textbooks, dictionaries and other resources, but you may find it useful to bring
native speaker texts that are age-level appropriate. Textbooks, specifically on English literature, may also be useful for finding short stories and plays. Pictures, postcards, and tourism information from your local town and state are of great value for helping the students to get to know you and develop an interest in the United States.

You can familiarize yourself with some website resources to help with lesson planning and methodology, such as:

www.americanenglish.state.gov
www.sparknotes.com
www.cliffsnotes.com
www.bardweb.net
www.teachingenglish.org.uk
www.sitesforteachers.com
www.alison.com/learn/teacher-resources
www.mooc-list.com
https://oelp.uoregon.edu/shaping
www.webenglishteacher.com
www.60secondrecap.com
www.abcteach.com
www.edutopia.org
www.enchantedlearning.com
https://www.fluentu.com/blog/educator-english/

PREPARATION FOR DEPARTURE

ENTRY VISA

U.S. nationals have the right to enter and reside in the Republic of Bulgaria for a period of no more than three months in any six-month period from the date of the first entry, without needing to have a Bulgarian short-stay visa.

An entry visa is required for Bulgaria for visits exceeding 90 days.

Important:
Fulbrighters should obtain entry visas type D prior to their arrival in Bulgaria. Please make sure you inform the Embassy/Consulate officers that you are applying for a long term, multiple entry visa commensurate with the regulations laid out in Article 15, Paragraph 2 of the Bulgaria’s Foreigners’ Act. Accompanying family members can apply for the same type of visa by presenting in addition a marriage or birth certificate proving their relationship to the grantee. For under-aged children travelling with only one parent/trustee, along with the birth certificate it is necessary to present an original and a photocopy of a power of attorney notary certified by both parents/trustees or by one parent/trustee that they agree their child to travel unaccompanied by them. Presenting a Clear Criminal Record Certificate is not required for this type of visa.

Visas are subject to special approval and grantees must apply in person at least 2 months in advance at the appointed Consulate Office (in Washington D.C., New York, Chicago or Los Angeles). Please note that no exception shall be made from the requirement for personal interview when applying for a long-stay visa. For more information visit: www.mfa.bg
The application for issuing a long-stay visa is submitted only in the diplomatic and consular missions at the permanent place of residence of the applicant or the missions accredited in the state of the applicant’s permanent residence. Persons staying legally in a third country, different from the country of their permanent residence, may, as an exception, apply in this third country after explaining the reasons thereof and if their return to the state of permanent residence is guaranteed.

Grantees are personally responsible for obtaining a passport and a long stay visa. The grant does not provide for expenses related to travel to the Consulate Office, processing fees, or penalty fees should travel plans be changed due to inability to obtain visa on time.

When applying for the issue of a long-stay visa, the applicant should present the following documents:

- visa application form (www.mfa.bg)
- a regular foreign travel document (international passport);
- copy of the passport's personal data page, and copy of previous visa(s) to Bulgaria (if any);
- recent passport-size color photograph;
- original documents and two copies thereof substantiating the application for a long-stay visa (the Grant Authorization Document issued by the Fulbright Commission and the supporting letter in Bulgarian);
- medical insurance valid for the EU member states for the whole period of the trip, covering all costs for repatriation and for urgent medical care and emergency hospital treatment for the period of the stay indicated in the visa. The insurance amount cannot be less than 30 thousand euro (the USDOS ASPE Insurance Card, issued by the Commission and a letter from Dept. of State, confirming coverage amount);
- proof of housing (letter in Bulgarian provided by the host-school, secured by the Commission).

In order to obtain permission for extended stay in the country, Fulbright grantees should present proof of housing arrangement, or at least confirmation for hotel booking for their first days in Bulgaria.

According to the bi-national agreement between the Republic of Bulgaria and the USA, visa issuance for Fulbright grantees is free of charge (agreement is published in the official State Gazette, issue 71, article 9)

**Important:**
As of April 30, 2001 Bulgaria is a member to the Apostille section of The Hague Convention. Any official document (power of attorney, affidavit, birth, death and marriage certificates and other legal papers) issued in the USA and to be used in Bulgaria, needs to be certified with the special stamp called "apostille", and translated into Bulgarian. Documents can be translated by one of the official translators appointed at the Consulate General that is in charge of your State.

Visas type D are non-extendable and non-renewable. If for any reason a grantee has been issued another type of visa, valid for a shorter period of time than the one stated in the grant document, an application for visa extension should be filed right after arrival. Such applications are handled by the Migration Directorate at the local police office. We strongly
recommend you to mention specifically that you apply for visa under article 15, paragraph 2 from the Bulgaria’s Foreigner’s Act, which is valid for one year.

Upon entry in Bulgaria all foreign nationals, except EU citizens, are required to fill out a form /at the respective point of entry/ providing information about the purpose of their travel to Bulgaria and the address of stay in the country. **Within two days from arrival, all foreigners who are not staying in a hotel should be registered with the local police by the person they are staying with.**

**TRAVEL**

Grantees should make travel arrangements in conjunction with the start period of their grant and the respective orientation program organized by the Commission in Bulgaria. The grant provides a one-time travel and relocation allowance, which is given as a lump sum and can be used for the round-trip ticket, excess baggage, hotel accommodation, and other travel-related expenses. The first grant payment is normally transferred close to the departure date, so it is possible to purchase the ticket in advance with personal funds in order to get a cheaper rate and more convenient route.

Since travel funds for the Fulbright ETA program are secured through the „America for Bulgaria” Foundation, rather than the U.S. Government, ETAs to Bulgaria are not required to adhere to the Fly America Act. ETAs can purchase their in- and outbound flight tickets with any carrier available.

### Important:
Coverage of your ASPE (Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges) health benefit plan begins at the time you depart from the U.S. and continues until you return to the U.S. Please note that this travel benefit is only valid when you travel directly to and from Bulgaria - immediately prior to and after a USDOS exchange program. This includes coverage for any allowed layover of up to 24 hours if the travel time by the most direct route exceeds 14 hours. If you are planning to have extended layovers anywhere on your way to or from Bulgaria, please make sure you purchase additional travel insurance.

All Fulbrighters should register with the U.S. Department of State through the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) and make sure that they provide their contact information in their host countries. Travel registration is a free service and it enables the Department of State to assist you in the case of an emergency. The registration can be completed online at: https://step.state.gov/step/

**PACKING**

There are many shopping malls, techno markets, grocery stores and pharmacies in Bulgaria, so it is not a huge problem to find the basic household appliances, electronic goods, clothing, make-up, medicines, etc. It is best to pack light, in order to avoid charges for excess luggage. If you bring electrical appliances, don’t forget there is difference in the electric current used in Bulgaria. Household voltage is normally 220 volts, 50 cycles, with European tubular prongs on plugs. Most appliances made in the U.S., on the other hand, run on 110-volt, 60-cycles.
Almost all modern technological devices like laptops, digital cameras and MP3 players have a universal power adapter and can convert the 110-volt to 220-volt current. Things like travel hair dryers and irons have built-in converters that you can switch to another system. Inspect all these items carefully to make sure they are prepared to work on 220 volts, 50 cycles. Appliances built for 110-volts without a universal power adapter will need two things to run adequately on 220 current: a transformer (which actually changes the voltage of the electrical current going into the appliance) and an adapter plug (which simply puts a new "head" on the appliance's plug so that it will fit into the electrical outlet). Make sure you specify that you need a transformer and an adapter for continental Europe. The adapters for the U.K. are different. Do not buy a cheap transformer; it can blow out the device itself and cause further damage in your apartment. Adapters can be purchased in Bulgaria, but you may have a difficult time trying to find them. Bring some extras from home, and make sure they have a ground. It is dangerous to use a two-prong adapter that ignores the ground.

What you do need to bring from home are the important documents /marriage or birth certificates for dependents, insurance documents, copy of your Fulbright grant document, etc./ and good supplies of familiar medicines or prescription drugs that you may be taking. If you wear glasses or contact lenses, it would be practical to bring an extra pair of glasses or a stock of disposable lenses.

Bulgarians work mostly with PC, so if you have a Mac and you plan to do PowerPoint presentations it is a good idea to bring a Mac adapter to connect to a projector.

While you can buy a wide variety of clothing and shoes in Bulgaria, it may take some time to find plus or petite sizes and shoes with wide or narrow width. It is advisable to bring two pair of comfortable shoes and several sets of clothing suitable for the seasons you will be spending in the country.

You may wish to bring some gifts from the US to give to your new colleagues, or some seasoning and spices to use for cooking; just make sure that what you pack is allowed to be imported in the European Union.

ARRIVAL IN THE COUNTRY

Please, send to the Commission precise information about your travel itinerary well in advance. If your flight has a major delay and you cannot arrive in time for hotel check-in or for the start of the orientation program, please call or send a text message to notify your program officer about that.

Iliana Dimitrova – cell: +359 879 341576
Rada Kaneva – cell: +359 879 918212

At the airport you will go through passport control. After passport control, you should pick up your baggage and fill in a customs declaration in which you should declare in writing money/ travellers checks (if the amount exceeds 20,000 levs - BGN) and valuable items like gold, platinum, expensive jewellery and/or expensive technical equipment you are bringing with you. Be sure that the customs official inspects, signs, and stamps the customs declaration, and returns it to you. Keep it in a safe place, as you will need to surrender it to a customs official.
upon leaving Bulgaria (and fill in a new one each time you return) if you have valuable items or money to declare.

Note that if you import a new, unused item which costs over USD 1,000, it must be accompanied by an invoice. If you indicate in your customs declaration that the item will be exported on your departure, you will have to prove it on leaving the country. It is recommendable not to carry newly packed personal effects in order to avoid formalities. Please note that the duty rate is 25% of the retail price of the respective imported item. The law applies to items, which will remain in Bulgaria.

N.B. Please read the information about customs regulations at the board in the baggage claim area of Sofia airport.

**Taxi from Sofia Airport:**

On both terminals of Sofia airport there are taxi stands representing official local companies. Grantees are strongly advised to book a taxi from the official booths inside the building of the terminal. If you go out of the building to the long line of waiting yellow cars, or if someone in the lobby offers you taxi services, you will be overcharged. Taxi ride to Sofia city centre usually costs 7-12 USD (10 – 17 leva). The fare must be displayed on the window of each cab – it is about 0.79/0.90 leva per kilometer (day/night). Representatives of companies that do not have a contract with Sofia airport can charge 3, 4, 5 – up to 10 leva per kilometer.

As of April 2, 2015 the metro serves Sofia Airport, so you can easily get to the city center in about 15 minutes and for the standard ticket price in Sofia. Tickets can be issued either by a cashier, or by a vending machine. Please note that you have the right to transport two pieces of luggage for free if the total dimensions do not exceed 140 centimetres. If you carry more than two pieces of luggage, or if your bags are larger than 60x40x40 centimetres you will need a standard ticket for each additional or bulkier piece. This rule applies to the whole public transportation system in Sofia (buses, trams, and trolley buses). Sofia Airport provides free-of-charge transportation services between Terminal 1 and Terminal 2 every 30 minutes between Sofia Metro Station.
07:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. The metro trains on the route to the airport operate from 5:30 a.m. to midnight on weekdays and weekends/holidays.

---

**YOUR STAY IN BULGARIA**

---

**GENERAL TIPS**

Most Fulbright grantees enjoy their stay in Bulgaria, although the initial period of adjustment may take some time on account of cultural differences and some economic difficulties the country still faces.

Shopping, the trip to work and back may take more time than you are probably used to. It is advisable to show flexibility and open-mindedness so as to avoid stress, at least in the beginning. After you arrive, it is advisable that you get information about locations for meeting/events in both English and Bulgarian/Cyrillic. Also get the phone number of an English-speaking colleague. That will allow people on the street to assist you in finding your location — even if they don’t speak English. Setting up a cell phone service immediately after arrival will be of great help. You can buy a relatively inexpensive cell phone in Bulgaria. Obtaining a phone locally will keep you from losing all of the information stored in your U.S. phone, but if you have an unlocked US phone that you don't use it would be easiest to bring it along.

Please note that the electric current is 220V/50Hz. You will need both adapters and transformers to make U.S. electrical appliances work. Get these items before you leave the US or it may take you a long time to locate them in Bulgaria. Also carry a power strip so that you can plug in multiple devices.

**LANGUAGE**

Being able to speak the language is the easiest way to become integrated into Bulgarian life. Your ability to express yourself will determine how you will be treated by the people you meet - from your neighbors, to academic peers and archive staff, and will be taken as a measure of your interest in and knowledge of the country. Being able to ask your way around and understand instructions will increase your confidence and mobility. Many people speak English in larger cities, but this is not the case in smaller towns and villages.

For the first time this year, we will be launching an online summer program for Bulgarian language study, developed specifically for Fulbright grantees by our instructors, Radost Sabeva and Zhana Zagorova, who will also be leading the intensive Bulgarian language and culture course during our Orientation in Sofia (Sep 1-11, 2018). Both Radost and Zhana are former Peace Corps instructors with a lot of experience in teaching Bulgarian to speakers of other languages.

Fulbright scholars, students and teaching assistants also receive USD 500 as part of their grant to facilitate the study of the language throughout the academic year. Contact persons,
mentor teachers, former grantees, and for Sofia – the Fulbright Commission can assist you in finding a private tutor or recommend a course.

If you decide to look at other BG language courses, former grantees have recommended the University of Pittsburgh Summer Language Institute (www.slavic.pitt.edu) summer course, and the following on-line courses: www.verbalplanet.com/learn-bulgarian.asp; www.mastylo.net, and www.easybulgarian.com.

Live Lingua (www.livelingua.com/project/peace-corps/Bulgarian/) have made available US Peace Corps Bulgarian resources for you to use free of charge. You can read Bulgarian eBooks online, listen to Bulgarian audios and practice your Bulgarian pronunciation with their online recorder or download the files to use whenever you want.

Once in the country, most popular are the courses offered by the Department of Language Learning of Sofia University (www.deo.uni-sofia.bg); the Bulgarian Language Summer School of New Bulgarian University (blss.nbu.bg), the Bulgarian language courses of the University of Veliko Turnovo (www.uni-vt.bg), and the Bulgarian Culture Summer School of Plovdiv University (http://logos.uniplovdiv.net/en/field-summer-school).

Some knowledge of Bulgarian history and culture will also help your adjustment. A bibliography of useful background texts is given at the end of this handbook.

HOUSING

As of 2013 providing housing to the ETA free of charge is one of the requirements for host-schools in order for them to participate in the Fulbright ETA program. As school budgets and municipal support vary in each town, there inevitably will be differences in accommodations provided to ETAs in different placements. For some schools allocating funds to cover apartment-related costs can be a real challenge, so please consider the fact that having free accommodation is a privilege most of your predecessors have not had the chance to enjoy.

Your apartment should be furnished with the basics (bed, wardrobe, table and chairs, sofas etc.) and equipped with working household items and appliances, such as a stove, a washing machine, a refrigerator, a vacuum cleaner, heating units. You might only need to spend part of your travel and relocation allowance on some additional furnishing which will make your life more comfortable and pleasant. Covering utility costs is a responsibility of the ETA.

We ask that the apartment location is close to the school or the city center but this may not always be possible. If unhappy with your apartment for any reason, please talk to your school’s administration first. If the school’s budget does not allow your hosts to offer you another option, you are free to find another apartment on your own. Please keep in mind that in this case you will need to assume all responsibilities related to your move expenses, utilities and rent payments.

Once you move into your new apartment, you should check with your mentor-teacher or landlord how and where you your bills are to be paid. Ask if there are any additional fees, for example for building upkeep. Ask to be introduced to some of your neighbors.
Please note that as of this year ETAs are no longer allowed to keep pets in school-provided apartments.

UTILITIES

Utility costs in Bulgaria may seem low for the foreign visitors, but they can get significantly higher in the winter months due to the high costs of central heating and electricity, as well as the poor insulation and low energy efficiency of the buildings. Pay attention to any notices in Bulgarian left on your front door or the main entrance and check with neighbors what they mean. A couple of times a year you will be required to provide access to the water and heat meters in your apartment to representatives of the respective companies. The water meters are usually in the bathroom and kitchen and there should be a meter on each central heating radiator in the house. You will also need to sign on the book after the person has recorded the reading. Failure to provide access to the meters will result in the companies calculating an average amount for you to pay, which may be higher than your real consumption.

The night tariff for electricity is lower, so it makes sense to postpone the start of your washing machine or water heater for later in the evening. During winter the night tariff starts at 10:00 PM till 6:00 AM, and in summer - 11:00 PM till 7:00 AM. Paying your utility bills can mean going to various offices each month but there are ways to make things simpler. You could arrange with your landlord to do this for you and present you with the receipts. You can also pay electronically via the secure online system ePay, or in cash through Fexopay, the international service of the Bulgarian company Easypay, a money transfer services company with offices across the country, where you can register to pay all your utility bills with just one visit.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

OVERALL INFORMATION ON CRIME IN BULGARIA

According to OSAC’s crime and safety report on Bulgaria for 2018, “Bulgaria is a relatively stable country with few specific threats targeting American citizens, businesses, or organizations…. The Ministry of Interior (MOI) reported a 3.8% decrease in all registered crimes in 2017 compared to 2016. In 2017, 44.4% of cases were resolved, compared to 41.2% in 2016. According to the MOI, since 2000 the majority of incidents involving U.S. citizens were economic, including ATM skimming, credit card fraud, theft, robbery, and motor vehicle theft. The volume and the type of reported incidents suggest that Americans are not being targeted as a nationality. The MOI has launched an outreach campaign targeting crimes against tourists, allocating additional resources and training for officers on the Black Sea coast and in winter resorts during tourist seasons.” For more detailed information on crime threats, theft, car theft, cybercrime, road safety, organized crime, environmental concern as well as political, economic, religious, and ethnic violence and corresponding statistics please follow this link to the report on Bulgaria by the Bureau of Diplomatic Security by the US Department of State.
For the latest security information, Americans travelling abroad can regularly monitor the Department’s Internet web site at travel.state.gov where the current Travel Advisories, and other useful announcements, are published.

Once in Bulgaria, grantees are advised to exercise caution and use common sense as they would in any other country. A special joint session of the Fulbright Commission and the American Embassy in Sofia will address personal safety and country security issues as part of the in-country orientation training (Sep 1-11). Grantees will have the opportunity to meet embassy officials, ask questions and learn more about the services and resources available to American citizens in Bulgaria.

In the case of a first-hand experience with crime in Bulgaria, grantees are strongly advised to inform the police immediately. Contacting your mentor teacher, the Fulbright Commission and the U.S. Embassy (through the 24-hour US citizens’ hotline: (359) 2 937 5101) as soon as possible will ensure that the case receives adequate attention and is handled professionally.

**EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION**

During an emergency in Bulgaria, dial **112** (the European equivalent of 911). You will be re-directed to an English-speaking operator if you require Fire, Ambulance or Police Assistance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact People at the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ms. Angela Rodel</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Executive Director</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ms. Iliana Dimitrova</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program Officer, ETA Program</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ms. Rada Kaneva</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program Officer, US Grantees</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**U.S. Embassy Sofia**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main phone number: +359-2-937-5100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency/Hotline: +359-2-937-5101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The American Citizen Services (ACS) Unit is located at:

American Embassy
16, Kozyak
1408 Sofia
Telephone: (359) 02 937 5100 (from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.); (359) 2 937 5101 (after-hour emergencies)
Email: ACS_Sofia@state.gov
GENERAL SAFETY ADVICE WHILE IN BULGARIA

- Be aware that as a foreigner you may stand out in a crowd, especially in smaller towns and villages. Remove airline tags and other identification from your bags, briefcases, etc.
- Avoid exchanging money in the street: there are numerous legal money exchange shops (under the sign "Change"). It is advisable to keep your U.S. and Bulgarian money separate. Keep your U.S. passport in a safe place and carry a copy instead of the original document.
- Build a network of people in your town with whom you keep in touch regularly and whom you can trust. Smile at the grocery shop owner, greet the shoemaker, and exchange a few words in Bulgarian with the man at the bakery. Bulgarians have a strong sense of community and will happily look after you or watch over your property, pets and plants when you are traveling.
- Do not be overly polite to strangers. In unfamiliar circumstances do not be too approachable. Do not trust people who you barely know to take you sightseeing or partying. If you consume alcohol, do so in moderation, and do not leave your beverage unattended or accept a drink from an open container. If you suddenly feel strange or dizzy, inform someone you trust immediately and let them take you to a safe place.
- Do not allow yourself to be isolated with a person you do not know or trust - travel with a friend/in a group. If going on a date with someone you do not know very well, meet in a public place and share your plans with a friend and have them call/check on you. Always have extra money to get home.
- Do not become complacent in your routine. Routine allows criminals to target you and catch you by surprise.
- Do not carry valuable items with you. In the event that someone demands your wallet/purse or camera, do not resist. Try to get a good description of the assailant(s). If attacked, flee and call 112 immediately.
- Carrying pepper spray with you can give you a sense of security when walking on your own. Please always be aware that in the case of an attack it can end up being used against you.
- Many towns in Bulgaria suffer from an overpopulation of stray dogs. If approached by barking dogs, do not run or make sudden movements and do not turn your back on them. If riding a bike – get off it and stand calmly facing the dogs. If not aggravated further, they will likely leave in a few minutes. Pretending to pick up a rock from the ground sometimes scares them away. Pepper spray, a dog whistle or other means of self-defense can be used as a last resort. If bitten by a stray dog, please consult a doctor as soon as possible. The usual treatment includes antibiotics and a tetanus injection, and in rare cases - anti-rabies injection.
- If driving, keep your car doors locked and suitcases/handbags out of sight.
• Be aware that pickpockets in crowds can be men, women, or children, operating alone or in groups. They may use any ploy to divert your attention while stealing your wallet or passport. Pickpockets “work” at airports and train stations and ride public transport known to take tourists to popular visiting sites.

• Act and present yourself with confidence when in public places such as bus or train stations, airports, tourist sites. You are less likely to become a target if you seem to know what you are doing.

• Plan ahead when traveling and try to have back-up copies of important documents as well as money. For example keep one copy of your passport and ticket in your purse and one in your checked in luggage.

• Inform the Commission, as well as your host-institution contacts of your whereabouts and planned travel. Provide additional contact information, when possible (hotel address, phone number etc.).

• Take control of your personal safety. Act under the assumption that you are on your own. Think about what you will do if caught in a bad situation. Envision the scenarios and your reactions. Trust your instincts. If something doesn’t feel right in a situation, leave immediately and get to a place where you feel safe.

• Keep yourself informed about parts of towns that local inhabitants consider risky; if you are out alone at night, avoid secluded, poorly lit areas. Keep your keys, cell phone and money on your person in case your hand bag gets snatched. Keep your cell phone charged.

• Learn how to use the phone system. Do not wait until an emergency comes along to figure it out. Have important contacts and information memorized or written somewhere safe as a back-up (in an email, in a note book at home), in case your phone is stolen.

• Be aware that telephone scams and other ploys are widely popular in Bulgaria right now. While their usual victims are gullible elderly people, be careful if you receive a phone call from someone crying and claiming they just had an accident or if approached by a child asking you to take them to an address written on a piece of paper.

• If you suspect that someone is following you, do not go straight home. Stop by a coffee shop or a grocery instead, or take a taxi. If the person is still around and looks suspicious, call someone you trust and ask them to take you home or call the police. Do not confront the stranger if alone.

• Be sure to register with the local U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

SAFETY PROCEDURES IN SPECIFIC SITUATIONS

LOSS OR THEFT OF IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS
Grantees are advised to keep scanned copies of their passports in their e-mail accounts.

If a theft occurs in the country:

• Inform your program officer about the loss or theft.
- Make sure to go to the nearest police station to report the loss or theft of your important documents. Upon submitting the necessary declaration, you need to make sure you are given a receipt with a number, which will be required later for the re-issuing of your Bulgarian visa.
- Call the U.S. Embassy American Citizens Service to renew your passport.
- Check with the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission how to re-issue your Bulgarian visa.

If you are out of the country:

- Inform your program officer about the loss or theft.
- Make sure to go to the nearest police station to report the loss or theft of your important documents.
- Visit the U.S. Embassy / Consulate to report the loss or theft of your documents.
- Renew your passport.
- Visit or call the Bulgarian Embassy / Consulate to report the loss or theft of your passport containing a Bulgarian long-stay visa.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexual advance, request for a sexual favor, or other verbal, non-verbal, online or physical conduct of a sexual nature. It may include behaviors such as: unwanted deliberate touching or pinching; unwanted sexual looks and gestures; unwanted pressure for dates; unwanted sexual teasing or jokes, inappropriate questions of a sexual nature; inappropriate discussions of a sexual nature at work; pornography in your school or office; being followed or stalked.

Please be aware that behaviors that might be construed as sexual harassment in the U.S. are not necessarily considered as such in Bulgaria. This may be due in part to cultural differences, unfamiliarity with or confusion over cultural signs and cues, or lack of fluency in the language of communication. Communicate openly with your Bulgarian acquaintances and co-workers so that they understand what is acceptable to you and try to be consistent. If someone is being persistent, set limits, be assertive and insist on being treated with respect. Do not sacrifice your personal safety, security or comfort zone.

If you are exposed to sexual harassment:

Contact the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission immediately. Your complaint will be taken seriously; you will not be blamed or labelled as a trouble-maker.
- Your safety is the most important issue for the Commission. Inform your program officer as soon as possible and provide as much as information as you can.
- If a grantee reports a sexual harassment incident, the Commission will investigate the situation and contact the host institution. Legal procedures will be investigated and pursued if necessary.
- If the grantee is in immediate danger and needs to be taken to a safe place, the commission and/or the host institution can facilitate this.
- The situation will be discussed with the grantee, and if the grantee decides to file a police report, the Commission will take the necessary steps to assist in this.
- If the grantee wants to suspend their program, the circumstances will be discussed with the U.S. Department of State, Bureau Educational and Cultural Affairs.
• If the grantee wants to remain in the country, the Commission will do its best to make sure the grantee is safe and secure as possible.
• The Commission, in cooperation with ECA and the U.S. Embassy Health Unit, will provide a professional counsellor or other advisor to assist the grantee.

**PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL ASSAULT**

In the case of physical or sexual assault, grantees are required to follow the action plan below for crisis response:

1. Make sure you have reached a safe place and you are out of danger. Call a friend to take you home or go to their place. If still in danger, call the European emergency phone number, 112, which has English-speaking operators. In Bulgaria it puts you in touch with a national network of six regional centers, who can send an emergency team to the location of an incident immediately. Quote your name and precise location, if possible. Other emergency numbers you may need, as well as helpful phrases in Bulgarian, are listed on your wallet-sized Fulbright emergency card.

2. Call the emergency 24-hour hotline for U.S. Citizens at the U.S. Embassy, (359) 2 937 5101, where embassy officers will help you get in touch with the local police and get medical attention.

3. Go to an emergency room or arrange to see a doctor as soon as possible, but at least within 24 hours of the assault. You may have hidden injuries and may want to explore options for preventing pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases. The embassy, Fulbright and your mentor teacher will help determine the best option for getting medical attention at your location. Even if you choose not to report the case, you should still go to the nearest hospital or clinic. Make sure you provide the hospital with your ASPE information and contact Seven Corners directly by email (usdosinfo@sevencorners.com) or phone (1 800 461 0430, toll free), as soon as possible.

4. Contact your mentor teacher and Fulbright program officer as soon as possible – their experience and local contacts will further help you get the most timely and adequate response.

5. Try to resist showering, bathing or washing your clothes – the police may be able to obtain evidence which can help identifying the attacker later. If you must change your clothes before seeking help, place them (including undergarments) in a paper bag, to preserve evidence.

6. Once at the police station, try to remember and share as many details about the assault as possible. The police should provide a translator in the event that you do not have the necessary language skills and have not brought a friend/acquaintance with you. Ask to be provided with a copy of the police report and make sure you have the name and contacts of your case officer. You have the right to decide to report the case but to refuse to give evidence or press charges. In this case you will be required to sign a form confirming your decision, at the police station.

7. A physical or sexual assault can be an extremely traumatic experience which can result in emotional, psychological, physical and financial after-effects. In order to prevent developing Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, also known as PTSD, we strongly recommend that you contact Fulbright ASSIST (24/7 Hotline: +1-813-666-0012) and/or a local therapist. The
U.S. Embassy and the Fulbright Commission will direct you to further resources to help you address all of your concerns and recover as soon as possible from this experience.

*Note on Rape Trauma Syndrome:* Mental health experts note that sexual assault victims often do not react as others “expect them to” – while some are visibly distraught, other victims may be in shock and denial and might ignore or downplay the seriousness of the incident, declining to seek legal, medical or psychological help. If you or another grantee seem to be exhibiting such symptoms, please contact (or urge him/her to contact) local authorities and the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission immediately to get the help they may require – even if you later decide the incident was not serious and prefer not to pursue treatment or legal action, it is always better to be safe than sorry and to consult with medical, psychological and legal experts as soon as possible after a troubling incident has occurred. For more information: [http://www.kcsarc.org/sites/default/files/Resources%20-%20Rape%20Trauma%20Syndrome.pdf](http://www.kcsarc.org/sites/default/files/Resources%20-%20Rape%20Trauma%20Syndrome.pdf)

**EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS IN CASE OF NATURAL DISASTERS, CIVIL UNREST OR OTHER STATE EMERGENCIES**

In the event of natural disasters, civil unrests or other state emergencies, grantees are required to follow the below emergency preparedness guidelines:

1. Fulbrighters should be enrolled in the US Government’s Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at [https://travelregistration.state.gov](https://travelregistration.state.gov). By enrolling in STEP, grantees can receive by email messages on safety and security from the US Embassy.

2. US grantees must provide up-to-date contact details to the Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission for the entire duration of their Fulbright award in Bulgaria. Fulbright Bulgaria maintains detailed contact information for all current US Fulbright grantees whilst on award. This information includes telephone numbers (home, office, and cell phone), physical addresses (home and office) and email, as available.

3. In an emergency situation, the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission will provide grantees’ contact information to ECA/A/E, which is required to report on the status and safety of grantees within the State Department, and is also often contacted by family members regarding the safety of individual US Fulbright grantees in country. ECA/A/E needs to be able to reach participants quickly and directly via email or phone from Washington to confirm their safety and whereabouts.

4. Grantees are advised that the standard means of communication may be cut off in an emergency and they should have a back-up plan. Fulbright Bulgaria also advises grantees that they may need to depart the country if a serious situation or crisis occurs, and will receive assistance to do so if necessary.

5. Every US grantee must have travel insurance for the duration of their award. The Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) is a health care benefit plan designed to pay covered medical expenses for USDoS-supported exchange programs. Since covered medical expenses are subject to limitations, and pre-existing conditions are not covered, grantees are encouraged to retain or obtain their own health insurance to cover ongoing or potential medical requirements relating to pre-existing conditions.
6. If US grantees are leaving their home base and/or will be out of cell phone range for three or more days (on trips outside the country or to other locations within the country), they must provide their respective program officer at the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission with the details of that travel and provide alternative contact details.

7. In an emergency response, the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission will provide this information to ECA/A/E, which is required to report on the status and safety of grantees within the State Department, and is also often contacted by family members regarding the safety of individual US Fulbright grantees in country. ECA/A/E needs to be able to reach participants quickly and directly via email or phone from Washington to confirm their safety and whereabouts.

8. US grantees are asked to keep their family/friends back home informed (using social networking, email or telephone) whilst they are travelling/away from their home base in Bulgaria.

9. US grantees are asked to like the Facebook page of the Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission and follow Fulbright Bulgaria’s Twitter account, if they use Twitter. In an emergency, the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission will use telephone, email, Facebook and Twitter to communicate with grantees, families/friends of US grantees and key stakeholders to keep them informed of the emergency situation.

***All grantees are advised to prepare a survival kit upon arriving at their place of residence. Keep a survival kit in two different locations in your apartment in case you cannot reach one due to damages. Make a list of emergency items you might need, and ensure their availability. Check and renew your survival kit every six months. The kit may include such items as drinking water, non-perishable food (dried fruit, nuts, MRE, etc.), medications, basic first aid kit, toiletries, map, compass/GPS, extra cell phone and/or battery, flashlight with batteries, Candles and matches, contact list, copies of ID(s), cash ($/BGN/Euro), rain jacket, sweater, and extra socks.

**EARTHQUAKE**

While there is seismic activity in Bulgaria, strong earthquakes are not very common. Yet, it is essential to be prepared in case such occur.

**Before An Earthquake (Upon Moving Into Your Residence):**

- Check that all heavy furniture is secure and will not fall in the event of a strong earthquake.
- Ensure that all heavy items are near floor level (as low to the floor as possible).
- Store all hazardous or flammable materials low and in covered containers.
- Keep emergency supplies in two different locations in your home.
- Know where all water, gas, and power on/off switches are located.

**When The Shaking Begins:**

- Remain calm.
- Take cover and hold on tightly. Move only a short distance to a nearby safe place. This might be under a table or doorway. Stay indoors until the shaking stops and you are sure
it is safe to go outside. Stay away from windows, chimneys and shelves containing heavy objects.

- If you are in bed, get under the bed quickly or hold on and protect your head and body with a pillow and blankets.
- If you are outdoors, find a clear spot away from buildings, trees and power lines. Try to get under cover (i.e. a bench, picnic table, etc).
- If you are in a car, slow down and drive to a clear place (as above). Stay in the car until the shaking stops.
- If you cannot find a safe place, get on your knees and cover your head with your arms.

When The Shaking Stops:

- After a strong earthquake, expect aftershocks. Each time you feel one, take cover and hold on.
- Check those around you and offer help if necessary.
- Beware of potential dangers after an earthquake such as escaping gas, fire, electrical hazards, and unstable building structures. Do not touch downed power lines - treat all power lines as live.
- After an earthquake telephone landlines might be down and you may not be able to make phone calls for a while. Do not panic!
- Move to a safe place and help people around you find a safe place.
- Call your Program officer and inform the Commission about your current position and situation as soon as possible.

SEVERE WEATHER

Many parts of Bulgaria are subject to flooding following heavy rains. Flooding is usually localized but can occasionally be widespread and has resulted in fatalities. The weather forecast on the National Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology website (http://www.meteo.bg/en) provides detailed information and severe weather warnings for Bulgaria. In winter, heavy snowfall may result in bringing down trees and rocks, as well as rising river levels in parts of the country, leading to numerous closures of roads and power outages. In the summer, Bulgaria is on a regular alert for wildfires. Follow media reports and the advice of the local authorities if wildfires occur in your area. Contact the Bulgarian Fulbright Commissions if you have concerns about severe weather in your area.

a) Flood

If you are indoors during a flood:

- Do not panic and remember where you placed your survival kit.
- Be ready to evacuate as directed by emergency services personnel (police, fire-fighters, etc).
- Follow the recommended evacuation routes.

If you are outdoors during a flood:

- If you are in a car (or in a public transportation vehicle) and it stalls, do not try to start the engine. Immediately leave the car (or the public transportation vehicle) and move to higher ground.
- If you are on foot, avoid walking through flood waters; move immediately to higher ground.
After a flood:
- Before you leave the building, switch gas and power off in case of fire outbreak.
- Turn off all electrical appliances before leaving your area.
- Remain outside until emergency services tell you it is safe to re-enter.
- Call your university contact person/mentor teacher to keep him/her informed.
- Call your program officer and inform the Commission about your current position and situation as soon as possible.

b) Fire or Explosion

After arriving in Bulgaria and moving into your residence, locate and identify fire escape routes. Talk to your landlord about which steps to follow in case of a fire or explosion. In your host institution, ask about where the closest fire escapes are and where is the meeting point in case of a fire or explosion.

Preparing for a fire or an explosion:
- Keep an extinguisher in a handy place in your residence.
- Know where all gas and power switches are located.
- Make sure you know where all fire alarms, emergency exits, and fire-escapes are located.

During a fire or an explosion:
- Remain calm.
- Call 112 and notify the people who live near you.
- Disconnect the gas and power unless doing so jeopardizes your safety.
- If the fire is small and contained, extinguish it if possible.
- Leave your residence using the designated exit routes.
- Call your university contact person/mentor teacher to keep him/her informed.
- Call your program officer and inform the Commission about your current position and situation as soon as possible.
- Remain outside the building until the fire fighters tell you it is safe to re-enter.

PROTESTS AND CIVIL UNREST

Be aware that it is not uncommon for Bulgarian citizens to publicly protest about political or social issues. These protests occur in large cities as well as smaller towns. The Commission advises grantees to avoid these protests. Do not become involved for any reason. If you encounter a protest, remain calm and move away from the protestors. Try not to provoke them in any way by taking photos, making gestures or comments. If you feel trapped, call 112 and/or your program officer to inform them about your current situation as soon as possible.

TERRORIST ATTACKS

While terrorist attacks are rare in Bulgaria and have not been known to target US citizens, the US Department of State offers the following security message to US citizens traveling abroad:

Terrorist groups including ISIS, al-Qaida, their associates, and those inspired by such organizations, are intent on attacking U.S. and Western citizens around the world. Extremists may use conventional or non-conventional weapons to strike U.S. interests, but many are increasingly using less sophisticated methods of attack to more effectively target crowds, including the use of edged weapons, pistols, and vehicles. Extremists are increasingly assaulting “soft” targets, such as:
The following recommendations may help you avoid becoming a target of opportunity. These precautions may provide some degree of protection, and can serve as practical and psychological deterrents to would-be terrorists:

**Airports and Air Travel:**

- Schedule direct flights if possible, and avoid stops in high-risk airports or areas. Country Specific Information pages often highlight such locations.
- Minimize the time spent in the public area of an airport. Move promptly from the check-in counter to the security screening section to gain entry to the secured area of an airport. Upon arrival, leave the airport as soon as possible. Arrival areas are typically less secure than departure zones.
- Keep an eye out for abandoned packages or briefcases, or other suspicious items. Report them to airport authorities and leave the area promptly.
- To the extent possible, avoid drawing attention to yourself.

**Public Venues:**

- When possible, avoid or minimize time spent in the “soft” targets listed above. When in such locations, be alert for suspicious or unusual activity.
- Recognize that Western-branded venues or Western-like facilities may be attractive targets for terrorists.
- Report suspicious activities and individuals (e.g., loiterers or potential surveillants) to the local police, as well as the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.
- Identify potential safe areas, such as police stations, hotels, and hospitals. Formulate a plan of action of how to respond if a terrorist attack or security incident takes place.
- **Remember the “run, hide, fight” rule during a terrorist attack or similar accident:** whenever possible, immediately depart the area; if retreat is not an option, conceal yourself from would-be assailants; as a last resort, and only if necessary, yell and fight off an attacker.

Source: https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/emergencies/terrorism.html

**MONEY**
Bulgaria's currency is called lev. One lev is made up of 100 stotinkas. The following banknote denominations are in circulation: 2, 5, 10, 20, 50 and 100. Coins of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20 and 50 stotinkas are in circulation as well. A coin of 1 lev is in circulation as of the beginning of 2003, and a coin of 2 leva was introduced in 2015.

Bulgarian currency bills look like this:

![Bulgarian currency bills](image)

MANAGING YOUR MONEY IN BULGARIA

Bulgaria has a predominantly “cash economy”. The check as a form of payment is not common. Credit cards can be used for shopping, lodging and entertainment; some of the larger hotels, restaurants, supermarkets and shopping malls accept them, but for your day-to-day needs, it is advisable to have some cash. Regardless how much cash you have, do not carry large amounts with you.

- Exchanging Money
Commercial banks and licensed moneychangers quote their selling and buying rates daily. It is perfectly legal to buy and sell local currency at any bank or exchange bureau in Bulgaria. Do not change money with sidewalk freelancers. You will be offered higher rates, but you may easily get swindled. It is illegal to change money on the street. Use the services of the banks or the licensed moneychangers.

Some banks serve as Western Union / Moneygram agents and provide direct transfer of money to travelers in need. There are also many Western Union / Moneygram branches in major towns and cities.

- **Traveller’s Checks**
  
  American Express travellers’ checks can be cashed for US dollars or Bulgarian lev for a fee of 1% - 2%. Major branches of the following Bulgarian banks will cash travelers' checks on the spot for lev, the Bulgarian currency, or another desired currency: UniCredit Bulbank, Raiffeisenbank, Bulgarian Postbank, First Investment Bank, and United Bulgarian Bank (UBB). Most shops, hotels, and restaurants, with the exception of some major hotels, do not accept travelers' checks. Only some local banks can cash personal checks, and the payee will need to wait more than a month to receive funds.

- **Credit Cards**
  
  All ATMs in Bulgaria work with major credit cards. Most widely accepted are VISA and MasterCard; American Express is supported by Post Bank ATMs. Up to 400 Bulgarian lev per day can be obtained at a favorable exchange rate using an ATM. You are advised to check with your U.S. bank what fees it may impose for using its card at international locations (Bulgaria). Cash withdrawal in Bulgarian lev can be made in banks using VISA and MasterCard credit cards for a fee of 3%-4%. Make sure you inform your bank that you intend to use your credit card in Bulgaria in order to avoid cancellations.

- **Wire Transfers**
  
  If you intend to transfer money from your U.S. bank account to Bulgaria, you are advised to consult your bank in the U.S. and make preliminary arrangements.

- **Opening a Bank Account in Bulgaria**
  
  According to Bulgarian legislation, you are allowed to open and maintain an unlimited number of accounts in Bulgarian lev and foreign currency.

Addresses of Centrally Located Banks in Sofia:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bank Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Fax</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNICREDIT BULBANK</td>
<td>Head Office: 7 Sveta Nedelya Sq., 1000 Sofia, Bulgaria</td>
<td>0700 1 84 84</td>
<td>(+359 -2) 988 4636</td>
<td><a href="http://www.unicreditbulbank.bg">www.unicreditbulbank.bg</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BULGARIAN POST BANK</td>
<td>Head Office: 1 Bulgaria square, Sofia 1000, Bulgaria</td>
<td>0800 18 000</td>
<td>(+359 -2) 988 81 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grant payments will be made according to the schedule in your Grant Authorization. The initial (prior to your departure) and the last grant (after submission of your final report at the end of the grant period) payments will be transferred to your U.S. bank account on the basis of the information provided in your Financial Information Form.

The interim grant payments can be made in US dollars or in Bulgarian levs according to your preferences. Please note that the bank charges for wire transfers in USD will be borne by you (about $ 50 per transfer). For wire transfers in BGN (Bulgarian levs) to your bank account in BGN opened in a Bulgarian bank, bank charges will be borne by the Fulbright Commission.

**TAX LIABILITY**

As a grantee, you are subject to U.S. tax laws and will have to file a tax return with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Various U.S. tax laws may be applicable. The binational Commission’s stipend, allowances and round-trip travel allowance, as well as any funds you may have received directly from Bulgarian sources, should be declared as taxable income. Grant recipients are audited, too. There is a tax treaty between the U.S. and Bulgaria, which means you won’t be taxed twice for the same income.
The Commission does not issue any tax forms. Save the grant document that lists all payments and attach a copy of it to your tax return.

A section on Fulbright Grants is on the IRS website at: www.irs.gov/Individuals/International-Taxpayers/Fulbright-Grants

The Commission cannot provide tax advice. You are encouraged to check with tax accountants before leaving the U.S.

COST OF LIVING

Cost of Living in Sofia (in Bulgarian Leva)  
(Source: www.numbeo.com, last update: April, 2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Restaurants</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meal, Inexpensive Restaurant</td>
<td>10.00 лв 8.00-15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meal for 2 People, Mid-range Restaurant, Three-course</td>
<td>40.00 лв 30.00-50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McMeal at McDonalds (or Equivalent Combo Meal)</td>
<td>8.00 лв 7.00-10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Beer (0.5 liter draught)</td>
<td>2.00 лв 1.50-2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imported Beer (0.33 liter bottle)</td>
<td>3.00 лв 2.00-4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cappuccino (regular)</td>
<td>2.14 лв 1.50-3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coke/Pepsi (0.33 liter bottle)</td>
<td>1.57 лв 1.00-2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water (0.33 liter bottle)</td>
<td>0.97 лв 0.55-1.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Markets</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milk (regular), (1 liter)</td>
<td>1.93 лв 1.50-2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loaf of Fresh White Bread (500g)</td>
<td>0.94 лв 0.70-1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice (white), (1kg)</td>
<td>2.09 лв 1.30-3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs (regular) (12)</td>
<td>2.78 лв 2.01-3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Cheese (1kg)</td>
<td>10.11 лв 7.00-17.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken Breasts (Boneless, Skinless), (1kg)</td>
<td>8.03 лв 6.00-10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef Round (1kg) (or Equivalent Back Leg Red Meat)</td>
<td>12.76 лв 9.00-16.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apples (1kg)</td>
<td>1.75 лв 1.20-2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banana (1kg)</td>
<td>2.55 лв 2.00-3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oranges (1kg)</td>
<td>1.97 лв 1.50-2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomato (1kg)</td>
<td>2.30 лв 1.60-3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potato (1kg)</td>
<td>0.96 лв 0.70-1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onion (1kg)</td>
<td>0.94 лв 0.70-1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lettuce (1 head)</td>
<td>0.93 лв 0.50-1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water (1.5 liter bottle)</td>
<td>0.90 лв 0.70-1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottle of Wine (Mid-Range)</td>
<td>8.00 лв 6.00-10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Beer (0.5 liter bottle)</td>
<td>1.18 лв 1.00-1.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Imported Beer (0.33 liter bottle) 1.83 лв 1.35-2.50
Cigarettes 20 Pack (Marlboro) 5.30 лв 5.00-6.00

**Transportation**
One-way Ticket (Local Transport) 1.60 лв 1.00-1.60
Monthly Pass (Regular Price) 50.00 лв 30.42-50.00
Taxi Start (Normal Tariff) 0.81 лв 0.70-1.00
Taxi 1km (Normal Tariff) 0.80 лв 0.70-0.90
Taxi 1hour Waiting (Normal Tariff) 13.20 лв 12.00-15.00
Gasoline (1 liter) 2.07 лв 1.95-2.20
Volkswagen Golf 1.4 90 KW Trendline (Or Equivalent New Car) 34,000.00 лв 27,500.00-38,000.00
Toyota Corolla 1.6l 97kW Comfort (Or Equivalent New Car) 33,507.54 лв 27,271.00-40,000.00

**Utilities (Monthly)**
Basic (Electricity, Heating, Cooling, Water, Garbage) for 85m² Apartment 169.56 лв 100.00-255.00
1 min. of Prepaid Mobile Tariff Local (No Discounts or Plans) 0.28 лв 0.15-0.40
Internet (60 Mbps or More, Unlimited Data, Cable/ADSL) 18.81 лв 12.00-25.00

**Sports And Leisure**
Fitness Club, Monthly Fee for 1 Adult 40.79 лв 30.00-54.17
Tennis Court Rent (1 Hour on Weekend) 17.58 лв 10.00-30.00
Cinema, International Release, 1 Seat 10.25 лв 9.00-12.00

**Childcare**
Preschool (or Kindergarten), Full Day, Private, Monthly for 1 Child 567.37 лв 400.00-800.00
International Primary School, Yearly for 1 Child 6,821.88 лв 3,000.00-10,000.00

**Clothing And Shoes**
1 Pair of Jeans (Levis 501 Or Similar) 88.16 лв 50.00-150.00
1 Summer Dress in a Chain Store (Zara, H&M, ...) 49.52 лв 30.00-80.00
1 Pair of Nike Running Shoes (Mid-Range) 127.24 лв 90.00-180.00
1 Pair of Men Leather Business Shoes 120.67 лв 80.00-200.00

**Rent Per Month**
Apartment (1 bedroom) in City Centre 502.82 лв 300.00-700.00
Apartment (1 bedroom) Outside of Centre 371.12 лв 200.00-600.00
Apartment (3 bedrooms) in City Centre 868.35 лв 500.00-1,250.00
Apartment (3 bedrooms) Outside of Centre 622.85 лв 350.00-900.00

**Buy Apartment Price**
Price per Square Meter to Buy Apartment in City Centre 2,037.03 лв 1,000.00-3,000.00
Price per Square Meter to Buy Apartment Outside of Centre

|            | 1,412.62 лв 750.00-2,000.00 |

**Salaries And Financing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Monthly Net Salary (After Tax)</td>
<td>970.07 лв</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortgage Interest Rate in Percentages (%), Yearly, for 20 Years Fixed-Rate</td>
<td>4.53 3.50-7.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**COMMUNICATIONS**

Post offices can be found in cities and villages, and the postal system is reasonably efficient. Ordinary mail to and from Europe takes about a week, and to North America and Asia Pacific between - two to three weeks. Sending parcels will require that you bring your parcel unwrapped to the local or central post office, have it inspected, fill in a customs declaration, and then wrap it up on the spot.

**Important:**

Please note that consumers have to go to Customs every time they purchase an item from a non-EU member state that costs more than 15 euro (postage and packaging not included), and pay the relevant duty, VAT and customs fees.

Please inform your family members and friends that if they want to send you gifts and personal belongings that cost more than 45 euro, you may be required to go to the Customs office and pay 20% VAT over the declared customs value plus 20% VAT on the shipping charges and customs fees.

All personal mail and packages should be sent to your private home address in Bulgaria, not to the Fulbright Commission in Sofia.

DHL, FedEx, Bulpost, TNT Express Worldwide, In Time, Econt Express and other courier services are available in Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Burgas and other cities and towns in the country. Through them you can send practically all kinds of parcels. Below is contact information for the major companies that operate in Bulgaria:

**DHL**
Customer service: Tel.: 070017700  
www.dhl.bg

**Federal Express**
Customer Service: (+359 -2) 942 94 00  
TOLL FREE Phone for Pickups: 0800 11 000  
www.fedex.com/bg/
We recommend you to bring all your personal effects with you rather than ship them ahead.

In case you decide to send your luggage via Cargo service from Bulgaria to the U.S.A., here is an address of a company that might be helpful:

**DESPRED CARGO SERVICE**
Head office: 84 Vesletz Str.
Tel.: (+359 -2) 931 06 64; (+359 -2) 931 39 56
Fax: (+359 -2) 931 14 84
www.despred.com

Most cities within Bulgaria can be dialled automatically. For a list of codes check www.guide-bulgaria.com/?t=phonecodes.

**Universal emergency telephone number – 112**

You can dial an U.S. number directly after the country code, which is 001.

After you arrive, it would be wise to obtain a cell phone. A Bulgarian prepaid SIM card, together with a cell phone (brought from the US or bought in Bulgaria), will allow you to have a local phone number without a contract. When you buy a pre-paid SIM card in Bulgaria, you get a certain amount of talk time credit. When you have used your account available balance, you have to make a new recharge at an office of your service provider or electronic voucher purchased on-line or via ATM. In this way, since you pre-pay your call charges, you can keep a track on your expenses and remain within your budget.
Please note that the cheapest phone you can buy without a contract costs at least 50 leva. Smartphones can be more expensive than in the US, so if you wish to have a more technologically advanced phone it may be a good idea to bring one from the US. The network in Bulgaria operates on 900MHz - 1800MHz frequency bands, and most U.S. phones cover this frequency. In order to work with a Bulgarian operator, your US phone has to be UNLOCKED.

If you wish to use the standard post-pay service, you will have to sign a contract with one of the mobile operators. Have in mind that the contracts are usually for one year, so you may be asked to pre-pay 12 monthly taxes in advance.

There are three major Mobile operators in Bulgaria: Mtel, Telenor, and Vivacom. Bob and Max Telecom use Mtel network to provide voice services, with Max Telecom being the first operator to provide 4G data transfer services.

Mtel
www.mtel.bg

MTel is the first GSM operator and so far the market leader in Bulgaria.

Telenor
www.telenor.bg

Telenor is a leading telecommunication company that offers a full range of services: mobile, fixed and data, to over 4.0 million active subscribers in Bulgaria. The company is part of Telenor Group and operates in Bulgaria under the Telenor brand as of November 4, 2014.

Vivacom
www.vivacom.bg

Vivacom is the trade mark under which the privatized Bugarian Telecommunications Company (BTC) offers mobile services.
Bob
www.bob.bg

Bob is a mobile telecommunication service provider which started operation in the fall of 2011 and uses Mtel’s network.

Max Telecom
www.maxtelecom.bg

Max Telecom is a mobile telecommunications company and internet service provider offering a wide range of fixed and mobile services, including 4G Internet access, virtual private networks (VPN), voice services, video services and IPTV.

Internet access is available at most host institutions. There are many cafes and restaurants in Sofia and in most of the towns offering Wi-Fi service free of charge. You can ask your landlord to set up an Internet connection at your flat if such is not available. The most popular types of Internet connection in Bulgaria are offered by local Internet providers, cable TV operators and the Bulgarian Telecommunication Company (Vivacom).

TRANSPORTATION AND TRAVEL IN BULGARIA AND ABROAD

If you intend to drive in or outside of Bulgaria, you should obtain an International Driving Permit before leaving the United States. A state-issued U.S. driver’s license is valid in Bulgaria only when carried and presented in conjunction with an International Driving Permit. For more information on International Driving Permits and general information on international road safety, please visit http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/go/safety/driving.html Experience has proven that it is very difficult to apply for a new U.S. driver’s license from overseas, so if your license expires soon make sure to renew it while you are still in the US.

Traffic rules in Bulgaria are: drive on the right, overtake on the left. Drunk driving is strictly forbidden. Random breath checks are made. Road signs are of international standard.

Driving in Bulgaria can be a challenge, with the many poor roads, numerous pedestrians and lack of parking space. Motorists should avoid confrontations with aggressive drivers. If stopped by the police motorists should note that under Bulgarian law, police officers may not collect fines on the spot; they may only issue a ticket with the fine to be paid at the motorist’s local regional tax office.

The use of seat belts is mandatory in Bulgaria for all passengers, except pregnant women. Children under 10 years of age may ride in the front seat only if seated in a child car seat. Speed limits are 50 KM/H in the cities/towns, 90 KM/H out of town, and 130 KM/H on the highways. Park only where it is allowed, or else the traffic police might lift your car and you should be prepared to pay a fine.
The carefree way to travel around is by bus, tram, trolley bus or underground railway (Metro).

You can purchase single-trip tickets from the public vehicle driver or at a transportation kiosk. There are also one-day, one-month or three-month passes. Public transportation fees and routes in Sofia are listed on the website of the Urban Mobility Center www.sofiatraffic.bg Route search and travel lines for Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Burgas and Pleven is available at www.bg.easyway.info Smartphone applications like moovit can help you with directions how to get to any place with public transit, and provide bus arrival times, maps, service alerts & train schedules for your city.

Plainclothes inspectors randomly board buses/trams/metro to check. The fine for being without a ticket or pass in Sofia is 40 levs.

If you are in a hurry and wish to avoid public transport, you can take a taxi cab. Taxi drivers often overcharge unwary travellers, particularly at Sofia Airport and the Central Train and Central Bus Station. We recommend travellers use reputable taxi companies whose cars are clearly marked with a sticker on the passenger side of the windshield indicating the rate and have meters. At the airport and the central bus station, there are clearly marked booths within the arrivals terminal, which arrange for metered taxis at a fair rate. Rates fluctuate according to the prices of gasoline, so changes are possible at short notice.

To know whether a taxi is available or not when flagging one down on the streets, look for a small light on the front passenger side; green means it is available and red means it is occupied. The average taxi is rather small, with a tiny trunk, so if you are travelling with a big company or lots of luggage, you might need to book two taxis.

Different cities have different taxi companies. In Sofia, OK Supertrans (02 9732121), Yellow Taxi (02 91119), and Radio CB Taxi (02 91263) are most popular. OK Supertrans have English speaking operators, and they can send you the car number and estimated time of pick-up by text message if you call from a cell phone. Smartphone applications like TaxiMe (available in Google play and App store) will connect you to a quality taxi driver as quickly as possible. Taxi drivers expect the fare to be rounded up, as a form of tipping.

A Bulgarian town’s centre is perfectly manageable on foot and a stroll along its boulevards is a pleasure at leisure time. Unfortunately, often the pavements, like the roads, are in less than desirable condition. Metal grates over manholes and drains may be missing; uneven pavements and metal protrusions may trip you up and with the lack of parking spaces in the city centre, cars park on the sidewalks, forcing pedestrians to walk on the roads. Crossing roads should be also done with special attention. Not all drivers are ready to stop and give you way, even at zebra crossings. It is best to wait until there are no cars before you try to cross the road, and you should definitely not test your courage with delivery trucks, taxis, shuttle buses, and big expensive cars.

Bulgaria has places of beautiful scenery and a variety of historic sites. Your own interests will dictate which ones you want to visit. There are convenient and inexpensive travel services to most places of interest. There are many private bus companies, which offer domestic bus routes. For information on train and bus schedules you can check www.bgrazpisanie.com or download their mobile application. The website of the Central Bus Station in Sofia
(www.centralnaavtogara.bg) offers detailed information about bus routes, arrival and departure times to and from Sofia (in Bulgarian), and an opportunity to purchase on-line tickets for some of the routes. Train schedules can be found on the website of the National Railways, www.bdz.bg

Car rental firms are well established; they do take credit cards and any foreign currency or the equivalent amount in Bulgarian levs. Check their offers at:

- HERTZ Rent a Car
  www.hertz.com
- AVIS Bulgaria
  www.avis.bg
- SIXT
  www.sixt.com
- CAR RENTAL BULGARIA
  www.carrental.bg
- BUDGET Bulgaria
  www.budget.bg
- MOTOROADS
  www.motorroads.com
- EUROP CAR
  www.europcar.bg

Below are listed several agencies for travel tickets, airport transfers, hotel bookings and foreign car rentals. However, in the past few years, it has turned more efficient to book everything online. International websites like www.expedia.com, www.booking.com, or www.tripadvisor.com are reliable, easy to use, and offer forums where you can read tourists’ honest opinion.

Alexander Tour, 40 Pop Bogomil Str., Sofia, Tel.: (+359 -2) 9835258; www.alexandertour.com
Skylink Travel Agency, 3 Saborna St, Tel: (+359 -2) 9882425; e-mail: skylinkbg@abv.bg
USIT Colours, 35 Vassil Levski Blvd., Tel: (+359 -2) 9811900; www.usitcolours.bg


SHOPPING

a) Supermarkets
Foreign chains like Metro, Billa, Lidl, Kaufland are widely present in Bulgaria. The supermarkets are well stocked with basic needs and don’t-needs ranging from food items, household items, to stationery and clothes. Most have bakeries within, where you can get freshly-baked bread. Chains like Piccadilly, Fantastico, T-Market and ProMarket are also very comprehensively stocked with both local and imported goods. Many have stands with freshly cooked food and freshly chopped salads. Most of the supermarkets have very long opening hours, and stay open through the weekends and public holidays.

b) Open markets

The best place to get fresh fruits, vegetables, spices, nuts and good Bulgarian honey is the open market. The prices are often displayed, and many of them have scales which indicate the price you have to pay.

c) Techno Markets

An extensive range of electronic goods can be found in the techno markets. Most popular chains are Technomarket (www.technomarket.bg) and Technopolis (www.technopolis.bg)

d) Shopping Malls

Shopping malls are very popular in major cities. In Sofia, there are eleven big malls offering a wide range of retail stores, supermarkets, electronic goods shops, bookshops, restaurants, movie theatres and bowling areas. (Mall of Sofia, The Mall, Park Center, Central Department Store (TZUM), Sky City Mall, Sofia Outlet Center, Serdika Center, Bulgaria Mall, Paradise Center, Sofia Ring Mall, Mega Mall)

e) Furniture Stores

If you are unsatisfied with a piece of furniture in your apartment, or need small household appliances that you can’t find in the supermarket, you can always visit one of the many local furniture shops, or order on-line. In Sofia, there is a large IKEA store (www.ikea.bg); popular are also Aiko (www.aiko-bg.com, also available in Stara Zagora and Burgas); and Como (www.como.bg).

f) Pharmacies and Drugstores

In Bulgaria you can only get medicine from pharmacies (Αποθήκες). These should not be confused with drugstores (Drogerie) where, at most, you can get some cough drops or food supplements. There are two types of medication: freely-available drugs and prescription-only medicine. You can only get the latter if a doctor has prescribed them and you take the prescription to a pharmacy. Some
medicines, which may be available without prescription in your home country, need to be prescribed by a doctor in Bulgaria. If the medication you are taking is a controlled substance in Bulgaria, local doctors will be able to give you a prescription, but pharmacies won't be able to sell it to you because it will require a national identity number that cannot be obtained with the type of long-stay visas issued to Fulbright grantees.

In Drogeries like DM or Lilly you can buy all kinds of toiletries, cosmetic products, household items, pet food, baby goods, etc.

**BULGARIAN CUISINE**

Bulgarian cuisine does not differ very much from European traditions. However, it has some specific characteristics that bring it closer to Greek, Turkish and other South-European food styles. Bulgarian cuisine uses a lot of vegetables (in salads, stews or just roasted). Chicken and pork are the two most common meats. Beef is less common, but available. Fish is most popular in the coastal regions. Yoghurt, white and yellow cheeses have a significant role in traditional recipes. Most Bulgarians like their food seasoned with herbs like savory (Chubritsa), dill, mint, paprika, basil. Bread usually accompanies all meals. Some regions, like Bansko, are well-known for a wide range of salami and sausages mixed with herbs and spices.

The Bulgarian drinks you should definitely try are:
- Rakia, a fruit brandy that can be made out of practically any kind of fermented fruit (grapes and plums being the most popular).
- Wine, from the spicy Mavrud variety of the Asenovgrad area through the deep dark Gamza of the northwest to the chilled whites of Dimyat of eastern Bulgaria, there’s unique local wines to enjoy throughout your stay. Bulgaria is among the world’s top wine exporters, and the traditions in wine making date back to ancient Thracians thousands of years ago.
- Ayryan, a healthy yoghurt specialty made of water with Bulgarian whole-milk yoghurt and salt. It is served chilled, and is a great refreshing drink for the summer.
- Mineral water, coming from one of the many mineral water sources in the country. Quality mineral water with valuable healthy properties is not only bottled and sold commercially to low prices, but in areas where springs exist, these are usually available to the public to drink and fill their own bottles with.
- Boza, a thick beverage of oriental origin that resembles a chocolate milk-shake, but doesn’t taste anything like it. Typically enjoyed for breakfast together with a piece of banitsa pastry, boza is a fermented beverage made of a boiled combination of wheat, rye and/or millet,
with added sugar for the traditional sweet taste. It has a slight alcoholic content due to fermentation, but is considered more like a healthy than an alcoholic drink in the region.

Among the other drinks you can enjoy are, of course a great variety of beers and spirits (including cognac, ouzo, gin, sweet liqueurs), coffee (try the Turkish-style coffee boiled with sugar in a special copper pot), tea, and juices (try some home-made elderberry juice if you can).

If you are not that curious about Bulgarian food, there is a wide range of imported goods in the supermarkets. Heinz baked beans, peanut butter, maple syrup, Italian pasta and sauces, all types of cheeses from different European countries, and many other tempting products can be bought in any of the major grocery stores (Billa, Lidl, Kaufland, Piccadilly, etc.). Along with restaurants serving traditional Bulgarian meals, restaurants with international cuisine have multiplied in the main cities, especially in Sofia (Armenian, Italian, Moroccan, Indian, Turkish, Greek, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, etc.). If you feel nostalgic about American food, you can order familiar brands from www.iamerica.bg

HEALTH

The World Health Organization has no inoculation requirements for visitors of Bulgaria, but you can check with your health care provider what vaccinations you may need for your own protection. The environment of Bulgaria is relatively safe. Water is also safe to drink in most regions, but air pollution is a serious problem in Bulgaria.

Fulbright grantees receive a limited health care benefit plan designed by the United States Department of State and administered by Seven Corners, Inc. This plan IS NOT an insurance policy. The Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) is a self-funded, limited, health care benefit plan designed to pay covered medical expenses for USDoS-supported exchange programs. Covered medical expenses are subject to limitations, and pre-existing conditions are not covered. ASPE provides Fulbrighters with health care coverage during the effective period of their grant (as specified in the Grant Authorization Document). Dependents are not covered by this program. We strongly advise grantees to check the Health benefit plan in advance at www.usdos.sevencorners.com and to read carefully the overview and conditions of the ASPE program. All grantees will receive an identification card to be used as proof of health care coverage upon arrival in Bulgaria. When you seek medical care, take a claim form. You can be attended by the physician or supplier of your choice, pay directly and then submit the claim to the ASPE Administrator for reimbursement.

ASPE requires all its members (exchange participants) to pay co-pays. $25 co-pay for office visits, $75 co-pay for ER, Hospitalizations and Urgent Care. As a reminder the co-pay amounts will be pre-printed on the ASPE ID card.

This healthcare plan requires precertification for all inpatient hospital admissions, skilled nursing, outpatient chemo and radiation therapy, outpatient surgeries and procedures, pregnancies, physical or occupational therapy, dialysis, plasmapheresis, MRI, PET scan, CT, home health and home infusion therapy.
You must call the Pre-certification phone number, (800)461-0430 to obtain preadmission approval at least one business day before a planned hospitalization. Certification for Emergency admissions or admissions due to an unexpected illness or injury must be obtained within two business days following admission. Pre-certification is not a guarantee of coverage. A $300 penalty will be applied if pre-certification is not obtained. Also, Seven Corners must be contacted to confirm coverage and benefits as soon as non-emergency hospitalization is recommended; within 48 hours of the first working day following an emergency admission; when your physician recommends any surgery including outpatient and prior to any treatment for dental pain.

Grantees are urged to retain or obtain their own health insurance to cover ongoing or potential medical requirements relating to pre-existing conditions. If you have health care coverage from two or more insurance carriers, coordination of benefits determines which carrier is the primary payer and must pay claims up to the limit of its policy. The other insurer is then designated as the secondary payer and must pay any remaining amount covered by the plan. The good news is that medical costs in Bulgaria are still significantly lower than in the US.

**Important:**
If you have a pre-existing medical condition, you should bring copies of your medical records with you. It is also a good idea to bring an extra supply of any prescription medication you are taking, since concentrations and brand names may vary or not be as easily available in Bulgaria. Also, while many kinds of medication, including prescription items, are available in the country, you may feel more comfortable using familiar brands of medications for headaches, colds, upset stomach, allergies, etc. People with allergies often have trouble with the air in large, polluted cities. A Fahrenheit thermometer is handy.

In case of medical problems, check with your host institution what would be the best clinic/specialist to visit in your town. In Sofia, there are several private clinics and hospitals with at least one English-speaking specialist or staff member:

Tokuda Hospital (part of Acibadem City Clinic, the biggest hospital group in Bulgaria)
Sofia, 51b "Nikola Vaptsarov" Blvd.
Call center:(+359 2) 403 4000
Emergency: (+359 2) 403 4112
www.tokudabolnica.bg

Medical Center “Dr. I. S. Greenberg” Sofia,
23-A Copenhagen Blvd, tel. 02/4170519;
Dr. Atanas Moskov str. bl. 325, tel. 02/9744816
E-mail: dccgreenberg@gmail.com www.greenberg.bg
More information and coordinates of English-speaking practitioners in and outside of Sofia can be found at [https://bg.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/doctors/](https://bg.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/doctors/).

There are many private dental surgeries or clinics in Sofia and in the big cities. Check with your contact person if he/she can recommend a dentist in your town. Dental care is not covered under the ASPE health benefit plan.

If you have concerns for your psychological health and you wish to talk to a counsellor, you can arrange Skype sessions with a counsellor in the US, or ask your Program Officer for contact information of English-speaking specialist in your town.

Since December 2014, The Fulbright Program has introduced a new resource to aid U.S. Student grantees. **The Fulbright ASSIST hotline is a 24/7 counselling and support service available to all U.S. Student grantees while they are on program in their host countries.**

Fulbright ASSIST services augment the health benefits that are concurrently provided through the Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) plan administered by Seven Corners. Grantees needing assistance with routine health and/or emergency medical services should continue to contact Seven Corners 24/7.

The new Fulbright ASSIST 24/7 counseling and support service hotline is being administered by The ANVIL Group. All telephone calls will be answered by medical personnel, who are trained to handle emergency and non-emergency situations. Using the Fulbright ASSIST service is completely confidential. The Fulbright Commission will be contacted by IIE only in extreme cases when a grantee’s health or life is in danger and legal action may be required in-country (violent attacks, sexual attacks, suicidal thoughts). There is no limit to the number of sessions a grantee can have. Especially if struggling with cultural adjustment, depression, anxiety and so on, a grantee can schedule as many sessions as needed with Fulbright ASSIST mental health professionals.
Fulbright ASSIST staff will be able to provide support and counseling to grantees involved in a range of situations requiring mental health and other support, including depression, sexual assault or harassment, or adjusting to the host country culture. Fulbright ASSIST staff are also available to provide personal safety guidance. Additional details on the Fulbright ASSIST 24/7 hotline can be found on the Fulbright website at: http://us.fulbrightonline.org/current-fulbrighters/fulbright-assist-24-7-support.

On the whole, pharmacies and drugstores are well stocked with Bulgarian and imported medicines and health products and we do not anticipate any problems of supply in this regard. However, if you are taking prescription drugs, and you know you will need a prescription drug refill of any kind while you are in Bulgaria, you should follow these steps:

1. Gather information about the availability of the medication in Bulgaria. If the medication you are taking is not available for sale, please be aware that there are many restrictions on shipping prescription medication that can affect your ability to get your medication. In addition, if the medication you take is available in Bulgaria, the Ministry of Health or customs may not allow your medication to be shipped from the US. Whether or not a medication can be sent to you outside the US can vary by types of medication (i.e., special packaging), by mail carrier type, etc.

2. Call your doctor and see how much of a day supply of your medication he/she can prescribe you so you can have it filled before you leave, and discuss with him/her the information you found out about your specific prescription and its dispensing regulations. Find out what s/he suggests and if there are any alternatives if you are NOT able to get the drug you are currently being prescribed once you leave the US. It is your responsibility to determine and ensure that you will be able to purchase maintenance medication in your host country.

3. Please review the list of medication excluded from the ASPE pharmacy benefits in the ASPE guide. If the drug you are taking is not a covered ASPE approved medication, the payment will be YOUR responsibility. If it is a covered ASPE medication and it is a maintenance medication that is allowed to be shipped to your host country, the minimum for ordering through mail service is a 90-day supply. It is your responsibility to purchase at least a 60-day supply of required medication to take with you to your host country—this is not reimbursable by ASPE. Prescriptions must be written by a licensed US physician.

**Important:**
If the medication you are taking is a controlled substance in Bulgaria, it can be prescribed only by a medical doctor, sometimes through a special, “green” prescription. Those can be filled in the pharmacy where the pharmacist will require to see your passport and enter your passport number in a computer database.
CULTURAL EVENTS AND RECREATION

Musical life in Sofia is rich, with the Sofia National Opera, symphony and chamber orchestras, splendid choirs, jazz and folk concerts, etc. Well over twenty larger cinemas exist, showing a number of recent English language films.

Grantees will be surprised to find out that in many cases concerts, theatres, operas, etc are tremendous bargains, much more affordable than in the US. Information about movies, theatre plays, exhibitions, expos, classical and contemporary music, concerts, parties and events of public importance in Sofia, Varna, Burgas, Plovdiv and Stara Zagora can be obtained online from the free cultural guide www.programata.bg

In Sofia, you may go skiing/snowboarding and/or hiking on Mt. Vitosha. Popular ski resorts are Borovets in the Rila Mountain (about 60 km from Sofia), Pamporovo in the Rhodopes (about 240 km from Sofia) and Bansko in the Pirin Mountain (about 170 km from Sofia).

Tennis courts, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, gyms and fitness centers are available in most cities. Golf is becoming increasingly popular and there are several excellent golf courses in the country that you may wish to visit. Sea sports such as wind-surfing, waterskiing and diving are on offer on the Black Sea coast.

More challenging sports are also available: paragliding, white-water rafting, rock-climbing, motorcycle tours, quad biking, caving, bungee jumping, etc. – for more information check www.verticalworldbg.com; and www.adventurenetbg.com.

Many international satellite and cable programs are available on Bulgarian TV.

LIVING IN A DIFFERENT CULTURE

Integrating into a different culture is a rewarding, yet challenging experience. Even if you have previous experience, be prepared to go through a period of adaptation. Avoid being excessively influenced by uncomfortable events. As a newcomer, you may not realize, unless you discuss the event with someone, that what has happened to you is either an unusual occurrence or a common problem.
Keep in mind throughout that you are a cultural ambassador. Through academic and personal relationships you will have an influence on international understanding. Make more of an effort than usual to talk to people and show them that you are interested in them and their work. Try to understand their situations - it may be that instead of being inconsiderate or unkind, the other person is preoccupied, in a hurry, or frustrated by an underpaid job.

The Bulgarian friendliness and hospitality is not a myth. The majority of US Fulbright grantees agree, that wherever they go, people are open and eager to help even if they don’t speak English. In general, city residents are more reserved, while people in the villages can overwhelm you with their hospitality. Young people are open, knowledgeable, inquisitive, kind, and tolerant. They try to keep up with global fashions and trends. Representatives of the older generations may treat foreigners with suspicion at first, but once a Bulgarian knows you well, he/she can be incredibly friendly and helpful. The long history of the Bulgarian nation features frequent transitions, many upheavals and long periods of foreign domination that have affected our world view. The hardships have made us a bit less organized, perhaps a little suspicious, sometimes skeptical and pessimistic. While most of the institutions that we work with are prompt and punctual, you may find that some Bulgarians have a fluid sense of time and may not always show up at a meeting on time, or may have difficulty planning long-term. In their reports, grantees have acknowledged that while these features have frustrated them at first, they have learned to be more flexible, have enjoyed the slower paced life, and the daily communication with Bulgarians has helped them gain a true cultural awareness and a broader worldview.

Many grantees tend to underestimate culture shock, probably because on the first look the culture seems similar. The sense of disorientation that comes with being in an unfamiliar environment can affect different people in different ways and at different times. You will miss friends, family, familiar food brands, and you will have to cope with a new language and alphabet. If you suddenly feel you’ve become very irritable, insecure, unsociable and find everything about the host country annoying it is quite possible that you are suffering a culture shock.

The cure is usually to visit or invite other grantees to cheer you up; to find additional things to do (like volunteering, charity work, exercise, travel, hobby) that will distract you, try to learn more about the country and the people in your neighbourhood, and focus on the positive things that your work as a Fulbrighter has to offer. Don’t let the confusion shatter your self-confidence and identity, and don’t shut out local people from your life – communication is the key to resolving the majority of problems.

Below are excerpts from grantees mid-term reports that can give you an idea of the common problems they face. Some quotes also offer excellent advice on how to cope with certain situations:

- I try to work within the system, but the biggest thing I have done to overcome this challenge is to simply observe other teachers. I am thankful that I have a good rapport with many colleagues so I can ask them their opinion about the education system in Bulgaria. Many believe that as teachers, we are failing the students by not providing a good education. By simply having these conversations, I have learned a lot about Bulgarian culture, history, and I have been able to put myself in other people’s shoes. I have gained more understanding as to why things are the way they are here. I respect a lot of my colleagues so much, especially the
ones who are trying to change the current education system. I have had many days where I have been frustrated by how students are forced to memorize and aren't even allowed to state their own opinions. So, instead I try to encourage creativity in and outside of the classroom. I started a Drama Club and weekly conversational groups for students. I also do a lot of activities in class where students have to give some sort of opinion. I challenge them to “think outside of the box” and this is when I see students becoming more open-minded, innovative, and exceptionally creative.

- After struggling for some time to pinpoint what my school expected of me, I began to work collaboratively with each teacher, basing my activities off of the chapters each instructor was currently covering in her classroom. I’ve also overcome this lack of clarity by meeting with each teacher individually and asking how I could better help them meet their goals for the semester with each class. To combat poor attendance and behavior in my “problem classes,” I have begun tailoring lessons to each class’s interests and talents, attempting to engage them in ways their traditional classrooms do not allow. I have seen great success with this. My students are more open to contributing lesson requests and have started showing up to class more often (attendance is an issue for the entire school).

- As an ETA, you are in this weird space where you ~are~ a teacher, but you’re also kind of not a teacher. I think my colleagues respect and support me, but I also think there’s still a tendency to think my classes are “less important” in some way, because they’re not textbook-oriented or don’t directly prepare students for some standardized test. Even with some previous teaching experience before coming to Bulgaria, I still had to learn how to turn my classroom into a space that students took seriously instead of just a “fun and games classroom.”

- The biggest challenge, without a doubt, is the language barrier. There are weekly meetings conducted all in Bulgarian, announcement made and written in Bulgarian, and obviously the casual conversations in the teachers’ room are in Bulgarian. However, I am very close with my mentor teacher and two other English teachers at the school. They all check in with me and make sure that I am kept up to date about announcements. Additionally, I took a five week language course, which does not necessarily help with keeping up to date with announcements, but does help with simple conversations in the teachers’ room, helping to make the other teachers respect me and have nice tete-a-tete. Unfortunately, sometimes announcements are not made at all, or are made right before a change will be made. I have learned to be much more flexible.

- The biggest adjustment I think any American makes to Bulgarian culture is being proactive, from building a group of friends, to getting assistance with getting settled, and even accomplishing research objectives. Bulgarians are open, friendly, and helpful people – however, they will not always offer specific assistance, but will wait to be asked. Furthermore, they may even agree to help, but still need to be reminded/have a specific time/date set if the assistance is actually going to occur. Sometimes Americans might feel that they are being overly aggressive, but are not viewed that way.

- Another big adjustment Americans might have to make (particularly young Americans) is to not expect immediate responses to asynchronous communication platforms. Overall, Bulgarians still work more efficiently over face-to-face meetings and telephone calls than email or text-messages. This can cause problems if one is particularly shy, but it’s often worth it to just pick up the phone and make a call.
- It's hard to realize that you are new to the group and are likely to not be contacted when people are meeting. It is not that they don't want you around, but they will have previously established patterns. I have had to cultivate a more proactive attitude towards my social life than I would be comfortable with at home. I reach out to people to see what they are planning, and also host many events on my own. I make a conscious effort to contact Bulgarians I'm cultivating connections with even if I don't have the time to meet up, so I stay in their conscious memory.

- Many of the challenges in my teaching assignment are rooted in systematic differences between the Bulgarian and US educational models. When I felt frustrated with something in the classroom - such as plagiarism or a lack of disciplinary measures - it was helpful to discuss them honestly with my mentor teacher. When I understood the Bulgarian system better, I was more able to ascertain the motives driving my students' behavior.

- I found that many things were less student-focused than in the USA. When I planned a Halloween party for my school and my students, my teachers were hesitant to get the students involved for decoration making, planning, or baking because they said they would mess it up. This is just one example but I believe that the student-focused education in the USA is very different and some teachers were taken aback that I was interested in getting to know the students, calling on even struggling students, and helping to be a role model for them. Through adjusting with the local culture, it's been hard to slowly learn of the lack of role models that many of my students have. Many families are broken in these small towns without universities where there are few jobs and many parents find jobs working abroad to support their children. There is a lack of young people post-high school age because there is also no university. Many of my teachers express their discontent with their job and how they wanted to do something else with their career. I have found over time that my role here is much more than a teacher. I take my role as a role model and positive adult figure in my students' lives very seriously. I have helped guide and support them in their goals after graduation as well.

USEFUL BACKGROUND TEXTS

BOOKS AND GUIDES

DK Eyewitness Travel Guide: Bulgaria
By DK Publishing; (August 15, 2017)

Bulgaria (Bradt Travel Guides Bulgaria)
By Annie Kay; Publisher: Bradt Travel Guides; 2nd edition (August 7, 2015)

The History of Bulgaria (The Greenwood Histories of the Modern Nations)
By Frederick B. Chary; Publisher: Greenwood (February 15, 2011)

The Rough Guide to Bulgaria 6 (Rough Guide Travel Guides)
By Jonathan Bousfield, Dan Richardson; Publisher: Cambridge University Press (June 2, 2008)
Lonely Planet Bulgaria (Lonely Planet Bulgaria)
By Richard Watkins and Chris Deliso; Publisher: Lonely Planet Publications (May 1, 2008)

Bulgaria - Culture Smart! The Essential Guide to Customs & Culture
By Juliana Tzvetkova, Publisher: Kuperard (July 28, 2015)

CultureShock! Bulgaria (Culture Shock!)
By Agnes Sachsenroeder; Publisher: Marshall Cavendish Corp/Ccb (February 1, 2008)

Bulgaria In Depth: A Peace Corps Publication
By Peace Corps, Publisher: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform (April 5, 2016)

Bulgaria... in Pictures (Visual Geography Series)
By Margaret J. Goldstein; Publisher: Lerner Publishing Group (May 30, 2005)

A Concise History of Bulgaria (Cambridge Concise Histories)
By R. J. Crampton ; Publisher: Cambridge University Press; 2 edition (January 9, 2006)

Bulgaria (Cultures of the World)
By Kirilka Stavreva; Publisher: Benchmark Books (NY); 2nd edition (January, 1997)

Guide to Bulgaria: Alexander Tour
By Evgheni Dinchev; Publisher: Tangra Tannakra; 2nd Rev edition (December, 2002)

The Insider’s Guide to Sofia and Beyond
By Christine Milner, Paromita Sanatani; Publisher: Inside and Out Ltd. (August 2005)

Bulgaria at the Crossroads
Jacques Coenen-Huther (Editor); Publisher: Nova Science Publishers (June, 1996)

The Bulgarian Economy in Transition (Studies of Communism in Transition)
By John A. Bristow; Publisher: Edward Elgar Publishing (March, 1996)

Masquerade and Postsocialism: Ritual and Cultural Dispossession in Bulgaria (New Anthropologies of Europe)
By Gerald W. Creed, Publisher: Indiana University Press (January 24, 2011)

Summer in the Balkans: Laughter and Tears After Communism
By Randall Baker; Publisher: Kumarian Press Inc. (1994)

Bulgarian Contributions to European Civilization
By Atanas Bozhkov; Publisher: Bulvest (2000)

Bulgarians - Civilizers of the Slavs
By Bojidar Dimitrov; Publisher: BORINA Publishing House, Sofia (1993)

Ancient Gold: The Wealth of the Thracians: Treasures from the Republic of Bulgaria
By Ivan Marazov, Alexander Fol, Margarita Tacheva, Ivan Venedikov; Publisher: Harry N Abrams (March 1, 1998)
Historical Dictionary of Bulgaria (European Historical Dictionaries, No 16)
By Raymond Detrez; Publisher: Scarecrow Press (December 18, 1997)

Prehistoric Bulgaria (Monographs in World Archaeology, No 22)
By Douglass W. Bailey, Ivan Panayotov; Publisher: Prehistory Press (April, 1995)

Music in Bulgaria: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture (Global Music Series)
By Timothy Rice; Publisher: Oxford University Press; Book & CD edition (September, 2003)

Bulgarian Folk Costumes
By Maria Veleva; Publisher: Tamburitza Pr (May, 1982)

Young Poets of a New Bulgaria: An Anthology
Belin Tonchev, Petur Petsin (Illustrator); Publisher: Forest Books (January 1, 1990)

BULGARIAN LANGUAGE

Grammar Matters: Bulgarian Grammar in Charts
Zhana Zagorova, Radost Sabeva; Publisher: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform (June 11, 2014)

Ronelle Alexander, Publisher: University of Wisconsin Press (September 26, 2000)

Complete Bulgarian with Two Audio CDs: A Teach Yourself Guide
Mira Kovatcheva, Michael Holman; Publisher: McGraw-Hill; 2 edition (February 18, 2011)

Teach Yourself Bulgarian Conversation (3CDs + Guide)
Mira Kovatcheva, Michael Holman; Publisher: McGraw-Hill; 1 edition (October 1, 2007)

Teach Yourself Bulgarian
Michael Holman, Mira Kovatcheva; Publisher: McGraw-Hill; 2 edition (September 29, 2004)

Beginner's Bulgarian (Beginner's Guides)
Mariana Raykov; Publisher: Hippocrene Books (April, 1995)

Bulgarian (Lonely Planet Phrasebooks)
Lonely Planet (April 1, 2008)

Bulgarian (Eyewitness Travel Phrasebook)
DK Publishing (May 1, 2000)

Bulgarian Dictionary & Phrasebook: Bulgarian-English / English-Bulgarian
By Michaela Burilkovova, Publisher: Hippocrene Books (April 27, 2012)
READING RECOMMENDED BY FORMER ETAS:

„East of the West“, “Stork Mountain”, Miroslav Penkov
„Border”, “Street without a Name”, Kapka Kassabova
“Thrown Into Nature“, Milen Ruskov
“Stolen Journeys“, Sylvia Atipova
A Captivating Mind, Dimiter Kenarov
"The Mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov as Lieu de Memoire“ (essay) and “Imagining the
Balkans”, Maria Todorova
"History's Restless Ruins" (essay), Zhivka Valiavicharska
"The Physics of Sorrow", Georgi Gospondinov
"Under the Yoke", Ivan Vazov
“The Balkans”, Misha Glenny
“Lost in Transition“, Kristen Ghodsee
“The Shadow Land”, Elizabeth Kostova
“Sarajevo Marlboro”, Miljenko Jergovic
“Cafe Europa“, Slavenka Drakulic
"Balkan Ghosts", Robert Kaplan
Błaga Dimitrova's poetry
"Poets of Bulgaria", edited by William Meredith
“Cold Snap”, Cynthia Morrison Phoel
“Black Lamb and Grey Falcon”, Rebecca West
“The Balkans”, Mark Mazower
“Teach Like a Champion”, Doug Lemov

Blogposts:
http://origins.osu.edu/connecting-history/1142014-empty-fountains-communist-era-
monuments-revisited
http://danamray.com/2015/08/hello-world/ (Reading List by Dana Ray)

Movies:
"Before the Rain" (Пред дождот) available on YouTube (Macedonia)
Урок, “The Lesson” (Bulgaria, 2014)
USEFUL INTERNET RESOURCES

Travel Guides:

- **Lonely Planet's online guide to Bulgaria** – www.lonelyplanet.com/bulgaria
- **World Travel Guide** – www.worldtravelguide.net/data/bgr/bgr.asp

---

**The Physics of Sorrow** is a 2015 novel by contemporary Bulgarian writer Georgi Gospodinov. The book is a finalist for both the Strega Europeo and Gregor von Rezzori awards. Its English translation by Fulbright Commission Executive Director, Angela Rodel, was nominated for the PEN Translation Prize in 2016.
• National Geographic Travel Guide – travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/countries/bulgaria-guide/
• Travel Guide – www.bulgariatravel.org
• Wikipedia guide – en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulgaria
• Bulgarian history, ethnography, folklore, and cuisine – www.omda.bg
• Bulgarian history podcast by Fulbright alum Eric Halsey - www.bghistorypodcast.com
• Accommodation, online reservations, travel offers, destinations, travel ideas, culture – www.discover-bulgaria.com

Country Profiles:

• The Economist Country Topics Index – www.economist.com/countries/Bulgaria
• Bulgaria and the IMF – www.imf.org/external/country/BGR
• Bulgaria and the WTO – www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/countries_e/bulgaria_e.htm
• Bulgaria and the UN - www.data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=BULGARIA

Official Web Sites:

• Bulgarian Embassy in the US – www.bulgaria-embassy.org
• US Embassy in Bulgaria – bulgaria.usembassy.gov
• Government of Bulgaria – www.government.bg
• National Assembly of Bulgaria – www.parliament.bg
• President of Bulgaria – www.president.bg

News and Events:

• Bulgarian News Agency – www.bta.bg/en
• Sofia News Agency – www.novinite.com
• Balkan Insight - www.balkaninsight.com
• The Sofia Globe - www.sofiaglobe.com
• Focus Information Agency – www.focus-fen.net
• Bulgaria's English monthly magazine - www.vagabond.bg

Cultural Guides:

• Free on-line cultural guide – events in major Bulgarian cities – www.programata.bg
• General information about the cultural life in Bulgaria – www.art.bg
1. Christmas Eve and Christmas Day  
   December 24-26

2. New Year's Eve and New Year's Day  
   December 31 and January 1

3. Liberation Day  
   March 3

4. Easter Holidays  
   April or May  
   /depending on the Eastern Orthodox calendar/

5. Labor Day  
   May 1

6. Bulgarian Army Day  
   May 6

7. Day of the Cyrillic Alphabet  
   May 24

8. Union Day  
   September 6

9. Independence Day  
   September 22

10. Day of the Bulgarian Enlighteners  
    November 1