



OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Bulgaria

CAPITAL: Sofia

TOP LANGUAGES:

Bulgarian, Turkish, Romanian

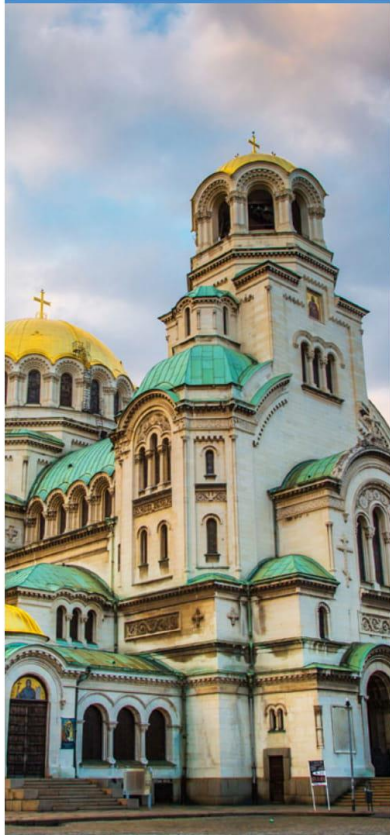
MAJOR INDUSTRIES:

Electricity, machinery and equipment, automotive parts, base metals, chemical products, refined petroleum, nuclear fuel, outsourcing centers

SPOTLIGHT ON BULGARIA

Bulgaria has earned a reputation as an inexpensive and exotic tourism destination year-round. Resorts are plentiful along spectacular beaches, and hikers and skiers love to tackle the peaks of four large and scenic mountain ranges. Bulgaria's ancient struggles and triumphs are the stuff of Byzantine epics, but it was the country's position on the losing side of World War I and II that defined its modern history. With significant territory lost, a ruined economy, and a populous in revolt, it fell under the influence of the Soviets and communism for much of the remainder of the 20th century.

Bulgaria held its first multiparty election since World War II in 1990 and entered the EU on January 1, 2007. Through significant amounts of bank lending, consumption, and foreign direct investment, the country grew at an annual rate of more than 6% from 2004 - 2008. Despite a favorable investment environment that offers low, flat corporate income taxes, problems with corruption in public administration and a high presence of organized crime have hindered the country's investment prospects and economic expansion. Additionally, the global financial crisis slowed domestic demand, resulted in a rise of unemployment, and subsequently slowed industrial production and capital inflows. The country's GDP growth has risen steadily since 2012 alongside a more stable government, a consolidation of the banking sector, and recent rise in exports, indicating the potential for moderate growth in the coming years



TOPICS TO EXPLORE

OLD MEETS NEW – Bulgaria's location has made it a crossroads for trade and, at times, a battleground since its establishment in Neolithic times. Explore how Bulgaria's rich history and diverse influences contribute to its modern culture, tourism industry, and overall economy.

RELIANCE ON NATURAL RESOURCES – Over 35% of Bulgaria is covered in forestation, and the breathtaking Balkan Mountains draw millions of tourists to Bulgaria each year. Learn how Bulgaria's natural resources and beauty support the country's timber and mining industries, as well as their love of outdoor recreation.

COMMUNISM – Communist ideology shaped Bulgaria's history for more than half a century. From government and economy to religion and culture, discover what it was like on the eastern side of the Iron Curtain.

BY THE NUMBERS

\$52.4 BILLION | EST 2016
GDP USD

7.4 MILLION | POPULATION

110,879 KM² | TOTAL AREA

2,320+ MEETINGS PLANNED
IN THE REGION

Your customized itinerary

World Media Systems – Bulgaria

The following itinerary is a working document and is subject to change (revised 9/16/2024).

March 7, 2025 | Program Begins

Friday

Meals Included
Per airline

- Flight departs for Sofia – Arranged by WorldStrides.

Departure Flights – *Quote only – Subject to Change*

Flight #	Origin	Destination	Departure	Arrival
LH 8802	Newark (EWR)	Frankfurt (FRA)	10:00 p.m.	11:50 a.m. +1
LH1430	Frankfurt (FRA)	Sofia (SOF)	2:35 p.m.	5:50 p.m.

March 8 | Program Begins

Saturday

Meals Included
Per airline
Dinner

Sofia Accommodations
[Rila Hotel](#) or similar (1 of 8)

Welcome to Sofia! This little-known Balkan capital is a true diamond in the rough, just waiting to be discovered. From its onion-domed churches and Ottoman mosques to the recently unveiled 2000-year-old Roman ruins, there are treasures to be found at every turn!

- Participants are responsible for their own transportation to their accommodations.
- Check-in to your accommodations or store luggage if check-in is unavailable.
- In the afternoon, make your way to an orientation. – *No local staff or transportation included.*

Class Orientation

Content sourced by The Pennsylvania State University
No meeting space included

- In the evening, meet with local staff in the lobby of your accommodations and receive your public transportation pass – *7-day public transportation pass estimate included.*
- Taste the local cuisine with a group **Welcome Dinner** – *Local staff and public transportation included.*

March 9 | Sofia

Sunday

Meals Included

Breakfast

Sofia Accommodations

[Rila Hotel](#) or similar (2 of 8)

- Make your way to today’s engagements – *Half day local staff and public transportation included.*

Walking Tour of Sofia (Guided)

Join your guide on a walking tour through the city’s historic streets! Some sites may include Sveta Nedelya Church, Statue of Sofia, Church of St.Petka, Largo Square and Roman Ancient Ruins, Banya Bashi Mosque, Sofia Synagogue, Former Public Bath (current Museum of Sofia), Hote mineral water springs, Council of Ministers, Former Communist Party HQ, Presidency, Parliament, National Art Gallery (Former King’s Palace), City garden and National Theatre Ivan Vazov, Russian Church, St.Sophia Basilica, Alexander Nevsky Cathedral. – *No entrance fees included, sites viewed from outside only*

- Break for lunch on own.
- Continue to next visit.

The Red Flat Experience (Self-Guided)

A downtown apartment in Sofia, which is designed to teleport you back to the 1980’s. You will immerse yourself in the atmosphere of the last decade of the Cold War while listening to the stories covering the everyday activities, work, school, fun and games, dreams and aspirations of a regular Bulgarian family back in the day. You are not just welcome, but encouraged to explore and play with the objects you will see in their home and will get a comprehensive picture of life in socialist Bulgaria. – *Entrance fees included*

Please Note: *The Red Flat Experience operates on a timed entry system. Exact entry time will be determined closer to departure.*

- Break for dinner on own then return to your accommodations for the evening.

Free Afternoon Activities

Unexpected extra time? Talk with your program leader about visiting one of the following free sites in the great city of Sofia! (Be sure to check opening hours if applicable!)

- › St. Alexander Nevski Cathedral
- › Saint Nikolas Russian Church
- › The Rotunda Church of St. George
- › Boyana Waterfall
- › Borisoca Gradina Park
- › Zhenski Pazar Women’s Market

March 10 | Day Trip: Rila Monastery & Surrounding Towns

Monday

Meals Included

Breakfast

Lunch

Sofia Accommodations

[Rila Hotel](#) or similar (3 of 8)

- Early this morning, make your way to today's engagements – *Full day local staff and private transportation included.*

Coach: *Approximately 2 hours*

Rila Monastery (Guided)

A perfect day trip out of Sofia, combining spectacular scenery with history and culture. On the UNESCO World Heritage list and tucked away in the Rila mountains at 1150m above sea level, the Rila monastery was founded in the 10th century by the followers of the hermit monk St. John of Rila. The monastery became a powerful spiritual centre in the Middle Ages and kept alive the Bulgarian national spirit during the Ottoman rule. The Monastery is the undisputed crown jewel of Bulgarian tourism and the country's most important cultural and religious center. Each year it welcomes hundreds of thousands of visitors, tourists and pilgrims, alike. From the outside, it maintains its fortress-like appearance but once through the main gate, the visitor finds himself in a spacious cobbled courtyard surrounded by enchanting rows of balconies with a church in the centre. All of this is against the splendid natural backdrop of the Rila mountains. Unlike most churches built under Ottoman rule, this one is outwardly ornate, and the exterior arcades depict religious scenes in bright colours. Visitors are free to wander around the monastery, which still functions as such to date. Other points of interest include Hreljo's tower, next to the church, the only original building dating back to 1335, the monastery kitchen with its huge, vaulted chimney and the museum, for which a fee is charged. – *Entrance fees included*

- Board your coach and continue to next visit.
- Break for lunch in Forest Nook – *Lunch included.*
- After lunch, return to your coach and continue to your next stop.

Melnik (Self-Guided)

Enjoy some free time to explore Melnik! – *No entrance fees required.*

- Board your coach and continue to next visit.

Rupite (Self-Guided)

Enjoy some free time to explore Rupite! – *No entrance fees required.*

- After visit, board your coach and return to Sofia.
- Break for a late dinner on own then return to your accommodations for the evening.

March 11 | Sofia

Tuesday

Meals Included
Breakfast

Sofia Accommodations
[Rila Hotel](#) or similar (4 of 8)

- Make your way to today's engagements – *No local staff. Public transportation included.*

Museum of Communist Art (Self-Guided)

The Museum of Socialist Art in Sofia, Bulgaria, offers a fascinating glimpse into the country's communist past through a collection of statues, artifacts, and artworks. Located in a former headquarters of the Bulgarian Communist Party, the museum showcases monumental socialist realist sculptures and propaganda pieces that once adorned public spaces across Bulgaria. It provides visitors with an insightful journey into the ideology and aesthetics of Bulgaria's communist era. – *Entrance fees included.*

- Break for lunch on own.
- Continue to next visit.

Boyana Film Studio Tour (Guided)

Boyana Film Studio, situated in Sofia, Bulgaria, is renowned for its contribution to Eastern European and international cinema. It has been a significant hub for film production since its founding in 1962, offering state-of-the-art facilities and services for filmmakers from around the world. – *Entrance included.*

- Break for dinner on own then return to your accommodations for the evening.

March 12 | Sofia

Wednesday

Meals Included
Breakfast

Sofia Accommodations
[Rila Hotel](#) or similar (5 of 8)

- Make your way to today's engagements – *No local staff. Public transportation included.*
Optional: Full day private transportation **priced separately.**

Boyana Church (Guided)

Boyana Church officially became a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1979 and ever since has been experienced by many visitors. Located on the outskirts of Sofia, this 10th Century church consists of three buildings each with their own historical significance. – *Entrance fee included.*

Please Note: *Boyana Church operates on a timed entry system. Exact entry time will be determined closer to departure.*

- Break for lunch on own.
- Continue to next visit via public transportation.

National History Museum (Guided)

The National History Museum in Sofia, Bulgaria, is the country's largest museum dedicated to Bulgarian history and culture. Housed in the former residence of Bulgaria's last communist leader, the museum's extensive collection spans artifacts from prehistoric times to the present day, including Thracian treasures, medieval art, and ethnographic exhibits. It offers visitors a comprehensive overview of Bulgaria's rich historical heritage and its evolution through various periods and civilizations. – *Entrance fees included.*

- Break for dinner on own then return to your accommodations for the evening.

March 13 | Sofia

Thursday

Meals Included
Breakfast

Sofia Accommodations
[Rila Hotel](#) or similar (6 of 8)

- Make your way to today’s engagements – *No local staff. Public transportation included.*

Media Visit

Arranged by The Pennsylvania State University

- Break for lunch on own.
- Continue to next visit.

Media Visit

Arranged by The Pennsylvania State University

- Break for dinner on own then return to your accommodations for the evening.

March 14 | Sofia

Friday

Meals Included
Breakfast

Sofia Accommodations
[Rila Hotel](#) or similar (7 of 8)

- Make your way to today’s engagements – *No local staff. Public transportation included.*

Media Visit

Arranged by The Pennsylvania State University

- Break for lunch on own.
- Continue to next visit.

Media Visit

Arranged by The Pennsylvania State University

- Break for dinner on own then return to your accommodations for the evening.

March 15 | Sofia

Saturday

Meals Included
Breakfast
Dinner

Sofia Accommodations
[Rila Hotel](#) or similar (8 of 8)

- Spend the day at your leisure to explore the city.
- Experience the tastes of the culture on your own or with your friends for lunch.

- In the evening, make your way to dinner on foot.
- Reflect on your experiences with a group **Farewell Dinner** at **Hadjidraganovi Izbi** or similar – *Local staff included.*

March 16 | Program Ends

Sunday

Meals Included
Breakfast

- Participants are responsible for their own transportation to the airport.

- Flights return home – *Arranged by WorldStrides.*

Return Flights – Quote only – Subject to Change

Flight #	Origin	Destination	Departure	Arrival
LH1427	Sofia (SOF)	Frankfurt (FRA)	1:50 p.m.	3:30 p.m.
LH8803	Frankfurt (FRA)	Newark (EWR)	5:15 p.m.	9:30 p.m.