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A BRIEF HISTORY OF BULGARIA

The territory of Bulgaria has been inhabited since the earliest historical times - the Stone Age and the Copper-stone Age. Evidences for this are the numerous residential and burial mounds. Some of them are the

Karanovska mound and the Neolithic residence, dating back to the 6th millennium BC, in the area of Stara Zagora. The oldest golden treasure in the world, discovered near Varna, dates back to the same time period.





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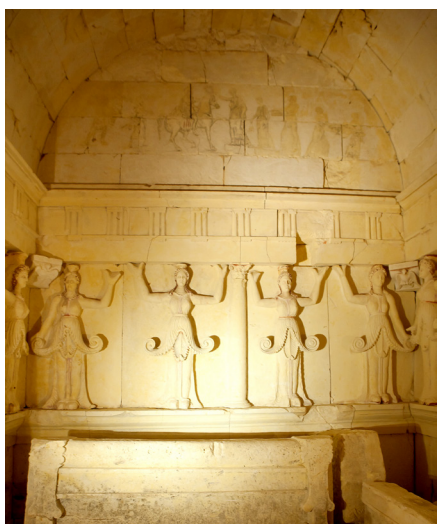


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During the Bronze Age Thracians settled here and left us a rich cultural heritage - tombs, temples and treasures. It is believed that the mythical Thracian singer Orpheus lived in the Rhodope Mountain, and the rebellious Spartacus was born near the present town of Sandanski.



A BRIEF HISTORY OF BULGARIA

When in the late first century AD the Bulgarian lands became part of the territory of the Roman Empire, a large-scale construction began; new towns appeared in place of the old Thracian settlements. Many architectural and archaeological monuments from this period are preserved - the ancient Roman theater and

stadium in Plovdiv, the ruins of the Roman towns Ulpia Eskus, Nove, Nicopolis ad Istrum, Nicopolis ad Nestum, Augusta Trayana, Abritus, Deultum and others. After the collapse of the Roman Empire, the present-day Bulgarian lands were included to the territory of the Byzantine Empire.





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In the second half of the 7th century the territory of the present-day northeast Bulgaria was inhabited by the proto-Bulgarians, who settled there and united with the Slavs and founded the Bulgarian state, which was recognized by Byzantium in 681.

At the head of the state stood Khan Asparuh. Pliska was declared a capital of the newly founded state. The ruins of the old capital have left from this period of history. Its scale of construction and magnificent architecture can be noticed even nowadays.





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One of the most magnificent monuments - the Madara Horseman was created sometime between the founding of Bulgaria and the adoption of Christianity (mid-ninth century). The unique rock relief was carved at a height of 23 meters, not far from the pagan capital Pliska.





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In 864, during the reign of prince Boris I Mihail (852-889 AD) Bulgaria adopted Christianity as its official religion. This act abolished the ethnic differences between the Proto-Bulgarians and Slavs, and the building of the unified Bulgarian nation began.





A BRIEF HISTORY OF BULGARIA

At the end of the century the Slav brothers Cyril (Constantine the Philosopher) and Methodius created and disseminated the Slavic alphabet (also known as the Cyrillic alphabet). Their disciples Clement and Nahum came to Bulgaria, where they were warmly welcomed and found

good conditions for work. They developed a rich educational and literary activity. The Cyrillic alphabet spread from Bulgaria to other Slavic countries such as Serbia and Russia. Ohrid and Pliska, and later the new capital city Veliki Preslav, became centers of the Bulgarian and Slavonic Culture.





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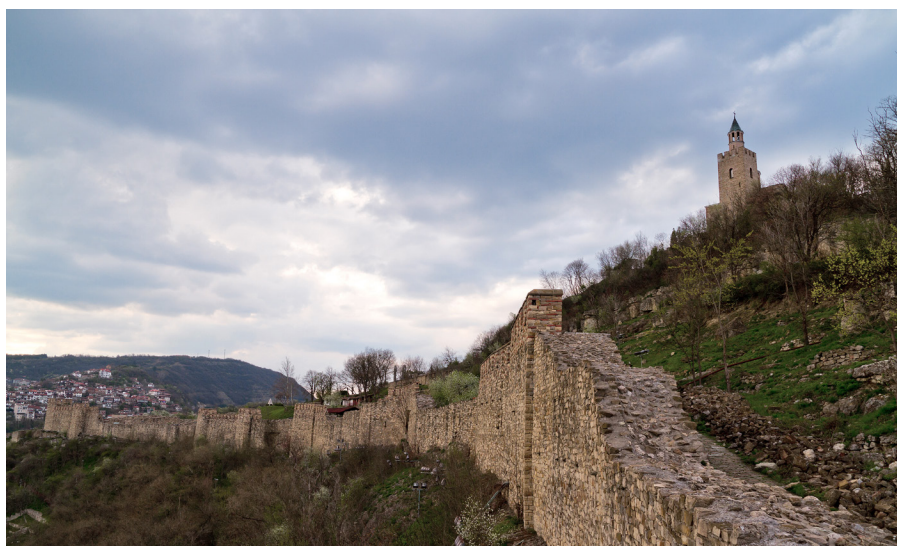
The reign of Tsar Simeon the 1st (893-927) was known as the Golden Age of the Bulgarian culture and the country's borders by this time reached the Black Sea, White Sea and the Aegean Sea. Simeon moved the capital of the

country from pagan Pliska to Christian Preslav, which was considered one of the most beautiful cities in Europe. The remains of palaces, churches and municipal buildings of the second Bulgarian capital are preserved to the present day.





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In 1018, after the prolonged wars, Bulgaria was conquered by Byzantium. In 1186 the uprising, led by the brothers Asen and Peter, overthrew the domination of Byzantium. The Second Bulgarian Kingdom was founded and Tarnovo became its capital city.

The peace treaty between Bulgaria and Byzantium, in which Byzantium recognized the Second Bulgarian Kingdom, was signed in the Lovech fortress. The remains of the fortress, studied and restored, can be seen on the Hisarya hill, over the town of Lovech.



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Veliko Tarnovo keeps most of the monuments of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. On Tsarevets Hill in the city visitors can nowadays see the brilliantly restored fortress walls and towers. Here stood the royal palace, many residential and commercial buildings and the water reservoirs. Another historic

hill is located near Tsarevets – the Trapezitsa hill. Its historical richness is high and still not fully revealed. The Christian churches of the old capital were concentrated here. Excavations on the hill continue and new and interesting discoveries light out almost all the time. Among the most interesting landmarks of





A BRIEF HISTORY OF BULGARIA



Tarnovo are its temples - Forty Holy Martyrs, St. George, St. Dimitar, St. Peter and Paul, the audiovisual sound and light show which takes place at the fortress Tsarevets, as well as the numerous museums, telling the millennial history of the old town.





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The earlier power of Bulgaria was restored during the reign of the younger brother of the boyars Asen and Peter - Tsar Kaloyan (reigned 1197-1207) and at the time of Tsar Ivan Asen the 2nd (1218 -1241) the Second Bulgarian Kingdom reached its zenith – it established political hegemony in South East Europe,

expanding its borders to the Black Sea, Aegean Sea and the Adriatic Sea, the economy and culture of the country developed quickly. From those times are preserved the frescoes in the Boyana Church, the churches in Tarnovo, the Zemenski Monastery, the Ivanovski rock churches, the Asenova fortress and others.





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In 1396 the country was conquered by the Ottoman Empire. The conquest was followed by five centuries of Ottoman dominion, during which the only spiritual centers, preserving the Bulgarian culture and spirit, were the Orthodox

monasteries. Many of them were founded before the fall of Bulgaria under the Ottoman dominion and in this dark period of five centuries they were repeatedly burned and restored, and continued their spiritual work to the present day.





A BRIEF HISTORY OF BULGARIA



The Bulgarian Revival began at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, when Bulgarian people awakened and matured for an organized fight against the Ottoman Empire. During this period, the Bulgarian merchants and craftsmen established trade connections with Europe, due to which many innovations in lifestyle and culture, education and architecture entered the

Bulgarian lands. Magnificent buildings are preserved from those times. Whole villages, carrying the spirit of the Revival age, were declared architectural reserves - Kovachevitsa, Shiroka Laka, Bozhentsi, Koprivshtitsa, etc. The unique architecture from the times of the National Revival found its peak in the Revival houses of Plovdiv, whose architectural style was called the Bulgarian Baroque.



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In 1876 the April Uprising broke out – it was the largest and most organized attempt for liberation from the Ottoman domination. The first shot of the uprising was made at the bridge

Parva Pushka in the town of Koprivshtitsa.

The uprising was suppressed with great brutality, but put the Bulgarian national issue at the center of international politics.



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In 1878, following the War between Russia and Turkey, the Bulgarian state was restored. Nowadays in the places, where the most memorable battles were fought, are built magnificent monuments – the park museum Shipka stands on the Shipka peak, and the Panorama “Pleven Odyssey” is in the town of Pleven.





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The Berlin Congress (1878), divided the former Bulgarian territories into three parts - Principality of Bulgaria, headed by a Bulgarian Prince, Eastern Rumelia with a Christian governor appointed by the Sultan, and Thrace and Macedonia, which remained under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. Alexander I of Battenberg was elected to be the first Prince of

the Principality of Bulgaria.

In 1879 in Veliko Tarnovo was adopted the first Constitution of Bulgaria - one of the most democratic for its time.

Nowadays the museum of National Revival and Constituent Assembly in Veliko Tarnovo is housed in the building, where the Tarnovo Constitution was adopted.





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In 1885 the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia were united. Nowadays 6 September is celebrated annually as the day of the Bulgarian unification.

The Ilinden uprising broke out in 1903 for the freedom of Macedonia and Adrianople. In the area of Petrova Niva, where the congress was held, and where a decision was made to start the uprising in 1903, stands a museum, telling the story of the uprising, a monument, erected in honor of those who died for the sake of the uprising, and a temple.





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In 1908 the Bulgarian Prince Ferdinand Saxe-Coburg Gotha proclaimed independency from Turkey and named himself king of the Third Bulgarian Kingdom.

In 1912 Bulgaria led the victorious Balkan war against Turkey, but in the next 1913 year, the former allies Serbia and Greece, due to disagreements, turned against Bulgaria and this led to a Balkan war in which Bulgaria suffered defeat. As a result of this war, more of the country's territories, inhabited by Bulgarians, were detached.

The intervention of Bulgaria in the First World War on the side of the Central Powers ended with a national catastrophe. The Neuilly Peace Treaty of 1919 imposed severe provisions on Bulgaria – the state lost a large part of its territories.

The first half of the twentieth century was a period of prosperity for the Bulgarian economy and culture. Some of the most magnificent architectural sites in the country date back to that period - the cathedral St. Al. Nevski, the National theatre Ivan Vazov, etc.



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In the early 40s Bulgaria led a policy in the interests of Germany and the Axis powers. In 1941 Bulgaria declared war on the United States and the United Kingdom, but the Bulgarian army was not involved in the battles at the Eastern Front. Tsar Boris the 3rd supported the public pressure and prevented the deportation of about 50,000 Bulgarian Jews. In August 1943 Tsar Boris the 3rd died and the regency of the young King Simeon the 2nd took over the government. On 5 September 1944 the Soviet Army entered Bulgaria and on 9 September the Fatherland

Front (Otechestven Front) Government took leadership over the country, headed by Kimon Georgiev. In 1946 Bulgaria was proclaimed a Republic. The royal family left the country. The Bulgarian Communist Party came to power. Political parties outside the Otechestven Front were banned, the economy and banks were nationalized, the arable land was coercively organized in cooperatives. The government of the country was consistently switched between Georgi Dimitrov, Vasil Kolarov, Valko Chervenkov, Anton Yugov and Todor Zhivkov.



A BRIEF HISTORY OF BULGARIA



The democratic changes in Bulgaria started in the end of 1989. Multiparty elections were held. A new constitution was adopted. Bulgaria took the road to democratic development and market economy. Bulgaria is a member of the Council of Europe

since 1991. In 2004 Bulgaria became a NATO member.

Since 1 January 2007, after fulfilling the criteria for membership, Bulgaria has been a full member of the European Union.



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