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# SOFIA GUIDE

*multimedia*



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*Those, who want to get to know Bulgaria, need to visit its capital, Sofia - a city with ages old history, magnificent architecture, numerous museums, galleries, theaters, parks, hotels, restaurants and various entertainment opportunities. Here everyone can find a way to entertain or learn something new and interesting.*



*Sofia is the largest city in the country; it has an international airport and local transport which covers the entire city - subway, buses, trolleybuses, trams, and route taxis. The opportunities for accommodation are diverse and can satisfy every taste - from various category hotels, international hotel branches, small family hotels, hostels, etc.*

*Many of Sofia's landmarks are concentrated in the central part of the city. They are located close to each other so the tourists, wishing to tour all of them, don't need transport. But in order to be sure you don't miss anything important, it is better to buy a city map or hire a guide from the city tourist information center. The center offers free walking guided tours along the downtown landmarks of Sofia, which are held on Saturdays and Wednesdays from 9.30 am for groups over 10 people. It is necessary to make an appointment in advance by phone (+359) 2 4918344 or (+359) 2 4918345.*



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*In the subway, between the Council of Ministers and the Presidency, lie the remains of the east gate of the ancient fortress of Serdika. The fortified wall was built during the second half of the 2nd century*

*AD. A large part of the ancient city lies in this part of Sofia nowadays. New parts of the fortress were discovered during the construction of the subway; they are soon to be restored and exhibited.*



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*Very close to the fortress, in the courtyard of the Presidency, is the rotunda St. George. It is the oldest Christian temple in the capital. It was built in the 4th century, during the reign of emperor Constantine the Great. Nowadays St. George is an operating Orthodox church.*







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*Opposite to the Presidency, in an old mosque, dating back to the 15th century, stands the National Archaeology Museum. The exhibition in the museum represents some of the most important archaeological*

*discoveries made in the Bulgarian lands. Among the most valuable exhibits are the mask of Teres, the Valchitran Treasure (14th - 12th century BC) and the treasure of Lukovit (4th century BC).*





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*Not far from the museum, on the other side of the Council of Ministers is the Banya Bashi mosque. It was built in 1566-1567. The Muslim shrine is operating, but it is only accessible for tourists, who observe certain rules of dressing and behavior.*







*Only a few hundred meters from the mosque stands the Catholic cathedral St. Joseph. The building is brand new – it was built in 2006 at the place of the old Catholic Cathedral, which was destroyed in the bombing in 1944, during the second World War.*





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*The largest Sephardic (Spanish-Jewish) synagogue in Europe is situated in Sofia. It is located near the mosque and the Catholic cathedral. It was built in 1909. Nowadays it has a Jewish History Museum at the Organization of the Bulgarian Jews - Shalom.*





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*At the central square, Prince Alexander the 1st, opposite the Archeological Museum is the former royal palace. Nowadays it hosts the National Ethnographic Museum and the National Art Gallery. Some of the greatest masterpieces of Bulgarian painters and sculptors are stored in the Gallery.*





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*The Ethnographic Museum possesses a rich collection of costumes, household items, textiles, embroideries and carvings from all regions of the country.*

*The National Natural History Museum is located near the palace. It was founded in 1889 and this makes it the oldest museum in Bulgaria.*



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*There you can see many interesting stuffed animals, some of which are already considered extinct.*

*In close proximity to the Natural History Museum is located the Russian church St. Nikolas.*

*It was built in the period between 1907 - 1914 by the project of the Russian architect M. Preobrazhenski. With its remarkable architecture and the golden domes of the temple, it is one of the most beautiful buildings in Sofia.*





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*A few hundred meters from the Russian Church lays the Christian church St. Sofia. It is the second oldest church in the city after the Rotunda St. George. The church was built in the 6th century during the reign of the Byzantine emperor Justinian on the foundations*



*of 4 older Christian temples, dating back to the fourth century. During the Middle Ages this was the main temple in the city. This was the main reason for Serdika to adopt its name. During the Ottoman Dominion, the building was used as a mosque. Nowadays it is an operating Christian church.*



*Right next to St. Sophia is the largest Orthodox church in Bulgaria - the cathedral St. Alexander Nevski. It was built for a long time - the foundation stone was laid in 1882 but construction started later - in 1904. The temple*

*was completed as late as 1912 and was consecrated in 1924. The remarkable building is a symbol of the Sofia. The crypt of the temple houses the exhibition of the National Art Gallery, dedicated to Christian art.*





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*One of the most beautiful buildings in Sofia is the national theater Ivan Vazov. It is located in the central part of the city. The building was built in 1906 by the design of Austrian architects. However in 1923, during a performance,*

*the theatre was set on fire and almost burned to the ground. The new building, raised by a project of a German architect, opened in 1929. The front garden of the theater is a pleasant place for walks and relaxation.*





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*The landmarks of Sofia are even more - in the periphery of the central part of the city is located the National Museum of Military History. It is one of the museums with largest collection in the country. It stores about 1 million evidences of the Bulgarian and European military history.*





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*The National History Museum is located in the residential section Boyana, in the outskirts of the capital. To get there, you will need transportation, but the museum is an obligatory place to visit, in order to explore the city entirely. Some of the greatest historical assets in Bulgaria are stores*

*here, among which are the numerous Thracian treasures. The most famous of them is the Panagyurishte treasure, dating back to the 4th century BC.*





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*Another landmark in Boyana district is the Boyana Church - one of the Bulgarian sites under the aegis of UNESCO.*



*If you are tired of a long walk, you can relax in a restaurant or in one of the parks in Sofia. The Borisova Garden, the South Park, Zaimov park and the West park are some of the most visited places in Sofia on weekends.*

*Another favorite spot for walks is the Zoo – which is the largest one in Bulgaria.*

*In weekends many residents and guests of the capital visit the nearby Mountain Vitosha - for a picnic, for hiking or sports.*



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