

Tourism in Bulgaria

Bulgaria is one of the most visited tourist destinations in Southeast Europe. Tourism has been an important source of economic growth. In 2008 Bulgaria was visited by 8.9 million tourists, as outlined by the World Tourism Organization. Tourists from three countries - Greece, Romania and Germany - account for 40% of visitors. New types of tourism, including cultural, architectural and historic tours, eco-tourism, and adventure tours, are expanding the range of visitor experiences. The tourist industry, especially on the seaside, continues to suffer from construction works, poor handling of visitors, poor advertisement and low bed occupancy.

Hiking and skiing

Winter tourist centres, such as Borovetz, Bansko, Pamporovo and Vitosha are picturesque and popular ski resorts.

Sea resorts

The Bulgarian summer resorts along the Black Sea coast include destinations such as the summer resorts: Sozopol, Nesebar, Golden Sands, Sunny Beach, Sveti Vlas, Albena and Saints Constantine and Helena. Some guests, such as the Germans, Russians or Scandinavians favour the summer beach resorts, while winter tourism, and the ski resorts, are the favourites of the British.

Night life

Bulgaria is popular with its night and disco clubs attracting tourists in the sea resorts and also in the capital Sofia (to which Vitosha mountain is near).

Ethno, cultural and historical tourism

Tourist activities such as "ethno-tourism" and "architectural-cultural" tourism are gaining ground, catering to specialized tastes. These are new types of tours, which involve interaction with and living amongst the local people in mountain villages.

For the more adventurous, active recreation involving mountain hiking and bike tourism, provides a close connection with nature. Climbers scale the granite mountains of Rila, Pirin and the Balkan. Hikers enjoy the mountains of Vitosha and the Rhodopes. Mountain biking, and bicycle racing are also recreations, and Bulgaria is one of only six countries to annually host the official 1,200 km *Randonnees* - ultra-marathon bicycle rides patterned after Paris–Brest–Paris.

Situated at the crossroads of the East and West, Bulgaria has been home to many civilizations - Thracians, Romans, Byzantines, Slavs, Proto-Bulgarians and Ottomans. Bulgaria is rich in historical artefacts, but museums to upkeep them are still to be built (central historical and art museum is now being developed in Sofia). Many of the museums and monasteries still need to be properly advertised and maintained, and some of the most interesting heritage sites may not be easily accessible due to poor infrastructure. Yet some visitors regard such "underdevelopment" as desirable - those who prefer to experience history first-hand rather than look at artefacts behind glass.

Top 10 International Visitors in Bulgaria

Data Source

Rank	country	2010
1	Romania	917,950
2	Greece	905,083
3	Germany	713,980
4	Russia	378,382
5	Macedonia	309,906
6	United Kingdom	289,156
7	Poland	253,962
8	Serbia	205,796
9	Turkey	204,103
10	Czech Republic	166,395

Destinations

Summer Resorts

Albena, Ahtopol, Balchik, Dyuni, Elenite, Golden Sands, Kiten, Lozenets, Nessebar, Obzor, Pomorie, Primorsko, Riviera, Rusalka, Sinemorets, Sozopol, St. Constantine, St. Vlas, Sunny Beach, Tsarevo

Winter resorts

Bansko, Chepelare, Borovetz, Pamporovo, Uzana, Vitosha

Cultural tourism

Veliko Tarnovo, Nessebar, Sozopol, Plovdiv, Bansko, Ethnographic museum Etara, Koprivshtitsa

Rural tourism

Elena, Arbanasi, Ribaritsa, Bozhentsi, Kumani, Ethnographic museum Etara, Shiroka Laka, Tryavna, Zheravna, Orehovo, Madzharovo, Dragoyново

City tourism

Plovdiv, Veliko Tarnovo, Sofia, Varna, Burgas, Rouse, Vratsa, Pleven, Vidin, Lovech

Hiking

Balkan Mountains, Pirin Mountains, Rila Mountains, Rhodopi Mountains, Strandzha Mountains, Sakar Montains, Vitosha Mountain

Paragliding

Central Balkan Mountains

Monasteries

Rila Monastery, Bachkovo Monastery, Rozhen Monastery, Dryanovo Monastery, Sokolsky Monastery, Troyan Monastery, The Assumption Monastery in Kardzhali town, Pomorie Monastery

Most picturesque Bulgarian villages (according to National Geographic, January 2005)

Orehovo, Narechen, Dragoyново

Source: Wikipedia

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