

SOFIA HOTEL BALKAN

5, Sveta Nedelya Square, Sofia 1000, Bulgaria

T: (359) (2) 9816541

From Sofia Airport to the Sofia Hotel Balkan:

Distance from the Hotel: 8 KM

Hotel Airport Shuttle: €30. Please inform the Hotel staff about your estimated arrival time.

Subway Station: Serdika Station

Taxi: the fare should be around 20 BGN (10 EUR). However, you need to be careful as there are a lot of scammers.

Hotel Overview

Located in Centrum district, the 5-star Sofia Hotel Balkan, A Luxury Collection Hotel, is next-door to the medieval Bulgarian orthodox Church of St Petka of the Saddlers. Sofia center can be reached within 5 minutes' walk. Famous Alexander Nevsky Cathedral can be reached in about 14 minutes' walk. A 3-minute stroll will take you to Serdika subway station.

Sofia Hotel Balkan was built in 1956 as part of a new architectural trend: a fusion of classical design and lavish décor. The iconic building of the hotel is part of the President's Palace complex and beneath its foundations lies a historical Roman fortress, the remains of which can be seen all around the hotel. The classical style blends in perfect harmony with the contemporary modernity of the restaurant, lobby bar and the newly refurbished guest rooms.

The intricate floor is inspired by the Byzantine mosaics and the accent gold metal and ceiling pay homage to the country's history of gold smelting. The conservatory of the Lobby Bar "Basilica" pays homage to Bulgaria's forests and acts as a winter garden in the cold months and a green oasis in the summer. Taking inspiration from Sofia's rich architectural heritage, Restaurant "Labels" has been designed with opulence in mind. The outstanding new restaurant offers the city's most elegant and enchanting refuge for exceptional dining experience. The signature menu is a fine mixture between International cuisine and authentic Bulgarian dishes.

Featured amenities on-site: Restaurant, Fitness Center, 24 Hour Room Service, Daily Housekeeping, Turndown Service, Meeting Space, Casino, Gift Shop, Dry Cleaning Service

Check-in: 2:00 pm

Check-out: 12:00 pm

Smoke Free Property

Internet

Wireless internet is available in the hotel rooms for free.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Bulgaria is a country occupying the eastern portion of the Balkan Peninsula in southeastern Europe. Founded in the 7th century, Bulgaria is one of the oldest states on the European continent. It is intersected by historically important routes from northern and eastern Europe to the Mediterranean basin and from western and central Europe to the Middle East. Before the creation of the Bulgarian state, the empires of ancient Rome, Greece, and Byzantium were strong presences, and people and goods traveled the land with frequency.

Sofia is Bulgaria's capital and largest city. It is one of Europe's oldest cities. While still undiscovered by many, more and more people are now falling in love with the city's unique east meets west vibe.

HISTORY OF SOFIA

For the past 6000 years, this city has seen it all. Once called Serdica – an important trade center in the Roman empire. Then conquered by the Bulgarians in the 9th century, then conquered by the Byzantine Empire, then re-claimed by the Bulgarians, and then a stronghold of the Ottoman empire. After Bulgaria gained its independence in the late 19th century, Sofia was chosen as the country's new capital. It's now been capital for 140 years.

The city's appearance today has been widely shaped by the twists and turmoils of the 20th century. Up until WW2 Bulgaria was a parliamentary monarchy and Sofia's architecture was influenced by the examples of Austrian, French, and German architecture. The second half of the 20th century saw Bulgaria firmly locked behind the Iron Curtain. Therefore, architecture and urban planning were reconceptualized to fit with the new communist ideas. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Bulgaria started its transition to democracy and is now a member of NATO and the European Union. All of this creates the unique blend that is Sofia today.

Sightseeing in Sofia

Sofia's city center is very compact and most of the city's main landmarks are situated within walking distance. Our best suggestion for any first-time visitor is one of the city's daily free walking tours.

Sofia is one of the most visited tourist destinations in Bulgaria alongside coastal and mountain resorts. Among its highlights is the [Alexander Nevsky Cathedral](#), one of the symbols of Bulgaria, constructed in the late 19th century. It occupies an area of 3,170 square metres (34,122 square feet) and can hold 10,000 people.

The city center contains many remains of ancient Serdica that have been excavated and are on public display, including Complex Ancient Serdica, eastern gate, western gate, city walls, thermal baths, 4th c. [church of St. George Rotunda](#), [Amphitheatre of Serdica](#), the tombs and basilicas under the [basilica of St. Sophia](#).

[Vitosha Boulevard](#), also called Vitoshka, is a pedestrian zone with numerous cafés, restaurants, fashion boutiques, and [luxury goods](#) stores. Sofia's [geographic location](#), in the foothills of the weekend retreat [Vitosha](#) mountain, further adds to the city's specific atmosphere.

Museums and Galleries in Sofia

We recommend that you visit at least one museum during your Sofia visit. And now comes the hard part... which one? Most museums are situated in the center of the city. Here are some of our favorites:

- [History Museum of Sofia](#) – You will find it in one of the city's most beautiful buildings – The Former Mineral Baths
- [National Archeological Museum](#) – Situated right in front of the Presidency, this is for all interested in learning much more about the remote past of our lands
- [National History Museum](#) – This one is a little bit further away from the city center, but totally worth the visit. It's also where you'll find some of Bulgaria's most impressive golden treasures
- [National Art Gallery Square 500](#) – One of Sofia's newest galleries, often referred to as "The Bulgarian Louvre" it truly offers a great variety of both Bulgarian and foreign art

EATING IN SOFIA

Wondering where to eat in Sofia? That is indeed a tricky question as Sofia is home to plenty of great restaurants that offer great value for money.

Best Traditional Restaurants

Bulgarian food is not to be missed when visiting Sofia. Going to a traditional restaurant is a must for any visit to Bulgaria. Here are some of our favorites:

- Pod Lipite – one of the oldest garden restaurants in Sofia. It dates back to 1926 and is part of the list of Bulgarian Cultural Monuments. The traditional meals are prepared based on original old recipes. Many of the products they use are from their own farm.
- Manastirska Magernitsa – situated in the very center of Sofia, this is where you can try real monastery food. The recipes have been collected carefully for many years. Apart from the great traditional decorations this restaurant also has a charming garden, perfect for the warm sunny days.

You haven't been to Bulgaria unless you've tried Bulgarian food

Spicing up your trip with new flavors is a must in Bulgaria

Banitsa

Undoubtedly, our number one dish is **banitsa**. This queen of Bulgarian specialties is a pastry usually stuffed with cheese but there are plenty of other versions for the adventurous type – spinach, cabbage, apple, pumpkin, eggs or meat, or a combo of these could be your daily joy. Banitsa is known as a breakfast meal but it is also eaten for brunch, lunch, dinner or just as a snack in between. It is truly traditional with recipes passed through the family.

Shopska salad

Maybe you've heard a legend during your travels: there is a country in the world where tomatoes are actually tasty! Well, this country happens to be Bulgaria! Tomatoes are essential when talking about Bulgarian food. When mixed with our equally luscious cucumbers and our homegrown white cheese, you get Shopska salad. Why such an odd name? Well, it is named after the ethnographic region of Sofia.

Liutenitza

If you ever get into a discussion with a Bulgarian about their childhood you will probably hear the following story: 'we used to play all day long outside and our grandmothers used to chase us down with a slice of bread with liutenitsa on top to feed us.'

The spread is made of roasted peppers, tomatoes and eggplants and has a nice shiny red color. We preserve it in little jars and keep it for the winter.

Kebapcheta

Meatlovers, this is your section! If you want to eat meat as a Bulgarian you have to start with this dish. If you enjoy eating grilled meat – kebabche is the one for you. Kebabche is made of minced meat with local spices.

Bob

Bob is not your uncle. Bob means 'beans' in Bulgarian and is used for the making of a traditional dish. Bob is usually cooked in a pot. Have you seen some of those really beautiful and colorful traditional ceramic pots? Most authentic restaurants offer this bean dish in traditional pottery as it keeps the heat and allows the beans to cook slowly.

Tarator

Any article about Bulgarian food will be incomplete without it- a cold soup with yoghurt and cucumbers. Extra easy to make. You add water to the yoghurt so it becomes soupy, add chopped cucumbers, garlic, dill, oil and salt. If you want to be fancy – you add some walnuts.

NIGHTLIFE IN SOFIA

Best bars in Sofia

- Bar Petak (Bar Friday) – a.k.a. everyone's favorite "bar of the week" is situated in a hidden place in central Sofia. Outside area, large party-hard ground floor and a smaller chill zone on the second floor. This is where you can meet the coolest people in town from Monday to Sunday. Music is the essence of Bar Petak, they strive to unlock horizons while making you dance.
- Sputnik – home to Sofia's best cocktails
- Dada Culture Bar – a place to relax, meet up with friends, listen to some good live music, and occasionally attend an interesting cultural event.
- Abordage – this is Sofia's favorite place for board games – the perfect place to have fun with your travel buddies and enjoy draft live beer, craft beer, tea, coffee, non-alcoholic beverages, and cocktails
- **The New Sofia Pub Crawl** – If you only have limited time in Sofia why not visit 5 different bars in just one night with a pub crawl of Sofia's unique and hidden bars?

Clubs and Live Venues

- Exe Club – one of Sofia’s newest clubs quickly became a favorite of a lot of locals. Every Friday this club offers an event with trap and hip-hop music. Every Saturday – house & techno music with international guest DJs
- Sofia Live Club
- National Palace of Culture – a hub for all sorts of cultural events, concerts, exhibitions and festivals. Make sure to check their program while in Sofia.
- Sofia Opera and Ballet House – Bulgaria is proud to have a long history and high standards of opera and ballet performances. Therefore, if you are a fan, visiting the local opera & ballet house is a must
- Hall Bulgaria – for the lovers of classical performances, it’s where the Sofia Philharmonic Orchestra performs most often.
- Terminal 1

A great way to check what events are happening in Sofia during your visit is this website. They’ll keep you up to date with the most interesting performances in town.

Public Transport

Most of the city’s cultural life is situated in the center of the city. Therefore, walking is the best option to navigate the city. However, if you need to use the public transport, we are here for you! Sofia has it all – trams, buses, trolleybuses, marshrutka (a local type of mini-bus). Public transport in the city is very affordable at a fixed rate of 1.60BGN (around 0.80EUR) per journey. A day card for unlimited use of all public transport will cost you 4 BGN (around 2.00EUR).

Metro

Sofia’s metro network is relatively new and it’s locals’ favorite way to get around. The city’s key points (such as the Sofia Airport, Sofia Central Railway and Bus Stations, and historical center) are all well connected with the metro.

Taxis in Sofia

Taxis are very affordable in Bulgaria. A ride from the Sofia airport to the center should be around 20 BGN (10 EUR). Anywhere within the city – around 15 BGN (8 EUR). However, you should be careful as there are a lot of scammers.

PLOVDIV

Plovdiv, is the second-largest city in Bulgaria, standing on the banks of the Maritsa river in the historical region of Thrace. It has a population of 346,893 as of 2018 and 675,000 in the greater metropolitan area. Plovdiv is the cultural capital of Bulgaria and was the European Capital of Culture in 2019. It is an important economic, transport, cultural, and educational center.

Plovdiv was built on seven hills. There are actually only six now: one was quarried for materials to construct the city centuries ago. The most popular for tourists is Nebet Tepe, one of the three hills of the Old Town. The earliest archaeological remains date from 4,000 BC (Plovdiv claims to be the oldest continually inhabited city in Europe).

Old Town

Hilly Plovdiv old town is famed for its photogenic winding cobbled streets and beautifully preserved Ottoman-era townhouses. One of the most splendid is the Hindliyan House, whose Armenian merchant owner installed a rose-water fountain in the hayet, or main living space. This has recently been restored to its former, fragrant glory – the smell fills the room. Another favourite is Klianti House, which has beautifully painted ceilings and half-size rooms with tiny doors that were once used for storing the merchant's wares.

The **Ancient Theatre** is Plovdiv's most famous cultural landmark: a Roman amphitheatre in a dramatic position on a hill above the city. Visitors can enjoy performances by the Plovdiv Opera and its international guests while sitting on ancient marble seats looking over the whole city centre, with the Rhodope mountains in the distance – a breathtaking spectacle.

The Bishop's Basilica

The Bishop's Basilica of Philippopolis was discovered during rescue archaeological excavations, carried out from 1982 to 1986. The basilica was built over former monumental buildings and some of their structures have been archaeologically investigated. It functioned from the middle of the 4th century until the end of the 6th century and during the Middle Ages a Christian necropolis was built over its ruins.

It is a three-nave basilica, with an apse to the east and a peculiarly shaped narthex and atrium to the west. Outstandingly large, it has lavish architectural interior and mosaic floors. It is about 83 m long and 36 m wide, which makes it the largest 4th-6th century basilica in Bulgaria and one of the largest on the Balkans. The floors of the basilica are covered with two layers of mosaics with a total area of over 2000 sq.m.

The mosaic floors from the Bishops Basilica have a peculiar aspect of their own, a combination of different influences and local culture, traditions and resources, and enrich our knowledge of the development and spread of mosaic art in Late Antiquity.

The Bishop`s Basilica of Philippopolis is unique in scale, architectural design and decoration and is one of the most representative early-Christian sites. It provides priceless information about the history of early Christianity and the formation and development of Christian art on the Balkans and in Europe.