

Jim Gold's

Bulgarian Travel Tips

WEATHER: Temperatures are mostly in the 70's. But be prepared for a range of 55 in mountain areas like Bansko and Pamporova, to 90 in the cities like Plovdiv and Sofia. A good website to visit is: <http://weatherspark.com>



CLOTHING: Pack lightly. Our tour dress is informal. Casual clothing is appropriate for everything we do. Bring clothes you can layer to suit a range of temperatures. Suggestions: Wash and wear clothing, sweater, jacket, shorts, raincoat or umbrella, swim suit, comfortable walking shoes (for dancing, too), sandals, sun hat, sunglasses.

MONEY: Bulgarian currency is the Lev, plural form, Leva. In Bulgarian, "lev" means lion.

Bulgaria remains a largely cash economy. You can exchange dollars at banks or change bureaus. There are ATM's in Sofia, Plovdiv, Bansko, Pamporova, and Veliko Turnovo. I suggest bringing \$300 to \$500, mostly for local shopping. Some large stores take credit cards. Traveler's checks are useless. Stick to cash. You may see a local costume, instrument, blouse, book, icon painting, CD, or whatever. For purchases and bargaining "on the spot", cash is best. Plus it's more fun.

A good currency site is: <http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter>

PASSPORTS AND VISAS: Valid passport required, visa is not.

A website to explore is: or www.itseasy.com

It's also good to bring a photocopy of your passport and credit cards.

CAMERAS: If using a digital camera, bring extra batteries and memory cards (difficult to find in Bulgaria).

LUGGAGE: One suitcase per traveler is best. You may also bring one carry-on bag that fits under the airline seat or in the overhead compartment. (Attach name tags to all luggage.)

IMMUNIZATION: No inoculations needed for Bulgaria.

BATHROOMS: Bathrooms are plentiful and in good condition. There are no pay toilets, but sometimes a small “tip” is given to the bathroom attendant where one exists.

MEDICINES: Keep them close at hand, not in checked luggage.

ELECTRICITY: For American appliances, you’ll need a Foreign Travel Voltage Converter and Outlet Adapter. The standard voltage is 230 V and the standard frequency is 50 Hz. Go to <https://www.power-plugs-sockets.com/bulgaria/>

TIPPING: No one knows the “correct” amount to tip. When asked, guides and drivers answer: “It is up to you.” This is true. Thus, to help you decide what is fair, here are some suggested guidelines: \$10 (American) dollars per day for our guide, \$7 per day for our bus driver. It is also customary to leave a small tip in restaurants when ordering a drink, as these are not traditionally part of the meal. Tipping can be in lev or dollars.

AIRPORT CHECK-IN: Be at the airline counter at least 3 hours before departure. Seat assignments are determined by the airline; they cannot be guaranteed until you are assigned boarding cards at the airport check-in counter.

AIR FLIGHT TRAVEL TIPS: Once on board: Set watch to time at destination. Remove shoes. Drink water on the plane. Go to sleep: (Use earplugs, sleep mask, blanket, neck pillow — whatever it takes.) Eat lightly. Exercise and stretch in your seat, in the aisles, during stopovers. (Practice your favorite folk dances!)

Once **on the ground:** Upon your arrival, start eating and sleeping on the new time schedule. Sleep is the most wonderful and curative balm for jet lag! Slumber, doze, and nap as much as possible— on the plane, day of arrival, and even for a couple of the following days. You’ll be fresh and happy, shining and energized, ready to enjoy your true travel objectives. Exercise to help resynchronize your body clock.