

## Discover Bulgaria

### Reading List

#### **Bulgaria - Culture Smart!: The Essential Guide to Customs & Culture**

by Juliana Tzvetkova

Bulgaria, situated in southeastern Europe on the Black Sea, is one of Europe's best-hidden secrets. A haven for nature and history buffs, this beautiful sunny country welcomes the traveler with bread and salt, a red rose, and a wooden vessel full of sparkling wine. These three emblems of ancient treasures, rose oil, and natural beauty symbolize its distinctive culture. This youngest member of the European Union has been riding a roller-coaster of radical transformation since emerging from the Eastern Bloc and becoming a market economy twenty years ago, changing dramatically in many ways and yet preserving its own particular charm and slow-paced way of life. Invasions and waves of migration, dating back to neolithic and classical times, have contributed to a unique cultural mosaic. The country boasts the oldest hoard of gold treasure in the world. The seventh-century Bulgarian empire dominated the Balkans and was a powerhouse of Slavonic culture. Later, Ottoman conquest and Soviet influence left their mark on the national psyche. Culture Smart! Bulgaria provides a key to understanding the Bulgarian people. It outlines their long and complex history, shows you what everyday life is like there today, and offers advice on what to expect and how to behave in different circumstances. This is a small country of proud and persevering people. More than the golden sands of the "Bulgarian Riviera," the vast thickly forested expanses of the Rhodopes or the Rila and Pirin ranges with their snow-capped peaks and emerald-green lakes, the music and dances and the warmth and cordiality of the Bulgarians will conquer your heart and bring you back time and again.

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#### **Bulgaria and Bulgarians A Brief History**

by Plamen Pavlov

Republic of Bulgaria is a state located in South-east Europe and covers the central and eastern parts of Balkan Peninsula. To the north it borders with Republic of Rumania; to the east, with the Black Sea; to the south with Republic of Turkey and Republic of Greece, and to the west, with Republic of Macedonia and Republic of Serbia. Bulgaria's surface area is 110 993 sq. km. The greatest distance from the north to the south is about 330 km, and from the west to the east, about 500 km. The population of Bulgaria, according to the census of 2001 is 7 973 673. About 85% of it is ethnic Bulgarians, 11% are Turks, nearly 4% are Gypsies and less than 1% is of other ethnic groups: Jews,

Armenians, Greek, Russians. Bulgaria's capital city is Sofia. It is also the largest city of the country with a population of 1 114 476 people. The next largest city is Plovdiv (population of 341 374), followed by Varna (population of 308 601), the main seaport of the country. Bulgarian is the official language. As regards religion almost 90% of the population is Christians and of these more than 80% are Eastern Orthodox. The second most numerous community, nearly 10%, is Muslim. There are also Judaists. As regards its state organization Bulgaria is a parliamentary republic with a single chamber parliament (People's assembly). It consists of 240 people's representatives of a 4-year mandate. The head of state is the President of a 5-year mandate. The central body of the top executive power is the council of ministers. The monetary unit of the country is the Lev (the international code is BGN). One Lev equals 100 stotinki. The value of notes is 2, 3, 10, 20, 50 and 100 Levs, while that of coins is 1, 2, 5, 10, 50 stotinki and 1 Lev. From AD 1999 the Lev has been tied up firmly first to German Mark and then to the Euro: 1 EUR = BGN 1,95583. March 3 is Bulgaria's official national holiday. Since January 1st, 2007 Republic of Bulgaria is a full member of the European Union.

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### **Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History**

by Robert D. Kaplan

From the assassination that triggered World War I to the ethnic warfare in Serbia, Bosnia, and Croatia, the Balkans have been the crucible of the twentieth century, the place where terrorism and genocide first became tools of policy. Chosen as one of the Best Books of the Year by The New York Times, and greeted with critical acclaim as "the most insightful and timely work on the Balkans to date" (The Boston Globe), Kaplan's prescient, enthralling, and often chilling political travelogue is already a modern classic.

This new edition of the Balkan Ghosts includes six opinion pieces written by Robert Kaplan about the Balkans between 1996 and 2000 beginning just after the implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords and ending after the conclusion of the Kosovo war, with the removal of Slobodan Milosevic from power.

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### **The Balkans: A Short History**

by Mark Mazower

Throughout history, the Balkans have been a crossroads, a zone of endless military, cultural, and economic mixing and clashing between Europe and Asia, Christianity and Islam, Catholicism and Orthodoxy. In this highly acclaimed short history, Mark Mazower sheds light on what has been called the tinderbox of Europe, whose troubles have ignited wider wars for hundreds of years. Focusing on

events from the emergence of the nation-state onward, *The Balkans* reveals with piercing clarity the historical roots of current conflicts and gives a landmark reassessment of the region's history, from the world wars and the Cold War to the collapse of communism, the disintegration of Yugoslavia, and the continuing search for stability in southeastern Europe.

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## **The Fracture Zone, A Return To The Balkans**

by Simon Winchester

The vast and mountainous area that makes up the Balkans is rife with discord, both cultural and topographical. And, as Simon Winchester superbly demonstrates in this intimate portrait of the region, much of the political strife of the past century can be traced to its inherent contrasts. With the aid of a guide and linguist, Winchester traveled deep into the region's most troublesome areas--including Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Montenegro, Albania, Kosovo, and Turkey--just as the war was tearing these countries apart. The result is a book not just about war but also about how war affects the living. Both timeless and current, *The Fracture Zone* goes behind the headlines to offer a true picture of a region that has always been on the brink. Winchester's remarkable journey puts all the elements together--the faults, the fractures, and the chaos--to make sense out of a seemingly senseless place.

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