



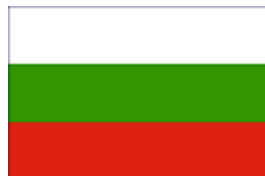
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Bulgaria - past, present and future

At the far South Eastern corner of Europe by the Black Sea, bordering Romania, Serbia, Macedonia, Greece and Turkey, we find Bulgaria – as from 2007 a member of the European Union. Some 7.5 million people inhabit its 111,000 km² - an area slightly smaller than Greece, slightly bigger than Iceland. But only some 1.100 scouts are found in the country - why so?

During your four days in Bulgaria, you will learn about the country, its past, its present and its future. You will also meet quite a few Bulgarians sharing with you their pride of this magnificent country and the challenges they meet, not least regarding making Scouting a big thing. All, of course, accompanied by the unbeatable company of other Friends of Scouting.



Who can participate?

All Friends of Scouting in Europe and their adult family members are welcome, and so are their friends. Availability of accommodation as well as transportation may force organizers to limit the number of participants, therefore be sure to book as early as possible. First come first served.

Travel arrangements

International flights to Sofia are quite numerous, and also include low-fare operators such as Wizz (refer to wizzair.com), Air Berlin (refer to airberlin.com) and EasyJet (refer to easyjet.com). To get the best price, it would, however, be advisable to book your flight as early as possible ... upon receiving your booking confirmation for the FOSE event.

Though being a member of the European Union, Bulgaria is NOT a member of the Schengen treaty. Visitors from an EU country should therefore bring their passports, being valid at least 3 months beyond the planned departure from Bulgaria. Visitors from other countries are strongly encouraged to check for possible visa requirements with local consular services in your own country prior to departure.

What to bring

Bring casual clothing for early autumn temperatures (October may actually still be quite warm) – and a scout uniform, if you have got one.

Programme

The official programme will start on Thursday, 8th October mid-afternoon, and end Sunday 11th October after lunch. Please check out the details below.

Costs

a) Programme

The cost for participation in the full programme (accommodation not included) will be **€ 299**.

The programme will, as usually, be arranged on an *all inclusive basis*, and so the programme fee will cover transportation throughout the week end, all excursions, guides, entrance fees, and (not forgetting) catering inclusive of drinks during meals from Thursday afternoon until farewell time Sunday early afternoon. It has become a tradition to use any financial surplus from the gathering, should it occur, to sponsor a Scout project, with priority given to a project in the host country.

b) Accommodation

The group will stay at two neighbouring hotels, the Adria*** and the Aris***, ul. Knyaz Boris I No 207, / ul. Seliolu No 1, Sofia. The little hotels are almost brand new, and under the same management.

All rooms are equipped with private toilet/shower, cable TV and free WiFi access. Any use of mini bars will be at own expense, however...

Hotel facilities include a fitness room, steam bath, sauna and massage. Our accommodation is minutes away from the main station, the central bus station, the Ladies' Market - and also within walking distance of the city centre.

Accommodation for **all 3 nights** will cost you € 105 per person in single rooms, and € 63 per person sharing double rooms.

If you want to extend your stay in Sofia, additional nights at your hotel may be booked in the enclosed form. Such extra nights will be charged at the group rate, but should be paid directly to the hotel upon arrival



Programme

Thursday 8th October Youth opportunities and Talents

We meet in the court between the two hotels at 14:00, and shall start our Bulgarian stay visiting government officials of the Ministry of Youth and Sports at the nearby government buildings to get introduced to the (not least economical) conditions for Youth in general, and Scouting in particular within the BG society.

Afterwards, we shall get to know our bearings through a guided walk through Sofia lead by the *365 Association* - a youth training project doing guided walking tours of Sofia, Plovdiv and Varna.

We shall end the day enjoying a Gourmet Dinner at the Restaurant Talents - the only student-operated restaurant in Eastern Europe, and part of Bulgaria's premier culinary institute the HRC Culinary Academy



Friday 9th October Landscape, hot waters and demography

Friday, a coach will take us south through the Struma Valley. We shall visit the *Sapareva Banya* - the only Geyser (= hot mineral water springs) on the European continent. The hot water is normally used for heating, but it will, of course, spring proudly for us when we visit!

Our next stop will be at the village of Ilindentsi. Like so many other rural towns, Ilindentsi struggles the challenge of youth leaving for a life in the big cities. We shall meet the Mayor at the abandoned school and learn about countryside life and problems. We shall also see some of the initiatives the left over population take to turn around development: We shall enjoy lunch and wine tasting with locals trying to establish Ilindentsi as a wine producing district, and we shall visit a site exploiting local marble for an international experimental art workshop.

We shall end the day having a stroll through the provincial town of Sandanski (those participants wanting a special experience may bring their swim suits and towels to enjoy the thermal baths). Dinner will be at the Orchid restaurant, right beside the spa district.

After dinner, we shall return to Sofia.



Saturday 10th October Roots and history

Saturday, we shall go east to Plovdiv, the second-largest city in Bulgaria - and the city chosen to be the European Capital of Culture in 2019.



We shall visit the Ethnographical Museum giving a glimpse of homes and trades of Bulgarian pre-industrialisation times.

A short walk away from the museum, we shall have our lunch at the Граждански Клуб (Citizens' Club).

After lunch, a guided tour will take us through the quite impressive monuments of Hellenic, Roman and Osman history to the Town Hall Square, where we shall have a refreshment before returning to Sofia.

Under way, we shall have a presentation of *Small Projects* made by Bulgarian Scouts.

We shall be back in Sofia in time to get ourselves prepared for the *traditional Saturday Night Dinner*. Nice food, nice environment, welcoming of new friends, and other *official words*. The setting will be the traditional Bulgarian Хаджидрагановите Къши (Pilgrim Dragan's Houses restaurant), just 5 minutes walk away from our accommodation.



Sunday 11th October Meet ... and greet

We shall start the day with the *Annual Meeting of the Friends of Scouting* at the Adria Hotel conference facilities.

Afterwards, we shall go down town to the Rotunda Restaurant for an informal get-together with Bulgarian Scouts for a most wanted brain storm of ideas for fund raising. Sandwiches, socializing and further talks will mark the end of this year's gathering.



The facts and figures given in the above programme are valid as per the time of editing and distributing the present invitation. Events beyond our control may give rise to alterations without prior notice.

What you don't see during the gathering...

As usually, we cannot possibly see everything during in just a prolonged week end. For those having the possibility to do so, take the chance. Guide books and tourist agencies will happily lead your way.

Here are a couple of suggestions - some of which will be well known to participants in the 3rd FOSE Gathering back in 2001...



The Rila Monastery

The monastery as such originates from 925 AD, the actual site however "only" dates back to 1335 AD. Those of you who are interested in religious art will acknowledge why guide books put Rila in as one of Bulgaria's main tourist attractions.



Melnik

Wine tourism is still under development in Bulgaria. A good example of this is the town of Melnik, just north of the border to Greece. Go and taste for yourselves...



Bachkovo Monastery

Smaller than Rila, but having its own original charm, is the Bachkovo, a short distance from Plovdiv. One key attraction is the icon of the Virgin, allegedly painted by St Luke.



Koprivshitsa

This well-preserved 'museum village' in central Bulgaria is lying on the Topolnitsa River among the Sredna Gora mountains. It is known for its authentic Bulgarian architecture and for its folk music festivals, making it a very popular tourist destination.



The Seven Rila Lakes

Those of you wanting to put on your hiking boots will love a walk in the Rila Mountains, south of Sofia. A good starting point (also accessible by public transportation) is the Borovets ski resort, from where well marked trails lead your way into the landscape. This is also the gateway to the highest mountain peak in Balkan, the Musala (2925 m)



Sofia

The FOSE event only gives you some highlights of the Bulgarian capital. The city however offers a wide range of sights and activities ranging from interesting churches, a huge selection of interesting museums, memorabilia from 40 years of communism, and - perhaps most important - to the vibrant life in streets and markets.

Registration form

To register for the 17th annual gathering of the FRIENDS OF SCOUTING IN EUROPE, please fill in the below form, and send it as attachment to a mail to FOSEtours@live.dk. Snail mail to Johansen&Stephansen, Boegevej 5, DK-4070 Kirke Hyllinge is less efficient, more expensive, but of course fully acceptable! You may fill out this form by hand and send us a scan - or you may write in the WORD document which is also enclosed with the invitation.

Please fill in & return the form as soon as possible, but no later than **15th August 2015**. **Payment info will be sent out upon registration.**

YES, cannot wait to go to Bulgaria on this year's FOSE-tour.

Name _____

Street/City/Country _____

Phone _____

Email _____

I/we shall **need hotel accommodation** in Sofia

from (date) _____ until (date) _____ Arrival to the hotel is planned at (time) _____

I/we shall **leave** Sofia

on (date) _____ at (time) _____ by air ___ / rail ___ / road ___ (tick as appropriate)

___ I shall bring family/friends along, and there will be ___ people, including myself

___ I hereby book ___ (number) of **double rooms** in the name of _____

___ (number) of **single rooms** in the name of _____

___ I am travelling on my own, but I would not mind sharing a double room with somebody else

I have the following special dietary requirement (e.g. vegan, vegetarian, vegetarian+fish/poultry, kosher, halal, allergies etc.):

Any further information or comments: _____

WAIVER AND RELEASE with respect to the 17th annual gathering of the Friends of Scouting in Europe (FOSE):

I/we _____ desire to participate voluntarily in the 17th annual gathering of the Friends of Scouting in Europe ("Event"). I assume voluntarily all of the risks associated with the participation in the Event. I confirm that I have sufficient insurance coverage to cover the consequences, should a risk associated with the Event materialize.

My attendance and participation is absolutely and entirely at my own risk without any exception, and I agree that neither the European Scout Foundation, Geneva, nor any of the members of the board of this Foundation, has any responsibility for my participation in the Event. I forever waive, release and discharge the Foundation and its board members from any and all claims, liabilities or expenses, whether such claim, liability or expense is in contract, statute, tort or otherwise, relating in any way to my participation in the Event. This waiver and release may not be modified orally. This waiver and release shall be governed by, and constituted in accordance with, the substantive laws of Switzerland.

Date: _____ Signature: _____