

List of “Do’s and Don’ts” for Foreigners in Bulgaria

Culture

- Bulgarians take a lot of pride in their rich history and culture. Commenting sarcastically on any Bulgarian tradition/fair/observance is generally not liked by the local public.
- Unlike in rest of Europe, it is common in Bulgaria to shake hand while meeting/greeting someone.
- Bulgarians are generally warm in expressing their feelings. However, at time, it can be confusing for others to comprehend the exact nature of their emotions, especially with non-verbal communication. For e.g., in Bulgaria moving head sideways means ‘Yes’ in contrast to what we have take it i.e., ‘No’.
- Don't avoid eye contact in business and personal conversations as it is considered discourteous.
- It is generally expected that you will take a gift while visiting the home of a local Bulgarian.
- While visiting rural areas/villages, it is generally advisable to get yourself accustomed with the local traditions.

Religion

- Bulgaria is majorly a Christian Orthodox country. It is, therefore, customary to show respect for religious gatherings/occasions associated with Christian Orthodox religion.
- Bulgarians generally have a great acceptance for other religions; a fact well evident from presence of a church, masjid and synagogue within a distance of 100 m in the main Centre of Sofia. It is, therefore, advisable not to criticise/discuss any particular religious belief (be it be of any religion).
- It is customary to wear proper attire while entering churches & any religious facilities (no short sleeves/skirts/pants).
- Avoid loud music/noise near the main churches, especially during misa dominical.

Politics

- Bulgaria is an ethnically diverse society with different political parties (some of which represents the minorities). It is, therefore, advisable not to take any firm political position against any local party.
- It is advisable not to take part in political demonstrations, especially the ones against the local government policies.
- Do not discuss/post any contentious issue relating to a government policy/decision on social media platforms. In case something is affecting you directly, please consult the Embassy to register your complaint/suggestion.

Administrative/Others

- Bulgaria is in the EU, but not in Schengen zone. You can enter Bulgaria only if you have a Bulgarian visa or multiple entry Schengen visa.
- Bulgaria is also not in the Eurozone at the moment. The local currency used in Bulgaria is Bulgarian Lev, which is equivalent to 1 Euro = 1.95 Lev.
- For travelling on all inter-city roads/highways you are required to pay a vignette tax. It can be through all major fuel stations and online as well.
- The official language of Bulgaria is 'Bulgarian' which is written in Cyrillic script. While young Bulgarians generally speak English, majority of the people do not.
- Only use legitimate taxi service in Bulgaria, otherwise you may be cheated or charged heftily for even small distances.
- Avoid commenting on the periods of Ottoman rule or Soviet Era, as generally these are considered to be 'sensitive issues'.
- Football is taken very seriously in Bulgaria. It is advisable not to comment on any specific team during national matches. More often there are riots also during the football games.