



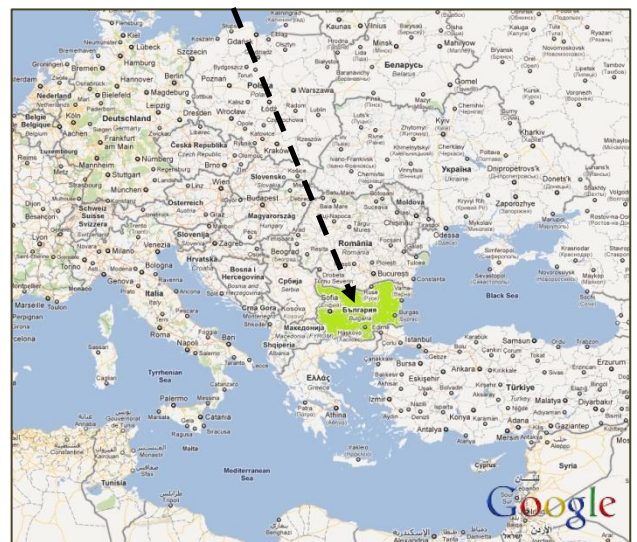
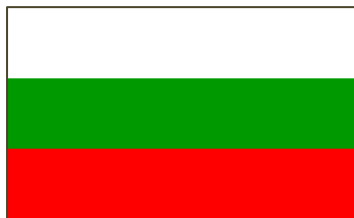
Trekking the Planet

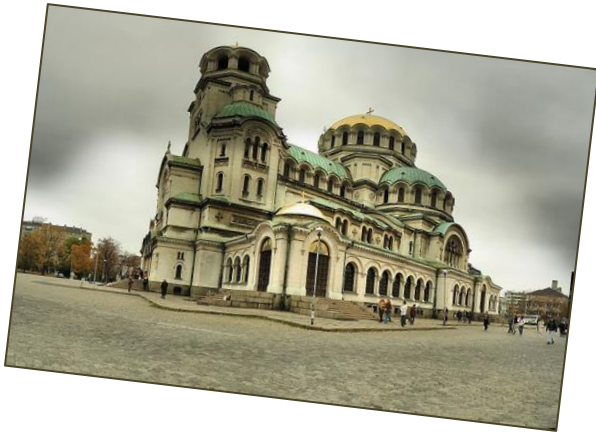
Discovering the Cultural and Natural Significance of the World



Where are we now?

- Darren and Sandy are in Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria, located at 43° N and 25° E.
- We have traveled approximately 34,413 miles (55,382 kilometers) from our starting point in California.





Sofia Orthodox church (sources: Happytellus.com, Flickr.com/Panoramas)

Did you know?

The Cyrillic alphabet is the main written script used in Russia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Belarus, Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria. It was developed during the First Bulgarian Empire in the 10th century. The script was based on ancient Greek script and modified to include sounds not supported by that language. There are 33 letters. For example, "Bulgaria" is represented by **България** in Cyrillic.



Subway sign in Sofia (sources: Wikipedia.org, Flickr.com/Paxtorval)

People and Culture

- Bulgaria was founded in 681. Several united empires were interrupted by Ottoman rule for almost 500 years.
- After modern independence in 1908, the country was ruled by Tsars until World War II. Bulgaria became part of the communist Eastern Bloc after the end of the war and transitioned toward democracy in the 1990's.
- Bulgaria is one of the least densely populated countries in Eastern Europe, with about 7.4 million inhabitants. Eighty-five percent of the population is ethnic Bulgarian, with about 8% Turkish.
- Sofia is the capital city and contains several historical Orthodox Christian churches. Orthodox Christian is the majority religion of the country. About 12% identify themselves as Muslim.
- On March 1st each year, a celebration takes place to celebrate the coming spring. *Martenitsas*, which are small figures made of red and white threads, are exchanged during this time. These are seen as symbols of health and happiness.



source: Krili-methodirakovski-chitalishte-en.blogspot.com

Nature and Environment

- Bulgaria is slightly smaller than the U.S. state of Tennessee. It measures about 200 miles (330 kilometers) north to south and approximately 325 miles (520 kilometers) east to west.
- The country is bordered by Romania (along the Danube River) in the north, by Serbia and Macedonia in the west, by Greece and Turkey in the south and by Black Sea coastline in the east.
- The terrain is diverse, ranging from mountains in the Balkan mountain chain, to plains and hilly plateaus. The mountains influence the climate with more rain and diverse temperatures north of the range than in the south. There are over 500 rivers in the country.
- As of 2008, renewable energy contributed to 7% of Bulgaria's energy consumption. The goal is for this number to reach 16% by 2020. Wind turbines are the major source of this renewable energy.
- Bulgaria is the home to about 4,000 caves. Recently, a new type of cave-dwelling ground beetle was discovered in two caves. The *Paralovricia beron* is completely blind and is only about (.08 inches) 2 millimeters long.

The Balkan Peninsula

This peninsula is bordered by the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea, Aegean Sea and Adriatic Sea. It comprises the countries of Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia, Greece, European Turkey and Bulgaria. Parts of Slovenia and Romania are typically included as well. About 50 million people live in this area.



sources: Infoplease.com, Answers.com



Entrance to Devetashka Cave (source: Andonovart.com)

Our Plans

- While in Bulgaria we plan to visit several historic areas. Bulgaria actually has the third-largest number of archaeological sites in Europe (after Italy and Greece).
- Our train travel will continue to Serbia. We will then head to Croatia as we get closer to the end of our time in Europe.
- Send us your questions as we continue our journey through Europe. You can contact us by Facebook, Twitter or via our website. We look forward to hearing from you!

Bulgarian Bagpipes

Bagpipes are commonly associated with Scotland or Ireland, but other countries in Europe, as well as Northern Africa and Asia, have developed derivatives of this instrument. In Bulgaria it is called a *gaida*. The bag is made of goat or sheep hide. Click the picture to watch the YouTube video (1:26) and see the *gaida* being played.



source: Wikipedia.org

More Information

- <http://www.funkidslive.com/features/fun-around-the-world/bulgaria/>
- <http://lifestyle.iloveindia.com/lounge/facts-about-bulgaria-2452.html>
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulgaria>
- <http://www.studyenglishtoday.net/martenitsa-bulgarian-tradition.html>
- <http://esciencenews.com/articles/2011/07/13/separated.20.million.years.blind.beetle.bulgarian.caves.clarifies.questions>
- <http://www.globalwindpower.com/en/turnkey/markets/bulgaria.aspx>
- <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Europe/Bulgaria-LOCATION-SIZE-AND-EXTENT.html>

Our Partners



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 Unported License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/).