

## BG Facts

- Exchange bureaux are obliged to show daily exchange rates on boards which are both clearly visible and easily accessible. If a client wishes to reverse a deal, the cashier is obliged to pay back the full amount.

- Taxis. Always choose a taxi displaying phone numbers and contact details on the side and make sure that the driver turns on his meter at the start of the journey. If traveling a longer distance agree the price in advance.

- Smoking. According to the latest changes in Bulgarian law, non-smoking sections should make up 50% of all seating in restaurants, pubs and cafes.

- Cinemas. Most cinemas show subtitled films with the original soundtrack, and the same applies to rented videocassettes; films for children, however, are usually dubbed.

- Shopping. Large supermarket chains offer a wide range of local and imported products. In smaller shops you will find very high levels

of service and friendliness but it is quite likely that the assistants will not speak much English, although they will probably understand you perfectly well.

- Nodding. When Bulgarians nod their heads up and down, they mean NO and when they shake their heads from side to side, they mean YES: exactly the opposite to the rest of the world. Therefore, it is better to listen to what someone is saying and ignore how he's moving his head!

- Wedding bands are usually worn on the right hand, not on the left as in Western countries.

- Registration. Be sure to register yourself and your family within 48 hours of arrival as you can be subjected to heavy fines if you fail to do so.

- Tipping is optional but becoming increasingly standard practice, with 10 to 15 per cent of the bill being customary. It is accepted to tip everyone-hairdresser, taxi driver, waiter, barman-you name it.

- Credit cards are not widely accepted although slowly becoming more so in larger shops. If you are out and about in the pubs, make sure you carry enough cash.

- Toasts. When proposing a toast Bulgarians raise their glass and lightly clink it against all the others present whilst looking the person in the eye (not to do so is considered rude) and saying "nazdrave" (meaning "good health to you"). If there are 10 people at the table you must do this with all 10.

- Having a Meal. The whole process usually takes more than two hours as Bulgarians are accustomed to having long conversations during a meal which will include many toasts, tons of food (usually too much to finish...) and listening to loud music.

- Toilet facilities are much improved compared to 10 years ago and most modern fuel stations, restaurants, hotels and bars have facilities of an acceptable standard; elsewhere, however, you may be faced with nothing more than a hole in the floor,

and no toilet paper. Places often charge for the use of toilet facilities, generally around 20 to 50 stotinki.

- Name Days are celebrated in addition to birthdays by people whose name is derived from that of a Saint. The person having a Name Day usually brings sweets to the office for colleagues to share, and Bulgarian tradition says that you may call uninvited on a person celebrating a Name Day, to wish them well and take part in the celebratory feast.

- Other 'Strange' Holidays. There are many Bulgarian holidays that may seem strange to a foreigner, to name but a few: 8th December - the holiday of all present, ex- and future students; 1st March - Baba Marta Day (people give one another special cotton symbols, called 'martenitsi', to wear on their clothes and hands for luck and health); 1st April - the day of the lie (on that day you must lie to at least one person); 14th February - the wine holiday (people gather together and drink lots of wine).



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