



# BULGARIA SPORT



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# Why Bulgaria?

## The Best Kept Secret

Take a peek through the keyhole and discover an unknown land which can offer more than you can dream of. They call Bulgaria Europe's best kept secret. Ask your friends what they know about this small land, and your adventurous spirit will bring you here without a doubt. The Old Continent guards its treasures, and still knows how to take you by surprise!



## All Nature's Treasures in a Nutshell

How is it possible that just 111,000 km<sup>2</sup> could gather together such a wealth of nature's treasures? Would you like to greet the sunrise from the Balkans' highest peak, and wave the day goodbye by the hot seashore? How about climbing a rock 200 metres high right after crawling out of a pit 200 meters deep? Or have you thought about flying above a mystical canyon and plunging into the waters of a wild stream less than an hour later? Your exciting adventure in Bulgaria's unique landscape is about to begin.



## A Crossroads of Cultures

Bulgaria is one of the few places where you will find the comfort of the modern world right next to the magic of unknown ancient cultures and religions, which have marked this land of crossroads for over 13 centuries. Whether in a luxury hotel or an authentic village house, you will be greeted by cordial hosts resembling the characters in old fairy tales. Your adventure will continue in the romantic atmosphere of a wealth of cultural and historic sites left over from the different civilizations which once inhabited these lands.



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# White Water – Kayak and Rafting

Your adventure will begin as soon as you spot the unusual white water destination of Bulgaria on the map. The local weather provides for all year round kayaking and 3-seasons rafting. The tracks are 8 to 15 kilometres long and of average difficulty. Comfortable hotels and facilities around the river complement some of the routes, while other downhill tracks will lead you to dirt roads, romantic bivouac sites and wild nature encounters. Steering amidst Bulgaria's unknown rapids will boost your adrenaline and you will get to meet the cordial villagers living in the settlements near the river.



The peace, silence and the emotions of an encounter with the unknown are best experienced in groups during kayak water tours. In Bulgaria, you can arrange your journey by yourself, or hire equipment and a guide. All Bulgarian rivers outside the borders of preservation areas are access-free, without restrictions and are waiting for you!



## The Struma River (Kresnensko Gorge)

The gorge of the Struma River offers all year round possibilities for white water kayaking, and is the most popular destination in Bulgaria. In the spring of 2008 a round of the European Rafting Championship took place here. The gorge has two 8-kilometre tracks: difficult (category III+ (V)) and easy (category II+ - III). The starting line can be easily reached by the main road along the river, which also offers comfortable spots for spectators who wish to watch the mesmerizing drops.

## The Arda River

Splendid canyons, extreme rapids and desolate shores – this is what you can expect to find along the Arda river. When the water is high you can paddle down either of two 15 kilometre-long tracks with difficulty levels of III to IV. The tracks are split by the medieval Devil's Bridge – a cultural monument. In the spring spate, you will experience incredible adrenaline rushes during kayak descents of the **Iskar, Chepinska, Zlatarishka, Rilska, Beli Iskar, Levi Iskar, Bebresh and Chepelarska rivers.**

A small section of the river Struma gorge has a lower degree of difficulty, which makes it suitable for children (aged 8 to 14) to kayak. Teenagers under 18 can also use the professional track, however parental consent is required.

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# Aqua Tourism

## The Danube

Narrow river channels, wild islands with impenetrable forests, wide sandspits, rare birds and fish – all these and more are what you will find between the Bulgarian and Romanian shores. The still waters of the Danube are expecting you all year round. The most popular activity here is the traditional August TID (Tour International Danube), while the biggest challenge are the winter boat tours along the river.

## The Yantra, Veleka, Arda, Maritsa, Tundzha and Kamchiya rivers

The still waters of the lower reaches of the large Bulgarian rivers will lead you to hidden beaches, take you past desolate shores, and offer you an alternative view of many cultural and historic sites.

## The Kardzhali, Studen Kladenets, Ivaylovgrad, Batak, Dospat, Beglik, Zhrebchevo, Koprinka and Iskar reservoirs

Discover a hidden island, and make a tour round the reservoir and see its picturesque shores reflected in the crystal-clear water. Set up your tent on the shore, or check in at a hotel with a panoramic view, and begin your kayaking adventure near one of Bulgaria's reservoirs.

Still water kayaking is open to children above 5, and we all know a child on board means joy for the whole crew. Water tours are the perfect family adventure in which everyone can take an equal part.



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# Scuba Diving

Having heard so much of the fearsome Black Sea you will be nicely surprised to meet its friendly waves at the Bulgarian seaside. You only need to feel the water once to find that it is half as salty than other seas. Currents, rough waters, high tides and low tides are minimal and in the summer time (June to September) the coastal water temperature can rise as high as 24-26 °C. Large ships are rare, making the Black Sea a perfect location for amateur divers. However this is true of the upper warm freshwater layer only. Beneath this layer is the cold and salty Mediterranean current of the Bosphorus. The Black Sea is the only sea in which at 200 metres deep there is no oxygen. While this lack indicates a lack of life, it also has a positive role – the lack of oxygen facilitates the conservation of artefacts at the bottom of the sea by stopping their decay. There is an abundance of unsolved mysteries for adventure seekers here. Furthermore, as technical scuba diving is relatively new to Bulgaria, there are still plenty of new opportunities to be explored.

There are more than 20 Scuba Diving Schools on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast.

**Sunken ships** – Mopang (near Sozopol, just 25 meters under the surface) is the most easily accessible and best preserved; braver divers can also expect to discover submarines submerged during the Second World War.

**Underwater caves** – village of Tyulenovo.

**Vegetation** – the underwater forest around the Island of Sveti Ivan near Sozopol.

**Animal life** – the Black Sea is home to around 180 species of fish and three species of dolphin.

**Taukliman** – perhaps the most beautiful location for underwater fishing on the entire north coastline (a myriad of small inlets, caves and sea-scattered rocks).

**South of Varvara** – here the speargun diver can expect to glimpse even the rarest of species.



All Scuba Diving Schools offer courses to children. Children over 8 can learn to swim and dive with masks, air lines and swim fins, while those older than 10 can practice with a breathing apparatus under an instructor's guidance in shallow and calm waters.

# Windsurfing



Some say that surfers are like fishermen – each has an amazing story to tell. If you come surfing in Bulgaria you are bound to hear all kinds of funny tales. There are those who talk about the gigantic waves of the Black Sea, its wild winds and sea monsters rising from the deep. Others tell about romantic surfs alongside pairs of dolphins in the silent creek, describing the quiet and sweet waters of the Sea where the mermaids live and remembering the moonlight walks of their childhood when not even the jelly fish would sting you to remember... However, just like fairy tales, there is some truth behind each story. Whether you are looking to sail with the wind or battle the elements, the Black Sea will give you a story to pass on... Accommodation is available at each surfing location, varying from luxury hotels to small fishermen's cottages and camping grounds (for tents and caravans).

**The Zlatnata Ribka and Atliman Bay (near Kiten)** camping sites are suitable for amateur surfers as there are no waves to hinder training lessons.

**Krapets, Albena, Varna, Burgas, Nesebar, Pomorie, the Gradina, Katatsite, Koral, Yug, Lozenets, Arapyia and Silistar** camp sites are the most popular surfing destinations along the Bulgarian coast. The beaches here are open and the wind is almost always good, especially in September.

**Reservoirs** – surfing fans can find good wind on the larger reservoirs such as the Iskar, Gorni Dabnik, Dospat, Koprinka, Dolna Dikanya, Lobosh and more throughout most of year.

Children should start surfing at the age of 5-6, as younger children are generally not strong enough to hold the sail. The inlets (Zlatnata Ribka, Atliman), where the wind and waves are not so strong, are suitable for the youngest ones. Even during the quietest days the waves are sufficient for children to master Hawaiian surfing skills.



# Paragliding

For the first time in 2005 Bulgaria hosted one round of the World Paragliding Cup. Before this the country was an unknown destination for paragliding professionals. The diverse topography and peculiarities of the weather (high clouds and strong thermals) offer a chance for unforgettable adventurous flights or attempts to set a new record. The active season is from April to September, while those who are not afraid of the cold may also make use of sunny winter days. More than 80 takeoff points have been identified in Bulgaria, with many unexplored opportunities still waiting to be discovered!



## Mountain Cross-country Flying

Sopot (host to international contests), Zlatitsa, Kom, Vratsa, Buzludzha and Sliven (in the Stara Planina), as well as in the Rila, Pirin, Vitosha and Konyavska mountains. They offer breathtaking views, strong thermals (6+ m/s), high cloud bases (3,500+ m) and are good for cross-country flights (200+ km) and closed tours (120+ km).

## Flatland Cross-country Flying

Stable thermals (4+ m/s) and a high cloud base (3500+ m) can be found in mountainous areas near Madara, Shumen, Montana, Pernik, Nevsha and Topolitsa. In addition to cross-country flights these areas are also suitable for soaring.

## Ridge Soaring

The sky above Albena, Varna and Burgas, as well as the whole of the remaining Bulgarian coastline offers excellent gliding conditions.

The most adventurous parents leave their children in the hands of tandem flight instructors as soon as they start to walk. Children are allowed to go on solo flights as soon as they are 16.

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# Skydiving



You only need one thing to go skydiving in Bulgaria – your wish must be stronger than your fear! There are several alternatives for beginners. You will feel safest during a guided tandem jump. After quick guidance you will jump from 3,500 m high for which you only need to relax and enjoy your 30 seconds' free fall at 150 km/h. All else is in the hands of the instructor. Should you wish to make a solo dive, you can enjoy a 5 seconds' flight from 800 metres high after taking a few hours' training. Then your parachute will open automatically (by means of a line attached to the aircraft). This is the cheapest option. Most enjoyable are accelerated free falls from 3,000 metres during which you jump holding hands between two instructors, who will help you to position yourself during the fall and open your parachute at the right time. Such jumps are recommended to those who would like to continue practicing and develop their diving skills further.

Modern aircraft and parachutes, tandem or solo dives are offered by experienced instructors at skydiving bases in **Montana, Kazanlak, Plovdiv and Primorsko.**

B.A.S.E. jumping is permitted in Bulgaria. Until now successful attempts have been made from paragliders and from the **Vitinya Bridge** (120 metres), however adventure seekers can check out the 400-metre rock wall near **Vratsa**, as well as other new locations.

Children aged between 10 and 16 with no previous training need parental consent for guided tandem jumps.



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# Bungee Jumping

If you would like to make a bungee jump from the highest bridge or the tallest rock arch in the Balkans, you should come to Bulgaria! You can jump from a hot air balloon at any place with suitable conditions. After some practice you can also try the pendulum bungee system. Each year on 22<sup>nd</sup> March at the Stamboloviya bridge in Veliko Tarnovo people attempt to break the national record for the highest number of bungee jumps in 24 hours. This is the most popular event for bungee fans. You can also choose between tandem or night jumps. During the summer rock festival in Kavarna a crane is assembled, serving as take-off base for bungee jumps during the concerts. If you wish to combine the romantic with the extreme, book your wedding party on a 50-metre platform from which you will have to jump after saying your marriage vows.



**Vitinya** – in the Vitinya Mountain Pass on the Hemus Motorway you will find the Bebrech Viaduct, which is the highest bungee jumping spot (120 metres) in the Balkans.

**The Devetashka Cave** near Lovech (the tallest cave entrance hall in the Balkans – 40 metres) and the Prohodna Cave near Karlukovo provide magnificent jumps in a mystical environment.

**The Asparuhov Bridge** near Varna (50 metres) – an excellent choice for a jump over the sea in hot summer days. If you wish, you can take a dive into the sea to top off your adventure.

Other favoured big river bridges are the Stamboloviya in Veliko Tarnovo (25 metres), the viaducts near Klisura (30 to 70 metres), the Pisanets Bridge between Ruse and Razgrad (65 metres), the bridge across the Veleka River after the village of Zvezdets (45 metres). Bunovo, Rozino, Dolno Kamartsi, Koprivshtitsa – magnificent railway bridges.



Children under 16 must have consent forms from their parents. Parents are advised to accompany children below 10 at a jumping location. Children can start practicing around 6, however, due to their small weight, they are advised to make tandem jumps with an instructor or another child.

# Horse Riding

The Bulgarians have a working relationship with horses since ancient times. In the 7<sup>th</sup> century the Proto-Bulgarians crossed the Danube holding their horses' tails and settled in the Balkans, where they established their state. The horse tail became the symbol of the first flag of the Bulgarian State.



In Bulgaria there are over 100 equestrian centres offering adventures to beginners, advanced riders or children. You can choose between daily, weekend or weekly programmes. Your hosts will put you up in an authentic village house or a nomadic tent.

**Near the large cities** you can get carried away into the swift equestrian world in less than an hour.

**At the foot of the mountains** equestrian centres serve as take-off points for wild walks in the woods or treks along the edge of the mountains at over 2,000 metres above sea level. For lovers of steep and narrow paths and crystal clear streams...

**In the lowlands** – if you would like to gallop and see the horizon far away in the distance in front of you, gather herbs, visit old fortresses or have a picnic around the shore of a large reservoir.

**At the Black Sea** – in hot summer days you and your horse can cool off in the sea water, or you can enjoy a sunset trot along the endless shore.

At just 2 or 3 years old children can ride with the help of an instructor. Children between 4 and 5 can ride ponies, and even a full-grown horse, as soon as they have mastered the basic techniques and skills. All equestrian centres offer daily adventures, regular training or one week holidays for children.





# Mountain Biking



All types of biking are well developed in Bulgaria. Between May and October the routes are accessible to both beginners and advanced bikers, while the most determined can practice even in the winter season.

You can buy a biking map of one of the regions and embark on your solo cycling adventure. Others prefer to join guided biking tours with fixed accommodation. If you are looking for an unusual experience, you can test your will on the classical Kom-Emine Track, passing along the entire ridge of the Stara Planina, or join the traditional public bike tour of Mount Vitoshka at the end of June.

**Borovets** – 20 kilometres combined track length, four degrees of difficulty. All biking types (downhill, cross country, free ride and all mountains) are possible and there is a lift specifically equipped for bikes. The downhill track is a total of 2,200 metres long with 40 meters displacement. International competitions, as well as snow track winter championships are held here.

**Sopot** – built-in facilities for downhill, cross country, 4-cross and trial cycling. The downhill track is 4 kilometres long with 800 metres displacement and is served by a cabin lift. Sopot is traditionally host to many national and international competitions.

**Dragalevtsi** – near Sofia. The chairlift will take you up to almost 2,000 metres. The displacement of the track from the marked cycling track to the first city dwellings is almost 1,000 metres.

**Beglika** – an adventure- and eco-park with good cross-country and free ride terrain.

**The Rhodope Mountains** have many dirt roads and forest paths suitable for mountain biking. Other locations are the Strandzha, Osogovo, Stara Planina and Slavyanka Mountains, as well as in the lower parts of Rila and Pirin.

Each child can take part in a suitable forest biking event, while some of the easier downhill tracks are also open to children of 10 or over.

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# Motocross



The grand prix circuits of **Gorna Rositsa near Sevlievo**, and **Rido near Samokov** host the starting rounds of the World Championship. In addition to perfectly kept tracks, they are fully equipped with parking lots, platforms, restrooms and restaurants. They are also suitable for advanced racers.

There are 2 tracks in **Sofia** and several more - with varying degrees of difficulty, around the city: **Bistritsa, Malo Buchino, Lokorsko, Botunets, Pasarel and Lesnovo**.

Other adrenaline pumping tracks in the rest of the country are **Ignatievo (near Varna), Troyan, Levski, Razlog, Lukovit, Yambol, Boboshevo, Ignatovo (near Sopot), Elena and Hisarya**.

Some children already take part in races at 7. Parents are strictly advised to not train their children themselves but to register them with experienced trainers using appropriate racing tracks.

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The best mixture of motor freedom and adrenaline can be found in Bulgaria! The outdoors here is wild, the roads are empty, the tracks are unmarked and all is up to you! There are more than 30 mountain ranges in Bulgaria, all crossed by dirt roads and steep footpaths. Many of these are not even marked on the map, so you still have the chance to discover these roads and mark them on a blank sheet of paper. Motor cycling is forbidden in national and nature parks, nature reserves and other protected areas, as well as over ski tracks and footpaths. Many national and international contests, as well as rounds of the International Motocross Championship take place in Bulgaria. When there are no sports events, all motor tracks are open for you to practice on the racing circuit.



# Trekking

There are over 35,000 way-marked walking routes in Bulgaria's mountains. A standard feature of all is that you can reach almost any peak above 2,500 metres without alpine skills. Summer routes are marked with coloured paint on stones and trees, while winter routes are indicated with metal markers. Accommodation can be found in the numerous mountain chalets, huts or alpine hotels. While wild bivouacking is prohibited, you can set up your tent in specifically designed camping areas or around the hotels. If you need any assistance, you should call the PSS (Mountain Rescue Service) by dialling 112.



**Rila** – the highest peak Musala (2,925 metres) is also the highest point on the entire Balkan Peninsula. Its solid granite structure gives it its alpine appearance. The most difficult terrains are in the area around the peak of Malyovitsa. Magnificent sights are the Seven Rila Lakes.

**Pirin** – Here you will find panoramic views, 45 peaks above 2,590 metres, more than 200 glacial lakes and karst massifs.

**Stara Planina** – the highest peak is Botev (2,376 metres). The mountain range splits Bulgaria into two, starting at the western border, all the way to the Black Sea to the east. The most popular route, called Kom-Emine, passes along the entire ridge and is part of the European route E-3, symbolically connecting the Atlantic Ocean to the Black Sea.

**The Rhodope Mountains** – with mild climate, rounded earth forms, green glades, pine forests, turbulent cold streams, alpine herds, bagpipe tunes and old stone houses.

**Vitoshka** – the highest peak is Cherni Vrah (2,290 meters). It attracts visitors to Sofia wishing to make a one-day trip to the mountain.

Children adore eco-trails with their information boards about wild animals and plants, as well as special games and relaxation spots.

# Caving



Bulgaria is known for yet another priceless treasure – pits, water caves and crystals. There are over 5,000 registered caves in Bulgaria. Some of the best known are within the protected areas, however licensed speleologists do not need a special visitor permit to enter. Encroaching upon the habitats of the large bat colonies is strictly prohibited from September to May. Further information about protected caves can be obtained from the Bulgarian Federation of Speleology.

There are 9 illuminated tourist caves – **Ledenika, Saeva Dupka, Yagodinska Peshtera, Dyavolskoto Garlo, Magurata, Snezhanka, Orlova Chuka and Bacho Kiro**. Here every visitor can enjoy the beauty of the underground world – its secondary formations or paleontological treasures.

Less advanced experience seekers can benefit from guided tours of undeveloped caves, such as **Vodopada** near the village of Krushina, **Golubovitsa** (near the village of Smilyan) – water caves; **Haramiyskata** – precipice; **Bacho Kiro** – labyrinth.

Speleologists can explore the horizontal labyrinths of **Duhlata** (near the village of Bosnek and the longest (19 km.) in Bulgaria), **Temnata Dupka** (near the village of Lakatnik) or **Orlova Chuka** (near the town of Ruse). The deepest cave in Bulgaria is **Raychova Dupka** (-384 m. in the Steneto Reserve in Stara Planina). The best vertical views can be found in Pirin National Park, while **Barki 14** above Vratsa is considered the most technical cave.

All children regardless of age can visit the 9 tourist caves. Those with better physical preparation can enter many of the pits or labyrinths with a guide, while the most ambitious can benefit from weekly speleo camps, which will take them to the most hidden parts of the underground world.



# Rope Gardens, Via Ferrata, Canyoning



### Rope Gardens:

Rope gardens are a favourite adventure location for children, however in Bulgaria they also pose serious challenges to adults. They are typically located near other extreme tourist spots such as caves, canyons, rocks and rivers. To enter visitors must pay a fee, which also covers the cost of equipment. The largest rope parks are Lednitsata (near the village of Bresnitsa), Shambhala (near Sopot), Adventure Island (near Dryanovo), Prikazka (near Vratsa), Maymunarnika (near Golden Sands), Dendrarium (in Vitosha National Park near Sofia), Borolandia (in Borovets), Beglika (near the dam of Golyam Beglik), Dolni Lozen (near Sofia), Katerichka (near Troyan), Devin (near Devin) etc.

### Via Ferrata

The vie ferrate in Bulgaria are meant mostly for fun, but can still offer the chance to test one's will power and physical stamina. All routes require special individual equipment, which can be hired on the spot.

**Malyovitsa in Rila** – track length 350 metres and height 2,000 metres.

**Lednitsata** near the village of Bresnitsa – 60 metres tall with four tracks with varying degrees of difficulty.

**Garga Dere** near the town of Smolyan has two sections with different degrees of difficulty with a total length of 300 metres.

**Klisura** near the town of Klisura is 40 metres high and is suitable for beginners.

Children can start to follow vie ferrate at the age of 8-10, however they must be accompanied by either parents or an instructor. Solo tours are recommended to youths over 16.

### Canyoning:

Both beginners and advanced fans can try solo or guided climbing, abseiling, diving and swimming in deep river beds, waterfalls and rock slopes. The best challenges can be found in the canyons of Dzhenema in the Central Balkan National Park. Other destinations are Vlahi, Klisura, Krushuna, Karlukovo, Glozhene. Canyoning is suitable for children over 7, however they must be physically prepared for each route.



# Rock Climbing



If you think that all good climbing rocks have already been discovered, or that you must line up at every easy-access location, or even that each rock in Europe has been climbed and premium sites are no longer possible, you have not yet been to Bulgaria. Here you will find perfect climbing conditions all year round. In the summer months you can visit high spots at 2,500 metres above sea level, or you can climb the rocky seaside shores. Even on rainy days you can practice under the vault of, for example, Prohodna Cave near the village of Karlukovo. All the while you can rest assured that after one full year of climbing in Bulgaria you will not have repeated a single route.

### Alpine and traditional climbing:

**The Malyovitsa Section in Rila** (granite) – 2,000 to 2,700 metres above sea level; route length – 100 to 200 metres.

**Pirin** (limestone) – the north slope of Vihren – 2,500 to 2,900 metres above sea level; route length – 300 to 350 metres.

**Stapalata** – 2,200 metres above sea level; route length – 50 to 200 metres.

**Vratsata near Vratsa** (limestone) – 300 to 500 metres above sea level; route length – 100 to 400 metres.

### Sport Climbing:

Locations with maximum height of 100 metres, each with routes of varying degrees of difficulty: Lakatnik, Bozhenitsa, Kominite, Transko Zhdrelo, Rusenski Lom, Karlukovo, Karandila, Bryanovshtitsa, Beledie Han, Gabrovo, Veliko Tarnovo, Lovech and Varna.

### Bouldering:

Rila Monastery, Beli Iskar

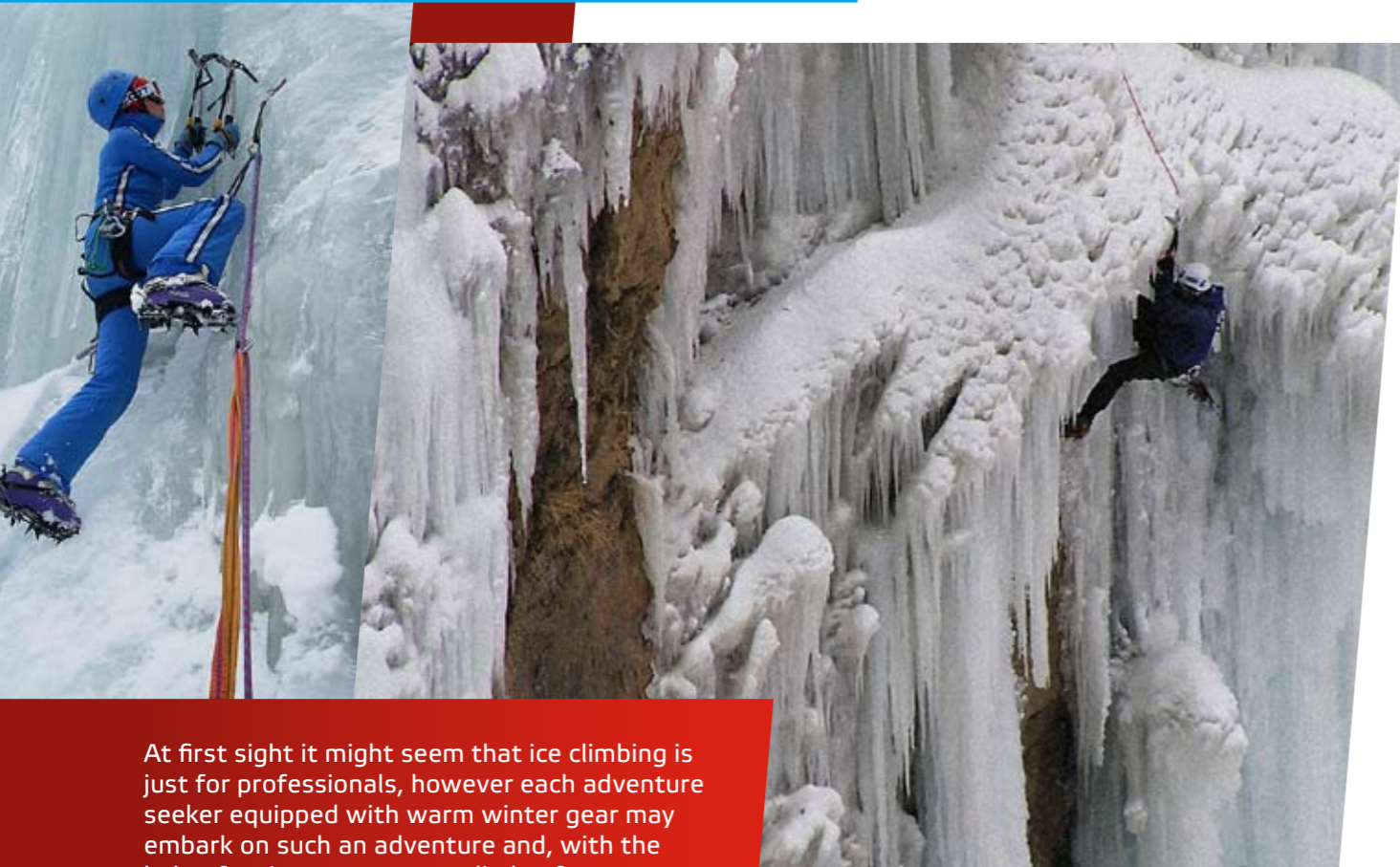
### Deep Water Solo:

Kamen Bryag, Tyulenovo

Sites with easier routes are the most suitable for children aged 4 or above. There they can make their first top roping attempt.



# Ice Climbing



At first sight it might seem that ice climbing is just for professionals, however each adventure seeker equipped with warm winter gear may embark on such an adventure and, with the help of an instructor, even climb a frozen waterfall. Ice climbing locations in Bulgaria are easy to reach and most are at relatively low altitudes. Most tourist agencies offer one- or two-day tours for beginners with no special equipment. Depending on the weather conditions waterfalls freeze well between December and March.

The best ice climbing locations are **Boyanski waterfall (Vitosha), the Malak Skakavets, Golyam Skakavets and Visulkite (Rila), Skakliya (Bov), Borov Kamak (Vratsa) and Praskaloto (Karlovo)** waterfalls. The height of the ice formations at these locations can vary between 30 and 150 metres. The highest and most stable ice formations can be found at Golyam Skakavets waterfall, while the most technically difficult location, and host to national championships, is the Visulkite waterfall.

Close to **Malyovitsa Chalet** there is an artificial 15-metre tall ice tower. It is illuminated, so if you have been busy trekking or skiing during the day, you can still do some ice climbing under the stars at night.

Advanced practitioners of traditional winter climbing (combined ice and rock) can make use of **Dzhendema (Stara Planina), Rezniovete (Vitosha), Vihren's northern slope (Pirin), as well as the Malyovitsa area (Rila).**

Children love to climb - be it trees or climbing frames... Therefore they are not afraid of frozen waterfalls, but see them as another playground. With the help of an experienced instructor and top roping they can safely conquer waterfalls, however the physical power needed to hammer the gear into the ice requires them to be at least 7-8 years old.

# Backcountry Skiing



The best free riding conditions can be found in the **Rila and Pirin** ranges. Classical spots are the areas around **Malyovitsa and the Seven Rila Lakes**, as well as **Todorka and Bezbog** in Pirin.

If you are still unwilling to give up the comfort of lifts, you will find powder snow in the groves around the ski zones of **Borovets (Rila) and Bansko (Pirin).**

All mountains are suitable for the lovers of long-distance skiing or snow-shoe tours, and you are best advised to follow the winter routes indicated by metal markers.

Winter tracks are a wonderful and safe place where even the youngest (5-6 years old) children can master cross-country ski-walking with belts. At the age of 8 or 9 they can already practice backcountry skiing on off-piste terrains near the ski zone. Special winter camps are organised for children to learn the basic techniques of skiing in untracked snow.

In Bulgaria you will discover endless snow slopes, climbing which is a challenge you will have to face, however you will be rewarded by the sight of nothing but your own footsteps in the untouched snow. The zone suitable for backcountry skiing or snowboarding is at over 2,000 metres above sea level, where the snow is good from December to March, while in the highest mountains you can ski even in April and May. At this period the snow is extremely stable and the risk of avalanches is relatively low. At the same time the temperature allows you to ski in short sleeves. To remain on the safe side with regard to avalanche risks you should contact the Information Centres of the Mountain Rescue Service for up-to-date information and observe all safety regulations.



# Sport in The Big Cities



Just like in alpine and seaside resorts, sports centres for all traditional activities are available in the big cities. Stadiums, sports halls and playgrounds function as both professional training grounds and spots for active recreation.

## Sofia

The capital city offers facilities of all types – football, tennis, volleyball, basketball, golf, chess, water, winter and other sports. The biggest complex is the Vasil Levski National Stadium. Many facilities are located in Borisovata Gradina, while the remaining facilities are spread throughout the suburban area. Sofia is host to the majority of big national and international competitions.

## Plovdiv

Bulgaria's second largest city is unique with its Rowing canal situated on the banks of the Maritsa River. The canal is 2,200 metres long, 120 metres wide and 3 metres deep. Just next to the river there is a large sports complex with football fields, athletics tracks, a covered swimming complex, open-air and covered tennis courts, and many other sports halls.

## Varna

The Palace of Culture and Sports in Varna is well-known for hosting matches of the World Volleyball Championship. The complex includes a covered swimming pool, 3 sports halls, 3 tennis courts, one football field and an athletics track.

## Bansko

Bulgaria's largest alpine resort is known for its ski zone, however sports like football, golf, horse riding and others can be practiced here during the whole year.

## Albena

In addition to being a hub of all types of water sports, the seaside resort of Albena is a favoured destination of local and international professional beach volleyball, football and tennis players, golfers and horse riders.

# Tourist Information Centres

NATIONAL TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE OF THE  
MINISTRY OF ECONOMY, ENERGY AND TOURISM  
Address: 1040 Sofia, 1 Sv. Nedelya square  
Tel: +359 2 9335826, +359 2 9335821, +359 2 9335811  
E-mail: e-docs@mee.government.bg

SOFIA, Subway at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski  
Tel: +359 2 4918344, +359 2 4918345  
E-mail: tourist@info-sofia.bg

ARDA 4790  
Tel: +359 3028 2235; +359 889 651232  
E-mail: smi\_arda@abv.bg

BANSKO, 1 Nikola Vaptsarov square  
Tel: +359 749 885 80; +359 749 88633  
E-mail: infocenter@bansko.bg

BURGAS, Hristo Botev street  
Tel: +359 56825772, +359 56841542  
E-mail: tic\_burgas@burgas.bg

VARNA 9000, Sv. Sv. Kiril i Metodiy square  
Tel: +359 52608918, +359 52608919  
E-mail: invarna@abv.bg

VRATSA 3000, 6 Dimitraki Hadzhitoshev street  
Tel: +359 92660318  
E-mail: naturacenter@abv.bg

"UZANA" – GABROVO, 3 Vazrazhdane square  
Tel: +359 885 825 224  
E-mail: uzana1@abv.bg

DEVIN 4800, 5 Osvobozhdenie square  
Tel: +359 876 535435  
E-mail: tic\_devin@mail.bg

DRYANOVO, 65 Shipka street  
Tel: +359 676 71005  
E-mail: tic\_dryanovo@abv.bg

KALOFER 4370, 3 Georgi Shopov street  
Tel: +359 3133 59 88  
E-mail: cbkea@yahoo.com

PLOVDIV, 1 Tsentralen square  
Tel: +359 32656794, +359 32620229  
E-mail: tic\_plovdiv@abv.bg,  
tic.plovdiv@gmail.com

TROYAN 5600, 133 Vasil Levski  
Tel: +359 670 60994  
E-mail: infotroyan@yahoo.com;  
troyantour@abv.bg

## USEFUL INFORMATION

Location: The Republic of Bulgaria is a country in Europe, located in the eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula. To the east Bulgaria borders with the Black Sea, to the south with Greece and Turkey, to the west with Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and to the north with Romania

Territory: 110,994 km<sup>2</sup>

Population (information from NSI): 7 351 234 (as of 01.02.2011)

Climate: average winter temperature: between 0 and 2 °C

Official language: Bulgarian

Alphabet: Cyrillic

Highest point: peak of Musala (2,925 m)

Time zone: GMT (London) +2 (EST+7)

Capital city: Sofia

Currency: Bulgarian lev (1 EUR=1.955 BGN)

Administrative Division: 28 districts, 264 municipalities

Important telephone numbers:

Medical emergency: 150

Fire Emergency: 160

Police: 166

Mountain Rescue Service: +359 8881470 or +2 9632000

General European Emergency Call: 112

Further information:

### Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism

1000 Sofia, Bulgaria

8 Slavyanska street; Tel.: +359 2 9407001; Fax: +359 2 9872190,

+ 359 2 9402315; E-mail: e-docs@mee.government.bg

<http://www.mee.government.bg>



Operational Program "Regional Development" 2007-2013  
[www.bgregio.eu](http://www.bgregio.eu)

**Investing in your future!**

This project is financed by the European Regional Development Fund  
and the State Budget of the Republic of Bulgaria



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