

# Some things you may find useful to know...

- **About Bulgaria**

Bulgaria, officially the Republic of Bulgaria is a country in southeastern Europe. It is bordered by Romania to the north, Serbia and Macedonia to the west, Greece and Turkey to the south, and the Black Sea to the east. With a territory of 110,994 square kilometers (42,855 sq mi), Bulgaria is Europe's 16th-largest

country. Its population of 7.4 million people is predominantly urbanized and mainly concentrated in the administrative centers of its 28 provinces. Most commercial and cultural activities are centered on the capital and largest city, Sofia. The country is a member of the European Union, NATO, and the Council of Europe.

The climate in the country is dynamic, which results from its being positioned at the meeting point of Mediterranean and continental air masses and the barrier effect of its mountains. Northern Bulgaria averages 1 °C (1.8 °F) cooler than the regions south of the Balkan mountains. Temperature amplitudes vary significantly in different areas. The lowest recorded temperature is -38.3 °C (-36.9 °F), while the highest is 45.2 °C (113.4 °F).

Situated at a crossroads between civilizations, Bulgaria has more than 13 centuries of recorded history and one of the richest cultural legacies in Europe. Modern Bulgarian culture derives from three ancient civilizations: the Bulgars, then Thracians, and the Slavs. The territory was also part of the Byzantine and Ottoman empires for several centuries.

Bulgarians are the main ethnic group in the country and comprise 84.8% of the population. Turkish and Roma minorities comprise 8.8 and 4.9%, respectively. All ethnic groups speak Bulgarian, either as a first or as a second language. Bulgarian is the only language with official status and native for 85.2% of the population. Nevertheless, a great percent of the population speaks and understands languages such as English, Russian and German.

- **About Blagoevgrad**

The Blagoevgrad province is the third largest in the country after Bourgas and Sofia. Blagoevgrad is situated at the foot of the Rila and Pirin Mountains, just 100 km south of the national capital, Sofia. The region abounds with natural beauty and tourist



attractions, including the Rila Monastery, the Bansko ski resort, the spa town of Sandanski, and the Seven Lakes in the Rila Mountains.

Blagoevgrad is a picturesque city of 80,000 with a pedestrian downtown and an Old Town with fine examples of 19th-century architecture and numerous restaurants and cafés.

Blagoevgrad is a student-friendly city. The town is the educational center of southwestern Bulgaria with its two universities – the American University in Bulgaria and the South-West University. With its clean quiet surroundings, walking plaza, shops, and restaurants, Blagoevgrad is small enough for everybody to find anything they need within a few minutes. At the same time, the dynamic environment of outdoor cafés, movie theaters, and recreational facilities makes it possible for people to have a balanced life of both hard work and fun.

Blagoevgrad is located in the southwestern corner of Bulgaria, which in turn occupies the northeastern part of the Balkan Peninsula.

- **About American University in Bulgaria (AUBG)**

AUBG was founded in 1991 as a joint endeavor of the U.S. government and the government of the Republic of Bulgaria to create an institution that educates future leaders for the region of southeast Europe - leaders who can respond to the challenges of transition and build societies based on democracy, free enterprise, civic responsibility, and a thorough understanding of cultural diversity.

When its doors opened on September 30, 1991, AUBG welcomed a class of 208 first-year students and had 16 full-time faculty members. Today, AUBG's student body is a varied society of 1,100 young people from over 40 nations, and their cultural and ethnic diversity shape a unique academic setting. Romania, Macedonia, Serbia, Albania, Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Spain, and the United States are just a few of the countries that are currently represented.

AUBG has also developed a growing portfolio of educational outreach programs, including an Executive MBA program; technical training at the government level for participation in EU programs; and English language, business, entrepreneurship, and computer skills courses. Most of these outreach programs are offered at the AUBG Elieff Center for Education and Culture, the University's off-campus facility in Sofia.



- **About Accommodation – Skaptopara Campus**

There are many reasons why AUBG is a unique spot, and its modern residential campus is certainly one of them!

Skaptopara Student Complex, or Skapto, as everyone calls it, is a one-of-a-kind residential campus in the tradition of the typical American "liberal arts" colleges.

The unique atmosphere is further enhanced by the modern facilities on campus. Here you will find the fabulous award-winning building of America for Bulgaria Student Center, the Balkanski Academic Center and Panitza Library, both nested in the same stylish building, as well as the three Residence Halls - Skaptopara 1, 2 and 3.

The Residence Halls offer to our students and guests day and night security service, computer labs with Internet access, self-service cafe with refreshments and snacks, backyard with well-kept lawn benches also suitable for open air parties, spacious lobbies with TV sets and comfortable sofas, cozy lounges on each floor and is accessible for disabled people.

Please remember that Skaptopara Residence Halls are smoke – free environment!

- **About Meals – “The Hungry Griffin Restaurant”**

All meals during the 2 week – long program, which include breakfasts, coffee breaks, lunches and dinners will be at the ABF Student Center Restaurant “The Hungry Griffin” situated on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the building.

Still, if you consider you need something extra in addition to everything mentioned above - a quicker snack, a delicious cup of coffee, or freshly squeezed orange juice, then you can stop by the coffee shop, located on the ground floor of the ABF Student Center.

Remember though, that any additional services will be at your own cost!



- **Now...How should you get here???**

### **Driving Directions to Skaptopara Campus**

#### **I. Coming from the North (Sofia):**

- ✚ Take the first exit toward Blagoevgrad
- ✚ Make a slight left onto Ivan Mihaylov Street. Drive for about 450 m.
- ✚ Make a slight right onto Sveti Dimitar Solunski Bulevard and drive for about 1.2 km
- ✚ Turn left on Vasil Levski Bulevard.
- ✚ Turn right onto James Baucher Street.
- ✚ After crossing the bridge, turn right onto Svoboda Bachvarova Street.
- ✚ Skaptopara Campus is on the right. The three resident halls are located as follows: Skaptopara 3, Skaptopara 1 and Skaptopara 2. The Panitza Library is the 4th building and ABF Student Center - 5th one.

#### **II. Coming from the South (Greece):**

- ✚ From E-79, take the first exit towards Blagoevgrad
- ✚ Merge onto Sveti Dimitar Solunski Bulevard. Drive for about 750 km.
- ✚ Carry onto Sveti Dimitar Solunski Bulevard as it curves to the left.
- ✚ Turn right onto Vasil Levski Bulevard
- ✚ Turn right onto James Baucher Street.
- ✚ After crossing the bridge, turn right onto Svoboda Bachvarova Street.

- ✚ Skaptopara Campus is on the right. The three residents halls are located as follows: Skaptopara 3, Skaptopara 1 and Skaptopara 2. The Panitza Library is the 4th building and ABF Student Center - 5th one.

### If you are traveling by plane:

The airplane lands at Sofia Airport, which is around 100 km Blagoevgrad. You can easily get from Sofia to Blagoevgrad by bus. The buses for Blagoevgrad leave from the Central Bus Station / Central Railway Station. From Sofia Airport you can get to the Central Bus Station by public transportation. The price of a single ticket in Sofia public transportation is 1 BG leva. We do not recommend you using a taxi from the Sofia Airport (they are very expensive and there is a risk of cheating).

#### **I. By Metro:**

- from Terminal 1 take the metro line № 1 to "Serdika"(the red line) – please visit the following link for the trains schedule: <http://www.metrosofia.com/en/schedule>
- from Terminal 2 - Sofia Airport provides free-of-charge transportation services between Terminal 1 and Terminal 2 at every 30 minutes between 07:00 hrs. and 19:00 hrs (it can be requested at the Information Desk or at telephone: (+359 2) 937 22 11/12/13). The stop locations of the shuttle bus in front of both terminals are designated by signage and pavement markings.
- from "Serdika" to the Central Bus Station / Central Railway Station take metro line № 2 (the blue line)

#### **II. By Bus:**

- from Terminal 1 take the bus 84 to hotel "Pliska"
- from Terminal 2 take the bus 284 to hotel "Pliska"
- from hotel "Pliska" to the Central Bus Station / Central Railway Station take one of the following buses: 213, 214, 305, 313.

The Central Bus Station has different sectors for the different destinations. Busses for Blagoevgrad leave from sector 26/29 around every exact hour. You may see the timetable at <http://www.centralnaavtogara.bg/> (in Bulgarian the name of our town is Благоевград). The price of a single one-way ticket is 11 BG leva ( 1 Euro = 1.95583 BG leva).

Tickets can be bought from the respective counters located in the bus station hall or directly from the bus driver.

The trip from Sofia to Blagoevgrad takes around 2 hours by bus. In Blagoevgrad, the bus will stop at the Bus Station in Blagoevgrad. From the bus station you can take a taxi to the AUBG Campus, the price will be around 1 Euro – 2 BG leva (for the entire ride).

Please tell or show the driver the following address:

ОБЩЕЖИТИЯ АУБ  
УЛ. СВОБОДА БЪЧВАРОВА 2

**III. Another option** would be to send you a taxi to pick you up from the airport. It will cost around 45 Euro. If you would like to request a taxi for you, please fill in the attached Transportation Request Form and email it to [rmiltcheva@aubg.edu](mailto:rmiltcheva@aubg.edu) . On the request form please, indicate the details of your flight – flight number, exact arrival date and time. As soon as we receive your request we will check if there is another student arriving at the same time, so that you can share the taxi and of course the charge for it. This is the easiest and the most comfortable way to arrive in Blagoevgrad.

- **Additional Information**

Currency - The Bulgarian currency is Lev. It's exchange rate is fixed at approx. 1.96 (1 EUR =1.95583 BGN). In Blagoevgrad there are two exchange bureaux with favorable exchange rates not far from the university.

Please note, that debit and credit cards may not be a possible payment method everywhere. We advise you to pay in cash. There are several post terminals near the university campus.

If you will need to go to a bank, have in mind that the working time of all banks in Blagoevgrad is from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., from Monday to Friday.

Health Care - The campus of the American University in Bulgaria has a Medical Center that works every day from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. It takes care of examining all patients and redirecting them to other health facilities in the city if necessary. The hospital of Blagoevgrad is situated not far from the University.

There is also an Emergency Center, that is open 24 hours and the Emergency line is 112.

We strongly advise you to make the appropriate Health insurance for traveling to Bulgaria.

Alcohol and Tobacco - All participants should know that by Bulgarian law, alcohol and tobacco products are forbidden for sale to people under 18 years old. Smoking in closed public places, as well as inside the university's buildings (both the academic centers and the residence halls) is not permitted.

Voltage – The voltage in outlets, used for domestic appliances in Bulgaria is 220V.

**You should be all set now!**

**WELCOME!**