

2022 John Locke Conference

Organized by the American University in Bulgaria and the John Locke Society

Endorsed by the British Society for the History of Philosophy, the International Society for Intellectual History, Locke Studies, and Studi Lockiani: Ricerche sull'Età Moderna

American University in Bulgaria – AUBG

Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria

June 21–23, 2022

Useful information

Venue

This 3-day conference will take place at the American University in Bulgaria (AUBG), the second biggest American university in Europe, founded in 1991. AUBG is accredited in the USA and in Bulgaria and its diploma is recognized worldwide. The University offers BA programs with 13 majors and 20 minors, as well as an Executive MBA program. It provides the best state-of-the-art facilities in the region: high-tech classrooms, computer labs, comfortable dormitories, a modern English-language library, and a unique student center. Renowned scholars mentor AUBG's 1,000+ students, who represent more than 40 countries. Most graduates continue their studies at some of the best universities in the world. AUBG alumni are among the most sought-after specialists who occupy top positions at multinational companies, national governments, or leading NGOs worldwide.

Conference sessions will be held in the 150-seat Andrey Delchev Auditorium in the Balkanski Academic Center on the AUBG campus (*see photos below and at page 9*). Buffet lunches will be offered at the AUBG restaurant, "The Hungry Griffin," located in the America for Bulgaria Student Center (*see photo below*), which is right opposite the Balkanski Academic Center.

The AUBG campus is located in Blagoevgrad, a 70,000-person town 100 km south of the Bulgarian capital, Sofia. The campus is a five-minute walk from the center of Blagoevgrad, which features a large walking area with many shops, restaurants, bars, and other amenities.

A map with directions to the AUBG campus can be found at: <https://www.aubg.edu/maps-directions>



Travel to Blagoevgrad

The closest airport is Sofia (SOF), which is 108 km from Blagoevgrad. Sofia Airport has two terminals: Terminal 1 serves low-cost airlines, while Terminal 2 serves many international airlines.

Whereas Sofia Airport is the most convenient airport to reach Blagoevgrad, the airports of Skopje in the Republic of North Macedonia (SKP: 192 km from Blagoevgrad) and Thessaloniki in Greece (SKG: 213 km from Blagoevgrad) offer valid alternatives. Please note that, if you travel on ground from Greece, you will have to cross an internal EU border where your documents will be checked anyway. If you travel on ground from North Macedonia, you will have to cross an external EU border.

Blagoevgrad can be reached from Sofia Airport in the following ways:

- Coach: if you decide to travel to Blagoevgrad by coach, you will first need to reach the Central Bus Station (“Centralna Avtogara”), which is located in the center of Sofia. Here is a link to the website of the Central Bus Station of Sofia:
<https://www.centralnaavtogara.bg/index.php#b>
 - Although public transportation by bus and tube is available, the best way to travel from Sofia Airport to the Central Bus Station is by taxi, which takes 15-20 minutes, depending on traffic, and costs around 20 BGN (i.e., ~10 EUR).
 - A one-way coach ticket to Blagoevgrad costs 10 BGN (i.e., ~5 EUR) and can be purchased, inside the Central Bus Station, at the stand of the coach company “Struma 11.” The coach trip from Sofia to Blagoevgrad takes 75-90 minutes, depending on traffic.
 - Coaches from Sofia to Blagoevgrad depart hourly every day, normally from platform 26. The last coach of the day from Sofia to Blagoevgrad departs at 7:00pm. Blagoevgrad is the final destination for coaches operated by “Struma 11.”
 - Coaches from Sofia arrive at the Blagoevgrad Bus Station (“Avtogara”). Once there, you can take a taxi at the taxi station located outside of the Blagoevgrad Bus Station.
 - Coaches from the Blagoevgrad Bus Station depart to the Central Bus Station of Sofia hourly every day. The last coach of the day from Blagoevgrad to Sofia departs at 5:00pm. Coach tickets to Sofia can be purchased at the stand of “Struma 11” inside the Blagoevgrad Bus Station.
- Taxi: the taxi company serving Sofia Airport, “OK Supertrans” (phone number: +359-[0]2-9732121), has offices in both terminals. A one-way taxi drive from Sofia Airport to Blagoevgrad takes 75-90 minutes, depending on traffic, and costs the equivalent of around 80 EUR for a party of 1 to 3 passengers. Additional charges for the baggage may apply. Reservation in advance is not needed. Taxi drivers normally accept only Bulgarian leva (BGN) and do not accept credit cards. (If, on your way back, you want to travel by taxi from Blagoevgrad to Sofia Airport or another destination in Sofia or elsewhere, it is advisable that you ask the reception of your hotel to reserve a taxi for you in advance.)
- Car rental: several international rent-a-car companies operate at both terminals of Sofia Airport.

Travel in Blagoevgrad

In the center of Blagoevgrad, all major landmarks and services are within walking distance. Moreover, taxicabs are widely available and are the most convenient public transportation service. Taxi drivers only accept Bulgarian leva (BGN) and do not accept credit cards. The taxi fare is normally around 1 BGN (i.e., ~0.50 EUR) per km. Taxi fares in Sofia are in the same range, and taxicabs are widely available there, too.

Generally, taxi drivers do not speak English. When in Blagoevgrad, if you want to take a taxi from your hotel to the conference venue, just tell the taxi driver: “Amerikanski Universitet Biblioteka”, which refers to the AUBG Panitza Library in the Balkanski Academic Center (BAC) – the building where the conference will take place.

In Blagoevgrad, hotel receptionists will be glad to call a taxi for you. However, it is good to have the phone numbers of local taxi companies such as “OK Taxi” (+359-[0]73-832121) and “Den i Nosht” (+359-[0]73-832223).

Accommodation

The following hotels are within walking distance or within a short drive from the Balkanski Academic Center and can be reserved in websites like Booking, Hotels, Trivago, etc.:

- Hotel Cardinal (★ ★): 450m from the Balkanski Academic Center, close to the walking area;
- Hotel Alpha (★ ★): 750m, close to the walking area;
- Hotel Korona (★ ★): 800m, close to the walking area;
- Hotel Fenix (★ ★ ★): 900m;
- Hotel Monte Cristo (★ ★ ★ ★): 1.1km, in the walking area;
- Hotel Rio (★ ★): 1.2km;
- Hotel Kristo (★ ★ ★): 1.2km, in the historic district of Varosha, close to the walking area;
- Hotel Petkov (★ ★ ★): 1.2km, in the historic district of Varosha, close to the walking area;
- Hotel Luxor (★ ★): 1.5km, close to the walking area;
- Hotel Bali (★ ★ ★): 1.5km;
- Hotel Orient (★ ★): 1.6km;
- Hotel Diva (★ ★): 2.2km;
- Hotel City (★ ★): 2.5km;
- Hotel Ezeretz (★ ★ ★ ★): 2.5km;
- Hotel Park Bachinovo (★ ★ ★): 5km, close to the Bachinovo Nature Park;
- Hotel Orbita (★ ★): 6km, close to the Bachinovo Nature Park.

Other hotels and guest houses are available in Blagoevgrad. When reserving a room at a hotel not included in the above list, please make sure that the hotel you choose is in the municipality (not simply in the province) of Blagoevgrad.

Parking

Free parking is available on the AUBG campus – next to the Balkanski Academic Center and behind the America for Bulgaria Student Center.

Meals

Buffet lunches on the conference days and a closing reception will be served at the AUBG restaurant in the America for Bulgaria Student Center. Coffee breaks will be offered in the Balkanski Academic Center.

For dinners, many restaurants, pizzerias, and pubs are available in Blagoevgrad, particularly in the downtown and, also, in the area surrounding the AUBG campus. Here is a table with some approximate prices of food and drinks in Blagoevgrad:

Meal / drink	Price per person
Coffee at a bar or restaurant	1 BGN (~0.50 EUR)
A 1-pint beer, a soft drink or a cappuccino at a bar or restaurant	2-3 BGN (~1-1.50 EUR)
Bulgarian spirits (50ml) at a bar or restaurant	2-4 BGN (~1-2 EUR)
Imported spirits (50ml) at a bar or restaurant	4-6 BGN (~2-3 EUR)
2- or 3-course meal at a self-service, including a beer or soft drink	8-10 BGN (~4-5 EUR)
A large pizza and a 1-pint beer or a soft drink at a pizzeria or restaurant	10-14 BGN (~5-7 EUR)
2- or 3-course meal at a restaurant, incl. soft drinks, beer, or local wine	20-30 BGN (~10-15 EUR)

Wi-Fi

Free Wi-Fi is available in many areas of the AUBG campus, including the America for Bulgaria Student Center. In Blagoevgrad, free Wi-Fi is also available at a number of bars, restaurants, hotels, etc.

Registration

Speakers and presenters do not need to register for this conference in advance.

Attendance by those not delivering a paper is welcome and free. Although there is no registration fee, those not delivering a paper shall **register by April 30, 2022** by contacting Prof. Diego Lucci at: dlucci@aubg.edu

Trip to the Rila Monastery

A trip to the Rila Monastery will be offered to all participants. Those who wish to bring family members or friends with them to this trip have to inform Prof. Diego Lucci via email (dlucci@aubg.edu) by **no later than April 30, 2022**.

The medieval Monastery of Saint Ivan of Rila (*see photo below*) is one of the nine UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Bulgaria. Entrance to the monastery and its church is free. The monastery also hosts a History Museum (entrance fee: 8.00 BGN – 4.00 EUR) and an Ethnographic Museum (entrance fee: 5.00 BGN – 2.50 EUR), both of which are worth visiting.



Visa information

Bulgaria is a member of the European Union as of January 2007, thereby enforcing the General Visa Policy of the EU.

Visas are not required by citizens of EU/EEA member states, as well as some non-EU/EEA countries (including, among others, the UK, the USA, Canada, and Australia) for a short stay period of up to 3 months or, in some cases, 6 months.

Citizens of the majority of the countries that are not member states of the EU or EEA require a visa to enter Bulgaria and the EU. Visitors from these countries can obtain further information from the Bulgarian Embassies or Consulates in their countries.

If you require an official invitation letter from the organizers in order to attend the conference, please inform Prof. Diego Lucci via email (dlucci@aubg.edu) no later than April 30, 2022.



Currency

The Bulgarian currency is the “lev” (plural: “leva”), with the code “BGN.” One lev is made up of 100 “stotinki” (cents). There is a fixed exchange rate between the Bulgarian lev and the euro: 1 BGN = 0.51 EUR; or 1 EUR = 1.95583 BGN. For US dollar, or other currencies, to lev exchange, it is best to check the currency exchange rate of the day.

A large number of bank branches, ATMs, and half a dozen exchange bureaus, offering reasonable exchange rates, may be found in Blagoevgrad. Exchange bureaus and ATMs are also available at Sofia Airport, although exchange bureaus at the airport have less convenient exchange rates than in Blagoevgrad or Sofia city.

In Bulgaria, banks are usually open Monday through Friday from 8:30am to 4:30pm, but some banks may stay open until 5:30pm. Although some banks are also open on Saturday morning, most banks are closed at weekends and on public holidays. Exchange bureaus usually have longer working hours: most of them work until 6:00pm.

Language

Bulgarian is a Slavic language and uses the Cyrillic alphabet. Street signs are both in Cyrillic and in Latin characters and shop signs may be in either the Latin or Cyrillic alphabet. Restaurants will usually have menus in both Bulgarian and English and servers will be able to communicate with you in English. Some phrases to get you started:

- Hello – здравей (zdrah-**vay**)
- Good morning – добро утро (dohbro **ootro**)
- Good afternoon – добър ден (dohber den)
- Good evening – добър вечер (dohber vecher)
- How are you? – как сте (**kaak stay**)
- Goodbye – довиждане (doh-**veezh-duh-nay**)
- Thank you – благодаря (blah-go-dar-**iya**) or мерси (French “merci”, pronounced mer**see**)

Safety

Blagoevgrad is a virtually crime-free town, where one may walk around safely at all times of the day and the night. Although not many people speak English in Bulgaria (usually, it is younger people who speak English and other foreign languages), people in Bulgaria and particularly in Blagoevgrad are very nice and helpful to foreigners.

Sofia too, despite its size (i.e., 1.5 million people), is a safe and pleasant city, where violent crime is almost inexistent. However, if you decide to visit Sofia, beware of:

- Pickpockets on public transportation, in shopping malls, and in tourist areas (e.g., Vitosha Boulevard and the surroundings of the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral).
- Counterfeit money dealers, who might approach you in tourist areas. We recommend you to exchange money only at bank branches or authorized exchange bureaus.
- Illegal taxicabs, which are much more expensive than authorized taxicabs. When at the airport, at a bus station, or at a train station, do not accept deals from persons approaching you and offering taxi or other transportation services in the arrivals area or immediately outside of the airport or station. If you want to take a taxicab upon your arrival at Sofia Airport, we recommend you to stop by the office of “OK Supertrans” in the arrivals zone and make arrangements there: an employee of this taxi company will direct or accompany you to one of their taxicabs. A taxi station of “OK Supertrans” is also located right outside of the Central Bus Station in Sofia. Although the large majority of taxicabs in Sofia work for authorized companies, several illegal taxicabs operate in the city of Sofia. Before taking a taxi, you should read the fare table on its windows, and avoid taking taxicabs that have fares largely exceeding 1 BGN per km or have no fare table on their windows.



Other practical information:

Time zone: Bulgaria is in the Eastern European Time zone (EET). The difference between the Greenwich Meridian Time zone (GMT) and the time in Bulgaria is +2 hours.

Weather: In late June, the weather in Blagoevgrad is quite warm, with significant variations between day and night. The average temperatures range from 24°C (i.e., 75°F) to 29°C (i.e., 84°F) in the day, and from 10°C (i.e., 50°F) to 14°C (i.e., 57°F) in the night. Rain is possible: thus, an umbrella and a light raincoat are advisable, as well as a light sweater for the evenings.

Telephone services: Mobile phone coverage is almost 100% anywhere in Blagoevgrad. When calling Bulgaria from abroad, dial +359 followed by the area code (e.g., 073 for Blagoevgrad), omitting the initial zero (e.g., 73 for Blagoevgrad), and the number required. For general emergencies, ambulance, fire, or police, dial 112.

Health and medical care: We advise you to have Health & Travel Insurance before coming to Bulgaria, particularly if you are not an EU citizen or permanent resident. If you are an EU citizen or permanent resident, you should have a valid European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) with you when traveling in Bulgaria. Emergency cases will be dealt with locally at the AUBG Health Center.

Electricity: Electrical current in Bulgaria is 220 V/50 Hz round. Two-pin European style plugs are used. Appliances designed to operate on 110/120 Volts need a voltage converter and a plug adapter. International adaptors can be found in the major electric shops in Blagoevgrad.

Smoking: Bulgaria is smoke-free in all public buildings, as well as in restaurants, bars, cafés, and shops. Designated smoking areas are located outside.

Entertainment and tourism in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria and Southeastern Europe

Blagoevgrad is a nice, safe, and lively college town of around 70,000 people. This town is located at the center of the Balkan Peninsula. It is a welcoming place to foreigners and offers a variety of affordable entertainment, dining, and accommodation options, including a large walking area (*see photo below*), many restaurants, bars, pubs, discos, shops, two small shopping malls, various pools, a go-kart track, a jogging path, a movie theater, several theaters, a regional museum, various public gardens, the historic district of Varosha with its 19th-century church (*see photo below*), and the Bachinovo Nature Park. Every year in June a number of public events, including concerts and music festivals, take place in the streets and squares of Blagoevgrad and can be attended for free.



Besides the [Rila Monastery](#), various other tourist attractions in Bulgaria are within an easy drive from Blagoevgrad. The Bulgarian capital, [Sofia](#), with its many museums, churches (including the [Alexander Nevsky Cathedral](#): *see photo below*), and places of cultural interest is 100 km away and can be easily reached by car, taxi, or coach. The ski and mountain resorts of [Bansko](#) and [Borovets](#), the spa resort of [Sandanski](#), and the traditional village of [Melnik](#) (*see photo below*), with the [Rozhen Monastery](#), are about a one-hour drive away. The beautiful city of [Plovdiv](#), which features a [Roman theater](#) (*see photo below*), a Roman stadium, an Old Town famous for its Bulgarian Renaissance architectural style, and one of the oldest mosques in Europe, is three hours away by car or coach. Other historic sites and cities in Bulgaria, such as the medieval capital [Veliko Tarnovo](#) with the [Tsarevets Fortress](#), the ancient sea town and UNESCO site of [Nesebar](#), and the cities of [Varna](#) and [Burgas](#) on the Black Sea, may be reached in a few hours by car or coach.



Blagoevgrad is also an excellent starting point for trips to other countries in Southeastern Europe, such as Turkey, Greece, the Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia, and Romania. Places of interest in these countries include the city of [Istanbul](#) with its many historic treasures (*see photo below*), [Thessaloniki](#), [Athens](#), and various archeological sites and sea resorts in Greece, [Skopje](#) and the historic town of [Ohrid](#) (*see photo below*) in the Republic of North Macedonia, the Serbian capital [Belgrade](#), and [Bucharest](#) and the [Transylvania](#) region in Romania.



Contact information

For more information on the conference, please contact the convener, Prof. Diego Lucci, via email at: dlucci@aubg.edu



*The Andrey Delchev Auditorium in the Balkanski Academic Center –
the 150-seat room where conference sessions will take place*