

WELCOME!

CONTENTS

Introduction to the PTO

What we do, who we are, and how we work.

2

Shopping

Where to go for necessities and the little extras!

6

Eating Out

With so many good choices, this list will help you get started.

16

Family Entertainment and Sports

Suggestions for things to do and where to go.

20

Medical Information

Who to call for help, plus general health guidelines.

28

Schools, Tutors, and Churches

We've compiled a basic directory.

32

Transportation and Money

Taking a taxi or driving your own car Things you should know.

36

Bulgarian Traditions

A simple primer to help you feel more at home.

39

Additional Resources

For those who want to learn more, plus a simple area map.

42

Emergency Phone Numbers

45

Welcome to Bulgaria, And to the Anglo-American School of Sofia!

Dear parents and teachers,

If you have recently arrived in Sofia, the PTO is pleased to welcome you to Sofia and to the Anglo-American School of Sofia. We hope you enjoy your experiences here. If you are a recent arrival to Sofia this booklet will help you to become acquainted with Sofia and to locate the resources you may need or want to know about. As a newcomer to our school this guide will help you to be aware of the many events that we will share together throughout the school year. The Welcome Back booklet is a guide to information gathered by our school community with an eye to making your adjustment to life here in Sofia easier. The booklet is updated annually and will give you information on special events at AAS as well as recommendations for family activities, shopping, restaurants, veterinary care and much more. Such as, contact information for doctors, hospitals and what to do in case of an emergency. This booklet has been edited in a pocket format to take with you when you're out and about. The PTO hopes you will enjoy this booklet and find it that it provides you with relevant helpful information.

*The PTO hopes you have a wonderful AAS experience!
Nikki Fellows, PTO President*

WHAT WE DO

The PTO strives to enhance positive Communication between the school and parents, for the ultimate benefit of our children. We organize events which bring the AAS community together and keep the lines of communication open between families and school. We support the school in maintaining a first rate education environment for our children. We help the Student Council, and coordinate parent volunteers when needed. We raise funds for student activities by organizing and hosting special events.

PTO General Meetings enable parents and teachers to discuss subjects about the school and its community. All parents of AAS students are members of the PTO and are invited and encouraged to attend our PTO meetings. Everyone is invited to submit ideas for the agenda by sending an email to any PTO member. The meetings are held monthly and announced in the AAS Newsletter, which you will receive at the end of every week, either electronically if you wish, or in a hard copy.

WHO WE ARE

The PTO has both members at large and an elected Executive Board, which for the school year 2009 – 2010 is as follows:

President: Nikki Fellows (the_fellows_5@yahoo.com)

Vice President: Julia Martiniak (juliamartiniak@yahoo.de)

Secretary: to be appointed

Treasurer: Monika Postolka (monypos@seznam.cz)

Room Parent Coordinator: Louise Metcalfe (metcalfegj@hotmail.com)

Members at large

Songul Imak(songul.imak@hotmail.com)

Katia Milhailova (royaltn@dir.bg)

Jim Leahy, School Director

Bill Corey, Deputy Director

Jim Anderson, Elementary School Principle

Teacher Representative, Lyn Anderson

The PTO would like to emphasize that ALL parents of the AAS students are PTO members, and as such, have a right to be an active member in the organization. If you wish to volunteer, you are welcome to attend any PTO meeting, contact any PTO member for more information, or to complete a PTO Volunteer Form available on Orientation Day, and in the Registrar's office.

INTRODUCTION to the PTO

HOW WE WORK

The PTO exists because of parent volunteers. At our core is a group of volunteers known as Room Parents. Every class from preschool to grade 12 will have one or more parents filling this role. The room parents help during the year to organize special activities for the classes, such as holiday parties and field trips, and working with teachers at their request. They will also help parents get to know each other by organizing social gatherings for parents and/or families, and they will represent your class to the PTO.

PTO MAIN EVENTS

The PTO helps AAS organize many events throughout the scholastic year. Some of the main events are described below.

PTO ORIENTATION and WELCOME BACK BARBEQUE for FAMILIES

August 22nd

This is a great opportunity to visit AAS and get acquainted with the teachers, building, the other children in your child's class, the other parents, and the PTO. You will get to meet your teachers in the classroom setting and learn about the curriculum. Afterward your family will be invited outside for a barbecue lunch and informal socializing.

HALLOWEEN

October 30th

Families are invited to bring along a dish and attend in Halloween costumes. This is a family event of dress-up, games and lots of treats.

SPRING FAIR

May 29th.

This is our main fund raiser for the year, and without this source of income the PTO would not be able to finance many events. This is a festive, fun-filled day for the entire family, where we raffle fantastic prizes, offer many fun games and activities for the children and you'll find many culinary specialties for sale from the many countries that make up our international school.



TEACHER APPRECIATION DAY

June 10th.

We like to show the teachers and all AAS staff how much we appreciate them, with the gift of food! You will have the chance to bring in a favorite dish and drop it off at the teacher's lounge, where a nice lunch will be set out just for the AAS teachers and Staff.

SHOPPING

Just a few years ago, grocery shopping was an all-day affair of search and find, driving from mini-market to bakery, to butcher, to marketplace. Now a wide variety of choices make our shopping chore easier. The following supermarkets are all self-serve and stock a good selection of local as well as western brand name products.

SUPERMARKETS

BILLA - Austrian chain. Appreciated for its fresh bread selections baked in-house. Open 7 days a week. Here you can also find fruits and vegetables, party supplies, kitchenware, and an assortment of magazines, DVDs, toys, etc. 2 locations in Mladost, Alexander Malinov and Samara. Also a store on Blvd. Bulgaria, near Boyana, but this one is usually much more crowded. Large parking lots at both. Cash machines located on outside of storefront. Note: You need a 20 or 50 st. coin for a cart, no hand-baskets available. Take your own shopping bags or purchase there.

BONJOUR - Smaller sized supermarket with many imported goods from food to children's toys, cosmetics etc. Located downtown on Slaveikov Square and Tsar Kaloyan Street.

DAILY'S - Small, but nice cheese selection. Located in Iztok on Jolio Curie Street. You're on your own to find a parking spot.

ELEMAG - Located in Lozenetz on Zlatovruh Street **and in Iztok**. This supermarket stands apart from others for stocking luxury goods and gourmet items, such as marinated prawns in the deli section. For more information see <http://www.elemag.bg/>

EUROPA - A local grocery chain. The one nearest to school is off Boulevard Andrei Saharov in Mladost 1, on the way to the covered marketplace. Cash machine outside next to parking lot.

FANTASTICO - 10 locations all over town, the one nearest school is in Mladost IV, next to block # 405. One is located in Dragalevtzi, just off the Ring Road.

HIT – German chain is one of Sofia’s newest, most modern supermarkets. Very large assortment of food and non-food items. A nice variety of Italian, Mexican and Japanese ingredients, such as Camolino rice, tortillas and udon noodles. Open 7 days a week. Inside you will also find a techno market, pharmacy, dry cleaner, bakery, toy/babystore, Jysk and several other shops. Cash machines inside. Located on Alexander Malinov Street in Mladost 4. Note: You will need a 20 or 50 ct. coin for a cart, hand-baskets available. Take your own shopping bags or purchase at checkout.

KAUFLAND - A German grocery chain in Mladost 3, between Billa and HIT Supermarket. Their motto: Guaranteed good grocery shopping and cheap.

MAKS - Located in Dragalevtzi on Zahari Zograf, the "upper ring road". They carry some fresh produce, a modest selection of household articles, some interesting breads. Slightly more expensive, but open 24 hours. Has a cafe upstairs with a play area for kids. Plenty of parking.

METRO - German chain bulk-shopping store. Children under 7 are not allowed in (for safety reasons - forklift trucks roam the store stacking shelves). Open seven days a week. You need a membership card which you'll show the cashier at check-out. You can get a membership through your company or embassy, or just stop in at the desk when you enter the store for a temporary number. The fresh food section is usually well stocked and sometimes you can find fresh herbs. You can buy office supplies, electronics, hardware, appliances, kitchenware, cleaning supplies, toiletries, houseplants, clothing, linens, toys and gardening equipment. They have a fresh fish section and a decent meat locker with Argentinian beef. Good pharmacy and coffee shop (Onda) outside. Cash machine at entrance. Ample and guarded parking. Note: Carts are inside the store and to the right. Bring your own bags or purchase at checkout.

PICCADILLY - Varna based supermarket chain with two brand new outlets in the basement of City Center Sofia and the Mall of Sofia. Good fresh vegetables/fruit selection and excellent fish counter

RAMSTORE - Turkish chain carries a selection of middle-eastern goodies like tahini, flatbread, chickpeas, and Turkish delight. The largest store is downtown on Stamboliski Blvd., but another store, closer to school is found on Boulevard Sveti Kliment Ochridski in Durvenitsa. You can use a credit card. Parking is limited to about 5 spaces in front of the store. Note: Their online ordering service works well, with payment upon delivery - www.ramstore.bg.

MARKETPLACES

Note that markets in Sofia open after 10 am, but stay open late in the evening.

The Hali - Located on Maria Luisa Blvd., opposite the Mosque. Beautifully restored and modernized, this is the oldest covered market in Sofia. There's a bit of everything inside. If the pay parking lot is full, an option would be to park across the street at the TZUM pay lot and use the pedestrian underpass to cross the street. (There are some fun jewelry stalls under there!)

“Zhenski Pazar” (Women’s Market) - Located behind Maria Luisa Blvd. across from the Mosque. Sofia’s largest and most culturally interesting. A cheap market, offering mostly local fruits and vegetables. You can find dairy products, ethnic food shops, butchers, bakeries, herbs, flowers, plants, shoes and clothing, hand-made tools, woolen blankets and sweaters and locally made pottery. It is a very busy open-air market, especially crowded on weekends. Parking on the tiny side streets is a challenge, and we would suggest using the pay lots either at the TZUM or the Hali and walking a block.

“Rimska Stena” (Roman Wall) Market - Located on Hristo Smirnenski Street, across from the Architecture School. A charming, smaller sized market, offering a variety of good fruits and vegetables, flowers and knick-knacks. There really are Roman ruins along the back side of the market. Park where you can along the street, and watch out for the trams.

Sitniyakovo Market - Located next to the Romanian Embassy on the Shipchenski Prohod Blvd. This open-air market caters to the international crowd and offers the best variety of fruits and vegetables anywhere in Sofia, including radicchio, endive, napa cabbage, and many exotic fruits. It's also considered the most expensive. Open year round, there are many areas to this market: the newer, covered, produce market, where some of the shopkeepers speak some English; the older, smaller, produce open-air market; and a small shopping area for hard-to-find alcoholic beverages, house wares, flowers, plants and typical pottery.

Other Markets Relatively Near School - In Mladost I, past Europa Supermarket, and in Mladost III, behind Fantastico Supermarket.

MALLS AND SHOPPING AREAS

City Center Sofia - Near the Hilton Hotel just off Cherni Vruh Boulevard. Underground parking lots and cash machine. On the ground floor is Piccadilly supermarket. Several good gift shops and fashion shops inside. Several cinemas with a good selection of English movies.

Mall of Sofia - On the corner of Stamboliiski Boulevard and Opalchenska Street, it is Sofia's largest mall (35.000 square meters) on three floors. Piccadilly supermarket in the basement and lots of parking space. The big advantage is that there is a nice children's playground inside. Mostly clothing and shoes shops (Marlboro, Benneton, Lacoste and Clarks), but also gift shops, Happy Bar and Grill and a McDonalds.

Sky City Mall – 52 Kosta Lulchev St., Kvartal Suburb, Geo Milev. Nice variety of shops, like supermarket, sport shops, nice coffee shop, toyshop etc.

RELATIVELY NEAR SCHOOL

Business Park Sofia - Includes several physician's offices, a dry-cleaner, some nice cafes, hairdresser, florist, eater, small supermarket, and a Mexican restaurant where you can buy soft tortillas to go and Holiday Inn hotel. Shops are only open in the week till about 6pm.

GM City Shopping Center - Just across the street from Billa in Mladost. Mostly women and children's clothing and shoes, but also gift shops, flower and watch shops. Cash machine on the premises at the Hebros bank outlet.

Princess Outlet - Located on Alexander Malinov street in Mladost 4. Clothing, shoes, restaurant, bowling alley and arcade.

CITY CENTER

Zala Universiada - In Geo Milev district, on the corner of Blvd. Shipchenski Prohod and Alexander Zhendov, just up the road from Sitniyakovo Market- lots of small shops for clothes, shoes etc. are situated around an interior exposition hall.

Sveta Petka Underpass - An assortment of shops located in the pedestrian underground walk between the Sheraton and TZUM. You can visit the ancient ruins of the Sveta Petka church, or hop on the metro from down here.

TZUM - (Tzentralen Universalen Magazin) Sofia's first shopping mall, located beside the Sheraton Hotel, with exclusive stores for clothes, shoes, toys, sports equipment, electronics, jewelry, furniture, kitchenware, gifts and souvenirs. A very nice cafe on the second floor. Convenient guarded pay parking lot in front of building.

SHOPPING

STREET SHOPPING

Alabin Street and around - Hugo Boss, Estee Lauder, Betty Barclay, quality shops for men's clothes, shoes, Bonjour Supermarket, etc.

Graf Ignatiev Street - For sheer variety and quantity of shops. Many good clothing and shoe stores for men, women and kids.

Pirotska Street - Pedestrian street across from TZUM where you'll find small shops for clothes, shoes, jewelry, Indian imported goods, books, electronics, household, fabrics, etc. The nicest thing about this street is the absence of cars!

Shishman Street - Behind the Radisson Hotel, many small, unique gift shops.

Vitosha Blvd - Sofia's main shopping street, with exclusive and designer shops for clothes, shoes, jewelry, cosmetics (including Clinique) and just about anything else. Also check out all the small side streets where you can find good shops.

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING SPECIFIC?

The availability of goods improves dramatically all the time in Sofia. We include a few items below, which might be less easy to find at first.

ART SUPPLIES AND SERVICES

The Union of Bulgarian Artists Building - 6 Shipka Street. On the ground floor of this building is a mall, with shops offering a good selection of high quality, professional artist supplies, framing services and galleries.

Office One Superstore - Several locations relatively near the school including one on Tsarigradsko Shosse with a focus on office furniture, a smaller outlet in Mladost just past Patilantsi, and a larger outlet in Lozenetz on James Bouchier Street. Here they have a nice selection of luxury pens and watches.

BOOKS

You can find a small selection of foreign language books in Sofia, mainly English but some French, German and Spanish, for example at the following bookstores. Also the British Council library (at 7 Krakra St, tel 942 43 44, www.britishcouncil.org/Bulgaria) is well stocked and for a 40 leva yearly

subscription, you can borrow books, magazines, CDs and videos. Their magazine and periodical section is good and there is a small range of kids' books.

Allianz Bookshop - 6 Shipka Street. Entering the cafe area of the Union of Bulgarian Artists, this shop on your left offers a good selection of books, novels, travel guides, and gift books in English.

Book Centre - 67 Patriarch Evtimii Blvd., near the British Residence, carries a large selection of books in English and German.

Booktrading Ltd. - 15a Graf Ignatiev (near Slaveikov Square). Adult and children's fiction and non-fiction in English, plus some children's craft kits and jigsaws, birthday cards and stationery. Tel: 981 04 48

Knigomania – 28 Vassil Levski Blvd., (just up toward NDK from the British Residence), has English fiction and kids' books, plus Lonely Planet and Rough Guides and other travel guides. Also, 17 Praga Boulevard, 6 Shipka Street, 9 Vitosha Boulevard and 18 Graf Ignatiev Street. www.knigomania.bg

Orange - 18 Graf Ignatiev. (Sofia's answer to a Virgin Megastore?!) On 4 floors, with stationery, a range of books in English, toys, music and a cafe.

Sofia Book Market - On Slaveikov Square, outdoor tables selling all types of books and software.

BICYCLES

BAS Shop - Bicycle and Repair – 5 Golo Bardo St. Great place selling everything from mountain to kiddy bikes. Staff speaks some English. Tel 962-1335. Web site: www.basbg.com

Velomania - Dimitar Nestorov Street, block 120, entr.V, apt.74. 812-7060. Very helpful personnel, good attitude. Bikes of all sizes and price ranges. They do repairs also. New shop is on 10 Ekzarh Joseph Str. Email: info@velomania-bg.com for more information.

BREAD & CHEESE

Don Des Dieux - 17 Cherni Vrah Blvd. Offers a wide selection of imported cheese, fresh baguettes and cut meats. They will make you a tasty baguette sandwich to take away. Call 866-2004 or fax 963-2026.

SHOPPING

Jovan, the Dutch Baker – Angel Kunchev St. 37. Nice bread, ciabatta, sweet pastry and Dutch apple pie.

CHILDREN'S AND BABY CLOTHES, SHOES

Shops on Graf Ignatiev, between Vasil Levski and Evlogi Georgiev and the RUM Shopping Centre in Mladost II sell good kids' trainers/sports shoes - good for the 'indoor shoes' the children are required to have for school.

ELECTRONICS, AUDIO/VIDEO, HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES, ETC

Metro – Relatively near school on km 7-11 Tsarigradsko Shosse, or on the other side of town, on 182 Evropa Blvd.

Techno Market - A new, multi-level superstore with two locations: One on Evropa Blvd, near Metro on the west side of town, and one next to Metro just off Tsarigradsko Shosse, on the east side.

Technopolis - In the Business Park Sofia, relatively near AAS.

FABRICS

Shops are numerous and tend to change location frequently, but they're usually concentrated on the following streets:

Alabin Street - near Vitosha Blvd. crossing.

Ekzarh Josif and Pirotska Streets - on either side of the Synagogue.

HARDWARE AND HOUSEWARE

Mr. Bricolage - Tsarigradsko Shosse on our side of town, or Evropa Blvd. on the Lyulin side. Follow the signs on the motorway. The first chain to open in Bulgaria for do-it-yourself home repair. Also offers some art supplies, plants, garden furniture, lighting, and quality house paint. Ample parking and cash machine outside store. Use a coin to unlock the carts parked outside, or hand baskets available inside. They accept credit cards.

Praktiker – Tsarigradsko Shosse on the left side as you head out of town, past Metro. The largest and newest do-it-yourself mega store, well-stocked with everything you would expect to find in this type of store. Easy off and on the highway with large parking lot. www.praktiker.bg

PIANOS

At the school there is a brochure available at the music department of the school. In this brochure you will find more information about the private Instrumental Program of the school.

Camerton - 3 Rusalka Street 946-1725. For purchase or rental, a wide price range, starting at 500 leva upward. Wwww.camerton999.com

Fender – 117 Knyaz Boris. Tel. 0898232999. rising@prolink.bg

MUSICAL STORE “FACTOR” 946-30-57

SOUVENIRS AND GIFTS

Flea Market at Alexander Nevski Cathedral - Icons, antiques, jewelry, Russian hand-painted boxes, and lots of cool junk too. Fun outdoor browsing.

Museum Shop at the Ethnographic Museum - Tsar Osvoboditel Blvd., located in the former Royal Palace. Great place for silver filigree work.

National Gallery for Foreign Art - Next to Alexander Nevski Cathedral.

TZUM - Maria Luisa Blvd., booths/shops on the ground floor and 3rd floor. Sveta Petka Underpass - between TZUM and the Sheraton Hotel.

Women’s Market – Reasonably priced Bulgarian pottery.

FLOWERS

Flora Comers - imports synthetic flowers, dry flowers, glass, ceramic souvenirs, accessories for weddings, candles, gifts. The firm has its own studio for decorating hotels, restaurants, offices, private homes and parties. Contact them at the following numbers: 951-6963 (store) 953-1682, 953-2623 (office), 0889-524-534, e-mail: floracom@mbox.contact.bg.

Interflora – Kv. Drujba 2, 1 5003 St. , Tel. 978-6867.

SPORTS EQUIPMENT

Intersport – Located in the Mall of Sofia, Alexander Stamboliiski Blvd. 920-9040.

SHOPPING

Miras - 47 Cherni Vrah. Stocks the following brands: Head, Tyrolia, Penn, Arena, Speedo, Converse and Trespass. Tel:962 71 98, www.miras-sport.com

Rossignol - 66 Cherni Vruh and in TZUM. Stocks brands such as Dunlop, Slazenger, O'Brien water-ski, Diana adults' swimsuits and lecoqsportif sportswear, cebe sun and ski goggles. Useful for kids' swim hats! www.rossignol.com

Speedo - On Cherni Vrah. Offers a fairly wide selection of swim suits for adults and children, swim gear and sport clothes. Expensive, but top quality. www.speedoswimming.com.

Sports Depot – Behind Technopolis, off the Ring Road.

Viva Sport - Located on the corner of 121 Evlogi Georgiev. 846-5439. www.viva-sport.com. Tennis equipment, including kids' racquets and sports clothing by Arena and Wilson.

TOYS

You can find toys all over, but these are some of our favorite shops:

Fancy - Cherni Vrah opposite the Rossignol shop and next to Waikiki children's clothes shop. Sells Smoby and Chicco toys and the Quercetti educational toys from Italy, jigsaws, dolls etc.

Hippoland – Located at Sky City Mall and Hit Supermarket

Komset -76 Todor Kableshkov, off Bulgaria Blvd, just past the entrance to Billa on the right hand side of the street. Tel.: 958 9917. Large assortment of children's toys for all ages and all different price ranges.

Simba Warehouse - Akad. Boris Stefanov, opposite the Winter Palace skating rink in Studentski Grad. (Look for the elephant sign - there's a parking lot off the road.) German brand, cheapest prices for Simba toys in Sofia. Open 11-4, Mon-Fri. Good for Barbie-lookalike and other dolls, wooden toys.

The restaurants listed below have a good reputation among our community. Food comes in no particular order.

RESTAURANTS

Annette - Nice authentic Moroccan restaurant in Sofia, 27 Angel Kunchev Street, 980-4098, info@annette.bg, www.annette.bg

Baalbek - Dyakon Ignatiy, near the junction with Slaveikov Square. Authentic Lebanese cafe. Very child friendly, cheap and cheerful. Good falafel, meatballs and salads. Takeaway downstairs, or seating upstairs.

Back Ground - 14 Vitosha Blvd. Working time: 10:00–24:00, Easy access to the Good taste of Modern Cuisine. Healthy eating, natural products, up-to-date manner of cooking and arranging the meals define the concept of Modern Cuisine. Working time: 10:00–24:00

Captain Cook -12-14 Pencho Slaveikov Blvd., 954-9098 Western-style fish restaurant with a big pool in the garden. Sushi has been added to the menu. Recently awarded "Restaurant of the Year 2005".

Classic Gourmet Club –17 Alexander Stamboliski Blvd. Tel 980-7477, 980-7478, Working hours: 10.00 – 2.00. Summer closure August 1-20. Offering nouvelle cuisine, good wine list at reasonable prices. English speaking, knowledgeable wait staff and good service.

Fenerite –2 Kotel St. 2 Kotel St. (corner with Arsenalski Blvd.) Tel. 964-0386, The Lanterns offers German and Austrian home cooking in a German Pub style environment.

Flannagans - Radisson SAS Grand Hotel - 4 Narodno Sabranie Square. 933-4334. We like it for its relaxed atmosphere, great sandwiches, and as a meeting place for friends who like to watch American basketball.

Jasmin Hotel and Restaurant - 126 Simeonovsko Shosse. 969-8555. Extensive menu, fresh ingredients, friendly service, elegant but relaxed, lovely poolside seating during warmer months.

J.J. Murphy's - 7 Karnigradska Street. 980 2870. Irish pub-style restaurant, authentic food and fun atmosphere.

Kumbare - Greek restaurant. (Closed for the summer, will open again in Sept.2007) To find out the new address, contact 0897-806-390

La Maison du Gourmet – 3A Matochina St. Dragalevsti. Tel 976-3247. Authentic French cuisine. Food and presentation offer pleasing service.

Lebed - 83 Samokovsko Shosse, in Pancharevo. 992-3045 Beautiful waterfront setting with a lovely large terrace overlooking the lake.

Olvives – 12 graf Ignatiev Str., Tel. 986 0902 American style restaurant. Offer Bulgarian, American and Italian cuisine.

Perla - On the “upper ring road” between Dragalevtzi and Simeonovo. 967-40-10. Kid friendly with a small playground, good food, large portions, guarded parking, outdoor eating area that is used even during the cooler months by means of large outdoor gas heaters.

Phoenicia - Zone B-5, 5 Osogovo Street (off Stamboliski Blvd.) 929 3641. Excellent, authentic Lebanese cuisine, loud and friendly atmosphere. If you can wait up, there's belly dancing after 10:00pm.

Restaurant 507 – Upper ring road, Simeonovska Str. Tel. 961-2218. Bulgarian cuisine. The staff is friendly and speaks English. Good food with reasonable prices.

Roll & Sushi - Korean eat-in (basic tables) or take-away 112 Rakovski Street, 0896-689-519, 0886-766-708

Seasons Restaurant - Hilton Hotel - 1 Bulgaria Blvd. Direct tel: 933-50 62. Lovely place for an elegant Sunday brunch. Kids run upstairs for supervised crafts, games and their own kid's buffet while parents luxuriate in the peaceful dining room. Live, but quiet music.

Sheraton Hotel Sofia - 5 Sveta Nedelya Square. 981-6541. Offers a luxurious Sunday brunch with free childcare.

Taj Mahal - 11, 11th August Street. 987-3632. Indian restaurant on three floors with excellent food.

Vodenitsata - Dragalevtzi, next to ski lift station. 967-1058. Good to visit with kids, as you can walk in the woods nearby or take the chairlift up Vitosha or visit the nearby monastery. Big on traditional decor with stuffed animals, a

EATING OUT

working watermill and fish swimming in the watercourse. The dancing is top-notch, and the summer folk program includes dancing on coals, after dark!

FAST FOOD CHAINS

Dunkin' Donuts - 25 Vitosha Blvd. / 45 Maria Luiza Blvd. / 2A Patriarch Evtimii Blvd. / Across from the Kempinski Hotel / Next to Metro on Evropa Blvd., among others.

Happy Bar and Grill - Opposite the Sheraton Hotel, next to Goody's, and in Mladost III relatively near the school, opposite McDonald's.

Kentucky Fried Chicken - 2A Angel Kunchev Street / 28 Alexander Stamboliiski Blvd. / 172 Slivnitsa Blvd., among others. If you work downtown you can have a bucket delivered to your office right before you head home, just call: 933-9999, Mon. - Sat. 10am - 1:30am, Sundays 11am - 1:30am. Delivery arrives within 30 minutes and costs 2.20 leva.


McDonald's - 69 William Gladstone Street / Bulgaria Blvd., behind NDK /Tsarigradsko Shosse has the double-decker bus for parties / 1 Evropa Blvd. / 23 Maria Luisa Blvd., among others.

Pizza Hut - 7 Dondukov Blvd., 981 7575, and 62 Gurko Street, 986 67 17. It's friendly and yes, it tastes the same! The restaurant in the Business Park Sofia, is located close to school. Also offers gourmet salads and sandwiches. Kids can run around the fountain park while you watch from large floor to ceiling windows, or outside under umbrellas during the warmer months. Very casual.

OMV Restaurants - At every OMV filling station you'll find a restaurant offering quick lunches; fresh baked savory pastries, chicken skewers, french fries, etc. Plus a playground for little kids. When the bread comes out of the oven, we can't resist taking a couple loaves home for dinner.

Pizza Victoria - Many locations: 4 Hristina Morfova Street, Dragalevtzi: 0888 968 169; 7 Tsar Osvoboditel Blvd. at the Military Club (24 hrs) 986-32-00/ Mladost III in the Kondor Center. 0888 968 168/ Komplex Tsarsko Selo on the ring road. 967 5050. / Arena Cinema on Blvd. Todor Alexandrov. / 66 Tsar Ivan Assen II St.; 0888-393-077 Cheap, fast, friendly and pretty good pizza too. They deliver! Delivery tel: 911-00www.pizza-victoria.com

Spaghetti Company - Italian/International



Located inside TZUM 1st floor, www.spaghetti-company.com,
spaghetticompany@mail.bg, Tel.926-0427

Below we list locations and activities we have tried with our families and return to again and again.

PLACES TO GO WITH CHILDREN

Borisova Gradina - Sofia's largest natural park. A great place for riding bike, roller-blading or riding scooters. Within the park is Kokolandia, an obstacle course laid out between the branches of large leafy trees. Good for kids over 10, or younger if they have long arms and legs! Safe bungee jumping for toddlers, and they've recently added mini-golf. Limited concession stand. You may want to think about packing a little picnic lunch or snack. No toilet facilities.

South Park (Yuzhen Park) - Contains several playgrounds, merry-go-rounds, and bouncy castles, etc. Another low-traffic park good for riding bikes.

Sofia Zoopark - On Simeonovsko Shosse, turn left at Sveti Lazarov maternity hospital. Admission is very low, (1 lev for adults) so take some coins with you. Large park area is safe but could use some loving care. The animals include tigers, lions, bears and elephants, among many others. It's never crowded and makes a good place to practice tricycle riding. Open year-round. Tel: 962 04 49

Patilantsi - In Mladost II, relatively near the school, just around the corner from McDonald's. Caters to the under-10 crowd, with supervised play jungles and a variety of rides and games, indoors and out. A popular place for birthday parties and after-school playdates. Tokens are purchased beforehand at the little store, and extra tokens can be brought back for use next time. 974 48 39; 974 49 63

ODIK - Top floor of the TZUM.

Ceramic figurine painting, either supervised or on their own. You can arrange for them to come to your home for a birthday party activity.

Puppet Theater - 14 Gurko Street, and Yanko Sakasov.

Performances are in Bulgarian, but are very well done and entertaining.

Opera and Ballet - On the corner of Vrabcha Street and Rakovski. 988 58 69; 987 13 66. You can find their program at www.geobiz.com/sfopera/program. National History Museum - Vitoshko Lale Street off the Ring Road in Boyana. 955-4280. Open 9:30-5:30. Admission: 10 leva. Exhibits show prehistoric life of the area, all through history up to 20th century.

FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT and SPORTS

History Museum – Vitoshko Lale Street. Off the ring road in Boyana. Tel 955-4280. Exhibits show prehistoric life of the area.

Natural History Museum - 1 Tsar Osvoboditel Blvd. 988-5115. Open 10-5. Admission: 2 leva. Stuffed animals, skeletons and bugs on exhibit. Even some living reptiles on display. Nothing is labeled in English.

Earth and Man Museum - 4 Cherni Vruh Blvd. 865-66-39. Open 10-6. Kids like the giant crystals, precious jewels and gold.

PARTY IDEAS/SUPPLIES FOR KIDS

Magicland Party Equipment - 52-54 Vorina Street, Belite Brezi. 958-1152, 952 3494. Specializing in carnival costumes and dress-up clothes. Fun Time Weddings and Parties at Party House: 30 Tsar Samuil Street. 981-6250, 0888-217-048, partyhouse@mail.bg. Katalina Jeliaskova is an expert theme party organizer, speaks English and Spanish.

Marietta and Marionetta Birthday Club – Lulin; Tel.827-4228; 827-2382. A theater and cafe for children. They'll organize birthday parties, carnivals and masked parties. www.marioneta.org

Prikazka Childrens Party Centre– 14 Golash St, geo Milev Area. Tel. 02 4952222 .Nice party centre for children upto 10 years old. English speaking animators available. www.prikazka.net.

CINEMAS AND MOVIES


Movies are left in their original language with Bulgarian subtitles, but children's cartoon movies are dubbed into Bulgarian. Timetables can be found on www.programmata.bg

Arena Multiscreen - 8 Tsaritsa Ioanna Blvd. Sofia's largest and most modern movie theatre. Their newest complex is located in the Business Park on the Ring Road next to Technopolis.

Multiplex Cinemas - In City Center Sofia and in Mall of Sofia are several movie theaters with Dolby surround system.

Movie Rental Shops - The main chains are Alexandra Video and Video Elite. You'll need a membership card or member number. Remember, most children's movies are dubbed into Bulgarian.

DAY-TRIPS



Bansko - Three hours drive from Sofia. Most modern ski resort in Bulgaria. Nice and well maintained ski slopes. Beautiful village, if you can see past all the new hotel and apartment construction. Go to www.bansko.bg for more information.

Borovets - This ski resort is only an hour or so out of town. It is crowded with not-so-charming hotels, and restaurants tend to be smoky and expensive, but you can take the gondola up the mountain and then hike to the “hidja” (hut) and the lake for spectacular views, fresh mountain air and a picnic.

Boyana Church - Just outside of Sofia, in the suburb of Boyana, is a tiny, well-hidden church containing outstanding frescoes dating from the 11th century. The site is on UNESCO’s World Heritage List. It’s well worth booking a personal guided tour by calling: 68-53-04, or online at www.boyanachurch.org.

Koprivshtitsa - One and half hours drive from Sofia, off the Bourgas highway, this town is of special interest for it’s well-preserved National Revival Style architecture, ornate and decorative. Some it’s houses are museums, which depict life as it was during the 1800’s. Lots of walking up and down cobbled streets. There is a nice restaurant called the brothers Mehada with a wonderful courtyard.

Melnik - The approximately 3 hour drive to Melnik follows the Struma River Valley with views across to the Pirin Mountains. The landscape then changes drastically as you near the town, and you find yourself surrounded by white, sandy cliffs. You may like to try the red wine, from the unique Melnik grape.

Mount Vitosh - This beautiful mountain can be viewed throughout Sofia. You can travel to the top either by car, bus or by lifts. A cabin lift runs from Simeonovo (entrance by the Ring Road) or a chair lift can be taken from Dragalevtsi. During the winter months it’s a crowded ski area, but the rest of the year it’s relatively quiet and great for hiking around on the numerous marked trails. There are a few outdoorsy places for a simple lunch once you get off the lifts.

Plovdiv - Located about 1.5 hr. drive from Sofia, Plovdiv’s old town attracts many visitors with its cobblestone streets and wonderful architecture and its numerous antique shops. The Roman amphitheater dates from the 2nd century and is incredibly restored. Music festivals are held here during the summer.

Rila Monastery - The beautiful road to the monastery runs beside the River Rilska and through wooded mountain slopes. The drive will take you about an hour and a half or two from Sofia. The monastery itself is breathtaking and it’s not hard to understand its place on the UNESCO World Heritage List. If you get

a chance, pay the entrance fee to the museum, just to marvel at the miniature cross sculpted by a monk with a needle. He finished it after 12 years, but by the end had lost his sight. No wonder; the work contains 1,500 tiny human figures depicting 140 biblical scenes!

SPORTS

Saturday soccer runs during autumn term and spring/summer term. It runs every Saturday during the term from 10am until 12 noon. The club is for students from Grade 1 upwards both girls and boys welcome. It is run by parents of the AAS and we have a qualified Bulgarian soccer coach who speaks Bulgarian and English. We concerntrate on technical skills as well as playing the beautiful game. A small fee of 10 leva per family is payable per session for the hire of the soccer coach. If weather is inclement the soccer will take place in the school gym. Parents are advised that an adult family member remain with their children as we are not child minders for their children

Here also is a list of some recommended places where you and your kids can enjoy the following sports:

ICE SKATING

Slavia Stadium - Ovcha Kupel district.

Winter Palace - Studentski Grad. Nickolay Simeonov 0888-505-923

HORSE RIDING

Adgor Stable: Western riding and natural horsemanship. English speaking contact: Alex Penev Tel. 0899014423. It is 25 km from Sofia, but worthwhile going to. Very nice horses and riding through the country. Very nice views. From Sofia drive to Bistritsa and follow the road to Zheleznitsa. Keep driving on the road (about 8 km) till you see a yellow sign with KOHE (means horses in Bulgarian). www.adgor.bg.

Han Asparouh Riding Centre: 28 Hajdushko Izvorche, Ovcha Kupel. By the Slavia soccer/ice skating complex. Large facility consisting of many riding clubs and independent instructors. Indoor and outdoor arenas; restaurants and tack shops on premises.

English speaking contact:

Sveti Georgi Riding Club, run by Yuri Valev 0888 921 268

Kremikovtzi Riding Club: Outdoor arena only, trail riding available. Located outside Sofia, for information call Yanislav Nikolov 0898 514 031(speaks English.

Sportna-Sofia Horse Club: 1 Dragan Tsankov Blvd., Borisova Gradina, tel. 865 7156. The manager, Hristo Marangozov, can be reached at 0886 216 669. Pony rides are also available. There is only an outdoor arena.

TENNIS

Boyana Diplomatic Club - Indoor/outdoor courts. Membership is expensive and required. Instructors available.

Borisova Gradina Park - 872-21-63. Indoor/outdoor courts.

Cherry Tennis Courts – Very close to our school in Pancharevo on Samokovsko Shosse – From Monday to Friday until 17:00. Contact 0878868811. Outdoor swimming pool.

Club Academic – Borisova Gradina Park. Tel. 872-21-63. Indoor and outdoor courts.

Dema - Near to Billa (same side) on Mladost. Indoor and outdoor courts. Contact Mariana on 0887 671 922 or the club on 976 85 85

Gorna Banya Diplomatic Club - Outdoor courts. Membership. Peace and Friendship Courts - Studentski Grad. Indoor/outdoor courts.

Maleeva Tennis Club - Outdoor courts and fitness center. Owned by the famous Maleeva sisters. www.maleevaclub.com
Nikola Vaptzarov Blvd, next to Sofia Land.

Kempinski Hotel Zografski - 962-0999, 625-1370. Indoor/outdoor courts.

Maxi Sports Center - 110 Simeonovsko Shosse. Outdoor courts.

Vasil Levski Stadium - Several public outdoor courts.

Vitosha Park Hotel - Studentski Grad, outdoor courts, expensive but good coach. Also hairdresser, beauty shop, indoor swimming pool and gym.
Contact Krasimir Lazarov (for tennis) 0888 427 605 or hotel on 816 8888

BOWLING

Galaxy Bowling - 1 Bulgaria Blvd.

Mega Extreme Bowling – Web-site: <http://mega-xtreme.atia.com>; 12 Akademic Boris Stefanov St., Sofia 1606, Studentski Grad (next to Fantastico store), tel. 969-2601.

Princess Outlet: - Located on Alexander Malinov St on Mladost IV, near HIT.

CLIMBING AND HIKING

Balkantrekking - 0888-705-179, 9899064. Contact is Miro Nankov. Email: adventure@balkantrekking.com.

Borislav Pankov - 0888-420-199. Boris is a cross-country and Biathlon Coach.

Lyuba Tours - Email: boyanin@mail.techno-link.com.

Odysseia-In - 989-0538. Email: odysseia@omega.bg ; www.odysseia-in.com

Rossy Ganevska / Bulgaria Rainbow Travels - 997-34-64, 0897-463-687. www.rainbowtravels.co.uk

Zig Zag Holidays - 980-5102. Website:
http://www.zigzagbg.com/index_eng.php

GOLF

Air Sofia Golf and Country Club - 2050 Ihtiman (60 km outside Sofia, just off the Plovdiv motorway). 07243530. Driving range, 18-hole golf course, outdoor pool, tennis courts and riding facilities.

St Sofia Golf Club and SPA - Elin Pelin, Village of Ravno Pole
Driving range, 9-hole golf course. www.stsofiagolf.com.

SQUASH

Easy Club – 6 Stoyan Edrev Street, Studentski Grad. 962-2223.
<http://www.easy-club.eu/>

Maleeva Tennis Club – 1 Squash court, Outdoor tennis courts and fitness center. Owned by the famous Maleeva sisters. www.maleevaclub.com

SWIMMING

Atama Sports Club - Kempinski Hotel Zografski 962-0999. Can organize lessons for beginners, intermediate and advanced swimmers. They are consistent with ASCTA (Australian) standards and techniques.

Boyana Diplomatic Club - Boyana, Membership required. Instructors available.

Bulgarian Sports Federation - 75 Vassil Levski Blvd. 930-0502. Hours: Mon-Fri 6.30am-8.40pm.plus Saturdays shorter hours

Holiday Inn Sofia – 111 Alexander Malinov Blvd., near Business Park and Arena. Tel. 807-0707, great pool, English speaking staff and swimming instructors, fitness center available.

Korali Mineral pool – Pancharevo district, off Samokovsko shosse. Beautiful setting, on the banks of the Pancharevo dam. Children’s pool available. Tel 0885-685-354. Hours 9am – 7 pm.

Maria Louisa Swimming Pool - in Borisova Gradina. Public, outdoor swimming pool.

Maxi Sports Club - 110 Simeonovsko Shosse Blvd. Working hours: Mon-Sun 8am-10pm. Several pools, good for kids.

Princess Hotel - 131 Maria Luisa Blvd. Indoor pool, open to non-guests for small fee. Good for little kids. 9338888

Spartak - 4 Arsenalska Street, 865-64-71. Blue complex behind the Hilton Hotel. Hours: Mon- Fri 7am- 8pm.

FITNESS CENTERS

Atama Sports Club - Kempinski Hotel Zografski, 100 James Bouchier Blvd. 962-0999. Located on the ground floor, access from the back side of the hotel, next to the pool. State-of-the-art facilities.

Holiday Inn Sofia – 111 Alexander Malinov Blvd., near Business Park and Arena. Tel. 807-0707, great pool, English speaking staff and swimming instructors, fitnesscenter with Aerobics, Gym equipment, Sauna. Variety of memberships available.

Spartak - 4 Arsenalska Street, 865-64-71. Blue complex behind the Hilton Hotel. Hours: Mon- Fri 7am- 8pm. Variety of fitness classes, gym equipment, cardio equipment, personal trainers and swimming pools.

In case of illness or accident, most expat families contact the physician they have come to know through a recommendation, whether from an employer, embassy or friend. If your need is specialized, the Sofia medical network is quite small and your physician can point you in the direction of a specialist clinic, lab or person who can treat you.

CLINICS and GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

Biocheck - 31 Ekzarh Yossif Street. 91183. Monday through Friday, 7:30 am - 7:00 pm. Saturday 9:00 am-1:00 pm. Different specialists..

Greenberg Medical Center - 25 Polyclinic, 1st floor, wing C, Mladost III 974-4816, 974-4933. 24 hour service and house calls. Very close to school. English speaking staff.

International Medical Centre – 28 Nikolai Gogol St. Tel. 944-9317, 0886-532-551. www.imc-sofia.com Dr. Ivo Djonev.

Medical Center Europe – Business Park Sofia in Mladost 4, building 2, floor 1, 976 95 23, 976 95 24. Offers medico-diagnostic laboratory, dental service and consultative unit.

Medical Center “St Panteleimon” - 21 Kniaz Boris I Street. 954-9588, 952-1841, 951-5162. 24 hour service and house calls. Different specialists. Some speak French, or German. http://www.medicinabg.com/index_eng.php

Military Medical Academy - 3 St. George Sofyiski Street. Tel: 9226 000, Emergency: 9225 543. Hours are Monday-Friday 8:00am - 5:30pm. Different specialists. Some speak German. www.vma.bg

Thorax Clinic - 57 Alexander Stamboliski Blvd. (Emergency: 91285) 988-5259, 885-259, Manager:0888-557-655. 24-hour service and house calls. Some doctors speak French or German. Clinic has different specialists including pediatricians.

Thorax Clinic 2 - Fritof Nansen Blvd. 980-7886; 981 6095. For x-rays and outpatient surgery only.

Vita Medical Centre - 14 Bunaia Street (off Oborishte). 943-4398. 24-hour service and house calls. Different specialists including pediatricians. Some doctors speak French or German. www.vita.bg

HOSPITALS

For a serious medical emergency, go directly to the emergency room at the Pirogov Hospital. If your Bulgarian is poor, take someone to translate. If you can't drive, dial 150 for an ambulance and be prepared to describe, in Bulgarian, the problem. You'll be asked to give the patient's age, address and phone number.

Pirogov Emergency Hospital - 21 General Totleben Blvd. 952-1161; 915 44 11
The entrance to the children's hospital is beside the main entrance. Modernized rooms are available for a price, should you need to stay. The medical staff are highly qualified but do tend to have an outdated approach toward patient bedside manner.

Tokuda Hospital – 407 Sofia, 51B Nikola Vaptsarov Blvd., Tel. 403-4000. English speaking staff available.

DENTISTS

Dr. Dinkova – Othodontist for children. 11 Blvd. Totleben, Apt. 1, across Rodina hotel. Tel. 952-3006,

Mette Manikov - Dental Hygienist, 969-2273/72.

Swedent - 100 James Boucher Blvd. Room 110 in the Kempinski Hotel. 969-2273. Dr. Dean Mihailoff is an EU licensed DDS from the Karolinski Institute in Stockholm. He's wonderful with children, but has a very full patient list.

The Ortodontist's Tzvetan Ninov - 0888 343816, ninov122@hotmail.com. He works together with Dean and Mette and they all speak English. ninov.tzvetan@gmail.com

Dr. Zhivkova – Excellent Dentist. Blvd. Totleben, Apt. 1, across Rodina hotel. Tel. 952-3006, 0887-897219.

ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE /PHYSIOTHERAPIST

Petar Ninov - Chiropractor, 0888 577 380, 11 Bulgaria Blvd. Excellent English www.petarninov.com

Venetta – Excellent massage therapist, who makes home visits. Tel. 0899-859601.


24-HR PHARMACIES

You will notice many small pharmacies (apteka) everywhere, but the following are 24 hour:

BD PHARM - 10 Yanko Sakazov Blvd. 943-3972.

Pharmatel (The Commercial League) - 1 G.M. Dimitrov Blvd. (off Simeonovsko Shosse) 962-2222. Largest selection available. They offer home delivery. English-speaking operator.

VETERINARIANS



Blue Cross Veterinary Clinic – 1 Chereshova Gradina, Pancharevo. Conveniently located on the road to our new school, 979-0935, www.bluecrossbg.com. The first of its kind in Bulgaria, this clinic is clean, well-organized, staffed by a group of young, knowledgeable and caring staff. Prices are listed on their website. They also offer kenneling. Call Dr. Borislav Georgiev - 0898-766-335. Speaks English.

Dr. Damian Iliev - 0888-95-0945; 0886 890 685 Speaks some English.

Dr. Vencislav Stoev - 0888-744-726. Speaks some English, makes house calls.

GENERAL HEALTH ISSUES

AAS employs a school nurse, Mrs. Kunka Georgieva, who is trained to deal with illnesses and accidents. Her office at our new school is down the stairs and on the right. She will happily help you with any children's medical advice. Otherwise you should be aware that Bulgaria has its own individual range of germs lurking, like any country! Although most of us stay pretty healthy, there were a few cases of strep throat, and lice in the community last year. Check with your health practitioner to check whether your family's inoculations are up to date for tuberculosis (TB), rabies, Lyme disease (from ticks) and Hepatitis A.

ENGLISH-SPEAKING SCHOOLS

American English Academy

Member of Association of Christian Schools International. Kindergarten through Grade 12. Director: Ruth M. Munsey Email: Fmmunsey@geobiz.net. Office Manager: Toni Krumova, 0888-328-138. 10 Tzvetan Lazarov Blvd., Sofia. 978-0136, 978-0186. Email: aeaoffice@gmail.com.

The American College of Sofia

Accredited in Bulgaria by the Ministry of Education. Grade 9 through 12, teaches an American curriculum to Bulgarian and International Students. The American College Campus, Mladost II. Director: Thomas Cangiano 974 4140; 974 3435. Email: acs@acs.bg Website : www.acs.bg

The American University of Blagoevgrad (AUBG)

Located about 100 kilometers south of Sofia in the town of Blagoevgrad. It was founded in 1991 as a cooperative venture of the University of Maine and the governments of Bulgaria and the U.S. The University of Maine extends its accreditation to the academic programs of the AUBG. The University teaches a four- year liberal-arts curriculum. Admission is competitive and based on high school transcripts, SAT and TOEFL scores, a required essay and letters of recommendation. President: Julia M. Watkins (073) 88304, 88306. Email: watkins@aubg.bg. Registrar: (073) 88220, 88221.

International Children's Creativity Centre

A preschool activity center for children age 2-4 years, serving the international community. Children can attend for 3 or 5 mornings or 5 full days; hours 8:30am - 12:30 or 5:00pm. Talk to Albena Dalkalatcheva. 56 Sveti Naum Blvd., Lozenetz, Sofia.

TUTORS

One of the advantages to living in Bulgaria is not only the affordability of private lessons, but also the high level of professionalism of the instructors. Many of these instructors will come to your home or office, and are willing to tailor their lessons according to your needs.

MUSIC

The school provides a private instrumental program brochure (upon request), which lists music teachers.

Vocal - Susan Brownfield is an experienced American trained voice coach.
www.susanbrownfield.com

Piano –

Dora Nikolova: 852-79-69,0887295832

Mariana Teolofilova: 840 33 07; 0887 629 698 (music teacher at AAS)

Siliana Shiliashka will give piano lessons in your home. Tel. 0885-518184.

DANCE

Dance teacher and choreographer - Zhenya Zhivkova, GSM: 0886-817-479, tel. 958-2880, e-mail: djenia@abv.bg. Private or group lessons can be arranged. Specializes in Dance Sport/Ballroom Dancing – both international and social style. Speaks English very well.

The Electra Dance Studio - Slavia Sports Complex, 1 Koloman Street, Champion Hotel, Floor 7. 958-4402, 0888-308-401. Lessons for children in all genres of dance, including ballet.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

International Women's Club - Offers its members numerous activities like babygroup and conversation classes (French, German, Spanish, Italian and Bulgarian). www.iwc-sofia.com

The UK and US Embassies - Contact the CLO's of these embassies for lists of recommended Bulgarian teachers.

CHURCHES

Alexander Nevsky Memorial Church, Bulgarian Orthodox

Telephone: 9802902, Daily Services: 8:00am and 5:00 pm. Closed on Monday. Saturday: 6:30pm / Sunday: 9:30am. During the winter months hours are 7:00am to 6:00pm. Summer hours are 7:00am to 7:00pm. Weekend services last about two hours. Go early to hear the bells ring before the service. The professional choir that sings the Bulgarian Orthodox liturgical music is famous in Bulgaria. People stand and walk in and out of the church during the services.

Anglican Services at the British Embassy

Address: 6th September Street, side entrance to the British Residence (sign says: Commercial Section). Holy Communion service in English starting at 10:00am. Held on the third Sunday of every month. Includes Sunday school. For more information, contact British Embassy tel: 933 9222

SCHOOLS, TUTORS, and CHURCHES

The Bulgarian Lutheran Church

Telephone: 963-4244. Email: blcofc@bgcell.net Address: 4 Kapitan Andreev Street, 2nd floor, Lozenetz. Pastor: Strahil Naidenov.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

Telephone: 9463329 Address: 21 Marin Drinov Street. Services held on Sunday at 10:00am. and 1:30pm. Thursday at 6:00pm. Saturday there is Free English at 10:30am. Bible classes, seminary and baptisms throughout the day.

International Baptist Church of Sofia

Telephone: 971-1750. Email: ibcs@geobiz.net Address: Interpreted World Trade Center, 31 Dragan Tsankov Blvd. Services are held in English every Sunday at 11:00am. There is also a Sunday School that starts at 10:00am. Nursery service is provided for young children during the 11:00am service. Bible study and prayer group meeting every Wednesday on Elemag Street, Block 304, Floor 9, Apt. 31.

Jewish Worship at the Sofia Synagogue

Telephone: 983-1273. Address: 16 Exarch Yossif Street. Services are held every day at 8:30am plus Fridays between 5-7:30pm depending on the season and Saturdays at 9:45am. A small Sephardic community meets in a side room of the main synagogue located not far from the Mosque near TZUM.

St. Joseph's Catholic Church

Telephone: 981-5548. Address: 125 Knyaz Boris 1 Street. Mass is held every Sunday at the following times: 9:00am in Polish, 10:00am in Bulgarian; 11:30am in Latin and 5:30pm in Bulgarian. The Bulgarian Franciscan priests serve this church.

Sofia English Fellowship, Bulgaria-Free Church

Address: Holly Trinity Church-Bulgaria Blvd next to Billa, Sofia. If you are interested, please contact Reverend Bob and Becky Faber. Telephone: 866-9409.

Ecumenical Service in German

Christliche Kirche "Ökumenische Zuflucht"

Deutschsprachige ökumenische Kirche

Office:

Ul. Elemag 6F,

1113 Sofia

Tel. 02 963 20 50

evkirchesofia@web.de

Sylvia Petzarsky

TAXIS

Taxis in Bulgaria are plentiful and affordable. They have become quite reputable in the last few years, and stories of rip-offs are rare. Nevertheless keep an eye on the meter for any “racing” of the fare. If this happens, the only thing to do is to tell the driver to stop and get out immediately. The basic rate for taxis in Sofia is about 59 ct. a kilometer, but double that fare after 10:00pm. Taxis at hotel stands should be following the standard tariffs, however, in practice they charge 2 to 3 times more.

Telephoning for a taxi is easy and only adds a little extra to the bill. When you order the taxi, the dispatcher will ask for your telephone number and inform you how long until the taxi will arrive. Sometimes they will call you back when a taxi is near, to confirm that you still want it.

Taxis from the airport are now run by a reputable company; just make sure you place your order up at the counter, and not from the sneaky drivers milling about in the waiting crowds.

Be aware that most taxis do not have their rear seat belts working and driving can be a bit hairy. If you come across a taxi driver that you really like, ask the driver for his/her number. The following are trustworthy taxi companies to hail from the curbside or to phone:

OK Supertrans - 973 -2121

Yes & Yellow - 91-119

Euro Taxi – 962-2226

Sofia Taxi - 974-4747

Radio CB Taxi - 91-263

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Trams, Trolleys and Buses; their network encompasses the whole city and if you aren't in a hurry, and don't mind crowds, they are certainly a cheap way to get around. Obtain tickets (“bileti”) in advance from booths at the central stops or kiosks. Individual tickets cost about 70ct. and must be canceled upon entering the vehicle. Monthly passes are also available. Trams and trolleys operate between 5:00 am and 1:00 am. Buses run from 5:00 am to 12:00 midnight. Sofia's underground, although new and efficient, only has one branch, running from the center to the west of the city. It operates from 6:00am to 10:00pm.

TRANSPORTATION and MONEY

The latest form of public transport is the “marcheroute” taxi. These mini-buses are clearly marked with their fixed route, but will make stops anywhere along the line to pick up or drop off passengers, usually without much warning, so drivers beware! The cost is about 1,50 lv. payable to the driver, regardless of your final destination along the route.

DRIVING TIPS

As in any other new city, it will take time to get accustomed to the local driving style. A few situations you may encounter are speed traps when going through villages. The speed limit will suddenly drop from 90km/h to 20km/h. And do watch out for the potholes, and especially for other drivers who are also dodging them!

Driving under the influence of alcohol is a serious infraction of the law, penalized with heavy fines, suspension of driving license or even imprisonment. Driving without car documents (registration and insurance papers) and your license, also carries large fines and possible suspension of your driving rights. To cross the border, in addition to your passports and the usual documents you carry with you when driving, you'll need Green Card insurance, (third party international liability insurance) obtainable from Bulstrad, or at the border itself, if you choose to deal with it there. Here in Sofia, the nearest office to school is in the Business Park Sofia. The price varies according to the vehicle and to the validity period you purchase (from 2 weeks to a year).

IN CASE OF A CAR ACCIDENT

1. Those involved must not move the vehicles but wait at the scene, even if the vehicles are blocking traffic.
2. You must call the police: 166.
3. You must present all your documents: drivers license, car registration, liability insurance certificate and passport or other ID card.
4. The police will issue a “protokol za proizshestvie” (police report), without which you cannot claim on your insurance.

AIR and RAIL

Sofia International Airport

Arrivals.....	937-2212
Departures	937-2211
Central Railway Station.....	932-3333

MONEY

Bulgarian society is a cash culture. You won't be using a checkbook; some payments can be made by credit card. You will come to learn where the cash machines ("bankomats") are. The one nearest our school is at the OMV service station on the corner of the Ring Road and Samokovsko Shosse. You may want to advise your visitors to bring their bankcard to Bulgaria and not Traveler's Checks, since these are very difficult to change in Sofia, and cash points are increasingly common.

Bulgarians are a fusion of distinctly separate ancient peoples; the Slavs, Thracians and Protobulgars, each differing in race, religion and culture. Together, over a period of thousands of years, they contributed to the immense richness of Bulgarian folk customs and traditions. These vary from region to region, and are more closely followed in rural areas than in Sofia, but you'll probably come across these major ones during your time here. We've also included some tips on local social etiquette that may come in handy when you interact with people from your host country.

ETIQUETTE

BULGARIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

It is customary for both women and men to remove their hats while in church, and not to put their hands in their pockets or cross their arms.

BIRTHDAYS

On their birthday, Bulgarians take a box of candy into work or school to share with friends and co-workers in celebration. When attending a birthday party, it is appropriate for guests to bring a gift and flowers.

COCKTAIL PARTIES OR RECEPTIONS

Usually begin in the early evening and last two hours or more. To arrive early would be discourteous. One should arrive at the time mentioned on the invitation. Up to 15 minutes late is permissible.

DEATH NOTICE

These formal announcements of a death in the family are usually sent by Bulgarians to all acquaintances. It is correct to respond with a note of condolence. If you attend a funeral, you should bring an even number of flowers.

FLOWERS

When invited to dinner either at a restaurant or to a home, particularly for the first time, you should take flowers to the hostess. Avoid chrysanthemums, a symbol of mourning. Also avoid giving an even number of flowers (except for a funeral or memorial service). If the party is given in your honor, you should have the flowers sent with your personal card, either earlier in the day, following the dinner, or during the reception itself.

GREETINGS

The man generally offers his hand first. A Bulgarian person may be addressed as "Gospozhitce" (Ms.), "Gospozho" (Mrs.), "Gospodin" (Mr.) without the last name. A greeting or farewell is always accompanied by a handshake. When you

become friends with a Bulgarian, you may kiss lightly on both cheeks upon meeting and parting.

NEW BABY

If you plan to take a gift to the new baby, be sure to call ahead and ask when it would be convenient. Usually a visit to a newborn should not take place earlier than the 40th day after delivery. Something like a baby shower, called the “Pogacha” (round bread), is held about a month or two after the baby is born, and is usually attended only by women. A round bread, “pogacha” or “pitka”, is one of the meals served. On that occasion it’s usual to bring a gift for the baby and flowers for the mother.

NODDING THE HEAD

You will soon notice that many Bulgarians will confirm by moving the head from left to right and will reject by moving it up and down.

TIPPING

A service charge of 10-15% is sometimes included in a restaurant bill, in which case there is no need to leave anything more. The tip should be increased accordingly, however, if you have required a great deal of service. In a luxury restaurant one gives a 10% tip. At a bar or sidewalk cafe it is normal to leave a small tip, or simply round up the bill. This would hold true for tipping a taxi driver too. Don’t expect any small change back from the fare.

WEDDING INVITATIONS

You may receive a formal invitation to attend a wedding ceremony, reception or both. The later in the day, the dressier the occasion. If you are invited to the reception, you will probably be expected to reply to the invitation and you should probably bring a gift and flowers. Be sure to include your personal card in the gift which you take to the home of the reception. If you are invited to attend only the church ceremony, still send a greeting card or flowers to the married couple.


CELEBRATIONS

“KOLEDARI”

On Christmas day, December 25th, young men and boys, called “koledari”, visit people’s houses singing special songs for every member of the family, wishing luck, health and success. People give them bread, candies and treats.

MARCH 1ST and “MARTENITZAS”

On this day Bulgarian’s greet each other with “chestita baba Marta”, and present each other red and white “martenitzas” which will be pinned to clothing or tied around a wrist for the entire month of March, or until the first stork is



seen. They symbolize health and happiness. Your children will find out exactly who baba Marta was, in their Bulgarian Studies class.

MARCH 8TH

March 8th is International Women's Day. Men are expected to give flowers to the women at their home and office. This is the closest thing to Mother's Day, and is taken very seriously.

NAME DAYS

There are numerous religious or folk holidays called "name days". All people named after a certain saint celebrate their name according to the religious calendar. Anyone celebrating their name day is expected to stay home so that friends and relatives may visit without a special invitation. The person celebrating their name day provides food and drinks, while guests are expected to bring flowers and good wishes.

"SURVAKARI"

On New Year's Day, January 1st, young children tap grown-ups on the back with decorated cornel cherry tree branches for health and good luck, singing Christmas songs. The adults are then expected to give each child a bag with sweets and fruit, or some money.

"VELIKDEN" OR EASTER

The Thursday before Easter Sunday is used to paint and decorate boiled eggs. On Easter Sunday families get together, they give each other decorated eggs and "fight" with them, tapping each egg against their opponents' until one cracks. It is believed that the person whose egg remains whole will be healthy and lucky throughout the year.

We hope this booklet will be a useful resource during your early days here in Sofia, and later on when you're completely comfortable in your new home. As you will soon realize, this is an ever-changing environment, and to keep up with the pace we rely on each other for advice, local updates, and to share new discoveries, good and bad. We aim to produce a revised version of *Welcome!* Every new school year, therefore, we greatly value your feedback. Please give us your comments for ways to improve; whether there's something missing, you found errors, or you'd like to make suggestions for additions, we want to hear from you! Write an email to any of our PTO members. Below we list a few additional resources that we can vouch for.

BOOKS ABOUT BULGARIA

Sofia Business & Travel Guide - by Peter Carney and Meri Anastassova - Useful for getting around the city. Available from the American Chamber of Commerce, 19 Patriarch Evtimii Blvd., floor 5, apt. 10. Tel. 981-5950, 981-4340. Also available from the AAS Library.

Sofia, The Insider's Guide- Let's you in on what you need and want to know... This quarterly publication is filled with up to date information about the city and events, suggestions for places to visit, restaurant reviews and even a language primer. You can find free copies in just about every hotel lobby.

Rough Guide to Bulgaria and Lonely Planet Guide to Bulgaria - Both of these travel guide books can be found in many of the bookstores we've recommended in the Shopping section. In addition, Jamadvice Travel Centre on 10 Assen Zlatarov Street (tel. 943-3011) stocks a selection of Lonely Planet Guides for sale.

The Insider's Guide to Sofia and Beyond – by Christine Milner and Paromita Sanatani. Published in 2005, this is the most thorough and interesting guide to the city. It's a beautiful book and makes a lovely gift for your visitors.

BOOKS ABOUT TRANSITION

The school counselor, Mrs. Laura Giosh-Markov, can offer you advice and material on coping with transition. The AAS library stocks quite a few books on this subject and our school librarian, In addition, AAS holds several meetings on transition issues throughout the school year.

USEFUL WEBSITES/EMAIL ADDRESSES

Bulgarian News

Sofia Echo www.sofiaecho.com
BTA www.bta.bg
Capital www.capital.bg
Novinite www.novinite.com

Bulgarian Weather

Local Forecast <http://english.wunderground.com>
Ski Report www.snow-forecast.com/resorts

Travel in Bulgaria

OMDA www.omda.bg
Discover Bulgaria www.discoverbulgaria.com
Sofia City Guide www.sofiacityguide.com
Bulgarian Tourism www.bulgariantourism.okay
Bulgaria Travel www.bulgariatravel.org
Travel Lang www.travlang.com
Sofia Airport www.sofia-airport.bg
Travel Warnings www.travel.state.gov
Maps, Addresses <http://bgmaps.com>

Entertainment in Sofia

Cultural Guide www.programata.bg
Cinema www.uncinema.com

Relocation Services

Local Expat Services www.local-expat.com

Bulgarian Arts and Crafts

AumdaGallery www.aumda.bizland.com
DeltaKilims www.geocities.com/kilimweaver
Chushkarcheto Carpets/Kilims <http://tchu.hit.bg>

Business in Bulgaria

American Chamber Commerce www.amcham.bg
International Women's Club www.iwc-sofia.com
Bulgarian Intl. Business Assoc. www.biba.bg
US Embassy www.usembassy.bg

Education

Anglo American School www.ecis.org/sofia
International School Services www.iss.ed
European Council of Intl. Schools www.ecis.or

Families in Transition

Interaction www.tckinteract.net
TCK World www.tckworld.com
Global Nomads Virtual Village www.gnvv.org



Expatriate Exchange
Berlitz International, Inc.
BISIS

www.expatexchange.com
www.berlitz.com
www.bisis.com

EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS

Ambulance.....	150
Fire	160
Police.....	166
Traffic Police.....	982-27-23
Pirogov Hospital	952-11-61

THANKS

The AAS PTO wishes to thank the businesses and individuals who, by placing their advertisement in the following section, have helped to finance the professional printing job of our Welcome Booklet. If you also are interested in advertising this way, please contact Maria Mihailova, AAS marketing manger for more information. The Welcome Booklet is updated every year and thanks to these contributors is offered free of charge to all AAS staff and families, new and returning.

We wish also to thank to Susan Hunsberger for her outstanding design of our booklet front cover.

We also thank Ivanka Papazova and Maria Mihailova for their contribution to this practical booklet.

PTO

Sofia map



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