

Survival Guide

2023



Dear future MU-Varna student,

We are very happy to see your interest in studying at Medical University of Varna. Every beginning is hard, especially if it is in a new environment with an unknown language and unknown culture. Nevertheless, you do not have to fear a new start. You're not the first one confronting this big step into your new life. All of us have been in this situation before.

One of the first international students was „Martin“, he graduated in the international program of the Medical University “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” Varna. “Martin” set the ground for this survival guide for students of MU-Varna with his first version of “A Brief Student's Survival Guide to Varna”.

But let us leave the history behind and look into the bright future - your future. Most questions you will face during the first weeks, months or years in Varna should be covered by this guide. If you have any additional questions, do not fear to contact your “buddy” or other students. You will always find somebody who is going to help you!

Your Orientationweek-Team!

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1. First arrival in Varna

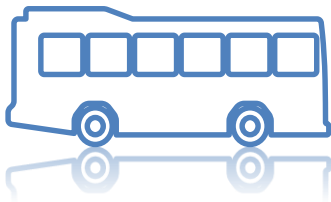
1.1 Airport transfer

1.1.1 Airport transfer to city center

If you have landed at Varna airport, there are two main options to get to the city center.



The first one is taking a cab, many students find the two companies “Omega” and “Triumph” very reliable. Those taxis run with a Taximeter. Usually you have to pay around 15-20 leva from the airport to the city center, depending on the time you arrive and the traffic. More information about how to take or order a taxi cab is available in the chapter „types of transports“.



The second possibility to reach the center is to take the bus number 409, direction Journalist or Golden Sands. It leaves every 30 minutes directly in front of the arrival terminal and takes you for one lev to the city center. You only can pay here with cash.

1.1.2 Airport transfer from Burgas

There are two possibilities for the transfer to Burgas. The easiest way is to ride the so called “M-BUS”, which takes approximately 2 hours and costs around 14 Leva. The other alternative is to take the train, but it takes 4 hours and there are many stops.

<https://bgrazpisanie.com/en/line/burgas-varna/mbus/147>

1.2 Money exchange or money withdrawal

If this is your first arrival in Bulgaria you need to get the Bulgarian currency, Leva, at least for the transfer to the city center. So in order to do that, you can either go to an exchange point directly at the airport (keep in mind that the trading rate is always 1€ to 1,96leva) or you can go to a cash point. Many students prefer “Varchev Exchange” due to its good location next to the main building of the University.

Here are some pictures of the currency:



Source:

<https://www.leftovercurrency.com/exchange/bulgarian-leva/current-bulgarian-new-lev-banknotes/>

1.3 Hotels

In terms of Hotels you have a few options from a cheap sleep to luxurious comfort. The closest to the University’s Main Building is “Hotel Orbita”. Rooms here are about 80-100 lev per night.

Other Hotels are: “Campus 90 “, “Grand Hotel London”, “Modus Hotel”, “Hotel Capitol”, all of them however are 20 minutes walking away from the university.

If you want it extra nice: “Swiss Belhotel” or “Graffiti hotel”. Those hotels have all the deluxe features, like a huge spa area that you can use even if you don’t stay in the hotel. So from time to time, if you are into that, you can have a relaxing spa day there.

1.4 Bulgarian for beginners

Добър ден (Dobar den)	Hello
Сiau/ Довиждане (Dovizhdanie)	Goodbye
Мерси/ Благодаря (Mersi, Blagodarya)	Thanks
Моля/ Заповядайте (Molia, saroviadaite)	Here you are
Как си? Аз съм добре (Kak si?, As sum dobre)	How are you? I am fine
Къде е университетът, тоалетната, ресторантът,...? (Kade e universitetat, toaletnata, restorantat)	Where is the university, toilet, restaurant?
Колко струва? (Kolko struva)	How much is it?
Може ли ...вода, портокалов сок, бира? (Mozheli voda, portokalov sok, bira)	Can I have water, orange juice, beer?
Дайте ми ... моля (Daite mi ... molia)	Give me please ...
Как да стигна до (Kak da stigma do) ... ?	How do I get to ...
Искам (Iskam) ...	I want ...
Бих желал (bih zhelal) ...	I would like ...

2.2 Students office

This is where you will get your “Knishka” certified and stamped (see below), sign in for the new semester, submit your doctor's note to get excused in case of illness. So in total, if you face a difficulty occurring with the university you can go to the Students office and the people who are working there are willing to help :)

For Medical students:

- It is located on the first floor - for Bulgarians it would be considered second floor - in the main building
 - <http://mu-varna.bg/EN/Students/Pages/faculty-medicine.aspx>
- Reception hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday:
 - 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 a.m. and 13:30 p.m. - 15:30 p.m.

For Dental Medicine students:

- It is located on the second floor - for Bulgarians it would be considered third floor - in the Faculty of Dental medicine
 - <http://mu-varna.bg/EN/Students/Pages/faculti-dentmed-students.aspx>
- Reception hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday:
 - 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 a.m. and 13:30 p.m. - 15:30 p.m.

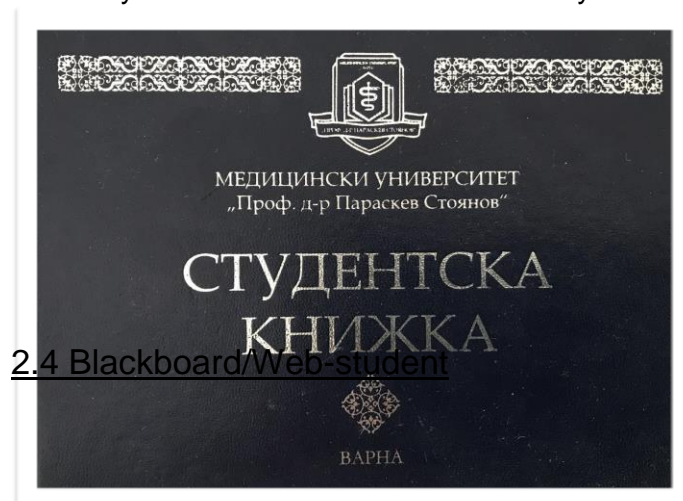
2.3 Knishka (Student's book)

Your “Knishka” or student's book is something very important in your career as a Student in Bulgaria. It will keep records of all your exams, is your proof of enrolment and your diary of sick days. The “Knishka” is often the first thing a professor will/ wants to see in an exam so you should keep it in a good shape.

So make sure not lose it, because this could cause a lot of problems.

In the left column you fill the name of the subject, I prefer to use the order that is used in the curriculum (find it at <http://mu-varna.bg/EN/Students/Pages/faculty-medicine.aspx>; <http://mu-varna.bg/EN/Students/Pages/faculti-dentmed-students.aspx>) however some students prefer to put subject in the order of the exam dates. Make sure to put subjects with examination first i.e. in a row with respective fields on the right for your mark. The name of your assistant and professor can be found in “Web-student” (see below) but if you remember, ask in the first week of your semester and write it down carefully for later purposes.

To excuse an absence from a seminar you have to go to the Student’s office with a sick note issued by a doctor of the MU Varna and they will fill it in the back of your “Knishka”.



2.4 Blackboard/Web-student

“Blackboard” is the platform you will use for learning, getting information, seminars, lectures and taking tests/exams.

There is also an application available for iOS, Android and Windows phone.

You’ll get your login data by the Students Office. If you have problems with your login or want to change your data, contact the students office.

- <http://mu-varna.bg/EN/cdo/Documents/help%20studenti-eng.pdf>

“Webstudent”:

- <https://webstudent.mu-varna.bg>
- You can see your schedule and which teacher you have with contact information and your taken exam grades.
- You can see your exam results, as well as paid tuition fees, signatures from your teachers for attending classes, and you can fill „Request forms“, if you need any administrative data from the Student’s office.

2.5 The University as a system

The University teaches according to the multidisciplinary approach, in which the student has many different seminars and lectures in one day in contrast to the cyclical/modular approach.

So for that cause after each semester there is an exam session in which you are

going to get examined - the winter exam session - from 2nd January to around the 7-8 February and the summer exam session - from the 1st June to the 7-8 July. That means that all your exams are going to be somewhere within those dates. If you fail an exam, there is a retake session in which you can repeat the exam - the winter retake session normally is from 7-8th of February to the 14-15th of February and the summer retake session is from 7-8th of July to the 14-15th of July, so always one week after the regular exam session. If you fail the retake session there is the September retake session. To get in the next year you should have less than 2 failed exams (that means you failed the regular, the retake and 2nd retake). Your first 3 times (regular, retake, 2nd retake) to pass an exam are free of cost, but if you have to take an exam for the 4th or more time it must be paid for. In the exams, which are not passed, you will get another shot in the next regular or 2nd retake session and should be in advance clarified



with your assistant and students office. Another important thing is that in order to get to the exam session, you must first get signatures for all the subjects you have in your “Knishka” from your assistant, who is leading your seminars and from your professor who is leading your lectures. If a student has too many absences, an assistant or a professor can refuse to give them a signature, which in effect forces them to repeat the year. The signatures can be seen inside webstudent (look at point 2.4). In most subjects the student is allowed to have two unexcused absences. If he has another absence the student has to retake each further missed seminar. The conductance can be arranged with your assistant. A student can miss 3 seminars, but has to retake 2 of them, in order to get the signature for a subject.

3 Registration

3.1 Migration office

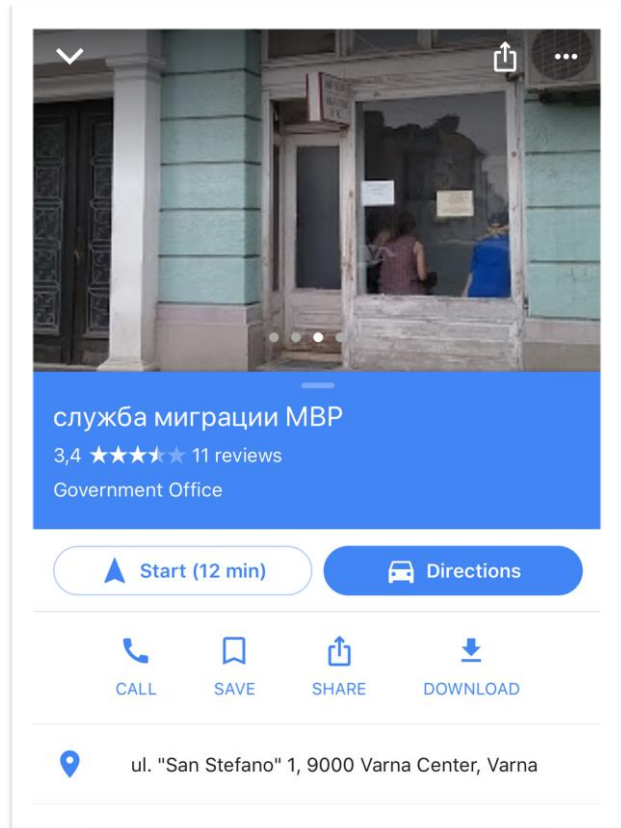
As a Student in Varna you are obliged to register as a “long-term-resident” in Bulgaria. For this purpose, it is necessary to pay a few visits to the Migration office of Varna.

You are strongly advised to register yourself, because it is necessary to sign in for the second semester!

Especially now with the pandemic situation you need your long term resident identification!

Following documents are required:

- Application form (you will receive it directly from the Migration office): the first half is translated in English, the second half not
- Copy of the national passport or ID card
- Rental contract as proof of address
 - The landlord should sign you an original contract.
 - Together with the landlord/or the authority you have to go to the notary to confirm the rightfulness of the contract.
- Copy of a health insurance card/proof of health insurance (for EU citizens) and compulsory health insurance for the duration of residence in Bulgaria (for non-EU citizens).
- The original certificate of enrollment, which is available for you in the Student’s office after a successful enrollment to the semester. For Non-EU students: you shall also submit a copy of their Certificate issued by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education.
- Proof of possession of financial means to cover the expenses for the duration of residence in Bulgaria:
 - A copy of your credit card (EU-citizens) and a certified copy of the declaration for financial support (for non-EU citizens)
 - When you visit the migration office for the first time, then you have to ask them for a declaration. With this you will go to the notary (the nearest one is: ul. "27-mi Yuli" 1, 9000 Varna Center) and sign it there (costs about 10 leva)
 -
- Document for paid fee:
 - In order to get the residence permit you have to pay:
 - First time, you have to pay 20.10 leva at the bank
 - located 100m to the right (if you are standing in front of the „Migration office“)



- The Second time, it depends on you, how quick you want the passport (normally 30 days is fine):
 - For EU citizens:
 - For 30 days: 18 leva (+2,10 taxes for the bank)
 - For 3 days 36 leva (+2,10 taxes for the bank)
 - For non-EU citizens:
 - Residence:
 - 6 months: 200 leva
 - 12 months: 500 leva
 - ID card-processing period:
 - For 30 days: 45 leva (+2,10 taxes)
 - For 10 days: 90 leva
 - For 3 days: 225 leva
 - Each time you pay you will get two bills, one for you, one for the Migration Office.

If you are a first year student, you are strongly advised to take a student from an upper course with you, because they can speak/read Bulgarian and will help you, filling out the documents.

3.2 Bank account

As a student of “MU-Varna” you’re going to need a bank account, preferably at a local bank. Having a bank account at a local bank is one of the elements required in obtaining the Bulgarian long-term stay permission and is useful for receiving funds from home. While it’s possible to do everything on your own, having a Bulgarian friend or higher year student come with you is definitely making it easier.

The most popular ones are:

- “DSK Bank”
- “UniCredit Bulbank”
- “KBC Bank”
- “First Investment Bank”
- “Postbank”

Having a Bulgarian bank account can sometimes be a bit more difficult, because some bank employees do not speak English and you have to explain your problem in Bulgarian, which can be very hard in the first year.

Exchange bureaus are not rarely seen in Varna - on the contrary, there are a lot of them, since Varna is a major tourist city. It’s however also not rare that change bureaus exchange rates deviate from the international course. We would highly recommend “Varchev Exchange” for being a reliable change bureau, with the international course of the currencies easily to be seen. There are also other reliable change bureaus in Varna such as “Forex Change” and “String”, however “Varchev” has an office in close proximity to the university and that makes it not only reliable, but also comfortable.

For German students:

There are two banks in Germany which offer free withdrawal at every ATM and payment in the whole world, if your monthly transfer is above 700 €. The first is "N26" and the second is "DKB", only offering online banking, but you have the significant advantage that your banking business is in German and you will have a pretty good customer service. By the DKB you get a free Visa card as a student. Another possibility is for example the "Hanseatic Bank" which offers a free credit card with a daily change course in every foreign currency. You do not have to pay any fees.

3.3 Mobile contracts

Important: You have free roaming in the EU, so you can use your contract from your home country in Bulgaria, without paying an extra fee! Also if you have an Bulgarian contract, you will be able to use it nearly without any limitations in your home country!

It is very useful first to have an apartment before you are going to sign a contract for your smartphone, because there are two operators, which are offering bundles, so you will get an overall discount ;)

- "Vivacom" (<http://www.vivacom.bg/bg>)
 - Different types according to your need:
 - Smartphone:
 - Contracts from 12.99 leva till 49.99 leva, which reach from 100 Mbit/s till unlimited data speed in Bulgaria, unlimited calls in Bulgaria and at maximum 31500 MB each month for roaming abroad
 - Internet at home:
 - "Vivacom" most often offers fiber internet all around the city with prices around 15 leva for 50000 MBit up to 1 Gbit, so there are plenty of options available
 - Additionally there are options/ contracts for your tablet and television as well (TV is available with German and English channels; starts at 9.99 leva as a combination package)
-
- "A1" (<http://www.a1.bg/bg>) (former Mtel):
 - Similar to "Vivacom"
 - Smartphone: (<http://www.a1.bg/bg>)
 - If you need more or less, the plans are reaching from 300 MB to 15000 MB as well (the plans still are not updated for roaming)
 -
 - Internet at home:
 - A1 most often offers fiber internet all around the city with prices around 15 leva for 50000 Mbit up to 1 Gbit



- Additionally, there are plans for your tablet and television as well (TV is available with German and English channels; starts at 8.99 leva)
- “Telenor”:
 - Smartphone:
 - Contracts from 10 leva till 49.99 leva, reaching from 650 MB till 20000 MB (HBO Go, free Facebook and Whatsapp usage are included in some of those contracts)
 - Is not selling any plans for internet at home



Overall, all of those mobile operators have plenty of types of plans to choose and every single operator has its advantages and disadvantages! “Vivacom” and “A1” have the best coverage!

But if you are satisfied with your existing contract from home, you can keep it and change later to a Bulgarian one, if you want, but keep in mind that some services in Bulgaria demand a national phone number, for example food ordering. (Here are only post-paid Plans listed. Of course, every mobile operator offers pre-paid plans as well)

4. Apartments

4.1 Renting

Renting an apartment is the most popular choice among foreign students, because the student's dormitories are not available for foreign students.

There are two main possibilities to look after apartments:

- Renting agencies
- Students group

In the students group you can find several offers for shared and single apartments, which have already been inhabited by other students.

If there is no suitable apartment for you, you can go to one of the many agencies and they will search the right apartment for you.

It is possible to contact them via phone, email or Facebook. Nearly all of them speak proper English.

Some of those agencies are:

- "Express imoti":
 - <https://www.expressimoti.bg/en>
- "New age":
 - <https://svobodni-kvartiri.com/newage-nedvizhimi-imoti-agency351.html>
- "Jhome":
 - <https://jhome.bg/?lang=en>
- "Openhouse":
 - <https://open-house.apartamenti.com/>
- "Rentica"
 - <https://rentica.bg/>

Here are some tips you should have in mind, when renting an apartment in Varna:

- Read the contract carefully and if you do not agree with it, ask for changing this special part.
- The location of your flat should be well considered. Do you prefer to live near the university buildings, the beach or the hospital, or outside of Varna?
 - Most of the students prefer to live near the main building in the first two years, because you can easily walk home from the university and the city center and the beach. You have four buildings where your lessons will be held in the first two years: main building, HEI-building, pharmacy building, medical college.
- You shall also keep in mind to have enough daylight for your studying desk and your apartment.
- The normal renting period in Varna is one year but sometimes you can talk your landlord into a shorter contract! Also take care of cancellation periods.
- The price range is from 300 € till 550€ normally, but 550€ is the top range for one-bedroom apartments.
- The commission for the real-estate agent is usually half of the monthly rent.
 - Tell them exactly what you want, most often the style of furniture is not very "modern".

- Sometimes you have to wait for an answer for one or two weeks from your real-estate agent, so be aware of that and contact many agents at once.
- The damage deposit is one monthly rent normally.
- Most often you have to pay the rent in cash and you will get no receipt, except you ask for it.
 - You may consider to have a small book, where your landlord can sign every time you have paid and where you can also keep your invoices for water and electricity.
- Water and electricity is normally paid in the Easy Pay shops, in the offices of “Energo-pro” or via the application “epay.bg” (you can pay with your fingerprint and credit card inside this app, the number for the payment has to be given to you by the landlord).
 - Very useful, especially in summer when you are not in Varna and you can’t pay your bills. But it is always possible to ask your landlord for payment during the summer period. Most of them will support you!
 - You have one month to pay your bill - otherwise your electricity will get cut off (but not your water).
- If some furniture is missing, ask your landlord if he could provide it. Most often he will say yes and even better, you can sometimes choose your favorite pieces (like a study desk, a bigger bed,..).
- The building quality is sometimes not that good, especially in older buildings, so there can be water damage, especially if you have a flat located on the top of the building. Be also very careful about mould.
- In most cases, the owners do not fix the water problem, instead they just paint over the damaged area, so you cannot see the problem until there is the first heavy rain.
- You may consider looking for an apartment in blocks with proper locking systems. Sometimes also security systems/ guards are available.
- Ask your landlord about changes of the locking system, so only you will have the key to the apartment and not some pre-owners

4.2 Furniture

Nearly all of the apartments are furnished, but if you need something additionally or if you want a new couch or study desk, there are several options:

- “Jysk”
- “Praktiker”
- “IKEA”
 - You will find the new IKEA store in the Delta Planet Mall. There you will find many things, especially home accessories. You can visit the showroom and order the furniture if it is not in stock.
 - You can order online: <http://www.ikea.bg>, or in the store directly.
 - Delivery is very cheap: if your order is over 100 leva, the delivery will be around 5 leva.
 - The delivery time is about 5-7 days.

5. What you can explore/do in Varna:

5.1 Cinema

There are three main cinemas in Varna:

- "Kino grand mall arena IMAX"
 - <https://www.kinoarena.com/en/cinema/kino-arena-grand-mall-varna>
 - "Grand mall"
- "Kino arena":
 - "Varna mall"
- „Delta Planet Mall“
 - 4D-Cinema rooms
- Tickets are cheap in comparison to other European countries. The prices are around 10 leva for one person for "IMAX".
- You will also get a student's discount, if you show your students card.

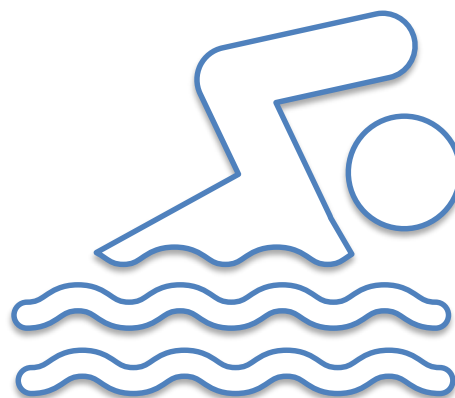
5.2 Sports

5.2.1 Swimming

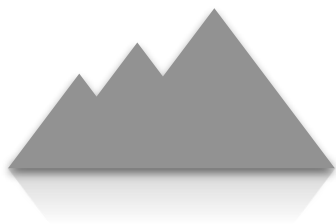
In spite of the swimming activity provided by the University, you can also practice this passion outside of the University. Of course there's the Black sea, easily to be found.

If you prefer a swimming pool, there's the swimming complex "Primorski" on Boulevard Primorski. It's close to the volleyball fields on the beach. For students the entry is 2 Lev for swimming. You might have heard of a swimming pool close to the "Varna Mall", this one is called Dolphins swimming pool.

For those of you who like spa, you can find some attractive options in and nearby Varna. The "Swiss-Bel-hotel" Varna provides a large spa area with sauna, pool, massages and much more. The prices are moderate. Another option is the "Aqua House" in "St. Constantin" and "Helena". It is easily accessible by taxi. The price is between 29-44 Lv.



5.2.2 Climbing



There is a climbing hall right behind "Cherno More" stadium, where lots of students go on a weekly base. Check it out yourself - Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 6pm- 9pm.

<http://varnaclimbing.com/en>

5.2.3 Paintball/Karting Track

At this place you can find lots of activities. It's right outside of Varna, easy to reach via Taxi or Car.

<https://www.varnakarting.com/en/>

5.2.4 Judo

<https://mma.bg/klubove/varna/dzhiu-dzhitsu,dzhudo,karate,samozashtita/sk-dzhudo-i-dzhu-dzhutsu-varna>

5.2.5 University sports

From second to fourth semester you have to choose between one of the following sports. You will have 1 hour a week:

- Soccer
- Tennis
- Bulgarian dancing
- Boxing
- Handball
- Basketball
- Swimming
- Sailing
- Volleyball
- Fitness
- Aerobics
- "Conditioning" Training

There are also university teams, in which you can participate, and even compete against other universities from all over Bulgaria.

5.2.6 Horseback riding

There are a couple of places around Varna, where you can go riding. This place offers regular riding lessons as individuals and in groups.

<https://www.horseclubvarna.com/>



5.2.7 Surfing

Finally, you did it. Living next to the sea is a dream for a lot of people, but especially for surfers. No matter if you are already experienced or if you want to start with surfing, the Black Sea Coast around Varna provides the conditions for you. Although it will never become a Surf-Mekka, there are some spots where you are able to hit the waves when the north-eastern winds let them roll on to the beaches.

In Varna you can go to the Cubo “Varna surf”. You can have there teaching lessons, but also can rent SUPs and windsurf boards.

Another popular spot for you as a student is the Sunny Day beach, located just in the South of Golden Sands. The 15 minutes car ride enables you to do a small session before University starts in the morning, or you just let Uni go and stay the whole day (happens from time to time, if the waves are too good). Depending on the conditions you can switch between this spot or Kabakum beach, which is a ten minutes walk to the north. Here you can find Chris (in summer only) who runs a small, cozy surfer-bar - Ri-Bar - and not only provides wetsuits and surfboards for rent but also offers surf lessons for fair prices. He’s a cool dude, check it out.

For bigger surfing trips, the south is your favorable destination. One hour ride to south-facing Byala bay where big swells roll smoothly and another 20 minutes to Irakli where you have a difficult beach break but therefore the possibility to camp in the wilderness of a Bulgarian beach on your own. Further to the south there are the spots Sozopol (3h ride, located to the south of Burgas) and Achtopol (another 30 minutes) which are known as the best spots in Bulgaria, Achtopol even is a point break and attracts surfers from all over the country in the rare case of good conditions. In general, you can surf all year but as you know the waves are better in winter. Then you need a good wetsuit with 6/5 mm because the water reaches temperatures down to 6° C. In the summer good waves are rare but therefore it’s possible to even go without a wetsuit for a short time, recommended for longer sessions is a 3/2 mm.



5.3 Restaurants

Most restaurants can be found in the City center around “Sevastopol”. Some big chains like “Happy”, “Staria Chinar”, “Godzilla” and “Nemo” will soon make up your basic food supply but there are some more cost effective alternatives for you. You will find that eating out is often cheaper than in your home country, this could make you very lazy in terms of cooking. In Varna you will find cuisine from all over the world, most Restaurants even offer a mix through all of them from Sushi over Pizza to Burgers and Steaks. Restaurants by the Sea: “Makalali”, “El Kapan”, “Sea House”, “Captain Cook”, “Happy”, “Morska Gara”, “Sea terrace”, “The Beach”, “Seacrets”.

Around Sevastopol:

- “Sundogs”
- “Godzilla”
- “Largo”
- “DaLucio”
- “Staria Chinar”

University Main building:

- Quantum Satis: Student’s canteen offering student’s discount

Around the Main building:

- “Corner Burger”
- “Nida”

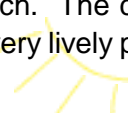
- “LaFamiliga”
- “The Martini Bar”

- “Candels”
- “ChickenKink”
- “Staria Chinar”

Around Pharmacy building:

5.4 Beach/bars

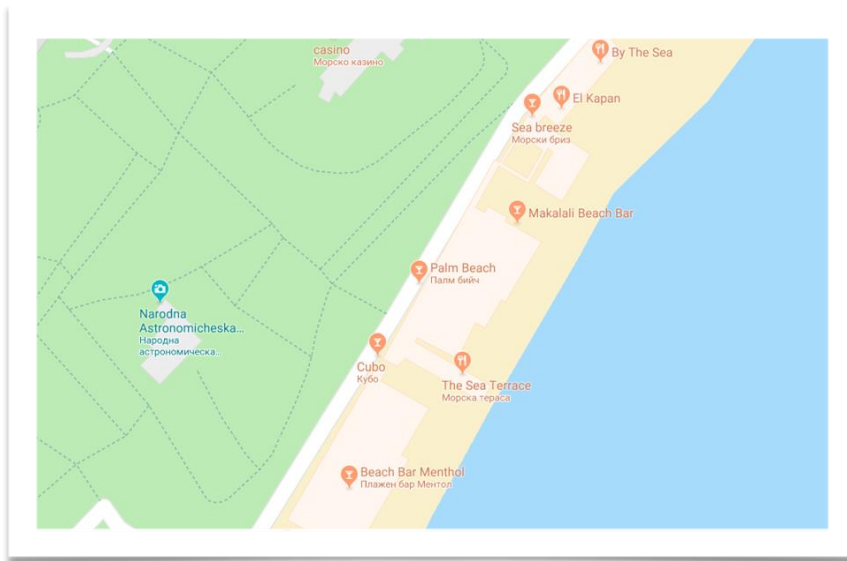
All the way from the seaport stretches the Varna city beach. Through breakwaters it is divided into several smaller beaches, which the natives call “Buna”, with the first “Buna” being the one farthest from the seaport. In those smaller beaches the people go to the beach. The coast line is a wonderful place to take a walk through in fall, winter and spring, and a very lively place in summer, where the variety of restaurants, bars and discos are located.



The more prominent places are:

- “Cubo” – one of the most popular beach bars in Varna
- “Mazu” – also a prestigious bar/restaurant right on the beach, some musical events take place here
- “Menthol” - many foreign music groups are playing live on stage there
- “Seacrets”, “Makalali” - nice for having a coffee break or study place right next to the Sea





5.5 Socializing

In the summer Varna is flourishing. The temperatures are high, around 30°C, the water is warm, it is mostly sunny, and a nice refreshing cool breeze comes from the sea. The tourist season is on, and people are coming to the city from everywhere to have some fun. In the summer the best places to enjoy yourself are all the bars along the beach of Varna...:) Some of them are located in Golden Sands, which is 20km away from Varna and easily accessible by bus line 409 or Taxi. There are plenty of bars and discos for every taste. Another summer resort is Sunny Beach, however it is located 50km away and it's even bigger than Golden Sands and is known as the "Party capitol of Europe" according to `The Daily-Star`.

In winter the situation is a bit different – family celebration such as Christmas, New Year's Eve dominate the atmosphere, while the cold weather and chilling winds make sure that only the locals are coming back to the city to celebrate with their families. The tourist season is off and the variety is a bit smaller. However, lots of people including our students still decide for "Cubo", "Avenue" – a club and major meeting point for lots of our students, "Rubik" – a bar with quite an alternative atmosphere and "Planet club" – a place with a fancy atmosphere.

6 Types of transport

6.1 Flying to your home country



6.1.1 Germany

There are different possibilities for flying to choose from, but you can also drive home by car. It is about 2000 km to the German border and you will see different countries like Romania, Hungary and Serbia.



Flights:

- “Wizz air”:
 - Very cheap (in the winter sometimes 15 euro with hand luggage)
 - Nice, intuitive booking via application or the internet
 - Flights are: Varna-Memmingen, Varna-Sofia, Varna-Dortmund, Varna-Eindhoven, Varna-Cologne, Varna-Nürnberg, Varna-Hamburg, Varna-Berlin etc.
- “Ryan air”:
 - Very cheap
 - Flights are from Sofia to Hamburg, Berlin, Köln, Baden-Baden and Memmingen
 - Sofia is easy to reach via Wizz air and Bulgarian air
- “Austrian airlines”:
 - Expensive
 - Stopover in Vienna, usually very fast, so you will not lose much time
 - From Varna to nearly everywhere
- “Turkish airlines”
 - Expensive
 - Stop-over in Istanbul
 - From Varna to nearly everywhere
- “Sunexpress”:
 - Only in the summer
 - Holiday airline

6.1.2 Spain

To Alicante:

- Sofia-Alicante and Alicante-Sofia
- From Varna to Alicante it is much more expensive
- “Bulgarian air” or “Wizz air”

To Barcelona:

- Sofia-Barcelona and Barcelona-Sofia
- “Wizz-air”



6.1.3. Great Britain

- “Wizz air”:
 - Very cheap (during holidays like Winter break, the flight is more expensive - book as early as possible)
 - Easy, intuitive booking via application or the internet
 - Only to London Luton
- “Ryanair”:
 - Cheap tickets, but first you need to go to Sofia (via “Bulgarian air”, “Wizz air”,...)
 - To Birmingham, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool and London Stansted
- “Turkish airlines”
 - More expensive
 - Stopover in Istanbul - which can be very long

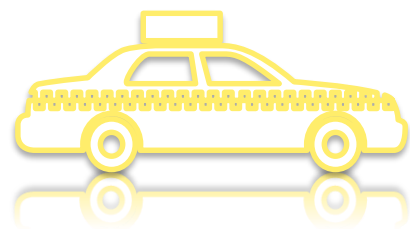


6.2 Transport in Varna

6.2.1 Taxi

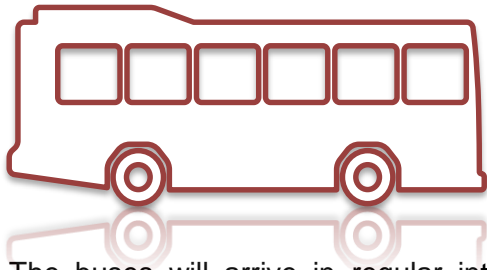
Taxi is the most popular choice of transportation among students. Two Taxi companies are recommendable:

- “Triumph”:
 - 052644444
 - <http://triumftaxi.com/en/>
- “Omega”:
 - <http://omegataxivarna.com>
 - 052388888



You should not choose other Taxi companies if possible, most often they do not have a taximeter, so they might tell you the price to your direction before starting. Most often it is way overpriced.

6.2.2 Bus



Varna provides a Bus system. With the bus you can easily reach any destination within Varna. There is a bus stop close to the University (next to the "DSK Bank") from which you can get to the hospitals, dental or pharmacy building as well as to other destinations. The buildings associated with the university are all close to a bus stop within 5 minutes walking distance.

The buses will arrive in regular intervals and most often are appropriate to reach your destination even within 30 minutes breaks. For the detailed schedule you can use the apps for your smartphone. If you are using an android device, download the app "Varna traffic". This can be used in English language as well. You can use it like a navigation app. It will search for the proper line close to your position that will bring you as fast as possible to your destination. For the iOS and also Android users, you should download the app "Moovit". This application is not only suitable for Varna, but also for many cities all around the world. It determines your current location via GPS, then you just have to select the place you want to go, either on a map or via the address and then the optimal route is calculated. It is pretty convenient. For general information you can also visit the website "varnatraffic.com". It provides an overview of the city map and available stations and schedules.

6.2.3 Own car



Some students from the 3rd year on have their own car here in Varna, because it is very comfortable if you live near the beach and you need to drive every morning to "St. Marina hospital" or to "Kaufland", "Grand-Mall" and so on! Also it is one of the best ways to discover Bulgaria, because you are not dependent on public transport.

You can either register your car in your home country (EU) or you can register it directly in Varna. Many students prefer the latter because the fees for taxes and insurance are cheaper in comparison to Germany, UK and so on. In order to successfully register your car, you need to take care of the following steps:

- You need to have a Bulgarian long-term resident card, which you will get from the migration office (look at point [3.1](#))
- You have to have the full data of your car with you (purchase contract, and so on..)

If you have fulfilled those two points you have to go to following location: bul. "Yan Huniyadi" 5, 9020 Planova Industrial Zone, Varna; "KAT Varna"

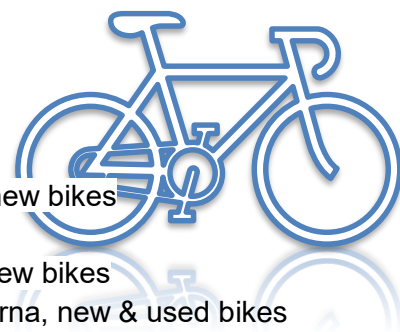
After the entrance you have to park somewhere and go to one small office, which is located on the left side beside the big building! There you will pay the registration fee, the environmental fee and taxes for the upcoming year. After you paid cash, you will go in the line for waiting cars (sometimes you have to wait for 2 days).

It is recommended to ask a student who can speak Bulgarian, because unfortunately, nobody is able to speak in English there.

6.2.4 Bicycles

There are many options to buy bicycles in Varna, a few are listed here:

- “Kaufland”: bul. "Hristo Smirnenski" 2, 9000 Varna, new bikes
- “Decathlon” , бул. „Владислав Варненчик“ 268, 9009 Varna, new bikes
- “Praktiker”, boulevard "Republika" 49, 9000 Varna, new bikes
- “Нометах”, бул. „Владислав Варненчик“ 271, 9009 Varna, new bikes
- “Джиро Байкс”, ул. "Knyaz Aleksander Batenberg" 22, 9000 Varna, new & used bikes
- “Metro”, ул. "Atanas Moskov" 2, 9023 Zapad, Varna



Among students, bicycles are very popular. But please be aware that the Bulgarians are not used to bikers, so you shall take care even more than you are used to in your home country. You are also strongly advised to buy a good locker, not to get your bike stolen.

6.3. Transport around Bulgaria

Most places in Varna you can either visit by bus or by train. It is an easy way to visit places, explore or get to another airport - e.g. Sofia, Burgas - to go home.

6.3.1. Bus transport

Either you can buy your ticket on this websites or go directly to the bus station, which is located right next to “Grand Mall” - the address is: blvd. “Vladislav Varnenchik” 158

<https://www.busexpress.bg/en/>

<https://busticket.bg/index.jsf>

6.3.2 Train transport

The Train station in Varna is located at: Petko Slaveykov square 1, 9000 Tsentralna Zhp Gara, Varna.

You can book your tickets online via: <http://www.bdz.bg/en/> or you can buy it at the train station.

There is a student discount card, which you can buy for about 1 Leva, at the train station. Don't forget to bring a student's certification, certificate of enrollment and a picture!

7. Shopping

There are many locations for shopping - most popular are:

- "Mall Varna": bul. „Vladislav varnendzik“ 186
- "Grand Mall": „Akademik Andrei Saharov“ 2
- "Sevastopol" - located in the city center
- "New Yorker" area in the city center
- "Decathlon" - for sports equipment
- "Jumbo", "Jysk", "Ikea": household shopping
- "Delta Planet Mall" - bul. "Slivnitsa" 185, 9009 Vladislavovo, Varna

Special things:

- "Eldo ET": supply for construction (screws,..)

7.1 Food shopping

- "Kaufland"
 - bul. "Hristo Smirnenski" 2, 9009 Varna
 - boulevard "Republika" 60, 9020 Varna
- "Lidl"
 - Ul. „Bitolya“ 1A, 9000 Varna (Right beneath the pharmacy building; point 2.1)
 - ul. "Mir" 45, 9010 Varna
 - бул. „Владислав Варненчик“ 257, 9009 Varna
- "Billa"
 - бул. „Владислав Варненчик“ 48, 9000 Varna Center, Varna
 - bul. "Knyaz Boris I" 99, 9002 Varna Center, Varna
 - ul. "Dimitar Ikonov" 36, 9010 Levski, Varna
- Mini supermarkets in the city
- Hallal: Lemas Halal meat, mall Varna
- Fish market: Kolhosen pasar , Vaarna, ul. Drin 53, 9000 Varna
- Local food markets:
 - Chataldzha
 - Farmers Market: ul. "Drin" 65-51, 9000 Center, Varna

Food delivery is very common in Varna among students, because it is very easy and cheap. There are two main companies, one being "Takeaway.com" and the second being "Glovo", <https://glovoapp.com/bg/bg/varna/>. Both services offer applications for your smartphone. You will pay in cash after the successful delivery or by credit card via the app. The delivery in turn is around 2-3 leva. So try it out :)

7.2 Household

- "Praktiker"/ "Baumax"/ "Technopolis"
- "Kaufland"/ "Lidl"
- "DM", "Lilly"
- Small supermarkets
- "Jumbo"
- "Jysk", "Mömaxx", "Homemaxx", "IKEA", "English Home", "Aiko"

8 Bulgarian culture

8.1 General information and history



Bulgaria is the oldest European country, as it has not changed its name since its founding in 681 by “Khan Asparuh”. In 875 the country adopted Orthodox Christianity and since then this is the traditional religion. Around the same time “Saint Cyril and Methodius” came to Bulgaria (they have a special holiday, the 24th of May or Day of the Slavonic Script), who in their turn invented the Cyrillic alphabet and allowed the Bulgarians to pray and write in Old Bulgarian, (or Old Church Slavonic) breaking the dogma of those times only allowing praying to God in 3 holy languages - Latin, Jewish and Greek.

At the end of the 14th century the country was subjugated by the Ottoman Turks, which continued for 5 centuries. The Bulgarians refer to this time as “The Turkish slavery”. For many years the Bulgarian society was encapsulated in its form since 1396, except that the native aristocracy was gone forever. The people were sedated and had no self-consciousness. The Bulgarian Renaissance movement brought the change, during which the monk “Paisii Hilendarski” has written the book “Slavo-Bulgarian History”. Due to hand-copying, the spreading was very slow - taking over 100 years that people started to yearn for freedom and for reestablishing their own national state. To those people, the so called “Narodni Buditeli” - “People awakeners”, another holiday is dedicated - “National Awakening day”, the 1st of November.

All of this has culminated in the ambitious and brave, yet unsuccessful „April Uprising“ in 1876, which has been followed by a brutal massacre shocking European society and forced Russians to intervene in the conflict. Due to this war (War of Liberation 1877-1878) the Bulgarians finally did earn their freedom in the decisive battle of “Shipka” through the heroic sacrifice of the “Opalchentsi” (Volunteer Militia). On the 3rd of March the peace treaty of San Stefano cemented this achievement and Bulgaria appeared as a free country for the first time since 500 years on the maps of Europe. As a result of this, the 3rd of March is the National holiday and Liberation day of Bulgaria and Bulgarians travel to the “Shipka” peak to celebrate.

In the 20th century Bulgaria has participated in the two World Wars and experienced 3 enormous societal changes - starting as a Tsardom in 1878 to 1944, to a totalitarian communist country (1944-1989), to its present form of a democracy since 1989. In 2007 the country joined the European Union.

8.2 Traditions

8.2.1 Folk dances and folk music

Quite characteristic and unmistakable, even within the Balkan cultural subgroup, the folk dances or also called "Horo" are particularly vivid. They are chain dances - a lot of people dancing the same steps, while holding each other's hand. The most famous styles of this dance are "Dunavsko horo", "Katerinino horo", "Byala roza" and "Makedonsko horo". The folk music accompanying them is marked with a specific focus on the bagpipe. The dances consist of simple steps, which are repeated all over to the rhythm of the song while it lasts.

8.2.2 Baba Marta tradition

The "Baba Marta" (Granny March) or "Martenitsa" tradition is celebrated on the 1st of March and is thought to be an old pagan tradition before Bulgaria was Christianized. It symbolizes the end of the winter and the beginning of the spring. The "Martenitsa" is a band of white and red tassels. People exchange „Martenitsas“ between one another with wishes for health, strength and happiness. You take them off when you see a stork or a blossoming tree, which is a harbinger that spring has come.

The literal images of the "Martenitsa" tradition are "Pijo" and "Penda", hugging each other. "Pijo" is the man version of the "Martenitsa", mostly white in color, symbolize strength. He is always intertwined with "Penda" - the woman version of the "Martenitsa", mostly red in color, the symbol of blood or health.

The "Martenitsa" band is highlighting this intertwining by having it's red and white color mixing.

8.2.3 Wine day

Wine day or "Trifon Zarezan" is the traditional celebration on the 14th of February, being on the same day as Saint Valentine's day. A popular thing among Bulgarians is that if they don't have somebody to celebrate Saint Valentine's day with, they decide to celebrate "Trifon Zarezan" instead. Mid-February is usually the time when vines are cut to ensure proper growth and an abundant harvest in autumn. Due to this, the traditional cutting of the vines has evolved into the holiday of Trifon Zarezan, a celebration of fertility and Bulgarian wine quality.

8.2.4 Barefoot fire dancing

Fire dancing, more famous in Bulgaria as "Nestinarstvo", can be seen in villages around the area of Burgas (a city in the SE of Bulgaria), mainly on the holiday of "St. Konstantin" and "Elena" (May 21st).

Apart from celebrating the two saints and the fire dancing, the holiday symbolizes the transition from spring to summer. The dancers, who are most often women, perform a dance on hot glowing embers whilst in a trance state. The tradition implies that the fire dancer is chosen and guided by the saint of the holiday, whose icon is being held while dancing on the embers.

Often during the traditional dance, the fire dancers are said to be able to connect to the saint and through this connection they can interpret omens, give advice, foretell the future, or communicate with the dead.

8.2.5 Orthodox Easter egg fight

The Bulgarian Orthodox Easter traditions vary from the common Easter traditions: they involve egg coloring, egg breaking and Easter breads. Tradition dictates that the eggs are colored on the Holy Thursday before Easter Sunday, and the first colored egg is always red, symbolizing Jesus has risen from the dead. Then the rest of the eggs can be painted in all colors and often a wax candle is used to draw on them.

The egg breaking custom takes place before the big meal and it involves all the family members tapping their eggs against each other, after each person has chosen a colorful egg. The person with the last unbroken egg is said to have a whole year of luck to look forward to.

The typical Easter bread in Bulgaria is called “Kozunak” and is a sweet bread, sometimes with raisins.

8.3 What to visit in Bulgaria

8.3.1 Cities

- Nesebar:
 - It is a very old, picturesque city located on an island, with a bridge connecting it to the mainland.

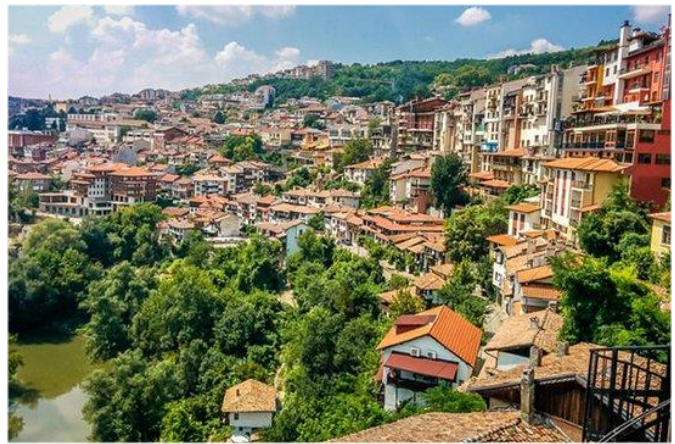


- Burgas:
 - 20 km far from the sunny beach, vacation area

- Plovdiv:
 - One of the oldest cities in Bulgaria, with an old Roman-built city center



- Veliko Tărnovo:
 - Located at the rim of a hill with a nice fortress
 - Capital of the 2nd Bulgarian Kingdom



- Sofia
 - Capital of Bulgaria



8.3.2 Hiking

- Hiking is very popular among young Bulgarians
- Basically you can hike everywhere, the application „Wikiloc“ is very useful, including many hiking, skiing, biking paths
- Four main mountain chains in Bulgaria:
 - Pirin:
 - Highest peak: Vihren with an altitude of 2914m
 - Was named after „Perun“, the highest god of the Slavic pantheon and the god of thunder and lightning
 - Bansko skiing resort
 - Rila:
 - Most popular mountain chain in Bulgaria



- Highest peak: Musala with an altitude of 2925m
 - Includes the „Seven Rila Lakes“: One of the most popular locations in Bulgaria
 - Borovets skiing resort
 - Rila Monastery: Largest and most famous Eastern Orthodox Monastery in Bulgaria
 - Rhodops:
 - Pamporovo skiing resort
 - Low mountain range, but nearer to Varna than Rila and Pirin
 - Stara Planina:
 - Highest peak: Botev peak: 2376m
 - The mountains there are remarkable for their flora and fauna
 - They played an enormous role in the history of Bulgaria
- Hiking maps and path trail marking are not that common as in the alps for example, so it's useful to have your phone charged, in order to use it as a GPS-device for Navigation! Hiking maps are almost entirely available in the villages before the hiking trail
 - From personal experience: The application „Maps 3D“ for iOS is very recommendable.
- The most comfortable solution for traveling to the mountains is having your own car, the hiking paths are most often being harder to reach with public transport possibilities. Nevertheless to the skiing areas, starting point to the seven lakes and the Rila Monastery for example are public transports available, most often from Sofia central bus station.

8.3.3 Skiing

Four main areas:

- Pamporovo
 - Nearest ski resort from Varna
 - Not so crowded, due to higher prices
- Bansko:
 - Popular ski resort -> Women's World Cup in skiing is there every year
 - Very good, but expensive hotels
 - Ski rental is about 25 leva per day
- Borovets:
 - Biggest ski resort in Bulgaria
 - Ski renting is about 20 leva per day with stockings, shoes and skis
 - Very nice parking situations
- Chepelare:
 - Cheapest place of them all



8.3.4 Excursions by the University

For first year students:

- Excursions:

- Orientation-week trip:
 - At the end of the Orientation-week we are going to take you on a trip around Varna. This one is all about socializing and getting to know the country you are going to study in. Accompanied by students from the upper courses and teachers you will have the perfect start into the first semester.

- CERN-Trip:
 - Organized by the physics department, every eastern student travels to CERN, which has the largest particle accelerator of the world. You will have guidance throughout the whole complex from experienced workers and doctors, all working at CERN. The trip is starting in Varna and you are going to visit many beautiful cities throughout Europe, like Belgrad, Ljubljana, Geneva and Venice by bus. Overall it is one of the best experiences you can have.

- Plovdiv-Trip:
 - Of course, you are going to learn the Bulgarian language while studying in Varna in seminars and lectures, but the best way to learn something about a new culture is by experiencing the country itself. Due to this fact, every year the Bulgarian department organizes a weekend trip from Varna over Nessebar and Burgas to Plovdiv, which is one of the oldest cities in the whole of Europe.

9 Tips in general

9.1 Car renting

- Top Rent a Car Varna:
 - 100-150lev for one week (depends on the season)
 - in summer: it can be very busy and a reservation is recommended
 - Website: www.toprentacar.bg

9.2 Safety

Generally, Varna is a very safe city with low crime rates. It is loved among tourists from Bulgaria as well as the rest of the world. As long as common sense is applied, nothing will trouble your mind.

9.3 Medical advice

There are many options to choose from, some of them being:

- The university suggests GPs and doctors which are listed in front of the Students Office.
- "St. Marina", bul. "Hristo Smirnenski" 1, 9010 Varna
- Dental faculty, bul. "Tsar Osvoboditel" 150, 9002 Center, Varna

9.4 Things to consider before flying to Bulgaria

- Lab coats (they are also available in Varna)
- Anatomy atlas ("Sobotta" or "Prometheus"), can be cheaper in your home country! Be aware that it shall be in English-Latin or German-Latin (for German students)
- Rain-proof shoes: Varna has a lot of rain during the winter
- Warm clothing (it can get very windy during the whole year, especially in the autumn and winter period)
- Proof of health insurance, make sure you are covered even when staying abroad
- ID card/Passport should be valid until you go back to your home country with enough time to renew them
- Credit/debit cards - familiarize yourself with fees for using them abroad
- Medications - if you are on very specific drugs make note of availability in BG. Another advantage of taking drugs from your home country is that you can understand the instructions in the box. (Travel kit)
- Federal law on financial support in education (German: "Bafög") you may apply even if you do not qualify for support while studying in your home country since law is different for studies abroad

9.5 Dry cleaners

- “Bubbles”:
 - ul. "Makedonia" 95, 9000 Varna Center, Varna, Bulgaria
- “Clean Zone”:
 - ул. Стефан Стамболов 12-А, (до Баня " Гъбата " - Шишкова градинка),
9000 Greek Neighborhood, Varna, Bulgaria

We wish you a successful journey in Varna and a wonderful student experience at MUV!