

B U L G A R I A

NATACHA 33


BULGARIA
A DISCOVERY TO SHARE



BIGCYCLING.EU





You, cyclists who like to climb, discover in these few pages what makes the list of the national challenge in Bulgaria so rich.

GEOGRAPHY

MEDIA

TOURISM

SPORT

Bulgaria

Geography

Bulgaria, in long form the Republic of Bulgaria (Bulgarian: България, transliteration: Bǎlgarija), is a country in south-eastern Europe located in the Balkans. It is bordered by the Black Sea to the east, Greece and Turkey to the south, the Danube and Romania to the north, and Serbia and Northern Macedonia to the west. Its capital is Sofia.



It is possible that the Slavonic name блъгаринъ blŭgarinŭ transcribes the Old Turkish bŭlgar (meaning ‘restless, energetic, disturbing’)

As far as our cycling is concerned, the road network in 2011 consisted of 40321 kilometres of roads, of which 644 km were dirt, 39169 km were asphalted and 418 km were motorways.

To read the signs on these roads, Bulgarian is written in the Cyrillic alphabet, with a few differences from Russian. There are only 30 letters and the pronunciations may not be identical.

Let's take a look at the topographical map to see how densely populated the country is.



The coastline is 354 km long, with altitudes ranging from 0 m (the Black Sea coast) to 2,925 m (Mount Mousala).

The country's main feature is its division into east-west mountain and plain bands. From north to south, there is the Danube plateau, the Balkan massif (Stara planina), Northern Thrace, the Rila massif and the Rhodope massif.

The eastern part, near the Black Sea, is made up of hills that gradually increase in height as you move westwards.

The western part of the country consists entirely of mountains.

More than two-thirds of the country, made up of plains, plateaux and hills, lies at an altitude of less than 600 metres. Plains (less than 200 metres above sea level) account for 31% of the country's surface area, plateaux (between 200 and 600 metres) 41%, low mountains (between 600 and 1,000 metres) 10%, medium mountains (between 1,000 and 1,500 metres) 10% and high mountains (more than 1,500 metres) 3%.

Bulgaria's average altitude is 470 meters.

Bulgaria is divided administratively into oblasti.



Since 1999, Bulgaria has been subdivided into 28 oblasti (in Bulgarian: област = oblast, singular, and области = oblasti, plural).

This term can be translated as 'region', 'district' or 'province'.

Each of the 28 regions is named after its capital city,

Our national challenge has been divided into 6 zones

BG01-Severozapaden rayon / Northwestern Region / Северозападен район

BG02-Severen tsentralen rayon / Northern Central Region / Северен централен район

BG03-Severoiztochen rayon / Northeastern Region / Североизточен район

BG04-Yugozapaden rayon / Southwestern Region / Югозападен район

BG05-Yuzhen tsentralen rayon / Southern Central Region / Южен централен район

BG06-Yugoiztochen rayon / Southeastern Region / Югоизточен район



It has a total surface area of 110,944 km². It is close to that of Portugal (250 natacha peaks) or Hungary (only 75 peaks, given the huge plain to the south-east), three times smaller than Poland (400 peaks) or Italy (800 peaks, but with a pronounced cycling culture), and five times smaller than Spain or France (800 peaks). Given the general appearance of the road network and the relief of the country (see above), we finally opted for a selection of 250 Bulgarian natachas.



Mount Moussala



The Rhodope Mountains

Bulgarian tourism

A large number of archaeological sites from all periods are scattered throughout the country. Bulgaria has the largest number of archaeological sites discovered in Europe after Italy and Greece¹²⁴, and many of them are of Thracian origin. A major historical artefact is the oldest gold treasure in the world, dating from 5000 BC, from the site of the Varna necropolis.

There are some great Bulgarian national parks to choose from on our list

Vrachanski Balkan Nature Park - Natural site

BGR-019 Peshtera / Cave Ledenika

BGR-020 Vrah Okolchitsa (Pametnik na / Memorial to Hristo Botev)

BGR-021 Ochindol

Shumen Plateau Nature Park - Natural and wild spaces

BGR-077 Shumensko plato / Shumen Plateau

Station Lakatnik - Montagnes

BGR-094 Eko ferma Chemernik

Park Kladnitsa - Natural and wild spaces - Vitosha Nature Park

BGR-114 Vitosha (Boeritsa)

BGR-116 Selimitsa

BGR-117 Yarema

Rila National Park – Randoski

BGR-145 Ski park Kartala / Kartala Resort

BGR-146 Semkovo

BGR-147 Hizha Treshtenik

Pirin National Park – Mountains

BGR-151 Todorka (Hizha / Chalet Vihren)

BGR-152 Lift Bezbozhkoto ezero / Lake Bezbog Lift

BGR-154 Turichka Cherkva

Central Balkan National Park – Parks

BGR-166 Arka na svobodata / Arch of Freedom (incl. Troyanski prohod / Beklemeto Pass)

BGR-167 Vrah Botev / Botev Peak

BGR-168 Koznitsa

Strandzha National Park – Natural site

BGR-248 Balgari

BGR-249 Brodilovski prohod (Papiya)

BGR-250 Malko Tarnovo (Granitsa Turtsiya / Border Turkey)



The summit of Vrah Botev



Shumen Plateau Nature Park

Most of Bulgaria's UNESCO World Heritage sites are represented here

Madaras Horseman

BGR-079 Madarski konnik

Thracian tombs in Svechtari

BGR-045 Trakiiska tsarska grobnitsa Sveshtari / Thracian Royal Tomb Sveshtari



Thracian tombs in Svechtari



Madaras Horseman

Boyana Church

BGR-114 Vitosha (Boeritsa)

Rila Monastery

BGR-138 Rilski manastir / Rila Monastery (Kirilova polyana)

Old Town of Nessebar

BGR-242 Obzorski prohod / Obzor Pass (vue panoramique)



Old Town of Nessabar



Boyana Church

There are a number of castles and fortifications

BGR-002 Castra Martis (Kula)

Garrison fortifiée

BGR-005 Belogradchishka krepost

Belogradchik Fortress

BGR-036 Krepost

Medzhidi Tabiya Fortress

BGR-077 Shumensko plato / Shumen Plateau

Shumen Fortress

BGR-087 Dobrina

Access to Ovech Fortress



Castra Martis (Kula)



Medzhidi Tabiya Fortress

BGR-126 Krepost

Hisarlaka Fortress

BGR-133 Tsari Mali grad

Tsars Castle

BGR-185 Panoramna gledka Yavrovo

Including Asen Fortress

BGR-221 Mezeshka krepost

Mezek Fortress

BGR-246 Vrah Bakarlaka

Zamak Ravadinovo Castle



Tsari Mali grad



Zamak Ravadinovo Castle

Among the many places of worship in the country, we have selected :

- BGR-017 Klisurski manastir
- BGR-027 Glozhenski manastir
- BGR-052 Preobrazhenski manastir / Transfiguration Monastery
- BGR-063 Batoshevski manastir
- BGR-085 Aladzha manastir
- BGR-095 Osenovlag (incl. Manastir Sedemte prestola / 7 Thrones Monastery)
- BGR-104 Klisurski manastir / Klisura Monastery
- BGR-106 Kremikovski manastir
- BGR-108 Etropolevski manastir / Etropole Monastery



7 Thrones Monastery



Etropole Monastery

- BGR-112 Giginski manastir / Gigintsi Monastery
- BGR-127 Granichki manastir / Granitsa Monastery
- BGR-131 Ruenski manastir / Ruen Monastery
- BGR-132 Boboshevski manastir Sv. Dimitar / Monastery Boboshevo St. Demetrius
- BGR-138 Rilski manastir / Rila Monastery
- BGR-162 Rozhenski manastir / Rozhen Monastery
- BGR-170 Trakiyski kultov kompleks Starosel / Thracian Cult Temple
- BGR-174 Batkunski manastir / Batkun Monastery
- BGR-191 Sveta Troitsa (Krastova gora) / Holy Trinity Cross Forest
- BGR-213 Paraklis Sveti Duh / Sveti Duh Chapel
- BGR-230 Maglizhki manastir / Maglizh Monastery & Garbata stena



Temple thrace



Chapel Sveti Duh

The country's history requires many monuments. We have chosen some of them.

Nikopol Victory Monument:

BGR-012 Pametnik na pobedata

Hristo Botev Memorial, Bulgarian poet and revolutionary:

BGR-020 Vrah Okolchitsa

Royal Sveshtari Thracian tomb from the 3rd century BC, illustrating the fundamental principles of building construction at the time:

BGR-045 Trakiiska tsarska grobintsa Sveshtari

Monument to mothers awaiting the return of their sons or husbands from the war

BGR-055 Krushevo / Monument 'Waiting Mothers'

Vulchan Voivoda Memorial, white monument of courage

BGR-059 Harvalovtsi

Memorial to the war between Russia and Turkey

BGR-109 Botevgradski prohod (Arabakonak)



Hristo Botev Memorial



Vulchan Voivoda Memorial

Vasil Levski Memorial, revolutionary and ideologist of the Bulgarian National Revolution

BGR-110 Galabets

Monument to the flame

BGR-128 Pametnik Plamak

Three-generation monument

BGR-180 Pametnik na trite pokoleniya

Memorial to Georgi Sholakov, partisan and co-founder of the 'Anton Ivanov' brigade

BGR-182 Kartela

The famous Shipka Freedom Memorial, erected in 1930 to honour the memory of the soldiers who died in the three battles of Chipka during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878. '

BGR-226 Shipka Pametnik

Monument dedicated to Bulgarian Communist Party & Dimitri Balgovev, Communist leader and philosopher

BGR-227 Pametnik Buzludzha

Two monuments to partisans executed

BGR-067 Pametnik na zaginalite yatatsi

BGR-228 Kavakliyka

Soldier's Rock

BGR-234 Kotlenski prohod / Kotel Pass / Soldier Rock

110 years of freedom monumen

BGR-244 Bakadzhika



Three-Generations Monument



Shipka

There are also a number of caves

- BGR-004 Peshtera / Cave Magura
- BGR-019 Peshtera / Cave Ledenika
- BGR-024 Peshtera Samuilitsa Cave
- BGR-025 Peshtera Prohodna Cave
- BGR-026 Peshtera Saeva Dupka Cave
- BGR-032 Devetaki = Devetashka peshtera / Devetaki Cave
- BGR-142 Obel (Border North Macedonia) = Pehstera boychova skala Cave
- BGR-178 Snezhanka peshtera / Snow White Cave



The caves of Magura



The white caves of Snezhanka

Deep canyons

- BGR-195 Buynovsko zhdrelo
- BGR-196 Trigradsko zhdrelo

- Buynovo Gorge (Yagodina)
- Trigrad Gorge

Waterfalls

- BGR-141 Kostenski vodopad
- BGR-201 Planinsko

- Kostenets Waterfalls
- Vodopad Gyumberdzhiyata Waterfalls

High altitude lakes

- BGR-118 Dolni Okol
- BGR-136 Vincheto
- BGR-194 Yazovir Dospat
- BGR-202 Sokolite

- Kalin Dam
- Dospat Reservoir
- Yazovir Borovitsa Reservoir



Kostenets Waterfalls



Vincheto Lake

Panoramic views

BGR-155 Ribnovo panorama

BGR-242 Obzorski prohod / Obzor Pass = Sunny Beach Panorama + Irakli Beach

The list includes a number of ski resorts

BGR-129 Osogovo

BGR-137 Malyovitsa

BGR-139 Borovets Ski Resort

BGR-145 Ski park Kartala / Kartala Resort

BGR-198 Snezhanka (Pamporovo)



Ribnovo



Borovets ski resort in summer

And some original local features

The historic and cultural Bulgarian capital of Veliko Tarnovo

BGR-054 Park Sveta gora

Bulgaria's geographical centre

BGR-069 Geografski tsentar na Bulgaria (Uzana)

Heading for the Black Sea

BGR-083 Kavarna

A forest of stones

BGR-086 Pobitite kamani / Banovo

A rock formation

BGR-105 Momina skala

A megalithic site in Thrace

BGR-120 Strelchanski prohod / Strelcha Pass



Kavarna, a cape like no other



The stones of Pobitite kamani

Two lifts for high altitude lakes

BGR-135 Lift Sedemte Rilski ezera / Seven Rila Lakes Lift

BGR-152 Lift Bezbozhkoto ezero / Lake Bezbog Lift

Two on the official list of the most beautiful Bulgarian villages

BGR-156 Kovachevitsa

BGR-235 Zheravna + Festival of the National Costume

An architectural reserve

BGR-157 Dolen

Modern and ancient cities

BGR-175 Mladezhki Halm / Youth Hill

BGR-204 Perperikon

BGR-209 Pechinsko

Young hill of Plovdiv

Ancient Thracian city of Perperikon

Old town of Stariyat grad Zlatograd



Kovachevitsa, a beautiful Bulgarian village



The Thracian city of Perperikon

An adventure park

BGR-224 Priklyuchenski park

Ivaylovgrad adventure park

A sanctuary in stone

BGR-240 Koziya kamak

Goat Stone (Thracian Rock Sanctuary)

The meanders of a protected river

BGR-181 Karatepe

Meanders of the Ribna River in a protected area

A white beech reserve

BGR-207 Daldzha Shkembedzhynitsa

Rezervat Belite brezi



Thracian sanctuary and its rocks



And the White Beech Reserve

The sporting side of Polish climbs

Here are the TOP10 longest Bulgarian climbs

167 SE	Vrah Botev / Botev Peak	44,2 km
172 SE	Yazovir Belmeken / Belmeken Reservoir	38,9
198 NWS	Snezhanka (Pamporovo)	35,4
18 SE	Zelena glava (incl. Petrohanski prohod / Petrohan Pass)	32
187 N	Byala Cherkva	31,2
163 W	Popovi Livadi (Popski Preslap)	30,9
237 SE	Balgarka	30
172 NE1	Yazovir Belmeken / Belmeken Reservoir	29,7
181 N	Karatepe	28,6
145 W	Ski park Kartala / Kartala Resort	28,4



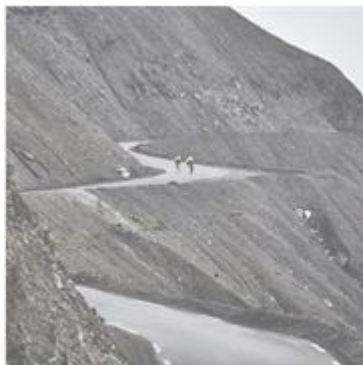
Petrohanski pass in Zelena Glava



Kartala resort

The TOP10 most uneven climbs

167 SE	Vrah Botev / Botev Peak	1974 m
136 S	Vincheto (Yazovir Kalin / Kalin Dam)	1795
172 NE1	Yazovir Belmeken / Belmeken Reservoir	1547
172 NE2	Yazovir Belmeken / Belmeken Reservoir	1547
187 N	Byala Cherkva	1346
18 N	Zelena glava (incl. Petrohanski prohod / Petrohan Pass)	1325
173 NE	Milevi skali (Partizanski panteon)	1275
172 SE	Yazovir Belmeken / Belmeken Reservoir	1271
182 N	Kartela (Pametnik na Georgi Cholakov / Memorial)	1234
163 W	Popovi Livadi (Popski Preslap)	1232



Road to Vintcheto, Bulgaria

Vincheto, a high mountain route



The summit tower of Byala Cherkva

Here are the top 25 Bulgarian cycle climbs by average percentage

136 S	Vincheto (Yazovir Kalin / Kalin Dam)	11,2 %
133 N	Tsari Mali grad	10,4
178 N	Snezhanka peshtera / Snow White Cave	9,3
132 SE	Boboshevski manastir Sv. Dimitar / Monastery Boboshevo St. Demetrius	8,6
63 E	Batoshevski manastir	8,1
131 E	Ruenski manastir / Ruen Monastery	7,9
176 W	Gorna Dabeva	7,8
180 N	Pametnik na trite pokoleniya / Monument of the Three Generations	7,8
90 N	Ulitsa Marin Tepe Street	7,7
134 NW	Hizha Otovitsa Hut	7,7
206 S	Krastatitsa	7,7
16 N	Hizha Kom / Mountain Hut Kom	7,5
151 N	Todorka (Hizha / Chalet Vihren)	7,5
245 N	Asanbair	7,5
96 NE	Kraevo	7,4
107 NW	Kompleks Stubelya Resort	7,4
133 NE	Tsari Mali grad	7,4
239 S	Topolitsa	7,4
143 NW	Tserovo	7,3
26 N	Peshtera Saeva Dupka Cave	7,2
38 NW	Park Hristo Botev	7,1
204 SE	Perperikon	7,1
238 SE	Park Hamambair	7,1
9 N	Gledkata / Viewpoint Oryahovo	7
28 S	Babintsi	7

And the 16 with a maximum hectometric percentage greater than ... 15%

133 N	Tsari Mali grad	20 %
178 N	Snezhanka peshtera / Snow White Cave	19
221 NE	Mezeshka krepost / Mezek Fortress	19
5 E	Belogradchishka krepost / Belogradchik Fortress	16
90 N	Ulitsa Marin Tepe Street	16
103 NW	Zhelyaznata voda (Detski lager / Summer camp)	16
127 N	Granichki manastir / Granitsa Monastery	16
131 E	Ruenski manastir / Ruen Monastery	16
132 SE	Boboshevski manastir Sv. Dimitar / Monastery Boboshevo St. Demetrius	16
133 NE	Tsari Mali grad	16
136 S	Vincheto (Yazovir Kalin / Kalin Dam)	15,8
191 W	Sveta Troitsa (Krastova gora) / Holy Trinity Cross Forest	15,4
21 S	Ochindol	15
41 N	Plevensko Shose / Chaussée	15
63 E	Batoshevski manastir	15
224 SE	Priklyuchenski park / Adventure Park Ivaylovgrad	15
245 N	Asanbair	15



The hard, hard road to Belogradchik



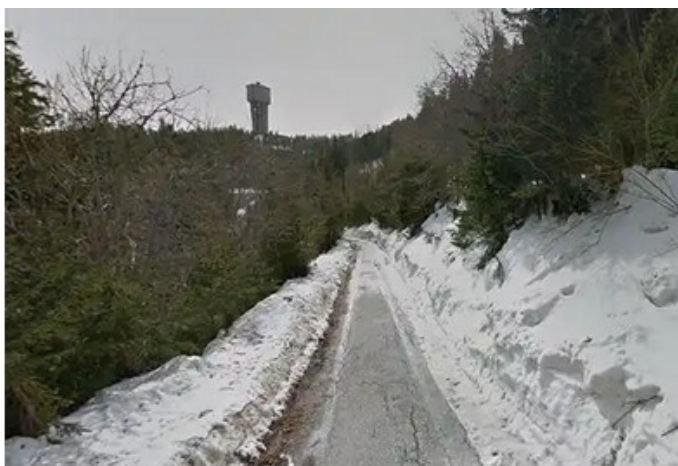
The steep, much-visited summit of Krastova gora

In terms of energy expenditure, what is the TOP10 Bulgarian europoints?

136 S	Vincheto (Yazovir Kalin / Kalin Dam)	2253,6
167 SE	Vrah Botev / Botev Peak	1359
173 NE	Milevi skali (Partizanski panteon)	1287,2
172 NE2	Yazovir Belmeken / Belmeken Reservoir	1128,7
172 NE1	Yazovir Belmeken / Belmeken Reservoir	1054,3
115 N	Aleko-Vitosha	938,2
187 N	Byala Cherkva	931,5
129 NW	Osoyovo	925,3
16 N	Hizha Kom / Mountain Hut Kom	908,9
184 N	Churen	908,2

As for explosiveness, here are the 19 bombs

136 S	Vincheto (Yazovir Kalin / Kalin Dam)	49,6
133 N	Tsari Mali grad	32,6
173 NE	Milevi skali (Partizanski panteon)	31,5
178 N	Snezhanka peshtera / Snow White Cave	31,2
131 E	Ruenski manastir / Ruen Monastery	28,7
132 SE	Boboshevski manastir Sv. Dimitar / Monastery Boboshevo St. Demetrius	28,4
134 NW	Hizha Otovitsa Hut	28,3
191 W	Sveta Troitsa (Krastova gora) / Holy Trinity Cross Forest	27,9
16 N	Hizha Kom / Mountain Hut Kom	27,2
129 NW	Osoyovo	27
163 E	Popovi Livadi (Popski Preslap)	26,6
154 SW	Popina Luka	26,4
90 N	Ulitsa Marin Tepe Street	25,9
115 N	Aleko-Vitosha	25,9
167 SE	Vrah Botev / Botev Peak	25,9
172 NE2	Yazovir Belmeken / Belmeken Reservoir	25,9
63 E	Batoshevski manastir	25,6
176 W	Gorna Dabeva	25,3
133 NE	Tsari Mali grad	25,2



The road to the Belmeken dam in winter



The Botev Peak mule track

Bulgarian cycle races

Some Bulgarian cyclists have made their mark in the professional peloton

* Trained in France, Ivailo Gabrovski is a multiple Bulgarian champion. He is the record holder for the number of overall victories in his national tour, the Tour of Bulgaria. He won the 2012 Tour of Turkey thanks to an attack on the first mountain stage in the Tour's history, the third stage to Elmali. Nikolay Mihaylov also did a good career in the CCC Team.



Ivailo Gabrovski



Nikolay Mihaylov

Obikolka na Bulgariya (Tour of Bulgaria)

The Tour of Bulgaria is a Bulgarian stage race held every year. It is part of the UCI Europe Tour, in category 2.2.

It is therefore open to any Bulgarian professional continental teams, continental teams, national teams and regional or club teams. UCI ProTeams (first division) may not participate.

There was no event between 1925 and 1934, 1936 and 1948, 1951 and 19542. The 2014 edition was cancelled.

Since 2017, the Tour of Bulgaria has consisted of two three-day races, the 'Tour of North Bulgaria' and the 'Tour of South Bulgaria', each with an overall classification.



The race's centenary logo



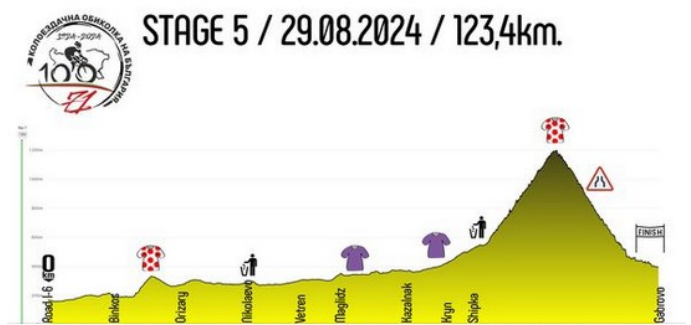
A longitudinal route

Our list of top contenders includes:

BGR-053	Kaloyanova krepost / Fortress (Arbanasi)	2012, 2013
BGR-070	Prohod na Republikata	2015, 2022
BGR-110	Galabets	2012, 2013, 2023
BGR-138	Rilski manastir / Rila Monastery	2020, 2021, 2022
BGR-166	Troyanski prohod (Beklemeto Pass)	2012, 2013, 2015, 2016 2021, 2022, 2023
BGR-226	Shipka Pametnik	2012,2013, 2021
BGR-232	Tvardishki prohod / Tvarditsa – Elena Pass	2013, 2016
BGR-234	Kotlenski prohod / Kotel Pass	2015,2023
BGR-237	Bălgarka	2015, 2022, 2023



A cobbled finish



A stage with explicit icons



The peloton towards Shipka



And coming down dominated by the monument

The **Etape Bulgaria by Tour de France** also exists and goes through

BGR-176 Gorna Dabeva



The stage with Gorna Dabeva



An invitation to climb

It also has a cyclosportive bringing together professionals and amateurs, the *Northwest Bulgaria Bike Tour*



An icon in three stages



The first peloton attacking a climb



Bulgarian cycling gets off to a flying start

EDITIONS BIGCYCLING

www.bigcycling.eu