

About Bitola and the Locals

Welcome to Bitola (Macedonian: Битола), one of the oldest civilizations in Europe, which was founded by the Slavic settlers. Considered “the city of consuls” (nowadays they have 14 consulates), thanks to their strategic location, the city reflects multiculturalism, mostly when you are trying to taste some typical dish from North Macedonia (actually, they don't have one – the dishes are from Turkey, Greece, Italy, and none is made only in this country). However, they are very tasty and cheap, so forget your diet plan if you really have one!

Here, you have a lot relaxation (people can spend more than 5 hours at a café, so imagine how it can be). You can experiment by yourself. Just take a walk through the busiest street – Shirok Sokak (Широк Сокак) – an authentic runway where you will feel always observed by the people that stay all afternoon at the cafés. Along this street full of interesting bars, you have the chance to know the stories about the first camera in the Balkans and, in the end, there's one of the landmarks of Bitola: the clock tower (known as Саат кула).

Bitola is a small and nice city explored very easily on foot or by bicycle, so it's not necessary to spend money on transport. But, if you want to go to “Bitola's green oasis” (National Park *Pelister*), which is only 15 km away from the city, you will need a car, unless you can start an adventure and start walking in the morning. There, you can enjoy an area known for rare animal and vegetal species – namely the endemic Molika pine – noted for the exceptional glacial lakes, ski centers as well as rural parts.

About the locals, there's few people speaking English in this country, which is a problem if you're not able to understand or communicate in North Macedonian. Our tip: try to ask the younger people and be prepared to be surprised by an answer in their language. There's no problem. Be persistent and never give up.

In our opinion, the city could be more tourist friendly and, for example, be marked with more signs and information, in order to help them to find the attractions and know more about what they are seeing. So, sometimes it's up to you to search for more information and explore!

Accommodation

In Bitola you can find various types of accommodation, depending on what your preference. However the price range is usually around 1.200 MK Denars per night, during summer, the prices can get higher. In the following list you can find accommodation located in the city center, in Baba Mountain and also divided by typology, including apartments or hostels.

Located in the City Center

Bela kuka Hotel

Address: 20 Dimitar Ilievski Murato Str, Bitola 7000, Republic of North Macedonia

Description: Situated in Bitola, 300 meters from the Main Square, Bela Kuka Hotel offers free WiFi, free air conditioning and a lovely garden. A bus stop is 120 meters away, while Shirok Sokak street filled with cafes and shops is located 30 meters away. You can find a supermarket 50 meters away from the hotel and a shuttle service is available to and from Skopje Airport, under request.



House Bastion

Address: 237 Solunska Str., 7000 Bitola

Description: Located in Bitola, 70 meters from the city center, House Bastion provides 24-hour front desk and air-conditioned rooms. Free Wi-Fi and free parking are also available. Various restaurants, cafes and bars are reachable within 100 meters. As a curiosity, the SFERA volunteer house is located right next door from this hotel.



Hotel Epinal

Address: Marsal Tito bb, Bitola City Center, Bitola, North Macedonia

Description: Hotel Epinal is centrally located in Bitola and it features its own casino, sauna and gym. An indoor pool and a hot tub are available as well. Wi-Fi access and parking are available for free. Numerous shops, restaurants and cafés are located within 100 meters from Epinal.



Located in the Mountain

Hotel Sator Trnovo

Address: V. Trnovo, National Park Pelister, 7000 Bitola, North Macedonia

Description: Located on the slopes of Baba Mountain, in the village of Trnovo, far away from the city noise (the Bitola city centre is 6 km away). Hotel Sator is a true place for complete relaxation of your body and mind. Here, you can find traditional North

Macedonian hospitality, contemporary designed vast rooms with a spectacular view of the untouched nature, where you can find a place for organizing your family events, as well as business events.



Apartments

Soho Apartments

Address: 3 Partizanska Str., Bitola City Center, Bitola, North Macedonia

Description: Featuring air-conditioned accommodation units with modern furnishings and free WiFi, Soho Apartments are located 2 km from the center of Bitola. Guests can relax on a common terrace of the Soho Apartments. Laundry and ironing services are also available. The property also offers a restaurant, next to the hotel building, where guests can enjoy the ambient and the food, complemented by a wine selection. The closest grocery shop is 200 meters away.



Hostels

Domestika hostel:

Address: Makedonska falanga 31a, Bitola City Center, Bitola, Macedonia

Description: Situated next to the City Park and close to The Champions Park, in Hostel Domestika you will find a lush garden and a shared kitchen, which can be used free of charge. Other facilities offered at the property include a shared lounge, luggage storage and a washing machine. The property offers free parking. There are 2 restaurants within 600 meters of the Domestika Hostel.



Cafes, Bars & Clubs

North Macedonia has a “coffee culture” that you can find in the southern European countries, such as Portugal or Greece. Depending on your taste, in Bitola you have a vast range of coffees, all decorated and filled with good energies.

The common “coffee time” is around 13:00h, which means, if you want to find a seat around this hour, it will get complicated, but normally you will always find a little place for you, surrounded by smiley faces.

The price range is commonly low and you have a large variety of coffee types.

In Bitola it's not common for you to ask for alcoholic drinks during the coffee time, however, they will always get you the drinks if it's your desire. Alcoholic drinks are usually ordered in clubs.

In Bitola, you can go out during the weekend, and in the following list you can find the main trendy places where you can have a nice night. We should warn you that in the clubs, North Macedonian people usually don't dance, they prefer to use these spaces to talk and have a drink. If you want to dance in the club, you will probably get some people staring at you, but as said previously, you can act according to your will.

Related to the Tobacco policy, you can smoke in almost every cafe, club or restaurant. In some of the places you can find legal restrictions to smoking, but in the late hours, it's common that everybody starts smoking inside and forgets about the restrictions.

As for restaurants, Bitola is filled with restaurants for you to taste the different flavors of North Macedonia. Here we present you the main one's.

Cafes & Bars

Art Caffe

Address: Sirok Sokak 98, Bitola, Republic of North Macedonia

Description: Located near SFERA Office, Art Caffe offers you the best cakes at the lowest range prices. A little corner cafe with friendly staff and where you can relax and enjoy a good piece of cake

Jagoda Meze Bar

Address: Shirok Sokak St 154, Bitola, Republic of North Macedonia

Description: Situated in a friendly corner, Jagoda Meze Bar is usually a cafe that gathers together youngsters. In this cafe you can have a good time enjoying the sun in the balcony and also taking a drink or some tasty hot chocolate.

Kamarite

Address: Leninova (Marsal Tito) 7000 Bitola, North Macedonia

Description: Trendy and well decorated bar usually frequented by youngsters. It's a really nice and cozy place where you can try a various range of cocktails.

Portal 2

Address: Shirok Sokak 67, Bitola 7000, North Macedonia (FYROM)

Description: Located in the main street, this cafe offers you a nice placement for you to enjoy the city movement in Bitola, as you can sit in the outside part of the cafe. Customer service is excellent and you can enjoy one of the biggest coffee varieties in Bitola.

Clubs

Rascekor Night Club

Address: Partizanska 21, Bitola 7000, Republic of North Macedonia

Description: The ultimate place to have a wonderful night, filled with trendy commercial music. The interior is modern and the light system is perfect for people that want to have a great time.

Positive Nightclub

Address: Olimpiski Bazen, Bitola 7000, Republic of North Macedonia

Description: Light environment to enjoy good music. Enjoy a drink with your friends at this club.

Restaurants

Scandal

Address: Partizanska 3, 7000 Bitola, North Macedonia

Description: American style restaurant decorated with a vintage and industrial design.

At the week days it's classified as being a calm place but at the weekends there's really funky but loud music, and it's hard to talk with your friends. They have a good selection of desserts, cocktails and breakfast options and even though the personnel is friendly, the orders are slow.

Vino Bar Bure

Address: Shirok Sokak 37, Bitola 7000, North Macedonia

Description: Vino Bar Bure is a cozy and friendly place with a great range of food options. The staff is friendly, but sometimes it can be difficult for them to understand English. Even though, the orders are fast and you can find a great variety of Turkish food, desserts and wine. If you visit this place, you should ask for the melted cheese, it's the best in town. You can also find Pizza Bure, also located in the main street, which serves pizzas as their specialty.

House of Manaki

Address: General Vasko Karangelevski 31, Bitola 7000, North Macedonia

Description: spacious and modern restaurant with a fancy atmosphere. Located a little bit outside the city center, has a beautiful view of the surroundings. In House of Manaki you can enjoy live music while you're eating.

Old house triangle

Description: Near the clubs in town, you can find an old fashioned restaurant where you can taste traditional food, while you can enjoy live night shows. The staff is friendly, however, the orders take the longest time you can imagine.

Supermarkets

In Bitola, you don't have a lot of supermarkets. However, you will find almost everything you need in Angromarket, Vero, small stores or even at the Old Bazaar.

One thing that maybe can be good for you to know in advance: in Bitola, it's not allowed to buy alcoholic drinks after 6:00 PM. So, if you are thinking of buying and taste the good wines they have or the famous Rakia, we advise you to do it before this hour, unless you don't mind to pay more at the bar or restaurant.

About the supermarkets, you can go to **Angromarket** (we call it "Blue market"), which is near to the SFERA volunteer house. This is not only a great option when you realize that you forgot to buy something while you're cooking, but also because of its prices. Despite being smaller than the Vero supermarket (so there's not as much offer), there you can find the same products but cheaper.

In Bitola there are two **Vero** supermarkets. We went to the biggest some times, but we prefer to go to Shirok Sokak, where they have the second one, because is near to the city-center. This is one of the biggest foreign investments in the country that brought a new trend and a different way of shopping in accordance with all European standards and methods of work in the retail business. (Here, in our case, we felt that we were in a "real" supermarket.)

As consequence, the offer is better, you can shop at reasonable prices, get a service with more quality (if the workers are in a good mood and also if they try to understand you and speak in English). The products are well-organized and they practice some price reductions frequently.

Finally, when it comes to fresh vegetables and fruits, we usually prefer go to the **Old bazaar**, mostly on Tuesday or Friday (although being opened every day, these are the days when sellers have the most fresh products). There are a lot of divided bazaars, some stores (clothes, shoes, bakery, bars, cheese, meat, fish, etc.) and a market. At the bazaar, you'll find great prices (take a walk and look for the best places because the prices are different) and a lot of products variety. However, if you want to speak with the sellers, you should be able to do it in Macedonian language because it's almost impossible to communicate in English.

Transportation

International bus transport

Belgrade – Bitola: every day from 21:30 hour. This line is operated by the Galeb – Ohrid company.

For more info please visit: <http://www.bas.co.yu>.

Sofia – Bitola: every day from 16:30 and 20:00 hour. The line in 16:30 hour is operated by the company Transkop Bitola, and the line in 20:00 by the Mat-Pu company from Bulgaria.

Vienna – Bitola: every Thursday and Friday arrives approximately in 12~13 hour in Bitola.

Bitola – Vienna: departure every Sunday in 6:00 and 7:30 h. The line to Viena is operated by Eurobus company.

Intercity bus transport

There are frequent bus lines between Bitola and other cities in North Macedonia. For more info please visit: <http://www.sas.com.mk>.

City transport

The city transport in Bitola is done with buses. There are 6 bus lines, 4 of which operate in the city and 2 in the suburban parts.

The Bus lines which operate in the city are marked with the numbers: 1, 4, 5, 6.

The suburban bus lines are marked with the numbers 11 and 12.

The tickets are bought from the driver and their price is 20 denars (0,3€).

Sport & Recreation

Running

If you like to be outdoors and have the opportunity to appreciate nature while exercising, the city park in Bitola is the place to choose. You can either go for a run, to work out, or simply go for a walk. There you have many football fields and tennis courts.

GYM

Since the habitants of Bitola cherish sports, the city offers a variety of sport clubs, gyms and organizations for the care of the mind and body. Some of the gym options are:

Aerobik

Partizanska 33/15, Bitola

Tel.: + 389 47 257429

Epinal

Marsal Tito b.b., Bitola

Tel.: + 389 47 224777

Email: epinal@mt.net.mk

Univerzal

Ruza Delceva b.b., Bitola

Tel.: + 389 70 339967

SPA

Some of the SPA options are:

Cosmetic Studio IVA

Anesti Panovski 9, Bitola

Tel.: +389 47 609 715

Hotel Epinal

Marsal Tito b.b., Bitola

Tel.: +389 47 224 777

Festivities in Bitola and the Surroundings

North Macedonia is one of Europe's hidden gems and its people are careful to preserve their fascinating heritage, through the rich variety of art events and numerous festivals that are held over the year. There are celebrations of traditional regional folklore to effervescent musical performances by some of the world's most renowned artists in many cities of the country. Down is listed few of the festivals around North Macedonia.

BITOLA

Small Bitola Montmartre

This popular event was held from May 23 – 30, on Shirok Sokak in Bitola. More than 150 pupils and 50 of their pedagogues and associates participated in the event. Over 40 countries and 1000 schools participated with 20000 works of art.

Manaki Brothers – International Film Festival

The International Cinematographers Film Festival “Manaki Brothers” in Bitola is organized by the North Macedonian Film Professionals Association (MFPA).

Founded 21 May 1950, MFPA represents the interests of film professionals and film authors in our country. Besides looking after its members' rights and interests, MFPA fosters the professional development and growth of film creativity in the Republic of North Macedonia. The Association aims to strengthen North Macedonian cinematography and to ensure its continuity amid different activities. From year to year, MFPA offers significant contribution to North Macedonian cinema and affirms world film art here in our country. One of the main activities of MFPA is the International Cinematographers Film Festival “Manaki Brothers”.

Interfest – Festival of Classical Music

Interfest is an international festival of classical music, held 2-12 October every year. In 2002, the festival celebrated its 10th anniversary. The 10-day festival gathers prominent musicians and renowned soloists from all European cultural centres.

SURROUNDINGS

Galicnik Wedding

On one day every July, St. Peter's Day, locals and tourists alike are invited to attend the traditional North Macedonian wedding celebrations at Galicnik, a legendary old village in the western mountains near Mavrovo.

The three-day feast, which includes much song, dance, eating and drinking, uses traditional customs, costumes, and rituals and dances that have been passed down over the centuries.

The Galicnik Wedding is an incomparable event that every visitor to North Macedonia must experience at least once.

Strumica Carnival

The Strumica Carnival is a centuries-old tradition of the town under the Tsar's Towers and is directly connected to the religious festival Trimeri. The only manifestation of such kind in Republic of North Macedonia, dedicated to engaged girls. The date changes depending on date of Easter and it is always on Tuesday after Ash Monday. During the festivity after the carnival procession, the masked groups visit the homes of the engaged girls where among the masked, the girls should recognize their fiancé. The first written account of the carnival originates from the Turkish travel writer Evlija Celebija.

The Balkan Folklore Festival in Ohrid

Member of the UNESCO Association of The International Council of Organizations of Folklore Festivals and Folklore Art, and The International Organization for Folklore Art, this festival has so far presented numerous original songs and dances from folk culture for more than 30 years.

"The Balkan Festival of Folk Songs and Dances" is an international folklore event established in 1962. Its original title was "The Ohrid Festival of Amateur Folk Songs and Folk Bands". In 1967 the Festival was restructured and ever since it has been hosting vocal and instrumental bands and solo singers presenting their authentic folk creations and traditional culture through songs, rites, traditional clothes, local costumes, traditional musical instruments, and handicrafts.

Countries from the Balkans and neighboring countries take part in the Festival. In the 36 years of its existence, it has hosted about 40,000 folk singers, dancers and instrumentalists from all around the world.

Nearby Top Places to See

SKOPJE

Skopje is the largest city and the capital of the Republic of North Macedonia with approximately one million inhabitants. It is the country's political, cultural, economic and academic center.

The city lies in the heart of the Balkan Peninsula and it counts with 2000 years of old tradition. It combines the ancient past with the modern European way of life. Skopje's Stone Bridge is a good example of this combination of old and new. The bridge links the new side of the city to the old Ottoman quarter.

The narrow streets in the Old Bazaar, which is the biggest bazaar preserved in the Balkans today, gives you the sensation of traveling back in time. You should make time to see some of the others main sights: Plostad Makedonija (Skopje Central Square), the 6th century Kale Fortress that is standing over the city, the Mother Teresa Memorial house that is dedicated to her since Skopje is the birthplace of Mother Teresa and the monastery St. Panteleimon.

MATKA CANYON

Matka Canyon is a canyon located just 17 kilometers southwest of Skopje. This destination is a beautiful day trip from the capital and is one of the most popular outdoor choices in North Macedonia with several medieval monasteries: Monastery of St. Andrew, The Monastery of St. Nicholas Shishovski, and the Matka Monastery.

Matka Lake, which is within the Matka Canyon, is the oldest artificial lake in the country. It is surrounded by the steep walls of a dramatic gorge and it is a perfect experience for those who enjoy being in nature.

It is possible to rent a boat and go around the lake to see the caves and have lunch at the restaurant. Matka counts with 10 caves, several rock formations and crevices, being Vrelo Cave the most impressive one of them all – the deepest underwater cave in Europe.

OHRID

The town of Ohrid, situated southwest of Skopje, west of Resen and Bitola is one of the most seductive destinations of North Macedonia, with an atmospheric old quarter, stunning churches, gorgeous view over the lake Ohrid, which is one of the deepest and oldest lakes in Europe, and topped by the bones of a medieval castle. The town and the lake are both recognized as UNESCO World Heritage Site for its cultural significance.

Ohrid is notable for once having had 365 churches, one for each day of the year, and has been referred to as a “Jerusalem (of the Balkans)”. It gives the tourists the chance to visit beautiful sightseeing’s, such as the Ancient Theatre, Tsar Samuil’s Fortess for gorgeous views over the lake and the city, the St. Clement Church, Saint Sofia (Sveti Sofia) Church and St. Jovan of Kaneo Monastery.

It is the perfect place to stay for a few days as you can explore the old town sites, walk around the Lake Ohrid, and the surrounding monasteries.

STRUGA

Struga is a city in the southwestern part of the Republic of North Macedonia, and it lies along the northern shore of the Ohrid lake, where the river Crni Drim flows. It is considered a major tourist destinations with more modern hotels and restaurants.

The location of the town on Lake Ohrid makes it slightly quieter and more peaceful experience than the more bustling city of Ohrid. It is possible to visit some places that show the beauty and culture, like the old bazaar, the century old churches, mosques and the clay chamber pots at the house of the Miladinovci Brothers.

Every August at the Poetry Bridge are held the Struga Poetry Evening visited by poets, writers and artists from all around the world. During the day, you can have a good time in one of the 3 kinds of beaches called Male beach, Female beach and the most beautiful called Galeb. At night, you can walk by the lake, by the river, or go at the most popular discos and pubs in town.

PRILEP

Prilep is located in the central part of the southern region of North Macedonia and it is well known as “the city under Marko’s Towers” because of its proximity to the towers of Prince Marko.

Because of the production of quality tobacco, Prilep is a famous world center for high quality tobacco and cigarettes. Many of the world’s largest cigarette makers, such as Marlboro, West and Camel use Prilep’s tobacco in their cigarettes.

The most illustrative monumental complexes are the St. Nikola Church, which dates from the 13th century, St. Uspenie na Bogorodica in the Monastery of Treskavec with representative paintings from 15, 16 and 19th century, as well as the Monastery with the St. Preobrazenie Church located above the village Zrze. On the hill Markovi Kuli is located one of the five biggest Balkan forts, and it consists of three defensive zones and many towers and gates.

Advice

If you are coming during the winter, you should bring warm clothes and specific shoes for the snow if you don't want to fall. But if you are coming during the summer be aware that the temperatures here are really high.

At SFERA office you use the meeting room for all workshops and lessons and they have all the materials you will need. For informal activities (cinema, tea, intercultural conversations, etc.) you can use the living room that has a good TV to watch movies, listen to music and a comfortable sofa.

Go to the American Corner if you like to read, they have a lot of books and you can always attend some events that they organize weekly.

When having birthday, unless you want to pay all the drinks and food for everyone, you should tell in advance that it is not a Macedonian birthday.

About **Promaja**... **"CLOSE THE WINDOWS!"**

Promaja is a mystical force of nature responsible for ailments and deaths of millions of Balkan people throughout history.

Useful link: <http://bitolatourist.info/> (here you can find a lot of information about Bitola: events, culture, food, sports, etc.)

Emergency Contacts

Police: 192

Fire Department: 193

Ambulance: 194

Road Emergency Help: 196

Information: 188

Enjoy your stay!