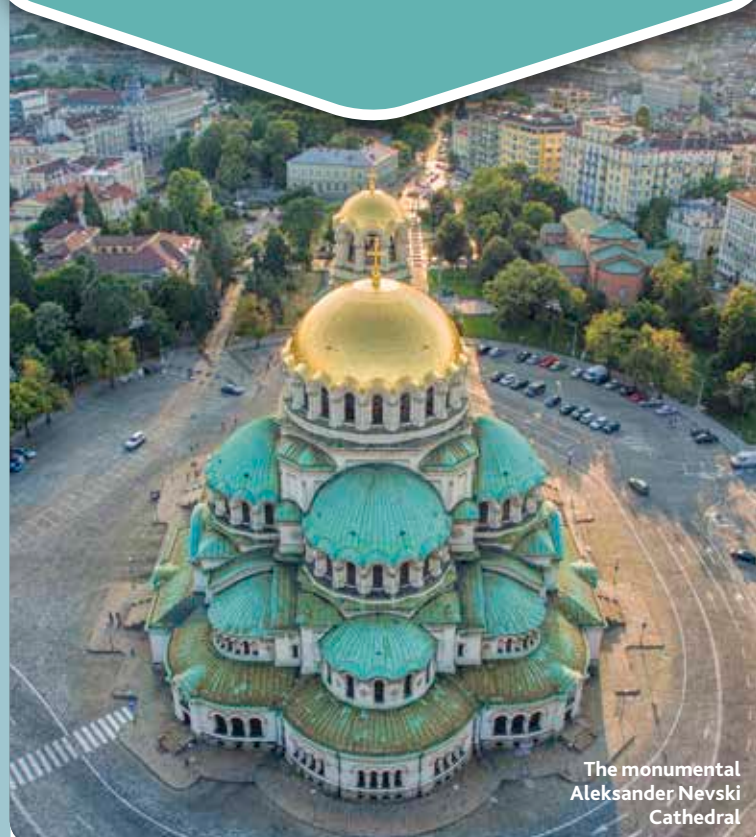


# Weekend in Sofia



The monumental Aleksander Nevski Cathedral

*Sofia is an eclectic city, with a scattering of onion-domed churches, Ottoman mosques and stubborn Red Army monuments. Use this list to plan your itinerary for a weekend in the Bulgarian capital.*

## 📍 SIGHTS

### Aleksander Nevski Cathedral

(Aleksander Nevski Square)

One of the symbols not just of Sofia but of Bulgaria itself, this massive, awe-inspiring cathedral was built between 1882 and 1912 in memory of the 200,000 Russian soldiers who died fighting for Bulgaria's independence during the Russo-Turkish War (1877–78). It is named in honour of a 13th-century Russian warrior-prince.

### Archaeological Museum

(naim.bg; ul Saborna 2)  
Housed in a former mosque built in 1494, this museum displays a wealth of Thracian, Roman and medieval artefacts. Highlights include a mosaic floor from the Church of Sveta Sofia,

a 4th-century BC Thracian gold burial mask, and a magnificent bronze head, thought to represent a Thracian king.

### Sveta Sofia Church

(00 359 2 987 0971; ul Parizh 2)

Sveta Sofia is one of the capital's oldest churches, and gave the city its name. A subterranean museum houses an ancient necropolis and the remains of four other churches. Outside are the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and an eternal flame, and the grave of Ivan Vazov, Bulgaria's most revered writer.

## 🍴 EATING

### Annette

MOROCCAN ££

(annette.bg; ul Angel Kanchev 27)  
With its cushion-strewn couches, glowing candles and lanterns, and spicy aromas, this is a great

place for authentic Moroccan cooking, including a big selection of meze, and delicious tagines such as lamb with figs and apricots, and chicken in wine.

### Made In Home

INTERNATIONAL

££

(00 359 0876884014; ul Angel Kanchev 30a)

Sofia's very popular entrant into the worldwide, locally sourced, slow-food trend (the name refers to the fact that all items are made in-house). The cooking is eclectic, with dollops of Middle Eastern (eg hummus) and Turkish tastes, as well as plentiful vegetarian and vegan offerings. The playfully rustic interior feels straight out of a Winnie-the-Pooh book. Reservations essential.

### MoMa Bulgarian Food & Wine

BULGARIAN ££

(moma-restaurant.com; ul Solunska 28)

An update on the traditional mehana (taverna), serving typical Bulgarian foods such as grilled meats and meatballs, and wines, but in a more modern and understated interior. The result is one of the best nights out in town. Start off with a shot of rakia (Bulgarian brandy) and a salad, and move on to the ample main courses. Book ahead – this restaurant is popular.

### Pastorant

ITALIAN £££

(pastorant.eu; ul Tsar Asen 16)

This charming pea-green restaurant provides an intimate setting for high-quality Italian cuisine, including some inventive pasta and risotto dishes and traditional favourites such as saltimbocca and pesto chicken.

### Vila Rosich

BAKERY £

(vilarosiche.com; ul Neofit Rilski)

Step into the back garden of this hidden bakery and enter what feels like a secret world of freshly baked breads and cakes. It's a perfect spot for an afternoon sweet, or a light cheese-stuffed croissant sandwich.

## 🍷 DRINKING

### DaDa Cultural Bar

(blog.dadaculturalbar.eu; ul Georgi Benkovski 10)

A local institution, DaDa bar is far more than a place to drink.

The mission here is culture, and you can usually expect to find live music, art installations, readings or happenings. Look for up-to-date listings on the website.

### Fabrika Daga

(00 359 02 444 0556; ul Veslets 10)

A classic third-gen coffee roaster with lots of exposed piping and a coffee menu scrawled on a chalkboard. Espresso, vacuum pots and French presses squeeze out java from a wide variety of exotic beans. It also has a long list of salads and sandwiches, with vegan and vegetarian options. A handy spot for morning coffee and a breakfast roll or cake.

### Raketa Rakia Bar

(00 359 02 444 6111; ul Yanko Sakazov 15–17)

Unsurprisingly, this rakish communist-era retro bar has a huge selection of rakia on-hand; before you start working your way down the list, line your stomach with snacks and meals heavy in meat and cream. Cheese baked in honey with walnuts is a particular winner. This place is very popular, so make sure you make a reservation – or arrive early and settle in for the long haul.

## Good to know

**Balkan Bites** is a two-hour guided walking tour focusing on food, and includes tastings and drinks at restaurants around town. The basic tour is free but a donation is expected. Walks depart at 2pm from the statue of Stefan Stambolov in Crystal Park (balkanbites.bg).



# WEEKEND IN SOFIA



TOP PICKS

<b>MAP KEY</b>	<b>5</b> Made In Home	<b>SLEEPING</b>
<b>1</b> Aleksander Nevski Cathedral	<b>6</b> MoMa Bulgarian Food & Wine	<b>12</b> Canapé Connection & Wine
<b>2</b> Archaeological Museum	<b>7</b> Pastorant	<b>13</b> Hotel Niky
<b>3</b> Sveta Sofia Church	<b>8</b> Vila Rosich	<b>14</b> Sofia Hotel Balkan
<b>EATING</b>	<b>DRINKING</b>	
<b>4</b> Annette	<b>9</b> DaDa Cultural Bar	
	<b>10</b> Fabrika Daga	
	<b>11</b> Raketa Rakia Bar	

## Sleeping

**Canapé Connection**  
 Best for a cosy guesthouse ([canapeconnection.com](http://canapeconnection.com); ul William Gladstone 12a)  
 Formerly a hostel, Canapé reinvented itself as a guesthouse in 2016, retaining its attention to cleanliness in a refreshingly simple, rustic design. There are singles, doubles and a larger room upstairs to accommodate families. The quiet garden outside is a great spot to relax in. There's no breakfast, but you'll find several coffee places nearby.

**Hotel Niky**  
 Best for being in town ([hotel-niky.com](http://hotel-niky.com); ul Neofit Rilski 16)  
 Offering excellent value and a good city-centre location, Niky has comfortable rooms and gleaming bathrooms; the smart suites come with kitchenettes. It's very popular and frequently full – be sure to book. You'll be within walking distance of the National Art Gallery, National Theatre, Russian Church, Alexander Nevski Cathedral and much more.

**Sofia Hotel Balkan**  
 Best for grandeur ([sofiabalkan.com](http://sofiabalkan.com); 5 Neta Svedelya Square)  
 The imposing building, part of the Presidential Palace, dates from the mid-1950s and exudes a retro socialist-realist appeal. The interior has been redone, with an elegant lobby, bars, clubs, cafés and a casino. Marble floors, glittering chandeliers and large plush rooms provide a level of comfort that should please the most demanding guests.



**FURTHER READING**  
 Our *Romania & Bulgaria* guide (£14.99) has a chapter on Sofia, which you can also download as a separate PDF (£2.99; [lonelyplanet.com](http://lonelyplanet.com)).