

## Bansko

Bulgaria/Bansko is a developing country/town.

Bulgaria is not a Western country and this is noticeable in many things in Bansko. It is good to be aware that the first impression of Bansko can be rough. For families who are new to travelling, or who have mainly travelled to Western countries or to high budget destinations, this can come as a culture shock. After a few days in Bansko and being open minded to the changes, people start to appreciate it, see the magic and everybody starts to love it.

Things to be aware of in Bansko are for example:

- Some roads are in bad condition, with holes in the pavement.
- There are abundant half built buildings throughout town.
- The houses and such in Bansko might seem in a bad state. Locals are in general more interested in the functionality than in the quality or aesthetic.
- The air in Bansko is smokey, since many people use fireplaces to heat up their houses.
- Locals do not have a service mentality. Do not expect the service that you might be used to in your home country or other places you have travelled to. Demanding service is seen as extremely rude and will result in the opposite. Locals can come across as rude, but if you treat them respectfully, as equals, and with compassion they turn out to be the most friendly and helpful people.
- Agreements with locals are in general informal and are not always followed up. Even in the program, where we select our partners well, this is sometimes experienced.
- Businesses are not always happy to serve groups.
- The electricity can go out. This had happened once or a few times each season.
- The WIFI can have regular interruptions. Internet on your phone is cheap and more stable.
- The apartments are basic.

## Apartments

Also the apartments in Bansko might seem in bad shape. Also here, functionality is valued over quality or aesthetic. Finding housing for a group, during high season, is a very challenging task, but we managed to find two complexes where we can all be together in

our private apartments and have spaces for our activities. But yes, these complexes meet the Bulgarian/Bansko standards. Our main complex is very basic, but the management is great and very helpful. The neighbouring complex is more luxurious and has facilities like a pool, gym, sauna, and the service level is good for Bulgarian standards, but limited. Things to be aware of in the apartments are for example: The apartments are poorly isolated.

- You can easily warm up the apartment within a fair budget, but you will notice the poor isolation near windows and outside walls.

- At arrival of the first group the apartments might be cold and need a few days to fully warm up. You will be able to get the apartments warmed up within a few hours, but the walls and floors will remain cold longer.

- Each apartment is different in its setup, furniture and equipment. Some are bigger-some are smaller, some have plenty of storage space-others have little, some are well equipped-others only have the basic, some have more comfortable beds than others etc.

- The apartments are in general limited equipped. The basic kitchenware is present, but there are no extra's. In the main complex the apartments are equipped with at least:

4 Cups

4 Glasses

4 Plates

4 bowls

4 Knives, forks, spoons

2 Cutting knives

1 Chopping board

1 Scissors

1 Wooden spoon

1 Opener

2 Pots

1 Pans

1 Kettle

1 Toaster

1 Broom

1 Butterfly mop

1 set of bedding per person (You might want to buy your own pullover sheet and pillows)

1 Towel per person

- Repairs in apartments might not always have been done professionally. You will notice this in details like: Outlets might be loose, smoke alarms might not work, extraction tubes might not be installed, there might be water running in the bathrooms etc. When reported to the complex they might send someone for repair, or they might consider it a “normal condition”, depending on the problem.

- The WIFI can have regular interruptions. Internet on your phone is cheap and more stable and good to have as a backup if you need to make online calls.

### Transportation in Bansko

Transportation is not included in our program, also no transportation to the activities. Arranging your transport to and in Bansko is your own responsibility. In Bansko it can be hard to find transportation, especially during the mornings. For this reason we advise people to use a rental car. There are some cheap options available in Sofia. For smaller families it is also possible to arrange a shared rental car with another family. We will arrange a communication platform in which such shares can be arranged amongst the families.

Also we know a reliable transport company in Bansko that you can use. This transport company will hold vans available for our group, also in the mornings, if ordered the weekend in advance. We can organise group transport as a courtesy to the families, but please be aware we are not a party in this, we only have an intermediate role. We will take on any sign ups for the group transports and take your payments, so that the transport company will have to work with one party only. The price for the vans will be determined by the transport company and communicated in advance, but the price per person will depend on the number of sign ups for that van. The van price will be divided by the number of people who signed up. Cancellations after the sign up deadline can not be accepted for any reason, as this would mean a higher price for other families.

To see the transportation prices, check [here](#).

### Health

In Bansko we come together with a large group of people from all around the world. It is winter season and a lot of the activities are indoors. Please be aware that people can bring different kind of viruses and other illnesses and when they do, they might run around the group and get a large part of the group ill. Please be aware and prepared. Make sure to keep your family healthy where possible and when you have some kind of symptoms, try to keep the community healthy where you can. And realise that this is a side effect of spending the winter in a large group with people from all over the world.

Staff might also get affected by illnesses that spread around. We have back up plans for that, but be aware that if more staff members become sick at ones, we might have to make some adjustments to the schedule.

Please also be aware of the rules during Worldschoooling Bansko.