

Things to be aware of - Worldschooling Banskó

Banskó

Bulgaria/Banskó is a developing country/town.

Bulgaria is not a Western country and this is noticeable in many things in Banskó. It is good to be aware that the first impression of Banskó 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 Banskó 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 Banskó 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 Banskó might seem in a bad state. Locals are in general more interested in the functionality than in the quality or aesthetic.
- The air in Banskó is smokey, since many people use fireplaces to heat up their houses. At the complex this is not the case, as we will be higher up in the mountains.
- 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. However, according to the information we have received from our new complex, the internet there should be good. If you rely on a good internet connection, internet of a local simcard is a good and cheap backup.
- The apartments are in general basic.

Skiing/snowboarding

Banskó is a ski resort from where you are able to take up the gondola to the Pirin Mountains. There are slopes for all levels of experience, with ski/snowboard classes available. There is usually plenty of snowfall on the mountain, and if there is not enough, snow machines are used to add artificial snow. The ski resort Ulen keeps the ski resort open the whole season. In cases of bad snowfall, they close a number of slopes. Also during days with extreme weather conditions, eg hard winds, some or all slopes will be closed.

To get up to the ski mountain, you can take the gondola. The gondola goes from the center of Banskó up to the mountain. At the upper gondola station there are the practice slopes and a restaurant. To go to the more advanced slopes you can take the ski lifts from the upper gondola station.

The gondola ride takes about 25 minutes. There are usually 15 minutes lines for the gondola in the weekends. During certain periods, mostly during Christmas period and during the

February half terms vacations, the lines for the gondola can be as longer, up to 90 minutes. The lines can be avoided by a season pass, that gives access to the fast lane. 20 passes unofficially also give access to the fast lane in 99% of the cases. Also during the busy periods vans drive to the top for approx 10-15 BGN per person. You are also able to drive your car up on the mountain, but in the busy times, the police closes the road when the parking lot up on the mountain is full.

To use the ski resort a ski pass is needed. All ski passes have the gondola pass included. There are different ski passes available. Only the season pass and the Bansko 20 pass are valid during the entire season. All other multiple day passes can only be used consecutively. Ski passes of the 2024 season can be found here.

Ski/snowboard classes start at the gondola upper station and a ski pass is needed for the classes. Please advise with the ski school, because sometimes a ski pass is not needed for the first and maybe second class. There are many ski schools operating in Bansko but not all have the same quality. We work with a ski school that we have good experiences with regarding quality and reliability and who can handle our group. A reduced fee is given to our group. The ski school assesses the levels in the group and adapts the lesson or group structure based on that. Because of this, some students might switch groups if the teacher notices this would help them learn better. Children and parents are not put together in a group, because children learn differently and much faster than adults. It is possible to get a private ski/snowboard group with you and your children together, but this is not recommended. Group ski classes are available from 7 years and up, for younger kids it is possible to arrange private group classes. The classes take 2 hours, but for younger kids only 1 hour is recommended. More information about the classes will be given after registration. Please note that the classes is not a service that we offer. We will book the classes for you as an intermediate, to make sure quality good classes are available for our group, but please note that we are not a party in the classes itself. In case of any difficulties with the classes, please reach out to the ski school directly. We can not be held responsible for any problems considering the ski/snowboard classes in any circumstances.

Please consult with us, before booking ski/snowboard classes with another school, so we can advise.

Ski/snowboard equipment is best to buy in Bulgaria, for about 100 euro for skis and boots. We will send you more information after registration. Ski clothes we advise you not to buy in Bansko as the prices will be much higher. Look for ski clothes for example in Sofia at Decathlon, check on their website for prices.

Complex

The apartments in Bansko are in general basic. They were build according to Bulgarian standards and mostly designed for short term visits. Most apartments in Bansko can show some defects, like for example a leaking toilet, and then it is up to the quality of the management of the complex whether problems like that are being fixed.

Our choice for this complex was not only for their facilities, but even more, we considered the quality of the management. Since the current management was managing our neighbouring complex during Worldscooling Bansko 2023 in which we hosted many

families, we got familiar with their managing style and are very satisfied about it. Also the families there were happy and we did not get any complaints.

We are very happy with the complex and its management, but please always keep in mind that it is still Bulgaria, with its particularities and set your expectations accordingly. Also please keep in mind that the apartments are originally designed for short term stays.

Please keep in mind that we have selected this complex with great care and are confident, but that the housing is not a service that we offer. We will book the housing for you as an intermediate, so you will be able to stay in the community complex, but please note that we are not a party in the housing arrangement itself. In case of any difficulties with your housing, please reach out to the complex directly. We can not be held responsible for any problems considering your housing arrangements in any circumstances.

Transportation in Bansko

Transportation to the gondola is included in your stay at the complex. However, we do have other outside activities, approx 4 times a week.

Families in the past years preferred to get their own rental car. Especially since they rent out very cheap in Sofia, for approx €200-€300 for a month. We can advise in this after booking. 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.

We also have the option to arrange community transportation to activities through a reliable transport company in Bansko. This transport is to be ordered during our weekly sign up. The price of the transport is charged per van and will be divided by the number of people in the van. Cancellations after sign up are not possible, as this will unexpectedly raise the price for the other participants.

Please be aware that the transportation is not a service that we offer. We will book the transport for you as an intermediate, and divide the costs over the participants, but please note that we are not a party in the transport arrangement itself. In case of any difficulties with the transport, please reach out to the transport company directly. We can not be held responsible for any problems considering your transport in any circumstances.

For an impression, last year's transportation prices you find [here](#).

Finding your own transportation in Bansko can be tricky, as not everybody is reliable and in certain weeks the taxi and transport services are overloaded.

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.

Program rules

Please also be aware of [the rules](#) during Worldschoooling Bansko