

SOFIA
Tourism in Figures
2016

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Ivo Marinov
Director of Sofia Tourism Administration

Sofia Tourism Administration presents to you the sixth edition of the tourist reference book *Sofia – Tourism in Figures*. The edition presents information regarding the state of the tourism industry in 2016.

Sofia continues to establish itself on the world tourist map as a successful tourist destination. This is evident from its increasing popularity, which leads to an annual increase in the number of tourists. Following the strong growth in 2015, Sofia continues to have an impressive, double-digit growth of tourists and their overnight stays in 2016 – 13% and 14% respectively.

The continuous growth of tourists and their overnight stays in the last few years has not gone unnoticed. This is the reason because of which in 2016 our capital was ranked among the top 10 European destinations with the largest increase in the number of tourists for the period 2009-2016 - over 7% annually, along with Barcelona, Budapest and Berlin. This is what the *MasterCard Global Destination Cities Index* shows.

An important reason for the increasing popularity of Sofia is also the launching of 23 new routes at Sofia Airport in 2016 - thus, the total number of served destinations in 2016 was over 70. Sofia is becoming more and more accessible thanks to the low-cost airlines, which are quickly establishing themselves on the market.

Following the world trends in tourism, Sofia continues to invest in the development of its tourist facilities, taking into consideration the sustainable development of the city. In 2016, funds were invested in the reconstruction and renovation of parks and green areas, and of Sofia Zoo, in the exhibition of cultural heritage, in enriching the cultural calendar and last but not least – in the modernization of public transport. All efforts are paying off, turning our capital into a more welcoming and attractive tourist destination. High-quality service and affordable prices contribute to tourists' satisfaction and a desire for a second visit.

Area: 492, 092 sq. km.

Sofia occupies 6.9% of the whole area of Sofia District which has a territory of 7 059 sq.km. or 6.4% of the area of the country. (Bulgaria – 110 994 sq. km.)

Population: 1 291 591

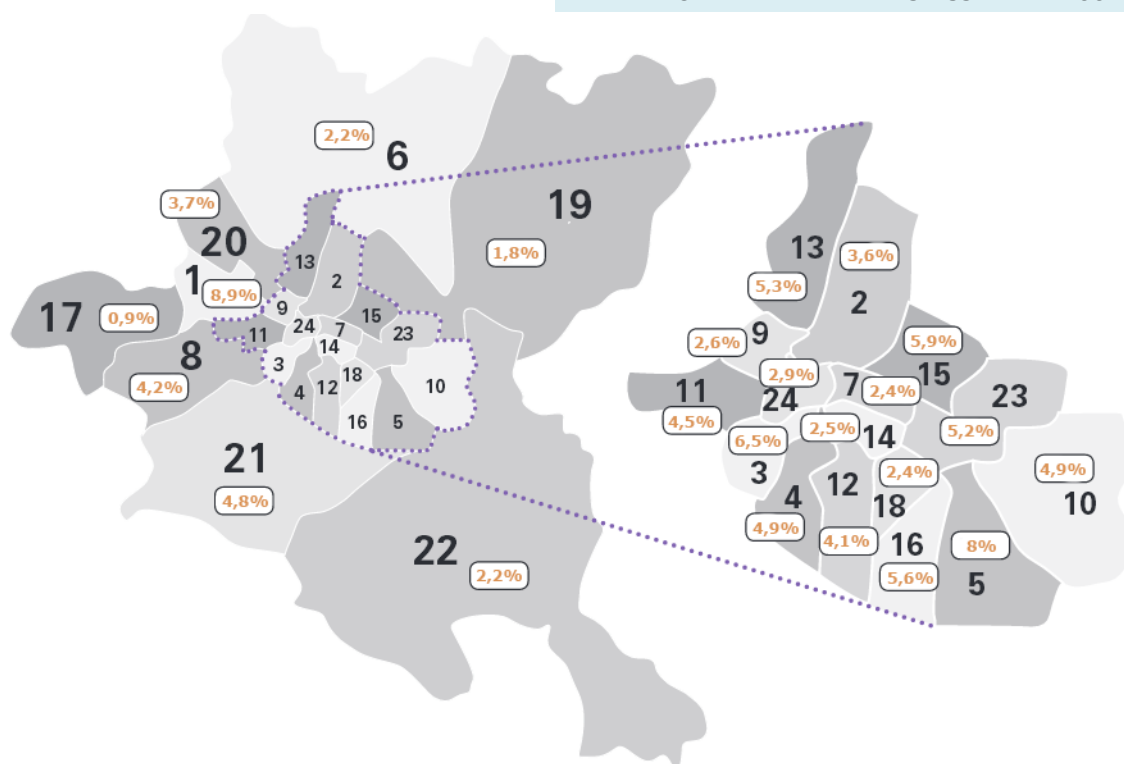
(According to NSI data from the 2011 population census)

According to NSI data, by the end of 2016 the population of the capital had already numbered 1 323 637 - 18,6% of the population of Bulgaria.

Sofia is divided into 24 administrative districts, the most populous of which are Lyulin and Mladost.

Source: NSI, 2011

	District in Sofia	Numbr of citizens	%
1	Lyulin	114 813	8,9
2	Serdica	46 949	3,6
3	Krasno Selo	83 552	6,5
4	Triaditsa	63 451	4,9
5	Mlodost	102 899	8
6	Novi Iskar	28 991	2,2
7	Oborishte	31 060	2,4
8	Ovcha Kupel	54 417	4,2
9	Ilinden	33 236	2,6
10	Iskar	63 248	4,9
11	Krasna Polyana	58 234	4,5
12	Lozenets	53 080	4,1
13	Nadezhda	67 905	5,3
14	Sredets	32 423	2,5
15	Poduyane	76 672	5,9
16	Studentski	71 961	5,6
17	Bankya	12 136	0,9
18	Izgrev	30 896	2,4
19	Kremikovtsi	23 641	1,8
20	Vrabnitsa	47 969	3,7
21	Vitosha	61 467	4,8
22	Pancharevo	28 586	2,2
23	Slatina	66 702	5,2
24	Vazrazhdane	37 303	2,9
TOTAL:		1 291 591	100



EMPLOYED PERSONS IN 2016

According to NSI preliminary data, as of December 2016 the average number of employed persons under contract of employment or ex-officio in the capital is 736, 500.

In the table below are presented some data regarding the employed persons in tourist establishments in Sofia, but it is important to point out that they apply only to the employees in the tourist facilities licensed and rated by the Mayor. Under the current legislation, these are:

- accommodation establishments and the adjoining catering and entertainment establishments:

- a) hotels – one- and two-star category;
- b) motels – all categories;
- c) family hotels – all categories;
- d) hostels – all categories;
- e) boarding houses – all categories;
- f) holiday houses – all categories;
- g) guest rooms – all categories;
- h) guest suites – all categories;
- i) guest houses – all categories;
- j) bungalows – all categories;
- k) campsites – all categories;

Sofia Tourism Administration does not have information about the employees in the tourist establishments categorized by the Minister of Tourism:

- accommodation establishments and the adjoining catering and entertainment establishments:

- a) hotels – three-, four- and five-star category;
- b) apartment tourist complexes – two-, three-, four- and five-star category;
- c) holiday villages – three-, four- and five-star category;
- d) tourist villages – two-, three-, and four -star category;
- e) villas – three-, four- and five-star category;

According to Sofia Tourism Administration, 29 657 persons are employed **in the places categorized by the mayor as accommodation establishments and catering and entertainment establishments** on the territory of Sofia Municipality.

Number of employed persons in the categorized by the mayor of Sofia accommodation establishments and catering and entertainment establishments on the territory of Sofia Municipality in 2016 by districts.

District	Total number of persons employed in accommodation establishments and catering and entertainment establishments		Number of persons employed in catering and entertainment establishments		Number of persons employed in accommodation establishments	
	Number of persons employed	Share in %	Number of persons employed	Share in %	Number of persons employed	Share in %
1 Lyulin	1 117	3,8	1 105	3,8	12	1,3
2 Serdica	726	2,4	665	2,3	61	6,7
3 Krasno selo	1 388	4,7	1 359	4,7	29	3,2
4 Triaditsa	3 140	10,6	3 037	10,6	103	11,3

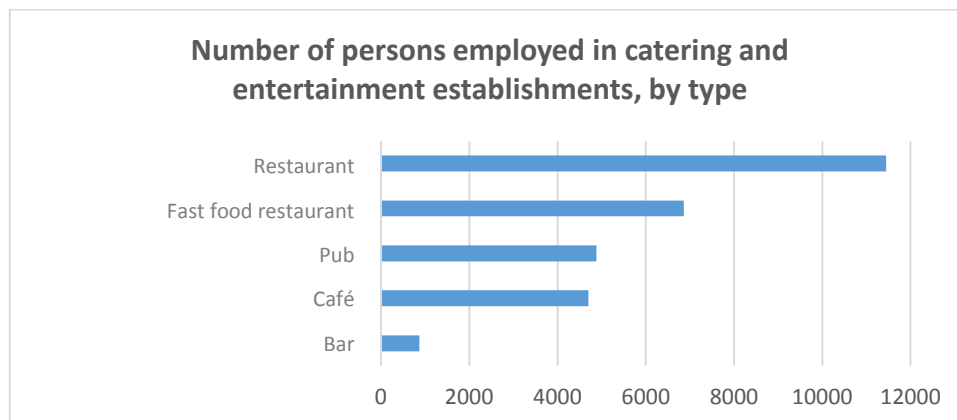
5	Mladost	2 375	8,0	2 320	8,1	55	6,0
6	Novi Iskar	168	0,6	163	0,6	5	0,5
7	Oborishte	2 166	7,3	2 106	7,3	60	6,6
8	Ovcha Kupel	749	2,5	717	2,5	32	3,5
9	Ilinden	563	1,9	563	2,0	0	0,0
10	Iskar	867	2,9	861	3,0	6	0,7
11	Krasna Polyana	308	1,0	308	1,1	0	0,0
12	Lozenets	1 596	5,4	1 581	5,5	15	1,6
13	Nadezhda	683	2,3	678	2,4	5	0,5
14	Sredets	3 997	13,5	3 928	13,7	69	7,6
15	Poduyane	731	2,5	717	2,5	14	1,5
16	Studentski	1 995	6,7	1 965	6,8	30	3,3
17	Bankya	290	1,0	216	0,8	74	8,1
18	Izgrev	761	2,6	751	2,6	10	1,1
19	Kremikovtsi	319	1,1	299	1,0	20	2,2
20	Vrabnitsa	312	1,1	303	1,1	9	1,0
21	Vitosha	1 851	6,2	1 728	6,0	123	13,5
22	Pancharevo	650	2,2	604	2,1	46	5,1
23	Slatina	1 253	4,2	1 194	4,2	59	6,5
24	Vazrazhdane	1 652	5,6	1 579	5,5	73	8,0
TOTAL		29 657	100	28 747	100	910	100

Source: Sofia Tourism Administration – based on figures indicated in inquiries of professional and language qualifications of persons employed at accommodation and catering and entertainment establishments.

The number of persons employed in accommodation establishments is 910 of which the largest share belongs to the districts of Vitosha (14%), Triaditsa (11%), and Bankya (8%).

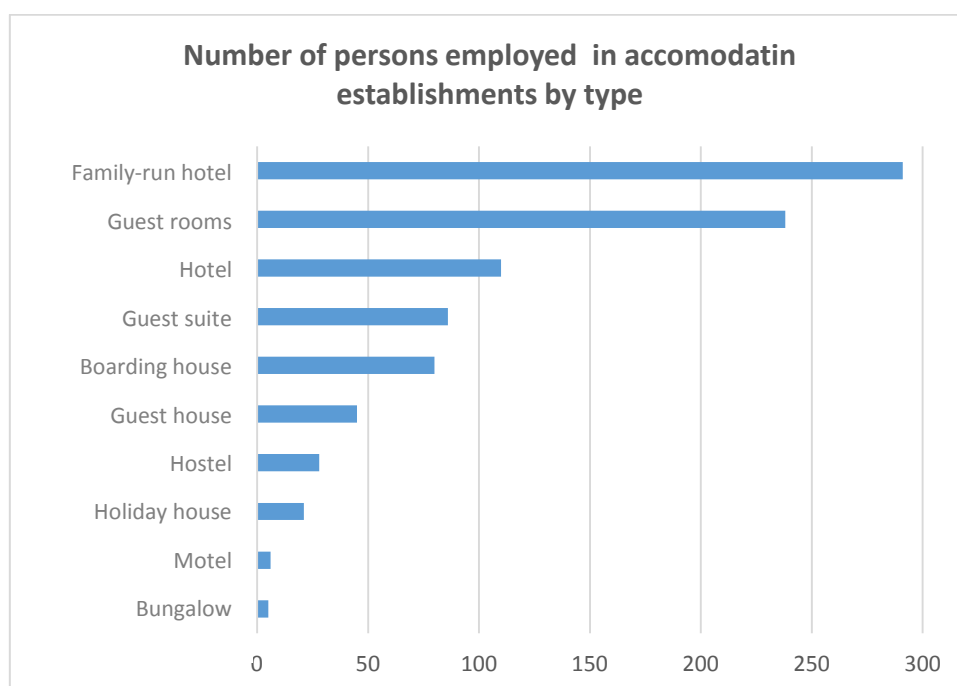
The number of persons employed in catering and entertainment establishments is 28 747 while the greatest number of employees is in the districts of Sredets and Triaditsa – 14% and 11% respectively.

NUMBER OF PERSONS EMPLOYED IN THE CATERING AND ENTERTAINMENT ESTABLISHMENTS ON THE TERRITORY OF SOFIA IN 2016, BY TYPE



Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

NUMBER OF PERSONS EMPLOYED IN THE CATERING AND ENTERTAINMENT ESTABLISHMENTS ON THE TERRITORY OF SOFIA IN 2016, BY TYPE



Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

The transport system of the capital is well developed and is an important part of the national transport system. All types of transport (except water transport) are present in Sofia.

Air Transport

Sofia Airport is the biggest international airport in the country, serving almost 5 million passengers annually.

Sofia Airport sent off 2016 with a record number of passengers - 4,980,387 - 22% more than the previous year. If 2016 was one day longer, the number of passengers would have reached 5 million

In 2016, the total number of arriving passengers (Bulgarians and foreigners) at Sofia Airport amounted to 2 455 787 people - 22,7% more than the previous year.

Arriving passengers at Sofia Airport, by segments

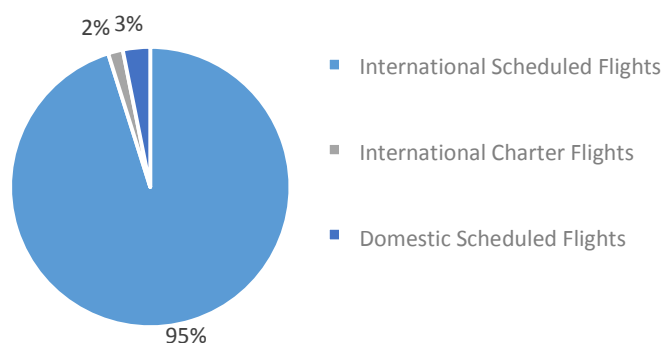
	2015			2016			Variation 2015/2016 (in %)		
	International Scheduled Flights	International Charter Flights	Domestic Scheduled Flights	International Scheduled Flights	International Charter Flights	Domestic Scheduled Flights	International Scheduled Flights	International Charter Flights	Domestic Scheduled Flights
January	116 952	12 980	4 522	135 658	8 222	4 508	16,0	-36,7	-0,3
February	120 771	7 595	4 219	143 490	6 084	3 843	18,8	-19,9	-8,9
March	143 922	1 872	4 254	160 503	2 832	4 367	11,5	51,3	2,7
April	149 930	2 358	4 673	173 785	346	4 823	15,9	-85,3	3,2
May	165 203	4 199	5 297	196 293	4 080	4 897	18,8	-2,8	-7,6
June	173 270	5 401	7 711	201 200	4 069	7 110	16,1	-24,7	-7,8
July	196 181	1 766	10 003	234 563	2 292	9 817	19,6	29,8	-1,9
August	179 212	2 034	12 831	202 391	674	12 688	12,9	-66,9	-1,1
September	168 650	6 914	8 730	217 819	5 300	8 633	29,2	-23,3	-1,1
October	163 902	2 704	5 940	223 275	3 177	6 363	36,2	17,5	7,1
November	135 656	393	4 791	202 975	620	5 001	49,6	57,8	4,4
December	160 151	2 730	4 296	244 458	4 192	5 439	52,6	53,6	26,6
Total number of passengers	1 873 800	50 946	77 267	2 336 410	41 888	77 489	24,7	-17,8	0,3

Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

The increase of passengers on international scheduled flights was the most significant one with an increase of 24% while the number of passengers on international charter flights dropped by 17,8% compared to 2015. There are no variations regarding domestic flights.

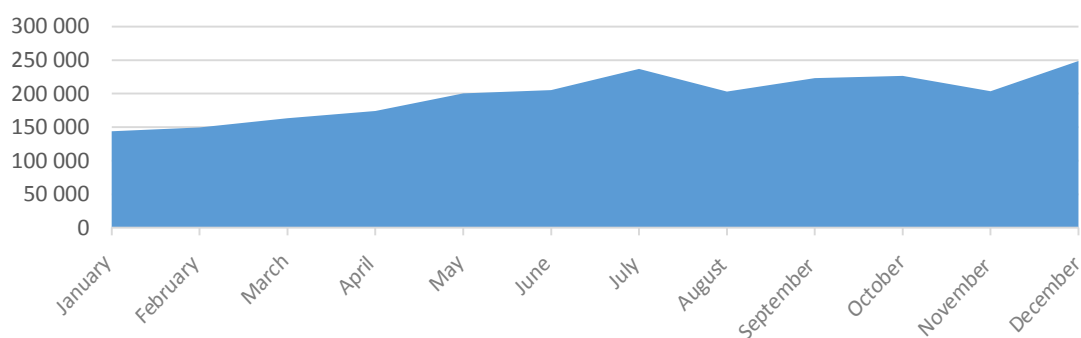
Out of 2 455 787 passengers that arrived at Sofia Airport in 2016 2 336 410 or 95% were on international flights and barely 3% - on domestic flights.

Arriving passengeres at Sofia Airport in 2016, by segmenst



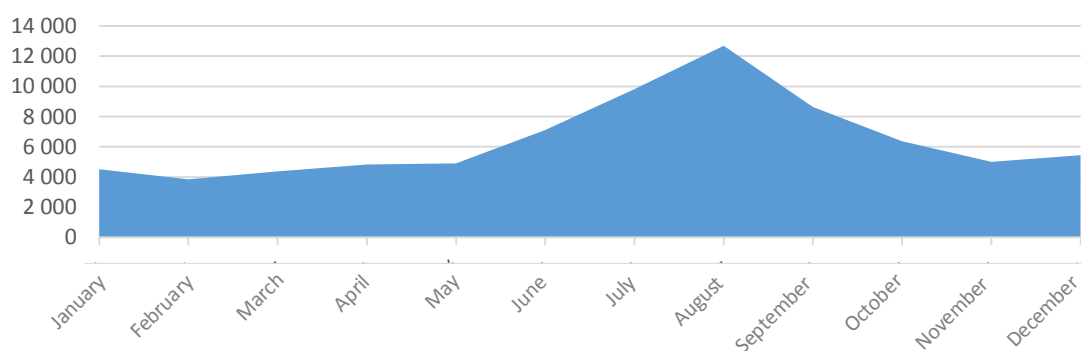
Source: Sofia Airport

Number of arriving passengers on International Flights at Sofia Airport in 2016, by months



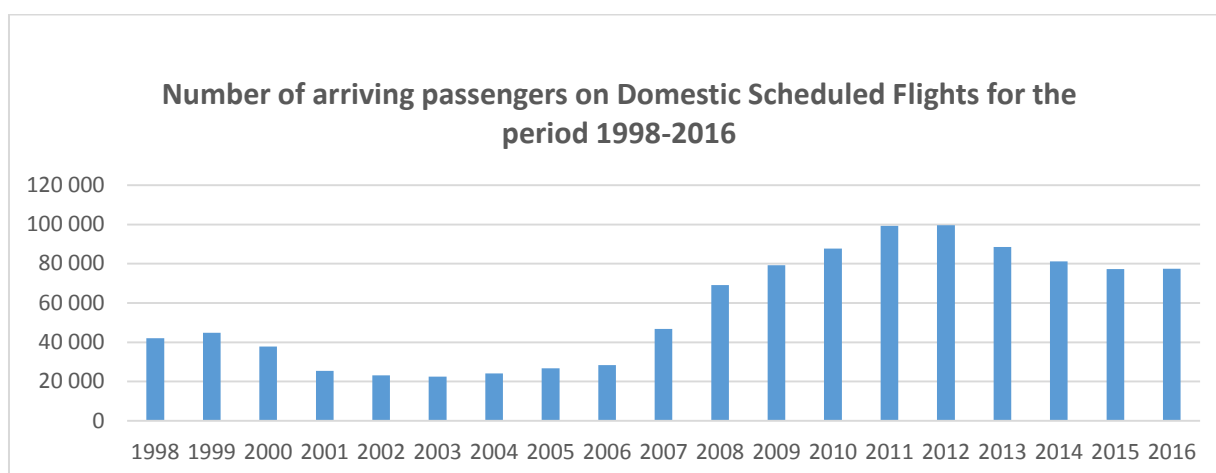
Source: Sofia Airport

Number of arriving passengers on Domestic Scheduled Flights at Sofia Airport in 2016, by months



Source: Sofia Airport

Monthly fluctuations in the number of passengers on international flights are not strongly pronounced. December and July stand out with more arriving passengers. The number of passengers on domestic flights significantly increased in the summer, with a pronounced peak in August.



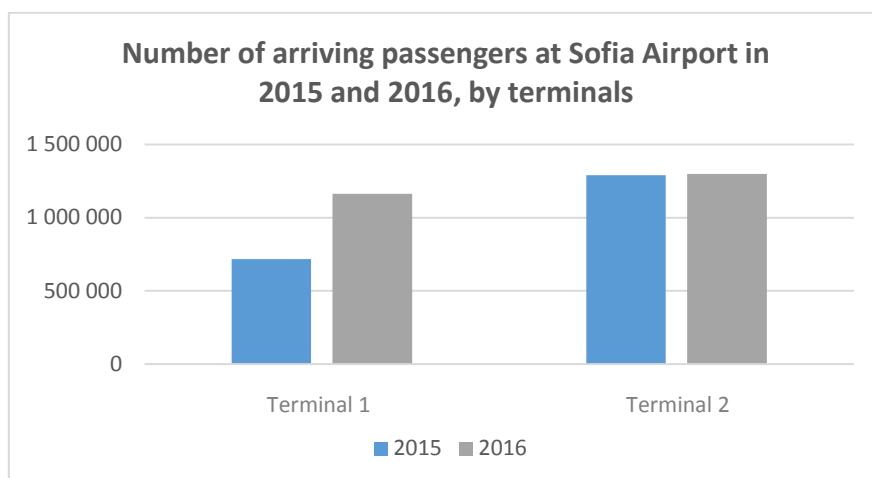
Source: Sofia Airport



Source: Sofia Airport

The total number of arriving passengers on international flights has been steadily increasing since 2002, with the exception of 2012 when there was a slight decrease of 2.5%. In 2016 significant growth was registered - 24.7% more compared to the previous year. This was accomplished mainly through the launching of 23 new routes in the past year.

Passengers passed through terminals T1 and T2 in 2015 and 2016



Source: Sofia Airport

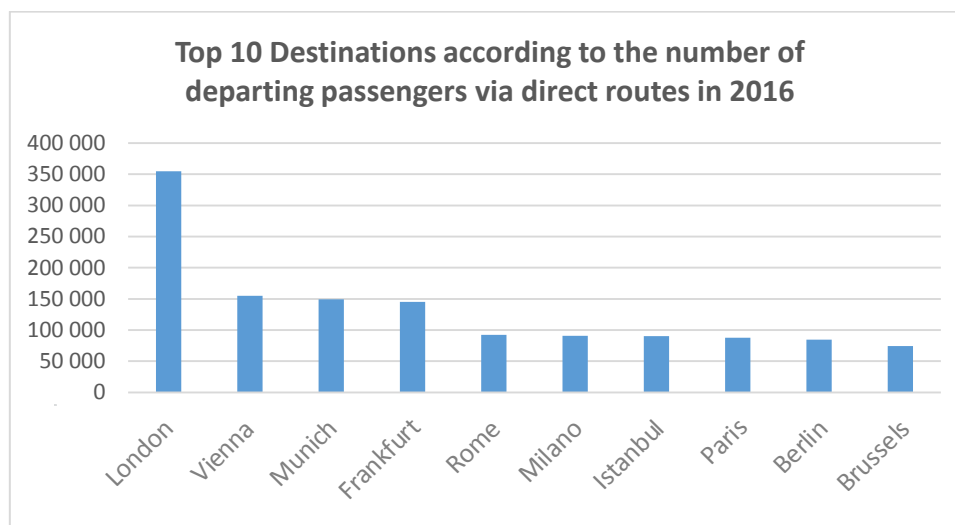
In 2016, more than 2.3 million passengers passed through Terminal 1 and over 2.6 million – through Terminal 2.

The direct flights favor the development of tourism in the capital. Destinations with convenient transport links from and to the Bulgarian capital determine to a great extent the important tourist markets for the city – Germany, Great Britain, Austria, France, Italy, Spain (air transport) and the Balkan countries such as Serbia, Macedonia, Romania, Greece (by road) .

In 2016 the regular scheduled flights were operated by 24 airline companies on more than 70 routes. The leading five companies - WizzAir, Bulgaria Air, Ryanair, Lufthansa and Austrian Airlines, transported more than 3,5 million passengers from and to Sofia which makes 71% of the annual passenger traffic. The most popular destinations in 2016 were London, Vienna, and Frankfurt.



Source: Sofia Airport



Source: Sofia Airport

Towards the end of 2016, the Dutch airline Transavia announced the launching of a seasonal flights Sofia-Amsterdam from May 10, 2017.

BUS TRANSPORT

Sofia Central Bus Station

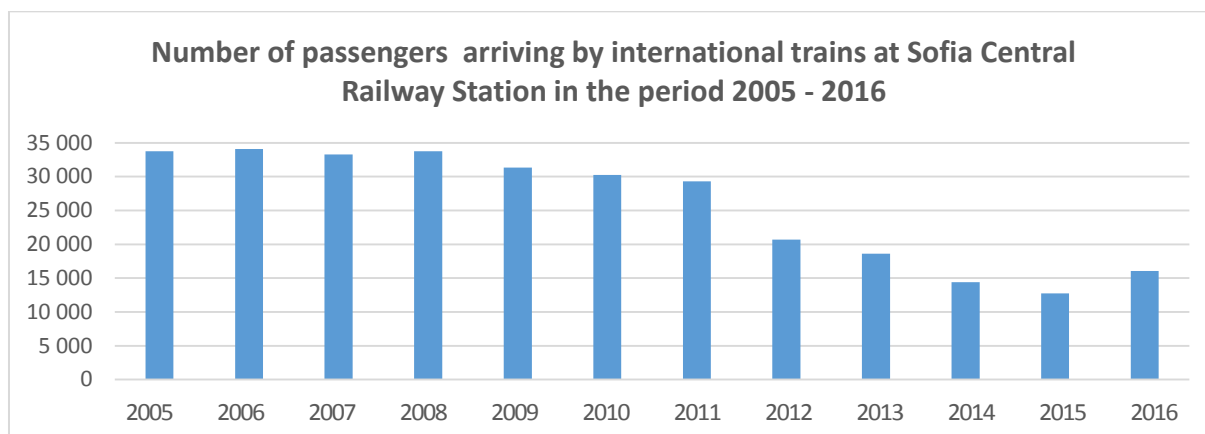
The Central Bus Station is a modern building with 7 173 square meters indoor area. The ground floor of the bus station is the busiest part of the entire building. On a daily basis there are around 2 250 passengers using the services of the Central Bus Station hourly. On the ground floor there is a waiting area with an area of 1500 square meters, as well as 40 ticket desks and a bank branch. Between 47 and 50 buses from 50 sectors set off from Sofia Central Bus Station towards different points in Bulgaria and abroad. In 2016 6035 international buses set off from the Central Bus Station. The companies operating on international routes are 11 and their destinations are Spain, Greece, Macedonia, Romania, Hungary, Germany, the Czech Republic, Austria, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, and Ukraine.

Next to Sofia Central Bus Station is Serdica bus station, which also operates both domestic and international routes.

RAIL TRANSPORT

In 2016 at Sofia Central Railway Station daily arrived 8 regular international trains from the following destination – Thessaloniki, Belgrade, Bucharest, Istanbul, Craiova, Budapest, Moscow / Minsk / Warsaw / Budapest.

The number of passengers that arrived by international trains in 2016 is 16,070 - about 26% more than in 2015. In total, 2 374 024 people arrived by domestic and international trains in 2016 - 2% less than in 2015.



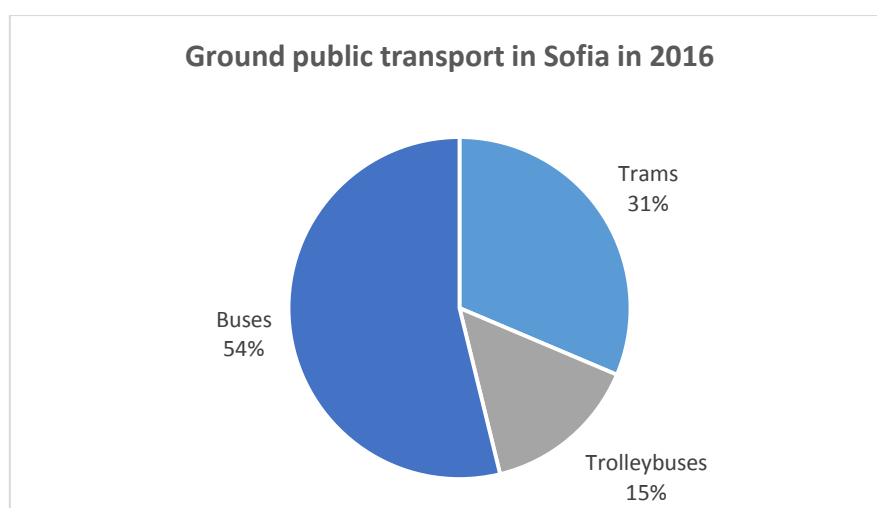
Source: BDZ - Passenger Services Ltd.

Since 2000, there has been a significant decline in the number of passengers preferring rail transport services at the expense of those using air transport. This is mainly due to the greater convenience of air travel and the much shorter travel time as well as the introduction of low cost airlines. However, in 2016 there was an increase in the number of passengers arriving at Sofia Central Railway Station by international trains by 26% compared to 2015.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

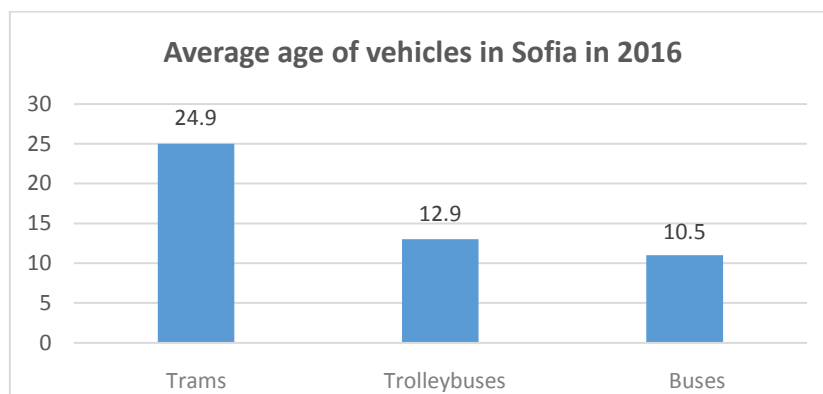
There is a public transport in all towns on the territory of Sofia Municipality. The public transport services on the territory of Sofia Municipality are realized by municipal and private operators and the control and coordination between them is carried out by Sofia Urban Mobility Center EAD. A network of tram, trolley and bus lines and a metro network operate on the territory of Sofia.

In 2016 there were 458 buses (340 - low-floor buses 236 of which were air-conditioned) operating in Sofia on 80 urban and suburban bus routes, 126 trolleybuses operating on 9 routes and 267 trams - on 14 routes.

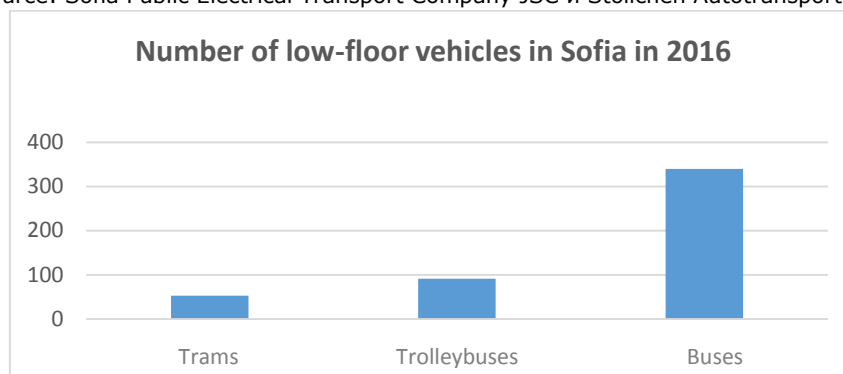


Source: Sofia Public Electrical Transport Company JSC и Столичен Автотранспорт ЕАД

In 2016 110 new diesel buses– wide, equipped with air conditioners, and seats and ramps for people in wheelchairs, were delivered. In 2017 a procedure for buying more new buses – both diesel and ones using natural gas, is expected to start.



Source: Sofia Public Electrical Transport Company JSC и Столичен Автотранспорт ЕАД



Source: Sofia Public Electrical Transport Company JSC and Столичен Автотранспорт ЕАД

The buses have the lowest average age – 10.5 years, followed by the trolleybuses – 12.9 years, and the trams have the highest average age – 24.9 years. The number of low-floor vehicles accessible for people with reduced mobility is increasing – 74% of all buses (340 buses), 72% of the trolleybuses (91 trolleybuses). According to these data, trams are the oldest and most inaccessible vehicles in our capital (only 20% of them have low floors).

In 2016 285 million passengers traveled by ground public transport, 165 millions of whom by buses, and 120 millions – by trolleybuses and trams.

In June 2016 some changes in the public transport billing system were introduced. The price of the tickets became now BGN 1.60, and the one of the coupons of 10 tickets – BGN 12. The price of the one-day, three-day, monthly, quarterly, six-month and annual public transport passes remains the same. In addition to paper passes, there are also electronic ones that are charged by non-contact validation devices in the vehicle.

Due to the fact that right now the non-contact validation devices are not implemented in all vehicles of the ground public transport ticket charging still works by manual perforation in ticket composters. In the autumn of 2016 a new travel pass was introduced – Sofia Card, following the example of many other European cities. This is an electronic pass for all public transport lines on the territory of Sofia Municipality for the duration of 3 days and also gives you a discount at tourist and commercial sites in Sofia.

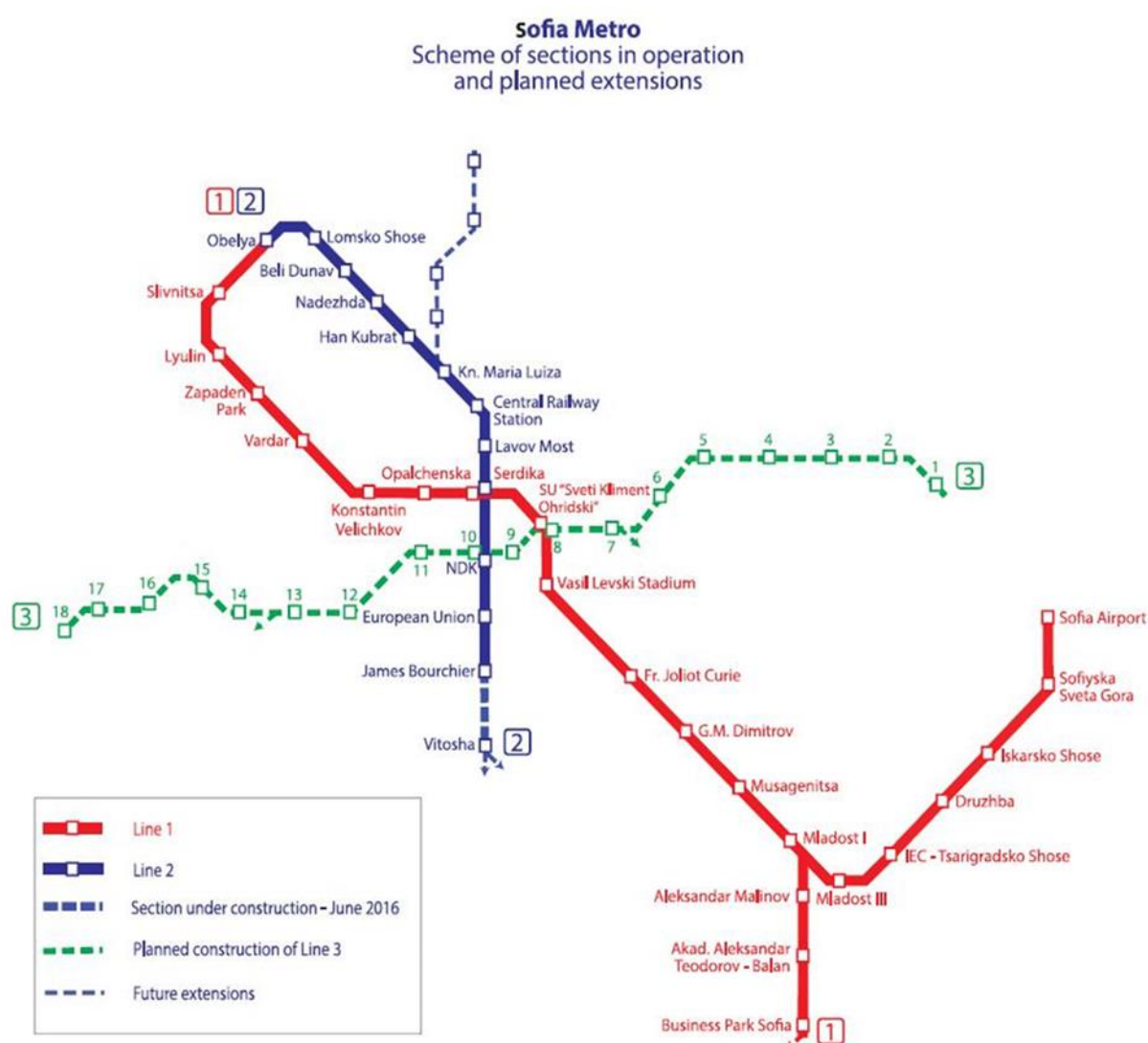
Sofia Metro also plays an important role in the transport efficiency in the capital. It accounts for around 340 000 weekday trips. In 2016 it serviced around 89 million transported passengers.

The time span between the trains varies depending on their destination and on the time of the day but on average they run every 6.5 minutes.

The ticket price for one trip has also risen to BGN 1.6 and electronic subscription passes can also be used – their price varies between BGN 4 and BGN 600.

In 2016 two metro lines operated with a total length of 40 km. In 2017 it will be worked on the implementation of two new projects:

- Extension of the metro in Sofia: Line 3 Stage I – the section Vladimir Vazov Blvd. - Central Urban Area - Jitnitsa Street with a length of 7.8 km and 8 metro stations
- Extension of the metro in Sofia: Line 3 Stage II – the section Jitnitsa Street – Ovcha Kupel – Ring Road with a length of 3.8 km and 4 metro stations



A lot of taxis and shuttles also operate on the territory of the city but there is no official statistics on them as they are run by various private companies.

Shuttles are mini-buses operating on pre-fixed routes. Before 2013 shuttles operated on 49 lines on the territory of Sofia with a total route length of 1070 km (source: marshrutki.com).

In 2014 the number of shuttle routes was drastically reduced from 49 to 17. The main reason for their reduction was the extension of the metro with new lines linking Mladost with Lyulin and Nadezhda with Lozenets. It also aimed to avoid the shuttles crossing through the ideal center of the city. The service is still preserved, but mainly in quarters with poorly-developed public transport.

A lot of tourists in Sofia use various taxi companies as the cabs operate 24 hours a day. They are the only possible transport in the capital after 11:30 pm. Taxi cars can be found at designated parking lots in the city or can be ordered by phone. The average price per kilometer is BGN 0.82 during the day and BGN 0.93 at night while the cost of the phone call is BGN 0.70. It costs around BGN 15 to go from the city center to the airport or vice versa.

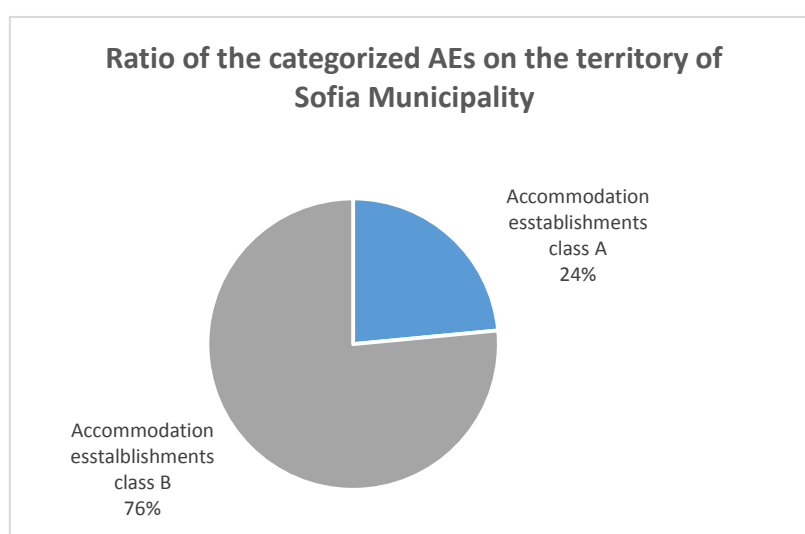
* the average price is calculated on the basis of the prices of 5 leading taxi companies operating on the territory of Sofia.

According to Sofia Tourism Administration, in 2016 485 accommodation establishments operated on the territory of Sofia. 114 of them were class A and 371 – class B. Compared to 2015, the total number of accommodation establishments rose by 4.8%.

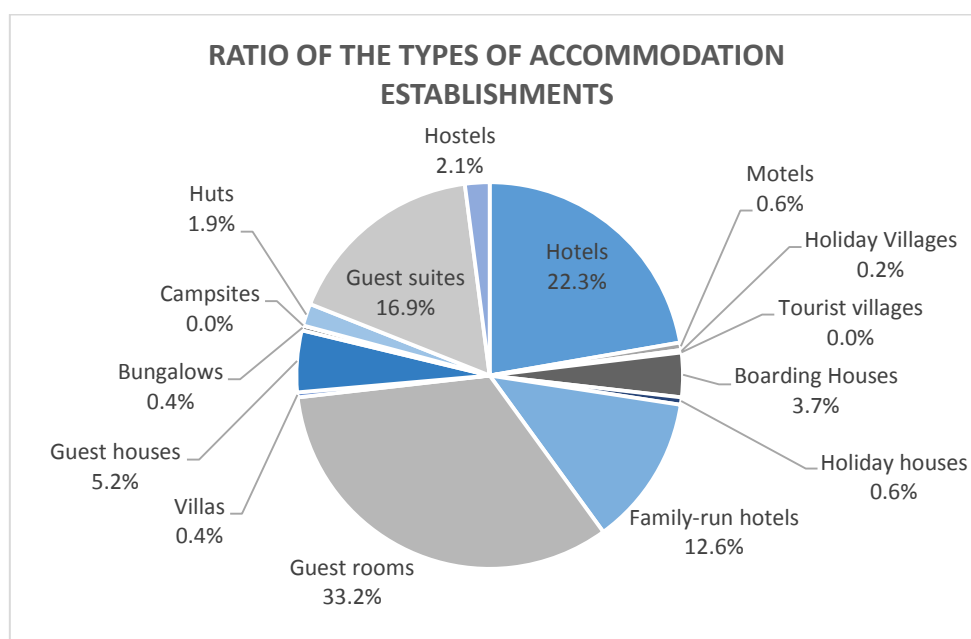
Categorized Accommodation Establishments on the territory of Sofia Municipality in 2016

Type of categorized accommodation establishments	Number of establishments	Technical capacity	
		Number of rooms	Number of beds
Accommodation establishments – class A	114	7 797	13 763
Hotels	108	7 681	13 535
Motels	3	72	143
Holiday Villages	1	20	40
Tourist villages	0	0	0
Villas	2	24	45
Accommodation establishments – class B	371	2 277	4 965
Boarding house	18	350	711
Holiday houses	3	58	116
Family-run hotels	61	767	1 493
Guest rooms	161	416	899
Guest houses	25	151	359
Bungalows	2	12	35
Campsites	0	0	0
Huts	9	106	361
Guest suites	82	259	638
Hostels	10	158	353
	485	10 074	18 728

Source: Sofia Tourism Administration



Source: Sofia Tourism Administration



Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

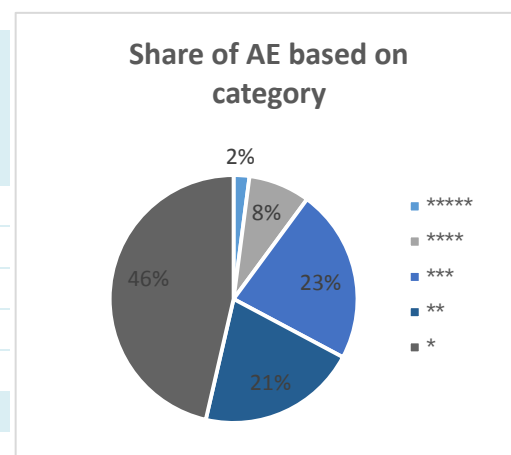
The distribution of the different types of accommodation establishments is traditionally characterized by a significant predominance of guest rooms, hotels and guest suites. Guest rooms represent 33% of all accommodation establishments, but they have only 5% of the bed places, while hotels represent 22% of all accommodation establishments but have 72% of the total number of beds in accommodation establishments.

Distribution of accommodation establishments by category for the period 2014-2016

In 2016 the total number of accommodation establishments rose by 4.8% compared to 2015. An increase was recorded for two-, three- and five-star AEs, while the number of one- and four-star AEs remained the same. The distribution of AEs by category remained similar to the ones in past years. Once again, one-star establishments (46%), followed by three-star ones (23%) represented the biggest share of AEs.

Category	Number of establishments			Share of establishments 2016 (%)	Variation 2015/2016 (%)
	2014	2015	2016		
*****	9	9	10	2	11,1
****	39	39	39	8	0
***	87	101	110	23	8,9
**	109	89	101	21	13,5
*	225	225	225	46	0
Total	469	463	485	100	4,8

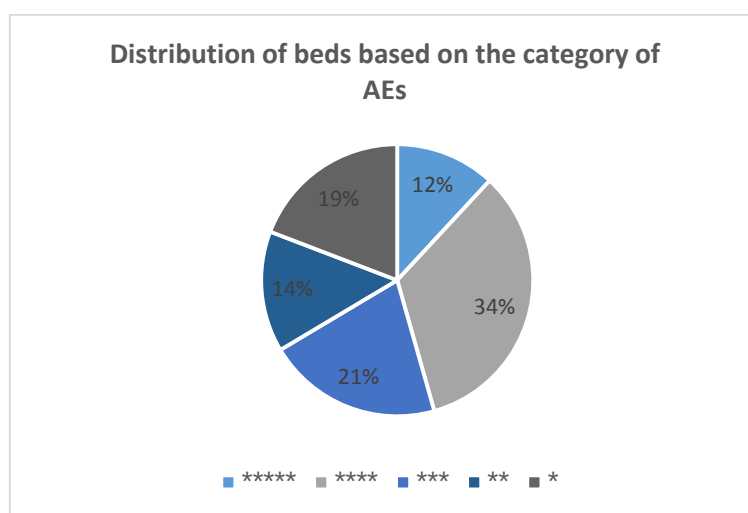
Source: Sofia Tourism Administration



Technical Capacity of Accommodation Establishments on the territory of Sofia Municipality for the period 2014-2016, by category

Category	2014		2015		2016		Variation in the number of rooms 2015/2016	Variation in the number of beds 2015/2016
	Number of rooms	Number of beds	Number of rooms	Number of beds	Number of rooms	Number of beds		
*****	1 462	2 416	1 462	2 416	1 354	2 230	-7,4	-7,7
****	4 062	7 238	3 583	6 354	3 364	6 310	-6,1	-0,7
***	2 415	4 044	2 350	3 972	2 160	3 904	-8,1	-1,7
**	1 342	2 492	1 192	2 246	1 463	2 691	22,7	19,8
*	1 707	3 417	1 722	3 425	1 733	3 593	0,6	4,9
Total	10 988	19 607	10 309	18 413	10 074	18 728	-2,3	1,7

Source: Sofia Tourism Administration



Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

In 2016 the accommodation establishments on the territory of Sofia have 10 074 rooms and 18 728 beds. There is a slight decrease in the number of rooms – by 2.3%, while the number of beds rose by 1.7% compared to 2015. There is a rise in the number of beds in one- and two-star establishments – by 5% and 20% respectively, and a decrease in three-, four- and five-star establishments.

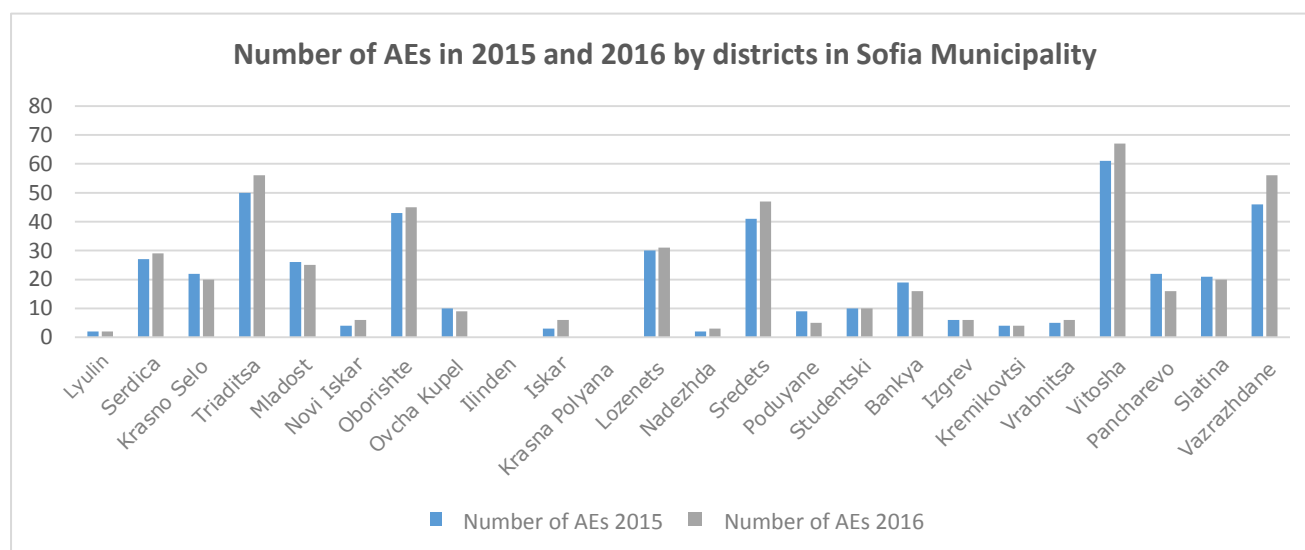
It is important to point out that the four- and five-star accommodation establishments represent barely 10% of all AEs on the territory of Sofia but they also have almost half (46%) of the total number of beds in the capital.

Based on their location, there is an obvious concentration of AEs in the central part of the city as well as in the southern peripheral districts. In 2016 there are slight changes in the distribution of beds by districts.

Districts	Lyulin	Serdica	Krasno Selo	Triaditsa	Mladost	Novi Iskar	Oborishte	Ovcha Kupel	Ilinden	Iskar	Krasna Polyana	Lozenets	Nadezhda	Sredets	Poduyane	Studentski	Bankya	Izgrev	Kremikovtsi	Vrabnitsa	Vitosha	Pancharevo	Slatina	Vazrazhdane	Total
Number of establishments 2015	2	27	22	50	26	4	43	10	0	3	0	30	2	41	9	10	19	6	4	5	61	22	21	46	463
Number of establishments 2016	2	29	20	56	25	6	45	9	0	6	0	31	3	47	5	10	16	6	4	6	67	16	20	56	485
Variation 2015/ 2016	0	2	-2	6	-1	2	2	-1	0	3	0	1	1	6	-4	0	-3	0	0	1	6	-6	-1	10	22

Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

In 2016 the total number of accommodation establishments in Sofia increased by 22 establishments. There are new establishments in 11 of the 24 districts of Sofia Municipality while Vazrazhdane has the highest number by having 10 new establishments. There is a decrease in the number of establishments in 7 districts and the highest number of closed establishments is in Pancharevo. Krasna Polyana and Ilinden remain with uncategorized AEs.



Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

Share of beds and rooms on the territory of Sofia Municipality by districts in 2016

District	Number of establishments	Share of establishments (%)	Number of rooms	Share of rooms (%)	Number of beds	Share of beds (%)
Lyulin	2	0,4	31	0,3	69	0,4
Serdica	29	6,0	944	9,4	1 860	9,9
Krasno Selo	20	4,1	803	8,0	1 567	8,4
Triaditsa	56	11,5	779	7,7	1 501	8,0
Mladost	25	5,2	600	6,0	990	5,3
Novi Iskar	6	1,2	25	0,2	61	0,3
Oborishte	45	9,3	498	4,9	1 057	5,6
Ovcha Kupel	9	1,9	312	3,1	412	2,2
Ilinden	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0
Iskar	6	1,2	135	1,3	247	1,3
Krasna Polyana	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0
Lozenets	31	6,4	1 147	11,4	1 901	10,2
Nadezhda	3	0,6	13	0,1	28	0,1
Sredets	47	9,7	955	9,5	1 533	8,2
Poduyane	5	1,0	29	0,3	51	0,3
Studentski	10	2,1	390	3,9	779	4,2
Bankya	16	3,3	239	2,4	469	2,5
Izgrev	6	1,2	291	2,9	517	2,8
Kremikovtsi	4	0,8	125	1,2	252	1,3
Vrabnitsa	6	1,2	162	1,6	297	1,6
Vitosha	67	13,8	1 213	12,0	2 574	13,7
Pancharevo	16	3,3	185	1,8	306	1,6
Slatina	20	4,1	550	5,5	1 017	5,4
Vazrazhdane	56	11,5	648	6,4	1 240	6,6
Total	485	100	10 074	100	18 728	100

Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

In 2016 Vitosha (14%), Vazrajthane,(12%), and Triaditsa (12%) have the biggest share of accommodation establishments on the territory of Sofia Municipality. Vitosha (13.7%), Lozenets (10.2%), and Serdica (9.9%) have the biggest capacity of beds

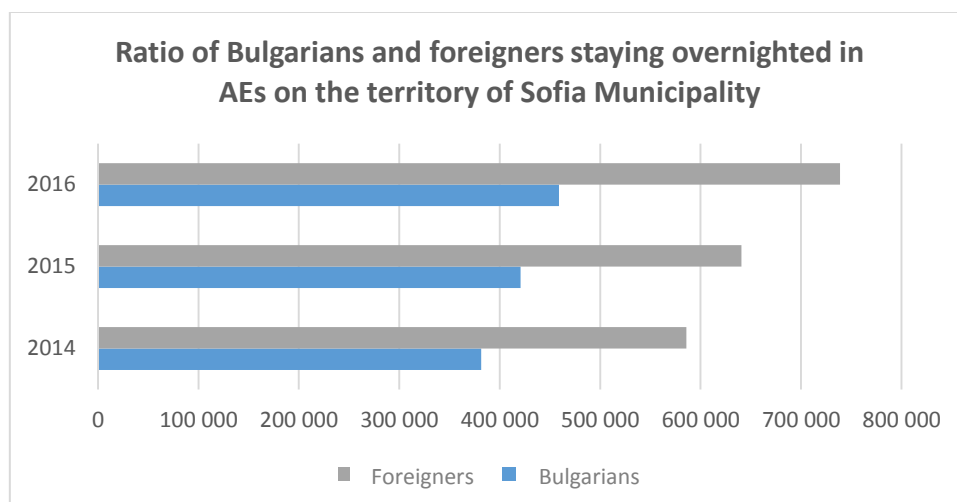
KEY ACCOMMODATION DEMAND INDICATORS

The total number of people that stayed overnight in accommodation establishments on the territory of Sofia Municipality in 2016 is 197 564 - 136 042 persons more (12.8%) compared to 2015.

There is an increase of 15.3% among foreigners and 9% among Bulgarians.

Number of people staying overnight in Sofia Municipality accommodation facilities								
2014			2015			2016		
Bulgarians	Foreigners	Total	Bulgarians	Foreigners	Total	Bulgarians	Foreigners	Total
381 662	585 737	967 399	420 901	640 621	1 061 522	458 867	738 697	1 197 564

Source: Sofia Tourism Administration



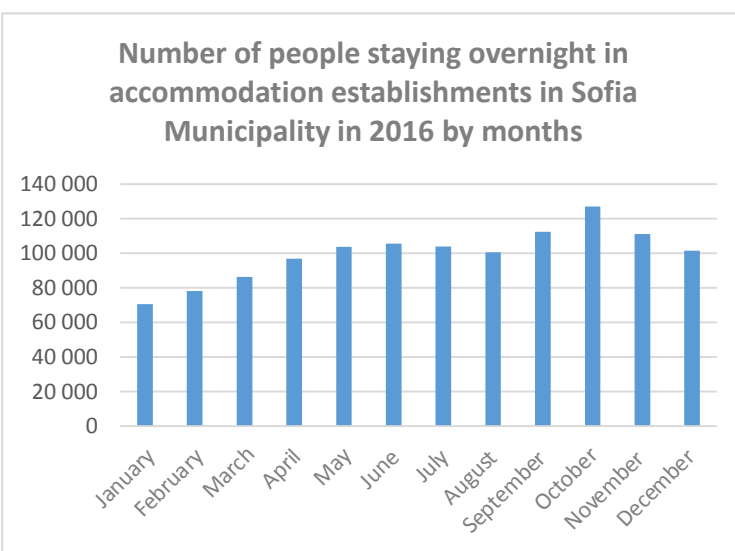
Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

There is a slight variation in the Bulgarians:foreigners ratio in 2016 - 62% of the overnight guests are foreigners while in 2014 and 2015 they were 60%.

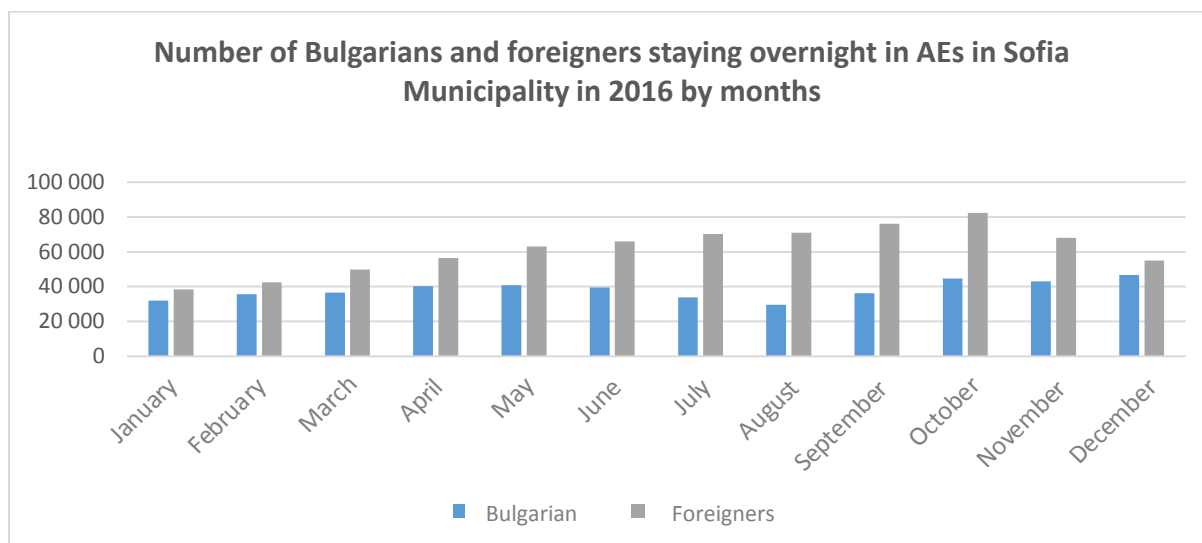
Number of people staying overnight by month 2015

Month	Bulgarians	Foreigners	Total
January	32 059	38 470	70 529
February	35 662	42 461	78 123
March	36 607	49 740	86 347
April	40 327	56 502	96 829
May	40 768	63 021	103 789
June	39 549	65 961	105 510
July	33 819	70 155	103 974
August	29 543	70 970	100 513
September	36 251	76 142	112 393
October	44 605	82 366	126 971
November	43 050	68 010	111 060
December	46 627	54 899	101 526
Total	458 867	738 697	1 197 564

Source: Sofia Tourism Administration



The number of people staying overnight is higher in October and lower in January.



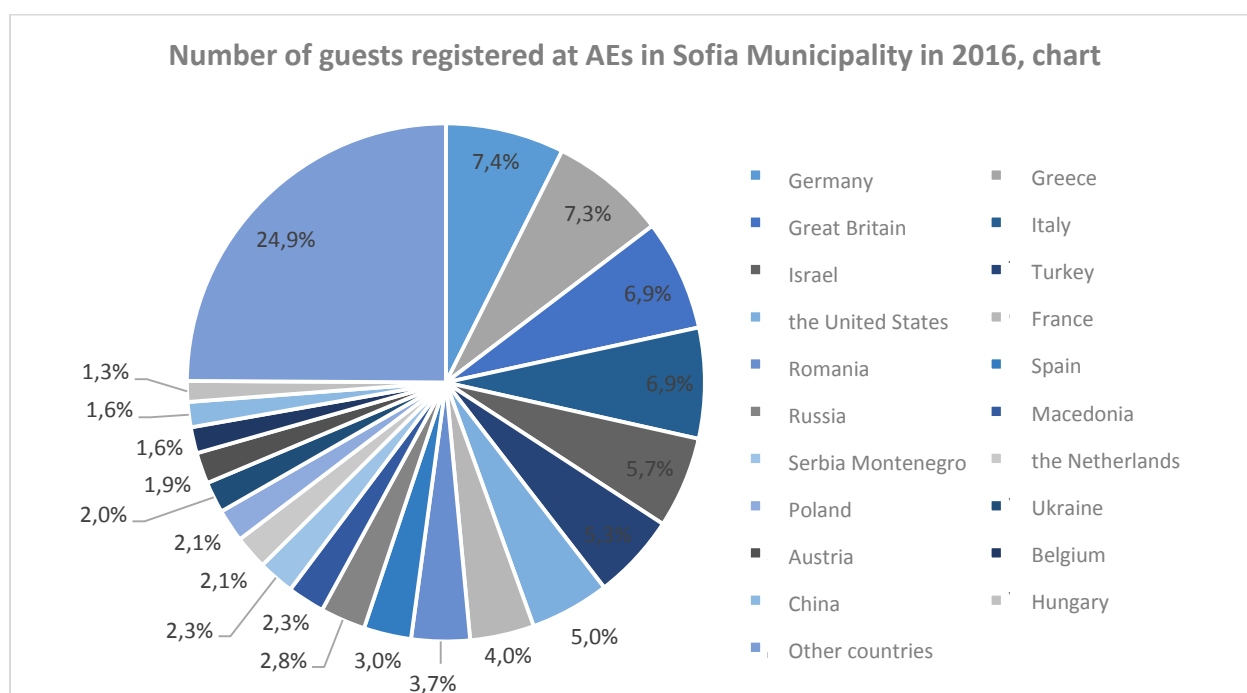
Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

CLASSIFICATION ACCORDING TO THE NUMBER OF REGISTERED FOREIGN GUESTS

Nationality	2015	2016	Share (%)	Variation 2015/2016 (%)
Germany	50 188	54 705	7,4	9,00
Greece	44 346	53 649	7,3	20,98
Great Britain	41 224	51 144	6,9	24,06
Italy	40 484	50 995	6,9	25,96
Israel	32 220	42 130	5,7	30,76
Turkey	33 364	39 426	5,3	18,17
the United States	36 460	36 652	5,0	0,53
France	26 384	29 569	4,0	12,07
Romania	25 034	26 996	3,7	7,84
Spain	14 875	21 906	3,0	47,27
Russia	18 673	20 791	2,8	11,34
Macedonia	13 922	17 173	2,3	23,35
Serbia	13 836	16 819	2,3	21,56
the Netherlands	13 433	15 584	2,1	16,01
Poland	12 816	15 191	2,1	18,53
Ukraine	11 652	14 406	2,0	23,64
Austria	14 555	14 351	1,9	-1,40
Belgium	10 529	12 040	1,6	14,35
China	9 614	11 602	1,6	20,68
Hungary	10 286	9 587	1,3	-6,80
Other countries	166 726	183 981	24,9	10,35
Total	640 621	738 697	100,0	15,31

Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

Number of guests registered at AEs in Sofia Municipality in 2016, chart



Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

Most of the overnight guests are from EU member countries. In 2016 the highest number is the one of German tourists, followed by the number of Greek, British, and Italian tourists – their total relative share is almost 29% of all foreign visitors in Sofia. Germany is a market of great importance for Bulgaria as well. German tourists rank first in the number of overnight stays in Bulgaria, followed by the Romanian and Russian tourists. However, in regards to Sofia, Romania ranked 9th and Russian – 11th, with barely 2.8% of all overnight stays.

Compared to 2015, in 2016 there is rise in the number of visitors from all leading markets which is most clear in the increased number of guests from Spain (46.4%), and Israel (by 30.6%). There is a decrease in the number of visitors from Japan (by 28.7%), and Hungary (by 7%).

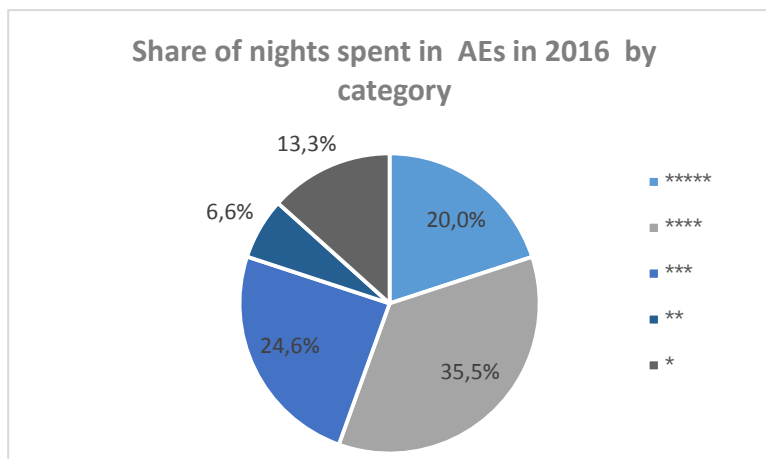
NUMBER OF OVERNIGHT STAYS BY CATEGORY OF ACCOMMODATION ESTABLISHMENTS ON THE TERRITORY SOFIA MUNICIPALITY

category	2015			2016			variation 2015/2016 (in %)		
	Bulgarians	foreigners	total	Bulgarians	foreigners	total	Bulgarians	foreigners	total
*****	39 314	365 067	404 381	48 014	376 774	424 788	22,1	3,2	5,0
****	204 076	481 469	685 545	215 360	539 962	755 322	5,5	12,1	10,2
***	192 523	230 407	422 930	227 799	294 305	522 104	18,3	27,7	23,4
**	109 755	32 643	142 398	102 539	37 893	140 432	-6,6	16,1	-1,4
*	145 694	72 030	217 724	173 312	110 504	283 816	19,0	53,4	30,4
total	691 362	1 181 616	1 872 978	767 024	1 359 438	2 126 462	10,9	15,0	13,5

Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

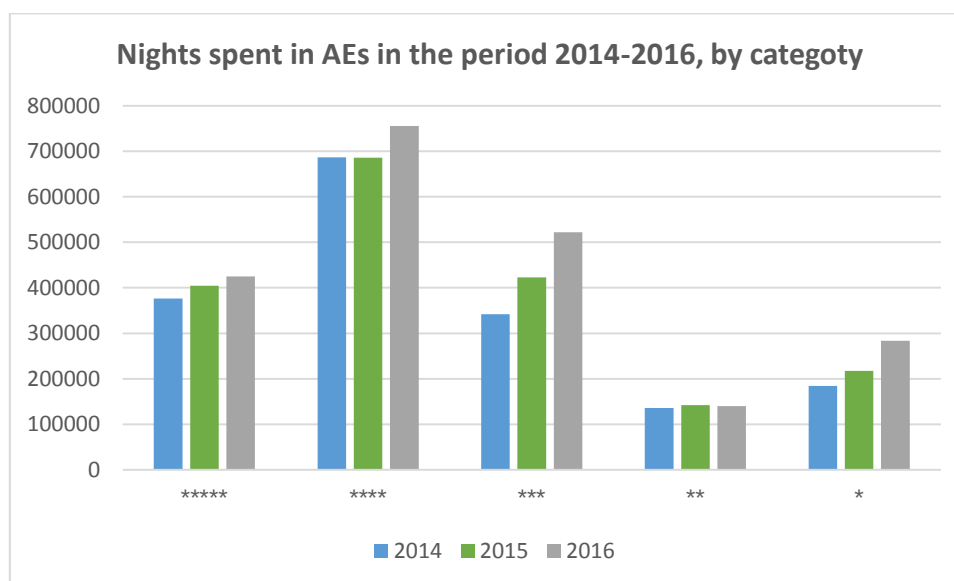
Compared to 2015, in 2016 there was an increase of 13.5% in the total number of nights spent in accommodation establishments in Sofia Municipality.

The highest number of overnight stays is reported in four-star accommodation establishments (36%), followed by three- and five-star ones - 25% and 20% respectively of the total number of overnight stays. The lowest number of overnight stays are reported in two-star AEs - 7%.



Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

There is an increase in the number of overnight stays in all categories of accommodation establishments with the exception of two-star ones which report a decrease of 1.4%. Significant increase is reported in one-star establishments (30%), followed by free-star AEs (23%).



Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

Number of nights spent in 2016 by category and months							
Category	January	February	March	April	May	June	July
*****	16 750	18 310	19 377	20 682	20 567	22 780	25 315
****	7 305	10 206	9 905	11 059	11 644	10 538	17 050
***	28 281	32 432	35 113	42 529	44 038	45 558	46 148
**	43 434	47 605	55 395	63 079	66 447	67 609	64 422
*	26 123	27 958	31 529	35 300	35 664	37 185	36 358
Total	121 893	136 511	151 319	172 649	178 360	183 670	189 293

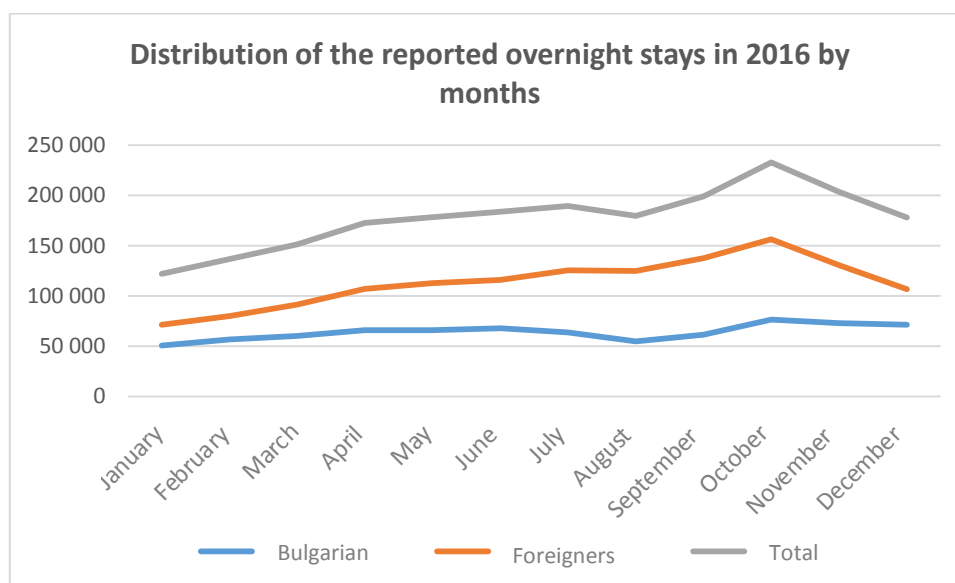
Category	August	September	October	November	December	Total
*****	23 449	30 583	29 433	34 088	22 482	283 816
****	10 922	10 200	16 735	12 927	11 941	140 432
***	45 135	50 025	55 363	51 587	45 895	522 104
**	64 526	67 656	84 113	68 675	62 361	755 322
*	35 536	40 439	47 087	36 266	35 343	424 788
Total	179 568	198 903	232 731	203 543	178 022	2 126 462

Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

Number of overnight stays in 2016 by months			
month	Bulgarians	foreigners	total
January	50 694	71 199	121 893
February	56 518	79 993	136 511
March	60 015	91 304	151 319
April	65 750	106 899	172 649
May	65 755	112 605	178 360
June	67 844	115 826	183 670
July	63 745	125 548	189 293
August	54 659	124 909	179 568
September	61 280	137 623	198 903
October	76 495	156 236	232 731
November	72 870	130 673	203 543
December	71 399	106 623	178 022
Total	767 024	1 359 438	2 126 462

Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

Clear seasonality in the total number of overnight stays is not observed, but this is typical for an urban destination. October was the busiest month in terms of overnight stays of foreigners.



Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

Types of Accommodation Establishments	Overnight Stays in 2016		
	Bulgarians	foreigners	total
Hotels	565 387	1 196 114	1 761 501
Motels	4 086	1 902	5 988
Holiday villages	1 930	1 047	2 977
Villas	986	1 779	2 765
Family-run hotels	70 528	46 644	117 172
Guest rooms	31 433	35 317	66 750
Hostels	17 334	6 515	23 849
Holiday houses	10 849	0	10 849
Huts	801	0	801
Guest houses	16 400	16 885	33 285
Bungalows	68	0	68
Guest suites	11 678	30 280	41 958
Boarding houses	35 544	22 955	58 499
Total	767 024	1 359 438	2 126 462

Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

The distribution of overnight stays according to the type of establishment remains stable through the last few years and in 2016 shows a significant predominance of nights spent in hotels - 761 501 or 83% of the total number of overnight stays in Sofia City.

The share of nights spent by foreigners in hotels in Sofia is significantly bigger than the one of nights spent by Bulgarians - 68% and 32% respectively.

EXPECTED TOURIST TAX REVENUE FOR 2016

On December 22, 2011 with decision № 65 of Sofia Municipal Council was determined the amount of tax due for each overnight stay according to the category of the accommodation establishment. In 2016 the amount of the tax remains unchanged:

Category	Tax due for 1 night	Overnight stays	Expected revenue from tourism tax
*****	1,2	424 788	BGN 509 746
****	1	755 322	BGN 755 322
***	0,8	522 104	BGN 417 683
**	0,6	140 432	BGN 84 259
*	0,4	283 816	BGN 113 526
Total		2 126 462	BGN 1 880 536

Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

The expected tourism tax revenue is determined by the number of reported overnight stays dependent on the differentiated tax rate for the given category. In 2016 an increase of 11.8% of the revenue from tourism tax is expected.

MAIN INDICATORS OF TOURISM IN SOFIA – ABSOLUTE VALUES FOR 2016

Category	Technical capacity			Overnight stays			Number of persons		
	Establishments	Rooms	Beds	Bulgarians	Foreigners	Total	Bulgarians	Foreigners	Total
*****	10	1 354	2 230	48 014	376 774	424 788	29 317	234 319	263 636
****	39	3 364	6 310	215 360	539 962	755 322	136 378	278 737	415 115
***	110	2 160	3 904	227 799	294 305	522 104	149 673	151 011	300 684
**	101	1 463	2 691	102 539	37 893	140 432	50 641	18 140	68 781
*	225	1 733	3 593	173 312	110 504	283 816	92 858	56 490	149 348
TOTAL:	485	10 074	18 728	767 024	1 359 438	2 126 462	458 867	738 697	1 197 564

Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

MAIN INDICATORS OF TOURISM IN SOFIA – RELATIVE VALUES FOR 2016 (in %)

Category	Technical capacity			Overnight stays			Number of persons		
	Establishments	Rooms	Beds	Bulgarians	Foreigners	Total	Bulgarians	Foreigners	Total
*****	2	13	12	6	28	20	6	32	22
****	8	33	34	28	40	35	30	38	35
***	23	22	21	30	21	25	33	20	25
**	21	15	13	13	3	7	11	2	6
*	46	17	19	23	8	13	20	8	12
Total:	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

Ratio of the number nights spent by Bulgarians and foreigners in accommodation establishments for the period 2014-2016

Number of Overnight stays in accommodation establishments in Sofia Municipality								
2014			2015			2016		
Bulgarians	Foreigners	Total	Bulgarians	Foreigners	Total	Bulgarians	Foreigners	Total
630 340	1 096 039	1 726 379	691 362	1 181 616	1 872 978	767 024	1 359 438	2 126 462

Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

The ratio of the number of nights spent by Bulgarians and foreigners remains unchanged in the last few years - 36% to 64% respectively.

In 2016 the total number of overnight stays increased by 13.5% compared to 2015 - the nights spent by Bulgarians increased by 10.9% and the nights spent by foreigners – by 15%.

Nationality	2015	2016	Relative share (in %)	Variation 2015/2016 (in %)
Italy	78 681	104 886	7,7	33,3
Great Britain	76 792	96 033	7,1	25,1
Germany	87 003	92 788	6,8	6,6
Israel	68 791	92 063	6,8	33,8
Greece	76 381	91 182	6,7	19,4
the United States	73 388	71 665	5,3	-2,3
Turkey	49 632	58 157	4,3	17,2
France	49 022	52 599	3,9	7,3
Romania	44 017	46 616	3,4	5,9
Spain	28 833	43 281	3,2	50,1
Russia	39 281	38 810	2,9	-1,2
The Netherlands	24 319	29 511	2,2	21,3
Poland	24 106	29 113	2,1	20,8
Serbia	22 748	28 985	2,1	27,4
Macedonia	22 493	27 653	2,0	22,9
Ukraine	21 185	25 141	1,8	18,7
Belgium	18 785	21 737	1,6	15,7
Austria	22 080	21 693	1,6	-1,8
China	17 428	21 398	1,6	22,8
Hungary	16 852	17 468	1,3	3,7
Other countries	319 799	348 659	25,6	9,0
Total	1 181 616	1 359 438	100,0	15,0

Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

In 2016 the EU member countries continue to be the most important generating market both for Bulgaria and Sofia.

The highest number of overnight stays is realized by the Italian tourists – 104 886 or 7.7% of the nights spent by foreigners in accommodation establishments in Sofia. Italy is followed by Great Britain and Germany which didn't rank first for the first time since 2013.

It is important to point out that Italian tourists realized the highest number of overnight stays in Sofia, but in terms of the country they ranked 20th with barely 1% of the total number of overnight stays in 2016. It is interesting that 59% of the nights spent by Italians in Bulgaria are realized precisely in AEs in Sofia.

Among the leading markets the greatest increase of overnight stays compared to 2013 is observed among Spain (50%), Israel (34%), and Italy (33%). In terms of the Balkan countries, Serbia (by 27%), Macedonia (23%), and Greece (19%) mark a significant growth.

The average length of stay of visitors in Sofia remains unchanged – 1.8 days - for Bulgarian guests it is 1.7 days, while for foreigners – 1.8 days.

Among the most important markets for Sofia in terms of length of stay are the guests from Israel (2.2 days) and Italy (2.1 days). Visitors from India, Armenia, and Latvia stay for the longest – 2.7, 2.4 and 2.4 days respectively.

Occupancy of Accommodation Establishments

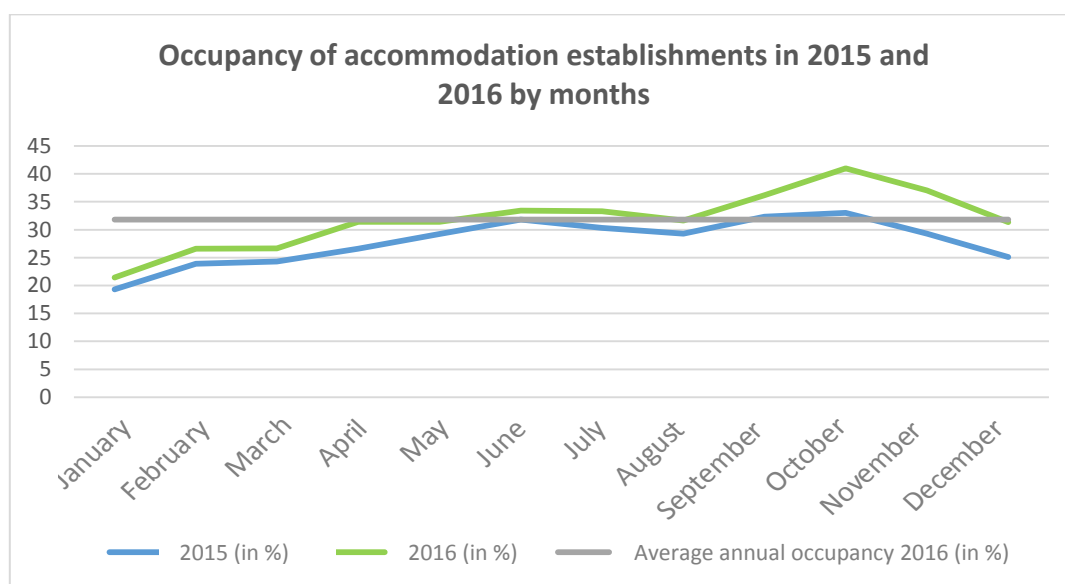
The occupancy is a dynamic figure and shows monthly fluctuations. It is an important indicator for the efficiency of the hotel business, reflecting the degree to which the existing accommodation capacity is actually used. In this section are presented the average monthly and annual occupancy of bed places, calculated on the basis of the reported number of overnight stays and the number of beds.

Occupancy of bed places in accommodation establishments on the territory of Sofia Municipality for the period 2015 – 2016 by months

Month	2015 (in %)	2016 (in %)	Variation 2015/2016 (in %)
January	19,3	21,5	2,2
February	23,9	26,6	2,7
March	24,3	26,6	2,3
April	26,6	31,4	4,8
May	29,2	31,4	2,2
June	31,8	33,4	1,6
July	30,3	33,3	3,0
August	29,3	31,6	2,3
September	32,3	36,2	3,9
October	33	41,0	8,0
November	29,3	37,0	7,7
December	25,1	31,3	6,2
Average	27,86	31,8	3,9

Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

Compared to 2015 there is a slight increase in the average annual occupancy of bed places in Sofia – in 2016 it was 31.8% while in 2015 – 27.9%.



Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

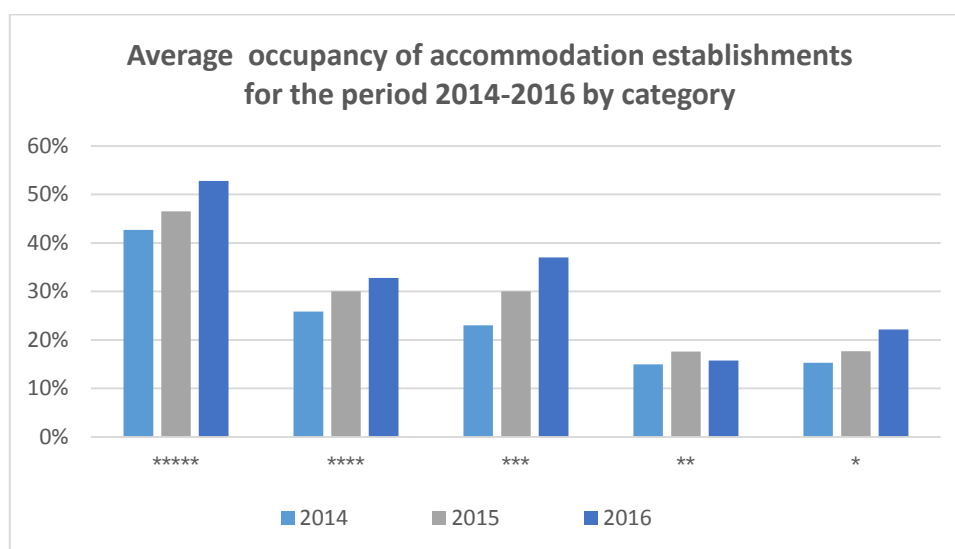
The monthly fluctuations in the occupancy of accommodation establishments are not significant but the period September-November and especially October (41% occupancy of bed places) stand out with higher occupancy rate. Traditionally, January has the lowest occupancy rate – 22%.

Average occupancy rate of bed places for the period 2014 – 2016 by category

Category	*****	****	***	**	*	Average occupancy
2014	42,7%	25,9%	23,0%	15,0%	15,3%	24,1%
2015	46,5%	30,0%	30,0%	17,6%	17,7%	27,9%
2016	52,8%	32,8%	37,0%	15,8%	22,2%	31,8%
Variations 2015/2016.	6,3%	2,8%	7,0%	-1,8%	4,5%	3,9%

Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

The highest average annual occupancy rate is traditionally recorded at 5-star accommodation establishments, while the lowest – at the one- and two-star AEs. In 2016 there was a slight decrease (1.8%) of this indicator only in two-star AEs.



Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

POSITION OF SOFIA IN TOURISM IN BULGARIA

According to NSI in 2016 3.8% of the accommodation establishments and 3.6% of the bed places in Bulgaria were located in Sofia.

The share of nights spent in Sofia was 7.1% of the total number of nights spent in the country, while the share of tourists that spent the night was 14.3% (10% - Bulgarians and 19% - foreigners).

The average length of stay in the capital was 1.7 days and in the country – 3.5 days. The average occupancy of bed places in the capital was 41% and in the country – 21%.

Sofia Region (capital):

- ranks 3rd among the regions in terms of revenues /BGN 130 million/of overnight stays, following Burgas /BGN 444 million/ and Varna /BGN 282 million/
- ranks 1st among the regions in terms of occupancy rate of bed places, followed by Pazardjik (37%) and Plovdiv (29%)
- ranks 6th among the regions in terms of number of beds following Burgas, Varna, Dobrich, Blagoevgrad, and Smolyan.

Indicator	Bulgaria	Sofia	Share of Bulgaria in %
Number of establishments	3 331	125	3,75
Number of beds	328 264	11 910	3,63
Number of overnight stays	25 185 996	1 783 994	7,08
By Bulgarians	9 035 330	610 999	6,76
By foreigners	16 150 666	1 172 995	7,26
Number of persons that stayed overnight	7 196 397	1 025 272	14,25
Bulgarians	3 809 465	375 735	9,86
foreigners	3 386 932	649 537	19,18
Average length of stay /days/	3,5	1,7	-
Occupancy of beds (%)	21	41	-
Average revenue of one overnight stay	BGN 49	BGN 73	-
Average revenue of one person staying overnight	BGN 171	BGN 127	-
Average revenue of one bed place	BGN 3 744	BGN 10 954	-
Revenues of nights spent (BGN)	1 229 073 306	130 457 649	10,61
By Bulgarians	337 244 264	31 049 935	9,21
By foreigners	891 829 042	99 407 714	11,15

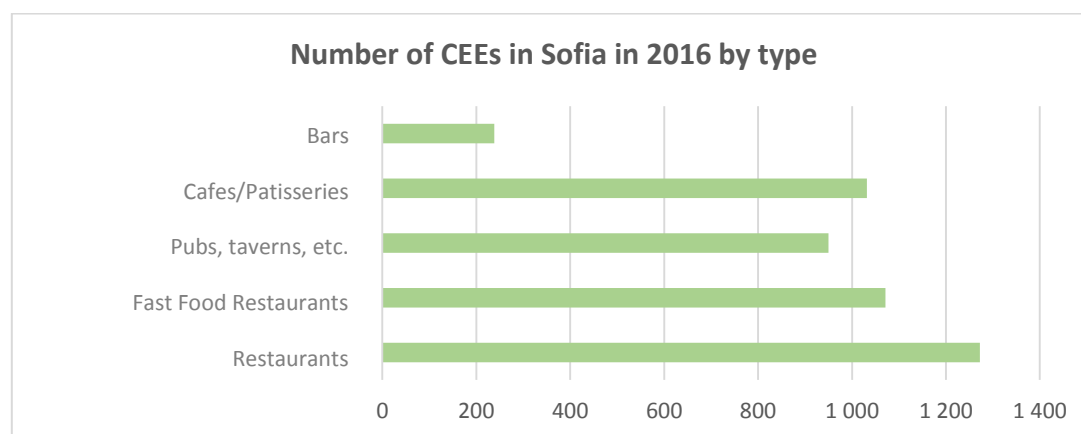
Source: NSI

*to be correctly displayed

In order for the position of Sofia to be correctly displayed in the national system of tourism only data from the National Statistical Institute is used in the table. It should be borne in mind that the NSI data refer to all categorized and operating during the reported period establishments with 10 or more bed places. This is why the data for Sofia in the table above differs from the data of Sofia Tourism Administration published in the reference book

Types of establishments	Number of all CEEs	Share of all CEEs (%)	Indoor seats	Capacity Outdoor seats	Total number of seats
Restaurants	1 272	27,9	89 609	49 305	138 914
Fast food restaurants	1 071	23,5	36 908	21 279	58 187
Pubs, tavern, etc	950	20,8	32 490	18 372	50 862
Cafes/ Patisseries	1 032	22,6	29 601	15 097	44 698
Bars	238	5,2	16 148	2 090	18 238
TOTAL:	4 563	100	204 756	106 143	310 899

Source: Sofia Tourism Administration



Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

In 2016 on the territory of Sofia operated 4 563 categorized catering and entertainment establishments 1 272 of which were restaurants, 1 071 – fast food restaurants, 950 - pubs, taverns, etc., 1 032 – cafes/ patisseries, and 238 - bars.

In 2016 there was a decrease of 22.9% in the total number of catering and entertainment establishments. The number of all types of catering and entertainment establishments decreased while the decrease in the number of bars (by 51.6%) and fast food restaurants (by 31.5%) was the most tangible.

The technical capacity of CEEs on the territory of Sofia Municipality includes indoor and outdoor seats while the indoor seats are twice as many as the outdoor seats. In 2016 the total number of seats in catering and entertainment establishments amounted to 310 899, 204 756 of which were located in indoor dining rooms and 106 143 – outdoors, operating in specific seasons.

In 2016 restaurants had the biggest share of all catering and entertainment establishments – 27.9%, followed by fast food restaurants (23.5%), cafes/ patisseries (22.6%), pubs, taverns, etc. (20.8%), and bars (5.2%).

The distribution of capacity by types of catering and entertainment establishments shows that 45% of the seats in catering and entertainment establishments were located in restaurants, 19% - in fast food restaurants, 16% - in pubs, taverns, etc., 14% - in cafes/ patisseries and 6% - in bars.

Technical capacity of the catering and entertainment establishments in Sofia Municipality in 2016 by type and category

Category	Number of establishments	Indoor seats	Outdoor seats	Total
Restaurants				
*****	15	1 554	871	2 425
****	29	2 377	562	2 939
***	94	8 879	3 635	12 514
**	210	18 265	10 098	28 363
*	924	58 534	34 139	92 673
Total	1 272	89 609	49 305	138 914
Fast food restaurants				
*****	0	0	0	0
****	0	0	0	0
***	15	638	544	1 182
**	35	1 804	1 244	3 048
*	1 021	34 466	19 491	53 957
Total	1 071	36 908	21 279	58 187
Pubs, taverns, etc				
*****	0	0	0	0
****	0	0	0	0
***	4	401	60	461
**	29	1 672	948	2 620
*	917	30 417	17 364	47 781
Total	950	32 490	18 372	50 862
Cafes/ patisseries				
*****	1	20	0	20
****	5	256	404	660
***	2	83	0	83
**	67	3 142	2 498	5 640
*	957	26 100	12 195	38 295
Total	1 032	29 601	15 097	44 698
Bars				
*****	16	1283	129	1 412
****	41	2 417	145	2 562
***	71	3 513	413	3 926
**	82	7 757	736	8 493
*	28	1 178	667	1 845
Total	238	16 148	2 090	18 238
	4 563	204 756	106 143	310 899

Source: Sofia Tourism Administration

In terms of the category structure of catering and entertainment establishments most predominant were one-star catering and entertainment establishments – 84%, while the four- and five-star ones represented barely 3% of all establishments.

According to the data on technical capacity of catering and entertainment establishments in Sofia, the distribution of seats by category shows that 75% of all seats were concentrated in one-star establishments, 16% -in two-star ones, and the rest were distributed among three-, four-, and five-star catering and entertainment establishments.

For a few years now the ratio between price and quality of the tourist product has been at a good competitive level.

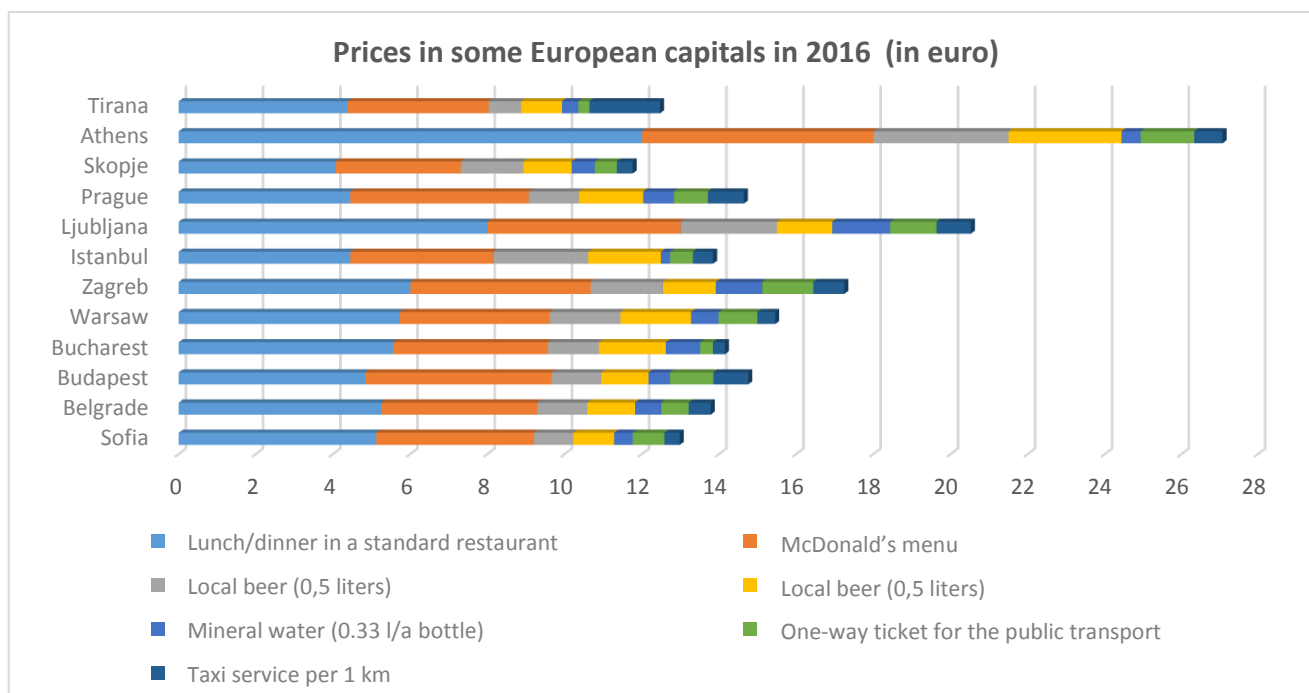
According to an online research of the tourism portal *Price of Travel* Sofia is the most affordable tourist destination in Europe. The portal states that "Sofia is a city that has a very pleasant downtown area which is very hospitable to foreign tourists. It is one of the most peaceful cities in Europe and has a convenient transport system. The prices of almost everything are very low with the exception of inbound flights from other major cities".

Average prices of some tourist services and products in some of the European capitals in 2016 (in euro)

	Sofia	Belgrade	Budapest	Bucharest	Warsaw	Zagreb	Istanbul	Ljubljana	Prague	Skopje	Athens	Tirana
Lunch/dinner in a standard restaurant – one meal	5 ,11	5 ,25	4 ,83	5 ,56	5,72	6	4,44	8,00	4,44	4,06	12,00	4,38
Lunch/dinner for two in a medium-priced restaurant – three-course meal	20 ,43	24 ,21	25 ,76	24 ,47	22,89	26,67	19,73	35,00	22,20	16,24	35,69	16,06
McDonald's menu	4 ,09	4 ,04	4 ,83	4 ,00	3,89	4,67	3,70	5,00	4,63	3,25	6,00	3,65
Local beer (0,5 liters)	1 ,02	1 ,29	1 ,29	1 ,33	1,83	1,87	2,47	2,50	1,30	1,62	3,50	0,84
Imported beer (0.33 liters)	1 ,53	1 ,61	1 ,45	1 ,78	1,83	2	2,96	3,00	1,48	1,62	4,00	1,46
Cappuccino	1 ,06	1 ,24	1 ,22	1 ,73	1,83	1,37	1,88	1,43	1,66	1,25	2,93	1,06
Coca Cola/Pepsi Cola (0.33 liters/a bottle)	0 ,82	1 ,21	0 ,84	1 ,20	0,95	1,76	0,68	2,04	1,06	1,15	1,35	0,71
Mineral water (0.33 litres/a bottle)	0 ,48	0 ,67	0 ,55	0 ,89	0,71	1,2	0,24	1,50	0,79	0,60	0,50	0,42
A packet of cigarettes	2 ,66	2 ,10	3 ,54	3 ,56	3,43	3,33	2,96	3,90	3,55	1,95	4,00	2,19
One-way ticket for the public transport	0 ,82	0 ,72	1 ,13	0 ,33	1,01	1,33	0,59	1,20	0,89	0,57	1,40	0,29
One-month transport pass for the public transport	25 ,54	25 ,83	30 ,59	13 ,35	25,18	48,01	44,38	37,00	20,35	22,73	30,00	11,68
Taxi service per 1 km	0 ,40	0,57	0,9	0,31	0,46	0,8	0,52	0,89	0,93	0,41	0,74	1,83

Source: <https://www.priceoftravel.com/>

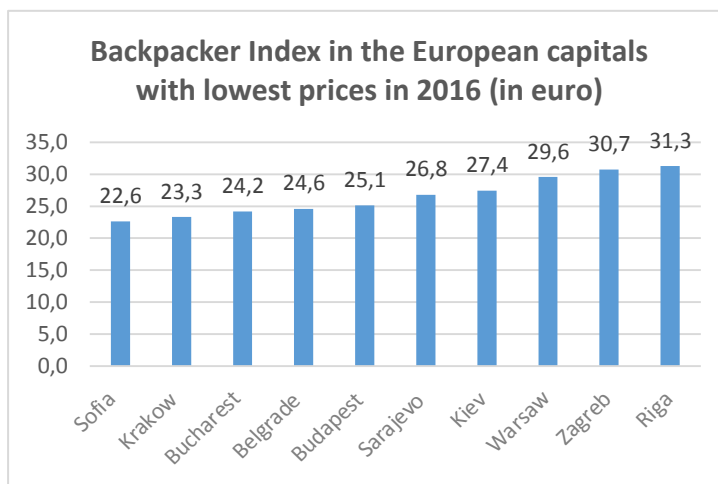
One-course meal in a standard restaurant; Local draft beer (0.5 l); Mineral water (0.33 l/a bottle); Taxi service per 1 km; McDonald's menu; Cappuccino; One-way ticket for the public transport



The World Backpacker Index shows a general picture of the minimum travel costs aiming to help tourists find the most affordable destination from their point of view. It includes the total cost of a group of essential services in the travel destination. Even though the listed prices are based on a potential trip on a limited budget they can serve as a reference to those having more money.

In every destination this daily "packet" includes:

- * a bed place in a good and cheap hostel
- * three meals in a standard restaurant
- * two passes for the public transport
- * One paid cultural attraction (museum, gallery)
- * three cheap beers or glasses of wine



While in 2014 and 2015 Sofia ranked 3rd in 2016 the capital leads the ranking for the cheapest one-day budget trip.

Sofia - the capital of Republic of Bulgaria, is the biggest city in the country. A flight to Sofia from London or Moscow takes around 3 hours, from Paris or Berlin – around 2 hours, and from the neighboring capitals Athens, Bucharest, Belgrade – 1 hour. The contemporary city has unique ancient temples and remains from the antiquity. The millennial history, the cultural, sports, and business events, and the wonderful conditions for conferences turn the city into a popular tourist destination.

In 2016 Sofia hosted several significant international events such as:

- Webit Festival Europe – the leading event for technology, digital economy and innovations with eight years of history. Some of the lecturers at the forum were leaders of companies such as IBM, SAP, Akamai, Google, Intel, Philips, Lego, Nokia Networks, the European Space Agency, and NASA. The topics discussed were connected to cybersecurity, biotechnology, entrepreneurial ecosystem development, smart cities, smart energy, sustainable development, technologies and media.
- First edition of Sofia Restaurant Week – part of the global culinary format Restaurant Week. 25 tourist establishments on the territory of Sofia Municipality took part in it by offering fine food at an affordable price.
- At the end of September, the first meeting of the mayors from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and China (16+1 cooperation) took place. The 16 + 1 initiative aims to strengthen and expand the cooperation between China and Bulgaria, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, and FYR Macedonia. The forum was held under the slogan "Sofia - Crossing Point of New Opportunities" and took place in Sofia Tech Park. It included discussions and B2B meetings dedicated to opportunities for cooperation in the field of tourism, innovation, transport, agriculture and agribusiness.
- The 62nd edition of Lions Europa Forum – the most important event of Lions Club in Europe. 46 countries took part in it
- First *International Congress on World Civilizations and Modern Tourism*, - a joint event of the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria and the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

HISTORY

Sofia is one of the oldest cities in Europe. It is 8 000 years old and was established near hot healing mineral springs at the crossroad of Western Europe, Asia Minor and the Middle East. Its history can be traced back to Neolithic times through the discovered Neolithic settlement in Slatina quarter and during the Bronze Age at the area between TZUM and Sofia Hotel Balkan the historic city center of Sofia was established, which has not changed its location to this day.

As early as the 7th century BC Sofia was already part of the map of Europe – it was the ancient Thracian city of the Serdi tribe, which the Romans later called Serdica. The Roman Emperors resided there but we associate mostly two of them with the city. The first one is Emperor Galerius who in 311 wrote in Serdica Edict of Toleration by Galerius with which officially ended the persecution of Christians for the first time in the history of the Roman Empire. "Serdica is my Rome" – these were the words of Emperor Constantine I the Great through which he expressed his attitude towards this city.

Serdica was also a major event center – in 343 the Council of Serdica was held there.

In V-VI century after the so-called “great migration of nations” followed years of devastation and numerous invasions of Huns and Goths but in the middle of VI century Serdica was revived as an important administrative and economic center of the Byzantine Empire. In 809 the city was part of Bulgaria and was called Sredets. In 1018 it received its third name as part of the Byzantine Empire – Triaditsa, which means “between the mountains”. After the liberation from Byzantine rule and before the fall of Bulgaria under Ottoman rule in 1393, Sredets flourished.

In the first half of the 14th century the name of the city was changed for the last time – it was named after St. Sophia Church which at the time was a bishop’s residence.

The new name of the city was first mentioned in 1378 by Tsar Ivan Shishman in a gift for the Dragalevtzi monastery.

After the city fell under Ottoman rule its appearance radically changed – the Christian temples were turned into mosques, and the silhouette of Sofia was filled with domes and minarets. But at the same time, Sofia also became crafts and trade center.

The economic prosperity of the local population made it possible for a ring of monasteries to be built around the city - an important spiritual and enlightenment centre.

On January 4, 1878 Sofia was liberated from Ottoman rule and on April 3, 1879 it was proclaimed as capital of Bulgaria. The city gradually acquired a European look. The streets were paved and schools, gardens, and administrative buildings were built. A sewer system, telegraphs and telephones were set up. In the 1930s Sofia had already become a modern capital but during WW2 it was partially destroyed by Allied bombers. After September 9, 1944 the city again changed its look in line with the political changes. On September 15, 1946 Bulgaria was proclaimed as People's Republic and in Sofia were built Nezavisimost “Independence” Square and the massive stone complex of buildings the Largo which was once the Residence of the Party and today it is known as the “triangle of power” - headquarters of the Presidency, the Council of Ministers and the Parliamentary Committees. On the occasion of the 1300th anniversary of the founding of the Bulgarian state, the National Palace of Culture was built. The last political change in Bulgaria took place on November 10, 1989, when the road to democracy and free market economy was paved, and this once again changed the look of the capital. Nowadays Sofia is a dynamically evolving European city with an infrastructure that is being constantly modernized but it has preserved the memory of its long history and the spirit of a free Bulgaria.

CULTURE

Sofia has an extremely rich cultural heritage - archaeological, historical and architectural valuables from different ages. Archaeologists constantly surprise us with new archaeological finds, which point to the significance of our city in antiquity. In the spring of 2016 the project for the restoration of the Ancient Cultural and Communication Complex *Serdica*, located within the Sofia Largo, was completed. The complex is located on an area of about 8,000 square meters and is one of the world's biggest open-air museums. 4850 square meters of the antique area are located under Nezavisimost Square and the remaining 3150 square meters - under Maria Luisa Blvd.

Among the biggest attractions in the complex is Decumanus Maximus - the main street of the ancient town of Serdica, which has preserved to a great extent its authentic pavement. The open-air museum presents three quarters of Ancient Serdica. A stage for theatre plays, concerts and other events with a great number of seats for the audience is located under the glass dome covering the area between the buildings of the presidency and the Council of Ministers.

Sofia is also characterized by a rich and dynamic contemporary cultural life. The cultural calendar of the city offers a variety of international festivals and cultural events aiming to attract both foreigners and Bulgarians. In 2016, many world-famous performers had concerts in Sofia – the Russian rock band LYUBE in December, Brian Adams in October, the Finnish band NIGHTWISH celebrated their 20th birthday on the Bulgarian stage in September, and the legendary German band SCORPIONS celebrated their 50th anniversary.

The capital traditionally hosts some of the biggest festivals in the country.

The film festivals - Sofia Film Fest, Golden Kuker, Sofia Independent Film Festival, Kinomania, and Sofia Biting Docs.

Music and dance festivals – Antistatic Festival, A to Jazz festival, The Yellow Brick Road Festival, Pop and Rock Music Festival, Sofia Music Weeks, Opera in the Park Festival (July), Art of Baroque, V International Children Folklore Festival

Contemporary art, fun and lifestyle festivals - Salon of the Arts (May), Sofia Poetics (May), Water Tower Art Fest (June), Sofia Breathes (August), KvARTal Festival, Sofia Puppet Fair, International Sofia Book Fair, and Sofia Science Festival

Number of visitors of cultural institutions in 2016	Structure by nationality			Age structure		
	Total	Bulgarians	Foreigners	Children and pupils	Students	Adults
National History Museum	179 873	145 752	34 121	-	-	-
Boyana Church	54 277	16 004	38 273	-	-	-
National Museum of Military History	121 203	109 853	11 350	-	-	-
Sofia History Museum	60 000	39 000	21 000	12000		48000
The archaeological level of the basilica of St Sophia	25 000	11 250	13 750	6 250		18 750
Vrana park museum	42 600	42 450	150	6 000	-	36 600
National Polytechnic Museum	11 907	11 774	133	5 658	318	4 277
National Museum of Natural History	47 830	-	-	-	-	19 506
National Institute of Archaeology with Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences	28 442	16 047	12 395	5 903		22 539
National Anthropological Museum at BAS	6 600	6 574	26	-	-	-
Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum	9 159	5 891	3 268	-	-	-
Total	586 891					

Source: Sofia museums

The museums in Sofia have different systems for counting the number of visitors. Most of them organize free-of-charge events and take part in international initiatives such as Long Night of Museums, so the actual number of visitors is significantly higher than the one listed in the table above. It should be pointed out that the big capital museums such as the National History Museum, the National Museum of Military History, and the National Museum of Natural History registered an increase in the number of visitors compared to the previous year.

NATURE – Green Sofia

Located 20 minutes from the city center, Vitosha Mountain offers all-year-round opportunities for tourism. It offers hiking trails of varying difficulty, accommodation establishments, ski slopes and facilities.

The Bear Museum, the Owl Museum, the Dragonfly Museum, as well as CHILDREN'S ECO-TRAINING CENTER which offers educational lectures, green schools, exhibitions and screenings are located in Vitosha Nature Park.

There is a great variety of parks and gardens in Sofia such as Gradskata gradina (the City Garden), Borisovata Gradina (Boris' Garden), Doktorskata Gradina (the Doctors' Garden) and Yuzhen Park (the South Park).

In the spring of 2016 Vazrajthane Park was officially opened. It is located on a square of 43 decares and offers a variety of attractions.

In the summer repair and restoration activities in Zapaden Park (West Park) and Borisovata Gradina were initiated. In 2016 BGN 5.5 million were provided for restoration and reconstruction of green areas in Sofia.

Vrana Park - a former royal residence and a monument of garden-park art, is also located in the capital, as well as two botanical gardens - one in the center of the city and the other at the foot of Vitosha Mountain.

SPORTS AND LEISURE ACTIVITIES

After in 2014 Sofia was named European Capital of Sport 2018, the city constantly proves that the promotion of mass sport and active lifestyle is one of its priorities. In connection with this initiative in 2016 a variety of sports events were organized.

Among the most popular and exciting sports events that took place in Sofia are:

- Marathon Sofia. In 2016 more than 300 people took part in the 33rd edition of the marathon.
- World Sambo Championships, hosted in Sofia. More than 600 sambo wrestlers that were representing 85 countries arrived in Bulgaria in November, 2016.
- Urban Zone 2016. Within the festival several sports activities that are popular among young people and typical for the urban environment, such as basketball, street BMX, skateboarding, wall climbing, etc. were held.
- The 2nd edition of Extreme Fest was held in Knyajeska Gradina. In the span of three days it delighted the residents of Sofia with different extreme activities that are practiced in urban environments. The festival closed with a super moto show across central streets and boulevards in the capital.

Vitosha is becoming an important place for sports events, both in summer and in winter. Over the past year, there were held Cherni Vrah Velo Rally; Vitosha 100 – a tour of Vitosha; Vitosha – my mountain – 10-kilometer mountain running along a route from Boyana quarter to Aleko Hut; summer and winter sports festivals. In September 2016 Sofia Monasteries 2016 was held - the first mountain running marathons and mountain biking competition.

There are a lot of sports facilities in Sofia both for mass and for professional sports – 6 stadiums, 6 sports halls, 6 swimming complexes, rowing facilities, horse riding facilities, ice rinks and a velodrome. For the fans of outdoor sports Sofia now has 35 street fitness facilities. In 2016 Sofia Municipality invested over BGN 7 million in sports activities and sports infrastructure projects, including financial support of the sports clubs and the development of their youth schools. Sofia Municipality also supported financially the renovation of sports infrastructure in schools and kindergartens, and of outdoor sports grounds.

The efforts of Sofia to become a pleasant city for cyclists have positive results. The capital has cycling lanes with total length of 59 km located in different quarters of the city. However, the adopted in 2016 programme regarding the extension of the cycling network foresees the connection of the different quarters with the central part of the city and with other types of transport.

The cyclists also have the opportunity to try the mountain route Aleko – Cherni Vrah – Jeleznitsa or the suburban cycling lane around Pancharevo Lake.

DISCOVER SOFIA FREE WALKING TOUR

Since 2010 Sofia Tourism Administration and the Association of Bulgarian Tour Guides have been successfully cooperating in the organization and conduction of *Discover Sofia* – a free walking tour, in order to promote the tourist attractions of Sofia among the tourists and residents of the city. The route of the walking tour covers 23 cultural/historical sites in the city center, presented by professional guides in Bulgarian, English or another language, according to the linguistic background of the tourists.

In 2016 74 tours were held and the number of participants was over 2000 including Bulgarian students, foreign partners and guests of Sofia Municipality, and of government institutions and non-governmental organizations, journalists, and bloggers.

You can receive more information regarding *Discover Sofia* free walking tour at Sofia Tourism Administration located in the underpass of Sofia University or by calling 02/491-83-44 or 02/491 83 45.

PILGRIMAGE ROUTES ORGANIZED WITH THE SUPPORT OF SOFIA MUNICIPALITY VIA SOFIA TOURISM ADMINISTRATION

Each year Sofia Tourism Administration conducts four free pilgrimages. Three of them lead to monasteries in Sofia Holy Mount, and the fourth one – to Rila Monastery. Usually, they are held on the feast days of the temples.

- *The Ascension of the Lord Pilgrimage* – held on June 9, 2016 – the Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, from the St St Constantine and Elena Church in the village of Dolni Lozen to the Lozen Monastery of St Spas.
- *Holy Trinity Royal Pilgrimage* – held on the Christian holiday Whit Monday (Monday of the Holy Spirit) on June 20, 2016. It starts from St St Kirik and Julita Church in the town of Bankya and finishes at the Divotino Monastery of the Holy Trinity. There Bishop Gregory performs a Holy Mass in the presence of His Holiness the Bulgarian Patriarch Neofit and Prime Minister Boyko Borisov.

- *The Miracle-maker of Rila Pilgrimage* –held for the 7th consecutive year from August 1 to August 6, 2016, from Sofia to Rila Monastery
- *Protection of the Mother of God Pilgrimage* – held on the feast of the Virgin Mary's Cerement on October 1, 2016; from St Petka Church in Kremikovtsi quarter to Kremikovtsi Monastery of St George.

TERMINOLOGY

Tourism Act, Promulgated, State Gazette No. 30/26.03.2013, effective 26.03.2013, amended, SG No. 68/2.08.2013, amended and supplemented, SG No. 109/20.12.2013, amended, SG No. 40/13.05.2014, SG No. 9/3.02.2015, supplemented, SG No. 14/20.02.2015, amended, SG No. 79/13.10.2015, amended and supplemented. SG No. 20/15.03.2016, amended, SG No. 43/07.06.2016, amended, SG No. 59/29.07.2016, amended and supplemented, SG No. 75/27.09.2016

Accommodation establishments hotels, motels, apartments, tourist villages, holiday villages, villas, family-run hotels, hostels, boarding houses, holiday houses, guest rooms, guest suites, guest houses, bungalows and campsites.

Average accommodation occupancy rate - a derived indicator reflecting the degree of utilization of the available accommodation capacity of the accommodation establishment. It is calculated as the ratio between the number of overnight stays and the number of beds ready for exploitation in the accommodation facility. (a work definition, created for the purpose of this publication).

Backpacker - a tourist practicing backpacking tourism

Backpacking - a low-cost form of tourism, regardless of the type of travel and transport. The term "backpack" comes from English, and literally means "rucksack". It refers to tourists, carrying on their backs big tourist backpacks or other luggage that is easily carried at long distances for a long period of time. It involves the use of public transport, low-cost accommodations (usually hostels or youth hostels) and a longer duration of stay compared to traditional holiday travel related mostly to sightseeing. It is practiced mainly by young people who have more free time.

Bar - an establishment that offers a wide variety of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks, cocktails, hot drinks, nuts, pastry and sweets, and a limited variety of culinary products.

Boarding house - an accommodation establishment where people usually stay for a longer period of time. It is furnished with the most necessary furniture, equipment, and utensils for use and self-service.

Bungalow - an accommodation establishment operating seasonally or all-year-round, equipped with a bathroom but not always with a kitchenette.

Café/ Patisseries - an establishment that offers confectionery, pastries, ice cream, alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks.

Campsite - a guarded area with appropriate infrastructure and the necessary conditions for the stay of tourists in their own or rented tent or trailer. It also offers parking space and tourist services. On the territory of the campsite there may also be bungalows, trailers (mobile accommodation establishments with or without a kitchenette and a bathroom), and other establishments.

Catering and entertainment establishments: restaurants, fast food restaurants, pubs, cafes/patisseries, bars, etc.

Family-run hotel - a building in an appropriate architectural style, consisting of 5-20 accommodation rooms, carrying out hotel business. The establishment is run by hosts or hired staff that provide personal service to guests. It has at least one catering and entertainment establishment.

Fast food restaurant - a restaurant where a limited assortment of culinary products and / or ready packaged food, desserts, alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks are served. It is a self-service establishment.

Guest house - a low-rise building that has no more than 10 rooms for accommodation. Guests have access to common rooms such as living room, furnished kitchen, dining room or dining area, and a recreation area in the yard. The establishment is run by the hosts that live in the same building or next to it and they also cater to guests.

Guest suite - an apartment in a residential building that is let to tourists

Guest rooms - up to 5 rooms - separate or in flats in a single building, let to tourists for overnight stays.

Holiday house - a separate accommodation establishment with prevalent social functions and with infrastructure, offering health, spa, sports and other services.

Holiday village - a territorially separate group of low-rise massive villas where basic and various additional tourist services are offered. It is comprised of at least 5 villas and there is at least one catering and entertainment establishment.

Hostel - a low-budget accommodation establishment where rooms are mixed or single-sex, and there can also be private rooms. Bathroom, living room, and furnished kitchen with a dining room are shared.

Hotel - a publicly accessible building or buildings that are functionally linked, with at least 15 accommodation rooms, offering basic and additional tourist services related to the tourists' stay. For hotels built before June 1, 2003 and ones located in populated places or in parts of them with historical, archaeological, ethnographic or architectural importance, the number of rooms must be smaller by 20%. The hotel must have at least one catering and entertainment establishment.

International visitor - a person that visits a country outside his/her usual environment for no more than 12 consecutive months for business, pleasure or personal reasons that don't include the pursuit of an activity for which they receive remuneration. (*International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008* (IRTS 2008))

Motel - a type of roadside hotel offering accommodation and services to tourists. It is located outside a populated place, or in close proximity to a busy transport junction or highway. The motel has at least one catering and entertainment establishment.

Passengers - all persons moving between two or more geographical points with different purpose and duration. (International recommendations for tourism statistics (IRTS 2008))

Pub, tavern, etc. –establishments that offer a wide variety of alcoholic drinks, non-alcoholic beverages and snacks

Restaurant - an establishment, offering meals and pastry, as well as alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. Customer service is performed by duly qualified staff.

Tourism - a social, cultural and economic phenomenon, related to the movement of people towards places outside their traditional place of residence for personal or professional purposes. (International recommendations for tourism statistics (IRTS 2008)).

Tourist - a visitor whose stay lasts at least 24 hours, thus spending at least one night in the visited destination for the purpose of tourism, recreation, sport, wellness procedures, business, visits to relatives and friends, pilgrimage, participation in a congress, a conference or a cultural event.

Tourist Destination - a regulated set of economic, social, cultural and environmental activities carried out in tourist sites with real borders, with the purpose of production, realization and consumption of goods and services, generating the attractiveness of the tourism product (package) with sustainable competitiveness and efficiency.

Tourist hut - a massive building designed for short-term recreation where basic and additional tourist services are offered. Furnished and equipped with the most necessary furniture, equipment, and utensils for self service. It offers tourist, ecological and other types of information.

Tourist village - a separate, territorially distinct group of accommodation establishments with a common engineering and tourism infrastructure, that offers basic and additional tourist services. It is comprised of at least five accommodation establishments and has at least one catering and entertainment establishment.

Villa - a massive low-rise building, incorporating at least: hallway, living room, two bedrooms, kitchenette, dining room, bathroom, terrace and parking space.

Abbreviation

CEEs – Catering and entertainment establishments

AEs – accommodation establishments

NSI – National Statistical Institute

T1 – Terminal 1 of Sofia Airport

T2 – Terminal 2 of Sofia Airport