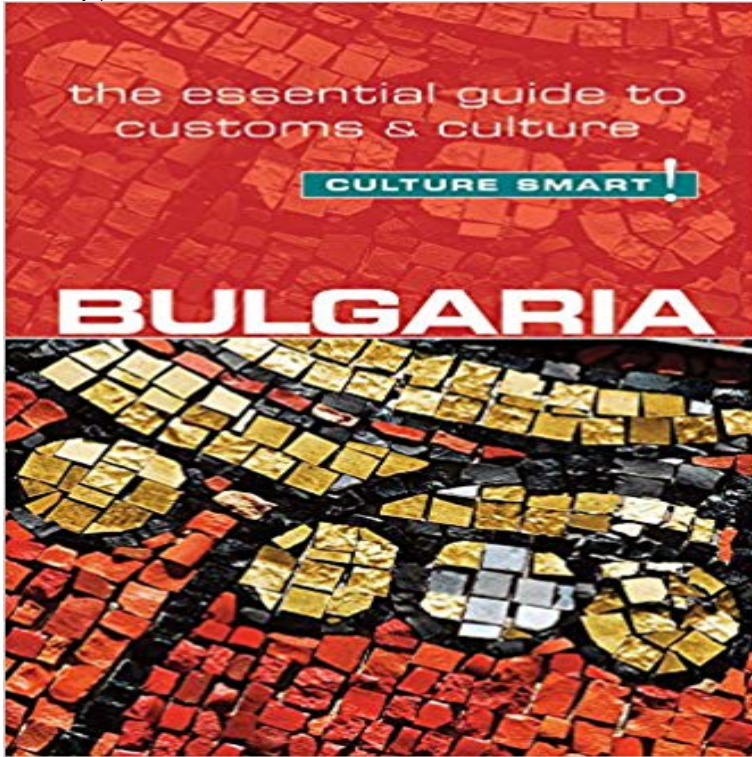


Bulgaria - Culture Smart!: The Essential Guide to Customs & Culture



Bulgaria, situated in southeastern Europe on the Black Sea, is one of Europe's best-hidden secrets. A haven for nature and history buffs, this beautiful sunny country welcomes the traveler with bread and salt, a red rose, and a wooden vessel full of sparkling wine. These three emblems of ancient treasures, rose oil, and natural beauty symbolize its distinctive culture. This youngest member of the European Union has been riding a roller-coaster of radical transformation since emerging from the Eastern Bloc and becoming a market economy twenty years ago, changing dramatically in many ways and yet preserving its own particular charm and slow-paced way of life. Invasions and waves of migration, dating back to neolithic and classical times, have contributed to a unique cultural mosaic. The country boasts the oldest hoard of gold treasure in the world. The seventh-century Bulgarian empire dominated the Balkans and was a powerhouse of Slavonic culture. Later, Ottoman conquest and Soviet influence left their mark on the national psyche. Culture Smart! Bulgaria provides a key to understanding the Bulgarian people. It outlines their long and complex history, shows you what everyday life is like there today, and offers advice on what to expect and how to behave in different circumstances. This is a small country of proud and persevering people. More than the golden sands of the Bulgarian Riviera, the vast thickly forested expanses of the Rhodopes or the Rila and Pirin ranges with their snow-capped peaks and emerald-green lakes, the music and dances and the warmth and cordiality of the Bulgarians will conquer your heart and bring you back time and again.

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