



## **IAESTE App: Country Information**

### **General information:**

- Country: North Macedonia
- Capital: Skopje
- Population: 2 million
- National language(s): Macedonian
- Currency: Macedonian Denar - MKD (61.5 euros on average)
- Time zone: CET
- Voltage: 220
- Phone country code: +389
- Cities with IAESTE LCs: Skopje, Bitola, Ohrid,
- Climate: It depends from city to city. Macedonia is mostly mountainous country with climate to match. Skopje and Bitola have really hot summers and really cold winters (both have mountains nearby with cooler weather for the summer), while Ohrid has the famous Ohrid Lake and it has warmer winters than the rest of the country, but still hot summers.

### **Travel tips:**

- Fun facts about the country:
  - (North) Macedonia is home to one of the world's deepest underwater caves: Cave Vrelo (literally means Hot Cave) is an underwater cave with a so far discovered depth of 230 meters.
  - It is home to the Europe's oldest lake, Ohrid. The lake Ohrid is not only one of the oldest in the world (2-3 million years), but also one of the clearest (down to 22 meters) and deepest (286 meters). In 1979 it was declared as a Unesco World Heritage Site, and the lake area is home to more than 200 endemic species.
  - The Cyrillic alphabet was invented here. The Cyrillic alphabet was invented in Ohrid and it was based on the Glagolitic script developed by the two brothers Cyril and Methodius. It was taught by their disciples at one of the monasteries in Ohrid – Clyment and Naum.
  - It was the first country in the world to have full access to wireless broadband in 2006.

- Of all the Yugoslav territories, Macedonia was the only one that gained independence peacefully in 1991.
- It is home to one of the biggest cross monuments standing atop a hill in the capital Skopje standing at 66 meters tall. It is called the Millennium cross built in 2002 to commemorate the 2 millennia of Christianity in the region.
- It is home to one of the highest cities in Europe, Krushevo. It is a town filled with lots of history, most famous for the uprising against the Ottoman Empire. Currently it's one of the most famous spots for paragliding and it has held the world cup.
- Ohrid is a city with 365 churches, one for each day of the year.
- It is one of the countries with the most mountains per square kilometer, with more than 34 mountains higher than 2000 meters.
- It is home to one of the world's oldest observatories. Kukino is a megalithic observatory from the 19<sup>th</sup> century BC in the north part of the country.
- Mother Teresa (Anjezë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu) was an Albanian national born and raised in Skopje.

I couldn't decide on which ones were the most interesting 😊

- Cities/towns that you recommend visiting:
  - Skopje is most definitely Europe's most eclectic capital city. Efforts have been made, rather successfully, to bring in new culture in the form of museums, fountains, bridges, and statuary throughout the city.
  - Bitola is an old Ottoman town once known as the "City of Consuls" because it served as a diplomatic center for the region. Elegant and sophisticated are the best words to describe it. You'll see colorful townhouses from the 18th century
  - Though it only has 10,000 citizens, Kruševo was once its own republic. Macedonians equate the town with the centuries-long struggle to win independence from the Ottoman Empire
  - The largest town on Lake Ohrid, and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Ohrid has a remarkable history and heritage to share. At the top of the list are the frescoes inside Saint Sofia Church, the Ancient Theatre, St. Clement Church (13th century), and Tsar Samuil's fortress – which has an unbelievable view over the city and lake. Fun fact: In the battle of Belasica in 1014, Samuil's army suffered a defeat in which 14,000 soldiers were captured and blinded.
  - *(short description for each, pointing out the most important landmarks people should visit):*
- Other places you recommend visiting:
  - Matka Canyon - in the suburbs of Skopje, this canyon is breathtaking and offers tourists the possibility to kayak and explore natural sites, such as Vrelo, one of the deepest underwater caves.
  - The perfect place for skiing, National Park Mavrovo is Macedonia's biggest winter resort, covering over 730 sq km of forests, gorges, waterfalls, and karst fields. You can also see the country's highest peak, Mt Korab, which stands at 2764m.
  - The oldest of the three great national parks is Pelister, located in western Macedonia near Bitola. With nearby Mount Pelister (2600m), and eight other peaks that top 2000m, the vistas are a magnificent natural escape from daily life. The park is home to the five-needle pine mallee – found on only a few mountains in the Balkan Peninsula – something all nature enthusiasts will love to see.
  - Shar Mountain, referred to as "the Balkan Alps" is the largest mountain in Macedonia. It is a great place for hiking, skiing and paragliding. The name

literally means “Colorful Mountain”, this is because (at least before global warming) it was covered partially in snow the whole year round.

Airports with budget airlines: Wizz Air in both airports (Skopje and Ohrid), also Prishtina, Nish and Sofia airports are really close to Skopje which have Ryanair. (*Wizz Air, Ryanair, EasyJet, Transavia, Norwegian*):

Website(s) with travel connections inside the country: sas.com.mk (*train, bus, public transportation, ridesharing*):

Traditional food and drinks you recommend trying:

- SARMA Cabbage rolls with meat and rice, or as Macedonians want to call it sarma, is a winter dish made of fermented cabbage leaves, rice, and ground beef.
- TAVCE GRAVCE - This is probably the most traditional dish in Macedonia that has an incredibly rich flavor. It's made of boiled beans seasoned with a roux that includes dry red pepper, and it's baked in a pan or skillet.
- MUSAKA - Musaka is the perfect dish when you crave meat and potatoes, and it's usually served right out of the oven. It's made of ground beef meat, and fried onion spread on layers of potato slices, seasoned with salt, red pepper spice, pepper, and topped with an egg crust.
- PASTRMAJLIJA - It's a baked dough pie in an oval shape that's neither too thick nor too thin. It's topped with small chunks of salted diced pork or chicken meat and believe it or not, some pork fat.
- Ajvar is like a legend to Macedonians that keep the tradition alive no matter how long it takes to prepare it. It's a pepper spread made of roasted red paprika and eggplants that are then mashed and slowly fried with salt and oil for several hours.
- TURLITAVA - This is one colorful, tasty, filling, and comforting dish made of plenty of different organic vegetables and pork or beef meat pieces. The dish consists of chunks and slices of potatoes, paprika, eggplants, peppers, okras, tomatoes, onions, carrots, garlic, and courgette that are first fried and then baked in the oven.
- ZELNIK - zelnik is a dish you simply must try! Some Macedonians stuff it with chopped meat, spinach, cabbage, or cheese instead of leeks, and even add a scrambled egg between the layers of dough to make it even tastier.
- RAKIJA - rakija is the traditional alcoholic drink in Macedonia, also drank in other countries of the Balkans region. It's also known as the Macedonian brandy, but has many more uses than a regular brandy. Macedonians prepare hundreds of kilos of rakija in their homes and use it not only for drinking but also for alleviating the symptoms of a sore throat, cold, and muscle pain.
  - o Macedonians believe rakija can kill bacteria and viruses, so they use it to disinfect wounds as well as clean their homes.

Tipping in the restaurants: It's common to leave a small tip, but no one will mind you for not leaving one. The tip is usually up to 100 denars, except for really large bills. (*is it common or unusual, how much should you leave?*)

Discounts for transportation: None (*do you know about any way of getting discounts for transportation? - e.g. in Belgium is cheap train Go Pass ticket if you are under 26, but you have to ask for it*):

What is the common greeting in your country: Shake hands, or hug with closer female friends. (*do you only shake hands, or you kiss on both cheeks...?*)

**Emergencies - numbers:**

Police: 192

Ambulance: 194

Fire brigade: 193

**Any other interesting or useful information:**

Macedonians are really proud of their culture and territory, so you can just ask anyone for a fun fact or an interesting place to visit and they will most certainly provide you. 😊

Please also attach ~10 pictures with the most beautiful places from your country and any nice group pictures from your summer reception. Make sure the authors of the pictures agree with you sharing them. If you search for images on Google, first go to 'Advanced search' and set the usage rights to 'free to use or share'. You can also try [www.pixabay.com](https://www.pixabay.com) for images that are free to be used.

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