

= Skopje =

Skopje (Macedonian : ?????? , [?sk?pj?] , is the capital and largest city of the Republic of Macedonia . It is the country 's political , cultural , economic , and academic center . It was known in the Roman period under the name Scupi .

The territory of Skopje has been inhabited since at least 4000 BC ; remains of Neolithic settlements have been found within the old Kale Fortress that overlooks the modern city centre . On the eve of the 1st century AD , the settlement was seized by the Romans and became a military camp . When the Roman Empire was divided into eastern and western halves in 395 AD , Scupi came under Byzantine rule from Constantinople . During much of the early medieval period , the town was contested between the Byzantines and the Bulgarian Empire , whose capital it was between 972 and 992 . From 1282 , the town was part of the Serbian Empire and acted as its capital city from 1346 . In 1392 , the city was conquered by the Ottoman Turks who called the town Üsküp . The town stayed under Turkish control for over 500 years , serving as the capital of pashasanjak of Üsküb and later the Vilayet of Kosovo . At that time the city was famous for its oriental architecture . In 1912 , it was annexed by the Kingdom of Serbia during the Balkan Wars and after the First World War the city became part of the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs , Croats and Slovenes (Kingdom of Yugoslavia) . In the Second World War the city was conquered by the Bulgarian Army , which was part of the Axis powers . In 1944 , it became the capital city of Democratic Macedonia (later Socialist Republic of Macedonia) , which was a federal state , part of Democratic Federal Yugoslavia (later Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) . The city developed rapidly after World War II , but this trend was interrupted in 1963 when it was hit by a disastrous earthquake . In 1991 , it became the capital city of an independent Macedonia .

Skopje is located on the upper course of the Vardar River , and is located on a major north @-@ south Balkan route between Belgrade and Athens . It is a center for metal @-@ processing , chemical , timber , textile , leather , and printing industries . Industrial development of the city has been accompanied by development of the trade , logistics , and banking sectors , as well as an emphasis on the fields of transportation , culture and sport . According to the last official count from 2002 , Skopje has a population of 506 @,@ 926 inhabitants ; according to two more recent unofficial estimates , the city has a population of 668 @,@ 518 or 491 @,@ 000 inhabitants .

= = Geography = =

= = = Topography = = =

Skopje is located in the north of the Republic of Macedonia , in the center of the Balkan peninsula , and halfway between Belgrade and Athens . The city is built in the Skopje valley , oriented on a west @-@ east axis , along the course of the Vardar river , which flows into the Aegean Sea in Greece . The valley is approximately 20 km wide and it is limited by several mountain ranges to the North and South . These ranges limit the urban expansion of Skopje , which spreads along the Vardar and the Serava , a small river which comes from the North . In its administrative boundaries , the City of Skopje stretches for more than 33 km , but it is only 10 km wide .

Skopje is approximately 245m above sea level and covers 571 @. @ 46 km² . The urbanised area only covers 337 km² , with a density of 65 inhabitants per hectare . Skopje , in its administrative limits , encompasses many villages and other settlements , including Dra?evo , Gorno Nerezi and Bardovci . According to the 2002 census , the City of Skopje comprised 506 @,@ 926 inhabitants , whereas the sole urban area only comprised 444 @,@ 800 inhabitants .

The City of Skopje reaches the Kosovo border to the North @-@ East . Clockwise , it is also bordered by the Macedonian municipalities of ?u?er @-@ Sandevo , Lipkovo , Ara?inovo , Ilinden , Studeni?ani , Sopi?te , ?elino and Jegunovce .

= = = Hydrography = = =

The Vardar river , which flows through Skopje , is at approximately 60 km from its source near Gostivar . In Skopje , its average discharge is $51 \text{ m}^3 / \text{s}$, with a wide amplitude depending on seasons , between $99 \text{ @ } 6 \text{ m}^3 / \text{s}$ in May and $18 \text{ @ } 7 \text{ m}^3 / \text{s}$ in July . The water temperature is comprised between $4 \text{ @ } 6 ^\circ \text{C}$ in January and $18 \text{ @ } 1 ^\circ \text{C}$ in July .

Several rivers meet the Vardar within the city boundaries . The largest is the Treska , which is 130 km long . It crosses the Matka Canyon before reaching the Vardar on the western extremity of the City of Skopje . The Lepenec , coming from Kosovo , flows into the Vardar on the northwestern end of the urban area . The Serava , also coming from the North , had flowed through the Old Bazaar until the 1960s , when it was diverted towards the West because its waters were very polluted . Originally , it met the Vardar close to the seat of the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts . Nowadays , it flows into the Vardar near the ruins of Scupi . Finally , the Markova Reka , the source of which is on Mount Vodno , meets the Vardar at the eastern extremity of the city . These three rivers are less than 70 km long .

The city of Skopje comprises two artificial lakes , located on the Treska . The lake Matka is the result of the construction of a dam in the Matka Canyon in the 1930s , and the Treska lake was dug for leisure purpose in 1978 . Three small natural lakes can be found near Smiljkovci , on the northeastern edge of the urban area .

The river Vardar historically caused many floods , such as in 1962 , when its outflow reached $1110 \text{ m}^3 / \text{s}$. Several works have been carried since Byzantine times to limit the risks , and since the construction of the Kozjak dam on the Treska in 1994 , the flood risk is close to zero .

The subsoil contains a large water table which is alimented by the Vardar river and functions as an underground river . Under the table lies an aquifer contained in marl . The water table is 4 to 12 m under the ground and 4 to 144 m deep . Several wells collect its waters but most of the drinking water used in Skopje comes from a karstic spring in Raštica , located west of the city .

=== Geology ===

The Skopje valley is bordered on the West by the Šar Mountains , on the South by the Jakupica range , on the East by hills belonging to the Osogovo range , and on the North by the Skopska Crna Gora . Mount Vodno , the highest point inside the city limits , is 1066 m high and is part of the Jakupica range .

Although Skopje is built on the foot of Mount Vodno , the urban area is mostly flat . It comprises several minor hills , generally covered with woods and parks , such as Gazi Baba hill (325 m) , Zajčev Rid (327 m) , the foothills of Mount Vodno (the smallest are between 350 and 400 m high) and the promontory on which Skopje Fortress is built .

The Skopje valley is located near a seismic fault between the African and Eurasian tectonic plates and experiences regular seismic activity . This activity is enhanced by the porous structure of the subsoil . Large earthquakes occurred in Skopje in 518 , 1505 and 1963 .

The Skopje valley belongs to the Vardar geotectonic region , the subsoil of which is formed of Neogene and Quaternary deposits . The substratum is made of Pliocene deposits including sandstone , marl and various conglomerates . It is covered by a first layer of Quaternary sands and silt , which is between 70 and 90 m deep . The layer is topped by a much smaller layer of clay , sand , silt and gravel , carried by the Vardar river . It is between 1 @ 5 and 5 @ 2 m deep .

In some areas , the subsoil is karstic . It led to the formation of canyons , such as the Matka Canyon , which is surrounded by ten caves . They are between 20 and 176 m deep .

=== Climate ===

The climate of Skopje is usually classified as continental sub @-@ Mediterranean , while according to the Köppen climate classification it has a humid subtropical climate (Cfa) , with a mean annual temperature of $13 \text{ @ } 5 ^\circ \text{C}$ ($56 ^\circ \text{F}$) . Precipitation is relatively low due to the pronounced rain shadow of the Prokletije mountains to the northwest , being only a quarter of what is received on the

Adriatic Sea coast at the same latitude . The summers are long , hot and humid , while the winters are short , relatively cold , and wet . Snowfalls are common in the winter period , but heavy snow accumulation is rare and the snowcover lasts only for a few days . In summer , temperatures are usually above 31 ° C (88 ° F) and sometimes above 40 ° C (104 ° F) . In spring and autumn , the temperatures range from 15 to 24 ° C (59 to 75 ° F) . In winter , the day temperatures are roughly 6 ° C (43 ° F) , but at nights they often fall below 0 ° C (32 ° F) and sometimes below ? 10 ° C (14 ° F) . Typically , temperatures throughout one year range from ? 13 ° C to 39 ° C. Occurrences of precipitation are evenly distributed throughout the year , being heaviest from October to December and from April to June .

= = = Nature and environment = = =

The city of Skopje encompasses various natural environments and its fauna and flora are rich . However , it is threatened by the intensification of agriculture and the urban extension . The largest protected area within the city limits is Mount Vodno , which is a popular leisure destination . A cable car connects its peak to the downtown , and many pedestrian paths run through its woods . Other large natural spots include the Matka Canyon .

The city itself comprises several parks and gardens amounting to 4 @, @ 361 hectares . Among these are the City Park (Gradski Park) , built by the Ottoman Turks at the beginning of the 20th century ; ?ena Borec Park , located in front of the Parliament ; the University arboretum ; and Gazi Baba forest . Many streets and boulevards are planted with trees .

Skopje experiences many environmental issues which are often overshadowed by the economic poverty of the country . However , alignment of Macedonian law on European law has brought progress in some fields , such as water and waste treatment , and industrial emissions .

Steel processing , which a crucial activity for the local economy , is responsible for soil pollution with heavy metals such as lead , zinc and cadmium , and air pollution with nitrogen oxide and carbon monoxide . Vehicle traffic and district heating plants are also responsible for air pollution . The highest pollution levels usually occur in autumn and winter .

Water treatment plants are being built , but much polluted water is still discharged untreated into the Vardar . Waste is disposed of in the open @-@ air municipal landfill site , located 15 km north of the city . Every day , it receives 1 @, @ 500 m3 of domestic waste and 400 m3 of industrial waste . Health levels are better in Skopje than in the rest of the Republic of Macedonia , and no link has been found between the low environmental quality and the health of the residents .

= = Urbanism = =

= = = Urban morphology = = =

The urban morphology of Skopje was deeply impacted by the 26th of July 1963 earthquake which destroyed 80 % of the city and by the reconstruction that followed . For instance , neighbourhoods were rebuilt in such a way that the demographic density remains low to limit the impact of potential future earthquakes .

Reconstruction following the 1963 earthquake was mainly conducted by the Polish architect Adolf Ciborowski , who had already planned the reconstruction of Warsaw after World War II . Ciborowski divided the city in blocks dedicated to specific activities . The banks of the Vardar river became natural areas and parks , areas located between the main boulevards were built with highrise housing and shopping malls , and the suburbs were left to individual housing and industry . Reconstruction had to be quick in order to relocate families and to relaunch the local economy . To stimulate economic development , the number of thoroughfares was increased and future urban extension was anticipated .

The south bank of the Vardar river generally comprises highrise tower blocks , including the vast Karpo? neighbourhood which was built in the 1970s west of the centre . Towards the East , the new

municipality of Aerodrom was planned in the 1980s to house 80 000 inhabitants on the site of the old airport . Between Karpo? and Aerodrom lies the city centre , rebuilt according to plans by Japanese architect Kenzo Tange . The centre is surrounded by a row of long buildings suggesting a wall (" Gradski Zid ") .

On the north bank , where the most ancient parts of the city lie , the Old Bazaar was restored and its surroundings were rebuilt with low -rise buildings , so as not to spoil views of the Skopje Fortress . Several institutions , including the university and the Macedonian academy , were also relocated on the north bank in order to reduce borders between the ethnic communities . Indeed , the north bank is mostly inhabited by Muslim Albanians , Turks and Roma , whereas Christian ethnic Macedonians predominantly reside on the south bank .

The earthquake left the city with few historical monuments , apart from the Ottoman Old Bazaar , and the reconstruction , conducted between the 1960s and 1980s , turned Skopje into a modernist but grey city . At the end of the 2000s , the city center experienced profound changes . An urban project , " Skopje 2014 " , was adopted by the municipal authorities in order to give the city a more monumental and historical aspect , and thus to transform it into a proper national capital . Several neoclassical buildings destroyed in the 1963 earthquake were rebuilt , including the national theatre , and streets and squares were refurbished . Many other elements were also built , including fountains , statues , hotels , government buildings and bridges . The project has been criticised because of its cost and its historicist aesthetics . The large Albanian minority felt it was not represented in the new monuments , and launched side projects , including a new square over the boulevard that separate the city centre from the Old Bazaar .

Some areas of Skopje suffer from a certain anarchy because many houses and buildings were built without consent from the local authorities .

= = = Localities and villages = = =

Outside of the urban area , the City of Skopje encompasses many small settlements . Some of them are becoming outer suburbs , such as Singeli? , located on the road to Belgrade , which has more than 23 000 inhabitants , and Dra?evo , which has almost 20 000 inhabitants . Other large settlements are located north of the city , such as Radi?ani , with 9 000 inhabitants , whereas smaller villages can be found on Mount Vodno or in Saraj municipality , which is the most rural of the ten municipalities that form the City of Skopje .

Some localities located outside the city limits are also becoming outer suburbs , particularly in Ilinden and Petrovec municipality . They benefit from the presence of major roads , railways and the airport , located in Petrovec .

= = = Urban sociology = = =

Skopje is an ethnically diverse city , and its urban sociology primarily depends on ethnic and religious belonging . Macedonians form 66 % of the city population , while Albanians and Roma account respectively for 20 % and 6 % . Each ethnic group generally restrict itself to certain areas of the city . Macedonians live south of the Vardar , in areas massively rebuilt after 1963 , and Muslims live on the northern side , in the oldest neighbourhoods of the city . These neighbourhoods are considered more traditional , whereas the south side evokes to Macedonians modernity and rupture from rural life .

The northern areas are the poorest . This is especially true for Topaana , in ?air municipality , and for ?uto Orizari municipality , which are the two main Roma neighbourhoods . They are made of many illegal constructions not connected to electricity and water supply , which are passed from a generation to the other . Topaana , located close to the Old Bazaar , is a very old area : it was first mentioned as a Roma neighbourhood in the beginning of the 14th century . It has between 3 000 and 5 000 inhabitants . ?uto Orizari , located on the northern edge of the city , is a municipality of its own , with Romani as its local official language . It was developed after the 1963 earthquake to accommodate Roma who had lost their house .

The population density varies greatly from an area to the other . So does the size of the living area per person . The city average was at 19 @. @ 41 square metres (208 @. @ 93 square feet) per person as of 2002 , but at 24 square metres (258 square feet) in Centar on the south bank , and only 14 square metres (151 square feet) in ?air on the north bank . In ?uto Orizari , the average was at 13 square metres (140 square feet) .

= = Toponymy = =

The current name of the city comes from " Scupi " , which was the name of a Roman colony located nearby . However , before the colony was created , the site had already been settled by Illyrians and " Scupi " is probably of Illyrian origin . The meaning of that name is unknown .

After Antiquity , Scupi was occupied by various people and consequently its name was translated several times in several languages . Thus Scupi became " Skopye " (Bulgarian : ?????) for Bulgarians , and later " Üsküb " (Ottoman Turkish : ?????) for the Turks . This name was adapted in Western languages in " Uskub " or " Uskup " , and these two appellations were used in the Western world until 1912 . Some Western sources also cite " Scopia " and " Skopia " .

When Vardar Macedonia was annexed by the Kingdom of Serbia in 1912 , the city officially became " Skoplje " and this name was adopted by many languages . The city eventually became " Skopje " (Macedonian : ?????) after the Second World War , when standard Macedonian became the official language of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia . The Albanian minority calls the city " Shkup " and " Shkupi " , the latter being the definite form , and Roma call it " Skopiye " .

= = History = =

= = = Origins = = =

The rocky promontory on which stands the Fortress was the first site settled by man in Skopje . The earliest vestiges of human occupation found on this site date from the Chalcolithic (4th millennium BC) .

Although the Chalcolithic settlement must have been of some significance , it declined during the Bronze Age . Archeological research suggest that the settlement always belonged to a same culture , which progressively evolved thanks to contacts with Balkan and Danube cultures , and later with the Aegean . The locality eventually disappeared during the Iron Age when Scupi emerged . Scupi was originally an Illyrian settlement founded during the 1st millennium BC but it later became a Dardanian town . It was located on Zaj?ev Rid hill , some 5 kilometres (3 @. @ 1 mi) west of the fortress promontory . Located at the centre of the Balkan peninsula and on the road between Danube and Aegean Sea , it was a prosperous locality , although its history is not well known .

= = = Roman Scupi = = =

Dardanians , who lived in present @-@ day Kosovo , invaded the region around Skopje during the 3rd century BC . Scupi , the ancient name for Skopje , became the capital of Dardania , which extended from Naissus to Bylazora in the second century BC . The Dardanians had remained independent after the Roman conquest of Macedon , and it seems most likely that Dardania lost independence in 28 BC . Roman expansion east brought Scupi under Roman rule as a colony of legionnaires , mainly veterans of the Legio IIV Claudia in the time of Domitian (81 ? 96 AD) . However , several legions from the Roman province of Macedonia of Crassus ' army may already have been stationed in there around 29 ? 28 BC , before the official imperial command was instituted . The first mention of the city was made at that period by Livy , who died in 17 AD . Scupi first served as a military base to maintain peace in the region and was officially named " Colonia Flavia Scupinorum " , Flavia being the name of the emperor 's dynasty . Shortly afterwards it became part of the province of Moesia during Augustus 's rule . After the division of the province by

Domitian in 86 AD , Scupi was elevated to colonial status , and became a seat of government within the new province of Moesia Superior . The district called Dardania (within Moesia Superior) was formed into a special province by Diocletian , with the capital at Naissus .

The city population was very diverse . Engravings on tombstones suggest that only a minority of the population came from Italy , while many veterans were from Dalmatia , South Gaul and Syria . Because of the ethnic diversity of the population , Latin maintained itself as the main language in the city at the expense of Greek , which was spoken in most of the Moesian and Macedonian cities . During the following centuries , Scupi experienced prosperity . The period from the end of the 3rd century to the end of the 4th century was particularly flourishing . A first church was founded under the reign of Constantine the Great and Scupi became the seat of a diocese . In 395 , following the division of the Roman Empire in two , Scupi became part of the Eastern Roman Empire .

In its heyday , Scupi covered 40 hectares and was closed by a 3 @.@ 5 m wide wall . It had many monuments , including four necropoles , a theatre , thermae , and a large Christian basilica .

= = = Middle Ages = = =

In 518 , Scupi was destroyed by a violent earthquake , possibly the most devastating one Macedonia has ever experienced . At that time , the region was threatened by the Barbarian invasions , and the city inhabitants had already fled in forests and mountains before the disaster occurred . Scupi was eventually rebuilt by Justinian I. During his reign , many Byzantine towns were relocated on hills and other easily defendable places to face invasions . Scupi was thus transferred on another site : the promontory on which stands the fortress . However , Scupi was sacked by Slavs at the end of the 6th century and the city seems to have fallen under Slavic rule in 695 . The Slavic tribe which settled in Scupi were probably the Berziti who had invaded the entire Vardar valley . The city is not mentioned during the three following centuries but along with the rest of Upper Vardar it became part of the expanding First Bulgarian Empire in the 830s .

Starting from the end of the 10th century Skopje experienced a period of wars and political troubles . Bulgarian capital from 972 to 992 , Samuil ruled it from 976 until 1004 when its governor Roman surrendered it to Byzantine Emperor Basil the Bulgar Slayer in 1004 in exchange of the titles of patrician and strategos . Later , Skopje was briefly seized twice by Slavic insurgents who wanted to restore a Bulgarian state . At first in 1040 under Peter Delyan 's command , and in 1072 under the orders of Georgi Voyteh . In 1081 , Skopje was captured by Norman troops led by Robert Guiscard and the city remained in their hands until 1088 . Skopje was subsequently conquered by the Serbian Grand Prince Vukan in 1093 , and again by the Normans four years later . However , because of epidemics and food shortage , Normans quickly surrendered to the Byzantines .

During the 12th and 13th centuries , Bulgarians and Serbs took advantage of Byzantine decline to create large kingdoms stretching from Danube to the Aegean Sea . Kaloyan brought Skopje back into reestablished Bulgaria in 1203 until his nephew Strez declared autonomy along the Upper Vardar with Serbian help only five years later . In 1209 Strez switched allegiances and recognized Boril of Bulgaria with whom he led a successful joint campaign against Serbia 's first internationally recognized king Stefan Nemanji? . From 1214 to 1230 Skopje was a part of Byzantine successor state Epirus before recaptured by Ivan Asen II and held by Bulgaria until 1246 when the Upper Vardar valley was incorporated once more into a Byzantine state ? the Empire of Nicaea . Byzantine conquest was briefly reversed in 1255 by the regents of the young Michael Asen I of Bulgaria . Meanwhile , in the parallel civil war for the Crown in Tarnovo Skopje bolyar and grandson to Stefan Nemanja Constantine Tikh gained the upper hand and ruled until Europe 's only successful peasant revolt the Uprising of Ivaylo deposed him . In 1282 Skopje was captured by Serbian king Milutin . Under the political stability of the Nemanji? rule , Skopje slowly spread outside the walls of the fortress towards Gazi Baba hill . Churches , monasteries and markets were built and tradesmen from Venice and Dubrovnik opened shops . The town greatly benefited from its location on the roads between Europe , Middle @-@ East and Africa . In the 14th century , Skopje became such an important city that king Du?an made it the capital of the Serbian kingdom . In 1346 , he was crowned " Emperor of the Serbs and Greeks " in Skopje . After his death the Serbian Empire

collapsed into many small principalities which were unable to defend themselves against the Turks . Skopje was first inherited by the Lordship of Prilep and finally taken by Vuk Branković in the wake of the Battle of Maritsa (1371) before becoming part of the Ottoman Empire in 1392 .

= = = Ottoman period = = =

Skopje economic life greatly benefited from its position in the middle of Turkish Europe . Until the 17th century , Skopje experienced a long golden age . Around 1650 , the number of inhabitants in Skopje was between 30 000 and 60 000 and the city contained more than 10 000 houses . It was then one of the only big cities on the territory of future Yugoslavia , together with Belgrade and Sarajevo . At that time , Dubrovnik , which was a busy harbour , had not even 7 000 inhabitants . Following the Ottoman conquest , the city population changed . Christians were forcibly converted to Islam or were replaced by Turks and Jews . At that time , Christians of Skopje were mostly non converted Slavs and Albanians , but also Ragusan and Armenian tradesmen . Ottoman Turks drastically changed the appearance of the city . They organised the Bazaar with its caravanserais , mosques and baths .

The city severely suffered from the Great Turkish War at the end of the 17th century and consequently experienced recession until the 19th century . In 1689 , Austrians seized Skopje which was already weakened by a cholera epidemic . The same day , general Silvio Piccolomini set fire to the city to end the epidemic . It is however possible that he wanted to avenge damages that Turks caused in Vienna in 1683 . Skopje burned during two days . The Austrian presence in Macedonia motivated Slav uprisings . Nevertheless , Austrians left the country within the year and Hajduks , leaders of the uprisings , had to follow them in their retreat north of the Balkans . Some were arrested by the Turks , such as Petar Karposh , who was impaled on Skopje Stone Bridge .

After the war , Skopje was in ruins . Most of the official buildings were restored or rebuilt , but the city experienced new plague and cholera epidemics and many inhabitants emigrated . The Ottoman Turkish Empire as a whole entered in recession and political decline . Many rebellions and pillages occurred in Macedonia during the 18th century , either led by Turkish outlaws , Janissaries or Hajduks . An estimation conducted by French officers around 1836 revealed that at that time Skopje only had around 10 000 inhabitants . It was largely overwhelmed by two towns of the present @-@ day Republic of Macedonia : Bitola (40 000) and ?tip (15 ? 20 000) .

Skopje began to recover from decades of decline after 1850 . At that time , the city experienced a slow but steady demographic growth , mainly due to the rural exodus of Slav Macedonians . It was also fuelled by the exodus of Muslims from Serbia and Bulgaria , which were gaining autonomy and independence from the Empire at that time . During the Tanzimat reforms , nationalism arose in the Empire and in 1870 a new Bulgarian Church was established and its separate diocese was created , based on ethnic identity , rather than religious principles . The Slavic population of the bishopric of Skopje voted in 1874 overwhelmingly , by 91 % in favour of joining the Exarchate and became part of the Bulgarian Millet . Economic growth was permitted by the construction of the Skopje @-@ Salonica railway in 1873 . The train station was built south of the Vardar and this contributed to the relocation of economic activities on this side of the river , which had never been urbanised before . Because of the rural exodus , the share of Christians in the city population arose . Some of the newcomers became part of the local elite and helped to spread nationalist ideas Skopje was one of the five main centres of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization when it organised the 1903 Ilinden uprising . Its revolutionary network in Skopje region was not well @-@ developed and the lack of weapons was a serious problem . At the outbreak of the uprising the rebel forces derailed a military train . On 3 and 5 August respectively , they attacked a Turkish unit guarding the bridge on the Vardar river and gave a battle in the " St. Jovan " monastery . In the next few days the band was pursued by numerous Bashibozuks and moved to Bulgaria .

In 1877 , Skopje was chosen as the capital city of the new Kosovo Vilayet , which encompassed present @-@ day Kosovo , northwestern Macedonia and the Sanjak of Novi Pazar . In 1905 , the city had 32 000 inhabitants , making it the largest of the vilayet , although closely followed by Prizren with its 30 000 inhabitants . At the beginning of the 20th century , local economy was

focused on dyeing , weaving , tanning , ironworks and wine and flour processing .

Following the Young Turk Revolution in 1908 , the Ottoman Turkish Empire experienced democracy and several political parties were created . However , some of the policies implemented by the Young Turks , such as a tax rise and the interdiction of ethnic @-@ based political parties , discontented minorities . Albanians opposed the nationalist character of the movement and led local uprisings in 1910 and 1912 . During the latter they managed to seize most of Kosovo and took Skopje on 11 August . On 18 August , the insurgents signed the Üsküb agreement which provided for the creation of an autonomous Albanian province and they were amnestied the day later .

= = = From the Balkan Wars to present day = = =

Following an alliance contracted in 1912 , Bulgaria , Greece and Serbia declared war on the Ottoman Turkish Empire . Their goal was to definitely expel Turks from Europe . The First Balkan War started on 8 October 1912 and lasted six weeks . Serbians reached Skopje on 26 October . The Turkish forces had left the city the day before . The Serbian annexation led to the exodus of many Turks : 725 Turkish families left the city on 27 January 1913 . The same year , the city population was evaluated at 37 @,@ 000 by the Serbian authorities .

In 1915 , during the First World War , Serbian Macedonia was invaded by Bulgaria , which captured Skopje on 22 October 1915 . Serbia , allied to the Triple Entente , was helped by France , Britain , Greece , and Italy , which formed the Macedonian Front . Following a great Allied offensive in 1918 , the Armée française d 'Orient reached Skopje 29 September and took the city by surprise . After the end of the World War , Macedonia became part of the new Kingdom of Serbs , Croats , and Slovenes , which became " Kingdom of Yugoslavia " in 1929 . A mostly foreign ethnic Serb ruling class gained control , imposing a repression unknown under the previous Turkish rulers . The policies of de @-@ Bulgarisation and assimilation were pursued . At that time part of the young locals , repressed by the Serbs , tried to find a separate way of ethnic Macedonian development . In 1931 , in a move to formally decentralize the country , Skopje was named the capital of the Vardar Banovina of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia . Until the Second World War , Skopje experienced strong economic growth , and its population increased . The city had 41 @,@ 066 inhabitants in 1921 , 64 @,@ 807 in 1931 , and 80 @,@ 000 in 1941 . Although located in an underdeveloped region , it attracted wealthy Serbs who opened businesses and contributed to the modernisation of the city . In 1941 , Skopje had 45 factories , half of the industry in the whole of Macedonia .

In 1941 , during the Second World War , Yugoslavia was invaded by Nazi Germany . Germans seized Skopje 8 April and left it to their Bulgarian allies on 22 April 1941 . To ensure bulgarisation of the society , authorities closed Serbian schools and churches and opened new schools and a higher education institute , the King Boris University . The 4 @,@ 000 Jews of Skopje were all deported in 1943 to Treblinka where almost all of them died . Local Partisan detachments started a widespread guerrilla after the proclamation of the " Popular Republic of Macedonia " by the ASNOM on 2 August 1944 . Skopje was liberated on 13 November 1944 by Yugoslav Partisan units of the Macedonian National Liberation Army , together with units of the newly allied Bulgarian People 's Army (Bulgaria having switched sides in the war in September) .

After World War II , Skopje greatly benefited from Socialist Yugoslav policies which encouraged industry and the development of Macedonian cultural institutions . Consequently , Skopje became home to a national library , a national philharmonic orchestra , a university and the Macedonian Academy . However , its post @-@ war development was altered by the 1963 earthquake which occurred 26 July . Although relatively weak in magnitude , it caused enormous damage in the city and can be compared to the 1960 Agadir earthquake . The disaster killed 1 @,@ 070 people , injuring 3 @,@ 300 others . 16 @,@ 000 people were buried alive in ruins and 70 % of the population lost their home . Many educational facilities , factories and historical buildings were destroyed .

After the earthquake , reconstruction was quick . It had a deep psychological impact on the population because neighbourhoods were split and people were relocated to new houses and buildings they were not familiar with . Reconstruction was finished by 1980 , even if many elements

were never built because funds were exhausted . Skopje cityscape was drastically changed and the city became a true example of modernist architecture . Demographic growth was very important after 1963 , and Skopje had 408 @,@ 100 inhabitants in 1981 . However , during the 1980s and the 1990s , the Republic of Macedonia experienced inflation and recession and the local economy heavily suffered . The situation became better during the 2000s thanks to new investments . Many landmarks were restored and the " Skopje 2014 " project renewed the appearance of the city centre .

= = Emblems = =

The Flag of Skopje is a red banner in proportions 1 : 2 with a gold @-@ coloured coat of arms of the city positioned in the upper @-@ left corner . It is either vertical or horizontal , but the vertical version was the first to be used .

The coat of arms of the city was adopted in the 1950s . It depicts the Stone Bridge with the Vardar river , the Kale Fortress and the snow @-@ capped peaks of the ?ar mountains .

= = Administration = =

= = = Status = = =

Being the capital and largest city of the Republic of Macedonia , Skopje enjoys a particular status granted by law . The last revision of its status was made in 2004 . Since then , the City of Skopje has been divided into 10 municipalities which all have a council and a mayor , like all the municipalities of the Republic of Macedonia . Municipalities only deal with matters specific of their territory , and the City of Skopje deals with matters that concern all of them , or that cannot be divided between two or more municipalities .

The City of Skopje is part of Skopje Statistical Region , which has no political or administrative power .

= = = City Council = = =

The City Council consists of 45 members who serve a four @-@ year term . It primarily deals with budget , global orientations and relations between the City and the government . Several commissions exist to treat more specific topics , such as urbanism , finances , environment of local development .

The President of the Council is elected by the Council Members . Since 2009 the president has been Irena Mi?eva , member of the VMRO @-@ DPMNE .

Following the 2013 local elections , the City Council is constituted as follows :

= = = Mayor = = =

The Mayor of Skopje is elected every four years . The current mayor has been Koce Trajanovski since 2009 . A former deputy and mayor of Gazi Baba municipality , he is a member of the VMRO @-@ DPMNE .

The mayor represents the City of Skopje and he can submit ideas to the Council . He manages the administrative bodies and their officials .

= = = Municipalities = = =

Skopje was first divided into administrative units in 1945 , but the first municipalities were created in 1976 . They were five : Centar , ?air , Karpo? , Gazi Baba and Kisela Voda . After the independence of the Republic of Macedonia , power was centralised and municipalities lost much of their

competences . A 1996 law restored them and created two new municipalities : Gjeç Petrov and Šuto Orizari . After the insurgency between Albanian rebels and Macedonian forces in 2001 , a new law was enacted in 2004 to incorporate Saraj municipality into the City of Skopje . Saraj is mostly populated by Albanians and , since then , Albanians represent more than 20 % of the city population . Thus Albanian became the second official language of the city administration , something which was one of the claims of the Albanian rebels . The same year , Aerodrom Municipality separated itself from Kisela Voda , and Butel municipality from Šair .

Municipalities are administered by a council of 23 members elected every four years . They also have a mayor and several departments (education , culture , finances ...) . The mayor primarily deals with these departments .

= = Economy = =

= = = Economic weight = = =

Skopje is a medium city at European level , but because of their administrative function , they can be compared to small regional metropolis like Sofia and Thessaloniki . Being the capital and largest city in the Republic of Macedonia , Skopje concentrates a large share of the national economy . The Skopje Statistical Region , which encompasses the City of Skopje and some neighbouring municipalities , produces 45 % of the Macedonian GDP . In 2009 , the regional GDP per capita amounted to USD 6 565 , or 155 % of the Macedonian GDP per capita . This figure is however smaller than the one of Sofia (USD 10 106) , Sarajevo (USD 10 048) or Belgrade (USD 7 983) , but higher than the one of Tirana (USD 4 126) .

Because there are no other large city in the Republic of Macedonia , and because of political and economical centralisation , a large number of Macedonians living outside of Skopje work in the capital city . The dynamism of the city also encourages rural exodus , not only from Macedonia , but also from Kosovo , Albania and Southern Serbia .

= = = Firms and activities = = =

In 2009 , Skopje had 26 056 firms but only 145 of them had a large size . The large majority of them are either small (12 017) or very small (13 625) . A large share of the firms deal with trade of goods (9 758) , 3 839 are specialised in business and real estate , and 2 849 are manufacturers . Although few in number , large firms account for 51 % of the local production outside finance .

The city industry is dominated by food processing , textile , printing and metal processing . In 2012 , it accounted for 30 % of the city GDP . Most of the industrial areas are located in Gazi Baba municipality , on the major routes and rail lines to Belgrade and Thessaloniki . Notably , the ArcelorMittal and Makstil steel plants are located there , and also the Skopje Brewery . Other zones are located between Aerodrom and Kisela Voda , along the railway to Greece . These zones comprise Alkaloid Skopje (pharmaceuticals) , Rade Konar (electrical supplies) , Imperial Tobacco , and Ohis (fertilisers) . Two special economic zones also exist , around the airport and the Okta refinery . They have attracted several foreign companies , such as Johnson Controls , Johnson Matthey and Van Hool .

As the financial capital of the Republic of Macedonia , Skopje is the seat of the Macedonian Stock Exchange , of the National Bank and of most of the Macedonian banking , insurance and telecommunication companies , such as Makedonski Telekom , Komercijalna banka Skopje and Stopanska Banka . The services sector produces 60 % of the city GDP .

Besides many small traditional shops , Skopje has two large markets , the " Zelen Pazar " (green market) and the " Bit Pazar " (flea market) . They are both considered as local institutions . However , since the 1970s , retailing has largely been modernised and Skopje now has many supermarkets and shopping malls . The largest , Skopje City Mall , opened in 2012 . It comprises a

Carrefour hypermarket , 130 shops and a cinema , and employs 2 @, @ 000 people .

= = = Employment = = =

51 % of Skopje active population is employed in small firms . 52 % of the population work in the services sector , 34 % in industry , and the remaining is mainly employed in administration .

The unemployment rate for the Skopje Statistical Region was at 27 % in 2009 , three points under the national rate (30 %) . The neighbouring Polog Region had a similar rate , but the less affected region was the South @-@ West , with 22 % . Unemployment in Skopje mainly concern men , who represent 56 % of job @-@ seekers , people between 25 and 44 years old (45 % of job @-@ seekers) , and non @-@ qualified people (43 %) . Unemployment also concerns Roma people , who represent 4 @. @ 63 % of the city population . Unemployment concerns 70 % of the active population in the community .

The average net monthly wage in Skopje was at ? 400 in October 2010 , which represented 120 % of the national figure . The average wage in Skopje was then lower than in Sarajevo (? 522) Sofia (? 436) and in Belgrade (? 440) .

= = = Population = = =

= = = Demography = = =

The City of Skopje had 506 @, @ 926 inhabitants within its administrative limits in 2002 , while the urban unit itself had 378 @, @ 243 inhabitants . A 2006 estimation gave 668 @, @ 518 inhabitants to the City in its administrative limits . Skopje 's employment area covers a large part of the Republic of Macedonia , including Veles , Kumanovo and Tetovo , and totaling more than one million inhabitants .

Skopje concentrates a third of Macedonia 's population and other Macedonian towns are much smaller . The second most populous municipality , Kumanovo , had 107 @, @ 632 inhabitants in 2011 , and an urban unit of 76 @, @ 272 inhabitants in 2002 .

Before the Austro @-@ Turkish war and the 1698 Great Fire , Skopje was one of the biggest cities in the Balkans , with a population estimated between 30 @, @ 000 and 60 @, @ 000 inhabitants . After the fire , it experienced a long period of decline and only had 10 @, @ 000 inhabitants in 1836 . However , the population started to rise again after 1850 and reached 32 @, @ 000 inhabitants in 1905 . In the 20th century , Skopje was one of the fastest growing cities in Yugoslavia and it has 448 @, @ 200 inhabitants in 1971 . Since then , the demographic growth has continued at a steady pace .

= = = Ethnic groups = = =

Skopje , as the Republic of Macedonia as a whole , is characterised by a large ethnic diversity . The city is located in a region where Ethnic Albanians and Macedonians meet , and it welcomed Romani , Turks , Jews and Serbs throughout its history . Skopje was mainly a Muslim city until the 19th century , when large number of Christians started to settle there . According to the 2002 census , Macedonians were the largest ethnic group in Skopje , with 338 @, @ 358 inhabitants , or 66 @. @ 75 % of the population . Then came Albanians with 103 @, @ 891 inhabitants (20 @. @ 49 %) , Roma people with 23 @, @ 475 (4 @. @ 63 %) , Serbs (14 @, @ 298 inhabitants) , Turks (8 @, @ 595) , Bosniaks (7 @, @ 585) and Vlachs (2 @, @ 557) . 8 @, @ 167 people did not belong to any of these groups .

Ethnic Macedonians form an overwhelming majority of the population in the municipalities of Aerodrom , Centar , Gjor?e Petrov , Karpo? and Kisela Voda , which are all located south of the Vardar . They also form a majority in Butel and Gazi Baba which are north of the river . Albanians form a majority in ?air which roughly corresponds to the Old Bazaar , and in Saraj . They form a

large minority in Butel and Gazi Baba . ?uto Orizari , located on the northern edge of the city , is predominantly Roma .

When an ethnic minority forms at least 20 % of the population in a municipality , its language can become official on the local level . Thus , in ?air and Saraj schools and administration use Albanian , and Romani in ?uto Orizari . The latter is the only municipality in the world where Romani is an official language .

Relations between the two largest groups , Macedonians and Albanians , are sometimes difficult , as in the rest of the country . Each group tolerate the other but they tend to avoid each other and live in what can appear as two parallel worlds . The Roma minority is on its side very deprived . Its exact size is not known because many Macedonian Roma declare themselves as belonging to other ethnic groups or simply avoid censuses . However , even if official figures are underestimated , Skopje is the city in the world with the largest Roma population .

= = = Religion = = =

Religious affiliation is closely linked to ethnicity : Macedonians , Serbs and Vlachs are mainly Orthodox , while Albanians , Turks and Roma (Gypsies) are usually Muslim . Skopje also has a Catholic Albanian minority , to which belonged Mother Teresa .

According to the 2002 census , 68 @. @ 5 % of the population of Skopje belonged to the Eastern Orthodox Church , while 28 @. @ 6 % of it belonged to Islam . The city also had a Catholic (0 @. @ 5 %) and Protestant (0 @. @ 04 %) minorities . The Catholics are served by the Latin bishopric of Skopje , in which is also vested the Byzantine Rite Macedonian Apostolic Exarchate of Macedonia .

Until World War II , Skopje had a significant Jewish minority which mainly descended from Spanish Sephardis who had escaped the Inquisition . The community comprised 2 @, @ 424 members in 1939 and most of them were deported and killed by Nazis . After the war , most of the survivors settled in Israel .

Because of its Ottoman past , Skopje has more mosques than churches . Religious communities often complain about the lack of infrastructure and new places of worship are often built . Skopje is the seat of many Macedonian religious organisations , such as the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the Islamic Religious Union of Macedonia . It has an Orthodox cathedral and seminary , several madrasahs , a Roman Catholic cathedral and a synagogue .

= = = Health = = =

Skopje has several public and private hospitals and specialised medical institutions , such as a psychiatric hospital , two obstetric hospitals , a gerontology hospital and institutes for respiratory and ocular diseases . In 2012 , Skopje had a ratio of one physician per 251 @. @ 6 inhabitants , a figure higher than the national ratio (one per 370 @. @ 9) . The ratio of medical specialists was also higher than in the rest of the country . However , the ratio of hospital beds , pharmacists and dentists was lower in Skopje . The population in Skopje enjoys better health standards than other Macedonians . In 2010 , the mortality rate was at 8 @. @ 6 ? in Skopje and 9 @. @ 3 ? on the national level . The infant mortality rate was at 6 @. @ 8 ? in Skopje and 7 @. @ 6 ? in Macedonia .

= = = Education = = =

Skopje 's citizenry is generally more educated than the rest of the country . For one , 16 % of Skopjans graduated university in contrast to 10 % for the rest of the country . The amount of people with a complete lack of education or ones who received a partial education is lower in Skopje at 9 % compared to the provincial average of 17 % . 80 % of Macedonian citizens who hold a PhD take up residence in Skopje .

Skopje has 21 secondary schools ; 5 of which serve as general high @-@ school gymnasiums and 16 vocational schools . The city is also host to several higher education institutions , the most notable of which is Ss . Cyril and Methodius University , founded in 1949 . The university has 23

departments , 10 research institutes and is attended by an average of 50 @,@ 000 students . After the declaration of independence for the Republic of Macedonia in 1991 , several private universities were brought to existence . The largest private universities in Skopje are currently European University with 7 departments and FON University with 9 departments respectively .

= = Media = =

Skopje is the largest media center in Macedonia . Of the 818 newspapers surveyed in 2000 by the Ministry of Information , over 600 had their headquarters in Skopje . The daily Dnevnik , founded in 1996 , with 60 000 runs per day is the most printed in the country . Also based in Skopje , Ve?er is pulled 50 @,@ 000 copies and the state owns one third of its capital , as well as Nova Makedonija , reprinted 20 @,@ 000 copies . Other major newspapers in Skopje , totally private , are Utrinski Vesnik (30 @,@ 000 copies) , Vest (25 @,@ 000 copies) and Vreme (15 @,@ 000 copies) . Magazines Fokus (12 @,@ 000 copies) , Start (10 @,@ 000 copies) , and Denes (7 @,@ 500 copies) also have their headquarters in Skopje .

The city is home of the studios of Macedonian Radio @-@ Television (MRT) , the country 's public radio and television . Founded in 1966 , it operate withs three national broadcast channels , twenty @-@ four hours at day . The most popular private television stations are Sitel . Kanal 5 , Telma , Alfa TV and AlsatM are another major private television companies . MRT also operates radio stations with national coverage , the private station Skopje 's Kanal 77 is the only one to have such a span . Radio Antenna 5 and Metropolis are two other major private stations that have their headquarters in Skopje .

Also , the city boasts big news agencies in the country , both public , as the Macedonian Information Agency , and private , such as the Makfax .

= = Sports = =

As the capital and largest city of Macedonia , Skopje has many major sporting facilities . The city has three large swimming pools , two of which feature Olympic pools . These pools are particularly relevant to coaching water polo teams . Skopje also boasts many football stadiums , like Ilinden in ?air and ?elezarnica , which can accommodate between 4 @,@ 000 and 4 @,@ 500 spectators . The basketball court Kale can accommodate 5 000 people and the court of Jane Sandanski , 4000 people .

?he largest stadium remains the Philip II Arena . The stadium , built in 1947 and named until 2008 , City Stadium Skopje experienced a total renovation , begun in 2009 to meet the standards of FIFA . Fully renovated the stadium contains 32 @,@ 580 seats , and a health spa and fitness . The Boris Trajkovski Sports Center is the largest sports complex in the country . It was opened in 2008 and named after president Boris Trajkovski , who died in 2004 . It includes room dedicated to handball , basketball and volleyball , a bowling alley , a fitness area and an ice hockey court . Its main hall , which regularly hosts concerts , holds around 10 @,@ 000 people .

FK Vardar and FK Rabotni?ki are the two most popular football teams , playing in the first national league . Their workouts are held at Philip Arena II , like those of the national team . The city is also home to many smaller football clubs , such as : FK Makedonija Gyor?e Petrov , FK Gorno Lisi?e , FK Lokomotiva Skopje , FK Metalurg Skopje , FK Mad?ari Solidarnost and FK Skopje , who play in first , second or third national league . Another popular sport in Macedonia is basketball , represented in particular by the teams Rabotni?ki and MZT Skopje . Handball is illustrated by RK Vardar PRO and RK Metalurg Skopje , also the women 's team ?RK Metalurg and ?RK Vardar . The city co @-@ hosted the 2008 European Women 's Handball Championship together with Ohrid .

= = Transport = =

= = = Main connections = = =

Skopje is located near three other capital cities , Prishtina (87 km away) , Tirana (291 km) and Sofia (245 km) . Thessaloniki is 233 km south and Belgrade is 433 km north . Skopje is also at the crossroad of two Pan @-@ European corridors : Corridor X , which runs between Austria and Greece , and Corridor VIII , which runs from the Adriatic in Albania to the Black sea in Bulgaria . Corridor X links Skopje to Thessaloniki , Belgrade and Western Europe , while Corridor VIII links it with Tirana and Sofia .

Corridor X locally corresponds to the M @-@ 1 motorway (E75) , which is the longest Macedonian highway . It also corresponds to the Tabanovce @-@ Gevgelija railway . Corridor VIII , less developed , corresponds to the M @-@ 4 motorway and the Ki?evo @-@ Beljakovce railway . Skopje is not quite on the Corridor X and the M @-@ 1 does not pass on the city territory . Thus the junction between the M @-@ 1 and M @-@ 4 is located some 20 km east , close to the airport . Although Skopje is geographically close to other major cities , movement of people and goods is not optimised , especially with Albania . This is mainly due to poor infrastructure . As a result , 61 @.@ 8 % of Skopjans have never been to Tirana , while only 6 @.@ 7 % have never been to Thessaloniki and 0 % to Sofia . Furthermore , 26 % of Thessalonians , 33 % of Sofians and 37 % of Tiranans have never been to Skopje .

= = = Rail and coach stations = = =

The main station in Skopje is serviced by the Belgrade @-@ Thessaloniki and Skopje @-@ Prishtina international lines . After the completion of the Corridor VIII railway scheduled for 2022 , the city will also be linked to Tirana and Sofia . Daily trains also link Skopje with other Macedonian towns , such as Kumanovo , Ki?evo , ?tip , Bitola or Veles .

Skopje has several minor train stations but the city does not have its own railway network and they are only serviced by intercity or international lines . On the railway linking the main station to Belgrade and Thessaloniki are Dra?evo and Dolno Lisi?e stations , and on the railway to Ki?evo are Skopje @-@ North , Gjor?e Petrov and Saraj stations . Several other stations are freight @-@ only .

Skopje coach station opened in 2005 and is built right under the main train station . It can host 450 coaches in a day . Coach connections to and from Skopje are much more efficient and diverse than train connections . Indeed , it is regularly linked to many Macedonian localities and foreign cities including Istanbul , Sofia , Prague , Hamburg and Stockholm .

= = = Public transport = = =

Skopje has a bus network managed by the City and operated by three companies . The oldest and largest is JSP Skopje , a public company founded in 1948 . JSP lost its monopoly on public transport in 1990 and two new companies , Sloboda Prevoz and Mak Ekspres , obtained several lines . However , most of the network is still in the hands of JSP which operates 67 lines on 80 . Only 24 lines are urban , the others serving localities around the city . Many of the JSP buses are red double @-@ decker buses designed to look like the British @-@ made buses that were in use in the 1950s and 1960s .

A tram network has long been planned in Skopje and the idea was first proposed in the 1980s . The project became real in 2006 when the mayor Trifun Kostovski asked for feasibility studies . His successor Koce Trajanovski launched a call for tenders in 2010 and the first line is scheduled for 2019 .

A new network for small buses started to operate in June 2014 , not to replace but to decrease the number of big buses in the city center .

= = = Airport = = =

Skopje has an international airport , Skopje " Alexander the Great " Airport . It is located in Petrovec

, some 20 km east of the city . Since 2008 , it has been managed by the Turkish TAV Airports Holding and it can accommodate up to four million passengers per year . The annual traffic has constantly risen since 2008 , reaching one million passengers in 2014 .

Skopje airport has connections to several European cities , including Vienna , Zürich , Brussels , Istanbul , London and Rome . It also maintains a direct connection with Dubai .

= = Culture = =

= = = Cultural institutions = = =

Being the capital of the Republic of Macedonia , Skopje is home to the largest cultural institutions of the country , such as the National and University Library " St. Kliment of Ohrid " , the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts , the National Theatre , the National Philharmonic Orchestra and the Macedonian Opera and Ballet . Among the local institutions are the Brothers Miladinov Library which has more than a million documents , the Cultural Information Centre which manages festivals , exhibitions and concerts , and the House of Culture Kočo Racin which is dedicated to contemporary art and young talents .

Skopje has also several foreign cultural centres , such as a Goethe @-@ Institut , a British Council , an Alliance française , an American Corner .

The city has several theatres and concert halls . The Univerzalna Sala , seating 1 @, @ 570 , was built in 1966 and is used for concerts , fashion shows and congresses . The Metropolis Arena , designed for large concerts , has 3 @, @ 546 seats . Other large halls include the Macedonian Opera and Ballet (800 seats) , the National Theatre (724) , and the Drama Theatre (333) . Other smaller venues exist , such as the Albanian Theatre and the Youth Theatre . A Turkish Theatre and a Philharmonic hall are under construction .

= = = Museums = = =

The largest museum in Skopje is the Museum of Macedonia which details the history of the country . Its icons and lapidary collections are particularly rich . The Macedonian Archeological Museum , opened in 2014 , keeps some of the best archeological finds in Macedonia , dating from Prehistory to the Ottoman period . The National Gallery of Macedonia exhibits paintings dating from the 14th to the 20th century in two former Turkish baths of the Old Bazaar . The Contemporary Art Museum of Macedonia was built after the 1963 earthquake thanks to international assistance . Its collections include Macedonian and foreign art , with works by Fernand Léger , André Masson , Pablo Picasso , Hans Hartung , Victor Vasarely , Alexander Calder , Pierre Soulages , Alberto Burri and Christo .

The Skopje City Museum is located inside the remains of the old train station , destroyed by the 1963 earthquake . It is dedicated to the local history and it has four departments : archeology , ethnology , history and art history . The Memorial House of Mother Teresa was built in 2009 on the site where stood the church where the Saint was baptised . The Museum of the Macedonian Struggle is dedicated to the modern national history and the struggle of Macedonians for their independence . Nearby is the Holocaust Memorial Center for the Jews of Macedonia . The Macedonian Museum of Natural History showcases some 4 @, @ 000 items while the 12 @-@ ha Skopje Zoo is home to 300 animals .

= = = Architecture = = =

Although Skopje has been destroyed many times through its history , it still has many historical landmarks which reflect the successive occupations of the city . Skopje has one of the biggest Ottoman urban complexes in Europe , with many Ottoman monuments still serving their original purpose . It was also a ground for modernist experiments in the 20th century , following the 1963 earthquake . In the beginning of the 21st century , it is again the subject of massive building

campaigns , thanks to the historicist and nationalist " Skopje 2014 " project . Skopje is thus an environment where old , new , progressist , reactionary , eastern and western perspectives coexist .

Skopje has some remains of Prehistorical architecture which can be seen on the Tumba Madžari Neolithic site . On the other side of the city lie the remains of the ancient Scupi , with ruins of a theatre , thermae and a basilica . The Skopje Aqueduct , located between Scupi and the city centre , is rather mysterious because its date of construction is unknown . It seems to have been built by the Byzantines or the Turks , but it was already out of use in the 16th century . It consists of 50 arches , worked in cloisonné masonry .

The Skopje Fortress was rebuilt several times before it was destroyed by the 1963 earthquake . Since then , it has been restored to its medieval appearance . It is the only medieval monument in Skopje , but several churches located around the city illustrate the Vardar architectural school which flourished around 1300 . Among these churches are the ones around Matka Canyon (St Nicholas , St Andrew and Matka churches) . The church of St. Panteleimon in Gorno Nerezi dates from the 12th century . Its expressive frescoes anticipate the Italian primitives .

Examples of Ottoman Turkish architecture are located in the Old Bazaar . Mosques in Skopje are usually simple in design , with a square base and a single dome and minaret . Their entrance is usually emphasised by a portico , as on Mustafa Pasha Mosque , dating from the 15th century . Some mosques show some originality in their appearance : Sultan Murad and Yahya Pasha mosques have lost their dome and have a pyramidal roof , while Isa Bey mosque has a rectangular base , two domes and two side wings . The Aladža Mosque was originally covered with blue faience , but it disappeared in the 1689 Great Fire . However , some tiles are still visible on the adjoining türbe . Other Turkish public monuments include the 16th @-@ century clock tower , a bedesten , three caravanserais , two Turkish baths and the Stone Bridge , first mentioned in 1469 .

The oldest churches in the city centre , the Ascension and St Dimitri churches , were built in the 18th century , after the 1689 Great Fire . They were both renovated in the 19th century . The Church of the Ascension is particularly small it is half @-@ buried in order not to overlook neighbouring mosques . In the 19th century , several new churches were built , including the Church of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary , which is a large three @-@ nave building designed by Andrey Damyanov .

After 1912 , when Skopje was annexed by Serbia , the city was drastically westernised . Wealthy Serbs built mansions and town houses such as the 1926 Ristić Palace . Architecture of that time is very similar to the one of Central Europe , but some buildings are more creative , such as the Neo @-@ Moorish Arab House and the Neo @-@ Byzantine train station , both built in 1938 . Modernism appeared as early as 1933 with the former Ethnographic Museum (today the City Gallery) , designed by Milan Zloković . However , modernist architecture only fully developed in Skopje after the 1963 earthquake . The reconstruction of city centre was partially planned by Japanese Kenzo Tange who designed the new train station . Macedonian architects also took part to the reconstruction : Georgi Konstantinovski designed the City Archives building in 1968 and the Hall of residence Goce Delčev in 1975 , while Janko Konstantinov designed the Telecommunication Centre and the main post office (1974 ? 1989) . Slavko Brezovski designed the Church of St. Clement of Ohrid . These two buildings are noted for their originality although they are directly inspired by brutalism .

The reconstruction turned Skopje into a proper modernist city , with large blocks of flats , austere concrete buildings and scattered green spaces . The city centre was considered as a grey and unattractive place when local authorities unveiled the " Skopje 2014 " project in 2010 . It made plans to erect a large number of statues , fountains , bridges , and museums at a cost of about ? 500 million .

The project has generated controversy : critics have described the new landmark buildings as signs of reactionary historicist aesthetics . Also , the government has been criticised for its cost and for the original lack of representation of national minorities in the coverage of its set of statues and memorials . However , representations of minorities have since been included among the monuments . The scheme is accused of turning Skopje to a theme park , which is viewed as nationalistic kitsch , and has made Skopje an example to see how national identities are constructed

and how this construction is mirrored in the urban space .

== = Festivals == =

The Skopje Jazz Festival has been held annually in October since 1981 . It is part of the European Jazz Network and the European Forum of World Wide Festivals . The artists ' profiles include fusion , acid jazz , Latin jazz , smooth jazz , and avant @-@ garde jazz . Ray Charles , Tito Puente , Gotan Project , Al Di Meola , Youssou N 'Dour , among others , have performed at the festival . Another music festival in Skopje is the Blues and Soul Festival . It is a relatively new event in the Macedonian cultural scene that occurs every summer in early July . Past guests include Larry Coryell , Mick Taylor & the All @-@ Stars Blues Band , Candy Dulfer & Funky Stuff , João Bosco , The Temptations , Tolo Marton Trio , Blues Wire , and Phil Guy .

The Skopje Cultural Summer Festival is a renowned cultural event that takes place in Skopje each year during the summer . The festival is a member of the International Festivals and Events Association (IFEA) and it includes musical concerts , operas , ballets , plays , art and photograph exhibitions , movies , and multimedia projects that gather 2 @,@ 000 participants from around the world each year including the St Petersburg Theatre , the Chamber Orchestra of the Bolshoi Theatre , Irina Arkhipova , Viktor Tretiakov , The Theatre of Shadows , Michel Dalberto , and David Burgess .

May Opera Evenings is a festival that has occurred annually in Skopje since 1972 and is dedicated to promoting opera among the general public . Over the years , it has evolved into a stage on which artists from some 50 countries have performed . There is one other major international theater festival that takes place each year at the end of month September , the Young Open Theater Festival (MOT) , which was organized for the first time in May 1976 by the Youth Cultural Center ? Skopje . More than 700 theatrical performances have been presented at this festival so far , most of them being alternative , experimental theatre groups engaging young writers and actors . The MOT International theater festival is also a member of the International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts or IETM . Within the framework of the MOT Festival , the Macedonian National Center of the International Theater Institute (ITI) was established , and at the 25th ITI World Congress in Munich in 1993 , it became a regular member of this theater association . The festival has an international character , always representing theaters from all over the world that present and enhance exchange and circulation of young @-@ fresh @-@ experimental @-@ avant guard theatrical energy and experience between its participants on one side and the audience on the other .

The Skopje Film Festival is an annual event held in the city every March . Over 50 films are shown at this five @-@ day festival , mostly from Macedonia and Europe , but also including some non @-@ commercial film productions from all over the world .

== = Nightlife == =

Skopje has a diverse nightlife . There is a large emphasis on casinos , many of which are associated with hotels , such as that of the Holiday Inn . Other casinos include Helios Metropol , Olympic , Bon Venon , and Sherry . Among young people the most popular destinations are bars , discos , and nightclubs which can be found in the center and the City Park . Among the most popular nightclubs are Midnight , Hard Rock , Maracana , B2 , Havana and Colosseum where world famous disc jockeys and idiosyncratic local performances are frequent . In 2010 , the Colosseum club was named fifth on a list of the best clubs in Southeastern Europe . Armin van Buuren , Above and Beyond , The Shapeshifters are just some of the many musicians that have visited the club . Nighttime concerts in local , regional and global music are often held at the Philip II National Arena and Boris Trajkovski Sports Center . For middle @-@ aged people , places for having fun are also the kafeanas where traditional Macedonian food is served and traditional Macedonian Music (Starogradska muzika) is played , but music from all the Balkans , particularly Serbian folk music is also popular . Apart from the traditional Macedonian restaurants , there are restaurants featuring

international cuisines . Some of the most popular cafés in Skopje are Café Ei8ht , Café Trend , Drama Café , Lex Café and Blue Café . The Old Bazaar was a popular nightlife destination in the past . The national government has created a project to revive nightlife in the Old Bazaar . The closing time in shops , cafés and restaurants was extended due to the high attendances recorded . In the bazaar 's restaurants , along with the traditional Macedonian wine and food , dishes of the Ottoman cuisine are also served .

= = People from Skopje = =

Notable people from Skopje include :

Mother Teresa , Roman Catholic humanitarian (honorary citizen of Skopje 27 June 1980) ([http : / / www.skopje.gov.mk / EN / DesktopDefault.aspx ? tabindex = 0 & tabid = 26](http://www.skopje.gov.mk/EN/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabindex=0&tabid=26))

Milčo Mančevski , film director

Darko Pančev , former footballer

Simon Trpčeski , pianist

Srgjan Kerim , former UN General Assembly president

Yahya Kemal Beyatlı , poet and diplomat

= = International relations = =

= = = Twin towns ? Sister cities = = =

Skopje is twinned with :

= = = Partnerships = = =