DOs AND DON'Ts IN Bulgaria

When visiting Bulgaria, bear in mind the following:

- We are a large and diverse community. Don't judge or generalize, nationality is rarely definitive for a person's character or understandings. Even so, there are a few things you should know before coming over:

- shake hands when meeting someone. A smile could also help. We very rarely exchange kisses on the cheek (as is traditional in France).
- Don't forget to join in when toasting. Bulgarians say "cheers" numerous times throughout the evening and it is considered rude if you refuse. It is also compulsory to maintain eye contact with the person whos glass you are clinking with.
- If you are visiting someone's home, it is considered bad manners not to bring a gift (a bottle of wine will suffice). Also - take your shoes off before entering.
- Wait for everyone to sit down and be served before starting a meal.
- Bulgarians are extremely friendly and open-minded, so if you approach them politely, they will respond in accordance. But if you are arrogant or disrespectful - be prepared for a similar treatment in return.
- When travelling by public transport, try to respect other people's personal space. Also, if you see an elderly person standing, it is considered natural to offer them your seat, especially if you are younger. (The same applies to mothers with their infants and/or children)
- Bulgarians are extremely tollerant toward different religions or sexual orientation. That is, of course, unless you push it on them. Then it's a problem.
- Bulgarians have a good sense of humour, but not a sense of self-irony. They will take offence if you poke jokes at their personal disadvantages. Also - proceed with caution if you talk about issues with historic or social relevance - the Turkish rule, communism, corruption and especially national pride. Try not to mistake Bulgarians for Russians, Turks

- Bulgarians tend to swear a lot. Try not to take offence, it's rarely aimed at anybody in particular.
- It is common for Bulgarians to react emotionally, because they are very temperamental. Don't be surprised if you hear raised voices in public.
- Try to avoid parks after dark, especially in big cities. Crime rates aren't definitively high, but there are dangerous places (especially the areas with a high number of minority members)
- You will probably also notice a few weird things in Bulgaria. If you visit night clubs with the local pop-folk music (a.k.a. chalga) you will see a lot of people throwing serviettes on the floor. It's quickly become mainstream, although not many people can explain the meaning behind it.
- The police in Bulgaria is also very corrupt. So if you commit an offence while driving, sometimes they will want a bribe. We strongly advise that you refuse and send a complaint to the relevant authorities.
- Don't be surprised if you see Bulgarians putting salt on their food without even trying it. That's a common occurrence. Also don't pass the salt from hand to hand - place it on the table, otherwise it's considered to bring bad luck.

- With all that in mind, we invite you all to come and visit Bulgaria yourself. Regardless of all the strange things you may encounter, we guarantee it will be an unforgettable experience.