

# WHERE TO GO IN SOFIA



## 2 MANASTIRSKA MAGERNITSA

Han Aspruh 67  
Phone: +359 2 9803883

The Monastery Kitchen – as this garden restaurant is named – specialises in traditional Bulgarian cuisine prepared from old recipes. Guests are welcomed by bread with salt and powdered paprika. This is followed by an astounding selection of dishes from a 35-page menu, which also



contains anecdotes, explanations and short recipes. Attentive staff ease the difficult task of ordering. What finally appears on the table are variations of good plain Bulgarian home cooking – as substantial as it is tasty. The Monastery Kitchen is no gourmet Mecca, but a moderately priced eatery that is ideal for meals with the family.

## 3 SITE BULGARY ZAEDNO

Gen. Stoletov 37  
Phone: +359 2 9315161



Anyone interested in seeing how the natives of Sofia celebrate should make for this restaurant with the patriotic name of “All Bulgarians Unite”. This hearty tavern boasts a wealth of wood, flags and pictures of the nation’s dead heroes. It’s rare to bump into tourists here, but there are plenty of local families. As soon as the musicians start to play and the singer picks up her microphone, a good number of the guests will jump up from their ta-

## RESTAURANTS

### 1 PANORAMA

In the Kempinski Hotel  
James Bourchier Blvd 100  
Phone: +359 2 9692440

The Panorama is popular with major figures from business, politics and culture – all Sofia’s smart set and demi-monde.



So it is no wonder that the restaurant on the top floor of the Kempinski Hotel provides superb views and excellent service. Instead of a written menu, guests consult the charismatic waiters who determine and satisfy their guests’ wishes with infinite expertise and humour. “Would you like to continue with surprises?” Delicacies rain down on the diners from heavily laden trolleys: Bulgarian salads, sardines, foie gras, lamb chops, steaks and desserts. A chilled digestive to finish can also do no harm.

bles to sway through the room in long dancing rows. Rousing melodies enjoy precedence over skewers of meat, marinated mushrooms and Shopska salads. Ah, the sound of that clarinet! Don't hesitate to join in the action; people will think all the more of you if you take to the floor. But watch out: the horo is by no means a straightforward dance!

## 4 PRI ORLITE

Dyakon Ignatij 11  
Phone: +359 2 9815000  
www.priorlite.com



The transport ministry building is a sober-looking high-rise without adornment, so it's not surprising that the panorama restaurant on its top floor should dispense with all the usual knick-knacks. Pri Orlite is a stylish spot, elegant and austere. Everything here is just right - even the glasses and cutlery are tasteful. Instead of the usual paintings or pot-plants, you can enjoy the best view of the city. Order a glass of sparkling wine and soak up the sunset. The cuisine is modern and service is professional and extremely friendly, but don't expect any culinary revelations.

## 5 KASHTATA SCHASOVNIKA

Moskovska 15  
Phone: +359 2 9875656



The "House with the Clock" has been popular with expats and business folk for years on account of its classically elegant interior. A good many guests wear suits and the air is filled with French chansons. Although the waiters may come across as a little moody, they serve the solid Bulgarian and Western European fare with a seasoned nonchalance.

## 6 UGO

Vitosha Blvd 45  
Han Krum 2



Congenial, extremely popular restaurant chain that offers attractive prices and a cool atmosphere. International fast-food cuisine with just a touch of Bulgaria: salads, pizzas, baked potatoes, pasta, etc. Rapid service, ideal for a light lunch or late snack (Ugo is open around the clock). Also a good place for vegetarian dishes.

## 7 HAMBARA

6 Septemvri 22



You will search in vain for a restaurant sign. Simply head down the dark alleyway between the two buildings. What looks like a shack is actually the entrance to Sofia's most interesting eating place. Formerly the building served as a granary, today the Hambara still has the feel of a wooden hut: rough and unfinished, like the entire city. You either stand at the bar or sit at simple tables lit by candles. The Hambara is a meeting place for artists, actors, writers, musicians and of course normal mortals, too.

## 8 TOBA & CO BAR

Moskovska 6  
Phone: +359 2 9894696

Sited directly behind the National Gallery, this pretty little café and bar offers good,



friendly service. While you sip your freshly squeezed juice (grapefruit with orange), you can get to grips with Bulgarian sculpture. Sitting, standing and lying in the park are works of all levels of quality. Pretty peasant girls in headscarves obviously featured among local stonemasons' favourite subjects for decades.

## 9 BUTCHERS

Sheinovoa 4a  
Phone: +359 2 9446577



The best new addition to Sofia and an absolute innovation for Bulgaria. Butchers could just as easily be a trendy in-spot in Zurich or Berlin, but one-time Cologne residents Svetlin Ilchev and Carlos Porten decided to open up in Ilchev's old home town. Why? "I simply came back here quite spontaneously," explains the likeable former literary scholar. His partner, Porten, originally comes from Peru and is the fourth generation of gastronomes in his family and so knows what it's all about. Butchers has only a few dishes on its menu, but these are all delicate and light by local standards. Everything is freshly prepared from only the best ingredients. The charming bistro is housed in a former butcher's shop. For the past few weeks, the two proprietors have also been running a small bar right next door, which Sofia's hipsters have long been waiting for.

## 10 CHERVILO

Tsar Osvoboditel Blvd 9



An institution in Sofia's nightlife for years now, the "Lipstick" – as the club's name translates – is a playground for the rich and beautiful. The up-market disco is housed in the magnificent neoclassical building of a former officers' club. While some guests sip their drinks on the terrace, others dance up a storm in the White Room or the Baby Box. If things get too loud and too hot, you can always fetch yourself a glass of whisky from the Black Label next door.

## 11 CAFÉ BIBLIOTEKATA

Park behind the National Library

We are not suggesting that this café is really anything special – there are plenty of outdoor cafés and terraces in Sofia. Thank goodness! But the Bibliotekata enjoys an ideal location in a lovely park behind the National Library not far from the splendid central building of the university. If you want to chill out somewhere else, you're at liberty to opt for a different park – we don't



mind. The prices are reasonable almost everywhere and the city's profusion of trees guarantees that there are more than enough attractive spots in the shade. Try the frozen yoghurt: it comes in an earthenware pot, but you have to be careful as it needs plenty of time to thaw out before you can enjoy eating it.

## 12 SPAGHETTI COMPANY

TZUM

Phone: +359 2 9260427

This roomy Italian restaurant in the classy TZUM department store is the ideal place to make for when you want a really good



cup of coffee. Although it's not completely clear what the motto "Pizza Pasta Modernista" exactly means, the menu is really not to be sniffed at: we tried the carpaccio of squid and vegetable pasta and certainly found nothing to complain about. And nobody will bother you if you simply wish to have a doppio and look at the desserts.