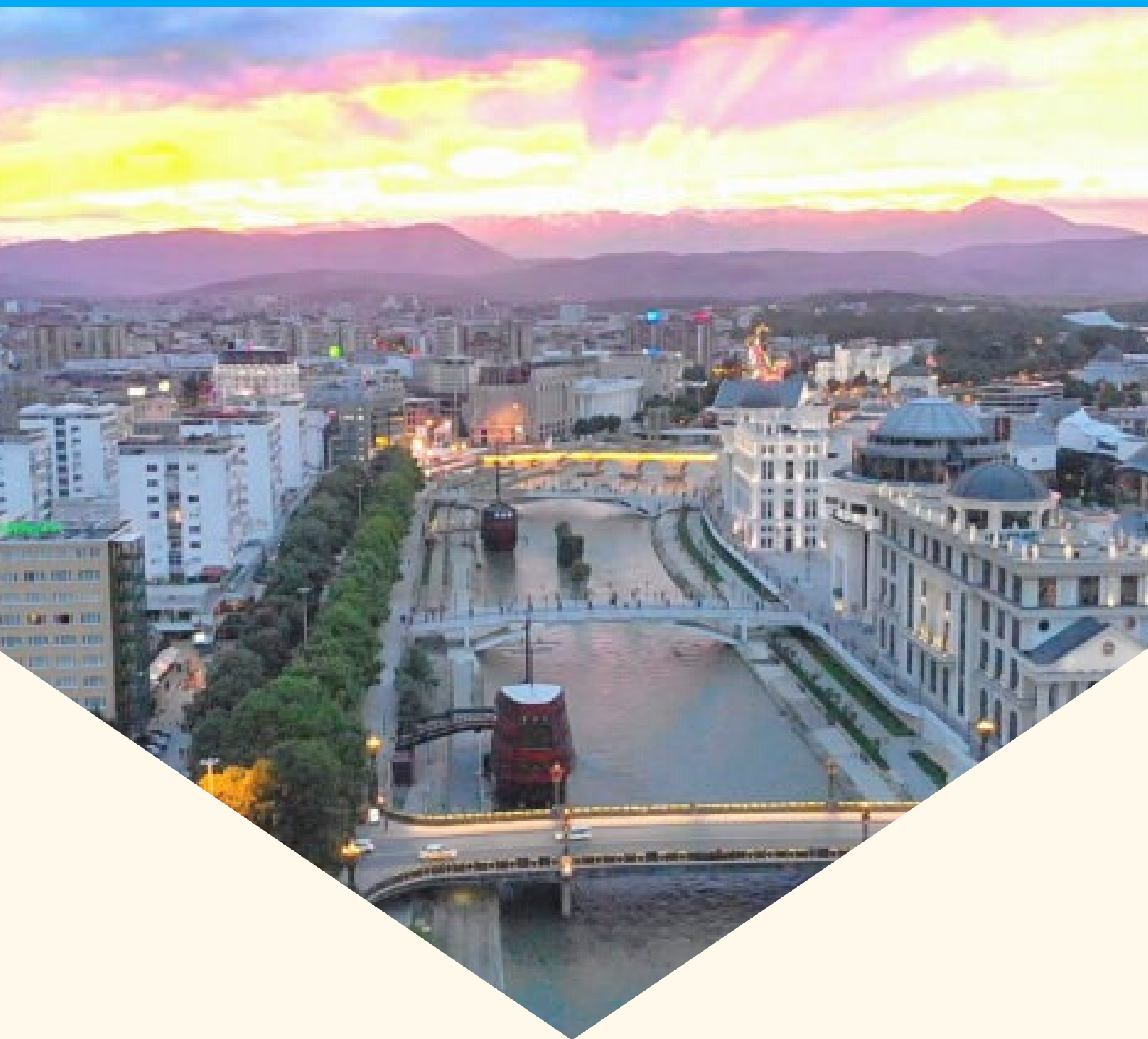


A NATIVE'S GUIDE



A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO NORTH MACEDONIA

About the author

This guide is written by Mina from North Macedonia, during her time as an **European Solidarity Corps** volunteer for the non-profit organization **Mladiinfo ČR**. She created this guide with the goal to shed light on what North Macedonia has to offer as one of the less explored Erasmus+ destinations. This guide is for the capital Skopje in particular, for those who are considering spending a semester there. Made by a students, for students.

In case of any questions regarding Erasmus in North Macedonia, do not hesitate to contact her via email **volunteer@mladiinfo.cz**

Mladiinfo ČR informs young people about new opportunities in education, volunteering, career, traveling, etc. They encourage youth to leave their comfort zone and reach their full potential. More about them at **www.mladiinfo.cz**.



Erasmus+

Table of Content

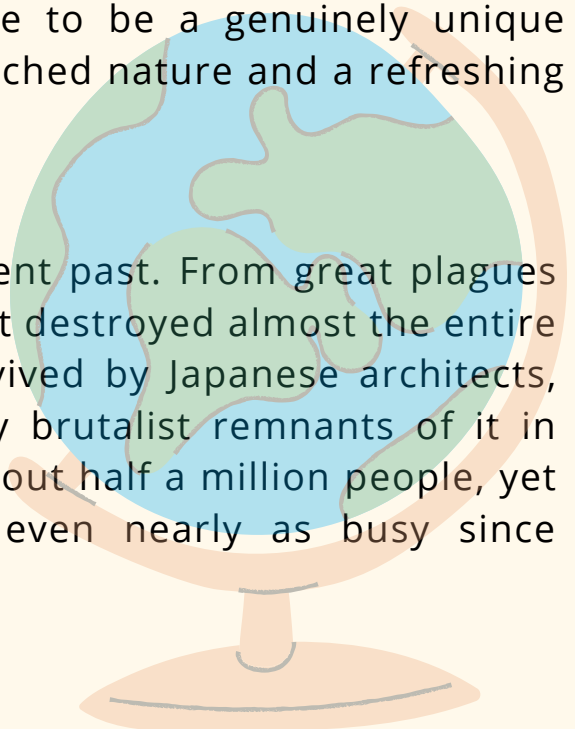
BIT OF HISTORY	pg.1
THE MAP!	pg.2
HOW TO GET THERE.....	pg.3
FINDING ACCOMMODATION.....	pg.4
PUBLIC TRANSPORT & PRICES.....	pg.5
ART & PARTY UNDERGROUND	pg.6
GETTING BY	pg.7
MATKA CANYON	pg.9
THE HILLS TO CLIMB	pg.10
THEN THERE'S THE FOOD.....	pg.11
SHOPPING	pg.12
JOBS & BUDDY SYSTEMS	pg. 13



Telecommunication Tower ('68-'81) by Janko Konstantinov

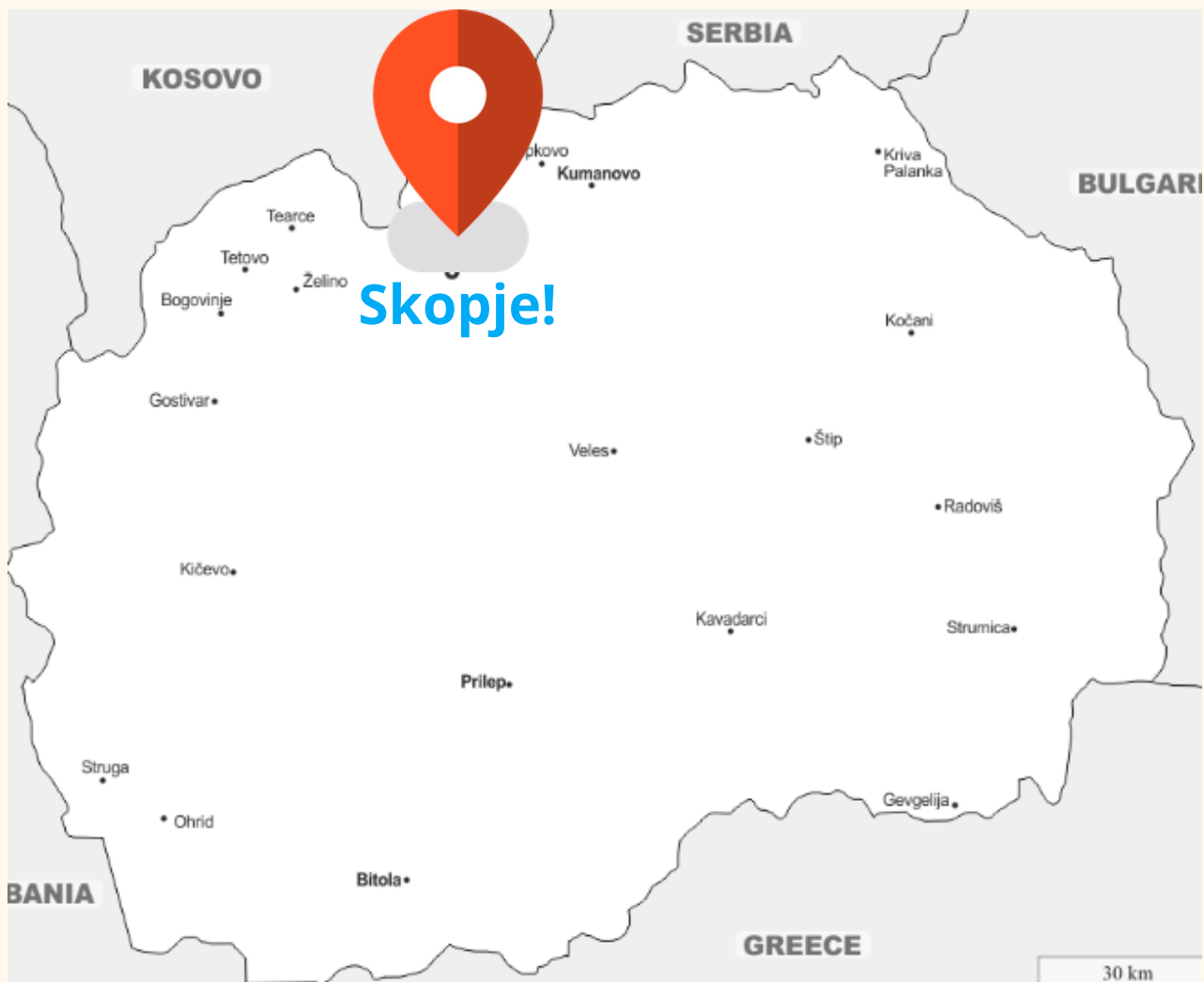
For most people, Macedonia represents just a place on the map your eyes pass through to get from one big country to another. Even though it's often overlooked, it doesn't mean you can't look at it at all. With the point-of-view of a native, let's show you why a budget-friendly stay here will prove to be a genuinely unique experience, connecting you to untouched nature and a refreshing blend of cultures.

The city of Skopje has a very turbulent past. From great plagues and fires, to an earthquake in '63 that destroyed almost the entire town. Since then, it was visually revived by Japanese architects, and you can see some otherworldly brutalist remnants of it in many buildings. Skopje also holds about half a million people, yet during the summer time it's not even nearly as busy since everyone goes back to their family.



The Map!

pg.2



How to get there

The best way to get to Macedonia is by using a student-budget airline - namely **Wizzair**. The ticket doesn't dip more than a 150 euro price range. The earlier you get it, the cheaper it is.

The recommended way to travel to and from Macedonia is by using **Wizzair**. This is the cheapest way to and from the Czech Republic, since there still isn't a direct flight, so most people buy a **Bratislava > Skopje** flight ticket and:

- Take a bus to Bratislava
- Use public transport to get to the airport
- Board your flight there



- Once you arrive in Skopje, instead of a taxi, it's best to wait for one of the **bus shuttles** that are part of the airport. They don't take euros though, so it's advised to exchange money at the airport, or before your trip. The bus costs 180 denars, and takes you to multiple stops, including the city center. You will probably get the chance to hear some authentic turbo folk music!



Finding accommodation

pg.4



If you aren't an Erasmus student with a place reserved for you, the best option to find a place in Skopje is through **couchsurfing** or **Airbnb**! Both options have very active and young hosts. The student dormitories aren't really recommended for long-term stay.

Couchsurfing: Some of the couch-surfing hosts are foreigners living and studying in Skopje as well, so this'd be good way to exchange tips on Macedonia or even have a travel buddy. The hosts who are Macedonian are also very open and can give you tips on where to go and what to do, as well as help you have a good time here!

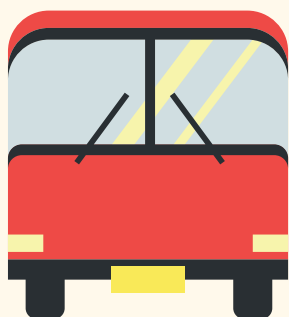
Airbnb: If you're more independent and want to go solo, but still get some tips from locals, Airbnb is a good site to rent a flat in. There's a lot of flats that are going relatively cheap, and since Skopje is small, most of them are near or in the heart of the city. The hosts can be more experienced, and offer you things that previous guests enjoyed to do, not just in Skopje but across the country too.



Public Transport & Prices



It's best to go everywhere on foot since it's a relatively small distance, but transportation in Macedonia is relatively cheap.



- The bus tickets in Skopje are electronic, so buying one ticket with **ten rides** costs 300 denars. You can buy these in shops near the bus stops, for example [this one](#). Make sure to bring a Macedonian-speaking friend, just in case.
- Alternatively, you can use your phone (if you get a Macedonian SIM card) and dial 185 then near your phone to the electronic sensor in the bus.
- Taxis are 1 euro at the first kilometre, then 0.5 euro. Taxis are all around the city, so sometimes it's easier to just go up to one, ask "Slobodno?", and then get in! Often they have discounts as well.



Art & Party Underground

pg.6



- The Balkans have a very active party culture, and Skopje is no exception. The city has always cultivated a place for art expression and music performances. For example, the Zdravo Mladi annual music festival which happens at the end of summer. Every year this festival hosts some of the coolest underground musicians both locally and from around the world. It's also filled with many colourful multimedia projects and friendly faces, as young people in Skopje love to hang out and talk to newcomers, especially with folks who aren't not from around. Don't be shy to say hi!
- The festival's website even has information on cheap Wizzair tickets, hostels and other places to stay at that aren't overly fancy hotels.



And for more events you can always check out the main website for events happening nearby!



One thing about this city: it's small and busy. There's often an orchestra of cars and people, rushing by and chit-chatting about anything and everything. That's why even though the night life is excellent, it's also very important to know the secret quiet places hidden in Skopje.

- If your style is more chill and less parties, a morning walk through the **Old Bazaar** would refresh you nicely.



- Then **the ancient Kale fortress** (pictured above, totally free entry!).

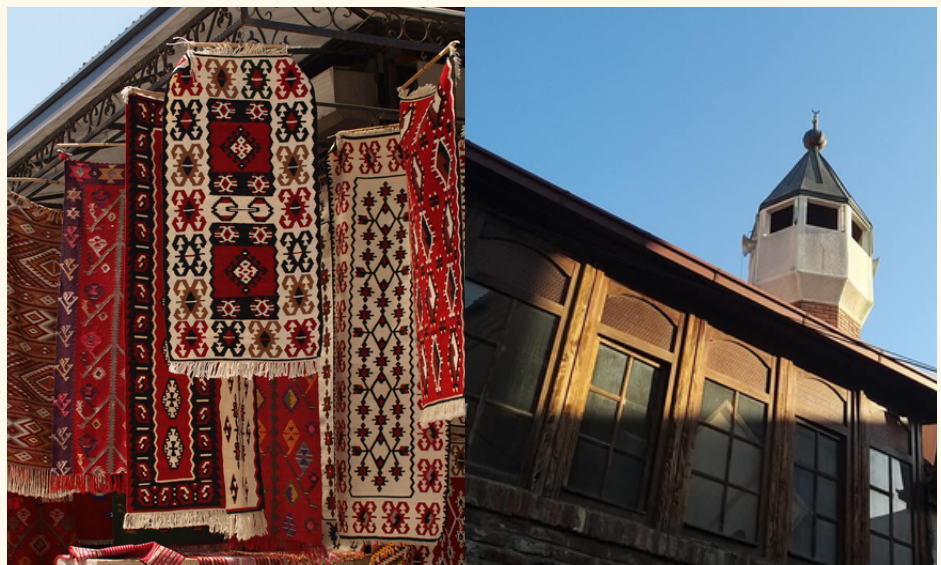
If you want to buy something, **carrying cash is almost necessary**. Macedonia is still transitioning from cash to card, and there isn't an option for a contactless card. This is especially important if you're shopping at the fruit and veggie markets.



Stara Čaršija - The Old Town

In the **Bazaar** you can find a mix of old Oriental style buildings with cozy restaurants and shops. In Balkan fashion, there's no one definitive style, instead a blend of the east and west. If you take your time there you will see that in small workshops, in people sipping teas in intricate coloured cups, sharing a nargile, and traditional dresses and lots and lots of jewelry. The smell of food being prepared is irresistible, even to the wandering cats who are often lounging around these places. And if all else fails, there's always the cheesy bootleg backpacks.

Fragments
of the past
- make
sure to
often look
up and
around!



Matka Canyon



Experience mother nature - but don't stray off the marked paths! (credit: Filip Maljković)

- If you're tired of the city and want to escape to real nature, the naturally-formed canyon Matka that lies on the Treska river is super close. **The bus number 60** takes you to the entrance of this place as its final stop.
- Matka originally means womb, and it makes sense as this is the home to more than **200** endemic organisms living in the Matka and its caves. The mysterious cave called **Vrelo** ('boiling hot') is the deepest cave in the Balkans and second in Europe. It's not yet known how truly deep it is, as even brave explorers had to stop somewhere. There is a portion of the cave that is open to the public and it is definitely an adventure to go through!



The Hills to climb

pg.10



- There's a bunch of recreational and sport activities you can do in Skopje! Climbing up the small mountain **Vodno** and reaching the top is like a pilgrimage for every local and tourist in this city. Not only do you get fresh air and a pretty horizon, you also reach the small cafe at the top.



- Gather some food and drinks in a picnic basket and head out. A soft trek up to the hill near the medieval fortress Kale (which you can also visit for free) and right next to the Bazaar, you will find yourself listening to birds and distant city sounds rather than the noisy chit-chat of people. Just on top of this hill lies a monument of art and renewal, the **Museum of Contemporary Art**. Even if you aren't in the mood to look too deeply into art installments, the hill gives a panoramic view of the river and park to rest your eyes and mind. Friends can have had the most profound conversations there, sitting on the grass with drinks.

Then there's the food

pg.11



- The father, the son, and the holy spirit. **Burek**, **gevrek**, and **perek** are definitely the tastiest breakfast foods around. You don't need to look far to find a bakery that sells them.
- This food can be stuffed with meat, cheese, spinach, and other greens, or of course, more bread. A student's favourite meal!



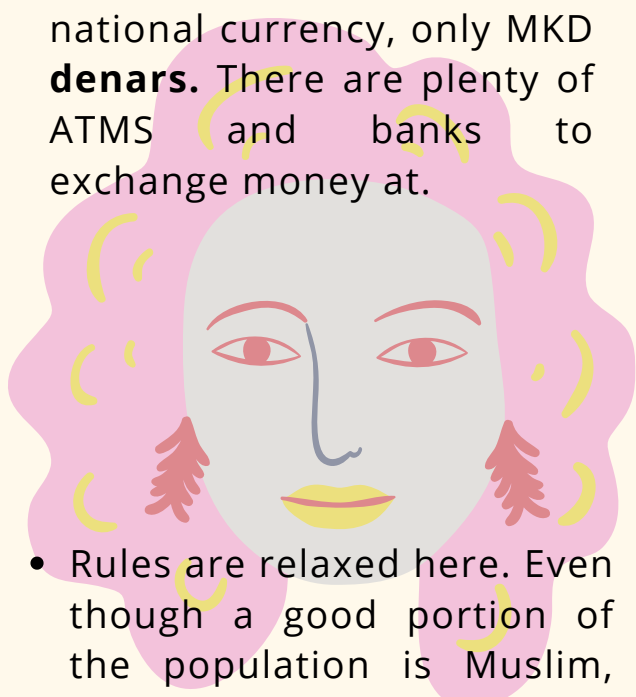
Live cheap and eat rich -
visiting the Skopje pazars
is a must!

If you want to try a **vegan/vegetarian** diet, this is the best place! To get cheap and fresh produce, just check the Green Pazar for all of your veggie/fruit/spices needs. It's much more affordable than buying from a supermarket, plus you get to meet and support the farmers themselves! The pazars in Skopje seriously have everything. From hair dyes, pyjamas, to phone screen protectors.

Shopping

pg.12

- As mentioned previously, cash is useful in Skopje. Euros aren't part of the national currency, only MKD **denars**. There are plenty of ATMS and banks to exchange money at.



- Shops open at **9:00/10:00** every day, and close at **20:00** on week days and **16:00** on Saturday. Small shops don't work on Sundays.

- Rules are relaxed here. Even though a good portion of the population is Muslim, alcohol is as easy to get as anywhere else. Make sure to try out **rakija**, a fruit-derived alcohol.



Monthly bus ticket // One way	Bread (500g)	Milk (1l)	Beer (0.5l)	Meal at Restaurant	Renting an apartment (outside of city center)	Basic utilities (water, garbage, heating, cool, electricity)
23.75 € // 0.65 €	0.45 €	0.82 €	0.81 €	4.24 €	139.02 €	98.89 €

Fun fact: The most popular beer in Macedonia, Skopsko, is based on a Czech recipe.

Jobs & Buddy systems

pg.13

- Jobs are often hard to find even for locals in Skopje. There still aren't as many opportunities available for English-speakers, unless you know someone who knows someone. Despite that, people are helpful and don't count their money when lending. It's almost rude to not start fighting at the table about who should pay for everyone.
- The university Kiril i Metodij in Skopje, although connected with **Erasmus**, doesn't have an official buddy system that assigns you to a student. But an official system isn't needed, since students are really open to welcoming any foreigners, especially since there aren't that many in Skopje. There's somewhat of a celebrity status that comes with being one of the few foreigners in a single classroom.



So don't be afraid to stand out and reach out!

Disclaimer

This brochure was created thanks to the support of the EU program **"European Solidarity Corps"** and was created by **Mladiinfo ČR volunteers**. The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Mladiinfo ČR is a Czech non-governmental non-profit organization (NGO). It is a part of the Mladiinfo International network and has an office in Brno. They inform young people about new opportunities in education, volunteering, career, traveling, etc. The organization encourages youth to leave their comfort zone and reach their full potential. They engage in communities, promoting active citizenship and connectedness.

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