

Bulgarian Beers

Written by Tom

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So England isn't famed for its perfect pints throughout Europe which I think is a bit unfair as the British Isles produce some of the worlds greatest ales and beers. Beer is the third most popular drink in the world (behind water and tea) so it's important you know what to expect if you are moving to Bulgaria

Most of the brands you get in the local UK boozer can also be found in the bigger supermarkets in Bulgaria like Metro but out and about the Bulgarian beer is king.

Bulgaria has a bit of a reputation as a drinking country and I can see how things could get that way having sampled a lot of the local tipples! The biggest brands of lager here are Kamenitza and Zagorka both of which you will find in almost every bar, restaurant, café and shop. Zagorka is actually owned by Heineken and has that familiar crisp taste to it.

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The prices of beer in Bulgaria are much lower than most of Western Europe. In a shop you will pay about 2.80 BGN (€1.40) for 2 litres of beer! In a bar you can expect to pay about 1.40 BGN for a 500ml bottle of beer.

One of the striking differences in the alcohol industry here is that beer you buy in shops will generally come in big plastic bottles rather than cans of glass bottles and the bars serve all beers in glass bottles. It doesn't seem to affect the taste and once you get used to the fact that your beer is coming out of a giant pop bottle you forget that it was any other way. The only problem with the plastic bottles is that of course you have to finish what you start or you'll end up with flat beer....oh well, it could be worse!

Kamenitza is about 4.4% Vol and most of the beers we've been sampling have been around this strength. If you want to steer clear of the brewing giants (Kamenitza is owned by Interbrew) there are a number of smaller breweries and the beer tends to be a bit cheaper. As a rule of thumb, if the logo and bottle don't have any English/Roman lettering, it's a domestic beer and will probably cost less. If it's been westernised then you may pay a bit more for being able to read what you're drinking. I say, start on the westernised brands and after a few giant bottles you won't care that you can't read what it is anymore, time for the true Bulgarian beers.

Lots of the bars also have Belgian beers like Leffe but the imported beers cost a lot more than the local ones. Metro Cash & Carry has Erdinger, Hoegaarden, Carlsberg and if you're lucky you might find one that sells Guinness.

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