

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE  
PROGRAM (IEP) - 2019  
(CIVIL ENGINEERING)



**Gujarat  
Technological  
University**

УНИВЕРСИТЕТ  
ПО АРХИТЕКТУРА  
СТРОИТЕЛСТВО  
И ГЕОДЕЗИЯ



AT:

UNIVERSITY OF ARCHITECTURE,  
CIVIL ENGINEERING AND GEODESY  
(UACEG), SOFIA-BULGARIA



## INTRODUCTION:

International Experience Program better known as IEP is a step forward from GTU in the direction of becoming an “International Innovative University”. The program was initiated in 2011. Currently IEP is one of the largest student mobility programs offered by the technological universities of India.

Since the beginning of the program, more than 1500 students have been benefited through IEP. GTU has signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with more than 30 renowned universities of USA, Canada, Europe, Russia, Asia and Africa and now Europe. GTU students go for studies to the foreign universities for 6 to 8 weeks during the summer. It is a great international experience program designed exclusively for GTU students across the branches of Engineering, Management (MBA), Pharmacy and Computer Science (MCA) with a constant progress towards making sure that it gradually expands to all the other departments of the University.

This year marks another such progressive step forward for Gujarat Technological University as the University has been successful in adding Civil Engineering in the International Experience Program- 2019 (IEP 2019). Under this, students of final year of Bachelor’s degree of Civil Engineering were sent to the University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy (UACEG). UACEG is situated in Sofia-the capital city of an Eastern European country - BULGARIA. A month long International Experience Program started on the 15<sup>th</sup> June 2019, from Ahmedabad was to continue till July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019.

A group of 35 students departed from Ahmedabad to Sofia, Bulgaria via DOHA, a journey spanning approximately 9-hours. Excitement, anxieties, emotions, and anticipation finished in no time. We were greeted by a very beautiful, hostile and comforting lady Ms. Irina Angelova.

We were taken to our accommodation immediately after landing on the Sofia Airport and our mentor, Prof. Dipak Jivani, was present all the time with us and we reached our hostel accommodation at Student's Ski Grad.

## SOFIA, BULGARIA:



Sofia is the capital and largest city of Bulgaria. The city is at the foot of Vitosha Mountain in the western part of the country and is in the centre of the Balkan Peninsula.

Being Bulgaria's prime city, Sofia is a hometown of many of the major local universities, cultural institutions and commercial companies. Sofia is one of the top 10 best places for start-up businesses in the world, especially in information technologies, according to Bulgarian National Television. Sofia was Europe's most affordable capital to visit in 2013.

## CLIMATE:

Sofia has humid continental climate with an average annual temperature of 10.4 °C (50.7 °F).

Particularly about summers, are quite warm and sunny. In summer, the city generally remains slightly cooler than other parts of Bulgaria, due to its higher altitude, and the temperature ranges from 28°C -14°C, and another important thing to be noted is that the rain fall occurs in a very unpredictable way.

## ACCOMODATION:

We were to be given accommodation at one of the University hostel blocks, but unfortunately we were given accommodation in the OLD BLOCK, which A common hostel for both- girls and boys and it demanded huge amount of repair, it was nearly inhabitable place and it even lacked the basic facilities, and we managed to stay there for a week, and one good thing about this place was that shops, banks, clubs, market, and restaurants were at a walking distance from this accommodation.



At first point we were not satisfied with the accommodation at all, but later on with the huge help of our respected mentor, IEP committee, and the officials of the University, we were granted accommodation in a very comfortable and cozy HEMUS HOTEL located at the very center of the city, and it was at a walking distance from the university.

We were all given dual sharing rooms with attached toilets, a table and chair, wardrobes and racks with small cupboards. Rooms were neat and clean, spacious enough for 2 people. The rooms were cleaned every day, and linens and soaps were changed. Laundry was at five minute walk, from both the places.

We didn't had Wi-Fi facility in the hostel, but we had some great network back at this hotel and in addition to this almost all of us had bought our own internet-cards, which were available at affordable rates, and also most of the cafeterias and restaurants near the hostels and even the hotel had open access to Wi-Fi facilities.



At the time of workshop and visiting the mountain for third week, we were given accommodation in the groups of two persons, in a really beautiful place and we had some great scenic view out of our windows.

#### FOOD:



It was very different and rare experience for us when it came to food. We were served all the three meals of the day - breakfast, lunch and dinner at the university canteen, with a special dining area allocated specially for us. There were wide variety of salads and sweet dishes served everyday, but the menu of the food served to us was pretty usual and it was pretty hard for us to manage with this and anywhere you go in Bulgaria, their tastes doesn't match to our typical Indian food, and one positive part with the food was that all the three times with a lot of varieties of fruit juices, cold drinks, and hot drinks were served with food.

In the third week of our stay, the university helped us with the food issue and they had organized the Lunch and Dinner at one of the Indian restaurants nearby named Indian Saffron Restaurant, after this arrangement we were all happy and satisfied with food thing.

### THE UNIVERSITY - UACEG, Bulgaria:



The University campus is very live and vibrant, with three major departments i.e. Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, all in one campus. This allows interaction between students of different departments and hence, allows possibility of a next level of exploration which helps the students of all discipline. We were really impressed to this. As for the infrastructure of the University, Everything necessary for a Civil Engineering students was all there in the campus like many stationary shops, printing/plotting shops, a bank, coffee vending machines around the corners, some models kept onto presentation were really great to have a look at, Laser cutting workshop, a main canteen, many smaller eating kiosks etc. which is very impressive for most of us.

And in addition to this, the university has got some really good laboratories, and some really good working models, which paved a way for us to visualize the way how the things work in reality rather than the theoretical part.

There, at UACEG, all of us were to study two subjects from our curriculum:

1. Design of Hydraulic structures (2170609)

2. Irrigation Engineering (2180601)

This started from Monday as on date 17<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

## LEARNING - Lecture rooms and the Tutors:

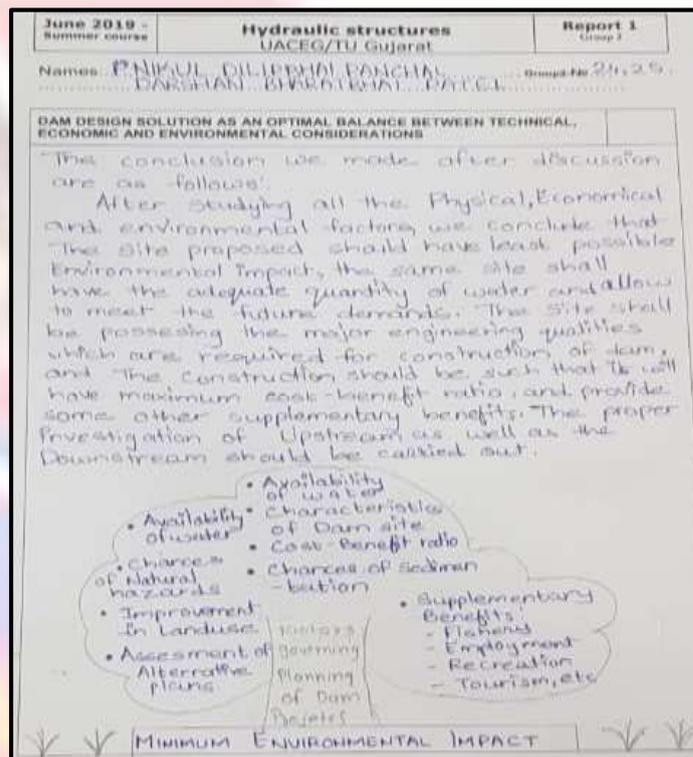


The Lecture rooms were all just more than satisfactory and can easily accommodate us all, they were well lit with sunlight and well ventilated. All lecture rooms had free Wi-Fi access, so that we the students can easily go for searching anything that new that we didn't understand, it was like a boon to us all, as we were able to quickly gather an immense amount of information in just a matter of seconds, further the lecture rooms had quite a lot of extension boards, allowing all of us to work comfortably at any desk of the rooms,

and we could conveniently charge our devices also and every time the respective faculty brought the projectors.

Writing about their teaching scheme, it was totally different for us. In the lectures, the faculties brought up the printed copies of the theory portion which we were going to discuss in that lecture. At the end of each lecture of an hour we had a break of 15 minutes which was another different thing for us and during this break minutes, we were free to have a chat with the friends or have some lunch. Sometimes one of our faculties asked us to leave the class, as according to their conscience, it was mandatory not to stay in the class as we had been in that environment for whole of the lecture, so we were to have a walk in the free air. All in the entire thing was that the faculties cared about everything not just the academic, software, tasks things but they did care about the mental health too. All our tutors were extremely helpful, kind, supportive, and awesome. They were just constantly ready to help us in any way they could do. They do not get annoyed as many times as we call them or ask them for solving our doubts.

Meanwhile writing about the task hours, these were the best part of our daily routine we all got relieved of our stresses from the lectures, we learnt about the practical aspects related to the theory portion which we had studied in the before lectures, and sometimes we had a lot of fun.



At one of the time, we were bifurcated into small groups of two persons and we were asked to write down our views about the problems being faced upon and further they asked us to discuss and find out the suitable solution that we group members thought that might be the most satisfactory and feasible solution to that, and at last we were asked to prepare some reports and the tutor then evaluated them, in this way they just made us to think beyond our thoughts, which made our tasks an immensely interesting to solve and go on with, while the other time, we were to solve our tasks using various software which was another good part. The

faculties for these tasks were just great. They were the persons of knowledge as well as friendly too. We had never thought of coming into contact with such great persons.

Further another fascinating thing we came across with was with the use of pen and writing about this, we had made the least use of pen and papers for understanding, interpreting, and solving our tasks and going on with the exams. At the time of solving our exercises we got the real time exposure to the software like Auto CAD, Excel, HEC RAS and understood the basic functioning of these.

## FEW WORDS TO OUR FACULTIES:



You are the most appropriate ones that any student can think of. Your decision to teach us is a matter of proud for us. We appreciate the real hard efforts taken by you, and the way you drove the whole of the INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE PROGRAM, was totally an amazing, fascinating and purely satisfying one. It really justified the true sense of the International Experience. We can never ever forget you and the memories we have with you all, and we request you to please visit us once.

**IT WAS OUR PRIVELIGE TO BE UNDER THESE FACULTIES  
&  
NO WORDS CAN EXPRESS OUR THANKFULLNESS TO THESE  
FACULTIES**

## First & Second Week:

17<sup>th</sup> June – 28<sup>th</sup> June

The first week of our stay in Sofia was totally an academic week. During the course, all the students were divided in two batches and each batch was to study one subject in one week and the other subject in the other week, the teaching was carried out daily, accompanied with tasks related to the course taught that day and the end of the week we had Tests.



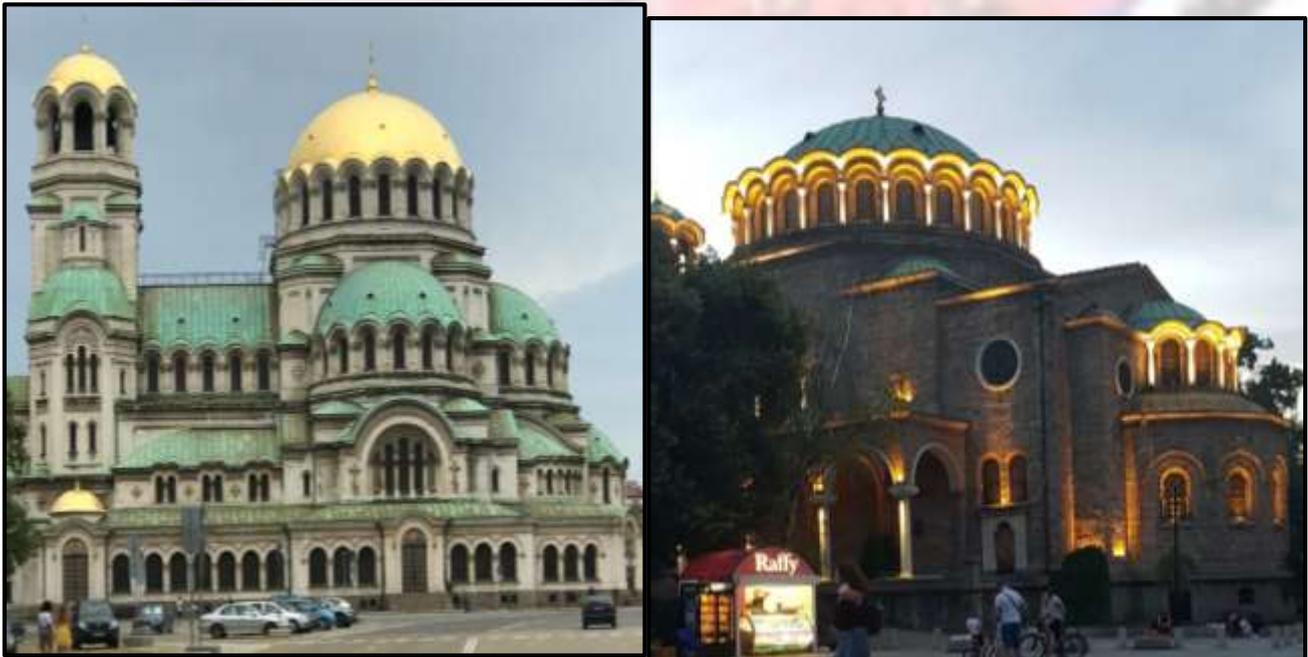
Meanwhile during the academic week, one of the most important things that we had done was the celebration of the YOGA DAY, as on 23<sup>rd</sup> of June.

At the end of the second week the university had organized an expert lecture with a successful businessman, named Mr. Boris. He was very intelligent and he advised us with some great tips to be kept in mind.

## EXPLORING PLACES IN SOFIA:

As soon as we landed in Sofia, after completing all our academics, we had gone for exploring the Sofia city by walk, which was pretty exhaustive but it was worth it. We were all too excited for the same. We went to see the important architectural monuments of the city, the gardens, the main shopping streets, etc. It was finished in very smooth manner as we were accompanied by our respected mentor and the Ms. Irina.

### ST. ALEXANDER NEVSKY CATHEDRAL:



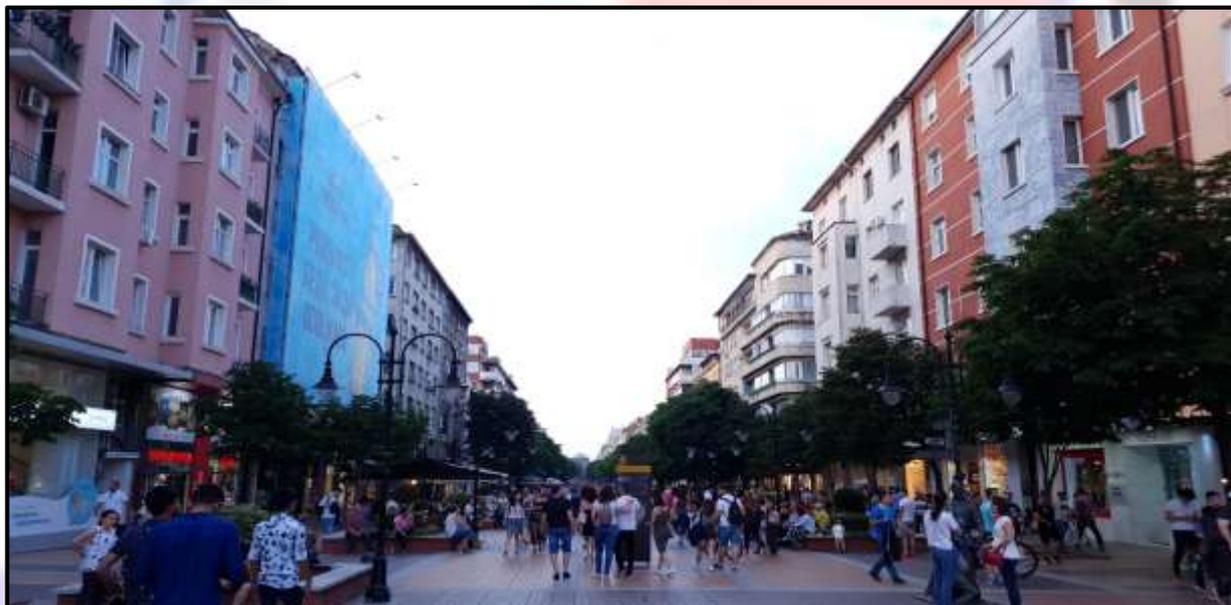
The St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral is a Bulgarian Orthodox cathedral in Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria. Built in Neo-Byzantine style, it serves as the cathedral church of the Patriarch of Bulgaria and it is one of the largest Eastern Orthodox cathedrals in the world, as well as one of Sofia's symbols and primary tourist attractions. We were all in the awesomeness of the place after looking at the interiors of the Cathedral.

### NATIONAL PALACE OF ARTS & CULTURE:

This is the center of Sofia, which greatly attracts the tourists and the aesthetic view of this place is just immersive. It is the largest, multifunctional conference and exhibition centre in south-eastern Europe. It was opened in 1981 in celebration of Bulgaria's 1300th anniversary.



## VITOSHA STREET:



Vitosha Boulevard is the main commercial street in the centre of Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria. It extends from the St Nedelya Square to the Southern Park. The boulevard is named after Vitosha, the mountain just next to Sofia. It was an unadjusted street during the Ottoman rule of Bulgaria and acquired the name Vitoshkaulitsa (“Vitosha Street”) after the Liberation, in 1883. The street was initially built up with low one-storey houses, but turned into an imposing trade street in the Interwar period as massive public buildings were constructed, changing Vitosha’s appearance completely. The street is always crowded with people, there are people giving musical and dance performances in the evening, keeping the street live all the time.

## Ivan Vazov National Theatre:



The Ivan Vazov National Theatre is Bulgaria's national theatre, as well as the oldest and most authoritative theatre in the country and one of the important landmarks of Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria. It is located in the centre of the city, with the facade facing the City Garden.

Third week:

29<sup>th</sup> June – 5<sup>th</sup> July



The third week was the one that we really wanted. We were made to stay in SEMKOVO RESORT. On the day of arrival to this resort, we had an introductory workshop regarding the Flow Measurement and the very next day, we had the second workshop and visited a small stream and the powerhouse for the practical implementation of the same.



The second day, we had gone for trekking to DRY LAKE and to mountain with very beautiful panoramic view, where we felt attached to the nature.



Followed by the trekking on the second day, on the third day we had gone to visit the SEVEN RILLA LAKES, we had stopped at the base of the mountain, after that we reached to the top by using Skyline and a bit of trekking, and there we saw a thin sheet of ice and the beautiful seven rilla lakes.



On the Fifth day, we visited the nearby city of Bansko, and in the evening we had an expert lecture with Prof. Alexandrov and he shared his experience about his experience in the Bulgarian Antarctic Expedition to the Antarctica.



Before coming back to Sofia, we had met the guys from the university, who had been there for some survey work, and we had shared our cultural reviews.

Fourth week (8<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> July):

**Day 1: water treatment plant (Sofiyskavoda Company)**



On this day, we visited the drinking water treatment plant. This was something not generally found in Indian water treatment plants. The only treatment imparted to the water was screening of water.

**Day 2: Industrial visit at precast construction site (Cordeel Company, Sofia) & workshop on hydraulic modeling**



Cordeel is an independent, family-owned business company. On this day we were to visit one of the construction sites of such world renowned company. We were hosted by a man of knowledge Mr. Tringov. He got us on a small walk around the whole site of construction and had given us some very important things to be kept in mind while dealing with projects. All of us were amazed to have a look at the methodology of the construction, the priorities to the safety and the measures that had been taken under consideration. Further the whole site was very well organised.



Further we had again come back to Sofia, which was just a real great feeling and we had again joined the university for attending two workshops, of which the first one was about Determination of Flow rate Vs Pressure relationship of Drippers and the second one was about the understanding of the Reverse wave production.



At last we had an expert lecture with a business man, named Mr. Peter Klissarov where he had presented to us about his upcoming project of the race track and he explained to us how he reclaimed the land, planning, arrangement of funds and everything, he had even asked up for suggestions, which was the most interesting part for us.

### **Day 3: Waste water treatment plant (Kubratovo)**



The Sofia WWTP has a design capacity of 1.3 million p.e. and treats more than 400,000 m<sup>3</sup> of domestic and industrial wastewater daily up to the most stringent EU requirements (including nitrogen and phosphorus removal). The plant was commissioned in 1984 and historically consumed between 16,000 and 24,000 MWh of electricity annually. Following the installation of CHP units, in 2009 the energy produced annually in the plant rose from 1,500 MWh to 23,100 MWh in 2017. The measures implemented to reduce energy consumption led to an excess of 4,300 MWh in 2017, i.e. the plant produced 23% more energy than the needed for its operation.

### **Day 4: Visit at Ongoing construction of dam (Panagyurishte) & historical museum**

On this particular day, we had an amazing experience as it was totally a practical approach towards our understanding of the dams. We had visited to an ongoing construction of dam. We were able to enrich our knowledge and understanding of the Rockfill dams, as we saw the various materials used for the construction of the dam core.

After the visit to the dam site, we had visited to a nearby museum where we fascinated by some very old artifacts, of which some included the gold treasures found in the old times of the history of that place.



### Day 5: Visit of Topolnitsa dam site & Power plant



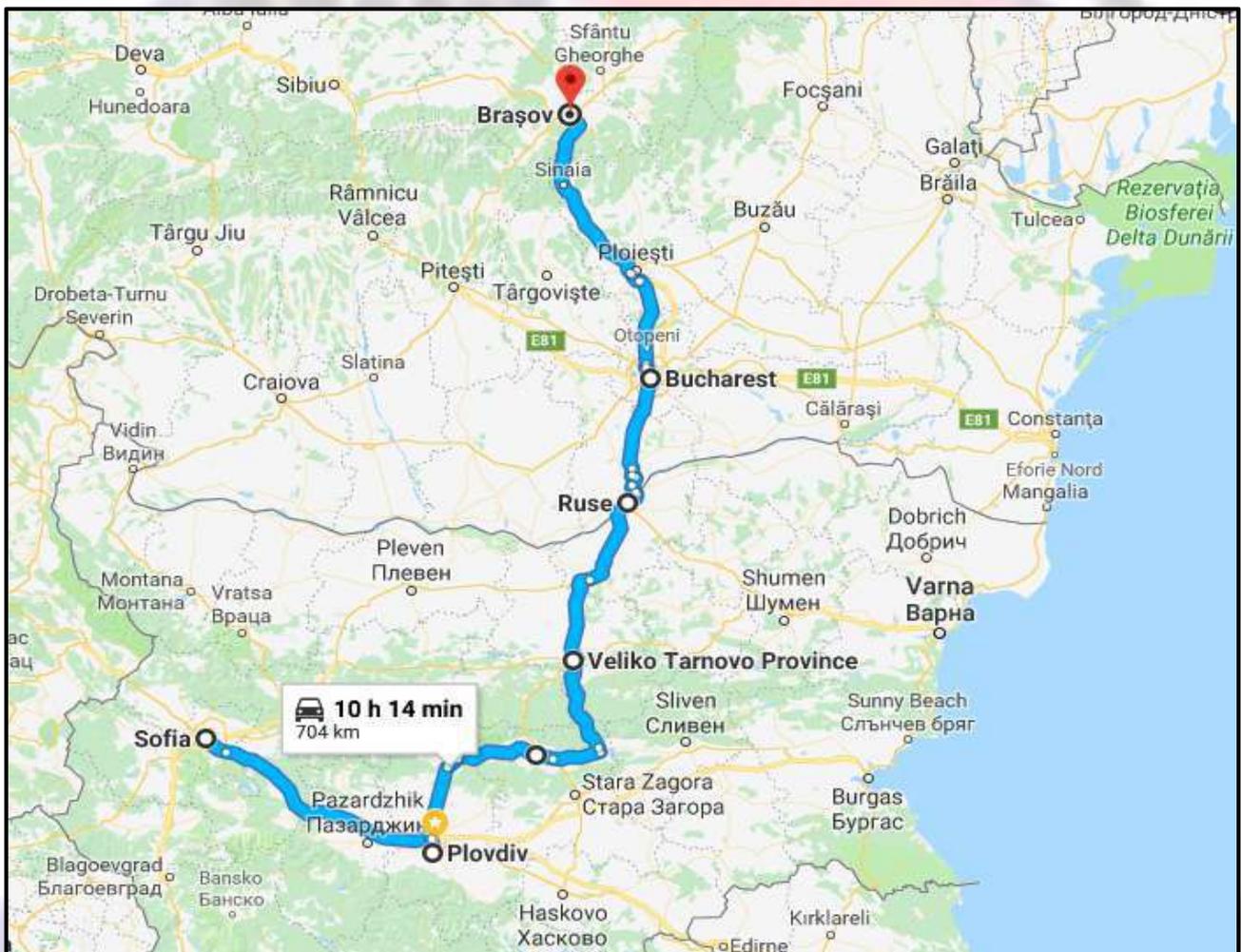


On this technical visit to the Topolnista Dam, we had been accompanied by the faculties from the university. We had been for the first time been into a dam body to understand the various parts of the dam and further for deeper understanding of the working of bottom outlets, and the picture above depicts the same.

## Fifth week (13<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> July):

Fifth week of our stay at Bulgaria was the one for which all the students had been waiting, right from the day -1. The Universities had planned a week long excursion to many important cities of Bulgaria and Romania.

We were given a private bus and a private guide Mrs. Eva to guide us throughout the tour.



The trip was planned in such a way that we could visit 7 different cities in 7 days, staying overnight at all the cities in the order as follows:

- Plovdiv, Bulgaria
- Kazanluk, Bulgaria
- Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria
- Ruse, Bulgaria
- Bucharest, Romania
- Brasov, Romania
- And back to Sofia

The following were the important places we had visited during the excursion:

### **BACHKOVO MONASTERY:**



The Bachkovo Monastery in Bulgaria is an important monument of Christian architecture and one of the largest and oldest Eastern Orthodox monasteries in Europe. It is located on the right bank of the Chepelare River, 189 km from Sofia. The monastery is known and appreciated for the unique combination of Byzantine, Georgian and Bulgarian culture, united by the common faith. The monastery is under conservation process. The first part is a sort of market there are plenty of small stalls on sides, offering souvenirs, jewelry, and ice-cream.

### **PLOVDIV, BULGARIA:**

Plovdiv is the second-largest city in Bulgaria. It is an important economic, transport, cultural, and educational center. There is evidence of habitation in Plovdiv dating back to the 6th millennium BCE, when the first Neolithic settlements were established it is said to be one of the oldest cities in Europe. Situated in a fertile region of south-central Bulgaria on the two banks of the Maritsa River, the city has historically developed on seven senate hills, some of which are 250 meters (820 feet) high. Because of These hills, Plovdiv is often referred to in Bulgaria as “The City of the Seven Hills”.



Some strong aspects of the old town of Plovdiv like - the narrow streets, the architecture, cobbled walkways, pedestrian only zones, public squares, murals and paintings on the walls surprising you at every next turns - all reflected the true characteristics of a typical European town.

### **THE ROMAN STADIUM:**

The Roman Stadium in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, is among the largest and best preserved buildings from the time of the Ancient Rome in the Balkan Peninsula. The facility, approximately 240 m (790 ft) long and 50 m wide, could seat up to 30000 spectators. Today, the northern curved part of the stadium is partially restored and is one of the most recognizable landmarks of the city among the many preserved buildings from Roman times. The stadium is located in the Center of Plovdiv, under the main pedestrian street.

### **PLOVDIV ROMAN THEATRE:**



The Roman theatre of Plovdiv is one of the world's best-preserved ancient theatres, located in the city center of Plovdiv, Bulgaria. It was constructed in the 90s of the 1st century AD, probably under the rule of Emperor Domitian. The theatre can host between 5000 and 7000 spectators and it is currently in use of Plovdiv. The theatre is one of the most valuable monuments from the ancient city of Philippopolis.



### **KAZANLAK, BULGARIA:**



Kazanluk is a Bulgarian town in Stare Zagora Province, located in the middle of the plain of the same name, at the foot of the Balkan mountain range, at the eastern end of the Rose Valley. It is the center of rose oil extraction in Bulgaria and the oil-producing rose of Kazanluk is most widely recognizable national symbols.

#### **ANCIENT THRACIAN TOMB:**



It comprises a narrow corridor and a round burial chamber, both decorated with murals representing a Thracian couple at a ritual funeral feast. The monument dates back to the 4th century BCE and has been on the UNESCO protected World Heritage Site list since 1979. The murals are memorable for the splendid horses and for a gesture of farewell. The paintings are Bulgaria's best-preserved artistic masterpieces from the Hellenistic period. To preserve the sensitive paintings, the tomb is not open to the public, and a full-size replica was built nearby which is open to public visit.

#### **ROSE OF BULGARIA - THE SOUVENIR SHOP:**

Visit to Bulgaria is absolutely incomplete without visiting this shop in Kazanlak which is the centre of rose extraction in Bulgaria. This is one place where one can find unimaginable rose products ranging from eating/drinking items to cosmetics to perfumes whatever extent one can think.

## SHIPKA MONUMENT, GABROVO:



The Shipka Monument is on Stoletov Peak near the Shipka pass, easily reached by bus. It is a Monument dedicated to those who died for the Liberation of Bulgaria during the Battles of Shipka Pass in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78. The monument is a 31.5-metre high stone tower in the form of a truncated pyramid. A giant bronze lion stands above the entrance to the tower, and a figure of a woman represents the victory over the Ottoman forces. There are four other floors where one can find replica of Bulgarian military flags and other relics. The top of the tower reveals a breathtaking panorama of Shipka Peak and the surrounding area.

## **ETAR, BULGARIA:**

The Open Air Ethnographic Museum - ETAR, is an open-air museum and a neighborhood of Gabrovo in northern Bulgaria. It is located on the northern edge of the Bulgaria Nature Park, between the park and the city of Gabrovo. It presents the Bulgarian customs, culture and craftsmanship. It spans over an area of 7 hectare and contains a total of 50 objects, including water installations and houses with craftsmen's workshops attached. As a whole, the complex's goal is to illustrate the architecture, way of life and economy of Gabrovo and the region during the Bulgarian National Revival.

The park features typical Bulgarian revival houses with two floors, bay windows, a clock tower, and a beautifully decorated house by Saakov featuring 21 windows. Using original instruments and following the old traditions, locals represent around 20 characteristics of the regional crafts such as wood-carving, pottery, coppersmith crafts, furriery, cutlery making, needlework etc.

There are shops for souvenirs. There are numerous restaurants in the park where tourist could consume local Bulgarian cuisine.

## **VELIKO TARNOVO, BULGARIA:**



Veliko Tarnovo is a city in north central Bulgaria and the administrative centre of Veliko Tarnovo Province. It is an important administrative, economic, educational, and cultural centre of Northern Bulgaria. Veliko Tarnovo is the center of one of the largest urban areas in Bulgaria and is one of the few cities in the country with a growing population. It is a foremost educational and cultural center, and the home of two major universities and extensive artistic activity. Often referred to as the “City of the Tsars”, Veliko Tarnovo is located on the Yantra River and is famously known as the historical capital of the Second Bulgarian Empire, attracting many tourists with its unique architecture. The old part of the city is situated on the three hills Tsarevets, Trapezitsa, and Sveta Gora, rising amidst the meanders of the Yantra. On Tsarevets are the palaces of the

Bulgarian emperors and the Patriarchate, the Patriarchal Cathedral, and also a number of administrative and residential edifices surrounded by thick walls.

### **TSARAVETS:**

Tsarevets is a medieval stronghold located on a hill with the same name in Veliko Tarnovo in northern Bulgaria. Tsarevets is 206 metres above sea level. It served as the Second Bulgarian Empire's primary fortress and strongest bulwark from 1185 to 1393, housing the royal and the patriarchal palaces, and is a popular tourist attraction.



The whole stronghold is girdled by thick walls reaching up to 3.6 meters (12 ft) and was served by three gates. The palace is on the hill's central and plain part, which was a closed complex encircled by a fortified wall, two towers and two entrances, a main one from the north and one from the south. It featured a throne room, a palace church and a royal residential part.

## RUSE, BULGARIA:



Ruse is the fifth largest city in Bulgaria. Ruse is in the northeastern part of the country, on the right bank of the Danube, opposite the Romanian city of Giurgiu, approximately 75 km (47 mi) south of Bucharest, Romania's capital. It is the most significant Bulgarian river port, serving an important part of the international trade of the country. After having lunch and some time for leisure we started our city tour at 3 p.m. we saw various monuments around the main street and shopped a few souvenirs from there. Then we headed to the river front of Danube River, which divides Bulgaria and Romania on this stretch in the evening and sat there for a while. After that all were set free to absorb the place, the people, the public squares, the central park at the public square, etc.

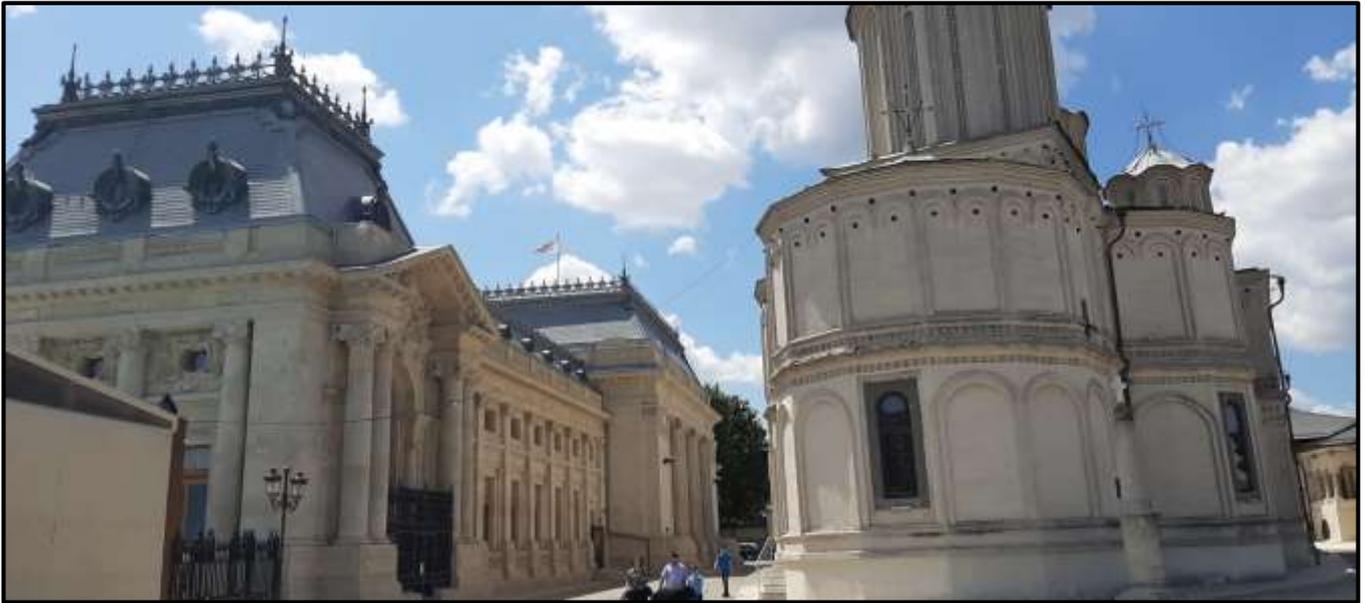


## **BUCHAREST, ROMANIA:**

After going through the many colorful cities of Bulgaria, we were all set to take in all about Romania. After all we were going to step into a new country all together. We were just a river apart, yet it seemed like a long journey owing to the formalities that we need to go through. It took our guide a while to set everything into place and soon we entered this new country called ROMANIA and went straight to its capital, BUCHAREST, it is the capital and largest city of Romania, as well as its cultural, industrial, and financial centre. It is located in the southeast of the country, on the banks of the Dâmbovița River, less than 60km north of the Danube River and the Bulgarian border.

Romania became the capital of Romania in 1862 and is the centre of Romanian media, culture, and art. Its architecture is a mix of historical (neo-classical), interbellum (Bauhaus and art deco), communist-era and modern. In the period between the two World Wars, the city's elegant architecture and the sophistication of its elite earned Bucharest the nickname of "Little Paris". In recent years, the city has been experiencing an economic and cultural boom. In 2016, the historical city centre was listed as "endangered" by the World Monuments Watch. All in all, we all felt that Bucharest was that one city, where just a day is not enough to absorb the city. The city has a lot to offer and we had too little time.

## ROMANIAN PATRIARCHAL CATHEDRAL COMPLEX:



The Romanian Patriarchal Cathedral is a wonderful example of Brâncovenesc architecture. It's also an important place of worship that shelters a magnificent collection of religious art. The Romanian Patriarchal Cathedral was established in the 1650s.

Originating in Romania in the late 17th century, its architectural style blends Baroque, Byzantine, Ottoman and Renaissance features. Crowning the roof are three domes and four towers, each topped with a simple cross.

## PALACE OF PARLIAMENT:



The Palace of the Parliament is the seat of the Parliament of Romania. Located on Dealul Arsenalului in the national capital city of central Bucharest, it is the second largest administrative building in the world after The Pentagon. The Palace has a height of 84 metres, an area of 365,000 sq m. A colossal building, designed and supervised by chief architect Anca Petrescu, with a team of approximately 700 architects, constructed over a period of 13 years (1984–97), it was built as a monument for a totalitarian kitsch style of architecture, in Totalitarian and modernist Neo classical architectural forms and styles, with socialist realism in mind.

### PELES OF CASTLE, SINAIA:



Palace Castle is a Neo-Renaissance castle in the Carpathian Mountains, near Sinaia, in Prahova County, Romania, on an existing medieval route linking Transylvania and allachia, built between 1873 and 1914. Its inauguration was held in 1883. It was constructed for King Carol I. By form and function, Peles is a palace, but it is consistently called a castle. Its architectural style is a romantically inspired blend Neo-Renaissance and Gothic Revival. Peleş Castle has a 3,200 sq m floor area with over 170 rooms, many with dedicated themes from world cultures (in a similar fashion as other Romanian palaces, like Cotroceni Palace).



Themes vary by function (offices, libraries, armories, art galleries) or by styles like Florentine, Turkish, Moorish, French, Imperial all the rooms are extremely lavishly furnished and decorated to the slightest detail. The establishment hosts one of the finest collections of art in Eastern and Central Europe, consisting of statues, paintings, furniture, arms and armor, gold, silver, stained glass, ivory, fine china, tapestries, and rugs. The collection of arms and armor has over 4,000 pieces, divided between Eastern and Western war pieces and ceremonial or hunting pieces, spreading over four centuries of history. Oriental rugs come from many sources: Bukhara, Mosul, Isparta, Saruk, and Smirna. The porcelain is from Sèvres and Meissen the leather is from Córdoba. Perhaps the most acclaimed items are the hand-painted stained glass vitralios, which are mostly Swiss. Since the photography was not allowed inside the palace, we could only bring back its memories.

### **BRAN CASTLE, BRAN:**



Bran Castle, situated near Bran and in the immediate vicinity of Braşov, is a national monument and landmark in Romania. The fortress is situated on the border between Transylvania and Wallachia. It is commonly known as “Dracula’s Castle”. The castle is now a museum dedicated to displaying art and furniture collected by Queen Marie. Tourists can see the interior on their own or by a guided tour. At the bottom of the hill is a small open-air museum park exhibiting traditional Romanian peasant structures (cottages, barns, etc.) from across the country.

### **BRASOV, ROMANIA:**



Braşov is a city in Romania and the administrative centre of Braşov County. Braşov is located in the central part of the country, about 166 kilometres north of Bucharest. It is surrounded by the Southern Carpathians and is part of the Transylvania region. The city is notable for being an important centre of Transylvanian Saxons in the past, and a large commercial hub on the trade roads between East and West. It is also the birthplace of national anthem of Romania. Amazingly colourful houses stacked side by side, empty roads, cool chilly breeze even in summers and lovely people is all that we will always remember about the place.

### **BACK TO SOFIA:**

Friday, we were required to be ready at 7:30am sharp and leave from Brasov. There are very strict rules and regulations for drivers in Europe. Our driver had only 8 to 9 driving hours for the day and the distance between Brasov and Sofia is 561km which would have taken us around 13 hours in all including the immigration process at the border of Romania and Bulgaria. Hence, we were supposed to leave early to avoid the traffic. Journey back was too long and tiring. As we were all on the move for one last week, checking in of a new hotel every day, rushing to see the cities immediately after checking in, walking for kilometers and kilometer everyday non-stop for seven days, we were all actually looking forward to be back in Sofia, relax a little and enjoy the lazy evenings of Sofia.

Once we reached back to Sofia, it felt like home. As we all were now staying here for Four good weeks, it had become our home. It was an amazing feeling to be back to your base after a long holiday. Our rooms were all cleaned and the linens changed as a part of the weekly maintenance policy of the hostel.

We had a great time during our excursion which we shall cherish for our lifetime. Thanks to UACEG, Prof. Boris and the team, the travel agency and to GTU for planning such an amazing trip.



# Moments from the Farewell





















# MOMENTS TO CHERISH FOR LIFE





















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