

BULGARIA

Bulgaria celebrates national Enlighteners Day

In Bulgaria, November 1st is traditionally marked as the Day of the Enlighteners, the founders of Bulgarian education, culture and spiritual make-up.

On November 1 the Bulgarians pay tribute to Bulgarian scholars from the past and to those committed to teaching, studying, culture and science. The Day of the Enlighteners was first marked in Bulgaria on November the 1st, 1909. In 1922, the cabinet of Alexander Stamboliiski instituted by law the day of St. John of Rila, November 1, a Day of the Enlighteners and teachers and students have been staging parades on this occasion since the 1930s. This is a traditional celebration. Hundreds of municipalities and schools mark the Day of the Enlighteners.

Every name, praised on November 1st, is a standard of devoted and unselfish service to the nation. Bulgarian history is a history of kings, military commanders and politicians, on the one hand, and a chronicle of the work of men of letters, intellectuals and men of God. Thanks to them the Bulgarian nation has made it through the centuries of hardship and has contributed a lot to European culture.

Several centuries later, the faith in Christ and the Bulgarian language would be the strongest pillars of the Bulgarians' spirit. In the darkest years of the 5 centuries of Ottoman domination, Bulgarians would find hope behind the walls of secluded monasteries and sacred books. It was then that a monk wrote the first Bulgarian history which later became the manifesto of the period of Bulgarian National Revival (mid 18th through 19th century). The slim manuscript of Father Paisii served to awaken the national pride and self-awareness of Bulgarians by resurrecting their glorious past and by instilling hope in the future.

Permeated by the thirst for freedom, the 19th century was ushered in by the words "Let This be a Beginning!" They belong to Sofronii of Vratsa, a man of cloth and of letters. He would work side by side with Dr. Petar Beron who compiled the first Bulgarian lay textbook. Well-off Bulgarians and benefactors would sponsor modern schools across Bulgaria. These were years dedicated to "education" and "fight" – keywords proclaimed by Georgi Rakovski whose name wreathes the long list of Bulgarian revolutionaries.

Fighters for freedom stepped out on the history's scene to send awaking impulses through the entire nation with their revolutionary ideas and lyrics. One of them was Hristo Botev, a revolutionary and poet of genius. He bequeathed on the Bulgarians the brightest paragon of patriotism and the most beautiful legend of immortality.

A nation which has centuries-old history and rich culture, which has preserved the spirit of its saints and kings, enlighteners, poets and heroes is a nation with a future. Bulgarians prove this by marking November 1 – the Day of the Enlighteners. On this day processions throughout Sofia and across the country close main boulevards. These are tokens paying tribute to those involved with teaching, studying, culture or scientific work.

The Enlighteners Day marks also a number of annual awarding ceremonies for teachers, actors, poets, artists, historians, etc.



ITALY

Halloween

Halloween, or All Saint's Eve, is becoming a popular day for costume parties and events in Italy. While the main holidays are still All Saints Day on November 1 and All Souls Day on November 2, the custom of celebrating Halloween is starting to take hold in many Italian cities.

Halloween costumes and decorations are on display in shop windows and can be found in many stores. Children's costume parties are mainly held during the day, but in the evening many nightclubs, bars, and restaurants now advertise special Halloween costume parties.

Urban Trekking for Halloween

Urban Trekking holds special All Saints Eve walks in many cities. These walks often include special night visits to medieval towers, crypts, dungeons, or castles. Some cities hold children's walks during the afternoon, too.

Each year's urban trek has a theme - the 2009 theme is *Il Gusto del Trekking, dolcetti e scherzetti camminando in Citta'* (the taste of trekking, treats and tricks walking in the city). Walks are offered in 32 Italian cities. Although the site is in Italian, each city walk has a simple map showing the starting point (which you'll find by scrolling down the city page) along with length of the walk (time and kilometers) and starting time (orario di partenza). Click on a city in the City List 2009 to see these details.



Halloween at Italian Amusement Parks

Italian amusement parks have special weekend events in October for Halloween culminating October 31. Near Lake Garda, Gardaland features Magic Halloween with a spirits' parade and reduced prices for those dressed in monster costumes, weekends in October, and Movieland has Rock'n Halloween every weekend in October and is open until midnight on Halloween night.

Halloween Dinners in Restaurants

A few restaurants offer special dinners for Halloween, like this one in a remote castle in Liguria. If you're in Italy, check local restaurants for posters.

Halloween Movies in Italian Movie Theaters

Some Italian movie theaters are advertising American Halloween movies for Halloween. I'm guessing they have Italian sub-titles.

Mummies and Skeletons in Italy

Not just for Halloween, Italy has several chilling displays of mummies and bones in catacombs, churches, and crypts. These mummies have been naturally preserved and the displays can be a macabre sight, not recommended for young children.

November 1st

LITHUANIA

ALL SAINTS' DAY



All Saints' Day in Lithuania is a solemn holiday. November 1st is set aside as a day to recognize the souls of the dead as well as remembering the Saints of the Catholic Church. In Lithuania, All Saints' Day is sometimes referred to as Velines, in honor of the pagan holiday during which those who didn't belong to the Catholic Church would celebrate a fall feast in honor of the deceased.

In Catholic churches, the night before All Saints' Day is devoted to prayers giving thanks to all the saints. Catholics attend church to say prayers and take the sacrament as it is customary to do on the morning of All Saints' Day. Though the "veles," or souls, of ancestors are said to act as guardians, it is necessary to have performed the appropriate religious rites prior to visiting with the veles. Lithuanians believe that on this day the souls of the dead visit in hope that the living will pray for them. People decorate graves with plants, flowers and candles. It's also customary to light a candle on neglected graves, those which have no family to tend them. Families gather for a big meal.

SPAIN

All Saints Day