

# UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGY AT NESSEBAR, ANCIENT MESAMBRIA (BLACK SEA), BULGARIA

## Program Information

### PROGRAM SPECIFIC FIELD CONDITIONS

#### What are the average weather conditions during the time of the field school?

Be aware that in May and June days are hot (25-35°C) and nights are chilly (15-25°C). Although rare in this region and season, rainy days are a possibility. The Black Sea is usually calm at this time of the year, but diving will be halted during windy days, when waves are high, currents too strong or water too muddy. Diving decisions will be made and are at the sole discretion of the project directors.

#### Please describe the site(s) where the students will work.

Founded at the end of the Bronze Age by a Thracian tribe, Messambria (modern day Nessebar) was one of the oldest towns on the western Black Sea Coast. It is situated on a small peninsula (currently about 0.5 sq. km) that was connected to the mainland by a narrow isthmus. Previous underwater excavation campaigns revealed that significant parts of the ancient town (incl. fortification walls from different periods) today lay below sea level at a depth between 1,5 and 6 meters.

The **field school** includes the following three modules:

**Fieldwork** including excavation, developing archaeological field documentation (drawing an elevation plan/ a ground plan/ cross-sections), underwater photography and photogrammetry, marine geophysical survey and archaeological dive survey.

**Lectures and workshops** for processing of data and information: creating 3D photogrammetry models, photomosaics, geophysical data processing, conservation of finds from marine environment; conservation of underwater structures *in situ*, etc.

**Excursions** to the [Archaeological Museum and the Old Quarter of Sozopol](#) and the Museum of Underwater Archaeology in Kiten and Museum of the Anchor in Ahtopol.

#### Are there special features of the program site?

Modern-day Nessebar is a small resort town located on the Bulgarian Black Sea Coast. It is an archaeological and architectural reserve. In 1983 the Old Quarter of Nessebar was included in UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites.

#### Will there be other people onsite with the field school or working in the same area?

No.

## **What does an average week look like?**

### **Working days**

7.00 - 7.30 am - Breakfast

8.00 am - 1:30 pm - Field work

4.30/5.30 - 6.30/7.30 pm - Lectures/Workshops /Lab work, Field work

### **The following excursions are included in the field school program during the weekends:**

- [Old town of Nessebar](#) (ancient Mesambria, UNESCO World Heritage Site) and Museum of Archaeology - Nessebar.
- [Old town of Sozopol](#) (ancient Apollonia Pontica) and Museum of Archaeology - Sozopol.
- Museum of the Anchor in Ahtopol
- Museum of Underwater Archaeology in Kiten

### **What are the options for students to access money? Are there ATMs nearby? Should students plan to bring a certain amount of cash?**

The Bulgarian currency is the Euro (EUR). You cannot pay in other foreign currency, except in casinos and big hotels (where the exchange rate is really unfair)! Bulgarian banks accept all credit cards. Usually, banks open at 8.30 – 9.00 am and close at 5.00-6.00 pm. They work from Monday to Friday. Shopping malls, supermarkets, and many shops in Sofia and/or bigger towns and resorts will also accept credit cards. This is not valid for smaller “domestic” shops throughout the country where the only way of payment is cash!

Exchange of foreign currencies is possible not only at banks but also at numerous exchange offices. Most of them don't collect a commission fee and have acceptable exchange rates (+/- 0.5-1.5% of the official rate) However, those located in shopping areas of big cities, resorts, railway stations, airports, etc., can overcharge you in varying amounts. Ask in advance how much money you will get! ATMs are available all over the country and POS terminals are in every bank office.

If you plan to use your credit/debit card in Bulgaria, please inform your bank of your intention before departure! Otherwise, it is very possible that your bank will block your account/ card for security reasons when you try to use it abroad! Unblocking your card, when abroad, may cost you several phone calls and a lot of money.

## **ACTIVITY LEVEL & ACCESSIBILITY**

### **Please provide information about the physical requirements of the program.**

This field school includes physical work underwater at archaeological sites. To avoid health problems and injuries, a strict discipline will be maintained, especially on diving days. Students

will have to adhere to a regime of structured diving schedule, diet restrictions and rest periods. Although the depth of diving will be fairly shallow – 2-8 meters– dive masters and program staff will monitor diving times and intervals and students will not be able to dive without strict supervision and report to directors.

**Please comment on how accessible your site is for people with mobility challenges. Would someone using a wheelchair be able to participate? Someone who uses crutches or other assistive walking devices?**

Unfortunately, due to the nature of the underwater archaeology it is not suitable for students with mobility disabilities.

## **PROGRAM COUNTRY & CULTURAL INFORMATION**

**What do you love about the country and area you work in? What do you think students will be most excited to discover?**

The richness and diversity of Bulgaria’s cultural heritage; the hospitality and food.

**How large is the community where students will be staying? Will students have opportunities to interact casually with local residents? Please describe.**

Participants and staff stay at a hotel located in the downtown of Nessebar, on the Bulgarian Black Sea Coast. Nessebar is a popular tourist destination, all visitors are able to freely interact with locals and other tourists. Accommodation is in shared double and triple bedrooms with AC, Wi-Fi, bathroom.

**Primary languages spoken by people in the area:**

Bulgarian.

**What are some things students may find surprising about the local culture?**

Many Bulgarians speak English, but cultural differences should be expected. Although many signs include Latin characters, expect street signs and most public signs to primarily use the Cyrillic alphabet.

**Are there cultural aspects that students should be aware of before they come, particularly behaviors that could be offensive or misinterpreted (for example, eye contact, dress, gestures)?**

A curious custom in Bulgaria is the shaking of the head when you mean “yes” and nodding when you mean “no”. It can be confusing for first time visitors.

**What cultural enrichment opportunities are students likely to have outside of the program?**

Nessebar is a resort town and as such offers various leisure activities. The field school team can assist participants during their free time with organizing visits to beaches and sites, boating, sailing, fishing, etc.

**Will students have opportunities to explore other areas of the country? If so, what options are available to them (such as available transportation or unscheduled time for exploration)?**

All of the excursion days have at least a couple of hours of allotted free time to explore the cities. They can also travel to neighboring towns on their days off either by bus and/or train or by arranged transport for which the BHFS team will assist them.

## **ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS**

**Please describe student accommodations, including the type of accommodation.**

Students will stay at the family hotel [Emona Guest House](#) in the Old Town Quarter of Nessebar in rooms with two to three beds (bathrooms with shower and WC, TV, and air-conditioning). Cheap laundry service and free Wi-Fi is available. Participants are not expected to bring any additional equipment, bedclothes, or towels. Diving gear will be transported by car.

**Please describe how/how often students can do laundry.**

Laundry can be done upon request at the hotel for a small fee.

**How are room assignments made? If rooms are assigned according to gender, how will you assign rooms for non-binary, trans and queer students?**

In advance, according to gender (including non-binary and queer). In the case of trans-gender students accommodation will be assigned on a case-by-case basis after communication with the student. We have very limited or sometimes no option for a change of accommodation on site, so please communicate all relevant information well in advance.

**Are there options for single rooms? Would there be an additional charge (and approximate cost)?**

Single rooms may be available upon request for the supplement of 160 EUR (approx. 175 USD) per week. Staying an extra day at the hotel costs 40 EUR (approx. 44 USD) per night per person. All requests must be made in advance of the program.

**Will the program provide meals? If not all meals, please specify which meals students will be responsible for, and what facilities are available for them to get groceries and prepare meals.**

Breakfasts on workdays as well as the welcome and the farewell dinners are covered by the program fee. Students are responsible for their daily lunches and dinners and all meals on days off.

Nessebar offers a variety of restaurants that can meet everyone's preferences and dietary requirements – from fast food options to cozy gourmet restaurants. The average meal price (soup/salad, main dish and dessert) can cost between 10 to 20 USD. The project team will recommend restaurants for different preferences (cuisine, cost, dietary needs) and will arrange discounts for the students.

Only breakfasts are included in the program package, which include: toast, varieties of cheese & meat, eggs, vegetables, fruits, corn flakes, milk, yogurt, jam and honey

## VISA AND PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

**Indicate the visa requirements, if any, for US citizens. If there is a visa requirement, what type of visa should students apply for?**

Citizens of EU, EEA, USA, Canada, Japan, Republic of Korea, Australia and New Zealand do not need a visa to visit Bulgaria for up to 90 days. Citizens of all other countries may need a visa. The Balkan Heritage Foundation can send an official invitation letter that should be used at the relevant embassy to secure a visa to the program. For more information visit the Balkan Heritage Foundation website at <http://www.bhfieldschool.org/information/visa-help> and the links provided there.

Citizens of other countries are asked to check the embassy website page in their home country for specific visa requirements.

## TRAVEL (TO AND DURING THE PROGRAM)

**If students will fly, what airport should they fly into?**

Sofia International Airport, Burgas Airport, Varna Airport.

If you missed your connection or your flight is delayed, please call, text or email the field school director/project staff immediately (email: [bhfs.admissions@gmail.com](mailto:bhfs.admissions@gmail.com)). A local emergency mobile phone number will be provided to all enrolled students.

**Where will you meet students? If not at a primary arrival point, like an airport, how should students get to the meeting point?**

On May 24 in the early afternoon, an **optional** pick-up and transfer by a shuttle from Sofia Airport to Emona Guest House in Nessebar might be organized. The shuttle cost may vary between 70 EUR and 110 Euro (approx. 75 to 120 USD) depending on the number of travelers.

**If the field site is not close to student accommodations, how will students get there? How long does it take?**

The distance from the hotel to the sites and the beach is approx. 200 / 400 m and it takes approx. 2 - 5 min to walk.

## EQUIPMENT LIST (What to bring)

- Diving gear – Diving weights and tanks will be provided by the field school. Students are responsible for the equipment listed below. If you do not wish to bring your own diving gear, you may rent such gear from a local Diving Center at a price of up to 30 Euros per day (depending on the items rented). You will need:
  - Wet/dry suite 5mm thickness or more **with a hood (or with a separate hood)**
  - Dive boots
  - Fins
  - Mask
  - Snorkel
  - Regulator
  - Buoyancy Controlling Device (BCD)

- Diving knife
- Belt without the weights (weights will be provided by the program)
- Diving gear bag
- Optional: dive computer, writing slate board.
- A laptop (powerful one) with Windows, macOS, or Linux.
- A set of walking or hiking shoes for the excursions and the fieldwork.
- Clothing suitable for layering for outdoor activities. Weather may change from cool and rainy to hot and sunny during the day.
- Wide brim hat.
- A small backpack (for your food, bottle of water, wet wipes, camera, papers, etc.)
- A light raincoat for possible rainy and windy days.
- Medication - Bring any individual prescription medicines at sufficient quantities for the duration of this program. It is not necessary to bring over-the-counter medicine since you can buy all common types in Bulgaria (e.g., pain reliever, first aid, etc.)
- A converter for an EU-type electricity wall plug.
- A good attitude for work, fun, study, and discoveries
- Identification/passport
- Travel documents
- Prescription medication for the entire program period
- Credit/Debit card
- Extra glasses/contacts if worn

#### **Recommended**

- Shower shoes
- Swimwear and quick dry towel
- Sunscreen
- Sandals and/or beach shoes

Note: You will not need formal clothing, and laundry can be done locally as needed.

#### **MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

<https://www.facebook.com/CUABulgaria>

<https://www.instagram.com/balkanheritage/>

<https://cua-sozopol.com/>

<https://www.youtube.com/@bhfieldschool>