

Vrana Palace



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The former hunting lodge where [Simeon II](#) lives

Vrana Palace ([Bulgarian](#): Дворец „Врана“, *Dvoretz „Vrana“*) is a former royal palace, located on the outskirts of [Sofia](#), the capital of [Bulgaria](#). It is today the official residence of the deposed [Tsar Simeon II of Bulgaria](#) and his wife Tsaritsa [Margarita](#). While the royal palace in the centre of Sofia (today the [National Art Gallery](#) and [National Ethnographic Museum](#)) served representative purposes and the [Euxinograd](#) palace near [Varna](#) was a summer residence, Vrana was the palace where the [royal family of Bulgaria](#) spent most of their time.

The extensive lot was bought by Tsar [Ferdinand I](#) in 1898 and is situated just outside Sofia. There is a park and two buildings, the first one built in 1904 as a two-storey hunting lodge commissioned to [Georgi Fingov](#), and the second constructed mainly between 1909 and 1914 as a palace, both with money from the state budget.

Three rooms of the three-storey palace commissioned to the noted architect [Nikola Lazarov](#) were later furnished in the [Baroque](#) style, one in the style of the [Austrian](#) royal palaces and one in a Bulgarian national style, while the study was designed in a [Venetian](#) style. The palace features a [carved wooden](#) ceiling, oak [wainscoting](#), built-in metal plates and [Delftware](#). The interior columns are made of [Carrara](#) marble and an old [Schindler](#) lift is still in use.

The [Karelian](#) Hall is a gift from [Alexander III of Russia](#), and all of its furniture (the table, the chairs and the dressing table) are made of Karelian [birch](#) by master woodworkers specially sent from Russia. The first storey also has a cinema hall and tea halls, the second storey is where the apartments are located, and the third one used to be allocated to the servants and the court.

In 1918 Vrana passed from Tsar Ferdinand to [Boris III](#). In 1943, it became the property of Simeon II. The main palace was bombed by the [RAF](#) in [World War II](#) and was subsequently restored in 1947. After the abolition of the monarchy, Vrana was taken by the [communists](#) and became a residence of [Georgi Dimitrov](#).

After the fall of the communist regime, Vrana was returned to the last tsar, Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha and his sister Princess Maria Luisa, by the Bulgarian [Constitutional Court](#) in June 1998, and the park was donated by the royal family to the city of Sofia in October 1999, making it possible for the former royal park, arranged in 1903 by Ferdinand,^[1] to be opened to the public. Simeon moved with his wife Margarita into the renovated old hunting lodge in 2001. [As of February 2006](#), the 0.968-square-kilometre park is expected to be opened to the public as soon as funds are found to finance its preparation for public use (construction of a car park, toilets and stalls, hiring of guides, etc.). The park is home to over 400 plant species and has been declared a national monument of [landscape architecture](#).^[2]

The palace, along with the other properties given back to Simeon II, has been the subject of much controversy in the Bulgarian media and society in the 2000s, as many argue they are in fact supposed to be public property.