



Rediscover the
meaning of travel

Tour Notes

Romania - The Land that Time Forgot

Tour Duration – 14 Days



Tour Rating

Fitness ●○○○○ | Adventure ●●○○○ | Culture ●●●●● | History ●●●●○ | Wildlife ●●●○○

Tour Highlights

- ✓ Sibiu, one of the best preserved medieval cities in Romania
- ✓ Bran Castle
- ✓ The Painted Monasteries of Bucovina
- ✓ Viscri UNESCO World Heritage Site

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Romania - The Land that Time Forgot Tour Map



Tour Essentials

- Accommodation:** Mix of hotels and local homestays
Included Meals: Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary.
Group Size: Maximum of 12
Start Point: Bucharest
End Point: Bucharest
Transport: Car (for a maximum 3 travellers) or Minivan (depending on group size)
Country Visited: Romania



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Romania - The Land that Time Forgot

Romania is one of the most exciting parts of Europe, tucked away in a remote corner where few visit and fewer still have much knowledge of. Blessed with large swathes of virtually untouched countryside, much of Romania follows a way of life that has been extinguished elsewhere in Europe, and the century's old folklore and traditions still thrive in its picturesque villages. Our tour goes right to the heart of this captivating country – rather than simply skim over its highlights we take you not only to important cultural gems such as the medieval towns of Sighisoara and Sibiu in Transylvania, but spend time getting to grips with life in the villages, often staying in rural communities as guests of local families, where local culture is at its strongest. We traverse the spectacular Carpathian Mountains, home to bears and wolves, and devote to the Danube Delta the time that it truly deserves, staying at an isolated settlement deep within its backwaters. Taking in the gorgeous painted monasteries of Bucovina and the Saxon village of Viscri, this trip encompasses the very best that Romania has to offer. But Romania cannot simply be experienced by ticking off its sites – it is the genuine cultural encounters that we have with local people that make this tour so very special, and will leave you with enduring memories of this truly enchanting country.

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested and on occasions alternative accommodation, of a similar standard to that named below, will be used.

Tour Guide

Our guides are a key strength, chosen for their knowledge of and passion for the areas in which they work. All of our guides are carefully hand-picked, and are not just passing through these countries, but are usually locally born. Unlike some companies it should be noted we do not send a guide or tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations in the UK as we have every confidence in our locally appointed representative who is responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. Where possible you will have the same guide throughout your trip but on occasions it may be necessary to change the guide at one or more points during the tour. On our Romania tours, we have a combined driver/guide for groups of three or less.

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Bucharest

Arrive in Bucharest. Depending on when you arrive, you may have a chance to start exploring the city on your own. Overnight Capitol Hotel or similar. No meals included today.

Bucharest

Bucharest all too often has a bad reputation, perceived by many to be little more than a grey and soulless city, full of gloomy Soviet architecture. To dismiss Bucharest like this is to do it a grave injustice and ignores its lively cultural life which led to it once being nicknamed 'Little Paris'. Of course it does have its fair share of concrete block style buildings, many of which sprung up during Ceausescu's regime but it also contains a marvellous collection of ancient churches, neoclassical and Art Nouveau buildings, parks and lively markets as well as some excellent museums. Bucharest's historic quarter is perhaps its highlight, founded as a citadel by Vlad (the Impaler) Tepes and with 16th century churches and narrow streets reminiscent of times gone by. In direct contrast to this is Ceausescu's 'civic centre' with its wide boulevards and imposing Palace of Parliament. Bucharest dates back to the 15th century when it was a summer residence for the princely court, and during its time has been sacked by the Ottomans, invaded by Russians, Austrians and Germans and suffered a number of earthquakes. Recovering now from the rule of Ceausescu, Bucharest is starting to quietly assert itself as one of the major cultural capitals of Eastern Europe.



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Day 2: Bucharest - Peles Castle - Azuga - Brasov (Driving distance: 150km; Approx. driving time is 3.5 hours today)

We start the day with a city tour of Bucharest. After lunch (optional) we leave Bucharest via the Prahova Valley. We stop of to see Peles Castle and then drive to the small village of Azuga and visit the Rhein wine cellars, which produce a renowned sparkling wine. There is a tour of the cellars followed by a wine tasting. We continue to one of Transylvania's major towns, Brasov for the evening. Overnight in Brasov city centre – Casa Wagner Hotel or similar. (B)

Brasov

Also known as Kronstadt due to the presence of German colonists as early as the 12th century, Brasov is still a mix of minorities, like Hungarians and Gypsies, with a mediaeval centre boasting colourful facades, old ramparts, secret narrow cobbled streets, guard towers and the largest gothic church between Vienna and Istanbul. Long under Saxon rule, the town betrays hints of its previous inhabitants in many of the buildings, with fine examples of merchants' houses and an impressive Byzantine style cathedral, and it is still possible to see the old fortifications which once protected Brasov from invaders.

Day 3: Brasov – Excursion to Bran and Wild Bears (Driving distance: 100km; Approx. driving time is 2.5 hours today)

This morning we explore the city of Brasov before travelling for 45 minutes to Bran village. This is home to Bran castle, tenuously linked to the legend of Dracula. We have a tour of the castle and discover its colourful history. Returning to Brasov, we visit a special observatory in the forest accompanied by National Forestry Administration representatives. Here, if we are lucky we hope to see wild European Brown Bear in their natural habitat. The trip will take about 4 hours and include a 20 minute walk. We return to Brasov late this evening. Overnight in Brasov city centre – Casa Wagner Hotel or similar. (B)

Day 4: Brasov - Viscri (Driving distance: 100 km; Approx. driving time is 1.5-2 hours today)

From Brasov we drive (about 1 ½ hours) to the delightful village of Viscri, a Saxon village and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. On the way we stop to view a beautiful UNESCO listed fortified church of Prejmer. Spend the day exploring the village and surroundings, and learning about local life. We visit the fortified church in the village, and then enjoy a horse and carriage ride through the surroundings. Along the way we will meet people specialising in traditional crafts and gain an insight into the customs of this part of the country. Overnight local house. (BLD)

Day 5: Viscri - Sighisoara - Sibiu (Driving distance: 150km; Approx. driving time is 2.5 hours today)

Today we travel to Sighisoara with its beautiful medieval citadel. We explore the fortress and also visit the house where Vlad the Impaler was born. We then head to Sibiu, one of the best preserved medieval cities in Romania and carefully restored in recent years. We have time to explore the old centre with its ramparts, churches and narrow alleys. Overnight in Sibiu Imparatul Romanilor Hotel or similar. (B)

Sighisoara

In a region full of spectacular architecture, Sighisoara manages to stand out. Its fortified old town is a mass of medieval houses, testament to its previous existence as an important centre of commerce, with artisans from throughout the Holy Roman Empire visiting the settlement. The town was dominated by Saxon artisans and craftsmen, who also built the fortifications protecting it. Most impressive is the old clock tower, constructed in the 13th and 14th centuries as part of the town's defences and today containing a museum giving an insight into Sighisoara's history.



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Sibiu

Sibiu's colourful old town is a spectacular sight to behold, with its fantastic old cathedrals, merchants' houses and public squares – it positively exudes medieval atmosphere. Sibiu itself is divided into an old and new quarter, although to be fair even the new quarter contains impressive buildings dating back to the 16th century. The city is known to exist from the 12th century, rising in prominence to become an important trading town. Like Brasov it was inhabited by Saxon merchants who formed themselves into guilds, fortifying the town to protect its wealth. Sibiu is packed full of fascinating sites to explore, from its ramparts and towers to its passageways linking the two parts of the town together.

Day 6: Sibiu – Alba - Iulia – Turda - Cluj (Driving distance: 180km; Approx. driving time is 3 hours today)

In the morning we drive to Alba-Iulia, a city with a high importance in Romania's history, being the place where the Romanian Principalities and Transylvania united to form Romania after the First World War. The city is also home of the best preserved Vauban fortress in Europe. It was designed by an Italian architect in the early 18th century, modeled on a star shape with seven points. With its arrow-shaped bastions, the fortress is outstanding both for its baroque decorative elements and for the beauty of its six gates. We then continue to Turda salt mine. First, we visit "La Salina" wine cellars, situated nearby the salt mine, with about 70 hectares of vineyard and taste some of their wines. This area prides itself with centuries of viticulture tradition, dating back to the Roman Empire period, when the current settlement of Turda was known under the name of Potaissa. The salt mine that we see today dates from the 17th century and it is now a fascinating underground entertainment area, described as 'the coolest underground place in the world'. This evening we will arrive in to Cluj, the former capital of Transylvania. Overnight in Cluj Lol et Lola Hotel or similar. (BL)

Day 7: Cluj - Sucevita (Driving distance: 280km; Approx. driving time is 5 hours today)

We explore Cluj this morning, a vibrant and cosmopolitan city. We then depart Cluj, travelling through the Carpathian Mountains and via the Tihuta mountain pass. This was the pass described as the 'Borgo pass' in Bram Stoker's Dracula novel. Our drive takes us to the region of Bucovina, located on the northern slopes of the central Eastern Carpathians. We arrive at our destination for the evening, Sucevita village, where we will have a traditional dinner prepared by our hosts. Overnight in traditional guesthouse. (BD)

Carpathian Mountains

The Carpathian Mountains stretch across a wide part of Eastern Europe, encompassing parts of Romania, Ukraine, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary and Serbia. Rich in wildlife they are home to some of Europe's last remaining populations of large mammals, with bears, wolves and lynx to be found prowling through the forests. The birdlife here is equally spectacular, with raptors such as eagles a frequent sighting. This is one of the most pristine environments to be found on the continent, with superb views to be had from every angle and the possibility of seeing wildlife adding further excitement.

Day 8: Sucevita – Excursion to Painted Monasteries of Bucovina and Voronet (Driving distance: 120km; Approx. driving time is 2.5 hours today)

In the morning we visit Moldovita Monastery, a wonderful masterpiece of Moldavian Gothic architecture adorned with lively exterior frescoes dating back to the beginning of the 16th century. Then we visit an egg painting workshop where we are shown the special technique required in this extremely delicate operation. We also see an exhibition of these local treasures. Later we visit Voronet monastery with its exterior frescoes dating to the 15th century, also named the Sistine Chapel of the East. On the way back to our accommodation in Sucevita, we stop in Marginea village to see the black pottery workshop and then we visit Sucevita monastery – the largest of the painted monasteries. We arrive back in Sucevita in time for dinner with our hosts. Overnight in traditional guesthouse. (BD)



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Painted Monasteries of Bucovina

The impressive monasteries of Bucovina, Romania, with their fine exterior and interior frescoes, have been preserved and handed down from mediaeval times, and because of their uniqueness and artistic value, were added to UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage List in 1993. Most of the churches are fortified with strong defensive surrounding walls as protection against Turkish invaders and they sheltered large armies of soldiers awaiting battle. The exterior walls of the monasteries are richly decorated with vivid frescoes depicting dramatic Biblical scenes, intended to teach Christianity to the illiterate by means of pictures. The artwork has amazingly survived harsh exposure to the elements for over 450 years and the intense colours have been well preserved. The best of the monasteries are generally considered to be Voronet, Sucevita, Moldovita and Arbore.

Day 9: Sucevita – Tarpesti – Agapia – Piatra Neamt (Driving distance: 180km; Approx. driving time is 3 hours today)

This morning we travel to the village of Tarpesti and the remarkable Popa Museum. At his home, Nicolae Popa had gathered an incredible collection of Romanian folk art and handicrafts, giving us a fantastic insight into the ancient traditions of this region. We visit the museum and have a home prepared lunch here. We then travel to the Agapia Monastery before ending the day in Piatra-Neamt where we have time to explore. Overnight in Piatra-Neamt, Central Plaza Hotel or similar. (BL)

Day 10: Piatra Neamt – Galati - Danube Delta with Tulcea – Murighiol and Sfantu Gheorghe (Driving distance: 370km; approx. 6 hours driving time)

We leave Piatra-Neamt and continue via the Siret valley to Galati, on the ancient commercial road that connected the Orient, through Constantinople and the Black Sea, through the middle of Moldavia then Poland, to the wealthy cities of the Hanseatic League on the shores of the Baltic Sea. Here we cross the Danube by ferry and on towards Tulcea, the gate to the Danube Delta. After a short stop in Tulcea, we continue towards Murighiol from where we are transferred by a private boat to our guesthouse for the following nights. Overnight in Sfantu Gheorghe village at Zen Eco Villa or similar. (BD)

Danube Delta

The Danube Delta is the best preserved of Europe's delta regions and a wetland paradise for wildlife, with over 300 species of birds in its numerous lakes and marshes. Species include storks, egrets, pelicans, eagles and numerous species of ducks. Birds are not the only inhabitants of the Delta though, and there is also a rich community of fish and animals, from wildcats, foxes and wolves, and even an occasional boar or deer. The region is also home to some very traditional villages, many of them home to Lipovani descendants of the 'Old Believers' who left Russia in the 18th century to avoid religious persecution. We avoid the 'floating hotels' that most companies use as these are unable to reach the most interesting parts of the Delta, but stay in a delightful village as guests of a local family who are able to show us all the intricacies of traditional delta life.

Day 11: Danube Delta

Today we have two outings by small boat exploring the winding channels of the Danube Delta. Our tour in the morning will be about 3 to 4 hours, return for lunch at our guesthouse and in the afternoon we can go and see the Black Sea as we are reasonably close to the place where the Danube flows into the sea. In the evening we return to our guests for dinner and accommodation. Overnight at Zen Eco Villa or similar. (BLD)

Note: Depending on the weather, the day program can be amended to best suit the group.

Day 12: Danube Delta

Today we visit the protected area of Caraorman forest, with oak trees as high as 30 meters, poplars, ash, but also Mediterranean type vegetation with creepers and vines. Return to our guesthouse for lunch and the afternoon is at leisure. Dinner and overnight at Zen Eco Villa or similar. (BLD)



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Day 13: Sfantu Gheorghe – Murighiol – Tulcea - Bucharest (Driving distance: 300km; Approx. driving time is 5.5 hours today)

We leave the Delta behind and travel by boat back to Murighiol and from there we head back to Bucharest for our final night. Overnight Capitol Hotel or similar. (B)

Day 14: Departure from Bucharest

Tour ends with transfer to the airport. (B)

Tour Inclusions / Exclusions

Inclusions:

Arrival and departure transfers

All accommodation

All transportation throughout with a professional driver

Services of English-speaking guide / tour leader - we have a combined driver/guide for groups of three or less.

Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)

Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary

Excluded:

International flights

Any airport taxes

Travel Insurance

Items of personal nature

Visas

Drinks

Important Information

Foreign Travel Advice Warnings

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At present there are no warnings against travel to Romania. Please feel free to contact us should you have any specific concerns or would like to know in detail what measures are being taken to ensure visits remain trouble free and without incident.

It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

Accommodation and Meals

Hotel Check-in Times

As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 2pm. Please note that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore please advise us if you would like to ensure that your room is available for an earlier arrival. This is particularly relevant on the first day of the tour and for early morning arrivals.





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One option is to pre-book and pay for an extra night at the beginning of your tour which will guarantee your accommodation is available irrespective of what time you arrive. Please contact us for information and costs.

It should also be noted that on many of our tours we have set-aside Day 1 of the itinerary as an 'arrival day'. For this reason and because tour participants are likely to be arriving at different times, and often from different countries, guided sightseeing or other activities are not included. If you are arriving early or before the start date of the tour and would like to organise some extra arrangements on a private basis please contact us.

Accommodation Rating

At Undiscovered Destinations we know our travellers prefer to stay in comfortable, mid-range accommodation which meets our own exacting standards. With a few exceptions you can expect rooms to be en-suite, with private bathroom and when necessary air-conditioning will be provided. In general you will find your hotel has a restaurant and/or bar. In Romanian homestays, there may be communal bathrooms in village houses.

We welcome solo travellers and single rooms will be allocated subject to the applicable tour supplement. Please note that on occasions you may not always be allocated a double or twin room, as some hotels have designated single rooms. These may be smaller in size. However, the supplement payable takes this into consideration.

Food & Drink

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B), lunch and dinner (D). Please note that lunch may be a picnic. Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.

Dietary Requirements

If you have any special dietary requirements you must notify us at the time of booking. While we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide for a 3 course meal with water. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch/Dinner £10 - £16

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Bottle of Beer £1.20 / Water £1

Tipping – Guide and Drivers

If your local guide has been helpful then you could think about tipping. This amount can obviously be left to you. For our group tour, a reasonable amount to tip the guide would be around EUR25-40 per person, depending on group size.



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Foreign Exchange

ATM Availability: Romania has plenty of ATM machines, even in smaller towns

Credit and Debit Card Acceptance: The use of cards is limited to the better hotels and restaurants. – They are not readily accepted elsewhere

Local Currency: Leu (RON)

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Euros

Where to Exchange: Your guide will advise you

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

Our advertised prices do not include the cost of international flights. Please contact us if you would like a quotation to book a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive a free airport transfer, both on arrival and departure. In order that the transfer can be arranged please ensure that you advise us of your flight information once available. Please advise the date, time and flight number for your arrival/departure. If we have not been advised of this information at least 2 weeks before travel, then you will be required to make your own way to the hotel on Day 1 of your tour.

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

Visa Information

Most nationals, including EU, UK and US citizens do not require a visa to visit Romania for stays of less than 90 days.

Regulations do frequently change though, so we advise that you check the current requirements with your nearest embassy.

Passports

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to your country.

We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities. In addition certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities.

For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country's embassy or consulate. Alternatively UK citizens can visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice



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Vaccinations & Protection

We strongly recommend that you contact your doctor's surgery or a specialist travel clinic for up-to-date information, advice and the necessary vaccinations. For a visit of less than one month, almost certainly you will be advised to have immunisations against the following: Diphtheria and Tetanus, Hepatitis A and B, Polio and Typhoid.

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in your home country can be different in other countries. If you're travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on [best practice when travelling with medicines](#). For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you'll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you're travelling to.

Preparing for your tour

Climate

Romanian winters can be very cold, with significant snowfall. The best time to visit the country is from April / May to September / October. April is generally a cooler time to visit than the other departures, but absolutely fine to visit everywhere on tour.

Clothing

Our general recommendation is to bring light clothing with a couple of fleeces or jumpers for cooler evenings. You should also bring a waterproof jacket for any days that it may rain. You should bring at least one long sleeved top for any churches that you will visit.

Equipment

The first thing on your list should be a first aid kit. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared: adequately immunized, with sufficient supplies of prescription drugs, along with a medical kit. Suncream/sunblock is a must – you should not rely on being able to find it in smaller towns in Romania. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will be useful to have. You should also bring a torch / flashlight.

Footwear

Footwear is a main priority on this tour. Comfortable walking shoes/boots are recommended.

Luggage on tour

Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). One large rucksack, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable. We advise you to travel with a rucksack or soft bag rather than a suitcase.

Electric Supply & Plugs

Electrical supply is 200V AC (50 Hz) and uses European two circular pin style plugs.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These tour notes were updated on 12th May 2020.