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meaning of travel

Tour Notes

Moldova Food and Wine Experience

Tour Duration – 6 Days



Tour Rating

Fitness ●●○○○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●●● | Culture ●●●●○ | History ●●●●○ | Wildlife ○○○○○

Tour Pace

Moderate

Tour Highlights

- ✓ Visit the little known “breakaway republic” of Transnistria with its distinctly Soviet edge
- ✓ Explore the incredibly vast labyrinth wine cellars of Cricova
- ✓ Contrast with the smaller family run winery of Et Cetera
- ✓ Enjoy the relaxed capital of Chisinau and take a walking tour
- ✓ Immerse yourself in the food and wine of Moldova
- ✓ Explore centuries old monasteries and 16th century Bendery ottoman fortress





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Tour Map Moldova Food and Wine Experience



Tour Essentials

- Accommodation:** Comfortable centrally located mid-range hotel in Chisinau
- Included Meals:** Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary
- Group Size:** Private Tour
- Start Point:** Chisinau
- End Point:** Chisinau
- Transport:** Private air conditioned vehicle
- Country Visited:** Moldova



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Moldova Food and Wine Experience

Most people are unaware that Moldova exists and are unable to locate it on a map. Sandwiched between Romania and Ukraine, this tiny country is home to the 'breakaway republic' of Transnistria, making it one of the quirkiest in Europe. With influences ranging from the Ottoman Empire to Romania to Russia, Moldova is a fascinating melange of cultures. On this short trip basing ourselves in Chisinau, we will take in some of the most important historical sites including a 13th century cave monastery at Orheiul Vechi. Visit the fascinating breakaway republic of Transnistria with its capital Tiraspol which has a distinctly Soviet feel. The focus of the tour however is to explore the culture of Moldova through the medium of its excellent wine and cuisine. Hearty lunches are included from Days 2 – 5 leaving the evenings at leisure for you to explore independently and maybe take in a bar or two. Moldova is the 11th largest wine producing nation in Europe and the history of wine-making stretches back some 5000 years. We explore the astonishing and vast underground wine cellars of Cricova contrasting with smaller wineries with of course opportunities to sample excellent local wines. For those seeking knowledge of ancient viticulture, combined with history and a culinary adventure in a little known land, then this short tour should be high on your list.

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. No guide is included on arrival and departure days and your transfers will be carried out by a local driver.

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Chisinau

Arrive in Chisinau where you will be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel. Depending on your time of arrival you may have the opportunity to explore the city. Overnight at Jolly Alon Hotel or similar. No meals are included today but our local team will make recommendations for dinner in the city.

Chisinau

Chisinau was founded back in the 15th century, as a small monastery village within the province of Moldavia. Falling first to the Ottoman and then the Russian Empire, the city grew over the years and played a major part in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877. Sadly it was bombed extensively during the Second World War and most of the older buildings were destroyed – the city today has been rebuilt on a typical Soviet grid system of streets. It contains one of the highest proportions of green spaces within any major European city, with many parks and lakes within its boundaries.

Day 2: Chisinau walking tour - Asconi winery - Chisinau (Overall driving time today is approx. 1.5 hours)

After breakfast meet your local guide and embark on a walking tour of the capital, visiting key sites including the Arc de Triomphe, the Cathedral, and the Moldovan Parliament. Continue with a visit to the National Museum of Ethnography, with its collection of archaeological treasures and old Bessarabian carpets.



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If time allows, it may also be possible to visit one or two local markets including a food market. Later this morning, we drive a short distance from the capital to Asconi winery, a family run winery producing wine since 1994. Asconi produce a diverse range of wines using modern methods but retaining traditions of previous wine producing generations. Enjoy a tour of the winery and enjoy a relaxing lunch of Moldovan and Romanian cuisine and taste some of the wines before transferring late afternoon back to Chisinau where your evening will be at leisure to relax or perhaps sample a couple of bars in Chisinau. Overnight Jolly Alon Hotel or similar. (BL)

Day 3: Chisinau - Orheiul Vechi - Cricova - Chisinau (Overall driving time today is approx. 3 hours)

After breakfast continue to Orheiul Vechi, an impressive 13th Century cave monastery complex set amidst dramatic scenery. This will be followed by lunch at a local pension with traditional dishes and Moldovan wine (two glasses of wine included). After enjoying the hospitality of our hosts, continue to the incredibly vast underground tunnels totally some 75 miles that house the wine cellars of Cricova. Tour the tunnels and enjoy tasting and enjoy up to 4 of the wines before returning to Chisinau where the evening is at leisure. Overnight Jolly Alon Hotel or similar. (BL)

Orheiul Vechi

The Orheiul Vechi Monastery complex is carved into a limestone cliff, and dates back to the 13th century, although it has only recently come back into use after being abandoned in the 18th century. It contains a chapel and a sleeping area for monks, and the cliff side is dotted with small caves and places of worship, dug over thousands of years by ancient Dacian tribes. There are wonderful views of the surrounding countryside.

Moldova Wine

Although perhaps little known in Western Europe, Moldova has a well-established wine industry that dates back some 5000 years. It is the 11th largest wine producing nation in Europe with around two thirds being commercial production and a third home grown wines. The main export markets are Poland, Russia and Romania although more Moldovan wine is now being exported to the United States. Wine is an intrinsic part of Moldovan culture and enthusiastically accompanies most meals and most certainly during holidays and special occasions. Whilst indigenous grape varieties can still be found (along with grape varieties from the Caucasus region), in the latter half of the 19th century, French varieties were intensively planted and to this day French grapes dominate. White wines form the majority of production totaling around 70% with red wine comprising around 25% of total production, predominantly in the south of Moldova.

Moldovan Food

Traditional Moldovan cuisine is famous for its wide variety of different dishes and delicious flavour. It has been heavily influenced by the cultures of the diverse cultures that have shaped the country from Ukrainians, Russians, Greeks, Jews, Germans and others. Nature has been kind to Moldova, offering up an array of produce such as grapes, fruit, vegetables, meat, dairy products and cereals. The fertile soil and traditional agricultural methods make it possible to cultivate a diverse range of ecologically pure raw materials. Favourite dishes of Moldovans are brynza (a cheese-like dairy product), 'Mamaliga', a kind of polenta, and many dishes consisting of vegetables, fruit and meat. Perhaps try sarmale which is made with rice, meat and vegetables rolled in cabbage leaves. Another traditional and very popular dish, made especially during the holidays, is Placinte, pastry typically stuffed with cheese, potatoes, cabbage or apples.

Day 4: Cheeses of Moldova – Tipova Monastery – Chateau Vartely - Chisinau (Overall driving time today is approx. 3.5 hours)

This morning we visit a couple in the village of Horodiste engaging in charity and social projects, in particular the production of cheese. Moldova is rich in high quality natural milk and the couple buy milk off local villagers as a raw material to make cheese providing much needed income for villagers. You will enjoy tasting up to 5 different cheeses paired with homemade wine. We then continue to Tipova and visit the impressive Orthodox cave monastery dating from the 11th Century and built into cliffs some 200 metres above the Dnistr River.



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Our final stop today is Chateau Vartely one of the top Moldovan winemakers where you will enjoy a late leisurely lunch and taste up to 5 different wines before returning to Chisinau where your evening is at leisure. (BL)

Day 5: Bender – Republic of Transnistria – Tiraspol – Purcari Winery – Et Cetera Winery - Chisinau (Overall driving time today is approx. 2.5 hours)

This morning drive to the border and cross into the breakaway republic of Transnistria. We head to the city of Tighina, or Bender, where you can explore the 16th century fortress and visit the on-site museum. We will also visit the War Memorial, before continuing onto the capital, Tiraspol where we enjoy a walking tour including the Lenin monument and tanks from the Second World War. Continue to the oldest wine estate in Moldova, Purcari is located no more than 50 km's from the Black Sea and dates from 1827. Enjoy tasting 3 varieties of wine and then take lunch on the estate. Finally, today we visit the boutique Et Cetera Winery started by the Luchianov family in 2003. After years of travelling the world, mathematician Alexandru Luchianov decided to settle down in his native Moldova and pursue his passion for wine-making using modern techniques and traditional methods. Take a tour of the winery and taste up to 4 varieties of wine straight from the barrels. You will also have the chance to try local 'Placinta', a traditional pastry common to Ukraine and Romania as well as Moldova. It is a type of pastry stuffed usually with apples or cheese. Return to Chisinau where your evening is at leisure. Overnight Jolly Alon Hotel or similar. (BL)

Transnistria

Transnistria is a curious entity, a self-declared republic, which is to all intents and purposes a separate state but is unrecognised by other countries. Historically it, like Moldova, formed part of the Soviet Union but unlike Moldova its population is mainly ethnic Russian which is opposed to being incorporated within Moldova. The territory was claimed by Russia following conflict with the Ottoman Empire back in the 18th century, while the rest of Moldova fell under Turkish control, leading to claims in Transnistria that it has never been part of Moldova. After the collapse of the Soviet Union Transnistria declared independence, sparking war with Moldova and although peace reigns now, there is an uneasy relationship. Transnistria has its own parliament, currency and border controls, yet few people have heard of it.

Day 6: Departure from Chisinau

The tour ends today after breakfast when airport transfers leave to meet onward flights. (B)

Tour Inclusions / Exclusions

Inclusions:

- All accommodation
- Private air conditioned transport throughout
- Return airport transfers
- Services of English-speaking guide / tour leader
- Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)
- Wine tasting at the cellars mentioned in the itinerary
- Wine accompanying the lunches
- Water accompanying the lunches
- Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary



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Excluded:

International flights
Any airport taxes
Travel insurance
Visas
Drinks
Items of personal expenses
Tips (Discretionary)

Important Information

Foreign Office Travel 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 Moldova. 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. 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'. 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

Accommodation in Chisinau is of a comfortable mid-range standard with private bathrooms in a centrally located area. If you prefer to stay in an upgraded hotel please contact us for a quote.

Food & Drinks

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D). 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.



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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. 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 and Dinner £8-10

Drinks

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 £1.30

Water £0.80

Tipping – Guide and Drivers

If your local guide has been helpful then you could think about tipping. On a private tour a reasonable amount for good service would be 10 – 15 Euro per day.

Foreign Exchange

Local Currency: Moldovan Leu

ATM Availability: Available in Chisinau

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

Recommended Currency for Exchange: US Dollars and 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 Your 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.



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Visa Information

Most nationals, including EU, UK and US citizens do not require a visa to visit Moldova 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

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

Moldovan winters can be very cold, with significant snowfall but if you wish to visit in the winter are prepared then it can be a very picturesque time to visit. However generally, the best time to visit the country is from April / May to September / October. The high summer months of July and August can be excruciatingly hot.

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/monasteries 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 Moldova. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will be useful to have.



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Footwear

Footwear is a main priority on this tour. Comfortable walking shoes are recommended for sightseeing but sandals or lighter shoes will be fine for the rest of the time.

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

Generally 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 11th November 2020.

