

Medieval tour for 10 days

(4 Gothic Churches, 4 Castles, 3 Medieval Cities)

Day 1

We pick you up from the airport, check you in the hotel and go out to the Old City Center of Bucharest. The welcome dinner in historic restaurant in the Old City Center is included.

The restaurant, called The Beer Carriage, opened in 1879 and serves traditional Romanian food as well as international cuisine. It is famous for the beautiful architecture and for operating its own brewery.



Gothic arches inside The Beer Carriage Restaurant

Day 2

We go sightseeing in Bucharest: a drive along the main historic boulevards and guided walking tour around the old city center.



The Palace of Parliament

Then we go visit inside the People's Palace (Palace of Parliament), the second largest and the heaviest administrative building in the world. It was built by the Communist dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu after demolishing an entire neighborhood that occupied 7 square Km, razing thousands of houses and forcing more than 40.000 families to move.

The WOW Factor: The Palace is 84m tall, has 1.100 rooms, 2.800 chandeliers, a total area of 330.000sqm and 220.000sqm of carpets.

In the afternoon we head to the mountain side a 2h drive away, for dinner and accommodation in Sinaia, a small but important town for the history of Romania and for our tour.

Day 3

Visit to the 300-year old Sinaia Monastery and the Peleş Palace (home of the Romanian Royal Family, built in 1883 in a Swiss-German style). If this is what it looks like on the outside, imagine the interior.

We then take a trip to Bran and a visit inside "Dracula's Castle" – The Bran Fortress.

The Peleş Palace



History: In 1377, Louis I of Anjou, king of Hungary and Poland, decided that the Bran gorge that linked Wallachia to Transylvania needed better protection against invading armies and issued a royal edict that described the place and size of the new Fortress.

Later, Bran Fortress was also used as a customs point, as trade between the two regions intensified and became a lucrative activity for the ruler. You shall find out about Vlad Dracul's (Vlad the Impaler) connection to this Fortress as we take the guided tour.

Later in the evening, dinner and accommodation in Bran.

Day 4

Morning visit of the Râșnov Citadel dating back to 1335, built on the site of an old Teuton garrison that went back to 1225. Just like the Bran Fortress, the Râșnov Citadel was meant to defend the gorge beneath it, and also offer shelter to several hundred villagers in case of enemy invasion.

Nature time: Short mountain trek, walk and climb through the natural canyon 7 Ladders – around 2 hours. Medium fitness level required. Group members can also relax in a green meadow at the beginning of the trek if they don't wish to join.



Bran Castle



Râșnov Citadel

After lunch, we go sightseeing in Brașov City Center and visit the largest church in Romania, the Black Church, built in the Gothic style between 1383 – 1477. The church bell weighs 6.000kg and the pipe organ was famous at its heyday and it is still being used for concerts.

Later in the afternoon, a short drive will take us to the heart of the Saxon area of Transylvania.

Day 5

Sightseeing in Viscri, Prince Charles' favorite village in Transylvania (UNESCO World Heritage Village). You will visit in the Viscri Fortified Evangelical Church, built in the 13th Century.

Trip to the Medieval City of Sighișoara (UNESCO World Heritage Centre), sightseeing and accommodation in Sighișoara. It is the only inhabited Medieval City in SE Europe recognized by UNESCO, first attested in 1191 by German settlers.



Viscri Evangelical Fortified Church

There used to be 14 defense towers guarding the gates and the wall of the Citadel, each of them manned and maintained by a Guild (Blacksmiths, Butchers, Weavers, Rope Makers, Leather Tanners, Tailors, etc.), 9 of which are still in place.

Day 6

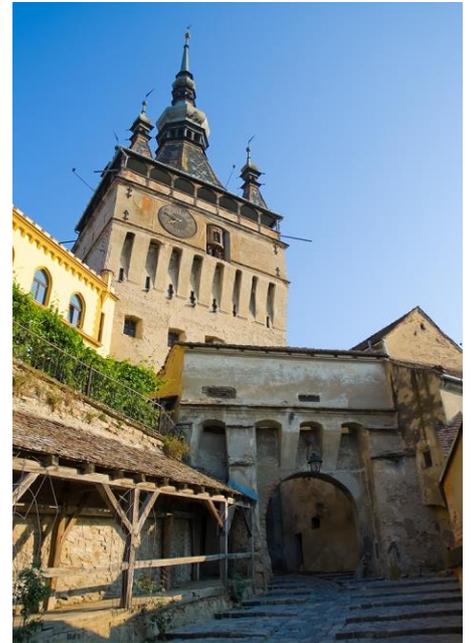
Sightseeing and accommodation in Cluj-Napoca, the cultural and economic capital of Transylvania.

History: The city dates back to a Dacian (pre-Roman civilization in the Balkans and Carpathian area) settlement from before 1 A.D. named Napuca. Following the Roman conquest of 107 A.D., it bore several names that included “Napoca”, steadily growing in size and importance and receiving certain economic and fiscal privileges from Emperor Marcus Aurelius.



Catholic Cathedral in Cluj

Sometime in the 12th century, the town was known by the Latin name “Castrum Clus”, as it is placed in a valley surrounded by steep hills. Hence, Clus-Napuca, or Cluj-Napoca.



Clock Tower in Sighisoara

In 1316, Carol Robert of Anjou, ruler of the Kingdom of Hungary (which included Transylvania at the time) granted the City of Cluj several rights, including the freedom to choose its own vicar, priests and build a church.

Fun fact: A document issued by the Pope in 1349 forgave the sins of those who contributed funds for building the church.

Then we go inside St. Michael’s Cathedral, the second tallest church in Romania. It was built in the Gothic and Neogothic style and has changed its religious denomination five times: Catholic (1390) – Lutheran (1545) – Calvinist (1558) – Unitarian (1566) – Catholic (1716 to date).

Day 7

Trip to Salina Turda, former salt mine turned into tourist attraction for recreation and leisure, followed by lunch at a local wine yard.

Visit in Alba Carolina Citadel (built 1738). Sightseeing includes the oldest (1,000 years old) and tallest cathedral in Romania, the citadel gates and the Armory Hall.

We will stay overnight in a historic hotel in Alba Iulia.



Main gate of Alba Carolina Citadel

Day 8

Visit in the Hunedoara Castle, built in 1440 by Ioan de Hunedoara, ruler of Transylvania and Regent of Hungary.

After lunch, we check in at the hotel and take the rest of the day off to enjoy an outdoor pool, horseback or carriage rides, sauna and tennis court. We deserve it!



Hunedoara Castle

Day 9



Windmills at ASTRA Museum

Visit at the Museum of the Traditional Popular Civilization – ASTRA Sibiu. Here you can see huts, windmills, houses and cottages from all around Transylvania, surrounded by ponds and meadows.

Sightseeing and dinner in Sibiu (European Capital of Culture 2007).

The hotel in Sibiu is a nice surprise. But then again, all accommodation in this tour is.



The Main Square in Sibiu

Day 10



Cârța Fortified Abbey

We start the day with a visit at the ruins of a Cistercian Abbey dating back to 1205. The history of this place is just incredible.

We then drive up the tallest mountain range in Romania and down the other side (hopefully, the weather will allow us). It was called The Best Road in The World (Top Gear said it).

Then, we have lunch at Lake Bâlea (2.035m altitude), and stop at the REAL Dracula's Castle – The Poienari Fortress. After climbing the 1480 steps (medium fitness needed), we will see the panorama of the entire valley from the defense posts of the Fortress.

Sadly, the tour is over, and, in the evening, we will head back to Bucharest and drop you off at the airport or, if you choose to spend another day in the city, at your hotel.



Notes

All accommodation is at old mansions, boutique hotels and countryside guesthouses, refurbished and decorated to offer an authentic taste of traditional or noblemen life. Spacious room with vintage painted furniture at a refurbished mansion in Transylvania



Meals always include traditional local food and a choice of international and vegetarian dishes. Romanian food is represented by soups and broths; local cheese, bacon and salami; grilled pork, sausages, smoked ham and meat; vegetable stew, eggplant salad, mushroom salad and many other delicious dishes. Common sides include baked potatoes with butter sauce, rice and vegetables, bean or pea stew, grilled eggplant or pickled cucumbers, peppers and cauliflower. Spicy, sweet, garlic, onion or barbecue sauces are usually available.



“Sarmale” are traditionally served with maize polenta

You are not allowed to leave Romania until you have tried the famous cabbage rolls with minced pork meat and spices (sarmale) and the fried doughnuts filled with cherry jam and sour cream



“Papanasi” Local drinks include hundreds of types of beer, world renowned wine and home brewed spirits made of plum, pear, apricot, sour cherry and other fruit.

The schedule of the tour is based on the guests’ arrival by plane on Day 1 in the afternoon/evening and departure on Day 10 in the evening. For different flight schedules, please contact us and we will do our best to help with additional nights of accommodation in Bucharest, pick up or drop off services.

During the months of May, June and October, the weather can be unpredictable, with clouds, wind and possibly storms, therefore we recommend that you bring a warm and waterproof jacket and water-resistant shoes. From July to September, it can be very hot, with temperatures rising to 37-39 degrees Celsius (around 100 Fahrenheit), therefore lighter clothing is recommended.