

Romanian Carpathians Unspoilt Nature and Archaic Villages

Day 1

Arrive by plane in Bucharest and meet with our tour leader. Transfer (approx 120kms / 2hrs) by car/minibus via **Prahova Valley** to **Busteni** resort, situated at the foot of **Bucegi Mountains**, high compact blocks, edged by steep slopes, some of the highest mountains in Romania – **2509 m at Omu Peak**. Dinner and accommodation in 3*** pension.

Day 2 (7 – 8 hours trekking, 300m climb, 1600m descent)

In the morning we take the cable car up to **2206 m** and reach **Babele (The Old Ladies) peak**.

In front of us strange stone sculptures - a huge block of stone shaped like a human head with deep orbits and a mysterious smile - the **Sphinx**. Near it a cluster of gigantic stone mushrooms, nicknamed **Babele**. Creations of wind and rain? Ancient Dacian temples? There are lots of theories, but no one can tell for sure. We continue trekking on the plateau, 307m climb, towards the highest peak of the mountains, called **Omu (The Human Being)** at **2509 m altitude**. From here we start descending towards **Transylvania** and **Bran village**, situated at about **800 m altitude**. On the way - **picnic lunch**.



The Sphinx

In the evening we arrive in **Bran**, where we have dinner and are accommodated in a locally owned 3* pension.

Day 3 (5-6 hours trekking, 900m climb, 800m descent)

In the morning we visit **Bran Castle** (also known as **Dracula`s Castle**), a beautiful 14th century castle, restored in the 19th century to its former glory, by the royal family of Romania. We drive towards **Brasov (Kronstadt)**, one of Transylvania`s major cities. We walk the medieval centre, one of the best preserved in Romania, housing **The Black Church**, the biggest church between Vienna and Constantinople, the **City Council Square**, the ramparts erected in medieval times by the **Saxon colonists**, and one of the **narrowest streets in Europe, The Binder Street**. We have lunch in a Romanian restaurant and then head north towards **The Eastern Carpathians**.



Hasmasu Mare Peak

We pass by some of the coldest inhabited places in Romania, then, in **Balan**, we start our trek in **Hasmas National Park**, mountains with a special charm due to the **pastoral life and the ancient rituals** surviving here. We climb to the meadows at the feet of the **Lonely Stone**, then, through vast open spaces, to the top, where we reach an altitude of **1797m**. White limestone crags, green flat meadows bordered by dark conifer forests surround us. Numerous **sheepfolds** shelter at night the semi wild horses and flocks of sheep which roam this land by daylight. In late afternoon we arrive in **Lacu Rosu (The Red Lake)** resort, where we have dinner and are accommodated in a 3 star pension or hotel.

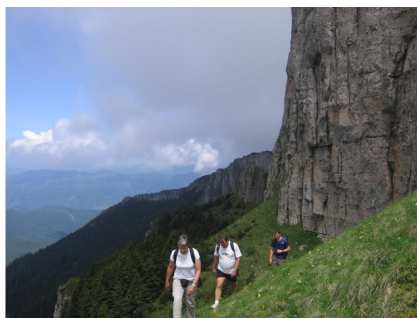
Day 4 (4h trekking, 1000m climb)

In the morning transfer by car (30min), through the impressive **Bicaz Gorges**, featuring vertical and overhanging limestone walls as high as 350m, to **Izvorul Muntelui resort**, where we start trekking in **Ceahlău Mountains (National Park and High Importance Natural Reserve)**. These mountains were held sacred by Romanians due to their deep religious meaning (they are said to have been the home of the most important Dacian God, called Zamolxis). Although they cover a small area, they consist in spectacular relief formations, most of them having their own legend and being an example of beauty and grandeur.

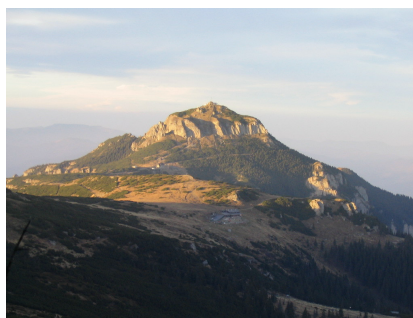
We reach the plateau at an altitude of 1750m and after lunch at Dochia Chalet (or a picnic in a nice spot), we start a short circuit that will take us to the second highest peak in these mountains, **Toaca (1904m)**, a very mystic and mysterious spot - in the month of August its shadow has the exact form of a pyramid. In late afternoon we return to the plateau to have a beer and watch the sunset. In the evening we return to **Dochia Chalet**, where we enjoy the delicious local blueberry tea and a tasteful dinner. Accommodation at the chalet.



Near Ocolasu Mic Plateau



At the foot of Ocolasu Mare Peak



Evening light on Toaca Peak

Day 5 (3h trekking, 200m climb, 1100m descent)

After breakfast we start walking towards the highest part of Ceahlau Mountains. We traverse a long section of **wild undisturbed mountain landscape**, under the big conglomerate walls of Ocolasu Mare, where we have a pretty good chance of spotting **chamois and edelweiss**. Our route reaches **The Dacians' Table** with a great 360 degrees view over the Eastern Carpathians, then starts descending towards Izvoru Muntelui. Here, the car is waiting to transfer us, following the shores of the largest mountain reservoir in Romania, to **Tarpesti village**. It is one of the **cultural highlights** of our trip, as we have the chance to visit the vast **collection of popular artefacts** belonging to **Mr Popa**, to see the **archaeological finds** that he personally uncovered in more than 20 sites he explored personally, to see his **collection of wooden and stone sculptures** he permanently enriches, to meet the man himself (he is 89 years old) and his family and also have a tasty lunch in the laidback atmosphere of his garden.

We continue our route through the rounded Moldavian landscape and arrive in the afternoon at **Sucevita**, a specific village in Northern Moldavia- better known as Bucovina. Sucevita houses one of the five **exterior painted monasteries included on the UNESCO World Heritage List**.

Dinner and accommodation in a **traditional wooden house**.



Mr. Popa



Sucevita Monastery



Painted Egg



Moldovita village after rain

Day 6 (700m climb, 600m descent, 7h trekking)

In the morning we leave towards southwest, through the dense fir tree forests of Bucovina. We climb to the main ridge of **Obcina Mare** where we find **The Bear's Clearing**, then we continue to the **altitude**

scattered village of La Toante (1141m). The landscape is shaped here by hundreds of years of pastoral life.

After stopping in a nice place to have a picnic lunch, our route follows a ridge footpath to the village and **Monastery of Moldovita**, also housing an **exterior painted church, 500 years old.** In the afternoon light, the vibrant colours are very much alive after all this time.

We pay a visit to a peasant workshop, where we are initiated in the centuries old tradition of **painted eggs.** In late afternoon the car takes us back to Sucevita (20 min transfer).

Dinner and accommodation.

Day 7 (400m climb, 4-5 hours walking)

After breakfast we climb the round mountains of Bucovina, covered in forests interrupted only by green meadows and haystacks, to arrive after about 2h of gentle walking to a **sheepfold.** Here we get acquainted with the **process of cheese making,** see how every day life is in a temporary settlement and get to understand the fragile truce between the Romanian shepherds and their fierce dogs, and the **7000 bears** and **3000 wolfs** inhabiting the Romanian Forest, the largest system of unbroken forests in Europe. We have a **tasty lunch** made of **mamaliga** – the Romanian polenta - and cheese, in these places that seem to escape the passing of time.



Sheepfold in Bucovina

In the afternoon we return to Sucevita and spend a few more hours in the tranquillity of Mr Cazac's – our host – orchard. Dinner.

In the evening, transfer to Suceava – the county's capital, to catch the night train to Bucharest.

Day 8

Arrival in **Bucharest.** Transfer to the **old centre.** After breakfast we walk the winding streets of this **3 million inhabitants** city, once known as Little Paris. It is a dynamic metropolis, full of contrasts, sitting at the crossroads of Oriental and Western Cultures. Lunch. Transfer to the airport for flying back home.

~ End of the program ~

The price/person is: 845 Euro.

SGL room supplement: 130 Euro.

The price includes:

- **6 nights accommodation in pensions, huts and hotels**
- **1 night in train – 1st class, sleeping car**
- **full board for the whole period, including the special meals**
- **luggage transportation (you will only carry the day backpack during the treks)**
- **all visits included in the program**
- **all necessary transfers in Romania by car/minibus**
- **English speaking guide for the whole program**

The price does not include:

- **air transportation**
- **medical insurance**
- **personal expenses**
- **photo or video taxes during the visits**
- **anything not mentioned in "The price includes"**