

## The Romanian Carpathians - Alpine Scenery and Shepherds Country

### Day 1

Arrival at Bucharest airport and meet with the guide. Transfer via Prahova Valley, to **Sinaia**, the resort that houses **the royal palaces** of Peles, Pelisor and Foisor. Great view over **Bucegi Mountains**, with some of the highest rock walls in Romania. Accommodation in a 3 star pension.

### Day 2 (600m climb, 30 -50 km )

After breakfast we take the cable car to **Bucegi Plateau** at 2000 m alt. 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 (The Old Women)**. Creations of wind and rain? Ancient Dacian temples? There are lots of theories, but no one can tell for sure.

We start climbing towards **Omu (The Man) Peak** (2509 m). This is the summit of Bucegi Mountains. We have a perfect view over the rocky domain of the **Southern Carpathians**. Descent and accommodation in **Moeciu** in an agro-tourist pension.



The Sphinx

### Day 3 (700m climb, 30-40 km )

We start in the morning heading upstream on Moeciu Valley. We turn right and, after climbing a shepherd track we reach **Fundata mountain pass**. We continue our journey climbing and descending the hilly area of the **Bran-Rucar corridor**, an ancient connection area between Walachia and Transylvania. **The scattered mountain villages** of Sirnea, Pestera and Magura give us an idea about the Romanians' traditional way of life in a medieval Hungarian dominated Transylvania. In the afternoon we descend back to Moeciu.



Magura village



Riding with the horses



Forest tracks

### Day 4 (700m climb, 30-40km)

After breakfast we head towards **Bran castle**, a beautiful 14<sup>th</sup> century building, restored to its former glory in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by the royal family of Romania, one of the highest rated castles in the world nowadays, due to its **Dracula linked reputation**. We visit the imposing structure guarding the passing point between the two Romanian provinces.

We drive towards **Brasov (Kronstadt)**, one of Transylvania's major cities, where 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**.

After lunch in a **Romanian restaurant**, we drive towards the heart of **Transylvania**, and reach **Sighisoara**. It is a **UNESCO Site**, one of the **most authentic medieval towns in Europe**, where we walk the winding alleys, following the old ramparts and the guarding towers - built, repaired and defended at war time by the local guilds.

Accommodation in a three star pension in the citadel 50 m from the house where, almost 600 years ago, the **Walachian prince** that was to be remembered as a Hollywood star under the name of **Dracula**, was born.

#### Day 5 (600m climb, 40-50 km)

The **Hartibaciu Plateau** (German – **Harbachtal**) is stretching to the southwest of Sighisoara, nestling **centuries old German villages**, unchanged by the passing of time. The presence of **Saxons** here goes back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century when the Hungarian king, after conquering Transylvania, was in the process of organizing it. Our ride follows a valley south, to the village of Stejareni then, passing in between valleys on cart roads and footpaths, we reach one after another, **Cris (Kreisch)** – housing one of the most beautiful **medieval castles** in Romania – **Bethlen Castle**, **Malancrav (Malmkrog)** – with a **fortified church** preserving a fantastic interior painting, **Nou Sasesc**, **Copsa Mare (Grosskopisch)**- with its own fortified church, and finally **Biertan (Bierthalm)** - one of the most important German settlements in Transylvania, the first attestation of its name dating from 1283. As any other Transylvanian Saxon community, it had an urban organization, being noticed the franconic style of the rows of houses around the central square, overlooked by the **grandiose fortress-church**. Lunch on the way.

In late afternoon we return to Sighisoara for dinner and accommodation.



On the way to Cris village



Biertan fortress-church

#### Day 6 ( 600m climb, 30 - 40 km )

After breakfast we leave Sighisoara and head towards the Eastern Carpathians. First we pass the interior western chain, the largest volcanic system in Europe, then we climb to Pangarati Pass (1200m), and here we start our ride in **Hasmas Mountains**. We head north on an altitude **ancient road** connecting **Moldova** with **Transylvania**. We pass by fir-tree forests and reach the meadows at the foot of **Mount Vitos** - optional hike to the top of the limestone peak dominating the north of Hasmas Mountains, where we are rewarded with a great perspective over the Eastern Carpathians. The route continues south and after 5km, the landscape changes. Wide spaces open in front of us and we descend to the **altitude village of Barnadu** (not more than 30 houses, a church, one pub and a school). Further down, **Bicaz Gorges**, with limestone walls more than 300 m high, lead us to **Lacu Rosu Resort**. Dinner and accommodation.



Hasmas National Park



From Mount Vitos to Barnadu village



Evening in Barnadu village

### Day 7 (800m climb, 30 - 50km )

We start after breakfast on the national road, we pass by the **Red Lake**, result of a massive rock fall 150 years ago, and after 2 km we turn left on Valea Oii (Sheep's Valley). The forestry road takes us to 1400 m altitude, through the valley, then fir-tree forests, to the **White Meadow**. Here the landscape changes, vast spaces open for us, green meadows bordered by dense dark conifer forests and white limestone walls. We climb to **The Upper White Meadow**, among junipers, white boulders and little lakes. We are surrounded by the sounds of pastoral life, with sheepfolds, cows and semi wild horses roaming these lands. From the Upper White Meadow, there is an **easy optional hike to Hășmașul Mare (1797m altitude)**, the highest peak in these mountains, with a breathtaking 360° view over the endless peaks of the Eastern Carpathians. We stop in search for some good food and company at one of the cow farms, and then we descend to the **Valley of Bicăjel** (1000m alt.) and its scattered mountain village of **Trei Fantani (Three Wells)**. We follow the Valley of Bicăjel, and close to the canyon the river dug in the limestone massif, we return, through the Vereșcheu Saddle, with excellent view over the mountains we have passed today, back to the **Red Lake Resort**. Accommodation.

### Day 8 ( 700m climb, 40-50 km)

The day starts with a transfer into the province of **Moldavia**, through Bicaz Gorges. We drive, following the shores of **Bicaz Lake**, the largest mountain reservoir in Romania, to Hangu. Here we start our ride over the last peaks of the Eastern Carpathians, Stanisoara (Little Sheepfoold) Mountains. We climb to 1200m then after a long descent and another climb through the forested mountains of **Vanatori Natural Park**, we start descending towards the Moldavian Plateau. **Valea Arini** and **Valea Seaca** are two quiet villages with **specific Moldovian architecture**.



Biking in Stanisoara Mountains

In the afternoon we reach **Tarpesti village**. It is one of the **cultural highlights** of our trip, as we visit the vast **collection of popular artefacts** belonging to **Mr. Popa**, see the **archaeological finds** that he personally uncovered in more than 20 sites he explored personally, explore the **collection of wooden and stone sculptures** he permanently enriches, **and meet the man himself** (he is 89 years old) and his family, and maybe see him at work. We also have **a tasty early dinner** in the laidback atmosphere of his garden, then a 40 minutes transfer to Piatra-Neamt, the county capital, for accommodation.



Mr. Popa at work

### Day 9

Transfer to Bucharest to catch the flight back home.

~ End of the program ~

**The price/person is: 999 Euros.**

**SGL room supplement/pers is 170 Euro.**

**Bike rent for the whole period: 170 Euro**

**The price includes:**

- **8 nights accommodation in 3\*\*\* hotels in DBL or TWN room**
- **full board for the whole period**
- **all necessary transfers in Romania by car/minibus**
- **all visits to monuments, monasteries, castles etc. included in the program**
- **English speaking guide for the whole period**
- **Luggage transfer**

**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”**