

Life in Romanian Villages

Day 1

Arrive by plane in **Bucharest** and meet with our tour leader. Transfer by car to the railway station where we catch the night train to Baia Mare. Dinner in the train.

Day 2 (2,5h easy walking)

In the morning we are transferred by minibus to the village of **Breb**, at the foot of **Gutai Mountains**, one of the most authentic villages in **Maramures**. We are received at the agro tourist pension and take time to accommodate to the surroundings.

After a late breakfast, a very easy walk through **Hoteni**, towards **Harnicesti** and **Desesti villages**, each one with its own ancient wooden church. We pass through peoples' gardens and orchards following an ancient narrow gauge railway track, then, return by the shores of **Mara River** where we discover a **peasant hydro mechanical workshop**.

We have lunch at a **trout farm** then we are transferred back to Breb. The afternoon is dedicated to local traditional activities. We have the possibility to see and try our hand in wooden handicrafts, meet a local beekeeper and also take part in hay harvesting.

Traditional dinner and accommodation in Breb.



Sunday morning in Hoteni village



Hay harvesting near Breb village



Sapanta Merry Cemetery



Hay stacks on Iza Valley



Afternoon in Poienile Izei village

Day 3 (1 h easy walking)

After breakfast we drive for about 40 min to **Sapanta** where **The Merry Cemetery** lies (unique all over the world due to its bright colored naïve painted crosses and humoristic epitaphs).

In **Sighetu Marmatiei**, the capital of historical Maramures, we have lunch in a restaurant specialized in traditional local food, then we walk for 5 minutes to the former Austro-Hungarian Prison, where we take a plunge into Romanian recent history by visiting **The Memorial of Communist repression and anticommunist resistance**.

The journey continues on Iza Valley and through **Barsana** village, where we stop to see **the workshop and exhibition of Mr. Barsan**, one of the last sculptors in Maramures specialized in traditional wood carving.

We stop in Poienile Izei to see **the best preserved interior painting of a Maramures Wooden church**. Then, after a 1 hour walk through grassland, orchards and on country road, we reach **Botiza** village, famous for the tradition of homemade carpets. Visit to a **traditional workshop**, where we get an inside look on the technical details of this millenniums old occupation. Dinner and accommodation in Botiza.

Day 4 (1,5h walk)

In the morning we start by minibus towards **Borsa** ski resort, situated at the foot of Rodna Mountains, the highest mountains in the North (2303 m altitude). Here we take the chairlift up to 1400m where we start walking in **Rodna Mountains** – a Biosphere reserve- using a path that provides us with an excellent view over **Cascada Cailor (The Horses Waterfall)** - a vertical drop of almost 100m. Our walk goes then to Stiol Plateau and **Golden Bistrita's Sources**, with a perfect perspective over the high summits to the west. After 40 minutes of very easy walking we reach **Prislop Pass** (1417m) where the minibus is waiting for us.

From here we enter **Bucovina** region, an oasis of Romanian spirituality, housing the famous **exterior painted monasteries** (Vornet, Moldovita, Sucevita, Arbore and Humor) included in UNESCO's World heritage list.

The road takes us down to Golden Bistrita Valley. On its shores we will find typical villages of Northern Moldavia like **Carlibaba, Botos, Ciocanesti**, consisting in very well kept and fine decorated houses.

We visit **Moldovița monastery** and stop for the night in **Sucevita village**, in an agro-tourist pension. Dinner and accommodation. (B, L, D)



House in Ciocanesti village

Day 5 (2 h easy walking)

In the morning we visit **Sucevita monastery** and also the 5000 years old **black pottery workshop** in **Marginea village**, where we have the opportunity to see the artists at work.



Sheepfold in Bucovina

We climb the round hills of Bucovina, covered in forests interrupted only by green meadows and haystacks, in order to arrive after about 1h of gentle walking to a mountain **sheepfold**. Here we get acquainted with the **process of cheese making**, see how every day life in a temporary settlement is, and get to understand the fragile truce between the Romanian shepherds (and their 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.

In late afternoon, return to Sucevita to spend a few more hours in the tranquillity of our host's - Mr Cazac— orchard. Dinner.



Sucevita Monastery



Black Pottery in Marginea



Moldovita village after rain

Day 6

In the morning we head south towards **Moldova** region. The route takes us through a series of extremely beautiful villages, with original architecture. We pass through Targu Neamt town and continue to **Agapia**

and **Varatec** villages, both housing renowned monasteries and about 2000 Orthodox monks and nuns. Lunch in a peasant house. From Varatec, passing the hills, we get to **Valea Arini** and **Valea Seaca**, two quiet villages with **specific Moldovian architecture**.

In the afternoon we reach **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 to see him at work. We also have a **tasty dinner** in the laidback atmosphere of his garden. Accommodation in peasant houses in Tarpesti.



Mr. Popa at work



Mr. Popa's house in Tarpesti

Day 7 (half an hour easy walking)

In the morning transfer on a scenic route, following the shores of the largest mountain reservoir in Romania – **Bicaz Lake**, to the **impressive Bicaz Gorges**, featuring vertical and overhanging limestone walls as high as 300m. Here we **walk for a half an hour** through the gorges and reach **The Red Lake**, a natural dam lake, formed in the beginning of the 19th century, situated at about 980 m altitude. Lunch in a restaurant.

We are already in Transylvania, heading towards **Miclausoara** village, and, on the way, we pass through a region inhabited by the strongest minority in Romania – The Szeklers.

After a tasty dinner, we are accommodated in Miclausoara, in **Count Kalnoky's Guesthouses**. These guesthouses date back to the 1800's, although parts of them are much older, as indicated by the presence of medieval shooting embrasures. The buildings have been carefully restored in order to preserve their original Transylvanian charm and character. They are beautifully furnished with antiques in the Transylvanian Szekler and Saxon style.



Room in Count Kalnoky's guesthouses

Day 8

The last day of the tour takes us to Brasov (**Kronstadt**), one of Transylvania's major cities. If time allows it, 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 continue to Bucharest, via Prahova Valley, situated at the foot of Bucegi Mountains- among the highest mountains in the country – 2509 m altitude, and certainly some of the most impressive.

In the afternoon we reach Bucharest.

~ End of program ~

The tariff/pers is: 899 Euro

SGL room supplement/pers: 140 Euro

The tariff includes:

- **6 nights accommodation in DBL or TWN room in agro-tourist pensions and peasant houses**
- **1 night in train, 1st class sleeping car**
- **All necessary transfers by car or minibus in Romania**
- **Full board for all period, including the special meals**
- **All entrance fees to museums, monasteries and monuments included in the program**
- **English speaking guide for all the period**

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”**