

EXPLORE!



DISCOUNTED

Grand Tour of Romania, Serbia and Bulgaria

BULGARIA, ROMANIA, SERBIA - TRIP CODE RSB

DISCOVERY

Why book this trip?

In two-weeks experience the highlights of Romania, Serbia and Bulgaria. Explore their bustling cities along with the rolling Transylvanian countryside, the Rose Valley and the Black Sea coast. Also discover the extensive history from ancient Roman right up to the more recent communist regimes.

- **Legendary Castles** - Delve beneath the myths at Castle Bran and marvel at the exquisite stained glass and décor in Peles Castle
- **Belgrade** - Discover the Ottoman, Roman and Communist history in the old capital of Yugoslavia
- **Rila Monastery** - Visit this spectacular UNESCO World Heritage Site with its brightly coloured frescoes



INCLUDED MEALS
Breakfast: 14
Dinner: 1



TRIP STAFF
Explore Tour
Leader
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



TRANSPORT
Bus



ACCOMMODATION
1 nights
comfortable
guesthouse
11 nights
comfortable hotel
2 nights simple
hotel



TRIP PACE:
Full on



GROUP SIZE:
10 - 16

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join trip in Bucharest, Romania

Arrive in Bucharest and meet the group and our Explore Leader. Bucharest is Romania's largest city and became the capital in 1832 and thanks to a period of urban renewal and modernisation, it's now a bustling centre of Romanian culture, arts and media.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Minerva (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - Walking tour of Bucharest; visit to remarkable Peles Castle and Bran Castle

Our trip leader will take us to explore Romania's capital, Bucharest. Situated on the Danube Plain and set amid a series of lakes and spacious gardens, here we will see a remarkable blend of turn of the century elegance and communist excess. We visit many of the older parts of the city to discover the architecture

that earned it the reputation as the 'Paris of Eastern Europe' such as the striking columned facade of the Romanian Atheneum concert hall and the Royal Palace of Bucharest. We will also see the exterior of the Palace of Parliament, which is an incredible construction, the second largest building in the world. Many homes were destroyed to make way for this massive structure and it took 13 years to build at an alleged cost of over three billion Euros, so it's of little surprise that it was and still is a very controversial building. We will make a visit to the fascinating Village Museum where we can see a collection of old wooden churches, windmills and peasant dwellings from different regions.

Driving out of Bucharest we head into the rolling countryside filled with forests, farmland and dramatic mountain peaks. We arrive in Sinaia, known as the 'pearl of the Carpathians' and visit the wonderful Peles Castle. Built for the Hohenzollern monarch Carol I, it resembles a Bavarian chateau and is richly decorated with stained glass, Persian carpets, Renaissance weapons, ebony and mother of pearl.

Next we'll visit what is probably the most famous castle in the world, Bran Castle, the apparent haunt of Count Dracula. Perched on a crag in a valley between two high mountain ranges, it dominates the surrounding scenery. We'll learn that the truth behind castle is even more fascinating than the myths. It was the home of the remarkable British born Queen Marie of Romania, grand daughter of Queen Victoria, whereas Vlad the Impaler, the infamous 15th century ruler of Wallachia who Dracula is based on, never lived here. In fact, the author of the much-loved Dracula novel, Bram Stoker never even came to Transylvania.

This evening we will stay in a quaint local guesthouse in the Transylvanian village of Moieciu, where we have a delicious home cooked meal this evening. Romanian cuisine is hearty and their red wine is surprisingly good. A typical meal can consist of stewed beef, freshly baked bread, pearl barley, cabbage, roasted root vegetables and sour cream. Before a meal the locals tend to sip the aperitif, tzuica, a strong plum brandy.



ACCOMMODATION:

Casa Zada Guest House (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Guesthouse



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

DAY 3 - Explore medieval Brasov and the walled city of Sibiu

We drive to the Brasov, which is a treasure trove of centuries-old buildings and churches, and cobbled streets all clustered within the medieval city walls and overlooked by a magnificent 15th century Gothic cathedral. You'll have free time here to take a stroll through the City Square and down the extremely narrow Rope Street to see the Black Church or perhaps you may like to visit one of the museums, the First Romanian School or Saint Nicolas Church in the Scheii district.

This afternoon we drive to the city of Sibiu, which back in the 12th century was one of the largest and

wealthiest of seven walled citadels in Romania. Our trip leader will take us beneath the ramparts and through the backstreets, past the first hospital and pharmacy in Romania and to Liar's Bridge. Here it is said that if you told a lie whilst on the bridge it would collapse, but it's also a known place where lovers would meet to declare their love and in recent times to attach padlocks to it as a symbol of their affections.

You'll have some free time in the city and you might like to visit the Brukenthal National Museum, which is home to over 1,000 works of art, sculptures and a Gothic exhibition. Sibiu is a good spot for food lovers with a range of restaurants and some of the best, which are frequented by the locals, can be found in the Small Square. A speciality is ciorba, which is a sour soup that comes in several varieties with vegetables or meatballs. Many local establishments in the town serve their beer by the metre.

Our hotel tonight is a modern hotel in a quiet area just outside the old city walls, within walking distance to the city centre.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Roberts (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 4 - See King Decebalus' statue and take a dip in riverside hot springs

We drive to the large Gothic Corvin Castle with its pointed red-roofed turrets and vaulted ceilings. It's supposedly here that Vlad the Impaler was held prisoner for seven years by John Hunyadi until they later became allies, even though John had previously killed Vlad's father. In the castle yard is a well that is an astonishing 30 metres deep. Legend has it that it took three Turkish prisoners 15 years to dig and that they were promised freedom in return for reaching water, but they were tricked and having succeeded they weren't released. There an inscription here that is said to have been written by them saying 'you have water, but not soul'. Due to its long and sometimes chequered history the castle is rumoured to be haunted.

We drive to Orsova beside the Danube River where we can see the gigantic statue of King Decebalus' head carved into the rocky river gorge. The rock relief is over 40 metres high and 30 metres wide and it took 10 years to carve. Although its subject is ancient, it was in fact only constructed in the 1990s. King Decebalus was the last king of Dacia (pre-Roman Romania) and he fought hard against the Roman emperors Domitian and Trajan to preserve Dacia's independence and as such he is regarded as a Romanian folk hero. You might like to join a boat trip on the Iron Gates Gorge to take a closer look at this monument.

Later this afternoon we arrive in the spa town of Baile Herculane in the Cerna River Valley. Our trip leader will take us on a short walk to discover the historic centre and to see the elegant façade of the

abandoned Imperial Bath Houses. We check-in to our hotel where you are then free to relax. Maybe you'd like to take a taxi to take a dip in the nearby old hot spring baths on the river bank. The baths haven't been modernised and are regularly frequented by the local residents, so it's a very authentic Romanian experience.



ACCOMMODATION:
Pensiune Safrane (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 5 - Explore ancient Roman Viminacium and arrive in Belgrade, Serbia

Today we leave Romania and cross the border into Serbia and drive to the ancient Roman city and military fort at Viminacium. The drive should take about 3.5 hours, but at times it can take an additional hour at the border crossing. A local guide will explain the history of the city which prospered during the reign of Hadrian, during the 1st century AD, right up to the 6th century, due to its location on the Danube River, and it was home to the Imperial Navy Fleet. Among the ruins the frescoes in the 4th century tombs are especially interesting along with the remains of one of the biggest amphitheatres discovered in the Balkans. The people living in Viminacium had a good quality of life and this is evident from the 30,000 artefacts that have been found here, however these are now mostly housed in the National Museums of Belgrade and Pozarevac. During the excavations other fascinating items have been found, and most notably in 2009 when a 5-million year old mammoth skeleton was uncovered.

This afternoon we drive to Serbia's capital Belgrade and our leader will point out the Ruins of the Yugoslav Army Headquarters before we arrive at our hotel. This romantic city lies on the confluence of the Sava and the Danube Rivers and it's said that Belgrade, meaning 'the white city', is where the rivers met and fell in love. However, it's certainly not always been a peaceful picture, but bustling with locals and visitors it's now rising from its turbulent past and is quickly becoming one of the 'must see' places in the Balkans. This evening you're free for dinner.

Paprika is arguably the most popular ingredient in Serbian cooking and they tend to use the red fruit itself rather than the dried spice. You'll find it chopped up in salads with tomatoes, cucumber and cheese, chargrilled with barbequed meats, pickled, stuffed and even mashed. They also love cream and kajmak, a partially fermented thick cream, which is often served with grilled meats or fresh bread. It's a bit like a cross between sour cream and clotted cream. Rakia is the most popular spirit and it's normally distilled from plums or grapes, but you can also find more unusual variations like quince, walnut or honey.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Kasina (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 6 - Visit to the laidback city of Novi Sad; explore Belgrade on foot

This morning we drive to Novi Sad, meaning 'new garden'. It is the second largest city in Serbia, but boasts a laidback atmosphere; with most locals choosing to enjoy a coffee on the banks of the Danube rather than rush anywhere. On arrival we'll have a walking tour ending at the Petrovaradin Fortress from where the city originated. Novi Sad is rich in Roman, Greek and Byzantine history and we'll explore the main Liberty Square and see the cathedral and the City Hall. Afterwards you'll have the chance to go inside Petrovaradin Fortress, which is known locally as 'the Gibraltar on the Danube' (due to its shape rather than its size). The 16 kilometres of hallways deep under the fort lead to dungeons, which have been home to Karadorde, leader of the first Serbian uprising against the Ottomans, and Tito, the former Yugoslavia's long reigning president.

After time for lunch we return to Belgrade this afternoon for a walking tour to discover its fascinating history from ancient empires through to the more recent conflicts of the early 1990s. We start our walk at Belgrade Fortress and the surrounding large Kalmegdan Park, which overlooks the rivers. We continue down the pedestrianised Knez Mihailova Street back towards the Main Square, which is just behind our hotel.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Kasina (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 7 - See the rock formations at Devil's Town and Skull Tower in Nis

This morning we drive further south to Devil's Town to see the towering rock formations that legend says are petrified wedding guests at a marriage arranged by the Devil between a local brother and sister, who were then punished by god for their sins by being turned to stone. There are over 200 red stone formations with the tallest being 15 metres high, which have actually been created by erosion from the local waters that are abnormally acidic and high in minerals.

After having time for a picnic lunch we drive to Nis and en route we'll learn more about the city's history at the Bubanj Memorial Park, which was built to commemorate the execution of over 10,000 of the city's residents during World War II. The cosmopolitan city of Nis is a place where old meets new and you can see new cars travelling beside horse and carts. It's a university city, so its old alleyways are home to sophisticated cocktail bars, as well as pop-up markets in summer and it has a burgeoning music scene. On our walking tour we'll get a taste of this and see Tito's Memorial, the Ottoman Citadel and the somewhat gruesome Skull Tower, which is embedded with the skulls of the rebels that fought and lost to the Ottoman forces at the Battle of Cegar.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Regent (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 8 - Arrive in Sofia, Bulgaria and visit the Soviet Army Monument by metro

Before leaving Serbia this morning we'll make a brief stop just outside Nis at the red bricked Latin Church and Cegar Hill where the battle of Cegar took place between the Serbian Revolutionaries and Ottoman army, as part of the First Serbian Uprising in 1809. We drive on to Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria. The drive takes us around 2.5 hours, but it can take an additional hour at the border crossing.

Sofia has a long history which can be seen by the onion-domed churches, Ottoman mosques, Roman ruins and old Soviet monuments. However, it is now largely modern and youthful with a wealth of museums, art galleries, cafes and restaurants.

We take the metro to visit the Monument to the Soviet Army. This tribute to the Russian soldiers who died supporting Bulgarian efforts during World War II is surrounded by a large park. In recent years its sculpted bronze statues have frequently been vandalised with them being painted in a pop art style. The paint keeps being removed by the authorities and then a new design will appear a short time later. The statues have been all pink, painted in the style of comic book heroes and villains, in the colours of the Bulgarian flag, and more, so who knows what the statues will look like when you visit them.

We'll walk back to the city centre making stops at interesting places along the way. After time for lunch our trip leader will take us on a walk to discover the city centre and to see the Palace of Culture, Independence Square and the Neo-Byzantine Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, which was built to commemorate the 200,000 Russian soldiers who died fighting for Bulgaria's independence.

The rest of the afternoon is free for you to explore more of the city and this evening you'll have your first chance to sample Bulgarian cuisine. Food in Bulgaria tends to be made from fresh local produce and dinner usually starts with a salad such as shopska salata consisting of tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers and white cheese. Other specialities include kebapche, small and spicy minced meat rolls, and surmi, stuffed cabbage or vine leaves. Both red and white wines are popular, as is the local brandy rakia and the aniseed spirit mastika.



ACCOMMODATION:
Budapest Hotel, Sofia (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 9 - Explore Rila Monastery; chance to visit the Museum of Socialist Art

Declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, Rila Monastery is an important religious and cultural centre for the Bulgarian people, which we will go to visit this morning. Remaining in wonderful condition it has the most stunning brightly coloured frescoes and distinctive striped brickwork. Originally founded in the 10th century the monastery served to preserve Bulgarian culture during the 400 years of Ottoman rule and was a hiding place for the Bulgarian revolutionaries. Today the magnificent church and its museum house a priceless collection of frescoes, gilded iconostasis and religious art and artefacts. Whilst here we'll visit the History Museum.

We return to Sofia for a free afternoon. You may like to visit the Archaeological Museum where there are Thracian, Roman and medieval artefacts on display in a former mosque dating from 1496. Or perhaps the Museum of Socialist Art where you'll find many of the items removed from around the country when the Soviet era came to an end such as unwanted statues of Lenin, the red star from Sofia's Party House and footage from old propaganda films. There are also the ancient ruins of Serdica, which were discovered during the building of a new metro station. Now partially excavated you can see a small section of eight streets, an early Christian church and a bathhouse from this old Roman city.



ACCOMMODATION:

Budapest Hotel, Sofia (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 10 - See Plovdiv Roman Theatre and a Thracian tomb in the Rose Valley

We'll drive to Plovdiv, an ancient city built on seven hills, and our trip leader will take us to discover the main highlights. The most famous of which is probably the well preserved Roman Theatre of Philipopol, which is still used for concerts and theatrical performances. We'll see the exterior of this and if there are no performances taking place or being setup then you may be able to go inside the theatre.

We'll have the opportunity to have lunch here before driving on to Kazanlak in the Rose Valley. The flower laden fragrant fields (normally in bloom in May) sit between the Middle Forest Mountain and Balkan Mountains and the rosa damascene variety has been cultivated here for centuries. The rose blossoms are used in the production of rose oil and nearly a ton is made here every year which is about 70% of the world's overall production. Rose oil is used in many different ways from antiseptics to aphrodisiacs and laxatives to beauty products. You'll have the option to visit the Rose Museum to learn more.

Next we visit the excellent reproduction of the Thracian Tomb of Kazanlak with a local guide. The original tomb was discovered in 1944 and dates back to the Hellenistic period. The ancient burial ground has impressive murals which show images of the ritual funeral feast, traditional dress and fanciful horses. In keeping with Thracian culture the burial site consists of three rooms - the main round burial chamber which would have been the owners final resting place, an antechamber where their chariot, horses and slaves would have been kept for use in the afterlife and a corridor between the two which served as storage for other items needed in the spirit world.

After our visit we'll go to Kazanlak and check-in to our hotel for the night.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Zornica (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE





MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 11 - Visit Shipka Memorial Church, Etar Museum and Tsarevets Fort

Today we'll get to experience a range of different sights. We start by driving deep into the mountains to Shipka Memorial Church. Its tall bell tower, golden domes and intricately decorated red and white exterior stand out somewhat from the remote surrounding tree covered hills. The church is dedicated to the Russian soldiers who gave their lives in the Battles of Shipka Pass during the Russo-Turkish War from 1877-78 in a bid to free Bulgaria from the Ottoman Empire. It officially opened on the 25th anniversary of the conflict and the names of the fallen soldiers are inscribed on walls of the church's crypt. Its bells are cast from battlefield cartridges and are extremely heavy, weighing up to 12 tons.

From here we drive to the northern edge of the Bulgarka Nature Park to visit the Etar Open Air Museum. Here there are approximately 50 old buildings that showcase Bulgarian customs and craftsmanship, the best known is probably the watermill which dates back to 1780. As well as being historical important, the park is very pretty with lots of running water, cobbled streets and colourful wooden buildings nestled within a leafy valley.

We drive on to one of Bulgaria's oldest towns, Veliko Tarnovo, where we will spend the night. It exudes medieval history with its fortified walls, cobbled ramshackle lanes and the mighty Tsarevets Fortress, which was formerly the city citadel. We will walk up to this fort, which was home to the medieval tsars, to see some of the ruins of over 400 houses, more than a dozen churches and the royal palace. We will also visit the handicraft market, Samovodska Charshiya, which has changed little over the past two centuries.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Concorde (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 12 - Discover Varna and Balchik on the Black Sea coast

This morning we drive to Varna on the Black Sea coastline. Our trip leader will point out the main sights and take us on a walk into the city centre. We'll see the ruins of the ancient Roman Baths of Odessos and the most famous Bulgarian Orthodox cathedral in the country, the Dormition of the Mother of God Cathedral. The city is famous for the 'gold of Varna' - 6,000 year-old Thracian jewellery which was found here and you can choose to go to see it in the Archaeological Museum. Perhaps you'd prefer to visit the Sea Garden, which is thought to be the largest landscaped park in the Balkans and you can see a variety of sculptures here along with the immaculate and wonderfully colourful selection of flowers.

This afternoon we drive on to Balchik where we will stay for the next two nights. We have the unique experience of staying in rooms in the old villas that formed part of the Black Sea Summer Palace of Queen Marie of Romania. This accommodation is rated as simple, but once the day visitors leave we have the botanical garden palace grounds to ourselves to explore. There is a restaurant in the grounds and other bars and restaurants are just a short walk away along the coast.



ACCOMMODATION:
The Palace Villa Complex (or similar)



Grade: Simple Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 13 - Visit Kaliakra Fortress and take a walk along the cliff tops

Today we'll continue exploring the Black Sea coast beginning with a visit to Kaliakra Fortress. Perched on a rocky peninsula and surrounded by the crashing sea waves this fort used to be a vital stronghold in protecting the Black Sea Cape. After our visit we'll take an easy walk along the cliffs that line the shore (taking about 1.5 hours) to take in the sea views. At the end of our walk we can reward ourselves with a coffee break on a nearby terrace overlooking the waters. There'll also be the chance to go for a swim from Boiata Beach.

This afternoon we return to Balchik and will visit Balchik Palace, the summer residence of Queen Marie of Romania and the botanical gardens that surround it, which contain over 2,000 different plant varieties. You then have free time to relax on the beach and paddle in the sea or maybe you'd like to explore more of the gardens.



ACCOMMODATION:
The Palace Villa Complex (or similar)



Grade: Simple Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE





MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 14 - Return to Bucharest, Romania

This morning we leave Bulgaria and cross back over the border to Bucharest in Romania. Our drive will take approximately five to six hours and potentially around another hour at the border crossing. We'll make a stop to pick-up lunch along the way and arrive back in the city at around 3.30pm.

After checking-in to our hotel the rest of the afternoon is free for you to unwind and explore Bucharest at your own pace. There's plenty to discover in the city's Old Town or there's a multitude of museums available to choose from including the National Museum of Romanian History, the Military Museum and the Folk Art Museum, to name but a few. Alternatively, you could visit inside the Palace of Parliament where you'll find marble columns, grand halls and glittering crystal chandeliers.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Minerva (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 15 - Trip ends in Bucharest, Romania

Our trip ends after breakfast at our hotel in Bucharest.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

Trip information

Country information

Bulgaria

Climate

Bulgaria has a somewhat temperate climate, influence by the combination of Mediterranean and Eastern European weather systems. The winters are mild and the summers warm and fresh. The alpine regions can be cooler, but Ezerovo is one of the sunniest areas in this part of Europe, with some 280 days of sunshine a year.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion
+2	2 Pin Round	Bulgarian Orthodox, Islam

Language

Bulgarian, Russian and English.

Romania

Climate

Romania's climate is continental, temperatures being strongly influenced by the physical features of the Carpathians. Temperatures will fall from highs of 18°C (by day) to lows of 6°C (at night) in October; by January they will hover around freezing during the day and go down to -10°C at night. They will then rise to reach October temperatures again by April. Temperatures will generally be lower in the mountains than in Bucharest. Snowfall may occur at any time.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion	Language
+2	2 Pin Round	Eastern Orthodox	Romanian

Serbia

Climate

Serbia has a continental climate with warm summers and cold winters. There is a chance of sporadic rain in spring and autumn, though generally it is in the form of short showers. Thunderstorms can occur in summer, generally helping to cool the air. Temperatures from May to October are generally in the low to mid 20's (in °C), but can reach into the 30's (in °C) in July and August - although sometimes warm air currents from Africa can reach here and push the temperatures as high as 40°C.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion	Language
+1	2 Pin Round	Christian (mainly Serbian Orthodox)	Serbian

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Many of the castles and museums charge a camera fee. You should allow approximately £15.00 for this.

Orsova:

Boat trip on the Danube Iron Gates to see King Decebalus' head (duration approximately one hour) on day four, 50 Romanian Leu (RON) per person.

Baile Herculane:

On day four a taxi to and from the hot springs will cost approximately 20-25 RON per way for a maximum of four people per vehicle.

Rila:

On day nine we include entry to the History Museum, however there are four other museums at Rila Monastery that you might also like to visit. The entrance fees for these are:

Ethnographic Museum 5 Bulgarian Lev (BGN)

Hrelyu Tower 5 BGN

Kitchen 3 BGN

Icons 3 BGN

Plovdiv:

On day 10 the entrance fee to the Roman Theatre is 5 BGN per person. There are a lot of concerts held here and so it frequently isn't possible to visit inside the theatre.

Kazanluk:

On day 10 the entrance fee to the Rose Museum is 5 BGN per person.

Bucharest:

On day 14 the entrance fee to the Palace of Parliament is 40 RON per person. Please note you must take your passport with you to be permitted entry. Please let your trip leader know at the beginning of your trip if you're interested in visiting this and they can help you to check availability and book onto a tour. Please note that since the Palace of Parliament in Bucharest is still an active government building that it might not always be open to visitors.

Clothing

July and August are the hottest months and lightweight cotton clothing is best. During spring and autumn temperatures can be lower or drop during the evenings and there is also a stronger possibility of rain, although light rainwear may be needed at any time of year. Layered clothing and a warm fleece are recommended for cooler evenings and in the mountains along with a windproof/waterproof jacket. Ladies should take a headscarf to cover their head when entering religious sites.

Footwear

We recommend taking comfortable walking shoes for exploring and trainers or sandals for relaxing.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a day pack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

We advise taking a water bottle for our included walks as well as sun glasses, sunscreen and a sun hat. In case of emergency we recommend that you carry a first aid kit and a torch, which you may also find useful for viewing frescoes as churches and tombs can be dimly lit. For the time spent in the countryside you might find mosquito repellent handy. Bring a swimming suit and towel for bathing in hot springs and taking a dip in the Black Sea.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Explore Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly please allow £30.00 for tipping.

In order to make things easier for you, the Explore Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the trip.

Bulgaria

Food and drink

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 price	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£9	£15	£2.3	£1.8

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Bulgarian Leva.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

All major currencies may be exchanged, but Euros are easiest to exchange. We suggest you travel with Euros cash.

Where To Exchange

Banks or 'Forex' offices in main towns/cities.

ATM Availability

Major towns.

Credit Card Acceptance

Larger hotels and restaurants - of very limited use on this trip.

Travellers Cheques

We do not recommend Travellers cheques. Places to exchange Travellers cheques are very limited.

Romania

Food and drink

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 price	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£8	£10	£1	£0.7

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Romanian Leu.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Sterling Pounds, US Dollars and Euros cash can all be exchanged for local currency. Old style £10 and £20 notes are not accepted.

Where To Exchange

Please note that the exchange rates at the airport on arrival are particularly low.

ATM Availability

In most towns, your tour leader will advise you.

Credit Card Acceptance

Major stores and restaurants only.

Travellers Cheques

It is not possible to exchange Travellers Cheques on the tour.

Serbia

Food and drink

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 price	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£8	£12	£1.20 - 4.00	£1

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Dinar.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Euros, US Dollars and Pound Sterling can all be exchanged for local currency. However, Euro is the best currency for exchange in most places. Please note if using Pound Sterling then only Bank of England issued bank notes are accepted. Scottish and Northern Irish bank notes are not accepted. Please consult your Explore Leader for more information on currency exchange.

Where To Exchange

Banks or official Forex Offices in the main towns and cities. British banks don't generally exchange Dinars, so you should exchange any unwanted local currency before you leave Serbia. Your Explore Leader will advise you on arrival.

ATM Availability

Generally widespread, but limited in more rural areas.

Credit Card Acceptance

Accepted in major restaurants and hotels.

Travellers Cheques

Travellers Cheques can be exchanged for the local currency but only in banks and they are only accepted in major hotels and shops in the main towns and cities.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals**Transport Information**

Bus

Accommodation notes

Some of the hotels and guesthouses used on this trip have bedrooms on multiple floors with narrow staircases and no lifts, so we recommend packing light, as you will need to carry your own bags up and down the stairs.

On days five and six our hotel in Belgrade is in an excellent location, but the décor in the rooms is a bit old fashioned.

On days 12 and 13 of this trip we will stay in Balchik, where we have the unique experience of staying in rooms in the old villas that formed part of the Black Sea Summer Palace of Queen Marie of Romania. This accommodation is rated as simple as the villas are historic and the décor is quite dated. All rooms are en suite and vary in terms of size and décor. Rooms won't be serviced on second night of our stay. Once the day visitors leave we have the botanical garden palace grounds to ourselves to explore. There is a restaurant in the grounds and other bars and restaurants are just a short walk away along the coast.

Essential Information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa and Passport Information

Romania, Serbia and Bulgaria: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US or Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant embassy prior to departure.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may be able to apply through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore 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. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them [here](#).

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Included activities

The exploration of the towns and cities visited on this trip will mostly be done on foot, so that you can get a proper feel for all the fascinating places that are visited.

At some of the museums visited, where we have a guided tour, this may be with other non-Explore customers as the museum doesn't provide private guided tours.

On all our trips that include Romania we travel by minibuses. Many of the roads in the Romanian countryside are twisty and narrow and the road surfaces can be poor in places, so by using these smaller buses it means that we're able to access areas that the larger coaches can't get into. The minibuses usually have 20 seats with two next to one another and then a single seat on the opposite side of the aisle and four along the back row. The seats are comfortable and equipped with armrests and seat belts. There's normally a rack for day bags and coats above the seats and the main luggage is stored in the rear boot. Leg room is however less plentiful than on a full size coach. There are a few photographs of the type of minibuses used for this trip within the image gallery tab.

Ability to swim

No

Bulgaria

Vaccinations

We recommend protection against typhoid, hepatitis A, polio and tetanus. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

Romania

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, although we recommend vaccination against tetanus, hepatitis A, typhoid and polio. Tick-borne encephalitis is recommended by some medical sources if travelling in certain areas of Eastern Europe, at specific times of the year. The Foreign Office currently recommend considerations of vaccination against rabies if travelling in rural areas of Romania. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

Serbia

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend being up-to-date with your routine vaccination courses and boosters as recommended in the UK including protection against measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, diphtheria, hepatitis A, typhoid and polio. Tick-borne encephalitis protection is recommended by some medical sources at certain times of the year. Ticks are most active between spring and late autumn. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an

exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

Additional Information



Why book this trip

In just two-weeks you can experience the highlights of the three fascinating countries. You'll travel from bustling cities to remote mountain ranges and from rushing rivers to Black Sea sand beaches. Along the way you'll learn of the regions extensive history from ancient Roman right up to communist regimes.



**AWARD WINNING
EXPLORE LEADERS**



**PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE**



**AIRPORT
TRANSFERS**