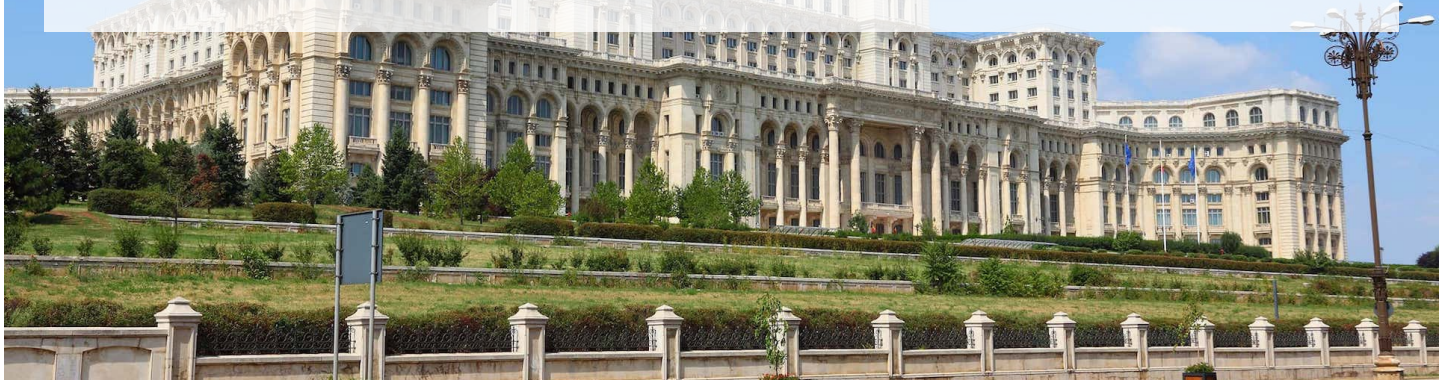


# EXPLORE!

**Moldova and Romania**

8 days

Moldova, Romania - Trip code MOO



## Moldova and Romania

Moldova and Romania have emerged from behind the Iron Curtain as fascinating destinations in their own right. We discover Moldova's capital Chisinau and Tiraspol, the capital of the breakaway territory of Trans-Dniester, which harks back to the days of the USSR. In stark contrast we'll stay in a traditional guesthouse near to the Orheiul Vechi Complex with its early Christian monasteries. We explore rural Romania and its captivating capital, Bucharest. Along the way we'll taste local wine and brandy and have the chance to get active whitewater rafting.

## Trip highlights

- ★ **Chisinau** - Explore Moldova's lesser visited capital
- ★ **Orheiul Vechi** - Visit ancient fortresses and early Christian monasteries and stay in a traditional Moldovan village
- ★ **Tiraspol** - Tour the capital of the breakaway territory of Trans-Dniester
- ★ **Rural Romania** - See the bubbling mud volcanoes at Berca; chance to go whitewater rafting
- ★ **Bucharest** - Explore one of the most intriguing cities in Eastern Europe and visit the Palace of Parliament
- ★ **Wine and Brandy** - Sip Moldovan and Romanian wines and Trans-Dniester brandy on our three included tasting tours

### ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

#### Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

**TRIP PACE:****Moderate**

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

**GROUP SIZE:****12 - 18**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

# Itinerary

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

## DAY 1 - Join trip Chisinau, Moldova

Arrive in Chisinau and check-in to our hotel. Chisinau is located in the very heart of Moldova and is the country's capital city. Moldova has a chequered history, which includes the nationalist movements and power struggles of the 1990's, which led to its freedom from the Soviet Union. Today you will find the Moldovans to be some of the friendliest people in Europe and nowhere is that more obvious than in vibrant Chisinau, where we spend the next two nights.

On our trips to Romania and Moldova we use minibuses to get around. Many of the roads in the 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 around 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 within the image gallery tab for this trip.



**Accommodation: Hotel Luna** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 2 - Excursion via Bendery Fort to Tiraspol with a tasting at the Kvint Brandy Factory

This morning en route to Tiraspol we'll visit the 16th century Ottoman fort at Bendery, which is nestled between a former army base and a very impressive bas-relief of the Soviet Worker. We continue to Tiraspol, the capital of the breakaway territory of Trans-

Dniester. Trans-Dniester unlike the rest of Moldova hadn't wanted to separate from the Soviet Union, so back in 1992 after a short conflict they declared their independence. However, it's not recognised by any of the United Nations as an independent state even though it has its own government, military, postal service, currency, flag and national anthem. On arrival we'll take an orientation tour of this fascinating city to view the House of Soviets, war memorial, monuments to Suvorov and Raevskiy, the Dramatic Theatre, Shevchenko University and Kirov Park.

After free time for lunch we'll continue to the Kvint Brandy Factory for a tour and tasting. Kvint is considered by the locals to be a national symbol of Trans-Dniester and even appears on one of their banknotes. It was founded in 1897, making it the oldest operating commercial enterprise in the region. As well as brandy the factory produces wine and vodka. After our tasting we return to Chisinau for the evening.



**Accommodation: Hotel Luna** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 3 - Chisinau walking tour, wine tasting and stay at Orheiul Vechi

This morning we enjoy a walking tour of the city's main sights including the Orthodox Cathedral of Christ's Nativity, Presidential Palace, Parliament building and the Holy Gates, which are known as Moldova's 'Arc de Triomphe'. We'll also visit the local food market and bazaar and Stephen the Great Park and Monument. Stephen the Great was the Prince of Moldavia who reigned in the 15th century and gained popularity for successfully defending the country from the Hungarians, Polish and Ottoman Empire. We'll join the locals promenading down the 'Avenue of the Classics of Moldovian Literature', which is lined with statues and busts of Romanian and Moldovan authors and social figures.

This afternoon we'll visit the Cricova Wine Cellar where we'll enjoy a wine tasting. Moldova is recognised for its good wine and back in the Soviet era the country was known as the 'the vineyard of the USSR'. Cricova is the second largest wine cellar in the country and makes use of tunnels constructed in the building of Chisinau in the 15th century. They've been producing wine here since the 1950's and have a number of wines that have won prestigious awards.

Following our visit we depart for the Orheiul Vechi Complex, which is undoubtedly one of the highlights of our trip. This site is of great historical and archaeological importance and is one of the most unusual in Eastern Europe. Set in a ruggedly beautiful valley, shaped by the Raut River, there are several ancient monuments amongst and carved into the huge limestone outcrops that date from 10 century BC up to 14 century AD. The Cave Monastery was dug into the cliff by Orthodox monks in the 13th century and was still inhabited until the 18th century. Above ground you'll find a church dedicated to the Ascension of Saint Mary and a museum providing a further insight into the area.

This evening we'll stay overnight in a local guesthouse in a picturesque rural village near to Orheiul Vechi and we'll also enjoy a traditional home cooked meal there this evening.



**Accommodation: Agropensiunea Butuceni** (or similar)



Simple Guesthouse



Swimming pool available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

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## DAY 4 - Drive to rural Valea Lupului, Romania via Iasi

This morning we drive to Iasi, which is the old capital of both Moldavia and Romania. Iasi is a very pretty traditional city and it's one of the oldest in Romania. On arrival we'll take a tour to view the stunning Roznoveanu Palace, Vasile Alecsandri National Theatre, Saint Nicholas Church (built by Stephen the Great), Metropolitan Cathedral and Church of the Three Hierarchs. After free time here for lunch we'll continue to Valea Lupului in scenic rural Romania, which takes around five hours and we'll arrive at our guesthouse in the early evening.



**Accommodation: Guesthouse Valea Lupului** (or similar)

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Standard Guesthouse

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Single room available

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Meals Provided: Breakfast

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## DAY 5 - Relax in Valea Lupului or the chance to go whitewater rafting

Today you have free time in Valea Lupului to enjoy the tranquil countryside surroundings. Or if you'd prefer to do something more active then you'll have the chance to go whitewater rafting on the Buzau River (grade 2-3 rapids) or travel by four-wheel drive into the hills to explore the early Christian rock-hewn churches and hermitages.



**Accommodation: Guesthouse Valea Lupului** (or similar)

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Standard Guesthouse

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Single room available

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Meals Provided: Breakfast

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## DAY 6 - See bubbling mud volcanoes, taste Romanian wine and arrive in Bucharest

This morning we leave the countryside behind as we drive towards Romania's capital, Bucharest. Along the way we'll stop at Berca to view the mud volcanoes. Due to a local geological phenomenon, natural gases erupt from 3000 meters below the surface and are pushed up through layers of cold water and mud before bubbling up through the ground to form a miniature volcano landscape.

We continue our drive to Urlateanu Mansion for a wine tasting and lunch. The mansion was built in 1922 by a rich local nobleman and is now home to Halewood Cellars, who produce some of the best Romanian wines.

Later this afternoon we arrive in Bucharest and our Explore Leader will take us on an orientation tour of the main sites. We'll walk along the city's main street, Victory Avenue, and see Revolution Square and the Romanian Athenaeum.



**Accommodation: Hotel Minerva** (or similar)

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Standard Hotel

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Single room available

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Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

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## DAY 7 - Visit the Palace of the Parliament; enjoy a free afternoon in Bucharest

This morning we visit the Palace of Parliament, an incredible construction which is the second largest building in the world and one of Bucharest's most photographed sights. Taking 13 years to build at an alleged cost of over three billion Euros it was a very controversial project.

This afternoon is free for you to relax and enjoy exploring 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, Military Museum and the Folk Art Museum, to name but a few.



**Accommodation: Hotel Minerva** (or similar)

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Standard Hotel

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Single room available

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Meals Provided: Breakfast

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## DAY 8 - Trip ends Bucharest

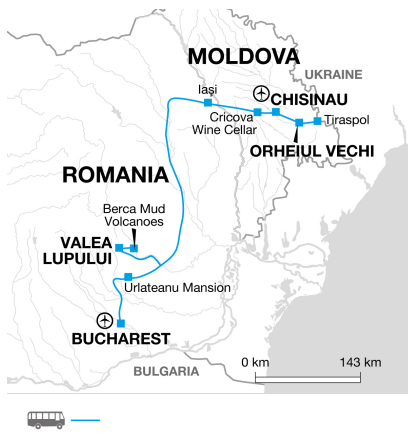
This morning after breakfast our trip ends in Bucharest.

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Meals Provided: Breakfast

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## Why book this trip

In this 8 day trip we experience the newly emerged countries of Moldova and Romania. Travelling from Chisinau to Bucharest, we visit ancient fortresses, bubbling mud volcanoes and experience rural Romania with some wine and brandy tastings along the way.

## What's included?



### Included meals

Breakfast: 7  
Lunch: 1  
Dinner: 1



### Transport

Bus



### Trip staff

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



### Accommodation

1 nights simple guesthouse  
2 nights standard guesthouse  
4 nights standard hotel

## Trip information

### Country information

#### Moldova

##### Climate

Moldova has a temperate continental climate. Summers are generally hot, sunny and less humid than in Central Europe, with temperatures normally between 20 to 23°C. Winters are cold and snowy with temperatures averaging between 0 to -6°C. Short thunderstorms can occur in June and July, but rainfall in Moldova isn't abundant.

##### Time difference to GMT

+2

##### Plugs

2 Pin Round

##### Religion

Orthodox Christians

##### Language

Moldovan and Romanian

# 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

+2

## Plugs

2 Pin Round

## Religion

Eastern Orthodox

## Language

Romanian

## 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.

Valea Lupului: Whitewater rafting on the Buzau River including picnic lunch: €60.00 per person

Valea Lupului: Four-wheel drive to the rock hewn churches and hermitages including picnic lunch: €60.00 per person

## Clothing

Pack lightweight clothing for summer and medium weights for autumn and spring when it can be colder. We would also recommend packing a fleece, waterproof jacket, swimwear and a small towel. Women should bring a headscarf for religious site visits.

## Footwear

Take comfortable shoes with good grip and sandals or trainers for relaxing.

## Luggage

20kg

## Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a daypack for personal items. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage - so don't overload yourself.

## Equipment

Bring a water bottle, insect repellent, sunhat, sunscreen and a torch. We recommend also taking a personal first aid kit.

Only small face towels are provided in some hotels, so if you prefer a larger bath towel it is advised that you take your own. This would also be useful if you are participating in the whitewater rafting optional excursion.

## 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, you should allow £15.00 for tipping.

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

## Country Information

### Moldova

#### 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**

£11

**Dinner price**

£15

**Beer price**

£1

**Water price**

£0.8

#### Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**

Moldovan Leu. The de facto currency in Trans-Dniester is the Trans-Dniestrian Ruble. Moldovan Leu can only be exchanged for Trans-Dniestrian Ruble whilst in Trans-Dniester. Attempting to pay for purchases in Trans-Dniester in any other currency is considered an illegal act.

**Recommended Currency For Exchange**

The most widely accepted currencies for exchange are US Dollars (USD) and Euro. Notes should be in perfect condition or may not be accepted. It's not always easy to change Pound Sterling.

**Where To Exchange**

Most major towns and cities - your Explore Leader will advise you on arrival. Only exchange money at reputable places like banks, ATM's and official Forex Offices.

**ATM Availability**

Major towns and cities have ATM's for cash withdrawal; although cash machines often do not work so please do not rely on them. ATM's in Trans-Dniester don't accept foreign bank or credit cards.

**Credit Card Acceptance**

In major restaurants and hotels in Chisinau. Outside the capital it won't always be possible to pay by card.

**Travellers Cheques**

Travellers cheques are very difficult to change in and Moldova.

### 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**

£8

**Dinner price**

£10

**Beer price**

£1

**Water price**

£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.

## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

### Transport Information

Bus

### Accommodation notes

#### Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

On day 3 of our trip we will stay in a traditional rustic pension in the village of Butuceni, which is near to Orheiul Vechi and the Raut River. It's surrounded by natural scenery and beneath picturesque rocky cliffs. This small guesthouse has en suite bedrooms which are air-conditioned. They pride themselves on their authentic Moldovan cuisine with many ingredients coming from their own garden, vineyard and farm. They also have an outdoor swimming pool, sauna and lounge decorated with local art and crafts.

## 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

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

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://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 transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. 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

In Bucharest when visiting the Palace of Parliament or Casa Poporului as it's also known, you must take your passport with you to be permitted entry.

## Non refundable permits

## Moldova

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against hepatitis A and diphtheria. Check that your polio and tetanus vaccinations are up-to-date before travel. The UK Foreign Office currently recommends that you should consider whether to immunise against tickborne encephalitis and rabies. 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.

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## 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.

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