

EXPLORE!

Transylvanian Long Weekend
5 days

Romania - Trip code BU



Transylvanian Long Weekend

Romania is a ruggedly beautiful country and on this long weekend we uncover dramatic mountains, Medieval towns and fairy tale castles. We travel deep into Transylvania - the legendary home of Dracula - and visit the Saxon fortifications in Brasov. In season we have the unique opportunity to watch European brown bears emerge from the thick forests to feed at a local reserve.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Bucharest** - Explore the city with a guide including the famous Casa Poporului - Ceausescu's Palace
- ★ **Transylvania** - Visit Peles, Pelisor and Bran Castle, plus Sinaia 'the Pearl of the Carpathians'
- ★ **Brasov** - Discover Medieval Old Brasov on foot
- ★ **Bear Watching** - In the observatory at the local bear sanctuary (in season)

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:

Full on

Full on paced trips are for travellers who like their holidays packed with activities and experiences, moving on quickly from place to place with lots of early starts and long, busy days. Some may find them tiring, but others get a buzz from packing their precious holiday-time as chock-a-block full of new experiences as possible!

GROUP SIZE:**10 - 15**

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 in Bucharest

Arrive in Bucharest and meet the group. Bucharest is Romania's largest city and became the capital in 1832. In the past Bucharest has been thought of as somewhat drab and dull, but thanks to a period of urban renewal and modernisation, it's now a bustling city at the centre of Romanian culture, art and media.

On all our trips to Romania we use minibuses to get around. 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 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 Minerva (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Tour of Bucharest and evening bear watching

This morning we start our day with a city tour of Bucharest. A remarkable blend of turn of the century elegance and Communist excess can be observed through its architecture. Situated on the Danube Plain and set amid a series of lakes and spacious gardens, remnants of more gracious days still exist to charm the visitor. We visit many of the older parts of the city to see some of the buildings that earned it the reputation as the Paris of Eastern Europe and of course no visit would be complete without seeing the Casa Poporului, the magnificent but blatantly excessive palace of ex-President Ceausescu.

After our tour, we make our way to the observatory for bear watching. The Romanian bear population is one of the few strong and healthy populations remaining in Europe and the Carpathian Mountains are home to about 43% of all European bears (approximately 6,000 individuals). This region is therefore of key international importance in the conservation of brown bears and due to increasing human-bear interactions, it's also the focus of much research into the effective management of bears and their habitats. Bears may be active at any time of the day, but generally they forage in the morning and evening and rest in dense

woodland cover by day. We try to spot these bears from a hide at dusk when they come out to feed. From here we drive to the Transylvanian village of Moieciu, where we stay in a local guesthouse for the next three nights.

Please note, that the bear watching from the observatory may take place on day 4 depending on the local forestry department's advice.



Accommodation: Casa Zada Guest House (or similar)



Standard Guesthouse



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Visit to Peles and Pelisor Castles; chance for further bear watching

We start this morning with a walk in the Bucegi Mountains surrounding Moieciu. The surrounding forest and woodland are protected as a nature reserve. After our walk we drive to nearby Sinaia, known as the 'Pearl of the Carpathians' because of its stunning scenery. Our first port of call is the wonderful Peles Castle. Built for the imported Hohenzollern monarch Carol I, Peles resembles a Bavarian chateau and is richly decorated with stained glass, Persian carpets, Renaissance weapons, ebony and mother of pearl. Then we visit the adjacent Pelisor Castle, largely the creation of Queen Marie of Romania, with a fine Art Deco and Art Nouveau interior. We return to Moieciu this afternoon and there will be the opportunity for you to choose to spend more time bear watching at the observatory. A late dinner is included this evening at our guesthouse where we enjoy a traditional home cooked meal.



Accommodation: Casa Zada Guest House (or similar)



Standard Guesthouse



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 4 - Visit to Bran Castle; Brasov walking tour including the Black Church

Today we visit the castle at Bran. The truth behind Dracula's Castle is even more fascinating than its myths. In the early 20th century it was the home of the remarkable British born Queen Marie of Romania, granddaughter of Queen Victoria. Vlad the Impaler, the infamous 15th century ruler of Wallachia, never actually lived here and Bram Stoker never came near Transylvania! Perched on a crag in a valley between two high mountain ranges, the castle controlled an international trade route, but is now a rural backwater. Exploring the village, the castle and the museum gives us a chance to unravel fact from fiction.

Later this morning, we drive to the Medieval city of Brasov. Brasov is one of the most historic cities in Transylvania, and we spend the rest of the day exploring. The town is a gem of old buildings, cobbled streets and local atmosphere all clustered within the Medieval fortifications and overlooked by a magnificent 15th century Gothic cathedral. Founded by German settlers to protect the routes that made their way up to the high passes over the Carpathians, Brasov is an architectural delight. There are several churches dating from the 14th through to the 18th century and we shall include a visit to the Black Church as part of our tour.

Later this afternoon you may like to visit one of the museums, the First Romanian School or Saint Nicolas Church in the Scheii area (the old Romanian district of Brasov). In the evening you have an option of returning to the observatory for more bear watching.



Accommodation: Casa Zada Guest House (or similar)



Standard Guesthouse



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Trip ends at Bucharest airport

We make our way to Bucharest airport where our trip ends. If you have a later flight, you may choose to return to Bucharest and visit some of the historic buildings or museums. If you fancy a change of pace, there is always the possibility of some shopping. Since the 1990s brand names and high-end stores have been pushing their way into the Romanian market. From high fashion boutiques to art galleries, shopping in Bucharest can fit any taste or budget. Stroll down Blvd. Magheru from Piata Romana to Piata Universitatii for a shopping extravaganza or hit one of the many shopping malls favoured by the local rich and famous.



Meals Provided: Breakfast

Wildlife in Romania



The Carpathian region of Romania is home to an estimated 6,000 brown bears, which is one of the few strong and healthy populations remaining in Europe. The female brown bear can weigh up to 200kg and the males weigh in at around 350kg - the largest on record in Romania being an astonishing 480kg.

Bears are most active in the morning and evening when they forage for food, then resting during the day in their woodland habitat. The mating season is between May and July, so we may be lucky enough to see males courting potential female mates. The cubs are then born over the winter and take their first exploratory steps in the spring, which we may get to see on our April and May departures. Towards the end of the summer, the bears will be more active as they seek out food to increase their weight before the harsh winter. Over the winter, the brown bear generally hibernates so sightings will not be possible.

Although it is not possible to guarantee that we will see brown bears on this trip, the majority of our groups have had sightings.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 4
Dinner: 1



Transport

Bus



Trip staff

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



Accommodation

3 nights standard guesthouse
1 night standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

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.

Please note many of the castles charge a photography fee. Accordingly you should allow approx £10.00.

Additional nights bear watching in the observatory costs approximately €50.00 per person per night.

Clothing

You should bring a warm fleece or sweater, woolly hat or balaclava, gloves, thermal underwear, thick socks, a good windproof/rainproof well insulated jacket (ski jacket) and a good pair of ski trousers or any trousers with good insulation that are waterproof if you are travelling in winter. Gaiters will also be useful when walking in the snow. During the spring and autumn, we recommend that you bring layers as it can be cold.

Footwear

Comfortable walking boots and trainers or other shoes.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

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

Equipment

We also recommend taking a water bottle, insect repellent, torch, sunglasses, camera and binoculars.

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 recognized 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. 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. Accordingly you should allow approx. £10.00 for tipping.

Country Information

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

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: 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 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

During our stay at our guesthouse in Moieciu we will visit a bear observatory and spend an evening in a hide to try spotting these impressive wild animals. Our local agent is in regular contact with the wildlife authorities to find out which hides offer the best chance of seeing bears depending on the areas where they have been most recently spotted. There are 22 hides in the area and they accommodate 5 to 15 people at a time, so depending on the size of the group you may be split between different hides. If there are one or two particular hides where the bears are frequently being seen then the group maybe split, so that some of us go into the hides on one night then the remainder on the next in order to give everyone the best chance of seeing them. The transfer from our guesthouse to the hides will take between 20 minutes to 1 hour depending which ones we will be using.

We will either have an early dinner before or a late dinner after our bear watching excursion. Depending on the time of year you will be in the hides for two to four hours and we generally enter them between 16.00 to 18.00 and leave between 19.00 to 22.00, so that we hopefully see the bears when they come out to feed. Once in the hides you must remain inside until the end of the excursion. There are no toilet facilities within the hides, but there will be the opportunity to stop at a service station for a bathroom break before arriving. Generally outdoor shoes aren't permitted to be worn inside the hides (in order to keep them clean and noise to a minimum), so you might want to wear soft slippers or thick socks when inside. It is advisable to bring insect repellent with you.

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

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.

