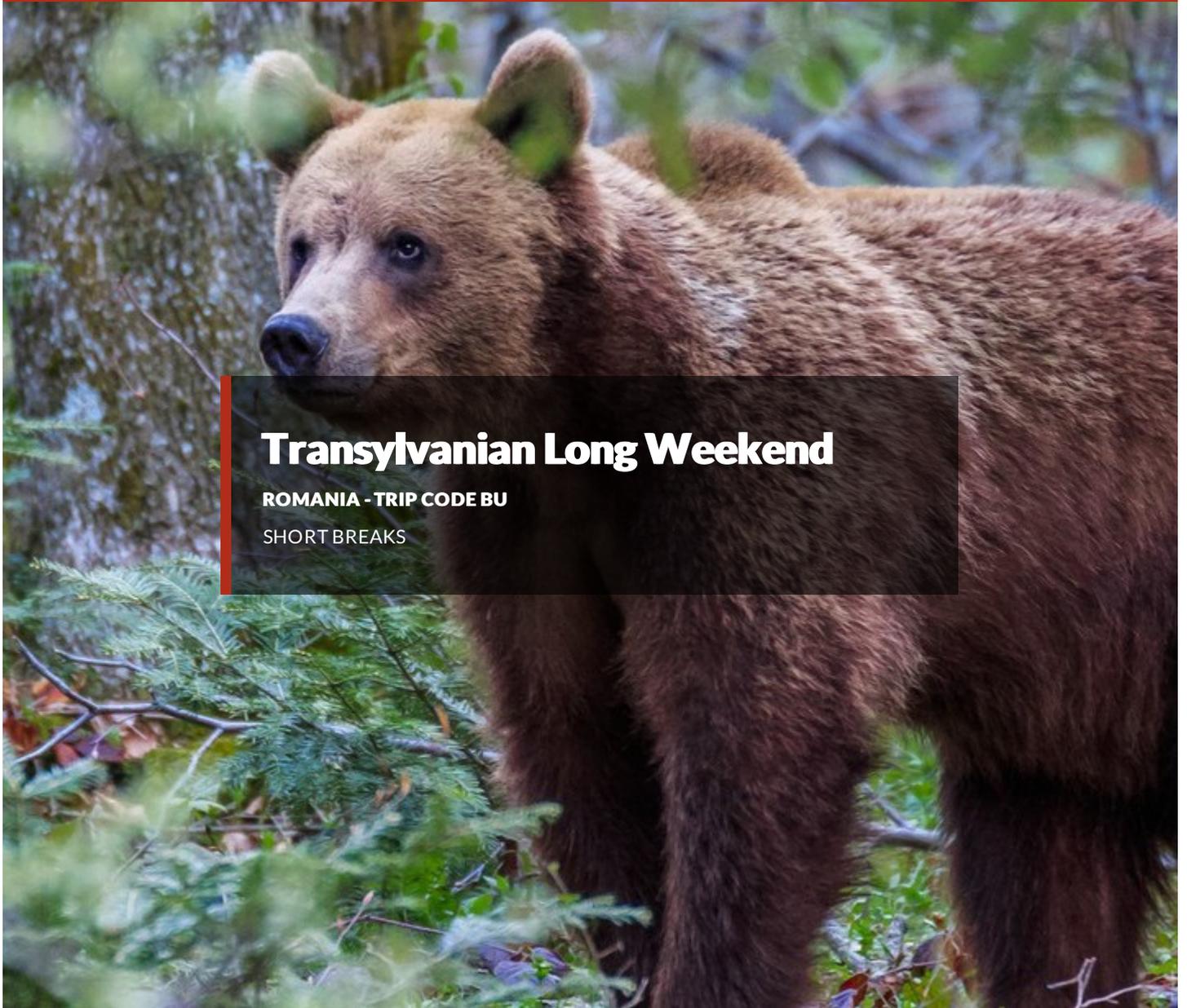


# EXPLORE!

Book with confidence



## Transylvanian Long Weekend

ROMANIA - TRIP CODE BU

SHORT BREAKS

### Why book this trip?

When the word Transylvania is mentioned it conjures up images of a mystic land steeped in history and legends, the home of Dracula, and it's this region that this unique Romanian short break gives a taster of.

- **Transylvanian castles** - Visit the opulent Peles and Pelisor Castles and the renowned Bran Castle
- **Bear watching** - In season see brown bears emerge from the thick forests at a local reserve
- **Bucharest** - Explore the capital city including the huge marbled interiors of the Palace of Parliament



**INCLUDED MEALS**  
Breakfast: 4  
Dinner: 1



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



**TRANSPORT**  
Bus



**ACCOMMODATION**  
3 nights  
comfortable  
guesthouse  
1 nights  
comfortable hotel



**TRIP PACE:**  
Full on



**GROUP SIZE:**  
10 - 15

## 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, Romania's largest city that became its capital in 1832. It has gone through a period of urban renewal and modernisation and it is now a bustling city, at the centre of Romanian culture, art and media.

There are no activities planned today, so you are free to arrive in Bucharest at any time. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today you need to arrive into Bucharest Henri Coanda International Airport (OTP), which is about 30 minutes' drive from the city centre. For those arriving on time our Leader plans to meet you in the hotel reception at 6pm and for those that wish, there is the chance to go out for dinner. Due to a number of flights arriving into Bucharest later in the evening, our welcome meeting will take place on the morning of day two.

If you have free time on arrival then 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 Art Gallery, National Museum of Romanian History, the Military Museum and the Peasant Museum, to name but a few.



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

**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



**SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE**





MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

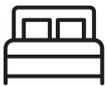
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## DAY 2 - Tour of Bucharest and evening bear watching

After our Leader does an initial welcome meeting, we go on 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 see the Palace of Parliament; 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 four depending on the local forestry department's advice. Also, since the Palace of Parliament in Bucharest is still an active government building that it might not always be open to visitors or possible for us to go inside. If this is the case then instead we will visit Sinaia Monastery on day three and the Rasnov Citadel on day four.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Casa Zada Guest House (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Guesthouse



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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## 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)

Grade: Comfortable Guesthouse



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

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#### 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.

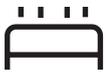
Later this afternoon you may like to visit one of the museums, the First Romanian School or Saint Nicolas Church in the Scheii area (the old Romanian district of Brasov). In the evening you have an option of returning to the observatory for more bear watching.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Casa Zada Guest House (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Guesthouse





SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 5 - Drive to Bucharest Airport where our trip ends**

Departing Moieciu this morning we drive for around three hours to Bucharest Henri Coanda International Airport (OTP), where we will arrive at about 10.30am and this is where our trip ends. The earliest your flight can depart is 12.20pm.

If your flight is departing later in the day then you may choose to return to Bucharest city centre to visit some of the historic buildings or museums. Alternatively, 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 Boulevard Victoria from Piata Amzei to the National History Museum of Romania for the shops or visit one of the many shopping malls favoured by the local rich and famous. If you wish to be dropped off in the city centre rather than remaining at the airport then please discuss this with your Leader. You can be taken to our hotel in Bucharest where you can store your luggage. To get back to the airport you will need to take a public bus or taxi.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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## **Trip information**

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### **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 64°F (by day) to lows of 43°F (at night) in October; by January they will hover around freezing during the day and go down to 14°F 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.

<b>Time difference to GMT</b>	<b>Plugs</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Language</b>
+8 (PST)	2 Pin Round	Eastern Orthodox	Romanian

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## **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.

Bucharest:

On day five depending on your flight departure time, you might have the opportunity to go into the city centre after your trip ends at the airport. If you wish to be dropped off in the city centre rather than remaining at the airport then please discuss this with your Leader. You can be taken to our hotel in Bucharest where you can store your luggage. To get back to the airport you will need to take a public bus for approximately 7 RON per person or the hotel can book a taxi for you.

Please note many of the castles charge a photography fee. Accordingly you should allow approximately £10.

Moieciu:

Additional nights bear watching in the observatory costs approximately €50 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

Tipping isn't compulsory, and we work hard to ensure that our leaders all receive a fair wage. You may however, want to recognise a leader that has done a great job or really added to your trip by giving them a tip. We're often asked about the recommended amount. It is a tricky one, and down to personal preference, but we would recommend £15 to £20 per person per week as a guideline.

## Local crew

Although 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 approximately £15 of local currency 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.

## 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.

<b>Lunch price</b>	<b>Dinner price</b>	<b>Beer price</b>	<b>Water price</b>
£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 Travelers Checks on the tour.

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## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

# Transport Information

Bus

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## Essential Information

### Government Travel Safety 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 be able to apply 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 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**

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 one 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.

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.

## **Ability to swim**

No

## **Romania**

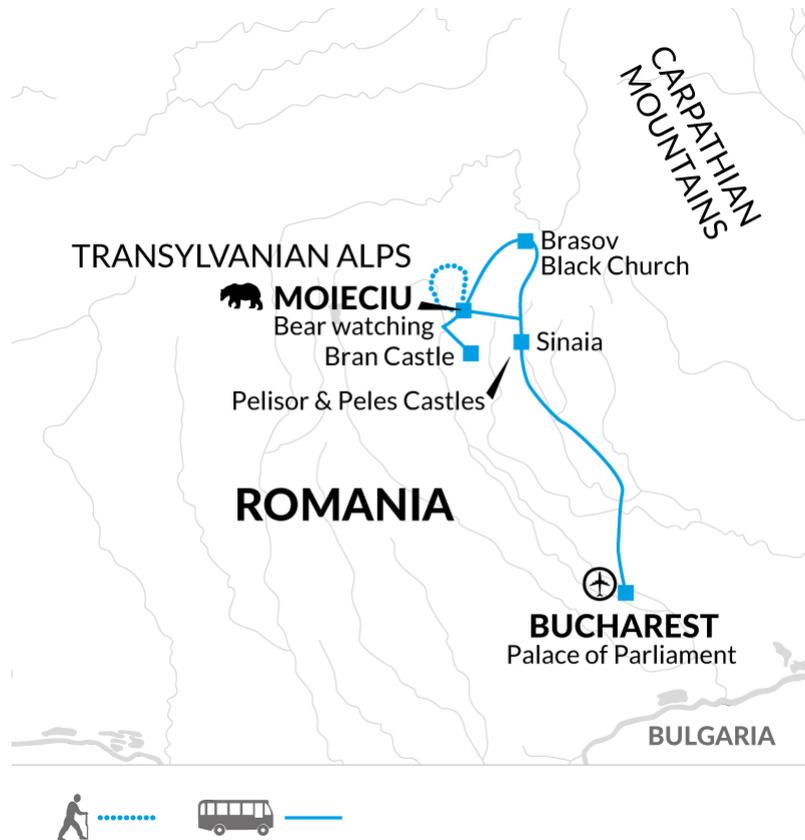
### **Vaccinations**

Nothing compulsory, although we recommend vaccination against tetanus, hepatitis A, typhoid and polio. Tick-borne encephalitis is recommended by some medical sources if traveling in certain areas of Eastern Europe, at specific times of the year. The Foreign Office currently recommend considerations of vaccination against rabies if traveling 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 traveling.

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## 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.

# Reviews

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AWARD WINNING  
EXPLORE LEADERS



PRICE GUARANTEE  
PROMISE



AIRPORT  
TRANSFERS