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*explore the Carpathian garden*

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## Explore the Carpathian garden

Dear Reader,

If you are already reading these pages, chances are Romania has already piqued your interest. We guarantee that what you already know about the country may be exceeded by the stories you will be told here. They are stories about a land of contrasts, a blend of rituals unchanged for hundreds of years, with large cities pulsing with life, awe-inspiring landscapes and stone-carved testimonials of a rich history. With that in mind, we have created for you a mini-guide that you can use based on six major points of interest.

To start off, we suggest a few tourist routes that will help you get to know Romania faster. Since Romania is blessed with a balanced and harmonious mix of nature, we have dedicated the second chapter of this brochure to its natural assets. Natural sights are complemented by the most important resource of the land, so in the third chapter we are going to talk about people, their traditions and the customs that have filled their lives for the last hundreds of years. As with all things that possess inherent quality, the beauty of Romania's nature is not only on the outside, but also from within, as you will read about the natural healing springs that you can benefit from here. Next, we invite you to discover the throbbing rhythms of Romania's great cities, real cultural gems. For the more adventurous people, we have prepared a special chapter, which is guaranteed to raise your adrenaline level as you go through the list of extreme sports you can try out in Romania, in its abundant natural environment.

This kaleidoscope of images and emotions will take you back in time, will help you know yourself better and, above all else, will make you feel reborn. **Before you hit the road in Romania, do not forget to put this mini-guide in your backpack so you'll have it with you every step of the way.**

Have a safe journey!

THE NATIONAL TOURISM AUTHORITY TEAM

# CALENDAR OF FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

To make sure that you are not missing out on any key experiences on your Romanian trip, just check out our calendar:

<h3>JANUARY</h3>  <p><b>Old Rite Christmas</b> Timișoara (Banat)</p>	<h3>FEBRUARY</h3>  <p><b>The Kissing Fair</b> the Hălmeagiu community (Banat) festival dedicated to newly married women</p> <p><b>Dragobete (February 24<sup>th</sup>)</b> the national holiday of love</p>	<h3>MARCH</h3>  <p><b>Mărțișor (March 1<sup>st</sup>)</b> the countrywide folk holiday that marks the beginning of spring</p> <p><b>The Festival of the Juns</b> Brașov (Transylvania) – the feast that celebrates the passage of young lads from adolescence to manhood</p>
<h3>APRIL</h3>  <p><b>Tânjaua</b> Hoteni-Ocna Șugatag (Maramureș) – agrarian feast</p> <p><b>Izvorul Tămăduirii (the Healing Fountain)</b> Brăila (Moldavia) – orthodox pilgrimage to the local Church of the Annunciation</p> <p><b>Orthodox Easter</b></p>	<h3>MAY</h3> <p><b>Ispas Fair</b> Topoloveni (Wallachia) – a fair for folk art objects</p> <p><b>The Feast of the Lilac</b> the community of Ponoare (Oltenia) – an agrarian feast, held in the wild lilac forest</p> <p><b>The Iorgovan</b> Arad (Banat) – folk festival</p> <p><b>Sâmbra oilor (the Sheep's Feast)</b> all villages in Maramureș – a holiday about sheep and shepherding</p> <p><b>EUROPafest</b> Bucharest – jazz, blues and pop festival</p> <p><b>The International Theater Festival</b> Sibiu (Transylvania) – festival dedicated to the theatrical art</p> <p><b>Transylvania International Film Festival</b> Cluj-Napoca (Transylvania) the largest Romanian film festival</p>	<h3>JUNE</h3>  <p><b>The Drăgaica</b> Buzău (Wallachia) ethno-folk festival and a folk fair</p> <p><b>Cocoșul de Hurez (The Hurez Cock)</b> the Stejari-Horezu Pass (Oltenia) – pottery fair</p> <p><b>Wedding traditions in Bucovina</b> the community of Straja (Bucovina) – folk festival</p>
<h3>JULY</h3>  <p><b>The festival of folk singing, costumes and dancing from Bihor</b> Băile Felix (Crișana) – ethno-folk festival</p> <p><b>The girls' fair on Mount Găina</b></p> <p><b>Medieval Sighișoara</b> Sighișoara (Transylvania) – medieval festival</p> <p><b>Ochi de păun (Peacock Eyes)</b> Rădăuți (Bucovina) – pottery festival</p> <p><b>B'ESTFEST – Bucharest (music festival)</b></p> <p><b>The Gărâna Festival</b> Gărâna (Banat) – jazz festival</p> <p><b>The Peninsula Festival</b> Cluj-Napoca – music festival</p> <p><b>Foresters' Day,</b> Poienița Voinii (Hunedoara)</p> <p><b>Harvest Festival</b> Ampoița (Alba)</p>	<h3>AUGUST</h3> <p><b>Enescu and the World's Music</b> Sinaia (Wallachia) – international festival of classical music</p> <p><b>The Romanian Căluș</b> Slatina (Oltenia) – festival dedicated to a traditional Romanian dance, part of UNESCO's World Heritage.</p> <p><b>Festivalul usturoiului (The Garlic Festival)</b> the community of Copălău (Moldavia) contests with prizes and garlic fragrant dishes</p> <p><b>Ziua Marinei (Navy Day) – August 15</b> Constanța (Dobrogea) – parade and naval drills</p> <p><b>Stufstock</b> Vama Veche (Dobrogea) – music, film and theatre festival</p> <p><b>Anonimul (Anonymous)</b> Sfântu Gheorghe (Dobrogea) – independent filmmaking festival</p> <p><b>Pie Festival</b> Oituz (Bacău)</p> <p><b>Trout National Festival</b> Ciocănești (Suceava)</p>	<h3>SEPTEMBER</h3>  <p><b>Târgul cepelor (the Onions' Fair)</b> Asuaju de Sus (Maramureș) – folk festival</p> <p><b>Festivalul sarmalelor (The Festival of the Meat Rolls)</b> Praid (Transylvania) – culinary festival</p> <p><b>George Enescu Festival</b> Bucharest (every two years) – classical music festival</p> <p><b>Anim'est</b> Bucharest – animation festival</p> <p><b>Tămăioasa Day</b> Pietroasele (Buzău)</p> <p><b>Rural tourism Fair</b> Albac (Alba)</p> <p><b>Harvest Day</b> Poiana Mărului (Brașov)</p> <p><b>EXPOPASTORALIS – the history of cheese</b> Rucăr (Argeș)</p> <p><b>Peasants' Parade</b> Săpoca (Buzău)</p> <p><b>Sheep Day – Cheese and Ham Festival</b> Bran (Brașov)</p>
<h3>OCTOBER</h3>  <p><b>Festivalul Vinului (The Wine Festival)</b> Arad (Crișana) – a festival dedicated to winemaking</p> <p><b>Pleşcoi Sausage Festival</b> Berca (Buzău)</p> <p><b>International Rural Women's Day!</b></p>	<h3>NOVEMBER</h3> <p><b>SoNoRo</b> Bucharest, Iași (Moldavia), Timișoara (Banat), Cluj-Napoca (Transylvania) – chamber music festival</p>	<h3>DECEMBER</h3>  <p><b>The National Day (December 1<sup>st</sup>)</b> the national holiday</p> <p><b>Christmas (December 25<sup>th</sup>)</b> national religious holiday</p> <p><b>The Christmas Ancestral Traditions Fair:</b> Bears' Festival in Comănești (Moldavia)</p> <p><b>Romanian tradition festivals and Christmas fairs</b></p> <p><b>House with Terrace – "Villas for rent" Festival Buzău</b> Sărata Monteoru (Buzău)</p>



Moldovița Monastery

## Choose a legend and follow it through Romania

No matter how many days you have set aside for your Romanian holiday, you can cast your eyes everywhere on the map and you will surely get to a place where there's so much beauty and stories for you to discover it.

From the shores of the Black Sea in Dobrogea to the Carpathian Mountains in Transylvania, through Wallachia's vast plains to the hills of Banat and the plateaus of Moldavia, Romania's diverse land features create a picturesque backdrop. This aids in making them unique and creates the conditions for some geological and natural surprises - well worth seeing in detail - so that you can get to know the country the way you planned.

The country's appeal also comes from its customs, which preserve their ancient patterns and send you back to the simpler and more patient times of yore.

Part of Romania's charm comes from its select architecture, which closely reflects the succession of historical periods and constitutes a unique combination of old and new; spirituality and urban nature.

If you have decided that your holiday is going to focus on a particular facet of Romania's attractions, a well-designed itinerary to meet your objectives is a must. You will see as follows some of the tourist circuits that will help you explore Romania.



Mocănița – Vaser Valley



Bran Castle



### Tours at the Heart of the Carpathians

In the middle of the country, amid the snowy peaks of the Carpathian Mountains, history, traditions and architectural creativity meet nature's unspoiled charm to give birth to one of the most beautiful regions of Romania: Transylvania.

Begin the Transylvanian leg of your journey in Sibiu, the "European Capital of Culture," in 2007 (along with Luxembourg), to discover one of the most beautiful Romanian towns. If you wish to experience the city's medieval flair, you must make time for a chance stroll through the Large Square, then down the old cobbled streets that wind past houses and monuments built in the Germanic style of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century, and on to the Bridge of Lies, which was built in 1859. Do not miss the impressive Bruckenthal Palace, a symbol of the city, where you can admire the most valuable works of art in Sibiu. You can find more details about the city if you refer to the "city-break destinations" chapter of the brochure. You could then head for Braşov, a city built in the same Germanic style, renowned for the beauty of its architecture and located at the foot of Mount Tâmpa. The Town Hall Square in the centre of the city is the place where several quaint streets with stylish houses, alluring shops and restaurants lead to. To grasp the essence of the city, you need to visit the Black Church, a landmark constructed in the gothic architectural style in Romania, and Strada Sforii (Rope Street), a street only 130 centimeters wide.

Also, if you feel like basking in a youthful ambiance, do pay a visit to the city of Cluj-Napoca, the second largest centre of high education in the country (after Bucharest), which boasts 10 prestigious universities and around 60,000 students per year.

If after all the urban strolling you feel a need to plunge into history and rusticity, you would do well to travel to Bârsa Country, in south-eastern Transylvania, to the fortified churches that are included on the list of UNESCO's world heritage sites and still retain their medieval configuration.



Street in Sighişoara



The Large Square in Sibiu



Peleş Castle

Begin your journey in the county of Braşov, where, receding from the road that links the county's largest city to the town of Sighişoara, lies the village of Viscri, with one of the most spectacular Saxon fortified churches. The well-preserved Roman fortified Hall Church rises on the foundations of a Roman chapel made of white limestone.

While still in the county of Braşov, take a break in Prejmer and its fortified church, built in the Burgundian gothic style by the Teutons in mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. The house of worship is surrounded by unyielding fortifications (Prejmer is the strongest fortified church in Eastern Europe), with walls up to 12 m high and a battle device that was innovative for those times: the death organ, a device made up of a series of weapons that could be activated all at the same time.

Now, take the road to the county of Sibiu, where you will find the monumental church of Biertan. The most interesting part of the building is the sacristy, with its complicated locking system made of 19 latches, which received an award at the 1900 World Exhibition in Paris.

The fortifications, made of three rows of walls, are considered to be the sturdiest in all of Transylvania.

A short distance away, in the county of Alba, you will find the the Evangelical fortified church of Călnic, built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The fortress's towers still rise above the church. Complete your circuit in the county of Harghita, in Dârjiu, a village whose Unitarian fortified church hosts a valuable assortment of mural paintings.

What you could do next is head for the county of Hunedoara, in southwestern Transylvania, and pay a visit to the commanding Huniad Castle, unique in the region known for its French gothic architecture. In the courtyard of the castle, next to the chapel, there is a 30 meter deep fountain, which, as legend has it, was dug by three Turkish prisoners who were promised their freedom if ever they would ever reach groundwater. At present, the castle has been converted into a museum.

#### Good to know

In Biertan, inside the fortress church, lies a small cottage where spouses that fought each other were locked away for a few days. It contained but one bed, one plate, and a single spoon, fork, knife and glass, so the spouses had no choice but to cooperate if they wanted to eat.

It seems that in 400 years there was only one divorce, which means the method must have worked.

### PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- 📍 • Get ready for the heavy but delicious dishes of Transylvania; they contain large quantities of pork, sour cream and egg yolks spiced with red pepper, tarragon and thyme.
- 👁️ • The address of the **Banffy Palace**: Piaţa Unirii nr. 30, Cluj Napoca.
- 🚗 • **Means of transport**: car.
- 🌸 • **Recommended season for a visit**: spring, in order to see the whole region in bloom.



Făgăraş Castle



The Huniad Castle, one of the most representative monuments of Gothic architecture in Romania



## Tourist Circuits of Traditional Living, in Maramureș

You cannot claim to have seen traditional Romania if your holiday itinerary has not taken you through the northwestern parts of the country, through Maramureș, where traditions have given rise to astonishingly beautiful settlements and homesteads.

Begin your journey by admiring the massive, carved wooden gates of Maramureș, the most interesting material proof of the folk artists' craftsmanship. With three pillars for support, the gates have carvings of traditional ornamental motifs all over their surface, such as the rooster, the sun and the rope. You will find the most beautiful examples of this art in the villages of Vadu Izei, Bârsana, Oncești, Desești, and Sârbi.

Another thing to be added to your Maramureșan itinerary should be the oak churches, which are still the central point of any traditional village. Several houses of worship of this kind have been declared UNESCO World Heritage Sites. You can see the most interesting wooden churches of Maramureș in the villages of Plopiș, Rogoz, Ieud, and Poienile Izei. Tradition is also observed in Maramureș with respect to clothes. The most important pieces of the women's costume are: the scarf, the white blouse with sleeves that end in cuffs or flounces, the poale (underskirt), on top of which are worn the two horizontally striped zadii (gores, or rectangular woolen pieces, joined together only at the upper end). On top of the blouse comes the pieptar, a short sleeveless coat made of sheepskin. Men wear a short, white shirt, izmene (summer homespun trousers) or cioareci (winter felt-like trousers), a clop (narrow-brimmed hat) or a cușmă (fur cap) on their heads, also depending on the season. The folks from Maramureș who continue to try and abide by wearing their traditional clothing down to the smallest detail do not give up wearing their opinci (leather-wrapped shoes), even to this day. Also, if you want to truly understand the spirit and world vision of the people from Maramureș, you must add a visit to the Merry Cemetery of Săpânța to your list of objectives. Famous for the humorous manner in which it addresses the often tragic events that led to the death of the people buried there, the Merry Cemetery is a unique concept in the world, exemplified by its boldly colored crosses, ornamented with rhymes and candid paintings that depict scenes in the lives of the persons entombed there.



Bârsana Monastery



Traditional garment in Maramureș

### Good to know

The Munții Rodnei National Park in Maramureș was included on the UNESCO World Heritage List, thanks to the diversity of its flora and wildlife.

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- 🚂 • Take a trip with the **Mocănița**, the last forest-based steam train in Europe – its route starts from the village of Vișeu de Sus and is almost 50km long. It is the only means of transport that reaches to the high-elevation settlements of the Vișeu Valley.
- 👁️ • **The address of the Mineralogy Museum:** Bd. Traian nr. 8, Baia Mare.
- ✈️ • **Best means of transport:** by plane (Baia Mare International Airport).
- 🌈 • **Recommended time of year:** the month of December, in time for Christmas traditions.



Detaliu Merry Cemetery (Săpânța)

## Bucovina, a Slice of Heaven

An early Christianized People, forced centuries on end to withstand the great powers of different faiths that dominated and imposed their own customs upon it, the Romanians felt the need to channel their own brand of spirituality through religious buildings, which survive to this day. The land of Bucovina, in the northeastern part of the country, is home to the most beautiful churches throughout Romania; twenty two monasteries painted in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries with such art that, to this day, part of their secrets remain hidden. Seven of them were included on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

If you want to see the best first, Voroneț monastery, situated 6 km away from the town of Suceava, should be the first stop on your Bucovinian tour. Called the "Sistine Chapel of the East", the monastery remains astounding even today, over 500 years since it was built due to the deep tone of blue paint (Voroneț blue) used in the monastery's outer and inner frescoes. The exact composition of the blue pigment has yet to be discovered. If painting is inspiring to you, you can take part in the art workshops held by nuns within the very precincts of the monastery.

Continue on your route to the monastery of Sucevița, a house of worship with the appearance of a fortress that dates back to 1581. The building is covered with the largest surface of frescoes among all the painted monasteries in Bucovina.

The next stop is Moldovița, with its paintings with gold and blue highlights. The most important frescoes of the monastery are: "The Siege of Constantinople" and "Jesus's tree," showing the genealogy of the Redeemer's family, one of the widest spread European spiritual themes in the Middle Ages. Also, you cannot possibly omit the Monastery of Humor from your tour. It's a place of minute dimensions, but it hosts a very valuable collection of 16<sup>th</sup>-century icons.

### Good to know

The nuns in Bucovina's monasteries are called to prayer by strokes of the toaca, a large wooden board. The tradition began in the Middle Ages, when the Ottoman armies kept Moldova under siege, and the use of bells for worship was forbidden. The custom was preserved, aided by the fact that, as wars continued on and off for centuries, bells were melted down in order to make bullets.



Exterior fresco at Moldovița Monastery



Humor Monastery



Voroneț Monastery

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- 👁️ • Explore the **Ceahlău Mountains**, where they say that the temple of Zamolxes, the supreme god of the Dacians, was located.
- 👁️ • **Citadel of the Throne of Suceava:** Dealul Cetății (Citadel Hill).
- ✈️ • **Means of transport:** by plane (Ștefan cel Mare International Airport).
- 🌈 • **Recommended time of year:** before Christmas, to enjoy the local traditions.



## Travelling in Sunny Dobrogea and the Danube Delta

The land of sea, beaches, both wild and touristic, and of luscious vegetation, Dobrogea is considered by specialists as the oldest land in the territory of today's Romania. It is then hardly a surprise that a journey through it will carry you to the ruins of some of the oldest landmarks left behind by conquering nations.

To the north of Constanța lies the medieval citadel of Enisala (Heraclea). Perched atop a limestone hill for a better line of sight, the 15<sup>th</sup> century structure was built by the Genoese for military and surveillance purposes. Dacian burial places and mammoth bones discovered here show that the area has been inhabited since prehistoric times.

“The paradise of those in love with nature,” could be the Danube Delta's second name, befitting a Biosphere Reservation included on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The second largest and best preserved delta in Europe, the Danube Delta spreads along the three arms of the Danube: Chilia, Sulina and Sfântu Gheorghe.

It occupies 5,700 square kilometers and is the youngest Romanian land. The Delta grows continually, thanks to the 67 million tons of debris deposited here by the river each year. You can arrive to the Delta by cruising down the Danube or travelling by boat, starting from the Dobrogean town of Tulcea. If you are fond of seafood, you must also take a break in the fishing villages scattered across the Delta area: Ceatalchioi, Plaur, Chilia Veche, etc. (on the Chilia branch of the river), Maliuc and Crișan (on the Sulina branch), or Mahmudia and Murighiol (on the Sfântu Gheorghe branch).

Naturally, you may want to do some fishing on your own in the specially designated areas, from June to December. Since you are in the region, you cannot miss the most important city on the Black Sea coast: Constanța.

An ancient Greek colony founded over 2,500 years ago, today Constanta features the elegant Art Nouveau building of the Casino, built between the two world wars, and the romantic promenade where we recommend that you watch the sunset.

You may find information on other tourist sites in Constanța in the chapter on “city break destinations,” in the brochure.

### Good to know

Dobrogea is famed for its numerous vineyards.

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

-  • Take a bath in the healing mud on the shore of Techirghiol Lake – a non-conventional yet proven treatment.
-  • **Fantasio Theatre:** Bd. Ferdinand nr. 11, Constanța.
-  • **Means of transport:** by train or by car.
-  • **Recommended time of year:** June – October.



Fishing at the break of dawn on Fortuna lake – Danube Delta, on the UNESCO world heritage list

## Dacian Legacies, World-Class Assets

In ancient times, from the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. – 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D., the Dacian people lived and fought on the territories of present-day Romania. Dacia's capital, the proud city of Sarmizegetusa-Regia, kept watch at the heart of the Orăștie Mountains, in the southwestern part of present-day Transylvania, and around it gathered a well-appointed string of defense fortresses, which were only conquered by the Romans in 106 A.D.

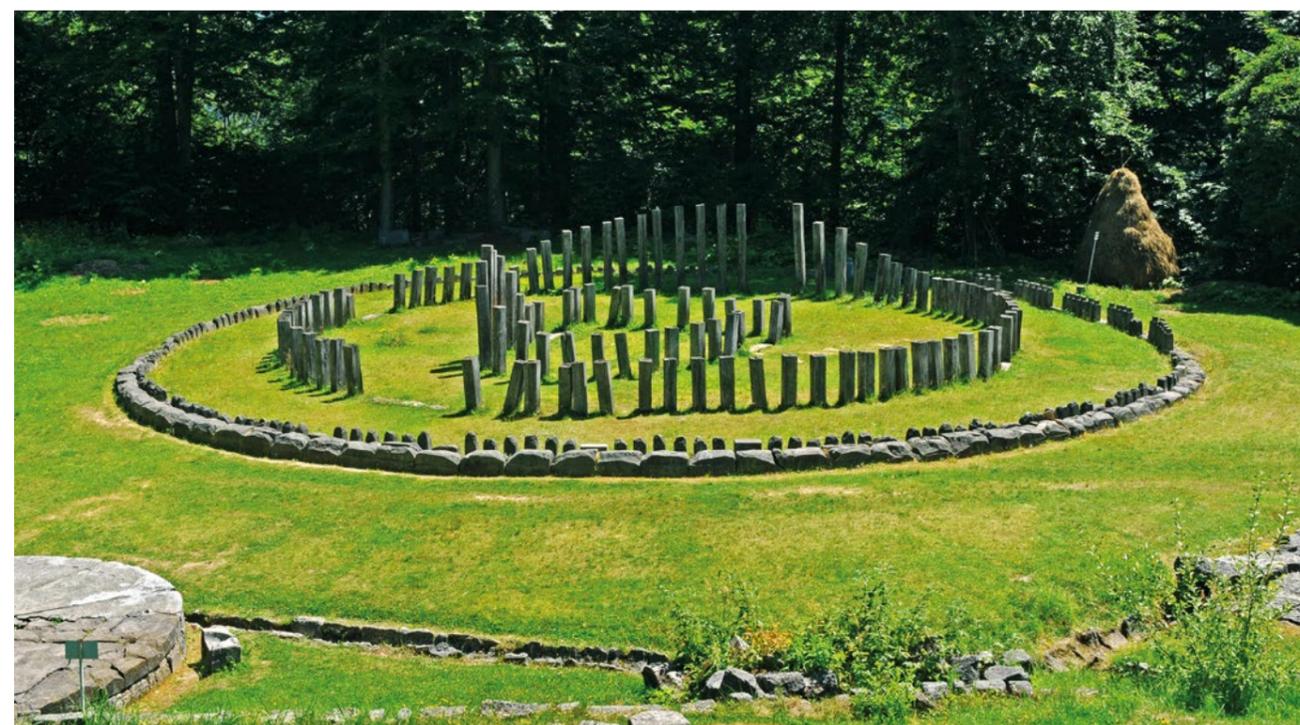
Nowadays, the ruins of six Dacian fortresses (including Sarmizegetusa) are still visible on the peaks of the Orăștie Mountains. The entire assembly has been declared part of the UNESCO World Heritage.

Moving closer to the city of Sarmizegetusa, start out at the fortification of Bănița, situated 11 km away from the town of Petroșani located on top of the Dealul Cetății (Fortress Hill), at an elevation of 902 m. The building is made entirely of limestone and is only accessible from the northern part of the hill.

Head for the Căpâlna fortification, in the village of the same name, at a distance of 10 km from Sebeș. Here you can look at the fortified, “murus dacicus type” wall. The murus dacicus is an architectural element that is typical of the Dacians, made up of two exterior walls built of large boulders, with gravel laid between them.

### Good to know

The assembly of the Dacian fortresses of the Orăștie Mountains entered into a major restoration process in the year 2012.



Sarmizegetusa Regia – Mehedinți county

The Costești-Blidaru fortress is the next stop in this circuit. The only Dacian citadel that was never conquered, it represents an ingenious feat of military architecture: its entrance is in the first tower, which was planned in such a way as to force the enemy to take a turn to the right, where it discovered, albeit too late, that it was open to attack.

Before the end of your journey through the Orăștie Mountains, take a break at the citadel of Lunca-Piatra Roșie, perched at an altitude of 832 m on the plateau with the same name and surrounded by sheer walls of rock.

You are, at this point, quite close to the capital. Sarmizegetusa-Regia awaits you on Grădiște Hill, at an elevation of 1,200 m. Only the defensive walls still exist today, which are built of limestone and enclose a territory of approximately 3 hectares.

Our stories end here, but your options do not, by far. You can fly on the regular flight routes, or you can journey the length of the Carpathians. Drive on the Transfăgărășan road, which was called “the best road in the world,” by the British auto show Top Gear. Do not forget about the “Iron Gates” route, a large canyon and ecological heaven that the Danube flows through.

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

-  • Visit the **circular calendar**, a small token of proof of the Dacians' ingenuity.
-  • **Means of transport:** by car, up to the base of the hills, and from there on foot.
-  • **Recommended season of the year:** in summer, when the ground is dry and you can climb easily.

## ROUTES

- 1. Maramureș Route** – Wooden churches from UNESCO (Bârsana, Budești, Desești, Ieud, Plopiș/Sisești, Poienile Izei, Rogoz/Târgu Lăpuș, Surdești/Sisești) Mocănița – Vișeu de Sus, Baia Mare Art Museum, Săpânța.
- 2. Transylvania Route** – Saxon sites with fortified churches from Transylvania, UNESCO World Heritage (Biertan, Călnic, Dârjiu, Prejmer, Saschiz, Valea Viilor, Viscri), Bastion Fortress in Vauban Style from Alba Iulia, Sighișoara, Bran Castle, Șumuleu Ciuc, UNESCO World Heritage Dacian strongholds in Orăștie Mountains (Sarmizegetusa Regia, Costești – Cetățuie, Costești – Blidaru, Căpâlna, Lunca – Piatra Roșie, Bănița), Gherla and Dumbrăveni – Armenian communities
- 3. Oltenia Route** – Hurezi, UNESCO World Heritage Monastery, Mănăstirea dintr-un lemn (One Wood Monastery) in Frâncești, Horezu (ceramics), Măldărești, Târgu Jiu (Constantin Brâncuși Sculptural Ansamble), Craiova, Strehaia Monastery
- 4. Muntenia Route** – Târgoviște, Curtea de Argeș, Poenari, Sinaia, Monasteries around Bucharest (Ghigiu, Țigănești, Pissiotă, Snagov), palaces around Bucharest (Mogoșoaia, Știrbey).

## ROUTES

- 5. Bucovina and Moldova Route** – Churches in Bucovina with mural paintings, UNESCO World Heritage (Voronet, Arbore, Humor, Moldovița, Sucevița, Pătrăuți, Suceava, Probota), Putna, Moldova Monasteries (Secu, Agapia, Neamț, Sihăstria, Văratec), Museums (Iași, Piatra Neamț, Fălticeni)
- 6. Dobrogea and Danube Delta Route** – Roman vestiges (the Adamclisi Monument), unique settlements in the Danube Delta (Sfântu Gheorghe), wild beaches (Corbu, Vama Veche), Constanța (The Roman Mozaic), Murfatlar wine cellar, Saint Apostle Andrew's Cave, the Romanian people baptizer (Ion Corvin), Dervent Monastery (the stone crosses emerging from the ground from which holy oil flows), The Genovese Citadel Enisala, the Greek Citadel of Histria, The Geto-Dacian settlement of Dinogetia - Garvăn.
- 7. Banat and Crișana Route** – Oradea, Arad, Timișoara, Radna Monastery, Hodoș-Bodrog Monastery, the wooden churches in Făget area.
- 8. Danube and Black Sea cruises** – Orșova (visit at Băile Herculane), Drobeta Turnu Severin (visit at the Apollodor of Damascus Bridge, The Roman Thermae, The Roman Amphitheater), Giurgiu (visit to Bucharest), Oltenița (visit to Bucharest), Tulcea (visit of the Danube Delta and the seashore), Constanța (visit of the Danube Delta and the seashore).





Traveler in Făgăraș Mountains

## Romania's Wildlife and Nature Parks

Imagine trees hundreds of years old, stretching over 40 meters high and one and a half meters thick, in an area where the ecosystem built over thousands of years has yet to be disturbed by the hands of man.

Now imagine what it would be like to watch wolves and bears in their natural habitat, or to take a stroll on one of Europe's greatest subterranean glaciers. Next, picture a gentle valley where gigantic dinosaurs sauntered lazily many millions of years ago.

You might think that, in order to see all this, you would have to travel all over the world, from the Amazonian rainforest to the Siberian wilderness, and then come back to Western Europe. Well, you may be surprised to know that you can see it all in a single country – Romania.

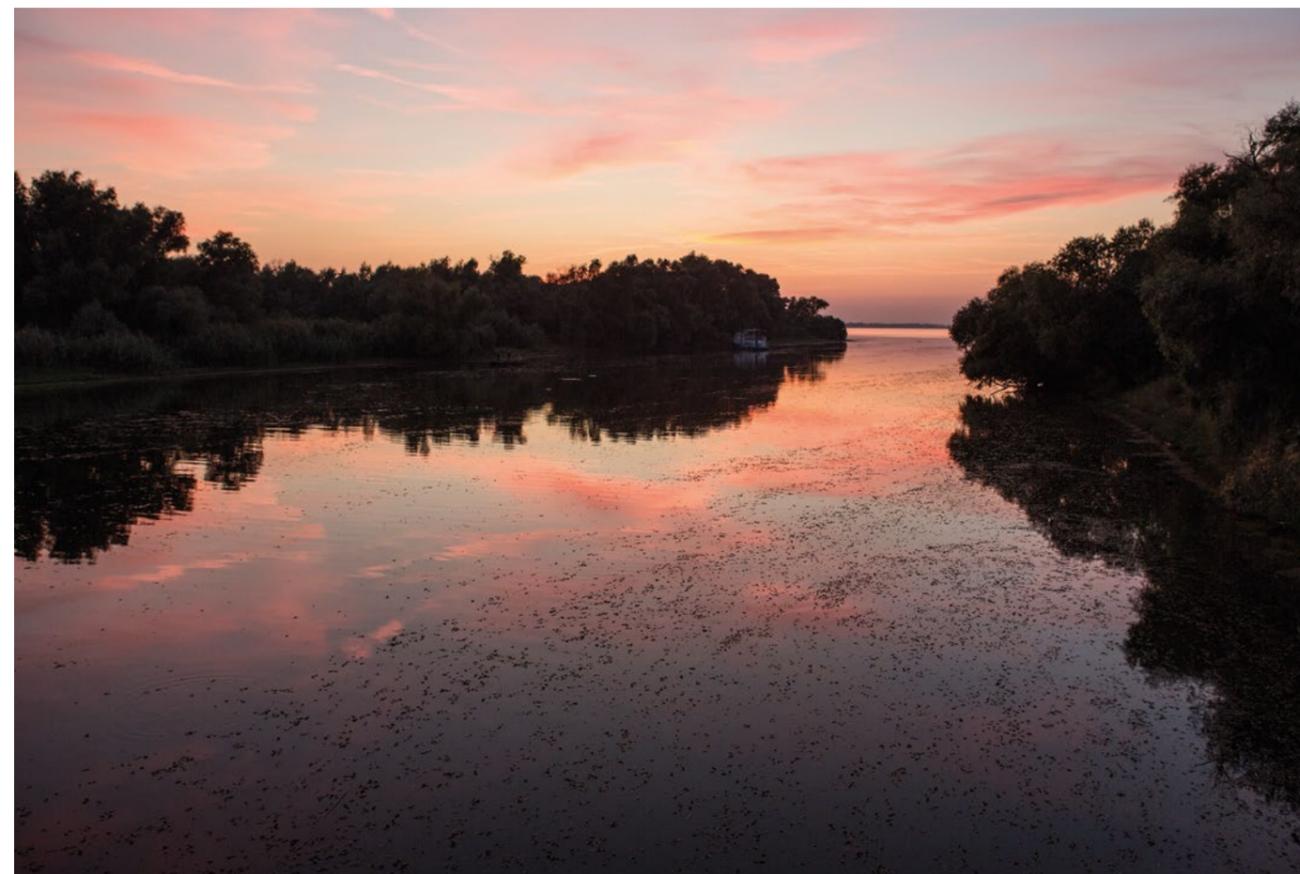
Blessed with a well-balanced terrain, including a 75 km-long strip of seaside overlooking the Black Sea, fields, hills and mountain areas in nearly equal proportions, as well as being one of Europe's most bio diverse areas, Romania will always surprise you with yet another face of nature in the wild.

The landscape is breathtaking, the air is clean, the waters are clear, and Romanians maintain a close relationship with a nature they respect.

That is why you can look forward to an authentic experience of discovering natural assets and, in the process, even yourself – returning home reborn.



The brown bear in the Romanian Carpathians



Fortuna lake at sunrise – Danube Delta, on the UNESCO world heritage list



## Unsurpassed Richness – The Virgin Forests

As the place of Europe's rebirth, the virgin forests of Romania are a real laboratory and a guide of the nature in its most untainted form. A real treasure, the 250,000 hectares of forest still untouched by human hand constitute the largest surface of its kind in Europe.

What is more, here you can find 65% of Europe's virgin and semi-virgin forests. Anything from saplings that have only recently grown branches reaching up toward the sun, to venerable century-old trees over 40 meters high (and that sometimes can reach over 1.5 meters in diameter) can be encountered here. Over 13,000 different species of plants and animals are part of the millennia-old ecosystem associated with the virgin forests, free from human influence.

Apart from these forests, it is useful to know that half of the forested surface of Romania is made up of natural and semi-natural forests. What could be a better excuse for you to come and explore them?

Be advised, however, that here you will also find the largest population of wolves, lynxes and bears in Europe, so get thoroughly informed on the trails that you wish to follow.

### Good to know

The Carpathians' eco-region boasts 322,000 hectares of virgin forests, the great majority of which (250,000 hectares) is in Romania.



Visit the mountains in autumn to enjoy the amazing colour palette



High-density lynx populations in the Romanian Carpathians



Chamois, the emblem of the Carpathians

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- 👤 • Take a forest ranger or a guide to accompany you on a brown bear-watching trip. The people who tend the forest have points of observation specially prepared for such activities.
- 🗺️ • **The virgin forests** rise on steep, difficult to access terrains, but they are worth the effort of getting to them. Still, you should only go accompanied by guides, because their ecosystem is delicate and, most importantly, has never been influenced by the presence of humans.
- 🚗 • Travel by car, and after that on foot.
- ☀️ • **Recommended season for a visit:** because they are located in places difficult to reach, it is recommended to go in summer, when the weather is hot and dry.

## The Apuseni Mountains Invite You to Turn into an Explorer

The Apuseni National Park, situated in the western part of the country, stands out through the sumptuousness of its karst landscape.

It is, for its largest part, without amenities, and for that reason it is best to go there equipped and accompanied by guides. There you will find plateaus, caves, sinkholes, and ravishingly beautiful intermittent springs, all with poetical evocative names: "The Lost World", "The Black Pothole", or "The Living Fire Glacier".

One also cannot bypass "The Cave of the Bad Valley", considered by specialists to be the largest speleo-mineral "museum" in Romania. The abundance of minerals in this cave situates it in the top ten caves of this kind in the world.

The Scărișoara glacier cave is the second largest underground glacier in Europe. The block of ice is over 3,500 years old, and inside the cave, icy stalagmites form every year.

### Good to know

In Urșilor (i.e. 'the Bears') Cave in the Apuseni Mountains, you may see the bones of the cave bears that took shelter here in ancient times.

## The Forested Charm of the Cheile Bicazului-Hășmaș National Park

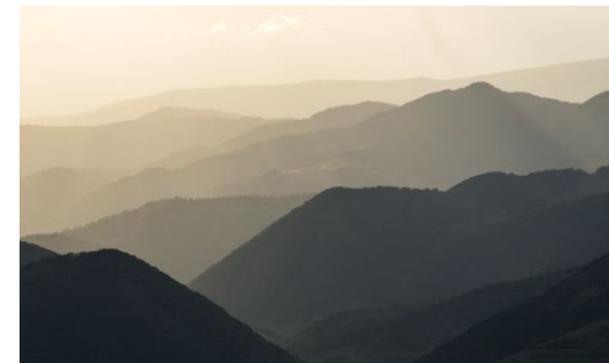
Situated in the central-northeastern area of the country, in the Eastern Carpathians, this park presents to its visitors the spectacular landscape of Cheile Bicazului (Bicaz Canyon), the mirror-like surface of the Red Lake dotted with protruding stumps of wood, and the beauty of the coniferous forests.

The huge difference in level (575 m in Bicaz Valley and 1792 m at the Hășmașul Mare Peak) makes for a rich biodiversity, which comprises 1147 species of higher-order plants. The Red Lake, formed by a natural disaster, also has its own unique beauty. After a series of rains and storms, one side of the mountain slid and blocked the flow of three mountain springs, and this is how this lake, with spruce fir stumps that jut out of the surface of the water, was formed.

The ruby reflections made by the sunset at the foot of the peak where the lake was formed, along with the red silt and reddish limestone that surrounds it, inspired the locals to give Red Lake its name.

### Good to know

The Cheile Bicazului-Hășmaș Park is located on the access road that connects Transylvania to Moldavia.



The Metaliferi Mountains – Apuseni

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- 👤 • Visit the **Living Fire Glacier**. One third of the size of the one in Scărișoara, this glacier is lit through an opening in the ceiling, which turns everything into a "shadow play".
- ⚙️ • The second glacier in terms of size from among Romania's glaciers is also in the Apuseni National Park and is called **Avenul Bortig**.
- 🚗 • **Means of transport:** best by car.
- ☀️ • **Recommended season for a visit:** any season is the right one for a visit in the Apuseni Mountains.



Bicaz Canyon – Hășmașul Mare

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- 👤 • Visit the 6 kilometers long canyon, lying between the Red Lake and the Transylvanian Bicaz. It is on the DN12C road.
- 🚗 • **Means of transport:** best by car.
- ☀️ • **Recommended season for a visit:** any season except winter, when the road is difficult to reach.



## High Ridges and Wild Nature in the Piatra Craiului Mountains

In the centre of the country, not very far from Braşov, towers a stunningly high peak called Piatra Craiului, part of the Southern Carpathian Mountains. This peak of over 2,200 meters high, together with its surrounding areas, forms one of the richest and most spectacular national parks in Romania.

Flowering plants are especially common. One can but fail to notice the rare endemic variety of carnation known as the Piatra Craiului Pink, as well as the 41 species of mountain orchids.

The wildlife, which is also characteristic to the Carpathians, showcases 35 endemic species. Here you will also be able to watch the elegant leaps taken by the Carpathian chamois and the tranquil existence of the large carnivores, such as the wolf and the bear.

### Good to know

21 different species of bats have been identified in the Piatra Craiului National Park. These mammals are protected throughout the country.

## Discover the Fascinating World of the Retezat Mountains

Possibly the most impressive national park, Retezat is situated in the central-western part of the country, and it's also in the Southern Carpathians. The glacier-carved landscape has a charm of its own.

Be prepared to encounter 80 lakes in this land, one of which is the largest glacial lake in Romania, Bucura Lake, as well as the deepest lake, Zănoaga Lake.

Twenty peaks over 2,000 meters high invite you to conquer them and relish in the beauty of the glacial landscape from above. There are also limestone cliff formations replete with caves.

We should add that you will find approximately one third of the Romanian flora here, as well as the Carpathian chamois, the red deer, the roe deer, wolves, lynxes, bears, butterflies and bats.

You will understand why a visit to Retezat is just the beginning of a love story between man and unspoiled nature.

### Good to know

The area between Tăul Negru and Dobrun Valley is closed to the public due to ongoing research being conducted in the area.



Piatra Craiului Mountains

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- 👁️ • Go bird watching, because here you have 111 different species to look for.
- 👤 • Visit **Curmătura chalet**.
- 🚗 • **Means of transport:** the only way to visit this park in its entirety is on foot.
- 🌈 • **Recommended season for a visit:** you can hike through the park at any time of the year, if you have the proper equipment.



Retezat Peak

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- 👁️ • If you get high up enough on the ridges, you will have the opportunity to see the oldest species of mammal in Romania, having lived on this land since the Quaternary Ice Age: **the Carpathian chamois**.
- 👤 • The mountain trails in the Retezat Mountains are all only for walking.
- 🌈 • **Recommended season for a visit:** the park can be visited throughout the year, if you have the proper equipment.

## The Danube Delta, or “Paradise Regained”

The best preserved European delta and the third largest wetland area in the world in terms of size, the Danube Delta biosphere reserve has been a UNESCO reserve since 1991. The Delta's biosphere enjoys one of the highest bio diversities in the world – over 5,500 plant and animal species – and is only outmatched by Australia's Coral Reef and Ecuador's Galapagos Islands.

Still, the delta's wildlife is even more varied than that: you can also spy wild cats, foxes, wolves, wild boars, wild horses and even deer in Letea Forest (which you can enter only accompanied by a guide). Letea spit, a sandy piece of land, is the home of the deciduous forest known under the same name, where some of the trees may be up to 400 years old.

### Good to know

In order to protect the natural richness of the Delta, only 8.7% of its surface can be visited.



Fortuna Lake – Danube Delta, on the UNESCO world heritage list



A boat ride – Danube Delta, on the UNESCO world heritage list

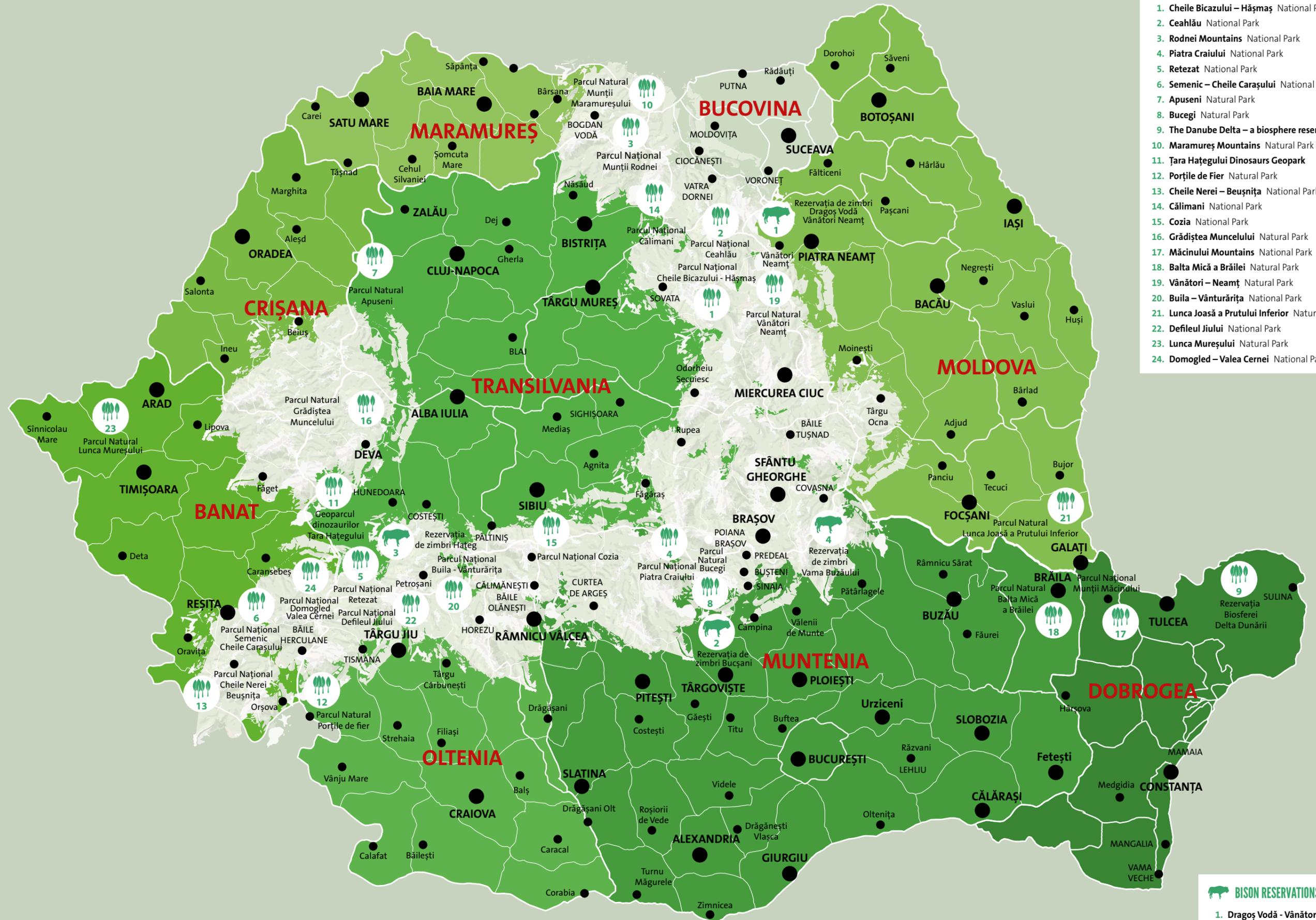


Pelicans in the Danube Delta, on the UNESCO world heritage list

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- 👁️ • **The Danube Delta** is the ideal place for bird watching, because species from as far as Africa migrate here in winter.
- 👤 • If the season allows it, go on a fishing trip. Fishermen start before sunset, but the atmosphere on the canals is worth this small sacrifice.
- 🚗 • **Murighiol** is the farthest place that can be reached by car. From here onwards, the ferry and the boats are the only means of transport.
- 🌈 • **Recommended season for a visit:** We'd suggest visiting the Delta in spring or in autumn, although the landscape has a particular charm that is worth experiencing in winter as well.

To try and count all of Romania's charming and authentic natural treasures would be an almost impossible venture. Of course, we must not leave out the strange megalithic structure of the Sphinx, looming next to the windswept stone figures of Babele (the “Old Women”) in the Bucegi Mountains (the Southern Carpathians), or the lunar landscape of the Mud Volcanoes in Buzău County. The wealth of flora and fauna of modern-day Romania is not a recent occurrence. You will become convinced of this if you head for the Haţeg Geopark, a territory that was a tropical island 70 million years ago, replete with giant ferns and dwarf dinosaurs.



- WILD NATURE AND NATURAL PARKS**
1. Cheile Bicazului – Hășmaș National Park
  2. Ceahlău National Park
  3. Rodnei Mountains National Park
  4. Piatra Craiului National Park
  5. Retezat National Park
  6. Semenic – Cheile Carașului National Park
  7. Apuseni Natural Park
  8. Bucegi National Park
  9. The Danube Delta – a biosphere reservation
  10. Maramureș Mountains Natural Park
  11. Țara Hațegului Dinosaurs Geopark
  12. Porțile de Fier Natural Park
  13. Cheile Nerei – Beușnița National Park
  14. Călimani National Park
  15. Cozia National Park
  16. Grădiștea Muncelului Natural Park
  17. Măcinului Mountains National Park
  18. Balta Mică a Brăilei Natural Park
  19. Vânători – Neamț National Park
  20. Buila – Vânturărița National Park
  21. Lunca Joasă a Prutului Inferior Natural Park
  22. Defileul Jiului National Park
  23. Lunca Mureșului Natural Park
  24. Domogled – Valea Cernei National Park

- BISON RESERVATIONS**
1. Dragoș Vodă - Vânători Neamț
  2. Bușani
  3. Hațeg
  4. Vama Buzăului



A stop at a well in a Transylvanian village

## Rediscover the taste of country life

Possibly the best starting place in your exploration of Romania is the countryside, situated far away from civilization and close to unspoiled nature. When you journey through Romanian lands, you will discover the warm and pleasant ways of village people and their readiness to welcome visitors.

The Romanian peasant's lifestyle seems unaffected by time. What is more, in the villages hidden in mountain valleys or on the high plateaus, time has a different, more settled flow.

Immerse yourself in the fascination of those places and their traditions and escape time as you know it. In Romanian villages, you will be included in rituals unchanged for hundreds of years. Detaching yourself from everyday life, you will relate to the eternity of simple values, and you will experience a true rebirth.

Because the Romanian peasant still has a very close relationship with the land, their lifestyle is still that of their grandparents and ancestors. Since their life is ruled by nature, it should come as no surprise that God still plays a crucial role. The values that rule their life are unchanged: the respect for the land, community and God, the memorialization of those departed, the faith in traditions and, as a result, in the future.

If you have the chance to arrive on a holiday, you can participate in rituals that have been the same for centuries and you can partake in an authentic and primordial culture, the like of which you could not dream of finding so close to you, inside Europe.



Traditions observed in Stâna de Vale - Bihor



Poienița Voinii – Hunedoara



## The Plentiful and Merry Christmas, the Heart of Romanian Traditions

If you would like a different kind of journey, one in which you follow the trail of past values and true human relationships, of the joy of community life and the rediscovery of the self, you are invited to the two great yearly holidays of the Romanians: Christmas and Eastern Orthodox Easter. Apart from the obvious religious dimension of these holidays, they are opportunities for the community to reassert itself; for the family to get together, for the individual to reestablish his or her place in the world, and, of course, also to get closer to divinity. For every Romanian holiday, the centrepiece of all activities is inevitably the meal, more exactly: the feast. Whoever sits down at the table is not only fed, but bonds with their people, with the community at large, and also with God. The hosts are proud of the abundance of their food and drink and are happy to entertain guests.

In the countryside, preparing the meal is often just as important and pleasurable as the meal itself. On Christmas, at the centre of these preparations is pork. Are you hesitant, thinking that a meal based on meat would be too hard to digest? Consider that all the food on the table is prepared using natural methods and with much loving care, so do not hesitate and sit down at the table when you are invited.

### Good to know

The Romanian custom of preserving meats by frying them at high temperatures and covering them completely with lard produces a dish reminiscent of the French Rillettes. Pork products are referred to by the same names across the country although the recipes may differ, depending on the specific location and interpretation of the host.)



Sleigh ride - Bihor



Countryside landscape



Discover winter holidays with their traditions – Bears Dance, Dărmănești

Do not hesitate to taste the șorici – the rind taken off the belly of the pig, well scrubbed and slightly cured, with a crunchy texture and a salty taste – the slănină – sheets of bacon preserved by smoking, boiling together with spices, or salting – homemade sausages, well dried and garlicky. Of course it wouldn't be a real celebration without tasting at least a bite of sarmale – rolls of well-spiced minced meat, wrapped in brined cabbage or in vine leaves. If you think that all the above can pack on too many calories, do not worry.

They commonly come accompanied by pickled vegetables – shiny vegetables with appetizing colors, preserved in vinegar or brine – and the țuica – a strong spirit distilled from fruit –, all homemade and specially chosen to serve as digestion aids. Also, keep in mind that when you sit at a Romanian peasant's table you can be sure that everything was grown or made in his household and that not only will you enjoy the dishes, but feel as if you belong to the family.

### Good to know

The Saxons, one of the ethnic groups that have relocated and have naturalized themselves on Romanian territory, used to have the custom of preserving the sheets of bacon belonging to each member of the community in one of the thick stone walled towers of the fortified churches. Being stored high above the ground, protected by the thick stone walls and aired by cold drafts, the bacon was kept fresh even in summer. The tower usually bore the unequivocal name of "Bacon Tower".



Traditional dishes



Romanian traditional dishes



## The Choir of Messengers from on High – The Carolers

Holiday and feasting preparations end on the eve of the holiday, at the time when the carols start. The custom commands that the youngest villagers, and in some parts also the oldest villagers should gather together in packs. The packs of carolers go from door to door to every homestead in the village singing old songs that announce the imminent Birth of Christ.

No household denies entrance to the carolers, because they are messengers from on high. It is believed that God himself enters the house and drinks a glass of wine through His delegates, the carolers. Another role of caroling is that of bringing fertility and good fortune to every household they visit.

In some areas, such as the Apuseni Mountains, on Christmas Eve children enact a full-fledged religious play. The custom, called “walking the Irod (Herod)”, has its characters recount the night of Jesus’ birth.

In Maramureș, the packs of carolers are accompanied by masked figures, people that personify evil spirits, death or other characters in the local legends and fairy tales.

Their masks are made of leather or canvas and are very beautifully decorated, having been made by specialized folk craftsmen. They serve the dual purpose of reminding people that life is transient and of casting away evil. Christmas feasting carries on into the New Year’s celebrations, in a continuous chain that ends on January 7<sup>th</sup>, on the feast of St. John.



Romanian folk theatre with masks, at the Peasant Museum – Bucharest

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- 👁️ • On a cold winter day, eat ham and onion together with a mulled țuică, in the well-appointed courtyard of a peasant.
- 👥 • Join a crowd of carolers and enjoy the merrymaking that welcomes you in every household.



Carolers in Maramureș

## Holidays do not end here...

The other great Romanian holiday is Easter – the Resurrection of the Lord. Just like on Christmas, everything revolves around the traditional meal where lamb dishes are served. Now is also the time when eggs – a symbol of fertility, of life and of balance – are dyed and decorated. The most traditional color is red, symbolizing the blood spilled on the Cross.

In Bucovina, Easter egg decoration has transformed into a genuine form of art. In certain areas of Transylvania, on the second day of Easter a meal is prepared and then brought directly down to the cemetery, to commemorate those who have departed.

### Good to know

When you tap an Easter egg against someone else’s, you make sure that you are going to see that person again “in the other world.”



Skillfully decorated eggs – Moldovița



Bucovina and its customs

Another important holiday in the life of the rural community is the feast of the patron saint of that particular village church. The whole community takes part in the food preparations, and after liturgy (mass) everybody participates in the feast.

Besides the religious feasts and feasts designated in the agricultural and pastoral calendar, the most important moments in the human life are cause for celebration. Birth, baptism, marriage and death are moments in which the entire community partakes and which take place according to rituals well established for hundreds of years. Depending on the region and the ancient customs of the community, Romanian weddings last from one to three days – days of feasting, merrymaking and music, when all villagers, neighbors, relatives, or mere travelers are called to share in the joy.

### Good to know

On Memorial Easter (in Romanian, the “Easter of the Blessed”), one week after the Orthodox Easter, children are given colored eggs that they play with in the grass, much like in a British game of Egg Hunting.



Decorated eggs at Neamț Monastery

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- 👁️ • If you celebrate Easter in Transylvania, take part in the ritual of **splashing girls with perfume**, a custom which the Romanians have borrowed from their Hungarian and German compatriots and which ends in dancing parties.
- 👥 • Go to the community-museum of **Ciocănești**, an open-air museum in the county of Suceava, to find out more about egg decorating.



## The Bread and *colaci*, The Heart of a Friendly Meal

Romanians have utter respect for grains, especially wheat, which is most definitely tied to Romania's traditional role as "Europe's granary". One does not only make ordinary bread from wheat, but also a series of foods that serve a ritual role.

The coliva – boiled wheat, mixed with nuts, sugar and lemon zest – is used to commemorate the dead. With flour one makes the *prescura*, a small loaf of bread which serves to make the Communion Host and the Eucharist Bread, which are both an essential part of the Orthodox liturgy (mass), especially on Easter.

The colaci are made also from flour. They're similar to pretzels, but with more "strands" of braided dough, which are presented to carolers on Christmas and at Easter, although they are not absent from other rituals, such as weddings. Their round shape symbolizes eternity, the wheel of life, but there are also colaci shaped like a horseshoe or like the letter eight – a symbol of infinity.

### Good to know

When they get hungry on the go and do not have time for a proper meal, Romanians love to eat pretzels – bread dough, modeled as a ring, salted and baked in the oven. They could also be your faithful companions on the road.

## Folk Art – Art with Soul, for your Soul

The rural community lives and enjoys itself through its crafts. Whether we speak of weaving, wickerwork or needlework, skills that beautify one's house and clothes, of carving wooden pails and other wooden objects or tools, or of the painting of glass icons, the people's faith and good humor is visible all throughout their work.

In old times, and still today in many places, all that was woven was produced in the household. The long cold winter nights were an opportunity to process the fleece from the sheep into threads and woven fabrics, by working it at the loom or with the sewing or knitting needle.

These pursuits have always taken place in a group and were an occasion for people to get together, enjoy and help one another. The folk costume told the story of the person who wore it, with the help of its cut and colors: his or her social status and wealth, age, occupation and area of origin.

The colors used were made of plants and varied from black, red and green to bright yellow. To this day, village households hold the tools needed for such pursuits: the grandparents' generation still uses them.



Baking bread at Ieud, in Maramures

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- 🍷 • Taste the **călăvia**, a typically Wallachian dish consisting of unleavened bread fresh out of the oven. Taste the wine too!
- 👁️ • Come see the **Romanian Peasant Museum**: Șoseaua Kiseleff, nr. 3, Bucharest.

### Good to know

In certain parts of the country, people still hold *șezători* (traditional group working sessions). If you want to take part in one, stop in Lăpuș country region. Remember that they are more likely to take place during the fasting time before Christmas.

The *Călușari*, a dance from Oltenia, performed especially on the day of Pentecost, and the *doina*, a very lyrical song that communicates complex nuances of sadness and longing, are the two non-material symbols that Romania has contributed to the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage.

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- 🏺 • From folk craftsmen in the **Horezu area** you could purchase enameled earthenware with beautiful decorations. They could make wonderful presents for loved ones
- 👁️ • Come see the **Astra Museum**: Calea Rășinari, nr. 14, Sibiu.

## The Mastery of "Made in Romania"

It is nice to remember that Romania shares the same latitude as France. Although it has its own unique climate, Romania shares with its francophone sibling the passion for good wines and cheeses. It would take a whole book just to list and explain them all!

Still, it is worth mentioning that the Transylvanian plateau is renowned for the best varieties of white wines, the Moldavian hills are known for the oldest and most time-honored vineyards, while specialists claim that, in a good year, the Chardonnay in Dobrogea turns out better than in its native France. Here are a few Romanian wines that will certainly delight your palate: Galbenă de Odobești, Fetească, Tămâioasă, Busuioacă, Crâmpoșie, Băbească, etc.

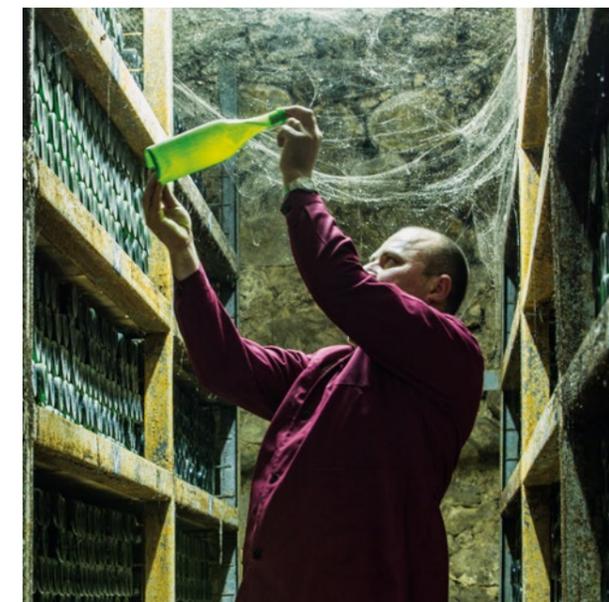
As the Romanian story is essentially a pastoral one, it is hardly surprising that the inhabitants of these lands are good at making cow, buffalo and goat cheeses. Regardless if it is the soft *caș* dripping with whey, or the matured "telemea" made of sheep milk in areas around Sibiu, the smoked "cașcaval" from the Iezer Mountains, or the pungent "brânză de burduf" cheese – please, just have a taste and enjoy.

Whether it is the cheese in fir-tree bark "baskets" that comes from Câmpulung Moldovenesc, the "năsal", matured in the cave of Țaga village, near Cluj, or the readily-available cow cheese that every woman makes from the milk that has "taken curd", do not refuse any kind of cheese presented to you, because it carries in it some of the essence of these people's lives.

If during your travels you simply do not get to take a break in a village, you should buy any of the above-mentioned assortments of wine and cheese from any traditional store, and have a taste of genuine Romania. You will feel that to have been born here would have been a good thing.



Give authentic Romania a try – Vâlcea



Beciul Domnesc – Odobești, Vrancea



Wineyard in Odobești

### Good to know

Between the Dacians and the inhabitants of the Greek settlements on the Black Sea coast, there is evidence of commercial exchanges that used wine as currency. As yet another bit of proof of the importance of wine, the emblem of the city of Tomis contains a bunch of grapes.

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- 🍷 • Stop at a sheepfold and let the shepherds feed you with their cheese and *cașcaval*. This is something you're not going to regret!
- 🍷 • The Festival of Cheeses and Salty Meats takes place in September in Bran, in the county of Brașov.

## THE CHARM OF COUNTRY LIFE

### ETHNOGRAPHIC OPEN-AIR MUSEUMS

1. "Dimitrie Gusti" National Village Museum, Romanian Peasant Museum (Bucharest)
2. Astra National Museal Complex (Sibiu)
3. Popular Art and Ethnography Museum (Tulcea)
4. "Haszmann Pal" Museum (Cernatul de Sus)
5. Popular Architecture Museum (Curtișoara, Gorj)
6. Bran Museum (Brașov)
7. Ethnography and Popular Art Museum (Baia Mare)
8. Ethnography Museum (Reghin)
9. Ethnography Museum of Transylvania, "Romulus Vuia" Ethnographic Park (Cluj-Napoca)
10. The Maramureș Museum (Sighetul Marmăției)
11. "Pădurea Verde" Banat Village Museum (Timișoara)
12. Bucovina Village Museum (Suceava)
13. Vâlcea Village Museum (Bujoreni)
14. The Seckler Museum of Ciuc (Miercurea Ciuc)
15. Viticulture and Tree Growing Museum (Golești)
16. Vrancea Architectural Reserve (Focșani)

### SPECIAL PLACES TO VISIT

17. The Merry Cemetery of Săpânța
18. The Danube Delta

### ROMANIAN VINEYARDS

## THE CHARM OF COUNTRY LIFE

### FAIRS AND FESTIVALS

19. Brașov, Piața Sfatului – The Romanian Village Day, Christmas Fair; Bran, Brașov – The Food Festival "Where are you heading, lamb?"; Sheep Day – The Cheese and Pastrami Festival; Moeciu, Brașov – Summer Fair
20. Negrești, Oaș – The Palina Festival
21. Luncăvița, Tulcea – The Linden Tree Festival
22. Râșinari, județul Sibiu – The Cheese and "Țuică" Festival; Astra Sibiu Complex – The Popular Romanian Creators Fair
23. Mânzălești, Buzău – Slănic Festival
24. Polovragi, Gorj – Nedee from Polovragi, a 500 years old fair
25. Bazinul Dornelor/ Șarul Dornei – The Snow Rose Festival, The Berries Festival
26. Ampoița, Alba – The Harvest Festival
27. Oituz, Bacău – The Pie Festival
28. Ciocănești, Suceava – The Trout Festival
29. Mamaia – The National Fair for the Romanian Artisans
30. Vorona, Botoșani – The Forrest Celebrations
31. Praid, Harghita – The "Sarmale" Festival
32. Vama, Suceava – The Morel Festival

## FARMECUL VIETȚII RURALE

### TRADITIONAL CRAFTS & ARTS

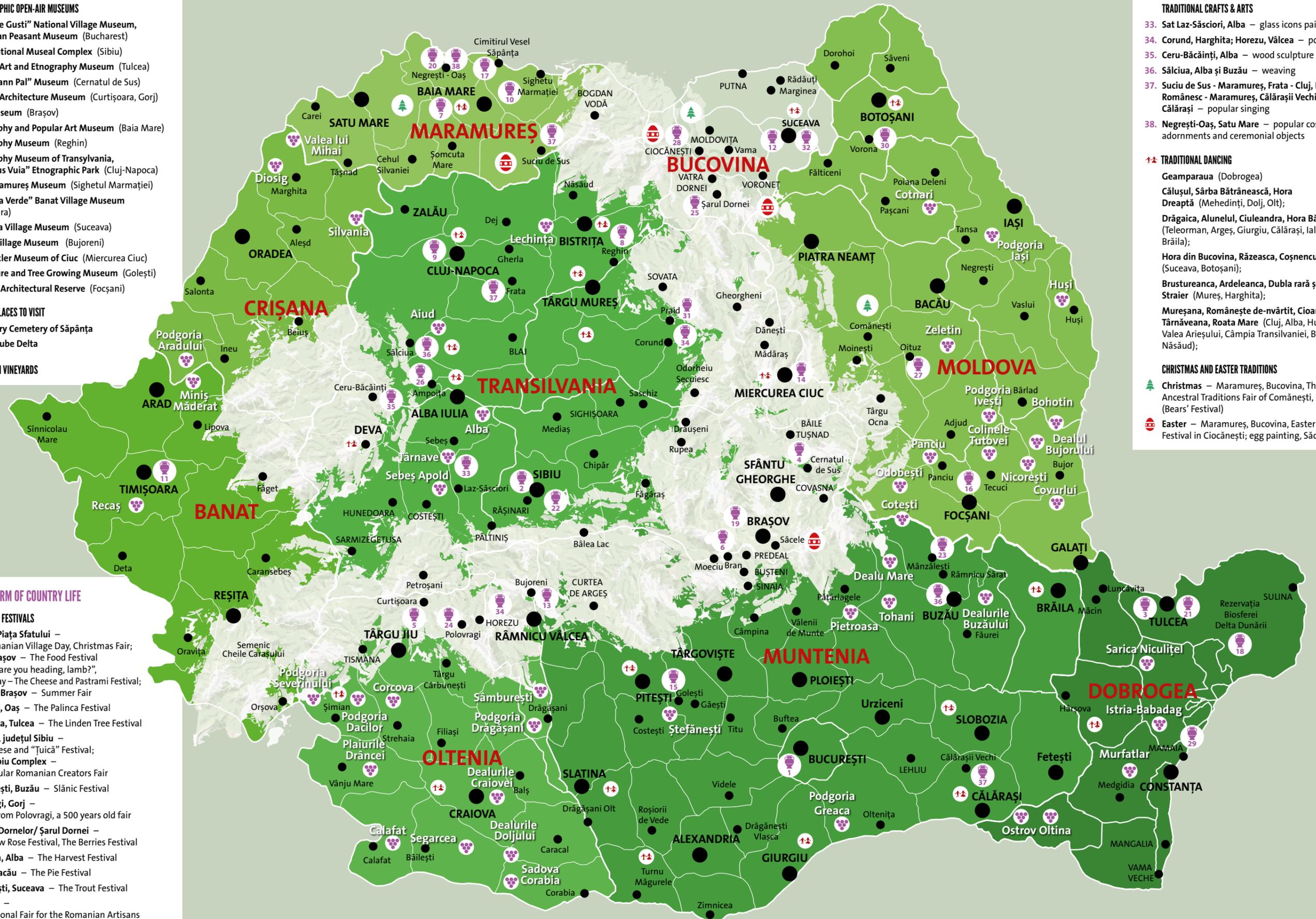
33. Sat Laz-Săsciori, Alba – glass icons painting
34. Corund, Harghita; Horezu, Vâlcea – pottery
35. Ceru-Băcăinți, Alba – wood sculpture
36. Sălcia, Alba și Buzău – weaving
37. Suci de Sus - Maramureș, Frata - Cluj, Lăpușul Românesc - Maramureș, Călărașii Vechi - Călărași – popular singing
38. Negrești-Oaș, Satu Mare – popular costumes, adornments and ceremonial objects

### TRADITIONAL DANCING

- Geamparaua (Dobrogea)  
 Călușul, Sârba Bătrânească, Hora Dreaptă (Mehedinți, Dolj, Olt);  
 Drăgaica, Alunelul, Ciuleandra, Hora Bătuță (Teleorman, Argeș, Giurgiu, Călărași, Ialomița, Brăila);  
 Hora din Bucovina, Răzeasca, Coșnencuța (Suceava, Botoșani);  
 Brustureanca, Ardeleanca, Dubla rară și deasă, Straier (Mureș, Harghita);  
 Mureșana, Românește de-nvârit, Cioarsa, Târnaveana, Roata Mare (Cluj, Alba, Hunedoara, Valea Arieșului, Câmpia Transilvaniei, Bistrița Năsăud);

### CHRISTMAS AND EASTER TRADITIONS

- Christmas – Maramureș, Bucovina, The Christmas Ancestral Traditions Fair of Comănești, Bacău (Bears' Festival)  
 Easter – Maramureș, Bucovina, Easter Eggs Festival in Ciocănești; egg painting, Săcele-Brașov.





Băile Felix balneary resort

## Romania's Springs of Good Health

For a country where people's relationship with nature is as close as their relationship with divinity, where the rhythm of life is driven by the religious and agrarian calendars, while beauty descends into the home and heart straight from the varied and utterly spectacular natural surroundings, it will not come as a surprise that people's health also comes from not too far away. What could be surprising, though, is that one third of Europe's mineral and thermal waters are in Romania. What seems to be the gift of a divine power has actually a simpler and more down-to-earth explanation – the geological structure of the mountains that dominate central Romania has made this concentration of healing waters possible.

Romania boasts 70 spa resorts – some even built by the Romans – where the most diverse ailments can be cured. Do not think, however, that only waters are used for healing purposes. Such is the ozone-charged air of the high altitude forest of fir trees, as well as the salty atmosphere, saturated with beneficial particles, of the salt mines found throughout the country. Such resorts are to be found in any geographical area and in every landscape from the mountains to the plains.

People find solace from a variety of afflictions through the healing properties of the waters, air, and beneficial environment, as well as at the hands of the highly trained personnel in the Romanian spa resorts. Some of the best known resorts are presented as follows.



Slănic Moldova balneary resort



Turda salt mine



## Băile Herculane, the therapeutic jewel of Cerna Valley

In the southwestern part of the country, in Cerna Valley, against the wild backdrop of the Domogled Canyon, equally close to the Danube and to the Apuseni Mountains, lies the resort built by the Roman legions at the beginning of our era and Christened in the name of the legendary hero Hercules. They say that Hercules himself took a bath in the healing waters of this place.

Situated in an inner mountain depression, at an elevation of 168 meters and having the typical depression climate with sub-Mediterranean influences, the resort reaps the benefits of its waters that naturally contain sulfur, chlorine, sodium and calcium, as well as trace minerals. The springs are either hot or cold and therapies take place both indoors and in open pools, where you can enjoy the air charged with negative ions.

Most of the buildings that form the old centre of the resort were built during the times of the Habsburg (later Austro-Hungarian), authorities that once ruled these territories, so do not be surprised when you find yourself in the presence of the Austrian baroque, lining the quiet flow of the river Cerna. In the imperial hotels and at the elegant casino the late 18<sup>th</sup>-century Central European elite used to meet. Even Emperor Franz Joseph and his beautiful wife Elisabeth, also known as Princess Sissi, paid a visit here. Apparently, in her diaries, Sissi showed her special appreciation for this resort and its surrounding places. Băile Herculane was at the time an undisputed competitor of famous European resorts such as Baden-Baden or Karlovy-Vary. After a period of time when they lost a certain degree of popularity with tourists, the patrimonial buildings are undergoing rehabilitation and the former charm of the resort is coming back.



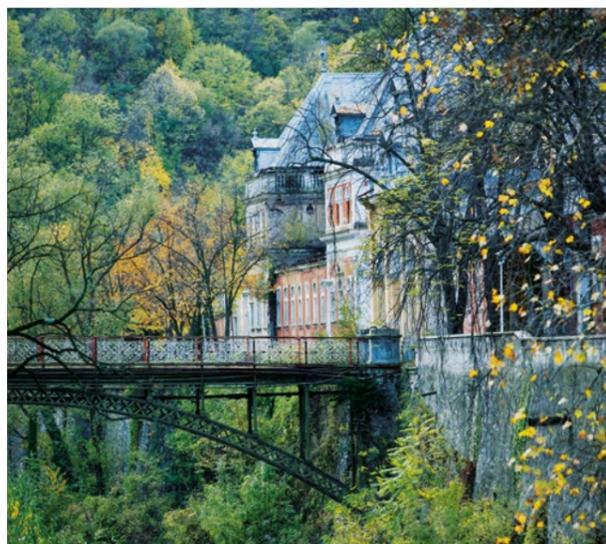
Cerna Valley

### Good to know

They say that Hercules the demigod tarried in Băile Herculane just to take a bath. His bronze statue is found in the historical centre of the resort that bears his name.



The statue of Hercules – Herculane



Băile Herculane

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- Take a walk in the evening, to listen to the rustles of the river Cerna and enjoy the fresh air.
- The resort can be accessed by train or by car.
- The resort is great in any season.

## Băile Felix – Thermal Springs and a Gentle Climate

Another famous resort to the west of the country, at a distance of only 8 kilometers from the city of Oradea, Băile Felix (Felix Baths) is the largest of its type in the country. The resort can accommodate up to 7,000 guests. Its main asset consists in the mineral waters that have a high concentration of trace elements and come out at temperatures between 20 and 49 degrees Celsius; in addition, it has sapropelic mud and clean air. In Băile Felix there is solace to be found for those suffering from rheumatism, as well as from neurological or gynecological disorders. Its treatment centre also provides modern installations for various therapies: electrotherapy, hydrotherapy, aerosols, massages and paraffin wrappings.

People have known about the water's healing properties since the 10<sup>th</sup> century, when they were first discovered by the priest of the neighboring parish. It wasn't until around 1700, however, that the first major amenities began to be built around the thermal waters, and the place became known as "Felix's Bath". In 1885, a spring with a temperature of 49 °C was discovered, and the resort gathered momentum.

In its immediate vicinity lies the Băile 1 Mai resort, equally renowned and enjoying the same beneficial thermal waters. In Băile 1 Mai you will find the oldest wave pool in the country, which has been in operation for over 100 years, while in Băile Felix passionate swimmers can enjoy the hot water throughout the year, irrespective of the weather, in an exterior pool permanently fed with thermal water, the Apollo pool.

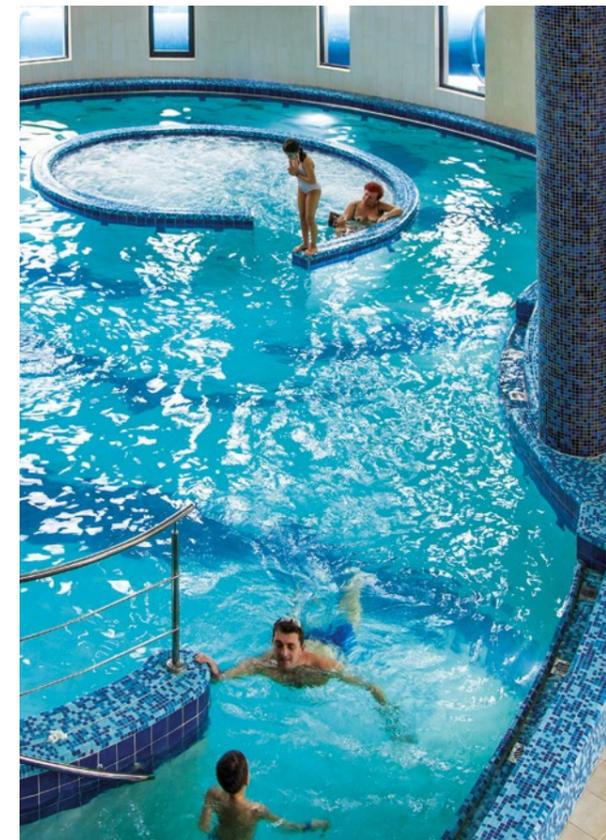
Thanks to its climate with gentle winters and moderately hot summers, subtropical water lilies are able to grow here, the most special of which is *Nymphaea Lotus Thermalis*, a variety unique in Europe and a vestige of the tertiary age. Here you also have the opportunity to admire turtles and exotic fish.

### Good to know

In the centre of the resort you can admire a church made of durmast oak in 1785. It was moved here from the village of Brusturi, after a short stop in Oradea.



Beauty and relaxation treatments



Indoor pool at Băile Felix



Felix Nymphaea Lotus Thermalis – unique variety in Europe

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- Take a bath in the **Apollo pool**, even if outside temperatures are below zero. The steam coming off the thermal water prevents you from feeling the cold.
- You can take the plane to Oradea; the 8 kilometers to **Băile Felix** can be travelled by bus or by car.
- You can visit the resort in any season.



## Wild landscapes and healing waters meet in **Tușnad**

In the well-lit opening of the Ciuc depression, not far from the curvature of the Carpathians, surrounded by a thick curtain of century-old fir trees and with an elegant lake in its centre, the Tușnad resort has a soothing effect even when you first lay your eyes upon it. On the sunlit slopes rise elegant hotels, the mountains seem to hug the resort, and the blue sky is mirrored in the waters of the lake. Here you can enjoy clean air, charged with aerosols and negative ions, which has a tonic, relaxing effect on the psyche, as well as the carbonated, chlorinated, mofette and bicarbonate-rich mineral waters. The resort is recommended to those who suffer from cardiovascular diseases, arterial hypertension, circulatory problems as well as nervous, digestive or endocrine complaints. As Tușnad is located in one of the most picturesque regions of the country, it has the advantage of wonderful scenery and the proximity to a number of outstanding tourist sites, which are but a short distance away.

From here you can visit the volcanic lake of St Ana, the natural reserve of Tinovul Mohoș (Moss Lake) with its peat bog, the baroque Franciscan church of Șumuleu, housing one of the rarest organ installations in Transylvania.

### Good to know

The area has excellent cuisine so don't hesitate to taste the cumin soup or the local *paprikas*.



Lake Sfânta Ana, the only volcanic lake in Romania

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- 👤 • Visit **Balványos Baths**, which are in the vicinity, for the wild landscape and clean air.
- 🚗 • **Tușnad** is close to Brașov, so we recommend getting there by car.
- ☀️ • No matter what season it is, the resort in the Ciuc depression has some assets to show you.

## Sovata – Two Millennia of History in Salt

Not far from the centre of the country, also in Transylvania and also in a depression, Sovata resort lies on the river Târnava Mică and opens to the view both the gentle slopes of the Transylvanian Plateau and the wild peaks of the Eastern Carpathians. The resort is located in an area that has been a mining site since as early as Roman times. It is not surprising that the area is rich in salt deposits, springs and salt lakes - an asset which also has therapeutic effects. The most representative lake in the area is Lake Ursu, a symbol of the resort and a natural reserve, this is the place where heliotherapy can be observed. The salt concentration of this lake's waters decreases from the surface to the bottom and with it the water temperature rises. The other lakes around have, apart from the salt water, healing, sapropelic or silica clay types of mud.

The resort's climate with its chilly summers and gentle winters has a calming effect on the nervous system, whereas the clean air, enriched by the deciduous forests around, contribute to its healing effect. The resort is recognized for its benefits in the treatment of gynecological, rheumatic, degenerative, cardiovascular, and endocrine diseases. The waters from these lakes and springs, along with their mud, are used in the treatment centres in the area, most of which belonging to the great hotels built here.

Only 6 kilometers away from Sovata is the Praid salt mine, another location where has been extracted ever since Roman times. Thanks to the constant low temperature, the clean and humid air, rich in negative ions and in carbon dioxide, but also sterile due to the low pH, the salt mine is recommended for pulmonary diseases. Even those who suffer from allergies feel better in this naturally controlled environment.

### Good to know

Apart from getting treated, tourists can go hiking in the mountains around, or simply admire the sun setting behind the Salt Mountain, even from the shore of Lake Ursu.

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- 👁️ • Watch the sunset from the terraces on the edge of Lake Ursu.
- ✈️ • You can get close to the resort by plane: the town of Târgu Mureș, only 60 kilometers away, has an airport. You can then get here using any other means of transport.
- ☀️ • The resort is charming in any season.

## Vatra Dornei – Skiing and Exercise

In the northeastern part of the country, in the region of Bucovina, lies one of the best-known spas, health and ski resorts in the country: Vatra Dornei. The ski slopes, all in great shape, and the thick fir tree forests attract tourists from all over the world. The mineral springs descending from the picturesque mountains which guard the resort have also contributed to its fame. Both the tonic bio climate and the beauty of the mountain trails that invite one to start hiking make Vatra Dornei a resort which is equally as beneficial to the suffering as to the healthy. The first to feel the effect of the air and the spectacular scenery are people with frail nerves, or who are suffering from nervous exhaustion. The mineral springs with carbonated waters as well as the thermal springs with bicarbonate waters, rich in calcium and magnesium, are another fountain of good health. Baths are recommended, as well as internal cures. The natural salt mofettes (which also have a high concentration of carbon dioxide) along with the peat mud, are other natural therapeutic resources available in Vatra Dornei. Thus, the resort treats diseases of the cardiovascular system; anything from hypertension to heart attacks, bone system disorders: spondyloses, arthroses, inflammatory rheumatism as well as post-traumatic disorders.

### Good to know

The resort is not far from Suceava, the town which was the capital of the historical region of Moldavia in the medieval period.

## Health in a Stunningly Scenic Salt Mine in **Turda**

In the very centre of Transylvania, in a charming small provincial town, Turda, you will discover the most recently renovated salt mine in the country.

Apparently salt was being extracted from here as far back as 1,000 years ago, and the resulting galleries and "bell pits" are now used by the tourists visiting the salt mine to relax and enjoy. There are contemporary elevators and multiple leisure activities, including mini-golf courses, pavilions for resting and reading, and a subterranean lake where you can go boating.

The most impressive element is, however, the lighting system. Long neon tubes light and decorate the walls, creating a scene that could very convincingly belong to a SciFi film. A walk through the cold air, rich in salt aerosols, virtually devoid of allergens, treat and prevent ear and respiratory diseases, as well as allergic complaints.

### Good to know

In the immediate vicinity of the salt mine there is a pool with salt water, perfect for the hot season. In summer, however, if you care about your health, please observe appropriate beach hours, as there is not much shade around the pool.

Even those who suffer from respiratory diseases – from bronchitis to bronchial asthma – from digestive or gynecological complaints – can find in Vatra Dornei an environment that takes the edge off their symptoms.



Vatra Dornei – the perfect destination for ski lovers

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

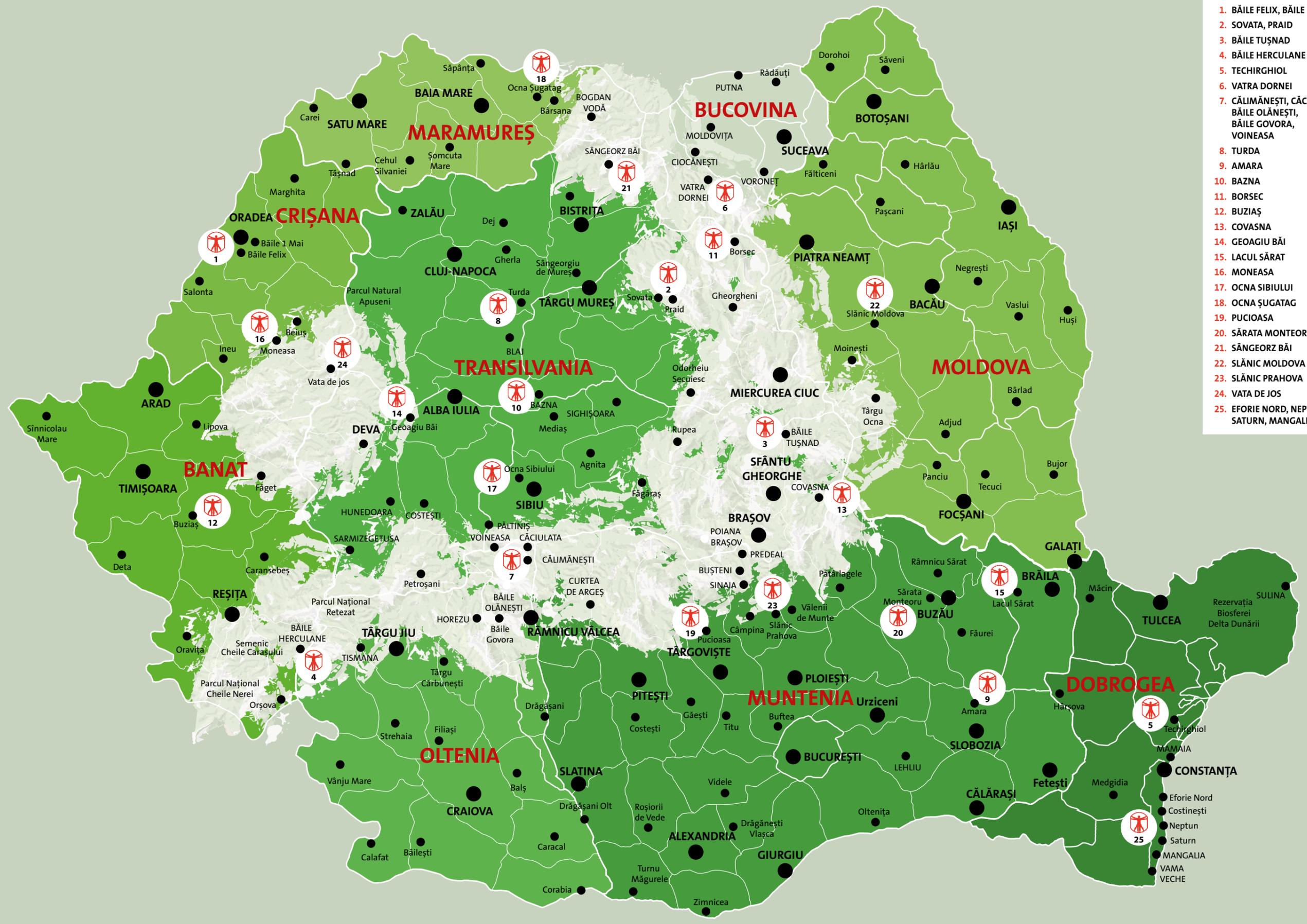
- 👤 • If you come here in winter, you should take a horse-drawn sleigh and roam in it through the forested snow-covered land.
- ✈️ • You can take a plane to Suceava; after that, there are slightly more than 100 kilometers to cover. From Suceava you can reach the resort by train, bus or car.
- ☀️ • You can visit **Vatra Dornei** in any season, because the resort will charm you, regardless of the weather or the season.



The unique décor at Turda salt mine

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- 👤 • If you get there in summer take a swim in the Durgău salt water pool. Be careful, however, because air temperatures can rise above 35 degrees after lunchtime, and the evening sun can cause serious burns.
- ✈️ • You can reach **Turda**, too, by plane; it will drop you off a short distance away, in Cluj, where the fastest way to reach the salt mine is by car.
- ☀️ • As the temperature is constant inside the salt mine, any season is a good season to pay a visit.



- HEALTH AND WELLNESS**
1. BĂILE FELIX, BĂILE 1 MAI
  2. SOVATA, PRAID
  3. BĂILE TUȘNAD
  4. BĂILE HERCULANE
  5. TECHIRGHIOI
  6. VATRA DORNEI
  7. CĂLIMĂNEȘTI, CĂCIULATA, BĂILE OLĂNEȘTI, BĂILE GOVORA, VOINEASA
  8. TURDA
  9. AMARA
  10. BAZNA
  11. BORSEC
  12. BUZIAȘ
  13. COVASNA
  14. GEOAGIU BĂI
  15. LACUL SĂRAT
  16. MONEASA
  17. OCNA SIBIULUI
  18. OCNA ȘUGATAG
  19. PUCIOASA
  20. SĂRATA MONTEORU
  21. SÂNGEORZ BĂI
  22. SLĂNIC MOLDOVA
  23. SLĂNIC PRAHOVA
  24. VATA DE JOS
  25. EFORIE NORD, NEPTUN SATURN, MANGALIA



Street in Sighișoara

## The Cultural Scene in the Greater Romanian Cities

Aside from the fascinating landscape, varied terrain and deep-rooted traditions, one of the sources of a country's appeal is its own particular blend of past and present that it achieves in its towns.

Romania's urban communities, many of which have a history that is a millennia old, have chosen to create an authentic future based on their ancestral heritage rather than to develop at an accelerated pace.

Do not be surprised, therefore, that even in the cities where life is strongly anchored in the present you will discover vestiges of past times, either as remnants of an ancient fortress or in the shape of a homestead built many generations ago.

Because Romanian lands abound in riches of all kinds, other peoples have often desired them. The signs of their passing are felt throughout the country. Whereas the cities on the shores of the Black Sea have a strong Greek mark on them, in the extreme north the influence of the neighboring Hungarians is still felt, and the architecture and sober way of looking at life that is typical to the western central part Romania still make you think of the German heritage.

Stroll gently down the streets of the historical centres and create indelible memories from the unique blend of old and new you see.



Downtown Sibiu



The Romanian Athenaeum – Bucharest



## Bucharest and the Bohemian Flavour of Paris

From the Byzantine spirit of the churches, to Little Paris's bohemian life between the two wars, to the trails of the former communist regime (1945-1989) and today's modern architecture, the capital of Romania has learned to make good use of all the trials and tribulations that history has subjected it to, turning into a vibrant city that always has yet another side to show.

Possibly the strongest architectural influence that you are likely to find here is the French one. You will find Belle Époque charms that have descended from the interwar period along Calea Victoriei (Victory Road), a great thoroughfare dedicated to the residents' love affair with the French capital.

Look for the Cantacuzino Palace, known today as George Enescu Museum, built in the French baroque style, the Romanian Atheneum and the CEC Palace, displaying a French-influenced eclectic style.

Calea Victoriei will lead you eventually to the place where two worlds look at each other from a distance. Only a few hundred metres separate the Palace of the Parliament – an edifice which has made it into Guinness World Records on three accounts: as the largest, the most expensive and also the heaviest administrative building in the world – from the city's Old Centre.

### Good to know

They say that Bucharest was founded by a shepherd called Bucur, who bewitched people with songs from his pan flute. What's more, Bucur's wine pleased the locals to such a degree that they named the new town after him.

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- Drink a frothy beer in one of the breweries in the Old Centre or on one of its lively terraces, because that's the right way to experience some of the charm of Little Paris.
- The address of **George Enescu Philharmonic**: Str. Benjamin Franklin nr. 1-3, sector 1.
- **Recommended means of transport**: by plane (Henri Coandă Airport).
- **Recommended season for a visit**: in summer, when the city pulses with open-air concerts and parties.



Palace of Parliament – Bucharest



Downtown Bucharest – Universităţii Square

In Bucharest's Old Centre you will find a realm of paradoxes populated by bars and clubs where life flows tumultuously, by enticing restaurants and cafes, and, everywhere, by a cosmopolitan crowd eager for entertainment.

Take a walk outside the city, only 15 km away from its centre, and visit the Palace of Mogoşoaia, built over 300 years ago to serve as residence for King Constantin Brâncoveanu. Admire the palace gardens and the Sf. Gheorghe Church, an architectural jewel built in 1688.

Just a few days are certainly not enough to take in the true spirit of Bucharest. The city will, however, leave lasting memories behind, and your voyage here will doubtlessly be the first in a long series of revelations.



Victoriei Boulevard – Bucharest



Terraces in the Old Centre – Bucharest



## Iași – The City on Seven Hills

The capital city of Moldavia spreads on seven hills, which has prompted the comparison to the Eternal City of Rome. Still, the warm golden glow that rises over the castles built by the aristocratic families of olden times, the Italian Renaissance style of some of its patrimonial buildings, and the green hills surrounding the town have caused it to be associated with Florence as well. Get ready to discover a rich cultural life, impressive buildings, and parks through which you can wander with great enjoyment.

The Palace of Culture is one of the main hubs of cultural activity in Iași and boasts an impressive neo-Gothic flamboyant style. If you ever make it to Iași, take a break at the Church of the Three Hierarchs. Its exterior is covered in lacework-like stone carvings-like with intricately-sculpted patterns, spread on 30 friezes.

Copou Park is a magnet for everyone who loves nature and romanticism, and it hosts the huge lime tree associated with the national poet of the Romanians, Mihai Eminescu. The Botanical Gardens spread over 100 hectares and are home to over 10,000 de species of plants.

### Good to know

Comparisons between Iași and Italy can also be seen in the railway station – it is a full-fledged palace, a replica of the Doge's Palace in Venice.

## Constanța – The Greek Colony on the Black Sea

If you find yourself in the largest city in the south-eastern part of the country, you will find that you are not only immersed in the restless waters of the Black Sea, but also in 2,500 years of history, as the port-city is located on the site of the old Greek colony of Tomis. A blend of a millennia-old history, oriental charm and a variety of cultures, the port-city wins you over with its architecture, its bright sunshine and lust for life. Allow yourself to fall under the spell of the Roman mosaic-floored Ediface found here, an attraction that the port has exhibited since its creation 2,000 years ago. The Art Nouveau building of the Casino, built between the two world wars, is the city's sumptuous symbol, while the promenade that lies before it grants you a romantic panorama over the sea. A dazzling representation of the city's beauty, Casa cu Lei, joins the Genovese architectural style and the pre-romantic style, and epitomizes what it stands for in the four pillars decorated with lion sculptures.

### Good to know

Legend has it that Jason's Argonauts landed in Tomis (Constanța) after they found the Golden Fleece.



The National Theatre – Iași

### PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- 🚶 • Take the tram over the hills of the “sweet town” to feel why Iași has been likened to Rome.
- 📍 • The address of the **Botanical Gardens**: Strada Dumbrava Roșie nr. 7-9.
- 🚗 • **Recommended means of transportation**: go by train or by car, to be able to admire the charming nature through the window.
- 🌞 • **The recommended time of year**: May and June, when the city is fragrant with the smell of the blooming linden trees.



Constanța – the promenade and the Casino

### PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- 🚶 • Pay a visit to the Maritime Museum in Constanța to have a look at the history of the Romanian naval fighters.
- 👁️ • **The Aquarium's** address: Bd. Elisabeta nr. 1 (on the Casino's embankment promenade).
- 🚗 • **Means of transport**: by car from Bucharest (on the Sun Motorway – the trip takes approximately 3 hours).
- 🌞 • **Recommended season for a visit**: in summer, when the sun invites you to the beach.

## Sibiu – The Idyllic Town of the Knights of Old

Sibiu, the European cultural capital of 2007, lies in the heart of the country. The city carefully showcases its assets and takes pride in its warm-hearted inhabitants and intense cultural life.

Made up of a medley of Germanic 17<sup>th</sup>-century buildings, joined by winding cobblestoned alleys, the city grants you the pleasure of discovering architectural treasures that transport you back in time.

One of them, the splendid Bruckenthal Palace, was built between 1778 and 1785 in the late baroque style by Baron Samuel von Bruckenthal. The palace has been converted into a museum, and today it hosts the baron's art collection.

The awe-inspiring Evangelical Cathedral is also not to be missed. The gothic house of worship was built in 1520 on the ruins of a former Roman basilica and hypnotises its visitors with a huge fresco that covers the entire northern wall.

The Bridge of Lies, the first cast iron bridge on the territory of today's Romania, was built in 1859. Legend says that the bridge has ears and any lie that it hears will make it fall down. Not far away lays the Goldsmiths' Market, surrounded by houses that seem to descend directly from the medieval times.

### Good to know

Sibiu is featured in the novel “Der Vorleser” (The Reader), written by the German Bernhard Schlink, whose screen version won an Oscar award.



The Little Square – Sibiu



Visit the Little Square – Sibiu



The Bridge of Lies – Sibiu



Metropolitan Cathedral – Sibiu

### PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- 🚶 • Take a stroll down Nicolae Bălcescu Street and taste the specialities of the restaurants here.
- 👁️ • The address of the **Gong Puppet Theatre**: Strada Alexandru Odobescu nr. 4.
- ✈️ • **Means of transport**: by plane (Sibiu International Airport).
- 🌞 • **The recommended time of year**: December, when Sibiu's festive charm resembles that of Vienna.



## Medieval Sighișoara – A Real Life Land of Fairytales

Sighișoara is home to the only European medieval castle that continues to be inhabited, which has earned it a place on UNESCO's World Heritage List thanks to its perfect state of preservation. The Clock Tower is definitely the central point of the city. Visit it and climb to the top to see Sighișoara from above and watch the figures that pass before the face of the clock, whose mechanism has been in continuous use since the Middle Ages.

At the foot of the tower, take a stop in one of the cafes in City Square, then climb the 175 steps of the Hooded Staircase to the Church on the Hill, a gothic landmark and Sighișoara's most valuable monument.

Seeing the cobblestoned alleyways and the 16th-century representative buildings, you must not think that the medieval atmosphere keeps the city from being well organized for its guests. There is a tourist office, where you can find information on trains, buses, events and city maps. Residents can always give you directions in English, and there are fairs and festivals galore that can well fill your spare moments.

### Good to know

In front of the Church on the Hill in Sighișoara lies a splendid Saxon graveyard which you can visit every day between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.



Alley in Sighișoara



City Square – Sighișoara



See the city by foot – Sighișoara

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- 👤 • Participate in the **Medieval Festival**, which takes place every year in the last week of July.
- 👁️ • The address of **Dracula's House**: Strada Cositorarilor nr. 5.
- 🚗 • **The recommended means of transport**: by train and, once in the city, by foot.
- ☀️ • **The recommended season for a visit**: in summer, when you can wander at ease and stay up late at the city's terrace bars.



The Clock Tower, view from behind – Sighișoara

## Brașov – The Extraordinary Mountain City

Surrounded by the peaks of the Postăvaru mountains, Brașov, one of Romania's most popular cities, has multiple assets: the strong mountain air, the medieval fortress flair, the gothic and baroque architecture, together with a multitude of clubs, bars and cafes lining Republicii Boulevard, in the city centre.

Any itinerary through Brașov must start from Piața Sfatului (Town Hall Square), the heart of the city. Here you can see the Casa Sfatului (The Town Hall), a 13<sup>th</sup> century edifice, as well as the Black Church, the largest gothic church in Romania. You should then lose yourself on the cobble streets and look for Strada Sforii (String Street), which is claimed to be the narrowest European street (approximately 130 centimeters wide).

For a truly medieval atmosphere, take Strada După Ziduri ("the Street behind the Walls") and visit the Graft Bastion and the Ironsmiths' Bastion, as well as the White Tower and the Black Tower, which were all part of the city's system of fortifications.

For a city tour you can take a ride in the double-decker tourist bus that runs Thursday through Sunday from Aleea de sub Tâmpa ("the Alleyway at the Foot of Tâmpa").

### Good to know

The Black Church of Brașov offers organ concerts in the summer from June to September.



The Clock Tower at the Black Church – Brașov



Brașov – The perfect getaway during the holidays



The city of Brașov, Tâmpa view



Historical buildings in Brașov

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- 👤 • Climb the **Tâmpa peak**, which towers almost 400m above the city. The trail is well-marked and has benches along it, for when you want to rest your feet. You can also choose to take the cable car.
- 👁️ • **Address of the Art Museum**: Bd. Eroilor nr. 21A.
- 🚗 • **Means of transport**: by train (from Bucharest, the journey lasts a little over two hours).
- ☀️ • **Recommended time of year**: December, when the city decks itself in glimmering lights and snow in preparation for the holiday season.



## Timișoara – The Lure of the Architecture and Spirit of Banat

In the western part of the country, Timișoara is the product of the Habsburg legacy which caused it to be called Little Vienna (the city was under Austro-Hungarian rule for two centuries).

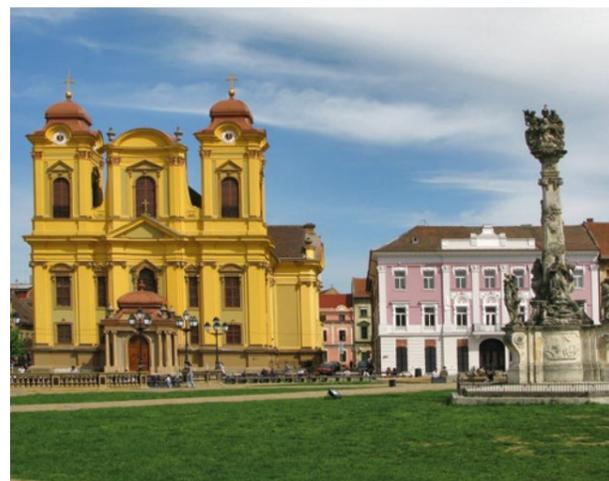
Often considered one of the most Westernised Romanian towns, Timișoara boasts an eclectic culture. The city's theatres, music festivals and art galleries give the city its character and keep people buzzing.

In your visit through Timișoara, the heart of Banat, you will rarely be left without music, which may come from a stage or merely from the loudspeakers strewn round the public squares, and will only fall silent late in the night. The old Victory Square is one of the most popular areas of the city, with its multitude of Secession-style buildings. The focal point of the square is the Orthodox Metropolitan Cathedral, which charms the onlooker not only with its magnificent architecture and mosaic roof, but also with the art gallery it hosts.

Bars and clubs are scattered throughout the city, so you cannot go wrong if you are in the mood for entertainment during your stay here.

### Good to know

Timișoara was the first city in Europe and the second in the world, after New York, that had electric streetlights (1889).



Roman - Catholic Cathedral – Timișoara

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- 🚶 • Go through Victory Square at a slow pace, wander through shops, relax on a bench and enjoy the early 20th-century atmosphere.
- 👁️ • The address of **Banat Village Museum**: Aleea CFR nr. 1.
- 🚆 • **The recommended means of transport**: by train, starting from Vienna (the trip takes approximately 8 and a half hours).
- 🌤️ • **The recommended season for a visit**: in autumn, when universities reopen and the city hums with the buzz of young people.



Metropolitan Cathedral in Timișoara

## Cluj The Bastion of Exuberance in the Centre of Transylvania

As one of the most important Romanian centres of higher education, this Transylvanian city has the largest percentage of students in the country (almost 19%). Therefore, when you get to Cluj, you will be exploring a vibrant cultural life, which awaits you at every corner.

The energy of Cluj is at its most intense in Unirii Square, crowded with bars and restaurants that never sleep. From here you can also hire a bike with nothing but your identity card. You must remember, however, that the city centre is surrounded by hills, which could turn a simple bike ride into a real challenge.

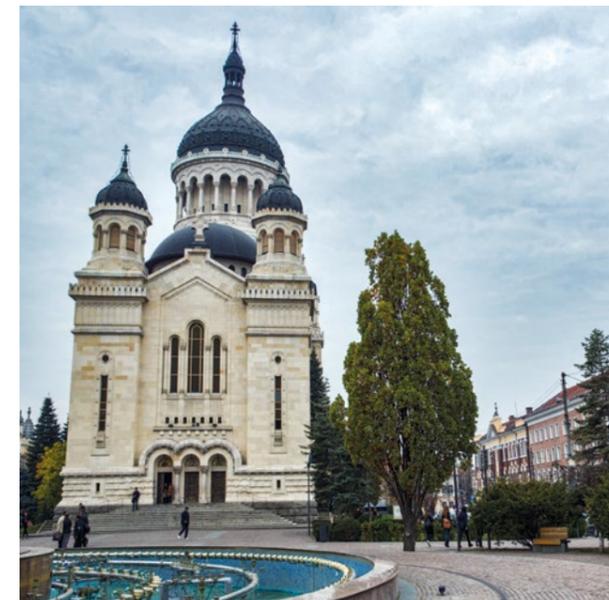
Beyond the youthful atmosphere, in Unirii Square you will also see buildings which carry with them the hundred-year-old history of the city. St Michael Church, dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, dominates the square and is one of the Romanian edifices that are representative of the gothic style.

The Banffy Palace, the baroque location of the Art Museum, is also in Unirii Square. Take a stroll to Baba Novac Square, too, to see the Tailors' Bastion, built in 1550, the last remnant of the city's medieval fortifications.

Finally, admire Cluj-Napoca from on high, on Cetățuia Hill.

### Good to know

The National Romanian Opera of Cluj-Napoca hosts the Opera Ball every year in February.



Dormition of the Theotokos Cathedral, Cluj

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- 🚶 • Take a stroll on the pedestrian Eroilor Boulevard, the city's main road; it is packed with shops and restaurants that put out terraces in summer.
- 👁️ • **The address of Lucian Blaga National Theatre**: Piața Ștefan cel Mare nr. 24.
- ✈️ • **Means of transport**: by plane.
- 🌤️ • **The recommended time of year**: October, when universities are reopened and the city fills with young people.



Downtown Cluj





Equestrian tourism – Transylvania

## Extraordinary Experiences in Spotless Scenery

If you'd try and discover Romania from a distance, you'd think it only has tranquil and welcoming lands, where classical relaxation is all there is, whether you are at the border of the Black Sea, on the Dobrodegean hills or on the mountaintops.

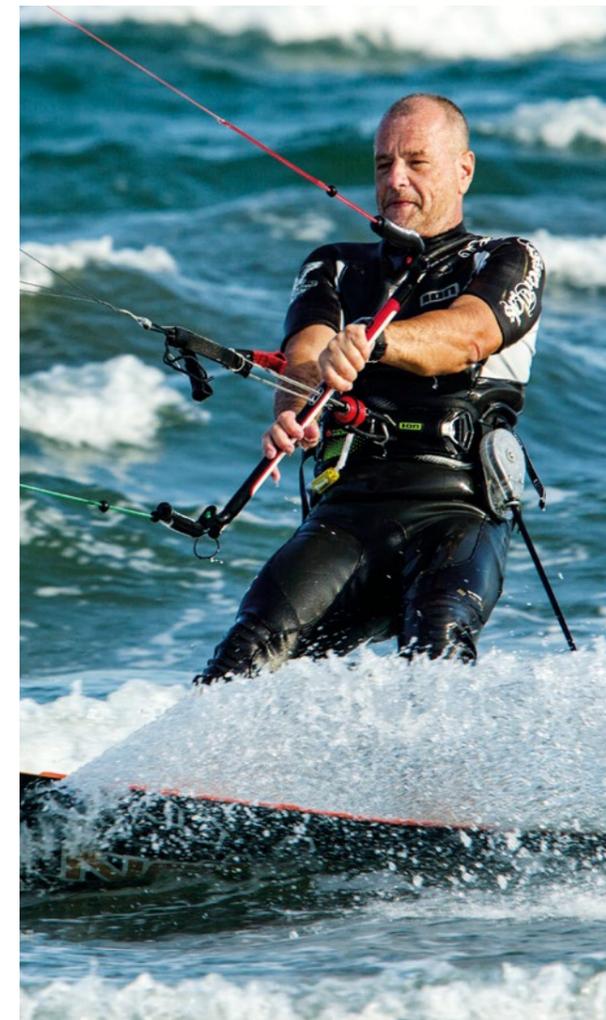
But if you'd look closely you'd see that Romania is a little more than just the sum of its parts.

If you think that a land of fairy-tales and old customs like Romania is too steeped in tradition for you to be able to enjoy a bit of a more contemporary adrenaline rush you should know that Romania's natural sights are not there only to be marvelled at.

They can serve as a headquarters for adventure anytime, whether it's on or under water – doing rafting or diving – or in the mountains – climbing, hiking, heli-skiing, paragliding or bungee jumping, etc.

On the other hand, if you are tempted by some off-track skiing then that is what you will have an opportunity to do it; on Romanian peaks specially designated for this purpose.

After a few days of indulging in Romanian cuisine, astounding views and city life, choose just about any point on the map, collect your courage and the right gear and set off in search of adventure. Just ask around and get into the explorer's frame of mind, and extreme Romania will be at your fingertips.



Kite Surfing at the Black Sea



Live the adventure in Transylvania



## On the Water and Underneath it

Green grass picnics, football games or relay races? If you are vacationing with your family or your co-workers, consider a bolder way to pass the time and cement your relationships: rafting.

Considered one of the safest extreme sports, rafting is defined by navigating down a water course that is often fairly rough, in an inflatable boat for 4 to 12 people, who must synchronise their moves and obey the guide's commands to the smallest detail. With respect to difficulty and degree of risk, there are six categories of rafting.

In Romania, you can practice rafting on the Bistrița river, in the Zugreni and Ciocănești areas (if you prefer authentic wooden rafts, built by indigenous craftsmen), where you face the second degree of difficulty. Another option is the Jiu Canyon, between Livezeni and Bumbești-Jiu, a trail which has the fourth degree of difficulty; as of now, it is possible to practice night rafting on the Jiu river, for extra adrenaline. On both rivers, rafting aficionados are permitted to practice their favourite sport from April till June.



Rafting in Jiu Canyon

### Good to know

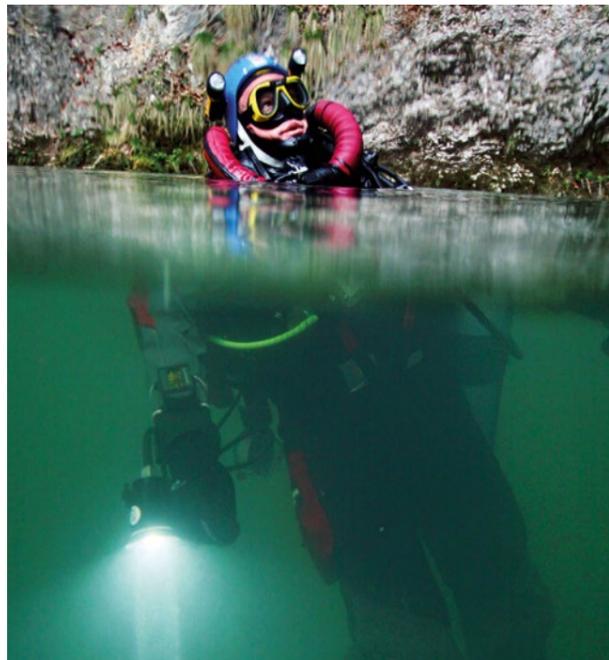
The total length of the rafting trail on the Jiului Canyon is 40 kilometers; there is a contrast in elevation of over 200 meters, and the journey lasts anywhere between 2 and a half and 4 hours.

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

- To avoid dangerous obstacles use a move called a pirouette which causes the watercraft to turn around.
- **Means of transport:** to reach the Bistrița river, take the train to Vatra Dornei then go by bus.
- **To reach the Jiu Canyon:** go by train to Târgu Jiu then take the bus.
- **Recommended time of year:** April – June.

Cave scuba diving (or underwater speleology) is the right choice for you if you want to discover cavernous hideaways under the surface of the water.

You can try your luck in the Izverna Cave in the Mehedinți Mountains, where, according to specialists, you have the best conditions in Europe for cave scuba diving – the water is clear and visibility is remarkably high, and the subterranean lakes and sumps are out of this world.



Izbucul Tauz, Apuseni Mountains

Speaking of flying, why not trying the helicopter this time, then slowly jump out of it and gently slide away on your skis? It's called heliskiing and in Romania it is practiced in the Făgăraș Mountains.

You might think this means jumping from the helicopter directly onto the slopes, but in reality it's a little more civilized. Heliskiing means finding peaks wide enough for the helicopter to land and for the skiers to come down safely equipped.



Heliskiing in Făgăraș Mountains

## Through Water

Windsurfing, the sport that specialists consider to be the most exhausting Olympic competition, is a true test of acrobatic talent, because of the numerous jumps and turns that surfers perform with the help of the mast.

In Romania, you can test your surfing skills in the Black Sea, at Mamaia and Eforie, and in the Danube Delta, on Grindul Chituc (Chituc Spit), at Gura Portiței, on Murighiol Lake, and at Mila 23 (The 23<sup>rd</sup> Mile). Still, it is useful to know that if you have the proper gear (neoprene wetsuit and boots, trapeze belt, board, sail, mast, vang, and other accessories), you can also practice this sport on land, sand (dirt windsurfing), or in the snow, by mounting the sail on a snowboard.

If windsurfing appeals to you, but you have not tried it yet or you feel that you have not completely mastered it, remember that in Mamaia you can take lessons with specialists at beginner, intermediate, or advanced levels.

Hiking in the canyons – sections of deep, narrow valleys that are still active, with water still flowing down through them (at least on a seasonal basis) – are another adrenaline-producing sporting option.

The bonuses of this sport are the stunning landscapes, obviously, but also the multiple possibilities you can choose from for the same track: climbing, descending, gliding on natural toboggans, riverbed hiking, etc.

In Romania, canyon hiking can be done in the county of Brașov, on the Dâmbu Morii (Mill Hill) trail – Canionul Șapte Scări (Seven Stairs Canyon) – Pietra Mare (Large Crag) Chalet.

### Good to know

Covering the entire trail of the Seven Stairs Canyon takes around 4 hours when climbing and 2-3 hours when descending.



Pick your favourite route – Apuseni Mountains



Riding the wind – Mamaia



Water sports at Corbu beach



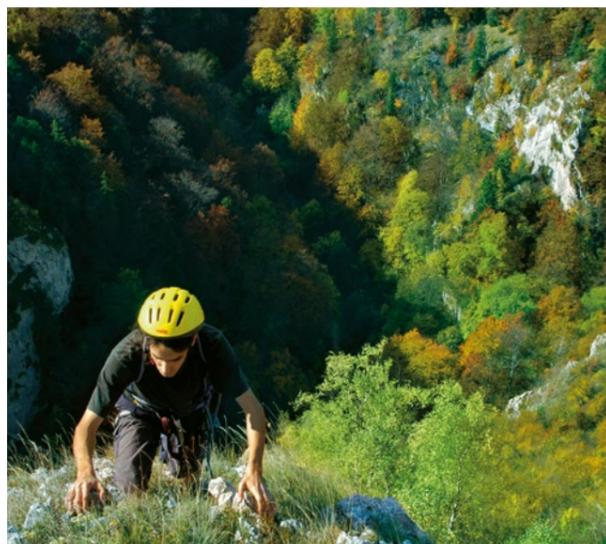
## Up, Up, Always Up

In Romania there are over 100 climbing trails included in the polygons with special markings and amenities in Cheile Sohodolului-Runcu, Cheile Oltețului-Polovragi, and Cheile Galbenului-Baia de Fier. Abseiling, or the controlled descent with ropes, also needs to be given due consideration: it is used when a cliff is too steep to be descended without protection.

If you have a lot of confidence in yourself and your pedals, try a bolder alternative than the run-of-the-mill mountain biking: a tour of the entire Carpathian range by bike during which you will never descend below 1,000 meters. The tour starts from the southernmost part of the Carpathians, in Brașov, continues then to Făgăraș, the Apuseni Mountains, and further on to Maramureș and the Rodna Mountains; it then crosses to the Eastern Carpathians and leads back south down the Curve into Vrancea, to finish gloriously again in Brașov. This tour totals 1,200 kilometers, which a person in peak physical shape could cover in approximately 29 days.

These days you do not need to settle for a comfy cushioned chair on a plane if flying is what you want. A paraglide awaits you any time you want to glide amongst mountain ranges. In Romania, paragliding is practiced most intensely in Râncea resort, at the foot of Păpușa Peak, in the county of Gorj. Other options are Vatra Dornei and Poiana Brașov, in the Postăvaru Massif. The extreme sport of off-track skiing can be practiced in an area situated above Râncea resort, between 1,700 and 2,100 meters altitude.

Zip-lining, another extreme sport in the mountains, which is, in fact, a technique of crossing impassable areas by using a system of static chords, pulleys and steel cables with a natural or artificial anchoring. The largest zip-line in the country is over 147 metres long and is suspended 137 metres in the air between the walls of Cheile Râșnoavei (Râșnoavei Canyon), close to the mountain resort of Predeal.



Hiking trails – Făgăraș Mountains



Biking on Transalpina

### Good to know

In the autumn of 2012, the Cluj parachutist Călin Popa, has made a world premiere jump: he jumped off the plane with his parachute, then he detached from it with a paraglider and executed a series of aerobatics.

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

 • **Areas good for mountain cycling:** the entire Carpathian range, but our first choices are Prahova Valley (county of Prahova, Wallachia) and the Bucegi Mountains (county of Brașov, Transylvania).

 • **Recommended time of year:** May – September



Zipline – Brașov

## Gliding down and riding high

If you like the idea of being able to float through air, you can try skydiving. The jumps from the plane can be performed in tandem with a skydiving instructor, or solo (for that, you need to have a recognised skydiving licence).

The altitude of the jump is between 1,000 and 4,000 meters. In Romania, one can perform static line jumps (the parachute opens immediately after separation from the aircraft) as well as free falls (the parachute opens only after a minute from the jump). You can try it at the skydiving club in Sibiu, the one in Ploiești- Strejnic, the Baia Mare aerodrome, or the clubs in Tuzla, Cluj or Bucharest.

If you are interested in trying out horse tourism, you can do that in Cheile Râșnovei, Munții Măcinului National Park, Călimani / Suceava, Munții Dornei, Munții Apuseni, Șieu – Sfântu, Bistrița on Pure Arabian, Lipizzan, Friesen, Andalusian, and the Hutsul horse, which is a specific Romanian breed.

In Romania you can practice horse riding in a club near Bucharest, in Râșnov (near Brașov), in the community of Vârful Câmpului (near Suceava), and only a few hundred meters away from the beach that connects the resorts of Saturn and Venus, on the shore of the Black Sea.

### Good to know

By changing body posture during free fall skydiving, the parachutist can turn and can even lift him/herself up.



Equestrian tourism – Transylvania



Skydiving near Bucharest



Paragliding in the Carpathian Mountains

## PLACES TO SEE AND THINGS TO DO

 • **Beginners can try out a Hutsul horse:** it is small in size (not higher than 150cm), and has a quiet temper.

 • **Recommended time of year:** late spring and summer.

## SPELEOLOGY

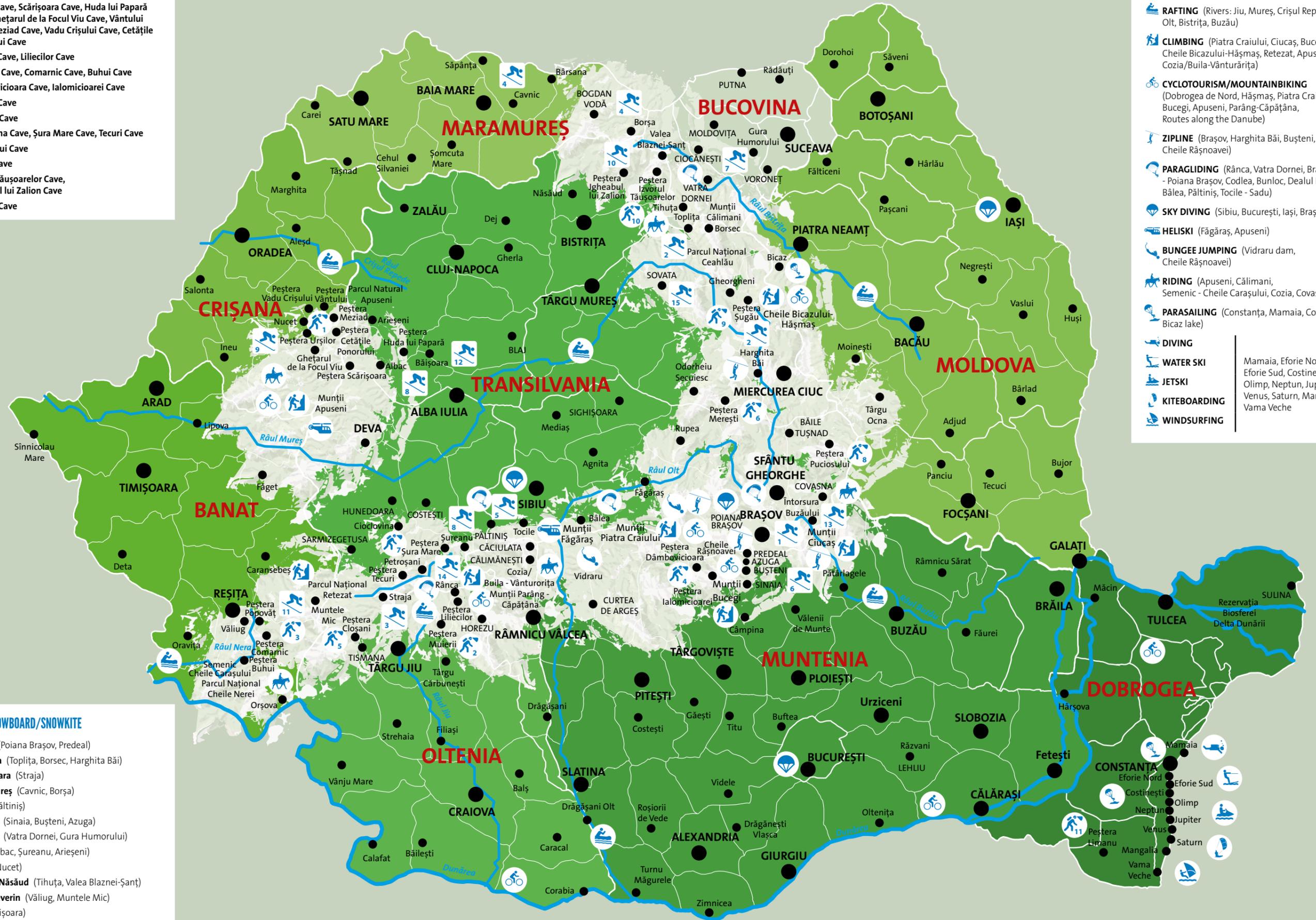
1. Urșilor Cave, Scărișoara Cave, Huda lui Papară Cave, Ghețarul de la Focul Viu Cave, Vântului Cave, Meziad Cave, Vadu Crișului Cave, Cetățile Ponorului Cave
2. Muierii Cave, Liliecilor Cave
3. Popovăț Cave, Comarnic Cave, Buhui Cave
4. Dâmbovicioara Cave, Ialomicioarei Cave
5. Cloșani Cave
6. Merești Cave
7. Cioclovina Cave, Șura Mare Cave, Tecuri Cave
8. Puciosului Cave
9. Șugău Cave
10. Izvorul Tăușoarelor Cave, Jgheabul lui Zalion Cave
11. Limanu Cave

## SKI/SNOWBOARD/SNOWKITE

1. Brașov (Poiana Brașov, Predeal)
2. Harghita (Toplița, Borsec, Harghita Băi)
3. Hunedoara (Straja)
4. Maramureș (Cavnic, Borșa)
5. Sibiu (Păltiniș)
6. Prahova (Sinaia, Bușteni, Azuga)
7. Suceava (Vatra Dornei, Gura Humorului)
8. Alba (Albac, Șureanu, Arieșeni)
9. Bihor (Nucet)
10. Bistrița-Năsăud (Tihuța, Valea Blaznei-Șant)
11. Caraș-Severin (Văliug, Muntele Mic)
12. Cluj (Băișoara)
13. Covasna (Covasna, Întorsura Buzăului)
14. Gorj (Rânca)
15. Mureș (Sovata)

## START THE ADVENTURE

- RAFTING** (Rivers: Jiu, Mureș, Crișul Repede, Nera, Olt, Bistrița, Buzău)
- CLIMBING** (Piatra Craiului, Ciucaș, Bucegi, Cheile Bicazului-Hășmaș, Retezat, Apuseni, Cozia/Vânturărița)
- CYCLOTOURISM/MOUNTAINBIKING** (Dobrogea de Nord, Hășmaș, Piatra Craiului, Bucegi, Apuseni, Parâng-Căpățâna, Routes along the Danube)
- ZIPLINE** (Brașov, Harghita Băi, Bușteni, Cheile Râșnoavei)
- PARAGLIDING** (Rânca, Vatra Dornei, Brașov area - Poiana Brașov, Codlea, Bunloc, Dealul Lempeș -, Bălea, Păltiniș, Tocile - Sadu)
- SKY DIVING** (Sibiu, București, Iași, Brașov)
- HELISKI** (Făgăraș, Apuseni)
- BUNGEE JUMPING** (Vidraru dam, Cheile Râșnoavei)
- RIDING** (Apuseni, Călimani, Semenic - Cheile Carașului, Cozia, Covasna)
- PARASAILING** (Constanța, Mamaia, Costinești, Bicz lake)
- DIVING**
- WATER SKI** (Mamaia, Eforie Nord, Eforie Sud, Costinești, Olimp, Neptun, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, Mangalia, Vama Veche)
- JETSKI**
- KITEBOARDING**
- WINDSURFING**



# ABOUT ROMANIA



**Location:** south-eastern Europe

**Vicinity:**

Hungary (north-west), Ukraine (north and north-east), The Republic of Moldova (east), The Black Sea (south-east), Bulgaria (south), Serbia (south-west)

**Surface:** 237,502 square kilometres

**Terrain:**

Romania's territory is almost equally divided among all major forms of terrain: the Carpathian Mountains (966 km), hills and plateaus (The Western Hills occupy the largest surface), the Black Sea (the Romanian coast is 241 km long), plains (the Romanian Plain, the Western Plain), the Danube Delta

**Point of highest altitude:**

Moldoveanu Peak, in the Făgăraş mountains (The Southern Carpathians): 2544m

**Population:** 19,350,000 inhabitants (2012)

**Flag:** three vertical stripes – red, yellow, blue

**Time zone:** GMT + 2

**Currency:** Leu

**Capital:** Bucharest

**Official language:** Romanian

**Climate:** continental temperate (with four distinct seasons: spring, summer, autumn, winter)

**Form of government:** a republic

**The legal system:** based on the European model and the 1991 Constitution

**The European Status:** member of the European Union since 2007, of UNO (1955), UNESCO (1990), and NATO (2004).

**Visa formalities:**

tourists from the USA and Canada may stay on the territory of Romania for 90 days without a visa; tourists from EU countries do not require a visa. Depending on the country of origin, it is advisable for tourists to double-check these details at the Romanian embassies.

**Airports:** Romania has 16 airports

**Railways:**

The Romanian Railway covers 17.535 kilometers

**Emergency number:** 112

**Electricity:**

European 220 volts outlets; tourists from the USA, the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Canada will need adaptors

**Unit of measurement:** the meter

**Consumer's Protection:**

Telephone: 0372-131951; e-mail: office@anpc.ro

## NATIONAL TOURISM AUTHORITY

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Photo: Ceahlău Mountains



România

*explore the Carpathian garden*