EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Romania Ice Hotel Adventure (AWR 2015)

WINTER ACTIVITY

TOUR DURATION **5** DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Tour Pace: Moderate
Tour Type: Small Groups
Tour Comfort: Standard
Tour Code: AWR

Tour Highlights - Romania Ice Hotel Adventure

- ✓ Winter sports - Tobogganing and snowshoeing in the Transylvanian countryside
- ✓ The Ice hotel - A night's stay in a unique hotel built of ice
- ✓ Carpathian Mountains - Cable car ride up into the mountains with fantastic views of the southern Carpathians
- ✓ Bucharest - Tour this fascinating capital city and see its blend of turn of the century elegance and communist excess, observed through the architecture

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	2 nights Standard Hotel 1 night Basic Hotel 1 night Standard Guesthouse
Included Meals:	4 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 1 dinner
Start Point:	Join tour: Bucharest
End Point:	Tour ends: Bucharest airport
Transport:	Bus
Countries:	Romania

Romania Ice Hotel Adventure

On this winter break we travel to the heart of the Transylvanian Alps. We take a cable car to the fabulous Ice Hotel for a unique overnight experience sleeping on ice beds. Along the way we toboggan and trek on snowshoes through the beautiful mountains. We also visit the medieval town of Sibiu, the capital Bucharest and the legendary Bran Castle.

Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Tour Comfort: Standard

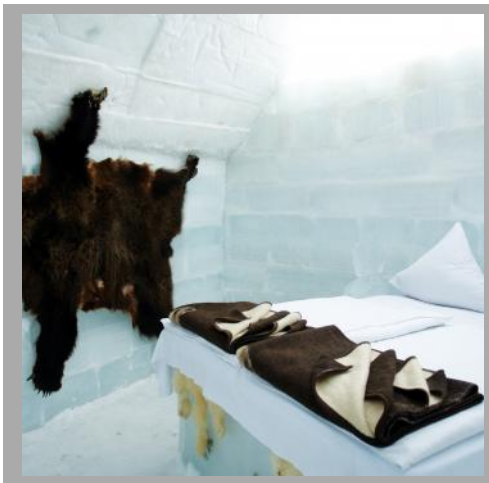
Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

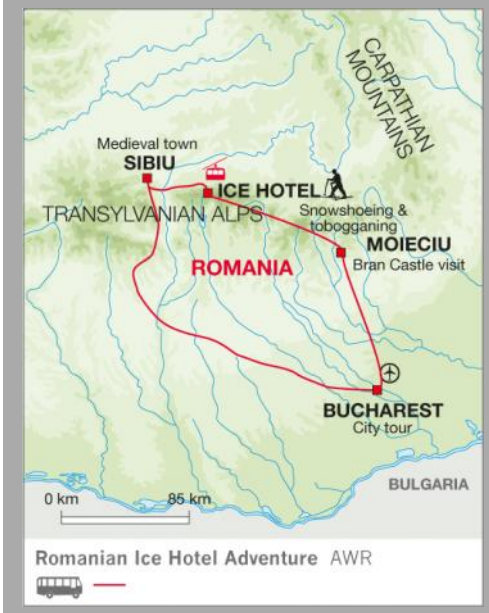
Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Tour Pace: Moderate

These moderately paced tours provide some busy days with plenty of experiences to enjoy, as well as time to relax along the way.





Your tour itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Your Tour Leader

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced Tour Leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your Tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Join tour Bucharest

Arrive in Bucharest and meet the group. Known for its wide, tree-lined boulevards, glorious Belle Époque buildings and a reputation for the high life (which in the 1900s earned its nickname of Little Paris), Bucharest, Romania's largest city and capital, is today a bustling metropolis. Romanian legend has it that the city of Bucharest was founded on the banks of the Dambovita River by a shepherd named Bucur, whose name literally means 'joy'. His flute playing reportedly dazzled the people and his hearty wine from nearby vineyards endeared him to the local traders, who gave his name to the place.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

Included Meals: None

DAY 2 Bucharest city tour; Sibiu walking tour

This morning our tour leader will take us on a tour of Bucharest to see the capital's main sites before we depart for Sibiu. We drive towards the historic landscape of Transylvania and arrive at the cultural centre of Sibiu; sandwiched between the Carpathian Mountains to the south and the Transylvanian Plateau to the north. On arrival your tour leader will take you on a walking tour around Sibiu to see the remains of the old town fortifications and the landmark buildings such as the Bruckentall Museum, City Hall and the House with Caryatids. You will spend the evening in this beautiful medieval town.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 3 Bus and cable car to Ice Hotel; tobogganing and snowshoeing

Departing Sibiu this morning, we head to the Ice Hotel. Along the way we will stop in the mountains to take a snowshoe walk through the picturesque scenery. The hotel is situated near Balea Lac, some 2034 metres up in the Fagaras Range of the Carpathian Mountains. Once we arrive at the foot of the mountain, the hotel is accessed by cable car. The journey takes 15-20 minutes depending on the wind conditions and takes 10 people at a time, so we'll need to make a couple of trips to get the whole group to the top, so this may take around an hour. Built with ice carved from Balea Lac, the hotel has an ice restaurant, an ice bar and even an ice church, which is created each year from ice blessed by local priests. The plan for this afternoon is to enjoy further snowshoeing and tobogganing near the hotel. Both activities are fairly easily mastered and you should need just a few minutes instruction to feel confident enough to head off on our excursion. This evening we enjoy a dinner in the cosy chalet next to the Ice Hotel before having the unique experience on sleeping on ice beds, in ice rooms.

Overnight: **Basic Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4 Drive to Moieciu; visit Bran Castle

Departing the Ice Hotel this morning, we travel back down by cable car and then drive to Moieciu. Before reaching the village we make a stop at Bran Castle. The truth behind 'Dracula's Castle' is even more fascinating than its myths! Earlier this century it was the home of the remarkable British born Queen Marie of Romania, grand daughter of Queen Victoria. Vlad the Impaler, the infamous 15th century ruler of Wallachia never lived here and there is no connection with the excellent novel by Bram Stoker - who never came near Transylvania. Perched on a crag in a valley between two high mountain ranges, it controlled an international trade route, but is now a rural back-water. On arrival in Moieciu, there will be the opportunity for more tobogganing.

Overnight: **Standard Guesthouse**
Single Rooms Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5 Tour ends Bucharest airport

This morning we leave Moieciu and return to Bucharest airport where the tour ends.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Rating

During this tour we will stay at the remarkable Romanian Hotel of Ice. In September 2013 this was rated as the second best ice hotel in the world by Wanderlust magazine. Nestled in the mountains and reached by cable car the hotel is created each year from ice dragged from Lake Balea. The hotel features beautifully carved sculptures, bedrooms of ice with warm polar sleeping bags provide, an ice bar, ice church and ice restaurant. On the night we stay at the hotel we'll enjoy dinner in the cosy chalet next to the Ice Hotel. The stunning surrounding and unique experience will certainly make this a night to remember.

Food & Drink

Included meals: 4 breakfasts, 0 lunches,1 dinner included in the price of this tour. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Other Sightseeing & Activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Optional Excursions

There are no optional excursions available to book on this tour.

Tipping - Tour Leader

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

Tipping - Local Crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly you should allow approx. £10 for tipping.

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

Foreign Exchange

Romania

ATM Availability: In most towns, your tour leader will advise you.

Credit Card Acceptance: Major stores and restaurants only.

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

Local Currency: Romanian Leu.

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

Where to Exchange: Please note that the exchange rates at the airport on arrival are particularly low.

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

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

Booking a land only package with Explore

For passengers making their own travel arrangements, please ensure you join the group as described on day one of the tour itinerary. If you are considering purchasing your own airline tickets, you can book these through any travel agent, directly with an airline or through an online flight consolidator. In all cases, we would be happy to arrange transfers to and from the joining point of your tour if required.

Joining Tour Abroad

Clients booked on **'Land Only'** arrangements should make their own way to the joining point. Please refer to separate **'Joining Instructions'** for time and place of rendezvous with tour leader

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

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

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

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of joining **any** of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable. You will also need to ensure your travel policy covers you for all activities you intend to do whilst on tour. Your insurer may charge an additional premium for certain activities.

If you require travel insurance for your tour, Explore Worldwide is an appointed representative of Campbell Irvine Limited, who is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Our travel insurance policy is specially tailored to the needs of the adventure traveller and will cover you for any included activity on any Explore trip. You can either purchase this at the time of booking or call us on 0844 499 0903 after you have booked.

Visa Information

Romania: Visas are not required by citizens of the UK, EU, US, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

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

Vaccinations & Protection

Romania

Nothing compulsory, although we recommend vaccination against tetanus, hepatitis A, typhoid and polio. Tick-borne encephalitis is recommended by some medical sources if travelling in certain areas of Eastern Europe, at specific times of the year. The Foreign Office currently recommend considerations of vaccination against rabies if travelling in rural areas of Romania. Check latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/ and from your local healthcare provider.

Preparing for your Tour

Climate

Romania

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

Clothing

You should bring a warm fleece or sweater, woolly hat or balaclava, gloves, thermal underwear, thick socks, a good windproof/ rainproof well insulated jacket (ski jacket) and a good pair of ski trousers or any trousers with good insulation that are waterproof. Gaiters will also be useful when walking in the snow.

Equipment

We also recommend taking a water bottle, torch, sunglasses, sun cream and binoculars. Ski goggle are also helpful for the snowshoeing.

At the Ice Hotel you will be provided with a polar sleeping bag that has been warmed in the hut just before going to bed. We reccommend you also bring a sleeping bag liner for additional warmth.

Footwear

Comfortable, warm walking boots (three seasons) and trainers or other shoes for relaxing in.

Luggage: On Tour

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

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

General Information

Food

The prices for meals and drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive. The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide.Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Romania

Lunch £: 8.00

Dinner £: 10.00

Drink

Romania

Bottle of Beer £: 1.00

Water £: 0.70

Country details

Romania

Population: 21,904,551

Size of Country: 238,391 sq km

Major Language: Romanian

Religion: Eastern Orthodox

Time Difference to GMT: +2

Electric Supply & Plugs

Romania

2 Pin Round

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures & tailormade holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, elephant, or any number of unusual forms of transport . Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Our commitment to the environment

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures and traditional, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: The Sunshine Orphanage (which cares for abandoned children in Luxor, Egypt), Education for All (sponsoring children through their secondary education in Morocco), The Hope Foundation (helping an Indian Village to recover from the 2004 Tsunami) and the Mufindi Orphanage, which support AIDS orphans in Tanzania.

We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation, Travel Operators for Tigers (helping save the Bengal Tiger from extinction) and Friends for Conservation. We have also adopted a beautiful Sri Lankan Elephant called 'Serendip'.

We are delighted to have received a Five Star sustainable tourism status from the Association of Independent Tour Operators in recognition of our on-going commitment to sustainable tourism.

Cool Earth

Explore are delighted to support Cool Earth to reduce carbon emissions through preventing the illegal deforestation of the South America rainforest. One of the top sources of global carbon emissions, rainforest deforestation equivalent to the USA's annual emissions, it also destroys flora and fauna, sometimes to the point of extinction. It also degrades the lives and communities of the 350 million residents of the rainforest.

Cool Earth prevents the deforestation through its support of local communities as forest guardians and by focussing on areas in immediate danger of deforestation. It has so far protected over 350,000 acres of rainforest, with each acre saving an emission of 260 tons of CO_2, as well as protecting rare animals and plants. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year. In addition to mitigating emissions, when you travel with Explore, you are helping to protect the source of 20% of the world's fresh water and oxygen, as well as the livelihoods of the 1.6 billion people who are reliant on the rainforest. www.coolearth.org

Earth Matters

- The Travel Foundation

  Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk
- Tourism Concern

  Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk
- For further information on responsible travel go to http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/

Know before you go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at http://www.explore.co.uk/essential-travel-information/travel-resources/travel-safety

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2013 and 31st December 2014.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2015 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2015. 2016/17 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2016.

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