

EXPLORE!

TRIP NOTES



Trekking the Transylvanian Alps (TTA 2017)



TRIPDURATION
8
DAYS



Tour Style: Simply
Accommodation Grade: Simple

Tour Type: Small Groups
Trek Grade: Moderate to Challenging

Trip Code: TTA

Trip Highlights - Trekking the Transylvanian Alps

- ✓ Transylvania - Get into the heart of the Southern Carpathians, walk in beautiful countryside
- ✓ Bran and Peles castles - Ornately decorated (optional trips)
- ✓ A warm welcome - Experience fantastic hospitality and traditional food from our guest house in Moieciu
- ✓ Bucharest - Explore the city with a local guide, including the Village Museum

Trip Essentials

Accommodation: 2 nights Standard Hotel
3 nights Simple Hut
2 nights Standard Guesthouse

Included Meals: 7 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 5 dinners

Start Point: Join trip: Bucharest Airport

End Point: Trip ends: Bucharest

Maximum Altitude on Trek (m): 2505

Transport: Bus

Countries: Romania

Trekking the Transylvanian Alps

On this walking tour in Romania we experience local hospitality, discover beautiful countryside and explore historic towns. We get well off the beaten track as we travel deep into the Transylvanian Alps, the legendary home of Dracula. Staying in a local guesthouse and mountain huts we walk through the imposing Bran Valley and to the Piatra Craiului Mountains, for one of the most spectacular ridge walks in Europe. We also have the opportunity to visit the ornately decorated Peles and Bran Castles.

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.

Accommodation Grade: Simple

No-frills accommodation which includes berths on sleeper trains, rooms in village houses, boat cabins, campsites, huts and simple family-run lodges, guesthouses and hotels. Sleeping arrangements are simple and amenities are adequate, sometimes with en suite facilities and occasionally communal.

Tour Style: Simply

If your idea of adventure travel is to experience everyday local life in a country then try one of our Simply Explore tours. These grassroots adventures are flexible, affordable and fun

Trek Grade: Moderate to Challenging

Combining moderate grade walks with some more strenuous hikes. This grade is ideal if you are fit and want to challenge yourself with a few longer, more demanding trekking days, possibly on difficult terrain or at higher altitudes.

Your trip 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 Airport; drive to Sinaia

Arrive Bucharest airport and drive to hotel in Sinaia. Located in a beautiful mountainous region, at the foothills of the Bucegi Mountains, about 120km from Bucharest and 44km from Brasov, in the Prahova Valley, Sinaia is one of the oldest and most famous mountain resorts, often referred to as 'The Pearl of the Carpathians'.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available




 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 2 Visit Peles Castle, cable car to Bucegi Plateau. Hike through the Bucegi mountains to the Omu Mountain Hut

After breakfast we visit in the Peles Castle (optional) which is considered by many as one of the most beautiful castles in all of Europe. It was the final resting place for several Romanian monarchs including King Carol I, who died here in 1914. Then we take a short cable car ride to the Bucegi Plateau. From here we start our walk through the Bucegi mountains which make up part of the southern Carpathians and walk for approximately 4 hours gaining about 500 meters in elevation to the highest peak, Omu Peak 2505m. Wind and rain have turned some rocks in to spectacular figures such as the Sphinx. We will finish the walk at the Omu Mountain Hut where we spend the night. If we arrive early enough there is the option to extend this walk with an additional one and a half hours trek to summit Bucsoiu a nearby peak. Our main luggage is transferred by road and will not be with us so we carry what we need for the night. Today's 14km walk is expected to take around 4hrs with 775m ascent and 318m descent


Overnight: **Simple Hut**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3 Walk from Omu Hut descending through the Bran Valley to Moeciu

We start our descent, including 50m on a scree path, to the Bran Valley with some stunning views of the Piatra Craiului Mountains. Today we walk from the peak of the Bucegi range to Moeciu and on our way will see natural monuments, various alpine flora and fauna, which could include the edelweiss, mountain wild rose, capercaillie and chamois. This area is also home to the European brown bear but a sighting would be rare. The wild beauty of this area is truly special. Today we walk with some steep sections and rough terrain, good walking boots are essential. The last part of the trail leads us to the guest house through their orchard. Here after a long day we will be welcomed with hot delicious food, locally brewed alcohol and a well deserved hot shower. Today's 22km walk is expected to take around 6hrs with 346m ascent and 2000m descent


Overnight: **Standard Guesthouse**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4 Visit Bran Castle (optional); walk towards the Piatra Craiului Mountains

Today we start our day with an optional trip to the castle at Bran. 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 heroic 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. From here we start our walk to the Piatra Craiului mountains. Piatra Craiului (The Royal Rock) is probably Romania's most loved mountain especially by hikers and nature lovers. The shining glow of this huge white limestone ridge can be seen from afar and it is probably the source of its unusual name. The mountain ridge has the biggest bio-diversity of the country. Not surprisingly, it is a national park. The wildlife is very diverse and there are still black chamois on the high cliffs and brown bear, wild boar, deer and stag, foxes, wolf and even lynx in the forests. The Piatra Craiului Mountains are further known for the abundance and diversity of flowers and plants. We walk today for between five and seven hours and end at a mountain hut where we spend the next two nights. Today's 16km walk is expected to take around 5hrs with 1337m ascent and 662m descent


Overnight: **Simple Hut**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5 Piatra Craiului Ridge walk

Today we take a circular walk from our mountain hut to the Piatra Craiului's beautiful limestone ridge, which is about 25km long, from where we have superb views over the surrounding country. The walk today is challenging in parts with the odd section where you may need to scramble over rocks or through dense forest. Once we are up on the ridge the views of the southern Carpathians are spectacular. After around six hours of walking we will return to our mountain hut for a well deserved hot meal and refreshments. Note: During the walk on the ridge there is a section approximately two metres in width which will require holding on to a chain to cross. Vertigo sufferers may wish to opt out of this walk. There will also be a descent of 300m on a scree path. Besides this, today's walk will not operate if it is raining or if there is a threat of rain. If this is the case an alternative walk in the area will be arranged. Today's 8km walk is expected to take around 4hrs with 813m ascent and 810m descent


Overnight: **Simple Hut**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 6 Walk from Curmatura Hut through the Zarnesti Gorge to Moeciu

Today we leave the mountain hut behind and walk to our guesthouse in Moeciu. Today's walk takes us through more beautiful countryside including the Zarnesti Gorge which has been used as a filming location for a number of movies including Cold Mountain. Today's 18km walk is expected to take around 5 hrs with 471m ascent and 1097m descent

Overnight: **Standard Guesthouse**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7 Drive to Bucharest to explore the capital

This morning we drive to Romania's capital, a remarkable blend of turn of the century elegance and communist excess. Situated on the Danube plain and set amid a series of lakes and spacious gardens, remnants of more gracious days still exist to charm the visitor. We visit many of the older parts of the city to see some of the buildings that have earned it the reputation as the 'Paris of Eastern Europe'. We also make a visit to the fascinating Village Museum, which has assembled wooden churches, windmills and peasant dwellings from different regions of the country. After the city tour we have free time for shopping, relaxing or more sightseeing.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 8 Tour ends Bucharest

Tour ends in Bucharest after breakfast.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Notes

On this tour we stay well off the beaten track. The two mountain huts that we stay in for three of the nights of the tour are well located in the mountains and very simple. Washing facilities are limited as there is no running water, although there is a fresh water spring thirty metres from the hut at Curmatura. At both huts the toilet is outside the main building.

Food & Drink

Included meals: 7 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 5 dinners included in the price of this trip. 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 Trip

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

Food

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

The prices for 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.

Romania

Bottle of Beer £: 1.00

Water £: 0.70

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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

Bran Castle - Entrance fee £5.00
Peles Castle - Entrance fee £5.00

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 £10.00 for tipping for local staff.

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 Trip

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

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

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 booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

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CAMPBELL IRVINE
DIRECT TRAVEL INSURANCE



Travel Insurance is essential. If you have not already arranged cover, please contact our recommended Travel Insurance providers www.campbellirvinedirect.com/Explore who offer Travel Insurance specifically designed to cover travel with Explore or call **Campbell Irvine Direct** on Tel: 020 7938 1734

Explore Worldwide is an Introducer Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Travel Aware

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 www.explore.co.uk/travel-safety

We strongly advise that you register with the FCO to receive updates to the travel advice for your chosen destination. A hard copy of the current FCO Travel Advice for your chosen destination is available by contacting cr@explore.co.uk or 01252 379438.

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Visa Information

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

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

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 Trip

DAILY DISTANCES

Day 2	14km	3km	4/1.5hrs
Day 3	22km		6hrs
Day 4	16km		5hrs
Day 5	8km		4hrs
Day 6	18km	4km	5/2.5hrs

Optional Walks

Maximum Altitude on Trek (m)

2505

Trekking Details

We walk for 5 days for an average of 4 to 6 hours a day, with a couple of optional additional walks. There are some steep ascents and descents through forests and rocky mountain paths. We have graded this trek as moderate to challenging.

Walking Boots

Due to the rocky terrain and loose stones in some parts of this walk and sections of steep ascent or descent comfortable walking boots are essential.

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

No matter what the season please be prepared for high mountain conditions. It can get as cold as -5°C during the night and can still be in the minuses the next morning. There may also still be snow on the ground in spring and autumn in the mountains. Please therefore bring a woolly hat, gloves, warm socks and wear layered clothing. A fleece and windproof/waterproof jacket are essential.

Equipment

Bring a water bottle, insect repellent, sunscreen, sun glasses, a sunhat and a torch. Walking poles may be useful as are gaiters for walking in snow if you do not have waterproof trousers. A sleeping bag liner will be needed for the nights in mountain huts, blankets and pillows are provided. There are limited washing facilities in the mountain huts, so wet wipes and hand sanitiser may be useful.

Footwear

Trainers/sandals for general travel.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage and a daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage - so don't overload yourself. Your main luggage will not be with you on every nightstop so ensure your day bag is large enough to carry everything you might need.

For the two nights staying in Curmatura Hut (days 4 and 5) your main luggage will be stored at our accommodation in Moeciu ready for your return on day 6.

Luggage allowance on trip: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Romania

Population: 21,904,551

Size of Country: 238,391 sq km

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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, self-guided, private journeys & tailor-made holidays.
- Award-winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one of 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, 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.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

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, 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: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people) and have recently supported women's cooperatives in Borneo and Morocco. We are a member of Tourism Concern's Ethical Tour Operator Group (www.tourismconcern.org.uk) and support their campaign for fair and ethical tourism. We also care passionately about the world's wildlife and actively support and promote the Born Free Organisation and Mahouts Elephant Foundation.

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.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

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

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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 2016 and 31st December 2017.

Trip 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: 2017 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2017. 2018/19 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2018.

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