EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Transylvanian Backwaters (BU 2016)

CULTURAL DISCOVERY

TOURDURAT
5
DAYS

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

Tour Highlights - Transylvanian Backwaters

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

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	1 night Standard Hotel 3 nights 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

Transylvanian Backwaters

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

Wildlife

The Carpathian area of Romania is home to an estimated 6000 brown bears, which is one of the few strong and healthy populations remaining in Europe. The female brown bear can weigh up to 200kg and the males weigh in at around 350kg - the largest on record in Romania being an astonishing 480kg.

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

Although it is not possible to guarantee that we will see brown bears on this trip, each of our groups in 2015 did have sightings.

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.

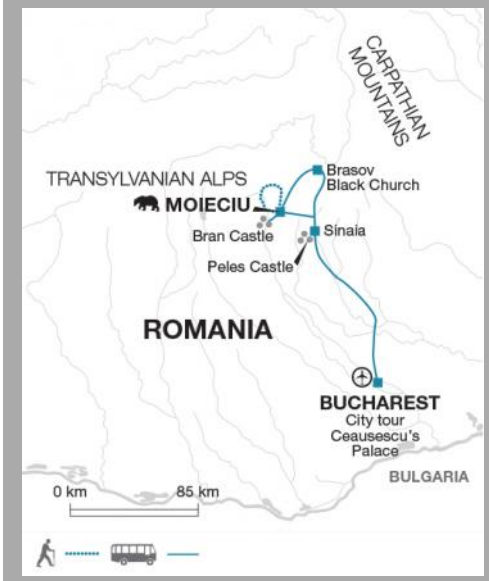
Your tour itinerary

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 trip in Bucharest

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

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: None

DAY 2 Tour of Bucharest and evening bear watching

This morning we start our day with a city tour of Bucharest. A remarkable blend of turn of the century elegance and Communist excess can be observed through its architecture. Situated on the Danube Plain and set amid a series of lakes and spacious gardens, remnants of more gracious days still exist to charm the visitor. We visit many of the older parts of the city to see some of the buildings that earned it the reputation as the Paris of Eastern Europe and of course no visit would be complete without seeing the Casa Poporului, the magnificent but blatantly excessive palace of ex-President Ceausescu. After our tour, we make our way to the observatory for bear watching. The Romanian bear population is one of the few strong and healthy populations remaining in Europe and the Carpathian Mountains are home to about 43% of all European bears (approximately 6,000 individuals). This region is therefore of key international importance in the conservation of brown bears and due to increasing human-bear interactions, it's also the focus of much research into the effective management of bears and their habitats. Bears may be active at any time of the day, but generally they forage in the morning and evening and rest in dense woodland cover by day. We try to spot these bears at dusk when they come out to feed. From here we drive to the Transylvanian village of Moieciu, where we stay in a local guesthouse for the next three nights. Please note, that the bear watching from the observatory may take place on day 4 depending on the local forestry department's advice.

Overnight: **Standard Guesthouse**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

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

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

Overnight: **Standard Guesthouse**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

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

Today we visit the castle at Bran. The truth behind Dracula's Castle is even more fascinating than its myths. In the early 20th century it was the home of the remarkable British born Queen Marie of Romania, granddaughter of Queen Victoria. Vlad the Impaler, the infamous 15th century ruler of Wallachia, never actually lived here and Bram Stoker never came near Transylvania! Perched on a crag in a valley between two high mountain ranges, the castle controlled an international trade route, but is now a rural backwater. Exploring the village, the castle and the museum gives us a chance to unravel fact from fiction. Later this morning, we drive to the Medieval city of Brasov. Brasov is one of the most historic cities in Transylvania, and we spend the rest of the day exploring. The town is a gem of old buildings, cobbled streets and local atmosphere all clustered within the Medieval fortifications and overlooked by a magnificent 15th century Gothic cathedral. Founded by German settlers to protect the routes that made their way up to the high passes over the Carpathians, Brasov is an architectural delight. There are several churches dating from the 14th through to the 18th century and we shall include a visit to the Black Church as part of our tour. Later this afternoon you may like to visit one of the museums, the First Romanian School or Saint Nicolas Church in the Scheii area (the old Romanian district of Brasov). In the evening you have an option of returning to the observatory for more bear watching.

Overnight: **Standard Guesthouse**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5 Trip ends at Bucharest airport

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

Included Meals: Breakfast

Included Activities

On this holiday our local agent is in regular contact with the wildlife authorities to find out which hides offer the best chance of seeing bears depending on the areas where they have been most recently spotted. There are 22 hides in the area and each accommodates 7 people at a time, so depending on the size of the group you may be split between different hides. If there are 1 or 2 particular hides where the bears are frequently being seen then we may split the group, so that some of you go into the hides on one night then the remainder on the next in order to give everyone in the group the best chance of seeing them.

Accommodation and Meals

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.

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

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

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

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

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 recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.
Accordingly you should allow approx. £10.00 for tipping.

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

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.

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.

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

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.

EXPLORE!
The Adventure Travel Experts

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.

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.

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 if you are travelling in winter. Gaiters will also be useful when walking in the snow.
During the spring and autumn, we recommend that you bring layers as it can be cold.

Equipment

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

Footwear

Comfortable walking boots and trainers or other shoes.

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

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, self-guided, private journeys & 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, 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, 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), Dekamer (a turtle rescue centre in Turkey) and Kids Saving the Rainforest (a wildlife rescue centre in Costa Rica supported through the LATA foundation). We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation and Friends of Conservation.

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

- 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 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 www.explore.co.uk/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 LicenceÂ granted by the Civil Aviation Authority.Â 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

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.

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: 2016 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2016. 2017/18 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2017.

These tour notes were printed on 06/05/2016 14:07:28