Romania at a glance (4 nights)

Tour Description:

Dark legends, priceless monuments, and fascinating historical revelations are revealed as you travel deep into the Transylvanian countryside, in the shadow of the Carpathian Mountains. Discover remote Gothic ruins and fortresses, medieval castles, precipitous gorges, a tragic monastery, and the ruthless trajectory of Vlad the Impaler.

Begin your tour in Bucharest, and make your way directly into the breathtaking Transylvanian landscape. At Curtea de Arges, visit the soaring 14th century monastery associated with an abundance of sorrowful legends.

At Poienari Fortress, ascend the steep staircase to the eagle’s-nest throne of Vlad the Impaler. In Sibiu, tour the most fortified of the region’s Saxon cities. The Saxons also built Biertan and other “peasant fortified churches,” in an architectural style reproduced extensively across Transylvania.

In Sighisoara, a gorgeous medieval citadel, climb to the beautiful Clock Tower for an exquisite view. At the end of your walking tour, have coffee in the birthplace of Vlad the Impaler, now a prominent restaurant. In Brasov’s Old Town, admire the Black Church (the largest Gothic cathedral in southeastern Europe), the Old Town Square, and St. Nicholas Church, the most important Romanian medieval church.

Proceed to Bran Castle, widely called “Dracula’s Castle,” but warmly redecorated by Queen Maria in the 1920s. The opulence continues at Peles Castle, the 19th-century royal residence, where the exquisite décor includes Carrara marble, Murano chandeliers, Venetian mirrors, and walls carved of 40 types of wood.

Tour Highlights:

• explore Bucharest, the Romanian capital
• discover the charming Transylvanian cities of Sibiu, Sighisoara and Brasov
• visit Romania’s most famous castles: Bran (a.k.a. Dracula’s Castle) and Peles
• enjoy the services of a private, licensed tour guide, who will uncover the best sights along your route
• overnight in centrally located, quaint, locally-owned 3 and 4 star hotels, perfect for exploring on own

Day-by-Day Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Bucharest, city tour

Arrive in Bucharest, greet your guide, and make yourself comfortable at the streamlined, up-to-the-minute Berthelot Hotel, a lovely jumping-off point for uncovering this splendid capital’s enticing cultural riches.

So cosmopolitan that it rivalled the sophistication of the City of Lights in public consciousness during the post-WWI era, Bucharest is now a study in startling opposites. Exquisite French architecture stands in juxtaposition with vainglorious testaments to the Communist era; elegant 19th-century homes provide an interesting counterpoint to gleaming skyscrapers of glass and steel. Join your guide for a scenic city tour, and take in the enlivened, effervescent personality of this extraordinary city.

*should you travel to Bucharest on a flight that arrives late in the afternoon or evening, the city tour can also be done the next morning

Overnight in Bucharest, Hotel Berthelot**** (centrally located)
Day 2: Bucharest – Curtea de Arges - Poienari ruins - Transfagarasan road – Sibiu

Today, you’ll travel into mountainous, spectacular Transylvania to experience the stunning medieval city of Sibiu. On the way, take a break at the Curtea de Arges monastery, an architectural wonder that seems to challenge the laws of physics. This 16th-century marvel, constructed under intense time constraints, spawned multiple legends of love, loss, and premature death.

After your tour, ascend the Carpathians to visit the forbidding ruins of the 13th-century Poienari Fortress, perched on the edge of a sheer cliff face falling straight into the Arges River. You’ll climb 1,480 steps to reach the former home and castle of Vlad the Impaler. Legends transmitted from the 15th century say that he terrorised the Boyars into the hard labor required to rebuild and fortify the existing structure; most his prisoners ended their days as exhausted slaves.

Continuing your drive to Sibiu, you’ll journey along the high Transfagarasan Road, built during the Communist regime at an altitude of 2054 m (over 6000 feet). The scenery is absolutely stunning.

This afternoon, arrive in Sibiu and settle into your hotel. Your guide will lead you on a fascinating, in-depth walking tour of the medieval Old Town. This settlement was built by ethnic German Saxons, who were extremely thorough in their construction of defence systems incorporating thick walls, high watchtowers, and secret passageways.

*please note the Transfagarasan road is open only between June and September. If your tour takes place outside this period, you will travel on the road going along the Olt river valley

Overnight in Sibiu, Hotel Casa Levoslav**** (located in the Old Town)

Day 3: Sibiu – Biertan fortified church - Sighisoara – Brasov

Depart the magnificent town of Sibiu, and proceed to the Biertan Church (UNESCO World Heritage Site). Saxon villagers took the protection of their towns very seriously, and built fortified churches over the course of the medieval era. Interestingly, the townspeople were solely responsible for the construction and maintenance of these structures—a tradition they have perpetuated to the present day. Saxon roots in Transylvania run deep, with some present-day families tracing their lineage back as far as the 1100s. The Biertan Church, built between 1486 and 1524, represents the last expression of this particular architectural style.

In the afternoon, continue on the trajectory of your journey with a visit to Sighisoara. Here, the UNESCO World Heritage Old Town exemplifies a living citadel, and the majority of its medieval fortifications remain relatively untouched by time. Tour the famous clock tower, a widely-recognised and beautiful symbol of medieval Transylvania. A picturesque covered wooden staircase brings you to the archetypal Church on the Hill, from where you’ll gain a superb view of the surrounding area.

Sighisoara is recorded in historical annals as the birthplace of the infamous Vlad the Impaler, the cruel Prince of Wallachia famous for brutally torturing his enemies. The house of his birth looks much the same today as it did in 1431, and now provides the setting for a distinctive restaurant.

In the afternoon, travel to Brasov, a quintessential Transylvanian town.

Overnight in Brasov, Hotel Armatti*** (located in the Old Town)

Day 4: Brasov – Bran Castle – Peles Castle – Bucharest

Today, let your guide lead you on a captivating walk in Brasov's Old Town, amidst the evocative homes of well-to-do medieval merchants. Discover the Black Church, a vast 14th-century Gothic cathedral featuring a museum and Lutheran services each Sunday. Walk along the town’s impregnable city walls and bastions before departing for the famed Bran Castle, redecorated by Queen Marie in the 1920s following a period of disrepair and abandonment.

Next, travel through majestic mountain scenery and soaring views to arrive at Sinaia, a beautiful town in the Carpathian Mountains. Visit the Peles Castle, the lavish 19th-century home of the first King of Romania. The castle boasts a palatial interior lined with luxuries: sumptuous crystal, oriental rugs, magnificent wood paneling, and precious mirrors. Nearby, pause to tour the Sinaia monastery, named after ancient Mt. Sinai of Biblical times.
Arrive in Bucharest in the evening.

Overnight in Bucharest, Hotel Berthelot**** (centrally located)

Day 5: Bucharest, departure
Today is the day when your tour ends. Transfer to the airport for the flight home.

Included services and features

- The possibility of having your itinerary customised in any way you desire, at no extra charge
- Great flexibility regarding changes to the daily itinerary even after the start of the tour
- The services of a private, licensed English speaking guide/driver, available throughout the tour
- All guide's expenses (meals, accommodations, etc.)
- Private transportation in air conditioned car or minivan (depending on the number of travellers joining)
- Complimentary wireless internet access in the car/minivan, so that you can stay in touch with your loved ones even while traveling
- All car/minivan expenses, such as gasoline, parking and road tolls
- Entrance fees as per the itinerary, with guided visits. If you wish to add any sight on the go, the guide will always be available with information during the visit
- Accommodation as per the hotel list above (we can also offer a different selection of hotels)
- Breakfast every day
- Airport transfers
- All taxes

Not included

- Airfare to and from Romania
- Meals or beverages, other than the included ones
- Photo fees (some sights require the payment of a fee for allowing you to take pictures - they are mostly inexpensive, around 2 or 3 euro/sight)
- Gratuities for your guide (entirely up to your discretion)

Additional information

You can further explore the route of this tour by having a look at the tour map we created, with the cities the tour overnight in and all sights (Google Maps).

Click here to browse this tour on our website and send us your inquiry, and here to read our FAQ.

To read what past travellers think of their travel experience with us, check out our Testimonials page. Additionally, you might be interested in reviews from past travellers, posted on websites like Trustpilot or Tripadvisor.

About us

We are Vlad and Zoe Trestian - the owners and managers of Balkan Trails. Vlad is Romanian, Zoe is Bulgarian - we have first hand, local knowledge of the countries our tours explore.

We have been working in the travel industry in Eastern Europe since the late 1990’s. In 2009, we decided to set up Balkan Trails as a family-owned and managed tour operator business. When trusting us with your travel experience, you will be dealing directly with one of us. Zoe or Vlad will be your single point of contact, so you’re always talking to an expert who has an overview of all details related to your tour.

We understand traveling is personal and individual, and no two travellers are alike. That is why the majority of our tours are based on customised itineraries. Your tour is exactly that: YOURS. Just let us know when you’d like to arrive and depart, what your interests are, the type of hotels you prefer, and we’ll take care of the rest.
We work with a small number of hand-picked, licensed guides. They are all have solid experience as tour guides and speak excellent English. During your time with them, you will get an insider's perspective on the country, its people and culture. They are also the ones who will help you interact with locals - meeting locals is key to truly understanding a country.

Being a small, family - run business and working with a small number of carefully selected guides also means we can only manage so many tours each year. And that’s OK. Our focus is not organising lots of “just OK” tours. We are here to create memorable travel experiences. And those do come in limited numbers. Looking forward to showing you our part of the world.

Vlad & Zoe Trestian

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