UNESCO painted monasteries of Bucovina (5 nights)

Tour Description:

Begin your tour in Bucharest, then proceed to the lavish Peles Castle, the phenomenal royal residence of Carol I. Next, visit Sinaia Monastery, built in the 17th century as a reminder of Mount Sinai and the Holy Land.

Proceed to the fantastical Bran Castle, beautifully restored by Queen Marie, second queen of Romania. In Brasov’s Old Town, take a walking tour of the old town, visiting the Black Church, medieval city walls and St. Nicholas Church, built in 1495 and a place of major importance for the Romanians.

Next, drive across the forested Carpathians toward Bucovina, passing through “Szekely Land,” a region inhabited by Hungarian ethnics. Learn about their singular role in the history of the region and the political controversies still linked to them in the current era. Continue your journey along one of the most spectacular landscapes in all of Romania: the breathtaking Bicaz Gorges, with 300-meter mountain walls on each side of the road.

Tour the famous UNESCO World Heritage painted monasteries, famous for their priceless frescoes; each monastery is known for a specific predominating color. The political changes of 1989 allowed them to be re-opened, and they continue to be maintained by hardworking communities of nuns. Stop near Moldovita to discover the age-old art of egg painting.

On the way to Bucharest, visit the Nicolae Popa Ethnographic Museum and the 14th-century Neamt Fortress, a pivotal defense component in battles against the Ottoman Empire.

Tour Highlights:

- explore Bucharest, the capital of Romania
- tour Romania’s two most famous castles, Peles and Bran
- walk the streets of Brasov, one of the most charming medieval towns in Transylvania
- visit the UNESCO painted monasteries of Bucovina, and learn about the crucial role they played in Romania’s history
- learn about the ancient art of egg-painting
- 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 your own

Day-by-Day Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Bucharest, city tour

Arrive in Bucharest, get acquainted with your guide, and land in the comfort of the Berthelot Hotel, located in the center of town and a fabulous starting place for investigating the depths of history the city has to offer. Bucharest, with a diverse population of over 2 million, remains one of Europe’s most cosmopolitan cities, and features an intriguing mixture of architectural styles. Even the Communists couldn’t completely wipe out the picturesque 19th-century French houses, which create a striking contrast with elegant new office buildings and leftover Soviet-style projects.

Enjoy a panoramic city tour that will afford you an inside look into the revitalized character of this exceptional 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 – Sinaia - Bran - Brasov

In the morning, you’ll depart Bucharest and drive north, in the direction of Brasov. Along the way, pause at Sinaia to tour Peles Castle, the architecturally-complex 19th-century residence built by Carol I of Romania. The interior is extraordinarily rich, with rare oriental carpets, stained glass, oil canvases, and suits of armor.

Near this amazing royal residence, stop at the Sinaia Monastery, a beautiful representation of Romanian religious architecture.

Next, continue on to the celebrated Bran Castle, a mysterious medieval masterpiece accessible by a breathtaking drive through the Carpathian Mountains. The past comes to vivid life here, and you’ll explore an extraordinary fairy-tale castle surrounded by vendors selling delectable cheeses, pălînda (plum and pear brandy), and traditional sausages and hams.

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

Day 3: Brasov - Bicaz - Gura Humorului

When you have awakened and had your breakfast, savor a guided walking tour of Brasov’s Old Town. Discover the monumental Black Church (one of Eastern Europe’s key Gothic cathedrals) and the Old Town Square, circumvented by the beautifully-preserved houses of medieval merchants and luminaries.

Afterward, drive to Bucovina via a majestic route that traces its way through the unrivalled Bicaz Gorges. The view is perhaps the most spectacular you’ll ever witness, and souvenir-shopping along the way is an option.

Arrive in Gura Humorului in the late afternoon.

Overnight in Gura Humorului, Hotel Casa Humor****

Day 4: UNESCO Painted Monasteries tour & egg-painting museum

In the morning, set out to discover Romania’s celebrated UNESCO Painted Monasteries, each known for a specific work of art and a predominant color.

Begin your tour at the monasteries of Humor and Voronet. Humor, built in 1530, is famous for the vivid reds that dominate its interior compositions. Voronet, characterized by prevailing shades of blue, was constructed by Stephen the Great in 1488.

In the early afternoon, you will visit a museum established by a world-renowned egg-painting artist. The complex, highly specialized art of egg painting represents one of the most important traditional art forms in Bucovina, and offers a highly refined and symbolic mix of secular art and religious imagery.

Later on, explore the remaining two monasteries at Moldovita and Sucevita. On Moldovita’s kaleidoscopic outer walls, the main color is yellow; the frescoes were painted by Toma of Suceava in 1537. Jewel-like Sucevita was built in 1585 and features a highly-developed fortification system.

Overnight in Gura Humorului, Hotel Casa Humor****

Day 5: Gura Humorului - “Nicolae Popa” museum - Neamt fortress - Bucharest

Morning brings a drive back to Bucharest. Along the way, stop to visit the medieval Neamt Fortress, a colossal 14th-century citadel built for inaccessibility: visitors could only gain entry via a narrow bridge built on monumental pillars.

You’ll also visit the extraordinary Nicolae Popa Ethnographic Museum, located in the home of sculptor himself. The museum is a carefully-curated repository for traditional Romanian peasant culture, and also features an extensive collection of original pieces by the artist.

Arrive in Bucharest in the late afternoon.
Overnight in Bucharest, Hotel Berthelot**** (centrally located)

Day 6: Bucharest, departure

Departure. Included transfer to the airport.

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 overnights 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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