



# Romania

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## Best Places to Stay

- » Hotel Amzei (p703)
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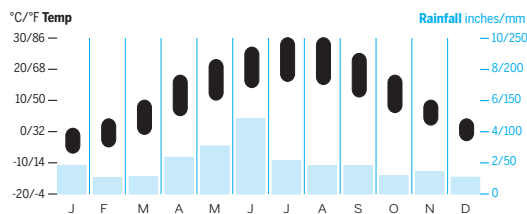
## Why Go?

Singularly beautiful, beguilingly simple and utterly fascinating, Romania's urban evolution has had little effect on its predominantly rural landscape, where aesthetically stirring hand-ploughed fields, sheep-instigated traffic jams and homemade-plum-brandy stills endure. The Carpathian Mountains offer relatively uncrowded hiking, cycling and skiing. Transylvania's Saxon towns are time-warp strolling grounds for Gothic architecture, Austro-Hungarian legacies and Vlad 'Țepeș' Dracula shtick. The fishies – and the birds that chomp them – thrive in the Danube Delta. Bucolic and wooden Maramureș has the 'merry cemetery', while Unesco-listed painted monasteries dot southern Bucovina. And, for the record, the big cities are a blast, too.

The antics of a tiny number of con artists and beggars have birthed exaggerated stories about Romanians, but you're far less likely to be the victim of crime here than in much of Western Europe. Enjoy the friendliness of a new generation with no vivid memories of Nicolae Ceaușescu.

## When to Go

### Bucharest



**May** Some of the best festivals: Sibiu Jazz, Transylvania Film Festival and Bucharest Carnival.

**June** Mountain hiking starts in mid-June, roughly when the Transfăgărășan Road opens.

**August** Folk festivals: National Romanian, Hora de la Prislop, and Fundata's Mountain Festival.

## Connections

Trains, buses and maxitaxis swarm around every available border crossing.

Trains depart Bucharest for destinations including Sofia, Budapest, Chişinău, İstanbul, Belgrade, Kyiv, Minsk and Moscow – the latter three via Suceava. Bucharest also has long-haul buses to Western European destinations, and daily maxitaxi services to Sofia.

Budapest can be easily reached by bus or train from Oradea, Timișoara and Cluj-Napoca.

Suceava has one daily bus to Chernivtsi, Ukraine, as well as Chişinău, though entering Moldova is easier from Iași. Timișoara buses go all over Western Europe, including Spain, Italy and Sweden. Nearly every major city has a bus service to İstanbul.

## ITINERARIES

### One week

Spend a day viewing the parts of Bucharest that survived Ceaușescu, then take a train to Brașov – Transylvania's main event – for castles, activities and beer at streetside cafes. Spend a day in Sighișoara's medieval citadel, then catch a train back to Bucharest or on to Budapest.

### Two weeks

Arrive in Bucharest (plane) or Timișoara (train), then head into Transylvania, devoting a day or two each at Brașov, Sighișoara and Sibiu. Tour southern Bucovina's painted monasteries, then continue to Kiev, Chişinău or Bucharest.

## Essential Food & Drink

- » **Mămăligă** Essentially a cornmeal mush that's boiled or fried, sometimes topped with sour cream and/or cheese.
- » **Ciorbă** A soup that's a mainstay of the Romanian diet and a powerful hangover remedy.
- » **Muşchi de vacă/porc/miel** A cutlet of beef, pork or lamb.
- » **Piept de pui** Chicken breast.
- » **Wine** The best Romanian wines include Cotnari, Murfatlar, Odobeşti, Târnave and Valea Călugărească.
- » **Țuică** A once-filtered clear brandy made from fermented fruit (the tastiest and most popular is plum *țuică*), usually 30 proof. *Palincă* is similar, only it's filtered twice and is usually around 60 proof.

## AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Romanian leu (plural: lei)
- » **Language** Romanian
- » **Money** ATMs abundant
- » **Visas** Not required for citizens of the EU, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand

## Fast Facts

- » **Area** 237,500 sq km
- » **Capital** Bucharest
- » **Telephone country code** 40
- » **Emergency** 112

## Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	€0.72
Canada	C\$1	€0.71
Japan	¥100	€0.82
New Zealand	NZ\$1	€0.54
UK	UK£1	€1.12
USA	US\$1	€0.69

## Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room** 90 lei to 130 lei
- » **Two-course meal** 20 lei
- » **Museum entrance** 6 lei
- » **Beer** 4 lei
- » **City transport ticket** 1.5 lei to 3 lei

## Resources

- » **Bucharest Life** ([www.bucharestlife.net](http://www.bucharestlife.net))
- » **Romania National Tourism Office** ([www.romania-tourism.com](http://www.romania-tourism.com))
- » **Romania and Moldova Travel Guide** ([www.romaniaandmoldova.com](http://www.romaniaandmoldova.com))