



Moldova

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Vatra Neamului (p259)
- ➔ Grill House (p259)
- ➔ Bastion (p259)
- ➔ Robin Pub (p259)
- ➔ Kumanyok (p264)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Jazz Hotel (p258)
- ➔ Hotel Russia (p264)
- ➔ Art Rustic Hotel (p257)
- ➔ Hotel Codru (p258)
- ➔ Agro Pensiunea Butuceni (p261)

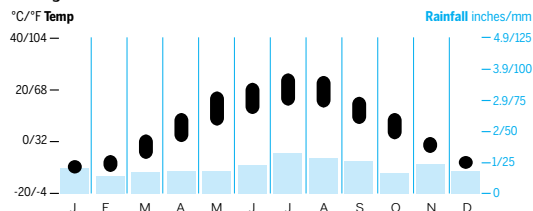
Why Go?

Sandwiched between Romania and Ukraine, Moldova is as 'off the beaten track' as you can get in Europe. Attracting just a fraction of the number of visitors of neighbouring countries (12,000 to 20,000 annually in recent years), it's a natural destination for travellers who like to plant the flag and visit lands few others have gone to.

But Moldova's charms run deeper than being merely remote. The country's wines are some of the best in Europe and a fledgling wine-tourism industry, where you can tour wineries and taste the grape, has taken root. The countryside is delightfully unspoiled and the hospitality of villagers is authentic. The capital, Chişinău, is surprisingly lively, with excellent restaurants and bars. Across the Dniestr River lies the separatist Russian-speaking region of Transdniestr. It's a time-warped place, where the Soviet Union still reigns supreme and busts of Lenin line the main boulevards.

When to Go

Chişinău



Jun Parks and restaurant terraces fill with students, and the weather is warm.

Jul High season hits its peak with hiking, wine tours and camping in full operation.

Oct The 'National Wine Day' festival takes place during the first weekend in October.



Moldova Highlights

1 Stroll the surprisingly pleasant streets and parks of the friendly capital **Chișinău** (p256).

2 Designate a driver for tours of the world-famous wine cellars at **Mileștii**

Mici (p261) and **Cricova** (p261).

3 Detox at the fantastic cave monastery, burrowed by 13th-century monks, at **Orheiul Vechi** (p261).

4 Go way off the beaten

path in the self-styled 'republic' of **Transdnistr** (p262), a surreal, living homage to the Soviet Union.

5 Gorge on the many excellent **dining options** (p259) found in Chișinău.

CHIȘINĂU

22 / POP 674,000

The capital Chișinău (Kishinev in Russian) is by far Moldova's largest and liveliest city and its main transport hub. While the city's origins date back six centuries to 1420, much of Chișinău (pronounced *kish-i-now*) was levelled in WWII and by a tragic earthquake that struck in 1940. The city was rebuilt in Soviet style from the 1950s onwards, and both the centre and outskirts are dominated by utilitarian (and frankly not very

attractive) high-rise buildings. That said, the centre is surprisingly green and peaceful. There are two large parks, and main avenues cut through groves of old-growth trees that lend a serene element.

Sights

Parcul Catedralei & Grădina Publică Ștefan cel Mare și Sfint

PARK

(Cathedral Park & Ștefan cel Mare Park; B-dul Ștefan cel Mare; 1) These two parks diagonally oppose each other. Both are popular with