



Moldova

Includes ➔

Chişinău.....	259
Orheiul Vechi.....	265
Soroca.....	266
Transdniestr.....	266
Tiraspol.....	267

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Grill House (p262)
- ➔ Gok-Oguz (p261)
- ➔ Kumanyok (p268)
- ➔ Vatra Neamului (p263)
- ➔ Pani Pit (p263)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Art Rustic Hotel (p261)
- ➔ City Park Hotel (p261)
- ➔ Eco-Resort Butuceni (p265)
- ➔ Hotel Russia (p268)
- ➔ Hotel Codru (p261)

Why Go?

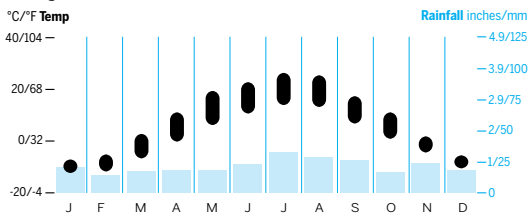
The world is finally waking up to the charms of this little nation wedged between Romania and Ukraine. Famously dubbed the world's least happy place in a bestselling book almost a decade ago, Moldova is increasingly known more for its unspoiled countryside and superb wine tours.

As one of Europe's least visited countries, Moldova retains a certain off-the-beaten-track charm. But even that's changing as budget flights from London and other European cities make the lively capital, Chişinău, a popular weekend break. Meanwhile, those looking to plant the flag in a land few others have visited still have their Shangri-La in the form of the breakaway republic of Transdniestr, where the Soviet Union still reigns supreme.

As for Moldova's 'unhappy' reputation? Well it's shed that, too, thank you very much. According to the most recent UN survey on the subject, Moldova is now the world's 55th *happiest* country.

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 wine festival takes place during the first weekend of October in Chişinău.



Moldova Highlights

1 Chișinău (p259)

Strolling the tree-lined streets and parks of Moldova's friendly capital.

2 Wineries (p109)

Designating a driver for tours of Cricova, one of

several world-famous wine cellars outside Chișinău.

3 Orheiul Vechi (p260)
Exploring this historic cave monastery, burrowed by 13th-century monks.

4 Transnistria (p266)

Leaving Europe behind in this surreal, living homage to the Soviet Union.

5 Soroca (p266) Ogling gypsy-king mansions in Moldova's Roma capital, and visiting its medieval fortress.

CHIȘINĂU

22 / POP 750,000

The capital Chișinău 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 was levelled in WWII and a tragic earthquake that struck in 1940. The city was rebuilt in Soviet style from the 1950s onwards, and is dominated by utilitarian (and frankly not very attractive) buildings.

That said, Chișinău does have a few architectural gems remaining, and is surprisingly green and peaceful. It's a pleasant city to wander about and discover as you go – with frequent cafe breaks and all-you-can-carry wine-shopping sprees.

Most visitors confine their stay to the centre, defined by two large, diagonally opposed parks. The best museums, hotels, restaurants and cafes are no more than a leisurely 10- or 15-minute walk away. The impressive