

# Bucharest & Transylvania

8 days **from £879** May & September



The marbled halls of the Palace of Parliament in Bucharest, the charming baroque streets of medieval Brasov, the imposing pointed towers in Vlad the Impaler's Sighisoara, the spectacular scenery of the Transylvanian Alps – these are just some of the highlights of this fascinating tour of Romania. On this holiday you'll find that the bustling capital Bucharest contrasts superbly with the fortified churches and forbidding castles of Transylvania, while Brasov will reveal the Saxon heritage of this part of Romania. There's also the chance to visit the old cultural centre of Sibiu.

- 3 nights bb in Bucharest and 4 nights bb in Brasov with one dinner
- Tour of Bucharest with entrance to the Palace of Parliament • Excursion to Sighisoara and Prince Charles' Viscri • Tours of Bran and Peles castles
- Excursion to the fortified churches of Harman and Prejmer

## PROGRAMME

**DAY ONE:** Flight to Bucharest, transfer to your hotel in the centre of the city for two nights bed and breakfast hotel accommodation. There are plenty of restaurants in downtown Bucharest to suit all tastes and budgets. Your Tour Director will be on hand to assist.

**DAY TWO:** Mid-morning walking tour of Bucharest. Romania's cosmopolitan capital is well known for its wide boulevards and fine pre-World War I buildings that gave it the name of Little Paris. The tour will concentrate on the Old Town and the Calea Victoriei - Bucharest's most famous avenue which leads to the beautiful Romanian Athenaeum, the Royal Palace and Revolution Square. Bucharest is also known for its stark Communist-era architecture, exemplified in Ceausescu's monster House of the Republic, now known as the Palace of Parliament. A guided tour will show you some of 1,100 rooms of the world's largest civilian administrative building.

**DAY THREE:** Travel north through the Southern Carpathians to Brasov, stopping en route at Bran Castle. On a rocky outcrop guarding the entrance to a mountain pass, Bran Castle lives up to the Gothic fairytale image that Bram Stoker's Dracula evokes. The castle was built by the Saxons in the late 14th century to defend Brasov from invasion by the Turks. Inside you'll find displays of rich Western European furniture, which Queen Marie, granddaughter of Queen Victoria, purchased in the 1920s when the castle was used as a royal

residence. Continue to Brasov (126 miles today) for four nights bed and breakfast with dinner in a local restaurant this evening. Arrival in Brasov will be late afternoon. Your Tour Director will conduct a short orientation walk of Brasov before dinner.

**DAYS FOUR TO SIX:** In Brasov. Brasov is a medieval town with ornate Saxon churches and townhouses. Local legend has it that when the Pied Piper lured away the children from Hamelin they re-emerged near Brasov's main square, Piata Sfatului, in the heart of the medieval quarter. It is one of the finest Baroque squares in Romania. Here you can visit the 15th century Town Hall, with its quaint Trumpeter's Tower on top, and the Lutheran Black Church - the largest Gothic church between Vienna and Istanbul with a 6-tonne bell and a huge organ with 4000 pipes. The Romanian School Museum displays some of the first textbooks written in the Romanian language and printed in Brasov.

There are two included excursions during your stay in Brasov. One is a full day trip to the birthplace of Vlad the Impaler, Sighisoara 81 miles away. Sighisoara was fortified by the Saxon guilds – the Blacksmiths', Butchers' and Cobblers' – among the defensive towers which still survive and the beautifully preserved medieval citadel is on the UNESCO World Heritage List. In the belfry of the imposing Clock Tower which dates back to the 13th century, a drummer strikes every hour and every day at midnight a different wooden

figure emerges. Close to the Clock Tower you'll find the house where Vlad Dracul was born. On the return journey to Brasov, you'll make a stop at Viscri where the Prince of Wales bought, restored and converted traditional dwellings into guesthouses.

The second excursion is a pleasant half-day visit nearby to Harman and Prejmer. Under continuous threat of marauding Mongols and Turks, the Saxons not only fortified their towns, but the villages as well with defensive works centred around the church. Two fine examples are in Harman, where the church is surrounded by a 40ft wall with seven towers and Prejmer where the church defences include bastions, drawbridges and over 270 rooms built into the outer wall in four storeys as refuge for the village's families in times of attack. (25-mile round trip).

There is also an optional excursion to Sibiu including lunch, the largest of the Saxon merchant towns. As well as a trade centre, Sibiu has always been the artistic and cultural capital of Transylvania. The former wealth of the city is evident in its grand squares, fine buildings and churches. 180 miles round trip.

**DAY SEVEN:** Return to Bucharest. The main stop today is the resort of Sinaia in the Bucegi Mountains 31 miles south of Brasov. Sinaia had a monastery and little else until the 1870's when King Carol I built a summer residence here. His ornate Peles Castle, built in German Renaissance style, is richly decorated with carved wood, tapestries and oriental ceramics. After a tour of the Castle you have free time to visit the resort and for lunch before continuing to Bucharest (a further 90 miles) for your last night on a bed and breakfast basis.

**DAY EIGHT:** Departure for the airport and your flight home.

## OUR HOTELS

### HOTEL CAPITOL ★★★★★,

Bucharest (first two and last nights)

The historic Hotel Capitol is in an excellent position on Calea Victoriei. Rooms have free high-speed, wireless Internet, cable tv, individual climate control and bathroom equipped with bath/shower and hairdryer. The hotel has a restaurant which is popular with the locals and hotel guests. ([www.hotelcapitol.ro/en](http://www.hotelcapitol.ro/en))

### HOTEL COROANA BRASOVULUI ★★★,

Brasov (four nights)

This small, friendly and modern hotel is in a quiet position but just a 15 minute walk to Brasov's main square. The hotel has a pleasant breakfast room and cosy English bar. Dinner at a local restaurant is included on the first night. Rooms have tv, wifi, direct dial telephone, shower and hairdryer. ([www.coroana-brasovului.ro](http://www.coroana-brasovului.ro))

**A WALKING HOLIDAY is also available from this hotel. Please ask for a copy of our Walking Holidays brochure or visit [preferredts.com](http://preferredts.com).**