

22.01.2020 REVISED ITINERARY HUNGARY – ROMANIA – BULGARIA – SERBIA – HUNGARY

*31.05.2020 – 16.06.2020
18 DAYS / 17 NIGHTS
02 PERSONS*



DAY 1: ARRIVAL IN BUDAPEST

Welcome to Hungary. Transfer to the hotel by your own.
A private transfer can be provided upon request – extra charge.



Day 2, 01.06.2020: BUDAPEST

Breakfast at your hotel.

Today enjoy a free day to explore Budapest. Head to Statue Park to see the communist monuments that were removed from the city after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

Depart to **Buda area**, the **Castle hill**. You will see the **Royal Palace**, rebuilt after the 2nd world war in Neo-Baroque style (today it houses the Hungarian National Gallery, the Budapest History museum and the National Library), the **Matthias Church**, the **Fishermen's bastion**.

Then you will go to **Pest** and discover the main historical buildings of this area, as the **Saint Stephen Basilica**, the famous **Andrassy Street**, the **Heroes square**, the **Dohanyi Synagogue**, and the **central Market Hall**. During your day you will visit the **Parliament**, sitting on the bank of the Danube.



As an alternative, you can pick **Szechenyi bath** in Budapest.



In the evening enjoy a **sightseeing cruise on the Danube** and discover the beauty of Budapest seen from a different angle.

Overnight in your hotel in Budapest.

DAY 3, 02.06.2020: BUDAPEST – EGER – DEBRECEN

Breakfast at your hotel.

Meet the rent a car company representative in Budapest International airport.

Pick up the car and documents of the car and continue your trip.

We leave behind the enchanting Budapest and we continue to Debrecen.

On the way we stop in Eger to explore **Eger's 13th-century castle**, which was the scene of the Historic siege that thwarted the Ottoman Empire's advancement into Western Europe.

Here you can explore the **Gothic Palace**, and tour **underground passageways of archaeological finds**. You may also like to check out the town's **19th-century cathedral**, the **northernmost medieval minaret in Europe** for views of the city, or the **Minorite church in Dobo Square**.



Our next stop will be the pleasant town of **Debrecen**. Here you can explore **Deri Square** with its fountains, colorful buildings, museums, and **golden Great Church**.

Overnight at your hotel in Debrecen.



DAY 4, 03.06.2020: DEBRETEN – VISEU

Breakfast at your hotel.

Continue on across the central plains into the **Maramures region of Romania**. Maramures is also a place that can feel like stepping back in time. Today you'll discover more about the region of Maramures. You'll visit the **unique Merry Cemetery in Sapanta**, where the life stories of the deceased - the good and the bad of their lives - are displayed on colorful wooden crosses. You'll also see **the village museum in Sighetu Marmatiei**, an assembly of beautiful local wooden architecture, along with stopping by various other traditional villages.



You will have today the chance to visit some of the **wooden churches from Maramures (Unesco World Heritage)**. Maramures is one of the better-known regions of Romania, with autonomous traditions since the Middle Ages – but still not very much visited. Its well-preserved wooden villages and churches, its traditional lifestyle, and the local colorful dresses still in use make Maramureș as near to a living museum as can be found in Europe. Meet some of the local craftsmen and artisans as women sewing and washing clothes at a natural washing machine or men carving the wood and running plum brandy distillery.

Overnight at your hotel in Viseu de Sus.

DAY 5, 04.06.2020: MARAMURES

Breakfast at your hotel.

Today you will step back in time and try a trip with “**Mocanita**” – the steam train.



After the long tour through the woods, you can visit **Barsana Monastery**, one of the landmarks of Maramures. The reason being that, is the beautiful church and the other wooden buildings made by craftsmen from Maramures inside of assembly. The Barsana Monastery church is one of the tallest wooden church in Romania, having 57m height.

Overnight at your hotel in Viseu de Sus.

DAY 6, 05.06.2020: VISEU – GURA HUMORULUI

Breakfast at your hotel.

Our journey takes us to Bucovina region.

We see the **Moldovita monastery**, which houses a valuable museum which proudly displays the Golden Apple, a prize awarded by the International Association of Journalists in all five Moldavian monasteries in recognition of the artistic and cultural value of the frescoes on the outside walls. Moldovita Monastery is a UNESCO protected monument as well.



A visit to Bucovina is not complete if we not see and try the technique of **egg painting**. There are also 2 museums dedicated to this handcraft. Painting eggs for Easter is a tradition in Romania, which goes back for centuries. Painted eggs are a unique element in Romanian culture, which stands testament to the piety and spirituality of the Romanian people.



On the way to the hotel you can find the **Sucevita monastery**, the last of 22 painted churches of Bucovina. The western exterior wall of the church is not painted. Legend has it that work stopped after one of the painters fell from the scaffolding and died. If not, we can discover them the next day.



Stop in **Marginea village** for exploring on your own the technique of **black pottery**.



Accommodation at your hotel in Gura Humorului.

DAY 7, 06.06.2020: GURA HUMORULUI – PIATRA NEAMT

Breakfast at your hotel.

In the morning we see the **Voronet Monastery**, known throughout the world for its exterior frescoes of bright and intense colors, and for the hundreds of well-preserved figures placed against the renowned azurite background.

On the way to Piatra Neamt you can visit the **Neamt fortress** and **Varatec monastery**.



Neamt Fortress is one of the most important medieval monuments in Romania and the symbol of the most glorious period of its eastern part, Moldavia, under the rule of Stephen the Great (1457-1504).

Built in the 14th century, the fortress was first mentioned in 1395, in a document issued by the Hungarian King Sigismund of Luxemburg. Located at 480 meters altitude and named after the nearby river Neamt, the fortress had a strategic position for defending the territory of Moldavia. It was substantially reinforced during the rule of Prince Stephen the Great, highly praised for his heroic victories against the Turks and the many churches and monasteries he founded, including today's **UNESCO World Heritage Sites** from Bucovina.



Varatec monastery

The first church at Varatec was a small church built in wood. As the number of nuns grew, the wooden church was replaced by the existing masonry church between 1808-1812, but painting and decoration continued until 1841. The second church, chronologically speaking, to be built as from 1808 was "the Assumption of the Virgin". It was known and named by the community "the larger Church". Its architecture preserves certain features taken up from the old church architecture and that of the 18th century in Moldavia.

The other churches of Varatec Convent, built during the 19th century are as follows: "St. John the Baptist's Nativity" – it was built in wood and then in brick, and "The Transfiguration", built in brick and stone, in 1847. This last church has its inside walls painted by artist Eremia Profeta in 1965. There is also a chapel dedicated to St. Nicholas on the first floor of the belltower, placed in the middle of the guest's house, which was built during the first decades of the 19th century. Particularly the church of "the Assumption" is a valuable artistic monument. Six hundred nuns live at Varatec Monastery. **The complex houses an icon museum and a small embroidery school.**



Accommodation at your hotel in Piatra Neamt.

DAY 8, 07.06.2020: PIATRA NEAMT – SIGHISOARA

Breakfast at your hotel.

We cross the Carpathian Mountains, and, on the way, we admire the nature beauties, the **Bicaz Gorges**. The road that slices through the gorges is among Romania's most spectacular. This stunning gorge has a part that is so narrow that it is known as "The Neck Of Hell." The drive is worth it. The gorge is part of the Cheile Bicazului-Hășmaș National Park. Along this way, one may find bazaars where one can buy products made by the Romanian and Hungarian craftsmen from this area. The gorge twists and turns steeply uphill for 5km, cutting through sheer, and 300m-high limestone rocks. At one point, the narrow mountain road runs uncomfortably beneath the overhanging rocks in a section known as the 'neck of hell'.



Our next stop is the **Red lake**, the largest natural mountain lake in Romania, its name coming from the reddish alluvia (iron oxides and iron hydroxides) deposited in the lake by the Red Creek. Here we enjoy a **typically Hungarian meal** at a local restaurant.

They can also serve fresh trout.



Late in the evening we arrive in **Sighisoara**, the most beautiful and best-preserved medieval towns in Europe. Designated as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, this perfectly intact 16th century gem with nine towers, cobbled streets, burgher houses and ornate churches rivals the historic streets of Old Prague or Vienna for atmospheric magic. It is also the birthplace of Vlad Dracula, also known as Vlad Tepes (Vlad the Impaler), ruler of the province of Walachia from 1456 to 1462.

Accommodation at your hotel in Sighisoara.

DAY 9, 08.06.2020: SIGHISOARA – BIERTAN – SIBIU – SIBIEL

Breakfast at your hotel.

Discover Sighisoara, one of the best preserved medieval citadel in Europe remains one of the most beautiful medieval city in Europe. It is a **World Heritage Site by UNESCO**.

See from outside the **Clock Tower** is a historical and architectural monument in Sighisoara, the most massive of the nine defense towers of Sighisoara, which have been preserved to this day. The monument has a height of 64 meters, is located in the southeast part of the city and is visible from any point of the city center. The edifice was built in the fourteenth century to protect the main gate of the city.



We also see from outside (closed on Mondays) **Biertan fortified church** which was built in the 15th century by the Saxons. It is part of the Unesco Heritage since 1993 and it boasts beside religious objects also a matrimonial prison. Take a walk by yourself and discover the locals and their traditional food.



Our next destination is **Sibiu**. Sibiu is one of the most important cultural centers of Romania and was designated the European Capital of Culture for the year 2007, along with the city of Luxembourg. Formerly the center of the Transylvanian Saxons, the old city of Sibiu was ranked as “Europe’s 8th-most idyllic place to live” by Forbes in 2008. You will begin with a walking city tour and a first stop at the **Big and Small Squares** and discover the old surrounding defense

walls and the remaining guild towers. Here you can admire the **Bruckenthal Museum** it was erected in the late 18th century in Sibiu, Transylvania, Romania, housed in the palace of Samuel von Brukenthal — who was Habsburg governor of Transylvania and who established its first collections around 1790. You can't miss in Sibiu is the **Evangelical Cathedral**, the most famous Gothic-style church in Sibiu, Transylvania. The four turrets situated on top of the steeple were a sign to let foreigners know that the town had the right to sentence to death. The **Sibiu Lutheran Cathedral** was built in the 14th century on the location of another 12th-century church. For three centuries it served as a burial place for the mayors, earls and other personalities from Sibiu.



Accommodation and dinner in Sibiel village at a local guesthouse.

DAY 10, 09.06.2020: SIBIEL – FAGARAS – BRASOV

Breakfast at the guesthouse.

Our first stop is **Fagaras fortress**.

Built in 1310 on the site of a former 12th century wooden fortress (burned by the Tartars in 1241), Fagaras was enlarged between the 15th and 17th centuries and was considered one of the strongest fortifications in Transylvania. The fortress was surrounded by a deep moat which, in times of war or social unrest, could easily be filled with water from a nearby mountain brook. A bridge over the moat provided the only access point. The fortress boasts three floors and five towers.



Around noon we arrive in Brasov city. Today we see the **Black Church – gothic attraction and the Council Square, Rope Street, St. Nicholas Church** together with the **First Romanian School**.



In the evening you can test the local food at a local restaurant. Overnight at the hotel in Brasov.

DAY 11, 10.06.2020: BRASOV – BRAN – SINAIA – BUCHAREST

Breakfast at the hotel.

The first stop can be made to **Bran Castle**, said to be the inspiration for the home of Bram Stoker's **Dracula**. Though not exactly: super spooky, it is undeniably impressive, perched on a high cliff top and surrounded by pine trees.



The next stop will be in **Sinaia**, known as the “Pearl of Carpathians”. Here we have the extended visit of **Peles castle**, a masterpiece of German new-Renaissance architecture, considered by many one of the most stunning castles in Europe. Commissioned by King Carol I in 1873 and completed in 1883, the castle served as the summer residence of the royal family until 1947. Its 160 rooms are adorned with the finest examples of European art, Murano crystal chandeliers, German stained-glass windows and Cordoba leather-covered walls. Peles Castle was the first European castle entirely lit by electrical current. The electricity was produced by the castle's own plant.



Head south to Bucharest today.

Overnight at the hotel in Bucharest.

DAY 12, 11.06.2020: BUCHAREST

Breakfast at the hotel.

Today you can visit **Primaverii Palace**, house of Ceausescu. After the visit we will take a walking tour through the **Old City** and find out more about the man that founded Bucharest – Vlad the Impaler aka Dracula that established his royal court here in the 15th century.

Today we admire as well the **Palace of Parliament** is the second largest building in the world.



Old Town Bucharest, the center of the city, is a true open-air museum. Here you will find the ruins of the Old Royal Court, the oldest church in Bucharest and the Lipscani pedestrian zone. This pedestrian zone, a network of small streets, represents a very lively part of the city, where merchants and artisans once stood and where there are now many restaurants, cafés, bars, antiques and souvenirs shops.

The Old Court and the Church Complex - In the center of the historical area are the ruins of the Old Court Built in the 15th century by Vlad Tepes, also known as Vlad Dracula. Next to the palace is the Church of the Court (Biserica Curtea Veche), dating from 1559 and considered the oldest in Bucharest. For 2 centuries, the church was the place where the Romanian king was crowned.

A must stop is the **Village Museum** where you will find one of the most interesting open air museum with original peasant households from all over Romania.



Overnight at the hotel in Bucharest.

DAY 13, 12.06.2020: BUCHAREST – VELIKO TARNOVO – PLOVDIV

Breakfast and departure to Veliko Turnovo – the medieval capital city of Bulgaria, picturesquely located on 4 hills above Yantra river.

Today we cross the bridge to Bulgaria.

Arrival in **Veliko Tarnovo**, one of the most picturesque cities you will ever visit in Bulgaria. It has been named “the city of the countries”. The old town is situated on three hills and it has been the capital of medieval Bulgaria. Here you can find the amazing **Tsaravets Fortress** which is situated on the Tsaravets hill known as the location of Execution Rock, an outcropping over the Yantra River from which traitors were pushed to their deaths and their bodies fell into the river.



Discover the old town of Veliko Tarnovo and go to **Arbanassi village**.

Here you can admire the **Church of Nativity**. This is the earliest and the most richly decorated church in the village of Arbanasi. It was built by stages. The oldest layer of wall-paintings is from the end of XVI c. It consists of a naos, a narthex, a gallery and a chapel dedicated to St. John the Baptist. One of the most interesting scenes is the genealogical tree of Jesus Christ with the twelve ancient philosophers.



Continue to Plovdiv. Overnight at the hotel in Plovdiv.

DAY 14: 13.06.2020: PLOVDIV – SOFIA

Breakfast at the hotel.

Today we enjoy the old town of Plovdiv. With an easy grace, Plovdiv mingles invigorating nightlife among millennia-old ruins. Like Rome, Plovdiv straddles seven hills; but as Europe's oldest continuously inhabited city, it's far more ancient. It is best loved for its romantic old town, packed with colorful and creaky 19th-century mansions that are now house-museums, galleries and guesthouses.

Visit of the **Old Plovdiv** architectural reserve with the **Ancient Amphitheatre**, **St. Constantine and Helena Church**, **The Ethnographic museum** (the so-called Royal House). Visit **Kapana** – the artistic neighbourhood of Plovdiv, walk along the **longest pedestrian street in the world** – **Djumaya mosque square**, the **Roman Stadium**, the remains of the **Roman forum**.



Around noon you can leave to Sofia.

Upon arrival in **Sofia** you can visit the **Boyana Church** (a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**) and a walk that will explore the major sights Sofia has to offer including the **Aleksandar Nevski Cathedral**, the **Parliament**, the **Russian church**, the **Presidential Palace** and **St. George's Rotunda**. The capital of Bulgaria and the middle of the Balkans and one of the oldest towns from Europe. Very close to her there are several hot water springs



and that's why the Romans after they conquered her they have transformed her into a typical roman settlement becoming one of the most prosper area from the Balkans in that time. Visit the **National History Museum**. The museum is situated in the former residence of the communist government in Bulgaria, at the foothills of Vitosha mountain – a cubic structure with a lot of woodcarvings, big windows and open space for receptions. The building itself has a historical significance for now-a-days Bulgaria, as it is here that the beginning if the transition period started back in 1989. It is one of the largest museums on the Balkans and houses the

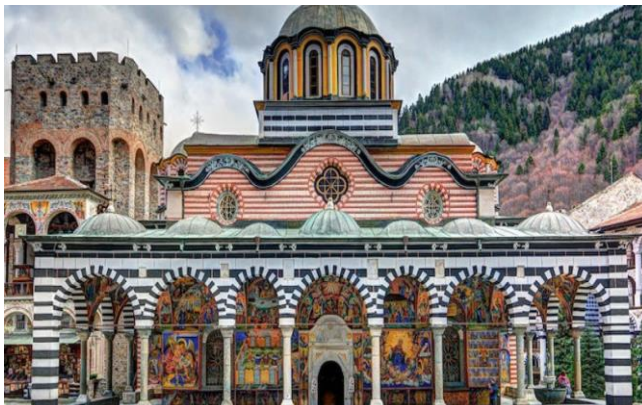
famous Thracian golden and silver treasures as well as a replica of the oldest gold processed by a human being found on Earth (Varna necropolis, now-a-days Bulgaria).

Overnight at the hotel in Sofia.

DAY 15: 14.06.2020: SOFIA – RILA – SOFIA

Breakfast at the hotel.

Today you can go to **Rila Monastery UNESCO site** – the largest monastery in Bulgaria, located 1100 m above sea level in Rila Mountain National Park. Rila Monastery is founded in the 10th century by the hermit St. Ivan of Rila. He actually lived in a cave without any material possessions not far from the monastery's location. His students built the complex when they came to the mountains to receive their education. The monastery is known as being one of the hideouts of Bulgarian revolutionaries such as Vassil Levski, Peyo Yavorov, Gotse Delchev and etc. The church has five domes, three altars and two side chapels. The gold-plated iconostasis is one of the most precious items inside the church. It is famous for its wood-carving, which took five years to be created by 4 handicraftsmen.



Return to Sofia in the early evening, overnight at the same hotel.

DAY 16: 15.06.2020: SOFIA – BELGRADE

Today we cross the border to Serbia and continue to **Belgrade** to explore the capital. The most impressive monument of the town is the **Kalamegdan Fortress** where you can stroll along the imposing historical buildings and enjoy the magnificent panoramic city view. You can also visit the **Cathedral of Saint Sava** (Hram Svetog Save), one of the largest churches in the world. The cosmopolitan, Serbian capital combines transparency and zest for life with historical consciousness. Overnight at the hotel in Belgrade.



DAY 17: 16.06.2020: BELGRADE – SZEKSZÁRD

In the morning you will drive to Szekszárd. Free time and overnight at the hotel.

DAY 18: 17.06.2020: BUDAPEST DEPARTURE

Breakfast at the hotel. Proceed to Budapest.

Meet with the representative of the rental company at the airport to deliver the car. End of services.