



Trip Dossier for Romania – The Land of Dracula

Trip Code: FRBW Issue date: 8 October 2009 Valid from: 01 January 2010

Day 1 Fly to Bucharest. Transfer to Prahova Valley

Fly to Bucharest from London. On arrival you will be met and transferred north into the Carpathian Mountains to our first nights' accommodation in the Prahova Valley. **Hotel (breakfast).**

Day 2 Cross into Transylvania, medieval Brasov, Saxon Village

We set off in the morning into Transylvania. This is a unique region whose historical, ethnic and cultural characteristics set it apart from the other Romanian provinces. Beginning in the 13th century Saxons were invited to come from the German region to help protect the border lands of the Hungarian Empire. They were given land and rights over the local population in exchange for building citadels and fortifications to guard the south and south-eastern frontiers against Tartar and Turkish invaders. They built impressive strongholds, citadels on the hilltops of the inhabited areas and fortified their churches, many of which still stand today. We stop at Brasov, one of the 7 great 'burgs' of Transylvania. This beautifully preserved medieval and baroque city, cobbled streets enclosed by huge walls, is most famous for its 'Black Church' – the largest gothic structure between Vienna and Istanbul. After the chance to wander here and lunch (own expense) we will continue on Sighosara and then Biertan (2½ hours) a Saxon Village and your home for the next 4 nights. **Village Guesthouse (4 breakfasts, 1 lunch and 4 dinners)**

Days 3 - 5 Biertan Saxon Village, Ropes & Wires

Over the next three days you are based in the Saxon village of Biertan where there are range of different activities organised for you. You can do all of them if you wish or if you would prefer you can just explore the surrounding countryside and enjoy its unspoilt landscape independently. Typically you can rent bikes or perhaps book a local wine tasting. Breakfast and Dinner are provided in the Guesthouse each day and lunch is included once. The order of the planned activities may vary according to local conditions.

Today we travel to Sovata (1 hour drive) for a morning of varied activities at the activity resort there. There are low and high climbing elements beforehand everyone goes through a short belaying course where they learn the necessary skills for ensuring safety. Among the activities are a giant Jacob's Ladder, parallel beams, Tirolean Traverse and Tarzan section. If time allows there will also be a Treasure Hunt while lunch will be provided before your return to Biertan in the afternoon.

Zip wires

Day 4 Biertan, hike between the villages

South-Eastern Transylvania is one of Europe's most important natural landscapes including some of the finest pristine wildflower rich grasslands. These have survived as a result of centuries of good husbandry by local farming communities who are still managing the the land today in a way that has long protected the countryside and created a unique place. The Saxon incomers brought distinctive architectural styles to the villages along with many stunning churches and manor houses. The constant threat of invasion from the East resulted in the fortification of many of these buildings. The churches of Viscri, Saschiz, and Biertan are on the UNESCO World Heritage list and can all be visited. The region is made up of a mosaic of unspoiled traditional villages, fortified medieval churches, extensive deciduous woodlands and rich flower meadows. The small communities, the few roads, and persistence of traditional non-intensive agriculture have helped preserve this landscape. Bears and wolves still roam the woods and conrakes and quail call among the long grass. This type of environment, once common across much of Europe, has now sadly disappeared almost everywhere. You will follow traditional trails linking the villages although the exact length and duration of the walking will depend upon the group but might range from 2 to 6 hours.

Day 5 Biertan, discover local crafts

Many of the once common local crafts are now pretty much extinct in Western Europe so one day you will be able to discover and learn about them and try your hand. You will start with bread making in the village of Tarnava Mare. Hear traditional sour dough bread is made in 100 years old oven in a traditional old Saxon house. The starter dough, saved from the previous bake, is mixed with flour and water to start the fermentation process. Left overnight it is kneaded in the morning before being left to rise for about 4 hours. The wood oven is prepared and once it reaches the desired heat the coals are raked aside and the dough placed directly on the floor using long handled wooden shovels. Most households own 2 or 3 cows and their morning and evening milking is often the only source of household income. Sheep and goats are also kept for milk and in particular for cheese, which is made in a traditional way unchanged for centuries. The animals are fed on the flowery grasslands and the cheese-making of cheese takes place up in the hills where they graze. Shepherds are entrusted to look after the flocks, according to their reputation, and they offer cheese in return for rent. The sheep are kept in temporary



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summer shelters and each sheepfold usually has about 300 sheep and an immaculate cheese room with trays and troughs. The idea is visit the sheepfold, see how cheese is made and to have some of the freshest cheese with your traditional Saxon picnic. In Tarnava Mare you can also see the local crafts of weaving and barrel making as well as the manufacture of many daily household items using local materials. It is a simple yet efficient lifestyle that can seem a long way away from that we are used to in Western Europe.

Day 6 Sovata, Bear Lake and Salt Mines, Sighisoara

It is time to say goodbye to Biertan as you head to Sovata (1 hour) for a bath in the helio-thermal lake called Bear lake (due to its shape). This is Europe's only helio-thermal lake and its highly salty waters are renowned for their therapeutic effects. The top fresh-water layer collects the sun's rays and transfers them to the lower salty layers where the temperature can sometimes reach 50°C. You will also visit nearby Praid to explore the Salt Mine. There is proof that the Romans were living in the area in the 2nd century AD and it is they who exploited salt in great volumes. Mining and the processing of salt have determined the history of the site ever since the Middle Ages. Due to the extensive mining there are large underground halls where a unique salt-mine microclimate has been created with a relatively constant temperature of between 14° & 16°C. After this visit you will drive to Sighisoara (approximately 1 hour). This charming fortified town is one of the best preserved in Romania and its narrow cobbled streets and bright townhouses are slowly being restored. It has the only inhabited citadel left in the country and we will stay inside it so you will be right in the heart of it to explore at leisure. **Hotel (breakfast).**

Day 7 Bran's Castle, Zarnesti Bear Reserve & Bucharest

Head off early for a full day today starting with one of the most famous castles in Europe (2½ hours drive). Built by the Teutonic Knights in c1215, Bran's Castle was the inspiration for Bram Stoker's 1897 classic novel 'Dracula'. The castle is situated on the border between Transylvania and Wallachia, featured in many Dracula films and is renowned for its close ties to the legendary 'Vald Tepes' – translation 'Vlad the Impaler' (1431-1476). This infamous warlord fought against the Turks during the Ottoman Empire. He enforced the death penalty and impaled all those he considered as enemies of the state including robbers, cunning priests, treacherous noblemen, beggars and usurper Saxons. In fact, he fought against everybody who tried to replace him including his stepbrother 'Vlad the Monk' and his cousin 'Dan the Young'. Although historians called him 'Vlad Tepes', local people called him 'Count Dracula' as his family name was 'Dracul' – the Romanian word for devil or dragon. As to whether he turned into a vampire remains a mystery... Enjoy looking around the castle with its labyrinth of ghostly narrow corridors, secret passageways and chambers and make up your own mind. Leaving Dracula behind we visit Zarnesti and the nearby WSPA Bear Sanctuary. Set up to help highlight the plight of captive bears in Romania this is now home to nearly 40 rescued animals. The visit is made on foot with a local guide and as well as seeing the bears you will visit the main clinic to see a short presentation on the sanctuary. After stopping for lunch you will then leave the mountains behind and head south to end the day in Bucharest (approx 3½ hours drive). **Hotel (Breakfast).**

Day 8 Return to London

Morning free to explore Bucharest at leisure before your afternoon flight back to London.

This itinerary includes our group flights from London. If you are making other flight arrangements, please refer to your Confirmation Invoice and Joining Instructions for details of the start or end of the trip. Please remember international flights and trip dates do occasionally change, so please always purchase flexible tickets.

Each itinerary is planned many months in advance and although it is our intention to operate the itinerary as printed in the brochure and detailed here, it may be necessary to make some changes as a result of alterations to flight schedules, climatic conditions, limitations of infrastructure or other operational factors which are beyond our control. As a consequence, the order or location of overnight stops may vary from those outlined but we will always endeavour to keep you informed of any such changes. Included meals are indicated in the daily itinerary.

Is this right for your family? An exciting short break for the family to see rural Eastern Europe and get a flavour of the culture of this relatively untouched area. Based in a comfortable traditional Saxon guesthouse for much of the time you will try your hand at local crafts, enjoy local walks, experience a salt lake and head into the trees on a zip-wire and rope course – there is a good range of activities to try if you wish. The variety of the trip is completed with major highlights such as the chance to see bears in Zarnesti and a visit to Dracula's Castle.

Lone Parents Single parents or other adults travelling alone with children should be aware that some countries, including the UK, require documentation confirming that the individual has authority to travel with the minor. It is crucial that you contact the relevant country embassy for further information on exactly what may be required. These details can be found on the Foreign & Commonwealth Website under the appropriate country www.fco.gov.uk/travel



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Climate Romania has a temperate climate, spring is pleasant with cool mornings and nights and warm days. Summer is warm with extended sunny days. The hottest areas in summer are the lowlands in southern and eastern Romania where 30°C is often reached in July and August. Temperatures are always cooler in the mountains.

Average climate in Bucharest

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Max °C	1	4	10	18	23	27	30	30	25	18	10	4
Min °C	-7	-5	-1	5	10	14	16	15	11	6	2	-3
Rainfall (mm)	46	26	28	59	77	121	53	45	45	29	36	27

Accommodation and Meals You'll spend four nights in the Guesthouse in Biertan where, en-suite rooms are clean and comfortable. The guesthouse is a medieval Saxon house recently restored and has an inner court with terrace.

Breakfast and evening meals are traditional home-cooked cuisine and lunch is also provided one day. All other accommodation is comfortable with en suite facilities and is on a bed and breakfast basis. The Hotel in Sighisoara is located within the citadel area itself. Vegetarians are catered for, but please advise us in advance.

Local Costs

A small bottle of mineral water (500ml)	£0.40
A large bottle of mineral water (1 litre)	£0.50
A can of coke (soft drinks)	£0.60
A carton or bottle of fruit juice	£1.20
A bottle of beer	£1.20
A two course meal – excluding drinks*	£5.00
A three course meal – excluding drinks*	£8.00

*Based on a mid range tourist restaurant.

Currency The unit of currency in Romania is the Lei. The exchange rate at the time of writing (September 2009) is Lei 4.7 = UK£1 / Lei 4.2 = € Euro. We recommend that you change money at the airport or at the widespread ATMs. Credit cards are accepted in restaurants and some souvenir shops.

Tipping is a recognised part of life and although at your discretion you will be expected to reward service. Please remember that all tips should be a way for individuals to thank staff for good service. As a guideline each person should allow £2 per day to cover tips for local staff.

Security Whilst the vast majority of travellers never experience anything untoward it is worth taking precautions particularly in urban areas. You should take sensible precautions in crowded areas such as street markets and airports, where pick-pocketing is common, and keep clear of any street disturbances. Don't wear expensive jewellery, never leave your bags unattended, keep large amounts of money, cameras and mobile phones out of sight when walking in town centres, and avoid walking in city centres after dark. Keep copies of important documents, including passports, in a separate place to the documents themselves, together with details of credit cards. Leave copies at home with a friend too. Safeguard valuables, important documents and cash and deposit them in hotel safes, where practicable.

Language The official language is Romanian.

Time Romania is GMT +2 hours (GMT +3 in summer)



Clothing & Equipment List for The Land of Dracula

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The following list of clothing and equipment is intended to be fairly comprehensive and experienced travellers may well take a good deal less luggage than we recommend. It is a good idea to wear muted colours while on tracking animals in the forest, as bright colours can be seen by animals and birds from a long way off.

CLOTHING	NUMBER PER PERSON	Check	EQUIPMENT	Check
Walking Shoes	1 pair (optional)		Soft-sided bag/Rucksack 50 litres	
Trainers or sandals	1 pair		Daypack 20 - 25 litres	
Socks	3+		Sunglasses	
Waterproof jacket	1 – lightweight		A large water bottle	
T-Shirts/ Polo shirts	3		Personal First Aid Kit	
Long trousers	2		Torch and batteries	
Shorts	1		Camera, Memory Card	
Fleece or sweatshirt	1		Washing Kit – antibacterial handwash and wet wipes are very useful	
Hat / Baseball Cap	1 - recommended for sun protection		Binoculars	
Casual wear	For evenings		Sunscreen	
Swimwear	1		Insect repellent	

ITEM	Check	ITEM	Check
Passport		Small Sewing Kit & Safety Pins	
Air Tickets		Universal travelling adapter	
Money/Travellers Cheques		Sweets & snacks for the journey	
Credit Card / Cash		Notebook/Diary/Pen	
Insurance Documents		Guide Book	
Trip Information and Itinerary		Moisturising Cream & Lip salve	
Money Security Belt/Pouch		Nail Scissors/Tweezers/nail clippers	

For details regarding **hand luggage restrictions** please visit www.baa.com