



Sibiu

TRANSYLVANIA

Transylvania is the central region of Romania. The magnificent Carpathian Mountains create a natural border for the region to the south, east and west and the high alpine plateaux range between 1600-2500m above sea level. The Transylvania plateau ranges between 500-800m above sea level. Medieval Brasov, known as the Prague of Romania, is our chosen base to explore this magical province.

It is in Transylvania that the Saxons and Hungarians left their mark on Romania and the architectural style bears witness to their prowess in building and design. Within easy reach of Brasov, are the medieval towns of Sighisoara (a UNESCO World Heritage site) and Sibiu. Here too you will find the unique Saxon fortified churches – again listed as UNESCO World Heritage sites. There are 175 churches remaining out of an original total of 300 and the best preserved is that at Prejmer, approximately 20-minutes drive from Brasov. If you seek the

Dacian and Roman heritage, then the south west of Transylvania is the area to visit.

The Black Church in Brasov is the largest Gothic church in Eastern Europe. Instead of having an ornate frescoed interior or walls hung with paintings, it is decorated entirely by exquisite, priceless antique carpets donated by tradesmen over the centuries. The church was gutted by fire in 1689 and, although renovated, it takes its name from the black colour of the walls – the result of smoke damage. As well as the Black Church, it is worth visiting the Romanian Orthodox church and school museum of Biserica Sf. Nicolae. Here you will see the oldest printing press and some of the oldest books to be found in Romania. They are currently kept in very primitive conditions. For centuries, this was one of the few centres of learning for the Romanian people. The priest here is quite a character and sometimes gives very entertaining tours of this tiny museum, speaking



his own brand of English!

There is no doubt that the beauty of Transylvania lies in the Carpathian Mountains, one of the most spectacular ranges in Europe. Here is the best hiking in Romania, if not Europe, and the Piatra Craiului National Park covering 14,773 hectares of mountain landscape is home to bears, wolves and lynx. In fact, Romania has the largest bear and wolf populations in Europe outside Russia, numbering approximately 5,500 and 3,000 respectively. There is a fascinating bear hide where you stand an 80% chance of seeing wild bears in their natural habitat. Romania's forests are legendary and great pride is taken in

preserving and managing them. Full of wildlife, their extent has to be seen to be believed.

Then, of course, there is the Dracula myth, centred on Bran Castle (Dracula's Castle) which was, in fact, built by Saxons in the late 14th century. Rising from the middle of Bran village, the castle is far more romantic than frightening with beautiful, fairytale turrets. Popular myth has it that the castle was built by Vlad (The Impaler) Tepes who ruled Wallachia in the 15th century. Vlad Tepes Dracula (meaning son of Dracul) - a particularly bloodthirsty and cruel ruler – somehow became associated in popular folklore with Bram Stoker's fictional character because the novel was based in northern Transylvania. The association was helped because vampires feature heavily in Romanian folklore. In fact, Dracula's castle was sited on the Tihuta mountain pass which links Transylvania with Moldavia, a particularly foreboding landscape complete with a pretend Dracula's castle hotel! But, legend, myth and reality are inextricably entwined in heavily forested and mountainous Transylvania.

Medieval Sibiu, nominated European city of culture for 2007, is one of the prettiest and most vibrant towns in Romania. The Brukenthal museum, 9km north of Sibiu, is the largest in Transylvania and houses the finest art gallery in the country. This is a very musical town, with its own annual jazz festival. Originally, the town had 39 towers and was one of the best fortified towns in Romania.

The atmospheric town of Sighisoara dates from the 13th century. The old town has many artisan shops and cafes and, unlike many other pretty medieval towns to be found in Europe, this one is lived in and has not yet become a showcase for artists.

Guided City Tour

Half and full day city excursions can be pre-booked for clients staying in Brasov, Sibiu or Sighisoara.



Brasov

HOTEL BELLA MUZICA BRASOV

Airports: 170km Bucharest / 285km Cluj Napoca

■ 3-star hotel ■ Bed & Breakfast



The Hotel Bella Muzica is well located just off Council Square in the historical centre of Brasov. Housed in a neoclassical building dating back to the 16th century, the hotel has many charming features including vaulted ceilings and exposed brick work which creates a warm and welcoming atmosphere. The guestrooms are furnished in a rustic style and are quiet despite its central location. This friendly city hotel is well situated for those visiting the town on foot.

Amenities/Leisure:

22 rooms including 2 spacious singles, 15 small doubles, 3 junior suites and 2 suites ■ All rooms have bathroom (shower), hairdryer, cable TV, minibar, safe deposit box, internet access and heating ■ The junior suites have a designated living area. One junior suite has a bathroom with shower and a view towards Council Square. The other junior suites have a bathroom with Jacuzzi bath and views over the inner courtyard ■ The suites are air-conditioned. One suite has a bedroom with en suite shower room, living room and second shower room. The second suite comprises of one large room with a double bed and en suite bathroom with Jacuzzi bath ■ Buffet breakfast ■ Cellar restaurant serving Hungarian, Mexican and Romanian dishes ■ Private parking - payable locally (c.£5.00 per day).

CASA WAGNER BRASOV

Airports: 170km Bucharest / 285km Cluj Napoca

■ 3-star hotel ■ Bed & Breakfast ■ Air-conditioning



The recently opened Casa Wagner is housed in a restored 15th century residence and offers twelve rooms in a warm and historic setting. Situated on Council Square in the very heart of the old city, the hotel affords excellent views over the main square and towards the Black Church and Mount Tampa. The guest rooms are all individually decorated with period furniture and modern facilities. A good base from which to explore the fortified town of Brasov.

Amenities/Leisure:

12 rooms including 3 junior suites, all with bathroom (bath or shower), hairdryer, cable TV, telephone, minibar, internet access and heating ■ The junior suites have a designated living area and one has a painted ceiling ■ Six rooms, three on the first floor and three in the attic, overlook the main square ■ Non smoking rooms available ■ Buffet breakfast ■ Café bar ■ Laundry and dry cleaning service.

HOTEL IMPARATUL ROMANILOR SIBIU

Airports: 280km Bucharest / 175km Cluj Napoca

■ 3-star hotel ■ Bed & Breakfast ■ Air-conditioning



The Imparatul Romanilor, located on the main pedestrian street in Sibiu, is a hotel of faded glory. The reception area is full of baroque gilt painted ornaments and mirrored frames. It is, however, conveniently located and comfortable – if a little dated in style.

Amenities/Leisure:

77 rooms including single rooms, standard rooms, duplex junior suites and duplex suites ■ All with bathroom (bath or shower), satellite TV, telephone and heating ■ Most rooms have a minibar ■ Some standard rooms interconnect ■ The single rooms are with shower only and are generally smaller than the doubles ■ All the junior suites and suites are duplex. These duplex units generally have a bathroom with a bath upstairs en suite to the bedroom and, downstairs off the living area, a toilet and wash basin. Some have a balcony overlooking the main street ■ The junior suites have one bathroom with either bath or shower ■ Some of the junior suites and suites have air-conditioning ■ There is one VIP suite which is particularly large and has two toilets and one bathroom (Jacuzzi bath) and is air-conditioned ■ Buffet breakfast ■ Restaurant ■ Various lounges ■ Sauna ■ Billiard room ■ Hairdressing salon ■ Lift ■ There are no locks on the doors of the toilets in the reception area!



Sighisoara

CASA WAGNER SIGHISOARA

Airports: 290km Bucharest / 175km Cluj Napoca

■ 3-star hotel ■ Bed & Breakfast ■ Air-conditioning



This is probably the most interesting hotel in the old town and is made up of three buildings located opposite one another. These striking buildings have many vaulted areas, all with dark oak woodwork and staircases. The rooms are all of different size and are furnished with old, characterful furniture.

Amenities/Leisure:

32 rooms, located in three buildings, including 5 single rooms, 13 twin rooms, 9 double rooms and 5 spacious suites ■ All the rooms have a bathroom (bath and shower, two rooms with shower only), hairdryer, telephone, cable TV, minibar and heating ■ Many rooms have a view over the main square ■ One room has a small terrace ■ One junior suite has a spectacular frescoed ceiling which overlooks the main square ■ One garret suite, located in the annexe, has one double bedded room and a separate living room with single bed ■ Buffet breakfast served in the main building ■ Restaurant serving International and regional cuisine ■ Snack-bar ■ Outside terrace bar ■ Wine cellar ■ Inner terrace ■ Laundry and dry cleaning service ■ Internet access ■ Free street parking ■ There is a fee to be paid on entrance to Sighisoara of c. £3.00.

CASA CU CERB SIGHISOARA

Airports: 290km Bucharest / 175km Cluj Napoca

■ 3-star hotel ■ Bed & Breakfast



This family-run property dates back to the 13th century and is one of the oldest buildings in Sighisoara. It was restored in the 16th century after the great fire of 1676 and was recently fully renovated by the Messerschmidt Foundation. The hotel has ten rooms and a lot of character. Views are over the medieval town and one of the towers of the city. It is located on the main square and is 50-metres from the house of Vlad Dracul, the father of Vlad the Impaler (Dracula). The guest rooms are comfortable and one, room 10, is where Prince Charles stayed in 2002. A well located property, equal to any Italian boutique hotel.

Amenities/Leisure:

10 spacious rooms including 2 single rooms, 3 twin rooms and 5 double rooms, all with bathroom (bath and/or shower), hairdryer, telephone, cable TV, minibar and heating ■ One single room has a shower, seven rooms have a bath and two rooms have both shower and bath ■ Five rooms overlook the main square ■ Safe deposit box at reception ■ A la carte breakfast ■ Good restaurant serving traditional cuisine ■ Café-bar ■ Free street parking ■ 100 metres from the town gate.

APAFI MANOR HOUSE MALANCRAV

Airports: 310km Bucharest / 195km Cluj Napoca

■ 3-star hotel ■ Bed & Breakfast

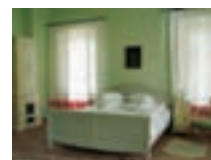


This 18th century manor house, once owned by the Apafi family – former rulers of Transylvania, lies in the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains in the Saxon village of Malancrav. Characterised by wild, unspoilt land and oak forests where lynx, wolf and bear roam, the area contains glorious medieval fortified churches, with painted pews and pulpits, and gives a sense of travelling back in time.

The Mihai Eminescu Trust bought the house in 2001 and began restoration using local labour and craftsmen side by side with conservation experts from England. Travellers now have the rare opportunity to stay in this remarkable historic building. The Trust's mission is the restoration of the Saxon villages of Transylvania. All profits from lettings go towards funding their charitable projects.

Amenities/Leisure:

5 rooms including 1 single room and 4 doubles, all with bathroom (bath), hairdryer (on request) and heating ■ Drawing room ■ Bar ■ Library ■ Free parking.



MIKES CASTLE ESTATE ZABALA

Airports: 230km Bucharest / 355km Cluj Napoca

■ 3-star hotel (equivalent) ■ Bed & Breakfast

This 16th century Castle is in demand of restoration and its owners Gregor and Alexander Roy-Chowdhury, descendants of the Mikes family and a Bengali prince, intend to restore the property. The estate itself is quite secluded, in a very beautiful area at the foothills of slopes covered with beech wood on 40 hectares of parkland. From Mikes estate, travel deep in to the forest to a bear hide. There is a high probability (90% sightings in 2006) of seeing bears here! This is one of the most wild and unexplored forest areas of Transylvania.

Guests are lodged in the **Machine house**, dating back to the 18th century and originally used to shelter the estate's generator and textile machinery. In 2006 the house was carefully and stylishly refurbished and today, offers a unique combination of bygone elegance, modern comforts and exceptional cuisine. The menus are based on unpublished family recipes used in the days of the old noble families of Transylvania. The kitchen-garden of the estate provides most of the organic vegetables, fruits and herbs.



Amenities/Leisure:

6 rooms including 5 double rooms and one twin room, all with en suite bathroom (bath or shower), hairdryer and heating ■ Large lounge with cable TV (DVD player on

request) and dining room, both with an open chimney ■ Free parking ■ Bear watching excursions can be arranged (locally or pre-booked) between Mar-May and 15Aug-Dec (maximum 5 people).

BEAR WATCHING EXCURSION



It is possible to pre-book a bear watching excursion from Mikes Castle Estate in Zabala. You can spend between 2½ to 3 hours in the hide – a 6sqm wooden hut – 30 meters from the bears. The season for this activity is late March to May and mid August to December. The trip can be arranged for up to five people plus a specialist wildlife guide – no children under 10 years permitted.

Location: Bears are at their highest densities in the north-central part of the Romanian Carpathians, especially in the counties of Mures, Neamt, Harghita, Covasna, Brasov, and Buzau. The Romanian bear population is one of the few strong and healthy populations remaining in

Europe and the Carpathians as a whole are home to about 43% of all European bears (accounting for 5,500 in Romania alone). This region is therefore of key international importance in the conservation of brown bears and, due to increasing human-bear interactions, is also the focus of much research into effective management of bears and their habitats within Romania.

Lifespan: Brown bears can live for 20 to 30 years in the wild, although most brown bears die in their first few years of life. In captivity, brown bears have been known to live up to 50 years.

Behaviour: Bears may be active at any time of the day but generally forage in the morning and evening and rest in dense cover by day.

The bears communicate primarily through smell and sound. Brown bears can sometimes be heard making moaning noises while foraging. They scratch and rub on trees and other landmarks to communicate territorial boundaries and reproductive status. Brown bears have an excellent sense of smell (able to follow the scent of a rotting carcass from more than two miles), human-level hearing but relatively poor eyesight.

Food: Brown bears are omnivorous, eating almost anything nutritious.



Key Facts:

Weight:	100 - 350 Kg
Height:	Up to 2.5 metres
Mating Season:	June & July
Hibernation:	November to March
Offspring:	1 - 2 cubs

Their diet changes with seasonal availability of different food sources. They eat a wide variety of plant foods – including grasses, sedges, roots, moss, and bulbs. Fruits, nuts, berries, bulbs, and tubers are taken extensively during summer and early autumn. They consume insects, fungi, and roots throughout the year. Whenever they get the chance they will take sheep or cows from shepherd camps.



Bear hide

GRAND TOUR OF TRANSYLVANIA

BRASOV ZABALA SIBIU SIGHISOARA VISCRI BUCHAREST

Duration: 8 days / 7 nights

Sunvil Discovery is organising an escorted, small group tour to Romania. This tour is ideal for first time visitors as well as for those who have already experienced the unique nature and natural beauty of the country. The tour, led by an experienced, English speaking guide, will provide an insight in to the people and culture of Romania and enable you to see and appreciate, at first hand, the very best of what the region has to offer.



Peles Castle, Sinaia

Day 1 – Monday – BRASOV

Arrive at Bucharest Henri Coanda (Otopeni) airport. Transfer to hotel in Brasov via the Prahova valley.

Day 2

In the morning, time to explore Brasov, an old Saxon merchant town, with its medieval streets, defensive towers, churches and famous Council Square – one of the most beautiful squares in Romania dominated by the Black Church. Brasov's most important landmark, the Black Church, towers over Council Square and the old town and is so called after a huge fire blackened its walls in 1689. Towers and gates can still be seen at the foot of Mount Tampa where four bastions survived and at the foothills of Warthe Hill where two of the most important watch towers still stand.

After lunch continue north east to Prejmer and Harman. These two Transylvanian villages were founded

by the Saxons in the 12th century when they were sent to guard the mountain passes. Prejmer or Tartlau has the largest and best preserved of the fascinating Saxon Transylvanian fortified churches. The large and beautifully preserved Lutheran church is surrounded by a circular defensive wall containing 272 cells for village families to shelter and store provisions during times of siege. Look for the unique 'death organ' – a type of early Gatling gun set into the defensive wall! Harman's fortified church has four small turrets that remind visitors that the authorities were allowed to sentence criminals to death. Seven towers stand along the 12m high ring wall, one of which houses valuable medieval frescoes. The walls used to be lined with refuge cells for local families. The shelters for the local nobility and their families are perched on the walls of the church itself.

The tour continues towards Rasnov fortress following the old trading route that connected Wallachia and Transylvania – the historical provinces of Romania. Rasnov (Rosenau to the Saxon inhabitants) was founded around 1225 by German Teutonic Knights. This impressive fortress was built in the 14th century by the local inhabitants. During times of war, the townsfolk would gather their cattle and family and retreat inside the fortress. The last siege took place in the 17th century, after which the fortress was successively severely damaged by fire, rebuilt and partially levelled by an earthquake.

In the evening you will be driven to Zabala village and, accompanied by an experienced wildlife guide, taken to a bear hide near lake Saint Ana. Overnight at Mikes Castle Estate in Zabala.

Day 3 – SIBIU

Depart for Sambata Monastery passing by the picturesque villages of Bucium, Recea and Lisa at the foothills of the Fagaras Mountains. Visit the Sambata or Brancoveanu Monastery – one of Romania's greatest and wealthiest monasteries, famous for its workshop for glass icons. Its name derives from its original founder, the Wallachian prince Constantin Brancoveanu, who built the Orthodox Monastery. During the Habsburg rule the Monastery was almost destroyed by General Bucow

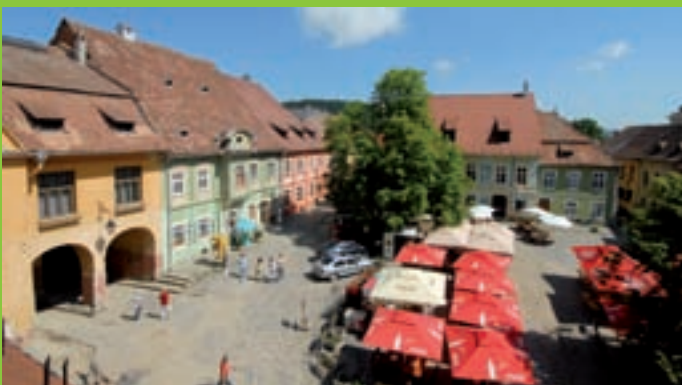


Prejmer

in 1761 because it was seen as the last bastion of Orthodoxy in the Fagaras Land. It was rebuilt between 1926-1936.

If time allows there will be an optional drive along the Trans-Fagarasan Highway (a mountain pass built by the army for strategic purposes) which peaks at 2,304m. It is said to be one of the highest roads in Europe. This road cuts through the Balea Valley across the Transylvanian Alps, linking Wallachia in the south with Transylvania in the north. The name of the Transylvanian Alps was given by the French Geographer Emmanuel de Martonne who was astonished by the similarity with the Alps. This area is spectacular – up to 2,000m the mountain sides are covered with spruce forests sheltering deer, Carpathian bears, chamois and other wildlife. The mountains are also dotted with more than 40 glacial lakes.

Drive westwards to Sibiu arriving in late afternoon with time to stroll through the medieval streets founded by Saxon Transylvanians in the 12th century.



Sighisoara

Day 4

Day tour of Sibiu: the Big and Small Squares, the old fortifications and Astra Museum – an open air museum that contains more than 300 traditional buildings from all over Romania. Continue to the outskirts of Sibiu (15-minute drive south) to Cisnadioara and Cisnatie. Cisnadioara is a hilltop citadel founded by German settlers in the name of Michelsburg with a beautiful church perched on a crag above the village. Cisnatie has a beautiful Saxon church surrounded by a double ringed defensive wall. Return to Sibiu.

Day 5 – SIGHISOARA

Depart northwards to Sighisoara stopping en route to visit Valea Viilor (a UNESCO World Heritage site) and Mosna with its fortified Saxon churches. Then on to Brateiu village to see a tinsmith Gypsy family.

Driving east, taking a country road, you will visit the impressive fortified church (a UNESCO World Heritage site) in Biertan – considered to be one of the most impressive fortified churches in Transylvania. The eastern bastion of the church was used for defence but also as a prison for couples who wanted a divorce. They were kept here and fed with bread and water until they changed their mind about divorcing – in 300 years only one divorce was ever recorded! Continue driving east to Sighisoara, the birthplace of Vlad the Impaler for your overnight stay.

Day 6

Morning tour of the fortified town of Sighisoara. This medieval citadel is perched on a hillock with a 14th



Rasnov Fortress

century defensive system surrounding the entire hill. Today only nine turrets, two artillery bulwarks and a part of the surrounding wall have survived. Here you will have the opportunity to walk the streets of a continuously inhabited medieval town – the only one in Europe! Other sights to visit are the Clock Tower, which is now a History museum with a good collection of WWI photographs, a scale model of the town and a superb view of Sighisoara from the walkway on top of the tower; Vlad the Impaler's (alias Dracula) house and actual birthplace considered to be the oldest civilian, stone building still standing; Church on the Hill, a gothic Lutheran church dedicated to Saint Nicholas dating back to the 14th century.

Drive southwards, stopping en route at Saschiz to visit a beautiful fortified church (a UNESCO World Heritage site). Saschiz is also the headquarters of the Adept Foundation who work with local communities of this Saxon area towards sustainable

development. Continue on to Viscri (Weisskirch), a remote village famed for its magnificent fortified church and for being visited by Prince Charles in 1997. After the prince's visit to many Transylvanian Saxon villages he lent his support to conserve and revive them. Viscri is one such village, and through the help of the 'Mihai Eminescu Trust', several houses from the village have been restored. The Trust seeks to conserve the Saxon architectural heritage, by reviving and sponsoring the use of traditional building methods and to regenerate village economy by assisting traditional agriculture, small enterprises, and ecotourism. Viscri is included in the UNESCO World Heritage list as a prime example of a medieval village with a fortified church in close relation with its surrounding landscape. After visiting the church and exploring the village you will enjoy a traditional Transylvanian dinner.

Day 7 – BUCHAREST

In the morning visit a sheepfold by horse and cart in the nearby hills – a traditional mode of transport that is still very much preserved today. Continue south to Sinaia to visit Peles castle. Developed around an old monastery built by hermits in 17th

century, Sinaia was at its peak at the end of the 19th century when the Romanian royal family decided to build their summer residence here, at the foothills of the Bucegi Mountains. This aristocratic town eventually developed into a mountain resort open to all. The royal Peles palace cannot fail to impress with its beautiful vistas and fairytale like appearance. Built in German Renaissance style, the palace is surrounded by green terraces and meadows. With more than 160 rooms, decorated to highlight the furniture and stained glass, weapons and paintings, carpets and rugs, tapestries, chinaware and refined glassware, the castle became famous throughout the country. Adjacent to Peles castle is Pelisor, another small castle, built by King Carol I for his nephew Ferdinand, who succeeded him to the throne of Romania. Ferdinand had his wife Maria's (granddaughter of Queen Victoria) rooms decorated in the Art Nouveau style.

Continue driving south to Bucharest for a short tour by car before arriving at your hotel.

Day 8

Transfer to the airport for the return flight home.



Viscrist

No. of nights	Accommodation	Location
1	Hotel Bella Muzica or similar	Brasov
1	Mikes Castle Estate	Zabala
2	Hotel Imparatul Romanilor or similar	Sibiu
1	Hotel Casa Wagner or similar	Sighisoara
1	Village family home	Viscrist
1	Hotel Residence Oliviers or similar	Bucharest