TOUR CODE

RO1

ADVENTURESABROAD

ROMANIA

8 days

Updated 06/01/2013

Day 1 *Arrive in Bucharest*

Arrive in Bucharest, the capital of Romania.

Overnight in Bucharest. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 *Bucharest: City Tour - Suceava*

Bucharest, the capital of Romania and the nation's powerhouse of cultural and economic life, was founded 500 years ago and it is a natural starting point for our visit to the country. During the 1930's its tree-lined boulevards and fin de siecle architecture earned it the nickname "The Little Paris of the East". There is even an Arc de Triomphe on the handsome Soseaua Kiseleff, itself longer than the Champs Elysees and alive with blossoms in the spring.

Despite the massive reconstructions of the 1980's, Bucharest remains a 'Garden City', leafy and pleasant, with many sidewalk cafes. Our tour today will include the Cotroceni Palace and Museum where we see the 6,000 room Parliament Palace. We will also see the Triumphal Arch, the Romanian Athenaeum, and University Square.

After lunch we will drive out to visit the Bucharest Village Museum. Situated in a picturesque environment on a lakeshore, this is one of the largest and oldest outdoors museums in Europe. Its exhibits, including houses, churches, water and windmills are of great historic and artistic value.

We will have an early dinner in Bucharest today before heading to the airport for our evening flight to Suceava* in the northeastern province of Romania. This is the heart of an area renowned for its 'painted' monasteries.

* Occasionally, due to irregular flight schedules, we may have to fly to a town called Iasi and transfer by road (150 km) to Suceava.

Overnight in Suceava. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 *Suceava - Bucovina Monasteries - Piatra Neamt*

Today is spent visiting some of the most impressive Bucovina monasteries. These triumphs of Byzantine-influenced art reflect a flowering of Moldavian civilization in the 15th and 16th centuries. The "Painted" Monasteries are a major Moldavian destination, because of the vivid and animated frescoes on their church walls. In acknowledgement of their value, the monasteries in Becoming have been declared as UNESCO protected cultural sites. The art historians compare their artistic value with the mural paintings of the San Marco church of Venice. The secrets of the Moldavian painters who prepared the colors and the techniques that made the paintings incredibly resistant are still a mystery.

We will visit Voronet, a nun monastery consecrated to St George, within walking distance from Guar Humorous town. Voronet is probably the most accomplished sample of artistic achievement in Moldavian architecture and painting. The

monastery was built at a time of peace with the Turks, when Stephen had centralized the state, giving a new impetus to its economy and culture. We will also visit Humor Monastery, founded in 1530.

After a visit to the famous Marginea black ceramics centre, we visit the Sucevita Monastery, the largest and arguably the finest of the Bukovina monasteries. The church inside the fortified monastic enclosure (1586) is almost completely covered in frescoes inside and out.

After spending the balance of our day exploring this region we depart for Piatra Neamt, the capital city of Neamt County, in the historical region of Moldavia. Because of its location in the Eastern Carpathian Mountains, it is considered one of the most picturesque cities in Romania.

Overnight in Piatra Neamt. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 4 *Piatra Neamt - Bicaz Gorges - Sighisoara*

Today we depart for Sighisoara via the Bicaz Gorges. The road that slices through the Bicaz Gorges is among Romania's most spectacular. The gorge twists and turns steeply uphill for 5km, cutting through sheer, 300-meter high limestone rocks. At one point, the narrow mountain road runs beneath the overhanging rocks in a section known as the 'neck of hell'. This stretch of road is protected as part of the Hasmas-Bicaz Gorges National Park.

A few kilometers west we will cross into Transylvania's Harghita County and immediately come to the resort area of Lacu Rosu or Red Lake. The alpine resort in this region sprang up in the 1970's and is still a magnet for hikers from both Transylvania and Moldavia. From the lake region, the main road continues via further mountain passed and beautiful scenery.

We will stop for lunch today in Praid, and will also visit the spectacular Praid Salt Mine. Praid is the natural centre of he Salt Region, and one of the most important salt mines of Transylvania can be found here. The underground salt mountain once supplied the whole Seckler and Saxon lands with this indispensable mineral. The history of the village is inked to the salt. The salt mine and salt baths of Praid are well known all over the country. Our tour into the mine is by bus and is not strenuous. We travel about 1500 m into the salt dome, dropping about 25 m. Inside we visit the underground mining museum, which shows salt minerals, mining tools, and folk art objects.

Our journey will end today with our arrival in Sighisoara. Sighisoara -- Schassburg in German, or Segesvar in Hungarian, the only inhabited Middle Ages city in Europe. Mentioned by historians as far back as 1191, Sighisoara has a long tradition in craftsmanship and trade and its fortifications and defense towers still witness for guilds as those of tinsmiths, butchers, hatters, and blacksmiths. Narrow winding streets, houses with thick walls and huge portals painted in vivid colours, towers, and churches, all old and very old (13th-16th centuries) enhance the charm of the place.

Overnight in Sighisoara. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *Sighisoara - Biertan - Sibiu*

This morning we will start with a walking tour of Sighisoara. We will visit to the History Museum located in the former Town Hall. The Clock Tower, dated from the 14th Century, reveals a marvelous view over Sighisoara. We will also see the house where Vlad Tepes once lived.

We continue on to Biertan, a former Saxon village south of Sighisoara. Here in Biertan we find a fortified church from 15th century, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage, representative of the unique Transylvanian phenomenon of building rural fortified churches. Surrounded by three lines of defense walls of 12m high and towers, the church was never

breached by invaders.

The next visit on our journey today brings us to Sibiu. Called Hermannstadt in German, Sibiu was the most important of the 12th century Saxon settlements in Transylvania and its industrious emigres, primarily from the Rhineland, the Moselle Valley, Flanders and Saxony, erected walls around it for protection. The first wall destroyed by invaders not long after its construction, but remains of a 15th century brick wall still stand. Because of the blood shed at its walls, the Turks, after an unsuccessful onslaught, called Sibiu the "Red City." Built into the walls are defense towers that were assigned to particular guilds and medieval houses.

Upon arrival we will enjoy a sightseeing tour of Sibiu, one of the oldest towns on the Transylvanian Plateau. We will wander its old quarter, where houses with immense roofs have been built within the fortifications, giving Sibiu its powerful medieval aspect. The Tartans destroyed the town's first Citadel in the 13th century and the massive Evangelical Church now occupies the site. It took 200 years to build the church in the 14th and 15th centuries.

Overnight in Sibiu. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Sibiu - Brasov - Bran Castle - Sinaia*

This morning we will depart for Brasov, stopping en-route in Fagaras town for a short visit.

Upon arrival in Brasov we will enjoy a sightseeing tour. Kronstadt in German, Brasso in Hungarian, Brasov ranks second in size after Bucharest. The Old Town lies between two mountains, surrounded like a halo by the Carpathians, and the city of Brasov benefits from the influence of an ancient history.

We will then continue on towards Bran for a visit to Bran Castle, erroneously claimed by some to be that of Count Dracula, the world's most famous vampire. Perched atop a rocky outcrop, this strategically located castle was built in 1377 to protect nearby Brasov from invaders. It also served as a customs station. The castle's rooms and towers surround an inner courtyard. Some rooms are connected through underground passages to the inner court. Bran is home to a rich collection of Romanian and foreign furniture and art items from the 14th-19th centuries.

We also visit Sinaia, the "Pearl of the Carpathian Mountains". We visit the former royal summer residence built by Carol I Hohenzolern Sigmaringen of Romania (1881-1914). We will take a leisurely STROLL up to the 17th century Sinaia Monastery, an interesting cluster of churches and courtyards which take their name from the ancient Egyptian monastery on Mount Sinai.

Overnight in Sinaia. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 7 *Sinaia - Peles & Pelisor Castles - Bucharest*

This morning we will visit the nearby Peles and Pelisor Castles. Considered by many one of the most beautiful castles in all Europe, Peles Castle is a masterpiece of German new-Renaissance architecture. This castle was built in the final quarter of the last century for Romania's 'imported ruler' King Carol. Designed mainly in German Renaissance style, this summer residence was decorated throughout by Carol's eccentric wife Carmen Sylvan. Many valuable objects are contained within the castles 160 rooms.

Almost adjacent to Peles Castle is Pelisor ("Little Peles"). King Ferdinand, who succeeded Carol I, intended to use Peles Castle as a summer residence. Pelisor's 70 rooms feature a unique collection of turn-of-the century Viennese furniture and Tiffany and Lalique glassware, and were mostly decorated in the Art-Nouveau style by Queen Maria.

We then continue on to Bucharest. Our journey south takes us via Targoviste where we visit the Princely Court and Sunset Tower. The Princely Court in Targoviste was the capital of Wallachia, where Vlad the Impaler (Dracula) ruled. Vlad took the throne at the Princely Court in 1456. To repay boyars for taking he and his brother hostages, it was here that Vlad impaled a great many of his enemies after inviting them to a feast on Easter Sunday.

Overnight in Bucharest. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 8 *Departure*

Departure from Bucharest.

DRUM BUN! Meal plan: Breakfast.