

Walking Tour in Romania Sept 2017

Walkaway Treks Private Project

Toronto	September 04	LOT 046	depart: 21:55
Warsaw	September 05		arrive: 12:20
Warsaw	September 05	LOT 645	depart: 14:30
Bucharets			arrive: 17:20

5 September 2017: Bucharest – Moroeni – 140km transfer, 2,5 – 3h

Arrival, meet our tour manager, Andrei, at the airport and three hours transfer to Bucegi Mountains at our 4*hotel - Dinner and overnight.



September 2017: Bucegi Mountains – hike over Strunga pass and descent to Moieciu de Sus – transfer for 20 minutes to Bran (500m climb, 800m descent, 10 km, 4-5h hiking)



After breakfast we start our walk in Bucegi Natural Park, climbing through the meadows towards Strunga Pass, an ancient connection between Wallachia and Transylvania. Still an important transhumance corridor, as shepherds from both sides of the Carpathians use it in their yearly travels across the old borders.

Our hike then follows the meadows at the feet of the limestone crags through open landscapes with wonderful vistas of the high Bran-Rucar corridor and the surrounding high mountains of Piatra Craiului, Leaota and Iezer.

A steep descent through the woods then gets us to the bottom of Bangaleasa valley from where a short transfer to Bran follows. We arrive at our guesthouse and have dinner cooked by our hosts.

7 September 2017: Bran – Zarnesti gorges – Bran (approx 13km, 600 m climb, 600m descent, 4h hiking)

A short transfer takes us to Piatra Craiului National Park. We start our day with an easy walk up the country road climbing through Zarnesti gorges.

They are part of Piatra Craiului (The King's Rock) mountains, one of the most beautiful massifs in Romania, very rocky, a thin high limestone strip, 22 km long, considered a geographical accident of the Southern Carpathians, due to their gentle peculiar profile in contrast with the massiveness of the surrounding relief forms.

The area was also home to The Carpathian Large Carnivore Project, as, although the Romanian Carpathians cover less than 1.5% of the European surface west of



Russia, they are home to almost one third of all European large carnivores: The estimated number of bears is over 7,000, there are about 3,000 wolves, and some 2,000 lynx. At the end of the gorges we climb through the woods and reach the alpine meadows of Magura and Pestera villages.



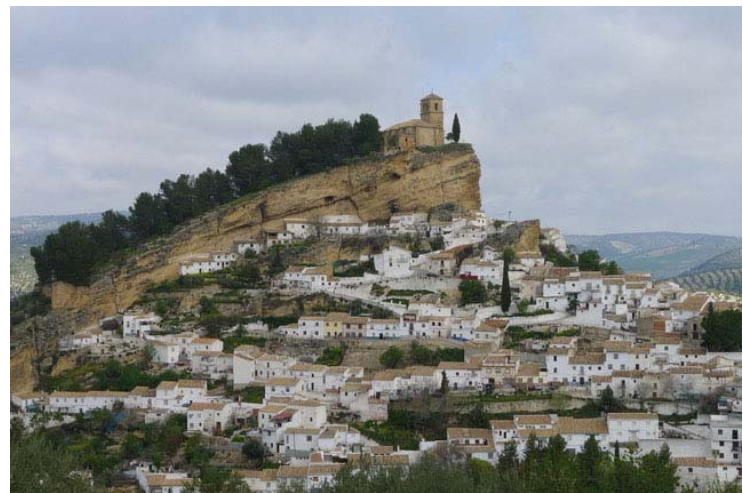
The landscape is typical for the Romanian altitude hamlets, with scattered households on the heights, meadows dotted by haystacks and the occasional summer lodges.

We finally descend back to the road where the minibus is waiting to take us back to Bran. Dinner and accommodation in our guesthouse.

8 September 2017: Bran – Prejmer – Viscri (135 km transfer)

We quit Bran and head for the flatland of Barsa, colonized by Saxons more than 800 years ago. At the

feet of the Eastern Carpathians we find one of the finest examples of ecclesiastic fortifications in Romania and Europe – Prejmer fortified church. It was built originally by the Teutonic knights on their arrival in medieval Transylvania (Terra Ultrasilvana). Then the local Saxon community took the relay and enlarged the original premises until they gave it an 18th century appearance still present to our day. From Prejmer we cross the volcanic range of Persani and make our way into the Transylvanian plateau to Viscri (Deutschweiskirch) – a UNESCO site.



This was originally a Saxon village, like most of settlements nestled between the dense oak and beech forests that cover these hills. The colonists arrived here 800-900 years ago when invited by the new master of Transylvania, the Hungarian king. They occupied the fertile valleys, bringing the feudal organization, laying foundations for villages, town and cities.

The mountains however, the higher grounds, as well as the lands close to the borders of Transylvania



remained Romanian, or as they called them at the time, Wallachian. Nowadays, following the Red Army invasion in 1944 and the communist era, most of the German population is gone, the result of an exodus involving some 500.000 people emigrating over a period of 50 years.

Compared to the rest of Romania, the countryside here is almost numb. Here we have the privilege of submerging in an enormous open air museum, the huge patrimony the Saxons left behind consisting of naturally preserved architecture, especially the

medieval fortified churches, unfortunately only a handful of them protected by UNESCO.

We have a tasty lunch prepared by our hosts, we then embark on a horse pulled cart ride through the village and the surrounding hills. From above Viscri, in good weather, half of the whole Romanian Carpathian Range is visible and we soak in the tranquil atmosphere, the sights and sounds of this huge Natura 2000 site named The Transylvanian Hills.

We descend back to the village and pay a visit to the local fortified church, one of the oldest, then we enjoy some free time in the village for the remainder of the afternoon.

Dinner and accommodation in typical Saxon houses.

9 September 2017: Viscri – Sighisoara – Sucevita (360 km, 6 – 7 h transfer by car without considering a break)

Today we transfer for 40 minutes to Sighisoara. This UNESCO protected town sits on top of a hill and is surrounded by ramparts. The medieval atmosphere is still very present due to the lively coloured facades, the narrow cobbled streets, the ramparts, towers and guard walks.

We make a tour of the fortress, including The Clock Tower, several bastions and also pass near the house where Vlad Tepes (later know as Dracula) was born almost 600 years ago. We continue north toward Bucovina.



On our way we pass through the beautiful cities of Targu Mures and Bistrita and possibly some stops to stretch our legs and admire the typical architecture. Then our road starts climbing and the landscape changes, with the vast open spaces of the Eastern Carpathians, endless spruce forests and meadows, dotted by summer lodges, haystacks and altitude hamlets. We make our way over 4 mountain passes in order to reach Sucevita, typical village of Bucovina (northern Moldavia). Dinner and accommodation in a local guesthouse.

10 September 2017: Sucevita – Moldovita – Sucevita (70km transfer, 4h hike, 500m climb, 10 km walk)

This morning we pass through the mountains to the beautiful valley of Moldovita.

After seeing the monastery – built in the beginning of the 16th century and dominated by yellow coloring - we start a gentle climb through grazing land, grassland and forest, up to Runc hamlet.



This place is almost completely separated from the rush of the modern world, where you cannot find roads, sidewalks, traffic lights, cars, but footpaths, fences to jump, springs, orchards, little potato and bean crops, haystacks, carts, horses.

The village itself is situated on top of a 1000 m hill, surrounded by dense conifer forests, populated not only by Europe's biggest number of large carnivores but also by an entire mythical world of fairies, saints, dwarves, giants, witches, evil fairies, animated trees and springs.

It is only a small glimpse into the archipelago of altitude villages in northern Romania, a place that shelters probably one of the last living peasant cultures in Europe.

We descend to the valley of Moldovita and, before heading back to Sucevita, we may choose to have a drink on the terrace of a local pub, watching the country life.

We return to our village and pay a visit to Sucevita monastery, a heavily fortified structure, fascinating work of the builders and fresco painters of the late 16th century Moldavia.

Dinner and accommodation in our guesthouse.

11 September 2017: Sucevita – Brodina – Argel – Sucevita (80 km transfers, 5h walk, 9-12km walk, 500-600 m climb, 1h steam train ride)

After breakfast, a 50 km transfer brings us to Brodina de Jos, a few kilometres near the Ukrainian border, in the land of the hutsuls.

We start climbing through the forest in order to reach the altitude scattered hamlets sitting right on the ridges of the northern Carpathians. We walk this landscape from the end of the world making our way back towards Moldovita valley where we have an appointment with the narrow gauge steam train.

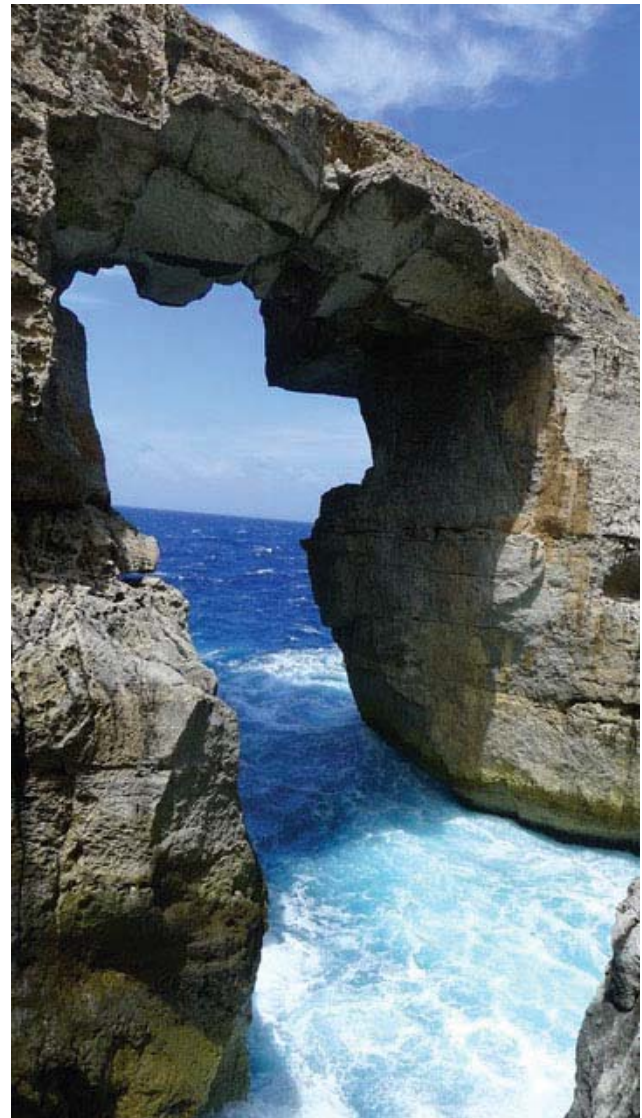
After one hour we get off in Moldovita and we visit Glicheria Hretiuc, one of the skilful local masters of the art of painting eggs. After a demonstration and a visit of her own exhibition, transfer back to Sucevita to spend a few more hours in the tranquility of our host's garden.

12 September: Sucevita – Tarpesti – Lacu Rosu (230 km transfer, optional visit to Voronet painted monastery, optional 2h hike)

We depart Sucevita and visit a black pottery workshop in Marginea village, where we have the opportunity to see the artists at work, then we head south towards Moldova region. The route takes us through a series of extremely beautiful villages, with original architecture. We can choose to make a short detour in order to see Voronet, another famous painted monastery whose foundation belongs to the late 15th century.

At noon we reach Tarpesti village. It is one of the cultural highlights of our trip, as we have the chance to visit the vast collection of popular artifacts belonging to late Mr. Popa, to see the archaeological finds that he personally uncovered in more than 20 sites he explored, and view his collection of wooden and stone sculptures. We also have a tasty lunch in the laidback atmosphere of his family's garden.

From Tarpesti we head west towards Varatec, we cross Valea Arini and Valea Seaca, two quiet villages with specific Moldavian architecture, then onto the impressive Bicz Gorges, featuring vertical and overhanging limestone walls as high as 350m.



We reach The Red Lake Resort organized around a natural dam lake, formed at the beginning of the 19th century, situated at about 980 m altitude. If time allows we will go for a afternoon hike to one of the many limestone cliffs rising from the meadows and forests of Hasma National Park, a short hike touching 3 viewpoints, with wonderful vistas of the Bicajel and Bicz valleys as well as Bicz gorges. Dinner and accommodation in a 3* hotel.

13 September 2017: Lacu Rosu – hike in the canyon and the hay meadows (600 climb, 11km, 5h hiking)



After breakfast, we depart on a 30 minutes transfer through Bicz Gorges before we start walking through Bicajel canyon and onto the hay meadows on the ridges of Hasmas foothills.

Picnic lunch and then we continue our walk with a long descent to Damuc valley, slowly making our way from the isolated summer lodges on the heights, down to the typical mountain village. We return to the Red Lake for dinner and overnight.

14 September 2017: Lacu Rosu – Hasmasu Mare Peak – Balan – Brasov (6-7h walk, 700m climb, 900 m descent, approx. 2h30min – 3h transfer to Brasov) In the morning we start our trek in Hasmas National Park - mountains with a special charm due to the pastoral life and the ancient rituals surviving here. We climb a steep hill and then, through dark woods, we get to the White Meadow and, through vast open spaces, to the top where we reach an altitude of 1797 m.

We have an excellent view over Eastern Transylvania and the Moldavian Carpathians: white limestone crags, green flat meadows, dotted by little lakes and bordered by dark conifer forests surround us. Numerous sheepfolds shelter at night the semi wild horses and flocks of sheep which roam this land by daylight. This afternoon we descend to Balan and transfer by car for two and a half hours to Brasov. Accommodation in the main square of the old centre in a nice 3* hotel. Dinner in a restaurant.



15 September 2017: Brasov – Azuga – Bucharest (175 km, approx. 3 h transfer)

Brasov (Kronstadt) is one of Transylvania's major cities. We walk the medieval centre, one of the best preserved in Romania, housing The Black Church - the largest between Vienna and Constantinople, the City Council Square, the ramparts erected in medieval times by the Saxon colonists.

We then continue across the mountains to Azuga. Here we stop for a visit of the sparkling wine cellars and a good lunch before we continue to Bucharest.

Mid-afternoon arrival in Bucharest. We drop our luggage and, after a break, we walk the streets of this vibrant city with surprising architecture, to our restaurant. Dinner and accommodation.

16 September 2017: Visit the city including the visit to the People’s House and free time

In the morning, we go for a walking tour of Bucharest then we make our way to the Palace of the Parliament, also known under its communist name as “The house of the People”.

It is one of the largest buildings in the world, and your visit will surely give you an idea of Romania in the 80’s and Ceausescu’s kitsch dictatorship.

After the visit, you enjoy some more free time in Bucharest, followed by a farewell dinner in one of the historical restaurants of the city.

17 September 2017

Free time this morning in Bucharest prior to our transfer to the airport.

Bucharest September 17	LOT 642	depart: 14:50
Warsaw		arrive: 15:35
Warsaw September 17	LOT 045	depart: 17:05
Toronto		arrive: 20:10

The private tour price includes:

- 12 nights accommodation in 3* hotels, guesthouses and peasant houses
- Full board for the whole period (most of the lunches are picnic) – day 1 includes only dinner and day 13 only breakfast; dinners in the villages of Viscri and Sucevita include local/homemade brandy and wine
- The ride in horse drawn carts in Viscri village
- The sparkling wine tasting at Azuga wine cellars
- all necessary transfers by minibus
- all entrance fees for the visits included into the program
- Main gratuities for included features
- English speaking mountain guide for the entire program

The price does not include:

- Alcoholic beverages, others than those mentioned above



Exclusive reservations through:
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