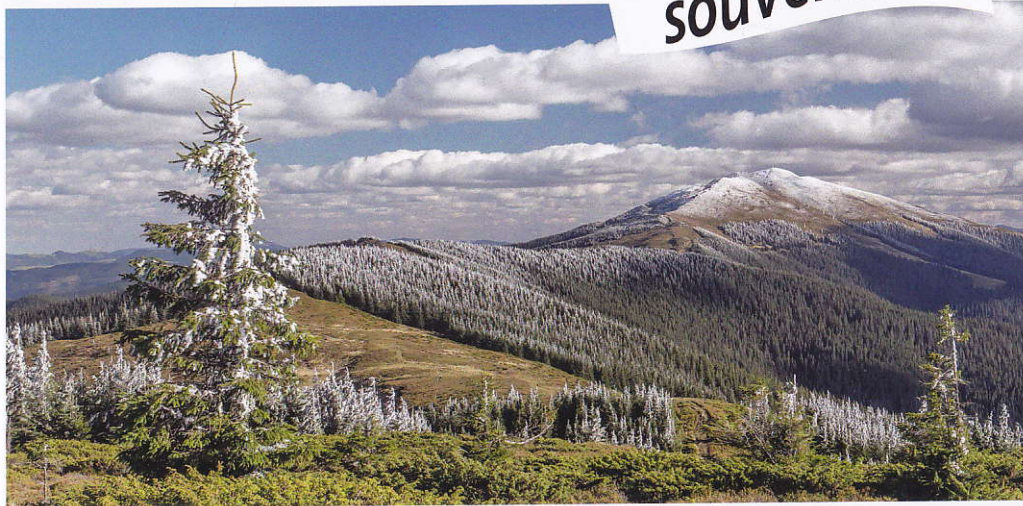


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Respect pentru oameni și cărți

ROMANIA

souvenir



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AdLibri

Romania is becoming a name more and more well known in the European landscape. More and more people are declaring themselves captivated by this vibrant and colourful land, which has not yet become a standardised tourist product. Romania is undoubtedly a place which has every chance of attracting the attention of those tourists who are in search of the authentic, as the phenomenon of globalisation has not yet taken hold here.

Ask one hundred people and each will give you a different reason as to why Romania is worth visiting... Each will have found what he or she is looking for. And in Romania there are indeed many things to discover.

In what follows, we shall list a few of these reasons and try to identify the features that define Romania. The result will be a portrait sketch which, we hope, will entice you to come here. Each of you will fill

in this sketch your own impressions, the details and adventures with animate any journey.

1 Romania is the best place in which to explore the Europe that lies at “the gates of the Orient”.

Let yourself be seduced by its blend of east and west, by the efficiency and dynamism characteristic of the west, and the carefree relaxation of the east! There are places here where you will feel the thrum and the pulse of the present, and others where you will feel as though you have been transported from the present back to the inaccessible past.

2 Romania is a country unique among the mainly Slavic nations of south-eastern Europe, a land where the language spoken is Latin in origin.

Many Romanian words will probably sound familiar to speakers of the Romance languages who come to this land that borders Bulgaria, Hungary, Serbia, Moldova and Ukraine. The Roman legions, under the Emperor Hadrian, crossed the Danube in 101 A.D., conquered the Dacians, and colonised the southern regions of Dacia. The archaeological remains of ancient *Dacia Felix* can still be seen today.

3 In Romania you will find a whole new world just waiting to be discovered.

The magic of the lie of its land and myriad natural curiosities, the blend of archaic, anachronistic, kitsch and modern, the picturesque customs that have survived in many places, and the spectacular cities with their eclectic architecture all make up a world of surprising diversity.

For those who don't care for the beaten track and prefer the unpredictable, making discoveries for themselves, Romania is the ideal choice.

4 It is in Romania that the Danube ends its journey. Before emptying into the Black Sea, the river forms a spectacular delta, which has been declared a Biosphere Reserve.

After rising in the Black Forest in Germany, the Danube crosses ten countries and four capitals (2,860 kilometres). Immediately after entering Romania, the Danube forms a wild gorge, between Baziaș and Drobeta-Turnu Severin, whose most spectacular stretch is named the Cauldrons.

With a surface area of 4,178 km², the Danube Delta is, in terms of size, the twenty-second largest in the world and the third largest in Europe. It is home to the largest area of compact reed beds in the world. According to the RAMSAR Treaty, it is a Wetland of International Importance, and is listed as a UNESCO World Natural Heritage site.

5 Romania is like many worlds rolled into one, and this will give added flavour to your journey.

Passing from one Romanian province to another will give you an opportunity to see many multicultural milieus, which have preserved traces of their turbulent history.

Romania is made up of provinces, the so-called mediaeval *țări* (lands) – small voevoda princedoms and independent states ruled by *knjazija* (feudal overlords), each with its own distinctive character and history. In the twelfth century, King Géza II of Hungary sent Saxon colonists to the Romanian province of Transylvania, who founded fortified settlements (Sighișoara, Sibiu, Bistrița). The province was later annexed by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The province of Dobrudja, colonised by the Greeks in the seventh century B.C., was part of the Roman Empire and later ruled by the Turks, between 1417 and 1878. The princes of Moldova, a province with numerous ruined forts and princely palaces, were

tireless in their fight against the invading Turks. It is said that St Stephen the Great built a church after each of his victories against the Mahommedans. Indeed, in Moldavia you will find numerous mediaeval churches, adorned with exterior murals of breathtaking beauty. In the eighteenth century, Wallachia and Moldavia were ruled by the Phanariots, Greeks from the Phanar district of Constantinople, who were appointed by the Ottoman Porte; this was a period in which the Romanian milieu became imbued with oriental manners. During the Russo-Turkish War of 1828-29, Russian troops, led by Pavel Kiseleff, occupied Moldavia and Wallachia, remaining until 1834.

6 Romania is a fascinating subject for political analysis. Two periods have been decisive in Romania's history: that of the monarchy, when the country set out on the road of modernisation, and that of the communist dictatorship, whose consequences were disastrous.

In 1859, under the rule of Alexandru Ioan Cuza, the United Principalities were formed (Moldavia and Wallachia), which became Romania in 1862. In 1866, Carol of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen (Carol I) came to the throne of the United Principalities, and a democratic constitution, inspired by that of Belgium, was adopted. Following the Russo-Turkish War of 1877, Romania obtained complete independence and freedom from the Ottoman yoke, and in March 1881 it was proclaimed the Kingdom of Romania, with Carol I as the first King. The long and beneficial rule of Carol I (1866-1914) was followed by that of his descendents: Ferdinand I, Carol II, and Mihai I. On 1 December 1918, the Act of Union between Transylvania, the Banat, Maramureș, Crișana, and Romania was signed in Alba Iulia. The communists, who seized power after the Second World War, isolated Romania from the rest of Europe, exerting an extremely authoritarian rule and bequeathing Romania a harsh legacy. After more than forty years, the communist regime was

toppled in 1989. Since 2007, Romania has been part of the European Union and is trying to rediscover the old values that were almost annihilated by the communists.

7 Romania is a land of religious belief. You will be impressed by the large number and variety of churches.

The ethnic diversity of Romania is reflected in its churches, which are built in the most various architectural styles. You will, of course, discover thousands of Orthodox places of worship – for this is a land which, although its language is Latin in origin, is part of Eastern Orthodox Christendom – as well as churches of the Evangelical denomination (the fortified churches of the Transylvanian Saxons), and the Hungarian, Szekler (Șumuleu), Polish (Cacica), and Armenian (Hagigadar) communities. You will also find Jewish synagogues (Timișoara) and Turkish mosques (Constanța, Mangalia).

8 The cities of Romania have much more to offer than you could ever imagine. Explore them and discover all their secrets! Many have preserved their historic centres, with enchanting winding streets, ideal for walks.

There are baroque cities, such as Timișoara; mediaeval citadels, such as Sighișoara; eclectic cities with frenetic boulevards, but also tranquil lanes, part of the old *mahalale* (tradesmen's quarters), such as the capital Bucharest; cities with tenement blocks that copy Soviet architecture, such as Bacău; cities that were formerly the capital of the land, with old princely courts, such as Tirgoviște and Curtea de Argeș; cities with a definite tourist appeal, such as Brașov; but also declining industrial cities, with abandoned factories... The dynamic big cities have tempting cultural attractions. Sibiu was European Capital of Culture 2007, the prestigious Transylvania International Film Festival is held in Cluj annually, and Bucharest is host to the biannual George Enesco International Festival and

Competition, to which are invited the most famous orchestras and conductors in the world.

9 Agricultural tourism is an ideal choice for a holiday in true Romanian style.

Romanian villages have discovered in recent years the rural development benefits of agricultural tourism. The rural communities of Bukowina, Maramureș, and the Rucăr-Bran corridor have blazed the trail. Old traditions and occupations can be admired in the fishing villages of the Danube Delta, the sheep-rearing villages of Mărginimea Sibiului, the coopers' villages of Bukowina (Pleșa, Bogata), and the potters' villages of Horezu, Vama and Marginea, which are like vast open-air pottery workshops. Rural folk wear traditional costume at Easter and Christmas, when *cozonac* and *pască* are baked, eggs are painted, and children go carolling from house to house.

In Bukowina, a village such as Ciocănești, with its stuccoed houses, will seem to you like something from

a fairy tale. And in the Delta, a fishing village, Sfintu Gheorghe – situated at the place where the Danube empties into the sea – fills with cinema-lovers from all over the world in the middle of August, when this isolated rural corner hosts the Anonimul International Independent Film Festival.

10 The local cooking, although not widely known, is full of flavour.

Try a few of the local traditional dishes, prepared according to age-old recipes, from fresh and healthy ingredients: pork-belly broth (“ciorbă”), stuffed cabbage leaves (“sărmăluțe”) with cream and maize porridge (“mămăliguță”), cauldron chicken, skinless beef, pork and mutton mince sausages (“mititei”), Pleșcoi sausages, lamb pudding (“drob”), shepherd’s maize porridge with cream and melted cheese (“bulz”)... For dessert, try Brașov pies or curd pancakes (“papanashi”) with cream and jam. And to go with your meal, try a Romanian wine from the vineyards

of Valea Călugărească, Tohani, Pietroasa, or Niculițel, ideally to be savoured to the accompaniment of lively Romanian folk music.

Romania is being talked about more and more, and more and more tourists are coming here to spend their holidays, in search of something different.

But don’t forget that Romania is not just limited to one or other of the aspects presented above. Try to see as much as you can if you are coming for the first time. Discover Romania in the bustle of its cities, as well as in the tranquillity of its villages, seemingly frozen in past times, or on the Black Sea coast and the fantastic aquatic world of the Danube Delta, or on the heights of the Carpathians, with their hundreds of hiking trails and their spectacular lakes and gorges, where rare species of flora and fauna have been identified.

And, of course, look around you carefully and you will discover all the picturesque local peculiarities – after all, you have arrived at the gateway to the Balkans, where everything is more colourful than anywhere else!





Seemingly endless expanses of ploughed fields extend around Romanian villages.



Country roads, Dobruja



Cart tracks lined with wild plants cut
across the fields.