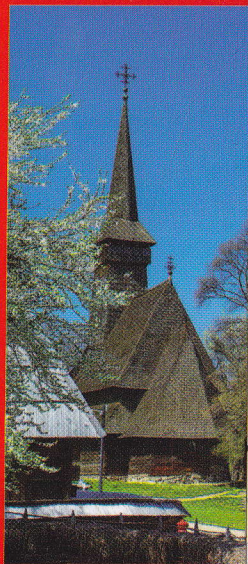
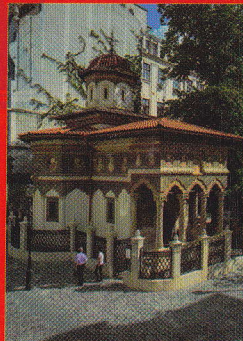


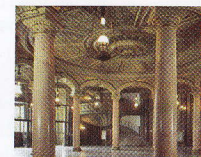
Bucharest's ten most beautiful tourist attractions

- Palace of Parliament (House of the People) ► 72
- Metropolia Hill ► 64
- National Museum of Art ► 51
- Cotroceni Palace ► 77
- Stavropoleos Monastery ► 26
- Museum of the Romanian Peasant ► 135
- Herăstrău Park and Museum of the Village ► 140, 141
- Bellu Cemetery ► 95
- Mogoșoaia Palace ► 152
- The park and monastery on the Island of Lake Snagov ► 150



Bucharest

Passion for Travel



text
MARIANA PASCARU

English translation
ALISTAIR IAN BLYTH

photographs
FLORIN ANDREESCU
MARIANA PASCARU (pag: 6, 7, 22, 24, 82, 84, 90,
96 right, 97, 109, 116, 120, 121, 127, 128)

Bucharest / trad.eng.: Alistair Ian Blyth; versiune originală: Mariana Pascaru;
foto: Florin Andreescu
București; Ad Libri, 2015
ISBN 978-606-8050-63-8
913(498 Buc.)

Published by AD LIBRI
tel./fax: 021-212.35.67, 021-210.88.64; tel: 021-610.37.92
e-mail: adlibri@adlibri.ro
www.adlibri.ro
www.calator-pe-mapamond.ro

AD LIBRI retains the copyright in the original edition and in all subsequent editions and reprints.

All rights to the present edition belong exclusively to Ad Libri publishing house. Reproduction of the texts or illustrations, whether in part or in whole, is permissible only with the prior written consent of Ad Libri publishing house.

The publisher endeavours to provide readers with complete and up-to-date factual information. We are nevertheless aware that, between the date this guide is published and that in which it is purchased, various modifications may appear in the information offered herein. We apologise for any eventual oversights and shall be grateful to all of those who point them out. Any other observation or new information regarding the subject matter of the guide will be regarded as welcome.

KEY TO SYMBOLS

✉ address

☎ telephone number

🕒 opening times

💰 admission charge

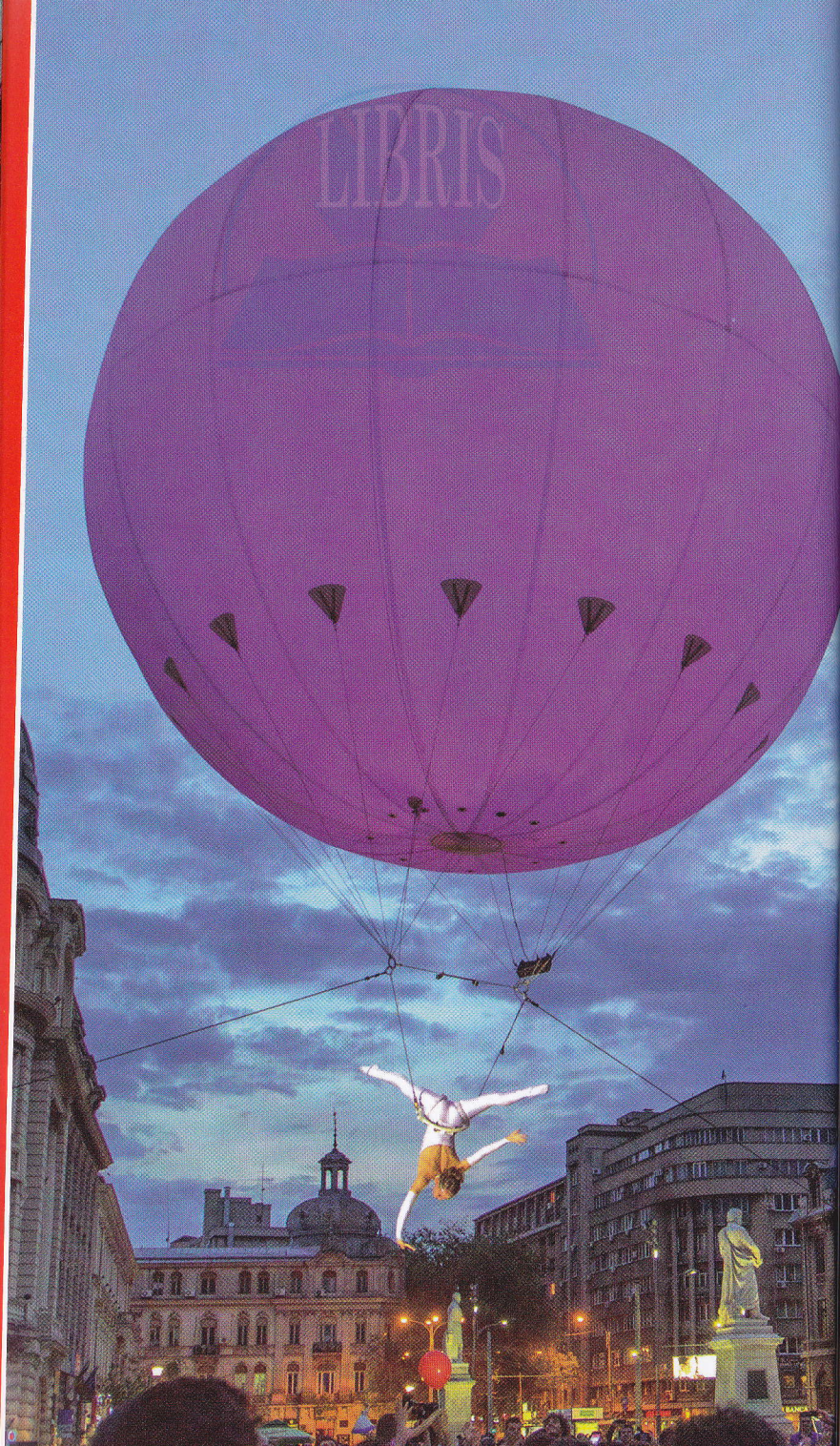
🚌 nearest bus/tram route

➤ indicates the page where you will find a fuller description

Contents

■ Bucharest, who are you?	5
Introduction	6
Historical Landmarks	8
Bucharest's ten most beautiful tourist attractions	10
Bucharest's ten most interesting experiences	13
■ The Historic Centre	17
■ Calea Victoriei (Victory Avenue)	41
■ The Dîmbovița embankment	61
■ Calea Șerban Vodă	85
■ Piața Universității and the West-East Axis	99
■ Piața Romană and the North-South Axis	123
■ Further Afield	149
■ Recommendations and Useful Information	155
■ Index	173





Bucharest, who are you?

Introduction	6
Historical landmarks	8
Bucharest's ten most beautiful tourist attractions	10
Bucharest's ten most interesting experiences	13



Introduction



Many people are madly in love with it (including myself), and just as many people hate it (including myself, sometimes), but it is in their blood and they cannot be parted from it. A cocktail of contrasts sets your head reeling as soon as you set foot in the street, whether you are a stranger arriving at the airport or the railway station or whether you live here and are just popping out on everyday business. On the one side, a bad-tempered functionary, a throwback to the communist period, slams the door in your face, and on the other side you stop in amazement at the sight of a homeless man singing angelically to a leaf. A little further on, you are enchanted by the sweet scent of lindens and honeysuckle that envelops a lane shaded by ancient trees, but turning the corner you can find yourself at the base of a crushingly massive office block, next to which you feel no bigger than an ant. A little farther still and you come across a gentle old woman with a basket of daisies, but barely do you have time to digest this anachronistic sight than you stumble on a street full of fancy restaurants packed with suited corporatists. In Obor, a department store from the communist period (1977) continues to lure nostalgic shoppers with its incredible hodgepodge of wares, while nearby has

sprouted an insipid mall. A stone's throw from the city centre an antiquated, forgotten cinema (formerly called the Miorița, now renamed, ironically enough, the Europa) stubbornly goes on projecting films for audiences of two (or even one, if you pay for two tickets, and it is well worth it given how little it costs). In the middle of Titan, a typical dormitory district, one of the city's largest and most beautiful parks can be found hidden away. Gripped by road rage, a driver showers you in curses because you don't cross the road quickly enough, but two metro stations away you plunge into the deafening silence and wilderness of an urban delta, which has accidentally formed on the bed of an abandoned reservoir (Văcărești).

In the last few years, the younger generation, the much-mocked hipsters, have found a way to avoid the pitfalls of nostalgic hankering after the Little Paris of the *Belle Époque* and the dead end of fatalistic post-communist victimhood, reinventing Bucharest as a place of experimentation and unconventional events. It is a kind of Little Berlin, say some, a place whose nightlife is just as exciting, that has once more gained a reputation as a European clubbing destination.

Photo: Masca Theatre parade on the Old City streets, during the Bucureștii Lui Caragiale Festival

Next page: Stand Up Paddling (SUP) on Dimbovița, in front of the National Library

If you pause to think about what Bucharest looked like before 2007, the year when Romania joined the EU, and what it looks like now, then you will be surprised to discover that it is in fact a completely different city in many respects. And the change can best be seen in the old centre, which used to be deserted and desolate, but is now busy and bursting with life at every hour of the day and night. The bars designed by Cristian Corvin (*Papiota, Laboratorul de Cocktailuri, Lacrimi și Sfinți, La Divan*) vie with each other in originality, the cafés and pubs (*Blutful, Origo, Energia*) have at last begun to take their function as urban living rooms seriously, while still leaving enough space for tea rooms (*La Metoc, Green Tea, Serendipity, La Vlaicu, Bohemia Tea House, Caffé D'arthé, Ceainăria Cinci*), which aim to create oases of relaxation in the midst of the urban tumult. Colțea Square had been renovated and now plays host to concerts of classical music every weekend. The statues area of Piața Universității has been freed up by the opening of an underground car park and is now a public space once more. The National Theatre has been reshaped. A Children's World Park has been laid out, and Children's Town has come to life again in a new format. A water park has been created (Divertiland), which has its own train station. Examples of street art have multiplied and it is already a tradition to close the Kiseleff Boulevard to traffic at weekends in summer as a way of encouraging the inhabitants of Bucharest to take part in sports. There has been an explosion of independent theatre, thanks to increasing numbers of small companies and spaces to host experiment (*Godot, Mignon, În Culișe, Teatrul de Artă, Teatrul de Sufragerie, Unteatru*), and the idea of converting industrial spaces into cultural centres (*ARK, Anexa MNAC, WASP, Atelierul de Producție, Halele Carol, Turnul de Apă Pantelimon, Turbohalle*) has begun to make inroads in Romania. Numerous alternative spaces have sprung up (*Acuarela, Carol 53, Diane 4, Home Mătășari, Casa de pe Chei, Știrbey Palace* on Calea Victoriei), which serve as cultural nodes, urban floes, whereby the city has been conquered and tamed by young artists. In early summer, when the all-nighters come thick and fast (*Museums Night, Cultural*

Institutes Night, Galleries Night, European Literature Night, Short Films Night, Romanian Films Night), Bucharest experiences a cultural fervour that is then maintained by a long series of urban festivals: *Street Delivery, Train Delivery, Women on Mătășari, Romanian Design Week, Bucharest Biennale, B-FIT in the Street, Bucharest Music Film Festival, Bucharest Jazz Festival, Strada Armenească Festival*. The old feast of St John's Eve, on 24 June, is an opportunity to showcase the traditional Romanian *ie* (embroidered woman's blouse), which has come back into fashion and which was modelled by young women to mark Worldwide Day of the *ie*.

Bucharest is habitable at last. And it is becoming an increasingly attractive destination for foreign tourists. The city seems to have gradually recreated its identity, which it accepts with pride, as proudly as its young inhabitants, who can be seen in steadily greater numbers pedalling through the city on their bicycles, serenely braving the chaotic traffic around them. It is a lesson in enthusiasm and courage for the cavillers, pragmatists and eternal malcontents around them. Yes, we cannot deny it, the city's heritage is still placed in peril by corrupt officials and too many of its architectural treasures are being destroyed, almost as many as during the hated time of communist urban planning. But in the present guide we shall leave aside such complaints and set out to discover a different Bucharest, a Bucharest unaffected by dilemmas and conflicts, and focus on its brighter side.



Historical landmarks

1400-1418

Mircea the Old builds the Princely Court in Bucharest (► 20).

20 September 1459

Bucharest is mentioned for the first time, in a document issued by Vlad the Impaler.

1558-1559

Mircea Ciobanu founds the Princely Church (► 21) of the Princely Court.

1659

Prince Gheorghe Ghika establishes the permanent capital of Wallachia in Bucharest.

1688-1714

In the reign of Constantine Brîncoveanu, the Old Court is rebuilt and the New Church of St George (► 31) is constructed. At the "gates of Bucharest" the Mogoșoaia Palace (► 152) is built.

1694

The first institute of higher learning in Wallachia is founded: the St Sava Princely Academy (on the site of the present-day University).

1704

At the behest of Mihai Cantacuzino the Spatharius, the Colțea Hospital is built (► 103), the oldest of its kind in Bucharest.

1711-1821

The reign of the Phanariots (princes from Greek families of the Phanar quarter of Constantinople) in Wallachia and Moldavia. Although in theory the two principalities are autonomous, in practice they are under the direct control of the Ottoman Porte.

1798

Bucharest is divided into five districts: Tîrgul, Podul Mogoșoaiei, Tîrgul de Afară, Broștenii, and Gorganul.

1806

The city's five districts are renamed Red, Yellow, Black, Blue and Green. These are later reduced to four, with the absorption of the Red district.

1808

Manuc's Inn is built (► 22). In 1812, the Bucharest Treaty between Russia and the Ottoman Empire is signed here.

1847

On 23 March, Easter Day, a devastating fire reduces the centre of Bucharest to ashes. Previously Balkan and Ottoman in layout, the city is rebuilt according to planning principles imported from France and the West, which is to earn the city its nickname of the Little Paris.

1852

The first performance at the National Theatre.

1854

Cișmigiu Gardens open.

1857

Bucharest becomes the first capital in the world to use paraffin street lighting.

1859

Bucharest becomes the capital of the United Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. The act of unification is signed by Alexander John Cuza.

1866

On 10 May, Karl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen enters Bucharest and becomes Romania's first crowned

head of state. In 1881 he is named King of Romania.

1869

Bucharest's first railway station is inaugurated in Filaret (► 94), along with the Bucharest-Giurgiu railway line. The inauguration of the University of Bucharest.

1872

Opening of the Gara de Nord. The first horse-drawn tramcar route, running from Gara de Nord to Piața Sfintu Gheorghe, via Calea Griviței, Strada Luterană, and the National Theatre.

1882

Bucharest becomes the capital of the Kingdom of Romania.

1888

The Athenaeum is completed.

1894

Mayor Nicolae Filipescu inaugurates the first electric tramway, running from Obor to Cotroceni Hill.

1 Decembrie 1918

After the union of Transylvania, the Banat, Crișana and Maramureș with Romania (created in 1859 through the Union of the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia), Bucharest becomes the capital of Greater Romania.

1918-1939

In the inter-war period, Bucharest modernises and prospers, experiencing its final period of glory.

1947-1989

After coming to power, the communist regime takes brutal measures to repress the old intellectual elite, nationalise private property, and encourage the populace to migrate from the countryside to the towns.

1965-1989

Nicolae Ceaușescu becomes Secretary General of the Communist Party and the leader of the country.

4 March 1977

An earthquake, 7.2 on the Richter scale, damages numerous buildings.

1979

Inauguration of the first metro line, between the Semănătoarea and Timpuri Noi factories.

1984-1989

A large swathe of old Bucharest vanishes under Nicolae Ceaușescu's bulldozers. The dictator earns a reputation as a demolisher of churches. The urban master plan involves demolition of Văcărești Monastery (1722), Cotroceni Monastery (1679), dozens of churches, the Central Markets, the Brîncoveanu Hospital, the Republica Stadium, and entire districts of old houses. Churches on boulevards and major streets are moved, sometimes dozens of metres, behind high-rise blocks, often overnight.

1989

On 21 December, following the uprising of 17 December in Timișoara, a mass demonstration in front of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (now the Ministry of the Interior ► 50) turns into an anti-communist revolt that topples dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu.

1990-1991

The *Mineriads*: aided by the forces of law and order, the miners of the Jiu Valley wreaked violent havoc against protesters who had gathered in Piața Revoluției to voice their discontent at the post-Revolution political situation.

2014

The 555th anniversary of the first documented mention of the city.

Bucharest's ten most beautiful tourist attractions

The Palace of Parliament (House of the People) ▶ 72

A gigantic structure with a surface area of 330,000m², the second largest in the world after the Pentagon, the Palace of Parliament was built between 1984 and 1989 on Spirii Hill and was intended to house the offices of the Presidency, the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, and a number of ministries. Its exaggerated size, the opulence of its interior decorations, and its lack of any unitary style have drawn much criticism. The irony is that this symbol of the Ceaușescu dictatorship is today one of the capital's most visited tourists attractions. Besides the sections included in the guided tours, you can also visit the west wing of the building, which now houses the National Museum of Contemporary Art (▶ 74). The roof of the museum provides a panoramic view of the area surrounding the gargantuan edifice, to make way for which an entire quarter of Bucharest was razed to the ground.



Photo: Parade in the large Constituției Square, overlooked by the colossal Palace of Parliament

Metropia Hill ▶ 64

The spiritual centre of a city dotted with churches, this hill shaded by old chestnut trees is home to the Cathedral of the Patriarchate (1668), around which thousands of Bucharest's inhabitants gather to listen to mass on high feast days. The Palace of the Patriarchate (1908) is also located on the hill. It was built in the eclectic style by Dimitrie Maimarolu on the site of the Princely Divan, where the act of union between Wallachia and Moldavia was signed in 1859, making Alexander John Cuza the *domnitor* (ruler) of the United Principalities.

The Romanian National Museum of Art ▶ 51

The former Royal Palace, a neoclassical edifice that dominates Piața Revoluției, is now home to the most valuable art collections in Romania: the Gallery of Romanian Mediaeval Art, the Gallery of Romanian Modern Art, and the Gallery

of European Art. Since 2014, guided tours have also included the historic spaces of the Royal Palace's main wing (the Royal Dining Room, the Throne Room, and the Voievodes' Stair), where there are exhibitions dedicated to the history of the royal family.

Cotroceni Palace ▶ 77

This wonderful palace was built between 1893 and 1895 by Paul Gottereau, the architect to the Royal House. It stands on top of a hill, within the precincts of an old monastery dating from 1679, renovated in the neo-Romanian style in the early twentieth century by architect Grigore Cerchez, but demolished at the orders of Ceaușescu in 1984. Today, it is the Presidential Palace and is home to a museum that reconstructs elegant interiors from the time when it was the residence of Prince Ferdinand and his wife Maria.

Stavropoleos Monastery ▶ 26

The old inns of Bucharest, built in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as miniature fortresses, usually had a church, some of which have survived

to the present day. Such is the case of the small Stavropoleos Church (1724), a genuine architectural jewel and wonderful example of the late Brâncoveanu style. It is remarkable for its portico, with four stone columns and a balustrade carved with motifs representing flowers and tendrils, as well as the biblical scene of Samson wrestling the lion, and also for its tranquil inner courtyard, where fragments of frescos and masonry are preserved from the old churches that were demolished in the centre of Bucharest during the communist period.

The Museum of the Romanian Peasant ▶ 135

In this original museum, which goes beyond the surface of its exhibits, managing to bring to light their deeper meanings, each object takes on life and tells its story as part of an initiatory journey replete with signs. Having explored the spiritual universe of rural Romania, you can relax in the lively Peasant's Club and admire the beautiful items for sale at the craftsmen's market that is held every weekend in the museum's courtyard.



Photo: Stavropoleos Monastery (1724)