

## Preparing For Your Journey: Romania

### General Information

**Visas:** are not required for US, EU, Canada and Japan citizens for fewer than 90 days of travel. Visas are required for citizens of Australia and New Zealand. However, the visa application process is merely a formality. Applicants only need to fill out a form and to pay the visa fee (\$35.00) No pictures are required. Visa must be obtained in advance at consular offices.

**Customs:** Valuable goods, jewelry and foreign currency over the value of \$1000 per person must be declared when entering the country. Endorsed customs declarations must be kept as they are required when leaving the country. It is forbidden to export cultural, historic or artistic value as well as Lei (currency) in excess of \$250,000.

**Vaccinations:** not required

**Topography:** Romania's terrain consists of a range of mountains, hills and plains, the Danube Delta and the Black Sea Coast.

**Climate:** Romania has a temperate-continental climate with moderate features, characteristic for Central Europe: hot summers; cold winters. Very distinct seasons. If you visit the country during winter, pay heed to the abundant snowfalls, especially if you are in the mountain area. The annual average temperature depends on latitude and ranges from 8 degrees Celsius in the North and 11 degrees Celsius in the South, with temperatures of 2.6 degrees Celsius in the mountains and 11.7 degrees Celsius in the plain. Summer nights in Brasov can be a little chilly.

**Clothing:** Pack a warm pullover, a raincoat and good walking shoes. Wool sweaters and hats can be purchased from roadside vendors when traveling through the mountains. Footing can be uneven when walking in the medieval villages with old cobbled streets.

**Languages:** The official language is Romanian, of Latin origin. Some Hungarian and German is spoken in Transylvania and in the border areas, while mainly English and some French is spoken by those connected with the tourist industry.

**Currency:** Romania was recently accepted into the EU, so Euros are accepted. In this transitional period the national currency, the leu (plural lei), is also still accepted. Coins come in denominations of 1, 5, 10, 20, 50 and 100 lei, while notes are issued in denominations of 200, 500, 1000, 5000, 10,000 and 50,000. Romania uses periods rather than commas to denote thousands, thus 10.000 means 10,000.

Keep your exchange vouchers, they may be requested when you pay for things in lei. Dollar bills are a readily negotiated currency and it is a good idea to bring some along. ATM machines are everywhere so this is the easiest method. There are also Currency Exchange Offices (Casa de Schimb) at the airport and main towns.

Small vendors cannot change large bills. It is best to carry several 100 lei coins and 500-1000 lei bills.

**Tippling:** For a 12 day tour, the guide should receive \$200-250 in total. Divide the total by the number of people in the group (for 4 people, this is \$5 per day per person). 10% is standard for restaurants, beauty parlors, etc.

**Hotels:** Some hotels expect you to leave the hotel key at the front desk when going out; check the policy where you stay. They may also hold your passport, but if you should need it to exchange currency, just ask for it. When in your room, keep your key in the door. The maids here don't knock before entering; they just try their key and if it opens the door, they will enter the room unannounced.

**Laundry:** There are no laundry facilities outside the hotels. The hotels charge an arm and a leg. Often, the hotels are not using washing machines; they are dry cleaning. Ask at the hotel reception desk if it is unclear.

**Calling Home:** You can purchase international calling cards to use in public phones, but you first have to purchase a local card to access the dial tone to then use the international card. It is a cumbersome method but fairly inexpensive. Using hotel phones is quite expensive. You could purchase an inexpensive euro mobile phone in Bucharest.

**Internet:** Most all hotels have free wifi. Internet access is everywhere and very inexpensive outside the hotels at cyber cafes. Many are open until 1-2 am and are located in pubs. Here are a few in Bucharest: Internet Cafe Bd. Carol I 25 at Piata Rosetti, icafe@icafe.kappa.ro Open 24 hours; French Institute 'Le Bistro' Bd Dacia 77 Tel: 210 0224 Open 10am-11pm; Web Club Bd. 1 Mai 12 Tel: 650.64.17; web@web.club.ro Open 24 hours.

**Time Zone:** GMT+2 hours. At noon in Romania it is 11:00 in Paris and Berlin, 10:00 in London, 06:00 in New York, 03:00 in San Francisco, 19:00 in Sydney and 13:00 in Moscow. Summertime: GMT+3 hours. Summer time change is in effect from the last Sunday in March to the last Sunday in October.

## Getting There

**What to do if you miss your flight:** At the airport you can request assistance from the ticketing agent of your airline carrier to re-book on next available flight. Next, call the contact number on your ID card to inform them that your arrival date has changed. If you call us, by the time we get the message, it will be too late to inform our associate in Europe.

### Travel Insurance

Trip cancellation/travel insurance is suggested. We use Travelex. The brochure/application is enclosed. Submit insurance application within 3 weeks of deposit to waive pre-existing conditions.

### Packing Suggestions

The weather is generally pleasant with sunny days and moderate evenings; occasional showers. Evenings in the mountains can be chilly. Lightweight casual clothing, sun hat, a sweater, light jacket, rain poncho, umbrella and of course comfortable walking shoes. The cobbled streets mean uneven footing.

### Arrival

You will be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel. After collecting baggage, follow the lines through customs and immigration to the exit. The Romania airport is quite small. Outside the exit, your driver will be waiting holding a placard with the name Original World.

## On the Journey

In Romania one person will be both driver and escort.

**Calling Internationally** is a bit difficult. You can use a US calling card in the hotels, but they will add a surcharge so ask first to find out costs. For public phones you need to purchase two calling cards. There are international cards available that have very good rates for calling the US, Canada or other parts of the world. You need a local calling card in order to dial the access code for the international card. You may also use this local card at hotels as it will be a local call. Alternately you can purchase an unlocked mobile phone and a SIM card for each country. Your escort can assist you in using the calling cards.

**Internet Cafes** are everywhere and they are open late sometimes until 2:00 am. Many of the internet centers are in bars so these can be smoke-filled. Cost is very inexpensive.

**Money Exchange:** There are ATM machines everywhere, even in the smallest towns. There are also exchange offices in the main cities.

**Meals:** The approximate cost of meals not included in the tour are \$15 lunch and \$20-25 dinner.

**Tipping** Tips are not included on the bills and when meals are included in the tour, the tips are not. 10 - 15% depending on the place and service. Guide & Driver Romania \$7-8 per day per person (your escort is also your driver).

**What to do if you need medical attention:** Ask your escort for assistance in finding a doctor or medical facility. If you have purchased travel insurance, be sure to save all receipts. If you have a serious illness or accident that requires extensive treatment or hospitalization or if you need to return home early, contact your travel insurance company for best instructions.

If you have purchased Travelex insurance, you may call collect 905-523-7066 (or call their London office which may be easier to reach 44-127-322-3000; fax: 44-127-332-7848). They have a list of approved doctors and facilities. They will also require you to obtain a 'fit to fly' letter from the attending doctor as well as a report on your medical condition. If there are major medical expenses, Travelex will handle payment directly to the medical facility provided you follow their instructions.

## Assistance Throughout the Journey

Please discuss with your escort any special needs or concerns that may arise during the journey. He/She will do everything possible to accommodate you.

**NOTE:** We suggest you carry with you a copy of the front page of your passport, our ID card with local contact numbers, your insurance benefits brochure and our preparation notes. The above information is accurate to the best of our knowledge, but always subject to change.