



Essential Romania 2020



Essential Romania

Myths, Mountains & Monasteries of Romania

Flexible Essential Trip – Classic Private Journey – 10 Days

Your choice of dates, start on any day of the week

Romania is a country that has everything – fortified medieval towns, gorgeous mountain landscapes, castles complete with vampire legends, fascinating ethnographic museums, and hospitable people – and travelers are just beginning to discover it. From the vibrant capital, Bucharest, roam the green, forested hills and meadows of this little-known country, visiting folktale villages that seem to have stepped out of the Middle Ages, and walk in the footsteps of Bram Stoker's legendary literary creation, Dracula. Admire the fortified churches of Transylvania, the exquisite UNESCO-listed painted monasteries of Bucovina, and the sturdy castles and cobbled squares of Saxon towns, and get to know the living traditions of the Romanian people.



Daily Itinerary

Day 1	Arrive Bucharest, Romania
Day 2	Bucharest
Day 3	Bucharest • Curtea de Arges • Sibiu
Day 4	Sibiu • Alba Iulia • Cluj Napoca
Day 5	Cluj Napoca • Bistrita • Gura Humorului
Day 6	Gura Humorului • Vama • day trip to painted monasteries of Bucovina
Day 7	Gura Humorului • Sighisoara
Day 8	Sighisoara • Saschiz • Brasov
Day 9	Brasov • Sinaia • Bucharest
Day 10	Depart Bucharest



Tour Highlights

Bucharest	Palace of the Parliament, Romanian Peasant Museum
Curtea de Arges	Curtea de Arges Monastery, Cozia Monastery
Sibiu	City center, Piata Mare
Alba Iulia	Turda Salt Mine
Cluj Napoca	St. Michael's Church, statue of Matthias Corvinus, Dormition Cathedral, National Theater
Bistrita	Old Town, Gothic Lutheran Church
Gura Humorului	City center, gateway to Bucovina region
Bucovina Region	Painted monasteries of Bucovina, including Moldovita, Sucevita, Voronet and Humor (UNESCO World Heritage Sites), Bicaz Canyon, Red Lake, Agapia Monastery
Vama	Vama Egg Museum
Sighisoara	Historic Center/Citadel area (UNESCO World Heritage Site), Clock Tower, House of Vlad Dracul, Scholar's Stairway, 14th century Gothic Church
Saschiz	Fortified church (UNESCO World Heritage Site), meeting with locals (including traditional food tasting)
Brasov	Old Town, Black Church, Bran Castle (Dracula's Castle)
Sinaia	Peles Castle, Sinaia Monastery, Azuga Rhein Cellar

Daily Itinerary



Day One

Arrive Bucharest, Romania

Arriving in Bucharest, check in to the hotel for overnight. Dinner is independent, touring will begin tomorrow morning after breakfast.

Meals: Independent/en route – *Golden Tulip Hotel or similar*

Day Two

Bucharest

After breakfast at the hotel, head out for a tour of **Bucharest**. Known for its wide, tree-lined boulevards, glorious belle epoque buildings, and reputation for the high life, Romania's capital was once known as the "Little Paris." Founded by Wallachian princes, it evolved from a 14th-century settlement that was part of a chain of fortresses built across the Danube plain to protect Wallachia from the Turks. Bucharest came into its own with Romanian independence in the late 19th century, when French and French-trained

architects were called in to transform what had been a large village into an imperial capital. There is even



an Arc de Triomphe on the elegant Soseaua Kiseleff, a boulevard longer than Paris' famed Champs-Elysees.

Today Bucharest is experiencing renewed energy after its communist years. The city's older architecture



remains one of its main attractions, reflecting the succeeding styles of its various rulers. The heart of the city is the Piata Revolutiei, the site of the old Royal Palace. It lies halfway along Bucharest's historic Calea Victoriei, the city's main artery. The majority of sights are conveniently within walking distance of the Piata Revolutiei and, to the east of the Calea Victoriei, the Piata Universitatii.

The 1,100-room **Palace of the Parliament** was one of the grandiose schemes of Nicolae Ceausescu, Romania's deposed and executed president.

Originally named the House of the People, it was intended to be the headquarters of the Romanian Communist Party. The monumental structure is one of the largest buildings in the world; only the Pentagon has more floor space. Ceausescu razed most of the historic buildings on Spirii Hill in the center of town in order to build it. The interior is clad with approximately one million cubic meters of Transylvanian marble: reportedly, Romanian tombstones had to be made of other stone during the years of construction, from 1984 to 1989. **Please note:** The tour inside the Parliament building is strictly controlled for security purposes and only "group" tours are conducted. Tour times are reconfirmed only 24 hours in advance, so your guide will provide updates as needed. As security is strict on entry, please note that a valid ID (passport) is required to enter, and airport-style screening should be expected.

The **Museum of the Romanian Peasant** displays over 100,000 objects representative of traditional Romanian peasant life. Voted "European Museum of the Year" in 1996 by the European Museum Forum, the collection is notable for its textiles, especially costumes, icons, ceramics, and other



items from daily life. One of the most famous exhibits is “the house in the house,” a display of peasant Antonie Mogos’ personal effects. The museum, founded in the 1930s, today occupies the building of the former museum of the Communist Party. Part of that museum has been left untouched in the basement, and can still be viewed.

Return to the hotel and enjoy an independent dinner.

Meals: B – *Golden Tulip Hotel* or similar



and other objects.

Day Three

Bucharest • Curtea de Arges • Sibiu

Check out of the hotel this morning and set off for Sibiu, stopping en route in Curtea de Arges. One of the oldest cities in Romania, **Curtea de Arges** was established early in the 14th century by the founding prince of Wallachia, Radu Negru. The city succeeded Campulung as the capital of Wallachia, and its name means “Court on the Arges River.”

The Monastery of Curtea de Arges’ cathedral was originally built in the 16th century and resembles a Byzantine mausoleum. Its unusual, two-toned limestone façade is emblazoned with lilies, and its interior walls are covered with frescoes. Legend has it that the builder was forced to entomb his wife in its foundations.

After an independent lunch, visit the **Cozia Monastery whose name is derived from Turkic** for “walnut grove.” Built in 1388, it is the oldest monastery in the Wallachia region of Romania. The interior walls are adorned with frescoes, several are well-preserved originals. The monastery also features a museum that exhibits art, manuscripts, embroideries,



Depart overland for **Sibiu**. Upon arrival, check into the hotel and enjoy an independent dinner.
Meals: B – *Ramada Hotel or similar*

Day Four

Sibiu • Alba Iulia • Cluj Napoca

This morning, explore **Sibiu**, an early Saxon walled town in Transylvania. Established in the 12th century and razed by the Tatars in 1241, Sibiu has two levels. The "upper town," surrounded by remnants of the 15th century defensive walls, contains most of Sibiu's historic sights. The "lower town" is a charming array of Sibiu's oldest houses and cobbled squares. Connecting the upper and lower towns are dozens of tunnels, stairways, and hidden passages. The large medieval square, **Piata Mare**, is at the heart of the city and began life in 1411 as a grain market. Today it is home to many shops, cafes, and museums.

Following the city tour, depart for Cluj Napoca with an en route stop in Alba Iulia.



Alba Iulia was an important early Dacian and Roman city, mentioned by Ptolemy as Apulon. During the reign of Charles VI, Holy Roman Emperor from 1711 to 1740, the city realized its greatest glory. The upper city's star-shaped citadel with its seven bastions remains today in a remarkably preserved state. The fortress encloses the Gothic cathedral, dating to the 13th century. Its walls are made of brick, stone and rubble from earlier Roman fortifications, measuring nine feet at the base.



Before arriving in Cluj Napoca, stop for touring at the **Turda Salt Mine, or Salina Turda**. Descend



some 400 feet into the halls of the mine, now an otherworldly theme park. Table salt was reportedly first mined here in the Middle Ages; over the years huge caverns have been carved out and connected to each other. Within the hill, you can find an underground lake plied by rowboats and paddle boats, a bowling alley, a Ferris wheel, and ping pong tables, all surrounded by the glittering formations of the strategically lit subterranean grottoes.

Arrive in Cluj Napoca this evening and check into

your hotel.

Meals: B – *Beyfin Hotel or similar*

Day Five

Cluj Napoca • Bistrita • Gura Humorului

After breakfast, enjoy a tour of the city. **Cluj Napoca**, originally a Dacian stronghold in the 2nd century, has been considered the capital of Transylvania since the Middle Ages. A university town bisected by the Somesul Mic River, Cluj has a population of about 300,000. The city is fairly evenly divided between ethnic Romanians and Hungarians, and the struggles between these two groups have made up much of Cluj's history.

Explore the center of medieval Cluj, including the 14th century **St. Michael's Church** in the city's central square. In front of the Gothic church is an **equestrian statue of Matthias Corvinus**; born in Cluj Napoca to Hungarian and Romanian parents, he was elected King of Hungary in 1458. Admire the **Orthodox Dormition Cathedral**, built in the 20th century in the Romanian Brancovan style, and the nearby neo-baroque **National Theater**, built in 1904 while Cluj was a part of Hungary.

Depart for Gura Humorului with an en route stop in **Bistrita**, a small town in the hills of northern Transylvania first mentioned in 1264. Originally one of Romania's Saxon villages, Bistrita's Old Town still



harbors 15th and 16th century houses. Its 14th century **Gothic Lutheran Church** is one of its main attractions, as is the Golden Krone Hotel, named after the one in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.

Ever since Bram Stoker published *Dracula* in 1897, Transylvania has been associated in the English-speaking world with vampires, mystery, and magic. In reality, Transylvania is a historical region of central Romania, flanked on the east and south by the Carpathian Mountains and encompassing the Transylvanian Plateau, a patchwork of valleys, villages, small farms, and low hills. A verdant and beautiful area, Transylvania has since medieval times been populated by a mix of Romanian, Hungarian, Roma, and Saxon people, and the land has been conquered and re-conquered many times.

Continue on to Gura Humorului for an overnight. **Gura Humorului** is a town of about 16,000 in southern Bucovina, between the Voronet and Humor Monasteries. A Jewish shtetl before WWII, Gura Humorului lost most of its Jewish inhabitants when the Romanians deported them to the concentration camps and ghettos of Transdniester.

Check into the hotel for overnight.

Meals: B – *Hilde's Residence or similar*

Day Six

Gura Humorului • Vama • day trip to painted monasteries of Bucovina

Today, explore the mysterious heritage of **Bucovina**, a remote province of northeastern Romania. This was once the heartland of the Ashkenazi Jews and today is famous for the beauty of its deep Carpathian Forest and its lovely Orthodox monasteries. Included in the day's touring are the beautiful

UNESCO-listed 16th century frescoed monasteries of **Humor, Voronet, Sucevita, and Moldovita**. The monasteries are small structures originally constructed within thick fortress walls. Their 13th to 15th century stone exteriors are frescoed with biblical scenes that served as "painted Bibles" for illiterate peasants seeking sanctuary from the frequent battles that swept the area.



Continue to the **village of Vama** to visit the **Vama Egg Museum**. This museum celebrates the traditional Romanian craft of egg-painting, with displays of more than 7,000 hand-decorated eggs from all over the world. Learn about the traditions behind the striking colors and exacting patterns ornamenting the eggs from the proprietor, with an opportunity to shop for your own handcrafted souvenirs. (Note: *Today's touring order is subject to change based on season and number of visitors to the painted monasteries.*)

Return to Gura Humorului and enjoy an independent dinner.

Meals: B – *Hilde's Residence or similar*

Day Seven

Gura Humorului • Sighisoara

Today will be a long travel day, but worth it to get to the medieval city of Sighisoara. The route goes through immense **Bicaz Canyon**, hugging the banks of the Bicaz River, which twists and turns among 700-foot limestone cliffs. One of the most spectacular roads in the country, it threads its way carefully between the rushing river on one side, and the sheer rock face on the other. At the bottom of Bicaz Canyon is **Lake Rosu, "Red Lake,"** formed when a rockslide dammed the Bicaz River in 1837.

En route, pay a visit to **Agapia Monastery**, made up of two different complexes where more than 400 nuns live and work, about six miles from Targu Neamt. The upper, older complex, called Agapia on the Hill and founded in 1527, is small and lovely. The lower monastery was founded in the mid-17th century, and includes a beautifully frescoed church and a small museum. The nuns live and work tending gardens, weaving rugs, and embroidering fabrics. Agapia's nuns wove some of the carpets that adorned Ceausescu's "House of the People" in Bucharest, now called the Palace of Parliament.

Arrive in Sighisoara this evening and check into your hotel for overnight.

Meals: B – *Cavaler Hotel or similar*



Day Eight

Sighisoara • Saschiz • Brasov



A medieval town in the heart of Transylvania, **Sighisoara** was built by German Saxons, and is considered the most beautiful and complete medieval architectural ensemble in Romania. In the 13th century, Hungarian overlords granted the Saxons land here in return for help defending the area from the Tatars. The Saxons typically built compact villages centered by fortified churches.

A city tour of Sighisoara's **UNESCO-listed medieval Old Town** begins at the entrance to the citadel, under the massive **210-foot**

clock tower. Continue along the square to **the house of Vlad Dracul, Vlad the Impaler's father**, and then take the **Scholar's Stairway** up to the 14th century **Gothic Church on the Hill**.

Dating from the 14th century, the clock tower formerly controlled the main gate of the 2,500-foot defensive wall. Its seven-foot-thick walls were used to store ammunition, food, and the city's treasures. The clock was placed in the tower in 1648, and its Swiss mechanism added in 1906. Seven different slow-moving figurines carved from linden wood replace each other every midnight all week, and at the top of the spire is a meteorological clock that forecasts the weather. Since 1889, the clock tower has been home to the History Museum and a small Museum of Torture.

Depart on the drive to Brasov, with a stop en route in **Saschiz**, a medieval Saxon village claiming one of the UNESCO-listed fortified churches in Transylvania. Usually organized around a fortified church, the Saxon villages were built from the 13th to the 16th century. The church in Saschiz is a late Gothic structure, built from 1493 to 1525; its high defensive wall makes it look like a fortress. The village is also known for its glass icons, another example of the Saxon culture that prevailed here.

Meet some of the villagers here to learn about their way of life. Also enjoy **tasting an array of local specialties**.

Continue to **Brasov**, an old Transylvanian town set at the foot of a mountain and filled with medieval architecture, cobblestone streets and small houses. The city dates back to the 13th century when it was a busy trading town. Many of Brasov's medieval and Renaissance buildings still exist, thanks to the



diplomatic skill and military foresight of town leaders. During repeated Turkish attacks in the region from the 15th to the 18th century, Brasov, with its strong town fortifications, escaped major war damage.

Highlights of the well-preserved **Old Town** include the 14th century **Black Church**, which received its name after the Great Fire of 1689 tinted its walls, the Council Square at the center of the old city with the old City Hall as its centerpiece, and the First Romanian School Museum, which houses some of the oldest examples of Romanian printing and typography.



Check into the hotel and enjoy an independent dinner.
Meals: B – *Kronwell Hotel or similar*

Day Nine

Brasov • Sinaia • Bucharest

Begin today with a tour to **Bran Castle**, more commonly known as "Dracula's Castle." Despite popular myth, it was not built by Vlad Tepes, the Wallachian prince upon whom the 19th century novelist Bram Stoker is alleged to have based his vampire count. This 14th century castle in the center of Bran village was in fact built by the people of Brasov in 1382 to defend the Bran mountain pass against the Turks. Bran Castle embodies the Gothic image of a Transylvanian castle, and as a result draws crowds from far and wide.





Continue to the town of Sinaia, affectionately known as the “Pearl of the Carpathians.” Located in the Prahova Valley, **Sinaia** is Romania’s most popular ski resort and gateway to the beautiful Bugeci Mountains. Winter sports, including a 5,000-foot bobsledding run, and excellent summer hiking and climbing make Sinaia a year-round destination. In 1870, King Carol I built his summer residence, Peles Castle, here, guaranteeing the town fame and fortune.

Start touring with **Peles Castle**, one of Romania’s most important museums and the final resting place of several Romanian monarchs, including King Carol I, King Ferdinand, and Queen Maria. Inaugurated in 1883, Peles combines elements of the German and Gothic Renaissance that bring to mind the extravagant Bavarian castles of King Ludwig. Seven terraces surround the castle’s 160 rooms, which are opulently decorated with leather, ebony, walnut, and mother-of-pearl, and display invaluable collections of art and furnishings. **Please note:** Peles Castle is a state-owned and operated museum, and does not permit anyone but its own sanctioned museum guides to conduct tours. As such, MIR’s private

guides will not be allowed to conduct private tours of the castle on their own. *You may be asked to join-in with other visitors at the scheduled tour times conducted by the museum guides.*

After an independent lunch continue with a visit to **Sinaia Monastery**. Founded by Prince Mihail Cantacuzino in 1695 after returning from a pilgrimage to Mount Sinai (where it’s believed Moses was given the Ten Commandments), the monastery is one of the oldest in Romania, nestled into a Carpathian forest near Peles Castle. Along with several small buildings and courtyards, Sinaia Monastery features two Byzantine-style churches built 150 years apart: the 1695 Old Church (“Biserica Veche”) and the 1846 Great Church (“Biserica Mare”). The monastery’s museum includes gilded icons, a 17th-century Bible, and royal jewels of the Cantacuzino family.”

After departing Sinai, stop in the little mountain town of Azuga, to visit the **Rhein Cellar**, where winemakers produce sparkling wines using the traditional Romanian method. The Rhein Cellar is the official supplier of the Romanian Court. Learn about Romanian sparkling wines and sample the wares in the tasting room.

Following an independent lunch, return to Bucharest. Upon arrival, check into your hotel for an overnight.

Meals: B – *Golden Tulip Hotel or similar*



The journey ends this morning with a transfer to the airport for departure.

Meals: B

Tour Days of Operation

Private departures of this land itinerary can begin on the day of your choice in 2020. Please note you will need to depart the U.S. at least one day prior to your tour start date due to airline flight schedules.

Private Journey Prices – 2020

2 traveler minimum, from \$3,895 per person, twin share

Single supplement, from \$695

Solo traveler rate on same hotel basis, inclusive of single supplement, from \$6,495

Hotel Upgrade Prices

Upgrade to four-to-five-star in select cities

2 traveler minimum, from \$4,295 per person, twin share

Single supplement, from \$895

Solo traveler rate on same hotel basis, inclusive of single supplement, from \$7,095

Flexible Essential trip prices may vary by season and are subject to hotel availability for your travel dates.

Extensions and additional nights are available on request. Contact us at 1-800-424-7289 for more information.

Your Private Journey Includes

- Shared accommodations in well-located superior tourist class hotels throughout the itinerary. See **Hotel Upgrade Prices** above for upgraded accommodations.
- Breakfast daily, beginning with Day 2, per the itinerary. Lunches and dinners are left independent to allow independent exploration.
- Services of experienced, English-speaking driver throughout the program, **who also serves as your national guide – handling the excursions in each town.**
- One arrival and one departure transfer. (Additional arrival and departure transfers are available at additional cost.) MIR arranges for travelers to be met on arrival and seen off on departure whether we make your airfare arrangements or not.
- Ground transportation throughout itinerary by private van or car (type of vehicle depends on the size of your party).
- Guided sightseeing tours and entrance fees as outlined in the itinerary.
- Complete pre-departure information including detailed packing list, reading list, *Touring with MIR* handbook with country-specific information, maps, and travel tips.
- Assistance booking your custom flight arrangements (on request; please note that international airfare is not included in the land tour cost).
- Final document packet including luggage tags, final updates, and more.



Not Included

- International airfare or taxes/fuel surcharges.
- Meals not specified as included in the itinerary.
- Single supplement charge, if requested or required.
- Baggage handling.
- Items of a personal nature (phone calls, email, laundry, alcohol, excess baggage, etc).
- Gratuities to local staff.
- Visa/passport fees, airport departure fees.
- Expenses incurred as a result of delay, modification or extension of a tour due to causes beyond MIR's control.
- Travel and trip cancellation insurance.

Interested in travel insurance?

To learn more about all the benefits of purchasing a Travel Guard travel insurance plan, please visit www.travelguard.com/mircorp or contact Travel Guard at 1-877-709-5596.

2021 Flexible Essential Trip – Classic Private Journey – 10 Days

At the time of writing, the land itinerary for this program next year is projected to be generally as depicted for this year. Please call if you're ready to book now.

Private departures of this land itinerary can begin on the day of your choice in 2021. Please note you will need to depart the U.S. at least one day prior to your tour start date due to airline flight schedules.

Private Journey Prices – 2021

2 traveler minimum, from \$3,995 per person, twin share

Single supplement, from \$725

Solo traveler rate on same hotel basis, inclusive of single supplement, from \$6,595

Hotel Upgrade Prices

Upgrade to four-to-five-star in select cities

2 traveler minimum, from \$4,395 per person, twin share

Single supplement, from \$925

Solo traveler rate on same hotel basis, inclusive of single supplement, from \$7,195



Start Planning Next Year Now

Flexible Essential Trips – Classic Private Journeys

Flexible Essential Private Trips are compact, well-designed private tour itineraries – researched and ready to book on the dates you choose. They work perfectly as brief overviews of a country or as effortless extensions to group tours – great for solo travelers, couples, or private parties who prefer to travel independently but appreciate a savvy, pre-designed program.

Important Notes: Is This Trip Right For You?

While the accommodations are designed to be comfortable for travel in this part of the world, they will vary from small, moderate, three star to four star hotels, some quite small with basic amenities and services. (Please see **Hotel Upgrade** pricing section above if interested in upgrading hotels.) It is important to keep in mind that Romania may not be up to the standards North American travelers expect. Services are improving in the region; nevertheless you may encounter problems with plumbing, bureaucratic service, road conditions, unpaved sidewalks, uneven surfaces, and steps and availability and quality of public restrooms. Some areas, relatively speaking, have seen few travelers, and the infrastructure is not yet fully developed. Another feature somewhat unique to Romania is the use of a **national driver who also serves as your national guide** throughout the program.

While this program is designed to be the most comfortable possible for travel in this region, this is an adventuresome trip. It is rated as **rigorous touring** due to the daily walking involved, some long driving days, the conditions of some roads, and the overall shortcomings of the tourism infrastructure. This itinerary features a significant amount of touring on foot. Many streets are of cobblestone, and some attractions are only accessible via steep staircases. Museums rarely have elevators. In the hotels, you may find that showers/baths have steep steps or ledges, which can become slippery and require extra caution. Handrails will not usually be present indoors or outdoors, and care and caution are required to avoid a fall. Flexibility and a sense of humor are essential components of the enjoyment of your trip.

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this schedule is accurate. However, trip itineraries are always subject to change. We do our best to inform you in advance of any changes, but due to the nature of travel in Romania, this may not always be possible.

Are You Prepared?

A Travel Guard travel insurance plan can help cover your vacation investment, offset expenses from travel mishaps, and provide you with emergency travel assistance. To learn more about all of the benefits of purchasing a Travel Guard travel insurance plan, please visit www.travelguard.com/mircorp

Please read the U.S. State Department's Travel Advisory regarding travel to Romania here: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/romania-travel-advisory.html>

If you are not already enrolled in STEP, Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, a free service to enroll your



trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate, please consider enrolling. For more information: <https://step.state.gov/step/>

Weather

Romania is a wonderful place to visit any time of the year. Summer and early fall weather is typically quite nice, with daytime temperatures ranging from 65-85 degrees Fahrenheit in June and 55-75 degrees Fahrenheit in September. Rain is always possible.

Please remember, weather at all times of year has an element of the unpredictable. This information comes from weatherbase.com and is based on data from previous temperatures on record. It is always advisable to check with weatherbase.com closer to your departure date for current conditions and forecasts for the specific region you will be visiting.

International Airfare

MIR's in-house, full-service air department is available to assist with your air travel needs. Check with MIR before booking air on your own, as we are happy to research and compare the best fares available through multiple channels. Airfare varies depending on a wide variety of factors, such as dates of travel and seasonality, seat availability, special airline promotions, how restrictive ticket changes are, how long the fares can be held without purchase, routing considerations such as stopovers, and more. Tour dates are based on the land tour only. Our preferred carriers for this tour are Lufthansa and Austrian Airlines, as they offer convenient itineraries and competitive rates from multiple cities across the U.S. to Romania.

Please call us at 1-800-424-7289 to discuss air options and routings for this program, and to request a quote for your specific plans and dates of travel. We will be happy to put together a no-obligation suggested air itinerary and estimate for you at your request.

Visas

U.S. passport holders do not require visas for Romania. Citizens of other countries may require visas; please contact us for more details.

Pre- and Post-Tour Extensions

MIR can arrange for an extended program in Bulgaria before or after the tour begins. Extensions can also be crafted to Ukraine, Belarus, the Balkans, or Western Russia. Call us at 1-800-424-7289 for more details.

Also Nearby...

For more tours in Eastern Europe and Western Russia, you may want to check out the following:

Flexible Essential Trips – Classic Private Journeys

Essential Balkans, 14 days. Visit seven Balkan countries in 14 days on this compact overland



journey through history. A remarkably complex region, the mountainous Balkan Peninsula is fascinating, diverse and incredibly beautiful.

Essential Baltics, 7 days. Take an overland survey of the Baltic capitals – Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn – exploring their UNESCO-listed Old Towns, featuring cobbled streets and red-tiled roofs. Visit important rural sites such as Lithuania’s Hill of Crosses and Latvia’s baroque Rundale Castle.

Essential Ukraine, 8 days. Ukraine is the new borderland between Europe and Russia. Explore this resilient region influenced by Polish princes, Cossack *hetmen*, Turkish khans, Russian communists and Ukrainian poets and nationalists.

Essential St. Petersburg, 7 days. St. Petersburg, home of the czars and their courts, is a rich repository of extravagant palaces, brilliant museums and renowned theaters overflowing with music and dance. Its fashionable boulevards and serene canals glisten in the “White Nights” of summer and dazzle on sunny winter days.

Essential Russia, 7 days. A compact and compelling survey of Russia’s political capital, Moscow, and its cultural capital, St. Petersburg, this tour communicates the character of Western Russia in a succinct and meaningful series of experiences.

Small Group Tours

Balkan Odyssey: Crossroads of Cultures, 16 days. From low-lying Belgrade up through the Dinaric Alps, down to the Dalmatian Coast of Croatia and back up to mountainous Macedonia, this overland journey ties together seven wildly divergent Balkan countries – Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Albania, North Macedonia, and Kosovo.

Bulgaria & Romania: Frescoes & Fortresses, 16 days. Explore the complex history and fascinating culture of Bulgaria and Romania, two Balkan countries whose rugged terrain and consequent isolation have helped preserve their heritage. Discover the luminous frescoes of the painted monasteries, breathe in the fragrance of the Valley of the Roses, and spend an afternoon visiting with villagers in a tiny Transylvanian town.

Belarus, Ukraine & Moldova, 14 days. Traverse a little known region that has changed hands from its earliest history. Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova are three of the least-frequented and least familiar countries in Europe. Time slowed drastically here after the devastation of World War II, but these beautiful countries are emerging from the shadows.

Russia’s Imperial Capitals & Ancient Villages, 11 days. Discover where Russian art, architecture and culture began. In between the urban centers of Moscow and St. Petersburg, experience the Russian countryside. The oldest and loveliest churches in Russia, Sergiev Posad’s wooden crafts and Fedoskino’s glowing lacquer boxes all put a shine on Russia’s Golden Ring.



Kaliningrad & The Baltics, 13 days. This overland journey roves the countryside and urban centers of four distinct nations: the three independent Baltic countries – Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia – and Kaliningrad, an exclave of Russia.

Conditions of Participation

Your participation on a MIR Corporation trip is subject to the conditions contained in the 2020 Tour Reservation Form and Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk Agreement. Please read this document carefully and contact us with any questions.

Cancellation and Refund Policy

Payment Terms: Non-refundable deposits are accepted by check, Visa, MasterCard, or American Express. Final land payments may be made by check or credit card for reservations made directly with MIR. If booking through a travel agent, please contact your agent to find out what form of payment they accept. (MIR can accept final payment from travel agents by agency check only.) Airfares are subject to change until ticketed; payment policies vary by carrier.

If you cancel your trip, please notify MIR in writing. Upon MIR's receipt of notice the following charges apply to land tours (policies for air tickets, custom group trips vary):

Flexible Essential Tours

Cost of cancellation, if received:

61 or more days prior to departure, deposit due or paid in full of \$750;

31-60 days prior to departure, 50% of land tour cost;

30 days prior to or after trip departure, no refund.

References

We encourage you to speak directly with satisfied past travelers. Please request a list of references.

Why MIR?

Regional knowledge is crucial to the success of any trip to our corner of the world. MIR combines detailed information about geography and infrastructure, history and art, language and culture, with the depth of knowledge that comes only from decades of regional experience. You may wonder how we differ from other tour operators...

Destination Specialization

MIR focuses exclusively on the exceptional region at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. This area has been our overriding passion since 1986; we don't do the rest of the world. Our hard-earned expertise gained over the last three decades can take you from end to end of the largest country in the world – Russia – and to all of its neighbors. We specialize in travel to Siberia, the Silk Route, St. Petersburg & Beyond. Our destinations include: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, the Baltics (Estonia, Latvia,



Lithuania), the Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia), Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia), Turkey, Mongolia, China, Tibet, and Central/East Europe (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia).

30 Years of Experience

A travel company doesn't last more than 30 years in the business without a solid track record. MIR has helped thousands of individuals achieve their travel goals. Our dedication and experience have earned us their trust and the trust of many well-respected institutions. Today MIR is the preferred tour operator for museum, alumni and special interest organizations across the country.

Recommended & Respected

MIR has twice been rated one of the "Best Adventure Travel Companies on Earth" by *National Geographic Adventure*. Several of our tours have won awards in top travel publications, such as *Outside* magazine and *National Geographic Traveler*. Our trips have been featured in books such as *Riding the Hula Hula to the Arctic Ocean* and *1,000 Places to See Before You Die*.



More Questions?

Please feel free to call us with questions at 1-800-424-7289, 8:30am-5:30pm Pacific Time.


MIR Corporation



85 South Washington Street, Suite 210
Seattle, WA 98104
800-424-7289, 206-624-7289
Fax 206-624-7360
info@mircorp.com
www.mircorp.com

Sellers of Travel: Washington#601-099-932, California# 2082306-40

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