

Amazing Medieval Castles of Transylvania

Highlights:

The famous **Bran Castle** well known as Dracula's Castle

Peles Castle – The summer residence of Romania's longest serving monarch, King Carol I

Corvinilor Castle (Hunedoara Castle) - the most stunning castle in Transylvania

Bethlen-Haller Castle from Cetatea de Balta - A castle in a spectacular historical setting, the unique Bethlen-Haller overlooks gorgeous landscapes and exudes a distinct, incomparable charm...

Cantacuzino Castle - built in neo-Romanian style in stone with a romantic ambience

Medieval and architectural cities of Transylvania: Brasov, Sibiu, Sighisoara, Cluj Napoca

Fortified churches of Transylvania

Turda Salt Mine – one of the most modern and recreational salt mine in Europe

Day 1: Bucharest – Sinaia – Bran – Brasov (190km)

Castles Visit: Peles Castle, Bran Castle

We will start our castle tour with the most imposing. Today we visit the magnificent **Peles Castle**, with its fairytale turrets and pointed towers nestling in the Carpathians. It is considered by many to be one of the most beautiful castles in Europe and has played host to many famous guests, including Kaiser Franz Joseph of Austria-Hungary, Richard Nixon and Yasser Arafat.

Then, we head to the small village of **Bran** where we visit perhaps the most talked-about structure in the world, **Bran Castle**. Much older than Peles, this spectacular fortress was made famous by Bram Stoker's gothic novel, Dracula. The fortification, popularly known as 'Dracula's Castle', was built on top of a steep rock in the Carpathian Mountains in 1377.

Overnight in Brasov to a cozy hotel in the city center, breakfast included.

Day 2: Brasov – Viscri – Sighisoara (135 km)

In the morning we will have a walking tour of Brasov with its baroque area.

Brasov is one of the most beautiful cities in Romania. The main attraction is the medieval part of the city with: The Black Church that houses a priceless collection of Oriental rugs as well as a 4000-pipe organ. The Town Hall Square, the Franciscan Monastery, The Central Park, The Black Tower, The White Tower, Ecaterina's Gate, Schei Gate and the Rope Street – the narrowest street in Europe.

We then start our drive to Sighisoara, turning off the main road to visit the wonderfully restored medieval **village of Viscri** where **Prince Charles of Wales** spends his most of summers and springs. Totally unspoilt, with horses and carts trudging its streets, this is Romania as it was 200 years ago.

We then continue to **the oldest-inhabited citadel in Europe, Sighisoara**, the best preserved of all the medieval towns in Romania. This is the birthplace of Vlad the Impaler (Dracula) and we visit the house where he was born in 1431.

Between Brasov and Sighisoara, we see **Saxon villages of Transylvania**. The Saxon villages display a remarkable, unspoilt harmony between people and landscape. The houses follow a clear pattern: they sit end-on to the street, painted in a rich variety of greens and blues, with distinctive hipped roofs. The houses themselves are built to a format, with their cobbled courtyards, winter and summer kitchens, vegetable patches and colossal timber frame barns enclosing the rear end of the courtyard.

Overnight in the citadel of Sighisoara to a very nice hotel, breakfast included.

Day 3: Sighisoara – Cetatea de Balta – Cluj Napoca (220 km)

Another day, another Castle: Bethlen-Haller Castle located in Cetatea de Balta – **Bonus: wine tasting at the castle.**

We leave Sighisoara and our first visit will be **Bethlen Castle**, a castle in a spectacular historical setting, unique in Transylvania, located in a gorgeous landscape which exudes a distinct, incomparable charm...

The Bethlen Castle was built in the 16th century in the French Renaissance style and restored in the 17th-18th centuries in the Baroque style. The Reformed Church, situated next to the Castle is a 13th century building. The gate that can be seen today, in Baroque style, was built in 1769. The castle was famous for its gardens and the deer farm. From the castle cellars start tunnels leading to the castle of Sânmiclăuș, another family property.

We then continue our trip to **Cluj Napoca city**, named by the Saxon merchants in the 18th century as the “treasure city”.

Starting our walking tour with the ruins of the old Roman camp, we'll discover the old Benedictine monastery, the square of the history museum and we will meet one of the city's famous sons, Matei Corvin. The Catholic Church “St. Michael”, a milestone in Cluj (the second largest Gothic church in Transylvania) is an absolute must. Bannfy Palace, “old Town Hall” and the “mirror street” complete the city's urban architecture. The headquarters of the «Babes Bolyai» University is proof of the cities student tradition, Cluj being the host of more than one hundred thousand students every year.

Overnight in Cluj Napoca, breakfast included.

Day 4: Cluj Napoca – Turda Salt Mine - Alba Iulia Citadel - Corvinilor Castle –Deva (200 km)

Today we will start our journey by visiting a real museum of salt mining in Transylvania – Turda Salt Mine. We will start early in the morning to avoid crowding.

Inside the old Turda Salt Mine stands **the world's largest salt mine museum**. Originally established in the 17th century, the massive mines were formed completely by hand and machine rather than by using explosives. Visitors are invited to descend as far down as almost 400 feet into the Earth in order to witness the history of the trade.

Throughout the cool interior, which averages about 50-55°F with 80% humidity, there are a variety of mines, rooms, and spaces to be explored. At almost 140 feet down, Rudolph Mine offers a 180-seat amphitheater, a carousel, ping-pong tables, basketball hoops, mini-golf, and bowling.

Back in time: visit Carolina Citadel from Alba Iulia.

After this wonderful experience, we take the way to Alba Iulia where we visit the citadel. Alba-Iulia (the ancient Roman Apulum) is a modern city in today's Transylvania. Being a place with a long history, there is much to tell and much to see, but the most important landmark is the upper city.

Alba Iulia became the capital of the Principality of Transylvania in 1541, a status it was to retain until 1690. It witnessed the first unification of the three Romanian-populated principalities of Wallachia, Moldavia, and Transylvania, in the time of Michael the Brave (Mihai Viteazul) and also the proclamation of the union of Transylvania with the Kingdom of Romania. The final form of the fortress (Alba Carolina) was achieved between 1714 and 1738 (constructed by Giovanni Morando Visconti), and it is considered to be the most representative of Vauban type in Europe.

In the afternoon, we **visit Corvinilor Castle in Hunedoara.**

Built in the 14th century, Corvinilor Castle represents one of the most amazing and well-preserved medieval buildings, being the most famous property of Iancu de Hunedoara. The building dominates the city of Hunedoara.

The legend of well: "You have water, but you have no soul"

It is said that three Turkish prisoners that Iancu de Hunedoara kept in the castle dug this well. Iancu promised them that he would set them free if they will dig a well. The prisoners, animated by the hope of freedom, dug for 15 years and at 28 meters deep they found the precious water. But in the meantime Iancu Corvin died and his wife, Elisabeth Szilagyfi decided to not respect the word she was given to her husband and doesn't award the promised freedom to the three prisoners. Prisoners decide to write on a cliff block the message "You have water but no heart" trying this way to revenge the lack of word from the family side.

Day 5: Deva/Hunedoara – Sibiu

Visits: **Sibiu town, 2007 European Cultural City.**

Today is dedicated to Sibiu town, 2007 European Capital of Culture, and 2019 European Region of Gastronomy!

Sibiu/Hermannstadt is perceived as a city of art and culture. A great number of cultural monuments, a diversity of museums, and various artistic and cultural events, make up the pillars of a complex cultural profile.

Using this simple premise, an attractive and stimulating atmosphere has been created for residents and visitors who take the opportunity to experience cultural life in this Transylvanian city.

Sightseeing tour in Sibiu, visit: Piata Mare (The Big Square), Piata Mica (The Little Square), Piata Huet (Huet Square), Iron Bridge, Biserica Evangelica (The Evangelical Church) and Mitropolia (The Orthodox Church).

Day 6: Sibiu – Bucharest

Visits: **Transfagarasan Road (*), Curtea de Arges Monastery**

If we had to put it in just a few words, than the **Transfagarasan** (DN 7C) is just the road that passes through Fagaras Mountains (**the highest mountains in Romania – Moldoveanu peak – 2544 meters**) and that connects Walachia and Transylvania. But in fact Transfagarasan road is more than that. It is the road that climbs to the highest altitude in Romania, 2042 meters, in the Glacial Hollow Balea with a spectacular mountain view and with a history behind that waits for you to discover it.

On the way to Bucharest we will visit **Curtea de Arges Monastery**, one of the most famous monasteries in Romania and a must-see attraction. It's the monumental church and its unique architectural style that make this monastery one of the most representative in Romania, a country that has hundreds of religious monuments of venerable age. Inside the garish red, green and gold interior lies **the tombs of the kings Charles I and Ferdinand together with their queens Elisabeth and Maria**.

We will arrive in the evening in Bucharest, and we hope that you will return home full of nice memories and a great experience!

Accommodation in Bucharest, centrally located.

Day 7: Bucharest – depart

Breakfast at the hotel. Transfer to the airport for your flight.

Cost:

Prices:

2 persons traveling together minimum	960	euro/person
4 persons traveling together minimum	775	euro/ person
6 persons traveling together minimum	630	euro/ person
8 persons traveling together minimum	550	euro/ person

Included in the cost:

- 6 nights' accommodation in Brasov, Sighisoara, Cluj Napoa, Deva, Sibiu, and Bucharest, centrally located and good breakfast included.
- Round-trip transport by air-conditioned car or minivan, with all taxes, fuel, parking.
- Professional and friendly English speaking driver-guide for the entire tour – escorted tour.
- Wine tasting at Jidvei Cellars, at Bethlen-Haller Castle on day 3.
- all visits included in the itinerary

Not included:

- entrance fees to the attractions
- meals, except breakfast