



Romania

“A tour of Transylvania & the Carpathians with Vlad the Impaler...”



Highlights Include:

Transfagarasan | Trans-Alpina | Bran Castle | Sibiu | Apuseni Mountains | Hunyad Castle | Bucegi | Brasov

Key Info

Start Location:	Budapest, Hungary
Finish Location:	Budapest, Hungary
Duaration:	9 days & 10 nights
Distance:	2,200km approx not incl. optional rideouts on rest days
Riding Difficulty:	Easy to moderate
Dates:	<i>See guided tours calendar</i>
Price:	<i>See guided tours calendar</i>

Included:

- Return transport of your motorcycle from our base in Gorey, Co. Wexford to Budapest, Hungary
- B&B accommodation in quality hotels,
- Evening meals on all riding days,
- Tour guides, maps, detailed route plan etc.

Not included:

- Flights to/from Budapest, fuel, food during the day, green card insurance (circa €10 - €20), local attraction entry fees, anything not listed above.

Introduction -We first visited Romania, and more specifically Transylvania, in 2012 and then again in 2013as part of our ‘Circumnavigation the Black Sea’ tours. Romania was one of the unexpected highlights of the tour and ever since there has been a burning desire to return and explore this beautiful and enchanting country a little more. This tour is designed to take in the very best Transylvania and the Carpathians have to offer. Romania, a former communist dictatorship, has in the past been described as the ‘Wild West of Europe’ but not any more...



Route Itinerary

Day No.	From	To	Distance
	Dublin	Budapest	
1	Budapest	Timisoara	315
2	Timisoara	Targu Jiu	330
3	Targu Jiu	Sibiu	220
4	Sibiu	Sibiu	350
5	Sibiu	Brasov	275
6	Brasov	Brasov	100
7	Brasov	Bistrita	400
9	Bistrita	Oradea	260
10	Oradea	Budapest	270
	Budapest	Dublin	

Total km 2,520

Note: Optional rideout distances on rest days included.

Day 1 – Budapest to Timisoara, Romania

We commence our tour heading south from Budapest towards Szeged on the Serbian/Romania border before turning east and south in search of Timisoara. Our accommodation tonight is the North Star Continental Resort.





Day 2 – Timisoara to Targu Jiu

Today sees us ride through a number of national parks and to our most southerly point on tour, where the mighty Danube acts as a natural border between Serbia and Romania, before turning east to Targu Jiu – a strategic location for an assault on the TransAlpina pass the following day.

Day 3 – Targu Jiu to Sibiu

The highlight today is a motorcyclists dream as we traverse the TransAlpina, known locally as ‘the Kings Road’ and sometimes referred to as ‘The Devils Path’. The TransAlpina road (DN67C) is the highest road in Romania and one of the famous Romanian high altitude roads. With a length of 146 km, it crosses the Southern Carpathian Mountains and reaches a maximum altitude of 2,145m above sea level at Pasul Urdele. It is considered one of the most spectacular roads of the Carpathian Mountains and offers breathtaking views together with an exhilarating ride. Arguably the oldest road over the Carpathian Mountains, TransAlpina was built at the beginning of the 2nd Century AD by the Roman legions during their war campaign to conquer Sarmizegetusa – the capital of Dacia (modern-day Romania). After the conquest of Dacia, the Romans used the TransAlpina to transport gold to Rome extracted from Transylvania.



Day 4 – Rest day in Sibiu with optional ride out to the Apuseni Mountains

Sibiu, voted Cultural European Capital in 2007, was the largest and wealthiest of the seven walled citadels built in the 12th century by German settlers known as Transylvanian Saxons. Sibiu's Old Town retains the grandeur of its earlier days when rich and powerful guilds dominated regional trade. Like Sighisoara and Brasov, it has a distinctly Germanic feeling. Sections of the medieval wall still guard the historic area, where narrow streets pass steep-roofed 17th century buildings with gable overhangs before opening into vast, church-dominated squares such as Great Square and Little Square. Renowned composers Strauss, Brahms and Liszt all played here during the 19th century, and Sibiu has stayed at the forefront of Romania's cultural scene through its festivals of opera, theatre and film, as well as rock, jazz and more. The country's first hospital, school, library and pharmacy were all established here, and locals are justly proud of the spirit of enterprise that endures to this day.



Optional ride out today is towards the Apuseni Mountains via the Aiudului Gorges. Options include a visit the Turda Salt mines and some beautiful villages along the way such as Medias or Biertan. As there are many routes available the duration of the ride out can be lengthened or shortened as desired.



Day 5 – Sibiu to Brasov via Transfagarasan.

Arguably the two main reasons why most people travel to Transylvania are on offer today as we traverse the magnificent Transfagarasan road before visiting Bran (Dracula's) Castle, pictured top, on route to Brasov and as an added bonus we get to ride the Rucar to Bran Pass.

More than 150 kilometres in length the Transfagarasan Highway is Romania's most spectacular and best known road and, thanks to an appearance on BBC *Top Gear* in 2009, now one of the country's most popular tourist attractions. Fully open only from June to October, the road's highest point is at 2042 metres: the tunnel which links the northern and southern sides at Lake Balea (*Balea Lac*). The Transfagarasan was built between 1970 and 1974 by military forces. After the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Soviets, Nicolae Ceausescu had it built as a strategic military route to cross the mountains in the event the Soviets attempted a similar move into Romania. The builders used 6000 tons of dynamite to clear a path for the road on the northern side of the mountains (this is the most spectacular) and on the tunnel. 40 soldiers lost their lives during construction. Facts and figures tend to vary but you get the jist.



Bran Castle - Surrounded by an aura of mystery and legend and perched high atop a 200-foot-high rock, Bran Castle owes its fame to its imposing towers and turrets as well as to the myth created around Bram Stoker's **Dracula**.

A little history. Although Stoker never visited Transylvania, the Irish author relied on research and his vivid imagination to create the dark and intimidating stomping ground of Count Dracula, leading to persistent myths that it was once the home of Vlad Tepes (also known as Vlad the Impaler or Vlad Dracul), ruler of Walachia. While the association with Dracula is sketchy at best, the castle continues to hold a strong attraction for all fans of the Count. Because Bran Castle is the only castle in all of Transylvania that actually fits Bram Stoker's description of Dracula's Castle, it is known throughout the world as Dracula's Castle.



From 1920 to 1957 Bran served as royal residence, a gift of the people of Brasov to Queen Marie of Romania. The castle is now a museum open to tourists, displaying art and furniture collected by Queen Marie. Narrow winding stairways lead through some 60 timbered rooms, many connected by underground passages, which house collections of furniture, weapons and armor dating from the 14th to the 19th centuries. Well worth the tour!



Day 6 – Rest day in Brasov with optional rideout to Bucegi Mountains

Fringed by the peaks of the Southern Carpathian Mountains and resplendent with gothic, baroque and renaissance architecture, as well as a wealth of historical attractions, Brasov is one of the most visited places in Romania.

Founded by the Teutonic Knights in 1211 on an ancient Dacian site and settled by the Saxons as one of the seven walled citadels, Brasov exudes a distinct medieval ambiance and has been used as backdrop in many recent period films.

The location of the city at the intersection of trade routes linking the Ottoman Empire and western Europe, together with certain tax exemptions, allowed Saxon merchants to obtain considerable wealth and exert a strong political influence in the region.

Brasov is home to one of the narrowest streets in Europe. The Rope Street is approximately four feet wide and it links Cerbului Street with Poarta Schei Street and was initially used as an access route by firefighters.

A stroll around the old Town Hall Square is highly recommended where you can admire colorfully painted and ornately trimmed baroque structures. Take a peek inside the

Black Church, the largest gothic church in Romania. Its name derives from damage caused by the Great Fire of 1689, when flames and smoke blackened its walls. The interior is impressive and well-kept and houses one of the largest organs in Eastern Europe.



Day 7 – Brasov to Bistrita

Today sees us meandering our way north via the Bogatti forests, Praid pass and onwards to the Bicz Gorges. The road that slices through the gorges is among Romania's most spectacular. There are many excellent photo opportunities along the way with bazaars where one can buy products made by the Romanian and Hungarian craftsmen from the area. The gorge twists and turns steeply uphill for 5km, cutting through sheer, 300m-high limestone rocks. At one point, the narrow mountain road runs uncomfortably beneath the overhanging rocks in a section known as the 'neck of hell'.





National Parks abound as we make our way further north before turning east along the Tihuta Pass and onwards to our destination at Bistrita. Located at over 1,100 meters altitude in the Bârgău Mountains (Eastern Carpathians), where Transylvania meets Bukovina, Tihuța Pass is currently one of the most important tourist attractions in Bistrița Năsăud county, gaining world recognition after it was depicted in the opening chapter of Bram Stoker's Dracula as the famous 'Borgo Pass'. The Bârgău Valley embracing the pass indeed encompasses some of the most exquisite unspoiled mountain scenery in the Carpathians, revealing picturesque traditional villages peering up the hillsides. All in all, the surroundings are ideal premises for hiking, riding or discovering the region's old customs, handicrafts and folklore.



Day 9 – Bistrita to Oradea

It's time to leave the Carpathians behind as we cross the improperly named Transylvanian Plateau which is almost entirely surrounded by the Eastern, Southern and Romanian Western branches of the Carpathian Mountains. Our destination is Oradea spanning both shores of the CrisuRepede River - a fitting end to our tour of Romania. The picturesque town of present-day Oradea was rebuilt in the 18th century to the plans of Viennese engineer Franz Anton Hillebrandt following the then-trendy Austrian architectural style called *Secession* with its richly decorated facades of pale pink, blue, green and white. In addition to the many Baroque buildings, Oradea is remarkable for its particularly rich collection of Art Nouveau architecture and is commonly referred to as 'Le Petit Paris'



Day 10 – Oradea to Budapest

With a short ride to the Hungarian border we leave Romania behind us in search of Budapest. For those who fancy some R&R or extending their holiday we would highly recommend a couple of days in Budapest either before or after the tour.

Divided in two by the Danube, the city is made up of Buda on one side: with Ottoman-era thermal baths at the foot of the spectacular Gellért Hill, the royal palace and Matthias Church, it radiates calm and peace. On the other side lies Pest, vibrant and lively, with its slew of museums rich in cultural and historical treasures, extraordinary Secessionist architecture, its majestic Parliament building considered as one of the most magnificent in the world, Saint Stephen's Basilica surrounded by pedestrian





streets, and its entirely renovated Jewish Quarter and Palace District. Besides its historical value, Budapest has a highly developed cultural scene with its world-class festivals, theatres, museums, concert halls and sporting events. For relaxing and enjoying nature, Margaret Island is the city's "green heart" (considered by many to be one of Europe's best city parks) - the perfect place to enjoy a stroll, various sports, swimming in outdoor pools or soaking in thermal baths and spas. As for foodies, the celebrated creations of Hungarian cuisine are a definite must!

We will be providing a more detailed itinerary on arrival to include hotel info and GPS co-ordinates. Please note that this is an outline route and maybe subject to change.

FAQ:

1. What riding gear: We suggest bringing full summer type/ventilated protective motorcycle riding gear with removal inner/outer waterproof layer. Average temp SHOULD be in the mid to high thirties although substantially cooler on mountain passes. We would also suggest hydration backpacks. Travel Light!
2. Travel Insurance: ESSENTIAL - Travel Insurance including medical repatriation (make sure and check that you're covered for a motorbike trip – a lot of policies have fine print stating you're not covered over a certain cc).
3. Navigation: We will be providing paper maps, detailed itinerary (incl. Hotel Co-Ordinates) and a .gpx file pre departure.
4. Currency: Hungarian Forint & Romanian Leu

Typical Accommodation

