

*The itinerary we propose to you is a unique combination of traditional and modern that will surely change your perception of Romania forever. It will take you from the heart of Romania; with it's imposing Gothic style houses and churches, to the timeless villages in Romania's North and will end in the majestic city of Budapest.*

*Anyone passing through rural Romania is sure to notice the clash of speeding cars and leisurely passing horse and wagons. Rural Romania is a special alcove in Europe where a vast number of its population still maintains an antiquated lifestyle extinct in the west.*

*Rural Romania is nature at its fondest moments. It means quaint villages, a central church with passing cows and sheep, and swaggering peasants shouldering long wooden handled scythes. Rural Romania is water drawn from the earth, and for those lucky enough to share a bite with a peasant family it means a simple meal raised out of the garden and barn. Rural Romania is old-fashion hospitality where a man's value isn't found in his pocket but by the character he composes.*

*Join us on this very special tour and discover a timeless place!*

### **Day 1: arrival SIBIU – SIGHISOARA**

*After arrival at the Sibiu, once the richest town in Transylvania., transfer to the center of the former 2007 European Cultural Capital. Enjoy a comprehensive walking tour of Sibiu. Here you see arcaded medieval shops and houses and also see the Cathedral, where the son of Vlad the Impaler (another of Dracula's monikers) was assassinated. Depending on your arrival time, serve a hearty Romanian dinner at a farmhouse in the village of Sibiel and transfer to Sighisoara. Overnight at Fronius 5\* Residence, located in the center of Sighisoara Citadel and built by Fronius family (an old Transylvanian Saxon family), which resisted at the devastating fire in 1676. Sign of high social rank, the water well in the bailey saved what after hundreds of years was to become a jewel of the old Citadel. The Latin inscription, dating since the great fire, resists at present, as well, worthy, on the facade of the house as a sign of "thank you" addressed to Good for His protection. (L)*



### **Day 2: SIGHISOARA – MALANCRAV – BIERTAN – SIGHISOARA**

*After breakfast, visit Sighisoara, also known as the birthplace of prince Vlad Dracula. Discover the wonderful old town of Sighisoara, walk through the old cobbled streets and let yourself filled up with the medieval spirit of this city. Visit the famous Clock Tower Museum with its Medieval Weapons Room and Torture Chamber. Then drive to Malancrav village, which was first mentioned in historic documents in 1305 and has retained more Saxons than any other Saxon village in Transylvania. In 1340 the commune and its surrounding land came under the ownership of the Apafi family, two of whose members ruled Transylvania in the 17th century. Malancrav has a Lutheran Church with rare 14th and 15th century frescoes and a 16th century altarpiece – the oldest entire piece of its sort still in its original location in Transylvania. On the hill above the church*



*stands the recently restored Apafi Manor. Continue to the Saxon village of Biertan, where you will see the fortress church that is one of the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Sites. The church hosts the largest wing altar in Romania and was used as the residence of the Lutheran bishop of Transylvania for over 300 years. In the evening we return to Sighisoara for dinner in the house where Dracula was born and overnight. (B, D)*

### **Day 3: SIGHISOARA – BICAZ GORGES – SUCEAVA**

*Leave legendary Transylvania - "the land beyond the forests" behind and head toward Bukovina region. Passing through Bicz Canyon, one of the most spectacular limestone formations in Romania you will reach Lacu Rosu (Red Lake), where you will stop for lunch and taste the fresh Romanian mountain trout and free time to admire the beauty of the mountains and the surrounding woods. The clients will have 1 hour free time in Bicz Canyon, where they can walk and take some pictures. In the early evening arrive in Suceava and enjoy a walking tour of once the capital of Moldova. See the Old Princely Court and St. George Church, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Overnight at Alice 5\* Villa. (B, L)*



### **Day 4: SUCEAVA – VORONET – SUCEVITA – MOLDOVITA – HOTENI**

*This day we visit the Moldavian Monastery. First you will visit Voronet Monastery, located in the beautiful village with the same name. The Monastery was built in 1488 by the greatest ruling prince of Moldavia, Stefan the Great, in a record time- three months and three weeks- and painted on the outside walls during the time of his son, the prince Petru Rares. The most important of the frescoes is 'The Judgment Day', painted on the whole western facade, that determined the monument to be called 'The Sistine Chapel of the East'. The scene, the simplest and the most dramatic composition, is processed in a characteristic Moldova way: the souls carried to heaven are wrapped in Moldova's towels, while the souls doomed to the fire of Ghenna wear the turbans of the Turks, the Moldova's enemies. Continue to Sucevita Monastery, which dates back from the XVI'th century. The Monastery was founded by the rich Movila Family and is encircled by high walls fortified with massive corner towers. This monastery impresses through its thousands of images and portraits. It is the church with the greatest number of frescoes in Moldova, frescoes painted on a predominant green background. They represent scenes from the New and the Old Testament, from the Greek-Roman Christian culture as they are filtered through the eyes of the Moldavian painters. Last visit will be at Moldovita Monastery, erected in the year 1532 by the illegitimate son of Stephan the Great, Petru Rares. Among much furniture dating back from the Middle Ages here you will also see the throne of the former Moldavian ruler. Depart for Hoteni. The pace of life in Hoteni village is as relaxed and charmed as the couple who own this homestead; Ion Pop, nicknamed "Popicu" by his enchanting wife, Geta, is one of Romania's most sought-after folk musicians, and is acknowledged internationally for his contribution to the preservation of traditional music. (B, D)*





## Day 5: full day trip into MARAMURES Region

Enjoy a full day intro Maramures Region, where you will visit the most beautiful wooden churches. Start with Budesti Church, famous for objects that belonged to two 18th century freedom fighters against the Austrian Habsburgs: the coat of mail of Pinte the Brave, and the flag of Ferenc II Rákóczi, a Transylvanian nobleman. There are also 15th-17th century icons painted on wood and glass. Continue to Ieud Church, more than 600 year-old edifice. It is now known that marauding Tatars set the initial church on fire in the 17th century, and it was totally destroyed. The well-preserved architecture repaired and slightly modified during the 18th century, together with the interior paintings that were made at the end of the same century, meant that the church was included on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Next stop will be at Barsana Church, built of thick beams of oak on a foundation of massive blocks of stone. The church is very dark inside. The very small and low pronaos is without any windows at all. The naos is much more spacious, with a high barrel vault, but also here not much light enters. Drive close to the Ukrainian border and visit the Merry Cemetery, a unique cemetery that has become an important tourist attraction. Some days the throngs of tourists that assault the cemetery with their cameras ready make one wonder if it really is possible to rest in peace here! In the afternoon visit also Desesti Church, built in 1770. In the evening return to Hoteni, where you will serve dinner together with Pop family. (B, D)



## Day 6: HOTENI – SATU MARE – TOKAJ

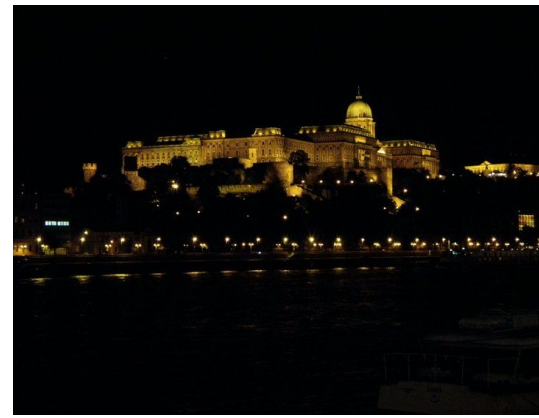
This morning you will leave Maramures Region and head toward Satu Mare, your last stop before you enter Hungary. After a brief panoramic tour, stop in the Freedom square for free time. Depart for Tokaj, famous throughout the world for its amazing wines. It has also been put on the World Heritage list in 2002 to protect the characteristic grape cultivation and wine making culture of this region in the northeastern part of Hungary. Accommodation in a former mansion, the Grof Degenfeld Castle 4\* Hotel, which is set in the middle of a 100-hectare vineyard. The history of the Degenfeld Counts with German-Hungarian origin dates back to the early middle ages, and documents refer to their presence in Hungary and Transylvania from the outset of the 19th century. The family played an important role in the Tokaj wine region's history with its first vineyards. Count Imre Degenfeld, as one of the most primal vineyard owners in Tokaj, participated in the work of the Tokaj Region Wine Producers Association established in 1857 as a founding member. (B)



## Day 7: TOKAJ – BUDAPEST

Today we discover the most celebrated wine producing areas in the country by bicycle and Tokaj makes up part of the expansive Tokaj-Hegyalja region that runs through the southern and eastern fringes of the Zemplen Hills. According to the legend the conquering Prince Árpád was riding along the Bodrog river when his path was crossed by a huge hill. His valiant knight Turzol was first to climb the summit, and on return he reported to his master that the hillside was covered throughout with tranquil vineyards. Árpád then awarded Turzol not only with the hill, but

also the entire area up to the intersection of the Bodrog and Tisza rivers. The village of Turzol was built here (today Tarcal). Later many a medieval chronicler mentioned the wines of the Hegyalja region, as well as the growing of the aszú grapes. Wine produced in the region was an immense success with the pontifical court when the Cardinal Draskovics presented it in as early as 1362. From then on it was known simply as “Tokay”, and the pontifical cellars were never low on the “wine of kings, and the king of wines”. In the 14th century new plantations were established in the region of Sátorajaiújhely under the direction of Pauline monks. Their call to pray, “Oremus”, very often heard from the direction of the castle chapel, later stuck, and one part of the vineyard was named Oremus, as well as the wine produced there which has a very special flavour. The Tokaj-Hegyalja region also boasts an immense, widespread system of cellars ideal for the storage and maturation – in bottles or in casks and barrels – of wines of many a vintage. Cellar walls are covered with a thick black coat of fungus, “noble rot”, which enters into mystical interaction with the wines. That is the key to the secret of Hungary’s renowned wines...Before free time for lunch, enjoy a wine tasting in a 100 years old wine cellar on the Tarcal Terezia Hill. In the afternoon, depart for Budapest. Overnight at Le Meridien 5\* Hotel. (B, WT)



## **Day 8: BUDAPEST**

Budapest is truly a cultural European city. Your morning city tour will acquaint you with the city and all of its most famous monuments, including Andrassy Avenue, the magnificent Opera House, St. Stephan Basilica, the largest Catholic church in Budapest, where the most important relic of the Hungarian Catholicism, the Holy Right of King St. Steven is kept. The Castle District, with its narrow streets, old citizen houses, it reflects a medieval atmosphere. The Royal Palace houses different museums and exhibitions. Matthias Church and the Fisherman's Bastion, the emblems of Budapest and the last, but not the least the Margaret Island and the Citadel. Afternoon is at leisure to visit one of the city's excellent museums, relax in a cafe or shop for handicrafts. (B)

## **Day 9: departure transfer**

After your breakfast, you will be transferred to the airport for your flight back home (B)