

## Behind the Iron Curtain

*In the early 90's, from behind the Iron Curtain a gray and closed world began to show. Until that historical moment, Eastern Europe had followed its own way, in spite of the Western capitalism, and was looked upon with interest and curiosity by the rest of the world. In the word media, this place was always associated with indoctrinated people, communist dictators, forced labour, censorship, queues for food, security and intelligence services which spread terror. After 1989 a couple of daring westerners traveling to this part of the world have found a picturesque and charming world where tradition, beliefs, customs and folk art where unharmed by the passage of time.*

*In this part of the world, the isolation of the Cold War Era has preserved an ancient land where life is dictated by tradition and not by politics, and the fear of God is greater than the fear of any ruling regime. The people continue to create in the spirit of their ancestors, lifting the craft of building wooden gates to art status; they write poems to the dead on brightly colored wooden crosses in the Happy Cemetery in Sapanța and they enjoy the good taste of Tokaj wine.*

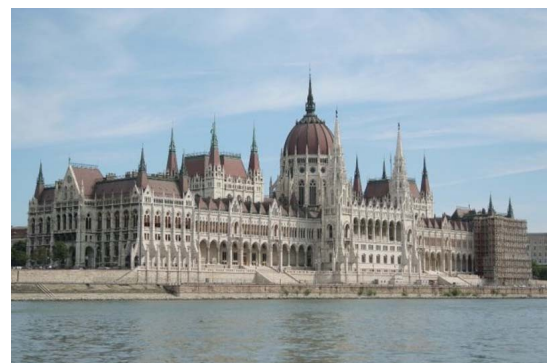
*On your trip through this universe, hidden until 20 years ago, you will start from Budapest, one of Europe's most beautiful capitals, and travel all the way to the Parliament Palace, the former People's House in Bucharest, an unmistakable symbol of communism. This is the true world behind the Iron Curtain!*

### Day 1: ARRIVAL IN BUDAPEST (THU)

*Upon arrival at Budapest airport, private transfer to Boscolo New York Palace 5\* Hotel for accommodation in the contemporary luxury in downtown Budapest*

### Day 2: BUDAPEST SIGHSEEING TOUR (FRI)

*Meet your English speaking guide in the hotel lobby and proceed on a city tour of one of the most beautiful European capital cities. See the Heroes' square, one of the most visited sights of the Hungarian capital. In the middle of Heroes' square stands a 36 metres high Corinthian column with the statue of Archangel Gabriel on the top, the symbol of the Roman Catholic religion. At the pedestal the equestrian statues commemorate Árpád and the seven chieftains of the Hungarian tribes, who settled their people in the present territory of Hungary. Continue with Vajdahunyad castle, situated in the largest park in Budapest, the Opera, impressive with its fine neo-Renaissance architecture, St. Stephen's Basilica, named in the honor of Stephen, the first King of Hungary, the Parliament - ornamented with white neo-gothic turrets and arches, it forms the most outstanding landmark of the Pest side horizon with its statues of Hungarian monarchs and military commanders decorating the outer walls, Matthias church - located in the heart of the Castle District, built in the 13th century and was Budapest's first parish church, and Fisherman's bastion, which offers a grand panorama of almost the entire city. Accommodation at Boscolo New York Palace 5\* Hotel. **(B)***



Budapest Parliament

### Day 3: BUDAPEST – TOKAJ – HOTENI (SAT)

*In the morning, depart for Hoteni, a small traditional village in the famous Romanian area of Maramures. En route visit Tokaj, a historical and famous wine region. The town is not only blessed with favorable natural assets, but thanks to its ancient grape and wine-culture, it has become one of Hungary's most popular and most often visited tourist targets. The first written records about the Tokaj date from the year 1353. At that time Tokaj and its neighborhood was already well known for its viticulture and its wine production. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century the settlement was given the status of "market-town". You cannot miss the opportunity to enjoy wine tasting in this famous place before heading for Romania. The northwestern Romanian region of Maramures is home to many villages where century-old traditions are still part of daily life. Today you will enjoy a hearty traditional Romanian dinner and accommodation in Popicu traditional pension. (B, D)*



Children dressed in traditional costumes in the Maramures Region

### Day 4: HOTENI – WOODEN CHURCHES OF MARAMURES – HOTENI (SUN)

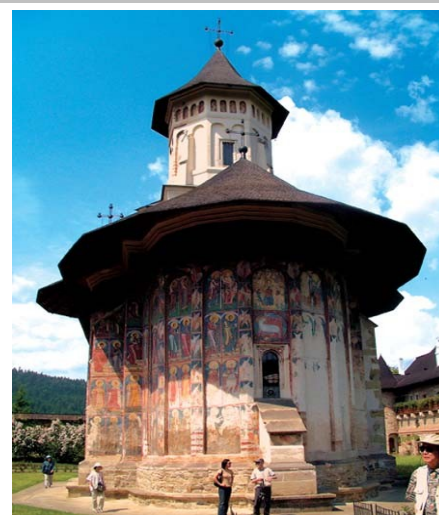
*After breakfast in the hotel, drive towards Sapanta to visit the Merry Cemetary, which dates back to the mid-1930's and is the creation of the local folk artist Stan Ioan Patras, sculptor, painter and poet rolled in one. Patras used all his skills to create this masterpiece. For half a century the master created hundreds of wooden crosses, carved in a distinctive style, so famous today. After his death in 1977, his work has been carried out by his apprentice, Dumitru Pop Tincu. Today you will also visit three wooden churches: Desesti Wooden Church, which due to the harmonious whole and the well-preserved paintings, the church of St. Parasceva has been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List; Budesti Wooden Church, famous for objects that belonged to two 18th century freedom fighters against the Austrian Habsburgs: the coat of mail of Pinteia the Brave, and the flag of Ferenc II Rákóczi, a Transylvanian nobleman. There are also 15th-17th century icons painted on wood and glass. It is one of the eight churches on the UNESCO World Heritage List; and Surdesti Wooden Church, which was the tallest wooden church in Europe with its tower of 54 m and a total height of 72 m until a few years back when the new 78 m tall church of the monastery of Peri in Săpânța was built. The church is one of the eight wooden churches included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Being Sunday you can also attend the Mass. Dinner and accommodation at Popicu traditional pension. (B,D)*



Wooden Church in Maramures

### Day 5: HOTENI – MOLDOVITA – SUCEVITA – RADAUTI (MON)

*Today you will head towards the beautiful lands of Bucovina. Visit Moldovita Monastery, built by Alexander the Kind-Hearted (1400-1432), between 1402 and 1410, but it collapsed at the beginning of the 16th century because of the very heavy rains and ground sliding; its ruins can still be seen today. Moldovita Monastery the one we can see today dates back to 1532 and is due to ruling prince Petru Rares (1532-1546). Continue with Sucevita Monastery, the greatest monastic ensemble among the painted monasteries in Bucovina, as it has the appearance of a real fortress, with towers, buttresses and watch roads. Upon arrival in Radauti, dinner and accommodation at Gerald's 4\* Hotel. (B,D)*



UNESCO Moldovita Monastery



## Day 6: RADAUTI – DRAGOMIRNA – SUCEAVA – CHISINAU (TUE)

After breakfast, depart for Dragomirna Monastery, Placed among the beautiful hills of Bucovina, at 12 km West from the old residence of Steven the Great and the Bishops of Moldavia, Dragomirna monastery stands tall defying time, inside the fortress walls. Built as to face the hights, in a search for light from among the forest, shadowed by a cortain of fir trees and majestically reflected by the lake nearby, this place of prayer, through its ancientness, through the originality of its style, through the its elegant and solid shape, through the picturesque awakens the admiration of each visitor, so that in its presence the pilgrim is as impressed as is the historian or the art critic. Continue to Suceava and enjoy a brief city tour before driving on to Chisinau, the capital city of Moldova, for accommodation at Leogrand 4\* Hotel. **(B)**



Chisinau Orthodox Cathedral

## Day 7: CHISINAU – TIRASPOL – MILESTII MICI – CHISINAU (WED)

Today you will drive Eastwards to the second largest city of Moldavia, Tiraspol who's name derives from a Greek word "the town on the Nistru". You will now be offered a fascinating glimpse at how life was lived pre -1991 as you journey back in time to the self-proclaimed Republic of Transnistria. The capital, Tiraspol, located a mere 80 km South East of Chisinau, is considered to be a living museum of Soviet culture. The statue of Lenin, Suvorov and other Soviet heroes remain intact and there is still nothing in the way of Western conveniences or services. On your way back to Chisinau, you will stop at Milestii Mici winery where you will visit the vineyard and have a wine tasting. The constant temperature of +12... +14 degrees Celsius and the high humidity favour the maturation of the high quality wines. The winery houses and impressive wine collection of over 2 millions bottles. Upon arrival in Chisinau, accommodation at Leogrand 4\* Hotel. **(B)**



Milestii Mici Winery

## Day 8: CHISINAU – BRASOV (THU)

After breakfast you will enjoy a sightseeing tour of Chisinau. The tour will include the Grand National Assembly square, the Government building, the Parliament and the University of Medicine. Short stop in the Stephan the Great park, the favorite place of rest and walks of the cities inhabitants, where you will cross the „Alley of Classics of Moldovan literature“. Continue to Brasov for dinner at local restaurant and accommodation at Aro Palace 5\* Hotel. **(B,D)**



Old city-hall Brasov

## Day 9: BRASOV – BRAN – SINAIA - BUCHAREST (FRI)

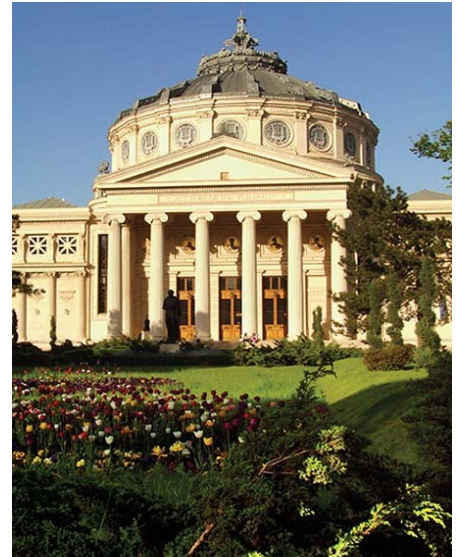
After morning, enjoy a walking tour of Brasov and visit the famous Black Church and St Nicholas Church with First Romanian School. Continue to Bran to visit the castle made famous by Bram Stoker's novel as the residence of the vampire count Dracula. Continue to Sinaia, one of the most beautiful mountain resorts in Romania, also known as the "Pearl of the Carpathians". After lunch in local restaurant, visit Peles Castle, an exquisite piece of architecture, which served as the summer residence of the former Romanian Royal family. Continue to Bucharest for accommodation at Grand Continental 5\* Hotel. **(B,L)**



Bran Castle

### **Day 10: BUCHAREST – HALF DAY CITY TOUR**

*In the morning, enjoy a half day sightseeing tour of the Romanian capital city, once called the Little Paris of the East. During the tour you will visit the Parliament Palace, the second largest building in the world after the Pentagon. See also the Revolution Square, the Romanian Athenaeum, the National Art Museum and others. Lunch in local restaurant. Afternoon at leisure. Accommodation at Grand Continental 5\* Hotel. (B,L)*



*Romanian Athenaeum Bucharest*

### **Day 11: BUCHAREST – TRANSFER TO THE AIRPORT**

*Transfer to the airport subject to your flight. End of our services.*