





## ROMANIA AND BULGARIA

Medieval history, fabulous food and wine, picturesque countryside... and Dracula!

Romania's pristine mountain landscapes and wonderful medieval towns seem to have stepped out of time. There is a lot to see and do in this mainly Christian Orthodox country. The picturesque Carpathian Mountains occupy the centre of the country, while the region of Transylvania is well known for its castles, churches and beautiful forested mountains. The quality of their wines has increased dramatically over the years, and you'll be pleasantly surprised at the wine and food culture.

Bulgaria is a rich mix of culture and tradition, with Greek, Roman, and Turkish influences all leaving their mark. After being caught up in both WWI and WWII and formerly part of the Eastern Bloc, Bulgaria has emerged with a unique identity and history just waiting to be explored. In fact, it boasts 9 UNESCO-listed World Heritage sites. You'll love the capital, Sofia, a mix of old and cool. Equally, you'll be charmed by the atmosphere and old town of Plovdiv, Europe's oldest consistently occupied city.

Grab your camera and join us on this fascinating cultural mix - history, beautiful scenery and wonderful food and wine. This tour is available as a standalone tour or as an extension to Blue Dot's Caucasus departure.



### Departure, October 2027 (date to be advised)

Depart from Australia for Bucharest, the capital of Romania. We will provide you with an individualised flight itinerary for your trip.

### Day 1 ARRIVAL TO BUCHAREST

On arrival in Bucharest, we'll be picked up from the airport and transferred to our hotel, where we will spend two nights. Your afternoon free to freshen up and wander this charming city, then we'll meet at a local restaurant for a welcome dinner. **D**

### Day 2 BUCHAREST

We'll explore dynamic Bucharest today, starting with some of the city's most important buildings: the Arch of Triumph, the Romanian Athenaeum, the former Royal Palace, and the Opera House. The capital has many charming city squares and a notable Parliament House. In the afternoon, we'll explore the old historical centre, visiting the Lipscani District, it's pedestrian streets full of beautiful buildings, restaurants, bars, and shops selling local handicrafts. We'll visit the Curtea Veche Church, the oldest church in Bucharest, and the Village Museum, an outdoor museum showcasing regional life across Romania. Our

dinner this evening is in a lovely setting, near beautiful Herastrau Park. **B/L/D**

### Day 3 BUCHAREST – CURTEA DE ARGES – OLT VALLEY – SIBIU

Today we'll travel to Curtea de Arges, the former second capital of Wallachia. We'll visit the Episcopal Monastery Church, a recreation of the original built in 1517 by Prince Neagoe Basarab. We'll visit Cozia Monastery, the oldest and most complex historical and art monument in Romania, dating back to 1388. In the afternoon, we'll continue to Sibiu, home to the impressive citadels built in the 12th Century by German settlers known as Transylvanian Saxons. Sibiu was designated a European "Capital of Culture" in 2007, and we'll spend two nights here. **B/D**



### Day 4 DAY TRIP TO ALBA IULIA AND HUNEDOARA

After breakfast, we'll travel to Alba Iulia, one of Romania's oldest towns, known in ancient times as Apulum. We'll visit the impressive Alba Carolina

citadel, then continue to Hunedoara, a medieval town of Transylvania. The fantastic Hunyad Castle, built in a Gothic-Renaissance style, is steeped in history and legends. We'll have time for lunch and a wander before returning to Sibiu in the afternoon, where you'll have free time to explore this charming city before dinner. **B/D**



#### Day 5

#### SIBIU – JIDVEI – BIERTAN – SIGHISOARA

This morning, we'll take a walking tour of Sibiu's UNESCO-listed Old Town before travelling to the picturesque wine region of Jidvei (with a tasting, of course). We'll continue to Biertan village to visit its UNESCO-listed Fortified Church. Surrounded by vineyards, the 15th-century fortified church is perched high on a hill in the middle of the village. After lunch, we'll continue to Sighisoara, another UNESCO-listed site. This perfectly intact 16th-century gem, with its nine towers, cobbled streets, burgher houses, and ornate churches, oozes atmospheric magic. We'll take a walking tour of the city's highlights, including the Old City, dating back to 1191; the Clock Tower; the Weapon Museum; Vlad the Impaler's birthplace; the Covered Staircase; the Evangelic Church on the Hill; and the cemetery. We'll spend one night Sighisoara and dinner is at our hotel. **B/D**

#### Day 6

#### SIGHISOARA – BICAZ – GURA HUMORULUI

Today we'll set out on a scenic drive, passing through some of Romania's most beautiful roads. We'll stop at Bicz Gorges National Park, known for its limestone rocks that tower hundreds of metres over the spectacular canyon, and take a light walk. We'll continue to Gura Humorului for a two-night stay, our base for exploring the fascinating painted monasteries. **B/D**

#### Day 7

#### DAY TRIP TO BUCOVINA MONASTERIES

Bucovina is a historical region in northeastern Romania, best known for its UNESCO-listed painted Orthodox monasteries, each with its unique mural frescoes. First, we'll visit Voronet, the most famous of the monasteries, painted in an intense shade of blue known as "Voronet blue". Next, we'll visit Moldovita, with its predominantly gold and deep-blue exterior wall paintings, and Sucevita, the last of the 22 painted churches of Bucovina. It was a princely residence and fortified monastery and has the largest number of painted images. In the afternoon, we'll visit the Marginea Pottery Centre, where local artists manufacture a unique form of black ceramics, and the Vama Egg Museum, with its beautiful collections of dyed and decorated eggs. **B/D**

#### Day 8

#### GURA HUMORULUI – PIATRA NEAMT – BRASOV

This morning, we'll visit Agapia monastery, painted by the famous



Romanian painter Nicolae Grigorescu. His work combines elements of the Byzantine and neoclassical styles, offering another unique and beautiful example of Romanesque art. Leaving the North behind, we'll travel to Piatra Neamt, nestled amongst the mountains, for a stroll through this picturesque town. We'll continue to the Transylvanian city of Brasov, known by its German name Kronstadt, and once a major medieval trading centre. The old historical centre is a delight with its Gothic, Baroque and Renaissance architecture, yet the city has a fabulous food and wine scene as evening falls. We'll spend the next two nights here, and dinner will be at a local restaurant. **B/D**



#### Day 9

#### DAY TRIP TO BRAN AND AZUGA

We'll start with a brief walking tour of the old historical centre, before travelling to Bran village to visit "Dracula's Castle". This impressive castle owes its fame to its imposing towers, narrow corridors and mysterious labyrinths that are said to have inspired Bram Stoker's Dracula. Next, we'll visit the Azuga Rhein Cellars, built in 1892 by the Rhein family, an official supplier for the royal court. The traditional "champenoise" method produces sparkling wines and champagne-type wines. We'll have a cellar tour and wine tasting served with cheese and bread. We'll return to Brasov and conclude our city sightseeing, including the gothic Black Church (Biserica Neagra), which took its name from its blackened appearance after a fire in 1689 and Rope Street (said to be the narrowest in Europe). **B/L**



#### Day 10

#### BRASOV – BUCHAREST

Our final journey in Romania winds through the Prahova Valley, along the Carpathian Mountains, to Sinaia and the nearby Peles Castle, considered one of the most stunning castles in Europe. Commissioned by King Carol I in 1873, Peles Castle served as the summer residence of Romania's royal family until 1947. The castle's 160 rooms are each decorated in a different theme;

adorned with paintings by great artists, Murano crystal chandeliers, German stained-glass windows and Cordoba leather-covered walls. We'll return to Bucharest for one night before continuing to Bulgaria tomorrow. **B/D**

## Day 11

### BUCHAREST – VELIKO TURNOVO

#### WELCOME TO BULGARIA

After breakfast, we'll travel to Rousse and meet our new guide for a short city tour and lunch in a restaurant overlooking the river. We'll continue to Veliko Tarnovo, the ancient capital of Bulgaria, for a one-night stay. We'll visit the medieval Tsarevets Fortress, then have free time to explore. The cobbled streets of this atmospheric town are a great place to wander, and the Samovodene market displays local artist's work. We'll meet for dinner at a local restaurant in the old town. **B/L/D**

## Day 12

### VELIKO TURNOVO – PLOVDIV

We'll visit the Ethnographic Open-Air Museum in Gabrovo this morning. The museum presents the architecture and way of life of the Central Balkans from the late 18th and 19th centuries. Master



artisans produce colourful ceramics, copper vessels, silver jewellery, leather and wooden articles, musical instruments and icon paintings. Next, we'll visit a private, family-run

Rose Oil Distillery in a beautiful rose garden. The museum here showcases traditional methods of extracting rose oil, which were used more than 350 years ago. You can taste the delicious rose jam, rose liqueur or rose brandy. After lunch, we'll continue to Kazanluk, located in a region known as the "Valley of the Thracian Kings" due to the ancient tombs preserved here. Dating back to the 4th Century BC, some of these sites are listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites, offering a unique insight into the lives of the ancient Thracians. The local History Museum displays artefacts, the most significant being an ancient gold funeral mask. After lunch at a nearby restaurant, we'll travel to Plovdiv for a two-night stay, and our evening is free. **B/L**



## Day 13

### PLOVDIV AND SURROUNDS

Plovdiv is one of Europe's oldest cities, and some historians argue that it is the oldest continuously inhabited city in Europe, with a civilisation dating back 6,000 years. We'll tour the Old Town, visit an ethnographic exhibition, St. Konstantin and Elena churches, and the Roman Theatre. The 2,000-year-

old theatre was only discovered 50 years ago. It could seat 30,000 people – an astonishing number for its time! Over the last ten years, Bulgaria has become well-known for its quality wines, and today, we'll visit a local winery for wine tasting, followed by lunch. In the afternoon, we'll return to Plovdiv to stroll along the pedestrian street (the longest in Europe - 1,750m) with its Roman Stadium built by Emperor Hadrian – one of the Balkans' largest and most impressive Ancient Roman structures. Your evening is free to explore this lovely city. **B/L/D**

## Day 14

### PLOVDIV – RILA – SOFIA

This morning, we'll visit the UNESCO-listed Rila Monastery, Bulgaria's largest monastery, and a must-see. An inaccessible fortress from the outside reveals a different world behind its heavy gates, exquisite architecture with arches and columns, 1,200 outdoor murals, sunlit verandahs and old fountains. The monastery houses a lavish collection of precious old icons and manuscripts. After lunch at a nearby restaurant, we'll travel to Bulgaria's capital, Sofia, for a two-night stay. Your evening is free, with dinner at your own leisure tonight. **B/L**

## Day 15

### SOFIA

Unlike most major European capitals, Sofia is not on a major river; it is surrounded by mountains, with ancient roads leading in and out. The city has a tumultuous history of wars, seizures, and earthquakes over the last few hundred years.

Highlights of the city include the St. Sofia statue, St. Petka church, St. George Rotunda, Ruins of Serdica, the National Theatre, the Synagogue, the Russian church, Al. Nevski Cathedral and St. Sofia church. In the afternoon, we'll visit Boyana Church (UNESCO-listed), a unique monument with wonderful 10th-century frescoes. Created by a Bulgarian artist, the realistic painting style surpassed the Italian Renaissance by a century. Next, we'll visit the National History Museum, one of the largest history museums of the Balkans. Its collection includes the oldest crafted gold in the world, the world-famous Thracian golden and silver treasures, ceramics and bas-reliefs from Bulgarian medieval capitals. We'll come together in the evening for a farewell dinner in a traditional restaurant featuring local dishes and wine. **B/L/D**



## Day 16

### DEPARTURE

After breakfast, depart for home or to your next destination. **B**



**MODERATE**

Icon indicates a day where there is **moderate physical exertion**. A basic level of fitness is required: eg. A trek over 'mostly flat' terrain or climbing several flights of steps without the support of handrails or elevators.



**ACTIVE**

Icon indicates a day where there is a **particularly active section**. A good level of fitness is required: eg. A longer trek over non-groomed, uneven terrain, or ascending to reach a panorama. May also include exposure to higher altitude. An alternate activity may be offered if you choose to sit out an active section. Please call - we are happy to discuss each tour in more detail.