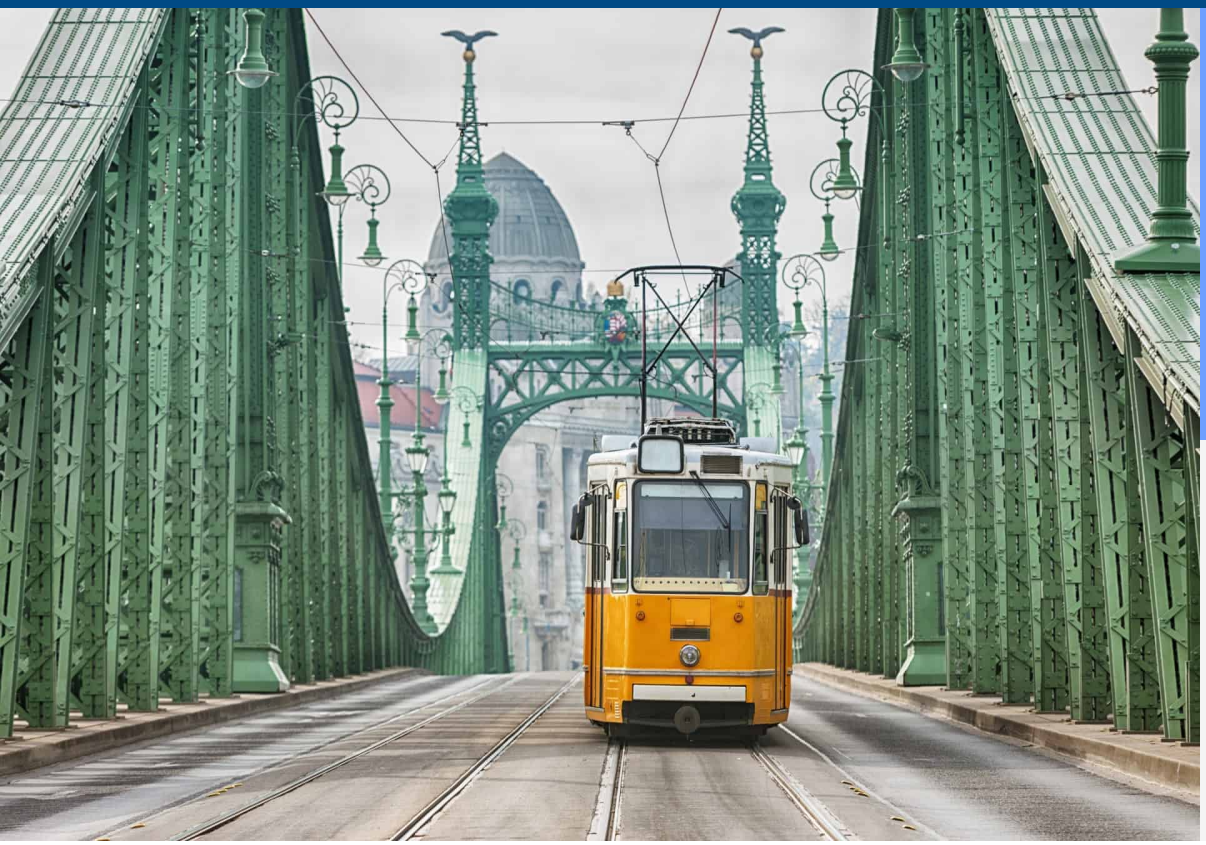
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£7,216 GBP

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Prices valid until
30th December 2024

23 days
Duration

Bulgaria, Hungary
Destination

Level 2 - Moderate
Activity

Sofia, Bucharest and Budapest | Small Group Tour



Sep 09 2024 to Oct 01 2024

Sofia, Bucharest and Budapest | Small Group Tour

Join Odyssey Traveller on this adventure as we travel from Sofia to Budapest, taking in Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary with this small group tour of Sofia, Bucharest and Budapest. This corner of Europe has been at the crossroads of civilisations for over 2,000 years and there are reminders everywhere. Thracians, Romans, Ottoman Turks and the Austro-Hungarian Empire have all contributed to a rich tapestry of

crumbling ruins and archaeological treasures.

Until recent years, Bulgaria and Romania were rarely visited destinations but since the fall of the Iron Curtain and communist dictatorships in 1989, this has all changed. These countries have now emerged from isolation and have so much to offer the inquisitive visitor.







Travelling from Sofia to Budapest

The Sofia, Bucharest, Budapest small group tour focuses on how historical influences have shaped these countries. Throughout our tour we will see dramatic reminders of the region's ancient heritage:

- Thracian tombs and rock carvings
- Roman ruins
- Medieval castles and fortresses
- Ottoman-era mosques and architecture
- grand Austro-Hungarian buildings and icons
- Communist-era monuments, palaces and museums

We visit magnificent wooden churches and monasteries filled with relics, walk along the cobbled lanes of picturesque villages, and admire ancient timber-framed houses. The Prejmer Fortified Church, one of the many fortified churches in Transylvania, Romania, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

We explore treasure-filled museums and galleries, wander through parks, forests and along beaches. Evenings may be spent watching the world go by from local cafes and restaurants in this relatively "undiscovered" region of Europe.

This tour will take you through a rural landscape relatively untouched by the modern world and you can look out upon hand-ploughed fields. These countries also offer a diversity of wildlife, and stunning scenery

seen rarely in the rest of Europe.

We cross mountain ranges, drive through beautiful forests, pass glacial lakes and sandy beaches beside the Black Sea. We even have time to visit a salt mine, animal sanctuary, and winery.

Learn about the people and the culture

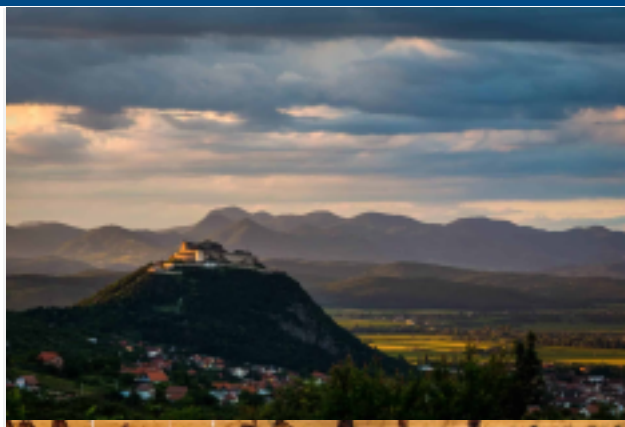
We will learn that Bulgaria and Romania are not homogeneous societies and offer considerable cultural diversity. Ethnic minorities such as the Roma, Magyars, and Germans have a distinct nature.

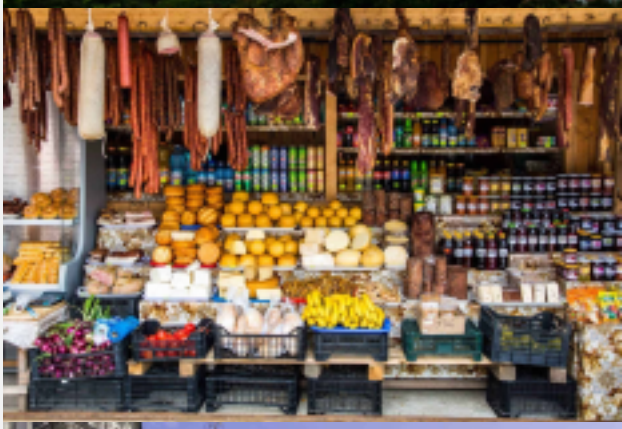
Think Romania, think Dracula. We visit several castles associated with Vlad the Impaler. Although Romania traces its ancestry to the Romans, contemporary fiction associates Transylvania with vampires and other such horrors.

Our program concludes in Budapest, the vibrant Hungarian capital set on the Danube River. You will be impressed by this global city, today an economic power-house but formerly the co-capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. A city with 2,000 years of settlement boasting diverse architectural styles and a range of museums, theatres and cultural institutions. Budapest has been identified as one of the most beautiful cities in Europe and you will soon see why.

We will be accompanied throughout the tour by an Odyssey Program Leader. In all countries, there will be knowledgeable English-speaking local guides to assist in the interpretation and presentation of information.

We travel around the region in a comfortable modern coach at a slow pace with frequent stops.







Travel Tips and Articles of Interest

For Odyssey Travellers, articles that may be of interest are often published on this website to assist you with your tour planning.

For this small group tour travelling from Sofia to Budapest, see these articles:

- History of Transylvania
- Discover Hungary
- Small group tours

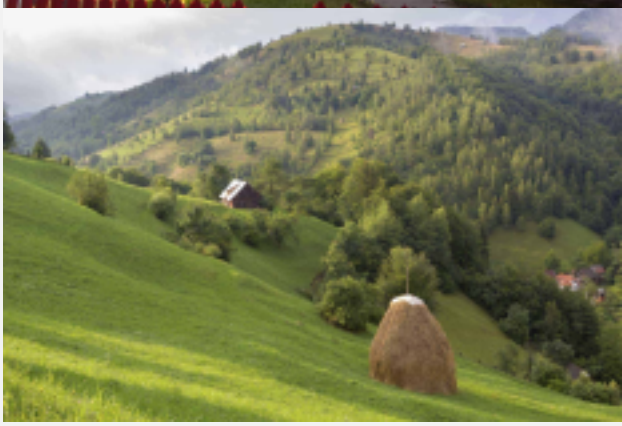
We also have several articles you can read to prepare:

- Practising Responsible Travel
- EU Introduces New Authorisation System for Visa-Free Travellers
- Problem of “Overtourism”
- Women’s Walking Shoes
- Selecting Shoes and Socks

To learn more about Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria, read our country profiles.







Highlights

1. Descend into a forested valley to 14th century Rila Monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Observe 300 Monk cells, four levels of spectacular balconies and 1,200 murals.
2. Stroll through Plovdiv village, along cobbled streets flanked by Ottoman –era buildings and soak up the bohemian atmosphere of a by-gone age.

3. Descend into Europe's largest and most unique salt mine. The Slanic Salt Mine offers two levels of chambers with scenes and sculptures depicting Romanian history
4. Heard of 'Dracula'? Visit 14th century Bran Castle, made famous by notorious Vlad the Impaler. Timidly explore the 'vampire' count's residence.
5. Ride a steam train into the mountains of Romania. Journey through forests and beside a raging river to the logging town of Viseu De Sus with its ancient wooden buildings and farm animals.



Itinerary

Day 1

Locations: Sofia

Overview:

On arrival in Sofia, make your own way to our hotel. We begin our program with an introductory meeting in the late afternoon, followed by a welcome dinner.

Accommodation:

Best Western Hotel or similar.



Day 2

Locations: Sofia

Overview:

Today we enjoy a guided tour of Sofia and explore the main sights of the city. We will visit the Archaeological museum, St Alexander Nevski Cathedral and crypt and view St George's Rotunda and Eagle Bridge. Our tour will also include the Bojana Church and Museum of Socialist Art. Following lunch we drive to Rila Monastery, a UNESCO heritage site. Dinner is by own arrangements in the area near the hotel.

Accommodation:

Best Western Hotel or similar.







Day 3

Locations: Plodiv

Overview:

We travel almost 300 kilometres from Sofia to Karabunar today to enjoy wine tasting at Villa Terres Vineyard. From here we transfer to Panagyurishhte to view the Memorial Complex at Apriltsi and Hisarya to explore this Roman archaeological site. Before our arrival in Plovdiv, we will make one final stop, at Tarnichene to learn about rose water production. Dinner is included at the hotel.

Accommodation:

Hebros Hotel or similar.

Day 4

Locations: Plovdiv

Overview:

We have a Plovdiv city walking tour past Ottoman style houses to view the main sights of the city. Our tour includes: the Roman theatre, the ethnographic collection at Kujumdzioglu's House, Lamartine House, Dzhumaya Mosque and the house of Stepan Hindliyan, a 19th century American merchant. In the afternoon we visit Bulgaria's second largest monastery at Bachkova. Dinner is by own arrangements at one of the many Bohemian restaurants near our hotel.

Accommodation:

Hebros Hotel or similar.

Day 5

Locations: Veliko Tarnovo

Overview:

First stop today is at the Thracian tomb at Kazanluk. From here we drive to Shipka to explore a Russian style church built to commemorate Russians who died fighting the Turks. Nearby, we stop to view the former communist meeting place at Buzludzha. Our day concludes with a tour of the preserved village at Etara Ethnographical museum before

arrival at Veliko Tarnova. Dinner is included at the hotel and there is ample time to wander the ancient city in the evening.

Accommodation:

Hotel Yontra Grand Hotel or similar.



Day 6

Locations: Veliko Tarnovo

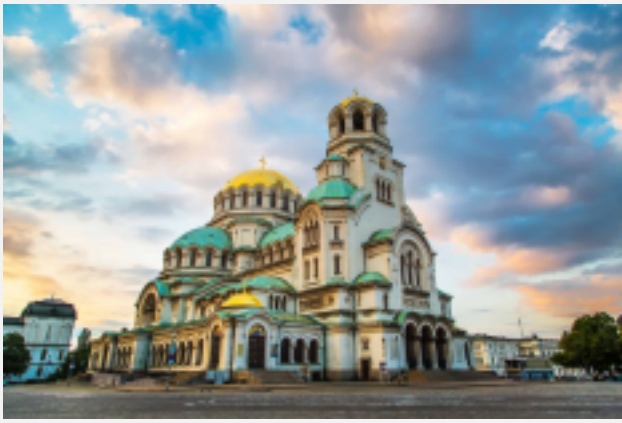
Overview:

We begin with a visit to the stunning Tsaravets fortress before our journey to Arbanasi and a tour of the Church of Nativity. At short distance away we stop at the Roman ruins at Nikyup. During the afternoon, we have time to wander the historic centre of Veliko Tarnova and dine at one of its many fine restaurants.

Accommodation:

Hotel Yontra Grand Hotel or similar.

Day 7



Locations: Varna

Overview:

Today we transfer to Shumen and visit the impressive Monument to 1,300 years of Bulgarian history. Our next stop is the Madera horseman carving on a rock face. Before arrival in Varna we will stop to view the unusual Stone Forest. There will be time to explore the coastal city with dinner by own arrangements at a local restaurant offering sea views.

Accommodation:

Hotel Capitol or similar.



Day 8

Locations: Bucharest

Overview:

Our journey today takes us across the border into Romania. Our first stop will be at Balcik to visit Queen Marie of Romania's palace and the Botanic Gardens. A delightful drive along the coast follows and brings us to Constanta and entrance to the National Museum of History and Archaeology. Upon arrival in Bucharest we will dine by own arrangements in the Old Town.

Accommodation:

Hilton Garden Inn or similar

Day 9

Locations: Bucharest

Overview:

This morning we enjoy a guided city tour which will include the Square of the Revolution, entrance to the Palace of Parliament, the Romanian Peasant Costume Museum and the mansion of former communist dictator Ceausescu. The afternoon offers free time to explore the Romanian capital before dining at a traditional restaurant offering a folklore show.

Accommodation:

Hilton Garden Inn or similar

Day 10

Locations: Bucharest

Overview:

Today is a free day to explore Bucharest. Your program leader will offer ideas on how to use the day productively.

Accommodation:

Hilton Garden Inn or similar

Day 11

Locations: Sibiu

Overview:

We will drive along the Transfagarasan road to Sibiu with stops to visit the orthodox cathedral at Curtea de Arges and the castle at Poienari. At the city of Targoviste we will explore the castle with its links to Vlad the Impaler and Ceausescu. This is a journey through spectacular scenery and as we rise through the mountains we will pause to view a dam and two glacial lakes at Vidraru and Balea. In the evening we will make our own arrangements to dine at a local restaurant near our hotel.

Accommodation:

Ibis Sibiu or similar.

Day 12

Locations: Sighisoara

Overview:

We begin with a guide tour of Sibiu with entrance to the city's leading attractions. A short ride then brings us to the largest salt mine in Europe where we descend two levels to view sculptures and scenes from Romanian history. We continue on to Biertan to see its magnificent fortified church. Upon arrival at We begin with a guide tour of Sibiu with entrance to the city's leading attractions. A short ride then brings us to the largest salt mine in Europe where we descend two levels to view sculptures and scenes from Romanian history. We continue on to Biertan to see its magnificent fortified church. Upon arrival at Sighisoara we explore the ancient citadel, the Old Town and various historic houses including the birthplace of Vlad the Impaler. Our accommodation is within the citadel and where we dine by our own arrangements.

Accommodation:

Casa Wagner Hotel or similar.

Day 13

Locations: Brasov

Overview:

Today we drive south with a stop at a tiny fortified church in the little village of Viscri. Later, at nearby Rupea we enjoy a guided tour of the castle. There will be an early arrival in Brasov allowing time for a city tour and entrance to the Black Church. In the evening we will be treated to a dinner and folk show at Cerbul Carpatin restaurant.

Accommodation:

Casa Wagner Hotel or similar.

Day 14

Locations: Brasov

Overview:

We experience a full day trip from Brasov with a visit to the notorious Bran Castle, used by Vlad the Impaler also known as Dracula in popular fiction. A short drive through hills brings us to Sinaia for lunch, entrance to Peles Castle and a tour of a bear sanctuary to learn about the efforts made to rescue bears from inhumane conditions. .Upon our return to Brasov we ride the cable car to the summit of Mt Tampa for breath taking views. Dinner will be by our own arrangements within the city centre.

Accommodation:

Casa Wagner Hotel or similar.

Day 15

Locations: Lacu Rosu

Overview:

We depart Brasov for Prejmer to visit the huge and very impressive fortified church, one of the largest in Romania. We arrive early afternoon in Lacu Rosu with time to explore the local area. Dinner at the hotel is

included.

Accommodation:

Hotel Lacu Rosu or similar.

Day 16

Locations: Sucevita

Overview:

Our journey today takes us through the beautiful Bicaz Gorge. Along the way we visit two quite unique monasteries: Neamt, famous for its decorated skulls and Agapia for its nuns and frescoes. Dinner at the hotel is included.

Accommodation:

Popas Turistic Bocovina or similar.

Day 17

Locations: Sucevita

Overview:

Following a guided tour of Sucevita we enjoy a horse-drawn carriage ride to the local ornately decorated monastery. A short ride brings us to a black pottery centre at Marginea, the monastery at Voronet and something quite special; the Museum of Decorated Eggs at Vama. Dinner is by own arrangements within the Old Town of Sucevita.

Accommodation:

Popas Turistic Bocovina or similar.

Day 18

Locations: Viseu de Sus

Overview:

Today there is a long drive through spectacular scenery, over the Prislop Pass to the small town of Viseu de Sus. Along the way, we visit two special churches: Ieud Deal and Poienile Izei. Dinner is included at

the hotel.

Accommodation:

Hotel Gabriela or similar.

Day 19

Locations: Sighetu Marmatiei

Overview:

It's not every day that you get to ride a steam train beside a river into the depth of a forested mountainside. Our ride will include a BBQ lunch after which we rejoin our coach and journey to Sighetu Marmatiei to visit a monastery and wooden church and have dinner at the hotel.

Day 20

Locations: Debrecen

Overview:

We begin with a guided tour of Sighetu Marmatiei, a town located on the border with Moldova. The town's Memorial Museum commemorates the incarceration, torture and starvation of enemies of the communist state. We then drive along the border to Sapanta to visit a cemetery where wooden tombstones are carved and painted showing how a person died or depict scenes from their life. Our last stop is Oradea to view Art Nouveau buildings, Unity Square and Black Eagle Palace. This is our last day in Romania and we conclude by crossing the border into Hungary. Dinner is by own arrangements.

Accommodation:

Centrum Hotel or similar.

Day 21

Locations: Budapest

Overview:

We view the main sights of Debrecen including a tram ride along Piac Utca and entry to the Protestant Great Reformed Church. A short ride

brings us to Hortobagy where we will be treated to an entertaining horse skills show. Our day concludes in Budapest with dinner by own arrangements at one of the many restaurants near our hotel.

Accommodation:

Mercure Budapest City Centre or similar.

Day 22

Locations: Mercure Budapest City Centre or similar.

Overview:

Today we enjoy a full day guided tour of Budapest which includes the castle, the Hospital in the Rock (formerly a nuclear fallout bunker), the Raoel Wallenberg Memorial and the old royal palace in Godollo. In the evening, we will be treated to a farewell dinner with an Austro-Hungarian theme.

Day 23

Locations: Budapest

Overview:

After breakfast, the tour concludes.

Inclusions / Exclusions

What's included in our Tour

- 22 nights of hotel accommodation
- 22 breakfasts, 1 lunch and 9 dinners.
- All excursions, entrance fees, and tipping as per itinerary
- Transport in comfortable and modern coaches.
- Services of Tour Leader for the duration of tour.
- Details preparatory material.

What's not included in our Tour

- International airfares and departure taxes.
- Comprehensive travel insurance.
- Items of a personal nature such as telephone calls, laundry and meals not listed on the itinerary.

Level 2 - Moderate

Participants must be able to carry their own luggage, climb and descend stairs, be in good health, mobile and able to participate in 3-5 hours of physical activity per day, the equivalent of walking/hiking up to 8 kilometres on uneven ground.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any requests for further information about this tour or any others offered by Odyssey Travel.