



SNOWSHOEING IN TRANSYLVANIA!

If you love winter and traveling off the beaten path, then this trip is your dream come true! Transylvania - the name alone conjures up images of craggy mountains, gothic castles, horse drawn carts and forests filled with hibernating bears. The reality is not that far off. Crisp winters add an extra dimension to this small corner of Europe, as snow blankets the pastures, farmsteads and woodlands. Spend a week exploring this region, hiking or snowshoeing to small villages, into gorges, through valleys and up mountains, wandering through castles and a bear sanctuary along the way.

From our comfortable guesthouse in the small village of Magura, we head out to uncover the region's treasures on foot. Snow conditions will dictate whether we hike or snowshoe, but either way, we get into the wilderness. Along the way, we meet locals who still live a traditional lifestyle, learn about the region's rich folklore and history, admire stunning mountain scenery and, with a bit of luck, see traces of the local wildlife, including wolf or bear prints in the snow.

The registration link is up on the [Epic Global Adventures](#)' website but I can take your non-refundable deposit and registration information any time by phone, to hold your spot: 207-329-8028.

This trip is February 19-26, 2022.

- **The cost, which does not include airfare, is US\$1600 per person, double occupancy; \$300 single supplement.**
- **A non-refundable deposit of \$375 will hold your spot; final payment is due December 1, 2021.**
- **This trip is non-refundable; medical and evacuation insurance are required. Cancellation insurance is HIGHLY recommended!**

Highlights

- The serene beauty of the Carpathian Mountains in winter
- Looking for wolf and bear tracks in the snow
- Visiting Bran Castle, *Dracula's home*
- Small, picturesque villages and warm hospitality of the local people
- Walking through the Prapastiile Zarnestilor Canyon, formed during the Jurassic Period.
- Visiting a Bear Sanctuary
- Visiting a bat cave

Key information

- 7 nights at Villa Hermani guesthouse in Magura; 1 night at Hotel Christina in Bucharest
- 6 days guided snowshoeing and winter walking
- Small group, 16 max, plus leader. Min age 16 yrs.
- Travel by private minibuss
- Sightseeing visits to castles and villages

What's included

- All breakfasts, 6 lunches, and 6 dinners
- All accommodation
- Transfers
- Snowshoes and poles

What's not included

- Travel insurance
- Single supplement

The exact itinerary (and therefore the length of each hike) may vary depending on weather conditions or other factors beyond our control. While aiming to always follow the routes described in these trip notes, it will be the leader's decision to amend the itinerary if and when necessary.



FEBRUARY 19, 2022

Start in Bucharest and Magura, Transylvania.

We'll meet at the airport in Bucharest (time TBD), where our transfer will pick us up and take us to our comfortable guesthouse, approximately 3.5 hours away, in the village of Magura, about 1040m, within the boundaries of the Piatra Craiului National Park.

Our hosts at our guesthouse, the Villa Hermani, are very hospitable and enjoy stopping to chat over a glass of local plum brandy. Click [HERE](#) to link to Villa Hermani.

Meals included: dinner

FEBRUARY 20, 2022 (12km; 7mi)

Walk to a local bat cave and the village of Pestera.

Heading out on foot, our first destination today is a local cave which is a hibernation roost for a number of bats, including lesser and greater horseshoe bats. Remember to bring a headlamp with you for the cave visit.

We then continue on our way to the nearby village of Pestera (which translates to 'the cave'), witnessing the winter rural life of these mountain communities.

After lunch at a local pub, we return to Magura.

Meals included: breakfast, lunch, dinner

FEBRUARY 21, 2022 (8km; 5mi)

Explore Kalibash villages.

Magura is one of a number of villages known as the Kalibash Villages. The Kalibash once fled Walachia to this remote area, which, at the time, was under Austro-Hungarian rule. Here, houses stretch along hilltops, like pearls on a string.

Starting again at our guesthouse, we hike up to Dealul Magurice (1300m) where we may spot wolf, lynx and bear prints in the snow in the forest. Later, as we make our way back to Magura, we stop by a local farm to share a hot 'tuica' (home-made plum brandy) with the farmer.

Meals included: breakfast, lunch, dinner

FEBRUARY 22, 2022 (20km; 12mi)

Snowshoe or walk between Piatra Craiului and Bucegi Mt.

This morning, we walk up to a high plateau between Piatra Craiului and Bucegi Mt. In winter, this plateau is completely uninhabited, everything is still, and a quiet serenity permeates the air, giving a sense of truly being in a remote and special area.

In the afternoon, we will return to the guesthouse.

Meals included: breakfast, lunch, dinner

FEBRUARY 23, 2022 (5km; 3mi)

Visit Libearty Bear Sanctuary and the villages of Vulcan and Brasov.

Driving down into the valley, we make our way to Europe's largest rescue facility for brown bears: Libearty. Founded in 2005, the rescue center is home to nearly 100 bears, most of whom suffered over many years in captivity as dancing bears or in circuses. The walk around the bear sanctuary will last approximately one hour.

We drive on to the village of Vulcan, which derives its name from the Slavonic word 'Valc' meaning 'wolf'. This region is rich with the history of Transylvanian Saxons, who emigrated here 800 years ago from the Rhine-Moselle valleys. They built fortified churches, some of which have been designated UNESCO World Heritage sites. Upon arrival in Vulcan, we are greeted with warm coffee and traditional cake in the yard of the fortified church.

From Vulcan, we drive to Brasov and receive a tour of the town, then some free time to explore on our own. We will have our evening meal in a traditional Romanian restaurant and return to Magura by minibus.

Meals included: breakfast, lunch

FEBRUARY 24, 2022 (13km; 8mi)

Walk to Bran Castle, also known as Dracula's castle.

Today we hike from tranquil Magura towards busy Bran, where we visit Bran Castle. It's easy to see why Bram Stoker picked this castle to be the residence of the infamous vampire, Count Dracula. The character himself was based on Vlad Tepes, AKA Vlad the Impaler, Duke of Walachia and a brutal tyrant. Though Vlad himself never went to Bran, Bram Stoker saw an image of the castle and thought it the perfect setting for his dark tale.

After visiting the castle, we stop by Dracula's market, where we can pick up some vampire-inspired souvenirs. Later, we will be picked up by the minibus and return to Magura.

Meals included: breakfast, lunch, dinner

FEBRUARY 25, 2022 (15km; 9mi)

Snowshoe through Zarnesti Canyon to Piatra Craiului Mountains.

This morning, we walk through a spectacular canyon, a gorge formed during the Jurassic Period. We continue towards Curmatura Cabin just beneath the rocks of Piatra Craiului Mountain. The cabin is open year-round, and we can relax here before going back to our guesthouse.

Altitude gain: We first walk down to the gorge 200m, then hike up 700m to Cabana Curmatura, walk down again 700m and hike up to Magura 200m.

Meals included: breakfast, lunch, dinner

FEBRUARY 26, 2022

End Magura, Transylvania.

We will be transferred to the 4* Hotel Christina in Bucharest (click [HERE](#) to link to hotel), time TBD; rest of the day is free to explore Bucharest.

Meals included: breakfast

FEBRUARY 27, 2022

End of adventure!

Schedule your flight departure any time today; airport transfer can be arranged for additional cost.

Meals included: breakfast



Eating and Drinking

All breakfasts, 6 lunches and 6 dinners are included during our stay. Meals are a mixture of local produce and Romanian/Transylvanian specialties.

Breakfasts usually consist of a small buffet including an egg dish, cold cuts, cheeses, boiled eggs, vegetables, spreads, bread, yoghurt, cereals, jam, juice, herbal teas and coffee.

Lunches included on this trip will include the following--a picnic lunch provided by a local farmer on one day, traditional soups, and self-made sandwiches, where you can choose your own fillings from the buffet in the mornings.

Each evening, there is a choice of a meat dish or vegetarian option. If you are vegetarian or have special dietary requirements please let me know at the time of booking.

On one night, we will have dinner in a traditional Romanian restaurant in Brasov; this meal is not included, and you should allow approx. US\$25 (without drinks) for this.

Weather

Romania enjoys a continental weather pattern. Winter is normally cold with clear skies, though heavy snowfalls are common. Skies tend to be clearer in the mountains, while in valleys and cities it may take a little longer, usually until lunch time, for the fog to clear.

This trip is graded 3 for moderate activity.

Snow conditions dictate whether we will hike with snowshoes or hiking boots, and the duration of our walks. Exact walks will be selected by the leader at the time to best fit current weather conditions and safety requirements. The walks will vary from 2 to 7hrs, however, with most being around 4-5hrs long.

Temperatures are generally cold, averaging 0°C in the valleys, though blue skies are common in winter, especially in the mountains. In the valleys, mornings tend to be a little foggy and nicer in the afternoon. Snowfall can happen any time between December and April.

Walking distances and hours stated within the itinerary are given as approximates only. Timings stated include lunch and photo stops and will vary depending on the pace of our group.

***Please note:** The leader has the right to adapt the route and length of the walks according to the weather conditions and the physical condition of the group. Our local tour operator uses different types of snowshoes, all types are easily adjustable to shoe sizes and are recommended for the type of terrain around Magura.*

INSURANCE:

It is a condition of joining any of our trips that you must be fully insured for at least US\$200,000 against medical and personal accident risks (to include repatriation costs and air ambulance or helicopter rescue services). On arrival, you will be asked to present details of your policy to your trip leader.

ELECTRICITY:

European plug - 2 round pins.

MONEY:

The national currency of Romania is the Romanian Leu. There are ATM machines in Zarnesti, Brasov and Bran. Credit cards are useful only for major souvenir purchases in cities or in emergencies.

US Dollars can be exchanged in banks or recognized exchange shops.

Traveler's checks are often difficult to exchange. Do not change any money on the street, as it is illegal. We don't recommend exchanging money at the airport in Bucharest, as they offer a very poor exchange rate. Only exchange money in banks, hotels and recognized exchange shops.

Extra Expenses & Spending Money

Drinks with meals are not included. Snacks are not included, and you may wish to buy souvenirs. Please note that prices are constantly changing in Romania. Please allow US\$25 for the dinner in Brasov (without drinks). Prices for drinks can vary, depending on what you choose and where you eat and drink. A beer, for example, is 8 - 10 Leu (~US\$2 - 3), and a glass of wine is 10 - 20 Leu (~US\$3 - 5). A bottle of wine is from 60 Leu (~US\$10).

There is Wi-Fi available at the guesthouse, however, due to the weak internet lines in this remote location and the need to go via satellite, which is provided by an external provider, the hosts of the guesthouse kindly request guests to pay a small fee of about US\$6 for 750MB, which should be enough for a week of checking emails.

TIPPING:

Tipping is, of course, entirely at your discretion, but it is customary in Romania. Our Romanian leader will offer guidelines on appropriate tipping. In restaurants, it is usual to tip 10% of the bill. Although optional, a tip for the leader, the bus driver and our host at Villa Hermani at the end of the trip is greatly appreciated. This is entirely at your own discretion. As a guideline, we recommend a contribution between US\$15-25 each (leader, bus driver and host) per client.

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM:

Tourism can be a real help to local communities, providing income, positive cultural exchanges and a financial incentive to protect their natural environment. Ours is a 'total approach' to responsible tourism. On this trip, we spend the week in locally owned Villa Hermani and one night in locally owned Hotel Christina, where they employ local staff and use local produce whenever possible. As a hiking trip, we actively encourage clients to interact with the locals, visit local cafes and bars, support local produce and craft and to experience what life is really like in this region of Romania. Additionally, walking trips like this have very little detrimental impact on the environment and the locals, as it is a quiet, low impact activity, requiring comparatively little resources to support.