

Romania

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Braşov** Cobbled Gothic town near fake Dracula castles and real-deal mountains (p939)
- **Cluj-Napoca** Lively, welcoming student town teams with laid-back clubs and bars (p943)
- **Sighişoara** Drac – the real one – grew his baby fangs in this lovely medieval citadel, now with hostels and torture museums (p942)
- **Off-the-beaten track** Southern Bucovina’s painted monasteries linger in bucolic, rural paradise (p946)

FAST FACTS

- **Area** 237,500 sq km (about the size of Britain)
- **ATMs** Widespread
- **Budget** €15 to €25 per day
- **Capital** Bucharest
- **Famous For** Transylvania, Dracula, beautiful scenery
- **Head of State** President Traian Basescu
- **Language** Romanian
- **Money** nou leu (lei); €1 = 3.52 lei; A\$1 = 2.10 lei; ¥100 = 2.36 lei; NZ\$1 = 1.78 lei; UK£1 = 5.18 lei; US\$1 = 2.75 lei; see p948 for details on the changed currency
- **Population** 22.3 million
- **Telephone Codes** country code ☎ 40; international access code ☎ 00



- **Time** GMT/UTC + 2
- **Visa** None required for EU, US, Canadian or UK citizens; required for Australians and New Zealanders; see p949

TRAVEL HINTS

Hire a car – for a day or a few – and stay in family *pensiune* (pensions) on farms. Getting on the backroads, even just 2km off the highways, unveils a deeper, more traditional world. Cars are cheaper from Cluj-Napoca or Bucharest.

ROAMING ROMANIA

If you’re coming from Budapest, stop in Cluj-Napoca, before touring Transylvania (Sighişoara, Braşov, Sinaia) and finishing in the capital Bucharest.

If you’ve come to Romania just to chase Dracula – or Vlad Ţepeş, the very-real moustached impaler of the 15th century – you’ll miss a lot. Romania is a perplexing and beautiful world, both modern and untouched. Outside Saxon towns of Transylvania, horse carts driven by folks in traditional gear wind up hills cars can’t access; Paris-inspired palaces sit side-by-side with communist-grey housing blocks; and mountains curl across, luring locals and visitors with hiking, biking and skiing. Romania sometimes gets a bad rap for rip-off taxi drivers in Bucharest – and they are pretty bad – but people can be super, holding hands in parks and stopping to point the way to helplessly lost tourists. Go before entry into the EU, possibly as early as 2007, starts to change it.

HISTORY

Ancient Romania was inhabited by Thracian tribes, also known as Dacians. From the 7th century BC the Greeks established trading colonies along the Black Sea, and the Romans conquered the area in AD 105–06.

From the 10th century the Magyars expanded into Transylvania, and by the 13th century all of Transylvania was under the Hungarian crown.

Prince Vlad, ruler of Wallachia in 1448, 1456–62 and 1476–77, gained the name Ţepeş (Impaler) after the punishment he used against enemies – driving a wooden stake through the victim’s backbone without touching any vital nerve, ensuring at least 48 hours of suffering before death. He was called ‘Dracula’, meaning ‘son of the dragon’, after his father, Vlad Dracul.

After the Russian defeat in the Crimean War (1853–56) Romanian nationalism grew, and in 1859 Alexandru Ioan Cuza was elected to the thrones of Moldavia and Wallachia, creating a national state, which took the name Romania in 1862.

In 1916 Romania entered WWI on the Allied side. As Romania began losing land in WWII, General Ion Antonescu imposed a fascist dictatorship and joined Hitler, sending 400,000 Romanian Jews and 36,000 Roma to grisly deaths at Auschwitz and other camps. But in 1944 Romania changed sides, declaring war on Nazi Germany. In 1947 the monarchy was abolished and the Romanian People’s Republic proclaimed.

In 1960 Romania adopted an independent foreign policy under two leaders, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (leader from 1952–65) and his protégé Nicolae Ceauşescu (1965–89). Ceauşescu’s domestic policy was chaotic and megalomaniacal. His great blunder was exporting food to finance his schemes.

On 15 December 1989 ethnic-Hungarian father László Tökés publicly condemned the dictator, prompting the Reformed Church of Romania to remove him from his post. Police attempts to arrest demonstrators failed and civil unrest quickly spread. Ceauşescu dispatched troops to crush the rebellion. On 21 December in Bucharest, an address by Ceauşescu was cut short by booing demonstrators, who were crushed by police gunfire and armoured cars. The following morning thousands more took to the streets. By the next day Ceauşescu and his wife were ar-

rested. On 25 December they were executed by firing squad.

In 1990 Romania held its first democratic elections. Since then economic reform has been hampered by internal disagreements.

The government has set its sights on integration with the EU and other international bodies. During the US-led war against Iraq in 2003, Romania allowed Americans access to its airfields and to set up military bases on Romanian soil. Romania joined NATO in March 2004. After billions of euro in aid from Brussels, and many delays, the EU finally approved Romania (and Bulgaria) for membership in 2007 – at the last possible second. The EU noted it would continue to monitor the countries’ progress in fighting corruption and organised crime – two trouble areas that some EU members publicly worried about.

PEOPLE

Romanians make up 89% of the population; Hungarians are the next largest ethnic group (7%), followed by Roma (2%), and smaller populations of Ukrainians, Germans, Russians and Turks. Germans and Hungarians live almost exclusively in Transylvania, while Ukrainians and Russians live mainly near the Danube Delta, and Turks along the Black Sea Coast.

The government estimates that only 400,000 Roma live in Romania, although other sources estimate between 1.5 and 2.5 million.

ARTS

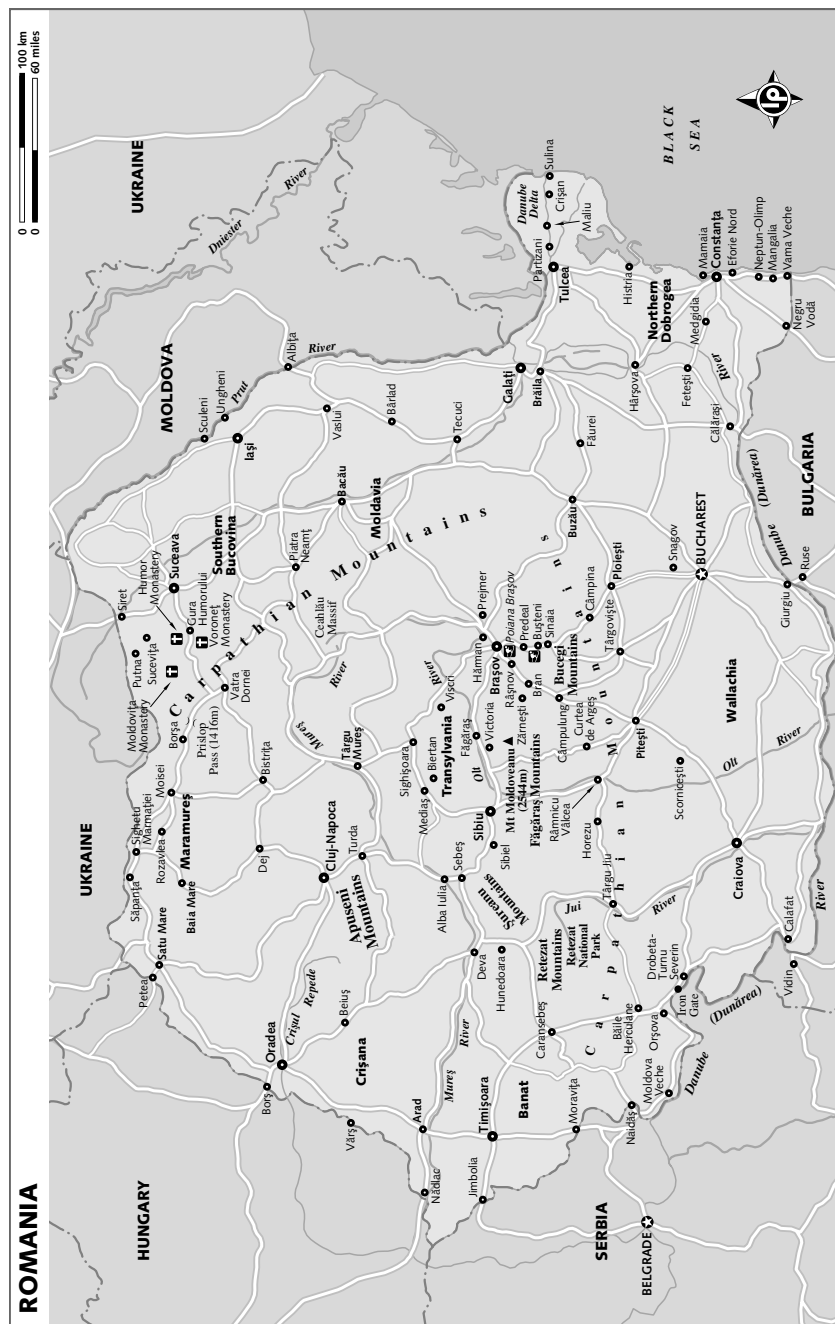
Romania has a strong tradition of traditional rural crafts, music and dance. Religious icon painting was widely practised, particularly between the 17th and 19th centuries.

Artist Nicolae Grigorescu (1838–1907) is known for adapting impressionism to Romanian peasant themes. Sculptor Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957) was a central figure of the modernist movement and one of the early pioneers of abstractionism.

In the cinema world, Romania has scored a couple of recent international hits, with Nae Caranfil’s comedy *Filantropica* (2002) and Cristi Puiu’s *The Death of Mr Lăzărescu* (2005).

ENVIRONMENT

Oval-shaped Romania is made up of three main geographical regions. The mighty Carpathian Mountains form the shape of a scythe sweeping down through the country’s centre



READING UP

One of the best history books on Romania, Lucian Boia's excellent *Romania* surveys Romania's past and present in a colourful, if philosophical, way. Robert Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts* devotes a couple of key chapters to post-revolutionary Romania. Some of Isabel Fonseca's fascinating *Bury Me Standing* follows the Roma population in Romania. Of course, the most famous 'Romanian' book is Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.

from Ukraine and then curling northwards.

East of the mountains are low-lying plains that end at the Black Sea and Europe's second-largest delta region, where the Danube spills into the Black Sea.

Rural Romania has thriving animal populations in its parks and mountains, including lynxes, foxes, wolves, bears and badgers.

Romania has nearly 600 protected areas, including 13 national parks, three biosphere reserves and one World Natural Heritage Site (the Danube Delta), totalling over 1.2 million hectares.

TRANSPORT

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Romania's state airline is **Tarom** (Transporturile Aeriene Române; code R0; www.tarom.ro). Nearly all international flights to Romania arrive at Bucharest's **Henri Coanda International Airport** (formerly Otopeni; code OTP; ☎ 021-201 4050; www.otp-airport.ro).

Some international flights – with direct services to Paris, London, Amsterdam, Germany, Italy, Greece, Budapest and other destinations in Eastern Europe – originate from Timișoara, Cluj-Napoca, Sibiu and Târgu Mureș.

Carpatair (code V3; ☎ 256 300 900; www.carpatair.com) connects Timișoara with Italy, France and Germany; it also flies from Budapest to Cluj-Napoca. **Air Moldova** (code 9U; ☎ 021-312 1258; www.airmoldova.md) and Tarom together operate daily flights between Chișinău and Bucharest.

Wizz Air (code W6; www.wizzair.com) connects Bucharest's older Băneasa Airport with London (Luton), Barcelona, Rome and Dortmund. Wizz also flies between Budapest and Târgu Mureș, in Transylvania, three times weekly.

Bus

International **Eurolines** (www.eurolines.ro) has a flurry of buses linking numerous cities in Romania with Western Europe. Buses to Germany cost €75 to €125 one way, while buses to Paris and Rome cost about €125.

Various companies connect Bucharest and İstanbul (p937); buses also leave from Constanța. Several daily buses connect Suceava in Moldavia with Chernivtsi, Ukraine.

Car & Motorcycle

The best advice here is to make sure all your documents (personal ID, insurance, registration and visas, if required) are in order before crossing into Romania. The Green Card (a routine extension of domestic motor insurance to cover most European countries) is valid in Romania. Extra insurance can be bought at the borders.

Expect long queues at Romanian checkpoints, particularly on weekends.

Train

International train tickets are rarely sold at train stations, but rather at Romanian State Railways (CFR) offices in town (look for the Agenție de Voiaj CFR signs) or Wastels offices. Tickets must be bought at least two hours prior to departure.

Those travelling on an Inter-Rail or Eurail pass still need to make seat reservations (€4, €15 if using a couchette) on express trains within Romania, but cheap train prices hardly justify the cost of using a rail pass here.

There are five daily trains between Bucharest and Budapest (13 to 16 hours), three of which pick up passengers in Brașov. Between Sofia and Bucharest (€18, 11 hours) there are two daily trains; both stop in Ruse.

There's an overnight connection from Bucharest to İstanbul (17 to 19 hours) on the *Bosfor*. There's also an overnight service between Bucharest and Chișinău (€26.40, 13 hours); the daily train to Moscow (39 hours) stops in Kyiv, Ukraine.

GETTING AROUND

Air

State-owned airline **Tarom** (Transporturile Aeriene Române; code R0; www.tarom.ro) is Romania's main carrier. **Carpatair** (code V3; www.carpatair.com) runs domestic routes – as well as to Western Europe – from its hub in Timișoara, making this

Trip	Personal	Accelerat	Rapid	Inter-City
100km (1st Class)	€3.50	€6.40	€8.10	€9
100km (2nd Class)	€2.20	€4.40	€5.80	€6.65
Bucharest–Braşov (1st)	€5.70	€10	€11.20	€12.10
Bucharest–Braşov (2nd)	€3.50	€6.50	€7.90	€8.70

western city a great back-up hub for getting in/out of Romania.

Bicycle

There are generally bike and bike-repair shops in most major towns, but bike hire is not that widespread. A good place to hire one is Sinaia (p938).

Bus

A mix of clunky buses, minibuses and maxitaxis combine to form the seriously disorganised Romanian bus system. Schedules, companies and even 'stations' (sometimes lots) change often. The most useful route to take a maxitaxi – essentially a van with minimal storage space – is between Bucharest and Sighişoara, stopping in Sinaia and Braşov.

Bus fares are cheap, though, and calculated per kilometre – it's about 1 lei (€0.29) per 10km; the 116km trip from Braşov to Sighişoara costs about €3.50.

Car & Motorcycle

Even if you're on a budget, it's well worth splitting the costs for a car – sometimes as low as €25 per day – and getting out into rural areas. Car-hire rates are cheaper in Cluj-Napoca and Bucharest than Braşov. Romanian-made Dacia Solenzas are the cheapest model. Factor in a lot of extra time when driving (roads are very pot-holed), and get a road map from city bookshops.

Your country's driving licence will be recognised here. There is a 0% blood-alcohol tolerance limit. Seat belts are compulsory in the front and back; children under 12 years are forbidden to sit in the front.

Speed limits are 90km/h on major roads and 70km/h inside highway villages and towns unless otherwise noted.

Local Transport

Buses, trams and trolleybuses provide transport within most towns and cities in Romania,

although many are crowded. They usually run from about 5am to midnight, although services can get thin on the ground after 7pm in more remote areas. Purchase tickets at street kiosks marked 'bilete' or 'casă de bilete' before boarding, and validate them once onboard.

In many rural parts, the only vehicle that passes will be horse-powered. Bucharest is the only city in Romania to boast a metro system

Train

The national train timetable (*mersul trenurilor*) is sold for €2 at **Căile Ferate Române** (CFR; Romanian State Railways; www.cfr.ro) offices.

The cheapest trains are local *persoane* trains. *Accelerat* trains are faster, hence a tad more expensive and less crowded. Seat reservations are obligatory and automatic when you buy your ticket. There's little difference between *rapid* and *express* trains; pricier inter-city trains are the most comfortable.

Advance tickets are sold from an Agenție de Voiaj CFR in every city centre.

Note that *sosire* means 'arrivals' and *plecare* is 'departures'.

Sleepers (*vaion de dormit*) are available between Bucharest and Arad, Cluj-Napoca, Oradea and Timişoara.

The table above provides sample costs; prices are tabbed by distance.

BUCHAREST

☎ 021 / pop 2.1 million

Stray dogs, rip-off taxis, lack of tourist information and communist smears aren't great press agents for Bucharest, but Romania's biggest city – really – is a fascinating, lively experiment of mixed eras. Century-old villas sit shoulder-to-shoulder with 18th-century monasteries and grey housing blocks from the 1960s and '70s. Around the corner from eerily fascinating 1980s-built housing blocks

are historic buildings that somehow survived Nicolae Ceauşescu's wrecking ball. Museums are super (the Museum of the Romanian Peasant, particularly), and people are a lot nicer than some give them credit for.

ORIENTATION

The main boulevard of Bucharest runs between Piaţa Victoriei, Piaţa Română, Piaţa Universităţii and Piaţa Unirii. The main train station, Gară de Nord, is a few kilometres northwest of central Bucharest.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Librărie Noi (Map p936; ☎ 311 0700; B-dul Nicolae Bălcescu 18; ☎ 9.30am–8.30pm Mon–Sat, 11am–7pm Sunday) Super bookshop with antiques, Lonely Planet guidebooks & maps.

Internet Access

Acces Internet (Map p934; ☎ 650 7879; B-dul Lascăr Catargiu 6; per hr €0.75–0.90; ☎ 24hr) International calls cost US\$0.04 per min.

Internet & Games (Map p936; ☎ 0721 877 866; B-dul Regina Elisabeta 25; per hr €0.90; ☎ 24hr)

Left Luggage

Train Station (Map p934; Piaţa Gară de Nord 1; per day small/large bag €0.90/1.80; ☎ 24hr) At the train station, to right in hallway leading to front exit.

Medical Services

Emergency Clinic Hospital (Map p934; ☎ 230 0106; Calea Floreasca 8; ☎ 24hr) Bucharest's best state hospital.

Money

Currency exchanges and ATMs are everywhere – including several along B-dul Nicolae Bălcescu in the city centre. Avoid the currency-exchange counters at the airport; there are ATMs in the arrivals hall.

Banca Comercială Română (Map p936; B-dul Regina Elisabeta 5; ☎ 8.30am–5.30pm Mon–Fri, 8.30am–12.30pm Sat)

Post

Central post office (Map p936; ☎ 315 9030; Str Matei Millo 10; ☎ 7.30am–8pm Mon–Fri, 8am–2pm Sat) Collect poste-restante mail from here.

Telephone

RomTelecomm cards (from 10 lei) are available from newsstands. Most phone booths are neglected, but they're still working. You'll have no problem finding a shop selling Orange or Voda-

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

- Police, Fire & Ambulance ☎ 112

phone SIM cards for your mobile phone – try a central street like B-dul General Magheru.

Tourist Information

Bucharest incredibly lacks a tourist information centre, and most travel agencies can only cheerfully send you out of the country. Generally hostels are the best source of info; here are two more helpful agencies:

ONT Carpați (Map p936; ☎ 314 1922; www.ont.ro; B-dul General Magheru 7; ☎ 9am–6.30pm Mon–Fri, 9am–2pm Sat) Staff are happy to talk through a Romania trip.

Wasteels (Map p934; ☎ 317 0370; www.wasteelstravel.ro; Piaţa Gară de Nord 1; ☎ 8am–7pm Mon–Fri, 8am–2pm Sat) Located at the train station, Wasteels can help with train reservations and sometimes get you a good taxi.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Bucharest's stray dogs number 100,000 and, on rare occasion, bite. If bitten, go to a hospital for anti-rabies injections within 36 hours.

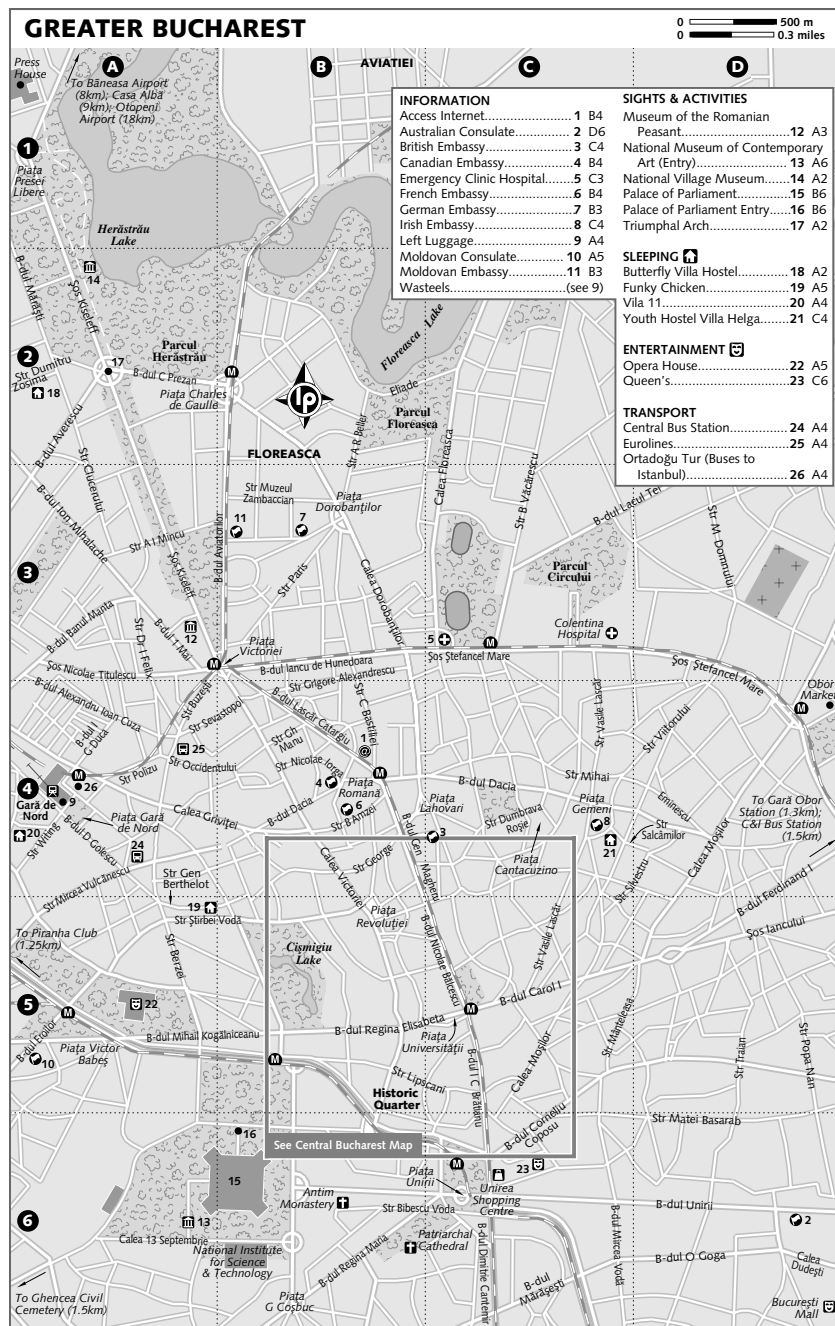
Taxi drivers sometimes charge extortionately high prices. Worst are those outside Gară de Nord. Avoid using these (we've heard of travellers paying US\$150 for a US\$5 ride!).

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Piaţa Unirii

The urban wasteland that is **B-dul Unirii** (Map p934) was intended as the Champs Élysées-style axis for the criminal civic project that saw Ceauşescu destroy an entire suburb to build the parliament and **Piaţa Unirii** (Map p934).

B-dul Unirii leads to Bucharest's (indeed Romania's) infamous star attraction, the **Palace of Parliament** (Map p934; ☎ 311 3611; B-dul Naşionile Unite; adult/student €6/3; ☎ 10am–4pm), the big mama of monstrous buildings – only the US Pentagon is larger. Conceived at the height of Ceauşescu's communist fervour, it remains 10% unfinished. Guided 45-minute tours show off the glory, ending with the balcony facing B-dul Unirii. Enter from the north side. Around the other side (access from southwest) is the superb **National Museum of Contemporary Art** (Muzeul Naşionale de Artă Contemporană; Map p934; ☎ 318 9137; www.mnac.ro; Calea 13 Septembrie; adult/student €1.50/free; ☎ 10am–6pm Wed–Sun), with rotating edgy modern-art exhibits (and a roof-deck bar).



Historic Centre

Just northwest of Piața Unirii you can see what Ceaușescu ruined in Bucharest's humble historic heart. The busted-up **Curtea Veche** (Old Princely Court; Map p936; Str Franceza 21-23; admission €0.60; ☎ 10am-5pm) dates from the 15th century. Nearby is **Hanul lui Manuc** (Map p936) – an active hotel and one-time shelter for merchants.

Just northwest is the **National History Museum** (Map p936; ☎ 311 3356; Calea Victoriei 12; adult/student €0.90/0.45; ☎ 9am-5pm), with a treasury and dismantled replica of the 2nd-century Roman Trajan's Column, showing the Romans conquering Dacians in present-day Romania.

A block east, the **Stavropoleos Church** (Map p936; Str Stavropoleos), on a street meaning 'town of the cross', dates from 1724 and is Bucharest's nicest church.

Ateneul Român

The scene of Ceaușescu's infamous last speech was on the balcony of the former **Central Committee of the Communist Party building** (Map p936), a few blocks north of the historic centre via Calea Victoriei. On 21 December 1989 crowds cried 'down with Ceaușescu' as the leader tried vainly to make his last speech.

Across the square to the northwest is the massive Royal Palace (a royal residence from 1834) and now home to the well worthwhile **National Art Museum** (Muzeul Național de Artă; Map p936; ☎ 313 3030; <http://art.museum.ro>; Calea Victoriei 49-53; combo ticket adult/student €3.60/1.80, Romanian & European collections €2.40/1.20, 1st Wed of month free; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Sun), a sprawling three-part collection of Romanian art, European art (Rembrandt, Rodin) and pieces from the Romanian treasury.

Just east is the grand domed **Ateneul Român** (Romanian Athenaeum; Map p936; ☎ 315 6875), which hosts prestigious concerts. Built in 1888, George Enescu made his debut here in 1898.

Just west is the local-loved **Çismigiu Garden** (Map p936).

North Bucharest

Bucharest's most luxurious villas and parks hug the grand avenue **Șoseaua Kiseleff** (Map p934), which begins at **Piața Victoriei** (Map p934; M Piața Victoriei).

About 200m north, the priceless **Museum of the Romanian Peasant** (Muzeul Țăranului Român; Map p934; ☎ 212 9661; Șos Kiseleff 3; adult/student €1.80/0.60; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) shows off Romania's rural glory with cute hand-made signs; one room

GETTING INTO TOWN

From Henri Coanda international airport catch bus 783 outside the main terminal (€1 from any RATB bus-ticket booth), which takes you to Piața Unirii in 40 minutes.

From the train station, Gară de Nord, take the metro to the city centre. Bus 133 will take you just north of the city centre to Piața Romană; bus 85 goes to Piața Universității.

is devoted to grandmas. There's a gift shop at the back.

About 1km north is the **Triumphal Arch** (Arcul de Triumf; Map p934), based on Paris' namesake monument, devoted to WWI and the reunification of Romania in 1918 (built 1935-36).

Pathways just east lead to the lovely **Parcul Herăstrău** (Herăstrău Park; Map p934), which hugs the chain of lakes that stripe northern Bucharest.

On the park's west side, the **National Village Museum** (Muzeul Național al Satului; Map p934; ☎ 317 9110; Șos Kiseleff 28-30; adult/student €1.50/0.60; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue-Sun, 9am-4pm Mon May-Sep, 9am-5pm Tue-Fri, 9am-4pm Mon Oct-Apr), a terrific open-air collection of several dozen homesteads and churches relocated from rural Romania.

SLEEPING Hostels

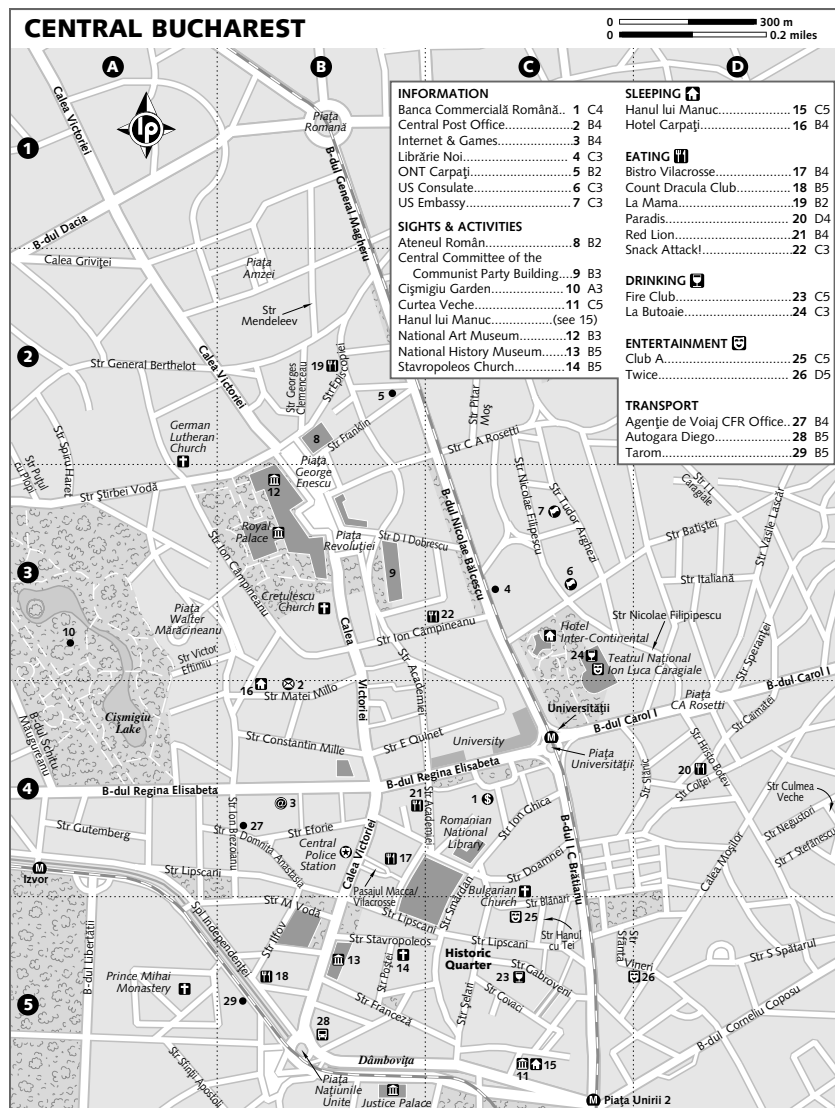
Funky Chicken (Map p934; ☎ 312 1425; funkychickenhostel@hotmail.com; Str Gen Berthelot 63; dm €8) In a historic home on a shady street, this central hostel has three dorm rooms that, in all, fit 18. No breakfast.

Butterfly Villa Hostel (Map p934; ☎ 0747 032 644; www.villa-butterfly.com; Str Dumitru Zosima 82; dm/s/d €9/14/26; ☎ ☎) By far Bucharest's best hostel, run by a German/Romanian couple, it makes up for its distant location with free laundry, a roof terrace, courtyard and all-day breakfasts. Bus 282 leaves from the train station, and bus 300 from Piața Romana.

Youth Hostel Villa Helga (Map p934; ☎ 610 2214; www.rotravel.com/hotels/helga; Str Salcâmilor 2; dm/s/d €12/16/28; ☎ ☎) A converted old villa east of the city centre, this hostel has nice, clean rooms, with a new kitchen for guests to use, two private rooms and patio seats.

Guesthouses & Hotels

Vila 11 (Map p934; ☎ 0722 495 900; vila11bb@hotmail.com; Str Institutul Medico Militar 11; dm/s/d €10/18/28) Run by a Canadian family, this homy *pensiuine* is near



the train station. Call ahead, as sometimes no one's around.

Hotel Carpați (Map p936; ☎ 315 0140; carpati@compac.ro; Str Matei Millo 16; d €55-68, s/d with shared bathroom €26/42) For location and price, nothing beats this 40-room, recently renovated hotel. Some rooms are tight, but breakfast is served in the ritzy parlour.

Hanul lui Manuc (Manuc's Inn; ☎ 313 1415; hmanuc@mc.ro; Str Franceză 62-64; s/d €36/60) Originally an old merchants' inn, this (now dated) hotel is one of the city's oldest buildings. Hanul lui Manuc has an equally colourful guest list from its past, including among others prostitutes, criminals and Lonely Planet authors.

EATING

Snack Attack! (Map p936; ☎ 312 7664; Str Ion Câmpineau 10; sandwiches €1.50; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat) Fresh and cheap takeaway panini and salads (including hummus and tabbouleh with tortillas).

Paradis (Map p936; ☎ 315 2601; Str Hristo Botev 10; dishes €1.80; ☎ 8am-10.30pm) Brilliant-value buffet lunch of Lebanese stews (mostly vegetarian).

Red Lion (Map p936; ☎ 315 1526; Str Academiei 1a; pizza €2.70-5.10; ☎ 9am-midnight Mon-Fri, 3pm-midnight Sat & Sun) Cheap beer and pizza in popular student hang-out.

Bistro Vilacrosse (Map p936; ☎ 315 4562; Pasajul Macca/Vilacrosse; mains €3.30-8.10; ☎ lunch & dinner) Framed sepia tone prints of Bucharest's most Parisian buildings keeps the feel French. The food's good, including a wine-splattered Transylvania pork *filet* and a few vegetarian options.

La Mama (Map p936; ☎ 312 9797; Str Episcopiei 9; mains €3-5; ☎ 10am-2am Sun-Thu, 10am-4am Fri & Sat) This converted villa, with a sprawling covered deck that's filled all hours, serves tasty, meat-heavy options, like a tasty roasted pork neck (13 lei).

Count Dracula Club (Map p936; ☎ 312 1353; www.count-dracula.ro; Splaiul Independenței 8a; meal €20; ☎ lunch & dinner) Sometimes you have to succumb to things like this: a dark home with walls dripping 'blood' and spookily themed. Plus, Drac himself shows up 'for a show' at 9.30pm Tuesday and Friday.

DRINKING

Bucharest's budding bar scene is liveliest in the Str Lipscani area. Piața Universității is busy with revellers on the weekend, and hosts free outdoor pop concerts in summer.

Fire Club (Map p936; ☎ 0722 390 946; Str Gabroveni 12) Big red-brick room with groups of students crouching on stools around small tables. Rock and punk shows are staged in the basement.

La Butoaie (Map p936; B-dul Nicolae Bălcescu 2) Huge with uni students, this open-deck bar on the 5th floor of the Ion Luca Caragiale National Theatre fits hundreds.

Piranha Club (☎ 315 9129; www.clubpiranha.ro; Spl Independenței 313; ☎ 10am-late) About 2.5km west of the city centre, this student-dorm area teems with drinking/eating life on either side of the Dâmbovița River. This jungle lodge-type place has piranhas in aquariums, lowly lit gazebos decked out like country homes and pretty good food. It's south of the river, 200m west of the Grozăvești metro station.

ENTERTAINMENT

Șapte Seri (Seven Evenings; www.sapteseri.ro) and *24-Fun* are free, weekly entertainment listings magazines (in Romanian only).

Clubs

Club A (Map p936; ☎ 315 6853; Str Blănari 14) Classic club carries the indie pop/rock banner.

Twice (Map p936; ☎ 313 5593; Str Sfânta Vineri 4, Sect 3; ☎ 9pm-5am) Hip-to-hip youth dancing, DJs and two rooms.

Gay & Lesbian Venues

Accept (www.accept-romania.ro) is a gay-, lesbian- and transgender-rights Romanian group that organises GayFest (late May/early June). The main gay venue is **Queen's** (Map p934; ☎ 0722 988 541; Str Iuliu Barac 13; ☎ noon-3am).

Opera & Classical Music

For information on seeing the philharmonic at the Ateneul Român (Romanian Athenaeum; see p935).

Opera House (Opera Română; Map p934; ☎ 313 1857; B-dul Mihail Kogălniceanu 70) Tickets cost €1 to €4.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

International flights use the **Henri Coanda international airport** (formerly Otopeni; code OTP; ☎ 201 4788; Șos București-Ploiești), 18km north of Bucharest.

Arrivals and departures use marked side-by-side terminals (arrivals is to the north). **Information desks** (☎ 204 1220; www.otp-airport.ro; ☎ 24hr) are in both terminals.

Romania's national airline is **Tarom** (Transporturile Aeriene Române; code RO; www.tarom.ro) Airport (☎ 201 400); Central Bucharest (Map p936; ☎ 337 0400; Spl Independenței 17; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat). **Air Moldova** (code 9U; ☎ 312 1258; www.airmoldova.md) also serves Henri Coanda international airport.

Băneasa airport (code BBU; ☎ 232 0020; Șos București-Ploiești 40), 8km north of the city centre, is used for some internal and charter flights.

Bus

Bucharest's bus system dots the metropolis; changing companies and departure points make travelling by train an appealing option. The most popular routes are the maxitaxis to Brașov (€5.10, 2½ hours), which stop in Sinaia, Bușteni and Predeal on the way; **C&I** (☎ 256 8039; Str Ritmului 35) runs these from its 'station' 3.25km east of Piața Romana – it's four blocks north of

metro station Piaţa Iancului. Buses 69 and 85 go there from Gară de Nord. Some continue on to Sighişoara (€8.10, five hours).

The biggest name in international buses is **Eurolines** (Map p934; ☎ 316 3661; www.eurolines.ro; Str Buzzeşti 44; ☎ 24hr), which links many Western European destinations with Bucharest.

Maxitaxi service leaves three times daily from roadside **Autogara Diego** (Map p936; ☎ 311 1283; Splaiul Independenţei 2K) for Ruse, Bulgaria (€12 one way, three to four hours).

The Turkey-bound have several options to Ýstanbul (€36, 12 hours) around Gara de Nord, including **Ortadoĝu Tur** (Map p934; ☎ 318 7538; Str Gară de Nord 6-8).

Every 45 minutes or so, maxi taxis head for Costanţa (€9) from the so-called **Central Bus Station** (Autogara Gară de Nord; map p934), about 350m east of the train station.

Car

Major car-hire agencies can be found at the Henri Coanda international airport arrivals hall. Cheapest is **C&V** (☎ 201 4611, 0788 998 877; www.dvtouring.ro), which offers Dacia Solenzas for €27 per day if you hire for over a week.

Train

The central train station is **Gară de Nord** (Map p934; ☎ 223 2060; Piaţa Gară de Nord 1). Call ☎ 9521 or ☎ 9522 for telephone reservations.

For all advance tickets (over 24 hours before departure), go to **Agentie de Voiaj CFR office** (Map p936; ☎ 313 2643; www.cfr.ro; Str Domnita Anastasia 10-14; ☎ 7.30am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1.30pm Sat). The Wasteels agency located at Gară de Nord (see p933) can help.

Check the latest schedules on **CFR** (www.cfr.ro), or the reliable **Die Bahn** (www.bahn.de, in German).

Following are sample direct daily services:

Destination	Price	Duration	Daily Departures
Braşov	€7.60	2½hr	hourly
Cluj-Napoca	€11-16	7½hr	six
Sighişoara	€8-12	4½hr	nine
Timişoara	€22.50	8hr	eight

Daily international service includes trains to Belgrade (12 hours), Budapest (13 to 15 hours), Ýstanbul (19 hours) and Sofia (€18.40, 11 hours).

GETTING AROUND

For buses, trams and trolleybuses buy tickets (€0.35) at any RATB street kiosk, marked 'casa de bilete' or simply 'bilete'. Punch your ticket onboard. Public transport runs roughly from 5am to 11pm Monday to Saturday (less so Sunday).

Bucharest's metro (two-ride/10-ride tickets €0.60/1.90) run frequently on four lines from 5.30am to 11.30pm.

The taxis outside Gara de Nord are not recommended. Call for a reputable company, such as **Cobalcescu** (☎ 9451), **CrisTaxi** (☎ 9461) and **Taxi Sprint** (☎ 9495).

TRANSYLVANIA

Probably no place in Eastern Europe inspires more imagination and awe than Transylvania, where you really do find Gothic castles that look like fanged goons would climb down walls and wing-flap over moats to villages where they pick-and-choose their daily meal of human flesh. Beyond the myths, Transylvania is flat-out gorgeous. Separated from Wallachia to the south by a curling stripe of giant Carpathian mountains – the so-called Transylvania Alps – here's what travel's all about: mountain hikes and skiing, valleys of Saxon towns (like the busy hub Braşov) and fortified churches dating from the Middle Ages, and (yes) a Dracula site or two.

SINAIA

☎ 0244 / pop 14,240

A Carpathian resort that attracted kings and queens, and now – being on the Bucharest-Braşov highway – hordes of outdoors-oriented travellers, Sinaia is set on fir-clad towering Bucegi mountains with ski runs and hiking trails for year-round fun. Sinaia can be quiet despite all the hub-bub, but King Carol I's Peleş Castle reckons to out-majestify Bran's for day-trippers looking for jaw-dropping excess.

Orientation

From the train station climb up the stairway across the street to busy B-dul Carol I, where maxitaxis between Bucharest and Braşov stop. From the train station, the cable car is located to the left and the palace uphill to the right.

Information

You'll find several banks and the post office along B-dul Carol I.

Dracula's Land (☎ 311 441; B-dul Carol I 14; ☎ 9am-5pm or 6pm) Signed simply 'Tourist Office', with chummy blokes that find villa rooms or arrange guides.

Eco Laundry (☎ 0788 660 788; per load €2.40; B-dul Carol I 31; ☎ 7am-11pm) Drop-off laundry behind the big grey building.

Internet Cafe (Str Aosta 3; per hr €0.90; ☎ 9am-11pm) Sign points to side of building.

Salvamont (☎ 313 131; Primărie, B-dul Carol I) Also at Cota 2000 at top of chairlift; 24-hour mountain-rescue service.

Sinaia Tourism Information Centre (☎ 315 656; CIPT_Sinaia@yahoo.com; B-dul Carol I 47; ☎ 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 'optional' Sat) Offers brochures and maps.

Sights

Full of pomp and brimming with the confidence of a new Romanian monarchy, King Carol I's magnificent **Peleş Castle** (☎ 310 205; ☎ 11am-5pm Wed, 9am-5pm Thu-Sun), a 20-minute walk up from the town centre, is really a palace, with its fairy-tale turrets rising above acres of green meadows and grand reception halls fashioned in Moorish, Florentine and French styles. Compulsory tours cost €3.60/1.50 per adult/child.

About 100m uphill is Queen Marie's less-fussy home, the **Pelişor Palace** (☎ 310 918; ☎ 11am-5pm Wed, 9am-5pm Thu-Sun), with compulsory tours for €2/0.65 per adult/child.

Sleeping

Travel agencies can help with finding rooms in *pensiunes* and villas in the area.

Hotel Furnica (☎ 311 151; Str Furnica 50; s €19, d €30-38) Built by the Peleş architects, the century-old, faux-Jacobian 26-room Furnica (250m west of Peleş) gives you royal surrounds for next to nothing.

BUCEGI MOUNTAINS

Sinaia and Buşteni, 5km north, are the principal gateways to this stunning (and popular) mountain range of dizzying skiing, mountain bike and hiking fun on a plateau situated high up on the border of Transylvania and Wallachia. Hikes are well marked – some make for great biking. There are cabanas up here, but most visitors go for a day trip.

From Sinaia, the 30-person **cable-car station** (☎ 311 764, 311 872; to Cota 1400/2000 €3/5.70 one way, €5.40/10.80 return; ☎ 8.30am-4pm or 5pm Tue-Sun) leaves half-hourly with two station points marked by elevation, but lines stack for a couple of hours in summer.

Snow (☎ 311 198; www.snow_sinaia.ro; Str Cuza Voda 2a; ☎ 9am-6pm), near the cable car in Sinaia, hires skis and snowboards for €10.50 per day, bikes for €12.

Hotel Caraiman (☎ 313 551; palace@rdslink.ro; B-dul Carol I 4; s/d/apt €33/44/61) Of the faded-glory century-old hotels this 1881 red-and-white Caraiman is less royal ball and more rustic and laid-back.

Eating

There are a few fast-food stands and pizza places along B-dul Carol I.

Irish House (☎ 310 060; www.irishhouse.ro; B-dul Carol I 80; mains €2-6; ☎ 10am-midnight) Guinness is on tap (€1.65), ceilings are green and a few token Irish dishes are on the menu, otherwise this House is all Romanian.

Getting There & Away

Sinaia is on the Bucharest-Braşov rail line – 126km from the former and 45km from the latter – so jumping on a train to Bucharest (€4, 1½ hours) or Braşov (€4, one hour) is a cinch.

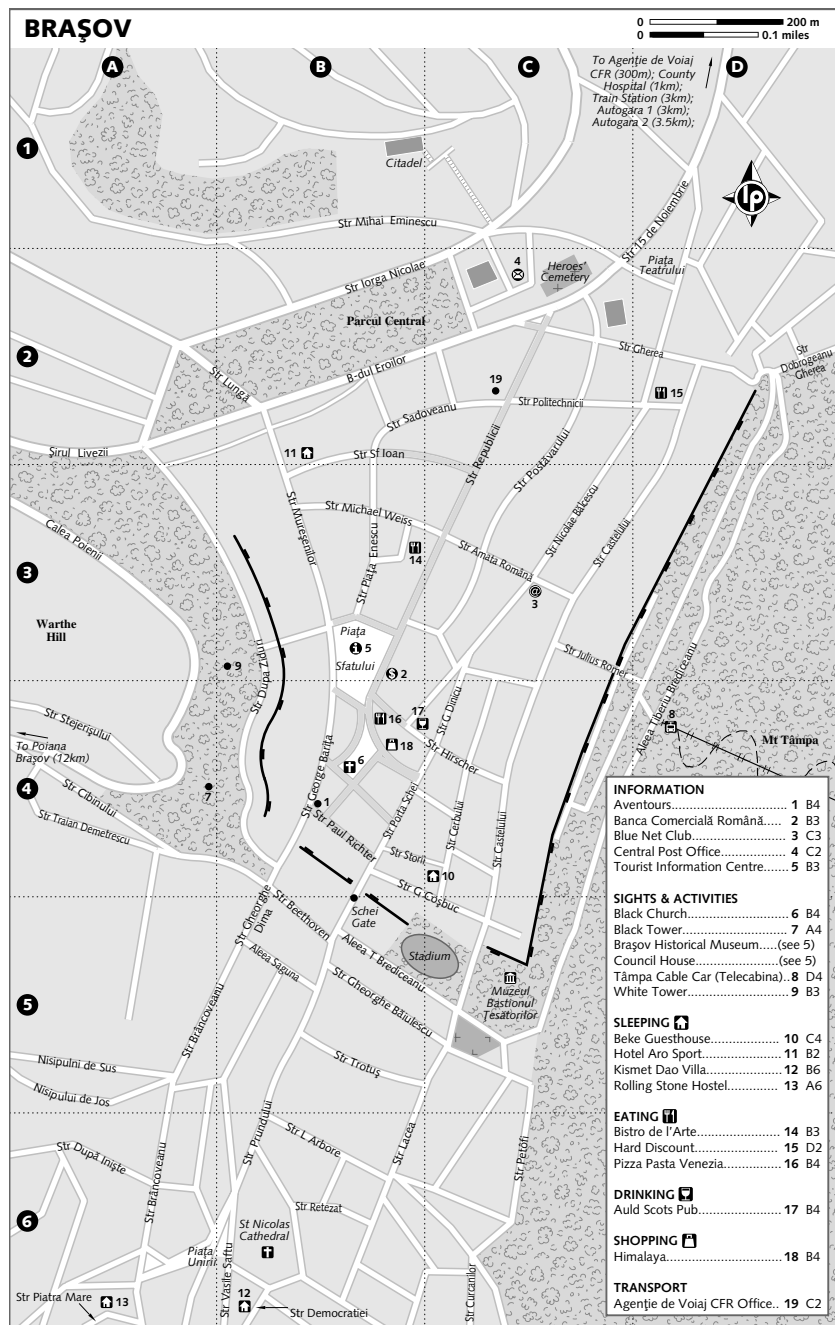
Buses and maxitaxis run every 45 minutes between roughly 7am and 10pm from the central bus stop on B-dul Carol I to Bucharest or Braşov.

BRAŞOV

Romania's most popular city – the Gothic-to-its-cobbled-core Braşov (called Kronstadt by its Saxon founders) – has a way of getting you to stay longer than you planned. Its lively streets and surprisingly unjaded locals (considering the tourism) add appeal to medieval walls, nearby mountains and castles.

Orientation

Several brick pedestrian lanes lead from central Piaţa Sfatului, including Str Republicii, which leads north to B-dul Eroilor and Parcul Central. B-dul Eroilor also links two other main thoroughfares, Str Mureşenilor to its west and Str Nicolae Bălcescu to its east.



The train station is 3km northeast of the city centre. Braşov has a few bus stations – Autogară 1, next to the train station, is the most active.

Information

You'll find numerous ATMs, banks and exchange offices on and around Str Republicii and B-dul Eroilor.

Aventours (☎ 472 718; www.discoveromania.ro; Str Paul Richter 1; ☎ 10am–3pm Mon–Fri) Great tailor-made tours (particularly mountain-based) and oodles of information on the area.

Banca Comercială Română (Piaţa Sfatului 14; ☎ 8.30am–5pm Mon–Fri, 8.30am–12.30pm Sat) Charges 1.5% (US\$5 minimum) to change travellers cheques.

Blue Net Club (☎ 0740 839 449; Str Amata Română; per hr €0.50; ☎ 24hr)

Central post office (☎ 411 609; Str Iorga Nicolae 1; ☎ 7am–8pm Mon–Fri, 8am–1pm Sat)

County Hospital (☎ 333 666; Calea Bucureşti 25–27; ☎ 24hr) Northwest of the city centre.

Tourist Information Centre (☎ 419 078; www.brasovcity.ro; Piaţa Sfatului 30; ☎ 9am–5pm) English-speaking staff can point you to tour services and track down hotel vacancies.

Sights

A good starting point for a walk is central **Piaţa Sfatului**, where prisoners were once tortured in the gold **Council House** (Casa Sfatului), which dates from 1420. The building also houses the good tourist information centre and unmemorable **Braşov Historical Museum** (☎ 472 350; adult/student €0.85/0.57 lei; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun summer, 9am–5pm Tue–Sun winter).

Peeking up from the south, the Gothic **Black Church** (Biserica Neagră; adult/child €1/0.50; ☎ 10am–5pm Mon–Sat, mass 10am Sun), built between 1384 and 1477, gained its name after a 1689 fire blackened its walls. Inside the church you can see apse statues moved from outside and 120 fabulous Turkish rugs. Organ recitals on the 4000-pipe instrument are sometimes held.

A couple of blocks east, cobble **Str Sforii** is one of Europe's narrowest 'streets'. Looming above on Mt Tâmpa is the 'Hollywood'-style Braşov sign; to reach it (and hiking trails), take the **Tâmpa cable car** (☎ 478 657; one way/return €0.90/1.80; ☎ 9.30am–5pm Tue–Sun).

Good vantage points of the city from the west side are at the **Black Tower** (Turnul Neagru) and **White Tower** (Turnul Alba) – both rather white actually – reached on a creek-side promenade alongside the city's original walls.

A side road leads to the promenade from about 200m south of the Black Church.

Sleeping

Kismet Dao Villa (☎ 514 296; www.kismetdao.ro; Str Democratiei 2B; dm €10–11, d €24) A little dormy, this six-room villa is a good budget choice, with video games on the TV and playful staff.

Rolling Stone Hostel (☎ 513 965, 0744 876 970; www.rollingstone.ro; Str Piatra Mare 2A; dm/r from €10/28; ☎) The Stone is a nice hostel spot, with a small pool in the outside courtyard. It's pleasant for hanging out, but skip the (energetic) staff's pricey tours.

Hotel Aro Sport (☎ 478 800; Str Sfântu Ioan 3; s/d €11/16) Old boxy rooms, a sink in the corner, a shower down the hall. It's quite clean, though, and the price is right. No breakfast.

Beke Guesthouse (☎ 511 997; Str Cerbului 32; r incl likely jug of homemade wine €11–14) Run by a sweet Hungarian couple, the simple rooms have shared bathroom. No breakfast, no sign, no English.

Eating & Drinking

Hard Discount (Str Nicolae Bălcescu; ☎ 24hr) Fully stocked supermarket next to the fruit and vegetable market.

Pizza Pasta Venezia (☎ 470 511; Str Hirscher 2; pasta & pizza from €2.50; ☎ 11am–midnight or 1am) Wall-sized Venetian paintings and soft lighting – and cheaper prices – make this Italian restaurant stand out from its similar neighbours.

Bistro de l'Arte (☎ 0722 219 980; Str Piaţa Enescu 11; mains €2.50–4.50; ☎ 9am–1am Mon–Sat, noon–midnight Sun) In the bottom of a cosy 15th-century building, the Bistro serves great meals – sandwiches, fish filets, breakfasts.

Auld Scots Pub (☎ 470 183; Str Hirscher 10; ☎ 11am–2am) Kilts and Connery on the walls of this inviting Scottish bar can be forgiven because of the tasteful sitting areas and far better-than-average pub fare.

Shopping

Himalaya (☎ 477 855; www.himalaya.ro; Piaţa Sfatului 17; ☎ 10am–7pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2pm Sat) A great sports store, with ski and hiking boots, sleeping bags and rock-climbing gear. The staff double as guides.

Getting There & Away BUS

Braşov's most active bus 'station' is **Autogară 1** (☎ 427 267), a ramshackle lot next to the train station. Maxitaxis go every half-hour from

6am to 7.30pm (roughly) to Sighișoara (€3.25, 1½ hours) and Bucharest (€5.25, 2½ hours), stopping in Sinaia.

Autogară 2 (Bartolomeu; ☎ 426 332; Str Avram Iancu 114), 1km west of the train station, sends half-hourly buses from roughly 6.30am to 11.30pm to Râșnov (€0.45, 25 minutes) and Bran (€0.75, 40 minutes). All buses to Brașov stop each way at Râșnov. Take bus 12 to reach the station.

TRAIN

Advance tickets are sold at the **Agenție de Voiaj CFR office** (☎ 477 015; Str 15 de Noiembrie 43; ☎ 8am-7.30pm Mon-Fri), north of the city centre. Hourly trains go daily to Bucharest (€7.50, 2½ hours), a dozen daily to Sighișoara (€6.50, 2½ hours) and five daily to Cluj-Napoca (€11.70, six hours). International links include three daily trains to Budapest (€40/70 seat/sleeper, 14 hours).

The train station has left-luggage facilities.

Getting Around

Bus 4 reaches the city centre from the train station (pre-buy ticket). From the city centre, hail a bus on the corner of Str Nicolae Bălcescu and Str Gherea.

BRAN & RÂȘNOV

☎ 0268 / pop 5300

It isn't really Dracula's castle – oh, he may have defecated here once in the 1400s – but it's hard to skip **Bran Castle** (adult/child €1.60/0.50; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Tue-Sun), a real-live, mountain-cradled, spooky castle (that well and truly plugs its Dracula connection). Tour groups and Dracula T-shirts take away a little from the experience.

Visitors to Bran can easily make a dual-castle day trip from Brașov by stopping in Râșnov to visit the mountain-top ruins of the interesting 13th-century **Râșnov Fortress** (Cetatea Râșnov; ☎ 230 255; adult/child €2.70/1.50; ☎ 9am-8pm summer, 9am-6pm winter).

Most visitors don't stay overnight in either town. **Cabana Bran Castel**, just 600m from the castle, was closed for renovation at the time of writing but may reopen. In Râșnov, **Casa Contelui** (☎ 0723 005 378; www.casacontelui.ro; Str Bălcescu 16; r with/without bathroom €28/23) is a lovely farmhouse with only six rooms – to get there follow the green signs.

See Brașov (p941) for information on transport.

SIGHIȘOARA

☎ 0265 / pop 32,300

Dreamy and medieval, Sighișoara's wee citadel saw Dracula, or at least Vlad Țepeș, make his first steps. These days half-a-millennium-old townhouses of bright colours overlook hilly cobbled streets, with church bells going dang in the early hours. It's cute – very cute – and sees bus-tour crowds, but it's well worth a day trip.

Orientation & Information

The bus and train stations are about a 15-minute walk north of the (visible) citadel.

Banca Transilvania, between Piața Cetății and Muzeulul, has a 24-hour ATM in the citadel.

Café International & Family Centre (☎ 777 844; Piața Cetății 8; per hr €0.60; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat summer) Non-profit agency doubles as a tourist office; also runs year-round internet café.

Post office (Str 1 Decembrie 1918, 17; ☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Fri) In a funny yellow-panelled building.

Steaua Agenție de Turism (☎ 772 499; Str 1 Decembrie 1918, 10; ☎ 9.30am-4pm Mon-Fri) Can find private accommodation (per person per night €10)

Sights

Most of Sighișoara's sights are clustered in the compact Old Town – the delightful medieval **citadel** – perched on a hillock and fortified with a 14th-century wall. Entering the citadel, which is on the Unesco World Heritage list, you pass under the massive **clock tower** (Turnul cu Ceas), which dates from 1280. Inside is the great little **History Museum** (☎ 771 108; Piața Muzeului 1; adult/child €1.50/1.10; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon, 9am-6.30pm Tue-Fri, 9am-4.30pm Sat & Sun mid May–mid Sep, 9am-3.30pm Tue-Fri, 10am-3.30pm Sat & Sun mid Sep–mid May), with small rooms that tell Sigh's tale and are off the steps that wind up to the 7th-floor look-out.

A combo ticket (€2.15) includes entrance to the small, dark **Torture Room Museum** (admission €0.60; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon, 9am-6.30pm Tue-Fri, 9am-4.30pm Sat & Sun mid May–mid Sep, 9am-3.30pm Tue-Fri, 10am-3.30pm Sat & Sun mid Sep–mid May), under the clock tower, and the small **collection of medieval arms** (adult/student €0.90/0.60; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon, 9am-6.30pm Tue-Fri, 9am-4.30pm Sat & Sun mid May–mid Sep, 9am-3.30pm Tue-Fri, 10am-3.30pm Sat & Sun mid Sep–mid May), towards Piața Cetății.

The renovated **Casa Dracula** (now a restaurant; see opposite) is where Vlad Țepeș reputedly lived until the age of four.

Sleeping

Gia Hostel (☎ 772 486; giahouse@myx.net; Str Libertății 41; dm/€7, r from €18-23; ☎) It backs onto the train tracks and the rooms are a bit of a rush job, but the nine-room hostel has lots of good services including bike hire and car hire (€35 per day).

Burg Hostel (☎ 778 489; www.ibz.ro; Str Bastionului 4-6; dm/s/d €7.25/11.50/17.25) In the citadel, this clean, slightly sterile, hostel has a popular basement lounge (internet access is slow). Breakfast is €2.80.

Nathan's Villa (☎ 772 546; www.nathansvilla.com; Str Libertății 8; dm/d €8/20) This traditionally popular choice (with free laundry and a bar) stays open from April to November only. It's 200m west of the train station.

ourpick **Bed & Breakfast Coula** (☎ 777 907; Str Tâmplariilor 40; €15) Those looking for a homy budget base in the citadel will enjoy this B&B, an unsigned 400-year-old home run by an English-speaking family that can help arrange Saxon church trips and has bikes for hire. There are six rooms (only one's available in winter).

Eating

Casa Dracula (☎ 771 596; Str Cositorarilor 5; mains €4.50-8.50; ☎ 10am-midnight) This three-room candlelit restaurant is too tempting to pass by – juicy meats in Dracula's first home. It's OK to come for a red wine only.

Getting There & Away

About a dozen daily trains connect Sighișoara with Brașov (€3 to €8, two hours), nine of which go on to Bucharest (€8 to €12, 4½ hours). Five daily trains go to Cluj-Napoca (€7.40 to €10, 3½ hours). Buy tickets at the **train station** (☎ 771 886) or at the central **Agenție de Voiaj CFR** (☎ 771 820; Str Goga 6A; ☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Fri).

Next to the train station, the **bus station** (☎ 771 260; Str Libertății) sends buses to Budapest (€20, eight hours, two weekly). Maxitaxis pass by every two hours for Brașov.

CLUJ-NAPOCA

☎ 0264 / pop 317,950

Just a letter away from 'club', Cluj-Napoca isn't as pretty or mountainous as the Saxon towns to the south, but it earns much of its nationwide fame and rep for its dozens of cavernous, unsnooty discos. Outside the clubs, though, Cluj (everyone calls it just 'Cluj')

is one of Romania's most welcoming and energised cities.

Orientation & Information

The *gară* (train station) is 1.5km north of the central Piața Unirii (bordered on the north by Str Regele Ferdinand, on the south by B-dul Eroilor), reached by tram 101 down Str Horea. Three blocks east of Piața Unirii is Piața Avram Iancu.

Access (☎ 420 476; www.access.ro; 3rd fl, Str Tebei 21; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon & Thu, 2-8pm Tue-Wed, 2-6pm Fri) Offers Romanian-language courses.

Banca Comercială Română (Str Gheorghe Barițiu 10-12; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-12.30pm Sat) Changes travellers cheques.

Blade Net (Str Luliu Maniu 17; per hr €0.60; ☎ 7am-midnight) Two blocks east of Piața Unirii.

Central post office (Str Regele Ferdinand 33; ☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat)

Gaudeamus (☎ 439 281; Str Luliu Maniu 3; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 11am-2pm Sat) Bookshop a half-block east of Piața Unirii.

Pan Travel (☎ 420 516; www.pantravel.ro; Str Grozavescu 13; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) This top-notch outfit can book accommodation, organise car hire (from €30 per day), provide guides and arrange Maramureș trips. It's best to contact ahead of time.

Perado Laundry (Str Calera Turzeii 13; per load €4.50; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat) Wash-fold-and-dry service, 500m south of of Piața Avram Iancu.

Sights

The vast 14th-century **St Michael's Church** dominates Piața Unirii. The neo-Gothic tower (1859) topping the Gothic hall church creates a great landmark. Outside is a huge equestrian statue (1902) of the famous Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus (r 1458–90), who was born in the city.

Facing Piața Unirii is the interesting **National Art Museum** (☎ 496 952; Piața Unirii 30; adult/child €1.50/0.75; ☎ noon-7pm Wed-Sun Jun-Oct, 11am-6pm Wed-Sun Nov-May), housed inside the baroque Banffy Palace (1791).

The small, surprisingly fun, three-room **Pharmaceutical Museum** (☎ 597 567; Str Regele Ferdinand 1; adult/child €0.60/0.30; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Sat) features grounded mummy dust, 18th-century aphrodisiacs and medieval alchemist symbols.

In the 'student ghetto' west of the city centre, inside the wooded **Biology and Geology Faculty**, you'll find the surprisingly rewarding **Museum of Zoology** (☎ 595 739; Str Clinicilor 5-7; adult/student €0.45/0.23; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat &

Sun), an L-shaped lab that looks like it hasn't changed in five decades. From Str Clinicilor, veer left through the brick gate.

Just south, head past fast-food joints up Str Bogdan P Hașdeu to Str Pasteur to reach the fragrant 1930 **Alexandru Borza Botanic Gardens** (☎ 592 152; Str Republicii 42; adult/student €1.20/0.60; ☎ 9am-6pm).

For an overall view of Cluj-Napoca, climb up the **cetatea** (citadel; 1715), northwest of the city centre.

Sleeping

Camping Făget (☎ 596 234; tent sites €2.25, 2-person hut €15) This hilltop collection of OK cabanas and tent spots is 7km south of the city centre. Take bus 35 to the end of the line, where it's a 2km marked hike.

Retro Hostel (☎ 450 452; www.retro.ro; Str Potaissa 13; dm from €10, r per person €15; ☎) On a quiet lane amid 16th-century citadel wall fragments, the superbly run Retro (southwest of Piața Unirii) is one of Romania's best hostels. Staff offer good-value day trips. Breakfast is €2.50.

Hotel Junior (☎ 432 028; www.pensiune-junior.ro; Str Cări Ferate 12; s/d €23/27) Hot-pink building and simple rooms, on a dusty, unappealing street 250m east of the train station. No breakfast.

Vila 69 (☎ 591 592; vila69@email.ro; Str Hașden 69; s/d €28.50/37; ☎) Seventeen rather plain, modern rooms in a happy little place. Take Str Clinicilor, turn right on Str Piezișă and it's 200m up the street.

Eating

There are heaps of good pizza, hamburger and kebab options on Piața Lucian Blaga and Str Napoca, just west of Piața Unirii.

Speed/Alcatraz (Str Napoca 4-6; pizza 11 lei, sandwiches €1.25-2; ☎ 24hr) Busy fast-food eatery with good seating options, including some in the 'Al Capone' jail cages.

For fresh produce, stroll through the central market, northwest of Piața Unirii on Piața Mihai Viteazul, which also houses **Mega Supermarket** (☎ 7am-9pm Mon-Fri, 8am-8pm Sat, 8am-7pm Sun).

Drinking

Diesel Bar (☎ 493 043; Piața Unirii 17) Walk past the hipsters in the all-glass entry and go downstairs into a towering cavernous room, with red-spotlit tables.

Music Pub (☎ 432 517; Str Horea 5; ☎ 9am-3am Mon-Fri, 11am-3am Sat, 5pm-3am Sun) A little Wild West

up the front, the sprawling pub is a great, more casual, place for indie-pop flirts.

The 'student ghetto', southwest of the city centre (on/off Str Piezișă, reached by Str Clinicilor about 300m from Piața Lucian Blaga), teams with lively open-air bars, including **La Salas** (Str Piezișă; ☎ 10am-2am or 3am).

Getting There & Away

AIR

Tarom flies daily to Bucharest (one way/return from €103/153), and often to Germany, Italy and Austria. Tickets can be bought at the airport (8km east of the city, reached by bus 8) or at the **Tarom city office** (☎ 432 669; Piața Mihai Viteazul 11; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat).

BUS

At the time of research daily bus service from **Autogară 2** (Autogară Beta; ☎ 455 249), 350m northwest of the train station (take the overpass), included two buses to Brașov (€8), four to Bucharest (€9.25) and five to Budapest (€17). Note: there is no Autogară 1.

CAR

Cluj has one of the best car-hire rates in the country. **Pan Travel** (☎ 420 516; www.pantravel.ro; Str Grozavescu 13; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) offers Dacias for €30 per day.

TRAIN

The **Agentie de Voiaj CFR** (☎ 432 001; Piața Mihai Viteazul 20; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri) sells domestic and international train tickets in advance. Sample fares for *accelerat* trains include Brașov (€8.60, four hours), Bucharest (€11, 7½ hours), Budapest (€34.50, five hours) and Timișoara (€8.60, seven hours).

Note there's no left-luggage service at the train station.

CRIȘANA & BANAT

The areas of Crișana (north of the Mureș River) and Banat (to the south) have a spirited independence found nowhere else in Romania. It was in the city of Timișoara that the seeds of the 1989 revolution were sown, a fact that has left citizens with a scarcely concealed perma-grin.

Crișana and Banat once merged imperceptibly into Yugoslavia's Vojvodina and Hungary's Great Plain.

ORADEA

☎ 0259 / pop 209,571

Oradea lies a few kilometres east of the Hungarian border in the centre of the Crișana region, at the edge of the Apuseni Mountains.

Of all the cities of the Austro-Hungarian Empire – Vienna notwithstanding – Oradea best retains its 19th-century Hapsburg style.

Orientation

The train station is 2km north of the city centre; trams 1 and 4 run south from Piața București (just outside the train station) to Piața Unirii, Oradea's main square. Tram 4 also stops at the northern end of Str Republicii, a five-minute walk south to the city centre.

The main square north of the river is Piața Republicii (also called Piața Regele Ferdinand I).

Information

There's no official tourist office.

Game Star Internet Café (Str Mihai Eminescu 4; per hr €0.40; ☎ 24hr)

HVB Bank (☎ 406 700; Piața Unirii 24; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri)

Panda Tours (☎ 477 222; Str Iosif Vulcan 6; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Has English-speaking staff.

Pharmacy (☎ 418 242; cnr Str Libertății & Piața Ferdinand; ☎ 24hr)

Post Office (☎ 136 420; Str Roman Ciorgariu 12; ☎ 7am-7.30pm Mon-Fri)

Telephone Office (☎ 418 242; cnr Str Libertății & Piața Ferdinand; ☎ 8am-8pm) Inside the post office.

Sights

Oradea's most imposing sights are on its two central squares, Piața Unirii and Piața Republicii.

In the centre of Piața Unirii stands a **statue of Mihai Viteazul** (r 1593–1601), the prince of Wallachia, who is said to have resided in Oradea in 1600. West of the statue, overlooking the River Crișul Repede, is the **Vulturul Negru** (Black Vulture; 1908) hotel and covered arcade.

The magnificent neoclassical **Teatrul de Stat** (State Theatre; Piața Republicii), designed by Viennese architects Fellner and Hellmer in 1900, dominates Piața Republicii.

Oradea's other worthy buildings are in a park one block southwest of the train station. Across the road is **Canon's Corridor**, a series of archways that date back to the 18th century.

The **Catholic cathedral** (1780) is the largest in Romania.

The **Episcopal Palace** (1770), with 100 frescoed rooms and 365 windows, was modelled after Belvedere Palace in Vienna. Now it's the **Muzeul Țării Crișului** (Museum of the Land of the Criș Rivers; ☎ 412 725; B-dul Dacia 1-3; admission €0.60; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun).

Sleeping

Strandul cu Voluti (cabins/tent sites per person €14.50/3; ☎ May-mid-Sep only) A camping ground in Băile 1 Mai, 9km southeast of Oradea.

Hotel Parc (☎ 411 699; Calea Republicii 5-7; s/d €14/23) Best of the budget bunch. Ignore the crumbling façade, as inside it's clean and gleaming white.

Pension Gobe (☎ 414 845; Str Dobrogeanu Gherea 26; s/d €30/40) This family owned *pensiune* has several charming rooms, a small restaurant and a bar.

Eating

Calea Republicii is lined with cheap and cheerful eateries and cafés. Oradeans enjoy an evening stroll and this is the street to do it in.

Restaurant Vegetarian Cris (☎ 441 593; George Enescu nr 30; mains €1.5; ☎ 9am-9pm Sun-Thu, 9am-4pm Fri) Romania's only vegetarian restaurant! Choose from a tantalisingly cheap menu featuring soups, stuffed peppers, minced pumpkin balls, lentils, celery schnitzel, mushroom haggis and soy, soy, soy!

Capitolium (☎ 420 551; Str Avram Iancu nr 8; mains €5; ☎ 8am-12am) Bask in dotting service and huge portions at this Romanian restaurant.

Entertainment

Tickets for performances at the **Filarmonica de Stat** (State Philharmonic; ☎ 430 853; Str Moscovei 5; tickets €2) can be purchased from its **ticket office** (☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri). The ticket office is inside the **Teatrul de Stat** (State Theatre; ☎ 130 885; Piața Ferdinand 4-6; tickets €3-12; ☎ 10-11am & 5-7pm).

Getting There & Away

Flights are available with **Tarom** (code ☎ 131 918; Piața Ferdinand 2; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) to Baia Mare, Bucharest and Satu Mare from **Oradea airport** (OMR; ☎ 416 082; Calea Aradului km6). Prices are US\$75/112 one way/return (plus taxes). The **Agentie de Voiaj CFR** (☎ 130 578; Str Republicii 2; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri) sells advance tickets.

A daily bus runs to Budapest (€17, 10 hours) from outside the train station. Maxitaxis run daily to Budapest, also from outside the train station (one way €20).

Daily fast trains from Oradea include three to Budapest (€28), two to Bucharest (€22), five to Băile Felix, three to Cluj-Napoca (€11), one to Brașov and three to Timișoara (€7).

TIMIȘOARA

☎ 0256 / pop 321,930

Tenacious Timișoara stunned the world as the birthplace of the 1989 revolution. Romania's fourth-largest city, it's known by residents as 'Primul Oraș Liber' (First Free Town). With a charming Mediterranean air and regal Habsburg buildings, it's a city that residents and tourists alike love.

Orientation

Confusingly, Gară Timișoara-Nord (the northern train station) is west of the city centre. Walk east along B-dul Republicii to the Opera House and Piața Victoriei. Further north is Piața Libertății. Piața Unirii, the Old Town square, is two blocks further north. Timișoara's bus station is beside the Idsefin Market, three blocks from the train station.

Information

Central post office (☎ 491 999; B-dul Revoluției 2; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat)

City Centre Travel Agency (☎ tourism 292 960, plane tickets 292 961; www.aerotravel.ro; B-dul Republicii nr 4; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri) A wondrously comprehensive, English-speaking agency.

Java Coffee House (☎ 432 495; Str Pacha 6; per hr €1; ☎ 24hr) Internet access inside the Java Coffee House.

Sensi Blu Pharmacy (☎ 406 153; Piața Victoriei 7; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm Sat & Sun)

Telephone office (B-dul Mihai Eminescu; ☎ 7am-9pm)
Volksbank (☎ 406 101; Str Piața Craiului 2) Cashes travellers cheques and arranges transfers.

Sights

The centre of the city is **Piața Victoriei**, a beautifully landscaped pedestrian mall lined with shops and cafés, with the **Teatrul Național și Opera Română** (National Theatre & Opera House; ☎ 201 284; Str Mărășești 2) at its head (see opposite).

Towering over the mall's southwestern end is the Romanian Orthodox **Metropolitan Cathedral** (1946). Next to the cathedral is **Central Park**, and just south of it the **Bega Canal** runs along tree-lined banks.

The 1989 revolution began on 15 December 1989 at the **Biserica Reformată Tökés** (Tökés Reformed Church; ☎ 492 992; Str Timotei Cipariu 1), where Father Lászlo Tökés spoke out against the dictator.

Piața Libertății and the **Primăria Veche** (Old Town Hall), built in 1734, lie to the north. **Piața Unirii** is Timișoara's most picturesque square, featuring a baroque **Roman Catholic cathedral** (1754) and the **Serbian Orthodox cathedral** (1754).

Sleeping & Eating

Camping International (☎ 208 925; campinginternational@yahoo.com; Aleea Pădurea Verde 6; tent sites €2.50, chalets with central heating s/d/lq €34/46/63) This excellent camping ground is nestled in the Green Wood forest on the opposite side of the city from the northern train station. The main entrance is on Calea Dorobanților. Travel by trolleybus 11 from the station to the end of the line. The bus stops less than 50m from the

camping ground. There is a mildly expensive restaurant here, too.

Hostel Timișoara (☎ 293 960; 'Baron' Bldg, Str Arieș 19; dm €9) Two kilometres from the city centre, take tram 8 from the northern train station to this simple hostel located on the top floor of a university building.

Hotel Cîna Banatul (☎ 491 903; B-dul Republicii 3-5; s/d €29/40) The best-value pad in Timișoara, with clean, ultramodern rooms and a good restaurant.

Java Coffee House (☎ 432 495; Str Pacha 6; ☎ 24hr) Marging caffeine with one hand, check email with the other.

Entertainment

Movies are screened in their original language at **Cinema Timis** (☎ 491 290; Piața Victoriei 7; tickets €2-3).

The **Teatrul Național și Opera Română** (National Theatre & Opera House; ☎ 201 284; Str Mărășești 2; tickets from €1.50) is highly regarded. Buy tickets in its **Agencia Teatrală** (☎ 499 908; ☎ 10am-1pm & 5-7pm Tue-Sun).

Classical concerts are held most evenings at the **Filharmonia de Stat Banatul** (State Philharmonic Theatre; ☎ 492 521; B-dul CD Loga 2; tickets from €1.50). Tickets can be bought at the box office inside the Filharmonia or from the Agenția Teatrală.

Getting There & Away

From Timișoara **Tarom** (☎ 490 150, 200 003; B-dul Revoluției 3-5; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 7am-1pm Sat) has four daily flights to Bucharest (US\$80 including tax).

Carpatair (☎ 300 900; www.carpatair.com) has service to nine Romanian cities and a growing list of international destinations. Strangely it doesn't have an office in its hub city, only out at the airport.

Maxitaxis run daily to Oradea, Arad and Brad from the **bus station** (autogară; ☎ 493 471; B-dul Maniu lului 54; ☎ 6am-8pm Mon-Fri).

International buses leave from the east bus station, outside the east train station, where you'll find **Atlasib** (☎ 226 486) and **Eurolines** (☎ 288 132; timisoara.ag@eurolines.ro). Call **Murat** (☎ 0744 144 326, no English) for bus tickets to Ystanbul.

All major train services depart from the **Gară Timișoara-Nord** (☎ 491 696; Str Gării 2). Purchase advance tickets from the **Agencia de Voiaj CFR** (☎ 491 889; cnr Str Măceșilor & Str Babeș; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, international tickets 9am-7pm).

Daily fast trains include eight to Bucharest (€22.50), one to Cluj-Napoca (€11.50), five to Baile Herculane (€8.40), one to Baia Mare via Arad (€12.60), three to Budapest (€38) and one to Belgrade (€14).

ROMANIA DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

Budget travellers should look out for *pensiune* (pensions), which cost about €15 to €20 per person (an extra €5 or more for full board), a little more in cities. The best online resource is **Rural Tourism in Romania** (www.ruraltourism.ro); otherwise contact **Antrec** (National Association of Rural, Ecological & Cultural Tourism; www.antrec.iiruc.ro).

Hostels usually run around €10 for a dorm bed; sometimes private rooms (with shared bathroom) are available for €20 to €30. Hostels vary in quality, with Bucharest's topping in terms of travel-savvy hang-outs. **Youth Hostels Romania** (www.hhostels-romania.ro) has information on HI hostels.

Prices for hotels have risen in recent years, but tend to offer the most privacy and comfort. Some old stalwarts have been scrubbed up. Midrange hotels cost from €30 to €60, more so in Bucharest.

In-town camping is often in less-than-ideal locations, and conditions are sometimes quite shoddy. In most mountain areas there's a network of *căsuțe* (wooden huts) with restaurants and dormitories. Prices are much lower than those of hotels and no reservations are required.

Apă caldă (hot water) is common at most accommodation, but air conditioning is a luxury.

ACTIVITIES

Most outdoor fun sticks with Romania's Carpathians, which stripe the country impressively. Emergency rescue is provided by **Salvamont** (www.salvamont.org, in Romanian), a voluntary mountain rescue organisation with 21 stations countrywide.

Hiking is the top activity, and mountain biking is getting more popular. A great place to go for both is into the Bucegi Mountains from Sinaia (p938), where you can hire a bike and take it to the plateau atop the mountains by lift – from where hiking trails can be reached, too. Hiking trails in Romania are well marked, with a series of huts along trails.

SOUTHERN BUCOVINA

The painted churches of Southern Bucovina are among the greatest artistic monuments of Europe – in 1993 they were collectively designated a World Heritage-listed site by Unesco. Erected at a time when northern Moldavia was threatened by Turkish invaders, the monasteries were surrounded by strong defensive walls. Great popular armies would gather inside these fortifications, waiting to do battle. To educate the illiterate peasants who were unable to understand the liturgy, biblical stories were portrayed on the church walls in colourful pictures. The exteriors of many of the churches are covered with these magnificent 16th-century frescoes. Remarkably, most of the intense colours have been preserved despite five centuries of rain and wind.

Bucovina's monasteries are generally open 9am to 5pm or 6pm daily. The monasteries of **Voronet**, **Humor** and **Moldovița**, all accessible by bus and train, provide a representative sample of what Bucovina has to offer. The gateway to the painted churches is **Suceava**, erstwhile capital of Moldavia. **Gura Humorului**, a small logging town 37km west of Suceava, is an ideal base from which to visit the monasteries.

Check **Romanian Alpineguide** (www.alpineguide.ro) for more information.

Clubul de Cicloturism Napoca (office@ccn.ro; Cluj-Napoca) was looking for a new office at the time of research, but can offer bike-hire advice. **Transylvania Adventure** (www.adventuretransylvania.com) offers eight-day trips from mid-May through mid-October for about €700.

Skiing and snowboarding are popular in winter. Sinaia (p938) has slopes, but most Braşov kids take day trips to Poiana Braşov, about 15km southwest. Hire costs about €10, lift tickets about €20.

CUSTOMS

Officially, you're allowed to import hard currency up to a maximum of US\$10,000. Valuable goods and foreign currency over US\$1000 should be declared upon arrival. For foreigners, duty-free allowances are 4L of wine, 2L of spirits and 200 cigarettes.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Embassies & Consulates in Romania

Unless stated otherwise, the following foreign embassies are in Bucharest.

Australia (Map p934; ☎ 021-316 7558; don.cairns@ustrade.gov.au; B-dul Unirii 74, Bucharest)

Canada (Map p934; ☎ 021-307 5000; bucst@dfait-maeci.gc.ca; Str Nicolae Iorga 36, Bucharest)

France (Map p934; ☎ 021-303 1000; www.ambafrance-ro.org; Str Biserica Amzei 13-15, Bucharest)

Germany Bucharest (Map p934; ☎ 021-202 9830; www.bukarest.diplo.de; Str Gheorghe Demetriade 6-8); Sibiu (☎ 0269-211 133; www.hermannstadt.ro; Str Lucian Blaga 15-17, Sibiu); Timişoara (☎ 0256-309 800; www.germanconsultimisoara.ro; Spl Vladimirescu 10, Timişoara)

Ireland (Map p934; ☎ 021-212 2088; embassybucharest@yahoo.ie; Str Vasile Lascăr 42-44, Bucharest)

Moldova Bucharest (Map p934; ☎ 021-230 0474; ambasadamoldova@zappmobile.ro; Aleea Alexandru 40); Bucharest (Map p934; ☎ 021-410 9827; B-dul Eroilor 8)

UK (Map p934; ☎ 021-201 7200; www.britishebassy.gov.uk/romania; Str Jules Michelet 24, Bucharest)

USA Bucharest (Map p936; ☎ 021-210 4042; www.usembassy.ro; Str Tudor Arghezi 7-9); Bucharest (Map p936; ☎ 021-316 4052; Str Nicolae Filipescu 26)

Romanian Embassies & Consulates Abroad

Romanian embassies and consulates abroad include the following:

Australia (☎ 02-6286 2343; <http://canberra.mae.ro>); 4 Dalman Cres, O'Malley, ACT, Canberra)

Canada (☎ 613-789 5345; www.cyberus.ca/~romania; 655 Rideau St, Ottawa, Ontario)

France (☎ 01 47 05 10 46; www.amb-roumanie.fr, in French; 5 rue de l'Exposition, Paris)

Germany (☎ 030-212 39 202; www.rumainische-botschaft.de; Dorotheenstr 62-66, Berlin)

Ireland (☎ 031-668 1275; ambrom@eircom.net; 26 Waterloo Rd, Dublin)

Moldova (☎ 22-228 126; <http://chisinau.mae.ro>; Str Bucureşti 66/1, Chişinău)

UK (☎ 020-7937 9666; www.roemb.co.uk; 4 Palace Green, Kensington Gardens, London)

USA (☎ 202-232 3694; www.roembus.org; 1607 23rd St NW, Washington DC)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

A few favourite festivals are listed (but watch out for horse trades and shepherd cheese measurement celebrations):

Juni Pageant During April in Braşov

Bucharest Carnival Held late May to early June in Bucharest

Medieval Festival of the Arts During July in Sighişoara

International Folk Music & Dance Festival of Ethnic Minorities in Europe During August in Cluj-Napoca

Sămbra Oilor During September in Bran

Iaşi Days Held mid-October in Iaşi

De la Colind la Stea During December in Braşov

HOLIDAYS

New Year 1 & 2 January

Catholic & Orthodox Easter Mondays March/April

Labour Day 1 May

Romanian National Day 1 December

Christmas 25 & 26 December

MONEY

Beginning in July 2005 the old lei (singular leu) was replaced with the new lei (abbreviated "RON") – with four less zeroes – took over (ie 10,000 old lei equals one new leu). The new lei comes in denominations of 1, 5, 10, 50, 100 and 500. Ban coins come in 1, 5, 10 and 50 denominations; 100 ban equals one leu.

Prices are frequently quoted in euros – especially at hotels – and prices in this chapter are quoted in euros.

ATMs are everywhere and give 24-hour withdrawals in lei on your Cirrus, Plus, Visa, MasterCard and Eurocard.

To change dollars, euros or pounds, you often need to show a passport. Be wary of changers with bodyguard goons out the front. Some changers advertise juicy rates, but

mislead by disguising a '9' as an '0' subtly etc. Count your money carefully.

All branches of the Banca Comercială Română, among others, will cash travellers cheques. Credit cards won't get you anywhere in rural areas, but they are widely accepted in cities and large towns.

POST

A postcard or letter under 20g to Europe from Romania costs €0.85 and takes seven to 10 days. The postal system is reliable, if slow.

TELEPHONE

Romania's telephone centres and phone booths get little use locally. Phonecards (€3) can be bought at newsstands, and can be used in booths for domestic or international calls.

European mobile phones with roaming work in Romania; otherwise you can get a Romania number from Orange or Vodaphone, which have shops everywhere. A SIM card costs about US\$5, including credit; calls cost about US\$0.10 to US\$0.30 per minute.

Romania's international operator can be reached by dialling ☎ 971.

VISAS

Your passport's validity must extend to at least six months beyond the date you enter the country in order to obtain a visa.

Citizens of all EU countries, USA, Canada, Japan and many other countries may travel visa-free for 90 days in Romania. Australians and New Zealanders need a visa to enter the country, and it needs to be arranged in advance. As visa requirements change frequently, check for the latest details at the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** (www.mae.ro) before departure.

Romania issues two types of visas to tourists: transit or single-entry. Transit visas (for those from countries other than the ones mentioned above) are for stays of no longer than three days, and cannot be bought at the border.

Make sure you check your visa requirements for Serbia and Montenegro, Hungary, Bulgaria and Ukraine if you plan on crossing those borders. Note that Australians and New Zealanders must have visas for the Ukraine and Belarus to cross the countries on the Bucharest–St Petersburg train.

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