Spend two weeks in one of south east Europe's most intriguing destinations to explore the fairy tale landscapes of Romania's Transylvania and Carpathian Mountains. We learn about rich traditions from local characters, visit World Heritage listed villages, fortified churches and castles while staying in Saxon villages known for lively folk culture. Meeting in northern Transylvania we connect in Cluj Napoca, before departing for Maramures, widely regarded as Romania's most traditional region. Dotted with steepled wooden churches and farmhouses fronted by ornately carved gates, it feels as if we have climbed into a horse-drawn time machine and headed back a couple of centuries. Here we explore hillside villages, see locals in traditional costume and marvel at farmers cultivating their land filled with enormous haystacks and enjoy walks in Creasta Cocosului National Reserve. Moving south we spend time in Turda exploring unique limestone gorges and a futuristic salt mine. After walks in Trascau Mountain, Western Carpathian ranges, to visit the beautifully preserved village of Rimetea, we spend two nights in 12th century Sibiu. We wander the meadows to a local shepherd family, spending time to share a meal of traditional homemade cheese and polenta delicacies. In the unspoilt Saxon village of Copsa Mare, our extended walks explore UNESCO sites in Biertan and Malancrav Villages along with colourful Sighisoara. Dating back to the 1100s, this fairy-tale fortified city lays claim to being the birthplace of Vlad II (also known as Vlad Dracula). From our base at Viscri, we embark on woodland walks to the enchanted village of Mesendorf. Heading to Brasov we spend two nights fringed by the Southern Carpathian Mountains in a local guesthouse, focusing on spectacular walks in Piatra Craiului National Park. Before ending our journey in the capital city of Bucharest, we visit the famous neo-renaissance Peles Castle.
13–28 September 2019 (15 nights)

WALK RATING

Easy to Moderate: 5-15km per walking day with some moderate sections (moderate due to hard surfaces, ascent and descent on some walk days). Age is not necessarily as important as your fitness and recent walking experience, and anyone of reasonable fitness should be able to join this tour. We reserve the right to be flexible with the itinerary to allow for unforeseen circumstances including weather conditions and group fitness.

INCLUSIONS

• 15 nights twin share accommodation - hotel accommodation with some shared facilities
• Meals include - 15 Breakfasts, 9 Lunches, 11 Dinners
• All transfers as listed in itinerary
• National park and museum entry fees
• Professional tour leader assisted when required by local tour guides
• Basic group tips where required
• Pre-departure material including background & personalised A-Z tour information and destination tour companion

EXCLUSIONS

• Airfares & taxes to start / from end of tour
• Airport transfers
• Passport & visa expenses
• Heavy or excess baggage
• Travel insurance
• Personal expenses e.g. drinks (water, alcohol, tea & coffee), laundry, telephone, or optional tours / excursions

TOUR LEADER

Lisa Groom is the daughter of interNATIONAL PARKtours founders Tony & Connie Groom and grand-daughter of Binna Burra Mountain Lodge founder Arthur Groom. You could say the great outdoors is in Lisa’s blood. Growing up with the business she commenced working as a tour leader and co-ordinator with interNATIONAL PARKtours in 1991, and took over the helm of the company from her parents in 2001. Leading walking holidays in Australia and Europe, her passion is for regional ecotourism, discovering local characters and showcasing nature from a different perspective. Lisa will be assisted on tour by regional specialist guides who will share their extensive local knowledge on Romania from geology, nature to culture.

FAQ’S

How & when to book?
Our biggest message to you is BOOK EARLY!! Many tours book out very quickly so the moral of the story is the early bird catches the worm! To qualify for any of the early bird prices, you simply need to send a completed booking form and deposit of A$400 per person per tour, by the early bird dates listed at the front of the tour itinerary. We offer A$500 discount per person if you book by the Advanced Early Bird date and A$300 discount per person if you book by the Early Bird date. If your deposit arrives after any of the early bird dates, the tour balance will be at the regular price. To place your booking, simply visit www.parktours.com.au to pay your deposit and book online, or complete a Tour Booking Form, and post / fax / email it to us with your deposit. Once you have booked on a tour, we will stay in contact with regular mailings (see below).

What information and contact can I expect?
When you send your initial deposit, we will contact you to confirm your booking. Once the tour has been confirmed to depart, a comprehensive information pack will be sent to you, including a Tour A-Z, suggested packing list, medical questionnaire, balance of payment invoice, and pre / post accommodation options. We can assist you with flight arrangements but please don’t book flights until our office contacts you to confirm that your tour has been confirmed to depart. The final mailing is sent out approximately three weeks before departure and includes final tour documents, address list for family and friends, meeting points, and any final travel information.

What is the group size?
We specialise in small group travel with an average group size of around 10-20 guests. Please see the front page for details on the minimum group size for this particular tour. All tours need a minimum number of passengers to operate at the price listed in the itinerary. If the minimum number is not reached, a tour may still operate with a surcharge.

How fit do I have to be?
When you are assessing your ability and agility to participate, age is not necessarily as important as your fitness and recent walking experience. Please read the tour walk rating and the day by day walking descriptions in the itinerary to determine if the tour is suitable for your fitness. If you have any queries, we are happy to put you in touch with either the tour coordinator or tour leader to discuss your fitness in more detail.

What gear and equipment do I need to take?
Because we focus on half and full day walks, returning to our accommodation in the afternoon, you don’t need to carry any more than a daypack with rain wear, sunscreen, drinking water, camera and lunch. A few tours include an overnight hike where you will need to carry personal gear for the journey. We recommend hiking boots on most of our tours as they offer good ankle support and grip. A detailed packing list is included with your tour’s information pack.

For bookings call 1300 197 201 | visit www.parktours.com.au | or email info@parktours.com.au | 2
TOUR ITINERARY

Day 1 – Fri 13 Sep | Cluj Napoca
We meet early evening in Cluj-Napoca for group and tour introductions followed by a welcome dinner in our centrally located hotel. Cluj-Napoca is a city in north-western Romania which is easily reached by plane or train from Budapest or Bucharest. It offers the best tour starting point to access the historical and cultural regions of northern Transylvania.
Meals: D
Walks: None

Day 2 – Sat 14 Sep | Cluj Napoca / Maramures county
This morning we explore the city's old squares and hidden streets on a walking tour with our local guide. Now a modern university city, Cluj Napoca has layers of history to uncover - Roman occupation, the arrival of the Hungarian kingdom and the Transylvanian Saxons in the Middle Ages, the traders guilds of the 15th century, Habsburg rule, Communism - all influenced its development. After lunch, we drive for three hours to Breb, a traditional village in the Maramures County, situated at the foothills of the Gutaiului Mountains. Here we settle in for the next three nights in restored village houses, surrounded by trees, meadows, bird-song and village life. Maramures is a magical county, famously home to the “last peasant culture in Europe” and it’s hard to not notice the difference from the city life of Cluj-Napoca.
Meals: B, D
Walks: 2-3 hrs / easy city walk on pavements

Day 3 – Sun 15 Sep | Maramures / Breb / Desesti / Sighet
Widely regarded as Romania’s most traditional region, Maramures feels as if you are climbing into a horse-drawn time machine and heading back a couple of centuries. The area is dotted with small villages, wooden churches and farmhouses fronted by ornately carved gates. We pause this morning to see local villagers dressed in full traditional costume, making their way to Sunday church. Afterwards we follow a stony track to explore hillside villages and walk to nearby Desesti, home to one of Romania’s World Heritage listed wooden churches. In the afternoon, we spend time in the town of Sighet, near the Tisa River and the Ukrainian border. We explore the museums, markets, synagogues and the nearby Merry Cemetery, famous for its colourful tombstones.
Meals: B, L, D
Walks: 12km / 6 hrs easy walk including village stops and rambles over dirt roads and meadow paths / 50m ascent / descent

Day 4 – Mon 16 Sep | Maramures / Creasta Cocosului National Reserve
After breakfast, we drive up to the Gutai Pass (1000m) to commence our hike across the mountain range to the Rooster’s Comb or Peak in Creasta Cocosului National Reserve. This narrow andesite ridge is a vestige of a former volcanic crater and one of the most iconic natural landmarks in the Maramures. Rising above the villages, valleys and the rivers of Mara and Cosau, this reserve has a rich biodiversity while offering great views across whole region. We return to our bus and accommodation in the afternoon.
Meals: B, L, D
Walks: 15km / 4-5hr moderate walk / 400m ascent / descent on dirt roads and rocky paths
Day 5 – Tue 17 Sep | Maramures village walk Botiza to leud / Turda
Driving to the eastern side of Maramures, we enjoy a magical walk between the villages of Botiza and Leud via a patchwork landscape of farming fields, haystacks and hillsides of poplar, beech and flowering ash. Both villages feature traditional architecture and the local farmers intensively cultivate their lands using hand tools and work animals. Leud is a working village, where travellers are welcomed but not doted over. It is also home to the oldest of the eight Maramures World Heritage listed wooden churches. From here, we continue by bus over the mountains back into Transylvania and the town of Turda just south of Cluj Napoca. Our base for the next two nights is a traditional hotel in the centre of town.
**Meals:** B, L  
**Walks:** 12 km / 4-5hr / 350m ascent / descent on grass & dirt footpaths

Day 6 – Wed 18 Sep | Turda Gorge
This morning, we explore the Turda Gorge (Cheile Turzii) following the stream at the base of 300m limestone cliffs, which are also a major destination for rock climbing. The karst environment is home to some unusual plants and a large variety of caves, towers and arcades formed by the river’s repeated attempts to penetrate the limestone walls. After our walk, we visit the impressive Turda Salt Mine, a futuristic looking underground space dropping 112m below the surface. Originally dug during the Middle Ages for salt exploitation, its upgrade in 2008-2010 included a glass lift, assembly of mine galleries and operating rooms along with a small lake. We end the day at a nearby vineyard for wine tasting.
**Meals:** B, L  
**Walks:** 6km / 2-3hr / easy uneven terrain (descent/ascent steps in mine)

Day 7 – Thu 19 Sep | Trascau Mountains / Sibiu
Our final destination today is the town of Sibiu, but we begin with a morning in the Trascau Mountains, part of the Western Carpathian ranges. Here we visit the beautifully preserved Hungarian minority village of Rimetea and enjoy walks at the base of the Rock of the Szeklers (Piatra Secuiului). After lunch at the Manor House of Coltesti, we continue to Sibiu and check into a central hotel, our base for two nights. Much of the city was built in the 12th century by German settlers known as Transylvanian Saxons when their powerful guilds dominated regional trade. A pedestrian-friendly city, sections of the medieval wall, still guard the old town area.
**Meals:** B, L  
**Walks:** 6km / 2-3hr / 250 m ascent / descent on mountain path, uneven terrain

Day 8 – Fri 20 Sep | Cindrel Mountains / Sheepfold walk
A unique experience awaits us today as we head to a remote village in the foothills of Cindrel Mountains, a European protected area. We wander through meadows and forests and are soon welcomed into the hearts and home of a shepherd family. At their sheepfold, we share their paddock-to-plate local delicacies including traditionally made cheese and polenta. We return by bus to explore lovely Sibiu at our own pace.
**Meals:** B, L  
**Walks:** 12km / 3-4hrs / 450m ascent / descent on mountain paths, uneven terrain
Day 9 – Sat 21 Sep | Sibiu Old Town walk / Copsa Mare Saxon Village
On our final morning in Sibiu, we further explore the old town on a walking tour with a local guide. We follow the narrow streets beneath steep-roofed 17th century buildings with gable overhangs. These streets empty into vast, church-dominated squares such as Great Square and Little Square. Saturday is a busy day and we visit the trading squares along with the daily fruit and vegetable markets. In the afternoon, we depart for the traditional Saxon village of Copsa Mare. We stay in the finest guesthouse accommodation in the village for the next two nights.
Meals: B, D
Walks: 5km / 2-3hr city walks

Day 10 – Sun 22 Sep | Biertan circular walk
Our circular walk today is to the village of Biertan, located in a long valley surrounded by hills and vineyards. Founded in 1283, the village is dominated by Saint Mary's citadel and church. This hilltop medieval construction, surrounded by three fortified walls, has been listed a UNESCO World Heritage site. We have time to explore the village, perhaps stopping by painting and sculpturing workshops to watch local artists using centuries-old traditional methods. After lunch at your leisure, we return by foot to Copsa Mare to enjoy our evening meal.
Meals: B, D
Walk: 12km / 3-4hr / mostly on dirt roads, small amount of bitumen / 100m ascent / descent

Day 11 – Mon 23 Sep | Malancrav walk / Sighisoara
Starting from our accommodation our walk takes us through forests and lush meadows to Malancrav, a true landmark of the Saxon heritage of Transylvania. Again, we can visit the many talented local artisans. After lunch with a local family to sample delicious home produce, we continue by bus to colourful Sighisoara. With a history dating back to the 1100s, this fairytale fortified city in the heart of Romania lays claim to being the birthplace of Vlad III (also known as Vlad Tepes, Vlad the Impaler, and Vlad Dracula). After a guided walking tour of the highlights, we have time to explore the UNESCO World Heritage site on our own. In the late afternoon, we transfer the short distance to our next village accommodation, close to Viscri, for two nights.
Meals: B, L, D
Walks: 10km / 3-4hr walk / easy meadow paths & dirt roads / 200m ascent / descent

Day 12 – Tue 24 Sep | Viscri / Mesendorf
With a history that goes back to the 12th century, Viscri is today one of Romania’s most famous villages. Repeated visits by Prince Charles, a World Heritage listed fortified church and the activities of the Mihai Eminescu Trust foundation, have helped this small village dust off many decades of isolation. We visit Viscri this morning before embarking on our walk via meadows and woodlands to the enchanted rural village of Mesendorf. We return to our accommodation for the option to further explore the local area on bike or via horse (extra cost).
Meals: B, L, D
Walks: 1 km / 4hr, on meadow paths / 50m ascent / 100m descent
Day 13 – Wed 25 Sep | Brasov / Carpathian Mountains
Our journey takes us a short distance to Brasov. Fringed by the peaks of the Southern Carpathian Mountains and resplendent with gothic, baroque and renaissance architecture, Brasov exudes a distinct ambience. It was founded by the Teutonic Knights in 1211 on an ancient Dacian site and settled by the Saxons as one of the seven walled citadels. Here we wander behind the fortified walls; visit the fortress and Black Church plus enjoy panoramic views over the old town. We continue on to the traditional mountain village of Magura, nestled in the middle of Piatra Craiului National Park. With narrow and saw-like ridges, this area is considered to be the most beautiful in the Carpathian Mountains range. Here we spend two nights in a local guesthouse surrounded by hay meadows, sheep grazing on the pastures and horse drawn carts trundling by.

Meals: B, D
Walks: 5km easy city strolls and orientation walks

Day 14 – Thu 26 Sep | Piatra Craiului National Park / Bran Castle
Today’s walk is something you can get your teeth into! We take a higher path through forests and meadows to follow the main route linking Piatra Craiului National Park to the Bucegi Mountains. Our destination is Bran Castle – also known as ‘Dracula Castle’ from Bram Stoker’s novel. The name Dracula comes from the Vlad the Impaler’s father surname “Dracul”. The truth is that Dracula Vlad Tepes never lived in the castle and perhaps the only Dracula you may see is the friendly one outside the castle at the tourist stands. Ignoring the kitsch stalls and the crowds, the beautiful mediaeval castle, built on the rocky hilltop, offers an amazing backdrop to finish our morning walk (entry is at our own leisure). We return to our accommodation by car.

Meals: B, L, D
Walks: 15km / 5+hr / moderate 500m ascent / 1000m descent (alternative easier walk/car option available)

Day 15 – Fri 27 Sep | Zarnesti Gorge / Peles Castle / Bucharest
This morning’s walk explores more of what Magura offers taking in either the impressive Zarnesti Gorges or close by traditional villages. After lunch we drive to Bucharest, the capital city of Romania, stopping along the way to visit the famous Peles Castle. This rambling Neo-Renaissance design was used as a summer residence by the kings of Romania. We continue on to Bucharest and settle into our central city accommodation before celebrating with our farewell dinner.

Meals: B, D
Walks: Approx. 10km / 3-4hr / 400m ascent / descent

Day 16 – Sat 28 Sep | Tour End
After breakfast we take the time to enjoy a short walking tour to glimpse Bucharest’s beauty, finishing in time for you to connect with onward travel plans. The capital and largest city of Romania has a mix of architecture ranging from historical (neo-classical), interbellum (Bauhaus and Art Deco), communist-era and modern styles. Ask interNATIONAL PARKtours about extending your stay in Bucharest to explore the city and surrounds more.

Meals: B
Walks: own choice
WHY TRAVEL WITH US?

InterNATIONAL PARKtours have been leading small group walking holidays since 1975. Our like-minded guests bond easily and often create reunions, celebrations and friendships, many of them lifelong. Our tours are active with regular half and full day walks. Aside from walking, we also spend time meeting local people, tasting regional food and immersing ourselves in the culture and history of a destination. Our flexibility enables us to adapt to the likes, dislikes and agility of our travellers, and changing situations such as weather and unforeseen circumstances. In most locations, we stay 2-3 nights and sometimes longer. This allows us to slow down, unpack our bags and enjoy the local atmosphere at different times of the day. Accommodation is comfortable, unique plus locally owned and operated where possible.

Our guides are dedicated, informative people who share their passion and knowledge on local history, culture, wildlife & topography. Our journeys are designed to safeguard the ecosystems; benefit the communities we visit and contribute to the sustainability of destinations. Travel is a chance to change your perspective. Nature always provides a new view if we take the time to look.

“IFP offers great value for money with their programmes. There is minimum spending money needed once on tour and there are no hidden extras along the way.”

Judy & Peter Hughes

“I know that you get the blue ribbon extras with IPT and I was in the mood to be spoilt.”

Judy Polkonen

Disclaimer of Liability

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Itinerary Updated: December 6, 2018 11:31 AM