**Dream Food Destination – Romania**

Vlad the Impaler, turned Count Dracula by Bram Stoker, Romanian prince with a legacy for cruelty. Nicolae Ceausescu, brutal and oppressive dictator with an extensive cult of personality, executed by firing squad on Christmas day. These are the first two names that come to mind when we hear the word Romania, but there is much more about Romania, than ruthless rulers. Romania has amazing monasteries, many of which are part of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites, a land covered with natural ecosystems and the largest undisturbed forest in Europe, beautiful cities with prestigious university centers. Situated in Southeastern Europe, Romania has an impressive relief, is culturally rich and historically significant.

Being originally from Romania, I never pass the chance to visit my beautiful native country, my friends, and my family, but I never had the opportunity and the financial means to tour a big part of it in one trip, for its amazing cuisine and world renowned and awarded wines.

Having been at the center of many wars and political conflicts throughout history, Romania culture has been impacted by many others, including the Ottomans, the Austro-Hungarians, the Greeks, Romans, and many Slavic nations. All these influences can be seen in the Romanian cuisine, as it differs throughout its territories. An extremely cosmopolitan city, Bucharest, the country’s capital, has a variety of ethnic restaurants, but as you venture north towards the Prahova Valley, and further to Brasov and Sibiu, the cuisine becomes more traditional. North-east, in Moldova, Iasi, a multicultural center, offers a variety of foods, including Romanian twists on Jewish and Russian staples. South-east by the Danube Delta and the Black Sea, tourists can experience a true Romanian fish and seafood fare, as well as Turkish foods.

Besides the amazing array of mouthwatering foods, Romania is well known for its fine wines from vineyards like Murfatlar, Recas, and Cotnari, and its plum brandy also known as tuica.

As I spent most of my life in the west and south-west regions of the country, and I am very familiar with them, a culinary tour of the east and south-east would be an amazing idea for a summer vacation. Going on long wine tastings, catching your own fish in the Danube Delta, and savoring new foods in fine Romanian restaurants, while still experiencing the awe-inspiring arts and culture is a longtime dream of mine. Being able to go on a motorcycle tour of these areas with my husband would help me share even more of my heritage with him, and maybe even discover new and exciting places from my native country.

**Itinerary**

**Day 1**, June 4, 2017

* Arrive in Bucharest at 1:10 PM
* Spend the afternoon with my sister and her family
* Dinner with family at Vacamuu.

Vacamuuu Restaurant and Meat Market opened in 2011 and since then it has been considered the top restaurant in Bucharest, by both customers and professional food critiques. It offeres a large array of high quality meats, including aged Angus beef. Since it has opened, Vacamuuu has been the highlight of many travelers’ trips, and no one who visits Bucharest should skip it.

**Day 2**, June 5, 2017

* Breakfast at home
* Spend the morning with family
* Lunch at Caru’ cu Bere

Located in a neo-Gothic mansion built in 1898, and decorated in an Art Nouveau style, Caru’ cu Bere is a restaurant that offers traditional Romanian fare, including sarmale (meat stuffed cabbage) served with mamaliga (something akin to the Italian polenta), cold cuts and cheeses, and of course many types of domestic beers. The casual atmosphere and old-school recipes attract diners from around the country as well as international tourists who are looking for a true Romanian experience.

* Show my husband around Bucharest
* Dinner at Divan

Romania was in constant contact with the Ottoman Empire for more than 600 years, and even though the wars and conflicts were violent and lengthy, the Romanian cuisine has been greatly influenced by the Turks. Divan is a Turkish restaurant in a middle of Bucharest that offers traditional dishes with oriental influences. The chef and owner has been praised for his attention to the customers’ desires and for the scrumptious dishes he serves.

**Day 3**, June 6, 2017

* Leave to Sinaia, Prahova in the morning
* Arrive in Sinaia at 12:00 PM
* Lunch at Kuib

Sinaia is a historic mountain resort in the Prahova County. Besides the amazing castles and monasteries, Prahova is also renowned for its hospitality. One of the many restaurants in the county, Kuib has been receiving the TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence for the past 4 years, and vows to keep providing its customers with the most authentic culinary experiences. It caters celebrity events, but it also serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day.

* Visit the famous Peles Castle
* Dinner at La Teleferic Bistro

Teleferic Bistro is a restaurant located at the base of the cable car in Sinaia, and it was opened by a couple of self-pronounced foodies, that decided to trade the fast life in Bucharest, for the laidback country side life. Their menu features their own take on the well-known traditional Romanian recipes. The filled reservation book is proof that their venture has been a success.

* Overnight stay at Piatra Soimului Hotel

**Day 4**, June 7, 2017

* Breakfast at the hotel
* Leave and arrive in Azuga, Prahova at 11:00 AM
* Motorcycle tour along the Azuga river and waterfalls
* Sparkling wine tasting and lunch at Rhein Azuga Cellar, lessons on producing sparkling wine and its history in Romania

Nestled in the majestic Bucegi Mountains of Prahova County, the Rhein Azuga Cellar was built in 1892 and supplied the Romanian Royal Court between the world wars. Today they supply The House of King Michael the First with their famous sparkling wine, Rhein Extra. The cellar is believed to be the oldest location in Romania where sparkling wine has continuously been produced using the traditional method. After a tour of the cellars, a presentation on the sparkling wine producing techniques, and tastings, visitors can have lunch in the Rhein dining room.

* Leave and arrive in Brasov, Brasov county at 7:00 PM
* Dinner at Dei Frati

Opened a little over a year ago in the picturesque city of Brasov, Dei Frati restaurant brings a fresh and modern twist on the Italian cuisine. Owned and operated by two brothers and their sister, Dei Frati makes its own pasta fresh every morning, and offers a memorable experience. Considered by many a hidden gem, the Italian restaurant, once discovered, can never be forgotten.

* Overnight stay at Armatti Hotel

**Day 5**, June 8, 2017

* Breakfast at the hotel
* Spend morning and early afternoon visiting the Graft Bastion, the Black Church and the Ethnography Museum
* Light lunch and coffee tasting at Hof Café
* Leave and arrive in Sibiu (Transylvania) at 7:00 PM
* Dinner at Crama Sibiul Vechi

Sibiu is another unique and historic center, once the capital of the Principality of Transylvania. So it would be only fitting that the restaurant hidden in an old wine cellar, would be the most evocative restaurant in Sibiu. Explore Romanian fare such as cheese croquettes, minced meatballs and peasant's stew with polenta, enjoy a glass of vintage Romanian wine, and imagine how life was during Vlad the Impaler.

* Overnight stay at Republique Hotel

**Day 6,** June 9, 2017

* Breakfast at the hotel
* Visit the Brukenthal Museum and the ASTRA National Museum Complex
* Dinner at Max Restaurant

Located in a newly renovated 14 century construction, the Italian restaurant manages to mix the old with the new, combining classic Italian recipes with a fresh atmosphere and décor. It’s a favorite among the locals, and the tourists rave about it.

**Day 7**, June 10, 2017

* Breakfast at the hotel
* Leave and arrive in Iasi (Moldova) at 2:00 PM
* Visit the Great Synagogue for Shabbat service
* Lunch at Chabad of Iasi (Kosher)

The Great Synagogue has an amazing chef who combine the Romanian recipes with Jewish staples, creating meals that everyone raves about, including non-Jews.

* Visit the city
* Dinner at The Trumpets

The Trumpets is a gastropub opened in Iasi 2 years ago. It features live performances every week, a cool atmosphere, and typical pub dishes like soups, fries, burgers, fish and chips, and others, named after famous English singers and bands. Locals prefer this pub to any other in Iasi, and tourists are happy to revisit it due to its quality dishes and cheerful vibes.

* Overnight stay at Hotel International Iasi

**Day 8**, June 11, 2017

* Breakfast at the hotel
* Visit the National Romanian Literature Museum
* Lunch at Blue Aqua Restaurant

Blue Aqua is a seafood restaurant opened in 1964. Since its beginnings, Blue Aqua was a staple for the culinary world in Iasi, offering fresh seafood and fish from the Danube Delta. Even though the owners changed the décor many times, they managed to maintain their passion for food and to attract countless customers every year. The recipes used are traditional Romanian with Mediterranean influences.

* Leave and arrive in Tulcea (Danube Delta) at 7:00 PM
* Dinner at Ivan Pescar Fish Bar

Tulcea is a city by the Danube Delta, renowned for the beautiful sceneries, and the amazing fresh fish. Ivan Pescar is a fish restaurant facing the Danube that offers an unpretentious atmosphere and delicious fish dishes. The reviews are always the same, Ivan, the owner and chef, has an undying passion for the Delta and its fish, and creates meals that remind everyone of times long passed, when the Romanian cuisine was more humble, natural, but still extremely delicious.

* Overnight stay at Delta Hotel

**Day 9**, June 12, 2017

* Breakfast at the hotel
* Visit the Danube Delta and the fisheries along the Danube river

The Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve has the third largest biodiversity in the world (over 5,500 flora and fauna species), exceeded only by the Great Barrier Reef in Australia and the Galapagos Archipelago in Ecuador. The very long history of trading along the Danube is evident from remains of Greek and Roman settlements (including a lighthouse). Villages surrounding the Delta show a Turkish influence.

* Catch our own fish and have it prepared by one of the local fisheries

The Delta's waters teem with some 160 species of fresh, and salt-water fish. In order to get a full taste of the local cuisine one can sample some Danube herring, grilled sturgeon fish and zander croquettes prepared fresh by fishermen in one of the Delta villages, paired with tuica, Romanian plum brandy.

* Leave for Murfatlar, Constanta and arrive at 7:00 PM

Murfatlar is a town in the Constanta County, right be the Black Sea. It is renowned for its award winning wines and vineyards. All wine lovers, when visiting Romania, take a trip to Murfatlar Vineyards to learn about its long history and taste the exquisite wines.

* Dinner brought with us from the Danube Delta
* Overnight stay at Hotel Raluca

**Day 10**, June 13, 2017

* Wine tasting at Murfatlar, 6 hour tour that includes visits at the cellars, history and production lessons, wine tasting, and lunch.
* Leave and arrive in Bucharest at 7:00 PM
* Spend the evening with my sister and her family
* Dinner cooked by my sister, traditional Romanian home cooked meal

**Day 11**, June 14, 2017

* Brunch with my husband and nephews at The Artist

The restaurant is located in the historic center of Bucharest, on the ground floor of an impressive historical building. The Dutch Chef and owner has a modern cooking approach that combines classical techniques with molecular cuisine and Romanian cuisine influences, resulting in surprising combinations of textures and flavors that revolutionize traditional cuisine. I am curious to try this restaurant because I have never experienced molecular cuisine in Romania, and something like this was unheard of there before I left more than 10 years ago.

* Afternoon at the National Theater seeing a play
* Dinner with friends and family at Chefs Experience

Chef Experience is a new restaurant in the heart of Bucharest that mixes the trendy communal dining experience with out of this world dishes, and specialty cocktails. Every Wednesday and Thursday, the restaurant hosts different chefs for culinary classes and unique meals.

Both diners and critics are raving about the Chefs Experience, and its reputation is always rising.

For a last night in Romania, before returning to New York, Chef Experience is the perfect place to share a wonderful meal with a large group of family and friends.

**Day 12**, June 15, 2017

* Leave for New York
* Lunch and dinner on the plane

**Budget**

* Flight roundtrip (2 people) $1,547,72
* Dinner at Vacamuu 100.45
* Lunch at Caru’ cu Bere 12.56
* Dinner at Divan 55.25
* Lunch at Kuib 62.75
* Hotel Piatra Soimului (1 night) 50.25
* Dinner at La Teleferic Bistro 53.00
* Wine tasting and lunch at Rhein Azuga Cellar 123.00
* Dinner at Dei Frati 42.70
* Armatti Hotel (1 night) 69.00
* Lunch at Hof Café 22.00
* Dinner at Crama Sibiul Vechi 25.75
* Republique Hotel (2 nights) 120.00
* Dinner at Max Restaurant 44.00
* Lunch at Chabad Iasi 26.00
* Dinner and drinks at The Trumpets 67.25
* Hotel International Iasi (1 night) 96.00
* Lunch at Blue Aqua 34.00
* Dinner at ivan Pescar fish Bar 47.75
* Delta Hotel (1 night) 81.00
* Fish in the Danube Delta (approximately) 30.00
* Hotel Raluca (1 night) 46.00
* Wine tasting at Murfatlar 125.25
* Brunch at The Artist 67.00
* Theater Tickets 39.00
* Dinner at Chefs Experience 195.00
* Motorcycle Rental (9 days) 475.00
* Gas (approximately 870 miles) 98.00

 TOTAL $3,498.43

 After all the big expenses, out of the total trip budget of $5,000, we have $1,501.57 left for other expenses, like museum and attractions tickets, snacks and drinks, souvenirs and other shopping.

**References and Sources**

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 <http://hofcafe.ro/meniu/>

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