

# *Welcome to Romania*



*Best Kept Secret in the European Union!*

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## Travel Information

### Visa Requirements

To gain entry into Romania U.S. citizens only need a valid passport and do not require a visa to stay in Romania for periods not exceeding 90 days.

### Arrival

Most travelers arrive in Romania in Bucharest, which is served by two airports, Otopeni Airport and Baneasa Airport. However, the majority of international flights arrive in Otopeni.

### **Airport to Downtown Bucharest**

You can find a taxi in front of the airport but make sure of the following:

1. The taxi belongs to one of the companies listed below;
2. Both registration number (written in black) and the company's name are displayed on the car;
3. The taxi driver has displayed in a visible place his identification card (name of the company, name of the taxi driver) with a photo attached;
4. Most of the Romanians have basic knowledge of English but you might consider writing down the address that you would like to go on a piece of paper and showing it to the driver;
5. The taxi driver must start the meter at the beginning of the drive.
6. Always, ask for a receipt at the end of your drive.
7. Look carefully at the price (see our recommendations in section 4 below) you are about to pay.
8. Tips should not exceed more than 10% of the price.

Recommended taxi companies:

Fly Taxi	Dial: 9441
Cobalcescu	9451
Cristaxi	9461
Grant	9433
Perozzi	9631
Prof Taxi	9422

#### **Taxis**

You are likely to be approached by taxi drivers offering their services to you at the airport, but **Fly Taxi is the only official taxi company allowed to wait outside the terminal.** If you would like to use a different company, you will have to walk out to the parking lot where other companies often wait.

If you wish to use public transport, there is an Express bus, # 783, found just outside the airport terminal. Buy a ticket at the RATB booth, for the equivalent of approximately \$1. The main stops for the bus are: Piata Presei Libere (main Publishing House), Piata Victoriei (Victoria Square), Piata Romana, Unirii.

## Local Transportation

Bucharest has a relatively good public transportation system with buses, trams and a metro. Tickets can be purchased from kiosks near bus stops or in the metro. You cannot buy bus tickets on the bus!

Bus/Tram Tickets: 1.10 Lei per trip

Metro Tickets: 2 Lei for 2 trips

7 Lei for 10 trips



## Currency

The only official currency in Romania is the Romanian Leu or Lei (plural). Both ATMs and authorized exchange offices (casa de schimb) are widespread.

**\*\*Note that international airports and larger hotels also offer currency exchange services, but usually the exchange rate is less favorable.\*\***

**Never use** the black market to exchange money. It is illegal and you may be cheated.

Also, due to the high incidence of credit card/ATM card fraud, using ATMs in hotels or banks is recommended.

All important restaurants, hotels, car rentals or stores accept major credit cards, such as VISA, MasterCard, and American Express. However, you may encounter situations where the credit card is not accepted (small restaurants or stores). You should seriously consider only using cash as credit card theft is a serious problem.

Traveler's checks are not recommended. They can be cashed in some banks or exchange offices but the commission fees are high.

### New Romanian Leu (RON)

Although the Leu is the only official currency, prices of hotels and pre-paid cell phone credits, for example, are often quoted in Euro. Therefore, the price you pay in Lei will depend on the current exchange rate.

## Communication

Time difference: UTC+2 (7 hours ahead of Washington, DC during Standard Time)

### Dialing from the U.S. directly to Bucharest:

International Access Code +40 (country code) + 21 + seven digit telephone number

### Dialing from the U.S. directly to any other city in Romania:

International Access Code + 40 (country code) + three digit area code + six digit phone number

### Dialing within Romania:

(0 + three digit area code)<sup>1</sup> + six digit telephone number when dialing anywhere in the countryside or

(0 + 21)<sup>2</sup> + seven digit telephone number when dialing a number Bucharest.

### International dialing from Romania:

00 + country code + area code + telephone number

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<sup>1</sup> Mandatory in case of dialing from a cell phone;

<sup>2</sup> See above footnote.



### Cell phones in Romania

Coverage and reception for cell phone in all cities are excellent. Check with your service provider about accessing the Romanian networks. (i.e. – Connex Vodafone, Orange).

### Emergency Numbers

Three digit telephone numbers are local toll-free numbers for emergencies or businesses.

**112 Emergency Call Center** – they will guide you to police, ambulance first aid, and firemen, as needed

### Coordinates of the Embassy of the United States of America:

Address: 7-9 Tudor Arghezi Str., Sector 1, Bucharest (Metro: Piata Universitate)

Phone (duty hours): (00 40 21) 200 3300 *Duty hours are from 7:30 am to 6 pm (local time).*

Phone (after hours): (00 40 21) 200 3300

### Security in Romania

In general, Romania is safe, including the city of Bucharest. However, as in any major city, street crime, particularly theft and pick pocketing, does occur and you should always be alert and take sensible precautions.

**Never show your passport and particularly your money, even if it is someone pretending to be a policeman.**

**Report all thefts immediately to the police and notify American Citizens Services at the U.S. Embassy during office hours and the American Duty Officer after hours.**

### Electricity in Romania

As in the rest of Europe, the electricity is 220 V in Romania.

Please **do not forget** to bring a plug and adaptor while traveling to Romania, otherwise your phones, laptops, hair dryers, electric razors will be useless! Adapters and plugs can be purchased at stores such as Radio Shack.

Romania utilizes the metric system for weights and measurements and temperatures. For conversion charts please go to: [http://hemsidor.torget.se/users/b/bohjohan/convert/conv\\_e.htm](http://hemsidor.torget.se/users/b/bohjohan/convert/conv_e.htm)

### General Facts

**Population:** 21.6 million (December 2006)

**Ethnic composition:** Romanian 89%, Hungarian 7.1%, German 0.5%, Ukrainians, Serbs, Croats, Russians, Turks, and Roma 2.5%

**Major Cities:** Bucharest (capital) – 2.02 million, Iasi (350,000), Constanta (344,000), Timisoara (327,000), Cluj-Napoca (334,000), Galati (331,000), Brasov (316,000)

**Language:** Romanian

#### FACT

The second largest building in the world, after the Pentagon, is the Palace of Parliament in Bucharest.



**Religions:** Orthodox 86.8%, Roman Catholic 5%, Reformed Protestant, Baptist, and Pentecostal 5%, Greek Catholic (Uniate) 1-3%, Muslim 0.2%, Jewish <0.1%

### **National Holidays**

#### *Official Non-Working Holidays*

January 1 – New Year’s Day  
January 2 – Day after New Year’s Day  
April/May – Orthodox Easter (only Easter Sunday and Monday are non-working)  
May 1 – Labor Day  
December 1 – Union Day  
December 25/26 – Christmas Day and Boxing Day

#### *Other Official Holidays and Observances*

March 8 – Mother’s Day  
May/June – Heroes’ Day (40 days from the Orthodox Easter)  
June 1 – Children’s Day  
June 26 – Flag Day  
July 29 – National Anthem Day  
December 8 – Constitution Day

#### **FACT**

Constanta Port, located on the Romanian Black Sea Coast, is the 2nd largest port in Europe.

### **History**

Over the centuries, various migrating people invaded Romania. Romania's historical provinces Wallachia and Moldova offered furious resistance to the invading Ottoman Turks. Transylvania was successively under Hapsburg, Ottoman or Wallachian rule, while remaining an autonomous province.

Romania's post WWII history as a communist-block nation is more widely known, primarily due to the excesses of the former dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. Despite its initial Soviet ties, under President Nicolae Ceausescu, Romania steered its own course, refusing to participate in Warsaw Pact maneuvers and conducting half its trade with the West. Police arrested dissidents and monitored contacts with foreigners.

A producer of grain and oil, Romania—so named because it was a colony of imperial Rome—is also a favored Black Sea vacation spot. But Romanian citizens enjoyed little of the bounty under communism. To help repay bank loans, petroleum and agricultural produce were exported during the 1980s, while imports were restricted, electricity was rationed, and shop shelves lay bare. With decline in production, basic commodities remained scarce and exports slowed.

In December 1989, government security police killed demonstrators in Timisoara and Bucharest, igniting a revolution. Subsequently, the regime of Ceausescu was overthrown and the ensuing execution of him and his wife ended their reign of repression, deprivation, and ethnic discrimination. The 1991 Constitution established Romania as a republic with a multiparty system, market economy and individual rights of free speech, religion and private ownership.

Unfortunately, the governments that followed have been laboring under massive foreign debt. Significant levels of public and private corruption impede economic growth and undercut public trust in new democratic institutions. However, the situation is improving rapidly and Romania became a member of NATO in 2004, and joined the European Union in January 2007.

### **Current Political Situation**

Romania is a Parliamentary Representative Democratic Republic with universal suffrage granted to citizens over the age of 18. The President is popularly elected and acts as the Head of State,



while the Prime Minister acts as the Head of Government and is nominated by the President. The most recent elections were held in 2004 in which President Traian Basescu was elected with 51.23% of the popular vote.

### **Current Economic Situation**

Romania began the transition from communism in 1989 with a largely obsolete industrial base and a pattern of output unsuited to the country's needs. The country emerged in 2000 from a punishing three-year recession thanks to strong demand in EU export markets. Despite the global slowdown in 2001-02, strong domestic activity in construction, agriculture, and consumption have kept GDP growth above 4%. However, macroeconomic gains have only recently started to spur creation of a middle class and address Romania's widespread poverty, while corruption and red tape continue to handicap the business environment. Romanian government confidence in continuing disinflation was underscored by its currency revaluation in 2005, making 10,000 "old" lei equal 1 "new" leu. The economy grew at 6.4% in 2006, the strongest growth in the last decade. Romania joined the European Union on January 1, 2007, and the IMF has praised the country's recent reform efforts in preparation for EU accession.

### **Romanian Food**

In Romania, there is a wide range of choices of Romanian, Italian, Chinese, Indian, Lebanese and other international cuisine. Fast food restaurants are abundant, such as Pizza Hut, Kentucky Fried Chicken and McDonalds. At your hotel please ask for the latest edition of *Sapte Seri* (Seven Evenings) [www.sapteseri.ro](http://www.sapteseri.ro) where you can find most of Bucharest's restaurants. If you are a wine drinker be sure to try Romanian wines as they are both very good and inexpensive (their variety and richness of taste will not disappoint you).

Try the following local specialties:

#### **Soup**

"*Ciorba de perisoare*" (meatball soup), "*ciorba taraneasca*" (vegetable soup, with or without meat), "*ciorba de burta*" (tripe soup).

#### **Fish**

"Saramura" (grilled carp in brine), "nisetru la gratar" (grilled Black Sea sturgeon) or "scrumbie la gratar" (grilled herring).

#### **Entrée**

"Tocanita" or "tochitura" (meat stew seasoned with onions and/ or spices), "ghiveci" (over 20 vegetables cooked in oil), "sarmale" (pickled cabbage leaves stuffed with a mix of minced meats, rice and spices) and "mititei" (The "Wee Ones" — small skinless grilled sausages) are among the favorites.

**\*\*Romanians produce great pickled vegetables, called "*muraturi*" (red peppers, green tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, red cabbage, cauliflower).\*\***

#### **Dessert**

"Papanasi" (cottage cheese donuts, topped with sour cream and fruit preserve), "clatite cu branza" (crepes filled with cottage cheese, raisins and spices) and "cozonac" (traditional holiday sweet bread filled with walnuts, poppy seeds or cream cheese).

A traditional drink enjoyed with appetizers is "tuica" (a potent plum brandy) which varies in strength, dryness and bouquet according to the production area.

#### **FACT**

Romania is one of the largest wine producers in Europe with a vineyard surface of 243,000 hectares and an annual production of 5 to 6 million hectoliters. Archaeological discoveries and historical documents place the beginnings of wine culture on the present territory of Romania some 4000 years ago.





### **Romanian Handicrafts**

There are several handicraft shops in Bucharest downtown, most notably on Magheru or Victoriei Avenue. Here are some of our recommendations:

#### **Ceramics**

Romanian pottery is still made mainly on traditional kick-wheels with simple finishing tools. Shapes, sizes and patterns reflect the different clays and cultures of diverse areas where are produced. Color glazes and decorations vary from strong geometric, to delicate flowers, animals and humans.

#### **Glass**

The oldest preserved Romanian glass dates back to the Roman Empire. Currently, there is a renewed passion for creating art in blown glass and several contemporary Romanian glass artists enjoy world renown.

#### **Painted icons**

Of Byzantine influence, Romanian icons are sculpted in wood and are hand painted.

### **Why Romania?**

Romania closed out 2006 with approximately 7.7% GDP growth, marking the 7<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of economic expansion. 2007 promises more of the same, thanks to an economy driven by a broadly balanced mix of consumption and investment. Romania's economy has matured into a dynamic, mostly private-sector marketplace growing at a rapid clip while adapting to changing conditions. The progress the country has made towards becoming a fully functioning market economy has not gone unnoticed by ratings agencies including Standard & Poor's, Moody's and Fitch who have moved Romania up to "investment grade", the gold standard in ratings.

The US and Romania have long enjoyed a strong political, military and increasingly commercial relationship. The US - Romanian Treaty on the reciprocal encouragement and protection of investment was established in May '92 and ratified by the US in '94. The signing of the U.S.-Romania Defense Cooperation Agreement in 2005 provides further evidence of the deepening of the strategic partnership between our two countries. 2007 brought Romania into the European Union (EU) and can now market itself as a EU member, with all of the privileges that come with membership in this powerful economic club, including harmonized tariffs and the opportunity for US firms to use Romania as an economically advantageous gateway to the EU market.

Romania's strategic location on the crossroads of trade routes in Southeast Europe as well as its booming economy makes it an increasingly attractive place for Americans to invest. Recent U.S.-investments highlight Romania's market of almost 22 million consumers, pro-American climate, political and economic stability and formidable economic business opportunities. In 2006 the U.S. was ranked sixth overall in direct foreign investment at USD 834 million, representing 4.5 percent of total investment. The actual figure is substantially higher when calculating investments made through foreign subsidiaries, of which there are many US companies. American investments have focused on telecom, manufacturing, agricultural and consumer products. In 2005 US exports to Romania were USD 632 million, up over 20 percent from the previous year.





## International Companies Doing Business in Romania

3M, AIG, Alcoa, Amway, Avon, Bunge, Cargill, Cisco, Citibank, Coca-Cola, Colgate Palmolive, Ernest & Young, Delphi, General Electric, HBO, Honeywell Garret, Howard Johnson's, HP, IBM, Johnson Controls, Kodak, Kraft, Lockheed Martin, McDonald's, Microsoft, Motorola, New Century Holdings, Oracle, Philip Morris, Proctor and Gamble, Qualcomm, RAEF, Solectron, Timken, UPS, Visa, Washington Group, Xerox...to name a few!

## Useful Websites and Resources

U.S. Commercial Service – Bucharest, Romania  
<http://www.buyusa.gov/romania>

The CIA World Factbook  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>

Consular Information Sheet – U.S. Department of State  
[http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1004.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1004.html)

Romanian Embassy in Washington, D.C.  
<http://www.roembus.org>

Daily Romanian Newspaper in English – “Nine O’Clock”  
<http://www.nineoclock.ro>

In Your Pocket Guide to Bucharest  
[www.inyourpocket.com](http://www.inyourpocket.com)

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<sup>3</sup> Cover photo courtesy of: <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/1550/romania/>

