

Traveler's Guide to



European Testing Conference



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Introduction

Thank you for joining the first edition of European Testing Conference.

To make your stay in Bucharest as pleasant as possible, we wrote this ebook. It contains useful information for travelling, accommodation, eating and drinking. It also contains important advice on things to avoid; pay attention especially to the [section about taxi trips](#) to avoid spending more than necessary.

Should you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact us

- contact@europeantestingconference.eu
- @eurotestingconf for twitter
- 0040 726 329 594 Adrian Bolboacă

What to pack for your Bucharest trip

The weather in Bucharest in February is usually cold. Temperatures are in the range of -4°C to +7°C (35°F to 45°F). It sometimes rains or snows, although Bucharest is known for its sunny weather.

Arriving in Bucharest by Plane

Plane connections are available from all over Europe, usually at less than €300. The national airline is [Tarom](#). You will land at [Henri Coanda airport](#), also known as Otopeni airport (OTP), situated about 15 km outside Bucharest.

There are three ways to transfer from the airport to Bucharest:

- Taxi: call one using the taxi ordering station at the international arrivals. The system is fully automated, using a mobile application on a touch screen terminal. You can pick your price level and the companies of choice (the price is 1.40 lei to 3.6 lei – see currency rates below). A taxi usually arrives in 1-7 minutes in front of the arrival terminal (there are two exits from the arrival terminal- one where you can find the taxi-the upper one, and one where you can find the bus- lower one). Take the printed receipt and keep it for reference. **Only take the taxi that has the company and id printed on the receipt.** Some drivers will try to make you take their taxi instead, and pay much more.

Bucharest taxis are cash-only





- UBER operates in Bucharest. You can request oen UBER but you have to get to the meetign point (it will be displayed on your map). The price is 1.6 lei (also be aware of fare increase when requesting it)
- Bus: the bus 783 has a station in front of the airport and it will take you to the center of the city, stopping in the most important stations on the way. The price for a trip is 3.5 lei, less than €1. The bus leaves every 15 minutes during the week and every 20 minutes in week-ends. You can check the schedule [here](#). You can buy tickets from the ticket machine in the bus station using cash or from the cashier.

Since you'll probably have luggage and will want to go to the hotel as soon as possible, we recommend ordering a Uber or taxi from the airport. The price per km is quite low; the maximum you should pay for transfer is around 50 RON, less than €15, given that you order the right type of taxi. **Bucharest taxis are cash-only; make sure you have small bills: 10, 5, 1 RON because they might not have (or want) to give change.**

Arriving in Bucharest by Train

Good train connections exist from Wien and Budapest, with sleeping cars available. Unfortunately, the train speed is quite low in Romania, so it will take you about 8 hrs to travel from the border to Bucharest.

The good thing, if you don't mind traveling longer, is that most international trains have electric plugs (at 1st class). If you buy a mobile internet connection, you can work during the whole trip since mobile internet covers almost the whole country and is pretty fast in Romania. Expect temporary signal loss in areas situated between mountains.

You will reach Bucharest in the main station, "Gara de Nord" (or North Station). **Don't get a taxi from the front of the station. Similar with the airport there are taxi order terminal where you can select what price and what company you want.** They are usually very pushy, negotiate prices and will take the long route. Instead, order a taxi or take the metro.

Arriving in Bucharest by Car

Traveling by car will allow you to see more of Romania. **It is strongly advised to use a navigation system with the last version of maps**; many roads are built in Romania and direction indicators are not that helpful. When planning your trip, take the following things into consideration.

Traveling by car takes longer in Romania than in other European countries, because Romania has only a few hundreds kilometers of highway. All routes from border to Bucharest will take you through cities, so you need to pay attention to speed limits and to city traffic.

European roads, starting with E (e.g. E68), are the best maintained roads in the country. It's advisable to use them as much as possible and avoid national and regional roads.

The speed limits in Romania are:

- 130 km/h on the highways
 - 100 km/h outside cities
 - 50 km/h inside cities
- but be careful to **observe the speed indicators**.

Due to the lack of highways, many Romanian drivers tend to go faster than the speed limits. Don't be surprised therefore if you'll see drivers going 130 - 180 km/h.

Due to this behavior, Romanian drivers will notify everyone when police is nearby by flashing their lights. To avoid tickets, observe the indicated speed limits whenever you see this signal.

In conclusion, the best thing to do is to go at your own pace, observe indicators and stay out of the way when speedy drivers close by.

After reaching Bucharest, you have to be aware of the local drivers' behavior. Driving in Bucharest often seems chaotic because drivers change lanes abruptly, go on the tram lines (even though they might get a fine) and do all kind of strange maneuvers. You will be more relaxed if you keep a constant speed and are careful to the cars near you, especially the one in front. Also, drivers behind you might hunk their horns immediately after the semaphore turns green.

If you find yourself in a tough spot, like having to change lanes while stopped at the semaphore, hand communication is the best way; let the nearby drivers know your intention and they will usually make way for you to do your thing.

Parking is another challenge in Bucharest. Many drivers park wherever they find a spot; this is risky because your car could be taken and you need to pay to recover it. The simplest thing to do is to get a parking spot at your hotel. Otherwise, a few parkings exist in Bucharest around the "Piața Universității" and "Piața Unirii" areas. [This website](#) has more information about parking in Bucharest.

Useful information for getting around in Bucharest

Language

The main language of Romania is unsurprisingly Romanian. It's a Latin language combined with Slavian words adopted from the neighboring countries.

Most of the Bucharest citizens speak at least some English or French. Young people speak English very well, due to early education and exposure to American culture. You will notice that, unlike in many European countries, movies are subtitled in Romania, allowing the viewers to listen to the original language.

Money & Currency

The Romanian currency is called 'leu'.

Banknotes exist for 500, 200, 100, 50, 10, 5 and 1 leu. Coins exist for 50, 20, 10, 5, 1 ban (1 ban = 0.01 leu). You can see how they look on the [National Bank's website](#).

A source of confusion with the currency lies in its recent history. The currency was denominated a few years ago, which is a fancy word for saying that we cut 4 zeroes from all currency. If you hear someone talking about amounts like 'one million lei', it's most likely it means 100 lei in today's money. Same for 10.000 lei and 1 leu, 100.000 lei and 10 lei, 500.000 lei and 50 lei, 50.000 lei and 5 lei. The currency code has also changed; the old one was ROL (Romanian Leu) while the new one is RON (Romanian New leu). Prices are nowadays displayed in RON, but if you see two different prices it could be RON and ROL.

Credit Cards

Many restaurants and shops accept major credit cards. Please be aware that not all of them do, and you might be surprised. The best way to find out is to ask the waiter or the shop assistant before buying anything.

A major exception is taxis. *Most taxis from Bucharest are cash only.* Make sure you have small banknotes, of 10, 5 and 1 leu because they often don't have (or don't want to give you) change.

Withdrawing Money

You can withdraw money from any cash machine. They are called "Bancomat" and are spread around the city. Depending on your bank, this might be the best deal for currency exchange.

Exchange Rate

The exchange rates have been relatively stable in the past years, somewhere in the following area:

1 EUR ~ 4,4 - 4,5 RON

1 GBP ~ 5,8- 6.4 RON

1 USD ~ 4,1 – 4,3 RON

The reference exchange rate is available on the [National Bank's website](#).

Exchanging Money

Exchange houses and banks can change your cash into lei. There are usually no additional taxes for this service. Of course, the rate depends on the exchange house.

Don't go to exchange houses that look strange. Never exchange money on the street. While these houses are regulated and verified, fraud is more possible than in other European countries. The safest money exchange is at bank offices, where the rate is usually better than in airport or at hotels. The simplest way is to withdraw money from a cash machine ('bancomat').

To exchange money, you will need to identify yourself with the passport or national ID.

Getting around in Bucharest

Public transport in Bucharest includes: buses, trams, metro and taxi.

Metro

The fastest and most reliable way to travel is by metro. Modern trains with air conditioning, security and lots of space arrive every five minutes during the day and at around 15' during late evenings. If your destination is close to a metro station, it's a great way of traveling. You can find more details about the metro and the map [here](#). (be aware that dotted lines on the map are not operational yet)

The price for a metro trip is around 2,5 lei (~€0,50). Multiple trip cards are available for different prices, of which I mention: 2-trip, 10-trip and daily pass. You can buy the cards from almost every station entrance with cash. There are some vending machines that accept credit cards but more they often they are broken.

Trains are available between 5:00 am - 11:30 pm.

The only downside of the metro is that it doesn't cover the whole city. Sometimes, you'll need to use other ways of transportation.

Bus and Tram

Many bus lines are available in Bucharest. A full map of the lines can be downloaded [here](#). A tram map can be downloaded [here](#).

Buses are not that reliable. Their timetable is greatly affected by traffic. Trams on the other hand are more reliable. Buses and trams are often full, especially in the morning and afternoon.

The price for a trip inside Bucharest is 1,3 lei (~€0.30). Tickets can be bought from ticket offices in the bus stations; most of them are cash only. The offices are closed after 6 pm and in week-ends.

You can either buy a card that you can charge with any amount of money or you can buy a card with a specific number of trips. You need to validate the card once you get in the bus or tram on the orange devices.



The simplest way to get a ticket is for a day-ticket through a SMS with the content 'A' sent at 7456. You will shortly after receive a code that you can use on any normal city line (not on express buses). The price is €2.17 including VAT. The ticket is valid until midnight on the day it was bought.

When in the tram or bus, *be aware of pickpockets*. Police officers are sometimes in the bus to prevent unpleasant events, but not always.



Bucharest Metro Map

Overall, buses and trams have larger coverage than metro but delays are to be expected.

Taxi

Bucharest taxis are very inexpensive, if you know the good companies. The normal price is 1.39 lei / km and another 1.39 lei to start, 13.9 lei / hour when the taxi is waiting. A trip around the Bucharest center will cost maximum 40 lei (~€10), usually around 10 lei (~€2.5).

There are many hidden traps with taxis. Therefore, the most important thing is to choose the right taxi company. Here's a list of recommended companies:

- Taxi 2000
- Meridian
- Cristaxi
- Cobălcescu

- *Național*
- *Leone*
- *Confort*
- *As*

A few things to be wary of:

- Most taxis are cash only. Have small bills available
- Most taxi drivers speak only Romanian. It's best to write down your destination and show it to the driver.
- The trip price has to be displayed on the car and inside the car, in front of the passenger sit. Check that the price is correct
- The counter should be visible. The driver should start the counter before leaving. Ask him to do so if he didn't
- Drivers will sometimes move around in circles to increase the price. There's little you can do about it, other than having a local person with you or looking on navigation
- Before paying look at the hour from the receipt. A few cabbies would give you an older receipt, with a very big amount, and ask you to pay for it. Make sure that hour of the receipt corresponds to the hour when you arrived at the destination.

You can order a taxi by phone, but the simplest way by far is using a mobile applications. [Clever Taxi](#) is the most well-known, but others are available in the app stores. Search for Bucharest taxi apps.

Internet Access

Romania has a very good internet infrastructure. It was consistently rated second or third place in the world in terms of average speed.

Because internet access is very cheap (~10€/month for unlimited broadband, usually fiber optics), most cafes, bars, restaurants and hotels provide free, fast, unlimited internet access. Fast 3G and 4G connectivity is also available.

Healthcare

We hope you won't need any health assistance, but it's good to know where to go if something bad happens.

Healthcare is relatively cheap in Romania compared to other countries. Both state clinics and private clinics exist. "[Regina Maria](#)" [healthcare network](#) is well spread around the country, and it has good services.

Emergencies

Like in most EU countries, call 112 for any emergency. The operator will send the appropriate team to help you.

Safety

Bucharest and Romania are safe, provided that you follow common sense rules. Your embassy probably has information about Bucharest that you should read and follow; here's [what the US embassy has to say about Romania](#).

The central area of Bucharest has luxury shops, cultural treasures (for example the National Art Museum and the Ateneu concert hall) and government buildings. The Old Town, while quite filled with people most of the time, has a low rate of unpleasant events. All the central areas are safe for walking, even late in the evening.

A few things you need to be careful about:

- *Petty thieves and pickpockets*. They operate especially in crowded areas and in buses. Subways are safer because they have guards on the train. Keep eyes and hands on your wallets and purses when in a crowd.
- *Taxi drivers*. Call a cab using one of the mobile apps or take one of the taxi companies recommended in this ebook. Make sure the price is right (1.39-1.42 RON/km) and the driver starts the counter before moving. Have small bills available. Don't take a cab from the front of the North Station.
- *Scams*. Don't buy things or exchange money from people offering it on the street. If you see people who seem to be in trouble, call 112 and report the emergency because it could be a scam.

SAFETY

- *Beggars*. They are almost always part of an organized network. Don't give them money.
- *Speedy drivers*. Look around before crossing the streets; some drivers are very impatient and might even go through the red light. You need to be careful.
- *Stray dogs*. The dogs moved with the people when the communists displaced them from country side to the city blocks. Their numbers increased in time. The population is managed now, but they can still pose a problem. Avoid them as much as possible.
- It's not advisable to go into *certain neighborhoods* from Bucharest in the evenings. They include: Ferentari, Rahova and Traian street.

If you need any help while in Bucharest, make sure to ask one of the local organizers; we would be happy to do whatever we can to make the visit nicer for you.

Going out

[The old part of Bucharest](#) has a lot of pubs, restaurants and clubs. It is the place to go for having fun.

Restaurants

Many restaurants have an English menu available. For traditional Romanian food we would recommend [Caru cu Bere](#) (highly appreciated among tourists), [City Grill](#) (has also international cuisine) and La Mama ([one restaurant is located close to the conference location](#)), [La Zavat](#),

Vegetarian restaurants [Barca](#), [Zexe](#)

Fish restaurants [Mesogios](#).

Non-smoking pubs: [Cafe Klein](#) (old center), [Origo](#).

You can find a list and a map of non-smoking pubs [here](#)