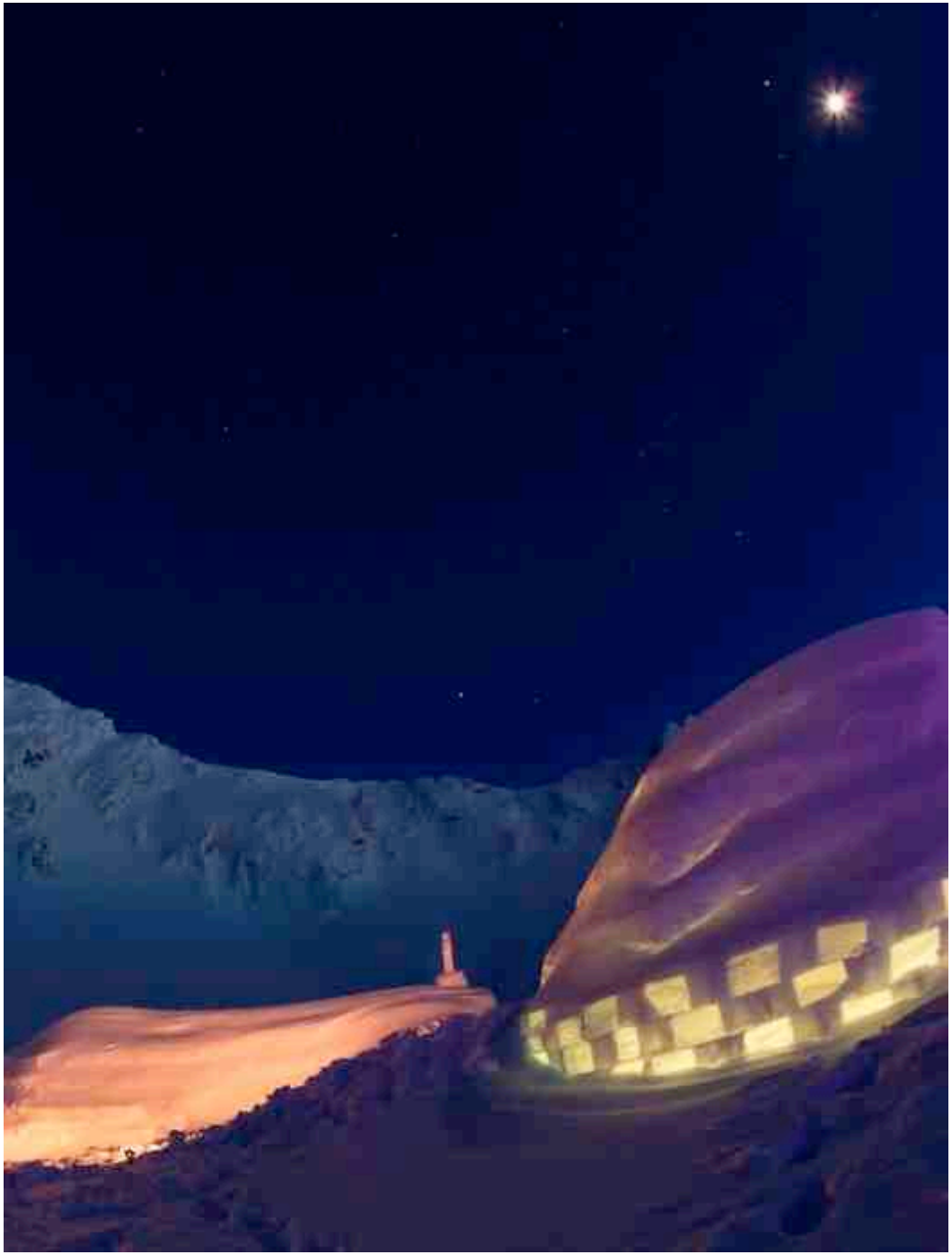
UntravelledPaths

THE ICE HOTEL EXPERIENCE BOOKLET



THE ICE HOTEL EXPERIENCE BOOKLET

A warm welcome to the Untravelled Paths Ice Hotel Experience Booklet on behalf of all the team! We do hope you're excited about your upcoming retreat to the beautiful Transylvanian countryside and we're sure you'll find the material in this pack both useful and informative in preparation of your trip as well as during your visit with us.

If you've not yet touched down on Romanian soil, you'll probably want to refer to the *Basics* section of the guide as this will brief you on the essentials for visiting, including information on additional activities and extras, advice on changing money, what sort of weather to expect and insider tips and hints.

For those that have already joined us off the beaten track, you'll find recommendations specific to each destination on your trip, including information about what to see, where to eat and drink. Our handmade maps should help you find your way around and we've also included a section on useful Romanian words and phrases to bridge that language barrier.

Travel safe and travel fun!

The UTP Team

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FAST FACTS

FAST FACTS

Country:	**Romania**
Capital:	**Bucharest**
Time Difference:	**GMT +2 hours**
Area:	**92,043 sq. miles, 12th largest country in Europe**
Population:	**19,651,000**
Language:	**Romanian**
Ethnicity:	**Romanian 84%, Hungarian 6.1%, Gypsy 3.1% German 0.2%, Ukrainian 0.2%**
Religion:	**Christian Orthodox (81%)**
Dialling Code:	**+40**
Emergency Number:	**112 (no code required)**
Electricity:	**220 volts; a standard continental adapter**
Currency:	**Leu (RON) (plural *lei*)**
Exchange Rate: (Please note these may vary)	**€1 = 4.5 Lei £1 = 5.6 Lei $1 = 3.5 Lei**

THE BASICS

Cash & Currency

CASH & CURRENCY

Currency: Romania is not in the Euro and uses its own local currency, the RON / Lei, which is difficult to get hold of outside Romania. Although most hotels will accept Euros, they convert into the local currency at an elevated rate before processing the payment. As such, you may prefer to pay in RON / Lei. If you're looking to get your Romanian money organised before you travel, the Bureau de Change in M&S is, strangely, one of the only places that dispenses the local currency. Alternatively, you will have access to cash points in Romania from which to withdraw any necessary funds.

Currency Card: For those who'd prefer to do without the hassle of changing currency or dealing with bank charges, we've teamed up with Caxton FX to offer you the benefits of using their currency cards which guarantee the best exchange rates along with the security of plastic. Once you've loaded it up online you can start using it on your travels to withdraw cash from ATMs without the usual charges. As a VISA card you'll also have no problems using it in restaurants, bars and cafes. You can even keep the card after your trip and use it when you're next abroad! If you'd like to know more, get in touch.

Bank Charges: Please note that most cash machines charge approximately £1.50 per withdrawal so use them sparingly. If you're keen to avoid being charged, a new bank in London called Metro Bank offer accounts and cards that are free to use abroad both for cash withdrawals at ATMs and when paying on card machines.

THE BASICS

Luggage & Packing

LUGGAGE & PACKING

Luggage: Alongside standard luggage, we recommend clients bring a smaller bag and transfer essential items into it for the overnight stay at the Ice Hotel, as it can be awkward lugging bulky suitcases around on the mountain. However, should you decide to bring all of your luggage, there is a secure room in the Balea lake Cabana where you can store your belongings.

Clothing: Balea Lake and the Ice Hotel are not generally as cold as people might imagine but we do believe that it's safer to prepare for very cold temperatures, as it is not uncommon for the temperatures outside the Ice Hotel to hit -20 degrees. We would recommend bringing some good waterproof shoes, a warm hat and some gloves to keep yourself warm. Some clients prefer to wear waterproof trousers or a ski suit to protect them from the snow and ice; however aside from technical wear, layering your clothes is just as effective. Given the high altitude, it is also advisable to bring sun cream and sunglasses to protect your skin and eyes from harsh sunlight. We have listed some of the essentials below.

- A Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trousers
- Waterproof shoes
- Pair of gloves
- A Warm Hat
- Thick pair of socks

Packing: Aside from the recommendations on what clothing to bring with you to Romania, we have also compiled a list of other items that you might consider packing.

- Camera
- Sunglasses
- Sun cream

THE BASICS

Weather & Climate

WEATHER & CLIMATE

Romania's Climate: With increasingly long summers and winters, the climate in Romania is rather extreme and plays host to some scorching months as well as a period of severe cold and snow. The average temperature during the winter hovers around -3 degrees although temperatures in rural areas and up in the mountains can drop well below -15 degrees so it's best to prepare for the worst. That said, it's not unusual to find yourself enjoying a coffee outside in a Transylvanian town's café with the sun beating down with surprising strength onto both your face and the snow-covered streets. So wrap up warm but don't forget your sun cream!

Average Climate Statistics: Warmest month is July; coldest month is January; average annual rainfall is 26 inches; highest recorded temperature was 44.5°C on 10th August 1951 in South-Eastern Romania; lowest recorded temperature was -38.5°C on 24th January 24 1942 in Central Romania.

Temperatures at the Ice Hotel: The temperature inside the Ice Hotel isn't actually as cold as you might think. It usually wavers between -2 and +2 degrees although the temperature outside can sink well below freezing. The Balea Lake Chalet is super warm and toasty though so you can always make your way over there to defrost between courses or before bed.

Bad Weather: Unfortunately, in the event of poor weather conditions we cannot guarantee that the cable cars will be running. However, we have always managed to get our clients up to the Ice Hotel so chances of non-delivery are slim. Activities up at the Ice Hotel may also have to be suspended if the weather is not appropriate.

THE BASICS

Food & Drink

FOOD & DRINK

Romanian Food: Let's face it no one comes to Romania for the food. However, there are a few traditional dishes that you should probably try during your visit, if not just for the novelty factor. Some are lovely while others are… interesting. There's a lot of stewed cabbage, the vegetables tend to be soaked in vinegar and they enjoy some rather bizarre cuts of meat. Must-try traditional food includes the staple sour soup, locally known as *ciorba*, little sausage-shaped meatballs dipped in sweet mustard called *mici*, and *sarmale*, which is made up of cabbage leaves stuffed with mince and rice. In restaurants, you'll often find a lot of smoked meat served with a stodgy type of polenta and vinegary vegetables. *Salata de vinete* is a popular choice too, consisting of smoked, mashed up aubergine. If you're going to take the plunge with traditional Romanian food, it's highly advisable to go for a stew of some sort, as they tend to do these rather well! For dessert, you're likely to see *papanasi* on the menu, which features deep-fried doughnuts filled with jam or cottage cheese.

Romanian Wine: Aside from locally produced wines, the people in Transylvania and indeed throughout Romania are masters in producing double-distilled liquors akin to brandy such as *palinca*, *horinca* and *rachie*. Plums, apples and pears are aged in mulberry tree barrels and often acquire a golden hue. That said, a lot of the plum brandy produced is colourless and stored in plastic bottles that could easily be mistaken for water so make sure you sniff the liquid before you drink! You won't make that mistake twice!

THE BASICS

Transport & Transfers

TRANSPORT & TRANSFERS

Airport Transfers: Once you have arrived in Bucharest and have picked up your luggage you will be met by a driver or your bi-lingual guide in the arrivals lounge holding up a card with your booking name on it. This is included in the package so you'll not need to pay the driver for the journey. You'll also have a private transfer arranged for your departure. Details of timings for pick-up will be explained on your arrival during the Welcome Get-Together. Don't worry though, we'll get you to the airport in good time so you can check-in at a leisurely pace and enjoy the duty-free shopping. Given the newness of the buildings, Romania's airports tend to be shiny, new and ultra-modern so make the most of them!

In-Country Transfers: We tend to choose vehicles based on how many guests we have for a particular trip. For smaller groups, we use private cars whereas larger groups tend to travel in mini-buses or coaches. Either way, you should be more than comfortable! We do ask that guests are ready to get going on time so that we can get everyone to the right places at the right times. Traffic in Romania can affect travel times immensely and whilst we try to avoid busy periods on the roads and factor in extra time getting from place to place, we can sometimes get caught out if we're forced to leave later than planned due to guests failing to meet at the correct departure time. We don't like being bossy but it really helps if you can keep an eye on the time!

Transport to and from The Ice Hotel: In the morning, guests are transported to the cable cars at the base of Balea Lake. The journey takes approximately 10-15 minutes and offers some absolutely stunning 360 degree panoramas of the snow capped mountain peaks and the surrounding valleys. Keep your camera at the ready; you're sure to take some spectacular shots to show off to friends and family on your return.

THE BASICS

Health & Safety

HEALTH & SAFETY

Emergency Contacts: In the unlikely event you experience any problems whilst travelling in Romania with Untravelled Paths please contact our local manager, Cristina Brebenel on +40732 673 853. She is an absolute super-woman so don't hesitate to contact her should there be a problem. On arrival, you will be provided with a business card containing all the relevant contact details for both Cristina and your bi-lingual guide, should you need them.

Taxis: Taxi drivers have a deserved reputation for harassing and ripping off foreigners. If in need of a taxi we advise you to ask the establishment you are in to order you one, as they will use reputable and reliable companies. In circumstances where you don't have that luxury, you will note that the taxis actually have their rate per km plastered on their side; these will vary from car to car. *DO NOT USE* a taxi with a tariff over 2 Lei/km. Tried & Tested Taxi Companies: Meridian: 021 9444, Speed Taxi: 021 9477.

Water: Tap water is safe to drink practically everywhere, but most people stick to bottled water to be on the safe side. We would highly recommend drinking bottled or filtered water during your stay in Transylvania.

Stray Dogs: You are likely to encounter a few stray dogs during your stay in Romania, particularly in and around Bucharest. The dogs are very unlikely to cause you any trouble, but if you encounter any sort of confrontation with stray dogs, try to remain calm and walk away slowly, avoiding eye contact.

Pickpockets: As in all cities, it is always prudent to keep an eye on your belongings when you're out and about. Pickpockets in Romania tend to operate on public transport so be extra vigilant when travelling on buses and trains. Be careful at airport terminals too.

Smoking: Smoking is rife in Romania. Despite recent changes in the law, the vast majority of restaurants and cafés still remain smoking zones. This often means that the smoking sections in restaurants and cafés are larger and more popular. In fact, it's not uncommon to see the non-smoking section demoted to a small space in the most unattractive part of the restaurant, so if you don't mind a bit of smoke, it can be worth asking to sit in the smoking section. Should you choose to smoke in Transylvanian, we kindly ask you to respect the environment by disposing of cigarette butts in bins rather than throwing them just anywhere.

Toilets: Public toilets in Romania aren't particularly easy to find but your best bet would be to use the loo in hotels, department stores or fast-food restaurants. It is also highly advisable to carry some tissues around with you just in case you find yourself short! Be warned that public facilities in train stations are not as clean as they should be. In case of any confusion, look for *femei* for women or *barbate* for men.

The Environment: Please be respectful of the environment when you are visiting Transylvania. Pick up any rubbish you may have accumulated and keep the noise to a minimum.

Customs & Etiquette: Not entirely related to health and safety unless you happen to overly offend a bunch of Romanians and it all goes pear-shaped! Anyway, we thought it would be useful to give you some information on the sort of customs and etiquette practiced in Romania.

- Romanians are friendly and open and foreigners are usually made very welcome. Chatting with visitors is very common for Romanians and they will find a way to communicate with you even if they cannot speak your language
- Older people particularly appreciate old-fashioned politeness. It is respectful to use Mrs. or Mr. when using the name of a person that you just meet.
- Handshaking is the most common form of greeting from man to man but when a Romanian man is introduced to a woman, he is likely to kiss her hand avoiding the eyes
- If your Romanian host offers you something to eat or drink and you decline, it will often be taken to mean that you are just being polite and do not want to accept. If you really don't want something, refuse politely but firmly
- As in the UK, it is customary to bring your host a small token such as a bottle of wine. Only bring flowers and chocolates for female hosts and make sure that the number of flowers is odd. Gifts should be wrapped but don't always expect Romanian's to open their presents in front of you!
- It is not considered impolite to ask a person's age, politics, income or religion in Romania so try not to take offence if you find yourself confronted with similar questions
- Tipping is not obligatory in Romania although rounding up taxi fares and adding 10% in restaurants is polite and common practice

BUCHAREST

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SEE »

Something Extraordinary - **Palace of the Parliament** (24-25)
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Something Different - **Walking Tours** (30-31)
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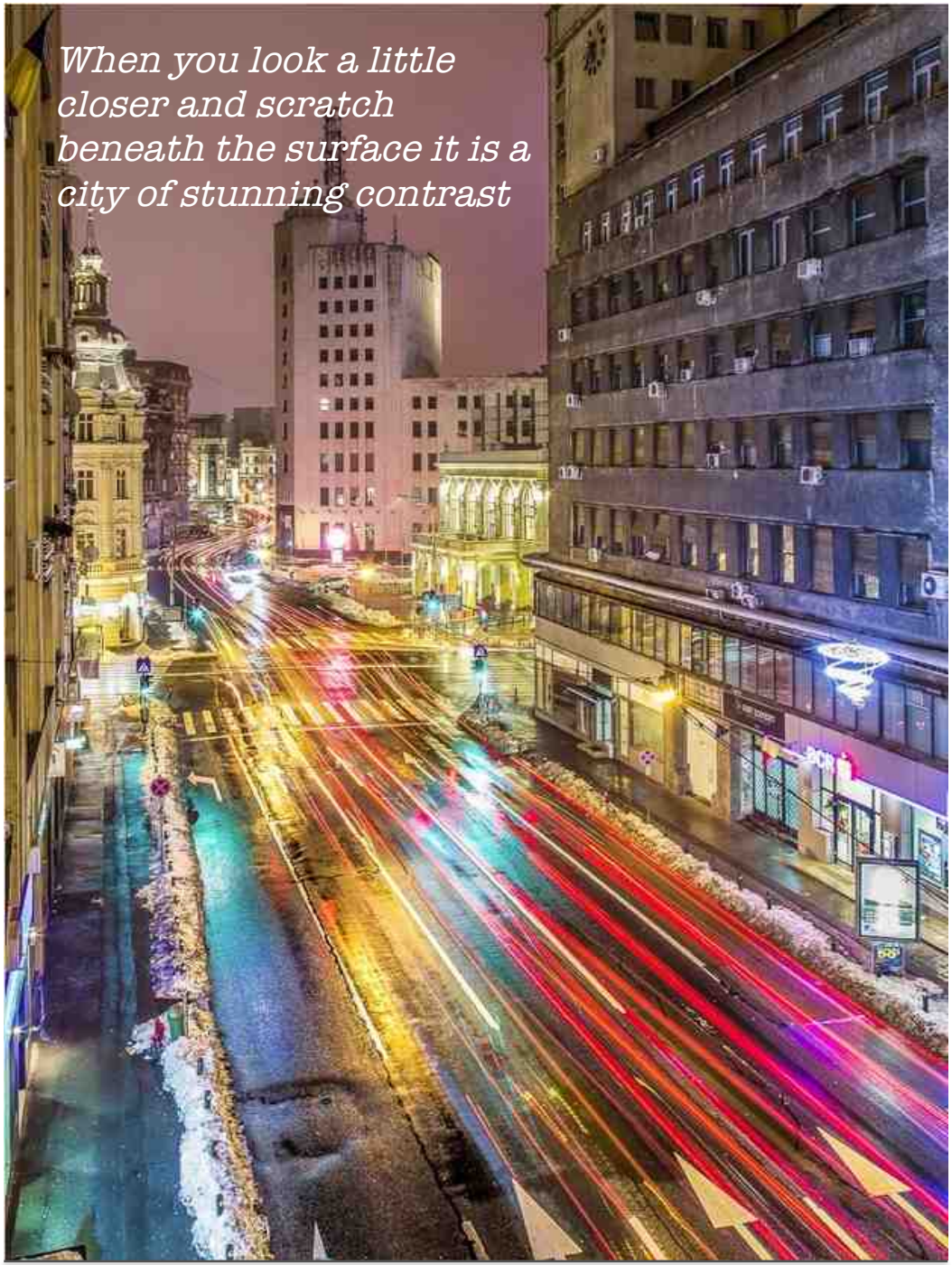


BUCHAREST

Imagine introducing a Communist dictator to Paris for 15 years, add an earthquake for good measure and you'll end up with something similar to what you have in Bucharest. Fortunately much of Bucharest's past beauty still remains and you're likely to find it with every wrong turn you make. It's a city full of surprises and it's this contrast that makes it such a fascinating place to explore.

At first glance the city might seem a little run down with remnants of its communist past on full view, however when you look a little closer and scratch beneath the surface it is a city of stunning contrast. In fact, it is the contrast that we love so much about Bucharest, its towering communist blocks sitting right next to the most beautiful buildings showcasing wonderful examples of belle époque architecture.

You're also likely to notice a few things other things in Bucharest — cars and dogs! Romania's capital has an abundance of both. The latter being a sad after effect of Nicolae Ceausescu's programme of systematisation, where he methodically moved families from their houses to purpose built communist blocks and often household pets had to be left behind. A lot of people seem to be intimidated or put off by Bucharest, but if you can get past preconceptions you might find yourself pleasantly surprised!

The old district of Lipscani (pronounced locally as *Lip-scan*) is the beating heart of the city and our favourite place to wine and dine in the evenings. There are tons of quaint eateries and buzzing bars amongst the historic backstreets so take your pick.

PALACE OF THE PARLIAMENT

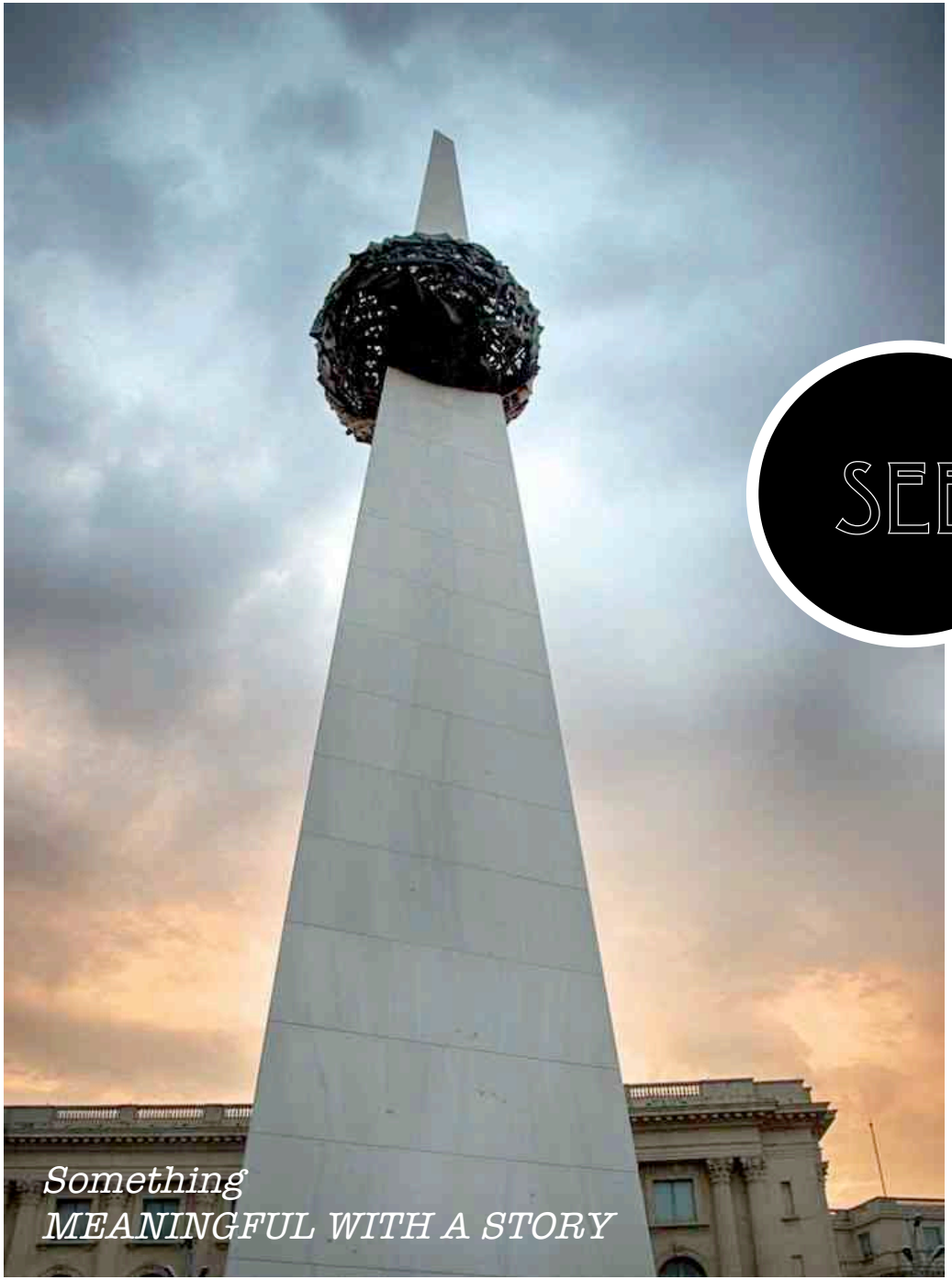
SEE

Billed as the most famous and most controversial building in Romania from the legacy of Ceausescu, the extravagant Palace of the Parliament is well worth a visit. At 86m high and 92m deep, this grandiose structure is the world's second largest building behind the Pentagon and is where Romania's parliaments sits today. Commonly known as the People's Palace, the building contains a whopping 1,100 rooms that are spread across 12 floors both above and below ground level. Despite being home to Romania's Museum of Contemporary Art, the vast majority of the palace sits vacant and remains unused.

If you decide you'd like to take the public tour of the building you'll need to remember to bring your passport or driving licence with you, and it might be worth asking a member of the UTP team to make the reservation for you as opening hours can be a bit erratic. Inside you'll be greeted by offensively large marble-plated halls, enormous sweeping staircases and some rather out of place conference rooms. The trip onto the wide roof terrace is probably the highlight of the tour as it offers incredible views over the sprawling capital city.

Please note that those wanting to take pictures will need to pay an additional fee for the privilege, which works out around £5. If your time in Bucharest is limited you'd be better off just taking a look from the outside just to get an idea of the sheer magnitude of the building. For the most impressive shots, head over to Piata Unirii.

Calea 13 Septembrie 1; Open Mon to Sun 10:00 – 16:00 (last tour at 15:15); 25 lei entry for a standard tour (around £5)



REVOLUTION SQUARE

SEE

Located just a ten minute stroll north of the Lipscani district, Revolution Square is a significant historical and cultural site that is an absolute must-see.

Renamed after the 1989 revolution, the square is home to some of the most beautiful buildings in Bucharest such as the Royal Palace, the University Library and the stunning Romanian Atheneum which showcases some stunning baroque architecture and is now used as an auditorium that is world renowned for its incredible acoustics.

Aside from the impressive architecture and the bold statue of King Carol I, perhaps the most striking feature to grace the square is the extraordinary looking Memorial of Rebirth, which was built to commemorate the victims of the popular revolt against Ceausescu's regime, which erupted in the square during the dictator's final speech and led to the fall of communism. The memorial, which features a metal ball spiked on a 25 metre high marble pillar, has been described in various manners from the literal 'olive on a toothpick' to the more metaphorical 'potato of the revolution'. We'll leave you to make your mind up on the symbolism.

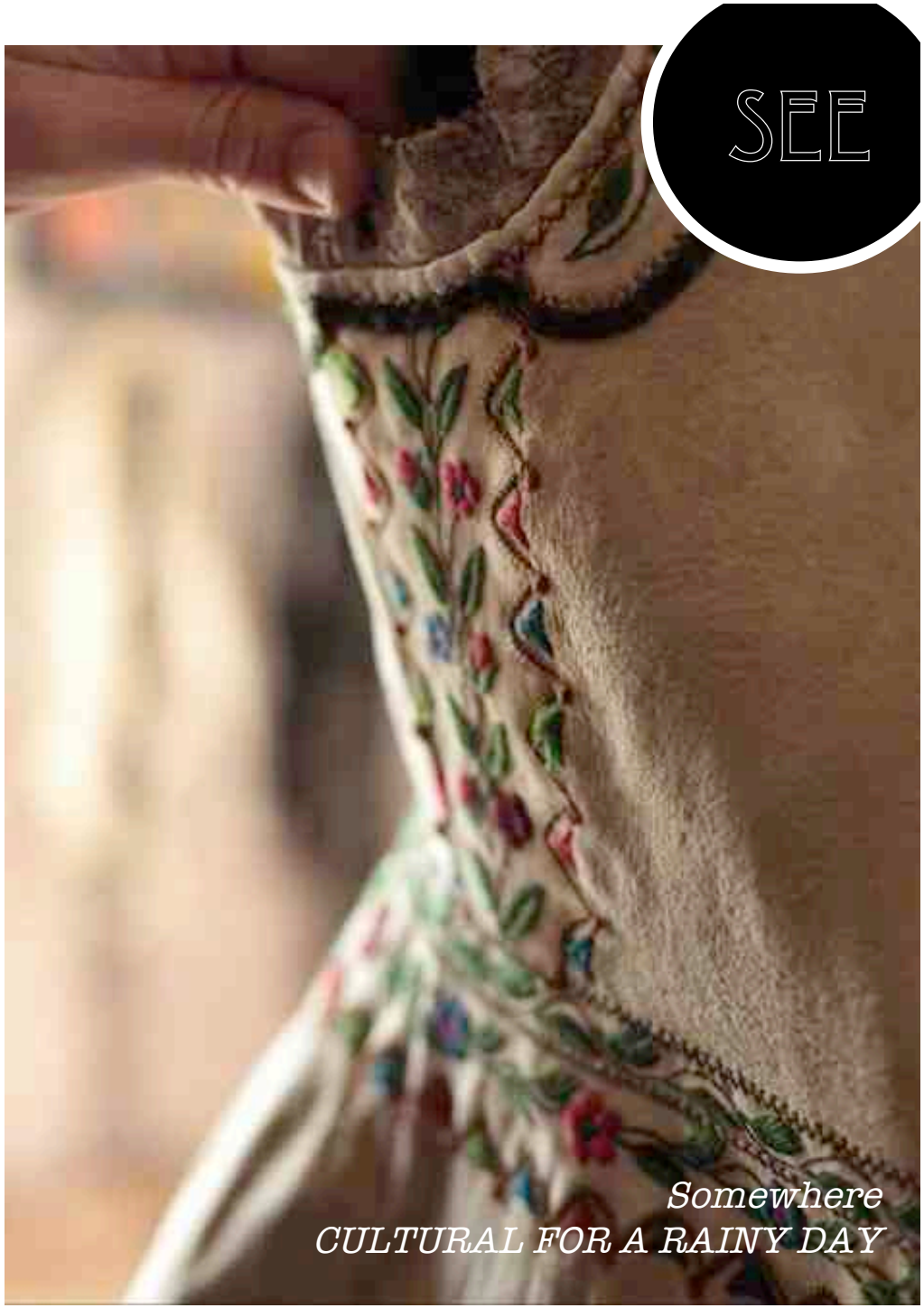
PEASANT MUSEUM

If the weather isn't pleasant enough for a trip around the Village Museum then head to the Peasant Museum and immerse yourself in the culture and traditions of the country's peasant lifestyle over the past four centuries. Boasting a rich collection of artefacts, ceramics and textiles including traditional clothing, ancient religious icons and terracotta pottery, this original museum has received the honourable European Museum of the Year Award and is considered to be one of the best museums in the country.

Spend an hour after lunch exploring the exhibitions at your leisure or purchase an audio guide for around £2.

At least once a month, the museum hosts a range of craft fairs as well as puppet shows for children each Saturday and Sunday morning, both of which take place in the rear courtyard of the Peasant Museum's beautiful red-brick building.

Sos. Kiseleff 3; Open Tues to Sun 10:00 - 18:00, Closed Mon; Admission 8 lei (around £1.50), 2 lei children



DO

BUCHAREST CITY TOUR

Experience Bucharest on foot and let your guide help unravel the stories behind the eclectic mix of architecture and fascinating Communist history while you map stays in your pocket and the city. An interesting way to understand the country's turbulent past and also a fantastic opportunity to help you get your bearings of the city.

Duration: 1 hour 15 minutes
Price: 12 **€**

RED PANDA DOG SHELTER

Bucharest's problem with stray dogs has been rife ever since Communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu's programme of systematisation was enforced and families were moved into purpose-built communist blocks, having to leave household pets behind. The situation has continued to worsen over the years and now there is an average of 1 stray dog for every 31 residents in Bucharest.

The wonderful people at Red Panda Romania in Bucharest are desperately trying to do their bit by rescuing as many abandoned animals as possible, offering them shelter, food and TLC...

DO

... Once the animals have been vaccinated and spayed or neutered, Red Panda works to find adoption or foster care for them. Some of the dogs at the shelter, however, still haven't been adopted which means that spaces are limited and fewer animals can be taken in and looked after. Finding volunteers who will take some time out to visit the dogs and play with them is also difficult along with raising the funds to buy food, vaccinations and essential supplies. Adoptive and foster families are also highly sought after which is why James and Marion took in five abandoned puppies, three dogs, two cats and one very poorly kitten during their time in Bucharest until they could be re-homed.

During the visit, you'll be shown around the shelter, introduced to the animals and given the opportunity to play with them and give them some much-needed attention. The donation covers the cost of transport to and from the shelter with a guide and the rest is handed directly to Red Panda (approx. 10 to 12 euros is donated per person). Please let us know in advance if you'd like to visit – you'll be doing a very good deed and we're sure you'll enjoy it!

Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes
Donation: 15 **€**

Further Info: If you're looking for a puppy or a pet then you might find one here – the adoption process is seamless and all taken care of by Red Panda including micro-chips, vaccinations, passport and transport. Additional donations can be made online if you'd like to help via Paypal (donate@red-panda.ro). You can also follow them on Facebook before you arrive and when you get home to see how the animals are doing.

CARU CU BERE

Typically the first point of call for any visitor to Bucharest Caru' cu Bere, literally The Beer Wagon, is a famous Bavarian style restaurant that dates back to 1879 and is worth visiting for the stunning interior alone, which boasts painted ceilings and ornate woodwork, the place is constantly buzzing with life. On Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings a well-known folk-song and dance ensemble will serenade you with traditional Romanian music and entertainment and although it can be a bit touristy, it's also great fun.

Appetizing traditional dishes are on offer, local wines are served and of course there is beer, plenty of beer. This isn't a bad choice is you're dead set on tucking into some authentic Romanian food and although the service can be a bit sketchy your meal will be cheap as chips! We love the old newspaper style menus and tend to choose the bean soup with smoked bacon and red onion to start then a variety of mixed platters to share so you get a taste of a variety of Romanian specialities. The Romanian pork shank served with pan-fried sauerkraut and polenta is excellent and don't forget to order a shot of palinka to toast your meal!

Due to its popularity, it can be worth reserving a table in advance although if you don't manage to book or prefer to take advantage of the international restaurants on offer in Bucharest, just stop at the bar for a local beer and to soak up the atmosphere first.

Str. Stavropoleos 5; Open Sun – Thurs 08:00 – 24:00, Fri – Sat 08:00 – 02:00; ££

THE ARTIST

If you're looking for something a little bit different then The Artist is for you. With tantalising and experimental food from a young Dutch chef, the menu changes with the seasons so you'll always be getting the freshest most exciting culinary delights of the moment. Opt for the 'spoon-tasting' menu for each course and treat yourself to a bottle of chilled prosecco. The chic and modern interior compliments the upmarket ambiance of the restaurant, and the prices are more than reasonable for the quality you receive. Perfect for foodies.

Str. Nicolae Tonitza 13; Open Tues – Sun 12:00 – 23:00, closed Mondays; £££££

LA BONNE BOUCHE

This is one of our favourites and hasn't failed us yet! In the heart of Lipscani, the bistro's location couldn't be better, the décor is divine with bookcases and gorgeous red-velvet chairs, the service is the best in Romania and we applaud the extensive reading material in the bathrooms! We love the baked Camembert, the seabass with champagne sauce, and the duck with truffles and mash. Make sure you order your own dessert; they're too good to share! Amazing crème brûlée.

Str. Franceză 30; Open Mon – Sun 12:00 – 23:30; £££

EAT

CAFÉ VAN GOGH

Right next door to our preferred Bucharest hotel, the Rembrandt, this little gem is one of our favourite haunts. Not too busy or too loud, the atmosphere is friendly, relaxed and wonderfully unpretentious and we reckon it's the perfect place for a coffee or a drink at any time of day. In fact even amongst the locals Cafe Van Gogh has become the go-to venue for pretty much every and any occasion – a leisurely morning coffee and croissant watching the world go by in front of the long windows; a light lunch of crunchy salads and toasted sandwiches set on lovely wooden tables; pre-dinner cocktails with friends and even a nightcap before bedtime.

We especially love their signature dirty burger and brunch on the weekends is great too. Don't be surprised if you end up in Cafe Van Gogh more than once during your trip! Oh, and if you're staying next door at the Rembrandt you're entitled to a 10% discount on any food and drink you order in the cafe. All you need to do is ask for your discount card at reception and show the waiters when you're about to order.

Str. Smardan 9; Open Mon to Thurs 08:30 – 24:00, Fri 08:30 – 01:00, Sat 10:00 – 01:00, Sun 10:00 – 24:00

CHOCOLAT

The name alone is tempting. The desserts on offer inside are beautifully presented and pretty incredible! A great choice if you're feeling a bit indulgent or looking for somewhere nice to grab a coffee after a stroll around Lipscani. We're told that the molleux au chocolat is well worth the 20 minutes it takes to prepare and the Orange Chocolate Martini is a winner. Not cheap but if you're going to indulge you may as well do it properly. Excellent croissants.

Calea Victoriei 12A; Open Mon to Sun 08:30 – 23:30

Somewhere INDULGENT WITH CHOCOLATE TREATS

CHILL

ENTOURAGE

This is the sort of place you could lounge around in all day. From breakfast and brunch through to mid-afternoon coffees then cocktails in the evening, it's funky and relaxed all at the same time. We adore the creative décor with its squashy leather armchairs, colourful hanging lamps and mishmash of stools and tables. It feels a bit like chilling out in a souped-up version of your own living room with its urban but intimate vibe. We're sure you'll love is as much as we do!

Str. Eugen Carada 5-7; Open Mon to Sun 10:00 – 02:00

Somewhere COLOURFUL FOR DRINKS

DRINK

PAPIOTA

A cute retro bar huddled on the first floor of an old building. Decked out like a 1980s Communist tailor shop, the décor features vintage sewing machines, old factory-style lighting and a mish-mash of odd chairs and sewing tables. The atmosphere is great, the drinks are cheap and the music is spot-on. Chilled during the week and up beat at the weekends.

Str. Lipscani 43; Open Sun to Wed 14:00 – 02:00, Thu to Sat 14:00 – 05:30

BICICLETA

Tucked away on the second floor of a Lipscani building, this bicycle-themed bar is among the old town's best kept secrets and is one of our favourite haunts. The long narrow bar is decorated with parts of old bikes and the stools are even made from bicycle seats with handle bars for arms. Draught beer is served in overturned green bottles and there are cocktails aplenty. On the weekends the DJ mixes up some cool tunes and the place really gets going.

Str. Lipscani 38; Open Sun to Thurs 16:00 – 02:00, Fri and Sat 64:00 – 05:00

PELES CASTLE

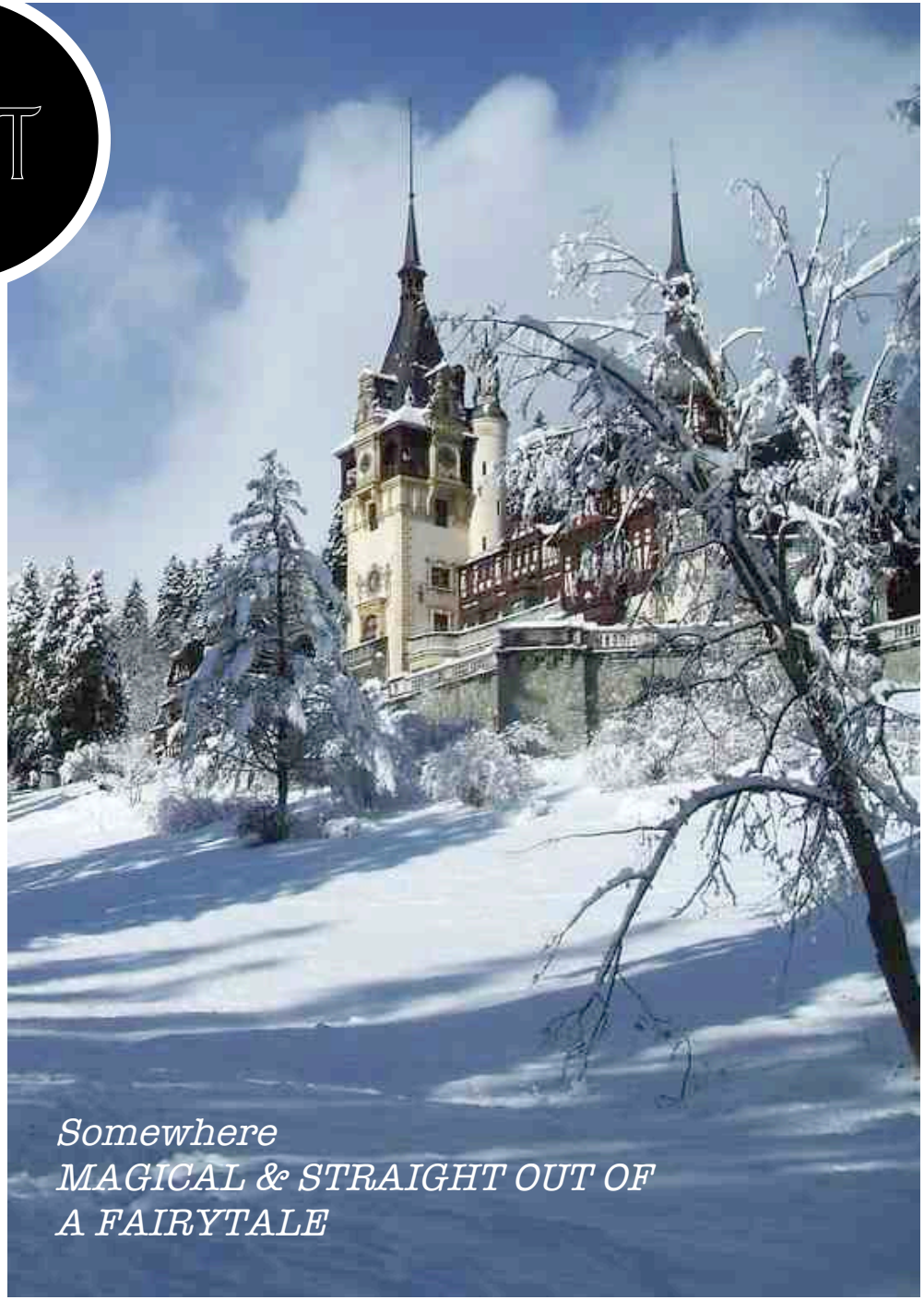
VISIT

Located in the mountain town of Sinaia, the magnificent Peles Castle is one of our top highlights in Romania. Built between 1875 and 1883 for King Carol I as a royal summer residence, Peles Castle cost over 16 million gold lei to construct, the equivalent of which works out at around £10 million today!

Set against a stunning alpine backdrop at the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains, the exterior of the castle is like something out of a fairytale with its spiked turrets, pointed towers and marble statues, elevated over acres of fields and meadows. The interior is even more magical still. Its 160 rooms are ornately and opulently decorated with stained glass windows depicting fairy tales, huge arched doorways, endless tapestries carpeting the marble floors, secret passageways and even a wooden stairway leading to nowhere.

Peles was also the first castle in Europe to boast electricity, central heating and vacuum cleaning systems all of which are still working today, and houses Romania's first cinema room with original paintings from a young Gustav Klimt.

Enjoy the beautiful castle grounds before heading inside for a guided tour of the stunning interior. Please note that there is an additional fee if you'd like to use your camera.



VISIT

RASNOV FORTRESS

Located on a rocky hilltop in the Carpathian Mountains, the crumbling fort of Rasnov towers at nearly 200m over the sprawling Transylvanian countryside below. The fortress was built in 1215 by Teutonic Knights and was used a defensive stronghold against the invading Tartar army with its nine towers, two bastions and drawbridge. It was said to be owned by Vlad the Impaler's grandfather, Mircea the Old.

Throughout its history, the fortress was only forced to surrender once in 1612 when invaders located and cut off the citadel's hidden water source after which it was decided that the construction of a well was the only way to provide safe access to water within the castle walls during sieges. Local legend has it that two Turkish prisoners were tasked with the job in exchange for their freedom upon completion of the well. Starting in 1623, it took the two men 17 years to dig the 143m deep well through the unforgiving solid rock in the centre of the citadel and they were still executed. Poor chaps!

The last siege of Rasnov Fortress took place in 1690 during the final Ottoman invasion of Transylvania. Damaged by fire in 1718, it was rebuilt the following year but damaged yet again by an earthquake in 1802. The fortress was then used as a place of refuge during the revolution of 1848 and was later abandoned.

Nowadays, the remains of the old fortress are a pleasure to wander around with maze-like rooms connected by old wooden ladders, secret passageways, and even a museum boasting a skeleton buried beneath a glass floor along with some other interesting artefacts. If it's chilly, go and get yourself some chocolate with Schnapps inside! They're £1 a pop, but are rather tasty.

BRASOV

LEARN »

Something Interesting – **Brasov** (50-51)

SEE »

Something Gothic – **Black Church** (52-53)
Somewhere with Amazing Views – **Black & White Towers** (52-55)
Something Charming– **St. Nicholas Church** (54-55)

DO »

Something Informative – **Brasov Walking Tour** (56-57)

EAT »

Somewhere Romantic for a Candlelit Dinner – **Bella Muzica** (58-59)
Somewhere Smart for Lunch – **Prato** (60-61)
Something Italian – **Casa Hirscher** (60-61)

CHILL »

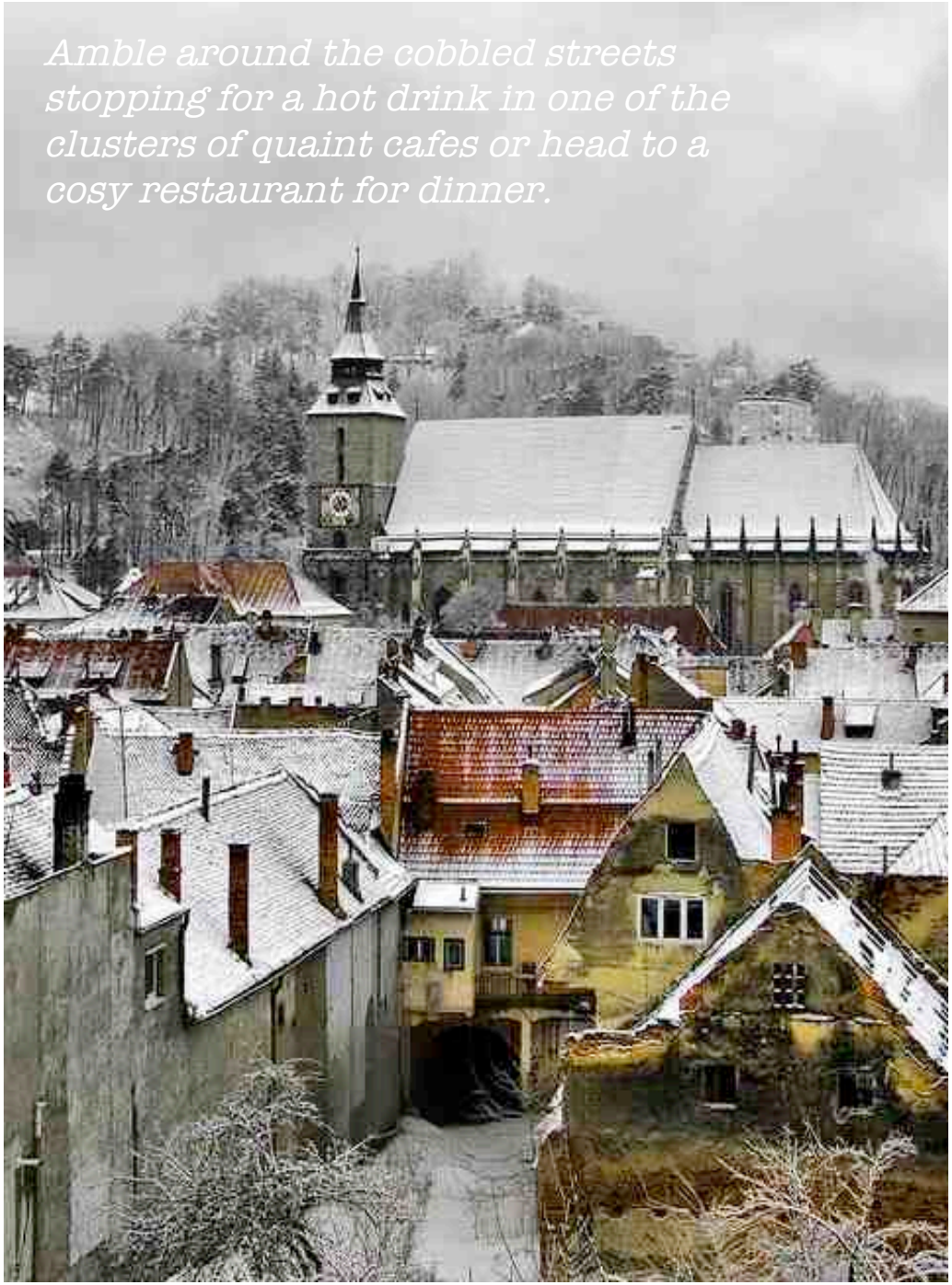
Somewhere Different for Cure-All Cocktails – **Doctor Jekelius** (62-63)
Somewhere Arty – **Colaj Café** (64-65)

DRINK »

Somewhere Chilled & Minimalist – **Simone** (64-65)

VISIT »

Somewhere Spooky & Home to Dracula – **Bran Castle** (66-67)



BRASOV

Nestled in the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains and known as the gateway into Transylvania, the medieval Saxon town of Brasov is an absolute gem. A world away from the lively buzz of the capital city, Brasov provides the perfect base for exploring the Transylvanian countryside with its rural villages, fortified churches and thick forests as well as the infamous Bran Castle, would-be residence of mysterious Count Dracula.

Set against a beautiful mountain backdrop and rich in clean fresh air, the pace of life in Brasov's Old Town is noticeably slower and more relaxed than in Bucharest is the ideal location for those who prefer to take in the atmosphere at a leisurely pace, ambling around the cobbled streets, stopping for a hot drink in one of the clusters of quaint cafes or heading to a cosy restaurant for lunch or dinner.

The town's distinctive medieval ambiance is reflected in its striking examples of gothic and baroque architecture, the most prominent of which has to be the Black Church with its smoke-blackened walls and looming presence over the beautiful old square in the heart of the town. All the sights worth seeing in Brasov are accessible by foot including the narrowest street in Europe and the climb up to the top of the Black Tower where the entire city unfolds before your eyes.

BLACK CHURCH

Looming over Brasov's main old town square, it's hard not to spot the imposing Black Church, which is said to be the largest church between Vienna and Istanbul. This stunning example of Gothic architecture dates back to 1477 and actually acquired its name after being blackened by smoke from the great fire of 1689, the restoration of which took nearly 100 years. As a result, the interior of the church is now mainly in Baroque architectural style but boasts the largest organ in Eastern Europe with a whopping 4000-pipe organ that dates all the way back to 1839.
If you're lucky enough you might even be in town on Tuesday when the church holds organ concerts at 6 o'clock in the evening.

Curtea Johannes Honterus 2; Open 10:00 - 15:00, Sun 12:00 - 15:00, Closed Mon; Admission 8 lei (around £1.50), organ concert tickets 10 lei (£2)

BLACK & WHITE TOWERS

Constructed by the Saxons between 1400 and 1650, the black and white towers were erected together with stonewalls and gates to build defensive fortifications to protect the town from invasion by the Mongols and the Turks...

SEE

... What we really love about these towers is the incredible views they afford over Brasov and the surrounding Transylvanian countryside. For information on exactly how to get to the towers just ask your guide and they'll give you some directions. You can pay to get into the towers but we think the views are just as good from the outside. For us, it's the white tower that wins when it comes to the view and it's also easier to get to. Oh, and when you're up there see if you can spot the old 'Stalin' sign etched into the mountain. It's hard to see, but you can still just about make it out.

Str. Dupa Ziduri; Open Tue to Sun 09:00 - 17:00, Closed Mon; Admission 4 lei (around 80p)

ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH

Established all the way back in 1219, this Romania Orthodox church looks like it has come straight out of a fairy tale and remains one of the prettiest churches we've come across. Originally built in Gothic architectural style, the church now showcases mainly Baroque elements while the interior has some lovely frescoes. People often miss the church as it's hidden away from the main square but it's well worth a look. While you're in the vicinity you can visit the first Romanian school located just opposite the church grounds, which opened its doors in 1583.

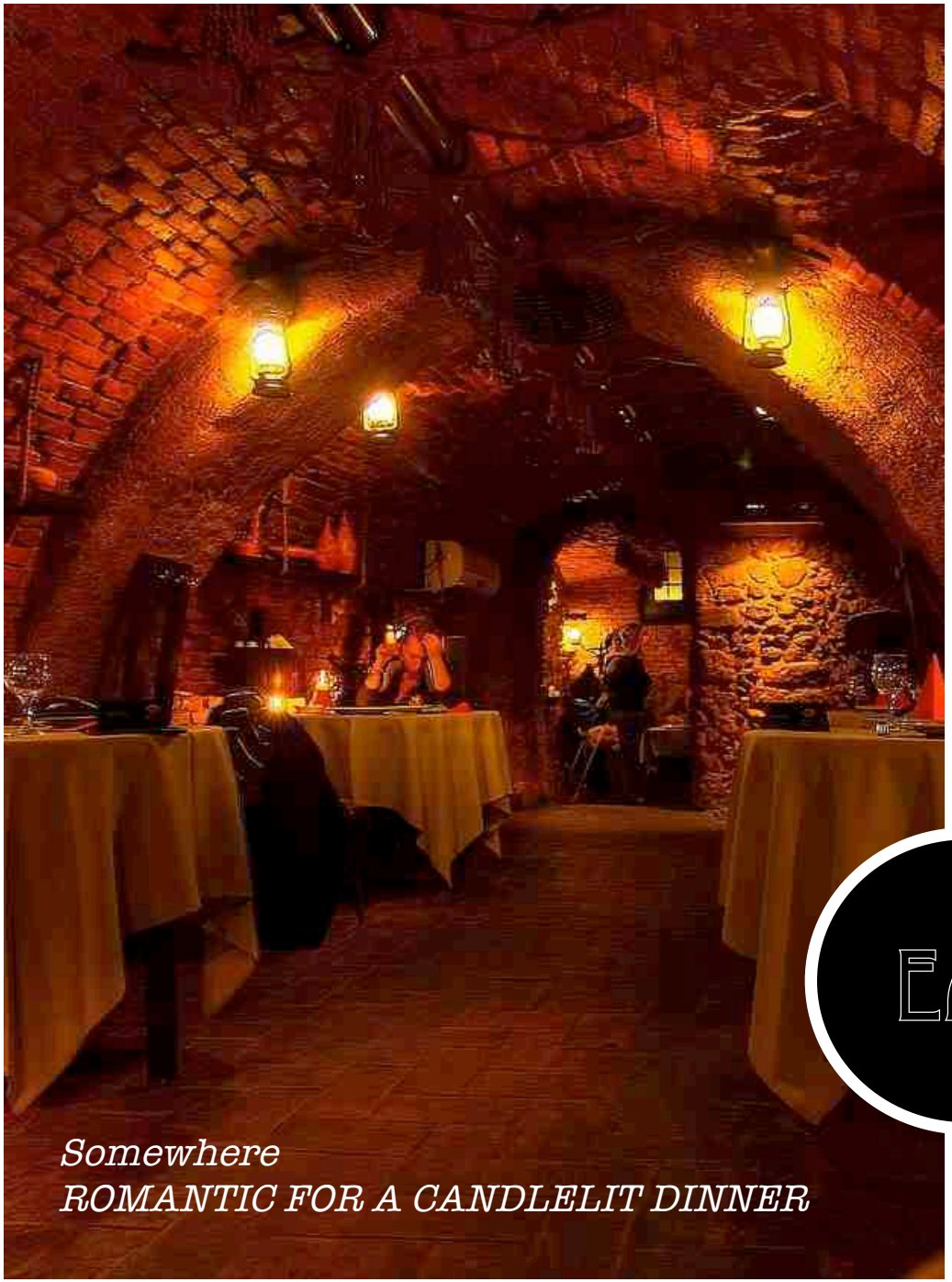
Piața Unirii 1; Open 08:00 – 18:00; Donation (we suggest 2 lei)

BRASOV WALKING TOUR

As well as walking up to the fairytale church of St. Nicholas and past the first Romanian school, you'll also journey through the one of the narrowest streets in Europe and hear all about the history behind the bemusing Brasov sign. Witness the looming presence of the gothic Black Church just off the main square and find out how it got its name.

Duration: 1 hour
Price: 10 **€**

DO



Somewhere
ROMANTIC FOR A CANDLELIT DINNER

THE BELLA MUZICA RESTAURANT

EAT

Occupying the catacombs of the Black Church, this low-ceilinged cellar located in the hotel of the same name is perfect for a cosy evening meal complete with exposed brickwork and candlelight.

The menu offers a strange combination of Hungarian and Mexican dishes at very reasonable prices. Go for the fajitas or the bean soup in bread, and beware of the handmade tortilla chips, they are delicious and very moreish! You can even order the soundtrack to your meal on the music menu.

The cosiest place to dine is in the smoking section. The non-smoking section is situated under the stairs and doesn't have quite the same atmosphere.

Piata Sfatului 19; Open Mon to Sun 12:00 – 23:30;
Price: ££

PRATO

Classy yet unpretentious, the walls are adorned with bright, surrealist pieces of art and the bar is decked out with big bottles of spirits and wine glasses. Perfect for a late lunch, Italian style. We'd go for a glass of red, a big bowl of fresh tagliatelle with Bolognese sauce and a strong espresso to round it off. The pizzas look authentic and they often have deals at lunchtime including a great value buffet that you should definitely check out. Good food, good service and a good wine list. Thumbs up!

Str. Michael Weiss 11; Open Mon to Sun 10:00 – 24:00; £££

CASA HIRSCHER

Cool, elegant and fun. With relaxed live piano music, candlelit tables and an open conservatory area coaxing in plenty of fresh air, this is one of our favourite restaurants in Brasov. The Italian food makes use of fresh, local produce and is presented in style while the decor is playful and lighthearted with neon orange and pink wine glasses, rainbow-coloured cushions, palm trees and walls lined with antlers. While service can be slow at times and prices are a little steeper than your average Romanian restaurant, you're getting quality that you'd pay over double for in the UK. Good vegetarian options.

Str. Apollonia Hirscher 12-14; Open Mon to Sun 09:00 – 24:00; £££

EAT

Somewhere
DIFFERENT FOR CURE-ALL COCKTAILS

CHILL

DOCTOR JEKELIUS

You could well be fooled into thinking that this cafe is an old-fashioned chemist with its worn exterior façade, pharmaceutical name and murky glass windows. Head inside, however, and you'll be in for a surprise. The pharmacy-style decor dates back to 1905 and features rows of medicinal bottles lined on white-washed shelves, framed black and white pictures and old prescriptions, and furniture from a 1910 Saxon pharmacy. The cafe is named after Dr. Ferdinand Jekelius, a chemist who set up Brasov's first pharmacy and was famous for prescribing natural remedies some of which are still available to order today!

Choose from a long list of medical infusions aimed to treat particular ailments like the common cold or even a hangover, and if you're feeling brave enough you could order an 'anaesthetic' which contains pure alcohol and is served in a long test tube! In fact, most of the drinks here are served in test tubes, glass beakers or measuring jugs which adds to the pharmaceutical flavour.

Go and get yourself cured at our favourite cafe in Brasov.

Str. Michael Weiss 13; Open: Mon to Sun 08:00-24:00

COLAJ CAFÉ

If Salvador Dali had painted his own version of Alice in Wonderland's Mat Hatter's Tea Party it might have looked something like the Colaj Café in Brasov. With bathtub-shaped sofas, multi-coloured door panels, menus mounted on easels, a collection of scrapyard chairs and studio-style lighting, it's not difficult to understand where it got its name. This bohemian café attracts the local artsy types and is often buzzing with painters, writers and photographers, which can sometimes make the place a little hot and stuffy. The coffee and tea is imported from far-flung places around the world and there's plenty of cocktails and bottles of wine to keep you occupied while you admire the artwork and people-watch. Beware, a trip to the bathroom may make you feel as though you've had one too many…!

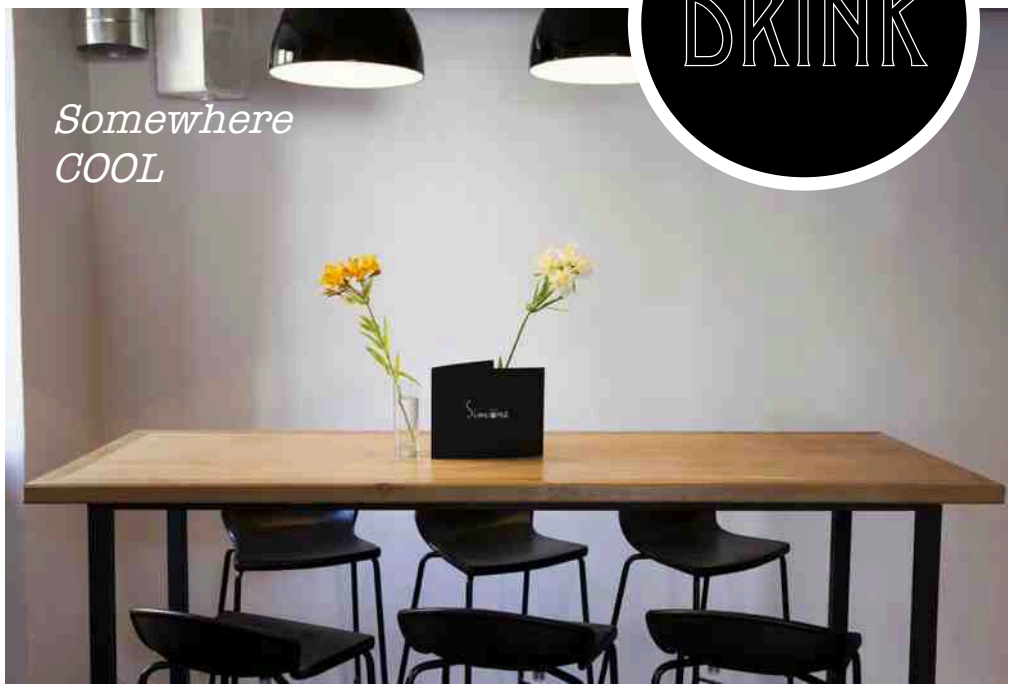
Str. Apollonia Hirscher 2; Open Mon to Sun 10:00-24:00

DRINK

SIMONE

Located off the main strip, this place is one of our favourite Brasov hangouts. Chilled, minimalist and cool, there's coffee during the day and cocktails, music and dancing at night when a local DJ gets the atmosphere going later in the evenings. We haven't eaten there but there's a good range of vegetarian dishes on the menu if you're feeling peckish.

Str. Politehnicii 6; Open Sun to Thurs 09:00–01:00, Fri to Sat 09:00-03:00



BRAN CASTLE

Perched high atop a rocky plateau with imposing spiked turrets and blood-red towers, Bran Castle looms eerily over Transylvania cloaked in myth and legend. Commonly known as Dracula's Castle, the 13th century castle is the real life setting of Bram Stoker's sinister novel and the would-be residence of Count Dracula himself. Despite being a fictional character, Dracula was based on the Wallachian prince, Vlad Tepes also known as Vlad the Impaler, who allegedly spent some time at the castle during his bloodthirsty reign of terror.

Dark narrow stairways wind through the castle connecting underground passage, watch towers that served as dungeons, and 57 rooms housing collections of Gothic furniture, weapons and armour dating all the way back to the 14th century. We have to admit that Bran isn't our favourite castle in Romania and probably doesn't live up to the hype but it's a box-ticker and you can't really leave without having a look!

While you won't be given a guided tour of the castle there are information points throughout the rooms as well as audio guides that you can purchase at the entrance point so you can choose to explore the castle at your leisure in whichever way you choose.

VISIT

BALEA LAKE & ICE HOTEL

LEARN »

Something New – **Balea Lake** (70-71)

SEE »

Something Incredible **– Ice Hotel** (72-73)
Something Beautiful – **Ice Church** (74-75)

DO »

Something Fun **– Snow & Ice Activities** (76-77)
Something Extreme – **Snow Zorbing** (78-79)
Something Creative – **Ice Sculpting** (80-81)
Something Adventurous– **Tunnel Trek** (82-83)
Something Unique– **Dining at the Ice Restaurant** (82-83)

EAT »

Somewhere Spectacular – **Ice Restaurant** (84-85)

CHILL »

Somewhere Cosy & Warm – **Balea Lake Chalet** (86-87)

DRINK »

Something Exciting in an Ice Glass – **Sub Zero Ice Bar** (86-87)

BALEA LAKE

Perched high up in Transylvania's Fagaras Mountains at an altitude of 2,034 meters, the glacial Balea Lake is a stunning location that will take your breath away with its changing facades throughout the year.

In the summer, the lake is reached via the Transfagarasan, a twisting snake of a road that has earned its title as 'the best road in the world' by Top Gear's Jeremy Clarkson. The rugged alpine scenery at the top is a beauty to behold and is made even more ethereal thanks to the serene and crystal clear waters of the lake. Outdoor activities include hiking, walking and enjoying the fresh mountain air while the Balea Lake Chalet provides a wonderful spot for lunch right on the water's edge.

As winter arrives and temperatures in the mountains begin to plummet, the lake gradually freezes over and its calm emerald waters are transformed into thick ice. Huge blocks of the icy lake are then cut and dragged to the location of the Ice Hotel where the construction process begins. In a matter of weeks, part of the frozen Balea Lake is transformed into a beautiful and uniquely designed hotel of ice with its very own Ice Church, Ice Restaurant and Sub Zero Ice Bar. Balea Lake's Winter Park offers a range of snow and ice based activities including skiing, ice skating, tubing and snow mobiling. Snowball fights are an absolute must!

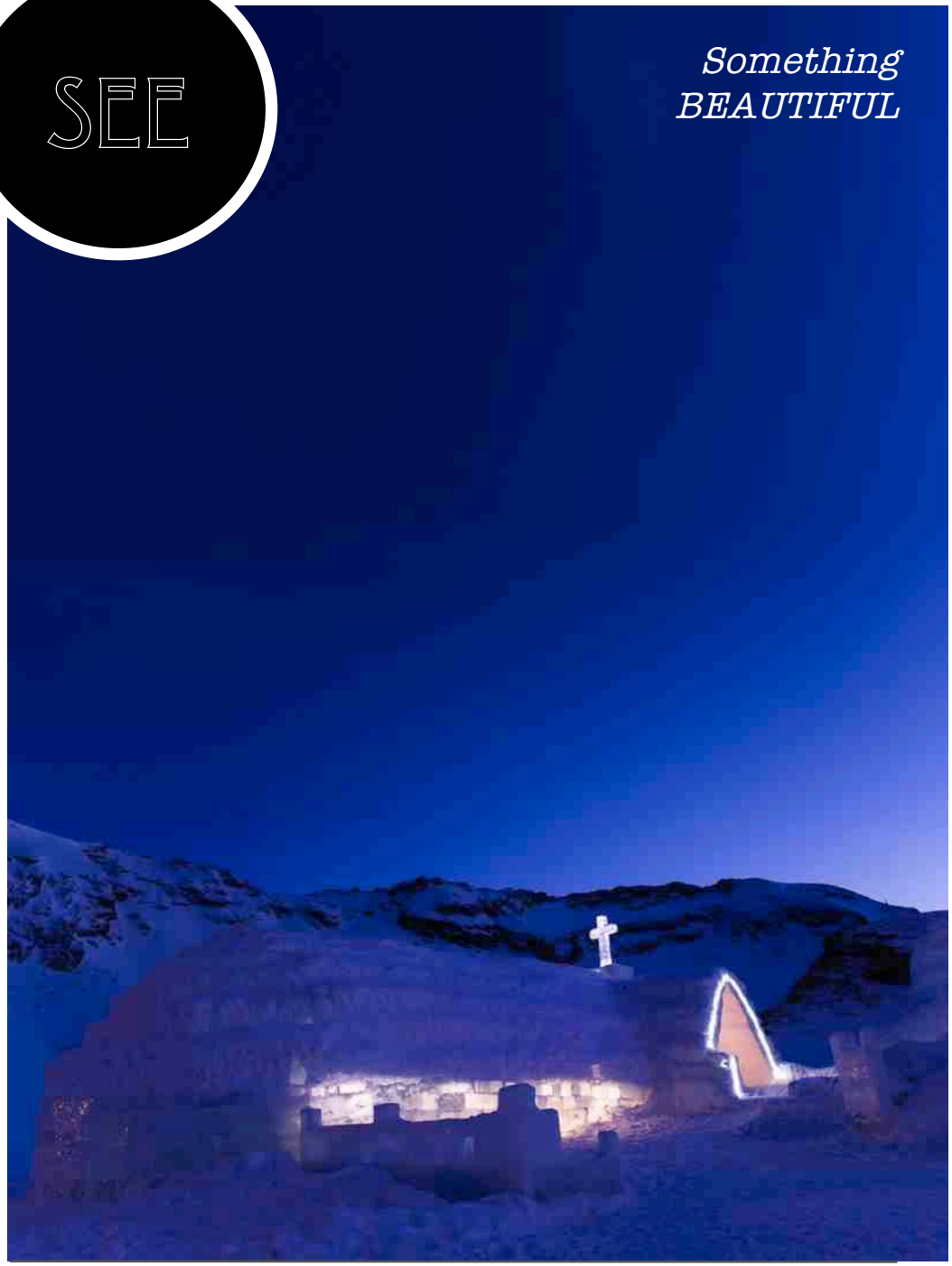
The frozen lake is only accessible by cable car during the winter months until the ice melts and the Transfagarasan reappears.

THE ICE HOTEL

Nestled between the icy peaks of the Fagaras Mountains and veiled by clouds, the remote Ice Hotel stands 2000m above sea level and can only be accessed via cable car. Each winter, once the Balea Lake freezes over, the locals cut and drag blocks of the icy lake to the location of the hotel, which is set against a magnificent backdrop. Hand carved by local craftsmen using traditional techniques, the frozen Balea Lake is transformed into the beautifully intricate structures of the Ice Hotel and its magical Ice Church, the theme of which changes each and every year.

With 14 beautifully lit bedrooms carved from ice no two rooms are the same but will always feature ornately carved ice fireplaces or intricate statues and impressive sculptures. For something extra special you can even choose to sleep in your very own igloo which are larger than the standard ice rooms and based away from the main hotel making them more private and exclusive. Untravelled Paths clients will always get priority over any other guests staying at the Ice Hotel that night.

Although temperatures in the Ice Hotel typically waver between -2 and +2 degrees, guests find themselves enjoying a surprisingly cosy night's sleep, particularly those who have indulged in a nightcap before bed. Ice beds are covered with insulating reindeer fur then topped with mattresses for extra comfort. They also have coloured lights embedded into the ice creating a stunning, magical atmosphere when lit up at night. Bedding, further furs and specialist sleeping bags are all provided with storage and bathroom facilities located nearby in the Balea Lake Chalet.



THE ICE CHURCH

Located just a stones throw away from the main structure of the Ice Hotel itself, the stunningly carved Ice Church is perhaps the most beautiful of the two structures with its iconic frozen cross and hand carved archway.

Inside the church, handcrafted tableaux adorn the frozen walls while an icy altar at the far end provides an impressive and surreal feature. Rows of ice pews are covered in blankets and there are candleholders and other decorative items all made from the frozen Balea Lake. There's even a collection box carved out of ice if you're feeling charitable and want to leave a few lei as a donation.

We've had a string of white weddings up at the Ice Hotel over the years with services held right here in the Ice Church as well as numerous marriage proposals. A few of our guests have returned to get married here so if you think it might be up your street then give us a shout! Otherwise, make sure you enjoy a few serene moments in the Ice Church during your stay.

SNOW & ICE ACTIVITIES

Tubing & Sledging

Bounce and slide your way down the surrounding slopes on a rubber ring or rent a sledge for some good old-fashioned fun – great for the kids! Prices are charged per hour.
35 /15 RON (8/3 €)

Snowmobiling (Fast / Normal)

Race a friend around the mountain basin on this zippy snow bike or hop on with your partner and feel the icy wind in your hair. Choose between two levels of snowmobile – speedy or super fast! Prices are charged per 15 minute slots.
100/120 RON (22/27 €)

Snow Rafting

Whizz across the frozen lake in the comfort of an inflatable raft attached to the back of a snowmobile. The winter version of a banana boat ride! Prices are charged per circuit.
15 RON (3 €)

DO

SNOW ZORBING

BRAND NEW FOR 2015!

Zorbing with a winter twist. Anyone who enjoys a burst of adrenaline will go crazy for the opportunity to tumble down the mountain inside a massive ball!

So what is snow zorbing all about? Strapped inside a huge plastic ball with a safety harness you'll be catapulted down a slope where you'll roll head over feet until centrifugal force takes over and pins you to the edges of the sphere.

The price includes a tumble down the mountain in a zorb-ball along with professional supervision. If you're interested in taking part in this extreme activity you'll need to let us know well in advance so we can make all the necessary arrangements.

Price: 50 RON (11 €)

ICE SCULPTING

BRAND NEW FOR 2015!

Feeling crafty? Learn how to sculpt shapes and objects out of frozen snow and ice under the guidance of a professional sculptor from the local area. After learning the ropes and watching a demonstration you'll get your hands on some carving tools and have the opportunity to transform your block of ice into something special.

The cost includes sculpting tools, ice block, translator and the services of a local sculptor. Please note that this activity can only run with a **minimum of 6 people** and a **maximum of 8 people**.

If you're interested in taking part you'll need to let us know well in advance so we can arrange for the sculptor to travel up to the remote Ice Hotel for the day.

Price: 115 RON (25 €)

DO

DO

TUNNEL TREK

This mini adventure takes you on a journey through the mountain tunnel and out again to some absolutely spectacular views of the wild Carpathian Mountains and glimpses of alpine wildlife including the epic mountain goat. The trek lasts approximately 75 minutes and is suitable for all ages and levels of fitness. You will be equipped with a head torch and a guide for safety.

Price: 25 RON (5 €)

DINING ON ICE

For a truly unforgettable experience, we highly recommend you opt in for the special four-course evening dinner served within the Ice Hotel. With glowing coloured lights, great music, ice tables and chairs, a stunning atmosphere and food served on plates of ice, this is an original dining experience that you'll not want to miss! If you'd like to book dinner in the Ice Hotel then let us know in advance along with any special dietary requirements your party may have. See next page for more details.

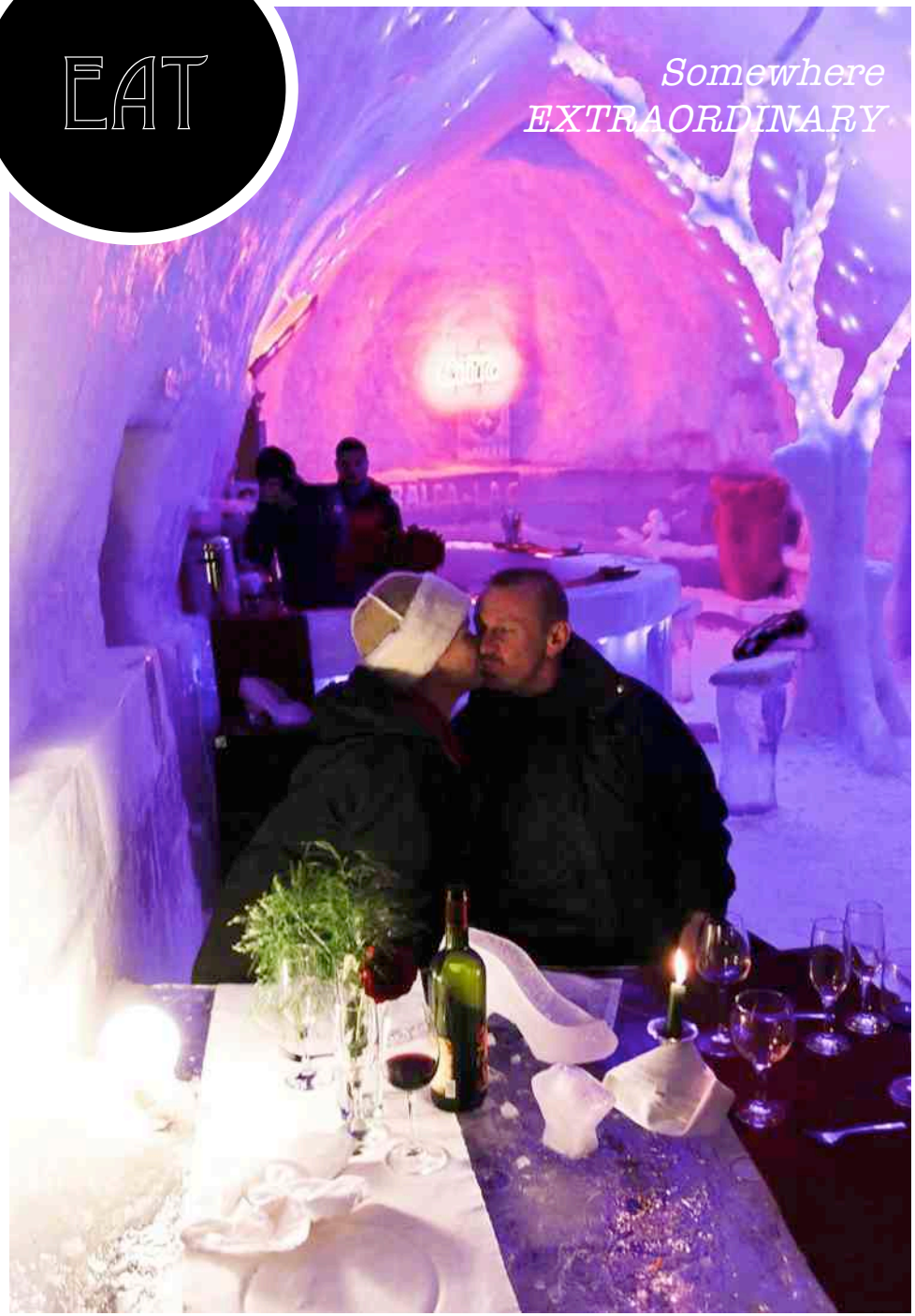
Price: 200 RON (45 € approx.)

ICE RESTAURANT

Don't miss the opportunity to diner in the first and only Ice Restaurant in the world! Set within the magical setting of the Ice Hotel's main hall with its frozen vaulted ceiling and kaleidoscopic glowing lights, you'll be seated at your very own ice table on frozen chairs topped with fuzzy-fur cushions for an unforgettable four-course dinner. There are additional wool blankets available should you feel chilly between courses although most diners choose to warm up with a brisk dance or a shot at the Sub Zero Ice Bar!

The evening kicks off with a complimentary glass of sparkling wine and an amuse-bouche. For starters there's salmon tartar and caviar with a citrus zest served on a slate of ice followed by a deliciously creamy carrot soup topped with crunchy croutons. Afterwards, tuck into tender pork sirloin wrapped in parma ham with a rich mushroom and rosemary sauce and a trio of vegetables. Last but not least, you'll be treated to a Symphony of Raspberries for dessert that is presented on a plate of ice. Think homemade shortcake biscuits filled with raspberry jam, crowned with a spun-sugar lattice and garnished with iced raspberries.

The Ice Restaurant also offers an alternative menu for vegetarians and children, and caters for special dietary requirements and allergies. At £35 a head, the cost is certainly more than you'd pay throughout the rest of Romania but the fairytale setting, fantastic food and surreal atmosphere more than justify the extra pennies. Did we mention you're also eating in a restaurant made of ice?! However, with limited tables available you'll need to reserve your spot in advance.



BALEA LAKE CHALET

Just a stone's throw away from the Ice Hotel across the frozen lake, the delightfully warm Balea Lake Chalet serves hot and cold drinks at very decent prices. The mulled wine is hot, sweet and the perfect antidote to the freezing temperatures outside.

Those not taking part in the Ice Hotel Dining Experience at the Ice Restaurant will eat both lunch and dinner here. While the traditional Romanian menu is extensive and the dishes cost peanuts, go as simple as possible when ordering – something like the snitzel and chips as is pretty foolproof. Oh and don't leave without trying the hot chocolate which comes topped with mountains of cream is to die for!

SUB ZERO ICE BAR

A bar with a difference... Not only is it situated at over 2,000 metres in the remote Transylvanian Alps but it's also made entirely of ice. From the bar itself to the fur-covered stools and even the glasses, everything is frosty, frozen and ice cold. In fact, it's probably the best way to warm up!

Indulge in one of the bar's super-sweet cocktails that'll make your teeth ache or take the Palinka Challenge and see if you can down a shot of Romania's national firewater from a frozen cup in one go without pulling a face! It's harder than you think. Drinks at the Sub Zero Ice Bar are the perfect way to kick off a magical evening at the Ice Hotel. And it closes when you decide to hit the sack!

SIBIU

LEARN »

Something Interesting – **Sibiu** (90-91)

SEE »

Something with Panoramic Views **– Councillors Tower** (92-93)
Something Charming – **Liar's Bridge** (92-93)

DO »

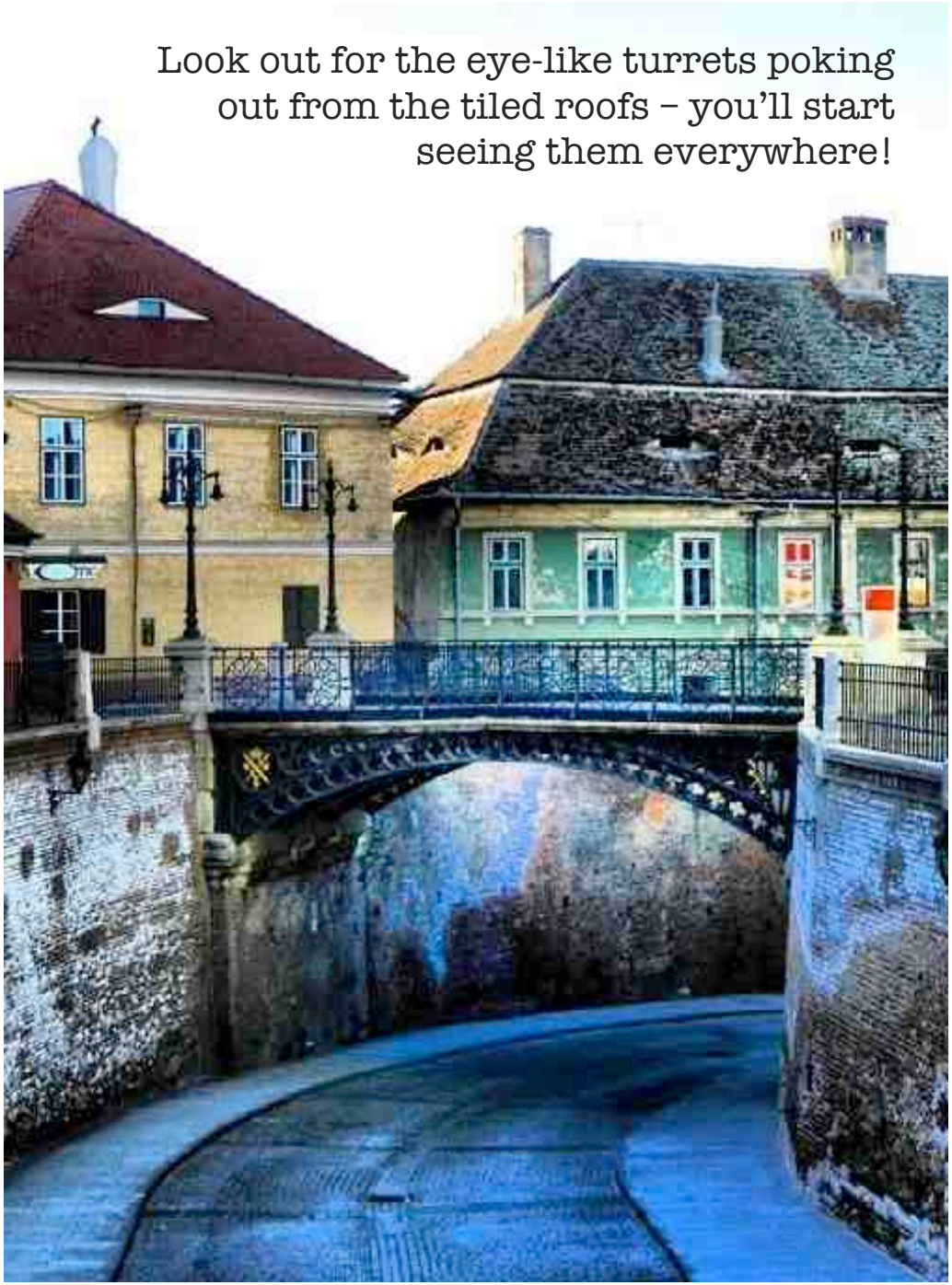
Something Entertaining – **Sibiu Walking Tour** (94-95)

EAT »

Somewhere Italian for Lunch **– Max Restaurant** (96-97)
Somewhere Traditional for Comfort Food – **Hermania** (96-97)

CHILL »

Somewhere for a Sweet Treat – **Café Redal** (98-99)
Somwhere Funky & Artsy for Drinks **– Croquis Art Café** (98-99)



SIBIU

Set in the heart of the Transylvanian countryside, the beautiful 12th century Saxon town of Sibiu represents one of the most charming areas in Romania. The winding cobbled streets, brightly coloured traditional houses and decorative bridges of the old town come together to create a picturesque chocolate-box town that provides a fairytale-like setting.

As the official European City of Culture (2007), Sibiu boasts the best-preserved architecture in Romania and its three main squares are divine with their charming façades painted in shades of warm apricot, pea green, sky blue and sunshine yellow. The quaint back alleys and stunning church-adorned squares provide the perfect opportunity to soak up the atmosphere pausing for refreshments in a string of wonderful cafés, bars and restaurants dotted in and around the main squares.

Look out for the eye-like turrets poking out from the tiled roofs – you'll start seeing them everywhere! The walking tour is the perfect way to explore this historic city.

COUNCILLORS TOWER

Bridging the gap between the two main squares, the 13th century tower has exactly 111 steps that you can climb for a small fee. It's well worth the effort! The views over Sibiu and the Transylvanian countryside beyond are pretty incredible up there and you'll also learn a thing or two from the displays and exhibits on show on the way up. Quick, easy and great for photographs.

Piața Unirii 1, open 08:00 – 20:00 Admission 2 lei (around 40p)

SEE

THE LIAR'S BRIDGE

Well actually, this is only the bridge's nickname but we love the story behind it. Dating back to 1859, legend has it that should you tell a lie whilst standing on the bridge, it would collapse. Ironically, Ceausescu managed to give a speech from the bridge without it falling but apparently he disliked the town and never returned! Try it out yourself.

Piața Mică, open daily

DO

SIBIU WALKING TOUR

As the 2007 European Capital of Culture, Sibiu boasts some of Romania's best-preserved architecture. The Sibiu Walking Tour will take you past winding cobbled streets, brightly coloured traditional houses and over decorative bridges, helping you explore the picturesque chocolate-box town of Sibiu at a leisurely pace.

Duration: 1 hour
Price: 10 **€**

MAX RESTAURANT

This may well be our all-time favourite restaurant in Sibiu, and the five-minute stroll from Piata Mica plenty justifies the dining experience you'll receive at Max. Gorgeous Italian food in a cool 'less-is-more' setting, you absolutely cannot go wrong. The service is great and the espresso is coffee perfection. Check out the quirky bathroom at the back, too. We love it. Character and charm along with great food! (v)

Ocnu 22; Open Mon to Sun 12:00 – 24:00; £££

EAT

HERMANIA

Tucked just around the corner from Piata Mare, this is traditional Germanic food at its very best and is perfect if the weather is chilly outside. Warm and vibrant atmosphere, wonderful service from authentically dressed waiters, and more than decent prices. Go for the Hermania Pfanne, it's a house specialty. You won't regret it. The Apfelstrudel for dessert tops it off nicely, too!

Str. Filarmonicii 2; Open Mon to Sun 11:00 – 24:00; ££

CHILL

CAFÉ REDAL

Located in prime position on Sibiu's main strip, Cafe Redal doesn't look like much from the outside but upstairs, it's a completely different story. Gorgeous high-ceilings combine with slightly extravagant décor but the overall atmosphere is cosy and inviting. Order a cake from the tempting selection downstairs then grab a seat by the window and watch the world go by on the streets below. The homemade lemonade is the best we've tried!

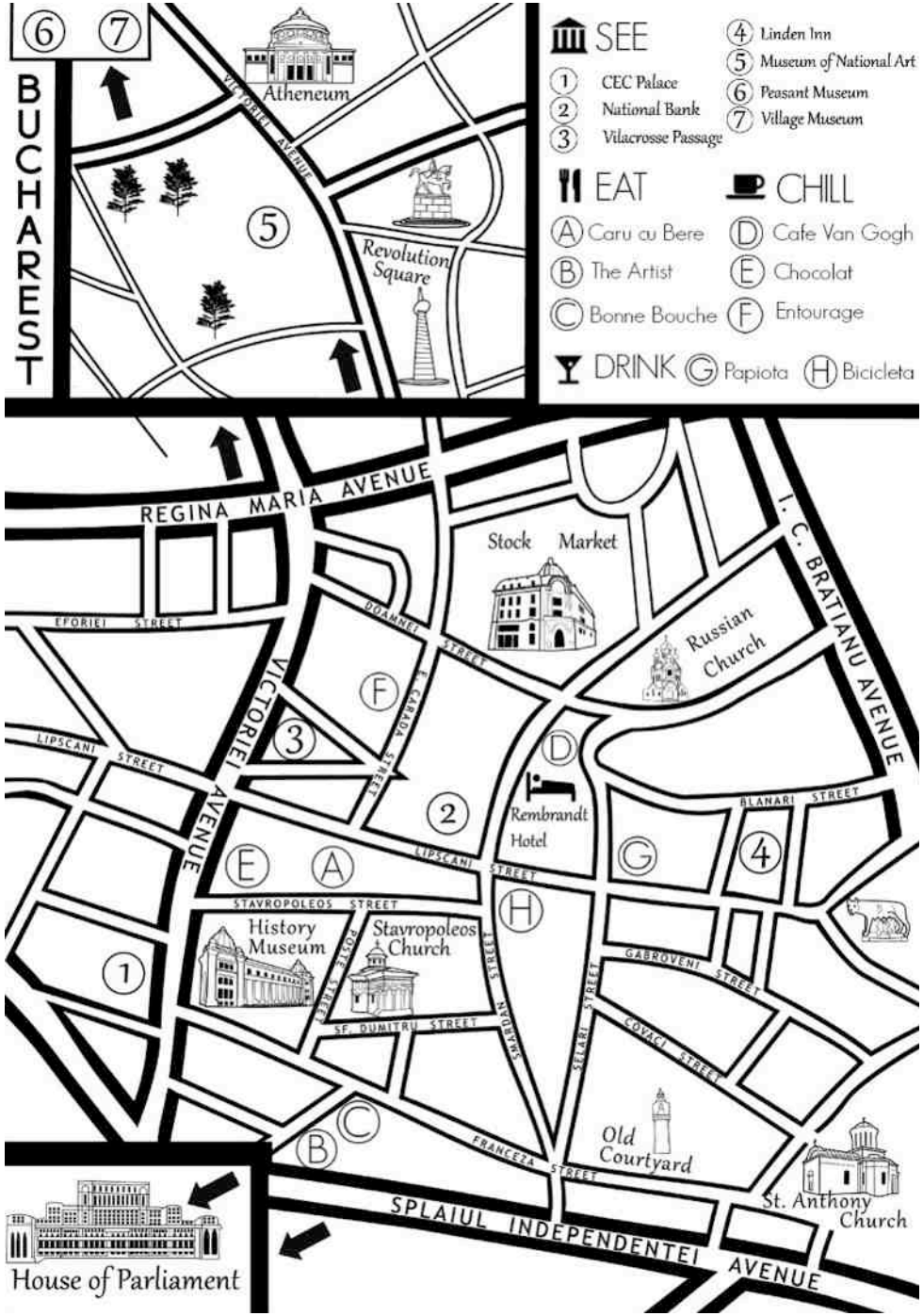
Str. Nicolae Balcescy 24; Open Mon to Sat 07:30 - 22:00, Sun 09:00 – 22:00

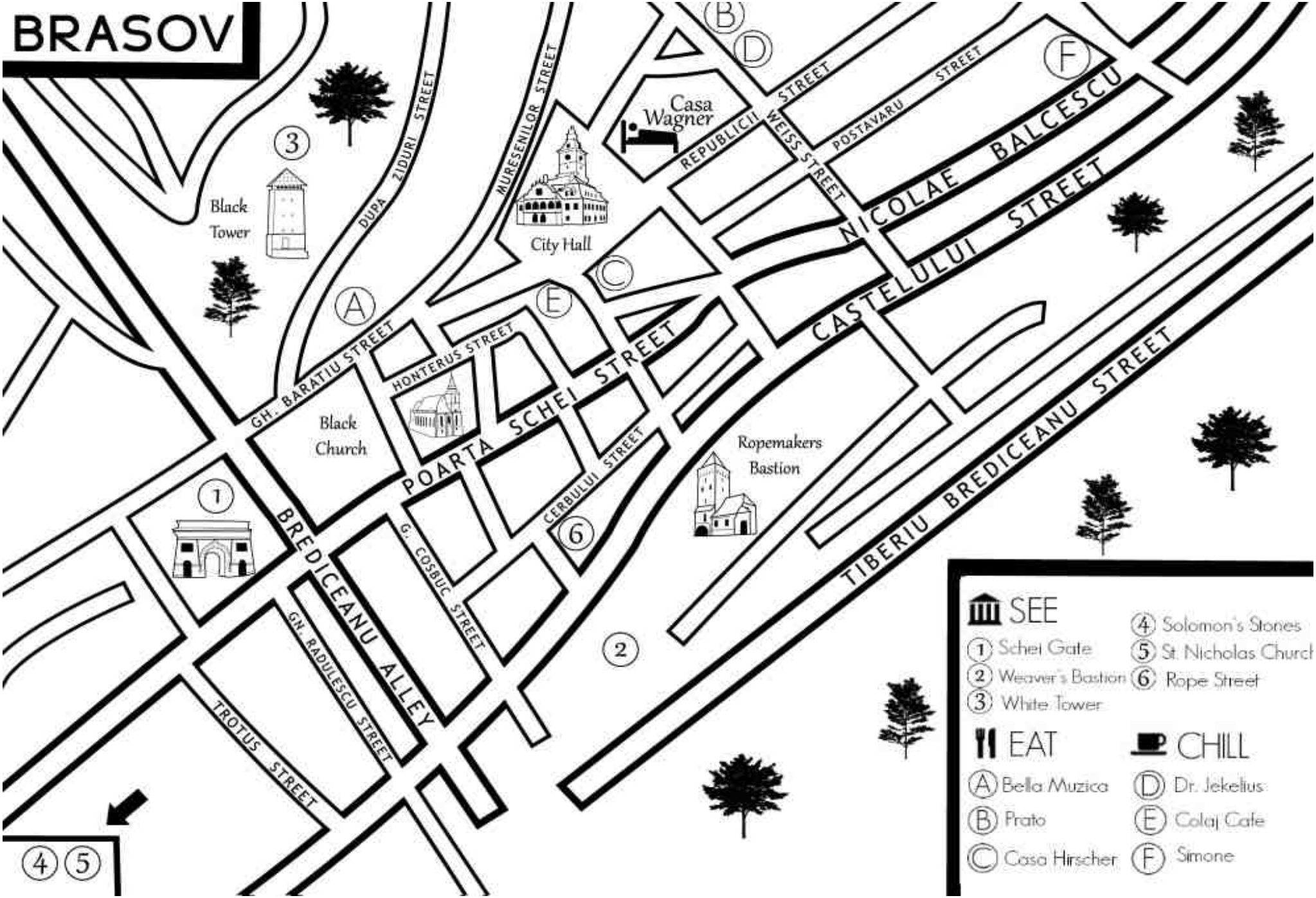
CROQUIS ART CAFÉ

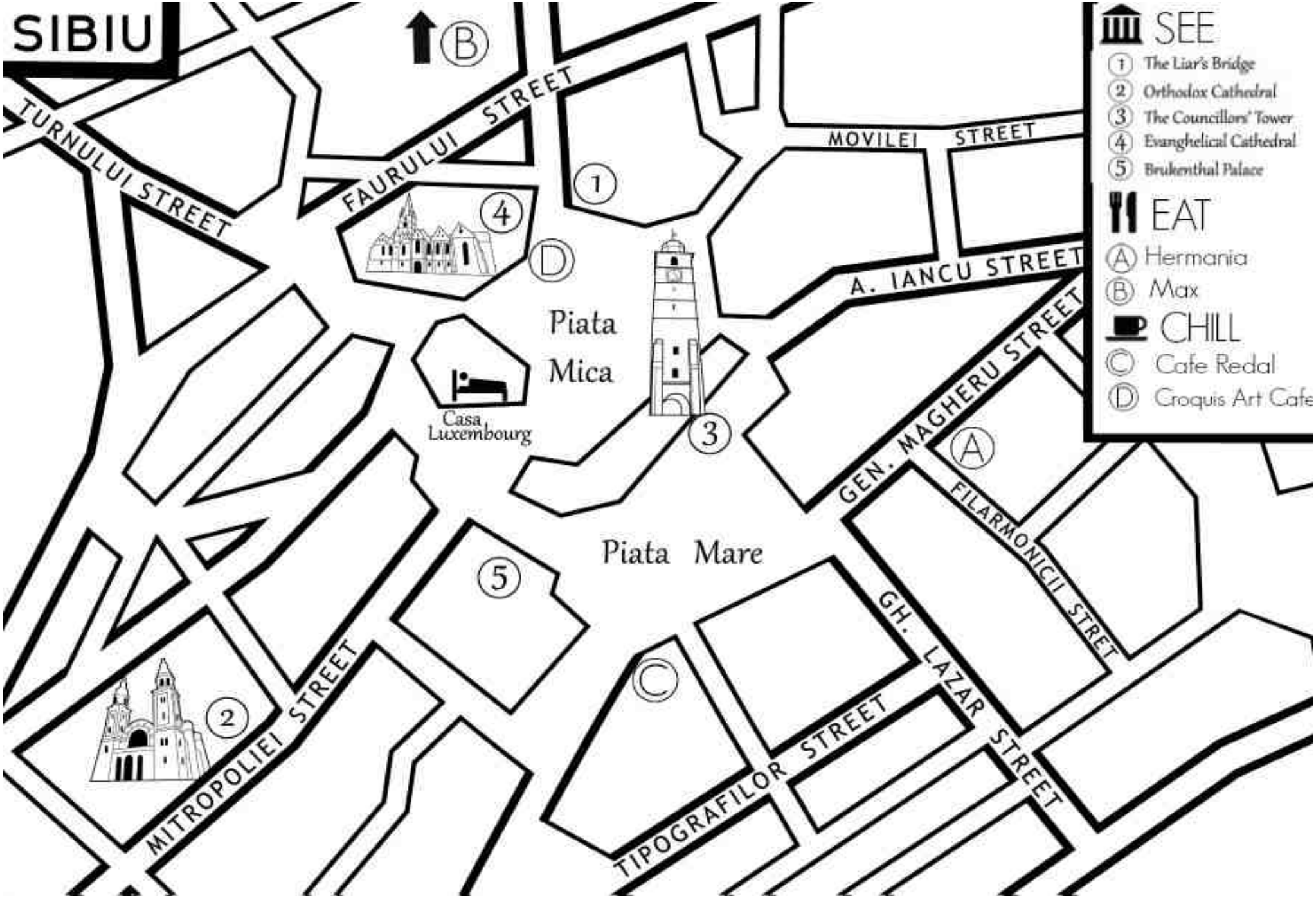
We love this place. It's kooky, quirky and right up our street. Tucked away on a corner of Piata Mica, the décor inside features exposed brickwork and arty silhouettes lit up with soft lighting. It's a bit of an all-rounder too, serving coffee and breakfast in the mornings and late night cocktails in the evening. Lots of choice, lots of character. Highly recommended.

Piata Mica 24; Open Mon to Fri 10:00 - 24:00, Sat and Sun 11:00 – 24:00

MAPS


BUCHAREST
Atheneum
Revolution Square
SEE
1 CEC Palace
2 National Bank
3 Vilacrosse Passage
4 Linden Inn
5 Museum of National Art
6 Peasant Museum
7 Village Museum
EAT
A Caru cu Bere
B The Artist
C Bonne Bouche
CHILL
D Cafe Van Gogh
E Chocolat
F Entourage
DRINK G Papiota H Bicicleta
REGINA MARIA AVENUE
I. C. BRATIANU AVENUE
Stock Market
Russian Church
EFORIEI STREET
DOAMNEI STREET
VICTOIRIEI AVENUE
LIPSCANI STREET
Rembrandt Hotel
BLANARI STREET
STAVROPOLEOS STREET
History Museum
Stavropoleos Church
GABROVENI STREET
SF. DUMITRU STREET
COVACI STREET
Old Courtyard
FRANCEZA STREET
St. Anthony Church
SPLAIUL INDEPENDENTEI AVENUE
House of Parliament


BRASOV
Black Tower
DUPA ZIDURI STREET
MURESENILOR STREET
City Hall
Casa Wagner
REPUBLICII STREET
WEISS STREET
POSTAVARU STREET
NICOLAE BALCESCU STREET
CASTELULUI STREET
GH. BARATIU STREET
HONTERUS STREET
Black Church
POARTA SCHEI STREET
CERBULUI STREET
Ropemakers Bastion
TIBERIU BREDICEANU STREET
BREDICEANU ALLEY
G. COSBUC STREET
GN. RADULESCU STREET
TROTUS STREET
SEE
1 Schei Gate
2 Weaver's Bastion
3 White Tower
4 Solomon's Stones
5 St. Nicholas Church
6 Rope Street
EAT
A Bella Muzica
B Prato
C Casa Hirscher
CHILL
D Dr. Jekelius
E Colaj Cafe
F Simone


SIBIU
SEE
1 The Liar's Bridge
2 Orthodox Cathedral
3 The Councillors' Tower
4 Evanghelical Cathedral
5 Brukenthal Palace
EAT
A Hermania
B Max
CHILL
C Cafe Redal
D Croquis Art Cafe
TURNULUI STREET
FAURULUI STREET
MOVILEI STREET
A. IANCU STREET
GEN. MAGHERU STREET
FILARMONICII STREET
GH. LAZAR STREET
TIPOGRAFILOR STREET
MITROPOLIEI STREET
Piata Mica
Piata Mare
Casa Luxembourg

LANGUAGE

ROMANIAN

Based on previous feedback, we decided to add a list of basic Romanian words and phrases to help you bridge the language barrier, get you into mystical, faraway-land mode and ease the sense of feeling lost when surrounded by an unknown language. Of course, there will always be our bi- lingual guide with you so you shouldn't run into any difficulties, and English is widely spoken, particularly by the younger generation, but it can always be fun to try to pick up a new language.

As a Romance Language, those who have a broad understanding of French or Italian will probably find that they can understand a fair bit of Romanian so it doesn't feel completely alien. In parts of Transylvania, German is also understood, if not spoken. Overall, we reckon the Romanian language sounds like a mixture of Italian and Russian and is pretty pleasant to listen to. The pronunciation guide and the words and phrases listed over the following few pages will be more than enough to help you get by but if you want to say something specific, ask your guide. Go on, have a go yourself!

PRONOUNCIATION

The Romanian alphabet uses 31 letters which are similar to the letters found in the English alphabet apart from the additional 5 special letter that are known as 'diacritics': ă - ș - ț - â – î.

Certain letters and combinations of letters are pronounced differently to the way they would be in the English language. The information below should help you to pronounce the letters that are different to our own correctly so that you can learn how to put together words and phrases properly.

ă – like ‘e’ in fath**e**r

i – like ‘i’ in p**i**ck

ş – like ‘sh’ in **sh**oe

ce – like ‘che’ in **che**ck

ge – like ‘ge’ in **ge**nder

che – like ‘che’ in **ch**emistry

ghi – like ‘gue’ in **gu**ess

e – like ‘e’ in t**e**ll

j – like ‘su’ in lei**su**re

ţ – like ‘ts’ in fi**ts**

gi – like ‘gi’ in **gi**n

chi – like ‘ki’ in **sk**ill

ghi – like ‘gi’ in **gi**ve

NUMBERS

One	**unu** (*oo-noo*)
Two	**doi** (*doy*)
Three	**trei** (*tray*)
Four	**patru** (*pah-troo*)
Five	**cinci** (*cheench*)
Six	**şase** (*shah-seh*)
Seven	**şapte** (*shahp-teh*)
Eight	**opt** (*ohpt*)
Nine	**nouă** (*noh-uh*)
Ten	**zece** (*zeh-cheh*)

IMPORTANT SIGNS

Men	**Bărbaţi** (*buhr-bats)*
Women	**Femei** (*feh-mey*)
Entrance	**Intrare** (*in-tra-re*)
Exit	**Ieşire** (*ye-shi-re*)
Open	**Deschis** (*dehs-kis*)
Closed	**Închis** (*yn-kis*)

WORDS & PHRASES

Yes	**Da** (dah)
No	**Nu** (noo)
Please	**Vă rog** (vuh-rohg)
Thank you	**Mulţumesc** (mool-tzu-mesk) If in doubt, just say mersi, it's informal and easy to remember! Just imagine you're in France.
Hello	**Salut** (sah-loot) Like the French – easy.
Goodbye	**La revedere** (lah reh-veh-deh-reh) Pa is also used and is less of a tongue-twister. You can say ciao too if you're stuck!
Good day	**Bună ziua** (boo-nuh zee-wah) You can always just nod and say 'buna' if it's too much of a mouthful
Good evening	**Bună seara** (boo-nuh syah-ruh) Very much like the Italian – buona-sera.
How are you?	**Ce faci?** (cheh fahtch)
Fine, thank you.	**Mulţumesc, bine** (bee-neh) Bine also means 'good' or 'okay'.

The bill	**Notă** (*no-ta*) A handy word to use when asking for the bill without having to compose a sentence!
Same again	**Incă un / una** Useful when you want to order another beer or glass of wine – just point to your drink(s)!
Cheers!	**Noroc!** (*nor-ock*) Use this when you're being encouraged to drink *polinka*. It literally means 'good luck' – you'll need it!
Here	**Aici** (*ah-ee-ch*) Use this in a taxi when you want the driver to pull over.
Still water	**Apă plată** (*ah-puh plah-tah*) If you ask for mineral water it will be fizzy.
I don't understand	**Nu înţeleg** (*noo oohn-tzeh-leg*) Always good to let people know you're not trying to be rude.
Bathroom	**Toaleta**? (*oon-deh yeh twah-leh-tah*) Just in case you need to go to the loo!
I love you	**Te iubesc** (*teh yoo-besk*) Probably best not to use this on strangers but perfect for romantic brownie points!

FAQS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FAQS

What happens when we get to the airport?
After picking up your luggage, you will be met by a driver in the arrivals lounge holding up an Untravelled Paths sign. This is included in the package so you'll not need to pay the driver for the journey.

How many people will there be on the trip?
This depends on the number of people who've booked at the same time. Groups can range from a cosy party of 4 to a large group of 16.

How do we travel from place to place?
It depends on the size of the groups although all transport is perfectly comfortable. For smaller groups, we use small, private coaches whereas larger groups tend to travel in mini-buses.

How much assistance do we get on the trip?
As much or as little as you choose. Having arrived at our various destinations, we like to let guests enjoy the surroundings at their own pace and merely specify a time and place to meet before moving onto the next destination as a group. This booklet should provide you with enough tips and recommendations for top notch bars and restaurants and our team are more than happy to offer any additional guidance or assistance you might need. We also have a list of activities at each of our destinations which you can choose to involve yourselves in as little or as much as you like. It's your holiday and we are here to make it as wonderful as it should be.

Any recommendations for good bars and restaurants?
Yes, just have a look at the relevant section of this booklet. We've listed our favourite bars and restaurants with indications of price, cuisine style, atmosphere and any extra tit bits of information we think you might like to know. We can also arrange restaurant reservations at your chosen venue should you request it.

What about Romanian currency?
Romania is not on the Euro and uses its own local currency, the RON / Lei, which is difficult to get hold of outside of Romania. Although most hotels will accept Euros, they convert into the local currency at an elevated rate before processing the payment. As such, you may prefer to pay in RON / Lei. If you're looking to get your Romanian money organised before you travel, the Bureau de Change in M&S is, strangely, one of the only places that dispenses the local currency. Alternatively, you will have access to cash points in Romania from which to withdraw any necessary funds. Please note that most cash machines charge approximately £1.50 per withdrawal so use them sparingly.

How cold is it up at the Ice Hotel?
Balea Lake and the Ice Hotel are not generally as cold as people might imagine but we do believe that it's safer to prepare for very cold temperatures as it is not uncommon for the temperatures outside the Ice Hotel to hit -20 degrees. See below for recommendations on what to wear.

What should I wear up at the Ice Hotel?
It depends on how much you feel the cold. We would recommend bringing some good waterproof shoes, a warm hat and some gloves to keep your hands warm. Some clients prefer to wear sallopettes or a ski suit to protect them from the snow and ice, however don't fret you don't own any technical clothing, layering your clothes is just as effective. Given the high altitude, it is also advisable to bring sunscreen and sunglasses to protect your skin and eyes from harsh sunlight.

What should I bring with me to the ice hotel?
Alongside standard luggage, we recommend clients bring a smaller bag and transfer essential items into it for the overnight stay at the Ice Hotel, as it can be awkward lugging bulky suitcases around on the mountain. However, should you decide to bring all of your luggage, there is a secure room in the Balea Lake Chalet where you can store your belongings.

How cold actually is it inside the Ice Hotel?
Not as cold as you might think. The temperature within the Ice Hotel itself wavers between -2 and +2 degrees although the temperature outside can sink well below freezing. The Balea Lake Chalet is super warm and toasty so you can always make your way over there to defrost between courses or before bed.

What are the sleeping arrangements at the Ice Hotel?
After a tour around the impressive structures of the Ice Hotel and its unique collection of rooms, guests are invited to pick their top preferences for rooms. Untravelled Paths clients get priority over any other guests staying at the Ice Hotel that night. Guests a provided with professional sleeping bags to protect against the cold during the night, however, many clients choose to sleep in layers of loose clothing, a pair of warm socks, gloves and a hat to keep extra cosy. As a safe bet, we recommend wrapping up warm to ensure a restful night sleep.

Is there somewhere to leave my belongings?
Yes, of course. You will have full access to a locked room in the Balea Lake Chalet where you can safely store your luggage.

What are the arrangements for meals?
For an unforgettable experience, we highly recommend guests opt in for the special four course evening dinner served in the Ice Hotel itself. With glowing coloured lights, great music, ice tables and chairs, a stunning atmosphere and food served on plates of ice, this is a truly original dining experience that you'll not want to miss! However, guests can choose to eat the same meal within the Balea Lake Chalet if they prefer. Lunch, breakfast and extra drinks and snacks are also available in the chalet. There is also a sub zero bar within the Ice Hotel itself where you can enjoy some ice cold beverages in frosty glasses. You may want to bring a pair of gloves!

What is there to do once we're up in the mountains?
Most guests find there's more than enough to keep them entertained during their day and night stay at the Ice Hotel. Aside from enjoying the stunning location and marvelling at the incredible hand carved structure, clients can also spend their time sledging, ice skating, learning the art of ice sculpting and of course relaxing with a drink, a bite to eat and great company. Clients who have brought their own ski equipment and are very proficient skiers, are also very welcome to get involved with some off-piste skiing. Those staying more than a day and night in the mountains may find the range of activities limited, but they are perfect for a short stay.

Is there somewhere I can shower in the morning?
Yes, absolutely. Untravelled Paths clients have access to bathroom facilities including towels and a much needed hot shower in a secure room in the Balea Lake Chalet. There are also toilets within the chalet.

What happens if there's bad weather?
Unfortunately, in the event of poor weather conditions we cannot guarantee that the cable cars will be running. However, we have always managed to get our clients up to the Ice Hotel so chances are slim. Activities up at the Ice Hotel may also have to be suspended if the weather is not appropriate.

How do we get up to the ice hotel?
By cable car. In the morning, guests are transported to the cable cars at the base of Balea Lake. The journey takes approximately 10- 15 minutes and offers some absolutely stunning 360 degree panoramas of the snow capped mountain peaks surrounding the valley.

Why do we only spend one night at the ice hotel?
Given the isolated location of the hotel, most guests exhaust the activities and facilities on offer up in the mountains. It is recommended that guests refrain from washing on the day of arrival at the Ice Hotel in order to retain the body's natural oils necessary to insulate the body. As such, those staying more than one night amongst the cold temperatures may find it a little too chilly.

I'd love to do some skiing on my trip. What are my options?
Yes, of course. There's off-piste skiing available up in the mountains around the Ice Hotel, however, we recommend this activity be pursued only by advanced, confident skiers. If necessary, we'd be happy to arrange a couple of extra days skiing in Romania's premier ski resort in Poiana Brasov.

TIPS & TRICKS

TIPS & TRICKS

- Put your gloves inside your shoes when you go to bed in the Ice Hotel
- Ask to sit in the smoking section of the restaurant, it's usually the most attractive part
- Wear sun cream!
- Breakfast options aren't particularly appealing so prepare yourself for cold meats and cheese
- Don't turn your nose up at the sandwiches and pastries in petrol stations, they're a lot nicer and fresher than you think
- Be patient with service in bars and restaurants, it's often slow and frustrating
- Romanians like their coffee strong, black and incredibly sweet. You have been warned!
- The Romanian beers are called Ursus and Ciuc
- You've got to try tuica, the national drink, at least once but be careful not to blow your head off – it's powerful stuff
- Museum entry is cheap but if you want to use your camera you'll have to pay a rather outrageous fee for the privilege
- WiFi is widely available and free so log yourself on and connect
- If the language stumps you, you can easily fall back on these basic French and Italian words: salut (hello), merci (thanks) and ciao (bye)
- Take the opportunity to eat international in Bucharest, choices are limited elsewhere

- Stews and bean soup are a safe bet for food and if in doubt, go for snitzel
- Shopping centres and airports are surprisingly modern and often bigger and better than most in the UK
- Be wary of icicles hanging off buildings, especially in Bucharest
- Condiments are ordered and charged for separately so you'll need to let your waiter know if you want butter, ketchup etc.
- If you don't want bread, say so or it will be brought to your table and added to your bill
- Water and soft drinks are served without ice unless requested
- Don't be surprised if an older shopkeeper quotes you an extortionately high price for a bottle of water – the older generation add zeros
- It's not uncommon to hear English spoken in an American accent by the younger generation of Romanians as there is so much American TV around!
- Avoid using ATM machines that are not attached to bank, you'll get a terrible exchange rate
- Only get in taxis that have 1.39 on the side, make sure the meter is on and don't agree on a price before you set off as you'll get ripped off!
- Don't spend more than a few lei on a taxi ride around town in Bucharest
- Don't bother looking for your seatbelt, you'll be hard-pressed to find a Romanian taxi that provides fully-functioning ones

DID YOU KNOW?

DID YOU KNOW?

- ‘Romania’ comes from the Latin ‘Romanus’ meaning ‘citizen of the Roman Empire’
- Romania is roughly the same size as the United Kingdom - 92,043 square miles
- The Carpathian Mountains are home to one of the largest undisturbed forests in Europe as well as 60% of Europe's Brown Bear population
- Timisoara was the first city in Europe to have electric street lighting in 1889
- The Palace of the Parliament in Bucharest is the second largest building in the world
- The fountain pen was invented by a the Romanian, Petrache Poenaru in 1827
- Transylvania translates to ‘the land beyond the forest’
- Peles Castle was the first in Europe with electricity and central heating
- Romanian gymnast, Nadia Comaneci, was the first to achieve a perfect score of 10.00 in the history of gymnastics during the Montreal Olympics in 1976
- The tallest wooden church in the world is in Maramures
- Brasov is home to narrowest street in Europe - Strada Sforii (The Rope Street) is approximately four feet wide

and was initially used as an access-route by firefighters

- Hollywood movie Cold Mountain was filmed in Romania's Carpathian Mountains starring Jude Law, Renee Zellweger and Nicole Kidman
- The ASTRA Museum in Sibiu is the second-largest outdoor museum in the world
- The 1920s "Dada" movement (Dadaism) was co-founded by Romanian artists Tristan Tzara and Marcel Iancu
- On March 1 Romanians celebrate the beginning of spring in their own, unique way. To show their respect, men and boys offer their female loved ones a "Martisor" (small trinket attached to a red/white lace - red for love, white for honesty)
- The real Dracula (Vlad Tepes or Vlad the Impaler) was a Romanian prince and military leader who fought the Turks in the Middle Ages. Count Dracula - the vampire - was created by an Irish writer, Bram Stoker in 1897
- The Romanian language is spoken by over 25-milion people is 1,700 years old
- Brasov is home to the largest gothic church east of Vienna which not only holds the largest organ in Europe with 4000 tubes but also houses the largest bell in Romania, weighing 6.3 tons
- The jet engine used by modern airplanes was invented by Bucharest-born aerodynamics pioneer, Henri Coanda

GENERAL INFORMATION

WITH THANKS

We hope this information pack has been useful to you and we'd love to know what you think. So if you've noticed any mistakes, or inconsistencies then please do get in touch and let us know. We're always looking for feedback too so if you think something's been misleading or you happen to stumble upon a little gem of a restaurant, a gorgeous little café or a buzzing bar that you think deserves a mention then please do fill us in. We're sure there are plenty of hidden delights we have yet to discover! Oh, and we also accept positive comments.

Enjoy your trip and keep in touch!

James, Marion, Cristina, Marius and the rest of the team.

CONTACT

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TRIP DISCOUNTS

Just to say thank you for travelling with us, we're happy to offer you a 10% discount on any other Untravelled Paths experience within 18 months of your trip. Simply let us know during the booking process but please note that this discount is not valid in conjunction with any other offer. Take a look online for some inspiration on the sorts of experiences we have in our collection. If you enjoyed the Ice Hotel Experience we reckon you'd love...

THE SAHARA DESERT EXPERIENCE

With so many unique moments to experience – bartering in the mad souks in Marrakech, journeying into the desert on a camel to watch the sun rise over the towering sand dunes of the Sahara Desert and sleeping under a blanket of stars to name but a few, the Sahara Desert Experience is guaranteed to blow you away!
4 nights in Morocco from around £400 per person

THE BROWN BEAR EXPERIENCE

Step into the wild and experience the thrill of tracking the mighty Brown Bear in the depths of Transylvania's extensive forests and across the Carpathian Mountains. This exciting four-night adventure is an absolute must for wildlife lovers and adventure seekers and includes bear hide and visits to Bran Castle (aka. Dracula's Castle) and the Libearty Bear Sanctuary in Zarnesti.
4 nights in Romania from around £399 per person

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