

## Title:

Romania - Bucharest, Dracula and Transylvania

## Word Count:

577

## Summary:

Mention Romania and people immediately think of Dracula and a mid-evil country. Recovering from years of economic misery, Romania is quickly becoming the hidden jewel of Eastern Europe.

## Keywords:

romania, romania travel, bucharest, brasov, dracula, vlad, bran castle, transylvania, Ceausescu

## Article Body:

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## Dracula v. Ceausescu

In pop culture, Romania is always equated with Count Dracula, Bran Castle and Transylvania. These assumptions are wrong. Vlad Tepes is widely regarded as the person on whom the Dracula character is based. Known as Vlad the Impaler, there is no disputing this was one nasty individual, but he wasn't a vampire. On top of this, Vlad the man never resided in Bran Castle, a real castle and the home of the fictional Dracula. Sorry to burst your bubble, but there was a person arguably worse than Dracula or Vlad in Romania's history.

Introducing Nicolae Ceausescu, the reigning worst dictator in the history of Europe. A pig on all counts, this man treated Romania as his personal fiefdom through much of the twentieth century. While leading the country into economic ruin, he built lavish estates for he and his wife. While Romanians starved on the streets, he and his wife spent money like Joan Collins at a plastic surgeon. When he was finally expelled from office, the people were so outraged by his excess that he and his wife were executed after what can only be called a show trial.

Unfortunately, the country didn't recover quickly. The last five years, however, have seen major advancements, and Romania is now a must visit location.

## Bucharest

Once considered the Paris of the East, Bucharest suffered greatly during Ceausescu's reign. Ancient buildings with French and Turkish influences were replaced with communist inspired concrete block buildings in redevelopment projects. Currently, the city is a microcosm of the lurching recovery of the country. Elegant neighborhoods border slums and there appears to be little or no middle class. There appears to be only the poor or rich. When visiting Romania, you will have to fly into Bucharest. Just don't stay too long.

## Brasov

Brasov is located in the hilly terrain of Transylvania and is a good place to visit. Located in the center of the country, Brasov is surrounded by the Carpathian Mountains. The city is a resounding example of old world Romania with an ancient center city square and little cafes throughout.

The real appeal of Brasov is the surrounding land. Unspoiled, the mountains surrounding Brasov are full of little villages and surrounding forests. In this area, you'll find bears, wolves and other threatened animals roaming freely. On top of this, the land is ripe with outdoor activity opportunities such as skiing, hiking, camping, hunting, rock climbing and parachuting. While all of this exists in other travel destinations, there is no tourist trap feel in Brasov.

## Carpathian Mountains

The Carpathian Mountains are visually stunning. While there are attractions throughout the mountains, such as Bran Castle, don't try to simply visit a particular place. Instead, rent a car in Brasov or hire a driver and just go for a ride. The scenery is so overwhelming it is hard to describe. You'll drive down and up into gorges that seem endless, see rivers bombing down mountain sides and see animals only found in National Geographic documentaries. Go for this drive and I guarantee you will be blabbering about it for at least five days.

Romania is the hidden gem of Eastern Europe and you should definitely visit. You don't even need to wear garlic.