



## **Romania: the natural world**

Birding and bears in the Carpathians and the Danube Delta  
with guest birder Ian Andrews

8 -20 May 2018



## Romania: the natural world

From the wild flower meadows to the forested Carpathians, from the hay fields to the delta there is a sense in Romania of a natural world that has been gently tended and neglected! The haystacks speak of a less hurried time and less mechanised agriculture. The abundance of birds tells a story of few or no pesticides, less poisoning of the environment. This tour takes as its broader theme the natural world, and we are very pleased to be travelling with Ian Andrews who brings with him the eye of a professional geologist as well as a widely published birder.

In the Carpathians Mountains we hope to see Brown Bears (from the safety of hides), and in the Danube Delta we will spot many species of birds, a few of which are resident, some which migrate through here, others which come to breed.

The Danube Delta provides many small channels along which we can quietly move by boat under the guidance of the local expert guide, who can also explain the land and water use of this extraordinary environment on the edge of the Black Sea.

We will drive through this lovely country and see something of its other qualities, sparing time to see some of its crafts, churches and country villages.

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### *Flights*

*International trains and flights are not included in the price of this holiday but Bucharest is well served by a train service (one route takes you via Paris, Munich and Budapest to Bucharest) and a number of airlines, including the low-cost airline Blue Air which offers flights to/from both Glasgow and Luton. It would be possible to use the train one way and fly the other. Ian Dickson Travel (0131 556 6777) will be able to help you get tickets. Travel tickets should not be purchased until the tour is confirmed: train tickets are available 92 days ahead of travel. Train travellers should get their own taxi to and from our city centre hotel.*

## JOURNEY DETAILS

Location: Romania  
Dates: 8 - 20 May 2018  
Duration: 12 nights  
Max: 15 travellers  
Price: £3350  
Single room supplement:  
£280  
Deposit: £300  
Tour Code: RR 02/18

**What's included:** Accommodation in a 4 star hotel in Bucharest and guesthouses as per the itinerary, all meals (picnics/snack lunches) from breakfast on 9<sup>th</sup> May to breakfast on 20<sup>th</sup> May, (but no lunch on May 10<sup>th</sup>) all road and river transport as described in the itinerary, entry to all the sites mentioned, and all tips.

**What's not included:** your international flights, personal travel insurance, drinks, laundry, phonecalls, and beverages.

**Your guides:** the tour is accompanied by a British birder and local guides. The tour is escorted by Rufus Reade.

**Walking:** we will be walking on footpaths, and along motorable tracks. All walks are rated easy to moderate.

**The tour is organised** by Rufus Reade Tours, 40 Pilrig Street, Edinburgh EH6 5AL  
rufusreade@blueyonder.co.uk  
Tel 0131 554 1078

**Getting to Bucharest:** no flights or trains are included in the cost of this holiday. Once the tour is confirmed we will write to you, confirming the tour, letting you know what available flights and trains there are (from Glasgow and Luton to/from Bucharest), and you may then book your own flights or trains. You may care to use Ian Dickson Travel, based in Edinburgh who will be aware of our travelling requirements: 0131 556 6777.



## The Itinerary

### Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> May

Arrive Bucharest. Transfer from the airport to hotel for overnight in the 4 star Residence Domenii Plaza or 4 star Scala Hotel.

### Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> May

Drive by minibus from Bucharest to Tulcea town, the gateway to Danube Delta ( about 4.5 hours). We'll take a small boat to Crisan Village travelling through the Danube Delta. Once we've settled in we'll walk through some typical delta landscapes - small lakes and large reed bed areas. It's a good area for many different marshland species - Glossy Ibis, Black-tailed Godwit, Black-winged Stilt, Rollers, Marsh Harrier, Ferruginous Duck and more. Our first night in Crisan Village (accommodation split between two nearby guest-houses).

### Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> May

We'll begin our exploration of the Delta in a boat in the company of our guide and host, Petre: moving through the Magearu channel we'll head towards Letea village. These small channels are amongst the best places in the Delta for birders, as they cross different types of habitats: small lakes, backwaters, floating and wooded islands etc. Red-footed Falcon and Hobby are here as well as Woodpeckers (Green and Black), Little Bittern, Grey, Purple, Night and Squacco Heron; Spoonbill and egrets; Grasshopper, Savi's, River, Great Reed and many other warblers. After about three

hours we'll reach Letea, a charming small village with Ukrainian inhabitants in their thatched-roofed houses. We'll return to Crisan for supper and overnight. The guest-house lies between expansive reed beds and the main Sulina Channel, so an ideal location for independent morning/evening walks. Second overnight accommodation at Petre's guest-house in Crisan village.

### Friday 11<sup>th</sup> May

After breakfast we'll leave on a boat tour to the central part of the Delta. We may see pelicans, Night, Squacco and Purple Herons, Wiskered Terns, Hobbys, Red-necked and Black-necked Grebes and Penduline Tits. We'll pause for a picnic lunch and later return for our supper and third overnight accommodation at the guest-house in Crisan village.

### Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> May

Explore more channels of the Danube



Delta. Fourth overnight accommodation in Crisan village.

### **Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> May**

Take the ferry from Crisan village back to Tulcea town, before we head north across the Dobrogea region, and travel eastwards to the plains of the Moldova region to our accommodation for four nights at Casa Tisaru ([www.casa-tisaru.ro](http://www.casa-tisaru.ro)), in the village of Lepsa.

### **Monday 14<sup>th</sup> May**

The day will be spent in the protected area of the Tisita Gorges, nationally recognized for the natural wealth of butterflies, flowers, birds and large carnivores. On our walk there is a chance we'll see traces of bears, wolves and even lynx. We will install camera traps to capture images of passing animals. We may see many different species of butterflies and moths: Camberwell Beauty, Red Admiral, Large Blue, Scarlet Tiger Moth, Tiger Moth, Large Copper, Swallowtail and many more. We can expect to see a large range of plants including *Crocus heuffelianus*, *Cypripedium calceolus*, *Angelica palustris*, *Leontopodium alpinum*, *Inula helenium*, *Campanula serrata* as well as many other species including mosses, lichens, flowering plants and trees. In this environment we can expect to see or hear Grey-headed, Three-toed and Black Woodpeckers, Barred Warbler, Red-breasted Flycatcher, Dipper, Ural owl, Wallcreeper, Peregrine, various eagles, Honey Buzzard and many other bird species. In the evening, we'll have a 30 to 40 minute drive to a hide, and there

will be an opportunity to observe and photograph Brown Bears. We'll return for our second night at Casa Tisaru.

### **Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> May:**

Today there will be an optional hike for about 5 hours, taking us through old forest of Beech, Spruce, Fir, Birch, Larch, Hazelnut, Juniper, Romanian Oak, and Scots Pine. We will stop for a packed lunch. There'll be further chances of looking for Brown Bear, Wolf, Lynx, Chamois, Red Deer, Roe Deer, Badger, Pine Marten, Wild Cat, and Red Fox. In the evening, there will be another opportunity to see bears. Third overnight accommodation at Casa Tisaru.

### **Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> May**

The day will be a mixture of visits to see people weaving and wood carving, as well as a walk to a sheep pasture where we'll learn something of the shepherding life. Fourth overnight accommodation at Casa Tisaru.

### **Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> May**

Continue the journey north-west to eastern Transylvania, crossing the Eastern Carpathians on the Oituz pass at 866m altitude. This area historically belonged to the Szekely, a Hungarian-speaking people. Our two nights of accommodation is in the Count Mikes estate (owned by Gregor and Alexander Roy-Chowdhury, descendants of the ancient Mikes family and a Bengali prince), in Zabola village. [www.zabola.com/](http://www.zabola.com/)

### **Friday 18<sup>th</sup> May**

Drive north-east to the village of

Ghelintato to see St Emeric Catholic church, originally a Romanesque structure (13th century). The interior walls and the ceiling of the church are covered with frescoes; the best ones dating back to the 1330s, illustrating the Legend of Saint Laszlo. We'll head to the only alpine volcanic crater lake in Europe, St Ana Lake. Nearby we can see the Mohos peat bog, (a botanical reserve), rich in Bog Blackberry, Bog Rosemary, Sundew etc. There will be a bear hide visit in the late evening. Return to Mikes estate for our second overnight accommodation.

### **Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> May**

Drive to Zarnesti at the foot of Piatra Craiului Mountain – the study area for the Carpathian Large Carnivore Project. The scenery is largely formed of limestone and is very rich in alpine flora. The high areas are grazed by flocks of sheep looked after by itinerant shepherds. There are also plenty of interesting birds in the area including White-Backed Woodpeckers and Wallcreepers. We'll have time to see the villages around Bran, as well as walk in the foothills of Piatra Craiului Mountain. Two hour drive back to Bucharest for overnight accommodation at the 4 star Residence Domenii Plaza or 4 star Scala Hotel. Walk to a farewell dinner together.

### **Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> May**

Transfer to the airport to begin our journey home.

