



Traditional wooden churches at Barsana

Culture and Belief in Romania

8 – 20 June 2026



Level 3
MODERATE





Biertan village, Sibiu

Romania's history of belief reflects a rich blend of ancient, Christian, and folk traditions. Pre-Christian Dacian spirituality, centered on nature and deities like Zalmoxis, merged with Roman and later Byzantine Christianity, shaping the Orthodox faith.

Over centuries, pagan customs intertwined with Christian rituals, creating unique folk practices, festivals, and superstitions. Influences from Slavic, Ottoman, and Western cultures added further layers. This fusion of ancient and sacred beliefs defines Romania's enduring spiritual identity and cultural heritage.

Experience Romania's spectacular unspoiled countryside and rustic medieval villages, glorious painted churches, excellent food and wine and an eclectic ethnic mix in the expert company of the Very Reverend Dr Richard Marsh, who will deliver a series of stimulating talks along the way.

THIS TOUR IS CLASSED AS:

Level 3 | Moderate



Regular walking at destinations, extended standing and /or increased travel distances. Good fitness is required.

Tour Leader

The Very Reverend Dr Richard Marsh has a long association with the Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox churches. He is the author of 'Black Angels: The Art and Spirituality of Ethiopia', 'Prayers from the East' and co-authored 'Millenium Challenges for Development and Faith Institutions'.

He is the Dean of Killaloe, Co Clare in the Church of Ireland, having worked in both the Church of England and in various capacities in the voluntary sector in the UK and Ireland. Richard has travelled extensively and is an experienced tour leader, having led many successful tours to a wide range of destinations.



He and his wife, Ro Hallam, divide their time between County Clare and their home in County Mayo, Ireland.

Bran Castle, Brasov



Itinerary 8 – 20 June 2026

B = Breakfast **L** = Lunch **D** = Dinner

2 nights Bucharest – 2 nights Sibiu – 1 night Cluj-Napoca – 2 nights Maramures
– 2 nights Bucovina – 2 nights Brasov – 1 night Bucharest



Day 1: Bucharest (8 Jun, Mon)

D

Am/Pm: Arrive in Bucharest and check in to Capitol Hotel.

Eve: Welcome dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 2: Bucharest (9 Jun, Tues)

B

Faith and Fire: Byzantium Beyond Byzantium

Am: Orientation of Romania's capital city, including Constitution Square, the Palace of the Patriarchate, Stavropoleos Church – one of Romania's oldest religious monuments – and Antim Monastery, which was moved to survive demolition during the Communist Era.

Pm: Visit the open-air National Village Museum, showcasing Romanian rural life.

Day 3: Bucharest / Curtea de Arges / Sibiu (10 Jun, Wed)

B L D

**Bones of Kings and Stones of Faith:
The Birth of Romanian Holiness**

Am: Drive to Curtea de Arges to visit the Cathedral and the Princely Court. The former Romanian Royal Family is buried here.

Pm: Visit Cozia Monastery, one of Romania's most ancient churches, featuring well-preserved frescoes and a combination of local and Byzantine motifs. Continue to Sibiu and check in to Continental Forum Hotel.

Day 4: Sibiu (11 Jun, Thurs)

B

The Devil's Architect: Faith, Fear, and the Gothic Imagination

Am: Full day visiting the Saxon traces of Transylvania; visit the fortified church of Biertan and Bethlen Castle.

Pm: Arrive in Sighisoara, the birthplace of Vlad Țepeș (Dracula) and visit the Citadel of Sighisoara, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Explore its cobbled streets and winding alleys on a walking tour. At leisure.

Day 5: Sibiu / Alba Iulia / Jidvei / Cluj-Napoca (12 Jun, Fri)

B L

Fortified Faith: Lutherans, Catholics, and Orthodox under One Sky

Am: Visit Alba Iulia, one of the oldest settlements in Romania. Visit its citadel and baroque gates, St Michael's Catholic Cathedral and the Coronation Cathedral, built to commemorate Romania's reunion with Transylvania in 1918.

Pm: Wine tasting at a winery within the Renaissance-style Bethlen Castle. Continue to Cluj-Napoca and check in to Courtyard Cluj Downtown. At leisure.

Day 6: Cluj-Napoca / Maramures (Sighetu Marmatiei) (13 Jun, Sat)

B L D

**The Half-Dead and the Holy:
Death, Humour, and Hope in Romanian Life**

Am: Depart Cluj and drive to the Merry Cemetery and its gravestones, which feature ironic epitaphs.

Pm: Lunch in a local restaurant in Baia Mare. Visit the poignant Memorial to the Victims of Communism and the Resistance, located in a former prison. Check in to Casa Lurca and have dinner.

Day 7: Maramures

B L D

(Sighetu Marmatiei) (14 Jun, Sun)

Wood, Word, and Wonder: A Gospel Carved from Wood

Am: Explore Maramures, where life seems to

have stood still for hundreds of years. Attend a service in a local church and visit the traditional village of Leud, with its beautiful wooden churches. Visit a large monastery in Bârsana.

Pm: After lunch visit the Church of the Holy Archangel in Rozavlea. Dating back to 1720, it is distinctive for its tall tower, sharply pitched roof and vibrant 18th and 19th century paintings (inside).

Day 8: Maramures (Sighetu Marmatiei) / Bucovina (Voronet) (15 Jun, Mon) B L D

Holy Irony: Faith, Humour, and Survival under Communism

Am: Drive to Bucovina, stopping at the Heroes Monument. Continue over Pasul Prislop, the highest mountain pass in Romania at over 1400m. Visit Pasul Prislop Church, with stunning mountain views.

Pm: Lunch in Borsa. Explore the traditional village of Ciocănești, which is among the most colorful towns in Europe, and visit the Painted Egg Museum. Arrive in Voronet and check in to **La Conac in Bucovina**.

Day 9: Bucovina (Voronet) (16 Jun, Tues) B L D

Mountain Monasteries and the Idea of Landscape as Theology

Am: Full day tour encompassing the UNESCO Painted Monasteries. Start with the stunning medieval monastery of Dragormina and continue to Sucevita, famous for its exterior frescoes.

Pm: Continue to Humor, an intimate monastery with unique Byzantine paintings. Finish at Voroneț Monastery, known as the “Sistine Chapel of the East”.

Day 10: Voronet / Lacu Rosu / Prejmer / Brasov (17 Jun, Wed) B L

How Romania's Geography Shapes its Soul

Am: Drive to the red lake, Lacu Rosu, for a short stroll before lunch.

Pm: Continue to Prejmer and visit its church fortress, an important medieval historical monument. Arrive in atmospheric Brasov and check in to **Aro Palace**. At leisure.

Day 11: Brasov (18 Jun, Thurs) B

Saints, Shadows, and the Gothic Soul of Europe

Am: Visit legendary Bran Castle, linked with the Dracula myth but rooted in real medieval history.

Pm: Walk through the medieval centre of Braşov, visiting the stunning Gothic Black Church, named for its charred appearance after the town's Great Fire in 1689. Continue to Sforii Street, the narrowest street in Europe. At leisure.

Day 12: Brasov / Sinaia / Bucharest (19 Jun, Fri) B D

Landscape as Liturgy: The Thinking about Place in the Carpathians

Am Head into the Carpathians, stopping at the fairytale Peles Castle for a tour. Continue to Sinaia and visit serene Sinaia Monastery.

Pm: Continue to Bucharest and check in to **InterContinental Athenee Palace Bucharest**.

Eve: Farewell dinner at a traditional restaurant.

Day 13: Bucharest (20 Jun, Sat) B

Am Check out of the hotel after breakfast.



Hotels

The tour features a range of mid-range and luxury accommodation, including historic and boutique hotels in the cities and authentic local rural guesthouses. **Hotels are indicated in the itinerary.**

You will experience two historic hotels in Bucharest: **Capitol Hotel**, housing a famous café dating from the 1900s, which was a popular meeting places for writers, artists and musicians; and the 5-star **InterContinental Athenee Palace**, which overlooks Revolution Square.

Talks

Richard Marsh will deliver a number of enlightening talks throughout the tour, as below.

1. Faith and Fire: Byzantium Beyond Byzantium

- An introduction to Romania as a living heir of the Byzantine imagination.
- How Orthodox theology became visible — in colour, line, chant, and gesture.
- The survival of Byzantine forms under Ottoman and Communist rule.
- Reading the painted walls: icons as scripture in pigment.

2. The Half-Dead and the Holy: Death, Humour, and Hope in Romanian Life

An anthropology of laughter and lament.

- The *strigoi* and the “Merry Cemetery”: joking with death as faith’s protest.
- Orthodox memorial prayers and the theology of the departed.
- Holy fools, village tricksters, and laughter as resistance.
- How the line between saint and sinner blurs in Romanian spirituality.

3. Fortified Faith: Lutherans, Catholics, and Orthodox under One Sky

Exploring Transylvania’s religious patchwork.

- Why there are Saxon Lutherans in an Orthodox land?



Peles Castle Sinaia in Autumn

- The Reformation behind walls — Biertan and Richiş.
- Alba Iulia’s twin cathedrals and the making of modern Romania.
- Ecumenism before it had a name: living side-by-side in devotion and difference.

4. Holy Irony: Faith, Humour, and Survival under Communism

How religion and humour intertwined in an age of fear.

- “Moved but not destroyed”: the story of Antim Monastery.
- Wurmbrand, house-churches, and silent defiance.
- Satire, folk wit, and irony as subversive theology.
- Memory, forgiveness, and how laughter heals trauma.

5. Landscape as Liturgy: The Thinking about Place in the Carpathians

Drawing the journey together.

- The painted monasteries as prayers in landscape.
- Mountains, rivers, and forests as sacraments of creation.
- Monastic chant, colour, and rhythm as echoes of divine order.
- How Romania’s geography shapes its soul.



Cozia Monastery, one of Romania's most ancient churches (top);
Village museum in Sibiu; Rozavlea Wooden Church, Maramures;
Café life in Brasov (above)

The cost of the tour is £2,740 per person sharing

The cost of the tour per person with a room to yourself is £3,156

The tour cost includes:

- The services of a tour leader throughout (Dr Richard Marsh and Ro Hallam)
- All internal transport
- 12 nights' hotel accommodation in standard rooms with private facilities
- Breakfast every day and other meals as specified (excluding beverages)
- A full programme of cultural visits, excursions and activities as detailed in the itinerary above
- All admission fees and tips
- The services of registered English-speaking guide to accompany the group for the duration of the tour.

The tour cost excludes:

- International flights and airport transfers
- Visas, where applicable
- Travel insurance
- Items of a personal nature such as portage, laundry, inoculation fees
- All optional excursions, tours and visits
- Meals unless specified
- Drinks

'Tour leaders (Richard and Ro) were wonderful – knowledgeable and kind.'

Mary Rossiter, Albania and Macedonia: Cultural Crossroads on the Via Egnatia, Sept 2024

NB: All itineraries are subject to change according to local conditions.

About Us

To travel with us is to dig below the surface, revealing the deeper destination. Of course, you will visit the great historical sites; marvel at the wonders of architecture and engineering; be moved by the riches of culture and art; and experience the most spectacular landscapes in the world. What we also do is make sure that you see the country as it is today, giving you privileged access that independent travel and other tour companies rarely get close to. We give you a variety of experiences, from the sublime to the humble, in the company of intelligent, curious, like-minded people. And while we can be worthy, we also make sure that you have a lot of fun.

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Sucevita Monastery, Voronet (top); Sighisoara, Sibiu;
"Judgement Day" fresco in Voronet Monastery;
Brasov's medieval centre (above)



**JON BAINES
TOURS**

