



Essential Bucharest

Arcul de Triumf

Piata Arcul de Triumf

Raised in 1922 to commemorate Romania's Great War dead, the original construction was of wood, replaced by the present, Petru Antonescu designed, concrete structure in 1935. Standing 25 metres high, the Arc has a staircase that allows visitors to climb to the terrace on the top of the monument. The sculptures that decorate the monument were created by leading artists of the day, including Ion Jalea, Constantin Medrea and Constantin Baraschi. Viewing terrace open 10:00 - 16:00. Closed Sun.

Communist Iconography Museum

Inside the Peasant Museum

Our favourite part of the Peasant Museum; a small but stunning cellar room featuring a collection of communist-era busts, paintings and nostalgic memorabilia. A painting of Stalin hangs on the same wall as one of the only two public portraits of Ceausescu we found in Bucharest. Be sure to take a Romanian speaker along to translate the chilling newspaper articles that are stuck on the walls.

George Enescu Museum

Calea Victoriei 141

Tel: 659 63 65

Fax: 312 91 82

10:00-17:00

except:

Mon: Closed

Fri: 10:00-17:00

Packed full of memorabilia and artefacts on the life of Romania's most famous composer, George Enescu, the museum occupies three rooms in a beautiful art-nouveau building that was his former residence. Admission 1.5 lei.

Historic Centre

Bucharest retains an historic center, but it is something of a miracle that the area still exists. Originally a fabulous district housing the city residences of the Romanian bourgeoisie, the communist regime was eager to see the demise of the area, and decided to go about it by moving in as many gypsy families as possible. The area, usually known as Lipscani, which consists of a jumble of streets between the river, Calea Victoriei, Bulevardul Bratianu and Bulevardul Regina Elisabeta, is today in a rather shabby condition, but it is also one of the most fascinating areas of the city to visit. There are markets selling shabby clothing, textiles, antiques, bric-a-brac, and an increasing amount of cafes, restaurants and bars. The area, now fully pedestrianised, is set for great things in the not too distant future.

National Art Museum

Calea Victoriei 49-53

Tel: 313 30 30

Fax: 312 43 27

[E-mail](#)

[Website](#)

10:00-18:00

except:

Mon: Closed

Tue: Closed

Fri: 10:00-18:00

The country's largest, and most impressive art collection is housed inside the splendid former royal palace, first built in 1812 as a private home by the wealthy trader Dinucu Golescu. When his sons fell into financial ruin some years later, they were forced to sell the building to the state, which carried out huge modifications, adding a number of new wings. It became a royal residence in 1859, when it became the sight of the court of the first prince of the united principalities, Alexandru Ion Cuza. Although slightly remodelled in the 1930s, the building we see today is more or less the original, revolutionary damage notwithstanding. Indeed, some parts of the building have only recently been reopened after the mindless vandalism of those mad days in December 1989, when the building was ransacked by the iconoclastic mob, which saw the building (named the Palace of the Socialist Republic during the communist period) as a symbol of the regime. It would be impossible to describe the wide variety of works on show, but rest assured that all of Romania's greatest painters and sculptors are well represented, including Theodor Aman, Constantin Brancusi, Gheorghe Patrascu, and Gheorghe Tattarescu. The museum also plays host to a fine collection of Old European Masters and contemporary European works. Recommended. Admission 7 lei.

Old Court Church

Str. Franceză

Dating back to 1559 and next to the ruins of the Vlad Tepes citadel, the Old Court Church is the oldest church in Bucharest. Noted for its old Wallachian architecture and frescoes (which are as old as the church) a venture inside is an astonishing step back in time.

Palatul Parlamentului

Calea 13 Septembrie 1, intrarea A3

Tel: 311 36 11

Fax: 312 09 02

E-mail

10:00-16:00

What is unquestionably Romania's most famous building, Palatul Parlamentului (known universally as Casa Poporului) was built during the darkest days of the Nicolae Ceausescu regime. Standing 84m above ground level on 12 floors, the building has long been shrouded in mystery, rumour and hyperbole. Originally designed to house almost all the organs of the communist state, it today plays host to the Romanian parliament and a modern, well equipped conference centre, as well as Romania's Museum of Contemporary Art. The vast majority of the building, however, remains unused. The public tour of the building is thoroughly recommended. You'll see plenty of grand staircases, marble-plated halls and conference rooms, while - depending on the modd of the guide - you may also have the chance to go on to the balcony, which offers the defining view of Bucharest. The largest room, the Sala Unirii (Unification Hall), has a sliding ceiling wide enough for a helicopter, should the need arise. The hall's 14 ton carpet was woven on the premises with machines designed specifically for the purpose. Some 3,500 tons of crystal were used for the building's chandeliers, few of which have ever been fully lit. The heftiest is that in the small parliament hall, which weighs three tons and makes use of over 7,000 bulbs. After the 1989 revolution there were plans to blow the building up, but the cost of explosives proved prohibitive. To join a tour, you need to use the entrance on the left-hand side of the palace (if you're looking at it front-on). Izvor is probably the nearest metro station, but you'll get a better view from Piata Unirii. Admission costs 20 lei noi for foreign visitors, with an additional fee of 30 lei noi payable for those with cameras.

Peasant Museum

²os. Kiseleff 3

Tel: 650 53 60

Fax: 312 98 75

E-mail

Website

10:00-18:00

except:

Mon: Closed

Fri: 10:00-18:00

In most people's opinion, the Peasant Museum is the best museum in Bucharest and one of the best in the country. Well laid out and presented exhibits tell you all you need to know about the diverse and fascinating history of life around the country over the past few centuries. Voted the European Museum of the Year in 1996, you will come across a couple of wooden churches from the northern Maramures province, handpainted Easter Eggs, terracotta pottery, icons and clothing. Talks are also held (in Romanian) on various related topics that take place on the first three Saturdays of each month. If you like what you see (and you will), then go to the excellent museum shop. Open 10:00 - 18:00. Closed Mon. Admission 2 lei noi, children 0.50 lei noi.

Village Museum

Sos. Kiseleff 28-30

Tel: 222 91 06

Fax: 222 90 68

E-mail

Website

09:00-19:00

except:

Mon: Closed

Founded by Royal Decree in 1936, and covering some 15 hectares on the shores of Lake Herăstrău, Muzeul Satului is sadly no longer the proud museum it was a few years ago, after a devastating fire in early 2002 damaged 15 buildings, five beyond repair. Yet it remains a fine place, and walking around the grounds you'll still see around 50 cottages, farmsteads, churches, workshops, water mills and roadside crosses from all over Romania. There is a good gift shop, but we believe you're better off going to that in the Peasant Museum. Admission 4 lei noi, students/children 1.50 lei noi.