

REALITY & BEYOND

Monasteries from a Moldavian Manor House

19-23 September 2022

This tour starts out from the Saxon villages where the Transylvanian Book Festival is held, on the Monday following the festival.

Leaving the Saxon villages behind us, we travel through territory settled by Hungarian Szeklers and still retaining distinctive elements of its Magyar heritage. Our ultimate destination is Bucovina, the 'land of the beech forests'. Here, we find ourselves in a distinctively Romanian Orthodox setting of great beauty and tranquility.



We will stay as the guests of Michael de Styrcea, at the delightful manor house he has painstakingly restored on his family's estate which was restored to him after the revolution.

Our pace will be deliberately leisured, to suit our unhurried setting. There will be time to read, write, paint or walk in Văleni manor's parkland, with its rare trees and long views towards the Carpathians, and the wider estate which is rich in wildlife, with deer, wild boar, hoopoes, bee-eaters and Ural and Eagle Owls. Colonies of Swallowtail butterflies are to be found. Here too is thrilling evidence of great antiquity – on the estate are the remains of a Dacian citadel and cemetery, and astonishing ceramics of the Cucuteni culture were discovered here.

All our excursions are within two hours' drive of our comfortable base, apart from one overnight stay to visit the astonishing painted monasteries of northern Bucovina. Guests who wish to opt out of any of the visits and stay at Văleni are welcome to do so.

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Itinerary

Monday 19 September

9am depart Richiş (pick up from accommodation in surrounding villages).

On our way north to Moldavia, we pass through towns and villages where there is a majority of ethnic Hungarians and we will see how the architectural style changes in this area.

Our first stop will be in Corund, famous for its highly decorated pottery; and we will visit the workshop of one of the many potters in the town. Just before we enter the spectacular Bicaz gorge, we stop for lunch at the home of a Hungarian Szekler family.

Welcome drinks, dinner and overnight Văleni.

Tuesday 20 September

Morning departure for the nearby town of Piatra Neamţ. Here we visit the Baal Shem Tov synagogue – the oldest surviving wooden synagogue in Romania (private tour), and the Museum of Neolithic Cucuteni Art which has an outstanding collection of ceramics produced by the fascinating Cucuteni people (c.5500BC-2750BC). Their huge boldly patterned vessels and haunting human and animal figurines are superb (private tour by one of the curators).

Cucuteni art was an inspiration for the maverick Neculae Popa. When archaeologists started to excavate in his village in the 1960s, he made copies of some of the figurines they discovered for fun. It sparked an interest in stone and wood carving inspired by ancient cultures of Romania, and in making traditional masks. He also began to collect folk arts and crafts which he displayed in the wacky museum which bears his name at Târpeşti, where we will have a traditional Romanian lunch.

In the afternoon we visit Agapia Monastery, which houses over 300 nuns and consists of two foundations, the ‘newer’ one in the valley, founded in the 17th century by Romanian nobleman Gabriel Coci, brother of Prince Vasile Lupu (Basil the Wolf), and Old Agapia on the hill, of 14th century origin and a pleasant walk, past various hermitages/shrines, and through woodland.

Return to Văleni for dinner and overnight.

Wednesday 21 September

Depart Văleni for an overnight stay to the painted monasteries. Our first stop will be Râşca Monastery. Less well known than other painted monasteries of Bucovina, and with fewer surviving exterior frescoes, it has great charm, a history as colourful as its paintings, and an active community of monks.

We continue to the painted church of Humor with frescoes painted in 1535, after which we will have a light lunch in the garden of a local family.

In the afternoon we drive to Voroneţ, which has an almost complete set of exterior frescoes of 1547-50, painted against the vivid blue background for which it is famous. Then onto Moldoviţa in its lovely valley, which has a particularly good siege of Constantinople.

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We cross over the mountains to Sucevița where we stay the night in the village, in charming traditional wooden houses, imaginatively restored, where we will also try excellent local dishes prepared by the family.

Thursday 22 September

Morning visit to Sucevița Monastery, the biggest and flashiest of the painted monasteries. We return to Văleni via the exquisite painted church of Arbore and have a picnic lunch in the village. Arrive mid-afternoon at Văleni. Dinner and overnight.

Friday 23 September

A free morning to walk round the park and estate, visit the church and meet local craftspeople by arrangement, or simply relax. We depart Văleni around midday to have lunch at the exquisite monastery of Războeni, before driving to Bacău to catch flights to London and Liverpool. For those leaving on the later Liverpool flight, there is the option to visit Bacău museum, church and Jewish museum, depending on the interests of the group).

Practicalities

We will be a small group, maximum 12, accompanied by Bronwen Riley as tour leader.

Price £2,500 (to include the Transylvanian Book Festival)

The tour is designed to follow on from the Transylvanian Book Festival, held in Richiș, although you are welcome to join the tour separately, meeting us at Văleni.

The combined festival price includes access to the whole festival, as described in the festival programme, as well as all accommodation and meals throughout, including wine with dinner each day. It also includes all transport as described in the above itinerary, including transfer on the last day from Văleni to Bacău airport and railway station. Entrance tickets to all historic sites and museums. Tips.

Price does not include extras (alcoholic drinks pre or post dinner; any additional photography fees at monasteries and museums; transfers to airports or railway stations other than to Bacău on 23 September). We can arrange transfers to airports or stations other than Bacău at an extra cost.

Please note that although all bookings are made through Reality & Beyond Ltd, both the Transylvanian Book Festival and Văleni are run as not-for-profit enterprises and money raised from this tour will be allocated towards cultural endeavours in the respective villages.



BOOKING FORM

Please fill out the form below to book your journey with Reality & Beyond Ltd. **Guest 1** should be the person filling out the form. If you are booking and paying on behalf of someone else, please add their details below yours and check the box to acknowledge that you accept the booking terms and conditions.

Name and address of signatory (Guest 1) making the booking:

First Name:	
Surname/Family name:	
Email:	
Mobile:	
Date of Birth:	
Address:	
Town/City:	Postcode:
Country of Residence:	

Please confirm below:

I wish to book an all-inclusive ticket to the festival, plus the tour to the manor house at Valeni and painted monasteries afterwards, and enclose my deposit(s) for	places, of £	(£300 per person)
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Accommodation

Please indicate your preferred room type, and the name of the person you will be sharing with (if applicable). A limited number of superior rooms are available at a supplement of £240 (please indicate below).

Double:		Twin:		Superior:	
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Please complete passport details in BLOCK CAPITALS (for hotel & emergency use) for each traveller:

Title	Surname	First name	Nationality	D.O.B.	Place of Birth	Passport No.	Place of issue	Date of issue	Expiry date



Additional details

Please let us know if there is anything else you would like to tell us – any particular interests, or plans to extend your trip.

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Marketing

How did you hear about us?	
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☐ Please tick if you would like to receive our newsletter.

Please note that although all bookings for the festival are made through Reality & Beyond Ltd, the Transylvanian Book Festival is run on a not-for-profit basis, with any surplus donated to the local town charity “Pro Richis”.

To secure your place, we require a deposit on booking and the balance 8 weeks from departure. If the journey is within 8 weeks then you need to pay in full.

Please pay by bank transfer to:

Account Name: **Reality & Beyond Ltd**
Account no: **37861360**
Sort code: **30-80-95**

Alternatively, you may pay by cheque payable to **Reality & Beyond Ltd**, and send to *Reality & Beyond Ltd, Old Rectory, Church Road, Quenington, Gloucestershire GL7 5BN*

You will receive a receipt when the payment has credited our account. Approximately 8 weeks before the start of your journey we will send you all the information you need to prepare for your trip, including suggestions for background reading and what to pack. We will also need flight information, insurance details, an emergency contact number and any particular dietary or medical details in advance.

☐ On behalf of all persons mentioned on this booking form I have read and agree to the booking conditions of Reality & Beyond Ltd.

Signature



Booking Conditions and Information

All contracts for these tours are made with *Reality and Beyond Ltd* of Quenington Old Rectory, Cirencester, GL7 5BN registered in England No 4085232 and are subject to these booking conditions.

Cancellation and Refunds

If you have to cancel your place on a tour please telephone us. All cancellations should be confirmed in writing, signed by the person who signed the booking form and acknowledged by us. If you cancel, your deposit is not refundable.

After the balance has been paid, refunds will be made as follows:

Notice of Cancellation Before Departure	Proportion of Tour Cost Refunded
56-28 Days	50%
27-15 Days	25%
14-03 Days	15%

Insurance

It is a condition of booking that all clients are properly insured.

Our Liability

We do not own or manage the aircraft, accommodation or other facilities that form part of the tours advertised in this brochure. However, if any part of the tour is not provided to a reasonable standard we will pay your appropriate compensation as we accept responsibility for our employees, agents, suppliers and sub-contractors whilst acting within the course of their employment. This liability is restricted to matters not involving injury, illness or death and is limited to twice the cost of the tour of the claimant. Transportation on aircraft, coaches, trains or ships is subject to the conditions of carriers, some of which may limited or exclude liability. In the case of a carriage by air or sea our liability is limited by the appropriate international conventions. If you or any member of your party suffers death, illness or injury as a result of any failure to perform or improper performance of any part of our contract with you, we will accept responsibility (providing that the employee, agent, supplier or sub-contractor responsible was acting within the course of their employment I) unless the failure to perform or improper performance was attributable to (i) your won acts and/or omissions; or (ii) those of a third party not connected with the provision of your tour and which is unforeseeable or unavoidable; or (iiii) an event which neither we nor the supplier of the service in question could have foreseen or prevented even with all due care.

Travel Documents

Participants should be in possession of a valid 10-year UK passport for all overseas tours, with at least 6 months' validity remaining after the date of return. In addition, participants should ensure they have the relevant visa/s and conform to the health regulations required in the country/s that will be visited by the tour.

Alternations to the Tour

We will do everything possible to ensure that the tour itinerary remains as advertised but we retain the right to modify or cancel any tour, flight schedule, accommodation or arrangement, if unforeseen circumstances outside Reality and Beyond's control that the tour has be cancelled all amounts paid will be refunded.