

About ROMANIA



Key Facts

Population:	21.4 million
Time Zone:	Two hours ahead of Ireland (GMT + 2)
Area:	237,502 sq. km – about 3 times the size of Ireland
Flag of Romania:	Three vertical stripes: red, yellow and blue.
Ethnic Groups:	Romanian 89%, Hungarian 7.5%, Roma 1.9%, German, Other 1.6%
Religions:	Christian Orthodox 87%, Roman Catholic 5%, Protestant 5%, Jewish
Official Language:	Romanian
Currency:	Romanian Leu (RON)
Climate:	Temperate, four distinct seasons.
Capital:	Bucharest (Bucuresti) – (population 2.2 million)
Head of State:	President of the Republic, currently Mr. Traian Basescu
National Government:	The government is led by the Prime Minister, confirmed by the Parliament on the nomination of the President of Romania.
Head of the Government:	the Prime Minister, currently Mr. Emil Boc (Democratic-Liberal Party).

Geography

Located halfway between the Equator and the North Pole, Romania is the 12th largest country in Europe. Romania's terrain is almost evenly divided between mountains, hills and plains.

Although not as high as the Alps, the **Carpathian Mountains** extend over 600 miles in Romania, in the shape of an arch. Romania's mountains are a great destination for numerous outdoor activities including: climbing, hiking, biking and river-rafting. Some of the most popular ski resorts are Poiana Brasov, Sinaia, Predeal, Vatra Dornei, Lake Balea and Paltinis.



Europe's second longest river, the **Danube**, flows through southern Romania forming part of the country's frontier with Serbia, Bulgaria and Ukraine. Its blue waters run along 621 miles, from Bazias to the Black Sea.

The Romanian Black Sea Coast stretches a little over 150 miles. Its wide, sandy beaches facing east and south-east become a major tourist attraction from May until September.



Giurgiu city, where Comber works, has a relatively small city centre and is easy to negotiate – it has a population of c. 67,000 people (about the same as Galway).

History

Romania's history has not always been peaceful. Over the centuries, various migrating people invaded Romania. Romania's historical provinces Wallachia and Moldova offered furious resistance to the invading Ottoman Turks. Transylvania was successively under Hapsburg, Ottoman or Wallachian rule, while remaining an autonomous province.



Romania's post WWII history as a communist-block nation is more widely known, primarily due to the excesses of the former dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. In December 1989 a national uprising led to his overthrow. The 1991 Constitution established Romania as a republic with a multiparty system, market economy and individual rights of free speech, religion and private ownership.

Recent time-line

- 1968** - The condemnation of Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia by Romania's communist leader Nicolae Ceausescu, earns him praise and economic aid from the West.
- 1980s** - Obsessed with repaying the national debt and megalomaniac building projects Ceausescu orders a ban on importation of any consumer products and commands exportation of all goods produced in Romania except minimum food supplies. Severe restrictions of civil rights are imposed.
- 1989** - Romanians unite in protests against the communist leadership and local demonstrations sparked a national uprising that finally ousted communist ruler Nicolae Ceausescu and his cabinet.

1991 - Romanians vote for a new Constitution.

2004 - Romania joins NATO (The North Atlantic Treaty Organization).

2007 - Romania becomes a member of the European Union (EU).

Nicolae Ceausescu

Ceausescu was a Communist dictator who was President of Romania from 1974-1989. He banned contraception during his regime and encouraged women to have 5 or more children, in a bid to increase Romania's population. His legacy included hundreds of overcrowded orphanages across Romania where unwanted children lived an appalling existence. Comber began working in Romania in 1990, after its founders had seen the coverage of conditions in orphanages on television.



For more information on this topic, please see the following useful articles and links.

Romanian Digest - Dec 09 – *Romania 20 Years Later*
<http://www.hr.ro/digest/200912/digest.htm>

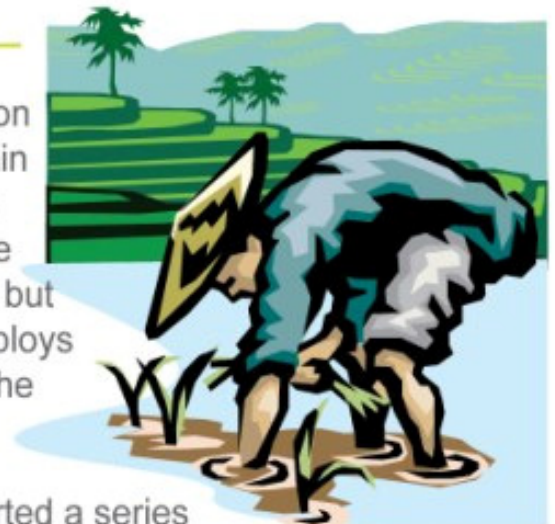
BBC Coverage

July 2005 - *What happened to Romania's orphanages?*
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4629589.stm>

December 2009 - *What became of Romania's neglected orphans?*
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8425001.stm>

Economy

For many centuries Romania's economy was based on agriculture. In the 1930s Romania was one of the main European producers of wheat, corn and meats and it used to be called "the bread basket of Europe." There was a shift towards heavy industries since the 1970s but the agriculture is still economically important and employs about one-third of the workforce. Romania is one of the largest wine producers in Europe.



With the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, Romania started a series of political and economic reforms. After a decade of post-revolution economic problems, Romania made economic reforms such as low flat tax rates in 2005 and joined the European Union on January 1, 2007.

While Romania's income level remains one of the lowest in the European Union, reforms have increased the growth speed.

The average gross wage per month in Romania was 1,855 lei in May 2009, equating to €442.48.

Language & Culture

Romanian is a Latin based language with the 31-letter Latin alphabet in use. The literacy rate in Romania is 98%. Many Romanians living in towns and cities are able to communicate in English, French or German. However, it is harder to find English speaking residents in smaller villages and towns. Romania has strong cultural traditions and has produced some world renowned artists, writers and musicians. Examples include Gheorghe Zamfir, a pan-flute player who has sold 120 million albums worldwide, and sculptor Constantin Brâncuși, who has achieved the highest price for any piece of sculpture ever made (\$27.5 million in 2005).



Romanian gymnast Nadia Comaneci was the first Olympic gymnast ever to score a perfect 10, at the Montreal Olympics in 1976.

For further general information and photos of Romania, please visit:

www.romaniatourism.com

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romania>

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/romania>

Currency

Romanian currency is Romanian Lei and worth approximately 4 lei to a euro. Euro can be changed at many bureau de change. The singular is leu, the plural is lei and it is written as RON e.g. 20 RON.



Phone

If you would like to use your phone in Romania, we advise that you get it unlocked before you travel (you can get this done for around 5-10 euro in Ireland) and purchase a Romanian SIM card when you arrive. SIM cards can be purchased for various prices, starting at 4 euro/17 lei. The SIM card contains your Romanian phone number and an initial credit equal to the amount paid. The most popular mobile phone providers in Romania are Orange, Vodafone, Cosmote, and Zapp Mobile.



ATM

There are many ATM machines in Romania where you can use your Laser/ Cirrus card as well as credit cards to withdraw cash. Most shops will not take credit cards however and also be prepared to pay cash in restaurants and bars.



Bus

There is a regular bus to Bucharest from Giurgiu (time c. 1.5 hours) and a one way ticket costs 15 lei/4 euro. There are also buses from Bucharest to many major cities at reasonable prices. To purchase tickets and find more information about pricing and schedules, we recommend going to the “autogară,” or bus station.



Car Rental

Most car rental firms are located in Bucharest but some do deliver cars to Giurgiu at no additional cost (one such firm can be found online at inchirieri-auto.com or contacted by phone at 0730.111.006).

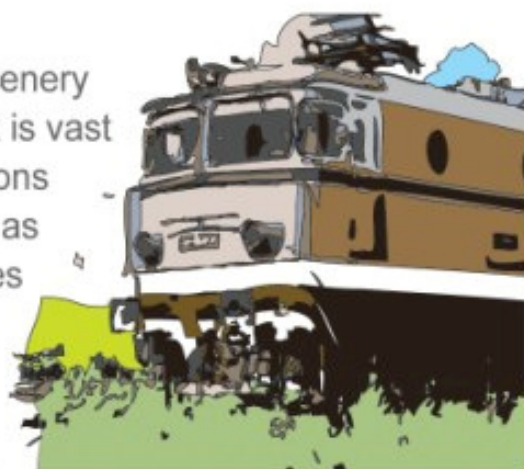
Cronoscar is a car rental firm in Bucharest offering small-sized cars from 25 euro/day if rented for 1-3 days to 22 euro/day if rented for 4-7 days.

Eurocars is another firm offering cars at similar prices.



Train

Travelling by train allows you to enjoy the beautiful scenery that Romania has to offer. Romania's railway network is vast and spans every town and city in the country. Conditions on trains have improved greatly in the past few years as newer trains were introduced. There are different types of trains with names that denote their speed. The rapid is the fastest (and most likely offering the best conditions), followed by the accelerat (stops only in major cities, towns, or larger villages/communities), and finally the personal, which stops at all train stations no matter how small.



Train tickets may be purchased online at bileteonline.cfrcalatori.ro or at corresponding train stations (“gară”=train station). A two-way train ticket for Bucharest – Constanta (the Black Sea) costs 80-90 RON (20 euro) and the trip is about 3 and a half hours long. A trip of about 7 hours, Bucharest – Sibiu (2007 Cultural Capital of Europe in Transylvania; mountains), for example, costs 110 RON (26 euro). The trip Bucharest – Sinaia (mountain resort, Peles Castle) of about 2 hours costs 60 RON (14 euro). All the prices indicate two-way trips conducted by the rapid

You will be free to travel on your days off and we hope you get to see some of Romania when you are there – the mountains and Black Sea coast are very beautiful. .

Staying Safe

In July-August it will be very hot in Romania – temperatures can reach the late forties. It is vital that you look after your health and this includes drinking plenty of water daily and staying out of the sun as far as possible. Remember to pack and use sunscreen if needed. It is recommended that you also bring mosquito repellent.



In Romania, most work places and shops close between 2pm-4pm for a siesta and you are advised to work with local hours and take some time off during the middle of the day for a rest/ lie down. Many shops are not open on Sunday.

Romania is relatively safe but like anywhere, do remember to watch your bag and be sensible with your money – don't count it in public places. It is recommended to travel in pairs after dark and carry a mobile phone with you, especially in Bucharest.




We advise you not to drink the tap-water and use bottled water only (which is cheap and available in all shops). Remember: apa minerala carbogazoasa = water with gas and apa plata/necarbogazoasa = water with no gas!

There are pharmacies should you need to purchase basic supplies or medicines. There is also the Emergency County Hospital and several doctors' surgeries in Giurgiu. Personal hygiene products are widely available and you will find a similar range to what is at home.





Comber 

for a future without orphanages

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