



Castles and Counts

Exploring the Secrets of Romania
and Bulgaria

OCTOBER 3-17, 2025

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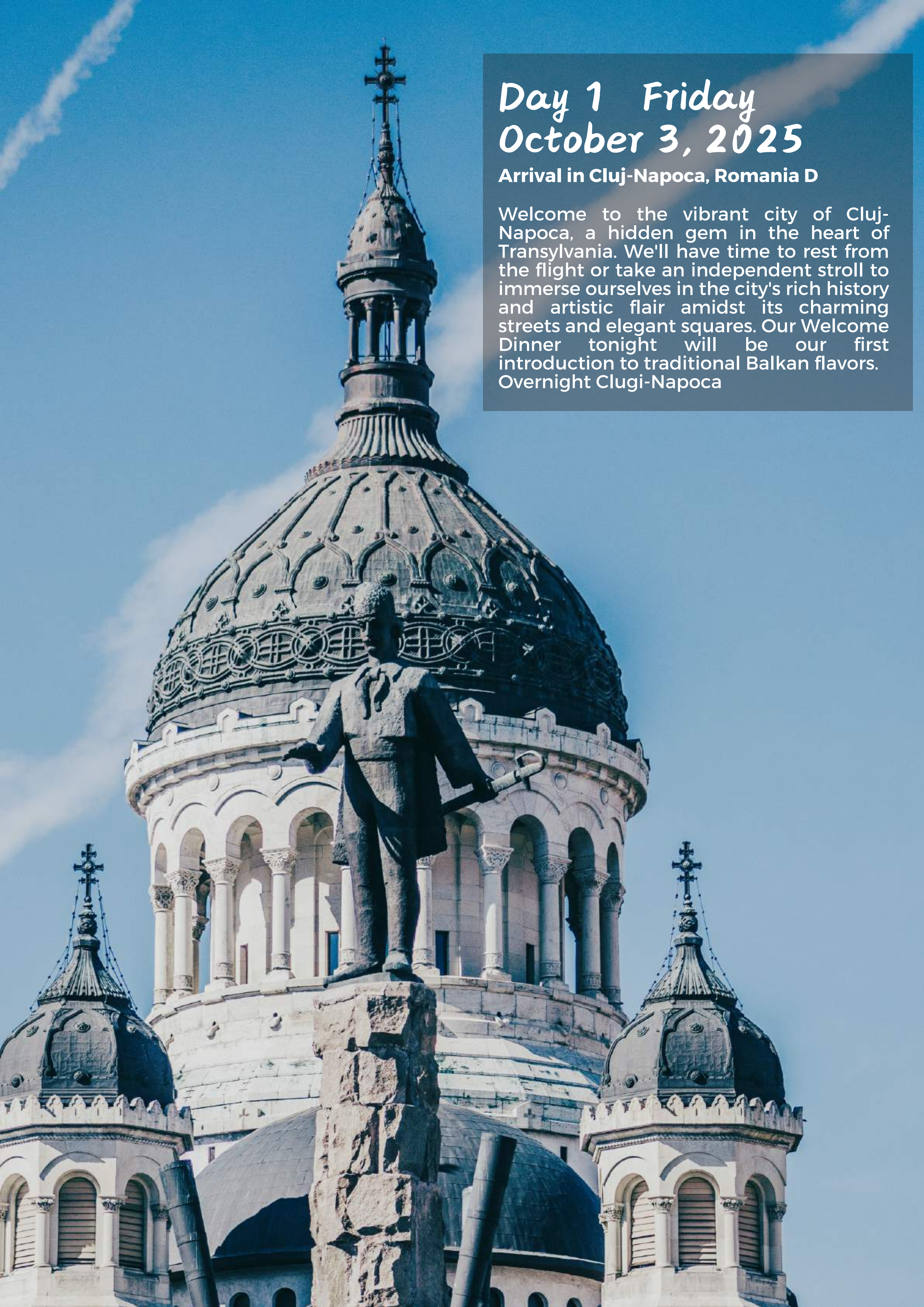
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Embark on a captivating cultural journey through the timeless landscapes of Romania and Bulgaria. Explore the enchanting medieval towns of Transylvania, where legends of Dracula intertwine with stunning architecture and folklore. Wander through the charming streets of Brasov and Sibiu, adorned with centuries-old churches and fortified walls. Absorb the mystical beauty of the Carpathian Mountains, whose ancient traditions and natural wonders await. Cross into Bulgaria and uncover the treasures of Sofia, a city where ancient ruins stand alongside modern marvels. Discover the rich heritage of Plovdiv, Europe's oldest continuously inhabited city, and be transported back in time as you wander through its cobblestone streets. Uncover the secrets of these fascinating countries, from ancient origins to modern-day transformation and gain valuable insights into the wider region, a crossroads of civilizations throughout history and a land steeped in myth and legend.





Day 1 Friday
October 3, 2025

Arrival in Cluj-Napoca, Romania D

Welcome to the vibrant city of Cluj-Napoca, a hidden gem in the heart of Transylvania. We'll have time to rest from the flight or take an independent stroll to immerse ourselves in the city's rich history and artistic flair amidst its charming streets and elegant squares. Our Welcome Dinner tonight will be our first introduction to traditional Balkan flavors. Overnight Cluj-Napoca

Day 2 Saturday October 4, 2025

A Day in the Heart of Transylvania B,D

Step into a world of medieval charm and artistic brilliance as our guided walking tour takes us on a captivating journey through Cluj-Napoca. We'll lose ourselves in the ancient streets of the Old Town, where history whispers at every corner. Marvel at the grandeur of Unirii Square, a vibrant hub of culture and commerce, before tracing the footsteps of legendary figures at the birthplace of King Matthias Corvinus.

This afternoon we venture into the mystical realm of Bucovina, a land of breathtaking landscapes and spiritual significance immersing ourselves in the awe-inspiring beauty of Moldovita Monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage Site adorned with vibrant frescoes that have defied the test of time. These masterpieces, painted on the exterior walls, are a testament to the artistic genius and deep faith of the Romanian people.

This evening we gather for an enlightening talk about the rich tapestry of Romanian history, its culture, its current reality and where it is heading, providing an insight into the wider region which has been in the center of the global attention in the recent years.

Overnight Bucovina region





Day 3 Sunday October 5, 2025

A Day of Spiritual Splendor and Artistic Expression B,D

The breathtaking beauty of the painted monasteries, UNESCO World Heritage Sites stands as a testament to the region's rich history and artistic heritage.

Our adventure begins at the iconic Voronet Monastery, often hailed as the "Sistine Chapel of the East." Marvel at the vibrant frescoes that adorn its walls, particularly the awe-inspiring depiction of the Last Judgment. The intricate details and vivid colors of the majestic Sucevita Monastery, the largest of the painted monasteries, will amaze with the stories depicted on the walls, a blend of biblical narratives and local folklore as will the imposing fortress walls and the stunning frescoes that adorn its exterior. The painted monasteries of Bucovina are a testament to the enduring power of faith, art, and human creativity.

Experience another traditional cultural richness of Bucovina, we'll participate in a traditional Easter egg painting workshop. Under the guidance of a skilled local artist, we'll learn the art of creating these intricate and colorful works of art, allowing us to connect with the region's cultural heritage and take home a unique souvenir.

Overnight Bucovina region

Day 4 Monday October 6, 2025

A Journey Through Time and Sound B,L

Today, we embark on a captivating journey through the heart of Transylvania. Our first stop is a hidden gem, a town renowned for its centuries-old tradition of crafting exquisite string instruments. We'll explore the intricacies of violin-making, witnessing firsthand the meticulous craftsmanship that goes into creating these musical masterpieces.

After seeing how the instruments are crafted and produced, a delicious lunch featuring flavors of Transylvania, paired with a sampling of the region's renowned wines, particularly its crisp white varieties, will tantalize our taste buds and leave us feeling refreshed and inspired. Our journey continues to the enchanting city of Sighisoara, a medieval marvel that has captivated visitors for centuries. As we wander through the narrow, cobblestone streets, we'll feel as though we've stepped back in time. Amid the medieval atmosphere we will admire the colorful houses, the imposing fortress towers, and the Clock Tower, a symbol of the city's rich history.

Overnight Sighisoara



Day 5 Tuesday October 7, 2025

A Day of Cultural Immersion and Rustic Charm B,L

Today, we probe deeper into the heart of Transylvania, exploring the rich cultural heritage of the Saxon villages. Our first stop is the enchanting village of Biertan, where we'll marvel at the imposing fortified church, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This architectural masterpiece, with its thick walls and fortified towers, offers a glimpse into the region's turbulent past.

Next, we'll share a unique cultural experience visiting a Roma family. These skilled artisans, known as gypsy coppersmiths, have passed down their craft through generations. We'll have the opportunity to witness their intricate metalwork and learn about their traditions and way of life.

As the day unfolds, we'll immerse ourselves in the idyllic beauty of a traditional Transylvanian village and savor a delicious homemade lunch, prepared with local ingredients of course with a tasting of the regions finest wines.

Our final destination is the charming city of Sibiu, a hidden gem with a captivating blend of medieval and Baroque architecture. We'll discover picturesque streets, admire the colorful houses, and explore the historic squares.

Overnight Sibiu





Day 6 Wednesday October 8, 2025

A Day of Cultural Delights and Artistic Exploration B

We slow the pace and enjoy a more relaxing day in the charming city of Sibiu. The vibrant atmosphere invites us to wander through historic neighborhoods and indulge in the city's delectable cuisine.

For a deeper understanding of Transylvania's rich cultural heritage, let's gather to visit the open-air Village Museum. Step into a bygone era as we wander through traditional Romanian village architecture, marveling at the intricate architecture and craftsmanship.

The afternoon is free for independent exploration. Art enthusiasts will delight in the Brukenthal National Museum, a treasure trove of Romanian and European art. Admire the stunning collection of paintings, sculptures, and decorative arts.

To gain insights into the city's history, explore the former Town Hall, now housing the History Museum to discover the fascinating stories of Sibiu's past, from its medieval beginnings to its modern-day transformation.

Overnight Sibiu



Day 7 Thursday October 9, 2025

A Day of Gothic Grandeur and Medieval Charm B,L

Today, we experience the essence of Transylvania's legendary past. Our first stop is the enigmatic Bran Castle, often shrouded in the mystique of Dracula. While the castle may be associated with the infamous vampire of literary and cinematic fame, it's also a stunning medieval fortress with a rich history. Explore its elegant rooms, adorned with exquisite decor from the 1920s, and delve into the legend of Vlad the Impaler, the inspiration behind Dracula's character.

Our adventure continues in the charming city of Brasov. Nestled amidst the Carpathian Mountains, this medieval gem boasts a picturesque historic center, fortified walls, and iconic landmarks. Our guided walking tour through the winding streets, reveals the imposing Black Church, a Gothic masterpiece, and the ancient fortifications that once protected the city.

The more adventurous among us may seize the opportunity to ascend Tampa Mountain hiking through lush forests and breathtaking landscapes to reach the summit, where panoramic views of the city and surrounding mountains await. The rest of us will take a scenic cable car ride to the top.

Overnight Brasov

Day 8 Friday October 10, 2025

A Day of Wildlife Wonders and Royal Splendor B,L,D

The Zarnesti Bear Sanctuary is a haven for rescued bears where incredible work is being done to rehabilitate these majestic creatures and provide them with a safe and nurturing environment. As we observe the bears in their natural habitat, we'll learn about their fascinating stories and the challenges they face.

Next, we'll journey to the fairytale-like palace, the enchanting Peles Castle, nestled in the Carpathian Mountains. This stunning architectural masterpiece, with its eclectic blend of styles, will transport you to a bygone era. Explore the opulent interiors, admire the intricate details, and imagine the lives of the Romanian royal family who once called this castle home.

We continue to Bucharest, the vibrant capital of Romania. On our guided tour of the Old Town, we'll wander through the historic center, a captivating blend of old-world charm and modern energy discovering the elegant Belle Epoque architecture, the iconic Romanian Athenaeum, and the historic Revolution Square.

Overnight Bucharest





Day 9 Saturday October 11, 2025

A Day of Urban Exploration in Bucharest B

Today is free to explore the vibrant city of Bucharest at our own pace. This dynamic metropolis offers a fascinating blend of architectural styles, from the elegant Belle Epoque buildings to the imposing communist-era structures. You might choose to wander again through the historic center, admiring the charming streets and squares. Or perhaps you'll be drawn to the grandeur of the Palace of Parliament, one of the world's largest administrative buildings. Art enthusiasts can delve into the city's rich cultural heritage by visiting one of the many museums, such as the National Museum of Art of Romania. For a more leisurely experience, you could spend the day strolling through Cismigiu Gardens, a serene oasis in the heart of the city. Or, if you're in the mood for some shopping, you can explore the trendy boutiques and bustling markets. No matter how you choose to spend your day, Bucharest is sure to captivate your senses and leave you with lasting memories.

Overnight Bucharest

Day 10 Sunday October 12, 2025

A Journey Across Borders: From Romania to Bulgaria B,D

Our next adventure begins as we cross the Danube on the Friendship Bridge, a symbol of unity between nations, and enter the enchanting country of Bulgaria. Our first stop is the captivating Ivanovo Rock-Hewn Churches, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. These ancient churches, carved into the rock face, are adorned with stunning frescoes that offer a glimpse into the religious art of the Byzantine era.

Later, we'll arrive in the medieval city of Veliko Tarnovo. Perched atop a hill, the Tsarevets Fortress offers panoramic views of the city and the Yantra River. We'll visit the ruins of the royal palace, the Patriarchal Cathedral, and the narrow, winding streets of the Old Town.

To celebrate our arrival in Bulgaria, we'll gather for a traditional welcome dinner, to savor the flavors of Bulgarian cuisine and experience the warm hospitality of the local people.
Overnight Veliko Tarnovo



Day 11 Monday October 13, 2025

A Journey Through Time: Thracian Treasures and Balkan Beauty B,L,D

Travel through the heart of Bulgaria we learn about its ancient history and appreciate the stunning landscapes. Our first stop is a charming village museum, where we'll admire the traditional architecture, learn about local crafts, and experience the simple beauty of rural life. Continuing our journey, we'll cross the majestic Balkan Mountains via the historic Shipka Pass a scenic route offering breathtaking views of the surrounding countryside. Our next destination is the Valley of the Thracian Kings, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We'll visit two of the remarkable Thracian tombs, including the iconic Kazanlak Tomb, renowned for its exquisite frescoes. These ancient tombs offer a glimpse into the sophisticated culture of the Thracians, a mysterious civilization that once thrived in this region. In the afternoon, we'll arrive in the enchanting city of Plovdiv, one of Europe's oldest continuously inhabited cities. Overnight Plovdiv



Day 12 Wednesday October 14, 2025

A Day of Ancient Wonders and Renaissance Charm B

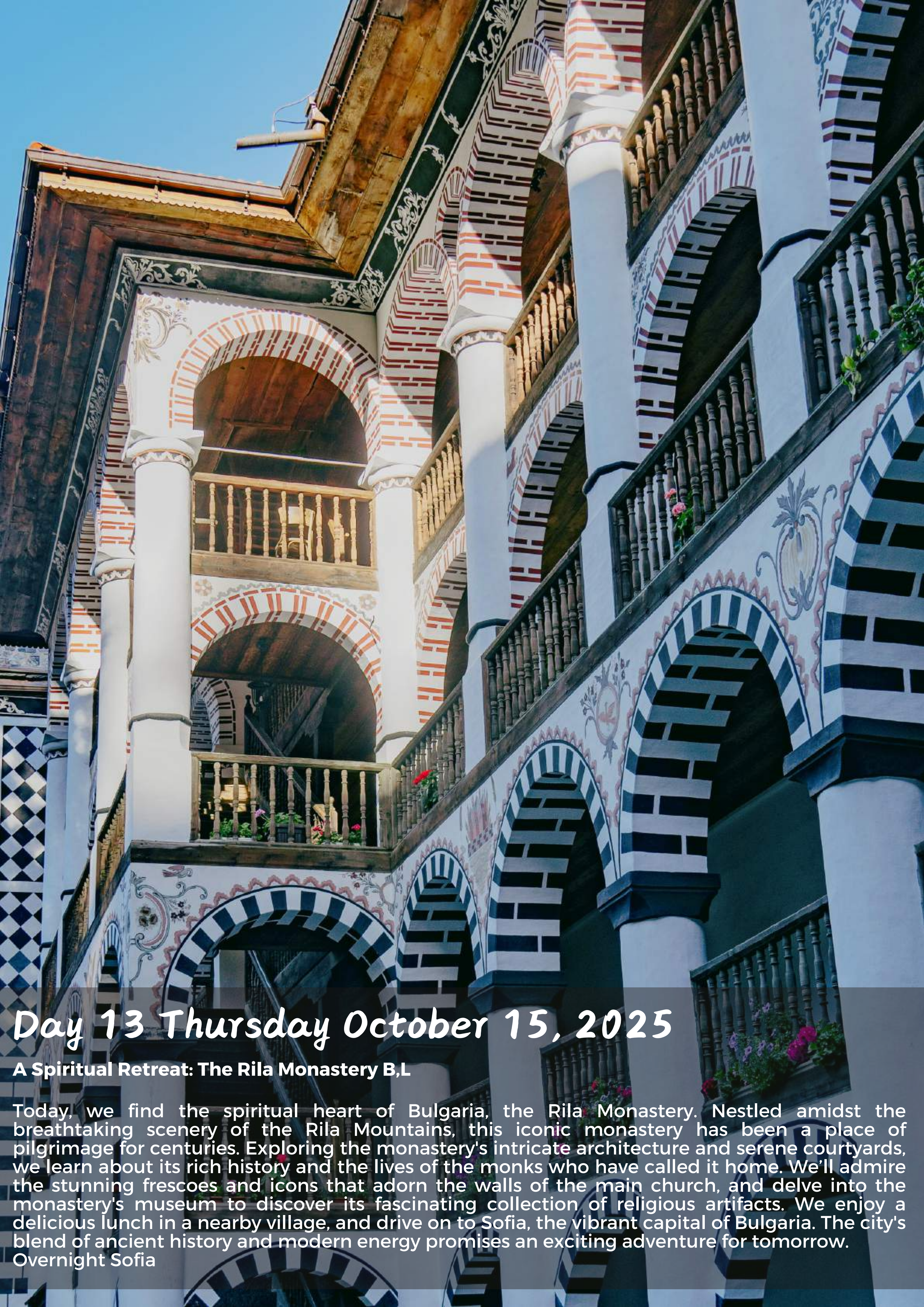
Exploring Plodiv today we'll stroll through the enchanting Old Town where a labyrinth of cobblestone streets reveals architecture from Medieval, Renaissance and colorful houses from the 19th century. We begin at the ancient Roman theater, a magnificent, well-preserved structure that once echoed with the cheers of thousands of spectators. Next, at one of the city's historic house-museums, we admire the elegant interiors, intricate carvings, and stunning frescoes that offer a glimpse into the lives of the city's wealthy elite.

Our exploration continues at the Bishop's Basilica, a gem that houses a world-class collection of early Christian mosaics dating to the 4th and 5th centuries AD, depicting intricate geometric patterns and mythological scenes.

The rest of the day is yours to explore Plovdiv at your own pace. Lose yourself in the city's vibrant atmosphere, sample delicious local cuisine, or simply relax and soak up the charming ambiance.

Overnight Plodiv





Day 13 Thursday October 15, 2025

A Spiritual Retreat: The Rila Monastery B,L

Today, we find the spiritual heart of Bulgaria, the Rila Monastery. Nestled amidst the breathtaking scenery of the Rila Mountains, this iconic monastery has been a place of pilgrimage for centuries. Exploring the monastery's intricate architecture and serene courtyards, we learn about its rich history and the lives of the monks who have called it home. We'll admire the stunning frescoes and icons that adorn the walls of the main church, and delve into the monastery's museum to discover its fascinating collection of religious artifacts. We enjoy a delicious lunch in a nearby village, and drive on to Sofia, the vibrant capital of Bulgaria. The city's blend of ancient history and modern energy promises an exciting adventure for tomorrow.

Overnight Sofia



Day 14 Friday October 16, 2025

A Day of Cultural Contrasts in Sofia B,D

We'll discover a fascinating blend of architectural styles and religious traditions on our guided walking tour through the city's historic center. At the Triangle of Tolerance, a unique area that showcases the city's religious diversity, we'll admire the golden domes of St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, one of Bulgaria's most iconic landmarks, and contrast it with the elegant architecture of the Sofia Synagogue and the serene Banya Bashi Mosque.

Our discovery stroll leads us to the Roman ruins, a testament to the city's ancient past, the stunning exteriors of the National Theater and the Russian Church, two architectural masterpieces that reflect the city's rich cultural heritage.

The afternoon is yours to explore Sofia at your own pace. Perhaps you'll indulge in some shopping, savor a delicious meal at a local restaurant, or simply relax in one of the city's charming cafes. As the day comes to a close, we gather this evening for a Farewell Dinner, celebrating our unforgettable journey through Romania and Bulgaria.

Overnight Sofia

Day 15 Saturday October 17, 2025

Farewell to the Balkans B

As our extraordinary journey through the enchanting lands of Romania and Bulgaria draws to a close, we reflect on the unforgettable experiences we've shared. From the medieval grandeur of Transylvania to the ancient wonders of Thrace, we've explored a region rich in history, culture, and natural beauty.

We depart with cherished memories of stunning landscapes, warm hospitality, and fascinating discoveries.

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