



Living in Romania General Information

Getting Here

By air

Regular and charter flights of Romanian air carriers (notably TAROM, the national airline) or the foreign airlines with offices in Bucharest (Air France, Lufthansa, Alitalia, Swissair) connect Bucharest and the world's major airports. Some of Romania's international airports are: Bucharest – *Otopeni*, *Băneasa*, *Constanța – Mihail Kogălniceanu* and *Timișoara*. Otopeni International Airport in Bucharest is 18 km from the city center. Transfers can be made by airport bus (no. 783) or by taxi. State and private taxis are equipped with metres.

By rail

International Express trains connect the main central European capitals with Bucharest, the Black Sea coast and other important cities. Romania is a member of the International Railway Tariff System RIT and Inter Rail.

By car

The principal access points to Romania are: Berlin, Warsaw, Budapest-Petea E 81; Vienna, Prague, Budapest-Borș E 60 or Nădlac E 64 or Varsaud E 671; Trieste, Belgrade-Moravița E 70 or Poștile de Fier E 70; Athens, Tirana, Sofia-Giurgiu E 85; Istanbul, Sofia-Vama Veche E 87; Moscow, Kiev, Chernovitz-Siret E 85. All roads are marked in accordance to international regulations. Driving is on the right side of the road and overtaking on the left. If you come to Romania by car, bring your driving licence, car papers and green card. The Romanian Automobile Club – ACR – and insurance company CAROM are at your disposal for technical and any other assistance for your car. Call ACR at 927 in Bucharest.

Passports and Visas

The following information is valid for both exchange and independent students.

Citizens arriving from the EU countries and from Canada, Croatia, Iceland, Japan, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, and USA, are exempted from visa requirements. As a student coming from one of these



countries, you can enter the Romanian territory only with a simple customs stamp and you can reside here for up to 90 days. After this period, your residence is to be extended by the Romanian Ministry of Internal Affairs, for periods which shall not exceed one year.

Citizens arriving from all the other countries are obliged to apply for study visas in due time, at a Romanian diplomatic mission or consular office from their native countries. In order to get the necessary papers for visa extensions, you should contact our International Relations Office, after your arriving here.

Customs Regulations

Romania applies the international regulations of the Convention for the Customs Facilities for Tourist Traffic. Highly valuable goods and foreign currency (over the value of \$ 1,000 USD per person) must be declared when entering the country. Endorsed customs declarations must be kept as they are required when leaving the country. It is forbidden to import, unless with a special license, *lei* (the Romanian currency), ammunition, explosives, narcotics, pornographic material. It is forbidden to export items of cultural, historic, or artistic value.

Car drivers must have their personal driving license and international green card.

Rabies vaccination certificates are required for cats and dogs.

More details on Romanian customs can be found on the Romanian Customs Administration's web site: www.customs.ro.

Insurance

The University of Bucharest takes no responsibility for covering costs, which relate to accidents or health problems during the period when you are a student in Romania. It is your own responsibility to have health insurance cover for the visa validity period. In some faculties, medical assistance is available on campus. Naturally, we hope that you will never need to use any medical facilities. However, Romania has good medical facilities and Romanian doctors are known for their high standard of medical education. Foreign citizens from the countries with which Romania has concluded bilateral agreements receive medical care in accordance with those agreements.

No immunizations or unusual health precautions are necessary. Romania has no infectious risks and there are no poisonous insects. No malaria cases have been registered in Romania in the last decades. During the summer months there are mosquitoes in the Danube Delta and some other southern regions. For your comfort take some mosquito repellent when traveling during summer



season. Tap water is safe to drink but, if in doubt, buy bottled water. Romania owns more than one third of all European natural mineral springs. Bottled water is inexpensive and widely available. Some Romanian bottled water is rated the best in the world for purity and taste and is exported to many foreign countries.

Time

Romania is 7-10 hours ahead of USA time, 2 hours ahead of GMT, and 1 hour ahead of CET. Daylight saving time runs from the end of March until the end of September.

Weather

Romania has a temperate climate, with four distinct seasons. In Bucharest the average summer temperature is 24⁰ Centigrades (75⁰ Fahrenheit), but during July and August it often exceeds 32⁰ C (100⁰ F). Winters are cold, with temperatures below 0⁰ C (32⁰ F). Apart from normal seasonal clothes, it is always advisable to pack a warm pullover, a raincoat and good walking shoes. Very warm clothing is recommended in winter.

Electricity

The main electricity in Romania is 220 volts and 50 Hz. British and American outlets differ from the Romanian ones, so you may need to bring a transformer and/or adapter for your electrical appliances.

Standard of Measurement

Romania uses the Metric system.

1 meter (m) = 100 cm = 1.094 yard = 3.281 feet

1 kilometer (km) = 1000 m = 0.621 mile

Language

Romanian is the official language of the country, spoken by around 90 % of the population. It belongs to the Romance branch of the Indo-European language family and it has 77% lexical



similarity with Italian, 75% with French, 74% with Sardinian, 73% with Catalan, 72% with Portuguese and Retho-Romance, 71% with Spanish.

Still, the Romanian language itself contains 3.800 words of Slavic origin.

Older generations have a fairly good command of French or German. Young people speak English and are happy to help you around.

Religion

Most Romanians are Orthodox Christians (87%). Catholics of the Oriental and Roman rite are well represented (5%). There are Reformed/Lutheran (3%), Unitarian (1%), Neo-Protestant, Armenian, Moslem and Jewish communities.

Money and Banks

Local currency is called *leu* (ROL). Romania is the third country in the world to fully convert to polymer notes. As of 14.12.01, all four denominations (10,000 Lei, 50,000 Lei, 100,000 Lei, and 500,000 Lei) in circulation were plastic. Romania is still primarily a cash economy, so make sure you always carry sufficient *lei* to cover your expenses. Some places accept credit cards, but fairly few accept travelers' checks. There are banks where you can change your travelers' checks and receive cash advances on your credit card. ATM machines can be easily found outside banks, post offices or malls.

Exchange rates are posted all over the city at changing houses called *Casă de schimb*, where you can change hard currency for *lei*. A valid passport is required in such cases. Save your receipt to prove you have changed your money legally. Never change money with someone who approaches you on the street; it's always a scam and it is illegal!

You can check exchange rates at www.bnr.ro, the official site of the National Bank of Romania. There are several banks in Bucharest which assist foreigners with their financial problems.

Raiffeisen Bank

B-dul Mircea Vodă 44, Bl. M17

Tel: 40-21-323-0031 Fax: 40-21-323-6027

<http://www.raiffeisen.ro>

Romanian Commercial Bank

B-dul Elisabeta 5

Tel: 40-21-312-1678; 40-21-312-6185

<http://www.bcr.ro>



BancPost Bank

B-dul Libertății 18, Bl. 104

Tel: 40-21-336-1124 Fax: 40-21-336-0772

<http://www.bancpost.ro>

Transylvania Bank

Str. Hristo Botev 1

Tel: 40-21-312-3521; 313-4512 Fax: 40-21-323-5618

<http://www.btrl.ro>

Banks are usually open 9:00 am to 1:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

Postal System

The Romanian Post has a variety of services directed towards foreign citizens.

The letter mail service allows foreigners to send letters, postcards, printed materials, legal documents, small packets up to 2 kg, within the postal network. The parcel service deals with sending the documents, valuables, papers, goods or cash via parcels, letters and declared-value items.

For more information, available also in English, you can access: <http://www.posta-romana.ro/>

Telephone Accounts

Rent apartments are usually provided with phone facilities; telephone bills must be paid monthly at the closest Post Office.

Telephone cards can be used to make international or national calls from all public phones. These can be bought at various shops, e.g. kiosks, newspaper shops.

There is also the option of having a mobile phone, which is widely used in Romania. If you already have a GSM mobile phone, remember to bring it with you.

Three digit telephone numbers are local toll-free numbers for emergencies or businesses.

Toll-free numbers: Fire Brigade – 981

Medical Emergency Service – 961

Emergency Hospital – 962

Puls Medical Emergency Service – 973

Police – 955

Constabulary – 956



A new general emergency phone number – 112 – operates for Bucharest, Braşov and the Black Sea area beginning with July 2003. By the end of 2004, the new 112 general emergency number will cover all of Romania.

Dialing within Romania:

0 + three digit area code + six digit telephone (when dialing anywhere in the country)

E.g. 0 + 268 + 543 210

0 + 21 + seven digit telephone (when dialing a number in Bucharest)

E.g. 0 + 21 + 65 43 210

International dialing from Romania:

00 + country code + area code + telephone

Dialing from a foreign country directly to Bucharest:

International Access Code + 40 (country code) + 21 + seven digit telephone

Dialing from a foreign country directly to any other city in Romania:

International Access Code + 40 (country code) + three digit area code + six digit telephone

Internet Access

Romania has several Internet access providers offering advanced services such as Internet messaging via mobile telephone, Internet paging, international roaming and more. A number of Internet retail outlets and cyber-cafes in almost every town offer convenient Internet access. An increasing number of hotels offer data ports with high-speed modem connections for guests to access the Internet and retrieve e-mail in the comfort of their rooms. However, if you already have a laptop, bring it with you.

Public Transportation

Trains

SNCFR (*Societatea Naţională a Căilor Ferate Române*) is the national railway covering over 6,800 miles (11,000 kilometers) throughout Romania. Its trains are either old and shabby or modern and efficient. CFR timetables are posted on large overhead boards inside the stations (*gară*). If planning a lot of train travel, find and buy the current timetable book called *Mersul Trenurilor* at CFR stations or offices; it lists all routes, both foreign and domestic, the trains, and their schedules (updated



each May). There are five types of trains, in accordance with their speed: *Personal* (the slowest), *Accelerat*, *Rapid*, *Intercity*, *Express* and *Săgeata*.

Buying a 1st class ticket provides you with an assigned seat in a cabin of six; it costs only a few thousand *lei* more. When traveling at night, book a sleeping cabin (*vagon de dormit*) with two bunks and a sink. It's a good idea to take along some food and water, too. Smoking is not permitted inside the cabins, but you may smoke on the corridor.

In Bucharest, the first class ticket windows at Gara de Nord are in a separate hall just left of the terminal entrance off Calea Griviței. If you have trouble communicating with the window attendants, ask a young person for help; they are able to speak in English and eager to assist foreigners. You may be charged a few *lei* to enter the station by a black-jacketed security person.

Domestic tickets are usually small cardboard stubs; your wagon number and seat number will be written on them. You can buy them a day in advance at CFR Agencies, but only two hours before departure at the train station. International tickets must be purchased in advance at a CFR office. CFR agencies are closed on weekends.

Subway

Bucharest is the only Romanian city which enjoys the benefits of the subway (www.metrorex.ro).

There are four underground lines crossing the city: from north to south (M2-blue), from east to west (M3-red), a circular route (M1-yellow), and an exclusively northern route, from *1 Mai* Station to *Gara de Nord* (M4-green). The stations are clean and well marked, and each has a unique design. You must buy a magnetic metro card for either 2 rides or 10 rides; they are very cheap, the equivalent of about 50 cents a ride. Subways operate from 5am until 11pm. Check the underground map for routes and stops.

Buses, trolley buses and trams

Buses, trolley buses and trams run throughout the entire city from dawn to 11pm. Tickets and magnetic cards can be purchased from yellow painted kiosks with the logo *RATB* located near the intersections of the main streets or in bus stations. They are cheap, so buy 2 or 3 to be safe. When you get on the bus, validate the ticket by punching it in the little box on board. Be especially aware of burglars on crowded buses. As for the schedules, you can check www.ratb.ro.

Taxis

Taxis are usually picked up on street corners where the cabbies hang out, rather than hailed on the street. Try to use only licensed metered taxis that have a lighted sign on top, and their name, number and rate on the car door. They will likely try to overcharge you, so watch the meter or agree on a price before you drive off. Most city trips should cost between 50,000 and 150,000 lei; pay in small bills and don't expect any change back.



Some of the best taxi companies are: *Cobălcescu* (tel: 9451), *Cristaxi* (tel: 9461) and *Getax* (tel: 9531).

Maxitaxis

Maxitaxis are shared taxi minibuses; they run along the main thoroughfares in Bucharest and supplement the bus services.

Accommodation

Students can find cheap accommodation in Bucharest. Comfortable and cosy youth hostels offer their facilities to everybody interested.

Elvis'Villa Hostel

Avram Iancu 5, Sector 2, Bucharest

Backpacker's Lodge

9 Radu Beller Str., Dorobanți, Bucharest

The Funky Chicken Hostel

63 Gen. Berthelot Str., Sector 1, Bucharest

Villa Helga Youth Hostel

2 Salcânilor Str., Bucharest

More information and online reservations at: www.hostelromania.com

Newspapers, Radio and TV Stations

Newspapers

After the Revolution in 1989, for a couple of years, the Romanian newspaper industry experienced an increase in the number of publications on the market.

Although most publications are in Romanian, there are some foreign-language newspapers which may be of interest for those with no or little knowledge of our language. *Bucharest Business Week* is an English-language business newspaper published each Sunday. *Nine O'Clock* covers national and international news, business, sports and culture. *Romanian Economic Daily* is published from Monday to Friday and approaches issues from domestic and world policy to business news. *BucarestMatin* and *Bucarest Hebdo* are French-language daily newspapers covering national and international news, business, sports, culture and more.

Some of the most purchased Romanian newspapers are: *Adevărul*, *România Liberă*, *Ziua*, *Curentul*, *Jurnalul Național* and *Cotidianul*. There are also several specialised newspapers. The most



important are finance and business newspapers *Ziarul Financiar* and *Bursa*, and sports dailies *ProSport* and *Gazeta Sporturilor*.

7 *SERI* presents all the cultural and social events organized weekly in Bucharest.

For a comprehensive list of dailies and other Romanian publications and links to their web pages, you can go to www.ziare.com.

Radio stations

The national radio operates with five national channels, an international channel and five regional studios broadcasting their own programmes. The first private radio stations appeared in 1990, in Bucharest, but they were only FM stations which used to broadcast mainly music and short news bulletins taken from the newspapers. It was late after 1992, with the establishment of the National Broadcasting Council, granting broadcast licences, that private radio and TV stations became a real alternative to the state-owned institutions. At present there are over 150 private local FM stations, the most important networks being established by *Radio Contact* - 96,1 FM (www.radiocontact.ro), *Radio ProFM* - 102,8 FM (www.profm.ro) and *Radio Uniplus*. *Europa FM* (www.europafm.ro) is a regional radio station, broadcasting news and music all across Romania through a comprehensive network of FM frequencies. However, there are no AM private stations as yet.

TV stations

The national public television, TVR, broadcasts through three national channels, *TVR1* (reaches 90 percent of the territory), *TVR2* (only 60 percent) and *TVR Cultural*, and one international satellite channel, *TVR International*. There are more than 60 private TV stations functioning at present all over Romania, but there is a tendency to form larger networks. The most powerful groups are *ProTV*, *Antena 1*, *Prima TV*, *B1TV*, and *Realitatea TV* which have several local stations and broadcast via satellite to cable companies all over the country. Other smaller stations can be viewed via satellite and cable in most Romanian cities.

Based on a study conducted by the European Journalism Center, more than 80% of families in Bucharest have cable TV. Also, statistics reveal that 7% from the Romanians subscribe to a cable distribution company, more than in France or Great Britain. There are around 700 cable distributors offering access to 18-25 Romanian, European and American stations: *Animal Planet*, *CNN*, *Discovery*, *Eurosport*, *France 2*, *Pro7*, *RTL*.



Shopping

Special purchases include embroideries, ceramics, pottery, porcelain, crystal, glassware, silverware, carpets, rugs, fabrics, wool jumpers, woodcarvings, glass paintings and more. Antique Shops (*Antichități*) and stores with traditional hand-made goods (*Artizanat*) deserve shoppers' attention.

Recommended shopping areas are those in the center of the residential zones of major cities. Normal shopping hours are 8.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m., but shop and department stores are open till 9.00 p.m. and later. Duty free shops are to be found in the international airports.

Smoking

The Romanian Government recently approved legislation that bans smoking in every public place. Currently smoking is not allowed on intra-Europe and domestic flights, on buses and on some trains. Luxury hotels have designated no-smoking floors but very few restaurants have no-smoking sections. Smoking is prohibited in all public places including hospitals, concert halls, and theaters.

Restrooms

There are not too many public restrooms, so your best bet might be large hotels, department stores or fast-food restaurants. Use of some public rest rooms may be subject to a small fee. Restrooms signs will indicate *Femei* (for women) or *Bărbați* (for men).

Disabled Visitors

Access for people with disabilities to Romania's tourist attractions has improved in recent years, and it remains a priority. However, it is advisable to check with all service providers prior to your visit, ensuring that they are able to meet your particular needs. Advance notice and reservations will also help ensure that you receive the best possible assistance.