

Exploring Romania

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A small number of South Africans are currently based in Romania for study or work purposes.

According to Ambassador Jabu Mbalula, South African ambassador to Romania, the south-eastern European country hosts about 80 South Africans, of whom 20 are students. "The rest are South African residents who work, do business, and invest in Romania. I think we probably have the highest investment per foreign resident in the whole country; statistics show that investments through South African individuals/businesses are extremely high, few as the individual South African investors are."

For those interested in visiting Romania one day, here are a few recommendations from Ambassador Jabu Mbalula on what to do in the country.

Things to do in Romania

There is a myriad of things that are interesting about Romania, starting with its unique mix of history, spectacular nature, charming medieval cities and castles, painted monasteries, and surprising architecture. Romania is absolutely worth a visit.

Romania hosts the best scenic driving road in the world (Transfăgărășan highway), the world's largest civil administration building (Palace of Parliament), the largest Gothic church in Eastern Europe, the largest salt mine museum (Turda mine), Europe's second largest river delta (Danube Delta), and some of the most beautiful castles in Europe.

Romania is home to no less than eight World Heritage Sites just waiting to be explored: the painted churches of Moldavia, the Dacian fortresses of the Orăștie Mountains, the historical centre of Sighișoara, the Danube Delta, the Carpathian Mountain forests, the monastery of Horezu, the villages with fortified churches in Transylvania, and the wooden churches of Maramureș.

Romanian cuisine is built around hearty, high-calorie, mouth-watering dishes. With a strong focus on taste and quality of ingredients, it will win you over with its unmistakably homemade feel.

Traditions are still alive and occupy a significant part of Romanians' lives, particularly around religious feasts, with carollers on Christmas and red painted eggs on Easter.

Romania offers good value for money. You will make more of your dollar in Romania, a country constantly rated among the cheapest destinations in Europe, perfect for budget travellers.

Peleş Castle

Nestled at the foot of the Bucegi Mountains in the picturesque town of Sinaia, Peleş Castle is a masterpiece of German neo-Renaissance architecture, considered by many as one of the most stunning castles in Europe. Commissioned by King Carol I and completed in 1883, the castle served as the summer residence of the royal family.



Palace of Parliament

The Palace of the Parliament in Bucharest is big enough to be among the few man-made things to be spotted from space. It is the world's second largest administrative building (after the USA Pentagon). Its 1100 rooms, of which only 400 are finished and used, are distributed over 12 floors and 8 underground levels.



Transfăgărășan road

Labelled ‘the best driving road in the world’, this high-altitude road connects the south of Romania with its central region, Transylvania, travelling straight across the massive Făgăraș Mountains through five tunnels. Transfăgărășan is 90 km long and reaches an altitude of 2 042 m, a real road in the clouds.



Poiana Brașov ski resort

Poiana Brașov is the most popular ski resort in Romania, also attracting skiers from all over Europe. Located in the Carpathian Mountains, the ski resort has seven slopes that offer a combined 25 km (15 miles) of skiing. The resort also hosts competitive alpine skiing and figure-skating events.



Bran Castle

With its red tiled roof and many irregular shaped turrets, Bran Castle is one of the most picturesque Romanian landmarks, dating back to the 13th century.



Fortified churches of Transylvania

The fortified churches of Transylvania were built by the Transylvanian Saxons (Germans) between the 13th and 16th centuries. The churches, featuring tall walls and

defence towers similar to those of fortresses, contain many storehouses inside, designed to protect valuable goods and food during long sieges by migrating peoples.



Corvin Castle

Also known as Hunyadi Castle after the man who built it – 15th century statesman Iancu de Hunedoara – Corvin Castle is the biggest and best-preserved medieval structure with military and civilian roles in Romania. With its high buttresses, towers, and a fairy-tale-like drawbridge, it keeps attracting visitors throughout the year.



Sighișoara Historical Centre

A walk through the historic centre of Sighișoara, included by UNESCO on its World Heritage Sites list, can feel like a trip back in time. Today, it is the last remaining citadel

that has been inhabited uninterruptedly since medieval times, and the only inhabited medieval fortress in Europe.



Painted churches of Moldavia

In Moldavia, eastern Romania, the local craftsmen used their talents to decorate churches of the Romanian Orthodox monasteries with beautiful frescoes, both on the inside and on the outside. These churches are architecturally unique, blending the Gothic and Byzantine styles. Built between the 15th and the 16th centuries by local rulers, eight of them are UNESCO World Heritage Sites.



Danube Delta

Home to more than 300 species of birds and 160 species of fish, the Danube Delta is the second largest and best-preserved river delta in Europe. Reachable by boat only, it is a genuine oasis of tranquillity, where nature displays all its beauty. Birds flock here from as far away as Egypt and China to breed or overwinter. The willow-lined canals offer a great environment for rich wildlife, among which are pelicans, herons, wildcats, wolves, and boars.

