

2. About Bucharest

Bucharest is the capital municipality, cultural, industrial, and financial centre of Romania. It is the largest city in Romania, located in the southeast of the country, and lies on the banks of the Dâmbovița River. Bucharest is situated in the south eastern corner of the Romanian Plain, in an area once covered by the Vlăsiei forest, which, after it was cleared, gave way to a fertile flatland.

Bucharest was first mentioned in documents as early as 1459, becoming the state capital of Romania in 1862. In the period between the two World Wars, the city's elegant architecture and the sophistication of its elite earned Bucharest the nickname of "Little Paris" (*Micul Paris*). In recent years, the city has been experiencing an economic and cultural boom.

Economically, Bucharest is the most prosperous city in Romania and is one of the main industrial centers and transportation hubs of Eastern Europe. The capital has a population about 2,300,000 inhabitants and includes six districts. The city has a total area of 226 square kilometers.

Bucharest contains large parks and gardens including Cișmigiu Gardens which have a rich history, being frequented by famous poets and writers. Opened in 1847 and based on the plans of German architect Carl F.W. Meyer, the gardens are currently the main recreational facility in the city centre, Herăstrău Park and the Botanical Garden. Herăstrău is located in the north of the city, around Lake Herăstrău, and is the site of the Village Museum, while the Botanical Garden is the largest of its kind in Romania and contains over 10,000 species of plants, many of them exotic; it was once a pleasure park for the royal family.

Bucharest is the centre of the Romanian economy and industry, accounting for around 22.7% of the country's GDP and about one-quarter of its industrial production, while being inhabited by only 9% of the country's population.

Bucharest's economy is mainly centered on industry and services. All large Romanian companies are located in Bucharest. Bucharest is also Romania's largest centre for information technology and communications.

There are a number of major international supermarket chains such as Carrefour, Cora and METRO operating in Bucharest. At the moment, the city is undergoing a retail boom, with a large numbers of new supermarkets and hypermarkets opened every year (see supermarkets in Romania). Numerous malls and large shopping centres have been built since the late 1990s, such as AFI Palace Cotroceni, Sun Plaza, Băneasa Shopping City, Plaza Romania, Liberty Center and Unirea Shopping Center. There are also a large number of traditional retail arcades and markets such as the one at Obor.

Climate

Bucharest has a humid continental climate. Winter temperatures often dip below 0 °C, sometimes even dropping to −20 °C. In summer, the average temperature is approximately 23 °C despite the fact that temperatures frequently reach 35 °C to 40 °C in mid-summer in the city centre. Although average precipitation and humidity during summer are low, there are occasional heavy storms. During spring and autumn, average daytime temperatures vary between 17 °C to 22 °C, and precipitation during this time tends to be higher than in summer, with more frequent yet milder periods of rain.

Phone system

In order to call Bucharest from another country you must dial first the country code "0040" followed by 21 for Bucharest or the prefix specific for each county and then the subscriber's number.

Public transport

Bucharest's extensive public transport system is the largest in Romania and one of the largest in Europe. It is made up of the Bucharest Metro, as well as a surface transport system run by RATB (Regia Autonomă de Transport București), which consists of buses, trams, trolleybuses. In addition, there is a private minibus system and a lot offer of taxis. You can find some phone numbers for these companies on this website: <http://taxi.itbox.ro>

Railways

Bucharest is the hub of Romania's national railway network, run by Căile Ferate Române. The main railway station is Gara de Nord, or North Station, which provides connections to all major cities in Romania as well as international destinations.

The city also has five other railway stations run by CFR, most important are Basarab (in proximity of North Station), Obor, Baneasa.

Air

Henri Coandă International Airport located 16.5 km north of the Bucharest city center, in the town of Otopeni, Ilfov. The airport received 7,500,000 passengers in 2011.

Transport from Henry Coanda International Airport

The 783 bus timetable is:

Monday to Friday 5:30 - 23:40 (every 15 minutes).

Saturday, Sunday and legal holydays: 5:30 - 23:30 (every 30 minutes).

Performing arts

The National Theatre

Performing arts are one of the strongest cultural elements of Bucharest. The most famous symphony orchestra is National Radio Orchestra of Romania. One of the most prominent buildings is the neoclassical Romanian Athenaeum, which was founded in 1852, and hosts classical music concerts, the George Enescu Festival, and is home to the "George Enescu" Philharmonic. Bucharest is also home to the Romanian National Opera, as well as the I.L. Caragiale National Theatre. Another well-known theatres in Bucharest are the Comedy Theatre, the Nottara Theatre, the Bulandra Theatre, the Odeon Theatre, the State Jewish Theatre, such as and the Constantin Tănase Revue Theatre.

Architecture

The city centre is a mixture of medieval, neoclassical and art nouveau buildings, as well as 'neo-Romanian' buildings dating from the beginning of the 20th century and a remarkable collection of modern buildings from the 1920s and 1930s.

Some medieval and renaissance edifices remain, the most notable are in the Lipsani area. This precinct contains notable buildings such as Manuc's Inn and the ruins of the Curtea Veche (the Old Court); during the late Middle Ages, this area was the heart of commerce in Bucharest.

Two notable buildings from this time are the Crețulescu Palace, currently housing cultural institutions including UNESCO's European Centre for Higher Education, and the Cotroceni Palace, the current residence of the Romanian President. Many large-scale constructions such as Gara de Nord, the busiest railway station in the city, National Bank of Romania's headquarters and the Telephone Palace date from these times.

Music and nightlife

Of all the wonderful things that Bucharest has to offer, nightlife is not the least of them. There is something for everyone in this town: from trendy bars to Irish pubs, lounge clubs and jazz clubs, discotheques, night clubs, and casinos.

Now that Old Town/Lipscani has been revived and is packed with bars and cafes.

Education

There are 16 public universities in Bucharest, the largest of which are the Politehnica University of Bucharest, the University of Bucharest, the Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies and the Carol Davila University of Medicine and Pharmacy.

Sports

The new Arena Națională was host to the 2012 Europa League final.

The new stadium was inaugurated on 6 September 2011 and has a capacity of nearly 55,000, making it one of the largest stadiums in South-eastern Europe. Every autumn, Bucharest hosts BCR Open Romania international tennis tournament, which is included in the ATP Tour. The outdoors tournament is hosted by the tennis complex BNR Arenas.