



Romania

Carpathian mountains and painted monasteries, Saxon towns and castles, the wild Danube Delta and a language that grew out of Latin.

AT A GLANCE

Facts to know

CAPITAL

Bucharest

POPULATION

About 19 million (official estimate for 1 January 2026)

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Romanian

CURRENCY

Romanian leu (RON), plural lei

AREA

About 238,400 km²

GOVERNMENT

Semi-presidential republic

HIGHEST MOUNTAIN

Moldoveanu Peak, about 2,544 m, in the Fgra Mountains

LONGEST RIVER

The Danube, about 1,075 km along or within Romania. The longest river mostly inside the country is the Mure, 761 km in Romania

NEIGHBOURS

Ukraine, Moldova, Hungary, Serbia and Bulgaria by land, with a coast on the Black Sea

DRIVES ON THE

Right

CALLING CODE

+40

A 45-minute trip to Romania

Everything you need is in this pack. No preparation beyond printing. Adapt the timing to your group.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 0 to 5 min | Welcome. Show the map page and find Romania together. Ask: who has been there, or knows someone from there? |
| 5 to 15 min | Read the facts at a glance, then three moments from the story: AD 8: Ovid exiled to Tomis; 1877: Independence proclaimed; 2025: Full Schengen membership. |
| 15 to 25 min | At the table: talk about Sarmale (stuffed cabbage rolls) and Mmlig (maize porridge). Idea: bring a small taste (bread, cheese, fruit, tea) if your kitchen can help. |
| 25 to 30 min | Say it like a local: practise "Bun dimineaa" (Good morning), "Bun ziua" (Good day, hello), "Bun seara" (Good evening). Everyone says them together. |
| 30 to 40 min | Quiz: read the questions aloud, or play the big-screen version at https://worldstroll.com/countries/romania/group . No scores needed. |
| 40 to 45 min | Talk about it (questions page), then stamp or sign everyone's passport page. |

You will need

- This printed pack (one per table, or one each)
- Pens for the quiz
- Optional: a world map or globe, a small tasting, music from the country

Romania and its cities



- Bucharest (Wallachia (Muntenia)): The huge Palace of the Parliament, The Romanian Athenaeum concert hall, Its Arch of Triumph, modelled on the one in Paris
- Cluj-Napoca (Transylvania): Babe-Bolyai University, the largest in the country, Being named a UNESCO City of Film in 2021, The Turda salt mine nearby
- Timioara (Banat): Starting the revolution of December 1989, Electric street lamps as early as 1884, European Capital of Culture in 2023
- Iai (Moldavia): The Palace of Culture, The linden tree of the poet Mihai Eminescu, Being called the Cultural Capital of Romania
- Constana (Dobruja): The Casino on the seafront, The statue of the Roman poet Ovid, who died in exile here, Its port, the largest on the Black Sea
- Braov (Transylvania): The Gothic Black Church, Council Square in the old town, Bran and Pele castles within easy reach
- Sibiu (Transylvania): The Bridge of Lies, The Brukenthal National Museum, The Transfgran road to the south
- Sighioara (Transylvania): The 64-metre Clock Tower, The house where Vlad the Impaler is said to have been born, A medieval festival every summer
- Oradea (Criana): Oradea Fortress, first built in the 11th century, The Criul Repede river flowing through the centre

- Suceava (Bukovina (Moldavia)): The restored Seat Fortress of Moldavia's princes, Saint John the New Monastery, part of a UNESCO site, The painted monasteries nearby
- Craiova (Oltenia): Nicolae Romanescu Park with its suspension bridge, The Craiova Art Museum and its early Brâncui sculptures, The University of Craiova
- Tulcea (Dobruja): Its river port on the Danube, Boat trips into the Danube Delta

A short history of Romania

Romania's story runs from Greek ports on the Black Sea and the Roman province of Dacia, through the medieval princes who held off the Ottomans, to the union of the Romanian lands, a monarchy, communism and a return to democracy in 1989.

AD 8 Ovid exiled to Tomis

The Roman emperor Augustus banished the poet Ovid to Tomis, a Greek colony on the Black Sea founded in the 6th century BC. Ovid spent the rest of his life there. Tomis is today's Constanța.

AD 106 Rome conquers Dacia

After two wars, Emperor Trajan defeated the Dacian king Decebalus and made much of the land a Roman province. Roman Dacia lasted until the 270s, and its Latin speech is the root of the Romanian language.

1330 Battle of Posada

Basarab I of Wallachia ambushed and defeated the army of King Charles I of Hungary in a mountain pass. The victory secured the independence of Wallachia.

1457 Stephen the Great takes the throne

Stephen became prince of Moldavia and ruled until his death in 1504. He fought to keep Moldavia free of the Ottomans, Poland and Hungary and built churches such as Vorone.

1600 Michael the Brave unites three lands

Michael the Brave, prince of Wallachia, briefly ruled Wallachia, Transylvania and Moldavia together. It lasted only months, but it was the first time all three were under one ruler.

1859 Moldavia and Wallachia unite

Both principalities elected the same prince, Alexandru Ioan Cuza. The union, known as the Little Union, was the start of the modern Romanian state.

1866 Carol I becomes prince

After Cuza was forced to step down, the German prince Karl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen was invited to rule as Carol I. A new constitution gave the country the name Romania.

- 1877** **Independence proclaimed**
On 10 May 1877 Romania proclaimed its independence from the Ottoman Empire, then fought alongside Russia in the Russo-Turkish War to win it on the battlefield.
- 1881** **Carol I crowned king**
Romania became a kingdom, and Carol I was crowned its first king. The monarchy lasted until 1947.
- 1918** **The Great Union**
On 1 December 1918 an assembly of Romanians at Alba Iulia declared the union of Transylvania with Romania. Bessarabia and Bukovina had joined earlier that year. 1 December is now the national day.
- 1947** **Monarchy abolished**
King Michael I was forced to abdicate on 30 December 1947, and a communist People's Republic was proclaimed.
- 1989** **The 1989 Revolution**
Protests that began in Timioara in December spread across the country. The communist leader Nicolae Ceauescu and his wife Elena were executed on 25 December, ending 42 years of communist rule.
- 2004** **Romania joins NATO**
Romania became a member of the NATO alliance on 29 March 2004.
- 2007** **Romania joins the EU**
Romania joined the European Union on 1 January 2007, together with Bulgaria.
- 2025** **Full Schengen membership**
Romania became a full member of the Schengen area on 1 January 2025, together with Bulgaria. Flights and sea crossings to other Schengen countries no longer have routine passport checks.

What people eat in Romania

Romanian cooking is hearty country food built on pork, maize, cabbage, sour cream and fresh cheese, with Balkan, Turkish, Hungarian and Austrian touches. A family meal usually starts with a ciorb, a soup soured with bor, vinegar or lemon, then moves on to meat with mmlig or bread and ends with something sweet. Many Romanians follow Orthodox fasting days, so meat-free and dairy-free dishes are easy to find.

Sarmale (stuffed cabbage rolls) (sarmale)

All over Romania

Sour pickled cabbage leaves (or vine leaves) rolled around minced pork, rice and onion and simmered for hours, often with smoked meat. They are served with mmlig and sour cream and are often called the national dish.

Mmlig (maize porridge) (mmlig)

All over Romania and Moldova

A thick porridge of yellow maize flour, much like Italian polenta. It is eaten as a side dish instead of bread, or as a meal of its own with salty sheep cheese and sour cream.

Mici (grilled meat rolls) (mititei or mici)

All over Romania

Small skinless rolls of minced beef, lamb and pork seasoned with garlic, thyme and pepper, grilled over charcoal and eaten with mustard, bread and pickles. Mici and mititei both mean "little ones".

Ciorb de burt (sour tripe soup) (ciorb de burt)

All over Romania, a favourite in Bucharest

A creamy, sour soup of beef tripe thickened with sour cream and egg yolks, sharpened with vinegar and served with garlic sauce and hot peppers. It is said to be a good cure for a hangover.

Ciorb de perioare (meatball sour soup) (ciorb de perioare)

All over Romania

A vegetable soup with small meatballs of minced meat and rice, soured with bor and usually flavoured with lovage leaves.

Zacusc (roasted vegetable spread) (zacusc)

All over Romania

A thick spread of roasted aubergine and red peppers slowly cooked with onion and tomato. Families make big batches after the autumn harvest and keep it in jars for the winter, to eat on bread.

Salat de vinete (aubergine salad) (salat de vinete)

Romania and Moldova

Aubergines grilled over an open flame until the skin is black, then peeled, chopped very finely and mixed with oil and chopped onion. It is spread on bread, often with tomato slices.

Tochitur (pork stew with egg and mmlig) (tochitur)

Moldavia and Transylvania, with many regional versions

Small cubes of pork and sausage slowly cooked in their own fat and juices, sometimes with a little tomato, and served with mmlig, salty cheese and a fried egg on top.

Drob de miel (Easter lamb loaf) (drob de miel)

All over Romania, at Easter

Lamb offal chopped with lots of spring onions, dill and parsley, bound with eggs and soaked bread and baked like a meat loaf, often with whole boiled eggs in the middle. It is a classic of the Easter table.

Cozonac (sweet bread) (cozonac)

All over Romania, for Christmas and Easter

A rich, soft yeast bread made with milk, eggs, butter and sugar and rolled around a filling of walnuts and cocoa, poppy seeds or Turkish delight. Every family has its own version.

Papanai (cheese doughnuts) (papanai)

Romania and Moldova

Doughnuts made from fresh cheese, eggs and flour, fried or boiled and served hot with sour cream and sour cherry jam. Each one comes with a little ball of dough on top, like a hat.

Covrigi (bread rings) (covrigi)

All over Romania, famous in Buzu

Chewy rings and twists of salted bread, like pretzels, topped with poppy seeds, sesame or coarse salt. They are sold warm from small bakeries and are one of the most popular street snacks.

Plcint (filled pastry) (plcint)

Romania and Moldova

A thin, flat pastry, round or square, filled with apples, fresh cheese, potatoes or cabbage and baked or fried.

uic (plum brandy) (uic)

All over Romania, the Piteti area is especially famous for it

A strong clear spirit distilled only from plums, usually 40 to 55% alcohol. It is often offered to guests before a meal and is thought of as the national drink.

Salat de boeuf (festive meat salad) (salat de boeuf)

All over Romania

Finely diced boiled beef or chicken and root vegetables mixed with pickles and mayonnaise and decorated on top. It is made in large bowls for Christmas Eve, New Year and other celebrations.

GOOD MANNERS

At the table

- Before eating, people wish each other 'Poft bun' (enjoy your meal).
- When glasses are raised, people say 'Noroc!', which means both cheers and good luck.
- Bread comes with almost every meal, and garlic is everywhere, raw or as the garlic sauce called mujdei.
- Hosts will insist when they offer more food. A first polite 'no' is often not taken as a real no.
- When you are invited into a Romanian home, expect to take your shoes off at the door.
- Many Orthodox Romanians fast on certain days and seasons. Ask for 'mâncare de post' if you want a dish without meat, eggs or dairy.

Sarmale (stuffed cabbage rolls)

Sour pickled cabbage leaves (or vine leaves) rolled around minced pork, rice and onion and simmered for hours, often with smoked meat. They are served with mmlig and sour cream and are often called the national dish.

Ingredients

- 1 large head of pickled (sour) cabbage, or about 20 blanched fresh cabbage leaves
- 750 g minced pork (or half pork, half beef)
- 100 g short-grain rice, rinsed
- 2 onions, finely chopped, and 2 tablespoons oil
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste and 400 ml passata
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme, 1 teaspoon paprika, salt and black pepper
- 150 g smoked bacon, diced, and a few bay leaves
- Sour cream and mmlig (or bread) to serve

Method

1. Fry the onions gently in the oil until soft. Mix them with the pork, rice, tomato paste, thyme, paprika, salt and pepper.
2. Separate the cabbage leaves and cut out the thick stem. Put a heaped spoonful of filling on each leaf, fold in the sides and roll up tightly.
3. Chop the leftover cabbage and spread half of it in a large heavy pot. Pack the rolls in snugly, scattering the bacon and bay leaves between the layers, and cover with the rest of the chopped cabbage.
4. Pour over the passata and enough water to just cover. Cover with a lid and simmer very gently for about 3 hours, or bake at 160°C, until the cabbage is soft.
5. Serve hot with a spoonful of sour cream and mmlig.

Mmlig (maize porridge)

A thick porridge of yellow maize flour, much like Italian polenta. It is eaten as a side dish instead of bread, or as a meal of its own with salty sheep cheese and sour cream.

Ingredients

- 1.2 litres water and 1 teaspoon salt
- 250 g coarse yellow cornmeal (polenta)
- 30 g butter
- 200 g telemea or feta cheese, crumbled
- 200 ml sour cream

Method

1. Bring the salted water to the boil in a heavy pot.
2. Pour in the cornmeal in a thin stream, whisking all the time so no lumps form.
3. Turn the heat down low and cook for 25 to 30 minutes, stirring often with a wooden spoon, until it is thick and pulls away from the sides of the pot.
4. Stir in the butter, then turn the mmlig out onto a board or spoon it onto plates.
5. Top with the crumbled cheese and a spoonful of sour cream and serve at once.

Mici (grilled meat rolls)

Small skinless rolls of minced beef, lamb and pork seasoned with garlic, thyme and pepper, grilled over charcoal and eaten with mustard, bread and pickles. Mici and mititei both mean "little ones".

Ingredients

- 500 g minced beef, 250 g minced pork and 250 g minced lamb (or all beef and pork)
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme, 1 teaspoon ground coriander and 1 teaspoon sweet paprika
- 1 teaspoon black pepper and 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
- 150 ml cold beef stock
- Mustard, bread and pickles to serve

Method

1. Put the meat, garlic, spices, salt and bicarbonate of soda in a large bowl.
2. Add the cold stock a little at a time and knead with your hands for about 10 minutes, until the mixture is soft and sticky.
3. Cover and chill for at least 2 hours, or overnight, so the flavours settle.
4. With wet hands, shape the mixture into rolls about 8 cm long and 2.5 cm thick.
5. Grill over hot charcoal or in a hot griddle pan for about 10 to 12 minutes, turning often, until browned and cooked through. Serve hot with mustard.

Salat de vinete (aubergine salad)

Aubergines grilled over an open flame until the skin is black, then peeled, chopped very finely and mixed with oil and chopped onion. It is spread on bread, often with tomato slices.

Ingredients

- 3 large aubergines
- 4 tablespoons sunflower oil
- 1 small onion, very finely chopped
- Salt, and a squeeze of lemon if you like
- Bread and sliced tomatoes to serve

Method

1. Grill the whole aubergines over a gas flame, on a barbecue or under a very hot grill, turning them, until the skin is black and the flesh is completely soft. This takes about 20 to 30 minutes.
2. Let them cool a little, then peel off all the burnt skin and put the flesh in a sieve to drain for 15 minutes.
3. Chop the flesh very finely with a wooden or plastic knife, or mash it with a fork.
4. Beat in the oil a little at a time, as you would for mayonnaise, then stir in the onion and season with salt and lemon.
5. Chill and serve on bread with slices of tomato.

Papanai (cheese doughnuts)

Doughnuts made from fresh cheese, eggs and flour, fried or boiled and served hot with sour cream and sour cherry jam. Each one comes with a little ball of dough on top, like a hat.

Ingredients

- 500 g dry cottage cheese or ricotta, well drained
- 2 eggs
- 3 tablespoons sugar, a pinch of salt and the grated zest of 1 lemon
- 1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
- About 200 g plain flour (or 150 g flour and 50 g semolina)
- Sunflower oil for deep frying
- Sour cream and sour cherry or blueberry jam to serve

Method

1. Mix the cheese, eggs, sugar, salt, lemon zest and bicarbonate of soda into a smooth paste.
2. Add the flour a little at a time until you have a soft dough that is only slightly sticky.
3. With floured hands, shape 8 balls the size of a small orange. Flatten each one and make a hole in the middle, like a doughnut. Shape 8 small balls from the rest of the dough.
4. Heat the oil to about 170°C and fry the rings and small balls a few at a time for 3 to 4 minutes on each side, until deep golden and cooked through. Drain on kitchen paper.
5. Put a small ball on top of each ring and serve warm with plenty of sour cream and jam.

Useful phrases

Bun dimineaa

BOO-nuh dee-mee-NYAH-tsoh · Good morning

Bun ziua

BOO-nuh ZEE-wah · Good day, hello

Bun seara

BOO-nuh SYAH-rah · Good evening

Noapte bun

NWAHP-teh BOO-nuh · Good night

Salut

sah-LOOT · Hi

La revedere

lah reh-veh-DEH-reh · Goodbye

V rog

vuh ROHG · Please

Mulumesc mult

mool-tsoo-MESK MOOLT · Thank you very much

Cu placere

koo pluh-CHEH-reh · You're welcome

Îmi pare ru

uhm PAH-reh RUH-oo · I'm sorry

Pardon

pahr-DOHN · Excuse me

Vorbii englez?

vor-BEETS en-GLEH-zuh · Do you speak English?

Nu înțeleg

NOO uhn-tseh-LEG · I don't understand

Cât cost asta?

KUHT KOHS-tuh AHS-tah · How much is this?

Unde e toaleta?

OON-deh yeh twah-LEH-tah · Where is the toilet?

Nota, v rog

NOH-tah, vuh ROHG · The bill, please

Poft bun!

POHF-tuh BOO-nuh · Enjoy your meal!

Noroc!

noh-ROHK · Cheers! Good luck!

Ajutor!

ah-zhoo-TOR · Help!

Things you might not know

1. Bram Stoker, who wrote the novel *Dracula* (1897), never visited Eastern Europe. Bran Castle is marketed as Dracula's Castle, but there is no evidence that Stoker knew anything about it.
2. The real Vlad III of Wallachia, known as Vlad the Impaler or Vlad Dracula, ruled in the 15th century and fought the Ottomans. Many Romanians see him as a national hero, and Sighioara is said to be his birthplace.
3. At the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal, 14-year-old Nadia Comneci became the first gymnast to be awarded a perfect score of 10.0 at the Olympics.
4. Romanian grew out of the Latin spoken in Roman Dacia, which makes it a Romance language, related to Italian, French, Spanish and Portuguese. It is the official language of both Romania and Moldova.
5. The name of the currency, leu, means lion. Romanian banknotes are made of polymer plastic rather than paper.
6. The sculptor Constantin Brâncui, a pioneer of modern sculpture, was born in the village of Hobia in 1876. His Endless Column in Târgu Jiu is part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
7. On 1 March, Romanians give each other a mrior, a small token on a red and white string, to welcome spring. The custom is on the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage.
8. In 1884 Timioara became one of the first cities in Europe to light its streets with electric lamps.
9. As of September 2026, Romania has 11 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, among them the painted Churches of Moldavia, the wooden churches of Maramure and the Danube Delta.
10. The Palace of the Parliament in Bucharest is often called the heaviest building in the world, at about 4 million tonnes, and it is one of the largest administrative buildings anywhere.
11. In 2009 the British TV show *Top Gear* drove the Transfgran, and presenter Jeremy Clarkson called it 'the best road in the world'.
12. In the village of Spâna, the Merry Cemetery has brightly painted wooden

crosses with pictures and funny, poetic verses about the people buried there.

13. Bones found in Petera cu Oase, the Cave with Bones in south-western Romania, belong to some of the oldest early modern humans found in Europe, between about 42,000 and 37,000 years old.
14. Romania has one of the largest populations of wild brown bears in Europe. In towns near the mountains, such as Braov, bears sometimes wander into neighbourhoods looking for food.

TALK ABOUT IT

Questions for the group

- Have you ever been to Romania, or has someone in your family? What do you remember?
- Have you ever tasted Sarmale (stuffed cabbage rolls) or Mmlig (maize porridge)? What is a dish you remember from a trip?
- Monarchy abolished (1947). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- The 1989 Revolution (1989). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- Have you seen Palace of the Parliament, in person or in pictures? Which famous place would you most like to see?
- If you could spend one day in any city of Romania, which would it be and why?

QUIZ

How well do you know Romania?

Circle the right answer. The answers are on the last page.

1. In which city did the revolution of December 1989 begin?

- A) Craiova
- B) Timioara
- C) Constana
- D) Iai

2. What is the Merry Cemetery in Spâna known for?

- A) Crosses carved from salt
- B) Graves of Romanian kings
- C) Tombs built into a cave
- D) Brightly painted crosses with funny verses

3. uic, often offered to guests before a meal, is distilled from which fruit?

- A) Apples
- B) Grapes
- C) Cherries
- D) Plums

4. Which prince briefly ruled Wallachia, Transylvania and Moldavia together in 1600?

- A) Alexandru Ioan Cuza
- B) Michael the Brave
- C) Stephen the Great
- D) Carol I

5. Which painted monastery is famous for the intense colour known as 'Vorone blue'?

- A) Vorone Monastery
- B) The Black Church
- C) Biertan Fortified Church
- D) Pele Castle

6. Which Roman emperor conquered Dacia in 106?

- A) Constantine
- B) Augustus
- C) Trajan
- D) Nero

7. Which leader ordered the building of the Palace of the Parliament in Bucharest?

- A) Stephen the Great
- B) Alexandru Ioan Cuza
- C) King Carol I
- D) Nicolae Ceauescu

8. How do you say "thank you" in Romanian?

- A) V rog
- B) Salut
- C) Pardon
- D) Mulumesc

9. The Transfgrn mountain road usually stays open through the winter.

- A) True
- B) False

10. Romania joined NATO and the European Union in the same year.

- A) True
- B) False

11. What do Romanians say when they raise their glasses?

- A) Pardon!
- B) Salut!
- C) Ajutor!
- D) Noroc!

12. Salina Turda, the old salt mine near Cluj-Napoca, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

- A) True
- B) False

Quiz answers

1. B) Timioara

The protests began in Timioara and spread across the country within days.

2. D) Brightly painted crosses with funny verses

Brightly painted crosses with funny verses: the wooden crosses of the Merry Cemetery carry pictures and humorous poems about the people buried there.

3. D) Plums

uic is a strong spirit made only from plums. Spirits from other fruit have other names.

4. B) Michael the Brave

Michael the Brave, prince of Wallachia, was the first ruler to hold all three lands, if only for a few months.

5. A) Vorone Monastery

Vorone Monastery, built by Stephen the Great in 1488, is known for its blue frescoes and is called the Sistine Chapel of the East.

6. C) Trajan

Trajan defeated the Dacian king Decebalus in 106 and made much of Dacia a Roman province.

7. D) Nicolae Ceauescu

The communist leader Nicolae Ceauescu ordered it. It was built from 1984 to 1997.

8. D) Mulumesc

Mulumesc (mool-tsoo-MESK) means thank you. 'Mersi' is also widely used.

9. False

False. It is usually closed by snow from late October until late June.

10. False

False. Romania joined NATO in 2004 and the European Union in 2007.

11. D) Noroc!

Noroc! means cheers, and also good luck.

12. False

False. It is a popular attraction but not on UNESCO's list. As of September 2026, Romania's 11 World Heritage Sites include Sighioara and the Danube Delta.

Romania visa page

Name: _____ Date: _____



Next stops

Country: _____	Country: _____	Country: _____
Country: _____	Country: _____	Country: _____

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<https://worldstroll.com/countries/romania>