

FOMA's Annual Autumn Pilgrimages:

October 24 – November 1 2020 Pilgrimage to Monasteries of Transylvania and Bucovina (northern Romania)

To embark on a pilgrimage is not only to visit a shrine or monastery in order to admire its architecture, its treasures, architecture, history or scenery. Going on a pilgrimage must be a journey made to encounter God - where He had revealed Himself, where His grace had shone with particular splendour and produced rich fruits and holiness of conversation among the seekers.

Among the most picturesque and cherished monuments of Romania are the painted Monasteries of Bucovina and Transylvania. With their painted exterior walls, decorated with 15th and 16th century elaborate monastic and church frescoes, featuring portraits of saints and prophets, scenes from the life of Jesus, images of angels and demons, heaven and hell, the monastic churches of northern Romania are deemed as masterpieces of Byzantine art. These edifices are one-of-a-kind architectural sites. Far from being merely wall adornments, the wall paintings represent complete cycles of religious murals. The purpose of the frescoes is to emphasize the stories in the Bible and the lives of the most important Orthodox saints. Their outstanding composition, elegant outline and harmonious colours blend perfectly with the surrounding landscape. Whether you are interested in religion, history, art or architecture, you will be intrigued by the construction and decor - exterior and interior - of these edifices.

Transylvania is home to nearly two hundred villages with fortified churches built by the Saxons between the 13th and 15th centuries. Nine sites were placed on UNESCO's World Heritage list in 1993. Twenty-five of this area beautifully preserved architectural gems have been included by UNESCO in the World Cultural Heritage in acknowledgement of their natural, scenic and stunning, monumental appeal. In some places, the primary wood material used by the artisans was local oak, which has survived the elements with sturdy elegance until today.

Itinerary

Day 1, Saturday, 24 October

Arrival at the airport **Iasi**. Meeting at 18:30 with the guide, Rev. Dr. Dan Sandu.

3 nights in Iasi in Grand Hotel Traian, Iasi <https://www.grandhoteltraian.ro/en/home/>

Day 2, Sunday, 25 October

Iasi city tour

Holy Liturgy at St. George Old Cathedral (from 08.00 to 9.30)

Pedestrian visit to the City Centre

Metropolitan Cathedral, built in the 19th century, an image of the Western influence in architecture, dedicated to Saint George. The relics of St Paraskeve are preserved here.

The **"Three Holy Hierarchs" Monastery** founded in 1635. The extraordinary building became known for its external surface covered in stone carvings that resembles folk embroidery.

The Gothic Hall, the monastery's former refectory, preserves a collection of medieval art and fragments of paintings of the monastery prior to the restoration work.

Bucium Monastery. Talks with the Abbot of the Monastery, Nicodim Petre.

Palace of Culture. hosts the most important museums and art collections of the region.

Day 3, Monday, 26 October St Dimitrios celebrations in every church.

Golia Monastery, a late 16 century monastic site has played an important role in the cultural life of the city.

Great Synagogue in Iași. Although called the "great", the size of the synagogue is actually very modest with a total length of 22 Built in an eclectic style with strong late Baroque influences. The building has remained for the most part unchanged since late 18th century.

University Palace, with its Hall of Echoing/Lost Steps, the oldest modern university celebrating the 160 years from the official opening, in 1860.

Optional visit to the flower exhibition of the Botanical Garden.

Accommodation in Iasi

Day 4, Tuesday, 27 October

Folk Museum of **Neculai Popa in Tarpesti**, a vivid example of how the rural life looked like just a few tens of years ago.

Varatec Monastery, an impressive women convent, with a vivid spiritual life, working to preserve the traditional skills of carpet weaving, icon painting, egg painting and many more. The site has three churches with a neo-classical influence in its architecture.

Meeting with the Mother Superior, Josephina Giosan

Sihastria Monastery (residence of F. Cleopa Ilie, renowned spiritual father).

Meeting with Fr Arsenios.

Neamt Monastery with its seminary and 6 sketes. The church of the monastery, dedicated to the Ascension of the Lord, was consecrated on the 14 November 1497. It was the largest monastic community, convening up to 900 brothers in the 18th century. As a mother monastery it facilitated the foundation of sketes in the forests for hermits' who lived a reclusive spiritual life. Meeting with the Abbot Archim. Benedict Sauciuc and Fr Pahomios of Sihla Monastery.

3 nights in Best Western Bukovina, Gura Humorului <http://www.bestwesternbucovina.ro/en/>

Day 5, Wednesday, 28 October

Humor Monastery. A small, sixteen century monastery: one of Bucovina's treasures with a variety of frescoes, including one illustrating the *Return of the Prodigal Son*. The church, topped by a cross-shaped shingled roof, is without a steeple, indicating that it was built by a court official rather than a prince. The predominant hues of the frescoes are reddish brown with some rich blues and green infusions. An extremely valuable collection of icons from the 16th century is displayed in the monastery.

Egg Museum, with handmade folk crafts, in Vama and talks with the founder, Letitia Orvischi

Voronet Monastery, also called 'Eastern Europe's Sistine Chapel' because of the unique 'Voronet blue' colour, famous for the Last Judgment scene. The church was built in 1488 during the reign of Saint Stephen the Great, and painted in 1547. This is an UNESCO monument.

Meeting with Sr Gabriela.

Optional Folk Evenig

Accommodation at Gura Humorului

Day 6, Thursday, 29 October

Black Pottery Museum in Marginea

Sucevița Monastery, built in 1586 – a wonderful unfolding of the Bible narrative is expressed in the exterior frescoes. The monastery is known for the stunning green hues of its paintings, and for its striking Ladder of Perfection, a visual representation of ‘The Ladder’, written in the 5th century by the monk, John Climacos. It shows the ascent of the soul to God. Meeting with Sr Mihaela, Mother Superior of the convent.

Moldovita Monastery, UNESCO monument. Built and painted during the reign of King Petru Rares (1532-1537). It boasts the best-preserved frescoes, most remarkable being The Siege of Constantinople.

Talks with the guide of the monastery, sister Tatiana.

Wonderful landscapes on the way.

Dinner with local food and folk performance.

Accommodation at Gura Humorului

Day 7, Friday, 30 October

Departure to Cluj with two visits on the way:

Rohia Monastery. A complex of buildings dedicated to quiet prayer and spiritual uplifting. During communist times only one monk was allowed to remain at the monastery. He was to become the local bishop, after guiding the work of the monks who added a complex of buildings for worship, hosting visitors and meeting the needs of the resident monks.

Meeting with Macarie Motogna, the Abbot of the Monastery and Bishop Iustin.

Nicula Monastery hosts an amazing wooden church built about 600 years ago, and another recently-built one. Inside the monastery church is a famous wonderworking icon of the Virgin, dating back to 1681. The icon gathers hundreds of thousands of pilgrims every year at the Dormition Feast on 15 August.

Two nights in Grand Hotel Napoca, Cluj Napoca <http://hotelnapoca.ro/?lang=en>

Day 8, Saturday, 31 October: Cluj Napoca city tour

Orthodox Metropolitan Cathedral. Cluj is a multiconfessional city housing four main cathedrals: Catholic, Greek-Catholic, Unitarian and the Orthodox Metropolitan Cathedral which was built between 1923-1933. It represents the Romanian stylistic current. It is one of the most important religious buildings in the Cluj Napoca municipality. Dedicated to the Dormition of the Mother of God.

Meeting with an official of the Metropolitanate of Cluj.

St Michael Cathedral, is located in Unirii Square. It is one of Cluj’s most popular tourist attractions and major city landmarks. Next to it one can admire the details of the imposing Matthias Corvinus monument.

Open Air Romulus Vuia. Perched on a hill near Horia forest, the ethnographic park is the first open-air museum to open in Romania. It was founded in 1929 and comprises traditional buildings from the region.

Day 9, Sunday, 1 November

Divine Liturgy and departure for transfer to the Airport