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Romanian Ambassador Applauds the Positive Trend of the Pakistan - Romania Relationship

H.E. Mr. Nicolae GOIA

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Romania to Pakistan





H.E. Mr. Klaus Iohannis
President of Romania



H.E. Mr. Ludovic Orban's
Prime Minister of Romania



H.E. Bogdan Lucian Aurescu
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania

Cordially Congratulations On the National Day of ROMANIA



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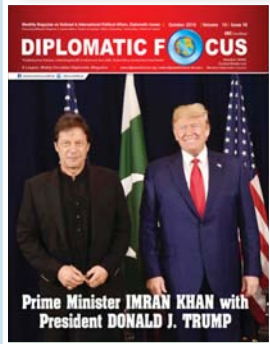
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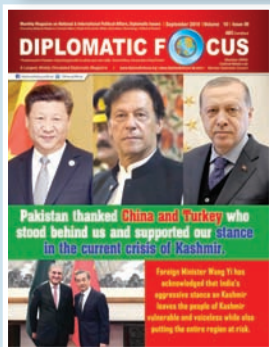
November 2019



October 2019



September 2019



July 2019



Mian Fazal Elahi

Pakistan have great attachment with the importance to its relations with Romania and considers Romania as an important member of EU.

The history of Pakistan and Romania relations had established ever since of diplomatic relations in 1964, both the nations have come very close to each other. Romania considers Pakistan as a credible and responsible country and supports Pakistan at every international forum including GSP Plus status which has increased Pakistan's exports to the EU by more than 30 per cent.

Both the countries shared the commonality of opinion on regional and international issues. Both the countries have longstanding cooperation in political, economic, defence, cultural fields and people to people contacts.

However there is further need to increase our trade and strengthen the economic dimension of our relationship.

CPEC makes Pakistan an exceedingly important country not only for the region but for the world at large. Connectivity potential of Pakistan was unique and immense. Pakistan will be a country of future from which whole of the world would benefit.

Participation of Romania in this connectivity will also bring Pakistan and Romania closer to each other. The regional security environment, the envoy applauded Pakistan's efforts for regional peace and stability.

The ambassador on regional security situation with particular reference to Afghanistan and reiterated that Pakistan and its people were determined to defeat the menace of terrorism to embrace a brighter future.

To give new impetus to Pak-Romania relations, both sides agreed to explore new avenues for cooperation and to increase the momentum of interaction.

The articles, columns, Opinions are published in Magazine in good faith. However, the contents of these writings may not necessarily match the views of the Editor/Publisher/Organization.

Important Announcement



Mian Assad Ullah

It has been announced for the general information that Mr. Mian Assad Ullah has been appointed as Editor In Chief of the Monthly "Diplomatic Focus" for the UK/EU Edition. He is entitled to participate official /non-officials diplomatic engagements, events, national days, social evenings/gatherings, press conferences/interviews and can be contacted for all kinds of stuff including articles, supplements and advertisements etc). It is requested to all Diplomatic missions and government high officials of UK, please contact with Mr. Mian Assad Ullah on His mailing address, 4 Ipswich Road, SW17 9RH, London. Cell number: +44-7961005954/ 2087694850, Email: uk.diplomaticfocus@gmail.com, assadmian1@gmail.com

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Special Supplement on the National Day of ROMANIA

Special Feature Report by
Mian Fazal Elahi
CEO/Editor/Publisher "Diplomatic Focus"



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H.E. Mr. Klaus Iohannis
President of Romania



**H.E. Mr. Ludovic Orban's
Prime Minister of Romania**



H.E. Bogdan Lucian Aurescu
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania



Romanian ambassador message on the occasion of National Day of Romania 2019



The year 2019 marks the celebration of 55 years of bilateral relations between Romania and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, characterized by friendship, mutual interest and collaboration. In recent years, the relations witnessed new dynamics, with a result-oriented driven political dialogue and positive developments in the economic / commercial, educational and cultural fields.

In the economic realm, we praise the recent dynamics of bilateral economic cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, which has significantly diversified, in fields such as shipbuilding, aeronautics and transports, and increased with up 13.74% as compared to 2017. Over a five-year period, 2013-2018, the bilateral trade balance was positive for Romania with a steady increase in percentage terms, a bilateral format that we share interest to further enhance and diversify.

At a cultural level, Romania benefits of a good reputation and experiences a fruitful relation with I.R. Pakistan. To give one example, in Islamabad, there is a monument dedicated to the national poets Mihai Eminescu and Allama Iqbal. The six-meter-long marble, bronze and granite monument, located in Blue Area on one of the capital's most important boulevards in Islamabad, features Pakistani architectural elements and a representation of the Infinite Column.

The bilateral dialogues with the I.R. Pakistan display a large array of domains and formats of cooperation.

The political-diplomatic dialogue is insured by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, which in the last years was regularly facilitated at state secretary level. At prime-minister level, a visit of the I.R. Pakistan Prime-minister was secured in 1995 and a technical call in 2016 on the Romanian side; an exchange of foreign ministers visits took place in Pakistan in 1991 and in Romania in 1999.

At a Parliamentary level, Romania and the I.R. Pakistan enjoy close, active and fruitful collaboration through the Romania – Pakistan Parliamentary Friendship Group, established on April 26, 2017, and the Pakistani – Romania Parliamentary Friendship Group formed on September 27, 2018.

Regarding the educational bilateral format, a Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation between the Kamra PAC and the Polytechnic University of Bucharest was signed in 2017 and is valid for 5 years. This format provides: exchanges of students, researchers; the development of joint research and development projects; cooperation in individual projects; teacher exchange.

In the realm of economic bilateral format, regular exchanges between the Romanian and Pakistan Chamber of Commerce are taking place, involving business-men, on both sides.

In the cultural domain, the two states periodically conclude cultural agreements and agree on Executive Programs to implement. In the academic year 2017-2018 there were 45 students from Pakistan in Romania (4 with a scholarship, 41 on their own). The areas of study, preferred are Medicine and Economics. The Romanian side offers Pakistani students a maximum of 5 scholarships per year.

With regard to people to people contacts, in order to bring together business and civil society representatives, graduates of higher education and former accredited diplomats, a Pakistan – Romania Friendship Association was established in Islamabad, in December 1998, and a group called Friends of Romania was created in 2014, in Lahore.

As regards the cooperation within international organizations, traditionally, the two countries provide mutual support for their candidacy at the UN and other inter-national bodies. A number of mutually supportive arrangements have been developed for the 2020-2021 timeframe.

Interview by: Mian Fazal Elahi



attract foreign investments and strengthening its diplomatic position to drive the attention of international community on Kashmir issue.

DF: Your Excellency! You have been serving in Pakistan for the last several years how would you find people conduct in Pakistan and what kind of perception has developed in your mind about Pakistan regarding the security situation?

Pakistan is strategically located between the twin forces of competition and collaboration in the mega-region that embraces Central Asia,

Pakistan is a beautiful country with a dynamic and entrepreneurial population and vibrant cultural diversity

South Asia, Middle East, and Caucasus. In this context it is important to note that Pakistan has a versatile geopolitical potential which can multiply opportunities for cooperation with important regional players.

Increased regional stability could have a stabilizing effect for ongoing domestic efforts, hence Pakistan had committed itself to supporting the reconciliation effort in Afghanistan and is working toward normalization of relations with India.

In my opinion Pakistan has been very active diplomatically since its inception and the new government is working with success on global perception management in order to achieve foreign policy objectives.

Pakistan is a beautiful country with a dynamic and entrepreneurial population and vibrant cultural diversity. During my tenure here, I have developed a true affection for this country, and therefore, I call it my second home. Pakistan is a peace loving country that is still a hidden treasure trove for those intending to explore, be it for touristic or commercial purposes.

DF: In your view, how do you see the role of Pakistan as a regional and international level in future?

The global environment is reordering and posing multiple challenges and, offering equal, if not overriding opportunities. While the core national interests of any nation remain constant, the process of executing the goals and objectives of foreign policy change

Romanian ambassador applauds the positive trend of the Pakistan - Romania relationship

H.E. Mr. Nicolae GOIA

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Romania to Pakistan

H.E. Mr. Nicolae GOIA is Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Romania to Pakistan. He took his diplomatic responsibilities in Pakistan in 2016. Mr. Nicolae has been active in working towards

strengthening Pakistan Romanian relations giving special preference to culture, trade and education. Diplomatic Focus discussed with him the developing aspects of Pakistan Romanian relations at a time when Islamabad is looking to



in an evolving atmosphere according to developments in the domestic, regional and global platforms.

It is clear that, like any other state, Pakistan's foreign policy is focused on promoting its national interest in the global community. It seeks to safeguard its security and territorial integrity, building peaceful relations with all countries, especially neighbors and pursue the path of economic prosperity on the basis of sovereignty and mutual respect.

DF: Your Excellency! Romania is one of the important countries of the European Union in terms of bilateral and trade relations with Pakistan. Would you like to share the information on volume for trade and the products which are import/export between the two countries? And how do you see the export opportunities for Pakistani businesses to Romania?

Pakistan can become an important trade partner of Romania and both parties are interested in strengthening the volume of bilateral trade, which currently is far below our actual potential. Romania has a rich tradition of economic cooperation with Pakistan. We, as aforementioned, built refineries, cement factories, tractors assembled lines, etc. In the numerous discussions I had with Pakistan's government ministers and business representatives, a constant interest

in resuming this kind of cooperation was pointed out, especially with regard to the construction of refineries, tractors assembling lines and agricultural machinery, automobile manufacture, heavy trucks etc. We have received many positive signals in this respect and I hope that we can achieve the partial materialisation of these projects. I am

The bilateral trade between the two countries currently stands around \$100 million

convinced that, as Romania will undoubtedly rebuild its external investor profile, it will find a reliable partner in Pakistan. The current level of bilateral trade does not reflect the true potential of the two countries. Efforts need to be made in order to identify new opportunities and areas to increase bilateral trade. This is something that is high on our Embassy's agenda.

The bilateral trade between the two countries currently stands at around US\$ 100 million (2018). Pakistan imports oil seeds and

oleaginous fruits, machinery and its parts, petroleum & chemical elements as well as compounds from Romania. Pakistan exports to Romania include chemical material and products, material of animal origin, cotton fabric (woven), synthetic fabrics and manufactured textile goods. These trade figures do not reflect the true potential of our bilateral trade. As a matter of fact, a considerable proportion of trade between Pakistan and Romania takes place through third country pattern and this does not factor into our accounts per se. Nevertheless, the existing bilateral trade much below the true potential of the two countries. Concerted efforts in this regard are being made and the commercial activity between Pakistan and Romania is gradually picking up pace and is likely to improve in the coming years.

I would like to point out in this context the excellent cooperation between Pakistan and Romania in the military field. Romania Damen Shipyards - Galati constructed two modern 2,300-ton corvettes for Pakistan Navy. The corvettes were launched in May and September of 2019. The ships will be used by Pakistan Navy for a range of tasks, including maritime security operations, surveillance and intelligence gathering, combat search-and-rescue (CSAR), and anti-surface and anti-air operations.

DF: Your Excellency! Romania is an industrialized country and huge manpower is required to run large scale industries? Are there any opportunities for Pakistani skilled workers over in Romania and did Embassy of Romania took any initiative to fulfill the demand of manpower in Romania by sending Pakistani skilled workers?

More and more young multilingual professionals are calling Romania "home". Romania boasts the fastest growing economy in the EU and catching up with its European neighbors fast.

With the growing economic climate, Romania is welcoming hundreds of young talented people from all over the world who are in search for





new professional and social opportunities. Romania does not lack a welcoming and friendly community atmosphere.

DF: How do you analyze Pakistan Romanian relations since the establishment of their diplomatic ties? What steps have been taken to expand its entire spectrum in short, medium and long term?

Romania and Pakistan established diplomatic relations in 1964. We have had uninterrupted diplomatic ties for over 50 years, during which my country has contributed to the development of Pakistan's economy by building cement factories in Kohat, refineries in Karachi, tractor assembly factory near Islamabad and many other projects in various other fields. We have tradition, we have many success stories, we have all the necessary ingredients to reset our economic cooperation to a much higher level than it is right now. As the Ambassador of Romania in Pakistan, I will prioritize laying down the foundation for increasing people to people contact and a workable system so that our expertise in the fields like construction, infrastructure, insurance, banking and finance, MSE etc. will be transferred to our Pakistani partners. We are going to encourage Romanian businessmen to invest in Pakistan; we will support the process of training young Pakistani in Romania.

We desire and aim to expand our bilateral political dialogue. It is noteworthy that the consultations between our Ministries of Foreign Affairs are becoming instrumental in promoting and supporting the mutually beneficial items on our common agenda, as well as in preparing high level contacts.

Nowadays, there is a strong need to strengthen the international economic cooperation and, simultaneously, to reconstruct the traditional relationship with old friends, Pakistan is certainly among them. We expect confidently and with much hope that the economic ties between Romania and Pakistan will deepen and diversify in the years ahead. The real potential of the two countries is huge and we



should take full benefit of the already identified areas of convergence of the two economies. Besides the bilateral cooperation through mutual investments, we are also interested in finding options for working together on the third markets where, Romania and Pakistan might conjugate their resources and energies in the most constructive way. This is, unfortunately, a domain which had been

somehow neglected lately because of focusing on the internal reconstruction of the economy. Romania and Pakistan do have common areas of interest both geographically (Near East, Northern Africa etc.) and thematically (the common interest of developing sectors such as IT and communications, civil constructions and infrastructure, agriculture etc.) and hence highly profitable cooperation for both parties



can be envisaged.

Our priorities, bilaterally, but also at EU level, are to support the democratic evolution of Pakistan, to intensify commercial trade and investments, and to consolidate regional stability, with special focus on the peace process in Afghanistan.

DF: Your Excellency! Romania's educational system is considered one of the best education systems. I would like to know, how many Pakistani students are enrolled in the universities of Romania? Would you further increase the number of students under scholarship programs?

In the education sector, there is an ever-strengthening connection between universities from Romania and Pakistan with over 200 Pakistani students currently studying in Romania.

Till 2010, under the framework of Agreement of Cooperation in the fields of education, culture, science and technology, the Romanian side had annually offered a number of scholarships to Pakistani students for postgraduate studies in various fields and disciplines. Since 2011, under the framework of "Study in Romania" Programme, the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through the Public, Cultural and Scientific Diplomacy Directorate, in cooperation with Ministry of National Education has facilitated educational exchanges and has ensured foreign citizens the possibility to study in Romania.

ASE, the University of Bucharest, the Polytechnic University and the Technical University of Constructions are on the list of higher education institutions in Romania that also organize the preparatory year of Romanian language for foreign citizens. This list, published

by the Ministry of National Education, plus other useful information for foreign students who want to study in Romania can be found online at Edu.ro/studiazainromania.

DF: Your Excellency! Romania is a part of the European Union and a very friendly neighborhood, what is the role of the Romania Government in the European Union? In addition to this question, I would like to ask,



what is the trade of Romania with European Union countries?

Geographical reorientation of foreign trade of Romania and its prevailing focus on the European Union had beneficial effects on the activity of Romanian companies, which has led to considerable efforts in modernizing their productive apparatus, reducing costs, diversifying and improving quality of products and services, in order to meet in terms of

efficiency the high demands of the European Single Market.

However, negative reverse of such orientation was the loss of traditional markets, with high absorption capacity and quality requirements significantly lower than those specific to Single Market, from which the foreign currency contribution would have been significant and export growth broader, and would compensated, to a larger extent, the import increase. In trade relations with the EU, Combined Nomenclature sections corresponding to manufacturing sectors have achieved very different performances on export and import side, as effect of various determinants - the tradition, the opening to the outside, the comparative and competitive advantages held, existing and potential, the favourable/unfavourable trade and economic conjunctures, the technological modernization needs of the companies, and the domestic demand.

At the range of positive aspects presented by Romania's foreign trade with the EU should be added the export structure change, as the weight of low processing products is decreasing in favor of growth of medium and high processing products. At the same time, it should be highlighted that the structure of exports to the European Single Market continued to show a still high share of raw processing products, and the range of products exported stunted as a result of the manufacture gradual abandonment of acknowledged products in Romanian exports.

Intra-EU trade accounts for 77% of Romania's exports (Germany 23%, Italy 11% and France 7%), while outside the EU 3% go to Turkey and 2% to the United States. In terms of imports, 75% come from EU Member States (Germany 20%, Italy 9% and Hungary 7%), while outside the EU 5% come from China and 4% from Turkey.

DF: Your Excellency! Would you like to give any message for the people of Pakistan and the readers of Diplomatic focus magazine?

To the people of Pakistan, I will always tell not to ever abandon the pride of belonging to a brilliant nation, to stand up against any form of discrimination, to fight for dignity and protect the human rights, to read and study continuously and believe that a magnificent future can and will be built only with their full participation.

They have the intelligence and talent needed for building up a bright future for this nation, for this beautiful country.

I wish and pray for the long-lasting and durable friendship between Pakistan and Romania.

Facts and Statistics about Romania



Official Name: Romania
Location: (Southeastern) Central Europe
Time Zone: Seven hours ahead of U.S. Eastern Standard Time (GMT + 2)

Area: 92,043 sq. miles (238,391 sq. km) - a little larger than the state of Minnesota

Flag of Romania: Three vertical stripes: blue, yellow and red.

Population: 19,334,000 (October 2016)

Largest cities: Bucharest (1,883,400), Iasi (322,000), Cluj Napoca (309,000), Timisoara (303,000), Constanta (298,000), Craiova (295,000), Galati (286,000), Brasov (275,000), Ploiesti (224,000), Braila (205,000), Oradea (196,400).

Romania's population lives in 320 cities and towns and 12,956 villages.

Main Ethnic Groups:

Romanian 84%, Hungarian 6.1%, Gipsy 3.1%, German 0.2%, Ukrainian 0.2%

Religions:

Christian Orthodox 81%, Roman Catholic 4.3%, Reformed 3%, Greek-Catholic 0.7%, Unitarian 0.3%, Jewish, other.

Official Language: Romanian

Currency: Leu (plural Lei --- pronunciation "lay" --- abbreviations: Lei or RON)

Climate: Temperate, four distinct seasons, similar to northeastern USA

Capital: Bucharest (Bucureşti --- pronunciation: boo koo re sh tea)

Form of State: Romania is a semi-presidential democracy based on a bicameral Parliament:

the Chamber of Representatives or "Chamber of Deputies" (Camera Deputatilor) and the Senate (Senat).

All members of the legislature are directly elected from Romania's 41 counties.

Under the semi-presidential system, the president is responsible for foreign and defense policy and controls appointments of prosecutors and the judiciary.

Legal system: Based on European models and Constitution of 1991.

Electoral System: Universal direct suffrage over the age of 18.

Parties must win at least five percent of the national vote to gain representation in the Parliament.

National Elections: Fall 2019 (presidential), Fall 2020 (parliamentary)

Head of State: President of the Republic, currently Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis (elected on November 16, 2014).

Romania's president can serve two consecutive five-year terms.

National Government: The government is led by the Prime Minister, nominated by the political party - or political alliance - with parliamentary majority, approved by the President of Romania and confirmed by the Parliament.

Head of the Government: the Prime Minister, currently H.E. Mr. Ludovic Orban.

Main political parties, represented in Romania's Parliament following the December 11, 2016 elections:

Social Democratic Party (PSD), National Liberal Party (PNL), The Union for Romania (USR), Democratic Union of Hungarian Ethnic in Romania (UDMR), Liberal-Democratic Alliance (ALDE), Popular Movement Party (PMP).

Regional Government: Forty-one County Councils (Consiliu Judeţean).

Romania is a member state of the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)



Pakistan Navy's second OPV launched in Romania

Dutch shipbuilder Damen has launched the second of two Pakistan Navy offshore patrol vessels at its shipyard in Galati, Romania.

The two OPVs, referred to as corvettes by the Pakistan Navy, are being built under a contract from June 2017.

The lead ship in the class was launched in May 2019 and is expected to be delivered by the end of the year.

According to specifications shared by the navy,

the OPVs are likely based on Damen's OPV2400 design, displacing 2,300 tons and measuring 90 meters in length.

Pakistan is currently in the process of upgrading and renewing its navy, with contracts in place for the construction of four MILGEM corvettes and four Type 054A frigates.

The navy has recently introduced a new tanker into the fleet and could be expected to welcome a Chinese-built survey ship this year.



Naval chief Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi discusses bilateral cooperation with Romanian counterpart

November 16, 2019: Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi held separate meetings with Romanian Chief of Defense Staff and Naval Commander during his official visit to Romania.

They discussed matters pertaining to mutual interest and promotion of naval cooperation.

The Naval Chief also highlighted the resolve of Pakistan Navy in ensuring peace and maritime security in the region.

Later, the Naval Chief visited Damen Shipyard and held a meeting with its Managing Director.

On the occasion, he was briefed about the progress regarding ongoing projects for Pakistan Navy in Damen Shipyard.





ROMANIA'S EU PRESIDENCY: A GLANCE BACK

How Romania's EU presidency survived its baptism of fire

By Sam Morgan

The world of tennis was stunned on 13 July, when Romania's Simona Halep won the first Wimbledon title for her country. But it wasn't the country's only international success this year – just two weeks earlier, Romania brought the curtain down on its maiden six months at the helm of the EU's rotating presidency. The presidency stint has also prompted reactions of positive surprise from expert observers, particularly as Bucharest was mired in a domestic political crisis. Like Estonia, Bulgaria and Austria before it, Romania kicked off its presidency six months earlier than planned, after the United Kingdom voted in 2016 to leave the EU and gave up its stint in charge. At a glitzy opening ceremony in Bucharest on 10 January, the EU welcomed in the new year and its new presidency. The Romanians structured their programme into four pillars: Europe of Convergence, Safer Europe, Europe as a stronger global actor, Europe of common values. The presidency also pledged to put cohesion at the heart of the decision making for the following six months. Prime Minister Viorica Dăncilă and President Klaus Iohannis both attended the gala event, with the former's government services driving the presidency work and the latter acting as the holder's figurehead. Bucharest was aware that the months to come would not lack challenges, and Dăncilă said at the outset that "we are fully aware of the stakes, especially in this changing European landscape". She said Romania was "firmly committed to contributing, as a facilitator of consensus, through concrete actions, to the promotion of a more united and cohesive Europe". It ended up being a baptism of fire, given that Brexit was meant to happen on 29 March and crucial EU elections were held at the end of May. There were also a large number of legislative files still on the negotiating table, on topics as diverse as climate change and transport emissions to social rights and the Banking Union. In the first 100 days of its presidency, the team in Brussels, in coordination with the government back home, managed to get as many as 90 legislative files off of its books, as well as numerous agreements on joint negotiating positions for the next holder of the presidency baton, Finland, to take over. Agreement on a landmark climate deal fell agonisingly short in June but political observers were impressed that consensus among 24 member states had built so effectively under the presidency. Many climate experts had expected that talks would have to extend long past Romania's time in



charge but now the situation is teed up for the Finns to broker a deal during their six months. During a press conference at the June leaders summit in Brussels, Council President Donald Tusk called it an "energetic and successful presidency" and said the number of legislative files closed was "impressive". The Pole also said there was "good progress" made in talks on the EU's next long-term budget, the multiannual financial framework. Romanian President Iohannis told the same press conference that the presidency "was very important for us" and highlighted the sheer amount of work



officials had got through, stressing also that the Council's strategic agenda for the next five years "reflects entirely" the points adopted under the Sibiu Declaration. That text was agreed at May's Future of Europe summit in the Transylvanian city of Sibiu. Initially billed as the first major meeting after Brexit, the event took on more of a reflective tone when the UK requested an extension to its leaving deadline. Tusk actually labelled the summit as "one of the most memorable events of my political career" and said, in remarks made in passable Romanian, that "the whole of Europe is in love with Sibiu".

JUNCKER'S SCHENGEN WISH UNFULFILLED

Romania, as well as Bulgaria and Croatia, want

to join the borderless Schengen area. But a decision on membership must be approved by unanimous vote in the Council. In keeping with its self-styled role as an 'honest broker', the Romanians did not impose a vote in the Council but that did not stop the presidents of the European Commission and Parliament, Jean-Claude Juncker and Antonio Tajani, from reiterating their support for the country's accession. Juncker even hoped to see a deal reached under his stewardship. But with the Luxemburger on course to vacate his job at the end of October that prospect looks uncertain. More so given that the Council looks in no mood to add new members to Schengen. In May, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said Romania is "not going in the right direction" to join, citing rule of law concerns. His Romanian counterpart, Dăncilă, retorted that her country "met the technical criteria for joining the Schengen area as early as 2011", as recognised in a Council decision. After these six months the Romanians have earned a lot of credit during their presidency and a deal on membership could be in the offing during the first part of the next legislative cycle in Brussels. "The presidency was proof that Romania is an honest member of the EU and a serious contender for getting the permanent membership of the Schengen zone," according to a review of the presidency written by the Center for Global & Strategic Studies, an international think tank. Finland is the second member of a trio of member states that will helm the presidency over an 18-month period, with Croatia the last of the set, making its bow on 1 January 2020.

Strategic success from the Sibiu summit



On 9 May, EU leaders gathered in the Transylvanian city of Sibiu to discuss the future of Europe. What conclusions did heads of state and government reach in the Romanian hills? And what will be the summit's legacy for the EU in the years to come? The Sibiu gathering was meant to be the first major summit after the United Kingdom's departure from the bloc but fate had other plans for the Romanian presidency of the EU. After Britain successfully lobbied for an extension to the original 29 March Brexit date, the summit shifted its focus away from the purely post UK stock-take that was envisaged to a broader, future-gazing affair. UK Prime Minister Theresa May did not make the Transylvanian trip and although European Commission boss Jean-Claude Juncker said "I miss her", he also said that, whether Britain was in attendance or not, "it's almost the same, really". Juncker explained at the Sibiu summit that his September 2017 proposal to hold a meeting in the town was because "I wanted you to fall in love with this place". The spell seemed to work its magic on Council chief Donald Tusk, who said that it was "one of the most memorable events of my political career", adding that "the whole of

Europe is in love with Sibiu". Indeed, several leaders were visibly pleasantly surprised by the welcome they received in the city, with hundreds of the locals gathering outside the meeting venue to wave EU flags and chant messages of support. On the nitty-gritty details, Juncker said the summit was "one of the easiest I've ever attended. First, because the Romanian Presidency, in particular President Klaus Iohannis, prepared this council in the best possible way." "Secondly, because there was no urgent decision to take. This was more a

trial run for the June council," where EU leaders struggled to decide who should land the bloc's top jobs. Leaders acknowledged all along that the meeting was not aimed at agreeing on law changes or new proposals but rather a reflection period. Observers of EU politics suggested that Sibiu could be a blueprint for all future summits, given the conviviality on display at the meeting, as well as the fact that it achieved what it set out to do: boost the debate about the future of Europe.

A STRATEGIC RESULT

The main tangible outcomes of the May meeting included the Sibiu Declaration, a broad-brush list of ten commitments ranging from defence and solidarity to the rule of law, and a first draft of the Council's five-year plan, known as the strategic agenda. Leaders took only a matter of minutes to give their seal of approval to the declaration. But it was quickly dismissed as vague, particularly by some environmental groups, who insisted that climate change was relegated to "an afterthought" in the text. However, the declaration ultimately fed into the strategic agenda. After the June summit, in which the broader document was adopted, President Iohannis said it "reflects entirely the 10 points under the Sibiu Declaration, the 'Spirit of Sibiu' as I call it". The strategic agenda prioritises defence and migration, economic stability, climate action and improving Europe's standing on the global stage. It is set to guide the work of the EU institutions for the next five years. Angela Merkel said after the summit that "it was important for us today to define our role in the world, to say once more that we are fighting for a Europe of values and everybody, or mostly everyone, agreed, one country cannot solve the world's issues." EU

leaders also preserved a united front on the Brexit issue and diplomats told EURACTIV at the Sibiu meeting that it was partly thanks to the Romanian presidency for the way in which it had organised meetings in the lead-up to the main event.

START OF THE TOP JOB SAGA

Sibiu also saw the beginning of the end for the Spitzenkandidat process of selecting the EU's main institutional postings for the next five years. Although the process, which elevated Juncker to the Commission presidency in 2014, survived the Future of Europe summit, Donald Tusk did not confirm that it would be used again to appoint the Luxemburger's successor. The writing was on the wall though, as leaders like Emmanuel Macron and Xavier Bettel voiced their strong criticisms of Spitzenkandidat. Tusk ultimately called an emergency meeting for 28 May, immediately after the EU elections. It is now known that the Council decided not to give their blessing to Spitzenkandidaten like Manfred Weber or Frans Timmermans. With the positive vote of the European Parliament on Ursula Von der Leyen's appointment, it's safe to say that Sibiu was the cradle where a decision on the EU's leadership first saw the light of day. The programme that will influence the work of the next Commission president was first sketched out at the Transylvanian summit, meaning that the meeting's legacy will definitely influence the future of Europe as intended. The Sibiu summit will ultimately be fondly remembered for being the first informal summit held on Europe day by one of the EU's newest members, at a time when the bloc sorely needed to take a good long hard look at itself.



A historical decision for Romania: Bucharest Stock Exchange promoted to Emerging Market

FTSE Russell, one of the biggest global index providers, promoted Romania to Emerging Market from Frontier Market status, three years after the country was added to the Watch List. FTSE Russell announced its decision on September 26, and the reclassification of the status will become effective in September next year when FTSE Russell's Emerging Markets Indexes will include the first Romanian companies.

"We are here facing a historical moment: it's the international recognition that Romania deserves to be promoted and I am happy and proud to lead the team that made it possible.

When the stock market is doing well the economy is doing well. I do hope this status upgrade will make more managers from state-owned and privately held companies see the stock exchange as the go-to place where they can further develop their businesses," said Bucharest Stock Exchange CEO Adrian Tanase.

"Romania's promotion to the Emerging Market status can be considered, from the economic



standpoint of the capital market, the equivalent of the country's admission to the European Union. Romania deserved to be promoted to the Emerging Market status as it has repeatedly proved itself as being a functional and accessible market," added Lucian Anghel, president of the board of directors of BVB.

The main consequence of this upgrade will be that the shares of Romanian companies will now become available to much bigger international investment funds than the ones that have invested so far on the local market. "Funds much larger than the ones that have invested so far and that manage hundreds of billions of euros will be allowed to invest here in the next years as these funds' managers are restricted by the prospectus to invest in Frontier Markets," Anghel explained. "Romanian investors could benefit from this promotion in the long run if they choose to reap the rewards offered by the investment opportunities in the stock market," he added.

"FTSE Russell is pleased to announce that Romania will be assigned Secondary Emerging market status effective in conjunction with the FTSE Global Equity Index Series (GEIS) semi-annual review in September 2020," FTSE Russell announced on September 26. The index provider took this decision after it concluded that the liquidity of the local stock market has improved in recent years and could support sizeable global investment. This was the last of the nine criteria that Romania had to meet to get promoted.

Three Romanian securities currently meet the eligibility criteria to be included in the FTSE Global All Cap Index: Romgaz, Banca Transilvania and BRD-Groupe Societe Generale. The Secondary Emerging markets group includes markets such as Russia, China, India, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Egypt, and Chile. Among the markets in Romania's region, Hungary and Czech Republic are Advanced Emerging markets while Poland is a Developed market. Meanwhile, Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Serbia and the Baltics are Frontier markets.

It's a historical moment for Romania, which had its stock exchange closed during the communist regime and had it reopened for nearly half a century later. When the market reopened in November 1995, it started with 6 companies. Now, the Bucharest Stock Exchange (BVB) has 84 companies listed on the Main Market alone, with a combined capitalization of EUR 36 billion.

"The Romanian capital market had many obstacles to overcome and it took a long way to get us here. Just think about it: six years ago, we did not even have simultaneous English reporting for listed companies, so foreign investors found it difficult to clearly



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understand what happened in the market. Now we have in place new and improved market mechanisms, easier access into the market for investors, supportive fiscal environment for institutional investors, transparent and qualitative corporate reporting of issuers, availability of capital market information flow and legislation in English, competitive trading framework, improved corporate governance for listed companies. This new environment has attracted in the recent years new private

listings for equities and bonds," said Lucian Anghel, President of the Board at BVB.

The Bucharest Stock Exchange plans to further develop the market infrastructure by focusing its efforts to make the central counterparty clearing house (CCP) functional in the next 16 months in a move that will create the framework required to significantly improve market liquidity.

"We are going to celebrate 25 years of modern trading at the Bucharest Stock Exchange in November next year. We plan to show to our partners that we are committed to improving the market infrastructure. The CCP project will relaunch the derivatives market in Romania and, at later stages, will allow for further instruments to be accessed by more sophisticated investors. We are establishing the local CCP with one goal in mind: to increase the liquidity in the mid to long term and thus equip investors with the necessary tools in order to make the market more attractive," BVB CEO Adrian Tanase stated.

The local capital market reached this month a new all-time high for its BET-TR index, which reflects the returns of blue-chip stocks including their dividends. The index passed the 15,000-point ceiling this September, which corresponds to an increase of 39% this year alone, making Romania one of the top-performing capital markets in Europe.

"Our goal for the next 10 years is to double the market representativeness in the local economy – that is the capitalization of the Romanian listed companies as compared to GDP – from the current level of 10% to 20% of GDP," the BVB CEO concluded.



Romania's goals as a NATO member

Romania was invited to join the North Atlantic Alliance at the NATO Summit in Prague in 2002. At that time, the allies launched the invitation of membership to seven countries – Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. On March 29, 2004, Romania officially joined NATO by submitting the instruments of ratification to the U.S. Department of State, the depositary state of the North Atlantic Treaty. On April 4, 2005, the “NATO Day in Romania” is celebrated on the first Sunday of April. In 2009, Romania has celebrated five years since joining the North Atlantic Alliance. Between 2 - 4 April 2008 Romania hosted the NATO Summit in Bucharest which was the major foreign policy event organized by Romania, and the largest summit in NATO's history.

Romania's goals as a NATO member are:

1. A robust and relevant alliance based on a solid transatlantic partnership capable to respond effectively to new security threats. A robust and dynamic transatlantic partnership is a crucial factor in addressing new security risks facing the transatlantic community.

2. Fulfilling the commitments as a NATO member regarding the participation in NATO operations and missions [link to the presentation of operations and missions]

Romania takes part in all Alliance missions and

operations, including those out of the Euro-Atlantic area.

3. Supporting NATO's role in providing stability, as a promoter of reforms and regional cooperation in the immediate vicinity of Romania (Balkans and the Black Sea area)

- Romania deems that the Euro-Atlantic frontier, based on democracy, freedom and security should not stop at its eastern border. Europe can not be complete without the integration of Western Balkans in the European and Euro-Atlantic structures. This country can help secure long-term stability in this region and support reforms undertaken by countries in the region.
- At the Eastern border of the Alliance, Romania has been and will continue to be a firm and active advocate of strengthening the partnership with Moldova. Romania will keep on supporting Georgia's democratic development, its European vocation and its aspirations for integration into Euro-Atlantic structures.
- As the Black Sea region, as part of Europe and a bridge to Central Asia and Afghanistan, is important for the Euro-Atlantic stability, Romania will join the efforts of coastal states to enhance

regional security.

4. Development of partnerships between NATO-EU and NATO-UN

- NATO's partnerships with the EU and the UN ensure cooperation in matters of common interest and contributes significantly to countering the threats and challenges to international security.
- Romania has consistently supported the strengthening of dialogue and cooperation between NATO and EU, in as many areas of common interest as possible, while respecting the specificity and autonomy of decision within each of the two organizations.
- NATO relations with the United Nations is one of particular relevance and Romania is in favour of a broader cooperation between NATO and the UN in maintaining international peace and security.

5. Supporting the transformation process of NATO

- Romania will continue to contribute to NATO's transformation process aimed at improving response to the new types of threats (terrorism, proliferation of mass destruction weapons).



Romania goes up to third place by number of companies in Coface CEE Top 500 ranking

Romania went up to third place by the number of companies included in this year's edition of the Coface CEE Top 500 ranking, which includes the biggest 500 companies in the Central and Eastern European region.

Romania has 61 companies among the top 500 in this region, up from 56 in 2018. Poland is first, with 175 companies, followed by Hungary, with 71 companies, while the Czech Republic went down to fourth place, with 60 companies.

However, Romania is still fourth in terms of aggregated turnover of the companies included in the ranking (EUR 69.5 bln), behind Czechia (EUR 94.8 bln). The situation is similar for the net profits (EUR 3.2 bln for Romania companies compared to EUR 5.75 bln for Czech ones) and number of employees (231,000 versus 252,000).

"Nevertheless, the turnover growth of Romanian companies was relatively high at 14.3% and net profits went up by 12.7%. On the other hand, Romanian players are still amongst the smaller ones in the ranking, with an average

turnover of EUR 996 million," reads the Coface report.

Romanian companies went up in the CEE Top 500 ranking compared to last year, due to

higher turnover growth rates. However, the biggest Romanian company by turnover, car maker Automobile Dacia, is just 13th, also being the only one in top 20.





Universities in Bucharest are ready to welcome foreign students

And Bucharest comes with a diversified offer of programs and faculties with courses taught in foreign languages or adapted for foreigners, but also with Erasmus opportunities. Some of these offers were presented at RIUF - the Romanian International University Fair, the largest educational event in South-East Europe, organized in October at Sala Palatului. It's Saturday morning and dozens of students, parents and teachers gathered in front of Sala Palatului in the center of the Capital for RIUF. The fair started not long ago and some of the participants are queuing at the entrance, eager to discover the best educational offers. Meanwhile, the early risers are already going out of the building, but they are not in a hurry to leave: they sit on the stairs or nearby benches, talking about faculties and comparing offers. Many others are still present at the stands inside.

"I'm starting to realize that we're going to university soon," says a young girl laughing. She is still a high school student and came to RIUF to

find the best programs of study in Romania and abroad. She hopes to find the right faculty here, the universities in UK topping her list. More than 170 universities and educational institutions from 13 countries got ready to meet the young people at Sala Palatului, where the visitors were able to find information on over 7,000 bachelor's, master's, doctoral and MBA programs in fields such as business and management, IT, arts and design, law, mathematics, medicine, hotel industry management or tourism.

We also enter Sala Palatului, cheered by the enthusiasm around us. A noisy atmosphere greets us right from the start. We soon realize that this edition of the fair also attracted a large number of participants. Most young people gather at the UK universities' stands, which are upstairs, but also at those presenting the study programs and conditions for admission to faculties in the U.S., Canada, Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands or Germany. At the stands we hear conversations in Romanian, English, French or

even German.

But the Romanian universities are also very popular. Every year, there are over 20,000 foreign students in Romania. Public or private, these universities are ready to provide participants with the information they need to make the best choice. The stands of the Bucharest University of Economic Studies (ASE) and the University of Bucharest seem to attract most students, but there are also young people who want to find out the offers of the University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine (USAMV), of the University of Architecture and Urbanism "Ion Mincu" or of the National University of Arts. They are young Romanians who want to continue their studies in Romania, but these institutions are also ready to welcome foreign students.

The Academy for Economic Studies ASE, for example, one of the Romanian state universities best ranked in global tops, offers study programs in English, French or German in fields such as





economic sciences, administrative sciences or sociology (human resources). Students can get a bachelor's or master's degree at this university. For citizens of the European Union the application procedures start in July, while for non-EU citizens the procedures start in April.

Things are similar at the University of Bucharest, another top educational institution in Romania. University representatives tell us about bachelor's programs in English for those who want to study business administration, physics, political science (teaching in French as well) or international relations. USAMV also has on its stand a guide dedicated to foreign students, who can study here in English or French. And the list of faculties includes, of course, the faculty of veterinary medicine. At one of the stands of state universities present at RIUF we also ask about their participation in the Erasmus program. "Of course we participate, we expect many foreign students, we're ready," the university representative says. Romania is among the countries participating in Erasmus +, which means that it is eligible for all actions of this program, including those dedicated to students. And the universities in Bucharest are ready to help foreign students to develop and improve their knowledge and to discover the local culture. There are also several private educational institutions present at the fair, and the list of those that also offer study programs in foreign languages (mainly English) includes the Romanian-American University, the Spiru Haret University, the European Nursing Academy and The Entrepreneurship Academy. Time passes quickly and the first day of RIUF is almost over. However, the number of young people and parents present at the fair is still high: while the students still ask questions to representatives of universities, parents take a few moments to rest nearby. "It's good that we've come now, next year we will already know what to choose," says one of the parents attending the fair. Education plays an important role in the life of the youth and the opportunity to study in a foreign country is an experience that comes with many benefits. As for those who choose to study in Romania, the universities in Bucharest have always been among the first on the list of preferences.



Useful:

ASE, the University of Bucharest, the Polytechnic University and the Technical University of Constructions are on the list of higher education institutions in Romania that also organize the preparatory year of Romanian language for foreign citizens. This list, published by the Ministry of National Education, plus other useful information for foreign students who want to study in Romania can be found online at Edu.ro/studiaz-a-in-romania.

Annual taxes for foreign students at state universities in Romania range around 2.000 de euro. The Study in Romania platform (Studyinromania.gov.ro) also offers detailed information on study opportunities in Romania,

including the Erasmus + program. For specific information, it is best to consult the websites of the universities you are interested in. They provide data on faculties and study programs or enrollment methods. It's never too early to start gathering information about registration procedures, especially when you plan to study in a foreign country. Information on how to obtain a study visa in Romania (for citizens of a state outside the European Union and the European Economic Area) can be found at Igi.mai.gov.ro/en/content/studii

This text is part of a project under the program of promoting the touristic heritage "Destination: Bucharest", carried out by the Bucharest City Hall through the Public Monuments and Touristic Heritage Administration (AMPT).





Romanian Foods

The central characteristic of the Romanian cuisine is its great variety. It is a cuisine influenced by repeated waves of different cultures: the ancient Greeks, with whom Romanians traded; the Romans, who gave the country its name; the Saxons, who settled in southern Transylvania; the Turks, who for centuries dominated Romania; as well as Slavic and Magyar neighbors. All of these influences gradually blended into the varied and delicious Romanian culinary tradition" (Nicolae Klepper — Taste of Romania)

The main ingredients used by Romanian chefs are meats such as pork, beef and lamb, fish, vegetables, dairy products and fruit. A traditional Romanian meal may include:

Appetizer

All kinds of cheeses, cold cuts and vegetable

spreads.

A traditional drink enjoyed with appetizers is "țuică" (a potent plum brandy) which varies in strength, dryness and bouquet according to the production area.

Soup

"Ciorbă de perișoare" (meatball soup), "ciorbă țărănească" (vegetable soup, with or without meat), "ciorbă de burtă" (tripe soup).

Fish

"Saramură" (grilled carp in brine), "Nisetru la Grătar" (grilled Black Sea sturgeon) or "Scrumbie la Grătar" (grilled mackerel).

Entree

"Tocaniță" or "tochitură" (meat stew seasoned with onions and/ or spices), "ghiveci" (over 20

vegetables cooked in oil), "sarmale" (pickled cabbage leaves stuffed with a mix of minced meats, rice and spices) and "mititei" (The "Wee Ones" - small skinless grilled sausages) are among the favorites.

Dessert

"Papanashi" (cottage cheese donuts, topped with sour cream and fruit preserve), "clătite cu brânză" (crepes filled with cottage cheese, raisins and spices) and "cozonac" (traditional holiday sweet bread filled with walnuts, poppy seeds or cream cheese).

A Unique Romanian Cheese

Cheese and tree bark don't seem like a natural fit. But this specialty of southeast Transylvania, especially in the towns and villages that include Moeciu and Fundata, may go as far back as



the 14th century. Dairy farmers needed a way to store the surplus cheese, and the local evergreen forests provided the perfect vehicle. After all, woody bark provides wonderful protection for trees. Strip the bark from a fir tree, wrap it around the cheese and presto: the dairy product remains moist and preserved from the elements.

The Origin of Pastrami

Little Romania in lower Manhattan was a neighborhood within a neighborhood, tucked into the blocks bound by East Houston Street, Allen Street, Grand Street, and the Bowery. When the Romanian-born writer Marcus Ravage arrived in New York in 1900, he found the area thriving; restaurants had opened

Transylvanian Treats: One Sweet “Cylinder”

A long rope of sweet yeast dough is tightly wrapped in a spiral around a wooden form, something like a rolling pin, and dusted with sugar. It is then baked, slowly turning, on a rotating spit above an open flame. Carefully edged off its wooden mold after baking, each chimney cake is a whimsical-looking, soft bread with an addictively crunchy caramelized sugar crust and an airy open center.

Anna Kozma, who hails from Romania, said this special-occasion cake (called kurtoskalacs, or chimney cake) was just a provincial treat until after the fall of Communism, when entrepreneurs began opening city shops in

include Loft, a modern restaurant and lounge, Lacrimi si Sfinti, Bistro Jaristea and Zeze (the last three offer traditional Romanian cuisine).

Loft

A hundred years-old printing house, located in Bucharest’s central area, has been recently converted into one of the most acclaimed restaurants in Romania: LOFT.

Modern design, high-class cuisine and ‘cool people’ are the attributes which are usually associated with LOFT – Bucharest. Drinks are in plain sight behind a 50-foot long bar. If you will be intrigued by the big white chandelier hanging above the bar: is the signature statement of the owners who have a long tradition in the restaurant and club business.



everywhere, he recalled in a memoir, and the first Romanian delicatessens were displaying “goose-pastrama and kegs of ripe olives”.

“Goose-pastrama” was the starting point for American pastrami. The Jewish immigrants who settled in Little Romania brought with them a traditional technique for preserving goose by salting, seasoning, and smoking the meat. In America, however, beef was cheaper and more widely available than goose, so pastrama was made with beef brisket instead. Later the name became pastrami—perhaps because it rhymed with “salami” and was sold in the same delicatessens. By the time Little Romania dispersed in the 1940s, New Yorkers from every ethnic background were claiming expertly sliced pastrami as their rightful heritage.

Romania, Hungary and elsewhere in Europe.

Now, at her Chimney Cake store and cafe in Long Island City - Queens, Ms. Kozma makes everything by hand, in an open kitchen in plain view, introducing a whole new population to the pleasures of these tubular treats that look like giant empty cannoli. She makes an old-fashioned sugar-dusted version, of course, but her menu also includes variations from cinnamon to crushed walnuts to chocolate shavings. They are best eaten, fresh, by breaking off pieces.

Restaurants and Cuisine

Bucharest – Romania’s capital city – is changing at a fast pace and its dining scene is evolving, too. New or relatively new restaurants of note

Bistro Jaristea

Perfectly positioned in the centre on Romania’s capital city – Bucharest, a short walk from the Romanian Athenaeum and Romania’s National Art Museum, Bistro Jaristea offers good Romanian urban cuisine, an award-winning wine list, and attentive service in a setting that recreates the atmosphere of Bucharest on the 1930’s, when the city was nicknamed The Little Paris. Traditional Romanian specialties include chicken meatball soup, Zacusca (seven-vegetable spread), smoked cheese and bacon roulade, duck leg with cabbage, duck breast with Ratatouille, Sarmale (cabbage rolls), Grilled Carp in Brine, leeks and olive stew.

The prix-fixe lunch includes a soup, entree and dessert for \$9.00.



Arts and Crafts of Romania

What is that impulse, that irresistible force which will not let the peasant rest content with the merely useful, but drives him to seek the best proportioned and most harmonious forms that appeal to the eye by color and line, are pleasant to the touch and produce that rare sense of contentment, poise of mind and joy which characterize

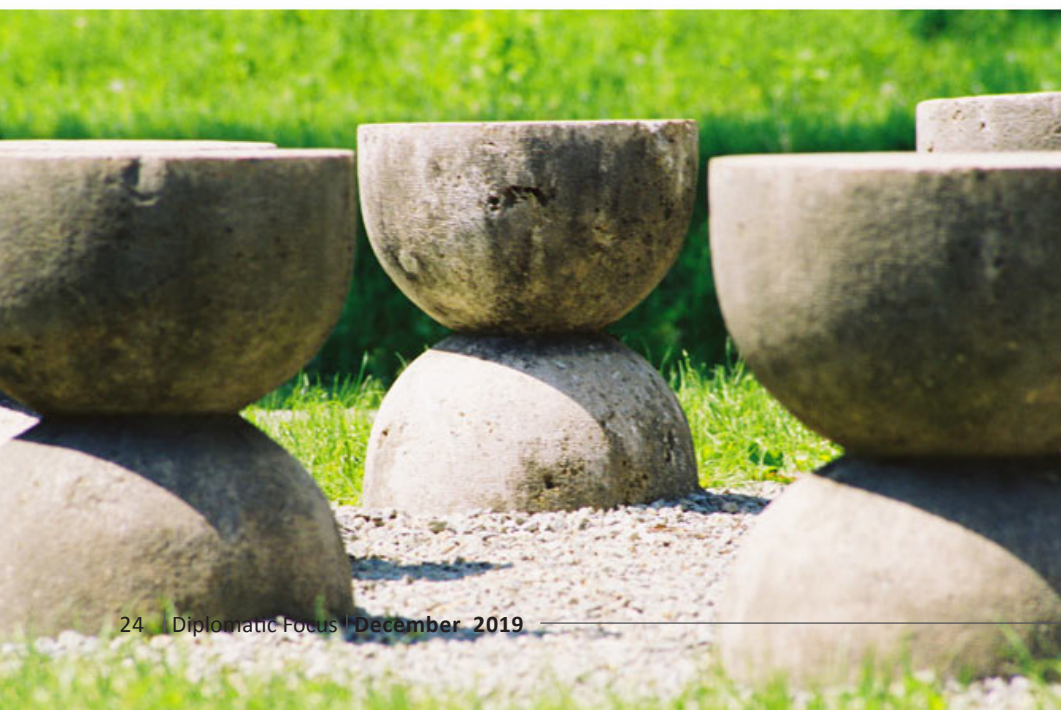
aesthetic enjoyment?

(Peasant Art in Romania, by George Oprescu, 1929)

While there are great Romanian fine artists, among whom 20th century sculptor Constantin Brancusi is probably the most famous, the typical zest for life and almost naive optimism

that the world is really a beautiful place seem best expressed in the traditional art and craft of Romanian peasants, extending even to their colorful, unique grave markers. In the "Merry Cemetery" of Sapanta," bordering Ukraine, carved wooden crosses are painted traditional Voronet blue (named for the nearby painted monastery) and embellished with fanciful borders, renderings of the deceased and often anecdotes of their lives. An erstwhile town mayor is memorialized with anecdotes of his womanizing ways.

As in most parts of the world, full-time artists and artisans are drawn together, tending to form communities throughout the country, where locales are aesthetically inspiring and economically viable. Bucharest and a few of the larger towns boast a few galleries showcasing work from such artist communities, but most don't have galleries. A few examples of local artists' and artisans' work are shown and sold in town museums, but most is sold in street markets adjoining major attractions. Sellers usually are also the makers and many speak English. A conversation with them can reveal fascinating facets of Romanian culture. Craft which are most popular include:





Painted Eggs

The most readily recognizable examples of Romanian art are the famed painted eggs, especially prominent around Easter time. Painting of real hollowed-out eggs was an integral part of preparations for this festival of renewal. Women and children gathered in someone's home and spent a day painting and gossiping. Intricate patterns were actually secret languages known only to residents of the regions where they were painted. The oldest known were painted with aqua fortis (nitric acid) on a traditional red background. They're available in nearly all shops and street markets.

Ceramics

Romanian pottery is still made mainly on traditional kick-wheels with simple finishing tools. Shapes, sizes and patterns reflect the different clays and cultures of diverse areas where are produced. Color glazes and decorations vary from strong geometrics, to delicate florals, animals and humans. There are approximately 30 pottery centers throughout



the country, each with its own distinctive style, but the main areas are in Horezu in Oltenia; Miercurea-Ciuc and Corund in western Transylvania; Baia Mare near the northern border, and Radauti and Marginea in Moldavia.

Wood

Maramures is the area to see the art of woodwork. Homes are trimmed in elaborately carved wood, wooden gates and even fences are intricately carved. Historically, in this area, a family's community status was displayed through the gate – the more elaborate, the more important the family. The "Merry Cemetery" of Sapanta is in this region, open all year long, at all times -- it's worth a visit. Hand-carved decorations in complex patterns hold meanings beyond the purely decorative. Trees of life, twisted rope, moons, stars, flowers and wolf teeth to ward off evil spirits are associated with myths and superstitions. They show up in furniture, spoons, ladles, walking sticks, keepsake chests and other decorative objects, sometimes embellished with paint. Wooden flutes and recorders are also elaborately carved. Most prized are the multi-piped pan flutes, which are now very rare, as few artisans know how to make them and even fewer know



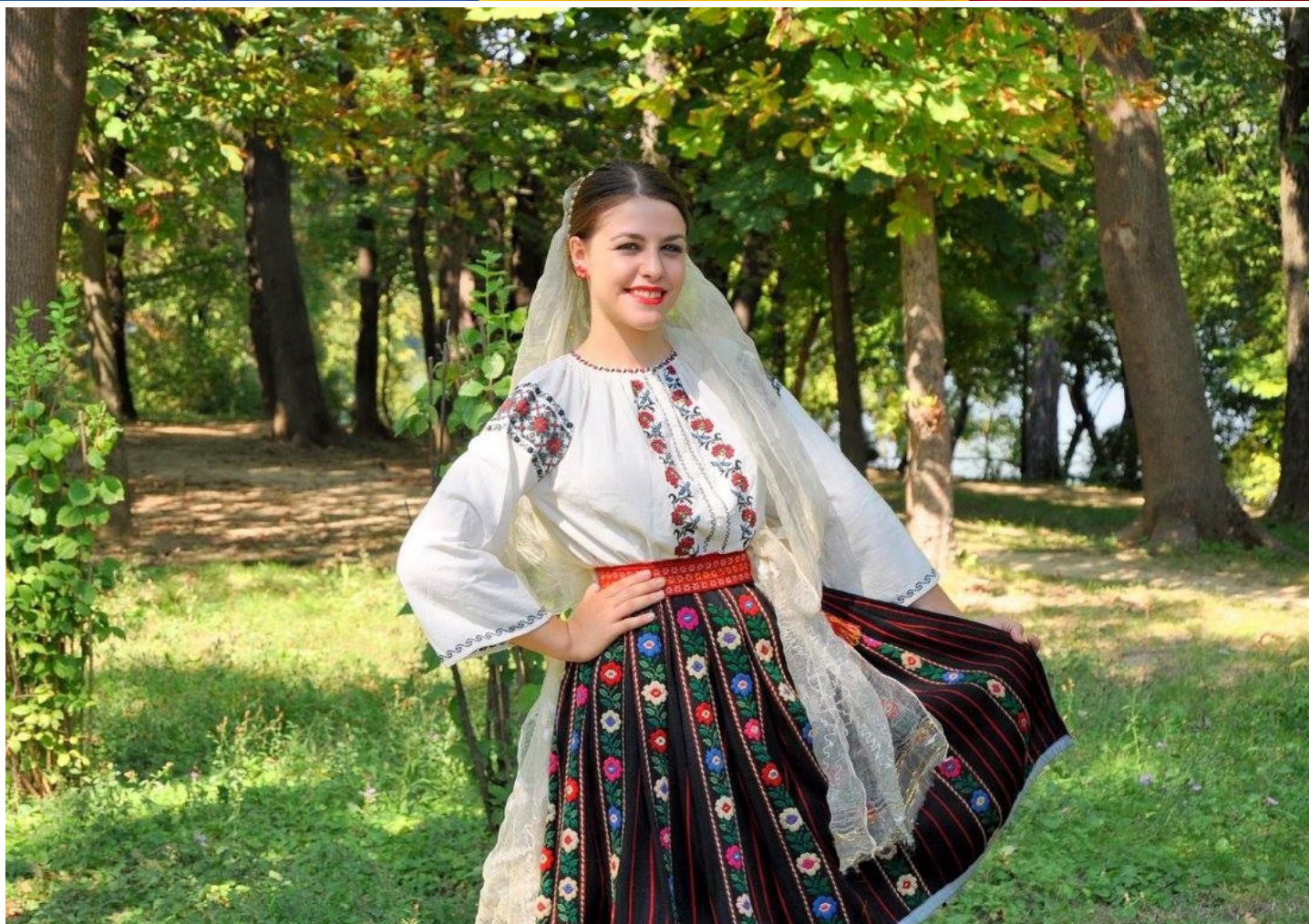
how to play them.

Textiles

At the edge of the street market adjacent to Bran Castle is a peasant cottage with a window behind which an old woman sits at her loom weaving and watching the passing scene. She'll invite interested visitors into her home, where her English-speaking daughter will explain that she's 74 years old and has been weaving since she was seven. She still weaves with thread she spins herself from sheep her family keeps in their tiny enclosed courtyard. On view in her tiny weaving room, which is also her bedroom, is a selection of magnificent throws and spreads that she has woven. Not for sale, they're priceless examples of this enduring way of life.

Textile weaving is the most widespread craft in Romania, handed down from generation to generation, using distinctive family patterns along with those specific to different districts. Looms still are common in homes and women





weave and embroider from childhood through old age. The predominant fibers, wool and cotton are woven into rugs, wall hangings, table covers and clothing. Some Romanian weavers and embroiderers still work with threads and yarns they produce themselves, but younger weavers tend to purchase their raw materials. They weave and embroider just about every cloth article used in their homes, from colorful

linen and cotton towels to window draperies, bedspreads, rugs, wall hangings, furniture throws and clothing. In a village near Sibiu, part of a bride's dowry is still a tolic, used to decorate horses of those who ride from house to house issuing wedding invitations.

Embroidery on folk costumes worn for holidays and special occasions (like weddings) follows

strict regional patterns and serves also as a sort of secret language known only to people within the different regions. Sibiu uses graphic black and white motifs, reflecting its Saxon heritage; southern regions of Arges, Muscel, Dimbovita and Prahova use red, black maroon, yellow, gold, and silver threads, reflecting influences of the Ottoman Empire. Buzau uses terra cotta; Oas uses green and Moldavia uses orange and the Voronet blue made world-famous by its use on the monastery of the same name. Especially beautiful is cut embroidery on white or ecru linen and cotton, done throughout the country.

Rugs

While technically textiles, these deserve their own category, because no other textiles so dramatically reflect their regions of origin. As varied as different areas' attractions, so too are the rugs that are displayed on surrounding fences. Most are flat-weave kilims, probably introduced centuries ago by the controlling Ottoman Empire. Today's hand-weavers mix traditional vegetable-dyed yarns with commercial aniline-dyed yarns to produce startling accents within traditional patterns and colors. Rugs from Oltenia reflect nature, with flowers, trees and birds. Those of Moldavia have patterns of little branches repeated in rows to





create a tree of life. Rugs from Maramures tend to have geometric shapes, resembling those from Turkey and the Caucasian mountains.

Masks

Masks are linked to folk festivals held predominantly in Maramures and Moldavia. Typically made from the hides of sheep, goats or cows, the masks are adorned with fabric, hats, pompoms, metallic bits, feathers, beans, straw and animal horns to represent bears and goats, they're traditionally worn to welcome in the New Year during a couple weeks in December and early January.

Glass

The oldest preserved Romanian glass dates back to the Roman Empire. Currently, there is a renewed passion for creating art in blown glass and several contemporary Romanian glass artists enjoy world renown. Most of the professional glass artists are clustered in the northeast, near Botosani. Glass artisans are also employed in factories located in Avrig, Turda and Buzau, turning out molded, hand-carved and hand-blown pieces, many of which are museum quality.

Arts of Romania

Works of Brancusi are in various locales, but one of the finest collections is in the city of Targu Jiu, in Oltenia province on the southern border of the Carpathian Mountains. "The Endless Column" (Coloana Infinita), "The Gate of the Kiss" (Poarta Sarutului), "The Table of Silence" (Masa Tacerii) and "The Alley of Chairs" (Aleea Scaunelor) are displayed in the city's main park as indicated by the great sculptor.



Nearby Horezu is a major center for ceramics, wood carving and iron forging and the Horezu Museum of Art showcases some of the best work of past and contemporary artists.

Romania has a great diversity of museums preserving every facet of its history and arts. Some are small museums, catering to enthusiasts with a taste for special interests such as pharmacy, clocks, railway trains,

folk arts and architecture, wine making and traditional crafts. Larger museums host regular exhibitions from around the world, as well as housing permanent collections of paintings and sculptures. Prominent museums include Romania's National Museum of Art, the Art Collections Museum, the Village Museum, the Museum of the Romanian Peasant in Bucharest, and the Bruckenthal Museum in Sibiu.





Charming old towns to visit in Romania this year



Many cities in the western part of the country have well preserved Old Towns, inviting visitors to take a stroll on winding cobbled streets and admire centuries-old buildings and structures, and attempt to imagine a time that no longer is. We put together below several suggestions of cities with well-preserved historical centers to consider for this year's travel list.

The historic center of Sighișoara is one of the best preserved in the country and has been included on the UNESCO World Heritage list as a "fine example of a small, fortified medieval town which played an important strategic and commercial role on the fringes of central Europe for several centuries."

Several defense towers of the old fortification are still standing, among them the 64-meter tall Clock Tower, which can be seen from around the city. At the beginning of the 17th century, it was equipped with a clock, featuring statues of the gods personifying the days of the week: Diana, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn and the Sun. Elsewhere, the Tinsmiths' Tower, the Tailors' Tower, the Furriers' Tower, the Ropemakers' Tower, or the Tanners' Tower

add to the sights tourists can visit in the city, alongside the Covered Stairway, linking the upper city to the school upon the hill, today the Josef Haltrich High School.

This small Transylvania town also has some fine examples of religious architecture and residential landmarks such as the Venetian House, the Deer House, the House of Chronicler Georgius Krauss, or the House of Vlad Dracul, where Vlad the Impaler is supposed to have been born.

A former European Capital of Culture in 2007, and Romania's first city to hold the title, Sibiu has a beautifully-preserved old town, reminiscent of its Saxon past. A stroll through its winding cobbled streets will reveal both Gothic monuments and Art Nouveau facades,

alongside medieval architecture.

One of the city's most famous landmarks is the Council Tower, located close to the building that used to host the Sibiu City Hall. Visitors can climb up inside for views of the surrounding Small Square (Piața Mică). Part of the city's old fortification network is still standing, with the Passage of the Stairs, the Soldisch Bastion, the Haller Bastion and the exterior defense wall. Besides their military purpose, they also served as headquarters and storehouses for the guilds in the old Hermannstadt, an established craft center beginning with the 14th century.

Also not to miss in the city is the Evangelic Church, erected in the 14th century on the premises of a Romanesque church dating from the 12th century. Its seven-level tower dominates

the area, at its 73.34 meter height, bringing the spotlight to one of the most impressive Gothic constructions in the country. Although newer compared to other constructions in the city, the 19th century Bridge of Lies (pictured above) is one of Sibiu's most beloved symbols. It connects the lower and upper town and is a favorite spot of couples. Its name is a reference to the legend surrounding it, namely that the bridge will collapse if someone will walk on it and tell a lie.

Also located in the old part of the town are most of the branches of the Brukenthal Museum: the Brukenthal Palace, hosting the art museum; the history museum housed in the house of Mayor Thomas Altemberger; the museum of pharmacy, located in a building dating back to the 16th century; and the natural history museum.

Often overlooked, Mediaș has an old town still proudly speaking of its Saxon heritage. For instance, the fortified St. Margaret's Church, built in the 15th century and featuring a Gothic winged altarpiece, dated between 1480 and 1520 and adorned with eight painted panels depicting the passion of Christ. Another landmark is the Franciscan Monastery, also built in the 15th century and, in time, also used as a hospital.

The town's medieval defense bastions can still be seen today. Their names speak of the manufacturing and trade activity in town, as is the case with the Tailors' Tower, the Wheelers' Tower or the Blacksmiths' Tower, among others. The inclined Trumpeters' Tower, the tower of the St. Margaret church, was an observation point from where the town's trumpeter announced the dangers that threatened the residents.

Among other sites to see, there is the Piarist School, where a school led by the Piarist Order functioned until 1790, the 18th century house of Lutheran pastor and historian Stephan Ludwig Roth, and the 16th century house of the Schuller family, now used as a cultural venue.

Braşov, the city standing at the foothills of Tâmpa Mountain, welcomes visitors with its Council Square (Piața Sfatului), the starting point to exploring what is left of the old settlement. Markets were organized here beginning with the 14th century, a right the city obtained officially in the 16th century. It is lined with 18th and 19th century houses hosting many cafes and restaurants and is the place where most visitors stop to take in the beautiful views of the mountain and have a drink.

The Council House (Casa Sfatului) sits in the middle of the square. It was built in 1420 and now houses the Braşov County Museum of History. The square is also home to one of





the city's best-known landmarks: the Black Church, a reference Gothic style monument in the country and the largest Lutheran place of worship in the country. At 89 meters in length and 38 meters wide, it measures 65 meters from the floor level to the highest point of its only bell tower. It features a six-ton bell and an impressive 4,000 pipe organ built in 1839 by Carl August Buchholz (1796–1884) which is played at the concerts held in the church. Also in the square is the Museum of Urban Civilization, a must-see to get to know more about the city's past life.

Going outside of the area of the Council Square, visitors will find several of the town's old fortifications, among them the Weavers' Bastion, the Graft Bastion, the White Tower, and the Black Tower. In the network of streets surrounding the Council Square, Strada Sforii stands out as being the narrowest in the city.

Bistrița is the northernmost of the former Saxon burghs of Transylvania and has a refurbished old town that is worth a visit. The Evangelical Church is a landmark of the city, representative for the transition from the Gothic style to that of the Renaissance in Transylvania. At 75 meters, it is considered the highest medieval one in Romania, 1 meter taller than the tower of the Evangelical Cathedral in Sibiu.

Another landmark site is the Sugălete ensemble of 13 buildings from the 15th to the 16th century, typical of the Renaissance constructions in Transylvania. It lines up one

side of the country's old square and the colorful buildings are connected through their spacious entrances, forming a gallery of 20 arches. The houses were inhabited by the town's nobility.

Timișoara's Habsburg past is still visible in the city, with its Cetate neighborhood offering visitors a wealth of sites speaking of its history. Here, the Unirii Square and Libertății Square preserve many Baroque buildings dating from 18th century.

The Libertății Square is where the military administration of Timișoarei and of Banat region was located, at a time when the square used to be called Paradeplatz (Parade Square). Also here is the building of the old City Hall, which had its façade redone several times until it received its current look in 1853. The building's Council Hall used to turn into a ballroom hall to accommodate the fastous parties of the time. The monument of St. Maty and St. Nepomuk is a Baroque creation brought from Viena in 1756. The sculpture was designed by Rapahel Donner, one of the most prolific Austrian sculptors of the 18th century, and created with help from sculptors Wasserburger and Blimm.

The city's Unirii Square is another place to see several masterpieces of Baroque architecture. Among them is the Monument of the Holy Trinity (dating to 1740) and known as "the statue of the plague" in connection to the plague that swept through the city in 1738 – 1739. Casa cu Lei (The House with Lions) and the nearby Nikolaus Lenau High School are

other notable edifices.

Another impressive site is the Roman-Catholic Episcopacy Palace. The inside is filled with several Baroque pieces, among which the painting of the main altar, signed by Michael Angelo Unterberger. Nearby, the Baroque Palace is another impressive building, which used to serve as the residence of the Landespresident (the governor of Banat). Today it houses the city's Art Museum and to many is the most luxurious building in town.

A visit to Oradea's older part is a trip back to a time when Art Nouveau was taking over the worlds of architecture and arts. Two of the city's main squares, Union Square and Ferdinand Square, and the surrounding area host some of the most beautiful buildings in the city.

For instance, the Black Eagle Palace is a Secession style architectural accomplishment in the city. It was designed to house a theater, ballrooms, a casino, offices and more. Today, it is one of the city's top get-together places and hosts many cafes and restaurants.

The Union Square area gathers the Town Hall and the Greek Catholic Bishop Palace, built in 1903 after the plans of architect Rimanoczy Kalman Jr. in renaissance style with Baroque and Rococo elements. The eclectic Ferdinand Square is where the Regina Maria National Theater was built in 1900. The Levay Palace and the Poinar Palace are also to be found in the perimeter of the square.

Bucharest Old Town Highlights: Palace of the Parliament, one of the most iconic buildings in the world



Originally called “House of the Republic”, the Parliament Palace is the most spectacular Romanian project carried out under the dictatorship of Nicolae Ceausescu, an important piece of history and nowadays, one of Bucharest’s main tourist attractions.

Located in the heart of Bucharest, the building, also known as the “People’s Palace”, is considered the second largest administrative building in the world, after the US Pentagon, as it covers an area of over 330,000 sqm.

The construction began in 1984, during the communist regime, and it was intended to be a replica of Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea. The Romanian dictator came up with the idea after the big earthquake in March 1977, which had devastating effects in Romania, with massive destructions including for Bucharest buildings.

The building was designed by a team of 700 architects, under the direction of chief architect Anca Petrescu. Between 20,000 and 100,000

people were appointed to the project, 3,000 of which have died during construction works.

The Palace of the Parliament has 12 stories and 8 underground levels, the last one being an atomic bunker. Today, only 400 chambers and 2 large can be used, out of its total of 1,100 rooms. The interior is a luxurious display of crystal chandeliers, mosaics, oak paneling, marble, gold leaf, stained-glass windows and floors covered in rich carpets.

Today, the Palace of the Parliament is an administrative building that hosts the Parliament of Romania, with its Chamber of Deputies, the Palace of the Chamber of Deputies, and the Romanian Senate. The immense building also houses the National Museum of Contemporary Art since 2004.

The building is one of the most important tourist attractions in Bucharest, is open to visitors and tours are also organized, including guided tours in foreign languages. Visiting hours: every day from 10.00 A.M until 4.00 P.M.

Nowadays, the Palace of the Parliament is also used for vibrant light shows during the iMapp competition or during the days of the city.

How to get there:

The Palace of the Parliament is located in downtown Bucharest, near the Consti=utiei Square and the Izvor Park. The building is framed by Izvor street, Na=ionile Unite boulevard, Libertă=ii boulevard, and Calea 13 Septembrie. Several buses stop nearby, including the tourist bus line, and the nearest subway stations are Izvor, Universitate Square and Unirii Square.



Welcome to Romania Tourism!

Authentic, Natural and Cultural are the words that best capture the essence of Romania, a dynamic country rich in history, arts and scenic beauty. This website is intended to assist travelers who are planning to visit Romania as well as the general public who would like to learn more about one of the most beautiful countries in Europe.

Romania offers countless unique travel experiences that are waiting to be discovered. A journey of three or four hours, by car or train, can take you from the Danube River to a beautiful, intact, medieval town; from Bucharest - Romania's capital city - to the Black Sea; from Southern Transylvania to the historic regions of Bucovina or Maramures. Take a step back in time as you visit one of the unique painted monasteries in Bucovina, the perfectly preserved hilltop citadel of Sighisoara or an authentic, centuries-old, village in Maramures. Explore Romania's many architectural treasures and experience its vibrant and flourishing arts scene. We look forward to welcoming you to Romania!

Black Sea Resorts

Warm climate, miles of sand beaches, ancient monuments, vineyards and modern resorts invite travelers to seriously consider Romania's Black Sea Coast as their summer vacation destination.

Beaches, stretching from Mangalia to Mamaia, are dotted with fine resorts and hotels, and countless sports and entertainment facilities.

Remnants of ancient Greek culture as far back as the 7th Century, BC, when seafarers established trading colonies along the coast, are still being discovered.

Romania's main sea resorts are centered on 45 miles of fine sand beaches and include Mamaia, Eforie, Neptun, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn and Mangalia.

The Black Sea coast has long been known for cures of arthritic, rheumatic, internal and nervous disorders. Eforie Nord and Mangalia Spas specialize in mud baths (the mud is taken from the area's salty lake waters) as well as in world famous "Gerovital" and "Aslavital" original rejuvenation treatments.

Vacationers at Romania's Black Sea Coast can also join organized trips from the seaside to a number of locations in the country, including the Danube Delta, the painted monasteries of Bucovina, to the nation's capital city, Bucharest, or to nearby Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey.

Romania's Castles and Fortresses

Romania's collection of castles and fortresses perhaps best illustrates the rich medieval heritage of the country. While castles built

from the 14th to the 18th centuries are strong and austere fortresses built mainly for defense against invaders, those erected beginning in the late 1800s are imposing and luxurious. The most popular include the 14th century Corvin Castle, built on the site of a former Roman camp, the elegant 19th century Peles Castle with its 160 rooms filled with priceless European art and, of course, the Bran Castle, built in the mid-1300s and legendary home to Bram Stoker's Count Dracula.

Universal literature found valuable sources of inspiration in some of Romania's castles, with the most famous novels written about them being "The Castle in the Carpathians" by Jules Verne and "Dracula" by Bram Stoker.

As a result of almost nine centuries of Saxon presence, Transylvania, located in central Romania, claims a cultural and architectural heritage unique in Europe. This region is home to nearly 200 Saxon villages, churches and fortifications built between the 13th and 15th centuries. Seven of the fortified Saxon churches (in Biertan, Calnic, Darjiu, Prejmer, Saschiz, Valea Viilor, and Viscri) were designated by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites. A visit to these quaint villages, placed amidst lush farmland and green rolling hills, will give you a taste of the long-gone medieval times.

Explore some of Romania's best-known castles

and fortresses:

Biertan Fortified Church - (UNESCO World Heritage Site)

The village of Biertan (German: BIRTHALM), first mentioned in an official document in 1283, is home to one of the largest and most impressive medieval strongholds in Transylvania.

Surrounded by quaint streets and vineyards, the 15th century fortified church at Biertan is perched high on a hill in the middle of the village. Three tiers of 35-foot-high defensive walls, connected by towers and gates, encircled the complex, making the church impossible to conquer during medieval times.

Featuring late-gothic architecture with heavy doors and double exterior walls, the church boasts the largest Transylvanian multi-paneled wooden altar and a remarkable wooden door which once protected the treasures in the sacristy.

Visitors can also admire the towers surrounding the church, namely the Clock Tower, the Bell Tower, the Gate Tower and the Bacon Tower. Within the grounds are several other interesting buildings, including the Prison Tower - which once served marital counseling purposes.

From 1572 to 1867, Biertan was the seat of the Saxon Evangelical bishops of Transylvania; their fine gravestones can be seen inside the Bishops' Tower.

Bran Castle

Surrounded by an aura of mystery and legend and perched high atop a 200-foot-high rock, Bran Castle owes its fame to its imposing towers and turrets as well as to the myth created around Bram Stoker's Dracula.

Built on the site of a Teutonic Knights stronghold dating from 1212, the castle was first documented in an act issued by Louis I of Hungary on November 19, 1377, giving the Saxons of Kronstadt (Brasov) the privilege to build the Citadel.



Although Stoker never visited Transylvania, the Irish author relied on research and his vivid imagination to create the dark and intimidating stomping ground of Count Dracula, leading to persistent myths that it was once the home of Vlad Tepes, ruler of Walachia. While the association with Dracula is sketchy at best, the castle continues to hold a strong attraction for all fans of the Count.

Narrow winding stairways lead through some 60 timbered rooms, many connected by underground passages, which house collections of furniture, weapons and armor dating from the 14th to the 19th centuries.

Calnic Fortified Church - (UNESCO World Heritage Site)

Built in the 13th century by Count Chyl de Kelling, the Fortified Church at Calnic (German: Kelling) is one of the most imposing defensive structures in Transylvania. First documented in 1269, the fortress served as a residence for Saxon nobility until 1430, when it was sold to the peasant community of Calnic.

Enclosed by one and a half rings of high walls fortified with a defensive tower to the south

and a gate tower to the north, the fortress withstood several Ottoman sieges.

The five-story-high Siegfried Tower, the landmark of the fortress, is endowed with defensive corridors and firing windows. An on-site medieval art museum displays various artifacts.

Jidvei (Bethlen-Haller) Castle

Where: Cetatea de Balta, Transylvania – Central Romania

Nearest large towns: Blaj, Medias, Alba Iulia

The Bethlen Castle was built in the 16th century in the French Renaissance style and restored in the 17th and 18th centuries when Baroque elements were added.

The Reformed Church, situated next to the Castle, is a 13th century structure.

The Jidvei (Bethlen-Haller) castle, with its eclectic combination of architectural styles, is located on the outskirts of Cetatea de Balta and it offers its guests with quaint views of the village.

Jidvei, one of Romania's premier white wines wineries is a five-minute drive from Cetatea de Balta.

The Jidei (Bethlen-Haller) castle can host business meetings, conferences, private dinners or wedding receptions.

Various exquisite local wines and original menus, that include traditional dishes prepared by local chefs, will, most likely, please even the most discerning palates.

Cisnadie Fortified Church

Originally built in the 12th century as a Romanesque basilica, the church was fortified during the 15th century to protect the local Saxon population against repeated Ottoman





Location: Harman, Transylvania – Central Romania

Nearest large town: Brasov

Located in the heart of Harman (Honigburg in German, meaning Honey Castle) village, this fortified church dates back to the 13th century when Saxons built the original structure. Strong walls and bulwarks surrounded the church and on its sides, massive towers were added.

The choir was built in a square shape with a vault resembling a cross. It was surrounded by two chapels, indicating the influence of the Cistercian style. This influence can also be observed in the still-standing original round windows with four lobes in the upper part of the church. The fortified church boasts two chapels...

Peles Castle

Where: Sinaia, Walachia – Southern Romania

Nearest large towns: Brasov and Bucharest

Nestled at the foot of the Bucegi Mountains in the picturesque town of Sinaia, Peles Castle is a masterpiece of German new-Renaissance architecture, considered by many one of the most stunning castles in Europe. Commissioned by King Carol I in 1873 and completed in 1883, the castle served as the summer residence of the royal family until 1947. Its 160 rooms are adorned with the finest examples of European art, Murano crystal chandeliers, German stained-glass windows and Cordoba leather-covered walls. Also worth exploring in town is Sinaia Monastery, founded by Prince Mihai Cantacuzino in 1695, and named after the great Sinai Monastery on Mount Sinai. The monastery served as the residence of the royal family until Peles Castle was built, and now is home to a monastic establishment. Peles Castle was the first European castle entirely lit by electrical current. The electricity was produced by the castle's own plant. The castle draws its name from neighboring Peles Creek, which passes right through the courtyard. The first movie projection in Romania took place in 1906 in the castle's Theater Room. Sinaia, a well-known ski resort, and the surrounding towns of Busteni, Azuga and Predeal provide many facilities for an active vacation – from ski and hiking trails to wildlife viewing.

Poenari Fortress

The ruins of Poenari Fortress stand high on a cliff overlooking the Arges River, at the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains. Built at the beginning of the 13th century by the first Walachian rulers, the castle changed names and residents a few times over the decades; eventually, it was abandoned and left in ruins.

Vlad Tepes (Vlad the Impaler) recognized the potential of the location and upon taking over

raids.

The fortification process included the construction of fortified towers over the two side entrances and the choir, the building of a double structure of defense walls, a moat and several defensive towers along the walls.

The clock installed in the 195-foot high (bell and clock) tower has been working since 1868; no repairs were ever needed!

Corvin Castle

The greatest Gothic-style castle in Romania, Corvin was built by the Anjou family on the site of a former Roman camp. The castle served as a fortress until the mid-14th century when it became the residence of Transylvania's ruler, Iancu de Hunedoara. Iancu upgraded the fortress transforming it into the most stunning castle in Transylvania.

The beautifully preserved structure features a sumptuous Knights' Hall, an impressive drawbridge, high buttresses, inner courtyards, a chapel and some 50 rooms resplendent with medieval art.

Cristian Fortified Church

Location: Cristian, Transylvania – Central Romania

Nearest large town: Brasov

The gothic-style Evangelical Church (1495) in the village of Cristian stands on the site of a 13th century Roman basilica.

Built in the 16th century, the church is enclosed by two rows of walls guarded by towers.

Two underground tunnels allowed villagers to flee from the fortress to the forest or to an old monastery in times of siege.

Darjiu Fortified Church (UNESCO World

Heritage Site)

Where: Darjiu, Transylvania – Central Romania

Nearest large towns: Sighisoara and Odorheiu Secuiesc

The fortified church at Darjiu was initially built in Roman style in the 14th century, and later rebuilt in gothic style. It was fortified in the 16th century when locals drew inspiration from the fortified churches of neighboring Saxon villages.

The Gate Tower preserves its initial form, with openings for shooting missiles; wooden shutters provided protection against incoming projectiles.

The original interior frescoes, some of the most impressive Transylvanian medieval works, have been preserved.

Fagaras Fortress

Where: Fagaras, Transylvania – Central Romania

Nearest cities: Sibiu and Brasov

Built in 1310 on the site of a former 12th century wooden fortress (burned by the Tartars in 1241), Fagaras was enlarged between the 15th and 17th centuries and was considered one of the strongest fortifications in Transylvania. The fortress was surrounded by a deep moat which, in times of war or social unrest, could easily be filled with water from a nearby mountain brook. A bridge over the moat provided the only access point. The fortress boasts three floors and five towers.

The beautifully preserved fortress houses the Fagaras County Museum, displaying Roman artifacts, a collection of medieval weapons and traditional folk crafts.

Harman Fortified Church

the throne, he ordered that the structure be repaired and consolidated, turning it into one of his main fortresses. When the Turks attacked and captured the castle in 1462, Vlad escaped via a secret passageway leading north through the mountains. Although the castle was used for many years after Vlad's death in 1476, it was eventually abandoned again in the first half of the 16th century and left to the ravages of time and weather. In 1888, a major landslide brought down a portion of the castle which crashed into the river far below. The castle underwent repairs and the remnants of its walls and towers stand to this day.

The largest fortified church in southeastern Europe, Prejmer

(Tartlau in German) was built by Teutonic knights in 1212-1213.

The powerful surrounding walls are 40 feet high and 10-15 feet thick. Historical records attest that in its 500 years of existence, the fortress was besieged 50 times. However, it was only captured once, in 1611 by Gabriel Báthori, Prince of Transylvania; the fighters defending the fortress have surrendered after not having no drinking water available for several days.

Access to the building was through a 100-foot-long arched passage fortified with two rows of gates. Each village family had a designated room for shelter in case of attack. The red-roofed wall accommodated 272 rooms, stacked over four stories and linked by wooden staircases.

Rasnov Fortress

Rasnov Fortress (Rosenau in German), is located on a rocky hilltop in the Carpathian Mountains, 650 ft. above the town of Rasnov. First mentioned in an official document in 1331, the fortress was built by Teutonic Knights as protection against invading Tartars and was later enlarged by the local Saxon population. Strategically located on the commercial route linking the provinces of Transylvania and Walachia, Rasnov differs from other Saxon fortresses in that it was designed as a place of refuge over extended periods of time.

Recently, the old fortress has been restored to its former glory and today, you can visit the impressive remains. There is also a museum here, hidden behind the ancient walls, where you can find a skeleton buried beneath a glass floor, as well as some other interesting artifacts.

Saschiz Fortified Church - (UNESCO World Heritage Site)

Saschiz is renowned not only as home to one of Transylvania's finest fortified churches but also as a carpentry and wood-painting center. It was here that Saschiz blue pottery was born in 1702.

The Evangelical Church of Saschiz was built between 1493 and 1496 by Saxon colonists. The monument is very impressive due to its sheer size and the way the fortifying elements have been adapted to the shape of a church building. From the outside, the church appears to be a bulwark, but its defensive role is surpassed by the beauty of its gothic elements: huge arches, massive buttresses and decorative stone and brick aspects. Due to the significant distance between the center of the village and the hill on which a Saxon fortress was built in 1496, the fortified Evangelical church became the main refuge for the inhabitants of Saschiz during invading raids.

Valea Viilor (Wurmloch) Fortified Church - (UNESCO World Heritage Site)

Where: Valea Viilor, Transylvania – Central Romania

Nearest large town: Medias

Located in the Vineyards Valley, this fortified church was built in 1263 in gothic style and was enlarged and fortified in the 15th and 16th centuries by adding a range of 26-foot-tall and five-foot-wide walls. A unique element is the well in the center of the church choir that provided water for the locals during sieges. Inside, you can admire Saxon furniture and decorations dating from the 16th century.

Viscri Fortified Church - (UNESCO World Heritage Site) One of the most interesting Saxon fortified churches is located in the village of Viscri (Weisskirch in German).

The name comes from the German Weisse Khirche, meaning white church.

Unlike other Transylvanian fortified churches, Viscri was built around 1100 by the Szekler population and taken over by Saxon colonists in 1185. This explains why this unique gothic church displays a plain straight ceiling rather than a traditional vaulted one.





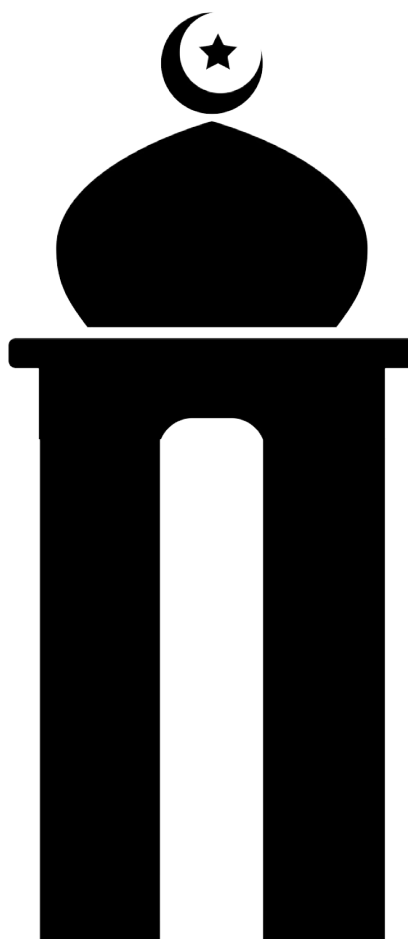
Mosques of Romania



Carol I Mosque

The edifice was built with Romanian state funding in 1910-1913, consisting of stone and brick, except the vault and the minaret, made of reinforced concrete. It was built according to plans elaborated by architect Victor Gh. Ștefănescu. Execution manner belongs to inventor Gogu Constantinescu and represents the first building made of reinforced concrete and brick ever built in Romania. The 450 m² large mosque, with a 25 m high vault and 47 m high minaret (the staircase inside has 140 steps) was raised on the spot of an ancient mosque (Mahmudia, built in 1822), of which the Mauro style mighrab (the altar) is preserved. The 99 attributes of God are written all around it. Since 1965 the mosque detains a 490 kg weighing and 144 m² large, manually made carpet among its patrimony objects. It was made about 200 years ago in Hereke (Turkey) and had been donated by Sultan Abdul Hamid to the mosque on Ada Kaleh Island, which is now flooded.

Visiting hours: 9:30 AM – 8 PM (9:30 AM – 5 PM offseason)



The Azizye Mosque

The Azizye Mosque (Romanian: Moscheea Azizie) is a mosque located at 2 Independenței Street in Tulcea, Romania, in the Dobruja region.

It was built in 1863, during the reign of Sultan Abdülaziz, to whom it is dedicated and after whom it is named. Among the largest mosques built by the Ottoman Empire in Dobruja, it is made of cut stone 85 cm thick. It has 32 windows, of which 18 are on the upper part, ensuring natural lighting for the interior terrace that surrounds the building on three sides. From the period when the mosque was founded, a Turkish school functioned adjacent to the mosque dating to 1865, it is now closed. The current minaret dates to 1897. By that time, Dobruja was part of the Romanian Old Kingdom, and the minaret was rebuilt using funds supplied by the Religious Affairs and Public Instruction Ministry.

Geamia Ali Gazi Pasa





The Abdul Medjid mosque

The Abdul Medjid mosque (also named The Great Mosque) was built in the period 1859 – 1865 by the Ottoman Government in the city Medgidia.

Currently, the mosque is the oldest building in the city and one of the two Islamic places of worship from Medgidia.

The Russian – Turkish war (1828 – 1829) which was also concluded with the complete destruction of the city of Medgidia, the population being dispersed in the surrounding localities. After the War of Crimea (1853 – 1856), Said – paşa, the Ottoman governor of Dobrogea, located approximately 6.000 peasants who immigrated from Crimea on the place of the old destroyed city, which he rebuilt after almost 30 years.

The sultan Abdul – Medjid (1839 – 1861) has issued on the 2nd of September 1857 a firman for building the mosque, which later received the sultan's name.

It is a monumental construction, of a square shape, in a neoclassic style, specific to the Islamic architecture [3], executed from limestone stone manually shaped and cedar wood, brought from Liban.

The minaret, with a height of 25 m, with an interior staircase in the shape of a spiral and a circular terrace in the superior part, is also built from a limestone stone. The interior isn't changed from the constructions and keeps in detail, all the details.

The building, which was executed and maintained by the Ottoman Government, was served from the beginning by an imam, a hatip and a muezzin.

Abdul – Medjid was the XXXIst sultan of the Ottoman Empire (1839 – 1861).

He tried to sign alliances with the great powers of the occidental Europe, such as: Great Britain, France, states which have been allied of the ottomans against the Tsarist Empire in the Crimea War. During the Treaty of Paris, the Ottoman Empire was included in the family of the European nations. But the great achievement of Abdul – Medjid are the reforms (named Tanzimat) with a liberal character, which he promoted (reforms initiated by his father, Mahmud the IInd), which opened the road to the modernization of Turkey and have favored the nationalist movements for freeing the subjugated people.

For his reforms, he was considered a real Atatürk of the XIXth century.

Abdul – Medjid dies at only 39 years of age, because of tuberculosis, disease of which his father suffered, too.

He is succeeded by his brother, Abdul Aziz, the oldest survivor of the family.



Moscheea Esmahan Sultan



Simona Halep stuns Serena Williams to win first Wimbledon title



Simona Halep played a near-flawless final on Saturday to become the first Romanian woman to win Wimbledon, simultaneously wrecking Serena Williams's bid for a record-equalling 24th major, a dream that grows more unlikely by the day. The 37-year-old American – still one short of Margaret Court's all-time tally – smiled graciously at the end but will have been crying inside, while Halep beamed like a lighthouse in celebration of a 6-2, 6-2 drubbing in 56 minutes of perhaps the game's greatest player.

"She really played out of her mind," Williams said. "Whenever a player plays that amazing you just have to take your hat off and give her a nod."

Halep, charm and joy personified, agreed she had never played a better match. "I had nerves," she said. "My stomach was not very well before the match. But I had no time for emotions and just came out and tried my best."

"It was my mum's dream when I was about 10. And the day came and my mum is here to see it. I have worked a lot to change a little bit my game to play on grass. I started to feel this year when the ball comes to me I knew what to do with it. I can't wait to come back here." A hat-trick of errors, culminating in a forehand

wide, cost Williams her opening service game and Halep held to love to go 2-0 up inside five minutes, the perfect start.

When she ran down a third angled reply to hit a winner on the run in the third game, Halep was like a terrier snapping at the wheels of a Rolls-Royce. Williams's coach, Patrick Mouratoglou, shook his head in the stands when Halep went 3-0 up with a sublime return into the forehand corner. "This is the best returning I've seen

since I can't remember when," John McEnroe observed. It was 4-0 Halep in 11 minutes. This was Serena-pace demolition. Writers in the press seats looked around, wondering if they would have enough copy to fill their allotted wordages. And then a love hold for Williams. Was normal service about to be resumed? The first five games had taken less than a quarter of an hour – but this did not resemble Williams's odd struggle in the quarter-finals against Alison



Source AELTC



But this year's Wimbledon belonged to Halep, who only dropped one set during the tournament.

Riske, when her tennis deserted her for long periods. She was still hitting the ball with deadly precision; it was just that Halep was hitting it

It was my mum's dream when I was about 10. And the day came and my mum is here to see it. I have worked a lot to change a little bit my game to play on grass

back at her in nearly every rally.

Williams finally made some inroads on the Halep serve in the sixth game, taking her to deuce with a wicked crosscourt forehand and getting her first break point with another down the line. But she could do nothing about the Halep forehand with which she held for 5-1 after just 20 minutes. Within six minutes the set belonged to Halep, although the manner of her taking it left Centre Court stunned.

Williams had not done a lot wrong. She had just been out-hustled in a whirlwind start and her challenge was first to stem the bleeding, then to get up and start winning the race. There was a moment of almost existential release after she hit a solid winner in the opening game of the second set, when she bent over the turf and screamed at it for 10 seconds. Shot by shot, she got back into the fight. Her sister,

Venus, looked on calmly from her box, no doubt quietly worrying for her as hard as she would for herself. Over in the royal box her best royal friend, Meghan Markle, smiled benignly, in a Duchess of Sussex sort of way. Cambridge was near to Sussex, for royal box purposes anyway, and she smiled brightly too.

If there were any Romanians up there, they probably were not smiling like this. Williams did not smile. She never does, until the job is done and then she gives it the full lights-on treatment. She had some work to do to get the opportunity.

Halep stayed steady, kept running, kept getting the forehand killers back, kept asking the questions. She got another look on the Williams serve in the fifth game that might have opened up a pathway to the finish line. Williams spoilt the good work in a long rally by putting a straightforward winner long. Crisis now enveloped Williams, a set and a break down with history calling her. She had been

here so many times before but, since becoming a mother in September 2017 she had not won a tournament in what has been a stuttering comeback.

In key moments Halep was not making dumb mistakes, and that was the difference between them. Her serve was less than lethal but it was serviceable; she gave Williams very few opportunities to hurt her second serve and she led 4-2 after a solid hold.

"She seems to have lost her spirit, her belief," Tracy Austin observed of her fellow American, as she struggled to get back in the match, an anaemic backhand at 40-30 dribbling into the net. Another gave Halep break point. She had won all three to come her way to this point – but Williams found an ace, when the Romanian misjudged the flight of the ball. Again, however, Williams netted and her head dropped, her 24th unforced error, to three from Halep. A 25th arrived immediately and Halep had her fifth break point of the match. This time she drove it down the line and, after 54 minutes, she stepped up to serve for her second slam title.

Williams thudded a backhand into the net: 15-0. Her nervous forehand went long: 30-0. Halep served big down the middle: 40-0 and three championship points. One more desperate Williams forehand, almost in angry response to her wretched slippage, and the job was done.

It was the most unexpected finish to a match few had predicted would go this way. But there was no denying Halep, who played the near-perfect match in the middle of a storm that eventually ran out of force. Williams has won only two of her past six finals in majors. The last was two and a half years ago in Melbourne. She is 38 in September. If she is to add to her story, she had better do it soon.





Romanian bikers impressed with Pakistani culture, hospitality

The three Romanian bikers who have travelled all the way from Romania to Pakistan to explore Northern Areas of Pakistan on motorbikes, have lauded the goodwill gesture shown by Pakistani people and hospitality extended to them adding it was a unique experience for them to get acquaintance with the Pakistani culture. They expressed these views while talking to a select group of media people at the Romanian embassy. Ambassador of Romania Nicolae Goia facilitated the meeting. The bikers Cosmin Neagu, Alin Popescu and Marius Loan further said they were going to ride their motorcycles all along the Karakorum highway, one of the wonders of the contemporary world and a living proof of impossible becoming possible.

“They will see absolutely magnificent sceneries and they will meet extraordinary people. They will also have the time to of their life in the picturesque valleys of Northern Areas”, they added. The bikers further said they will go back to Romania stronger and wiser for they will have access to something very few people of

this Planet had. They will speak loudly about Pakistan, which is a beautiful, and peace loving country, worth of respect and admiration, thus making it better understood in Romania and Europe.

Earlier Ambassador of Romania Nicolae Goia in his remarks said, 2018 was an important year as we are celebrating 100 years since the Great Union of all Romanians. “We as the embassy of Romania to Islamabad took the liberty to ask the bikers to carry the symbols of the Romanian Great Union all along the road to the final destination.

The ambassador said, they graciously accepted the idea so the journey was undertaken under the aegis of the Great Union in the spirit of one of the major messages we, Romanians are sending to the world “ Celebrating together” because being together is the only way of making a better world for us, for our children and for the generations to come. Ambassador Goia further said, this year has a very special significance for Romanians. We are celebrating 100 years since Romanians fulfilled their

century-long most cherished political ideal: the unification of all provinces inherited from our ancestors and where they were in the majority - Transylvania, Banat, Crisana, Maramures, Basarabia, and Bucovina with the old kingdom of Romania in one democratic, national state, thus writing the greatest Romania story ever told.

He said the Centenary is celebrated by Romanians all over the world as a symbol of solidarity, hope and triumph against adverse circumstances. It reflects Romania’s attachment to the principles of tolerance, mutual respect, peaceful co-existence and respect for cultural values of all people.

Currently Romania is an ascending economic path and has the highest rates of annual economic growth within the European Union. We are enjoying unprecedented development, security and welfare in whole our history, he added. The Romanian ambassador said, Pakistan is a friendly country and as partners we work together for a better, more secure, prosperous and peaceful world.



