This is an original, premium quality tour of Romania exclusively designed as a window into the Romanian Culture. The itinerary encompasses all of the historic regions of the country with a focus on Transylvania, Maramures and Bucovina. Well balanced and paced, with centrally located and full of character hotels, including visits to local religious communities, meeting with local artists, exclusive talks, music and local dining, you go “behind the scenes” to experience the customs, traditions and daily life of this beautiful country.

Day 1: MONDAY 8 MAY, 2017

Bucharest, Romania
Afternoon arrival to Coanda International Airport in Bucharest. Meet and greet by your professional English speaking tour guide to wait with a name sign reading «Orthodox Tours» right after you exit Customs. Transfer to your downtown Bucharest hotel with a short orientation tour on the way. In the evening enjoy a Welcome Dinner with Romanian traditional faires.

T D Accommodation in Bucharest at Hotel Berthelot **** (centrally located boutique hotel)

Day 2: TUESDAY 9 MAY

Bucharest Tour – Cave of St Andrew - Constanta
Hot and cold buffet breakfast at hotel. This morning take a city tour of Bucharest including the Revolution Square, the Palace of the Parliament - the second largest building in the world after the Pentagon, Cotroceni Quarter for its representative architecture and the
Village Museum - one of the world’s most interesting open air museums with century old original peasant households from all parts of Romania. Visit Stavropoleos Church in Bucharest and the unique Darvari Skete (an operating monastery in the middle of Bucharest). Lunch in Bucharest, then leave Bucharest for Constanta. En route visit the Cave of St Andrew and the Monastery of St. Andrew. Late afternoon arrival to Constanta. Visit the Church of Archangels Michael and Gabriel. Hotel check in with the evening at leisure.

B L Accommodation in Constanta at Hotel Ibis *** (or similar)

Day 3: WEDNESDAY 10 MAY
Monastery of Cocos – Tulcea – Half Day Danube Delta Cruise
Hot and cold buffet breakfast at hotel. Early morning departure to Niculitel to visit Cocos Monastery. Enjoy a half day Danube Delta Cruise with licensed skipper. The cruise will reveal superb parts of the Delta as well as wildlife. Lunch onboard. Return to Tulcea in the evening. Hotel check in.

B L Accommodation in Tulcea at Hotel Delta ***

Day 4: THURSDAY 11 MAY
Celic Dere Monastery – Epiphanis Icon Studio - Sinaia & Peles Castle - Brasov
Hot and cold buffet breakfast at hotel. Early morning departure for Transylvania with a visit to Celic Dere Monastery in Tulcea. Around noon time arrive to Campina for a guided tour of the Epiphanis Icon Studion. Continue to Sinaia. Then take a guided tour of the Peles Castle and Gardens in Sinaia, the royal residence of King Charles I of Romania and known as one of the most beautiful summer royal residences in Europe. Lunch in Sinaia. Visit Sinaia Monastery. Then cross the mountains into Transylvania for Brasov. Short orientation tour of the Old Town on arrival to Brasov, followed by check in and evening at leisure in the lovely pedestrian area of the Old Town.

B L Accommodation in Brasov at Hotel Aro Palace ***** (located in the Council Square)

Day 5: FRIDAY 12 MAY
Brasov Tour – Bran Castle - Harman Fortified Church - Sighisoara
Hot and cold buffet breakfast at hotel. Take a morning tour of Brasov with the Gothic Black Church with its valuable collection of Anatolian prayer rugs. Brasov has one of the best preserved medieval quarter and fortifications. The tour will include the Council Square, Schei Quarter and the First School in Romanian language, the Rope Street and Catherine’s Gate. Next is the medieval Bran Castle also known as Dracula Castle. The castle was built in 1377 to safeguard the trading route between Transylvania and Wallachia to later be turned into a royal residence under Queen Marie of Romania. The connection between this place and Vlad the Impaler Dracula is still under debate, but the castle is definitely worth a visit. Enjoy an informal cheese sampling on the premises. Lunch in Bran. Continue to one of the typical Transylvanian fortified churches: Harman. Its uniqueness consists in the fact that it is the only structure with dwellings attached to the church. Later drive through the picturesque Transylvanian Plateau with its quaint villages and Saxon fortifications such as Saschiz. Afternoon arrival to Sighisoara, a World Heritage Site and the only still inhabited medieval citadel in Europe Hotel
check in. The evening is at leisure in the Upper Town. Dinner at hotel.

**B L D Accommodation in Sighisoara at The House with Antler *** and Casa Wagner ***
The hotels are relocated in the Upper Town in a historical buildings.

**Day 6: SATURDAY 13 MAY**

_Sighisoara Walking Tour – Gypsy Home Visit – Bicaz Gorges – Neamt Monastery - Bucovina_

Hot and cold buffet breakfast at hotel. Sighisoara was developed by the German settlers as of late 12th century. It stands on a network of tunnels and catacombs and, according to one version of the myth; this is where the Pied Piper brought the children of Hamelin after their ungrateful parents refused to pay him his due. Continue to Bucovina with a brief stop to meet a Gypsy family in their own home. Lunch en route. Later stop in the Bicaz Gorges where the surroundings are dramatic. In the afternoon visit the Monastery of Neamt, the largest and most important in Moldavia and a superb example of Moldavia medieval architecture. Pay your respects at the tomb of Paisie Velickovski, the author of Fiocalia. Continue to Bucovina with arrival in the town of Gura Humorului in the early evening. Hotel check in.

**B L Accommodation in Gura Humorului at Hotel Best Western Bucovina **** (two nights)**

**Day 7: SUNDAY 14 MAY**

_Bucovina Painted Monasteries Excursion (UNESCO World Heritage Sites) & Lunch_

A la carte breakfast at hotel. Bucovina monasteries are gems of medieval Moldavian architecture and artistry. Begin your day with Voronet, the most famous out of all, known as the Sistine Chapel of the East and featuring one the best Last Judgment fresco in this part of the World. The newly open Customs and Traditions Museum of Gura Humorului is a must. Next is Moldovita Monastery where the UNESCO Golden Apple Award given to the painted churches in 1975, is kept. As a cultural connection, enjoy a traditional Bucovina lunch in the picturesque village of Moldovita followed by an egg painting demonstration. Later continue to the nearby Sucevita Monastery, which is the largest of all, looking more like a mighty fortress than a monastery. The Ladder of John of Sinai is considered one of the best of the frescoes of Sucevita, rarely present in medieval Romanian art. In the village of Marginea visit the black pottery workshop - they use a technique called "oxygen reduction", there is the same technique in Mexico only! End your day with the Monastery of Humor, the only one without a belfry tower. Return to the hotel with the evening at leisure.

**B L Accommodation in Gura Humorului at Hotel Best Western Bucovina ****

**Day 8: MONDAY 15 MAY**

_Bucovina – Maramures: The Wooden Churches of Maramures – Ieud, Bogdan Voda and Barsana_
Hot and cold buffet breakfast at hotel. This morning depart early for Maramures, via the picturesque Borgo Pass. Due to the relative isolation of their land, the people of Maramures developed a particularly strong community with a unique personality, traditions, culture and lifestyle unspoiled for centuries. Lunch in Borsa. Visit the Church of Ieud, the oldest wooden church in Maramures followed by the wooden church in the village of Bogdan Voda (1722). Stop in the village of Barsana for a visit to a famous master carver in his own workshop. He represented Romania at the 1999 Smithsonian World Folk Festival in Washington, DC. Next is the exquisite Barsana Nunnery, a superb example of Maramures wooden church architecture. Arrive to the town of Sighet. Check in followed by dinner at hotel.

Day 9: TUESDAY 16 MAY
Maramures: Iza Village Walking Tour - Sighetul Marmatiei - Sapinta Village
After breakfast, take an exclusively designed walking tour of the village of Iza including an icon workshop (learn about the technique), the local ancient type plum brandy distillery and a typical whirlpool still used by the local women to wash heavy woolen blankets. Then drive to the nearby town of Sighet to mingle with the locals at the colorful fruit and vegetable market where you will have the opportunity to sample various produce from cheeses to sausage. Continue to the Anti Communist Memorial - a political prison in the Communist times. This is one of the main memorial sites of the continent, alongside Auschwitz Museum and the Peace Memorial in Normandy. The visit provides a direct connection to Romania’s most recent history. Lunch in Sighet. Continue west along Tisa River and reach the village of Sapinta world famous for its "Merry Cemetery". Here each wooden cross carries a funny epitaph about the person’s life. Before returning to Iza, take a view of what is the tallest wooden structure in the world: Sapinta Peri Church. Enjoy a home hosted dinner on an exclusively organized Maramure folklore show. Our hosts will join for dinner, this being a first hand cultural interchange.

B L D Accommodation in Sighetul Marmatiei at Hotel Gradina Morii **** (two nights)

Day 10: WEDNESDAY 17 MAY
Maramures – Surdesti – Lunch en Route – Monastery of Nicula – Cluj Napoca
After breakfast, depart for Sibiu. En route, visit to the early 1720’s Church of Surdesti, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and until recently the tallest wooden structure in Europe. This is a good opportunity to learn about the Uniate Church (Greek Catholic). Early lunch in Gherla. Arrive to the Monastery of Nicula before noon. This is the largest pilgrimage place in Northern Transylvania. The monastery holds the precious Mother of God Icon painted in 1691. In the afternoon continue to Cluj Napoca, the former capital of Transylvania and one of the main university centers of the country. The tour will reveal the Helmer & Fellner Opera House, the Gothic St Michael’s Cathedral as well as a tour of the 1920s Orthodox Cathedral, built in Neo-Byzantine style. The evening is at leisure in Cluj Napoca.

B L Accommodation in Cluj Napoca at Grand Hotel Napoca ****

Day 11: THURSDAY 18 MAY
Cluj Napoca – Turda Salt Mines – Sibiel Icon-on-Glass Museum & Home Hosted Lunch - Sibiu
Hot and cold buffet breakfast at hotel. Morning guided tour of the Turda Salt Mines, known as the most beautiful underground place on Earth. Early afternoon arrival to the village of Sibiel where we visit the unique, icon-on-glass museum and local Orthodox church. Enjoy a home hosted lunch in Sibiel. Take a leisurely, afternoon walking tour of Sibiu (Hermannstadt), formerly the chief city of the Transylvanian Germans. The Great and Lesser Squares are the landmarks of the Old Town with the many merchant houses featuring "the sleepy eye" dormers. View the old surrounding defense walls and the remaining towers belonging to the merchant guilds. One of the architectural landmarks of Sibiu is the Bruckenthal Palace assembled by Baron Bruckenthal, Governor of Transylvania at the beginning of the 19th century. Next is the Evangelical Cathedral completed in its actual shape in 1520. Overnight in Sibiu's famous Romans' Emperor Hotel, first built at the end of the 18th century. A Transylvanian Dinner is included at Crama Sibiana, the best cellar - restaurants in town, serving authentic fares.

**Day 12: FRIDAY 19 MAY**

**Sibiu Walking Tour - Cozia Monastery - Hurezi Monastery - Bucharest**

Hot and cold buffet breakfast at hotel. Morning visit to Sibiu Orthodox Cathedral, a smaller replica of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. Depart for Wallachia on the scenic Olt River Gorge. En route visit the late 14th century Monastery of Cozia, featuring Serbian architectural elements and a superb icon museum. Lunch en route. In the afternoon, visit the Monastery of Hurezi, probably the brightest example of Brancovan architecture and decoration. The Last Judgment fresco at Hurezi is one of the best in the country. The town of Hurezi is one of the main pottery centers of Romania. Continue to Bucharest with arrival in the early evening. Hotel check in. Farewell Dinner.

**Day 13: SATURDAY 20 MAY**

**Bucharest Departure**

Hot and cold buffet breakfast at hotel. Transfer to Coanda International Airport for your return flight.

**TOUR PRICE (Based on minimum of 20 Participants):**

- 2280USD. The rates are based on double/twin occupancy.

The single supplement is 360USD

**Included features:**

- 12 nights at three and four star hotels
- fully insured bus with climate control, for the entire distance
- fuel & parking fees
- all sightseeing tours & cultural connections
- private half day cruise into the Danube Delta
- informal talks on: Romanian Church Under Communism, Ceausescu and His Times, The Gypsies and Their Journey (all by the tour guide)
• 29 meals: 12 breakfasts, 11 lunches, 6 dinners
• cheese sampling in Bran
• a professional English speaking tour guide to accompany you throughout
• guide expenses
• an exclusively organized folklore show in Maramures
• an interactive egg painting demonstration in Bucovina
• exclusive Gypsy home visit
• Bucharest city tour, including a guided tour of the Palace of the Parliament
• all transfers
• admissions to museums and sites as per itinerary
• porterage (except for Customs Areas)
• map of Romania (for use on bus)

You'll visit 5 UNESCO World Heritage Sites:

• Harman Fortified Church.
• Sibiu's Historic Center
• Historic Center of Sighisoara
• Bucovina Exterior Frescoed Monasteries
• Maramures Wooden Churches

Not included:

• International flights
• Medical/travel/cancellation insurance
• Other meals than stated
• Alcoholic beverages
• Photo/video fees at sites and museums
• Personal expenses, i.e. phone calls, laundry, use of minibar, etc.
• Tips to guides, drivers and an escort.

Financial arrangements:

The current cost of the trip is $2,280 per person, based on double occupancy in a group of at least 20 paying members. Single accommodations: $360 and subject to availability. Please factor that the final price may fluctuate due to the actual number of participants or due to significant difference in exchange rate at the time of the final payment. Our hope is that the price of the tour will remain the same. In any case you'll be informed right away of any possible financial changes or adjustments.

All payments should be made by check to: "Palomnik, LLC" and mailed to: 53 Baxter Street, Binghamton, NY 13905. Any returned checks are subject to $25 fee. For payment with a Credit Card and for domestic or international bank wires, please contact Fr. Ilya directly.

A $500.00 deposit is required when you sign up for the trip. **The deposit is non-refundable, unless is cancelled by the organizers due to lack of participation or due to other valid and unforeseen circumstances.** The deadline for signing up for the trip is January 31, 2017. The entire amount is due 90 days prior to departure, February 8, 2017. Failure to pay in full by February 8, 2017 without written notice of explanation may lead to the cancellation of your participation, with no refund of any previously committed funds. If
you decide to join the pilgrimage after the deadline, please contact tour coordinator regarding the availability.

In the event that you need to cancel after you have signed up, the charges in addition to the full amount of the deposit are*:

- 25% of the tour cost, 90 to 45 days prior to the departure
- 50% of the tour cost, 45 to 30 days prior to the departure
- 100% of the tour cost 30 or fewer days prior to the departure

**Special requests:**
All special requests, concerns and suggestions must be submitted in writing to Fr. Ilya Gotlinsky no later than the date of the final payment (February 8, 2017).

All cancellations must be done in writing as well and sent directly to coordinator - Fr. Ilya Gotlinsky and must be received for reimbursement by the dates shown in the cancellation schedule.

**Rules on the road:**

- It is strongly suggested for a traveler to obtain insurance covering medical needs and coverage regarding personal property;
- be aware that all medical needs will be sole responsibility of the traveler;
- act in a manner consistent with the surrounding environment;
- make arrangement to have sufficient funds to cover personal needs and unexpected happenings.

The places that we will be visiting may not have the same amenities that one may be accustomed to. Medical facilities in some areas are limited. Because of the difference in language and customs, it is expected that the traveler will follow the directions of the Tour Leader at all times.

The Tour leader reserves the right to restrict a person's participation in the group's activities, including exclusion from the group, when, in the opinion of the tour leader, such action is appropriate.

**Please note:** The Director of the trip (Fr. Ilya Gotlinsky) does not hold any legal responsibilities concerning any of the arrangements. He plays only the role of a coordinator.