

FAGARAS TREK



2005



The main aim of this trip is to complete the traverse of the longest section of the Transylvanian Alps, the Fagaras, whose 80 km of ridge rarely drops below 2000m. (6700ft.) and includes Romania's highest summit, Moldoveanu (2544m, or 8480 ft.). This is one of the longest, continuous, high level walks in Europe. The trip is suitable for the strong mountain walker who is also interested in seeing a fascinating country close-up; walking through flower strewn meadows and farm land, along craggy mountain tops and through indigenous forests. During the trek we have a fascinating glimpse of rural life in an almost medieval corner of Europe. The walk starts with a visit to the magnificent Peles Castle and the Sinaia Monastery from where we cross the Bucegi Massif to Bran. Rising to a height of 2500m above the broad Danube plain, the Bucegi Massif forms part of the mountainous barrier that divides Transylvania, "the land through the woods" from the flat-lands of Wallachia. It is a region of pristine forests of beech and pine. On their margins and in the alpine meadows farming goes on as it has done for centuries - most work being done by horses and hand. Above tower high limestone crags, haunt of chamois and raven.

Bran is a pleasant and the remarkably unspoilt little town famous for its castle, which was the home of Count Dracula. This picturesquely situated fortress is worth a visit for its own sake. After Bran we visit a small mountain village where the group is divided to stay in several farmhouses. The local people are very hospitable and will at some stage show you around their homes and show you some of their handmade rugs and other artefacts.

After crossing over the rugged Piatra Craiului Mountains, a dramatic 20 km long limestone ridge, we reach Plaiu Foi - and the beginning of the Fagaras. By now we are fit for some long days on the magnificent Fagaras ridge, for the top of Romania and for the incredible panorama of high peaks stretching out in every direction. On our return journey to Bucharest we visit Simbata Monastery and the old town of Brasov.

Health matters and visas

An emergency medical kit accompanies the trek. We nevertheless recommend that you carry your own personal first aid kit.

A suggested list of contents as well as more general health information is included in your pre-departure information. No special inoculations are necessary but we recommend that your tetanus inoculations are up to date and that you consult your doctor for other cover such as typhoid.

A full and valid passport is required for entry to Romania. At present most European and North American citizens do not require a visa to enter Romania, other nationals should refer to: <http://embassy.romania.org/visa/visa.html>

Grade, qualifications and staff

This is a tough walking trip. Much of the trek involves walking on good foot paths. However a few short sections involve very easy scrambling; chains are in place to give support if needed on these. On average we walk for about 7 hours per day. Fitness is required for this and for some of the steeper sections.

Generally, only day packs need to be carried allowing you to enjoy the walking with a light pack containing items for the day such as waterproofs, water bottle, camera, jumper, and a change of clothes for the cabanas in the evening. A support vehicle will be used for your main baggage, which you will meet up with on several days of the trek.

A support driver assists the Romanian trek leader. Both are English speaking and qualified mountaineers.

Accommodation and meals

All accommodation and meals are included: full board in mountain chalets, hotels and private homes: twin-bedded rooms in hotels, but many mountain cabanas only provide dormitory style in rooms. Some of the cabanas are good but others, eg Omu and Urlea, are still very basic with poor facilities and sanitary arrangements. In a few cases a sleeping sheet is required. Food on trek is prepared for you, as much as possible from local fresh foods. Packed picnic lunches are provided during walks unless it is possible to stop at a restaurant. We recommend that you bring with you a small selection of "goodies" which you are particularly fond of - chocolates, nuts etc. - for consumption between meals or when you need some extra energy. We try to cater for vegetarians but we cannot provide the same range as expected in the West. We suggest that vegetarians take some of their own protein supplement if this is likely to cause a problem.

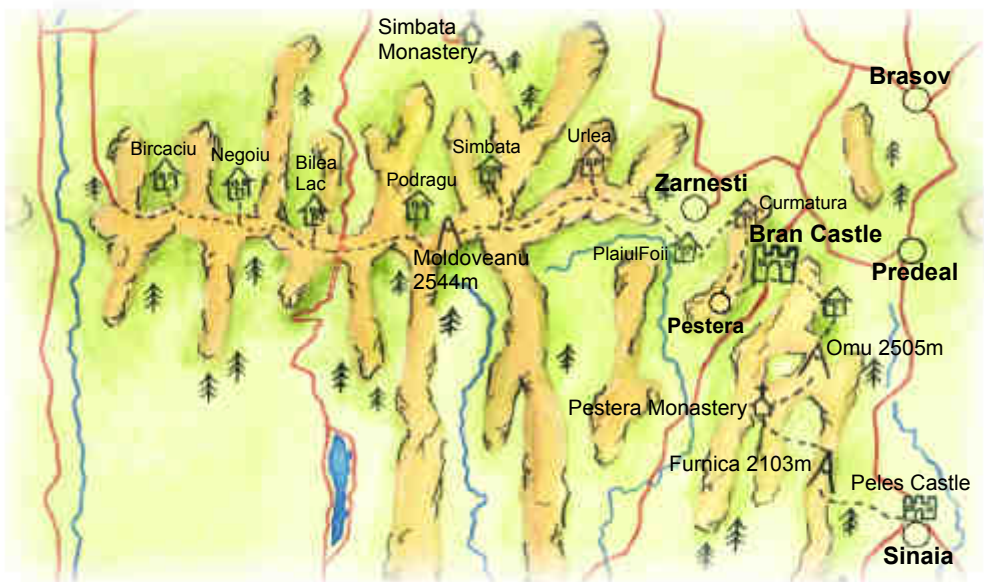
Equipment, weather and clothes

If you are already a hiker or backpacker you will have much of the clothing and equipment necessary. Good, waterproof boots with ankle supports are essential, as are warm clothing and waterproofs.

Mountain weather is variable. Conditions are generally warm at lower altitudes and light clothing is adequate. However warm, windproof and waterproof clothing is needed for higher level walking where it is possible to encounter misty, wet and cold conditions.

You do not need to bring a sleeping bag; linen and blankets or duvets are provided.

You will need a day sack and a soft 'sports' bag for your main baggage. This could be a larger rucksack; a hard suitcase is not really suitable. The day sack should be large enough for you to carry a small amount of overnight gear for nights in the mountain huts, which cannot be accessed by the support vehicle. A more detailed equipment list will be sent with confirmation of booking.



Itinerary outline

The following itinerary is intended as a working guide only and it is subject to variation as a result of weather conditions, local factors, the progress and the well being of the group. We reserve the right to alter (lengthen or shorten) the trek at any time if necessary. Flight time tables are altered occasionally and it may be necessary to vary our itinerary to adapt to these changes. Please refer to the booking conditions.

- 1 Fly from LGW to Otopeni Airport, Bucharest. Meet your guide. Drive 2 hours north to Sinaia and the atmospheric Hotel Furnica which originally belonged to Peles Castle.
- 2 Visit Peles Castle and the Orthodox Sinaia Monastery. Take the cable car to Furnica summit from where the descent leads through alpine meadows and forests to the pleasantly located Pestera Hotel ***.
- 3 After visiting Pestera Monastery walk up a wild valley past Iolomita Waterfall to Omu (2507m), the highest peak in the Bucegi. Descend to spend the night in the Omu Cabana, the highest cabana in the Carpathians.
- 4 Leaving the cabana we cross a high ridge then a gradual descent through forests and clearings leads to Bran village. Night in hotel.
- 5 Visit Bran Castle then walk up to Pestera, a settlement of scattered farmsteads, night with local families.
- 6 Walk through meadows and forests to Curmatura Alpine Hut at the north end of the Piatra Craiului Ridge.
- 7 Cross the ridge to reach the renovated Plaiu Foii Alpine Hut (862m) located between the Piatra Craiului and the Fagaras Mountains. If the weather is good it might be possible to take in part of this very airy ridge and an ascent of La Om (2238m), the highest top.
- 8 From Plaiu Foii 5 km of forest road (lift by vehicle provided if desired!) leads to Rudarita from where a gentle path rises through forests then alpine meadows to the Fagaras Ridge proper. This is followed easily over Mount Berivoiu Mare (2300m) and Ludisoru (2302m) to Zirnet Refuge. Descend through meadows to Urlea (1533m), a remote cabana set just at the limit of the forests. This is the longest and toughest day (ca 20km from Rudarita with 1600m of ascents, at a gentle pace. This takes about 10 hours
- 9 Regain the ridge at Mount Urlea (2475m) and continue along it with magnificent views. Drop down into the beautiful Simbata Valley. Night at Cabana (1400m).
- 10 The ridge is followed over several minor rises to Moldoveanu. After a further two hours the ridge is left and a short descent leads to Podragu Cabana (2136m). Magnificent location amongst beautiful meadows by a mountain tarn.
- 11 Back up to the ridge for one of its more dramatic sections where several short sections are equipped with chains. The night is spent in a hotel converted from Ceacescus hunting lodge at Bilea Lac (2034m).
- 12 Regain the main ridge and follow it past Laita (2397m) to the splendid Negoiu summit (2535m), the ascent of this requires a short section of easy scramble. We then drop down to the comfortable Negoiu Mountain Hotel.
- 13 This is a long day - possibly 9 hours from the Negoiu to Sebesu de Sus village, Depending on the weather there is a choice of two routes, the high-level route takes in Scara (2306m) and part of the main ridge. an alternative lower level route crosses ridges and meadows. The final section of the ridge leads to the site of Suru Cabana, from there a good trail leads down through forests to Sebesu de Sus and waiting transport.
- 14 On the return journey we visit Simbata Monastery then drive on to the ancient city of Brasov. Night in a hotel in the old town.
- 15 A few hours to roam around Brasov - good shopping opportunities - before driving back to Otopeni Airtort and the flight back to the UK.

Flights

Scheduled BA flights from Gatwick. Timings are yet to be confirmed & subject to slight change.

Cost £770 from UK

Dates: 09/07/05, 23/07/05, 06/08/05, 20/08/05, 03/09/05

Included: All flights from and back to London. All transport, guides, food and accommodation in Romania. See brochure or web site for land only costs.

Not included: Passport, personal insurance, and tips. Most clients like to show their appreciation to the trek staff for good service and general helpfulness throughout the trip. In such a case, although this is not compulsory in any way, we would recommend a small US\$ tip.



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