

## **Major Cities of Romania**

Romania has about 22.500.000 inhabitants and is divided in 41 counties. The capital city of Romania is Bucharest with about 2.400.000 inhabitants, being the largest city in the country. The other most important towns in Romania are Constanta, Brasov, Cluj-Napoca, Sibiu, Timisoara and Iasi. The largest, most populated cities in Romania are: Bucharest (the capital), with 2,3 million inhabitants, Constanta – the biggest Romanian harbour, with a local population of 350.000 people, and Iasi (344.00 inhabitants), Timisoara (334.000 inhabitants) and Cluj-Napoca (328.000 inhabitants) - all great cultural and academic centres.

### **Bucharest**

Bucharest (Romanian: București) is the capital city and the commercial centre of Romania. It is located in the southeast of the country, at 44°25'N 26°06'E, and lies on the banks of the Dâmbovita River.

The city was first mentioned in 1459 and became the capital of Romania in 1862. Since then, it has gone through a variety of changes and has become the centre of the Romanian mass media, cultural and arts scene. Its eclectic architecture, which is a mix of historical, Ceausescu-era and modern, also reflects the city's varied history. In the period between the two World Wars, the city's elegant architecture and the sophistication of its elite gave Bucharest the nickname of the "Paris of the East" or "Little Paris" Although much of the historic center was damaged or destroyed by war, earthquakes and Nicolae Ceausescu's program of systematization, much survived, and in recent years the city is experiencing an economic and cultural boom. Bucharest has a population of roughly 2.3 Million inhabitants, making it the largest city in Romania and the entire Southeastern Europe.

Economically, the city is by far the most prosperous in Romania and is one of the main industrial centres and transportation hubs of the region. As the most important city in Romania, Bucharest has a broad range of educational facilities.

The city is administratively known as the Municipality of Bucharest (Municipiul Bucuresti), and has the same administrative level as a county, being further subdivided into six sectors.

[www.bucharest.ro](http://www.bucharest.ro)  
[www.miculparis.ro](http://www.miculparis.ro)

### **Iasi**

Iasi, the former capital of Moldavia, is is said to have a real vocation for history. Iasi is the political, economic and cultural centre of Moldavia and one of the oldest cities in Romania. Situated in the North-East of Romania, between the Moldavian Plateau and Jijia Plain, on the River Bahlui, it used to be the crossing place of the most important commercial roads that passed through Moldavia coming from Poland, Hungary, Russia and Constantinople.

Archaeological investigations attest the presence of human communities on the present territory of the city and around it as far back as the prehistoric age. But the beginnings of urban life in Iasi are to be found in the second half of the 14th century, the name of the city being mentioned for the first time in a document about commercial privilege granted by the Moldavian ruler Alexandru cel Bun to the Polish merchants of Lvov in 1408.

Major events in the political and cultural history of Moldavia are connected with the name of the city of Iasi. Thus it is here that we can trace the roots of the Romanian national historiography. The great scholars of the 17th century - "the golden age" of Romanian culture - namely Grigore Ureche, Miron Costin and later Ion Neculce, wrote most of their works in the city or not far from it and the great European fame scholar Dimitrie Cantemir also linked his name to the capital of Moldavia.



At the beginning of the 19th century, the many-sided scholar Gheorghe Asachi laid the foundation of the national school in the Romanian language and, in 1829, he published the first newspaper in Romanian. And it was also here that the first superior institute in the country was founded in 1835 (The "Mihaileana" Academy).

In 1600, Mihai Viteazul sanctioned here the union of the three Romanian principalities and in 1848 the Revolution which was to spread all over the country burst out here. This same town was the place where Alexandru Ioan Cuza was elected ruler of Moldavia (January 5th, 1859), the first step in fulfilling the Romanians' desire of forming a single unified country named Romania.

Iasi continued to be the most important cultural centre of the country even after Bucarest became the capital of Romania in 1862. It is in Iasi that the first Romanian university was founded in 1860 during the reign of Al.I. Cuza and in 1867 there appeared the review "Convorbiri literare" in which Ion Creanga's "Memories from My Boyhood" and the best poems by Eminescu, the "Morning Star" of Romanian poetry, were published. The reviews "Contemporanul" and "Viata romaneasca" appeared in 1871, respectively in 1906 and had a great contribution to promoting our national cultural values.

Many great personalities of Romanian culture are connected to Iasi: the chronicler Nicolae Milescu, the historian and political man Mihail Kogalniceanu, the poet Vasile Alecsandri, the writer Mihail Sadoveanu, the poet George Toparceanu, the writer Alecu Russo, the writer Ionel Teodoreanu, the literary critic Titu Maiorescu, the geographer Grigore Cobalcescu, the chemist Petru Poni, the historian A.D. Xenopol, the philosopher Vasile Conta, the sociologist Dimitrie Gusti, the geographer Emil Racovia, the philosopher Petru Andrei, the painter Octav Bancila and many others.

Iasi, "the city of great loves", represents a symbol of Romanian history about which Nicolae Iorga rightly said "there should be no Romanian who does not know it".

[www.lajasi.ro](http://www.lajasi.ro)  
[www.primaria-iasi.ro](http://www.primaria-iasi.ro)

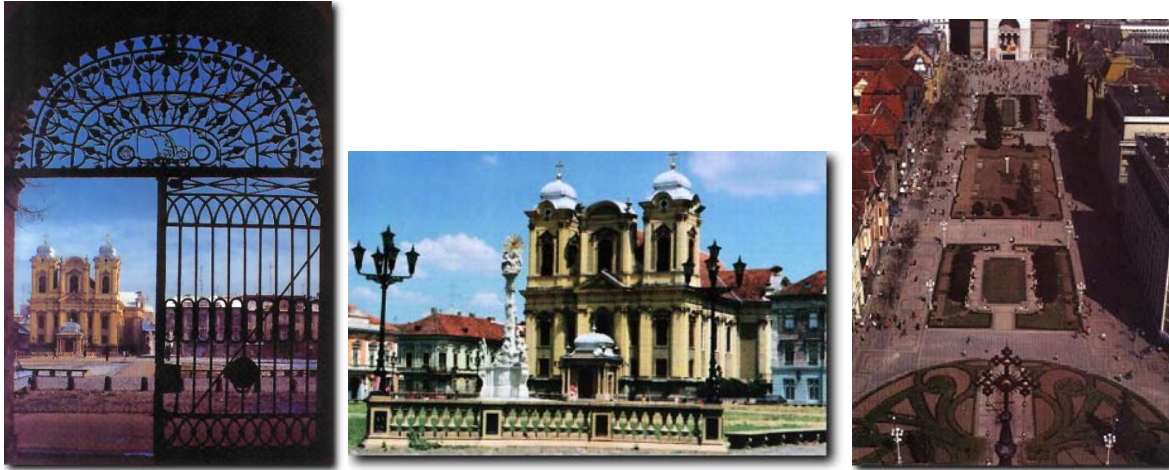
## Constanta

Constanta is located in a region of Romania called Dobrogea (<http://www.dobrogea.ro>) which is the land between the Danube River to the west and Black Sea to the east. The history of the city goes back to 657 BC when it was the Greek controlled town of Tomis. When Romania became a Province of the Roman Empire in 106 AD the Romans later renamed the city after emperor Constantine who fortified and developed the city from 320 - 350 AD. The city was later destroyed in the 8th century by invading Slavs and Avars and then fell under Byzantine control. In 1418 the Turks had there turn at the region until the mid 1800s when the national state of Romania was created in 1862. Constanta was taken by Romania in 1877 after the Romanian War of Independence.



<http://www.constanta.ro>

## Timisoara



Timisoara is located in the Banat region in western Romania. Known in German as Temschwar and/or Temeschburg and frequently referred to as 'Little Vienna', Timisoara has always been a progressive, cosmopolitan city, facing West rather than East, so it was no surprise that the spark of the Romanian 1989 Revolution was ignited here. Other claims include the first city with trams, the first in continental Europe with electric street lighting and the oldest hydro-electric station in Europe. It is also a very beautiful city with open squares, parks and gardens, elegant boutiques, cafes and and restaurants and a wide variety of architecture, principally baroque, neo-classical and 'art nouveau'. The focal point is the tall orthodox cathedral standing at the end of the main square, Piata Victoriei, overlooking the Bega Canal. The square is lined with impressive late secessionist apartment 'palaces'.

Across the town centre is the colorful, historic, Habsburg-era square, Piata Unirii, lined with pavement cafes, and colorful buildings which include the newly renovated, and very fine, newly-restored baroque Catholic Cathedral, and Baroque Palace which houses the city's art museum, together with a Trinity Column, the baroque Serbian Orthodox Cathedral, the mint green Serbian Metropolitanate and the extravagant art nouveau Banca de Scont. Many of the buildings around this delightful square are either being restored or are scheduled for restoration in the near future.

<http://www.timisoara.ro>

<http://www.primariatm.ro>

## Cluj-Napoca

Cluj-Napoca - The capital city of Transylvania

The city of Cluj-Napoca (Hungarian: Kolozsvár, German: Klausenburg) can trace its origins back to the 2nd century AD, when the Dacian settlement "Napuca" is first mentioned. After the Romans conquered Dacia, they renamed the city "Napoca", which received the rank of

"municipium" in 124 AD. The city quickly advanced socially and economically, and during Marcus Aurelius' reign, Napoca received the title "colonia", the highest possible urban status in the Roman Empire.



The name Cluj comes from "Castrum Clus", first used in the 12th century as the name of the citadel surrounding the city. "Clus" means "closed" in Latin, and is related to the hills that surround the city. Today's name is therefore made of two parts: "Cluj" (the Roman name of the former citadel from the middle ages) and Napoca (the Dacian name of the city that existed here about 2000 years ago).

Currently, the city is the socio-economic center of Transylvania. The stable population of the city is around 330.000. However, the city has six state (and several private) universities, of which the Babes-Bolyai University, with over 43.000 students, is the largest and most diverse university in Romania. Consequently, the student population of the city is quite significant, making Cluj-Napoca the city with the largest percentage of student population in Romania.

Five european and nine national road segments meet around Cluj-Napoca, and work is ongoing at the Bors - Cluj-Napoca - Brasov motorway, currently the largest road project in Europe. When finished, Cluj-Napoca will be placed on one of the most important road corridors in Europe, linking the Atlantic Ocean with the Black Sea.

<http://www.clujnapoca.ro>

<http://www.primariaclujnapoca.ro>

## **Brasov**

Situated in the heart of Romania, the city of Brasov (German: Kronstadt) benefits from the influence of an ancient history.

Much before the discovery of written documents, the archaeologists discovered traces of civilisation going back to the Bronze Age. Therefore the site discovered on Dealul Melcilor became well known in Europe. Other archaeological sites found in different places around Brasov prove that there lived a strong community of native population, mixed later on with Roman colonists developing into the Romanian population.

At the beginning 13th century the Saxons (German population coming from the region of Rhein and Mosel) colonised the region of Brasov, finding here a strong Romanian community.



The genuine character of the city will come from the mixture of two different cultures and mentalities.

The origins of Brasov as a town are lost in the dark times of medieval age. However it is known that it developed as different communities living here decided to come together into a city. The first written documents on Brasov go back to 1235, when the city was mentioned as CORONA, situated on the present location of the Black Church. Later on the city was known also as Brasco, Brasso, Stephanopolis, Kronstadt, and Brasov. However the most popular names of the city are the last two ones.

Thanks to its geographical position and the good connections to Moldavia and Valachia, Brasov will grow economically fast, becoming one of the most important centres of Transylvania.

The traders of Brasov will have special trade privileges with the other Romanian counties. The free right of bringing goods there will help them develop a very strong craftsmen community. In the 16th century there were more than 45 corporations, grouped according to their field of activity. The craftsmen and traders were the most influential people in Brasov. The economical welfare of the city will make Brasov develop into an architectural jewel. The most important historical monuments were built in that period: The Old City Hall, Podul Batusilor (today hosting the Cerbul Carpatin restaurant), The Old Granary (today the lovely Bistrot de l'Arte), the Black Church (14th century), and the St. Nicolae Church in Scheii Brasovului.

The 14th century found the Turkish armies just South of the Danube River. They were frequently attacking the region of Brasov. This situation determined the citizens of Brasov to start building a strong defensive city wall, fortresses and towers; the work will last till the 18th century. The town will be now one of the strongest cities in Transylvania. The various guilds had each its own towers and fortresses that they would have to maintain and defend throughout the centuries. Today you may see parts of the old city walls or visit the Weavers' Fortress (currently a museum).

The culture of Brasov will also develop during this period. Johannes Honterus, a great German humanist will work for most of the time in Brasov, and the deacon Coresi will print the first

Romanian books here. Therefore in the 16th century Brasov will host several schools, libraries, and printing houses.

1688 will be one of the toughest years in the history of Brasov. It will have to fight in the same time with the uprising against the Austrian armies who were occupying Transylvania at the time, with a devastating fire that destroyed most of Brasov, and with outbreak of plague. Still hopeful, the citizens of Brasov will rapidly rebuild the city.

The 19th century, the age of progress, as we all know it, will mean a lot for Brasov. The city walls will be partly taken down, allowing a fast development. Manufacturers and factories will replace the old, conservative guilds. Once freed by medieval restraints, the trade will be better than ever for Brasov. This also helped a lot the development of education and media.

"Gazeta de Transilvania", the first Romanian political newspaper in Transylvania, was founded in 1838. This would be the main paper to fight for the independence of Transylvania, which was occupied at the time by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It was also issuing a literary review that will promote the Romanian writers and poets living in Transylvania.

The first half of the 20th century and especially the period following the 1st world war were times when Brasov became the second strongest economical centre of Romania. However the town was partly destroyed during the bombardments of the 2nd world war.

Fortunately the town recovered every time things went wrong here, mainly because of the outstanding people living here. Thanks to them we are now able to live here and share this privilege with the visitors of the city.

<http://www.brasov.ro>

## **Sibiu**

Known in German as Hermannstadt, Sibiu has always been the centre of Romania's German minority since medieval times. Even today, it contains Romania's largest German community, and, due to initiatives by the local government, the Germanic feel of the area has been maintained. Sibiu also has a significant Hungarian minority, remnants of Transylvania's past as part of the Hungarian Empire and, later, Austria-Hungary. Despite this, Sibiu is also distinctly Romanian (95% of the population is ethnic Romanians) and manages to fuse these three cultures, as well as smaller minorities of Roma, Slovaks and Ukrainians into a city that is as wonderful as it is vibrant.

According to legend the lost children of Hamelin emerged from the 'Almasch' (Varghis) cave into Transylvania – somewhere close to Sibiu. This is the 'romantic' explanation for what was for many centuries a strange phenomenon: the presence of blond-haired, blue-eyed, German-speakers following ancient customs, yet isolated by hundreds of miles from Germany. The reality is that the fortified towns and villages of Transylvania were established in the 12th Century by settlers from the Moselle region, referred to locally as 'Saxons'. They were tempted to Transylvania by favorable market rights by the Hungarian rulers who wanted them there to guard the mountain passes against Tatar and Ottoman raiders.



They created the 'Siebenbürgen', the seven fortified cities, while in villages they constructed fortified churches in which they could shelter during times of siege. Some of these churches are massive structures. The villages are often remote and although vestiges of the original populations may remain, clinging on to age-old traditions, many of them are in serious danger of losing their character as churches crumble. Various restoration projects have been initiated to rebuild the communities and to attract back some of the original inhabitants.

[www.sibiu.ro](http://www.sibiu.ro)