

WILD FRONTIERS



Along the Enchanted Way A Wild Walk in Romania

When William Blacker first crossed into the snowy landscapes of northern Romania, just after Christmas 1989, he entered a world that many people would hardly have recognised. In just a few short miles he had been transported back centuries, to a Medieval Europe of flickering candlelight and Romany Gypsies, where the remote Transylvanian landscapes still haunted childhood dreams. In his book, 'Along the Enchanted Way', he describes a world that was vanishing around us, with gypsy lovers and howling wolves, where the cycles of the seasons slowed to the pace of a lumbering horse and cart. This incredible journey follows in his footsteps, passing through the landscapes of rural Romania and capturing a last glimpse of a romantic world that will soon be lost forever. Beginning in the foothills of the Gutai Mountains we journey to William Blacker's spiritual home, the village of Breb, from where we begin our adventure. Over the next few days we will walk amongst the rolling hills of the Maramures and the beautiful Iza Valley and trek through the spectacular highlands of the Rodna Mountains National Park. These are landscapes filled with unique wooden churches and painted monasteries, dark forests filled with bears and wolves and remote Saxon villages that still retain a wonderful sense of feudal Europe. For Blacker this was a world that offered an escape from the chaos of his modern existence. For us it is one that offers a chance to experience one of Europe's last remote corners of medieval tradition.

"Travelling with Wild Frontiers is an inspiration. I have 100% trust in them and their ability" *Daniel Galvin*

HIGHLIGHTS

- Experiencing an ancient way of life with the Maramures
- Walking in the beautiful Gutai Mountains
- Visiting the painted churches and Saxon villages of the region
- Rodna National Park
- Visiting the fascinating village of Breb

Duration: 9 Days

Average group size: 5 - 12

Start: Sat 26 May 12

Finish: Sun 03 Jun 12



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Why Wild Frontiers?

As a young, innovative company, Wild Frontiers is delighted to have been voted one of the 'Top 10 Tour Operators' by the readers of both Wanderlust and National Geographic Adventure. We are frequently asked what makes us different from other tour operators, and feel that the factors below answer this important question.

The Traveller's Ethos: WF is a company that has been set up by travellers for travellers, and our ethos is to help adventurous souls get to incredible and inaccessible places in safety and as much comfort as local conditions allow. We are firm believers that travelling is all about the experience and it's the details that make the trip - we specialise in drawing on our own extensive local knowledge and array of contacts to give our clients the very best experience possible.

Personal Service: Our London office is manned by experienced expedition leaders and every trip we run stems from their extensive knowledge - in short, we run the kind of trips that as passionate travellers, we like to do ourselves! When you ring our office, you can be guaranteed to chat to someone that knows the trips and the terrain, and is able to offer sound and practical advice.

Authentic Experiences: Our unique, original itineraries allow our clients to take journeys that venture beneath the surface of the region. Unlike the plethora of 'world specialists' out there who purport to know a hundred destinations, we concentrate on the locations we know and love. We don't run the same tour over and over, thus running the risk of creating a 'tourist circuit' and spoiling untouched regions. Instead, we rarely run any tour more than a couple of times a year and they are on routes we have discovered for ourselves, meaning we are able to give a truly authentic, off-the-beaten-track experience.

Be the First: Our style of travel is all about exploration, and nothing excites us more than opening up new routes to genuine travellers. We keep abreast of new destinations and are often the first to return to places that have vanished from the tourist map. We were the first back into Pakistan after 9/11, the first to return to Kashmir after a decade of tourist isolation, and the first to run a commercial travel trip to Afghanistan for almost 30 years. Since then we have helped bring Colombia, Yemen and Georgia back into the tourist fold, specialising in groundbreaking reconnaissance trips and imaginative expeditions.

Small Group Size: We believe it is imperative to keep the group sizes small. Most trips are limited to a maximum of approximately 12 travellers, thus giving you more access to fragile cultures, better opportunities to interact with local people, and the knowledge you are making less of an impact while there.

Cost of Tours: We believe in an honest, upfront pricing system so you know exactly what the tour will cost before you book. We avoid local payments, 'optional extras' or forcing our clients to split every meal bill. Our tours are provided on a predominantly full board basis, with mineral water, government permits, entrance fees and transport all included.

Added Value: We aim to give our clients the very best (not the least expensive) experience through whatever facilities are available to us. We always try to provide accommodation that is interesting, characterful and convenient, and transport - another important part of any tour - that is as varied and comfortable as possible.

Our clients: Your companions can make or break a trip, and it's lucky therefore that our clients are our greatest asset. Travelling to remote regions is not for everyone, and as such we tend to attract open-minded travellers looking for genuine experiences, and a desire to reach those hard to get to places.

Responsible Travel: Awarded 5 star status by AITO (Association of Independent Tour operators), responsible tourism has always been an integral part of our company ethos and our adventures are designed with the local people, culture and eco-system in mind. For further details please refer to the RT section on this dossier.



Day 1: Tour starts at Cluj-Napoca and transfer to Breb by road: Our starting point for this journey is the city of Cluj-Napoca, the traditional capital of the Transylvania region, which today is considered one of Romania's most important cultural, academic and commercial centres. But our final destination today lies far away from the city's street, and so we head deep into the rural landscapes of northern Transylvania, towards the foothills of the Gutai Mountains and the picturesque village of Breb. When William Blacker first drove into this landscape in 1989 it was covered in a blanket of snow and he described entering '...a country frozen in time'. One of the most authentic villages in the Maramures, Breb is still steeped in the customs and lore of this region, a place that harks back to a time of childhood fairy stories and travelling bands of gypsies.

Hotel (D)

Day 2: Visit Sapanta and Sighetu Marmatiei; walking in the Maramures: Sunday morning offers a great opportunity to watch as the village of Breb go to church in their Sunday best. This is a great introduction to village life in Maramures. We then take a short drive to the village of Sapanta, home to one of Romania's most remarkable settings, the unique 'Merry Cemetery' of Ion Stan Patras. Patras was a local artist and poet who, during the 1930s, began carving a series of decorative crosses and tombstones that depicted in words and

pictures the lives of the deceased. These colourful grave markers were covered in naive pictures and amusing anecdotes, instilling in the place a sense of celebration rather than sadness, a tradition that has been carried on to this day by Patras's students. From here we then head to Sighetu Marmatiei, the capital of the historic Maramures region, where we visit the emotive setting of 'The Memorial of the Victims of Communism and of the Resistance', a moving and poignant exhibition that occupies the site of an old Austro-Hungarian prison. The prison has been restored to something of its former 'inglorious' state and today each of the cells displays information and exhibits that cover everything from repression and deportation, to prison poetry under the former Communist rulers. For many it represents one of the finest testaments to totalitarian oppression anywhere. After visiting a local church and taking lunch in the town, we then head back towards Breb, stopping in the village of Hanicesti and then continuing the journey on foot via Desesti. We'll visit ancient wooden churches and pass through gardens and orchards as we follow an old narrow gauge railway track towards the banks of the River Mara. Continuing to follow the course of the river we come across a remarkable hydro mechanical workshop in one of the local villages, before finally reaching Breb later this afternoon. Approximate walking time 2.5 hrs, easy walking.

Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 3: Trekking through the Iza Valley: Today's adventures take us on a journey that spans centuries of cultural development in this region, as we make our way through the beautiful landscapes of the Iza Valley. Our first stop will be in the village of Barsana, where we will visit the workshop of Mr Barsan, one of the last sculptors in the Maramures who still specialises in traditional wood carving. From here we then head on to the wooden church at Poienile Izei, whose stunningly preserved frescoes has seen it achieve UNESCO World heritage status. Dating back to the latter years of the 18th century, the paintings follow post-Byzantine traditions and depict a variety of themes, from the Last Judgement and the Old Testament, to the life of Christ.

From here we continue on foot, walking across grasslands and through orchards en route to the village of Botzia, famed for its traditional handmade carpets. After taking lunch in a local peasant's house, we then head for the village of Ieud, one of the oldest in the Maramures and home to the country's second oldest church. The village has long been considered the cultural heartland of Transylvania and its people still retain a fierce sense of their own identity and time-honoured traditions. This evening we will be accommodated in the house of an old friend, Liviu Ilea, whose ancestors ruled over these lands for the better part of 700 years. Approx walking time 6 hrs.
Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 4: Walking in the Rodna Mountains:

The village has two churches, one that dates back to the 18th century and the lovely 'Church on the Hill', which can trace its origins back to the 14th century. We'll take a look at this historic old building this morning, hopefully getting a chance to view some of its beautiful interior frescoes, considered amongst the finest in the region. We then travel by bus to the ski resort at Borsa, situated at the foot of the Rodna Mountains (2303m). These represent the highest ranges in the north of the country and we'll take a chair lift up to 1400m, from where we begin the day's walking. The Rodna Mountains encompass a biosphere reserve that stretches across the Eastern Carpathians and provides a refuge for brown bears, wolves, eagles and lynx. As we follow the ridge, the views out across the landscape include the dramatic cascades of the Cascada Cailor (The Horses Waterfall), a vertical drop of close to 100 metres. We continue onto the Stiol Plateau and along the narrow path of the Golden Bistrita, from where there are some stunning perspectives towards the high mountains to the west. After a relatively easy 40 minutes of walking we come to the Prislop Pass (1417m), where we rendezvous with our vehicle for the onward journey into the Bucovina district. An oasis of Romanian spirituality, the area is famed for its painted monasteries, masterpieces of Byzantine art whose exteriors are adorned with elaborate 15th and 16th century frescoes. Seven of these remarkable buildings were placed on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 1993. The road then takes us down the

Golden Bistrita Valley and through some wonderful examples of typical Northern Moldovian villages, whose houses are beautifully decorated with traditional floral and zoomorphic symbols. As our long day draws to an end we round the north-eastern part of the Carpatians Orientals (the Obcinile Bucovinei) and head for our night stop in the small village of Sucevita. Approximate walking time 2.5 hrs

Agro-tourist Pension (B,L,D)

Day 5: Exploring the villages of the Moldovita Valley:

This morning we visit Sucevita's Eastern Orthodox monastery, a wonderful 16th century building that blends Byzantine and Gothic influences and which holds the distinction of being one of the last churches to be decorated with the famous Moldovian style of exterior painting. Climbing up through grassland and forest we then head towards the village of Runc, a small hamlet that lies encircled by dense forests of conifers and Europe's largest population of large carnivores. This place perfectly encapsulates William Blacker's first impressions of a land frozen in time. Sheltering some of the last traditional peasant communities left in Europe, this is a land where mythical beasts and fairies share the landscape with bear and wolf populations that number in the thousands. These northern Romanian villages provide a glimpse back to a Europe of legend and romance and as we continue down through the intoxicating vistas of the Moldovita Valley we pass through a world far beyond our own. Our next visit is to the workshops of Glicheria Hretiu, one of the most skilful exponents left in Romania of the traditional art of egg painting. Following a tradition that is meant to date back to the crucifixion, painted eggs are believed to bring luck and keep away unholy spirits, with each intricate colour and pattern dispelling a different form of evil. After a demonstration of her skill and a chance to see some samples of Glicheria's work, there may be time for a refreshing beer in a local hostelry before we head back to Sucevita for our second night. Approximate walking time 3.5 hrs.

Agro-tourist Pension (B,L,D)

Day 6: Exploring the Saxon Villages of the Bicaz Gorge:

After a chance to visit the 5,000 year old black pottery

workshop in Marginea we then head south into the landscapes of Moldova, a route which takes us through a string of wonderfully traditional villages, filled with original architecture. Around lunchtime we arrive in the village of Tarpesti, one of the journey's cultural highlights as it affords us an opportunity to pay a visit to the house of the late Mr Popa. Unfortunately Mr Popa passed away last year in his early nineties, but his collection of archaeological artefacts that spans years of work and encompasses over 20 different sites, is still under care of his wife in their beautiful home. After lunch our journey continues west, towards the villages of Agapia and Varatec, home to 2 renowned monasteries that house over 2000 Orthodox nuns. Passing on through the hills we then take in the Moldovian architecture of Valea Arini and Valea Seaca en route to the dramatic limestone vistas of the Bicaz Gorge. A 30 minute walk brings us to the Red Lake, a natural dam lake that formed at the beginning of the 19th century. We are deep into Transylvania now, heading towards the Saxon village of Viscri (Deutschweisskirche), one of a number of German settlements that lie littered amongst the dense oak forests that blanket these hills. German colonists arrived in this area nearly a thousand years ago at the invitation of the Hungarian king. They settled the fertile valleys and brought with them a feudal society that thrived amongst the villages until the arrival of the Red Army in 1944. The German settlers are mostly gone now, but they have left behind a cultural legacy that is still very much in evidence amongst the region's wonderful architecture, especially the medieval fortified churches that pepper the countryside.

Pension (B,L,D)

Day 7: Exploring Viscri and its environs:

This morning we will visit the village's beautiful 12th century fortified church, a building whose development mirrored that of its Saxon inhabitants. As the need arose, the church was expanded and fortified over the intervening centuries, to include towers and defensive walls that were still being added to until the end of the 18th century. From here we then take a tour of the surrounding districts by horse drawn carriage,

meeting with a family of local wood burners and visiting a traditional sheepfold, where we will take lunch and get a chance to try out some locally produced cheeses. Blacker was keen to try to preserve something of this way of life during his time here and set aside time and money to try to renovate some of the old houses. Its interesting to note that Prince Charles has followed a similar path, purchasing two old Saxon homes and having them restored to their former glory for the benefit of visitors to the area. This afternoon we pay a final call on a local family that specialises in the manufacture of handmade bricks and tiles, before we head back to Viscri for a relaxing evening and a home cooked meal.

Pension (B,L,D)

Day 8: The Saxon villages of the west:

Leaving Viscri behind after breakfast we continue our journey west, towards more of the region's Saxon settlements. We'll stop and visit the village of Cris, home to the sumptuous 14th century Bethlen Castle, whose lavish fusion of Gothic and Renaissance styles makes it one of the most beautiful castles in Transylvania. Continuing on foot we then head to Malancrav, which has probably the highest number of Saxon descendants left in any of the Transylvanian villages. After a picnic lunch we then proceed to Biertan, location of one of the earliest of the Saxon settlements in the region, being founded towards the end of the 13th century. As with the other German villages it follows the same lines of development, consisting of rows of houses aligned around a central square and overlooked by a fortified church. This evening we transfer to the stunning town of Sighisoara, one of the best preserved medieval towns anywhere in Europe; a 16th century gem of cobbled streets, watch towers and ornate churches, that positively exudes atmosphere and charm. Birthplace of the infamous Vlad the Impaler (the progenitor of the Dracula legends), the town was protected by a defensive ring of 14 watch towers and several bastions, each of which was maintained and defended by a separate guild. Our final evening sees us enjoying the hospitality of a renovated medieval building at the heart of the citadel. Approximate walking time 3.5 hrs.

Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 9: Drive to Cluj-Napoca: Tour ends in Cluj-Napoca mid-morning.
(B)

Wild Extensions:

Arrive early to adjust to a new time zone or just to get a feel for the country before your tour starts. Explore the country after your tour on a bespoke Wild Extension or just allow a few days to relax afterwards. Maybe choose all of the above and get cheaper flights mid-week?

A sample of what you could do...

With our suggested airline you could include a stopover in the beautiful Hungarian capital of Budapest.

Or spend a few days in the Romanian capital, Bucharest or even Istanbul, and take the train through Bulgaria to the start point.

Another great idea is to take the train from London via Vienna to Bucharest - very eco and a great deal of fun!

Contact the office for extension specifics.

TOUR DETAILS

Tour Code: WWR/A

Tour price: All our tours are priced on a LAND ONLY basis, giving you maximum flexibility when deciding how to get to and from your tour.

Single Supplements: These are NOT compulsory for any Wild Frontiers tour. Where single supplements are available please note that a single room cannot always be guaranteed for every night of the tour as depending on the destination, rooms may be limited. On this tour we are happy to offer an optional single supplement that will cover you for most nights of the tour etc.

Flights: If you would like us to send you a quote for the suggested tour flight (see GETTING THERE) or on any alternative flight that may suit you better, please let us know.

In all cases, for the latest prices, please refer to our website or contact the office.

Please remember that all Wild Frontiers tour prices mean NO hidden extras, NO local payments or kitty and NO compulsory single supplements.

WHAT IS INCLUDED?

- Full services of a Wild Frontiers Tour Leader with local guides and drivers.
- Meal plan as detailed in the itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner) with mineral water as required.
- All transport as outlined in the itinerary.
- All accommodation
- All entrance fees, as per itinerary

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED?

- Visas (if applicable)
- Local airport taxes
- Tips
- Beverages & any costs of a personal nature.
- International Flights
- Airport transfers (unless booking suggested flights through WF office)

GETTING THERE

For this trip our suggested flights (subject to change) are:

26MAY MA613 LGW-BUD 08:45/12:15
26MAY MA864 BUD-CLJ 13:45/15:45
03JUN MA865 CLJ-BUD 16:15/16:20
03JUN MA614 BUD LGW 17:05/18:35

Key:

LGW - London Gatwick
BUD - Budapest
CLJ - Cluj-Napoca
MA - Malev Hungarian Airlines

NB If you wish to arrange your own flights you are completely free to do so and in this case we can arrange any transfers or supplementary accommodation that you may require.

Please note that if you are making your own flight arrangements, we recommend that you only purchase flights that are totally flexible and refundable as due to the nature of adventure travel, itineraries can change at any time. For more information, please refer to our booking conditions.

PRACTICALITIES

Accommodation will be in hotels and pensions. Any accommodation mentioned in the itinerary is subject to availability and if not available substitutes will be of a similar quality.

Transport on this tour includes minibuses and your feet!

Trip Grading:

Adventure Rating ❖❖❖❖❖

Comfort Grade ❖❖❖❖❖

Fitness Level ❖❖❖❖❖

Cultural Interest ❖❖❖❖❖

Please note that this grading is an indication only and should you have any concerns please contact the office.

Fitness...

Anyone in a reasonable state of health, with an open mind and a sense of adventure should be perfectly able to cope with this tour. The walking is not too strenuous but you should be used to, and enjoy, a good country walk.

It may sound obvious but...

Wild Frontiers tours are not always for everyone and it is important to us that the tour you choose is the most suitable. Please therefore take time to read the dossier carefully. All our tours are graded to give an overall picture of the trip but these are only guidelines and you should check the daily itinerary. Should you have any concerns about your ability to partake in any aspect of the tour then please contact the office.

Insurance: Insurance that provides cover for emergency repatriation in case of a medical emergency is compulsory for all tours. You should be aware that many standard insurance policies may not cover you adequately for all aspects of a Wild Frontiers trip and so we strongly recommend that you purchase a suitably designed insurance policy. One such policy is the "Wild Frontiers" policy underwritten by Travel & General Insurance Company plc, which is available to UK and Republic of Ireland residents through our website or via the insurance company direct on 0845 408 0583. Under this policy there are two different levels of cover available and for this trip the

minimum requirement would be the Standard policy.

Cover explained:

Standard policy: a comprehensive travel insurance policy that provides cover for all Wild Frontiers activities, including trekking up to 6,000m. This policy does not provide cover for travel to areas where the FCO is advising against all or all but essential travel.

Elite policy: provides the same comprehensive level of cover as the standard policy. In addition the Elite policy also provides cover for travel to areas where the FCO is advising against all or all but essential travel. The policy will not provide cover for any claims arising from or relating to the reasons why the FCO is advising against travel.

If purchasing the Elite policy you also have the option to **extend the cover** provided by the policy to include cover for claims arising from a terrorist act in an area where the FCO is advising against travel. You can add this cover to your policy when purchasing online or over the telephone.

These policies are only available to those travelling on a Wild Frontiers holiday.

For more information and to purchase your policy online please visit the Insurance section of our website.

The cover is underwritten by the International Insurance Company of Hannover Limited (IICH), who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority (FSA). Wild Frontiers Limited is an Introducer Appointed Representative of Travel & General Insurance Company plc, details of which can be found at the FSA's website www.fsa.gov.uk.

If you do decide to purchase alternative insurance, then you must ensure that it covers you for every aspect of this trip.

Visas: Visas are necessary for many of the destinations we travel to and while we aim to provide you with the most up-to-date information, requirements frequently change and as such we advise that you check with the relevant

embassies or contact our recommended visa agency, Travcour (020 7223 5295) www.travcour.com for the latest advice.

For this tour, UK passport holders do not currently require a visa for Romania.

Non-UK passport holders should contact the relevant embassies for individual requirements.

Further details will be sent out to you on booking, however ensuring that correct and valid visas are obtained remains the sole responsibility of the client.

Responsible Travel: Responsible travel and sustainable tourism are fundamental ideas that Wild Frontiers has been committed to since our birth. It is our strong belief that these words should not be simply 'tagged on' to dossiers and websites but should be at the very core of each trip, and our adventures are therefore designed with the local people, culture and eco-system in mind. We believe that a successful trip not only delivers a unique and unsurpassable journey for our clients, but that it also benefits the peoples whose lands we are privileged to visit.

The Wild Frontiers Foundation: In order to facilitate an enduring support structure for the communities we visit, and to show a commitment to these values, Wild Frontiers has set up a charitable foundation through which we can channel funds to both existing NGOs and our own development projects. In addition to organising ethically sensitive tours, having our own charitable foundation allows us to raise money - through the cost of our tours, charity trips and fund raising events - which can then be used to fund various projects in education, sanitation, reforestations and a number of other important issues facing developing communities. Wherever possible we are happy for our clients to visit these projects to see for themselves where and how this money is being spent. For a full list of partner NGOs please visit our website. Should you wish to donate to the foundation please contact the office.

The Environment: Trying to do our bit for the environment, in 2005 we were among the first UK-based travel

companies to automatically offset every client's international flight (if booked with us) with a payment to Carbon Clear to help promote sustainable energy.

Climate: It will be late spring/early summer in Central Europe which can be pretty hot with temperatures getting up to the mid-thirties. That said it can rain as well when the temp will drop, so be prepared!

Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO): The FCO travel advice highlights potential hazards people might experience when travelling abroad. Given the nature of destinations offered by Wild Frontiers it is inevitable that from time to time some itineraries contravene this advice. Whilst WF takes the safety and security of its clients extremely seriously, we will not necessarily cancel a trip because of the FCO advice. It is recommended therefore that clients check this advice before booking and contact us if they have any queries or concerns. Please see our website for further information.

Further information:

When you make a confirmed booking with Wild Frontiers we will send you our confirmation pack with complete pre-departure information giving you details on visas, health and vaccinations, packing lists, suggested reading on the region, insurance, photography and other useful tips to make your trip more enjoyable.

ROMANIA - THE FACTS



The beauty of the Romanian countryside is thanks to the rural traditions that are still very much part of the way of life. The landscape is dotted with shepherds' huts and haystacks, horse and cart is still the vehicle of choice for many, and the local produce would have Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall drooling. The best way to experience this countryside is on foot, and we will be walking in four different mountain ranges.

Romania's history is abundant; it's past complex and violent. It was the only country of the Eastern Bloc to end Communism by executing their leader, and perhaps one of the most violent rulers of all, Vlad the Impaler (on whom Dracula is loosely based), was born here. It's not all about Vlad though; there are endless stories of marauding invaders and the Dacians, Romans, Saxons, Turks, Slavs, Gypsies and Hungarians are just some of those to have left their mark. We'll be visiting the medieval cities of Brasov and Sighisoara, as well as the painted monasteries of Bucovina (a UNESCO World Heritage Site).



Transylvania Occupying the middle part of Romania and enclosed by the jagged peaks of the Carpathian Mountains, Transylvania is one of Central Europe's most scenic and mysterious regions. Steeped in the legends of vampires and covered in dark, ancient forests filled

with wolves and bears, the region has a cultural ancestry that stretches back to the Kingdom of Dacia in the 9th century BC. Conquered by Romans and Huns, Mongols and Magyars, the region abounds in historic sites, fortified churches and a number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Birthplace of the Dracula legend and blessed with some of the most untouched wilderness left in Europe, its traditions and customs are amongst the most authentic and fascinating left on the European mainland. Rich in mineral resources, it has withstood the passing of the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires and today can count amongst its cultural treasures some of the most unique attractions in the country, including its fabulous painted churches, the Merry Cemetery of Sapanta and Dracula's Castle itself.

Saxon Villages The Saxon villages of Transylvania are a direct result of colonisation by German settlers in the 13th century. Accorded special status by the Hungarian monarchy, the villages thrived, as did their cultural traditions. Living in an area under constant threat from Ottoman and Tartar invasion, the Saxons built a range of fortifications to protect themselves, many of them centred around the local church. A mix of Gothic, Romanesque and Baroque styles, the churches formed the heart of the communities, with defensive walls and storehouses being added to the church buildings in case of siege or attack. Lasting for nearly nine hundred years, these settlements have left behind a remarkable legacy that is unique in Europe, with hundreds of towns and fortified churches testifying to a period of administrative hegemony that was almost unknown in feudal Europe at the time.

Maramures Romania's north-western regions are home to an incredible collection of villages that still retain a sense of tradition and culture that has been lost in many other parts of Central Europe. Here amongst the rolling hills of the Iza Valley and towering peaks of the Rodna Mountains National Park, centuries-old traditions still play an important part and village life still revolves around the region's distinctive wooden churches, much as it has for hundreds of years. Built from local oak these unique structures, with their tall

spires and shingle roofs, have survived the passing of the centuries remarkably well and many have been recognised by UNESCO as important heritage sites. The churches and their interiors are richly decorated by local artists, with a profusion of frescoes that depict biblical scenes that are often juxtaposed against village landscapes. Traditional crafts also play an important part in the region, with elaborate wood carvings decorating the eaves and windows of the village houses and intricate embroidery adorning the traditional local dress.

How to book:

In order to confirm your booking we need to have a completed signed booking form for each client together with a £400 deposit per person. You can either return your booking form to us by post or by booking online at www.wildfrontiers.co.uk

You can contact the office by email to info@wildfrontiers.co.uk or we are very happy to take your call on **020 7736 3968**.

Wild Frontiers is a fully licensed and bonded tour operator and our ATOL number is 5975. You can book your holiday with Wild Frontiers in complete confidence that all monies you pay to us for your tour are fully protected.

We are also bonded with the Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO). AITO members comply with the highest standards of consumer protection. Every AITO holiday is backed not only by AITO's Quality Charter but also by full financial protection.

We do recommend that you take out adequate travel insurance at the time of booking in the event that you are no longer able to travel as all deposits are non-refundable - full booking conditions can be found on the booking form and online at our website.