

Transylvania Winter Wilderness Trek



Duration: 5 days

This short but spectacular snowshoe-trek takes us to the snowy forests and mountains of wild Transylvania, where we discover a pristine winter wonderland.

Snowshoes allow us to negotiate the deep snow of the sheltered lower slopes as we follow paths through silent forest and, in sharp contrast, head high above the tree-line into the frozen mountain wilderness surrounding Lake Balea (2034m). Sleeping here in the Hotel of Ice – a remarkable construction beside the frozen lake – is a real highlight, and a truly unforgettable experience.

This is a remote region of the Carpathians and you are unlikely to meet more than a handful of other trekkers. For a unique adventure in untouched natural wilderness, look no further!

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1: Fly London to Cluj Napoca – Sibiu

We fly into Cluj Napoca and transfer to our hotel in historic Sibiu, in central Romania. Night hotel.

Drive approx. 3 hours

Day 2: Sibiu – Lake Balea

After breakfast, we leave Sibiu and drive through farmland and villages with colourfully-painted houses. Before long we can see the Transfagarasan ridge of the Carpathians looming; on a clear day these snow-covered peaks look spectacular. We join the Transfagarasan Road – Romania's highest pass and dubbed 'best road in the world' by *Top Gear* – as it climbs through pine forest on increasingly dramatic hairpin-bends. In winter the upper reaches

are closed; we take it as far as the cable-car station.

These lower slopes are perfect for our snow-shoe introduction! Thick powdery snow covers the valley tracks, and we weave between snow-laden boughs as we explore this winter wonderland. The tranquility is broken only by the crunching of unspoiled snow; we are unlikely to meet other people. Back at the cable-car station, a 15-minute ride takes us above the treeline and through the open, exposed snow fields of this glacier-sculpted valley to Lake Balea. The lake itself is covered in thick ice and snow, and indistinguishable from the rest of this beautiful valley basin.

There will be time to check out the chapel and hotel, constructed every year from ice from the lake and, depending on time, explore the lake's surroundings. We have dinner in the hotel of ice (and perhaps a warming glass of tuica, the local plum brandy) before bedding down for the night in our rooms carved out of thick ice – an incredible experience. Night hotel.

Drive approx. 1.5 hours; Trek / snowshoe approx. 3-4 hours

NB: Weather conditions will dictate snow-shoeing routes and locations, and may affect the night spent in the hotel of ice.

Day 3: Lake Balea – Rasinari

We emerge from our unique accommodation and prepare for another day of exploring this winter wilderness. There are plenty of options and, after assessing the weather and conditions, our experienced guides will lead us through this harsh but beautiful landscape. We then take the cable car back down the mountain; looking down onto the thick carpet of snow-covered trees is truly magical. Look out for agile chamois on the dramatic rocky ridges above; their tracks can often be seen in the wide saddle above the treeline. We meet our vehicles and drive south to Rasinari village, at the foot of the Cindrel Mountains. Time permitting, we can explore the narrow winding streets and distinctive colourfully-painted buildings. Night guesthouse.

Trek / snowshoe approx 3-4 hours; Drive approx. 2 hours

Day 4: Snow-shoeing Cindrel Mountains

A short drive takes us to a small mountain resort, where we glide silently on ski-lifts above the thickly-forested conifer slopes. These perfect Christmas-card landscapes are perfect for snow-shoeing, with plenty of trails covering the gentle hills. Although the open slopes are popular with skiers and snowboarders, the forest is still and peaceful and it feels as though we have the world to ourselves. Our route will depend on the conditions, but we aim to take in one of the many peaks for unsurpassed views, before descending to the lower slopes, sheltering in one of the many shepherd's huts for lunch. Back in picturesque Rasinari, we celebrate the end of our winter adventure. Night guesthouse/hotel.

Snowshoe approx 5-6 hours

Day 5: Rasinari - Sibiu - Fly Cluj Napoca to London

We drive the short distance back to Sibiu. An attractive riverside city with much of its medieval fortifications still intact, and a beautiful historic centre, Sibiu is justifiably proud of its culture and arts. It's a wonderful place to

explore. After lunch we transfer to the airport in Cluj Napoca for our flight home.

Drive approx. 3 hours

GRADE | ORANGE

Trips are graded Yellow, Orange or Red, in increasing level of challenge. This trip lies within the **ORANGE** range.



The grade is determined by factors such as terrain, distance, climate, altitude, etc. Each colour grade has a **spectrum** which reflects the difficulty of these factors; trip duration, accommodation and living conditions (see icon) are also taken into account.

[Trip grading explained](#)

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Discover Adventure reserves the right to change the route or itinerary for safety reasons should local conditions dictate.

Please note: This document was downloaded on 19 Apr 2024, and the challenge is subject to change.