

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](#)

CHALLENGE INFORMATION

DETAILED INFORMATION

Leaders & Trip Support

Your trip will be led by experienced Discover Adventure leaders. Our leaders are selected for their experience in harsh wilderness environments, knowledge of travel in remote areas, friendliness and approachability, sense of humour and ability to safely and effectively deal with any situation that arises. They are also trained in expedition first aid. You are in very safe hands with a Discover Adventure leader. Usually leaders are based in the UK or other English-speaking countries and lead for us regularly throughout the year in many different countries. In some instances, trips are led by in-country guides with a wealth of knowledge about the region; they have been trained by us to provide the level of support expected on a Discover Adventure trip.

Local Support Crew

Our local support crew is made up of local guides, assisted by drivers, porters, cooks and other support staff, depending on the type of trip. Local guides know the area well, and are a great source of knowledge about local lifestyles. The Discover Adventure crew work closely with the local crew to ensure your trip runs smoothly and safely. In some destinations we work together as a team with local guides to help set up or break camp, or prepare meals. Your leader will arrange a collection of tips for the local support crew at the end of your trek, and you will be provided with a guideline amount in advance. Tipping is not obligatory, but once you see how hard they work on your behalf you will be happy to

donate something!

Trip Safety

Your safety, and that of the rest of the group, is our highest priority. Our trips are designed and planned with safety in mind. Your crew will be equipped with communication devices (eg phones, radios and/or emergency satellite phones), medical kit and other safety apparatus appropriate to the destination. Our leaders always have access to our 24-hour emergency UK back-up. They are responsible for safety on the trip, and will make any changes to the itinerary they deem necessary, should local conditions dictate. Pre-trip administration - such as medical questionnaires and travel insurance as appropriate - is all done with your safety in mind.

Flight Information

Group flights usually leave from London Heathrow or Gatwick but may also depart from regional airports, and are booked through Discover Adventure Ltd under ATOL licence 5636. You will usually receive confirmed flight details several months before departure. We do not always use the same airline for each destination and low cost airlines may be used for short haul flights. If you wish to know the probable carrier and flight times, please call for details.

By travelling with Discover Adventure you are protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). Our itineraries are always based on current flight schedules and are therefore subject to change by the airline. If you prefer to book your own flights please ask us for a land-only cost.

Accommodation

We stay in a variety of hotels/lodges ranging from quite simple, friendly guesthouse-style to more international-style hotels in larger towns or cities. Standards are generally good, in great locations, but there may be a night or two where facilities are more basic, as you'd expect in very remote, untouristed or rural areas.

During the trek, a night will be spent in the Hotel of Ice, in a twin room. If the winter is unseasonably warm and the lake hasn't frozen over, it is not always possible to build the Hotel of Ice and therefore a stay there isn't guaranteed. In this instance, the group will stay at the Balea Lac Chalet, situated besides the lake.

Roomshare Arrangements

Accommodation is usually on a twin-share basis. Occasionally we may use hostel-style accommodation. Please tell us if you know somebody else on the trip that you would like to share with and we will try our best to accommodate your request. If you don't know anyone else in the group don't worry, we always pair you up with someone of the same gender, and a similar age where possible. We do not charge a single supplement if you are a solo traveller in a shared room.

Group Size

Your booking is part of a group challenge, and the tour costs and fundraising targets listed on our website are based on a minimum number of participants which is shown on the challenge. Our typical groups run with approximately 15-25

participants; however you may find your group is smaller or larger than this.

We will confirm at least 12 weeks prior to departure that your challenge is guaranteed to run. Occasionally it may be possible to still run the challenge with less than the minimum numbers, subject to a small group supplement. If we think a small group supplement may be necessary, we will discuss this with you as soon as possible, usually 5 months before your departure date.

Minimum numbers and groups sizes may vary on Bespoke Charity challenges. If you are booked onto a bespoke challenge please contact your charity for full details.

Food & Dietary Requirements

The food provided is plentiful, often local in style and freshly-cooked, and will give you plenty of energy. Sometimes we enjoy a buffet-style lunch-stop, other times we might have packed lunches. On some trips we stop at small local restaurants. Dinners are generally eaten at our accommodation each evening. In some regions there may be less variety than you are used to, and in others fresh meat or produce can be harder to come by. Any meals not included are listed in the itinerary and are generally on travel / free days, giving you the opportunity to explore and try other culinary experiences! There is always something to suit different budgets.

Being vegetarian or having other dietary requirements is not usually a problem provided you let us know well in advance. Please do not expect as much variety as you would have access to at home – we may be in very rural or remote areas, or among people of a different culture who may not understand your requirements, however willing they are to help. If you know there are plenty of foods you cannot eat we strongly recommend you bring extra snacks from home so you can top up your energy supply. Please feel free to ask us for advice.

Luggage

Your luggage, food, water and equipment is transported for you from one night-stop to the next. If there is easy road access this is done by vehicle; if not porters, mules or even camels might carry your bags, depending on the terrain.

Space is limited and hard-sided luggage is not suitable, so it is essential that your kit is packed in a soft bag, rucksack or expedition kitbag. Ask us about our specially-designed low-cost kitbags if you don't have one already. You should also bring a small daypack to carry for items needed during the day as you will not have access to your main luggage until the evening.

PREPARING FOR THE CHALLENGE

Fitness Levels

This is designed to be a challenge, and it is vital that you train sufficiently for it. We will supply you with a thorough training guide once you have registered. We expect all participants to train hard in advance, but we respect everyone's limits and do not expect everyone to maintain the same pace. Inadequate training is likely to have an impact not just on your chances of completing the challenge, but enjoying it too - and we want you to have the time of your life!

Our challenges attract people of all levels of experience, fitness and ability as well as all ages and backgrounds. We

design our challenges so that everyone can go at their own pace: this is not a race. If you have concerns about your fitness or if you have reduced mobility please do contact us for a confidential chat about whether this challenge is appropriate for you.

For logistical and safety reasons we sometimes need to re-group, so the front-runners may find themselves waiting for the slower ones. Please relax, and remember that this is a team effort that enables people to achieve their personal goals and earn sponsorship.

Passport & Visa / Vaccinations

Entry requirements vary depending on your destination and nationality. It is your responsibility to ensure your passport is valid, and any visas are obtained in good time. Check the [FCO's advice](#) on entry requirements for your destination to be sure. Please ensure you allow plenty of time to apply for your visa; we will provide you with all necessary information 6 weeks prior to departure to assist with your application.

Your routine UK schedule of vaccinations should be up-to-date (especially tetanus). We recommend you check [Fit For Travel](#) for further details. You should always check with a GP or travel clinic for up-to-date travel health advice as it does change.

Clothing & Kit

We plan our trips around the optimal weather conditions, but could still be exposed to bad weather at any time. It is vital you are prepared for all conditions. We provide you with a detailed packing kit-list on registration, with plenty of information, and we are always available if you need advice.

Travel Insurance

Travel Insurance is compulsory on all of our challenges outside of the UK; we strongly suggest that you arrange insurance cover as soon as your booking with us is confirmed, or as soon as you're able to purchase some, and at least 8 months prior to travel. Should you need to cancel prior to departure, you will need insurance to cover the costs involved (registration fee and any trip costs depending on cancellation date).

We all hope never to need it, and thankfully most of the time we don't, but on those rare occasions when you do, you want it to cover you as best it can. Whilst it's a fairly boring admin task relating to your trip of a lifetime, it is really important you ensure that you have adequate cover for the type of challenge you are taking part in as well as medical emergencies, evacuation and repatriation, so make sure you're happy with the level of cover. There are lots of suppliers out there, with a wide range in levels of cover; generally speaking, you get what you pay for! Get and pay for the right level of cover and then you can go on your adventure not having to worry about the what-if's. For more details click [here](#).

Once your travel insurance is arranged, just remember to let us know the policy number and 24-hr medical emergency phone number provided by your insurers.

Cultural Differences

For most people, the main attraction of travelling to a different country is to see new sights and enjoy new experiences. Sometimes those new experiences can make life harder or more inconvenient than you may like, such as toilet hygiene or different food, or simply a different attitude to solving problems. This is all part of the challenge you are signing up for! We are very privileged to live in a country with a high standard of living, and travelling exposes us to different challenges – all of which help broaden our horizons. We can guarantee that coming face-to-face with experiences outside your normal 'comfort zone' will help you bond with your fellow participants and provide you with plenty of things to laugh about! A sense of humour and sense of adventure are two of the most important things to bring with you!

Cancelling your booking

In the unfortunate circumstance that you need to cancel your booking, we would ask that you notify us in writing either by post or email. Your cancellation will be considered effective from the date the notice is received. Registration fees and amendment fees are non refundable and, depending on your payment option and how close it is to your challenge departure date, you may be liable for a cancellation charge.

Full details of all cancellation charges may be found in the Terms and Conditions of booking.

BUY YOUR KITBAG

Only £45 (inc p&p) - designed to deal with the rigours of your challenge.

Easier for accessing gear than a rucksack (especially when camping) this is probably the most cost-effective way to take your luggage on a Discover Adventure challenge!



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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 25 Apr 2024, and the challenge is subject to change.