# EXPLORING THE SOUTH OF MOLDOVA

**DAY 1**

## Day 1: Arrival day

On arrival at Chisinau International Airport, you will be transferred to your accommodation in Chisinau. After settling in, you will enjoy the city tour of Chisinau which is the main administrative, scientific and cultural centre of Moldova. During the tour, you will discover pieces of history and culture of the city such as the Nativity of Christ Cathedral, the Bell Tower, the Arch of Triumph, the Monument of Stephen the Great, etc.

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Chisinau city,

**DAY 2**

## Day 2: Discovery of Gagauzia

You will start the day by travelling to Comrat where you will enjoy a city tour. Comrat is the capital of the autonomous region of Gagauzia, located in southwest Moldova. This is a very interesting territory since the majority of its habitants are Gagauzians. These are the only representatives of Turkic origin that affiliated with the Eastern Orthodox Church. Gagauzians migrated from Bulgaria together with ethnic Bulgarians and settled in Moldova in 19th century. You will see such attractions as the Cathedral of St John the Baptist, Museum of Gagauz Culture, Gagauz Art Gallery, Gagauz National University and Alley of Gagauz Glory.

You will continue your trip to Vinuri de Comrat winery, which is the oldest winery of southern Moldova. Here you will discover the tastes of Vinuri de Comrat wines and the specificity of Gagauz cuisine, while tasting Gagauz dishes. For over 100 years the winemakers of Comrat are preserving and transmitting from generation to generation the classical traditions of making fresh and naturally elegant wines based on the unique winemaking technology characteristic for the south of Moldova. Vinuri de Comrat is a modern complex processing 4 thousands tones of wine and spirits using closed-loop cycle, including production and processing of grape, production and bottling of dry, semi-sweet, desert, selected and vintage wine, production of wine spirit. Its portfolio lists more than 50 collections of wine, however, it is very famous for the Cahors wine.

Next, you will visit the National Gagauz Museum of History and Ethnography “D. Cara-Ciobanu” in Besalma village. The museum presents the history, culture and everyday life of the Gagauz people from ancient times until nowadays. One of the personalities of this small nation was the writer D. Cara-Ciobanu, who spent his life promoting this culture. He founded this museum, which features more than 6,000 exhibits, including works by famous writers, poets and famous artists in Gagauzia. One of the most valuable item in the museum is the collection of original films produced during the Gagauz colonization of the steppe of Bugeac.

Later this day you will check in at a local guesthouse in Congaz village where you will enjoy an excursion, culinary masterclass and dinner. The pension is located in the largest and densely populated village of Europe and is a typically Gagauz house of the 19th century.

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Comrat city , Vinuri de Comrat winery, National Gagauz Museum of History and Ethnography “D. Cara-Ciobanu”, Gagauz Sofrasi guest house,

**DAY 3**

# Day 3: Wine Experience at Vinaria din Vale winery and folk program in Valeni village

In the morning, you will travel to Gaidar village where you will visit the Carpet Museum within the House of Culture of the village. Besides finding out interesting things about the history of this craft, you can learn how to manually spin the wool and convert it into threads just as it was made 150 years ago.

You will continue your trip to Karagani family winery located in Vulcanesti, in the southern part of Moldova. This small family enterprise is engaged in grape cultivation and wine production. Karagani wines are produced by original technology from selected grapes of European and national varieties, grown on its own vineyards. On this land, you will discover the tastes of Karagani wines and the specificity of Gagauz cuisine, while tasting Gagauz dishes such as shorpa (a highly seasoned mutton soup), gözleme (flat breads) and bulgur.

Next, you will visit Vinaria din Vale - a 20 years old family winery located in Slobozia Mare village in a very picturesque region of the country. Here you will enjoy an excursion and wine tasting and will have the possibility to admire the beautiful landscape surrounding the winery. The winery produces several international and local varieties such as White Feteasca and Black Feteasca.

Finally, you will enjoy the day in Valeni village, where you will check in at a local guesthouse and have dinner in a wonderful traditional atmosphere created by the live music show of the local folk ensemble.

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Carpet Museum in Gaidar, Karagani winery, Vinaria din Vale winery , Folk program in Valeni ,

**DAY 4**

# Day 4: Discovery of Prutul de Jos (Lower Prut) Nature Reserve and Beleu Lake

You will start the day by travelling to Prutul de Jos (Lower Prut) Nature Reserve and Beleu Lake. The reserve was founded on a swampy land of a former estuary of the Prut River. It was created in 1991 to protect the flora and fauna of Beleu Lake and the Prut River surroundings. Beleu Lake occupies about one third of the Nature Reserve, and the rest of the territory is made up of a network of ponds that together form a unique ecosystem of national and international importance. Beleu Lake is a relict of the Danube – at around five to six thousand years old – and is therefore of great interest as a monument of immense scientific, cultural and aesthetic value. In the nature reserve you can find almost all the species of water plants and animals native to Moldova. Here you will see many species of birds including cormorants, white storks, swans, glossy ibises, white kingfishers, little egrets, big egrets, herons.

Next, you will be transferred to La Gura Cuptorului guesthouse and Bread Museum in Valeni village where you will enjoy an excursion and lunch. The Bread Museum is the most “delicious” museum of Moldova. This amazing museum of bread pleases its visitors with delicious “specimens” and thus has a huge success among the visitors, who promise every time to come again. Besides the tasty bread, the visitors of the museum can witness traditional ceremonies at a makeshift Moldovan wedding. The villagers of Valeni village are proud of their unique museum that holds about 20 types of bread products.

After lunch, you will visit the Museum of History and Ethnography in Valeni village. By its creation, the Town Hall of Valeni village has proposed to keep the traditions and history alive. In the museum, there are exhibited valuable carpets in which the women from the village put their soul. The Peasant House and Casa Mare (Big Room – a traditional room in each rural house where people feast together) were rebuilt and exhibited in the museum. Next to the Museum of History and Ethnography is the village church, sanctified on 25 December 2016. The two institutions form a cultural complex worthy of being included in the national and international circuits in the South of Moldova.

In the evening, you will take a ride to Milestii Mici winery located at a depth of 40-85 m in Milestii Mici village. Measuring about 200 km, all underground streets make up the largest network of caves ever dug by a human being, which appeared after the extraction of limestone deposits. The winery holds an impressive collection of more than 2 million bottles. The "Golden Collection" of  Milestii Mici winery, which has over 1,5 million bottles, is the pride of the whole country, as in August, 2005, it was registered in the Guinness World Records as the biggest wine collection in the world. You will feel like a king/ queen here, admiring the beauty of this place, tasting wines in which you will feel the fire of sun and vigor of earth and enjoying national cuisine dishes.

After visiting Milestii Mici winery, you will be transferred to the hotel in Chisinau.

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Prutul de Jos (Lower Prut) Nature Reserve , La Gura Cuptorului guesthouse , Museum of History and Ethnography in Valeni village , Milestii Mici winery,

**DAY 5**

# Day 5: Departure day

On departure day, you will be transferred from the hotel to Chisinau International Airport. If your flight is in the afternoon, you will have the option to explore Chisinau for a while on your own in the morning and buy some souvenirs.