# NATURE TOUR IN 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 can have a walk through downtown and explore the city centre on your own.

**DAY 2**

## Day 2: Orheiul Vechi - a 40 thousand year-old natural amphitheater

The day will begin with Chisinau city tour. Chisinau 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.

After Chisinau city tour, the day will continue with the excursion at the National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History built in 1905 in the oriental style, thus being a unique building of this kind in Moldova. Here, you will discover famous archaeological treasures, carpets, national costumes and other valuable exhibits and you will be able to see the “millenary smile” of the nicest deinotherium of Moldova.

Next, you will have lunch at a restaurant in Chisinau where you will taste traditional Moldovan dishes.

After lunch, you will set off on a time travel to Orheiul Vechi (Old Orhei) to see a natural amphitheater revealing a territory which was first inhabited 40 000 years ago. The Cultural, Natural and Landscape Reserve Orheiul Vechi includes a series of historical and cultural monuments as well as natural landscapes in the gorge of the Raut River. Ancient fortifications, cave monasteries, monks and hermits – here you can follow the history of this region.

The remnants of the first human settlements were found in the stone caverns from here. On the rocky hill, you will find the ruins of a strong Geto-Dacian fortification, which acted as a sanctuary for celebrating religious holidays and rituals in this prehistoric community. The originality of Orheiul Vechi landscape is due to the gorge of the Raut River, dug under the form of a canyon in the limestone layers of the former Sarmatian Sea, about 14 million years ago.

After visiting Orheiul Vechi, you will return to Chisinau where you will have dinner. During dinner at the restaurant, you will be enveloped in the traditional atmosphere, created by the traditional style of the restaurant, the traditional dishes and of course the traditional live music show – the special flavor of the restaurant.

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Chisinau city, National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History, Orheiul Vechi - a 40 thousand years-old natural amphitheater,

**DAY 3**

# Day 3: Discovery of Saharna and Tipova Monasteries – an unusual landscape with many waterfalls

In the morning you will visit Saharna Monastery - one of the oldest monasteries in the country. The monastic complex is composed of a cave monastery (the Annunciation) and a stone monastery (the St. Trinity). The complex is located in a picturesque valley on the right bank of the Dniester River, near Saharna village. It is surrounded by rocks covered by forest. The legend says that the Virgin Mary left her footprint on the highest rock, named Grimidon. The history of the monastery is little known. The first prior of the holy place is considered the monk Bartholomew (1776-1790) who settled in a deep gorge, built a church, a few cells and enclosed the monastery with a stone wall.

In Saharna you will enjoy the beautiful landscape created by the waterfalls. The River Saharna has 22 waterfalls on its way. The biggest waterfall is 4.5 m high.

Then, you will travel to Lalova village where you will have lunch at a local guesthouse.

After lunch, you will discover Tipova Cave Monastery. Located near Tipova village, the monastery with the same name is considered one of the oldest monastic establishments on the territory of Moldova. The heritage, which consists of 18 rooms, dug into the rock at an astounding altitude, represents an impressive museum in the open air. The Tipova River, on its flow to the Dniester, creates many waterfalls with the height above 10-16 meters, which a long time ago used to move the millstones of the numerous watermills.

After visiting Tipova Cave Monastery, you will return to Chisinau, where during dinner at the restaurant you will enjoy dishes specific to European cuisine.

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Saharna Monastery, Tipova Cave Monastery,

**DAY 4**

# Day 4: A meeting with the bisons at “Padurea Domneasca” Nature Reserve

You will start the day by travelling to “Padurea Domneasca” (Royal Forest) Nature Reserve, which is the largest nature reserve of scientific interest in Moldova, found in the prairies of the middle Prut River. Along the Prut River, which covers a vast area, a forest with trees specific for this type of environment such as willows, oaks, poplars, beech trees, etc. could be found.

The secular oaks cover a total area of 108 ha and exceed the age of 200 years, some of them reaching a height of 30-35 m. The fauna of the reserve is rich and varied, consisting of many species of mammalians, reptiles and amphibians and birds. The flock of herons that live in the reserve do not have their nests in the bushes or rushes, but in the trees distributed on a large area. The locals call this place the "Land of herons", a true paradise for these birds, included in the Red Book of Moldova. At the Bisons’ Refuge you will see a small herd of bisons. The bison is an impressive animal that can reach 3.5 m in length and is considered the toughest wild terrestrial mammal on the territory of Europe.

In the afternoon, you will have lunch at the Ecotourism guesthouse “La Fontal”, a place to relax for the

tourists who visit “Padurea Domneasca” Nature Reserve.

The journey will continue to “Suta de Movile” (A Hundred Mounds) Landscape Reserve located near the Prut River, between Branesti and Cobani villages. This unique landscape situated on the slope of the Prut Valley, has a length of 8 km and a width of 2.3-1.7 km and its originality is due to the set of relief microforms - over 3500 mounds, mostly elongated with steep slopes and heights from 1.5 m to 30 m. The first documented mention of this geological phenomenon was made in 1716 in the book “Descriptio Moldoviae” written by Dimitrie Cantemir who named it as “Centum Monticulli” (A Hundred Mounds).

Next, you will travel to “Cheile Butesti” gorge dug by the Camenca River on a reef with a length of more than 2 km and a width of 125 m, which is located in the south of Butesti village. This geological formation, formed 15 to 20 million years ago in the warm tropical waters of the Sarmatian Sea and the Tortonic Sea from skeletons of corals, mollusks, shells, algae, animals and marine organisms.

After visiting “Cheile Butesti” gorge, you will return to Chisinau, where you will have dinner at the restaurant.

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Royal Forest Nature Reserve, A Hundred Mounds Landscape Reserve, Cheile Butesti gorge,

**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.