SLOW FOOD TOUR IN MOLDOVA

DAY 1

Day 1: Arrival day

Chisinau

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: Visit of the Eco Local Farmers Market

Chisinau – Cricova – Chisinau

In the morning, you will visit the **EcoLocal Farmer's Market** where you will have the opportunity to try and buy high-quality biological products directly from local farmers and producers such as nuts, almonds, honey, greens of various kinds, fruits and vegetables grown in the most ecological conditions.

The day will continue 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.

In the afternoon, you will have lunch at a traditional restaurant in Chisinau.

After lunch, you will discover **Cricova winery** – the only wine enterprise that was awarded the highest state prize “The Order of the Republic” and has been declared by law a national cultural heritage. During the excursion at Cricova winery in the tourist train, at a depth of 80 m, you will discover the wonders of this place. Cricova underground galleries are formed by over seventy streets covering an area of nearly 120 km, each bearing Bacchic names: Sauvignon, Cabernet, Cahors, etc. The jewel of the underground treasure is the National Collection, including over 600 types of wine totaling about 1 million bottles. Here you will admire the oldest bottle of wine - "Jewish Easter Wine", dating from 1902. You will also visit the unique production of sparkling wine, where a professional guide will tell you about all the process of producing sparkling wines using the famous French-style Méthode Champenoise. In one of the tasting rooms, the sommelier will explain the rules of wine tasting and help you better reveal the taste and bouquet of each type of wine.

In the evening, you will have dinner at a local restaurant in Chisinau.

HIGHLIGHTS: EcoLocal Farmer's Market , Chisinau city, Cricova Underground Wine Galleries,

DAY 3

Day 3: Relaxing in the rural atmosphere at Hanul lui Hanganu guesthouse

Chisinau – Clisova Noua – Soroca – Lalova

The day will begin with the visit of **Arta Rustica handicraft complex** in Clisova Noua village. The handmade carpets in Clisova Noua are of amazing interest and beauty. The traditional Moldovan carpets have been included in UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage. The creation of only one canvas takes several months. Every carpet is a work of art. The craftsmen of Clisova Noua village put their whole soul and free time into their craft. They restore unique carpets according to old photographs. They uses only natural materials and authentic technique during the weaving process.

In the afternoon, you will have lunch at a local restaurant in Soroca.

Next, you will visit **Soroca fortress**, the "pearl of fortification art" built by the Moldovan Prince Stephen the Great in 1499. It was a unique historical monument of defensive constructions architecture of medieval Moldova composed of a huge tower holding five smaller towers surrounding it. Currently, it is an important attraction in Soroca, having preserved cultures and kept the old Soroca in the present day.

The day will continue at **Hanul lui Hanganu guesthouse**, where you will check in and have dinner. Hanul lui Hanganu guesthouse is the perfect choice for a quiet and full of emotions stay. Here, you will surely fall in love with some of the most popular dishes in Moldova. During dinner, you will discover the taste of delicious dishes, cooked following a recipe containing secrets passed down from generation to generation.

HIGHLIGHTS: "Rustic Art" Crafts Complex, Soroca Fortress, Hanul lui Hanganu guesthouse,

DAY 4

Day 4: Horse-drawn carriage ride through Butuceni village

Lalova – Orheiul Vechi – Butuceni – Chisinau

In the morning, you will discover Orheiul Vechi (Old Orhei) - 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.

Next, you will learn how to prepare traditional Moldovan dishes during a **culinary masterclass**, which will be served at lunch together with other traditional specialties at a local guesthouse in Butuceni village.

After lunch, you will experience a **horse-drawn carriage ride** through Butuceni village. You will discover the rural life and the unspoiled nature, talk with the inhabitants, the true bearers of culture and traditions and immortalize this fascinating experience with photos.

In the evening you will have dinner at a local restaurant in Chisinau.

HIGHLIGHTS: Orheiul Vechi - a 40 thousand years-old natural amphitheater, Traditional dishes at Butuceni guesthouse , Horse-drawn carriage ride in Butuceni village,

DAY 5

Day 5: Honey tasting at Casa Mierii guesthouse

Chisinau – Capriana – Raciula – Palanca – Chisinau

You start the day by travelling to **Capriana Monastery**, founded in medieval Moldova, which is one of the oldest monasteries in the country. It is located in Capriana in a picturesque forested area once called Codrii Lapusnei. The first significant reference dates from a document issued in 1429 that gave Capriana the status of royal monastery on behalf of Alexander the Good. During a long period, Capriana Monastery acted as the residence of the Moldovan archbishop. Being closed and devastated in the post-war years, it was one of the first monasteries that reopened in 1989, becoming soon the symbol of national revival.

Next, you will travel to Raciula village where you will discover the "sweet" **Casa Mierii (Honey House) guesthouse**, where actually, in a small bees kingdom, with a bunch of beehives in the garden, and the house being transformed in a honey museum, the householder will disclose with patience all the secrets of a bee's family. You will see a small family of bees through the glass wall of a hive and taste the natural and delicious honey produced here.

You continue the day by travelling to Palanca village where you will visit **Casa Parinteasca (Parents' House) craft centre** including the museum, the peasant house from the 19th century and enjoy traditional peasant dishes, typical for Palanca village served with homemade wine. The lunch will be served along with remarkable jam and tea made from herbs collected from the garden.

In the evening, you will be transferred from Palanca to Chisinau.

HIGHLIGHTS: Capriana Monastery, Casa Parinteasca craft centre,

DAY 6

Day 6: Lunch and folk program at Casa Karaman guesthouse

Chisinau – Tiraspol – Tirnauca – Chitcani – Puhoi – Chisinau

In the morning, you will set off on a time travel in **Tiraspol**. During the city tour, you will discover Vladimir Lenin's monument and the tank left from the Second World War. The city seems to be a vestige of the Soviet past. Nevertheless, you will be amazed by the contrasts, one of which is the football complex „Sheriff" - a pearl of contemporary architecture.

In the afternoon, you will have lunch including folk program at **Casa Karaman guesthouse** in Tirnauca village. At Casa Karaman, one becomes enveloped in the rural food and wine experience. Here you can find: the vegetable garden, homemade wine, dishes with seasonal products collected in the back garden, homemade preserves in the cellar, handmade bread. You will taste the specialty of the house - chickpeas with goose meat, prepared on the fire in the cauldron. After enjoying lunch, you can relax in the garden and discover the ancient tools that our ancestors used.

Next, you will travel to Chitcani village where you will discover **Noul Neamt Monastery** which is perfect for retreat and meditation. The monastery was founded in 1861. The tour will take you to the outstanding picturesque landscape to be admired from the upper level of the highest bell tower in Moldova (64 m). The monastery museum will be highly appreciated by those who are fond of history of religion. The museum houses icons dating from the 18th-20th centuries, as well as crosses, books, priest gowns and old pictures.

The last stop of the day will be at **Asconi winery** founded in 1994 and located in Puhoi village. The winery achieved a lot due to modern wine making technologies. Nowadays at Asconi estate, European varieties are grown, but special attention is paid to indigenous varieties such as Rara Neagra, Feteasca, etc. One of the features of Asconi winery is that they pick up the grapes mechanically at night when the grapes are still cold. During the excursion, wine tasting and dinner at the winery you will be able to discover the wonders of this place.

After dinner, you will be transferred from Puhoi to Chisinau.

HIGHLIGHTS: Casa Karaman guesthouse, Noul Neamt Monastery, Asconi winery,

DAY 7

Day 7: Discovery of Gagauzia

Chisinau – Comrat – Vulcanesti – Besalma – Chisinau

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.

The day will continue at **Karagani winery** – a family winery with a specific emphasis on the Gagauz origins of the Cerven family, who owns the company. 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 gozleme, bulgur with lamb, shorpa, etc.).

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.

In the evening, you will be transferred from Besalma to Chisinau.

HIGHLIGHTS: Comrat city , Karagani winery, National Gagauz Museum of History and Ethnography "D. Cara-Ciobanu",

DAY 8

Day 8: Excursion, wine tasting and culinary masterclass at Et Cetera winery

Chisinau – Crocmaz – Cioburciu – Chisinau

In the morning, you will visit **Et Cetera family winery** and take part in the excursion and wine tasting carried out by the owner of the winery who will inform you about the methods of wine production and maturation. Each family member has a role in the work of this winery, maintaining the quality and taste of the wine, and doing everything so that this winery remains a hospitable, warm home for every visitor. Here you will enjoy tasting the young wine directly from the tank where it is stored. After the wine tasting, you will learn how to prepare a special kind of "placinta" – **"Placinta Miresei" (Bride's pie)**. This is an old tradition passed from generation to generation in the southern region, the Bride's Pie being prepared and served at the main family holidays.

You will have lunch at **Mester Faur guesthouse** in Cioburciu village – a perfect solution for all nature lovers. The guesthouse has a bungalow made of wood, covered with reed, which surprises with its construction. Here you will taste a delicious lunch.

In the evening, you will return to Chisinau.

HIGHLIGHTS: Et Cetera winery, Mester Faur guesthouse ,

DAY 9

Day 9: Departure day

Chisinau

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.