



# Wild Globe Travel Consultancy

*Tailored Wildlife, Wilderness and Adventure Travel Across the Globe.*

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## ROMANIA

**Date - July 2010**

**Duration - 7 Days**

### **Destinations**

Bucharest - Zarnesti - Magura - Piatra Craiului National Park - Brasov - Sinaia



## Trip Overview

I had not been to Romania for a number of years, but I had seen wolf on my last visit to the Carpathians and this trip was to try out a local company who offered a brown bear, wolf and lynx tour. I did not really expect to see lynx in the area that we were exploring, and indeed my guide told me that they were rarely encountered, but I always like to use local people whenever possible and I did have reasonably high hopes for a number of other animals. As it was, I saw a great deal in some stunning settings but sadly, most of the sightings were either at great distance or were very brief. Some were both and of twelve species encountered, I was only able to take even reasonable pictures of two. Much of our time was spent perched on the top of hills, scanning the valleys below and although we did see several animals this way, including a couple of brown bears, red deer, wild boar and a wild cat, none of the settings were particularly isolated and we were often disturbed by the noise of quad bikes and chainsaws. A few of the hikes were better, as there is nothing quite like walking through ancient European forest and we did have some success in terms of pine marten, red squirrel and red fox, although again no photographs. I actually only have myself to blame for one of those omissions, as I decided to abandon my hillside vigil at one stage and to go on an impromptu walk. The walk itself was fine and apparently I did not miss anything while I was away, however, I left my camera with the guide for some inexplicable reason, only to have a pine marten sit on a log directly beside me for at least three minutes. It was one of those trips really and whilst we did see a



lot of brown bears, all but two were from old hunting hides where the bears were fed to attract them. I had not been made aware that we would be baiting bears before my departure and, as I informed my hosts, this was not a satisfactory aspect of the tour or something that I will repeat. I have no real objection to the irregular and inconsequential feeding of some small mammals, but it is not a good idea to feed major predators and it is certainly not acceptable to build an entire tour around doing so. As it was, the trip was salvaged to some degree by only my second encounter with a European wild cat outside of Scotland, which we were fortunate enough to observe for about 20 minutes whilst staked out on a hill looking for bears. As we watched from one hill, the wildcat hunted and cleaned itself on another directly opposite and it would have been a great sighting if my guide had a spotting scope, which I had taken for granted when I decided to leave mine at home. I did have binoculars at least and it was still an enormous thrill to be able to spend so long with such a rarely observed animal. The other consolation, and a significant one, was the extreme beauty of the area, as the meadows were brimming with colourful wildflowers in the bright July sun and my chalet had truly magnificent views across undulating green valleys and the imposing Carpathian Mountains beyond. I actually spotted two more animals from here, a roe deer emerging from the forest at the bottom of the valley and an alpine chamois that was so far away you can barely see it in my photograph. The final highlight of the trip was seeing a Eurasian beaver on my last full day, as they are being reintroduced in various



parts of Europe and I went along to meet one of the conservationists involved in the project and to look for the animals along the Olt River near Brasov. It did not take long to find a pair, as the beavers were released a number of years ago and are now firmly established in the area. When not looking for wildlife I visited a few of the notable local attractions, including the walled medieval city of Brasov, which was fascinating and a nice place to have lunch and spend a couple of hours slowly strolling around. The eclectic Peles Castle near Sinaia was also impressive and I decided that, being in Transylvania, I would make the short pilgrimage to Bran Castle, although it has only very tenuous links to the 15th century

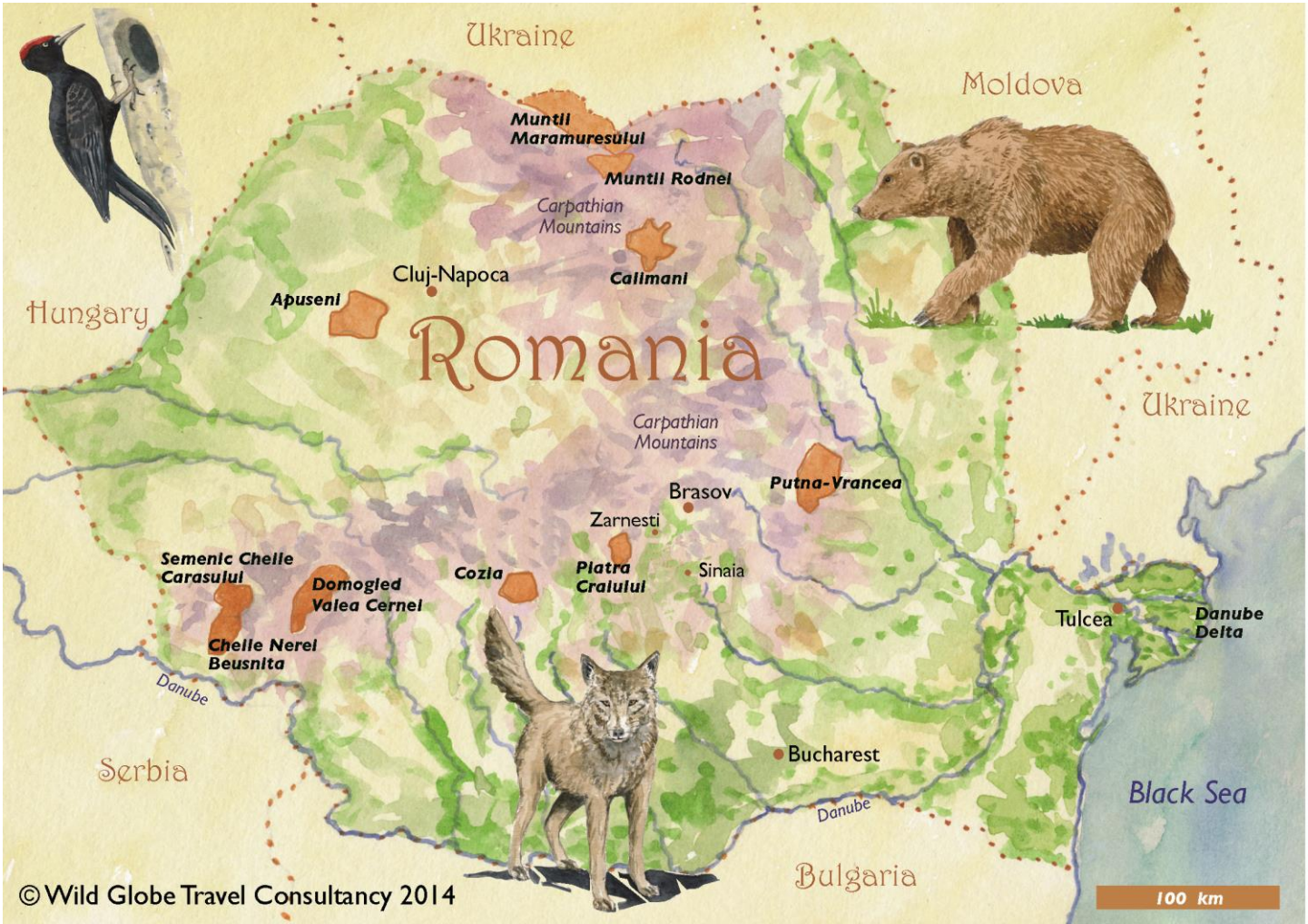
Prince of Wallachia, Vlad Tepes, upon whom Bram Stoker is said to have at least partly based Dracula. In terms of research, the trip was a successful one, as I learned a great deal about various destinations and what improvements I would make for future guests. As a wildlife tour it was less so, as the hides were disappointing and it would not have taken much extra effort to visit slightly more remote locations away from any human activity. Of course, it was partly a matter of bad luck that most of the sightings were either at great distance or were very brief, as twelve mammal species is certainly not bad for a short trip in largely dense European forest. The potential is undoubtedly there for a wonderful tour, as wolf are a genuine possibility and the region is clearly a good one for wildlife.



No.	Species	Scientific Name	Notes
1	Wild Cat	Felis silvestris	Individual animal for 20 minutes, but at distance.
2	Red Fox	Vulpes vulpes	Disturbed one lone animal on a forest walk.
3	Brown Bear	Ursus arctos	Several from two hides and two individual animals.
4	European Pine Marten	Martes martes	One next to me on a forest walk.
5	Red Deer	Cervus elaphus	Two while staking out a bear area.
6	Roe Deer	Capreolus capreolus	One at the edge of forest on the valley floor.
7	Northern or Alpine Chamois	Rupicapra rupicapra	Very distant sighting on a hike near our chalet.
8	Wild Boar	Sus scrofa	Two at distance while looking for bears.
9	European Rabbit	Oryctolagus cuniculus	Several while driving, none on foot.
10	Eurasian Red Squirrel	Sciurus vulgaris	One very briefly on a forest walk.
11	Eurasian Beaver	Castor fiber	Two animals swimming for about ten minutes.
12	Muskrat	Ondatra zibethicus	Lone individual swimming when looking for beaver.







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