

## **Slow Food Tour to Moldova, by invitation of Slow Food Chisinau Convivium**

**13 – 21 September**

**See draft programme and ideas here:**

**At last! Here!** The long promised Slow Food trip to Moldova has become a reality. From 13 September – 21 September – this is the best time in Moldova to catch the grape picking, wine making, harvesting, feasting and all – in the warmth of some gentle sunshine.

Moldova was featured in “Playing Moldovans at Tennis” by Tony Hawks, and by Michael Palin in his recent series and book “New Europe”. And the relatively new table game “Where is Moldova?” is set out to become the “Christmas Game” of the year sometime in the future... As for the multiple TV programmes and media articles on human and labour traffic from Moldova, “the poorest country in Europe”, oh, don’t ask...

The Slow Food Chisinau Convivium, as a special Thank You! for your support in setting it up, is inviting Slow Food members to discover a different Moldova – hospitable, warm, flavoursome, and yet – somewhat naïve in business, peculiar and withdrawn from the tourist world. The tour promises to be a discovery without retouches for the tourists’ eyes. Few of the proposed places are normally featured in tourist agencies’ brochures. And because it is custom-made, and a first one of this kind, the price is more than convenient – around EURO 300 for the 8 days, plus your travel costs and insurance. We are still working on the accommodation, hoping to have you all stay with a hosting family, by this – enhancing your country experience. Should this prove impossible, there will be an additional cost of about EURO 30/day for accommodation.

So, are you interested? Then have a look at our draft programme below and let me know whether you would like to come along. At this stage we would like to know how many people are going to join, before we finalise the programme and costings. Going to Moldova is easiest by plane direct to Chisinau with a stopover in Vienna, Budapest, Frankfurt or Amsterdam, costing, depending on date of booking, about £330. There is also a direct flight to Chisinau, from Stansted airport, on Tuesdays and Fridays, but it is a very long flight and somewhat unreliable (timings). The cheapest option is to fly to Bucharest (£80) and take the overnight train to Chisinau (£20). This, actually, is an experience in itself, since the train has to pass through the former Soviet border, where the width of the rails changes, and all carriages have to be lifted up on cranes, with sleeping passengers onboard, and wheels changed in the middle of the night. My British husband thinks this is hilarious and worth every penny. Another option is to fly to Bucharest and get on a minibus, for an 8 hour cross-border journey. Should there be a group of 10, we can book our own bus and negotiate prices, as well. Let me know at [tschiopu@hotmail.com](mailto:tschiopu@hotmail.com)

## Day 1

Arriving to Chisinau

Accommodation at SF Chisinau members'

Dinner with hosts

## Day 2

Tour of Chisinau, visit to the open air Food Market

Dinner in a traditional Moldovan restaurant, Slow Food Chisinau members invited

## Day 3

Excursion to Milestii Mici Winery (wine tasting and lunch included), about 40 min drive

In **Milestii Mici** visitors walk down real size streets in an underground town, situated at a depth of between 30 and 150 meters. "Milestii Mici" Winery was registered in the Guinness Book as "*possessing the biggest wine collection in the world – the „Golden Collection”, which contains over 1, 5 million bottles of wine*". The total length of the underground streets is around 50 km. These underground streets have names just like towns at ground level, appropriately taken from wines – Cabernet, Aligote, Feteasca and so on.

Free evening

## Day 4

Trip to Dubasari, Transnistria (1,5 – 2 hours drive)

This is a bit of "extreme" tourism for those who'd like to find themselves at the outer edge of Europe as you know it. If you have not heard of Transnistria, this is a breakaway republic claiming 2,000 square miles of Moldova, bordering only 40 miles from Chisinau. Apart from being renowned for its political split, Transnistria grows some of the best vegetables and fruit and is also famous for its brandy, of which bottles are sold in Chisinau for 200 dollars (half a yearly wage for some).

BBQ by the river

Free time to watch the rural life go by...

Stay over at Dubasari Villa

## Day 5

Breakfast at Villa

Returning to Chisinau

Visit to Museum of Natural History

In October 1889 Baron A. Stuard founded the oldest museum in Moldova, which during the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a research laboratory for many scientists. The museum was built in 1905 in the oriental style, thus being a unique building of this kind in Moldova. The Museum is known for its rich geology, ethnography, paleontology, zoology, entomology, archaeology and numismatic collections. The museum, through history, has kept its two specific directions: Nature and Cultural Studies of Moldova. Nowadays, next to those 10,000 objects in the collection, visitors can see famous archaeological treasures, Moldovan national carpets of the 19th century, national dress, objects of cooking, farming and entertainment, and much more.

Free evening

## Day 6

Trip to the South of Moldova (2.5 – 3 hours drive), visiting Gagauzia, a Turkish region of the country, currently under a special status of autonomy. Their 170,000 inhabitants are an unusual combination of Christian and Turkish and the cuisine and customs reflect this strongly. Some of the best vineyards are home in Gagauzia and the unique sweet Cagor wine was at some point only made in one Gagauzian village.

Dinner, Cagor wine and Gagauzian folk concert included

Stay over in local village

## Day 7

Breakfast

Returning to Chisinau

Free time, shopping.

## Day 8

Trip to the village of Capriana , 30 min drive

Picnic at Tamara's place where Tamara and her husband Tolly are building a new house, "grand designs" type...

Visit local Capriana Monastery (optional)

Capriana village is best known for its monastery which houses the oldest church in the country and is a centre of modern times pilgrimage. But we love the village more for its surrounding virgin forests, for the tranquillity away from the city life, for the wonderful local customs and very beautiful local people.

Country house dinner with traditional home made food and wine

Return to Chisinau

## Day 9

Breakfast

Departure

### **Price EURO 300 includes:**

- Transport services for 9 days by minibus
- Guide services where necessary ( Chisinau tour, museum, Capriana)
- Excursion to Milestii Mici with wine tasting and dinner
- Open air dinner in Dubasari
- Accommodation in Dubasari for 1 night
- Excursion to the South of Moldova including accommodation, dinner, Cahor tasting and folk concert
- Excursion to Capriana

The price is approximate and can change. It depends on the number of the people in the group, and included services in the program. At this point we can also accept your suggestions for something specific you would like to see/experience, let me know [tschiopu@hotmail.com](mailto:tschiopu@hotmail.com)