

# BESSARABIA & BEYOND

An unique escorted tour of Moldova & Odessa  
10<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> September 2020



NOBLE CALEDONIA



Interior of the Cave Monastery at Orheiul Vechi



Domes of Capriana Monastery



Castel Mimi

There are few places left in the world, especially in Europe, that can be legitimately referred to as ‘off the beaten track’ but Moldova is certainly a country that can lay claim to the description. Our in-depth, escorted tour of this charming country, with its rich cultural heritage, will explore a wealth of interesting sites including Medieval fortresses, magnificent wineries and the autonomous territory of Transnistria with its Soviet architecture. Crossing into Ukraine we will visit Odessa, the ‘pearl of the Black Sea’, to admire the splendid architecture and explore the fascinating labyrinth of underground tunnels before returning to Moldova where our final days will be spent admiring the beautiful, untouched countryside and of course enjoying the local food and splendid wines of the region.

## The Itinerary

**Day 1 London Stansted to Chisinau, Moldova.** Fly by scheduled flight. Arrive this evening into Moldova’s capital, Chisinau and transfer to the Radisson Blu Leograd Hotel, our base for the next five nights. Meet tonight for dinner in the hotel. (D)

**Day 2 Chisinau & Capriana Monastery.** After breakfast in the hotel, we will enjoy a walking tour of Chisinau including the Central Cathedral, Parliament building and the excellent National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History. After lunch at a local restaurant, continue on to the 15th century Capriana Monastery, the current residence of the Metropolitan Bishop and the base for many past rulers of Moldova including Stefan the Great. The monastery was closed during the Soviet rule but was reopened in the early 1990s following an extensive renovation, and is home to Moldova’s largest religious

library. We return to Chisinau this evening and enjoy dinner in a local restaurant. (B,L,D)

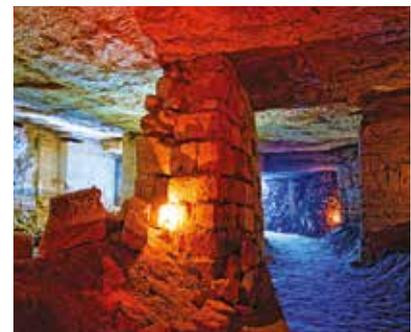
**Day 3 Cricova Winery & Orheiul Vechi.** In recent years Moldova has become renowned for its wines and this morning we will visit one of the most popular cellars at Cricova, which produces some of the country’s best sparkling wine. We will learn about the production methods, which follow the French system very closely, before exploring the huge cellar network. Situated 80 metres underground and stretching out for a total of 120 kilometres, these cellars are used by both the vineyard and many wine aficionados as a personal vault. After our tasting, we continue our journey to Butuceni for lunch in a local restaurant with national Moldovan dishes on offer. This afternoon we will visit Orheiul Vechi, Moldova’s most important historical site. See the impressive 13th century Cave Monastery,



carved into the limestone rock, the ruins of the Geto Dacian fortress and visit the Ethnographic Museum. We will return to Chisinau for dinner this evening. (B,L,D)

**Day 4 Gagauzia.** Located in southwest Moldova is the autonomous region of Gagauzia. This little-visited territory is home to Gagauzians, a minority group of Turkic origin that affiliate with the Eastern Orthodox Church. Gagauzians migrated from Bulgaria together with ethnic Bulgarians and settled in Moldova in the 19th century. We will visit the capital of the region, Comrat and, after a local lunch, tour the neighbouring village of Besalma and visit a local house to learn about life in the region. Return to Chisinau for dinner this evening. (B,L,D)

**Day 5 Clisova Noua & Soroca.** This morning we visit a handicraft museum in the village of Clisova Noua. Reflecting Moldavian way of life, customs and traditions, this small museum showcases samples of national objects of Moldavia’s people and culture. Afterwards, we head north towards Soroca near the Ukrainian border. Here, following a traditional lunch, we will visit the impressive Medieval fortress which played an important and key role in the defensive battle against the Turks and was one



Odessa Catacombs



Statue of Lenin



Vineyards of Cricova



Medieval fortress at Soroca



Orheiul Vechi Monastery

of the 'stone belt of fortresses' built to protect Moldova. Return to Chisinau for dinner this evening. (B,L,D)

**Day 6 Transnistria & Odessa, Ukraine.** Situated to the east of Chisinau, on the Ukrainian border, is the state of Transnistria. Officially part of Moldova, it is run as an autonomous territory and clings to its Soviet roots; statues of Lenin overlook the streets and Russian is the official language whilst the hammer and sickle flag flies from the buildings. We will start our day in Tiraspol, the capital of Transnistria. On a city tour we will see the monument of Lenin, outside of the Presidential Palace, the World War Two tanks, and the unique and typically Soviet architecture. Afterwards enjoy a small performance by the veterans of Transnistria. We will enjoy lunch at a local restaurant before travelling to Odessa, crossing the border into Ukraine, and arriving in the late afternoon at the Bristol Hotel, our base for the next three nights. Enjoy dinner at the hotel this evening. (B,L,D)

**Day 7 Odessa.** Founded by Catherine the Great in 1794, following the Russian victory over the Turks, Odessa today is a popular resort. On our tour we will see the famous Primorsky Boulevard and the Potemkin Steps which rise to a height of

almost 500 feet from the sea to the upper town. Also, see the acoustically perfect Opera House which is one of the most impressive buildings in Europe. Enjoy lunch in a local restaurant and this afternoon visit the Archaeological Museum. Established in 1875 it was the first museum of its kind in the former Russian Empire, housing jewellery and coins from early Black Sea civilisations. This evening attend a ballet or music performance at the Odessa National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet (subject to schedules and availability) followed by dinner in the hotel. (B,L,D)

**Day 8 Odessa Catacombs.** Today we visit the fascinating Odessa Catacombs. The sandstone on which Odessa stands is riddled with approximately 1000 kilometres of tunnels, quarried out for building in the 19th century. They have been used by smugglers, revolutionaries and World War Two partisans. Our morning tour includes a visit to one of the network of tunnels in Nerubayske village on the north-west edge of Odessa, which sheltered a group of partisans during World War Two and now has been turned into the Museum of Partisan Glory, also known as Catacombs. This afternoon and evening are at leisure to explore the city of Odessa. (B)

**Day 9 Purcari Winery & Chisinau, Moldova.** Leaving Ukraine this morning, we return to Chisinau and en-route visit the Purcari Winery where we can appreciate the local wines. Here, a unique micro-climate, the location of the vineyards on the south-western and south-eastern slopes, proximity to the Black sea and closeness to the Nistru River provides ideal conditions for the creation of high quality wines. Enjoy a tour of the cellars, the oldest in Moldova and unchanged since 1827, and a tasting before lunch at the winery. After our visit we continue our journey back to Chisinau where

we will check in to the Radisson Blu Leograd Hotel for a two night stay. Spend the evening at leisure. (B,L)

**Day 10 Castel Mimi.** After breakfast we journey to Castel Mimi. Constantin Mimi was a pioneer, an emblematic wine maker and the last Governor of Bessarabia during the Russian Empire era. By applying the knowledge he acquired in Western Europe, Constantin Mimi built the first and only true chateau in Moldova, and went on to produce some of the highest quality wines. We will explore the chateau and have a tasting before enjoying lunch at the vineyard. Return to the hotel this afternoon and enjoy some free time before meeting for our farewell dinner this evening in a local restaurant. (B,L,D)

**Day 11 Chisinau to London Stansted.** After breakfast we will check out of the hotel and transfer to the airport for our return scheduled flight to London Stansted. (B)

#### PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

Twin: **£2795** Single: **£3195**

**Group Size:** We are restricting the group size to just twenty-five participants

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • Seven nights hotel accommodation in Chisinau and three nights hotel accommodation in Odessa • Meals as indicated (B - breakfast, L - lunch, D - dinner) • Excursions • English-speaking local guide • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Gratuities • Transfers.  
**Not Included:** Travel insurance.

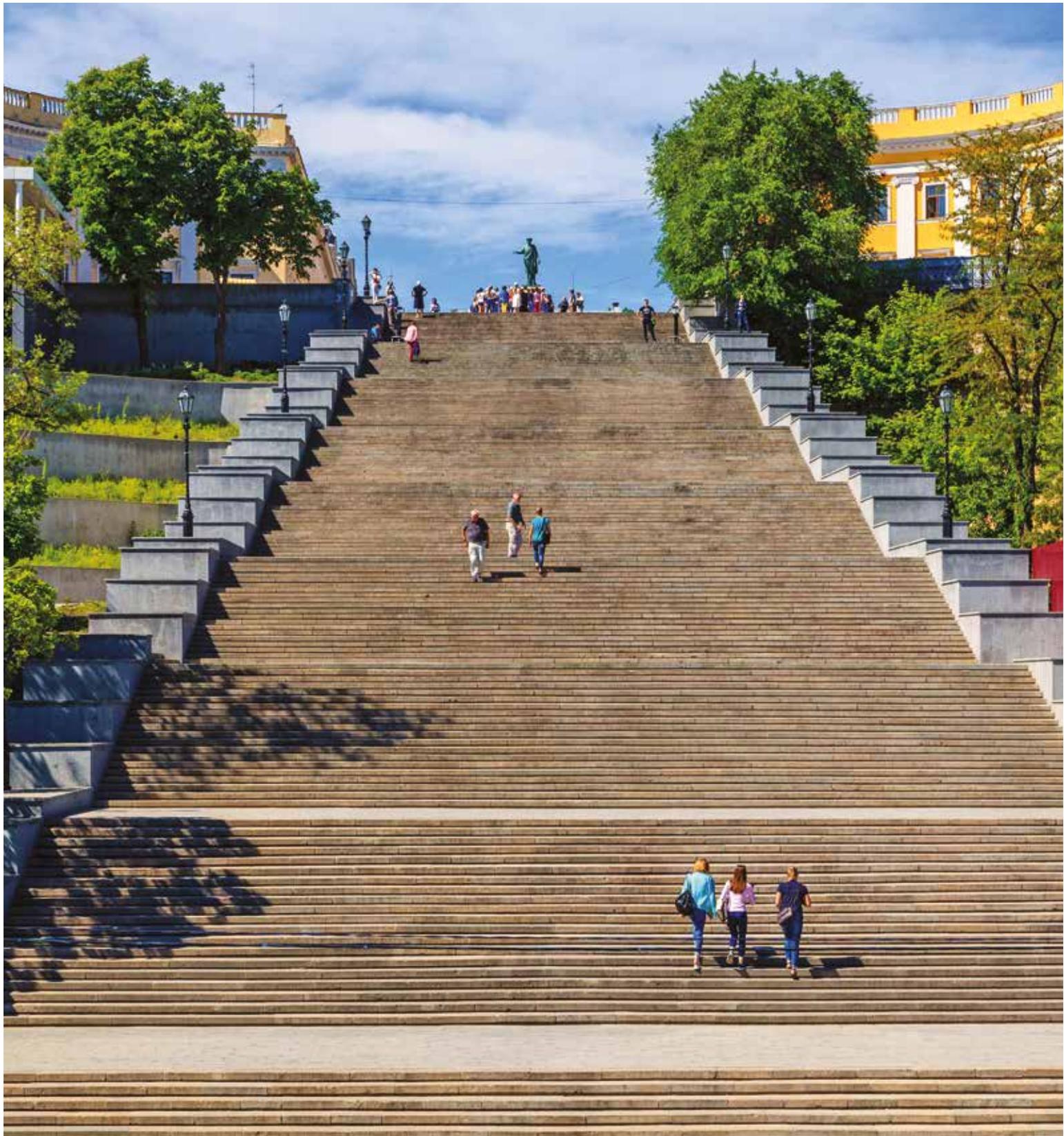
Please note: This tour will involve being on your feet for some long periods and traversing a number of cobblestoned streets and uneven paths.



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Interior of Capriana Monastery, Chisinau



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Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request.  
Cover images: Front - Odessa National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet; Back - The Potemkin Steps, Odessa