BIRDWATCHING TOUR IN MOLDOVA

DAY 1

Day 1: Arrival day and Panoramic tour of Chisinau

Chisinau

On arrival at **Chisinau International Airport**, you will be transferred to your accommodation in Chisinau. After settling in, you will enjoy **lunch** at the hotel.

After lunch, you will have an excursion to the **National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History** from Chisinau. It offers visitors a fascinating insight into the country's cultural traditions, historical legacy, and natural environment. Visitors can also admire archaeological treasures, Basarabian carpets, traditional national costumes, and many other significant cultural artifacts. Outside, the museum features a mini botanical garden and a mini zoo, creating a peaceful and educational space for visitors of all ages. One of the museum's most unique attractions is a small area dedicated to live animals – the Vivarium. The outdoor garden is home to an impressive variety of animals and birds, including swans, mandarin ducks, geese, ostriches, peacocks, hawks, and pigeons. In total, the garden houses over 130 plant species and more than 60 species of animals, reptiles, and birds.

The day will continue with a **Walking city tour of Chisinau** -the main administrative, scientific and cultural center 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. - where you will also see many charming pigeons gathering around.

In the evening, you will enjoy a **Welcome Dinner** at **Fuior Restaurant** (traditional cuisine).

HIGHLIGHTS: Chisinau city, National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History, Fuior Restaurant,

DAY 2

Day 2: Birdwatching experience at Orheiul Vechi a 40 thousand year-old natural amphitheater and wine tasting at Cricova Underground Wine Galleries

Chisinau - Butuceni - Cricova - Chisinau

In the morning, you will enjoy **birdwatching experience at Orheiul Vechi** - a natural amphitheater revealing a territory which was first inhabited 40 000 years ago. Orheiul Vechi area is a haven for birdwatchers, offering the chance to spot around 20 different bird species, including rare and migratory ones such as Common Wood-Pigeon, European Turtle-Dove, Common Cuckoo, Yellowhammer, Corn Bunting, European Goldfinch, European Starling, Great Tit, Hooded row, Common Kingfisher, Gray Heron etc. The diversity of natural habitats – cliffs, riverbanks, meadows, and patches of forest – creates ideal conditions for observing birds in their natural environment. Birdwatching is especially rewarding along the 5 km stretch of

the R?ut River between Trebujeni and Furceni, where the scenic route offers excellent access to key bird habitats and picturesque landscapes. The second part of the Orheiul Vechi excursion includes walking through a series of historical and cultural monuments that reflect the region's rich past.

In the afternoon, you will savor an **authentic Moldovan lunch** at Butuceni Eco Resort, where you will experience local specialties, as “zeama”, “mamaliga”, and “scrob”, along with traditional pastry and homemade wine.

Next, you will visit the world’s most impressive underground wine cities - **Cricova Cellars.** 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 totalling 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.

After visiting the winery, you will be transferred to Chisinau and have free time in the city.

HIGHLIGHTS: Butuceni guesthouse, Cricova Underground Wine Galleries, Birdwatching experience at Orheiul Vechi,

DAY 3

Day 3: Birdwatching adventure at Lower Dniester Park and wine tasting at Chateau Purcari

Chisinau - Causeni - Purcari - Chisinau

After breakfast, you will travel to Causeni, where you will visit the **“Assumption of the Virgin Mary” Church** - the only church in Moldova with wall frescos and candidate to UNESCO heritage. Its actual shape dates from the reconstruction made between 1763 and 1767. Its interior is rich in wall painted frescos of the specific style of the late Romanian Hurez school.
The journey will continue with **Birdwatching adventure at Lower Dniester Park** - a vast natural area characterized by lush floodplain forests, wet meadows, and vibrant lakes teeming with life. This protected region is home to 950 of plant species and 288 bird species, some of which 113 breed locally, while the rest are migratory or seasonal visitors. The region attracts many bird species, especially from neighboring Ukraine. Large flocks of glossy ibis, great white pelicans and numerous herons — such as the squacco heron, little egret, and great egret — are frequently observed. Other notable species include the white stork, various raptors like the black kite, common buzzard, kestrel, hobby, and rarer birds such as the booted eagle and red-footed falcon.

In the afternoon, you will discover **Château Purcari**, followed by a delicious **lunch at the winery**. It is the oldest winery in Moldova where the favourite wine of the royal families is served. It the leader among premium class wines from Moldova, recognized worldwide for its legendary Ro?u de Purcari and Negru de Purcari wines. Over the years, it has won more than 250 medals at prestigious international competitions such as Decanter World Wine Awards, International Wine & Spirits Competition, International Wine

Challenge, Effervescents du Monde, etc.

After visiting Chateau Purcari winery, you will be transferred to Chisinau and savor a **delightful dinner at the hotel.**

HIGHLIGHTS: “Assumption of the Virgin Mary” Church from Causeni, Château Purcari winery, Birdwatching adventure at Lower Dniester Park,

DAY 4

Day 4: Journey through Gagauzia

Chisinau - Hincesti - Comrat - Congaz - Valeni

The first stop of this day will be at **Historical Architectural complex Manuc Bey**, located in Hince?ti city in the central-western part of the Republic of Moldova; and it includes the following edifices: Palace of Manuc, House of bailiff, Countess House, Hunting Castle, Watchtower and others. The mansion is an architectural monument recorded in the Register of cultural monuments of Moldova.

Next, you will visit **Comrat** - 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 Turkish origin that affiliated with the Eastern Orthodox Church. Gagauzians migrated from Bulgaria together with ethnic Bulgarians and settled in Moldova in XIX century.

The trip will continue with excursion at the **Gagauz Sofrasi Guest House**. Our guide will take you on a tour of the entire complex and share stories about the lifestyle, culture, and traditions of the Gagauz people. You will visit the traditional guest houses, the ethnographic museum, the wine cellar, and the terrace. At the museum, you’ll have a unique opportunity to try on traditional Gagauz costumes and take beautiful photos as a memorable keepsake.

After excursion, you will enjoy a **Traditional Gagauz lunch** at the Gagauz Sofrasi guest house.

You will continue your journey with a **culinary masterclass of making ”gozleme”** - a traditional Gagauz pastry.

Next, you will be transferred to V?leni, where you will take part in the **“Traditional Carpet Weaving in the Prut River Meadow” masterclass** at Eco Village V?leni.

In the evening, you will have a **traditional dinner at Eco Village Valeni**, followed by an overnight stay there.

HIGHLIGHTS: Manuc Bei Manor, Comrat city , Gagauz Sofrasi guest house, Eco Village Valeni Guest House,

DAY 5

Day 5: Boat Ride at Beleu Lake, Birdwatching experience at ”Lower Prut” Reserve and Wine tasting at Karagani Winery

Valeni - Vulcanesti - Chisinau

After breakfast, you will go in a **boat ride at Beleu Lake** - an unique opportunity to explore the spectacular biodiversity of Lacul Beleu and its surroundings from the water. Depending on the time of year, from the observation tower overlooking the lake, you can spot birds such as: egrets, cormorants, glossy ibises, gulls, white-tailed eagles, harriers, ducks, geese, swans, marsh terns, grebes, coots, lapwings, herons, as well as large colonies, sometimes even thousands of pelicans.

The trip will continue with a spectaculous **birdwatching experience at ”Lower Prut” Reserve**. The birdlife of the “Lower Prut” region is represented by over 247 bird species, of which 51 are listed in the Red Book of the Republic of Moldova and are protected at the international level. In the reserve there are rare mammal species, including the otter, wildcat, stoat, European mink, and wild boar among other. Starting at the Reserve Headquarters, where white water lilies grow, visitors can explore the lakeshore and observe.

In the afternoon, you will have an excursion with wine tasting, followed by a **traditional lunch at Karagani Winery**. It is a family winery with a specific emphasis on the Gagauz origins of the Cerven family, who owns the company. 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.).

After visiting Karagani Winery, you will be transferred to Chisinau, where you check in at the hotel and have a fabulous dinner at the hotel.

HIGHLIGHTS: Karagani winery, Birdwatching at ”Lower Prut” Reserve, Boat Ride at Beleu Lake,

DAY 6

Day 6: Birdwatching escape at ”Plaiul Fagului” - Natural Reserve and wine tasting at Mircesti Winery

Chisinau - Radenii Vechi - Mircesti

The day will begin with a **birdwatching adventure to ”Plaiul Fagului”** that holds a special place among the forested areas of the Central Codri Plateau, thanks to its unique and charming landscapes. Among the rare bird species often seen in ”Plaiul Fagului” Reserve are the Black Stork, Booted Eagle, Honey Buzzard, Lesser Spotted Eagle, and during the summer, the elegant Mute Swan. During migration periods, lucky observers may even spot the Corncrake, a bird that is now very rare.

In the afternoon, you will discover **Mircesti Winery**, where you’ll explore the vineyards and modern cellar, learn about the winemaking process, and taste a selection of premium wines. The experience ends with a traditional Moldovan lunch made from local ingredients, served with stunning views of the surrounding hills.

After lunch, you will have excursion at **The Magic Sphere.** Near the village of Mirce?ti, Ungheni District, stands a mysterious structure known as the "magic" sphere, about 18 meters in diameter. Built during the Soviet era, it was likely intended for space-tracking equipment. Constructed in the 1970s, the dome was built to protect sensitive equipment from extreme weather conditions. The site also included a bunker with multiple functions—ranging from air traffic surveillance to the storage of classified documents and technical

photography.

In the evening, you will enjoy the **dinner at Mircesti Winery** and overnight there.

HIGHLIGHTS: Birdwatching adventure at Plaiul Fagului, Mircesti Winery, The Magic Sphere from Ungheni,

DAY 7

Day 7: Discover Cazimir Dendrological Park, walking to the highest point from Moldova - Balanesti Hill and Honey tasting at Conacul Mierii Guest House

Mircesti - Milesti - Balanesti - Ciutesti - Micleuseni - Chisinau

The first stop of this day will be at **Cazimir Dendrological Park** - a national monument of landscape architecture established in the second half of the 19th century.The park is based on the layout of an ancient Roman "rustic villa". Its radial alleys separate various centuries-old trees, including two Ginkgo Biloba trees—one female and one male. Locals affectionately call them "Adam and Eve."

The trip will continue with a walk to **Balanesti Hill** - the highest point in the Republic of Moldova. This peaceful natural area is an ideal place for a short break, featuring a swing and a gazebo where visitors can relax and enjoy the surroundings. Also known as Miron's Peak, B?l?ne?ti is the highest geodetic point in the Republic of Moldova – 429 meters above sea level. However, it does not resemble a sharp mountain peak, but rather a gently rounded hill.

Upon arrival at the top of B?l?ne?ti Hill, you will savor a **delightful lunch** with panoramic views.

After lunch, you will walk to Ciutesti with stop at **The Wooden Church of Ciute?ti.** The architecture of the Wooden Church of Ciute?ti resembles that of stone churches. The church is located on a small hillside in the village, situated in the middle of the old cemetery. It is a modest wooden structure built on beams fixed to stone slabs, with walls constructed from horizontal logs.

The journey will continue with excursion and masterclass at the **Museum of Craft Design from Ciutesti**. The museum also hosts an exhibition featuring creative works by children from the Ciute?ti School of Fine Arts and from the Masca Artistic Studio. Various mask-making workshops are organized in the museum spaces, where visitor groups can register and participate.

In the evening, you will visit **Conacul Mierii Guest House**. This unique destination offers a captivating insight into the world of beekeeping and honey production, set within a picturesque environment. During your visit, you'll have the delightful opportunity to sample various types of exquisite local honey, experiencing the distinct flavors and aromas directly from the hive.

After excursion with honey tasting at Conacul Mierii guest house, you will be transferred to Chisinau, have the **Farewell Dinner at the hotel** and enjoy your last night in Chisinau.

HIGHLIGHTS: Balanesti Hill, Cazimir Dendrological Park, Wooden Church of Ciutesti, Museum of Craft Design from Ciutesti, Conacul Mierii guesthouse ,

DAY 8

Day 8: 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 visit an **Art Souvenir Market and/or do some shopping**. In Chisinau you'll find a lot of places where you can purchase some memories about Moldova. Good places for shopping are "Sun City", "Grand Hall" and "Jumbo" commercial centers and "Malldova" or "Zity Mall".
Also, you can visit **Central Market of Chisinau** where you will have opportunity to taste and buy quality ecological products right from the local farmer and producer. Walnuts, almonds, honey, different kinds of greens, fruits and vegetables grown in the most ecological conditions.

HIGHLIGHTS: Central Market in Chisinau ,