MOLDOVA SPRING TOUR - MARTISOR TRADITIONS

DAY 1

Day 1: Arrival day

Chisinau

On arrival at Chisinau International Airport, you will arrange on your own the transfer to the hotel in Chisinau. After settling in, you can have a walk through downtown and explore the city centre on your own.

Optional: Dinner at the restaurant.

DAY 2

Day 2: Visit of “Martisor” exhibition and “Martisor” masterclass at the National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History

Chisinau

In the morning, you will visit the **National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History** where you will see the exhibition of “Martisor”, which is a small piece of adornment, made of white and red yarn and usually in the form of two dolls, a male and a female. It is part of the cultural practices associated to the 1st of March consisting mainly of the wearing of a red and white thread with the purpose of ensuring the safe and harmonious passage from winter to spring. “Martisor” was included by UNESCO on its intangible cultural heritage of humanity list. At the museum, you will also enjoy a **masterclass of “Martisor”**, during which you will learn how to make the “Martisor”.

Next, you will enjoy a **tour of Chisinau city** which 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.

You will have **lunch and wine tasting at a local wine bar** in Chisinau.

In the evening, you will have the option to attend the concert dedicated to “Martisor” Festival.

HIGHLIGHTS: National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History, Exhibition of "Martisor", Chisinau city,

DAY 3

Day 3: Discovery of the Cultural, Natural and Landscape Reserve Orheiul Vechi

Chisinau - Curchi - Orheiul Vechi - Butuceni - Cricova - Chisinau

The first stop of this day will be at **Curchi Monastery**. The monastery is surrounded by a high wall of stone, set with towers at each corner, creating the impression of a fortress. The Nativity of Virgin Mary Church built in 1775 by Iordache Curchi is an example of neo-byzantine style, while St. Nicholas Church has monumental forms built in classicism style with baroque elements.

Next, you will set off on a time travel to Orheiul Vechi (Old Orhei) to see 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 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.

In the afternoon, you will have lunch at Butuceni guesthouse in Butuceni village where you will taste dishes from the slow local cuisine.

The day will continue with an excursion and wine tasting at **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, discover the tastes of Cricova wines and enjoy an exquisite dinner.

In the evening, you will have the option to attend the concert dedicated to “Martisor” Festival.

HIGHLIGHTS: Curchi Monastery, Orheiul Vechi - a 40 thousand years-old natural amphitheater, Traditional dishes at Butuceni guesthouse , Cricova Underground Wine Galleries,

DAY 4

Day 4: Discovery of the largest cosmetics and perfumery producer in Moldova – “Viorica Cosmetic”

Chisinau - Puhoi - Bulboaca - Chisinau

In the morning, you will visit “Viorica Cosmetic” and enjoy a workshop at the factory. **“Viorica-Cosmetic” factory** was founded in 1989 and is still positioning as the largest cosmetics and perfumery producer in Moldova. In the production process, “Viorica-Cosmetic” harnesses the gifts of nature: unique plants growing in ecologically pure areas of Moldova, as well as plants recognized worldwide in the international beauty industry for curative effects, as well as skin and hair care. After the excursion, you will enjoy a workshop which includes a masterclass on preparing a scrub for the body, which is useful for both women and men.

In the afternoon, you will be transferred to **Aconi winery** 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 and wine tasting at the winery you will be able to discover the wonders of this place. You will also have free time for an optional lunch at the winery.

Next stop will be in Bulboaca village at **Castel Mimi winery -** a destination of interest unique in Moldova. Castel Mimi is currently listed among the most beautiful architectural masterpieces in the world of wine. The story of the castle begins at the end of 1893, when Constantin Mimi, the last governor of Bessarabia, plants the first grape vines on the place that would become legend over the years. Here, you will enjoy an excursion, wine tasting and dinner in a beautiful atmosphere with live music.

HIGHLIGHTS: "Viorica-Cosmetic" factory , Asconi winery, Castel Mimi winery,

DAY 5

Day 5: Departure day

Chisinau

On departure day, you will arrange on your own the transfer 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.

Optional activities before the flight:

-Lunch at a local restaurant;
-Local brewed beer tasting.