MOLDOVA – UKRAINE WINE AND CULTURE TOUR

DAY 1

Day 1: Arrival in Chisinau, Moldova

Chisinau

On arrival at Chisinau International Airport, 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.

After the tour, you will check in at the hotel and enjoy the rest of the day on your own.

HIGHLIGHTS: Chisinau city,

DAY 2

Day 2: Visit of Orheiul Vechi - a 40-thousand-year-old natural amphitheater and culinary experience at Butuceni guesthouse

Chisinau – Orheiul Vechi – Butuceni – Cricova – Chisinau

The day will begin with the visit of **Central Market in 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.

Next, you will visit Orheiul Vechi (Old Orhei) - 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 remnants of the first human settlements were found in the stone caverns from here. On the rocky hill, you will find the ruins of a strong Geto-Dacian fortification, which acted as a sanctuary for celebrating religious holidays and rituals in this prehistoric community. 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.

The day will continue at Butuceni guesthouse, where you will enjoy a **culinary masterclass** during which you will learn how to cook traditional “placinte” (pies) with sour cherries. At lunch you will taste traditional Moldovan dishes such as “zeama” (chicken soup with homemade egg noodles), “mamaliga” and Moldovan sweet “placinte” which melt in the mouth.

The journey will continue 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 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.

HIGHLIGHTS: Central Market in Chisinau , Orheiul Vechi - a 40 thousand years-old natural amphitheater, Butuceni guesthouse, Traditional dishes at Butuceni guesthouse , Cricova Underground Wine Galleries,

DAY 3

Day 3: Discovery of Tighina fortress and brandy tasting in Tiraspol

Chisinau – Tighina – Tiraspol

In the morning, you will discover **Tighina fortress** located in Tighina town and built in the 15th century by the prince of Moldova, Stephen the Great. Originally built as a small wooden fort, it was later fortified in stone by the prince of Moldova, Petru Rares. Occupied by the Ottomans in 1538 (in a campaign lead by the sultan Suleiman the Magnificent), the fort was strengthened in 1541 and became the center of an Ottoman "raya" (in which were included the surrounding Moldavian villages). In the 18th century, the fort was strengthened by Moldovan craftsmen under the direct supervision of Dimitrie Cantemir. Tighina Fortress is an architectural ensemble of irregular quadrilateral plan, surrounded by wide walls, 2-3 meters thick, made of limestone and brick.

In Tiraspol you will have lunch at a local restaurant.

After lunch, you will enjoy **tour of Tiraspol city**, during which you will discover Vladimir Lenin’s monument and the tank left from the Second World War. The city seems to be a vestige of the Soviet past. Nevertheless, you will be amazed by the contrasts, one of which is the football complex „Sheriff” - a pearl of contemporary architecture.

Next, you will visit **Kvint wine and brandy factory** where harmony, refinement and tradition underlie the oldest and most genuine spirits. Here you will be acquainted with the taste of 5-10 years old spirits that will certainly impress you.

After visiting Kvint wine and brandy factory, you will check in at the hotel in Tiraspol.

HIGHLIGHTS: Tighina Fortress, Tiraspol city, Kvint wine and brandy Factory,

DAY 4

Day 4: Discovery of Odessa city - the pearl of the Black Sea in Ukraine

Tiraspol – Odessa

In the morning, you will be transferred to Odessa city, known as the pearl of the Black Sea.

Once arrived in Odessa, you will enjoy a **tour of Odessa city**. You will discover the varied architecture of urban development which will allow you to take a journey through all the old epochs and styles. You will see such architectural pearls as the Opera and Ballet Theater, undoubtedly one of the most beautiful buildings in the city, Potemkin Stairs, considered the city's flagship, the Seaside Boulevard and the De Ribas Street serving as a meeting place for locals and tourists. De Ribas Street was named after José de Ribas, a Spanish military officer from Naples who was the builder of Odessa, the head of military and civil administration and had a house on this street. In addition, you will discover the Port of Odessa and its extraordinary history and see the statue of the Duke De Richelieu who was the Governor of Odessa. During his administration, the city greatly increased in size and importance.

In the afternoon, you will have lunch at a local restaurant where you will enjoy Ukrainian traditional dishes.

After lunch you will explore **Odessa Catacombs**. The catacombs form perhaps the largest network of tunnels in the world which appeared during the construction of the city 200 years ago, when the stone was extracted from the mines. The Catacombs are on three levels reaching a depth of 60 m below sea level and running up to 2,500 km. They consist of a network of basements, bunkers, drainage tunnels and storm drains as well as natural caves. During the city's first years of construction, the catacombs became a refuge for various gangs who organized deposits of various goods exported from Odessa by smuggling.

In the evening, you will check in at the hotel in Odessa.

HIGHLIGHTS: Odessa city, Odessa Catacombs,

DAY 5

Day 5: Excursion at Akkerman fortress and discovery of Shabo Wine Culture Centre

Odessa – Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyi – Shabo – Purcari

In the morning, you will be transferred to Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyi where you will visit the **Akkerman fortress** (White fortress) that today represents one of the most majestic examples of medieval defensive architecture in all Europe. The fortress dates back to the 13th century, when it was erected by Genoese merchants. In the 14th century, the territory came under the control of the Principality of Moldova. Bilhorod was called Cetatea Alba (literally the White Fortress). By 1440 were built the main elements of the fortress. The fortress had 34 towers, some as tall as 20 meters.

On your way to Shabo Wine Culture Centre, you will make a stop at a local **Cheese Factory**.

In the afternoon, you will have lunch at a local restaurant.

Next, you will visit **Shabo Wine Culture Centre** that is not only one of the leading Ukrainian wineries that follows the standards of high grape growing but is also aimed at promoting high culture of noble beverages drinking. It is located in Odessa Region, one of Europe's oldest regions where winemaking traditions are dated as far back as the ancient times. Shabo is a unique Europe terroir where grapes have been grown since the 6th century. It was founded in 1822 and has over 1,200 hectares of vineyards. Shabo Wine Culture Center

is the only tourist complex in Ukraine located right on the premises of an active winemaking enterprise, combining state-of-the art, high-tech production process with unique historical and cultural landmarks.

In the evening, you will be transferred from Shabo to Purcari village in Moldova, where you will discover Château Purcari winery and spend the night at this place.

HIGHLIGHTS: Akkerman fortress, Shabo Wine Culture Centre ,

DAY 6

Day 6: Discovery of Château Purcari winery - famous all over the world due to the legendary wine “Negru de Purcari”

Purcari – Puhoi – Chisinau

In the morning, you will enjoy an excursion and wine tasting at **Château Purcari winery** founded in 1827 in Moldova. If you are a wine enthusiast or just love to be in beautiful, pristine surroundings and listening the songs of birds, Purcari estate is definitely the place you need to visit. The old mansion’s galleries feature great collections of Purcari wines, some bottles dating back to 1948. The winery is famous all over the world due to the legendary wine “Negru de Purcari” - the elixir that in 1878 was highly appreciated on the international arena by being awarded the gold medal at Paris World Exhibition.

The day will continue at **Asconi winery** in Puhoi village, where you will enjoy an excursion, wine tasting and lunch. This is a family-owned winery, whose foundation is a long-standing tradition and experience in the production of Moldovan wine. 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.

After visiting Asconi winery, you will be transferred to Chisinau where you will check in at the hotel.

HIGHLIGHTS: Château Purcari winery, Asconi winery,

DAY 7

Day 7: Castel Mimi winery – architectural masterpiece in the world of wine

Chisinau – Bulboaca – Chisinau

In the morning, you will have some free time for shopping. You can enjoy visiting “Mihai Eminescu” Theatre Square, where you will be amazed by the souvenir market with national tourism brand “Moldova – discover the routes of life”, Viorica Cosmetics - cosmetic company store and Moldovan brands “Din inima”. Then, good places for shopping are “Sun City”, “Grand Hall” and “Jumbo” commercial centers and “Malldova” shopping centre.

The day will continue at **Castel Mimi winery** located in Bulboaca village - 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.

After visiting Castel Mimi winery, you will be transferred to Chisinau International Airport.

HIGHLIGHTS: Castel Mimi winery,