WINE FESTIVAL TOUR IN MOLDOVA

DAY 1

Day 1: Arrival day

Chisinau

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

In the evening, you will have the option to enjoy a Moldovan traditional dinner at a local restaurant in the city.

DAY 2

Day 2: Wine experience at Cricova winery (120 km)

Chisinau – Curchi – Butuceni – Orheiul Vechi – 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.

The day will continue 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.

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

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

DAY 3

Day 3: Attend the Wine Festival - the most important event dedicated to wine in Moldova

Chisinau

In the morning, you will discover Chisinau - the main administrative, scientific and cultural centre of Moldova. During the **walking tour of Chisinau**, you will see 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, the City Hall, etc.

Next, you will attend the **Wine Festival** (first day of the festival) officially named National Wine Day. During the festival, Moldovan wineries proudly display their wines in individual stands, often richly decorated in national style, and offer wine tastings to visitors. The guests of the festival can find a vast range of wines: from dry, sweet, semi-sweet, and fortified wines to rare "collection wines", produced 10-20 years ago and stored in Moldova's famous underground cellars. While wine is the main attraction, many local restaurants and cafes offer traditional foods: grilled meats, placinte, other traditional dishes, fruits, and desserts. The festival is known for its local color, with traditional music and dance and people dressed in national costumes. You will also have the possibility to buy Moldovan handicrafts.

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

After lunch, you will have free time to enjoy on your own in Chisinau.

HIGHLIGHTS: Chisinau city, Wine Festival,

DAY 4

Day 4: Time travel in Tiraspol – Back in the USSR

Chisinau – Tighina – Tiraspol – Bulboaca – Chisinau

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 set off on a time travel. During the **city tour**, 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.
In the afternoon, you will have lunch at a restaurant in Tiraspol.

After lunch, you will visit **Castel Mimi winery** in Bulboaca village and enjoy the celebration of Wine Festival at the castle. 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.

In the evening, you will have free time at the **Wine Festival** in Chisinau (second day of the festival).

HIGHLIGHTS: Tighina Fortress, Tiraspol city, Castel Mimi winery,

DAY 5

Day 5: Departure day

Chisinau

On departure day, you will arrange your own 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.