



Travel Information for October 2007 R8 Committee in Bucharest (*București*), Romania

Romanian currency is the Lei (ISO abbreviation RON). The exchange rate is ~ 3.2 New Lei to one Euro. The Lei is divided into 100 Bani. Note that the Romanian currency was divided by 10000 a few years ago. All Romanian bank notes use polymer (not paper). Old bank notes might be exchangeable in banks, but not elsewhere.

example of OLD
Lei bank notes



The Romanian language is based upon Latin, so has similarities to Italian, and to some extent French (perhaps even more to Catalan) – so unlike the last two R8 Committee meetings, you will not be surrounded by the Cyrillic alphabet. You will see the character ‘ț’ in many words, pronounced ‘ts’. Note that although Gypsies are also called Roma (means man or husband in the language of the Roma), that has no connection whatsoever with the name Romania.

Hotel:

Our meeting is at the Novotel, a new hotel built on the site of the old (destroyed) National Theatre: the original front of the theatre has been incorporated into the design.

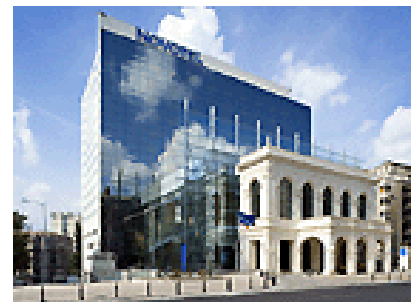
Address: 37B Calea Victoriei, Sector 1, 010061 BUCHAREST, Tel : (+40)21/3088500, Fax : (+40)21/3088501



Old National Theatre as it used to be



Novotel construction



Final result

Airports:

Bucharest has two airports, both north of the city. The main one is **Otopeni** airport (called Henry Coanda airport after the Romanian inventor of the jet engine). The older **Baneasa** airport (also called Auerel Vlaicu) is nearer to the city, and is used mainly by Blue Air and other budget airlines.

Transport from Airport:

From **Otopeni** airport, the 783 bus travels regularly to the City Centre, and goes fairly near the Novotel hotel. You may have to struggle past a row of unofficial taxi drivers who will try to prevent you from finding the bus. Go downstairs from the arrivals area to find the bus departure place.

Only round trip tickets for the bus can be purchased, there are no singles. Buy from the sales booth at the terminal building exit before boarding. Tickets have a magnetic strip which is read by a machine on entering the bus. These tickets are different from and not compatible with the cheaper ones for City buses – but they are still cheap (~ 5 Lei for one return ticket). In the absence of other advice, get off at a stop in the vicinity of the easily recognised Intercontinental Hotel (will be on left-hand side of the bus route) – do not travel further on the bus.

From **Baneasa** airport, the 131 (and perhaps 301) city buses travel to Piața Romana – and might not go further, so you may need to change to a local bus or taxi for the last part to get to the Novotel. Do not take the 205 bus, which goes to the Gara de Nord rail station (nowhere near the Novotel). As with the 783, you need to buy the ticket from a booth before boarding the bus. Baneasa airport is in the City Zone, so the standard cheaper tickets are appropriate (~ 1 Lei per trip?).

The 783 goes along the road outside Baneasa airport but does not, as far as I know, go into the terminal area.

If using taxis, be sure that they are ‘official’ (e.g. belong to named, known taxi companies) and that they use their meter. “Independent” taxis may be legal but are likely to charge much more.

Arrival by Train:

International train travellers will most likely arrive at the Gara de Nord, to the west of the main centre. Here you will also find aggressive taxi drivers. It is possible to travel by the Metro or by surface public transport to Piața Universiteii, which is not far from the Novotel. Metro tickets are not the same as bus/tram/trolley-bus tickets, and the Metro journey would require a change from the red (M1) line to the blue (M2) line at Piața Victoriei.

Travel within Bucharest:

The public transportation system is comprehensive and cheap. There are pickpockets and beggars to avoid, but no worse than in most major European cities.

Bucharest used to be called ‘Paris of the East’ and is on the Dâmbovița river. However, this river is not at all scenic within the city, and of little interest to visitors. A large area of historic Bucharest was destroyed to make space for the ‘street of unity’ (B-dul. Unirii) and ‘house of the people’ (Casa Poporului). This huge building of the Ceaușescu era, now called the Parliament Palace (Palatul Parlamentului), is one of the world’s largest .



The name Bucharest is said to be derived from that of a flute-playing shepherd, whose music and wine so impressed local people that they named the town after him. It became the capital of Romania in 1862. A former capital was Iași, in north-east Romania. Bucharest has many fine buildings, wide boulevards, large squares and statues, but behind the main street-fronts, much is still in need of repair.



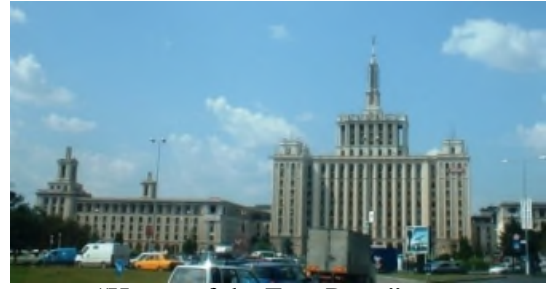
Atheneum, Circul militaire, Aviation heroes statue, Patriarch’s palace, church at peasants museum



Memorial to anti-communist heroes



Intercontinental hotel



“House of the Free Press”

If you have spare time in Bucharest, consider visiting the Village Museum and the Peasants Museum, and take the tour of the Parliament Palace (during which you will see a lot but it will be only a minute fraction of the whole building!)



It is unlikely that you will have a dog with you, but for those of you unfamiliar with the Romanian language, you might start by reading the sign illustrated!

← dog regulation

Nearby places to visit:

The International Semiconductor Conference (CAS 2007) will take place immediately after the R8 Committee meeting (15-17 October) - the 30th in an annual sequence. All papers are in the English language. It is located at Sinaia, a small town in a rural Carpathian mountain area to the north of Bucharest (about 120 km away) – it seems easily accessible by a regular train service from Gara de Nord. Sinaia is the location of Peles Castle. In the same direction you could visit Bran Castle, associated with Vlad Țepeș (Count Dracula) who is regarded as a local hero in Romania. This is a nicer place than you might expect, if you can close your eyes to the Hollywood-inspired nonsense. Further past Sinaia is Brașov (once known by the German name of Kronstadt, and then inhabited by a Saxon community) which is also worth a visit.



Vlad ‘Dracula’



Brașov



Poet Mihai Eminescu

web links: www.bucharest-map.com/
www.otp-airport.ro/ (Otopeni airport) www.infofer.ro/ (rail information)
www.ratb.ro (public transportation, out-of-date site) www.miculparis.ro/
www.romanianvoice.com/poezii/poeti_tr/eminescu_eng.php (Mihai Eminescu’s poems)
www.brancusi.ro/ (life and works of sculptor Constantin Brâncuși)



- Yellow oval: location of Novotel
- Blue oval: Piața Revoluției
- Red oval: Intercontinental Hotel (tall landmark) – see picture on previous page
- Green oval: New National Theatre
- Pink circle: Piața Universității (may be called Piața 21 Dec 1989 on some maps)
- Yellow dashed line: Route of 783 airport bus

Note that the university in the city centre (near Piața Universității) is NOT the Politechnic University of Bucharest (Universitatea Politehnică din București), which is outside the centre, to the west