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Transylvania



Synopsis

Transylvania is the birthplace of Dracula, where the Pied Piper carried the children of Hamelin, and home to Harry Potter's dragons. It's a place where truth is often stranger than fiction: streams run with silver, the mountains are full of gold, and haystacks can be found in trees. Newly awakened from its communist years, Transylvania is changing rapidly. In splendid photographs and sparkling text, this handsome large-format book captures a land both steeped in tradition and embracing the future.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Bronwen Riley's words and Dinescu's pictures should inspire more travelers to explore this repository of Romanticism while it lasts. --Daily Telegraph
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Bronwen Riley lived for a time in the remote mountains of Transylvania, studying village traditions and learning Romanian. An Oxford Classics graduate, she specialised in the post-Byzantine art of Romania at the Courtauld Institute, London. She is now managing editor of guidebooks at English Heritage and organises tours of small groups to share her great enthusiasm for and knowledge of Romania. Bucharest-born Dan Dinescu is best known for his marvellous documentation of Maramures, a region in north-west Romania where life stayed unchanged for centuries. Over the

course of 25 years, he has captured the people and places of this remote country in luminous, memorable images.

I absolutely relish the magnificent and delicate photos in this book. They are the main reason I bought the book. There are subtly colored landscapes, touched with winter frost or first snow, with shepherds and flocks of sheep, old traditional wooden churches, Romanian peasants walking down muddy roads in traditional costume. A Saxon woman shows off her treasured keepsakes and wears traditional Saxon black frock and white blouse, black headscarf. A rosy-cheeked grandmother leads her horse through a field. Gypsies in colorful garb sell a copper distilling kettle for making plum brandy. Villagers engage in a parade-celebration of the "festival of the plough." The author Bronwen Riley tells of her adventures traveling and visiting among the people of this region of Romania which she describes as one of the last bastions of a traditional way of life, which is quickly disappearing, in its demise since the Romanian Revolution in 1989. "The culture that sustained this life for a thousand years, which survived the invaders, two world wars and COmmunism, has almost vanished in one generation." Bronwen tells many interesting tales of her visits with villagers, and the stories they tell, such as of the Saxon woman who dressed her up in traditional Saxon dress, and wasn't satisfied until every wisp of her hair was tucked in. Or the tales of village witches who, when threatened by the tax collector to pay tax for their work, duly respond that they have now put lifelong curses on said tax collectors. While it's sad to read about the fragility of this traditional way of life (represented for instance in the anecdote that many of these poor villagers prefer the mass-produced, made-in-China fake leather jackets they buy in town to the traditional clothing that they make by hand), yet one feels, in looking at these photos and reading about the old ways of life here, that something essential about the human spirit is being revealed, which will never die, even though it may change form. Even as the poor Romanian peasants prefer the American soap operas and China-made cheap and tawdry products, Americans (and Europeans and others) from privileged and much wealthier backgrounds are turning against the banal trends of mass culture, and returning to Earth-based and folk practices, which often means going in search of our ancestral roots in Europe. This book seems to be a result of such a meeting of paths.

Lovely pictures, interesting and informative text.

Excellent narrative and great photos!! Would recommend to anyone with interest in eastern Europe, specially Romania. Great reference to any regional traveler.

Love this book. Full of beautiful photos. Very nicely put together. Would even consider buying another copy for our Minnesota Romania Genealogy Society.

this is a beautiful book - wonderful text and stories - not just lovely photos. Good stories about very specific people and groups.

If you're a Romanian and you want to offer this book as a gift to someone who has never been in Romania, think twice. The photos are nice, but they depict mainly old Romanian customs and people, so if you want to show a real view of modern Romania this is not the right choice... you risk making people believe that Romania is some feudal looking country, which is not the case nowadays.

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