



ROMANIA BIRD AND MAMMAL TOUR: TRANSYLVANIAN BROWN BEAR EXTENSION

23–26 MAY 2027

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*Romania is home to the largest concentration of **Brown Bears** in Europe.*

Overview

This short extension takes us into the wild, forested mountains of Transylvania, where we focus on intimate and repeated encounters with one of Europe's most iconic mammals, the **Brown Bear**. This tour directly follows and compliments our Birding Tour Bulgaria and Romania: Birding the Balkans in Spring, our flagship tour to the region, which explores woodlands, wetlands, mountain steppe, rocky gorges, farmland, the Black Sea coastline, and the vast Danube Delta, targeting a high diversity of European species in their beautiful breeding plumages. In contrast, this extension offers a different experience, with a slower pace, more relaxed forest birding, and evenings spent in wildlife watching hides for the chance of prolonged, close-up views of some of Europe's most iconic mammals in the breathtaking Carpathian Mountains.

The Carpathians and surrounding Transylvanian forests are among the best areas in Europe for observing **Brown Bears**, and we will spend two evenings in wildlife hides managed to maximize opportunities for mammal watching. While our main aim is memorable views and photography opportunities of wild **Brown Bears**, the hides may also provide chances for **Red Deer**, **Roe Deer**, **Wild Boar**, **Red Fox**, and, if we're extremely lucky, possibly even **Eurasian Lynx** or **Grey Wolf**. The evening sessions are often beautifully atmospheric experiences in their own right, as the forests settle into dusk.



*The diminutive **Eurasian Pygmy Owl** is mostly active at dawn and dusk, but it can be seen hunting during the daytime as well.*

During the day, we will explore nearby meadows, deciduous woodland, ancient conifer forests, and mountain villages in search of species we would not expect on the main tour, such as **Great Grey Shrike** and **Fieldfare**, as well as species missed during the main tour or those we want

improved views of. These may include **Black Woodpecker**, **Crested Tit**, **Marsh Tit**, **Common Firecrest**, **Collared Flycatcher**, **Common Crossbill**, and we will have further opportunities to target **Wallcreeper** if it was missed on the main tour. Aside from these more abundant forest species, several secretive birds are far from guaranteed, but with luck and persistence, we may find **Hazel Grouse**, **Western Capercaillie**, **Boreal Owl**, **Eurasian Pygmy Owl**, **Ural Owl**, or **White-backed Woodpecker**.



*The enormous **Black Woodpecker** boasts the largest wingspan of any woodpecker in the world.*

This extension is well suited to those wishing to add a more relaxed, mammal-focused finale to the main Bulgaria and Romania tour, while also enjoying birding in the stunning forests and valleys of the Carpathians, not to mention the famous hearty Transylvanian hospitality.

Detailed Itinerary (4 days/3 nights)

Day 1. Bucharest to Brasov

This short extension starts in the Romanian capital Bucharest, where the main Bulgaria and Romania tour finishes. Leaving the capital, we will journey north to overnight in the quaint Transylvanian city of Brasov. Depending on time, we may enjoy some casual birding on the way to our accommodation, as even brief stops in the foothills could produce raptors such as **European Honey Buzzard**, **Lesser Spotted Eagle**, and **Eurasian Goshawk**, along with forest species such as **Black Woodpecker**, **Eurasian Nuthatch**, **Common Redstart**, and **European Serin**. Once in Brasov, we will settle in for the night and prepare for the beautiful days ahead.

Overnight: Hotel Casa Wagner, or similar, Brasov

Day 2. Travel to Zetea and evening session in the hide

We continue north through the Carpathians toward the Zetea area of eastern Transylvania. Depending on which species may be needed after the main tour, we may detour into the Piatra Craiului Mountains, giving us another opportunity to search for **White-backed Woodpecker**, **Northern Nutcracker**, and **Common Firecrest**, among others. Irrespective of our route, our drive takes us through one of Romania's most scenic regions, winding past wooded hills, traditional mountain villages, and ancient forested ridges. We may break the journey with a visit to the Sânpaul Wetland. Possible highlights include **Ferruginous Duck**, **Eurasian Bittern**, **Bearded Reedling**, and **Savi's Warbler**, along with many more widespread wetland species which we expect to encounter during the main Bulgaria and Romania tour.



Common Firecrest is a tiny bird with a lot of character!

After check-in at our remote mountain lodge, we will spend time birding locally before our first afternoon and evening hide session. The surrounding mosaic of forest, meadows, and gardens can be productive, and we will look for birds that we will likely not encounter on the main tour, such as **Great Grey Shrike** and **Fieldfare**, with good chances of **Marsh Tit**, **Garden Warbler**, **Mistle Thrush**, **Collared Flycatcher**, and **White-throated Dipper**.

In the late afternoon, we will settle quietly into one of the hides for our first opportunity to observe **Brown Bears**. The session usually continues for around four hours, allowing us to experience the forest as the light softens and mammalian activity increases. While we wait, it is possible that we see **Red Fox**, **Red Deer**, **Roe Deer**, and **Wild Boar**, and with patience, we hope to enjoy excellent views of **Brown Bears** as they feed and interact, offering the chance to witness natural behaviour at close range and capture memorable photographs from the hide.

Overnight: Hargita Bear Lodge, Zetea

Day 3. Birding in the Zetea area and second Brown Bear hide session

Our plans for the day will remain flexible, depending on local information, weather conditions, and the species we have already seen, before we end with another session in the hides that evening. If we missed the iconic **Wallcreeper** during the main tour, we may opt for a longer excursion from our lodge in search of this spectacular species. Alternatively, we might visit nearby Madaras Peak, which supports many forest birds including **Crested Tit**, **Willow Tit**, **Common Goldcrest**, **Eurasian Treecreeper**, and **Common Crossbill**. Here we have the opportunity to see some of Europe's most exciting, yet notoriously difficult, birds. These sought-after species include **Hazel Grouse**, **Western Capercaillie**, **Boreal Owl**, **Eurasian Pygmy Owl**, **Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker**, and **White-backed Woodpecker**. Even without these bonus species, birding in the Carpathian foothills offers a rewarding change of pace from the main tour, with a distinctive, almost magical atmosphere that is hard to beat.



*Many mammal species visit the hides we will spend time in during this short tour to Transylvania, such as the comical **Wild Boar** (Photo J. Strzelecki – [Wikimedia Commons](#)).*

In the late afternoon, we return for our second hide session. Having two evenings gives us a much better chance of enjoying quality sightings of **Brown Bears** and other mammals from the hide. While we would consider ourselves incredibly lucky to see them, **Eurasian Lynx** and **Grey Wolf** are also possible. Depending on our successes, we may look for owls after leaving the hide, as species such as **Boreal Owl**, **Ural Owl**, and **Eurasian Scops-Owl** are possible around Zetea.

Overnight: Hargita Bear Lodge, Zetea



Ural Owl is a very secretive yet beautiful species, which breed in the Transylvanian forests.

Day 4. Transfer to Bucharest and departure

Today is mostly a travel day, as after breakfast we leave Transylvania and transfer back to Bucharest, though we will keep an eye out for birds and mammals along the route as we descend from the mountains. This extension concludes at Bucharest airport in the early afternoon, where you can book onwards travel in the early evening. If you would like to spend extra time exploring Bucharest, we would be happy to help arrange additional accommodation.

Overnight: Not included

Please note that the itinerary cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different international guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling.

Tour Details

Duration:	4 days
Group size:	4–8
Dates:	23–26 May 2027 23–26 May 2028
Start:	Bucharest, Romania
End:	Bucharest, Romania
Prices:	EUR €1,590 per person sharing – based on 4–8 participants (2027) EUR €1,690 per person sharing – based on 4–8 participants (2028)
Single supplements:	EUR €120 (2027) EUR €130 (2028)

Price includes:

All accommodation (Day 1 until Day 3 as above)
Meals (from lunch on Day 1 until lunch on Day 4)
Drinking water
Expert tour leader
Birdwatching site entrance fees including two nights in the mammal watching hide
All ground transport and tolls/taxes while on tour, including airport pick-up and drop-off

Price excludes:

All flights to and from Bucharest, Romania, and airport transfers on alternate days
Visas, if required
Expenditures due to flight cancellations/delays or other causes beyond our control (force majeure)
Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts, laundry, internet access, etc.
Any pre- or post-tour accommodation, meals, or activities
Soft/alcoholic drinks
Personal travel/medical insurance
Gratuities (please see our [tipping guidelines blog](#))