

# Moldova

## HIGHLIGHTS

- **Chişinău** Stroll its tree-studded avenues and experience its kick-ass nightlife (p768)
- **Orheiul Vechi** Visit the fantastic cave monastery of 13th-century monks (p772)
- **Best Journey** Take an organised or improvised wine tour at the country's world-famous vineyards, and sip from the fruit of the gods (p771)
- **Off-the-beaten-track** Visit the self-styled republic of Transdniestr, a surreal, living museum of the Soviet Union (p772)

## FAST FACTS

- **Area** 33,843 sq km (twice the size of Denmark)
- **ATMs** In major cities
- **Budget** US\$30 per day
- **Capital** Chişinău
- **Famous for** wine, folk art
- **Head of State** President Vladimir Voronin
- **Languages** Moldovan, Russian
- **Money** Moldovan lei; €1 = 17.74 lei; A\$1 = 10.59 lei; CA\$1 = 12.54 lei; ¥100 = 11.91 lei; NZ\$1 = 8.98 lei; UK£1 = 26.10 lei; US\$1 = 13.87 lei
- **Population** 4.5 million
- **Phrases** *bună* (hello), *mulţumesc/merci* (thank you), *cum vă numiţi?* (what's your name?)



- **Telephone codes** country code ☎ 373; international access code ☎ 22
- **Time** GMT/UTC + 2
- **Visa** Required for Australian and New Zealand passport holders; see p774 for details

## TRAVEL HINTS

Enter Moldova via Romania, from where connections are frequent and easy, and then either return to Romania or continue eastward.

## ROAMING MOLDOVA

Party in Chişinău, go to Orheiul Vechi, splurge for a big-name vineyard tour, then head to Transdniestr.

For a country that's only vaguely known about in Europe and all but anonymous to the rest of the world, Moldova has a cultural, political and economic, erm, 'liveliness' equaled by few. News briefs that emerge from the region are punctuated by tales of civil war, break-away republics, organised crime, arms dealing, human trafficking and a curious return to communism.

In reality, it's a charming journey into the obscure – way off the beaten backpacker track – featuring sunflower fields, enormous watermelons, bucolic pastoral lands, amazingly friendly people and rivers of delicious wine, as well as a party-crazy capital city.

## HISTORY

Moldova today straddles two historic regions divided by the Nistru River. Historic Romanian Bessarabia incorporated the region west of the Nistru, while tsarist Russia governed the territory east of the river (Transdnestr).

Bessarabia, part of the Romanian principality of Moldavia, was annexed in 1812 by the Russian empire. In 1918, after the October Revolution, Bessarabia declared its independence. Two months later the newly formed Democratic Moldavian Republic united with Romania. Russia never recognised this union.

Then in 1924 the Soviet Union created the Moldavian Autonomous Oblast on the eastern banks of the Nistru River, and incorporated Transdnestr into the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR). A few months later the Soviet government renamed the oblast the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Moldavian ASSR). During 1929 the capital was moved to Tiraspol from Balta (in present-day Ukraine).

In June 1940 the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact meant Soviet troops occupied Romanian Bessarabia and joined it with the southern part, naming it the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic.

During 1941 allied Romanian and German troops attacked the Soviet Union. Bessarabia and Transdnestr fell into Romanian hands. Consequently, thousands of Bessarabian Jews were sent to labour camps and then deported to Auschwitz.

In August 1944 the Soviet army reoccupied Transdnestr and Bessarabia. In July 1949, 25,000 ethnic Moldovans (Romanians) were deported to Siberia, followed by another quarter of a million from 1950 to 1952.

It wasn't until February 1990 that the first democratic elections to the Supreme Soviet (parliament) were won by the Popular Front. Then in April 1990 the Moldovan national flag was reinstated – except in Transdnestr.

In August 1991 Moldova declared its full independence. Today Vladimir Voronin is president of the republic, and also the president of the parliamentary Communist Party.

Widely regarded as the poorest nation in Europe and one of the most corrupt countries in the world, Moldova is endeavouring to shake these stigmas. In late 2005 the country signed agreements committing itself to combat corruption and human trafficking.

## THE CULTURE

Moldovans make up 78.2% of the total population, Ukrainians constitute 8.4%, Russians 5.8%, Gagauz 4.4%, Bulgarians 1.9%, 'other' 1.5%, and other nationalities such as Belarusians, Poles and Roma compose 1.3%.

In Transdnestr, Ukrainians and Russians make up 58% of the region's population; Moldovans make up 34%. It's one of the least urbanised countries in Europe.

## ARTS

There is a wealth of traditional folk art in Moldova; carpet making, pottery, weaving and carving predominate. The country also has prolific modern composers, painters and sculptors.

## ENVIRONMENT

Moldova is tiny and landlocked. It's a flat country of gently rolling steppes, which is home to some 16,500 species of animals (only 460 of which are vertebrates).

There are five scientific reserves (totalling 19,378 hectares) and 30 protected natural sites (covering 22,278 hectares). The reserves protect areas of bird migration, old beech and oak forests, and important waterways.

Never heavily industrial, Moldova faces more issues of protection and conservation than pollution. Most of its 3600 rivers and rivulets were drained, diverted or dammed, threatening ecosystems.

## TRANSPORT

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

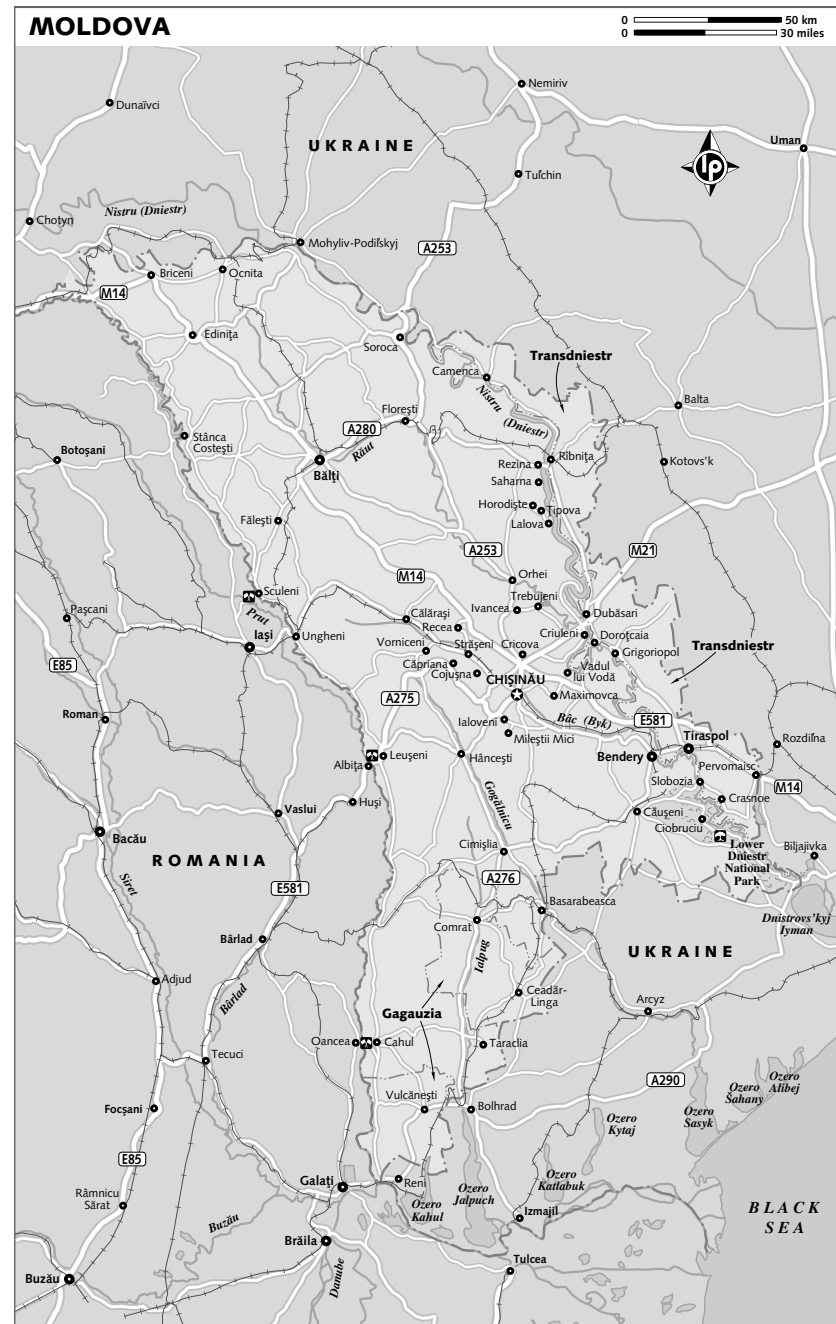
#### Air

Moldova's only airport of significance is **Chişinău International** (code KIV; ☎ 22-526 060).

**Air Moldova** (code 9U; ☎ 22-546 464; www.airmoldova.md; B-dul Negruzzi 8, Chişinău) and **Tarom** (code RO; ☎ 0992 541 254; www.tarom.ro) operate daily flights between Chişinău and Bucharest. **Carpatair** (code V3; www.carpatair.com) flies to Timişoara and beyond six times weekly.

#### EMERGENCY NUMBERS

- Ambulance ☎ 903
- Fire ☎ 901
- Police ☎ 902



**READING UP**

*Playing the Moldovans at Tennis* is Tony Hawks' hilarious account of his visit to a much bleaker Moldova in the mid-90s in order to satisfy a drunken bet, challenging him to defeat the entire Moldovan football team at tennis. *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia and the Politics of Culture* by Charles King is a more recent, textbook snapshot of this 'intriguing East Europe borderland'.

Chișinău is connected by regular flights to/from Amsterdam, Athens, Budapest, Minsk, Moscow, Prague, Rome, Sofia and Vienna. Expect to pay US\$250 to US\$430 for a return flight between any of these capitals.

**Bus**

International **Eurolines** ([www.eurolines.md](http://www.eurolines.md)) has regular routes to Italy, Spain, Germany and Russia.

**Car & Motorcycle**

The Green Card (a routine extension of domestic motor insurance to cover most European countries) is required to enter Moldova and available at roadside kiosks near the borders.

**Train**

International routes include Moscow (USUS\$46, 28 to 33 hours, three daily), St Petersburg (US\$31.50, 37 hours, one daily), Bucharest (US\$29.50, 14 hours, one daily), Lviv (US\$15.50, eight hours, one daily) and Minsk (US\$19.50, 25 hours, two weekly).

**GETTING AROUND**  
**Bicycle**

Being largely flat, Moldova should be perfect for cycling. Unfortunately, the roads are horrendous and infrastructure is nonexistent.

**Bus & Maxitaxi**

Moldova has a good network of buses and maxitaxis (quicker) running to most towns and villages.

**Car & Motorcycle**

In Chișinău, travel agencies can arrange car hire, but the roads are in poor condition. EC driving licences are accepted here.

The intercity speed limit is 90km/h and in built-up areas 60km/h. For road rescue,

dial ☎ 901. The **Automobile Club Moldova** (ACM; ☎ 22-292 703; [www.acm.md](http://www.acm.md)) can inform you of all regulations and offer emergency assistance.

**Local Transport**

In Moldova, buses cost about US\$0.15, trolley-buses US\$0.10 and city maxitaxis US\$0.25.

**Taxi**

There are official and unofficial taxis, which will often try to rip you off. The official rate is USUS\$0.25 per kilometre.

# CHIȘINĂU

☎ 22 / pop 664,325

In Chișinău ('kish-i-now' in Moldovan, 'kish-i-nyov' in Russian) fleets of BMWs and Mercedes dominate traffic, while fashionably dressed youth strut down boutique-lined avenues and dine in fancy restaurants. How did this excessive wealth find its way to the capital of one of Europe's poorest countries? Answer: you don't wanna know and we ain't asking. While this dodginess may be inordinately distracting for visitors, citizens of this vibrant, good-natured city have long since dismissed these oddities in favour of what really counts: having a good time.

Yet the city has a brutal history. It was a hotbed of anti-Semitism in the early 20th century; in 1903 the murder of 49 Jews sparked protests from Jewish communities worldwide, and in 1941 during WWII the notorious Chișinău pogrom was executed.

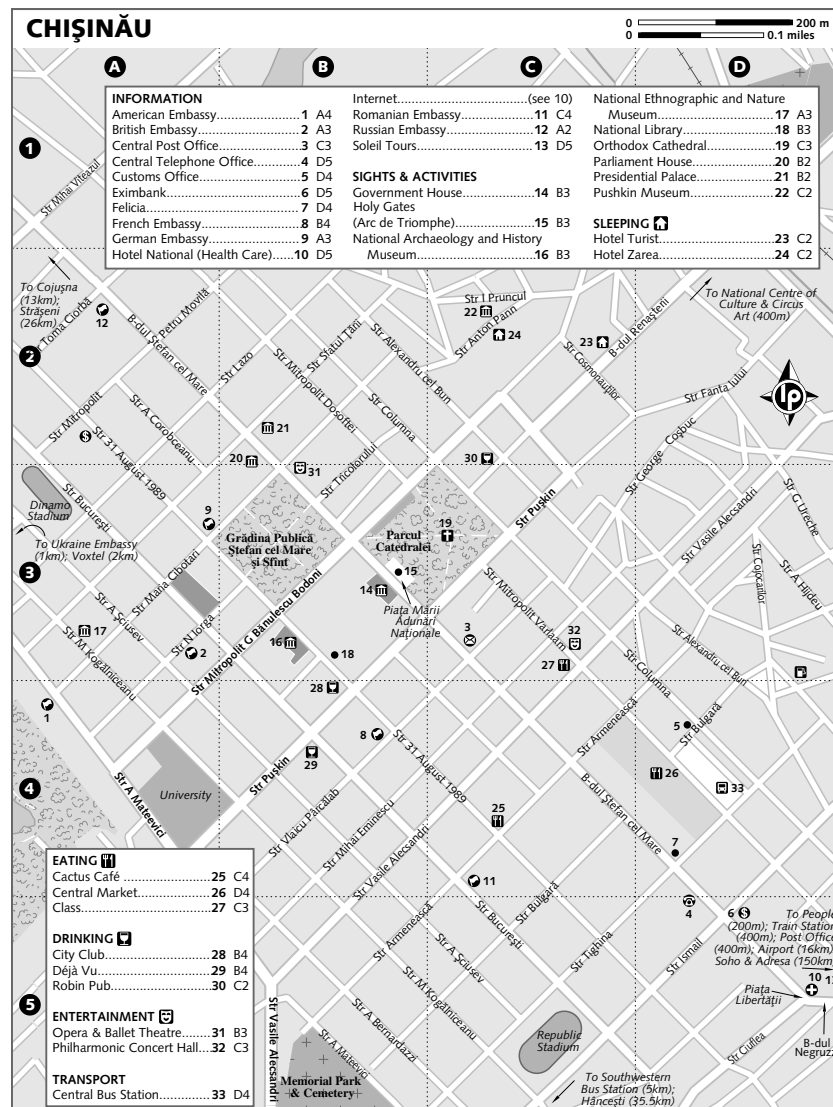
The city's location in the centre of the country makes it an excellent base for day trips or several-day excursions to other parts of Moldova; it's usually possible to drive anywhere in the small republic and back in a day.

**ORIENTATION**

Chișinău's layout is a typically Soviet grid system of straight streets. The main street, B-dul Ștefan cel Mare, crosses the city from southeast to northwest.

**BORDER CROSSINGS**

Moldovan visas are available at border crossings with Romania: Albița (65km southeast of Iași) and Sculeni (24km north of Iași).

**INFORMATION**  
**Internet Access**

**Internet** (☎ 540 305; 4th fl, Hotel National, B-dul Ștefan cel Mare 4; per hr USUS\$0.50)

**Medical Services**

Contact the US embassy (p773) for a list of English-speaking doctors.

**Felicia** (☎ 223 725; B-dul Ștefan cel Mare 62; ☎ 24hr) Well-stocked pharmacy.

**Hotel National** (☎ 540 305; 4th fl, B-dul Ștefan cel Mare 4) Has a medical-care room.

**Money**

There are ATMs all over the city centre, in all the hotels and in shopping centres. Currency

exchanges are concentrated around the bus and train stations and along B-dul Ștefan cel Mare.

**Eximbank** (☎ 272 583; B-dul Ștefan cel Mare 6; ⌚ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Can give cash advances in foreign currency.

### Post & Telephone

**Central post office** (☎ 227 737; B-dul Ștefan cel Mare 134; ⌚ 8am-7pm Mon-Sat, 8am-6pm Sun) There is also a post office on Aleea Gării (⌚ 8am to 8pm).

**Central telephone office** (B-dul Ștefan cel Mare 65; ⌚ 24hr)

### Tourist Information

There's no tourist centre in Moldova, but plenty of agencies provide information, including **Soleil Tours** (☎ 271 312; B-dul Negruzi 5). Check out **Marisha** (www.marisha.net) for pre-trip information.

### SIGHTS

#### City Centre

A good place to begin is smack in the city centre, where Chișinău's best-known parks diagonally oppose each other, forming two diamonds at the city's core. The highlights here are the **Holy Gates** (1841), more commonly known as Chișinău's own Arc de Triomphe. To its east sprawls **Parcul Catedralei** (Cathedral Park), dominated by the city's main **Orthodox Cathedral** (1836).

**Government House**, where cabinet meets, is the gargantuan building opposite the Holy Gates. The parliament convenes in **Parliament House** (B-dul Ștefan cel Mare 123) further north. Opposite this is the **Presidential Palace**.

**Grădina Publică Ștefan cel Mare și Sfint** (Ștefan cel Mare Park) is the city's main strolling, cruising area. The park entrance is guarded by a **statue** (1928) of Ștefan, the greatest symbol of Moldova's brave past.

### SCAMS

Bucharest-style restaurant pricing scams are emerging. Never order anything, particularly wine, without confirming the price *in writing* (eg menu) to avoid surprises on the bill. If you've been victimised, keep all receipts and report it to the police.

Travellers are required to have their passports with them *at all times*. Cheeky police are inclined to do random checks.

### GETTING INTO TOWN

From the train station it's a 10-minute walk; turn right along Aleea Gării to Piața Negruzi, then walk up the hill to Piața Libertății or take bus 1. From the airport, 14.5km south of the city centre, take bus 65 (US\$0.15) to the Central Bus Station, departing every 30 minutes between 5am and 10pm. Maxitaxi 65 (US\$0.25) departs every 20 minutes stopping at Str Ismail, near the corner of B-dul Ștefan cel Mare.

### Museums

The **National Archaeology and History Museum** (☎ 242 194; Str 31 August 1989, 121A; admission/photo US\$1.15/0.75; ⌚ 10am-6pm Tue-Sat) is the granddaddy of Chișinău's museums. There are archaeological artefacts from Orheiul Vechi, including Golden Horde coins, Soviet-era weaponry and a huge WWII diorama where you can speak to a man who spent 12 years as a political prisoner at a worker's camp in desolate Vorkuta.

The **National Ethnographic and Nature Museum** (☎ 244 002; Str M Kogălniceanu 82; admission US\$1.15; ⌚ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) has some pop art, lots of stuffed animals, and exhibits covering the sciences of geology, botany and zoology. The highlight is a life-size reconstruction of a mammal skeleton that was discovered in the Rezina region in 1966. An English-language tour costs US\$8.

The **Pushkin Museum** (☎ 292 685; Str Anton Pann 19; admission US\$1.15; ⌚ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun) is housed in a cottage where Russian poet Alexandr Pushkin (1799-1837) spent an exiled three years between 1820-23. Here he wrote *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* as well as a few other classics. An English-language tour will cost US\$8.

### SLEEPING

Check out **Adresa** (www.adresa.md) and **Marisha** (www.marisha.net) for cheap homestays and apartments for US\$10 to US\$20 per night.

**Hotel Zarea** (☎ 227 625; Str Anton Pann 4; d US\$30, s/d with shared bathroom US\$10/20) This drab high-rise has dour, smoky rooms that are appropriately priced. Breakfast isn't included.

**Hotel Turist** (☎ 242 637; B-dul Renașterii 13; s US\$26-50, d US\$25) For a kitsch blast of the Soviet past, try this friendly place: it overlooks a giant Soviet memorial to communist youth and

sports a snazzy socialist mural on its façade. The low-end singles are in tatty condition.

### EATING

For the cheapest eats, there are some kiosks and small cafés around the bus station/central market and the university, where a dish of mystery meat or meat-filled pastries costs less than US\$1.

**Class** (☎ 227 774; Str Vasile Alecsandri 121; mains US\$4; ⌚ 11am-midnight) One of the country's rare Lebanese restaurants, Class doesn't disappoint, with excellent entrées, falafel and eggplant dishes. There are waterpipes (US\$2.50), live music nightly, and exotic dancing on Friday and Saturday evenings.

**our pick** **Cactus Café** (☎ 504 094; www.cactus.md; Str Armenească 41; mains US\$4-8; ⌚ 9am-10pm) The Wild West meets urban bohemian interior décor here will stun overly jet-lagged and wine-fogged patrons into thinking they've been zapped back to Brooklyn during the night. The extravagant breakfasts, vegetarian meals and daring plates such as turkey with bananas don't help to dull the sensation.

### DRINKING & CLUBBING

**Deja Vu** (☎ 227 693; Str București 67; ⌚ 11am-2am) This cocktail bar has a tantalising menu of drinks on offer.

**Robin Pub** (Str Alexandru cel Bun 83; ⌚ 11am-1am) A friendly local pub atmosphere reigns supreme in this relaxed, tasteful hang-out.

**City Club** (Str 31 August 1989, 121; ⌚ 10pm-2am) In the alley next to the Licurici Puppet Theatre, this 2nd-floor club is vying for the title of 'Hippest Place in Town'.

**People** (☎ 275 800; B-dul Negruzi 2/4; ⌚ 10pm-4am Thu-Sat) This disco has lots of theme nights and special DJs. The doormen might try to lead male customers into their next-door strip club.

### ENTERTAINMENT

**Opera & Ballet Theatre** (☎ 244 163; B-dul Ștefan cel Mare 152; ⌚ box office 10am-2pm & 5-7pm) Home to the esteemed national opera and ballet.

**Philharmonic Concert Hall** (☎ 224 505; Str Mitropolit Varlaam 78) Moldova's National Philharmonic is based here.

**National Centre of Culture and Circus Art** (☎ 496 803; B-dul Renașterii 33; ⌚ box office 9am-6pm) Performances are held at 6.30pm Friday, and noon, 3pm and 6.30pm Saturday and Sunday. Bus 27 from B-dul Ștefan cel Mare travels here.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Chișinău has three bus stations. Most domestic and international buses depart from the **North Bus Station** (Autogară Nord; ☎ 439 489), except Transdnistr-bound lines (which depart from the Central Bus Station). Domestic and international maxitaxis operate from the **Central Bus Station** (Autogară Centrală; ☎ 542 185) on Str Mitropolit Varlaam. Maxitaxis go to Tiraspol and Bendery every 20 to 35 minutes from 6.30am to 6.30pm. Buses to/from southern destinations use the **Southwestern Bus Station** (Autogară Sud-vest; ☎ 723 983; cnr Șoseaua Hâncești & Str Spicului), 2km from the city centre.

Due to the train service interruption through Transdnistr, there were no trains to Bendery, Tiraspol or Odesa at the time of research.

There are four trains daily to Ungheni (US\$4, three hours).

### GETTING AROUND

#### Bus & Trolleybus

Bus 45 (and maxitaxi 45a) runs from the Central Bus Station to the Southwestern Bus Station. Bus 1 goes from the train station to B-dul Ștefan cel Mare.

Trolleybuses 1, 4, 5, 8, 18 and 22 go to the train station from the city centre. Buses 2, 10 and 16 go to the Southwestern Bus Station. Tickets costing US\$0.15 for buses and US\$0.10 for trolleybuses are sold at kiosks or direct from the driver.

#### Taxi

Calling a **taxi** (☎ 746 565/705/706/707) is cheaper than hailing one on the street. The official rate is US\$0.25 per kilometre.

## AROUND CHIȘINĂU

### CRICOVA

Fifteen kilometres north of Chișinău in a village of the same name, lies **Cricova** (☎ 22-277 378; www.cricova.md; Str Ungureanu 1; ⌚ 8am-4pm), the tragically narcissistic grand duke of Moldovan wineries. The 120km labyrinthine of roadways, 60km of which are used for wine storage, were first burrowed in the 15th century and are now one of Europe's largest wine cellars. Private transport and advance reservations are required, made through the vineyard itself – if they feel like answering the phone or email – or travel agencies in Chișinău.

## COJUȘNA

Cricova's spunky competitors operate 12km northwest of Chișinău in the village of Cojușna. The winery **Cojușna** (☎ 22-744 820, 715 329; Str Lomtatze 4; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri) is moribund in comparison with Cricova, however, the tours given here are paradoxically first-rate, down-to-earth and very friendly. Bus 2 runs every 15 minutes from Str Vasile Alecsandri in Chișinău towards Cricova. Maxitaxis to Cojușna leave from Calea Eșilor. Alight at the Cojușna stop, ignore the sign on the left marked Cojușna and walk the remaining 2km along the main road to the vineyard entrance, marked by a tall, totem pole-style pillar.

## ORHEIUL VECHI

The **Orheiul Vechi Monastery Complex** (Complexul Muz-eistic Orheiul Vechi; ☎ 235-34242; admission US\$1.15; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun), 10km southeast of Orhei and marked on maps as the village of Trebujeni, is arguably Moldova's non-wine tourist high point.

The **Cave Monastery** (Mănăstire în Peșteră), part of a series of precarious – and largely inaccessible – caves tunnelled into a dramatic limestone cliff, was dug by successive Orthodox monks beginning in the 13th century. Shorts are forbidden and women must cover their heads inside the monastery.

## TRANSDNIESTR

pop 555,500

Arguably one of the most curious regions in Europe, the self-declared republic of Transdniestr (Pridnestrovskaya Moldavskaya Respublika, or PMR in Russian) – defiantly occupying a narrow strip of land covering only 3567 sq km on the eastern bank of the Dniestr River – is nevertheless a largely unknown enigma. The street credibility of being one of the world's last surviving communist bastions is wearing thin, however, as the illusion of a workers' paradise is being swiftly eclipsed by sweet, sweet capitalism!

The scene of a bloody civil war in the early 1990s when the movement for independence from Moldova began, Transdniestr has its own currency, police force, army and borders, which are controlled by Transdniestran border guards.

At the time of writing Transdniestr was plunging into a renewed political and economic crisis, involving Moldova, Ukraine and

Russia, with no end in sight. Further to that sentiment, on 6 July 2006, a bomb blast on a local bus in Tiraspol killed eight people. Transdniestran politicians were quick to blame 'Moldovan provocateurs'. Popular opinion in Moldova is that a would-be arms dealer probably lost control of his merchandise.

See <http://geo.ya.com/travelimages/transdniestr.html> for some excellent photos of the region or try to catch a rerun of the BBC's *Places That Don't Exist*.

## INFORMATION Language

The official state languages in Transdniestr are Russian, Moldovan and Ukrainian.

## Money

The only legal tender is the Transdniestran rouble (TR), though some taxi drivers, shopkeepers and market traders will accept payment in US dollars, Moldovan lei or Ukrainian hryvnia.

## Post

Transdniestran stamps featuring General Suvorov can only be used for letters sent within Transdniestr and are not recognised anywhere else. For letters to Moldova, Romania and the West, you have to use Moldovan stamps (available here but less conveniently than in Moldova).

## TIRASPOL

☎ 533 / pop 183,678

Tiraspol ('town on the Nistru' river in Greek), 70km east of Chișinău, is the world's largest open-air museum of Soviet-style communism. The city was founded in 1792 following Russian domination of the area.

The train and bus stations are next to each other at the end of ulitsa Lenina.

## Information

**Bunker** (pereulok Naberezhnyi 1; per hr US\$0.40;

☎ 9am-11pm) Modern internet club.

**Central telephone office** (cnr ulitsa 25 Oktober & ulitsa Kommunisticheskaya; ☎ 7-8.45pm) You can buy telephone cards (US\$2.15 or US\$7.75) for the modern pay telephones.

**Prisbank** (☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Sat) Change money at this bank, next door to the central telephone office.

## Sights

At the western end of ulitsa 25 Oktober stands a Soviet armoured tank from which the Transdniestran flag flies. Behind is the

Heroes' Cemetery with its **Tomb of the Unknown Soldier**, flanked by an eternal flame in memory of those who died on 3 March 1992 during the first outbreak of fighting.

The **Tiraspol National United Museum** (ulitsa 25 Oktober 42; admission US\$0.30; ☎ 9am-5pm Sun-Fri) is the closest the city has to a local history museum, with an exhibit on poet Nikolai Dimitriovich Zelinskogo, who founded the first Soviet school of chemistry. Opposite is the **Presidential Palace**, from where Igor Smirnov rules his mini-empire.

The **House of Soviets** (Dom Sovetov), towering over the eastern end of ulitsa 25 Oktober, has Lenin's angry-looking bust peering out from its prime location. Inside is a **memorial** to those who died in the 1992 conflict.

The **Kvint factory** (☎ 37 333; <http://kvint.biz>; ulitsa Lenina 38) is one of Transdniestr's pride and joys. Since 1897 it's been making some of Moldova's finest brandies. There are no excursions, but a gander at the factory might be of interest. Buy some of the products here or at its **town centre store** (ulitsa 25 Oktober 84; ☎ 24hr).

## Sleeping & Eating

**Hotel Drushba** (☎ 34 266; ulitsa 25 Oktober 116; r/deluxe US\$20-40) Basic rooms are on offer at this massive place. Some have hot water, TV, fridge, larger beds, and a private bathroom or shower.

**Cafe 7 Days** (☎ 32 311; ulitsa 25 Oktober 77; mains US\$0.35-1.50; ☎ 9-11pm) A great selection of tasty Russian fast food, such as blini (stuffed pancakes), and Western imports, including pizza, as well as salads, are served at this modern, pleasant café.

## Getting There & Away BUS

From Tiraspol there are five daily buses to Bălți (US\$7, six hours), 13 daily to Odesa (US\$5, three hours), once daily to Kyiv (US\$10, 14 hours) and once weekly to Berlin. Buses go to Chișinău nearly every half-hour from 5.50am to 8.50pm, and maxitaxis run regularly from 6.30am to 6.10pm.

## TRAIN

All train service in and out of Transdniestr had been suspended at the time of research. However, when in operation, most eastbound trains from Chișinău to Ukraine and Russia stop in Tiraspol. Trains go to Chișinău (US\$0.90, seven daily), Odesa (US\$2, three

daily), Moscow (two daily), Minsk (two daily) and St Petersburg (one daily).

## MOLDOVA DIRECTORY

### ACCOMMODATION

Chișinău has a good range of hotels, though many are criminally overpriced. Most towns have small hotels that have survived from communist days. Basic singles and doubles with a shared bathroom cost US\$30 to US\$50 per room, but outside the capitals rooms will usually be US\$20 to US\$25. Unless noted otherwise, breakfast is included in the price.

Camping grounds (*popas turistice*) are practically nonexistent, but wild camping is possible unless explicitly prohibited.

### CUSTOMS

See **Welcome to Moldova!** ([www.turism.md](http://www.turism.md)) for the latest changes in customs regulations.

You might be asked to prove that you have at least US\$30 for each day of your stay. You're allowed to cross the border either way with 1L of alcohol, 2L of beer and up to 200 cigarettes. The **customs office** (☎ 22-569 460; Str Columna 65) is in Chișinău.

### EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

#### Embassies & Consulates in Moldova

The following countries have embassies or consulates in Chișinău:

**France** (☎ 22-228 204; [www.ambafrance.md](http://www.ambafrance.md), in French; Str 31 August 1989, 101A)

**Germany** (☎ 22-234 607; [ambasada-germana@riscom.md](mailto:ambasada-germana@riscom.md); Str Maria Cibotari 35)

**Romania** (☎ 22-228 126; [ambrom@ch.moldpac.md](mailto:ambrom@ch.moldpac.md); Str București 66/1)

**Russia** (☎ 22-234 941; [www.moldova.mid.ru](http://www.moldova.mid.ru), in Russian; B-dul Ștefan cel Mare 153)

**UK** (☎ 22-225 902; [www.britishebassy.md](http://www.britishebassy.md); Str Nicolae Iorga 18)

**Ukraine** (☎ 22-582 124; [www.mfa.gov.ua](http://www.mfa.gov.ua), in Ukrainian; Str V Lupu 17)

**USA** (☎ 22-233 772; <http://moldova.usembassy.gov>; Str A Mateevici 103A)

### Moldovan Embassies & Consulates Abroad

Moldova has embassies worldwide.

**France** (☎ 01 40 67 11 20; [www.ambassade-moldavie.com](http://www.ambassade-moldavie.com); 1 rue Sfax, 75116 Paris)

**Germany** (☎ 069-52 78 08; [www.konsulat-moldova.de](http://www.konsulat-moldova.de); Adelheidstrasse nr 8, 60433 Frankfurt)

**Romania** Embassy (☎ 021-230 0474; ambasada.moldova@zappmobile.ro; Aleea Alexandru 40, 011834 Bucharest); Consulate (☎ 01-410 9827; Str C Constantinescu 47, Sec 1, 71326 Bucharest)

**Russia** (☎ 495-924 5353; www.moldembassy.ru; 18 Kuznetskii most, 103031 Moscow)

**Ukraine** (☎ 044-280 7722; kiev@mfa.md; vul Sichnevogo Povstannya 6, 01010 Kyiv)

**USA** (☎ 202-667 1130; embassyofmoldova@mcihispeed.net; 2101 S Street NW, Washington, DC 20008)

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

The major festival is the **Wine Festival** on the second Sunday in October. The government has instituted a visa-free regime for this period. Chişinău's **City Day** is 14 October.

## HOLIDAYS

**New Year's Day** 1 January

**Orthodox Christmas** 7 January

**International Women's Day** 8 March

**Orthodox Easter** March/April/May

**Victory (1945) Day** 9 May

**Independence Day** 27 August

**National Language Day** 31 August

## INTERNET RESOURCES

Get everyday Moldova news and information at **Moldova Azi** (www.azi.md).

## MONEY

Moldovan lei come in denominations of 1, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 500 lei. There are coins for 1, 5, 10, 25 and 50 bani (there are 100 bani in a leu).

The breakaway Transdnistran republic in Moldova has its own currency, which is unexchangeable anywhere else in the world (see p772).

Outside Chişinău, ATMs are sparse. It's near impossible to use travellers cheques in shops or restaurants. While credit cards won't get you anywhere in rural areas, they are widely accepted in larger department stores, hotels and most restaurants in cities and towns.

Tipping is gaining momentum, though still not an automatic practice for locals. Generally, leaving 10% will be considered generous.

Prices quoted in this chapter are in US dollars.

## POST

It costs US\$0.35 to send a postcard or letter under 20g to Western Europe, Australia and the USA.

**DHL** (www.dhl.com) has offices in Chişinău, Bălţi and Tiraspol.

## TELEPHONE

Moldtelecom sells phone cards (US\$2.25 to US\$3) for domestic calls, available at any telephone centre. International calls require a prepaid card, like Treitelecom, sold at any Moldpresa newspaper stand.

Mobile phone service in Moldova is provided by Moldcell and **Voxtel** (☎ 22-575 757; www.voxtel.md, in Moldovan; Str Alba Iulia 75, Chişinău).

## VISAS

From 1 April 2007 citizens of EU member states, the USA, Canada and Japan will no longer need visas! Everyone else, including Australian and New Zealand citizens, are still on the hook for visas and may require letters of invitation, acquired from an accredited travel agency, a company, organisation or individual. The price of a single-/double-entry tourist visa valid for one month is US\$60/75. Single-/double-entry transit visas valid for 72 hours are US\$30/60.

Visas can be acquired on arrival at Chişinău airport or, if arriving by bus or car from Romania, the three border points: Sculeni (north of Iaşi), Leuşeni (main Bucharest–Chişinău border) and Cahul. Those requiring an invitation must present the original document (copies/faxes not accepted) at the border if buying a visa there.

See **Welcome to Moldova!** (www.turism.md) and follow the links to check for the latest changes in the visa regime.

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