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Sofia and Bucharest, \$1,499

Air/hotel package for the youthful, artsy capitals of Bulgaria and Romania, which are shedding their repressive pasts.

Friday, September 7, 2007;

The Real Deal Round-trip airfare, six nights' accommodations, and rail transportation from \$1,499 per person--plus taxes of about \$165.

When Sept. 10-Oct. 31, 2007; for travel after Nov. 1, add \$80 from D.C. and \$105 from Chicago.

Gateways Chicago, D.C., and New York City.

The Fine Print Buffet breakfast daily, hotel taxes, service charges, and fuel surcharges are included. Airport taxes are an additional 11 percent (\$165 per person). Based on double occupancy; single supplement is \$329. Seats and hotel accommodations are limited and may not be available for all days of the week. Optional travel insurance is highly recommended and available from \$4.95 per each \$100 of the cost of trip. Read these [guidelines](#) before you book any Real Deal.

Book By No deadline; based on availability.

Contact Austrian Airlines Vacation Center, 800/790-4682, [austrianair-vacations.com](#).

Why It's a Deal According to a recent search on Sidestep, the lowest round-trip multicity fares--arriving in Sofia and departing from Bucharest--in late September are: \$789 from D.C. (Air France), \$825 from New York City (multiple carriers), and \$848 from Chicago (multiple carriers). The six-night hotel stay is valued at about \$700 per person, which would bring the DIY total to \$1,489-\$1,548. In comparison, the \$1,499 package includes the airfare and the six-night stay as well as train transportation between the two cities, fuel surcharges, and hotel taxes.

Trip Details The [Sofia and Bucharest Four-Star Combo City Steal](#) includes two transatlantic flights on an Austrian Airlines carrier. You'll arrive in Sofia, one of Europe's oldest cities, dating back over 7,000 years. Situated in the Sofia Valley at the foot of the Vitosha and Lyulin mountains, the capital of Bulgaria has a laundry list of attractions to keep you busy--from ancient archeological treasures and Byzantine churches to busy bazaars and coffee shops to soothing mineral baths.

You'll spend three nights at the 523-room [Hotel Rodina](#), a tall structure that offers panoramic views of the downtown area and the surrounding mountains. Situated on the Russki Pametnik (Russian Monument square), the hotel is close to the city's commercial center and about nine miles from the airport. Hotel

amenities include a swimming pool, a gym, a hair salon, five restaurants, and even a nightclub.

Next you'll board an InterCity train for the roughly 10-hour ride to Bucharest, in the south of Romania. You can choose to make the trip by day or, for an extra \$50, by night in a double-occupancy first-class sleeper cabin.

While the Communist era architecture is still evident, recent renovations have restored much of the Bucharest's charm, including the belle epoque buildings that earned the city the nickname Little Paris. Muzeul Satului and Muzeul Taranului Roman are among the top-notch local museums.

The [Hotel Lido](#), located in the heart of the city's cultural center, will be your base for three nights. Note that you can extend your stay from \$53 per person per night in Sofia and from \$93 per person per night in Bucharest.

There are two must-sees in the countryside near Bucharest: Transylvania (the land of Count Dracula) and the Danube Delta, Europe's largest wetland reserve and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. For more on tips on what to see and do, visit the websites of the [Bulgarian State Agency for Tourism](#) and the [Romanian National Tourist Office](#).

The package's valid travel dates are during the fall, when temperatures average in the 50s and 60s Fahrenheit. Before you go, check the [weather forecast](#), the [exchange rate](#), and the [local time](#) at [BudgetTravel.com](#).