Christmas in Romania: events and traditions by Francesca

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Choosing Romania as travel destination for Christmas can be the right choice and you might get pleasantly surprised. Not many people know the tourist potential of this country and of its wonderful capital city, which by no coincidence is called â€œlittle Parisâ€• and â€œParis of the Balkansâ€•, and the r Christmas holidays might be a good chance to discover a city and a country that perhaps are not that famous, but which certainly are very charming.

As far as the capital city of Romania is concerned, we can claim that Bucharest, exactly like many other cities in Europe and all over the world, is a perfect destination if you have a passion for the magic Christmas atmosphere: visiting this city in December means having the possibility to take part in many Christmas events that can certainly warm up the heart of children and adults, in spite of cold temperatures! Celebrations start before Christmas, on St Nicholas Day, which is keenly felt in many European countries. St Nicholas Day, which is traditionally celebrated at the beginning of the month â€“ to be precise on the 6th - marks the beginning of Christmas celebrations, and the Rumanian capital starts celebrating with a very interesting event, which is held at the Museum of the Romanian Peasant: a fair that is held for few days before St Nicholas Day and which is dedicated to Rumanian typical dishes, traditional hand-made toys and other products that are part of the culture and traditions of this country. About 150 local artisans take part in this event, but the program always includes many other interesting features: workshops, theatre and so on. St Nicholas Day is much awaited by Rumanian children, because it is on this day that they receive gifts if they have behaved well throughout the year, while if they have behaved badly, according to tradition they will find a stick in their shoes.

Another Christmas event included in the offer of the Rumanian capital city in this period is the trade show of Christmas gifts, decorations and souvenirs, which will be held for the first time from the 1st to the 4th of December 2011, and which will make visitors immerse in this special sector.

If you happen to be in Romania in Christmas time (in Bucharest or in other cities), you might have the chance to experience other Rumanian traditions, and you might happen to see children moving around in the city dressed with typical clothes and singing the â€œColindatulâ€•, i.e. the sung Christmas greetings, to receive a sweet stranded cake â€“ symbol of prosperity â€“ in return. If you stay in Romania also for new yearâ€™s eve you might take part in the feast of the goat, a collective ritual that include throwing corn on a goat as an auspicious gesture for the new year (once the goat used to be sacrificed), and in the following days take part in the feast called â€œBoboteazaâ€•, which is celebrated on Epiphany in memories of Jesusâ€™ baptism in river Jordan. Celebrations include the blessing of the water of rivers and lakes, then the priest throws a crucifix into water. Men have to try and save it, and the person who succeeds in doing this is believed to be going to enjoy good health throughout the year. Eventually, on the 7th of January, St Johnâ€™s day marks the end of Christmas celebrations in Romania.

It is useless to say that spending your holidays in Romany does not only mean getting to know all these local traditions; it also means discovering charming cities and breathtaking nature.

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