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# Travel Guide Chişinău

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## Quick view

### Chişinău – a brief overview

Almost entirely destroyed during WWII, much of Chişinău was built during the Soviet period and as a result, brutalist Communist architecture dominates the skyline. That said, the city has attractive pockets too, with gorgeous parks and a smattering of beautiful cathedrals helping to break up the vast swathes of concrete.

Although the city's cultural scene is comparatively undeveloped, Chişinău boasts some excellent museums and galleries, while its shopping scene is gradually picking up speed. Chişinău might not be beautiful, but it more than makes up for it in cosmopolitan charm.



## Moldova

### General Information

#### Country overview

Rich with history and fertile soils that produce abundant vineyards, Moldova is an unjustifiably forgotten tourist destination, as yet untouched by the budget airline brigade.

#### Geography

Moldova is a small landlocked state in southeastern Europe - one of the most highly populated republics of the former USSR. To the north, east and south, Moldova is bound by Ukraine; to the west by Romania.

The River Prut constitutes the border with Romania. The country has rich pastures and wooded slopes, ideal for wine-growing.

#### General knowledge

##### Key facts

Population: 3619925

Population Density (per sq km): 107

Capital: Chişinău (Kishinev).

##### Language

Moldovan (official), although considered to be virtually identical to Romanian. Russian is still the most widely-spoken language.

##### Currency

Leu (MDL; symbol (plural) Lei) = 100 bani. Notes are in denominations of Lei500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10, 5 and Leu1. Coins are in denominations of 50, 25, 10, 5 and 1 bani.

##### Electricity

240 volts AC, 50Hz. European plugs with two circular pins are used.

##### General business opening hours

Mon-Fri 0800-1700.

## Public holidays

Listed below are the public holidays for the period January 2020 to December 2021.

### 2020

New Year's Day: 1 and 2 January 2020  
Orthodox Christmas Day: 7 and 8 January 2020  
International Women's Day: 8 March 2020  
Orthodox Easter: 19 and 20 April 2020  
Labour Day: 1 May 2020  
Commemoration Day: 6 May 2020  
Victory Day: 9 May 2020  
Independence Day: 27 and 28 August 2020  
National Language Day: 31 August 2020  
Christmas Day: 25 December 2020

### 2021

New Year's Day: 1 and 2 January 2021  
Orthodox Christmas Day: 7 and 8 January 2021  
International Women's Day: 8 March 2021  
Labour Day: 1 May 2021  
Orthodox Easter: 2 and 3 May 2021  
Commemoration Day: 6 May 2021  
Victory Day: 9 May 2021  
Independence Day: 27 and 28 August 2021  
National Language Day: 31 August 2021  
Christmas Day: 25 December 2021

All information subject to change.



## Travel etiquette How to fit in

### Social Conventions

Dress should be casual but conservative.

For official engagements, men should wear a jacket and tie.



## Health Health

### Food & Drink

Mains water is normally chlorinated but bottled water is available and advised.  
Local meat, poultry, fruit and vegetables are generally considered safe to eat.

### Other Risks

Vaccination is sometimes recommended for tick-borne encephalitis. Travellers staying longer than three months may be required to produce proof of HIV-negative status.



## Phone calls & Internet Phone calls & Internet

## Telephone/Mobile Telephone

**Dialing code:** +373

### Telephone

Local payphones are cheap and plentiful. They work by phonecards available at kiosks.

### Mobile Telephone

Roaming agreements exist with most international mobile phone operators. Coverage is generally good all over the country.

## Internet

There are Internet cafes in main towns.



## Top 10 sights Top 10 sights in Chişinău

### Nativity Cathedral

An imposing neoclassical pile with a huge colonnade and a vast dome, Chişinău's cathedral was built in 1836 by Russian architect Abraham Melnikov and remains one of the city's most beautiful buildings.

Piaţa Marii Adunări Naţionale 12  
Chişinău  
Moldova

Opening times:  
Various

### Pushkin Museum

It was during his three-year exile in Chişinău that Russian Alexander Pushkin wrote *The Prisoner of the Caucasus*, much of it from his study in a tiny cottage. The cottage, crammed with personal effects, is now a quaint museum.

Str Anton Pann 19  
Chişinău  
Moldova

Opening times:  
Tue-Sun 1000-1600

### National Parliament of Moldova

Built in the 1970s, Moldova's imposing parliament building sits within pretty grounds in central Chişinău and is worth visiting for the architecture alone – even if, as is usual, you can't actually go in.

Bulevardul Ştefan cel Mare şi Sfînt 105 [www.parlament.md](http://www.parlament.md)  
Chişinău  
Moldova

### Memorial Park

Dominated by a vast orange pyramid, Memorial Park commemorates the victory of the Red Army over the Nazis in 1945, as well as the many Moldovan soldiers who died in defence of the city.

Strada Pantelimon Halippa 5  
Chişinău  
Moldova

### National Art Museum of Moldova

Home to a motley mixture of contemporary and medieval art, Moldova's biggest art gallery mainly displays the work of local artists, although there's a significant Romanian contingent as well.

Bulevardul Ştefan cel Mare şi Sfânt  
Chişinău  
Moldova  
Tel: +373 22 241 303

Opening times:  
Tue-Sun 1000-1800 (Apr-Oct)  
Tue-Sun 1000-1630 (Nov-Mar)

[www.mnam.md](http://www.mnam.md)

### Grădina Botanică

A pretty botanical garden attached to the Academy of Sciences of Moldova, the garden is a little scruffy around the edges but contains beautiful vintage greenhouses as well as a huge variety of trees and plants.

Strada Padurii 18  
Chişinău  
Moldova

Opening times:  
daily 0830-1800

[www.gradinabotanica.asm.md](http://www.gradinabotanica.asm.md)

### Military Museum

Packed with Soviet antiques, including several tanks and a couple of old fighter planes, Chişinău's unusual military museum is open-air and offers an interesting way to fill a couple of spare hours.

Strada Tighina 47  
Chişinău  
Moldova  
Tel: +373 22 272 056

Opening times:  
Tue-Sun 0900-2000

### St Teodor Tiron Convent

A spectacular blue painted piece of ecclesiastical architecture topped with eye-catching golden onion domes, this convent was built in 1850 and was named in honour of the Moldovan martyr St Teodor Tiron.

Strada Ciuflea  
Chişinău  
Moldova

### National Ethnographic and Natural History Museum

The centrepiece of this museum is a huge reconstruction of a dinother, but the galleries are packed with treasures too, all of which relate to natural history, botany and zoology.

Strada Mikhail Kogălniceanu  
Opening times:

Chişinău	Tue-Sun 1000-1800
Moldova	
Tel: +373 22 244 002	www.muzeu.md

## National Museum

Charting Moldova's history from the Bronze Age to the present day, this museum houses a huge collection of ancient coins, plenty of Soviet memorabilia and a fascinating permanent exhibition dedicated to the Nazi occupation.

Strada 31 August 1989 121a	Opening times:
2012 Chişinău	Sat-Thu 1000-1800 (summer)
Moldova	Sat-Thu 1000-1700 (winter)
Tel: +373 22 24 04 26	
	www.nationalmuseum.md



## Shopping in Chişinău

### Shopping in Chişinău

#### Key Areas

Chişinău, like the rest of Eastern Europe, is awash with Soviet antiques and quirky places in which to buy them. Nevertheless, there's more to the Moldovan capital than historical artefacts, with stylish fashion boutiques lining the central Bulevardul Ştefan cel Mare and scores of markets selling everything from handicrafts to fresh produce. In addition to markets, there are plenty of malls, including the vast Megapolis Mall and the amusingly named MallDova.

#### Markets

Chişinău Souvenir Bazaar (Bulevardul Ştefan cel Mare) is the best place for Soviet memorabilia and handicrafts while the Plata Centrala (Strada Ismail) is the place to go for fresh produce.

#### Shopping Centres

Along with Megapolis (Strada Mihai Sadoveanu 42/6) and MallDova (Strada Arborilor 21), Unic (Strada Ismail), a Soviet-style all-purpose store, is well worth checking out.



## Restaurants

### Restaurants in Chişinău

Eastern Europe might not be known for its cooking, but you wouldn't know it in Chişinău. The Moldovan capital is home to scores of restaurants, some better than others, but all relatively cheap and serving up a huge range of cuisine from traditional Moldovan to flavours from the Far East.

#### Marius

The poshest restaurant in Chişinău, this is the place to come for lunches costing €300 per person.

Eminesku St., 41/1	Price: Expensive
Chişinău	
Moldova	

## Grill House

Terrific meat and fish dishes served up to the accompaniment of live jazz.

Strada Armenească 24 Price: Moderate  
Chişinău  
Moldova

## Vatra Neamului

Delicious, traditional mainly meat-based food, in a charming, old-world dining room.

Strada Puşkin 20B Price: Moderate  
Chişinău  
Moldova

## Pani Pit

Moldovan classics meet the Far East in this unusual courtyard eatery.

Strada 31 August 1989 115 Price: Moderate  
Chişinău  
Moldova

## Pizza Mania

Along with the eponymous pizzas, this budget chain serves up huge salads and delicious omelettes.

Strada Tudor Vladimirescu 7a Price: Cheap  
Chişinău  
Moldova



## Nightlife Nightlife in Chişinău

If you're looking for a party, Chişinău is a good place to come. Much of the nightlife revolves around the local tittle of choice, vodka, although there are some decent beer bars to choose from as well. Be warned: come weekends, bars and clubs are packed, so be prepared to stand.

## City Club

It might be tucked away down an alley but the hip décor and generous drinks have made this place a local favourite.

str. 31 August 1989 115  
Chişinău  
Moldova

## Drive

One of the city's livelier nightclubs, Drive is huge and impersonal but nevertheless

very popular.

Calea Orheiului 109  
Chişinău  
Moldova

## Monaco

Beautifully decorated and very slick, Monaco is the best place to go for a cocktail in Chişinău.

Strada Calea Mosilor 18  
Chişinău  
Moldova

## Dublin Irish Pub

Even Chişinău isn't immune to the lure of Guinness, and this standard Irish pub is a good place for a pint.

Strada Bulgară 27  
Chişinău  
Moldova

## Booz Time

As the name suggests, this isn't the most sophisticated of drinking dens but it's brilliant fun.

Strada 31 August 1989 117  
Chişinău  
Moldova



## Calendar of events Calendar of events

### Martisor Music Festival

Chisinau's finest concert venues join forces to stage 10 days of outstanding musical performances in early spring each year. Local and international artists and companies present an enthralling programme of over 40 concerts featuring classical and folk music, opera and dance.

**March 1 - 10, 2020**

Venue: Various venues

### Cronograf Festival

Moldova's international film festival invites documentary filmmakers and fans from across the globe to this juried competition. Films are judged under three categories: documentaries from any location on any theme; films focusing on Romanian communities around the world; and locally, independently produced documentaries.

**May 2020**

Venue: Odeon Cultural Center

## Night of Museums

Chisinau's museums stay open into the small hours and offer free admission on this special evening coinciding with International Museum Day in mid-May. Interactive exhibitions, poetry readings, theatrical performances and concerts take place, along with architectural city bus tours and historical re-enactments.

### May 2020

Venue: Museums throughout Chisinau and Moldova

## Victory Day

Flag-waving crowds march through the streets to commemorate the Soviet Union's WWII victory over Nazi Germany. The highlight of the day is a spectacular military parade and speeches next to the Victory Memorial. Veterans and their families lay wreaths of red carnations.

### May 9, 2020

Venue: Throughout Chişinău; main parade at Victory Memorial

## Independence Day

Rousing military band performances, folk music and dancing displays attract huge crowds of proud Moldovans to Chisinau's Independence Day celebrations, with many participants donning traditional dress. The commemoration of independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 culminates in a tremendous fireworks display.

### August 27, 2020

Venue: Great National Assembly Square and parts of Stefan cel Mare Boulevard

## Maria Bieşu Opera and Ballet Festival

World-renowned conductors, opera singers and ballet dancers are invited to perform in Chisinau at this annual festival founded by, and now held in honour of, Maria Bieşu, a former prima donna of Moldova's National Opera and Ballet Theatre. The programme includes an enticing mix of favourite and lesser-known productions.

### September 2020

Venue: National Opera and Ballet Theatre and National Palace

## National Wine Day

Lively folk dancing and music, traditional embroidered costumes, delicious regional dishes and plenty of fine local wine combine to create a colourful celebration of Moldovan wine-making. Visitors can pick up handicrafts, get up on grape varieties at masterclasses, or head out of town on scenic vineyard tours.

### October 3 - 4, 2020

Venue: Great National Assembly Square

## Hramul Chisinaului (Chisinau City Day)

The city's main street closes to cars and is transformed into the venue for an important Russian Orthodox religious festival on 14 October, celebrating the

Intercession of the Holy Virgin. Highlights include parades, traditional music and dance, an outdoor concert in Great National Assembly Square and a sparkling fireworks display.

**October 14, 2020**

Venue: Stefan cel Mare Boulevard



## Hotels

### Hotels in Chişinău

As befits a city that's rapidly becoming an economic force to be reckoned with, Chişinău is home to an impressively large array of hotels, most of which are on a par with the rest of Europe. Its boutique hotels are a particularly good bet – many are family run and very cosy.

#### Savoy

No relation to the London hotel, this is nevertheless an opulently decorated Chişinău institution.

Strada Alexei Mateevici 66                      Category: Expensive  
Chişinău  
Moldova

#### Nobil Luxury Boutique Hotel

Very stylish and centrally located, with fabulous four-poster antique beds.

Strada Mihai Eminescu 49/1                      Category: Expensive  
Chişinău  
Moldova

#### Club Royal Park Hotel

Next to Trandafirilor Park, the hotel is packed with quirky antiques and is close to the city centre.

Strada Trandafirilor 6/2                      Category: Moderate  
Chişinău  
Moldova

#### Regency Hotel

A stylish, modern and comfortable sleeping spot close to the Moldova parliament building.

Strada Statul Țării 17                      Category: Moderate  
Chişinău  
Moldova

#### Art-Rustic Boutique Hotel

More family home than anything else, this is a cosy, friendly place to stay.

Strada Alexandru Hajdeu 79/1  
Chişinău  
Moldova

Category: Cheap