**Population:** 21,666,350
**Area:** 238,391 sq. km (slightly smaller than Oregon)
**Capital:** Bucharest (1.9 million)
**Languages:** Romanian (official) 85.4%, Hungarian 6.3%, Romani (Gypsy) 1.2%

**QUICK FACTS**

**EDUCATION**

Romania has a free and compulsory 11-grade education system for ages 6-16. At age 14 students must pass examinations to enter secondary school. About half of these students go on to vocational schools; others continue their education at technical institutes or teacher-training programs. Grading is on a 10-point scale (9 and 10 = excellent, 7 and 8 = good, 5 and 6 = acceptable, 4 and under = unacceptable). The literacy rate for 15 and over is 97.7%. Traditionally, greater emphasis has been placed on rote-learning rather than inquiry-based or critical thinking and exams are typically oral.

**RELIGION**

The majority (86%) of the population identify with the Eastern Orthodox or Romanian Orthodox Church, 7.5% are Protestant (including Pentecostal and Reformathe), 4.7% are Roman Catholic and less than 1% identify as other (mostly Muslim). The country’s Jewish population was decimated during World War II.

**ETHNICITY**

Romanian can imply a nationality, ethnicity or language and not all citizens are ethnic Romanians. While Romanians make up 89.5% of the population, there is a sizeable Hungarian minority (6.6%) as well as Europe’s largest Roma population (2.5%), and smaller populations of Ukrainians, Germans, Russians, and Turks.

**FAMILY, RELATIONSHIPS & CUSTOMS**

Due to tradition as well as housing shortages, it is common for many generations to live together. Under Ceausescu, abortion was outlawed and women were instructed to have four children. While this produced the desired population boost, it also resulted in an increased number of abandoned babies. With both parents working outside the home, it is common for children to be left in day cares all day from a very early age. Belief in vampires has a long history in folk culture but was popularized by the story of Dracula in the 1800s. Food offerings to ward off vampires are made on Saint George’s Day (April 23) and Saint Andrew’s Day (Nov. 29). The custom of covering mirrors in the home of the deceased has its origin in vampirism and the fear that the spirit of the dead person will see its reflection and not be able to leave. Romanian folklore is rich in pagan rituals: Paparuda is performed in times of drought, Dragobete and Martisor usher out winter and welcome spring. Calusari is the spring dance that was recently declared one of the “masterpieces of oral and intangible heritages of humanity” by UNESCO. Romania’s National Day is December 1, which commemorates the union of the principalities.
CONTEMPORARY ROMANIA

The 1989 overthrow of the communist regime in Romania came via violent revolution, in which more than 1,000 people were killed. Among the dead was the longtime President Nicolae Ceaușescu and his wife, Elena, who were executed after a hasty trial. The transition to free-market capitalism and democracy were not easy in Romania, and the 1990s were a time of great economic hardship. This dramatically changed in the 2000s, as the Romanian economy began a period of tremendous growth, leading some to call Romania the “Tiger of the East.”

Since the late 1990s, Romania has been a staunch ally to the United States, backing even controversial US policy decisions. Romania joined George Bush’s “Coalition of the Willing” in 2003, and maintained a military presence in Iraq until 2009. Romania also participated in NATO interventions in Afghanistan, Libya, and Kosovo. The US has also been allowed joint use of Romanian military facilities since 2005, and a new US Navy base opened in Romania in 2014. In exchange, Romania has been allowed to join NATO (2004) and the EU (2007), and substantial bilateral trade and investment agreements have been signed between the US and Romania. NATO plans to build a continental missile shield have been supported by Romania and have been stepped up since the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis in 2014.

Romania was hit hard by the global financial crisis of 2007-2008 and received a large loan from the IMF in 2009. However, the economy had largely recovered by 2013, and today Romania again has one of the strongest economies in the region. Despite this progress, corruption and organized crime remain big problems. The current president of Romania is Klaus Iohannis, of the center-right Christian Liberal Alliance, elected in late 2014 on a anti-corruption platform. The Romanian government has been reluctant to accept large amounts of Syrian refugees, but Romania’s desire to gain admittance into the Schengen Area led them in 2016 to acquiesce to the EU’s mandatory refugee quotas. It is likely that over 4,000 Syrian refugees will be eventually settled in Romania.

ROMANIAN WORDS

Hi .......................... Salut!
Bye .......................... La revedere
Good day .................... Buna ziua
Yes ......................... Da
No ......................... Nu
Please ..................... Multimesc
Thank you ................. Cu plăcere
You’re welcome ........... Bun venit
How are you? ................ Ce mai faceti?
I do not understand ...... Nu inteleg
Do you understand? ...... Dumneavoastră întelegeti
What is your name?........ Cum va cheama
My name is ............... Ma numesc...
Where are you from? .... De unde sunteti?

USEFUL LINKS

CIA World Factbook: Romania
BBC Country Profile Romania
National Geographic Romania Guide
English Language news from Romania

CONTEMPORARY ROMANIA

The colors date back to the shields and banners of Michael the Brave, who united Walachia, Moldavia, and Transylvania in 1601. The stripes were horizontal until 1886 when they adopted the French vertical model. The communist coat of arms was removed in 1989.

ROMANIA IN THE USA

Romanian immigrants have been arriving in the US since the late 19th century. Early immigrants were unskilled laborers working in factories. Later waves brought a variety of professionals who often took jobs outside of their profession. Major surges occurred during the threat of Nazi occupation and after the 1989 revolution, which brought an end to communism and travel restrictions. Romanians are the fourth largest community at Microsoft in Washington State.