

IT FEELS SAFE TO
WANDER BUCHAREST,
BUT IT'S BEST TO
ORDER A TAXI
RATHER THAN TRY
TO HAIL ONE



Six in the city: Bucharest

Expats in the Romanian capital share their secrets
Interviews by **James Wallman** Photography by **Tim White**



WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

Leslie Hawke.

HOW OLD ARE YOU? 55.

WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

New York City, USA.

WHERE AND WITH

WHOM DO YOU LIVE? On Calea Victoriei, with my 16-year-old god-daughter and my 10-year-old Maltese.

WHAT DO YOU DO? I try to get impoverished children into school.

DO YOU LOVE THE CITY? Bucharest is a fascinating place to live and work. I loved it until it joined the EU, when suddenly a million 4x4 vehicles appeared out of nowhere – like mushrooms after rain. It is now

completely disagreeable to drive in the city.

WHAT SURPRISED YOU MOST

ABOUT BUCHAREST? The beautiful neoclassical and modernist buildings constructed between 1890 and 1940.

WHERE ARE YOUR FAVOURITE

PLACES TO EAT? Vatra, a very authentic Romanian restaurant near Cismigiu Park, serves wonderful *sarmale*, a Romanian dish of cabbage stuffed with pork. You have to try it when you're here – even if you're a vegetarian.

WHERE DO YOU TAKE FRIENDS

WHEN THEY COME TO STAY? The old town, Lipscani, for its crumbling

but beautiful buildings, the housing projects near Piata Rahova, the new and completely fabulous Carol Parc Hotel, the Ateneul Român and Cismigiu Park.

WHERE DO YOU GO TO DRINK? The Debarcader restaurant in Cismigiu Park. It's next to a lovely boating lake, which becomes an ice rink in December and January.

CAN YOU SUM THE CITY UP IN THREE WORDS? Incongruous, intense, real.

WHAT'S THE WORST THING ABOUT THE CITY? Romanians' obsession with honking their horns.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE ROMANIAN

PHRASE? *Fiecare copil in scoala* – it means “Every child in school”.

PIATA UNIRII, OR 'UNITY SQUARE' IS IN THE CENTRE OF THE CITY, WHERE SECTORS 1, 2, 3 AND 4 CONVERGE



WHAT'S YOUR NAME? Tara Marie Anderson.

HOW OLD ARE YOU? 30.

WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

Orange County, California, USA.

WHERE DO YOU LIVE AND WITH WHOM?

Bucuresti, with a Persian cat called Oscar Davis.

WHAT DO YOU DO? I'm an actress – I was in *As Good as It Gets* and have been in *Baywatch* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

And I've just started my own fashion label, CC California Constanta (www.californiaconstantar.ro).

WHY DO YOU LIVE IN BUCHAREST? I

came to visit my father who was working here and fell in love with the people and the country.

WHAT'S THE MOST SURPRISING THINGS

ABOUT THE CITY? The transformation over

the last seven years that I've been here.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE FOODS IN THE CITY? The hommus snobar at Lebanese restaurant Piccolo Mondo and the spinach crepe at Uptown are to die for.

WHERE TO TAKE FRIENDS WHEN THEY COME TO STAY? The Coyote Café is great for rock 'n' roll. And Fratelli is the trendy venue. It's by the lake in summer and behind the Atheneum in winter, and it's always a car show. Everyone comes in their BMWs and Porsches.

ADVICE TO A TOURIST? Always order a taxi rather than hailing one on the street. Go to the Peasant Museum at Herastrau Park and have lunch on Herastrau Lake.

WHERE DO YOU GO FOR A DRINK? When you're in the old city, in Lipscani quarter, stop for coffee or a cocktail at Market 8, a really cool design shop and café.

CAN YOU SUM THE CITY UP IN THREE WORDS? Not a chance.

WHAT'S THE WORST THING ABOUT THE CITY? The traffic.

FAVOURITE ROMANIAN PHRASE?

Sarut mâna. Men address women this way, it means "I kiss your hand".

THE ONE ROMANIAN DISH YOU HAVE

TO TRY? *Papanasi* – pronounced "papa-nash" – a delicious pastry you can buy everywhere.





WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

Joaquin Bonilla.

HOW OLD ARE YOU? 38.

WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

Mexico City.

WHERE AND WITH WHOM DO YOU LIVE?

A loft in Cotroceni with a French Bulldog named Tim – short for Timisoara, where I bought him after a night of partying.

WHAT DO YOU DO? I'm executive creative director for Publicis Dialog, a communication agency.

DO YOU LOVE BUCHAREST? Love it? Hard to say, really. Better put it this way: Bucharest is *sooo* addictive.

WHAT'S THE ONE ROMANIAN DISH YOU HAVE TO TRY? *Mici* – super-tasty Romanian meatballs – or *ciorba de burta* – the lovely local tripe soup.

WHERE ARE YOUR FAVORITE PLACES TO EAT? Uptown, Balthazar, Piccolo Mondo.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE ROMANIAN PHRASE? *Ce faci draga!* Meaning, "What are you up to dear?"

WHAT'S THE FUNNIEST MISUNDERSTANDING THAT YOU'VE COME ACROSS IN ROMANIA?

Anytime a foreigner tries to say the word for lemon, *lamiae*. It sounds very similar to the phrase you say when you are asking for a special favor...



WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

Lauren Vonnegut.

HOW OLD ARE YOU? 44.

WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

California.

WHERE AND WITH WHOM DO YOU LIVE?

In the centre of Bucharest with a pugnacious street cat with attitude.

WHAT DO YOU DO? I write novels and screenplays.

WHY DO YOU LIVE IN BUCHAREST?

Because everyday is an adventure here. It gets under your skin in a way that is difficult to articulate.

WHERE ARE YOUR FAVOURITE PLACE TO EAT?

Mju, a new-ish designer French-Japanese fusion restaurant in Str. Vasile Lascar.

WHERE DO YOU TAKE FRIENDS WHEN THEY COME TO STAY? To my vineyard.

And promptly put them to work.

WHAT'S YOUR ADVICE TO A TOURIST? It's a safe city – explore.

CAN YOU SUM THE CITY UP IN THREE WORDS?

Chaotic, downtrodden beauty.

WHAT'S THE WORST THING ABOUT THE CITY? The traffic.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE ROMANIAN PHRASE?

Nu stiu, pronounced "new stew", meaning "I don't know".





WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

Andrew Begg.

HOW OLD ARE YOU? 45.

WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

Melbourne, Australia.

WHERE AND WITH WHOM DO YOU LIVE?

Bucharest, with Lola the dog, Percy the cat, a snake called Mr Snake, and some fish who are just collectively known as "The Fish".

WHAT DO YOU DO? I work for BAC, an investment bank, and edit *Vivid*, the English language publication.

WHAT'S THE MOST SURPRISING THING ABOUT THE CITY? The fact that you can walk around at pretty much any hour without feeling threatened or intimidated.

WHERE DO YOU TAKE FRIENDS WHEN THEY COME TO STAY? Down Calea Victoriei and show them the Palatul Poporului – the People's Palace. You only believe how big it is when you see it.

CAN YOU SUM THE CITY UP IN THREE WORDS? Bustling, bewildering, beguiling.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE ROMANIAN PHRASE? *Nu am chef* – "I'm not in the mood".

LEFT: A MIX OF EAST AND WEST IN PIATA UNIRII BELOW: CISMIGUIU PARK OFFERS A CHANCE FOR RELAXATION





WHAT'S YOUR NAME? Jerry Van Schaik.

HOW OLD ARE YOU? 41.

WHERE ARE YOU FROM? Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

WHERE AND WITH WHOM DO YOU LIVE? Near the main station with my girlfriend, Maya.

WHAT DO YOU DO? I manage the Amsterdam Café and the Rembrandt boutique hotel.

HAS THE CITY CHANGED MUCH SINCE YOU'VE BEEN HERE? When I first moved from Amsterdam my partner said to me, "It'll take five years to make this area the blooming heart of Bucharest, Jerry." Seven years later, it's still a mess but it's slowly getting there.

WHAT HAS SURPRISED YOU ABOUT THE CITY? As well as the grand Neoclassical buildings, there's a lot of great modernist buildings here too.

WHERE DO YOU TAKE VISITING FRIENDS? They have to see Caru' Cu Bere. In terms of food and service, it's like a slap in the face, it's horrible. But the interior is amazing – the stained glass and carved wood is a great example of Romanian architecture a hundred years ago.

WERE THERE ANY CULTURE CLASHES WHEN YOU MOVED HERE? There was a huge one with my staff. To begin I gave people responsibility and asked their opinions. But they thought that democratic leadership means that *sefu* [pronounced "chefu"] is an idiot. It's not how I want to work, but I have to be tougher.

Mieszkający w stolicy Rumunii obokrajowcy dzielą się swoimi wrażeniami.

Leslie Hawke z Nowego Jorku, 55 lat.

Czym się zajmujesz? Pracuję na rzecz obywateli dzieci.

Co w Bukareszcie najbardziej cię zaskakuje? Piękna neoklasykistyczna i modernistyczna architektura.

A co najmniej ci się tu podoba? Rumuni mają obsesję na punkcie użycia klaksonów samochodowych.

Tara Marie Anderson z Kaliforni, 30 lat.

Czym się zajmujesz? Jestem aktorką.

Ulubione rumuńskie wyrażenie? Sarut mana (tzn. całuję twoją dłoń) – w ten sposób mężczyźni zwracają się do kobiet.

Rumuńskie danie, którego koniecznie trzeba spróbować? Pyszne ciasto o nazwie papanasi.

Joaquin Bonilla z Meksyku, 38 lat.

Czym się zajmujesz? Jestem dyrektorem kreatywnym w agencji Publicis Dialog.

Kochasz Bukareszt? Czy kocham? Naprawdę trudno powiedzieć. Powiedziałbym raczej tak: Bukareszt jest tak baaardzo uzależniający.

Ulubiony rumuński zwrot? Ce faci draga! – Na co masz ochotę, kochanie?

Laureen Vennegut z Kaliforni, 44 lata.

Czym się zajmujesz? Piszę opowiadania i scenariusze.

Dlaczego mieszkasz w Bukareszcie? Ponieważ każdy dzień jest tu przygodą. Czujesz się gdzieś pod skórą, trudno to nawet określić.

Andrew Begg z Melbourne, 45 lat.

Czym się zajmujesz? Pracuję dla banku inwestycyjnego, wydaję też angielskojęzyczną publikację Vivid.

Co najbardziej cię tu zaskakuje? To, że w tym mieście możesz wychodzić na ulicę o dowolnej porze, bez poczucia strachu czy zagrożenia. W jakich trzech słowach podsumowałbyś Amia-sto? Zakrecone, oszalałające, czarujące.

Jerry Van Schaik z Amsterdamu, 41 lat.

Czym się zajmujesz? Prowadzę kafejkę Amsterdam i hotelik Rembrandt.

Dokąd zabierasz przyjaciół, kiedy cię odwiedzają? Muszą zobaczyć Cara Cu Bere. Jedzenie i obsługa są tu okropne. Ale za to wnętrza – z romańskimi witrażami i rzeźbieniami w drewnie – po prostu niesamowite!

BUCHAREST BLACK BOOK

SLEEP

Rembrandt Hotel Bucharest's only boutique hotel has 10 good rooms and location on its side; it's in Lipschani quarter. Doubles from €86 including breakfast. Str. Smardan 11, tel: +40 (0)21 313 9316, www.rembrandt.ro

Novotel The city's newest four-star has a recreated 19th-century entrance, spa and awesome views. Rooms on the 12th floor have the best views. Doubles from €160. Calea Victoriei 37b, tel: +40 (0)21 308 8888, www.novotel.com

EAT

Ristorante Debarcader Cismigiu Park, tel: +40 (0)21 310 0466

Mju Str. Vasile Lascar 29, tel: +40 (0)21 313 0015, www.mju.ro

Uptown Str. Rabat 2, tel: +40 (0)21 231 4077, www.uptown.ro

Piccolo Mondo Str. Clucerului 9, tel: +40 (0)21 222 5755, www.piccolomondo.ro

Balthazar Str. Dumbrava Rosie 2, tel: +40 (0)21 212 1460, www.balthazar.ro

Vatra Str. Brezoianu 23-25, tel: +40 091 315 8375, www.vatra.ro

PARTY

Coyote Café Calea Victoriei 48-50, tel: +40 (0)21 311 3487, www.coyotecafe.ro

Fratelli Str. Nicolae Golescu 5, tel: +40 (0)21 311 6676, www.fratelli.ro

Embryo Str. Ion Otetelesanu 3a, tel: +40 727 379 023

CAFÉ

Amsterdam Café Covaci Street 6, tel: +40 (0)21 313 7580

Market 8 Str. Stavropoleos 8, tel: +40 (0)21 313 4167

SEE

Caru' Cu Bere St. Stavropoleos 3-5, tel: +40 (0)21 313 7560, www.carucubere.ro

Cismigiu Park

People's Palace

Peasant Museum

WHAT'S ON

In Your Pocket Pick up this excellent guide in your hotel, from www.inyourpocket.com