



# Never Mind the Balkans, Here's Romania

*Mike Ormsby*

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## **Never Mind the Balkans, Here's Romania** Mike Ormsby

'Never Mind the Balkans, Here's Romania' has been described as one of the best guide books on Romania. If you want to discover Romania with someone who knows it well, Mike Ormsby's travel writing is for you.

Whilst the average Romania travel guide provides details of places to visit, this writer takes a different approach. Ormsby gets up close and personal, blending journalistic objectivity with dry wit to craft true-life stories about the people who live in Romania: from friendly hikers and shepherds in Transylvania, to exasperated taxi drivers and bossy bureaucrats in Bucharest.

Ormsby's bittersweet short stories are a quick and easy read yet offer fascinating glimpses of an enthralling land that Vlad 'The Impaler' Tepes - real life inspiration for gothic legend Dracula - once ruled with an iron fist.

Mike Ormsby's first visited Romania in spring 1994 as a BBC reporter. Touched by the hospitality and wry humour of the local people, he soon returned to teach journalism at BBC World Service School in Bucharest, and remained in that post for several years, writing in his spare time.

Published in 2008, 'Never Mind the Balkans, Here's Romania', was well received by Romania's literary critics, several of whom dubbed Ormsby 'The British Caragiale', in deference to their beloved fin-de-siècle satirist and playwright. Ion Luca Caragiale shone a humorous and affectionate light on Romania in his era, and Mike Ormsby does the same in ours.

Numerous expats and visitors have also welcomed the book as a unique and modern variation on the more conventional Romania travel guide.

'Never Mind the Balkans, Here's Romania' is a memorable collection of travel writing that provides a unique insight into this irresistible country, where locals say, "Ca la noi, la nimeni - there's nobody quite like us."

So, close your guide book and meet the people! Ormsby's cast of colourful characters will entertain, educate, and even enrage - it depends who's reading.

Many reviewers praise the book's frank and funny descriptions of life in Romania:

"This chronicle of slightly agonised passion for a country and its people is exactly the kind of Romania guidebook that a visitor needs - an insight into the culture's paradoxical heart."

"Wonderfully captures many aspects of living and working in Romania - funny, frequently frustrating and uniquely Romanian."

"A good read on the cultural changes in post-communist Romania with a comical slant. An interesting piece of social commentary."

"A fascinating view of Romanian people, witty and readable."

"If you enjoy honest travel writing this is definitely worth a read."

"If you're planning a trip or have already been, this is an insightful, informative, and funny book on Romania and Romanians."

"The book is a series of short witty essays about everyday life and friendships in modern Romania. Ormsby skilfully brings out the contradictions, contrasts, warmth, and beauty of a fascinating country and its colourful people."

"'Never Mind the Balkans, Here's Romania' is an intimate tour of Romania with an expert guide. Perfect for the truly adventurous as well as the armchair traveller. Ormsby smuggles you deep inside this extraordinary country and into the minds of its people. A brilliant read."

"A fascinating journey through Romanian geography and culture, told with warmth and hope."

"I loved this book. An anecdotal review of life in Romania from the perspective of an Englishman with typically dry humour. Highly recommended, a great read, and I was laughing from beginning to end."

"A realistic and very humorous insight into the Romanian psyche. As someone who has travelled extensively in Romania I could relate to many incidents."

"Never Mind the Balkans has become one of the best-selling books ever written about Romania by a foreigner. Romania is the protagonist of the book, not Mike Ormsby."

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#### **Eduardo Fernandez:**

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