

# National Folk Traditions in Romania



*Traditions without Frontiers - Journey around Regional Cultures*

# New Year's Eve Traditions

## The Goat

*Capra* – all regions of Romania



A man will dress up as a goat, called *capra* in Romania. He wears a multicolored costume and is accompanied by a group of singers during Christmas night. The goat will jump and dance, trying to scare the host.

# The Goat



The custom involves props, literary and musical texts and dance. The goat costume is made up of a wooden head, whose lower jaw bone is loose so it can clatter, and multicolored horns that are adorned with mirrors, beads, colored tassels and ribbons, bells and goat or rabbit fur. The costume's body is made up of thick fabric. It can be made of wool, a carpet or goat fur. Its main function is to hide the one who is wearing it.

# New Year's Eve Traditions



## The Star



**Groups of kids or young people will take the star with them when they go carol singing. The star is made of colored paper and often decorated with tinsel, silver foil and sometimes bells, and is put on a pole. In the middle of the star there is a picture of baby Jesus.**

**The custom of carrying around a star relates to a Biblical story. The star of Bethlehem, also called the Christmas Star, revealed the birth of baby Jesus to the three Magi and led them to Bethlehem.**



# New Year's Eve Traditions

## ➤ Sorcova



The first day of the new year however has traditional ties to it. It marks the celebration of Saint Vasile . On this day, which is considered to be magical, children come caroling a carol called Sorcova, wishing people a rich, fruitful year.



# Epiphany – January, 6th

## Blessing water and Throwing the Cross

The celebration starts on the eve of the Epiphany, on January 5, when the priests across all Orthodox churches begin to bless the waters. The holy water (*agheasmain* Romanian) is then given to the people on the Epiphany day, after the religious mass. The believers use the *agheasma* to bless their houses, goods, and animals, as it is believed that this blessed water has miraculous powers and protects them. They also drink the water every morning, usually before eating, before January 6 and January 14. Some of the religious ceremonies usually take place near large bodies of water, such as rivers or the sea. After the priests bless the waters, they throw wood crosses into the cold water and young men go in their search. It is believed that the one who finds the cross and brings it back to shore will get purified of all sins and will have good luck the entire year.



# Summer and Winter “moși”

The orthodox church has chosen two specific Saturdays during the year to commemorate the soul of the dead people. In these days, Romanians go to church and share food for the soul of their dead ones after it is blessed by the priest.

In the evening, couples visit their godparents and parents kissing their hands in respect and bringing food and presents .



# Painting Eggs for Easter

Throughout time, painting Easter eggs became an art of its own in Romania's villages, the painter's role being initially reserved only for women. While painting eggs is even today a skill very few master as the process is long and meticulous, some Romanian artisans have transformed these hollowed-out eggs into unique works of art, exhibited all around the world. Although the colors and symbols used to decorate the eggs vary according to the region, usually three-four colors are used, each with its own meaning. Red symbolizes love and solar light, black is the eternity, yellow is about youth and rich crops while green relates to nature and blue to health and sunny skies.





## Easter Eggs

The decorative motifs are also very diverse, mixing symbols like the cross or the star with vegetal and animal representations and traditional elements from the rural culture. The use of symbols is also influenced by regional and local elements. This local specificity is well represented by the artisans from Ciocanesti, [Bucovina](#), who use the geometrical motifs of the beautiful houses from their village to decorate their creations.



# Splashing Water on Girls-Easter tradition

Boys from the village get water from a well and, with the splashing, they are wishing upon the women to be healthy, beautiful and to find love.

The boys, wearing traditional costumes, walk around the village singing songs and playing traditional instruments. They stop at almost every house, where they are greeted by girls dressed in folkloric costumes with Easter-specific food and drinks. Then the boys recite a poem and ask for the girls' permission to be "sprinkled".



# Sanzienele/ Drăgaica



Sanzienele' is a Romanian tradition with pre-Christian roots which is celebrated on June 24 – which coincides with the Orthodox holiday Ioan Botezatorul (St. John the Baptist). It is a midsummer tradition which celebrates nature and fecundity. Sanziennele are also called Dragaica in some regions of the country (Muntenia, Oltenia). The word “sanziene” is also used for a plant with golden flowers, which are gathered into wreaths and placed in the house (actually also thrown on the roof) to protect the house and its inhabitants from evil spirits. The legend goes that Sanziennele are young girls who give their magical powers to flowers and herbs during this period. During this time, young women can find their destined one – if they put the Sanziene flowers under their pillow during the night before the holiday, they will dream their future husband, the tradition goes.

In more traditional Romanian villages, young girls are dancing Hora Dragaicelor. Hora is a traditional folk dance that gathers everyone into a big, closed circle, with all dancers holding hands.

The Sanziene night (June 23rd to June 24th) is considered a mystical moment, when the nature is at its peak and displays its most vital force. The traditional belief is that miracles can happen during the Sanziene night, when the skies can open.



# Călușarii



Căluș dance is performed in the Olt region of southern Romania. The ritual's name derives from the Căluș, the wooden part of the horse's bridle. The Căluș ritual features a series of games, skits, songs and dances, and was enacted by all-male Călușari dancers to the accompaniment of two violins and an accordion.



Young men used to be initiated into the ritual by a vataf (master) who had inherited the knowledge of descântece (magic charms) and the dance steps from his predecessor.

Groups of Călușari dancers, sporting colourful hats, embroidered shirts and trousers adorned with small jingling bells, perform complex dances, which combine stamping, clicking of the heels, leaping and swinging of the legs.

According to tradition, groups of dancing and chanting Călușari, who were thought to be endowed with magical healing powers, went from house to house, promising good health and prosperity to villagers. Until today, Călușari meet to celebrate their dancing and musical prowess on Whit Sunday.



# Christmas Traditions-Men's Group Caroling



Each year before Christmas, groups of young men gather in villages throughout Romania and the Republic of Moldova to prepare for the ritual of Colindat. On Christmas Eve, they go from house to house performing festive songs. Afterwards, the hosts offer the singers ritual gifts and money. The songs have an epic content, which is adapted to each host's individual circumstances. Ritual performers also sing special, auspicious songs for unmarried girls and dance with them – a practice said to help them find a husband within the next year. Colindat is sometimes performed in costume, with instrumental accompaniment and choreography. Groups of young men (traditionally unmarried) are the main bearers and practitioners of the element; experienced men, often former group leaders, are responsible for the group's training. The ritual songs are learned at daily rehearsals from the time the group is formed until Christmas Eve. In some areas, children are allowed to attend these rehearsals in order to learn the repertoire. As well as conveying the season's greetings, this cultural heritage plays an important role in preserving social identity and ensuring cohesion.

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# Christmas Traditions

- Christmas Caroling



Just before Christmas, traditionally men bring home the Christmas tree that will be decorated on Christmas' Eve, December 24. The Christmas tree will stay in the house until January 6, when Orthodox Romanians celebrate Boboteaza, or Jesus' baptism. On this day, the caroling season officially starts. But according to the tradition, the first carolers will come during the morning on Christmas Eve, singing a carol called ' Buna dimineata' (a translation of Good morning).

Families usually either leave the carolers sing outside their door or their windows, and then go out and give them goodies, apples, nuts, cookies, sweet bread – and money, something which has been added into the tradition – or invite them into their home, at the entrance. Usually the entire family gathers to listen to the carolers, with several groups of carolers visiting during the Christmas Eve day.



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