

# Cross Cultural Transylvania Pilgrimage

## August 2017

(rev. 11/27/16)

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Join Unitarians from the Khasi Hills on a budget pilgrimage to Transylvania in August of 2017 to explore and experience the historic roots of Unitarianism and to connect with our coreligionists in Romania. We will spend 2 weeks in the pastoral countryside of central Transylvania, getting to know the Indian Unitarians and our partners better, visiting local sights and having fun. Along the way we will visit historic Unitarian sites and places of a more general interest, including:

- Bucharest – two nights, and a city tour in this elegant European capital city!
- Sinaia – home to Peles castle, the summer palace of the Romanian Royals.
- Sibiu – the historic Saxon capital of Transylvania, named the European Cultural Capital for 2007-8.
- Torda - where the first act of religious tolerance in Europe was signed in 1568
- Kolozsvár – the city in central Romania where the Transylvanian Unitarian Church has its headquarters, high school and the church which houses the rock that Francis David spoke from when he "converted the whole town's population to Unitarianism."
- Gyulafehérvár where a 1000 year-old church houses the tomb of the Unitarian King Sigismund and his mother, Isabella.
- Deva – participate in a vesper service in the citadel where Francis David was martyred.
- Sighisoara – 13<sup>th</sup> century medieval walled city which is both a UNESCO World Heritage site and the purported birthplace of Vlad Tepes – aka "Dracula".
- The Homorod Valleys - where 19 Unitarian villages with historic frescoed churches are set among unparalleled scenery.
- Brasso - the Saxon city which is home to the "Black Church", the largest neo-gothic cathedral between Istanbul and Vienna.

The trip will begin and end in the Romanian capital city of Bucharest. It then travels north over the Carpathian Mts. into Transylvania where we will tour a number of Unitarian holy places and tourist sites before arriving in Nagyajta (or your partner village) where we will experience rural Transylvanian village life. Pilgrims will discover the warmth and loving hospitality of Transylvanian Unitarian families attending church, sharing meals, and getting to know Unitarians from another culture.

The trip is open to all, young and not so young. Through this trip we hope to foster a new understanding of our historical roots and build deeper relationships with each other and our co-religionists overseas. The tour logistics will be coordinated by the UU Partner Church Council Pilgrimage Service which has more than a decade of experience facilitating the visits of North American UUs to Eastern & Central Europe.

**Proposed Itinerary:** *(B/L/D – Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner included in trip fee): hotels subject to change due to availability at time of booking.*

- Wednesday, August 16 – Arrive OTP Bucharest airport, transfer to hotel. Free afternoon to rest and relax. Evening reception & dinner with UUPCC staff. Overnight Bucharest – Hotel Herastrau\*\*\*(D)
- Thursday, August 17 – Guided Bucharest bus & walking tour with visits to Palace of Parliament, Metropolitan Church (seat of the Romanian Patriarch), Embassy district, and other sites of interest. Group lunch followed by free time at your choice of the Peasant Museum or the outdoor Village Museum. Evening folklore dinner show. Overnight Bucharest – Hotel Herastrau\*\*\*(BLD)
- Friday, August 18 – Depart via motor coach for two hour drive to the Carpathian Mountain resort town of Sinaia. Hotel check-in and group lunch upon arrival. Guided tour of Peles Castle, summer palace of the Romanian Royal Family. Free afternoon/evening to visit the Orthodox monastery of Sinaia, shop, stroll or just relax. Overnight Sinaia – Hotel Caraiman\*\*\*. (BL)
- Saturday, August 19, Morning drive through the mountains to Bran Castle (1 hour driving time), aka – "Dracula's Castle", for a group lunch and self guided tour. Free time to shop for tasteless souvenirs

Late afternoon arrival in Sibiu (2 hours driving time). Hotel check-in & orientation in city center. Dinner on your own. Overnight Sibiu – Imparatul Romanilor\*\*\* (BL)

- Sunday, August 20. Morning check-in with UUPCC staff followed by free morning to visit the museums, churches, and shops of your choosing. Lunch on your own. 2pm departure for Deva (1 ½ hour driving time). En route we detour slightly to visit the 13<sup>th</sup> century fairy-tale castle at Vadjahunjad. Early evening arrival in Deva. Hotel check-in and group dinner. Evening fountain & music/light show in city square. Overnight Deva – Hotel Sarmis\*\*\* (BD)
- Monday, August 21. Morning vesper service in the ruined fortress above Deva followed by a visit to the Deva Unitarian church before departing for Cluj/Kolozsvar (2 ½ hours driving time). Two stops en route. First we visit the newly restored Transylvanian royal city of Alba Iulia/Gyulafehervar to tour the 1000-year old church which houses the tombs of the Unitarian King, Sigismund, and his mother, Isabella. Group lunch before continuing on to Torda where we stop at the Church of the Edict to honor the place where the first decree of religious tolerance in Europe was issued in 1568. Group dinner & overnight Kolozsvar - Unitarian Center for Students & Pilgrims (UCSP). (BLD)
- Tuesday, August 22. Morning Unitarian tour of Kolozsvar including 1<sup>st</sup> Church (which houses the famous Francis David rock), the Unitarian HQ & High School, and St. Michael's Church where Francis David once preached. Group lunch, followed by a free afternoon to shop, stroll, catch up on email, visit the Botanical gardens, or just relax. Evening program TBD provided by Hungarian Unitarian Church's tourism office. Dinner on your own. Overnight Kolozsvar – UCSP. (BL)
- Wednesday, August 23. Depart Kolozsvar after breakfast for the town of Szekelykeresztur (3 1/2 hours driving). En route we stop in the picturesque Hungarian provincial city of Targu-Mures/Marosvasarhely to tour the world famous Teleki Library, Transylvania's first public library, and the spectacular Art Nouveaux Cultural Palace. Group lunch before continuing on to Szekelykeresztur. Group dinner & overnight Unitarian Guest House. (BLD)
- Thursday, August 24. Morning orientation in the citadel of Segesvar (a UNESCO World Heritage site) by UUPCC staff followed by a free morning to explore the city on foot, shop, climb the clock tower, and tour the attractions & museums of your choice. Lunch on your own. Afternoon departure for the frescoed Unitarian church at Szekelyderzs (a UNESCO World Heritage site). Group dinner in Szekelyudvarhely before returning to Szekelykeresztur Unitarian Guest House. (BD)
- Friday, August 25. Morning shopping trip to the nearby craft village of Korond for fabulous deals on all manner of hand work and local crafts. Afterward we partake of a group lunch, and then depart for Nagyajta via the Little Homorod Valley. En route we visit the Unitarian church at Karacsonyfalva with its recently uncovered frescoes Beautiful drive around the Vargyas Gorge before arriving in the Unitarian village of Nagyajta. Welcome reception/dinner before settling in with host families. Evening program TBD. Dinner & overnight Nagyajta - home stays & guest houses. (BLD)
- Saturday & Sunday, August 26-27. Village days making new friends & reconnecting with old. Program specifics TBD by organizers and hosting congregation. Day trips to nearby sights. These may include the village of Bolon with its massive Unitarian church & the Saxon city of Brasov/Brasso, plus village activities such as picnics, horse cart rides & hiking in the hills. Overnights village home stays or guest house. (BLD)
- Monday, August 28. Depart Nagyajta for Bucharest after breakfast (5 hours driving) Farewell luncheon en route with UUPCC staff in Sinaia. Evening arrival in Bucharest. Free evening to repack and rest. Dinner on your own. Overnight Bucharest – Airport RIN\*\*\*\*. (BL)
- Tuesday, August 29. Shuttles to airport for return flights to the US (B)

14 days/13 nights base land package offered by UUPCC Pilgrimage Service \$1095 double occupancy + 150 registration fee. Add \$149 for single supplement. Children 12 and under sharing accommodations with 2 adults are ½ price and not subject to the registration fee. Land package includes ground transportation, accommodations, meals (as indicated above), tour director, guide(s), interpreter(s), and entrance fees to programmed tourist sites. The package does NOT include airfare (note 1), visa fees (note 2), gratuities, alcoholic beverages, personal expenses incurred during free programs, departure or arrival airport transfers before/after specified trip dates or different from main party.