

Visit tour of Transylvania

The visit tour of Transylvania represents the visit of Alba Iulia Historical City and its area. This tour is free of any additional charge (it will be covered by conference registration fee).

The tour will be by bus with three stars and takes about 8 hours. The participants will support all the personal expenses within the Alba Iulia and trip.

About Alba Iulia

Alba Iulia is the site of the ancient Apulum, founded by the Romans in the 2nd cent. A.D., and destroyed by Tatars in 1241. It was the seat (16th–17th cent.) of the princes of Transylvania, of a Roman Catholic bishop, and of an Eastern Orthodox metropolitan.

From 1599 to 1601, Alba Iulia was the capital of the united principalities of Walachia, Transylvania, and Moldavia. It was the site (1918) of the proclamation of Transylvania's union with Romania and of the coronation of King Ferdinand in 1922. Today, many Romanians consider Alba Iulia to be the spiritual capital city of Romania.

During the Middle Ages but also in the modern times, Alba Iulia was known as an eventful town, having an important role in the social and political life of Transylvania. From a tourist point of view the city holds pride of place. There are many places of interest but the Citadel is undoubtedly the most important one.

The Roman Catholic Cathedral can be found here. It is the oldest and most valuable monument of architecture in Transylvania.

The Reunification Cathedral stands next to it and symbolizing the Romanian people's idea of unity.

The First of December, the Romanian National Holiday, is a suitable time for promoting the touristy potential of the city inside the country and abroad.

Alba Tourist Area

Alba Iulia municipality is situated in an appealing territory, and traveler is warmly hosted here. The touristic potential of the area is mirrored by the numerous traces of millenary history, by its architecture and art, by the variety and beauty of nature. Even since ancient times Alba's territory has been a heart of human civilization. Indeed, Romanian specific traditions and customs have always been a great temptations for Romanian and foreign tourists.

Some touristic offers have been financed through EU projects such as: "**Alba Iulia-The Gate to the Wine Citadel**", and the "**Hunting circuit on Sebes valley**" - pattern projects that managed to certify about 82 guest houses which can provide accommodation for 370 tourists.

The history of the city

The City has been inhabited since ancient times. There are settling traces dating from 106-107 b.C. when the existence of Dacian hovels was mentioned. Next to them, two towns developed and later become municipia and collonia. A bi-millenary municipality, a heart-shaped, historical city of monuments and national becoming, Alba Iulia had a very important contribution to the history of human settlings and fortified citadels.

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The city is situated at an old gold and salt commercial crossroads, into the perimeter formed by the rivers Ampoi and Sebes and the crests of the Apuseni Mountains that mount mildly and lithely towards the terrace of the river Mures and the Transylvanian Hills. The gentle climate and the richness of the soil rendered this area habitable even since ancient times. Archeologists register rich vestiges of the material culture - dating since Neolithic, Bronze Era, Hallstatt, Latene and Middle Ages - undeniable proof of our continuity on these territories.

The tribe of the Dacians from "the far-off Appulus" is mentioned in "Consolatio ad Liviam - Poetae latini minores", and the geographer Ptolemaios revealed in his "Geographical Guide" (written in the first half of the second century) the coordinates of the city: 49°15' longitude - 46° 41' latitude.

The XIII Gemina Legion is to be billeted here in one of the major stoned Roman camps during the years Dacia was a Roman province. Along with the Dacians, the new comers (the Romans), "ex toto orbe romano", are the ancestors of the Romanian people, appropriating the Dacian ancient toponym Apoulon (a fortress situated at Piatra Craivii, 20 km North of Alba Iulia, which became the Roman Apulum).

Two roman cities, first municipia and later collonia, have developed near the Roman camps, into the fortress, but also nearby the Mures river, in Partos. The settlements became two of the most wealthy and important places of Dacia - ("Chrysopolis" 251-253 d. Chr.) - outstanding in diversity and the novelty of the local civilization. Temples and polychrome mosaics, thermae and statues, amphitheatres, porticos, the governor's palace "Daciarum Trium" - that would be in brief the synthesis of this important military-political, economic-commercial and cultural-artistic center, the miniature copy of the mother Rome. Imperialism had irreversibly and unmistakably marked the existence and the consciousness of the Romanized popular Latin speaker inhabitants. This was the beginning of a new world - orbs romana. The settling continuity, the pre-early and late feudal towns and graveyards, the hoards, the rotunda baptistry uncovered from the Roman-Catholic Cathedral's floor, the presence of Hieroteos who came here straight from Constantinopol, indicate the existence of a Christian world with Byzantine background and of an important political center - the Principality of Bălgrad.

Middle Age was earlier here, Alba being certified as a county in 1171, then as "civitas", along with Brasov, Sibiu and Rodna. The first documentary reference Alba Iulia had been made in 1276, and was then taken over and consequently translated as Bălgrad or Gyulafehérvár. An Episcopal citadel and an important political, military and ecclesiastic center of the province, Alba Iulia reached an important climax between 1542-1690, being the capital of the independent Principality of Transylvania and "the residence of the Transylvanian princes", as the traveler Evlia Celebi eloquently wrote. Famous rulers and voivodes, musicians and painters, ambassadors and scholars, engineers and doctors met in "the city of fine arts", endowing this "Transylvanian Heidelberg" with a new glowing.

An important commercial center, a real foundation stone of the province and of the entire South-Eastern European world, the city has gained a special cultural importance due to the notable accomplishments in the bishops Ladislau Gereb and Francis Varday's time but mostly during the prince Gabriel Bethlen's time. The well-known Collegium Academicum, the first higher educational institution in Transylvania, which had been running since 1622, boasted for about four decades some of the most brilliant representatives of the European Humanism and Renaissance: Apaczai Csere Janos, Martin Opitz, Alstedius, Biserfeldius, Johannes Piscator, genuine titans with passion for knowledge and multilaterality. Nowadays the local universities continue the tradition of the old academic schools. Between 1577-1702, more than 22 works, "real masterpieces of language, belief and Romanian feeling", such as Tetraevangheliarul slavon (1579), Evanghelia de invatatura (1641), Noul Testament de la Balgrad (1648), Psaltirea (1651), Bucoavna (1699) or Chiriadromionul (1699) came out of the printing presses of Balgrad. The ample series of incunabula and rare books (such as Codex Aureus) from the Batthyaneum Library (where it is the oldest astronomic observatory in Romania) enrich through their singleness the culture of Alba Iulia.

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On the first of November 1599, once with the voivode Michael the Brave's victorious arrival, Alba Iulia has become the capital of the first political union of all Romanians. His military, administrative, cultural and national accomplishments represent a seal-symbol of the Transylvanian map and of Romanian people's consciousness. The mitropoly that he had founded here, "our most resistant and useful establishment from this side of the Carpathians", symbolizes the integration of Transylvania into the great Romania. Having been overtaken by the Austrian suzerainty after 1700, the city of Alba Iulia had experienced fundamental changes between 1714-1738 and therefore became a real military bulwark, a monument of baroque architecture built in Vauban style.

Alba Iulia has the greatest and best-preserved fortress of this kind in Romania, which has become an effigy of the city. The serfs revolt led by Horea, Closca and Crisan, tragically put down in February 28th 1785 on the Pitchfork Hill, makes the city a seal symbol of the fight for justice and freedom. Eloquently defined by Nicolae Iorga as "the cultural municipality", Alba Iulia also honored its reputation through the synods organized by the Romanian priests, through public assemblies of Astra (1866, 1875, 1886) and those of the Romanian Theatre Fund Society (1878, 1909), through papers and publications, the well known names of St. Ludwig Roth, Mihai Eminescu, Nicolae Iorga, Octavian Goga, Lucian Blaga, Liviu Rebreanu, Iuliu Maniu, Constantin Daicoviciu ennobling the city.

On the 1st of December 1918 another glorious page of history was written in the citadel of martyrdom and glory, as a corollary of its millenary history. Here, in Alba Iulia, on the Field of Horea, 100,000 Romanians and 1,228 delegates have democratically, plebiscitarily and irrevocably decided the Unification of Transylvania with the mother country, accomplishing the dream of many generations.

A new historical stage came to an end, a stage also outlined on the 15th of October 1922 by "our defining in terms of history", through the crowning of the Great Romania's monarchs, the King Ferdinand the 1st, the Unificator and his queen Mary, in the People's Reunification Cathedral.

As an acknowledgement of its contribution to the history of our nation, in 1944 the Romanian Parliament has stated Alba Iulia as the "Great Unification Citadel".

Culture

Alba Iulia area synthesizes in a combined manner - through costume, tradition and customs - the influences from the Apuseni Mountains, from the surroundings of Mures, Sebes or Secas, the Romanians harmoniously living together with other nations settled here along ages. The famous vineyards of Alba Iulia, the melancholy Romanian folklore songs inspired from the genuine folklore of Mures valley and Apuseni Mountains, the beauty of costumes, the kindness and wisdom of the people, all these make this county a legendary realm.

There are 36 religious establishments: Here, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Franciscan, Greek Catholic, Calvinist/Lutheran, Jewish, Unitarian and Baptist, believers pray in a tolerant and ecumenical community.

Out of them:

- 85,6% are Orthodoxies
- 4.3% are Calvinists/Lutherans
- 3,9% are Greek Catholics
- 1,5% are Roman Catholics
- 1,5% are Pentecostals
- 3,2% of other religious belief

Education

484 classrooms, 60 laboratories and 62 school workshops represent the infrastructure of the educational system. The city and the suburban localities have ten elementary school, four colleges, two high schools: Music High school, Sports High school and five technical schools. The higher education in Alba Iulia is

represented by two theological seminaries-Orthodox Theological Seminary and Catholic Theological Seminary and three universities - "1 December 1918" University, "AISTEDA" University Foundation, "Romanian Business School".

The Alba Iulia Fortress

The City of Alba Iulia is one of the few localities in Romania that have been fated to gain an important position in the history of human settlements and fortifications, from pre-history to modern ages.

The bulwark fortress of Alba Iulia has been set up between 1714 and 1738 and it is considered to be the most representative of Vauban type in Romania. The fortress was designed by the Italian architect Giovanni Morando Visconti.

The Italian architect Giovanni Morando Visconti has made the project of the fortress. He was guided by the general Stefan de Steinville and later by general Weiss. The work at the fortification of Alba Iulia has begun on the 4th of November 1715, when the foundation of Carol bulwark, dedicated to the emperor and situated on the Northern side was made. Weiss named his project, the fortification, "*Alba Iulia's major fortress in the Principality of Transylvania*".

Between the 18th and 19th centuries the fortress has served as the military center of Transylvania and also as general armament dump. The perimeter of the walls is about 12 km; 20.000 serves built the walls.

The fortress has seven bulwarks (Eugene of Savoia, St. Stefan, The Trinity, St. Michael, St. Carol, St. Capistrano and St. Elisabeth) that make it a star shaped one, common to Vauban fortresses. The biggest bulwark is the Trinity one, measuring 116 and 135 m and being decorated in the center with a blazon crowned by outlines and acanthus leaves. The walls were made of bricks, quarry stones, or out of the Roman ruins, measuring 3 m at the base and 1.20 m at the top, being sustained by abutments in order to neutralize the earth's force. The six gates of the bulwark fortress have been a model for the 18th century Transylvanian architecture. They are looked upon as extremely valuable samples of early baroque.

The planning and the building of the fortress led to the modification of the street texture; that is why the six gates had been placed three towards the town and the other three towards the western drill field. All the roads and the fitted gates were functional. The fortress is outstanding both for its decorative elements and for the beauty of its six gates, unique in European military architecture. Doubtless the artists had been inspired by ancient mythology. Sculptors like Johann Koning, Johan Vischer and Giuseppe

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Alba Iulia Fortress - The Gates

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The First Gate

It is situated at the base of the fortress and has been built out of stones carved like a three gates triumphal arch. The gate has the Austrian blazon (the two headed eagle, the sword and the scepter) in the middle, between the statues of the god Mars and the statues of the goddess Venus. The inside is carved with antique mythology bas-relief, representing legendary hero Hercules fighting Nemeea lion and Perseus holding Medusa's cut head

The Third Gate and Horia's Cell

After the second gate, out of which only the lateral pylons are preserved, next follows the most important and most grandiose of the gates, the third gate. It actually represents the entrance to the fortress. It is situated on the curtain, half way between the St. Eugene bulwark and St. Capistrano one.4 pillars and 8 pilasters hold the archway and the vault of the three gates. Richly adorned, it is considered representative for Transylvanian baroque sculpture. The front stands out for the Carol the sixth's equestrian statue. Two ottoman prisoners, terrified under the hoofs of the victorious emperor's horse, are sculptured on the pedestals of the statue. The Austrian blazon with the two-headed eagle, with Transylvanian blazon on its chest is carved on cornice. The bas-relief on the left side represents the allegory of the glorious general receiving Alba Iulia's scale model after his brave victory over the ottomans. Inside the pedestal of Carol's statue there is a small room that, in 1785, January 2, had served as cell for Horea the main leader of the great serves revolt from 1784-1785. In 1937, a stone plaque with the carving: "*This where he had suffered with bravery, determination and trusting the future of Romanian people 27th of December 1784 - 28 of February 1785*". On the side there are four statues, symbolizing the great virtues temperance, wisdom, welfare and force.

The Fourth Gate

The Fourth Gate, also in baroque style is situated next to the two cathedrals. It is one of the entrances to the Roman Plateau. The building is the common one, and was probably used as shelter for the guards; it also contains a semi cylindrical vault on two Atlantes, resembling the one at the Third Gate; the elementary Austrian blazon; bas-reliefs of trophies, canons and Carol the sixth's flags.

The Reunification Cathedral

Grandiose building, the Reunification Cathedral was built between 1921-1923, following the project drawn by the architect D.G. Stefanescu, led by the engineer T. Eremia. The Great Romanian monarchs were crowned here on the 15th of October 1922. The establishment is shaped as a Greek cross, with an open porch. One can get inside through a right-angled narthex with three round headed vault units, a narrow nave and a sanctuary. Constantin Petrescu painted the fresco in traditional iconography style.

The Roman Catholic Cathedral

Built in 13th century, the Roman Catholic Cathedral is considered to be an important monument of early Transylvanian medieval architecture. It harmoniously combines Gothic and Roman style elements. The establishment was meant to be a three Trinitarian three semicircular absides transept. Undoubtedly, the most important early Transylvanian Renaissance building is "Lazo" Chapel situated on the northern side of the Cathedral. The Chapel has a late gothic pointed arch. The keystone is decorated with blazons of some Transylvanian personalities. Inside the cathedral there is Iancu of Hunedoara's sarcophagus next to those of his elder son Ladislau (situated in the lateral southern nave), of Queen Isabella and of son, Ioan Sigismund (situated in the opposite lateral nave).

The Union Hall

Symbolic building, sealed on the consciousness of Romanian people as the place of one of the most important events of the national history, the Unification from the 1st of December 1918. It was here where the session of the great national Assembly took place, on the 1st December 1918, and decided the unification of Transylvania with Romania, and therefore of the Unitary National state. The original documents of the unification are exhibited here together with the flags carried by the delegates from the whole country for this great event.

The National Union Museum

The National Museum of Unification in Alba Iulia is one of the finest in Romania. The museum is host in a building originally built for military purpose, Babilon Building dates since the half of the 19th century (1851-1853). Since 1968 the building has become the headquarters of the Unification National Museum. Its two floors and over 100 rooms host the basic exhibition, the warehouse, and the library and restorations laboratories.

This establishment was founded in 1887 and it occupies two important buildings in the middle of the City: The Babilon Building, built up in 1851 and The Unification Hall Building, built up in 1906. The museum exhibits over 130000 pieces of priceless works included in its patrimony, starting with a pre-historia section, then Dacian-Roman and feudal sections, the great battles with the Turks, the Revolution in 1848, the Unification of the Principalities in 1859, the Unification of Transylvania with Romania, etc. The Unification Hall was highlighted in 1895 as the Military Casino of the Garrison in Alba Iulia, but its distinctive historical signification is given by the fact that it hosted, on the First of December 1918, the Rally of the 1228 Romanian delegates from all Transylvania, who decided the Unification of this ancient province with Romania.

Historic monuments

The city offers a wide range of statues and monuments, many of them of historic importance. The most important historic monuments could be found in the Citadel.

The Equestrian Statue and the bas-relief dedicated to Michael the Brave

Michael the Brave's statue is placed in front of the Princely Palace. It has been realized out of bronze by the sculptor Oscar Han in 1968. Behind the equestrian statue there is a bas-relief sculptured by Horia Flamandu in 1975 it represents Michael the Brave while receiving homage from the three Romanian countries. The bas-relief is 6,20m. long and 3m. broad, and at the base it has an carved plaque saying: *"It is here , in Alba Iulia where, in the year 1600, as a symbol of the historical right of the Romanian people to Unity, liberty and independence, trough the fight and the will of the people, trough the bravery and the genius of the great prince Michael the Brave, the great event of the first political unification of the three Romanian Principates: Transylvania, Moldavia and Valachia."*

Pitchfork Hill Monument

Built in memory of Horea, Closca and Crisan, the martyrs of the serves revolt from 1784-1785, the monument, an stone obelisk, shows the place of their tragically end.

The Obelisk

In 1937, a beautiful obelisk was built in front of the Third Gate. The Project was initiated by "Astra" and carried through by local voluntary contribution. The monument is dedicated to the memory of the leaders of the great serves revolt (1784-1785). It is a monolithic monument, realized by the architect E. Mihalton and the sculptor Negrulea. It has a symbolical call at the base a winged Victory holding a laurel crown at the western side. In the pedestal of the obelisk has been carved the following homage to the three martyrs: "*Homage to Horea, Closca and Crisan*".

Custoza and Losenau Monuments

The Losenau Monument, in front of the 1st December University, in the park, was built in 1853, honoring the memory of colonel Ludwig Von Losenau, who had fight to death against gen. Bem's army. In the same park, towards the Unification Hall, one can see another monument, shaped like a small obelisk, surrounded by chains made of heavy links and cannonballs. The monument was uncovered in 1906, commemorating soldiers and officers from 50th Regiment, dead at Custoza during austro-italian war in 1866.

Source of information: <http://www.apulum.ro/index-en.htm>