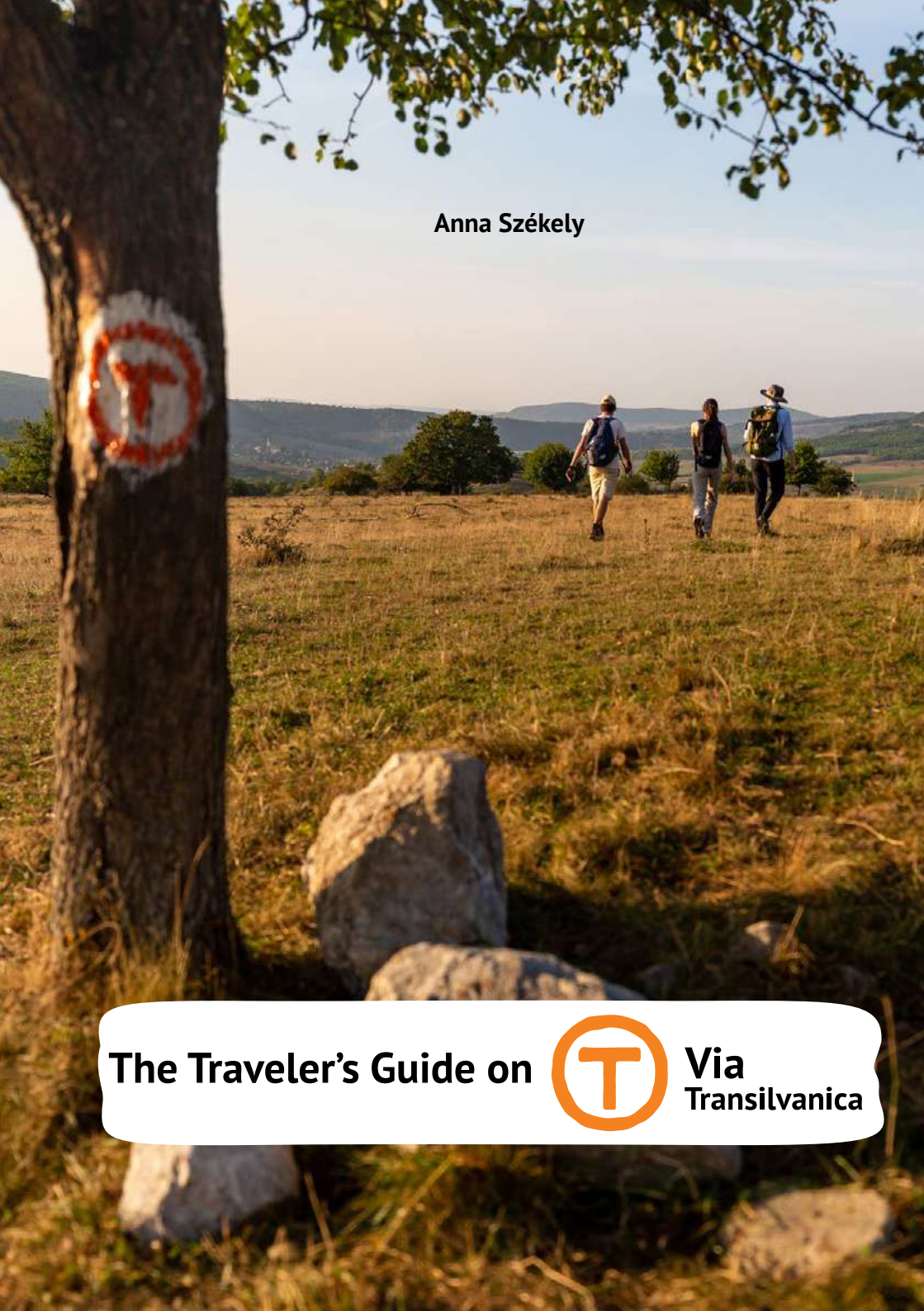


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The Traveler's Guide on



Via
Transilvanica

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To make it easier for you to browse our guide, we've saved an interactive table of contents, which, just by selecting a title or page number, will take you to that part. You can go back to the beginning by clicking on the VT logo at the top of each page.



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INTRODUCTION

Via Transilvanica is a 1,400 km trail that reveals 2,000 years in the history of Transylvania, from Putna to Drobeta-Turnu Severin. It is a Tășuleasa Social project, which is an NGO that deals with environmental, educational, social, cultural, and more issues. The campus can be found in Piatra Fântânele, in Bistrița-Năsăud County.

This trail can be done in stages, or fully, by foot, by bike or even by horseback, depending on what works best for each traveler. This guide will provide general information about food and accommodation, places and objectives of touristic interest.

Via Transilvanica is a road that fills the generation gaps and encourages multiculturalism because it is dedicated to those people, no matter their age or experience, who are willing to limit their daily activities to just walking, as well as to reduce the number of things they pack to the bare necessities. Before anything else, this type of activity can be a source of happiness, meditation or healing. People always needed stories to give meaning to their lives. The main purpose of this road is this aspect of discovering characters, stories, as well as places, that enrich, and heal both mentally and spiritually.

Via Transilvanica is all about diversity, from the green grass at the shores of the Danube river, all the way to the mountain peaks, the scenery is as different as the people we hope will walk this road. Thus, the trail allows us to discover important elements about our country and the people who live here.

This guide was carefully written by the first people who walked on Via Transilvanica and had the opportunity to see what the needs are and how they can be fulfilled in order for the traveler to have a safe and positive experience on Via Transilvanica. You



can find information here about the trail, the road markings, food, and accommodation, geographical areas, touristic attractions, and many more.

Via Transilvanica is ever changing, therefore some of the information concerning portions of the road and even accommodation can differ every year. If you can find things that do not match the reality, please contact us.

Safe travels!

General Information

How to use the guide?

You will read at the beginning of each route a short description of a historical area, out of the seven, as they were shared by our team, e.g. Bucovina, The Highland Region, Terra Dacica etc.


















In the *Accommodation* and *Infrastructure* chapters, you will find information about the road as well as accommodation possibilities. The icons found nearby, will help you find what you are looking for a lot faster.

We mentioned the accommodation possibilities in order of their occurrence on the trail. The information regarding accommodation include the price-quality ratio, according to the facilities that are available for every hiker (washing machine, kitchen etc.), the possible changes regarding the current pricing, addresses and contact details. You should know that besides lodgings and hotels, the locals in some villages and towns, would provide the hikers with accommodation. You should keep this in mind because tourism is not so well-developed in the rural areas. The accommodation available at the locals will appear in the guide next to a phone number, where you must call beforehand (at least one day prior to your arrival) and ask for the accommodation possibilities, mentioning the number of people. One person is named explicitly for this mission.

Note – we have included a short narrative description of the trail in every chapter.

Info – it is the name of the subtitle where you can find information about the touristic, and cultural-historical objectives. In the box that contains the altitude profile map, you can find icons regarding the infrastructure, distance between the accommodations, as well as important GPS tracks. Next to every route title, you can also find the expected duration, needed for hiking that specific trail. Every route has its own map where you can follow the numbers that had been previously written next to the villages mentioned in the description (*Note*). The map is useful for those who decide to hike the old fashion way, using only the map, and the compass.

The explanation of the icons

 Lodging	 Bar	 Bank	 Bus	 Belvedere	 Store
 Hotel	 Drinkable water	 Doctor	 Airport	 Local Accommodation	 Police
 Restaurant	 Internet	 Post office	 Church	 Pharmacy	 Touristic objective
 Camping	 Information	 Train	 Pass	 Souvenirs	

Infrastructure

Each village marked on the map is attributed a list of relevant information that comes in handy to the traveler. The list below shows all these points of interest. Means of public transportation are available even in the small villages, but the majority of them only pass by once a day.

The pharmacies or medical points will be available if contacted beforehand because most of them have a short-term schedule. The marked springs usually have drinkable, mountain water, and most of the time, are well arranged, however if they are not you can always ask the locals for water.



The road signaling comprises: andesite kilometer-stones, white and orange arrows, the ever present Via Transilvanica logo, crossroad and crosswalk indicator and more such indicators with other specifications.

Almost every village has its own Patron Saint, which is usually a celebration day among the locals. Furthermore, other religious commemorations are meaningful to the local people who preserve the old customs, like for example not working on a celebration day. In the small villages, during religious celebrations, the local store might be open only a few hours a day as opposed to the normal schedule. We recommend that you ask the locals for the exact store schedule.

List of celebrations/ Public holidays 2024:

- January 1st, 2nd – New Year's Day
- January 24th – Day of the Unification of the Romanian Principalities
- May 1st – Labor Day
- May 5th (Good Friday), - May 8th – Ortodox Easter
- June 1st – Children's Day
- June 23th - 24th – Pentecost/ Whit Monday
- August 15th – Dormition of the Mother of God
- November 30th – St. Andrew's Day
- December 1st – National Day/ Great Union
- December 25th - 26th – Christmas

In every new geographical or historical area, the culinary experiences can be various. That is why one should not miss out the opportunity, so in order to make sure that it is possible to get to taste traditional food, reservations should be made at the right time. In the mountain and lowland areas, we can often find fresh, traditional Romanian types of cheese, such as “caș” (whey cheese), and “urdă” (similar to ricotta) that the shepherds will sometimes offer to people for free, but we recommend that these will be paid for, in order to encourage the touristic development among them as well.

One will be able to get more information as they arrive in those areas.

The trail's duration

The hiking hours are mentioned in the subtitle of every new route, where you can add a margin of error of +/- 30 minutes, depending on the terrain, your physical condition and the weather.

The duration has been calculated for an average speed of 3-4km/h.

HIKING ON VT

The VT trail offers a very authentic experience that puts the traveler in new situations that cannot be experienced in any other way. What makes hiking on this trail so special is the fact that the hikers can enrich both their physical and spiritual state by means of personal experience, as well as empathy towards the stories of others, people met on the road. Culturally speaking, the hiker can experience in a unique manner, both the deep history of România and the reality people live in these days. Thus, one can fight the stereotypical views, having their minds open to how things are in reality. On top of that, experiencing nature in all its diversity, from Obcinele Bucovinei, above the Călimani Mountains, to the depressions that lead to the Danube's port, is a rare opportunity.

The traveler's guide on Via Transilvanica offers as many details as possible about the accommodation network from the areas where the trail passes through and the possibilities that they have to offer.

What is more, the trail has very good signaling/markings that offers a safe experience for every traveler and reduces the chances of getting lost outside the trail. Otherwise, we are waiting for your suggestions in the contact section on our website or Facebook page.

RIDING YOUR BIKE ON VT

Via Transilvanica is a trail that can be done by riding a bike or a horse, as well as of course, by walking. Someone that chooses to ride a mountain bike on Via Transilvanica should follow the advice that we have gathered from different experiences on Via Transilvanica the way it is now.

As Via Transilvanica is under construction, new advice and information, as well as maps and GPS tracks will be presented in the guide.

Regarding the general view of riding one's bike on Via Transilvanica, we must warn people that enjoy mountain biking that based on information gathered by the Tășuleasa Social Team, some parts of the trail are very difficult for biking. These parts require a certain level of fitness and experience from the traveler. The Bucovina region in particular requires enduro equipment, starting with an enduro bike and ending with all

the protective elements such as a helmet. The equipment should also contain a first aid kit, as well as a kit with tools that can be used to fix a broken bike (a pump, flat tyre kit etc) and the other accessories that are mandatory for any traveler such as a raincoat or mountainbiking gear. The trail in Bucovina consists of around 75% push bike, from Putna to Vatra Dornei. However, from Vatra Dornei to Lunca Ilvei, the trail becomes less difficult.

Even though the recommendations seem threatening, we still think that riding your bike on Via Transilvanica could be an unforgettable experience, a real challenge and a wonderful adventure. The people living in Bucovina are known for their hospitality so that might help the traveler get through the difficult situation. Moreover, after Bucovina, the trail gets easier and can be done by anyone that likes riding their bike.

Hiking recommendations

The ideal period for hiking on Via Transilvanica must be chosen according to weather conditions, having as much daylight as possible and the accommodation possibilities. We do not recommend hiking during winter for now, because the trail becomes more difficult in case of snow, a downside which combined with a lack of accommodation possibilities during winter time can turn out to be dangerous. The most suitable periods would be between May and October, with chilly mornings and nights, but we must not forget that in the mountain areas, the weather tends to be changing suddenly. Checking the information about the weather forecast is mandatory!

We also recommend hiking during the daytime, in the time of year when daylight lasts longer, because this way we can avoid different dangerous situations (ex: wild animals, getting lost or accidents). If you have suitable equipment, temperatures should not be a problem (see the equipment list).

For now, our suggestion would be not to hike on this trail alone, but rather find a companion or more. This is because the trail is still new and somewhat wild.

Human's best friend, the dog, can be an ideal hiking/traveling buddy except for the places where we can find sheepfolds (which are quite often). Our only recommendation is that in these cases you should have a leash for your dog (for it to be kept as close as possible to its master) and to alert the shepherds to call for their dogs and not let them get close to you. At the same time, when passing next to a sheepfold, we recommend friendly behavior towards the barking dogs and trying to communicate with them. If this is not working, you can use different expressions that work to keep them away. The most efficient ones are: "TIE LA OI!!!!" (Go back to the sheep!!!) or "CHEAMĂ-ȚI CÂNII!" (Withdraw your dogs!!!). However, for those who fear shepherd dogs, we also recommend pepper spray, ultrasound devices or other methods of driving away the animals.

Hiking is the ideal endurance sport for people of all ages and when it is practiced often, it can lead to a meditative state, which is beneficial in establishing a good mind, body and solu balance.

Planning the route

Via Transilvanica is divided in seven main regions from a historical and cultural point of view: Bucovina, The Highland, Terra Siculorum, Terra Saxonum, Terra Dacica, Terra Banatica, and Terra Romana. The trail is also divided between the ten counties that it passes through: Suceava, Bistrița-Năsăud, Mureș, Harghita, Brașov, Sibiu, Alba, Hunedoara, Caraș-Severin and Mehedinți.

People can choose to hike a region, a county or their own configured trail, by foot, by bike or even on horseback. Of course, hiking the whole trail is not excluded.

Orientation: the VT trail is marked with its specific colors: orange and white (orange arrow sign towards Drobeta-Turnu Severin and white arrow sign for the other way towards Putna). The crosswalks will be signaled with specific panels just like other signs that you will meet on the road. There will be a sculpted andesite kilometer stone (made by art students), together with the VT logo, which will show you the kilometer where you are located and that ensures you that you are on the right track.

The access to the VT trail: It can be made by plane (the closest airports are in: Suceava, Cluj-Napoca, Târgu-Mureș, Sibiu, Brașov, Timișoara), by car, train or bus, up until certain points on the trail

By foot, by bike or on horseback – this is the official description of the way of traveling. By bike, the trail is recommended for mountain biking because the traveler will pass through mountain and off-road areas. The asphalt will be present in some areas but very rarely. It is self-explanatory that by using the bike, the necessary time for completing the trail will be reduced to a half as opposed to the time needed to hike it by foot).

Ideally, the walking schedule should start at 8 am so that you do not exceed the margin of error for the hours needed to hike the trail. Moreover, in order to have the chance to admire the landscapes and get a good rest during the breaks, you must not be in a rush. It is mandatory to check out from the accommodation after one night so that the next hikers will have a place to rest and sleep. We recommend that you read every route's description before hitting the road and that you make a reservation beforehand for the accommodations and meals presented in the guide.

The cost will cover the minimum expenses for the services offered by the local micro-investors or the local hosts. The accommodation price will be approx. 40-60 lei/ person (9-14 €/person) and 20-40 lei/ person (4-9 €/person) for a meal. Most of the accommodations offer traditional breakfast and you might even be able to order dinner if order it beforehand. During lunchtime on the trip, you will be able to shop in the local stores or even have lunch in a restaurant that might be found in the bigger towns.

Equipment

Footgear, clothing and the backpack must be chosen very carefully and must be prepared beforehand. Advised by the qualified personnel in the specialized stores, you can purchase complete and suitable equipment for the road. DO NOT hit the road with brand new footwear! Pain and blisters can occur from day one. Very old footwear is also not recommended because it will be heavily used, and it can deteriorate faster than you would expect. Mountain boots with a leather interior and suitable socks are the best choice considering the Romanian climate. We really recommend trekking socks because it will keep the feet dry. Ideally, the clothing should be especially made for hiking, light and super-dry. The mountain trousers, which can be turned into short pants, are very practical and light. The backpack must be also chosen in the specialized stores because its size and shape must fit perfectly with its owner. Those who do not have any experience in long hikes, should experiment walking with their backpack full, a few weeks before hitting the road. This way, they can test the effect it has on their shoulders, wrists and legs. Thus, it will be clear what unnecessary weights can be omitted from the backpack. Ideal weight of a full backpack should be between 9 and 11 kg. The decision of using Nordic-walking/trekking sticks is at your own choice. It is well known that if

you use them the right way, with a certain rhythm and especially when ascending, they release part of the pressure from the knees and ankles.

Recommended list of equipment:

- Middle-sized backpack (35-55 l)
- Nordic-walking/trekking sticks (optional)
- Summer sleeping bag (light)
- Sleeping pad/inflatable mattress
- Waterproof jacket+ backpack rain cover
- Suitable clothes for a specific season (polar fleece jumper, puff jacket)
- Super-dry T-shirts
- Mountain trousers/zip-off trousers
- Shorts
- Trekking leggings
- Trekking socks (super-dry)
- Comfortable and light footwear (for the possible walks in the villages)
- Trekking/mountain boots
- Flip-flops
- Water bottle (we recommend a plastic one)
- Penknife
- Headlight
- Batteries
- Charger/ Portable power bank
- Sports towel (light)
- Shower gel (traveling size)
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Sunglasses, sun hat, sunscreen with high SPF
- First-aid kit (bandages, patches, magnesium/ anti-cramp control, antihistamines, painkillers, foot cream, disinfectant and personal pills)
- Mosquito/ insects spray
- Pepper spray (for wild animals or dogs)
- Plastic bag (to maintain your clothes dry in case of rain)
- Dirty laundry bag (it should not be made of plastic, to not make too much noise)
- Earplugs (in case you sleep in a room full of people)
- 2-3 m of clothes line rope
- Sewing kit/ safety pins
- Matches
- Important documents (ID/ passport, health insurance card, emergency contact)

Emergency numbers

112 – National emergency number

+40 – SALVAMONT – +40 0725 826 668 – National Mountain Rescue Dispatch

Mountain accident emergency system:

1. In case of emergency, call the following telephone numbers: 112 – Romanian General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations; +40 – SALVAMONT - National Mountain Rescue Dispatch, which is +40 725 826 668. The operator from the National Mountain Rescue Dispatch will take your call and will send a rescue team in your area.
2. The emergency call should contain:
 - Personal data about the caller
 - The nature of the accident or of the event (injured, sick, lost)
 - Identification data about the victim
 - Where and when the event occurred and how many persons were injured

After following these steps, you have to wait (in an area that has mobile phone coverage) for a call back that will verify the truthfulness of the announcement.

3. After the emergency call:

- You must remain in an area with mobile phone coverage.
- Shelter and keep the injured person warm.
- Observe the vital functions of the injured person.

The groups or the people who are lost will remain in the signal area from where the emergency call was made.

The International Code of Signals in case of an emergency:

- The emitted signals in case of any danger: light, visual and acoustic signals. You must launch six signals (a signal at every 10 seconds, for a minute, then you take a one-minute break).
- To answer you must use three signals per minute (a signal at every 20 seconds) followed by a one-minute break.
- You must continue the signaling until a rescue team comes.

Useful information

The schedule is available only for 2023 and changes might occur, especially concerning the information about accommodation, which might be only available during certain seasons.

Pharmacies: We suggest that you buy your necessary pills from the bigger villages because the rural pharmacies have a restrictive schedule and less options.

Police: There are four types of units, in România: Gendarmerie, Municipal Police, Traffic Police and National Police.

Banks/ATMs: The Romanian leu is the currency of România and has in 2022 a value of (approximately) 20 euro cents, 21 US\$ cents or 17 pence (British sterling). National Bank reference exchange rates can be found here: <https://www.bnr.ro/Exchange-rates-1224.aspx>. Credit card payment is excluded from the rural areas (at the lodgings/ locals) but in the bigger villages/ towns, you can find ATMs for cash withdrawal.

Internet: In the national mobile networks, the Internet connection is good, România being in the top 5 countries with the fastest Internet in the world. Either way, if the signal is missing, there will be no Internet connection as well. You might find WI-FI in some rural lodgings if you ask the hosts about this detail.

Telephony: România prefix for roaming or international calls is +40

The roaming follows the EU's rates, terms and conditions. You can find out more details and rates here: https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/consumers/internet-telecoms/mobile-roaming-costs/index_en.htm

In some areas there might not be phone or even GPS signal. In case of any danger, do not hesitate to look for mobile coverage in the higher areas.

Stores that one can come across are usually rural ones. Besides public or religious holidays, the stores usually have a shorter schedule and include a lunch break.

Emergency call: 112 is the international call (you can communicate in several different languages).

Blisters

Blisters are often unavoidable, however there are a few precautions one can take to prevent them: friction should be reduced by properly tightening your boots and trying to keep your feet as dry as possible. You should take your boots and socks off, while taking a break, to let the feet breathe and dry. Using a new and dry pair of socks, would be ideal in this case. The wet ones can be hung with safety pins on the backpack so that they can dry while you walk. If you are using trekking socks, they usually dry very fast. We do not recommend using wool or 100% cotton socks.

The cold mountain streams can be refreshing but be careful: a wet foot is more likely to get blisters. At the first sign of discomfort (blister) you have to put several bandages or patches on top of each other on the sensitive spot, in order to avoid extra friction. You should only pop a newly formed blister, when it prevents you from walking properly. You should use a needle or a small pair of scissors (risk of infection please disinfect it and the blister area first!) in order to make two small holes so that the liquid inside can come out. **DO NOT** tear the skin of the blister apart!!! You have to cover it with several bandages or with a special one. In all of the cases, the wound must be protected from any risk of infection and must be kept clean. The special blister Band-Aids are also very useful. If the patch keeps ripping apart, you can fix it by using several strips of bandage.

Hydration and food

Hydration is extremely important both during the trip and after finishing it. The water container will be refilled multiple times from the places marked with spring water or drinkable water (check the first part of the trail description). It is always recommended that you have more water than less of it, especially when it is very hot outside. In some areas, there are only a few villages, which means access to water is limited. You should manage your water and food supplies according to the information present in the route description.

It is recommended that you pack a light snack (energy bar, fruits, bread) when the route is longer.

You should take your daily dose of magnesium in the mornings, before starting a new route. This will prevent muscular cramps and tendinitis.

At most of the lodgings, you can serve a hot meal (breakfast/dinner) for the price of 30-60 lei/meal (4-9 €/meal) if you announce the hosts beforehand. We suggest you ask about the traditional food and try it out wherever you are. Wine and brandy are both tasty beverages, but they are not everybody's cup of tea. Either way, it can be refreshing to end a whole day of walking with a glass of wine.

WARNING

Fresh dairy products can be an authentic experience in Bucovina, straight from the bosom of nature, from the shepherds at the sheepfold, but please consume these products with great caution, especially if you have never tasted them. Milk, cheese, udder, jântuit, cream or other products with high levels of traces of protein should be consumed separately and at least one hour after eating berries or drinking water. Similarly, after

moderate consumption, do not drink water or eat berries until at least one hour after consumption. Otherwise digestive problems, abdominal pain, colic, bloating, vomiting, diarrhoea or other stomach problems may occur.

Spending the night/ Accommodation

There is not a developed accommodation network (like the ones from Camino de Santiago, from Spain) because Via Transilvanica was created in 2018. However, you might be able to sleep at some locals who are willing to offer you accommodation, as many of them have a spare room in their house that they can use to host hikers. The families from every village that Via Transilvanica passes through, are mostly very well informed with regards to what this project implies. What is more, Via Transilvanica is a great opportunity for touristic development among them.

Some of the lodgings you will come across provide accommodation in hostel-style (more people in the room). In other villages one can find parsonages that will gladly shelter hikers from all over the world. The costs at the locals (with a certain standard of cleanness and comfort) are between 50-100 lei/person and the meals (optional) will cost between 30-60 lei/meal. At the lodgings, the prices will be higher due to the higher quality facilities (such as washing machine, dryer, WI-FI etc.) and will be between 60-120 lei/person. The parsonages will keep the same rates. At the same time, some places do not ask for a particular remuneration so the payment becomes a form of a donation from the tourist. The accommodation conditions, in every case that has already been presented, are: a clean bed, toilet, shower and eventually traditional meals.

Phone reservations must be made beforehand in order to find spare rooms. Phone numbers can be found in the trail description.

Most of the villagers don't speak foreign languages. Therefore, in order to help out the traveller, we recommend making use of the following text messages which can be sent via mobile phone, which are standard for when one needs to ask for one night of accommodation or one night of setting up a tent on a property.

With the help of the small dictionary at the end of the introductory chapter, the travellers can also manage to change a few important sentences with the hosts, but online translations come in handy too.

Text message for a bed/place to sleep:

Bună, mă numesc ...(name)..., nu vorbesc română, sunt din ...(country)... și doresc să rezerv ...(number of beds/persons)... loc/pat la Dumneavoastră, pentru seara de ...(check in)... până la ...(check out)...Multumesc. Vă rog să îmi răspundeți cu un OK sau Ocupat!

(Translate.: Hello, my name is... , I don't speak Romanian and I am from ... I want to make a reservation for ...number... bed/room for the night of ... until...Thank you. Please answer with: OK or Busy!)

Text message for a tent place:

Bună, mă numesc ...(name)..., nu vorbesc română, sunt din ...(country)... și doresc să campez cu cortul meu la Dumneavoastră în curte, în data de ...(check in)... o noapte. Vă rog să îmi răspundeți cu un OK sau Ocupat!

(Translate: Hello, my name is..I don't speak Romanian and I am from ... I want to camp in your garden for the night of ...until... Thank you. Please answer with: OK or Busy!)

Text message for dinner and/or breakfast (in case of a positive answer from the hosts):

Aș dori să știu dacă oferiți și cină și mic dejun. Mulțumesc.

(I would like to ask if you offer dinner and breakfast too. Thank you.)

If there is no standard price for one night of accomodation, we recommend paying in a range from 40 to 60 lei, depending on the conditions. For dinner we recommend 40 lei and for breakfast 20 lei.

If the traveller is invited by the shepherds to taste the cheese, or receives fruits or vegetables from villagers and wants to pay a modic price for it, we recommend 5 lei, which is 1 euro and is going to make everyone happy, although payment is not needed only if the traveller feels like it.

DOGS AND WILD ANIMALS

On the trail you will come across domestic or wild animals at almost every step of the way, either through the traditional villages, over the grazing lands or through forests. Animals will be present, even if we do not see them.

Domestic dogs are usually tied up or in the courtyard where they will not be a danger as long as they bark at us from behind the fence and you do not invade their territory.

Generally, the dog attacks if it feels threatened, it does its duty as guardian of the house / courtyard or sheepfold by barking.

Even though Sheepdogs can be man's best friend, they can be dangerous to the unfriendly, but there are ways to defend yourself or avoid conflict with them.

One of these ways is to bypass the territory it defends, where possible. We also recommend using friendly language which often calms them down, or calling for the shepherd to call his dogs back to the sheepfold. In this guide we try to support a more friendly approach with them, in many areas learning what and how to calm them down. Sprays, firecrackers, whistles or sticks are also recommended, but our team has never had to use any of these means. But let's not forget: fear is the dog's biggest enemy!

What do we do if we meet the bear?

We need to know that no matter what happens, it is not the bear that is responsible, but the human being, because we are the ones who can plan and anticipate, therefore, you cannot treat the situation as if you are dealing with a conflict with another person.

We emphasize that man is not part in the bear's food options and man is not attacked with predatory intent, but in defense. The intention to attack is not one of food or territory, but rather an intention that is caused by the feeling of fear, it is an aggressive defense mechanism to ensure the survival of his own species or that of his cubs. At the same time, some individuals can attack due to negative external influences (disorientation, illness, injury) and can have an aggressive, unnatural attitude towards man.

Specialists have also confirmed that from the points of view mentioned above, each meeting with a bear is unique and your behavior and reaction are dependent on each individual encounter and situation.

Therefore, if a man can learn, plan and think logically when encountering a bear, he must act in consideration of the bear's right to exist and to not forget about acceptance and coexistence.

One of the best preventions is walking/hiking in groups and avoiding the thick bushes and forests. If, however, we are alone, we must let our presence be known by making noise with the help of bells, whistles, singing, etc. Hunting observatories, dens and animal carcasses should be avoided as much as possible. Under no circumstances should food remains be left on the trail because food scraps attract wild animals. This is true both for camping and for our nature breaks. The bear identifies artificial food with humans, and because of this, many conflicts occur. Bear cubs should always be avoided, even if they seem to be alone. A mother bear never leaves her cubs and if she sees us nearby, she will surely attack.

One of the basic forms of avoidance, which is effective in 95% of cases is talking and making noise while hiking. The bear will leave the area if it perceives the presence of humans.

What do we do if we see a bear?

Respect the animal, keep a distance of about 30 meters and be aware of bear's warning signs (yawning, huffing, woofing, move their ears on their backs, blow or gnash their teeth) and move away slowly.

If it stands up on two legs, what happens?

If the bear stands up on two legs, it is just curious, like a person who stands up. In this case, we can warn him that we are people through speech and slow movements. Bears have poorer eyesight than hearing, which is why it is important to speak slowly. Do not behave threateningly in any case. We are not allowed to throw stones, wood or anything at it, because it will feel threatened and the chances increase of it being aggressive. They may also feel irritated due to photographers, especially at the sound of cameras, which are unusual sounds for them. Simply be aware of the animal's behavior and move away slowly.

If you hear some sounds that you think are from a bear, what should you do?

Stay calm. Probably the bear will leave the territory if it perceives the presence of man. We must make our presence known through sounds that gradually increase in intensity but not threatening. If the noise of the bear seems close, move in the opposite direction and it will hear the sounds becoming distant and it will not follow. Keep calm because, as we mentioned before, the European bear does not consider man as prey. It's defensive or threatening behavior is caused by fear or because he feels threatened. The exceptions are individuals who have been raised by humans, injured or dying.

Can we defend ourselves from a bear?

We can use bear/animal spray as self-defense. It can also be used against sheepdogs. It is larger than a normal aerosol that can be used several times and is effective at a

distance of 6-10 meters. Its effectiveness is not guaranteed in all weather conditions or close encounters.

How to stay calm?

It is difficult to stay calm, even after ten bear encounters, but be mentally prepared according to the above is possible.

What if it attacks?

A bear only attacks if challenged. For example if it is annoyed by a dog and then the dog goes to the owner for protection. He also attacks if he is caught and pushed in



a corner or if he is disturbed from feeding. It can attack and be extremely dangerous if it has previously been injured or scared by hunters. A bear attacks to protect her cubs. Besides, there are dangerous bears that are in the last phase of rabies, so they are sick and are no longer afraid of humans, these are rare cases of those that are accustomed to humans by feeding.

If the bear sees man as prey or as a danger, for various reasons, the bear will attack and injure him, as he has all the advantages. For the bear, man would be an easy prey. In some rare cases, the bear may launch a fake attack to drive the man away, but this generally does not happen through physical contact. In these cases, the most important thing is to keep calm. Never fight the bear, he will always win!!!

Slovenian experts have advised us to stay put, to lie face down with our hands on the back of our necks and to try to stay as calm as we can. Before we get up, we need to make sure the bear has left the area - there is no guarantee that this technique will work, as there are no sources who have experienced this.

Do not try to run, because that's how you only awaken the bear's hunting instinct and it's a better runner than you anyway. At long distances on flat terrain, it can run at a speed of 50kph.

Climbing a tree is a slightly better solution than running, but it is still a weak solution because the bear climbs better than you as well. Only then can you run if you only have a few steps to the car, for example.

What do we do with the dog? Shall we keep him tied up?

Keep the dog on a leash, a longer leash to have freedom of movement and control.

The dog has no chance against bears, it will just irritate and annoy them. If you let the dog go, he can even lead/ lure the bear to us.

Mosquitoes, ticks and other insects

If you are on the trail after a wetter, rainier period, you will face another unpleasant and painful problem: mosquitoes!

After a month and a half of rain in July, our team set off in extreme heat, a period that attracted millions of mosquitoes in the dark, cooler areas such as forests.

Our route often goes through grazing areas with sheepfolds, which also means that you will find ticks, especially where the sheep walk.

We recommend that in the morning, before hiking, first use a protective layer of sunscreen and then insect repellent. At the pharmacy you will find Autan for mosquitoes, ticks and other insects.

(Note that the portion described above about meeting the bear is partly a translated article from the online page of the Transindex newspaper, signed by G.L.)

Small survival dictionary:

Drinkable water - apă potabilă /a.pə/ pɔ'ta.bi.lə/

Non Drinkable water - apă nepotabilă /a.pə/ ne. pɔ'ta.bi.lə/

Blister - beșică /be'ʃi.kə/

Sanitizer - dezinfectant /de.zin.fek'tant/

Cramp - crampă /'kram.pə/
 Dehydration - deshidratare /des.hi.dra'ta.re/
 Diarrhea - diaree /di.a.re.e/
 Headache - durere de cap /du're.re de kap/
 Heatstroke - insolație /in.so'la.tsi.e/
 Band-aid - leucoplast /le.u.ko.plast/
 Pharmacy - farmacie /far.ma'tʃi.e/
 Where is a pharmacy? - Unde este o farmacie? /un.de/'es.te/ o / far.ma'tʃi.e/
 Well - fântână /fin'ti.nə/
 Spring/ stream - izvor /iz'vor/
 Constipation - constipație /kon.sti'pa.tsi.e/
 Magnezium - magneziu /mag'ne.zju/
 Doctor - doctor, medic /'me.dik/
 Where can I find a doctor? - Unde găsec un medic? /un.de/ gə'sesk/ un/ 'me.dik/
 I need a doctor! - Am nevoie de un doctor! /am/ ne'vo.je/ de/ un/'dok.tor/
 Danger - pericol /pe'ri.kol/
 Dangerous - periculos /pe.ri.ku.los/
 Leg - picior /pi'tʃjor/
 Earplugs - dopuri de urechi /'do.puri/ de/ u'rekj/
 Tendinitis - tendinită /ten.di'ni.tə/
 Patch - plasture /'plas.tu.re/
 Knee - genunchi /dze'nun.kj/
 Sprain - entorsă /en'tor.sə/
 Sling - fașă /'fa.ʃə/
 Shoes - papuci /pa'putʃj/
 We are looking for a free room for three persons, tomorrow night. - Căutăm o cameră liberă pentru trei persoane, mâine seară /'kæ.u.təm/ o/ 'ka.me.r/ 'li.berə/ 'pen.tru/ trei/ per'soa.ne/ 'mij.ne/ 's æ.rə/
 Do you have spare rooms? - Aveți camere disponibile? /a've'tsi/ 'ka.me.re/ dis.po'ni. bi.le/

A story about the Traveler's Booklet

The Via Transilvanica road represents a journey everyone will remember in their own authentic way. This means that its story is one that rewrites itself with every new traveler that walks on this trail. However, we would like to have a common language of our recollections on Via Transilvanica, a collection of memories to highlight this road with its every region and every stage, each of them so special and unique. Thus, we would have a collection of memories that belong to all of us.

This is why we have created the Traveler's Booklet, a little book where the traveler can collect all of the Via Transilvanica stamps, specific to each stage of the trail that they manage to walk on (one stage = one day on the trail, all the days are described in this guide). These stamps are customized to the places they represent and the travelers can go to distribution points (see stamps distribution points attached at the description



of every stage) where they only have to present the booklet and they will get a stamp representing the stage they have just finished.

It's easy. This booklet will accompany the traveler in their journey, being a visual representation of all the kilometers the traveler walks and eventually a souvenir that awaits to be completed with all of the stamps, one that calls for the traveler to return on the paths he's walked before and to explore the ones they haven't seen yet.

The Traveler's Booklet can be purchased from the Official Via Transilvanica Shop shop.viatransilvanica.com

Safe travels and to many stamps acquired in your own Traveler's Booklet!

The booklet can be purchased on the website of the Official Store Via Transilvanica <https://shop.viatransilvanica.com/> and from several places along the route:

- Putna - Putna Monastery, Museum (inside the monastery) and Gamas Market (the gas station shop in front of the entrance to the Putna monastery)
- Fundu Moldovei - Luisenthal Conac and Patiserie & Pizza Mati Cafe
- Pasul Mestecăniș - Mini-market under Restaurant Mestecaniș
- Vatra Dornei - SALVAMONT / Hotel Silva
- Tășuleasa Social (also here you will find other VT products)
- Bistrița: Copacul de Cafea and Roots Bistro & Caffè
- Toaca - Insula Argentina
- Ibănești Pădure - Vila Floarea de Colț
- Brădețelu - Pension Ovidiu & Paula
- Câmpu Cetății - Hanul Pescăresc
- Lupeni - Barangoló Panzió (accommodation recommendation in guide)
- Odorheiu Secuiesc - Market Helyénvaló Helyi Bolt and Pension Panorama
- Saschiz - Lime trees 70m from the Fortified Church right on the OT
- Mălâncrav - Guest house, str. Morii nr.22
- Nemșa - BED&WINE Nemșa
- Mediaș - Friends - Specialized Wine and Coffee Shop and Tasting Bar
- Axente Sever - Guest house Frauendorf
- Caransebeș - Limonădăria Nea Tică
- Cireșu - Nomad's Place

You can see the lists of places where you can find the Via Transilvanica stamps divided by region on pages 52, 114, 158, 222, 292, 350 and 390.

BUCOVINA

The portion of the Via Transilvanica trail that covers the Bucovina region starts from Putna, the Putna Monastery to be more specific, a monastery that was built by Stephen the Great, ruler of Moldova, who was ultimately buried at Putna. Bucovina forms a link in the northern part of the country, between two important regions, Transylvania and Moldova.

The 137 km long trail brings out areas of spectacular natural beauty, as well as historical monuments that are unique worldwide. Passing by the Putna Monastery, the trail goes towards the Sucevița Depression and then reaches Vatra Moldoviței through the famous “Obcinele Bucovinei”, and then towards the Mestecăniș Pass which is situated in Pojorâta commune. The trail continues towards “Țara Dornelor”, which is surrounded by Giumalău, Suhard and Călimani Mountains. From then on, the trail winds on hillsides and meadows until it reaches Poiana Negri which is well known for the natural spring waters. The Bucovina portion of the trail finally ends in Poiana Stampei.

BEWARE!

This particular portion of the trail has preserved a great deal of wilderness, therefore one should always set off on road fully equipped, with enough drinking water on hand, as well as objects for defense against wild animals or big dogs that can be found around sheepfolds.

Throughout this portion of the trail, multiple gates have latches that can be easily opened in order to get on the other side. These gates usually mark the presence of pastures, so people put latches on so that animals such as cows cannot get away. Thus, in respect of the local people, we kindly ask travelers on Via Transilvanica to always close the gates after themselves.

People that wish to mountain bike along this trail should know that this portion is particularly difficult as many parts of it require entire kilometers of pushbike. At times, the mud, the lack of drinking water, the sudden ascents and descents, impose a real difficult challenge. Please read the section “Riding your bike on VT” for further information.

WARNING

Fresh dairy products can be an authentic experience in Bucovina, straight from the bosom of nature, from the shepherds at the sheepfold, but please consume these products with great caution, especially if you have never tasted them. Milk, cheese, udder, jântuit, cream or other products with high levels of traces of protein should be consumed separately and at least one hour after eating berries or drinking water. Similarly, after moderate consumption, do not drink water or eat berries until at least one hour after consumption. Otherwise digestive problems, abdominal pain, colic, bloating, vomiting, diarrhoea or other stomach problems may occur.

Trail: well signaled, touristic trail signaled with blue band, easy, mainly through forests, 70% of it is on forest roads

Elevation difference: +379m

Critical spots: none

Scenery: rich in forests, half of the trail follows Putnișoara river, entering Sucevița village is made on a flat road which at first is unpaved, but later on asphalt road, the trail also passes by some new and former forest exploitations.



Accommodation:

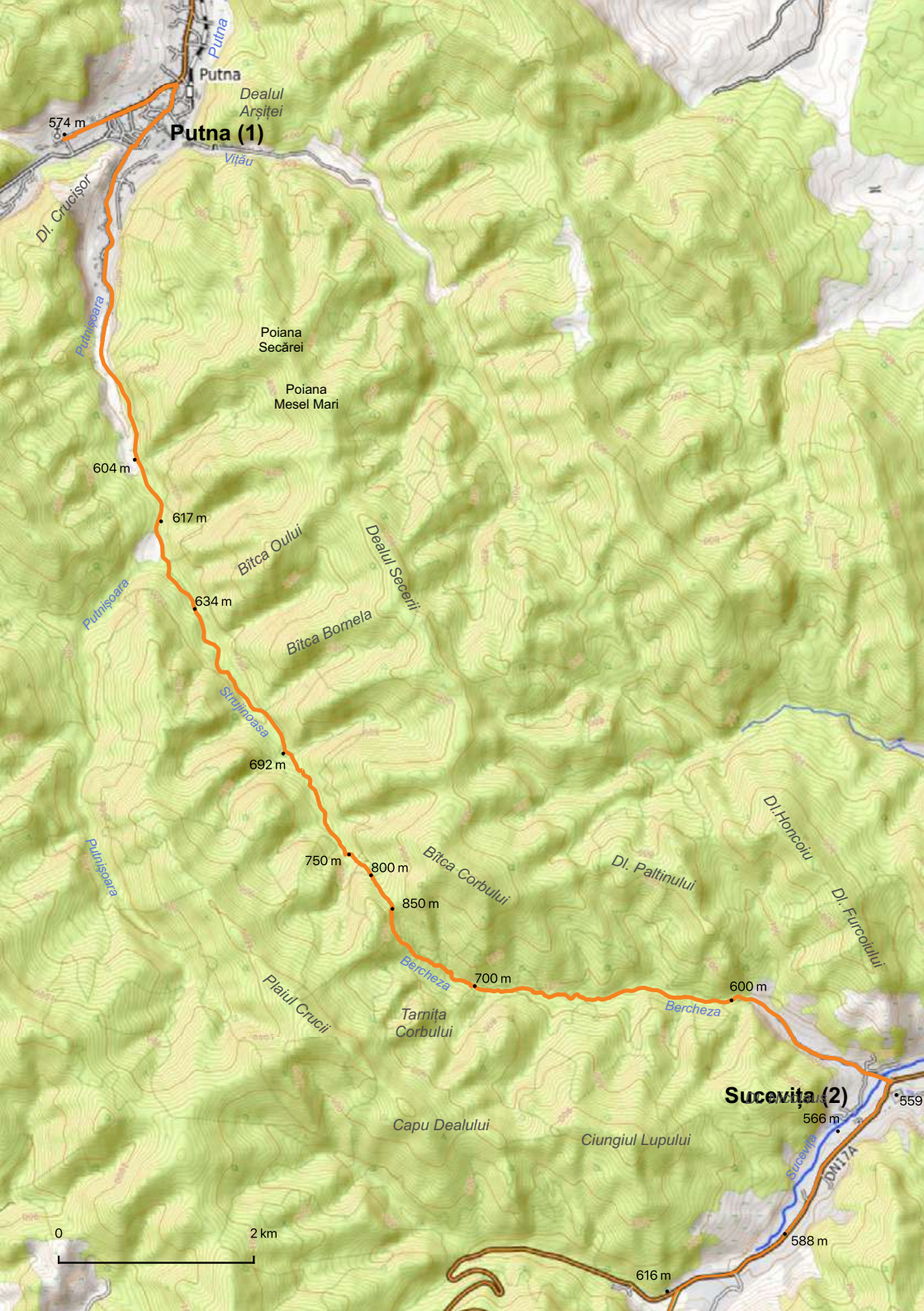
Putna (574 m alt.): At **Putna Monastery**, at **Xenodochium Mitropolit Visarion Puiu**, (monastery guesthouse), available all year round with previous reservation between 9:00 and 19:00, Monday to Saturday, phone number: +40 756 639 606 (Father Isaac), and at **Arhondaric Sf. Nicolae**, phone number: +40 758 607 794 (Father Gherasim) price is up to the willingness of people (donation);

Sucevița (560 m alt.): **Hanul Mărioara/ Karisma Kriss**, 22 beds, breakfast and dinner can be arranged for extra fee, available all year round with previous reservation at the phone number: +40 747 771 341;

Casa Octavian Guesthouse, 46 accommodation places, double, triple rooms, apartment, breakfast and dinner on request. Reservations by phone +40 752 543 773

Pension Poiana de vis, 14 places, restaurant nearby, car transport on request, reservations by phone +40 744 776 210 (Sorin Chiraș).

Good to know: At the xenodochium, of Putna Monastery, is expected to have an ecclesiastical conduct that respects the monastic life. It is entirely out of the question to exhibit a behavior that is anything but decent and respectful as the housing is provided by the monastery for pilgrims, thus it is not a regular hotel. Both Putna and Sucevița



Putna
Dealul Arșiței
Putna (1)

Sucevita (2)

0 2 km

provide multiple accommodation options but in case the ones presented here are not available, we highly recommend searching for other possibilities on the internet.

Infrastructure:

Putna: 

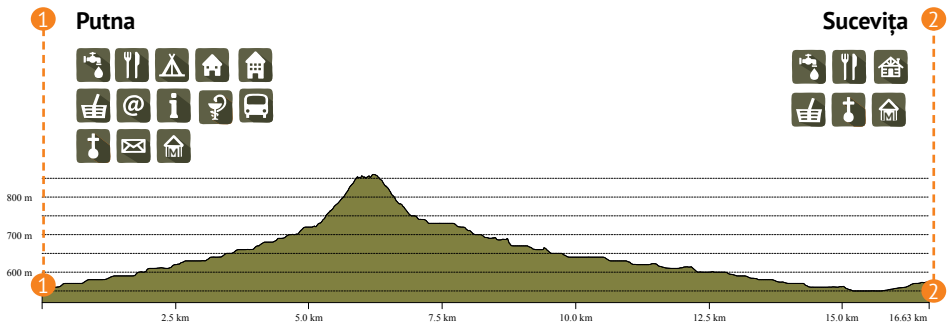
Sucevița: 

Note:

Putna (1) is situated in the northern part of Suceava county, in Obcinele Bucovinei. Access can be made on the driveway, as well as on the railway that goes from Suceava to Putna. The closest airport is situated in Suceava, and hourly public transportation to Putna can be taken from Rădăuți.

Beginning at the Putna Monastery, the trail takes the left on the asphalted road right in front of the monastery, following the Via Transilvanica signaling for about 1 km until it reaches the City Hall of Putna, then the trail turns right and after another few hundreds of meters, reaches the outskirts of the village, on an unpaved road. There, the road crosses a small bridge and then heads on by the side of the Putnișoara river. The touristic signaling (a blue cross) can be seen on the side of the bridge. Together with the Via Transilvanica specific signaling, this will accompany the traveler until the next stop which is Sucevița (2). Then, one has to walk for about 4 km on a pretty long forest road on the Putnișoara Valley, until the road reaches Strujinoasa Stream. From this moment on, one should leave the forest road on a path that can be found to the left of the initial road. Then, a thick and dark forest comes along that challenges the traveler with an abrupt ascent, which is quite different from the mild roads up until now.

Following the ascent on forest paths, in a chilly atmosphere, the road seems to get lost through the thickness of the forest, but the signs lead to the ridge of it. From then on, the trail follows a slow descent and all the while it is accompanied by the sound of 2 parallel streams: one on the left and the other one on the right of the walking direction, among the fallen trees but enchanted by the singing of all the birds. The paths are nice but one might find it difficult to avoid all the obstacles along the way, however, on hot days, the coolness of the spruce and beech tree forest comes in handy and can be very encouraging for the tired traveler. The descent continues until the meeting point of the two streams, where one can take a rest and drink some water. The trail then follows through muddy terrain, on indecisive paths, until it reaches the forest road. This road stretches for roughly



4 kilometers to the center of Sucevița (2). We recommend finding accommodation as close to Poiana Mărului as possible because the next portion of the trail, the next day, starts from there. The problem is that streets in Sucevița are fairly long and one might find that they are required to walk as much as 3 kilometers from the center of the Sucevița until the actual starting point of that day's walk.

Info:

Putna Monastery – the renowned Romanian poet Mihai Eminescu called it "The Jerusalem of the Romanian people". It is the first monastery built by the ruler Stephen the Great. Its construction was finished in 1469. It is an orthodox monk monastery, with great cultural, religious and artistic importance for the history of Romania. Here at Putna Monastery, Stephen the Great, one of his wives and two of his sons are buried. Here important pilgrimages take place on the 2nd of July (the religious celebration of Stephen the Great who is regarded by the Romanian Orthodox Church as a saint) and the 15th of August (the religious celebration of Assumption of the Virgin Mary). For these occasions, over a thousand people can come together at Putna. The remains of Saint Iacob Putneanul (Jacob from Putna) can be found at the monastery. He was the second founder of the monastery (1755) and the person who printed the first ABC book in Moldova (1755) as well as the one who founded the first school in the countryside in Moldova (1759). After the Great Union of all the Romanian states in 1918, King Ferdinand used to pray at Putna, remembering how his ancestor Stephen the Great has left behind some important lessons that led to the birth of Romania the way it is today.

Saint Stephen the Great – Stephen the Great ruled between 12th of April 1457 and the 2nd of July 1504. He was one of the most notable defenders of Christianity and of Europe, facing the rapid expansion of the Ottoman Empire. He has built over 30 churches and monasteries. Putna Monastery was the first one to be built. In 1982, were found the remains of 5 lonely monks that used to live in the place where the Putna Monastery was built, during the time of Stephen the Great. The Italian doctor Matteo Muriano wrote about Stephen the Great, in 1502, that he was a very wise man that was worth all the praises in the world and that the people loved him because of how honest and dutiful he was. All of these qualities made the people call him "the good one" and "a saint" soon after his death. He will forever be remembered as a father of the Romanian people that fought to keep traditions alive. In 2007, he was awarded the title of "The Greatest Romanian". Grigore Ureche remembered in his chronicles how people grieved and shed tears when the ruler of Moldova, Stephen the Great died, pointing out how big of an influence he had over his people. Stephen the Great was buried at the Putna Monastery and at the time of the burial, it is said that people were grieving and everyone was in tears, devastated.

The Cell of Daniil the Hermit – it is situated one kilometer away from The Putna Monastery and it is a cave that was manually dug in the rock. The tradition says that in this very cave, Daniil The Hermit lived before the building of the Monastery was finished, but then later on, he moves to the Voroneț Monastery, where he is now buried.

Putna Hermitage Monastery – it is a church dedicated to Annunciation ("Buna Vestire") which celebrates the moment the Virgin Mary was told by an angel that she carries the Son of God in her womb. This church was once again built during the reign of Stephen the Great, but for this time, not by Stephan, but by a Tatar that was christened and then

became a monk at Putna under the name of Atanasie. The relics of Saints Sila, Paisie and Natan can be found at this monastery.

Sucevița Monastery in Sucevița – this is a nun monastery. It represents a significant historical monument of România and it was built by an important family, the Movilești, at the dawn of the sixteenth century. The church named “The Holy Resurrection” is renowned for the predominately green color that was used for the painting of the exterior walls, as well as for the remarkable representation of the scene of the Scale of Virtues.

Dragoș Vodă Church – this is the oldest wooden church still preserved in Moldova. It was built in the 14th century by Dragoș Vodă the one who founded the state of Moldova and the church was relocated by Stephen the Great to Putna.

Chapel on the Furcoi – on this hill that is very close to the Sucevița Monastery there used to be a hermitage so in honor of this, a chapel has recently been built here.



Trail: difficult, long and abrupt ascents, mostly through forests, beautiful meadows where drinking water can be found

Elevation difference: +1,178m

Critical Spots: at the beginning of the trail there are heavy ascents

Scenery: rich in forests and meadows, leaving the locality (Sucevița) is made on an asphalted road for roughly 3 kilometers until Poiana Mărului.

Accommodation:

Vatra Moldoviței (620 m alt.): **Crizantema Guest House**, 8 rooms, duple, apartment, breakfast and dinner can be arranged for extra fee, available all year round with previous reservation by phone number +40 743 902 330 (Doina Morar) and +40 745 922 447 (Grigore Morar), vilacrizantema@yahoo.com, (closed during winter);

Alexandra Pension, 12 rooms, single, double, triple rooms, breakfast and dinner optional, with previous reservation by tel. +40 744 301 667 (Nicoleta Crețu) or at www.pensiunealexandra.ro;

Pension Myky, 25 beds, camping possible, dinner and breakfast on request, access to kitchen, shop and bar nearby, reservations at +40 748 054 878 (Mihaela Ciornei);

Valcan Guest House, 26 beds, with a restaurant, available all year, with reservation by phone number +40 722 419 513;

Good to know: Vatra Moldoviței offers multiple accommodation options, available at all price ranges. However, in case there are no places at the above locations, we suggest searching for other possibilities on the internet. We recommend accommodation to be made as close to the trail as possible, to avoid having walking extra kilometers.

Infrastructure:

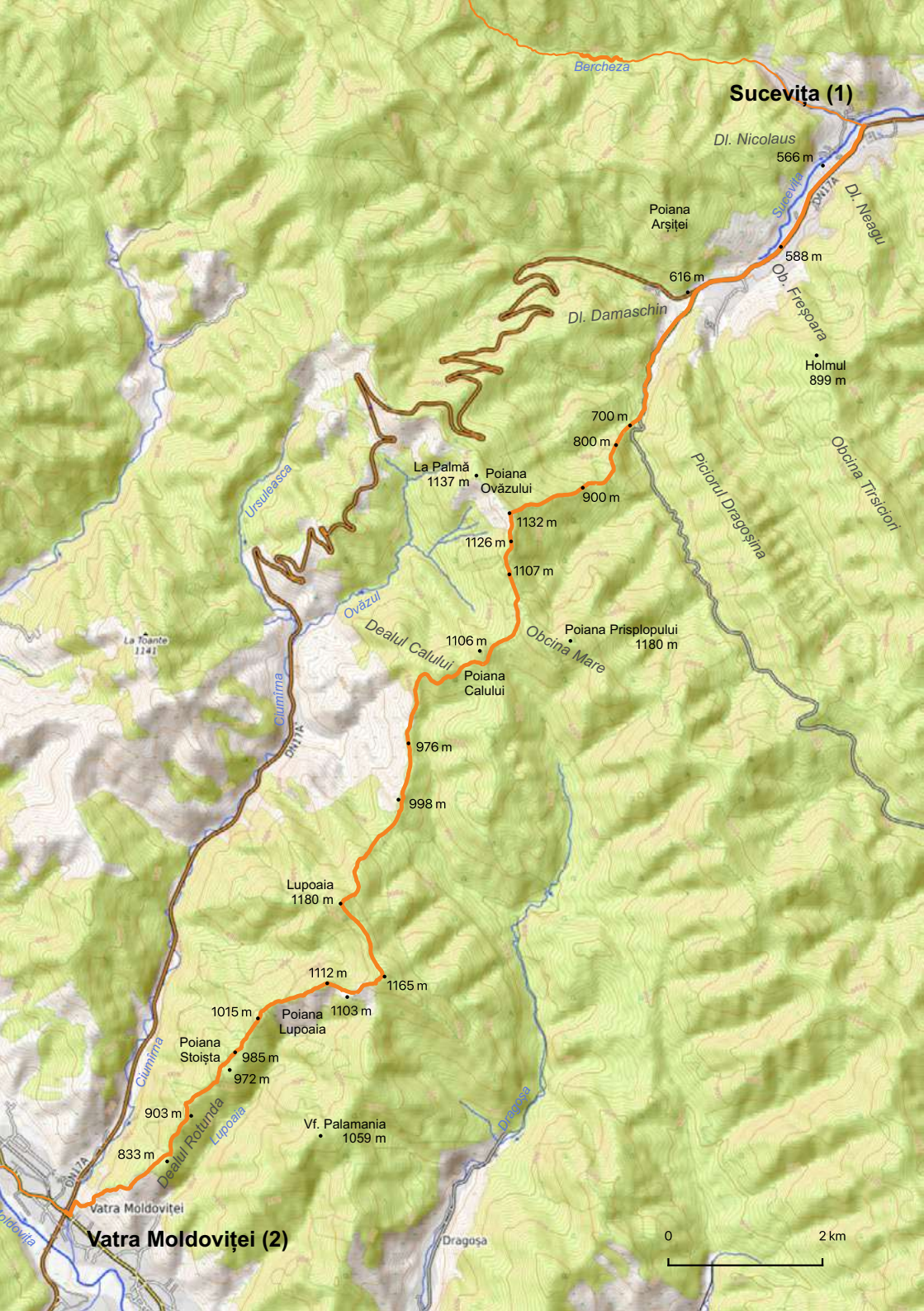
Sucevița: 

Vatra Moldoviței: 

Note:

Sucevița (1) is situated at the base of the “Obicina Mare” and it is a mountain village spread along the DN17A national road which links the Rădăuți municipality to the Câmpulung Moldovenesc municipality. The closest airport can be found in Suceava but other public transportation is available from Rădăuți.

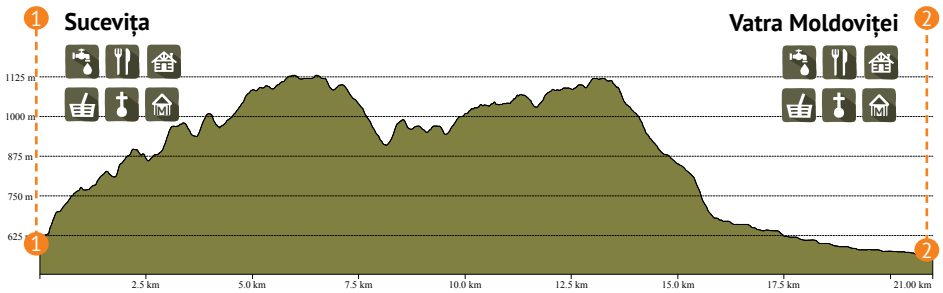
From Sucevița Monastery, the trail heads for the asphalted road right in front of the monastery towards the “Poiana Mărului” (the Apple Meadow) which takes roughly 3 kilometers. On the left side, there is the Poiana Mărului forest road, which must be followed further on. This road cannot be missed as it is well signaled with a metal panel. After about 2 kilometers on this forest road, leaving all the households, hotels and guest houses behind, the trail reaches a forest exploitation. Passing by this exploitation, the traveler then turns to the right, near a barrier and to the left and upwards on a road that was heavily used by big forest machines. This road is almost parallel with the main forest road, but unlike the latter, it ascends abruptly for around 800 meters into the darkness of the woods. Once in the forest, there will be many ascents, however, they will be less steep and a lot milder than before. All these ascents will continue until the trail finally reaches “Poiana Ovăzului” (The Oat Meadow). After following another ascent for



Sucevița (1)

Vatra Moldoviței (2)





roughly 2 kilometers, the road enters a little meadow, from where it turns to the left and continues until meeting with a wooden cross, which is a good sign that touristic signaling (red band) is nearby. Then comes a path that seems to be taken straight out of a fairytale. The walk becomes almost relaxing as it follows the ridge of the forest for a kilometer and a half, until the signs show a direction turn to the right on a path that slowly descends. This path leads straight to “Poiana Calului” (The Meadow of the Horse), which is a beautiful little meadow that is usually full of gentle cows that feed on the fresh green grass. Leaving Poiana Calului behind, the trail enters the coolness of the forest until it reaches yet another meadow, Rija Meadow. This meadow is inhabited by people that are kind and always willing to help travelers in need. They often show they are willing to provide travelers with food, drinking water, but most importantly, they know stories and words to encourage anyone to keep exploring this beautiful part of the country. We would like to mention that some of these people could offer local traditional products for sale, which is something that we encouraged them to do, so the travelers could try and buy a few things from them to boost the local economy. The trail then slowly descends into a dusty road that takes a turn to the right and then forward. From here on, the trail keeps the road forward in between the fence that separates the households and the forest. Keeping the road straight ahead on the ridge, the trail follows the Via Transilvanica signaling for around 3 kilometers until “Poiana Lupoia” (The Wolf Meadow). One will probably come across many dogs from the sheepfolds, in which case we recommend people to keep calm and most importantly, keep the distance because usually, shepherds know that when they see travelers, they have to call for the dogs. From the Lupoia Meadow, the trail continues for a few more kilometers until Vatra Moldoviței (2), through Stoișta and Plaiul Rotunda. From there, into a steep descent, the trail reaches the Monastery.

Info:

Angelica Flutur, a folklore music singer. She was born in a “huțuli” family (find what “huțuli” are in the information below) in Ciumârna village from Obcinele Bucovinei. She claims that she uses music in order to voice the fascinating stories of the population that inhabits the mountain area of the northern part of the country. In her own words: “In my debut in 2005, I was unlike anybody else and nobody else was like me. I showed myself to the world exactly as I am, and I think this is what make people who love folklore and authenticity start listening to my music. I have always tried to better illustrate the life and the tradition of “huțuli” people and to honor them through my repertoire of songs.



The “huțuli” people are mountain people of Scythian origin, that were first Romanized and then Slavicized, which came to Moldova in the seventeen and eighteen centuries. I took inspiration from every written piece I could find on them, as well as my own personal knowledge, as I have lived as one of them myself”. Angelica refers to herself as a simple human being that was blessed with a beautiful voice.

Moldovița Monastery from Vatra Moldoviței, built by Petru Rareș in 1532, it is one of the 8 UNESCO heritage monuments. The paintings on the church wall are special for the themes depicted, such as The Siege of Constantinople, the tree of Jesse and the Akathist Hymn. The “Golden Apple” prize, awarded by the International Federation of Journalists and Writers for Tourism, can be seen inside the monastery museum.

The Museum of Decorated Eggs “Lucia Condrea” from Moldovița is named after the artist who took on herself the preservation of the art of decorating eggs. It is the largest museum of decorated eggs, with over 11,000 exhibits, carefully arranged inside 106 vitrines, according to various themes and working techniques, a collection that puts the artist among the most well-known artists worldwide. Her works can be found in other museum around the world, private collections, Royal Houses etc.

The Mocănița “Huțulca” Steam Train in Moldovița – it is a fairytale-like train that has a locomotive either with steam engine or Diesel engine, which runs from Moldovița to Argeș, following a picturesque trail along 12 km. This train represents one of the most unique attractions of Bucovina. The train runs on narrow gauge system that was used for transporting wood from the forest to the plank between 1888 and 2001. Nowadays,

the train works for touristic purposes. The Steam Train leaves from Vatra Moldoviței, right behind Moldovița Monastery, details and schedule can be found here: <https://mocanitamoldovita.com/>

The Huțuli People – while being on Via Transilvanica, one can hear people speaking in strange accents and having Ukrainian names. These are the Huțuli people. They are an ethnic subgroup which lives in Bucovina, Maramureș, Transcarpatia as well as Pocuția. The Huțuli people call their territory the Huțulșcina (Гуцульщина), but this territory is known to the Romanians as "Țara Huțulilor" (The Land of the Huțuli people).

In Romania, these people live in the villages Brodina, Breaza, Cârlibaba, Moldova-Sulița, Moldovița, Izvoarele Sucevei, Vatra Moldoviței and Ulma (in Suceava county), Bistra, Poienile de sub Munte, Repedea, Rona de Sus and Ruscova (in Maramureș county), as well as the other mountain villages close to the ones listed above. Many times, the Huțuli people were identified as a subgroup of Ukrainians, however it seems like they do not represent a standard ethnicity. It seems like they are related, culturally more so than from a linguistic point of view, with other Slavonian populations that live in the Carpathian Mountains and in Transcarpatia.

Their traditional clothes are distinct from the ones belonging to nearby populations, the music has something in common with the Hungarian music, but there are some habits and customs that can be traced from Carpathian populations such as people from Maramureș. The Huțuli people are the ones that perpetuated the art of decorating eggs, wood and bone inlays as well as the traditional mountain clothing style. According to the historian Mihai Iacobescu, their name comes from the term "huțan" a name that was initially given to horses, which was then extended and used to name the people.



Trail: average difficulty, steep but short climbs, forest, beautiful meadows

Elevation difference: +937m

Critical spots: steep climb starting from Spărturi village until Poiana Coreta (on the map it is found as Jorești)

Scenery: rich in forests, the trail reaches a lot of meadows, leaving the locality (Vatra Moldoviței) is made through an asphalt road (for approximately 1 km from the center) that leads to the Moldovița river. From the meadows, the scenery is fairytale-like, as the Rarău Massif reveals itself with the famous rock formation "Pietrele Doamnei".

Accommodation:

Spărturi (800 m alt.): **Florin Guest House**, 5 rooms, , reservation by phone +40 761 388 519 (Anișoara Strugariu);

Sadova (711 m alt.): **Ionescu Guest House**, 12 beds, breakfast and dinner options, available with a previous reservation at the phone number +40 230 578 837 or +40 744 957 251 (Elena Ionescu);

Dor de munte Guest House, 540 beds, breakfast and dinner options, available all year round with previous reservation at the phone number +40 744 390 365;

Alvy lezer Guesthouse, 20-25 beds, breakfast and dinner on request. Reservations by phone +40 722 654 601 (Georgeta Arvirescu);

Pension Irinuca, 21 beds, breakfast and dinner on request, with traditional products, car transport available. Reservations at tel. +40 743 171 784 (Liliana)

Casa Mariana, 16 beds, breakfast and dinner on request, reservation in advance at tel. +40 748 890 831 (Mariana);


Pension la Muncel, 12 places, 150 lei/room, dinner and breakfast on request, 1.9 km from the trail. Reservations at tel. 0744 232 847 (Ioan Vermeșan)

David Cabin (Cabana David), rooms with shared bathroom, or with bathroom, breakfast and dinner possibilities, available all year round with previous reservation at the phone number +40 745 174 180.

Panorama Bucovina, 10 beds, and camping places, breakfast and dinner on request, car transport from or to the trail VT, Sadova 158A, tel. +40 741 971 212 (Cătălin Lehaci) and +40 745 332 245 (Lenuța).

Casa Dorina, 16 beds, breakfast and dinner on request, washing machine. Reservations by tel. +40 751 208 537 (Dorina Coca)

Good to know: Sadova offers multiple accommodation, available at all price ranges. In case there are no more beds available at the places mentioned here in the guide, we strongly suggest to search on the internet and always remember that accommodation should be close to the trail that needs to be done the following day.

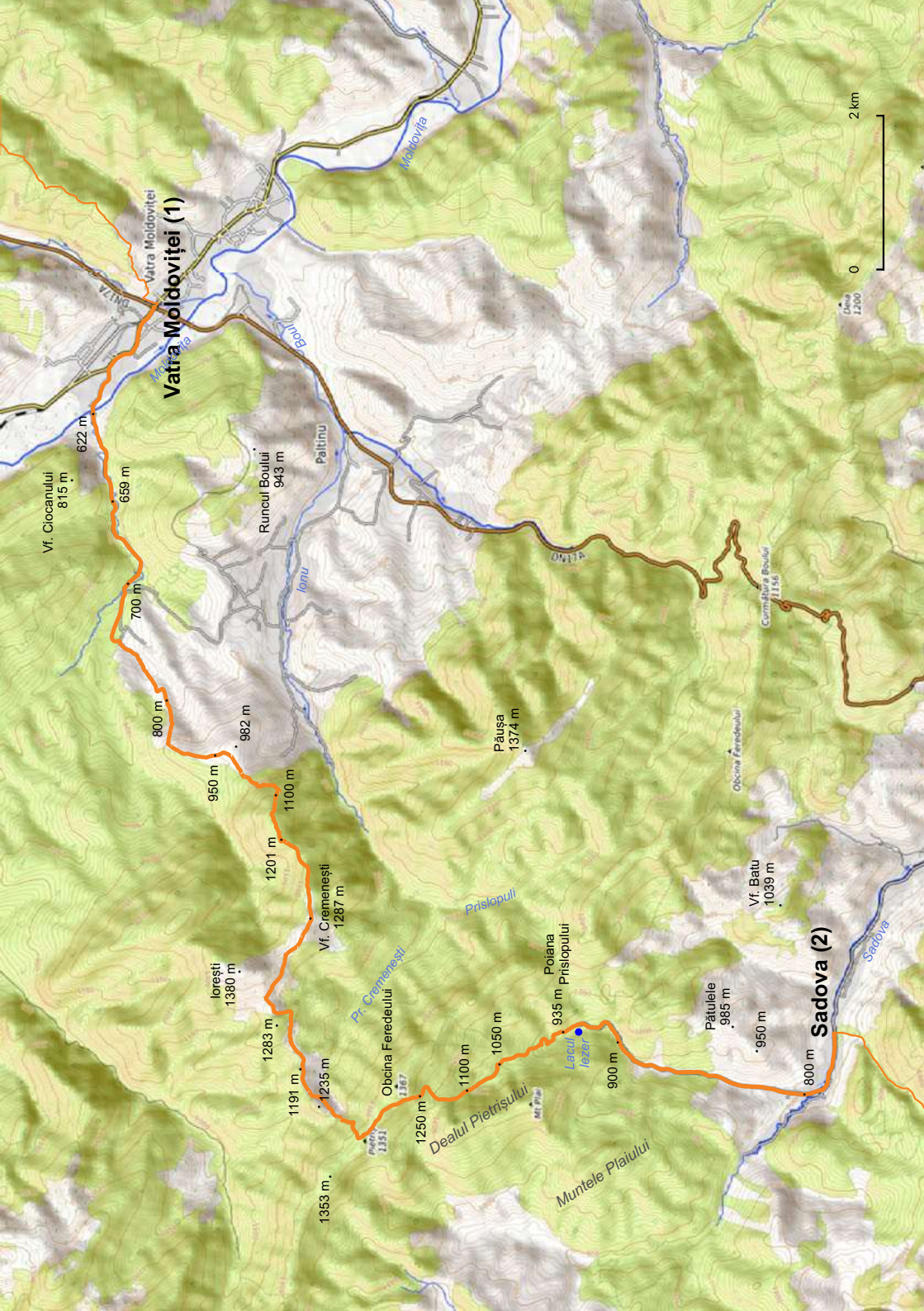
Infrastructure: Vatra Moldoviței: 

Sadova: 

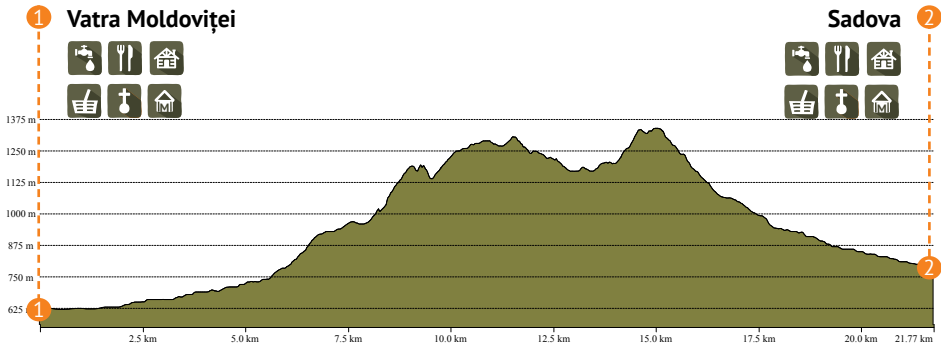
Câmpulung: 

Note:

From Vatra Moldoviței (1), the trail goes towards Valcan Guest house and then passes right in front of it. Then, the trail crosses the Moldovița river, where one can sometimes



admire big birds that are fishing. If one gets lucky, they could have the opportunity to see a black stork chilling itself down by the river, looking for some fish or frogs to eat. Remember that walking on this trail and reaching your desired final destination are both great targets, but natural beauties such as the ones described above should not be neglected while being on the road. After this, the trail crosses the bridge and then follows the Valcan stream on the right side for a couple of hundreds of meters until a new bridge comes across. After crossing the bridge, and after roughly 1 kilometer, the forest road reaches an intersection where the trail follows the road on the left and upwards, which is called the forest road Cremenești. Then the trail climbs towards the mountain village that can be gradually seen in the distance, a village called Spărturi, whose houses seem to be randomly spread on the hillsides, hills that during summertime are full of beautiful and colorful flowers. After a mild ascent for a few meters, the trail reaches a guest house and two all-purpose stores. Casa Florin Guest house can provide accommodation, but because it is found at the start of the day 3 trail, we suggest relying on the fact that the energy will be enough to guide you all the way to Sadova, so you will not need a prolonged break during this day. Then, the trail climbs above the village Spărturi, on the meadows, passing by multiple latched gates and eventually goes into a significant curve on the hillsides and before reaching the cattle herd at the entrance in the forest, we recommend that the travelers take a look behind them for finally being able to admire Obcinele Bucovinei in all their beauty. Then comes a prolonged and steep climb that follows some roads that enter the spruce forest between fallen trees and finally climbing on top of the hill. At this moment the trail reaches the top, where only a few broken trees are still standing, and on the right side of the hill a cross stays strong against the wind, a cross that commemorates an unknown soldier that was killed in World War 2, and whose body was found by a local villager and then buried in this place. From here on, the trail only follows the hillside, until entering Coreta and Versnarka meadows. From the first meadow, Coreta (Jorești on the map), the trail climbs to the hill side heading right, while on the left side of the walking direction, one can admire the Rarău Massif with the very well-known rocks, Pietrele Doamnei. Some forest rangers claim that if the sky is clear enough, The Ceahlău Mountain can be spotted in the distance. There are 3 cattle herds in the two meadows mentioned above. Passing by the first herd, where we recommend getting help from the owner who is happy to help the travelers walk safely and to protect them from his dogs, but who is also keen to share some of his cheese with his guests, the trail reaches the second herd, where there are even more dogs than before. Here, we recommend a strategy. To avoid risks of any kind,



we recommend going around these herds, on the lower side of the hill. Still, the owners might be there to help you pass by safely. Then, whatever the solution for passing by the 3 cattle herds was, the trail reaches the Pietriș Peak.

From the Pietriș Peak, the trail descends to the lezer Lake, on a forest road where one can find wild berries during summertime. The lezer Lake represents a good opportunity for taking a well-deserved break, where one can admire the crystal-clear water and the wild ducks that swim swiftly along the water. After this, the trail follows a forest road for 4 more kilometers until reaching Sadova (2). We recommend finding accommodation here because the next portion of the road is a bit longer.

Info:

lezer Lake – Sadova is situated in Obcina Feredeului, at 937 m altitude. This lake was formed due to the landslide of the slope which is 400-500 years old and comes along with a legend. It is said that on the bottom of the lake there is a hidden treasure that belonged to the Tatars, which is protected by numerous vipers and the fish of the lake. The lake was recently cleaned and added to the touristic circuit. The beauty of the view during summertime is only matched by the enchanting atmosphere during winter, when the lake is completely frozen for as long as 3-4 months.

Another water pan is situated on the upper side of the lezer Lake, and it is called Bolătău. This one is surrounded by thick spruce-tree forests, which makes it hard to notice from the distance. Its surface reaches roughly 0.5 ha, and its depth is still unknown. This lake is surrounded by mountains and in complete silence.

Sadova – The name of Sadova is supposedly deriving from the Slavic term “Sad-va” which means “two cheekbones”. In all truthfulness, it appears that the village was born from the first few settlements that were built to guard the fruit trees during summer and autumn. Plum trees are naturally growing where the Sadova Stream flows into the village that is today known as “Prundul Lățișenilor” and “Coasta Botnari”. These settlements which at first were only temporary, became permanent houses as time went by. The old parish house is registered as household number one here in Sadova.

The legends of this area claim that in the place where the two streams, Sadova and Moldova, unite, people used to exchange goods. The people living in the south of Moldova came with carriages full of cereals, while the local people had cheese and fish to offer in exchange. The legend claims that with one particular occasion, a “fratello” from the Apennines mountains came to rest “At the Cross” and his name was Pizzelli. No one knows the reason why he traveled to this place, but he was mesmerized by the beauty of this area, but more importantly by a local girl. The two got married and started one of the largest families of this area, a family that still lives here today and whose name has slightly changed from the original one.

Another legend takes place on the stream that was later called the stream of the Zbrancani which now constitutes the access way to “Trei Movile” touristic point. This place attracted workers that had built the monastery Vatra Moldoviței to come and build a new settlement, Sadova.

This time, the legend tells us of a family of peasants that ran away from the land of the monastery across the other Obcina because they were not content with the injustice they had to go through. They found shelter in this beautiful area, where there was no danger. One of the runaways was the constructor of the Jibranca Monastery who had a big family that can be traced today as the Zbranca family.

Trail: easy until reaching Fundu Moldovei, then it becomes of average difficulty, steep but short climbs, forest, beautiful meadows

Elevation difference: +1,010m

Critical spots: none, except for the long climbs from Fundu Moldovei to Obcina Arseneasa

Scenery: rich in forests, the trail goes through meadows that overlook the Rarău Massif with Pietrele Doamnei rocks on the left side, it is maybe the portion of the trail with the pretties views that mark an epic exit from Bucovina.

Accommodation:

Fundu Moldovei (734 m alt.): **La Moară Guest House**, 23 beds, breakfast and dinner on request. Reservations can be made at the following phone numbers: +40 726 870 400; **Luisenthal Mansion**, double rooms, breakfast and dinner possibilities, available all year round with previous reservation at the phone number +40 757 462 589, +40 729 127 123;

Mari Cafe, Patisserie and fast food, local gastronomic point, orders at tel +40 723 571 000 and +40 729 073 735 (Răzvan Ivanciuc).

Pasul Mestecăniș (1096 m alt.): **Lucaefărul Guest House**, there are 24 available beds inside the bigger house and 25 more in smaller cabins, it is available all year round and it also has a restaurant. 10% discount for VT hikers. Reservations can be made at the following phone numbers: +40 744 779 768, +40 744 383 573.

Mestecăniș Restaurant offers Via Transilvanica hikers a 10% discount for dining.

Good to know: In Pasul (Pass) Mestecăniș there are not many places that offer accommodation. In case there are no free beds, we recommend finding transportation to Vatra Dornei to spend the night there so that in the following morning the trail can be started from where it was previously left off (this means more transportation is required).

Infrastructure:

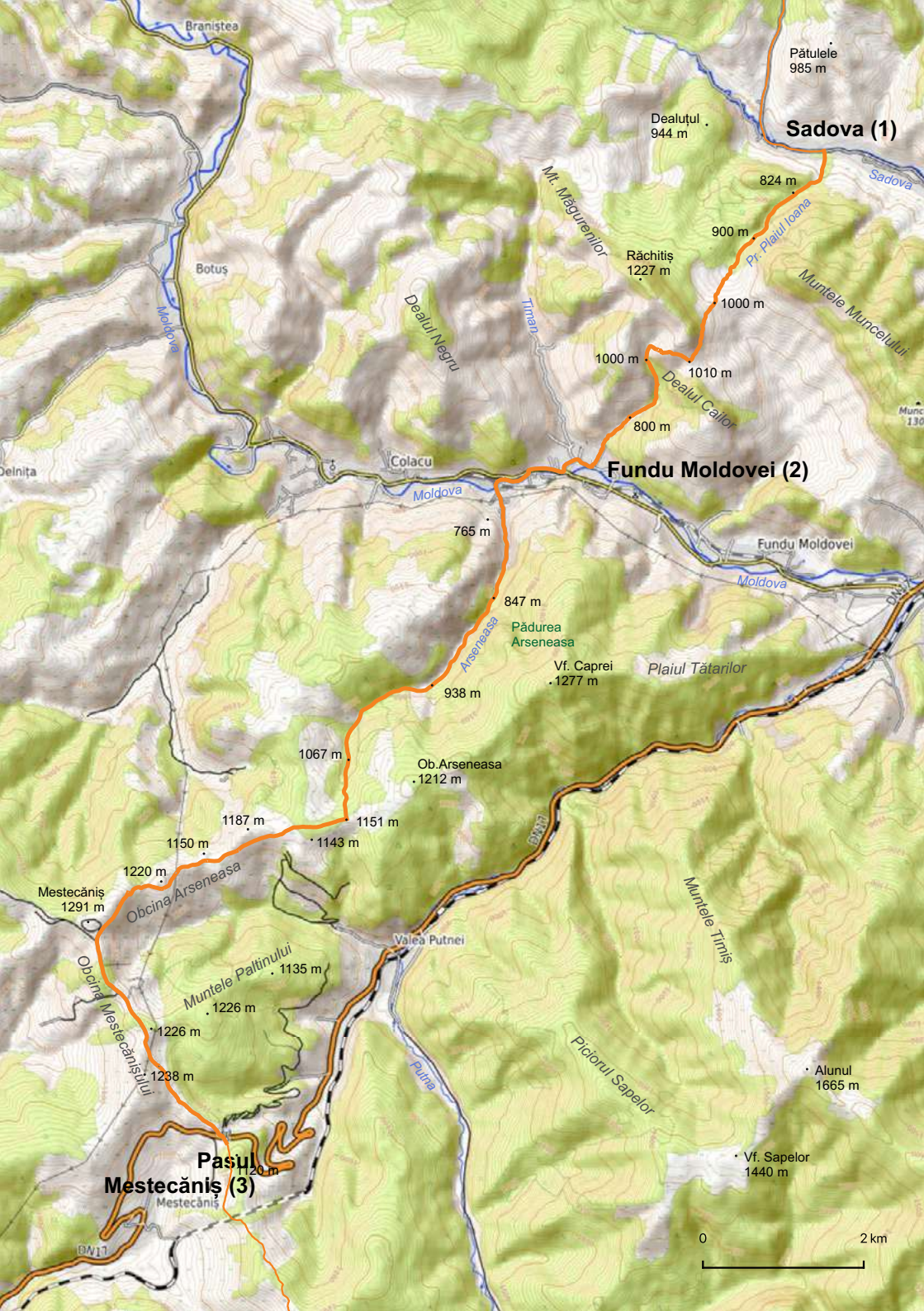
Sadova: 

Fundu Moldovei: 

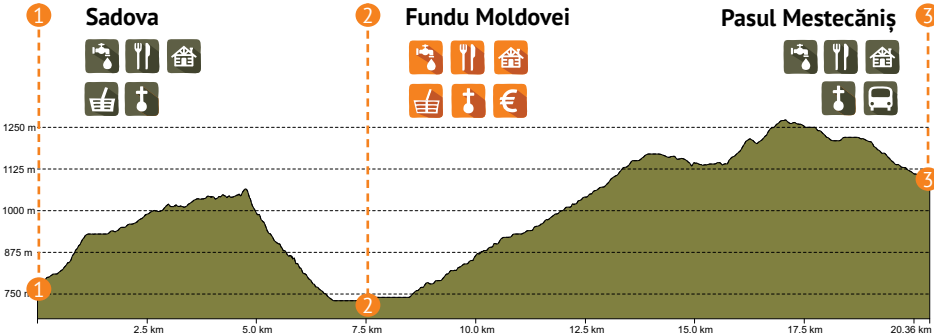
Pasul Mestecăniș: 

Note:

Sadova (1) is a beautiful village. It has old houses but with a modern twist, a bunch of local stores and pubs, specific to the Romanian rural areas. It stretches over 6 km and it is a place where a lot of accommodation options can be found. The trail descends from the lezer Lake to the left where it continues for a couple of hundreds of meters on the main street, until it reaches an intersection where there is a kilometer stone. The trail turns to the right, on Valea Ioanei (a valley). Leaving all the houses behind, after less than a kilometer of walking, a quarry can be seen on the right side of the road and 100 meters from this, a new kilometerstone. Then, the trail crosses a stream, following a slight ascent ahead, having a young forest on the right side, which eventually ends in some hey and flower meadows. This image will accompany the traveler until the road turns to the left when reaching a big rock (Romanian: La Stâncă) that can be seen from the distance. The rocks stays on the right side of the walking direction. Passing through the fairytale-like meadows, with sheds and summer houses, the trail finally reaches an



intersection where there is a sheepfold ahead. At this point, the trail follows the carriage road situated on the right side of the walking direction. This road is slightly climbing to the next kilometer stone that is situated on the ridge. The trail turns slightly to the left and then descends abruptly leaving all the households behind, on the right side of the trail. The road then turns into a kind of a forest road that fluctuates between going to the right and then changing to the left of the stream and at times, the road actually is in the stream but ultimately leads to the village Fundu Moldovei (2). From the village, the trail reaches a little road which takes a turn to the right, near some houses and fences and finally reaches a pub. From here, the town hall can be seen which must be passed by. A few hundreds of meters away from the town hall, on the opposite side of the road, "La Moară" Guest House is situated. From here, the trail goes to the right again, on a road that follows the valley of the Arseneasa river. At the very beginning there are a few households that can be seen, at times even asphalt, but gradually they disappear until the road leaves civilization all together and starts a new adventure through the thick and chilly forest, following the Via Transilvanica signaling. The trail follows the signals that lead into some meadows for a distance of roughly 4 kilometers. Yet again, the road to the meadows is slightly climbing. After reaching these meadows, the trail follows the hillside which provide the travelers with beautiful scenery of the mountains or the cows that pasture peacefully in the distance. At some point, the Arseneasa stream is left behind and after one more kilometer on the hillside, the trail turns slightly to the right, following a winding road without any other significant ascents and descents, until reaching Obcina Arseneasa and the Mestecăniș Peak. The trail passes by a military base and starts a slow descent to Pasul Mestecăniș (a mountain pass) (3). The last two kilometers are done in a slighty shaded descent, until reaching the main road (DN17) where the Mestecăniș Cabin is situated (it has a restaurant) and the Luceafărul Guest House.



Info:

The limestone klippe at Pârâul Cailor (the Horses Stream) (La Stâncă, At the Rock) – is a geological reserve with a surface of 1,000 square meters, situated in Obcina Feredeului, on the valley of Pârâul Cailor, in Fundu Moldovei village. The red limestone rocks preserve traces of the fauna and flora of the Triassic period, such as fish, shellfish and ammonites.

Fundu Moldovei – To reach the village Fundu Moldovei, one must go under a carved gate, where the name of the village has been carefully engraved in wood. The commune comprises 7 villages situated roughly 50 kilometers from the border with Ukraine. This is one of the places where local people have carefully preserved all the customs and traditions.

On New Year's Eve, children gather in groups and go from house to house to bring good wishes to the people and the local people give them traditional pastries, pears, donuts and even coins. The children make sure they visit every house. They have the mission to announce that the old year is coming to an end, so a new one is about to begin, so they wish everybody good health and luck for the year to come. This tradition is continued in the morning on the 1st of January which marks the religious celebration of Saint Basil (Romanian: Sfântul Vasile), when the same groups of children will visit all the houses again for good luck in the current year. Older children also use a type of instrument named "buhai" that is specific to this area and which makes harsh noises. The children leave seeds at every house because it is a sign that they will have a lot of bread in the year to come. Also, people prefer young boys to come and spread these seeds, rather than girls, because the superstition says that boys must bless the place first. Throughout the singing ritual, the buhai instrument is said to be responsible for chasing away bad spirits. Children that plan on using this instrument, all gather together as early as the 1st of December to practice playing the buhai. They also take care of the traditional clothes that include marten fur vests, hemp-made clothing, masks and of course the loud buhai instruments.

On Easter, the people in Bucovina decorate eggs. During the Holy Week, starting from Tuesday until Friday, painting eggs becomes a ceremony for the people here. Besides painting little pieces of art on eggs, women also use old traditional methods that imply using wax. There is no other place in Romania where decorating eggs is such a big deal than right here in Bucovina.

Dr. Traian Popovici - the hero from Fundu Moldovei. He was named a local hero because he has saved 25,000 Jews from being deported in 1941. These Jews were going to be deported to Transnistria. His grave is situated near the wooden church in Fundu Moldovei and it can still be visited today.

Trail: average in difficulty, many descents through the forest and bad forest roads, beautiful meadows

Elevation difference: +546m

Critical spots: the last 3 kilometers of descent that lead to the town are made on a forest road that is in bad condition

Scenery: rich in forests, the trail also goes through meadows and the Giumalău Massif is seen in the distance.

Accommodation:

Gigi Ursu Chalet, between Pasul Mestecăniș and Vatra Dornei, between milestones number 092 and 093, 9 accommodation places, dining in restaurant, possibility of camping with access to the bathroom. Reservation two days in advance at +40 752 638 912 (Gabi);

Vatra Dornei (802 m alt.):

Elenuca Guesthouse, 16 beds, breakfast on request. Reservations at tel. +40 755 277 954 (Tatiana). Restaurant **Șura Brazilor** nearby;

Bukowina Vintage Bikes, str. Dornelor nr.6, bike repair and rental, tel. +40 742 258 454 (Cătălin)

Good to know: Vatra Dornei offers multiple accommodation options available at all price ranges. In case there are no free spaces, we suggest looking up on the internet and remember accommodation should be close to the start of the trail for the following day.

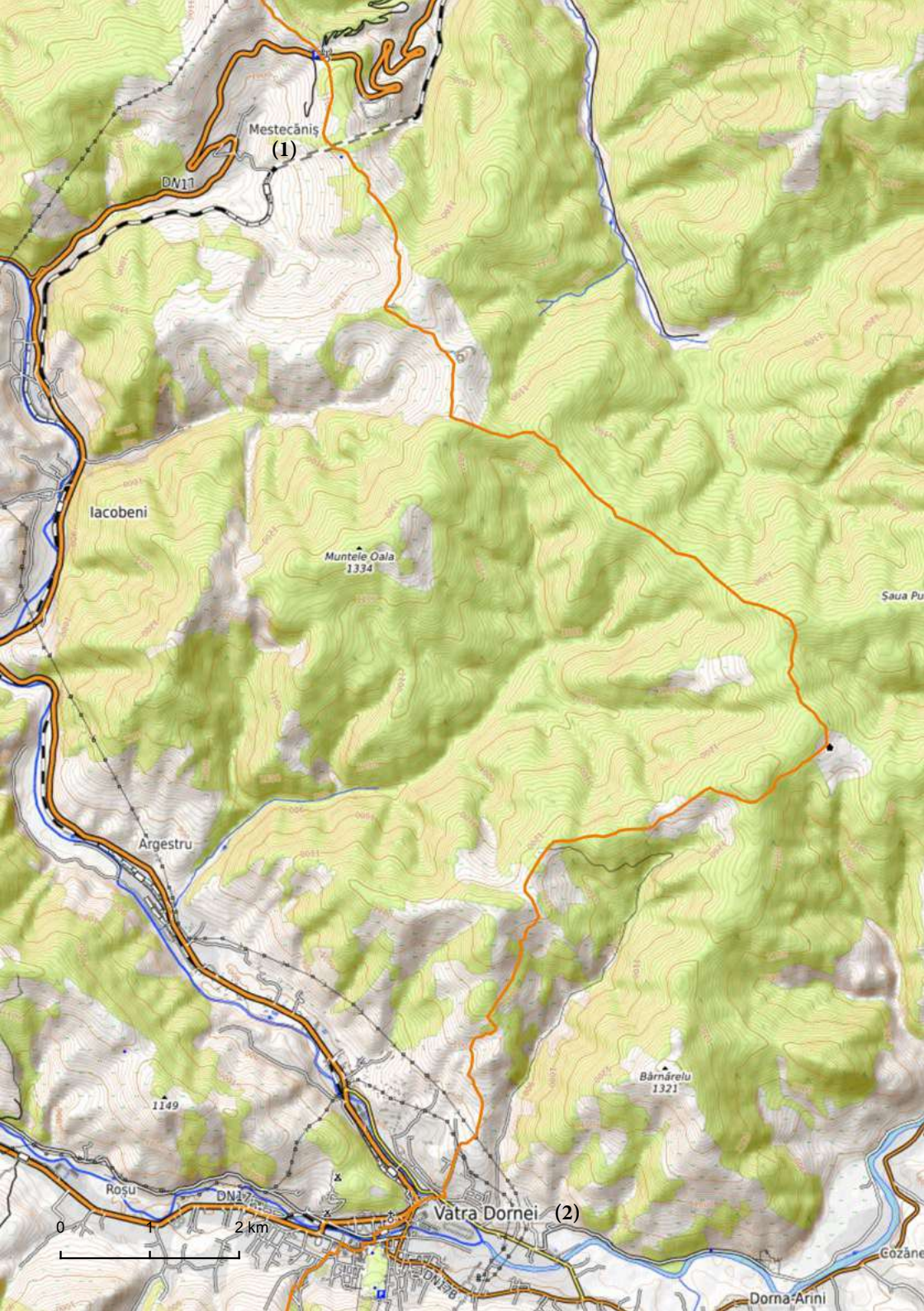
Infrastructure:

Pasul Mestecăniș:



Vatra Dornei:





Mestecăniș
(1)

DN11

Iacobeni

Muntele Oala
1334

Argestru

1149

Roșu

DN17

Vatra Dornei (2)

Bărnărețu
1321

Dorna-Arini

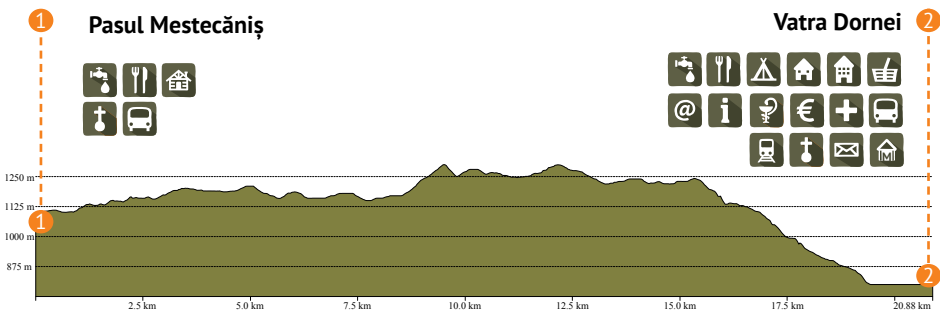
Cozâne



Note:

The red band which is a tourist route sign, leads from Pasul Mestecăniș, slowly climbing for roughly 3 and a half kilometers, to the Saint Pantelimon Monastery. The trail leaves the shade of the young trees on the side of the country road, with the monastery on the left side, passes by yet another monastery, when finally, the trail reaches a meadow where there are many sheepfolds. Many sheepfolds also means that there are many dogs. Our recommendation for safely passing by these places is to keep calm and treat the dogs with indifference because they usually tend to treat people the same. Not to mention that usually, the owners know to call them out and protect the travelers. After this area was safely left behind, the trail follows Via Transilvanica signaling and the touristic one already found in the forest, where a new complicated climb begins, which is luckily not that long. The path is reminiscent of some paths also found in some marshes. In the highest point of the forest, three touristic signs meet: red band, red cross and blue band. At this point, the trail follows the Via Transilvanica signs which accompany the red cross. After roughly one kilometer, the trail reaches a glade. The exit from the glade is made through the forest, on the right side and slightly in a valley, while on the left side of the road there is a curtain of trees. This place offers a pretty view of the Giumalău. Then the trail descends through the forest for some time, on beaten tracks, then on a forest road. From this point on, one should be able to see indicators towards Gigi Ursul Cabin. There it is possible to have a meal, find accommodation and even drinking water. However, after roughly 3 or 4 kilometers downhill, there is a water spring on the right side of the road.

There are high chances of meeting other tourists or mushrooms pickers, but only in certain periods of the year. After passing by the Obcina Mică and Obcina Mare Peaks, the trail reaches a sudden descent on a road that has been damaged by rain and floods, where there are huge craters in the middle of the road, which means that walking on this road requires extra care. After this challenge, the trail crosses some fields where there are a few latched gates that can be easily opened and then shall be closed back. Then, the trail reaches the first houses of Vatra Dornei and passes near a small cemetery. This is where town is made possible, where there are stores, guest houses, pharmacies and other places for finding different types of supplies for the road.





Info:

Vatra Dornei – it was once a small beautiful touristic town, but like many other towns, it is in poor condition nowadays. However, there still are a few places that are worth a visit, even though the town has lost his past glory when, thanks to its mineral waters, used to attract tourists all the way from Vienna. The Central Park has a melancholic vibe to it, as well as the Casino whose old building can be seen slowly decaying from the outside. There is a modern skiing slope that is open every winter. All of these, combined with the look on people's eyes, a look that shows pride, as well as regret towards what the town used to be, makes Vatra Dornei a nostalgic destination.

Saint Pantelimon Monastery in Mestecăniș – A monk monastery that was built in 1999 because the mayor at the time had an aunt that had wanted to retire to a monastery while the communism was still alive, and could never fulfill her dream. The mayor built this monastery on a slot of land named Piciorul Lat (The Wide Foot).

The secular forest Giumalău – it is a forest reserve that stretches on a surface of 309.50 ha, east of the Giumalău Massif, in Pojorâta commune. This forest comprises trees such as spruce trees 1,300 years old, sycamores, poplars, blueberry bushes, juniper etc. Being one of the few old forests still standing, this area provides a good habitat for different fauna species such as the brown bear, the stag, the wild boar, the lynx, capercaillie, the raven and many more.



Trail: difficult, many climbs and descents through the forest and a lot of the walking is done on forest roads, very little asphalt, but beautiful meadows.

Elevation difference: +869m

Critical spots: from the town until Dorna Candrenilor (15 km) there is no water source available and there are high chances of meeting wild animals

Scenery: the trail follows the skiing slope, then passes multiple forests, and few meadows.

Accommodation:

Dorna Candrenilor: *Lena Guesthouse*, 15 beds, breakfast and dinner on request, traditional menu. Reservations by phone 0752 133 199 (Lenuța Candrea);

Căsuța bunicilor, 3 beds, breakfast and dinner on request, reservations by tel. +40 755 360 917 (Rodica) and +40 756 012 464 (Florin). Shop nearby.

Dorna Eco Camping, 15 tent pitches, access to bathroom and equipped kitchen, dinner and breakfast on request, with traditional products, shop nearby, +40 740 220 215 (Ela Dediu) and +40 745 037 585 (Adrian Dediu)

Poiana Negri (880 m alt.): *Poiana Agrotouristic Guest House*, there are multiple room types available. There is a possibility to lodge in smaller houses, each having 3 beds, a la carte restaurant. Reservations can be made at the phone number: +40 755 972 451. Available all year round;

Accommodation at *Mrs. Măriuca*, 8 beds, breakfast and dinner possibilities, reservations at the phone number: +40 741 162 711;

Pension Casa Edi, 9 rooms, shared kitchen, dining room, inside the pension there is a mixed shop. Reservations by phone +40 754 598 036 (Carpea Cristinel);

Casa Miruna, 20 beds, dinner and breakfast on request, reservations at +40 742 078 647 (Ana Maria Flămînzianu)

Good to know: Poiana Negri offers multiple accommodation options for all price ranges. In case all places are occupied, we suggest looking up on the internet and always remember that accommodation should be as close to the trail as possible.

Infrastructure:

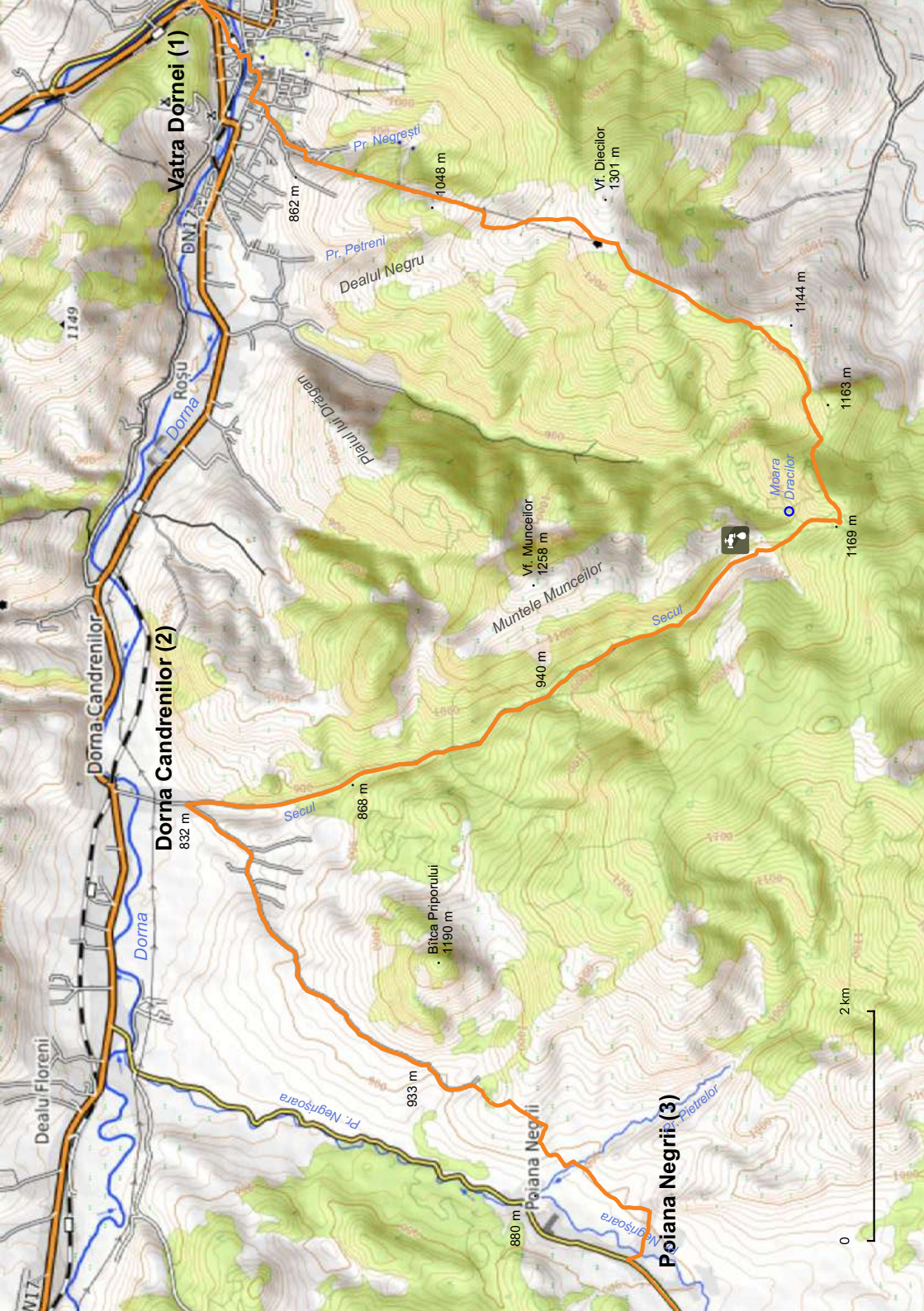
Vatra Dornei: 

Dorna Candrenilor: 

Poiana Negri: 

Note:

From Vatra Dornei (1), the trail leads to the entrance on the skiing slope. The VT signaling starts from Salvamont (the mountain guard) quarters near the railway station, and at the entrance on the slope, the orange "T" should be visible. This signaling follows the trail that now climbs to the highest point of the mountain which is Șaua Zăurele. After 5.5 kilometers, the top of the mountain is reached, inside the forest, where the trail abruptly descends to Moara Dracului (The Devil's Mill). From here, the trail enters the forest road Secul, in a slight descent to Dorna Candrenilor (2). Then, the trail continues on the forest road for roughly 5 kilometers until reaching asphalt where a road sign indicates Secu



Vatra Dornei (1)

Dorna Candrenilor (2)

Poiana Negrii (3)

Pr. Negrești
Pr. Petreni
Dealul Negru

Vf. Muncelilor
Muntele Muncelilor
Secul

Bica Piporului

Dorna Candrenilor

Dorna

Dorna

Dealul Floreni

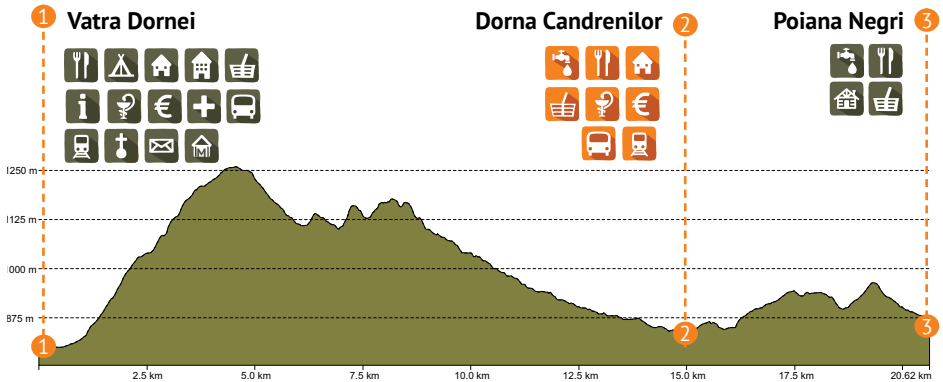




- Poiana Negri, 6 km. A store can be found here, on the right side of the direction of the trail. Then the trail turns sharp to the left on the asphalt road, slightly ascending. For the next 3 kilometers, the trail follows the asphalt road, passing by the households of Secu, in the direction of the Monastery. Shortly after the concrete road turns into a road full of pebbles, a kilometer stone confirms that you are on track. The trail leaves the Via Transilvanica kilometer stone on the left side of the walking direction, behind a fence and then reaching an intersection, it follows a beaten path that climbs slightly to the left. The trail continues as the Via Transilvanica signaling safely leads to the gates of the Bella Vista Guest house. The trail passes by this house and then 150 meters later, reaches the kilometer stone that depicts the Infinity Column that leads to Poiana Guest house. Poiana Negri (3) offers a multitude of touristic activities such as visiting the church, visiting the 12 Apostoli Hermitage, with different hiking tracks available to the Călimani Mountains National Park. The Guest houses around also offer the possibility to travel by carriages or even by off-road cars. Thus, Poiana Negri could convince the traveler to spend some extra time here before setting out on the road again.

Info:

Moara Dracilor – situated between Vatra Dornei and Poiana Negri, on Secului valley. The legend says that this is a strange place, because it is the meeting place of many water



springs, so it is very noisy. At times, people claim that the water flows in the opposite direction, defying gravity. Thus, this place was called “The Devil’s Mill”.

Dorna Candrenilor – The Dornelor Basin is surrounded by the ridges of the Suhard, Giuamalău, Bistriței and Călimani Mountains. Dorna Candrenilor is 8 kilometers away from Vatra Dornei and it is the most important village of the commune with the same name. Other villages in the commune are Dealu Floreni, Simizi and Poiana Negri. The legend has it that the name of the commune comes from an outlaw named Candruț and that is why even nowadays a lot of people still bear the name Candrea. People around here have received the recognition that their land was stretching over a great surface ever since 1772. Their land goes from Măgura Calului Peak to the Oușoru Mountain. The commune is especially known for its mineral waters which were used in touristic purposes from 1898 in an area named “La Burcuț”. The touristic area was damaged by a fire in 1937 and has not been rehabilitated since.

The architecture of the houses is very special because many of them are built from wood and have outside decorations depicting flowers or geometrical patterns. Dorna Candrenilor grants access to the Călimani National Park, to the 12 Apostoli reserve, as well as a hiking trail to the Oușoru peak of the Suhard Mountains (1,639 m), where one can admire the entire Dornelor Basin.

The 12 Apostoli Reserve – is a geological reserve where volcanic activity, erosion and wind have all contributed to building some amazing rocks. The group of rocks that are most known are the ones that have the same name as the reserve. These rocks look like they were man-made, but instead, they are a true miracle of nature. With a little imagination, an old bearded man or a three-faced man, even a bear with his head down and a woman that appears to be Nefertiti can be spotted, hidden within these rocks. Besides these fantastic rocks, the western ridge houses some amazing species of flora and fauna. The spruce tree and the zămburu tree (Swiss pine) cohabit in a harmony rarely seen in Europe.

Poiana Negri – a place known for its mineral waters, it also offers multiple options concerning mountain tourism. Tourists can choose from many activities, such as hiking, rock climbing, rafting, or even paragliding.



Places to find Via Transilvanica stamps:

Putna

- Putna Monastery, Museum (inside the monastery)
- Market Gamas (next to the gas station near the Putna monastery gate) M-Su: 7-19

Sucevița

- Tourist Info Point (near the Monastery Pharmacy)
- Hanul Mărioara/ Karisma Kriss, at tel. +40 747 771 341
- Casa Octavian Pension, tel. +40 742 398 200 and +40 752 543 770 (Octavian Mateiciuc)

Vatra Moldoviței

- Crizantema Guesthouse, tel. +40 745 922 447 (at 100m of route)
- Valcan Guesthouse, tel. +40 722 419 513
- Alexandra Pension, tel. +40 744 301 667 (Nicoleta Crețu)

Sadova

- Ionescu House, tel. +40 744 957 251 (Elena Ionescu) (at 50 m of route)
- David Cabin, tel. +40 745 174 180 (at 1,300 m of route)
- Dor de munte Guest House, tel. +40 744 390 365
- Pension Irinuca, tel. +40 743 171 784 (Liliana) (at 1.5km of route)
- Casa Mariana, tel. +40 748 890 831 (Mariana)

- Pension la Muncel, tel. 0744 232 847 (Ioan Vermeșan), (at 1.9 km of route)
- Pensiunea Alvy lezer, tel. 0722 654 601 (Georgeta Arvirescu)
- Panorama Bucovinei, tel. 0741 971 212 (Cătălin Lehaci) și 0745 332 245 (Lenuța).

Fundul Moldovei

- Braserie FM, Cafe-bar, 0731 368 482 (Iuliana Moroșan)
- Pension La Moară, tel. 0726 870 400;
- Conacul Luisenthal, tel. 0757 462 589 or 0729 127 123

The Mestecăniș Pass

- Restaurant Mestecăniș
- Luceafărul Guesthouse, tel. +40 744 779 768 or +40 744 383 573

Vatra Dornei

- Vatra Dornei National Center for Tourist Information and Promotion: L-D: 10-17
- Elenuca Guesthouse, tel. +40 755 277 954 (Tatiana)

Poiana Negri

- Poiana Guesthouse, tel. +40 741 249 766 or +40 755 972 451
- Mrs Măriuca, tel. +40 741 162 711
- Pension Casa Edi, tel. 0754 598 036 (Carpea Cristinel)
- Casa Miruna, tel. 0742 078 647 (Ana Maria Flăminzianu)

A scenic landscape of a highland region. The foreground is dominated by large, dark, moss-covered rocks. A path winds through the rocks towards a grassy hillside. In the background, there are evergreen trees under a bright, slightly cloudy sky. The sun is visible through the branches of a tree on the right, creating a lens flare effect.

THE HIGHLAND REGION

Leaving Poiana Stampei behind, the trail also exits the Bucovina region. Here begins the Highland region, which is 207 km long (with an additional 70 km in two route variants). It then follows the way to Lunca Ilvei, which is situated in Bistrița-Năsăud county, at the side of the Rodnei Mountains.

The trail is crossing the mountains which offers an important lesson about the way the harshness of the scenery has taught the people living in this area to adapt to the natural conditions. The trail passes through a diverse scenery that changes from mountain tops to lowland forests, mild hillsides to infinite fields. This portion of the trail awaits the travelers eager to discover its natural beauties and touristic objectives while the culture that has been influenced by a variety of ethnicities, adds value to how special this region is.

Trail: all signaled, easy, mainly through forest, Nature Reserve, passing underneath a viaduct

Elevation difference: 714m

Critical spots: non-existent

Scenery: rich in forests, passing near Larion Marsh which comes with visiting possibilities if we leave the beaten track for a little while, passing near the railway tracks passing yet again through a Nature Reserve, the entry into Lunca Ilvei is made on an unpaved road, in the shadows of a thick, spur-tree forest.



Accommodation:

Poiana Stampei (900 m alt.): **Edera Guest House**, 22 beds, double and triple rooms, reservation by phone +40 747 450 756 (Manuela Iosif);

Top camping 125, camping and caravan site, bathroom and kitchen access, barbecue site. Reservations on tel. +40 742 772 765 (Aurel Ivan)

Grădinița (940 m alt.): **Forest Range Grădinița**, 5 beds, available all year round with reservation by phone +40 760 257 379 (Iacob Rus);

Lunca Ilvei (682 m alt.): **Forest Cottage Silhoasa**, 8 beds, available all year round with reservation by phone +40 729 011 815 (Dan Negrea);

Teleski Cottage, in the center of the village on Teleski street, 10 beds, breakfast and dinner on request, possibility of transport, available all year round with reservation by phone number +40 753 332 741;

Maria Guesthouse, 7 beds, breakfast and dinner on request, possibility of transport. Reservations at tel. +40 765 217 751 (Maria Slavoaca);

Casa Alexandra, (www.ecolunca.ro) 20 beds, single, double, triple quadruple rooms, access to kitchen, dinner and breakfast on request, reservations by phone and whatsapp 0757 46 27 48 or email alexandra.ureche90@gmail.com (Alexandra Ureche).
Monica Mureșan, therapeutic massage, +40 730 350 441.

Infrastructure: **Poiana Stampei:** 
Grădinița: 
Lunca Ilvei: 

Note:

From Poiana Negri (1), the trail reaches the asphalt road and no matter where the accommodation for the previous night was situated, the road that goes opposite from Dorna Candrenilor must be followed. It is important to find the Via Transilvanica signs which must be followed, firstly for 2km on asphalt until reaching an unpaved narrow road which turns to the right, slightly upwards. Another 2km must be walked on this road which is climbing towards the meadows on the hillside, which are ideal for taking long breaks and picking forest fruits and flowers. On the top of the hill, the trail finally leaves the country road and takes a sudden turn to the right in 90 degrees and into a place where there are a lot of wild flowers in the summertime. Then the road reaches a few latched gates which are positioned there to keep the animals safe and then it descends to Poiana Stampei (2) village. The trail then passes by 2 big households where there are many animals and suddenly turns to the left on a smaller road. This road descends for a few kilometers until reaching the village and the unpaved/asphalt road which must be followed for yet another 2km until reaching DN17 and the center of the village Poiana Stampei. Poiana Stampei (2) is situated on DN17 road, between Piatra Fântânele and Dorna Candrenilor and can be reached either by public or personal means of transportations, train included. Going in the direction of Vatra Dornei, in the center of the town, we turn left from the main road DN17, following the direction to Teșna/Tătaru. One must walk around 4km on asphalt and then move on to an unpaved road, passing by Via Transilvanica markings and signs to the top of the hill in Tătaru.

In Tătaru, the trail goes down the hills that are used for pasture by the very few villagers that live in the houses in that area. From the top of the hill, looking in the direction of the trail, towards Grădinița (3), there is a pine tree forest that can be noticed down in the Larion Marsh. After around a kilometer of downhill, the path comes across a paved road and the Via Transilvanica trail will continue on the left. Ahead and to the left, the Larion Marsh can be seen and right ahead there is The Grădinița Railway Station, but the road turns a right across the railway tracks, on the forest road Semenic. From time to time, the sound of the train can be heard from somewhere behind the traveler. After a kilometer, the road turns a left, and as one goes on walking, the path will go in parallel with the train tracks, a few meters away from it, around 700 to be more exact. Entering the forest, the train tracks should be on the left and the road continues its way. After around 200 m, according to the road signaling, one must turn a right into the forest, leaving the railway tracks behind. Inside the forest, there are the remains of an Austrian paved road, used for building the railway tracks a long time ago. Next comes a path through the forest, paved with large stones. Exiting the forest on the left, one can notice an observation point used for watching wild animals. On this portion of the road, Via Transilvanica passes through "Sit Natura 2000" Natural Reservation of which more information can be found on the

info-panel. Leaving it behind, a little bit ahead and above of us, there is a viaduct. There is a resting place 30 m away from the viaduct and the Via Transilvanica trail intersects with a paved road. The VT trail takes a right turn on the paved road and follows it for 3 kilometers until it enters Lunca Ilvei (5). Along the way, before entering the village, there is another resting place, with a water spring. After one kilometer and around 600 m, The Forest Cottage "Silhoasa" and the Forest Nursery can be found.

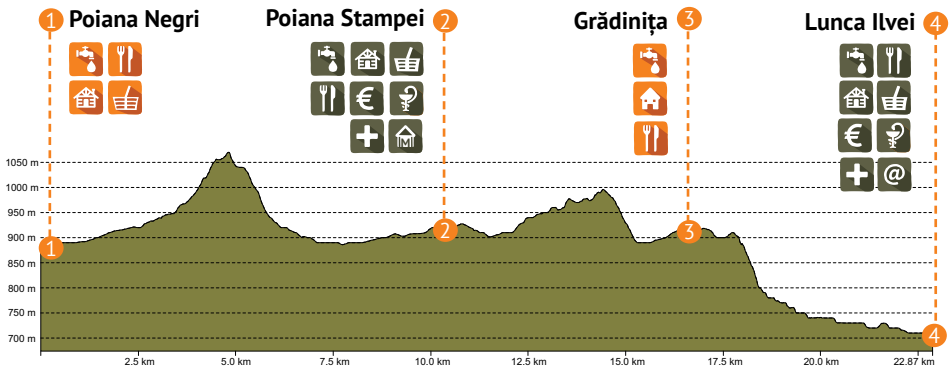
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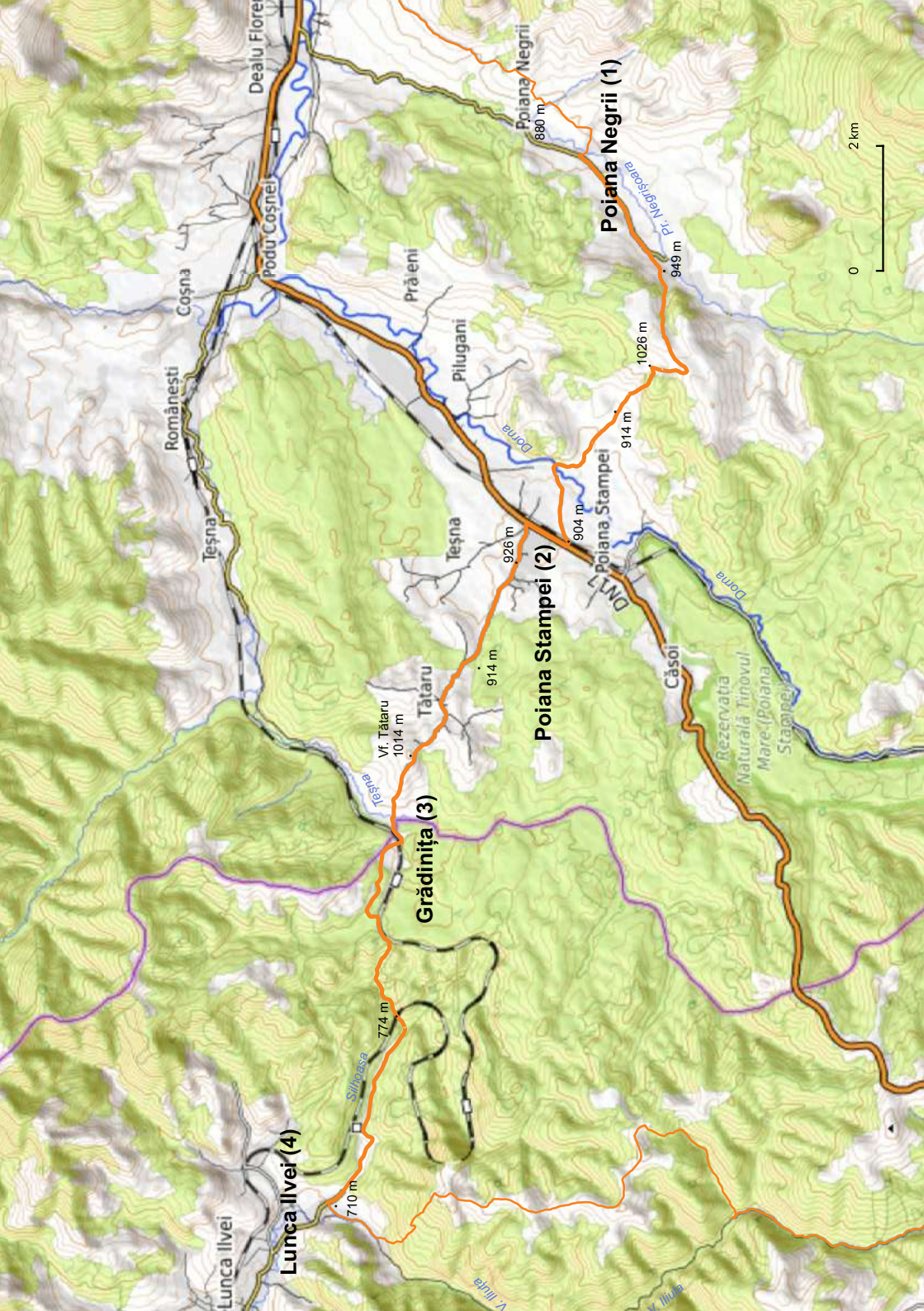
The Great Marsh ("Tinovul Mare") – It preserves the greatest peat reserve in România. The Marsh is situated in the Eastern Carpathians, in Dornelor Basin and it stretches over 682 hectares. Peat is a type of soil that is rich in organic substances, which are little or not decomposed due to lack of oxygen.

Ilva Mică - Vatra Dornei railway station – The plans for the Ilva Mica-Vatra Dornei railway tracks were made in 1898, during the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It is one of the most complex constructions of its kind in România. Nine tunnels, 12 viaducts, and 22 bridges were necessary to make possible the passing over the Carpathians to connect Transylvania to Bucovina. All of these were built with people employed from many places, especially those coming from Someș Valley and Țara Dornelor. Engineers were faced with great challenges in the swamp as well as mountain areas. In 1938 it was inaugurated.

Larion Marsh – Larion is a very important natural site as it preserves a variety of species of both plants and animals. The protected area spans over 3,023 hectares and includes the nature reserve "Crovul de la Larion" (250 hectares). Coniferous forests, deciduous forests, transition forests, riverbanks, swamps, peats, meadows and fields are home for many species of plants, trees and animals representative of the geographical area: spur tree, fir tree, beech, birch, poplar, wild animals such as bears, wolves, deer, mountain rooster and many more. The site has been under special protection regime since 2007.

Rodnei Mountains – Rodnei Mountains are part of the northern side of the Eastern Carpathians. With its highest peak, Pietrosul, reaching 2,303 meters, Rodnei Mountains are the highest and most difficult to access out of Eastern Carpathians. Lunca Ilvei is situated at the base of the mountains, surrounded by the three most important peaks: Ineu, Ineuț and Roșu.





LUNCA ILVEI - TĂȘULEASA SOCIAL (PIATRA FÂNTÂNELE) ROUTE - VARIANT A

21 km

7.5 h

Trail: a little difficult due to the prolonged climb at the very beginning of the trail until Poiana Cătuneniilor, especially when the road is all muddy after the rainy season, as well as the elevation difference. However, the scenery is spectacular; this route has another variant, the one described at Variant B, via Poiana Cătuneniilor, also called Dealu' Frâu; **DO NOT FORGET** to bring a lock along with you should you choose Variant B for your travel, since at kilometer 5 we have the very special kilometer stone that dutifully awaits to be covered in locks from every traveler.

Elevation difference: +800m

Critical Spots: lack of water until Poiana Cătuneniilor approximately until kilometer 9 from the initial ascent

Scenery: From the heights and the meadows from atop, when the sky is blue and allows the watcher to admire, the entire Rodnei mountain chain, as well as that of Suhard with its famous Oușoru (trans. Egg) Peak, Călimani and Heniul can be observed, whose beauty ought to take one's breath away.

Accommodation:

Poiana Cătuneniilor, 50m from the route, possibility to serve meals, traditional plates, reservation by phone +40 725 452 844 (Nicoleta Sidor);

Tășuleasa Social (Piatra Fântânele, 1,042 m alt.): 24 beds + camping site, meals, all come with a donation fee, WI-FI, available all year round and it provides facilities such as washing machine, drycleaner, printer, yard), easily accessible from the main road DN17, reservations can be made at the telephone number +40 741 545 201 (Anna Székely) tel. +40 751 824 524 (Ștefan) and +40 744 524 855 (Kitty);

In Piatra Fântânele, there are more alternatives for accommodation, such as:

Casa Maria, 12 beds, breakfast and dinner on request, information and reservations can be made at the telephone number +40 741 124 679;

Găbița Lodging: rooms and meals, reservations can be made at the phone number: +40 744 935 681 (more details can be found online).



Infrastructure:

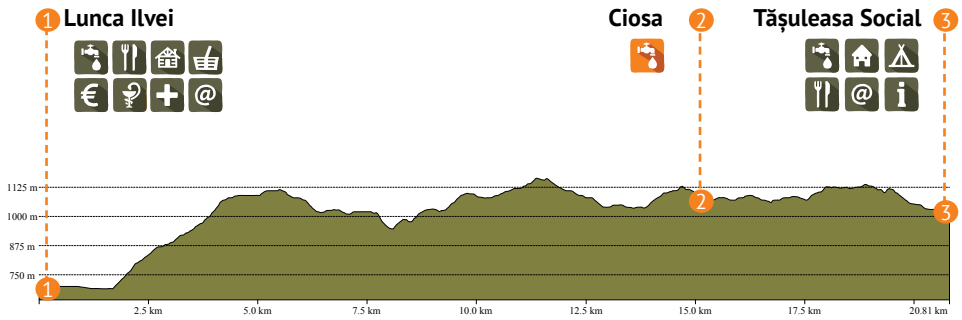
Tășuleasa Social:

Piatra Fântânele:



Note:

Left of the very rustic "La Avram" Guest House from Lunca Ilvei (1), the trail reaches an intersection where there is an indicator for Piatra Fântânele and Vatra Dornei. Should the traveler opt for the first variant of the trail, the road turns to the left. If the second variant is chosen, one must walk ahead for 2 kilometers on asphalt road, until they reach the indicator with an arrow pointing to the left, right next to the house number 263, which is also a gathering place for Jehovah's Witnesses.



One will pass by this house and take the dirt road on the left, where there is a wooden bridge right in the beginning, that has to be crossed. The river Ilva can be calm and refreshing during summer/autumn time, or wide and tumultuous due to too much rain during spring. One will carefully cross the bridge (beware that in case of rain, the wood can be quite slippery) and will turn right and then turn again but this time to the left on a dirt road that slowly ascends. This road can be damaged by forest machinery, or tractors, especially if the journey is made after a rainy season when the mud can become quite problematic. In spite of the great number of intersections that arise throughout the walk, the trail keeps left, leaving the fence always on the left, slowly ascending to the first meadow of today's journey. When looking behind, one can admire the entirety of Lunca Ilvei Village and more in the distance, the Rodnei mountain chain. On a sunny day, the scenery may seem surreal since visibility may allow the traveler to observe all the mountains like in a crown made out of dandelions.

From now on, the traveller should keep turning their gaze behind because they will be surrounded by beautiful scenery of wild nature and it's not worth missing these just for the sake of pacing up to reach the final destination. One will continue on this trail, following the signaling and indicators along the way, climbing, at times slowly, other times on a steep slope, until at one moment, a steeper hill arises ahead. If the traveler fixes the gaze, they will see that on top of the hill, there is a cross. One should approach this hill on its left side and then will turn right on the steep slope that ascends to the "kilometer stone with holes". This is the fifth kilometer stone from the asphalt road and it is a place where travelers can leave a lock behind in order to seal their friendship, love, their journey on Via Transilvanica or any other reason they see fit.

Then the trail continues on the hill ridge and passes the wooden cross and leaves it on the right side, while on the left side, the traveller will be able to admire lands of crops and one or two households. One will continue on a grass road that curves along the way until it becomes a strangely paved road that crosses a few lands separated by electric, or simply wooden fences where one might see cows quietly eating grass, while curiously looking at the passersby.

Then, all of a sudden, the road turns to the left, making a "hairpin" curve (180 degrees) and continues among a few summer households where the villagers come to feed their animals. This place is called Poiana Cătunenilor. In case the traveler feels thirsty or very hungry, they can ask the locals for some help, but otherwise, one will keep on walking, following the signaling until kilometer nine, where there is a water spring on the left. The trail continues among the houses and one more kilometer ahead the traveler will reach yet another water spring, with a wooden container where the water flows in. This

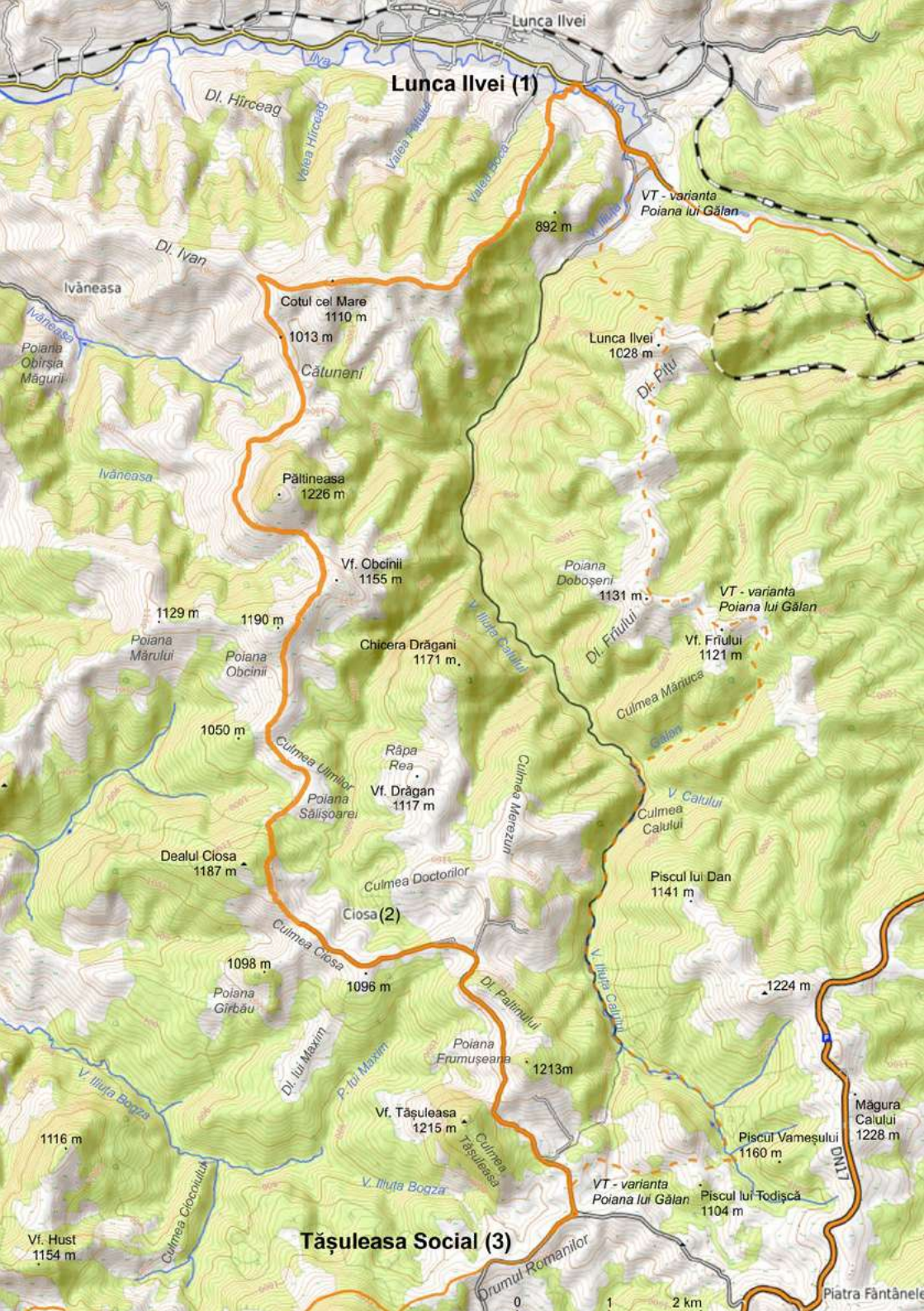
spring at kilometer 10 is called “The spring with cold water”. After taking a well deserved break, one will walk on the paved road, following the signaling, while also admiring the beautiful scenery, among mountain households with animals that pasture in the shades. After six more kilometers, the traveler will enter the next mountain village, called Ciosa. One reaches Ciosa (2) by crossing a little forest with paths that go up and then down into the village. One will pass by the church and continue on the dirt dusty road, between hills and mountains, approaching the next village, which is also today’s destination: Piatra Fântânele. There are many inviting water springs along this road, since they are all arranged in a traditional way, with wooden containers and mugs left behind for those that are thirsty. A few more curves, some hills and more households are left behind following the way to Piatra Fântânele, until the traveler sees the Tășuleasa Mountain that becomes a road companion for one more kilometer. Then, in close proximity, the Iron Cross can be noticed straight ahead. One will continue walking on the asphalt road and then turn to the right on The Roman Road and walk 300 meters until finally reaching the destination at Tășuleasa Social (3), where they can find some friendly faces, accommodation and something good to eat and drink.

Info:

Tășuleasa Social – The organization and its volunteers are the creators of the project Via Transilvanica, which is very dear, and therefore they have invested all their knowledge and experience, accumulated over more than 18 years of organizational activity. It is an environmental NGO, known for plantings trees in autumn and spring, with voluntary participation, but it has organized many more projects concerning environmental, social, educational or cultural issues, such as: Via Maria Theresia Marathon, The Pedagogical Forest, The Christmas Truckers, The School of Hiking, The Good Day, The Day of Young Volunteers! The campus is situated in Piatra Fântânele, in Bistrița-Năsăud county and it is part of the Via Transilvanica circuit. They are more than happy to welcome travelers from everywhere, to hear their stories and to be the best to fulfill their needs.

The Iron Cross Monument – was built in 2018 by Tășuleasa Social NGO, after the example of the Cruz de Ferro Monument from Camino de Santiago in Spain. This monument has been built in the honor of Via Transilvanica’s hikers. They will be able to leave a stone at the base of the monument as a symbolical gesture to metaphorically leave behind their problems and/or sins. Being 17 m high, the monument can be seen from a long distance, offering the hikers a much-needed motivation.

The Roman Road – It is a road with significant historical value and it can be noticed in some places along the Via Transilvanica Trail, almost intact. The old stones that can be seen are reminiscent of times long gone. It is situated in the Bârgăului mountains and its origins are somewhat of a controversy. Some historians say it was built by Romans in the year 260 to extend the Empire to the north, toward the territory that is today’s Bucovina. Others say that its history is more recent, from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and it was supposed to be a frontier road and then a commercial road. It seems that this road was prolonged at the command of Empress Maria Theresia in the year 1760. Nowadays, we have collaborated with The Museum in Bistrița-Năsăud County to research the area and find the answer to the problematic origin of the road.



Lunca Ilvei (1)

Di. Hîrceag

Valea Hîrceag

Valea Făltăuș

Valea Bocu

VT - varianta Poiana lui Gălan

892 m

Di. Ivan

Ivăneasa

Cotul cel Mare
1013 m

Cătuneni

Lunca Ilvei
1028 m

Di. Pîtu

Ivăneasa
Poiana Obîrștia Măguri

Pălineasa
1226 m

Vf. Obcîinii
1155 m

Poiana Doboseni
1131 m

VT - varianta Poiana lui Gălan

1129 m

1190 m

Poiana Mărului

Poiana Obcîinii

Chicera Drăgani
1171 m

Di. Friului

Vf. Friului
1121 m

1050 m

Culmea Ulmilor

Răpa Rea
Vf. Drăgan
1117 m

Culmea Măritica

V. Galen

Dealul Cîșoia
1187 m

Poiana Săișoarei

Vf. Drăgan
1117 m

V. Calului

Culmea Calului

Piscul lui Dan
1141 m

Culmea Doctorilor

Cîșoia (2)

Culmea Cîșoia

1098 m

Poiana Gîrbău

1096 m

Di. Iul Maxim

Poiana Frumuseștea
1213 m

Di. Pălinului

Vf. Tășuleasa
1215 m

Culmea Tășuleasa

1224 m

VT - varianta Poiana lui Gălan

Piscul Vameșului
1160 m

Piscul lui Todîșcă
1104 m

Tășuleasa Social (3)

Vf. Hust
1154 m

1116 m

V. Iluța Bogza

Culmea Ciocovulă

Di. Iul Maxim

P. Iul Maxim

V. Iluța Bogza

Drumul Romanilor

0 1 2 km

Măgura Calului
1228 m

Piatra Fântânele

Trail: a little difficult due to the prolonged uphill portion from the very beginning up to Gălan's Meadow and the one from the Roman Road to Rusu Meadow, significant elevation differences, but the scenery is amazing, there is the option of Variant A described below, through Poiana Cătunenilor;

Elevation difference: +1,036m

Critical spots: lack of water until Gălan's Meadow (2h 30 min).

Scenery: from Gălan's Meadow, with favorable weather condition, the entire Rodnei Mountain chain can be admired, as well as Suhardului Mountains, Oușoru (translated "The Egg"), 12 Apostoli, Călimani Mountains and Heniu, which provide spectacular views



Accommodation:

Gălan's Meadow (1,207m alt): camping site for those who carry tents or the ones willing to sleep under the stars, during May up until October, Gălan family can provide a hot meal, 15 beds in chalets, with a reservation with at least a day ahead at the telephone number +40 732 806 201;

Tășuleasa Social (Piatra Fântânele, 1,042 m alt.): 24 beds + camping site, meals, all come with a donation fee, WI-FI, available all year round and it provides facilities such as washing machine, drycleaner, printer, yard), easily accessible from the main road DN17, reservations can be made at the telephone number +40 741 545 201 (Anna Székely), tel. +40 751 824 524 (Ștefan) and +40 744 524 855 (Kitty);

In Piatra Fântânele, there are more alternatives for accommodation, such as:

Casa Maria, 12 beds, breakfast and dinner on request, information and reservations can be made at the telephone number +40 741 124 679;

Găbița Lodging: rooms and meals, reservations can be made at the phone number: +40 744 935 681 (more details can be found online);

Infrastructure:

Poiana lui Gălan:



Tășuleasa Social:



Piatra Fântânele:

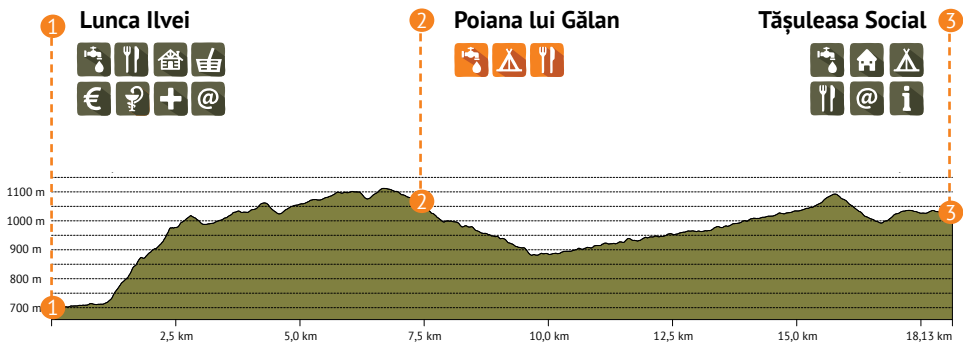


Note:

Today's trail reaches a crossroad indicator that reads "Piatra Fântânele" and "Vatra Dornei", at which point the path makes a right - if you come from the center of Lunca Ilvei village. Leaving the village, in around 1km, on the left, one can notice a forest road going slightly uphill for about three kilometers and this road takes the hiker to Gălan's Meadow (2), which stretches over around five kilometers. One passes by a few summerhouses, small and traditional, built by the local people who work the land (especially for hay) during summer. At the exit of the meadow, whenever they are at home, the Gălan family is more than happy to welcome anyone with a hot meal and fresh spring water. Taking a slight downhill portion through the forest, the hiker leaves the charming meadow and shortly after, we reach a forest road called "Pârâul lu' Gălan".

At the end of the forest road, the path turns left, on the main road from Lunca Ilvei (1) to Piatra Fântânele which is an unpaved road that must be walked for almost four kilometers until it turns right, but Via Transilvanica continues right ahead, climbing on the well-known Roman Road. All these paths pass through the coolness of the spur tree forests and the Roman Road, which is still intact in a few places, is winding on a slight uphill portion, close to Rusu Pasture. In Rusu Pasture, the Roman Road crosses an asphalt road in Piatra Fântânele, which must be walked for around 200 m to the left, then it takes a big curve and turns right on the Roman Road again, but not before one stops by the "Iron cross" monument, where the hikers can leave a stone, in order to metaphorically leave their problems and/or sins. Moving forward, leaving the cross on one's right side, in around 300m the hiker reaches Tășuleasa Social Campus (3).



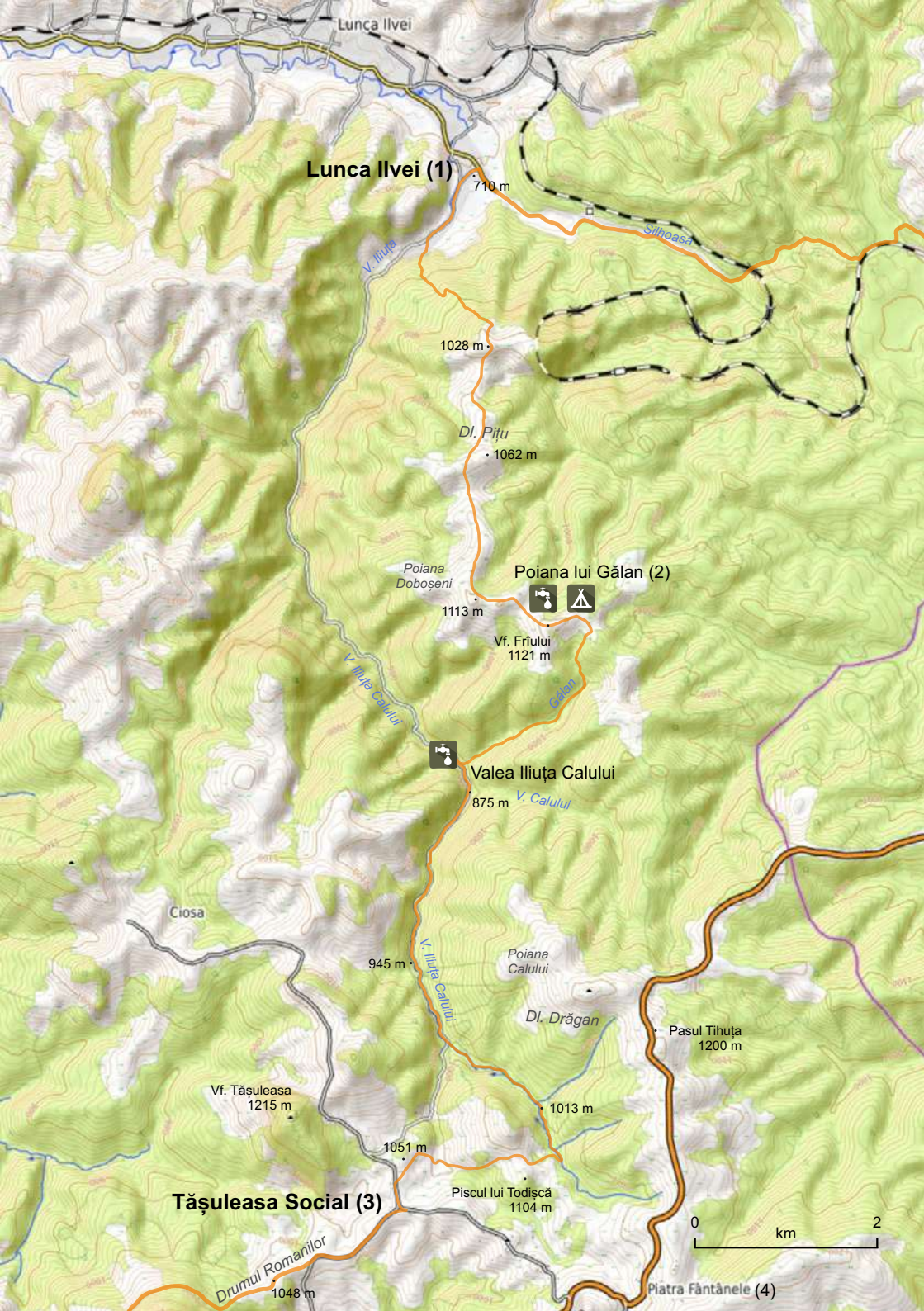


Info:

Tășuleasa Social – The organization and its volunteers are the creators of the project Via Transilvanica, which is very dear, and therefore they have invested all their knowledge and experience, accumulated over more than 18 years of organizational activity. It is an environmental NGO, known for plantings trees in autumn and spring, with voluntary participation, but it has organized many more projects concerning environmental, social, educational or cultural issues, such as: Via Maria Theresia Marathon, The Pedagogical Forest, The Christmas Truckers, The School of Hiking, The Good Day, The Day of Young Volunteers! The campus is situated in Piatra Fântânele, in Bistrița-Năsăud County and it is part of the Via Transilvanica circuit. They are more than happy to welcome travelers from everywhere, to hear their stories and to be the best to fulfill their needs.

The Iron Cross Monument – was built in 2018 by Tășuleasa Social NGO, after the example of the Cruz de Ferro Monument from Camino de Santiago in Spain. This monument has been built in the honor of Via Transilvanica's hikers. They will be able to leave a stone at the base of the monument as a symbolical gesture to metaphorically leave behind their problems and/or sins. Being 17 m high, the monument can be seen from a long distance, offering the hikers a much-needed motivation.

The Roman Road – It is a road with significant historical value and it can be noticed in some places along the Via Transilvanica Trail, almost intact. The old stones that can be seen are reminiscent of times long gone. It is situated in the Bârgăului mountains and its origins are somewhat of a controversy. Some historians say it was built by Romans in the year 260 to extend the Empire to the north, toward the territory that is today's Bucovina. Others say that its history is more recent, from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and it was supposed to be a frontier road and then a commercial road. It seems that this road was prolonged at the command of Empress Maria Theresia in the year 1760. Nowadays, we have collaborated with The Museum in Bistrița-Năsăud County to research the area and find the answer to the problematic origin of the road.



Lunca Ilvei

Lunca Ilvei (1)

710 m

V. Ilieș

Silvoasa

1028 m

DI. Pițu

• 1062 m

Poiana Doboseni

Poiana lui Gălan (2)



1113 m

Vf. Frului
1121 m



Valea Iliuța Calului

875 m

V. Calului

Ciosa

945 m

Poiana Calului

DI. Drăgan

Pasul Tihuța
1200 m

Vf. Tășuleasa
1215 m

1013 m

Tășuleasa Social (3)

1051 m

Piscul lui Todîșcă
1104 m

Drumul Romanilor
1048 m



Piatra Fântânele (4)

Trail: average difficulty; the natural scenery can be seen until reaching the main road DN17, which must be crossed once, which requires extra care. Then, the trail follows a path a few meters away from the road, then comes an uphill portion through Mureșenii Bârgăului to Brazii Buni, which takes around 2 hours, offering many spectacular viewpoints.

Elevation difference: +545m

Critical spots: Even if the crossroad is well signaled, it is still new therefore it requires extra care when walking the road; also on the top of the mountain, at Brazii Buni, until entering the village, there are only a few places where one can protect from the rain, so check the weather forecast before going there; there are multiple sheepfolds along the way and even though the shepherds usually call for the dogs, the traveler must not fear them (simply ignoring them, talking nicely to them or even shouting are all advised);

Scenery: Until Valea Străjii, from Tășuleasa, one can admire amazing scenery, with households specific to Bârgău area where kind shepherds can provide fresh cheese. In the second part of the trail, after DN17, in around 4 kilometers, the magical view from before comes back again in a slight ascending trail, a view that you just can't get enough of.

Accommodation:

Valea Străjii: camping site, restaurants and resting places.

Bistrița Bârgăului: *Maria Bidian Local Gastronomic Point*, 8 beds, traditional menu, breakfast, lunch and dinner on request, Bistrița Bârgăului, no. 24, reservations by phone +40 753 422 321;

Guest house, 6 places, shared bathroom, lunch and dinner on request, reservations by phone +40 745 840 317 (Tatiana Rusu);

Guest house, nr. 609b, 2 bedrooms, 4-6 places, breakfast and dinner on request, transport, reservations by phone +40 774 964 240 (Nick Gavan);

Ony Lodging: 12 beds, kitchen, swimming pool and terrace are all included, reservations for food and accommodation in advance at phone number: +40 723 193 925 (Popandron Felicia).

Infrastructure:

Valea Străjii: 

Bistrița Bârgăului: 

Note:

Leaving Tășuleasa Social (1), following the Roman Road, Via Transilvanica turns left towards Zâmbroaia mountain and the trail continues behind the mountain. The view feels surreal, surrounded by thick spruce trees. From the highest point of the mountain, after passing by some traditional households, the improvised paved road seems to be melting in a smaller one that is ending downhill and on the right in a sudden curve. Going straight on that path, one can notice the majestic mountain Căсарu, with almost feminine curves. By the side of the path there are sheepfolds and meadows but as one

goes on, the households begin to come into signs more and more often, giving the impression of a mountain village, with no name, hidden from the heavy street traffic on DN17. After a descent on the left, among typical houses, for 3 kilometers, next comes a slight downhill portion on an unpaved road, which leads to a crossroad that passes the street. The path turns right, parallel to the road, but at a safe distance from the main road. The path crosses two streams through a thin forest and then the well-known “Valea Străjii” (2) appears in sight, where one can have a hot meal, like the famous tripe soup, and rest for a while. The path goes through Bârgău River Valley, not changing direction, right into the camping site with the same name, which also has some resting places. For around 2 kilometers, the valley is not very spectacular and chances to find some shade from the sun are very small until Blajului Bridge. Then comes an ascent on the left side of the bridge, on the road that is already situated in Mureșenii Bârgăului village. The road signaling lead through yet another small part of the village which includes around 30 meters of asphalt, on the road from where one must turn left, on an unpaved road that goes slightly uphill, slowly getting above the village. Households become less and less frequent and the road turns into a smaller path, people in the area are more curious by nature as the path reaches the top of the hill, at Brazii Buni. From then on, one has 4 more km of slight descent into Bistrița Bârgăului (3) village. On the road, one can admire the lazy settlement that stretches until it touches the mountain that separates it from Colibița Dam.

Info:

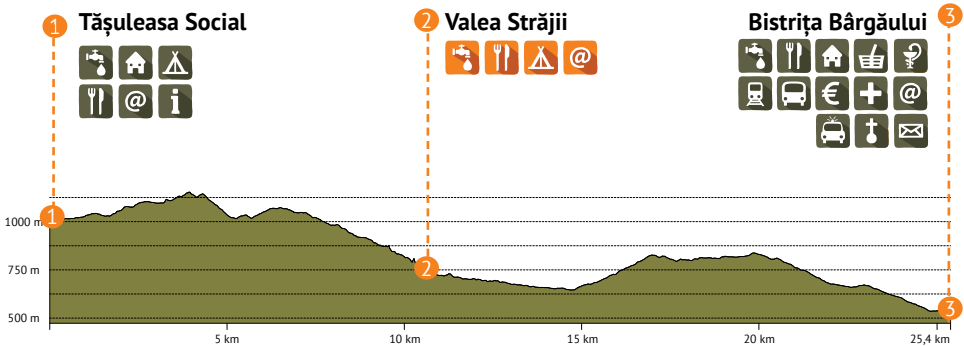
Colibița Dam – Colibița Dam has created the reservoir lake Colibița where one can find an impressive recreation area. The dam built between the 1977 and 1991 for hydropower purposes. Lake Colibița has a surface of 270 hectares, 13km in length and the volume of water reaches 65 million cubic meters and it is situated at 900 m of altitude. The building of the lake is still a subject of controversy, especially in this side of the county,





where people are known for believing in superstitions. Before the 80s, the area was known for its high concentration of ozone and iodine ions, recommended in treating pulmonary and heart diseases. Building the dam led to flooding the village, so it gave birth to a popular legend according to which the lake is cursed, and every year it chooses a person from the swimmers as a victim.

Maria Theresia Road – Via Maria Theresia is a historic road situated in the Călimani Mountains, built hundreds of years ago, to provide the military troops at the frontier of the Austro-Hungarian Empire with ammunition and food. Nowadays, this road connects Bistrița-Năsăud County to Suceava County, but few people know that long ago, it was a frontier road between Transylvania and Bucovina. Besides the historical value, the road also has beautiful natural scenery. Tășuleasa Social has revived 42 kilometers of this road in 2014, properly signaling it for hikers to come all year round. Moreover, Tășuleasa organizes a trail running competition every summer. The trail unfolds beautiful natural and wild views. It proves as well that massive deforestations in our country are a real problem.





WARNING: due to the lack of large towns up to this point of the route, two options are available for the next section, one with and the second without the possibility of passing through a town, namely Bistrița. Thus, Variant A is: **Bistrița Bârgăului - Dorolea - Bistrița - Jeica** and Variant B is: **Bistrița Bârgăului - Petriș - Jeica**.

4

BISTRIȚA BÂRGĂULUI - DOROLEA ROUTE VARIANT A

17 km

4.5 h

Trail: easy

Elevation difference: +490 m

Critical spots: The water supply is important, because for several kilometres, there will be no spring in the way. The trail that separates from Variant B, will also be a more critical one, on which we do not recommend walking at night, due to the danger of wild animals (bears, wild boars). Sun protection and insect repellent is required. Possible encounters of sheep herds with dangerous dogs.

Scenery: From Bistrița Bârgăului, you walk along the Blidăreasa river, uphill, on a gravel road and then on a paved road, among the houses of the locals, until you get out of their shadow in some clearings where landscapes from a picturesque past can be admired. A few dilapidated huts rest in the middle of pastures whose expanse is beyond your sight, the road climbing up the hill to the thick, cool forest. The exit to the hills with mild ascents and descents. Dorolea, a Saxon village with its own charm.

Accommodation:

Dorolea: Elis Pension, 6 accommodation places, access to the kitchen, reservation by phone +40 744 658 148 (Daniela Dumitru), <https://pensiunea-elis.ro>;

Edelweiss Chalet, 5 double rooms, access to kitchen, terrace, reservations by phone +40 735 900 735 (Tea Andreica).

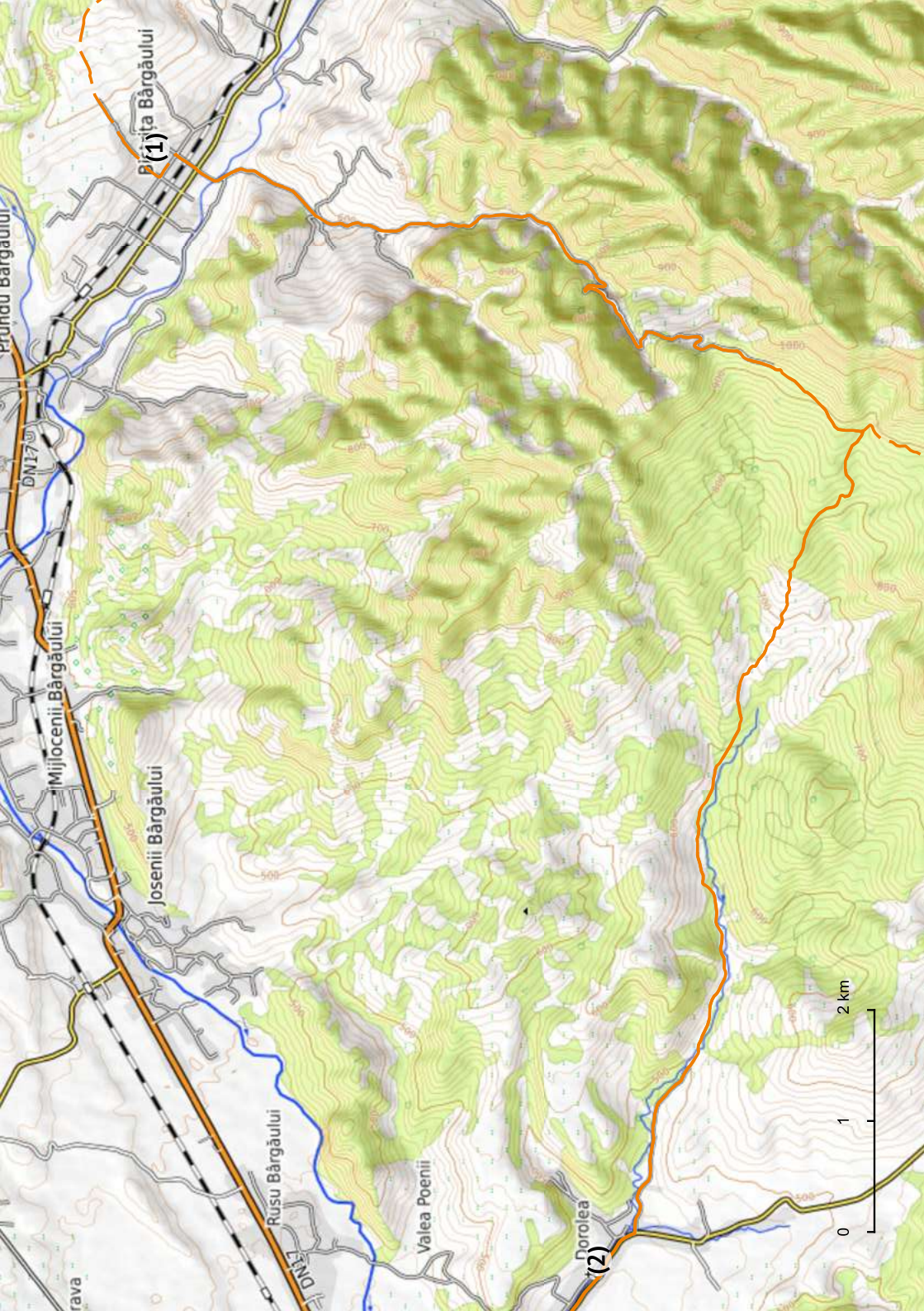
KleinBistritzer Hof, camping place, access to kitchen and toilets, shop nearby. Reservations on tel. +40 744 505 920 (Toni Pal).

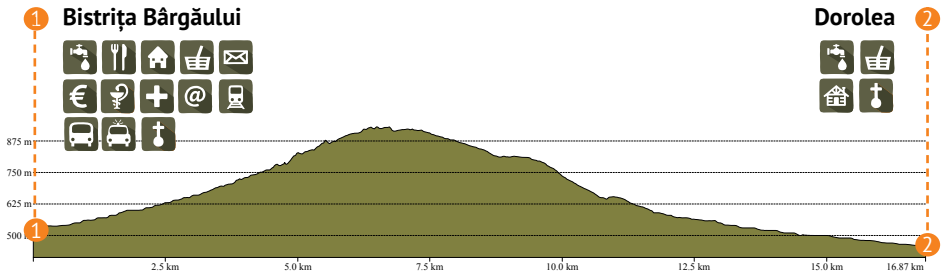
Infrastructure:

Dorolea:    

Note:

From Bistrița Bârgăului (1), from the Ony guesthouse, turn left on the pavement for about 200m, then cross the road and turn right on the bank of the Blidăreasa river for several km, in a slight climb. After leaving the inhabited area, the road passes through some picturesque pas-tures, then enters a thick, cool beech forest. At the entrance to this forest, route B splits off from Variant A, and following the signpost and arrow, turns right down the forest road. Follow-ing the road, go through the forest for about a kilometre, then making a right turn, to a resting spot and a hut, a place that seems to be set up for tourists to go out for a barbecue. You can see all the necessary tools and the place specially prepared for this leisure activity. If this spot is on the left side, a barrier can be seen in front, closed, but the route takes a left turn between the barrier and the barbecue hut. Following the markings, you descend gently down the path and then onto





the dirt road, through scraggly trees that look like part of an orchard, but are oak or beech trees planted perhaps to shade the animals. After a few hundred metres, a cow farm comes into view ahead, and the trail takes a right turn above the barn. The farm's dogs are tethered and other loose animals are not dangerous, you can see donkeys or horses tethered. Then you exit back onto the dirt road and descend to the right into the valley, the bend then going slightly left. The road turns into a nice path, down which one descends gently, towards the valley, surrounded by hills with young forest or scraggly trees, flower meadows and fat grass. Continue on the road with caution, for after a while, and a few bends, a small herd of sheep may come our way. The sheep are few, but the dogs are mean, the shepherd keeps them under control, but they can scare the walkers a little.

Then, going further downhill, among hills and bushes, we will slowly approach the valley that will accompany us on the left side. After a while walking parallel to it, you will have to cross, with caution, even if the water level is very low. This is the area where the herd is grazing, but it is not far to the entrance to the village. The cowherd can ask us a few questions, be friendly and curious, a short break to chat and briefly hydrate can only be welcome.

Then the trail continues on the same dusty road, and descends towards the village, slowly, through fields of moorland, flowers and scrappy trees, of intense and exciting colour, all the way to the village entrance. Here it is best to pay close attention to the old Saxon houses, Dorolea (2) being one of the best preserved in Bistrița-Năsăud County. With a welcome break for supplies at the shop in the centre of the village, continue on asphalt to the two recommended accommodation points, one of which is at the end of Dorolea.

Info:

Dorolea - Dorolea (in Saxon Băstărz, in German Klein-Bistriz, Kleinbistriz, in Hungarian Aszúbeszterce, Kisbeszterce) is a village in the commune of Livezile, in Bistrița-Năsăud county, Transylvania, Romania. This "little Bistrița" is a typical Saxon settlement, with houses on the road, close to each other, still reminiscent of the life of the Saxons, long gone from the village. It is the most picturesque and enlightening rural Saxon settlement in the region. In the middle of the village, on a small promontory, stands the parish church, now an Orthodox parish church, built after the middle of the 19th century (1858-1861) in classicist style. The village is part of a group of three villages with the

same structure and historical development and is a good example of what a frontier village of the Empire was like. The archaeological site is located 1km from the village and can be visited for tourist purposes.



Trail: easy to medium, gravel roads, hill climbs and asphalt. The length of the climb and the asphalt riding may be the reason why this trail has medium difficulty.

Elevation difference: +339m

Critical spots: lack of water on the trail, despite being a short trail, there is a fairly long climb and a short and difficult descent

Scenery: from Dorolea you climb a hill from where the scenery is extremely beautiful, then you walk through the cool forest to the Cocoș (translation: Rooster) slope where there is another spectacular viewpoint and a short steep descent to the outskirts of town, here asphalt to the town.

Accommodation:

Bistrița: Camping Lacul Unirea, camping, terrace, swimming pool, fishing place, restaurant nearby. Reservations at tel. 0747 036 978 (Iuga Daniel).

Hotel Bistrița, 100 places, restaurant, reservations on tel. +40 730 660 837 and +40 263 231 154.

Good to know: Bistrița offers multiple accommodation options, available at all price ranges. However, in case there are no places at the above locations, we suggest searching for other possibilities on the internet. We recommend accommodation to be made as close to the trail as possible, to avoid having walking extra kilometers.

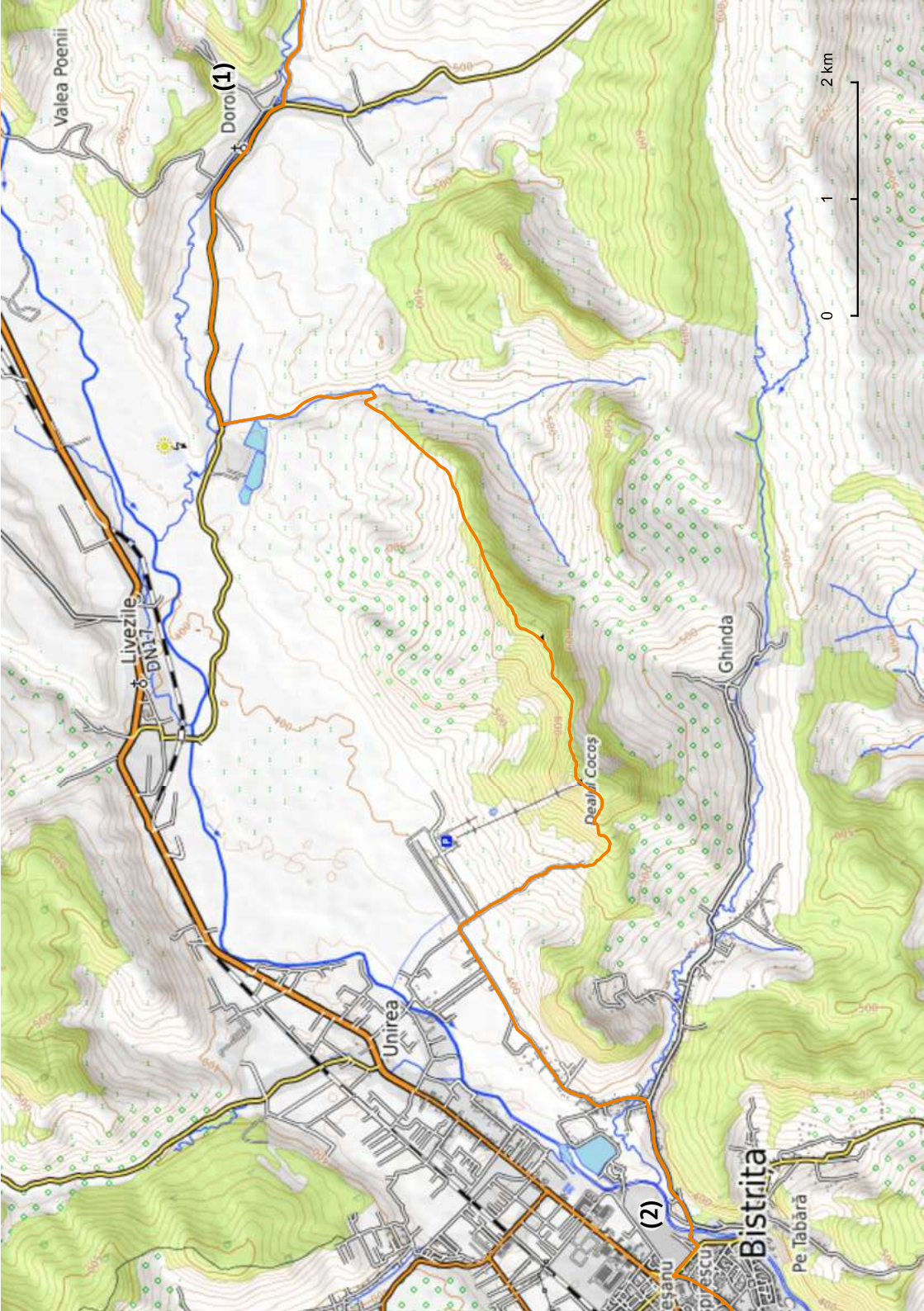
Infrastructure:

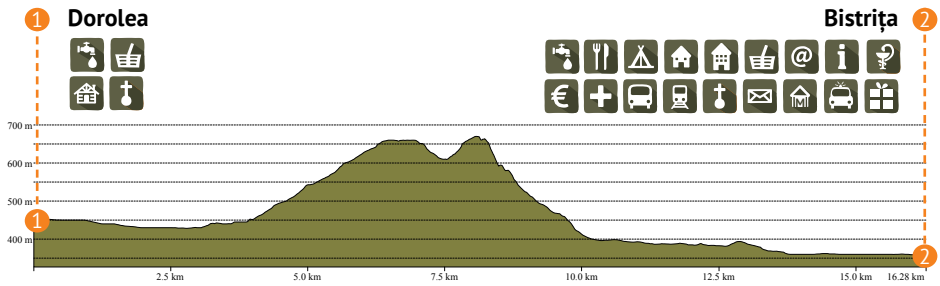
Bistrița: 

Note:

Leaving Dorolea (1) you walk a few kilometers on asphalt with caution, the traffic being quite intense and merciless, passing the last houses of the inhabitants and a Monastery with its buildings under construction. Walk for about 2 kilometres, then cross the road and turn left onto a dusty road still ahead, passing a reservoir, called Lake Dorolea, which remains on the right-hand side. Walking along this road for a while, the lake ends on the right-hand side and slowly a valley opens up, and a hill rises in front, which the trail soon climbs. So, going slightly right, there follows a climb up the hill, still higher and slightly right, towards the cool forest in the distance. Behind, you can see many villages in the Bârgăului Valley, if the visibility is good you can see the whole chain of the Rodnei Mountains and the Țibleș. If we pay attention, we can also see Dorolea and Livezile at the foot of the hill. We walk about a kilometre and a half on the edge of the forest, looking for pleasant shade on hot days, keeping right all the time, in fact following the signs and the path leading into the forest.

Entering the forest, the shade envelops the hiker's heated skin, making the pores turn the skin into goosebumps. The well-defined ridges, the stillness of the forest and the coolness of the not-too-thick, not-too-frequent foliage offer a calm and respite from the long climb. After a few hundred metres, the trail reaches a plateau, or hilltop, still in the forest, from where it's not too long to the next highlight.





Then it goes on to a new climb, which lasts around 700 metres, until it comes out in the clear-ing with the Cocoș Slope, where the view is awe-inspiring to anyone. This is a place where winter sports are practiced, and in summer cycling, mountain biking, ktm and running through the forest. An off-road cycling track can be seen through the surrounding forest, which is used for various competitions.

On one of those trails will be the descent of our route, a very steep and dangerous descent, being the only way out of the trail. Walking sticks can be very useful at this point, and extreme caution will be required in the rain. The descent takes about 500 metres until you reach a fence with an entrance on the right, towards the Bistrița Lions Club Century-Old Pear Trees Park. Here you cross the park with centuries-old pear trees, you can also take a break at the specially arranged benches and tables, and then descend, always to the left, towards the shepherds' hut at the foot of the hill. Pass in front of it, and then go forward, still straight ahead, with the large building on the right-hand side, to the asphalt road. From here, to the left, for about 4 kilometres, on the marked path, you reach the centre of Bistrița (2), a town that has much to offer to the hikers who wish to discover its treasures.

Info:

Parcul cu peri seculari Lions (translation: The Lions Club Park with century-old Pear Trees)

- The Century-old Pear Trees Park is a very special place. The Park was created thanks to a custom of the Saxons of Unirea, who each had to work four days a year to tend and plant the trees. Lions volunteers together with their partners - Harta Verde Romania and Ruralis Association have redeveloped the place, surveyed the surroundings and continue to take care of the park. They say the pear trees are so old that of the 28 varieties found here, only three could be accurately identified. Our friend Eng. Mihai Bilegan explained "There are so many things to study about these pear trees, you can never go home...". Surely hikers on the Via Transilvanica will find this a perfect place for a well-deserved break!

Bistrița - Bistrița, one of the seven Saxon fortresses in Transylvania, is a charming town with an interesting history, which can still be read from the architectural style of many buildings and complexes, still preserved intact.

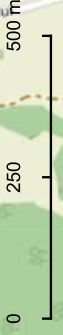
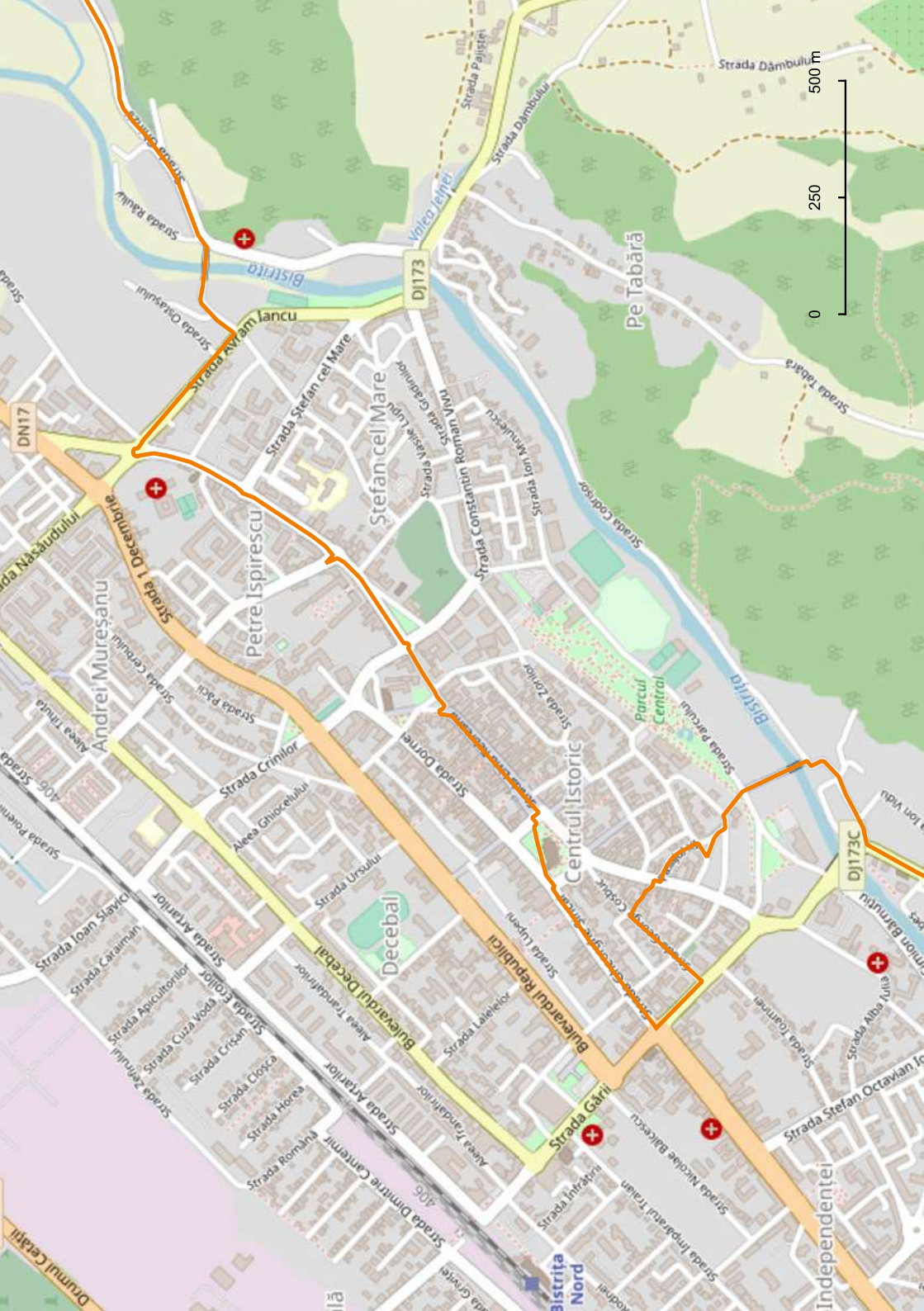
The Evangelical Church - an emblem of Bistrița, located in the centre of the town, is an architectural monument representative of the transition from the Gothic to the Renaissance style in Transylvania. The 75m high church tower is the tallest medieval tower in Romania, slightly taller than the tower of the Evangelical Cathedral in Sibiu. The visitor can go up to the church tower by elevator (visiting hours: Wednesday - Friday: 13.00 - 16.00, Saturday: 10.00 - 16.00, Sunday: 12.00 - 16.00) and admire the panorama of Bistrița.



Sugăletele - Opposite the church, the hiker can walk under the Sugălete complex, where once was the heart of trade in the old village. The historic monument in the central square has housed merchants from all over Europe over the years, with separate rooms for each guild, covered by a vaulted ceiling that has become a symbol of the medieval town.

Dogar's Tower - Equally interesting to see is the Dogars Tower, another representative place for Bistrița. The Dogars Tower (in German Fassbinderturm) in Bistrița is part of the fortifications of the medieval fortress of Bistrița, being the only one that has survived of the 18 towers that formed the fortress. In the past, it was used as a hospital for the mentally ill, but also as a place of detention for prostitutes, who were put in chains before being held at the pillar of infamy in the central square, where the city's goatherds would whip them with whips before being chased out of the fortress with brooms by the venerable women of the city. Later, the tower also served other purposes, functioning as a headquarters for the Bistrița scouts and then as a night asylum. At present, the Dogars' Tower houses a unique gallery of puppets and masks including about 700 exhibits created by Baron Alexandru Misiuga. Bistrița is a pleasant city, inviting you to stroll through the old centre, through narrow and mysterious passages, through the ingeniously landscaped central park and along the quiet streets or boulevards shaded by lime trees. Bistrița is a lively little town, there is always something going on, a medieval festival, a concert in the courtyard of the Dogars' Tower, a film screening or a craft fair in the old centre.

Casa Argintarului - The Silver House is an architectural monument in Bistrița from the early Renaissance. An architectural monument from the early 16th century, it was the former home of a great jeweller who embellished its façade (between 1560-1563) with stone Renaissance-style frames by the Swiss architect Petrus Italus. The Silversmith's House is located at number 5 Dornei Street.



500 m

250

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Strada Tabără

Strada Codru

Strada Șoselei

Strada Dâmbovului

Strada Dâmbovului

Strada Pajulei

Pe Tabără

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Andrei Mureșanu

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DJ173C

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Centrul Istoric

Decebal

Bucuresti Republicii

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Independentei

Bistrița Nord

Drumul Ceibal

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Andrei Mureșanu - Andrei Mureșanu is one of the most famous personalities of Bistrița. He was born in 1818 and died in 1863 in Brasov. He was a great Romanian poet, writer and philosopher, who studied in Blaj. He is best known as the author of the lyrics of the national anthem "Deșteaptă-te române", whose music was composed by Anton Pann.

Andrei Mureșanu Memorial House - The city of Bistrița is known as the city of the national anthem. The Memorial House is the place where the author spent his childhood, being a house inherited from his grandparents. The building is quite old, dating back to the beginning of the 19th century, following the classical Romanian construction model. It is the kind of architecture that perfectly complements the structure and architecture of the town as it was conceived at that time. Since 1984, a library has been housed inside this house. The house is located at 19 Andrei Mureșanu Street and can be visited. (Visiting hours: Monday - Friday: 08:00 - 16:00, Saturday - Sunday: Closed).

The Bistrița-Nasaud Museum Complex - County Museum is located at 19 Grigore Balan Street. The current location is the former Habsburg barracks built at the end of the 19th century and used as a castle building. The building was built in the same style as the building of the County Museum of the Border Regiment in Caransebeș, in the same period, the two being sister buildings, but the one in Bistrița was renovated and maintained in a much better state. The space is generous and houses valuable and interesting collections for any history enthusiast. Moreover, in the courtyard of the museum there is an old wooden church from the 17th century. The museum also has two houses representative of the vernacular architecture of the region, one from the mountain area, from Șanț, and another representative of the plain area, from Archiud. In the museum you can see collections ranging from archaeology to contemporary art, not to mention the rich collection of ethnography. Visiting hours are as follows: Mondays are closed all the time, and the rest of the days are closed according to the season, October-March: 9am-5pm April-September: 10am-6pm.

Bistrița Synagogue - The Bistrița Synagogue is a Jewish place of worship in Bistrița, located at 10 General Grigore Bălan Street. It was built in 1856 and in 2015 it was declared a historical monument. According to the 1930 census, the mosaic community in Bistrița numbered 2,198 believers, representing 15.55% of the city's total population. After the deportation of the Jews to the Nazi extermination camps in May 1944, but also as a result of the massive emigration to the USA and Israel during the communist regime, the synagogue fell into disrepair. Later it was restored and is now one of the important places in the city for cultural events, among which the Bistrița Poetry Festival is worth mentioning. This festival happens every year, usually in July, and brings together poets from the country and beyond, who meet in Bistrița for a few days with and about poetry. There is a large (and happy) concentration of good and internationally known writers in the county. Among them, we mention Dan Coman, Marin Mălaicu-Hondrari, Ioana Nicolae, Alexandru Uiuuiu, Ion Mureșan etc.

Ada Milea - We don't think there is anyone in our country who hasn't enjoyed listening to an Ada Milea concert, or who hasn't gone to one of the plays for which Ada composed the music: Sânziana and Pepelea, Chirița in Concert or Svejka. Ada Milea is one of the oldest and best friends of our organisation Tășuleasa Social and has been taking part in our actions since the beginning. Ada Milea is a singer, songwriter and actress, known for her unique style. She graduated from high school at the "Liviu Rebreanu" National College in Bistrița. She has released memorable albums: Absurdistan, Apolodor, Nasul, Quijote, Insula, etc, which have delighted people over the years! Everyone loves Ada Milea! Starting with us at Tășuleasa Social.

Trail: easy to medium, gravel roads, hill climbs and asphalt. Walking on asphalt may be the reason why this route has medium difficulty.

Elevation difference: +486m

Critical spots: lack of water on the trail, but it passes through localities where water can be requested from the locals; correct water supply in case of hot weather;

Scenery: from Bistrița up a hill from where the landscape is extremely beautiful, then a long walk up the hill and then down the valley, on asphalt through Monariu, short visit to recharge batteries at the PIPO animal shelter in Monariu; then forest, asphalt, Mărișelu with asphalt, Râpa cu Păpuși (translation: The Ravine with Dolls) and long, dusty road with open landscape to Jeica.

Accommodation:

Mărișelu: at the parochial house and the locals, if you call beforehand at +40 769 825 051 (Father Aurelian);

Jeica:

Accommodation at the Parish, 10 beds, breakfast and dinner on request, access to kitchen, WI-FI, landline phone, inner courtyard next to the church), with prior reservation on +40 752 341 078.

Accommodation at the locals: with breakfast and dinner on request, booking in advance on +40 741 050 569 (Hunyadi Ilona), +40 748 433 636 (Bezsnei Magdolna), +40 740 666 063 (Mr Stanciu).

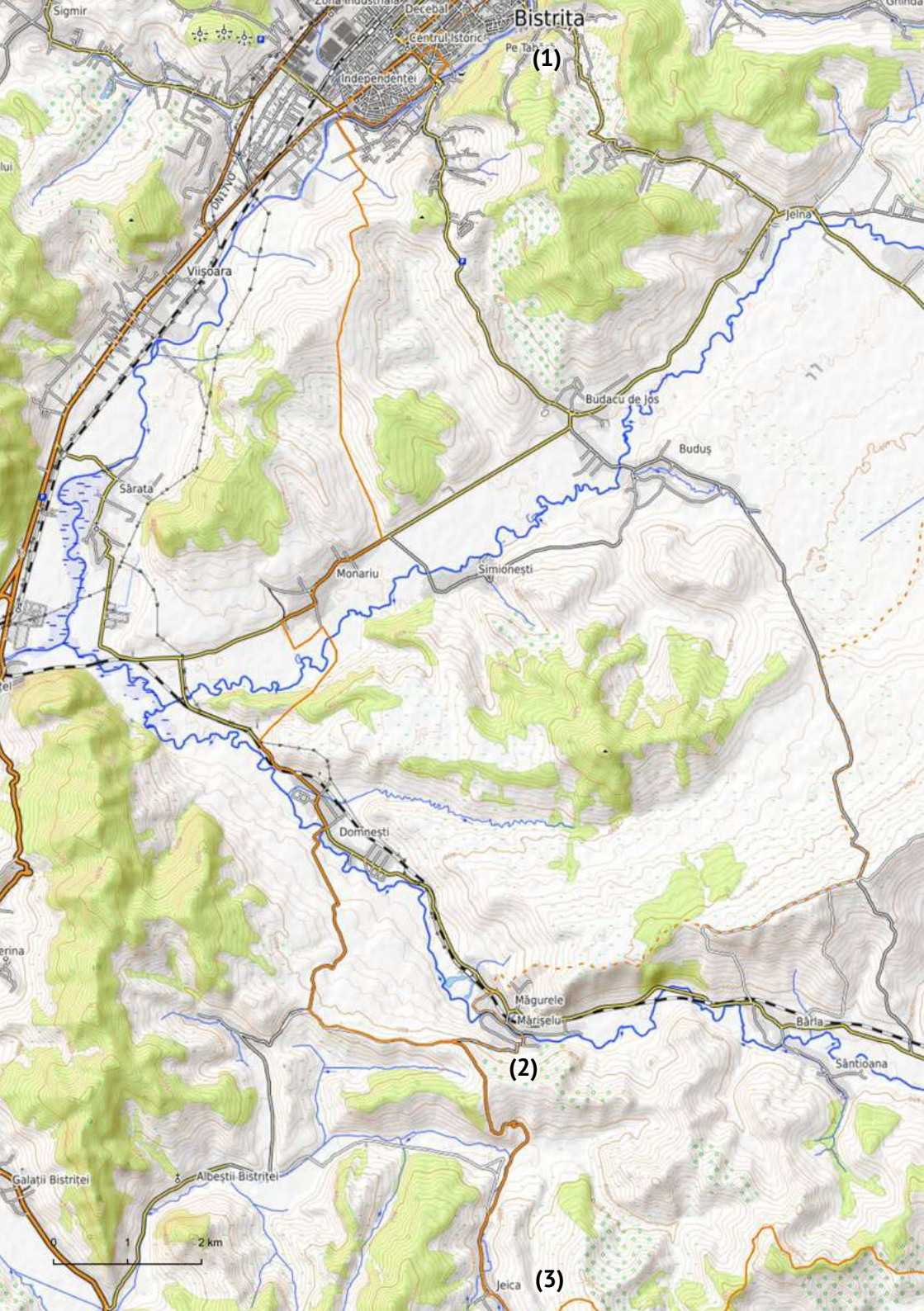
Infrastructure:

Mărișelu: 

Jeica: 

Note:

Because the day before the trail was rather short, it is recommended to visit the city at the points recommended in the Guide or any other points of tourist interest, as Bistrița is easy to visit and has so much to offer. After a tour of the city or its sights, the trail slowly climbs out of the city towards Dealul Budacului (The Hill of Budacu), leaving behind the last neighbourhoods built as far as possible in nature, outside the city, walking on asphalt in a gentle climb. After the climb of 2 kilometres and a bit, the trail turns sharply right, onto a paved road, past a small forest at the top of the hill. Follow this road as it skirts around the forest, keeping to the right, until it comes out at a superb viewpoint at the bottom of the hill. Ahead lies the whole town with its buildings, blocks, houses, a place where you can admire the urban landscape for minutes on end. The trail then turns to the left, intertwining with a motocross competition track, walking along the edge of it or even on it for a while. Then, past the trail's trampolines, leaving them behind you still walk past a hedge of shrubs and wild rose bushes, keeping slightly to the left until the trail turns into that grassy path delicious to the hiker's foot. If up to this point, one or more vil-lages could be seen on the right, the road takes a slight turn to the left, and

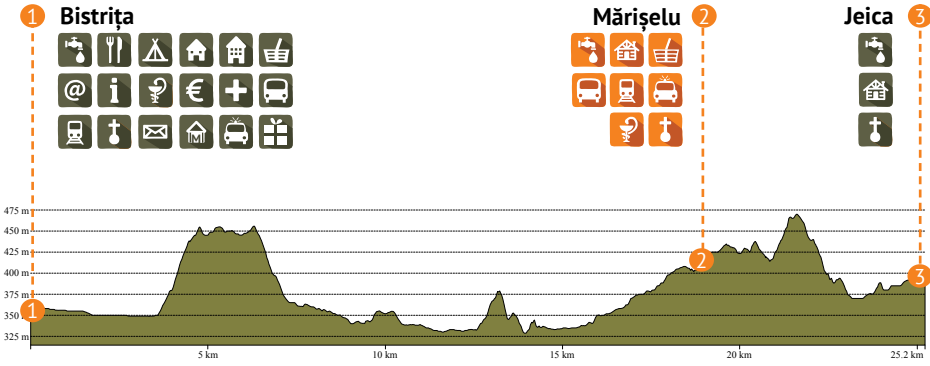


(1)

(2)

(3)

ahead, leaving a hill to block the landscape on the right, but opening the view to the left where the Călimani Mountains keep appearing and disappearing through the clouds and into the valley, Jelna, Budacu de Jos, Simionești show themselves in full force. Here there is a farmhouse, which also has two dogs, one of which quite aggressive, but getting out of its range, one can continue the trail normally and uninterrupted. The hiker will begin to hide among the hills, having walked some of the way to the top, beginning to descend into a valley that is straight as the palm, with meadows or pastures on the right and left. Still going forward, Monariu can be seen from a distance already, and the goal is to reach the road. Once you reach the main road, turn right on the markings, paying attention to the traffic on the road, which is sometimes very busy. After about one and a half kilometres, turn left towards the Pipo animal shelter, a partner organisation of our association, which teaches us a lot about appropriate behaviour with sheepdogs, strays and wild animals. Here, if there are willing, recharging personal energy can be done by walking the shelter's dogs, pausing to play with them for an hour or hydrating and listening to the story of these lovely people who dedicate their time and lives to the souls of the unwanted around us. Then, with joy in our hearts, batteries recharged, hydrated and in good spirits, we can continue the trail that leaves the shelter to the left and goes a little ahead, then left again and finally right towards the bridge that crosses the Budac river. After the bridge, keeping the road slightly to the right, the markings will indicate a slight climb to the left towards the forest, through which you pass and exit into a clearing from where you will descend, slightly to the right, past a farm-house, towards the main road leading to Domnești. Then walk along the side of the road, still with great caution, until you pass by the Râpa cu Păpuși, a well-known place among the inhabitants of Bistrita, famous for the geological formations on the rock walls. Then you enter Domnești, and after a while you take the road that goes right towards Nețeni. You walk on this road for about 4 kilometres, a dusty, paved road, with bushes on both sides, with hills and pastures all around, but from which you can see the whole of the Călimani chain at a certain point, and the landscapes are plain, but pleasant to look at. Reaching the crest of the hill at some point, you can also see Mărișelu (2) and other villages in the area, the trail being higher up, and offering excellent visibility. After this, the road intersects with another road that climbs to the right towards Jeica, the village where today's route is due to end, to which you walk for more than 2 kilometres from the junction of the two. So, going right uphill, after a few serpentines, you reach the top, from where you can see the small village of Jeica (3), tucked away at the bottom of the valley. On the pleasant descent you walk down to it and feel the welcoming atmosphere of the



small Hungarian village, where people are few but all the better hosts. And so another day ends on the Via Transilvanica.

Info:

Pipo Animals, Monariu: When hiking along the Via Transilvanica, rather than encountering the bear, many hikers have the problem of encountering the sometimes fierce dogs at the sheepfolds. In this guide you will find a lot of useful information and useful tips on how to behave in such situations, but also in contexts where humans become dangerous to dogs (when a disoriented dog goes after travellers and gets too far from home to return and is then left to its own devices). Tășuleasa Social has thought of a partnership with a dear new association, Pipo Animals, where veterinarian Toni Varga and his team of dedicated people and hearty volunteers take care of abandoned animals, especially dogs and cats. We made a point of hiking to Monariu, where both the old and new shelters (built to modern standards, in a big way) are located. It's an opportunity for hikers to talk to people who know about dog behaviour very well. It is an opportunity for the hiker to see the extent of the homeless dogs issue. And the coolest thing is that hikers will be able to interact with the animals, whose sincere kindness can heal any pains of the hike.

Râpa cu Păpuși - The Ravine with Dolls (natural monument) is a protected area of national interest. The nature reservation has been declared a protected area and covers an area of 2 hectares. It is an almost vertical wall of compact sands with layers of marly clays, sandstones, marls and multiple concretionary sandstones of different shapes (that look like dolls, animal heads, mushrooms) and sizes.



Trail: high difficulty caused by the length of the route

Elevation difference: +419m

Critical spots: The hikers must carry more water, because one will not find any springs on their way for approx. 8km. For the section of the route before Cușma until the descent from Dealu' Negru we do not recommend any passing through it during the night, as there is great risk of coming across wild animals (bears, wild boars).

Scenery: From Bistrița Bârgăului, one ascends along the Blidăreasa river, on asphalt road and then on the causeway, winding through the locals' households, until one steps out of their shadows and enters some forest glades which seem to be taken out from a picturesque past. Some tumbledown huts rest in the middle of the meadows, which you cannot entirely observe, as the road ascends the hill, towards the thick and chilly forest. Many kilometers through the forest with smooth uphill and downhill.



Accommodation:

Cușma: Information to be updated.

Petriș: *Casa Țărănească* lodging, 8 beds, bed and breakfast and dinner, with booking by phone number: +40 752 538 138 (Gavril Oltean); available during the whole year, equipped with washing machine and dryer, kitchen, terrace and TV;

Ferma Agrotouristic Guesthouse, 14 beds, breakfast and dinner on request, booking in advance at tel. 0747 864 397 (Crina Tarniță);

Accommodation with locals with breakfast and dinner on request, by prior reservation at tel. 0771 644 385 (Marius and Geta Tiniș), Petriș nr.98.

Local gastronomic point La Mări, reservations on tel. 0754 700 118, (Florina Curean).

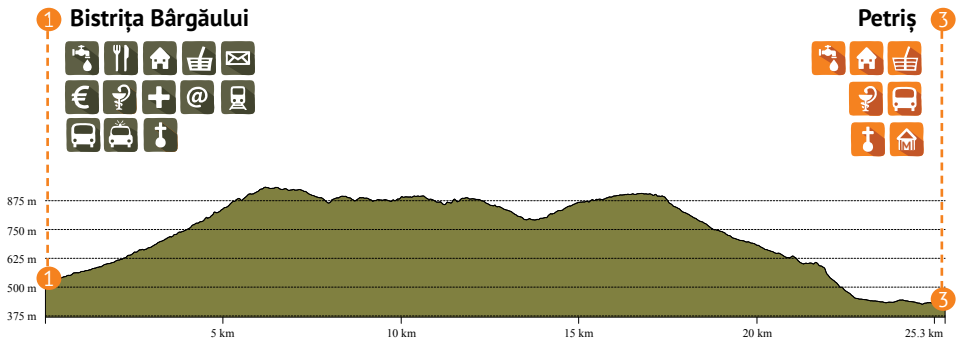
Infrastructure:

Cușma: 

Petriș: 

Note:

In Bistrița Bârgăului (1), from the Ony lodging, one turns left on the sidewalk and walks around 200 meters, then crosses the street and turns right on the shore of Blidăreasa river, for few kilometers, in a slight ascending. After exiting the inhabited area, the road crosses some picturesque meadows and afterwards it enters a thick and chilly beech-tree forest. Few kilometers further, the road commences to slightly descend, after which it ascends again and it continues this pattern, up to the proximity of Dealu' Negru. When seeing the Cușma (2) sign, the ones who wish to end the day can look for accommodation among the locals in Cușma and thus, they will walk about 2km to the village. If one wants to continue the travel, one walks further and follows the VT signs, crossing a bridge. Afterwards, the ascending road continues up to the belvedere point at the peak of Dealu' Negru. In the distance, one can observe multiple villages, the town of Bistrița, and even fragments of distant mountains, such as Țibleș. On the right side of the road towards Petriș (3) one can observe two heliports, which lay there ever since the time of the dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu, who eagerly came here to hunt. Further, the Dealu' Negru forest hut stays on the right side, one passes in front of the gate of Ceaușescu's cottage (which is now private) and one descends towards the Petriș village. On these paths in



the forest, you can often find bear footmarks and also, in forest glade, the earth can be loosened by the wild boars. You can also come across sheepfolds together with their shepherds (some of them being very friendly), who already know about the traveling of the hikers across those regions. After 4km of slight descending, one arrives at the first kilometer stone at the entrance of Petriș village, after which the indicators lead through the heart of the lowland village, with its generous locals, an old wooden church, wells, stores, the old Evangelical Church and former Saxon houses, which have an astonishing architecture. At the exit of the village, on the left side, right next to the last kilometer stone, there is the "Casa Țărănească" lodging. In case all the accommodation beds are occupied in this lodging, the locals offered to welcome and accommodate the hikers for the night. The local specialties are sheep cheese ("caș" in Romanian) and whey cheese ("urdă" in Romanian), the local wine (Jelna – this wine cellar can be visited at just 2km away), pork fat ("slănină"), the onion and the aromatic home-grown tomatoes. You shouldn't miss all of this food when passing by.

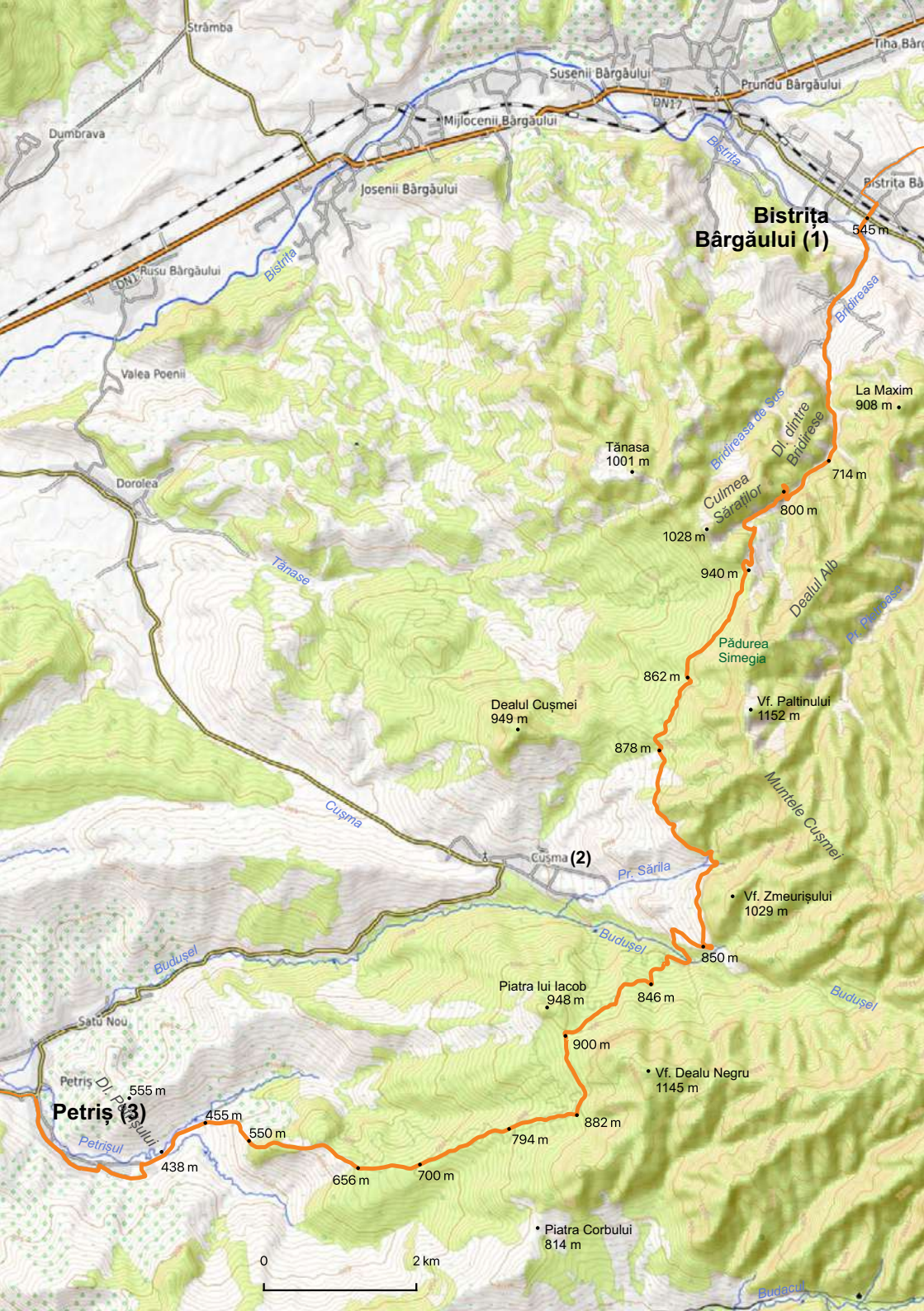
Info:

The Hut of Dealu' Negru (Ceașescu's hut) – The Hut of Dealu' Negru was built in a very short time during the 80s, at the demand of the dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu, who had just found out that the region was famous in Europe for its high concentration of brown bears. One of the factors that attract these bears is the presence of fruit trees: apples trees and pear trees, which were planted there during the Saxon time in România. Close to the hut, there are three heliports. Ceaușescu has used the largest heliport when he came to hunt, and the other two of them were destined for the Securitate. Nowadays, the area has the same purpose, namely the hunting, even for foreigners, and the area is appreciated for the way it is arranged.

The wooden church of Petriș – This is a historical monument, built most probably in 1748 and it has Saint Ilie (Elias) as Patron. The locals of Ilva Mare village donated the church to the Petriș community in 1900. Until that moment, the locals of Petriș had not had a church. One can reach this church traveling on our road. From the indicator, in slight ascending, one passes a garden (which has a nut tree in front of the gate) and a graveyard.

The bell tower of the Evangelical Church – The gothic church dates from the 15th century; the bell tower was built at approx. 20m southeast from the church, between 1820 and 1822. The stone carving on the dulcimer of the west portal, representing The Mother of the Skies with Jesus Christ, has an indescribable value. Many Saxons were living in the village, until the evacuation to Austria in September 1944 and the return of a large of them in 1945. After their return, came their expropriation, the coercive work in concentration camps, the loss of their civil rights (until 1950), and finally the communist oppression. However, they reconstituted a strong German community. After 1970, their emigration mostly to Germany takes place. The Evangelical Church has been sold to the Orthodox community and it has been renovated with the financial help of the Saxons from Germany

The beam of the master (house) – The Saxon architectural custom, which one can observe at the houses of many villages in Transylvania, was to build a beam above the entrance of the house, carved with the name of the family and the year in which it was built. Moreover, the writings that can still be seen, even today, include religious references, thanks to those who brought help in the building of the house, quotes or urges.



Trail: easy-medium difficulty, unpaved roads, hilly paths and a little bit of asphalt. The length of the trail might be the reason why this route is considered to have a medium difficulty

Elevation difference: +403m

Critical spots: lack of springs and wells from Orheiu Bistriței until Mărișelu (for approx. 15km), passing through the forest after sunset is NOT recommended.

Scenery: after leaving Petriș and passing through Orheiu Bistriței and then through the base of a hill called Măgura, the road crosses a scenery composed of lowland villages followed by flat fields, covered by cereal and corn crops and oak forests (Pădurea de Șes) planted by the Saxons for their animals to have shade. From the Măgura peak, you will have visibility towards the villages in the area.

Accommodation:

Mărișelu: at the parochial house and the locals, if you call beforehand at +40 769 825 051 (Father Aurelian);

Ardan, Pension Rosenhof, 10 beds, dinner and breakfast on request traditional food, we provide transport to and from the route (**between Petriș and Monor**). Reservations at tel. +40 744 798 433 (Nicu Predescu) <https://rosenhof.ro/>;

Jeica:

Accommodation at the Parish, 10 beds, breakfast and dinner on request, access to kitchen, WI-FI, landline phone, inner courtyard next to the church), with prior reservation on +40 752 341 078;

Accommodation at the locals: with breakfast and dinner on request, booking in advance on +40 741 050 569 (Hunyadi Ilona), +40 748 433 636 (Bezsnei Magdolna), +40 740 666 063 (Mr Stanciu).





Petriș (1)

Orheiul Bistritei (2)

Mărișelu (3)

Jeica (4)



Infrastructure:

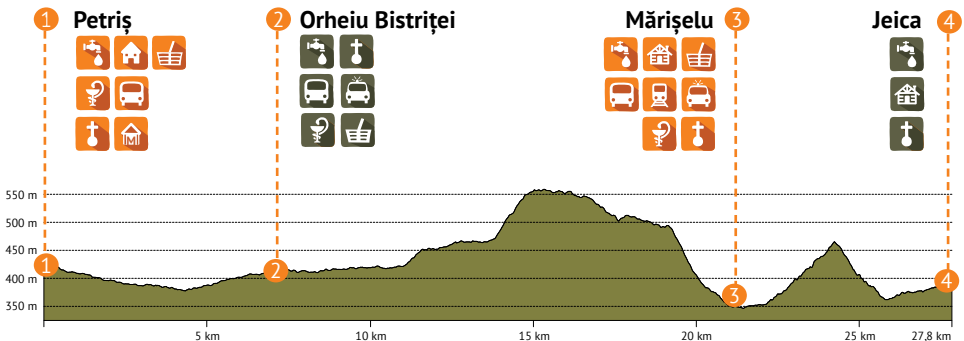
Orheiu Bistriței: 

Mărișelu: 

Jeica: 

Note:

At the exit of Petriș (1), one will pass in front of a VT kilometer stone, leaving it on the left side. After that, one will pass an unpaved road, crossing twice a small river. Before the second crossing, the road takes a left turn in the intersection, and if looking ahead, one will find Jelna Wine Cellar (for eventual visits you must announce beforehand). After the second crossing of the river and 20 m on the left, there will be a road hidden by the cornfield, which is the Via Transilvanica trail. This road will cross Orheiu Bistriței village (2), among houses and the village's center, where there is a 600 year-old oak next to the school. Exiting the village, still between crops, after approx. one kilometer, one has to turn right and cross the asphalt road, going towards Pădurea de Șes (The Lowland Forest). From there on, the trail will go through a flat field for approx. two kilometers. After that there will be an intersection and an ascent on an unpaved road to the left, on Măgura hill. In the summer time, the meadow around is full of cowherds. When one arrives on the top of the hill, the paved road will be left and our path will turn right, leaving the next kilometer stone behind, on the left side. The ridge of the hill is crossed by several meters of asphalt, which descends at some point on the left side to Bârla village. One must NOT descend on this road but has to continue straight on the grass path, following the hill's ridge. After two kilometers, the road passes through a deciduous forest, and from its ending, one will arrive at another hill peak from where it can be observed the next kilometer stone. The hills are so smooth that, in some places, a person can manage to see the next kilometer stone, which is one kilometer away. Descending to Mărișelu (3) one will pass the village's edge until the next kilometer stone. After a while, between houses, on an easy descending, the road takes a right turn, towards a crosswalk, on the asphalted road. After that, there will be a railroad and the road will go through Mărișelu village, in front of the police, the church, the stores, and bars, crossing a bridge on the road that goes to Jeica (4). After a winding road of two kilometers, ascending,



from the kilometer stone one can see a small village, hidden in the valley. Descending easily, towards the village, after one kilometer, one will enter the village between typical Hungarian and Saxon houses. In the middle of the village, there is a Lutheran church and a monument that certifies the village from 1332.

Info:

Pădurea de Șes (The Lowland Forest) – This forest is, firstly, important because it represents a nature reserve for the Snake's Head flower (*Fritillaria meleagris*). It is an old forest of oak trees from the Saxon times as the old men say and which has something unique compared to other forests. Even though it is not a large forest (only 8.5 ha) it manages to outline a spectacular landscape. The forest has been planted by the Saxons for their animals to have enough shade.

Snake's head – is a very rare plant, from the tulip family, which, unfortunately, is on the list of endangered species. In România, snake's head is commonly found in Bistrița-Năsăud County, in Orheiul Bistriței, in Pădurea de Șes, area, which is protected by law. It also grows in other counties such as Gorj, Timiș and Maramureș, where the humidity is high. The flower blossoms in April.

Laleaua Pestiță Festival – After the end of snake's flowering season, in May, the local community organizes every year a rural feast where people of all ages gather around to celebrate, listen folk music, and enjoy nature's beauty.



Trail: easy, well-marked, hilly and passes through a forest, crosses an asphalt road before flattening out with slight ups and downs.

Elevation difference: +713m

Critical spots: After leaving the Bârgaieilor (Bistrița Bârgăului) area into the lowlands, you enter a hunting area. When walking through the forests, you need to pay more attention to wildlife. Caution is also required for sheep dogs, when approaching either sheepfolds or cow herds.

Scenery: On this route, the landscape is wild, passing through dense forests and crossing hills that can rise over 600m, with peaks that allow a 360 degrees view.

Accommodation:

Posmuș: Accommodation is with locals with prior reservation: Tel: +40 760 749 526 (Ivan Mihai Pavel);

Șieuf: *Agro Tourism Guesthouse - Maria*, 10 beds, prices starting with 50 lei/person, the possibility of a hot meal, services (TV, terrace, courtyard), availability all year round, with prior reservation: Tel: +40 751 110 204 (Cotoc Marian);

Cabana Creangu, (2km away from Pensiunea Maria), 10 beds, services (terrace, courtyard), availability all year round, with prior reservation: tel: +40 751 110 204 (Cotoc Marian);

Gledin: Go to Gledin, Parish no. 242 (in the churchyard), 23 beds, breakfast, the possibility of a hot meal, with prior reservation: Tel: +40 763 697 883 (Father Ion Titieni).

Gledin gastronomic point, serving meals for 12 people, reservation on +40 766 623 933 (Maria Moldovan) and +40 766 623 654 (Cornel Moldovan).

Infrastructure:

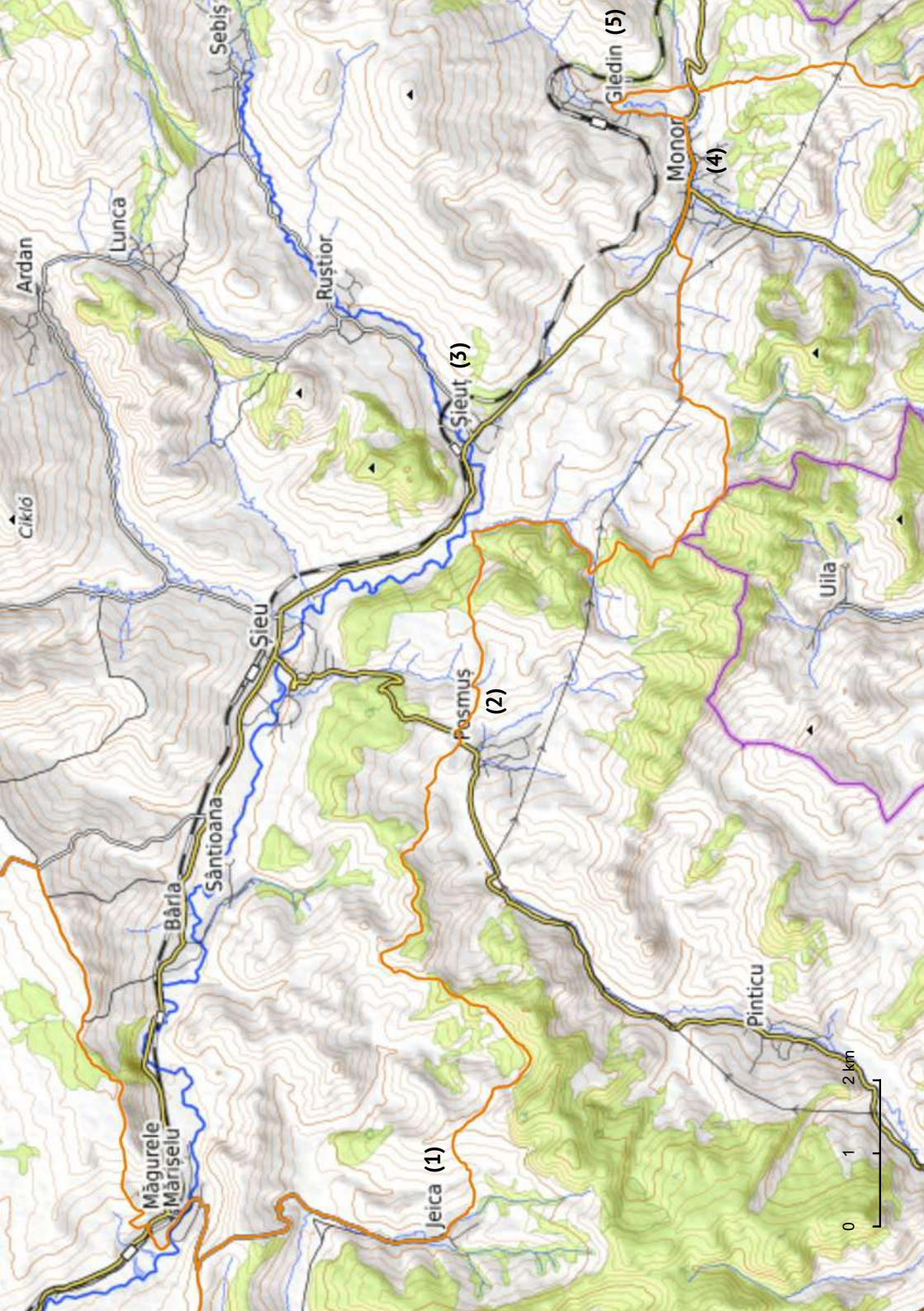
Posmuș: 

Șieuf: 

Monor: 

Note:

After passing the kilometer stone in front of the church in Jeica (1), cross the bridge on the left and then go right up the hill, continuing in the village where you will find the last houses on the left. You will see that the Via Transilvanica trail continues through a field furrowed with cereals and corn fields with a slight ascent. The kilometer stones will become more and more visible in the distance. From the ridge of the first hill, the trail heads right and follows a path on the edge of the forest and, from time to time, goes in and out of the forest. The forest is deep, quiet and mysterious with old, secular beech trees. When leaving the forest, the road heads to the next landmark at the foot of a hill before climbing back to the edge of the forest again. The next kilometer stone stands at the entrance to the forest as the trail follows the tree line to the right. After entering a thicket, in about 500 m, you will enter and cross the forest before exiting out into an apple orchard. The path descends onto an existing road and, after about 50 m on the left, you will find a high earth mound deeply marked by the road where at the top there is a cross-shaped spruce tree. You leave the mound behind and arrive at another peak. As you go down the valley to the village of Posmuș (2), you head towards the old castle (the imposing castle on Count Teleky, which has already been visible for a long time) on a smaller road, between the houses scattered along the main country road. From



Măgurele
Mărișelu

Băria

Sântioana

Șieu

Căkló

Lunca

Sebis

Ruștior

Jeca (1)

Posmuș (2)

Șieu (3)

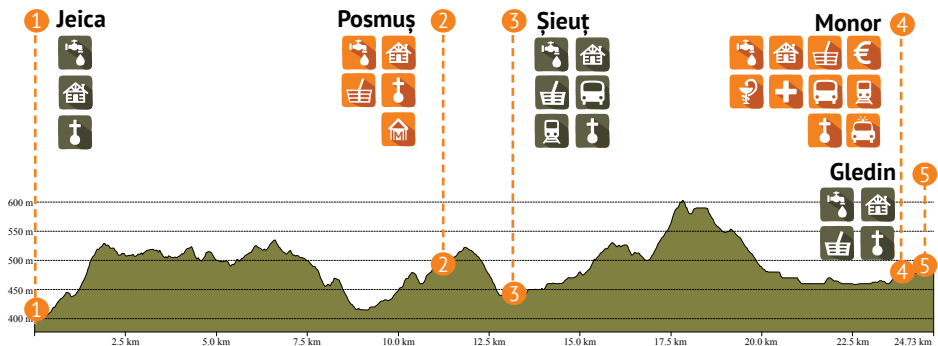
Pinticu

Ujila

Monor (4)

Gledin (5)

0 1 2 km



one of the kilometer stones you can see the asphalt road, where, after a short distance, you turn left with your back to Teleky castle. After 30m, cross and leave the road and continue up a slight climb over the hills. Once you encounter the first kilometer stone, the path descends slightly in a left curve, which leads to a bridge that crosses a stream. Cross the bridge and follow the path to the right into a slight ascent that follows the curve of the hill. Once you reach the edge of the forest, pass the kilometer stone and head right, after which a 4km descent begins on a forest road. The Maria guesthouse is less than 200 m away. To Șieuț (3), continue from the Maria guesthouse and take the first road on the right through a forest until you meet another Via Transilvanica kilometer stone. Turn left and follow the main road until you pass a private building on your right where you will see the Creangu Chalet in front of you that offers accommodation. Next, the route continues to the left until you leave the forest. Here, follows the edge of the forest to the left for a few hundred meters. The forest will remain behind you as you continue. Cross the hill from which you will start to see the landmarks in the distance and, once on top of the hill, follow the path for a few hundred meters before descending slightly to the left towards the edge of the village which is marked by a fence (the passage between the Șieuț and Monor). Continue past the corner of the fence and cross a stone path that climbs to the right. Continue straight ahead descending slightly into a green pasture. Looking to the right you can already see the roofs of several houses in Monor. After a slight descent on the cart track, you will see to the right the electricity poles and a gateway of several alder trees, which separates a pasture from the rest of the surrounding hill. Walk through this and follow the direction of the electric wires until you approach the entrance to the village. You then turn left onto a cobbled path, bypassing the hill in front. Not long after, making a right turn, you reach Monor (4), where there are some village shops, pharmacy, bank, food market. Crossing the village on the pavement, after about 1.7 km you reach a crossroads where you turn left. This is where the village of Gledin (5) begins, and after another 500 m you reach the Orthodox Church in the village where the stage ends.

Info:

Jeica – Jeica, formerly Șeica, Șelca (in the Saxon dialect Sälk, Schalk, in German Schelken, Schelk, in Hungarian Zselyk) is a village in Mărișelu area in Bistrița-Năsăud County, Transylvania, Romania, which was documented in 1332. In the 19th century, the village had a population of 800 inhabitants, mainly Hungarian, but this decreased drastically especially during the communist period due to deportations. Since 1981, neither the kindergarten nor the school has been operating. Today, about 90 people over the age



of 70, of Hungarian ethnicity, live in Jeica. Hidden in a valley with a beautiful Lutheran church and a parish house, over a century and a half old, located on a hill in the center of the village, Jeica is an oasis of tranquility, waiting to be discovered and enjoyed by hikers on the Via Transilvanica Trail. During the summer, in August, the village day takes place, an occasion when the villagers celebrate the local values through song, play, poetry and good cheer.

Teleki Castle in Posmuș – In the middle of the 18th century, instead of today's mansion, there were several dilapidated wooden buildings. Teleki Pál and Haller Borbála rebuilt the Baroque building. Teleki Pál and Haller Borbála were the ones who ordered the creation of the rectangular shape of the castle: on the sides were the warehouses, the stable and the prison, in the back, the main building rebuilt between 1750 and 1752, and in front, the gate bastion built around 1760. The gate bastion, a building with a chapel, was later used as a guest house. During the revolution of 1848-1849, the mansion was destroyed and Teleki Ferenc moved to his domain in Șomcuta Mare. After 1945, the property of the Teleki family was subject to nationalization and was used as a State Agricultural Enterprise and as apartments. The mansion was surrounded by a vast forest and a park until the new "owners" cut down most of the forest, but there are still several secular trees left. There is also an oak tree that is more than 600 years old. A nursery has been set up behind the mansion.

Monor village – Monor is part, along with Gledin, of the Monor locality which is located on the upper course of the Luț Valley and in Bistrița-Năsăud County. Situated at the foot of the Călimani Mountains, in the south-west, Monor has a relief of medium high hills at the transition between the Transylvanian Plain and the Călimani Valley. The main industrial activity of the locals is milk processing. In 1991, a modern processing milk factory, Carmolact, was established. It processes daily around one hundred thousand liters of milk purchased from private producers in the area and neighboring localities in Bistrița - Năsăud and Mureș counties. Other tourist attractions would be the Muddy Volcanoes of Monor - a protected area, the monuments of the heroes of Monor from the First and Second World Wars, the Revolution Monument from Monor from 1848, the Memorial Museum of the writer "Teodor Tanco", the Orthodox Church of Monor. The local events are: "Monor's Day", an annual event on the first Saturday and Sunday of September, the Country Fair from March 1 to 11, the Country Fair from May 2 to 21 and the Country Fair from September 3 to 25.

Trail: easy, well-marked, easy ups and downs

Elevation difference: +413m

Critical spots: When walking through the forests, you need to pay more attention to wildlife. Caution is also required with sheep dogs when approaching either sheepfolds or cow herds.

Scenery: Mixed between rural landscapes, lowland forests, clearings and hills used for grazing, asphalt in Monor (short distance).

Accommodation:

Brâncovenești: Restaurant *La cinci nuci*, tel. +40 748 128 376.

Vălenii de Mureș: *Pensiunea Gabriella*, 4 km from the trail, 9 double rooms, 18 places, restaurant, access to kitchen, grocery, shop nearby, car transport from Brâncovenești, reservations by phone +40 758 763 523 (Ambrus Zsigmond);

Suseni de Jos, La Hanu' Cald, 20 places in double rooms, restaurant, car transport from Brâncovenești, reservations by phone +40 740 609 073 (Sonia Bendorfean);

Idecu de Jos (3,5 km from Idecu de Sus) **Complex Turistic Lac Sărat**, 40 places, access to the kitchen, dinner and breakfast on request, car transport from Idecu de Sus, reservations by phone +40 742 527 563 (Ovidiu Salcă) and +40 745 949 514 (Nicoleta Salcă).

Pensiunea Marianne, 18 beds, dinner and breakfast on request, car transport from Idecu de Sus, reservations by phone +40 752 438 057 (Carmen Kocsis).

Parents on the road in this area can help you with various information. If you have any problems, contact them: Moldovan Emilia, tel. +40 757 058 999, Nagy Imre Laszlo tel. +40 742 666 382.

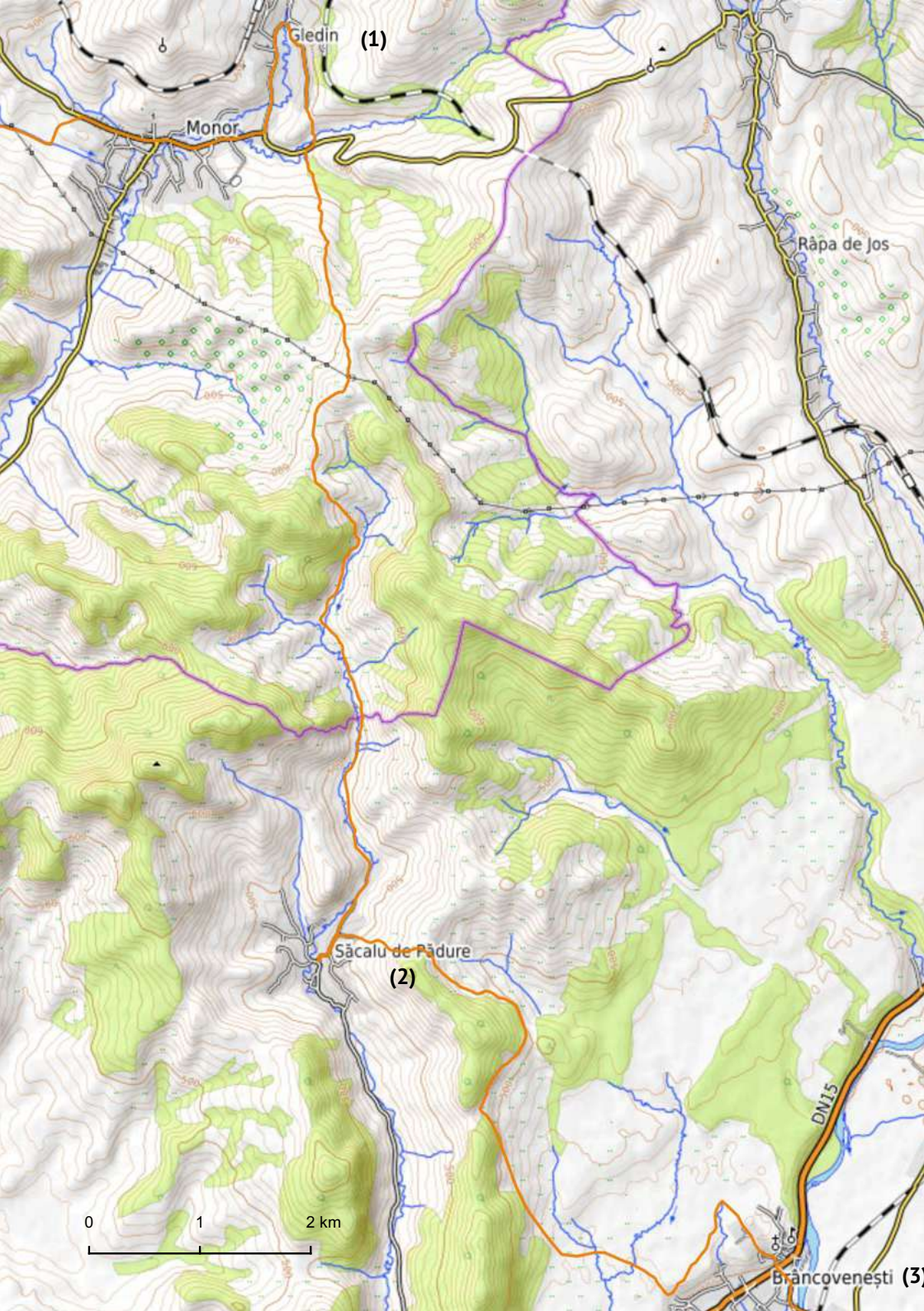
Infrastructure:

Monor:          

Săcalu de Pădure:     

Brâncovenești:         





Gledin (1)

Monor

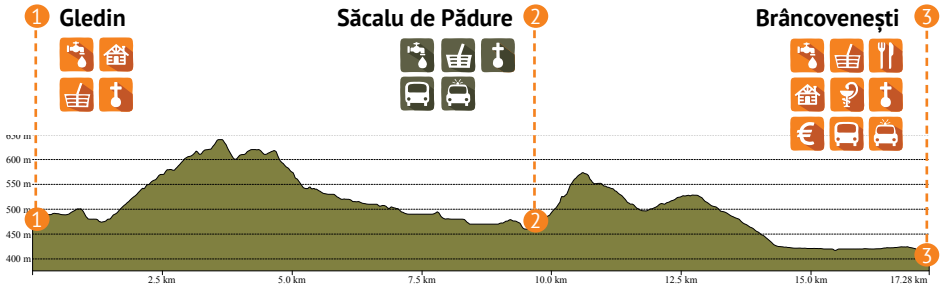
Râpa de Jos

Săcalu de Pădure (2)

0 1 2 km

DN15

Brâncoveniști (3)



Note:

Starting from the Orthodox Church in the village, the route turns left and continues for 1 km around the village, then past a few gardens to reach an asphalted road. Turn right here, and after 80 m turn left off the tarmac. The road then climbs slowly up a dirt track in direct sunlight. From here, the countdown can start to reach the border between Bistrița-Năsăud and Mureș counties as there are only five kilometers left after the next kilometer stone. The route climbs gently up some hills, descends again into several valleys, passes by cowsheds and a sheepfold until it reaches a small forest, that is interrupted by a clearing in which the route turns left. From here on, you can see a 250-year-old oak tree, that creates shade for grazing animals. The trail stretches for another kilometer to the last kilometer stone in the county. From this border, continue another 2-3 kilometers through pastures, where the village of Săcalu de Pădure (2) in Mureș County is waiting for hikers to rest. The trail enters the village and takes the first left towards another exit on a country road, but you will notice that the markings continue in front of you, towards the center of the village. In general, Via Transilvanica trail will guide you, with the help of its signs, to the church in the center of the village it passes through. If desired, you can visit the church and then return to the road that takes you back to the trail - now on the right as we come from the village.

You enter a pasture in which our path climbs gently and slowly, having in front the forest whose shade seduces us and on the left side you will notice a kind of cross with an antenna above. There, at the top, the cart track slowly descends alongside the edge of the forest on your right and a sheepfold on your left. Over a few hundred meters you will see various constructions that look like fountains and one, which you will pass, is even functional, but only if you find a way to release the water, being an improvised system. Water is a great welcome after a few hours of being in the sun. After cooling off at the well with cement rings, the edge of the forest lasts a little longer and then the path turns slightly to the right. From above, you can already see the villages of locality Brâncovenești (3) and, after passing through some corn and wheat fields, turn slightly left onto the agricultural road for about 1km and, after passing a group of trees on the right, the route reaches a cobbled road and suddenly turns right. Passing some farms and a few households for about 1km with Keményi Castle on the left, you reach the main road, DN15. This is where the route of the day ends.

Info:

The wooden church from Săcalu de Pădure – "The Ascension of the Lord" wooden church from Săcalu de Pădure is a monument on the list of Historical Monuments from 2010. It is located on the place known by the locals under the name of "Grui", in a former orchard used as a cemetery. The church was founded by the priest Popa Chiril, who came from Moldova in "anno 1809" according to the inscription at the entrance, who, together with Cengher Simion, primary epitrope/trustee, completed the building works. To build the church, the priest Chiril (Chirilă) was helped by Baron Kemeny who provided wood cut from his forests.

Brâncovenești Castle - In the Saxon village of Brâncovenești, there is a medieval castle that belonged to several Hungarian noble families. The castle in its current form, was built in the 15th century by the family of a noble, Losonczy Dezsőfi, but since then the owners have changed over the years. In 1527, major changes were done to the castle. In 1610, the domain was in the ownership of Gabriel Bethlen, the voivode of Transylvania, later taken over by Gheorghe Rákóczy I. Later on, Gheorghe Rákóczy II (who ruled in Transylvania between 1648-1660) donated the estate, which included villages, to an army leader named János Kemény. For the next 3 centuries, the Kemény family owned the estate. Ioan Kemény took part in many battles in Poland, where he fell prisoner to the Tartars, but to his luck, he was rescued and thereafter became Prince of Transylvania in 1661 and he died in 1662. His enemies destroyed the Brâncovenești estate as well as during the wars led by Francis Rákóczi II. Ioan Kemény, who in 1926 invited 28 of the most prominent literary figures of the time to his castle where he founded the Transylvanian cultural association 'Helikon'. From this moment on, for twenty years, the castle of Brâncovenești became the center of the literary meetings of the Transylvanian Hungarian language writers and not only. Visiting hours: 10:00- 17:00, closed on Mondays. Tel. +40 741 225 141 (Kemeny Geza, owner).



The tomb of Kemény János and the Kuncz Aladár Memorial Table - The last owner of the castle was the Hungarian writer Kemény János (1903-1971), who founded on July 18, 1926 the Association of Hungarian Writers "Erdélyi Helikon". The tomb of Kemény János is located in the castle courtyard, near the Kuncz Aladár Memorial Table, designed by Kós Károly. After the short stories in the 1923 anthology Tizenegyek [The Eleven], he published several novels and volumes of short stories (Kákóc Kis Mihály, 1929, Kutyakomédia [Desert Comedy], 1934, Ítéletidő. Történetek és rajzok a havas életéből [The Storm. Sketches catches from mountain life], 1938, Kokó és Szokrátész (Dél-tengeri történetek [Koko and Socrates. Stories from the Southern Seas], 1940). The literary historian Pomogáts Béla characterizes his career as a writer - "Novels, short stories, and later autobiographical works signed by János Kemény always proposed as an intimate and personal description of Transylvanian life, man and landscape." "He felt at ease in this environment, among these people, and this feeling of comfort could not be shaken by censorship, marginalization and harassment."

The Reformed Church in Brâncovenesti - In the village of Brâncovenesti, close to the castle mentioned above, there is the Reformed church, which was founded in 1727 from the donations of the Kemény family. It is a church without a tower, but with a bell tower next to it and the organ is the only piece dated and signed inside the church. Inside the organ is written: "Johannes Hahn Fecit Cibini 1757". Hahn built the organ especially for the Reformed church in Brâncovenesti, this one being an excellent example of his remarkable craftsmanship and instruments. The Saxon builder, who made 40 instruments during his life, associated the external shape, proportions, ornamentation of the organ with the style of the church's interior. To visit call +40 757 790 921 (Ördög András, curator).



Trail: easy, well-marked, a large proportion passes through villages (on asphalt), forests, pastures and hills.

Elevation difference: +541m

Critical spots: Roads may be risky, therefore be cautious.

Scenery: Houses with impressive architecture give the impression of wealthy and hardworking people, colorful flora, dark and mysterious deciduous forests, full of wild animals.

Accommodation:

Deleni: (430m alt.): **La poieniță Guest House**, 9 rooms, the possibility of breakfast with pre-order, reservation in advance at phone +40 740 002 501, (Sorin Morar) and +40 740 002 502 (Sorina Hogiu);

Gurghiu: (424m alt.): **Gurghiu reformed Guest House**, without meals included, Address: Gurghiu, Petru Maior 66, <https://travelminit.ro/ro/accommodation/RGG-pension-reform-Gurghiu-Gurghiu>;

Cașva: (435m alt.): **Farm from Cașva**, accommodation and meals on request at phone +40 751 346 901 (Marcela Andrici);

Cașva Village Guest House, Str. Principală, Cașva, 2 rooms, the possibility of breakfast or dinner with pre-order, reservation in advance: contact on Facebook Cașva village or +40 760 760 874;

La Poiana lui Ionuț, accommodation and meals on request. Reservation at tel. +40 744 117 755 (Ionuț Boar);

Good to know: There is not a lot of accommodation on this route, so you will have to call each contact recommended in this guide in advance to find out availability. If there are no places available at the mentioned points, we recommend hikers to call the phone number +40 755 144 702. Mr. Neluțu will help them find accommodation.

Infrastructure:

Deleni:      

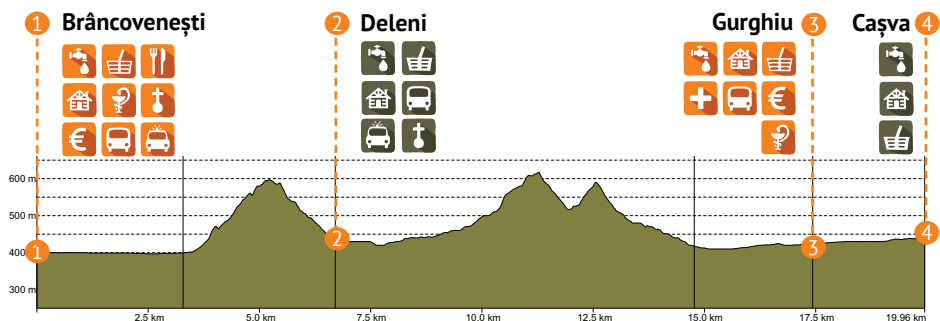
Gurghiu:       

Cașva:   

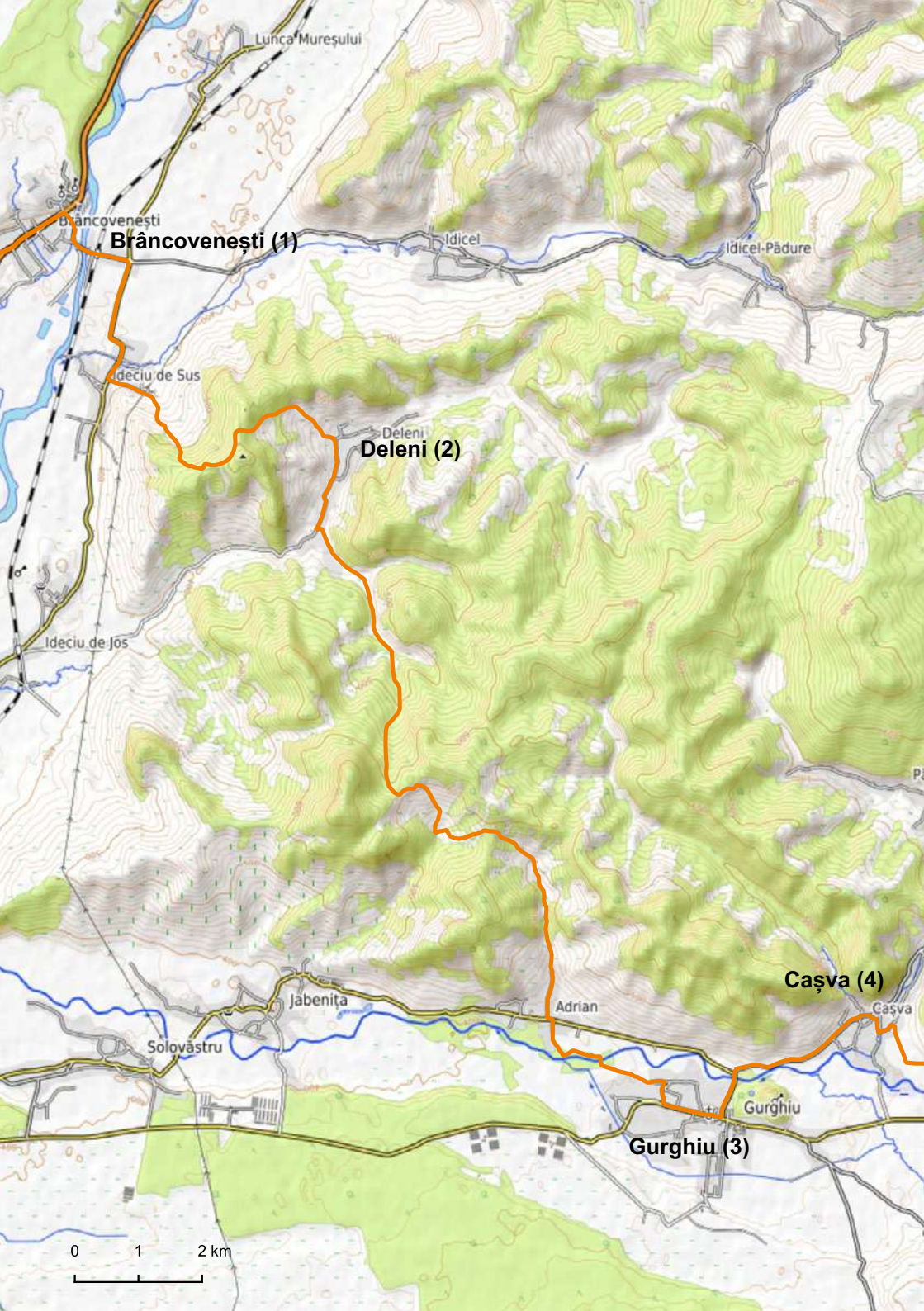
Note:

After crossing the DN15 follow it for 500m and cross the bridge over the river Mureș and continue for another 400m before reaching an





intersection where one turns right towards Ideciu de Sus. Continue to the center of the village where one will turn left. One will pass the last of the houses and start a slight climb. You will pass an electric fence before arriving at the base of a hill where the path steepens for a short distance up to the entrance of the forest. You will reach cart tracks that will lead you up to the shadow of this forest called 'Țân-Țara' (Țânțar meaning mosquito and Țara meaning country) being a forest full of mosquitoes, after long rainy periods. After another smooth ascent through the forest, which heads towards the ridge, about 1km from the entrance, you will see a descent to an opening with thinning trees. Slowly, you will leave the forest on a cart track, slightly descending towards Deleni (2). After about 500 meters, the cobbled road meets the inhabited houses. When you arrive at the church in the center of the village, you will see a shop on the other side, where you will be able to enjoy a refreshing drink. From here the markings follow the asphalt to the right for about 2km to an intersection with a road that goes up to the left. Here, turn left onto the road that climbs a little until another intersection that leads to the "La poieniță" guesthouse on the right. The trail continues further ahead. You will follow a forest road that heads away from the houses and towards the forest, that has near the entrance an abandoned farm, a concrete building forgotten by the world. The coolness of the beech forest is pleasant, and you may meet people picking mushrooms, berries or walk with pets. After leaving the forest, climb slowly to where the route meets a tractor track that follows the edge of the forest, before turning left. Continue on this path next to the forest, through various meadows and places that remind us of the imminent presence of wild animals lurking in the darkness of the rich branches or bushes. Follow the forest slightly to the left and you will reach a dusty road that lies below. Go down to this road from the forest and turn right onto it. Now the young forest will be on your right. The hills begin to flatten out in front of you and you can see that they are covered by sheepfolds with friendly sheep and dogs. As you go down the dusty road you will come across a crossroad of tractor and cart tracks where, to the left, you will see a trough about 10 m from the track. The route passes by it, and if you want to drink from the trough, you can unplug the pipe. As you stand in front of the trough, the trail heading to the left, before starting to climb to the right. You will start to walk among wild cherry trees and other trees that give you fruit or shade, both perfect for the trip. You will descend slowly between hills with forests until you reach a dirt road, which meanders among wheat fields and corn plantations, to the village of Adrian, where you will meet the asphalt main road. Follow the markings to a moving bridge, cross the bridge and



Lunca Mureșului

Brâncovenesti

Brâncovenesti (1)

Idicel

Idicel-Pădure

Idiciu de Sus

Deleni
Deleni (2)

Idiciu de Jos

Jabenita

Adrian

Cașva (4)

Cașva

Solovăstru

Gurguiu

Gurguiu (3)

0 1 2 km

walk through cornfields and various cereals until you reach asphalt again to Gurghiu (3). From Gurghiu, where you can take a short cooling break, follow the signs to Cașva (4) on asphalt.

The villages that one passes through are well-arranged, with large and towering houses that are colorful and tidy. Cașva is one of them.

Info:

Gurghiu Fortress – The Gurghiu Fortress is located on a forested hill at a height of 500m. To the north of the fortress, at its base, is the baroque castle with Renaissance elements that has several phases of construction. The castle in its current form dates from the seventeenth century. Gurghiu was often a battle scene between the Austrian imperial troops and the Hungarian and Szekler rebels, with the siege of 1708 by the Russian-French Habsburg military commander, Jean-Louis de Bussy-Rabutin, adding to the destruction of the fortress. Its ruins were later used to rebuild the castle and the houses in the village. At the eastern end of the fortress, there is a Roman Catholic chapel, rebuilt in 1887 by the bishop of Eger. Later, there was a famous school that trained forestry and hunting specialists, some of whom were ethnic Czechs, Italians, or Germans that came from various parts of the Habsburg Empire. In the 17th century, a colony of over a hundred Armenians settled here, who were later assimilated by the local population.

Reformed Church in Gurghiu Village – The Reformed Church in Gurghiu Village was built in 1756.

Rákóczi-Bornemisza Castle – In the center of Gurghiu, right at the base of the Citadel Hill, is the Rákóczi-Bornemisza Castle. The castle was built during the reign of Prince George Rákóczi I (1593-1648), who wanted to build a residence in the Gurghiu Mountains for the hunting parties he joined in. Since 1717, the castle had been leased to Vice-chancellor Ioan Bornemisza and his successors for 99 years. The Bornemisza family invested in the grounds by adding new buildings. In 1740, the chapel with an ellipsoidal footprint was built, which for Transylvania is rare. Between 1754 and 1756, the paper mill that functioned until 1872 was rebuilt and a glass and porcelain factory was also built.

Narcissus Meadow – The Narcissus Meadow is a botanical reserve for the protection of the plant *Narcissus Stellaris* (*Narcissus*) and the *Fritillaria Meleagris* plant (*Motley Tulip*), located in the south of Gurghiu.

The monastery of Cașva – The monastery of Cașva was reactivated in 1995. Here, a wooden chapel was built and, in 1996, the construction of the cells and the church began. The church is built in the style of the Athonite monasteries, carved from stone. In 2008 at the Cașva Monastery, the proclamation of the canonization of Saint Simeon from Pângărați took place. This monastery was reopened at the request of the villagers of Cașva, it being very close to their hearts.

Trail: Medium difficulty due to the distance, well-marked, a large proportion passes through villages (on asphalt), forests, pastures and hills

Elevation difference: +685 m

Critical spots: Roads may be risky, therefore be cautious

Scenery: From large, full villages to hamlets scattered among the hills, with friendly people, alongside the river and among the houses

Accommodation:

Toaca: *Argentina Island*, 12 beds, breakfast and dinner on request, shop on the ground floor. Reservations on tel. 0742 355 481 (Argentina Korobian)

Ibănești Pădure (528m alt.): *Floare de colț Villa*, 97 Principală Street, accommodation in double rooms, local gastronomy point. On the ground floor of the pension is the store "La Doi Pași", which works as reception of accommodation and where to cook, on request, food per minute with products from the store. Advance reservations at tel. +40 740 238 977 (Mihaela Alexa) and +40 755 064 231 (Ovidiu Alexa);

Nicu Gliga offers accommodation, car transport at any time from Mureș County to the route or from the route to certain stations - train or bus stations, and any other information related to the Via Transilvanica route - Ibănești area, tel. +40 745 029 529 and +40 752 566 355;

Zimți: *Valea Regilor, Happy Camp*, 12 beds, access to equipped kitchen, barbecue place, shops nearby, bike rental, reservations by phone +40 754 965 851 (Gabriel).

Brădețelu (588m alt): *Ovidiu and Paula Guesthouse*, breakfast included, restaurant, tel: +40 769 678 507;

Bălăcianu Guesthouse, Brădețelu, 13 beds, bathroom, access to the kitchen, dining on request, dinner and breakfast. Reservations at tel. +40 742 355 510 (Smaranda Bălăcianu) and +40 745 520 260 (Stelian Bălăcianu);

Andreea Guesthouse, 12 beds, meals on request. Reservation at tel. +40 745 413 558 (Dana Suciava);

Good to know: There are not many opportunities for accommodation on this route, so each contact recommended in this guide should be called in advance to find out availability. If there are no places available, we recommend hikers to call the phone number: +40 755 144 702, Mr. Neluțu - who will help them find accommodation in the area.

Infrastructure:

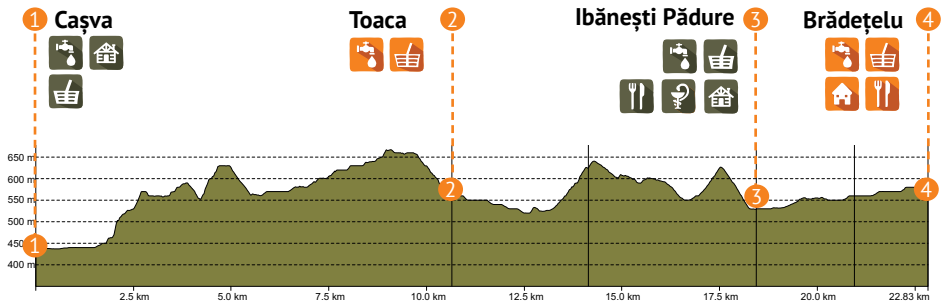
Toaca:  

Ibănești Pădure:     

Note:

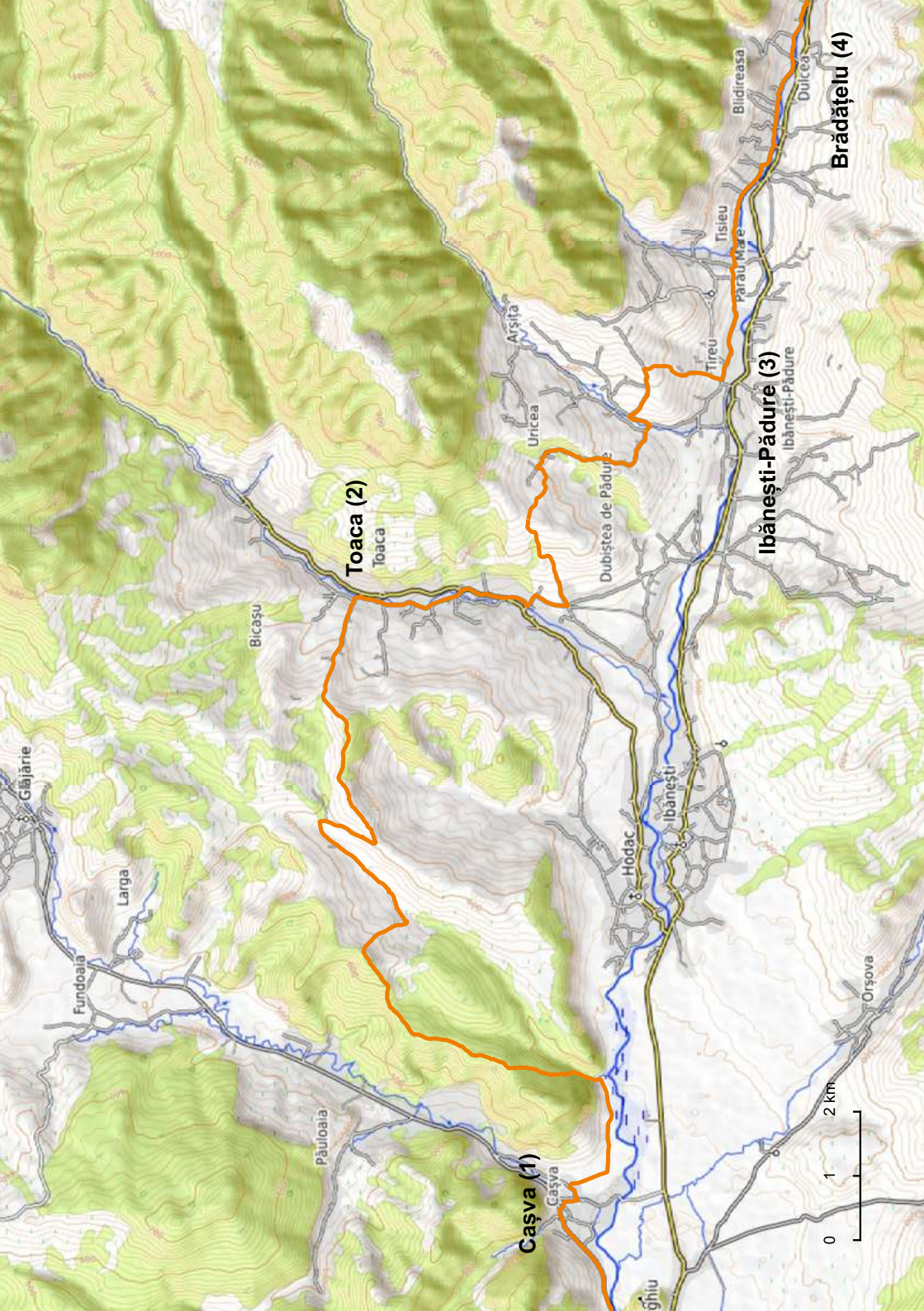
Brădețelu:    

In Cașva (1), go to the center where there is a roundabout with a big tree in the middle; from there, turn right, leaving the church behind you, turn slightly left and follow the markings through the village until you get to a wooden bridge (on the left, after the bridge there is another small church), continue on the asphalt for a few hundred meters until you reach a path that takes you to the right, next to a big house. The path heads out of the village towards the meadows. Take the path on the right that leaves the asphalt



until you pass a crossroad. Keep following the trail to the left and continue on the path between pastures, fields and arable land, for about 2km. You will see mounds of hay, farmers plowing or at work in the fields. When you reach a small, cold stream (don't cross it), follow the route up to the right, climbing towards the forest. The months of June-July are usually either too hot or too rainy in recent years due to climate change, but after 2 months of rain, when you walk in 30 degrees in the sun, the image of a dense and cool forest is a blessing. Enter the forest and slowly climb for a kilometer and a half, until you reach the top of the hill where you then walk on the ridge for another 2km. Here the view is beautiful, you can see mountains and dense forests. Once you reach the road at the edge of the forest, follow it a little until you reach the sheepfold on the right next to the fences from which you descend to the base of the hill where you turn left, bypassing the fenced area. Pass through the hamlet called Mirigioaia, and it's nice old houses and through the flowery fields. Once again you reach a cobbled road among the old houses





as the route goes up and down slowly in the shade of the trees. The hamlets mentioned are scattered, barely inhabited, but extremely beautiful. You come out of a thicket with a house and woods on both sides and again a beautiful view opens in front. From here, the unpaved road descends to another hamlet, Bicașu. The cobbled, narrow road winds slowly down towards the village. Suddenly, the path turns left, among a few acacias and other shrubs, on a narrow path that then grows and widens, reaching a cart track. Follow this track, among wild cherry trees - Enjoy! and continue on the track until you reach the village of Toaca (2) where the asphalt begins. Turn right and, for 3 kilometers you will pass through the village among the huge houses with insulated windows, where, at a certain point, the trail turns left and upwards, on a road paved with big stones as big as a fist, making it difficult to climb quickly. After climbing up to the hilltop on the serpentine path with little shade, you reach a crossroad and a bench. Behind it, you can find an old cemetery. After a short stop, continue with a slight descent and you will start to see some houses, some new, some old. In case of lack of water in these areas, with the goodwill of the locals, they will (and are used to) top up the hiking bottles with spring water. Continuing down to the next village, you will again reach the tracks to the country road that leads straight through the villages of Uricea and Tireu (following a kind of ring road). Also, on the ring road, you will reach Ibănești Pădure (3), where we can see the name of the village on the street signs. Here you reach a huge church (behind which your route continues) on the left that can be visited or bypassed. Not far from here, over a bridge, there is the shop "La doi pași". After a short break, return to the route and continue without changing direction, with the Gurghiu River on your right, until you pass through 2 other villages before reaching Blidireasa, a distance of about 3.5 kilometers. The villages are well arranged, with chic houses, old and new, and the shade of the trees next to the "ring road" allows you to enjoy the view with the whisper and coolness of the river. Once in Brădețelu (4), the route crosses the Gurghiu River over a bridge and turns a left on the road. There is also a path next to the road for those who do not want to walk close to passing cars. The route for today ends in about 1km, where the route turns right and enters a forest, however, 500m away from this point, you will reach the guesthouse Ovidiu and Paula and other accommodation.

Info:

The Museum of Traditional Objects and Costumes – Located inside the Cultural Center in Ibănești, it offers a complete image of the customs, traditions and way of life of the locals. This, together with the explanations offered by Dorina Farcaș, director of the Ibănești Cultural Center, should be the starting point for those who want to discover and understand the cultural richness of the area. From the museum's collection: women's national costume, 150 years old, spinning machines, old irons, manual seed drill, over 150 years old shoes, waistcoats, men's belts, a wooden refrigerator etc.

Văltorile – Văltorile from Ibănești Pădure and Ibănești Sat, take you into a world of the past, a world where women worked wool from August to Christmas and when girls had textiles as dowries. Traditionally, the whirlpool and the spade were in the immediate vicinity, on a river with a slope that would create a small waterfall. "We make a 40 centimeter thick log, make it round, dig it out, put two two-meter-high planks in it, and then fix it in the ground, at about 70-80 centimeters", explains Uncle Manailă (Gliga Emanoil, who spent his whole life whirling). The result is a vat, a conical construction with the tip down, in which water flows onto a gutter and then onto its edge to form

a vortex, which turns the clothes. Next to the whirlpool was the spade - a large, heavy wheel with a shaft in the middle, spun by the force of the water that operated 12 hammers. They alternatively beat the cloths placed in a trough; there were six troughs with two hammers each, which kept beating the clothes. About half an hour later, a bucket of water was poured over them, at first colder and later, warmer.



Trail: Medium difficulty due to long ascents in the first part of the day, well-marked, a large proportion passes through forests, pastures and hills

Elevation difference: +788m

Critical spots: A long ascent of 5km through a forest

Scenery: After a long and pleasant climb through the forest, you reach an open plateau with a steep but short descent through another forest. The plateau that separates the two forests offers wonderful views, wildflowers and a sheepfold with welcoming shepherds.

Accommodation:

Câmpu Cetății (610 m alt.): **Hanul Pescăresc**, around 20 cottages with 2 beds each, a la carte breakfast and dinner, reservation in advance, at phone +40 724 235 859;

Vândor Guest House, 21 beds with breakfast, double, triple or suite room, restaurant, 10% discount for hikers on Via Transilvanica, reservations at phone +40 743 030 608.

Guest House, 30 beds, restaurants nearby. Reservations on +40 747 015 961 (Barna);

Pension Aster, 35 beds, shops and restaurants nearby, dinner and breakfast for large groups, reservations by tel. +40 745 182 672 (Attila Tordai).

Good to know: On this route we recommend walking as a group, making noise in the forest with increased attention to areas where the trees are felled.

Infrastructure:

Stâna cu WiFi:   @

Câmpu Cetății:     @

Note:

As recommended in the guide above, leave the area of guesthouses, using the Ovidiu and Paula Guesthouse as a reference point, trace back your steps on the asphalt road for about 500 meters until you find the marked trail again. From here you will follow a forest road that turns left. This road will climb smoothly and gently for 5km through a beautiful and cool forest, which is a blessing during a hot summer. For your peace of mind, safety and for wild animals to be able to retreat, we recommend a bell or whistle attached to your backpack, while also talking in a group. Music or constant talking is important through this stretch to scare off animals. To avoid a possible encounter with the bear, or for possible conflicts with the sheepdogs, please study the recommendations on page 17. This ascent is gentle as you follow the valley and the river, which is sometimes on your left and other times on your right. When you finally exit the forest you will see a large meadow in front of you, where there are several paths. You will follow the meadow to the right until you reach an exit between the trees where a sheep track begins and heads towards a sheepfold and shepherds. If the shepherds are present there will be no problems with the dogs. From here the trail advances onto a hill full of scattered trees and clusters of old and shady oaks, where you will follow the markings for about a kilometer and a half as you slalom slightly between them. The markings will take you out onto a plateau with stunning views of the Gurghiului mountains and their valleys in the proximity of the salt lands. Continue on this path for another 2.5km as you follow the traces of domestic and wild animals, bear, deer, wolf or dog and sheep tracks. The

Ibănești-Pădure

Zimți

Dulcea

Brădățelu (1)

Stâna cu wi-fi (2)

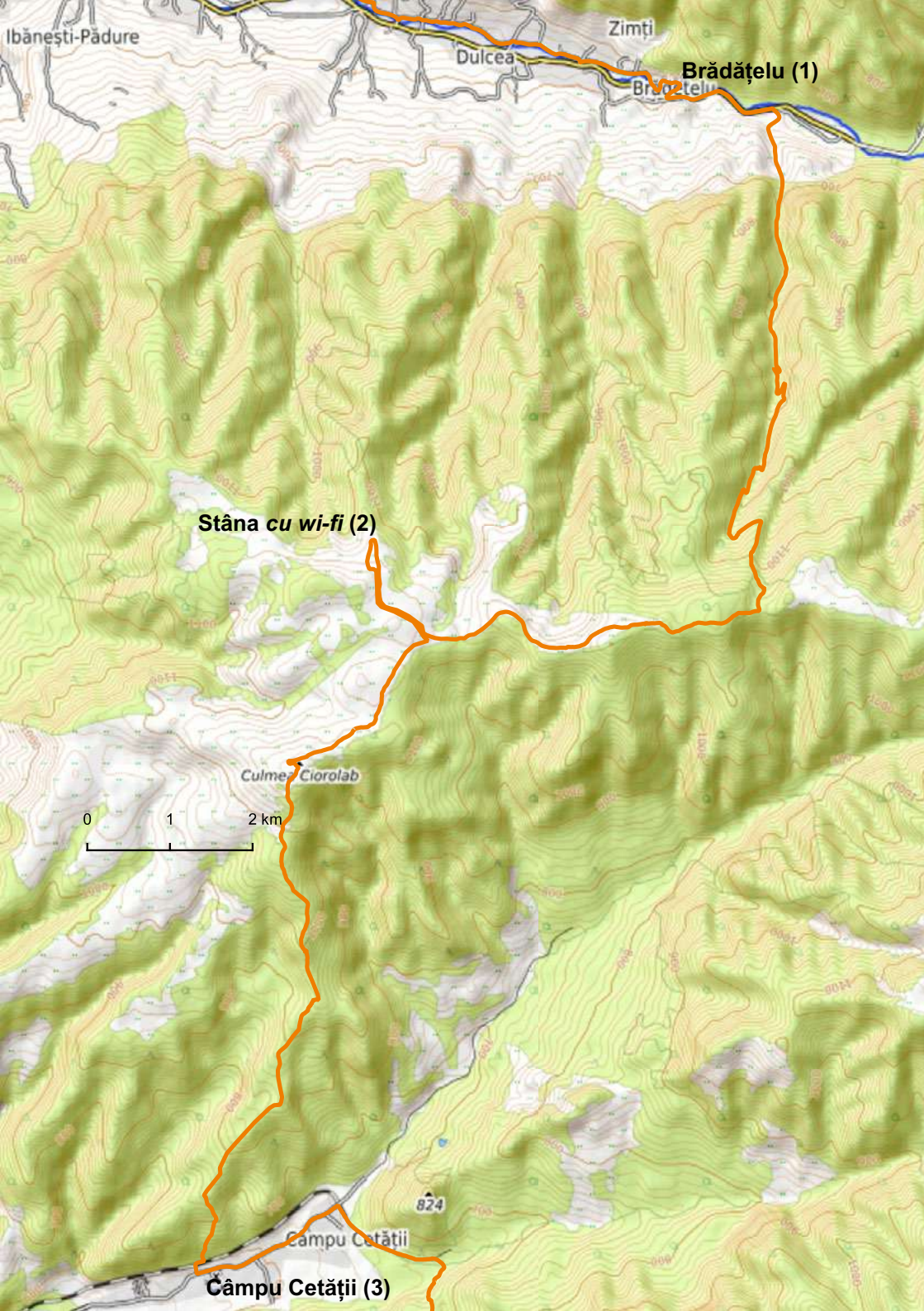
Culmea Ciorolab



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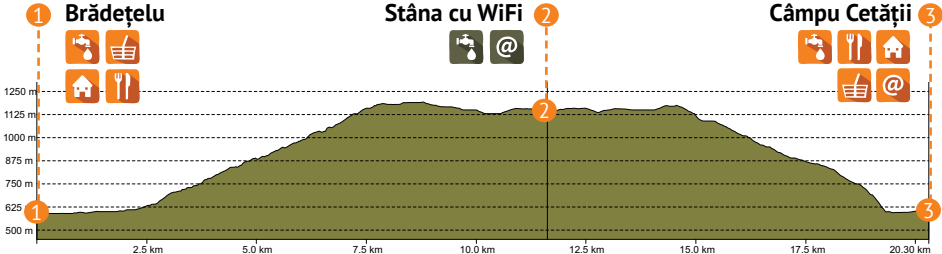
Câmpu Cetății

Câmpu Cetății (3)



surrounding thicket is a young thicket, made up of bushes and trees, where bears can be found, so be aware, talk and sing or play music. The trail follows the contour line and continues until it takes a slight curve to the right, where you will notice a marking. At this point, you can either continue on to Câmpu Cetății or you can take a break at "Stâna cu WiFi" (2), a sheepfold that is worth visiting for the fact that it is well maintained and beautifully arranged with Swiss funds. Codruț, the administrator of the sheepfold, will be waiting for you. Here you will find WiFi (there is not much signal in the area), which is called (probably by an incurable romantic shepherd) "Târla fără gânduri" which translates as 'Sheepfold without thoughts'. Here you will be able to refresh yourself with cold water, shade and "jintiță", a local specialty cheese.

Retrace your steps about 600m to the intersection above and leave "Târla fără gânduri" behind. From here you will climb a little until you leave the forest onto the edge of the spruce forest which quickly turns into beech. At the time of writing the guide, logging was taking place at the edge of the forest and, as a result, the forest road deviated a bit, so keep a safe distance, as the lumberjacks don't necessarily notice passers-by on the road. Among the scattered trees, shade and sun, raspberries and strawberries, clumps of groves and bushes, you will reach the last part of the trail, which enters a majestic, large, old forest. This stretches 4km through this impressive forest that wants you to stop and admire its natural beauty, crooked and gnarled trees, which create imaginary shapes surrounded by large boulders, as if thrown there by dragons. As you continue following the curve of the hill, it will seem like you are discovering the remains of ancient fortresses, maybe Dacian, maybe Roman, maybe medieval, maybe from stories or legends, whatever it may be, the atmosphere of this forest is rare and requires great respect. It's as if you can feel the traces of history. You will descend through the same forest until it becomes steeper, especially the last 500 meters when it becomes very steep. At some point, you will be able to see among the trees old tombstones from the cemetery of Câmpu Cetății village (3). Pass next to the cemetery until you reach the main road where you turn left on the sidewalk, where the Szekler gates will become obvious and you will maybe hear Hungarian. You can greet the locals with "Jó napot!" (Yon a pot) which means "Hello!". At one point, there will be signs pointing to the recommended guesthouses, one of which is on a road to the right and the other just ahead. Câmpul Cetății locality has a lot to offer and may be worth taking a break for a few days to discover the area.





Info:

Gurghiu Mountains – The Gurghiu Mountains are part of the mountain range of the Eastern Carpathians, a group of the Moldo-Transylvanian Carpathians. The Gurghiu Mountains are located between the Mureş Valley and the Târnava Mare River. The highest peak is Saca Mare peak, at 1,776m. Other peaks are Amza peak, at 1,695m, Fincelu (1,684m), Bătrâna (1,634m), Saca Mică (1,731m), Saca Mare (1,776m), Frătileasa (1,628m), Găinuşa (1,680m), Şoimuş (1,575m).

Their beauty is given by a relatively simple relief, a ridge which is oriented northwest-southeast, marked by streams that have formed ridges orientated easterly and westerly. On the same side, there is evidence of former volcanic activity: Fâncel, Seaca, Şumuleu and Ciamani are the highest peaks in the region.

The ruins of the Vityal fortress – Walking through the forests surrounding Eremitu locality, that includes the village of Câmpu Cetăţii, we can still see the ruins of some fortresses that could be from the Migration Period. One of the fortresses - the Citadel of Vityal has many legends. It is said to have been built by fairies, not humans. According to archaeologists, the fortress was built in the Middle Ages, on top of the remains of a Bronze Age fortress and was used by the locals as a shelter during the Tartar invasions. It is located between the villages of Eremitu and Câmpu Cetăţii, about 7km from the center of Câmpul Cetăţii village.

Village trout farm – In the village of Câmpu Cetăţii, a visit to the trout farm should not be missed. Tourists can pay to fish in one of the lakes and, of course, to enjoy the tranquility offered by this area. The fish caught can be taken home or given to the chef at the Fishing Inn to prepare it. The price of live fish is lower than that of a ready-made fish.

Places to find Via Transilvanica stamps:

Lunca Ilvei

- Teleski Cottage, tel. +40 753 332 741.
- Maria Guesthouse, tel. +40 765 217 751 (Maria Slavoaca)

Piatra Fântânele

- Tășuleasa Social, tel. +40 741 545 201 (Anna Székely)

Bistrița Bârgăului

- Ony Lodging, tel. +40 723 193 925 (Popandron Felicia)
- Guest House, tel. +40 774 964 240 (Nick Gavan) and +40 745 968 942 (Dumitru); (at 3km of route)
- Maria Bidian Local Gastronomic Point, 0753422321 (at 1km of route)
- Guest House, tel. 0745 840 317 (Tatiana Rusu);

Dorolea

- Pensiunea Elis, Tel. +40 744 658 148 (Daniela Dumitru),
- Cabana Edelweiss, Tel. +40 735 900 735 (Tea Andreica)

Bistrița

- Copacul de Cafea, Tel. +40 745 932 166
- Roots Bistro & Caffè, Tel. +40 755 670 099 oder +40 747 589 553 (Bogdan)
- Amaretto Caffè, Tel. +40 730 277 181

Petriș

- Casa Țărănească lodging, tel. +40 752 538 138 (Gavril Oltean)
- Petriș nr.98, tel. +40 0771 644 385 (Marius and Geta Tiniș),

Jeica

- Parish, tel. +40 768 438 636 (Toth Zoltan, preot)
- Agro Tourism Guesthouse - Maria, tel. +40 751 110 204 (Cotoc Marian)

Șieut

- Agro Tourism Guesthouse - Maria, tel. +40 751 110 204 (Cotoc Marian)

Monor

- Gledin, Parish nr.242, tel. +40 763 697 883 (Father Ion Titieni) (at 1,3km of route)
- Gledin gastronomic point, tel. +40 766 623 933 (Maria Moldovan) and +40 766 623 654 (Cornel Moldovan)
- City Hall Monor

Brâncovenești

- Singer's House, no. 195, Evangelical Parish House, tel. +40 757 790 921 (Ördög András)
- University Pharmacy: Mon-Fri: 9-17, Sa: 9-12, Su: Closed

Cașva

- Cașva Village Guesthouse, Str. Principală, tel. +40 760 760 874
- La Poiana lui Ionuț, tel. +40 744 117 755

Brădețelu

- Andreea Guesthouse, tel. +40 745 413 558 (Dana Suceava) (at 300 m of route)
- Ovidiu and Paula Guesthouse, tel. +40 769 678 507 (at 600 m of route)
- Bălăcianu Guesthouse, tel. +40 742 355 510 (Smaranda Bălăcianu) (at 400m of route)

Câmpu Cetății

- Vândor Guesthouse, tel. +40 743 030 608
- Hanul Pescăresc, tel. +40 724 235 859 (at 200m of route)

TERRA SICULORUM

Terra Siculorum is the Latin name of the Szekler Land, a region of Romania that contributes significantly to the completion of the ethnic, cultural and historical stages of the Via Transilvanica Trail. The route through Szeklerland is 157 km long and starts in Câmpu Cetății, crosses the Sovata-Praid plains from where it continues over the hills of Transylvania, reaching various Szekler villages, inhabited by hardworking people and households, who still preserve ancient traditions and customs. From Odorheiu Secuiesc, also called the home of Szeklerland, Via Transilvanica goes to Archita, the border between Harghita and Mureș counties.

During this section, the Szekler communities stand out with their specificities, but also with the natural landscape, with gentle hills and flowery meadows, dense forests, and pastures. The stages of this trail vary in difficulty, sometimes in terrain and sometimes vary from one day to the next. The Szekler Land will reveal itself through the places, the people and its atmosphere.

Some of the key experiences of this part are the very good brandy, the traditional doughnuts "Langoși", the salt mountains, the Hungarian language, handicrafts, the love and care of the people for horses, the extraordinary stories and of course tasty food. You will discover the old runic writing, the Szekler mustaches, the traditional dress, the sculpted Szekler gates, the big local and national celebrations with specific folk dances and the homemade potato bread. You will discover those who continue the Szekler customs, traditions, and culture as well as the people who are very hospitable and joyful.

The flora and fauna of Terra Siculorum are specific to the region, with rich beech, pine, and spruce forests, populated by bears, wolves, and a few small carnivores. Otherwise, the orchards, pastures, and lands are the ones that are cared for and worked to produce for the people and the household.

Up until now, some parts of the route had the role of capturing predominantly the natural landscape or on the contrary, that of human settlements. In Szeklerland there is a balance between the two and each day of the hike you will have the opportunity to experience both equally.

Trail: easy to medium

Elevation difference: +608m

Critical spots: When walking in the woods, pay close attention to the wildlife. On asphalt roads, pay close attention to cars especially in the curves, villages, and towns.

Scenery: Forest paths through predominantly beech forest, unpaved and asphalt roads, the Szekler gates in localities; you reach the spa resort, Sovata, known for its lakes - Lake Ursu or Lake Aluniș. This is where the trail through the Szekler land starts.

Accommodation:

Sovata (460m alt.): Being a well-known and visited tourist destination in Romania, Sovata offers multiple accommodation opportunities for all budgets, from its suburbs to the center of the resort, there are hostels to hotels and plenty of restaurants.

Close to the trail is the **Hotel Tivoli** (a short extra climb). Call for reservations: +40 787 898 668.

Infrastructure:

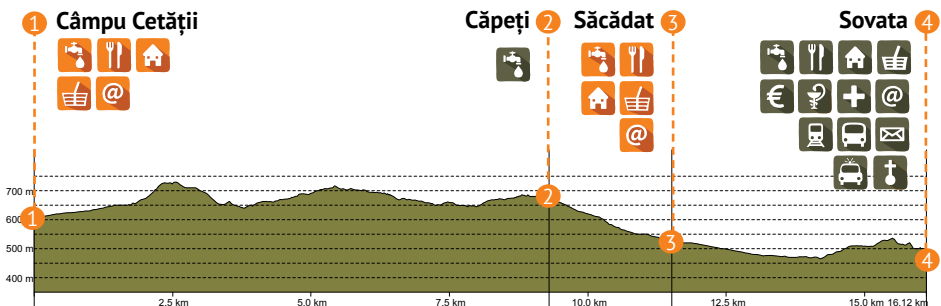
Căpeți: 

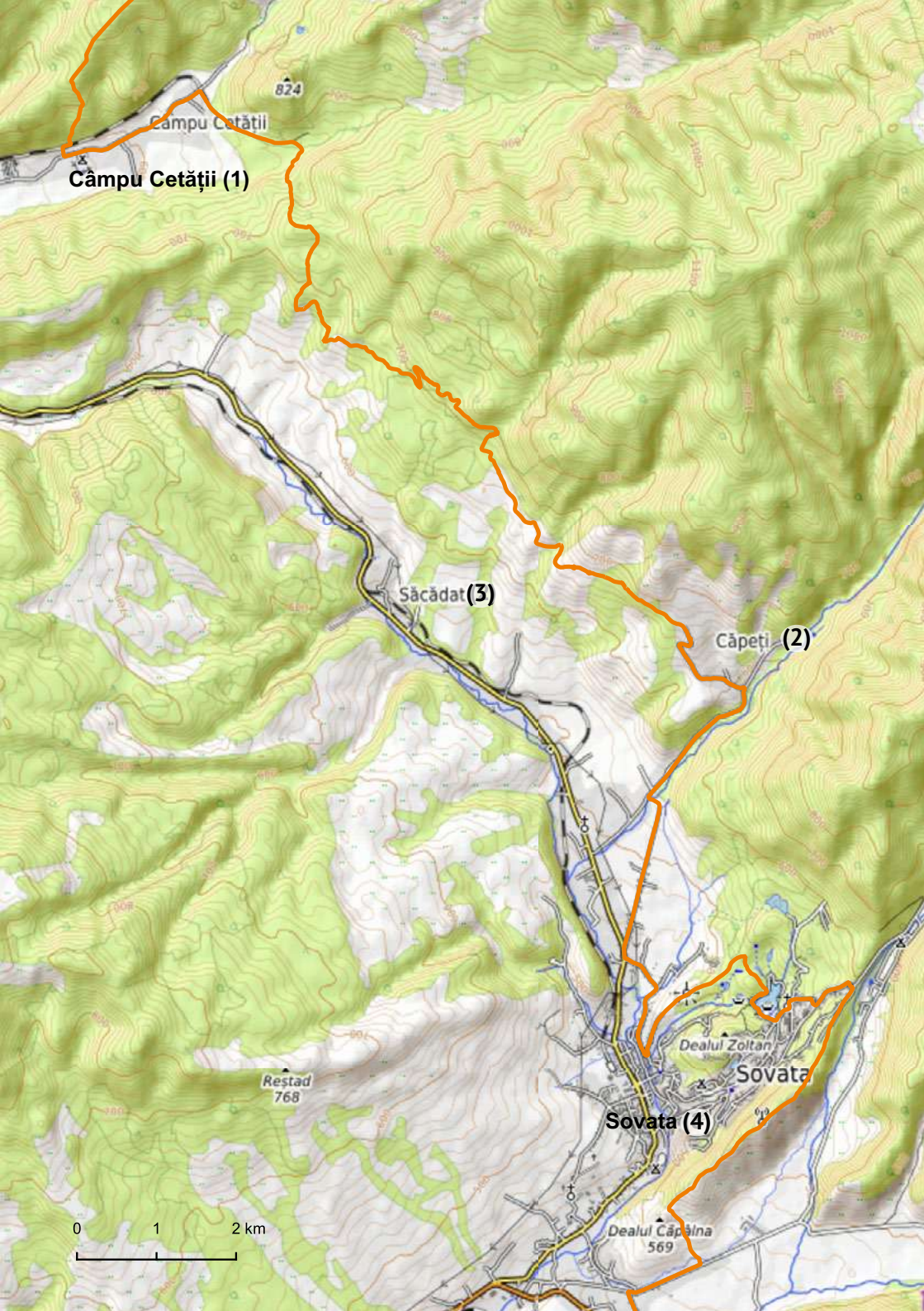
Săcădat:     

Sovata:            

Note:

At the beginning of today's route, you will cross the village of Câmpu Cetății (1) on asphalt for a short distance before slowly heading right, towards the forest. The path climbs around 3km through the forest. The difficulty increases to moderate, so you can take breaks in the shade of the beech trees. Be aware that bears can be present. To prepare for a potential encounter with this wild animal, we encourage you to read the section dedicated to bear encounters, from page 17.





Cămpu Cetății
Cămpu Cetății (1)

Săcădat (3)

Căpeti (2)

Sovata
Sovata (4)

0 1 2 km

After climbing through the forest, there is a long but easy descent on a cobbled road among the trees. The road then alternates, with short ascents, descents, and curves. In June-July, wild strawberries can be found on the road side and those who have the patience to look for and pick them will enjoy their aromatic taste. After about 4km, you descend to the village of Căpeți (2). In approx. 1km on the road that passes in front of some houses, the markings will indicate a slight descent to the left where you have to cross a stream. The water can be crossed barefoot and, on the opposite bank, there is a good opportunity for a break in the shade of the trees to cool and dry your feet. After another 1.5km, the route reaches an asphalt road and passes by many guesthouses and accommodation, which tells us that we are approaching the resort of Sovata (4). After walking on this road for some time, you will reach the main road. Follow it on the left sidewalk, passing by many houses. At one point, the asphalt road climbs steeply for about 1 km to a viewpoint located at the southwestern edge of the national park, which is part of the eco-educational route Ursul. From the tower you can admire a panoramic view that will impress any hiker and give them the energy to continue on the last part of today's hike to Sovata resort, which, especially during the summer, buzzes with energy. The road continues, initially with a descent, followed by a slight ascent. Then, the Via Transilvanica markings will guide you on a path through the forest. Before this, you will see markings with a yellow band that heads downhill to the right. This is a good route to do by bike, and a little shorter. Via Transilvanica follows the path mentioned earlier, with steps, bridges, information panels, benches, and even a new viewpoint. Following this short route, you reach Lake Ursu, which is surrounded by a fence. At this point, you will have reached the center of the resort. From here, the markings take you through Sovata, where you can do many leisurely activities like shopping, spa etc. Today's stage of Via Transilvanica ends here with the opportunity of a swim in Lake Ursu that will relax your muscles and prepare them for the next adventure.

Info:

Sovata Thermal Spa Resort – Sovata has been certified as a place for curing diseases since 1597 and, later in 1875, the treatment resort was formed around Lake Ursu (Bear Lake). It is located between the river Corund and the valley of Târnava Mică. Sovata is especially famous for its saltwater lakes (Bear Lake, Aluniș Lake, Red and Green Lake, Mierlei Lake and Piroșca Lake). The treatment resources consist of chlorinated and sodium waters creating a heliothermal phenomenon, electrotherapy installations, gyms, saunas, arranged beaches. The climate is subalpine.

Bear Lake (Lacul Ursu) – This lake is special, holding three important records: the largest heliothermal lake in the world, the only lake whose exact formation date is known (1857) and the only saltwater lake that is surrounded by a rich vegetation. Lake Ursu is 40,000 square meters, has a depth of 18 meters and an average salinity of 250 grams/ liter. The heliothermal phenomenon is very interesting due to the fact that a layer of fresh water is formed on the surface of the lake which keeps the heat in the salt water and prevents the heat escaping into the atmosphere. This phenomenon is very rare in the world and the most notable effect can be seen at Bear Lake. The exact date of its formation was May 27th 1875, when, at 11 o'clock, two salt guards were gathering hay when they were caught in torrential rain that filled the area where the lake is now. The lake is well-known for treating rheumatic, endocrinological and cardiovascular diseases. The mud on the bottom of the lake is used in several treatments.



Other lakes in Sovata – Lake Aluniș, formed in the 1970s, is the second most important lake in Sovata. It has an area of 3,670 square meters and a depth of 6.4 meters. The water table is 4 meters below the level of Ursu Lake which creates excess water that flows into Aluniș Lake. From here it reaches Valea Frumoasă, Pârâul Sărat and finally into Pârâul Sovata. The temperature and salinity of Lake Aluniș are lower than that of Lake Ursu. Lake Paraschiva is also worth a visit. It was formed in the middle of a sinkhole that underwent significant changes in the 1980s, following the karstic saline phenomena. The salinity of the water is very low, which is why the lake is populated with fish, thus being an attraction to fishing enthusiasts.



1 km

0

Sovata

Sovata

Lacul Ursu

Dealul Zoltan

Băile Sovata

DC49

Strada Tândărilor

Strada Câmpul Mic

Strada Vulturului

Strada Brađului

DC49

Strada Brađului

Strada Tândărilor

Strada Vulturului

Strada Tândărilor

DC49

Strada Maistrilor

Strada Răchitel

Strada Răchitel

Strada Părăului

Strada Părăului

Strada Părăului

Strada

Trail: easy with a few short ascents

Elevation difference: +242m

Critical spots: When walking in the forests, pay close attention to wildlife. On asphalt roads, pay close attention to cars especially in the curves, villages and towns. Some climbs may seem demanding but short.



Scenery: Asphalt roads through resorts, cobbled roads, you reach the village of Şaşvereş and then the Hochland factory. Via Transilvanica intersects with Via Maria. You will also walk through meadows and on forest paths.

Accommodation:

Praid (486m alt.): **Moldovan Guest House**, 8 rooms available and rooms in cottages, without meals, with prior reservation: +40 721 931 760 (Moldovan László), for details web <https://www.sohaztur.ro/indexa.htm>;

Cabana Phoenix, 40 accommodation places, camping place, kitchen, with prior reservation: +40 740 795 550 (Gabriela Szabo).

Infrastructure:

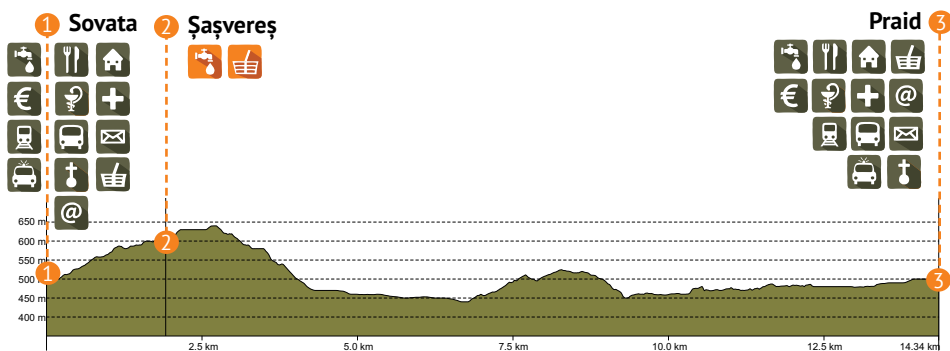
Şaşvereş:  

Praid:             

Note:

Today's route passes through the Sovata - Praid basin and is a route that has a climb, but being short, it is not very tiring and leaves you with time to enjoy the sights of Sovata and Praid.

Via Transilvanica leaves the resort of Sovata (1) following the asphalt road that has some uphill corners where you should pay more attention to cars and where possible, walk on the sidewalk. After 2km you reach a cobbled road that turns right for a short distance through a forest. Once leaving the forest, it descends quite steeply over a few hills. The path leads into a meadow that is perfect for a short break. The markings will

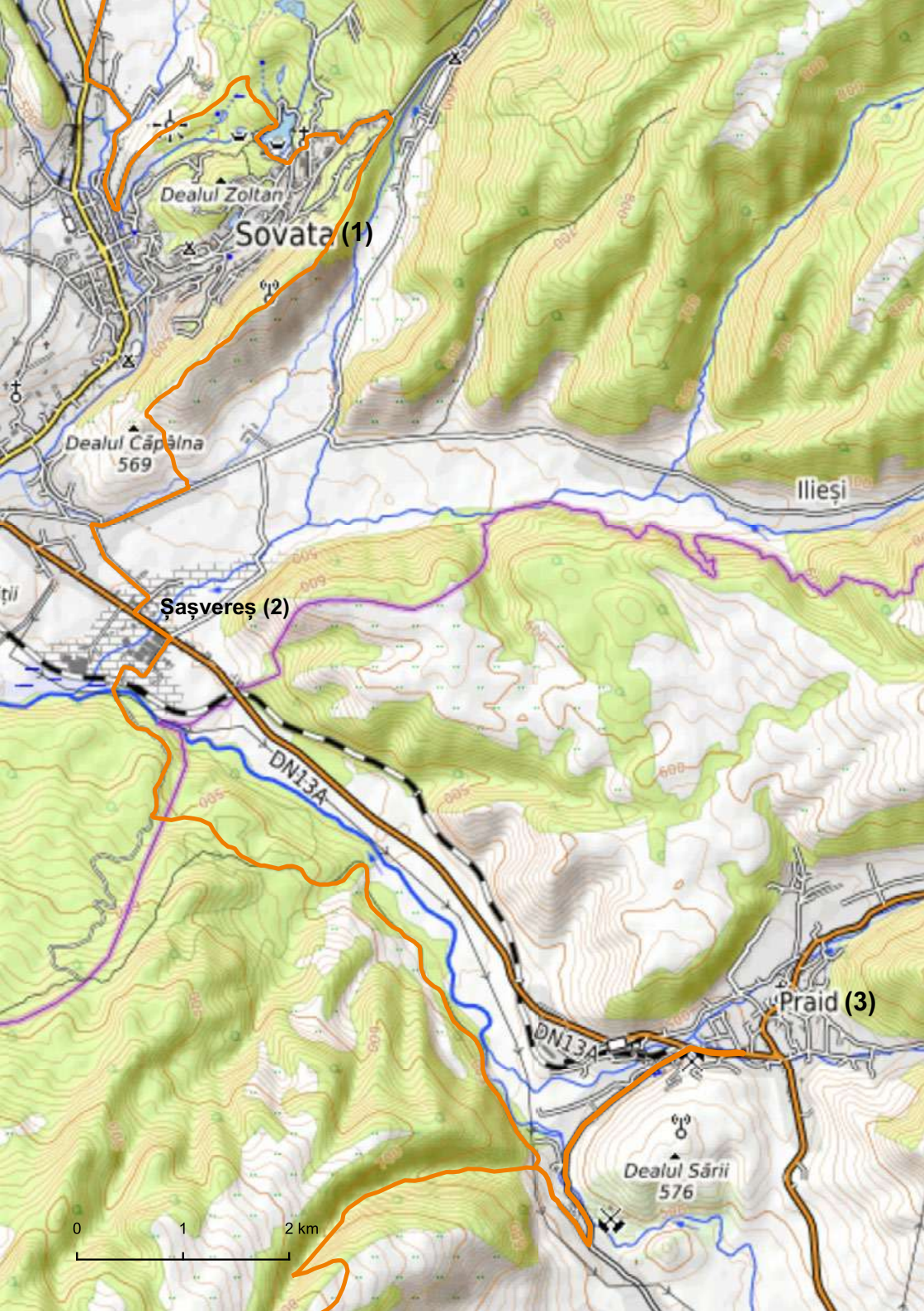


guide you from the clearing up a short ascent of 130 meters, to the Hermitage "14 Crosses" which is located on the hill in front of you where you can have a short break. This short deviation from the route means a maximum of 260 meters return trip. The VT markings will signal this and is almost impossible to get lost. Returning to the route, the road descends to the right towards the village of Şaşvereş (2). You will reach the village on mountain paths. Traverse the village on asphalt until the markings indicate a left turn onto an unpaved road. Of course, the curious glances of the villagers, or their funny questions will probably be greatly amusing. The route leaves the unpaved road to the right and eventually onto the asphalt. Already the feeling of city air has started as you pass by car washes and other modern constructions. Once you reach the asphalt, turn right before leaving the main road. After 1km on the asphalt, on your right you will see the Hochland cheese factory. In front of the factory turn slightly right without going around the building and after a short distance you will reach the train tracks. Here, turn left past the old worker blocks (lumberjacks) to a forest road. Follow this road for about 2km and at one point turn left into a thicket leaving the forest road. After another good section of shady forest you come out onto the hillside, from where you can see in the distance the town Praid (3). Walk along the side of the hill, with the edge of the forest on your left, through the scattered trees until you come across a field with the seductive smells of wildflowers. Eventually, you will reach a country road that becomes better and better maintained. This country road descends slightly to the left towards Praid. Follow this road until Via Transilvanica trail meets the Via Maria trail (at km 11 of today's route). From now on, the two routes will overlap each other for approx. 59km. After the Via Maria markings become visible, descend, until close to the Târnava Mică river, whose whisper you will start to hear.

After reaching the base of the hill, the route intersects with various other roads, but the signs of Via Transilvanica will indicate a right turn onto a forest road which is very damaged by the rains of previous years. After heavy rains, this road is very muddy and mosquitoes can be present. For about 2km you will walk alongside the road and bypass the ponds to a small stream, which you will cross. The route continues next to the stream up to the right, along with Via Maria and an arrow sign to a hermitage. Our guide's recommendation is to go down to Praid and enjoy the rest of the day in the town. So, cross the stream, turn left towards a few houses where the road descends to Praid behind the tourist complex "Wellness". After the left hairpin turn on the asphalt road to the bridge, take a right and continue to the accommodation. The mentioned bridge is crossed to visit the salt mountain. However, if you want to take a short break, you can discover a lot of the wonders found in Praid, mentioned below under "Info".

Info:

The mountain and the salt canyon of Praid – The salt mountain is a protected area located in the south of Praid town in Harghita county, in the lower part of the Corund Valley. It has the largest salt deposits in the country with reserves buried 2.7-3km deep. You can still see the traces of the Elisabeta gallery, along with where small salt caves, salt and mud flows were formed. The rarity of the area is also given by the existence of halophyte species, i.e. plants that grow on salty soils, such as the cow parsnip. In the immediate vicinity of the Wellness Center - the future baths and on the northwestern edge of the Salt Mountain, the eco-educational route of the Salt Canyon with an entry point, i.e., a small building with the function of an information and visitors center. The route is



Sovata (1)

Șașvereș (2)

Praid (3)



approx. 1km and has 7 points of interest, with guided tour between in June-October. The Salt Canyon was also formed due to human activity: the excavations left after the exploitation of the salt were filled with rainwater which dissolved them.

Praid Salt Mine – The microclimate offered by the Praid Salt Mine is recognized for the many benefits in treating respiratory diseases such as tuberculosis or asthma, but also other diseases such as high blood pressure, Basedow disease, etc. Healthy people can also benefit from a visit to the salt mine: relaxation, skin beautification, etc. The leisure base is arranged at "Horizon 50", which is at a depth of 120m below surface level. The transport into the salt mine is by bus. At the leisure base, visitors can enjoy many facilities: TV, 3D cinema, children's playgrounds, and much more. The average annual temperature in the salt mine is 16 degrees Celsius. In the summer months, visitors can also enjoy the swimming pool of the salt mine.

Rapsoné Fortress – The ruins of Rapsoné Fortress are located in the Târnava Mică and Creanga Mare valleys, on top of a group of rocks. The origin of the fortress is unknown, but according to the archaeological research in 1974, it is believed to have been built as a Szekler fortress in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, during the Árpád dynasty. From the Praid-Gheorgheni national road at kilometer 5, turn left and in 2 kilometers you reach the base of the fortress, Várkapú. The fortress of Rapsoné was part of a defense system made up of several fortresses that ensured the supervision of the Bucin Pass together with the fortress of Firtuş. There are also legends related to this fortress. It is said that it belonged to a beautiful widow, who made a deal with the devil to make a good road because the old one kept destroying her carriages. Although she promised to pay him, the widow did not do so, so the devil destroyed the fortress and, because she didn't repay the devil, she was blamed for the destruction. Only ruins remain from the old Szekler fortress, but it is still impressive with its special landscape, dominated by deciduous forests.

Kincses Kodáros Hill – Kincses Kodáros Hill is a place that keeps its secrets to this day. On this hill, there is a 30 centimeter hole. Many believed that beneath it was a cave full of treasures from the time of King Darius. In the 13th century, the southern slope served as a quarry during the construction of the church in Ocna de Sus. Probably these traces were interpreted as the remains of a Roman watchtower. Although this theory could not be confirmed, the site was declared an archeological site. In the 19th century, a young Scotsman, enchanted by the idea of treasure, hired miners to dig a 4m corridor into the dry rock to the supposed cave. During the works, he fell in love with his hosts' daughter and married her. Therefore, he stopped the excavation and used the remaining money to buy two mills with his new wife. Between the two world wars, the Armenian tavern holder in the village financed the continuation of the works. This time too, the works were not successful, as they were abandoned by the workers who were frightened of a legend with a witch who predicted a terrible end for those who would find the treasure.

Casa Fluturilor (Butterfly House): The first permanent butterfly house in Romania opened in Praid in 2012. The building is divided in two houses, built for this purpose, a reception area that is connected with a souvenir shop, next to an area called "flight space", with a tropical microclimate, filled with tropical plants, with a small lake and a circular alley. Butterfly species that can be found here include zebra butterflies, azure butterflies, paper kite butterflies, and many more. The building is located on Küllömező Street.



Trail: Medium difficulty

Elevation difference: +695m

Critical spots: When walking in the forests, pay close attention to wildlife. There are two demanding ascents, the first is longer and the second shorter, but steeper; for the hike from Praid to Atia, there are no water sources, the main supply is from Praid

Scenery: After leaving Praid, the trail is through nature, through the forest, over the hills, through fields with flowers until the end of the day when it reaches the village of Atia.

Accommodation:

Atia (736m alt.): *Kiss Család Lak Agro-Guest House*, 6 double rooms available, food and washing machine on request, with prior reservation: Tel: +40 754 991 407 (Kiss János), or at <https://www.kisscsaladlak.ro/en/>;

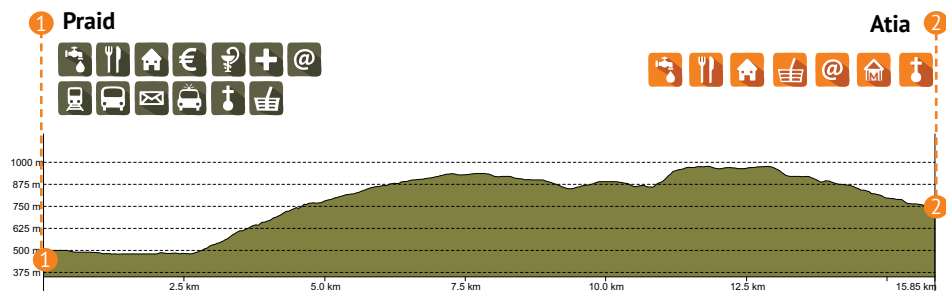
Guest house, 2 rooms with 3-4 beds, meals on request, access to the kitchen. Reservation at tel. +40 756 242 660 (Péter Herta Juliánna).

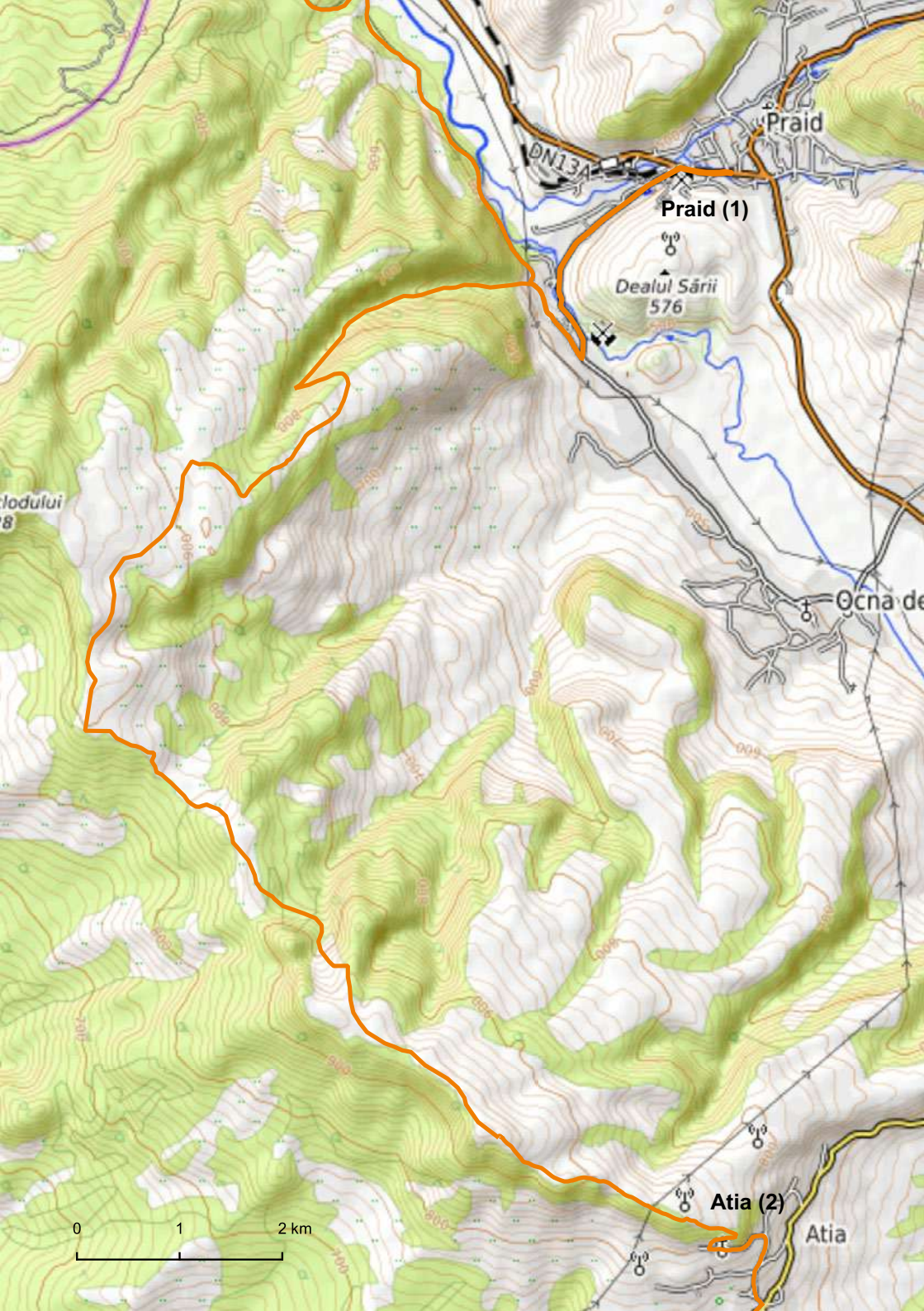
Infrastructure:

Atia: 

Note:

When leaving Praid (1), follow the asphalt road round the right hairpin corner behind the Wellness tourist complex. Leaving the houses behind you, you will reach the stream that you crossed the day before. Here, the trail overlaps the Via Maria with both markings indicating a road that goes up to the left. Continue this long climb on a forest road for about 1.5km. Leaving the forest, the route reaches the first clearing that opens to the surrounding villages, offering spectacular views. The path climbs slightly for almost 1km to a cowshed. You will see a few small scattered trees, some bushes in a clearing and several paths, but the VT markings bypass the cowshed to the left-hand side and climb relatively easily for a few hundred meters. The landscape is airy, open, and continues in the same way onto the ridge of the hill following a mountain path that at one point descends and ascends for about 2km; then, straight ahead, the path turns to the right in





Praid

Praid (1)

Dealul Sării
576

Dealul 8

Ocna de Praid

Atia (2)

Atia



a very steep ascent for a few hundred meters. Continue the path to the right, reaching the ridge, which you will follow for about 1.5km straight or slightly descending. After a few more kilometers you reach a covered lookout point with benches (in Hungarian: "Fias tetői kilátó") where you can take a break in the shade. From this point, continue on the mountain path which will ascend and descend slightly keeping the forest on the right. At one point, you will pass power tower which marks the nearing point to the descent into the village of Atia (2). Go through the tall grass and turn slightly left towards the chapel and descend past the 14 crosses before traversing the cemetery in the village. Continue down to the white church. Don't forget to close the gates at the entrance and exit of "Via Dolorosa" (the row of wooden crosses). From here we continue on the street, admiring the houses hardened with time. Follow the markings to the center of the village and onto the accommodation. Being a shorter day, the remaining time could be used for a visit to the house of the artist László Vinczeffy, where he keeps a permanent exhibition, but also other very interesting small points of interest hidden in this small village from Harghita county.

Info:

Corund Village (Corund ceramics) – Corund (Hungarian Korond) is the main village of the locality of Corund. It is located in the western part of Harghita County, in the Praid basin. The village is known as a center for folk pottery. Pottery from Corund features stylish floral and zoomorphic designs, symbols of Szeklers and Hungarians. Corund ceramics are made in different colors: white, brown, blue (cobalt), or multicolored. Also there are here traces of human presence found from ancient times (such as but not limited to prehistoric gold earrings and a Roman tower which was discovered in the 80s).

The house of the artist Vinczeffy László – In Atia, there is the house of the artist Vinczeffy László who was born here. He has arranged an area to host a complex, permanent exhibition that includes many of his works, from wood carvings to paintings made using special techniques. He warmly welcomes visitors and is happy to present the place he transformed through his work into an unexpected oasis of art in the middle of a Szekler village in Harghita. The traditional house has a carved veranda with motifs of the local area and the old house in the same garden is arranged with old objects preserved or gathered from the village. The artist organizes and annually holds an exhibition of several famous Hungarian and Transylvanian artists. Donations are welcome to support activities at Kakasülő Galéria.

Abel's house in the woods – Inspired by the book with the same name, written by Tamási Áron, the film *Abel in the woods* (1994, *Ábel a rengetegben*) was also filmed in the village of Atia. The house from the opening of the film can be seen today on one of the streets of the village and is more than 100 years old. Many villagers will know how to lead visitors to it.



Trail: medium to difficult, with steep climbs and height variance

Elevation difference: 571m

Critical spots: lack of water, there are two possible springs on the trail that are to be arranged. We recommend water from Atia village.

Scenery: the trail goes a lot through deep shade forests, hill ridges and it follows the crest of the hills above the villages, with breathtaking scenery, mountain ranges, former fortress and silence;

Cazări:

Lupeni (565m alt) *Pension Farkastanya Vendégház*, 11 beds, dinner and breakfast on request, prior reservation by phone number +40 747 885 435 (Barna).

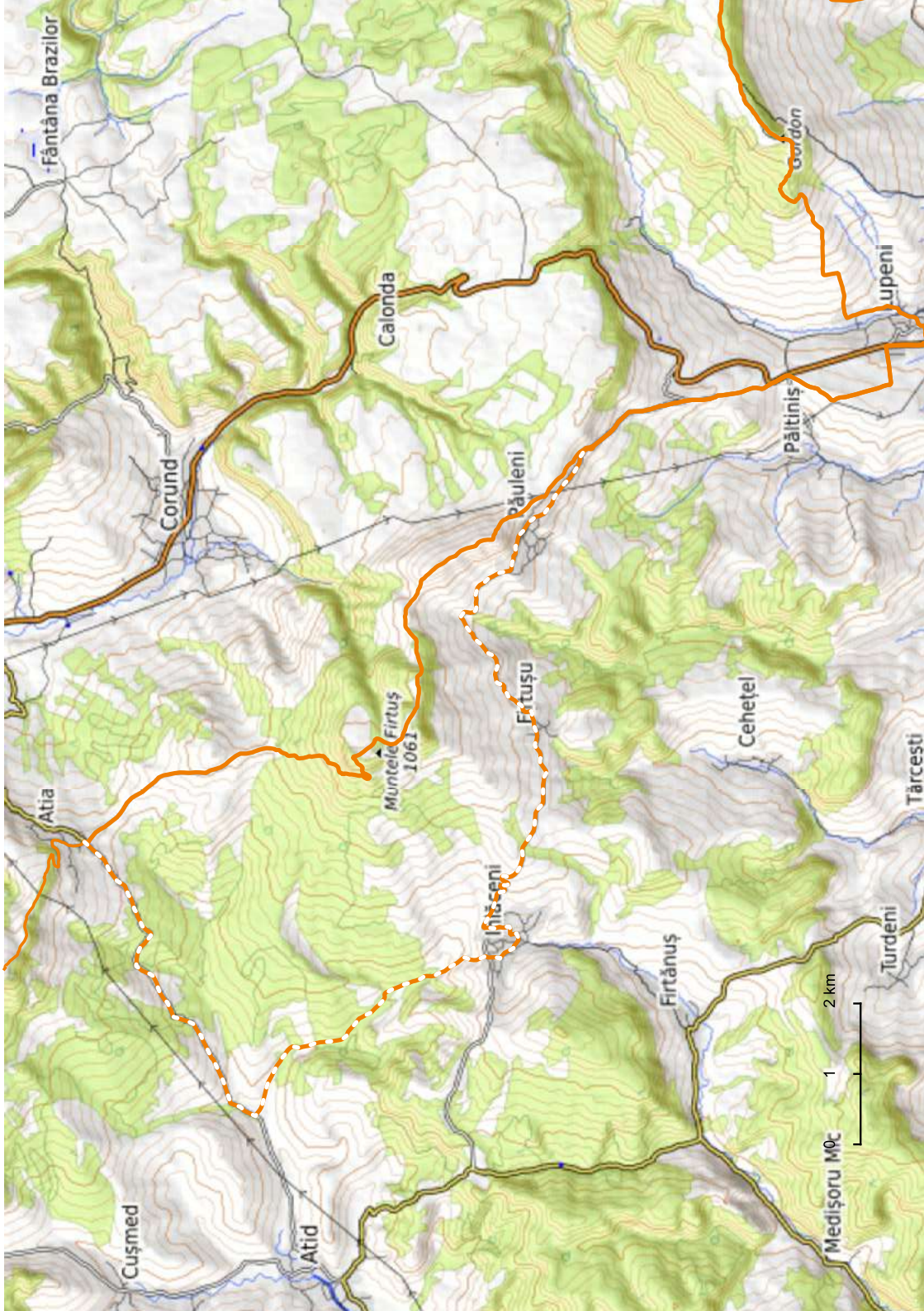
Good to know: In Lupeni, the *Barangoló Guest House* is the one used by the teams of markers and Tășuleasa girls throughout the construction of the route in Harghita County. Although it is about 2.5km from the route, we highly recommend it, having excellent brandy and food made by Mr. Ernő and his beautiful family. The guest house has plenty of accommodation places and the food makes you want to come back whenever you are in the area. Barangoló Guest House, address: Fő út 638, Lupeni, phone +40 733 953 063 and +40 740 388 110.

Infrastructure:

Lupeni: 

Note:

Today you will leave Atia (1) and follow the markings in the direction of “Énlaka” or Inlăceni, towards the exit from the village on a stony road. Before the exit of the village, Alternative A of our trail takes a left turn, near after a kilometre stone, with an arrow indicating this. Walk along the stony (or muddy) road until you reach a crossroad, past which the road curves slightly to the right, leaving it to the left, and exit the village. Slowly you reach some clearings, where the landscape opens up, the road turns into a dirt track looking more and more like a path, but keeping the traces of off-road vehicles or carts. It goes over hills, gently uphill, with lone trees or dense, young hazel woods. The road becomes stony again and constantly changes, depending on how it is used: access to meadows, farms or herds of cows, or access to forest. After three km from the village exit, the trail reaches a thick forest, which is crossed by a muddy, tractor-like but much narrower road, where bear tracks can be found in the mud from time to time. Walking along the road, the surrounding silence will prompt the hiker to whistle, sing or clap their hands to make their presence heard. In the distance, on the left side in the direction of walking you can see the Călimani Mountains, the Harghita Mountains, several villages, like Praid and Corund, and on the right side you can see the Făgăraș Massif. When you have visibility you can even see Piatra Craiului, Bucegii and to the right of all you can see Apusenii Mountains. In a gentle climb, the route approaches a few viewpoints, where you can see the mountains above, walking on a ridge of hill a few hundred meters. From here, you can see the surrounding hills, where in the old days, the locals used to set alarmfires. They were used by them to send out different messages: either calls to battle when the commander needed men, or warnings of danger when enemies were approaching. Later,



Fântâna Brazilor

Corund

Calonda

Gordón

Păuleni

Păltiniș

Atia

Muntele Firtuș
1061

Firtușu

Cehetel

Târcești

Ișișeni

Firtănuș

Turdeni

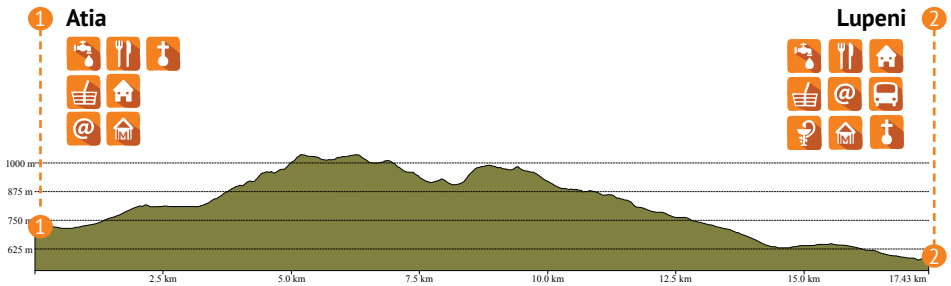
Cușmed

Atid

2 km

1

Medișoru MŃC



these fires became sentry fires. Nowadays, the custom is still maintained when on the last Sunday in October the locals go out to the highest hill near the village and make a bonfire. Songs of call to battle or soldier songs are sung and thus the late autumn season ends and everybody awaits winter.

After a short pause for silence at the point where we have a superb view, the route continues up the hillside in a dense climb to a forest, where we enter past a marking warning of the presence of bears. We walk through beech forest, on muddy road, damaged by machinery but with the possibility of bypassing the mud, passing through clearings with Via Maria signs, with which our route overlaps, following the typical VT signs and markings, and the beautiful kilometre stones. After a few steep climbs, the surprise at the top of the hill are the remains of an ancient fortress, the Firtuş Fortress, at the peak of Firtuş mountain. At the foot of this mountain the village with the same name exists. At the top, at what remains of the fortress, you also find a resting place, a bench to admire the scenery in the valley when the trees have no leaves and visible pieces of the circular wall of the fortress. After a short visit to the ruins of the fortress, the road continues through the clearing, out of the forest but surrounded by scraggy trees or young groves, then climbs again, with the forest on the right to wind down past it. It also passes by fences, the majestic landscape being there at every step. Then it follows a steep but short climb for a few metres and goes out again, on the top of a hill, which turns into a ridge, and at the foot of which you can see the village of Păuleni, and further on Lupeni. Then the path descends slightly and you can see parallel on the right side the paved road that leaves the village of Păuleni and towards which the path descends and then the paved road. We walk on concrete for a while, on the route of the Alternative B with which we are now overlapping, until we notice a small trail on the right and markings that show us to turn right, leaving the concrete. Here, the road becomes again a dirt track, passing a water reservoir on the left, then reaching the main road, but our trail runs parallel to it, with a dirt footpath on the right. On this we walk until an intersection, cross the road to the Satul Mic and then straight ahead along the edge of some farmland or pasture. On the left, Lupeni village is already stretching out and visible, very close. Then the trail turns left, on the markers, towards Lupeni, which you enter after a few hundred metres. Here turn right on the pavement, along the main road to the Tourist Information Centre. This will be the end of the day's route.



Info:

Firtuș Fortress - About 300 m northwest of the Firtuș peak are the ruins of the Firtuș fortress. The fortress is oval-shaped, the ruins of the 2 m thick walls are almost invisible in the forest clearing. Archaeological excavations and restoration works in the 1950s revealed the ruins of buildings on the north-eastern side and the walls on a 10 m long section. Together with the fortresses of Tartod and Budvar, Firtuș Fortress is part of a system of fortifications built at the beginning of the 12th century to defend the Hungarian feudal kingdom (Ferenczi, 1971, 1978). The ruins of a 13th-century monastery were discovered within the fortress. In the 18th century the fortress was used by monks of the Minorite order. In the 19th century the fortress is documented as uninhabited, most of the massive stones being used by the locals to build houses in neighbouring villages. At the road entrance to the fortress are the ruins of a small chapel consecrated to St. John. The fortress is also famous for the discovery in 1831 of a treasure of 237 gold coins dating from the Avar period in the early 7th century.

Tamási Áron Memorial House, Lupeni - Tamási Áron (1897 - 1966) was a Szekler writer who was born in Lupeni village but left Transylvania when it became part of Romania. He is the author of many literary works in Hungarian, but his best-known and best-loved works are contained in a trilogy describing the adventures of a Szekler boy named Ábel. His first books were published in Cluj-Napoca and were highly acclaimed. Tamási Áron died in Budapest, but his body was buried in his native lands - Szeklerland (Ținutul Secuiesc). The memorial house in Lupeni is over 150 years old and inside you can see furniture, photographs, letters and other personal belongings of the writer. His grave is located in the western part of the village, behind the Roman Catholic church and the cemetery, in a park with flowers.

Tamási Áron Monument - The monument is the work of the sculptor Jenő Szervátiusz from Cluj. The sculpture depicts the characters from the Ábel Trilogy, Énekesmadár and Őrdőgváltozás Csikban, the writer's main works.

Roman Catholic Church of Lupeni - It was built between 1842 and 1848 in the classicist style on the church hill located west to the village at an altitude of 581m. Dimensions of the church: 47m long, 15.80m wide, with a 38m high tower. The church bells were cast in Sibiu in 1927 and the harmonium was built in 1865 by Mátisfalvi Szócs Sámuel. In front of the church is a monument dedicated to the fallen heroes of the First World War..

Trail: Easy, well-marked, a large proportion is through traditional Szekler villages, asphalt.

Elevation difference: +552m

Critical spots: The section on asphalt can become challenging if the weather is extremely hot (we recommend water from the locals and sun protection)

Scenery: The trail goes through small, but wonderful villages with admirable courtyards, traditional Szekler gates and houses that are hundreds of years old. The connection between the villages is on asphalt, uphill, or young forest paths.

Accommodation:

Păuleni, Pension Szilas, 18 beds, shop nearby. Reservations by phone number +40 724 583 296 (Ildikó Szabo)

Lupeni (565m alt) Pension Farkastanya Vendégház, 11 beds, dinner and breakfast on request, prior reservation by phone number +40 747 885 435 (Barna).

Good to know: In Lupeni, the **Barangoló Guest House** is the one used by the teams of markers and Tășuleasa girls throughout the construction of the route in Harghita County. Although it is about 2.5km from the route, we highly recommend it, having excellent brandy and food made by Mr. Ernő and his beautiful family. The guest house has plenty of accommodation places and the food makes you want to come back whenever you are in the area. Barangoló Guest House, address: Fő út 638, Lupeni, phone +40 733 953 063 and +40 740 388 110.



Infrastructure:

Inlăceni: 

Firtușu: 

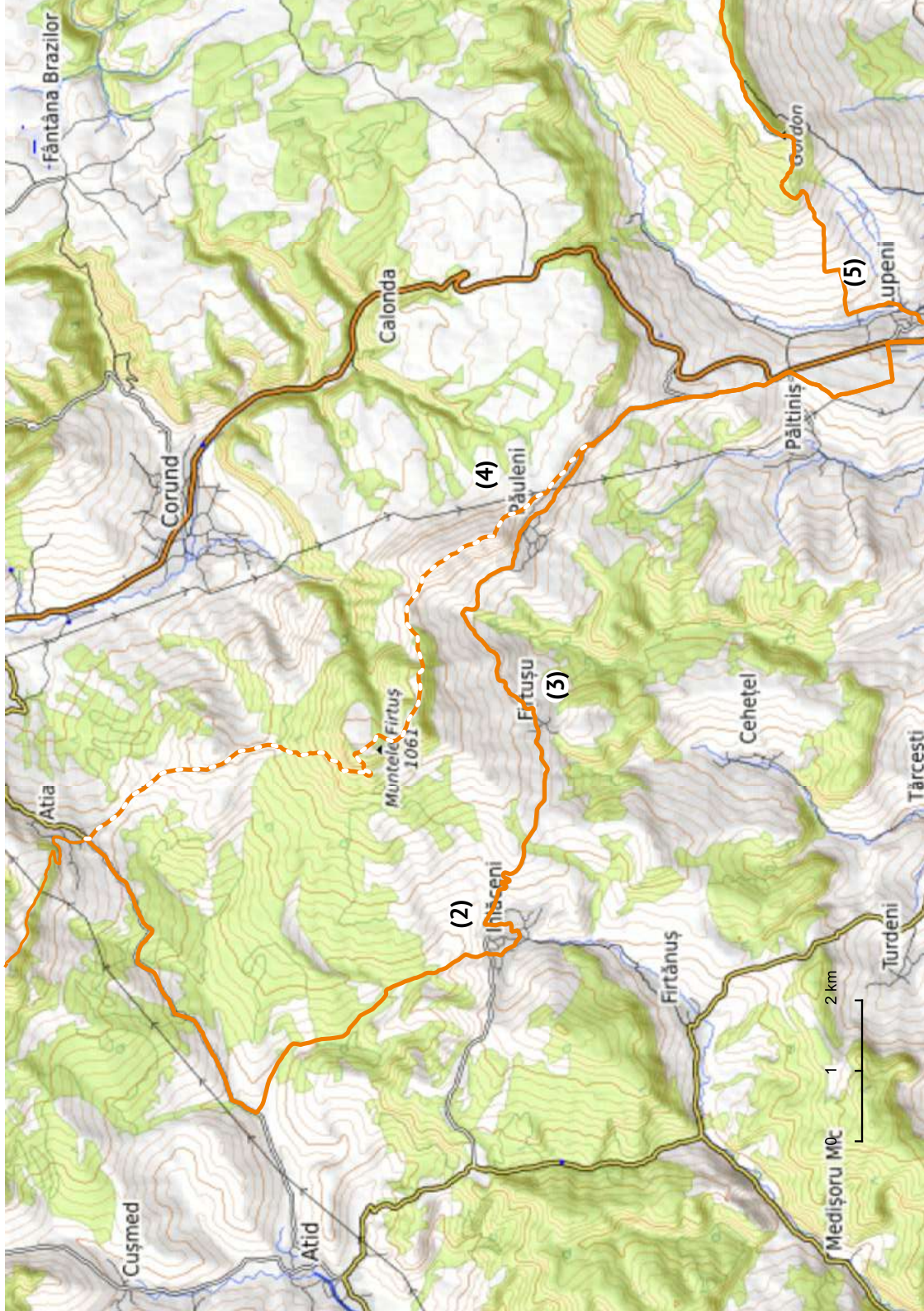
Păuleni: 

Lupeni: 



Note:

Leave Atia (1) on the marker towards “Énlaka” or Inlăceni, towards an exit from the village on a stony road. Leave the village, walking on the stony road for several kilometres until you cross a stone bridge on the left. Slowly you reach some large clearings, where you will pass by a family of charcoal burners, who process and make their charcoal there, using a method that is hundreds of years old. The trail reaches a thick forest, which is crossed by a much



Fântâna Braziilor

Atia

Cușmed

Corund

Atid

Calonda

Muntele Firtuș
1061

(2)

Firtănuș

(3)

Păuleni

(4)

Cehetel

Păltiniș

Gordon

Turdenui

Târcești

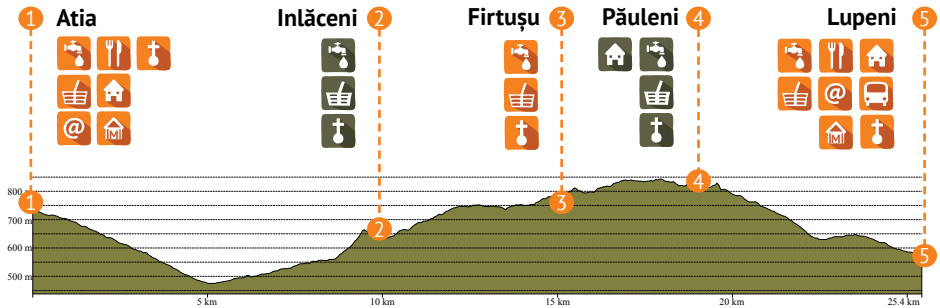
Lupeni

(5)

2 km

1

Medișoru Măr



narrower, tractor-like mud road, where bear tracks can occasionally be found in the mud. Walking along the road, the surrounding silence will prompt the hiker to whistle, sing or clap his hands, until the first signs of entering the village of Inlăceni (2). It should not be forgotten that starting from Atia, the route will be one that climbs sometimes smoothly, sometimes steeply towards Păuleni, from where, only after leaving it, the descent towards Lupeni will begin. Arrived in Inlăceni and going towards the centre of the village, with the old Unitarian church on the markers, you will pass through beautiful old houses, with an architecture pleasing to the eye, with a superb mixture of wood and stone. The houses seem to have fortifications up to the first floor, a custom taken over to make the cellars on the first level of the house.

Inlăceni seems to be an almost magical village due to its quietness, due to the surprises offered or the people you can meet, like a certain Willi bácsi, who may meet you, bring you to his house over a brandy shot and tell you for hours on end, without being able to stop, all sorts of adventures, some real, some invented, some from times long gone, like the hunt with Ceaușescu, others from other planets, like a “third degree encounter” - thus becoming the favourite host of hikers. Passing by his house, the trail leads to the shop from which, to the upper left, you walk to the Unitarian church. The shop is open throughout the day, at least that’s what the lady shopkeeper assured us. Walking up to the church, a few metres to the upper left, the phone number of the lady priest can be found on the gate program and she can present the church. (During the summer every weekday until 19:00, Sundays from 15:00-19:00, phone number: +40 746 674 970 - Nagy Mátéfi Timea. In case of unavailability please call Mrs. Koronka Lilla at phone number: +40 745 473 911. You can also enter the churchyard, where you can see tombstones dating back to ancient times, some even from the 18th century, with the Unitarianism sign on each of them: a weeping willow. If you enter the courtyard and walk behind the church through the old cemetery, you can also discover a linden tree, about 600 years old, which can be admired in the silence of the tombstones.

After a short pause for reflection at the Unitarian church, the route continues along the streets of Inlăceni until it leaves the village and enters the concrete in a dense and slightly heavy climb on sudden serpentines without much shade, to a lookout point, a covered bench on the right side of the road called “Castellum kilátó, Mihály pihenő”. Continue the slow ascent to Firtușu (3), another old village, built at the foot of an old fortress, the Firtuș fortress, which can be reached on another, relatively easy,

uphill marker from the village. You also cross this small village, with newer but equally beautiful houses, finding, from time to time, dilapidated houses that need to be restored and inhabited. In the centre of every Szekler village, there is a through with cold running water where hikers can fill their bottles. One passes from Firtuşu further on, on concrete, to Păuleni (4), along the contours of the hill on which the trail runs, from sun to shade and back again, to the village centre. Here, too, there are information boards about the village, its attestation and what the locals do for a living. Descending from Păuleni, on concrete, on a few serpentines, with increased attention because of passing cars, the trail then turns slightly right, on a paved road, as a shortcut to the concrete before. You ride on concrete for a while, on the Alternative A route with which we now overlap, until you notice a small trough on the right and markings indicating to turn right, leaving the



asphalt. Here, the road is again, a dirt one, passing a water reservoir on the left, then reaching the main road, but our route runs parallel to it, on the right side being a dirt road for pedestrians. On this you walk to an intersection (with the small village), cross the road and then straight on along the edge of some farmland or pasture. On the left, the village of Lupeni is already stretching out and is visible, very close. Then the trail turns left, on the markings, towards Lupeni (5), which you enter after a few dozen metres. Here you turn right along the pavement, along the main road, to the Tourist Information Centre. Here will be the end of the route for the day.

Info:

Inlăceni village - The village of Inlăceni, in Harghita county, is also called “the labyrinth village” as it is the only village in Romania where the number of alleys exceeds the number of houses. The landscape is also very special because of the houses built centuries ago, many of which still have the traditional Szekler gates, painted with specific motifs (the tulip). The houses are built of stone or wood, covered with small tiles and painted white or azure. Entrance to the house is not from the courtyard but from the mezzanine via wooden stairs. There are a considerable number of houses here, about 60, which have never been renovated and retain their old charm. The village is inhabited exclusively by Hungarians, a wise people who still live in the spirit of customs and traditions inherited from their ancestors. One could say that Inlăceni is a kind of living, breathing museum, far from the hustle and bustle of any road through the city.

The Church of Inlăceni - The landscape is dominated by the Unitarian Church that rises imposingly and nostalgically in the centre of the village. It was built on the site of a former Roman altar dedicated to the god Jupiter. A Roman stone has been built on the threshold of the church which tells of the visit of a high ranking Roman, probably the Emperor. The present church, rebuilt several times over the years, is an illustrated chronicle of the village, exemplified among other things by the coffered ceiling with Latin inscriptions. The cemetery is also steeped in history. Gravestones dating back to the 1800s and even earlier can be seen. Within the cemetery grounds there is also an impressive secular linden tree that is around 600 years old.

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Trail: Medium difficulty, well-marked, well balanced, passes through traditional Szekler villages and over the surrounding hills, through forests and with little asphalt.

Elevation difference: +746m

Critical spots: The climb out of Lupeni is a bit steep and long, asphalt before and in the city.

Scenery: The route climbs up to the "Heart of Jesus", a large statue where people can climb up to admire the surrounding landscape, passes through Dealu, the village that organizes a brandy festival and then over the hills and through traditional villages to Odorheiu Secuiesc.

Accommodation:


Dealu (755m alt): We recommend searching on the town hall website, where you will find a comprehensive list for Accommodation, but pay attention to the name of the village Dealu in Hungarian which is "Oroszhegy", where you should find accommodation - <https://oroszhegy.org/category/szallaslehetosegek/>;

Odorheiu Secuiesc (482m alt.): **Gizi Csárda**, 12 bed room, with breakfast included, restaurant, details, and reservations by phone +40 266 218 433 and +40 748 234 756 (close to the route); Or on the site: <http://tourinfo.ro/en/category/megszallni/>; Pension Panorama, 16 beds in double rooms, dinner and breakfast on request, access to the kitchen, reservations by tel. +40 266 212 345 (Haider Csaba).

Good to know: In this city there is a lot of accommodation so you will have to call in advance each contact recommended by this guide to find out availability. If there are no places available at the mentioned points, we recommend you look for more on the internet, where you can find options for all budgets.

Infrastructure:

Dealu: 

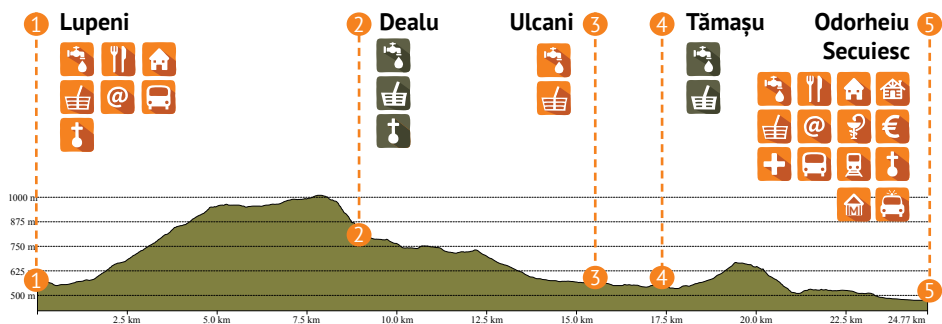
Ulcani: 

Tămașu: 

Odorheiu Secuiesc: 

Note:

Leaving from the Tourist Information Centre, walk to the church on the opposite side of the road, and then, following the markers, for 2 kilometres, visit the most important tourist points of Lupeni, The Church, The Tamasi Aron Museum, The Memorial House, etc. until the road that takes you to the right, uphill, towards the "Heart of Jesus". It starts on a cobbled road that goes up the hill as a slightly steep climb, but fortunately not too long. When you begin to see the ridge of the hill, you will notice a smaller clump of trees that are spread out, where you might also find dogs guarding sheep of a few sheepfolds at the top. The route intersects with "Via Dolorosa" (known to Roman Catholics as the "Way of the Cross"), which is marked with several stone sculptures a short distance from each other, from which it climbs to the top to the statue of Jesus. Here you can admire the surrounding landscape or you can even climb the statue to see the whole of Szeklerland.



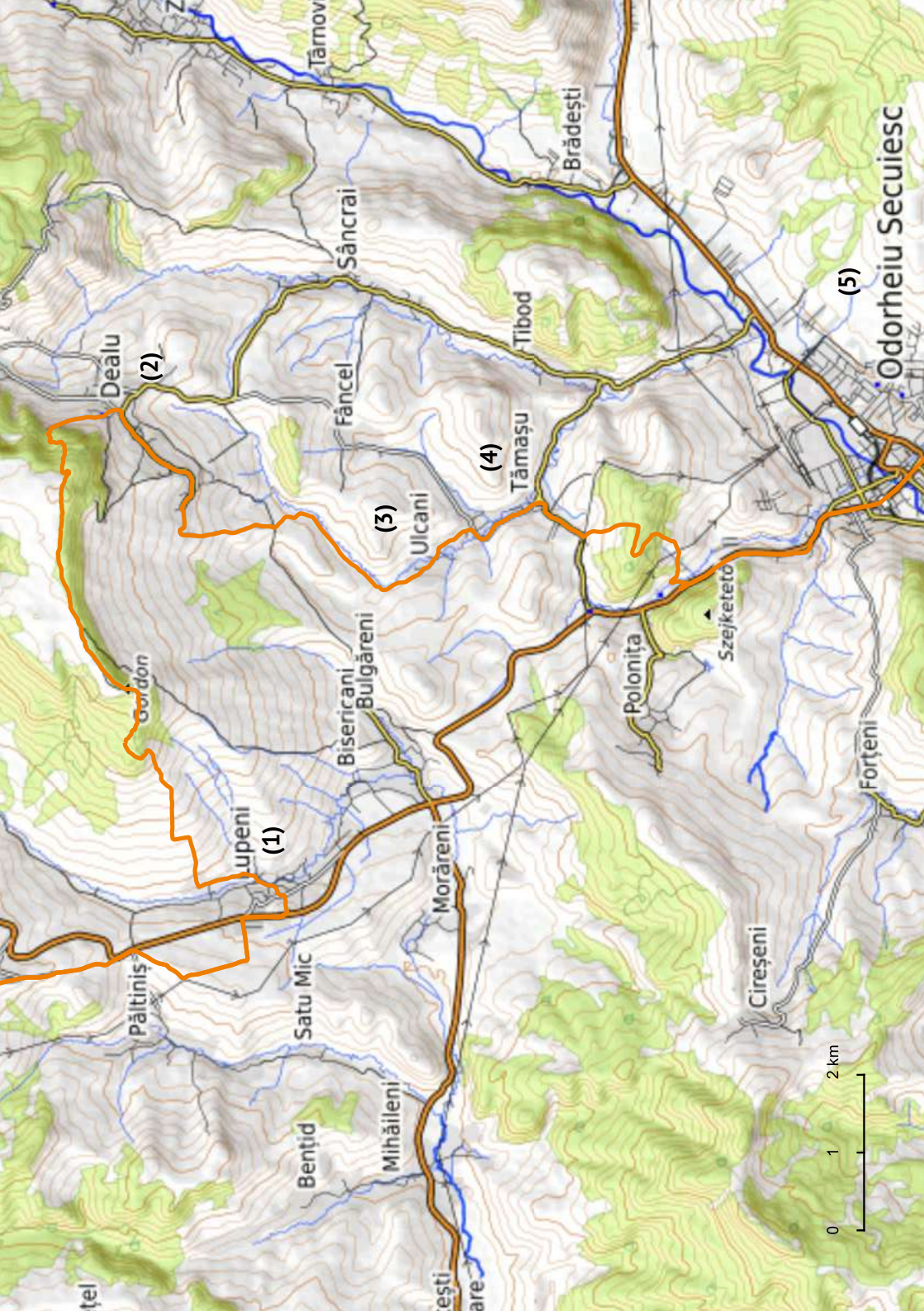
Behind the statue is a descent that follows the plateau, which is reachable also by car. After a few kilometers on the edge of the forest you will reach a small hut visible on the right as you enter the forest. If desired, 50m after passing this hut there is a lookout tower built from wood, where, from the top, you can admire Szeklerland and take a rest. Once you have got your breath back, continue on the same cobbled road for 200 meters until you see the entrance into the forest on the right. Here you enter a fairytale forest, through which you descend steeply for about 400 meters to the village of Dealu (2). Then, on the country road you descend into the center of the village, where the markings indicate right, keeping the village cafe on the left until the asphalt ends and you wander the narrow streets while paying attention to cars.

Gradually, the road becomes macadam and slowly leaves Dealu passing through pastures and a farm, next to which you turn left, following the markings, until you reach plains full of flowers with pleasant scents of sandalwood or other wildflowers. Crossing several meadows and fields with grass mowed or still high to the waist, you will pass another farm on the cart track from where you can see the edge of a village. Arriving at the road on the mud track turn left towards the center of Ulcani village (3). One kilometer after the entrance you will see a shop on the right. Here you can ring the bell if you want refreshments and the shopkeeper will come. From Ulcani head onto Tămașu village (4), which you will pass through as well. Shortly after you leave Ulcani, turn left into the pasture and slightly ascend on a cart road that takes you to the forest. After 100 meters through the forest turn right and continue to follow the markings until you come across another route, which is a circuit of Odorhei (5).

Leave this trail and head down to get out of the forest next to a private property with a fence on the left. Follow the fence to the end and turn right onto the path to the tomb of Orbán Balázs. Pass under the Szekler wooden gates and exit through the car park crossing the main road at the pedestrian crossing. From here join the bike path on the left toward Odorhei. Continue on this route for about 2.5km to the entrance of the town. At one point, you will bypass the main road on a smaller parallel road. Today ends in the city center of Odorheiu Secuiesc where you can discover local shops and get a taste for traditional Szekler products and food from the local restaurants.

Info:

Statue of the Heart of Jesus on Gordon Hill – In 2011 one of the largest statue of Jesus in Eastern Europe was built on Gordon Hill. This monument is on the route so it can be seen without deviating from the trail. The statue is 22m tall and is made of stainless steel and iron. You can climb the stairs inside the statue to have a beautiful view.





The Szejke-Orbán Balázs Museum of Mineral Waters and Baths – Orbán Balázs built a small bath on his estate that soon became popular. He also organized the transport of mineral water to the city with buffalo carts in clay jugs specific to the area. In 2008, the largest permanent exhibition of mineral water and baths opened here. The old jugs and the buffalo cart are exhibited and you have the chance to find out the process of how mineral water is formed.

The ***Legendarium Team*** from Odorheiu Secuiesc is behind the ***Mini Transylvania Park***. The purpose of this park is to present the architectural diversity of the multicultural Transylvania through miniature models. These models represent the most important buildings belonging to all the nationalities in the area. Most of the buildings exposed are part of the UNESCO Heritage. The models have been made by Domokos Vajda and Auróra Németh Hajnal, with the close guidance of János Gyöngyössy regarding professional graphical and historical knowledge. The objective of the project is to present the architectural diversity of Transylvania. Visitors can see, at least in miniature, some of the

most important historical monuments and symbols of our national identity, to enrich their knowledge of the cultural heritage of Transylvania and to become aware of their importance and thus to get involved in adopting measures to protect these valuable elements of our heritage.

The Orbán Balázs Visit Center – The "Orbán Balázs" info center is situated at Băile Szejké, north-west from the town of Odorheiu Secuiesc, close to the grave of the great predecessor. The permanent exhibition inside the Info Center has the purpose of honoring "the greatest Szekler". Visiting the exhibition rooms, we can learn about the life, activity, and the inheritance Orbán Balázs has left behind. Following his life path, the visitor can recognize domestic objects and photography equipment from another era, which can help the visitor form an idea about the techniques that were used in photography a long time ago. His numerous adventurous travels have inspired many wanderings through the Szekler Land from Transylvania, as well as his most important writing, *The Description of the Szekler Land*. One of the more spectacular elements of the exhibition (besides an Egyptian Pyramid and other objects) is an old camera, similar to the one Orbán Balázs used. As he was an important personality of his era, the political life of the time can also be known from his perspective. With the help of an animated, realistic hologram, one can listen to a speech Orbán Balázs has held in person in the Hungarian Parliament. Related to his career as a politician, it is worth mentioning that due to his political beliefs, he had to duel twice. These events stand as proof of his seriousness when it came to politics, especially in the fight for justice for the Szekler people.

Haáz Rezső Museum – The Haáz Rezső Museum is waiting for you in the new headquarters on Beclean Street no. 2-6, in the villa Haberstumpf. The building was designed and built as a villa for his family by Haberstumpf Károly senior, a German from Bistrița. The eclectic style with German influence differs from the old Odorheian buildings. The grandeur of the villa reflects the former social status of the Haberstumpf family.

Jesus Chapel: Jesus Chapel (Chapel of the Heart of Jesus, Chapel of the Holy Heart) is located at the southern entrance of the city (2 Bazinului Street). It is the only medieval monument preserved in its original state. It probably dates back to the 13th century, being built in Roman style with a quatrefoil shape, the ceiling is decorated with painted boxes (1667).

Szekler Calvary – North of the city, under the peak of Mál, begins the Szekler Calvary, erected in memory of the millennial diocese of Transylvania, from the donation of the Ugron family. The sculptures done in bas-reliefs in the rock by Zavacki Walter follow are found every 30 meters, symbolizing at the same time important dates in Szekler history. Calvary is meant to serve the upliftment of the soul to find inner peace.

Iron Szekler – The bronze statue of the Iron Szekler is found in the Márton Áron Square, which is a copy of the one removed in 1919. It is the work of the sculptor Szabó János who made this statue from the donations of the descendants of the heroes who fell in the two world wars.

Julia Simo Collection – This elegant house was built in 1910. In the salon there are exhibited folk costumes from several cultures, from the 19th century and early 20th century. The collection was created by Atelierul Rustic. The address where the exhibition is located is Odorheiu Secuiesc, 26 József Attila Street. For more information, call +40 266 212 033 or +40 744 313 289.

The statue of Orbán Balázs – Near the Reformed church is the bronze statue of Orbán Balázs (1829–1890), called "The Greatest Szekler." Orbán Balázs's life was a romantic

one, full of adventures. Roaming the Szeklerland, he published his masterpiece in 6 volumes - "Description of the Szeklerland." He was an exceptional writer, ethnographer and photographer, who from 1872 until his death was a member of the Hungarian government and a corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He died without heirs, leaving his fortune to the country.

Székelytámadt Fortress – In the immediate vicinity of the center, on Tompa László Street, no. 12, you can find the "Székelytámadt" fortress. Báthory István tried to turn it into a fortified castle-fortress (1490-1492). János Zsigmond, Prince of Transylvania, ordered the reconstruction of the fortress after the defeat of the rebellious Szeklers (1562). The fortress, according to the model of the time, was built in neo-Italian style. Following the defeat at Şelimbăr in 1599, it was decided to rebuild the fortress demolished by the Szeklers in 1600. However, restoration work began only during the reign of Bethlen Gábor, Prince of Transylvania. Its final destruction took place in 1706 and since then it has been called "Cetate Ciuntă".

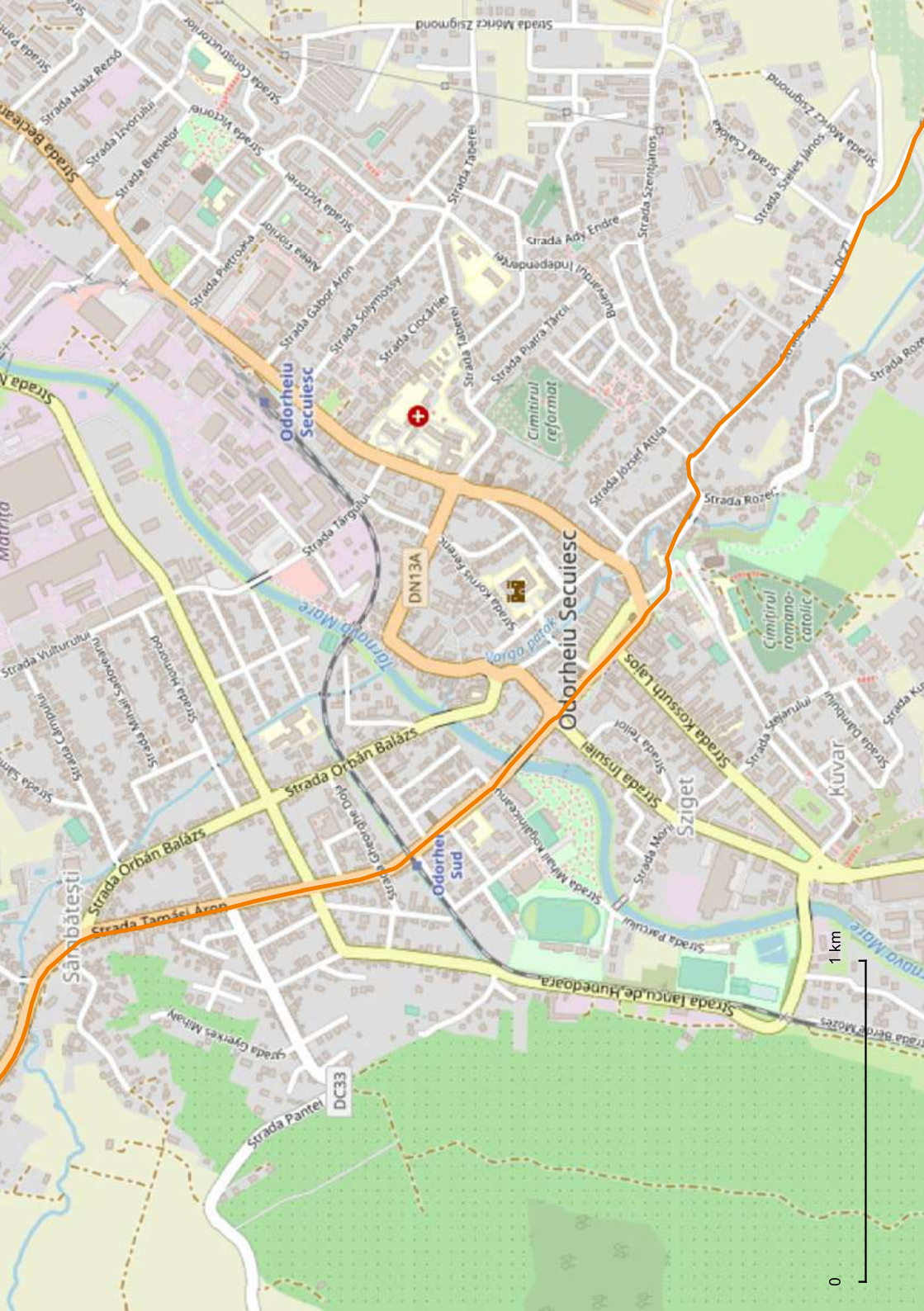
Potcoava (Horseshoe) – The northern part of the center square, where the statue of the Szekler Hero was erected, at the beginning of the 19th century, was built in its current horseshoe shape in 1941, from the donation of the twin city of Pestszentlőrinc, a sector of the Hungarian capital, Budapest. Since then, the locals simply call it "Horseshoe". Even though it is not a real horseshoe, it is the largest horseshoe in the world.

The Church of the Monks – Church of St. Francis (the Church of the Monks) is located at the intersection of Cetății Street with the Central Square, being the oldest in the city center (1728–1779). The primary school of the Franciscans operated here between 1784–1927, and in 1928 the building of St. Anton's College was erected. The Franciscan sisters in Mallersdorf are currently working here. During the plague epidemic of 1710, two Franciscan monks, Fábíán Bernárdin and Kálmán Ferenc, sacrificed themselves to care for the sick.

Kováts Photo Museum – It is a unique photo workshop in Europe, which functions with natural light. Here you can see the old cameras kept in their original condition, backgrounds, decors, and technical curiosities. There is the possibility to look inside the cameras that are a hundred years old and you can experience the manual development of black and white photos in the darkroom.

Cumsecade / Helyénvaló store – This is a store for local products and an alternative business, which tries to embody new ideas in the business world. It is created by the Civitas Foundation, and it sees producers and buyers as partners wanting to help their collaboration by carefully selecting its suppliers, offering only seasonal products. At the same time, this company offers an ethical business and has been working consistently for 25 years towards the sustainability and evolution of the rural environment. With the Foodhub project and the Helyénvaló store, the Civitas Foundation for Civil Society wants to support local producers in facilitating market access for products. Local products are healthy, ecological, and reflect traditions and with the store and the foundation they try to strengthen social cohesion and community spirit by contributing to the development of self-identity and forming awareness. By purchasing these products, you contribute to rural preservation and the development of a prosperous vision.

The store can be found at II. Rákóczi Ferenc street, no. 15, Odorheiu Secuiesc or online on the page: www.helyenvalo.ro. Opening hours: Monday-Friday from 9:00 to 18:00 and Saturday from 9:00 to 14:00 (except the last Saturday of the month, the day of the local fair).



Odorheiu Secuiesc

Odorheiu Secuiesc

DNT3A

DC33

1 km

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Strada Mărica Zsigmond

Strada Halyk Rezső

Strada Constantin Ior

Strada Halyk Rezső

Strada Ivorukli

Strada Bereştor

Strada Victorie

Strada Victorie

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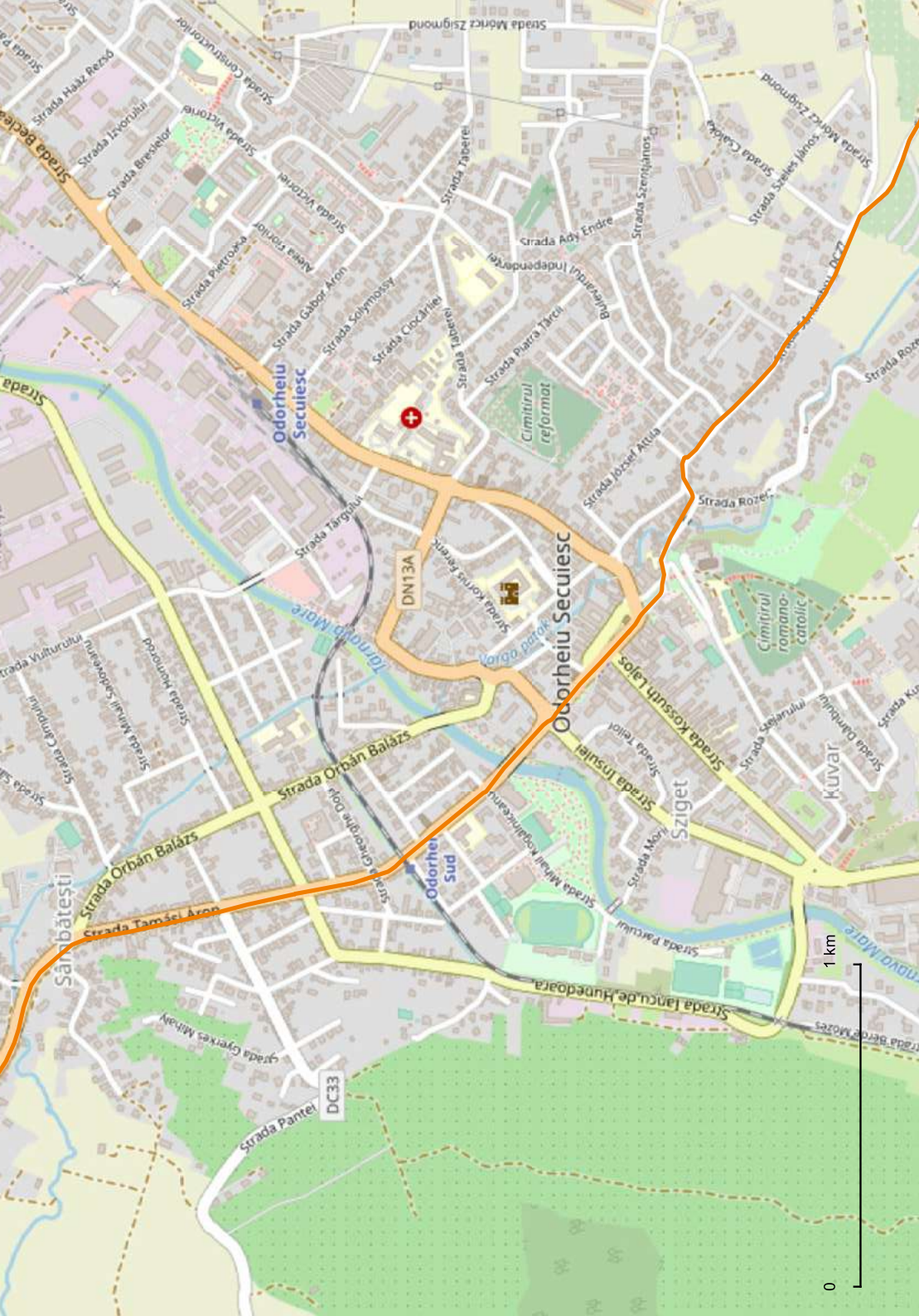
Strada Victorie

Strada Victorie

Strada Victorie

Strada Victorie

Strada Victorie



Trail: Easy

Elevation difference: +483m

Critical spots: At the exit from Odorhei there are a few sheepfolds, pay attention when on asphalt roads.

Scenery: From the hills above the town there are meadows with sheepfolds, then a lot of forest with shade, traditional villages and wild cherry trees by the roadside.

Accommodation:

Mărtiniș (500m alt.): Old, traditional houses, managed by László Arpad and Ildikó, offer up to 8 beds with dinner and breakfast on request. The family also manages a house-museum where they will guide you (for a donation). Accommodation here will make you feel like you traveled back in time, to childhood with your grandparents in the countryside. Dinner included, breakfast on request, reservations with at least 2 days in advance by phone: +40 756 901 919. The family also has the key to an open-air art museum, by sculptor Roman Viktor, a few steps from their home. The whole location is called *Bükkfalva*;

Infrastructure:

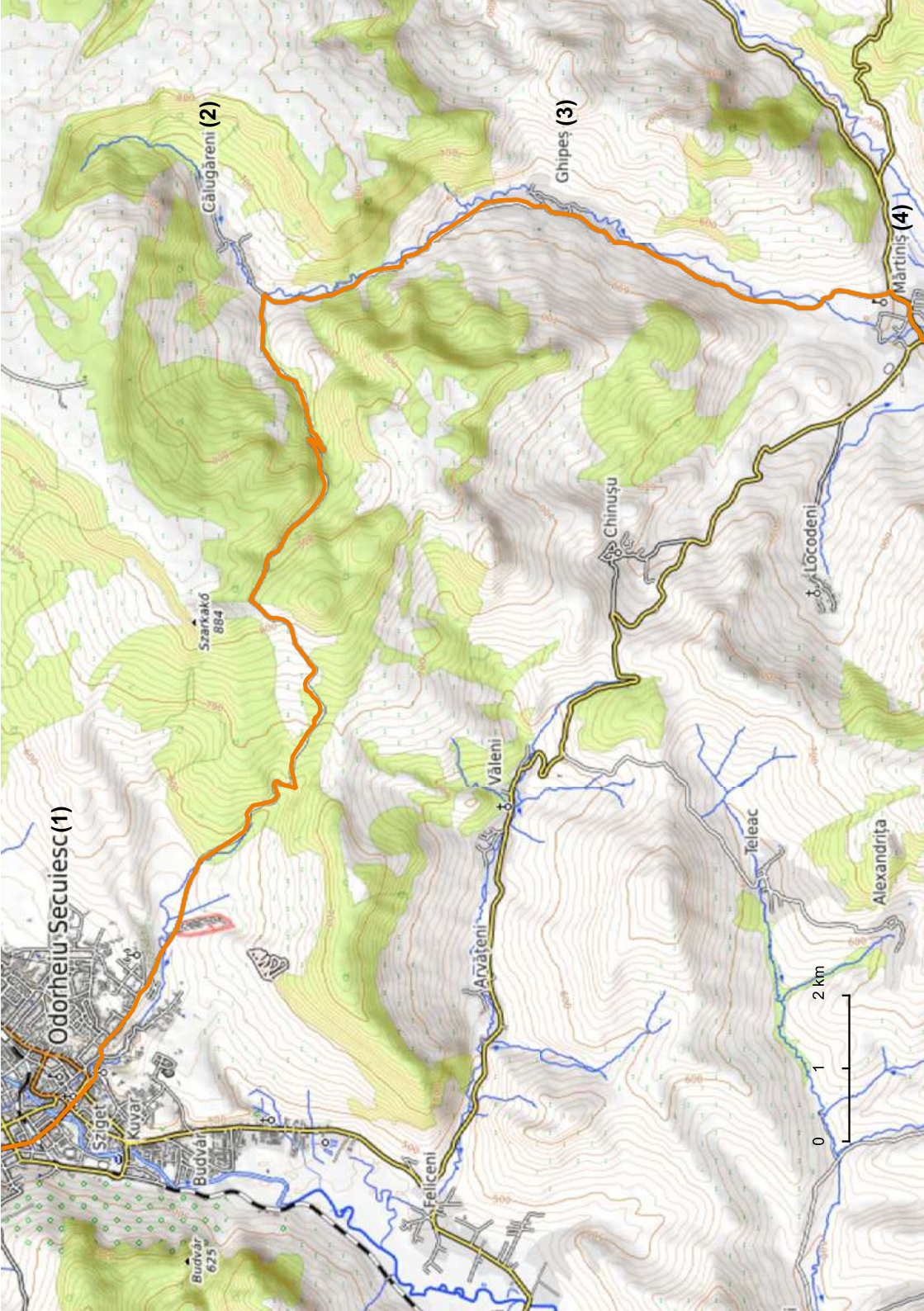
Călugăreni:   

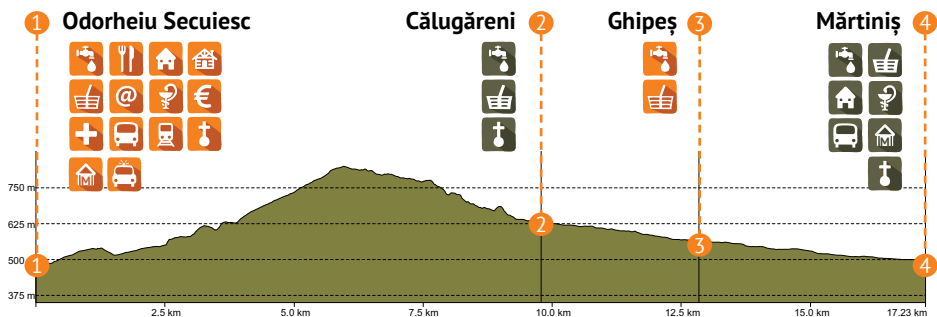
Ghipeș:  

Mărtiniș:      

Note:

Odorheiu Secuiesc (1) is a medium-sized, modern town, with a lot to offer for all budgets. As the VT trail did not pass through a town for some time, here is the right place to repair your backpacks, renew your boots and pick up supplies. After getting back on the trail, cross the city center by following the markings through streets to the edge of the city, ascending slightly on the sidewalk, until it descends again and the road turns into a macadam road. Walk slowly among the last houses/construction until you come out in a meadow with a fairly wide road but still quite well used by the locals - most of them being mushroom pickers or shepherds who head up to the sheepfolds on the hill. When leaving the forest on the stony road, the trail turns right and climbs the serpentine road to the sheepfold whose dogs will run madly towards you. However, if they are avoided by taking other paths, which lead in the same direction, they will not bother you. You will come out slowly towards the top of the ridge where VT and the path that circles Odorheiu meet again, but the trails don't follow one another. The VT trail heads down, straight ahead, through a kind of intersection, where several people exploit wood in the forest. After starting the easy descent on the forest road, moving away from the exploitation area you arrive in small meadows, which are the perfect places to take breaks or rest. Walk another 2km through a thick and young forest - don't forget to make noise to avoid any animal encounter. Once you reach the intersection, turn left towards the village of Călugăreni (2), where, but at some point the path, will take a right towards Ghipeș (3). Continue on the country road for about 2.5km slightly climbing to the village where you will meet an asphalt road. Cross the village towards Mărtiniș (4). From here on, the route will be about 3km on asphalt or macadam roads. You will see people working their





land, bailing machines or tractors for processing the hay. There are black cherries or ripe cherry plums on the side of the road, however, there is no shade for a while. After about 3km, you reach the village of Mărtiniș and right in the center you can enjoy a well-deserved break on the terrace of the village store. From here the recommended accommodation is close and is on the marked path towards the end of the village, in an oasis of peace and quiet. Cross the road to the opposite side of the store and turn left into an alley between the houses, in front of an old unitary church, which is worth a visit. Then, next to the stream in the shade and in front of some houses with many and colorful flowers, you cross a bridge, then, on the edge of a cornfield, you cross the stream. After about a kilometer and a half, you reach the old houses where you can see the sign 'Road of the Heart' - a red heart. Here contact the family mentioned above on the phone number indicated, or continue to the guesthouse in Rareș.

Info:

Román Viktor – Román Viktor was a Romanian sculptor of Hungarian origin, whose works were appreciated internationally. He was born in the village of Mărtiniș in 1927 and died in Paris in 1995. He studied at the School of Fine Arts in Târgu-Mureș. After the establishment of the communist regime, he lived the rest of his life in Paris. He was noted not so much for monumental works, but for pieces of somewhat smaller size, where his own talent made an unmistakable stylistic imprint. Among his works are "Skater", exhibited in Floreasca Park and "Vampire", exhibited in Siegen, Germany. The artist's older brother, an architect, wanted to build in Mărtiniș a place to exhibit his brother's works. The place can be visited, although the house designed by the artist's brother was not completed after his death, however in the courtyard are some of the sculptures of Román Viktor that can be visited.

Museum House/ Artists' House – A family from the village of Mărtiniș, László Ildikó and her husband, collected from villagers various tools, carts, furniture, crockery, clothes, letters, paintings and much more, as well as from their archives. They managed to arrange a museum in the village that they present with great enthusiasm to anyone who crosses their doorstep. As the husband's father is a wheelwright, many of these crafts are explained.

The artists' house - is one of the houses they also manage, where photography exhibitions, art camps or cultural events are organized and, even though it is a traditional house, there is also possible accommodation.

Biró-Ugron Curia – Biró-Ugron Curia from Mărtiniș was the residence of one of the important families of barons from Szeklerland. The massive masonry gate is visible from the main road of the village. The house is centrally located, being the most important building in the area. Although it is in bad condition, the house still retains the atmosphere of a noble residence.

Mărtiniș Unitarian Church –The historical church in the center of the village is located at the beginning of Bisericii (Church) Street and built at the end of the 19th century, replacing its gothic predecessor. The church was surrounded by an oval-shaped fortress wall, reinforced with 6 defense towers with the entrance under the medieval gate tower that was built separately from the church. At present, you can only find the elevated gate tower and the ruins of the fortress wall, built in the 17th century. The new church was built with a north-south orientation with the following inscription on the facade: “It was built in 1888-1889, on the site of a 12th century church and transformed in the 15th century”. The Gothic church is decorated with medieval murals that are important for art history.



Trail: Medium difficulty

Elevation difference: +641m

Critical spots: There are several intersections in open fields, where more attention is required to the markings, the distance is considerable, several sheepfolds and cow herds guarded by dogs

Scenery: It will change slightly, being on the border of two cultures: Szeklers and Saxons, the paths pass through fields, through the forest, paved roads or dirt paths through the grass. There is a little asphalt when you reach the villages Rareș, Sânpaul, Daia, Iașu, Ulieș and Dârjiu, where you can admire the architecture of the Szekler and Saxon churches and houses.

Accommodation:

Rareș: Nagy-Homoród Étterem és Panzió, 3km from the trail, 35 accommodation places, reservations by phone +40 266 223 098.

Dârjiu (556m. alt): The house next to the parish, nr. 162. For reservations: +40 765 967 426 (Măria Zoltáni), dinner and breakfast only with prior notice - separate price.

Orbán Guesthouse (www.orbanpanzio.ro) situated in the back of the fortified church, reservations can be made at the phone number +40 754 910 116. In the small house (4 -5 available places) can be booked for a night, while the bigger house (8-12 places can be booked for a minimum of 3 nights, possibility of catering through **Vih Colt Kitchen**, with prior reservation at the phone number +40 266 222 143;

Also, the **Unitarian Parish** wishes to provide accommodation in the old school. For more details, you can call the phone number +40 266 222 183.

Infrastructure: Sânpaul: 

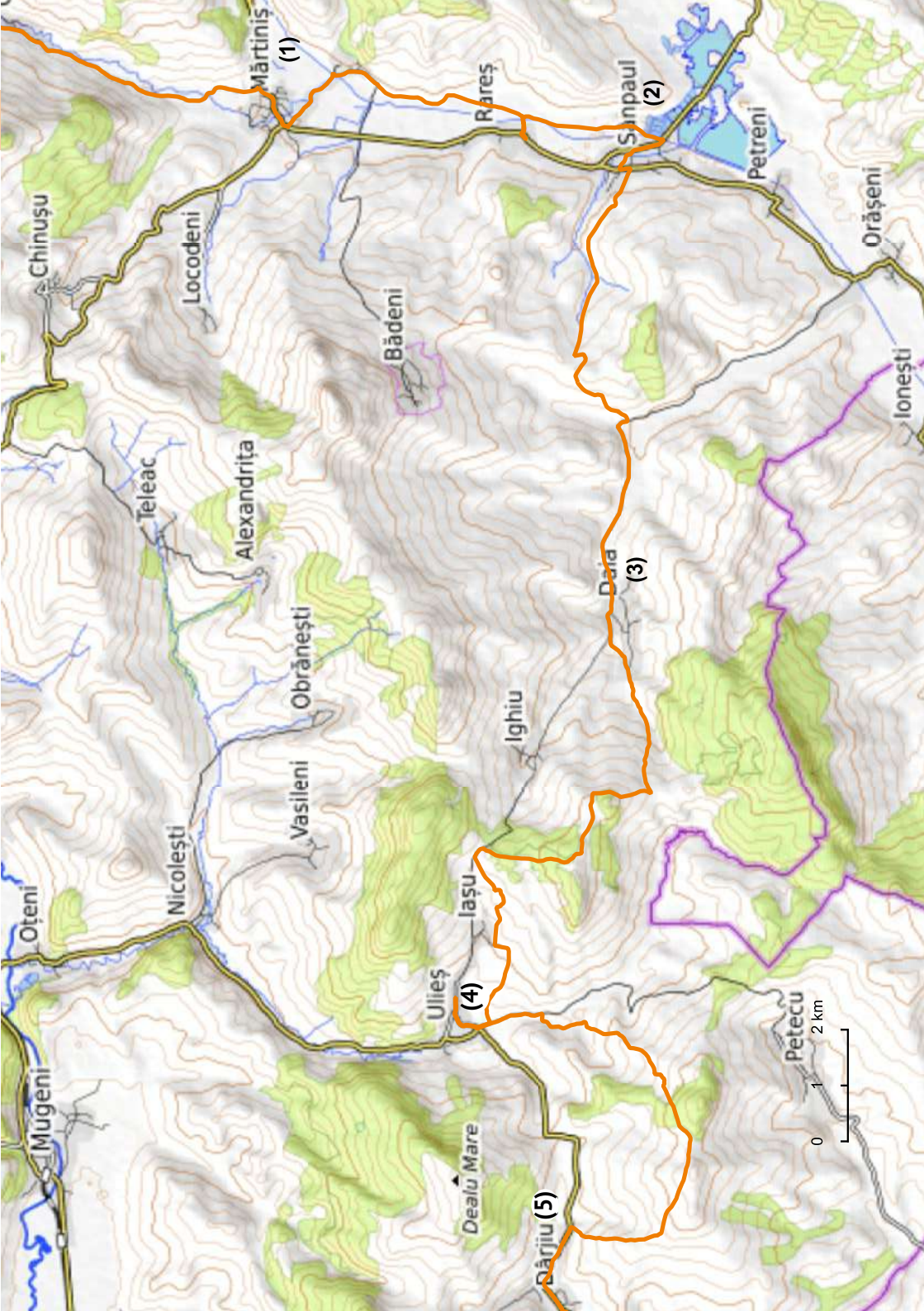
Daia: 

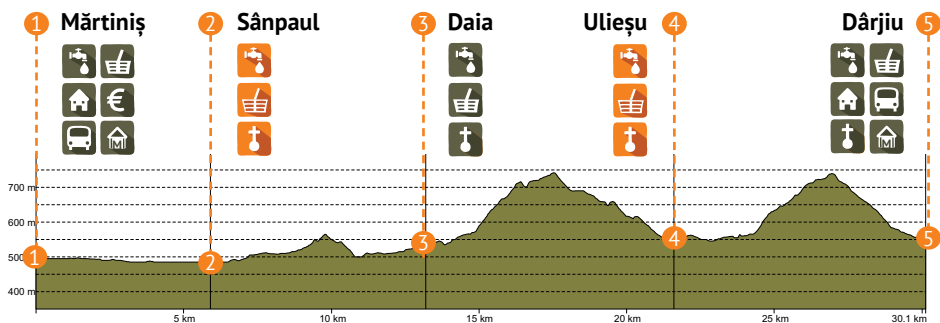
Ulieșu: 

Dârjiu: 

Note:

The village of Mărtiniș (1) will be difficult to leave as it is filled with charming alleys and small hidden treasures. However, VT continues with a slightly longer and therefore slightly demanding stage than in past days. You will follow the markings through the fields that the villagers work. Various crops will be seen, from large areas of alfalfa to wheat and corn fields. On the slightly flatter stretch there are scattered clumps of trees for about 3km which makes for a pleasant walk. Beyond the cornfields, on the right, the houses of Rareș village will start to become more evident, where you can stop and visit the church in about 500m on the right. After visiting the church, return to the route on the same road, straight ahead on the road. Walk for a while through the fields for about a kilometer. The route goes towards the village of Sânpaul (2), passing by the Natural Reserve "Popasul Pășării de la Sânpaul", i.e. 2 lakes on the lefthand side. Soon you will reach the asphalt in the village where the road takes a right and continues on asphalt. Follow the markings through the village, passing by people's houses, and stop at the church if you wish. Immediately turn left onto a short section of asphalt, leaving the village behind you. You will find yourself on a dirt road that winds gently through the





hills where you can see fenced properties, bales of hay and herds of cows. The route continues for 3 more kilometers, making a slight ascent before descending to the village of Daia (3). Here, walk on the unpaved road to the center of the village where there is a fortified church and, very close to it, a small shop with a terrace where you can find food and refreshing drinks. In Daia you will have reached the 10.5km mark for today. Continue until you reach an ascent up the hill passing grazing cows as you leave the village. Follow the path on which there are cherry trees, which in June-July are full of delicious fruits that leave your fingers and lips red and your stomach full. Climb up, bypassing the fenced area for cows, and turn left towards some oak trees. Follow the path to the oak grove where the road suddenly turns right uphill. Continue past the groves and out onto the ridge of the hill on the cart track. On the left, you will see new grazing areas fenced with an electric fence. At the end of it, our route takes a left into a slight climb, bypassing the edge of the forest on your right. At one point among the scattered oaks on the right, the route heads towards two sheepfolds and leaves the ridge behind into a small descent through the oaks, old beeches, and wild cherry trees. The path descends to a communal road where you turn left for about 100m and left again onto a pasture track. Following the markings through the pasture, keeping level with the gradient of the land, the route slowly turns left to Iașu village. Continue on the side of the village, between the houses before heading into the fields again, passing a farm, from which the route takes a sudden right down to the base of the hill to the roads near the hayfields found on the right and the brook on the left. You will reach the main road that enters Ulieș (4), then turn right after 150m, and those who wish will be able to take a small detour to visit the village church. Those who do not want to, can continue on the trail, on asphalt to Dârjiu (5), on asphalt road to the left. Walk on the asphalt for about 800 meters, then turn left up the hill towards the forest. Continue on the ridge in a slight ascent towards the edge of the forest where the route bypasses part of it to the right. Enter the forest on the left. After about 400 meters among the trees, the route comes out at the edge of the forest again before entering once more for about 500m, after which you will come across a clearing. Here, enter the forest on the left and cross it until you reach a hill that stands firmly above Dârjiu. On the left, there is metal tower, and there is a cart track following the gentle curve of the hill and leaving behind, to the right, a sheepfold. The descent to the right is easy until you reach a muddy road made by the cows from the nearby farm.

You will avoid the farm and continue on the muddy road to the asphalt, and the entrance to the village is about one kilometer from the fortified church in the center of the village.

Info:

The "Popasul Păsărilor" nature reserve - Sânpaul – This area of 10 hectares has been declared a protected area due to the number and different species of migratory and nesting birds. The area is included in the special avifauna protection area of Dealurile Homoroadelor, a site belonging to the European ecological network 'Natura 2000'. In the ornithological reservation, there have been recorded over 260 species of birds and a high concentration of species in such a small area represents a rarity in Europe. More than 70 species of birds nest here, many of them protected by law. Among the most important bird species are the barn owl, the great egret, the red heron, the black stork, the red duck, the reed heron, and the woodpecker.

Salt mines in Sânpaul – In the village of Sânpaul in the locality of Mărtiniș, salt mining has been carried out for centuries. Volker Wollmann's monograph notes the presence of a Roman fortification near the salt deposits. The salt deposits from Mărtiniș and Sânpaul, have the Roman camp of Sânpaul nearby.

The Fortified Church of Dârjiu – The fortified church of Dârjiu is one of the most important fortified churches in Transylvania, entering the UNESCO patrimony in 1999. Among the attractions of the church is the brick with Szekler runic inscription that was found in 1929 and on which the inscription can be seen even today. Experts date the brick between 1274 and 1431. The content of the inscription is subject to discussion, one of the versions of the text being: "Miklós Derzsi apa-pap" (Miklós Derzsi father-priest). Additionally the exhibition in the churchyard and in the various towers is very interesting, where you can admire old photos embodying the ancestors of those who now live in Dârjiu, as well as personal items, tools, all with Szekler customs and traditions. It can still be seen today that every family in the village has at least one wooden nail in the tower where meat, sausages, bacon, and smoked hams are stored. Nails are inherited from generation to generation and are not alienated, the number of nails held indicating the social status of the family. Every Wednesday, when the roosters sing - according to the rules established in the medieval era, which are still in force today, - the bell starts ringing, announcing to villagers that the gates of the fortress are opening and they can come to stock up for a week. Visitors can take part in the "bacon ceremony" every Wednesday of the week, provided they announce their intention a few days in advance.

To visit the fortified church contact the phone numbers found on this site: <https://kirchenburgen.org/ro/biserici-fortificate/>.

Other valuable information about the fortified church, as well as old traditions of the locals, can be found on the website www.1419.ro/index.php/en/.

Dârjiu Riding Center, where the priest Demeter Sandor Lorand takes care of horses and riding. Horse and guide tours or carriage rides are available. More details or reservations on the phone +40 744 557 659 (Zarándok Nyargaló - or on Facebook).

Trail: Easy

Elevation difference: +464m

Critical spots: Several intersections in open fields where it requires increased attention to the markings, there are several sheepfolds and herds of cows where there are dogs.

Scenery: Paths through fields, forests, macadam roads, dirt paths through the grass, and a little asphalt. You will reach the village of Mujna with the destination Archita, where you can admire the architecture of the fortified church and Saxon houses. Archita is in Mureș County and Terra Saxonum.

Accommodation:

Archita (469m alt): **Guest house**, 10 beds, dinner and breakfast, reservations at +40 741 849 156 (Adelina Stângaci), 164 Main Street.

Cristina Mihăilă offers accommodation or information about possible accommodations, phone +40 769 291 837;

Guest House, 5 places, dining (dinner and breakfast) on request, washing machine and clothes dryer, str. Principală no.354. Reservations at tel. +40 762 532 006 (Gheorghe Șilian).

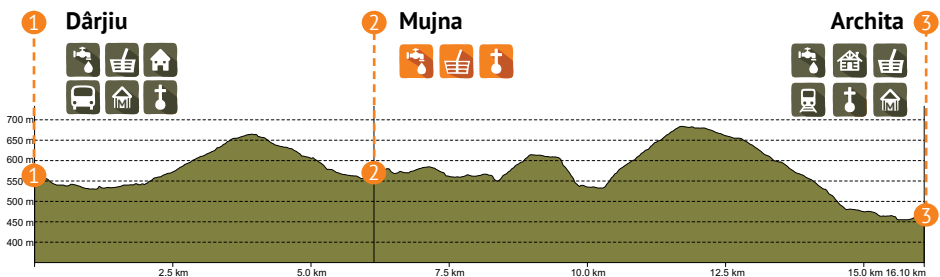
Accommodation at locals, 4 beds, 2 double rooms, dinner and breakfast on request, reservations by phone +40 754 780 728 and +40 755 475 648 (Alexandria and Lucian Opriș) Archita nr.169;

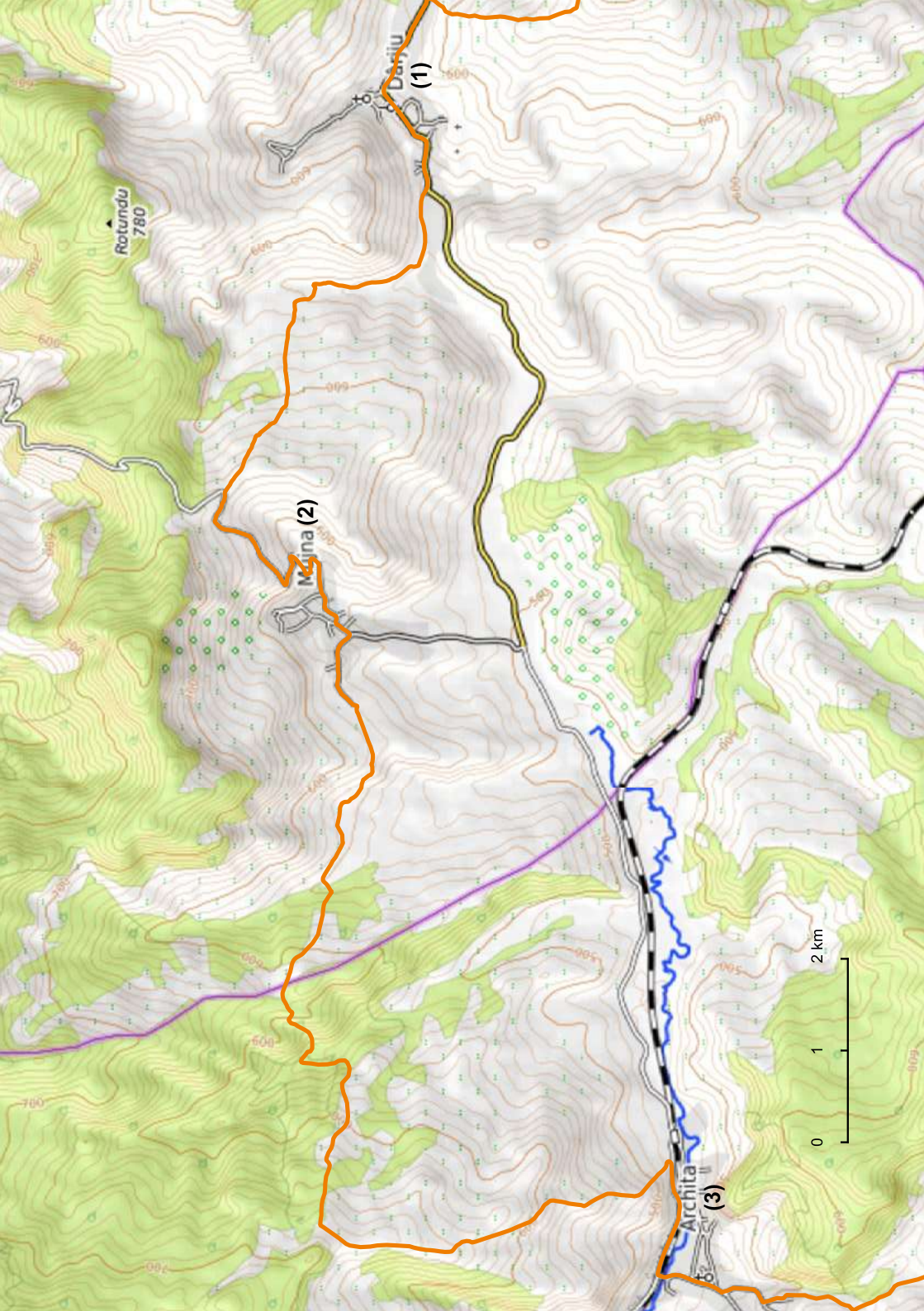
Infrastructure: **Mujna:** 

Archita: 

Note:

When leaving Dârjiu (1), go to the opposite side of the church, crossing the length of the village to the west for about 1km after which you will reach a crossroad where the route will take a right. Follow this shadowy macadam road for 2km. After the trees begin to multiply you will enter a clearing with large oaks and lots of shade where there are two sheepfolds. Here be cautious and bypass in silence. Then on the same macadam cart track, you come out of this clearing with big, old trees on the left-hand side, following the markings to the top of the hill in a thicker forest. The route now follows the ridge





for a short distance before it descends on an occasionally visible cart track to Mujna (2), whose rooftops you will already start to see. In this pasture, descend slightly into the valley until you reach the village road. Cross the village, but don't forget to take a break at the village bar. When arriving at the western side of the village, follow the rolling country road that you have been on all day. After about a kilometer the road continues following the markings, keeping to the strip of trees, like a grove, on the left-hand side. After 500m you will start to see a small lake that has a tree in the middle and is surrounded by other trees that give a little shade. From the lake, you go in a slight ascent through a pasture on a cart track to a meadow, after which you can see the entrance to yet another forest where there will be an intersection.

Pass the huge boulder towards the forest until, at one point the trail turns right. After turning right through the forest, follow a steeper descent of about 500 meters until you leave the forest heading downhill. When you reach the intersection you will be able to see some metal structures. Here you turn left, returning to the main road, for about 500 meters as you enter into the forest again, to the right, you climb about 1.5km up a hill full of scattered trees. On the plateau turn left towards a sheepfold. Pass it and follow the barely recognizable pasture track. A slight descent begins until you see an abandoned farm on the right, which, after a few meters, the terrain opens up. This point is called "Belvedere". From here you can see the whole Saxon village of Archita (3), the first in the Saxon land, Terra Saxonum. The landscape changes rapidly as you will observe the difference in cultures, architecture, the arrangement of houses and courtyards. Go down into the village to the main road, which will soon become asphalted and head for the tower of the fortified church. Pass through a passage under a railway bridge to the main street and you will arrive at the fortified church.

Info:

Mujna – The last Szekler village in Terra Sicularum. Mujna belongs to the locality of Dârjiu and has a long history. The old church in Mujna has existed since 1283. The current Reformed church was built in the 15th century, after which it was given to the Unitarians in 1642, but from 1647 it returned to the Reformed. It was destroyed by the empire in 1704, then by an earthquake in 1802. Bán András, one of the leaders of the Szekler revolt of 1562, was from Mujna, and after their defeat, the families of 44 houses sank into slavery. The Unitary church of the village was built in 1701.

The Fortified Church of Archita – Archita is a village founded by the Saxons, in around 1200, after the relocation of the Szeklers who occupied these places. The church is located in the center of the village and is well preserved. It has a double enclosure and seven of the nine defense towers that once existed are preserved. In the middle of the enclosure was a Romanesque Basilica with three naves and a huge tower, dating from the last quarter of the 13th century. The evangelical church can be visited with a guide, by calling the telephone number written on the program at the entrance to the church.

For visiting the fortified church there is this site where you can find the phone numbers of those who hold the keys and can present the churches: <https://kirchenburgen.org/en/biserici-fortificate/>.



Places to find Via Transilvanica stamps:

Sovata

- National Center for Tourist Information and Promotion: Mo-Su: 10-17
- Hotel Tivoli, tel. +40 787 898 668 (at 460 m of route)

Praid

- Moldovan Guest House, tel. +40 721 931 760 (Moldovan László)
- Zsuzsanna Parasztház, tel. +40 745 466 250 (at 1.4 km of route)
- Cabana Phoenix, tel. +40 740 795 550 (Gabriela Szabo)

Atia

- Kiss Család Lak Agro-Guest House, tel. 0754 991 407 (Kiss János)
- Guest house, tel. +40 756 242 660 (Péter Herta Juliánna)

Lupeni

- Barangoló Guest House, tel. +40 733 953 063 (at 1.8 km of route)
- Lupeni Tourist Information and Promotion Center: Mo-Su: 10-17

Odorheiu Secuiesc

- Gizi Csárda, tel. +40 266 218 433 (at 100 m of route)
- Pension Panorama, tel. +40 266 212 345 (Haider Csaba) (at 280 m of route)
- Helyénvaló Helyi Bolt: Mo-F 9-17, Sa: 9-14, Su: Close (at 1.3 km of route)

Mărtiniș

- Mărtiniș City Hall
- László Arpad and Ildikó, tel. +40 756 901 919

Dârjiu

- Dârjiu City Hall
- Dârjiu Fortified Church

Archita

- Guest House, tel. +40 759 961 229 (Adelina Stângaciu)
- Guest House, tel. +40 762 532 006 (Gheorghe Șilian)
- Accommodation at locals, tel. +40 754 780 728 and +40 755 475 648 (Alexandria and Lucian Oprîș)



TERRA SAXONUM

History tells us that Saxon people were brought to Transylvania by the Hungarian kings. The Saxons came with their ways of life and principles such as organizing in vicinities, the agriculture was done in a triennial manner (two different crops were planted in two years and for the third year, the soil was left uncultivated so it could rest), using churches to shelter during invasions and most importantly when a decision had to be made, all the Saxons had a right to vote and express their opinion. It is believed that some of them originated from Flanders or some other land close to the North Sea, while others came from the region of the Middle Rhine River or Luxembourg.

The exact date of their colonization is unknown because their personal papers were lost during "The Great Tartar Invasions from 1241". It is known for sure that they started coming to this area during the reign of the Hungarian King Geza the Second (1141-1162) who is the one that offered them privileges. The first groups of Saxons came from the German territories situated west of the river Rhine, from the Moselle basin. They were Flemish, Waloons or Franconians. Other Saxons continued colonizing Transylvania during the reigns of Bela the Third and Andrei the Second.

In order to stimulate the Saxons to want to stay and keep contributing to the economic development of the south of Transylvania, the Saxons received the privilege to own "fundus regius" (royal land) that was empowered by "the golden ball of the Saxons" in 1224. According to this privilege, the Saxons could use the land with no restrictions, making the most out of the richness of both the soil and the subsoil. They were exempted from paying customs taxes on the entire territory of the kingdom. Thus, they could be involved in markets without having to pay anything. Later on, they also received the right to issue their own money, the right for deposit in the commercial activities with The Country of Wallachia (nowadays the south of Romania) and since 1376, they had received the right to organize in guilds of craftsmanship. The Saxon communities also benefited from administrative, judiciary and religious privileges and in exchange they offered military service, as well as fiscal obligations towards the Hungarian Crown.

After they settled in Transylvania they gradually started building Saxon residences such as Sibiu, Orăştie, Sebeş, Miercurea Sibiului, Sighişoara, Nocrich, Cincu and Rupea and later on Mediaş and Şeica. The ten residences in the South of Transylvania, together with the two districts Braşov and Bistriţa formed the "Saxon University", which was basically an administrative unit that had power over all the Saxon communities that belonged to the "fundus regius" (from 1486-1487).

The Saxon community was renowned for their way of life. In each village with a fortified church there was a tower called "The tower of the Bacon" this was the places where people would preserve their supplies for winter. The tower was open on Saturdays and Sundays so people would come and grab the necessary food to last them for a week, without touching other people's food.

The communist regime was very restrictive with the right to leave the country so emigrants were considered to be traitors. Nicolae Ceauşescu implemented the so called "selling" of the minorities which affected the Saxon and Jewish communities. What actually happened is that the Federal German government used to pay a fee for every German citizen that received the right from Bucharest to emigrate to West Germany.

Roughly 230,000 Saxons and Swabians were sold by Nicolae Ceauşescu between the years 1968 and 1989. The German state has payed around three billions German Marks.

These people were considered to be "Auslandsdeutsche" ("German people living abroad") by the German government so the Saxons from Transylvania received German citizenship. Most of them emigrated to Germany before and after the fall of communism in the year 1989. Thus, the number of Saxon people living in Transylvania at the moment has significantly lowered.

For visiting the fortified church go to the site where you can find the phone numbers of those who hold the keys and can present the churches: <https://kirchenburgen.org/ro/biserici-fortificate/>.

Trail: Easy, well marked, a large proportion is through forests, 70% on paths, pastures and forest roads, 1.5km of asphalt

Elevation difference: +746m

Critical spots: A few sheepfolds with sheep and dogs

Scenery: Saxon villages with fantastic architecture, colorful flora, dark and mysterious deciduous forests, full of wildlife.

Accommodation:

Rodeș (548m alt.): **Guest house** or **Gasthaus** - belonging to the Tabaluga Foundation, Peter Maffay Stiftung. 15 beds in 5 rooms - possibility of breakfast, online reservation <https://www.gaestehaus-tabaluga.com/roman/reservierung.html>;

Criț (553m alt.): **Casa Rozi:** agro-guesthouse with 35 camping places, 10 beds in 4 rooms, meals on request, offers natural products and traditional food, prior reservation at +40 745 268 947;

Pension La Hansi, 26 places, breakfast and dinner on request, reservation in advance at tel. +40 743 067 402 (Ioan Lazăr);

Guest house, 3 beds, dinner and breakfast on request, reservations by phone. +40 745 155 312 (Elena Ciurea).

Kraus House, belongs to the Michael Schmidt Foundation, 50 beds, possibility of breakfast and dinner, available all year with prior reservation by phone. +40 743 255 553, bicycle rental;

Glamping Blumenhof, 12 accommodation places in the arranged tent, access to the bathroom, bar, dining on request, reservations by phone +40 723 417 141 (Uwe Leonhardt or George Toma);

Good to know: Criț offers multiple accommodation options, for all budgets. If there are no places available at the places mentioned above, we recommend hikers to search on the internet.

Infrastructure:

Rodeș: 

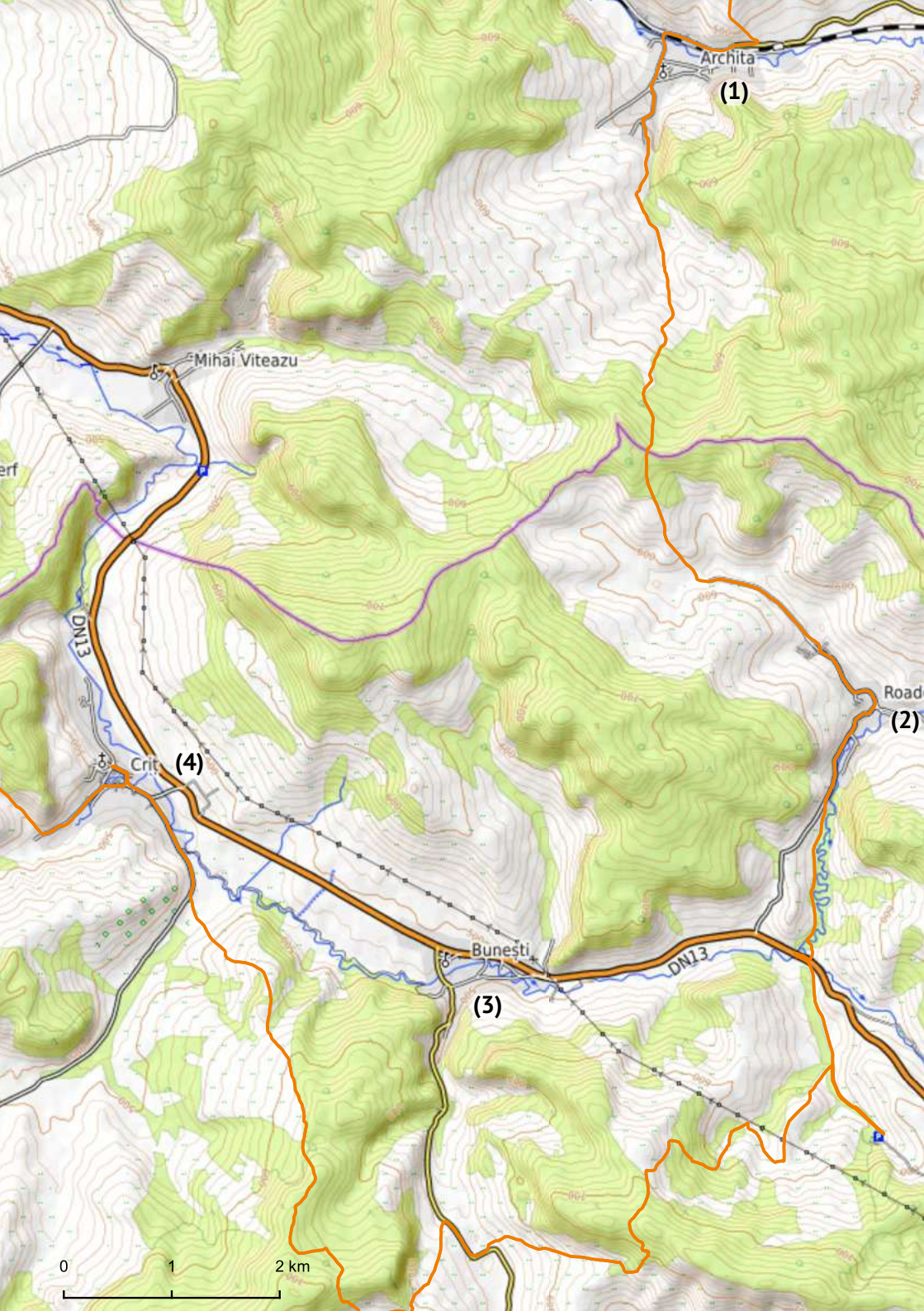
Bunești: 

Criț: 

Note:

Archita (1) (Vânători locality) is the only village in Mureș County, where the Via Transilvanica trail passes after leaving Harghita County. From Archita, it heads to Rodeș, a stone's throw away, which is already in Brașov County. Archita is the transition from Terra Sicularum to Terra Saxonum.

Therefore, starting in front of the fortified church, which can be visited in a guided tour briefly, you head slightly to the right, on a road that leaves the village in a few hundred meters. It continues through a small valley, gradually climbing a hill/pasture for about a kilometer, where you will come across one or more sheepfolds. After passing them, also in a slight climb, the route heads towards the forest and slightly left, where there will be a thicket, rare trees, bushes and tall plants, all of these being the successors of a picturesque landscape with flowers up to the waist, of bright colors and sweet scents



(1)

Mihai Viteazu

DN13

(4)

Crit

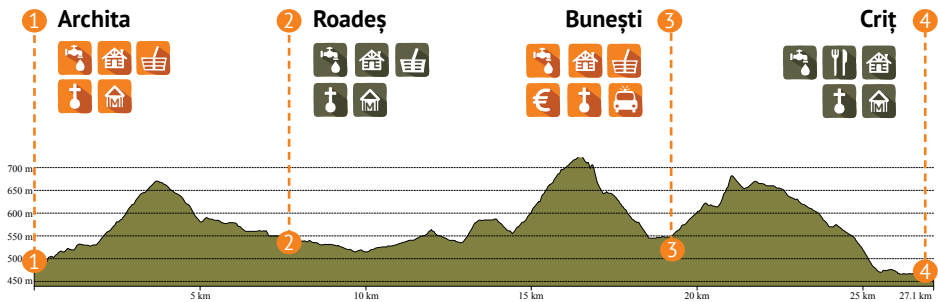
(3)

Bunești

DN13

Road (2)





like honey. VT continues with a slight climb to the forest where, after a few hundred meters, at the border of the localities, is the first kilometer stone in the forest (of Archita locality) that was mounted at 100m from next (of Rodeș village, Bunești locality). The forest road stretches through the dark deciduous forest, where your senses will sharpen because of the silence, yet so pleasing to the soul. After a few hundred meters, the route leaves the forest and descends onto a colorful plateau with the diversity of flora depending on the different areas.

In the distance you can see the village Rodeș (Radeln, germ.) (2), which is the second village at the entrance of the Via Transilvanica trail in Terra Saxonum. This is a Saxon village with some houses renovated by the Tabaluga Foundation, Peter Maffay Stiftung and with other houses waiting for their turn.

Going down the path among grassy pastures, the route crosses a bridge after which turns left at a 90-degree angle, past a trough for grazing cows .

You will arrive easily to Rodeș, passing by several animal farms and Saxon houses. In the center of the village there is an old, forgotten artesian well, non-functional, that acts as a roundabout. Here take a left and pass slightly right over a bridge in front of the guest house and again over another bridge to the asphalt and follow it for 1km to the next kilometer stone. The trail then leaves the asphalt on the left-hand side of the road where it stretches out past a stream towards the national road. Cross the stream under the bridge, which is above the national road. Here we walk with great caution on the „bridge” made of bollards, because the route takes us to the other side of the road. Head straight on a cart track for a kilometer with the stream on the right and towards the sign to St. George’s Monastery. Hikers who want to visit the Monastery must know that it is 1km from here, so a potential visit would involve deviating from the route. At the Monastery there is water and even accommodation for those who wish. From the sign to the Monastery take the road to the right, crossing a bridge and to the left climb steeply for a few meters, after which the markings follow the road to the right. Here you may come across a sheepfold. Pass it slightly down to the right and follow the cart track to a stream crossing, but do not cross it. The trail turns left uphill, slightly climbing to a clearing with scattered trees. At the kilometer stone found there, you will observe that the flora is much richer, being a slightly wetter area. Passing an almost invisible brook, recognizable only by the tall, green grass, the road leads to a dense deciduous forest. After the natural pass, about 20 meters on, the route takes a left into the forest, following the Via Transilvanica markings. In the forest it climbs steeply a few meters,

giving the impression of ancient times because in this forest is the Citadel Hill, where there was once a Dacian fortress. After leaving the thicket of the forest, you pass by a few isolated oaks, keeping slightly to the left, until the next kilometer stone that hides behind a secular oak. From this, a path can be seen, on which you turn left 90 degrees. You cross another majestic forest, which from a distance seems to be one of eucalyptus, with vines, like those in the jungle. In the clearings between the forests, you can also find strawberries that will quench your hunger and even your thirst. Slowly, on this road, the route leaves the forest, descending to the right, through a pasture from which you can see on the left Bucegiul and Piatra Craiului, if visibility allows this. From here, in a slight descent, you reach an asphalt road that comes from Bunești (3) to Viscri. The road takes you to the right (Bunești) for about 400 metres, until you reach a field road on the left side, marked with a milestone and signpost. On this road, slightly uphill, you go through the field, past the signposts, for about 1 km 800 metres, going around the forest and especially a forest tongue. Walking behind it, at some point you will see signs to enter the forest on the right-hand side, where you walk for about a kilometre. In the forest, you can feel the thrill of wild animals stalking from the shade, or the dampness and coolness of the forest. After a few hundred metres, the forest becomes increasingly wild and unfamiliar but all the more enjoyable. Noises, whistling and storytelling are welcome in its mysterious silence. At the exit, another meadow extends to the entrance to Criț. Follow the VT markings and you will pass the edge of the forest for a few hundred meters, then past two sheepfolds to a cobbled road that takes you to the right in a slight descent. Pass the kilometer stone and descend into the village of Criț (4), which you will reach after about 2km on asphalt, among the colorful houses of the departed Saxons. The route leads to the fortified church where you can take a break.



Info:

Rodeș – (in the Saxon dialect Raddeln, Radln, Rarlen, in German Radenthal, in translation “deforested valley”, colloquial Radeln, “deșteleniș”, in Hungarian Rádos) is a village in the locality of Bunești in Brașov County. The fortified church is protected by a double wall with five defense towers. The evangelical church was built by the Saxons in the 15th and 16th centuries in Gothic style, dedicated to St. John. The construction was completed in 1526. The church tower has a continuous gallery. On March 31st, 2010 in Rodeș, the ceremony of laying the foundation stone of an institution for traumatized children took place. The project was initiated by the Peter Maffay Foundation, founded by the German musician Peter Maffay from Brașov. Following the project, the former parish house of the fortified church in Rodeș will become a camp for children with social problems, coming from the institutionalized system. The holiday home is for free, for two weeks, for 14 abused children from all over Europe, who will benefit from therapy.

In 2013, the singer-songwriter’s Peter Maffay Foundation restored the outer wall of the fortified church that collapsed in February 2012. After a crack from top to bottom appeared on the church tower in 2015, which increased from month to month, and due to a winter with changing temperatures, wind and heavy rains, in February 2016 the bell tower of the fortified church collapsed to the ground, leaving behind a pile of boulders.

Sf. Gheorghe Monastery – The Bunești Monastery is not hundreds of years old, but it is a place of worship in a natural setting that gives you peace, relaxation and prayer.



The history of the Bunești Monastery begins after the 1989 Revolution when Metropolitan Antonie Plămădeală decided to build several monastic ensembles. In 1991, together with the priest from Bunești, the construction of the monastery began and, in 1993, the place of worship was built. In 1994, the first two sisters, Filofteia and Rafaela Potcoavă, nieces of Father Dumitru Stăniloae, also came here. In order to raise funds for the construction of the monastery church, its frescos and for the completion of the monastic ensemble, the nuns traveled hitchhiking all over the country.

The monastery is dedicated to Saint George. However, the nuns also celebrate on Thomas Sunday (the first Sunday after Easter) and the small patron saint as they call it. A peculiarity of the Bunești Monastery is the Agheasmatarul, the road of the cross, arranged on the hill next to the place of worship, a kind of homage to the road to Golgotha. Twice a year, on special holidays, after the service, there is a procession to the cross on the hill. At each of the 14 stops, people pause and pray at the icons depicting Christ the Savior carrying the Cross to Golgotha.

Criț – In German, Criț - Deutschkreutz means “German Cross”. Here is a place where, in addition to the beautiful fortified church, we have the opportunity to learn a lot about the traditions and customs of the Saxons.

In the 15th century, an enclosure wall with an irregular oval outline was built. Four of the original five towers are still preserved. In the 19th century, the inner wall was demolished and, in 1909, the warehouses for supplies were partially demolished. In 1908, a gate was created through the west tower to allow the hearse to pass. That is why the tower is now called Leichenturm (Corpse Tower).

The south tower where the main gate was found - initially designed to be curved - collapsed in 1925. In 1955, the north tower collapsed, but was rebuilt in 1957 with two floors. In the church there are wooden boxes dated 1666 and 1724. The painted benches date from 1793. On the bells the dates 1549 and 1551 can be seen.

Michael Schmidt is a Saxon, originally from the village of Criț. He is successful businessman who believes in the cultural values of this community and actively supports them through numerous projects that are carried out through the “Michael Schmidt Foundation” speak for themselves: the restoration of the church organ in Criț, the financing of the film ‘Organs from Transylvania, a return in time’, the reconstruction of the parish house in Criț after the original plans, the Festival ‘Haferland’ which takes place annually in several villages such as Saschiz, Rupea, Bunești, Criț, Viscri, Fișer, Meșendorf and Roadeș, but also projects to support German language education for students who want to become German language teachers.

The Neighborhood – (Nachbarschaften) functioned – as an institution based on mutual aid and was a form of village organization. It included around 30 families from the same street or from several adjacent streets, who contributed to the good order of the community, borrowed money or shared agricultural tools. The neighborhood organization began in Criț in 1616 and lasted until 1991, when the last meeting of the last neighborhood took place. The neighborhood was run by a “neighbors’ father” or “old father”, chosen from the oldest members, for a period of two years and helped by a “young father”. Their role was to advise neighborhood officials to check the village finances and oversee the community. Each neighborhood had its own symbol, carved on a piece of wood, kept in the neighborhood box. Their laws clearly stated that all those in a neighborhood contributed to the construction of a neighbor’s house, to help him, there were “trials” and reconciliations or exclusion from the community.

Trail: Easy

Elevation difference: +420m

Critical spots: Increased attention in the forest, dusty roads where cars pass, asphalt at the end of the route

Scenery: Roads through Saxon villages, the opportunity to visit the evangelical fortified churches, Saschiz revived Saxon village.

Accommodation:

Cloașterf (460m alt): Accommodation opposite the evangelical church, a new campsite **Camping Zori** arranged with plenty of space for caravans and tents, details and reservations by phone +40 740 291 869 (Florentina).

Saschiz (460m alt): Our first contact with Saschiz was Anca, from **Casa de pe deal**, who became a volunteer of the trail and the charity, who offers accommodation (possibly also meals) with prior contact - phone +40 740 286 874 or phone and WhatsApp +40 770 491 896 as well as any other information necessary for a hiker.

The list of all accommodation places in Saschiz can be found on the commune's website: <http://turism.saschiz.ro>.

Infrastructure:

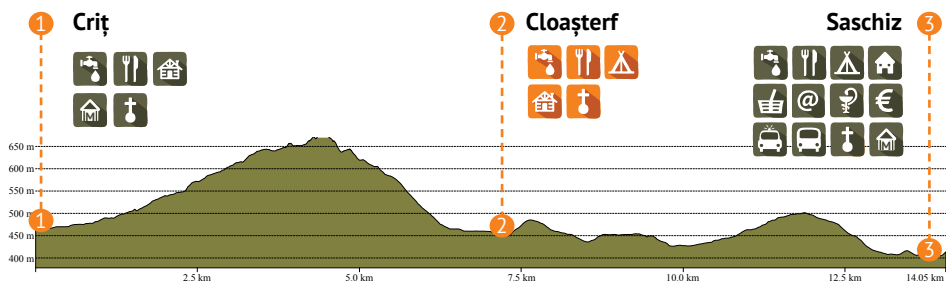
Cloașterf: 

Saschiz: 

Note:

From the center of the village of Criț (1), at the foot of the fortified church, follow the route Via Transilvanica to the opposite end of the village, continuing in the direction from which you entered Criț. Opposite a large farmhouse, one of the last in the village, the road turns to the right, climbing slowly towards a forest for about a kilometre. The path is one enclosed by young trees or pastures guarded by electric fencing, for the cows grazing agilely. For a mile and a half you walk on the marker and enter the forest, where you walk for a while in the pleasant shade of the trees, without many steep ups and downs, making little noise to be heard by possible wild animals. The exit from the forest, after 2 beautiful kilometre markers, is to the left, at the signpost, on the edge of the forest, then directly towards the village that can be seen at the foot of the meadow and hill. On this path you enter Cloașterf (2). Go to the evangelical church in the center. Opposite the church is the campsite, where you may want to stop and spend the rest of the day to visit this town. If not, after a visit to the church (today's route is shorter, so time will allow it), the asphalt road continues for a few meters, before taking a left.

There is now a bicycle route, a newly asphalted road, which connects two villages that is also used as a detour for agricultural vehicles. It winds through various farms and hops plantations for almost 7 kilometers, being a relatively safe road and not very busy with cars. The entrance to Saschiz (3) will be slightly to the right, where we will notice that the next day's route will take you to the upper left part of the village, continuing on asphalt. But for now, you will enter the village and head down to the fortified church in Saschiz. Here you can enjoy all the wonders that this revived Saxon village offers.



Info:

The Evangelical-Lutheran Church - Cloașterf – The fortified ensemble of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church is one of the most homogeneous in Transylvania, being the work of a single period of construction (1521-1524) under the leadership of Master Stefan Ungar from Sighișoara. The church has the appearance of a fortified massif, above the nave and the choir with raised arches supporting a fortified floor, which has firing windows and throwing holes. The enclosure is quadrilateral, with corner towers in a square plan, with a roof over the pulpit.

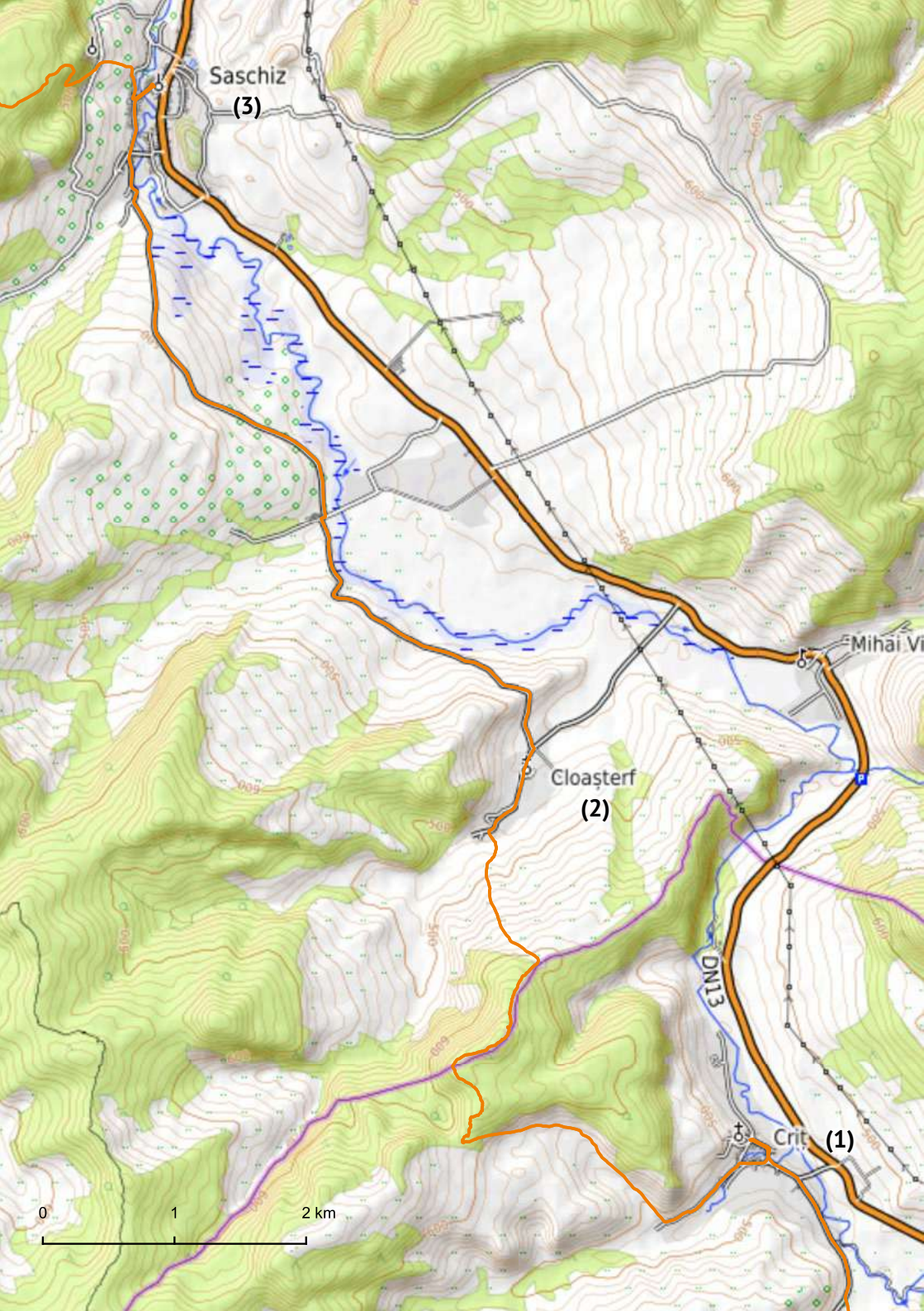
For the visit of the fortified church go to this site where you can find the telephone numbers of those who hold the keys and can present the churches: <https://kirchenburgen.org/ro/biserici-fortificate/>.

Saschiz Fortified Church – The Evangelical Fortified Church of Saschiz is on the list of historical monuments since 2010, it has been renovated and prepared for visitors, as it is located on the main European road, E60. The community is very attached to this church, which is why they did their best to contribute to the consolidation of the building, fought for its reconstruction to be done with great care and now it is promoted internationally, with events organized around it, such as classical guitar concerts, etc. On the site of an old Roman Church, a large fortified church was built in 1493 in honor of King Stephen I of Hungary. It was built of quarry stone, in Gothic style, reinforced with 22 buttresses to support the hall church. The hall is very wide and long with the choir enclosed on three sides. In 1496 the church choir was completed and, in 1525, the entire construction of the church. The Saxon fortification was built between the 14th and 15th centuries with walls up to 9m high. The whole ensemble was surrounded by a strong defensive wall, which is currently replaced by a fence.

To visit the fortified church go to this site where you can find the telephone numbers of those who hold the keys and can present the churches: <https://kirchenburgen.org/ro/biserici-fortificate/>.

Peasant fortress of Saschiz – On the hill, there is a peasant fortress dating from the 14th century. The year 1343 is carved on a stone in the fortress. The fortress had six bastions and a 60m deep fountain (which today has only 1-2m). Legend has it that there is a tunnel leading to the center of the village from the bottom of the well.

Women's Neighborhood – We can talk about the concept of a neighborhood once we enter the Saxon land, this being a form of organization that worked for them. But who would have thought that in these complicated times of the 21st century, in which life is



Saschiz (3)

Cloașterf (2)

Crit (1)

Mihai V

DNIȘ



becoming more and more self-oriented and the rhythm is no longer a rhythm, but a speed race through time, there are people who want to revive and reinvent, not just ancient traditions and customs, but simply country life. The Tășuleasa Social team met in Saschiz the "Women's Neighborhood", a community that not only supports itself internally, but manages to implement various projects of social economy, education and promotion of the area. Some of the projects of these determined women are the "Rhubarb Fest" which promotes this locally grown vegetable through established recipes and culinary innovations as well as bicycle tours, children's book clubs, etc.

Saschiz Pottery Center – This is the best place to learn about the history of Saschiz blue pottery, but also about other pottery techniques used by the Saxons. Saschiz was an old pottery center, famous for its blue color since the 1700s. The small workshop was closed in the 1970s and the traditional white motifs on a blue background were replaced by those of Corund pottery from the Szekler area and inverted patterns (blue on white). The Saxons who lived in Saschiz over the years were not just farmers. The documents attest that in this area there were potters who made their place among the other traditional guilds of the 17th century, including leatherworkers, furriers, blacksmiths or carpenters.

The Orthodox Church in Saschiz - In 1823, the Priest Ioan Șoneriu, with great difficulty, built the current church of stone and brick with the roof made of tin and tile, dedicated to "Saint Nicolae". The name and origin of the constructor are unknown. From an architectural point of view, the church is built in the form of a nave, with a length of 32 m and a width of 8 m, the ceiling is vaulted having, above the nave, a tin turret with windows and plaster inside. In 1961, during the time of Father Dumitru Ciulei, the church was painted in tempera technique by the painter Iosif Vasu and, between 1993-1994, priest Ioan Cătană commissioned the painter Mihai Alecu to repaint and complete the interior of the church, which it is kept in good condition to this day.

"Tei" teahouse in Saschiz can be found behind the church, on the road that leads to the Via Transilvanica Trail, over the bridge and on the left, an idyllic place, an oasis of tranquility with a huge lime tree in front of the entrance. The two young owners, Hadrian and Marianne, did this out of love for Saschiz, slow food and bicycles. They offer various drinks and have a small souvenir shop where you can find: jam, syrup, craft beer, gin from elderflower... etc., waiting to be tasted or wrapped for gifts. In the courtyard of the teahouse, which is well arranged to relax, there is also the Bicycle Rental Point. For any eventuality, they also have a beautiful accommodation room, for a couple, i.e 2 people/double bed. Address: 302 Saschiz, Mureș, www.tei-teehaus.weebly.com - for more information and reservations, or by phone +40 742 416 291/+40 744 148 426.



1832



Trail: Easy

Elevation difference: +702m

Critical spots: Increased attention in the forest, dusty roads where cars pass, asphalt at the beginning of the route


Scenery: Roads through Saxon villages, hamlets forgotten by the world and inhabited by very few people, secular forest, spectacular views above the village of Daia.

Accommodation:

Șapartoc: Traditional Romanian Village, large number of beds available, breakfast and lunch with local products on request. The location offers accommodation for all budgets, including traditional houses for rent or camping, with reservations by phone: +40 741 082 770 (Radu Moldovan) or email sapartocvillage@yahoo.com, information on the Facebook page Sapartoc Traditional Village.

Infrastructure:

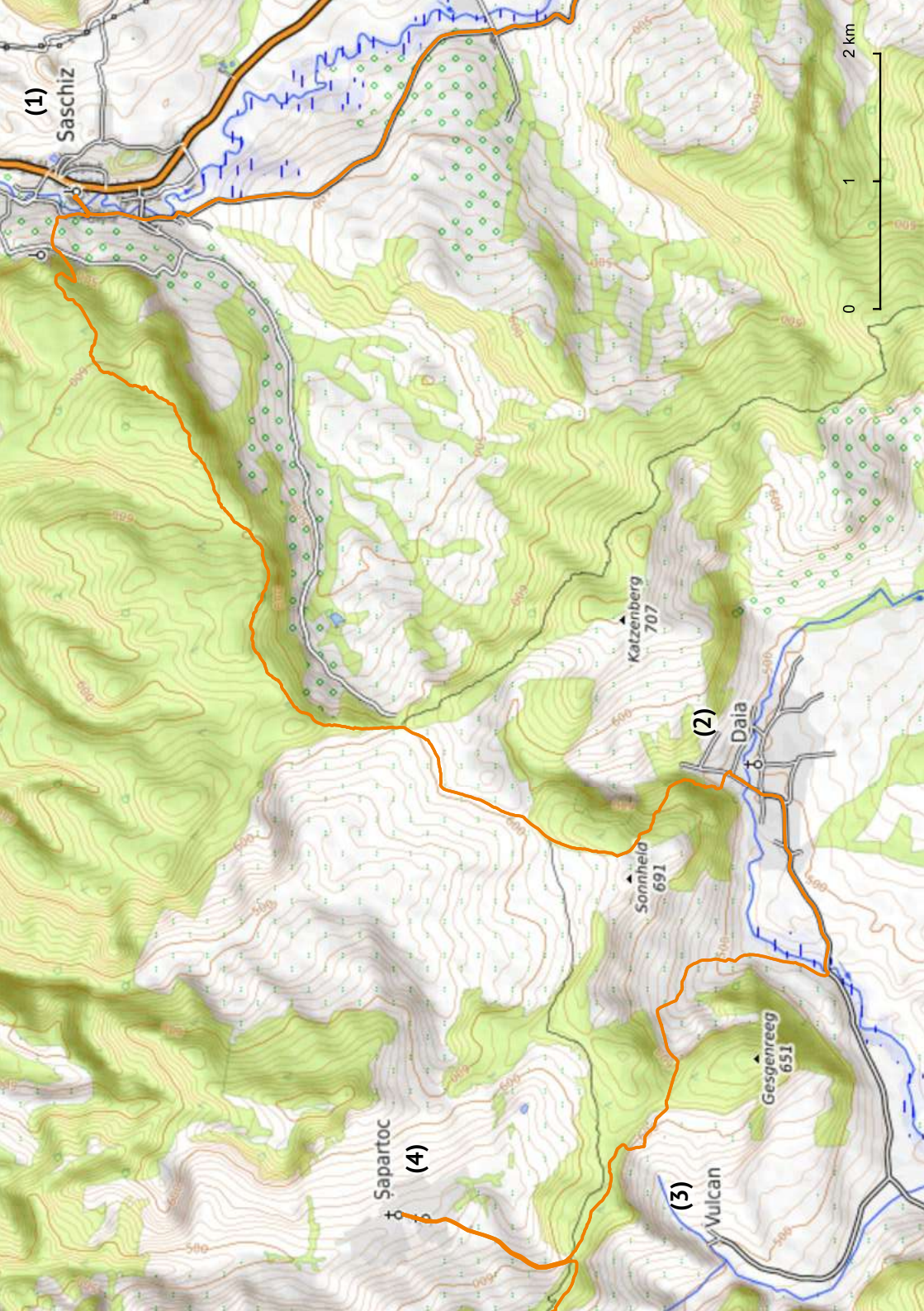
Daia:   

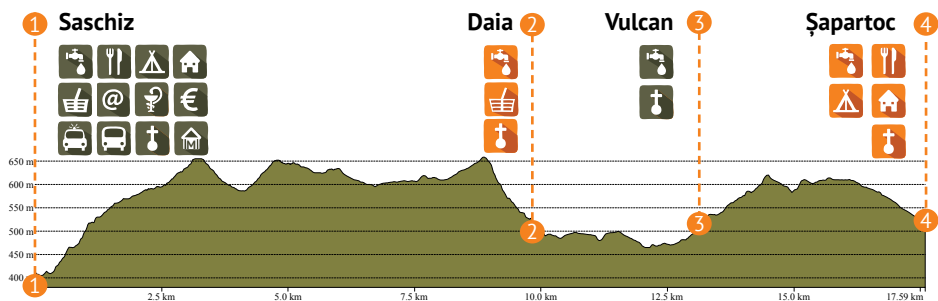
Vulcan:  

Șapartoc:     

Note:

Take as a point of reference the fortified church in the center of Saschiz (1), which is next to the main road, E60, behind which the route continues, going slightly downhill on the left, walking on the paved road, following the markings. The road turns into a cobbled path and slowly climbs the marker on the right, leaving the village entirely with clear directions to the fortress. The slightly steep climb continues for about a kilometre and a half, when you can see the fortress of refuge, from the sec. XIV of Saschiz. Here you can take a hydration break and admire the landscape from the height of the fortress. With time, the road narrows and turns into a forest path along which we walk for a few kilometres, maybe two milestones. The exit from the forest is marked and leads onto a clearing where leaving the fence of a sheepfold on the right, with the shepherd keeping his barking dogs stopped at the edge of the territory they were defending, one passes further on, past a pine grove on the left and a stable-like building with a deserted house on the right. After walking across a clearing of green, raw grass and four-leaf clover, the milestone and marker point to the left entrance on a path that will lead you into a forest of overwhelming beauty, with tall old firs, broken and fallen trees, with streaks of light piercing the cool semi-darkness, surrounded by the sounds of the birds and animals that inhabit it. The path leads to a slight descent, which becomes steeper and steeper, as the village of Daia (2) approaches. Traces of bears or other wild animals can be found, so we recommend keeping the noise and tone of voice non-threatening. After a descent of about 500 meters you exit the forest on a side road of the village that goes up to the main street.





Once on the main road, to the left, you can cool off at the village shop and terrace. After a short hydration break, retrace your steps to the right, towards the exit of the village and follow the main road, unpaved and dusty, for about 3 kilometers, then turn right at the junction onto the road to the village of Vulcan (3). It turns right at the two mushroom bollard, through the yard of a cow farm, which remains on the left, and proceeds along their pasture, passing through dreamy scenery, with tall and/or mown grass (depending on the period), gliding smoothly along the silhouettes of the meadows, past the marked posts. Pass two more markers, meandering gently left then right, past an abandoned saivan that also remains on the left, until you reach an entrance to the dense forest on the right, signposted. A slight climb up into the forest takes you into the forest ridge and then, following the signposts, to the left, downhill towards the village. Once you reach Vulcan (3) and the old church in the center, follow the markings on the main road that climbs slightly. After about 600 meters, you head onto the hill closest to the village, in a climb of medium difficulty and among the remains of a sheepfold. From there, the route takes a left towards the forest, in another easy climb. After 1 kilometer and a half you reach the forest where it will be cool and shaded. In the forest you will follow the ridge of the hill as the route takes a slight left on the country road to Șapartoc (4) where you will leave the VT trail to enter the village. After the first and second abandoned church, you reach an intersection, a third church, from which the accommodation is on the road that leads slightly up to the right. The recommended accommodation is the only one in Șapartoc, the village having only a handful of inhabitants.

Info:

The fortified church from Daia – The fortified church of Daia Saxon in Apold locality, Mureș County, is on the list of historical monuments and worth visiting. The whole assembly consists of the evangelical church, the fortified enclosure and the bell tower. The evangelical church in Daia, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, was built in the middle of the 15th century. It is of the hall type and stylistically belongs to the late Central European Gothic era. The original building measured 18.10 meters in length, with a maximum width at the level of the choir of 9.10 meters and a width at the level of the hall itself, below the entrance tower, of 7.05 meters. The original western tower collapsed at the beginning of the last century. The apse of the altar has a pentagonal shape.

To visit the fortified church go to this site where you can find the phone numbers of those who hold the keys and can present the churches: <https://kirchenburgen.org/ro/biserici-fortificate/>.

The three churches in the village of Șapartoc – In the village there are three churches, Romanian Orthodox with a date attested by one of the existing bells made in 1696 and by a Holy Gospel from 1723, printed in Bucharest "with the blessing of Kir Dănilă, Metropolitan of all Wallachia"; two churches of Catholic and Calvinist denomination, the first built in the middle of the 19th century, 1857, and the second in 1930; two parish houses; two schools, one state and one former Catholic denomination. The village is now almost deserted and the view of the three churches is almost nostalgic. Once the village had about 800 inhabitants and, by 2011, the population of the village decreased to 26 people.

Trail: Medium difficulty due to the length

Elevation difference: +657m

Critical spots: Increased attention in the forest and while walking on asphalt

Scenery: long roads through the forest, asphalt in villages, Sighișoara - a UNESCO heritage city, the Breite plateau and the Saxon villages Criș and Stejărenii to visit.

Accommodation:

Aurel Vlaicu (499m alt): Accommodation at a chalet for rent, with reservation at no. phone +40 741 082 770 (Radu Moldovan).

Pension Casa cu prispă, near St. Dimitrie Monastery, accommodation double room with breakfast included. Dinner on request. Reservation by phone +40 742 336 323 (Alisa Olar), 10% discount for VT hiking.

Sighișoara (364m alt): **Burg Hostel**, 4-6 Bastionului Street, Sighișoara, possibility of meals on request, prior reservation at phone +40 722 591 132.

House with a cerdac, 17 beds, access to the kitchen. 10% discount for VT hikers. Reservations at tel. +40 770 348 178 (Marian Stoica); Restaurants nearby.

Stejărenii (413m alt): **Hanul din Pădure**, 6 km from the trail, 25 beds, 8 rooms, breakfast included, restaurant, possibility of car transport from the trail, reservations at tel. 0728 811 559.

Experience Transylvania Guesthouses (MET), House no. 106, reservations on <https://www.experiencetransylvania.ro/guesthouse/>, online payment. For hikers on Via Transilvanica, there is a small discount. Reservation by phone +40 724 000 350 (Florin Culea);

Accommodation with locals, 6 places, dinner and breakfast on request, reservations at phone +40 749 507 797 (Marcela Taloș) and +40 765 782 508 (Viorel Taloș).

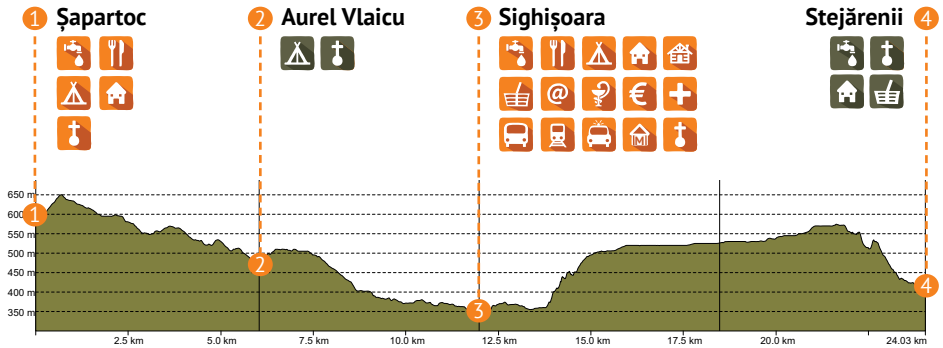
Infrastructure: Aurel Vlaicu: 

Sighișoara: 

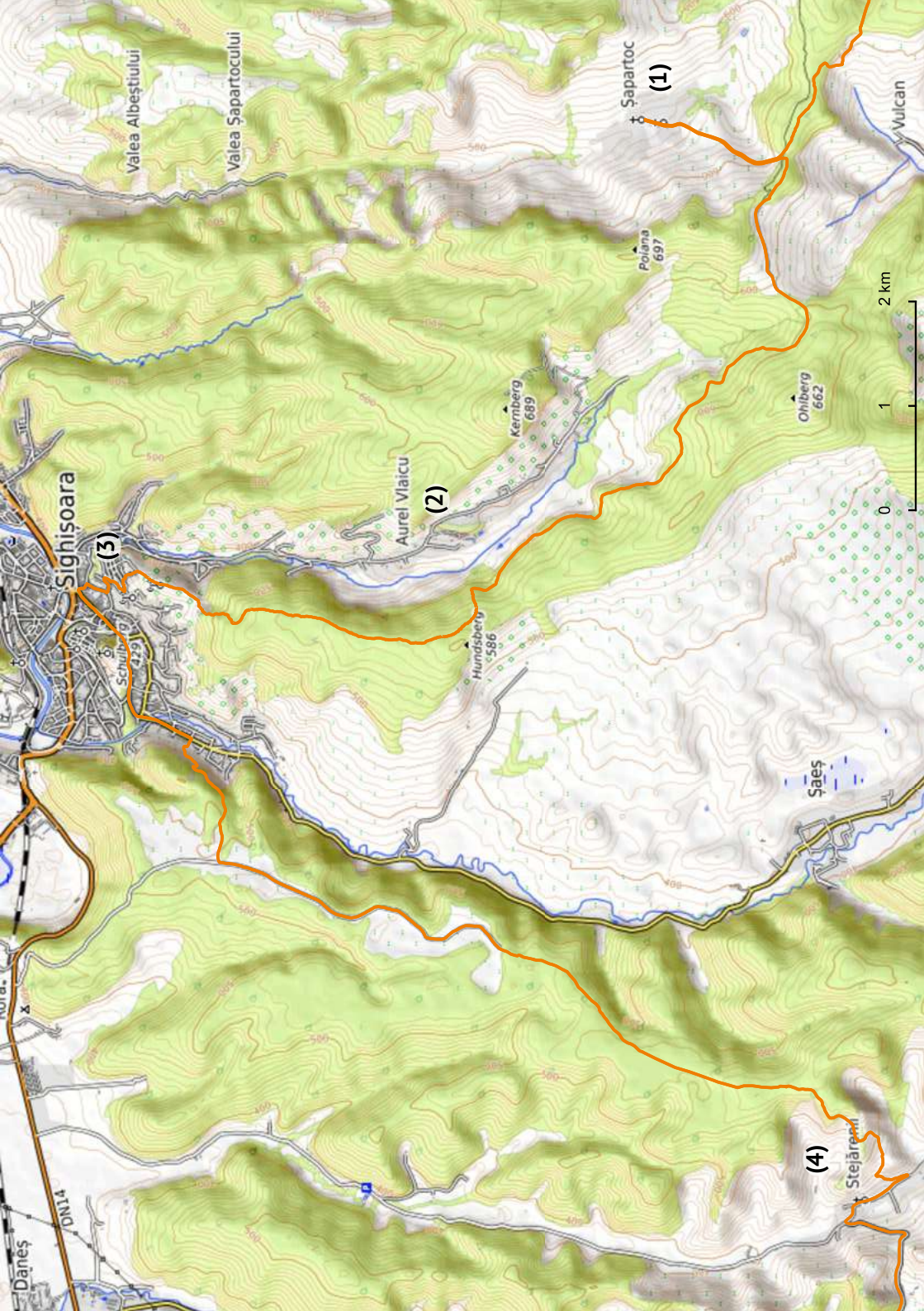
Stejărenii: 

Note:

The trail starts when we return to it from the center of Şapartoc village (1), climbing slightly in front of the two abandoned churches, on the unpaved road for about 1km, until the pasture road is on the right, which also climbs slightly. Following it, winding and climbing slowly, you pass a sheepfold where you take a slight left. The route stretches up to a forest, which is actually a meeting point of two corners of forest, on the top of the hill. There you pass through the transparent curtain of trees and descend through the emptiness of the hill that also leads you to yet another forest. This corridor is lined with raspberries and strawberries and sometimes even countless mosquitoes. Now, the route will lead onto a road through the forest that is covered with grass and mud, and used not for forest exploitation, however for many other sports. For some time now, there have been several bicycle or hiking markings. For about 3km you go through this dark and cool forest until, when coming out of it, you will continue on the edge. To the left you can see a village, and in front, in the distance, even Sighișoara city.



The forest road intersects at one point with a road coming from the right, and the route continues straight ahead, with several households visible in the distance to the right. This road, on the right, winding downhill and uphill between huts, houses and households, leads to Aurel Vlaicu (2), almost a village-“neighbourhood” of Sighișoara. But our route continues straight ahead, on the well-trodden forest road, for a mile and a bit, after which it takes a steep left through the forest. Signposts will point to the climb to the left, into the forest, and the markings will continue, along with the blue cross, bike trail marker. **WARNING.** The two trails, although running much in parallel, do not overlap for safety reasons, sometimes cyclists speed downhill and hikers can have accidents. So cyclists on VT can choose the blue cross route and hikers the route marked VT. Crossing the forest on the marked trail, the VT route, after descending gently, turns right towards the Lunca Poștei hill, where a wonderful landscape opens up, showing the splendours of the medieval town of Sighișoara. Then it descends for a long way down to the right, following the VT markings, you will slowly enter Sighișoara (3). Here, you will be overwhelmed by the architectural beauty of this medieval city, most of it being excellently preserved. Here you can visit the fortress, the fortified church, the school or the streets around them. A culture break will give you a good dose of energy for the second half of today’s route, so far having covered 12km. After this experience, the route crosses the city almost in a straight line, with few but visible markings on the left hand side on the sidewalk, until the exit out of the city, which is on the right, between two houses. Cross the road at the pedestrian crossing in front of the Coralia store. From here, the trail begins a steep climb through the forest, for 1km, until you reach a plateau, called Breite, on which there is a reservation of trees of centuries-old oaks. Here, after passing a football field, keep to the main road for about 7 kilometers. The trail will turn right and descend slightly to the village of Stejărenii. Here you can visit the old church and, if you have the energy, you can go onto Criș, 4km on asphalt, on a narrow road that goes up and down, like the waves of the Danube, where you can visit some points of interest.



Info:

Sighișoara – The municipality of Sighișoara in Mureș County is a well-known city in Romania, where tourism is quite well developed. The historic center of the city is included in the UNESCO heritage and even if there are many sights to visit, it is important to see how the city itself is in one way or another a museum that tells the ancient history of a truly special place in our country. We will list in this guide some of the tourist attractions worth visiting, but the list could go on. First, it would be important to leave here a few words to describe Sighișoara. Somewhere near Sighișoara was the Roman military guard post, Sandava. The town was founded by German settlers (actually Franconians from the Northern Rhine region), who had been invited to settle in Transylvania by Hungarian King Géza II to defend the eastern borders. During this historical period, people of German ethnicity were called Saxons, but the true German settlers, known as the "Saxons of Transylvania", had no connection with the Saxons in northeastern or southeastern Germany. These settlers received land for use and they benefited from special rights and privileges. Over the years, the fortress of Sighișoara was not exempt from dangers and disasters, the first great invasion was the Tartar's in 1241, when the city was not yet fortified. The construction of the fortress wall, which is 950 m long, began in 1350. The original height was 4m, but in the 15th century it was raised by another 3-4m. It had 14 towers (each belonging to a guild) and 4 bastions. Currently there are 9 towers and three bastions, of which the most representative is the Clock Tower (Hour Tower). Other towers are the Roper's Tower (one of the oldest constructions in Sighișoara), the Tailors' Tower, the Goldsmiths' Tower, etc. Between 1431 and 1435, Vlad Dracul (the inspiration for the character Dracula) stayed in Sighișoara, waiting for the right moment to ascend the throne of Wallachia. He also ruled these regions on behalf of Sigismund of Luxembourg, King of Hungary. It seems that during this period (in 1431) Vlad Țepeș was born in Sighișoara.

Guilds - In Sighișoara there were 19 craft guilds that received status and privileges. The competition between the guilds in different cities was fierce, so the guilds reserved the right to confiscate the products brought by other craftsmen in their city. The craftsmen became richer and richer and came to have representatives in the city council, which until then was reserved for feudal patricians. The first craftsman to enter the city council, as a juror, was a representative of the goldsmith's guild, Nikolaus, in 1393. The guilds were abolished in 1884 because they had lost their significance.

The School on the Hill in Sighișoara - The school on the hill in Sighișoara, today the "Josef Haltrich" high school, is one of the oldest schools in Transylvania. It is classified as a historical monument. Between 1402 and 1520, 95 students from Sighișoara studied at the Universities of Krakow and Vienna. The language of instruction was probably Latin. In 1642, the so-called "Covered Staircase" (also called the "Student Staircase") was built, which connects the Upper Town with the school. Initially it had 300 steps, but now it has 176. The school has many important collections inherited from teachers in the past. These collections include a herbarium with over 1,000 specimens and the collection of snails.

Citadel Square – The Citadel Square is a small square in the heart of the city. In the past, all from fairs, holidays to trials or public executions took place here. It is a suitable place to access the most important tourist attractions in Sighișoara.

Dracula's House – Vlad Dracul's house is located in the Citadel Square, close to the Clock Tower. This house – Vlad Țepeș, the inspiration behind Bram Stoker's



character, was born in 1431. He lived here with his father for 5 years and then they moved to Târgoviște. An iron dragon hangs at the entrance to the house and on the ground floor is the Weapons Museum.

Church of the Lepers – The church is located in the Lower Town, on the banks of the Târnava Mare River. It is a 15th century Gothic church that takes its name from the fact that it served as a chapel for the lepers' hospital between 1647 and 1684. Because lepers were not allowed to enter the church, a special pulpit was built outside so that the priest can serve the sick.

The secular oaks in Breite – Area Natura 2000 is a protected area located in the south of Mureș County, in the administration of Sighișoara. The area "Secular oaks in Breite" is included in the site of community importance - Sighișoara - Târnava Mare and is a hilly area covered with pastures and species of oak and secular sessile oak trees, aged between 400 and 600 years.

The fortified church in Stejărenii – The small town of Stejărenii had its first church built in the 15th century, of which only the middle part of the altar made in the 18th century is preserved. The current church was built between 1913 and 1914, with the material help of the Gustav Adolf Society (Gustav-Adolf-Werk), under the patronage of the Evangelical Church headquartered in Leipzig. The organ, located in the west balcony, was built in 1914 by Wegenstein and his son from Timișoara.



Trail: easy

Elevation difference: +515m

Critical spots: on hot days it is recommended to buy water in the villages due to few springs on the route

Scenery: long roads through the forest, meadows, asphalt in villages, Mălâncrav is a UNESCO heritage village.

Accommodation:

For Terra Saxonum there are many websites where you can find more possibilities for accommodation in traditional houses, it is also worthwhile searching if you can't find places at the recommended accommodation. We also propose the Colinele Transilvaniei website, where one can also find important information: <https://www.en.colinele-transilvaniei.ro/>; <https://www.travlocals.com/>.

Criș: Sometimes at **Bethlen Castle** in Criș you can find accommodation in the tents set up in the castles' garden, prepared by the Devai Szent Ferenc Association (St. Francis), reservation details by phone +40 728 721 495 or + 40 265 713 355, email beke.haza.keresd@gmail.com, in English or German. The fee for visiting the castle goes to the St. Francis Association.

Florești: Experience Transylvania Guesthouses (MET), House no. 79, reservations on website (<https://www.experiencetransylvania.ro/guesthouse/>), payment only online, mentioning that one will be hiking on The Via Transilvanica Trail, there is a small discount. Reservations by phone +40 724 000 350 (Florin Culea) and +40 770 327 738 (Malina Coșorean).

Florești House 21, 5 places, possibility to have dinner on request, reservations by phone. +40 757 019 993 (Dragoș Todea) and +40 751 077 943 (Marinela Todea).

Casa Bunicilor, 6 beds, camping place, breakfast and dinner on request, reservation in advance at tel. +40 743 095 184 (Petru Șerb); email: Petri.delia.auto@gmail.com

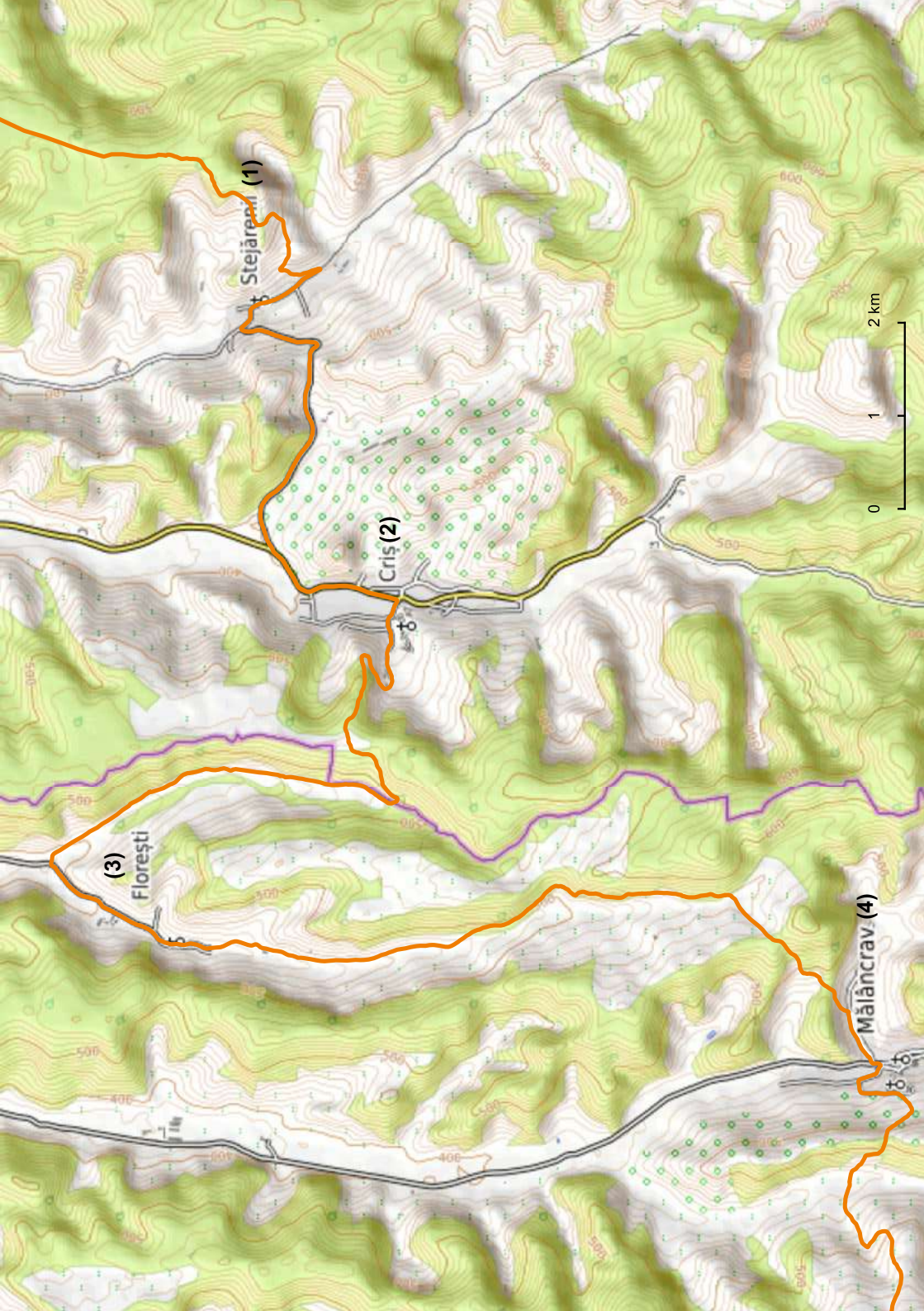
Sheepfold on the hills/ Stâna de pe Coline: 5 places, dinner and breakfast on request, with local products, reservation at tel. +40 741 633 814 (Florin Coșorean) and +40 770 327 738 (Mălina Coșorean);

Mălâncrav: Experience Transylvania Guesthouses (MET), House no. 280, reservations on website (<https://www.experiencetransylvania.ro/guesthouse/>), payment only online, mentioning the fact that one will be hiking on The Via Transilvanica Trail, there is a small discount. Reservations by phone +40 724 000 350 (Florin Culea).

MalmkrogerHaus, Bed & Breakfast accommodation, double rooms, rooms with 9 places. Possibility of camping, with own tent, large common tent. Breakfast and diner on request, prepared with local and farm products. Reservations by phone +40 756 776 916 (Eduard Linzing).

Accommodation at locals, 4 persons, breakfast and dinner on request, reservations at phone +40 775 200 415 and whatsApp, (Maria Căușanu)

Guest House, nr.22, 5 beds, breakfast and dinner on request. Reservations at tel. +40 745 751 944, 0745 010 379 (Gheorghe Jelieru).



Stejăreni (1)

Cris (2)

(3)
Florești

Malâncrav (4)



Infrastructure:

Criș: 
Florești: 

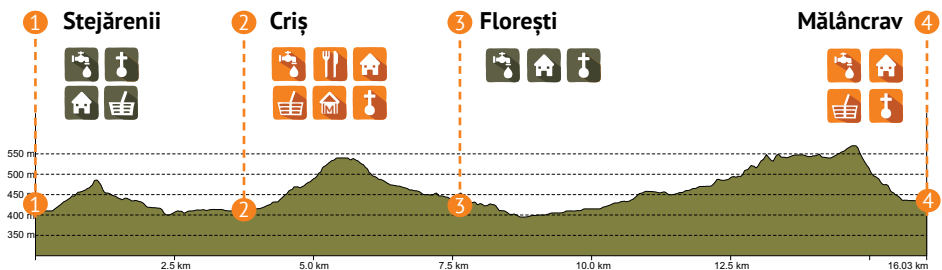
Mălâncrav: 

Note:

This part of the route will be one that makes the transition between Mureș and Sibiu Counties. The start of this section is from Stejărenii (1), following the asphalt between the two localities and the well-made markings for around 3km to the kilometer stone in the center of Criș. Here one can visit Bethlen Castle where one will travel back in time a few hundred years, with archaeological excavations in full swing and the renovation of the castle. Included in the admission fee is information about the organization whose headquarters are here, its activities, as well as about the different transitions done over time. Where the path turns left towards the entrance to the castle, the trail continues ahead on asphalt for a short distance until it reaches a concrete building (farm building), next to which it passes on a macadam road that climbs slightly to the right and to the border between the counties. This climb curves around the concrete building from where one will follow the serpentine road up to and into the forest for about half a kilometer. Here, in the forest, walk another few hundred meters to the top of the hill where one will cross into Sibiu County. Of course, there are no signs to show this and only on a physical map one can see the specific boundary.

This scenery and the area through which the Via Transilvanica Trail passes (the Transylvanian Hills), will become much more obvious, with the trail winding over the hills, left-right, up-down, gentle and smooth, like a miniature version of the Bucovina region. The climbs will be light and short, but frequent, and the hillsides, like in Bucovina, will be just as wooded, with beeches, acacias, oaks and pines and the spruce being a little rarer. The vegetation is the same as in Terra Siculorum and the fauna is just as rich, except for the presence of the bear. Traces of them can be found, but there are no frequent sightings.

Once you reach the hill above the Criș (2), you start a slight descent with small serpentines in the pleasant shade of the forest. The forest road at one point continues straight ahead, but the VT will head to the right, leaving the marked path with the blue cross, which one saw next to the orange T. On the path up to the entrance of the forest, one can indulge oneself in the countless fruits by the roadside such as: apples, forest pears, mirabelle plums and blackberries (depending on the season). When leaving the dense forest one will pass through younger groves and small meadows before reaching the asphalt road on the left towards the village of Florești (3). Walk a kilometer to the entrance of the village and continue through the center where one will discover small, colorful, old and slightly cluttered houses. As you slowly approach the center of the village, the smell of



manure may intensify and the streets will become less well maintained. Close to the center one will find on the left a tap for spring water that flows into a large concrete bowl. Here is the perfect opportunity to refill one's bottles. If it is good weather, you may see children bathing in the water or girls washing carpets. In this village there is only one place that sells products. There is no shop and everything is sold in large quantities by a family opposite the watering hole. Once one has stocked up on water and supplies, continue to the end of the village and follow the trail to the sheepfold "Sheep on the hills", to Florin, who owns this sheepfold with dogs accustomed to tourists, as Florin offers multiple possibilities for an authentic sheepfold experience. Florin also offers accommodation if needed and even "brunch" for groups. He also has water and cute puppies and kittens which hikers can play with during their well-deserved break. The route then continues on the same dusty country road without many trees around it to an empty sheepfold on the right-hand side of the road. During the day the animals are away grazing in the surrounding area. At one point the route turns left, leaving the road in a slight ascent following the contour of the hill on a country road, which passes through open land, woods and even thickets. At one point you can see several roads and after exiting the rare pine forest the path turns right suddenly for a few meters and up the hill, leaving the dusty road behind. It climbs about 200 meters until it enters another new forest which seems like another world as it hides a mysterious mini-canyon, formed in the rock of this small mountain which slowly descends towards Mălâncrav (4). After about 500 meters, traces of civilization (or maybe the opposite) and evidence of the village begins. Once on the asphalt the route turns right towards the center of the village. This time, the fortified church and the fortress are not to be found in the center, but above on the left.

Info:

Bethlen Castle in Criș – Bethlen Castle in Criș was built between the XIV-XVIII century, in the style of the Transylvanian Renaissance, as a small fortified noble residence. It is considered to be the most beautiful Renaissance castle in Transylvania. It has a fortified enclosure with a square plan, with circular bastions at the corners and a square entrance tower, a structure typical of late medieval military architecture, previous to the castle on the south side. The residence has two levels, an imposing circular tower (Archers Tower) and a loggia with semicircular arched openings, supported on short cylindrical columns. After the construction of the castle, the fortification system was completed with a semi-enclosure with star-shaped bastions.

The evangelical church in Criș – The first mention of the church in Criș was in 1309. In 1433 it received from the pope the right of pilgrimage. The medieval inhabitants, under the influence of the Protestant wave, became Lutherans. This old Lutheran church was demolished at the end of the 19th century and, between 1906 and 1907, the current church was built in its place. The middle bell, inherited from the previous church, was cast in 1554. The organ, located in the west balcony, was built in 1854 by Samuel Friedrich Binder and repaired in 1892 by Eugen Palf and, in 1907 by Karl Einschenk..

Florești – "The sheepfold on the hills" must be mentioned at the exit from Florești to Mălâncrav, where the shepherd, Florin, is a very welcoming person who offers drinking water, or on request, for organized groups, also offers a traditional meal, brunch and even the opportunity to sleep in hay and other local experiences, specific to a sheepfold in the area. You can get in touch for booking such experiences via Facebook, where "Stâna

de pe coline” has a page, with photos and articles about them. It’s a special place where even if you don’t spend much time, you are welcome for some refreshing cold water!

Mălâncrav – An isolated village in Sibiu County, became a tourist attraction after the Mihai Eminescu Trust, which is under the patronage of Prince Charles, carried out 180 projects. The MET’s mission is to revitalize Transylvanian villages where there are still fortified churches without altering the values that have been preserved over time. The village is located almost one hundred kilometers from the city of Sibiu, towards Sighișoara and 13 kilometers from the nearest national road. In 2000, when MET first intervened in this village, many people did not have jobs and there were generally many shortcomings. With the common goal of bringing the community back to life, carpentry workshops, tile ovens were set up and people mobilized and worked to help rebuild the traditional houses and the church, which now attracts many local and foreign tourists. Thus, the Evangelical Church, the Catholic Church and 75 facades of the traditional houses in the village were restored, people of different ethnicities - Saxons, Romanians, Hungarians and Roma - working side by side.

The fortified church of Mălâncrav – The evangelical church of Mălâncrav is located near the Apafi Mansion, located on the site of a former Roman basilica. The current evangelical church is mentioned for the first time in the will of Nikolaus Apafi. Another important act for the history of the church here is the one issued in 1424 by Pope Martin V regarding the right of Nikolaus Apafi to grant indulgences in the chapel of the Holy Blood. This chapel, which was positioned next to the church and can no longer be found today, served the last remaining Catholics after the Reformation. The church that was built in the early 14th century by Nikolaus’ son Gregor, has three naves and a bell tower. The sanctuary built in international gothic style was rebuilt in 1400. The current form is due to structural changes, which were carried out in the early twentieth century. The most impressive element of the church is its mural painting. Most of the frescoes are on the north side of the central nave, dating back to 1350. Most of the paintings in gothic style, capture the life of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary. There are also scenes painted from the Old Testament. From the fortification of the church, part of the exterior and the first levels of the gate tower can still be seen.

Orchard and Fruit Juice Factory – One of the MET projects carried out in Mălâncrav is the orchard of fruit trees, which supply a local business for natural juices. The company is eco-certified periodically. The company has three permanent employees who take care of the smooth running of things, but from March 2020 they have also employed daily workers. In September-November, the fruits are harvested by hand and the juice is made on the same day. We encourage hikers to discover local products, especially when they are produced in the best conditions for the environment, for the consumer and finally for the community.

Apafi Mansion – The most important project of MET in Mălâncrav was the restoration and introduction into the tourist circuit of the Apafi Mansion that dates back to the 15th century. The mansion that belonged to Prince Mihaly Apafi is located on a hill, at the edge of the orchard, near a fortified church where one will find spectacular views. Before the 1989 Revolution, the mansion served as a cultural home where all the local festive days took place. During the communist period the mansion was exploited heavily and not to mention the countless owners that the mansion had over time resulting in even a fire when it suffered substantial damage. It goes without saying that the restoration of the building was not only necessary, but even a blessing for the whole village.



Trail: Medium

Elevation difference: +619m

Critical spots: On hot days it is recommended to buy water in the villages due to few springs on the route

Scenery: Long roads through the forest, meadows, asphalt in villages.

Accommodation:

New Saxon (Nou Săsesc): **New Saxon Camp**, reservations at tel: +40 740 027 011;

Coșșa Mare: **Pension Șura**, accommodation 10 places, possibility of dining, reservations at +40 728 371 762 (Sile and Simona Seciu);

Possibility of accommodation and camping in a reinvented honey truck, details on www.facebook.com/copsamare.life or at +40 768 994 224 (James de Candole);

Guesthouse Casa Albă, no. 154, 8 places, and. **Guest House Casa Galbenă**, no. 146, 4 places, possibility of serving meals, details and reservations by phone +40 746 046 200 (Giovanna Bassetti);

Biertan: **Experience Transylvania Guesthouses**, House no. 2, reservations at <https://www.en.experiencetransylvania.ro/guesthouse/> payment exclusively online, mentioning that one is on the Via Transilvanica Trail, they have a small discount. Reservations by phone +40 724 000 350 (Florin Culea);

Eva Wagner House, 8 rooms with bathroom, 20 places, double rooms, with meals on request, reservation by phone +40 740 679 119;

Pension Oppidium, maximum capacity of 9 people, meal on request, reservation by phone +40 740 679 119;

Cetate Pension, capacity 23 places, 25 George Coșbuc street, possibility of serving meals, details and reservations by phone +40 745 246 485, or on [on booking.com](http://on.booking.com);

Pension Unglerus, 32 places, restaurant nearby. Reservations at tel. +40 742 024 065;

Casa Ana, 9 rooms, double, triple rooms, or apartment, breakfast and dinner on request. Reservations by phone +40 787 876 009 (Ani Mărginean)..

Infrastructure: Nou Săsesc:



Coșșa Mare:

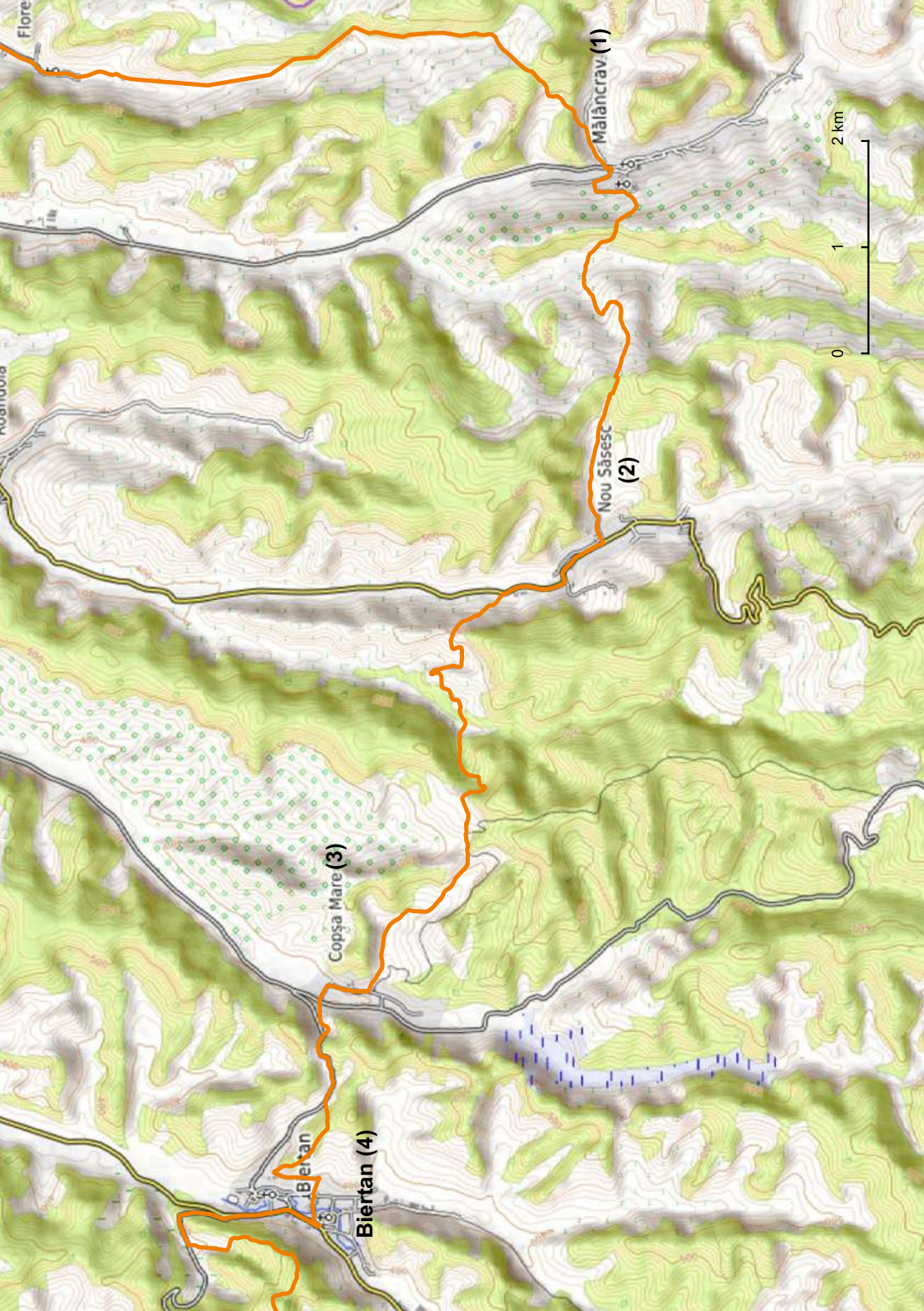


Biertan:



Note:

After a night spent in Mălâncrav (1) and a visit to the church and the mansion, the trail continues in front of them, passing through the terraced orchards up to the right, leaving the church tower behind. Follow the dirt road that separates the electric fenced orchards and that is used by carts and other vehicles that are needed for doing the work in the orchards. One might be lucky enough to find a plum or an apple that fell on the right side of the fence. After about 100 meters of climbing this dirt road, one will come to a right hand curve before entering a small grove to the left. The path then descends and follows the deep tractor tracks towards an increasingly flatter terrain. The tractor



Flora

Mălăncrav (1)

Nou Săsești (2)

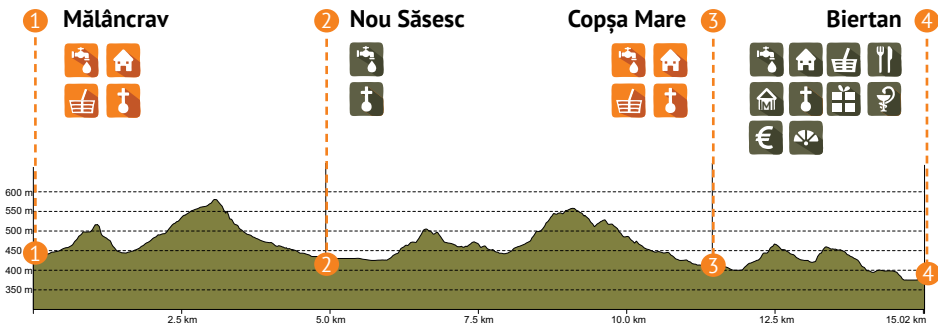
Copsa Mare (3)

Bierțan (4)

0 1 2 km

tracks will double or even triple, forming several tracks, some steeper, others gentler, descending to the point of where they meet. One will pass more empty fields until starting a slight climb up another hill, as one will start to hear the murmur of water. When taking a closer look, one will find a hexagonal "fountain" improvised from black pipes from where the water flows into the large concrete hexagon made of concrete, which has a tree (it looks like a hawthorn bush) and a smaller hexagon in the middle. The water has a strange taste and is undrinkable, although ok for animals. From here, follow the trail to the left, leaving the fountain behind as the path then heads right. After a few hundred meters one will come across a meadow with golden grass and a path that is made up of two tracks of earth, which are separated by thick grass on the hill and stretches out in front and slightly to the right to another cool forest.

The path looks like it has been created by man due to being very flat and straight, with the sky open above and the sun burning down, after which one enters the cool forest, which should feel like a good mouthful of fresh, cool air for the heated lungs and skin. After entering this young forest, it will lead one downhill until one finally reaches another yellow-red dirt road reminiscent of Morocco. One will slowly leave the young forest and from which it is another kilometer to Nou Săsesc (2). When entering the village, one will be among several houses until you reach the asphalt road. Here, turn right. Cross the village, which one will find extremely clean and tidy along the long, asphalt road. 300 meters from the last house, leave the main road to the left, onto a country road, which climbs slowly. After almost 600 meters of climbing, one will reach the sparse forest, from which one comes out onto a kind of ridge where there are only bushes, trees, and thick grass where the road is no longer visible, but only a path. One will notice that it has greener grass than the surrounding areas, which is a sign that it is circulated by humans and animals. Continue following the markings which descend slowly. The track will appear and disappear from time to time before taking a sudden right at the foot of a rather steep hill. One will avoid going over the peak, traversing the contour of the hill to the opposite side and as it one will see on the map, it was a good detour. Then, continue the grass path, which turns sometimes into a dirt road, sometimes into a cart track and passes through several thickets in a straight line, without major changes, for around 400 meters to a grove where one will meet a small, narrow stream, a step's width. The trail here can be difficult when raining or in high humidity as the mud becomes very slippery.



After about 1km and at the end of an ascent through the forest, one will reach other wide meadows used for grazing, with electric fences that separate the private properties from the properties of the locality. You will notice several signs that indicate this, but before meeting the first sign of this kind, at a short distance from it, the path will take a right onto the edge of the bush forest surrounding a property. The route follows the edge of the pasture for about 400 meters, after which it descends onto a dirt track, which is used by the villagers. It continues with slight descents through groves and among fruit trees for about 1.5km until it straightens out and the village can be seen in the distance. Then, when entering Copșa Mare (3), one will discover another village with Saxon architecture with an old church in the center and houses with courtyards. A few meters from the entrance to the village, take the asphalt road on the right until it takes a left, in front of what would appear to be a bus stop with beautiful houses on the left. At this intersection, where we meet the asphalt road, our trail carefully crosses the road and takes the path to the left of the bus station, through the trees, nettles and bushes, following the markings. After traversing a



smaller forest, one will meet a serpentine asphalt road that descends for about 1km. After which, at the foot of the descending hill, the path takes a left, leaving the asphalt and crosses another meadow for 600m to the entrance to the forest. Here begins an ascent to the top of some of the Transylvanian Hills. Once reaching the top and after a climb that is of medium difficulty, but short, one will follow the contour of the curves of the forest and of the peak. From this point one will start to see these geographical shapes more often. After about 1km, one will reach a point where Biertan (4) can be admired from above, before starting a slight descent into the village. As all the roads lead to the church in the center of the community, the route will descend past the cemetery and the orthodox church, turning sharply left next to a fence towards the streets of Biertan. Here one will find another world long gone, with wonders that can still be admired.

Info:

Nou Săsesc – Nou Săsesc is a village in Laslea commune, in Sibiu County. The village is equally distanced from Mediaș, Sighișoara and Agnita, surrounded by steep hills, at an altitude of 400 meters. The history of the village goes back to the 13th century, when the first Saxons came to the area. People say the original settlement was more upstream than the current one, in a place called The Stone Well. There lived the first farmers of

the village. Following written sources, it seems like the lands and the forest belonged to the Hungarian baron Apafi, which also explains the Hungarian name of the village. Other sources tell us the village moved to its current placement once the Turkish troops burnt down the original settlement, according to the story of the church bells present even today in the Evangelical Church. The original bell is said to have been so big and heavy that the only way to be transported to the new village was to be melted and transformed into 3 new smaller church bells. The Saxons say the new church was built on its current spot (up a hill, 100 meters away from the village) in order to resist better in case of attacks. The Saxons named the village Neudorf (after the latin name Noua Villa). Besides the Evangelical Church, there are two more churches in the village: a Catholic one and an Orthodox one.

Copșa Mare – Copșa Mare is another village admired for the typical Saxon architectural heritage, which is very well preserved. The practice of agriculture and viticulture led to the rapid development of Copșa Mare at the beginning of the 14th century. The inhabitants did not want to be left behind those from Biertan, known for their beautiful church. Thus, they decided to build a church just as imposing, whose works began in the fourteenth century, the defense wall being added almost two centuries later. Today, the fortified church in Copșa Mare is in the form of a Gothic architectural complex that guards the town and its surroundings.

Biertan – Biertan is a village very present on the tourist circuit, being known for the fortified church that some say would be one of the most beautiful in the country. The village is located in a long valley, among the terraced hills where vines were once grown. Unfortunately, Biertan no longer produces wine as before, only in small quantities at the Biertan winery, which is located at the exit of the village towards Richiș. The place is first mentioned in documents in 1283 and is dominated by the impressive assembly of the fortress with the church of St. Mary on top of the hill, surrounded by three fortification walls. The whole assembly was included in 1993 on the list of monuments of the UNESCO Cultural Heritage. Biertan was an important ecclesiastical and commercial center, seat of the Evangelical Episcopate since 1572 for a period of almost three centuries. The late Gothic church with its spectacular altar, was built between 1500-1525. The altar with 28 icons was created by artists from Vienna in 1483. Skilled craftsmen and local blacksmiths created an original padlock system for the door of sacristy in 1515. The door is decorated on the outside with inlays made by the same Sighișoara craftsman, Johannes Reychnut, who also made the chairs for the church choir.

Biertan architecture – The medieval architectural complex consists of the church and the fortifications, located in the center of the village, on a hill. The hall-type church occupies the central part of the complex, being built between 1490 and 1520 in the late gothic style, being the last in Transylvania built in this style. Craftsmen from Vienna and Nuremberg built the church's valuable polyptych altar, the largest in the country, with 28 painted panels. The sacristy door is internationally renowned for its very complicated system of 19 locks, made by local craftsmen in 1515 who was awarded at the World's Fair in Paris in 1900. It is a representative example of medieval Saxon engineering and quality, due to the exceptional inlays and the original locking system, which still works today. The surrounding fortifications are also worthy of a mention, being considered the strongest in Transylvania for a peasant fortress. It has three rows of walls, 6 towers and 3 bastions built in different stages since the fourteenth century. At the top is a defense corridor, the clock and the bells. The "mausoleum" tower is located to the northeast

and has a mausoleum on the ground floor that houses, since 1913, the tombs of the prelates of this church. The eastern tower was also called the “prison”. In this tower, the quarrelsome couples were locked up for two weeks in order to resolve their conflicts thus avoiding divorce.

The Biertan Donation – The Biertan Donation was discovered in 1775, 5km south of Biertan, near a spring. This discovery is perhaps one of the most important in Romanian history and archeology. The piece is a tabula ansata made of a bronze alloy of the highest quality, bearing the inscription “Ego Zenovius Votum Posui” and the Christian monogram inserted in a circle. The researchers decided that the piece was part of a chandelier designed to illuminate a Christian worship building. The dating was made in the fourth century AD, and it is among the highest quality of the era, being worthy of the most important early Christian churches in Western Mediterranean. Researchers have established the provenance of the piece in northern Italy by analogy with other similar pieces found here. The object either adorned an existing place of worship in Chinedru, or came here as a result of migration and the stationing of the Goths in Transylvania.

The Lookout “Cucu ‘hill” – The village elders tell of this defense point, built on this hill during the Turkish invasions before the completion of the fortified church. Today, this lookout point offers a stunning view of the building and the entire village, with Saxon houses, the tower of the Orthodox Church and the beehives of beekeepers. In the recent history of the hill, the locals built a wooden cross to show their faith.



Trail: a little difficult because of the elevation level

Elevation difference: +558 m

Critical spots: on hot days it is recommended to get water from the villages, as there are no springs on the trail, flowing mostly through the forest. The trail can be walked either until Richiş, where you can decide for a stopping point and accommodation or until Nemşa.

Scenery: long paths through the forest, on hills/coasts, clearings, villages on concrete.

Accommodation:

Richiş: *La Curtea Richvini Guest House*, 16 places, breakfast included, dinner on request. Camping Richis, no.5, place for caravans, tents, with shared kitchen and showers, possibility to serve meals with prior reservation at phone number: +40 741 183 404;

At Lucy Abel Smith, 2 apartments, Richiş no. 24. Reservations at phone number 0269 806 784 (Clari Sărăşan);

Noah House, a room with private bathroom, reservations on tel. +40 758 059 859;

Ani Guesthouse, 10 beds, access to kitchen, dinner and breakfast on request, reservations at phone number +40 771 762 321 (Adela Szatvanyi);

Nemşa: *Liana Guesthouse*, 15 places, breakfast and dinner, shop, pastry laboratory, camping conditions, reservations at phone number +40 771 523 276 (Mrs Elena);

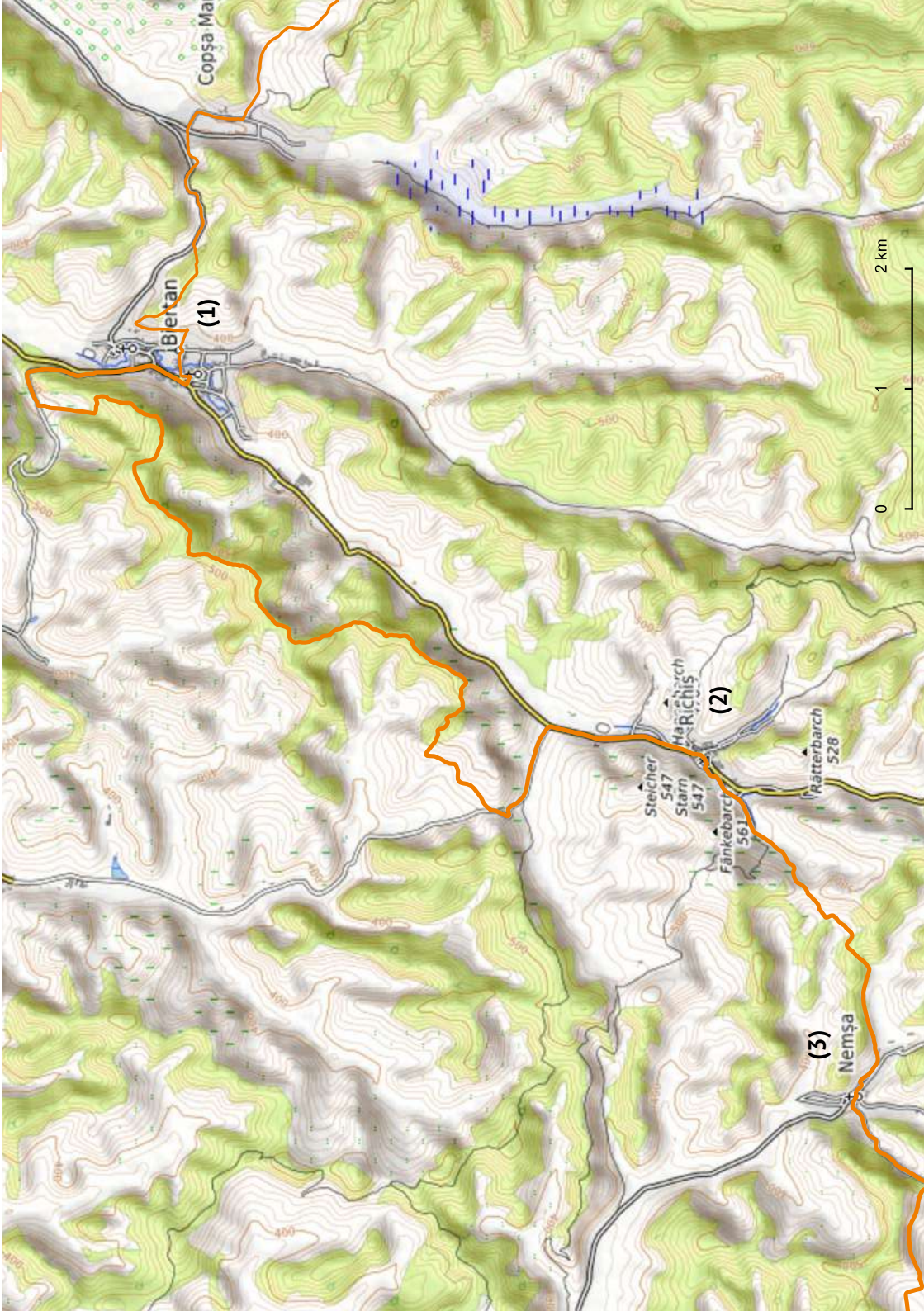
Guest house, no.58, 3 places, breakfast, shops nearby, reservations on phone number +40 775 108 468 (Remus) and +40 722 552 001 (Liviana);

Bed and Wine Guest House, nr. 91, 6 places, breakfast included, dinner on request, reservations by phone number: +40 743 332 405 (Bogdan Matei).

Infrastructure: **Richiş:** 

Note: **Nemşa:** 

Biertan (1) is a place to be seen, visited, lived as an experience of the Saxon past. Biertan will certainly not disappoint. There are multiple options for accommodation and activities. But the time will come for the hiker to continue his or her path. Starting from the central square of Biertan, leaving the fortified church behind, you will go right, on the concrete, on the main road, to the exit of Biertan, where you will keep left, walking on the secondary road that takes it almost parallel to the main one, to the left of it. It's also a concrete road, but less busy, with trees on either side, providing good shade as you climb gently. After a few sharp bends, coming out of the forest and already descending, about a kilometre into it, near the fence of a farm, turn left, leaving the tarmac road for a small cobbled track that keeps turning into a path. After about 400 metres, at the corner of the forest that drops off to your right, turn sharply left, towards the next forest you are climbing towards. After another 100 metres of slightly difficult climbing, the much-mentioned hill appears, that is, that wooded ridge of a hill that keeps going up and down, offering breathtaking views from time to time. This brings you to another viewpoint, offering a view of Biertan, this time with the tower facing the viewer. After about 4.5 km, through beautiful forests that awaken your appetite for songs about nature and stories full of mystery, the joy that shade brings on a sunny autumn day is hard to put

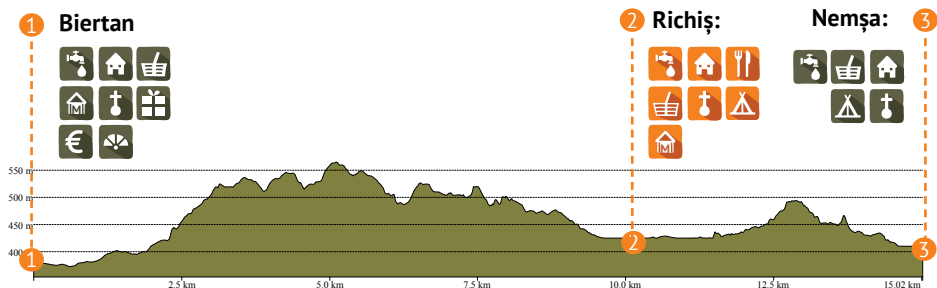


into words. This joy will cover even the feeling of dread that it's a long walk through the woods, because shade has never been more welcome. If it's been rainy lately, the biggest threat will be mosquitoes, which even without much humidity, are hard to bear. After all these kilometres of ups and downs in the shade, the edge of the forest is reached, but not for long, just long enough to reveal some perfect, gnarled, perfectly terraced hillsides ahead, which we shall later learn were the vine-covered hills of Richiș (2). One walks a little on the ridge, then again in the shade and again in the sun, until one descends into the forest and the road makes a small intersection, where the hiker's instinct would say to turn left, where there is a big X on the tree, which clearly means that one does not pass through there. So you go straight ahead, with your senses sharpened for any wild animal movement, thing that can either delight or frighten you. Deer, wild pigs, squirrels or bears may get in the way, but the right behaviour in the woods helps avoid these encounters. Then, suddenly, the road takes a left turn downhill, a sign that a hilltop has been bypassed, heading for a cornfield after exiting the forest. The road is already a dirt one that suddenly passes and turns into a road ready to be paved. Then, over another 400 metres, past more cornfields and another dirt road, always keeping left, you reach the concrete where Richiș is on the right after about a kilometre. After a descent to Richiș, perhaps even an overnight stay, depending on one's taste and abilities, one walks along the road until the church in the centre of the village is on the left-hand side of the road, and opposite to this you will find a shop called "La Doi Pași" (a place to hydrate, shop, take a break), after which, a few metres further on, one turns right into a small street, then left, towards the exit of the village, among numerous houses with specific Saxon architecture. They are colourful, renovated, dilapidated or deserted, but each of them offer something interesting to observe, with beauty in their imperfection. Towards the exit of the village one leaves the concrete and the road becomes a dirt one, winding slightly uphill, through trees, hills and man-made fields, following the VT markings, one goes further, glancing back towards the beautiful Richiș and its church rising between the houses, all seen a little above. The road continues muddy, leafy through young woods, downhill or slightly uphill, about two kilometres. Then, following the arrow and signposts, you enter the village of Nemșa, on the road leading to the old church in the centre of the village, next to the Cultural Centre. Here you will find a shop, Liana, accommodation, good people and interesting stories.

Info:

Richiș - Richiș is also known as the multinational village in Sibiu county. Situated near the village of Biertan, Richiș has recently succeeded in persuading people from the Netherlands, Germany, Great Britain or Switzerland to leave their native country and discover a "country" lifestyle, simple but charming. Only the village's coat of arms, a bastlan, is a reminder of the times gone by, remembering of the period when the village was a marsh with wildlife. The Saxon houses are, of course, a reminder of the more recent past, when the Saxons lived on these lands, which they transformed as the story of history unfolded over the years. Foreigners have refurbished the houses of the Saxons who left for Germany, preserving the original style, and have even built numerous guesthouses, camping areas and generally adapted very naturally to the way of life here, reviving this village. But the most beautiful thing is that the love for this "adopted" place shines through in the eyes of the locals, who are in love with the peace and beauty of the place, the customs and crafts that are hundreds of years old, the taste





of food and drinks. Ask a foreigner from Richiș if he likes the local “țuică” (brandy) and he’ll proudly answer immediately, with the most sincere smile on his face, that he likes it so much that he learned to make it himself.

Nemșa (in Saxon dialect Nimesch, Nimeš, in German Niemesch, Nimesch, Nimisch, Nimschdorf, in Hungarian Nemes, Szásznesmes) is a village in the commune of Moșna in Sibiu county, Transylvania, Romania, with 516 inhabitants. It is part of the Ecomuseum Circuit of the commune of Moșna, of which Moșna and Alma Vii are also part.

Stephan Ludwig Roth - (b. 24.11.1796 - d. 11.05.1849) - Lutheran priest, teacher, writer, politician. Progressive intellectual, activist for equal rights for peasants, abolition of serfdom and political rights. In the church of Nemșa he was a priest for 10 years, between 1838 and 1848. In 1849 he was accused of high treason and executed in Cluj-Napoca. A photocopy of his last letter is on display in the evangelical church, together with a translation into Romanian, addressed to his five children and the parishioners of Nemșa and the commune of Moșna. A fragment of this letter is printed and offered as a gift to the visitors.

Fortified Evangelical Church of Nemșa - is a group of historical monuments located on the territory of the village of Nemșa, commune of Moșna. Built at the end of the 14th century, the ensemble consists of two monuments: the evangelical church and the fortified enclosure.

Tour of the fortified enclosure - with prior notice, you can take a tour with a presentation of the history of the building and the mural paintings in the church. The ensemble is a class A historical monument, the original part of the choir (14th century) has been preserved. The neo-Gothic tower (19th century) houses the oldest bell in Transylvania, dating from 1326. The murals were partially stripped and restored almost a century ago. Subsequent research studies have confirmed the existence of a much larger painted mural surface. A project to uncover them will be launched as soon as the foundation has the necessary material support (phone number Liviana and Remus).

The Bellinger’s House - a 19th century building that is part of the fortified ensemble. The recently completed project aimed to furnish it like a Transylvanian dwelling, both with Saxon ethnographic furniture (painted furniture, ceramics, clothing, fabrics, jewellery) and with bourgeois furniture. The collection on display is entirely private and will be accompanied by other exhibitions on a regular basis over the coming years. The aim of the exhibition is not only to present museum pieces, but also to present them in a way that reflects as authentically as possible the atmosphere of the Transylvanian houses of the past.

Trail: Difficult due to the long distance and in some places the difference in elevation

Elevation difference: +556m

Critical spots: On hot days it is recommended to buy water in the villages due to few springs on the route. One can go directly to Mediaș, or, optionally, with a slight detour to Richiș, adding on a total of 4.2km round trip. Of course, Richiș can be an option for accommodation as well

Scenery: Long paths through forests, meadows and hills and asphalt roads in the villages.

Accommodation:

Moșna: Bio Moșna, 4 places, breakfast and dinner on request, breakfast and dinner on request, 0741 391 444 (Lavinia Schuster);

Casa Speranței, 10 places, breakfast and dinner on request, reservations at phone +40 752 955 587 (Claudiu Cătană);

Casa Parohială, 16 places, shop nearby, reservations by phone +40 749 680 770 (Laci Ciocan);

Accommodation with locals, 6 places, breakfast and dinner on request, reservations by phone +40 741 888 558 (Gheorghe Pănișoară);

Laura Nuțu, - for any information or help at phone +40 747 325 783

Mediaș: Ferdinand Apartments, Laci Ciocan, phone +40 749 680 770, accommodation in the center, kitchen and bathroom, possibility to eat at restaurants;

Accommodation with locals, Ion Creangă street nr.4, 2 rooms, 4 beds, equipped kitchen, shops and restaurants nearby, Reservations at +40 741 045 355 (Adriana Nistor) and +40 741 045 333 (Marius Nistor). You can get information about the route at adriana_n2007@yahoo.com.

Infrastructure:

Moșna:

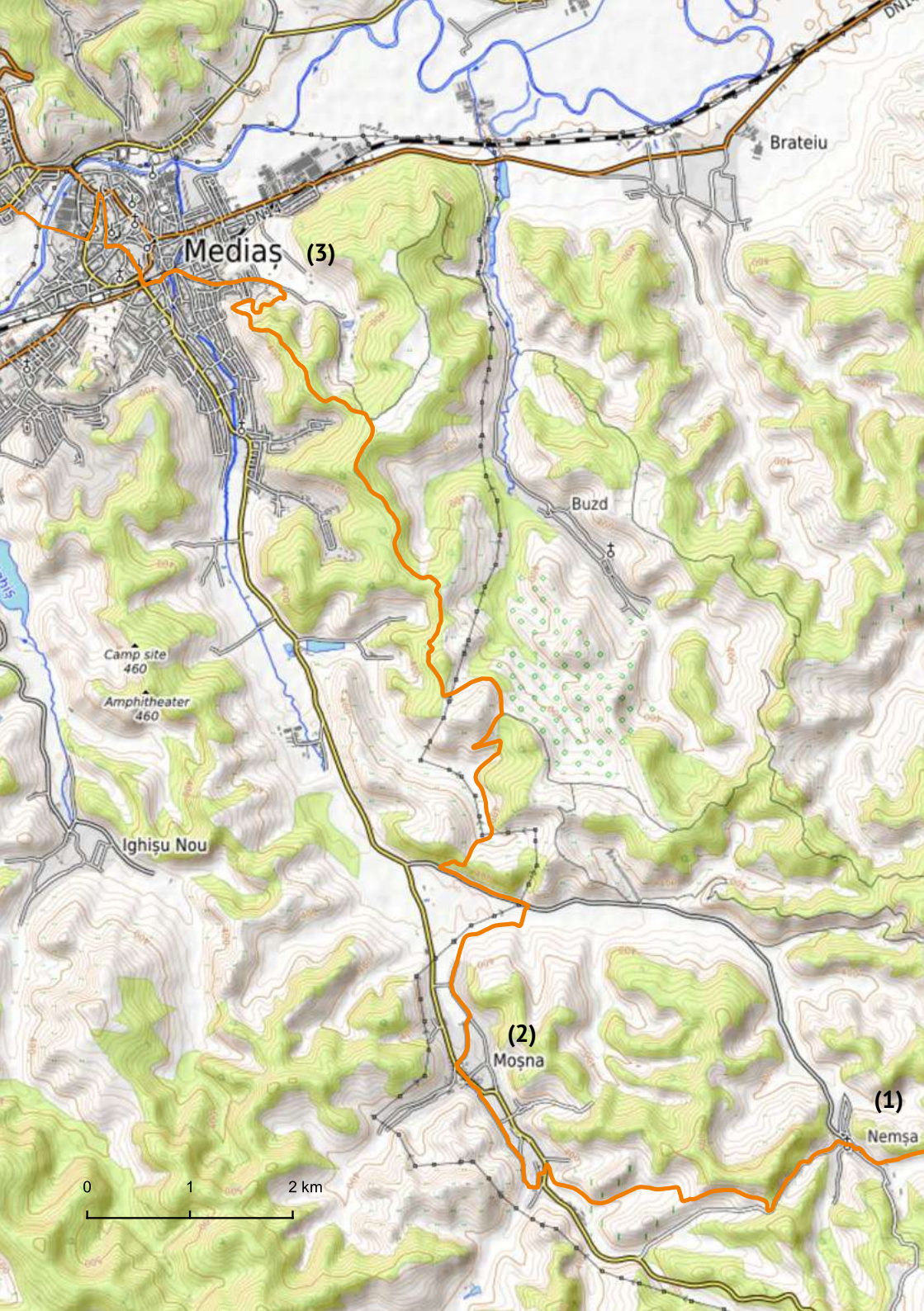


Mediaș:



Note:

Nemșa (1) is a very warm village where people ask and answer questions, being happy to socialise with someone new. The road leads past the bell ringer's house, then turns right. Between the houses, the road turns into a broken concrete road, almost gone, with gravel out and patches of tarmac material here and there, staying the same for a long time, even after leaving the village and passing between the last households, becoming then a dirt road, continuing through solitary trees with VT markings on them. Note that the paved road remains to the left and our path goes above it, through large, dry, ungrazed grass, then turns right slightly, and left again, following the contour above the paved road. Later, the level of the road and the level of the path begin to approach, as the hiker crosses from the path onto the jerry-dashed concrete road, which curves to the right and descends gently, and then left towards the entrance to Moșna. From distance you can see some buildings, which are farmhouses at the end of the village, and then houses that become increasingly dense and close together. Leaving the farmhouses on the left, notice the markings on the electricity poles and continue to a bridge on the left and then



Mediaș (3)

Brateiu

Buzd

Camp site
460

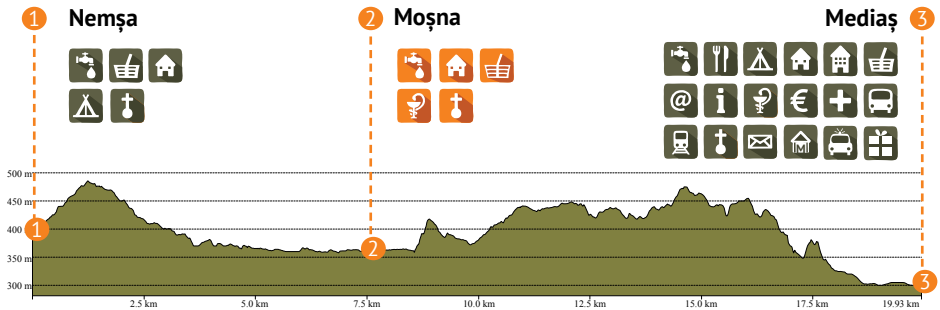
Amphitheater
460

Ighișu Nou

(2)
Moșna

(1)
Nemșa





turn left on this bridge, along the roadside for a few metres. You are already in the village of Moşna. After 100 metres you cross the road and turn right between the houses on a small path, which leads to another one, and continue winding through the houses, along the small lanes, avoiding the busy tarmac road. At one point you cross a small stream, from which a path leads to another village street, on which there are other houses and households. Then again you go out on a path that avoids a little more concrete and again you enter it, up to the centre of the village, with the fortified church standing guard. From here, you leave the church on the left side, and after crossing a bridge, the road turns right on the concrete, after a few hundred meters again to the left and you walk on it until the exit of the village, where one last time, between the last houses, you turn right and walk on the same asphalt, damaged, with fields on both sides, about two kilometers to a new wide road. From here the signpost points left, and you walk up to a large white building, which is the village sewage treatment plant. Past this you turn right, uphill slightly, towards a pine forest, which you could see even from Moşna already. From here you walk up and out on a hill, climb a little more, then walk along the edge of the forest, bypassing it. After two kilometres from the sewage treatment plant, our route continues over hills and through glades, past woods, and then starts to climb up into a forest through which there will be a few ups and downs that bring us closer and closer to Mediaş.

You enter the forest and follow the specific markings of the “road that unites”. From here we start a new “hilly”, along the wooded coast, around four and a half kilometres. Many descriptions through the forest are not necessary, as the route is extremely well marked, no special specifications are needed, just that these passages through the wooded Transylvanian Hills offers a pleasant feeling of freedom and time for meditation.

You will then reach a viewpoint on the edge of the forest, from where you will be able to observe Mediaş (3), which seems to play hide-and-seek with hikers, appearing and disappearing, letting you discover more and more houses and buildings of the town. Then follows a descent, still through the forest, keeping slightly to the right, until you reach a clearing, which has a paved road at its base. Follow the markings to reach the centre of Mediaş.

Info:

Moşna - “other names: Meşindorf or Mojna (in the Saxon dialect Meschn, Maešn, in German Meschen, Moschen, in Hungarian Muzsna, Szászmuşsna or Muzsna) is the village



of residence of the commune of the same name in Sibiu county, is located in the northern part of Sibiu county, on the course of the Moşna valley, in the Hârtibaciului Plateau. Brief history: Archaeological excavations made over time have brought material evidence of the existence of a settlement on the territory of the village since the Neolithic and Eneolithic, thus, in the place called "La Râpă" was discovered a prehistoric settlement in prehistoric Romania with material belonging to the Petreşti culture. In the border of

the village, at "Via lui Rampelt", materials belonging to the Coțofeni culture were found, and from another place come medieval bronze and iron sickles. A necropolis from the Second Iron Age, containing fragments of vases, a Celtic cup and a sword, has been found on the "Citadel Road". Ceramic material with burn marks from the Iron Age and pottery from the 6th century were found in the medieval fortification. In the 14th century, a Gothic three-nave hall basilica was built, dedicated to St Mary. In 1485 the church was almost entirely rebuilt, with only the outer walls of the old basilica remaining, and the interior was converted into a church hall. In 1780, during repairs to the Lutheran church's sacristy, a monetary hoard of 380 Roman silver coins was found, the oldest dating from the period of the Emperor Nero and the most recent from the Severus Alexander period. In the oldest document referring to the Saxon settlements in the Târnavelor area, dated 1283, the name of the priest of Moșna (Petrus) is mentioned. Moșna was a particularly prosperous commune and until 1533 it was in competition with Mediaș and Biertan to become the seat of the municipality, a title eventually obtained by Mediaș. The village of Moșna belonged to the County of Târnavă Mare in the Kingdom of Hungary from 1876 onwards, a membership that ended in 1920 with the signing of the Treaty of Trianon, a treaty that provided for the establishment of Hungary's borders with its neighbours. The two Romanian churches from Moșna were built at the same time, side by side, in 1841. This fact prompted Protopope Ștefan Moldovan from Mediaș to write: "In the year 1841 - at once both the united and the non-united people started to build new churches next to each other, and many of them with a quiet and more sensible mind told them - that instead of one church a school should be built and it should be provided with a hardworking teacher, because in a church they could fit all of them; but those interested did not let anyone leave his own. And so now there are two neighbouring churches, one of which is ready as it should be, and both of which - except for Easter - are always empty of people, for without any teaching they are happy to swim in foolishness, and are happy to drive their animals to pasture on Sundays and feast days." In the interwar period the village was part of the county of Târnavă Mare. Since 1968 it has been part of Sibiu county.

Evangelical Fortified Church - one of the most beautiful late Gothic churches, was built between 1480-1486. The famous stone mason Andreas Lapidica was responsible for the construction. The present church is built on the structure of the outer walls of the previous basilica. It is a three-nave hall, vaulted with ribbed latticework. It has remarkable cornices and a monumental tabernacle. It is surrounded by an extensive peasant fortification and reinforced with towers, which also incorporates an old Gothic chapel, probably of the XIV century. It has a massive bell-tower about 2m west of the church, the bell having been cast in 1515. The polyptych altar, executed by Vincentius (1521), is now in the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Cincu. Renovations, alterations and additions were made in 1575, 1630, 1658, 1698, 1701, 1718, 1763, 1791, 1824, 1878, 1919, 1998 and 2000.

The fortification - In 1520 the construction of the fortification enclosure began. The walls were 9 metres high and described a rectangular route. The gate tower is to the south-east (originally it was to the east). Source citation: https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moșna,_Sibiu

Mediaș - The town is one of the seven fortress-cities, a Saxon town, also known as the "Fortress of the Sun". It is so called because so many architectural, or even cultural-historical elements in the broader sense, stand under the sign of the sun. The solar

gates or impressive profiles that shelter under the arches are meant to bring the light and warmth of the sun into the homes of the locals, along with the symbol of reason and harmony, purity and enlightenment. The light is also reflected in some of the ceiling paintings of the houses, with rays also reflected in the windows. The cult of sun and light is therefore present everywhere in the city of Mediaş, which makes the name of the City of Light meaningful. There are rumours that the Citadel of Mediaş may have been built by Freemasons. If you turn the map of Mediaş upside down, you can see that the fortress is shaped like a human skull, a totemic element found in the Masonic inventory. As you walk through the citadel, you will come across Freemasonic symbols at every turn: columns, roses, rosicrucians, octagons, eyes framed in pyramids, hammer, caliber and carpenter's square, chrysalis, ivy, poppy. Some of the streets running in the citadel overlap the lines of steps that Freemasons follow in rituals. It is easy to understand why this city is shrouded in mystery and makes a tourist object worthy of a visit to the Via Transilvanica, perhaps we would even recommend an extended break here, in order to capture as much as possible of the sights that the citadel of Mediaş has to offer, which we will talk about in the following.

Stephan Ludwig Roth High School - This high school building was built according to the plans of Solomon's Temple and is a key element of the architecture of Mediaş. The facade of the building features symbols of the city, such as the "Twins", a symbol of light, the "Compass and the Echo", specific to Freemasonry, and last but not least the "Golden Grapes", a symbol of the city that also has an interesting legend behind it. The Irish writer Bram Stoker mentions in his well-known novel "Dracula" that the wine at the wedding of the Walloon count was "the golden wine of Mediaş". Mediaş and its surroundings have been and still are famous for their old Târnavă wines, the area being known in ancient times as 'Wine Country' or 'Weinland', as it appears on the map of the humanist Johannes Honterus (16th century). Returning to the high school building, it is in many ways similar to the temple architecture described in the Old Testament, also having three entrances, and with similar staircases, decorations and interiors. Furthermore, the high school has a huge hall upstairs with two columns at the top of which are two globes, one lunar and the other solar, on the roof. In Freemasonry, Solomon's Temple was taken as a landmark for rituals.

Tower of the Trumpeters in the Church of St. Margaret - The construction of this tower began at the same time as the church, sometime in the 15th century. City officials then decided that the tower should be raised three more stories to compete with St Stephen's Tower in Vienna. The tower rose and also leaned, like the tower in Pisa, proving that great things can happen even after mistakes. Today the tower is 68.5 metres high and has a vertical deflection of 2.28 metres, making it one of the top 10 such buildings in the world. The rooftop was framed by four smaller turrets, attesting to the city's right to pronounce and execute capital punishment. That is, in Mediaş, if you were found guilty, you could be sentenced to death. Unfortunately, the town used this right, among other things, on the occasion of the burning at the stake of "witches" in the 17th century, the last such record being dated 1752. The name of the Tower of Trumpets comes from the fact that, in the old days, a trumpeter was always on watch in the tower, constantly scanning the skies to give warning when enemies approached the city gates. It is said that false alarms by the trumpeters on duty were punished by being thrown off the walls.

Fortified Church of St. Margaret - The church is known because here Vlad Tepes was imprisoned following a conflict with the King of Hungary, Matthew Corvinus, in 1476. It



Zona Industriala
Medias

Pârâul Moșno

Pârâul Moșno

Târnoava Mare

Strada George Cosbuc

1 km

0

was also here that the Transylvanian prince Stefan Báthory was elected King of Poland. The church has a valuable collection of Gothic murals. One of the most valuable pieces in the church is the polyptych Gothic altar from the late 15th century, painted under the influence of the Viennese school of painting. There are four such polyptych altars in Transylvania: in Biertan - the largest, in Sebeş - the most valuable, in Prejmer - the oldest, this one in Mediaş being considered the most beautiful.

Network of tunnels under the fortress - It seems that under the fortress there was a network of underground tunnels. One of the entrances to this network of tunnels can be found in the cellar of the Rosenauer House in the central square. The Rosenauer House was built after 1621 to the south of the outer wall of the castle in the Transylvanian Renaissance style. The Rosenauer House is not open to the public.

Gas Museum - Some also call it the Gas Museum although the official name is the Natural Gas Information and Documentation Centre. This museum, located in the city centre, was established in 2009, on the occasion of the one century anniversary of the discovery of natural gas in Romania, within the National Natural Gas Company, ROMGAZ SA Mediaş. The museum is worth visiting both for the interior courtyard that welcomes you until you enter the historic building that houses the centre and for the fact that it is a unique museum in terms of the field it deals with and its exhibits.

Hermann Oberth Museum - Herman Oberth, born in Sibiu in 1894, is considered one of the fathers of world astronautics. Inspired by Jules Verne's novels, which he read enthusiastically as a child, Herman Oberth built his first model rocket at the age of 14. In 1912, Hermann Oberth became a medical student at the University of Munich and then served as a military doctor in the First World War, during which time he came to the conclusion that he did not want to practise medicine. After the war he returned to the same university, this time to study physics under some of the greatest minds in the field at the time. In 1922, his PhD thesis on rocket science was rejected by the University of Munich being considered utopian. A year later the paper was accepted by the University of Cluj and was published with private funds under the title "Rocket in interplanetary space". In the autumn of 1929, Hermann Oberth launches his first liquid-fuelled rocket, the Kegeldüse. Subsequently, 95 of Hermann Oberth's inventions and recommendations were used in the construction of the world's first large rocket by Wernher von Braun, called the A4, but known today more commonly as the V2. During this period Herman Oberth lived in Mediaş in the building that today houses the museum that bears his name. He left Romania in 1938. First he moved to Austria and then to Germany. After the Second World War he worked in the United States at the Space Research Institute founded by Wernher von Braun. In 1953, long before man's first flight into the cosmos, he published the book *Man in Space* in which he described his ideas for a space searchlight, a space station, an electric spaceship and cosmonaut suits. At the end of 1958, Hermann Oberth, again in Feucht, found time to write down and publish his thoughts on the technological possibilities of a lunar vehicle, a lunar catapult, a helicopter and a silent aircraft, and more. In 1960, he worked for Convair as a technical consultant developing Atlas rockets in the United States.

Hermann Oberth retired from space research in 1962 at the age of 68. The oil crisis of 1977 led him to focus on alternative energy sources, which led to the conception of a plan for a wind power plant. Hermann Oberth died on 28 December 1989 at the age of 95 in Feucht, Germany. After his death, the "Hermann Oberth Space Museum" was opened in Feucht, where his research and its results are available to the public.

Trail: Easy and short

Elevation difference: +248m

Critical spots: None

Scenery: 90% of today's trail is in forests, which is pleasant to walk, open meadows and a few country roads.

Accommodation:

Bazna: Possibility of camping, accommodation tips, bicycle rental and guided tours, reservations at phone +40 745 683 267 (Peter Lorand);

Bassen Pension, 21 places, with breakfast included, the possibility of dining (lunch, dinner) at an additional cost, camping facilities. Reservations at +40 747 288 749, +40 723 510 712 (Alexandra Cioc) or +40 746 240 506 (Cornel Posea), www.bassen.ro;

Reghina Pension, camping for caravans and tents, 3 rooms with 6 places and private bathroom, on request breakfast is offered, reservation at phone +40 748 994 434 or +40 740 123 364 (Cornelia Căpâlnean);

Casa Sasului, 10 rooms (8 double doubles, 1 triple, 1 suite for 3 people), without meals, with kitchen, or at Expro restaurant, 1 minute away, reservations at phone +40 740 522 491 (Răzvan Piaskovski).

Infrastructure:

Bazna:

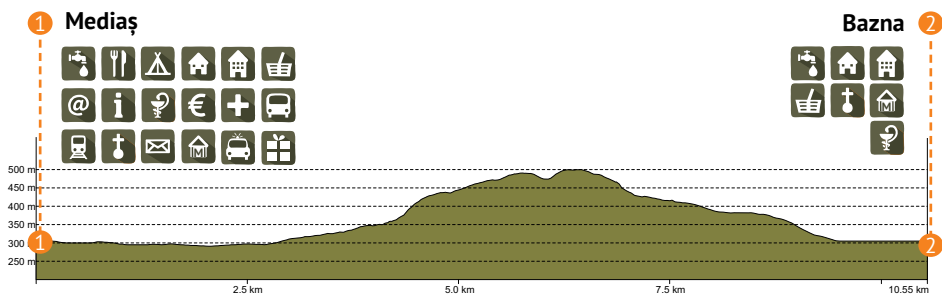


Note:

The long route from the previous day will leave one wanting a day off and for this reason a shorter day is recommended. From Mediaș (1) to Bazna (2) you will have the opportunity to visit a small part of the city of Mediaș, maybe its center and to arrive in time at Bazna where you will be able to carry out leisurely activities.

Leave Mediaș after visiting the evangelical church in the center and head to the pedestrian bridge via the street that has the square on the right-hand side. After crossing the bridge between the blocks of flats, one reaches the alley that is lined with houses leaving the city. The path will be on the left-hand side, passing a house, on a road that becomes macadam, climbing slowly into the coolness of the forest and onto a serpentine path. At the time of the documentation, this was a road under construction, i.e. it was macadam. After the serpentine corners, at some point the markings will suddenly turn right through the forest and continue until one can see some vineyards on the left. They will be fenced and guarded. If shots are heard, they are just the bird cannons protecting the vines by scaring birds. After passing them, the path will start again to become difficult and long, but very pleasant, through the forest for 4km to Bazna. At the beginning of this path it keeps slightly to the right before a clear curve to the right, with beautiful clearings and perfect resting places with tree stumps and bird songs. At the end, even if there are several paths, the trail leaves the forest where one will notice the Spa Complex of Bazna on the left. The fortified church in the center of the village is a little over a kilometer away.

In Bazna you will find many ways to spend time, rest, or party, which is why our team warmly recommends an afternoon or even more in this village.

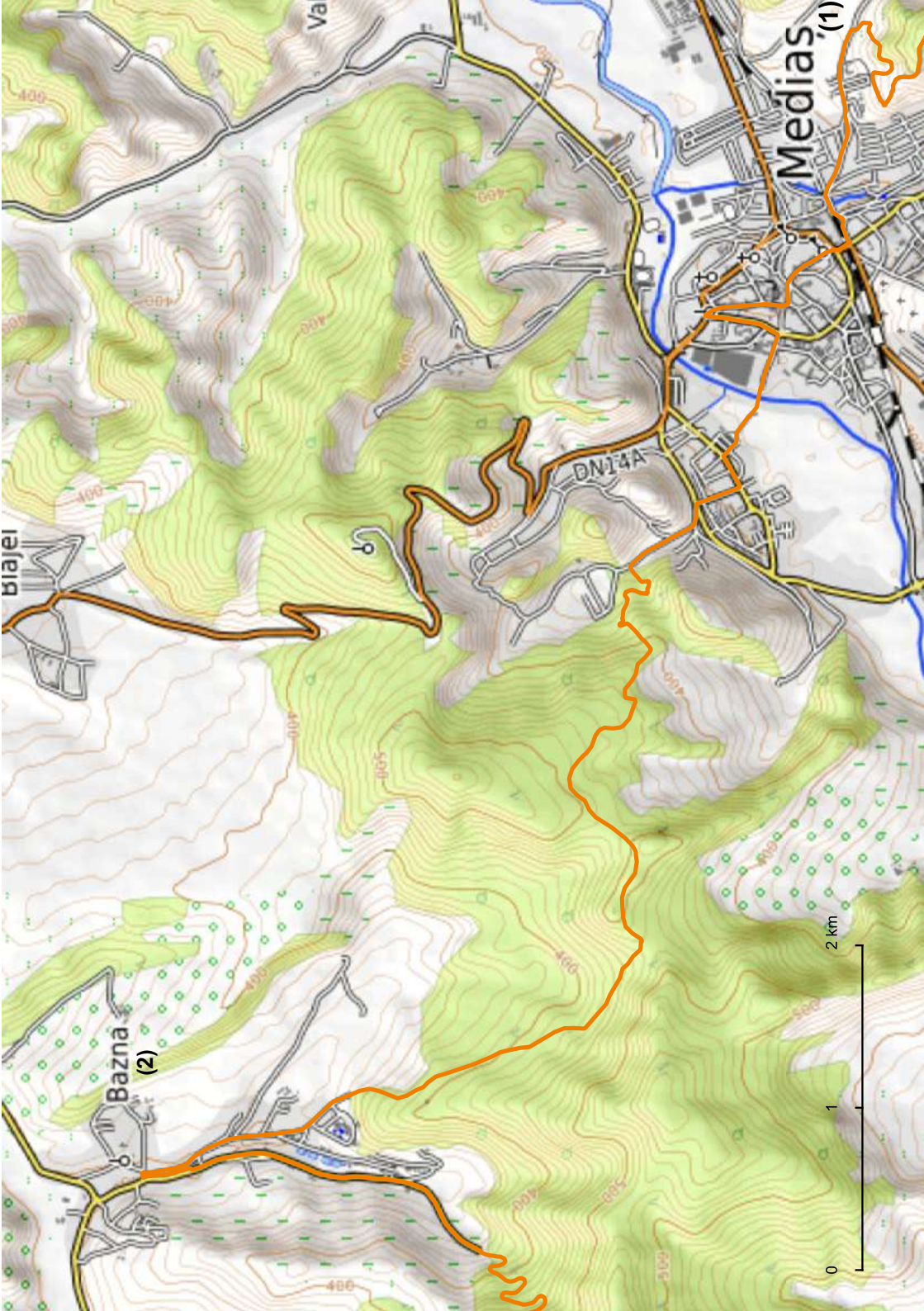


Info:

Bazna – Bazna is the main village of this locality bearing the same name. The village is located in the Târnavelor Plateau, in the northwestern part of the county. Since medieval times, documents attest the healing qualities of the waters and springs of Bazna. At the beginning of the 19th century, doctors and chemists arrived from Vienna to study the effects of salt in Bazna and the climate here. Soon after, the number of tourists coming to Bazna for spa treatments began to increase. In 1843, the Bazna resort was established and was taken over in 1905 by the evangelical community, which transformed it into a well-known spa resort throughout Transylvania. The mineral waters, the sapropelic mud, the salt of Bazna, but also the picturesque landscape and the favorable climatic conditions attract tourists to Bazna every year for various treatments. Bazna is also a suitable destination for those who want to relax in the middle of nature or for active tourism enthusiasts, who can enjoy hiking or cycling on the hills with orchards and in the beech forests that surround the town.

The fortified church of Bazna – The inscription “O REX GLORIAE VENI” (Oh, King of Glory, come!), found on one of the bells, suggests that the church was built at the end of the 14th century. The current church is rectangular with a choir hall. The choir has a cross-shaped vault and on three sides of the hall there are baroque balconies. An impressive piece is located right in the choir, where a tabernacle is kept with a depiction of ‘Jesus of Sorrows’ from 1504. In the bell tower, which is also a gate tower, there are three bells from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The baroque altar dates back to the end of the 17th century and has Jesus of Nazareth in the temple in the main painting, flanked by three Corinthian columns. The baroque organ, made by Johannes Hahn, was completed in 1757, and together with the front railing is a harmonious work of art. The baroque pulpit was made in 1781 by Georgius Schuller and painted by Stephan Valepagi. In the middle of the settlement, a fortified fortress was built with a palisade. It is a peasant fortress with a church inside from the 15th century. The precinct has approximately a circular route and initially had three towers. The big tower is the bell tower and at the same time the entrance tower. In the northwest there is a short and elongated tower and in the northeast, you can see the traces of a smaller tower. In 1873 the defense wall was demolished to half its original height. A second defense wall, for the defense of the old one, was built in 1911. At the end of the 19th century, the initial height of the defense wall, of about 7-8 meters, was reduced to 2-3 meters.

Bicycle tours – with a very long network of routes for running, cycling, or hiking, Sibiu County does not lack outdoor sports activities of this kind. In Bazna there are many possibilities for renting bicycles and electric bikes with guides, to make tours around



Medias (1)

Bazna (2)

2 km

1

0

the village, through the forest and over the hills, with stops for traditional food or water breaks as well as wine tasting from the area. For more information contact Peter Lorand, phone +40 745 683 267.

The Monument of the Romanian Heroes from the Second World War – The monument was erected in 1956 in the center of the Bazna locality, in honor of the Romanian heroes who fell in battle in the Second World War. The monument is made of brick and is surrounded by a metal fence with chains.

Bazna Pig – The Bazna pig is a Romanian pig breed, which was born by crossing the Mangalița breed with the Berk boar. The Bazna breed was officially recognised as an independent breed in 1948. Although the breed was bred by the Saxons who lived in Transylvania. The breed was named after the locality of Bazna because here it was highly valued for its strength and quality. The pig is small to medium in size, has black hair, with a white band that surrounds its shoulder blades and front legs. Pork fat is excellent, and the meat is very good for raw-dried products, which are still stored when ripe in winter and are smoked in the attics of traditional houses.



Trail: Medium difficulty

Elevation difference: +491m

Critical spots: On hot days it is recommended to buy water in the villages due to few springs on the route. The Trail can be taken to Copșa Mică for accommodation or as recommended, directly to Axente Sever;

Scenery: Long paths through forests, meadows, hills, and asphalt roads through long villages

Accommodation:

Axente Sever: Frauendorf Guesthouse, 2 beds, breakfast and dinner on request, traditional menu. Reservations by phone at +40 722 600 380 (Mihalache Daniel Tudor). Details on <https://www.facebook.com/casadeoaspetifrauendorf/>;

"A visit to us means a bed in which we have invested a science of sleep, the mattress plus toper of 35 cm of comfort, means an experience that will remain. It means an evening by the fire in the yard with stories, wine, and snacks. In the autumn and spring months we offer sauna and hydration with local craft beer. Breakfast and sandwiches on the way." (Mihalache Daniel Tudor, mayor of Copsa Mică, trekker from Copsa to Bucharest so that the locals can have water);

Medieval Apartments Frauendorf, reservations phone +40 749 680 770 (Laci Ciocan), accommodation in the fortification of the evangelical church;

Frauendorf 151, 6 places, possibility of dining on request, opposite the fortified church, reservations by phone +40 722 169 620 (Lavinia Stoian) or on <https://abnb.me/ihaBdThS9yb>;

Pension El Greco, 14 beds, restaurant, for reservations at phone +40 799 554 464.

Infrastructure:

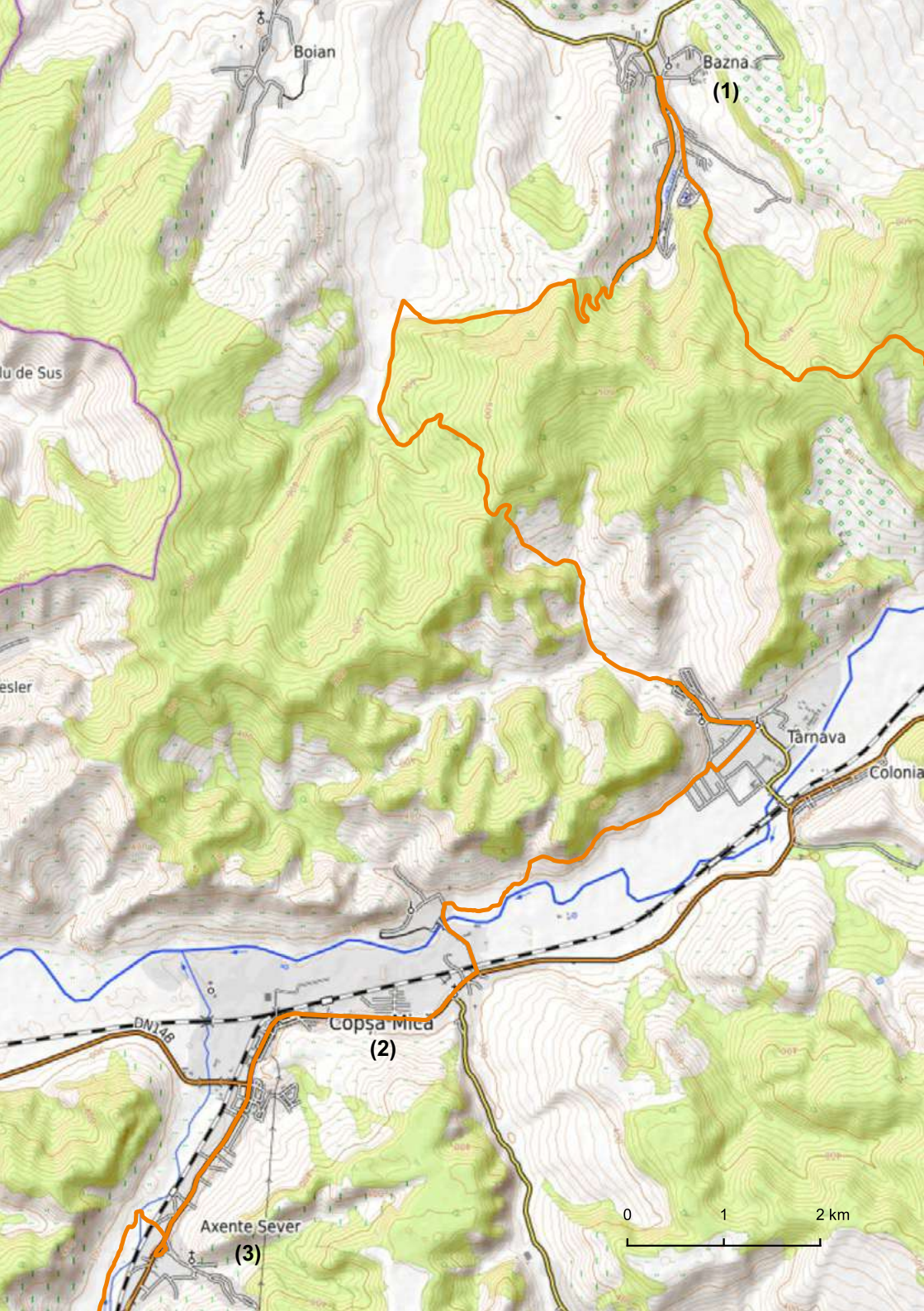
Târnava:     

Copșa Mică:          

Axente Sever:     

Note:

Leaving Bazna on the asphalt road with the spa complex on the left, continue on the road with old and abandoned houses until one has passed them all and only a few trees remain. Eventually one will reach a small intersection after passing a large hotel with parking. Here, turn right towards some houses, from where one will be able to refill one's water bottles if needed from the last families who live there. At the entrance to the forest, one will have covered last 500m out of 2km from the center of the village. Enter the forest and follow the meandering and the serpentine path until you reach the top of the wooded hill, where one can see a clearing as if one were reaching the famous light at the end of the tunnel. At the exit of the forest, turn left among the hawthorn bushes, young and thick trees as the glade opens more and more. Continue descending on the edge of the forest for about a kilometer. Keep your eyes open for a spring/well and the opportunity to refill water bottles, however it is not known if it is drinkable or only used



Boian

Bazna
(1)

lu de Sus

esler

Târnavă

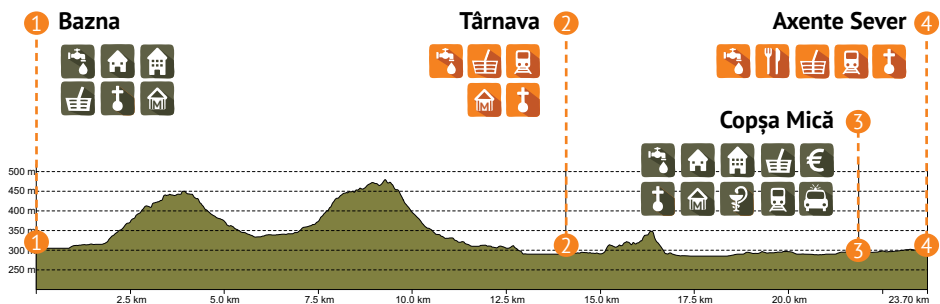
Colonia

Copșa Mică
(2)

DN146

Axente Sever
(3)





for watering animals, like so many other makeshift wells on the trail. Up to now, the path is lined with trees on both sides. One will reach a cart track to a macadam road, on which turn left and follow the edge of the forest with two slight left curves for about a kilometer and a half. After about a kilometer, the route turns left in front of a house. After only a few meters you enter the forest again and start an ascent keeping to the left for a few hundred meters before taking a slight right. From there, for 1.6km descend slightly following the curves to the left and right until you leave the forest completely. The road will now be dusty, but passable even with a small car as it meanders between two hills and passes a small stream in an extremely quiet and peaceful area that must be admired for its beauty. The road becomes better over two kilometers from the exit of the forest. Kilometers in which the landscape changes several times: from the edge of the forest to steep hills on the left (two twinned hills) and especially on the right. Keep following the path until one reaches a macadam road leading to Târnăveni.

The trail takes a slight right onto this road, crossing a concrete bridge and after a few meters one will be able to see the first houses. After another few hundred meters on the dusty road, one enters a part of the village that has at the entrance a landfill site. It is a village inhabited mainly by Roma people. Also, among the houses of the Roma, which are full of children who ask questions, tell stories, or answer the greetings of hikers, walk 1.3km to the center of Târnava, where there is a small park, old and new buildings and a few stores. From here, turning right, one will notice the houses and courtyards are in better condition. As one leaves the village there maybe a few opportunities to pick apples from the apple trees in front of the houses and exchange a few words with the villagers. One will leave Târnava towards Copșa Mică on a road that avoids asphalt, and connects the two villages. The road climbs a little among several farms on the left and right, where the dogs bark, some tied up and others free, until one enters a small acacia grove. After a short break, continue through this grove, which is actually the edge of a larger forest. The route climbs a little further and then begins to slightly descend to the left to some fields with alfalfa and corn. The path through the field winds between them, until, at a certain moment, it bypasses a large corn plantation and reaches the asphalt among the houses of the Târnăvioara locality. After a few meters you leave the village on the asphalt road towards Copșa Sat, crossing over the railway to the first big intersection where one turns right onto the county road to Copșa Mică (2).

After 2 kilometers through the village of Copșa Mică, continue the sidewalk to Axente Sever, leaving Copșa Mică behind. The road between the two villages is about 3.3km long, from the entrance of Copșa Mică to the fortified church of Axente. Their stories,

history and culture will last for many years, but especially they will impress anyone who takes a closer look at everything that surrounds oneself and the places one passes through. At Axente Sever you will find impressive accommodation, which will offer a special experience for each hiker.

Info:

Târnava – About the Roma communities on the Târnava Valley, we propose the following text written by Mrs. Oana Burcea, expert of ethnographic goods/occupations, crafts, folk costume belonging to the Roma.

Roma people and the relationship with other communities in the ethnographic area of Târnava Valley

Transylvania is a region rich in examples of multiethnic and multicultural communities. The population of the ethnographic area of the Târnava Valley is very diverse from the point of view of ethnicities. The main ethnic groups that live together are Romanians, Hungarians, Saxons (population of German origin), Roma, Jews, and Armenians who over the centuries, have had social, economic and cultural relations between them.

The Roma are an ethnic group with a tradition in Transylvania, the first document mentioning them was around 1400 where we found out that a boyar from Țara Făgărașului (Făgăraș area) had 17 gypsies working for him (Ciganustentoriatos) (Achim, 1998). It is known that since their arrival on the Romanian lands they had the status of slaves, but in Transylvania, slavery was “accepted” only by some members of this ethnic group. There have been harsh and long policies of sedentarisation, assimilation, erasure of ethnic identity, policies that are visible today, but were not always successful. Among the harshest moments of identity annulment are the policies of Empress Maria Theresa, Emperor Joseph II and the deportation of Roma to Transnistria during World War II and the mentioning of the Roma ethnicity during the communist period. Despite these policies, we cannot deny that there have been Roma for almost 700 years in the Transylvanian region.

A simple analysis of the censuses conducted in the period 1930-2011 in the villages with the majority of the population made up of Saxons and Romanians, it can be seen that, today, the majority population is represented by Romanians and Roma. The explanation could be given by the deportation of the Saxons after the Second World War, when they emigrated to Germany in the '70s, '80s and their exodus immediately after the revolution of '89. We also mention here the politics from the communist period when the villages were populated with Roma and Romanians, together with the industrialization process, the state offering them a job and housing. Also, the birth rate of Romanians and other ethnic groups has decreased, while the birth rate of Roma is increasing.

Today, we can talk about two types of Roma: Roma who declare themselves as such and Roma identified by other populations as belonging to the Roma ethnic group.

In Sibiu County, among the self-declared Roma we mention tanners, cauldrons, gabori, musicians, silk Roma and blacksmiths. They speak the Romani language, some of them have a characteristic behavior of the nation they belong to and have particular customs. The occupations from which they have material gains are: making pots, cauldrons, copper boilers, brass, tinsmithing, music at weddings and other occasions, trade of various types (non-ferrous metals, carpets, clothes, small street trade), agriculture, blacksmithing and trade with animals.

The Roma identified by the others as Roma, but who declare themselves to be of another ethnic group: boyash, house Romas, bricklayers, wickerwork. They do not speak Romani

language, do not wear a dress that distinguishes them from others and do not have distinct habits. Their occupations are day work, employees at factories, weaving twigs and making bricks from earth and clay.

About 15 kilometers away from the locality of Biertan is the locality of Brateiu where there is the largest community of tanners in southern Transylvania, about 700 people. The tanners are former nomads, who depended directly on the ruler, they were able to move freely until late in the twentieth century, which allowed them to preserve and strengthen the nation's identity. As in the case of other villages in southern Transylvania, farmers moved from village to village to exercise their traditional profession, so it was an occupational movement, each of the two parties (Roma and other populations) managing to provide for themselves and their household. They are an attractive presence in the villages of this area through the folk costumes worn and through the craft practiced and passed down from generation to generation: making household objects from copper.

The Silk Roma's or the House Roma's would have settled in the villages in the interwar period when they worked for the Saxons in agriculture or were craftsmen such as shoemakers or musicians. They also "benefited" from the departure of the Saxons, when they were offered to rent their houses, later managing to buy them.

The departure of the Saxons left traces in the occupational and material situation of the Roma, leaving them without an employer. Some of them live on social assistance, others work during the day for Romanians or even for tanners or are employed in factories around their home villages.

About the relations and exchanges between the ethnic groups from the localities from Târnava Valley:

- The neighborhood, a special aid institution made up of the inhabitants of the same street, was taken over by Romanians from the Saxons, which also includes some Silk Roma's;
- The architecture of Romanian houses is influenced by the architecture of Saxon houses. The Romanians were influenced by the architectural style of the Saxons when they started building from stone and this is observed not only in the villages that had a Saxon majority, but also in the villages inhabited mainly by Romanians (Monograph of Târnava Mare County, 1943). Today, Saxon houses are inhabited by Romanians and Roma;

The settlement of Roma and Romanians in Saxon houses took place since the 1980s, a historic moment in which the former had to gain from the agreement between Romania and the former German Federal Republic, the German state paying the Romanian state a fee for each Saxon emigrant. The Romanian state confiscated or bought the houses of the Saxons, which it later offered for rent to other ethnic groups. (Bibliography: *** (1943) Monograph of Târnava Mare County, MironNeagu Printing House, Sighișoara, Achim, V. (1998) Gypsies in the History of Romania, Encyclopedic Publishing House, Bucharest)

Coșșa Mică – Coșșa Mică is a town in Sibiu County where Romanians, Saxons, Hungarians have lived together over time. During the communist period, certain factories were built that brought the city a negative reputation around the world, the town becoming known especially for the pollution with carbon black. In 2006 Coșșa Mică was the most polluted city in Europe. Today, the colorful houses and the charming landscape do not remind us of those times. The most important archeological point can be considered the Citadel Hill (Buc) where a series of materials of historical value were discovered: the remains of a rhino skeleton, bronze objects belonging to the Witenberg culture and a bronze coin of Thracian origin from the 1st century BC. Roman remains and the remains of a tomb

from the 4th century have been located on Citadel Hill and on the south-eastern terraces of the current settlement, ceramic fragments dating back to the 11th and 12th centuries have been discovered - obvious signs of settlements from a medieval village. All these archaeological remains are evidence of the continuity of the population in these lands from ancient times to the present day. The center of the settlement moved from one place to another due, in part, to the intervention of the migration process, a process attested in Coșca by the discovery of fragments of gray pottery.

Black snow and invisible death – Pollution did not reach alarming levels only in 2006, the problem has existed since Ceausescu's time, but no one discussed it. Even today, people do not know all the details of this ecological disaster. The two factories, Carbosin and Sometra, were to blame, where carbon black, sulfuric acid were produced and non-ferrous metals were processed, including lead and cadmium. Carbosin closed in 1993, and at Sometra the furnace has not burned since 2008, but the ruins of the two factories still stand as evidence of an aggressive industrialization, without respect for man or nature. The industrialization of the area began in 1920-1930 with the exploitation of methane gas. At the same time, the biggest fire in the country took place here, which lasted 7 years. In the first year of operation, 11 tons of carbon black came out of the factory and since 1936, exports had begun. Ten years later, production reached 913 tons of carbon black, of which 235 tons went exported. After the communists came to power, the two factories were nationalized and the production capacity increased very quickly. At Carbosin the production of carbon black reached over 38,000 tons per year and the factory had one thousand employees. Sometra produced 30,000 tons of zinc and 20,000 tons of lead per year. This is how pollution started to become a very serious problem. The factory workers were also affected, as well as the inhabitants of the city. People's houses, clothes, animals were all black and sometimes it even snowed with soot. But carbon black was not the most harmful. The white death, one of which people were unaware, being a slow death, was due to the zinc and sulfuric acid factories. Due to acid rain, the forests and vegetation around the city were destroyed. Everyday life was a challenge in Coșca, but people adapted to the infernal conditions and learned to survive. But dying at 60 had become the norm. Those who worked in such conditions of toxicity from father to son began to figure out how to discipline themselves and knew that if you wash your hands and do not touch food with your hands when you eat in that environment, you will not get lead disease. The most affected were those sent to frontline, who were unaware of the risks to which they were exposed. They were mostly Roma citizens. Many of them took out the zinc plates, and then during the lunch break they broke the eggs on them. Most had the same health problems. Because of zinc, their teeth fell out and they had heart disease. Immediately after the 1989 Revolution, the decline of the two factories began. Residents have demanded the closure of the Carbosin plant due to pollution. The second factory, responsible for the invisible death, also closed gradually, although it was long defended by locals who feared they would lose their jobs.

Axente Sever Village – It is a village in Sibiu County that was originally called Frâua, but in 1931, in honor of the 1848 revolutionary Ioan Axente Sever, the name of the village changed. The church was built in the first years of the 14th century and was later fortified; supply pantries and the guard road above them were added. The church served not only as a place of worship, but also as a shelter during invasions and as a storehouse for grains and meat. At Axente Sever there was also a Bacon Tower where each family stored their bacon. To not mix them up, families marked their pieces of bacon. Following recent renovations, the former storage rooms have been transformed into a "Fortress Museum".

Through models, maps and various exhibits, the museum reveals amazing stories about the lives of Saxon settlers. Along with the museum, rooms were also set up to receive guests, a special opportunity to live right in the former pantries where, four centuries ago, the Saxons took refuge from Turkish attacks.

The revolutionary Axente Sever – At the outbreak of the revolution of 1848, Ioan Axente Sever was a teacher of Latin and Romanian at St. Sava College in Bucharest. He played an extremely important role in making the ideals of the revolution known to the peasants. In August 1848, he returned to Transylvania where he attended the third assembly in Blaj and was with Avram Iancu at the resistance in the Apuseni Mountains. On the evening of January 8th, the massacre in Aiud took place, where Romanians killed about 600 ethnic Hungarians. A large number of people tried to hide in the nearby mountains, but because of the frost they froze to death. The dead were thrown into the ditches of the fortress, and the others nearby, where their monument is located. Ioan Axente Sever was tried in this massacre but was found not guilty.

The fortified church from Axente Sever – The fortified church from Frâua is first mentioned in 1322. The shrine, dedicated to All Saints, is a church-hall with a square nave and a pentagonal choir. It is one of the few churches in Transylvania that has a bell tower above the choir (similar examples can be found in Agârbiciu, Ocna Sibiului and Turnișor). The premises, built simultaneously with the fortification of the church, is oval, the defense walls are 6–8m high, being provided with ramparts and buttresses. From inside, the walls seem shorter, due to the high level of the courtyard.



Trail: Medium difficulty

Elevation difference: +374m

Critical spots: On hot days it is recommended to buy water in the villages due to few springs on the route. The Trail can be taken to Șeica Mică with accommodation or as recommended directly to Micăsasa.

Scenery: Long paths through forests, meadows, hills and asphalt roads through long villages.

Accommodation:

Șeica Mică, Accommodation with locals, 10 places, dinner and breakfast on request, camping place with access to bathroom and kitchen, shop nearby, Reservations at +40 743 183 202 (Valentin Datcu) and +40 740 022 670 (Alina Datcu).

Micăsasa: Văleni Castle, 8 places, camping, access to bathroom and kitchen, dinner and breakfast on request, car transport on and off the trail, reservations by phone +40 767 807 428 (Nemeș Gabor).

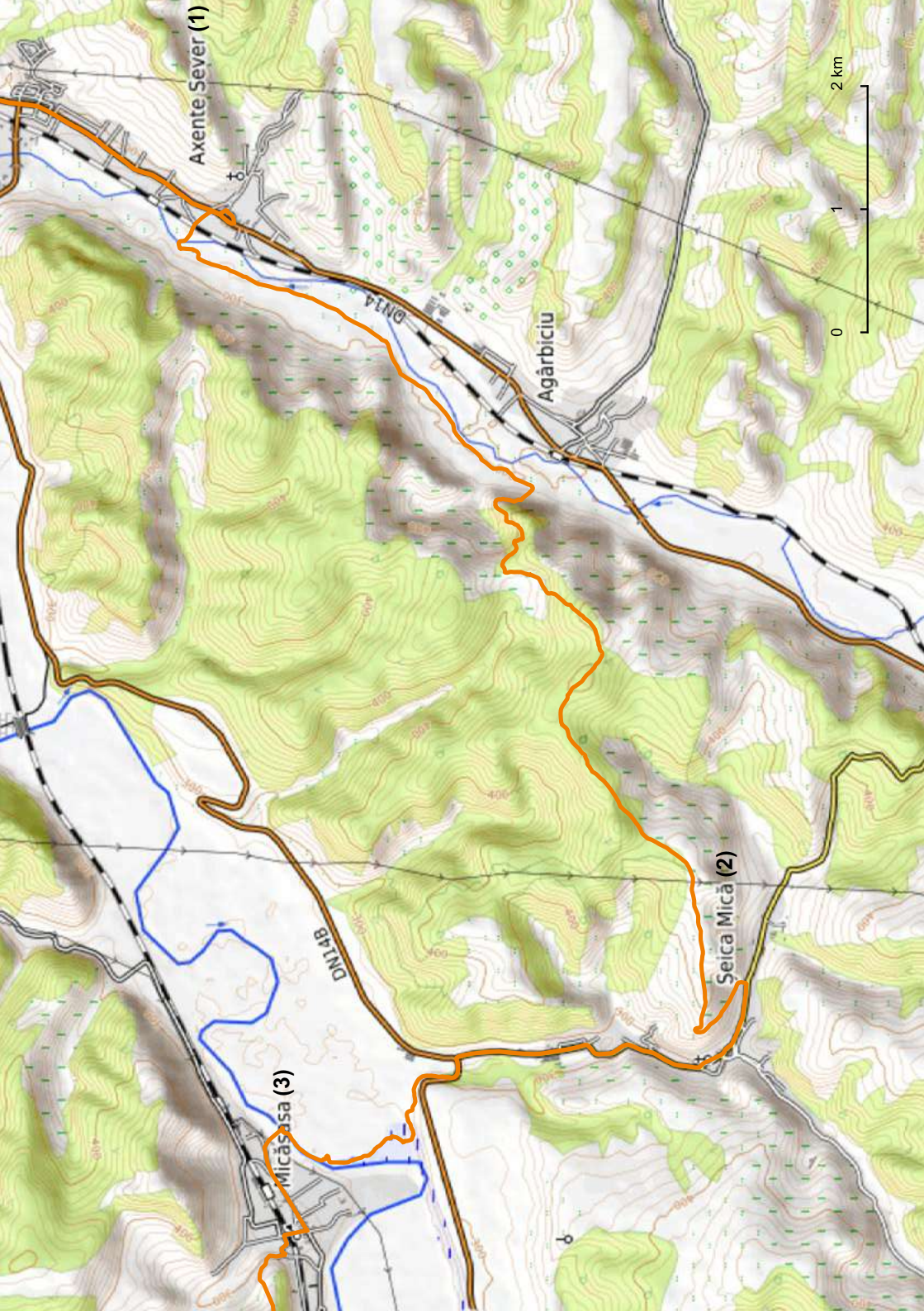
Infrastructure:

Șeica Mică: 

Micăsasa: 

Note:

From the fortified church in Axente Sever (1), head in the direction of Copșa Mică following the main road for about 180 meters, after which turn left and walk another 400 meters, during which you will cross the railway and a bridge to a kind of intersection of routes, where the Via Transilvanica trail will turn left, on the border road, which runs parallel to the Vișa River. For a while, one will pass through fields of corn, and pastures at an almost equal distance between the forest and the river for about 600 meters, during which the dusty path descends slightly to the river before running parallel to it. The path sometimes approaches, sometimes distances itself from the river as it passes through the shade of the alder trees on the riverbank and even sometimes in the meadow of mowed alfalfa, as the path continues in the same way for 2.5km. Throughout this route, more attention will be needed to the route markings as the path crosses many similar paths along the way. After walking along the river all this time, you come to a better-defined path, running alongside a well-fenced property, implying that there is a farm or a well-established house. One should not be misguided by the perfect path that heads to the right into the forest but should continue straight for a few meters until one reaches the other end of the electric fence. Here, ascend to the right. On the left there will be a large corn field and to the right one will still find the electric fence. From here follow the path that curves to the left, leaving behind the electric fence. To the left is the whole cornfield and on the right a thicket that suggests that one will soon enter the forest. After about 50m a path is revealed to the right heading towards the entrance to the forest and once on the path, one will be facing the forest. Behind oneself at a short distance the church tower from Agârbiciu will be in sight. Enter the forest on the path slightly covered with greasy green grass and follow it all the way up, until you come to a



Axente Sever (1)

Agârbiciu

Seica Mică (2)

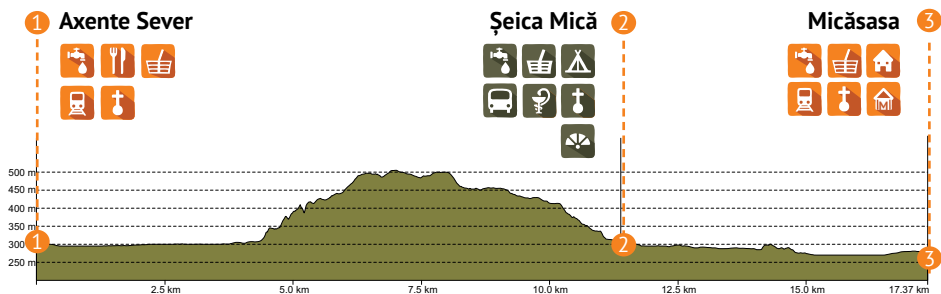
Micăsasa (3)

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fairly clear forest road. Ascend for about 1km on the serpentine path until you come out into a clearing. From here head left, on the edge of the forest and follow the markings for about 400 meters until the next entrance to the forest. Once under the dense and cool trees, one will start to pass by multiple hunting observation huts. After a long walk of just over 1km through the beautiful forest, with easy ascents and descents, you come out into a meadow that might be full of cows, ready-made winter bales and electric fences. The trail passes through this pasture, keeping slightly to the right towards an easy descent, passing under the high voltage lines that is suspended in the air above. After passing under, descend slowly and turn left. In the distance one will be able to see the electricity pylon, next to which the road passes and where there is another kilometer stone. Once here, one of the most beautiful views seen along this section can be found.



In the last hundred meters one can see the entire village of Micăsasa and next to this kilometer stone, one will be able to see the village Șeica Mică (2) and Micăsasa from above with admiration. The path then leads down to Șeica Mică and an asphalt road here one turns right, following the road to the evangelical church. Hikers who prefer to have a shorter day, will be able to end their journey from Terra Saxonum here, with well-deserved accommodation in the village, enjoying the specific dishes of the area and the liquors as well. Others may choose to continue to the end of Terra Saxonum and directly to Micăsasa (3) by following the road to the exit from Șeica Mică where one turns left for about 1.5km through an agricultural field to the village. It is said that it was also built by the Saxons, after which the Saxons withdrew from it, thus leaving Micăsasa as the southern border of the Saxon Land.

Info:

Șeica Mică – This village in Sibiu County has a long and well-documented history. The first traces of civilization date back to the Bronze Age. In 1280, there was a Saxon settlement here. The name of the village seems to be of Slavic origin from the word "sol" which means salt.

The Fortified Church from Șeica Mică – The church St. Catherine was built in the 14th century and modified around 1500. It is a massive building, well preserved and defended by two defense walls, which support solid guard roads. In the church there is a beautiful bronze baptismal font in the form of a chalice, a work from 1477 made in the workshop of master Leonard from Sibiu. The grandstands were added over the collaterals at the end of the 18th century, so that both the collaterals and the main nave are located under the same roof. To the west, the church is guarded by a multi-storey tower, the upper floors being of more recent construction. With the strengthening of the choir, horizontal openings were provided, used to throw tar, stones and boiling water onto the enemies attacking. Above these openings are circular holes provided for firearms, shotguns, or cannons, capable of reaching more distant targets. Today, only the "Curtea Fântâniei" and a small fragment in the south-western part are preserved from the interior defense wall, therefore the north tower is completely isolated. The exterior defense wall is interrupted to the west by the school building.

Medieval Church of Micăsasa – The church is a historical monument located in the center of the village. It was used half as a Reformed church and half as a Roman Catholic church. In the choir of the medieval church (the current Catholic part of the building) are preserved the pointed vault, the tabernacle, and the seat, all in Gothic style.

Brukenthal Castle in Micăsasa – The castle was built in the 16th century. In the 18th century it was owned by the governor of Transylvania, Baron Samuel von Brukenthal. During communism, the building served as the headquarters of the CEC Bank (House of Savings and Consignments), after which, as a school, traces that are still very noticeable today. In the shop windows where the objects of the Brukenthal family were once kept, only traces of vases can be seen today.

Places to find Via Transilvanica stamps:

Criț

- Rozi House, tel. +40 745 268 947
- Pension La Hansi, tel. +40 744 528 551 or +40 743 067 402 (Ioan Lazăr);
- Mix shop and bar, +40 747 867 382 (Orzea Loredana)
- Kraus House, tel. +40 743 255 553 (at 100m of route)

Saschiz

- Casa de pe deal, tel. +40 740 286 874 (Anca) (at 50m of route)
- Tei Teehaus, tel. +40 742 416 291 (Hadrian), tel. +40 740 159 484 (Marianne)

Șapartoc

- Traditional Romanian Village, tel. +40 741 082 770 (Radu Moldovan) (at 100m of route)
- Sighișoara Information Center

Sighișoara

- Voynich Cafe & Pub (at 70m from the route): M-S: 9-24:00 Su: 12-24:00, tel. +40 752 243 538
- AUM Association (str.1 Decembrie 1918 no.30), +40 721 148 400 (Flori)
- House with a cerdac, tel. +40 770 348 178 (Marian Stoica)

Stejărenii

- Experience Transylvania 100, tel. +40 265 713 347 (Vlorica Neagu)
- Hanul din Pădure, tel. +40 728 811 559 (at 6km of route)

Mălâncrav

- Mălâncrav nr.280, tel. +40 774 903 580 (Simona Chifor)
- Mălâncrav nr.245, tel. +40 775 112 091 (Elena Neagu)
- Accommodation with locals, tel.+40 775 200 415 and whatsapp (Maria Causanu)

Biertan

- Restaurant Medieval Unglerus, Tel. +40 742 024 065 (at 130m of route)
- Pension Oppidum, tel. +40 740 679 119

Richiș

- La Curtea Richvini Guest House, tel. +40 741 183 404

Nemșa

- Pension Bed and Wine, tel. +40 743 332 405 (Bogdan Matei)

Mediaș

- Ferdinand Appartments, tel. +40 749 680 770 (Laci Ciocan) (at 50m of route)
- Friends Wine and Coffee

Bazna

- Lorand Peter, tel. +40 745 683 267 (at 150 m of route)
- Bassen Pension, tel. +40 747 288 749, +40 723 510 712 (Alexandra Cioc) or +40 746 240 506
- Reghina Pension, +40 748 994 434 or +40 740 123 364 (Cornelia Căpâlnean);

Axente Sever

- Guest House Frauendorf, tel. +40 722 600 380 (Mihalache Daniel Tudor)
- Medieval Apartments Frauendorf , tel. +40 749 680 770 (Laci Ciocan)
- Frauendorf 151, tel. +40 722 169 620
- Pension El Greco, tel. +40 799 554 464.

Micăsasa

- Timotei Păcurar, tel. +40 786 911 995
- Nemeș Gabor, tel. +40 767 807 428 (near the Town Hall)

TERRA DACICA

Terra Dacica is the name of the Via Transilvanica section that crosses the counties of Alba and Hunedoara. Both counties are laden with the ancient and recent history of our country, under the weight of which, cities of major importance, stretch lazily with their medieval or ancient Dacian royal fortresses, winding along the Mureş valley and the Târnavelor plateau with its vineyards, greeting the Apuseni Mountains and winding towards the Retezat Mountains, reflecting ever more strongly the roots of the Romanian people, until the trail enters the Iron Gates of Transylvania in the county of Caraş Severin.

A territory of northern Dacia, Alba County - with its capital at Alba Iulia, later called Apulum by the Romans, with its surrounding territories rich in minerals, later becoming the Principality of Transylvania - has been and remains an important region of Romanian culture and politics. Several centers of culture and education were formed in Alba County, from Dominican monasteries to higher education. The Apuseni Mountains in the west have served, through their complex geological structure, entire generations with resources of minerals and precious metals. The fertile soil of the entire region has favored agriculture and livestock farming. There are also steppe-like habitats, mainly in the Sebeş area, which offer the nature-loving visitor interesting aspects of flora and fauna, paleontology and mineralogy. Habitats including steppe vegetation are found mainly at Râpa Roşie and Pripocului Hill.

Here the route reaches the place where it all began, in the Alba Carolina fortress, where on the 12th of June 2018, together with the leaders of the project, we launched the idea of the route with a tentative map. What a joy and honor that hikers will now pass-through Alba Iulia, at a walking pace, following in the footsteps of history: passing through the site of former prehistoric Neolithic and Bronze Age settlements, which then became a fortified Dacian center, under the name of Apoulon, which later, conquered by Trajan, became Apulum, becoming Alba Iulia in the Middle Ages as the center of the administration of the Kingdom of Hungary in Transylvania, on the banks of the Mureş River.

Alba Iulia, residence of the princes of Transylvania, the bishop's residence, scene of the Great National Assembly, where Transylvania and Banat united with the Kingdom of Romania, place of the coronation of the kings of Great Romania, King Ferdinand I and Queen Maria - became an important historical capital of Romania. The union of provinces Transylvania, Banat, Crişana and Maramureş with Romania took place on the 1st of December 1918 with the Declaration of Alba Iulia, sealed on the 15th of October 1922 at the Coronation Cathedral with the coronation of

King Ferdinand I and Queen Maria, placing all the historic provinces of Romania under the same monarch.

Hikers will have the opportunity to pass through these "sacred" places for the history of Romania, to absorb their energy, their stories, to visit the fortress buildings, the artworks in them, to taste local wines or to savor the atmosphere of the historical city, nestled between the ridges of the Apuseni Mountains and the Transylvanian Plateau and embraced by the Ampoi, Sebeş and Mureş rivers. Surrounded by mountains and red clay hills, with spectacular ravines and rare vegetation, the city of Alba Iulia offers the hiker a special feeling of the glorious past, which accompanies him throughout the county, until the passage into Hunedoara County.

Hunedoara County, including the crossing of Țara Hațegului (Hațeg Land), crowned by the Retezat Mountains continues the string of mystical and sacred places for all the Romanians. Terra Dacica stretches through both counties, because ancient Dacia, the cradle of all Romanians, was right here. We find many traces of the ancestors of the Dacians, if not necessarily in many archaeological settlements, rather in the geological formations, the mystery in the air of the majestic mountains at the foot of which there are former Dacian fortresses, we find in the features of the locals, in the harshness of the weather and of life in the mountain villages or in the hard life of the hard-working peasants. From Sarmizegetusa Regia to Ulpia Traiana, with small, hobbit-like villages with round stone fences, legends of Iorgovan or discoveries of dwarf dinosaur fossils. A mix of fairy tales, history, reality, magic, kings, dragons, fairies and giants - Terra Dacica is an experience that surpasses them all. The mighty fortresses where history was written and the country united, grown from the gold of the Apuseni and the work of those who dug it, stand as gateways to Terra Dacica, to continue later with the wonders of Hunedoara County.

The trail enters the Ecodestination Țara Hațegului - Retezat, a territory that contains extraordinary nature or man-made attractions and that are promoted together for sustainable tourism. The first important part of the Ecodestination is the Grădiștea Muncelului - Cioclovina Nature Park, with its karst wonders, ancient villages and even older people, with wonderful flora and fauna that catch the eyes and heart of anyone passing by. It was here that the Dacians decided to build their "mountain-ringed" fortresses and it is here that we rediscover their mysteries, over the centuries. After passing the fascinating site Fundătura Ponorului, the route enters the Țara Hațegului UNESCO Global Geopark, a UNESCO member of the Global and European Geoparks networks, which encompasses the entire Țara Hațegului and contains extraordinary geological, as well as natural and cultural attractions.

Here, the stories begin 70 million years ago, when dwarf dinosaurs adapted to the tropical island in the Thetis Sea. Hunedoara County welcomes hikers with the highest altitudes along the route of Via Transilvanica, reaching up to about 1,300 meters, even from the first days of the route, to then pass through the Unesco International Geopark Țara Hațegului, with the Retezat National Park in the background, most of the time, mountains that guard and seem to offer protection to the traveler, to then pass through the Nature Park Grădiștea - Cioclovina. The small stone churches offer a respite and peace of soul to reconnect with the divine, the Dacian fortresses or the ruins of other fortresses encountered along the way offer a moment of silence and awaken curiosity, the flora and fauna, specific to the areas crossed provoke gentle and especially amazement, the people, the locals, the shepherds or peasants of the villages who always have a good

word to say, or offer blessings - all these strengthen the pilgrim's steps, soothe the soul and awaken the burning desire to revisit these miraculous places.

Terra Dacica, like the other lands, is one of the 7 reasons (the 7 historical regions), for which we have built this route, in order to become, in fact, an initiatic path, into the act of "loving the country", experience that the hiker is guaranteed to reach at the end of this journey.

WARNING

In the whole area of Alba and Hunedoara counties, apart from the larger localities, mobile network coverage will be missing in some places, especially on the road, in forests and in some clearings. Please make available an offline track, app or any other way that shows the Via Transilvanica route while offline, without internet.

There is NO danger of wild animals (large carnivores), but in the last few years a few bears have been spotted! In Hunedoara County, watch out for vipers, especially on rocks, boulders or even the ruins of former fortresses!

Sheepdogs or free-roaming dogs don't present as much of a danger as in other areas, locals and people who have guided us in our documenting journey use kind words, gentle whistling and petting to calm their barking. The sheepfolds we encountered are small, with sheep and few dogs and friendly shepherds. Beware of the gentle dogs that follow the hikers - they must be chased away, to avoid their "transhumance" for dozens of kilometers, far from home and with no chance of finding the way back to their owners.

If hiking in the summer, in the hot months, it is recommended to use every means of sun protection, i.e. hat, sunglasses, sun cream with high protection factor and plenty of water for hydration. If hiking after a rainy period, keep mosquito and tick spray at hand!

For people suffering from allergies, medical treatment is recommended, as there are high levels of allergens in the air, especially in meadows and mountain pastures.

For those wishing to cycle the whole of Terra Dacica by bicycle or electric bike, Alba County may be cyclable in dry weather, but after a wet and rainy period, it may be impossible. In Hunedoara County, the same advice applies, but here, 80% of the roads are paved, but are more difficult because of their steepness.

Trail: easy

Elevation difference: 457m

Critical spots: in rainy weather the route can become of medium difficulty, otherwise it has no critical spots

Scenery: you walk on paths or tractor roads, on hills, through the forest and through the locality where you can get water or other necessary supplies. From the high points of the hills, you can find lookout points with wonderful views all around.

ATTENTION: for any emergencies regarding accommodation, transport, accidents, recoveries, advice, wandering off or help, please call tel. +40 765 303 053, Dan Aldea, Mayor of Valea Lungă!

Accommodation:

Lodroman: *Accommodation with locals*, camping (we offer tents and sleeping bags), accommodation for 2 people, dinner and breakfast on request, fishing, shop nearby. Reservations at +40 767 766 766 (Raul Cristian);

Valea Lungă: *Agropensiunea Ioana*, 12 beds, possibility of serving meals on request, with traditional products. Reservations at +40 751 624 889 (Ioana);

Accommodation with locals, 6 places, dinner and breakfast on request, Reservations by phone +40 766 346 955 (Vilina Băcilă).

Infrastructure:

Lodroman: 

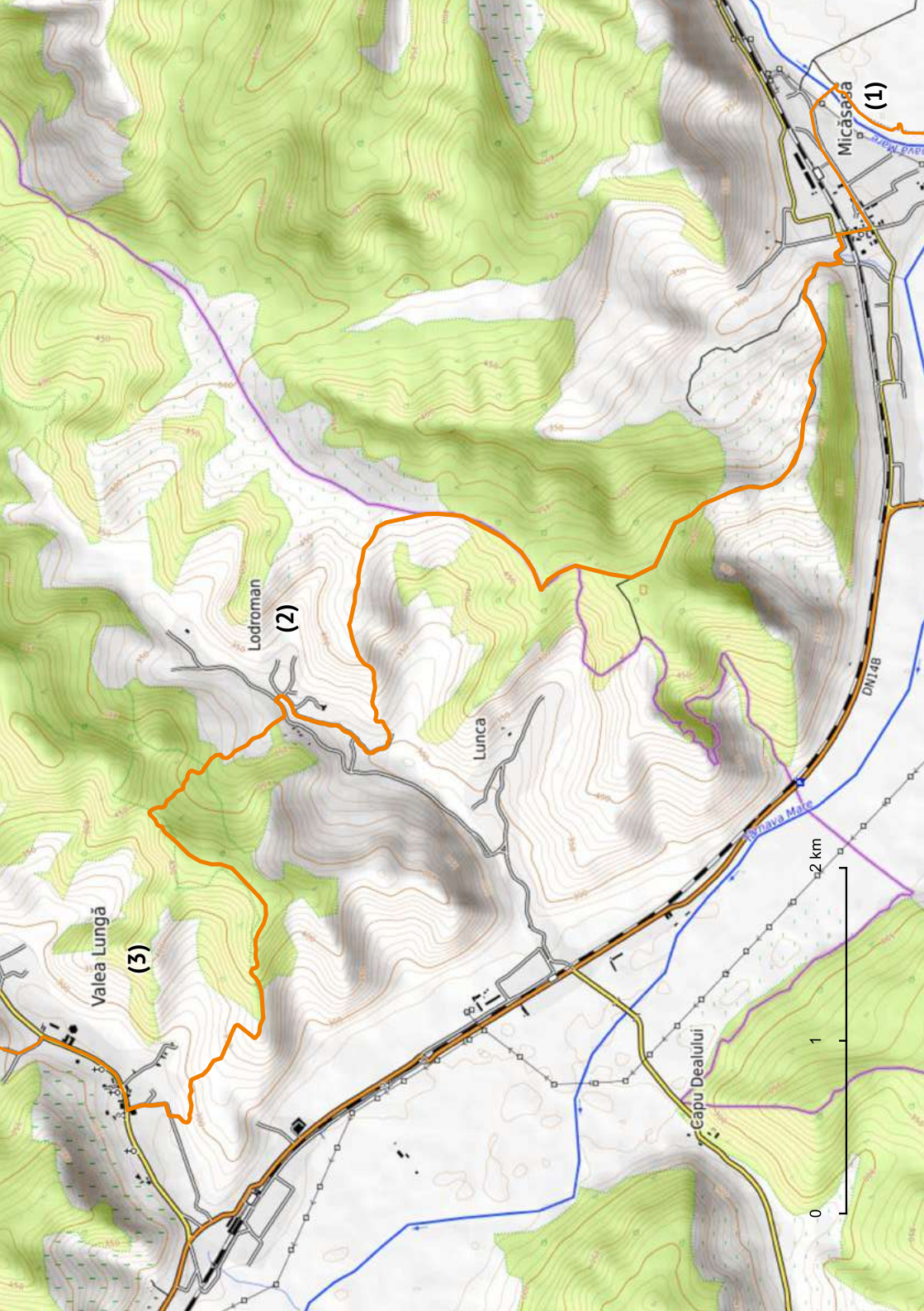
Valea Lungă: 

Note:

As we reached the end of Terra Saxonum at Micăsasa (1), still in Sibiu County, this will be the point where we will resume the route of this day, continuing Via Transilvanica towards new horizons and adventures.

Starting from the church in the center of the village of Micăsasa, more precisely in front of the kilometer stone depicting Samuel Von Brukenthal, the still asphalted road turns to the left of the stone, if you look at it from the front. Behind it rises the large building of the Catholic and Reformed Church, which has been divided in two, fraternally, so as not to upset any of the faithful villagers, who after all, pray to the same God, only some in the right half and others in the left half of the old church, with the roof of the nave almost crushed by the many years of haggling over it.

The road that passes between the church on the right and Brukenthal Castle on the left, leads out of the village, climbing gently and turning from asphalt first into a stony country road and then into a path that climbs a hill, keeping left. After one kilometer of climbing the tractor road, on the right side you can see the valley and, on the left, the ridge of the hill which has been stretching parallel to your walk. Pass some rusty car remains, which served as a storm shelter for shepherds, then past a fenced-off water reservoir, maybe observing from a distance, if you are lucky, deer or foxes on the hill ridge to the left.



Micăsasa (1)

Lodroman (2)

Valea Lungă (3)

Lunca

Jivava Mare

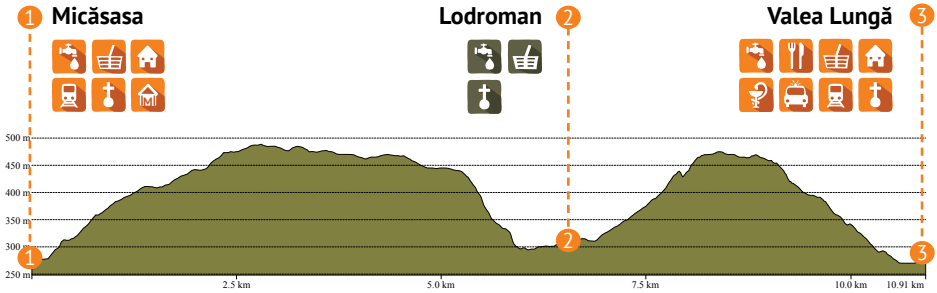
DN128

Capu Dealului

2 km

1

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The areas will be without traces of large carnivorous wild animals, instead it will be dotted quite frequently with deer, stag, many pheasants, foxes and wild rabbits. It seems that throughout Alba County, these gentle landscapes of ravishing beauty are well suited to the aforementioned wildlife, which may shyly show themselves, from time to time, to travelers.

After about 100 metres of ascent, for about one kilometer of walking, the ridge of the hill will turn to the right, like a sort of pass, and our route will enter a thick and cool deciduous forest. Before entering the forest, the place is worth a few minutes' rest, to admire the landscape that spreads out on the left-hand side of the walk. You can see Râpa Cailor, a few villages in the valley and especially the surrounding mountains, which can still be snowcapped in certain months of the year. You can see, if weather allows it, the Făgăraș, Cindrel, Șureanu and even the Apuseni Mountains.

The road then continues through the forest, for another kilometer and a half, until it reaches the border between the counties, on which you walk for a few metres and then step, into Alba County, leaving Sibiu County behind. This is where Terra Dacica begins.

After other 500 metres through the beautiful forest where grazing sheep can be seen sometimes, you exit the forest into a glade with beautiful, mythical landscapes all around. The second sheepfold was encountered, and the second time the dogs were good, apart from barking to announce the sighting of intruders, then retiring to their sheep, the shepherds exchanged a few words and gave good guidance. The trail takes a left turn down the glen, descending to the valley towards the first settlement, called Lodroman (2). After a slightly steep descent of about one kilometer, you reach the village and cross a bridge, then, going left for 100 metres, turn right onto a new country uphill road that leaves the village. Here the scenery will be just as delightful, with flowers and flowering bushes, following a country road entering a thicket of birch and other shrubs, following the Via Transilvanica markers, winding gently uphill. Then to the left, emerging into the hillside ridge and leaving Lodroman behind, you reach a new viewpoint. Up to this point, you pass by a methane gas infrastructure, which can still be a kind of landmark for orientation. This hillside is surrounded by steep ravines, covered with patches of former bushfires (which were large and dangerous), that are still visible. These shapes, natural patterns, in the middle of a huge scene on the top of a hill or on its steep slopes give us the feeling that we are here, in the present, living to its fullness. There are such unique moments in the life of a hiker, not to be missed, as you pass by. From here, you descend gently, still keeping to the right, towards Valea Lungă until you reach the

commune's allotments, from where, following the markers, you reach one of the roads of the village. Valea Lungă (3) is welcoming the hikers with open arms.

Option: 2 kilometers from the village, there is a place near the forest, named "La Popică", here you can camp and/or spend a resting day at Valea Lungă, to visit the sights listed below, maybe even enjoy a wine tasting at the winery and recharge your batteries and prepare for the new county.

Info:

Ioan Bianu – He was a Romanian philologist and biographer (born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire). He was born in 1856 in the village that is today called Făget, in the commune of Valea Lungă. Having high patriotic feelings, he left the empire, after some dispute with the Austro-Hungarian authorities and fled to Wallachia (now the southern part of Romania). He became a Romanian language teacher at the St. Sava National College in Bucharest. Here he also played an extremely important role in the development of the Romanian Academy Library. During his studies in Milan and Paris, he was fascinated by the libraries there and studies ways to improve the ones at home. Later in life, when hearing problems prevented him from managing the library, he became the president of the Romanian Academy. Ioan Bianu died in 1935 in Bucharest.

Benedek Manor – Members of the Benedek family, one of the most important traditional families in Transylvania, reported that the manor was built sometime in the early 18th century, undergoing various changes over time. During the communist period, the manor house was the headquarters of the Valea Lungă post office.

Szentkereszty Gyorgy and his wines – Szentkereszty Gyorgy, Baron of Zagoni, was born on 23 October 1840, right in the middle of the grape harvesting period in the Târnava Valley, in the village of Valea Lungă, which most probably influenced his destiny. He tried to find innovations in the vineyard and in wine making. In fact, in his own vineyard, he started planting the Riesling variety from Rhine region. He was convinced of the quality of Transylvanian wine, even claiming that wood, cattle and wine could be the economic assets of Transylvania. Wine has a history here in Valea Lungă, we can go back in time a long way: between 1359 and 1406, there were disputes between Valea Lungă and Micăsasa, some resulting in armed conflicts, which led people to pick their grapes very late in the autumn when they had time to do so. The grapes were already dry and turned into raisins, hence the origin of Aszu wine from the vineyards of Baron Szentkereszty Gyorgy.

Churches in the village of Valea Lungă (7 confessions) – Via Transilvanica celebrates diversity, it is a journey meant to tell stories across the board. The team documenting the guide noted with great joy that there are seven churches in the village of Valea Lungă, each of a different confession: Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Orthodox, Hungarian Reformed, Evangelical Lutheran, Pentecostal and Baptist.

Tăuni Winery – Located in the commune of Valea Lungă, this is the fourth and the newest of Jidvei's wineries, and was inaugurated in 2014. The winery has 700 hectares of vineyard, on a plateau at an altitude of 500 meters. It is also called the "Tăuni gravitational winery" because of the technology used, namely gravity flow, operating on the principle of communicating vessels, ensuring an exceptional wine making process. It has a storage capacity of around 5 million liters and most of the operational systems are computerized. "It's a modern open-air winery, where we process about 300 tons of grapes per day during harvest time. As everything is automated, there are only 5 people

working on each shift: two oenologists, one lab technician and maintenance staff. All the raw material is recorded on electronic scale and video monitored to observe the quality and health of the grapes, samples are taken for each shipment, and sugar and acidity testing is carried out,” said Nelu Mărginean, technical director at Jidvei.



Trail: easy

Elevation difference: 625 m

Critical spots: a lot of walking through farmland, and in hot summer weather and high heat water supplies, sun protection and insect repellent are required; in wet weather extra care is needed when travelling, as all roads are extremely muddy. The descent to Glogoveţ is steep and on a narrow path.

Scenery: through forests, hills, meadows with tall grass and scattered trees, among wheat fields or curving pastures, a dream landscape of great diversity;

Accommodation:

Glogoveţ: Accommodation at the locals, 6 places to stay, access to the kitchen. Reservations by phone +40 763 495 058 (Marius Sărătean);

Blaj, Roa Guesthouse, 28 places to stay, with breakfast, restaurants and shops nearby. Reservations by phone +40 759 110 011 or via online booking;

Buna-Vestire House, 20 beds, breakfast and dinner on request, reservation in advance at tel. +40 765 155 870 (Priest Paul Mican);

La Hodaie, 3-4 km after Blaj, near AB032, 4 places, camping possible, dinner and breakfast on request with traditional products, reservations on tel. +40 770 859 126 (Mihai Tarko) and +40 740 672 796.

Liziera Blaj, 10 places, restaurant, sports hall, reservations at tel. +40 751 786 307 (Andrei Duroi)

Good to know: Blaj offers multiple accommodation options for all budgets. If there are no seats available at the mentioned points, we recommend searching on the internet. It is recommended that the overnight stay should be as close as possible to the route.

Infrastructure:

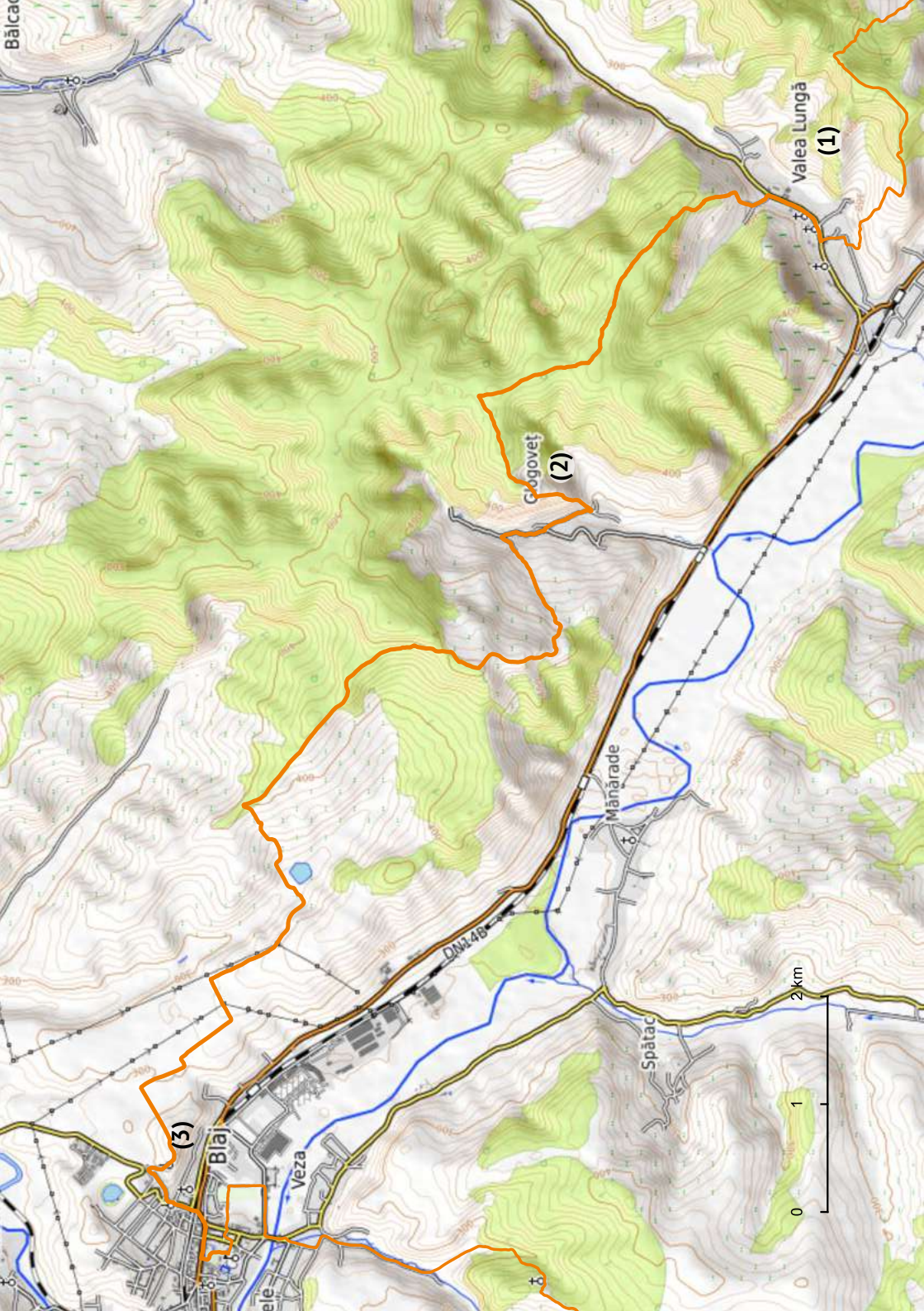
Glogoveţ: 

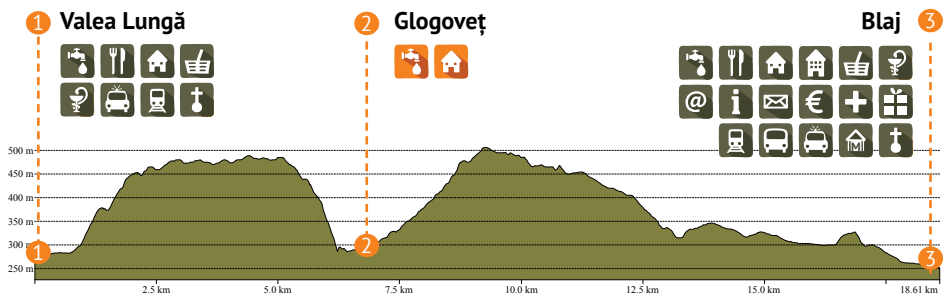
Blaj: 

Note:

From the Orthodox church in Valea Lungă, (1) the route takes us upwards, out of the village, on a rather steep narrow road, fortunately not very long, which then turns into a path, on the forest edge, and then enters a deciduous forest to the left. Entering the forest, the trail follows the marking for a long time, offering cool shade on hot summer days, or leafy cover in the rain. Dried leaves cover the muddy and moist soil, and spring flowers may delight the hiker's eyes in the early season. Everywhere you can hear the songs of birds just back from their own journey, and the cuckoo accompanies the hiker's steps incessantly until Midsummer's Day in June.

We pass through thick forest for about 2.5 kilometres, on a level curve, with no big ups and downs, until the markings suddenly point left. Here, the road slowly emerges from the forest to a clearing, where it turns right, towards a large wooden cross, passing several wooden hunting hides on the edge of the forest. Once at the wooden cross, hikers can read the "Legend of the Giants of the Glogoveţului Valley", and then take a





rest at the bench next to the cross, admiring from above the whole Glogoveț valley and its surroundings.

After a short hydration break, the route descends the hill, to the left of the cross as you stand with your back to it, on a path that leads steeply to a ravine formed, probably, by the clogging of the cliff by rainwater, a ravine so typical of the whole Alba County and of the typical geological formations of the steppe. The descent to the village is steep, but very short. From here, you walk among the colorful, orderly and clean houses of Glogoveț (2), with many spring flowers in the front gardens. It goes all the way to the first junction, where two roads meet forming a Y, but our route takes a sharp left, making a "hairpin" bend and climbing steeply up on another stretch of asphalt.

The village is shortly visited, with the route only reaching one of its ends, but this is a good chance to refill water bottles from the wells or even from the locals, people are always happy if they can chat a bit with visitors, exchange a few words or satisfy their curiosity.

Moving up the road, it turns back into a tractor road and then a field path, crossing electric fences, well-maintained gardens, well-kept properties, with the chance of even finding a flock of sheep in the area. Looking back, you can see village smaller and smaller, scattered like a collection of glass beads.

We enter a young forest which is relatively easy and fast to walk through, because the roads lead to it through small ditches made long ago by forestry machinery, or even by water that has been squeezed out of the skies and off the leaves of the trees. Still treading on the soft bed of leaves dried since last year, the landscape changes, when the path emerges again on the edge of the forest, and on the left a glimmer of water, The Lake of Galoș, can be seen in the distance. We follow this road for about one kilometer and then begin our descent to the left, towards the lake and the group of houses in the valley. This is where you can dine in the future, for those who will not have the strength to walk further to Blaj (3).

After that, the road turns to the right, going around the various plantations of corn, wheat and other grains, in a zigzag of about 3 kilometres, until the path that goes down behind the Cross of Avram Iancu, where there is also an excellent viewpoint over Blaj, Târnava Mare valley, the hills and the woods that have been crossed up to here. Descending towards the town, you pass by the lime-tree, which is said to be where the poet Mihai Eminescu greeted Blaj, calling it "little Rome". Then, with small steps and a

long descent on asphalt, you walk into town to the place chosen by each hiker for rest until the next day.

Info:

Wooden cross – The legend of the giants of the Glogoveț Valley This panoramic point is a good opportunity for a break with a surprise! There's nothing like a story told (or in this case read) at the right time. Next to the wooden cross there is a panel which, in a fairy-tale language, tell us about the "urieși" ("giants") and the legend of their daughter, who, as it usually happens in fairy tales, has a tragic fate. After a short reading, the hiker can admire the view. From here you can see the Glogoveț Valley and its surroundings. Among some houses that seem to be resting, the road undulates like a snake slithering between the valleys.

Blaj – Blaj is an important city in the history of Romania. Until the union of Transylvania with the Kingdom of Romania, Blaj was one of the few towns in Transylvania, along with Năsăud, with a majority of Romanian population. On 15-17 May 1848, the Great Assembly of Blaj took place, attended by 30,000-40,000 people, mostly peasants, on the field near Blaj called "Râitul Grecilor", which since then has been known as the Field of Liberty. The Assembly adopted a programme of democratic demands: abolition of the tithe, of the mandatory group work and serfdom, the abolition of guilds and customs, freedom of speech and printing, formation of the national guard, state schools in Romanian, etc.

Crucea lui Avram Iancu (The Cross of Avram Iancu) – In the northern part of the city, at the top of a hill from where Blaj can be admired, with its old buildings full of history, but also





with the new, modern ones, there is a monument called "The Cross of Avram Iancu". This four-metre-high cross is dedicated to the events of 1848, when, it seems, it was on this beautiful viewpoint, from where even today the hiker can admire the famous Field of Liberty, that a legion of "Moți" (Romanians living in the Apuseni Mountains) led by Avram Iancu stationed here to watch over the plain. The first cross that was erected here dates back to 1815, dedicated to the philanthropist bishop Ioan Bob. This first version was blown up in 1908 and then rebuilt in 1915 according to the original design.

Teiul lui Eminescu (The linden tree of Eminescu) – The linden tree in the Copou Park in Iași (major city from Moldova region, in the Eastern part of the Romania) has a brother in Blaj, also declared a natural monument. It is a silver linden tree located on the northern side of Blaj. In the spring of 1866, the poet Mihai Eminescu made a long journey linking Bucovina to Blaj, the Transylvanian citadel of culture. It is said that on reaching this place, in the shade of a linden tree, he took off his hat in homage and greeted Blaj, saying: "I greet you from my heart, Little Rome!" **Teiul lui Eminescu** – Teiul lui Eminescu aflat în parcul Copou din Iași are un frate la Blaj, declarat și el monument al naturii. Este vorba de un tei argintiu aflat la marginea nordică a orașului Blaj. În primăvara anului 1866, poetul Mihai Eminescu a făcut o călătorie lungă pe un drum care lega Bucovina de cetatea culturii transilvănene. Zice-se că ajungând în acest loc, la umbra unui tei, și-a dat jos pălăria în semn de omagiu și a salutat Blajul, spunând: "Te salut din inimă, Mică Romă!"

Trail: easy but a bit long

Elevation difference: 413m

Critical spots: a lot of walking on clearings, in meadows and short crossings of forests, water supply from the villages, sun protection and insect repellent are required in hot weather;

Scenery: dreamy scenery, with soft grassy glades, passing meadows and gentle winding hills, from where you can have excellent views of the surrounding mountains;

Accommodation:

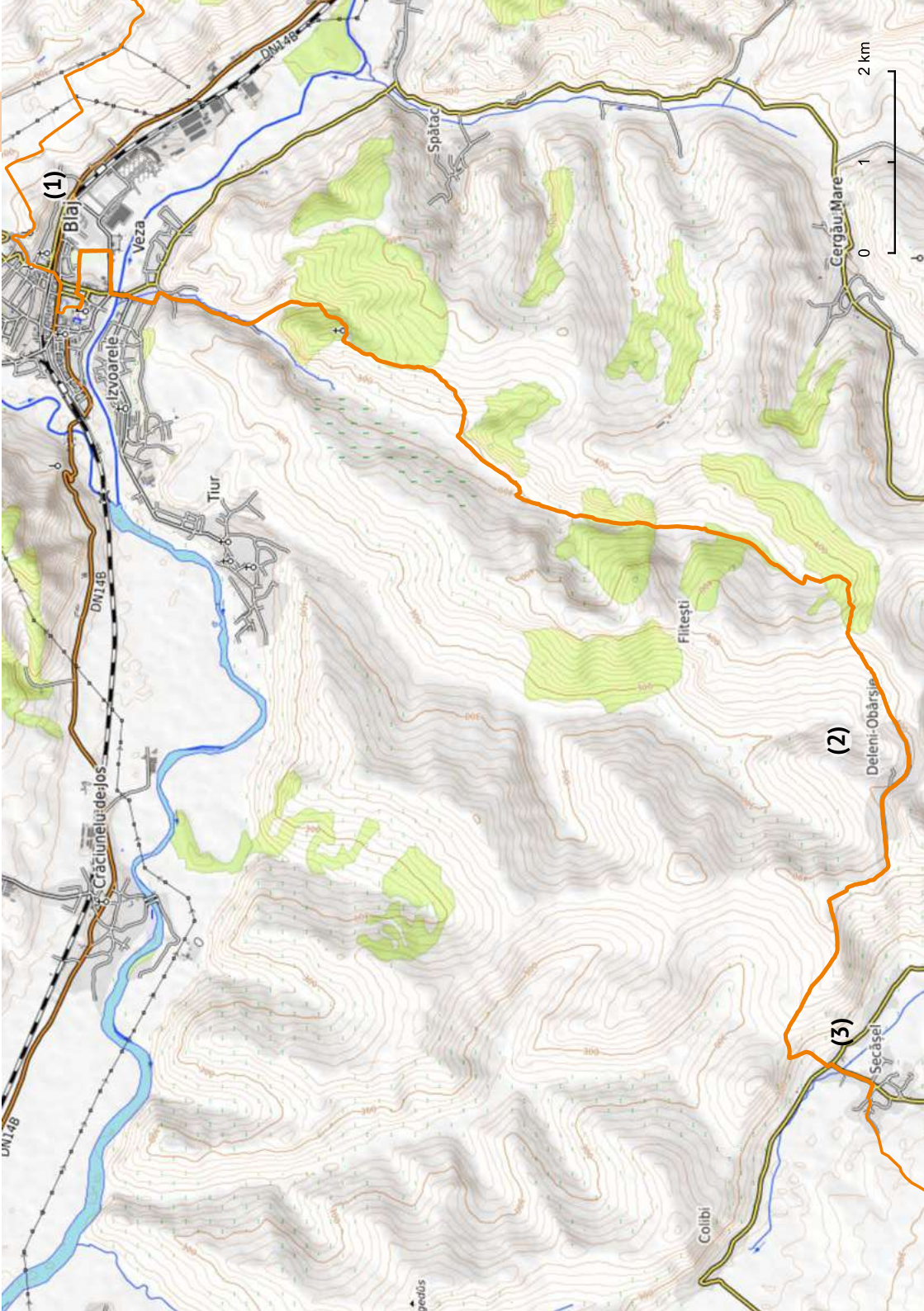
Secășel: Parish House, 7 beds, breakfast and dinner on request, reservation in advance at tel. 0765 155 870 (Priest Paul Mican);

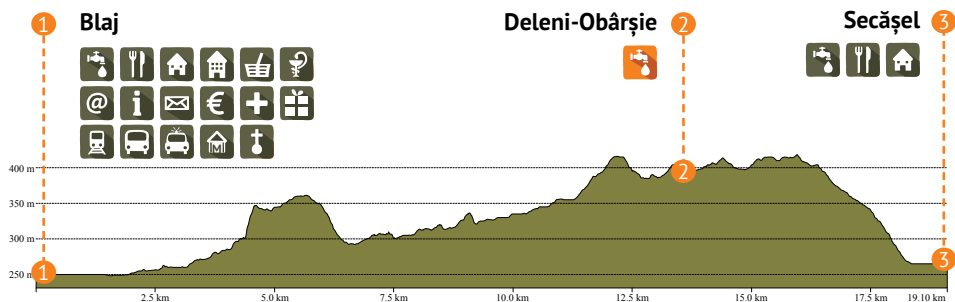
Cergău (2 km from the trail): **Pensiunea Fata Viilor,** 18 beds, dinner and breakfast on request, camping, access to bathroom and kitchen, car transport on and off the trail, reservations by phone +40 744 791 799 (Lucian Bozoșan)

Infrastructure: **Secășel:**   

Note:

From Blaj (1) one goes south to the exit of the town towards Veza, on asphalted road, and together with the kilometres in the town, there are about 3 and a half kilometres until the road turns into a paved, forest road, which leads to Drumul Crucii towards Sanctuarul de la Cărbunari. Once here, a small gate is opened and closed again, and you pass through the courtyard of the Monastery, following a proper conduct, keeping quiet and covering your body as much as possible, until you exit the courtyard, which is also closed with a small gate. Here one climbs a little to the edge of the hill, like through a tunnel covered with birch leaves, where a peaceful and beautiful landscape opens up. From here turn left and walk along green, beaten paths, over hills and thorny bushes, past small groves, sneaking into their shadow, on and on along the ridge, until a gentle descent begins into the valley, towards a round forest, the edge of which must be reached. From here begins a gentle winding of the path around forested hills which the hiker must bypass, but with a desire for beauty, a desire for wondering all around, for the shape of these valleys is like a cradle, which can astonish by the winding of the path through it. Walking along the path, at one point an unfinished house/hut can be seen on the left, then, keeping the path slightly to the right, a gentle climb begins to the forest ahead. By this point the documenting team had encountered two flocks of sheep, and on both occasions, the shepherds talked with us and both flocks had one or two sheep gathering dogs, which were either friendly or simply ignoring us. Walking towards the forest in front of us, slightly uphill, after entering it, the trail turns to the right until it exits the forest again and meets an asphalt road ahead. This goes round the level curve, dividing the fields neatly, but it won't be our path, because at this crossroad our trail turns sharply left onto another yet-to-be-asphalted road, to the village Deleni-Obârșie (2) which can be seen in the distance, beyond the spire of the church. Schitul Obârșii is also located at this crossroad and we leave it, silent, behind us. This road was in a preparation phase for asphaltting, containing stones and other debris, but the hiker's luck is that it descends





quite pleasantly, then slowly climbs again, winding through sparse vegetation at first, and thicker near the church. The farmsteads at the bottom of the village have begun to appear, each with crosses in the yard, ghastly scarecrows, flowering fruit trees, satellite dishes and dizzily green grass. The further we go, the more houses can be seen to the left and right of the road.

Arriving in Deleni-Obârșie, one can stop and admire the old Romanian church with paintings above the entrance, not used by people for a long time. These landscapes may differ by the time in which the hike is made. At the time of documentation, the clouds, the sun rays playing hide-and-seek, the sky freshly washed by a light summer rain, transform all the colors into intense hues. The newly grown wheat field can be of an electric green when it meets, at the horizon line, the grey-blue sky, the little church rises and looks much taller against the dramatic sky background, the blossoming trees spread their fragrant petals everywhere, as if preparing the red or white carpet, making us feel that each of us is special, unique, in that time and place.

From here, we cross the village and enter a forest. After 100m we exit and turn right on a tractor road. Crossing mud roads, you come out again on a hill ridge, on which you walk on the contour, observing the specific hilly relief of low plateau, having on the left side the valley with the village of Tău, maybe even Ohaba further to the horizon and walking parallel to DJ107. The river Mureș with its meanders is also recognizable from a distance. Then we take a gentle left onto the field road, a road that is sweetest to the tired hiker's foot, the soft earth and grass serving as a fluffy cushion for sore soles. Going further on, in about a kilometer we will notice the village of Secășel (3), and we descend on muddy roads (after rain), towards a large farm through which we may have to pass, but then we notice a detour road, so as not to disturb the farmers.

Once here, the adventure can continue the next day, after the hikers have cared their wounds and let all these road feelings to settle in.

Info:

Deleni-Obârșie – Deleni-Obârșie is currently a depopulated village on the territory of Blaj municipality. In the past it belonged to Tiur commune and had about 100 households. Entering this ghost village, the hiker has the impression that he has travelled back in time, or rather, that time has travelled on its own, without people, without a hiker, but has befriended nature, which is turning wild. Even though it is now an uninhabited village, the traces of households and the church are proof that at one time this community was prosperous, mainly during the interwar period. The village was somewhat abusively disbanded, by taking the land from the people and passing it into the possession of CAP

(collective farms implemented by the Communist regime). In this context the inhabitants were forced to move closer to Blaj, especially to Tiur, from where they could commute to the jobs created in the new factories of the communist industrialisation. In the village there are currently two or three families as temporary residents. The church can still be admired from the outside, with a beautiful mural above the entrance, and you can still feel the energy of the faithful who left behind this house of God.

Secășel – The ancient toponymy of the locality is based on the Pecheneg ethnonym (a Turkic-speaking, semi-nomadic population from the 7th – 12th centuries). The German name Heidendorf (pagan village) also evokes the presence of non-Christian populations in this area in the Middle Ages.



Trail: medium to difficult due to length

Elevation difference: 546m

Critical spots: a lot of walking on clearings, in meadows and forests, water supply can be made in the villages, sun protection and insects repellent are required in hot weather;

Scenery: among the moors at the beginning, and by the end of the day a lot of rural and then urban landscape.

Accommodations:

Șeușa: *Casa cu vii*, 12 beds, breakfast, restaurant nearby. Prior reservations at +40 723 548 439.

Alba Iulia: *Hotel Transilvania*, 20 beds 3*, 56 rooms de 4*, 4 apartments, restaurant, bar, hairdresser, cosmetics, massage. Prior reservations at tel. 0258 812 052 or 0721 291 709.

Matia Resort, 20 beds, restaurants and shops nearby. Prior reservations at +40 786 803 496;

Casa Tâmplarului, 6 beds, breakfast, access to kitchen, restaurant and shop nearby. Prior reservations at +40 768 036 636 (Daniel Roman);

Good to know: Alba Iulia offers multiple accommodation options for all budgets. If there are no seats available at the mentioned points, we recommend searching on the internet. It is recommended that the overnight stay should be as close as possible to the route.

Infrastructure:

Berghin:  

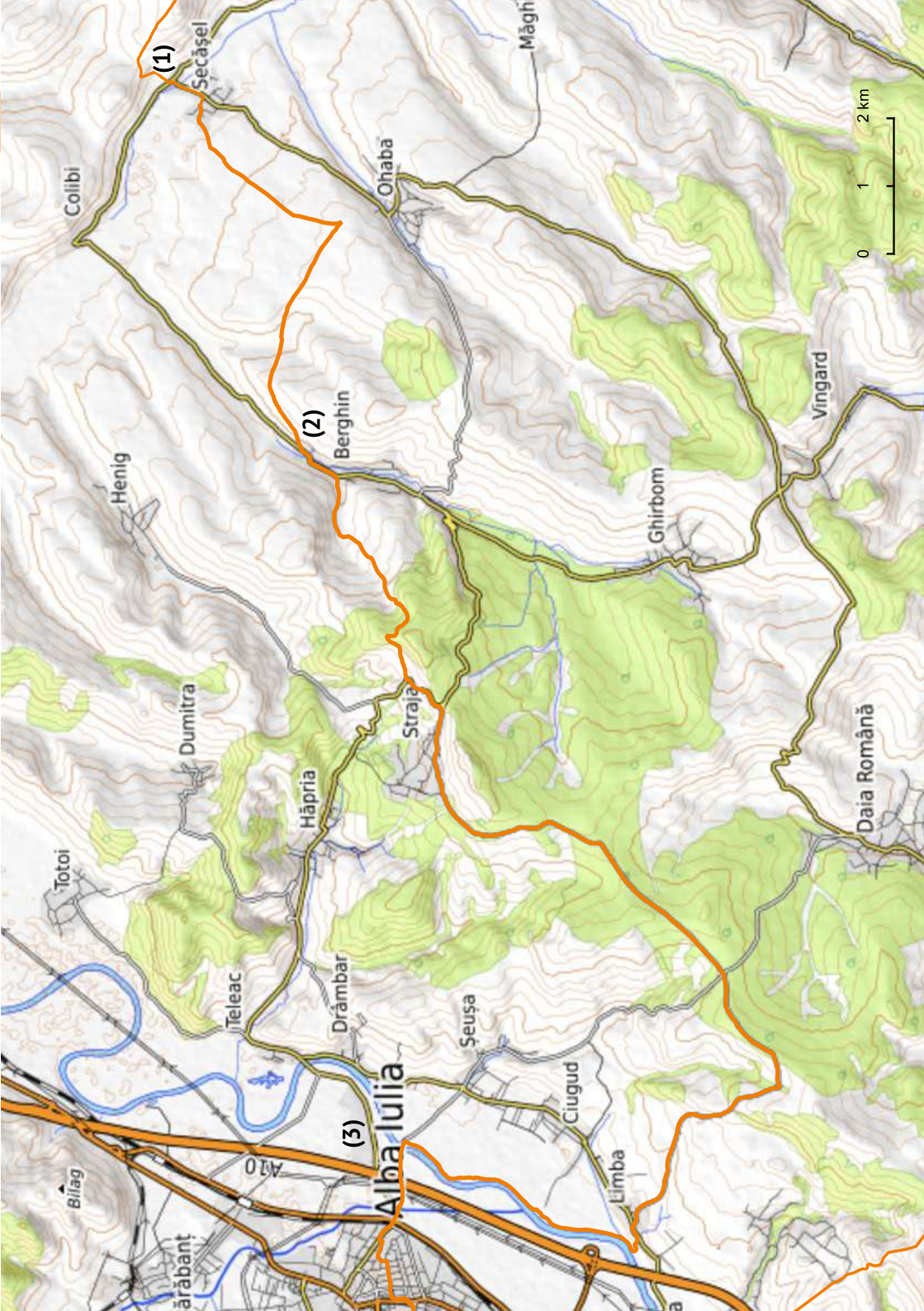
Șeușa:    

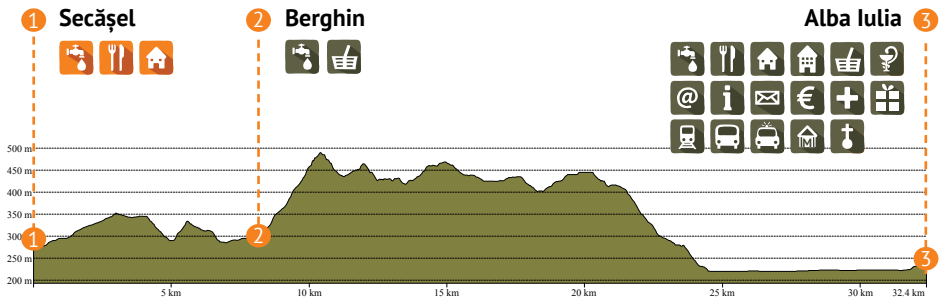
Alba Iulia:                 

Note:

Secășel (1) shows us, by following the markings, how to get out of the village: coming from the direction of the previous day's route, near the wooden church, turn right, until the road turns into a tractor road, because it leads to people's arable land. Through scattered clumps of trees, some full of crows, with mud sticking to the boots, the good mood is not lost, for it is a new day of walking, a new day of seeing colored earth, four-leaf clover, smelling the flowers of bird cherry, lilac or apple trees, admiring the live, green fields of alfalfa, nothing can stop the hiker's feeling of freedom and happiness. After leaving the village, on the muddy or dry and dusty road (depending on the weather), walk for about 3 kilometres until you cross a new path, there turn right sharply. More cultivated fields, more clouds or raindrops, more songs hummed to keep the mood of the group, or the mind of oneself, balanced.

Our road can be seen winding its way, with the naked eye, up, away, where a gentle climb begins. Here, high up at the top of the hill, there is a sheepfold or farm on the right side of the road, with big, white, fluffy, well-behaved dogs. Since the trail is so far away from their territory, the dogs will likely not even bark at us. From here it's just a short descent to the left, towards the better maintained rural road to Berghin. Soon, this turns to asphalt, on which we cross the village.





The documenting team had an interesting incident while on this road. When the entrance road to the asphalt in Berghin (2) takes a left turn there is a site for artificial insemination of cattle. Over the fence, we could see dogs and cows, but one on top of this, there was music coming out of some speakers, all over the yard and the street, and it was Leonard Cohen. Romantic, relaxing music for the animals to be inseminated. In my opinion, the writer of this guide, the humanity shown towards animals, goes all the way to heaven.

One passes many neat and tidy houses, but one's eyes are drawn to an old, blue house built in 1857, with a Saxon inscription on the mason's beam. After this, you leave the village, descending very gently to the right, past another farm with cows and curious horses, and then climb up to a clearing, where you can see the whole village and the surrounding forests.

The traveler is better off when on the road, however it would be good for them to stop time and again, to admire the surroundings, to let the experience of the road sink in.

After a short hydration break, continue the gentle climb to the right, where you enter a young forest, and following an old path, you reach another road that descends sharply to the left to Straja in about 2 kilometers from the break in the clearing. After leaving the forest, and passing through several cow pastures, marked by electric fences, you can see DJ107 from above, which you eventually reach in order to cross Straja, for about 2 kilometres. Straja is just as beautiful, like a little village in a fairy tale, and the people are friendly and curious, saying „hello” and even staying for a short conversation.

Leaving the village, on asphalt road for about five kilometers to an intersection with a monument cross dedicated to heroes. Cross the street and continue on the asphalt, on the level curve at the beginning, then downhill towards the village of Limba, part of Ciugud commune, for a distance of 4km. From the top we have a superb view with the town of Alba Iulia (3) towards which the hiker is heading. At the entrance to the village of Limba, we will come across a famous spring that fills the containers of people in this area. We cross the village to the main road, from where we turn right onto a dirt road that takes us near the river bank of Mureș. We take it again on the road to the right and for about four km we will be accompanied by a cool landscape specific to meadow areas, with the river Mureș on our left and other trees or cornfields on the right. After so many kilometers on asphalt, the hiker can enjoy an unpaved road before entering the town of Alba Iulia. Arriving at the new bridge that crosses Mureș, we cross it and return to a farm road that after 800m leads to the road that passes under the motorway. Cross DJ107, turn left, and for a distance of about 800m you will pass one by one: under the A10 motorway,

by the Ampoi river, by the Alba Iulia bypass road and by the railway level crossing at the entrance to the neighborhood Lipoveni.

From here, it's another kilometer or so to the fortress of Alba Iulia. A longer break in this historic city is recommended, not just because it was a much longer day, but rather because the city has a lot to offer to be seen, learned and visited.

Info

Ciugud Industrial Park – The industrial area of Ciugud, near Alba Iulia, has had a fantastic development, even surpassing that of the county town. A few years ago, in Ciugud, dozens of hectares of land were covered in thorny weeds. Now this land has become the economic engine of the commune after the area has turned into an „Industrial Park”. Among other conditions, the town hall demands that the companies' local registered offices shall be in Ciugud and that the investments to be environmentally friendly.

Smart school in Ciugud – The first rural smart school in Romania has been built in Ciugud. The project won funding following a national selection.

Golf Course – Theodora Golf Club is a resort not far from the Alba Carolina Fortress. Situated in the middle of nature, Theodora Golf Club can be a stop for hiking along the Via Transilvanica, for relaxation and entertainment. Built to international standards, it features premium facilities, from an exclusive location to the largest golf course in Romania. If the hiker doesn't have a passion for golf, then perhaps they should know that they can still visit this place where the views are enchanting, thanks to the course's location on the left bank of the Mures River.

Straja – Straja is a village in the commune of Berghin in Alba County. In the village there was once a monastery, and around 1760 it was abandoned. It had a vineyard, which produced 400-500 urnae of wine annually and which was taken over by Zorger, an apprentice of the bishop of Alba Iulia. Some villagers still know, to this day, where the monastery was located. Part of the border area is still called „La Călugărul”. Also, here we find the valley of the river „Valea Călugărului”, which is a tributary of the river „Izvorul Dorului”.

Hapria Hermitage – The hermitage includes a church dedicated to the Annunciation and a group of chapels and is a very beautiful place to visit for hikers!

Alba Iulia – Before you will find out the reasons why Alba Iulia has always been a special place, one of the most important cities in Transylvania, we will tell you the story of Via Transilvanica in Alba. In 2018, Romania was celebrating 100 years since the Great Union of 1918, yet there was still no major national project that was truly about union. That's how the concept of Via Transilvanica - the road that unites - was born in the city of Alba Iulia, when a handful of people thought that maybe in 10 years, they would manage to mark 1,000 km crossing the country. Four years later, in 2022, also in Alba Iulia, 100 years after the coronation of King Ferdinand and Queen Mary, the completion of the Via Transilvanica route is celebrated in Alba Iulia, where this story of union began. But we can tell you also some other historical facts about Alba Iulia, which place it among the most important Transylvanian cities. In ancient times, on the site of the current fortress there was the Roman castrum of Apulum. Between 1541 and 1711 the town was the residence of the princes of Transylvania and thus the political capital of the Principality of Transylvania. Between 1595-1596, under Sigismund Báthory, and between 1600-1601, under Michael the Brave, it was the residence of the political leader of Moldavia, Transylvania and Wallachia, which were in a personal union. On 1 December 1918 it was



the venue of the Great National Assembly of Alba Iulia, which legitimized the popular union of Transylvania and Banat with the Kingdom of Romania. In 1922 the official coronation ceremony of the kings of Great Romania, Ferdinand I and Maria, took place in Alba Iulia, a moment that confirmed the symbolic importance of the city, thanks to its role as historical capital. Today, the city still retains the charm of the past, combining the old with the modern, being a place where the traveler can find many ways to spend time, whether visiting the various tourist attractions or relaxing on the terrace of a chic restaurant.

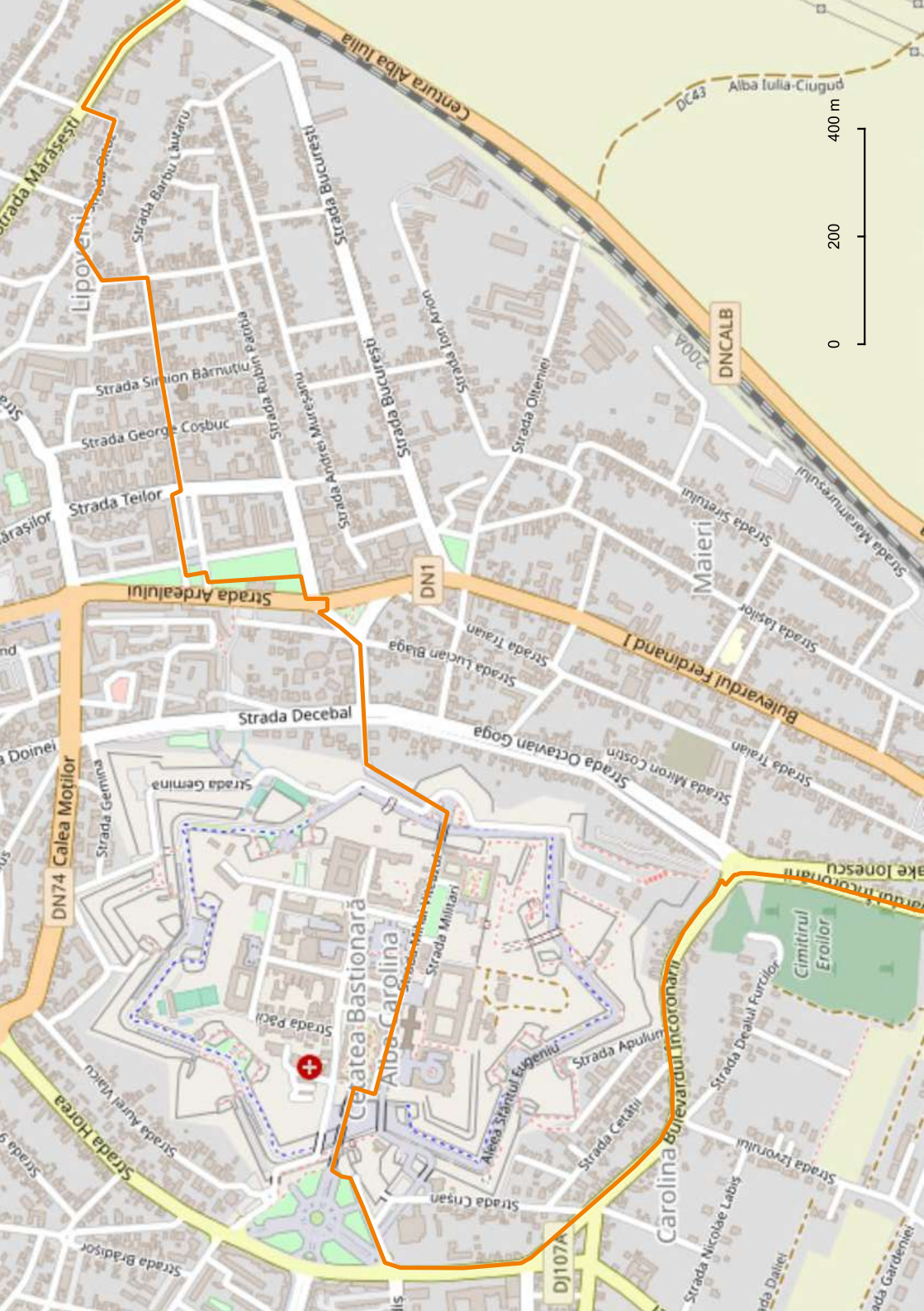
Alba - Carolina Citadel – The star-shaped fortification of Alba Iulia is the largest fortress in Romania, which has been standing for more than 300 years. The hiker's journey along the Via Transilvanica suddenly becomes a journey back in time, over two millennia, through the remains of three fortifications from different ages. In other words, each fortress built here has incorporated the old one: The castrum built by the Romans, the medieval fortress and the Alba Carolina fortress. The latter was built in Alba Iulia at the beginning of the 18th century. The first design of the fortification was made by the Italian architect Giovanni Morando Visconti, who also directed the first phase of the works. The architect died from plague and is buried in the Roman Catholic Cathedral of Alba Iulia. The tour of the citadel can last about 2 hours, and reveals the history of the fortifications built in Alba Iulia (the Apulum Castle, the medieval fortress of Bălgrad and the Alba Carolina Fortress). Various attractions like the elements of the Vauban type defense system (bastions, fortress gates, ravelins and defense ditches), Principia

(Command of the XIII Gemina Legion), Via Principalis, Princely Palace, Bishop's Palace, Roman-Catholic Cathedral, traces of cannonballs, a sundial, the statue of Michael the Brave, the Obelisk of Horea, Cloșca and Crișan, the Unification Museum and the Unification Hall, the Coronation Cathedral, the Centenary Monument, are all part of the city's rich history which is turning into an interesting story for the traveler.

Roman Catholic Cathedral – This beautiful and impressive church was built 800 years ago and is the oldest cathedral in Transylvania still in operation and the oldest building in Alba Iulia and Alba County. It is also the tallest building in Alba Iulia. The tower is 56.7 metres high, including the cross. In the southern side aisle is buried Iancu de Hunedoara, a prince of Transylvania and governor of Hungary. Both Hungarian and Romanian crowns are placed on his tomb, a sign of his appreciation by both nations. In the opposite nave are the tombs of the first prince of Transylvania, John Sigismund, and his mother Isabella, Queen of Hungary. Because of its architecture, the rich history of over eight centuries and the events that this building has witnessed, the church is arguably the most important monument in Alba Iulia.

National Museum of the Unification and the Unification Hall – The Museum of the Unification in Alba Iulia is located in the „Babilon” building, opposite the Unification Hall. The building was built for military purposes in the Romantic architecture style between 1851 and 1853. The two floors with more than 100 rooms in total were used as housing for officers, and later on refurbished as a museum between 1967 and 1968. The Unification Hall is located in the former Army House and is the room where the 1,228 delegates met on 1 December 1918 and voted for the union of Transylvania, Banat, and Maramureș with Romania. The museum's collections include around 200,000 heritage objects and its library holds around 70,000 volumes. The museum annually publishes „Apvlvm. Acta Musei Apulensis”, and since 1994 it has been publishing the specialist series „Biblioteca Musei Apulensis”. The visiting programme is: Mon: Closed; Tue-Thu: Open 10:00 - 19:00.

The Hugo Wine Cellar in the Alba Carolina Fortress – In the catacombs of the fortress there is a special place, a cellar hidden from view for many decades, where bottles of selected wines have been collected for more than 70 years, gathered in collections and visited only by collectors or caretakers. The cellar was opened in 2018, after renovation, and presents a collection of over 5,000 bottles of wine from the former State Reserve (1952-1972), of Romanian varieties and not only. The wine cellar has a storage space of about 58,000 bottles of wine and also offers dining space, restaurant, terrace and wine tasting. Tours are organized daily, even during public holidays. Tours usually start at 11:00, 15:00 and 19:00.



0 200 400 m

Centura Alba Iulia

Alba Iulia-Ciugud
DC43

DNCALB
200A

DN1

DN74 Calea Motilor

Căminul Eroilor

DJ107A

Carolina Bujvarului Incononarii

Strada Dneului Furcilor

Căminul Eroilor

Strada Nicolae Labis

Strada Izvoarelor

Strada Dneului Furcilor

Strada Cetății

Strada Apului

Strada Mădărașului

Strada Militari

Strada Pații

Strada Gemină

Strada Gemină

Strada Decebal

Strada Gemină

Strada Ardealului

Strada Teilor

Strada George Cosbuc

Strada Simeon Bărnăuțiu

Strada Barbu Lauraru

Lipovești

Strada Marăsești

Strada Buncurștii

Strada Ion Moș

Strada Dănileni

Strada Ștefan M. Șandru

Strada Rubin Parob

Strada Ștefan M. Șandru

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Strada Ștefan M. Șandru

Strada Dănileni

Strada Izvoarelor

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Trail: easy to medium

Elevation difference: 362m

Critical spots: there's a lot of asphalt, as the route connects two large towns, but the mid-day scenery will compensate. Water supply, sun protection and insect repellent are required in hot weather;

Scenery: you go from one big town to another, so there will be more urban scenery, but the middle part of the route will offer unforgettable scenery of Râpa Roşie;

Accommodations:

Sebeş: *Hotel Leul de Aur*, 150 beds, restaurant, parking with CCTV. Prior reservations at +40 771 136 525.

Hotel Clasic, 28 beds, restaurant, parking. Prior reservations at +40 755 063 985.

Infrastructure:

Oarda: 

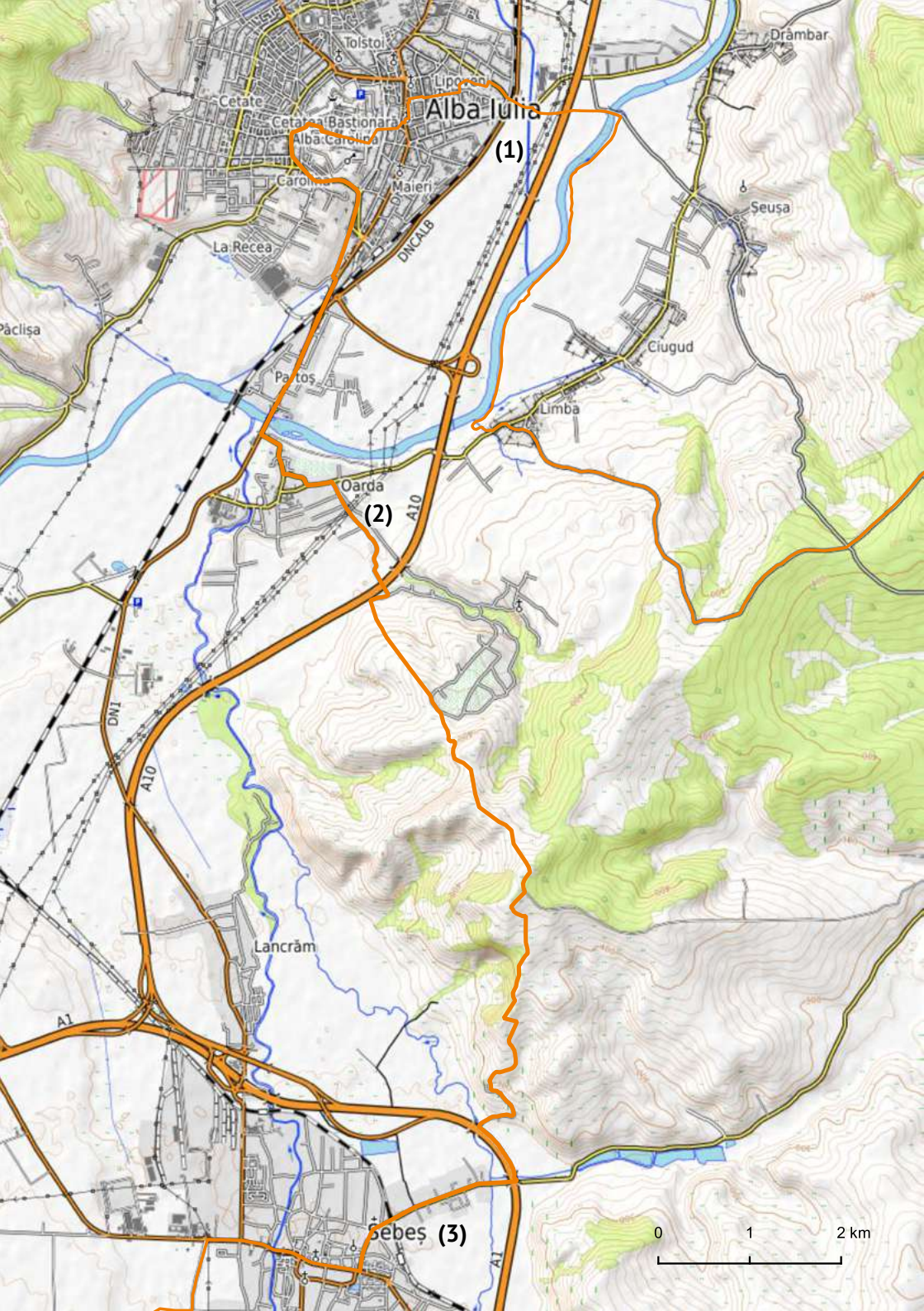
Sebeş: 

Note:

Alba Iulia (1), a historic city, leaves travelers full of learnings and amazement by a living city that stands as a testament to our written history. Walking out of the citadel, to the exit of the city towards Paroş or Oarda (2), one will walk on the pavement, following the markings, past the cemetery, after crossing the road, and then through an alley with large houses, to a gas station. Here you turn slightly left and then right to cross onto the main road, which can be very busy, and which also has a footpath for pedestrians, but proceed with caution either way. Follow the overpass on the DN1, which crosses a railway and other small adjacent roads, then a new bridge, over river Mureş.

After the bridge, turn directly left, entering Oarda, walking again, among proud and beautiful, neat households that give a feeling of a small town. Walk about two kilometres through Oarda, to its exit, where you once again pass under the A10 motorway. From there, turn right onto a road, then immediately left onto the gravel road, which you walk uphill for about a kilometer and a half, past some farms with houses and gardens, but mostly cow and sheep farms. Winding along these, from the farmsteads going right, after a second climb you go left and so on, uphill, past fences with posts made of young trees. The muddy road, cutting through the hills in front of us, occasionally lifts us up to show us the landscape that lies around. You can still see the historical city, Alba Iulia and going further and further up, you will see Sebeş town. The view is amazing from these heights, when the sky is clear or the clouds are high.

We also pass through a grove, which appears to be the top of the hill, where a building is hidden on the right side. Passing past this, and out of the shadow of the woods, we will see a new hill open in front of us, which will have to be walked up with new energy. Going towards it, with a slight bend to the right, one comes out at length on a flat

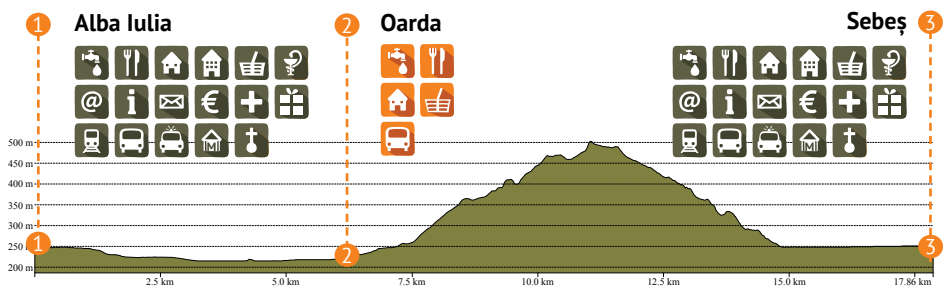


Alba Iulia (1)

Oarda (2)

Sebeș (3)





section, whence a gentle descent begins. First to the right, around a cultivated field, then taking a sharp left towards more bushes, past which you pass and then keep going right, to the crest of a hill. If you are more careful, after a few dozen metres, you can see from above Râpa Roșie on the right as it rises out of the ground, with red patterns made by the winds and rains, resembling the spires of Cambodian temples. Here it is worth a longer break, to hydrate, to contemplate, to admire Râpa Roșie and the scenery around us.

Our route then continues on the markings to the left, passing between patches of cultivated land, until it meets a tractor road, which we follow downhill. Amidst wetland vegetation, with broad-leaved plants, cows peering longingly from behind fences, the trail bears right climbing a clearer country road, then descends through a small grove until it comes out at another pasture. Here it continues with the pasture on the right, skirting around it, and then turns left around it. There may be some sheep fenced in, with slightly more aggressive dogs, but the electric fence will stop them getting out. Then, heading gently down the road, leaving a farmhouse on the right, you come to a cobbled road, running parallel to the A10 motorway, coming from the town. Go left on this road, until you reach the motorway bridge, and under which you pass towards the entrance to Sebeș (3). From here, it's about 2 kilometres to the center of Sebeș, where more wonders and surprises await to be discovered, in addition to the charming historical buildings.

Practical tip: in case of mud and bad weather, there are several car washes at the entrance to town, even self-service, where you can clean your muddy boots or other dirty hiking gear.

Info:

Râpa Roșie (The Red Ravine) – This "small canyon" of Romania is located just three kilometres from the town of Sebeș. In fact, it offers an enchanting view to those who, in their driving rush on the Orăștie - Sibiu motorway, find the time to turn their eyes towards this strange hill with red clay protrusions, only two kilometres from the road. It is also called 'the strange hill' because when it rains, little red streams gurgle down the hill, as if blood is gushing from the hill, and make strange sounds. The nature reserve appears as an alternation of red clays and grey sandstones. Understandably, here we are talking about a great ravine, a continuous carving of soils and rocks. The highest peak of the Red Ravine is over 500 metres and offers a spectacular view. In fact, it is the only

such formation in Romania. And hikers on the Via Transilvanica can admire it up close, at a well-deserved break.

Sebeş – According to the Saxon oral tradition, the town was founded in 1150. However, the first written document that indirectly refers to it is Diploma Andreanum of 1224, which mentions a “country of Sebeş” founded by German settlers – “terra Siculorum terrae Sebus” - whose name may derive from the town of Sebeş,. In all heraldic representations, the main element of the Sebeş coat of arms is the lion. The earliest known version of the coat of arms is the one depicted on a console of the altar of the evangelical church and can be dated to the third decade of the 16th century. Today the town is a combination of modern and old. We recommend the hiker to take a walk through Sebeş. Among the attractions you can see are the Tailors’ (or Student’s) Tower, the Shoemakers’ Tower, the North Gate Tower, the West Gate Tower, the Polygonal Tower, the Semicircular Tower, the Evangelical Parish Church, the Wheat Mill, the Forest House, etc.

Evangelical Church of Sebeş –Originally built as a basilica in Romanesque style, the church took later on a Gothic appearance with Renaissance elements. The nave is the only part preserved from the original church, built between 1240 and 1270. Over the centuries, Gothic elements were added to the structure, such as the richly decorated choir built between 1361 and 1382. The Evangelical Church of Sebeş boasts the largest altar of all churches in Transylvania. Richly decorated with paintings and sculptures, the polychrome wooden altar was designed between 1518 and 1526, marking the transition from Gothic to Renaissance style. The church was repainted in 1752 and again in 1904.





At the end of the 18th century, an organ made by the master Johannes Hahn from Sibiu was placed under the bell tower. In 1893, this was replaced by a new organ made by the Rieger brothers from Jagendorf (Silesia). St Jacob's Chapel, located on the north side of the church, was built in Gothic style in the 14th century. Images depicting the lives of St Francis of Assisi and St Nicholas are still visible on the murals.

Sebeş Fortress – the first written mention of Sebeş Fortress dates back to 1387, when construction began. Damaged by invaders, it was restored in 1571. To the original rectangular enclosure there were added stone and brick walls with eight towers. The 1.5 km long walls, with battlements, bastions and openings (used to pour hot tar over the attackers) have been preserved and can still be seen today.

Zapolya House / Museum of History – The Zapolya House was built in the second half of the 15th century and was the seat of the Transylvanian Diet in the 16th and 17th centuries. Today, the building houses the Museum of Local History, which exhibits Romanian and Saxon folk art, medieval weapons, traditional ceramics and icons painted on glass and wood.

Edy Schneider – When you say Edy Schneider you say Sebeş, you say music and you can even say Via Transilvanica. Paul Eduard Schneider was born in Sebeş, but grew up in Hamburg, Germany, until the age of 13. He studied in Germany and France and returned to his hometown in Romania in 1996 at the age of 26, having German and French citizenship. In 1997 he founded the Schneider Productions studio, fulfilling his childhood dream. For ten years, in his studio in Sebeş, he produced more than 60 albums for Romania's top record labels, and since 2004 he has become executive producer for dozens of music videos, commercials, short films and documentaries. He simply revolutionized the music industry in Romania and since 2004 he is one of the best photo-video producers in the country. Edy Schneider has a studio in Sebeş, on Dorin Pavel Street. But most importantly, Edy Schneider is a Via Transilvanica ambassador.

Carl Filtsch – When the hiker arrives in Sebeș, walking through the town center in the vicinity of the Evangelical Church, he will find the bust of Carl Filtsch and it will probably seem it's wrong when, reading the duration of his life, no more and no less than 14 years will be calculated. Carl Filtsch was a pianist, composer and pupil of the famous Frédéric Chopin. In other words, he was a child prodigy, and Chopin himself called him his best performer, even exclaiming that no one understood him as well as the child Carl Filtsch did. He was born on 28 May 1830 in Sebeș itself (being of Saxon origin) and died of tuberculosis on 11 May 1845 in Venice, Italy.

Leul de Aur – It is both the newest and the oldest hotel in Sebeș! It was built in 1417, being for a long time the only inn in the old market town of Sebeș, one of the most important towns of medieval Transylvania. Today, Sebeș is one of the most transited towns in the country, being a road junction for those who want to reach Bucharest, Cluj or Arad and is located at a distance of 50 km from Sibiu International Airport. Today, the hotel building, located in the center of Sebeș, is completely renovated, but retains the features that made it famous, its past combined with state-of-the-art facilities and finishes. Nothing of the architectural appearance of those times has been changed.



Trail: easy

Elevation difference: 340m

Critical spots: water supply, sun protection and insect repellent are required in hot weather, walk carefully on asphalt road;

Scenery: meadows with tall grass and scattered trees, birch groves, beautiful scenery, and sprawling villages with welcoming people and excellent hosts;

Accommodations:

Pianu de Sus: Pension Iedera, 26 beds, breakfast for a fee. Local products of all kinds and mini market on the trail. Transport from the trail to the pension and back 2 km. Reservations at tel. +40 764 503 384 (Liviu) or +40 769 621 315 (Maria).

Casa Artemis, 16 beds, access to kitchen, store nearby. Prior reservations at +40 744 560 411;

Casa Dives, 16 beds, breakfast and dinner on request. Local Gastronomic Point, swimming pool, wood fire hot tub, jacuzzi, relaxation massage, stores nearby. Prior reservations on WhatsApp at +40 751 882 384 (Gabriel Altomi), www.casadives.ro.

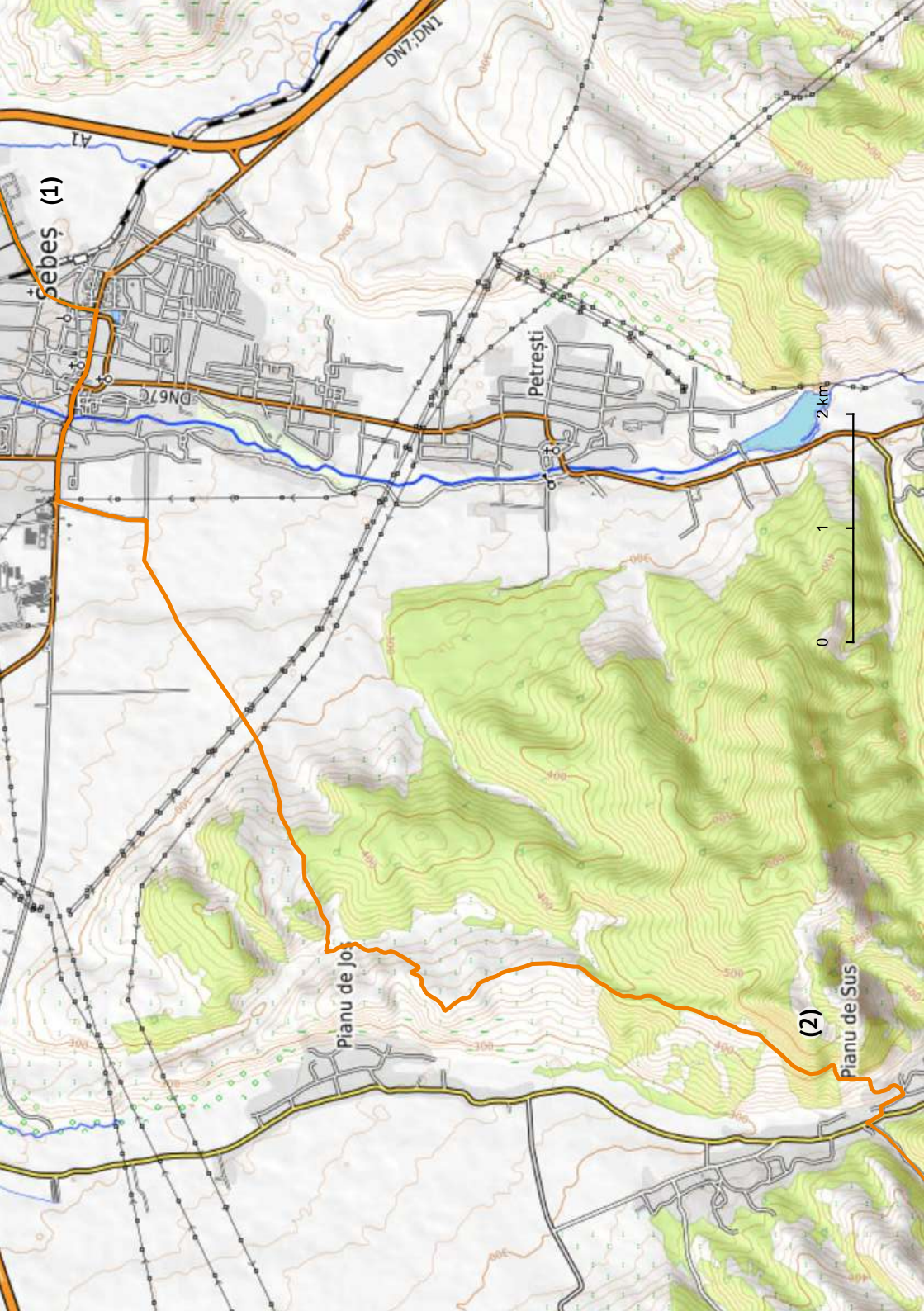
Infrastructure:

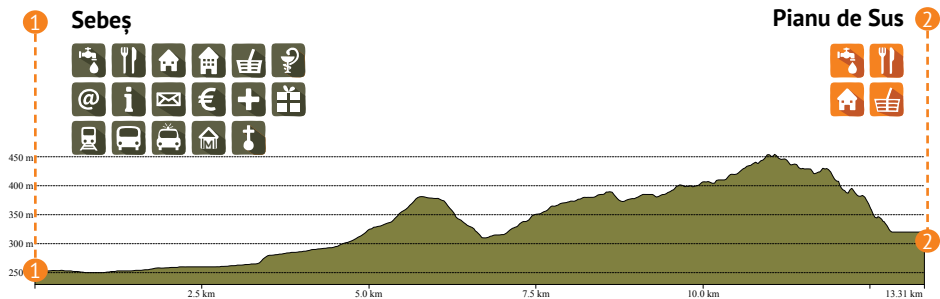
Pianu de Sus:    

Note:

The route leaves Sebeş (1) along the sidewalks of the main road, following the markings, to the end of the town, crossing the Sebeş river, then, further on, it turns left, along a small street with fewer buildings, and turns into a gravel road, soon to be paved. Along it you can see a few larger, recently built buildings with offices or modern housing. Passing in front of them, you keep going straight ahead, until the route turns to the right, onto a country road, beside which arable land stretches and shows people's work. After about a kilometer and a half, the trail begins to climb uphill. After an easy climb up the hill path, or grassy path, through shrubs and bushes, wild roses or dog rose, mixed groups of trees, mountain-ash and acacia, you reach a small clearing, with a beautiful view. From here, you walk along the edge of the young forest to the left, after a well-deserved, recommended, hydration and photo break. Going downhill, you then descend to a small valley, where you can see a sheepfold beyond a bridge.

Here you follow the trail to the left, past the merrily murmuring stream, going straight for a few hundred metres, and then up the hill on the right again to the top of the hill, where there is a wooden platform, with a great view over Pianu de Jos and Pianu de Sus (2). A few tens of meters before this stop, we will cross a route, marked with a red triangle and with black and white poles, a route that will also be followed by VT signs for a longer time. From here, the field road, follows the crest of the hill together with the tourist markers, red triangle and VT, going to the left of the platform, if we admire the Pianu de Sus commune, then it goes down gently and passes on cow tracks, among scattered trees. We descend with the image of the Pianu de Jos on our right and the hike continues on the crest of the hill through a shady forest. Eventually, after traveling the ridge of the





hill, you reach a descent and then a farm, a sign that a commune is beginning. From here, the road leads through Pianu de Sus, a long village, like the keyboard of a piano. This will be a good opportunity to stock up at the village store, with ice cream or water in the heat, or whatever a hiker lacks at that time. Here we are looking for accommodation, as the following day will be a longer one and the travelers will have to rest their bones properly at Pianu de Sus.

Info:

Pianu de Sus – Pianu de Sus is a large village, with neat houses and hardworking people. It is surrounded by rich nature and is close to various beautiful places to visit, for example the Wooden Church, the nature reserve of secular oaks or the Monument of the Romanian Heroes of the First World War. But what makes this village an absolutely romantic one, are the locals who seem to live in another dimension of time, a good, peaceful and quiet life. The hiker might meet some people they'll remember for a lifetime (or at least for the whole trip).

Paul Tomița Golf Club – Pianu de Jos has the first private golf club in Romania. It has an area of 70 hectares, of which 50 hectares of the golf course, containing 18 holes. Nature itself creates the tricky layout of the game, one that undulates under old scattered oaks.

Afteia Monastery – Afteia Monastery is an Orthodox monastery in Mărgineni-Strungari, Sălișteța commune, Alba County. The prayer house dates from the second half of the 17th century. Although closed for a while during the communist period, the Afteia Monastery was reopened in 1975.

For a time, the monastery of Afteia had as abbot the holy priest Sofronie, also called „Confessor of Cioara”, who dedicated his whole life to the fight for the defense of Orthodoxy in Transylvania. During his time as abbot, the monastery became the main center of the defense of the Orthodox faith against the Romanian Church United with Rome.

Afteia Monastery is an ancient monastic monastery whose origins can be traced back to the second half of the 15th century. According to local tradition, the first small church was built here after the battle of Câmpul Pâinii in 1479, when the Turkish invaders were defeated by the Christian armies. During the battle, many locals (old men, women and children) took refuge in Plăișor. After the victory, as a thanksgiving to God, the neighboring villages built a shrine there. The oldest document mentioning the Afteia Monastery is the one that attests the unsuccessful attempt of a local authority from Vințu to catch

a monk from the border of Cioara, an event that took place on Palm Sunday in 1757, when the church and the chapels were demolished. Several notes made by some of the monastery's servants, written on service books, icons and bells (1756-1771), prove that the monastic settlement at Plăișor was later rebuilt.



Trail: medium, long

Elevation difference: 1,178m

Critical spots: the climb from Pianu de Sus to the monastery will be difficult and steep at the end, water supply, sun protection in hot weather and insect repellent are required;

Scenery: forests and meadows, the route undulates and shifts between these two landscapes;

Accommodations:

Vinerea: Cabanele Mihălțan, 20 beds, serving meals on request. Prior reservations at +40 747 067 610 (Corina Mihălțan) or email mihaltan_corina@yahoo.com;

Cugir: Hotel President, 30 beds, restaurant and stores nearby. Prior reservations at +40 754 707 990.

Infrastructure:

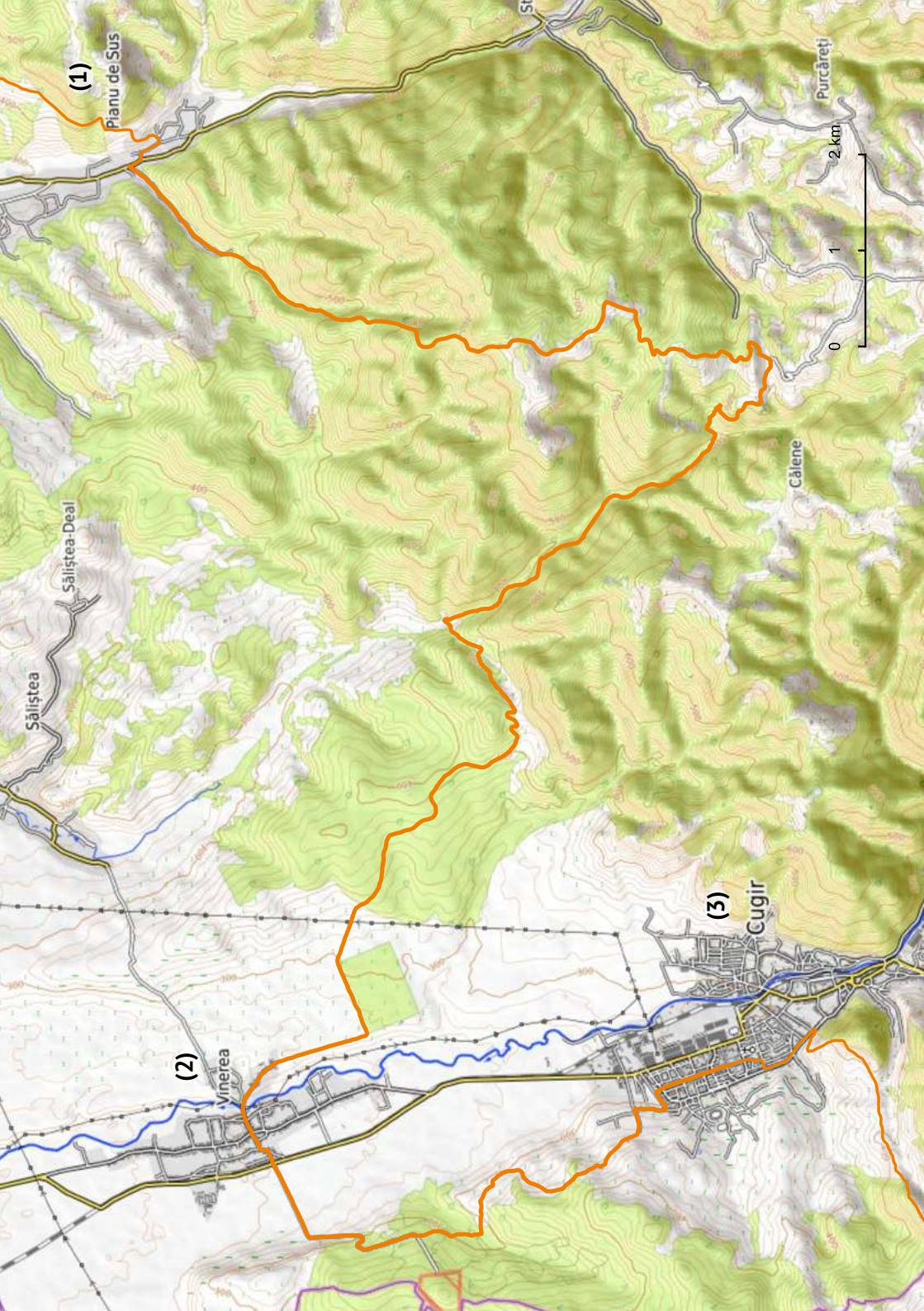
Vinerea: 

Cugir: 

Note:

Following the marking, in the center of the village the route crosses the main road towards the area known as Măcui. The road slowly turns into a forest road that climbs and winds its way up to another hilltop for several kilometers. Then it becomes a steep dirt road, damaged by forestry equipment, and which seems impassable in the rain, mainly for cyclists. This will be a steep two-kilometer uphill pushbike section for cyclists and a downhill boot slide for hikers. The advantage is that the road is in the forest, in the shade of the old beech trees, the silence surrounds us and during the heatwave it is a pleasant climb, if practiced with many breaks and abundant hydration. The water reserve will be made from the village, from Pianu (1), otherwise you will reach a few households after passing the top of the hill.

After the two kilometers of ascent, you come out into a wide meadow with a great view, a place that seems to be used for weekend picnics. Here you keep to the right and after a few hundred meters you reach some mountain households that also have flocks of sheep or cows, therefore dogs are present. If we keep calm and go around the sheepfold, the dogs will stop barking, more than that, the households seem inhabited and the help of the hosts can be asked if the dogs are persistent. Here you may also recharge the water reserves, and then you walk along the coast and downhill, on the road, around five kilometers, on the VT markings and the red triangle marking, up to 500 m from Afteia Monastery. Here, the two routes separate, Via Transilvanica turning right towards the monastery, and the red triangle path turning left towards other peaks to be conquered. You walk in front of small and dense households, with dogs at every house, but they are angrier with cars than with hikers who will be ignored and let pass. In this area you have to take long and frequent breaks, you have to look at the surrounding landscapes, how



(1)

Planu de Sus

Purcăreți

2 km

1

0

Săliștea

Săliștea-Deal

Călene

(2)

Vinerea

(3)

Cugir

right. The hilly path leads from here through an orchard of pear trees and curious horses, parting the road when the trail turns right again. We go round a former sheepfold, still keeping right on the contour, until we come out at a lookout, furnished with a bench and table, to the hikers' delight and a well-deserved break. From here, still to the right, going gently down towards the town of Cugir (3), which has been visible for some time now under the hills, a cross can be seen on the hilltop to the right. It seems that this is a place often visited by those looking for an afternoon stroll, or those who want to get away from the hustle and bustle of the town when the weather is good. Those who wish can climb up to the cross to admire Cugir in all its splendor.

Our route will descend to the right, then to the front, then past the town cemetery to enter with glory the pedestrian area in Cugir, where the day stops for travelers for another evening of rest or even a day's break, as Cugir has much to offer and is waiting to be discovered and appreciated by tourists.

Info:

Poiana cu Goruni de la Vinerea (Sessile Oak Glade from Vinerea) – Located in the south-western part of the village of Vinerea, about two km from the village center, the glade is a particularly picturesque and valuable place. On an area of almost 20 hectares there are ancient oaks and an impressive colony of European stag beetle, *Lucanus cervus*, a protected species of insect and currently endangered in Europe. The oaks glade at Vinerea is very similar to the one from Breite Plateau near Sighisoara and well preserved to this day, thanks to minimal human intervention in this area. In recent years the second largest festival of Cugir has been held here in July, with the aim of promoting the traditions, customs and specificity of the area, and recently it is also the venue for the local athletics competition. The area has become as well a recreational spot for locals and not only. Fire pits and picnic furniture have been built. Integrated into the landscaping are several gazebos and a sheepfold.

Cugir – Although the locality is mentioned since 1330, Cugir became a town only in 1960. Cugir is an old iron and steel-industry center. The iron and steel processing plant was founded in 1799 and is one of the first steelworks in Transylvania. Since 1945, the town's main factory, S.C. Uzinele Mecanice Cugir S.A., has produced machine tools, agricultural machinery, industrial sewing machines, washing machines and Soviet-type weapons and ammunition. UM Cugir is divided into two modules: the civilian part, represented by the mechanical unit producing electrical appliances, and the military part, the Fabrica de Arme SA, which manufactures arms and ammunition, including products to NATO standards. Cugir is a quiet town where hikers can stroll or sit on a terrace to rest before setting off again.

The Water Tower in Cugir – The monument that has become a symbol of the town is the Water Tower (1909-1911). It is part of a hydroelectric system comprising the Wasserliner (water line), the Dam and the reservoir (Tăul lui Nilă). The water flows through concrete tubes for 5 km from the lake to the Water Tower on the principle of communicating vessels, with the top of the tower at level with the lake bottom. A turbine was installed in the tower and from there the water reached the engine house or power station, which was installed by Ganz company from Budapest. The turbine was put into operation in 1912 for lighting and to electrify the factory's machines, which until then had been powered by water or steam. A grant-funded project renovated the tower building in 2011, but the turbine's supply system is no longer operational. The route of the water



line from the tower to the reservoir is in itself a tourist trail, with several aqueducts in the form of arched stone bridges. The building is proposed to be inscribed on the list of historical monuments.

Cugir Dacian Fortress – The site is located on the top of a hill that rises on the left bank of Cugir River, northwest of the confluence with Daia Valley. The earliest human traces come from the Early Bronze Age, followed by more settlements during Middle and Late Bronze Age. Occasional traces of habitation were also dated to the Early Iron Age. The richest remains belong to the Dacian period. The upper part of the hill is now being levelled, with most of the prehistoric settlements destroyed. On three sides of the hill, just below the plateau, numerous terraces are being built for habitation. On the basis of systematic investigations, two levels of Dacian habitation could be observed. From the period corresponding to the first Dacian level, a fortification with moat, ditch and palisade was built, which later, in the last phase of settlement, was extended and reinforced with a wall of local rocks and river stones bound with clay. Numerous habitation complexes have been excavated within the fortress, some containing rich archaeological material, with imported products. The size of the fortification and the richness of the vestiges entitle us to state that Cugir was an important economic, political and military center. From the geographical description of Ptolemy (often erroneous, admittedly), it appears that Singidava was close to Apulum and at a great distance from Ziridava. This is the reason to assume, hypothetically, that the recently discovered Dacian settlement at Cugir can be identified with Singidava, corresponding in all its elements to an ancient and important Dacian center. Even if this identification is a hypothesis, it is of special importance the discovery of such a large and rich fortified Dacian settlement, of the dava type, on the Cetate hill, at Cugir, whose settlement began very early (5th - 4th century BC) and lasted until the Roman conquest.

Trail: medium to difficult

Elevation difference: 1,102 m

Critical Spots: the climb from Romoșel to Ciungu Mare is a long and quite difficult one, it requires water supply, sun protection in hot weather and insects; we recommend food supply for the next 2 days of trail; area without phone signal;

Scenery: you leave Cugir near the Dacian fortress, you reach the plain, parallel to the road, then from Romoșel you climb towards Ciungu where an incredibly beautiful landscape opens up, and will accompany the hiker until they reach their destination;

Accommodation:

Romoșel (one kilometer away), **Accommodation with locals** (name), 4-5 places, breakfast and dinner on request, reservation in advance at tel. +40 730 457 378 (Marin Ilieș).

Ciungu Mare (Valea Rea)

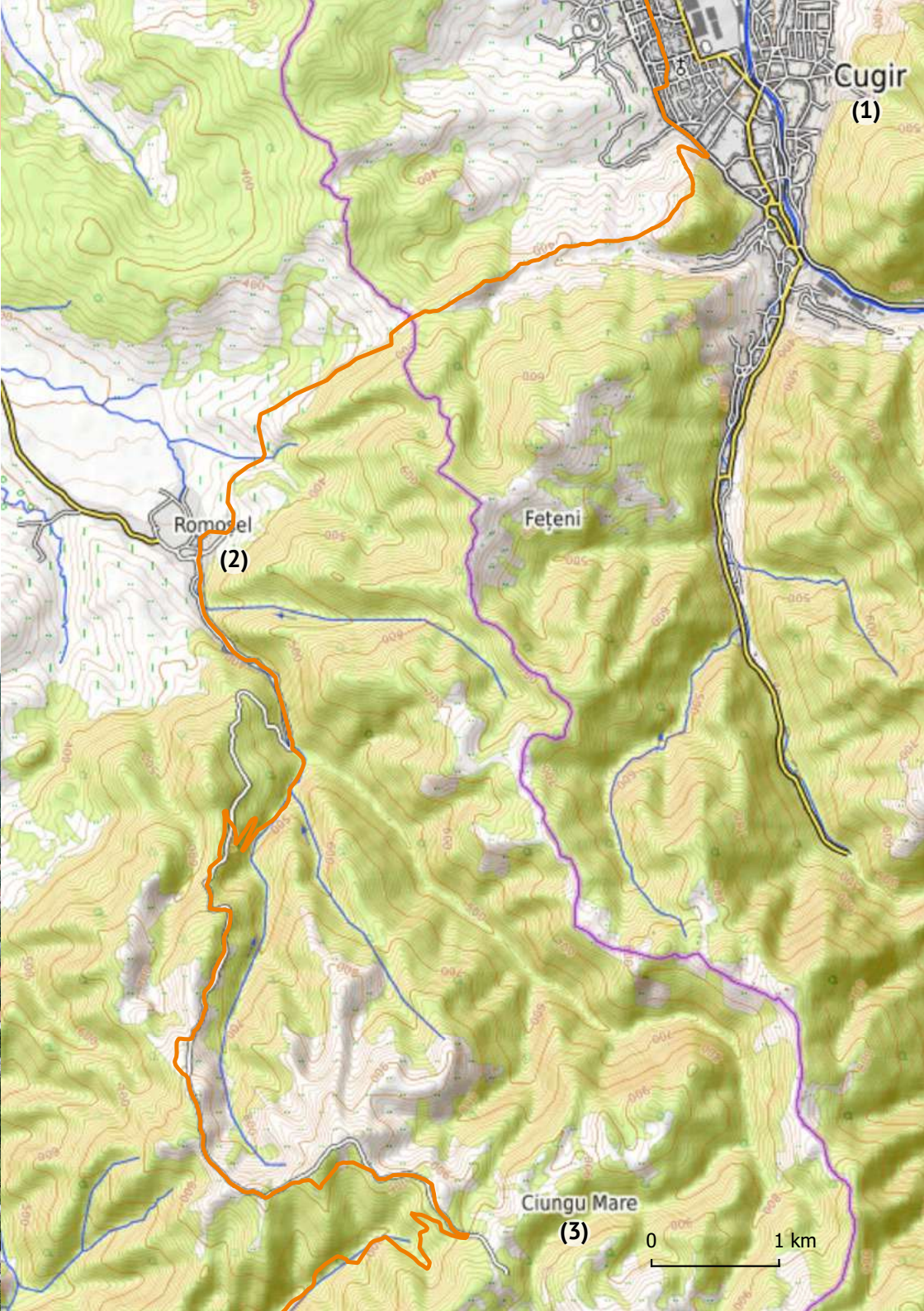
Accommodation at the locals:

9 places, traditional meals served on request, reservations two days in advance: +40 765 173 289 (Nicușor Uritoiu) or on WhatsApp;

6 places, traditional meals served on request, reservations by phone: +40 720 879 966 (Radu Nasta).

Casa Dinu, 6 places, traditional meals served on request, reservations two days in advance: +40 761 895 469 (Dubleșiu Constantin) or on WhatsApp +40 737 957 794;





Cugir
(1)

Romorel
(2)




Fețeni

Ciungu Mare
(3)

0 1 km

Infrastructure:

Romoșel:   

Ciungu Mare:   

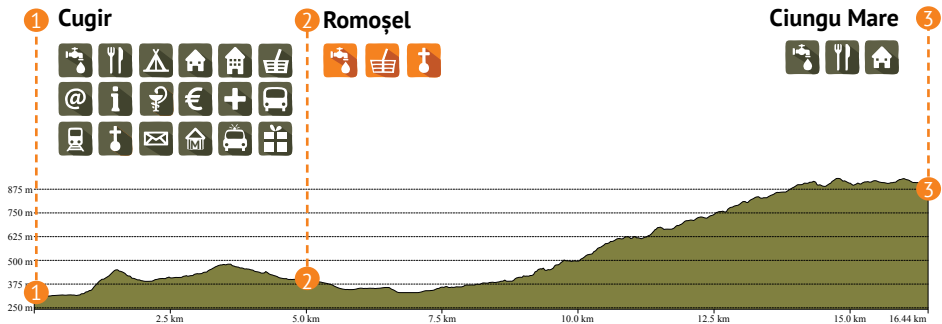
Note:

From the old center of Cugir (1), walk towards the Citadel, following the markers, and turn right uphill past the Dacian fortress, which stands dotted and wooded on the edge of the town. Walking along this marked hiking trail, you climb for about 700 metres, until you come out on a hill ridge, which runs parallel to the Cugir - Romoșel road, on a level curve, for about a kilometer. Then the route descends slightly to the road mentioned above in about 500 meters, and will continue on it, until Romoșel (2), for about 2 and a half kilometers. Once you reach Crucea Romoșelului (the Romoșel cross), you are entering Hunedoara County.

The route, now in a new stage, will take on a new aura when, at the end of this day's stage and especially the next day, will reach the highest altitude of the entire Via Transilvanica, "the road that unites", namely 1,300 metres.

Thus begins the conquest of a new county, Hunedoara County, with its mountains and parks, with magical surprises awaiting us.

From Crucea Romoșelului (translation: The Cross of Romoșel), on the asphalt to the left, you descend to the village, where you can also purchase some small supply, and then, still keeping left on the asphalt, you go on the communal road Romoșel - Ciungu Mare, almost for 3 kilometres, a road that turns slightly into a country road and that, after 3 kilometres, starts to climb in some sharp serpentine, then in gentle curves, then again serpentine, for 6 and a half kilometres. This climb will be unforgettable, on the one hand because it is so long, and on the other because every half kilometre we will have to stop and contemplate the expanses around us, images right out of a fairytale will appear, with small villages, steep hills, scraggly trees, valleys with remote settlements, snow-capped or bare mountains, crooked fences and human-shaped haystacks. If the climb causes you difficulty and pain, fatigue or frustration, the surroundings will immediately erase these feelings. One will feel the embrace of the hills and forests, which will soothe all the aches and pains.



The sighting of mountain households will begin, from where one can ask for drinking water if needed, and the road will also go on the level curve for a while, until one reaches Ciungu Mare (Valea Rea, translation: The Bad Valley) (3) and the farmstead that is just around the bend. From here our route will take the next day a sharp right, downhill, a stretch that will feel as a blessing after today's long climb.

Info:

Romos – Romos is a commune in Hunedoara County, including the villages of Ciungu Mare, Pișchinți, Romos (the commune), Romoșel and Vaidei. Among the main attractions of Romos commune are the Evangelical-Lutheran Church, the Evangelical Parish House, an 18th-century building, a historical monument, and the Romos Rural Ensemble.



Trail: easy

Elevation difference: 999 m

Critical spots: area with no mobile network coverage, not even at the Măgureni Hermitage;

Scenery: you walk a long way through the forest, along the forest road, past small waterfalls and swirling rivers, green mosses on the surrounding cliffs, then out into the glades, which climb up to the Măgureni Hermitage;

Accommodation:

Măgureni, Cabana Uia La Gelu, 10 beds, meals served on request, no permanent habitation. Reservations two days in advance: +40 726 224 478 (Gelu Samoilă) and +40 762 281 083 (Adriana Lăscoiu).

Casa Țambă, near the Monastery of the Nativity of the Mother of God, 200 m from the VT trail, 12 beds, kitchen and a bathroom with wood boiler, food can be provided on request, the house is not permanently inhabited. Reservations two days in advance on tel. +40 763 656 444 (Țambă Aurelian) or WhatsApp and tel. +40 755 969 901 (Daniela Tamba).

Infrastructure:

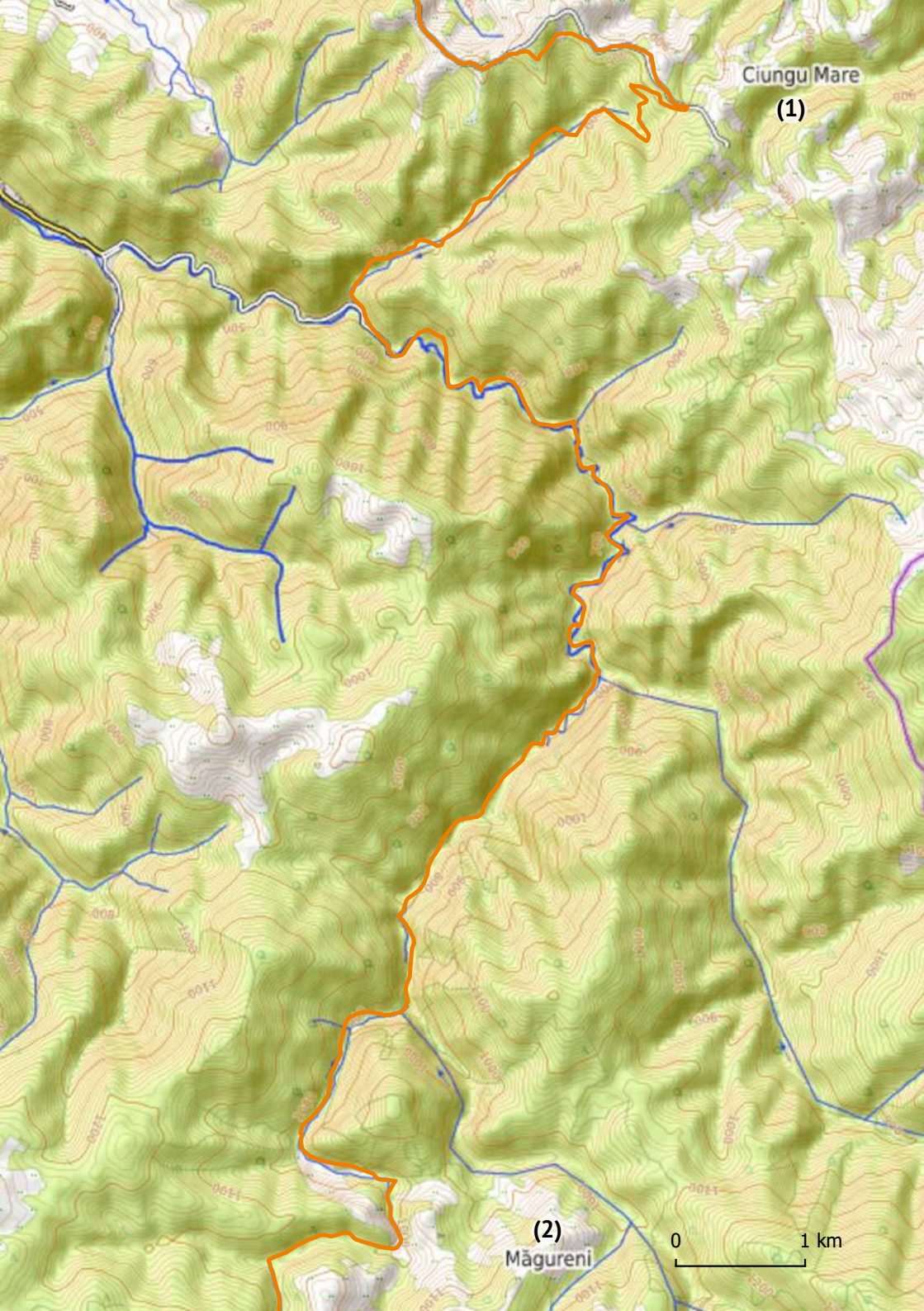
Very limited - you should purchase supplies from Romosel, if needed, or traditional products from Valea Rea from the family hosting you.

Note:

We leave the next day from Valea Rea (1), from the Stână (that's the name of the place where we spent the night). Exit the gate and follow the trail straight ahead, on the road that descends steeply to the right. It will go a long way downhill, which may be rewarding for some or not so pleasant for others, but being a well-maintained forest road, it will be quite comfortable to walk. Descend about 500 metres, then go left, following the hairpin bend of the road for a few kilometres until the Valea Rea comes up on our left side and flows in the direction of our walk. The landscape is a mystical one, with old growth forest, vines, moss on fallen trees and small waterfalls in the stream that runs parallel with the hike. Silence, coolness and peace will be our companions on the way, on the gentle descent to a road junction, where two signposts will be found: to the left of the paved and communal road, the Măgureni Hermitage is indicated, and to the road from which the trail has just descended, is the Ciungu Mare signpost.

Then one goes later on to the left, parallel with Sibișel river, which flows in the opposite direction of the hiker's walk. This road can have car traffic, as it is still crossed by logging trucks or small cars, but it continues for about 2.5 km, until a bend that takes it to the right, along with the river, where on the left side you will find a resting place, covered, with table and benches, and where, with the help of a poster, the faithful who pray at the Măgureni Hermitage, we are asked to be respectful, not to destroy and not to leave litter. Which should be a rule of common sense for any traveler, hiker or pilgrim. Nature should be left as it is, everything we receive from it, we reward with respect, no noise and no waste.

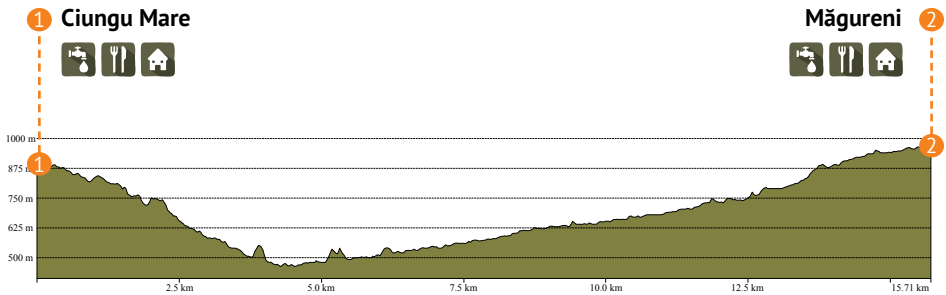
Signs of KTM competition or other tourist markers can be found along the way. At one point, the trail splits off from the main road, heading right over a bridge onto the Cliva - Posada forest road. From here, the nature gets wild again, with towering green and yellow cliffs on the right side, waterfalls breaking the rock and falling smoothly down,



Ciungu Mare
(1)

(2)
Măgureni





inviting with their wet sigh to cool down. The valley to the left leaves the hiker, flowing downstream, a sign that the trail is climbing again. But the ascent is hardly noticeable, the landscape ravishing the attention and delighting the senses. The road is in a worse than before, and the forest opens up more and more, the trail emerging towards the hilltops with every step we take. After the road has climbed for a few kilometres, another path will split off leading uphill, all the way to the Măgureni Hermitage (2). We recommend a visit to the hermitage, provided that clothing and conduct are appropriate to the monastic world, i.e. respectful behaviour, hushed conversation, body parts covered in the monastery premises and discreet questions. If one is to visit the hermitage, take the road to the left, the one that climbs up and reaches more open places, with a few summer houses, huts or cottages on the left, and the hermitage waiting patiently on the hill on the right. From here you can see the Şureanu mountains, if you go out on the hill in front of the Hermitage you can also see the Godeanu Peak and feel the living energy, the closeness to divinity, the hand of God on your shoulder. These are blessed and sacred places.

Info:

Măgureni Hermitage – A century ago, the village of Măgureni could have been considered the village at the highest altitude with permanent inhabitants, but unfortunately, Măgureni is now one of those deserted places. Măgureni is situated in the Şureanu Mountains, at an altitude of 1,300 to 1,400 metres, surrounded by wild nature, which gives it an isolated aspect, cut off from the world, from reality, a beauty that can take your breath away. Situated just below the Godeanu peak (1,659 metres above sea level), the landscape of Măgureni resembles the Swiss mountain villages (or at least that's what we, the documenting team, noticed: the comparison to Switzerland is often made when the scenery is fabulous). In this wilderness, in complete harmony, the hermitage is dedicated to "The Transfiguration and the Nativity of the Mother of God", a monastery with five nuns.

Şureanu Masif with Godeanu Peak – Godeanu Peak (Şureanu Massif) is also known as "the holy mountain of the Dacians". Godeanu Peak (1,656 metres) is about an hour from Sarmizegetusa Regia and is considered by some historians to be the holy mountain of the Dacians and the place where our ancestors offered sacrifices to Zalmoxis. The mountain was surrounded by the largest concentration of civil military and religious settlements found and researched in all Dacia, and at its foot, there are the most sanctuaries in all Dacia. It is also the only peak visible from the summits of all the Dacian fortresses in the area.



Trail: easy

Elevation difference: 784 m

Critical spots: Walk only through the forest during the first part of the day, water supply required, sun protection in hot weather and from insects, with caution to wild animals; area without phone or gps signal;

Scenery: The forest one goes through have a charm of their own, you can feel the approach to Sarmizegetusa Regia, a sacred place for the Dacians, a place of meditation and introspection. It follows then a couple of kilometres of asphalt road until the accommodation in the valley.

Accommodation:

Sarmizegetusa Regia, Popasul dacilor, 17 places, restaurant. reservations two days in advance: +40 740 776 316 (Marius Ciobanu);

Căsuța din Valea Regilor – 10 places, meals served on request, reservations by phone: +40 726 506 608 (Andreea Stănilă).

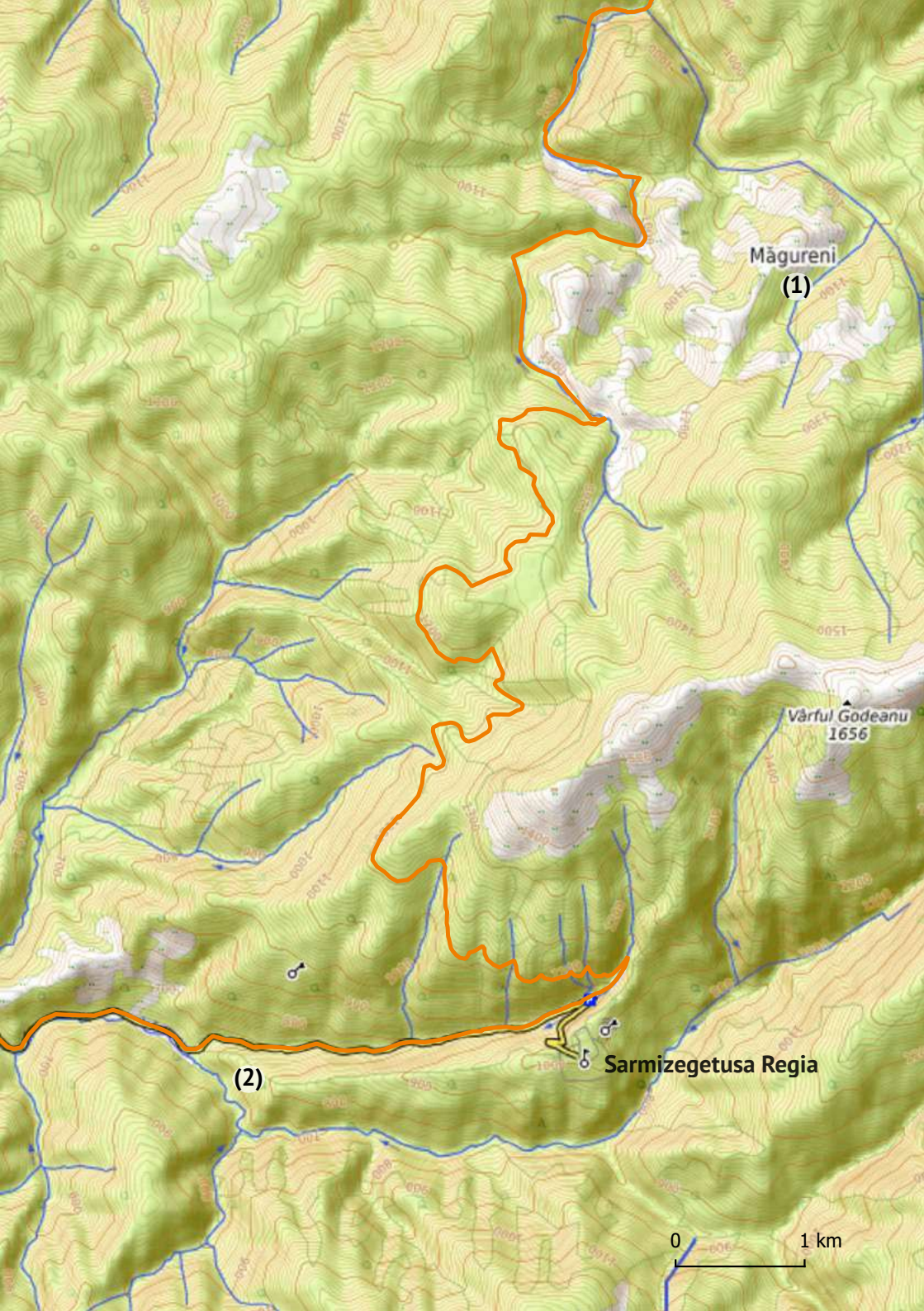
Infrastructure:

Sarmizegetusa Regia:   

Note:

Leaving from Măgureni (1), the route will start with a gentle climb on the road that will turn into a forest road and gradually climb into the forest. There will be no spectacular or difficult climbs on today's section, instead it will be a long walk in the forest, around 9 kilometres, towards Sarmizegetusa Regia. It may look boring, but the forest is so diverse, with something special every few kilometres, the trees opening their crowns, every now and then, just to reveal more of the mountain behind them, with high peaks that, at the time of documentation in May, were still covered with snow.

If at first the forest appears to be made up of young trees, with the road meandering along the level curves, they change species, size, trunk thickness, looking like a different forest every hour. After a short climb, reaching the top of the hill, you turn left onto a better forest road, just as pleasant and shady, but on which later you will see traces and remnants of logging, a trailer, the road destroyed by machinery and lots of mud. You also have to cross this section of forest, where a water source can be found, as the workers at the site usually have a spring nearby. The route is descending slightly, because from 1,300 meters altitude, it goes down to around 1,000 meters altitude, and it's going down quite gently for now. Then the forest changes its props and becomes rocky, mysterious, in some places dark, with older trees, less used roads and steeper valleys. Here you can see rocks in the road, or what may be the remains of a Roman road, perhaps, the stones resembling a pavement typical of ancient Roman roads. From here, the descent becomes steeper, gradually with few serpentine will start, and suddenly you can see the barrier that closes this road and the asphalted parking place of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, Sarmizegetusa Regia.



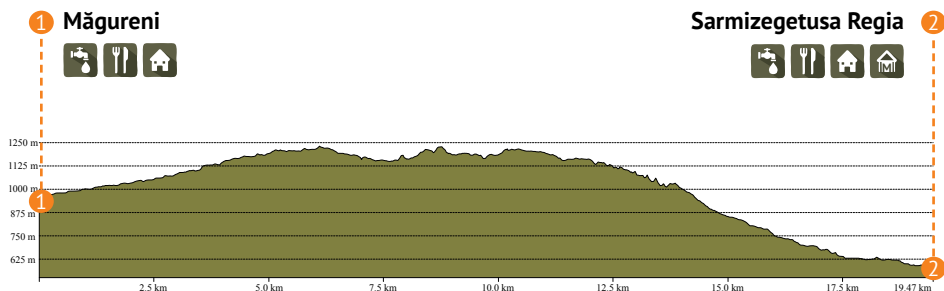
Măgureni
(1)

Vârful Godeanu
1656

Sarmizegetusa Regia

(2)





Once at the car park, we recommend visiting the brilliant fortification system of the Dacians, the capital of the Dacian kingdom, Sarmizegetusa Regia. To visit the site, go left and above the car park, on a paved, pedestrian road, about 800 metres. Here, in the mountains of Orăștia, the Dacian civilization established its capital, at the time when it was at its most flourishing stage of economic, military and spiritual development. No one can explain in words why they selected this place, more than for the surrounding mountains, hills and forests, but whoever visits Regia, Romanians and foreigners alike, will feel at first hand why this is a special place. A magical, sacred place that is already visited every day by curious people or people who come to recharge themselves with the energy of the place.

After the visit, take the road back to the parking lot, from where the trail will take you on the asphalt to the left, for about 4 and a half kilometers, with the stream Pârâul Alb on the left-hand side in the final part. There will be a few difficult kilometres, but anyone who has visited the site will get the feeling of extra strength like for another 20 kilometres of walking. But this will not be the case for hikers on the VT, because once the buildings on either side of the valley start to appear (2), the day can come to an end, after choosing an accommodation, "specifically Dacian" - because all available options in the area have a Dacian name or is considered Dacian.

Info:

Sarmizegetusa Regia – The site known as Grădiștea de Munte - Sarmizegetusa Regia is part of the complex of Dacian fortresses in the Orăștiei Mountains. It is the largest settlement known for the Dacian area, being spread on a hill with a length of about 4.5 km. From combined archaeological data and ancient written sources, it results that this was the capital of the Dacian Kingdom, from the second half of the 1st century BC. Most probably, the first capital of the kingdom founded by Burebista was at Costești - Cetățuie, after which, in the mentioned period, this was transferred to Sarmizegetusa Regia). What is certain is that for almost a century and a half, Grădiștea de Munte - Sarmizegetusa Regia was the main political, religious, economic and military center of the Dacian world. For the documentary team, Sarmizegetusa Regia has a special significance. The site is set in a forest of ancient beech trees which amplifies the sacredness of the place. We are sure that Sarmizegetusa Regia has the power to fill the open-hearted and open-minded with a new, at least interesting, energy. Within the site, hikers can follow two walking trails that will take them on a journey through the world of the Dacians. The hiker will enthusiastically note that many of these Dacian remains, the traces of ancient temples



and other elements that are part of the sacred area, were made of andesite (this is also the stone from which the VT milestones are made). The connection between the fortification and the sacred area was via a road paved with limestone slabs, with a total length of about 200 meters. The sacred area comprises two large anthropogenic terraces, supported by limestone walls whose height was, in some segments, more than 10 meters. The remains of seven temples (two circular, the rest in a rectangular plan), a monumental altar, as well as water distribution/drainage systems (the stone spillway on the 11th terrace and pipes made of terracotta tubes) have been identified here. The elements preserved here, such as the plinths, drums, limestone or andesite pilasters of the temple structure speak for themselves of a monumental religious architecture, unique in its proportions in Dacia.

Fortress – The two Dacian-Roman wars led to the almost complete disappearance of the Dacian fortification of Regia. Through various archaeological investigations, a partial picture of the ancient fortress has emerged: it was built in a dominant position, on a plateau of about 1,000 m, situated between the western civil quarter and the sacred area. The fortress wall (muris Dacicus) consisted of two walls of shaped blocks, named emplecton (earth and stone infill between the two walls and wooden cross beams, which connected the two walls). At the end of the wars, the Romans built a new fortification at Grădiștea de Munte, which only partially followed the footprint of the old Dacian one, considerably extending the defended area. Because the old walls did not provide enough construction material for the Roman fortress, many limestone and andesite blocks from Dacian buildings were used, including ones from the sacred area itself.

The andesite sun of Sarmizegetusa Regia – ‘Sun disk’, the largest andesite construction discovered outside the fortress walls of Sarmizegetusa Regia may have been a gnomon: “an ancient instrument used to determine the meridian of a place, constituting the oldest type of sundial. - From French gnomone.” The andesite sun may have had the function of a sundial, which helped the Dacians to easily follow certain astronomical events - equinoxes and solstices.

The Great Temple of Andesite – Shortly before the battles with the Romans, the Dacians began work on the construction of a great temple made of andesite. The temple was a rectangle with 60 stone columns. From the temple structure, the following architectural elements are known: the plinths, with a diameter of more than 2 m, the column bases and the columns themselves, all made of andesite. The ruins say nothing about the deity to whom this temple was dedicated, shrouding this sacred world of the Dacians in even more mystery, but nevertheless, this temple is just one of many testimonies to a religious architecture intended to mark the royal role of Sarmizegetusa.

The paved road – The hill of Grădiștei de Munte was crossed in ancient times by a paved road made of pieces of mica schist. The road, paved with limestone slabs, descends from the vicinity of the fortress towards the sacred area. Before reaching the sacred area, the road splits, with one branch reaching the large andesite temple and the other near the large circular temple, where it used to reach a paved square. It is very likely that this road was used as a procession from the citadel to the temples during major religious events. In their visit to Sarmizegetusa Regia, the walker will have the opportunity to see the traces of this ancient road and to realize that very often the journey along the Via Transilvanica is not a purely spatial one and that through stories, some true, other legends, it transports the walker also in time and through imagination, on different roads that can be very interesting or even strongly emotionally and energetically charged.

Dacian-Roman Wars – The Dacian-Roman Wars were two wars between the Roman Empire and Dacia (Dacian Kingdom) during the reign of Emperor Trajan. The first took place between 101 and 102, and the second between 105 and 106. Confirmed rumors about Dacian gold and other riches of this country contributed to the Roman-Dacian conflict. Another reason was Dacia's strategic position. As a result, Emperor Trajan, himself an experienced soldier and tactician, began preparations for a decisive war against Dacia. The decisive battle of the first war was fought at Tapae. The Dacians held out against the Roman offensive, but when a storm broke out, the Dacians, seeing it as a sign from the gods, decided to retreat. The first war ended with a peace treaty. Decebalus, whose army could not withstand the Roman attacks, had to abide by the terms of the treaty. He thus became a client king of Rome, he had to ensure the surrender of weapons, war machines, builders, deserters, the destruction of fortress walls, the withdrawal of Dacian troops from the territory conquered by the Romans (Banat, Oltenia) and, moreover, Trajan stationed a Roman army at Sarmizegetusa. He also ordered the construction of a bridge across the Danube between Drobeta and Pontes, two Roman castles, which Apollodorus of Damascus designed. Meanwhile, Decebalus was planning his revenge. As Decebalus had broken the agreement, the Senate decreed him again an “enemy of Rome”, and Trajan set off with his generals to a new war. In the summer of 105, the Romans attacked Dacia from several directions: from west, through Banat to the Mures valley and the valley of Apa Oraşului; from south, from Drobeta, over the Vâlcan pass, and then up on the Olt valley. The last fortresses were gradually conquered in the summer of 106, including Sarmizegetusa. The Romans reorganized Dacia as a Roman province and built

another capital at a distance of 40 kilometres from the old Sarmizegetusa. This center was called Colonia Ulpia Traiana Augusta Dacica Sarmizegetusa. The losses suffered by the Dacians during the Roman conquest of Dacia were huge, but the Roman army also suffered significant losses in this war. The Romans destroyed the Dacian fortresses and sanctuaries to quell any resistance. The victory against the Dacians was celebrated with great pomp in Rome.



Trail: medium

Elevation difference: 1,358m

Critical spots: the climb up to Târșă can be a bit challenging, but spectacular, water supply required (possibly from locals), sun protection in hot weather and from insects; lack of phone signal after the descent to Fundătura Ponorului;

Scenery: Spectacular valley climb, meadows with tall grass and scraggly trees, wild horses, charming valley descent and ascent to one of the most spectacular places in the world, Fundătura Ponorului.

Accommodation:

Târșă, Pensiunea Regatul dacilor, 12 places, meals served on request, grocery store nearby, reservations by phone: +40 732 604 081 or +40 771 360 601 (Liviu Andreiu), liviuandrei@yahoo.com;

Pension Baba Marina, 10 places, breakfast and dinner on request, reservations at tel. +40 7841 58 251 (Andrei Alionescu),

Prihodiște, DacRust House, on the VT trail, 14 beds, camping place, breakfast and dinner on request, reservation in advance at tel. +40 766 773 262 (Alex).

Fundătura Ponorului, Sălașu lui Nea Costică, 4 places, camping area, traditional meals served on request. Possibility for car transportation. Reservations by phone: +40 755 280 129 (Ion Murgoi) or +40 744 402 262 (Mărioara Murgoi);

Sălașu la Hoțul Mic, 6 places, traditional meals served on request. Reservations by phone: +40 753 091 996.

Accommodation with locals, camping 40 places, access to the bathroom, 5 places, dinner and breakfast on request, transport by car, near the spring. Reservations by phone or whatsapp +40 758 182 672 (Leontin Stănescu).

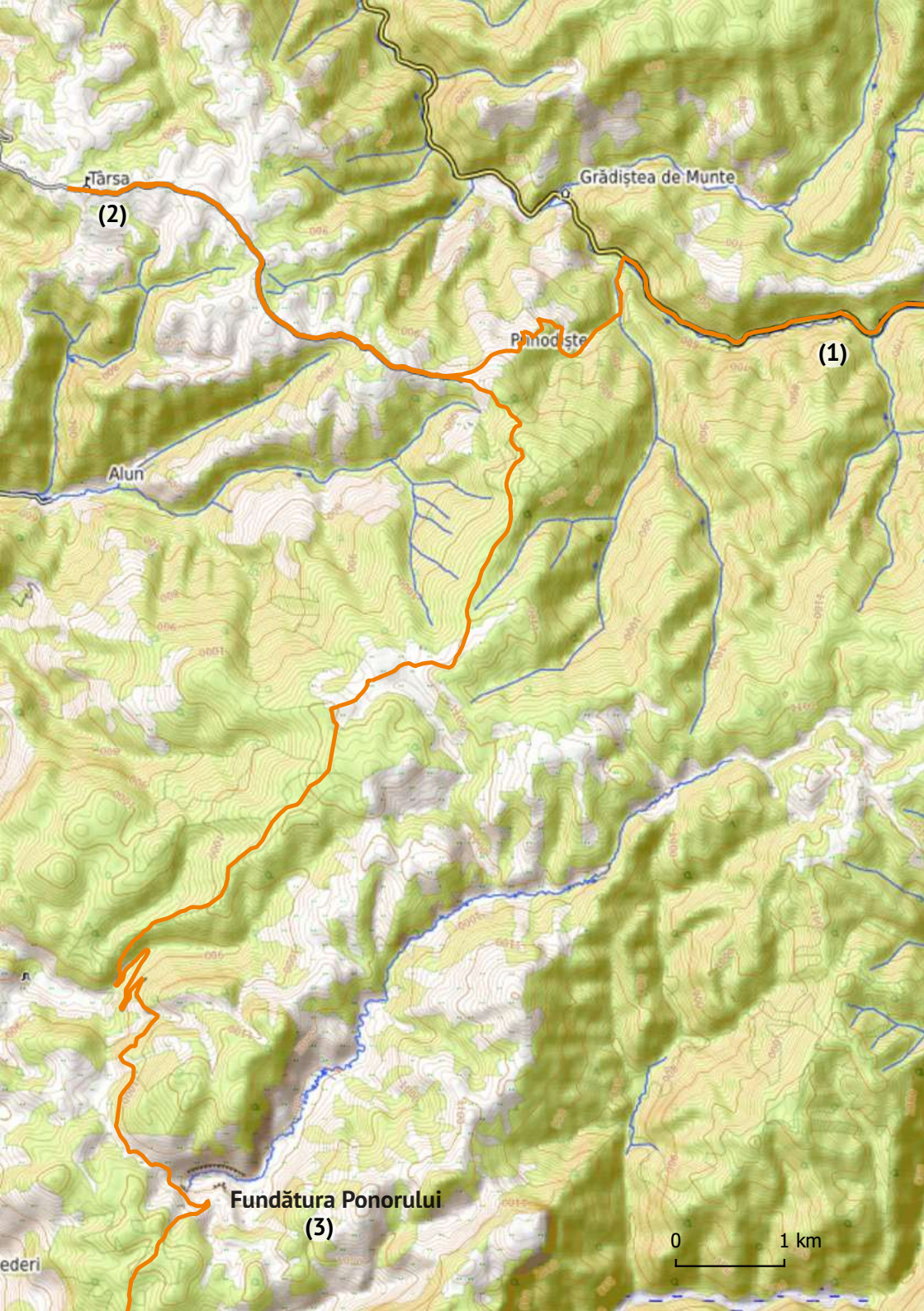
Infrastructure:

Târșă:   

Fundătura Ponorului:  

Note:

Depending on your accommodation (1), you walk on asphalt in the direction of Grădiștea de Munte for about 2-3 kilometres, until you reach a crossroads, where you turn left on the signpost. This road turns into a forest road which our route follows for a while, until we have to cross a stream which was on the right of the hikers. Cross the creek, and go left on a path that slightly turns away from the creek and leaves it on the left, heading into the forest on the right in a slight climb. Then, paying attention to the VT signs, the path follows an old forest road, damaged by water, fallen trees, landslides. After about a kilometer of ascent, although initially tempted to go straight ahead along the water that has cut through two deep valleys, forming deep, bouldery ravines, like miniature gorges, our path suddenly takes a hairpin bend to the right, climbing upwards, quite steeply, into the forest. Here follows the steep climb for about 2 kilometres, through cool, young



Târșia
(2)

Grădiștea de Munte

Pînoaște

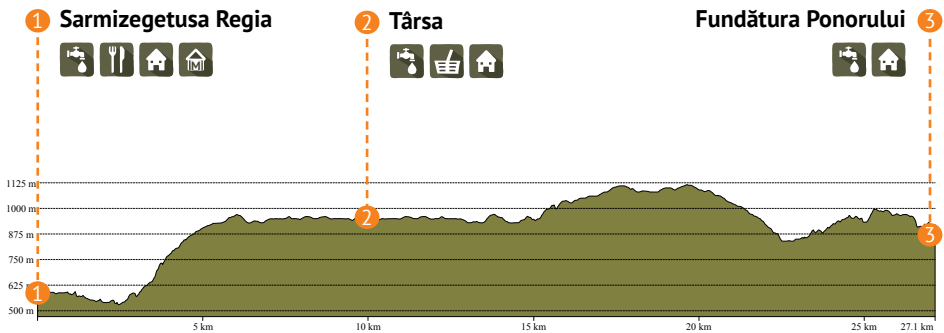
(1)

Alun

Fundătura Ponorului
(3)

0 1 km

Făderi



forest, treading on soft beds of dry leaves, spotting many salamanders along the way, as in many areas throughout Terra Dacica.

You exit the forest to the right, through the birch trees, at a place called Prihodiște, and pass under the power lines, for a few more hundred metres of gentle climbing, to the Târșa road. Once there, you can see an old, dilapidated building on the left, known as the Old School. This has a small table with benches next to it, where you can take a break to hydrate and recharge your batteries.

The road to Târșa (2) is on the right, on the opposite side of the old school, for about 3 kilometres. Târșa is a mountain village on a high hill ridge, from where you can see the whole of the Retezat Mountains and other surrounding mountains. One can take a daybreak here if one wishes so, with possible accommodations and a few things to see. In the near future the hikers will have the option of being picked up and taken to a special VT hiking accommodation in the village, but as of now this project is still under development. So continue with the current route, bypassing the school on its right-hand side, down the road among the farms. Here one can ask friendly householders for water, and replenish supplies, as there is still a long way to go to the end of the route.

Continue on the road that passes between the last households in Târșa or Prihodiște, and continue through the forest, for about 2 kilometers, until the exit in a first clearing. The roads here are quite well maintained by people who take their animals to the glades and leave them there in summer, or farmers who have farms there, or householders who have pastures or other interests.

At the end of the first clearing, the route does not go straight ahead through the forest, but takes you along the edge of the forest, past a tree hit by lightning, to the left sharply, along paths, then turn slightly right onto a well-defined, flat, road. Again you come out into a small meadow, with scraggly trees, occasionally glimpsing the Retezat mountains in the distance, in all their splendor. Then you pass slightly further into the largest glade so far, Poiana Omului. This stretches long along the hilltop, the route follows the contour line, leaving a large farm on the right, a forest of ancient oaks on the left, on a higher hillock, where you may even find a biker's memorial stone. Proceeding along the length of the clearing, on the grassy road, you reach the end of it and enter the forest, on a muddy forest road, which begins with a sharp descent, the edges of the road rising up around you, forming mud fortresses on either side. After a while a valley is reached, with a stream meandering down the middle of it. This is where the high-walled muddy road ends. The trail takes it to the left, upstream. After a break in the shade and a cool down



in the creek, the route crosses the stream and climbs a path that leads, surprisingly, to another forest road. As you cross this new road, turn right. From here, a few winding, uphill, fairly gentle switchbacks will begin, as hikers are spared the scorching sun, strong wind or cold rain by the trees on the sides of the road. Black locust, rowan, young beech and other species stand guard and protect us for much of the way. Then they respectfully step back, so that the traveler can enjoy the wonderful places through which his steps are taking him. And then a green glade opens up on the right, with waving grass, raised haystacks, grazing animals, and on the horizon line distant, tiny towns, a sign that we have climbed quite a bit already. Continue a little more the easy ascent, easy because the landscape view takes away any trace of tiredness, until you reach Nea Costică's hut, which is on the left-hand side of the road, long after exiting between the trees on the roadside. It is necessary to pass the gate and walk to the cottage, from where someone will direct guests to the lodge in question, where you can spend the night or admire

the incredible scenery. If this is not the place to spend the night, the location is worth a break now, to take photos, however the trail will continue from here the next day.

Fundătura Ponorului (3), also called the Palm of God's hand, is a special place, deserving to be discovered and admired by as many people as possible, but with the appropriate respect and discretion.

Info:

Târsa – Târsa, also called Platoul Luncanilor, is a village in the mountains of Orăștia, with enchanting views, many birch trees with their white trunks and leaves that in autumn are of a deep yellow, like the golden locks of an emperor's daughter. The settlement lies at an altitude of 1,000 metres in the Orăștiei Mountains. You can see houses scattered on the crests of the hills, surrounded by pastures colored with the raw green of spring, or yellowed by the vagaries of autumn, lonely mountain peaks that preserve the sacred stories of the fortresses built by the Dacians. The Luncanilor Plateau is a place of extraordinary energy, which amplifies and catalyzes the processes of Consciousness. It is located between the Dacian fortresses of Costești and Blidaru, the fortress of Sarmizegetusa Regia, the Cioclovina cave and the fortress of Pietra Roșie.

Poiana Omului – Poiana Omului is a very special place, not only for the beauty of the natural landscape, but also because it has a legendary, special atmosphere. People like to believe that Poiana Omului is the place where Decebalus, the leader of the Dacians, met his end. In fact, legend has it that Decebalus, in order not to become a prisoner of the Romans, ended his own life.

Fundătura Ponorului – Fundătura Ponorului lies at an altitude of 900m and is crossed by the waters of the Ponorului valley. Once reaching "Sălașu lui nea' Costică", the hiker has a breathtaking view, right to the place where the water enters into the underground, forming the ponor. From here, you can imagine how the water is like a snake crawling sinuously under a wide expanse of land (about 9 km), following its way into the coolness and darkness of the underground. A brief geography lesson: "The waters carved out the limestone formed during the Jurassic period and seeps appeared in the riverbeds, creating the largest known caves in the Șureanu Mountains. Over the years these seeps became the ponds we can see today, the rivers completely eroded the limestone layer down to the crystalline rock substrate, widening their bed and creating the most spectacular karst depressions in the Șureanu Mountains." Continuing along the trail, the hiker will come across information boards about gorges, caves and other formations, which we want to be discovered by each on their own. Hiking the Via Transilvanica is not to be done with your eyes on the ground only.

UNESCO International Geopark Țara Hațegului – After passing the fascinating "Fundătura Ponorului", the trail enters the Hațeg UNESCO Global Geopark Țara hațegului, a UNESCO member of the Global and European Geoparks networks, which encompasses the whole of Țara Hațegului and contains extraordinary geological values as well as natural and cultural values. The Geopark is managed by the University of Bucharest, which provides integrated management for education, protection and sustainable development. It uses local values to give communities a sense of identity and to generate new local income, especially through geotourism. The most interesting values of this UNESCO site are the fossils of dinosaurs and other animals that lived here when Țara Hațegului was a tropical island in the Tethys Ocean. You can discover these and many other stories about Earth and Man by visiting the Geopark's Houses and its themed trails.

Trail: easy

Elevation difference: 305m

Critical spots: a lot of walking on asphalt between towns, hydration, sun and insects protection are required in hot weather;

Scenery: long descent from the Fundătura Ponorului, passing through villages and through pastures or land, straight, crossing from one mountainous area to another, so lots of flat terrain, opportunity to socialize with locals.

Accommodation:

Râu Bărbat: Popasul din Lunca, 5 double rooms, 2 triple rooms, breakfast and dinner served on request, reservations by phone: +40 727 538 229 (Mihaela Matei);

Hobița: Ollie Pension, 5 double rooms, shared kitchen, grocery store nearby, reservations by phone: +40 736 172 288 (Nicolae Ghicajanu);

Casa Atos, 2 rooms, shared kitchen, grocery store nearby, reservations 3-4 days in advance: +40 752 153 853 (Neli Tudor).

Infrastructure:

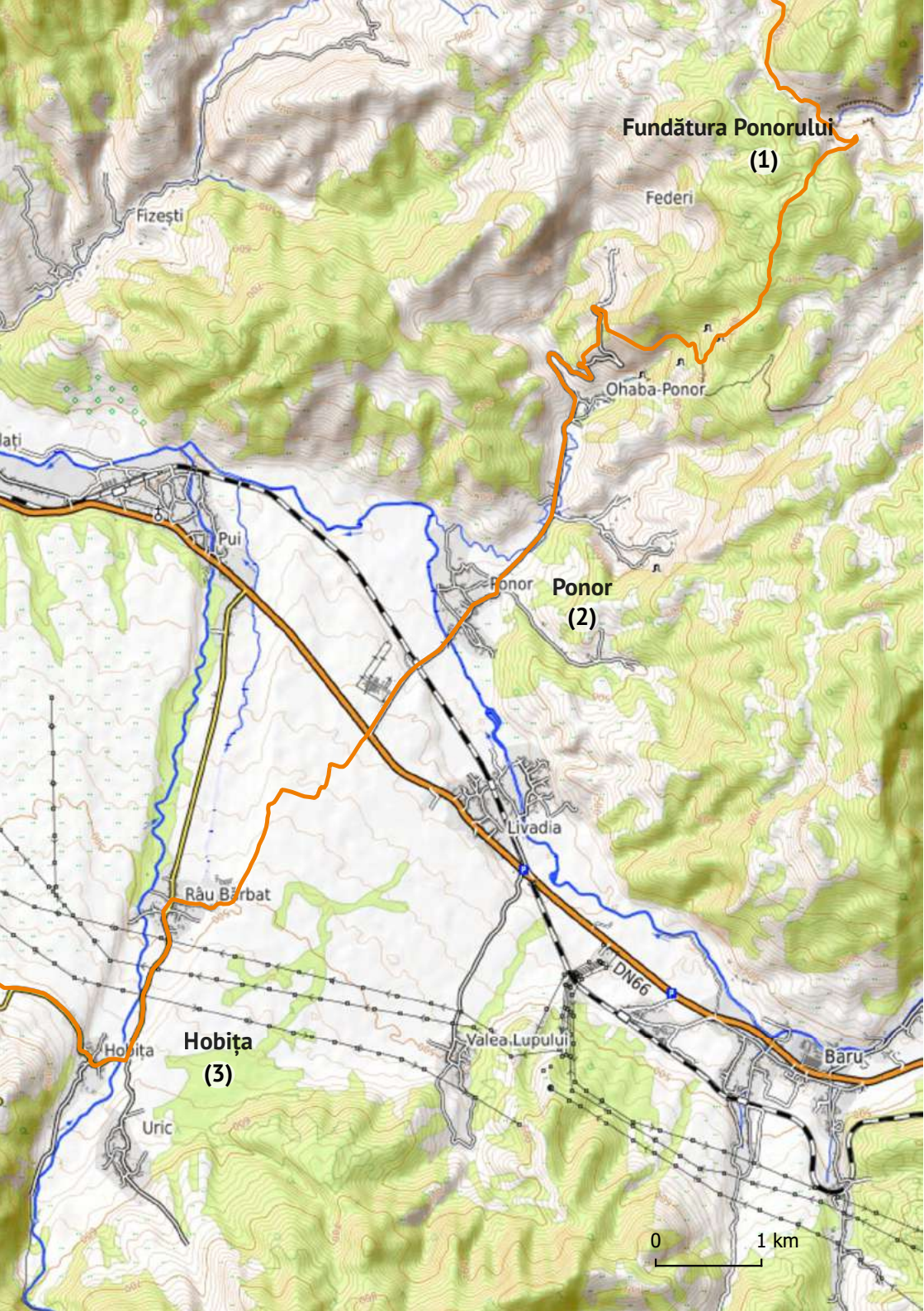
Ponor:   

Hobița:    

Note:

It is with great reluctance that one departs from the cottage that provided a night's sleep, which may have thrown some into other dimensions of life, such as childhood in the countryside or in the film "Moromeții" (based on the famous Romanian novel, depicting a family saga in the countryside, right before communism). Following the route, one walks through the karst formations typical of the Șureanu mountains, with sinkholes, seen from above, from the path, which is sometimes going down, then suddenly going up, leaving the Fundătură (1) and reaching a forest road that intersects at one point with a hiking trail. This will also be our route, and it will shorten the forest road by few good few kilometers, even though it climbs at first and then descends steeply and quite long as well, but the fact that it goes through thick forest and sparse woodland further up can be a blessing on hot summer days. Around 6 kilometers of some ascent and mostly descent to Ohaba Ponor. Here you can ask the locals for water if you need it, and then continue on the asphalt road, following the signs, to Ponor (2), for around 2 and a half kilometres.

At some point there will also be a resting place, with a roof, benches and two crosses, probably of some people deceased in a car accident. A break is needed, can be taken here, as there won't be too many other options along the route. One exits Ponor, crosses a bridge over the river Strei, then crosses a railway line, then reaches the main road, DN66. Before the road, there is a huge building on the left-hand side, once used for weddings, christening parties, or other important events, a building that is still unfinished - which brings a lot of confusion to the viewer. One crosses the main road carefully, and goes straight ahead on a tractor road. These are pastureland, arable, wheat fields, cornfields

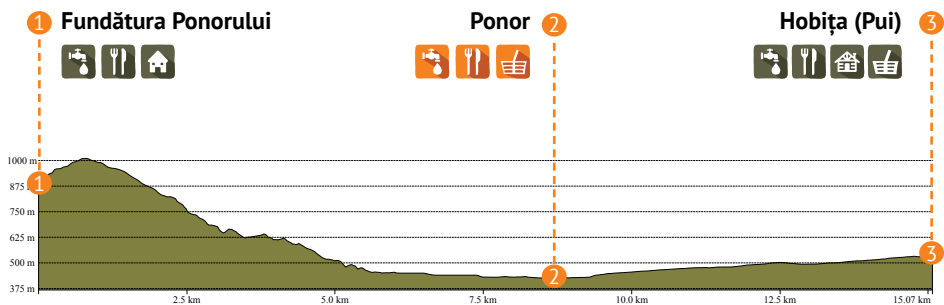


**Fundătura Ponorului
(1)**

**Ponor
(2)**

**Hobîța
(3)**

0 1 km



and so on. Walking right along the edge of these, without taking a single step further on private land, drawing the edges for 2 1/2 kilometers, until the entrance to the Râu Bărbat. The village starts with some small old blocks of flats, with quite aggressive dogs in the yards, who will bark at every passing stranger. You then walk further on, to the center of the village, where, having reached the main road, you turn left. Continue walking on the narrow, asphalted road, which gives us a bit of shade from the poplars, until, at the entrance to Hobița, turn right over a bridge. There are about 2.5 kilometres from Râu Bărbat to Hobița (3). This is the end of the day for those who want to follow the number of kilometres recommended in the Guide.

Info:

Nature Park Grădiștea Muncelului - Cioclovina – Located in the Șureanu Mountains, it is remarkable for the unique landscape created over thousands of years by the interaction of man and nature. Here you will find numerous protected species of flora and fauna, villages where traditions are still alive, as well as historical monuments of particular value. The specificity of the area is also due to the presence of karst phenomena on the surface and underground. Where water has shaped the rock, gorges, sinkholes, caves and abysses have formed, some of them of great scientific importance.

The natural area is located in the Șureanu Mountains (a mountainous group of the Șureanu-Parâng-Lotrului mountains, belonging to the Southern Carpathians mountain range), in the southern part of Hunedoara County, on the administrative territories of the communes of Baru, Boșorod, Bănița, Orăștioara de Sus and Pui. The nature park includes within its boundaries six of the most spectacular nature reserves of Hunedoara county: Ponorâci-Cioclovina karst complex, Tecuri Cave, Șura Mare Cave, Crivădiei Gorges, Ohaba-Ponor fossil site, Bolii Cave. Also here are the UNESCO World Heritage archaeological sites of Sarmizegetusa Regia, Costești, Blidaru, Lunca-Piatra Roșie and the authentic ethnographic settlements of the Lunca Plateau.

Karstic relief in the Șureanu Mountains – The landforms present in the Șureanu Mountains are closely related to the rock types existing here. Thus, the presence of limestone and limestone-crystalline lithological contacts creates a spectacular landscape, with steep slopes, isolated cliffs and gorges. Surface and deep karst phenomena are grouped in the north-west and south-west of the mountains: near Grădiștea de Munte - in Dealul



Vârtoapele, between Cioclovina and Baru, in the Crivadia-Banița-Peștera Bolii area and the last perimeter, north-east of the Petroșani Depression, in Culmea Piatra Leșului.

Dealul cu Melci (The Snail Hill) – when going downhill from Fundătura Ponorului and arriving in the village of Ohaba Ponor, at the asphalted road, on the right-hand side you will see a sign explaining about the Snail Hill (“Dealul cu Melci”). This is a rock hill where you can see fossilized snails, snails that are 100 million years old, called by specialists gastropods of the genus *Acteonella*.

Șura Mare Cave – The cave is notable for its large entrance (8-12m wide and almost 40m high), huge giant’s kettles and rimstone. The cave is reported to host as well the largest hibernating colony of bats in Romania.

Trail: easy to medium

Elevation difference: 564 m

Critical spots: quite long, but passes through localities where supplies are available; hydration, sun protection in hot weather and insect protection required;

Scenery: colorful flower meadows, cool forests, you also walk through villages, but the landscape is balanced between nature, with hills and meadows and villages.

Accommodation:

Șerel, Accommodation with locals, 4-6 places, meals on request, with traditional products, grocery shop. Reservations at tel. +40 735 087 772 (Silvia Târnovean);

Mălăiești: Guesthouse Iancu, nr. 62, 20 places, traditional meals served on request, reservations by phone: +40 722 762 245, +40 722 666 238 (Mihai Iancu);

Pension Narcisa with Barrel (3 daisies), 3 double rooms (6 persons + extra bed on request for a fee), access to kitchen, living room, terrace, hammocks, bikes and barbecue area. Barrel for a fee, reservations by tel. 0760 281 697 or whatsapp;

Pension Paula, Main Street, nr. 68, has 3 rooms with double bed, minimum 6 adults, access to the kitchen, on request breakfast and dinner with traditional products from Tara Hațegului, bike rental. Reservations at +40 763 608 311.

Sălașu de Sus: Guesthouse Casa Cînda, str. Principală nr. 190, 18 places, 5 double rooms and 2 apartments, traditional meals served on request. Reservations by phone: +40 770 981 600 or e-mail: casa.canda190@gmail.com;

The guesthouse is a first example of social economy in Hunedoara County, which means that development and promotion projects of the area are carried out from the profit obtained. Its administrators are the Retezat Tourism Association, those who since 2015 have been coordinating the Ecotourism Destination Țara Hațegului - Retezat.

Sălaș Pension, 12 places, traditional meals served on request. Reservations by phone: +40 730 705 859 (Neli Iancu);

Guesthouse Iancu, 10 places, traditional meals served on request. Reservations by phone: +40 722 762 245, +40 722 666 238 (Mihai Iancu), <https://www.pensiuneaiancu.ro>;

Nucșoara: La moșu-n Retezat, 5 double rooms, meals served on request, shared kitchen, grocery store nearby, reservations by phone: +40 771 367 189 (Moș Mircea);

Căsuțele din Retezat, 13 places, shared kitchen, grocery store nearby, reservations by phone: +40 769 649 845 (Dana Croitoru).

Infrastructure:

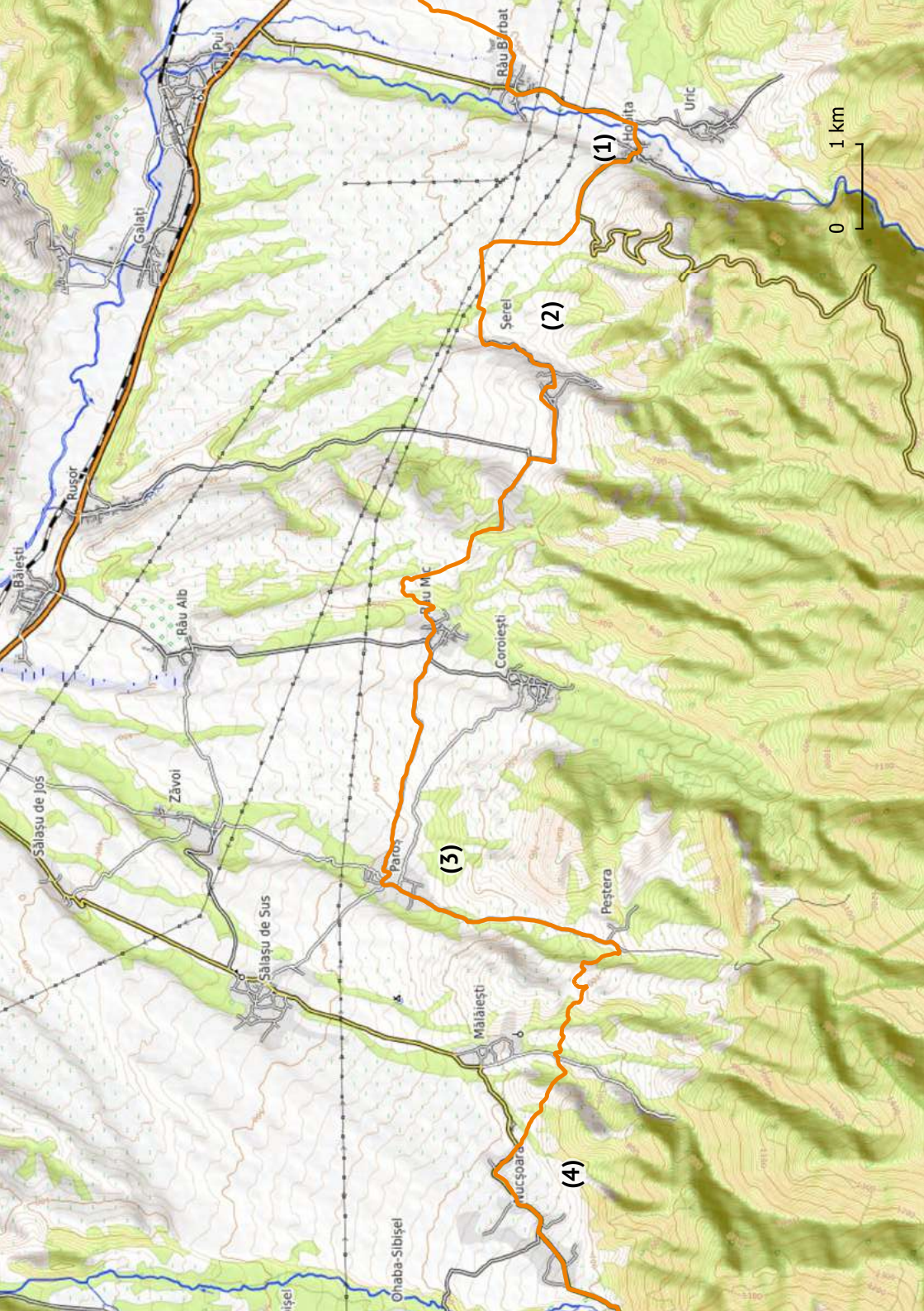
Șerel:    

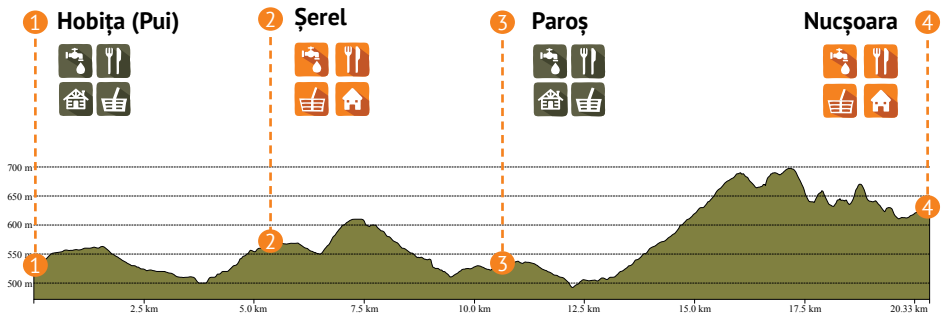
Paroș:    

Nucșoara:    

Note:

Leaving Hobița (1), one follows the markings until leaving the village on the county road DJ677 and then on a field road, which leads clearly towards Șerel, but not before going





about 3.5 kilometres along the border, where one passes through pastures, separated by electric fences, which can be closed and opened safely, until descending into the village of Șerel (2). Here you walk to the next exit, a slight climb up to a clearing full of purple flowers, perhaps even wild orchids, in full bloom in May. Continue the trail over the glades further, slightly uphill, for about one and a half kilometers until you reach a hilltop from where you can see the village of Râu Mic on the lower left, and our trail makes a wide loop to the right and then descends to the left into the village, over two bridges, over the stream with the assumed name of Râu Mic. After walking over flowering hills for other 2 kilometers, we reach Paroș (3), a very tidy, clean village with large houses and neat households, the specific round stone fences reminiscent of the hobbit houses in fairy tales, but standing as proof that the direction of our route is towards the Retezat mountains, from where many round stones were thrown by giants of times gone by, or at least so the imagination is left free in such landscapes, surrounded by such legends. In Paroș there is also a grocery store for possible re-supply or just an ice cream for refreshment, and then we continue on our way out of the village. You walk on asphalt, straight towards the mountains, with breathtaking scenery and rare energy. For people who live near the mountains, there is a certain sense of safety from having the mountains always in front of them or in the corner of their eyes. The embrace of the mountain is one that is not found in flat, lowland places. The mountain is mother and father, God and heaven, safety and life.

So, walking towards the great Retezat, on the right-hand side you can see a grove of trees around the stream on the edge of which the cattle graze, guarded by a peasant, who says hi and wonders. Then, the straight roads give freedom to the imagination and drive our minds to stories and legends about the mountain ahead, the stone houses or the local people. You then reach the outskirts of the village of Peștera, where you do not turn left but continue on the road straight ahead, until you reach a thematic trail sign with the title: "Music of nature". For a short break, it is worth taking this short tour and visiting the exhibits, which can arouse the interest of everyone, but especially children, even if adults could learn something new as well. Then walk to the right, leaving the theme trail behind, through a young forest to a bridge, which you cross and continue with an easy climb above the village, over the plain and the hill above it. Here, turn left on the tracks of a road, then sharply right, crossing a ditch, continuing across the field, until the citadel of Mălăiești rises on our right. Being so close to the trail, the recommendation is to at least come close and see it from the outside. Then, from the trail, from where it left and/or resumed, go up a hill, then down, passing through the end

of Mălăiești, crossing the road leading to the methane gas station which is on the left of the trail, but we will continue straight ahead, on the road between the trees, which will smooth and clear itself, a little further on, until it reaches a stream. This is crossed and then turns sharply left. From here, the trail goes through the forest a bit, and then to the right, out of it, and where you can even find information boards with medicinal plants. It then continues across the field, followed by a birch grove, a few bumps and cleared land, perhaps ready to be turned into pasture. After another patch of dense birch woodland, the headquarters of the Retezat Mountains National Park can be seen in the distance on the right. Here begins the village of Nucșoara (4), today's destination for hikers.

Info:

Theme trail "Music of nature" – Stone, wood and water have always been the best friends of the locals in Țara Hațegului. These were used to build houses, tools and machines to make their lives easier. Each exhibit has its own story and musicality. Walk along the "Music of Nature" theme trail in the village of Peștera, commune of Sălașu de Sus, to discover the music of the rocks, the wood and the water, the music of the forest and the sounds of life in the countryside!

Șerel watermill – Șerel is a village in the commune of Pui. The village is spread along the valley of the river Șerel for about 5km, being very dispersed, with a few isolated hamlets named "În bălți" and "În Luncă". Apart from being an almost romantic place, with beautiful traditional houses (one of which was even transferred to a museum in Bucharest in the 1960s), what is very special about this place, is the existence of a working water mill, where the miller, who inherited this craft from his father, is happy to show the process to any interested visitor.

Retezat Massif – Retezat National Park was established in 1935 at the initiative of Alexandru Borza and Emil Racoviță, being the first national park in Romania. It is particularly noted for its unique glacial relief in the Romanian Carpathians, with over 20 peaks higher than 2,000 meters, numerous glacial lakes, including the largest (Bucura) and the deepest (Zănoaga) ones in Romania. Add to this over a third of Romania's plant species found here (1,190), 90 of which being endemic. Several times along the journey through Hunedoara County, the hiker will be surprised by the spectacular view of the Retezat Massif, sometimes covered in snow, sometimes shyly hidden behind a curtain of fog, sometimes proud and serene, inviting adventurers to explore it. Retezat is the most complex and grandiose mountain massif of all the geographical sectors of the Romanian Carpathians. Its uniqueness lies in the existence of spectacular alpine ridges over 2,000 m high and a sculptural relief. The highest peak is Peleaga, with an altitude of 2,509 m. There are many reasons that make Retezat Massif truly special and we will list a few of them. It has 80 blue eyes - the 80 lakes and ponds in which the blue of the sky is mirrored; the largest glacial lake in Romania - Lake Bucura - is in the middle of Retezat; and the deepest glacial lake in Romania - Lake Zănoaga - is also in Retezat; there are more than 20 peaks higher than 2,000 meters; it's special that in the same massif you can find a typical glacial relief, with valleys, lakes and glacial cirques, but also limestones surrounded by gorges, caves and avens. But perhaps the most interesting are the legends of flying fairies, the giant Iorgovan, the story of Gugu peak or Retezat peak, stories that are worth hearing from the locals, in the evening around the fire, or over a glass of wine. The team of Tășuleasa Social/Via Transilvanica are friends with the great team at

the Retezat National Park, where hikers will meet wonderful people who can tell their stories about the present, legends and everything between the truth and the fantasy.

Mălăiești Fortress – Mălăiești Fortress is a group of historical monuments located on the territory of the village of Mălăiești, commune of Sălașu de Sus. The fortress from Mălăiești is the first medieval monument in Hunedoara County to be almost completely restored after 1989. The small stone fortress attracts the attention of the hikers who want to admire the wonders of nature in the Retezat National Park, but also of the history enthusiasts. The medieval fortress was built at the end of the 14th century by the knyaz Sărăcin family at the edge of the village of Mălăiești, as a point of defense against light attacks. At first, the fortress had only one main tower, followed by a belt of six-meter-high walls and four towers around the keep. Over time, these were destroyed, so that only the donjon-tower remains standing today.

Fânețele cu Narcise ("Daffodil Meadows") – For a post ice age feel you can visit the Daffodil Meadows. Here you can still find plants that have survived from the colder age when the whole area was a huge taiga, similar to Siberia of today. You may wonder how this was possible? Well, cold water from the Retezat Mountains flows through the granite boulders under the ground and has a cooling effect on the place. And so, an island of refuge has been preserved here, with a cold and wet climate, where you can see these plants that have survived from colder times, as well as rare butterflies.

Râu Bărbat Geosite – Downstream, at Pui, there are sedimentary rocks with dinosaur and mammal fossils, formed in the lakes and rivers of Hațeg island, 70 million years ago. An extraordinary animal - Barbatodon - was discovered here and received its name from the village Râu Bărbat. At 2.5km upstream from the village of Hobița, on the left-hand side, there is a special place where you can see rocks deformed by the tectonic forces that pushed two very large fragments of the earth's crust together during the formation of the Carpathians.

Dinosaurs – Some of the interesting dinosaur species found in Tara Hațegului are Magyarosaurus dacus, Zalmoxes robustus and Balaur bondoc (the only dinosaur species not named in Latin, but directly in Romanian). About 70 million years ago, Tara Hațegului was a tropical island in the Tethys Ocean. Dinosaurs, flying reptiles and other interesting species lived on this island with rich vegetation and dominated by active volcanoes. Their tracks can be found today mainly along the Dinosaur Valley trail and are explained at the Geopark's visitor points. Some of these also contain replicas of the Hațeg dinosaurs: at the Geopark House in Hațeg there is a reconstruction of Balaur bondoc and Zalmoxes robustus, as well as a nest with original dinosaur eggs, at the Geopark House for Science and Art in the village General Berthelot there are two replicas - Magyarosaurus dacus and Zalmoxes robustus. But the main question is, why were these dwarf dinosaurs, contrary to everything we learn about dinosaurs from films like Jurassic Park? Well, we have to imagine that millions of years ago Hațeg was an island (located about where the Mediterranean Sea is today) that broke away from the mainland. The remaining dinosaurs on the island found themselves stranded, with limited food resources compared to the ones from mainland. This phenomenon is called 'island dwarfism' and is actually how these dinosaurs adapted to the conditions of life.

Trail: medium

Elevation difference: 721m

Critical spots: long trail, water supply required, sun protection in hot weather and from insects;

Scenery: dreamy scenery with easy climbs up hills with great visibility, you also ride through old and new villages, short sections with asphalt and lots of nature.

Accommodation:








Clopotiva, Clopotiva Camping, 150 camping places, 10 places in small cabins, with shared showers and kitchen, grocery store nearby. Small repairs and maintenance services for bikes. Reservations by phone: +40 727 272 682 (Andrei Mihăilescu);

Sarmizegetusa Ulpia Traiana: Sarmis Pension, 96 places in double and triple rooms, and apartments. Restaurant, reservations by phone at +40 744 794 051 (Varvara Cristian);

Casa Britonia, 15 places in rooms with 2, 3 or 4 beds. Restaurants and grocery store nearby. Reservations by phone at +40 720 891 775 (Eliza).

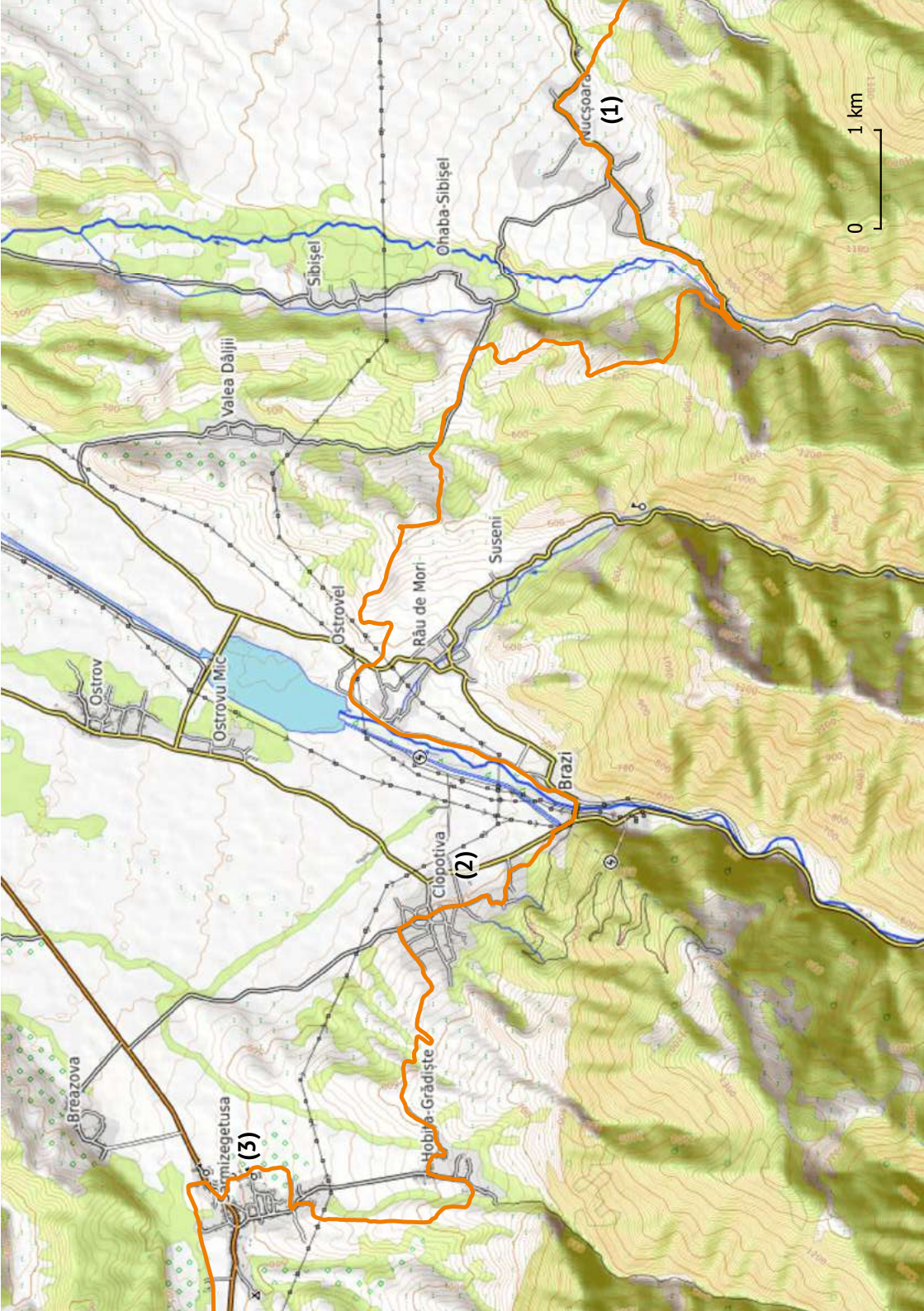
Infrastructure:

Clopotiva:     

Sarmizegetusa Ulpia Traiana:       

Note:

One leaves Nucșoara (1) among the houses, towards the mountain, on the asphalt, with a heavy heart, thanks to the interesting things to see, the welcoming hosts and the warm and generous locals who always have kind words to say to you on the way. We walk to the exit of the village, towards the green forest covering the mountains in front of us, with refreshed strength for another spectacular day. Calculated from the center of the village, you walk on asphalt for about 2 kilometers, slightly uphill, which you can barely feel, towards a viaduct over the Nucșoara river. From here it's a short walk until the hills on the left open up and allow the Retezat to take its peaks out and display them proudly in front of the viewer. After the first spectacular view with the adjacent photo shoot, the route turns sharply right into a hairpin bend, leaving the tarmac to follow the specific signs towards the Cetatea Colț. The path climbs up the hillside and goes around it, opening up again the whole of the Nucșoara valley, and then turns its back on it again and continues through the woodland upwards. After a while, the VT trail splits off from the trail that goes to Cetatea Colț to the left, and our path takes a right turn after reaching a ridge. Walking along the ridge to the right, one reaches a sort of a saddle, where it is appropriate to pause to again admire the extraordinary scenery. Then continue on the path, leaving the top of the hill on the right-hand side and walking around it, again for a few hundred meters on mountain/hill paths until you reach a new glen, which actually starts at the top of the hill and runs down smoothly. From the top of the hill you can see the Retezat mountains, and on the right, you can see the whole flat valley of Sibișel, with the related communes, even Nucșoara can be spotted. Further ahead you can see the lake that we will pass by later today, and in the right time of the



year you can see many fields of flowering rapeseed. After another dose of scenery, the route continues, descending slowly towards a flat road, between shrubs and patches with vegetation burnt during springtime. Descend this road on pasture, to the entrance to a paved road that descends steeply. This leads to the Valley of the Dâljii to the right, but our route will continue ahead, with a steep climb up the hill after the initial descent. From the top, turn slightly right and climb the next hill, slightly higher, from where the gates open to another "dimension", i.e., yet another part of Țara Hațegului. You can see the whole of Lake Ostrov to which you will descend, you can see the village of Clopotiva and the mountain, the villages of Râu de Mori, Brazi and much more. If needed, you can take another break, because the route is quite long and stretched. You then descend and from here, on the level curve, follow beaten paths made by people, cows and then eventually by vehicles, bypassing over a small stone quarry, and exiting on a paved road. To the left, there will be the village of Râu de Mori, where you don't enter, but go on towards Ostrovel. Go on asphalt through the end of Ostrovel, turn left at the tail of the lake towards the village of Brazi. At the entrance to Brazi, turn right at the crossroad and continue on asphalt towards Clopotiva, until the trail turns left at a certain point, behind fences, on a path that runs parallel to the road. If you look up to the sky, when the weather conditions are good, you can see paragliders flying above. This is one of the best known flying spots in the whole country, called "Clopotiva", by the nearby village. The path will bypass the road and slowly climb towards the village, which is placed quite high, while feeling the change of altitude on tired feet. Cross Clopotiva (2), but your attention will have to be focused on the old museum houses, which are excellently preserved and among the oldest of the Hațeg region. The houses are tidy, the village is extremely clean and neat and everywhere smells of lilac blossoms or garden flowers. After passing through most of the village, the road takes a left, still uphill and exits the village, then climbs to the right up the hill to a large wide pasture. Here, you walk a long way past an electric fence that separates the property from the rest of the pasture and follow this fence for 2 kilometers up and down steep ascents and descents that seem more difficult at the end of the trail, but the scenery perhaps eases the difficulties and helps the hiker find some of the remaining energy. Entering the village of Hobița Grădiște, cross the village and walk about 2 kilometers on the road to Sarmizegetusa Ulpia Traiana (3) to the accommodation, because there will be many sights to see and strength will be needed to absorb all this precious information that hides within the museum and the site of Ulpia Traiana.



If you want to enjoy more of the Hațeg Country, you can take your time to visit the sights in the Densuș area: the Densuș Church, the House of the Volcanoes, the Hațegan Village Museum. And while you're here, you have the opportunity to savour traditional dishes prepared to perfection by Auntie Ana and served alongside Uncle Luci's stories at the Local Gastronomic Point LuciAna, Densuș.

Info:

Cetatea Colț – The Fortress of Colț is said to be the fortress described in the novel "The Carpathian Castle" by the famous visionary Jules Verne. Although he never visited Transylvania, the descriptions of the fortress in the book match very well with the Fortress of Colț. It seems that he was in correspondence with a lady, Miss Ileana, Miss Ileana, with whom he was in love, and she sent him detailed information about the lands where she lived and the fortress in particular. Jules Verne described this place as "the wildest in Transylvania, the Land of Forests". The Colț Fortress, a foundation of the Cârdea family of Râu de Mori, later to become Kendeffi, dates from the early 14th century.

Colț Monastery – There were times, in the Middle Ages, when Colț Monastery was more than a simple place of worship. Back then, robberies and attacks were common. And that's the reason why the monastery had a fortified tower, where the monks kept their valuable things and took shelter in case of danger. The tower's walls were over a meter thick and with narrow openings from which the monks could aim at attackers without being themselves targeted. Today, at Colț, there are still preserved the fortified tower and the stories related to the monastery. One of these stories is about the founder of this place of worship. It is said that he was buried in the monastery church and that his bones are holy.

Râu de Mori – Râu de Mori is a village in Țara Hațegului, residence of the commune of the same name. Among the tourist attractions in this village are the reformed parish church of the village of Râu de Mori built in the 18th century, a historical monument and the Noble House of the Cârdești.

Clopotiva – Clopotiva is a village in the commune of Râu de Mori. For the team of Tășuleasa Social/Via Transilvanica, this place will always be synonymous with our good and dear friend and VT ambassador, paraglider Toma Cocone, double Red Bull X-Alps vice-champion. In fact, even before entering the village, the hiker will notice how high up in the sky, colorful wings smoothly spin in circles, high above the ground, farther and farther away. If the hiker's daring hasn't completely left him, or, on the contrary, the view of the Retezat Massif has inspired him with a kind of unexpected courage, he might sign up for a tandem flight with one of Clopotiva's paragliding instructors. Once you're flying, life looks like a breeze and to travel further will be a breeze as well! Otherwise, crossing the village of Clopotiva, the hiker will be able to admire many peasant houses, looking like left frozen in time, but maintained so they resist the test of time, and they can tell us their story as well as possible. In front of these houses there are information panels about the construction, about the family who lived in these houses and other interesting facts. Another interesting place to visit in Clopotiva would be the church "Saint John the Baptist", built in 1763, a historical monument.

Sarmizegetusa Ulpia Traiana – Having conquered the Dacians, now gaining access to the gold mines of the Apuseni, and therefore in a better financial situation than before the conquest of the province, Emperor Trajan had the ambition to build, the capital of Roman Dacia, Colonia Ulpia Traiana Augusta Dacica Sarmizegetusa in the western part of the

Land of Hațeg. Sarmizegetusa Ulpia Traiana was a medium-sized city compared to the other cities of the empire. The city was inhabited by about 30,000 people. Historians say that the metropolis and its businessmen owned and controlled the trade on the Danube, the agriculture in the Mures Valley, and the substantial revenues from the Apuseni gold mines. Today, the village of Sarmizegetusa has only about 2,000 inhabitants. Walkers on the Via Transilvanica can visit the many ruins and imagine how the fortress looked



thousands of years ago, before turning back to the present and continuing their own journey.

Sarmizegetusa Ulpia Traiana Archaeology Museum – The Museum of Sarmizegetusa is a section of the Museum of Dacian and Roman Civilization in Deva, it houses an important archaeological collection and manages the archaeological park Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa. The institution was founded in 1924 by Constantin Daicoviciu following the restarting of archaeological excavations, and since 1982 the museum has been moved to a new building in the immediate vicinity of the school, just at the entrance from Hațeg. The museum's archaeological collection includes epigraphic and sculptural monuments, mosaics, fragments of mural paintings, weapons, silverware, bronze, bone, ceramics, glass and numismatics. Other attractions in the museum are replicas of Roman military and civilian equipment. The tour programme is also available at the entrance to the archaeological site and the price of the site visit ticket includes a visit to the museum.

Densuș Church – is a building whose history has not been fully deciphered. Both the origin and the date of the church's construction are controversial. Some believe it was originally a Roman temple dedicated to the god Mars, which was transformed into a church in the 16th century. Others claim it was the ancient mausoleum of the Roman general Longinus Maximus, whose wife converted to Christianity and built on the site of the mausoleum the first church north of the Danube. Today the church has an unusual appearance, being a mixture of styles and materials. Some of the windows are actually Roman sewer connections, the church walls are supported by columns, the altar is a sarcophagus lid, the lions on the roof were Roman statues, and the massive stones in the walls retain ancient carvings. You can even see pieces of the Roman ruins of Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa in its walls: Roman brick, columns, stones with ancient inscriptions or even statues. Inside, there is another unique feature: in the icon of the Holy Trinity, Christ is dressed in Romanian folk costume.

Densuș Church is one of the most important tourist attractions in the region. Its special appearance, and the fact that it still serves as the village church, makes it a must-see for travelers.

House of Volcanoes – The House of Volcanoes is a space for learning and experiencing through play. We invite you to discover the story of the Earth: here you can be an explorer, geologist, paleontologist and learn about prehistoric volcanoes and life on the former Island of Hațeg 70 million years ago. We do science experiments, work with an explorer's tool kit and dig for fossils in the little paleontologist's chest, walk through the forest and collect rocks. Visiting programme and educational activities: by reservation only on the website: www.casavulcanilor.ro or by phone at +40 254 777 853 / +40 743 688 108.

Hațegan Village Museum – At Peșteana, across the road from the medieval church, in a traditional wooden house, one of the locals, Nenea Antonică, has collected old objects from the village. You can see in his collection some unique things and especially you can discover the ingenuity of the villagers to make and give practical uses to the objects around them. Some of the objects that were used in the household are: the fish net made of braided wire, the spice grinder which is nothing more than a piece of stone in the shape of a grinder or the iron spikes that were attached to the soles of shoes when it was icy. In addition, Antonică can tell you interesting stories. And if you're curious, he can show you how a traditional beehive was made, woven from vines and lined with clay.

Tăul fără Fund – If you listen to the villagers of Peșteana, you will find out that near the village there is Tăul fără Fund (translation: The Bottomless Pond), a deep swamp that is connected to the ocean and where the cattle are attracted by the Devil. It's worth going there, as there is an interesting real story of this place. Even if you will not find a muddy swamp, as you might expect, you will discover a place where carnivorous plants grow. Don't imagine that carnivorous plants have huge tentacles to catch insects. They're just little 'flypaper traps', no taller than a few centimeters. Their leaves secrete a sticky substance, and the little insects that are tricked get trapped between the plant's hairs.

Franz Nopcsa – Franz Nopcsa is certainly one of the most interesting personalities that the hiker will learn about on his journey along this section of Via Transilvanica. He was a Hungarian aristocrat who was interested in biology and archaeology. He is known for being one of the founders of paleobiology and the first to formulate theories about insular dwarfism, the cause of the appearance of dwarf dinosaurs in the Hațeg Land, the theory of sexual dimorphism of dinosaurs, the theory of the origin of birds from dinosaurs, the theory of complex social behaviour in dinosaurs, the theory of warm blood in Mesozoic reptiles. His first paleontological discoveries were made at Sânpetru, in the Hațeg region, where the family summer residence was located. For 10 years he traveled to the areas inhabited by Albanians - Macedonia, Kosovo, Albania and Montenegro, studied the culture, language, ethnography, archaeology, laws and history of the people, wrote numerous scientific materials and joined the scholars who laid the foundations of the science called Albanology. In fact, at the age of 36, he even volunteered to become the King of Albania. Franz Nopcsa was also director of the Royal Geological Institute in Budapest. At the age of 56 he committed suicide in Vienna after a period of social and economic decline due to his open sexual orientation.

Trail: easy

Elevation difference: 355 m

Critical spots: a lot of walking on straight and disused railway embankment, water supply, sun protection in hot weather and insect protection are required;

Scenery: the landscape straightens out, goes straight and stretched out quite a lot, there is a lot of walking on the former railway line, passing through the Iron Gates of Transylvania;

Accommodation:

Bucova: *Mimi Pension*, 40 beds, double, triple rooms, restaurant, fast-food, grocery store, Reservations by phone at +40 744 791 361 (Dragomir Horia).

Infrastructure:

Bucova:    

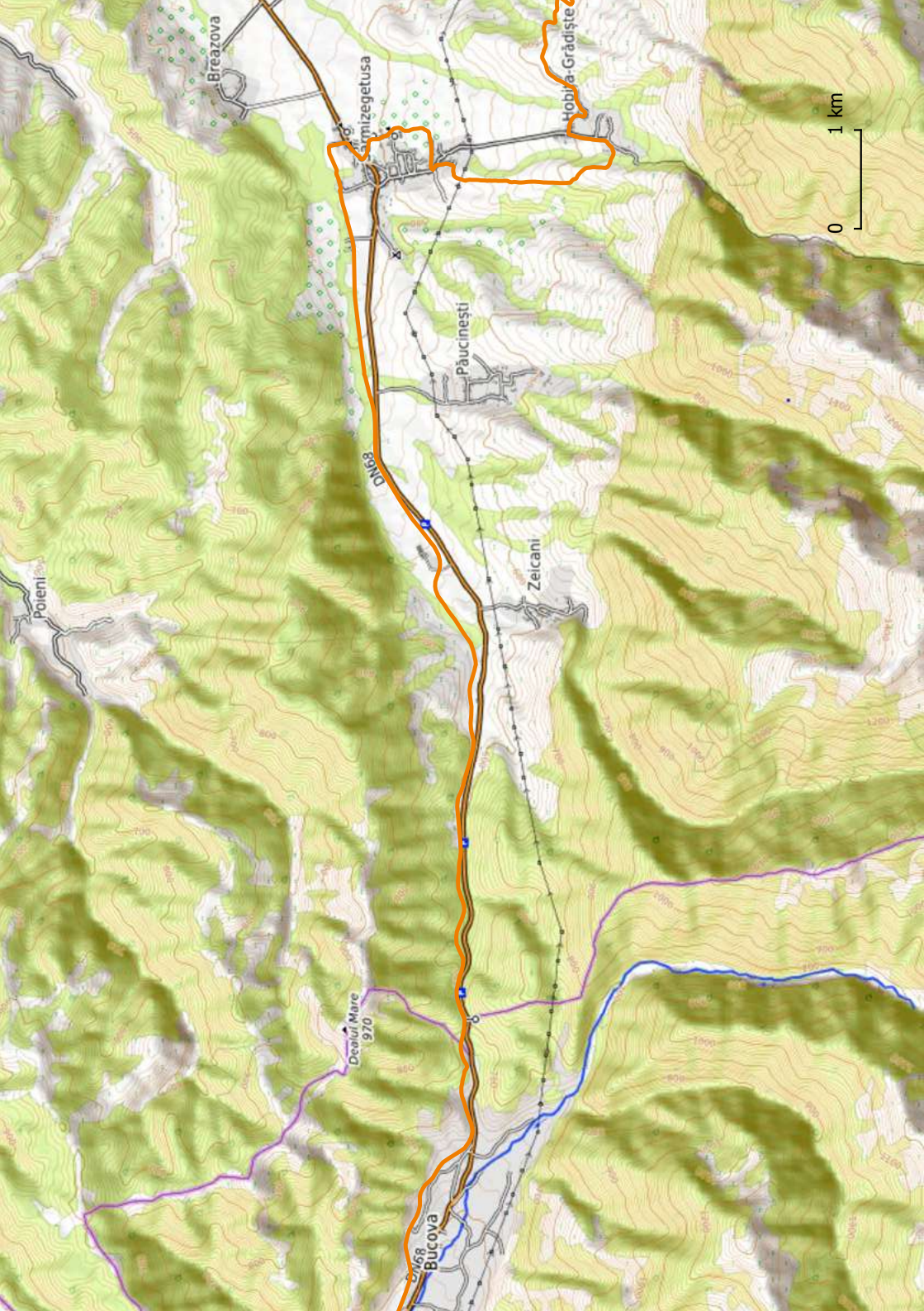
Note:

Being a short route out of Hunedoara County, the first part of the day can be reserved for sightseeing in Ulpia Traiana (1), which takes up at least 3 hours in the morning.

Then you walk along the trail to the former local train station and start your way out of Terra Dacica, on the former railway, now laid out for hikers and cyclists, with small passes through properties, where people have stretched their claws over state land, perhaps a little too far, given a disused and unused railway. But it has now been given a new role, and serves the hikers on the Via Transilvanica, those who can walk it and admire the change in scenery, remember the one at the beginning of the county and compare it with the one at the end of the county. The subjective opinion of the team is that the magical atmosphere of these places is preserved until the Iron Gates of Transylvania, perhaps even after, because here, the mountains and hills take mystical shapes and fascinate with their peaks, which stand like gates through which one passes from the Hațeg Country into the Banat region. They may even remind you of the spines of junipers or dinosaur crests, with all the values and discoveries of the area taking shape even geographically. The epic end of this chapter happens by walking for about 10 kilometers on the former railway, contemplating on our country's past, on our roots, on our ancestors, on the heritage we have received from them, from the universe, from nature or from God, on how this heritage should be cherished, not only by ourselves but by every human passing through these sacred places and forming a spiritual communion with them. This contemplation teaches us how to live the everyday life, returning to it after we have marveled at the divine power, becoming more humble, receptive, open, patient, attentive, focused and simply put, better.

Info:

Former railway line – The rugged terrain and steep slopes of the Iron Gates of Transylvania (the passage from the Western to the Southern Carpathians, or the link between the Bistra Corridor and the Depression of Hațeg), imposed as a technical solution, the construction



Breazova

Sarmizegetusa

Hobuș-Građiște

Păucinești

Zeicani

Bucova

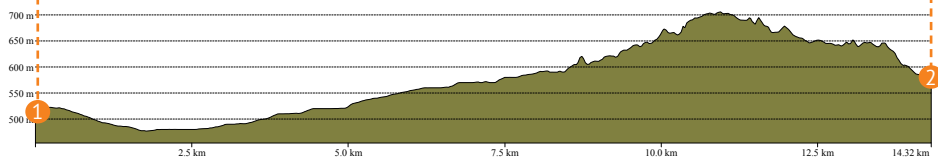
Dealul Mare
970



1 Sarmizegetusa Ulpia



Bucova 2



of a cogwheel railway, which operated between 1908 and 1978 and was served only by steam locomotives. Today the railway section of line 211 between Subcetate and Băuțari is disused. The Via Transilvanica route follows in the footsteps of this old railway line, where today there is little evidence that trains ever passed through.

The Iron Gates of Transylvania – The Iron Gates of Transylvania, the area where the ancient settlement of Tapae was located, has preserved the story of some of the famous ancient battles. Of course, this is only a guess, because no thorough research has been done, especially not in the wooded area. We consider the Iron Gates of Transylvania as a crossing between the regions of Transylvania and Banat, between Hunedoara and Caraș-Severin counties.



Places to find Via Transilvanica stamps:

Valea Lungă

- Agropensiunea Ioana, tel. +40 751 624 889 (Ioana)

Blaj

- Roa GuestHouse, tel. +40 759 110 011
- Pensiunea Montana Popa, tel. +40 755 742 717

Secășel

- Parish House, tel. +40 765 155 870 (Priest Paul Mican)

Alba Iulia

- Hotel Transilvania, tel. +40 258 812 052 or +40 721 291 709
- Matia Resort, tel. +40 786 803 496
- Casa Tâmplarului, tel. +40 768 036 636 (Daniel Roman)

Sebeș

- Hotel Leul de Aur, tel. +40 771 136 525
- Hotel Clasic, tel. +40 755 063 985

Pianu de Sus

- Pension Iedera, tel. +40 764 503 384 (Liviu) or +40 769 621 315 (Maria).
- Casa Artemis, tel. +40 744 560 411
- Casa Dives, tel. +40 751.882.384 (Gabriel Altomi)

Vinerea

- Cabanele Mihălțan, tel. +40 747 067 610 (Corina Mihălțan)

Cugir

- Hotel President, tel. +40 754 707 990
- Brutăria Lae Pecu, tel. +40 773 933 054
- Bar Turist Caffè, Tel. +40 766267339 (Țîrlea Vasile Ștefan - Billy), at 400m from the route

Ciungu Mare

- Nicușor Urtoiu, Tel. +40 765 173 289 or on WhatsApp
- Casa Dinu, +40 761 895 469, and whatsapp +40 737 957 794
- Radu Nasta, Tel. +40 720 879 966 (at 600m from the route)

Măgureni

- Cabana Uia La Gelu, Tel. +40 726 224 478 (Gelu Samoilă) and Tel. +40 762 281 083 (Adriana Lăscoiu) (at 400m from the route)
- Casa Țambă, tel. +40 763 656 444 (Țambă Aurelian) (200 m from the trail)

Sarmizegetusa Regia

- Popasul dacilor, Tel. +40 740 776 316 (Marius Ciobanu)
- Căsuța din Valea Regilor – Tel. +40 726 506 608 (Andreea Stănilă)

Fundătura Ponorului

- Sălașu lui Nea Costică, Tel. +40 755 280 129 (Ion Murgoi) or Tel. +40 744 402 262 (Mărioara Murgoi)
- Sălașu la Hoțul Mic, Tel. +40 753 091 996.

Hobița

- Village store, opening hours: Monday-Saturday 7:00-21:00, Tel. +40 752 117 162 (Eva Dănilă)
- Church of the Holy Spirit in Râu Bărbat, Tel. 0748 036 416 (Priest Cristian Florea)

Nucșoara

- La moșu-n Retezat, Tel. +40 771 367 189 (Moș Mircea)
- Căsuțele din Retezat, Tel. +40 769 649 845 (Dana Croitoru) (at 200m from the route)
- Casa Cânda Guesthouse (Sălașu de Sus), Tel. +40 770 981 600 (at 3.5km from the route)

Sarmizegetusa Ulpia Traiana

- Sarmis Pension, Tel. +40 744 794 051 (Varvara Cristian) (at 100m from the route)
- Casa Britonia, Tel. +40 720 891 775 (Eliza)

TERRA BANATICA

Terra Banatica is the Latin name of Banat, a re-gion of our country also known by two names: the historical Banat and the Romanian one. The historical Banat, also called "the land between the rivers" with the Mureş River in the north, the Tisza in the west, the Danube in the south and the Cerna River in the east together with the Godeanu and Ţarcu mountains and finally the Transylvanian Iron Gates, located between Ţarcu and Poiana Ruscă mountains. Today, the western third of Banat belongs to Serbia and in part, to Hungary, with two-thirds belonging to Romania. The Romanian Banat makes up most of Caraş-Severin County (which also includes the Orşova area), Timiş and Arad. The Mountainous Banat is the area crossed by Via Transilvanica Trail, which enters through the Iron Gates of Transylvania in Caraş-Severin County, crossing a part of the "Gugulan country", dwellings in the mountains and hills of the National Parks with secular forests, meeting Nera with her cool shadows and mountain streams with old green moss.

Caraş-Severin is the county with 15 ethnic minorities (Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, Croats, Serbs, Roma, Czechs, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Lipovan Russians, Turks, Bulgarians, Jews, Poles and Italians), which stands as an example for a peaceful coexistence and preserving the language and culture of each community which can be seen at each celebration and Feast Day of the villages. Terra Banatica, the huge drainage basin, where water from all the mountain peaks gather, will remain as a strong memory and will certainly be a place that the traveler will want to return to. It is the land of fast rivers, magical meadows with colorful flowers, sharp, Dorian gray rocks, mysterious caves and water mills, the enchanted land of secular beech forests and thermal waters, ghost villages or the declining Pemi.

In this area the beauty of nature dominates, the forests, the small villages with the specific archi-tecture in the few localities or in big cities through which one passes. One will be warmly welcomed by the locals who will offer you some homemade brandy while enjoying the peace of the places and the "Banat language". 232 kilometers of peace, little civilization, bad mobile coverage, but a chance to meditate safely through dense forests and meadows with the scent of flowers. The routes are long, but invite for innu-merable discoveries while travelling safely without being threatened by anyone or anything.

Terra Banatica is the land where many stories were born and are waiting to be told through the wind that rustles among the multitude of colorful flowers, the lemon thyme or the secular beech trees. It is a place that will keep inviting you to come back!

ATTENTION

In the whole area of Caraş-Severin County, apart from the larger localities, one will mainly have mobile phone coverage on Vodafone, otherwise the signal is weak or non-existent, especially on the trail in forests and in some meadows. Please download an offline track, phone app or any other way of showing the Via Transilvanica route without internet.

There is NO danger of wild animals (large carnivores), but in the last year a few bears have re-turned! Further south, pay attention to the horned viper, in this area this species of viper is common!

Sheep or free roaming dogs are not a danger here, the locals and those who guided us, spoke kindly to them and whistled lightly to calm their barking. Beware of the shy dogs that may follow the traveler - one has to drive them away to dis-courage their "transhumance" of tens of kilometers, far from their home and with little chance of finding their way back to their owner.

If hiking is done in the summer, in the hot months, it is recommended to use sunscreen with high factor protection, a hat, and plenty of water for hydration. In case of hiking after a rainy period, it is recommended to use a spray against mosquitoes and ticks!

For people suffering from allergies like hay fever, it is recommended to take the necessary medication as there are high levels of allergens in the air, especially in meadows and mountain pas-tures.

For those wishing to travel throughout Caraş-Severin County by bike, there is the possibility to rent mountain bikes or electric bikes from www.romountainbike.ro, or by phone: +40 726 187 399, contacting Cătălin Gavrilă. The bikes can be delivered and picked up anywhere in the county.

Route: Easy

Elevation difference: +189m

Critical spots: Asphalt road crossings require attention; one follows the old railway lines - which is a quite rocky path

Scenery: The trail follows the former railway line, surrounded by mountains, the villages are very close to the path in case you need water, one will cross roads and pass through localities, extraordinary views. These places are called The Iron Gates of Transylvania and make the transition from Hunedoara County to Caraş-Severin County;

ATTENTION: For any emergencies related to accommodation, transport, accidents, recoveries, advice, or general help, please call: +40 766 445 214, Nicolae Beg, Mayor of Marga commune!

Accommodation:

Marga:

Alex Pension (former name Ana), 20 places, double rooms, apartment, restaurant, reservations by phone +40 730 665 000 (Nea Goe);

The Garden Cottages, accommodation in cottages with their own kitchen, serving meals on request, reservations by phone +40 745 140 175 (Olimpia Ursescu);

Sunset Terrace, restaurant, reservations by phone +40 740 206 254.

Infrastructure:

Bucova: 

Bouţari: 

Marga: 

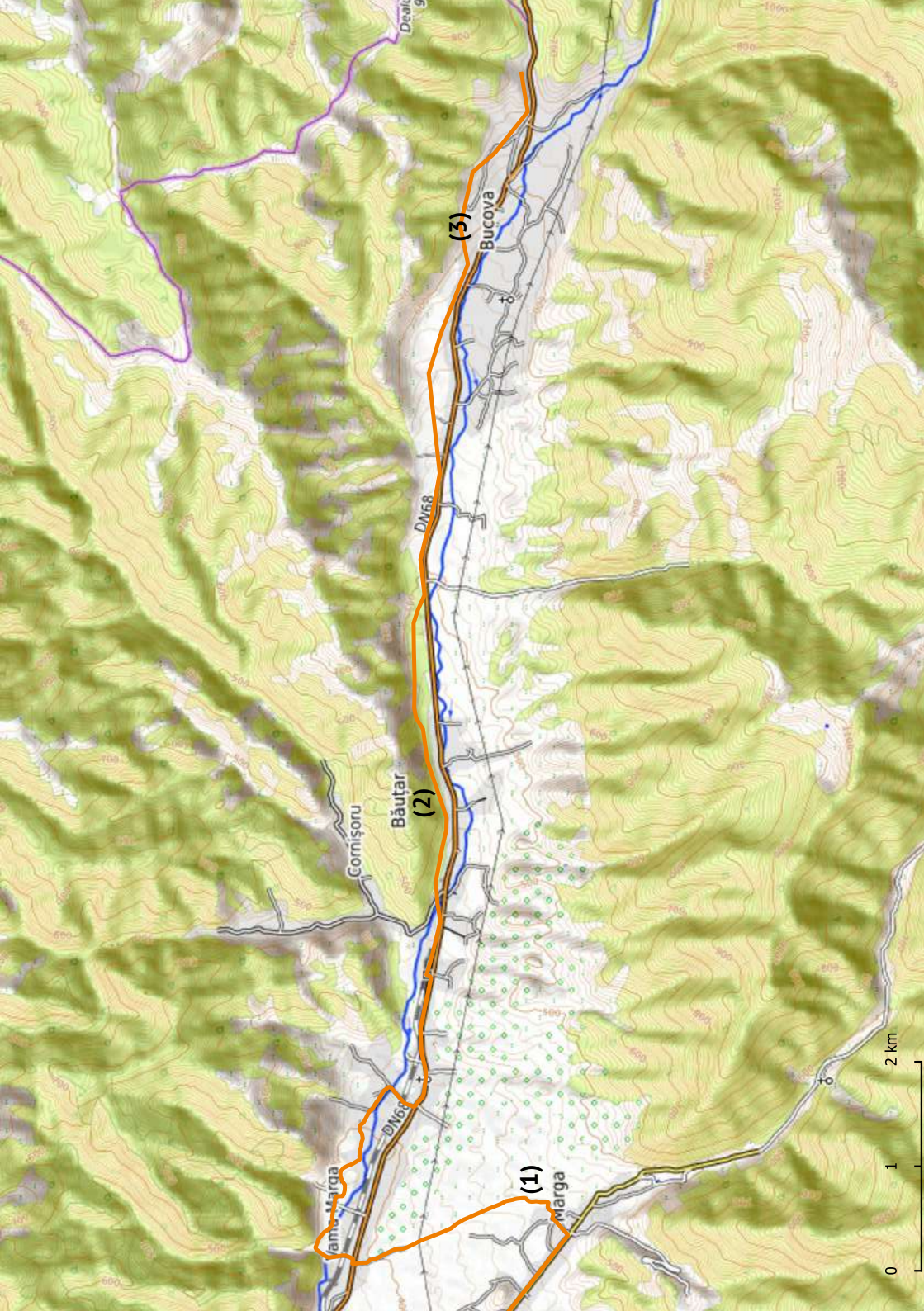
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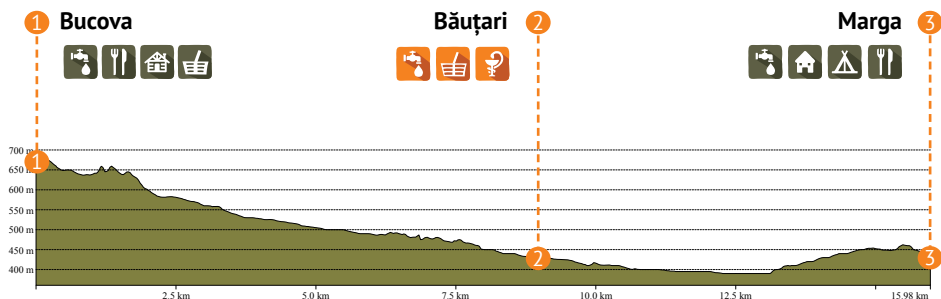
The trail enters Caraş-Severin County, meandering through the high and rugged hills, with forests that seem to wrinkle their peaks, which is reminiscent - of the "Dacian caps" (pileus, similar with Phrygian caps) or in some other way, of the word "gugulean", because their form somehow has the shape of the word. On entering the Gugulan country, one will see the forested hills in the form of the Dacian cap.

At the border between the two counties there is a sign with words of welcome to Băuţar and the flag of Romania. To the right, follow the road ascending and then take a left that guides one far above the village where one will see the reddish orange roofs.

One will walk on a road with stones that seem to be coming out of the fresh earth while passing in front of some small and colorful brick houses. On both sides of the road you can see the acacias that line the former railway, an embankment that is now transformed into a road for people who cross the Via Transilvanica on foot, by bicycle or on horseback. Maybe one will need to open a gate on the way which keeps the animals that graze quietly at the foot of the rugged hills in their pasture or maybe even one has to pass under an electric fence.

The road will narrow and then widen, then it will get almost dark due to the trees that line it and when it brightens it will show a picturesque landscape. Right at the beginning,





on the left, above the village, one can see a seemingly torn strip of mountain, like a very short ski slope, with a kind of embankment. This is the BRUA gas pipeline which starts in Bulgaria and ends in Austria. Further on one reaches the village cemetery, crowned with its Greek-Catholic church before continuing on in the pleasant shade of acacias.

There are about 4 and a half kilometers of walking on the beautifully arranged road, which smells of the railway embankment, i.e. of burnt oil with which the oak railroad ties of the embankment were treated. It's a strange feeling that makes one think of one's childhood when jumping from one beam to another between the rails, exactly that smell and memory dominates the air throughout this route.

Keep following the trail down to the left and follow the route that is a few meters from the main road, being attentive to the passing traffic. The sister roads will go alongside for about a 1km, after which they again separate and move away from each other. The route rises again above the village, to the right, offering better visibility over the area. In the next two and a half kilometers one passes by the cemetery, behind the orthodox church, behind wellkept orchards, past flocks of sheep with their shepherd next to them and behind the backyards of the houses.

We pass the kilometer stone CS 010 at the intersection of the path with the local road to Cornișoru and we follow the markings on the left, cross and walk alongside national road for about 200m, then cross back to meet again the embankment road. Another half kilometer will bring us at the former rail station and then back to the main asphalt road. We are now in Băuțari and walk on the left-hand side of the national road for more than one kilo-meter. After passing a kilometer stone (placed across the road) the trail turns left on an unpaved road. After 500m we reach an open field with excellent view of the mountains and head towards Marga, the end of today's route.

Note:

Gugulan Land – Gugulan Land gets its name from Gugu Peak (2,229 m), the highest peak in Banat, where the legend says there was the sanctuary of the Dacian god Zamolxis. The toponym "gugu" refers to a mountain peak in the shape of a cone. The Gugulans are personalized by their specific dialect, proof of a Dacian origin, the faith in immortality of pre - Christianity, unchanged customs for centuries and last but not least, the fame of selling the best apples and pears.

From a geographical point of view, the Gugulan Land extends entirely throughout the territory of Caraș-Severin County. Two of the three sides meet in Caransebeș, following

the river valleys of Bistra and Timiș, up to the Eastern Gate, between Teregova and Domașnea. The third side meets in the area of Teregova, following the river Hideg upstream and then the border line of the Godeanu and Țarcu mountains, to the Iron Gates of Transylvania. It has a population of 62,000 inhabitants and includes a number of 48 localities, of which Caransebeș municipality, Oțelu Roșu town and 13 communes with 33 villages: Armeniș, Băuțar, Bolvașnița, Buchin, Bucova, Glimboca, Marga, Obreja, Rusca Montană, Slatina Timiș, Teregova, Turnu Ruieni and Zăvoi.

During the Dacian-Roman wars, but also later, when the times were hard and the invaders were destroying everything they came across, the people of the region used to hide in the valleys and meadows between the mountains, where they took care of the sheep grazing. Gugulans are distinguished by a rich folklore, their trade in apples, pears, plums, quinces and walnuts, but also by the famous physical beauty of men and women. The houses are without fences, with Dacian architecture, on one level, combined with the style of border houses.

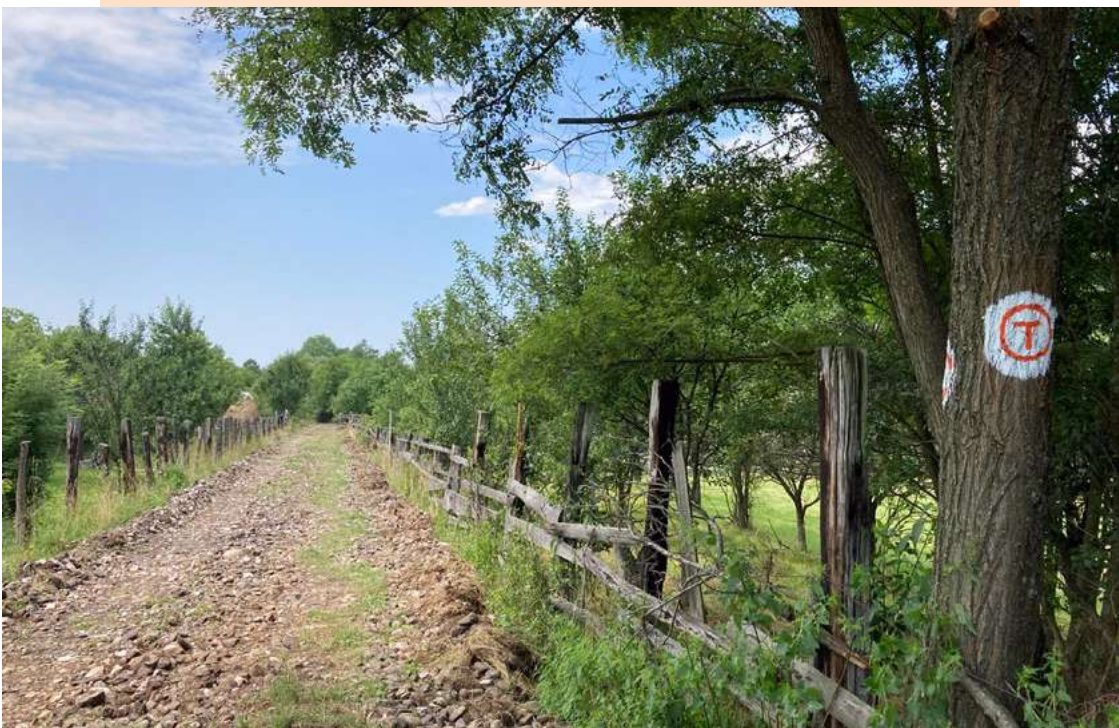
Pons Augusti (Marga) – From Zăvoi, the old Roman road leads to the Pons Augusti camp and bridge (Podul Împăratului), near Marga. Here was a customs point for the transition from intracarpethian Dacia to the provinces south of the Danube. Near Pons Augusti camp there are traces of a civil settlement, an altar dedicated to the god Mars and the goddess Nemesis. Also in Marga you can see traces of gold mining from Roman times.

Feast day of Marga – “Feast day” is the village holiday, each village/commune having its own holiday once a year. In the village of Marga the feast day is held yearly on July 20, the Day of Saint Elijah the Prophet in the Greek Orthodox calendar.

Feast day of Băuțar – In Băuțar, this is held on July 20, on St. Elijah's Day.

Feast day of Bucova – In Bucova, this is held on October 26, on St. Demetrius Day.

Feast day of Vama Marga – In Vama Marga, this is held on June 29, by the Day of Holy Apostles Peter and Paul.



Route: easy

Elevation difference: -179 m

Critical spots: Over the meadows with scattered trees, make sure to have provisions of water, sun-screen and insect repellent;

Scenery: Meadows with tall grass and scattered trees, birch forest, a long section is following the railway and next to the industrial area of Oțelu Roșu.

Accommodation:

Oțelu Roșu: Hotel Fiama, 10 double rooms, 10 single rooms, horse stables, restaurant nearby. Reservations by phone +40 742 907 405 (Dana).

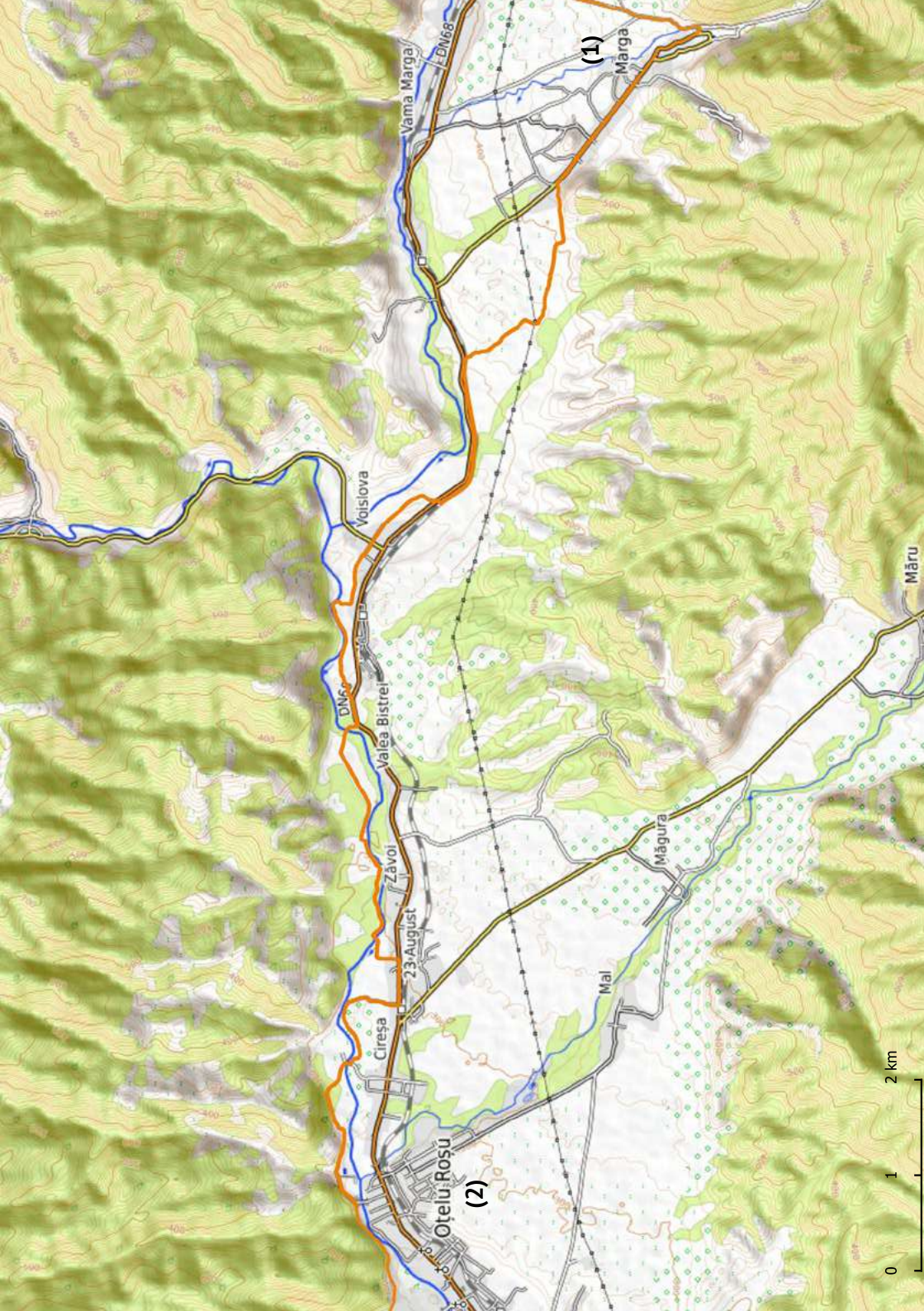
Gura Jgheabului Tourist Complex, 30 accommodation places, double, triple or apartment rooms, restaurant, playground, swimming pool, sauna, barbecue place, horse shelter and parking places for trailers and caravans. Reservations on tel. +40 744 652 004 (Adrian Lungu).

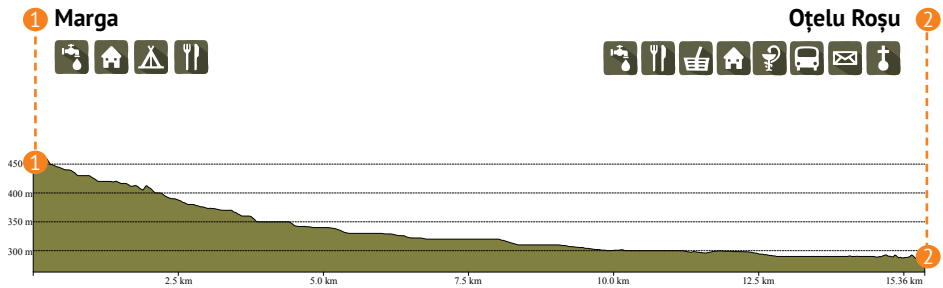
Infrastructure:

Oțelu Roșu: 

Note:

After starting the trail again from the village of Marga (1), one leaves the village into the meadows on a grassy country road. At the exit of the village, the markings lead slightly to the left, which passes through the long unworked meadows of the locals. The grass is tall and wild, if one wants to caress it, it may sting and scratch their skin. We continue on this path, which winds to the right and to the left, through fields of huge ferns or “forests” of birches, where it is said that people come to harvest birch sap that is very healthy. It is well known that birch sap helps various diseases and is used to cleanse and detoxify the body, especially at the beginning of the spring. Continue on, making a little noise, because rumor has it, there is a mother bear (Viorica) with cubs in the area. With song and good cheer while moving quickly, we continue on the dirt road that widens and deepens, a sign that “mud ponds” are formed after heavy rains. The trail then reaches the road to be crossed with caution, and along the side of which you walk for a few more metres to the dusty path that leads to the right of the road, past trees, cork trees or rich bushes, which provide some shade on sunny days. Walk along this wider path, among fields of corn, again at the head of gardens, past fences, behind which distant farms can be seen. You then reach the village of Voislova, where you cross the middle of the village on asphalt. At a closer look, the old houses have small stained-glass patterns on their windows, which make the frame of the window glass, adorning them. You head straight out of the village, along the trail markers, again behind the local courtyards. On the left you will see several households, the towers of a church, walking through trees, sometimes in the shade, sometimes in the sun, through fields of corn, winding up to the asphalt again. Here you walk about 100 metres along the roadside, with great caution, then re-enter the woodland to the right and walk parallel to the river for a while longer. You will be able to see a marble processing factory, still in operation, on the left,





where clouds of white dust rise as trucks leave the yard loaded. Then continue along the glades, through the meadows, the local people's gardens or scraped trees, the groves and bushes, and go on for about two and a half kilometres to Zăvoi. Here you turn right, on asphalt, following the markings to the road that you cross at the pedestrian crossing. You can take a refreshment break at the village shops. Here, turn right, on asphalt, following the markings to the pedestrian crossing. Here, one walks on the righthand side of the village, crosses the river Bistra and passes between trees, crossing a few streams and if possible avoiding mud for about 3 and a half kilometers, to Gura Jgheabului. The walk will be pleasant because it is done on a dirt road, with trees that create shade. Moreover, it is flat and the area is already largely open. At Gura Jgheabului there is also a beautiful fountain with a well-maintained spring, from where one can fill up for the next journey by the industrial area of the Oțelu Roșu city.

This adventure will be a very interesting one, because on the left there are the huge skeletons of the steel and iron smelting plants and factories and on the right, cemeteries of rusted machines, trucks and cars. These areas are very reminiscent of the Strugatsky brothers' book "Roadside Picnic", or Tarkovsky's film "Stalker", the gray towers and chimneys, the dilapidated buildings that are still held by several metal constructions, furnaces and halls, as if there are some that create the feverish state of hallucinations under the influence of radioactive rays. Of course, the place is not dangerous from this point of view, it was just one of the very polluted places after the opening of the factory. This "iron belt" of the city is followed for about three and a half kilometers, but the end of this day must be in the city, as tomorrow one starts from here with fresh powers.

Note:

Oțelu Roșu – At the end of the 18th century, the settlers majority of German origin, coming from Reșița and Bocșa, built metal workshops on the right bank of the Bistra, building "Colonia Veche" - the nucleus of the future city of Oțelu Roșu. It can be seen, given the favorable climate, that these lands were inhabited since ancient times. Thus, in antiquity, the "Roman road from Lederata to Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa" passed through the Bistra Valley and flint objects dating from the Upper Paleolithic were found on the outskirts of the city. The researcher Mircea Rus mentions that between 6th-11th centuries, among the 32 localities in Banat from which gold was extracted, there was also Ohaba Bistra, on the foundations of which the current city, Oțelu Roșu, was formed. Emperor Joseph II of Austria-Hungary paid a visit to Banat in 1773 and noted the military company Ohaba

Bistra for discipline. A few years later, near Ferdinand Hill, an iron processing forge was built. While the factory is run by Ferdinand Hoffman, “Colonia Veche” is founded and amongst the group of houses in the area of the factory and the bridge at Cireșă, it is worth noting the building “Villa” which served as a school. During the Second World War, the localities of Ohaba Bistra and Ferdinand merged, but after 1945 they returned to their original form. During communism period, the name was changed to Oțelu Roșu (“The Red Steel”), to be in tune with the new times. Today, the city’s population is about 13,000 inhabitants who, by nationality, are Romanians (majority), Germans, Hungarians, Italians, Slovaks, Roma, Ukrainians, Turks, Jews and Serbs.

Oțelu Roșu Metalworking Plant – Oțelu Roșu was a well-known center of metalworking industry. Attested for the first time in 1796, during the Habsburg Empire, the plant has been continuously developed and modernized over more than 200 years of existence. The last modernization took place in 1996 and aimed at improving the technological process of rolling. After the failure of the privatization with the Gavazzi brothers, the main assets were bought by a former tenant, Ductil Steel Buzău. Today, the plant is a ruin, reminiscent of the prosperity of yesteryear.



Route: Easy to moderate

Elevation difference: +401 m

Critical spots: When walking through forests, you need to pay attention to wildlife. On asphalt roads, pay attention to traffic, more water is needed on hot days, springs are missing but water can be requested from locals in the villages along the route;

Scenery: Forest paths, hills, unpaved roads or asphalt, going through villages and making the transition from rural to urban.

Accommodation:

Glimboca: Pension Aurmar, 20 beds, dinner and breakfast on request, free camping with tent, supermarket nearby, reservations at +40 762 655 847 (Ionuț Pascotă).

Caransebeș: Hotel Kolpinghaus, 52 places in single, double and triple rooms, restaurant. Reservations by phone: +40 757 021 721, +40 757 021 719.

Good to know: Caransebeș offers multiple accommodation possibilities for all budgets. If there are no places available at the mentioned point, we recommend searching the internet. It is recommended that the overnight stay be as close as possible to the trail.

Infrastructure:

Caransebeș:



Glimboca:

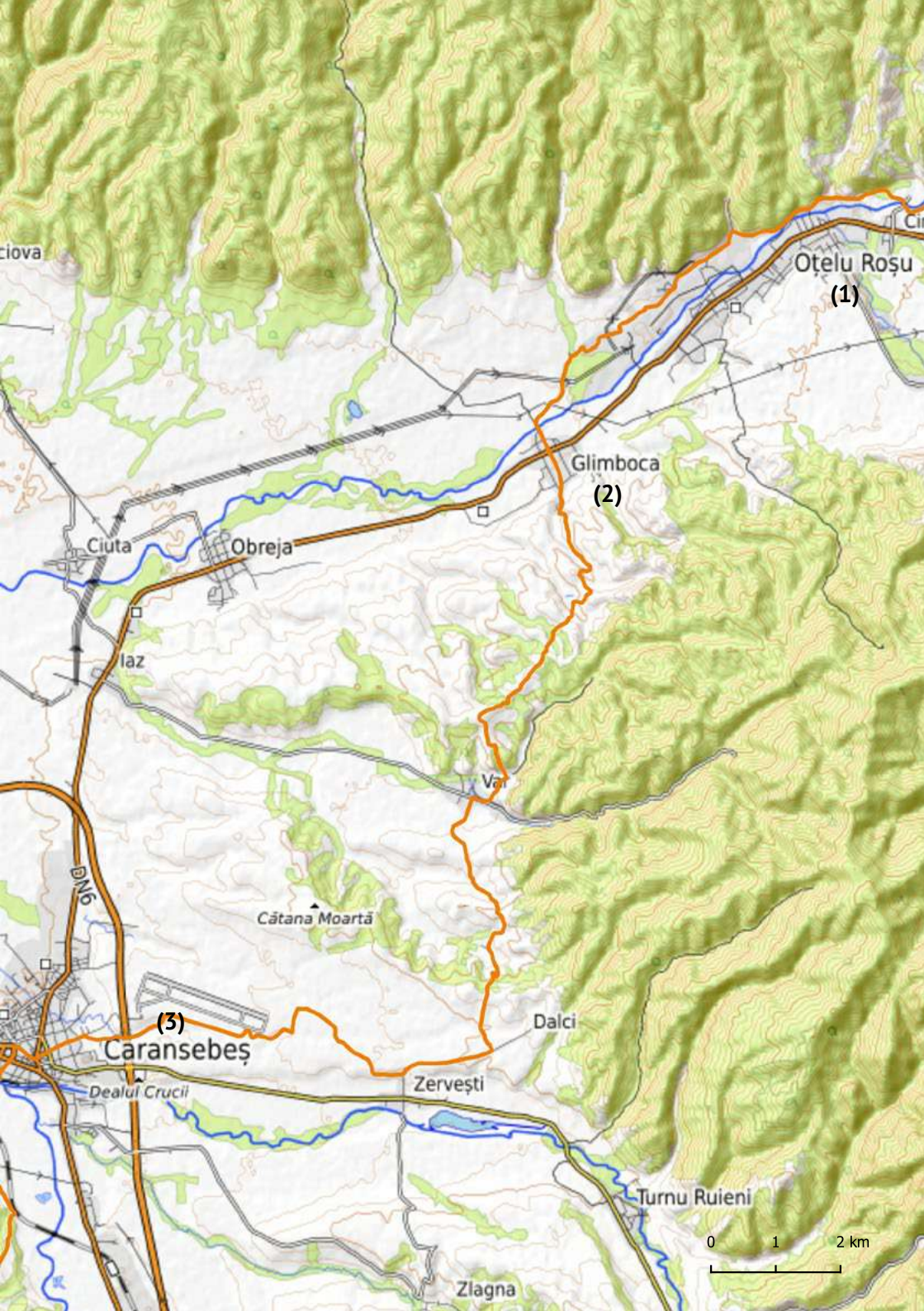


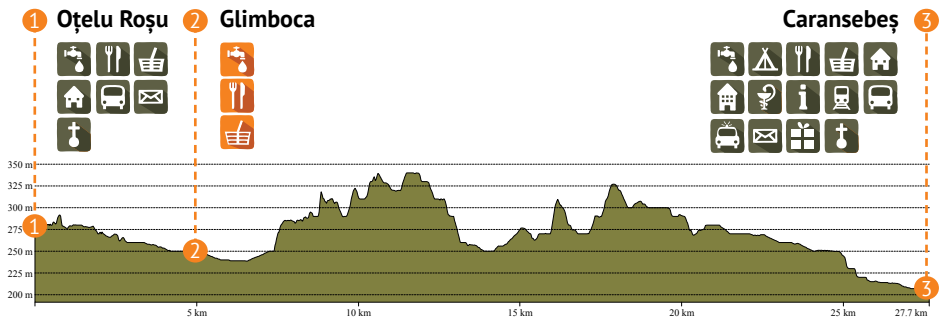
Note:

A new day on Via Transilvanica will start in the city, looking for the markings or resuming the route from where one left it, more precisely, on the "iron belt" of the city, in the industrial area. For about two and a half kilometers one will walk among the settlements and a landscape with trees and greenery after leaving the gray area, until you enter the asphalt and walk on it as you cross the Bistra river on a large concrete bridge.

Right after the bridge, on the left is the Musa Restaurant, a perfect place for lunch or a cold drink, however it is not open on Mondays. After the bridge, one enters directly into the village of Glimboca (2), where one will walk through the houses of the locals. Banat houses are beautiful to look at, they







present many aspects and information about the people's way of life. Following the markings, one crosses the main road and follows it to the center of the village - approx. 1 kilometer and a half.

Then, after crossing a valley and turning right, the landscape will be green, among the well-known "fern forests" that will be found more and more often in this county and until Drobeta-Turnu Severin. The trail passes through huge bushes and ferns and from time to time a sudden and surprising ascent or descent as one crosses streams amongst the frequent shadows. After about 4 kilometers of walking, one will reach a descent to the right leading to the village of Var, which waits quietly and white for a few hundred meters. Once you reach the main road, turn right again towards the center of the village, passing the first house. Then, from the center, turn left until you come out of it. After the exit, at about 200 meters, turn left and then, after another 500 meters, leave the road again and continue through the meadows, hills and orchards.

Between Var and Dalci one will follow an unpaved road among scattered trees for several kilometers, seasoned with short ascents and descents and a few streams. You also pass a Baptist church, in the village of Cicleni, after which, in 400 meters, there is a slightly more difficult ascent of about 200 meters. Then there is only one kilometer left until the descent into the village of Dalci, from where one can already see the football field grinning in the sun on the right as one descends to the communal road. From here, take the exit from Dalci village on the right, pass in front of the football field on the road, leaving the village behind.

About a kilometer away, in the direction of Zervești village, a loop made by the road is cut, leaving Zervești on the left of the walking direction, reaching it only by sight. The route does not enter here either, but continues on the road, going slightly to the right through the border, on the field, among rare, groves. After almost 2 kilometers you reach and cross a beautiful and dense forest, but very small. Once there, one suddenly turns left for another 500 meters and then to the right for another 200 and left again, next to a stream that meanders to the left. From here one can already see the airport in front, but there is still little way to go. One will get close to it. Turn left and pass the Police post on the right. After about a kilometer and a half, one reaches the airport buildings, which will be left on the right, the route continues to the left along the Potoc brook. Then passes under the suspended ring road, and then, over about 500 meters one will find the first street of Caransebeș (3), on the route. From here, there are several options for accommodation close to the trail and Caransebeș is waiting to be discovered by a walk.

Info:

Feast day of Glimboca – In Glimboca, the feast day is held on August 15 for Saint Mary the Great, a holiday that also marks the transition from summer to autumn.

Feast day of Obreja - In Obreja, the feast day is held on June 29 for the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul.

Angus Cow Farm – Locals in Glimboca boast the world-famous Angus Cow Farm, which is popular worldwide for its tender meat. It is the first such farm in the whole county of Caraş-Severin.

Places to stop in Glimboca – At the school in Glimboca one can visit a museum that the locals are proud of and claim it is “as beautiful, if not more beautiful than the museum in Resita”. It is also worth asking about the locations of the Andesite Quarry, or the uranium mine, which may be better to remain unvisited.

Caransebeş Tourist Information Point – On the right hand side of the Ethnography Museum and of the Caransebeş Border Regiment there is the Tourist Information Point, which offers useful information with a large variety of informative material, maps and tips. You can also book a tour of the city guided by the girls from info point, free of charge and recommended by us. In the guided tour of the city we visited the synagogue and other important buildings, and learned from the guide a lot of useful and new information.

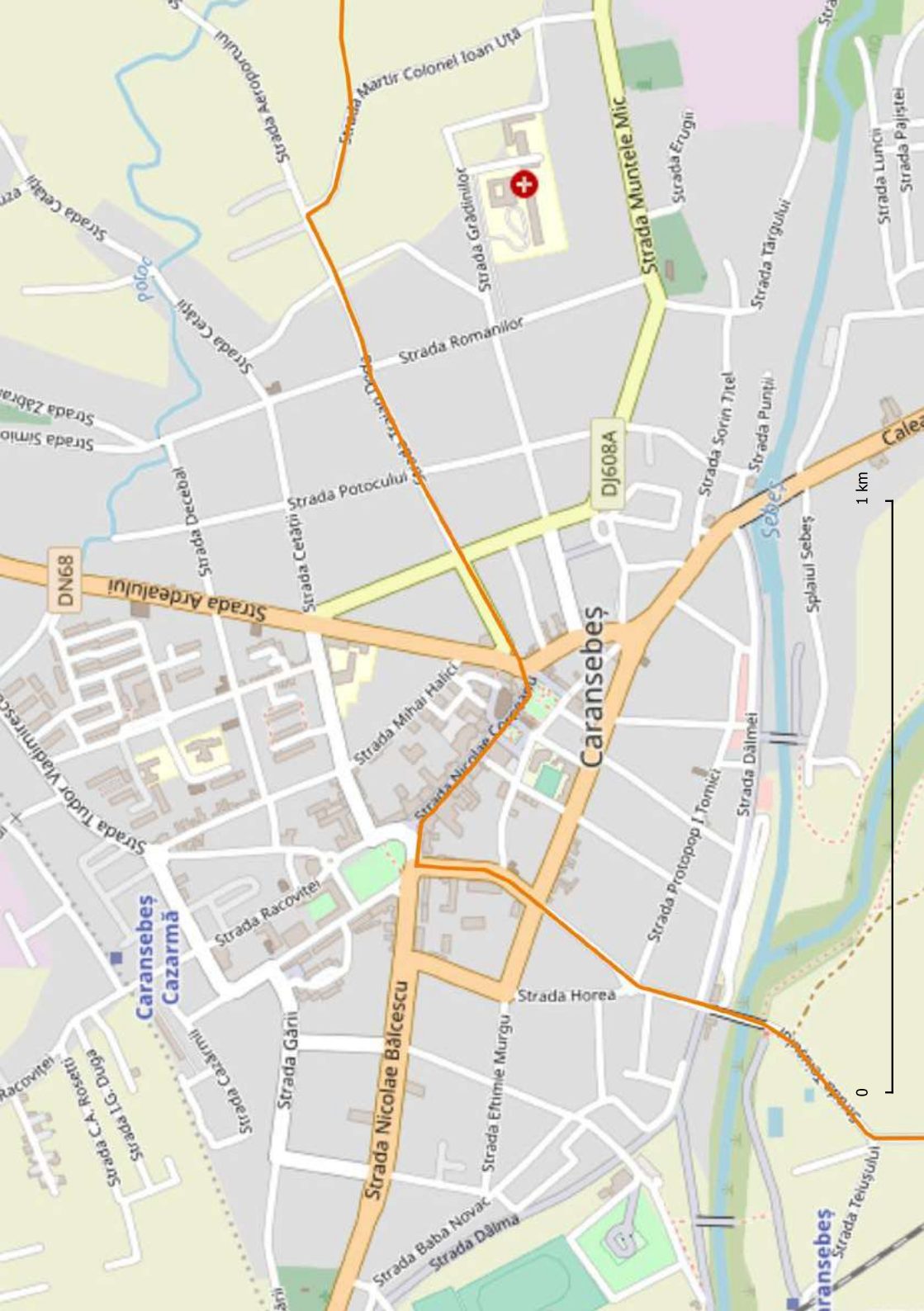
Teiuş Park – Teiuş Park is located at the confluence of the Sebeş and Timiş rivers and is called Teiuş, probably due to the linden forests that are found on the slopes of the hills in this area. As early as the first decades of the 19th century, mixed settlements began to be built, with small peasant homes and inn's. Around 1900, between the peasant houses,



a series of houses began to appear for recreational purposes. Between 1920 and 1933, a series of villas and summer residences were built to liven up the resort. So, visit Teiuș Park, a place for recreation of the Gugulans, with ionized air, the smell of lime, acacia and firs. Look for dairy products and honeycombs that have been well liked (and tasted) by tourists since 1932, when Teiuș was declared a climatic health resort. Unfortunately, after 1940 the decline of the resort began, and especially after 1948, the villas were confiscated and transformed into workers' houses. Later, after the Revolution in 1989, investments were made in the revitalization of this special place that is full of history.

Teiuș Sculpture Park - This park is an open-air museum, which hosts the International Sculpture Symposium every year at the end of summer. The park was built between 2003 and 2009, with 33 sculptures of oak. This number is not coincidental at all, but represents a religious reference, 33 being the age of Jesus on Earth. Visitors can admire the works like "Dreams carved in wood" and "Thoughts carved in wood". Both wood and marble are riches of the Mountainous Banat, which can explain to a large extent the concentration of sculptors and love for this art form in this area. So, after seeing the wooden sculptures in Teiuș Park, start walking through the Caransebeș squares to see the marble sculptures made during three editions of the Marble Sculpture Symposium. A total of 33 Rușchița marble sculptures were created by artists from Asia, Africa, South and North America, Europe and Romania.

Museum of Ethnography and the Border Regiment from Caransebeș - To understand the context of this museum, it is important to know that for a long time, the Mountainous Banat was "on the edge of the Empire". Walking from the city center to the Park with plane trees, you can see the Statue of General Ioan Dragalina. Continuing through the park from the statue, on an alley that divides the dendrological reservation in two, you reach the museum. The museum was established in 1962 in the building that was once the barracks of the Romanian - Banat Regiment no.13 from Caransebeș, built in 1753. Numerous collections such as the exhibition dedicated to Empress Elizabeth or the permanent exhibition of the Medieval Church, are completed by Tibiscum Archaeological Reserve from Jupa, located 6km from the current hearth of the city. This building that is home to the museum, is a sister to the building in the Bistrița-Năsăud County Museum, both being former buildings of the Border Regiments.



1 km

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Caransebeș

Sebeș

DN68

DJ608A

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Cazarmă

Caransebeș
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Strada Nicolae Bălcescu

Strada Protopop I Tomiț

Strada Mihai Hăliuc
Strada Nicolae Ceaușescu

Strada Horea

Strada Eftimie Murgu

Strada Baba Novac
Strada Dălmă

Strada Dălmăi

Splaiul Sebeș

Strada Teiușului

Calea

Strada Lunch
Strada Pajistei

Strada Tărgului

Strada Țrugii

Strada Muntele Mic

Strada Romanilor

Strada Potocului
Strada Cetății

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Strada Țugii

Route: easy and short

Elevation difference: +273m

Critical spots: There are very few on this stage. On the way out of the city, extra attention is required towards the road traffic, otherwise the markings are to be followed;

Scenery: Asphalt to the exit of the city and then again to the Monastery which is followed by paths and forest roads through the cool forest;

Accommodation:

Poiana (325 m alt):

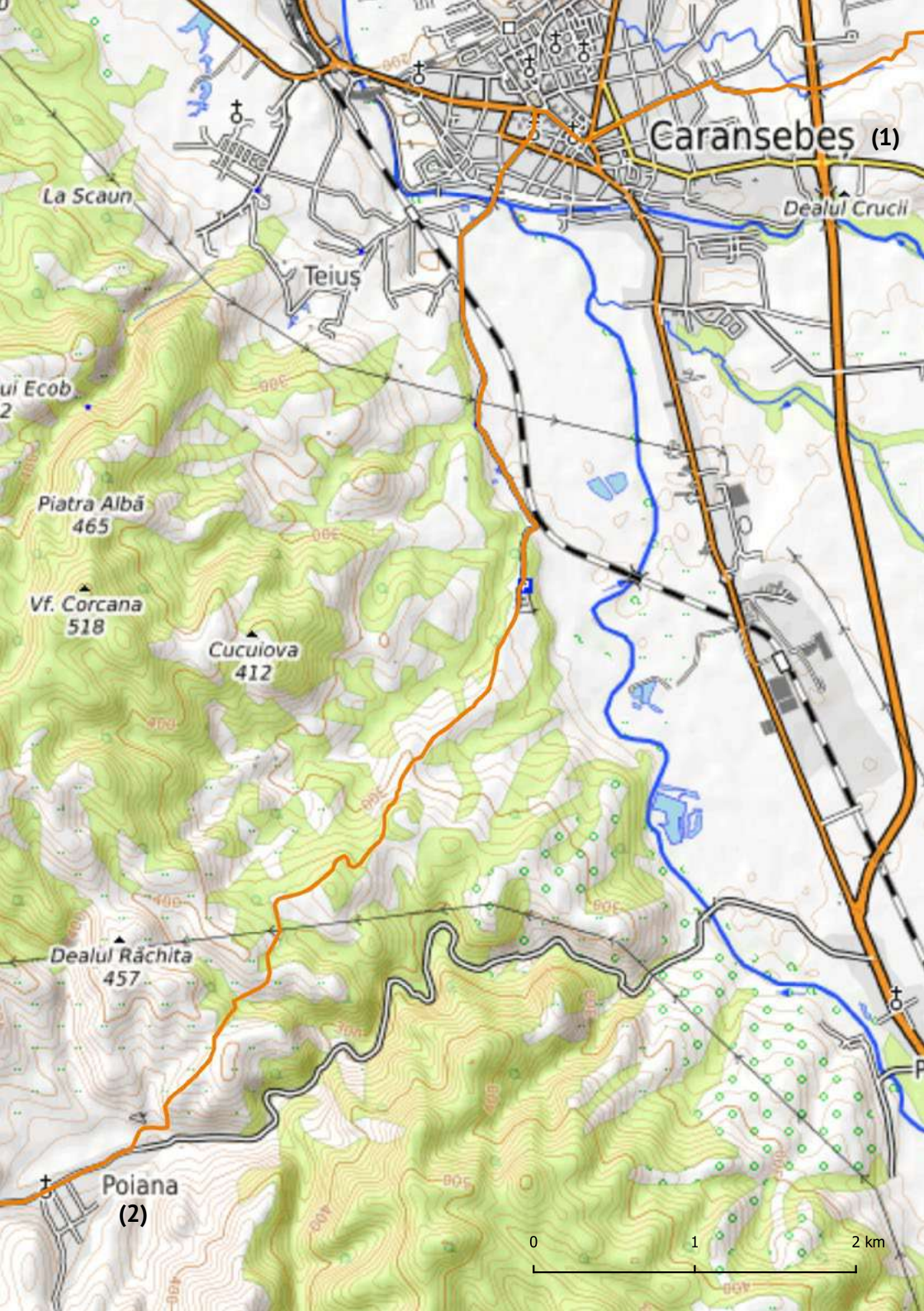
Pe Vale la Poiana, after leaving the village on the route, at a distance of 3.5km, in the hairpin curve that goes up to Lindenfeld, there is a sign with “Terasă și închiriere ATV-uri” (Terrace and ATV rental). Here you will find a campsite, accommodation, food and drinks. Accommodation: 2 rooms with bunk beds of 6 places each (total 12 beds), access to shower and toilet (shared), reservations by phone at +40 773 831 478, +40 763 149 049 (Mădălina Ștefănescu). Details on <https://www.facebook.com/peValelaPoiana>.

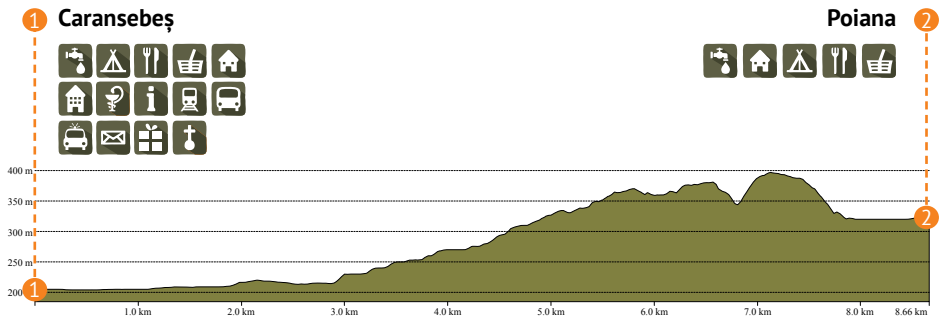
Infrastructure:

Poiana:     

Note:

Cross the town of Caransebeș (1) and follow the markings to the exit, where one will see the signs for the “Mănăstirea Adormirii Maicii Domnului Caransebeș Teiuș” (Monastery of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Caransebeș Teiuș), where the orange T will also lead. Before crossing the railway at the exit from the city, on the right there will be the “Teiuș Park” which one read above in the Info chapter above. About 650 meters after the city one crosses the railway, staying on the asphalt, walking for about 2 kilometers on the road leading to the monastery, which is lined by trees and bushes that provide shade, which is perfect in the hot summers. Then, the asphalt takes a right for about 500 meters in an easy ascent to the gate of the monas-tery. The route heads slightly right next to the wall, which then turns into a fence. The route gradually moves away from the sanctuary, on narrow, almost forested paths. Immediately behind the fence of the monastery there is a house where there are 3 dogs. Don't worry, they are friendly. Talk to them and there will be no problems. They may even accompany visitors until they cross their territory. Then the road continues and becomes a path, in fact two tracks separated by grass, nettles and other plants in abundance, especially after a rainy period, with fences on either side of the path or the cart track, which protect a few gardens. Here one will observe a number of different objects from equipment to tools, houses, roofs, flowers, vines and even dogs barking angrily. Continue on the path until it leaves the forest briefly, into a clearing before heading back into the forest, descending slightly. During this small descent, one can see a kind of micro - swamp/delta, with stagnant water forming a small lake, ideal for happy, bathing frogs and trees coming out of the water, where dry leaves lay on the luster of the lake. Dragonflies fly colorfully around and everything gives the sensation and smell of the Danube Delta, but an extremely





miniature version. The path continues uphill, through the forest that sometimes offers a wild cherry on the way, especially in the shady areas. After a while, one comes out of the thicket and one can see the village of Poiana on the left, not very far away. Then it continues on a dusty road, which, ahead, looks very similar to a “deep clay cauldron.” One continues on the path that descends more and more steeply as the signs of civilization begin with the well-known garbage (litter and other objects) thrown on the side of the road or even in the middle of it, such as a piece of a sofa that was waiting for us. There was no time to waste and after a few more meters of descent, one reaches the cemetery of Poiana village (2). Here the road turns slightly left, a road with small, round and light stones which leads to the center of the village. On the left an asphalt road that leads to the national road intersects with the current one. Continue on the route straight ahead, to the church and to the other end of the village with small houses, crowded, once dilapidated, long ago and as if waiting for newcomers to hear their stories. In Poiana it is worth sitting in front of the house in the evening, as locals do. The recommended accommodation is at 4-5 kilometers after Poiana, on the way to Lindenfeld.

Info:

Teiuș “Assumption” Monastery – Known as a “jewel of the Christian Banat”, the Teiuș Monas-tery is dedicated to the Assumption (August 15) and was founded in 1999. This place of worship is a testimony of the Orthodox faith in a period of Banat’s return to what were once the oldest Orthodox hermitages, which disappeared due to the unfortunate historical events and the Catholic expansion of the 11th and 12th centuries. The monastery is surrounded by a linden forest that gets one dizzy with it’s intense fragrant smell. The monastery looks like a fortress, like those in the area of Moldova, and in the center is the church. Although there is no written testimony about a monastic settlement near Caransebeș, the tradition passed down from generation to generation, recalls a “Green Cross” and a spring with water called “The Monk’s Spring”.

Feast of Sântămărie Mare (August 15) – This Christian holiday is a very important one for the people of Banat. Around this day, they have developed unique traditions and customs that tell a lot about the faith of the local people. On the morning of the feast, the women come to the monastery with flowers that they place on the Icon of the Mother of God and with bunches of grapes from the summer varieties. These “Grapes of Sântămărie” are used in August, to prepare the “grape koliva” which is offered to the faithful, but also to

the participating guests. There is also a custom at the Teiuș Monastery, through which the elders change the summer hat on their head, with the fur hat, as a sign of the passing of summer and the return to the autumn season and have this saying: “*Sântămărie has come, you leave your hat!*”

Muntele Mic and Poiana Mărului – Muntele Mic has a maximum height of 1,806m and offers unique views of the Romanian Carpathians. In summer, in nice weather, from Muntele Mic one can see to the east, all the peaks over 2,000m from Țarcu Mountains. Looking towards the sunset, one can see Timișoara and Timiș basin. If we look towards Zervești, we can see the Semenic mountain which is part of the Banat Mountains. The entire alpine pasture of 1,000ha stretches from 1,806m to 1,600m altitude. The easternmost rock formation of the plateau on Muntele Mic is Pietrele Scorilo, towards Poiana Mărului. In Poiana Mărului resort, health tourism is developed due to these four elements: naturally occurring ozone, negative ions, air purity and natural aerosols. Aerosols in the re-sort’s forests are made up of a mixture of water vapors, pollen particles and volatile oils emitted by fir, pine and spruce trees.



Route: moderate to difficult

Elevation difference: +1,198m

Critical spots: 80% of the route is a continuous climb, but easy. During the hot months, in summer, take more water than usual to keep hydrated, right from Pe Vale to Poiana, where, in the next yard, there is a fountain with cold water, under a mulberry tree with red fruits.

Scenery: Uphill forest roads, with little shade from the trees, dusty but with delicious strawberries, Lindenfeld offering wide and open views, then through cool forests and large meadows uphill to Gărâna.

Attention: Gărâna has become a cultural and musical center due to the International Jazz Festival, followed by other cultural and musical events, during which accommodation in the village can be problematic. We insist that hikers call early on for accommodation/rooms and/or tents, asking for support from locals to find other options if needed.

Accommodation:

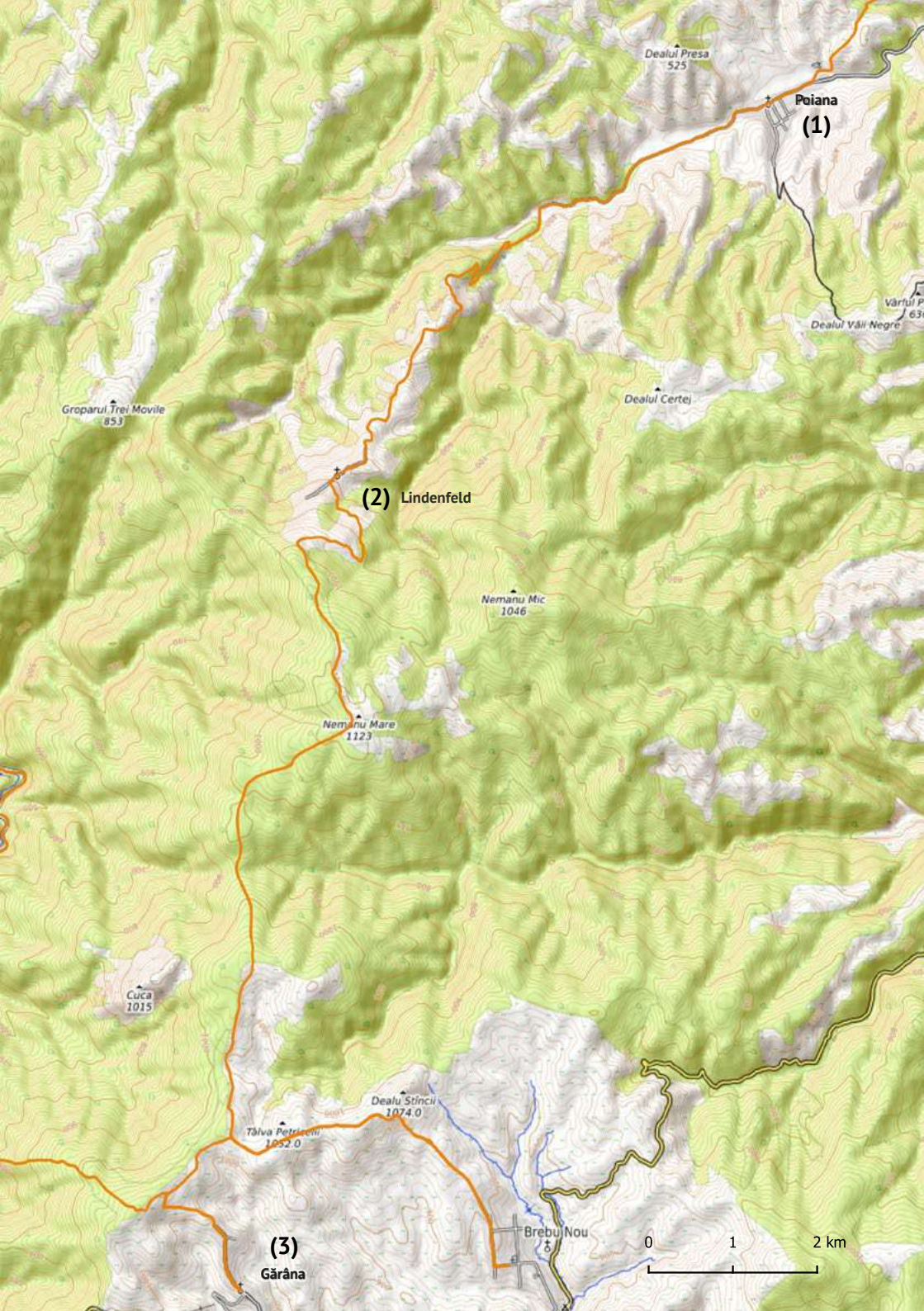
Brebu Nou - La Noi La Brebu Guest house, 21 beds, access to fully equipped kitchen, village shop nearby. Reservation at tel. +40 727 500 597 (Adrian). Call Adrian with confidence for any information about the route.

Accommodation with locals, 10 places, dinner and breakfast on request, access to kitchen, reservations on tel. +40 744 383 395 (Alex Wehry)

Gărâna (1,000m alt): Being a well-known and vis-ited tourist destination in Romania, Gărâna offers multiple accommodation opportunities, mainly outside the festival season. One can find more accommodation options online. During the summer, Gărâna hosts at least three music festivals, during which finding accommodation will be a bit complicated, but with early reservations, tent accommodation or prior agreement with the hosts, one can find places to sleep for one night.

Attention: Adela Petreanu, from Brebu Nou was one of the first people who offered their support during route implementation in 2021. She owns an off-road vehicle and has good knowledge about the area, and possible information about accommodation. In extreme cases where there is no accommodation, if there are problems, injuries, delays, need for tent space, or to pick-up luggage or people for a few kilometers, Adela is available by phone: +40 723 295 319. Please do not forget that phone signal is weak in the whole area of the Mountainous Banat, except in and around cities!

Kibuț: <https://www.facebook.com/kibutgarana>, some of our first friends from Banat are from Kibuț, Alina and Gabi, who are not from Gărâna, but have been living in Gărâna for many years and offer some experiences in Kibuț, both culinary and cultural. On the Facebook page of the restaurant there is the possibility to reserve, for probably the most interesting meal ever taken, lovingly prepared from local products, sometimes gathered and even picked by the hosts, in an absolutely special setting, with good music, nice and special people. Kibutz is a small, intimate space and sometimes there are chances that there is not enough room for everyone, but it is worth trying at least once what it's like to live, eat and sleep "jazz" - because we are inspired by exactly this feeling. Gărâna, no. 31, with prior reservation on Facebook (ask for accommodation, you may be lucky to find);



Dealul Presa
525

Poiana
(1)

Dealul Vâii Negre
630

Gropanul Trei Movile
853

Dealul Certej

(2) Lindenfeld

Nemanu Mic
1046

Nemanu Mare
1123

Cuca
1015

Tâmba Petriceni
1052.0

Dealu Stincii
1074.0

(3)
Gârâna

Brebu Nou



La Răscruce, 4 double rooms, 3 triple rooms, 4 double rooms with shared bathroom, dinner and breakfast in the restaurant. Reservations by tel. +40 255 226 788;

Poiana Lupului, 2 beds, tiny home with double bed, kitchen, toilet with shower. Reservations at tel. +40 773 979 130 (Dragoș Mircea);

Gotschna Pension, 23 places, double and triple rooms, breakfast included, reservations by phone +40 720 667 593;

Gasthaus Christl, 10-12 beds, breakfast and dinner on request, reservations by phone +40 722 327 519;

Cabana Craiu, 12 places, access to kitchen, restaurants nearby, reservations by phone +40 722 627 689 (Elena Ștef);

Accommodation at the locals

Gărăna nr.26 - 4 beds in double rooms, reservations by phone +40 769 564 731 (Seba)

Gărăna nr.70 - 7 beds in 3 rooms and bell and tipi tents (30 sqm) to be installed in the orchard, reservations by phone +40 721 542 310 (Bogdan).

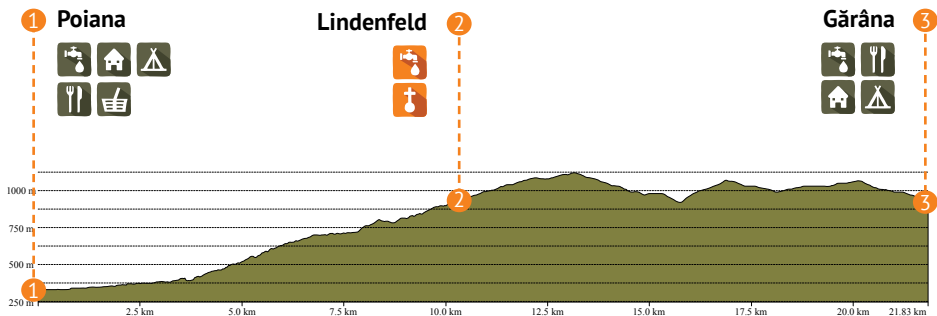
Infrastructure: **Lindenfeld:**  

Gărăna:    

Note:

Starting from the center of Poiana village (1), follow the main road on asphalt for a long time towards the exit of the locality. Before leaving the locality, one will notice the houses, colorful, and proud, with the ladies watching out from the windows, or resting on the front bench in the summer heat in the shade of the house, houses like faces that sometimes seem to marvel with their large, vaulted windows or shout with their wide and





high gates. People smile, ask questions and watch calmly as the travelers walk through their village at the edge of the forest. Leaving the village, about 2 and a half kilometers from the center, the route takes a left on a cobble road at the sign that points to Lindenfeld. Continuing for about a kilometer on the dusty road with a few potholes, one will pass some beautiful stone dwellings, which seem to be used only occasionally, when the grass is mowed or when gathering hay or corn. The road reaches a small intersection, where a “hairpin” curve takes it to the right and steeply upwards, and there, on the edge of the road that continues ahead, one will notice, on the left, a house, also made of stone, which has a mulberry tree in front of it. Under the mulberry tree there is a fountain and nearby even a bench with a table in the shade. This is the perfect place to rest before starting the climb to Lindenfeld, the ghost village, and take a hydrating break with the cold water from the fountain and a few ripe, sweet and juicy mulberries from the tree. Here, a few steps further, is the place called Pe Vale la Poiana, which has a terrace with refreshments and even offers accommodation and camping. One can stay overnight here. The route continues from the mentioned curve and climbs steeply, in a zigzag, with ferns to the right and to the left, and some shade for about 3 kilometers until the terrain begins to open up and on to what seems to be a kind of plateau. The VT markings are accompanied by a wish of “Cale bună” (“Safe Travels”) on the stones on the side of the road that may catch your eye at times when you feel the need for extra motivation. After admiring the incredible landscape, continue on, until a wooden cross appears in front, on the left. There are also some ruins covered with grass and wildflowers, a sign that there was once a mountain village, populated by Pemi, people of German origins who developed their own language, customs and culture. The road continues on a dusty, sandy road, which shines in the hot summer sun, and after climbing up here a steep section with little shade, wild strawberries, the path will continue up a gentle climb on the road that seems to be dug deep into the dry earth and full of “diamonds”. You reach the so-called “center” of the village, where there is a modern terrace built between several houses under construction or even finished. The image gives a kind of hope to repopulate the place, which still persists with a family of elderly people who take care of their animals. It is possible that there are also tourists with ATVs coming for “a tour”, to see the abandoned and missing Lindenfeld (2). Here, in the center, you can see the small church, newly rebuilt “In memory of the village Lindenfeld 1828-1998”. After a few meters from the church, the road turns left, at the sign which indicates Lindenfeld - Gârâna, 3.5 hours - with a pleasant shade and the smell of sheep, as the family from the only inhabited house in the village keeps a few sheep. Then, continuing on this path,

which can be quite difficult after a rainy period, one will reach a spring, which is the last source of water before Gărâna (3) - all containers must be filled, especially in the middle of summer. It continues in the same tone, with a muddy path from the springs/ the road that is used by tractors that exploit the wood which passes through the shade of birches and then beech trees, climbing lazily higher and higher. The path takes a right, until it leaves the forest and continues on a kind of hilltop where one can see on the right two large localities and surrounding mountains. One can also find ripe blueberries, which quench your hunger a little. Walking through this open field with a few scattered trees, after about 500 meters, one enters the forest turning left. Then, for a kilometer and a half, walk occasionally among the scattered trees, sometimes in the meadows, sometimes in the young forest, being the only area where one will walk on the ridge, quite straight, without ascents or descents. Then, after a few easy going sections of path, through the thicket, where one can take a break in the shade or meadows with the dusty path that divides them in two, the route enters a beech forest, tall, slender, straight, with trees that have been guarding the forest for decades, and they are showing their resilience to the hardship of the weather through the countless names and messages in their bark, some of which grew with the trees, all the way up, as if the messages were to reach the sky and not to be read by people who discover the forest. From this forest, where the path turns right again, begins a descent, both gentle and steep in places, a descent that makes it clear that it has passed a peak (Nemanu Mare 1,123m). The forest with beeches "marked" by the hand of man in the smooth bark, offers some interesting points to observe, such as even a piece of cobbled/stone road, reminiscent of the remains of Roman roads, right next to a kind of ruin, made of sharp stones, surrounded by defensive ditches. Through this forest, the descent lasts for about 2 kilometers, followed by another climb of about two kilometers to the exit in a meadow. From here, on the right, just 20 minutes uphill, is Cuca Peak, from where the view of the whole area opens up in front and one can see all the mountains, rural and urban landscapes. Returning to our route, for 2 kilometers one can walk on the road at the edge of the forest, which can be damaged or can have crevices made by landslides or the flow of water, with little pleasant shade, on a level curve, and then again, it descends and then climbs steeply until the path leads to the route to Brebu Nou. (Optionally you can go down to Brebu Nou for an overnight break, on a four kilometers downhill road marked with VT signs.) These paths overlap for a kilometer, until the road to Gărâna turns left and climbs a kilometer to the top of the hill. From there it is not long until the entrance on the gravel road and then asphalt that descends into the village. The apple strudel is waiting to be tasted in Gărâna (Wolfsberg in German, the Mountain of the Wolf).

Info:

Pemii from Banat – Pemi was the name that the people of Banat gave to the Germans who were colonized in Banat, starting in 1827. They came from Bohemia and their main role was to work in the forest and to supply charcoal for the furnaces in Reșița. The German Pemii created settlements in the most picturesque mountain places. This is how villages like Brebu Nou, Gărâna and Lindenfeld appeared. They were people of the mountains, with clean clothes and specific dress, prosperous and industrious, which was reflected in the image of the houses in which they lived, most often painted in white and green, with geraniums in the windows. They were also famous for their skills in growing potatoes and preparing dairy products such as sweet cheese, butter or cream.

Lindenfeld, the abandoned village – The story of Lindenfeld village is as interesting as it is tragic, the village being completely abandoned since 1998, that is, in its fairly recent history. Lindenfeld is located on the opposite side of the Semenic Massif, at the foot of the Nemanu Mare peak (1,123 m). The village was very isolated throughout its short history. There were no mixed marriages between local Pemi and Romanians from the nearby village of Poiana. Moreover, during the First World War, they were not even recruited in the Austro-Hungarian army. Instead, in World War II, many fought and perished on the front. After the end of the war, many of them were deported to the Soviet Union because they were Germans. Even so, Pemi could still be found in the post-war period, for example in the food market, where they sold the tastiest cherries. In the 60's a massive depopulation of the village began, but it was achieved gradually, either because of industrialization or because some of the Pemi's managed to escape to Germany. Practically in 1989, the village was almost deserted. In the 90's the last inhabitant of the village, who refused to leave, was named Paul Schwirzenbeck. The old man used to tell stories to tourists, especially stories about abandoned houses in Lindenfeld, about the Pemi that once gave them life, and about a more lively past. He died in October 1998, in Caransebeş in a car accident. Since then, only the shepherds from the village of Poiana live in Lindenfeld and only during the summer.

Gărâna International Jazz Festival – For over 20 years, every July, the largest and most beautiful outdoor event takes place, dedicated to jazz music, not only in Banat, but in the whole south-eastern part of Europe. Renowned guests from Romania and abroad and thousands of jazz lovers gather at this festival that has already become legendary for this musical genre of sounds from different cultures, inflections, sudden changes of atmosphere and a lifestyle. The festival was born from the love of the founders for music and was called for the first time "Jazz Festival în Şură la Brebu". This was the pilot edition of the festival, where some passionate friends shared music. At one point, the barn no longer accommodated the large number of "friends of jazz", so the festival moved to Gărâna, to the inn "La Răscruce". The last and most editions took place in Poiana Lupului, at the entrance to Gărâna, where the "Jazz Banat" Cultural Foundation managed to make it "the biggest festival in Romania".

Gărâna – The tourist village Gărâna (Wolfsberg, Mountain of the Wolf) is located 38 km from Reşiţa on the county road DJ58. Along with Lindenfeld and Brebu Nou is one of the villages colonized by German Pemi. Gărâna and Brebu Nou have the appearance of small Swiss cantons, being located on the hillside, at an altitude of 1000m. Not only the geographical positioning twins them, but also their common history. After 1991, it seemed that these villages would be abandoned and follow the fate of their younger brother, Lindenfeld. However, in the 1990s, Gărâna gathered many residents from Timisoara and Resita who bought houses and renovated them in their original style, respecting the history and culture of the place.

Trei Ape Lake (Three Waters) - Timiş, the largest river in Banat, is born from "three waters": Grădişte (the river that can be seen in front of the main stage of the Gărâna International Jazz Festival), Semenic and Brebu, united in the reservoir lake "Trei Ape". The "Trei Ape" resort is famous especially for the spectacular landscapes, which differ from season to season, being the ideal place for rest and stress relief. Near Trei Ape resort there is the sculpture camp from Gărâna, and only ten kilometers from the lake is the mountain resort Semenic.

Route: easy

Elevation difference: +921m

Critical spots: There are none. The trail is predominantly straight on the forest road, it starts with a descent and then continues pleasantly in the shade through the forests to Hotel Turist. It is recommended to have at hand a mosquito repellent for the forest.

Scenery: Forest paths, predominantly beech, paths, then forest roads, passing by impressive aqueducts and water catchment canals, under two viaducts and over several bridges. It is a route with new elements in the landscape.

Accommodation:

Văliug: Casa Baraj: 8 places in double rooms, with breakfast included, dining in the restaurant. Reservations by phone +40 724 234 950 or +40 731 361 315;

Secu: Hotel Turist, accommodation, breakfast included, restaurant service with prior request, TV, washing machine. Reservations by tel. +40 741 041 963 (Mrs. Maria);

Camping Şura Banatului, 15 places in rooms with private toilets, camping place, access to grill and toilet, breakfast and dinner on request, discount for holders of the VT Hiking Card, reservations at tel. +40 722 686 651 (Artur Schvaner).

Infrastructure:

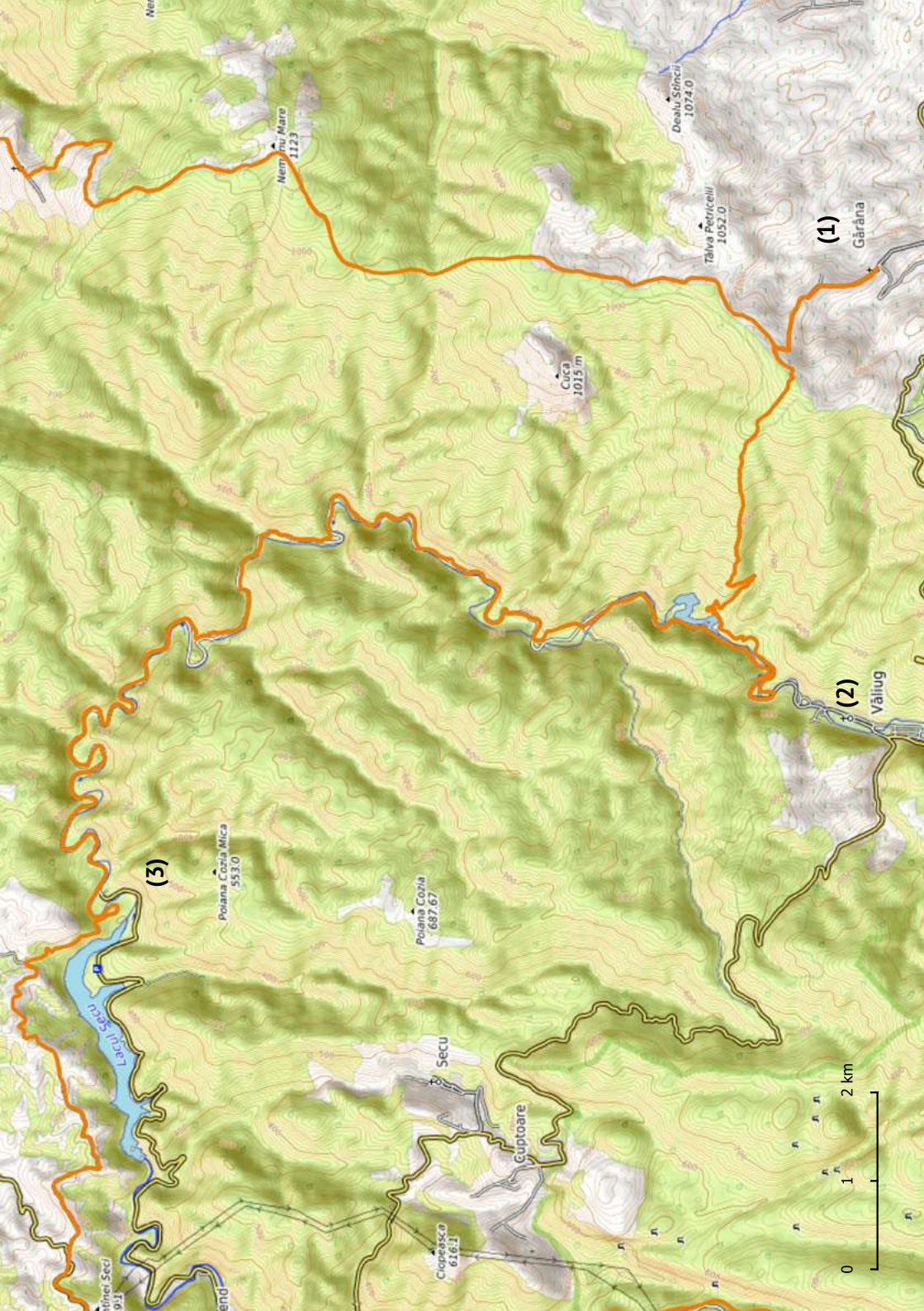
Văliug:    

Secu:    

Note:

From Gărâna village center, the route will return along the same road on which one entered the village and will follow it for about 3 kilometers until one will turn left by the forest. Here it separates from the route that came from Lindenfeld to Gărâna.

From the village, to the intersection that separates the 2 routes, it climbs slightly from the exit, on asphalt, until it turns into a macadam road and then a path between a few trees that may have formed an orchard. You can see some gas stations of the village in the distance. Then, after reaching a peak, at the VT sign, turn left onto the road that leads to the forest. From here, a descent begins and leads one to Lake Breazova. The forest is dense, and if the sun is hot in summer, the pleasure of walking through the forest will be most comforting. After 2 and a half kilometers of a fairly steep descent, first on the path and then on the forest road, you reach a "hairpin" that will take a left, but here is a good point to hydrate as there is a small spring flowing from the mountain. Then follow the serpentine, but be careful, if recently it has rained, the paths and the road through the forest will be hampered by mud and mosquitoes. Being a rather important hydrological basin, this whole area, in the forests where water accumulates through the hydrological canals built in 1903, one may come across mosquitoes. After the serpentine in the forest, which stretches for another kilometer, turn right, after another 500 meters there is another row of curves, from which one can already see a glow of water and one can hear the first canals. At one point, after leaving the forest, on the left, there will be a canal built of concrete and covered with concrete slabs greened by the green moss over

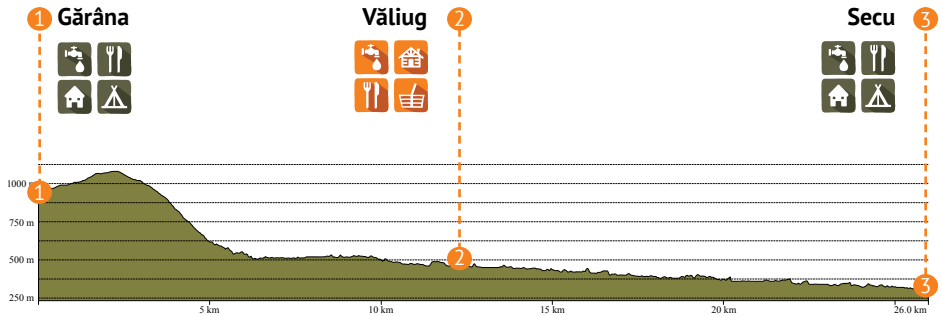


(1)

(2)

(3)

0 1 2 km



time and humidity and on the right is a corner of lake that entices one to cool down. Passing a bridge made of concrete slabs, among which one can see the water flowing underfoot, slabs that are sometimes missing from the canals and bridges that will get in the way, one can see several kinds of metal constructions, above bridges or trees, various bridges for funiculars, aqueducts or constructions that facilitated the work of those who worked in the area.

Leave the lake on the right and head to its southern tail, where there are several houses, inhabited, belonging to Văliug village, which is about 2 and a half kilometers from here. The route makes a loop, surrounding the tail of the lake, to then return to the opposite side, after passing between houses (from where you can ask for water, if needed, from the locals). There is also a bridge that crosses the river Bârzava, which can shorten the distance a little. One leaves the houses, also on the forest road, with the lake on the right, and continues for a kilometer and a half until the lake remains behind. Then, after another kilometer and a few cold springs on the edge of the forest road, it comes out of the forest in some places, where one can see meadows with tall grass, ready to mow and dry for animals. One may see a bulldozer damaged and parked in a clearing, merging into the landscape. Further on, the road continues sometimes in the sun, sometimes in the shade, under other bridges or viaducts, until it enters the shade again, on another forest road, with the river Bârzava on the left. It will become a travel companion, for about 11 kilometers to the destination, offering various scenery to the tired eye, such as: mangrove-like trees, stretching their roots in the water, as if lifting their skirts to not wet them, colorful birds that suddenly land to catch fish only seen by them, wild ducks dancing on the water and scared by the sounds made by boots on the path, fragrant scents of elderflower rising on the river bank or on the right at the edge of the forest, the coolness of the rocks on the left, which look menacing above one's head and places with small waterfalls that form from the stones that prevent water from flowing smoothly to the next lake, Secu. After the fatigue starts to set in, especially around the ankles and in the soles of one's feet, one can see at a short distance, after at an intersection to the left, less than a kilometer, the roof of the Tourist Hotel, waiting over the bridge, on the right, to receive its "tourists" and a good chat with Mrs. Maria, its owner. Thus, another day has passed on the Via Transilvanica route and in the evening it invites one to rest and tell tales in the small quiet grove of the hotel.



Info:

The hydrological basin of Mountainous Banat – Timiș River is the largest draining river in the Banat hydrographic area. It collects its waters from the most important sources in Banat. The main course of the Timiș River being located along the intermountain depression corridor Caransebeș - Mehadia, the main collector of an important number of rivers draining the Țarcu - Godeanu Mountains, as well as the Semenice and Poiana Ruscă Mountains. From the Țarcu - Godeanu Mountains it receives mountain rivers, among which the most important is Râul Rece (Hidisele). From the Semenice Mountains, Timiș receives small but similar tributaries, and from the intermountain depression corridor of the Bistra, it receives the Bistra River, collector of waters on the north-western slope of the Țarcu Mountains and on the southern slope of the Poiana Ruscă Mountains.

Văliug – Văliug (Franzdorf) was described in 1936 by the engineer Ion Păsărică as a “quiet climatic resort”, located at an altitude of 645m, 20km southeast of Resita. Both the Bârzava river and the Goznița brook flow on its territory. The population consisted of Romanian natives, of “Austrian settlers” and the bufeni, emigrated from the Turkish occupied and oppressed region of Oltenia. It can be said that the Holy Day of St. Peter and Paul in 1793 is the day of the founding of the new locality of that time, Franzdorf (Franz’s village, Austro-Hungarian Emperor), Văliug of today and the 71 Austrian families are the founders of this locality. It had this name until 1919, when Transylvania and Banat became regions of Greater Romania. The Văliug area soon became a climatic resort, with its picturesque views, and benefiting from the hospitality of the locals and the openness generated by the construction of access roads. And in 1879, it began to be visited by tourists from all over the country. Today, Văliug continues to play the role of a resort, a place of recreation with a ski slope and chairlift, restaurants, a pontoon on the lake and a stage.

Lake Breazova – Lake Breazova is the first reservoir lake in south-eastern Europe and in the Banat Mountains area, with a stone dam with cement mortar, and was built on the Bârzava River, between 1907–1909. Lake Breazova is located three kilometers downstream from Văliug at an altitude of 500m. The dam mainly supplied water for the industry in Resita, and also served for wood transport through the channels to the charcoal piles of Lănd neighborhood.

Secu Lake – Secu dam was built between 1961 and 1963 on the Bârzava River, near the confluence of Secu and Râul Alb streams with Bârzava river, a few kilometers upstream of Reșița. It was the first buttress dam in Romania. The main role is to protect nearby towns from floods, but the resulting reservoir lake, Secu Lake, has a recreational role.

Route: Easy

Elevation Difference: +459m

Critical spots: They are not on the forest road but on the paths and in the meadows. On asphalt roads, especially towards the city and in the corners, pay close attention to traffic and cars.

Scenery: Forest road to the first meadow, where one continues on a cart track and then on a path, beautiful views, then among the houses one reaches on the asphalt road which continues to Reșița.

Accommodation:

Reșița (249m alt): Being a medium-sized city, Reșița offers multiple accommodation opportunities, basically for all budgets. From its suburbs to the city center, one will find hostels and hotels and restaurants of all kinds. We decided that the route should pass through the city for extreme cases when there is a need to change equipment, repairs, recharge batteries, for necessary shopping or a break of a few extra hours. Recommended accommodations:

Casa Bănățeană Guesthouse, 16 places, restaurant, reservations by phone +40 745 419 767 (Laurențiu and Marta Bora);

Complex Atlantic, 19 double rooms, restaurant open only in summer or for groups all year round. Reservations at tel. +40 723 626 495, +40 255 210 000 (Mihai Zamfirescu).

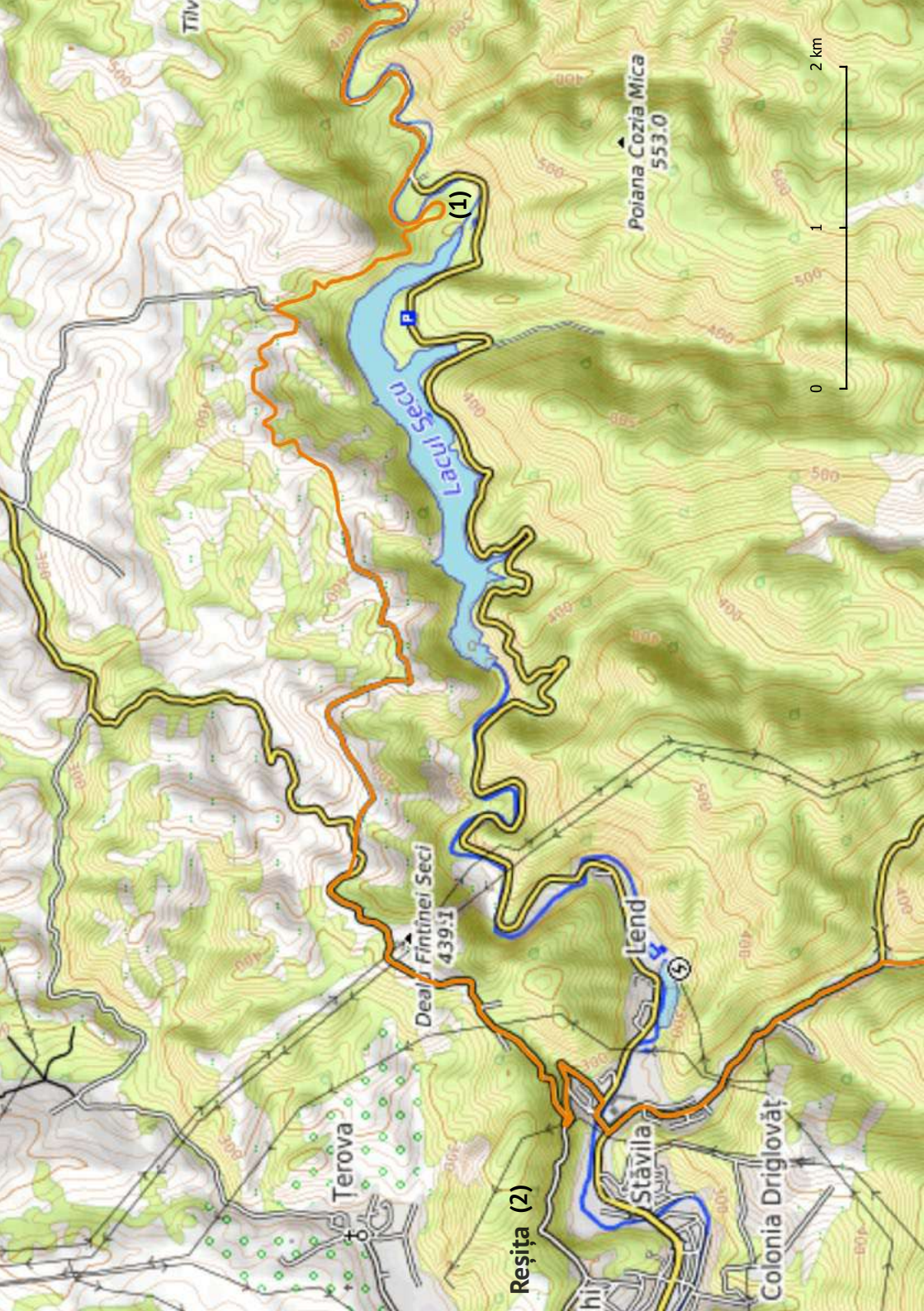
Infrastructure:

Reșița: 

Note:

The route starts from Tourist Hotel, after a hearty breakfast and the goodbyes from Mrs. Maria, and the trail takes a left after crossing the bridge, continuing on the forest road in the shade. After about a kilometer and a few hundred meters, the road narrows and begins to climb to the top right, next to a cottage, and more precisely its landfill. After leaving behind the pungent smell of the containers, one easily climbs through the trees to a house that has colorful flowers in the garden. Wherever there are dogs, there will be no danger when talking to them, or bypassing the territory they guard. From the house, turn left, coming out from under the shade of the trees on the edge of the road into a beautiful meadow, from where one can see Lake Secu from above.

Then one continues to the summit, on the road that undulates when descending, then ascending slightly, offering from time to time a clump of trees for cooling in the shade, if the sun is hot, giving the chance for a hydration break and continuing the walk on the crest, which can lead to a state of quiet meditation. It may seem, at one point, that there is no one else in the world, the hiker and the surrounding landscape. Then slowly appear villages and cities like colored spots that are seen in the distance, where the trail seems to descend leisurely. Take another look around, because if it is clear, you will see Văliug, the Semenic mountains, Muntele Mic and other mountains and peaks that can be admired from a distance. Scattered trees, the smell of elderflower or acacia, wildflowers



TIV

Poiana Cozia Mica
553.0



(1)

Laciul Secu

Dealul Fântinei Seci
439.1

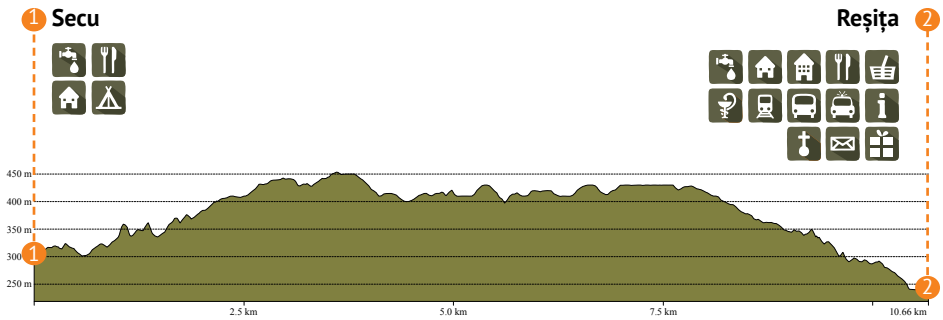
Lend

Terova

Reșița (2)

Stăvila

Colonia Driglovăț



of all colors, some specific to the area, others common that you find everywhere, but all the more beautiful as they can be touched, smelt, where one may walk among them. After about two kilometers of walking in heaven, the first descent one will see houses which start to appear on the left and right, with also the beautiful meadow that is perfect for making hay for animals. One passes among the first houses before taking a right for a few meters, following yet again, more houses with beautiful gardens, with flowering peonies, ripening cherries, with tall and thin heads that barely cover the pillar stuck in the ground, with curious people who will ask where are you coming from and where are you going. Keep following the trail until it turns left again, through the fences and on the country road, for a kilometer to the asphalt.

From here it's simple, one turns left from the gravel country road that descends onto the asphalt, then follow a curve to the left and over another kilometer one will go continuously following the asphalt for about 2 kilometers, after which one will turn sharply left again, in a hairpin, to Pensiunea Club Castel. From here, the route follows the markings for about a kilometer and a half on the city streets, with many accommodation possibilities, to Casa Bănățană. Here ends the short stage for today, where one can make time for shopping, refreshing oneself, visiting the city or resting at the accommodation.

Info:

Reșița – Reșița is in Caraș-Severin County. The city is located on hills and valleys, following the route of the river Bârzava. Once known as the “city of fire”, it has now become the “city of poets”. In 1930 Reșița had a population of 19,868 inhabitants, of which 10,637 Germans (53.5%), 5,851 Romanians (29.4%), 2,127 Hungarians (10.7%), 381 Czechs and Slovaks, 300 Jews, 257 Roma etc. Currently, there are over 80,000 inhabitants, and the majority population is Romanian (81.65%). Among the minority populations are: Hungarians, Germans and Roma. Among the points of interest not to be missed are the “Muzeul de Istorie al Banatului Montan” (“Museum of the History of Mountainous Banat”) found-ed in 1959, the Museum of Steam Locomotives, which exhibits 14 locomotives produced in Reșița over 100 years (1872-1959), “Podul de la vamă”, 1931, the first riveted and welded bridge in the country and many other attractions.

Reșița Locomotives Plant – In 1872 (less than 50 years after the invention of the steam locomotive in England) the plant in Reșița produced the first locomotive in Central and Eastern Europe, called “Resicza”, with circulation number 2 (number 1 being assigned “Szekul” locomotive made in Vienna), with a gauge of 948mm, designed by John Haswell - director of the locomotive factory “St. EG” from Vienna, a locomotive intended for

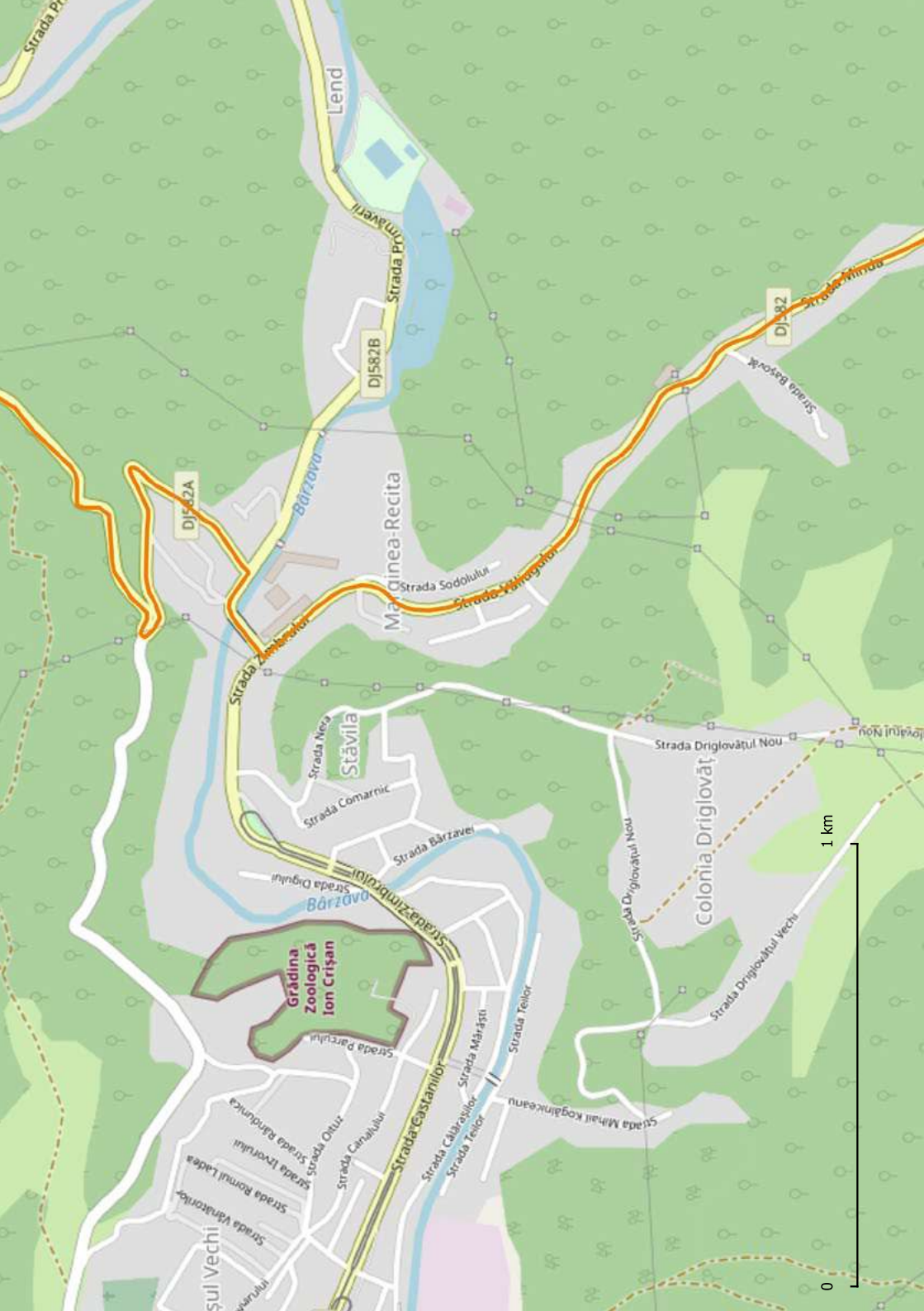
internal factory transport. Starting with 1872, the factories “St. EG” from Reșița produced for European railways: 16 cranes, 18 tanks for water castles, 110 plates for the return of locomotives, 514 crossing hearts for switches, 793 buffers. If you are interested, you can visit the Steam Locomotive Museum.

Industry (truths and legends) – Reșița has long been considered one of the major industrial centers of Romania having influence in the steel industry (cast iron, steel, laminate), machine construction (electric and diesel, oil, steel and chemical, rolling stock), chemical (wood chemicalization, coke). The first factories were founded in 1771, during the reign of Empress Maria Theresa. On July 3, 1771, the first blast furnaces were inaugurated on the current hearth of the furnaces within SC TMK Reșița SA. In the past they were known as “Uzinele și Domeniile Reșița” or UDR (“Reșița Plants and Domains”), as can be read on some steam locomotives manufactured in Reșița, the branch of the StEG Locomotive Factory in Vienna. But there is a legend that is more famous than the history of this industrial city itself: was or wasn't the steel produced in Reșița, used in the construction of the Eiffel Tower? The factories in ‘Reschitza’ (the name of Reșița during the time when Banat was under Austro-Hungarian rule) began to produce long before famous factories in Germany, the Czech Republic, Switzerland or Austria. At the inauguration of the bridge over the Tisza in Szeged (Hungary), the famous architect Alexandre Gustave Eiffel praised the steel from Reșița. We cannot know exactly if the same steel was used at the Eiffel Tower, but we can be sure that this symbol of Paris was made in part, after a technology invented by a Romanian, the engineer Gheorghe Pănculescu.

Muzeul Banatului Montan (Mountainous Banat Museum) – This is the place where one can find out the story of the city of Reșița, through seven collections that carry the museum's visitors along the seven dominions under which the land was located. Among the objects that can be seen at this museum are: Neolithic idols, Greek- Illyrian helmet from the 5th century BC, the collection of numismatics with Roman and medieval coins that circulated in Banat, the collection of mine crystals, with over 200 precious stones from Mountainous Banat and many others.

Cuptoare Village – (in local speech Cuptoarea) is a township in the city Reșița. During the last Turkish invasion in Banat in 1783 and after the defeat of the Austro-Hungarian army and its retreat to Lugoj, the Turks occupied all of southern Banat with Orșova, Mehadia, Panciova, Biserica Albă, Vârșeț, Deta, and they destroyed the mining and metallurgical buildings from Moldova Nouă, Sasca, Bocșa and Dognecea. The same fate was expected in Resita, because the German population here, workers, settlers and their leaders, took refuge in Timișoara. The inhabitants of Cuptoarea mobilized and managed to defeat the Turkish army, which is proof of the bravery of the locals. It seemed that the inhabitants of the Cuptoarea were not only brave, but also handsome. Miss Domnița Belcea, from Cuptoare, at the age of 17 was chosen in 1927 as “Miss Caraș”.





Strada P...

Lend

DJ52A

Strada P...

DJ582B

Mașina Recita

Strada Sădăului

Strada Zărnă

Strada Zărnă

Strada Comarnic

Strada Bârzava

Strada Zărnă

Strada Parcului

Strada Parcului

Strada Parcului

Strada Parcului

Strada Parcului

Strada Parcului

DJ582

Strada Bârzava

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Strada Driglovăț Vechi

1 km

0

Route: Easy

Elevation difference: +679m

Critical spots: More water is needed because there will be no springs on the route;

Scenery: Forest paths, predominantly beech, gravel roads or paths arranged through the forest, one comes out into a few clearings with views, but mainly there is a road in the forest, in pleasant shade.

Accommodation:

Iabalcea (248m alt):

Sălașul fermecat, accommodation for 8 people, possibility to serve meals on request, limited running water, solar panels, reservations by phone +40 753 078 164 and +40 754 020 427 (Zlatko Ursul);

La Sălașul lui Blaj, 12 places, access to kitchen, camping area, meals on request, shop nearby, reservations by phone +40 727 382 879 (Nicolae Filca);

Sălaș u Bregu, 5 places, serving meals on request, reservations by phone +40 740 614 297 (Petru Tincu), <https://www.facebook.com/salasubregu>, <http://salasubregu.com/>;

Accommodation for locals, 0763 276 349 (Nicolae Ifca); Mr. Nicolae can give you information about the route and about the tourist objectives in the area;

Accommodation at Union of Croats in Romania, 14 places, access to kitchen, shop nearby, reservations at +40 752 154 536 (Tudor);

Carașova (205m alt):

Casa Doda, where the host is Oana, which has a room with 5 beds and also offers some food, on request with prior notice and for a fee. Oana also owns an off-road vehicle, and in case of emergencies or accidents, she can intervene with pick-ups by car, but don't forget, phone signal is weak, it is only found on peaks or in localities. Oana also has natural cosmetics, based on medicinal plants picked by herself and if your soap or cosmetic cleaning products are finished, Oana offers one a wide range of natural, non-toxic, made-up products made by her dexterous hands and even wool hats knitted by her. Oana also helps with tips on what is in the area where she plays with her four-legged friends, tel. +40 747 048 184 (Oana Frențiu);

Perla Carașului Guesthouse, 8 places, restaurant service, reservations by phone: 40 753 856 665 Süßemilch Azemina);

Accommodation for locals, 0763 276 349 (Nicolae Ifca); Mr. Nicolae can give you information about the route and about the tourist objectives in the area;

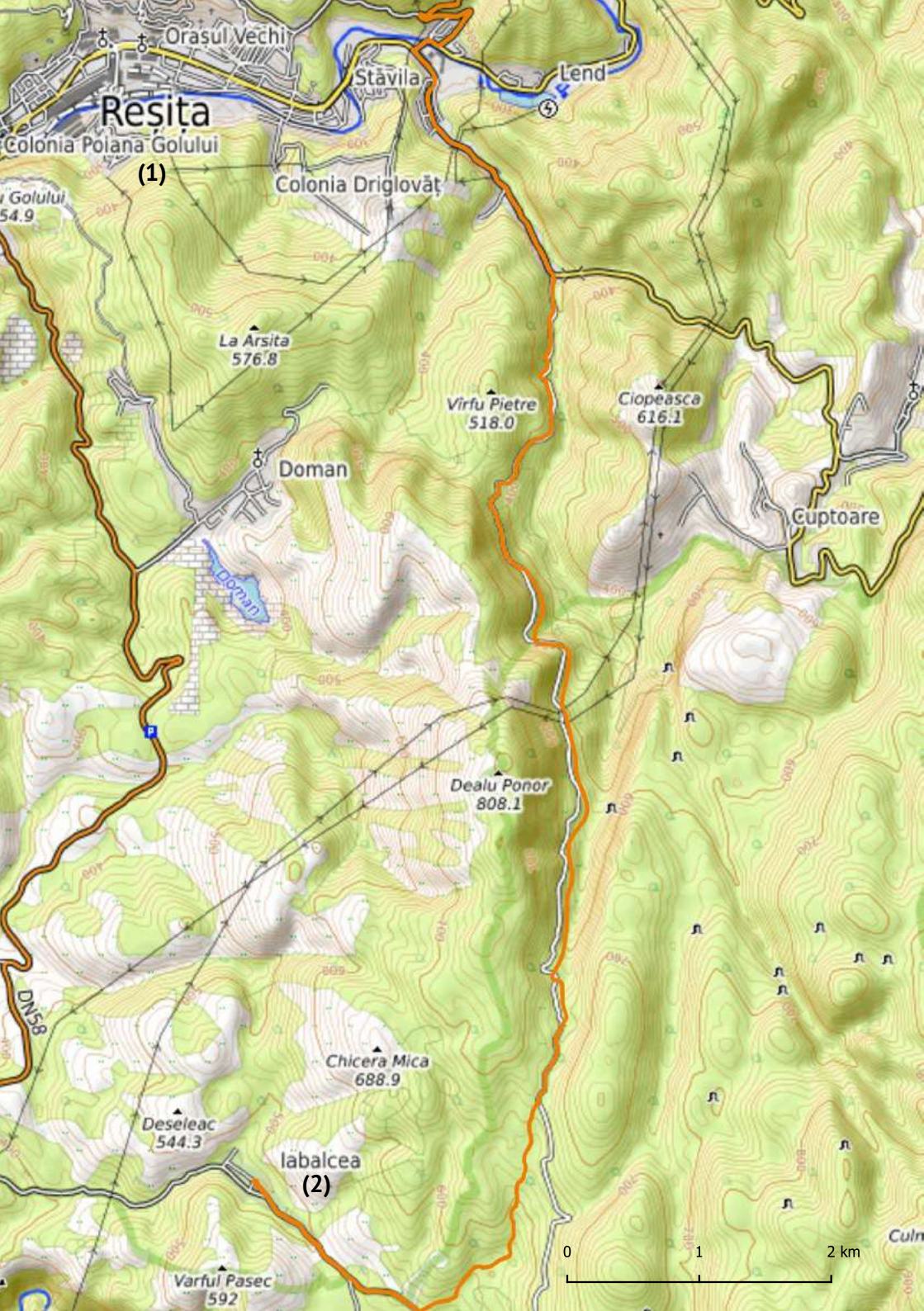
Accommodation at Union of Croats in Romania, 24 places, access to kitchen, shop nearby, reservations at +40 752 154 536 (Tudor);

Lavender Guesthouse, 4 places, possibility to serve meals on request, possibility to camp, reservations by phone: +40 746 894 407.

Infrastructure:

Iabalcea:    

Carașova:    



Resita

(1)

Doman

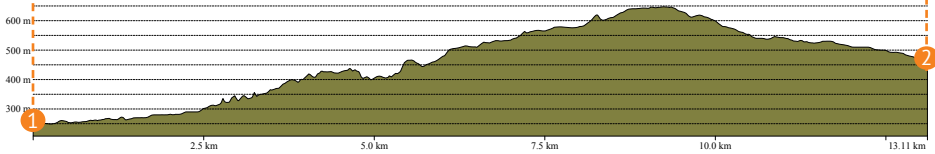
Iabalcea
(2)

0 1 2 km

1 Reșița



2 labalcea



Note:

An easy day follows, with the ascent from Reșița city, from the accommodation chosen by each one, depending on the needs. The climb starts after Casa Bănățană, on a forest road that goes to the right, next to a house. This path heads leisurely uphill and is wide enough for a large car, with trees on either side that provide protection from the sun in the summer. The forest becomes dense, then it becomes rare, and then thick again. The beeches are becoming taller, thicker and with more and more shade, as one is on the edge of the Semenic Mountains National Park and near the reserve of the virgin beech forests.

After almost 3km of gentle climbing in the shade, one follows the edge of the hill and one can see other tourist markings, which are used for bike trails, hiking or markings for the National Park, which draw our attention to the fact that we are on the edge of it. Before reaching the "edge of the park", walk another kilometer and a half on the ridge, in the forest, until a long meadow opens, which allows the sun to caress the cool skin of the hiker. After another 500 meters, on the left one will see the localities Cuptoare and Secu in the distance and huge electricity poles that lead the squeaking cables above our heads, somewhere high, on top of the mountain.

The area may not look spectacular, out of the ordinary or interesting to the eye, but it will be special to the senses. Because this area is the beginning of the land full of mysterious caves, century old beeches and springs, gorges and ruins, mysteries that will be felt on one's skin, knowing that many more treasures are hidden underground than on its surface, like pit caves that can still be seen on the side of the road or a mini waterfall that is formed from a mountain spring, or the countless sinkholes that go down from the forest floor. Entering the forest again, over 3 kilometers of easy descent, one reaches the road that enters labalcea. From here, in a kilometer one enters the village. The village is one of a series of villages with Croatian inhabitants, so interesting stories with the locals await you.

Info:

National Park Semenic - Caraș Gorge – Even if they do not have the same reputation as Nera Gorge, as the longest in the country, Caraș Gorge also impresses with its wild landscapes, but especially with the large number of caves and pit caves: 50 in total (for example Bat Cave, Comarnic Cave). Caraș Gorge stretches over a length of 19 kilometers, between Carașova and Comarnic Valley and is part of the Semenic National Park - Caraș Gorge. Caraș river, unlike the rest of the important rivers in Banat that spring from the

Semenic Mountains, starts in the Anina Mountains. The whole landscape offered by Caraş Valley is an impressive one, that is constantly changing. One of the highlights is a possible hike in this area to the wild lilac forests, around which there are other species of Mediterranean trees, such as the South European flowering ash and the European smoketree. Passing the felled area on the right bank of the Caraş, above the steep rock wall, the ruins of the Caraşova Citadel can be seen. A legend says that a Turk who passed by, looking at the waters of the river, called them Kara Su (black water), hence the name of the river.

Mr. Nicolae Ifca, as director of the Semenik National Park - Caraş Gorges, can give you information about the route and about the tourist objectives in the area (tel. +40 763 276 349).

Semenic Mountains – These mountains, named after the flower mountain everlasting (*Antennaria dioica*), are a mountainous group of the Banat Mountains belonging to the mountain range of the Western Carpathians, found in Caraş-Severin County. The highest peak is Piatra Goznei Peak at an altitude of 1,447m.



Carașova and the Croatian villages of Banat:

In the Caraș Gorge in the Banat mountains and in the area between Reșița, Anina and Grădinari, live the people of Carașova (Carașovenii), a population of Roman Catholics, one of the most unusual ethnic groups in Romania. They are the Croats from Mountainous Banat. At the entrance to the Semenic National Park - Caraș Gorge is the Carașova commune (which includes the villages of Iabalcea, Nermed and Carașova), where there are around 3,200 inhabitants. On the other side of the valley, on the road between Reșița and Grădinari is the commune of Lupac (with the villages of Clocotici, Rafnici, Vodnici and Lupac) with approximately 2,600 inhabitants. The Croats of Carașova live in these two communes. They are different from the Croats from Timiș (from Checea, Cena and Recaș).

It is the oldest Croatian community in Romania. They have preserved their identity for the last century, mainly due to the isolation of the enclaves in which they live. Carașova - the largest community of Croats in Banat was once the capital of the county before this role was taken by Lugoj. In the two communes, the Croatian language is officially recognized. They have signs, bilingual official inscriptions, education, access to justice and public administration in Croatian, along with Romanian. Due to the Catholic religion, other ethnic groups did not assimilate, with the help of the church they managed to keep their language. Being a united people, they did not leave their native places. 90% of Croats live here, together with several Roma families and 20 Romanian families.

Carașova was first mentioned in documents in 1333. It is said that their ancestors settled voluntarily in these lands and were not colonized by the Habsburgs as in the case of those from Recaș and Checea. The language is an old one, a Croatian from 300, 400 years ago, undeveloped as in the mother country. The popular traditional costume of Carașova is unique, it is not found elsewhere. Being the spiritual center of the Croats, in Carașova there are several folk dance groups. Immediately after 1990 in Carașova, the first Croatian language department was re-established for pupils from the Croatian community, and in the school year 1996-1997 the first generation of pupils enrolled at the Romanian-Croatian Bilingual Theoretical High School, where children from the seven Croatian villages come to learn. The Roman Catholic church in Carașova was built in Baroque style in 1726. There is also a unique chapel on a hilltop.

Carașova was the seat of the archdiocese for several hundred years. The church dates back to 1726, the chapel on the hill dates back to the 1800s. Due to the mountainous relief, the people of Carașova were especially engaged in animal husbandry.

The Croats of Carașova were the first ethnic group in Romania to benefit from dual citizenship. In the context of the war in Yugoslavia during the 1990s, Zagreb decided to grant passports to all Croats living outside the country. They took advantage of this law and obtained dual citizenship. The people who received Croatian citizenship were able to go to work in the West, but also in Croatia. The young people were able to go to college in Croatia, with grants from the former Yugoslav state.

In Carașova there is also the headquarters of the Union of Croats in Romania, which gives a deputy in the Romanian Parliament. Currently carașovenii are represented by Gera Giureci Slobodan.

Route: Easy to moderate

Elevation difference: +1,287m

Critical spots: The difficulty is moderate, due to its length.

Scenery: Forest paths, predominantly beech, gravel or forest roads, forest paths, and forestry tractor tracks, wonderful forest landscapes, springs with cold drinking water, forester's houses ("canton" in Romanian) and hydropower houses. The route is one of the most beautiful routes through the forests.

Accommodation:

Canton hidro-energetic Coșava - "Izvoarele Nerei" (1,100m altitude): This is placed at the highest elevation of today's route, and is owned by our friend Radu Ștefănescu, who bought the building and the surrounding terrain and have turned it into a "Cultural Exchanges" refuge with accommodation, where to return to nature, to discover a new friend or a good story, etc. Prior reservations must be done at least 2-3 days in advance, one must bring its own basic amenities for accommodation. For a fee, Radu will be able to offer food, but the possibilities are limited, because all the products are bought and brought up by him, from the city.

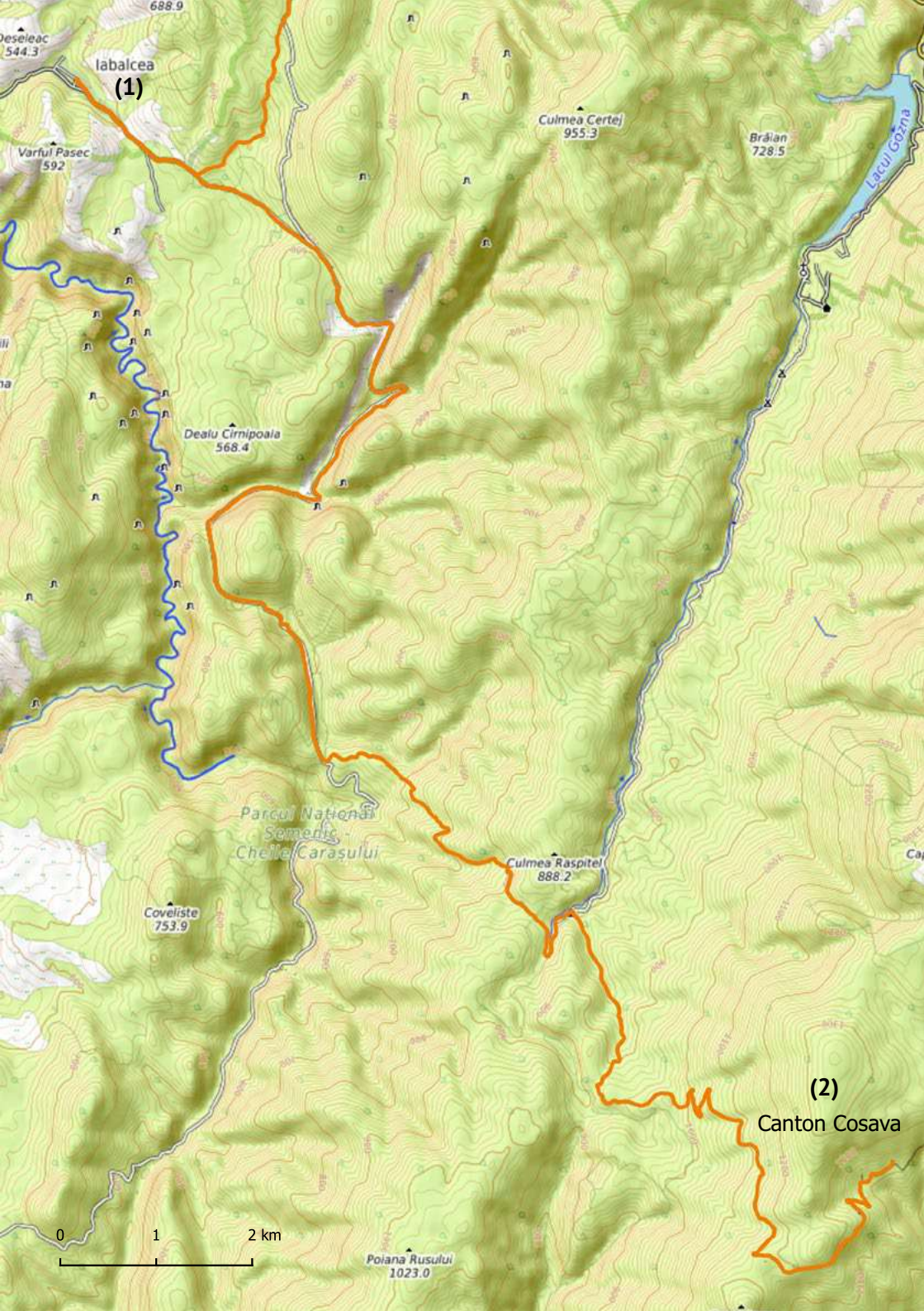
The conditions are: cottage/refuge, room with mattresses and beds for several people, one can sleep on the floor or outside in the open air, the shower is at the stream or in the basin and there is no phone signal. But the experience will be unforgettable. The canton is under continuous construction, working on improving conditions and accommodation, but this requires financial support. For any donation, the following hikers will thank you! The meal will be ordered in advance, over the phone, with costs determined by the food ordered. Radu Ștefănescu, phone +40 730 081 984, in case he is in the area without a signal, leave a voice message!

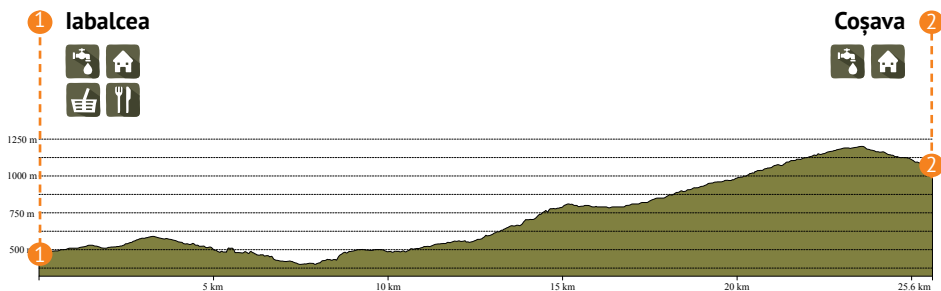
Infrastructure:

Coșava:  

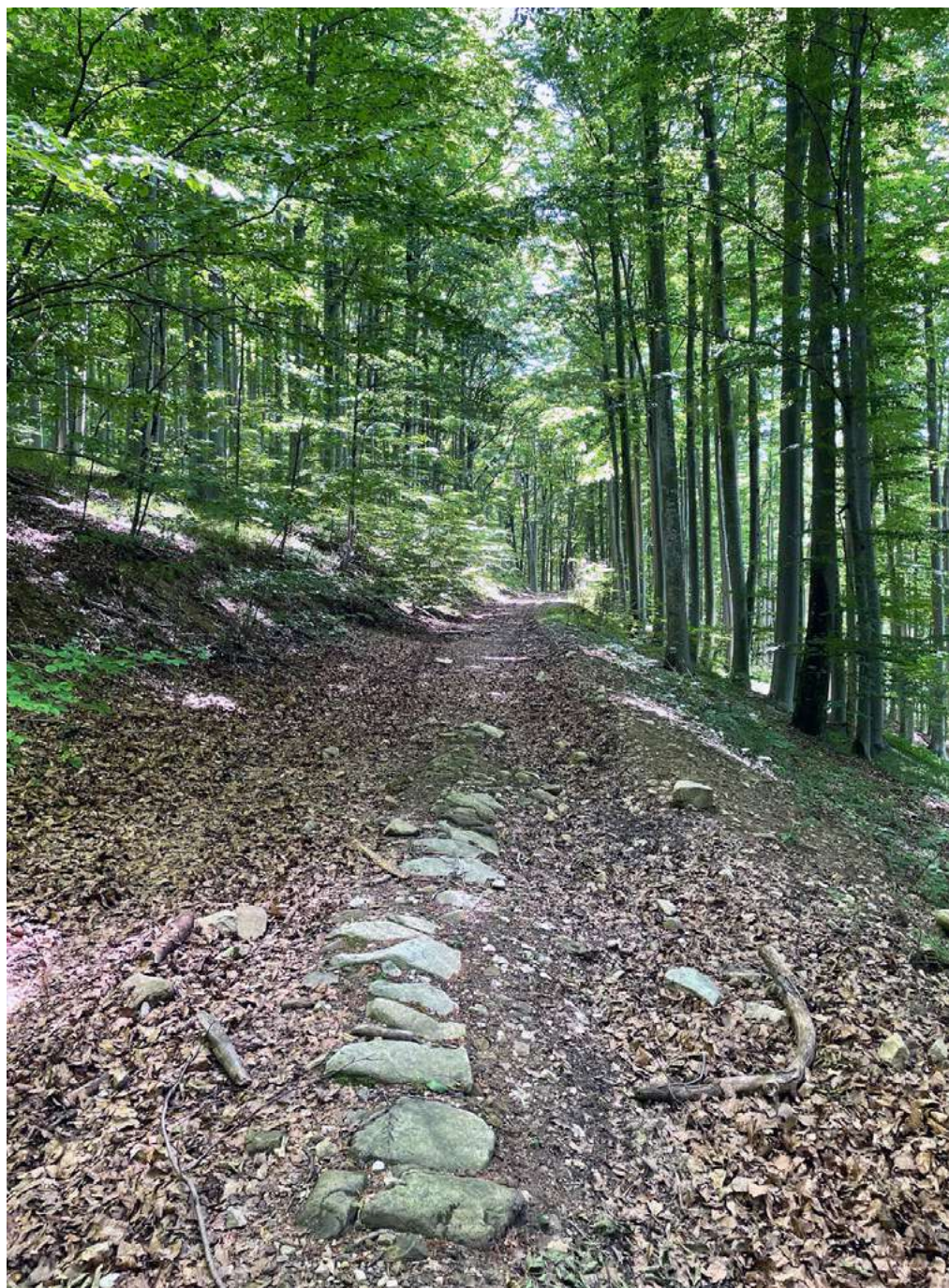
Note:

Starting from Iabalcea, from the center of the village (or Carașova, as the case may be), to the next point, namely Cantonul Padina Seacă, one will have to cover about 3 kilometers. On a gravel country road, with fields on the left and right, reaching the canton, one will see a forest road that descends from the forest on the left and meets the VT Trail. Continue ahead, leaving the canton on the left and behind one, passing through the shadows of the trees above. After another 4 kilometers of forest road, at an inter-section one will find the sign: Peștera Comarnic (Comarnic Cave) 1km, on the right. Thus, after another kilometer of dusty roads and sometimes extremely muddy after heavy rains, one will reach a new, small intersection, where one will see the steps to the entrance to the cave, with a resting place at the foot of the steps, on the left. Cross the bridge towards it and one will find under this bridge a spring with cold and clear water which is excellent to drink and fill one's water bottles for the rest of the day. Today's route is a longer one, but extremely beautiful and pleasant. The cave may be visited only with guided tour by the speleologists who manage it.





Thereafter, cross the bridge to the stairs of the cave, but do not climb them but go slightly to the right, leaving them behind, with the spring on one's right, on a path that becomes smaller with each step. Quite soon one arrives in front of another canton, which was used more by speleologists from the Comarnic cave, for camps and accommodation, a nice building as we often find in this county, which resembles houses built of stone. The signs show that the route goes to Anina and Navesu Mare. The route follows them for another 3.5km, as shown by the sign at the source. Navesu Mare is another canton, very important for the route, because when its ruins are on our left, taking a few steps back, and finding a kind of entrance through the thicket on the left, where the grass is trampled a little, and after 25 meters into the giant forest, the sequoia giganteum tree, rises, towering in front of us. It is worth visiting, seeing, touching and embracing, because there are not many species of this tree in our country, moreover, it is difficult to know how this tree appeared right next to the Navesu Mare canton. Continue on the route following the markings on the forest road before taking a left and then climb slightly. It continues uphill easily and pleasant in the beech forest as it becomes less dense and then denser, with the leaves of an electrifying raw green, and with the carpet of dead leaves and mud underfoot. Healthy and fresh air fills one's lungs. After about a kilometer and a half one follows the straight and flat path, then follow it to the right and then to the left, also on swampy, forest roads or broken paths, through a younger forest, extremely pleasing to the eye. After another few kilometers of walking, make a sharp curve to the left, over a bridge, which leads into a better contoured and wide forest, and continues following the markings, until it reaches a large, white building, on which is written "Direcția Silvică Reșița, Ocolul Silvic Văliug, Cantonul nr. 1 Bârzăvița". Also here is a signpost indicating 5km to Villa Klaus. You can make a detour of 5 kilometers to visit the place where King Michael I of Romania spent a long time as a student (more details in the info section below). Pass the building and a bridge and take the road that continues to the right and it seems that a slight climb begins. From here, nature, forest and fauna reveal their true beauty, being a road not too frequently used, and in a rather humid area where huge ferns and juicy strawberries, oversized flowers or fluorescent green grass grow. Sometimes there is a strange pavement on the road, as if reminiscent of the remains of a Roman road, after which the crown of the trees opens again, leaving the blue of the sky to soothe the eyes. One then goes deep into the forest, which becomes more and more mysterious, moments when the brain of the tired and hungry hiker begins to resemble the geographical curves and patterns of forest sinkholes with cakes full of fruit or freshly sliced polenta for everyone at the table. Any forest coast cut by sharp streams becomes



a dish in our minds. The screams of the eagle can be heard nearby, the crows playing among the beech leaves and the rest is the silence and the murmur of water. There is also a canal and concrete bridge covered with moss or a hedgehog running away from the sound of our footsteps. Only in the forests of Banat can one feel this kind of security that surrounds man in the bosom of the forest. There is no danger of wild animals, only nature in all its splendor. Slowly, after about 7 kilometers of beauty in the shade and after the road has become straight and stopped climbing, one can see again water collection channels, and then on the left, a few meters away, a house in the middle of the meadow. This is where one will stop.

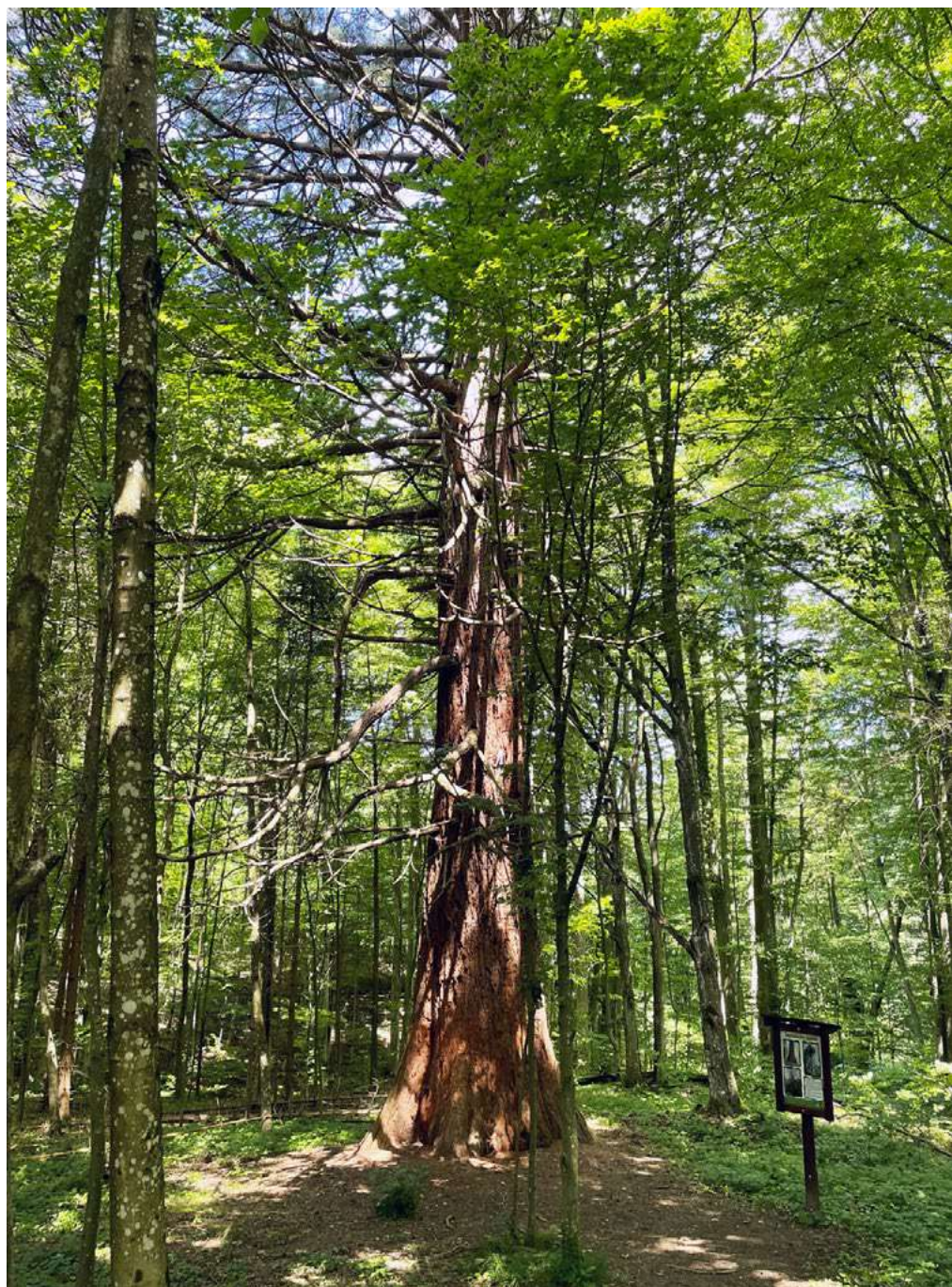
Info:

Comarnic Cave – The cave is located in the heart of the Banat Mountains, about halfway between Reșița and Anina, near the confluence of the Comarnic brook and the Caraș river and is a speleological reservation in the National Park Semenic - Caraș Gorge. It is the second longest in Banat (6,201m), being surpassed by Buhui Cave (6,547m). It is structured on three levels: fossil, subfossil and active, and tourists have access only to the upper, dry level. The tourist route consists of a succession of galleries and halls, as follows: Small Hall, Zebra Hall, Great Hall, Hajduk Hall, the Museum, Crystal Hall, Lord's Hall and Virgin Hall. Spectacular formations that can be admired are "Nuca Mică", "Altarul", "Claia cu Fân" and many other unique karst forms, waiting to be discovered.

Izvoarele Nerei – This is a protected natural area in the Banat Mountains, part of the National Park Semenic - Caraș Gorge. The natural area has a relief made up of schist, granite and granodiorite, with short and sloping hills at the top and long slopes at the base of the reservation, with springs (Nera springs that collect in narrow and deep valleys the waters of Coșava Mare, Coșava Mică, Hiclișag, Nerganița, which in some places form small waterfalls), steep, relief, arches and meadows; with flora and fauna specific to the Western Carpathians and especially to the mountain group of the Banat Mountains. The flora of the reserve consists of virgin beech forests (*Fagus sylvatica*), Dacian oak forests (*Quercus robur*), hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) or linden (*Tilia*), as well as floristic species of corner (*Dentaria bulbifera* or *Dentaria glandulosa*), wood sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), sweet woodruff (*Asperula odorata*), alpine woodrush (*Luzula alpinopilosa*), hairy sedge (*Carex pilosa*) or blackberry species, *Rubus hirtus*. The fauna is represented by a diverse range of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians, some of which are protected at a European level: the brown bear, the gray wolf, the white eagle, the wild cat, the horned viper, the red mountain frog, etc.

Sequoiadendron giganteum – The giant Sequoia tree can be visited near the canton of Navesu Mare, as written in the description above, or in Băile Herculane. The sequoia tree proves to us through its presence at Băile Herculane that it is able to grow even in conditions of low altitude. Its location in the Cerna Valley, at an altitude of 160m, on the same parallel to Nice and Venice, gives it a climate with Mediterranean influences.

Vila Klaus – Villa Klaus in Văliug is a place full of history. King Mihai himself spent a year in this villa as a student. In the words of the historian Mircea Rusnac: "As far as I know, it was built at the beginning of the twentieth century, it is not as old as they say. Initially there was a large lake to regulate the river Bârzava because the river was carrying logs at that time, as fuel for the plant in Reșița. The logs were transported from Semenic mountain, and stored on the banks of the Bârzava. At one point, this dam opened, in the area of Villa Klaus, and a stream of water started, which lifted all the logs from the banks



and led them down to Reșița, below. After the Breazova dam was built in 1904-1905, the dam here was dismantled and the villa was built. It was constructed as a relaxation house, a hunting lodge for the management of the plant at that time. The former plant had very large land possessions. This whole mountainous area belonged to it and had many cantons, which at that time were very well managed and the villa was probably also an administration center for the management of the forestry sector of the plant.”

Canton hidro-energetic Coșava – these buildings were placed strategically near water collection channels, and were inhabited by their guardian or person responsible for the care, cleaning and repair of collection channels.

Munții Carpați (The Carpathian Mountains) project, whose initiator is **Radu Ștefănescu (Canton Coșava - Izvoarele Nerei)** – was started in 2011 out of a passion for nature and mountains combined with quite an obsession with Google Earth and mountain maps. During that period, Radu roamed all the mountains and took aerial photos with a drone, which he posted on the FB account Munții Carpați, in order to present the beauties of the mountains and to develop interest in the mountains and active tourism. Based on these posts, a community of 350,000 people gathered and the Munții Carpați brand (the trademark registered at OSIM) became known. In parallel, starting with 2013, the organization began to produce mountain hiking and cycling maps for each mountain area. With an active community of 350,000 users, the private tourism company Munții Carpați has launched the first site dedicated to all providers of tourism services in the mountain area and beyond. The project mainly aims to develop the largest digital space jointly promoting the Carpathian Mountains and all the interested parties: from those who work in HoReCa, to mountain guides and ski schools, to public authorities, small local entrepreneurs, to those whose mountain adventures add flavor to their life. Starting in 2021, the company Munții Carpați moved its headquarters from Timișoara to Reșița, in order to be closer to the mountains and everything it has to offer. The maps are designed as “travel planners”, are easy to read and are addressed both to established mountain lovers and to those who want to get started in hiking or cycling. Therefore, tourism service providers are invited to activate and register the activity on the site, mountain lovers are invited to use the digital space too and effectively plan their stays and get to know the products available in the online store magazin.muntiicarpati.com. Email: office@muntiicarpati.com, Web: www.muntiicarpati.com; Web: www.magazin.muntiicarpati.com; Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CarpathianMountainsRomania/>; Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/muntii_carpati/

Route: Easy and long

Elevation difference: +797m

Critical spots: The route is a continuous descent, but easy and incredibly beautiful. One will reach the village and asphalt, where one will need to pay attention to cars;

Scenery: Forest paths, forest roads, predominantly beech forests, then gravel roads and asphalt. 20km on the forest road that descends next to the river Nera that offers a spectacular view at every step.

Accommodation:

Prigor (294m alt):

Prigorel Pension, 28 places, meals on request, swimming pool, reservations by phone +40 761 718 128 (Doru and Liliana) <http://pensiuneaprigorel.ro/>.

Infrastructure:

Prigor:    

Note:

After a night at Coșava Canton that is guaranteed to be memorable, the descent is on the forest road that starts from there, which widens and turns into what is a real forest road with each passing kilometer. At first it seems wild and untidy and little by little the forest starts to look neat, as if the branches seem brushed into place, more arranged and fine-tuned as the road becomes a straight line, of course, except for wet periods, in which the forest road can be problematic, especially if the forest has been felled and exploited. On the left of the route is again the National Park Semenic - Carașului Gorge and after a descent of about 8 kilometers, easy and pleasant underfoot, we finally meet her, Nera, the distinguished lady of the rivers, an important character from the legends, strong, beautiful and mysterious. Thus, at a canton popularly called "La botu' calului", where there are also information boards about the national park and one can take a hydration break on the large terrace of the building on the right, one will find out and see how Nera descends from the left, from the springs and prepares to accompany one on almost the entire route today. From here the Nera hydrological show takes place, which offers one something exclusive at every step, meter and kilometer, so that one won't take one's eyes off the river on the right for 12 kilometers, admiring and taking in the smells alongside it. From time to time, the left side of the road is also asking one's attention with big waterfalls, with water like a bridal veil, spurting aggressively out of the hill, after descending from the dense forest. The forest is so wonderful and Nera is so miraculous that it is a little frustrating that in the middle of it there is a huge amount of logging, which obstructs hikers and moreover, it destroys the forest road, transforming it into a sea of swamp and mud. But nature prevails through the incredible landscapes it still gives us. We are not overwhelmed by human cruelty. Sometimes and somehow a balance will be found between all these things. Round rocks, large and small boulders make the water turn into small waterfalls, make it burble and knead before calming down and becoming deep, thoughtful and meditative. Then again, angry and swirling,

Canton Cosava
(1)

Țiiva Printului

Cracu Lung

Merganica Mică

Borlovenii Noi

Borlovenii Vechi

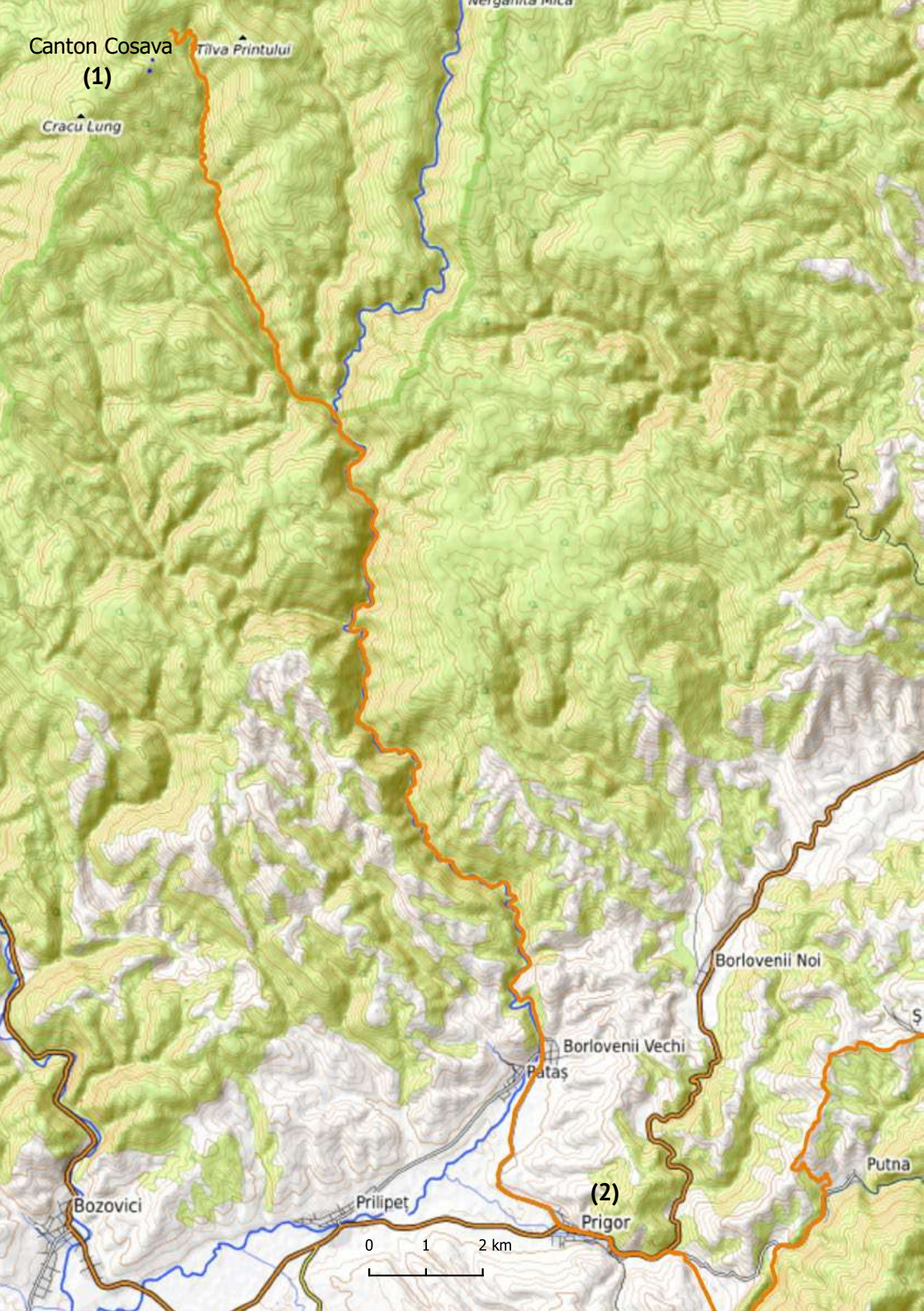
Pataș

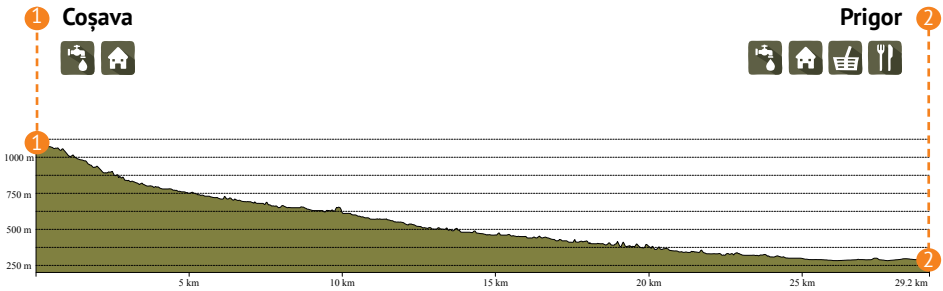
Putna

Bozovici

Prilipet

(2)
Prigor





she passes through some miniature canyons, and then flows again smiling and calm. One can even get a small taste of 'mini Cheile Nerei' and one can enjoy all the shapes that this river takes, which even gives off its own scent. Nera, the one who starts from the springs like a squirming girl and lets one witness her maturity, turning into a teenager with challenges on the way, then into the young woman in whom the blood boils and finally into the mature woman, with wide hips and deep eyes of a wise mother.

The route with water running next to it makes one forget the length of today's hike and suddenly the first signs of civilization appear in front and one can see the village of Borlovenii Vechi. Houses are starting to appear, one can even take a break at the village bar or shop, so that the last six kilometers of country road and asphalt pass quickly as one enters the village of Prigor. Here, with increased attention on the asphalt, a well-deserved break is awaiting.

Info:

The legend of Nera river and gorges – Nera, as in the description above, is a story from folk tales, beautiful and sad, like the river itself. It is said that through those old, dark and dense forests, a young and towering boy was hunting, a skilled and good hunter, the best of all. One fine day, when he was lurking, he saw a young girl, proud and beautiful, wandering through the heart of the forest, alone. From the first moment, the two fell in love and made love daily in the forest, only the trees and their shadows witnessing their beautiful love story. The girl's father was the master of the surrounding forests and mountains, being a great boyar, he saw that his daughter refused all the sons of the boyars and she was always in the forest, every day. Thus, the master, the girl's father, set up a spy to stalk her. After he told her father about her love, the father ordered the boy to be brought to his dungeon chained. Maybe this way his daughter will fall in love with a boyar's son and marry into a rich family. In vain, the girl wept in front of her father to let the hunter boy go free, but he became even angrier and threw the boy into a cave in the heart of the mountain, giving orders to wall up the entrance to it. Day and night the girl prayed for a miracle, hearing the cries of the boy in the cave. Day and night the girl wept for his release, as her marriage to a boyar's son grew closer and closer. After seeing how great her love was and hundreds of requests, a fairy transforms the girl into a strand of crystal-clear water in order to sneak through the rocky mountain; and so she began searching for her love. After years and years, Nera, with her never ending love, pierced the huge mountain and penetrated into the most secret corners and into its most hidden caves until only the wide plain remained in front of her. And realizing that there was



no way back, she let herself meander and wander through the plain, carrying her love story, and testimony over time remained: the gorge that split the mountain, the caves that line the hills, the crystalline lakes gathered from shed tears. Nera Gorge.

The Watermills at Rudăria (Eftimie Murgu) – this is a milling reserve unique in Europe, having as a main attraction a chain of 22 watermills with horizontal waterwheels, which stretches for 3kms along the river. Each mill has its own name and is well built on the rock. These water mills can teach the traveler a real lesson about the “science of mills”: the turn at the mill, the free fall of water on the wheel and the grinding of grains between two stones, to obtain the flour with a special taste (for the documentation team, the best polenta ever was eaten here).

Virgin beech forests in Caraș-Severin – 65,000 hectares of virgin and secular beech forests in Romania were inscribed,

in 2016, as UNESCO World Heritage sites under the name “Virgin beech forests in the Carpathians and Germany”. Thus, 60,000 hectares of forests are from Caraș-Severin: Domogled - Valea Cernei, 51,463 ha; Cheile Nerei-Beușnița, 5,962 ha; Izvoarele Nerei, 2,495 ha. What is a virgin forest? These are those areas where nature evolves in its pure form, without human intervention. The beech species that grows in this area is the common beech (lat. *Fagus sylvatica*) which is found only on the territory of Europe, having the highest density in Caraș-Severin.

Route: Easy to moderate

Elevation difference: 1,011m

Critical spots: There are some areas without water, difficult to pass in high heat, but you can ask for water from the locals, the trail is moderate to difficult due to its length, but even more beautiful because it has no extreme differences in altitude;

Scenery: One passes more through localities, in balance with the landscapes only with nature up to here. One also passes through a wonderful meadow, through villages populated with curious people and interesting houses from Banat. There is asphalt through localities, but this is complemented by field or country roads or even some forest roads.

Accommodation:

Cuptoare (496m alt): **Cabana Pescarului Jim**, 14 beds, 4 rooms (2 triple rooms and 2 quadruple rooms), 2 bathrooms, dinner and breakfast on request, free fishing, reservation by phone: +40 749 655 383 (Ionel Jurescu) - 1km from Crușovăț;

Petnic: **Agro Tourism Guesthouse Hînda**, 6 places, breakfast and dinner on demand. Reservation by phone +40 771 276 579 and +40 255 244 448 (Ioan Hînda). Shop nearby.

Infrastructure:

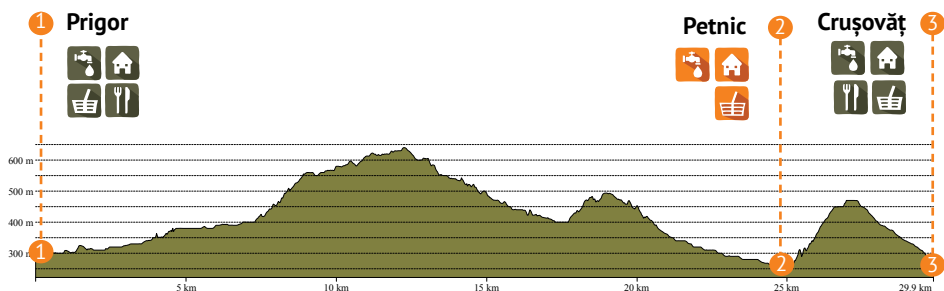
Cuptoare:    

Petnic:   

Note:

From Prigor (1), the route on asphalt leaves the village following the markings for about a kilometer and a half, until it turns right on the first road, also asphalt, which leads to Putna. Up to this intersection, one passes some old, beautiful houses, which are abandoned or slowly deteriorating, time leaving its mark on them. One also passes a modern building, which fits into the landscape - Prigor Tourist information center. It might be closed, but the intention was good. Then, after a few meters, one will reach the intersection, turn right on the asphalt, until one reaches the first water mill, which will be on the stream on the right. Then, after that, the road continues for another 100 meters, after which it turns right over a wooden bridge and continues on a new unpaved road. It passes through the plantations, bypassing the asphalt just for now, after which it turns left into a forest that will keep one cool if the sun is hot, especially in July and August. From here, after 3kms through the cool forest one will arrive at two bridges and several water basins, called by the locals "scaldă" (bathing places). The path returns back to the asphalt and in a kilometer and a half it will pass by the Almăj Putna Monastery. Pay attention to the smells in the air, reminiscent of the sea, as a sign that one has entered the sub-Mediterranean climate. It smells of sand, algae and flowers, scents that accompany hikers throughout June and maybe even July. At the monastery the road continues, with a hidden thought that there is another Putna Monastery in Suceava County, exactly where our route starts and it seems so exciting to find the same name at kilometer 1,200 of the route, as if it would make a lot of sense to twin the two. Or





maybe it would make even more sense to enter for a few minutes of meditation, prayer or blessing to get to the end of the trail. With such thoughts in mind, 200 meters after the monastery, the road turns left and begins to climb, coming out of the protective guidance of the trees, slowly, slaloming on the shoulders of the hills that become bare and open the landscape in front of us. One can see the mountains of Cerna, Godeanu, Retezatul Mic, in other parts Țarcu, Muntele Mic, Semenic, however, the route is on a simple hill, located, simply, in a dream place. It is the kind of place that makes one happy with its beauty, so much that it is overwhelming and tears well up in one's eyes from the gratitude that you can witness this. This hill is one that seems to have been forgotten by God there, uninhabited, deserted, living by the bushes of wild rose or rosehip, tall and slender wildflowers or trees and shrubs that barely give shade. Then the route winds further on, following the beautiful ridge of the hill for a few kilometers, then turn right and cross a swampy road, if it is after rain. A lonely building appears and a few bushes and shrubs on the side of the road, until it starts to descend in Șumița at the end of the village. From here, take the asphalt road on the right for about 5km to the village of Lăpușnicel, kilometers where we must be careful, even if there is little traffic. Through Lăpușnicel you pass only in a corner, but with houses, where, in case of need, you can ask for water from the locals. At the exit of the village, follow the markings for another 6km to Petnic, on a road that is sometimes in the woods and in the shade, sometimes in the fields among the lands of the people. A pleasant walk on the unpaved country road, during which you can tell stories, invent songs or make plans to eat and sleep in the near future. Petnic is a fairly large locality, which must be crossed almost entirely in length, so you enter and go to the center, on asphalt, from where one turns right towards the exit on the main road. Here you can take a break at the local bar or one can shop in the village and pick up some supplies for the next 6kms to Crușovăț (2).

One leaves the village of Petnic and also leaves the main road on the left, towards an ascent that starts in the shade and one comes out on another ridge with beautiful views. You can see several localities surrounding the hill, but the route continues unhindered, with ups and downs, shadows and trees, pieces of forest, leading to an area with various fields, which are a sign that it is approaching a new village, Crușovăț. One reaches Crușovăț, and from here, the only accommodation and meal that exists in the area, is in the neighboring village, one kilometer away, in Cuptoare, at Cabana Pescarului Jim. Thus, here one ends the long day.



Info:

Almăj - Putna Monastery – One will find on the route in Caraș-Severin a new Putna Monastery, where, for some and a long time ago, some of us have started the route from Putna in Bucovina, on the road that unites. This monastery is dedicated to the Feast of Transfiguration (August 6) and was built in 1996. The actual monastic life began in March 1997, when the monk Sava Gana, later appointed abbot, along with other monks, started to administer the hermitage.

Places to find Via Transilvanica stamps:

Bucova

- Mimi Pension, tel. +40 744 791 361 (Dragomir Horia)

Marga

- Alex Pension (former name Ana), tel. +40 730 665 000 (Nea Goe); (at 50m of route)
- The store opposite the City Hall: M-Sa: 7:30 - 21:30 Su: close

Oțelu Roșu

- Hotel Fiama, tel. +40 732 553 668
- Local police, at the entrance to the City Hall, near Lidl

Caransebeș

- Hotel Kolpinghaus, tel. +40 757 021 721 and +40 757 021 719 (at 800m of route)
- Limonădăria Nea Tică, tel. +40 727 778 510, M-F: 7:30 - 22:00 Sa: 8:00-20:00 Su: close

Poiana

- str. Principală no. 28, tel: +40 771 531 283
- Pe Vale la Poiana, tel. +40 773 831 478, +40 763 149 049 (Mădălina Ștefănescu)

Gărâna

- Gărâna City Hall: program: Mo 11:00-16:30. Tu-Th-: 8:00-16:30. Fri: 8:00-10:00, close in weekend
- Kibuț, tel. +40 746 536 300 (Gabi) <https://www.facebook.com/kibutgarana> (at 800m of route)

- Adela Petreanu, tel. +40 723 295 319.
- Pension La Noi la Brebu, tel. +40 727 500 597 (Adrian)

Secu

- Hotel Turist, tel. +40 741 041 963 (Mrs Maria)

Reșița

- Casa Bănățeană Guesthouse, tel. +40 745 419 767 (Laurențiu and Marta Bora)
- Complexul Atlantis, telefon: +40 723 335 367, +40 255 210 000

Iabalcea

- Sălașul fermecat, tel. +40 753 078 164 and +40 754 020 427 (Zlatko Ursul)
- La Sălașul lui Blaj, tel. +40 727 382 879 (Nicolae Filca)
- Salaș u Bregu, tel. 40 740 614 297 (Petru Tincul)

Canton Coșava

- Canton hidro-energetic Coșava, tel. +40 730 081 984 (Radu Ștefănescu)

Prigor

- Prigorel Pension, tel. +40 761 718 128 (Doru and Liliana)
- Prigor City Hall

Crușovăț

- the shop next to the church (at 50m of route)
- Cabana Pescarului Jim, tel. +40 749 655 383 (Ionel Jurescu) in Cuptoare (at 1,3km of route)



TERRA ROMANA

Via Transilvanica has its last 135 km on the last part of Caraş-Severin County (starting from Cruşovăţ) and the rest on the territory of Mehedinţi County, a part we call Terra Romana, an area with a unique climatic specificity in Romania, which allowed the development of a breathtaking natural landscape. Stories about the Dacians and the Romans, hidden treasures that are still lost somewhere in the depth of the ground or deep inside the caves, roads that were once walked by the kings of Romania and even more recent stories and legends about people living in this area nowadays, all these are waiting to be discovered by those who are willing to open their hearts and minds to all these beauties.

The Mehedinţi Plateau offers a view worthy of an epic finale of the Via Transilvanica trail. It is an area that is known among the local people for the multitude of legends and stories that make the area the actual treasure people can find here, not the gold that was once supposedly buried here. The end of the road in Drobeta-Turnu Severin proves once again that some places and some stories can only be found when walking and wandering throughout the country. There is a great historical value added to the amazing view at the end of the trail. In the Drobeta Port, Romania's first King, Carol I, set foot on Romanian territory for the first time before his coronation. At a roughly 1 km from this place, there is another historical monument, where the last kilometer stone is. This stone looks over the remaining ruins of the foot of the Trajan's Bridge. The construction of the bridge began in the year 103 BC and was completed 3 years later, but it was eventually set on fire.

All these things mentioned above constitute the unique identity of the Mehedinţi county which represents the end of the Via Transilvanica trail. This is a trail that unites from Putna to Drobeta-Turnu Severin in over 1,400 km, passing through the country and discovering its special character and all its amazing shapes and forms.

Route: Easy to moderate

Elevation difference: 1,351m

Critical spots: Country road that can be walked. It crosses the European road, which may present a certain risk. Watch out for traffic!

Scenery: unpaved country roads in the localities, then crossing the road into a climb on a forest road to Poiana Lungă, there one will follow mountain paths with beautiful scenery; The villages at the top of the mountain do not have access by car, phone signal will be weak but the experience there will be one of a kind.

Accommodation:

Dobraia: *Glamping Camp Arjana*, accommodation in tents, serving meals on request, reservations by phone: +40 767 824 761 (Marius Opreșcu);

Glamping Camp Dobraia, accommodation in tents, serving meals on request, reservations by phone: +40 729 650 588 (Ionuț Reduța);

Prisăcina: *Nea Talpeș's house*, 10 places, accommodation in the house and tent; dinner and breakfast on request, reservations by phone: +40 735 377 694 and +40 745 783 201 (Nistor and Ioana Talpeș);

Tanti Maria Chima, (or Lică, her son), 6 places, accommodation in the house; Dinner and breakfast on request; reservations by phone: +40 731 572 870;

Sălașul cu Plopi, from Plugova to the top of Arjana, accommodation with a tent (free). Access to the porch for dining. Access to the building ("colibă" in local language) on request. Reservations at tel. +40 722 581 814 or +40 771 338 477 WhatsApp (Maxim Adamescu) and +40 727 356 190 or +40 770 875 071 WhatsApp (Lavinia Adamescu-Lorincz);

Ineleț: *Accommodation at the locals*, near the school, 4 places, breakfast and dinner on request, reservations by phone: +40 734 177 340 (Avrămică Cionca).

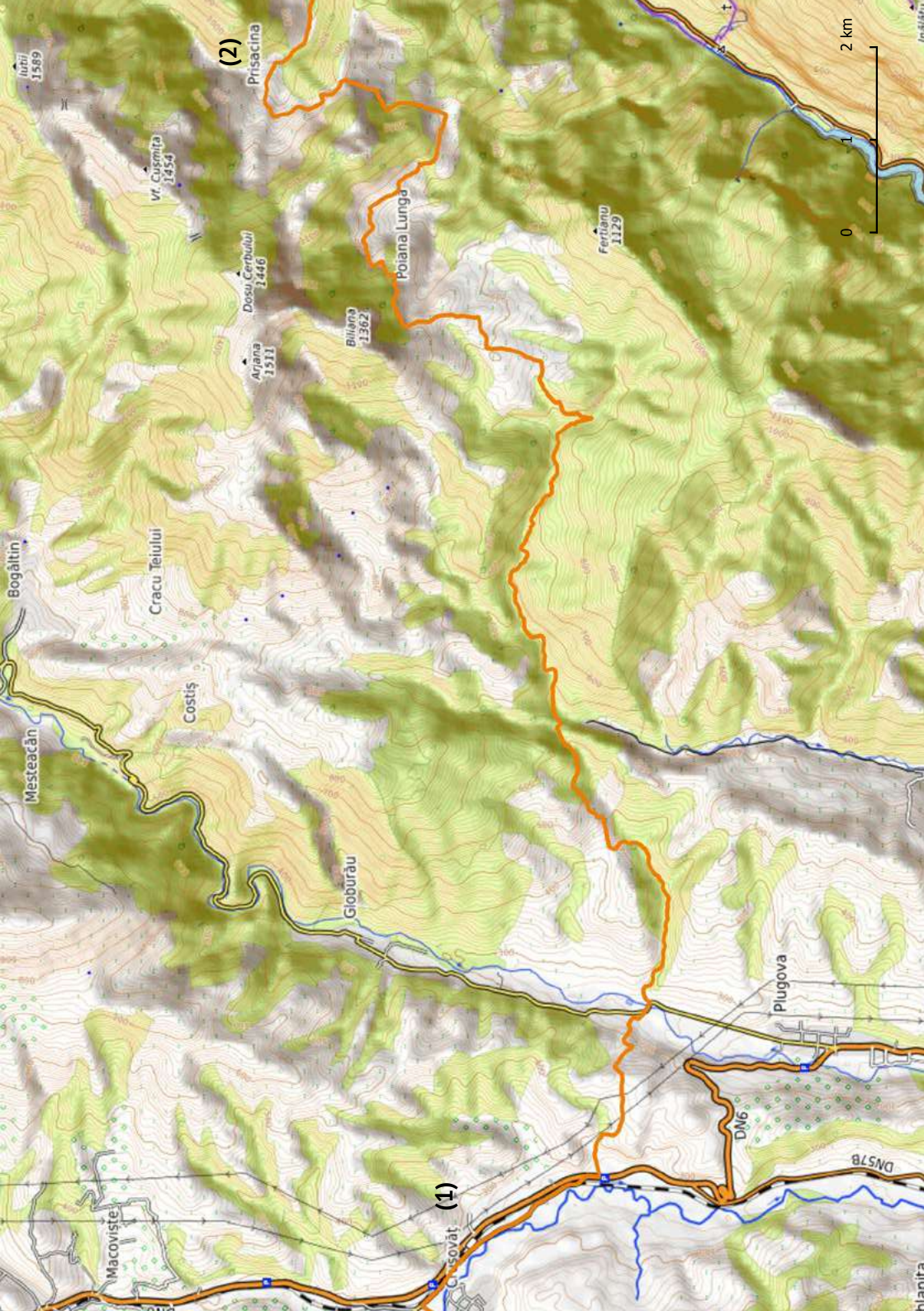
Infrastructure:

Dobraia: 

Prisăcina: 

Note:

The route starts from Cabana Pescarului Jim, from Cuptoare and joins the markings after a few hundred meters from the accommodation, i.e. at the exit from Crușovăț, past the train station on the left and a former alcohol factory on the right. Then one follows the asphalt county road, parallel to the European road, about two and a half km, among several houses that appear one after another and past rarely worked land, cornfields or even the railway that stretches to the left. Cross the national road E70 and follow alongside it for about 100 meters, then turn left and follow the cart tracks for about 2 kilometers, through other lands owned by the houses of the surrounding villages, until one reaches the county road DJ608 crossing our route. After another 600 meters on the right, on the asphalt road in the direction of Plugova, the markings separate again from it and head to the left and continue through the meadows before climbing the hill, a



(2)

(1)

0 1 2 km

vr. Cusmiza
1589

vr. Cusmiza
1454

Dosu Cerbului
1446

Ariana
1511

Biliana
1362

Fertanu
1129

Poiana Lunga

Bogăltin

Cracu Teiului

Costiș

Mesteacăn

Gioburău

Plugova

Macoviste

Crasovăț

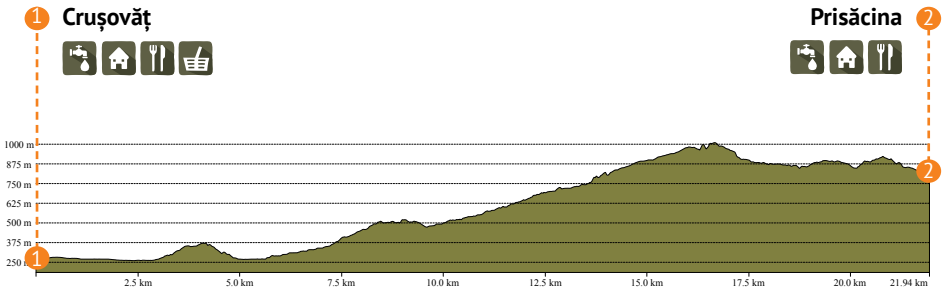
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little among the trees and a few huts. Climb about a kilometer and a half, then continue on the communal road for about 4 kilometers, until you reach a pine forest at the top of a hill. The climb is continuous, which makes the route a little difficult on hot days, but it is offset by the fact that the visibility on the two sister peaks, Biliana and Arjana, is incredible when it is clear. From here, the landscape begins to become rockier and wilder. The focus will be on what is happening in the surroundings, in the forest, or what landscape is hidden beyond the trees that become rarer from time to time and you can catch a glimpse behind them. There may be mosquitoes in the forest especially after a wet period, so it is recommended to protect oneself against them and later even against ticks. You can find partridges, mice, vipers, water snakes and even frogs from time to time in the shade of the trees that climbs slightly for about 4 kilometers. The forest road will encounter an intersection at a certain point, from here, the route goes up to the left in a curved ascent, a little steeper, but does not take too long until the mountain arches over. After a few easy and ascending curves with rocks on the right and scenery on the left, the path straightens and becomes wider and wider as one approaches Poiana Lungă. Before that, there are a few gates to open and close, because one will go through the people's fields where one may meet several grazing animals, cows or horses.

If the path to here was a little difficult, coming out from under the shade of the trees one will see another realm before one's eyes, a place that is so hard to describe due to its utter beauty. Going forward, on the dusty path that forms smooth meanders as it follows the VT markings and kilometer stones, on the right is the Cerna Valley, above which rise





other cliffs straight out of the legends of Hercules. Going forward, the wildflowers form waves in the mountain breeze around one, the birds sing and play lazily, the fragrant smells rise from the haystacks and suddenly it seems that we are in another country. The wild, yellow and tall dill will slowly caress one's knees, the strong smell of mountain thyme will tickle one's nostrils (it smells different from the common mountain thyme) and Zascalul Arjanei leans towards one slowly, like a mermaid with her song. Continue straight on the wide, dusty road with the tastes of the landscape still in the air. Then, after noticing several other tourist markings, the route takes one to the foot of these majestic cliffs that will be on the left, and continues downhill slightly, then up the road again. Thus, one passes Poiana Lungă and heads towards Dobraia, rather big names for some hamlets, which can't even be called that as there are a few scattered houses. But each group of houses has its own name. On a path hidden by the crown of the beech trees, continue to climb and descend easily, keeping fences or forests on one side, mountain streams or small houses on the other until the first church. After many cultivated fields, where corn, potatoes and other vegetables grow, after the heavy and small paths, the solar panels or the batteries that are charged at the mountain springs, one can feel the hard life of the peasants in this area. Without electricity, with little phone signal, without car access and much too rarely without young people to help with house chores, life in the mountains is hard. But there are many more stories from the families one will spend the night with, people who enjoy guests and who share absolutely everything they have with someone who stops by and talks to them, but especially those who listen to them. After the break at the small church in Dobraia, and the nearby pavilion, it is recommended for the hiker to catch his breath, maybe he will meet another local with whom to exchange a few words. Continuing on the same path, it is as if the rocks keep moving their nest and can be seen sometimes to the right, sometimes to the back. An absolutely wonderful view. A place with a very special energy. It is almost 2km to Prisăcina, where tanti (aunty) Ioana or tanti Maria are waiting for you with stories and warm polenta. Special people from special places. It is worth spending the night here, in these conditions, to eat this food made by the hands of the peasants who have been working for a lifetime in the same places and for the same purposes.

Waiting for an epic sunset, a dinner as it used to be and words of encouragement with the hosts, the day can't end better.

Info:

National Park Domogled - Valea Cernei – The places passed by Via Transilvanica over the last two days in the county of Caraș-Severin are located in National Park Domogled - Valea Cernei. Thus, Poiana Lungă, Dobraia, Prisăcina, Cracu Mare, Ineleț and Scărișoara are part of the Cerna Mountains and the national park. From a geographical point of view, the park stretches over the Cerna river basin, from its source to the confluence with the Belareca river, over the Godeanu and Cerna Mountains massif (on the right slope) and the Vâlcanului and Mehedinți Mountains on the left, respectively. The national park is a mountainous area (with rocks, limestone cliffs, peaks, sinkholes, lava flow rocks, caves, grottos, gorges, waterfalls, meadows and forests); in this area, there are also nature reserves: Coronini - Bedina, Domogled, lardașița, launa - Craiova, Bârzoni Cave, Corcoaiei Gorge, Ciucevele Cernei, Piatra Cloșanilor, Vârful lui Stan and Valea Țesna.

Arjana Peak and Biliana Peak – 12.9 km upstream of Băile Herculane, in the Cerna Valley, on the left side of the road there is a large stone and next to it the path to the bridge over the river, beyond which two paths start. On the right, the yellow band marking, a very easy route, goes towards Cheile Prisăcinei. On the left, the yellow dot leads us to Arjana. Arjana Peak has an altitude of 1,511 m, being the highest point in the Cerna Mountains and offers an impressive panorama view including: great scenery and wildlife in the Domogled National Park. The sister mountain peak to Arjana is Biliana (or Bilana), at an altitude of 1,364 m.

Maria Drăghicescu, Romanian folk music singer from Banat, born in Dobraia on 18th September, 1952 in Prisăcina hamlet, Bogâltin village, Cornereva commune, Caraș - Severin county - died on 3rd April, 1997, in Toronto, Canada. Tiberiu Ceia calls her "The Nightingale of Banat". Her first hit, constituting her debut with the Folk Music Orchestra "Lazăr Cernescu" from Caransebeș, was the song "Duce-m-aș și m-aș tot duce (La măicuța mea, la cruce)", recorded at Radio Timișoara in 1972. Despite the radio success, the song was censored by the communist authorities. The singer specializes in the Banat repertoire. She continued to collaborate with "Lazăr Cernescu" orchestra from Caransebeș (conducted by Nicolae "Laci" Perescu), then joined the orchestra Banatul from Timișoara (conducted by Gelu Stan). She collected folklore from the region and created adaptations of the collected songs and texts. She participated in tournaments and in popular music festivals and competitions and was rewarded with several prizes. Her name is given to a cultural association that organizes a festival - a national contest for vocal interpretation "Maria Drăghicescu". The contest is addressed to soloists aged between 16 and 30 years. The preselection and the actual contest take place in Timiș county, and the winners hold a tribute show in Bogâltin - Cornereva. The first edition of the festival took place in 1998. (source: wikipedia)

Nistor's mill – in Prisăcina, one of the houses that receives guests belongs to the Talpeș family, with tanti Ioana and nea Nistor. Somewhere, behind the house, nea Nistor takes care of one of the last water mills, which remains the only one functional in the area. This is where the corn is ground and also where the rest of the neighbors in the area come to grind it. If hikers spend the night at Prisăcina, ask for a visit to Talpeș's mill, nea Nistor will be a guide full of fun and good cheer.

Băile Herculane – Băile Herculane (Latin: Aqua Herculis, German: Herkulesbad, Hungarian: Herkulesfürdő) is a town in Caraș-Severin County. It is the oldest tourist resort in the country and also among the most important and visited spas with permanent regime in Romania and Eastern Europe. It is located in the southwestern part of Romania, at an

altitude of 168m, 8km away from the border with Mehedinți County and 25kms from the border with Serbia.

Hercules Marathon – is a mountain running marathon organized by CS Alternative Timișoara and in 2021 it celebrated its 10th edition, in October. The autumn landscape of the Cerna Valley is one that should not be missed, so the marathon routes take you on paths, over rivers and up to peaks so that participants will see the most beautiful things on offer. In the village of Prisăcina, tanti Maria Chima offers a hydration point in front of the house, together with the marathon volunteers.

Hiking/mountain trails – If the break days are extended in this amazing area of the Cerna Mountains and if one stays in the same place for several days, there are a multitude of possible routes that can be done on break days: thus, one can visit Fall Vânturătoarea from Mehadia, one of the most spectacular in the country, one can admire the sunset over “Geanțu’ ăl’ galbin” (yellow rock translated from the local dialect). More information can be received from the host, tanti Maria or nea Nistor) on how to reach by Prislop pass the peaks Bilana and Arjana or until Godeanu. Tourist and mountain routes are marked according to the difficulty of the route, but sometimes one may use information from several sources (internet, maps and locals). You can also visit the Prisăcinei Mills which are located in the Prisăcinei Gorge. The walks around the hamlets can be diverse, long or short, on ridges or peaks, or simply up to the Prislop Pass, in an alpine hollow, from where one can admire the Cerna Valley with all its ridges.



Route: Easy to moderate

Elevation difference: +722m

Critical spots: Increased attention to easy, frequent and changeable descents, ascents and descents;

Scenery: Forest paths, predominantly beech forests, paths outside the forest, among the houses, with an absolutely superb background of the Cerna Valley, the surrounding rocks, spectacle of wildflowers or forest protected by secular trees.

Accommodation:

Ineleş: **Accommodation at the locals**, near the school, 4 places, breakfast and dinner on request, reservations by phone: +40 734 177 340 (Avrămică Cionca);


Valea Cernei: There are camping opportunities with access to water on the side of the road, for example at about kilometer 20 to Baia de Aramă, from Băile Herculane;

Guesthouse Dumbrava (on the border of Caraş-Severin County) which is 12kms from Băile Herculane, reservations can be made by phone: +40 755 697 981, and prices differ depending on the type of room. The guesthouse has 44 places, possibility of serving meals;

Valea Cernei Guesthouse, 24 places in double rooms or triple rooms, with the possibility of meals on request. Reservations by phone: +40 744 771 900; directly on the route, on the descent.

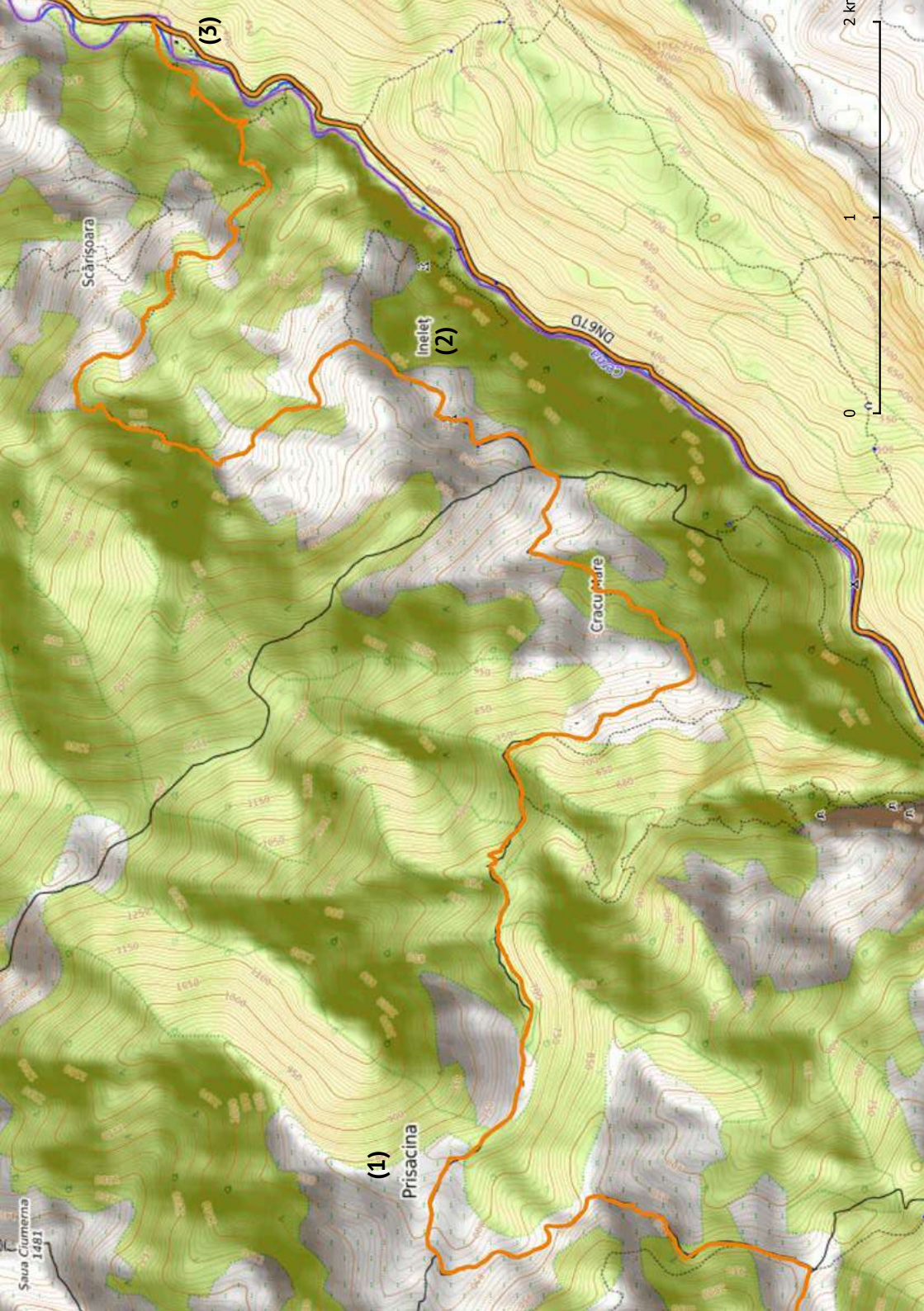
Infrastructure:

Ineleş: 

Valea Cernei: 

Note:

The first thought in the morning was: we want more! These places must be known, seen and lived in at least once in a lifetime. There may be a great contradiction in what we feel, between keeping these places untouched, or polluting them with the growing presence of tourists, but if the balance between these two things is ever found, it will be something special. Perhaps one of the gestures that can be made to keep this balance is that tourists do not have expectations of hotel conditions and try not to make it difficult, but even to facilitate the efforts of their hosts by: low power consumption (they only have a few solar panels), low or no linen use (laundry consumes electricity and detergents taken from the city), the consumption of traditional food offered on the spot and no expectations of Michelin star menus. We feel the need to draw attention to this, because the Romanian tourists still have a lot to learn and maybe a first step would be the return to their roots, to the harsh conditions of the country, of their grandparents, of the mountains. One will leave Prisăcina with a heavy heart and with the soul full of goodness, purity and warmth, as received when hosted by one's grandparents, by simple people, hard workers and with the experience of a lifetime. The path continues with specific markings on trees, boulders or fences, with the kilometer stones appearing who knows where at every kilometer, next to the cool streams, through stormtorn forests, with



Sava Crumena
1481

Scărișoara

(1)

Prisacina

Ineleț

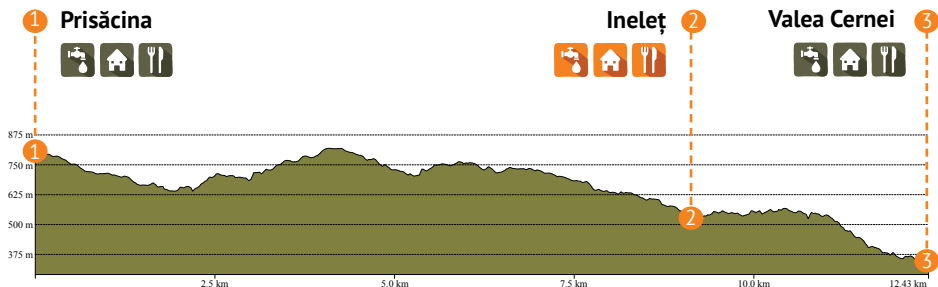
(2)

Cracu Mare

DN67D

(3)





steep ravines or muddy climbs, but none of this will stop one from smiling, the soul from rejoicing, or the feet from walking, because each "hop" is compensated with a wonderful view, which relaxes one, every hundred meters. The force of nature is incredible, especially when it can be seen in full swing, but its beauty can be disarming for anyone. On the way to Ineleț one can find a showcase with various products, which can be bought by leaving money in the purse, then at the school in Ineleț one can do the same, which can make one dream of a world like this, based on trust and honesty.

The church is another place of respite, peace and meditation, here the priest comes on Sundays and whenever necessary, there are also other holidays and the Feast Day, and it is the place where man is closer to God, in the true sense of the word. The church is placed in such a way that one can see with the naked eye the greatness of the One above. From here it is not too long to Valea Cernei, on the path, but one can prolong the trip as much as possible, because there are some special places, which are worth enjoying until the last minute. As a detour one may descent or ascent the wooden stairs from Scărișoara. Or can visit the church or other families who are willing to tell stories to strangers. It doesn't matter in what form, but time is worth spending here.

In such places it is worth listening to the stories about an old woman who casts spells, because she cannot but be the witch of the place, about where the sky meets the earth and all the portals are open, day and night. About energy fields and medicinal plants, about being so few people and about sick animals. Such childhood stories, or more recent memories, about how it was in the past, who left or came, how to weave a bag or how to wash in the river, all this in the sweet words of Banat, make it a journey which must be repeated.

There are not many places where hikers can get lost, just the sense of an empty stomach in the descent to civilization, through the forest, with puppies barking, but they are good, or a grumpy local, who hardly responds to a greeting. Then the roof of the nearest accommodation approaches, the sounds of the road approach and in a few meters one reaches Casa Valea Cernei, on the road, and after very few kilometers on the right, the first stop in Mehedinți County. One thing is clear, Caraș-Severin will remain the county, the route of Via Transilvanica, which urges you to return.

Info:

Ineleş and Scărişoara – The villages of Scărişoara and Ineleş, in the Cerna Valley, are among the most isolated places in the country. Located in the Cerna Valley, more precisely above it, in the Cerna Mountains, they belong to the Cornereva commune in Caraş-Severin County. The nearest towns are Băile Herculane and Baia de Aramă. Five village hamlets form Scărişoara: Cracu Mare, Ineleş, Croui, Ţaţu and Gura Iuţii. One of the biggest tourist attractions is one of the routes from the valley to these hamlets, which has a series of acacia wood stairs, built in the '70s - from here the connection with the name of Scărişoara. Of course, there are other paths and possibilities to get here, but they will be slightly longer routes. The villages at the top of the mountain, together with Scărişoara and Ineleş are located at over 1,000m altitude. Life in these villages is conducted entirely differently, people are quiet, warm, patient, hardworking and extremely hospitable. Everything is produced by their hands, through hard work. They deal with raising animals (sheep and cows) and growing vegetables and fruits. There is no electricity, only a few solar panels (most recently) and batteries charged by the mountain rivers. The food is made from their own products, without chemicals. The hardest for them is the winter, a season in which they have to live on savings over the year, little electricity and no wood at all. The harsh life drove away from the mountain villages most of the inhabitants and especially the young people. There are very few families of old peasants left who take care of their daily affairs and enjoy the company of hikers from time to time.



Trail: well signaled, average difficulty, a straight forest road, a slight ascent for around 2 to 3 hours, steep descent on asphalt road towards the end

Elevation difference: +1,356m

Critical spots: the steep descent that leads to the entrance to the village at the end of the day

Scenery: the trail passes through many beech forests, on many forest roads and a few glades and meadows.

Accommodation:

Obârșia Cloșani: *La furca văii*, 8 beds, breakfast and dinner on request, shop nearby, reservation in advance by tel. +40 741 638 685 (Maria and Ghiță Achim)

Good to know: Villages in the region of the Mehedinți County are not prepared yet to provide a large variety of accommodation possibilities. So, if there are no available beds at the places we mentioned above, we recommend the traveler to look for accommodation in villages nearby and then continue the trail where they had left off the day before.

Infrastructure:

Valea Cernei: 

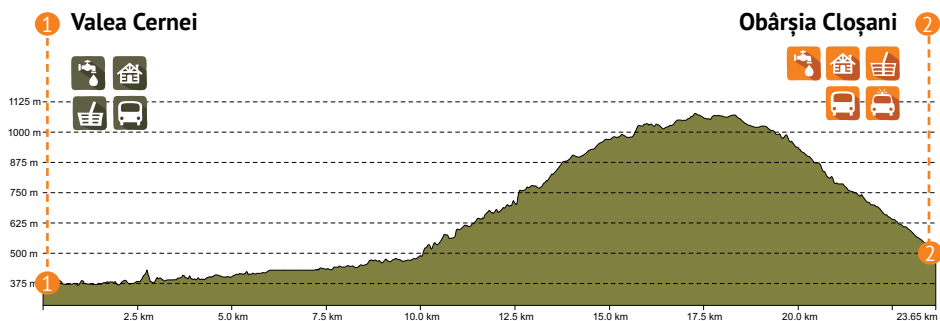
Obârșia Cloșani: 

Note:

The Prisaca Lake is situated in the Domogled-Valea Cernei National Park, on the national road 67D right at the border between the two counties, Caraș-Severin and Mehedinți. Roughly 12 kilometers away from the tail of the lake, towards Cerna-Sat, the trail leaves the national road on the left, where there is a Via Transilvanica kilometer stone. The paved forest road follows its way among some imposing rocks and after 2 more kilometers, on the left side of the road, there is a bridge and another forest road named launa. The trail stays unchanged and continues ahead, having the river on the left side and the forest on the right, a forest that is occasionally intersected by huge rocks. After 3 kilometers, a few meters into the woods, there is a waterfall that can be reached on a small, almost invisible path that stems from the main forest road. After another 2 kilometers, the trail gets further and further from the river, completely leaving it behind, and approaches a few houses that are situated on the left side. Right in front of the first house, there is a spring, which represents the first hydration point so far. We recommend all travelers to make serious water supplies here, because there are no other drinking water sources for the next 15 kilometers. The trail continues for 2 more kilometers, and then it reaches a settlement with a few spread-out houses. The traveler then must follow the forest road on the right side, in front of the kilometer stone, a road that is slightly uphill. With great caution towards the existing vipers in that area, the traveler should keep the forest road ahead, passing by a few limestone rocks. From time to time, cars may pass on this road as well. The ascent continues until entering a thick, dark forest, which does well to the heated skin of those who walked a lot in the sun. There are a ton of wild berries that are very inviting and mark the end of the ascent, when the road

leaves the forest into a meadow, a road that is intersected by another dustier and smaller one. The trail goes to the left on the dusty road that leads to a bigger opening, which culminates into a forest of secular beech trees and pieces of rocks and stones that are spread everywhere. This scenery looks like it was once the playground of dragons. After 5 kilometers of a slight ascent, there is a wild water spring on the right side of the road. After one kilometer the trail leaves the road that is climbing, taking the right side. The next kilometers are made inside a thick forest where at times, the trees spread out their branches to allow access to an amazing view in the distance of the Mehedinți Mountains and the meadows worked by the hands of men. The trail goes ahead, as the beech trees become thinner and darker and start going upwards on a road that culminates into a meadow where there are two deserted households on which time has put its mark. There is a fountain next to a painted icon of the Virgin Mary, which are both put in a nice resting place, where the traveler is advised to take a well-deserved break, because there is a significant descent coming up, leading to Obârșia Cloșani village (2). The trail then continues forest road into a young and scarce forest. There are stones on the road that look like they were put there by men. The legend has it that these stones are the outcome of a volcano eruption millions of years ago. Shortly after this, the trail enters the village, passes by the houses, and slightly descends until becoming a steep descent on asphalt road. At the first intersection, the trail takes the right, following the signs and then makes a right again, until the town hall. The next day, trail will start in front of the town hall.





Info:

The Mehedinți Plateau – It is situated in the south-west part of the country, west of the Motru River and at the base of the Mehedinți Mountains. The plateau is at an altitude of 400-600 meters. The peaks that reach over 600 m are called cornets. This unit is made out of crystalline shists and limestone. Due to the presence of limestone, there are plenty of karst phenomena around this area, like caves, valleys, natural bridges, sinkholes, etc. The three hydrographic arteries that frame this plateau are Topolnița, Motru and Coșuștea. The Mehedinți Plateau represents a sunken step of the Carpathian Mountains, and it is unique because it has the structure of a mountain, but the heights are specific to the hills. The climate is continental with sub-Mediterranean influences. As for vegetation, this area consists of beech tree forests but there are many elements specific to the Mediterranean climate, such as wild lilac bushes. The fauna is predominantly specific to the beech tree forest with species such as wild boars, badgers, wolves, foxes, but yet again, there are Mediterranean influences such as the presence of turtles.

The caves in Obârșia Cloșani area – This area has many karst phenomena, like for instance the many caves located in Obârșia Cloșani. Some of these caves are *Cracul cu Via Cave*, *Cracul cu Plopi Cave* and many more that the local people usually have a lot of information about. The area that is under research is situated on the south-eastern flank of the anticlinal of the Mehedinți Mountains, oriented north-east, south-west, and belonging to the Danubian Inland. In the middle of the anticlinal, there are crystalline rocks above which there are clay shists and phyllite intertwined with quartz tiles. Then, there are arcisian sandstone and conglomerates, followed by reef limestone 200-300 meters thick. On top of the limestone, there are layer of clay and sandstone.

The Cloșani Rock – The beauty of the area is breathtaking and it offers a geography lesson to the viewer who can notice in the far distance the Vâlcan Mountains, the Retezat Mountains, the Piule-Iorgovan, the ridge of the Godeanu Mountains and its continuation into the Cernei Mountains. The area is wild and rough. The height of the Cloșani Rock is modest, only 1,421m for the taller peak and 1,163m for the smaller one. This peak is remarkable for the scenery and it is visible from afar, right from the very first hills of the Mehedinți Plateau, near the Danube River, up until the hillside area of the Gorj County, towards the Parâng Mountains.

Trail: easy, short, short portions of asphalt road

Elevation difference: +457 m

Critical Spots: none

Scenery: meadows with views towards the Mehedinți Mountains, hardwood forests, and mountain paths.

Accommodation:

Isverna: La Mustață Guest House (3 daisies), 6 rooms with one king-sized bed and one single bed each, the maximum capacity is 20 places. Meals can also be served on request, but in a boarding house. Reservations can be made on the website, at email contact@pensiunealamustata.ro or at the phone number: +40 741 577 993.

Good to know: Villages in Mehedinți County are not prepared yet to provide a large variety of accommodation possibilities. So, if there are no available beds at the places we mentioned above, we recommend the traveler to look for accommodation in villages nearby and then continue the trail where they had left off the day before.

Infrastructure:

Isverna:   

Selișteea:    

Note:

The trail crosses the main street in front of the town hall in Obârșia Cloșani (1): right in front of the town hall, there is a smaller road, an intersection where there is a kilometer stone and Via Transilvanica sign. After 500 meters of ascent, there is a water spring with drinking water. After 2 more kilometers of ascending, the trail leaves the village and reaches a few glades which offer amazing views. Following some very nice and comfortable paths, the trail, being considerably shorter for this day, allows the traveler to take longer breaks to enjoy the scenery, the Mediterranean climate and the rocky mountains around the meadows. After leaving the young forest and the bushy hillsides, full of ferns and blackberries, the trail reaches a large and open meadow at the peak of which the road goes into a sort of an intersection, where the trail makes a right. After almost 8 kilometers and a slight descent from the meadow mentioned above, following a dusty road that has a deserted household ahead that is surrounded by a stone fence, the trail turns slightly to the left in front of the house, at a 30m distance and on a carriage path, even though the initial road continues ahead. The trail enters a hardwood forest, full of young trees, then it crosses a bridge in bad condition, which leads to other opportunities to feast on wild berries. Eventually, after yet another break, the trail enters other open meadows, full of hay or green grass sprinkled with colorful flowers. At times, the traveler might come across a sheepfold and then admire the mountain peaks that can be seen in the distance. After a slight descent on the mountain path, the trail reaches a beech tree forest (in front), where the road forks and the Via Transilvanica trail turns left in a curve that resembles a hairpin. The road slowly approaches the village and from a mountain path, it becomes an unpaved road and ultimately an asphalt road. The



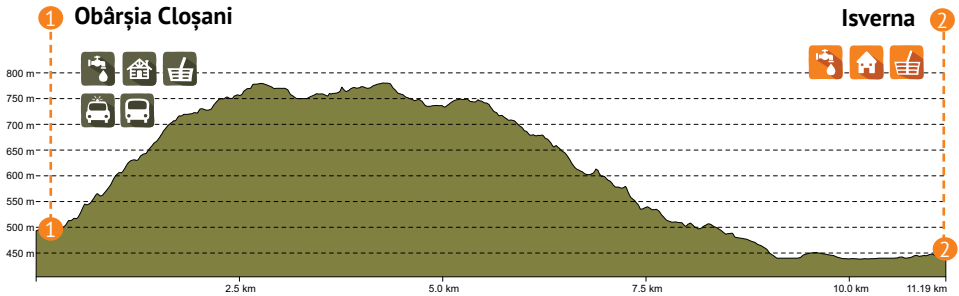
unpaved road leads among the houses to an intersection where, on the left side, there is a fountain, but the trail turns to the right. It then continues among the houses until it crosses the asphalt road, following the signaling. After around 2 km among the local houses, the trail enters the asphalt road and leads for another 2 kilometers to the center of the commune Isverna (2).

Info:

Stan's Peak – Stan's Peak (Vârful lui Stan) is the highest peak of the Mehedinți Mountains, having 1,466 m in altitude. It presents itself as a steep unit, oriented towards north-west and it looks over the Cerna Valley (Valea Cernei). The scenery is characterized by the presence of clints and, according to the local people, it is the most beautiful peak from the Mehedinți Mountains. There are legends related to this place that say that there is a ton of gold and treasury buried here, but they have not been discovered just yet. People around here seem to have been born to look for hidden treasures so many of them have maps to help them figure out these hidden places and maybe one day, find all the gold and become rich.

Beletina Meadow – It is a beautiful large meadow in the Mehedinți Mountains, in Isverna. This meadow offers a good viewpoint to Stan's Peak. It is very easy to reach the Crovul Mare area from here, which is an area with great views as well. Here, one can find many clints, beech tree forests and Banat black pine trees (a unique tree species that only grows around these areas). Beletina Meadow is also famous for Gruia's Step, which is one of the thousands of little ditches, naturally carved in limestone. This particular one has the shape of a foot sole, so it was associated with a legend whose main character is Gruia Novac.





"Nedeile" (celebrations of the villages) – The so called "nedeie" is an ancient inheritance of the Romanians. These events are celebrations that gather all the people in one place to sing and dance together. The origins of this celebration date way back in time and come from a complex pre-Christian celebration that was honoring the God of Fire and the Sun. The first documented "nedeie" (the Romanian word for this kind of celebration) dates back to 1373. In villages like for instance Seliște, Isverna and many others along Via Transilvanica, people celebrate such events. Usually, each village chooses a Christian celebration as an opportunity to also celebrate this event. We think that taking part in such an event as a traveler is a very good opportunity to meet local people, learn their customs and habits, the way they dance, sing or speak and all in all, just a nice opportunity to spend some great time in the center of the village.

The Bridge of God – The Bridge of God, also known as the Natural Bridge in Ponoarele, is the only natural bridge used for vehicle passage in România. The main road DJ 670 Baia de Aramă - Drobeta-Turnu Severin crosses this bridge which is part of the Podului Cave (in English: The Cave of the Bridge) and resulted from the crumbling of the ceiling of the cave. This is the longest natural bridge in România, the second one in Europe, having 30 m in length, 13 m in width, 22 m in height and 9 m in thickness. It is the only natural bridge that is open as a vehicle passage in the world. There are many legends related to the origins of this bridge. Some say that the Devil used to live here, and people would pray to God to chase him away, so God finally hit the ceiling of the cave with his mighty palm and thus, the structure of the bridge was born. Another legend says that God Himself built the bridge in order to help Saint Nicodim escape from the village he was expelled from. He left Ponoarele to Tismana where he built a monastery (The Monastery of Tismana). Before leaving, it is said that he cursed the water in Ponoarele to always be without fish and for the ground to occasionally swallow it whole. Nowadays, these 2 phenomena have turned out to be true, as there are no fish in the water and the Ponoarele lake dries out during summertime. Another legend has it that Hercules himself built the bridge. Anyways, this attraction is placed east of the Via Transilvanica trail and can be visited provided that the traveler is willing to spend one extra day in the area.

Trail: medium difficulty, well signaled, mainly through small villages, meadows, paths and country lanes, 30 % asphalt road

Elevation difference: +669m

Critical spots: the asphalt areas can be difficult but are inevitable

Scenery: mountain paths, through meadows full of ferns, young and old forests, small villages with friendly people.

Accommodation:

Jupânești, Sanctum Glamping, a glamping resort, 15 places, access to equipped kitchen, shop nearby. Reservations on +40 749 093 836 (Eduard Stanchievici);

Cireșu: The Mehedinți Plateau Geopark has its quarters in Cireșu. People here have always shown their support towards our project. Right from the get-go, they helped us signal the trail and now they have agreed to accommodate travelers on Via Transilvanica. They can provide up to 15 places, reservations can be made at the phone number: +40 754 574 246 (Claudiu), grocery store nearby.

Nomad's place, Cottage on the Lunca - 5 beds, in 2 separate rooms and sofa bed living room, bathroom with shower, fully equipped kitchen, generous terrace, coffee and tea from the hosts. On request, we can mediate for evening meal and breakfast. Further details and reservations on tel. 0741 176 215 (Oana)

Pension La Tudor, 3 beds, breakfast and dinner on request, and possibility of camping with access to bathroom and kitchen. Reservations at tel. +40 722 841 997 (Tudor Sahanovschi).

Accommodation with locals, 10 places, gazebo, barbecue place, shop and pizzeria nearby. Reservations on 0747 824 940 (Mirel Petolea);

Pension Conăcelu Dan, 8 beds in rooms, dinner and breakfast on request, camping place, with access to toilet and kitchen, cypress, reservations at +40 729 947 020 (Daniela Dan).

Infrastructure: **Balta:**  

Cireșu:  

Gornovița: 

Note:

In Isverna, (1) in front of the church, there is a grocery store where, the hiker can purchase the goods needed for the third day, which is a long one and requiring a little bit more energy. On the left side of the church, on the road that goes straight ahead, the Via Transilvanica sign must be followed among the small houses, until the village ends in a slight ascent of a few kilometers. Then the road reaches a meadow with ferns, almost as tall as humans. A little bit further, following the smooth paths, the trail is now surrounded by the country's most precious treasure: the mountains. Many peaks can be observed in the distance, from the Retezat Mountains, from the Godeanu Mountains etc. Slowly, the trail reaches the Mehedinți Plateau. Alongside a small creek, the country lane enters Gornovița, a small village with scattered houses. Here, the traveler can get water and hear interesting stories from the locals, such as those about mister Cornu who had more than 90 jobs. His family house can be easily spotted because it has countless drawings, inscriptions, sculptures, and carvings around it. After leaving Gornovița, the trail continues a few kilometers on asphalt road and then turns a right alongside a group



of poplars trees, leaving the asphalt road and continuing on a straight and dusty road, typical for the Mehedinți Plateau. After a few kilometers, on a road that goes parallel with the asphalted one, following the small creek, the trail goes back on the asphalted road after a left turn. The trail continues for a few kilometers alongside the main road until it reaches a village called Balta (2). This is the last place for the day that provides drinking water or food supplies. Later, the trail continues among a few abandoned houses, on a dusty road, among fruit trees, where the hiker might be able to see some typical wild animals that live in that area, such as the tortoise. Next, the trail enters a beech forest on a forest path, where the tranquility dominates the shades. After exiting the forest, the trail continues with a slight descent among a few houses, this time inhabited, with flowers and fruit trees in their yards. After leaving them behind, the road enters the last village which is then followed by a few kilometers of asphalt road. One of the entrances of the Topolnița Cave as well as the limits of the scientific reserve can be found here. The road continues 2 km to the next village, Cireșu (3), where the traveler can get to the headquarters of the Mehedinți Plateau Geopark, located on the right alley, after leaving the center of the village, where route 3 gets to an end.

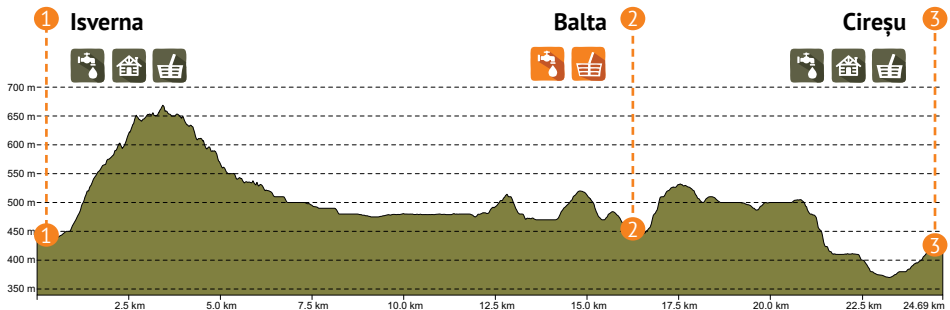
Info:

Topolnița Cave – Topolnița Cave is one of the most spectacular caves in România with formations unique in the world. It is a speleological reserve, declared a natural monument. The cave is located in the central part of Mehedinți Plateau, between Cireșu and Marga, 30 kilometers from Drobeta-Turnu Severin. Topolnița, a vast branched cave, is one of the most important karst forms in the country. The waters of Topolnița River carved through the mountain and formed gigantic and extremely spectacular galleries. The cave area has a length of about 11,000 meters; it is the fifth largest in the country. The galleries are positioned on five levels, of which the most impressive speleological formation in the Carpathians is Racovița Gallery. In Topolnița, there have been discovered human traces dated back to Neolithic. It is a warm cave, with temperatures ranging from 8.2 to 10.8 degrees Celsius. This cave houses numerous lakes, impressive stalactites formations and stalagmites, accompanied by mazes, torrents, waterfalls, and underwater areas. Topolnița

Cave is open only a few hours a year, on the third Sunday of August. For the rest of the year, it can be accessed only with approval from the Romanian Academy.

Mehediți Plateau Geopark - The Mehediți Plateau Geopark is a protected area situated in the south-western part of România, on the administrative territory of counties Gorj (5%) and Mehediți (95%). The Natural Park, protected area, is situated between the Mehediți Mountains and the Getic Plateau. The protected area represents a hilly area: small heights made out of crystalline shists and limestone attributed to the Jurassic period, rare geological formations such as the Bridge of God, valleys, piers, lakes (Zătonu Lake), caves (Ponoarele Cave) and having forests, meadows, and pastures. Inside the park, there are numerous natural protected areas such as the karstic complex of Ponoarele. Coșuștei Pier, Babelor and Cerboanei peaks, Topolniței Pier and Topolnița Cave, Epuran Cave, etc. For flora we can mention the beech, the oak, South European flowering ash (*Fraxinus ornus*), European cornel (*Cornus mas*), wild privet, common hawthorn, mahaleb cherry (*Prunus mahaleb*), hackberry, juniper, *Xanthium spinosum*, the lilac, etc. The fauna is diverse: multiple species of mammals, birds, fish, amphibians, and reptiles, some of them protected by law. Some of them are wolf, fox, stag, deer, wild cat, tree marten, hare, squirrel, different species of bat, dormouse, great spotted woodpecker, goldfinch, leaf warbler, Eurasian hoopoe, common cuckoo, horned viper, smooth snake, slow worm, etc.

The Horned Viper - The horned viper or the long-nosed viper, nose-horned viper, sand viper is a viper species found in southern Europe throughout Balkans, including România. It is renowned to be the most dangerous of the European vipers due to its, long fangs (up to 13 mm), and high venom toxicity. The head is covered in small, irregular scales that are either smooth or only weakly keeled, except for a pair of large supraocular scales that extend beyond the posterior margin of the eye. The most distinctive characteristic is a single "horn" on the snout, just above the rostral scale. The color pattern is different for males and females. In males, the head has irregular dark brown, dark gray, or black markings. A thick, black stripe runs from behind the eye to behind the angle of the jaw. Females have a similar color pattern, except that it is less distinct and contrasting. They usually lack the dark blotch or V marking on the back of the head that the males have. The ground varies in color and tends more towards browns and bronzes, such as grayish-brown, reddish-brown, copper, "dirty cream", or brick red. It primarily inhabits dry, rocky hillsides with sparse vegetation. It is not usually associated with woodlands, but if so, it will be found around the edges and in clearings. It is quite sensitive to cold and goes into hibernation in the early fall and is the last one to come out in spring.



Trail: medium difficulty, well signaled, a small ascent at the beginning, mainly among small villages, through meadows, country lanes, a lot of asphalt road

Elevation difference: +634m

Critical spots: the asphalt areas can seem very long and difficult but are inevitable

Scenery: some touristic spots that can be visited at the beginning of the trail.

Accommodation:

Balotești: Taverna Grădețului, 6-8 accommodation places, camping for tent/ caravan, toilets, showers), terrace and shop, a beautiful terrace, possibility of providing meals, reservations can be made by calling at +40 763 100 006. The tavern's schedule is 24 hours a day;

Happy Guest House (4 daisies) - 8 accommodation places, meals are provided on request, camping places are available. Reservations two days in advance at +40 724 557 724 (Mircea) or on Facebook;

Good to know: Villages in Mehedinți County are not capable of providing a large variety of accommodation possibilities just yet. So, if there are no available beds at the places we mentioned above, we recommend the traveler to look for accommodation in villages nearby and then continue the trail where they had left off the day before.

Infrastructure:

Marga:  

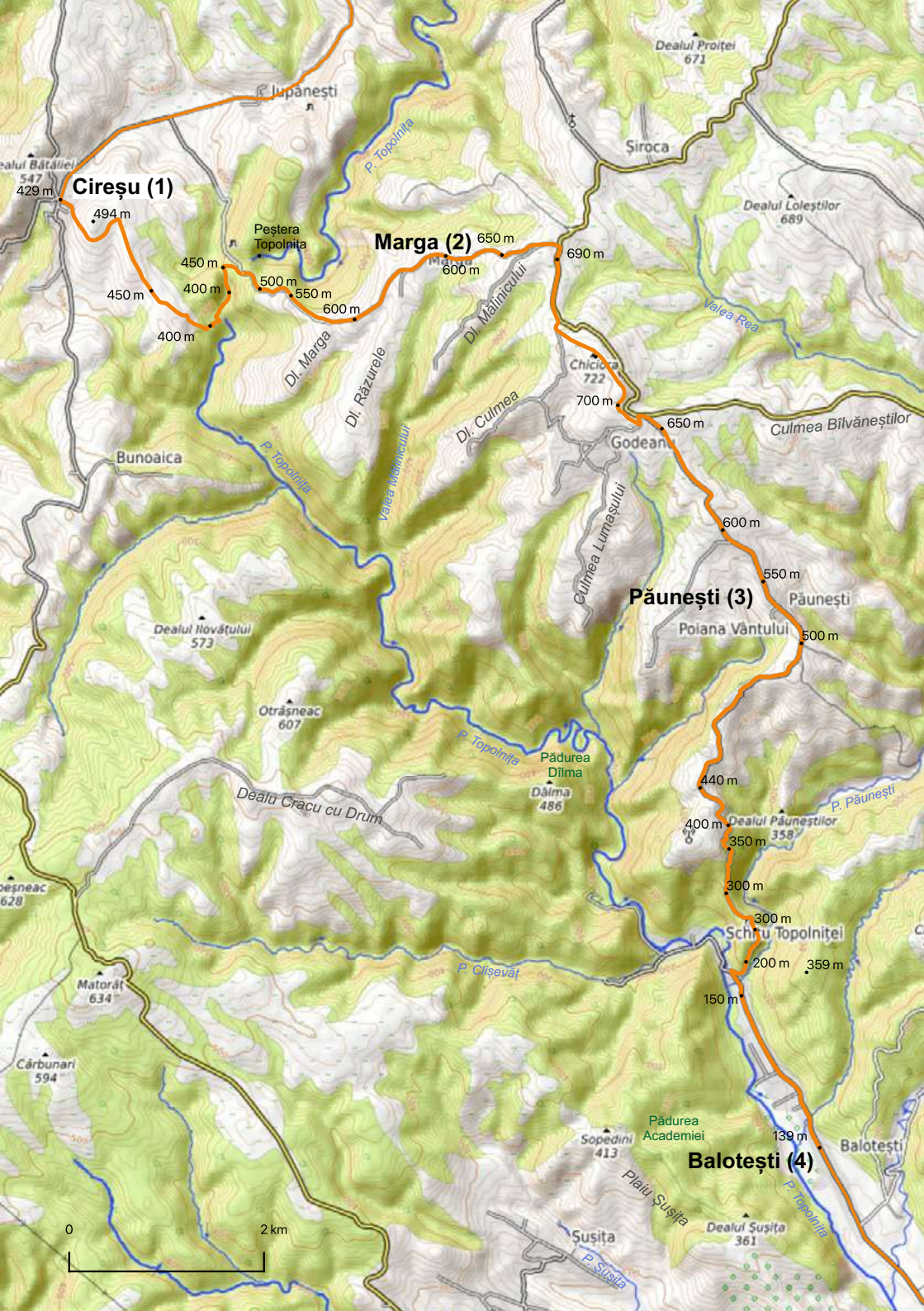
Păunești:  

Balotești:   

Note:

After a long trip, the traveler might need a day that is not so difficult or more time to visit the touristic spots that this area has to offer. However, the trail has a medium difficulty as it goes through a lot of villages that have long, asphalt roads.

The trail starts in front of the headquarters of the Mehedinți Plateau Geopark; from here the road takes a left turn in a small ascent. There are a few hundred meters of asphalt road, then the trail takes a right turn next to some small houses. Here, the traveler leaves the country lane and takes a left turn on a path that leads straight to a young deciduous forest. In the forest, the path leads to the first spot that has to be visited. The trail gets to some sort of intersection with a few touristic markings. Here the road can either take a right turn, downhill (where we can get to Ciocârdie's Hole, a cave from where the water flows into the Topolnița river), either go straight ahead, above the cave (where we can find a beautiful belvedere spot) or continue with a left turn. If we go straight ahead, to the belvedere spot, after our eyes have been delighted with the cliffs and the stunning peaks around us, the trail goes back 10m until we see the markings again and then takes a right turn, or left turn (before the belvedere). The trail continues downhill, through young trees, calcareous cliffs, and rocks sprinkled everywhere. While doing this, the traveler can start sensing the mysterious vibe of the area and they can get a better understanding of why the mystical creatures, characters of a lot of myths would want to find a retreat spot in these hidden places or why the Dacians built their hideouts on this



Cireșu (1)

Marga (2)

Păunești (3)

Balotești (4)

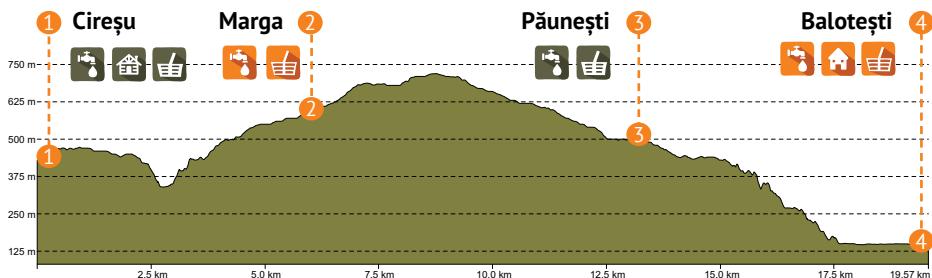


grounds. After a few meters, the trail goes uphill on a pretty steep ascent. Here we can spot the markings placed in a gorgeous place, even higher than the first belvedere spot (462 m elevation) where we can observe the mountains even better. This place is called "La Varniță". In the distance, we can spot Stan's Rock and the Domogled and Suscu Peaks. Somewhere around this area we can also see some boulders that used to be a part of the so-called "cazanele dacice". Going further, the trail goes uphill again, on a country lane where we can see some signs that show the way to some touristic places such as Prosec Gallery from Topolnița Cave, where we can go by making a 3km detour (about 2 hours). The gallery's opening is 64m high and is very impressive.

After the optional visit to the Prosec Gallery, the trail continues on the country lane, next to a fountain with drinking water, a place where we can take a break in order to gain more energy. After about 2km on the dusty road, we get to a village called Marga (2), where we find even more fruit trees. The trail goes through the village and goes into the asphalt road which is followed for a few kilometers up until an intersection. If we take a right turn, we will arrive in a village called Godeanu and if we continue straight, we will get to Păunești (3). We cross the road and we continue on the asphalt road to Păunești. Here, the hiker can receive water if they ask kindly the locals and can even discover a small grocery store which is hidden between the houses. If the hiker talks to the locals, they can receive useful information, can hear different stories, or even get the indications to the grocery store. Leaving the small village behind, after about 1km, we find a sign to Grădețului Fortress where we can find a ruin that can be visited. The detour is about one kilometer long. After a few kilometers on the dusty road, we arrive again at the main road where the trail takes a right turn on the side of the road, for about 2km. Here we get to a huge, wooden crucifix, where we must cross the road and go uphill on the right side. Through blackberry and rosehip bushes and different trees, the sun can be hot, that is why we recommend proper hydration and suitable equipment for high temperatures, because the trail is located in a sub-Mediterranean climate.

When we get to the top of the hill, the traveler has the chance to see an impressive view, where they can also spot an enormous white crucifix with a chapel. Here the locals might build a hermitage or a monastery. If we take a look around and the sky is clear,





we can observe the Retezat Mountains, the Godeanu Mountains, etc. (on the left side/in the back), and straight ahead, slightly on the right side, we get to see the Danube which crosses Drobeta-Turnu Severin on the shore.

From here, the trail follows the country lane in a continuous descent until a village called Balotești from where, a few hard and maybe painful (for the already tired legs) kilometers follow, at the shadow of the trees. When the village becomes more visible, we take a left turn to the asphalt road at the begging of the village, where on the right side we can see a sign to the Schitul Topolniței Monastery that can be optionally visited. The traveler can end their hike here as the next day is also the last one, which has only asphalt road to Drobeta-Turnu Severin.

Info:

Topolnița Hermitage – Topolnița Hermitage is an old orthodox monastery, located on Topolnița's river valley, in Izvoru Bârzii commune, at about 20 km away from Drobeta-Turnu Severin. It is the only existing hermitage in Mehedinți County. The monastery, an architectural monument, was founded in the 14th century (1376-1384, during the reign of Radu cel Frumos). The tradition names as founder the monk Nicodim. The existing church, shaped like a Greek cross, was built in 1646, by Lupu Buligă. The old church is built in the Byzantine style, built up from stone and brick. The entrance in the church is through a twin door, set in a stone portal. The church was painted in 1673, in Byzantine fresco, by the painters Grigore "the Greek" and Dima "the Romanian". The fresco "Last Judgement" painted on the exterior frontage of the western wall is outstanding.

Grădețului Fortress – Grădeț Fortress or the Fortress from Grădeț is placed on top of the hill Grădeț, in the north-western part of the city Drobeta-Turnu Severin. This high point allows the expanded vision of the Topolnița valley and Clicevat riverbed, and the old road that crossed near the hill, linking with the Danube. The ruins of the fortification are certified for the first time by the historian Cezar Bolliac in his wanderings in 1869, publishing his impressions and theories in a paper dating from the very same year. In that work, related to the fortification of the hill Grădețului, the author said that we are dealing with a Dacian fortification, as the locals are naming it "Zidina dacilor". Twenty years later, Vasile Dumitrescu, local historian, said that locals also called the ruins "City of Mateiaș" and that, a long time ago, there was a fight of the Romanian and Hungarians against the Tartars. Later, the historian Teohari Antonescu and the archaeologist Vasile Pârvan visited the ruins and wrote that the ruins are medieval and not Roman or Dacian. Therefore, like many other things in this area, this fortress is also full of mystery and local legends.

Trail: medium difficulty, well signaled, passes through the last villages and the industrial area of the city, passes through the city

Elevation difference: -76m

Critical spots: the asphalt areas can seem very long and difficult but are inevitable

Scenery: multiple touristic spots, urban landscape, industrial area

Accommodation:

Drobeta-Turnu Severin – Numerous accommodation spots can be easily found on the internet. For example: **Hotel Continental**, **Hotel Traian** etc. There are also hostels, pensions, or Airbnb. The prices are suitable for everyone.

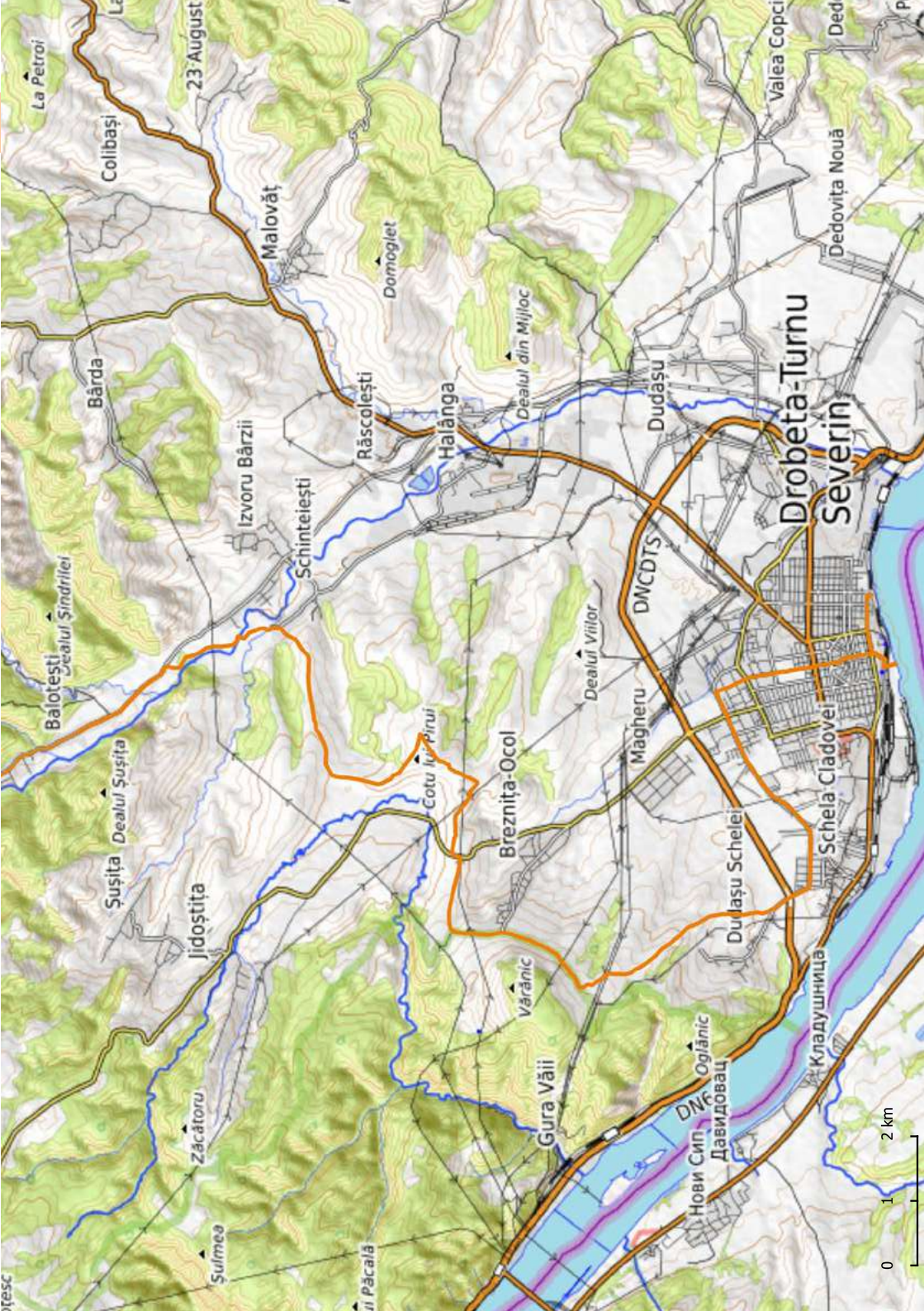
Infrastructure:

Balotești:   

Drobeta-Turnu Severin         
        

Note:

This is the last day of the trip, a 1,400 km long trip that ends in one of the most important, historical cities in România, Drobeta-Turnu Severin. After spending the night in Balotești (1) and maybe a resting day to visit the touristic spots in the area, the hiker continues the trip only on asphalt road. That is why they must be well-rested and ready for this long section of the road. From the entrance of the village, where the route 4 ended, the road follows a long street, passing by houses, on asphalt, where the way that locals live can be observed and there are chances of being able to taste figs straight from the trees or other fruits offered by the locals. The trail also passes by some grocery stores that have a range of different products. Slowly the signs of urban civilization can be noticed, like the bus stations that lead to the city. Immediately after leaving Balotești, at Schintiești, go off the road on the right-hand side. You walk on asphalt through the village, on the specific markings, for about a kilometre, then, between the houses, the road goes uphill, turning into a country road and leaving the village of Schintiești, leaving the houses behind. Caution on this route, there is a lack of water and it is in full sun!!! We recommend „arming” yourself with plenty of water, especially as the area is open, whitout shadow, for many miles. Go straight ahead, touching small patches of trees, so fragile that they barely hold shade, slightly uphill, not changing directions, until you reach a hilltop, from where the spectacular scenery opens up all around. The route then turns sharply right, as the arrow and specific markings will show, up a hillside to a village stretching along the opposite coast. Here it descends slowly towards the road, crosses it, then climbs, on a paved road, towards the right-hand edge of the village of Breznita-Ocol, which will be bypassed. After climbing the road to the right of the village, where the first wells with drinking and cold water are already to be found (if locals are to be found, ask them for water or for directions to the wells), the road then turns left, above the village, still among the last households at the foot of the small mountain on which it sits. You walk among the fruit trees between the households, cork trees or fig



23 August

La Petroși

Colibași

Bârda

Malovăț

Domoglet

Valea Copcii

Ded

Dedovița Nouă

Izvoru Bârzii

Râscolești

Halânga

Dealul din Mijloc

Dudașu

Drobeta-Turnu Severin

Balotești
Dealul Sîndrilei

Șușița
Dealul Șușița

Jidoștița

Schinteiești

Cotu lui Pirul

Dealul Viilor

DMCDTS

Breznița-Ocol

Magheru

Scheia Cladovei

Dudașu Schelei

Vărănic

Gura Văii

DMG
Ogânic
Давидовац

Кладушница

Zăcătoru

Sulmea

Și Păcală

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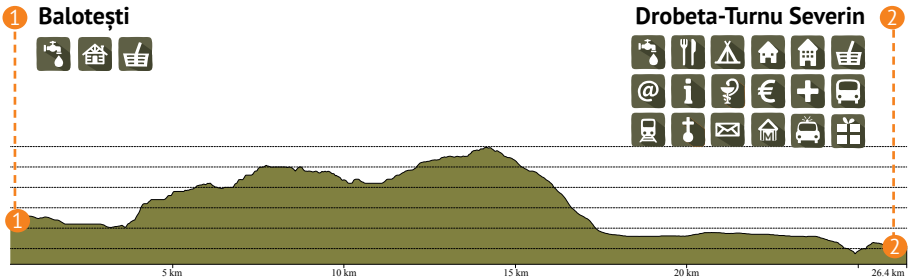
trees, until you leave the village and descend gently, still in open fields, to the left, where you can clearly see the town of Drobeta Turnu-Severin and the Danube.

After a few kilometres, you reach another small village, a few houses where you find a kilometre marker in the shade of a tree, next to a well and a barn. Then you pass these too, go down to the road on the dusty road until the asphalt and the first roundabout. Here you walk carefully along the roadside to the entrance to the town, between the blocks and to the pavements.

After 3-4 km on the asphalt road, the trail finally gets to the Drobeta-Turnu Severin Harbor, to the second to last kilometer stone. This kilometer stone represents the Steel Crown of the Romanian Kings. This is the place where, in 1866, King Carol I stepped for the first time on Romanian land. The traveler started their journey from Bucovina's heart, from the mountains and now, at the end of this journey, they get right to the Danube. The trail continues for another kilometer, through the city, on Carol I Boulevard, where there are old houses with an architecture that is specific to this area. Finally, we arrive at the Iron Gates Region Museum, where the last kilometer stone can be found right in front of the pillar of the Trajan's Bridge, built by Apollodorus of Damascus. Here, the trail that united and discovered România, from Putna to Drobeta-Turnu Severin (2), ends after 1,400 km full of history, natural beauty, many beautiful stories, and all kinds of people.

Info:

Ada Kaleh Island – Ada Kaleh from Turkish: Adakale meaning “Island Fortress”, was a small island on the Danube that was submerged during the construction of the Iron Gates hydroelectric plant in 1970. The island was about 3 km downstream from Orșova and was less than two kilometers long and approximately half a kilometer wide, and it was inhabited by 600 Turks. It was a very popular touristic place, mainly because of the small prices (the island was exempt from taxes) for Turkish delights, jewelry, or tobacco. The island was also well-known for growing roses, from which they made oil and perfume. Ada Kaleh has been inhabited ever since ancient times. Herodotus wrote the island was full of olive trees and grapevine. The island had a strategic position. This is the reason why it played a key-role in the conflicts between the Habsburg Empire and the Ottoman Empire. In 1689, the Austrian army built a fortress on the island. During the construction of the dam, some of the structures that were built on the island were relocated to the nearby Șimian Island, including part of the masonry of the fortress' catacombs, the mosque, the bazaar, Mahmut Pasha's house, the graveyard, and various



other objects. However, the Ada Kaleh community decided to emigrate to Turkey after the evacuation of the island, instead of re-settling on Şimian Island. Also, a smaller part went to Dobrogea, another Romanian territory with a Turkish minority.

The Monument dedicated to Carol I – On the 8th of May 1866, Prince Carol I debarks at Severin to take over the command of România. On the shackles there were a lot of people, who were not there to welcome their king, but to celebrate the Sunday of the Pentecost by taking a walk. Today, this place is commemorated with a gravestone which has Carol I words, when he first set foot on Romanian grounds: “By setting foot on this sacred ground, I made myself Romanian already”. This commemorative plate was unveiled in 1939 by king Carol II. Carol I started his reign in 1866. In the 48 years of his reign (the longest reign in the history of the Romanian states), Carol I obtained the independence of the country from the Ottoman Empire, and his prestige also grew immensely, he redressed the economy, he equipped România with a series of institutions specific to the modern state and he set the bases of a dynasty.

Following the steps of King Michael from Podeni to Băile Herculane – On June 21st 1938, Prince Michael, Great Voivode of Alba Iulia, King of România (1927-1930, 1940-1947) passed through these places together with His classmates and teachers from the “Palatine Class”, in a study trip, from Baia de Aramă (Mehedinţi County) to Băile Herculane (Caraş-Severin County). The Via Transilvanica trail follows a few kilometers of the road that was once walked by the last king of România. The “Palatine Class” was a special class of pupils formed by King Carol II of România, for his son's education, the Voivode Mihai, which later became His Majesty King Michael I of România. The pupils were carefully selected so that the future king to encounter other children, from each social stratification: sons of peasants, of intellectuals, etc. After King Michael's death, the only survivor of this Palatine Class, remained Lascăr Zamfirescu until his death on May 27, 2020.

Trajan's Bridge – Trajan's Bridge, also called Bridge of Apollodorus over the Danube, was a bridge built by the architect of the well-known Trajan's Column, between the spring of 103 and the spring of 105, over the lower Danube, Est from the Iron Gates, in Drobeta-Turnu Severin. It was built in order to facilitate the transport of the Roman troops (led by Trajan) and their necessary supplies for the second military campaign of conquering Dacia (led by Decebal). In antiquity, this bridge represented an impressive architectural and technical construction which only proves how much Trajan wanted to conquer Dacia. The bridge's engineer, Apollodorus of Damascus, used wooden arches, each spanning 38 m (125 ft), set on twenty masonry pillars made of bricks, mortar, and pozzolana cement. The structure was 1,135 m (3,724 ft) long (the Danube is now 800 m (2,600 ft) wide in that area), 12 m (39 ft) wide, and 19 m (62 ft) high, measured from the surface of the river. Dio Cassius believed that Emperor Hadrian (117-138) is responsible for the partial destruction of the bridge to protect the south of the Danube from the invasion of the Roxolani and the lazyges. However, the abandonment and destruction of the bridge marks the moment when Dacia was abandoned forever (275 AD). Today, there are still 12 pillars under water but the first and last one can still be seen at the Danube's shores.



Places to find Via Transilvanica stamps:

Prisăcina

- Căsuța lui Nea Talpeș, tel. +40 735 377 694 and +40 745 783 201 (Nistor and Ioana Talpeș)
- Tanti Maria Chima, tel. +40 731 572 870

Valea Cernei

- Valea Cernei Guest House, +40 744 771 900
- Obârșia Cloșani City Hall

Obârșia Cloșani

- Obârșia Cloșani City Hall

Isverna

- Isverna City Hall
- La Mustață Guest House, tel. +40 741 577 993

Cireșu

- Mehedinți Plateau Geopark, tel. +40 754 574 246 (Claudiu)
- Pensiunea La Tudor, tel. +40 722 841 997 (Tudor Sahanovschi)
- Nomad's place, tel. 0741 176 215 (Oana)

Balotești

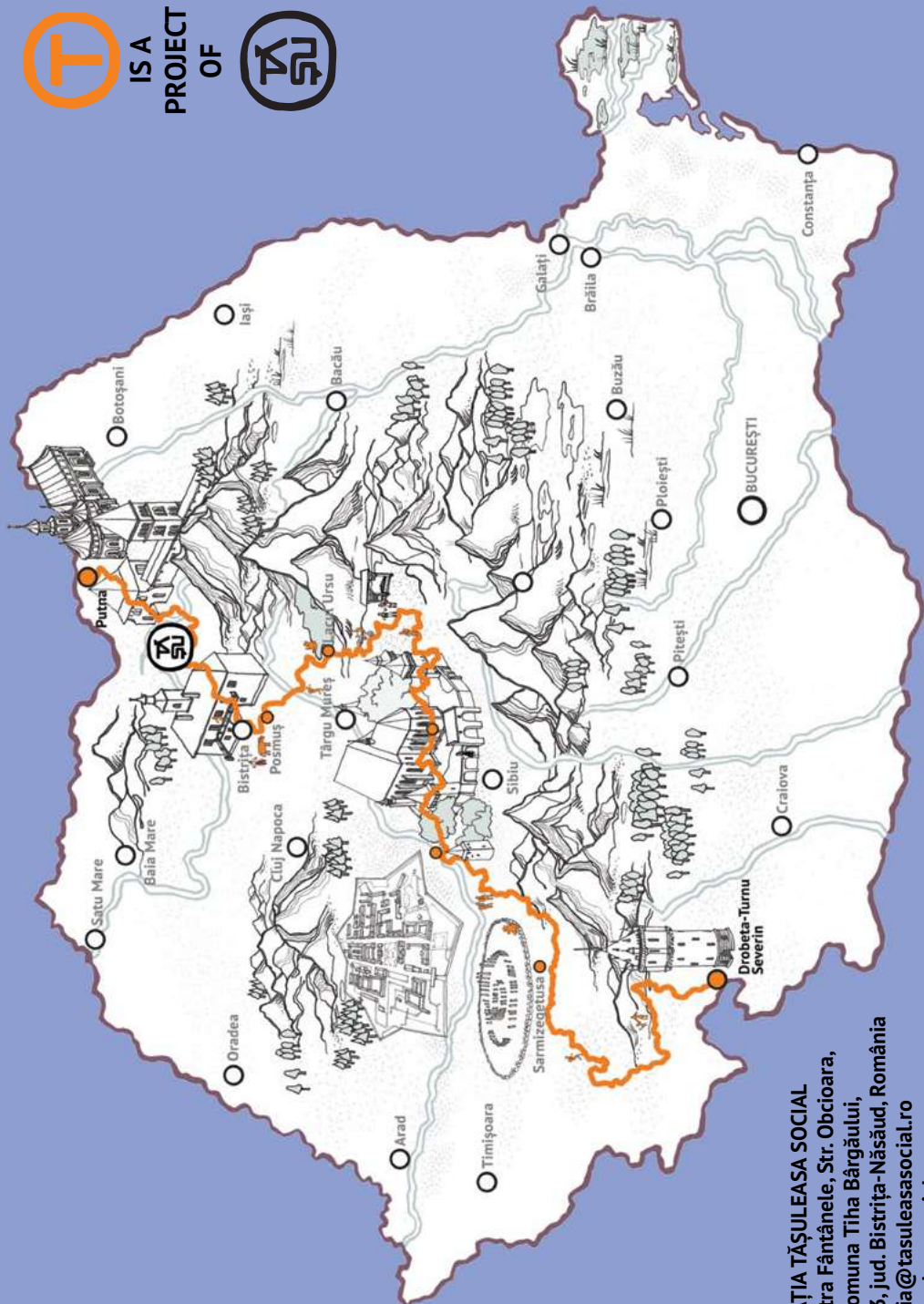
- Happy Guest House, tel. +40 724 557 724 (Cătălina și Mircea)
- Taverna Grădețului, tel. +40 763 100 006

Drobeta-Turnu Severin

- Museum of the Iron Gates Region, M: Close T-Su: 8-16



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