

Unitarian-Universalist
Partner Church Council



Romania Travel Guide



2009 Edition

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Forward

Unitarianism traces its institutional roots back nearly 450 years to 16th Century Transylvania. There, a theologian named Francis David (who in true UU fashion was first a Catholic, then a Calvinist before becoming a Unitarian) converted the King and much of the population to a radical theology -- a theology that espoused the oneness of God and the humanity of Jesus, and that held up reason and tolerance as the pillars of its faith. Today, despite centuries of persecution, there are still some 60,000 Unitarians living in the Transylvania region of Romania, and another 8,000 in Hungary proper. The political changes of 1989 have made it possible for us to visit our co-religionists in Central and Eastern Europe and to experience first-hand their lives and our historical faith.

Most UU pilgrims will travel to Europe as a part of a congregational group. We often hear from past travelers that the opportunity to travel with other UUs – to get to know and to grow alongside them during the journey – is one of the most meaningful parts of the trip. Group travel, however, requires compromise and patience, and can be particularly challenging in rural or primitive settings. Your itinerary will allow for some periods of independent exploration and downtime, but inherent in group travel is some loss of personal freedom. The larger your group, the more this will be the case.

Whatever your motivation for visiting Transylvania, this guide is intended to help prepare you for travel and to enhance your experience while you're there. The information contained within is the collected wisdom of many individuals who travel frequently to Transylvania. It is a work in progress. We welcome your feedback and suggestions. You will be better prepared if you read it through before you go.

When you're looking at a map to plan your trip, the place names will be in Romanian. In this guide, the Hungarian name is in caps and the Romanian name is in parentheses.

Background

Transylvania is a geographic region of Romania east of Hungary, approximately the size of the state of Indiana. It is now inhabited by Romanians, Hungarians, Roma (Gypsies), Germans, and smaller ethnic groups. Most of the Jews who once lived there were killed in the Holocaust or immigrated to Israel after World War II. It was once the province of Dacia under the Roman Empire, until the Romans withdrew from the region in the 3rd Century, B.C.

The Carpathian Basin, including Transylvania, was settled by Hungarians at the end of the 9th Century. There is an acrimonious disagreement between Romanian and Hungarian historians as to which of these two ethnic groups came first. The Hungarians claim that the Romanians (formerly called Vlachs) started to infiltrate Transylvania from the Balkans in the 13th Century. The Romanians claim that they are the descendants of Romanized Dacians and have lived continuously in Transylvania since the Roman Empire.

The Ottoman Turkish Empire occupied Hungary during the 16th and 17th Centuries while Hungarian princes ruled Transylvania as a semi-independent principality. The princes dominated the Romanian peasants while maintaining a precarious independence from the Ottoman Empire. The country of Romania was formed relatively recently, in 1861, with the unification of the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. Transylvania constituted the eastern part of Hungary until the end of World War I, when this region was awarded to Romania by the Allies under the Treaty of Trianon in 1920.

It is ironic that Transylvania, which today has its share of ethnic discord, was a model of enlightenment and religious tolerance during the 16th Century, when most of Europe was embroiled in religious wars. In 1568, Prince John Sigismund promulgated the Edict of Religious Toleration at

the Diet of Torda (an assembly of nobles and landed gentry), which enabled the Unitarian religion to prosper among competing faiths.

The Unitarian faith is a product of the Reformation and was introduced into Transylvania by Francis Dávid (Dávid Ferenc in Hungarian). Dávid had studied in Wittenberg, Germany, where Martin Luther had previously taught. First a Catholic priest, Dávid soon became a Lutheran, and then a Calvinist. Upon studying the writings of the religious scholars Faustus Socinius (an Italian) and Michael Servetus (a Spaniard), both of whom had challenged the theological concept of the Trinity, Dávid began to spread the Unitarian "heresy" in Transylvania - with so much success that even the Prince, John Sigismund, became a Unitarian.

Earlier, Socinius had tried to spread the Unitarian theology in Poland, but it was ruthlessly squashed by the Counter Reformation. Servetus, too, had considerably less success than Dávid, and he was burned at the stake in Geneva by Calvin.

16th Century Transylvania was far ahead of the rest of Europe in the sphere of religious tolerance. A Catholic prince, who ascended the throne after the death of John Sigismund, continued to sanction freedom of the previously established religions (including Unitarianism), but limitations to religious freedom soon developed. He strictly forbade the introduction of any theological innovations. Thus, when Dávid began to proclaim that it was not appropriate to invoke Jesus in prayer, he was tried and sentenced to prison for life. He died in prison in 1579.

Transylvanian Unitarianism underwent a significant evolution in England and was transplanted to the United States at the end of the 18th Century by liberal dissenters from the Church of England, most notably Joseph Priestley, the discoverer of oxygen.

Since the 1989 overthrow of the Communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, increasing numbers of North American Unitarian Universalists have traveled to Romania.

Our Unitarian brothers and sisters in Transylvania have suffered much over the past four centuries, but they have kept their faith under the most trying circumstances. Today, they have about 120 churches – many of these paired with a North American UU partner church. Although their religious beliefs and church services are more traditional than ours (there is a formal Unitarian catechism), we all share in some basic values and principles:

- the use of reason in matters of faith
- belief in absolute freedom of conscience
- tolerance of differing opinions.

Food – What to Expect & What to Bring

The entire retail culture in Romania has changed dramatically over the last few years. Food options have expanded likewise. Travelers returning to the country after several years are surprised to find “big box” stores outside of most of the major population centers. Even many medium sized towns now boast modern grocery stores with shelves full of local and imported foodstuffs. In the summer months fresh produce is readily available at reasonable prices. Imported products are available at a price that is comparable to North American prices, but out of the reach of many Romanians.

In people’s homes the food is good but simple - lots of pork, potatoes, cheese and bread. In the summer there are plenty of vegetables from the garden, particularly tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers, delicious goat and sheep cheeses in the villages -- and home-made brandy that is called pálinka. Plan on large, filling meals, but understand that there is not much variety. If you have a requirement for a particular non-perishable food item such as artificial sweetener, oatmeal, or granola/power bars – bring it with you. Asking your hosts for things that they cannot provide may embarrass you both. Remember – experiencing local foods and recipes is an integral part of the travel experience.

MEALS

- Breakfast includes bread, cheese, sausage, tomatoes, and other vegetables in season -- sometimes eggs, tea, or coffee (maybe even pálinka!). Milk and cereal are sometimes available in hotels, but rarely during home stays. If you must have cereal for breakfast - bring some with you.
- Lunch or dinner is most often a soup course followed by a meat dish - pork usually, often fried and served with potatoes or noodles and sometimes vegetables. You will love the soups: carrot, tomato, and some of the most delicate chicken noodle soup you will ever eat. Salad is usually cabbage with pickles and tomatoes - no lettuce.

So what about Vegetarians? Enough of us crazy North Americans have now made the journey that the concept is familiar in most places in Transylvania. They know that there will be those among us who do not eat meat, and they will attempt to accommodate you. If one can be flexible and understand that there will be a limited number of protein sources then vegetarians will fare quite nicely during the summer growing season. In the early spring and winter however, your choice of local produce will be very limited – mostly cabbage, potatoes, pickled vegetables, bread, and cheese. Bring some peanut butter and spread it on some wonderful fresh-baked bread. Steadfast vegans and those with severe allergies to common foods should probably stay home.

“No red meat” in Romania means you will eat a LOT of chicken. The only local fish that is consistently available in restaurants is trout. It will be served fried and whole. Imported fish such as salmon or tuna is going to be frozen and expensive.

WATER

We recommend that you do not drink tap or well water during your travels in Romania, particularly if you have a sensitive constitution. If this is your first visit, it is better to be “safe than sorry”. Ask your tour guide where it is safe to drink tap water and where you should drink bottled water which is available almost everywhere -- “sparkling” water being most common. The bottled water in Romania can sometimes contain a lot of salt. You may want to consult the label before purchasing bottled water. Increased salt intake combined with walking or sitting more than usual, can cause some leg and foot swelling. Elevating your feet and limiting your salt consumption helps assuage the swelling. If you need non-carbonated (“still”) water, stock up before your village stay, especially if you need water for your medications. It should be okay to brush your teeth with the local water.

What to Pack for Romania

THINGS YOU MIGHT NOT THINK OF

Summer can be terribly hot and humid for extended periods. During the day, shorts, t-shirts and summer dresses are fine to wear. The evening can get cool, even down to the 50's at night, so bring a sweat shirt, slacks, light cotton sweater or light jacket, especially if you are traveling in the mountains.

Other items to pack are:

- Small bath towel and a washcloth in a Ziploc bag.
- One nice outfit for Sunday
- A flashlight and extra batteries! The villages are VERY dark at night
- Lots of small packets of tissues -- for sniffles, toilet paper, whatever...
- Little alcohol wipes (some say that bottles of sanitizers are worthless).
- Extra film and/or memory cards for your camera. It is difficult to find the kind you want and it will be a lot more expensive.
- Dictionary (H/E and E/H) and phrase book

- If you will want to wash anything during the trip, go to the travel section of your local Target and buy some of the prepackaged miniature sizes of laundry soap and a rubber stopper for the sink. There are no “laundromat” style facilities in Transylvania.
- Shoes. Tevas work well during the summer over there. They're cool, they dry quickly if you get them wet, and if you step in something "unfortunate," you can wash Teva, foot, and all, and keep going. If you have a day of trekking on your itinerary, bring a pair of comfortable hiking shoes. If it rains, many villages get very muddy very quickly. If your partner village has a general store – and most do – you can purchase mud boots locally. Just bring some thick socks to wear underneath.
- Medicines: bring enough. You will NOT be able to fill an American prescription in Romania.
- Over-the-counter stuff: Tylenol or Ibuprofen, your favorite upset-stomach remedy, Imodium (for "Dracula's Revenge"), anti-itch cream for bug bites, band aids, Bacitracin (or some other antibiotic ointment for scrapes).
- Personal toiletries. Bring what you think you will need, but don't despair if you forget something or miscalculate the amount. Toothpaste, deodorant, etc. (Ladies: yes they sell tampons and napkins over there) are available even in most villages, but you may not find some American brands.
- Sunscreen. Aloe if you burn. Antihistamine if you are likely to get stuffy or have allergies.
- Earplugs can be useful in the villages/towns if you are sensitive to the sound of barking dogs or crowing roosters. Pocket the ones provided by your airline on your overseas flight just in case.
- Gifts for your host family (see **Gift Etiquette & Suggestions for Home Stays**)

Here is a sample packing list put together by the Annapolis UU congregation for a recent youth trip.

Essentials

- _____ Airline tickets (with copies in backpack)*
- _____ Passport*
- _____ Wallet
- _____ Euros and/or dollars
- _____ Money card*
- _____ Copy of Travel Insurance*
- _____ Contact number to report lost card(s)*
- _____ Prescription and OTC medicines
- _____ Plug adapter and all "tethers" for camera, iPod, etc.
- _____ Camera with extra batteries and memory card
- _____ Battery charger
- _____ Journal and pen
- _____ Watch with alarm function (new battery)

- _____ Liquid bath soap
- _____ Shampoo and conditioner
- _____ Sunblock
- _____ Deodorant
- _____ Cosmetics
- _____ Razor and shaving cream
- _____ Brush or comb

Clothes

- _____ Quick drying underwear
- _____ T shirts
- _____ Shorts
- _____ Church outfit
- _____ Shoes (2 pair maximum)
- _____ Light weight long sleeve shirt
- _____ Cap or hat
- _____ PJ's

Self-Care Items

- _____ Glasses, sunglasses, contacts lenses
- _____ Sanitary supplies
- _____ Anti-bacterial hand gel or wipes
- _____ Lotion and/or sunscreen
- _____ Earplugs
- _____ Quick dry towel and washcloth
- _____ Clothes line & spot remover

Miscellaneous

- _____ iPod
- _____ Cards, games
- _____ Gifts for hosts
- _____ Hackey Sack
- _____ Book(s)
- _____ Flashlight
- _____ Photo book
- _____ English/Hungarian Phrase Book
- _____ Power Bars

Toiletries

- _____ Toothbrush and toothpaste

WHAT NOT TO BRING

If it's irreplaceable - don't bring it. That goes for jewelry as well. Simple costume jewelry that compliments your Sunday outfit is plenty. Get a cheap watch. Wear it while you are there and then give it away as a gift to someone.

Pack sharp objects (like pocket knife, nail scissors, and metal file) in your checked luggage. Nothing sharp is allowed on the airplane.

The electricity in Romania is 220v with two round plugs. Most North American appliances such as hairdryers will not work without a converter or dual voltage. Even if your appliance works with dual voltage, many older homes only have a single plug in each room.

Flight Preparation and Luggage

Check with your individual airline to ensure your luggage meets their requirements for size, weight and number of bags. In general the airlines allow a maximum of 2 checked bags (of up to 50 pounds each) plus one carry-on bag and a personal item such as a purse or backpack.

Luggage recommendation: check your large bag(s) and carry on a smaller rolling bag and a backpack. We recommend:

- **Small rolling bag** (carry-on): pack a change of clothing and your toiletries just in case there is a problem with baggage arrival. Pack all prescription medication in your carry-on.
- **Backpack:** You will likely do a lot of walking in Transylvania, and a backpack will come in handy.
- **Larger bag(s):** If you are bringing lots of gifts for your partners, it is a good idea to try and pack these in your largest piece of luggage so that you can leave it on the van/bus until you arrive in your partner village. You may be traveling to and from the village in your Minister's car which will likely not be large enough for both of you and a big suitcase. Pack all sharp objects in your check-on bag because they are not allowed in carry-on bags.

If you plan to do some serious shopping, pack a collapsible suitcase or duffle bag inside your big suitcase. You can use it during your stay in the village and then stuff it with dirty clothes for the plane ride home.

CONCERNS

- Plan some time to adjust to the new time zone and to get over your jet lag.
- People over 50 are at high risk (about 1 in 5) of developing blood clots in their legs during a long flight, so take an aspirin some time during the week before you leave and another during the week before you return.
- Drink lots of water during the flight. Walk around several times.

Gift Etiquette & Suggestions for Home Stays

If you plan a home stay, bring with you a small photo album of your family, home life, church and school -- not for a gift, but rather a great ice breaker and conversation stimulant, invaluable when words fail. The Transylvanians are extremely generous people and the giving of gifts is deeply engrained in the culture. For trips that include home stays we recommend that you bring some small gifts for your host family. It is extremely difficult to make blanket recommendations, but the following are offered as suggestions. We have differentiated between city and village congregations as their circumstances are quite different.

IN CITIES AND TOWNS

Town and city congregations (Szekelyudvarhely, Brasso, Kolozsvar, Sepsiszentgyorgy, Marosvarhely, etc.) will have access to most of the same products that you do. It is highly likely that

the host families in these congregations will be educated professionals with a relatively comfortable lifestyle. Therefore, we recommend for gifts:

- nice souvenirs of the U.S., your particular town or state (eg., tile, mug, plate, pen).
- goods made only in the U.S. (Valley Forge brass, Lennox china, books, CD's)
- If you know your partner has a computer the USB flash drives are much more affordable here than they are in Europe and could make a nice gift.
- small Hungarian/English dictionary (which also might encourage staying in touch!)

IN VILLAGES

If you don't know the demographics of your host family ahead of time we suggest you bring 3-5 SMALL gifts that can be used by several family members. Gift suggestions include anything listed above for the towns and cities. Some other suggestions are:

- solar calculators
- BBQ or fireplace starters
- small flashlights with extra batteries
- disposable cameras
- inexpensive digital watches

Group	Gift Idea
Women	Ziplocs, food storage containers, and kitchen gadgets like a vegetable peeler, wire whisk, spatula; fancy soaps and lotions
Men	screwdriver set, vice-grip, "LeatherMan" combo tools, or a bottle of spirits (American bourbon or the like) from the duty free shop at the airport
Children	Picture books, washable markers, balloons, toy cars, M&M's, soccer ball
Teenagers	Girls: pierced earrings, bracelets, make-up samples (they love them!) Boys: t-shirt, UUPCC lapel pins, American pop music CDs.

If you have brought toys and there are no young kids in your family, give them to a teacher in your village's school or the minister of your partner church. Some other general "village gifts" might include reading glasses (considerably more expensive and more difficult to obtain in Romania), tooth brushes, or magnifying glasses. The minister can sort out who might benefit from these.

BATHROOM FACILITIES

In hotels, one finds most of the necessities of an overnight stay. In the home, particularly in the rural villages, the bath facilities are varied. You will find everything from an outhouse to full plumbing; but most will not have a working toilet, sink and tub in the same room. It is not uncommon for several buildings to comprise one abode. There may be a toilet in one room, a bathtub in another -- and they may all be in a different location from that of the bedroom. Before you go to bed your first night make sure you know how to locate the various facilities. It may be necessary for you to traverse one or more occupied rooms to get to the toilet. This is ok. Your hosts have done this their entire lives. Hot water is scarce in rural areas, and often it must be heated by a wood-burning heater. There is nothing to fear, but it is good to be alert to the situation.

Some Useful Hungarian Words

Hungarian is the native language of the Transylvanian Unitarians. For most Americans, Hungarian is an impenetrable language. Try using some of the following Hungarian words or phrases during your visit – at the very least this will be a source of amusement for the locals.

Hungarian	Pronunciation	English
<i>jó reggelt.</i>	yo reh-gelt	good morning
<i>jó napot.</i>	yo nah-pote	good afternoon
<i>jó estét.</i>	yo esh-tate	good evening
<i>jó eszokat</i>	yo ay-sa-kat	good night
<i>hogy van</i>	hodge vahn	how are you?
<i>jól</i>	yol	fine
<i>nem jól.</i>	nem yol	not well.
<i>igen</i>	ee gen	yes
<i>nem</i>	nem	no
<i>kérem</i>	kay rem	I'd like, or, please
<i>köszönöm</i>	ku su num	thank you
<i>köszönöm szépen</i>	ku su num say- pen	thank you very much
<i>szívesen</i>	see-veh-shen	you're welcome
<i>bocsánát.</i>	boh-chuh-note	excuse me
<i>hol van a w.c.?</i>	hole vahn uh vay tsay?	where is the toilet?
<i>nem baj</i>	nem boy	no problem
<i>baratom</i>	bar-a-tom	my friend
<i>kenyer</i>	ken yair	bread
<i>tojás</i>	toy yash	egg
<i>gulyás</i>	goo- yash	goulash
<i>kávé</i>	kah-vay	coffee
<i>bor</i>	bore	wine
<i>palinka</i>	pah linka	homebrew brandy
<i>víz</i>	veez	water
<i>borvíz</i>	bore-veez	mineral water
<i>egészségedre</i>	egg-esh-egg-eray	Cheers!
<i>szervusz/szervusztok</i>	sair-voos/sair-voos-tok	greetings (to a friend/friends)
<i>(your name) vagyok</i>	<i>(your name)</i> vad-yok	my name is...
<i>ki vagy?</i>	kee-vaj	what is your name?
<i>ki von?</i>	kee von	who's that?
<i>örvendek</i>	uur-ven-deck	pleased to meet you
<i>gyerek/gyerekek</i>	dger-ek/dger-ek-ek	child/children
<i>feleség</i>	fell-uh-sheg	wife
<i>férje</i>	fair-ye	husband
<i>templom</i>	tem-plom	church
<i>ház</i>	hahz	house
<i>fiú</i>	fee-you	son
<i>lány</i>	line	daughter
<i>tea</i>	tay-yaw	tea
<i>tej</i>	tay	milk

Brief guide to pronunciation:

a = "o" in "hot"
á = "a" in "father"
e = "e" in "Eric"
é = "ay" in "hay", "ai" in "air"
i = "ee" in "weed"
ó = "o" in "bone"
ö = "u" in "fur" but even more so
ú or **u** = "oo" in "poof"
ü = "ew" in "dew" but even more so

c = "ts" in "cats"
cs = "ch" in "chicken"
gy = "dg" in "edge"
j, ly = "y" in "yolk"
ny = "ni" in "onion"
s = "sh" in "shut"
sz = "s" in "sing"
zs = "s" in "pleasure"

Health Care in Romania

Medical care is a problem. Doctor and nurse care is competent, but diagnostic equipment is not likely to be of the latest generation, and there is sometimes a lack of medicines and medical supplies. Although UUPCC trip leaders know several doctors in the country personally and would use them in an emergency, that doesn't solve the other systemic problems. In an emergency, we would only use the Romanian medical system long enough to stabilize the patient so we can get them to Hungary or Austria ASAP.

Any medicines that you will or might need must be purchased here and carried with you. There is absolutely no way to fill an American prescription in Romania.

- If you have occasional problems, like migraine headaches, cold sores, constipation, asthma, a trick knee or a bad back, bring any “just in case” medicine with you.
- Bring spare glasses and spare hearing aid batteries.
- If you suffer from frequent sinus or ear infections, ask your doctor to prescribe an antibiotic for you to bring along.
- If you will be spending a few days in a village, pack some standard over-the-counter medicines to treat headaches, colds and diarrhea.
- If you have trouble with insomnia when you travel, it might be useful to bring a few prescription sleeping pills.
- Make a list of all your regular medications, their doses, and your allergies. Put them on a card in your wallet or with your passport.
- Ask your doctor for the generic names of your medications—brand names of the same medicines are different in different countries

Check your own health insurance policy. Most U.S. insurances (and certainly Medicare) will not cover any medical problems that occur abroad. If you have any serious and/or chronic medical condition that might require treatment during your time in Romania, we strongly recommend that you purchase supplementary health insurance that includes provisions for health care costs overseas and transportation home if necessary. Please note that supplemental policies do not necessarily cover pre-existing conditions.

Immunizations:

- diphtheria-tetanus booster in the past 10 years
- measles vaccine if you've had neither measles nor a measles vaccine
- Hepatitis A shot at least a month before you leave. Later a booster will give you long-term immunity for your next trip.
- flu vaccine if you are traveling during flu season

ASK THE DOCTOR

Ideally, you should ask a doctor in your congregation or someone's family doctor to put together a group medical kit. Dr. Jamie Harms, 410-224-4315, has volunteered to answer questions you might have about what her group felt were essential and what were particularly useful during their trip during the summer of 2004. She recommends:

- laxatives and anti-diarrheals
- Tylenol and ibuprofen
- equipment to treat blisters
- small roll of duct tape to hold makeshift splints in place
- epi-pen for allergic reactions or severe asthma
- a few empty syringes. While the Romanians may be able to come up with a good medication, you would be relieved to have a syringe you know for sure is sterile.
- sterile suture supplies

- inexpensive ankle brace and ACE bandage
- chemical ice pack
- eyeglass repair kit and dental emergency kit

STAY HOME IF:

- you have medical problems that require your medication to be refrigerated
- if you have heart problems that flair from time to time
- if you have had asthma severe enough to require an overnight stay in the hospital.
- Don't take a chance. Stay home. If you need a very restricted diet, you may have trouble.

We strongly recommend you look at the Center for Disease Control (CDC) web site -- <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/destinationRomania.aspx> -- and share it with your family or group physician.

Cultural Issues Regarding Sexual Harassment

After several unsettling reports of unwelcome advances on trips to Romania, UUPCC felt that differences in cultures should be addressed along with sexual harassment. It is important for travelers to feel safe, and so attention should be paid to the following:

- One should take cognizance of cultural differences in regards to sexual behavior and in relationships between men and women in Transylvania and in North America. Differences can cause difficulties. Some differences are described here.
 - 1) Cheek-kissing is common between men, between women, and between men and women.
 - 2) Transylvanian expressions of affection can be more ardent than those to which North Americans are accustomed.
 - 3) It is commonplace for European men to offer personal compliments on a woman's dress or appearance. This may be off-putting to North American women, and yet is a cultural norm not at all intended to offend.
- Language differences alone have been known frequently to create misunderstandings, sometimes comic and sometimes convoluted.
- The omnipresence of alcohol can significantly lower inhibitions for both Transylvanians and North Americans, especially among young people who may not know their limits and among those whose consumption may be excessive.

There have been a few allegations of what we in North America call sexual harassment. Sometimes these allegations have involved overt behaviors that are clearly unacceptable in both our cultures, such as groping, sexual suggestiveness, and excess unwanted attention. Most of the reports involved incidents of what we will call "wandering hands" and/or inappropriate kissing.

- We want to remind you that inappropriate behavior is what YOU say is inappropriate. You have every right to say something firmly and clearly.
- It is wise to be not wary but *alert* to your circumstances. In home stays in a village, you may be by yourself at times and not near any other members of your group. So just be alert in order to prevent any problems occurring. Should something occur which causes you to feel unsafe, you should:
 - 1) insist that the behavior stop, and
 - 2) tell your Transylvanian host and/or the North American person in charge of your trip.

Cathy Cordes, Executive Director of the PCC, offers the following story by way of illustration:

I spoke with one woman recently who relayed a "wandering hands" story. She (in her 40's) was with a group of villagers and they were standing together talking. An older man from the village put his arm around her waist. Soon, his hand was on her bum. She was very surprised - this was not a young man but an old guy (I'm talking 60's, maybe 70's) So I asked her what she did. She said, "I was holding a hand fan because it was hot, so I bopped him over the head with it and told him to stop it!" He did. Everyone in the group - including the Transylvanians - laughed. Seems this gentleman has a reputation for this.

The moral of the story, ladies, is that you do not have to put up with this kind of behavior from anyone. There is no need to put up with unwanted advances in an effort to be culturally sensitive.

The Partner Church Council is working on this.

- We have established a Sexual and Cultural Concerns Committee, which will listen to any concerns or complaints, maintain others' anonymity, offer counsel, and assist in any further problem solving.
- We have initiated conversations with the Transylvanian Church, including their officials, ministers, women, laity and youth - sharing mutual perspectives on matters of sexual misconduct and safe congregations.

It is important to note that North Americans, too, can cause discomfort among Transylvanians - for just as many varied, confusing and troubling reasons. With regard to sexual ethics, suffice to say that North Americans are expected to treat Transylvanians respectfully, as we would wish to be treated ourselves, and according to the same behavioral norms as we would consider appropriate anywhere.

The UUPCC does have a Sexual and Cultural Concerns Committee. If you have any concerns please contact the office at 781-275-1710 and we will put you in touch with the appropriate committee member.

Sex, Drugs and Alcohol

All travelers should be aware of these risks. All Youth Trips include a discussion about sex, drugs, and alcohol with the youth before they leave the U.S. Parents should read this section thoroughly and have a frank discussion with your youth before they leave as well. Understanding the circumstances and intentionally addressing them is the best way we know of to make the trip more pleasant for all. In short, you will be a country that has an ongoing epidemic of both AIDS and Hepatitis C. There is no vaccine for either.

- AIDS is transmitted sexually and via blood transfusions and Hepatitis C via blood transmission.
- Sex with Transylvanians should not be considered!

DO NOT BRING ILLEGAL DRUGS OF ANY KIND. Prescription and over-the-counter medicine is, of course, okay. Your UUPCC trip leaders know doctors and ministers all over the country and can work wonders in the case of many problems. However,

- we CANNOT get you out of jail or rescue you from customs officers.
- alcohol is widely available and will be offered to you by well-intentioned host families - even for breakfast! The local liquor is very strong and jet lag increases the effect. You can very easily and very quickly experience alcohol poisoning. There is no place to have your stomach pumped.

In all these things, each person has to be in charge of their own behavior. They will need to make good decisions on their own. We welcome your questions and comments.

Money and Security

Even though Romania entered the European Union on January 1st of 2007 it will be sometime before they are ready and able to adopt the Euro as their currency. For now the Romanian currency is called the “leu” or the plural “lei”. The international abbreviation for the currency is RON. Bills are plastic, partially transparent and issued in denominations from 1 to 500. Coins are denominated in something called “bani” which is the equivalent of “cents” or 1/100 of a leu. Coins are denominated from 1 – 50 bani (50 bani would equal 1/2 of a leu). At this writing (February 2009) the current exchange rate is about 3 RON to 1 USD. Romania suffers from high degree of currency fluctuation, so you should check the current rate immediately prior to your departure. This is largely a cash economy. **Do not bring Traveler's Checks.** They are very expensive to exchange in Hungary and Romania.

CREDIT CARDS

Visa and MasterCard can be used in Budapest and a few of the more expensive hotels and restaurants in Bucharest, Kolozsvár and other large cities. **YOU MUST KNOW YOUR PIN** (Personal Identification Number). If you plan to use your credit card in Romania, call your provider ahead of time, let them know you will be traveling in Eastern Europe and make certain you know your PIN. If you do not have a PIN you can request one from the issuer. Make sure your card is authorized for overseas use.

Debit/ATM Cash Card

Cirrus or Plus are recommended. The best way to get local currency is at ATM Cash machines (called Bankomats in Romania). They are available in all of the towns and cities in Romania, even the second-tier cities such as Segesvár, Sinaia, Deva, and Szekelyudvarhely. You receive local currency at the official exchange rate, with no commission. Be conservative with your withdrawals of lei. At the end of your trip lei cannot be changed back into dollars easily, and you will pay a premium to do so. We have had instances of ATM cards not working in Romania. This is particularly true of credit union debit/ATM cards. It is highly recommended that you have a debit/ATM card from a major bank. Make sure that your card is authorized to work overseas, and know your PIN. If you only have a credit union account then bring cash with you as an alternative.

CASH

For a typical 10-12 day tour we recommend bringing \$200 in \$20 bills. **CAUTION** -- when you get the money from your bank, look the bills over and **DO NOT BRING** any bills that are torn or have extraneous markings on them. Get as clean, fresh banknotes as you can find. America is way behind the rest of the world in producing counterfeit-proof currency, and even the international banks in Romania turn a calloused eye to American banknotes. If you do not have an ATM card or you plan to buy expensive craft items such as linens and embroidery, you should bring additional cash.

SECURITY

- Your American or Canadian passport is the most valuable thing you have – know where it is at all times. Bring a copy of the photo page of your passport and keep it in your suitcase. If you lose your passport this copy will prove invaluable.
- Keep a separate note of the phone numbers of your bank and credit card companies so you can notify them immediately if the worst should happen and you are robbed!
- Take an under-your-clothing zippered pouch in which you can carry your passport and American cash. Buy a soft one that won't get too hot when you wear it, not the kind of pouch that goes around your waist outside your clothing. Pickpockets love them.

There are lots of pickpockets – particularly in the larger cities near popular tourist attractions, especially crowded locations. Be alerted to anyone nudging or pushing you -- that is the distraction while someone else is trying to pick your pocket or purse. Many are small children, and they are very skilled.

Tipping

Drivers, Guides and Translators on UUPCC trips are fairly compensated for their work. Tips are not required, but you will probably want to pass the hat. That is fine. \$2-3/person/day is an average gratuity for UUPCC staff members.

The UUPCC trip leader will tip the bell staff to carry your bags from the van/bus to the hotel lobby. If you need help getting the bags to your room 2-3 lei/bag is good for the bellhop who carries your luggage. We suggest that you leave 2-3 lei/night in your room for the maid. The UUPCC trip leader will also tip the wait staff for all those meals which are included in your itinerary. When traveling or dining on your own, 10% is a customary tip for cab drivers, waiters, and other service personnel.

Places of Special Interest in Transylvania

Towns and cities in Transylvania have two names: a Hungarian and a Romanian name. If you are looking on a map of Romania you will only find the Romanian name. Like wise people outside the village are unlikely to know the Hungarian name. The destinations below have both names: HUNGARIAN (Romanian). If you are traveling to your partner village it is a good idea to have both names on hand.

➤ **BAROT (Baraolt)**

The new Unitarian church was dedicated in 1996. The congregation had previously met in a room in the minister's house. Kiss Altar, the minister, spent time at Meadville/Lombard and speaks excellent English. His time in the US is evident in the design of the new church. In an area of a great many other Unitarian churches and villages, try to stop by to see a possible glimpse of the future while you are steeping yourself in the past.

➤ **BOLON (Belin)**

Bolon is a large Unitarian village and has a massive and unusual church, designed by an architect who had spent time in Turkey. It is well worth a visit, and has an exceptionally fine pulpit carved with the frequently seen pelican stabbing its breast to feed its young with its own blood. A long-term renovation project is now finally finished. The previous minister is a fiery Hungarian patriot and has created a small "memorial" park with a large Szekely grave marker on the road in front of the church.

➤ **BRASSO (Brasov)**

Brasso is a large and interesting, originally Saxon, city. For many years Unitarians were not allowed to live within its walls. Both Brasso and the surrounding area are worth seeing. In the fifties a building was constructed that now houses two congregations. It is not an architecturally striking building, but the ministers and congregants are friendly and welcoming. The congregation has undertaken a ambitious building project in the courtyard. The ground floor social hall and basement kitchen are now completed. The planned guest rooms in the upper floors have been roughed in, but await additional funds before they can be finished.

A walk around and through the central square will well repay any time or effort it takes. The Black Church is the major historical attraction and everyone goes to see it.

If money is burning a hole in your pocket, you might want to visit the Merchants Hall (opposite the History Museum). It was once the location of the Saxon guilds but now hosts a collection of craft shops.

➤ **BERETHALOM (Biertan) – *Non-Unitarian Village***

Located eight to ten kilometers south of the road between Segesvar (Sighisoara) and Medgyes (Medias), Berethalom was once an extremely important Saxon village and the site of a Lutheran diocese.

The medieval church is one of the most striking and interesting fortified churches in Transylvania, with its many towers and bastions perched high above the village. It was recently designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage site. The inside of the church offers a wealth of well preserved detail, including an especially fine three paneled painted altar and a treasure room with one of the world's most intricate locks (which still works). Guided tours are available and include a small house in which quarreling couples were locked. If the quarrel remained unresolved, and if both halves of the couple survived the period of forced intimacy, then they were allowed to divorce. The house includes fine examples of Saxon folk costumes, household implements, etc. Berethalom is well worth a visit if you are in the neighborhood.

➤ **DEVA (Deva)**

Not really on the way to anywhere, Deva is not frequently visited except by those making pilgrimages to the castle ruins which contain the prison where Francis David died. This is located in the fortress high on the cone shaped hill dominating the town. The climb to the fortress is a 45-minute walk on a reasonable path. If need be, you drive halfway up. It's worth the climb. For those who cannot or do not wish to walk to the citadel a cog railway system was completed in 2006 that will take you nearly to the top. You must still navigate a series of uneven stone steps to enter the ruins and view the memorial to Francis David.

Not far from Deva is one of the great tourist attractions of Transylvania, the castle at Vajdahunyad (Hunedoara). Not the blatant tourist trap that Bran is, this is worth seeing. Its been well restored and is everything, and then some, you always imagined a romantic fairy-tale type castle to be. The tour needs to be scheduled not later than early afternoon, however, as the castle closes at 3:00 PM or 4:00 PM, depending on the day.

➤ **GYULAFEHÉRVAR (Alba Julia)**

One of the oldest inhabited sites in Transylvania, this was King Janos Sigismund's capitol. Portions of the (RC) Bishop's palace date back to the time Janos Sigismund and his mother, Isabella, lived there.

The Cathedral, once Unitarian, contains Janos Sigismund's tomb in a sort of side chapel (no doubt the only portion of a Catholic cathedral devoted to a Unitarian anywhere in the world). Both Janos Sigismund's and Isabella's tombs have interesting stone carvings depicting some Unitarian history. The cathedral itself is almost entirely restored in anticipation of the 1000 year-old anniversary celebrations. It is definitely worth a visit. One spot on the floor covers a baptistery pool where pagan Magyar chieftains were forcibly "converted" to Christianity.

The old city was destroyed by the Austrians so they could build a fortress. The fortress remains and is still a military site. From the walls one can look down on the lower town and view the tiny cell in which the rebel Horea was imprisoned.

A huge Romanian Orthodox Cathedral stands next to the Catholic Cathedral. It was built especially for the coronation of the Romanian king after the awarding of Transylvania to Romania in the 1920 Treaty of Trianon.

➤ **HOMOROD VALLEY**

The site of 16 Unitarian villages, the Homorod Valley is an exceptionally beautiful spot, wonderfully sylvan while agrarian scenery unfolds around every bend in the roads. "Back-roading" takes on a whole new dimension in the Homorod! All of the churches and villages are worth visiting, but don't try to visit all of them unless you're a church freak. There is a certain sameness.

This is a partial list of places to see and visit. It deals only with sites that have a Unitarian association and by no means all of them. Nothing has been listed that has not been visited. If you note that a place

of special interest is missing, or you think your Partner Church or its city/town/village should be included, please send us a note.

➤ **ALMAS (Meresti)**

Almas means "apple" in Hungarian. This village is nestled in the hills above the Homorod valley and is surrounded by orchards. There is an especially scenic road that winds from Homorodszentmarton up to Almas and is well worth taking. The village itself has a large walled Unitarian church.

➤ **ARKOS (Arcus)**

Not far from Brassó or the Homorod Valley, the village of ARKOS contains a striking walled Unitarian church. The walls and bastions are well preserved. It has a fine "parohia," or parsonage, and a separate school building still in use for religious education. The congregation has recently opened a small museum in one of the bastions which houses a collection of old farm implements, wood stoves, and other objects representative of rural village life. In the village one can also visit one of the many country estates belonging to former members of the nobility and used as one of Ceaucescu's multitudinous weekend retreats... complete with bearskins on the floor

➤ **KOHALOM (Rupea)**

Unitarians from the Homorod valley moved here to find work during the communist era when it was impossible to found or build churches. They created an "underground" church, hidden in a house on the hill. Those who attended the church and the ministers who served the church took great risks to do so. After 1989 the congregation put a small steeple on the house and proclaimed it a church. It is small but worth seeing and clearly reflects the current minister's interest in art. There is also a ruined "royal" fortress in Kohalom.

➤ **KOLOZSVAR (Cluj Napoca)**

The First Unitarian Church was built in 1796 and was once a source of considerable pride, now undergoing some badly needed repair and renovation. In a side vestibule you can see the stone on which Francis Dávid stood to address the population of the city when he returned victorious from the great debate at Gyulafehérvár. Also of great interest is the church's Communion Table, carved by a master woodworker and representative of the best Transylvanian folk art.

Pay a visit to the Unitarian High School. In 1999 the building, confiscated during communist rule, was restored to its rightful owners. With the assistance of many North American congregations and generous individuals as well as the Veach Fund, the attic space was renovated to provide much needed living space for boarding students. This space is rented to pilgrims visiting in the summertime. Beautifully appointed and conveniently located, it offers a wonderful opportunity to support the Unitarian Church.

The same building houses the Headquarters of the Unitarian Church of Transylvania.

St. Michael's: Located in the heart of the city and taking up the most prominent portion of the central square (Piata Unirii), St. Michael's was the church to which the crowds carried Francis Dávid, deposited him in the pulpit, and made it Unitarian -- along with the entire city, according to legend. Unitarian supremacy was short lived, and so the church was confiscated from the Unitarians by the Austrians and given to the Catholics. Today there is no reference in the material about the history of the church posted on the walls to its ever having been Unitarian.

Banffy Palace: As you emerge from St. Michael's, directly behind you, and facing the church across the street, is the former Banffy Palace. One of the most powerful Hungarian noble families - their city residence is now an Art Museum. Worth a visit if the renovations are completed.

If, on leaving St. Michael's, you don't go to the Banffy but turn right and then left when you get to the sidewalk, you will, in a couple of blocks, come to the Ethnographic Museum. This is a small museum but worth visiting. It has a good folk costume collection. It also has an open air section just a ways outside of town which is also worth seeing if you haven't visited the big village museum in Bucharest.

Strada Matei Corvin: Located off the Northwest corner of the central square, Strada Matei Corvin takes you to a 15th century building where Martinus Corvinus is said to have been born. The sculpture department of the Babes-Bolyai University is located here now, and sometimes there is interesting work in progress.

Close by is the Franciscan Church, at one time Unitarian, with an extraordinary Rococo interior well worth seeing. Rumor has it that Martinus Corvinus was actually born in the attached school (also once Unitarian) because the house credited as his birthplace was too cold for a safe delivery.

History Museum of Transylvania: Mostly Romanian history.

Protestant Theological Institute: Where the Unitarian students take many of their classes. The Chapel is worth a visit.

Kolozsvár is said to be the only city in Europe with two opera houses. The Romanian Opera House was formerly the Hungarian Opera House. The Hungarians have a newer (but not nicer) building. If you are there when there are plays, concerts or operas be sure and go to either one. It is a rich experience.

The market is the largest you will see, and well worth not only visiting but spending enough time in to wander about. See both the indoor and outdoor sections.

The Cock Church is a Reformed church designed by Kos Karoly, an architect with a passionate love of Transylvanian folk motifs. The church is named for the crowing cock worked into every available detail. The Third Unitarian Church meets here. Services are at 4:00 on Sunday afternoon.

The Botanical Garden, the largest in Romania, is a little sad... because it could be so very beautiful. And is in a way. The local people are very proud of it. But it shows the lack of funds for upkeep, which no amount of making-do can quite overcome or hide.

➤ **KOROND (Corund)**

Korond is a potters village, and something of a tourist trap. The main street is lined with shops and stalls selling "folk" items. It is approximately 1/3 Unitarian and 2/3s Roman Catholic. An interesting aspect of the town is that you can often identify the religion of the inhabitants of the houses you pass as you walk along the street because the posts of the carved Szekely gates - of which there are a great many in Korond - are topped with stars, suns and/or crescent moons or crosses. The crosses indicate Catholic homes, the stars, suns and moons Unitarian homes. There is a fine Unitarian church in Korond, very well kept and cared for, with an especially fine Szekely gate. It is surrounded by a small wall, inside of which is a well-kept garden and, behind the church, Szekely grave markers commemorating each of the church's ministers. If you stop at the parsonage next to the church you can be given directions or escorted to one of the Unitarian potters. There you can see the pots thrown, decorated, glazed or fired and shop at far better prices than you would find down on the main road.

➤ **MAGYARSAROS (Deleni)**

A few kilometers south of Dicsoszentmarton (which has a fine Unitarian Church with an exceptional painted ceiling) is a beautiful and beautifully located Unitarian church. A point of exceptional interest is the church's "haranglab", a wood and shingle bell tower. It is two hundred years older than the church and is constructed with wooden pegs rather than nails.

➤ **MAROSVASARHELY (Tirgu Mures)**

The downtown Unitarian Church was built in the 1930s at the top of the Bolyai street just across from the high school which is also named for the famous founders of non-Euclidean geometry. A large new church was completed in 2006 on the outskirts of downtown, which attempts to incorporate many of the traditional elements from the village walled-churches. The congregation hopes to complete guest rooms with private baths sometime in the summer/fall of 2009.

Near the downtown church is the Teleki Library, a must see for those interested in books and manuscripts, and interesting for those who are not bibliophiles. Founded by Count Teleki in the late 1700s this was the first public library in Hungary and contains among other things one of the very few (8?) remaining original copies of the US Declaration of Independence.

Just a hundred yards south-east from the central square are the citadel walls of Marosvasarhely which house the Reformed church in which the Edict of Torda was reinstated in 1571. The citadel is also host to numerous festivals and performances throughout the year from pet shows to rock concerts.

The Palace of Culture is an extraordinary building, full of beautifully ornamental folk art. A kind of Transylvanian "art nouveau" in style, you will not see its like elsewhere. It is worth a guided tour. The Marosvasarhely Philharmonic Orchestra is the second largest orchestra in Romania (after Bucharest). They perform on Thursday evenings beginning in September and continuing through May. If you find yourself in the city on a Thursday you are well advised to make your way to the Cultural Palace before 7pm. Tickets will run about 3-4 RON. A BARGAIN by any measurement.

The Jewish Synagogue is an imposing example of its kind. Only a very small congregation worships here now but it was once the center of a thriving community. It has been restored, is well maintained, and can be toured.

➤ **MESZKO (Cheia)**

Balaz Ferenc, the minister-poet who traveled around the world in the 1920s, befriended Tagore, learned Japanese, etc... rebuilt and redesigned the Unitarian church here in a "Transylvanian style." The interior is especially interesting. So is the parsonage, which has one of the most intriguing rooflines in Transylvania, a country of interesting roof-lines. If you've read Alabaster Village, based on the letters written by Feri's American/Danish wife from this place, you will certainly want to visit.

➤ **NAGYAJTA (Alta Mare)**

This 15th century fortified church (re-fortified with "Italian-style" bastions and walls in the 16th century) is one of the most important examples of the type to be found. In the late-Gothic style, the interior is especially beautiful.

➤ **TORDA (Turda)**

Torda was once one of the wealthiest towns in Transylvania, and evidences of it can still be seen in the architecture. But it has been savagely industrialized, and getting from the outskirts to the center of town can be dismaying. The Roman Catholic church at one end of the plaza shows the many styles and periods to which it has been subjected. It is worth a quick visit because it was the site of the promulgation of the Edict of Torda, but the interior looks nothing at all as it did when the Diet met there in 1568. Nor does the famous painting of the Diet, on exhibit in the local history museum, give an accurate idea. It is a highly romanticized 19th century impression of the proceedings, with Franz Liszt the model for Francis Dávid. The Unitarian Church is hidden down by the riverside, for the Austrians gave permission to build it only if it could not be seen from the main road. It is well cared for and has very beautiful carvings.

➤ **SEGESVAR (Sighisoara)**

Segesvar is a Saxon city. The citadel, basically the whole upper town, is a wonderfully preserved bit of

medieval Europe. The whole upper town is a photographic opportunity, and simply walking the streets is a thoroughly worthwhile activity.

- The Unitarian Church, located in the lower town, is an extremely modest building. Over the years, the “kicsi templom” (little church) has survived periodic flooding.
- The Clock Tower, which can't be missed, should not be missed. It has a small local history museum and a wonderful view from its wooden galleries. The clock itself has great figurines that emerge to strike the hours.
- The Lutheran Church, on the highest point of the hill and reached by an interesting covered wooden stairway, has been undergoing renovations. It's a climb, but a rewarding one.
- If you must do something related to Dracula, you can eat in the restaurant in the old town in which he is said to have been born (and it may even be true). "I had lunch (or dinner) at Dracula's house," should impress your friends. Dracula souvenir shopping is fun

➤ **SEPSISZENTGYORGY (Sfintu-Gheorghe)**

The new Unitarian church was completed in the 1990s with support from North American partners. It is a well-designed building and is worth seeing.

- A block or two further along the street from the church is a must visit, the Kos Karoly Museum. This contains, in an extraordinary building designed for the purpose by Kos Karoly, a good collection of Szekely materials and a remarkably good series of exhibits on area history.
- If you have the time and are heading in that direction, do take the road from Sepsiszentgyorgy through Nagybagyon to Barot. It's a beautiful ride through unspoiled countryside.

➤ **SOVATA (Szovata)**

This is a "spa" town on the edge of one of Transylvania's more beautiful lakes. There is a small Unitarian congregation and newly constructed church here, but the attraction is the natural beauty of the area. If you are a "backroad" aficionado take the road between Sovata and Nyaradszentmarton (which has an interesting old Unitarian church... as do several other villages in the Nyarad valley, notably Nyaradszentlaszlo).

➤ **SZEKELYDERZS (Dirjui)**

The road to Szekelyderzs is not the best (and there is only the one road to and from it) but the journey and the loosened fillings in your teeth are well worth it. It is a wonderfully preserved walled church in a beautiful area. This is one of the villages Ceaucescu planned to have razed. Fortunately he didn't, and so you get to see some of the frescoes depicting St. Laszlo defeating the Cuman villain with the help of the maiden he has come to rescue. The frescoes were uncovered during a recent renovation and, while incomplete, are fascinating, as is the entire church. Szekelyderz has recently been designated a World Heritage site by UNESCO.

➤ **SZEKELYKERESZTUR (Cristuru-Secuiesc)**

The location of the second of the two Unitarian high schools. It now has one or two Unitarian classes in which the students prepare for teaching music and serving as church musicians. Both the college and the church are worth visiting. If you are interested in ceramics there is a good Ceramics Museum in the city.

➤ **SZEKELYUDVARHELY (Odorheiu-Secuiesc)**

Udvarhely is the seat of one of the three majority Hungarian counties and has two Unitarian churches. The First Church is a substantial and well-kept building. The second is a new A-frame building. Udvarhely has a huge Unitarian population and the new church, very ambitious in it's design, was planned to serve it. It is well worth a visit for it is a good example of progressive thinking about the Unitarian mission in urban centers. There is a good ethnographic museum in Udvarhely with fine

examples of Szekely grave markers. Small examples of these "kopjafa" can be purchased at a trade school where they are carved by 7 and 8 year old apprentice carvers.

➤ **TORDA GORGE**

The Torda Gorge is a spectacular cut in the mountains. The gorge is a protected "micro environment" with unique biological and botanical life. It is approached by foot over a bridge after parking in a cabana area. The walk is not difficult and the trail runs below 300 meter high cliffs. Those who wish to wait at the cabana can listen to loud music and ignore the requests for cigarettes and to "borrow your camera to take a picture of my girlfriend." A legal dispute over the ownership of the Gorge area has resulted in a sad lack of maintenance of the buildings and grounds in recent years.

➤ **TOROCKO (Rimetea) and TOROCKOSZENTGYORGY (Coltesti)**

These Unitarian villages are as strikingly and beautifully located as any in Transylvania (or Europe for that matter). About a half hour's drive from Torda they are well worth visiting. One is tempted to say they are required visiting sites. Both have interesting walled churches. Torocko is the larger. Torockoszentgyorgy is the better cared for and has the more beautifully decorated interior. In Toroko be sure to visit the local museum. It is small and devoted entirely to the history of the town. But it has a folk costume collection without peer. Perhaps you will be fortunate enough to stay in the Retreat Center in Torocko. It's an excellent facility with wonderful cooks. If you do stay there, plan on getting up early enough in the morning to watch the shepherds, goatherds, and cowherds collect their charges and lead them off to pasture. If you miss this, try to watch the return procession(s) in the evening. Lots of photo opportunities. Torockoszentgyorgy has a ruined castle on the hill above it. It's something of a climb to get to but the view and the feeling you get up there are awesome.

➤ **VARGYAS (Virghis)**

The Unitarian church stands in the Y in the road. It has the simple, peaceful quality of other old Unitarian churches. However, besides the distinctive carved wooden chandelier and altar, and the typical embroidered cloths, it has a breath-taking organ. This village is home to a master wood carver, who carves two of everything: one to sell and one to keep. (Ruth Vogler recommendation). Vargyas is also famous for its painted furniture and you will see where the craft has led to the painting of some of the Szekely gates. This village has one of the largest Unitarian congregations and, just outside the village, an interesting example of a Manor House of the local (lesser) nobility.

➤ **VARFALVA (Moldovenesti)**

This Unitarian village (located below the unexcavated remains of a Roman fortress on the hill above), is nicely situated on a rise above the Aranyos River. The tall tower of the Unitarian church dominates the village. A good example of a "typical" Transylvanian Unitarian church, Varfalva has the distinction of being the first to use the word "Unitarian" to describe itself. An ancient marker stating this is affixed to the wall of the church (in a sort of recess to the right of the main doorway).

➤ **VERESPATAK**

This is an out-of-the-way village, and you are unlikely to visit it unless you make a special effort to take the time. But it is an especially interesting congregation, for cut off from contact with other Hungarians, the Unitarians speak Romanian. The church is a gem! Truly a gem. It is located in a somewhat deteriorating village in a gold-mining area. The streams must feed the Aronyos River (the "Gold" River) which has been sifted for gold since before Roman times. Nearby is the ruined Unitarian church of Abrudbanya, the site of a massacre of Hungarians when the Mocs, a Romanian population long located in these mountains rose against the Hungarian landowners and sided with the Austrians in the revolution of 1848.

An Introduction to the Hungarian Unitarian Church

"We cannot learn anywhere from the Scripture of God, that his words and the religion are meant to be spread by fire and sword." God always took care of his truth Himself and He will always do that in the future as well." -Francis David

The very essence of Unitarianism is religious tolerance and a consistently firm attitude in support of liberty of conscience. Francis David constantly emphasized that religion must be free, that in question of faith there is no place for compulsion and that the spreading the Gospel (God's words) requires no weapons or violence, because Faith is the gift of God. In other words, Unitarianism is inseparably bound up with freedom of conscience and faith. There is no greater mindlessness and absurdity than to force conscience and their spirit with external power, when only their creator has authority of them.

It has been said that we Unitarians have no Doctrine, only Principles of faith. The difference between these two words is that Unitarians possess no articles of faith enunciated by church meetings that are compulsory and unchangeable. But there are in the Unitarian membership generally accepted views and principles regarding religion which more or less shape the Unitarian collective consciousness.

The Unitarian religion is simple. The Love of God and Human are the essence of Jesus' teaching, according to Unitarian Principles. God is Spirit, who is almighty, wise, good, and just. God is Love. The Holy Spirit is God's power, the cause of life in us. It is true, that the Bible attributes will, examination of inner thoughts, teaching and comforting to it. This is not because it would be another person, but to illustrate the different ways of God's action. This Spirit is a teaching power, guiding toward good.

The Bible is a collection of man-created writings, including teachings of Jewish and Christian teachers, historical accountings and literature. These works were inspired by God but we are not to forget that this inspiration was grasped by those who lived long-long time ago in a certain historical time and place. This is why each writing has the mark of a cultural trend from ancient times, with a characteristic worldview, containing precious intuitive insight but also mistakes. This is why the Unitarian theology follows and accepts the results of the scientific criticism of the Bible in adopting its ethics in life and philosophy. The most valuable part of the Bible for Unitarians is the New Testament, more specifically the four gospels, where you can learn about Jesus' life and teachings. The basis of Unitarianism is the Gospel according to Jesus. The rules of Unitarianism are rooted in the teachings of Jesus. The seed of continuity in Unitarianism is the seed that represents ideas accepted in the Gospel; the inferences of humanism and social liberalism are significant only as they relate to this seed.

Jesus is human. He is our master in teaching and our guide toward God's Kingdom. Jesus is the greatest representative of faith, reason and freedom. The human Jesus doesn't teach about the essence or person, about the son preexisting eternally, neither about the dual Christ, but only about One God.

The human being is in the center. Everything is for humanity's sake; religion also serves humanity. God created the whole of humanity from one blood; this is the natural foundation of our brotherhood and sisterhood. God created human beings good and capable to become perfect. To be human is not a state, but a hard task yet to be accomplished. Humans can be recognized if they love each other, if they are merciful, meek, peaceful, and generous ... humanness and love must be visible in all our actions.

Our most personal cause is Faith, which we can accept but also to refuse. If faith it was given in our nature and it isn't a gift of God, than all of us would believe equally. Faith in its content is trust in God and it is God's work in us, entering in our life, connecting with us, who speaks to us by the spirit touching our soul and we answer. So thus faith and action are inseparable. We demonstrate our faith by clear thoughts, zealous prayers and our actions of love in relationship with humans.

Conscience and reason are the assurance for freedom of faith. Francis David summarizes his theology in this way: let people argue by their own will, to seek for the hidden essence of God or deal with the multitude of the person and to turn around the wisdom of reason, but eternal life is to know your only God. Jesus said: Seek and you will find; knock and the doors will open to you. Search everything and keep what is good. Conscience is free. Every one follows his own best understanding. Thus to be Unitarian means the acceptance of complete freedom in matters of religion. Unitarian and individual freedom belong together.

Characteristic of Unitarianism is the belief in human's potential for good, their noble calling and strong faith in enlightenment and progress. It emphasizes science as an important factor in our religion. It is enthusiastic for humanism. It emphasizes the authority of the individual conscience as opposed to creedal authority. The church is a necessary organization to mature and to spread these views.

These are the general convictions, the framework within which lies a more precise expression of communal belief. The following are its main points: God is One and indivisible. The man Jesus is an example. The Holy Spirit is the power for good within. Its ethic is to emphasize the possibility of repentance, free will and freedom of choice, the innerness of religion as opposed to other forms and ceremonies. It requires reason among humans and progressive change in the principles of one's faith and a continuing endeavor to bring into harmony the findings of science and religion. Possibly this description is sketchy and misses some points, yet without doubt it describes the main outline of Hungarian Unitarianism.

Unitarians observe the Christian Holidays and celebrate the traditional sacraments of Baptism, Marriage, Funerals, and Confirmation. Communion or Lord's Supper is observed 4 times a year on the following Holidays:

- Christmas - the commemoration of Jesus' birth.
- Easter - the manifestation of the belief in the immortal soul.
- Pentecost - the holiday held to the victory of Jesus' ideas in the confession of the disciples.
- Autumn Thanksgiving (last Sunday of September) - gives thanks to God for the harvest.

Confirmation ceremonies also end with the new members taking their first Communion. There is no Trans-substantiation in the Unitarian catechism. The wine and bread are thought to become the body and blood of Jesus. Communion is meant to commemorate Jesus and give evidence of the intention to belong to the community of his followers.

Unitarianism as a living philosophy is first of all a religion, a religious philosophy whose aim must be to fulfill and to comfort the soul. A religion whose task is to lift and ennoble humans' soul cannot really be a method, a scientific worldview, a constant search, or any other such endeavor. It must be something which equips human's souls with a shield against the trials of life, which provides a faith "which is not of this world".

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

The history of the Unitarian Church has it on record that the Unitarian Reformation began in the year 1565. It was on the 20th of January of that year that Ferenc Dávid gave his first sermon in Unitarian spirit at the present-day St. Michael's Church in Kolozsvár (present-day Cluj).

The year of the foundation of the Unitarian Church was 1568. The Diet of Torda, in session between the 6th and 15th of January of that year, made possible for the Unitarian Church to come into being by ensuring religious toleration and liberty of conscience

In the first period of its existence, the Church itself was mentioned under various names. The name "Unitarian" originates from the Latin word "unus" and means "a believer in unity". In this year, when the second religious dispute had taken place in Gyulafehérvár, Prince John Sigismund of Transylvania

and the writer and printer Gáspár Heltai, known as "the general factotum of the reformation" became supporters of the Unitarian Reformation. This started a process leading to the formulation of the articles of faith in their final form, to the development of the Church organization and to launching Unitarian propaganda.

The law of religious freedom and conscience proclaimed in January 1568 carried the success of one of the main Unitarian principles. The whole country accepted this principle for the first time in the Christian history. But it lasted only 3 years. These short years of golden age were followed by long centuries of hard compromises and heavy losses. The humanitarian and rational cultural trends upraised, and the enlivened missionary spirit suppressed this spirituality that obstinately tried to remain loyal to following Jesus instead of adoring him in the clouds of Heaven.

In 1572, Prince István Báthori, succeeding to the throne after Prince John Sigismund's death, passed an act against the Unitarian Reformation. This act was directed against Ferenc Dávid in particular, who stressed in his doctrine Jesus Christ's human nature, and was thereby against worshipping him. The Diet of Gyulafehérvár, held on 1 and 2 June 1579, in pursuance of the Act against the Unitarian Reformation, sentenced Ferenc Dávid to life imprisonment in a fortress, at a show trial, with the aim of "setting an example to others". He was imprisoned in the castle of Déva, and ended his life there on 15 November 1579.

In 1638, the commission of the Diet in session at Dés forced a new dogma upon the Unitarian Church, accused of Sabbatarianism. The new dogma obliged the Unitarians to worship Jesus as God, their ministers had to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, and their books on ecclesiastical matters had to be submitted to the office of the Prince's censor. The Counter-Reformation, starting in 1691, was intended to liquidate the Unitarian Church. During this period many of the Unitarian schools and churches were confiscated.

The 1781 Edict of Toleration allowed the Unitarian Church to continue its development. Between the years 1780 and 1811 38 new churches and schools were built. A book of theology in Latin by Bishop Mihály Szentábrahámi, designed for religious instruction and entitled "A summary of Christian theology according to the Unitarians", was published and László Suki's legacy made possible the erection of a third building for the Academy in Kolozsvár. In 1821 relations were established with the English Unitarian Church. This allowed for future ministers to continue their studies abroad.

In 1839, the first printed history of the Unitarian Church was published under the title "The beginnings of Unitarianism in Transylvania". The education of ministers on a regular basis was started. A new curriculum and educational system were developed. The building of a Unitarian denominational secondary school was completed in Székelykeresztúr. A theological journal was launched, under the title "Keresztény Magvető" (The Spreader of Christian Faith). The collection of folk songs by Bishop János Kriza, "Briar roses", the account of Balázs Orbán's travels in the Székely land, Domokos Simén's theological works contributed to the great progress towards the goal of joining the main stream of Hungarian literature.

In 1879, the tercentenary year of Ferenc Dávid's death, a commemoration was held. New Unitarian journals appeared in succession, in 1888 the Unitárius Közlöny (Unitarian Gazette), in 1905 the Unitárius Egyház (Unitarian Church), in 1907 the Unitárius Szószék (Unitarian Tribune), in 1910 the Unitárius Keresztény Népnaptár (Unitarian Popular Christian Calendar), in 1911 the Egyháztársadalom (Society of the Church). In 1910 the Women's Association was founded and, ten years later, the Unitarian Literary Society began its activity.

In 1918, the bequest made in Mózes Berde's "princely" testament offered the Unitarian Church the opportunity to build a College in Kolozsvár, which is still functioning. Unfortunately, the development of the Unitarian Church was interrupted by the Treaty of Versailles, which dismembered Hungary. The Unitarian Church found itself on Romanian territory and was

subjected to a Romanian ecclesiastical authority. The Unitarians who had decided to move into Hungarian territory had to develop organizational forms independent of their mother-church.

As a consequence of the treaty of Trianon (1920), there are two separate Hungarian Unitarian Churches in Hungary and Transylvania; however, we hold a single one in our hearts, and hope that "that which belongs together, will be joined" soon.

The Transylvanian Unitarian Church comprises 126 congregations organized into 6 districts, with approximately 65.000 church members; our high authorities and the bishop's office are located in Kolozsvár, and most of the inner organizations and institutions are also based in the same city.
(www.unitarius.com)

The Hungarian Unitarian Church has 11 member congregations with a few thousand churchgoers, and is centered in Budapest. (Website: www.unitarius.hu) Both these organizations are based on synod-presbyterian principles, their most important organs being the Synod and the Main Council of the Church.

Unitarian beliefs similar to the ones mentioned above also evolved in other parts of the world during the past two centuries (United States of America, England, The Czech Republic, India, The Philippines, etc.). The Unitarian organizations among the different nations do not belong to one unifying organization, though they maintain many partner-church relationships.

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Sources:
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/Transylvanian Unitarian Church (History of the Unitarian Church)

/Hungarian Unitarian Church (Unitarian Catechism and much more; Beliefs and thoughts; Principles)



by Rev. Ruth Gibson

THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST PARTNER CHURCH COUNCIL VISION

The vision of the UU Partner Church Council is that partner relationships between North American congregations and churches around the globe will be forged and sustained wherever they are desired—and that these relationships will be of high quality, firmly based, mutually beneficial, responsibly sustained, and linked by a joint and mutual covenant. We envision a commitment to international engagement as a moral and spiritual principle that is integral to Unitarian Universalist congregational life.

Reflections on Partnership

A Journaling Guide for Pilgrims in Partnership

Welcome to this Partner Church pilgrimage. Whether you are meeting with your congregation's partner church, or with a school or other organization related to the Unitarian Universalist Partner Church program, or joining this journey in order to meet your partners in faith from a different culture for reasons of your own, we expect that this experience will bring you joys, questions, new truth, new beauty, and inspiring opportunities to grow in faith and in understanding of the world.

Being in a new culture can also be a confusing experience—you may gain information that challenges old assumptions, have encounters that stir up unexpected emotions. Traveling as a partner rather than as a tourist invites you to be open to being changed. We recommend that you use or begin a journal. Creating space for you to reflect on your journey will enhance the experience.

If journaling is new to you, and you don't know where to begin, some of the open ended "sentence starters" may be useful. You might also consider choosing a moment, event or conversation from your day, and describe it with as much sensory detail as you can. Follow that with a paragraph on why this moment was meaningful to you, what questions it raises for you, what insights it offers you. If you find yourself having vivid dreams on your journey, you may want to record those—best done first thing in the morning! Sometimes people like to draw or sketch in their journals.

It is also helpful to have a place to record the names of people you've met (and contact information if you might correspond), to identify photos you've taken. If you are taking home any commitments, questions or information, it's a good idea to have that written down as well.

Whether or not you plan to bring a journal along with you—and especially if you already have a journaling practice, it is a good idea to bring along a pocket-sized notebook so that you will always have a handy place to record the

thoughts, questions and information that comes to you. Relevant parts of this can be transcribed into your journal later.

There may be some opportunities built in to your pilgrimage itinerary for sharing reflections with fellow pilgrims during the trip. More likely, spontaneous opportunities for such sharing may arise. Our way in religion calls us to remember that no single person can see and understand the fullness of truth. Consider covenanting with one or two traveling companions to make some time every two or three days, to share your impressions and reflections. Towards the end of the journey such meetings can help you prepare to bring your stories home, and this will be especially important if you are to report to your congregation. You may also want to practice a daily “check in” with each other, to help each other manage the small stresses that are part of any change of scene.

This Partnership Journaling guide is a resource for your reflections. Whether you use it as a guide for written journaling, or for conversations with your fellow pilgrims It is entirely yours.

Blessings on your journey!

Here are a few things to think about, or reflect on, before your journey or near the start of it:

My Purpose

Each of us has our own purpose for making this pilgrimage; in addition you may be meeting partners as a representative of your congregation, and have other purposes or goals for this trip in addition to your own. Your sense of purpose for this journey may be very clear—it may be fixed, or it may change or grow in the course of the experience.

- Why are you going on this journey? (how many ways can you answer this question?)
- What are you looking forward to, or expecting?
- What do you hope will happen on this journey or because of it?
- What concerns or worries do you have about it?
- Given your goals, hopes and concerns, what would be helpful for you to ask for, or to remember?

Sharing yourself

What do you want your partners to know about your family? Your work? You might think about bringing some photos to illustrate important parts of your life— a family gathering, your home and work life, a church event, the outside environment, in different seasons.

The Meaning of Partnership

What does it mean to have a partner—and to be one?

What’s the difference between being a partner and being a tourist?

It has been said, “It is hard to embrace someone when your arms are full of gifts.:.” How is partnership different from charity?

Cultural assumptions:

When we enter as guests into another culture, it is helpful to be mindful of the assumptions we carry from our own. Much of what we consider “normal” or “right” is based on the culture in which we live. We are not always aware of the ways in which our cultural assumptions influence our judgments, or our feelings of comfort and discomfort.

As North American Unitarian Universalists, we expect to experience (and to value) considerable cultural, political, economic, religious diversity within our own small group, and may not want to over-generalize. However, there are some themes that are dominant in Western culture that may influence our perceptions of a different culture—or the assumptions others make about us. The Mennonite guide for cross-cultural learning suggests reflection on the following:

- Progress is better than tradition. Therefore, change is always promising.
- The new (or young) is better than the old.
- The future holds promise. The past is of little value.
- Doing is better than being. Therefore staying “busy” or active is very important.
- Getting there fast is better than enjoying the journey.
- Order, organization and efficiency hold great importance in society.
- Individual freedom is more important than the common good. When there is a conflict between the two, it’s better to guard personal freedom.

It may be helpful to notice whether these attitudes are apparent or predominant in the culture you visit, or whether your perceptions, judgments or responses to the people and situations you encounter are rooted in any of these assumptions.

Please also remember that many of the issues you feel strongly about as a North American Unitarian Universalist—the role of gender, racism, theological identity, family structure, for examples— may not be central issues in your partner culture—or if they are, there may be different histories and experiences and assumptions around them. If you are preoccupied with presenting your views on these matters, especially if you find yourself tempted to enlighten those of your hosts who seem to see things differently, it will be that much more difficult for you to meet your partners, come to know them, or understand their values.

Expectations and Impressions

(an exercise adapted from the Mennonite Central Committee’s handbook, “Connecting Peoples”.)

Look through the following list of adjectives and mark those that you think people in the country you will visit will expect you to be like. Add additional adjectives until the image is expressed adequately.

Go through the list again. Using a different color ink or different mark, identify the adjectives you think fit members of your traveling group, or how you see them in comparison to other cultures.

During the Journey

Notes on these pages may be helpful during your journey. The reflection questions provided below might be used on a daily basis or occasionally, if they seem useful to you.

Understanding another Culture

Observation—Interpretation—Emotional response

Along this journey and at other times in your life, you may encounter different and contradictory statements of “truth.” In your search for truth and understanding, how do you know what to believe? How do you decide what is true? How do you live with the question, if you aren’t sure?

What we think about and remember about any experience will be based not only on our observations, but also on how we understand or interpret what we observe, and how we feel about what it is we think we understand. A cross-cultural experience will be richer if we distinguish between these three aspects of “knowing,”

Understanding another culture is a difficult and complex undertaking, and should be approached with some humility. It is helpful to remember that different people observe the same situation or event in very different ways, may notice different details.

Any observation of an event or situation may be interpreted or understood in multiple ways; what I think is “true” about something we experienced may be very different from what you or anyone else thinks is “true.” How people feel about what we observe is greatly shaped by our interpretation of the event. However, while people may feel differently about the same thing, no one else can tell you what you feel or ought to feel. New information may change your interpretation and therefore, your feelings about what you have observed.

It helps to pay attention to what you observe, to be careful to distinguish between observation and interpretation, and to be respectful of but not driven by, your feelings and others’.

Observation log.

Jot down responses to these questions. It might be helpful to share your responses with a reflection partner.

When we were *[event or situation]*

I observed...

I thought...

and that made me feel...

Evening reflection log:

Date:

Today I was surprised by:..

Today I appreciate...

Today I learned....

Today I wondered:..

A note from the UUPCC Pilgrimage Service:

This guide has been printed in a small pamphlet format and included with the Travel Reflections Journal that every traveler receives from the UUPCC. We encourage travelers to keep their journal and reflection guide with them throughout their trip, so they may capture the wonderful moments that might otherwise be forgotten.

A Balkan/Eastern Europe Reading List

Compiled by Rev. Harold Babcock

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