

Budapest to Budapest Transylvania & Hungary

(w/4 nights Budapest Hotels)

During the summer of 2008 we are planning to organize a group pilgrimage to Hungary & Romania to experience the historic roots of Unitarianism. We will share in the lives of our co-religionists in Eastern Europe, discuss the origins of our denomination with Unitarian ministers, and visit a number of significant historical Unitarian sites, including:

- Torda - where the first act of religious tolerance was signed in 1568
- The rock in Kolozsvár that Francis David spoke from when he "converted the whole town's population to Unitarianism."
- Meszko – the “Alabaster Village” served by Ferenc Balazs and made famous in the book of the same name.
- Szekelyderzs – the Unitarian village declared a UNESCO World heritage site for its medieval frescoed church and the keeping of ancient traditions.

Beginning and ending in the lovely Hungarian capital city of Budapest, the trip will also include a 4 night stay in our partner village of Alsófelseszentmihály, and visits to numerous historic village & town churches. Travelers will discover the warmth and loving hospitality of Transylvanian Unitarian families during a home stay - attending church and experiencing rural village life

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

Tentative Itinerary:

- July 16th – Wednesday. Arrive Budapest Ferihegy airport. Airport shuttle/cab to hotel. Overnight Budapest - Fabius Hotel***.
- July 17th - 18th – Thursday & Friday. Thursday morning orientation on suggested sites and how to use the local public transportation. Two free days in beautiful Budapest. Explore your favorite museum, indulge yourself in one of the cities famous thermal baths, shop, stroll, and top it off with a night cruise on the Danube. Overnight Budapest – Hotel Fabius*** (B)
- July 19th - Saturday. Travel day. Morning pickup at Budapest hotel for the 8 hour drive to Kolozsvár/Cluj, Romania. Orientation en route about village life in Transylvania, the current structure, beliefs and challenges of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church. (You will need to arrive in Budapest no later than Friday evening, July 18th. Overnight Kolozsvár. Choice of hotel stay or Unitarian Center for Students & Pilgrims (UCSP) (BLD)
- July 20th - Sunday. Morning services at 1st Unitarian Church followed by a tour of this church which houses THE Rock of Francis David. Group lunch followed by an afternoon walking tour of other Unitarian sights in the historic and picturesque Kolozsvár city center. Free evening to rest or explore the city. Dinner on your own. Overnight Kolozsvár – hotel or UCSP. (BL)
- July 21st – Monday. Morning departure for Szekelyudvarhely in the heart of rural Harghita County. En route we will stop in the “pottery village” of Korond to shop for unique hand crafts from all over Transylvania, and pay a visit to the Szekefurdo, site of the annual Unitarian World Gathering. Dinner & overnight Szekelyudvarhely – Hotel Kukullo*** (BLD).

- July 22nd – Tuesday. Depart Szekelyudvarhely for Segesvar/Sighisoara after breakfast. First we visit the Unitarian village of Szekelyderzs (a UNESCO World Heritage site) to tour the frescoed 13th century Unitarian church and then partake of a traditional peasant lunch inside one of the ancient bastions. PM arrival in medieval walled-city of Segesvar, purported birthplace of Vlad Tepes – aka Dracula. Orientation session in the citadel followed by a free afternoon & evening to shop and visit the museums of your choice. Group dinner. Overnight Segesvar – Hotel Europa*** (BLD)
- July 23rd – Wednesday. Morning tour of the Saxon fortress church in nearby Biertan (a UNESCO World Heritage site). Lunch at a restaurant on the village square followed by a shopping opportunity at unique craft shop located in a house restored with the help of Prince Charles’ foundation. PM return to Segesvar with free time to complete your exploration of the town. Dinner on your own. Overnight Segesvar – Hotel Europa*** (BL)
- July 24th – Thursday. Depart Segesvar for Marosvasarhely/TG-Mures after breakfast. Walking tour of the city center including visits to the Art Nouveau Cultural Palace with its stunning mirror hall and art collection, and the renowned Teleki library, the first public library in Transylvania and home to one of the 8 remaining original copies of the US Declaration of Independence. Dinner at a Hungarian csarda (roadhouse) with traditional gypsy band. Overnight Marosvasarhely – Hotel Continental****. (BLD)
- July 25th – Friday. Free morning to sleep in, shop, get a massage, and catch up on emails. Group lunch before we depart for our partner village of Alsofelsoszentmihaly. En route we will visit the impressive new Unitarian church in Marosvasarhely which was dedicated just this past December. We will also make a photo stop at one of the outrageous “Gypsy Palaces” in Campia Turzii, and take time to stock up on water and necessities before our late afternoon arrival in the village. Welcome reception & dinner with minister and host families. Overnight Alsofelsozentmihaly (AFSM) home stays. (BLD)
- July 26th – Saturday. Village day. Explore AFSM as an “honored guest”. Get to meet members of the local congregation & experience rural village life. Program details TBD by pilgrims, the minister, and the hosting congregation. Overnight AFSM – home stays. (BLD)
- July 27th – Sunday. Morning services with the congregation at a village Unitarian Church. Reception afterward with members of the congregation. Afternoon visit to the nearby Alabaster village of Meszko to hear the story of Ferenc Balazs and see the jewel-box & evening program TBD. Overnight AFSM – home stays. (BLD)
- July 28th – Monday – Possible day trips to the Ethnography Museum in the nearby village of Torocko and/or Torda to see the “Church of the Edict” and visit the salt mines. Farewell dinner with minister & host families. Overnight AFSM – home stays. (BLD)
- July 29th – Tuesday. Travel day. Depart AFSM after breakfast for Budapest. Farewell group lunch with UUPCC staff en route. Early evening drop-off at Budapest hotel. Dinner on your own Overnight Budapest – Tulip Millenium Hotel***+(BL)
- July 30th – Wednesday. Transfer to airport for flights back to the US, or extend your stay in Europe. Vienna is only 3 hours by train, and Prague is just 4 hours further. The UUPCC Pilgrimage Service can help with suggested hotels, guides, and modes of transportation. (B)