

## UUPCC Pilgrimage Services Group Trip Coordinator Check List

### Trip Coordinator's Role

*You will be the point of contact for the UUPCC Travel Services and UUPCC Office for administrative questions regarding your congregation's trip. For larger groups (8+ travelers) you will also be asked to distribute trip materials to travelers.*

*Depending on your group's needs and preferences, you may also be the person who organizes pre-trip meetings and gatherings for the group, and arranges airline tickets and insurance. Your group will know best whether or not you need a leader and can determine how tasks will be divided.*

**1. Pick one or two people to be the coordinators for the trip.** If the trip is 5-6 people, you probably do not need a coordinator, but it is helpful for us to have one or two people to be the contacts for John Dale, the UUPCC Travel Coordinator, and with Margot Fleischman, the administrator in the UUPCC Office. As soon as you have a trip coordinator, he/she should be in touch with John Dale. Contact John at [travel@uupcc.org](mailto:travel@uupcc.org) or [jdaleuupcc@yahoo.com](mailto:jdaleuupcc@yahoo.com)

**2. Pick your travel dates.** The length will depend on the itinerary – see the next section. Please remember the most expensive flights are in the summer. We have organized trips from March to November in Transylvania, so pick a time that suits your travelers and your budget. Be sure to contact your partner church minister to run your proposed dates by him/her. If you do not receive a prompt reply to your email pick up the phone and call. International calls are not that expensive anymore and most ministers have a landline and/or mobile phone(s). If you do not have recent contact information for your partner church please call the UUPCC office and we can provide you with that.

**3. Decide on your itinerary.** This is usually an iterative process – particularly for first time travelers. You will likely go through a few drafts before agreeing with each other on the final version. The length of the trip will depend on where you want to go and how long you want to stay in your partner village. We recommend 3-4 days for a first visit, longer as friendships and joint projects develop. You might want to consider doing some kind of service project as part of your village stay or elsewhere while you are traveling. In addition to visiting your partner village you might want to consider some of the following:

- Unitarian religious and historical sites such as Kolozsar, Torda, Gyulafehervar, Szekelyderzs, & Deva.
- For those groups from unpartnered churches we normally recommend a stay in a Unitarian village in order to experience - albeit briefly - the lives of many of our co-religionists.
- Romanian & Transylvanian locations with broader tourist appeal such as Peles & Bran Castles in the Southern Carpathians, the Saxon fortress churches at Biertan & Viscri, the Saxon walled cities of Brasov (Brasso), Sighisoara (Segesvar), and Sibiu (Nagyszeben), the Painted Monasteries of Bucovina, and/or the Wooden Churches of Maramures.
- A Central European capital city. Budapest, Vienna, & Prague are the most common.

You may want to consult the UUPCC website for information about planning your itinerary. We have a useful page dedicated to trip planning that will walk you through some of the considerations and give you some ideas about possible destinations. We have also posted a number of actual recent group itineraries that can give you a better idea of what a Unitarian themed trip might look like. Go to [www.uupcc.org/tripplan.html](http://www.uupcc.org/tripplan.html) to get started. You can also just email and/or talk with John Dale.

**4. Invite a guest from your partner church?** Some groups have found that inviting the minister or some other English-speaking parishioner from their partner church along for some of the travel days outside of the village to be a great way to build relationships. Given that they would already be in the country the additional cost of meals and accommodations for a few days is not that expensive. If this sounds like something you would want to consider let us know and we can build the expense into your trip fee. Spread out over several people the additional cost/person is nominal.

**5. Register for the trip.** UUPCC will handle registrations for all travelers through our on-line registration process. Once you have developed your trip itinerary, John Dale will provide you with a quotation for the trip fee as well as a registration code number and trip name. These will be emailed to you with instructions and an embedded link to a secure page on the UUPCC website. You will in turn, give that information to your travelers.

#### The online registration process

Trip participants should log on to the UUPCC website and follow the steps needed to register. The first time you visit the website you will be asked to create a login and password. You will also be asked to accept a “cookie” so that the site remembers you the next time you visit.

If more than one person is registering from a family, each one will have to create a NEW record by logging off as one traveler and logging in as another. Please DO NOT write over an already created trip registration – this will erase the first traveler from our records.

Anyone who has difficulty using the on-line registration process should contact the UUPCC Office by phone (781- 275-1710) or email ([office@uupcc.org](mailto:office@uupcc.org)).

#### Trip deposit payment

The trip deposit (usually \$150) can be paid online with a credit card. Alternatively, the registration page can be printed and sent with a check to the UUPCC office, PO Box 88 Bedford MA 01730. This registration deposit will hold your place on the trip. The deposit is NON-REFUNDABLE except in the event that the entire trip is cancelled.

#### Accommodations Options

The basic accommodation cost is normally based on double occupancy. Travelers who do not wish to share a room during the trip will have to pay a “Single Supplement” charge. A Deluxe Accommodation option, with an additional charge, is also available for some trips. You can select these options during the registration process and your invoice will reflect your choices.

#### Optional contribution to the Travel Grant program

We ask that you as individuals and/or as a group consider making a tax-deductible contribution to the UUPCC Travel Grant Program when you register. This fund provides

financial support for travel that would otherwise not be possible. A grant can be used for any type of travel, but priority is given to overseas travelers coming to the United States (e.g. for your partner minister to come to visit your congregation). Travel Grant applications are accepted twice yearly in October and April. If you would like more information on this program, it is available on our webpage ([www.uupcc.org](http://www.uupcc.org)) or you can contact the UUPCC Office.

#### Why we ask for health information during trip registration

It is important that each traveler list on their registration form any chronic medical conditions or serious allergies that might require hospitalization AND equip themselves ahead of time with enough prescription medicine to last the duration of the trip. Healthcare in Romania is not always up to Western standards and your itinerary may take you some pretty remote places. Romania is also not geared to travelers with severely limited mobility. Your travelers should be able to climb stairs and walk 15 minutes without sitting or resting. Walkers and wheelchairs do not work on dirt/gravel village roads (canes are ok), sidewalks are often uneven, and even many upscale hotels and restaurants do not have elevators.

If you or one of your prospective travelers is not sure if s/he should come, please email the UUPCC office and/or John Dale and we will give you our recommendation.

#### Closing Registration

Once all travelers have registered, John Dale and the office will have access to their registration information and will keep track of how many are on your trip. John uses the registration information to arrange transportation, rooms, meals and guides and to coordinate with your partner congregation concerning your village program and home stays. When the trip is first set up in the UUPCC travel database you will agree with John on what date registration will close. Typically this is no later than 90 days before your departure date. Once that date passes the UUPCC office will mail out trip materials and invoices.

#### Trip Materials

If your trip is for 8 or more people, the office will send the trip coordinator a package (usually shipped to the church) containing trip materials: a travel journal, *UUPCC Travel Guide* (can also be downloaded from the website) and 2 luggage tags for each traveler. Invoices will be sent by mail to each traveler. For smaller trips, the travel packets are sent to each traveler individually and contain their trip materials and invoices.

One pre-trip meeting should review the *UUPCC Travel Guide* with folks to see what questions arise that need to be answered in advance. You can then get answers from John Dale or from the UUPCC office. If you have a smaller number of travelers, each one will receive in the mail their own packet containing the same items.

#### Invoices

Each traveler will receive an invoice from the UUPCC for their trip cost, including any options (single room supplement, deluxe accommodations, Travel Scholarship donations). If they receive an individual trip packet, the invoice will be on the outside of the packet in a plastic pouch that says "INVOICE ENCLOSED."

The total trip cost must be paid by the due date shown on the invoice. If not, UUPCC retains the right to cancel your registration. If you cancel before the due date, your entire payment - less the non-refundable registration deposit - will be refunded to you. If you cancel after the due date but before the trip departure date, you will receive a refund, less any unrecoverable pre-paid costs.

It is each traveler's responsibility to pay this bill on time, but the trip coordinator may want to check that everyone has received an invoice and is aware of the payment due date and cancellation policy.

#### Risk/Release Forms

Each traveler will receive a release form to sign and return with their trip payments. These forms need to be signed by the traveler (or by a parent/guardian if the person traveling is under 18) as well as a witness, but do NOT need to be notarized.

5. **Arrange for your airline reservations.** There are several consolidators that our groups have used with success in the recent past. These include:

Campus Travel Management Inc., Annapolis MD tel: **(410) 267-0866**. They specialize in school groups.

Golden Rule Travel, (various locations) tel: **(877) 455-3599**. They specialize in humanitarian/missionary airfares. Since your trip is of a religious nature you qualify. You may need a letter from your minister or church governing body.

Seebok Travel, Chicago IL. **(800) 788-4718**. This is a Hungarian owned agency that specializes in travel to Eastern & Central Europe and often gets good rates on Malev, the Hungarian National Airline.

You can try buying all the tickets through one of these agents if you will all fly together. Usually 10 or more people sharing the same itinerary qualify you for a group rate. Alternatively, you can give everyone the start date and location and everyone can arrange their own flights.

6. **Consider purchasing Travel Insurance.** Travel Insurance contains two parts: trip cancellation and emergency medical evacuation insurance. We recommend individuals decide for themselves if they want this insurance. If they are going to buy it, it is more comprehensive if they get it within a few days of buying the airline tickets. Almost all of the companies are the same and prices are similar for similar coverage. We do not recommend one over any other and have had little experience with claims. A web search for "travel insurance" will give you many possibilities.

7. **Prepare your travelers.** Enclosed in this package are the outlines for pre-travel sessions that have been helpful in other churches. We do recommend at least one gathering before you depart. The *UUPCC Travel Guide* is an excellent resource for travelers to Eastern and Central Europe. It should be required reading for everyone. The guide also has an extensive bibliography of literature related to the history, cultural, and ethnic issues in this part of the world.

About 2-3 weeks before your trip departure you should receive an email from the UUPCC Pilgrimage Service with arrival instructions, emergency contact numbers, and other last minute useful information. If you are getting ready to leave and you have NOT received an email with arrival instructions and emergency contact numbers you as the trip leader should write to John Dale and ask him to resend the email. Some internet providers routinely block emails from Romania.

**8. Things to bring (for the trip coordinator).**

- Copy of everyone's passport. If someone loses his/her passport during the trip a photocopy will greatly speed the issuance of a new one at the Consulate.
- Ziplock bags for the bus/van (in case of motion sickness).
- A First aid kit with an assortment of over-the-counter drugs for headaches, stomach troubles, bug bites, cuts and scratches.