

Transylvanian Thanksgiving Pilgrimage

September 22 – October 2, 2009

A Group Tour for 10 - 25 people.

Ten days, \$1,450 per person, double occupancy + \$150 registration fee. (Add \$250 single supplement). Includes ground transportation, meals, lodging guides, interpreters, and fees. Cost does not include airfare to/from Bucharest, Romania, gratuities, alcoholic beverages, departure airport transfer, or expenses incurred during free periods.

Eleven days of spectacular scenery, loving hospitality, and unique architecture in Southeastern Transylvania. Discover the singular beauty of the Carpathian Alps and the fascinating history of the walled churches of the region. Beginning and ending in Bucharest, this tour will visit the walled Unitarian churches of Szekelyderz (a UNESCO World Heritage site) and Arkos, and the Reformed church & model village at Illyefalva. You will spend a weekend with your partner congregation and worship on this special *Őszi hálaadás* Sunday - the traditional Transylvanian Unitarian Thanksgiving. The tour also includes two nights at mountain resorts high in the Carpathians, architecture as varied as Peles Castle (home of the former King of Romania), the sprawling Black Church in Brasso, and the Saxon fortress church at Biertan (a UNESCO World Heritage site). You will also participate in discussions with and local ministers about life under Communism & with local experts about the Transylvanian Unitarian Church today and the future of the Unitarian villages.

Proposed Itinerary:

- Sept 22 (Tues) Arrive Bucharest Otopeni airport. Transfer to motor coach for 2 hr drive to resort town in the Southern Carpathians. Group dinner and orientation. Overnight Sinaia – Caraiman Hotel ***. (D)
- Sept 23 (Wed) AM tour of Peles Castle, former summer residence of the Romanian royal family. PM tour of the historic Black Church, the largest gothic church between Vienna and Istanbul, and site where the reformation began in Transylvania. Free time to explore picturesque Brasso city center. Early evening drive across rural Transylvania to medieval walled-city of Sighisoara/Segesvar, purported birthplace of Vlad Tepes – aka Dracula. Overnight Segesvar – Hotel Claudiu ***. (BLD)
- Sept 24 (Thurs) Morning tour of Saxon fortress church at Biertan (a UNESCO World Heritage site). Lunch in restored village square before returning to Segesvar. Free time to stroll the city, shop, climb the clock tower, and/or visit the museum of your choice. Dinner on your own. Overnight Segesvar - Hotel Claudiu ***. (BL)
- Sept 25 (Fri.) Morning tour of the Orban Balazs Unitarian High School in Szekelykeresztur followed by guided tour of frescoed Unitarian church at Szekelyderz (a UNESCO World Heritage site) with traditional peasant lunch in 14th century bastion. Afternoon visit to the new A-frame Unitarian church in nearby Szekelyudvarhely for a discussion with the Unitarian minister about life under communism and the significance of *Őszi Hálaadás* in the Transylvanian Unitarian tradition.. Early evening departure for partner villages. Dinner and overnight with partner congregation. (BLD)
- Sept 26 (Sat) Village day. Relax and explore your partner village as an “honored guest”. Program details TBD by minister & pilgrims. Overnight in partner village. (BLD)
- Sept 27 (Sun) Thanksgiving Services with your partner congregation. *Őszi Hálaadás* celebrates the end of the harvest season and is one of the four Transylvanian Unitarian communion Sundays. Overnight in partner village. (BLD)

- Sept 28 (Mon) Depart villages after breakfast and gather again in Szekelyudvarhely, the heart of the Harghita County. Optional PM shopping excursion to pottery village of Korond & visit to Szelykefurdo site of the annual Unitarian “Gathering”. Overnight Szekelyudvarhely – Hotel Kukullo***. (BLD)
- Sept 29 (Tues) Scenic drive across Harghita Mountains. Picnic & an afternoon of hiking at Lake Santa Ana in the mountains above Tusnad. Dinner & overnight Sepsiszentgyorgy – Hotel Sugas***. (BLD)
- Sept 30 (Wed) AM tour of Unitarian fortress church & museum at Arkos. Discussion with local ministers about village economic development. Lunch back in Sepsiszentgyory with shopping stop at women’s craft cooperative, and a visit to the Unitarian Church of Sepsiszentgyorgy. PM departure for Sinaia. Dinner & overnight Sinaia – Hotel Cota 1400 ***(BLD)
- Oct 1 (Thurs) Morning departure for Bucharest. Tour of the Peasant Museum and/or the Village. Museum. Farewell group lunch. Afternoon hotel check-in. Dinner on your own. Overnight Bucharest – Hotel Herestrau***. (BL)
- Oct 2 (Fri) Depart Bucharest for US. (If you would like to extend your stay and tour Bucharest we will assist you with the arrangements for guides, lodging, etc. (B)