Maramureș, a small and unique location in northern Romania, has carefully and distinctively preserved the culture, traditions and lifestyle of a mediaeval peasant past. Whilst Romania is on the verge of economically and socially joining the rest of Europe, Maramureș stands as a testament to the traditional, to a romantic era of simplicity, pride and moral values that many of us can only now read or hear about from our grandparents.

SETTING
Situated in the northwest of Romania, the region occupies an area of 6304 square kilometers, borders Ukraine and also the counties of Suceava, Bistrita Nasaud, Cluj, Salaj and Satu Mare.
Almost 50% of the region is considered mountainous. The Gutai, Țibieș and Rodna Mountains, running northwest to east, separate Historical Maramureș from the rest of the region while the Maramureș Mountains form a natural and political boundary with Ukraine in the northeast.
The region is abundant with fast-flowing rivers. The names of the major rivers are used to distinguish the regions in Historical Maramureș – the Iza, the Mara, the Viseu, the Tisa and the Cosău rivers.

HISTORY
The first written documentation of Maramureș dates back to the year 1199, but archaeological evidence points to habitation of these lands since the Neolithic age. Whilst much of Dacia (the old name corresponding to lands south of the Carpathians and north of the Danube) was conquered by the Romans, Maramureș, in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, was largely independent.
In the middle ages, Dacian-Roman society was influenced by neighboring tribes. Feudal settlements were established between the 4th and 10th centuries and were largely institutionalized and sanctioned by the church. In the 13th century, Magyar (Hungarian) chiefs began their conquest of Transylvania and by the middle of the 14th century, the whole Transylvania region, including Maramureș, was under Hungarian rule. Maramureș officially became part of the Transylvanian principality in 1526, then part of the Habsburg Empire in 1687 and was annexed by Hungary in 1703. Revolution in 1848 ended the Habsburg Dynasty and in 1918, Transylvania, including Maramureș, united with the Kingdom of Romania.

Following the peace treaties of Paris, in 1920, Maramureș loses to Czechoslovakia the territory from north of the Tisa River (a land that currently belongs to Ukraine). In 1940, Maramureș and Northern Transylvania was given by Nazi Germany to Hungary and subsequently returned in 1944 with the withdrawal of German and Hungarian troops. March 1945 is acknowledged as being the moment when the communist regime’s instauration started in Romania. A few years after, in 1948 the Greek Catholic Church (the prevailing denomination in Transylvania and Maramures of those years) was abolished. In Maramures, the process of collectivization launched in Romania in 1949 was a failure for communists.
Due to the mostly mountainous landscape, the ground here was not favourable for farming. The peasants who were coerced into giving away their land withstood the authorities' pressure, many of them ending up imprisoned, if not slain. Ever since the establishment of the totalitarian regime until the late 50's, commandos of local partisans operating in the mountains kept up the fight against the Communist authorities.

December 1989 did not bring initially any major changes in the local people's lifestyle. Yet, in the late '90s, the rural communities once isolated in the remote parts of the county opened up to the world and the migratory process towards western Europe increased dramatically. The phenomenon's consequences were soon to be noticed in the local architecture, customs and traditions. However, life in the countryside has preserved much of its idyllic charm, even today, many of the villages of this region being regarded by foreign writers as "Europe's unknown Eden" (Lonely Planet Magazine).

ETHNOGRAFIC ZONES
Maramureș County is comprised of the following ethnographic zones: the Land of Maramureș, the Land of Lăpuș, the Land of Chioar, the largest part of the Codru Land and the area of Baia Mare-Baia Sprie. Five of the wooden UNESCO World Heritage churches presented in this guide are situated in the Land of Maramureș (Desești, Budești, Bârsana, Poienile Izei, leud), two in the Land of Chioar (Șurdești and Plopis) and one in the Land of Lăpuș (Rogoz).

TOURISM
Maramureș is considered by many to be the heart and soul of rural Romania. The narrow streets of tiny villages, surrounding hills, meadows of flowers and hay stacks painstakingly erected, the peasants dressed in festive clothing or working on the field, the cows returning from the pasture at sunset and the buckets of freshly milked dairy, they all contribute to the picturesque charm of life in the countryside. Those who wish to become familiar with the world of Maramureș villages are invited to sleep in a rural guesthouses, regale themselves with traditional food and participate in the everyday life of locals, learn some of the secrets of old crafts. Rural tourism is not the only opportunity Maramureș has to offer. Hikers and trekkers can take in Maramureș's breathtaking landscapes which are accessible through a large network of trails. Those fond of winter sports can enjoy the skiing in Cavnic, Mogoșa, Suitor, Izvoarele or Borșa.

Are you interested in the cultural heritage? You won't be disappointed about it either. Maramureș exudes history and old civilization, customs and testimonies of the past. The large museums in Baia Mare and Sighetu Marmatiei are not the only cultural attractions in the area. Keep you eyes open for the many small treasures that can be found in tiny village museums and memorial houses. You might even stumble upon a fine collection of old books or icons painted on wood and glass that are tucked away in a remote village church.

Distinctive wooden architecture clearly distinguishes Maramureș from other regions in Romania. In particular, ornately carved wooden gates convey an undeniable local identity to this land. Maramureș is also home to many old wooden churches which have been visited and admired by people from all over the world. These special monuments, particularly the 8 UNESCO World Heritage churches, are the focus of this guide. We invite you to travel along the scenic byways of Maramures to discover these magnificent churches and their interesting and unique histories.

Winter in Șurdești
Photo: Gabriel Motica
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FOREWORD

The history of the people of Maramureș is told through the wood of their churches. Along the centuries, the area’s foreign rulers did not allow the people living here to build long lasting stone churches so instead, the local carpenters raised beautiful wooden churches to communicate with God. Wood became their best friend and companion. Despite many predictions to the opposite, the churches have resisted the ravages of time and still remain in this northwestern Romanian land, sustaining the local populace and amazing visitors.

Eight wooden churches from Maramureș have been inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage list. These churches are to be found at: Desesti (1770), Bârsana (1720), Poienile Izei (1604), Ieud-Deal (mid fourteenth century according to some opinions, 1611-1621, according to others), Budești Josani (1643), Rogoz (1663), Plopiș (1798) and Şurdești (1766).

HOW TO USE THIS MAP-GUIDE

Dear visitor,

This brochure intends to highlight these eight wooden churches located along a circuit through Maramureș and is dedicated to those who visit the region by car. By following the route exactly, or in pieces, you can explore the World Heritage and beautiful countryside of Maramureș.

In order to maximize your visit in Maramureș, the guide also includes information on other tourism attractions located near the highlighted churches. The key feature of this guide is the large, fold-out, full color map to help you navigate easily around the suggested route. Also included is a brief history and general interesting information about Maramureș and short descriptions of each monument featured on the trail. In an effort to make your journey through this historical landscape easier and more enjoyable, directions, times, and distances between each stop are clearly described. The guide will also offer a few suggestions for accommodation and dining places.

This trail includes two major cities of significance in Maramureș County: the current county capital, Baia Mare, and the former, historical one, Sighetu-Marmației. Our approach to these cities is more detailed in order to reflect their greater significance and the larger variety of tourist objectives found here.

The last page of this guide provides the contact information for Tourist Information Centers and tourist associations that might provide you with information during your trip and some useful phone numbers.

Important Note
Before embarking on your tour it is advised that you call the phone numbers specified in this guide for each monument to announce your visit. There are only a few sites where the guardian can reliably be found onsite.

We wish you a pleasant trip and hope you will

ENJOY YOUR MARAMUREȘ WORLD HERITAGE TRAIL!
BAIA MARE

Any tour of Maramureș should start with its capital, Baia Mare, the point of easiest access to the county. A mixture between medieval history and modernism. Baia Mare is a medium-sized city with many sights and points of interest for visitors to explore. One major unique feature of the city is the sweet chestnut tree reserve. This natural treasure is celebrated annually at the end of September during the three days of Chestnut Festival.

ACCESS TO BAIA MARE

The city is located in a depression in the western part of Maramures, approximately 80 km from the border with Hungary. Baia Mare's fastest connection with Bucharest is by plane and the airport is located 8 km outside of the city. Tourists arriving in Bucharest or Budapest may also fly to Satu Mare (70 km) or Cluj Napoca, (150 km) and then travel via train (www.mersultrenurilor.ro), bus (www.autogari.ro) or car to Baia Mare. Once you arrive in the city, you are welcome to visit the tourist information center located in the Administrative Palace on 46 Gh. Sincăi St (www.visitmaramures.ro)

HISTORY

Baia Mare has historically served as an important mining colony and archaeological research points to the fact that the gold and silver in this area had been intensely exploited even prior to the Roman conquest of Dacia. The first written attestation of the town of Baia Mare dates back to 1329, when it was mentioned under the name of Rivulus Dominarum (River of the Ladies) in some documents issued by the office of King Charles I of Anjou. Over the following centuries, due to the fact that royal policies came to support mining activities, Baia Mare enjoyed several rights and privileges, becoming one of the richest medieval towns in the area. Names have changed over time: from Rivulus Dominarum, to Nagybanya, Frauenbach, Neustadt. After 1541, Baia Mare is transferred under the administration of Transylvania’s princes, and beginning with 1691, the town is incorporated into the „Partium”, a territory of the Hungarian Kingdom, until December-1st-1918 when Transylvania, including Maramures, is unified to Romania. Between the two World Wars, Baia Mare goes through a period of extended political, economic and cultural growth. After the years spent under Horthy occupation during the Second World War, on October-17th-1944 Baia Mare is declared a free town. In 1968, Baia Mare becomes seat city of Maramures district, a status it still retains.

PLACES TO VISIT

Recently restored, the Historic Centre is a nice testimony of the medieval history of Baia Mare and is the pride of the city’s residents. Most of the architectural monuments and museums are located in this area.
- The town’s emblematic building, the Stephen’s Tower, has seen centuries of very troubled history. Between 1347 and 1387, St. Stephen’s Cathedral was erected and later on (446-1468), a Gothic bell tower (Stephen’s Tower) was added. In 1769 the church was struck by lightning and burned down. After several attempts to rebuild the church, each followed by another fire, the remaining walls were torn down in 1847 for use as construction stone. Of the whole church, today only the tower remains. From the top of the tower, there is a panoramic view over the city.
• Also located in the Old City Center (Libertății Square), the **lancu de Hunedoara House** was initially part of the former medieval castle built by Transylvania’s ruler lancu de Hunedoara for his wife. The building was finished around 1468 by their son, King Matei Corvin.

Other architectural monuments of interest are: **St Anthony Roman-Catholic church** (1402), the **Holy Trinity Church** (1720), the **Butchers’ Tower** (15th century), the **Old Inn** (18th century) and many other buildings from the 17th and 18th centuries. Among the modern buildings, one of the most appreciated is the **Prefecture Building** (Gh Sincăi St.), inaugurated in 1969. Also close to the town’s historical center, there is the **City Theater of Baia Mare** (www.teatrulbm.ro), which, beginning with 2006, has been the annual host, during the month of June, of the „Atelier” International Theater Festival.

**MUSEUMS**

- The edifice on Monetariei Str., No. 1-3 houses the **Archeology and History Museum** containing various collections including: archeology, mining techniques, numismatics (coins, medals), stamps, seals, weapons, clocks, etc. The museum has been equipped with an audio guide service in Romanian and English. (www.maramuresmuzeu.ro)

- **The Mineralogy Museum** (Traian Blvd, No. 8) contains an extensive and interesting inventory of rare minerals and gems from the mining areas of Maramureș County, some of which (species of andorite, fizelyite, rhodocrosite, pyrrhotite, etc) are unique in the whole world. (www.muzeuminbm.ro)

- **The Ethnography and Folk Art Museum**, located at the foot of Dealul Florilor, reflects the traditional occupations, crafts, folk clothing and religious objects specific to the old Maramures, while the nearby **Village Museum** covers the traditional architecture and technical installations from the four ethnographic regions of the county. (www.etnografiamaramures.ro)

- **The Art Museum** (1 Mai Str, No. 8) contains a lovely collection of paintings, sculpture and graphics belonging to the famous Baia Mare painting school, founded in 1896 by the painter Hollosy Simon.

**The Planetarium of Baia Mare** (G. Coșbuc Str., No. 16), inaugurated in 1969, gives daily presentations of the stars and other astronomical highlights.

**AFOOT THROUGH BAIA MARE**

Set inside a depression protected almost all the way around by mountains, the city of Baia Mare provides a generous choice of tracks for those who are passionate about hiking. A simple walk in the city park may at any moment transform into a more ambitious outing, as the paved alleys merge into a hilly area, covered by forests, hosting **Piatra Virgină** (the Virgin Cliff). Also, a visit to the Village Museum may be continued with a trip up to the **Piatra Șoimilor** peak, returning along the **Firiza** reservoir, which provides an extraordinary view. The Borcutului Valley, Roșie Valley, Usturoi Valley also provide tempting tracks, both for walking and for cycling, and these are only a few of the available offers, located within the city or right next to it. By slightly extending the area you will be surprised by the diversity of landscapes surrounding the capital city of Maramureș county.
Accommodation and restaurants

Best Western EuroHotel
București Boulevard, No. 23
Tel: +40 262 222 405, www.eurohotel-bm.ro

Carpați Hotel
Minerva Str., No. 16,
Tel: +40 262 214 812, www.hotelcarpati.ro

Mara Hotel
Unirii Boulevard, No. 11
Tel: +40 262 226 660, www.hotelmara.ro

Hotel Rivulus
Culturii Str., No. 3, Tel: +40 262 216 302
www.hotelrivulus.ro

Hotel Ambassador
Moldovei Str., No. 2, Tel: +40 262 250 242
www.hotelambassador.ro

Floare de Colți Guesthouse
Vasile Lucaciu, Str. Nr. 48
Tel: +40 262 250 216, www.floaredecolti.ro

Ideal Guesthouse
Steampului Str., No. 6
Tel: +40 362 411 411
www.pensiuneaideal.ro

RESTAURANTS

Millenium (Crama) Restaurant
Crisan Str., no. 1
Tel: +40 362 415 045, + 40 751 188 212

Rustic Restaurant
Transilvaniei Str., No. 15
Tel: +40 262 276 367

„Curtea Veche” Restaurant
Libertatii Square, No. 16

Bastion Restaurant
Valea Roșie Str., No. 22
Tel: +40 754 625 760

Cinquecento
Petofi Sandor Str., No. 7
Tel: +40 362 806 781
18 km away from the center of Baia Mare, beyond the Firiza Lake, the Locristra complex (www.complexlostrita.ro) welcomes its guests with its own trout farm, accommodation facilities, a restaurant and extended terraces. And at about 30 km away from the city seat of the district, at the foot of the Ignis peak, the Izvoare tourist complex (www.statiuneaizvoare.ro) tempts guests with fresh smelling forests, ski slopes, an adventure park, accommodation facilities, a riding center and mountain paths leading to natural reserves.

Set at 10 km away from Baia Mare, the town of Baia Sprie (Hungarian name: Felsobanya) is a former mining town, with buildings of interest for tourists, mostly from the XVIII and XIX centuries. One of the attractions of Baia Sprie is the pottery workshop of the artist Daniel Les, whom you may watch crafting clay objects, and in whose guesthouse you may rest over the night (www.casaolaruului.ro). Starting in the town center, a paved narrow road leads up to the Blue Lake. After approximately 1 km, the road is continued through a forest. The Blue Lake, a natural reserve formed after the collapse of an old mining gallery, owes its intense color (blue-emerald green) to the dissolution of sulphates.

Also under the jurisdiction of the town of Baia Sprie, there is the Chiuzea village, starting point for several tracks leading up to the Ignis Peak (1307 m). Chiuzea is also home to a famous fossil reserve, having one of the most developed Pliocene flora. Tourists who visit the area of Chiuzea will get to see whirlpools that locals use for washing their blankets and carpets.

Back to the center of Baia Sprie and climbing up to the Gutai Pass (Pasul Gutâi), the road will soon encounter a bifurcation (after 5 km). The road to the left will lead to Historical Maramurë, while the right one will lead to Mogoșa and Ţuitor, two well-known tourist locations in this area. Mogoșa (www.mogoșa.ro) displays as main point of attraction the Bodi Lake, which tempts you into swimming on hot summer days. Accommodation and food are available at the lodge set on the lake shore. Another attraction is the possibility of hiking a trip up the Mogoșa Peak (1246m).

Close to it, the Ţuitor complex (www.tuitor.ro) attracts tourists mainly due to its ski slopes, equipped with lighting system and artificial snow cannons. Accommodation is available in one of the three small hotels of the complex or in the wooden cabins at the 1000 m level. Ţuitor is also one of the starting points towards Rooster’s Peak, a geological reserve consisting of a steep cliff of peculiar shape, probably the most popular destination for those interested in hiking near Baia Mare.
The Wooden Churches Trail begins with a steep and winding ascent from Baia Mare into forest covered mountains. At the top of Gutâi Pass, the picturesque landscape opens up before you. Should you want to eat in a rustic ambience, before entering the Mara village you can stop at the Alex trout farm. The road then continues down the Mara Valley towards Desești, the first World Heritage site on this itinerary.

Legend maintains that in 1717 the wooden church of Desești was set ablaze during a Tatar invasion and many villagers died trying to save the church. The legend continues to say the the location of the current church was chosen by the new altar stone. The consecrated stone was erected in several different places and each time it fell over. After five attempts, the stone remained upright and this way, the site for the church, called Pious Parascheva, was established. According to the inscription on a beam of the pronaos roof, the interior frescoes date from 1780 and is the work of master painter Radu Munteanu from the village Ungureni in the Land of Lăpuș, and of his helper Gheorghe (from Desesti).

Perhaps the most unique of the frescoes is the depiction of The Last Judgment. In the painting, the sinners are individualized by their costumes: the Turks and the Tartars wear shalwars and tunics, the Germans wear cutaways and small hats, the Francs wear tights, short tunics, very tall hats. Within the church’s cemetery, among the old crosses (among which one may notice Celtic crosses too), there is a tall oak tree, 400 years old, the oldest one in this area.

Contact Info for visiting the church: Priest Ioan Sigartău, Tel: +40 262 37 26 14

The itinerary continues from Desesti to Sighetu-Marmașiei. The section of the route along the Mara Valley ends at Vadu Izei where the river Mara flows into the Iza. In Vadu Izei you can find several guesthouses, wooden gates, glass painting workshops, weaving workshops, wood sculptures and ornamental glass workshops. From here, after another 2 km you will reach Sighetu-Marmașiei.
Accommodation

**Anca Guesthouse**
Desești, Main Street, No. 286
Tel: +40 262 372 635

**Irina Guesthouse**
Desești, Main Street, No. 259
Tel: +40 262 372 603

**Ardelean Guesthouse**
Vadu Izei, No. 190B, Tel: +40 262 330 616
www.pensiuneaardelean.ro

**Borlean Guesthouse**
Vadu Izei, Zavoii Str, No. 689A,
Tel: +40 262 330 228, www.vaduizei.ro

**Doina Guesthouse**
Sighetu Marmatiei, Șugău Str., No. 75,
Tel: +40 262 330 602
www.pensiunea-doina.ro

**Teleptean Guesthouse**
Vadu Izei, Main Street, No. 320
Tel: +40 262 330 341
www.pensiunea-teleptean.ro

Traditional room - Photo: Rada Pavel
The county’s second largest city, Sighetu-Marmației, is located at the confluence of the rivers Iza, Tisa and Ronișoara, at the North-West border of the country. It was the old capital of the historical province of Maramures and written documents attest to the town as far back as 1326. In some specialists’ opinion, the name of the town comes from the old Thracian word „Zeget”, meaning „fortress”. Another explanation for the name could be the Hungarian „Szigt”, which means „island”.

The inhabitants of Sighetu-Marmației proudly claim that they live in the very heart of Europe, since not far from Sighet (on land that today belongs to Ukraine), a landmark made by the Austrian-Hungarian geographical society at the end of the 19th century demarcates the geographical center of Europe.

The former capital of Maramures also maintains many traces of old traditions and costumes. Exemplary of this rich cultural heritage is the Festival of Winter Traditions and Customs, held annually in Sighet on the 27th and 28th of December, in which the town centre transforms into an open-air stage focusing on the unique traditions of the area.

Foreign travelers before World War II, described Sighetu-Marmației as a town with a strong Jewish component. The tragedy of the deportation to Nazi concentration camps that struck Jewish communities throughout Eastern Europe did not spare the local population here. Elie Wiesel, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, was born here and his work is a living piece of this tragedy.

PLACES TO VISIT
Sighetu-Marmației retains buildings that constitute historical monuments, most of which are grouped in the Liberty Square, built during the Middle Age and reconditioned during the XIXth century. The protestant church on Ioan Mihalyi de Apșa street was built in the XVth century, in place of another building, constructed in early Gothic style, between 1050-1150. Other historical buildings include: the Roman-Catholic church (1730), the Ukrainian church (1830), the Orthodox church on Dragoș Vodă street (1892), the Big Synagogue (1904) etc.
The building at no. 1, Bogdan Vodă Street houses the Ethnographic Museum of Maramureș that displays a wide variety of objects related to folk culture: icons, agricultural tools, traditional furniture and costumes, rugs, ceramics, masks and architectural elements. (www.muzeulmaramuresului.ro)

Tourists eager to learn more about the traditional wooden architecture of Maramureș are invited to visit the open-air section of the museum, called the Village Museum. The museum is located on the Dobâieș Hill, just as you enter the town coming from the direction of Baia Mare. Both of the above-mentioned museums are equipped with audio guides in Romanian, English and French.

The Memorial of the Victims of Communism and Resistance is hosted by a building that was a prison between 1899 and 1965. During the interval 1950-1955, the place was transformed into a political prison where representatives of Romanian elite, people opposing the Communist regime were locked, tortured and killed. Today, the memorial is the most visited museum in Maramureș (www.memorialsighet.ro).

Elie Wiesel’s House (T. Vladimirescu Str., No.1) has been transformed into a museum hosting an important collection of photos, pieces of furniture and other objects that belonged to members of Sighet’s Jewish community.

The Museum House Dr. Ioan Mihalyi de Apșa (17, Ioan Mihalyi de Apșa Street) is hosted by the building that was home to the famous historian and man of science from Maramureș. The ground floor exhibits art works. In the workshop at the top floor you can see Mihalyi’s desk, his book shelves, paintings, original copies of various documents and the coat of arms of the noble family. Other museums of interest in Sighetu Marmăției are the The History and Archaeology Museum and the Museum of Natural Sciences (Libertății Square, No. 15).

Near Sighet, in the Tisa village, you can visit the Pipas Private Museum, which displays an impressive collection of old artworks from Maramureș: from paintings, glass and wood icons, sculptures, drawings, furniture items and porcelain, to needle-works, woven fabrics, vintage clothing. (Tisa Village, No. 231, Tel: +40 262 319 330)
Less than 20 km away from Sighet is the village of Săpânța, famous for its truly unique "Merry Cemetery", a must-see for anyone visiting Maramureș. The cemetery owes its name to the vivid colors of the headboards on which naively painted scenes and satirical epitaphs narrate the biography of the deceased. The rhymes are deprived of the usual clichés and remain fresh and original. The cemetery was created in the 1930s by the local craftsman Stan Ioan Pătraș. After his death in 1977, his work has been continued by his apprentice, Dumitru Pop Tîncu.
Very close to Sapanta is the Peri Monastery. The church of the monastery, a new wooden construction, with a 78 m spire, is even higher than the previous record-setting tower of the church in Surdesti. The monastery is set in the middle of a century-old oak forest.
After visiting Peri Monastery, the trail returns through Sighet, continuing along the road south into Vadu Izei where you will turn left and begin the journey along the Iza Valley, through a series of small villages and hamlets set amidst rolling hills. 20 km from Sighet lies Bârsana, a village that was first mentioned in documents in 1326.

The signposted wooden church at Barsana, known as the Holy Mother’s Entrance, was originally built in 1720 and later moved to its present location on Jbâr Hill in 1806. According to the legend, the Jbâr Hill used to be a cemetery for plague victims. Plague victims were buried hurriedly, without a religious service. Most likely it was the strong religious convictions of the locals which led to the churches relocation. Tradition holds that religious services for the dead to be of extreme importance and the relocation of the church would allow these unfortunate souls to rest for eternity in the shadow of the church.

A construction peculiarity of the church is the double-eaved roof. The interior frescoes were painted in the Baroque style. The side walls of the naos depict scenes from both the Old and New Testament. Of particular beauty are the flocks of angels and the touching depiction of the cherubim with eyes covering their bodies.

Contact Info for visiting the church: Priest Urda, Tel: +40 262 331 006

The Bârsana Monastery is located at the southern end of the village and merits a visit by travelers. (www.manastireabarsana.ro)

Bârsana is also home to Teodor Bârsan, a famous handicraftsman in wood, whose work is renowned all over Maramureş and beyond. His son, Ioan Bârsan, has inherited his skillfulness and carries on the old handicraft to this day.
Accommodation

Fratii Pașca Complex
Bârsana, Văleniului Street, No. 1338A
Tel: +40 262 331 165

Iza Guesthouse
Bârsana, No. 281, Tel: +40 262 331 212
www.izamaramures.ro
Upon leaving Bârsana, the trail continues to follow the meandering of the Iza River. In the village of Rozavlea, you can visit the old wooden church erected around 1717-1720 on the site of an earlier house of worship that had been destroyed by the Tatars.

Once you reach the village of Şieu, home to another wooden church (1760), keep an eye out for the turn off toward Poienile Izei. Take a right turn off of the main road and follow the signs toward the next stop on the trail.

The UNESCO designated wooden church at Poienile Izei, Pious Parascheva, is one of the most beautiful and well preserved monuments in all of Maramures. The church was built in 1604 and is covered on the interior with spectacular frescoes. It contains several scenes of the Last Judgment on its „pranoas” (walls). The scenes depict images of punishments for sins: the liar hanged by his tongue, the witch gored by cows for casting a spell on them, the farmer plowed by two devils for stealing his neighbor’s land, the mother forced to swallow her aborted baby, and the person who sleeps while the priest is preaching is forced to lay on a burning bed and endure the devil’s violin.

Contact Info for visiting the church in Poienile Izei: Priest Ioan Pop, Tel: +40 726 387 120

Nearby Poienile Izei is the quaint village of Botiza which is famous for women’s artistry in weaving traditional rugs. In the center of the village, there is a wooden church, built in 1699 at Vișeu de Jos, which was moved to its present location towards the end of the 19th century. Also in the center of the village, the traditional guesthouse of Mrs. Victoria Berecăru invites you to step in and listen to the story of the traditional art items displayed in the rooms at the ground floor.
Accommodation

Adriana Guesthouse
Poenile Izei, Valea Dubului, No. 96
Tel: +40 726 412 197

Bercearu Guesthouse
Botiza, No. 21B, Tel: +40 262 334 107

Ancuța Guesthouse
Botiza, Valea Sasului, No. 222
Tel: +40 262 334 079

Muntean Guesthouse
Botiza, No. 862, Tel: +40 262 334 135
www.pension/muntean.com

Man Maria Guesthouse
Șieu, No. 486, Tel: +40 262 333 513

Iza Guesthouse
Rozavlea, No. 227
Tel: +40 262 333 033
The trail now returns to Șieu where a right turn back on to the main road continues its journey along the Iza River. The next point of interest is the village of leud, just off the main road from Bogdan Vodă. Situated at the foot of the northern slope of the Țibleș Mountain, the village of leud was first mentioned in documents in 1364. You shouldn’t miss its two wooden churches, which are among the most important in the Land of Maramureș. The church on the Hill, inscribed in UNESCO’s World Heritage List, is made of fir tree wood and has been for long considered to be the oldest wooden structure in Europe.

However, dendrochronological dating established that the building was erected between 1611 and 1621, not in the middle of the XIVth century, as some specialists had believed. The church is devoted to the Birth of Holy Mary, celebrated on September 8th. The interior frescoes were made by Alexandru Ponehalski, one of the most active church painters in Maramureș. The painting in the pronaos depicts the Last Judgment, where the blaze of the inferno is about to engulf the sinners. In the attic of this church, a document that is known as The Codix of leud was found. The document, dating from 1391, is generally considered to be the first example of written Romanian.

The Lower Church (leud Șes) was erected in 1718, just after the last raid of the Tatars. It is one of the largest wooden buildings in Romania. leud is also home to the unique Hemp Museum, hosted by the Pleş family, who changed a peasant household into a real ethnographic settlement.

Contact Info for visiting the Pleş Museum:
leud, No. 909, Tel: +40 262 336 104

Contact Info for visiting the church:
Priest Alexandru Brici,
Tel: +40 262 336 203
or the church’s care-taker:
+40 763 655 924
Driving back to the main road, you soon reach Bogdan Vodă (formerly Cuhea), once the residence of the ruler Bogdan, who founded the feudal state of Moldavia. The wooden church in Bogdan Vodă was built in 1718-1754. The next village along the trail is Dragomirești. About midway through the village you will see a quaint house museum focusing on the life of the Romanian peasant woman in Maramures. On display here are traditional costumes, including wedding costumes, textiles, pottery, and wood carvings.

Contact Info for visiting the Peasant Woman Museum in Dragomirești: Mrs Zubașcu, Tel: +40 262 337 417

Dragomirești also hosts a monastery whose patron is Saint Elijah, sanctified in 1875, which is home to an icon believe to be miracle-working.

The last village of the Iza Valley is Săcel, famous for its unglazed red ceramics. Tănase Burnar, who learned the craft from his father, practices pottery using old techniques very similar to the ones used by the Dacians and a very old kiln, of Roman origin. Săcel is also home to Vasile Șușca, the artisan who is known for the traditional masks he has been making for more than 20 years and to a famous woodcarver, Grigore Țulean, specialized in making small wooden objects.

Accommodation

Ilea Guesthouse
leu, No. 333, tel: +40 262 336 039
www.pensiuneailea.ro

Oniga Guesthouse
leu, No. 275, Tel: +40 262 336 372

Chindris Guesthouse
leu, No. 201, Tel: +40 262 336 197

Dâncuș Guesthouse
leu, No. 539, Tel: +40 262 336 126
www.casadancus.ro

Lăcrimioara Guesthouse
Săcel, No. 755, Tel: +40 262 339 071
www. cazarevaleaizei.ro

Țurlaș Guesthouse
Săliște de Sus, No. 195
Tel: +40 262 338 301
Budești

Our World Heritage Trail continues by following the route back until reaching Bârsana once again, at which point you will need to turn left toward Călinești. Upon reaching Călinești (a village with two wooden churches, dating from the 17th and 18th centuries), turn left following the Costău Valley. Shortly you will pass through the charming village of Sârbi. Many households in this village have preserved their carved wooden gates. It is worthwhile to stop briefly to examine the still operational water mill, located midway through the village. Sârbi is also home to a talented hat-makers, Vasile Borodi who hand-makes hats (from straws and sawdust) which are integral to the male costume of Maramures.

Our next UNESCO monument is the oak church of Budești-Josani, built in 1643 on the site of an earlier church. Dedicated to Saint Nicoară, the old Romanian name for Saint Nicholas, the church was constructed from thick pieces of oak placed on a foundation of river stones. Inside the church, the chain mail shirt and armor helmet of Pintea the Brave, a local Robin Hood, can be viewed. Tradition says that he brought these pieces here himself. Alexandru Ponehalschi painted the interior in bright, warm colors, around 1762. The church is also known for its collection of 17th century icons painted on glass and wood. An earlier icon from a 15th century church contains Slavonic inscriptions and depicts Saint John the Baptist.

Contact Info for visiting the church: Priest Ioan Năneștean, Tel: +40 262 373 615 or the church's care-taker, Tel: +40 753 306 647

The other church in Budești (Susani Church) was erected in 1760. Be sure to take a close look at the scenes from the Life and Passion of Christ and the panoramic depiction of the Paradise, swarming with sundry animals, quaintly blending the real and imaginary. Those who are interested in viewing some remarkable architecture and, tall, carved, wooden gates are encouraged to make the short trip to Breb and Hoteni, two villages close to Budești. Each May the village of Hoteni hosts a famous and colorful ritual, called Tânjaua de pe Mara, to celebrate the occasion of the first man starting to work the fields that spring. The spouses Anuta and Ion Pop (Popicu), who have brought world fame to the Maramures music, have arranged here, in Hoteni, a traditional home, with a house that is almost 200 years old, with a shed and a large wooden gate, all of which are 100% authentic for the spirit of Maramures.

Breb, the neighboring village, hosts numerous traditional homes and an old wooden church. Breb is home to several skilled popular artists, among which remarkable is Pâtrus Pop (Niță) - wood carver.

At short distance, Ocna Șugatag is a spa resort that has become an important touristic center, with a well developed network of bed and breakfast facilities and hotels. The old salt mines here collapsed and in their place are now eight salty lakes, which are among the most salty bodies of water in Europe. From Budești, the trail follows the road to Cavnic, an old mining settlement, first mentioned in documents in 1455. Over the past few years, Cavnic has evolved into a popular winter destination due to its ski slopes (Roată and Icoană).
Accommodation

Mărioara Guesthouse
Brebi, No. 346, Tel: +40 262 374 593
www.marioara.ro

Lucia Guesthouse
Brebi, No. 285, Tel: +40 262 374 584

Popasul din Deal Guesthouse
Ocna Șugatag, Unirii Str., No. 1D
Tel: +40 262 374 133, www.popasul.ro

Adina Guesthouse
Cavnic, Independenței Str., No. 11
Tel: +40 262 295 653
www.adina.pensiuni.info.ro

Ana Guesthouse
Cavnic, Diamantului Str., No. 8
Tel: +40 262 295 064

Mărie&Friends Chalet
Cavnic, Icoanei Str., No. 1
Tel: +40 744 894 399
www.icoanacavnic.ro

Roata Hotel
Cavnic, Maramureșului Str., No. 3
Tel: +40 262 295 142
www.hotelloata.ro

Superski Hotel
Cavnic, Maramureșului Str., No. 22
Tel: +40 731 818 199
www.hotelsuperski.ro

On the way home - Photo: Gabriel Motica
A short distance out from Lăpuș is the small village of Rogoz, home to another UNESCO monument.

According to tradition, the church Saint Archangels Michael and Gabriel was built in 1633 from two huge twin trees brought from Dealul Popii (The Priest’s Hill). The church seems to have survived the Tartar invasion of 1717 as the Land of Lăpuș was affected less by the danger brought about by the Tartars than the Land of Maramureș. The interior frescoes, painted in 1785 by Radu Munteanu and Nicolae Man, remain only in the nave and in the pronaos, with some of the scenes split up and others faded.

The uniqueness of the church Saint Archangels Michael and Gabriel is given by its southern entrance, asymmetrical roof and horse-head cantilever joints. The Elder’s table covered by the eaves on the northern side of the church has markings corresponding to the families entitled to sit at it. On religious holidays, these families offered meals to the poor in memory of the dead.

Contact Info for visiting the church: Priest Ioan Chirilă, Tel: +40 262 387 218 or the small Peasant Museum near the church: Mrs. Mărza Călina, Tel: +40 742 584 696.

Rogoz is also home to a master woodcarver, Mr. Nicolae Șerban, whose sign-posted home and workshop can be found just up the road from the church.

The first town you will drive through after leaving Rogoz is Târgu Lăpuș, the region’s oldest settlement and the starting point for various routes through the Land of Lăpuș. One of them is the Blue Track, dedicated to bicycle riders, with a length of 45 km, which crosses through villages, meadows, pastures, forest groups, starting at the foot of the Satra Mountain, going all the way up and back.

A well-known attraction in the Land of Lăpuș is the Monastery of Rohia, situated 12 km South from Târgu Lăpuș. Rohia was one of the centers of spiritual resistance against communism and one of the most profound thinkers of contemporary Romanian culture, Nicolae Steinhardt, chose to follow the path of voluntary reclusion here, in 1980. (www.manastirea-rohia.ro)
Accomodation

Maria Guesthouse
Rohia, No. 80, Tel: +40 262 387 422
www.pensiuneamaria.com

Marissandra Guesthouse
Târgu Lăpuș (Răzoare village), No. 9
Tel: +40 262 385 181

Bike Ride through the Land of Lăpuș: Blue Track - Photo: Rada Pavel
Just like the church at Rogoz, the wooden church of Plopiș is also devoted to the Saint Archangels Michael and Gabriel, whose celebration every year is held on November the 8th.

The village of Plopiș, situated in the Cavnic Valley, is first mentioned in documents in 1583, as a settlement belonging to the Chioar Fortress. The inhabitants of Plopiș were renowned for their carpentry skills and the fruits of their labors can be found throughout the county. In 1798, the villagers began construction of a new church meant to replace their older house of worship. On the 12th of November 1811, to the joy of the 49 founder-families, the new church was completed. The information referring to the dedication of the church was extracted from a document drafted on the occasion of its dedication which was later found in the abutment of the altar. This is the place where 49 coins, deposited by each family of the village, were also discovered.

According to tradition, the frescoes, the iconostasis, and the altar icon are attributed to Stefan the Painter, and were completed between 1810-1811. The inscription at the back of the altar icon certifies this paternity, namely that it was painted by Stefan the Painter.

The size of the church, the proportions of the body of the church, realized in the Blockblau style, and the roof exhibit an exceptional sense of harmony. The steeple is raised above the pronaos with a robust structure that is imposed by its considerable height and includes a pyramidal helmet framed in the four corners by four miniature towers giving the church a soaring silhouette.

Despite the relatively modest dimensions: 17 m in length, 7 m in breadth and 47 m in height, the church at Plopiș is remarkable for its well-balanced proportions, giving credence to the opinion that it is one of the most united and integrated religious constructions in Maramureș.

Contact Info for visiting the church: Mr. Augustin Făt, Tel: +40 741 203 676
Upon leaving Plopiș, turn right once back to the main road for the trip to the village of Ṣurdești. The wooden church of Ṣurdești, devoted to the Saint Archaengels Michael and Gabriel, was built in 1721 under the direction of Toma Macarie. The church steeple is claimed to be the tallest old wooden structure in Europe. In the past, people believed that the taller the church tower was, the easier their prayers could reach up to Heaven.

The interior frescoes, executed by Ștefan of Șișești in 1783, were applied on canvas strips which in turn fill the gaps between the wooden beams. On Sundays this church is still used by the locals as a house of worship. As with so many of the churches in Maramures, the one in Surdești is an integral part of the village landscape. Apple trees grow in the courtyard and outside of the protective gates, firewood is stacked next door to provide heat in winter, and barrels of harvested fruit await transport to the nearest Palinca stall.

Contact Info for visiting the church: Priest Marius Tomos: +40 766 442 263 or +40 262 298 744

This village is also known for its traditional spring custom known as Udătoriu. Every year, on the second day of Easter, the hardest working villager (udătoriu) is celebrated by all the locals. After the celebrating ritual, the udătoriu will host a big feast and dance! The church at Ṣurdești ends our itinerary of the UNESCO World Heritage Monuments in Maramureș. Upon leaving the church, return to the road and turn right. Then, once you reach the intersection with the main road, turn left, following the sign that shows the way to Baia Sprie. The next village is Dânești, a local spa with several mineral water sources. The village hosts a new tourist Complex, Secret Garden, situated in an outstanding location. Following again the main road, you will soon reach the crossroad in the centre of Baia Sprie, where a left turn will return you shorty to Baia Mare, the starting point of our trip.
TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist Information Centre MaramuresInfoTurism
Baia Mare, Gh. Sincai, No. 46, Room 20
Tel: +40 262 206 113, Fax: +40 262 206 114
email: office@visitmaramures.ro  www.visitmaramures.ro

MTMM - Tourist Information Centre
Sighetu-Marmației, Piața Libertății, No. 21, Tel: +40 262 312 552
e-mail: contact@mtmm.ro  www.mtmm.ro

Association for Rural Tourism Development and Promotion
Târgu Lăpuș, Piața Eroilor, No. 21, Tel: +40 721 691 744
e-mail: viorel_coroian@yahoo.com

OVR Agro-Tur-Art Vadu Izei Foundation
Vadu Izei, Main Street, No. 161, Tel: +40 262 330 171
e-mail: office@ovr.ro  www.vaduizei.ovr.ro

OVR Botiza Foundation
Botiza, Main Street, No. 742, Tel: +40 262 334 110
e-mail: botizavr@sintec.ro

Iuga Foundation
Tel: +40 744 769 178
artizanat@rdslink.ro  www.artizanat.org

MaramontSport
(outdoor equipment, maps, tourist information)
Baia Mare, Piața Păciilor, No. 1, Tel: +40 758 089 455
e-mail: office@maramont.ro, www.maramont.ro

Useful Phone Numbers

Emergency (Police, Ambulance, Fire brigade): 112

Baia Mare bus timetables information: +40 262 221 777
Sighetu Marmăției bus timetables information: +40 262 331 512

Baia Mare train timetable information: +40 262 220 952