Brown bear experience and birding in Eastern Transylvania

The Milvus Group’s Pre-conference tour offer
23rd August – 26th August
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4 days

Price: 495 €

Departure:
From Cluj Napoca, on August 23, at 09.00 AM

Tour end:
In Cluj Napoca, on August 26, around 3.00 PM

Group size:
min. 5, max. 8 people

Bookings will be by the “first come, first served” principle, until available places are filled up

info: csaba.domokos@milvus.ro
TOUR SUMMARY

Our 4 day-long "Brown bear experience and birding in Eastern Transylvania" tour will provide you with an authentic large carnivore and birding experience in Romania’s Eastern Carpathians and in the mountains’ Western foothills. This tour offers more than a simple bear watch! You will gain an insight into a long-term brown bear conservation and research program, you will learn about bear biology and ecology, about the challenges the species faces and about large carnivore-human coexistence in the traditional rural landscapes of Eastern Transylvania. Throughout the tour, you will be accompanied by professional guides: the coordinator of Milvus Group’s ‘Brown bear conservation and research program in a model area in Romania’, respectively a professional ornithologist from the Milvus Group. The profit from the tour will be directed entirely towards covering the costs of the NGO’s bear program.

Thank you for considering our offer!
TOUR ITINERARY

**1st Day** (Friday, 23, Aug): Departure from Cluj - travel and arrival to the Forestry Service Guesthouse near the town of Sovata. Sightseeing, birding, bear watch.

**2nd Day** (Saturday, 24, Aug): Guesthouse, morning birding - Neaua parish, bear trapping site, shepherd camp, village museum, bird rehabilitation center, open-air bear watch – Guesthouse


**4th Day** (Monday, 26, Aug): Guesthouse - morning birding in the area, bear den visiting – Cluj (EOU)

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**TOUR INCLUSIONS**
Transportation, accommodation, meals and 2 dedicated guides (one on large carnivores and one on birds)

**TRANSPORTATION**
From Cluj Napoca by air-conditioned minibus. At the end of the tour you will be transported to the Conference Hotel in Cluj Napoca, with the same minibus.

**WHAT TO BRING AND EXPECT**
Binoculars, hiking boots, small backpack, camera, headlights, hat, sunglasses, raincoat that can fit in your backpack, pen and notebook. Even in August the mornings and evenings can be surprisingly chilly, so please bring adequate clothing with you.

**Important note:**
- For species likely to be seen, dietary preferences, travel, payments, and any other questions, please contact us at csaba.domokos@milvus.ro
You will be picked up at your place of stay in Cluj Napoca starting with 09.00 AM, or, if you wish, at the city’s Avram Iancu International Airport. You will be transferred (via an air-conditioned minibus, approx. 3-4 hrs drive) to the forestry service guesthouse in the mountains above the town of Sovata, in the Eastern Carpathians. This will serve as our basis throughout the tour.

After check-in and lunch we will conduct a walking trip (first by minibus and later on foot – confortable hike) to a vantage point in the mountains, where you will get a feeling of Romania’s Eastern Carpathians. We will search for large carnivore tracks and signs of presence and observe local bird species.

In the evening we will go for bear watching in closed observatories, located next to feeding stations (transportation to the sites will be by car). Dinner will be served back at the guesthouse, after nightfall.
Before breakfast, we will take a comfortable hike in the vicinity of the guesthouse, to look for birds. After breakfast, we will travel to the foothills of the Eastern Carpathians by minibus (approx. 30 min. drive). Here, we will visit one of the trapping sites of the bear program (approx. 10 min. easy hike). Next, we will visit a traditional shepherd camp (approx. 30 min. easy hike), with a possibility to taste locally produced cheese.

Packed lunch will be served at our Traditional Village Museum / Bird Rehabilitation Center in the village of Sansimion. There is also a possibility to taste locally produced spirits in the nearby distillery.

Late afternoon we will hike to a vantage point in the hills (approx. 30 min. easy hike) to look for free roaming bears and other wildlife species. Unlike in the mountains, this will not happen in a closed observatory and there are no feeding stations here. After nightfall, we take the minibus back to our base above Sovata.
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Pre-conference tour

Day 3

Departure by minibus from the guesthouse at 08.00 AM to the Bicaz gorge, which is situated in the Hășmaș Mountains National Park. The limestone cliffs are home of the Alpine Swift and the Wallcreeper. We will also have some chance to see Chamois here.

The team will have the packed lunch in the beautiful grasslands of the Gheorgheni Basin. Species likely to see during this journey are: Lesser Spotted Eagle, Scarlet Rosefinch, Three-toed Woodpecker, White-backed Woodpecker.

After the end of the program, we will head back to our base above Sovata. In the evening, we will go for bear watching in closed observatories, located next to feeding stations (transportation to the sites will be by car). Dinner will be served back at the guesthouse, after nightfall.
Before breakfast, we will take a comfortable hike in the vicinity of the guesthouse, to look for birds. After breakfast, **we will visit 2 bear dens** in the mountains above Sovata (approx. 30 min. medium difficulty hike). Additionally, we will also look for birds in the bear den area.

After the fieldtrip, we will head back to the guesthouse, to pack our bags and to get ready to leave around noon. Transportation back to the Conference Hotel in Cluj Napoca will be done by minibus. Arrival to Cluj Napoca will be around 3.00 PM.