TASTE OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE
BĂILE TUȘNAD AND SURROUNDINGS
ECOTOURISM DESTINATION
(3 day tour - Lower Ciuc Basin, Eastern Carpathians)
1st day

07:30-08:00 Meeting and boarding the bus in Cluj Napoca
08:00-13:00 Bus ride: Cluj Napoca - Băile Tușnad
13:00-14:00 Arrival at the accommodation in Băile Tușnad and surroundings ecotourism destination, introduction and briefing
14:00-15:30 Lunch
Set menu rich in local products. Vegetarian menu is optional.

16:00-18:00 Visit to the “Mohoș Peat Bog - Lake Saint Anna” protected area (Natura 2000 site and natural reserves)
Due to the presence of several rare species of plants the Mohoș Peat Bog is declared a natural monument. It is situated in the south-east part of the Ciomad volcanic cone in the Mohoș crater, which is next to the crater of Lake St. Anna. The peat bog has an area of 80 hectares and is located at 1050 m altitude, 100 meters above the lake’s level. It has a thickness of 10 m and a volume of about 3 million m³. The peat bog is renowned for the rare plants. In the carpet of moss we can find species like bog-rosemary (Andromeda polifolia), bog cranberry (Vaccinium oxycoccos), round-leaved sundew (Drosera rotundifolia), great sundew (Drosera anglica), paddle-leaved sundew (Drosera obovata) and others. Most plants are rare glacial relics. Dwarf scots pine forest (Pinus sylvestris) enriches the landscape.

Lake Saint Anna is the only volcanic lake preserved as a complete crater in southeastern Europe. Formed in one of the twin craters of Big Ciomad, which is part of Ciomad Mountains, the lake is at an altitude of 950 m above sea level. A circle-shaped lake covers an area of 22 hectares, with a circumference of 1737 meters and an average depth of 4 m. The lake has no spring and its water supply comes from the snow of the mountains surrounding it, which melts in spring and from rainwater. The lake is separated from the peat bog only by a narrow ridge. Near the lake is St. Anna Chapel where a pilgrimage is organized annually for day of Saint Anna, which is attended by numerous faithful Catholics.

18:30-20:30 Bear watching in the wild
In the vicinity of Băile Tușnad town, there are two bear hides designed and built by Máté Bence, a famous wildlife photographer, specialized in designing hides. From these hides, created especially for wildlife photographers, brown bears (Ursus arctos) can be observed in their natural environment: in the wild. Occasionally other mammal and bird species can be observed as well.
The bear hide is a secure enclosure, from which wildlife can be observed even during rainy weather. It depends on various factors where the observation will take place, such as the number of wildlife visitors on the previous day, number of tourists, possible disturbing activities in the forest and so on.

21:00-22:30 Dinner
Set menu rich in local products. Vegetarian menu is optional.
2nd day

07:30-08:30 Breakfast
Set menu rich in local products. Vegetarian menu is optional.

09:00-10:00 Easy hiking to the Apor Bastion

The trail starts from Bâile Tușnad town, passes by the Mikes and Apor mineral water springs and reaches the edge of the forest. After approx. 20 minutes of walk, at an altitude of 762 m, the Apor Bastion can be reached. In 1883 thanks to baron Károly Apor the Apor Bastion was built at the bottom of the Surduc-hill, which never served strategic goals, it was always a viewpoint and resting place. From the bastion there is an excellent view on Bâile Tușnad in the Tușnad Defile, on the Olt River and on the Falcon Stone Nature Reserve, which is rising from the opposite peak.

Also known as “Pearl of Transylvania”, Bâile Tușnad is one of the most beautiful mountain resorts in the country, which was declared a town in 1968. It is considered the smallest town in Romania. The geographical context and richness of natural therapeutic factors, climate, numerous sources of mineral water, natural gas and thermal waters, have favored the development of specialized medical conservative balneology type, which uses the natural treatment factors.

The Apor Bastion has undergone several renovations over the years, but every time its purpose and style was conserved and as an addition it can be viewed now from the city even in darkness. During the renovation of 2017, an exhibition space was set up in the bastion by placing archival billboards and a brief presentation of its history.

10:30-12:00 Visit to the Mineral Water Museum

The Mineral Water Museum draws the attention to the value of the waters of the region, and to the history of the drinking – water and spa – culture that is based on these waters. The residence of the Museum is Tușnad village, a place where locals, tourists and guests stop to take water from the “Owl” mineral water spring from the center of the village. The museum offers visitors a relaxing, slow, nature friendly atmosphere.

The Museum is a yurt – shaped building, to emphasize that during the visit we walk over a “mineral water path” that begins with the steam bath of the Scythian and Hungarian shamans and ends with the modern spa – culture of today. The building is of 40 square meters (inner exhibition surface); the exhibition surface is of 60 – 90 square meters (internal and external). The local guide in the museum is a geologist.
12:30-14:00 *Visit to the Torda valley, Delnița village*
A brief presentation of the natural history of the Ciuc Basin featuring the local geology, geomorphology, wildlife, human land use and cultural landscape. The visit will take place on the area of the periglacial ponds (early Holocene formations), which are situated in the Torda valley next to Delnița village. Their origins, evolution, present state and importance for conservation will be presented, along with the characteristic species of this region. The alluvial fan has a special air circulation that is favorable for an impressive number of birds of prey, from lesser spotted eagle (*Aquila pomarina*) to short-toed eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*), but the wet hay meadows are often visited also by flocks of non-breeding white storks (*Ciconia ciconia*) and marsh harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*) often nests in the small reedbeds. Temporary ponds are used as breeding habitats by great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) and Transylvanian smooth newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris ampelensis*), and one of the largest moor frog (*Rana arvalis*) populations of Romania is also known from this site. The visit to the solitary Gothic style St. John’s church next to the ponds is optional, which is a relic of Mediaeval church “spatial planning”.

14:30-16:30 *Buffet style lunch at the Barn Guesthouse of Delnița village*
The lunch consists of traditional bites and drinks specific to this region, will take place at a renovated and converted barn. The barn dates back to 1940, renovations started in 2012 and ended early 2013. Today it is a guesthouse with three rooms, two bathrooms, a kitchen and a social-cultural multifunctional space. Prince Charles visited the barn in 2011 to support the wider work for the protection of traditional architecture, farming and culture in the area of the owner of the barn. Informal conversation will take place during lunch with the owner of the barn about cultural and natural heritage of the region.

17:00-20:00 *Beaver watching in the Lower Ciuc Basin*
Nearby Cetățuia village, in the Lower Ciuc Basin Natura 2000 site, which includes several natural reserves and fens, there is a special habitat at the lower part of Asău stream created by beavers (*Castor fiber*). Here we can observe them, their activity and constructions from a distance without disturbing them. In the meantime Sânsimion village will also be visited, which is situated next to Cetățuia village. The two villages that are one administrative unit host one of the largest white stork colonies of Romania, about 60 breeding pairs. The floodplain of the Olt River still has a few specific habitats for the weatherfish (*Misgurnus fossilis*), which was an important food source for the local population (in fact the Hungarian name of this region – Csink – probably comes from this species). This lowest part of the Ciuc Basin has sand deposits from the Pliocene time thanks to which there are smaller bee-eater colonies (*Merops apiaster*) and a large sand martin (*Riparia riparia*) colony nearby in a sand quarry. This is one of the southernmost nesting areas of the snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) and typical for common reed warbler (*Locustella naevia*). The floodplain of the Olt river is a continuous wet hay meadow area, with a very large corncrake population (*Crex crex*).

21:00-22:30 *Dinner*
Set menu rich in local products. Vegetarian menu is optional.
3rd day

07:30-08:30 Breakfast
Set menu rich in local products. Vegetarian menu is optional.

09:00-12:00 Horse carriage ride
It starts on a set route from Tușnadul Nou village on horse carriage to admire the unique landscapes of the Ciomad area. The route also includes a visit to a sheepfold where different types of local cheeses can be tasted. The Ciomad Mountains are a main corridor for large carnivores in the Eastern Carpathians. Typical bird species of forests include hazel grouse (Bonasa bonasia) and several woodpecker species. The agricultural landscape with scattered bushes is typical habitat of red-backed shrike (Lanius collurio).

12:30-14:00 Church with medieval wildlife drawings, and walk to a scenic hilltop*
The trip starts with a short visit to a unique church in the Northern part of the Ciuc Basin, that has unusual mural drawings on its tower, including plant and animal drawings, with recognizable crayfish (Astacus astacus) drawings (the name of the village and its main stream is Crayfish – Racu in Romanian and Csíkrákos in Hungarian) and a crane (Grus grus). These two species are still found in the area, crayfish being still relatively widespread, while crane is rarely seen during migration.

Next we will take a short walk to a spectacular pyramid-like hill with scenic views all around, with excellent corncrake habitats to the north, a fossil valley of the main river to the west with a series of periglacial ponds. Ideal for watching birds of prey too.

14:30-16:00 Lunch*
Set menu rich in local products. Vegetarian menu is optional.

16:00-21:00 Bus ride back to Cluj Napoca
Price/person: 240 euro
Advance/person: 72 euro (30%), payable between 16 and 31 March, 2019.
The price includes: two nights’ accommodation; meals; bus travel from Cluj Napoca to Bâile Tușnad, during the trip and back to Cluj Napoca; visiting fees; local guide (biologist).
The program will be guided in English.

Period: August 31 - September 2 (3 days).
This program is for min. 8 and max. 15 person. Reservation deadline: April 30.

For reservation, advance payments and any other information do not hesitate to contact us:
Tel.: +40 743 775 213 (ACCENT GeoEcological Organization, Bâile Tușnad)
E-mail: imecs.istvan17@gmail.com

More about the Bâile Tușnad and surroundings ecotourism destination: www.eco-turism.ro
All the programs take place in the destination, except for those marked with *.

Photos: Czirjak Beata, Demeter Laszlo, Imecs Istvan, Joao Oliveira, Miha Moiceanu, Mihaly Laszlo