

Romanian Narrow Gauge Exploratory Tour
Revised Tour Proposal - 22 February 2019
New dates, lower prices, revised itinerary!
Proposed dates: 9-20 August 2019

Join me for an exploratory tour of what remains of the Romanian narrow gauge lines. This proposed tour will visit 8 narrow gauge lines which are described in <https://www.romania-insider.com/steam-trains/>

The 7 lines are:

[Viseu de Sus - Paltin](#)
[Moldovita - Argel](#)
[Teaca - Râciu](#)
[Sovata - Câmpu Cetatii](#)
[Covasna - Comandau](#)
[Sibiu - Agnita](#)
[Criscior - Brad](#)
[Abrud - Câmpeni](#)

Previously I have visited only one of these lines at Viseu de Sus. This is the only one regularly working as both a diesel-logging and a steam-tourist line. The others, I believe, operate purely for tourists.



Would you like to join me to visit these lines and to see them in operation?

July and August have been suggested as the best months to find them all working. Please note that apart from Sibiu (where a draisine/maintenance trolley ride is planned as the line is not yet open to passengers), all other lines should have regular tourist trains for us to ride and photograph from the lineside. Apart from Sibiu, no charters are planned.

Along with the narrow gauge lines, we can expect good scenery, local food, and interesting architecture. The tour is focussed on narrow gauge railways with a railway visit included on 9 of the days. In addition, there will be trams to see in Cluj and Sibiu and possibly mainline attractions along the way.



Dates

The proposed dates are 9-20 August.

Itinerary

This is the revised itinerary I have negotiated with the Carpathian Travel Centre, Sibiu for our tour. In addition, I have asked if we can reduce the number of single nights with the suggestions that we might be able to spend 2 nights in Brasov rather than one in Brasov and one in Targu Secuiesc.

Itinerary:

Day 1, 9 August

Arrival in Cluj Napoca

Flight 1: London Luton (08:15) – Cluj Napoca (13:10) with WizzAir *for (Mon, Wed, Thu, Fri and Sun)*

Flight 2: London Luton (13:10) – Cluj Napoca (18:05) with WizzAir *for (Mon, Wed, Thu, Fri and Sun)*

Flight 3: London Luton (21:55) – Cluj Napoca (02:50+1) with WizzAir *for (Mon, Wed, Thu, Fri and Sun)*

Comment: The 18:05 arrival will be met at the airport. If arriving at other times, please meet up at our hotel in Cluj. Other flights into Cluj are available and there is a direct daytime train from Budapest.

Day 2, 10 August

Drive to Criscior.

Travel by the steam train from Criscior to Brad.

Later transfer to Abrud

Accommodation for 1 night in Abrud.

Day 3, 11 August

Travel by the steam train from from Abrud to Campeni.

Transfer to Sibiu.

Accommodation in Sibiu for 2 nights.

Day 4, 12 August

Travel on the "Cheese Express" tram from Sibiu to Rasinari.

Visit Rasinari and taste some delicious cheese specialities.

Return to Sibiu.



Day 5, 13 August

Transfer from Sibiu to Cornatel.

Travel by the draizine to Agnita.

Drive to Brasov. Accommodation in Brasov for 1 night.

Day 6, 14 August

Transfer to Covasna.

Travel by the steam train Covasna – Comandau.

Transfer to Targu Secuiesc in the evening.

Accommodation for 1 night in Targu Secuiesc.

Day 7, 15 August

Transfer to Sovata

Travel by the steam train from Sovata to Campu Cetatii.

Drive to Teaca

Accommodation for 1 night in Reghin.

Day 8, 16 August

Travel by the steam train from Teaca to Raci.

Hiking the railway to take pictures and videos of the steam train.

Transfer to Moldovita.

Accommodation in Moldovita for 1 night.

Day 9, 17 August

Travel by the narrow gauge line train from Moldovita – Argel with steam or diesel loco.

Walk to the railway to take photos and videos of the train.

Visit of Moldovita Monastery.

Transfer to Viseu.

Accommodation in Viseu for 2 nights

Day 10, 18 August

Travel by the Mocanita steam train.

Return in Viseu.

Day 11, 19 August

Viseu de Sus part day morning steam departure and depot activity.

Drive to Cluj Napoca.

Optional activity: Tram ride and tram photography in Cluj Napoca

Accommodation for 1 night in Cluj.

Day 12, 20 August

Optional activity: Tram ride and tram photography in Cluj Napoca prior to departure if your flight allows.

Transfer to the Airport in Cluj Napoca.

Flight 1: Cluj Napoca (06:15) - London Luton (07:30) with WizzAir *for (Mon, Wed, Thu, Fri and Sun)*

Flight 2: Cluj Napoca (11:30) - London Luton (12:40) with WizzAir *for (Mon, Wed, Thu, Fri and Sun)*

Flight 3: Cluj Napoca (20:05) - London Luton (21:10) with WizzAir *for (Mon, Wed, Thu, Fri and Sun)*

Comment: Transfers will be provided around 09:00 for the 11:30 departure. For other flights you may need to make your own transfer arrangements.

Flights

Wizz Air to Cluj Napoca is the best way if you are UK based. I understand Wizz Air also flies to/from Birmingham.



Deposit

If you wish to book this tour, a fully refundable deposit of £500 is requested. This deposit will need to be remitted to the tour organiser in Romania after the tour program is finalised in early May. Until then it will be fully refundable. After that it will be partially refundable according to the terms and conditions of Carpathian Travel Center - <https://www.carpathian-travel-center.com/en/travel-terms-conditions.html>

Full payment

The balance needs to be remitted to Romania at least 30 days before the start of the tour so will need to be with me 45 days before the start of the tour.

Tour numbers

From 6 to 11 participants. The tour is currently priced for 6 and 7 participants. There will be a reduction in price for more than 7. If there are only 4 or 5 people interested, I will ask for prices for these numbers which will be somewhat higher than for 6 people. The tour will not proceed with less than 4 committed participants by early March 2019.

Tour pricing

6 participants: GBP 1400 / Person in single room (the guide for this size group is also driver)

7 participants: GBP 1300 / Person in single room (the guide for this size group is also driver)

Note that there would be a switch from driver-guide in a smaller vehicle for 6-7 people to a dedicated driver plus a guide and a larger vehicle for 8-11 people.



Flights

At the time of the tour, Wizz Air will be operating 3 flights a day from London Luton Airport to Cluj Napoca in Romania. The plan is for the group to be met off the more sociably-timed middle flight in the day and anyone on the earlier or later flight may need to make their own way to the downtown hotel/airport. Cluj is well served with flights from the UK, Germany, Austria, etc. so alternatives to Wizz Air and using London Luton Airport are possible. You may also want to consider arriving in Cluj by train via Budapest. Journeys with only one change of trains in Budapest are possible from certain stations in Germany, for example Frankfurt-am-Main.

[Flights to Cluj](#)

Inclusions

Accommodation with breakfast in single rooms for 11 nights in 3*/2* hotels/pensions according to the program:

2 x Cluj Napoca: e.g. Hotel Univers T 3*

1 x Abrud: e.g. Vila Nature 2*+

2 x Sibiu: e.g. Hotel Roberts 3*

1 x Brasov: e.g. Hotel Q 3*/ Silver

1 x Targu Secuiesc: e.g. Hotel Atrium 3*

1 x Reghin: e.g. Hotel Marion 3*

1 x M. Humorului: e.g. Pension Casa Andrea 3*

2 x Viseu e.g. Casa Barsan 2*+ (next to the loco depot)

Meals: full-board (breakfast, lunch and dinner)

11 x breakfast in the hotels

4 x lunch with 3 course menu and water at local restaurants

6 x lunch package with water

10 x dinner with 3 course menu and water at local and hotel restaurants, according to the program

English speaking driver according to the program, including his meals and accommodation

Transportation from/to Airport Cluj Napoca (CLJ) by a modern air conditioned van, according to the program, including all parking taxes and road taxes in Romania, meals and accommodation of the driver

Tickets to all narrow gauge lines, touristic trains and city tramways according to the program

Entrance tickets according to the program

English speaking guide for city tour in Cluj Napoca, 1 day at the Monasteries of Bucovina, city tour of Brasov and city tour of Sibiu

Photo fees according to the program

Info material, Romania map



Exclusions

Arrival/departure by plane

Trip cancellation insurance

Alcoholic drinks or other private costs (souvenirs etc.)

Dinner on the first night

Comment

Romania is a new country for me to offer tours to and this required me to find a tour company to provide the local arrangements. Dan Lloyd provided the contact and he will be using them for his own cultural tours in May this year. His tours include a limited narrow gauge content whereas I am trying for

narrow gauge, tram or railway interest on all days but with plenty of local culture included.

Unlike Bosnia where Majda and Dario are two individuals who turned their hand to organising steam tours, in Romania, it's an established general tourism company with their own established terms and conditions. This means that once the tour is declared go with 6 or more people, they require a deposit of 30% and the full tour price is payable 30 days before the start of the tour. They require me to collect the payments and make one single transfer to them rather than have every participant pay separately.

If joining me for this tour, you accept that this is an exploratory tour and we will enjoy the good and have to work on anything which is not satisfactory. I welcome your comments and any tips on what might be included in the tour without dramatically changing the itinerary. Of the railways, only the Viseu de Sus has published its summer timetable so some adjustments may be necessary when we know what tourist services the other lines will offer. Charters are not out of the question if required to see something in action at any of the lines (at additional cost) but are not part of the basic plan. Charters would increase the per-person cost and would be discussed with all the tour participants first before going ahead if they seem sensible.

This is an exploratory tour. If it's successful, I'll try to build on what we discover to offer further tours. However, as you probably know the very first tour with its surprises can often be the most satisfying tour with all of the delights of discovering a new country and the start of the road to becoming something of an old Romanian hand! I think it's very unlikely that I will offer a repeat tour with the same or similar program in 2020 unless the 2019 tour is postponed until 2020.



References

Rob Dickinson's International Steam website is not very up-to-date on Romania. His last update is 2015 and most reports are much earlier.

<http://www.internationalsteam.co.uk/europe.htm#Romania>

Viseu de Sus has its own website:

<http://www.cffviseu.com/en/home/>

Further research should reveal more webpages for the other lines. Let me know if you discover them first.

Apart from <https://www.romania-insider.com/steam-trains/> which inspired this trip the best site for information on the other Romanian ng lines is:

<http://www.beyondtheforest.com/Romania/CFR4.html>

Although Bern Seiler normally arranges special charters, his reports will give a flavour of what can be seen with day-to-day operations. Note that you may need to subscribe to read these reports:

https://www.farrail.com/pages/trip-reports-engl/Romanian-narrow-gauge-steam-Viseu_de_sus+Moldovita+Brad+Comandau-2017.html

and

https://www.farrail.com/pages/trip-reports-engl/Romanian-steam-Viseu_de_sus+Moldovita+Brad+Comandau-2016.html

You can read what an American tour operator was offering in 2018:

<http://www.traintrips.biz/2018-Tours/Narrow-Gauge-Steam-In-Romania-2018>

Please let me know of any other good reference sources you find.



Interested?

If you are interested and the proposed August 2019 dates work for you, please let me know immediately. If there is sufficient initial interest, I will ask for refundable deposits in early March. If you are interested but not completely sure, as long as there are enough initial deposits (4 or more), you should have until early May to decide if you wish to participate. However, if there is not sufficient firm interest by early March, this tour will be cancelled.



**John Raby,
Revised
22 February 2019**