

Churchfortress - Trail

From **Biertan/Birthälml**
to **Viscri/Deutsch-Weißkirch**

A Project of



Funded by the Department for Interethnic Relations of the General Secretariat of the Romanian Government through the Democratic Forum of Germans in Romania and the Democratic Forum of Germans in Sibiu.

It is distributed free of charge.

Content

The project	1
<i>Stage 1: From Biertan/Birthälml to Copşa Mare/Großkopisch</i>	4
<i>Stage 2: From Copşa Mare/Großkopisch to Nou Săsesc/Neudorf</i> 6	
<i>Stage 2: From Copşa Mare/Großkopisch to Mălâncrav/ Malmkrog</i>	8
<i>Stage 4: From Mălâncrav/Malmkrog to Stejărişu/Probstdorf</i>	10
<i>Stage 5: From Stejărişu/Probstdorf to Iacobeni/Jakobsdorf</i>	13
<i>Stage 6: From Iacobeni/Jakobsdorf to Movile/Hundertbücheln</i>	15
<i>Stage 7: From Movile/Hundertbücheln to Seliştat/Seligstadt</i>	17
<i>Stage 8: From Seliştat/Seligstadt to Bărcuţ/Bekokten</i>	19
<i>Stage 9: From Bărcuţ/Bekokten to Grânari/Nagymoha</i>	22
<i>Stage 10: From Grânari/Nagymoha to Viscri/Deutsch-Weikirch</i> 23	
Arrival and departure	26
FAQ Frequently Asked Questions:	27
About the fortified churches	29

The Project

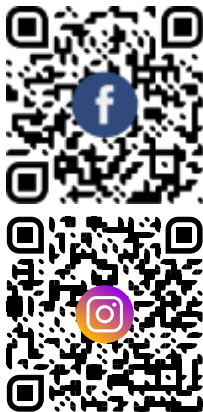
The “Church Fortress Trail” in the heart of Transylvania is a wonderful opportunity to explore rural Romania and the cultural history of the Saxons, as well as today's village life.

Over approx. 75 km, we roam through unique landscapes, discover a high level of biodiversity, discover small villages and centuries-old fortified churches, the latter being unparalleled worldwide in terms of frequency and diversity.

The path connects the two world's cultural heritage sites Viscri (ger. Weißkirch) and Biertan (ger. BIRTHÄLM) over 10 small stages and is suitable for both hiking and cycling. In the individual villages, we have the opportunity to get an authentic picture of the Transylvanian cultural landscape. In addition to information on the hiking route, the guide contains selected information about the villages and churches along the way.

There is also the option of finding out about local offers such as activities, products and accommodation options and booking them online in the respective village using the QR code. You can also find all villages with their offers at:

www.agramonia.com/village



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social media!

Biertan/Birthälm

Village History

The town of Biertan was founded in the middle of the 13th century. The village gained special importance as a market place at the end of the 14th century. For several centuries the place suffered from heavy indebtedness which resulted in the departure of many citizens and the decline of the community. Biertan was the seat of the bishopric of the Evangelical Church in Transylvania from 1572 to 1867. In 1993 the place and the fortified church were added to the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

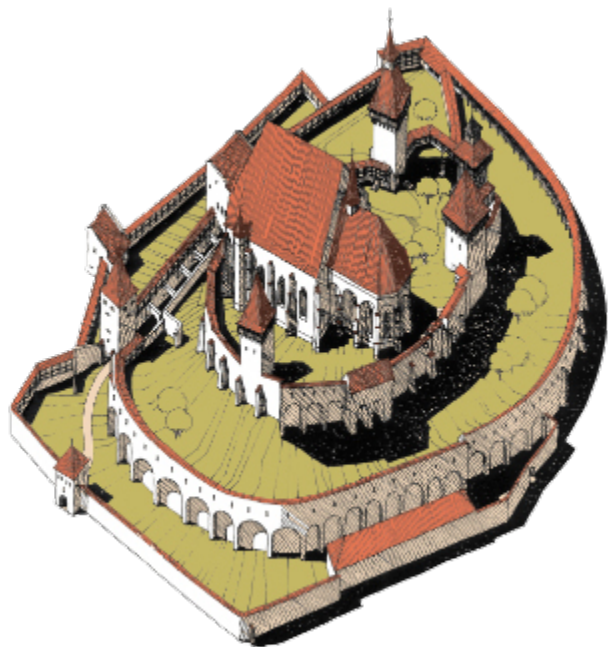
Fortified church

The late Gothic church, built in the heart of the settlement at the end of the 15th century, is one of the largest in all of

Transylvania and today still shows fragments of the early Gothic basilica that was previously located in this place. The fortified church which consists of three wall rings, six defense towers and several bastions is particularly impressive because of its extent.



**Scan this code and
discover offers from
Biertan**



Visitation:

Mai-Sept.

10:00-13:00 o'clock

14:00-19:00 o'clock

Parish office Biertan:

+40/269/842 660

April-Oct.

10:00-13:00 o'clock

14:00-17:00 o'clock

Mrs. Erna Weinrich:

+40/749/231 199

In winter only on request

Stage 1: **From Biertan/Birthälm to Copsa Mare/ Grosskopisch**

🕒 1h Walking time

We begin the hiking trail in Biertan at the fortified church and walk past the church on its right side to get to look at the hills cornering the city in the north-east. We then turn into the narrow alley on our left and keep walking in this direction. On our right we can already make out the large hills, which we are about to ascend. After a short while we reach a traffic? refuge. To our right we can make out a petite, black gate with a tall electrical tower. A blue and white colored mark next to an orange “T” attracts our attention. This is the distinguishing marker for our hiking trail and alongside this marker we continue hiking. After having climbed up the hill, we are rewarded with a beautiful view over Birthälm/Biertan and especially its church.

We follow the path to our left, which leads us up to the hill crest where we can now enjoy a picturesque view. The path leads us towards the woods, and we keep walking downhill until we arrive at the glen. Now we are standing at a crossroad. We turn right and walk on the street for a while. Shortly before we enter Grosskopisch/Copsa mount we exit the street and turn right. We are now following a steep and thin path until we reach Grosskopisch/Copsa mount. We follow the street and keep to the right. From here we can already make out the fortified church, which we then visit.

Copșa Mare/Großkopisch

History of the village

Copșa Mare, founded at the end of the 13th century, is located 2 km east of Biertan. The village developed particularly quickly at the beginning of the 14th century due to agriculture and wine growing. In 1605 Szeklers ravaged the place and plundered the church. The place is picturesquely situated in the valley and is still home to some private vineyards.

Fortified church

At the beginning of the 14th century a Gothic pillar basilica with three naves was built. When the church was made defensible at the end of the 15th century, the two side aisles were demolished. In addition, the church is getting extended to the east by a new choir which protrudes over the nave and has a fortified floor above. Also the facility will have a ring wall made of quarry stones

with loopholes. In 1605 the defense system could not withstand the attacks of the Szeklers and was taken. At the beginning of the 19th century parts of the church facility were damaged by earthquakes. In 1977 the fortified church was restored.



**Scan this code and
discover offers from Copșa
Mare**



Visitation:

Keys are available from
Mr. Sebastian Ghiuri

Phone:
+40/733/262 089

Stage 2: From Copșa Mare/Großkopisch to Noș Săsesc/Neudorf

🕒 3h Walking time

When leaving the church, we continue hiking up the street on our left for about 150 meters until we reach a little stream which we follow to leave the village. We make a right turn at the fork and start ascending the hill. Shortly after that we have to descend the hill again only to circle the old weeping willow trees and climb up the hill once more. On the top we can take a moment to enjoy the beautiful view over the grassland, which extends around us. Afterwards we walk down the hill and follow the steep path to our right. We come to another fork and keep walking straight on, leaving the picnic area behind us. In order to continue we have to cross a creek and keep hiking cross country. We can spot a pipe in the ground

and start heading towards it. We follow the path until we make it to the hill crest and get rewarded with a great view over the low valley. For a little while we hike next to the woods at the other side of the hill crest. We are now leaving the woods behind us and are heading towards the first visible houses of our next stop, Nou Săsesc/Nou Sasesc.

Nou Săsesc/Neudorf

History of the village

Nou Săsesc was first mentioned in 1305, and at that time was owned by the Apafi family just like Mălâncrav. Some sources assume that the original settlement was not in its current location before it was first mentioned but rather further upstream. In 1658 Tatar troops destroyed the place. In the 1930s and 1940s large natural gas deposits were discovered in the vicinity of the village. The exploitation continues into the present.

Fortified church

In the east above the village stands the Gothic hall church built in the 15th century. There is a square tower a short distance from the church. The current bell tower was built between 1828 and 1832.



**Scan this code and
discover offers from Nou
Săsesc**

Stage 2: From Nou Săsesc/Neudorf to Mălâncrav/Malmkrog

🕒 2h Walking time

We walk through Nou Săsesc/Nou Sasesc and cross the bridge on our left. While leaving the city we follow the path leading towards a large grassland on our left. After the grassland we arrive at the beginning of the woods. From now on we have to ascend an imposing hill. Having reached the top, we are once again starting to descend the hill all the while following the marked trail. In the distance we spot a big tree. Here we turn to the right and come across a barrier for animals, which we can easily open and close by hand. We pass the pit and start to ascend the hill. In the beginning it is not very steep but the hill continues to become steeper. From the summit we can easily spot Mălâncrav/Malmkrog, our next stop.

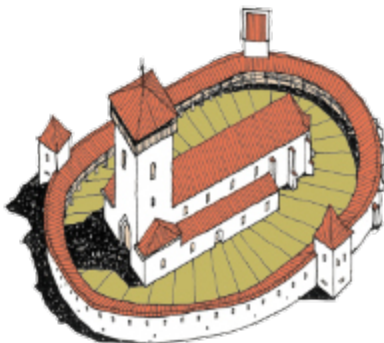
We descend the hill and arrive next to the fortified church. From here on we keep to the right and have to cross another barrier before we can walk straight to the city center.

Visitation:

Usually possible
between 10 and 18
o'clock

Key at family Linzing,
house Nr 307

Phone:
+40/269/448 696
or: +40/775/142 285



Mălâncrav/Malmkrog

History of the village

In 1305 Mălâncrav was mentioned for the first time. In contrast to most of the Saxon villages of Transylvania, the place is owned by the Hungarian noble family Apafi at this time and does not belong to the free royal ground. In the middle of the 18th century, Protestants and Catholics lived in a good neighborhood in Mălâncrav. After serfdom ended in 1865, the villagers demolished large parts of Mălâncrav and built new stone houses.

Fortified church

The Gothic basilica with a west tower was built in the 14th century. Signs of the former aristocracy can still be seen above the altar in the form of the Apafi coat of arms. Another special feature are

the frescoes in the church, which are considered to be the largest surviving wall paintings in Transylvania. From 1913 to 1914 the church was renovated. During that time the frescoes which until that were partially covered became exposed.



**Scan this code and
discover offers from
Mălâncrav**

Stage 4: From Mălâncrav/Malmkrog to Stejărișu/Probstdorf

🕒 3h Walking time

After visiting the church, we have to go down the stairs on our right in order to continue walking on the road leading us to the village center. We continue to the right and go up the valley to the village. Then we cross the bridge and walk on the village main road. Soon we can spot a small fountain and a unique weeping willow on our right. We arrive at a fork and walk over the bridge to our right. Now we follow this path until we arrive at the next fork.

Here we choose the path on our right and start ascending the small hill. We walk past an artificial pond and continue walking on this path until we reach the knoll. Having arrived at the top, we now leave the forest behind us and notice a little house surrounded by a large barn. We continue hiking straight on and walk past yet another fountain on our left. From now on we have to follow this path until we make it to the hill crest, which we can already make out in the distance. At the top of the hill we can take a moment to enjoy the beautiful view over the valley, which looms beneath us.

We walk past the valley and arrive at a grassland. In the distance we can already make out a forest. We start hiking towards this forest but turn to the left in order to walk on the right side of the forest. For a while we hike on this path and come across another valley on our left along

with a timber scaffolding holding a map of the region.

On one of the trees we can see a blue triangle. This sign will mark our hiking trail from now on. Therefore, we follow this sign until we arrive in Stejărișu/Stejarisu. The last part of our path is mostly flat and leads us downhill. On our way towards Stejărișu/Probstdorf we can enjoy the beautiful scenery around us until we have to descend some stairs and finally stand in the city center.

Stejărișu/Probstdorf

History of the village

Stejarisu is mentioned for the first time in 1223 under the name "terra Borthnik " although at that time it was not at the current location, but at a point further down the valley. Frequent floods are the reason for the resettlement of the community up the valley. Today Stejarisu is one of the few places in Transylvania where Saxons still live. The initiator of this hiking trail is also one of the founders of the restaurant and guthouse in the rectory in Stejarisu.

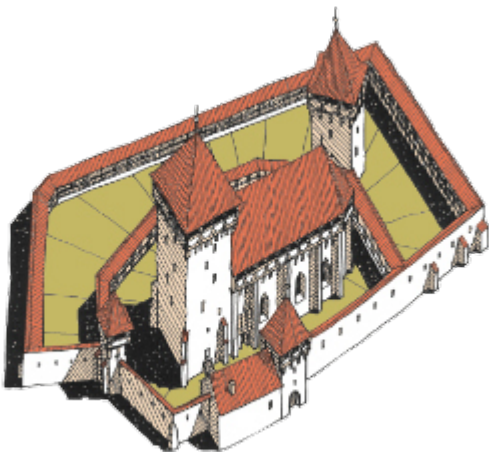


**Scan this code and
discover offers from
Stejarisu**

Fortified church

The Gothic hall church was built in the 14th century and made fortified about a century later. The church is partially provided with a double curtain wall and a defensive tower on the east side. The inner of the

two walls was demolished in 1860. The Stejarisu church fortress is one of the last in all of Transylvania to have an authentically used tower where the villagers still hang their bacon.



Visitation:

Keys are available at Michael Gierling

Phone: +40/743/093 963

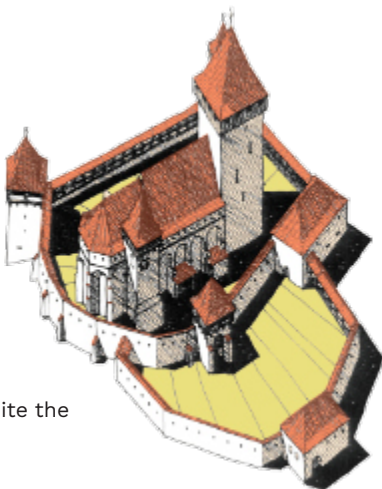
House number: 70

Stage 5: From Stejārisa/Probstdorf to Iacobeni/Jakobsdorf

🕒 1h Walking time

We leave the village on the asphalted main road down the valley and keep left twice, not crossing the bridge until we reach the forest road over which the animals also travel. Follow this path until you reach the comb, where you follow the markings and go straight down the valley. We cross the valley and turn left along the pasture fence, open the fence and keep to the right until we reach the old water trough. Here we walk slightly uphill to the left until we reach the hill, at which time we enter the forest.

In the forest we keep to the markings and as soon as we reach it we see Iacobeni. We enter the village on the easily recognizable dirt road and cross the first bridge on the right and climb up to the church castle on the left at the village store.



Visitation:

Key at Mr. Achim, opposite the village store

+40/741/928/545

Iacobenj/Jakobsdorf

History of the village

Iacobenj was first mentioned in 1309 as part of the Kosder chapter. Around 1500 Iacobenj became a free parish of the Schenker chair. Today the village is the largest in the region and the seat of the mayor's office. The place inspires with its liveliness.

Fortified church

The Gothic church was built in the 14th century. The hall was expanded in the following century by a late Gothic reticulated vault. At the beginning of the 16th century the church was made defensible and surrounded by a circular wall with double loopholes. Sacristy and paintings in the church do not correspond to the original appearance and were added later by adherents of new religious beliefs.



**Scan this code and
discover offers from
Iacobenj**

Stage 6: **From Iacobeni/Jakobsdorf to Movile/Hundertbücheln**

 2h Walking time

We go back along the small path, turn right at the bottom and cross one of the bridges we encounter, onto the asphalt road. Here we keep right and follow the long road until we leave the village and meet the country road. We cross this, as well as the Harbach after about 200 meters and walk up the next hill. Almost at the top, the path makes a slight left turn, which we follow and continue to the right between hills lings and forest.

After about 400 meters keep to the right at the wild hedges and walk uphill into the forest. In the forest we walk up to the comb following the markings, where we turn left on the ridge path and pass the game feeding station. We follow the path until we leave the forest and continue straight along the dirt road. Where the path forks after about 1 km, we keep left and walk uphill until we reach a fenced cow pasture on the hill, where we turn left and walk along the fence on the right. Here we stay following the hill until we see Movile, Selıştat on the right and Neustadt, as well as Netus, on the left.

As soon as the path forks, we turn right and follow the path straight ahead towards the village. We pass the cemetery on the left and follow the path into the village. When we reach the first village road, we turn right and follow the road until we reach the Orthodox Church, where we turn left. Cross the first bridge to the right and follow the road to the church.

Movile/Hundertbücheln

History of the village

The first German settlers settled in the area in the southern side valley of the Harbach River around 1180. Movile was first mentioned as a free part of the Schenker chair in 1355. The place owes its German name to the unique landscape that surrounds it, consisting of countless small hills, also called Bücheln in Saxon German. Today there are numerous initiatives in Movile which

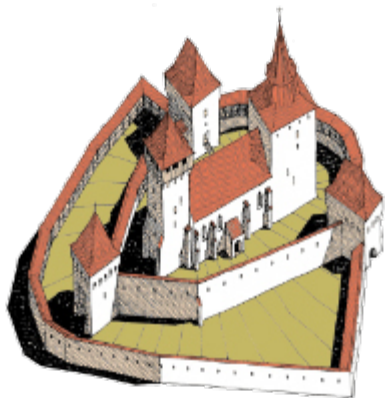
are mainly initiated by the association "Churchfortress e.V. Friends of Hundertbücheln - Movile".

Fortified church

In the 13th century a Romanesque basilica was built on the site of the current church. At the end of the 15th century the church gets expanded in the late Gothic style. Around the same time, the inner wall ring is being built, which is reinforced on the south-eastern side by the "port tower" which no longer exists today. In the 16th century parts of the complex were secured by another curtain wall. Today the association "Churchfortress e.V. Friends of Hundertbücheln - Movile" is particularly committed to the preservation and restoration of the fortified church.



**Scan this code and
discover offers from
Movile**

**Visitation:**

Keys are at Mrs.
Doina Atudorei

House Nr. 213

Phone:
+40/757/745 041

Stage 7:
**From Movice/Hundertbücheln
to Seljst/ Seligstadt**

⌚ 2h Walking time

We leave the church complex, walk down to the road by the stream, cross the stream turn and follow the main paved road straight. We leave the village on the paved road and turn right on the second dirt road after the village. We follow the dirt road until the second fork, where we go right following the markings and see the famous mobile hills. Here we walk straight on, crossing the hills, leaving them behind us and turning left at the next possibility and then right again following the markings.

We follow the dirt road until we reach a small stream in front of which there is a paddock on the left. We cross the brook and continue to follow the dirt road until we arrive in Seliștat. Here we follow the main road and reach the fortified church on the left.

Seliștat/Seligstadt

History of the village

Like the next village Barcut, Seliștat is mentioned for the first time in 1206, these villages are considered to be one of the first settlement areas of the Transylvanian Saxons. In its beginnings the place bears the Latin name “Felix locus” which

can be translated as “happy place”. The (cultural) history of the place can be experienced today in the Erich-Lukas-Museum. Seligstadt has also a youth exchange center, which is connected with the one in Barcut and accommodates both groups and individual tourists.

Fortified church

At the beginning of the 14th century the Gothic church was built on the plateau between the Hartibaciu and Alt valleys. Due to increased attacks by the Turks the gradual conversion of the church into a fortification began at the end of the 15th century. The exterior of the fortified church shows its original appearance to this day.



**Scan this code and
discover offers from
Seliștat**

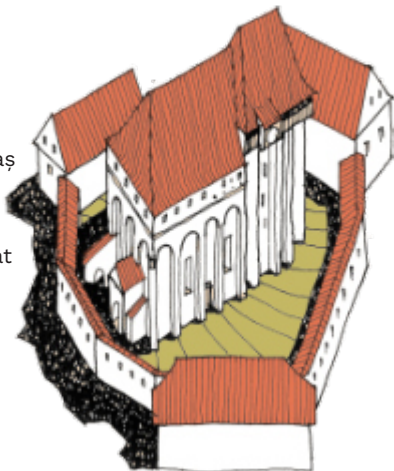
Visitation:

Parish office Făgăraș

Phone:
+40/268/211 994

Keys are available at
Mrs. Lucica Duicu

Phone:
+40/731/430 260



Stage 8:
**From Selistat/Seligstadt
to Bărcuț/Bekokten**

🕒 2h Walking time

We leave the fortified church in the direction of the main road, turn left onto it and walk to the fork in the road. Here we keep left and have the opportunity to visit the village museum "Lukas". Then we continue on the same road towards the exit of the village.

We stay on the paved road until we enter the forest and are at the height of an antenna. Here we turn left onto the forest path and follow it into the forest. We now follow the markings of the red dot and at the first

clearing we turn slightly right and continue walking on the ridge in the forest until we are out of the forest.

Here we continue to walk along the ridge and to the right we already see Viscri, we follow the metal bars and after about 700 meters we turn right until we reach the cemetery to the left past orchards. When we arrive at the main road we have the possibility to make a detour to the right to the church castle, but the actual path leads down the main road to the left.

Bărcuț/Bekokten



**Scan this code and
discover offers from
Bărcuț**

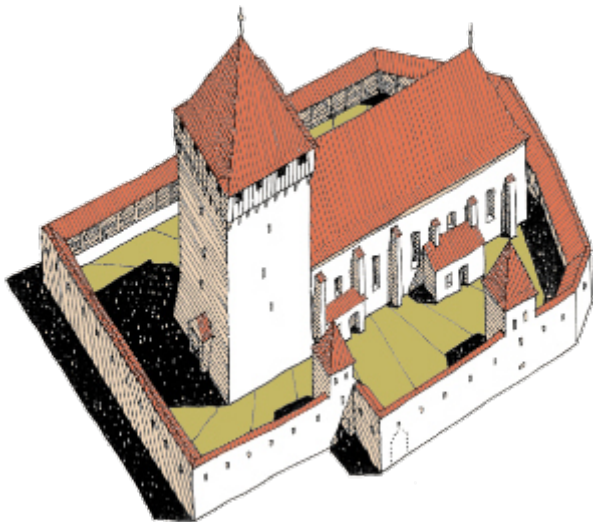
History of the village

In 1206 Barcut is mentioned in a document under the name “villa Barancuth”. In 1532 the place described as “Perkütten” is listed as the third largest municipality in the Schenker chair. Between the 18th and 19th centuries, the village was destroyed by several fires. Today Barcut is known as a city that offers a wide range of cultural and nature experience events especially for children and young people.

Fortified church

The fortified church still has elements of the original exemplar from the Middle Ages, including the bell tower and parts of the curtain wall. The old church was almost completely demolished in 1845 and a new one was built by 1846. It is

inaugurated in the following year. The bell tower with battlements, the curtain wall and parts of two towers that are located on the south side of the wall still bear witness to the original fortification.



Visitation:

Keys at Mrs. Cornelia Tache

Phone: +40/721/130 540

Contact person for registration:

Mrs. Irmgard Bădean

Phone: +40/721/405 851

Stage 9: From Bărcuț/Bekokten to Grânari/Nagymoha

🕒 2 h Walking time

We walk down the asphalt village road and after about 800 meters we turn right until we see the Orthodox Church, which we pass on the left. We walk up the road and after a short time we turn left. We follow the dirt road up into the hills following the signs. Shortly before we reach Grânari we meet a flock of sheep which is most likely accompanied by biting dogs, here we recommend either to make a wide arc to the right over the fields or to have a stick or something similar ready for defense.

We pass the shepherd and follow the path down to the village, at the entrance of the village we turn sharp left and pass the church and the village.

Grânari/Nagymoha

History of the village

The Hungarian village of Grânari was founded in 1289 on a branch to the left of the Valea Mare. The German village name “Mukkendorf” was first mentioned in 1461. Today the small village is a Hungarian exclave and has an Orthodox wooden church and a Hungarian Reformed church.



Scan this code and discover
offers from Grânari

Stage 10: From Grânari/Nagymoha to Viscri/Deutsch-Weißkirch

 4½ h Walking time

Continue along the path until you reach a hill, from where you follow the signs to the right until you reach the woods on the hilltop. Here we follow the markings straight ahead until we reach a crossroads in the forest, where we turn right and from here on we follow the white-red-white line markings.

We leave the forest and enter large pastures. On your right you will see a fence, along which you turn left and finally enter the next part of the forest. In the forest we follow the narrow gravel path and after a while we reach a small clearing, with forest on our left and wide meadows on our right, we go straight on into denser forest.

Leaving the forest, we come across a meadow which we cross to enter the next section of forest. After leaving it behind, we come to the road to Viscri and follow it until we discover the first houses of the village and finally we reach the Orthodox Church. Passing it, we reach the main road of the village. We take the next turn to the left, walk up the cobbled street and discover the fortified church on our right.



Visitation:

Mrs. Gerhild Gross,
Phone: +40/742/069 477

Opening hours:

Monday - Saturday
10:00-13:00 and 15:00-18:00
Sundays to registration

Viscri/Deutsch-Weißkirch

History of the village

The place is first mentioned in a document around 1400 in connection with cathedral interest payments from the Repser chapter. In 1638, large parts of the village were destroyed in a fire and rebuilt with the help of the surrounding communities. In 1999 the village center as well as the church fortress were added to the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Today there

are numerous projects in the village and it is one of the largest agritourism destinations in Transylvania.

Fortified church

In the 12th century Szekler built a small hall church on the site of today's church at the western end of the village. At the beginning of the 13th century the church was surrounded by an oval fortification. Additionally, the hall got extended and connected to the west tower. Work on the extension of the church fortress continued in the 18th century, when the second towerless wall was built.



**Scan this code and
discover offers from Viscri**

Arrival and departure

Arrival Biertan / BIRTHÄLM

Not far from Biertan is the town of Medias, which is also worth a visit.

You can take a cab from Medias, which costs about 80 lei.

There is also the possibility to go to the train station to Dumbrăveni and from here by foot or to hitchhike the ten kilometers.

Departure Viscri / Deutsch-Weißkirch

From here you can either hitchhike or take a cab to Reps/Rupea; the cab ride costs about 50 - 60 lei and is organized by Cruceiru Constatin +40 745 608 941.

Reps/Rupea has train and bus connections. Buses can be found at: autogari.ro and trains through the website: cfr.ro or directly at the train station.

FAQ

Frequently asked questions:

How long is the hiking trail?

The path extends over approx. 75 km, on which 11 villages can be discovered over 10 small stages. It is advisable to plan at least four days for the hike in order to get to know villages and people and to get a good impression of the region and its natural landscape. We recommend planning enough time.

Who is the trail suitable for?

Since the route is not technically demanding and the stages are short, it is suitable for young and old. The path over old village streets, on field and forest paths is not only suitable for hiking, but is also easy to do with an off-road bike. Quads and motorcycles are not allowed on the way and severe penalties must be expected if the rules are not observed.

What offers are there in the villages?

You can find out about the local offers using the QR code on each side of the village. It is important to reserve products and activities at least the day in advance so that the providers have time to provide them. It is also possible to book and reserve accommodation in the village using the code. Examples of activities would be a bread-making course or a horse-drawn carriage ride around the village.

How do you get to the fortified churches?

Only the church fortresses in Viscri and Biertan have continuous opening hours. In order to visit the other churches, it is best to consult the person responsible for the key. Normally a visit is possible relatively spontaneously, whereby a call a few hours in advance is sufficient. This guide gives you free entry to all of the church fortresses along the way.

Are there any places to eat on the way?

All villages along the way have a small shop and it is possible to get dinner at all guest houses. It is also possible to order local products from the village via the QR code and thus to eat locally.

About the fortified churches:

Since the Transylvanian Saxons were granted the territory of today's southern Transylvania by the Hungarian King Geza II in the 12th century, they were exposed to hostile attacks from the east. In order to protect the villagers against this danger, the churches were fortified over the centuries. The peculiarity of fortified churches was that, unlike medieval castles, they did not belong to the nobility, but served as a communal project for the defense and protection of the village community. The manifold fortifications of the fortified churches are still today an impressive testimony of that time.



**Download the
Track**



**Open the
Track**