

Maramures

The Joy on Two Wheels



Maramureș

Maramureș. North of Transylvania. Ask the elders there and they will say to you, "The world divides in two". Perhaps in more, in three, in four, in thirty, but basically that's that, the world is divided in two: between the good and the evil, between some who *something* and some who *something else*, between some who are and some who are not. Or, we say, between people who rejoice and people who cannot enjoy.

Of the few joys left in the world and still at hand, we here have chosen to enjoy fresh air. The Romanian villages in Maramureș, as they once were, and the tranquility which riding on greenways gives. That is the reason why we are asking you to join in our joy. We want to share it.

Maybe you have guessed, maybe you have not, but we are thinking about how good it is to ride, far and wide, on two wheels. Ride a bicycle. Ride that commonplace means of transportation which has become, for ever more people, an escape, a flight, an impetus, a healthy drug. A reason to pull air into you and shout from the top of your lungs, "God, how cool this is!" We want the bicycle, which in local speech is called *biță* or *țoagă* ("bike"), henceforth to be the key with which we open the gate to everything which is *fain* ("cool") in Maramureș.



photo: Ștefan Bela

Maramureș The Joy on Two Wheels



photo: Emil Pop

We want you to wander. To ride from village to village, over the hills, along the river, across the river, on narrow mountain tracks, over fir-tree roots and under juniper eaves, everywhere where there is wildlife and good people. In places so picturesque, that everything you have ever heard about Maramureș would, all of a sudden, take shape before your eyes. We want you to forget that there are convertibles and motorcycles, which would be infinitely trendier than a bicycle. Trendier they might be, yes. Better, not. Neither will allow you to luxuriate in the genuine secrets of a trip in the wild: the music of the forest, the grass reaching to your knees, the soft touch of the wind, the words which you exchange with friends on the fly, the glass of *horincă* (local brandy) you drink with local - just because you greeted one another on the road and you stopped to shake hands with him.



Therefore, should there be a philosophy of strolling in nature, then that stays in the spokes of the bicycle wheel. It is a philosophy of the greenhorn, who, having arrived in the country, discovers that riding a bicycle actually has something of the way of the world as reflected in peasants' thinking: neither too quickly, nor too slowly; you see all, hear all, and, which is more, you are at God's home, in the wood, on the hills, around the village.

Run away from speed, engines, and concrete. Look for green. Take as many stops as you feel like. Talk to the peasants. Enjoy the smell of hay. Ride your bicycle in the morning, in the afternoon and in the evening through the most spoken-of Romanian green realm: Maramureș!



photo: Unicorn Records





photo: Unicorn Records

Bicycle Trails

Fortunately, it will be easy to do all these. Easier now than before, for in the meantime, through the project ACCESS2MOUNTAIN, bicycle trails have been marked. Following the red C marking, the trails connect green areas, tourist attractions, and several river valleys in Historical Maramureş: *Mara*, *Cosău*, *Iza*, *Rona*, *Vişeu*, and *Vaser*. Area maps and information boards on the trails are there to assist tourists, so do not worry, you will not get lost even if you get off the road to pick up strawberries, blackberries, and mushrooms. Of which, since we've been brought that up, you'll find plenty if you go around there when their time is due.



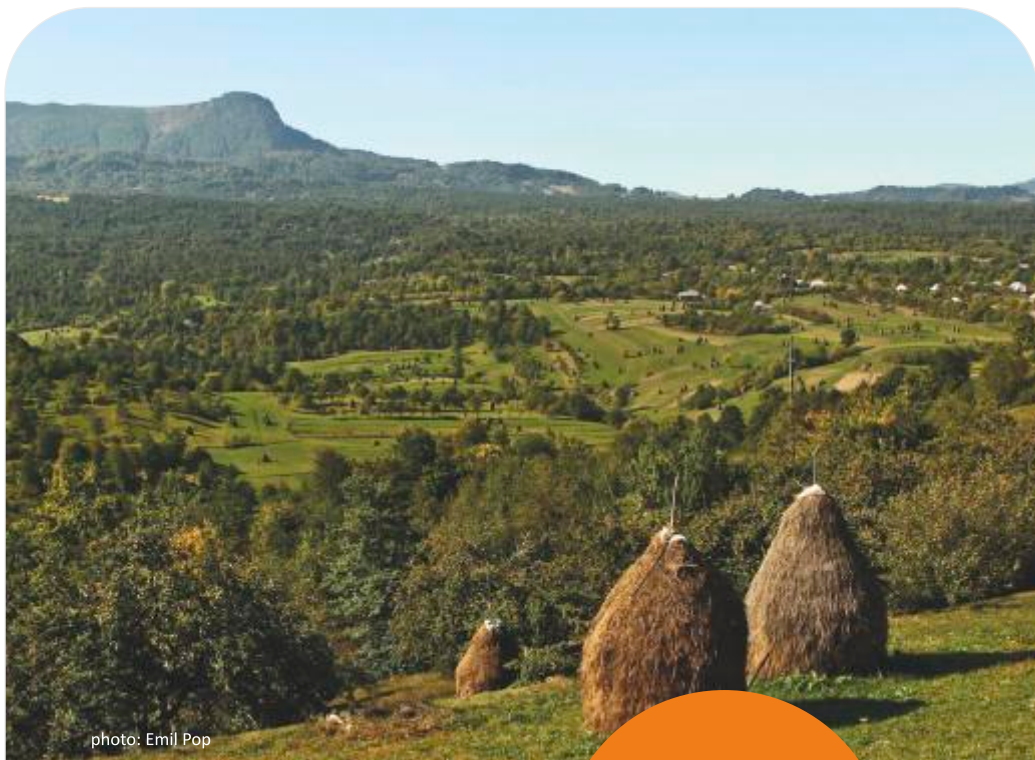


photo: Emil Pop

All Roads Lead to Breb

Many of the marked bicycle trails revolve around the village of Breb, just as the Moon revolves around the Earth. Why? you will wonder. What is Breb, what makes it that special?

We will answer that for you. It is a village stashed in a valley, watched over by *Creasta Cocoşului* ("Rooster's Crest") and surrounded by hills with agricultural terraces. A place where the village streets are still village streets and the wooden houses are still watched over by authentic gates and still lived in. A village with a new church, but also with an old church, a very old church, in fact, which has the most ancient wooden tower in Romania (dated 1530). A village which has been visited by special guests, such as Prince Charles, and which William Blacker describes so movingly in his book *Along the Enchanted Way: A Romanian Story*.

Because Breb is tortuous and has many crossroads, a circuit of the village, marked by a blue C (so as not to be mistaken for the routes marked by a red C showing the exits to the neighboring villages) will help you learn about some of its main attractions: preserved peasant households, houses restored by the Mihai Eminescu Trust (Charles' houses), traditional artisans' workshops, the old wooden church of the "Holy Archangels", etc.



photo: Unicorn Records



Legend

- City, Town
- Commune, Village
- Old wooden church, stone church
- UNESCO church
- Monastery
- Museum, Memorial house
- Crafts
- Water powered installation
- Accommodation
- Camping
- Protected area
- Sheepfold
- River
- Lake
- Forest
- Rocks
- Peak
- Spa
- Ski slope, hair lift, ski-st
- Spring
- Viewpoint
- Shelter
- Castle, Ruins
- Pass
- National or county road
- Conventional paved road
- Un paved, forestry, gravelled road
- Marked footpath
- Bike track
- Village circuit
- Info panel

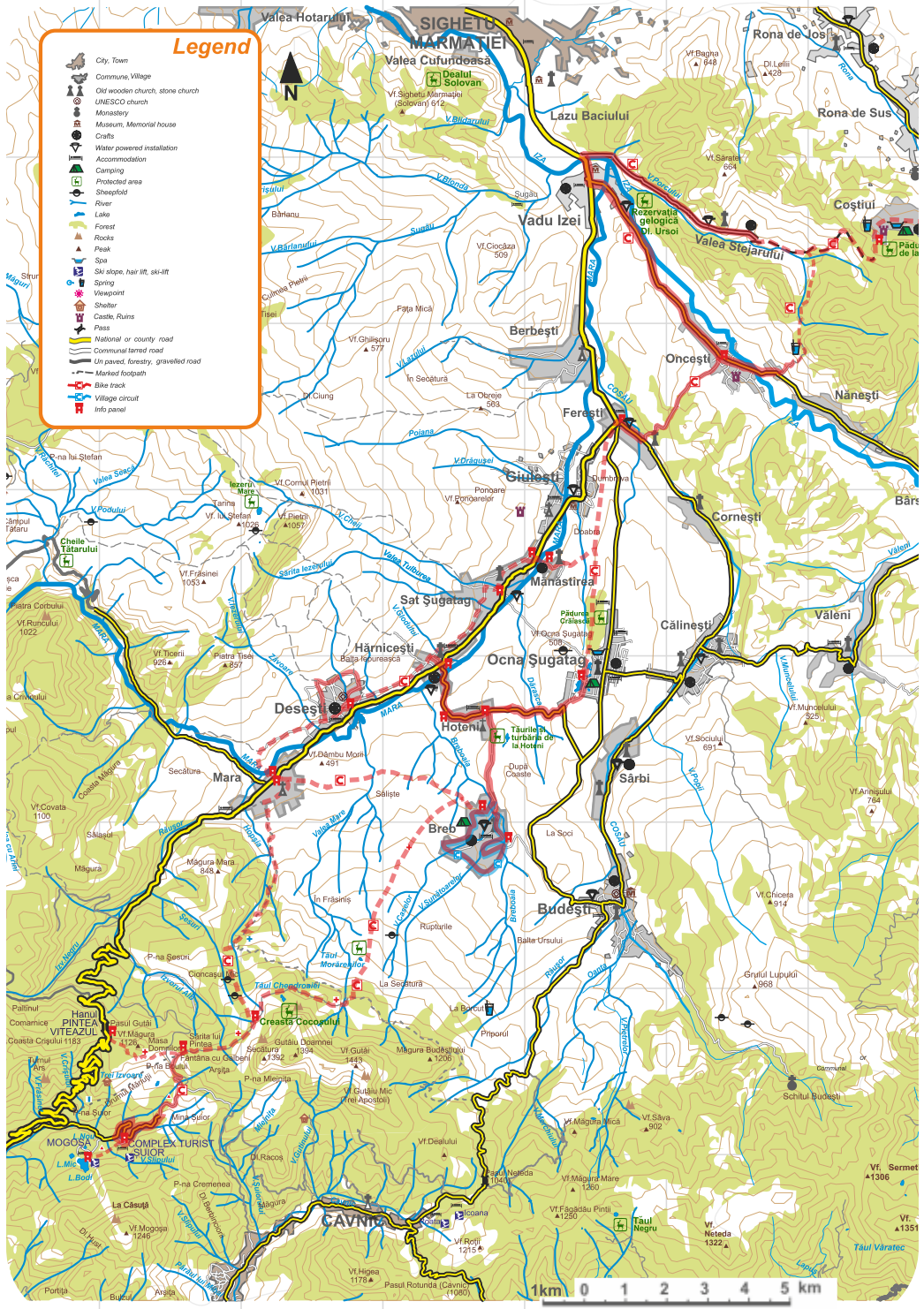


photo: The Village Hotel, Breb



The Easy Circuit

Breb - Hoteni - Breb



Distance: 11 km; duration: 1-2 hours; difficulty: low

This is a short trail, recommended for those who want an effortless ride. If exit from Breb is on a dirt road (with access only for trekkers, bikers, or carts) which takes you to the wooden church in Hoteni, asphalted county roads (unmarked, yet accessible and picturesque) have been chosen for the return to the village. In Hoteni, before reaching the church, one can stray from the Circuit to ride to the Floating Marshes (500 m off the marked road).

Highlights:

- The Wooden Church of the "Holy Archangels" in Hoteni (1790)
- *Tinoavele plutitoare* ("Floating Marshes") of Hoteni - protected natural area
- Traditional houses and wooden gates





The Medium Circuit

Breb - Mara - Desești -
Hărnicеști - Sat Șugatag -
Mănăstirea - Ocna Șugatag -
Hoteni - Breb

Distance: 27 km; duration: 5-7 hours; difficulty: medium

A circuit which is a tad more difficult than the previous one, laid north of Breb, addressing largely the Mara Valley, on a track (parallel to the national road) which follows the embankment of a former forestry railway (in use between 1910 and 1975).

Highlights:

- The wooden church of the “Holy Paraskeva” in Desești (UNESCO-monument, 18th century)
- The wooden churches of the “Nativity of the Virgin” in Hărnicеști (1679), of the “Holy Paraskeva” in Sat-Șugatag (1699), of the “Holy Archangels” in Mănăstirea (17th century), Hoteni (1790) and Breb (1621)
- *Pădurea Crăiasca* (“Crăiasca Forest”) - nature reserve
- *Lacul Gavrilă* (“Lake Gavrilă”) in Ocna Șugatag
- Traditional artisans' workshops in Breb, Desești and Mănăstirea





The Difficult Circuit

Breb - Creasta Cocosului ("Rooster's Crest") - Mara - Breb

Distance: 27/35 km; duration: 8-12 hours; difficulty: high

This circuit is recommended only to the trained cyclists; it has steeper slopes and rough sections. The trail lies south of the village of Breb, up high in the Gutâi Mountains, and reaches *Creasta Cocosului*. It provides two ways of access to the village of Mara: through pastures and on dirt roads on the one hand and, on the other hand, on asphalt roads, for those who want to experience the turns of the national road (DN18).

Highlights:

- *Tăul Morărenilor* ("The Millers' Pond") - nature reserve
- *Tăurile Chendroaiei* ("Chendroaia's Ponds")
- *Creasta Cocosului* ("Rooster's Crest") - nature reserve



photo: Adrian Teghii



At the Crossroads of Valleys

Vadu Izei - Valea Stejarului - Coștiui - Oncești - Vadu Izei

Distance: about 15 km; duration: 3-5 hours; difficulty: medium

We are moving (taking our bicycles with us) farther north in the county, at the confluence of the rivers *Mara* and *Iza*, in *Vadu Izei*, where begins this trail, which is special and extremely varied in terms of both difficulty level and landscapes.

Highlights:

- The wooden church of the "Holy Paraskeva" in Valea Stejarului (17th century)
- The traditional artisans' workshops in Vadu Izei and Valea Stejarului
- The Apaffi Castle and the stone churches in Coștiui
- The ruins of the mediaeval fortress in Oncești, on Dealul Cetățea ("Fortress Hill")
- The traditional water-powered installations in Vadu Izei
- Traditional houses and wooden gates

photo: Mirel Mihali

Rent a bike

If you have not brought your bike with you, you will find bicycles for rent in Baia Mare, in rural guesthouses, or at the Vișeu de Sus CFF Railway Station. And if you want to transport the bicycles over longer distances, you will be able to do so on the buses equipped with bicycle racks or the famous *Mocănița* narrow-gauge train.

Rent a bike

● Baia Mare

On Bike Shop (A2M bikes)

7 Podul Viilor St, Baia Mare

Tel: +40 722 771 267

Email: conceptfly@yahoo.com

Boneshaker Shop

13 Valea Roşie St, Baia Mare

Tel: +40 722 573 139

Email: info@boneshaker.ro

● Ocna Şugatag

Popasul din Deal Guesthouse

1D Unirii St, Ocna Şugatag

Tel: +40 751 944 353

Email: popasul@clicknet.ro

www.popasul.ro

● Vadu Izei

Dumbrava Minunată Guesthouse (A2M bikes)

534 Vadu Izei

Tel: +40 740 493 516

Email: maria_borlean@yahoo.com

www.dumbravamininunata.uv.ro

● Deseşti

Irina Guesthouse

259 Deseşti

Tel: +40 747 076 935

Email: pensiuneairinadesesti@yahoo.ro

www.pensiuneairina.weebly.com

● Breb

Babou Maramureş Campsite (A2M bikes)

149 Breb

Tel: +40 768 397 339

Email: info@baboumaramures.com

www.baboumaramures.com

The Village Hotel (A2M bikes)

349 Breb

Tel: +40 725 141 545

Email: duncan@somewheredifferent.com

www.somewheredifferent.com

Mărioara Guesthouse

346, Breb

Tel: +4766 271 254

Email: pensiuneamarioara@yahoo.com

www.marioara.ro

● Vişeu de Sus

CFF Vişeu de Sus (A2M bikes)

Cerbului 5 St, Vişeu de Sus

Tel: +40 744 686 716

Email: info@cffviseu.com

www.cffviseu.com

photo: Rada Pavel



photo: Unicorn Records

Transport your bike

Greenway Tour, Baia Mare

Tel: +40 741 773 683

Email: office@maramuresgreenways.ro

Outdoor Emotions, Baia Mare

Tel: +40 722 771 267

Email: conceptfly@yahoo.com

Lena&Alex Trans, Breb

Tel: +4766 271 254

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