

Saschiz - The Village of The Seven Churches

Saschiz - Keisd - Szász-Kézd



The name “Saschiz”, originates from the Hungarian *Szász-Kézd* which literally means “Saxon Protection”. “Keisd” is the German name of the village.

The “Kisder Kapitel” was first recorded in 1309 and is located in the south-east. corner of the county of Mures, on European Route 60, between Sighisoara and Brasov.

Many years ago, it is said, had you asked a Saxon from Saschiz the location of Saschiz he would have been so filled with joy at your question that he would forget to give you the location. He would instead answer, **“Saschiz, our beautiful village with the old fortified church and even older citadel needs to be seen once in your lifetime, you definitely must pay us a visit.”**

Saschiz is the main village in a commune of three including, Mihai Viteazu and Cloasterf. The commune is surrounded by orchards, vineyards, hop plantations, wildflower meadows, agricultural land and wooded hills. As you enter Saschiz on the road from Sighisoara, to the east is situated „Hangman’s Hill” and to the west the Citadel on “Citadel Hill”. Further along the road to the east is located the legendary “Hill of the Giants”. It is between these two hills, in the “Valley of the Sow”, that Saschiz is situated with its dominating central feature, adjoining the fortified church. The Bell Tower with its clock and statue of “Bogdan”.

Because of the unique diversity of flora and fauna in the Tarnava/Sighisoara region and the historically valuable buildings within it the area including Saschiz is part of the Natura 2000 initiative, the European Union’s main instrument for nature conservation.



The tourist information centre located near the church tower offers the visitor the chance to explore the region, meet the locals and try local products.

The Fortified Church of St Stefan

In Saschiz there once stood seven churches and chapels—hence the name “Village of the Seven Churches“ which in some cases was used instead. Apart from the fortified church the sites of five of these are known.

Today’s evangelical church, situated in the centre of the village, was built between 1493 and 1525 on the site of a Roman style church and a later Cistercian Gothic church. The church was dedicated to the Hungarian King, Stefan the Holy.

Like the other Transylvanian Fortified Churches, the church needed to play both a religious and defensive role in order to protect its congregation.

Built as a one-nave, fortified, late Gothic, hall-type church with separate tower and large choir section which is probably the largest of its kind in Transylvania. The church is surrounded by 23 arches supported by 22 pillars. Above these pillars is the defensive level. In the northern part of the choir is a small registry with two upper levels creating the registry tower.

In the interior there is an Austrian Baroque style altar from 1735. The pulpit is from 1709 while the baptistry is made up of three different parts. The bottom dates from 1400, the middle from 1709 and the upper section is from 1620. The organ is also in Baroque style and is one of the ten largest such organs in Transylvania. Built in 1788 the organ was extended in 1840 and 1878. The late Gothic stalls are still in good condition.

The defense and bell tower built of stone and brick is situated 10m north of the registry tower. The tower walls have a base thickness of 3 m and have a side length of 11.6 m. The tower is a replica of that in Sighisoara. Built in 1677 it was created as a defensive tower and was extended to house the bell. After many fires the tower roof was last fully restored in 1830. In the northwest upper level stands the wooden statue of “Bogdan“ who used to beat his drum every 15 minutes in unison with the clocks chiming.

The church and tower were surrounded by a defensive wall. It is known due to archaeological excavation that the original wall stood in the same place as today’s perimeter wall.

The church is today a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The church is open to the public.



The Peasant Citadel of Saschiz

Situated on Citadel Hill, with steep inclines on three sides, the Saxon fortification was probably built on the site of a former Roman fort which guarded the road between Rupea and Sighisoara.

The year 1347 is written on a stone on the north western side of the perimeter wall and probably signifies the beginning of construction or the reinforcement of the wall. Seven communities which belonged to the “Kisder Kapitel” built the Citadel. These included: Saschiz, Cloasterf, Archita, Daia, Crit and two villages which no longer exist, Diawaldia and Adamsdorf. Because of their efforts in constructing the citadel these communities gained the right to take refuge within it.

The citadel has an oval shape, is 92 m long and 45 m wide. The fortifications consisted of 6 towers. The Sentry Tower no longer stands but was connected to the Gate Tower by a narrow passage way. The Gate Tower was also called the Bacon Tower. These two towers and the other four, the Priest’s Tower, the Princess Tower, the Powder Tower and the School Tower, were connected by the defensive battlements of the wall. These battlements were supported by wooden pillars and brackets on the wall.

The primary wall was located on the eastern side of the Citadel, the only approach. Only parts of the foundations of this structure exist today.

Within the Citadel compound there were two fish ponds and a 60 m deep well from which an underground tunnel leads out of the Citadel. After the first World War approximately 10 m of the tunnel still existed. The citadel also hosted a chapel but it was converted into a youth hostel in 1927. According to an English traveller of 1868, Charles Bonner, “a winding track has been cut into the hill to allow carts to get to the citadel”.

The confidence of having the citadel enabled the local community to begin building the fortified church at a much later date than would be expected, after the Turks invaded the area’s principal city, Sibiu.

Legend has it that an old virgin who built the Citadel wished to be buried within the walls. It is said that if one wishes the Citadel “Good Night” then she will respond with an echo.

Today the site is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.





The village of Klosdorf (Ro. Cloașterf), is located 7km from Saschiz on E60, 2km are off road. It was first recorded in 1322 as “Villa Nikolai”. The name comes from the first church which existed in the village known as “Holy Nicholas”. “Klos” is short for “Nicholas” and “Dorf” means “village” in German. The construction of the fortified church started in 1521 and the quotation found on the wall, “1524 this building was finished by me Stephan Ungar” is the oldest known signature of a Master Builder containing both fore and surnames in Transylvania.

Contact Tourist Information Centre for further information on activities and tours:

- Visit the Saxon Citadel
- See the Saxon Fortified Church of St Stefan
- Visit the Orthodox Church of St Nicolae
- See local private courtyards
- Visit stana (summer sheepfold)
- Meet the Bees
- Experience traditional bread making
- Meet Local Producers and try their produce.

For more information on the local area, culture and produce please visit the tourist information centre.

Or alternatively please visit:

www.fundatia-adept.org
www.saschiz.ro

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