



# Târnava Mare Walking Trails

Tackle the whole long distance footpath or select sections.

Enjoy a truly memorable experience in the Târnava Mare area of Southeastern Transylvania

Find out more by contacting the Tourist Information Centre in Saschiz or by visiting the web site.

The Târnava Mare area of Southeastern Transylvania offers some of the finest walking country in Europe. It is one of the continent's most important natural and cultural landscapes, including some of Europe's finest pristine wildflower-rich grasslands – the result of centuries of good husbandry by local farming communities, who are still managing the land today in a way that has long protected the countryside and created a unique sense of place.

The landscape is a mosaic of ancient oak and beech forests, wildflower-rich meadows and pastures. Unspoiled villages centred on fortified churches lie peacefully in the valleys. Traditional farming is carried out in ecological balance with nature. This landscape supports an astonishingly rich wildlife of plants, birds, mammals and insects: for this reason it has been designated a Natura 2000 European protected area.

The walking trails described in this brochure are based wherever possible on existing cart tracks that have linked the villages in the area for centuries. From Biertan in the west to Viscri in the south east of the Tarnava Mare area, a long distance path provides a challenge for the more energetic, while other village to village trails provide further choice for walkers of all capabilities.



TARNAVA MARE

[www.DiscoverTarnavaMare.org](http://www.DiscoverTarnavaMare.org)

Orange Romania is a major sponsor of Fundatia ADEPT under their Corporate Social Responsibility Programme.

Each month from May to September, Orange staff visit the area to make direct contributions to this CSR project. In 2008, they helped way-mark the long distance trail from Biertan to Viscri. In 2009, they will consolidate this work and way-mark secondary trails.

The long distance path is way-marked with a vertical red line, the secondary trails with a blue triangle and circular walks with a yellow circle, all on white backgrounds.

Local custom offers free access to all responsible walkers to the woods, pastures and hay-meadows: but please remember, these are all important economic and cultural assets of the local communities.



The Author  
George 'Paddy' Deasy is an accomplished hill walker and writer who has been recording his epic wanderings for over four decades. He lives in Scotland. In 2008 he will assist in the updating of this first edition of the walking guide.

## Discover Târnava Mare

The walks in this guide have been selected to match the capabilities of an averagely fit person who has some previous walking or rambling experience. Most of the walking described is along good tracks or paths, with a few short pathless sections over pasturelands or through open woodland. Whilst there are uphill and downhill stretches along the way, the slopes are not mountainously steep.

The shortest of the walks described here can be completed comfortably in a couple of hours. The longest walks may take up to six hours, and these routes do demand some commitment and stamina.

The walks have been identified to form a long distance footpath from Biertan to Viscri with interconnecting routes between the villages to provide flexibility and variation.

Maps and route descriptions for each section of the walk are being developed and will be available as loose sheets from the Tourist Information Centre.

This initiative is the first activity bringing together all eight communes of the LEADER Local Action Group in the Târnava Mare area.

Walkers should either ensure they have the map-reading and navigational skills to follow and keep to the described routes, or they should consider employing the services of a guide (the Tourist Information Centre in Saschiz can arrange walking excursions and guides).

Hazards: beware the local sheepdogs. These animals are bred to defend flocks of sheep against the marauding wolves and bears which inhabit this part of Transylvania. The dogs are typically very aggressive, and may attack perceived intruders. Carry a stick with you; a long leafy branch can also be effective in distracting the dogs. If approaching a sheepfold, alert the shepherds – who are invariably friendly and hospitable – to your approach so that they have time to get their dogs under control. Avoidance of unpleasant encounters with dogs is another good reason for hiring a guide when walking in this area.

Also be alert for ticks, especially after walking in long grass: they can carry diseases or cause allergic reactions.

By contrast, bears and wolves are NOT a major hazard to walkers – they are careful to keep a safe distance between themselves and that most dangerous of species, *Homo Sapiens!*

## Flora - author Dr John Akeroyd

**Woodland:** hornbeam and oak, with some beech, dominate the woodlands. On dry southfacing slopes there are also a few woods of the rarer Downy Oak. These have an interesting ground flora, including several steppic species. Cornelian Cherry, a small tree of dry slopes, provides both a valued autumn fruit and the hard heavy wood of the traditional long sticks carried by shepherds.

**Grassland:** the abundant wildflower-rich meadows and pastures provide one of the greatest floral spectacles in Europe. The meadows are still mostly mown by scythe, giving hay for winter feed for the livestock. Plants characteristic of central Europe mingle with those more typical of Eurasian steppic or Mediterranean regions – this is known as ‘meadow-steppe’.

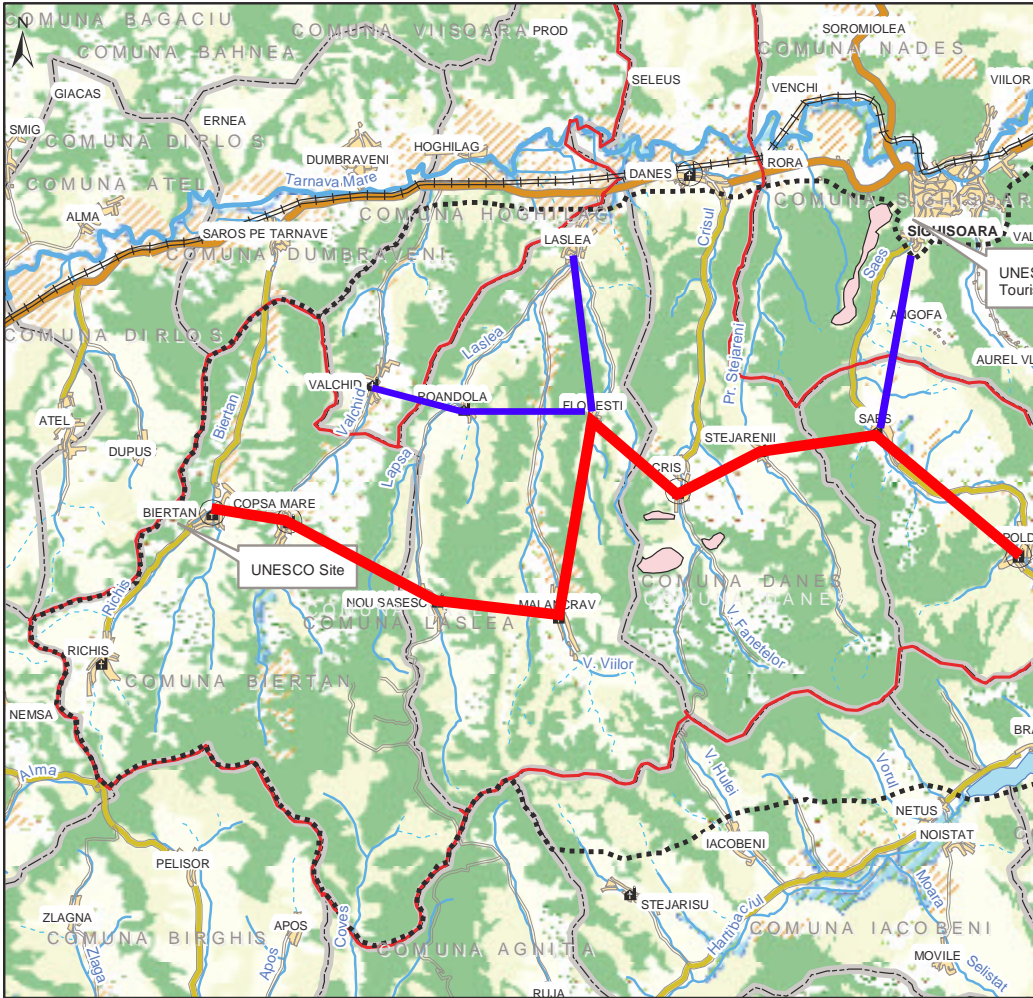
All of these grasslands are colourful from **May** onwards, when several orchids flower, for example Military Orchid, Green-winged Orchid and Three-toothed Orchid. Cowslips flower in massed profusion. On the steepest and driest slopes is a distinguished group of early flowers: Yellow Adonis, Leafless Iris, Montpellier Milk-vetch, Purple Mullein, Purple Viper's-grass and the first of the wild sages. By **June** the grasslands present a superb spectacle. The mix of colours derives from high species diversity, notably the varied suite of clovers, vetches, knapweeds and daisies. From a distance the massed cream heads of Dropwort, loose pink spikes of Sainfoin and blue splashes of Meadow Clary are particularly distinctive. At closer quarters the pale pink of Squinancywort, the yellow of Lady's Bedstraw and long-stalked crimson-and-bronze heads of Charterhouse Pink, are conspicuous. Extensive areas are pale yellow with Hay-rattle.

Through **July** the grasslands remain colourful, with splashes of blue Creeping Bellflower and Spiked Speedwell, purplish-pink knapweeds and Zigzag Clover, yellow Lady's Bedstraw and Agrimony, white Wild Carrot, and conspicuous clumps of two umbellifers, greenish-cream Field Eryngo and yellow Longleaf. In **August**, Wild Carrot colours many places white.

In **September**, a new group of flowers appears, for example blue Fringed Gentian on dry slopes. The most conspicuous early autumn flower is Meadow Saffron or Autumn Crocus, splashing slightly damp meadows with great patches of lilac. These often grow where orchids and cowslips flower in spring. By early **October**, while there are still a few flowers to be seen, autumn tints of the woods and scrub replace the summer colour.

**Medicinal plants** are plentiful and widely used in everyday life. St John's-wort is widely gathered to treat stomach upsets and diarrhoea; Yarrow or Milfoil to treat "the heart"; Sweet Flag treats digestive disorders and sore throats; Lady's Mantle treats diarrhoea; Centaury, a small pink-flowered gentian, once a popular medicinal herb in England and mentioned by Geoffrey Chaucer, is used as a general tonic and a stimulant to digestion. Hawthorn is gathered to alleviate high blood pressure and circulatory problems, Sage species as a general tonic and antiseptic. Small-leaved Lime is a herbal tonic, drunk as a tea. Heath Speedwell is a general tonic. Mistletoe lowers blood pressure and has anti-cancer properties.

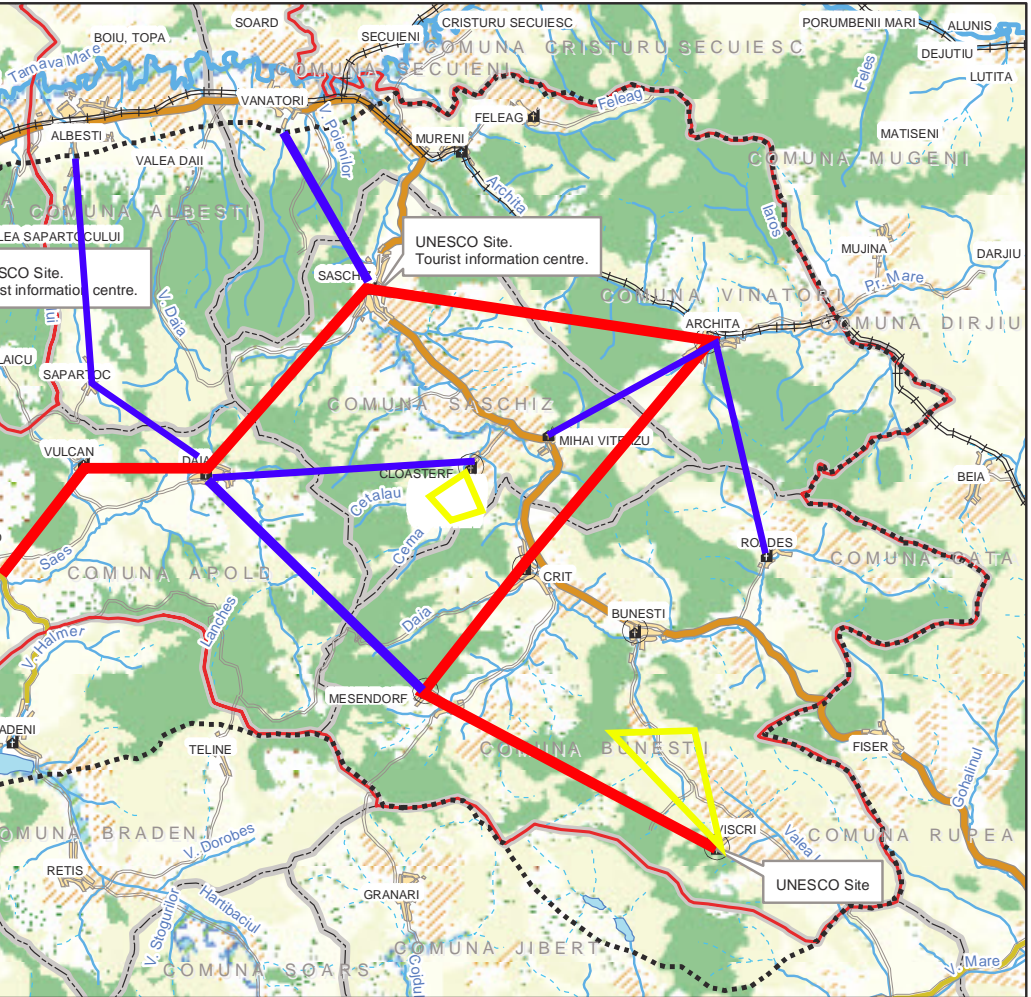
# Discover Târnava Mare












## Legenda / Legend

- Curs de apa temporar \ Temporary water course
- Curs de apa permanent \ Permanent water course
- Drum local \ Local road
- Drum judetean \ County road
- Drum national \ National road
- Limita administrativa \ Administrative boundary
- Zona Natura 2000 propusa / Proposed Nature 2000 area
- Zona LEADER / LEADER area
- Rezervatia naturala / Natural reservation
- Sat, oras / village, town
- Lac / Lake

The red line roughly shows the concept of a long distance footpath linking the villages from Biertan to Viscri. The blue lines show other secondary routes and the yellow denotes a circular walk. The actual footpaths follow traditional cart tracks and not the straight lines indicated below.



-  Biserica fortificata / Fortified church
-  Biserica / Church
-  Teren arabil / Arable land
-  Livezi si pasuni impadurite / Orchard and wood pastures
-  Pasune / Pastures
-  Padure / Broadleaf forest
-  Vegetatie arbustiva / Transitional woodland/scrub
-  Mlastina / Inland marshes
-  Zona umeda, lac / Water bodies

## Fauna

### Mammals

The area has some of the last remaining lowland populations of Wolf and Brown Bear to survive in Europe, as well as wild boar, Red Deer and the elusive Wild Cat. Roe Deer and Brown Hare are common. There are 12 bat species in the area, two of which are protected at European level.

### Birds - author *Milvus Group*

**The broadleaved woods** are home to many songbirds: common species such as Robin, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Nuthatch and Chaffinch, and more unusual birds such as Collared Flycatcher or Tree-creeper. In mature woodland one can see Stock Dove and many woodpeckers, including Greater Spotted, Middle Spotted, Green, Grey-headed, Lesser Spotted and Black Woodpecker. In daytime one may see the Ural Owl leave its roosting place; at night-time can be heard the churring song of Nightjar and the call of the Tawny Owl.

**In meadows** with sparse scrub Woodlarks breed. Skylarks sing over the meadows and pastures. Scrub offers nesting places for Red-backed Shrike, Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat, Corn Bunting, Yellowhammer and Thrush Nightingale, whose pleasant melodic song can be heard night and day in early summer. Stonechat and Whinchat are characteristic of the grasslands. From the end of **May**, the repeated rasping notes of Corncrake – a globally threatened species – can be heard in damper meadows. Quail can be heard even on the margins of cereal fields. Among birds of prey, you can frequently see the Common Buzzard and the Honey Buzzard, but note, this area has one of the highest densities of nesting pairs of Lesser-spotted Eagle in Europe. You may also see the Short-toed Eagle hunting reptiles.

**Wood-pasture** serves as a habitat for birds such as Hobby and Kestrel, and Scops Owl whose metronomic bell-like note can be heard on May and June nights and which nests in the hollows of older trees, as does the Hoopoe. Among characteristic songbirds of this habitat are Tree Pipit, Woodlark and the magnificent Golden Oriole. **Avenues of trees** planted along roads offer nesting sites for Kestrel and Hobby; also here one can see Lesser Grey and Great Grey Shrike, important protected birds of the area. Another striking bird of warm days is the colourful Bee-eater, which nests in colonies in clay and sand cliffs.

### Butterflies and Moths - author *Prof Laszlo Rakosy*

This is a spectacular area for butterflies. Of the 650 species of butterflies and moths in the area, over 200 are threatened and 12 protected under the EU Habitats Directive. **In pastureland**, Silver-studded Blue is frequent; in this species the males are blue and the females brown. But the greatest number of species are found in **hay-meadows**, and especially in the margins between meadow and scrub. "Fire butterflies" prefer yellow or white flowers as sources of nectar. In the damp meadows along streams and rivers Large Copper, a protected species, frequently occurs. Scarce Large Blue is found in **July**, feeding from the nectar of the cherry-coloured flowers of Greater Burnet in damp meadows. Other important species include Pallas's Fritillary, Marbled Fritillary, Scarce Fritillary and Marsh Fritillary. In **woodland glades** Clouded Apollo, rare and threatened in Central Europe, is common. In lighter parts of woods and in hazel scrub one finds the elegant and unmistakable Woodland Brown, strictly protected. Hawthorn and blackthorn bushes make up the larval diet of the handsome Scarce Swallowtail. **The woods** also contain many species of moth, including Oak Hawkmoth, as well as many species of underwing. Among False Acacia trees is often found Common Glider, a rare species protected in central Europe.

## Discover Târnava Mare

Many tourists already come to the area because of some 30 churches, of which 10 are fortified and four are UNESCO World Heritage Sites (Biertan, Saschiz, Sighișoara and Viscri).

In addition to walking, there are many more activities in the Târnava Mare area to experience:

- In most of the thirty villages in summer, you can see the evening procession of cows returning to their owners' homes for milking, generally about an hour before sunset.
- Traditional **bread making**. Combine this with a village walk and church visit while the bread is baking, so you can return to see the bread taken out of the oven.
- An **organic farming** training scheme for young people. Taste their organic milk, cheese, bread and vegetables.
- **Barrel making, blacksmith, charcoal burning, weaving and embroidery** demonstrations.
- **'Meet the Bees'**: wear a fully protective bee suit and discover how honey is produced. Taste and buy different types of honey.
- Horse and cart rides through wild flower meadows to see **sheep being hand milked** and cheese being made. Picnic lunch can be arranged.
- Visit the goats / **cheese making** and sample traditional cakes, jams and pickles.
- **Fresh produce markets** are held daily in Sighișoara, with a wide range of local produce on offer. Wednesday and Saturday are the busiest days. Rupea has a market every Friday.

In Saschiz, visit the citadel or walk around the village following marked trails. Visits to gardens and courtyards can be arranged.

In Viscri, stroll on a series of short walks on marked trails around the village (map available).

Traditional herbal tea, cakes and lunches can be arranged in some courtyards or as picnics.

Please respect the privacy of the people offering these activities and only visit by **pre-booking tours and visits through the Tourist Information Centre in Saschiz** (the availability of some is seasonal).

Alternatively plan to spend time in one of the villages and just observe country life.



ADEPT have published the guide book **The Historic Countryside of the Saxon Villages of Southern Transylvania** by John Akeroyd (2006) and a **1:50,000 Tourist Map of the Târnava Mare area..**

Both are available from the Tourist Information Centre, or at [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)



*The Târnava Mare area (85,000 ha, population 23,000 in 27 small villages) is the site of an innovative approach to sustainable development, integrating two EU programmes: Natura 2000 for nature conservation and LEADER for rural community development. This will ensure local benefit from and local support for nature conservation.*



*The Tourist Information Centre is located by the Clock Tower in Saschiz and has been established by ADEPT to help visitors book accommodation and a range of walking, cultural and food related activities. Local produce, maps and guide books are available*

**Fundația ADEPT** (ADEPT Foundation) is a charity working to protect this special countryside and give local people a secure future by promoting sustainable agriculture and the marketing of high quality food products, along with encouraging ancient crafts and skills, rural tourism and nature conservation.

**[www.fundatia-adept.org](http://www.fundatia-adept.org)**

**The Natura 2000 Network** is the European Union's main instrument for nature conservation, a network of designated sites across the EU in which vulnerable plant and animal species and important habitats must be protected. Târnava Mare was given Natura 2000 protection by the Romanian Ministry of Environment in 2007.

**LEADER** is an EU programme for rural community development, through which Local Action Groups open to all local people directly decide how development funding is spent. Târnava Mare is a pilot LEADER area in Romania.

The network of walking routes is the first community project being developed by the Local Action Group, with the active support of the councils of the Târnava Mare area. The network will help bring economic benefits to local people throughout the area.

The network is a work in progress. Please be part of the process. If you, the walkers and users of the network, have any comments, or wish to propose amendments or additions to walks or their descriptions, please send them to the email address below.

For further information visit: [www.discover tarnavamare.org](http://www.discover tarnavamare.org)

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