

ALBA IULIA



Alba Iulia - General Information

Location: Central Romania (County: Alba),
60 km from Sibiu
Size: 3.7 sq. miles (9.7 sq. kilometers)
Elevation: 710 - 790 ft. (222 - 247 meters)
Population: 67,000



City Highlights

The gentle climate and the richness of the soil made the area around Alba Iulia inhabitable since ancient times and established Alba as a leading wine growing region since 1st century AD. Northwest of Alba Iulia are the Apuseni Mountains and in the east the Transylvanian Plateau with its rolling hills and deep, wide valleys.

The City is situated at an old gold and salt commercial crossroads, into the perimeter formed by the rivers Ampoi and Sebes and the crests of the Apuseni Mountains that mount mildly and lithely towards the terrace of the river Mures and the Transylvanian Hills. Archeologists register rich vestiges of the material culture - dating since Neolithic, Bronze Era, Hallstatt, Latene and Middle Ages - undeniable proof of our continuity on these territories. There are settling traces dating from 106-107 b.C., when the existence of Dacian hovels was mentioned. The tribe of the Dacians from "the far-off Appulus" is mentioned in "Consolatio ad Liviam - Poetae latini minores", and the geographer Ptolemaios revealed in his "Geographical Guide" (written in the first half of the second century) the coordinates of the city: 49°15' longitude - 46° 41' latitude.

The Dacians were a people of Thracian origin, called "Dakoi" by the Greeks and "Daci" by the Romans. The Dacian civilisation was highly elaborated: they believed in the immortality of the soul and formed a society divided into two classes, the aristocrats ("pilleati", wearing a hat) and the proletarians ("capillati", bearing on head their long hair only). The Dacians knew how to harness horses, build roads and exploit mines of gold, silver, iron and salt in Transylvania. A

powerful Dacian kingdom was constituted in the IInd century BC, with the capital at Sarmisegetusa (cca. 100 km from their fortified city Apoulon, in our days Alba Iulia)

The wealth of Dacia and its increasing military power incited the Romans to attack the Dacians. Emperor Trajan (98-117) subdued the Dacians after two wars (101-102 and 105-107) commemorated by the famous Trajan's column erected in 113 in the Trajan's forum (the largest) in Rome. Dacia became a Roman province, ruled by a praetorian governor, an occupation army called "Legio XIII Gemina" and auxiliary troops. The Roman colonists, veterans and the local Dacians built fortresses, roads and cities: Ulpia Trajana and Apulum. Apulum was built on the crossroads of the trade roads of gold and salt and served as the largest military and economic center of our territory during the Roman occupation. Temples, mosaics, thermae and statues, amphitheatres, the governor's palace "Daciarum Trium" – all rendered Apulum as a miniature copy of the Mother Rome. In 129, under the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161-180), Dacia was divided into two provinces, Upper- and Lower-Dacia. Under Antonin (138-161), there were three provinces, Dacia Apulensis, Dacia Porolissensis and Dacia Malvensis. Two Roman cities, a "municipia" and a "colonia" developed near the Roman camps of Apulum into the fortress, but also nearby the Mures river, in Partos. The settlements became two of the most wealthy and important places of Dacia known in the IIIrd century as Chrysopolis (the City of Gold), outstanding in diversity and the novelty of the local civilization.



Apulum Castrum, Porta "Principalis Dextra" (archaeological site, in our days)

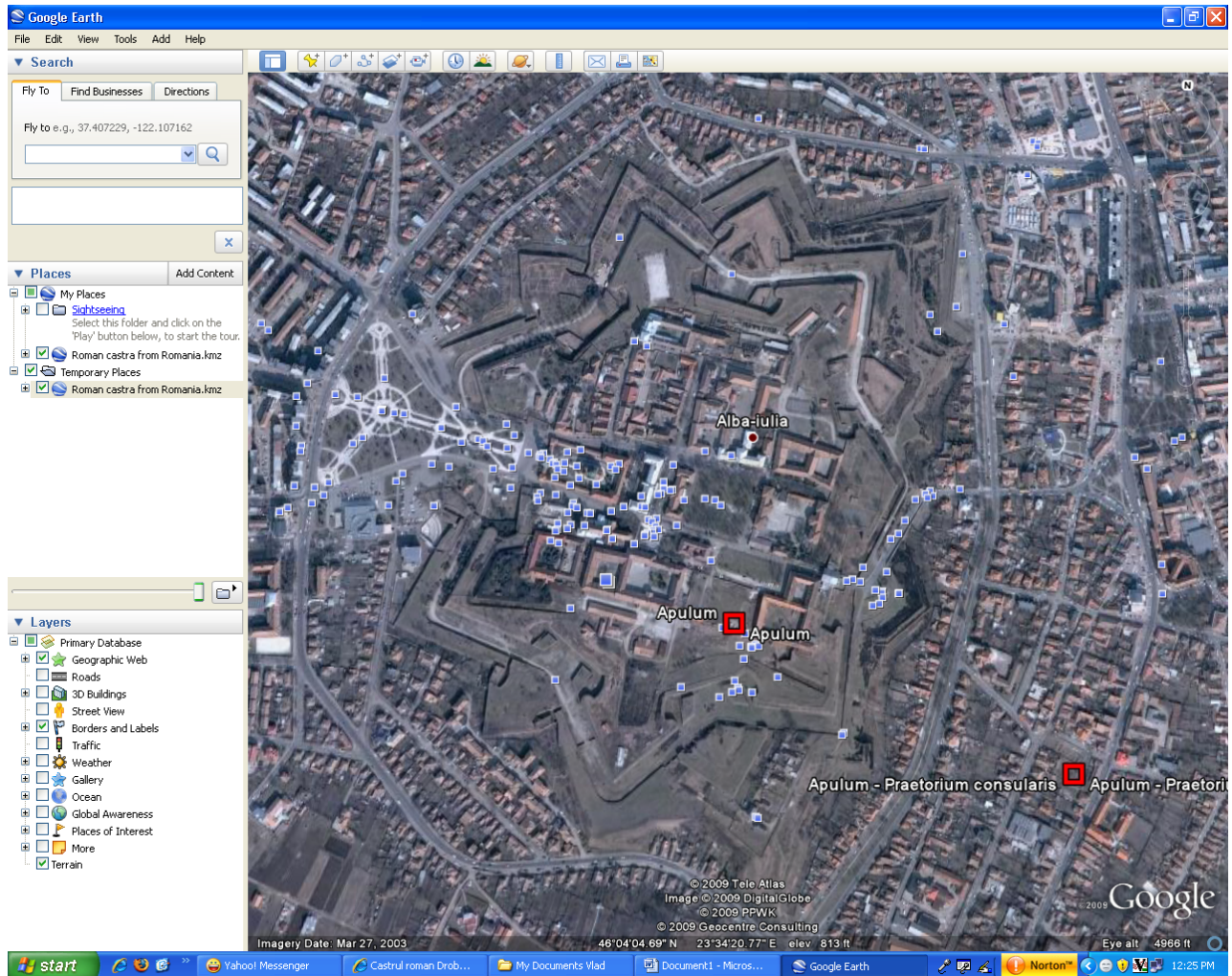


Apulum Castrum, Southern Gate, *Principalis Dextra*, reconstruction based on the architectural research



Apulum Castrum general view

In 256, the Goths crossed the Carpathian Mountains and occupied Dacia. The Romans kept only two fortresses, which were left in 275, when Emperor Aurelian (270-275) relocated the Roman colonists to Moesia, in the south of Danube. However, there were many attempts of the Roman army corps at the North of Danube, trying to re-conquer this territory and to keep the invaders far from the Danube border.



In this period, many colonists from the Roman Empire and veterans of the Roman legions lived, worked and transferred their knowledge, language and customs to the local population (Dacians). This civilization, together with the Christian religion, remained over the centuries and gave the main features of the Romanians.

“Alba” means “white” and comes from the time when the Slavs called the settlement “Belgrade” (“White Castle”). Iulia comes from the name of Romanian Prince Gelu (Iulius), who ruled over the land around Alba Iulia during the 10th century. The Habsburgs tried to impose the name *Alba Carolina* (Karlsburg) in honor of the emperor Charles VI. In 1918, the town became once again Alba Iulia.

The Roman Catholic Cathedral



In September 2009, the Cathedral will be 1000 years old (the oldest in Romania). Re-built in 1247-1291 (in the same time as Notre Dame de Paris) and in Ioan de Hunedoara' time (around 1450), it is considered to be an important monument of early Transylvanian medieval architecture. It harmoniously combines Gothic and Roman style elements. The establishment was meant to be a three Trinitarian three semicircular absides transept. Undoubtedly, the most important early Transylvanian Renaissance building is "Lazo" Chapel situated on the northern side of the Cathedral. The Chapel has a late gothic pointed arch. The keystone is decorated with blazons of some Transylvanian personalities. Inside the cathedral there is the sarcophagus of Ioan Corvin of Hunedoara (Hunyadi) (1387-1456), famous Romanian General (with important victories against the Turk armies), Prince (Voyvode) of Transylvania (1441-1456) and Regent of Hungary (1446-1452). His son, Matei (Matheus, Mathias) Corvin was one of the most prominent Kings of Hungary (1458-1490). In the Cathedral, next to his thumb, there are those of his elder son, Ladislau (situated in the lateral southern nave), of Queen Isabella and of son, Ioan Sigismund (situated in the opposite lateral nave). The impressive Organ of the Cathedral was installed in 1877.

The Roman Catholic Bishop House is situated in the South West of the fortress and in 17th -19th centuries. It was been constantly modified during ages. The building was a harmonious dovetailing of late Renaissance and baroque elements, remarkable sobriety.



The unification of Walachia, Transylvania and Moldavia under Michael The Brave

An Episcopal citadel and an important political, military and cultural center, Alba Iulia reached its peak between 1542-1690, serving as the capital of the independent Principality of Transylvania and the residence of the Transylvanian princes. In 1599, Mihai Viteazul (*Michael the Brave*) achieved here for a brief period of time the unification of the three main provinces of Romania: Walachia, Transylvania, and Moldavia.

Michael the Brave (Romanian: *Mihai Viteazul*, Hungarian: *Vitéz Mihály*; 1558-1601) was the Prince of Wallachia (1593-1601), of Transylvania (1599-1600), and of Moldavia (1600), the three Romanian principalities (former Dacia) that he united under his rule.

He was born in the noble family named Pătrașcu (related with Bassarab, Wallachian dynasty). His reign began in late 1593. Only two years later, Michael started the war against the Turks (Ottomans), in which the Prince won the Battle of Călugăreni, one of the most important victories of the Europeans (Christians) against the Turks. The war continued, Michael having the support of the Emperor Rudolf II of Austria and the Prince Sigismund Báthory of Transylvania, until a peace finally emerged in January 1597. In 1599, Michael won the Battle of Șelimbăr, entered victoriously in Alba Iulia and become the Prince of Transylvania. A few months later, Michael's army entered in Moldavia, reached its capital at the time, Suceava and Michael was declared also Prince of Moldavia.



Due to inadequate support from his allies, intrigues of some important nobles of Transylvania and even of his boyars (nobles), Michael was not able to keep the control of all three provinces for more than a year. The Austrian General Giorgio Basta, coming as an allied to defeat (at Gurăslău) an uprising by the Hungarian nobility, ordered the assassination of Michael, which took place in the night of 9 August 1601 (it seems, due to jealousy on Michael brave and fame). Michael The Brave is regarded as one of Romania's greatest national heroes.

Princely Palace (Michael the Brave's residence)



The building used to be Michael the Brave's residence during the first political unification of the Romanians was strongly damaged by the Ottoman and Tatar invasions. The foreign chronicles picture it as an extremely luxurious building, richly adorned, with frescos, marble stairs. The building was placed next to two guard ranges. It was built almost hundred years before Michael's reign. Right after Hungary had been conquered by the Ottoman Empire (1526), it became residence for Ioan Zapolya's wife, Isabella. There had been made some adornment improvements during the rule of princes Gabriel Bethlen and Gheorghe Rakotzi II. Since 1700, the building changed its destination and was used as a barracks for Habsburg Army, and therefore, the inside was adapted. The notifications led to the destruction or covering of some important statue groups representing scenes from The Bible.



Michael the Brave's equestrian statue is placed in front of the Princely Palace. It has been realized out of bronze by the sculptor Oscar Han in 1968. Behind the equestrian statue there is a bas-relief sculptured by Horia Flamandu in 1975, representing Michael the Brave while receiving homage from the three Romanian countries. The bas-relief is 6,20m. long and 3m. broad, and at the base it has an carved plaque saying: *"It is here, in Alba Iulia where, in the year 1600, as a symbol of the historical right of the Romanian people to Unity, Liberty and Independence, trough the fight and the will of the people, trough the bravery and the genius of the great prince Michael the Brave, the great event of the first political unification of the three Romanian Principalities: Transylvania, Moldavia and Walachia."*

The Alba Iulia Fortress



The City of Alba Iulia is one of the few localities in Romania that have been fated to gain an important position in the history of human settlements and fortifications, from pre-history to modern ages.

The bulwark fortress of Alba Iulia has been set up between 1714 and 1738 and it is considered to be the most representative of Vauban type in Romania. The fortress was designed by the Italian architect Giovanni Morando Visconti.

He was guided by the general Stefan de Steinville and later by general Weiss. The work at the fortification of Alba Iulia has begun on the 4th of November 1715, when the foundation of Carol bulwark, dedicated to the emperor and situated on the Northern side was made. Weiss named his project, the fortification, "*Alba Iulia's major fortress in the Principality of Transylvania*". Between the 18th and 19th centuries the fortress has served as the military center of Transylvania and also as general armament dump. The perimeter of the walls is about 12 km; 20.000 serves built the walls.



The fortress has seven bulwarks (Eugene of Savoia, St. Stefan, The Trinity, St. Michael, St. Carol, St. Capistrano and St. Elisabeth) that make it a star shaped one, common to Vauban fortresses. The biggest bulwark is the Trinity one, measuring 116 and 135 m and being decorated in the center with a blazon crowned by outlines and acanthus leaves. The walls were made of bricks, quarry stones, or out of the Roman ruins, measuring 3 m at the base and 1.20 m at the top, being sustained by abutments in order to neutralize the earth's force. The six gates of the bulwark fortress have been a model for the 18th century Transylvanian

architecture. They are looked upon as extremely valuable samples of early baroque.

The planning and the building of the fortress led to the modification of the street texture; that is why the six gates had been placed three towards the town and the other three towards the western drill field. All the roads and the fitted gates were functional. The fortress is outstanding both for its decorative elements and for the beauty of its six gates, unique in European military architecture. Doubtless the artists had been inspired by ancient mythology. Sculptors like Johann Koning, Johan Vischer and Giuseppe Tencalla had made the decorations. On the whole, the fortress stands out as the most important baroque figurative plastic pile.

Alba Iulia Fortress - The Gates

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The First Gate



It is situated at the base of the fortress and has been built out of stones carved like a three gates triumphal arch. The gate has the Austrian blazon (the two headed eagle, the sword and the scepter) in the middle, between the statues of the god Mars and the statues of the goddess Venus. The inside is carved with antique mythology bas-relief, representing legendary hero Hercules fighting Nemeea lion and Perseus holding Medusa's cut head.

The Third Gate and Horia's Cell

After the second gate, out of which only the lateral pylons are preserved, next follows the most important and most grandiose of the gates, the third gate. It actually represents the entrance to the fortress. It is situated on the curtain, half way between the St. Eugene bulwark and St. Capistrano one. 4 pillars and 8 pilasters hold the archway and the vault of the three gates. Richly adorned, it is considered representative for Transylvanian baroque sculpture.

The front stands out for the Carol the sixth's equestrian statue. Two ottoman prisoners, terrified under the hoofs of the victorious emperor's horse, are sculptured on the pedestals of the statue.

The Austrian blazon with the two-headed eagle, with Transylvanian blazon on its chest is carved on cornice. The bas-relief on the left side represents the allegory of the glorious general receiving Alba Iulia's scale model after his brave victory over the ottomans. Inside the pedestal of Carol's statue there is a small room that, in 1785, January 2, had served as cell for Horea the main leader of the great serves revolt from 1784-1785.



The peasant revolt led by Horea, Closca and Crisan, executed on February 28, 1785 on the Pitchfork Hill (*Dealul Furcii*) turned the city into a symbol of the fight for justice and freedom. In 1937, a stone plaque with the carving: "*This where he had suffered with bravery, determination and trusting the future of Romanian people 27th of December 1784 - 28 of February 1785*". In memory of Horea, Closca and Crisan, the martyrs of the serves revolt from 1784-1785, a stone obelisk was initiated by the society "Astra" and built by local voluntary contribution, to mark the place of their tragically end.

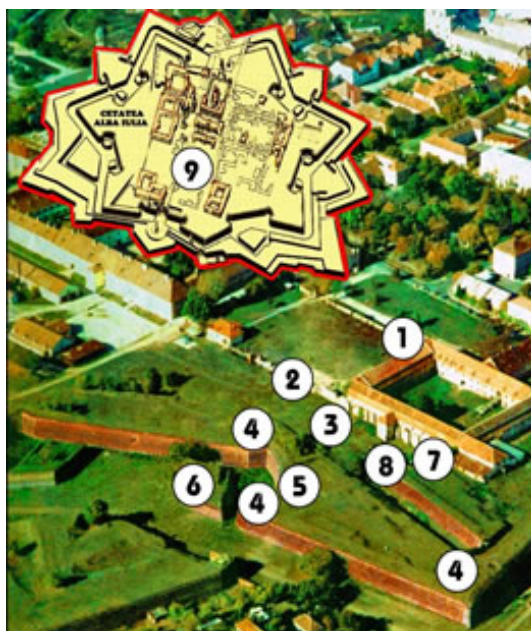
On the side there are four statues, symbolizing the great virtues temperance, wisdom, welfare and force.

The Fourth Gate

The Fourth Gate, also in baroque style is situated next to the two cathedrals. It is one of the entrances to the Roman Plateau. The building is the common one, and was probably used as shelter for the guards; it also contains a semi cylindrical vault on two Atlantis, resembling the one at the Third Gate; the elementary Austrian blazon; bas-reliefs of trophies, canons and Carol the sixth's flags.

THE ROUTE OF THE THREE FORTIFICATIONS

Important tourist objective in Europe, the Route of the Three Fortifications offers the visitors the opportunity of a journey in time through two millennia among the vestiges of three fortifications belonging to three different periods, successively constructed on the same location each new fortress including the former one: **The Roman Camp** (106 AD), **The Medieval Fortress** (16th-17th centuries) and **Vauban Fortification** (the beginning of the 18th century). By developing the route, areas that were formerly forbidden to public access have entered into tourist circuit the benefits being not limited only to local or national sphere but reflected on entire Europe. This is a unique place in Europe where one can notice and study the historical and architectonic evolution of such diverse influences and populations on a relatively limited area. Route of the Three Fortifications Project has been initiated on the basis of the agreement between the City Hall of Alba Iulia and the United Nations Development Programme through Beautiful Romania.



In its final stage the Route of Three Fortifications consisted of: The Southern Gate of the Roman camp, Bethlen Bulwark of the Medieval Fortress and St. Eugene Bulwark of the Vauban fortress. On the route have been set up information areas, exhibition areas, a military camp with medieval specificity, routes and visiting and resting points and the Artillery platform at the bases of St. Eugene Bulwark. Here each week one can attend cannon shootings and admire the Guard parade. Further more, due to the development of the area there have been discovered unknown spaces within the bulwarks such as the run tunnel that connects the lower and upper sides of St. Eugene Bulwark. This tunnel was entirely restored. Also it has been set up a beautiful Weapons Room in one of the Watch Rooms of the Medieval fortress.

The route, even if it has lost some of its components from objective reasons, remains for Romania and Europe “a history book a regained fortress where the visitor can pass through two millennia of history within a relatively limited area.

The Bathyaneum Library

The Bathyaneum library (1) is a late church, built in baroque style. In 1780, Ignatiu Bathyany, bishop of Transylvania and a passionate bibliophile, transformed the inside of the establishment to fit it for the present use, that of library.



1



2

It is famous all over the world for its ample series of manuscripts, incunabula and rare books, such as Codex Aureus (9th century), also known as the Lorsch Gospel, containing Marcu and Matei Gospel, David’s Psalter, Codex Burgundus (15th century), Biblia Sacra (13th century), the Pentateuch from Orastie (1850), Serba Cantacuzino’s Bible, the New testament from Belgrade (1648).The first astronomical observatory was founded here in 1792.

Apor Palace (2)

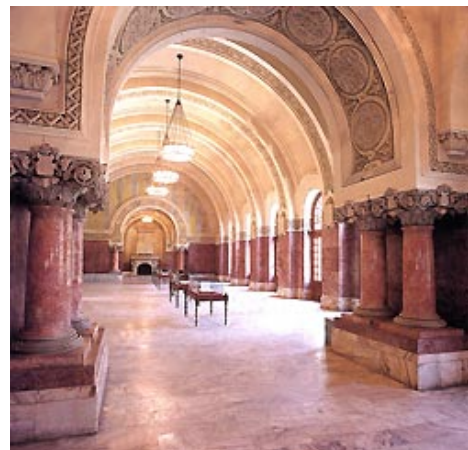
The palace is situated nearby the Bathyaneum Library. It belonged to the prince Apor, and had been built in the second half of the 17th century. At the beginning of the 18th century it was the residence of the Austrian army leader, prince Steinville. In the same historically period, the building had been added some excellent interior baroque decorated portals.

The National Unification Museum

It was here that on December 1st 1918 the province of Transylvania announced its unification with Romania. In 1922, Prince Ferdinand was crowned King of Romania, in an act which mirrored the unification achieved more than four centuries earlier by Mihai Viteazul.

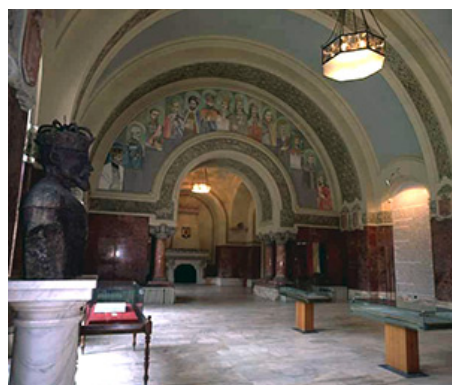
The National Museum of Unification, located in the Babylon Building, was originally built for military purposes between 1851 and 1853 and transformed into a museum in 1887. The museum features a prehistory section, a Dacian-Roman and feudal sections, and sections for the great battles with the Turks, the Revolution of 1848, the Unification of the Principalities in 1859, World War I, the Union of Transylvania with Romania.

Its two floors and over 100 rooms host the permanent exhibition, the warehouse, the library and the restorations laboratories. The **Unification Hall**, also belonging to the National Museum, was opened in 1895 as Military Casino of the Garrison in Alba Iulia, but its distinctive historical significance is given by the fact that it hosted, on 1 December 1918, the rally of the 1228 Romanian delegates from Transylvania, who decided the province's union with Romania.



The Unification Hall

Symbolic building, sealed on the consciousness of Romanian people as the place of one of the most important events of the national history, the Unification from the 1st of December 1918. It was here where the session of the great National Assembly took place, on the 1st December 1918 and decided the unification of Transylvania with Romania, and therefore of the unitary national state. The original documents of the unification are exhibited here together with the flags carried by the delegates from the whole country for this great event. In the front of this building, there are the statues of the leaders of this national movement and great moment of Romanian history. Many of them played an important role in the development of Romania between the two WW and were killed in the Communist prisons, after the 2nd WW.



The Reunification Cathedral

Grandiose building, the Reunification Cathedral was built between 1921-1923, following the project drawn by the architect D.G. Stefanescu, led by the engineer T. Eremia.



The Great Romanian monarchs, King Ferdinand I (de Hohenzollern-Siegmaringen) and his Queen Mary (of Edinburgh, the niece of Queen Victoria of U.K. and Tsar Alexander II of Russia) were crowned here on the 15th of October 1922. The establishment is shaped as a Greek cross, with an open porch. One can get inside through a right-angled narthex with three round headed vault units, a narrow nave and a sanctuary. Constantin Petrescu painted the fresco in traditional iconography style.

<http://www.romaniatourism.com/alba-iulia.html>

<http://www.apulum.ro/index-en.htm>

<http://www.restromania.co.uk/Geografie/AboutAlbaIulia.htm>

FOTW Flags Of The World website at <http://flagspot.net/flags/>