Information about Sibiu and nearby regions

Climate
The climate here is temperate-continental with temperatures of 26^0C (max.) and 15-16^0C (mim.) in this period. As showers are also possible, raincoat and umbrellas are recommended (for more information please visit the site: http://romanian.wunderground.com/global/stations/15260.html).

The climate, the relief and the structure of the soil, the clean air, unpolluted creates the opportunities for a rich flora and fauna, characteristic to the areas of transfer between plain and mountain. The numerous green areas, **Dumbrava Forest** nearby, declared natural park, the proximity of the mountains, offer to the town Sibiu the specific of a town with a great touristic potential.

Tourist objectives:

Medieval centre of Sibiu
"Hermann Oberth" Memorial House
Medias – Medieval town
Biertan — Saxon Fortified Church
Sighisoara — Medieval town

1. Medieval centre of Sibiu

The historic part of Sibiu offers the largest medieval site in Romania with three historic squares and an array of old and cobbled streets.

The citadel of Sibiu was for centuries one of the largest and best fortified in Europe. The citadel was surrounded by walls and defence towers, some of these are still very well preserved and give us a clue of how they looked like hundreds of years ago.

The third fortification of walls were built in 14th century and were consolidated in the 17th century. Most of the remaining of Sibiu's medieval fortress wall and towers stand along Cetatii Street and Coposu Bd. In Cetatii Str. are the **Arquebusier Tower** (15th century), the **Potter Tower** (15th century) and the **Carpenter Tower** (15th century). The last two are connected by a well preserved wall built in the 15th century.
All were well fitted for using firearms and holes have been made in the walls for throwing the tar. Few hundred meters down the street is the T**hick Tower**, built at the middle of the 16th century and used to be the infantry tower.

The first theater in town was opened here in 1778. Recently renovated and incorporated in the new city theater, Thalia Hall. Not far from here is the **Haller Bastion**, built in 1552 as part of the protection edifice that surrounded the old town.

In the lower town the walls had dissapear, the same the towers with two exceptions. 9 Mai Street is the place where Sibiu began. Here and in the parallel Noua Str., the houses still show the

social development that took place between the 13c - 14c, when agricultural farmsteads gave way to craftsman's dwellings.

At the further end of. Zidului Str. (wall street) stands the circular **Gunpowder Tower** (Turnul Pulberariei) follow Zidului Str. west into Pulberariei Str., and at next junction stands an octagonal tower built by the tanner's guild, **Turnul Pielarilor**.

The Stairs Passage

The Stairs Passage is one of the most picturesque places in Sibiu. It makes the connection between the lower-town and the upper-town and was built in 13th century. At one end of the passage stands one of the oldest buildings in town. It hosts the oldest restaurant in Romania: "The Golden Barrel" (Butoiul de Aur).

The Goldsmiths Square and Passage

The Goldsmiths Square (Piata Aurarilor) is pockmarked with medieval windows, doorways and turrets and is connected to the Small Square through a stairway (15-th century) of asthonishing beauty. The actual look is preserved since 1567.

Sibiu has ten museums and permanent exhibitions.
In details: Brukenthal Museum, ASTRA Museum, Museum of History, Ethnography Museums

The Brukenthal Museum

The Brukenthal Palace was built by Samuel Brukenthal, governor of Transylvania, in baroque style between 1777 and 1787. He gathered here a vast collection of paintings, antiques, coins, and rare books. Palace hosts the Brukenthal Museum which includes the Art Gallery and the Exhibition of Ethnography and Folk Arts. The Art Gallery was open for the public in 1817, seven years earlier than the National Gallery in London, with 1090 paintings from the collection of the Samuel Brukenthal, governor of Transylvania. Today the Art Gallery, which is one of the richest in Europe, contains a number of 450 paintings belongings to the Flemish and Dutch schools, about 500 paintings representing the German and Austrian schools, and 200 Italian paintings in different styles starting with Renaissance. The Romanian collection contains 1500 pieces, mostly signed by academic painters whose names are part of the national heritage. The entire collection reaches the imposing number of 10,000 pieces. Brukenthal's own collection, displayed on the second floor, comprises European paintings from the 15C - 18C. It is particularly strong in Dutch and Flemish paintings and scenes by Caravaggisti. Among many beguiling canvases are: '*Mary Magdalena reading her Bible in Prison*' by Caracciolo (1578 - 1635), *'Winter Scenery*' by Denis Van Alsloat, '*Venus, Bachus and Ceres*' by Abraham Janssen, *'The Mocking of Christ*' by Ludovico Carracci, *'St. Catherine*' by Francesco Fusini, *'Rivaldo and Armini'* by *Stefano Torelli*

The Ethnography and Folk Collection is structured in several sectors:

- The Pottery Room

- Textile and Fabrics
- Folks Costumes, with two rustic interiors
- Wood processing
- Painting on Glass collection

Museum of Pharmacy

Located in an historical building dated 1569 where one of the oldest pharmacy in country was. Samuel Hohnemann (1755-1843) invented homeopathy and developed his treatment in the basement of this house. Some of his phials and plans are on display. The exhibition is organized on the structure of a classical pharmacy that includes two laboratories, one homeopathic sector and a documentation sector. It contains over 6000 ancient medical instruments and dispensing tools from the time when Sibiu had more chemists' than anywhere else in Transylvania. At the front, a reconstructed shop is decked out with wooden counters and stacks of glass jars creating the atmosphere of an 18c apotek. The furniture is viennese. Very important is the collection of pharmaceutics jars made of wood with painted marks.

Museum of Natural History

One of the oldest and richest of its kind in Romania, the museum contains over 1 million units that represent almost one third of the total collection of natural science in the country. Founded by Transylvanian Association of Natural Science (*Siebenbürgischer Verein für Naturwiessenschaften*) in 1849, hosted in actual building since 1895. The museum owns also an astronomic observation center. The permanent exhibition of the museum is 'the systematic animal world'.

The Steam Museum

The official "Steam Locomotive Museum" was inaugurated on 23 august, 1994 - the occasion of the centenary of the Sibiu - Cisnadie line. It now comprises 23 standard gauge locomotives, 10 narrow gauge locomotives, 3 snow ploughs and 2 steam cranes. The locomotive shown here were built between 1885 and 1959 in Romania and other countries, like Germany (Henschel, Borsig, Schwartzkopff) and USA (Baldwin). Two of these locomotives are active and are used on a variety of special trains for enthusiasts and other groups. The museum is located opposite the main railway station in Sibiu, comprising the former roundhouse and turntable across the railways lines.

In Sibiu are found **15 historic churches**, some of them of invaluable importance and some of them are masterpieces of architecture. In details: Evangelic Cathedral, Catholic Church, Orthodox Cathedral, Ursuline Church.

Franciscan Church

From outside, the church has a gothic aspect. The initial building dated from 15 century and in time it acquired many baroque elements which can been seen today. The church was property of the Franciscans since 1716. On the north wall is an epitaph of Hugo von Virmond dated 1722. Inside the church are various stone graves not open for the public.

'Biserica din groapa' Church

'Biserica din groapa' (Church from the Gorge) is an Orthodox church built between 1788 - 1789 and renovated between 1802 - 1803. It's a small church with a tower in three levels. The church is beautifully painted inside.

'Biserica Dintre Brazi' Church

It's the oldest Romanian church in Transylvania, now it is a Greek-catholic church, built in 1788. Surrounding the Church are graves of many Romanian personalities like Gheorghe Baritiu, Al. Papiu Ilarian and Ioan Ratiu.

2. The "Hermann Oberth" Memorial House

Several years ago, the house where Hermann Oberth used to live in Medias, was arranged as a museum. On entering it, the visitor actually enters the cosmic world of the man and scientist Hermann Oberth. Photographs and copies of some plans and calculations can be seen here, as well as other documents and things belonging to the illustrious scientist of Medias. In order to honor Oberth's memory, the local City Hall has decided to name a street after the famous scientist. Only one street could have been chosen for the purpose and this is the very street where the museum is. Thus the locals of Medias pay an everlasting homage to the man who was the most important personality of the town on the Tarnava.

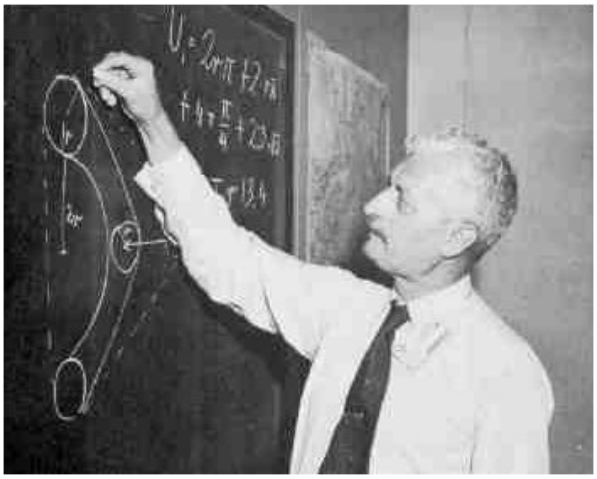
Hermann Julius Oberth, born June 25, 1894 in the Transylvanian town of Hermannstadt, is, along with the Russian Konstantin Tsiolkovsky and the American Robert Goddard, one of the three founding fathers of rocketry and modern astronautics. Interestingly, although these three pioneers arrived at many of the same conclusions about the possibility of a rocket escaping the earth's gravitational pull, they seem to have done so without any knowledge of each other's work.

Oberth's interest in rocketry was sparked at the age of 11. His mother gave him a copy of Jules Verne's *From The Earth To The Moon*, a book which he later recalled he read "at least five or six times and, finally, knew by heart." It was a young Oberth, then, that discovered that many of Verne's calculations were not simply fiction, and that the very notion of interplanetary travel was not as fantastic as had been assumed by the scientific community.

By the age of 14 Oberth had already envisioned a "recoil rocket" that could propel itself through space by expelling exhaust gases (from a liquid fuel) from its base. He had no resources with which to test his model, but continued to develop his theories, all the while teaching himself, from various books, the mathematics that he knew he'd need if he was to ever challenge gravity's dominion.

Oberth realized that the higher the ratio between propellant and rocket mass the faster his rocket would be able to travel. Problem: as the rocket expends fuel, its mass (not including fuel) remains the same, in essence becoming heavier and heavier in relation to the engine's ability to provide thrust. Solution: stages. Hermann Oberth reasoned that as one section of the rocket cylinder becomes expended, and therefore also becomes dead weight, why not just get rid of it? This idea is especially important, in light of the fact that in space, velocity is additive. Oberth wrote, "the requirements for stages developed out of these formulas. If there is a small rocket on top of a big one, and if the big one is jettisoned and the small one is ignited, then their speeds are added."

In 1912 Hermann Oberth enrolled in the University of Munich to study medicine. His scholarly pursuits, however, were interrupted by the First World War. In an indirect way, Hermann Oberth's participation in the war, mostly with the medical unit , was, in some ways, fortunate for the future of rocketry. Hermann Oberth stated it best when he wrote that one of the most important things he learned in his years as an enlisted medic, was that he "did not want to be a doctor". When the war was over, Professor Oberth returned to the University of Munich, but this time to study Physics with several of the most notable scientists of the time.



In 1922 Oberth's doctoral thesis on rocketry was rejected.
He later described his reaction: "I refrained from writing another one, thinking to myself: Never mind, I will prove that I am able to become a greater scientist than some of you, even without the title of doctor." He continued: "In the United States, I am often addressed as a doctor. I should like to point out, however, that I am not such and shall never think of becoming one." And on education he had this to say: "Our educational system is like an automobile which has strong rear lights, brightly illuminating the past. But looking forward things are barely discernible."

In 1923, the year after the rejection of his dissertation, he published the 92 page *Die Rakete zu den Planetenraumen* (*The Rocket into Planetary Space*). This was followed by a longer version (429 pages) in 1929, which was internationally celebrated as a work of tremendous scientific importance. That same year, he lost the sight in his left eye in an experiment while working as a technical advisor to German director Fritz Lang on his film, "Girl in the Moon."
In the thirties Oberth took on a young assistant who would later become one of the leading scientists in rocketry research for the German and then the United States governments; his name was Werhner von Braun. They worked together again during the Second World War, developing the V2 rocket, the "vengeance weapon" for the German Army, and again after the war, in the United States at the U.S. Army's Ballistic Missile Agency in Huntsville, Alabama. However, three years later Professor Oberth retired and returned to Germany.

That Hermann Oberth is one of the three founding fathers of rocketry and modern astronautics is, I think, indisputable. That all three have advanced the science of rocketry is also indisputable - Professor Oberth, though, possessed a vision that set him apart, even from these great men. In 1923 he wrote in the final chapter of *Die Rakete zu den Planetenraumen* (*The Rocket into Planetary Space*), "The rockets... can be built so powerfully that they could be capable of carrying a man aloft." In 1923, then, he became the first to prove that rockets could put a man into space.
By all accounts Hermann Oberth was a humble man (especially considering his achievements) who had, in his own words, simple goals. He outlined them in the last paragraph of his 1957 book *Man into Space*: "To make available for life every place where life is possible. To make inhabitable all worlds as yet uninhabitable, and all life purposeful."
Hermann Julius Oberth died in a Nuremberg hospital in West Germany on December 29, 1989 at the age of 95.

3. Medias town

Medias is the second important town of the Sibiu county by its size, population (63,204 inhabitants in 1995) and economic growth. During the Middle Ages, the city, like most other towns in Transylvania, was strongly fortified. The Evangelic Church "St. Margaret" or the "Castle" represented the core around which the citadel gradually developed.

The first document relating to the existence of the town goes back to June 3rd, 1267; it was also mentioned later on, in documents of 1283 and 1318. Between 1480 and 1534, the castle was encompassed with a last fortification which had strong walls and defense towers. The citadel used to have three rows of walls with three main gates (Forkesch to the south, Zekesch to the east, and Steingasse to the north), four secondary gates and 19 bastions with defense towers.

The medieval centre of the city has a particular charm, with narrow winding lanes, centuries-old houses and a large square towards which converge the main streets of the town. Among the worth visiting towers and bastions of the city are the Furriers' Bastion (1641), the Blacksmiths' Tower (1641), the Wheelwrights' Tower (17th c.), the Knife-Makers' Bastion (15th c.), the Gate's Tower (16th c.).

The Schuller House (1588) is a monument built in the Transylvanian Renaissance style; it functioned as an inn and later on as a seat for Transylvanian Diets. The Schuster House is monument of Baroque architecture (1705), with beautifully decorated ceilings. The house is built on two levels and it is L shaped towards the back of the yard. The main façade is dominated by a portal leaning to the left, whose posts seem to have been remade. On the other hand, the flat arch of the gate, in place of a keystone, has an engraved shell. Between the ground floor and the first floor, the façade is marked by a horizontal cornice and vertically, the partition is made by means of columns, the ones of the fist floor having Ionic capitals. The ground floor windows have richly decorated lattice-works, made in 1913 and containing the monogram of the then owner (J. Schuster). On the inside, the corridor is vaulted, the stair-case has a Bohemian vault and in the rooms, there are cylindrical arches, as well as wooden floors.

The Piarists' School is a piece of architecture built by a branch of the Piarists' Order in the 18th century, whose preeminent style is Baroque (19th c.) It bears this name because up to 1790 it served as a school for Piarist monks. The school is built on three levels, the present façade having been altered by the activities on the ground floor where shops with large windows were opened. On the other hand, the floors are divided into nine partitions, by means of columns with a Doric capital and a high base. Above the windows and the columns on the last floor, there are engraved flower wreaths. All this decoration is proof of a moderate style,

characteristic of the Transylvanian baroque The exact date of the construction is not known. Some others plead for the year 1733, other lean towards the year 1740. What is for sure is the fact, that the building was marked on captain Theumern's 1750 map; however, this does not rule out the possibility of the existence of the building at the time when the Wiess map was drawn (1736), since the latter also leaves out other constructions existing at that time, such as the Evangelical rectory, from the castle.

4. Biertan

The village Biertan, set high on a hill within two and a half rings of walls linked by a splendid covered staircase, has the best known of all the Saxon fortified churches. It was completed as late as 1516, and recently restored.

The church was the seat of the Lutheran bishops until 1867, and their fine gravestones can be seen inside the Bishop's Tower.

5. Sighisoara, situated in Romania center, in Transylvania province, is famous by its architecture dating from 14th century.
Sighisoara, which Vlad Tepes called home, is one of the most beautiful towns in the heart of Transylvania. German architectural influences are visible throughout the entire city. Sighisoara was for several centuries a military and political stronghold. One of its most famous attractions is the Clock Tower (Council Tower), built in the 14th Century. This was the control tower of the main gate of the 2,500 foot long defensive wall. The tower has seven foot thick walls and was used to store ammunition, food reserves, archives and the city's treasures. The clock was placed in the tower in the 17th Century. Highlights include: Guild Tower, Venetian House (built in the 13th Century), Vlad the Impaler (Dracula) House, Antler House, Wooden Covered Staircase, Hill Church, Hermann Oberth Square.

You have to walk up from the city to the medieval citadel and enter throwgh the 60-meter-tall clock tower (built in 1360).

Citadel Clock Tower in Sighisoara

The ocher-colored house named "**Casa Vlad Dracula**", where the Vlad the Impaler was born, better known as Vlad III Dracula, once lived, is now a cozy restaurant. You can find inside Gothic-style furniture and serve good soups and traditional Romanian dishes.

Sighisoara old buildings (12th Century)
The right building is the birthplace of Count Vlad Tepes (well known as Vlad Dracula). Now the building is a restaurant.

Old arcade and Stairs Street (14th Century) in Sighisoara Citadel

The convered stairway with 176 steps was made in 17th century. Museums, the Church on trop of the Hill (14th century) and the Monastery Church (15th century) both built in the Gothic style are attractions for numerous tourists.