

Cluj-Napoca

Overview

Cluj-Napoca is to be found in the north-west of Romania in the heart of Transylvania. The origins of the city are unclear but it is believed to be somewhere in the middle ages although earlier signs of habitation in the region exist. The current name of the City is quite a recent change, having been in use since 1974. During the Soviet era the city saw a high degree of industrialisation which overshadowed its cultural past, but the post Soviet era has seen the city quickly regain its identity and culture.

The city has some of the countries most outstanding old architecture which is immediately evident on reaching the older parts of Cluj-Napoca, not only its churches but also its pre Soviet era architecture are pleasing to the eye. The museums and galleries of the city are also in some eye-catching buildings as well as the concert halls, the opera house and theatres. The “Alexandru Borza” Botanical Garden close to the city centre has some impressive glass hot-houses that are well worth visiting and some of its structures such as the building in the Japanese garden give a pleasant counterpoint to the parks other architectural style.

For shopaholics Cluj-Napoca has a lot to offer with shopping malls in the city centre and in the suburbs. In the city centre you will find Polus and the Iulius Mall, both of which include hypermarkets and others are in the process of being built. There are also a number of shopping centres away from the city centre. The shops within the malls and centres include many internationally famous brand names. The city also has many small local shops and art galleries, all selling local wares which make for much better souvenirs than a tee-shirt or baseball cap.

As one of Romania's larger cities, Cluj-Napoca has a wide selection of cuisines to choose from, Romanian, Hungarian and Transylvanian are of course the main stay but there is also a range of international restaurants. If you do not want to try the excellent local food there are a few international fast food chain restaurants in evidence. For night-life, Cluj-Napoca has quite a few places to choose from; clubs, pubs and bars are all in evidence in the city with enough variety to satisfy most people, as Cluj-Napoca is a University town you can also expect to meet a lot of students in the venues. For lovers of opera and classical music the city has a number of excellent venues to listen to some of the world's favourite music.

Accommodation in and around Cluj-Napoca ranges from 5 star to bed and breakfast and hostels. In general accommodation in Cluj-Napoca is of a good quality and reasonably priced. Ultimately where you stay is down to your personal taste and budget, but you will easily find somewhere to suit you in or outside the city. If you prefer not to stay in the city there is a good selection of B&B's and guest houses within a reasonable radius of the centre. Staying outside of the city has the advantage of often being located in outstanding rural locations surrounded by beautiful scenery and peace and quiet.

Weather in the region is considered to be continental, with winters seeing temperatures below -1 degrees Celsius and summers reaching around 27 degrees Celsius, higher and lower temperatures have been recorded though. By and large Cluj-Napoca is by European standards a relatively safe and clean location.

Very close to Cluj-Napoca there are a lot of places to visit, one of which will come as a surprise ‘the Turda Salt Mines’. Dating back to Roman times, the mines have been extended over the centuries and include vast chambers the look like sets from a James Bond or science fiction movie and indeed would not look out of place in a modern computer game. Close to the mines is the Turda Gorge, an area of outstanding natural beauty with mountains, cave's, rivers and forest all in all a perfect place for walking, hiking, climbing, camping and just generally marvelling at natures wonders.