

Joint IFEM & GCM elective module Ecosystem (and Natural Resource) Management in Transformation Countries

Excursion to Romania, May 17-25, 2025

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**Eberswalde University
for Sustainable
Development**



Centre for Economics and
Ecosystem Management

Excursion team

HNEE staff

- Dr. Michael Spies (lecturer): michael.spies@hnee.de
- Lars Schmidt (lecturer and logistics): lars.schmidt@gmx.org

Local partners

- Oana Harabagui (guide)
- Tudor Georgescu (guide)
- Rangers from **Piatra Craiului National Park**
- Ranger / municipal forester from **Codrul Secular Sinca**

Two modules at HNEE

GCM: Natural Resource Management in Transformation Countries

- **Goal:** Students acquire a critical understanding of the challenges for **sustainable development in transformation countries** and are able to propose strategic elements for addressing challenges identified in a concrete case-study region.
- **Examination:** Project presentation & report

IFEM (module component): Ecosystem management in transformation countries

- **Goal:** The students learn on an exemplary basis of a region in a chosen transformation country to what extent **socioeconomical and political transformation processes induce changes in the ecosystem** and how corresponding knowledge is relevant to ecosystem management. The students are enabled to identify and implement ecosystemic and socioeconomic indicators for the evaluation of potential changes in the system.
- **Examination:** Project presentation

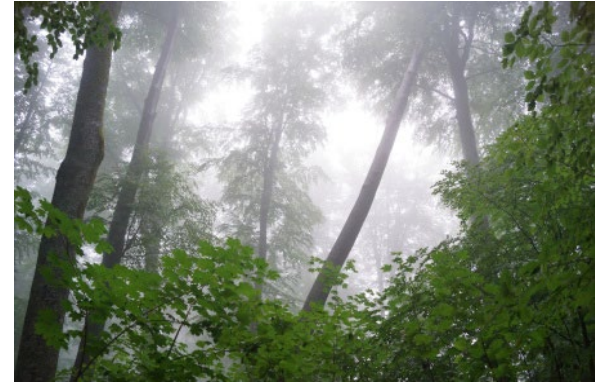
What is this excursion about?

- **Broadening our horizons!**
- **Transformation countries** = countries in Eastern Europe, ex-Soviet Republics and Asian countries that have or continue to transition from a planned economy towards a market economy
- Political, socio-economic and socio-cultural **transformation processes** and how they have and continue to impact **ecosystems and their management**; and **what can we do about it?**
- **Gain experience and learn** about ecosystem management in a different context

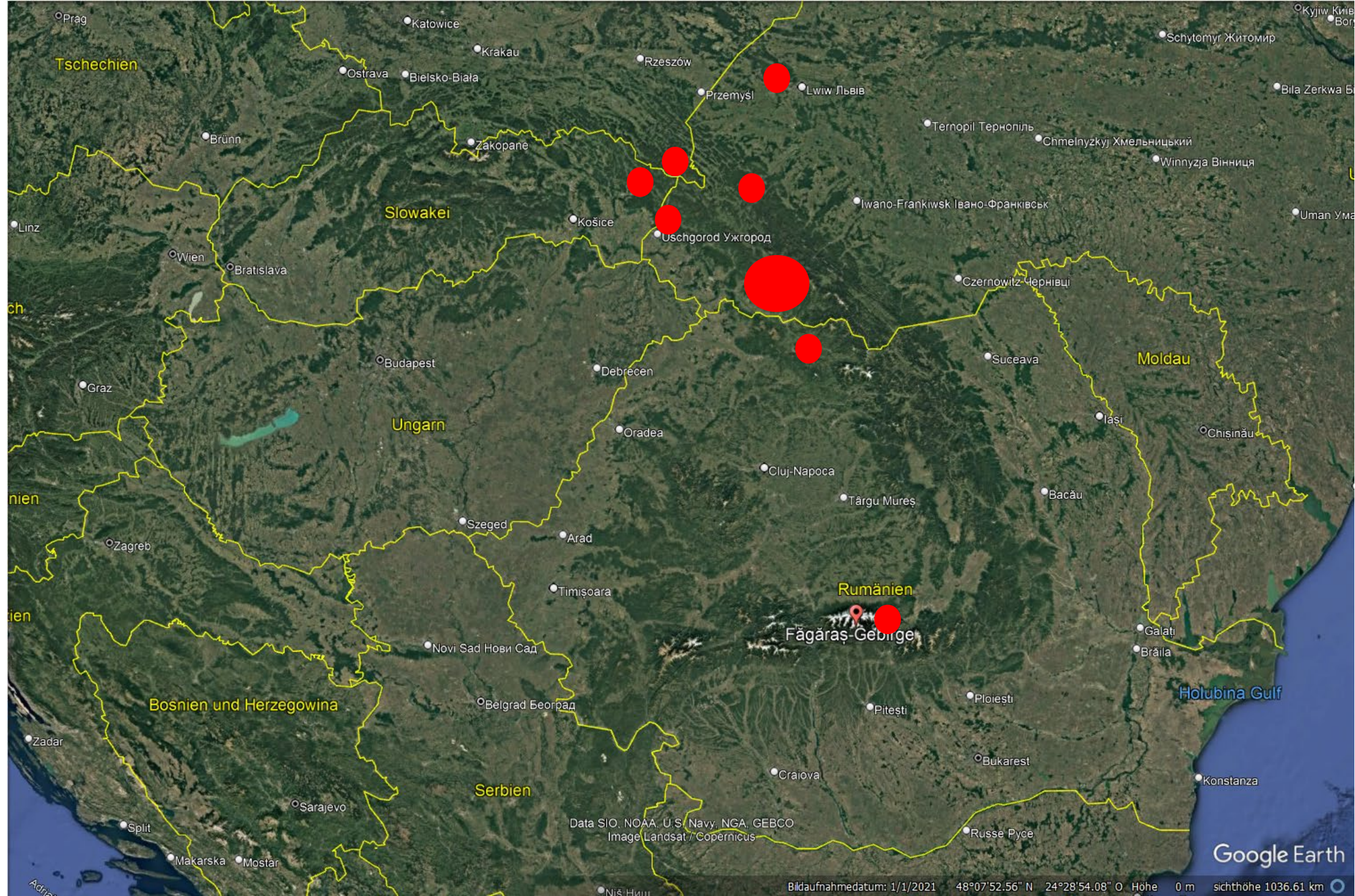
Why are we going to Romania or the Romanian Carpathians (Făgăraș mountains)?

- Transition country
- Post-war and communist / autocratic period until 1989
- Transition from “Eastern-Bloc” country to EU (2007) and NATO (2004) membership, Schengen-membership as of 01.01.2025
- De-collectivization of agriculture and privatization of forests and industry, land reforms and labor migration!
- Approx. 30% of land under agricultural management, 27% of land covered by forests

A little bit of excursion history



- Excursion from **2006-2021** in the Ukrainian Carpathians, with stays in Poland, Slovakia and the bigger L'viv area
 - Cooperation and projects between HNEE / CEEM and Carpathian Biosphere Reserve and L'viv National Forestry University and Partners from Moldova and other Ukrainian universities
 - Facilitated and contributed to founding of European Beech Forest Network and establishment of UNESCO World Natural Heritage site ***Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe***
- **2022-2024**: Romanian Carpathians because of the Russian war on Ukraine
 - Partnering with Carpathian Conservation Foundation
- **2025**: New excursion set-up with different partners, location and lecture team



Tschechien

Slowakei

Ungarn

Rumänien

Moldau

Bosnien und Herzegowina

Serbien

Făgăraș-Gebirge

Holubina Gulf

Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO
Image Landsat / Copernicus

Google Earth

Bildaufnahmedatum: 1/1/2021 48°07'52.56" N 24°28'54.08" O Höhe 0 m sichthöhe 1036.61 km

European Beech Forests



Map created by the authors of the book "European Beech Forests" (2016) based on the data provided by the European Commission and the European Forest Institute (EFI). The map is a work of the authors and is not an official map of the European Union. The authors are not responsible for any errors or omissions in the map. The map is published under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike license (CC BY-NC-SA).

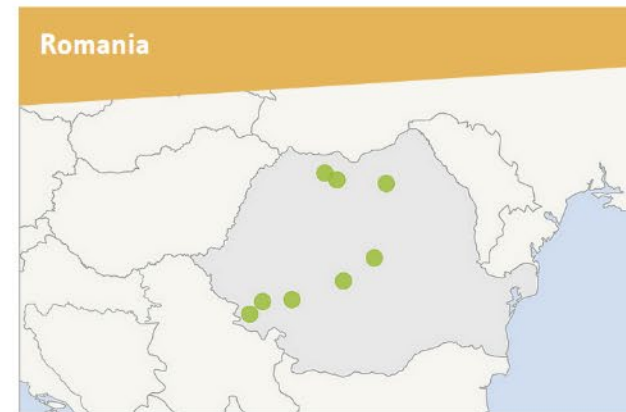


Codrul Secular Sinca

In the Southern Carpathians on the northern slopes of the Taga Mountains, embedded in vast beech forests, grows a fascinating primeval fir-beech forest with natural dynamics that have lasted for centuries. It is famous for its gigantic trees, with a height of over 60 meters and an age of up to 500 years. The natural biodiversity of the component part is astonishing, with numerous endemic animal and plant species.

Profile

- ✓ UNESCO recognition: 2017
- ✓ Protected area: Codrul Secular Sinca Virgin Forest Reserve
- ✓ Beech forest region: Carpathian
- ✓ Area: 338.24 ha
- ✓ Number of component parts: 1
- ✓ Altitudinal range: montane (790 – 1,400 m above sea level)
- ✓ Fauna: Brown bear, Wolf, Lynx, European wildcat, Chamois, Lesser spotted eagle, Wood grouse, Eurasian three-toed woodpecker, Alpine longhorn beetle



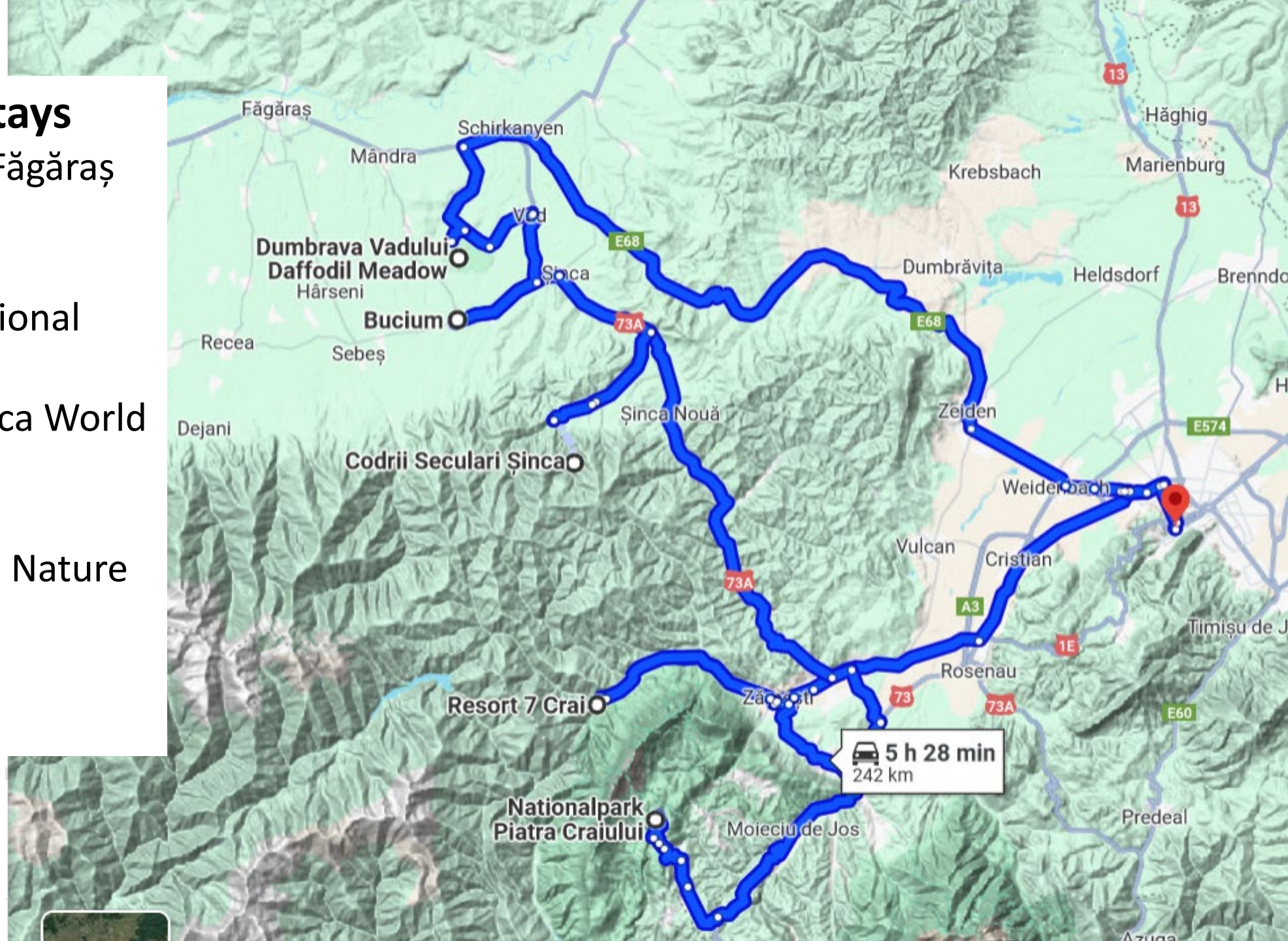
Other Areas in Romania

Cheile Nerei-Beușnița



Main excursion stays

- Eastern slopes of Făgăraș mountains
- Plaiul Fcii village
- Piatra Craiului National Park
- Codrul Secular Șinca World Heritage Site
- Bucium village
- Dumbrava Vadului Nature Reserve
- Brasov city



Schedule



Date	Program	Transport	Accommodation & meals
Sunday, 18/05	Arrival in Brasov at 1 pm Transfer to Camping Plaiul Fcii by bus Check-in, pitch tents, Introduction & Next day's programme	Bus	Camping Plaiul Fcii Dinner
Monday, 19/05	Hiking around Piatra Craiului NP Main Topic: Protected area management	None	Camping Plaiul Fcii Breakfast & Dinner
Tuesday, 20/05	Hiking along the Bârsa valley, return along Valea Runculu (or vice versa). Main topics: Forestry, (sub)alpine meadows, Pastoralism	None	Camping Plaiul Fcii Breakfast & Dinner

Date	Program	Transport	Accommodation & meals
Wednesday, 21/05	Check out at Camping Plaiul Foii Bus to Codrii Seculari Șinca; Hiking at Codrii Seculari Șinca and talk to local forestry administration; Main topic: Old- growth forest (management) and WHS Bus to Bucium, Check-in at Casa Moga	Bus	Breakfast at Camping Plaiul Foii Dinner at Casa Moga
Thursday, 22/05	Walk through a) Bucium village; b) agricultural landscape; c) forests at the foothills of Fagaras mountains		Casa Moga Breakfast & Dinner
Friday, 22/05	Morning hours: Visit to Poiana Narciselor din Dumbrava Vadului; Main topic: lowland forest ecosystems and conservation Afternoon: Presentations		Casa Moga Breakfast & Dinner
Saturday, 23/05	Breakfast Pack-up Transfer to Brasov Train station Train or bus to Berlin	Bus	Breakfast at Casa Moga

What to bring (borrow, get 2nd hand or buy)

- Daypack (comfortable for long hikes, with raincover)
- Extra bag/backpack for spare clothing that can stay in the camp
- Hiking boots & socks, second pair of shoes
- Appropriate clothing (0-30°C): everything from sunbathing to cold, rainy, windy conditions
- Waterproof jacket and pants
- Cap/hat
- Towel
- Camping gear (tent, sleeping bag, camping mat)
- Water container (1 l or more)
- Small first-aid kit (some)
- Torch
- Litter bags
- For **EU citizens**: national ID or passport
- For **non-EU citizens**: Passport + VISA + german residence permit
- Health insurance coverage for Romania
- Cash (LEI): you can draw money at ATM at Brasov central station
- Small eating set (according to your lunch design)
- Snacks and energy bars
- One roll of toilet paper
- Sun cream (factor 30-50)
- Mosquito repellent
- Camera and power bank
- Notebook & pen (the old fashioned type)



Other questions & issues

- Travelling to Romania: Does anyone need a visa?
- Getting there & back: Has everyone a (return) ticket & seat reservation to/from Brasov?
- Activation of the interrail pass
- Dietary preferences (vegan, vegetarian) & allergies
- Datasheet
- Advance payment EUR 100
- Telegram group
- Anything else ???

General topics covered during the excursion

- (Forest) ecosystems
- (Forest) ecosystem management
- Socio-ecological systems
- Land & natural resources use
- Climate change
- History and (geo)politics
- Actors and institutions
- Conservation and protected areas

Qualitative Research

- **Prior to excursion:** Desk research before the trip based on reports and peer-reviewed publications
- **During the excursion:** Collection of facts and evidence during entire trip
 - Groups introduce the plenary to their topics and first insights from desk review on day 1
 - On-site observations (notes, photos)
 - Documentation of presentations, dialogues, discussions
 - Interviews with local experts and stakeholders
- **Examination 1 (IFEM & GCM):**
 - 1 presentation 1st day, 5 presentations last day
 - Structure: Background, research question(s), methods, results and discussion
 - Based on literature review and insights/data gained during the excursion
- **Examination 2 (GCM):** 2 group reports by 15 July 2024
 - (ca 15-20 pages + maps, photos, annex)
 - Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion

- Brief introduction to the concept of “transformation countries”
- Brief introduction to Romania, including key facts and covering key events of the last 4 decades (mid 1980s to 2025).
- What were key events in Romania’s recent past (mid 1980s to 2025) that had a significant impact on how natural resources and ecosystems in Romania were and are managed
- Introduction to Transylvania with a focus on present day (forest) ecosystems, conservation and land use.

- Provide an overview of the different (forest) ecosystems in present-day Transylvania.
- Which of these (forest) ecosystems did we see during the excursion?
- Make 3 short case studies of different (forest) ecosystems. This should include 1 non-forest ecosystem and 1 protected forest ecosystem. Try to answer the following questions:
 - Describe and characterize the different (forest) ecosystems and their origins.
 - Is (and if yes, how?) Romania's history as a transformation country linked to these (forest) ecosystems?
 - Are any of the (forest) ecosystems threatened and if yes, by what?
 - How could these threats be addressed?

- Provide an overview and characterization of the principal property/ownership and management regimes of (forest) ecosystems in Transylvania
- How is Romania's history as a transformation country linked to these property and management regimes?
- Make 3 short case studies of different property/ownership and (forest) ecosystem management regimes. This should include 1 non-forest ecosystem and 1 protected forest ecosystem. Try to answer the following questions:
 - Ownership?
 - Who is managing it?
 - What is the management objective?
 - What resources are available for the management?
 - Is the management achieving its objective?
 - What are challenges / barriers to achieving the management objective?
 - How did the transformation process affect the ownership and management in the last 4 decades?

- Map and try to categorize the different people(s) and user / interest / stakeholder groups that have used and continue to use (forest) ecosystems in Transylvania
- Perspective and role of women: What are women's perspectives on how (forest) ecosystem management has changed during the last 4 decades? Which roles did and do women play in (forest) ecosystem management in Romania and how has this changed during the last 4 decades?
- Make 3 short case studies of different interest / stakeholder groups that use (forest) ecosystems today. This should include one non-forest ecosystem user group and at least one forest ecosystem user group. Try to answer the following questions:
 - Describe the user / interest / stakeholder group and their stakes in (forest) ecosystem use.
 - How do they use, benefit or profit from the (forest) ecosystems?
 - Are there any conflicts among the user group or between this user group and other use groups?
 - Is their (forest) ecosystem use sustainable? If not, what is causing unsustainable practices?
 - How did Romania's history as a transformation country affect their (forest) ecosystem use in Transylvania?

Aims:

- To identify the different actors and stakeholders involved in natural resource use and conservation and analyse their (conflicting) perspectives on conservation (*external conservation actors, government agencies, community groups, etc.*)
- To analyse the main lines of conflict in their historical and multiscalar (*local needs, national politics, EU, etc.*) genesis

Particular attention can be given to:

- The role of EU's New Green Deal that emphasizes nature conservation for well-being & economic recovery
- The needs & perspectives of local communities:
 - Livelihoods often tied to local natural resources
 - Well-being linked to landscape functionality

Aim:

- To outline and analyse different pathways/strategies of sustainable development in the Fagaras mountain area that take into account the needs of humans and nature.
- Investigate their potentials and limitations based on a systemic understanding of the current situation

Possible foci:

- Sustainable forest use
- Sustainable agriculture (and/or agroforestry)
- Ecotourism

Group formation

- We will prepare a collaborative document where you can choose your groups (google doc)
 - Link will be shared via Moodle
 - First come, first serve
 - Try to solve arising issues among yourselves
 - In case this should not be successful, contact us
- Group **coaching** with Michael Spies and Lars Schmidt in late April (and per request)



Questions?

