

Bicycle Trails

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Mara-Cosău-Creasta Cocoșului **MARAMURES**

"The beauty of being on two wheels is being able to move at your own pace, to peer over hedgerows, to hear, smell and savour. And frankly,

there's nowhere better to do that than here."

(Andrew Eames, travel writer, UK)



The place Andrew Eames is talking about is in Maramureş, Romania. More specifically, in the land of southwestern Historical Maramures, certified as an ecotourism destination: the Mara-Cosău-Creasta Cocosului (Rooster's Crest).

A cluster of tessellated landscapes, meadows with flowers and scents, volcanic mountains, villages with old churches and even older customs are here for those who want to roam this land by bicycle, freer than the

And for the infrastructure to be on the side of the cyclists itself, over 150 km of trails which are good for riding a bicycle have been marked in the area, a few guesthouses have become friends with cycle tourism, and a host of informative materials about all these has been created.

But let us take them in turn...

Without them being designed specifically for pedalling, our trails are cycling variants of certain roads which had, or still have, another use: forest and cart roads, pastoral paths, the village streets, short segments of county and village roads, old railway embankments, offering guests "pathways to experience the region at the pace it deserves". (National Geographic, "Best Trips

To mark the trails, a red "C" on a white background has been used; it was painted on trees, slabs, and poles or printed on arrows signs. Some trails can be covered as circuit trails, some as return (going back to the starting point is done by the same road), while others are recommended as one-way trails.



Difficulty Levels

From a very first look at the map of the Mara-Cosău-Creasta Cocoșului eco-destination, you can see that the terrain of these places is predominantly mountainous, so you should expect many of the trails to include tougher ascents and descents, for which the mountain bike



The difficulty levels of the marked trails are:

for any cyclist, these trails contain a few gentle ascents and no obstacles;

for most cyclists, these trails are relatively flat, including several tougher climbs and possible obstacles which can be avoided;

for the trained cyclists, these trails include sustained ascents, technical descents, rough segments, and unexpected obstacles.

Top Trails

Numerous are the bike trails which line the land and different the ways they can be travelled. Below here are described some of the itineraries which will make you long to wander on two wheels:

The Rooster's Crest - Budeşti Trail

The Roșia Trail

The Rails' Trail

The Igniş - Mara Trail



eco maramures

Eco-destination

by Bicycle

gniduri-turistice,into Back cover photo: Front cover photo: Vali Tămaș

www.ecomaramures.com or.g.o.oigolooe.www:deW E-mail: ecologic@email.ro Tel. / Fax: +40 362 412 197; +40 745 332 022 430232 Baia Mare, Str. Florilor 8/36



The Rooster's Crest

Trail

Start: Şuior Tourist Complex; Finish: Creasta Cocosului's foothills Reference points: Şuior Tourist Complex - Mina Şuior - Poiana Boului -

Distance: 7.5 km; Elevation difference: 350 m; Trail grade: maximum -26.2%; average – 8.5%; **Difficulty level:** ①

If you are still south of Munții Gutâi (the Gutâi Mountains), yet you want to go beyond the hill", to the Land of Maramureș, this is the way which takes you closest to Creasta Cocoșului (the Rooster's Crest) – the giant volcanic rock which guards our eco-destination –, at the same time putting distance between you

and the busy main roads. The trail showcases forests and glades, inviting vistas, places which remind of imperial times or legendary outlaws. However, the joy of pedalling towards the foot of the Crest comes at a price: the route is not for everyone, but for the adventurous and trained cyclists.

the guesthouse owners.

Creasta Cocosului – natural reserve

The Easy Ways

Most of the trails recommended above seem to be a physical training

test when they are fully covered. When only certain segments of them

are travelled on, though, they turn friendly even to the least trained

The **Călinești Circuit** (5.2 km), part of The Cosău Trail, is suitable for

those who want a leisurely ride on two wheels, moving along village

streets, idyllic country roads, and very short asphalt sections.

The Deseşti - Sat Şugatag and Ocna Şugatag - Fereşti routes,

For zero effort, the eco-romantic option would be the horse-drawn

carriage, the vehicle in perfect harmony with the world of the village,

to another. Carriage transportation can be organized, on request, by

which, if need be, takes both you and your bike, slowly, from one place

travelled on the railway embankment, move across groves of paradise,

a treat for the cyclists who want to pedal without effort. Well... a tiny bit

Beautiful wooded landscapes



Start: Creasta Cocoşului's foothills;

Reference points: Creasta Cocoşului – Drumul Mlăcii – DJ 109 F – Valea

Distance: 22 km; Elevation difference: 450 m; Trail grade: maximum – 30%; average – 7%; **Difficulty level:** ①

An epic route, which has the "audacity" to link the Rooster's Crest to the Văratec of obstacles. Of the total of 22 km, barely over 4 km run on asphalt. The rest is spots, pastoral trails running through spruce forests,

away as the neighbouring countries. The trail arouses the travellers' curiosity, promising to reveal a way to access the Cosău Valley which is totally different from the usual one: more adventurous, less travelled, and more idyllic.

- The UNESCO church in Budești Josani (1643)

Finish: Budesti:

Oanţa - Gura Râielor - Budeşti;

Piedmont and the village of Budeşti, following various roads, with no shortage both delightful and off-road. The trail is interspersed with countless panorama vistas which on clear days break through as far

- Spectacular scenery Adventurous downhill rides

reading this leaflet.

Cycle-Friendly

Accommodation

Start and finish: Budeşti (village centre); Reference points: Budești - Râul Mare - Gura Râielor - Roșia Monastery;

Distance: 15.7 km (round trip); Elevation difference: 250 m; Trail grade:

maximum – 16.7%; average – 3%; **Difficulty level:** M D

Anyone seeking to learn about Budeşti will find out that in this village on the Cosău there are two old wooden churches, the one in Josani being a UNESCO monument, authentic households, and many places which recall the name of the legendary Pintea the Brave. Then, one knows that the soils of Budeşti hide "treasures" of gold, once exploited in the mines now closed. The Roşia Trail reveals of the picturesque quality of this village, leading us through the landscape offered by the volcanic caldera, meadows, and little wooden houses perched on hills, all the way to the Roşia

Monastery and the mouth of the springs which form the river called Râul Mare. The route has a drawback: it is solely uphill. But that always comes bundled with a big advantage: the return is an easy descent, all you have to do is sit on the bike saddle and exclaim, "This is so cool!"

- Enchanting landscape
- Traditional households
- The church of the Roşia Monastery
- The wooden church of Budești Susani (1760)

Start: Budești (village centre); Finish: Ocna Şugatag (Băile vechi)

he Cosău

Reference points: Budeşti - Sârbi - Călineşti - Ocna Şugatag; Distance: 15 km; Elevation difference: 180 m; Trail grade: maximum - 12%;

average – 3%; Difficulty level: (1) (M) Although it largely stretches on the main road, which is the most exposed to

modernity, this trail keeps us close to the authentic and archaic Maramureș. If you want to get into all the workshops of skilful craftspeople and you are interested to admire closely the motifs carved on the wooden gates, you will need to grip the bicycle brake levers often. For both craftspeople and wooden gates are found in abundance on the Cosău Trail. From the church in Budești Josani to Sârbi, our road follows the river Cosău closely, thus

managing to bring us into the realm of the ingenious technical installations driven by water: whirlpools, fulling mills, flour-mills, a thresher. In Călinești, we are surprised by a maze of village streets and cart roads. The last part of the trail takes us to Ocna Şugatag.

- The Ocna Şugatag Weekly Fair The Sârbi Susani wooden church (1639)
- The Călinesti Căeni wooden church (1629)
- Craftspeople and traditional installations The Gavrilă Lake – the largest salt mining lake in Ro The UNESCO monument wooden church in Budeşti Josani (1643)

Reference points: Breb - Hoteni - Hărnicești - Sat Şugatag - Mănăstirea -Ocna Şugatag – Hoteni – Breb; Distance: 20.8 km; Elevation difference: 190 m; Trail grade: maximum -

20.7%; average – 5.1%; Difficulty level: (L) (M)

This is one of our destination's trails with few demanding uphill slopes, yet sprinkled with many attractions. The core of the trail stretches along fragments of old narrow-gauge railway embankments on which trains used to carry logs (Ferești – Mara – Runcu), salt, but also passengers (Sighetu Marmației – Ferești – Ocna Şugatag). No less than five old wooden churches "watch" our way and waiting for us are apple and plum orchards, paths through the forest, salt lakes, the place where "Tânjaua on the Mara" (an old agrarian custom) is held every year, and

roads of all kinds.

 The old wooden churches in Breb (1622) Hoteni (1790), Hărniceşti (1679), Sat

The Rails'

Start and finish: Breb (the old church);

- Şugatag (1699), and Mănăstirea (17c) The rural landscape • The Crăiasca Forest - nature reserve
- The Gavrilă Lake Craftspeople's workshops

The Igniş - Mara

Finish: Mara/Sat Şugatag Reference points: Sat Şugatag – lezerul Mare – Cheile Tătarului –

Distance: 25 km/32.9 km; Elevation difference: 450 m; Trail grade: maximum – 27%; average – 5.3%; **Difficulty level:** ①

Barajul Runcu - Mara - Deseşti - Hărniceşti - Sat Şugatag;

An ambitious, adventurous trail, but as nice as can be. It has everything: villages, wilderness, varied and anti-boredom roads, postcard-perfect views, two protected areas, ascents and descents. Our eyes will feast upon the grandeur of the mountain peaks, with the wavy landscape of the Igniş volcanic plateau; we will pass by a marsh (lezerul Mare) which could definitely win an award in a biodiversity contest and by the andesite walls of the

Tătarului Gorge (Cheile Tătarului). After reaching Mara, we can return to Sat Şugatag on the embankment of the former forest railway. And if we pedal on a former railway, we can chose to make a halt in Desești, a UNESCO site, or one in Hărnicești, where we meet the Rails' Trail.

- Glorious mountain landscape
- Barajul Runcu (The Runcu Dam) • The UNESCO church in Desesti (18c)

And, last but not least,

vegetation, silence, and other tourists!

- The old wooden churches in Hărnicesti (1679) and SatSugatag (1699)

"Come find the real Maramureș by bike! Some of the most authentic villages are connected by old pathways, ideal for an audacious ride that will eave you sweaty, tanned and definitely for ever in love with these places."

ancras Dijk, National Geographic)



In the villages at the foot of the Crest there are dozens of guesthouses which can provide a restful bed and a plentiful meal. Some of these are more alluring for bicycle tourists, offering extra services which come in handy for the passengers on two wheels: a safe place to store their bikes, washing facilities, safety equipment, repair tools, and, last but not least, information on the trails. Moreover, all of these guesthouses offer bicycles

For availability and pricing, please contact the guesthouses in the list below. And please let them know that you've learnt about them by

*Total number of bikes for rent *"Travel Green" bikes for rent

Mărioara Guesthouse 346 Breb, 1ei: +40 /05 2/1 234, E-mail: pensiuneamarioara@yahoo.com, www.marioara.ro 346 Breb, Tel: +40 766 271 254, 290 Breb, Tel: +40 760 149 552, E-mail: pensiuneamaramu@yahoo.com, 349 Breb, Tel: +40 725 141 545, E-mail: info@villagehotel.ro,

Babou Maramures 149 Breb. Tel: +40 768 397 339. E-mail: info@baboumaramures.com. Camping & Hostel 285 Breb, Tel: +40 762 107 084, E-mail: pensiunealuciabreb@yahoo.ro,

266 A Budești, Tel: +40 735 226 607, E-mail: office@maramures-resort.ro, 259 Desești, Tel: +40 747 076 935, Email: pensiuneairinadesesti@yahoo.ro,

Ocna Şugatag Popasul din Deal 1D Unirii Str, Ocna Şugatag, Tel: +40 744 598 842,

14 Avram lancu, Ocna Şugatag, Tel: +40 749 581 135,

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Informative Materials

Information about the bike trails (including GPS coordinates) can be found in the cycling section of the site www.ecomaramures.com.

If you want to know more about the area, we recommend that you study the map and guide of the Mara-Cosău-Creasta Cocoșului ecotourism destination, put together by the EcoLogic Association. They can be found in electronic format at the same web address or as printed matter at guesthouses and at the tourist information centre in Ocna Şugatag. Information about our past and present projects is found here: www.ecoLogic.org.ro.

How can we partake in an organized tour? Who provides transportation services? What other activities are there in Maramures? These are questions to which the Greenway Tour Travel Agency can provide answers: MaramuresGreenways.ro.



Be prepared!

Here is some good advice to follow if you want to move on two wheels across these places:

- Grazing sheep is part of the traditions of Maramureş. Sheepfolds are part of the bucolic landscape. But the shepherd dogs are also part of the sheepfolds. And we know that they can be very aggressive. If you are attacked by dogs, we recommend that you stop cycling and use your bicycle as a shield. Do not panic, communicate with them, and wait for them to learn that you are no threat.
- The bicycle trails are marked, but we still recommend you have a map and your mobile phone on you (single emergency number: 112, Mountain Rescue: +40 725 826 668).
- Plan your trip taking the weather forecast into account! Some trails can become very muddy at times of rain.



Make sure you have enough supplies of food and water! Outside the villages, drinking water sources are rare. Do not forget the carbohydrates, they are an important source of energy!

• Make sure you have the right equipment! Mountain bikes are essential for most trails. So are helmets.

 Know your limits! Choose trails suitable for your physical training and cycling experience! • Give the right of way to those traveling on foot! That way you will avoid

accidents and help maintain a positive attitude towards cyclists.

Protect nature: do not throw litter on the ground, respect the





