

Cluj-Napoca ? Where exactly is that?

Eleonora Lungu, Romanian, has been a member of the FEWP board for 4 years and this year hosted our European meeting in Cluj-Napoca, in Transylvania, in the heart of Romania. Some may still know it by its German name Klausenburg.

After Serbia in 2022, the second venue in a country that few of us have probably visited once.

We, Heike Käferle, Ingrid Hopman, Annette Parsch, Waltraud von Manowski, Walpurga Eisenhauer, Ingrid Kuhlmeier as well as our supporting members Horst Ramsthaler and Ralf Sieling and I (Ruth Haliti) accepted the invitation to take a closer look at this “vampiric” Transylvania .

We all traveled from all directions on Thursday, June 1st, 2023, in order to have a little more time on site, even though the official program only started on Friday.

Cluj is the second largest city in Romania with around 300,000 inhabitants. When approaching the country from the west, the image is initially dominated by large agricultural areas. After landing in the strawberry field in 2021, I seem to be developing a selective perception of outdoor landing areas. 😊

As you get closer to the target, the picture becomes more lovely. Hills, rivers and lakes and only a few extensive settlements with their almost uniform orange tiled roofs.

As we later learned during the airport tour, the runway is currently a good 2000 meters long and in the absence of taxiways, the big drivers here have to say: “Backtrack please”

On Thursday evening, Heike, on the recommendation of a “Cluj” friend, took us to a restaurant in the pretty and very lively old town. After the meat-heavy and not exactly fat-free Romanian diet, which we enjoyed with white and red local wine, the traditional Palinka schnapps, with plenty of alcohol, was a must. It was very nice to meet in person again after the long winter and our first evening was correspondingly cheerful.

When registering at the hotel on Friday morning, where Eleonora, who had organized the meeting as a one-woman show, was supported by her little niece, the goodie bag contained a self-made notebook and a very comprehensive guide to Romania. Great!

If you wanted, you could either spend the day by the lake at the Hotel Univers T, drive into the city or, and this was the case for most of us, drive back to the airport. The airport director and some of the air traffic controllers were waiting for us there. After a very warm and informative welcome, they showed us their small, somewhat outdated tower.

In addition to many interesting facts, we also learned that Romania will be putting its first “remote tower” into operation in the same month. From Arad, in the very west, among other things, Cluj can also be looked after. Romania is particularly memorable to me as a country between investment backlog and modernity. There is certainly still a lot to do for our EU member, but where something is done, it is planned in a very timely manner.

A small mishap on the public bus ride from the airport to the old town, namely a forgotten smartphone on the seat, initially made us a little nervous. The Romanians were all extremely helpful, friendly and tried to help us in English. In the end, after a good hour, the bus driver brought us the phone back into the city in perfect condition. Great experience because something similar happened again on Saturday with a lost key.

Saturday was all about the flying community. The bus full of pilots (around 50 participants) went from Cluj to the world cultural heritage site “Salina...” A salt mine that was exploited until 1932 and has now been open to visitors since the early 1990s. Since Romania was celebrating its national children's day, there were an incredible number of Romanian visitors and children in the mine. Due to some not-so-successful logistical decisions on the part of the builders regarding the route up the steep stairwells, it was a bit adventurous, but no less impressive. From the various galleries you have a view of “art through nature”, attractive structures and colors and finally a black lake...over 100 meters underground. The huge playground and sports field at the bottom of the mine may have taken some getting used to, but it was very well frequented...none of us had ever seen anything like it.

After a “light” Romanian lunch snack we continued to Dezmir airfield (L....). Thanks to Eleonora's good relationships with the local pilots, astonishment and excitement appeared on our faces when a member of the Romanian national aerobatic team flew us a program in his Edge that was so incredibly technically sophisticated, professional and so incredibly close above our heads that it was probably became the highlight of the meeting. Some pilots also took the opportunity to do a few laps over the surrounding area in the right seat of a lively UL. Since the pilots forewent any payment, the contribution to be paid went to the club's youth support fund.....(name)

Incidentally, due to its extensive and successful aviation tradition, Romania is probably the only country in which the state fully pays for the flying lessons for adolescents between 16 and 23. This is carried out for the “kids” at the square in Dezmir, among other things. with the breathtaking aerobatic pilot as a flight instructor.

At the rather unconventional but thoroughly successful FEWP AGM at the square, where the members sat down on the lawn, we were happy to welcome two new member countries. The Czech Republic and Malta joined the FEWP. A real success story, because we now have 15 European countries full of motivated female pilots.

During the gala dinner, Monique van Tilborg presented the program of the next FEWP meeting. From May 31st - June 2nd, 2024, all pilots, along with their followers, of course, are invited to the Netherlands, namely to Breda (EHSE). As always, further information will follow at the beginning of next year by email or in our WhatsApp group.

In 2025 it will probably be Malta and in 2026 we will consider inviting our Slovenian pilots again.

To sum up, we can all agree that Romania is really worth a trip and that there is no substitute for our personal conversations and contacts in such a wonderful atmosphere. A European, flying, friendly network!

Oh yes, and by the way... Count Dracula didn't even show up, and we were only bitten by a mosquito once...

Save the date for 2024 – flies, cheese and Heinecken 😊

