



Bicycle Trails



Eco-destination
by Bicycle
Mara-Cosău-Creasta Cocosului
MARAMUREȘ

"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 Maramureș, Romania. More specifically, in the land of southwestern Historical Maramureș, 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 free Dacians.

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 have 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 2015")

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 Cocosului 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 is a must.



The difficulty levels of the marked trails are:

L light

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

M medium

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

D difficult

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



Start: Șulor Tourist Complex;
Finish: Creasta Cocosului's foothills;
Reference points: Șulor Tourist Complex - Mina Șulor - Poiana Boului - Sârta Pintii - Creasta Cocosului;
Distance: 7.5 km; **Elevation difference:** 350 m; **Trail grade:** maximum - 26.2%; average - 8.5%; **Difficulty level:** **D**

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 Cocosului (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.



Start: Creasta Cocosului's foothills;
Finish: Budești;
Reference points: Creasta Cocosului - Drumul Mlăcii - DJ 109 F - Valea Oața - Gura Răielor - Budești;
Distance: 22 km; **Elevation difference:** 450 m; **Trail grade:** maximum - 30%; average - 7%; **Difficulty level:** **D**

An epic route, which has the "audacity" to link the Rooster's Crest to the Văratec Piedmont and the village of Budești, following various roads, with no shortage of obstacles. Of the total of 22 km, barely over 4 km run on asphalt. The rest is both delightful and off-road. The trail is interspersed with countless panorama spots, pastoral trails running through spruce forests, vistas which on clear days break through as far 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.



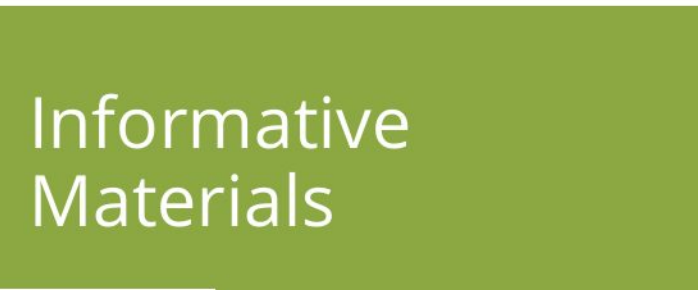
Start and finish: Budești (village centre);
Reference points: Budești - Râul Mare - Gura Răielor - Roșia Monastery;
Distance: 15.7 km (round trip); **Elevation difference:** 250 m; **Trail grade:** maximum - 16.7%; average - 3%; **Difficulty level:** **M** **D**

Anyone seeking to learn about Budești 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 Budești hide "treasures" of gold, once exploited in the mines now closed. The Roșia 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 Roșia 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!"



Start: Budești (village centre);
Finish: Ocna Șugatag (Băile vechi);
Reference points: Budești - Sârbi - Călinești - Ocna Șugatag;
Distance: 15 km; **Elevation difference:** 180 m; **Trail grade:** maximum - 12%; average - 3%; **Difficulty level:** **M** **D**

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: whirpools, fulling mills, flour-mills, a thrasher. In Călinești, we are surprised by a maze of village streets and cart roads. The last part of the trail takes us to Ocna Șugatag.



Start and finish: Breb (the old church);
Reference points: Breb - Hoteni - Hărniciești - Sat Șugatag - Mânăstirea - Ocna Șugatag - 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 Marmăției - Ferești - Ocna Șugatag). 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 "Tânjuia on the Mara" (an old agrarian custom) is held every year, and roads of all kinds.



Start: Sat Șugatag;
Finish: Mara/Sat Șugatag;
Reference points: Sat Șugatag - Iezerul Mare - Cheile Tătarului - Barajul Runcu - Mara - Desești - Hărniciești - Sat Șugatag;
Distance: 25 km/32.9 km; **Elevation difference:** 450 m; **Trail grade:** maximum - 27%; average - 5.3%; **Difficulty level:** **D**

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 Igriș volcanic plateau; we will pass by a marsh (Iezerul 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 Șugatag on the embankment of the former forest railway. And if we pedal on a former railway, we can choose to make a halt in Desești, a UNESCO site, or one in Hărniciești, where we meet the Rails' Trail.



Highlights:

- Beautiful wooded landscapes
- Creasta Cocosului - natural reserve

Highlights:

- Spectacular scenery
- Adventurous downhill rides
- Blazed trails
- The UNESCO church in Budești Josani (1643)

Highlights:

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

Highlights:

- The Ocna Șugatag Weekly Fair
- The Sârbi Susani wooden church (1639)
- The Călinești Căeni wooden church (1629)
- Craftspeople and traditional installations
- The Gavrilă Lake - the largest salt mining lake in Romania
- The UNESCO monument wooden church in Budești Josani (1643)

Highlights:

- The old wooden churches in Breb (1622), Hoteni (1790), Hărniciești (1679), Sat Șugatag (1699), and Mânăstirea (17c)
- The rural landscape
- The Crăișca Forest - nature reserve
- The Gavrilă Lake
- Craftspeople's workshops

Highlights:

- Glorious mountain landscape
- Barajul Runcu (The Runcu Dam)
- The UNESCO church in Desești (18c)
- Turbăria Iezerul Mare, Cheile Tătarului - protected areas
- The old wooden churches in Hărniciești (1679) and Sat Șugatag (1699)

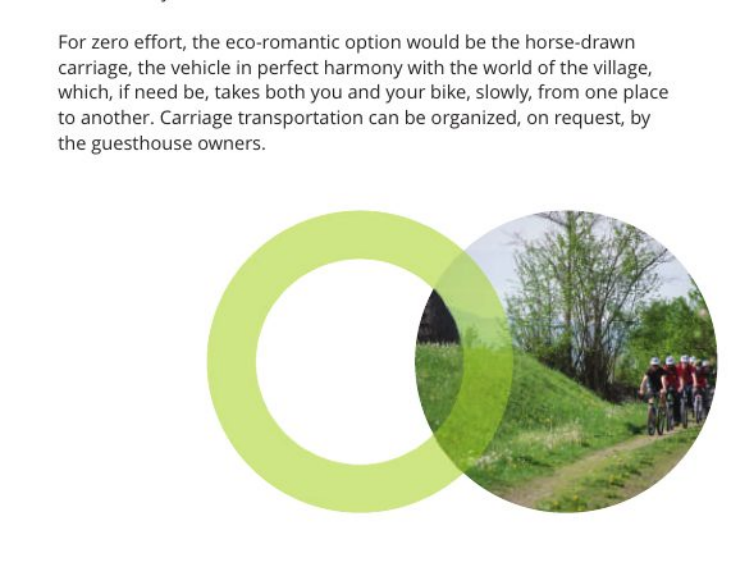
The Easy Ways

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 cyclists.

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 **Desești - Sat Șugatag** and **Ocna Șugatag - Ferești** routes, 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 of effort only.

For zero effort, the eco-romantic option would be the horse-drawn carriage, the vehicle in perfect harmony with the world of the village, which, if need be, takes both you and your bike, slowly, from one place to another. Carriage transportation can be organized, on request, by the guesthouse owners.



Cycle-Friendly Accommodation

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

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

Contact:

Village Hotel	349 Breb, Tel: +40 725 141 545, E-mail: info@villagehotel.ro, www.villagehotelmaramures.com
Babou Maramures Camping & Hostel	149 Breb, Tel: +40 768 397 339, E-mail: info@baboumaramures.com, www.baboumaramures.com
Lucia Guesthouse	285 Breb, Tel: +40 762 107 084, E-mail: pensiunealuciabreb@yahoo.ro, www.pensiunealucia.com
Budești	
Maramures Resort	266 A Budești, Tel: +40 735 226 607, E-mail: office@maramures-resort.ro, www.maramures-resort.ro
Desești	
Irina Guesthouse	259 Desești, Tel: +40 747 076 935, Email: pensiuneirinaidesești@yahoo.ro, www.pensiuneirina.weebly.com
Ocna Șugatag	
Popasul din Deal Guesthouse	1D Uniri Str, Ocna Șugatag, Tel: +40 744 598 842, E-mail: popasuldindeal@gmail.com, www.popasul.ro
Tiplea Guesthouse	14 Avram Iancu, Ocna Șugatag, Tel: +40 749 581 135, E-mail: pensiunetiplea@gmail.com, www.pensiunea-tiplea.ro

		Number of beds / campsite pitches	Bicycle rental / No. of bikes	Bicycle parking	Bicycle storage	Safety equipment	Tools kit	Bicycle washing	Bicycle trails information	Cycling GPS	Bicycle pickup	Wi-fi	Breakfast	Kitchen for guest use
Popasul din Deal Guesthouse 1D Uniri Str, Ocna Șugatag, Tel: +40 744 598 842, E-mail: popasuldindeal@gmail.com, www.popasul.ro	16													
	20													
	21													
	14													
	9													
Tiplea Guesthouse 14 Avram Iancu, Ocna Șugatag, Tel: +40 749 581 135, E-mail: pensiunetiplea@gmail.com, www.pensiunea-tiplea.ro	16													
	16													
	30													
	20													

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 Cocosului 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 Șugatag. Information about our past and present projects is found here: www.ecoLogic.org.ro.

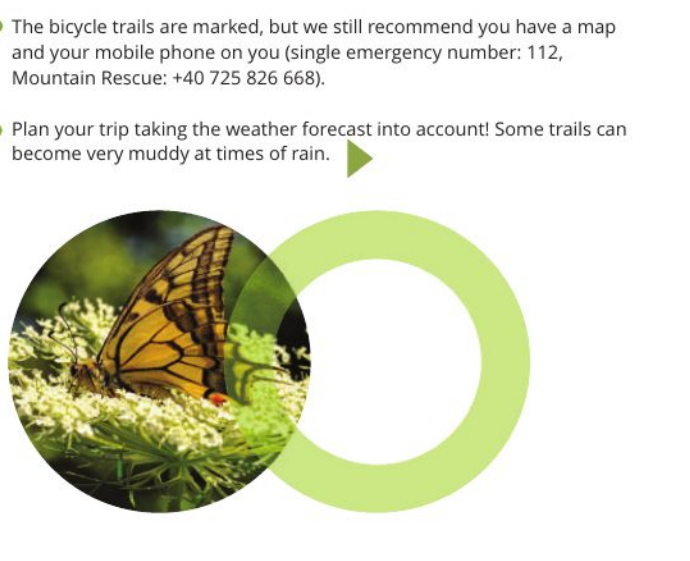
How can we partake in an organized tour? Who provides transportation services? What other activities are there in Maramureș? These are questions to which the Greenway Tour Travel Agency can provide answers: MaramuresGreenways.ro.



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 Maramureș. 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.

And, last but not least,

Protect nature: do not throw litter on the ground, respect the vegetation, silence, and other tourists!



"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 leave you sweaty, tanned and definitely for ever in love with these places."

(Pancras Dijk, National Geographic)



