The History of Alba Iulia

Website address:  www.apulum.ro

Alba Iulia had a very important contribution to the history of human settlements and fortified citadels.

The city is situated at an old gold and salt commercial crossroads, into the perimeter formed by the rivers Ampoi and Sebes and the crests of the Apuseni Mountains that mount mildly and lithely towards the terrace of the river Mures and the Transylvanian Hills. The gentle climate and the richness of the soil rendered this area habitable even since ancient times. Archeologists register rich vestiges of the material culture - dating since Neolithic, Bronze Era, Hallstatt, Latene and Middle Ages - undeniable proof of our continuity on these territories.

The tribe of the Dacians from "the far-off Appulus" is mentioned in "Consolatio ad Liviam - Poetae latini minores", and the geographer Ptolemaios revealed in his "Geographical Guide" (written in the first half of the second century) the coordinates of the city: 49°15' longitude - 46° 41' latitude.

The XIII Gemina Legion is to be billeted here in one of the major stoned Roman camps during the years Dacia was a Roman province. Along with the Dacians, the new comers (the Romans), "ex toto orbe romano", are the ancestors of the Romanian people, appropriating the Dacian ancient toponym Apoulon (a fortress situated at Piatra Craivii, 20 km North of Alba Iulia, which became the Roman Apulum).

Two roman cities, first municipia and later collonia, have developed near the Roman camps, into the fortress, but also nearby the Mures river, in Partos.

The settlings became two of the most wealthy and important places of Dacia - ("Chrysopolis" 251-253 d. Chr.) - outstanding in diversity and the novelty of the local civilization.

Temples and polychrome mosaics, thermae and statues, amphitheaters, porticos, the governor's palace "Daciarum Trium" - that would be in brief the synthesis of this important military-political, economic-commercial and cultural-artistic center, the miniature copy of the mother Rome. Imperialism had irreversibly and unmistakably marked the existence and the consciousness of the Romanced popular Latin speaker inhabitants.

This was the beginning of a new world - orbs romana. The settling continuity, the pre-early and late feudal towns and graveyards, the hoards, the rotunda baptistery uncovered from the Roman-Catholic Cathedral's floor, the presence of Hyeroteos who came here straight from Constantinopol, indicate the existence of a Christian world with Byzantine background and of an important political center - the Principality of Bălgrad.

Middle Age was earlier here, Alba being certified as a county in 1171, then as "civitas", along with Brasov, Sibiu and Rodna. The first documentary reference Alba Iulia had been made in 1276, and was then taken over and consequently translated as Bălgrad or Gyulafehérvár.

An Episcopal citadel and an important political, military and ecclesiastic center of the province, Alba Iulia reached an important climax between 1542-1690, being the capital of the independent Principality of Transylvania and "the residence of the Transylvanian princes", as
the traveler Evlia Celebi eloquently wrote. Famous rulers and voivodes, musicians and painters, ambassadors and scholars, engineers and doctors met in "the city of fine arts", endowing this "Transylvanian Heidelberg" with a new glowing.

An important commercial center, a real foundation stone of the province and of the entire South-Eastern European world, the city has gained a special cultural importance due to the notable accomplishments in the bishops Ladislau Gereb and Francis Varday's time but mostly during the prince Gabriel Bethlen's time.

The well-known Collegium Academicum, the first higher educational institution in Transylvania, which had been running since 1622, boasted for about four decades some of the most brilliant representatives of the European Humanism and Renaissance: Apaczai Csere Janos, Martin Opitz, Alstedius, Biserfeldius, Johannes Piscator, genuine titans with passion for knowledge and multilaterality. Nowadays the local universities continue the tradition of the old academic schools.

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On the first of November 1599, once with the voivode Michael the Brave's victorious arrival, Alba Iulia has become the capital of the first political union of all Romanians. His military, administrative, cultural and national accomplishments represent a seal-symbol of the Transylvanian map and of Romanian people's consciousness. The mitropoly that he had founded here, "our most resistant and useful establishment from this side of the Carpathians", symbolizes the integration of Transylvania into the great Romania.

Having been overtaken by the Austrian suzerainty after 1700, the city of Alba Iulia had experienced fundamental changes between 1714-1738 and therefore became a real military bulwark, a monument of baroque architecture built in Vauban style.

Alba Iulia has the greatest and best-preserved fortress of this kind in Romania, which has become an effigy of the city. The serfs revolt led by Horea, Closca and Crisan, tragically put down in February 28th 1785 on the Pitchfork Hill, makes the city a seal symbol of the fight for justice and freedom.

Eloquently defined by Nicolae Iorga as "the cultural municipality", Alba Iulia also honored its reputation through the synods organized by the Romanian priests, through public assemblies of Astra (1866, 1875, 1886) and those of the Romanian Theatre Fund Society (1878, 1909), through papers and publications, the well known names of St. Ludwig Roth, Mihai Eminescu, Nicolae Iorga, Octavian Goga, Lucian Blaga, Liviu Rebreanu, Iuliu Maniu, Constantin Daicoviciu ennobling the city.
On the 1st of December 1918 another glorious page of history was written in the citadel of martyrdom and glory, as a corollary of its millenary history. Here, in Alba Iulia, on the Field of Horea, 100,000 Romanians and 1,228 delegates have democratically, plebiscitarily and irrevocably decided the Unification of Transylvania with the mother country, accomplishing the dream of many generations.

A new historical stage came to an end, a stage also outlined on the 15th of October 1922 by "our defining in terms of history", through the crowning of the Great Romania's monarchs, the King Ferdinand the 1st, the Unificator and his queen Mary, in the People's Reunification Cathedral.

As an acknowledgement of its contribution to the history of our nation, in 1944 the Romanian Parliament has stated Alba Iulia as the "Great Unification Citadel".

**Partner cities**

The concept of city partnerships has had a great impact on post-war Europe, serving to bring people closer together after times of great hardship and turmoil. Alba Iulia is in partnership with 9 cities from Europe: Arnsberg, Székesfehérvár, Nazareth Illia, Aeghio, Alcalá de Henares, Sliven, Duzce, San Benedetto del Tronto and Varese (Italy, since 2003).

**ARNSBERG - Germany**
Web site: [www.arnsberg.de](http://www.arnsberg.de)
Mayor: Hans Josef Vogel
Alba Iulia is in partnership with the city of Arnsberg since 1974; in Arnsberg is active a non-profit organization called 'Pro Alba Iulia'. Arnsberg Town Hall has helped in setting up a foundation for child protection in Alba Iulia. Constantly it helps the County Hospital and the Elderly Sanitarium with money, furniture, equipments and medical care.

**SZEKESFEHERVAR - Hungary**
Web site: [www.szekesfehervar.hu](http://www.szekesfehervar.hu)
Mayor: Tihamer Warvasowsky
Székesfehérvár lies on the north side of Mezoföld between lake Balaton and Budapest. It has a population of 106 thousand people which is the 8. highest in the country. With its 170.9 sq km, Székesfehérvár is the second largest county center in Transdanubia. Székesfehérvár is the administrative, economical and cultural center of Fejér county.
The mayor Mircea Hava is Honored Citizen of Székesfehérvár.
Partner with Alba Iulia since 1990.

**NAZARETH ILLIT - Israel**
Web site: [www.nazareth-illit.muni.il](http://www.nazareth-illit.muni.il)
Mayor: Menachim Ariav
The city, founded in 1957, boasts an outstanding educational system and a reputation throughout Israel for its highly successful program of immigrant absorption. From 1990 and 1995, its population has doubled.
With 45,000 residents Nazareth Illit is the capital of the Galilee region.
Alba Iulia is partner with this city since 1994.

**AEGHIO - Greece**
Web site:
Mayor: Alekos Megaris
Aeghio, a city 40 km east of Patras and 175 km west of Athens.
Aeghio is in the Peloponnese, built on the south coast of the Corinthian Gulf.
Alba Iulia is partner with this city since 2001.

**ALCALÁ DE HENARES - Spain**
Web site: [www.ayto-alcaladehenares.es](http://www.ayto-alcaladehenares.es)
Mayor: Manuel Peinado Lorca
The City of Alcalá de Henares, birthplace of Miguel de Cervantes, was named a World Heritage site by UNESCO in December 1998, in recognition of the fact that Alcalá was the first city to be designed and built solely as the seat of a university, and was to serve as the model for other centres of learning in Europe and America. In Alcalá de Henares live a large Romanian minority. Partner with Alba Iulia since 2002.

SLIVEN - Bulgaria
Web site: www.sliven.bg
Mayor: Jordan Letchkov
Sliven municipality is one of the biggest in the country. Its territory is 1366 sq. km and it comprises of 48 settlements. Its population is 148 000 people, 110 000 of whom live in Sliven. Sliven is famous for its clean fresh air, clean water sources, meek winter and cool summer. The city is partner with alba Iulia since 2002.

DUZCE - Turkey
Web site: www.duzce-bld.gov.tr
Mayor: Ruhi Kurnaz
Partner with Alba Iulia since 2002.
Between the two cities is developing various cultural exchange programmes.

SAN BENEDETTO DEL TRONTO - Italy
Web site: www.comune.san-benedetto-del-tronto.ap.it
Mayor: Paolo Perazzoli
San Benedetto Del Tronto is a very important tourist resort at Adriatic Sea, being part of the Le Marche region. Partner with Alba Iulia since 2001.