

# LIFE BY THE IMPERIAL ROAD

## Roman Provincial Excavation and Survey

### ROMAN PROVINCIAL LANDSCAPE STRATEGIES

Transylvania, Romania

June 1 – July 5 2014

During the Roman colonial occupation, southern Transylvania shows a very dynamic and intensive synthesis of Roman provincial life, where a multitude of processes of colonization and creolization take place side by side. Prior to the Roman conquest of 102AD, it was also the most densely populated region of the Dacian Kingdoms.

Our project seeks to explore and understand the integration of all the structural provincial elements present along the main Roman axes of communication and transport. Our research area is in the immediate proximity of both the imperial road and the Mures River, the extremely important gold deposits of the Carpathian Gold Mountains, and the political and military centers of *Sarmizegetusa Ulpia Traiana* and *Apulum*. We will continue the excavation of the well preserved structures identified during our 2013 field season.



Our 2014 excavations will aim at understanding the importance and impact of the proximity of the main axis of movement, communication and commerce on the Roman provincial rural life, and its evolution through time. This extraordinary environment and its associated monuments, and material culture, combined with spectacular surrounding natural landscapes and beautiful Transylvanian churches and castles, guarantees all students and volunteers with an incredible archaeological and cultural experience.



Duration: 5 weeks (2 weeks minimum stay)

Costs: US\$1585 for 5 weeks. It includes:

- Excavation registration, taxes, fees and most gear
- Housed as guests of Romanian families in a beautiful traditional Transylvanian village
- Full room and board – Monday-Friday

### TO APPLY:

For information and application procedure:

[www.archaeotek.org](http://www.archaeotek.org)

Contact us:

[archaeology@archaeotek.org](mailto:archaeology@archaeotek.org)

- ROMAN PROVINCIAL LANDSCAPE STRATEGIES -  
ON THE EDGE OF THE EMPIRE :  
DAILY LIVES BY THE ROMAN IMPERIAL ROADS

**TRANSYLVANIA, ROMANIA**  
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## Excavation Context



By the beginning of the first century AD, the Roman Empire reached its zenith. The conquest of Dacia was the last great expansion of Rome. Since the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, under the great king Burebista, the Dacians start to get involved in Roman politics. Domitian's failure to annex Dacia and subsequent Roman military defeats at the hands of the Dacians made the Danube frontier a target of essential importance for the Empire. It took Trajan, one of Rome's greatest military minds, two wars (102 AD and 106AD) to subjugate and colonize the mighty Dacians, or as Herodotus described them, "the bravest and fairest of all the Thracians". The Dacians were the only (and last) entity left in Europe to pose a real threat to Rome... culturally, economically, politically and military. The synthesis between Dacia and Rome, from the conquest in 102/106 until the Aurelian retreat in 271/275, sustained the Roman Empire for another two centuries. Dacians are the people most immortalized in Roman imperial statuary. The Transylvanian gold has kept Roman economy out of bankruptcy at the same time as the Dacian auxiliaries have manned the Imperial armies to the point of having an emperor of Dacian origin, Maximinus Thrax.



Our research area is situated between the richest gold deposits in Europe, the Dacian Kingdom's political and religious capital and its fortified satellites in the Carpathian Mountains, and *Sarmizegetusa Ulpia Traiana*, the Roman capital of the Dacian provinces and the first Roman city North of the Danube, southwestern Transylvania was a highly integrated military, political, and economic region. During the Roman colonial occupation, 102-271AD, our target area around Simeria and Rapolt

shows a very dynamic and intensive synthesis of Roman provincial life, where a multitude of processes of colonization and creolization take place side by side.



Bordering to the south the Gold Mountains with their extraordinarily well preserved Roman mining town of *Alburnus Maior* (Rosia Montana), the importance of this area is further enhanced by the immediate proximity of the most navigable waterway in Transylvania, the Mures River, and one of the imperial roads from *Sarmizegetusa* to *Apulum* (Alba Iulia), capital of *Dacia Apulensis*. As such, the region was intensely populated by a great variety of settlements, ranging from small towns (*municipia*) to villages (*vici*), to small river harbors and road way stations (*manisones* and *cauponae*). Another feature that contributed to the variety of Roman provincial life in the region is the multitude of mineral and thermal springs in the area. As a result, the Roman landscape has seen an explosion of baths, such as those at *Aquae* (Calan) and *Germisara* (Geoagiu Bai), and of *villae rusticae*.

## Project Description

Our project seeks to explore and understand the integration of all these structural provincial elements along the main Roman axes of communication and transport. The area of interest is situated between the modern town of Simeria and the Rapolt commune. Its value to our “provincial road side” integration study is the immediate proximity of both the imperial road and the Mures River, the extremely important gold deposits of the Carpathian Gold Mountains, and the political and military centers of *Sarmizegetusa Ulpia Traiana* and *Apulum*. Prior to the Roman conquest of 102AD, it was also the most densely populated region of the Dacian Kingdoms.



In 2014, we will be exploring a couple of the well preserved Roman structures identified during our 2013 survey and excavation, by the imperial road. Our excavations will aim at understanding the importance and impact of the proximity of the main axis of movement, communication and commerce on the Roman provincial rural life, and its evolution through time. This extraordinary environment and its associated monuments, settlements and

material culture, combined with spectacular surrounding natural landscapes and beautiful Transylvanian churches and castles, guarantees all students and volunteers with an incredible archaeological and cultural experience.

## Objectives

1. excavate the identified Roman structures
2. establish the relationship between the Roman sites, the communication axes and surrounding landscape
3. investigate the question of the processes of Roman occupation and the aftermath of the Dacian Wars as it is illustrated by the abundance and variety of artifacts present along the Imperial communication axes
4. investigate the relationship between the Late Iron Age settlements and the Roman sites
5. conduct a large scale soil phosphate and surface survey to identify all instances of Roman human activity in the area and its temporal intensity



## Specialized Skills Taught

Several lectures will be offered to our volunteers, ranging from local history and archaeology to material culture typologies and architecture, and several guided tours to local archaeological sites. Students will be taught the proper use of various field tools. Explanations will be provided for every step of the excavation, on stratigraphy, field finds and archaeological complexes. We expect our volunteers to be intellectually involved in the archaeological process and thus interacting with the research staff.

Students and volunteers will also join for several days, if possible, the Terra Dacica AETerna, a Daco-Roman reenactment group. As such, they will have the opportunity to handle ancient armor and weapons, practice experimentally ancient crafts such as forging, weaving, cooking, etc.



### Skill sets taught during the project:

**Excavation:** proper use of all excavating tools, proper excavation techniques as they are implemented in different environments for different purposes, profile management, stratigraphic column extraction for microstratigraphic analysis, sampling, artifact and sample packaging, recording, drawing.

**Survey techniques as they apply to:** GPS topographic survey, archaeological survey, soil and phosphate survey.

**Laboratory:** phosphate analysis, flotation, artifact processing, GIS mapping.

## Research Team

1. Scientific Director: Dr. Gica Baestean (Expert Archaeologist, Dacian and Roman Civilization Museum, Deva, Romania)
2. Project Coordinator: Prof. Andre Gonciar (Director, Archeological Techniques and Research Center, ArchaeoTek - Canada)
3. Field Director: Alexander Brown (Archeological Techniques and Research Center, ArchaeoTek - Canada), Angelica Balos (Archaeology Specialist, D.J.C.C.P.N.C.), Dr. Marius Barbu (Expert Archaeologist, Dacian and Roman Civilization Museum, Deva, Romania) you expect the newsletter to be at the height of its circulation.

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