

A Soldier's Life on the Edge of Europe

Castrum Cumidava: Home of the VI *Cohors Cumidavensis*

Archaeology of the Roman Frontier

Rasnov, Transylvania, Romania

July 5 - August 8, 2015



Duration: 5 weeks (2 weeks minimum)
Costs: US\$1575 for 5 weeks. (\$450/week for short stays)

It includes:

- Excavation registration, taxes, fees and most gear
- Housed in double/triple occupancy rooms with private bathrooms in a beautiful hotel in Rasnov, a few miles from Bram Stoker's Bran Castle
- Breakfast and dinner - Monday-Friday

ROMAN MILITARY EXCAVATION AND SURVEY

The Transylvanian Limes (*Limes Alutanus*) was the richest, hard fought and unstable European frontier of the Roman Empire. Our project seeks to explore the human dimension of the military presence on the imperial frontier, assessing the military aspects of Roman colonization from various anthropological perspectives. We are first and foremost interested in the different vectors of creolization resulting from the dynamic cultural, social, economic, religious, political and military interaction between the “representatives” of the Empire and the autochthonous Dacians. Our multiscalar and multidirectional approaches aim at exploring the various elements that constituted the daily lives and practices of the soldiers and how they responded to the imperatives and pressures generated by the liminal environments emerging on the imperial frontier.

The VI *Cohors Cumidavensis*, stationed in *Castrum Cumidava* on the Transylvania Limes, was likely formed in Noricum, from German Romanized conquered populations. Through the exploration of their barracks, we will focus on the evolution of their personal and military practices as they dynamically integrate their Germanic origins, Roman imperatives and Dacian local realities. The excavation takes us from the early Dacian Wars wooden *castrum* to the stone fort abandoned during the Aurelian Retreat of 271AD.

This project will introduce our participants to a multidisciplinary integrative approach, combining excavation, remote sensing, and geophysical, geochemical and field survey. They will learn to operate a ground penetrating radar, conduct phosphate surveys and perform geospatial analyses, such as military terrain analysis and/or using various vegetation indices to locate other structures as well as the civilian settlement(s) associated with the *castrum*.



FOR MORE INFORMATION: www.archaeotek-archaeology.org
CONTACT US: archaeology@archaeotek.org

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ROMAN MILITARY EXCAVATION AND SURVEY

The Transylvanian Limes (*Limes Alutanus*) was the richest, hard fought and unstable European frontier of the Roman Empire. The conquest of Dacia has been a long and arduous process. After the humiliating peace forced on Domitian in 88AD and the destruction of several legions, Trajan managed to conquer Transylvania after two hard fought wars in 102 and 106AD. Dacian resources has allowed the Roman Empire to keep its economy afloat for another two centuries.

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Castrum Cumidava is situated half way between the amazing medieval city of Brasov and Bram Stoker's Dracula's Bran Castle, at the foot of the imposing Bucegi Mountains, near the small city of Rasnov with its medieval fortress overlooking the Barsa Valley. It is one of the best places to experience Transylvania and its incredibly rich archaeology, history and natural beauty.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The region of Transylvania (Romania) has been one of the most important frontiers of Old Europe. Its huge and easily accessible salt deposits made it unavoidable since domestication took place in the early Neolithic. Large deposits of copper, tin, iron, silver and gold transformed this region into political, economic, cultural and, of course, military focal point from the rise of the Metal Ages forward. Its prehistory saw the rise of great civilizations such as the Ariusd-Cucuteni Culture during the Eneolithic and the mighty Dacians during the second Iron Age. The latter played an important role in the evolution of the Roman Republic and Empire, as attested by the pervasive Dacian imagery present throughout the



Our project, formerly known as *Cumidava* Archaeological Research Project (CARP), is an international endeavor seeking to better understand what is occurring in Dacia after the Roman conquest. By focusing on small scale interactions between Roman legions and Dacian civilians, we seek to understand what it actually meant to the average person to now be subjected to Roman rule.

Castrum Cumidava was established during the Daco-Roman wars (102-106 A.D.), and was utilized for roughly 150 years by the Romans. This duration, along with evidence of several building episodes, indicates that the fort was an important part of the Roman *limes* in present day Transylvania. Even though the inside of the fort has been explored for many years, only recently has research begun on what was occurring just outside of the fort's walls. This work began in 2010, by conducting an intensive survey of the area to locate the civilian settlement(s) that would have supported the fort. As a result of that survey, a promising location has been found, as well as some additional areas that also seem to be tied to the fort, but in what capacity is still unclear. 2011 - 2013 seasons were devoted to *intra muros* excavation, digging through the second phase of the barracks. Last summer, we uncovered the Roman road that transected the fort, and found many assorted artifacts, from Roman coins to what may turn out to be a cursed tablet, which was found directly under the road.

During the 2015 season, we will continue the excavation of the *castrum*. Following the discoveries from the barracks' area of *Castrum Cumidava* from the 2011-2014 seasons, we will be looking at how soldiers would have used the space in terms of short, medium and long term practices and, and how the area shifted in use in the fort's later stages. In addition, we will be conducting several geophysical surveys using a ground penetrating radar (GPR) to better understand the evolution of the *castrum* throughout the Roman occupation and attempt to identify the civilian settlement(s), as well as find out the association of the other points of interest. At the same time, we will investigate the interaction between the foreign soldiers and the local Dacian populations, trying to establish vectors of creolization. We will conduct several remote sensing, geospatial and military terrain analyses to better understand the integration of the *castrum* in the landscape. The mix of established site along with exploratory work will offer a great deal of opportunity to experience different styles of archaeology, as well as dealing with research of forward thinking ideas about the past.



OBJECTIVES

1. To excavate the interior of the Roman castrum
2. To establish the relationship between the castrum Cumidava, communication axes and surrounding landscape
3. To investigate the processes of Roman occupation and evolution of local creolization
4. To investigate the relationship between the castrum Cumidava, other settlement(s) and landscape features.
5. To conduct a large scale soil phosphate and surface survey to attempt to locate the civilian settlement(s)
6. To construct a detailed map of the *castrum*, its associated structures *intra* and *extra muros* using a GPR
7. To conduct several remote sensing and geospatial analyses, and test the results in the field.

SPECIALIZED SKILLS TAUGHT

The project is designed to be an immersive and integrative archaeological experience. In addition to hands-on training with regular operation of excavation, recording and survey equipment (including geochemical processing, GPR and total station operation), a variety of lectures and guided site tours will be provided in order to broaden students' understanding of the archaeological process.

Lectures will cover a range of topics from local culture and history to archaeological materials, methods and theories, Roman social history and archaeology. Visits to other sites and museums will put our work in context and bolster students' applicable background knowledge. Additionally, our relationship with Romania's premier Daco-Roman reenactment group, Terra Dacica Aeterna offers students a glimpse of practices in experimental archaeology and an interactive experience with ancient customs, clothing, crafts, weapons and technology. We are seeking participants eager to engage actively with both the ancient context we are exploring and the immediate modern context within which we do our work.



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, ground penetrating radar (GPR) survey, archaeological survey, soil and phosphate survey.

Laboratory: phosphate analysis, flotation, artifact processing, GIS mapping., remote sensing analysis, military terrain analysis, geospatial integration

TENTATIVE LECTURE SERIES

1. Intro to Archaeological Field & Lab Methods
2. History of Cumidava: Previous Excavations and Local Context
3. Dacia : From the Iron Age through the Roman Occupation
4. Dacian Wars - Context of Conflict - from Domitian to Trajan
5. The Roman Way of War - Architecture and Strategy
6. The Roman Way of War - Organization of Army Groups, Equipment, Weapons, Armor, etc.
7. Provincial Policies from Trajan to the Aurelian Retreat
8. CRM vs. Academic Excavation: a Comparative Approach

Technical lectures:

1. Principle of geolocation - GPS, total station
2. Ground Penetrating Radar - principles, theory and method
3. Geochemical Survey – Phosphate Soil Analysis: Theories and Method
4. Site Preservation Methods
5. Military Terrain Analysis
6. Intro to Remote Sensing Archaeology

RESEARCH TEAM

1. Scientific Director: Dr. Liviu Petculescu (Expert Archaeologist, National Museum of History of Romania, Bucharest, Romania)
2. Project Coordinator: Prof. Andre Gonciar (Director, Archaeological Techniques and Research Center, ArchaeoTek – Canada)
3. Field Directors: Jeremy Miller (Archaeological Techniques and Research Center, ArchaeoTek – Canada), Dr. Alvaro Ibarra (College of Charleston), Darren Poltorak (Archaeological Techniques and Research Center, ArchaeoTek – Canada), Dr. Stelian Cosulet (Expert Archaeologist, Brasov County History Museum, Brasov, Romania)

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