

City tours of Timișoara

relaxing walks in a historical urban landscape

There are many occasions, on which a city tour of Timișoara is welcomed: a Timișoara-based company has guests from abroad, or a group of tourists wishes to visit Timișoara as part of a larger roundtrip of Romania a.s.o. For all of these situations we offer our 8 years of experiences with the city tours of Timișoara.

What does Timișoara offer?

- the Romanian city with the highest numbers of buildings registered as monuments – they cover almost entirely four old districts (neighbourhoods)
- a highly interesting history, with countless interesting European connections
- a multicultural background
- dramatic events of contemporary history: the beginning of the Romanian Revolution of December 1989
- a young, dynamic atmosphere (university centre)

Of course, there are piles of information available about this city.

But let's cut the long story short: everybody had to do with Timișoara: from Maria Theresia, to Franz Joseph, and from Sigismund of Luxemburg, to Nicolae Ceaușescu.

It's your turn now!



Short city tour

Our most popular city tour contains the downtown (quarter "Cetate", the former "Inner City") and catches the essential of Timișoara: countless old buildings in the styles of Art Nouveau or Baroque, large pedestrianized squares filled with European history, the multicultural character of the city and of the Banat region ("in the Banat, even the dog barks in four languages").

Especially suitable for people coming to Timișoara on professional visits, and don't have much spare time. The short city tour fits smoothly between the busy work schedule and dinner.

Route. Whatever the exact route might be (this might differ slightly, depending on pick-up point and the exact interests of the guests), we will visit all of the "must-see" points of Timișoara:

- **Victory Square** (or "Opera Square" with the locals), with the Romanian-Orthodox cathedral (visit inside, if opened), Opera House and Theatre, Art Nouveau (Wiener Secession) palaces on the "Corso"-row, the events which took place in the square during the Revolution.
- **Liberty Square** with the Old City Hall (with the Turkish inscription),

military casino, Turkish cannons, depending on time perhaps also the nearby synagogue and the area of the old hospitals.

- **Union Square** (former Dome Sq.) with the Catholic dome-church, Serbian-Orthodox cathedral, President's Palace ("Baroque Palace", today Arts Museum), other old palais, statue of the Holy Trinity ("Pillar of the Plague") a.s.o.
- The **"Bastion"** area: remains of the huge (post-)Vauban-type fortress of Timișoara.

On each of this points, we answer the basic questions: When? Who? Why? But don't expect this to be so simple and straightforward. This basic questions often lead to in-depth discussions – history shows in Timișoara its complicated ways... Our guidings are far from "reciting a poetry". Even if we conduct many of this "short city tours" each year, there are hardly two of them quite the same.

Duration: some 1½ to 2 hours. This depends a lot on your time and interest in the topics. Are you fascinated by history & old architecture, and have many questions? We're glad! On our side, there's no problem if the tour takes 2½ hours.



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Medium city tour

This is a step further (or “deeper”) than the previous tour, for you to know this fascinating city. We visit the downtown (similar to the “short city tour”), but then head east and see the old neighbourhood called “Fabric” - this is basically a beautiful display of valuable architecture. After receiving insightful infos, we deserve a beer break at the oldest brewery in (nowadays) Romania.

Route. The first part (some 1.5 hrs) is similar to the short city tour described previously: we visit the sites on Victory Square, Liberty Sq. and Union Sq., respectively. From the Bastion we then head east, passing by the former German high-school “Banatia” (now University of Medicine) and the County Office (“prefectura”) - a place which knew a very troubled time during the Revolution in December 1989.

Then we cross the river Bega on the former “Parkstraßenbrücke” (now Decebal bridge) and reach the Fabric district. The whole area makes a wonderful reserve of Art Nouveau architecture: the fancy bridge, the richly-decorated “palais” of the bourgeoisie, the gate of the park – they all belong to this style. Behind the park is the Neologue synagogue, lavishly adorned with “Moorish” touches.

As we pass the large-scaled Millennium church (neo-Romanesque), we get near the heart of the Fabric district. This is the Traian Square, surrounded by other nice examples of old architecture (Art Nouveau and Classicism).

The tour ends at the Timișoreana “Beer Factory” (brewery). The beer production started already 1718, being initially intended especially for the soldiers of the Austrian army (!). We can not visit the brewery inside, but there are here nice places to have a beer: the large, old hall (in winter) or the Biergarten (summertime). Actually, the restaurant of the brewery can be considered for a full lunch or meal (prices more than reasonable, but the service somewhat slow).



Duration: 3 to 4 hours, depending especially on the time spent at the brewery; the tour without the beer break takes ca. 2½ hours.

for explaining details and social or historical trends, of which even many local people are not aware. There is also enough time for coffee breaks in-between, whenever we need to recharge the batteries.

Route. We start in the downtown (“Inner City”) just like in the previous two versions. The centre of Timișoara is certainly the best place to explain the basics about the city’s evolution, before getting into details. On the other side, this city area is full of first-hand monuments – many of which appeared in connection with European events.

Then we move to the Fabric neighbourhood. After seeing the complex of Art Nouveau architecture near the bridge, the Millennium church and Traian Square, we can have a break at the brewery (just as an idea... there many other spots for a coffee break, but, once we leave the downtown, not so many where we can also eat).

Following is a transfer (by tram, taxi or hired bus, depending on group size, weather, mood) to Elisabetin neighbourhood (there are a few good places here to eat, as well). There is much less traffic here, so we can focus better on the architecture – like the Secession



Big city tour

This city tour takes a whole day, for those of you passionate about history, historical architecture, and observing the “real life” of the locals. We visit all the old districts of Timișoara, starting with the downtown, then Fabric (lunch break possible at the brewery) next we continue to Elisabetin and, lastly, Iosefin. During this we take our time

houses built by the architect Martin Gemeinhardt, and also on the events which triggered the Revolution: the first episodes of the mass movements took place on St. Mary Square (Piața Maria), at the border between the districts Elisabetin and Iosefin.

Next is Iosefin: the main boulevard is bordered with impressive buildings. Among countless large houses of the bourgeoisie, we can also see here the Catholic complex of the nuns' order of Notre Dame, the Orthodox synagogue and also the Baroque Catholic parish church. You might be pretty tired by



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now – in which case we stay “on the human side” and cut short some of the long stories.

At the end of the day, the guests will probably be exhausted, but certainly filled with interesting new (hi)stories.

Duration: 5-6 hours, even up to 8 hours, including the breaks. There is no rush on our side, we are happy to meet people highly interested in our city.

City tour of the Art Nouveau heritage

In the last decades, the Art Nouveau has been quite “trendy”. Many European cities rush to promote it. Here in Timișoara, only (very) few are aware of what a stunning heritage of Art Nouveau is to be admired. The Art Nouveau (also known as Jugendstil, but here, in Timișoara, rather as “Secession” because of the Viennese affiliation) is virtually all over the place.

In this city tour, we don't just talk about buildings and architects. A great deal of explanation goes to understanding the social and economical situation which led to the surprisingly abundant flourishing of this architecture. At the beginning of the XX-th century, Timișoara was still part of the Habsburg Empire, the largest chunk of inhabitants were German-speakers. The demolition of the fortress wall led to an

unprecedented economical revival, which chronologically coincided with the ascension of the architecture based on the “coup de fouet” in Western Europe. The timing was just perfect.

Route. There are two possible routes for 99th the Art Nouveau heritage of Timișoara:

1. The centre (“Inner City”) and the Fabric district
2. The centre (“Inner City”) and the districts of Iosefin and Elisabetin.

Hard to say which of the two is better... The location of your hotel might also play a role, also the existence of restaurants (the restaurants in Iosefin and Elisabetin might meet higher tastes, than those in the Fabric). Following, we describe the 2nd route.

We start in Piața Unirii; even here, in “Timișoara's Baroque treasure chamber”, the beginning of the XX-th century brought in some refreshing changes: we have here two outstanding Secession palaces (Brück and Steiner, respectively), coming from different architects – and hence, with distinctive features. On the narrow streets of the Inner City, the evolution was the same: some older houses, modest and small, were punctually replaced around 1910 with much larger ones, belonging to the new style. In the Victory Square, the place was free from the beginning for large-scaled buildings; here appeared between 1910 and 1914 one of the most coherent complexes of Art Nouveau buildings in Europe. The size of these buildings reminds on the large palaces of the Ringstrasse in Vienna.



How did Timișoara's chief-architect Székely László reshape the outlook of the city around 1910 is the main topic of discussions in this area.

Next, we cross the Bega. Near the German consulate we have the hidden Piața Plevnei (Plevna Sq.), where we find the most elaborate houses of architect Martin Gemeinhardt, but also buildings from other architects – including from Székely. A comparison between the two artists is quite handy here. We conclude the tour with some large palaces built on the boulevard separating the districts of Elisabetin and Iosefin.

Duration: cca. 2 ½ hours. It is recommended to *take this city tour during day time (under day light)*, in order to notice better the architectural details.

City tour of the Revolution in December 1989

It is easy today to resume the events in Timișoara in December 1989 into simple sentences, like “Here started the Revolution which led to the fall of the communist dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu”. However, real life is never so straightforward. In this city tour, we start by presenting Timișoara's (and Romania's) situation in 1989, and then move on to the very beginning of the mass movement. We then follow how the events gained momentum, and finally talk about the bloodshed on Timișoara's street and squares. *Optional, but recommended:* a visit of the Memorial of the Revolution, a



collection of documents about the events, as well as about the communist regime.

Understanding the details of those days is meaningful. In Romania, many legends have developed afterwards, even many people of Timișoara forgot the mesmerizing atmosphere of those days. Just to mention: this city tour would be highly recommended to many of our fellow citizens, from time to time...



who took part in the events and was eventually wounded. The memorial is actually a private collection, and Mr. Orban is not always available (sometimes busy on short notice), this is why we can not guarantee this visit.

Duration: around 2 hrs. (short version) to 3 hrs (version including "Memorialul Revoluției").

Romanian language. The Hungarian language is also sometimes requested.

The city tours take place only on request. There are no daily city tours by fixed schedules.

Starting point & ending point. There are not a 100% fixed points for the start and for the end of the city tour; at many times, we pick up the guests from the hotel (when it has central location), and start right with explanations about the hotel's environment. Just the same, the tours end often right in front of a chosen restaurant. So, we set these points together with the guests.

Additional services. There is normally no need for transportation, but we can arrange that when needed – including transfers from / to the hotel or airport. For après-tour: we can arrange meals (dinners, lunches) or wine-tastings outside Timișoara (Recaș, Buziaș, Miniș), or recommend places.

Flexibility is one of our concerns. We encourage the guests to express their fields of interests, to ask questions; we don't know everything, but we might have some interesting information or hints. We can also easily operate changes of the sites to visit during the city tours, on spot, according to your wishes.

Contact. Please send your enquiries or bookings at info@tymestours.ro or use phone +40 256 203015. Sometimes we are very busy (or off in the mountains for hiking tours), you can also try the mobile phone +40 722 525734 (Cristian Bădoiu, manager and guide).

Route. We start in the Maria Square – were the whole thing started. The Calvinist parish house has seemingly nothing special to it; but on December 15th, 1989, the regime lost here grip of the masses for the first time in decades. We then follow the chain of the events, and move on to the Victory Square – the name says it all. And yet, many lives went lost here on December 17th and 18th, till the speakers could talk freely about a "victory" on December 20th in the balcony of the Opera House. Today only a few holes in some houses speak of the thousands of bullets shot those days. The Liberty Square was also war theatre on December 17th, just as the area of Piața 700 food market was; both area were raided by tanks, people were shot without warning.

There are two options next:

1. We can continue the tour towards the County Office (the "prefectura", headquarter of the Communist Party in the old days, and scenery for many bloody episodes), and then to Decebal Bridge, where many people were shot.
2. We can visit "Memorialul Revoluției", were we talk to Mr. Orban, manager of the memorial,

Other +/- technical data about our city tours

Our city tours are essentially walking tours. Timișoara is not well suitable for sightseeing tours by bus (out of many reasons), even if we sometimes *have to* organize such bus tours. Even then, we try to make as many stops as possible. Out of experience, we can highly recommend the walking tours in Timișoara: one notices much more captivating details, there is also much more interaction with the guide.

Rates. The prices for the tours are varying a lot, depending on the time of the year, size of the group, available guides. We are happy to send you a price offer for each request.

Languages. We conduct the city tour frequently in English and German – for these languages we can in most cases organize a city tour even on short notice. Much less often, the city tours are being held in Serbian, French, Italian. And, surprisingly seldom, we have requests for tours in



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“Inner City” - or, in Romanian, “cartier Cetate”.

This the centre of the city, the downtown. There is a high density of monuments spread on narrow streets or on large, pedestrianized squares. Most foreigners coming to Timișoara only see this central district, and nothing else. This is OK if you only have little time.

All of our city tours include this area.

Fabric district.

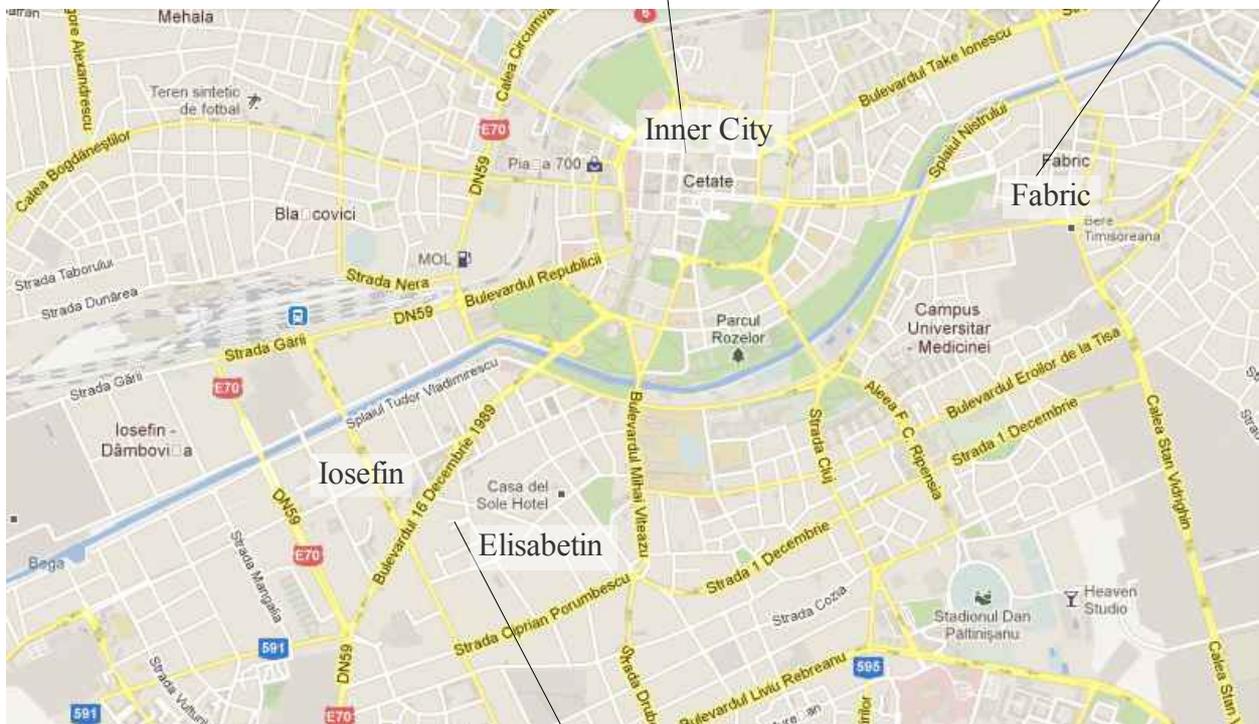
Was the largest suburb of Timișoara already in the XVIII-th century; actually, already then in the Fabric lived more people than in the Inner City. There are thousands of old houses here, of which the complex of Secession architecture in the western part of the district is the most interesting. Also the city's brewery is located in the Fabric district.

The Fabric district is included within:

- the Medium City Tour
- the Big City Tour

Alternatively, we can also arrange a city tour of the Art Nouveau (Secession) architecture.

Source: Google Maps



Iosefin district and Elisabetin district.

Quite close to each other, this districts had pretty different histories and functions within the city. In the late XIX-th century and at the beginning of the XX-th century both districts developed rapidly, in both size and quality of the buildings. The result is a nice display of architecture, the Art Nouveau (Secession) being very valuable.

The two districts are included within:

- the Big City Tour
- the City Tour of the Art Nouveau heritage
- the City Tour of the Revolution in December 1989

It is also possible to organize a city tour just for these two districts.

