With its Baroque and Secession outcroppings and weathered *fin-de-siècle* backstreets, **CLUJ** (officially Cluj-Napoca; Klausenburg in German and Kolozsvár in Hungarian) looks every bit the Hungarian provincial capital it once was. The city’s focal point is **Piaţa Unirii**, surrounded by shops, cafés and restaurants and dominated by the monumental St Michael’s Cathedral. With a clutch of fine **museums** (especially the marvellous Ethnographic Museum), churches and buildings, and buzzing **nightlife**, Cluj could quite easily detain you for several days.

**Brief history**

The city was founded by Germans in the twelfth century, on the site of a Roman Municipium, and the modern-day Magyars – now under a fifth of the city’s population – still regret its decline, fondly recalling the *belle époque* when Kolozsvár’s café society and **literary reputation** surpassed all other Balkan cities. For Romanians, however, this was the city of the Hungarian landlords until 1920; most consider Ceauşescu’s addition of Napoca to its name in 1974 as fair recognition that their Dacian forebears settled here 1850 years ago, long before the Magyars reached Transylvania. It’s rightly said that Romanians live in Cluj and Hungarians still live in Kolozsvár, with separate schools and theatres, though relations between the two communities are healthy. Cluj is also the birthplace of the **Unitarian creed** and its centre in Romania, further adding to the multiethnic, multi-faith cocktail.

Under communism, Cluj was **industrialized** and became Transylvania’s largest city, with a population of over 330,000. Nonetheless it retained something of its old languor, as well as a reputation for being anti-Ceauşescu. From 1992 to 2004, the city was run by **Gheorghe Funar**, the “Mad Mayor”, former leader of the Romanian National Unity Party, and notorious for his anti-Hungarianism – park benches and litter bins were painted in the colours of the Romanian flag, while several absurdly expensive monuments were raised.

Unlike almost every other Romanian city of comparable size, Cluj avoided the construction of a Civic Centre and the widespread demolition of its historic centre, which remains largely unspoiled within the line of the **city walls**. It’s increasingly being **pedestrianized**, allowing stylish new bars and restaurants to flourish; unfortunately the city’s drivers haven’t got the message and are trying to cram more and more cars into the remaining space.