



MUZEUL ASTRA  
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# The `ASTRA` National Museum Complex



Located in the center of Romania, **The `ASTRA` National Museum Complex** is the most important ethno-museum institution in Romania. It was created under the auspices of the Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and Culture of the Romanian People – which was an institution founded in 1861. The `ASTRA` Museum – formerly known as the Association Museum - opened its first exhibition on the 19th of August, 1905. The museum was founded out of the Transylvanian people`s desire to define their own ethno-cultural identity within the Austro-Hungarian Empire multiculturalism and having as background the cultural emancipation of all peoples from the centre and south-east of Europe.

Reorganized under this structure after 1990, the `ASTRA` National Museum Complex has four museum units of ethnographic profile in its structure and a department of anthropological documentary film which are sustained by the following departments: the Conservation and Restoration Department, the Educational Department, the Cultural Marketing Department, the Tourist Information Centre, the `Astra Museum` Publishing House and the Project Management Department.

The most important museum unit is **THE `ASTRA` MUSEUM OF TRADITIONAL FOLK CIVILIZATION – or THE OPEN AIR MUSEUM.**

Situated in the natural reservation of Dumbrava Sibiului, on the road to Rasinari village and to Paltinis ski resort, 8 kilometers away from the city centre, the Open Air Museum spreads across a 96 ha area of which an area of 40 ha is covered by the permanent exhibition which is the largest open air ethnographic exhibition in Europe.

Inaugurated in 1963 under the name of the Museum of Folk Technics, the museum currently has over 400 monuments of folk architecture and technique as well as an impressive collection of ethnographic heritage objects. The collection of mills, the wooden churches, and the traditional homesteads are very popular and very much appreciated.

The museum is divided in 6 thematic sectors, 36 thematic groups and subgroups.

Conceived as a *living museum*, it hosts many traditional events such as: traditional fairs, folk festivals, workshops, performances and much more. The traditional function is kept for the wooden churches where all religious ceremonies specific to Romanian tradition are regularly performed. The exceptional natural landscape makes the open air museum adequate during both summer and winter, for educational visits, relaxing walks, drives by carriage, sleigh or sailing, according to everyone`s taste.

The museum has its own traditional inns, spaces suitable for practical lessons, a lake, a playground, over 400 parking lots and over 10 kilometers of paved alleys.

**THE `ASTRA` MUSEUM OF TRADITIONAL FOLK CIVILIZATION** hosts workshops, handicraft trainings, team buildings, and other recreational activities. The traditional Romanian village reveals the visitor its heritage richness specific to all the ethnographical areas of Romania. Cultural events are organized during the summer season.







The **'Franz Binder' Museum of Universal Ethnography** is located in 11 Small Square, in a historical building, erected between 1865 and 1867, as residence for the Association of Small Craftsmen.

Inaugurated at 18 May 1993, it is the first and the only museum in Romania until now with the purpose to present the public various aspects belonging to the world peoples' culture, civilization and art based on its own collections and through collaborations. Inside the 'ASTRA' ethno-museum Complex, the 'Franz Binder' museum introduces moreover the perspective of the non-European as a knowing alternative and a comparative explaining of the 'difference' as an element of cultural identity.

There are two important stages for the formation and development of the ethnographic heritage at the 'Franz Binder' Museum: the second half of the 19th century and the period after 1990. Thus the collection of 'exotic' ethnography, formed by means of donations made to the Transylvanian Association for Natural Sciences by Saxon travelers and naturalists on other continents, mirrors the journey as form of knowledge and the birth of ethnology as science. They preceded the ethnologists and often obtained amazing results by replacing the academic formation with an ever renewed curiosity.

The founder of the extra - European ethnographic collections from Sibiu - and the one the museum was named after - is Franz Binder (1824-1875), a merchant and a passionate explorer, consul of the Austrian Empire in the Turkish-Egyptian Sudan. In 1862, Franz Binder donates to the Transylvanian Association of Natural Sciences from Sibiu and to the Evangelical Gymnasium from Sebeş, his native town, his collection of African objects (the collections count more than 500 pieces) originated mainly from the South of Sudan, from the tribes in Bhar al-Ghazal region, on the upper course of the White Nile. 'Franz Binder' collection is one of the oldest and richest collection in the world today containing objects from the Southern Sudan: there is only the collection from Venice donated by Giovanni Miani which outnumbers the artifacts from the collection in Sibiu.

The donation made by Hermann von Hannenheim is of great impact. He donated in 1907 an Egyptian mummy in its wooden sarcophagus dating from the late Ptolemaic Period (more than 2000 years old), which comes from Gamhud, an archeological site on the left bank of the Nile.

The 'Franz Binder' Museum doubles its heritage collections by means of donations, collection exchanges and acquisitions after 1990.

Thus the following appear : the Congolese collection Violeta și Cătălin Rang; the collection of costumes of the national minorities in China, a donation of the Embassy of China in Romania; the collection of non-European handicraft, a governmental allocation from the ex protocol presents from 1965-1989 (following the allocations made by the government from 1991 and 1999; ethnographic objects from Japan (exchanges of collections) – traditional toys from the Toys Japanese Museum near Himeji and kimonos, ceramics, *temari* balls, vegetable fibers woven handicrafts, wooden toys, textiles etc. from the Shimane–Transylvania Association; the handicraft collection donated by the diplomatic representatives in Bucharest of the Republic of Ecuador; a Guarani handicraft donation brought from Argentina; the collections of Indonesian ethnography and folk art donated by the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia and by the anthropologist Kate Kerr; the collection of the Indian ethnographic dolls, a donation from the Indian Council for the Cultural Relations from New Delhi; Mayaya & Hliban collection with traditional textiles, little ritual statues, contemporary handicraft objects and photos from the Sub-Saharan Africa; the donation of photos from Altai and Kamchatka, made by Gabriela Medrea, as well as other numerous artifacts which come from all the continents.

The **`ASTRA` Museum of Transylvanian Civilization**, founded in 1993, continues in the concept of *traditional museum* from 1905 when the first national museum of the Romanian people from Transylvania was founded, *The Association Museum*, founded by the **`ASTRA` Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and Folk Civilization**.

The **`ASTRA` Museum of Transylvanian Civilization** is the treasurer of the patrimonial assets inherited from the Association Museum. 9002 objects appear in the inventory register under „A” category divided in collections: embroidery, folk costumes, religious objects, wood-bone-iron, ceramics and dolls. Over the years, these heritage values were presented in various exhibitions organized both in our country as well as abroad.

The **`ASTRA` Museum of Transylvanian Civilization** is conceived as a pluri-ethnic and interdisciplinary museum, its main goal being to define the multiculturalism of a European region with a pluri-ethnic, multisecular coexistence, as well as to highlight these European values and ethnic community in particular.

At present, because of the lack of an appropriate space for a permanent exhibition, its rich heritage, containing 31.717 cultural objects, is in its most part, withdrawn in storages. The **`ASTRA` Museum of Transylvanian Civilization** is still organizing temporary exhibitions in the halls of the „Hermes House” and the „House of Arts”. The **`ASTRA` Museum of Transylvanian Civilization** has initiated and applied the modern concept of *`museum vivum`* or *`living museum`*, its main goal being to rescue, recover and conserve the folk culture. Therefore, under the name of Living Human Treasures, the museum organizes:

- The Fair of the Folk Creators from Romania
- The Association of Folk Creators from Romania
- The Academy of Traditional Arts from Romania
- The National Contest *`Traditional Artistic Handicrafts`*
- The National Festival of Folk Traditions
- The National Festival of Traditions and Customs
- The National Fair of Toys
- The National Fair of Pottery Makers (in collaboration with The County Center for Folk Culture Conservation and Promotion)







The **`EMIL SIGERUS`** Museum of Ethnography and Saxon Folk Art, founded on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, 1997, is located in Sibiu, 21 Small Square in a historical building known under the name `The House of Arts`. The permanent exhibition of the museum, „Transylvanian Terracotta Tiles –XV-XIX centuries” is hosted in 12 Huet Square. The museum`s team of curators undertook a comprehensive program to rescue, conserve and recover the movable and immovable heritage objects of the traditional culture and civilization of Transylvanian Saxons, developing a program whose coordinates are: the initiation of a ethnographical research campaign, the conservation and the research of the collections, recovery of the ethnographic Saxon heritage (but also the Austrian region of the landlers and their late colonization because of religious persecution in the XVII th century), organizing exhibitions, publishing specialized articles and studies, collection of catalogues and advertising materials.

The museum`s heritage has been enriched over the years by means of donations and acquisitions currently amounting to over 8900 objects, conserved in 3 collections: folk costumes-textiles-embroidery, painted furniture and ceramics.

The **`EMIL SIGERUS`** Museum of Saxon Ethnography and Saxon Folk Art organizes temporary exhibitions each year in order to render value to the collections and to illustrate the Transylvanian Saxons` culture, civilization and traditions.

**The `ASTRA Film` Studio** is a center for documentary film and visual anthropology in Romania.

Its main goal is to educate and cultivate the community in the spirit of tolerance and understanding the diversity of the world we live in through film, the most powerful communication channel. The `ASTRA Film` Studio promotes documentary films encouraging the use of film as a tool for the `in and between` cultural understanding.

The `ASTRA Film` Studio is a resource center for filmmakers, professionals, students from the social sciences faculties and for all those interested in the use of visual images to understand, describe, analyze, and interpret culture and society.

The `ASTRA Film` Studio, founded in 1990, manages a documentary film archive of over 4000 titles. Inaugurated in 1993, the ASTRA Film Festival is the first documentary film festival from Romania and became after only 10 editions, the most important film festival dedicated to the creative documentary film from the east-central part of Europe.

The `ASTRA Film` Studio film collection makes way for discovering the world and the people across the globe, through presenting the most interesting documentary films of the last two decades, nonfiction films that have won awards at famous international festivals, and films selected and awarded by ASTRA Film.

**The `Cornel Irimie` Information and Documentation Centre in Ethnology** owns a specialized library and graphics department. The `ASTRA Film` Studio is located in Sibiu, 12 Huet Square.





**The Folk Art Galleries** are exhibitions with sale, where authentic folk art objects from different parts of the country can be purchased: ceramics, wooden toys, painted icons on wood and glass, carpets, folk costumes but also other souvenirs.

**The Folk Art Galleries** are two shops, one located within the precincts of The `ASTRA` MUSEUM OF TRADITIONAL FOLK CIVILIZATION, Sibiu, Calea Rasinari Street, the second being downtown, at the ground floor of "The House of Art", in Sibiu, 21 Small Square. The galleries are open from Tuesday till Sunday, between 10-18, during the summer season and between 9 -17 in the off season. The traditional folk objects are supplemented by the `ASTRA Museum` Library, located also at the ground floor of „The House of Art” where ethnographic books, CDs or DVDs can be bought.

**The traditional Inns** give the visitor the opportunity to spend their holidays within the Astra Museum of Traditional Folk Civilization. The traditional restaurant **Cârciuma din Bătrâni** makes it possible for the tourist to taste traditional dishes in the atmosphere of a yesterday village. The traditional Inn from Tulghes, located at the second entrance in the museum from the main road to Rasinari village, has also an excellent selection of the Romanian traditional dishes. The Traditional Inn from Vestem is located at the third entrance from the main road to Rasinari village, which in addition to the traditional restaurant, offers three- star accommodation comfort. Next to the traditional Inn there is „Vila Diana” hostel which offers two-star accommodation comfort. Details about the cultural-touristic offer of ASTRA National Museum Complex as well as suggestions for organizing a complete stay in the open air museum are offered at The Tourist Information Centre, situated within the precincts of the open air museum, in close vicinity of the main entrance.



Those who wish to deepen their knowledge of the museum can seek information at The Conservation and Restoration Department which supports all efforts of transfer, reconstruction, restoration and conservation of monuments and the construction and maintenance of the entire museum heritage. ASTRA Centre for heritage hosts exhibitions, conferences, professional symposium in addition to the museum`s deposits, conservation and restoration workshops. ASTRA Centre for heritage organizes professional training courses for conservators and restorers.

**The educational department offer** of the `ASTRA` National Museum Complex allows public to get accustomed to the atmosphere and values of the traditional village, to discover or to get specialized in traditional craftsmanship and to learn through play etc. The educational activities are found in most of the museum events, whether it is fair, festival or traditional crafts contest, whether we are dealing with long-term programs which aim also at a certain activity area. Permanent and temporary exhibitions host guided tours and learning workshops and the fairs include practical lessons and workshops. A few yearly events are focused on educational activities: *The National Contest `Traditional Artistic Handicrafts`*, *The National Fair of Toys*, *New-born baby Day*.

Discovery programs of our heritage through educational and entertaining activities are organized in all our museum departments: *The Museum presents itself*, *World`s stories at the `Franz Binder` Museum*, *Chinese Theatre*, *Old days village crafts* and others.

Within the Astra Museum of Traditional Folk Civilization, Ethno-Techno Park was created as an area dedicated to the young visitors. The educational projects include an educational component for the conservation and restoration specialists, as well as to other university and college specialties (architecture, tourism, etc), for these types of beneficiaries courses, creation camps, internships being organized etc.

For all categories of public the museum provides a rich offer of publications made by **`ASTRA Museum` Publishing House**.





**Team - buildings** Starting from 2007, The `ASTRA` Museum provides team-building services for interested companies, organizations whose main goal is to boost their employees` motivation in so far as their daily work activities are concerned. By interaction during recreational activities mutual understanding is created and goals achieved. The `ASTRA` Museum answers to all these needs and has developed various activity packages according to its profile: traditional crafts workshops (pottery, dolls making from organic materials, traditional masks, vegetable fibers weaving, egg decorating, painting on glass, folk dances workshops, etc), educational – cultural- recreational activities, to ensure the quality, the diversity and charm of these motivational actions for any type of client.

**Opening hours:** The departments of the Museum from downtown are open from Tuesday till Sunday between 10-18, during the summer season and between 9-17 in the off-season (October - April). Astra Museum of Traditional Folk Civilization is open from Monday till Sunday, at the same interval of time. During the summer season the public can also visit the interior of the traditional houses, except from Mondays. Every first Wednesday from every month, all the departments of the museum offer free entrance for all visitors.

**Web:** Information about all the activities of ASTRA National Museum Complex can be found on our own websites:  
[www.muzeulastra.ro](http://www.muzeulastra.ro): (general presentation of the museum's collections and its departments, calendar of events, contact information)  
[www.muzeulastra.com](http://www.muzeulastra.com) (Virtual Journal of the museum, conceived as blog, covering mainly the presentation of current events, press releases)  
[www.muzeulinaerliber.ro](http://www.muzeulinaerliber.ro) (detailed presentation of Astra Museum of Traditional Folk Civilization as a catalogue)  
[www.astrafilm.ro](http://www.astrafilm.ro) (website presentation of the structure and activities of the ASTRA Film department)

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The `Franz Binder` Museum of Universal Ethnography

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The `EMIL SIGERUS` Museum of Ethnography and Saxon Folk Art

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The `ASTRA` Film Studio:

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The Folk Art Galleries:

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Restoration-conservation department:

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For each department of the museum, the contact detailed information are available on the website [www.muzeulastra.ro](http://www.muzeulastra.ro)



## Location

ASTRA National Museum Complex, Sibiu 550 182, 11 Small Square (mailing address for all the museum departments-administrative office)

Astra Museum of Traditional Folk Civilization, Sibiu, Rasinari Road (DJ 106A)

Franz Binder Museum of Universal Ethnography, Sibiu 550 182, 11 Small Square

EMIL SIGERUS Museum of Ethnography and Saxon Folk Art, Sibiu, 21 Small Square and 12 Huet Square (main exhibition).

ASTRA Film Studio, Sibiu 550 182, 12 Huet Square

## How to get to Sibiu

- By plane - Sibiu airport, 73 Alba Iulia Street, website: [www.sibuiairport.ro](http://www.sibuiairport.ro)
- By bus – international Atlassib bus station (1 Autogarii street, web: [www.atlassib.ro](http://www.atlassib.ro) ), Amad Touristik bus station ([www.amadtouristik.ro](http://www.amadtouristik.ro) ) etc

Internal lines Transmixt bus station ([www.transmixt.ro](http://www.transmixt.ro)) or Autogara Q7 (1 Scoala de Inot Street). The internal lines schedule can be found to the suppliers or specialized sites (ex. [www.autogari.ro](http://www.autogari.ro) )

- By train – central railway station from Sibiu, 1 Decembrie 1918 Square 6, Sibiu, website: [www.infofer.ro](http://www.infofer.ro).

- By car

from Braşov (DN 1)

from Râmnicu-Vâlcea (DN 7)

from Mediaş (DN 14)

from Alba-Iulia (DN 1)

from Agnita (DJ 106)