

Report on Traveling to Munich by Bus

Journey from Romania to Munich - A Sustainable Adventure

When I decided to travel to Munich for my Erasmus program, I knew I wanted an affordable and sustainable option. Living in Romania meant I was about 1,500 km away, and my journey had the potential to be both challenging and rewarding. Choosing the bus became my decision after evaluating different options. Here's how my experience unfolded, including the challenges, the people I met, and what I learned on the way.

Planning and Choosing Transportation

My move was set for October 9th, and I needed a reliable travel method that could also handle my extra luggage. The first option I considered was flying, which would have been the quickest route. However, it was very expensive, especially with additional baggage fees, which are often high for long-distance flights. Trains were another possibility, but after researching, I realized the journey would require several transfers across borders. Changing trains multiple times felt risky with heavy luggage in unfamiliar train stations, especially since train delays were common.

After careful consideration, I decided on taking the bus, which seemed the safest and most environmentally friendly choice. I found a bus company, Romfour Trans, which offered direct routes from Romania to Germany and even provided door-to-door service. Once I'd booked my ticket, I began preparing for the journey ahead.

Departure Morning

The day before departure, the driver called to confirm the exact time he would pick me up. He mentioned an early arrival time. Early the next morning, around 7 a.m., he called again, saying he would be there earlier than expected, like in an hour. Half-asleep, I jumped out of bed, quickly got ready, and said goodbye to my family. The anticipation of a new beginning was mixed with the nervousness of saying goodbye, making those final moments bittersweet. I loaded my bags into the minibus and, with one last wave, set off for Munich.

However, as I settled into my seat, I learned that I would need to switch buses multiple times during the trip. This unexpected development was unsettling, but I knew the adventure had only just begun, so I tried to stay positive. I was soon faced with another challenge: language barriers. Being from Transylvania, my primary language is Hungarian, but the other passengers and the bus company spoke mainly Romanian. Communicating in Romanian stretched my language abilities, but it was a good opportunity to practice in a real-world setting.

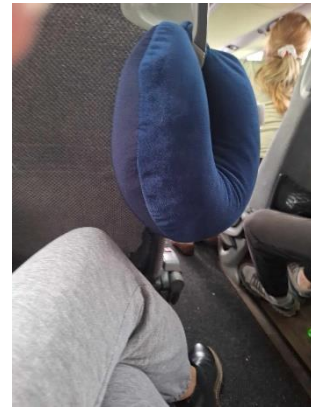
First Stop - Turda and Meeting Fellow Travelers

Our first stop was at a gas station, where we took a quick break before heading to Turda. The journey there was relatively fast, with the driver playing some traditional Romanian music that added a comforting ambiance to the bus. Most passengers were quiet, and I sensed that everyone was a bit nervous. Upon arriving in Turda, our driver informed us that the main bus would arrive soon and left us at the parking lot to wait.



1. Figure: Waiting in Turda

As we waited, a middle-aged woman started voicing her frustrations about the bus company's service. Despite her complaints, it became clear that we were all in the same boat, trying to make the best of a long trip. Another passenger, a young man from Romania who worked at Amazon in Stuttgart, joined our conversation and shared some helpful information about the bus company's usual timing. He mentioned that the wait could be an hour or two, which turned out to be true. He was friendly and offered to sit with me once we boarded, which I accepted gratefully.



2. Figure: Inside of the bus

This conversation allowed us to get to know each other better, and I found it challenging yet rewarding to practice my Romanian. I was relieved to find that my new friend was patient with my mistakes and even helped me with expressions. Our conversation passed the time quickly, and soon, the large, two-floor bus arrived. With a mix of excitement and relief, we boarded and continued our journey.

Stops and Cultural Reflections

Our next stop was at a beautiful location on top of a mountain called Király-hágó. The view was breathtaking, but the winding roads leading there had left many of us feeling a bit queasy, so the break was very much needed. The sun began to set, and a chill filled the air as we were still making our way through Romania. I became increasingly worried about arriving late in Munich, as my landlord would need to let me in. I messaged him to update him on our delay, and he kindly reassured me that he would manage to be available when I arrived, no matter the time.



3. Figure: Stop at Király-hágó

Border Challenges and Reflections on Power Dynamics

As we approached the Romanian border with Hungary, we needed to exit the bus to rearrange our luggage for inspection. Everyone was called out by name, and our bags were returned to us before being reloaded. The process was a bit chaotic, especially for an elderly woman who misheard her instructions. She tried to hand over her bags too early, and a bus official shouted at her, even making some unkind comments. I was shocked at the way he treated her; it felt disrespectful, especially given her age. Another passenger stepped in to defend her, and their small confrontation brought to light a sad reality about power dynamics. It was a reminder of the importance of compassion, especially for those who may be struggling or vulnerable.

Once we crossed the border, we were able to travel more quickly and with fewer stops. The long journey continued as my new friend and I discussed topics ranging from cultural differences to personal goals. I felt lucky to have a supportive family and the chance to pursue my studies, which he reminded me was a privilege not everyone had. As we neared the Austrian border, we stopped briefly at a gas station in Hungary. I was the only passenger who spoke Hungarian, so I offered to help others communicate, feeling proud of my language skills.

Final Leg and Arrival in Munich

Around midnight, most of the passengers were asleep, some even lying on the floor for comfort. By early morning, we reached the Austria-Germany border, and the driver read out names of those who needed to transfer to a minibus. My friend and I were on the list, so we gathered our bags and transferred with a small group of familiar faces from the main bus. Our final bus took each passenger to their specific destination.

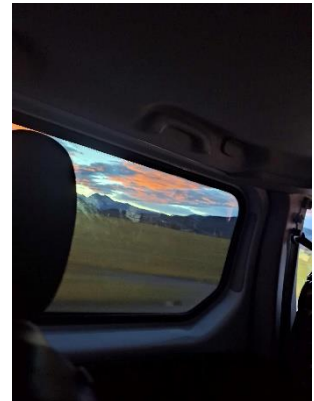


5. Figure: At the gas station

As we dropped people off, I saw snapshots of their lives, one woman's husband waiting at her door, the elderly lady being dropped at a remote farm. Each moment reminded me of the unique experiences that bring people together on journeys like these. The sun rise as we entered Munich, and with German music on the radio, I felt a wave of excitement. Arriving at my new residence, I thanked the driver, knowing this journey was one I would always remember.

Reflections

This journey taught me a lot about sustainable travel, patience, and kindness. The bus wasn't just an affordable choice; it reduced my carbon footprint and provided the opportunity to connect with fellow travelers from different backgrounds. Despite the challenges—language barriers, delayed buses, and border crossings—I gained valuable insights about people, myself, and the importance of compassion. Sustainable travel, as I learned, is not only about protecting the environment but also about embracing the shared human experience.



6. Figure: The sunrise from the minibus

In the end, traveling by bus was more than just a means of reaching Munich, it was a personal adventure that marked the beginning of my Erasmus journey, reminding me of the world's diversity and the common ground we all share.