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# *What I really found in Romania*

By Mitsuki Nishi

*B*efore I arrived in Romania, my image of the country was not so good. All we Japanese really hear about Romania is that it is a former communist country, that Nicolae Ceausescu was one of the worst dictators in the world, or about the violent revolution. Most Japanese look only at the tragic aspects of Romania, and that is why my mother, who is a typical Japanese, was strongly against my trip to Romania.

After a 20-hour flight, I finally arrived at Henri Coanda, a small airport. It was a rainy day and I waited for the car with strong anxiety. It took almost three hours to get from Bucharest to Brasov, and I was very exhausted when I finally arrived at my accommodation, located right in the center of Brasov. In contrast to my physical fatigue, my general mood became cheerful as soon as I got out of the car.

“What a beautiful city it is!” This was my first impression of Brasov. Narrow paths were lined with neat rows of houses and beautiful churches were illuminated by the glow of the setting sun. When I looked up at the mountain, it was covered in a dark forest, and a sign sporting the name BRASOV in big white letters welcomed me to the iconic city. Despite the negative image that I first had of Romania, I fell in love with Brasov at first sight. I had never seen such a beautiful city.

For me, Brasov is not just one of the cities in Eastern Europe. It is a sophisticated, Westernized city. There are many tourists and local people enjoying themselves under the sunshades in the centre or sitting on the benches next to the fountain in the Council Square. Sometimes I would come across some gypsies wearing dizzying brightly coloured clothes.

However, as I became used to life in Brasov, I also noticed its dark side. For example, there are a lot of female beggars with children on the streets. There are also many stray dogs on the streets. I’m not sure whether it is a vestige of the communist era, but the poverty is still present.

Overall, my first impression of Romania was better than I had expected. Romania is no longer the poor and pathetic country we studied in history class. While there are still traces of the dark era, people are able to enjoy their lives. I’m sure there is a bright future awaiting Romania and its people.



## *Working as a care volunteer in Romania*

By Lindsey Brown

*After* four weeks of working with children in foster homes in Brasov, it became possible to build a relationship with the children despite the language barrier, and they always seemed happy to see me. Some children knew some basic English words and most liked to practice counting in English.

I found it quite difficult to get used to the fact that little value was attached to anything they made/coloured/cut out. Once craft work was done, it tended to be discarded. At the second foster home at which I worked, the staff kept some of the children's handwork in their journals, or displayed it on the notice board, which I felt was better.

'Colouring' was usually the request I received as soon as I arrived in the morning, so I made sure that I always had crayons and colouring pads with me. I also tried to do something constructive each day – we made paper snakes, cutout crocodiles and created designs with Tangrams. The children also enjoyed jigsaw puzzles – Spiderman was a favourite! We made bead bracelets and mosaic patterns and all the children liked to play hand clapping games.

I hope my visit has made a small difference, and I won't forget the smiles and hugs from the children.



## *Experiences of a drama volunteer*

By Ellen Ormesher

*I* have thoroughly enjoyed both my time in Romania and working at Casa Mea foster home. Before I arrived in Brasov, I had no idea what to expect. All I knew was that I was in for an adventure, and an adventure is definitely what I had. Working with the children has been one of the most rewarding things I've done - not just on my trip to Brasov, but in my life. What pleased me just as much as the politeness and cheerfulness of the children was the kindness and dedication of the staff, not only towards the children but towards me as well.

During the first few weeks of my time at Casa Mea I encountered one or two challenges. The main one was the language barrier, as I spoke no Romanian and the children spoke little English. Sometimes activities and games that I had planned had to be abandoned as I couldn't make myself understood. However, as the weeks went on and I became more familiar with the children themselves and with their attention spans, it became much easier to know what they would enjoy and what would keep them engaged. I also found that the children's English improved whilst I was there, as they became more familiar with vocabulary and the pronunciation of certain words.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time at Casa Mea, and my only regret has been that I've had to leave early. I hope to take all the skills I have learnt in Romania back to the UK with me, and hopefully to find a job teaching Drama at home, thanks to my great experience with Projects Abroad.



## *Recent Events*

By Alexandra Ichim (Drama Project Supervisor)

On 13 September Projects Abroad Romania visited three foster homes to run our regular drama mini projects.

The mini projects involve the presentation of traditional plays and stories to children from various foster homes. The drama volunteers and I choose a traditional/mythological play/story/ legend to present at each performance. The first step is to organise what exactly we will present and to decide how many numbers we will include in our small performance.

After successfully completing this step, I translate the story from Romanian to English and the drama volunteers start running rehearsals with the group involved. The group may include other volunteers in the country or Romanian teenagers involved in our drama group. After putting the story into a great pantomime, everyone starts creating costumes and props for the small performance.

When all this is finished and we have the final product, we choose a day to go to the foster homes in Tarlungeni and Budila and we perform for the children. After performing, we ask the children to participate in the games and activities that the volunteers have prepared for them and to retell the story that was pantomimed. Usually it is a great success and it is a great opportunity for children to learn and remember Romanian stories, traditions and culture. It is also a good way for volunteers to learn more about Romanian culture.

The performance on Friday 13 October was directed and coordinated by drama volunteer Ellen Ormesher, who was assisted by our Romanian Drama Group members. The team performed Vizita (The Visit), a famous traditional Romanian drama.

As always, the run was a great success for everyone involved. We would like to give special thanks to everyone involved in this mini project. All the children enjoyed it! You made a difference!





## Telephoning in Romania

Having difficulty telephoning in – or to – Romania?

### **THIS GUIDE SHOULD HELP**

When phoning a Brasov number from a Brasov number, use the prefix 0268/0368 followed by the six digit local number.

When phoning a Brasov number from out of county, dial 0268 before the six digit number

When dialling a mobile phone number from within Romania that begins with 07x always include 07x

When dialling Romania from overseas dial up your international connection (usually 00) then 40 (for Romania), followed by the area code without 0 (that's 268 for Brasov, and 7x for mobile phones) and local number.

Callers from overseas are reminded that the time in Romania is GMT + 2 hrs