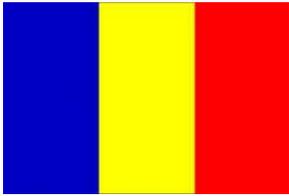


2012 Romania



June 5, 2012

Upon leaving the airport we traveled a short distance by bus to reach the train to Bucharest. Rail travel is quite good in Romania as in the rest of Europe. (More on that later.)

While on the bus and train, an Englishman and I struck up conversation with Dorin, a Romanian, who lives in Brasov. He was 11 at the time of the revolution and he is thus familiar with the before and after. I am so pleased that he agreed to meet us for dinner in Brasov when we arrive there Saturday. I look forward to talking with him about what we've seen and what it means.



We end our 23 hour journey at Gara de Nord, the train station in Northern Bucharest, just a block from our hotel, Das President, which by the way, has free wireless internet!

That evening we decided to go and visit the Arch of Triumph commemorating WW 1 as it could not be closed. On the way we saw this statue commemorating Aviator Heroes.

We got bewildered and saw much more of the park than originally intended but eventually arrived at the Arch.





June 6, 2012

This morning we went to see the site of the revolution

and the “Old Town.” On the way we saw this quaint building characteristic of the old town.



The second largest administrative office building in the world, (the Pentagon is the largest) this is the Parliament Palace.

A view from the front indicates why Bucharest is known as the city of columns. Many of the buildings have columns in the front or the roof.



Across the street, even the roof has columns.



Various chapels on the way to the Antim Monastery. The belfry is adorned inside with paintings.



Beautiful flowers surround the chapel of the monastery and the air conditioner is designed to expel its water onto the plants instead of the sidewalk.



A Romanian Orthodox monk by the willow trees.



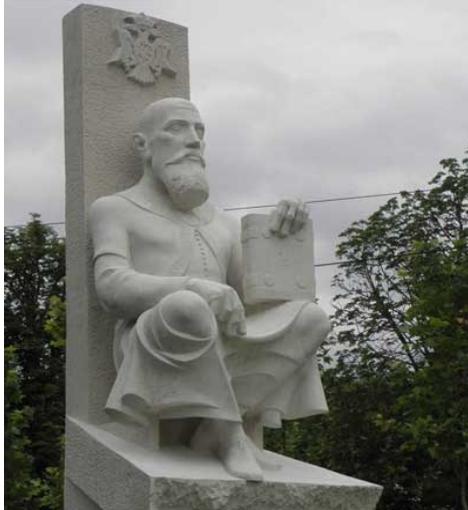
Many of the buildings date back to the 17th century but have been updated every century or two. This 17th century building was remodeled in 2005.



Patriarchal Cathedral built in 1656, the center of Romanian Orthodox faith.



Statues of public figures are in the center of the road to the cathedral.



You can buy almost anything on the street in Bucharest. Below, the church at Old Princely Court dates from the 15th century. Imagine, Columbus was sailing while they built this church.



To the right is the national bank headquarters. The building also known as the Economic Consortium Palace was built in 1894.



The headquarters of the Communist Party now houses the national health department. A statue of Maniu stands in front. He was a supporter of the Allies and opposed to communism. However the communists took over, he was sentenced to life in prison as a traitor and died incarcerated. To the right, a memorial of the revolution.





A memorial to the first fallen protestor, December 1989.

King Carol I, a good king of olden days.



The Romanian Atheneum built in 1888, where the Orchestra now performs. Final stop of the day, The Romanian Peasant Museum where articles and artifacts for the past 400 years are exhibited.

June 7, 2012

We have ½ day left in Bucharest and went to the Ghencea Civil Cemetery to see the grave of Nicolae Ceausecu who was executed on Christmas day, 1989. The former dictator of the Romanian Socialist Republic.



On the train we met a lady returning from Bucharest to her home, not far from Sighisoara, our next stop.

We enjoyed chatting and the five hour trip went quickly for her. En route she called her husband and asked if he knew where our hotel was. He was picking her up at the station. Upon arrival they insisted on taking us to our hotel and wishing us well.

June 8, 2012

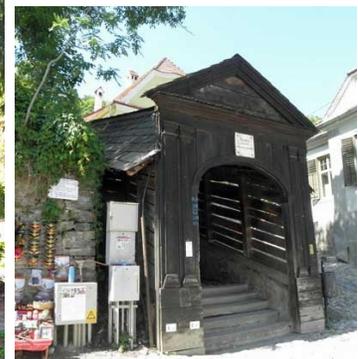
Sighisoara, Romania



In the center of Romania, in the hill country, this well-preserved medieval town is one of the most beautiful towns in Europe. Entering the citadel, the original city which is surrounded by walls, the clock tower with working mechanism greets you. The figurines rotate showing the hour, day and night and the days of the week. Now a museum of history, one can view the operating mechanism and objects used and made by the various trade guilds. There were doctors' instruments on display as well.



Next door, the town hall occupies this building formerly a monastery. As we walked around the walls, the Catholic church is next. Each guild made and manned a tower in times of battle. The cemetery has ancient graves as well as new ones. We saw people in black walking toward it.



The covered stairway offers protection to both students and parishioners in the winter months.



School was in session up on the hill, above a class room.



The Lutheran church “on the hill.” The catholic church is in the center of town. In 1557 most of the town became Lutheran as a result of the Protestant revolution. On the right, the goldsmith’s tower on the citadel wall.

A good view of the expanded city of today from on the hill.





We had a traditional Romanian lunch today. Jim ate the Cioba, a soup with beef and vegetables, we shared the mamaliga, which is a cornmeal mush. Judy had the salad with cheese.



Left, the town center and above, a model of the community found in the clock tower museum.



In the clock tower museum, household items of 500 years ago were displayed, in the center is a soap press. After eating my Romanian beef soup and visiting the war museum, I was ready to don my coat of mail and armor, get my cross bow and go out for King Vlad and get some Turks!



One of the figurines of the clock and the modern clock mechanism. Originally it was of wood. Pieces were retained on exhibit.



Minstrels sang in the streets playing their instruments and dressed in classical garb. Nearby the torture museum showed a few implements to gather the “truth” from townspeople accused. Stretching, pressing the thumbs and feet, and hanging by the hands were displayed here along with various manacles for the feet and hands.

June 10, 2012

Brosov: We traveled by train from Sigisoara to Brasov. The train arrived 45 minutes late and we went to our hotel to find our friend, Dorin, waiting for us. We had promised to get together for dinner. We ate at the café outside the hotel and talked about the change to communism in the 40's after WW II and the change back to capitalism in 1989. He told us about the corruption of the communist era and how everyone had to join the cooperative, turn in their land or they would be beaten and disappear. The “intellectuals” were put in labor camps to be starved. We’d probably both be “intellectuals” digging the Danube Canal to our deaths had we been there at that time. We had planned to pay for his dinner but were surprised when he insisted in paying for ours. After being cheated by the cab driver, this was a very pleasant result. There are some good Romanians.



After lunch we saw this processional from the Catholic Basilica to the

Center Square with banks, choir, the official and the people. They do this once a year for a special day but I don't know what for.



The Black Church is known because of the fire hundreds of years ago. This arch is a gate through the wall that surrounds the city. This tower is one of the best maintained medieval architectures of Europe.

We took the cable car to the top of Mt. Tampa to see the city view. On the right is the “white tower.” Set in the foreground of the modern apartments. Below the city of Brasov is laid out before us.



After our ride, we sat in the park below watching the Romanians do their Sunday afternoon thing of taking the dog, the kids and grandma to the park.



June 11, 2012

I don't recommend the Romanian rail system if you need to get any where on a certain day. We purchased tickets from Brasov to Bucharest to arrive in time to take a train to the airport for our flight to Istanbul at 4:30 p.m. The train we were scheduled for was to leave at 11:30 a.m. however it was "150 minutes" late. Not to worry however, the previous train that was to leave at 8:30 a.m. had not yet arrived. It finally rolled out the station at 12:10. It crawled through the cow pastures and agricultural area and finally reached full speed just two stations outside of Bucharest. If it had gone full speed all of the way, it wouldn't be 3 ½ hours late. We were never going to make the train to the airport in time.

As we got off the train and I was passing down the suitcases to Judy, a man asked her if she was going to transfer to the airport. She said yes and he said he would take us in his cab. As I entered the cab I asked the cost and he said meter. I thought that meant about \$1 per mile (of course it's 1.35 to 2.50 ley per km but I convert for you.) As we were traveling, I noticed that there was no meter. When we were almost there, he said 50 euros, 220 ley or about \$70. We were took again, though I tried not to be a mark. Actually we really had no choice. With our late arrival, we would have not made the plane and would have had to spend the night at the airport, another few meals, missed our arrival reception in Turkey and other complications. I figured the fair price would have been \$50 for the 30 km ride. He was "kind" enough to stop at the bank so I could get some more cash for him.

So two of my three taxi rides were crooks. I'm glad that most of the other people I met in Romania were nice.