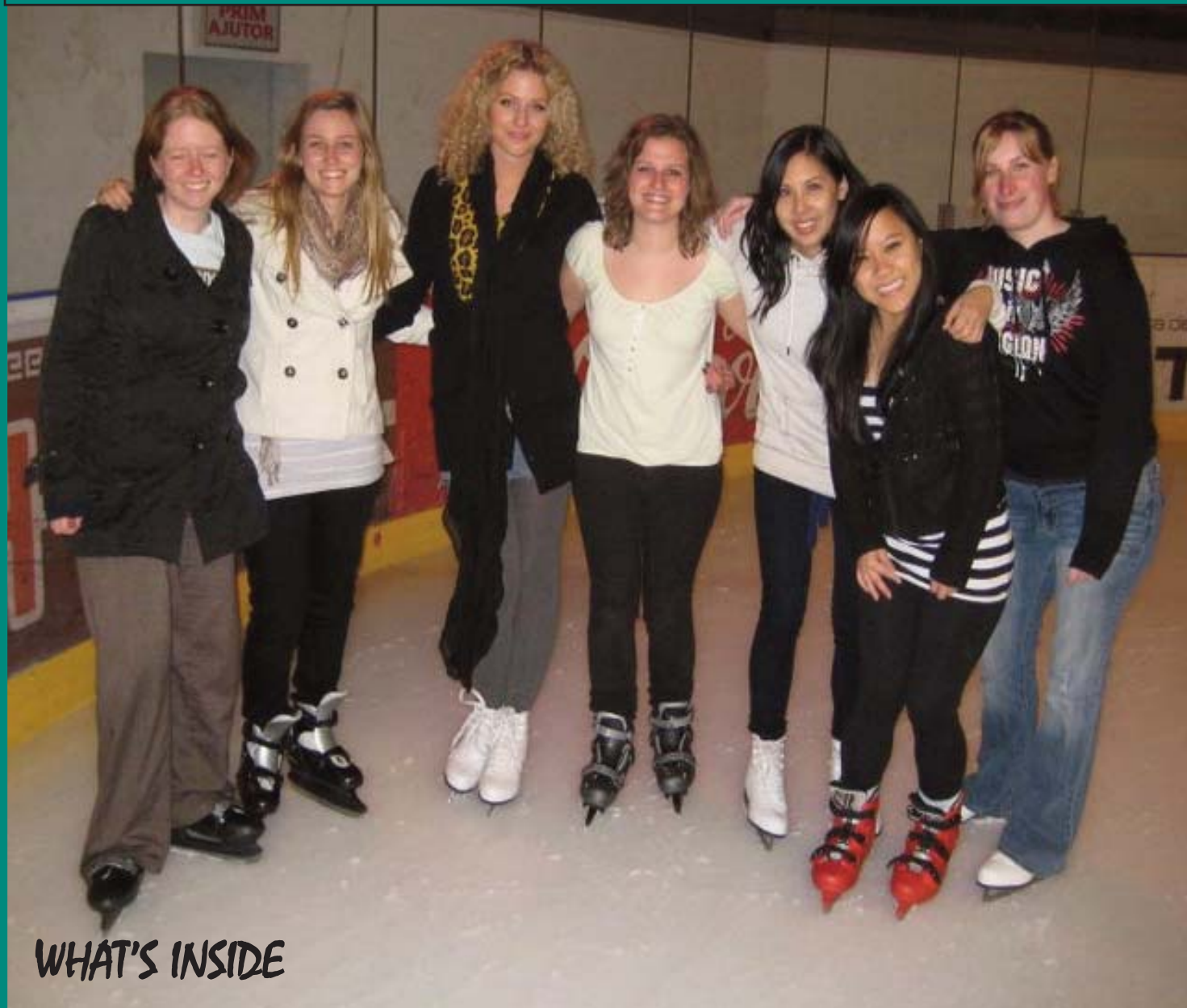


# BUNĂ ROMÂNIA ProjectsAbroad

The Official Newsletter of Projects Abroad Romania

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Hello everyone and welcome to the 37th edition of the Projects Abroad Romania Newsletter. Hope everything is well in your lives. We come to you now with the happenings of the past month and what Romania has to offer in terms of information, articles, news, updates, projects and, last but not least, culture.

We begin by presenting one article that was published in the Village Magazine, issue 7, written by our former journalism volunteer, Victoria Richman. Thank you to Victoria for writing this amazing article and presenting the portrait of Romania and what it meant for you, with its traditions and culture.

To continue, we chose to present to you an article written by a current journalism volunteer, Natasha Potter, or Tash as we call her. She wrote her first impressions on Romania and her trip to our amazing country. We hope you enjoy reading to it, as it offers beautiful insights of her experience in our country.

Moving to serious stuff, we'll give you some details on the Charity Event that I organised together with the Projects Abroad Romania team and our former drama volunteers, Sarah, Rachael and Greg. It was an amazing experience that we all planned, formed and lived together and that we shared for the Romanian and foreign audience. The 2nd Edition of 'To Love is to Give, to Give is to Receive' Charity Show was a great success and you'll have the chance to read the unique experience that our volunteers had in terms of raising money for the Educational Rehabilitation Centre in Bradet. The result was that we raised enough money for their needs and we are very happy we were able to do so.

Furthermore, the cookery corner in this issue will be presented to you by our current journalism volunteer, Lynn Mayer, who will give you the great recipes for 'Clatite Brasovene' (Crepes a la Brasov). Enjoy reading and good luck in making them in your homes. It's delicious!

Last but not least we have volunteers' stories. This is one of the most interesting parts of the newsletter because here you can find out news about everything that is happening at the moment in their lives as volunteers. In this edition you can read about Lynn's first impressions of the country and also about Li Min's overall experience within the care centre where she works.

If you feel I forgot about something that is the section about Social Events presentation that our colleague Alex Parasca wrote some time ago. It is about one of the most successful and funny social events held by him together with the group of volunteers. Please check it out!

I really hope I gave you a bit of the insight into this newsletter. In order to find out more, please read the whole issue and enjoy it at the same time because it's created with loads of good thoughts and love for you all!

*By Alexandra Ichim – Drama, Dance, Journalism Supervisor; Social Manager*

## Carrying the Past into the Future

By Victoria Richman – Journalism Volunteer, UK, August –September 2010

(Article published in The Village Magazine, Issue no 7)



There is something about Romania that makes it stand out from other European countries as starkly individual. Visitors recognise elements of the country and its atmosphere not as ‘European’ but as something entirely ‘Romanian.’ But what is it that makes it unique? Maybe it’s the gothic architecture which gives the buildings a fairytale element. Perhaps it is the dramatic scenery; the sweeping forests and craggy mountains to which civilisation clings. The traditional Romanian clothes, which

are still worn by many people, enhance the country’s identity. As does the rich Romanian food; recipes for traditional meals, such as Sarmale, have been passed down through generations.

It is Romania’s heritage and its traditions that make it individual. Unlike other countries, who role out diluted versions of their past for special occasions, Romania’s traditions are still very much a part of their present. In rural areas the land is ploughed by oxen and horses, hay is stacked with no more modern machinery than a pitchfork. Food, such as cheese and bread is made by hand, and tastes all the better for it. Ancient crafts, like weaving, are still used today.

These are not cute examples of traditions that are put on for tourists; it is real life, real people and real livelihoods. But can this way of life and Romania’s cultural identity continue to exist when faced with the formidable forces of modernisation and westernisation?

The country, frozen in time somewhat by twenty years of communism, is hurtling head first into the twenty first century. This was cemented in 2007 when Romania joined the EU; which means a boost in the economy and benefits in other areas such as justice and tourism. Yet, with this progress, there is the worry that the country will lose its identity and the rural areas will die out.

The villages are already bleeding life; with little work prospects the young are leaving for the cities or to other countries. In contrast the cities are expanding; in the countryside outside of Brasov there are already several new houses in various stages of development. Of course it is naive to believe that the countryside will never be encroached upon, the expansion of cities is an inevitable fact. But at the moment there is still a clear line between city and countryside. What people don’t want to happen is for this line to blur and the countryside become an endless suburbia, devoid of the personality that gives Romania its identity.

However, although the traditions and rural way of life are in danger they are not yet extinct. In my brief month in Romania I met many people passionate about keeping Romania's heritage alive and, what's more, making it part of the country's future. 'The Village' magazine for one celebrates Romanian villages and promotes the beauty of both the people and the places. There are also several projects dedicated to conserving the countryside and historical buildings of Romania.

One such scheme is the 'Carpati' project which is set up in conjunction with the Romanian government and 'The Prince's Foundation.' Launched in 2009 it aims to promote agriculture, sustainable tourism and the conservation of rural villages in six counties of Romania.

There are also normal citizens carrying on the traditional crafts of Romania. Many artisans make a living from such crafts like the Neuvirts, a married couple who sell their traditional sculptures and wall hangings from the Funarilor tower in Brasov. Their beautiful wares are sold to Romanians and tourists alike, by doing so they are bringing pieces of Romania's past into its future.

It is not only the older generations who value their heritage. The youth of Romania may leave off traditional garb and listen to modern music, but it does not mean they have abandoned their past. Skills, such as Mrs Neuvirts' weaving are still passed down the generations.



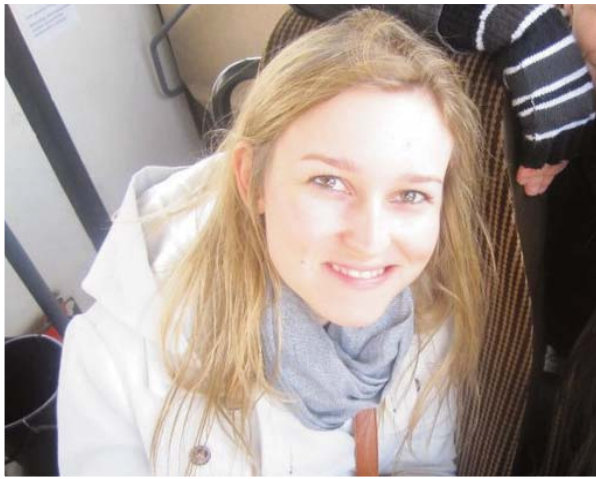
Traditional dances are also passed on and there are several dance ensembles that perform throughout the country. Cetatuia are one such group and they perform the traditional dances of their village, Teliu, all over the country. The oldest member of the ensemble is twenty three; they show that the youth of Romania have not forsaken their past.

Romania's uniqueness is born from its heritage; with the traditions being carried forward by the youth to future generations the country's heritage should never die out. Change is inevitable for any country in order to develop, but the only way for a country to embrace the future successfully is not to forget their past.



## Stepping outside the Lonely Planet

By Natasha Potter, current journalism Volunteer, Australia



Often living in Perth, Australia is like living in a bubble. The bubble of comfort, prosperity and a land full of opportunities and advantages provides a safe and secure world for many fortunate people. Some will always remain in the security of Perth's western lifestyle and live happily ever after under a cloud raining riches, or with the pot of gold at the other side of the rainbow.

But who is to say this is the most fulfilling way to live? It is very possible to live within a western society and for it to exist as your only world, with nothing more complex or challenging lying forth in your realm of being. While I will never take for granted the lucky life I have been given, I have always been

conscious and curious of another world out there waiting to be experienced and explored.

This is the reason I decided to embark on my journey as a volunteer journalist in Romania.

Travelling alone to a foreign, unfamiliar eastern country is something I have always dreamed about but I never, in reality, thought it would ever come true. Back home it is easy for many people to reach a luxurious holiday at the tip of their fingers, or these days a click of a button, but often they are experiencing life at home with friends and family just in a more spectacular setting. I do believe in the saying of St Augustine; "The world is a book and those who do not travel read only a page". Now my chapter of Romania is open for me have the chance to live, breathe and experience real traditional culture and life in a new country, playing polar opposites to my home of Australia.

Arriving in Romania I really had little thought of what to expect. Reading travel guides and information on Romania reveals its mountain peak glory and its stunning cobblestoned town squares, yet doesn't properly prepare you for the real Romania. It doesn't outlay the vast differences in the Romanian classes and the obvious struggle between eastern and western life. Neither does it really illustrate the traditional and picturesque coloured houses which dot the mountains, the icy wind seeping through an open car window, the foggy mist lining the horizon, or a horse and cart which trot by. Nothing could have prepared me to see people selling traditional packaged seeds and flowers on the road at one corner, then two minutes later watching Bali like vendors selling mismatched clothes and brightly stuffed toy animals. Romania really does feel like confusion between east and west, with people seemingly living all different walks of life.

Similarly when I majored in Anthropology at university experiencing cultures was only possible through books and documentaries. While a fine picture can be presented of what it is like to live among a new culture and fully experience their way of life, words can only take you so far. To be welcomed into a home so joyfully by someone who you have never met and don't understand, and still feel so at home and at ease is an incredible and humbling experience. Already I feel as if I have known many people I have met for lifetimes longer than two days, and have already laughed with them constantly until my stomach has hurt. I have experienced new food, transport, humour and excitement in a completely foreign land in such a short space of time and still have many more days to enjoy and try to help make a difference.

Additionally I feel doing journalism I am very lucky in working for such an amazing cause in helping preserve traditional Romanian culture in educating people who read *Satul*. The magazine is a distant world away from fashion and lifestyle magazines I have had experience with back home, but extremely outweighs other commercial magazines in morale, ethos and quest. With a tiny glance into Romanian life, culture and tradition I feel ready to begin my next chapter...

Who really needs a Lonely Planet guide anyway?

## *4th Edition of Projects Abroad Drama Show*

By Alexandra Maria Ichim

Drama, Journalism and Dance Supervisor; Social Manager

A year has passed by very fast and we have had many accomplishments within the drama project. Since the third edition of the Projects Abroad Drama Show in February 2010, we had many successful activities on the drama placements.

The first volunteer to change the daily drama routine within the project was Miss Danielle Convery, who tried something new with her Drama Therapy sessions. She was amazing and did a great job as a drama therapist in three of the day care centre's with which we collaborate. We created shows within these drama placements, which were different to the former ones, but very successful.

Moreover, we continued the idea of Drama Therapy with Natalie Taylor, who did an amazing job working with the children in the foster-homes. She also created a show for and together with them at Christmas which was very successful.



From January 2011 we started having drama volunteers that wanted to take the former system of drama teaching, which means giving drama classes to several groups in high schools and primary schools in and outside Brasov. All three of them, Sarah Slaunwhite, Greg Walker and Rachael Morrison knew from the beginning of their placements that the final result of their stay here would be creating a show – the Forth Edition of the Projects Abroad Drama Show.

First, we put the bases of ten drama groups in high schools and primary schools in Brasov, and then the three named volunteers started working with them on creating different performances for the final show. They have been working for over one month now, choosing appropriate scripts for all the groups, directing them and teaching them how to perform. They are almost ready with their groups performing and furthermore, they are very proud of their work.

The 4th Edition of the Projects Abroad Drama Show will present 6 plays from our Drama Groups and two or three theatrical moments presented by our drama volunteers. Alongside the drama moments we will also have special guests who are going to delight the audience with songs and dances presented by local famous singers and Dance Schools. Like every year the show will be hosted by Alexandra Ichim and one of our drama volunteers and will be designed for both foreigners and locals. It will make a great impact and involve local television stations and other advertising outlets.

Following the pattern of last year's edition, we thought of transforming this event into a Charity Show, this time raising money for a Special Needs School which we collaborate with, a different placement from last year. The money we raise will be donated to Bradet School for Special Needs to use for anything they need, be those products or construction tools and materials.

We hope the show has a great impact among the locals and foreigners and that, through our drama project and relations that we have with local artists, we succeed in raising enough money and at the same time give our drama volunteers and children within the groups the opportunity to appear on stage, perform and direct. We just need to keep up the good work and pay attention to all details; organising is fun when there's the right team behind you.

## *Clatite brasovene (Crepes à la Brasov)*

By Lynn Mayer, Current Journalism Volunteer, Germany

(Article published in The Village, Issue no 8)

This light and fluffy specialty is perfect as a main dish, maybe eaten on the terrace in springtime, or to complete a meal as a dessert. Surrounded by the golden dough, the filling doesn't start melting before it hits your tongue. Sour cream and cottage cheese compensate the sweet, doughy taste of the vanilla sauce. The mellow filling finds its contrast in the fruity raisins, which makes this dessert a harmonising composition.

The dish comes from Brasov, a big town located in the centre of Romania, surrounded by forested mountains, where you can eat the popular "Clatite brasovene" in almost all restaurants.

### Ingredients:

Crepes batter:

- 1 egg
- Sugar to taste
- 300ml milk
- 1/2 cups sparkling water (to make it fluffy)
- Flour

- Filling:**
- 250g cottage cheese
  - 1 tblspn sour cream
  - 1 handfull of raisins
  - Rum essence
  - Lemon essence
  - Vanilla sugar

- Toppings:**
- Vanilla sauce
  - Raisins

### Preparation (30-40min):

Mix the egg, milk, sugar and water to a smooth texture, add flour and put it in the fridge to chill for 2 hours.

Put a ladle amount in a pan and bake it until golden brown on both sides.

Mix ingredients for the filling well and put a batch of it on the crepes. Traditionally, each crepe is now wrapped into squares. Dust it with sugar powder and put it in the oven until the sugar melts.

Finally coat the squares with the vanilla sauce and sprinkle on some raisins. Serve warm.



## 2nd Edition of 'To Love is To Give, To Give is To Receive' Charity Show

By Rachael Morrison, Drama Volunteer, UK, February – April 2011

On Friday 18th March we held the drama performance which also included dance and singing at the Cantina Memorandului in Brasov. The drama groups who performed were the groups that had been created by Alexandra and the other drama volunteers back in January. They were created with this performance date in mind, so it was a real showcase of what we had achieved with our groups over the last two months.

The evening began with a short presentation by Alexandra about the cause we were raising money for and a short dance piece. And then I, with Marcu Stefan, introduced each act, which we linked together with a story line. The premise being that we had found our mums diary and were telling stories about her life. It was a great way to link all the very different performances together.

The youngest of the groups, a drama group formed by Projects Abroad at School 27, were the first of the drama groups to take to the stage. They performed a short piece called 'Bracelet Up Against Bullying', which was about children at school taking a stand against bullying. Some of the kids had a lot of dialogue to learn and so everyone was really impressed that they all remembered their lines and performed so confidently too.

Also, the group needs to be praised, as they suffered the most from illness and people dropping out. They even had one new cast member added the day before the show! With the help of the rest of the cast she worked really hard to learn her part, and so we are particularly proud of them for this.

Some of the other drama groups who performed were two newly formed Black Juice groups. It was the first time on stage for most of them but they too performed to a very high standard. It was great for them to be able to act in front of a live audience who were very responsive, laughing at the jokes in both pieces.

The other groups who performed were made up of older Black Juice members who had performed before, including Marcu Stefan, who was also presenting. Their performances of 'Ferris Wheel' and 'The First Firework', both written by Alex Braun, really showed off their hard work and dedication to their acting classes. And we are very sad that it will be their last performance with Black Juice, as they are finished high school. However if the standard of the new Black Juice members is anything to go by then I expect many great performances to come!

Of course the event didn't go without its stresses. We had a lot of problems with cast members and volunteers being ill which made it difficult to rehearse sometimes. However I am delighted to say that the evening was a success. All the groups portrayed themselves with a great deal of maturity both on and off the stage. And all showed a real natural talent for performing on the stage. What was particularly impressive about the groups is that for most of them it was there first time performing, not that anyone would've guessed. It was a great evening, one I know I will remember for a long time.



## *My first impressions of Romania*

By Lynn Mayer, Current Journalism Volunteer, Germany



*I* slowly underwent the change between two diverse worlds. I boarded the plane, calmed down with all the familiar impressions in my head, and debarked nervously with thousands of new foreign pictures, voices and smells in my mind. On the plane, the melody of the passengers' voices seemed to be getting harder, non familiar and changing the rhythm becoming just a sound in the back of my mind.

When I entered the Bucharest Airport I instantly noticed the atmosphere having converted. The colours were different from what I knew, the smell, the noise, and even the way people acted. I had problems finding the exit by following foreign signs, with foreign words of foreign letters. Since then, whenever I had problems friendly people helped me with a charming accent to find my way.

In my first days in Brasov I experienced Romania as a very coloured country, with a rustic touch in almost all aspects: substantial food, baroque architecture and loud music in the streets, emphasising the warm atmosphere of the town. As the sun came out, everybody met in Piata Sfatului, to talk or drink a coffee. I had the feeling that everybody was happy and enjoying staying there, something that made me feel even more comfortable.

Even though I was sometimes exhausted from all the new impressions, I'm glad I chose Romania as my travel destination. I'm sure there are many other adventures, and a lot of new impressions for me to discover during my stay here.



## Passing Figures

By Li Min Teng, Current Care and Journalism volunteer, Malaysia

Everybody has experienced people coming in and out of their lives whether it's the postman who delivers our mail every morning, or that brief encounter of meeting someone random on the streets; the flickering presence of someone that once lingered in your life. Within these two months volunteering in Romania, I've had many people coming in and out of my life. Some are merely passing figures that I would not remember as time transcends, others are impactful passing figures that have become part of me. Assimilating intimately at an emotional level with the other volunteers, as well as the children at my street shelter has created a cycle of painful goodbyes for me.



The frequency of children coming in and leaving the care centre where I work at is very common. Domino's Shelter is a pristine centre where children in abominable situations come to stay while things are getting sorted out. We have children staying for a few days and some for months if things cannot be solved promptly. One may think that the language barrier would hinder any intimate connection between us; however we managed to contend that mindset. Somehow, despite being in the middle of negative brouhahas and density of language, we managed to form a tight bond filled with warm hugs, laughter, sign language and learning from one another. At first I found it particularly difficult to get through to the teenagers.

At that age everything is more volatile and complicated and their situation makes it even worse. However I accomplished to ascertain a common interest: hip-hop dancing and music. After busting some unguo hip hop moves and rapping to Lil Wayne, only did they start to open up to me. Today I get some teenagers confiding in me about their past, although it involves a big dictionary and weird sign languages.

Dancing is a huge activity at the shelter and in Romanian culture. I thoroughly love sessions where all of us adjourn to the main hall to do some freestyle dancing. Seeing the little ones try to do a Shakira body roll or krumping to Madcon's rap music makes my day. Through mutual idiosyncrasies we all manage to form a beautiful connection. These munchkins came into my life unexpectedly and it's really difficult parting ways with them. Each of them has touched a part of me and engraved onto me priceless reminiscences I would carry to my deathbed. I was utterly overwhelmed by their undulating kindness, despite their harsh surroundings and their simplicity despite this complicated world. Their silent courage and positive outlook in life still astound me, reminding me to appreciate the little things in life.

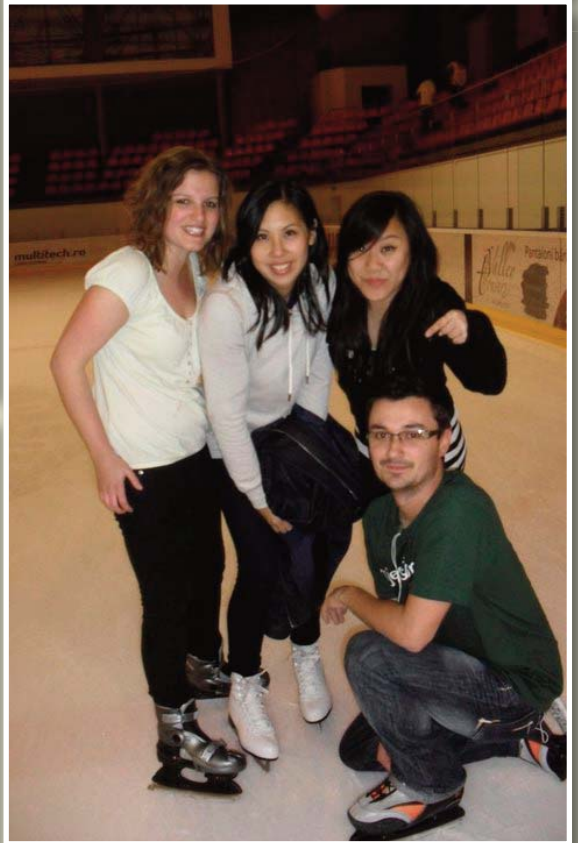
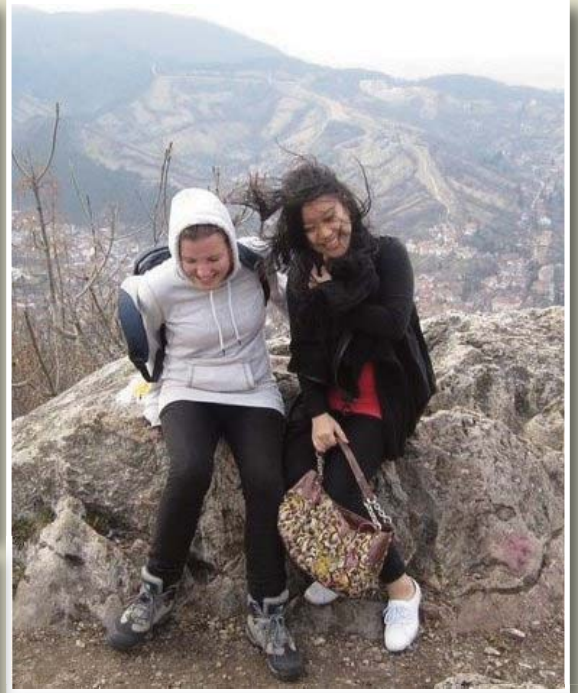
Being a 5-month volunteer with Projects Abroad has its bittersweet perks. Having chosen to stay longer than the average volunteering time frame, saying goodbye to so many volunteers I've come to know intimately is predestined irrevocable. Naturally, there is always that small scepticism about adapting to new people and going through the whole cycle of getting to know each and every one again when one has become accustomed to a group of people. 2 weeks ago I bid farewell to the first bunch of volunteers who I called my sisters.

Although it has only been just over a month spent together the fact that we are in a foreign country going through the same circumstances, sharing the same passion in terms of helping the others, we created a strong unique bond. We literally did everything together. We travelled to Prejmer Village, spent a weekend in Sibiu, went on regular outings and had many heartfelt conversations. It was hard saying goodbye to them, knowing that I might not see them again or for a while. I am living and having truckloads of fun with the second group of volunteers now. Profoundly and pleasantly surprised with the rapidity of all of us getting amiable with each other, to a point where I find myself treating them as my confidantes.

Making an effort organising a 'getting to know one another' trip to Bucharest certainly helped to catalyze the tight interrelationship we have formed. So much so we are currently planning a 1-week trip to Hungary and Poland. They all will be leaving in bulks again at the end of May and the thought of it is shattering. Again I will definitely miss the endless laughter, tears, travelling adventures and volunteering that sparked the closeness between us.

5 months is a short period of time compared to a lifetime of experiences. It doesn't even make a quarter of your lifetime. Passing figures are constant, but it is the impactful passing figures that would become a part of you. This journey has taught me invaluable life lessons that have become a part of me. I strongly believe that this is the cause of the people I've crossed paths with here whether it is a brief conversation with a waitress or a tightly knitted relationship with new found friends. It has been a joyous, enriching rollercoaster ride so far and I am looking forward to experiencing more of these.





## *All aboard... social event at the Skating Rink*

By Alex Parasca, Desk Officer and Transport Manager

The skating train is about to depart and this is how it went. At first we'd decided to go swimming on Thursday, but we didn't because some of us were ill and we didn't want to leave anyone behind, so the others, the more healthy ones, headed to the Olympic Skating Rink in Brasov.

Once we went there I realised that things were about to get funny, very funny, and they did. Isao and Kohei, our two Japanese volunteers, had never had any contact with the art of ice skating, so they spent more time sweeping the ice surface than skating on it. No one was hurt, so the story is still funny. They weren't the only horizontal skaters inside the rink: even I, a skating "God", was humiliated by an epic fall. It hurt my ego more than my back so I got up immediately, but not fast enough to get by unnoticed.

After getting accommodated with the ice we decided we should risk more, and this is how the Skating Express was born. We all grabbed each other and started a 16-leg train. To be honest I wanted a CONGA dance but the risk was too high so the Express did just fine.

After finishing with the skates and the muscle fever settled in we all went to a nice pizza restaurant, 'Dieci'. After so much skating we were hungry so we all ordered a pizza and started chatting. Things started getting a bit heavy after midnight when fatigue was starting to take over. Eventually everyone had a good night rest and woke up with ankle pains from the skates.

Next update will come from the water park; it should be interesting since there's a jacuzzi pool at the park which is outside, in -10 degrees Celsius weather, so I'm just curious who will have the guts for that.

