



have fun. help people.

Redeeming Romania About your Program



"There comes a point in a person's life when you start asking yourself: what difference am I making in this world? I decided to put my time into something worthwhile."

- Gayle Harrod

Redeeming Romania

Introduction to Romania

Romania's contemporary history has included some of the most significant political and economic events of recent times. The fall of communism and Romania's admission to the European Union have brought major waves of change to all aspects of Romanian society and politics. Prior to 1989, Romania lived under the dictatorial rule of Nicolae Ceaușescu and his family. People suffered painfully and were not allowed to leave the country freely. Staple food items were not available as all of Romania's food was exported in an ill attempt at eliminating all of the country's foreign debt. Thousands were imprisoned by the secret police and tortured using low-level radiation to inflict rare forms of cancer.



Of all the communist regimes to fall in 1989, Romania's was certainly the bloodiest and the only one to end in a dead leader. On December 21st, 1989, protestors booed Ceaușescu during an attempt to address a crowd of over 100,000 in the University Plaza in Bucharest. Eventually police used tanks to smash through the protestors and at least 1033 people were killed. The following morning thousands more protestors came out, forcing Ceaușescu and his wife Elena to flee, but they were captured by the armed forces. On December 25th the couple were hastily tried and convicted by a special military tribunal on charges of genocide and sabotage of the Romanian economy in a two-hour court session. Ceaușescu and his wife were then shot by a firing squad.



Since then, Romania has had a slow transition to democracy and a capitalist market economy. Romania joined NATO in 2004 and the European Union in 2007, and although it is now considered an upper-middle income economy, many of its citizens still live in abject poverty. During the 2000s Romania enjoyed one of the highest economic growth rates in Europe, but the country's development suffered a major setback during the late 2000s recession which led to a large budget deficit in 2009, eventually becoming the largest debtor to the International Monetary Fund. Romania faces serious issues related to infrastructure, medical services, education, and corruption.

Although the 1989 revolution ushered in sweeping political changes, other changes came as well: the possibility of entering and exiting Romania freely, the freedom to exercise religion, the availability of Coca-Cola, McDonald, Levi's and free market enterprise, to name a few.

Romania faces serious issues related to infrastructure, medical services, education and corruption.

Only recently have Romanian people felt free to return to some of their traditional heritage and culture that was lost during Communist rule. Poverty has a firm grip on Romania's rural areas, where almost half (44 per cent) of the population lives. Rural people are particularly vulnerable to the hardships brought by the painful economic and social transition after the collapse of communism. Low agricultural productivity is one of the main causes of poverty in rural Romania. Poor small-scale farmers do not have the collateral to secure loans that would enable them to invest in agricultural inputs and equipment to improve their incomes. And in rural areas there are limited opportunities for formal employment opportunities, partly because of minimum wage regulations, high payroll taxes and the rigid labour code. Inadequate social services, reflected in the poor condition of rural health centres, long distances to schools and poor sanitation facilities, also contribute to rural poverty.



Community

Globe Aware works in the city of Braşov

Globe Aware's project is located in the City of Braşov (pronounced Brashov). It is a major city (population 370,000) in the heart of Transylvania. Braşov was originally settled by the Saxons (Germans) and is extremely picturesque, with a medieval center and charming town square. A guard wall surrounds the historic center and the streets are still cobbled. There are tons of cafés and shopping opportunities here, as well as internet cafés and historic sites. You will have ample time for sightseeing, as you shouldn't miss a visit to the historic Black Church, a cable car ride up Mt. Tampa, and a climb up to the old watchtowers.



Projects and Expectations

Globe Aware always looks first and foremost to the community to tell us which needs they have, and hence in Romania Globe Aware works with a well-established organization that helps people and families or people with special needs through a variety of different avenues.

Please Remember that concepts of scheduling and organization are not universal. It is best to keep an open mind when visiting another country. Remember that your way of doing things may not be the best way here – the locals usually have a very good reason for completing a task in a certain way, and their priority may be different than ours.

We understand your desire to know as much as possible about the project you will be working on. It is important to understand that projects are often not set in place until about two weeks prior, as they are based on factors such as; what projects were finished by the last group, what supplies are available, how many volunteers are in your group, weather conditions, the changing priorities of the community, etc. These can even change upon arrival, based on interests and fitness levels of the specific volunteers. Volunteers can expect to work 5-6 hours per day on the weekdays, usually concentrated earlier in the day, and can expect to have free time in the evenings most days. There will be a variety of planned but optional leisure and cultural activities throughout the week.

The projects revolve around a variety of soft touch interactive volunteer opportunities with our recipient community and is primarily based around a Day Therapy center for people with special needs. The center offers a many different services to those in need, including; specialized forms of therapy, support groups for parents, providing information from specialists abroad – translated and distributed for free, and conducting assessments by qualified therapists. In addition, because people with autism spectrum disorders are usually isolated in Romania, lacking opportunities for leisure and socializing, the association offers a combination of specific therapeutic programs and an educational program focused on developing life skills, which increases the capacity of their beneficiaries for learning and bonding, while reducing the severity and frequency of unwanted behaviors.

Projects will be adjusted to accommodate local school schedules

The center arranges group activities and games at the first part of every morning with volunteers and participants all together. The exact activities vary from day to day as the center meets a variety of needs for many different people throughout the week. Music,



therapy, teaching, and classes on self-care and hygiene will typically follow the mornings activities. Therapeutic stories, aerobics, and swimming pool therapy/free swim time is also included as part of the therapy and something the volunteers will be learning about and assisting with. The center also has sensory rooms that are utilized with the participants and volunteers. These rooms are set up to promote self-organization and positive change. Volunteers will learn about each of the therapeutic spaces and work with the experts and participants on a specific goal for each session. This is in addition to any refurbishment/special projects that the center needs. If the weather is nice, volunteers can expect to have outdoor excursions and

activities planned throughout the week.

Leisure Activities

You will have ample time to explore Brasov and the surrounding areas during your volunteer week. Sunday of each week is dedicated to taking a trip to visit Bran Castle (also known as Dracula's Castle) and the Rasnov Citadel. Please note that these excursions are not included in the program fee and you will be responsible for paying for the entrance fees and guide. There are also plenty of hiking options near Tampa Mountain and a cable car ride up to the top is highly recommended.

Globe Aware believes that it is equally important that you are exposed cultural heritage of your program site, as well as work on meaningful volunteer projects. While all leisure activities are optional, you are encouraged to participate with the group.



Additional Packing Information

Summers are warm (but nights may get chilly) and winters are cold. Layers are essential. We highly recommend that you check the weather in Braşov online prior to departure so that you have a good idea of the temperature for the week. Clothing should be neat, clean and comfortable. The way Romanians dress is a sign of respect for themselves and for others, and this respect should be reciprocated. Please include work clothes that may get dirty or ruined while volunteering.

Don't forget to bring:

- Comfortable shoes
- Day bag / small backpack
- Strong money belt
- Camera / Memory cards / Chargers
- Money / Credit cards for personal expenditures
- Travel plug adaptor & adapter
- Rain gear: Umbrella or rain poncho (check the weather before you go!)
- Layers of clothing for the mountain climate
- Towel
- Toiletries and prescription medicines
- Pants for working
- Toilet paper / tissues or wipes
- Sunscreen/ Lip balm
- Swimsuit

You may enjoy bringing games or books for free time.

Please
dress
respectfully and
remember you
represent your
country while
traveling abroad

Blankets, towels or a sleeping bag may help you be more comfortable, as the bedding or linens may not be what you are accustomed to. It is also a great donation to leave behind for the locals at the end of the program.

Please note that the packing list is meant as a guideline. There is no single item that you can't live without for one week. Pack what you think you will need to be comfortable, but do not get preoccupied about items that you didn't bring, weren't on the list, etc. Everyone has different opinions about essential items!

Accommodations



Volunteers will be staying a mid-range hotel in the city of Brasov. It is within easy walking distance of the therapy center and a quick taxi/uber ride from the historical center. It is roughly a 25-minute walk to the historical center from the hotel. The rooms are non-smoking and have wi-fi and A/C in every room. Volunteers can expect to share their room with one other volunteer of the same gender.



Electricity

The electricity in Romania is 230V. Most modern electrical chargers (for digital camera batteries, ipods, etc) are equipped to deal with this current. Read the label on each plug you plan to bring. You may need to purchase a voltage converter. You will definitely need a prong adaptor, as plugs in Romania are European round-pin style.

Popularly known as the Europlug, the Type C electrical plug is a two-pin unearthed plug used throughout continental Europe, parts of the Middle East, and much of Africa, South America, central Asia, and the former Soviet republics.



Food

Breakfast is had every morning at the hotel. The majority of lunches will be prepared by mothers at the day center and the remaining few at preselected cafes by our coordinator. Meals will include delicious and plentiful local selections. Unlike most of our programs, dinners will be taken independently, given the huge number of enticing, delicious and affordable restaurants within walking distance to your accommodations. Your coordinator can also give you recommendations, though we know you will not have any difficulty in spotting them. Typical Romanian food includes mamaliga, a cornmeal dish that may be boiled, fried, or baked; different varieties of soups and many meat and vegetable dishes. Wine is also a staple beverage, and regional varieties are plentiful. There are many cafes and stores in Brasov where you may



purchase additional snacks, coffee, etc.

Laundry

You should not need to do laundry in a week-long trip. If necessary, laundry facilities can be found in Braşov, or your coordinator may help you make arrangements for your clothes to be washed for a fee.

Weather

Braşov's location in the center of the country, flanked by the Carpathian Mountains, makes it considerably colder than Bucharest. Winters can be extremely cold and foggy, with snow from December to April. Summers are generally warm, though nights can be cold, and the temperature can change from warm to cool very quickly! Check the weather online prior to your departure so you know what to expect.

Spring is pleasant with cool mornings and nights and warm days.

Summer is quite warm, with extended sunny days. The hottest areas in summer are the lowlands in southern and eastern Romania where 100°F is often reached in July and August.

Autumn is dry and cool, with fields and trees producing colorful foliage, much like New England.

Winters can be cold, especially in the mountains. While not the rule, abundant snowfalls may occur throughout the country, from December to mid-March.

There are significant regional differences of the climate between different regions of Romania.

Money

Romanian currency can be a bit confusing. Though Romania is now a member of the European Union, they continue to use their own currency, referred to as the Ron or Lei. The Ron is the same as the "new" currency, which is basically the same as the old currency, or Lei, but they dropped zeros because of inflation. Most commonly, you will hear the money referred to as lei (plural) or leu (singular).

You will need to get lei to pay for any expenses you incur outside of what your Globe Aware program covers. This includes souvenirs, alcohol, internet, snacks, laundry, phone calls and any other incidental expenses.



The best way to get Romanian money is to either use an ATM to withdraw lei or change US dollars or Euros. There are many cash machines as well as currency exchange booths in and around Braşov and Bucharest. Beware of high ATM fees from your bank or high commissions from moneychangers. It is a good idea to call your bank and credit card companies before you depart and notify them of the country you will be traveling to and the dates of your travel so that they will allow charges and/or withdrawals internationally.

Romania is largely a "cash only" economy. While some major hotels will accept credit cards, it is common for smaller stores or businesses away from tourist areas to not accept cards. Many businesses ask for a PIN number when you are paying by credit card. Many American banks will allow cardholders to establish such a PIN prior to travel, in case one is needed, or you can pay with a debit card and use your PIN number. Regardless, you would notify your bank of your international travel, and the potential legitimate use of your card abroad, prior to leaving the U.S. Please remember to never tell your PIN number to anyone, you may be asked to type it in to the machine, similar to many businesses in North America, which should be OK.

Phone and Internet

Please do not plan to spend a lot of time on the phone or internet during your short volunteer week. We will have a busy and short week to be immersed in the culture. Should you anticipate needing to make calls

from Romania. your cell phone will work, but remember to check with your provider before you go to purchase an international calling/data plan and make sure you know what is included or not included in it so you don't get any surprises when you come back. Roaming charges, especially for data use, can be outrageous. You may consider renting a SIM card (for unlocked cell phones only) or a cell phone to use internationally - this should be done from the USA before you leave. Depending on how much you plan to use your phone or data plan, this can save you a lot of money.

Wireless internet is available at the bed and breakfast where you will be staying, though it may be much slower than you are used to. There are a number of internet cafés around the town square in Braşov. You will be able to visit them in your free time.

Health

You should be up to date on routine vaccinations while traveling to any destination. No special vaccines are required to travel to Romania. For additional information on travel health in Romania, please refer to the CDC's website at <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/romania>

Your Fellow Volunteers

You will receive a Fellow Volunteer Report attached to our "Ready, Set, Go!" email about 3 weeks before the program starts. It will include information on your fellow travelers, as well as their email so that you can start to get acquainted with them before you leave.



Your Main Coordinator: Luiza

Luiza will be your coordinator while in Romania. She was born and raised in Brasov. She worked as a Kindergarten teacher for two years prior to becoming a therapist for people in the autism spectrum in 2011. Luiza started volunteering at the centers where we work and is now a full time occupational therapist for kids and adults here. In her free time, she enjoys reading, watching movies, and swimming, but most of all, spending time with her family.



Your Main Coordinator: Nicoletta

Nicoletta was born and raised in the city of Brasov and is passionate about improving the city in any way she can. She works as consultant for European projects in and around Brasov and has many insights to the goings-on and history of the city. In her free time, Nicoletta enjoys volunteering at the day center and arranges excursions and logistics for the center. Nicoletta has a daughter who recently graduated with her MBA from the University of Texas and travels to the states from time to time. We are so grateful to have her as a part of our family and know you will love getting to know her and the beautiful city of Brasov.



Arrival and Meet-Up

U.S., Canadian and Australian citizens may visit Romania without an entry visa for up to 90 days. Citizens of other countries should check the visa regulations that apply to them with the nearest Romanian Consulate.

You must have a valid passport, which will need to be valid for at least 90 days after your intended departure from Romania. For stays longer than 90 days you will need to contact a local passport office in Romania or a Consulate of Romania to obtain a visa. There is no entry or departure tax. Be sure you mark that you are visiting Romania as a tourist when you arrive. You will be issued a 90-day tourist stamp upon arrival.

Please make sure you have communicated your arrival and meet up information with the office.

If we do not see you at the meet up point, our first step is to check with the airline to see if your flight was delayed. If it was not, then our next call is to your emergency contact. If you should have any sort of change in your arrival, please make sure you call our 24-hour emergency On-Call number at **(214) 824 4562**. DO NOT EMAIL US, our email is not attended 24 hours a day and our on-call number is.

If you cannot reach us through our on-call number, please make sure you notify your emergency contact of any changes in your arrival, as this is the first person we will be contacting. We will do our best to contact you, but if we cannot contact you within about an hour's time of the meet up, we will continue without you. Once you have made contact with either your emergency contact or our headquarters, we will try and work out arrangements to get you to your location, but it may be at your extra expense.

If you feel there is a problem with these arrangements, or cannot meet the time schedule, please contact us prior to your departure and we will try to resolve this as best we can. However, because of certain limitations and strains on other volunteers, special arrangements or requests must be made within a fair amount of time (at least two weeks before the program date) and will be remedied to our discretion.

If you should miss the meet up in Bucharest, it is easy to get to Braşov but please be sure to make every effort to contact us to let us know. Our coordinator will be able to give you instructions on how to meet up with the group once you arrive in Braşov.

By train (IF YOU MISS THE MEET UP)

You will need to go to the Bucharest Nord train station and buy a one-way ticket to Braşov. The word for a "one-way ticket" is "doos". A second-class one-way ticket to Braşov will cost around 50-75 lei.

Many trains leave the station at the same time, make sure you are on the right one. Your platform number will be marked on your ticket by "linea nr. ____". Usually trains for Braşov depart from Platform 11. Trains leave Bucharest for Braşov every hour, and sometimes every half-hour, and the trip should last 2-4 hours. Don't throw your ticket away until after you get off the train. Every train station has its own STATION NAME in white letters on a blue sign at the platform. Keep an eye out for the BRASOV station and make sure you are ready to get off (close to the train's exit door) before the train comes to a complete stop.

By Taxi (IF YOU MISS THE MEET UP)

If taking the train is not your first choice, then you may decide to pay more for a taxi ride to Braşov. It is a 2½ hour drive north through beautiful farmland and mountain countryside, and well worth the \$200-\$300 you will probably spend for a driver. Please do make sure you communicate with our office and/or coordinator so your driver knows where to deliver you in Braşov.

Entering and Leaving Romania

U.S., Canadian and Australian citizens may visit Romania without an entry visa for up to 90 days. Citizens of other countries should check the visa regulations that apply to them with the nearest Romanian Consulate.

You must have a valid passport, which will need to be valid for at least 90 days after your intended departure from Romania. For stays longer than 90 days you will need to contact a local passport office in Romania or a Consulate of Romania to obtain a visa. There is no entry or departure tax. Be sure you mark that you are visiting Romania as a tourist when you arrive. You will be issued a 90-day tourist stamp upon arrival.

Stay Involved

As you leave Romania, you may be asking yourself, “how can I continue to help?”.

Start planning your next volunteer vacation

Are you ready for your next volunteer vacation? Many of our volunteers are forever changed by the experience and can't wait for the next one, or to visit a new, exciting place. Maybe you fell so in love with the community you visited that you would like to go back. Get a group together, explore our different destinations on our website www.globeaware.org, or return to Romania! All returning volunteers receive 10% off our program fees!



Other ideas to stay involved:

Join us on Facebook

Our Facebook page is www.facebook.com/globeaware. Don't forget to LIKE us! You can also FRIEND us at www.facebook.com/globeaware.org and see photos of your program, continue to follow the progress of projects through other volunteers and their images.

Fundraising

Start a fundraising campaign to support a program or project, fundraise towards your next volunteer trip, or even donate to other individuals fundraising so they can experience what you did!

Communicate with us

Please call us at 1 877 588 4562 or email us at office@globeaware.com to communicate any special needs you saw, project ideas, etc. to our office. We are always happy to hear from you!

Share your photos

Send in your photos so we can share with other people in the same program, or people interested in going to Romania.

Safety and Security

Romania's cities are amongst the safest in Europe. Incidents of violent crime are very rare. Please be vigilant at all times because pickpockets do exist, so you should exercise caution with your belongings, particularly in crowded areas or buses.

You should always be wary of where you leave your belongings, as unattended items may disappear (day packs, cameras, etc). Our accommodations are very safe, but as a precaution in any of our locations, we recommend purchasing a baggage lock and putting all your valuables inside your largest bag and locking it when you leave for your daily activities.

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)

The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program is a free service provided by the U.S. government to U.S. citizens who are traveling to a foreign country. STEP allows you to enter information about your upcoming trip abroad so that the Department of State can better assist you in an emergency, keep you up to date with important safety and security announcements, and help your friends and family get in touch with you in case of an emergency. The link to STEP is <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>

Global Entry

Global Entry is a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) program that allows expedited clearance for pre-approved, low-risk travelers upon arrival in the United States. Due to sequestration, long lines have been reported at customs and immigration when coming back into the United States. Global Entry approved travelers are able to use the automated kiosks at immigration to reduce wait times considerably. For more information, visit <http://www.globalentry.gov/>

In Case of Emergency

United States Embassy

Location: Bulevardul Dr. Liviu Librescu 4-6, București 015118 Romania

Main Line: +40 21 200 3300

Emergency Line: +40 21 200 3433

From the U.S. dial 011 40 21 200 3300 or 011 40 21 200 3433

Globe Aware's 24 hour phone line Please note our email is not attended all day every day so if you have an emergency please use this phone number : (214) 824 4562

State Department Travel Information: <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country/romania.html>