

ProjectsAbroad | Proiecte în străinătate

January 2013 Newsletter of Projects Abroad Moldova



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Experience with Projects Abroad

By Virginia Badiu. Projects Abroad translator and supervisor.

My name is Virginia and I worked as a translator and assistant at international volunteers from Projects Abroad Moldova. I have had the opportunity to get to know people from various countries, various cultures and with various ways of thinking. I was always fascinated by the challenge to interact with people I used to consider different, so that eventually to discover that all humour being, regardless of the place they were born, regardless of the language they speak, regardless of their social status, have similar wishes, dreams and maybe even virtues. My experience as an interpreter was an impetus to host someone in my home. Due to the organisation Projects Abroad which has a friendly team, this wish could be fulfilled. It takes a lot of effort to get to know people and make friends with people who live thousands of miles away. The new means of communication, via the social networks, makes virtual communication possible. However, Projects Abroad through its valuable contribution, makes friendship happen in real life. Within this organization, people from various corners of the world meet in order to explore our country which is small but interesting. The special nature and mesmerizing landscapes, old forests, steep hills, deep valleys, quicky rivers, singing birds all of them are part of the enchanting landscapes which prompt visitors to come back to Moldova. In our country, visitors from abroad can visit monasteries, some of them old, some of them new, pointed churches, country-side houses which belonged to our ancestors where one still can find tools from old times. There are old but beautiful carpets woven (tesute) by looms, traditional clothing which are nicely embroidered. Thus in Calarasi at the so-called Parent's House, visitors have the opportunity to listen to the life stories of some ordinary people during the time after WWII, visitors can listen to traditional food cooked with love and kindness. In Orheiul-Vechi our guests can visit an ancient settlement on the banks of a river, they can visit the cover in the steep cliff which was inhabited many years ago. Also, nowadays there are several villages located on the banks of the river with old traditional houses where visitors can stop and relax. On the banks of Prut river, in the North, there is an old forest, Padurea Domneasca, where visitors can see old oak trees, but also bisons which used to have their natural habit here, many centuries ago.

In Soroca, North of Chisinau, where there is a fortress built during the time of Steven the Great, visitors can listen to the history of events of those times. In the South, there is a village called Valenii Vechi. This is where the Prut river flows into the Danube and, thus visitors can admire the world life of Prut delta, they can taste local pies cooked with sheep cheese and can listen to the sound of traditional songs sung by the local folk music group. While approaching Chisinau our guests can visit the winery of Purcari, but also the new wine cellars from Cricova and Milestii Mici. Chisinau has several good museums which can provide a true vision and a better understanding about the rich culture which we have. This small country has numerous picturesque places which we do not notice when we are driven by other concerns related to our daily existence. As a translator and host I enjoyed many nice experiences by the side of those who are eager to explore Moldova.

Travel in Moldova

**By Philipp Grimmig from Germany.
Learning Russian. 1 month in Moldova.**



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Als ich meinen Freunden erzählte, dass ich für einen Monat nach Moldawien gehe, musste ich meistens als erstes erklären, wo auf der Landkarte dieses Land zu finden ist. Da ich schon seit einiger Zeit Russisch lerne, wollte ich gerne die Möglichkeit nutzen und in einem russischsprachigen Land meine Kenntnisse zu verbessern. Und da meine Freundin Verwandte in Moldawien hat, war auch recht schnell klar, dass es mich hierher verschlagen wird. Nach einiger Suche im Internet bin ich auf das Angebot von Projects Abroad gestoßen, einen einmonatigen Intensivkurs hier im Land zu absolvieren. Ich würde dabei in der Hauptstadt Chisinau wohnen und unter der Woche jeden Tag Einzelunterricht mit einer Lehrerin haben. Gesagt - getan. Anfang Januar setze ich mich also in den Flieger und nach knapp zwei Stunden kam ich in Moldawien an. Ich wurde von Elena am Flughafen abgeholt und wir fuhren zu meiner Gastfamilie. Viktor und seine Familie leben in einem schönen Einfamilienhaus, in einem der vielen Viertel, welche um das Zentrum der Stadt verteilt sind. Das Haus ist nett eingerichtet und ich konnte auch gleich mein eigenes Zimmer beziehen. Da ich durch die Mutter meiner Freundin schon das ein oder andere moldawische Gericht kennengelernt habe, war mir das Essen auch schon ein wenig vertraut. Moldawier sind außerordentlich gastfreundliche Menschen und dies drückt sich insbesondere beim Essen aus. Während man in Deutschland häufig mit „nur“ einem Kaffee einen Gast begrüßt, geht man in Moldawien nie mit leerem Magen wieder nach Hause. So lernt man auch schnell die ein oder anderen Besonderheiten in der lokalen Küche kennen. Der Unterschied zur deutschen Küche liegt insbesondere dahin, dass alles ein wenig länger gekocht wird, sowie weniger gewürzt wird. Saucen gibt es eher keine, sondern man nutzt für viele Speisen Smetana – eine Kreuzung aus Kefir und Joghurt. Schon gut gestärkt, lernte ich am nächsten Tag auch gleich meine Lehrerin kennen. Sie unterrichtet Russisch und Englisch an einer Schule hier in der Hauptstadt und gibt in ihrer Freizeit noch zusätzlichen Unterricht für die Project Abroad-Freiwilligen. Daher habe ich nun jeden Tag drei bis vier Stunden intensives Einzeltraining und beschäftige mich danach noch den Rest des Tages mit Hausaufgaben und Vokabeltraining. Am ersten Wochenende – dem orthodoxen Weihnachtsfest – bin ich dann zu den Verwandten in den Ort Orhei gefahren. Dieser kleine Ort liegt knapp eine Stunde Fahrt mit dem Minibus entfernt.

Üblicherweise bewegt man sich von Ort zu Ort hier mit den Minibussen, die man einfach am Straßenrand herunterwinkt und zu denen man zusteigt. In Orhei angekommen, habe ich gleich auch die gesamte Verwandtschaft kennengelernt – natürlich begleitet von einer großen Auswahl an leckerem Essen und viel selbstgemachtem Wein. Denn das ist auch noch eine Besonderheit hier in Moldawien. So ziemlich jede Familie stellt hier ihren eigenen Wein her. Die Männer verbringen dabei eine große Zeit damit, den genauen passenden Geschmack abzustimmen. So bekommt man einen Wein vorgesetzt, den man bestimmt in einer so guten Qualität nicht so einfach in Deutschland findet. Ich habe nun fast die Hälfte meiner Zeit hinter mir und bin sehr gespannt, was ich während der nächsten zwei Wochen noch erleben werde.

Miscellaneous page

Winter Traditions in Moldova

By Ana Zaiat, student at the State University of Moldova
and collaborator of Projects Abroad.



Our Moldovan nation is rich in traditions. Because of them we are special and unique. Moldovan people meet their guests with freshly baked bread, salt and a glass of wine. This represents one of the most important and specific traditions of our nation. In this way we show our respect and warmth to the guests we receive in our homes.

We have a plenty of winter holidays. On the 6th of December we celebrate St. Nicholas. It opens the door of winter holidays. This holiday is very special for children, due to the fact that in the night of St. Nicholas all the children who have been obedient throughout the year, and always have their boots clean find inside their laced up boots sweets and many other gifts. St. Andrew is another significant holiday. On this day young girls have fun doing witchcrafts. In this way they try to find out their future husband. But boys steal the gates from the homes of young girls, who respectively should look for them the next day. In many of our villages and towns, Christmas is celebrated according to the old style (the 7th of January). Lately, due to the spreading and influence of western traditions, Moldavians, guided by the principle of the “holidays are no way too many”, began to

celebrate this holiday according to the new style (the 25th of December). Christmas is preceded by a period of fasting referred to as *Nativity Fast (Advent)*. The Nativity Fast lasts for 6 weeks. For those who celebrate Christmas according to the New Style it lasts during the 15th of November and the 24th of December, while for the people of the Old style it is between the 24th of November and the 7th of January. During the Nativity Fast it is prohibited to consume meat, eggs and milk.

During the period of fasting Orthodox Christians eat traditional dishes such as: vegetable soup with beans or potatoes, "geandra" (polenta porridge), potato dishes, vegetables, pickles, beans, cookies with poppy and others. The most important traditions of the holiday are Christmas carols. Traditionally, in Moldova Christmas Carols are sung only by boys. Children's habit of walking to carol with the star proclaims the Nativity (Jesus' birth). Also an old tradition is "going with the icon"; it is a kind of carol which is sung by the priest of a village who keeps in his hands the Nativity icon. In such a way he blesses homes, households and all the Christians. Winter carols are ritual texts dedicated to Christmas and New Year. The origin of carols is lost in the mists of time. All the carols recalled the moment, when at the Jesus' birth in the sky appeared the star that guided the free Magi (wise men) to the place of birth. On Christmas Day groups of children who carry with them a star in the center of which is placed the Nativity icon begin their carols with the following words: "The star rises above". Christmas Eve begins with the "Good Morning to Santa on Christmas Eve" carol and children sing such carols as "Flowers of white", "Leru-i ler", "Day Down" and "Today Christ was born. Carolers have small purses where they put gifts received from the host families. This tradition signifies the luck and the abundance in the house of the householder. The traditional gift for carolers is the bread (it signifies the abundance). Lads are usually given big "colaci" (a kind of knot-shaped bread/ in scot). Hogmanay which is prepared especially for this event, while children receive smaller "colaci", pigeons (a kind of fancy bread which looks like a pigeon), nuts and candies. It is worthy to take into consideration the housewives' tradition regarding cooking and baking traditional cookies, especially the baking of "colaci". Baking "colaci" for carolers imposes certain canons for housewives. According to the tradition from the first batter is baked the so called "Christmas" or it is referred to as well as "Craciunel". It is a cookie that looks like an eight which is not completed. After it is baked, it is placed right near the icon until the springtime, and then it is shared to cattle in order to be healthy. Before Christmas Eve people celebrate the holiday of St. Ignatius. It is the day when families from the countryside stick off their pigs. After, the pork is used to prepare Christmas meals. In ancient times, the pig was considered a sacred animal which was sacrificed in the honour of gods in the springtime which is the period viewed as the beginning of the agricultural year and the year in general. The sacrifice of swine before the main winter holidays gets the meaning of "sacrifice" for sun, which is believed to die and then to rise again during the winter solstice. The name of Ignatius represents in some wise a kind of link between the killing of the pig and the sun worship. On Christmas Eve all the housewives cook certain fasting meals from the grown over the year cereals, fruits and vegetables in order to bear fruits in abundance. Such meals as boiled wheat with nuts and sweetened with honey, smoked plumes, boiled beans, cabbage rolls with gruel, "varzari" (a kind of pie filled with fruits or vegetables), chopped mushrooms with garlic and mashed beans with garlic are prepared and then arranged carefully on the table in the "big house" (it is a kind of guest room). The number of food is considered magic- 7, 9 or 12. Everyone sits down to table just after the meals are blessed by the priest. Food leftover should remain on the table. It is believed that the dead will come to taste them. The holiday table on the Christmas Eve is a special one, as there sit not just the living people but the dead as well. The holiday table on the first day of Christmas is much richer. On the Christmas table of Moldovan people pork meals never miss, as these signify the desire to have an abundant life. Traditionally on the table one can relish such dishes as: bubble-and squeak and pork sausages, cabbage rolls, cold buffet, fish, bread, "Christmas" cookie, fruits, sweets and drinks. In Moldova it is certified the tradition of eating polenta on Christmas Day, which is considered to

have magical connotations. Christmas is a special holiday for everybody.

It is the only holiday which gathers the entire family together around the table of the parental house, besides the dearest persons. In these moments, life seems to be different, all the people appear in a more favourable light and we can open easier our hearts. On the 31st of December, when it is celebrated New Year, children walk from house to house and wish to householders a happy, prosperous New Year and great achievements; as rewards for their wishing children are given sweets. There are a lot of old traditions which are preserved and passed down from year to year. One of the most popular traditions is "jocul Ursului" (the bear), which in the centre of the action is considered as a sacred animal for Geto-Dacians (geto-dacians are considered to be the ancestors of the Moldovan nation). A number of young people gather together to prepare the mask and costume. The person who has the role of the bear should wear a fur coat adorned with tassels and on the head he carries a wooden frame covered with canvas. This masked folk theatre is attended by musicians; it is a ritual which involves the participation of many characters who should recite their own text, respectively it looks more or less like a theatre play. At the end they send the best wishes to the host families which reward them with money and "colaci". As well, there is the tradition of reciting to different houses the so called "Plugusorul" carol. Such mask role-plays as the goat, the bear, the horse and the deer are too popular. On the 1st of January children go to different houses and sing "Sorcova" (a kind of carol), although the bear is the most awaited by people, as it brings in the New Year more fertile land and wealth. "Plugusorul" is related to the hope of fertility; its lyrics present agricultural practices and wish rich cropland. In exchange for this wishes children receive symbolic gifts, biscuits, fruits or money. Traditionally, on the 1st January Moldovan people don't throw away anything from their houses, because it is considered that if one gets rid of something on this day, s/he gets rid of his/her luck. As well, on this day no one lives his/her house until a brunette enters the house (people say that brunettes bring luck and happiness, while redheads and blondes misfortune). On New Year Eve people make a wish, as it is likely to happen. New Year Eve is greeted with noise because it is said that loud noises chase away evil spirits. Some people open champagne at the turn of the year in order to have a prosperous new year. The lighting of New Year fireworks is usually practiced by the young. Finally I'd like to mention that Moldovan people are believed to be very hospitable to their relatives and friends, especially to strangers. People usually say that the majority of foreigners who have the opportunity to visit our country remain amazed due to the openness and unconditional generosity of the host Moldovan families. Consequently these traits can be applied universally to all the inhabitants of this country.

Volunteers' Happy Moments





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Thank you all for your collaboration!
Thank you for being with us!
If you have anything you'd like to contribute,
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