



THE ROMANIAN CULTURE

ATTITUDE IN A DIFFERENT CULTURE:

Be flexible and exhibit a sweet Christian spirit! This will be a taxing trip in some ways. You will get hot and tired. Things will not always work like they do at home. Plans made one day may have to be scrapped and replaced with alternate plans. Do not get uptight! So long as you remember that God has everything under control, everything will work out.

Life in Romania will be different from life in the United States. Learning about another culture can be one of the most exciting things about the trip. Don't constantly compare with how things are done at home. "Go with the flow". Maintain a positive attitude, adapt and accept the differences. If nothing else, you will come away with a greater appreciation for the luxuries we enjoy in the U.S.

Cultivate relationships with the Romanians you will be working alongside and ministering to. Almost without exception, you will find that the Romanians will be extremely gracious and friendly. They will do their best to make you feel at home.

Be courteous and kind to each person you meet. Cooperate in obeying local and national laws. Respect local customs. Never ridicule or criticize their views, even if different from your own.

If you have learned a bit of Romanian, use it. Although many Romanians (especially children and youth) speak English, it pleases them when foreigners are interested enough to learn their language.

Respect other worshipers and be reverent in churches you visit. Many congregations bow in silent prayer while waiting for the service to begin. Remember that you are there as a fellow worshiper, not as a spectator.

DO NOT SMOKE! Romanian Christians do not smoke, and smoking is not tolerated within the church membership. To smoke would be to cancel any opportunity of witness you might have.

Typically, Romanians are accustomed to less "people space" than we Americans are. So, do not be surprised if they stand closer when conversing with you and sit closer in church.

Most Romanians do not like to have movement of air around them, and consider it unhealthy. Thus, most of the time windows will not be opened to catch a breeze like they would be at home. Be prepared for this, especially during worship services. Dress lightly, though modestly.



Romanian Culture

You will probably encounter beggars, maybe even children who beg for their family. Avoid giving money or gifts on the street or in large crowds, or you may be pursued. The “street people” who beg can be a big nuisance. They may attempt to surround and distract you while their cohorts try to rob you. This is a good reason to stay with your group. Watch out for each other.

It will be a blessing to discreetly give gifts to those people you get to know. You might want to pack some small gifts to give to your interpreters and families you might be invited to share a meal with. Most are very poor and even small items will be appreciated, especially by the children (t-shirts, storybooks, dolls, “matchbox” cars, balloons, puzzles, etc.) As an alternative to taking gifts, you might want to take some Christian cards in which you enclose a small gift of money. American money is always welcomed.

Much of the time, you will be accompanied by an interpreter. When speaking through an interpreter, do not say, “Tell them this . . . or tell them that”, but rather speak directly to the person you are talking to. Pause after sentences or phrases. It will seem a little awkward at first, but with practice you will get the hang of it. Be sure to use RAM provided interpreters as they are assigned to you and your team to help you communicate throughout the mission trip.

Romanians generally do not like to talk about their sad lives during Communism. Treat that subject with discretion. They are proud of their education and literacy rate (98% - one of the highest in the world).

The ultimate aim for the mission trip is to lead people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. The best way to accomplish this is to avoid letting cultural considerations muddle communications.

MONEY:

Most expenses for your trip will be covered using the donations provided to the team, including transportation, meals while in Romania and lodging. Typical items for which you will need money are snacks or meals in the airports going and coming, souvenirs, snacks and drinks in Romania other than at mealtime and any money you might want to give as gifts.

It is VERY IMPORTANT that you keep your money in a safe place, preferably in a money pouch under your clothing AT ALL TIMES.

Romanian lei (leu in the singular), the national currency, are issued in coins and notes. Cristi or your interpreter will provide you with current exchange rate.

Usually one of our Romanian leaders or interpreters will exchange money for the whole group. See your team leader if you need extra cash converted.

It is best to exchange money at local exchange offices available at almost every street corner in larger towns. Their exchange rates tend to be a little higher than the official rate at banks, the airport, train station or in hotels. Be sure to hang on to your receipt to change your money back at the end of the trip, as it is needed to prove you didn't trade on the black market. **Avoid black market moneychangers, who will approach you on the street! This can be very dangerous!** Some of the unscrupulous methods still used by professional thieves include shortchanging the unsuspecting traveler by wrapping new bills around wads of worthless or counterfeit ones or shouting to the police in the street after the transaction and running off with the hard currency.

When you are owed change from a purchase, do not expect change for amounts less than 500 lei (the smallest coin currently in use).



Romanian Culture

Take new crisp American money in small denominations. Carry most of it in \$20 bills, but also take some 1's, 5's and 10's. The currency exchanges in Romania will not take old, torn or wrinkled bills or bills that have been written on.

Traveler's checks are mostly useless in Romania. They're accepted only at banks, tourist offices, major hotels and some exchange shops. You may be charged as much as 5-10% commission.

Larger hotels and upscale stores and restaurants will accept major credit cards, but most of the time you will need cash.

GENERAL INFORMATION

CLIMATE:

Romania has long, bitter winters and hot, humid summers. Average temperatures in Bucharest range from highs in the 80's in the summer through the 50's and 60's in spring and fall, to a low in the 20's in January. Generally the seacoast has warmer winters and cooler summers, while the mountains are cooler in summer and much colder in the winter.

Remember that there could be no air conditioning, so it may seem hotter than home even if the average temperature is lower in Romania. The climate is variable, just like we experience here. Generally, you can expect it to be quite hot in the summer. Some mission teams, however, have experienced rainy, cool weather, so be prepared with a jacket or sweater.

FACTS:

Population - The population of Romania is approximately 23 – 24 million.

Size - Romania is comparable in size to the state of Oregon.

Business Hours - Banks are usually open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Offices usually stay open Monday through Friday from 8 or 9 a.m. until 4 or 5 p.m., and they close at 1 p.m. on Saturday. Most are closed on Sunday. In cities and larger towns, shops are open Monday through Friday from 7 or 8 a.m. to 5 or 6 p.m. Larger stores may stay open until 8 or 9 p.m. Some stores close for a few hours in the afternoon; most are open on Saturday, but close by 1 p.m.

Language - Of all the Romance languages – Italian, Portuguese, French and Spanish – Romanian is the closest to ancient Latin. Even with its Slavic and Turkish influences, Romanian is a fairly accessible tongue for Westerners. If you know a little French, Spanish, Portuguese or Italian, you will understand some of the language. Romanian is much easier to pronounce than other Eastern European languages. Many words in Romanian are actually pronounced just as they appear.

Laundry - Coin-operated laundries are not available. Plan to take detergent for hand washing, or take enough clothes to last the entire trip, because you won't have access to a washing machine and dryer.

Romanian Culture

Mail - Although mail service has improved since the revolution and is reportedly no longer monitored, it remains one of Eastern Europe's less reliable systems. Go ahead and mail postcards and letters, but don't be surprised if you beat the mail back home!

Maps – When reading maps, searching for addresses or navigating your way around Romania, you should know that **Strada** (abbreviated “Str.”) means “street”. **Calea** means “avenue”. **Bulevardul** (abbreviated “Bd.”) means “boulevard”. **Soseaua** (abbreviated “Sos.”) is an even wider avenue than a boulevard. **Piata** is a square or plaza, and **Drumul** means “lane”. Note that in Romanian addresses, street numbers follow the street name (for example, Str. Academiei 35).

Photography – You may now take photographs freely in Romania, with the exception of military objects with a NO PHOTOGRAPHY sign (a red slash over a black camera). Do not take photographs of military personnel seen in airports.

Do not take photographs of embassies, military objectives, or any other building or property guarded by guards, police or soldiers! You may find yourself in trouble, even taken to jail!

Important Note about photographic film: Make sure that you carry your undeveloped film in your carry-on luggage. Some international airports have newer, more powerful scanning machines for check-in luggage that will destroy your film. Therefore never put your film in the check-in luggage.

Police – The national police emergency number is 055.

Restrooms – Always carry toilet paper or tissues with you if you plan to use public toilets. Many public restrooms lack soap, towels and toilet paper.

Telephones - Do NOT place long distance calls from your hotel room. If you do, you will be shocked when you get the bill!!

Cell phones for use in Romania during the mission trip are available and the phone rental rate is best covered using a prepaid calling card.

Phone calls can also be placed from the post office or phone center or from a pay phone (which might be located in hotel lobby). You will need a phone card in order to place a call. Phone cards can be purchased at the post office or phone center. It can be difficult and take a long time to get a long distance connection. Faxes can be sent from phone centers, and may be the cheapest and most efficient way to communicate with loved ones in the U.S., so take with you their fax numbers.

Time – Official Romanian time is one hour ahead of Central Europe, two hours ahead of Greenwich mean time, seven hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time, and eight hours ahead of Central Standard Time. Romania goes to daylight savings time the last Sunday in March and goes back to standard time the last Sunday in September.

Driving – Except in a few places outside of cities, Romanian roads are two-lane and not maintained to high standards. Signs are maddeningly absent and in the rain, roads drain poorly. On the roads you will encounter heavily laden trucks, buses, combines, cars, horsecarts, livestock, bicyclists, pedestrians, sheep, geese and stray dogs. Most roads are unlit. Speed limits are 60kmph (37 M.P.H.) within cities and 80 to 90kmph (50 to 56 M.P.H.) outside cities, depending on the size of the car.

Safety – NEVER strike out on your own! Always stay with a group of two or three and keep your group leader informed as to your whereabouts.

Romanian Culture

Gypsies – This group of people, especially in the cities, can be a real nuisance. Many of them beg for a living and may attempt to mob you if you're not careful. They usually dress in bright, colorful clothing.



FOOD AND DRINK:

Food is abundant in Romania. The variety may not be overwhelming (summer fruit and vegetables improve the situation considerably), but eating enough is not a problem. You will probably be invited to eat in homes and will enjoy delicious meals – perhaps the best you will have on the whole trip. If you like meat and potatoes, you will not go hungry!

Soups – If you're ever in doubt about what to choose from a menu, order soup. It is especially good in Romania and you can hardly go wrong. Soups come in two main varieties – supa (a broth or cream-based soup, such as beef consommé or cream of mushroom), or the more common ciorba (a hearty sour soup base with meat and a variety of vegetables).

Main Dishes – Grilled pork or beef is the most common main course. Pork is served in endless variations, such as pork cutlets, roast loin of pork and pork schnitzel. Chicken and turkey are usually accompanied with a portion of mujdei (an intense garlic sauce). Traditional Romanian dishes include sarmale (spiced meat and rice mixture wrapped in cabbage or grape leaves), tocana (a meat stew with vegetables), musaca (meat, vegetable and potato casserole), and mamaliga cu brinza (a cornmeal dish with unsalted feta cheese).

Fruits and Vegetables – The most common vegetables are green beans, peas and carrots. In the summer, you might be served pepper, eggplant, cucumbers and tomatoes. Potatoes are very plentiful and can be fixed many ways, all of which are tasty.

Bread – Delicious fresh bread is served with every meal.

Desserts – Try traditional Romanian desserts such as clatite (jam-filled crepes) and papanas (doughnuts drizzled with a sour-cream sauce). Ice cream is cheap and tasty; however, be sure to stick with commercially packaged ice cream products like Mars, Dove Bars, etc.

Drinks – Soft drinks such as Coke and Pepsi are widely available. Canned soft drinks are more expensive than bottled. Fanta is a very good soft drink in Romania. Romanian coffee is served with grounds. Instant coffee is called nes. Capuccino is the closest to Western-style coffee.

NOTE: All milk products are questionable except those that are commercially packaged. Milk in Romania is usually much higher in fat content than you are accustomed to. You may want to take with you milk, which is available in small drink boxes that don't require refrigeration. One brand available at Kroger is Nestle, which comes in chocolate and plain. If you do carry any kind of drink boxes, BE SURE to pack them in Zip-lock bags.

HISTORY:

The Revolution of 1989 – After anti-Communist revolution had swept over Eastern Europe in the fall of 1989, the anger of the Romanian people finally boiled over when security forces killed hundreds of pro-democracy demonstrators in the western city of Timisoura in December 1989. Protests spread across the country, and the army revolted against Ceausescu. The bitter fighting that erupted in Bucharest and other Romanian cities was some of the worst seen in Europe since World War II. A few days after the revolution began, Ceausescu was caught. On Christmas Day he and his wife Elena were executed.

Famous People:

Vlad Tepes (1430-76) – Ruling prince of Wallachia from 1456 to 1462 and in 1476, Tepes is still honored in Romania as a nationalist who valiantly fought invading Ottoman Turkish armies. He was infamous for slowly torturing his victims to death by impaling them on rounded wooden stakes, earning him the name “Vlad the Impaler”. If that didn’t suit his grisly appetite, he might lop off an arm or leg and watch his victims slowly die, leaving the bodies to rot outside. His father was given the Order of the Dragon or “dracul” for fighting the Turks. As the son of dracul, he gained the name Dracula. But, he was never considered a vampire until Bram Stoker characterized him as such in the 19th century novel.

Stephen the Great (1434-1504) – Prince of Moldavia from 1457 to 1504, Stephen is remembered in Romanian history for his resistance to Ottoman Turkish invaders in Moldavia. Following each victory against the Turks, he built a beautiful frescoed monastery, leaving Romania one of its greatest cultural heritages in the Bukovina region.

King Michael of Romania (1921 -) – The last king of Romania, Michael served from 1927 to 1930 and 1940 to 1947. During the war years he was a popular symbol of resistance to the pro-Nazi iron Guard government, and he played an important role in the 1944 coup that ended Romania’s Axis alliance. Under Soviet pressure, he abdicated in 1947. Since then he has lived in exile in Switzerland. In 1990 the new government at first barred him from making his first return visit to Romania. When they finally allowed him to visit on Christmas Day, they expelled him within 12 hours.

In recent years, King Michael returned home to the first official welcome since he was banished 50 years ago. He was greeted by shouts of “Long live King Michael” and “Your Majesty, don’t leave. This is your homeland!” Michael laid a wreath of white orchids to honor the heroes of 1989.

Nicolae Ceausescu (1918-89) – Communist leader of Romania for 24 years (1965-89), Nicholae Ceausescu held the titles of president, general secretary of the Communist Party, supreme commander of the armed forces and president of the State Council. He implemented a brutal, repressive society at home, but was frequently praised abroad for his strong Romanian nationalism and degree of independence from Moscow. Ceausescu and his wife were tried by a military tribunal and executed on Christmas Day in 1989.

Constantin Brancusi (1876-1957) – A sculptor and pioneer of abstract art whose work exerted a tremendous influence on 20th-century art. He learned woodcarving as a peasant boy in his native village, and after studying art in Bucharest, he left for Paris (where he spent most of the rest of his life, from 1904 on). Influenced by the interest in primitive carving and the modern art movement, he produced numerous increasingly abstract sculptures, the most famous of which is Bird in Space.

Nadia Comaneci (1961 -) – The 14-year old gymnast who won the world’s admiration by scoring the first perfect “10” score in the 1976 Montreal Olympics. She went on to win three gold medals at Montreal after



Romanian Culture

earning seven perfect scores. In the 1980 Moscow Olympics she won two more gold medals and two silver medals. In late 1989, just a few weeks before the revolution, she fled Romania to Hungary, and then settled in the United States.

ROMANIA TODAY:

Since the 1989 revolution, Romanians have been allowed to have more contact with foreigners, to accommodate them in their homes, to hold foreign currency and to speak fairly freely. Prior to 1989, there were only government stores with empty shelves and long lines, but flourishing street markets have sprung up, allowing farmers to sell their produce. In May 1993 subsidies on food, transportation and energy were scrapped and prices jumped four or five times. The annual inflation rate is very high.

Romanians earn only about \$ 80-150 a month. Many are disillusioned by the lack of progress since 1989 and by declining living standards, rampant inflation and unemployment.

Violence has eased up since the bloody days of the televised revolution, but for a great many Romanians little has improved since those days of great hope. Romania continues to have the lowest standard of living in Eastern Europe after Albania. Recovering from the consequences of Ceausescu's policies and extravagant building projects that left the economy ravaged, the country polluted, and the people destitute from exploitation and numb from years of repression may take decades.

ROMANIAN GREETINGS AND EXPRESSIONS:

Yes	Da
No	Nu
Thank you	Mulțumesc
Thank you very much	Mulțumesc frumos
You're welcome	Cu plăcere
Good morning	Bună dimineața
Good afternoon	Bună ziua
Good evening	Bună seara
Good night	Noapte bună
Let's go	Hai să mergem
Please	Vă rog
Excuse me	Scuzați-mă
Glad to meet you	Încântat de cunoștință
What is your name?	Cum te cheamă?
My name is Bill!	Mă numesc Bill!
How much does it cost?	Cât costă?
I'm sorry	Îmi pare rău
You are very kind	Sunteți foarte amabil
I had a wonderful time	M-am simțit foarte bine
Good-bye	La revedere
Hello	Bună
Do you know Jesus?	Crezi în Isus Cristos?
Jesus loves you!	Isus te iubește!
I love you	Te iubesc
Do you believe in God?	Crezi în Dumnezeu?