

ProjectsAbroad

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Salutare Moldova



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Inside and Out

The development of the Moldovan Traditional Towel

(Once - the main occupation of housewives, Today - a traditional item of national pride)

By Eugenia Doros, supervisor of Projects Abroad Moldova.

Moldovan people were always known mainly as hard workers, and that's because the agriculture was always the main occupation here, as we are lucky enough to have a fertile soil. That's why, while men were working the whole day in the field, their wives were standing at home, cleaning the house, cooking food, raising children, and every woman, obligatorily, had to weave or to sew adequate household. We can say the traditional Moldovan woman had always been considered to be a housewife. Actually weaving all the necessary fabrics for the house, the women were contributing to the family' budget, because the statistic says that on average per year in a single farm were produced: a carpet, a 50-inch wave "cubits", a wave of domestic cloth pieces, decorative and for clothing. Certainly nowadays the things are totally different: today in Moldova, as in any civilized country the women empowerment is widely promoted and you will hardly find a housewife, interested only in cleaning the house and towel/carpet weaving in our towns, and in many villages too. The fact that Moldovan society develops is undoubtedly a great thing, but on the other hand, isn't it a pity that our national traditions risk to be forgotten by the young generation? For avoiding such a situation, at the main holidays, and especially at weddings, christenings and funerals we try to keep the traditions and to use the representative Moldovan objects. As the weaving was the main occupation for women, one of the first representative item, you will immediately notice coming to Moldova, is our traditional towel. The towels were made in the territory situated between the rivers Prut and Nistru (Dniester), the nowadays territory of Republic of Moldova, beginning with the late prehistoric period. The towel weaving was considered to be a great and a rather valued skill. They were part of girls' dowry and were passed down from generation to generation. The moment of "glory" of the Moldovan Towel Art was during the 18th century and the first half of the 19th. Actually, once the functionality of towel was multiple: from an item of interior design, to a decorative fabric for different rituals.



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First, in every room of the house, in the corner of the wall, near the ceiling, was put an icon, and behind it was fixed a traditional towel, whose free edges (being tied to the icon from the middle part) were falling down. As an element of interior design, there was a towel placed on the table in the "the Large House" (a name given to the most important room in the house, where guests were expected at holidays), or near the pictures of dear people. Another tradition which requires the use of the towel, kept till nowadays, is to meet an important guest with bread and salt, that would never been held straight on the hands of host, but there obligatorily will be the most beautiful towel, and just then the bread and salt on it. First of all this tradition is used at official meetings between the officials of different countries. We can also be proud that another function of it, that of decorative fabrics for ceremonies and rituals hasn't been forgotten still. So, as many years ago, today at the weddings the guests (the "spiritual parents") are also tied with it: the middle of the towel is put on the shoulder, and then its edges are tied approximately near the waistline. The same way we use the towels at baby christenings. There are funeral towels too, given as "doled" to the people that came to say goodbye to the deceased. Every time we use a towel meeting a guest, it is a sign of how important this person is for us, how much we respect and care about him. To understand which is the main difference between the usual/everyday towel and the Moldovan traditional towel (called "Prosop"), it's important to know that it is longer (up to 4 m) and wider, approximately 80 cm, beautifully decorated with different thematic motifs (phytomorphous, cosmomorphic, geometric), in 2-3 colors, predominantly white and cream. Quality raw material is thin, sometimes silk, combined with thicker wires. It is finished with wide lace at the ends, or even on the 3 or 4 edges. Actually, the most precious towels are used in the most important events, which serve as a yardstick-brand of social identity, a symbol of high honor and honor for some special people.

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More common for southern Moldova are towels made of cotton silk threads, longer and wider, with decorative openwork invoice and phytomorphic, avimorphic, or geometric motifs, usually white or cream. According to the manufacturing technique there are known different kinds of towels, such as: "ity", "high", "elected", "embroidered", and combined. The last combine several technical procedures of decorative weaving: plain weaving, ity and "selected". The towels that are embroidered and have attached to the edges the lace are extremely beautiful. Some of them are considered to be real pieces of art, due to the difficult technique of weaving and embroidering, that's why many of them are kept in the National Museum of Ethnography and National History of Moldova, and there are even organized periodically exhibitions of Moldovan traditional towels which are more than 100 years old. Nowadays, there are many stylized towels, probably in step with fashion trends, an absolutely original element being the replacement of threads with small and colored beads. There is a young designer who has even made a collection of dresses for girls using just the towels that she found at her grandmother, and have called her collection "Treasure Chest".

Therefore, for many people, peasant' towel is a symbol of fertility and welfare of the family and was a part of peasants' life for centuries, both in happy and sad moments, that's why towels with original compositions and a rich ornament are a true national treasure of Moldovan people.



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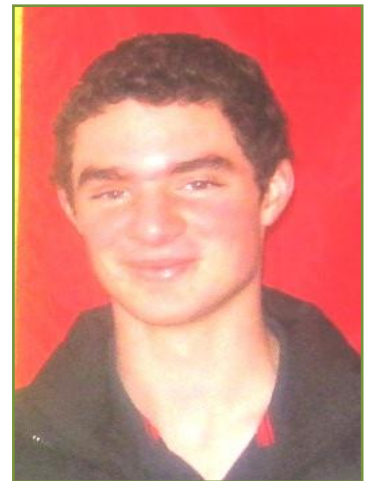
Journalism project

9th of May: A Divisive Celebration

By Matt Suppelsa from United States of America.

The 9th of May is a very important day in most CIS countries, as it is a day of recognition of the Allied forces' defeat of Germany following the Red Army's invasion of Berlin. Although, the largest celebrations are of course held in Moscow, the Russian Embassy sponsored a sizeable celebration in Chişinău as well, which took place in the center of the city, on Ştefan cel Mare street. This was my first time experiencing first-hand the 9th of May celebrations, since this day is not recognized in the United States. The day certainly marks an important event – one that changed the course of history, and prevented the spread of a certain evil, Fascism, throughout the European continent. Since the USSR suffered by far the largest number of casualties in World War II, their contribution in the defeat of the Axis forces is of great significance. Before heading to the celebrations in the center of the city, I visited the Eternal Flame, where there is a large memorial commemorating those who died in the war. There were multiple war veterans, all of whom were welcomed as heroes. Those in attendance distributed flowers to the veterans to show their respect. Although, the event that the 9th of May celebrations commemorates is of great importance, and one that I certainly support, I was struck by the divisions that the 9th of May celebrations brought upon Moldovan society. It was my observation that the majority of people who attended the celebrations were primarily Russian speakers, and reminisced about the Soviet Union. At the Eternal Flame, there was even a banner which read “Our Homeland, USSR”. Almost every Romanian-speaker that I talked to did not support the 9th of May celebrations. In fact, there was even a small demonstration protesting against the celebrations, waving Moldovan and European Union (EU) flags. Therefore, I have come to the conclusion that the 9th of May celebrations – although the event it is intended to mark is one we can all agree on – has a much deeper significance, and divides society on linguistic and ethnic lines. It also has geopolitical significance, with both Russia and the European Union together with the United States attempting to exert their influence in Moldova. I noticed advertisements on trolleybuses for “Europe Day in Moldova” on May 18, which may be intended to counter the 9th of May celebration, which was sponsored by the Russian Embassy.

In conclusion, I found the 9th of May to be fascinating, and one I will not soon forget. It was something I had wanted to experience for quite some time, and I am very glad I had the opportunity to take part in the festivities. However, it is always important to consider the “big picture” when reflecting on an experience or event.



My time in Moldova

By Michael Fuller from UK.

Before I left England, I had deliberately not carried out a large amount of research about the place. I knew the basics, but I wanted to experience for myself and from what I learnt from people who lived there. My first impressions were oh my god I really haven't packed enough warm clothes for this!! It was late March and the daytime temperature was well below freezing but it was the strong wind that really packed the punch. I was however given a warm welcome by Iana at the airport, who made me feel comfortable straight away and pointed out key sights and landmarks (I will never forget 'MallDova' and you soon learn to find you way around by Andy's Pizza!) I was taken to my host family and Sofia and Victor made me feel at home straight away. Throughout my stay I was treated as one of the family and will not forget the wonderful food and interesting dinner table conversations which we had. I even managed to learn a few words in Russian in my one month here. I carried out a split Sport/business placement; most of the time I assisted Victor and Eugen coaching 11-year-old children football. It was a great experience and the children got so much enjoyment out of playing, no matter what the weather and showed great respect to both Victor and Eugen (something which children in England could certainly do with learning). I



also took part in training with the under 17 team and played matches in the Chişinău championship of the town. The pitch was far from wembley stadium on the nou camp in Barcelona and was mainly very hard with little or no grass but this was part of the experience and explained to me why so many footballers in Moldova have good technical abilities such as dribbling and ball control from an early age. I could recommend this placement to anyone with an interest in football, irrespective of age or ability as Victor and Eugen will encourage you to take part, but not force you to do anything you're not comfortable with. I also carried out a business placement.

Photo Collage realized by Matthew Suppelsa, volunteer in Journalism project.

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Back in the UK, I am a traffic engineer and as part of this I am qualified to carry out Road Safety Audits. This is essentially a review to minimize the number of accidents on new or improved roads. Moldova does not have Road Safety Audit process and I gave a presentation to eight members of the Moldova ministry for transport on this process. It included a site visit to help the members to identify safety issues to avoid them in the future. The presentation was well received and I felt proud that I have helped in some small way to improve road safety in Moldova. I'm not sure I can do much about the amount of holes in the roads though! So about Chişinău. Well the -10c weather ended after the first week and as I left temperatures were 20c and trees were starting to come into leaf which gave the town a different feel given there are trees on almost every street. I enjoyed trips to Chişinău's wonderful national, military and natural museums, the trip to the Old Orhei monastery and trips to Odessa and Kiev (via the interesting transdnestr which I shall say no more about). Both Russian and Romanian are widely spoken. At first I couldn't tell the difference but then I realised that, as this I'd Moldova, some people often combine the two mid-sentence! The Romanian spoken here certainly sounds less Latin than it does in Romania but after one very enjoyable lesson with Christina I was able to tell the languages apart easier. I'd certainly recommend trying to learn the language or if you're only here for a month like me some basic words at least as the effort is appreciated by all, even if you are laughed at a lot!! And this brings me nicely onto the people. The people I have experienced in Moldova without exception have been open, friendly, welcoming, sharing and often frank in their views about Moldovan life. I know when I return to England, friends and family will ask me to explain Moldova. My time here has left me with more questions than answers. I shall say it how I have seen it though. There are people who say that they are Russian, those who say they are Romanian and those that say they are Moldovan. Whilst they may all have different views, they coexist peacefully with one another and whilst there may be the odd joke about each other, it is this in my mind which makes them all Moldovan and therefore Moldova. I end my wonderful experience with thanks to all who have helped me along the way, the two Victors, Sofia, Igor and Elena at Projects Abroad and most of all Eugen - my coach at football for all the time spent with me and making sure I understand all the training drills, and Iana and Eugenia for being great guides, all of the effort in translating my presentation into Romanian and also for being my friends here. La revedere Moldova şi mulţumesc.



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Photos Page

Volunteer's Happy Moments

Journalism, Teaching and Business projects.



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Miscellaneous page

Museums in Moldova

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

REPUBLICAN PEDAGOGICAL MUSEUM

The museum has five halls and a fund of about 11.000 exhibits: documents, photos, reproductions, textbooks, programs and curricular from 1940-2000. The museum library contains 3050 showpieces among which there are rare books, textbooks published in the 19th, early 20th in Bessarabia. Among the most valuable works of the museum are "Russian and Romanian Grammar" by Stefan Margela (a two-volume edition), "The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia" by Dan Simionescu, 1975, Bucharest; "Romanian Documents and Entries from the 16th Century" by G. Chivu, Bucharest, 1979; and "The Primitive Course in Romanian Language" elaborated for primary schools and secondary ones, 1865, Chisinau, by Ion Donceev.



THE VILLAGE'S MUSEUM

It's a kind of open-air ethnographic museum which reflects a Bessarabian village from the 18th -19th centuries. The problem of creating such a museum appeared in the early 20th at the initiative of renowned scholars and men of culture P.Stefanuca and P.Mihail. The present-day Village's Museum, opened on the 18th of May in 1995 was designed by the following architects: E.Bazgu, S.Burciu and M.Seremet. It is located near the "Gates of Chişinău" (Botanica district). On a surface of 150 ha, there are six ethnographic areas and 165 showpieces: windmills, water mills, wooden churches, houses, households, crucifixes, an inn and a pub etc. The first mounted exhibits were the wind mill from Opaci village (Causeni district) (in the second half of the 19th century) and the wooden church from Sudarca village (Donduseni district).

THE MEMORIAL MUSEUM OF BULGARIAN VOLUNTEERS

It is one of the national museum branches. It was opened inside the chapel, built in memory of the Russian victory in Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78. The museum accommodates documents, objects, engravings, samples of weapons, numerous photos of the participants of the battles of Bulgaria Liberation's war, who were born actually in Chişinău, among them there are as well C.V.Hrutka's combat uniform, diplomas, mentions and medals, who died in 1969 at the age of 114 years.



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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,
suggest, or comment on, please contact
moldova@projects-abroad.org