

# Friendship Week and 30th Anniversary in Bucharest from 15th - 21st May 2022

The foundation of Eurojumelages Romania dates back to 1991.

Due to Corona, however, the 30th anniversary of the foundation could not be celebrated in 2021 and had to be postponed by one year. Thus, the President of the Bucharest Section, Camelia Bitea, issued an invitation to all Jumeleors to participate in a friendship week in Romania from 15th to 21st May 2022 to "belatedly celebrate" the 30th anniversary.

Camelia and her team prepared a very interesting cultural programme for their guests. The travel group consisted of 11 German twinnors (3 from the Bonn association, one from the Böblingen/Tübingen association, 4 from the Marburg association and 3 from the Stuttgart association).

The travel group is happy to report on the highlights of their trip to Romania:

## **Arrival and Day 1/Monday**

On Sunday, 15th May 2022, the German twinnors left for the Friendship Week in Romania.

Upon arrival, direct transfer to Hotel Intercontinental. About 8:00 pm the group was complete with 11 German (unfortunately only German) travellers. Camelia, our contact person and organizer, had organized a place for dinner that evening.

After a good breakfast on Monday, the minibus with Roman, Ukrainian and guide Dr. Mihălcioiu M. Mihail, known as



Michael for short, was waiting for us for a short city tour. Across a few important streets and squares, the largest building in Europe, the "Palace of the Parliament" was already recognizable from a distance in front of us.

Built from 1984 to 1989, under dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, it is an impressive building with 1,100 rooms, as large as concert halls. The lobby alone, measures 340 metres long! 10% of the rooms are open to the public.

Other parts are used by government agencies. Everything is just huge. Impressive fountains, one for each

part of the country, are situated in the line of sight to the building.

Adjacent buildings were replaced by functional high-rise buildings for government members, on the dictator's instructions.



Entire streets had to give way to new high-rise buildings. If we understood well, the new buildings replaced those of the royal era. Fortunately, you can still find a part of the old town with historic buildings.



Next stop, the "Village Museum". Nicely located in the city, it is a popular destination for residents and visitors. Here we find the country life of the last 200 years in original houses (dismantled in the country and rebuilt here). Unfortunately as always time was limited. 3 members of the Bucharest association were waiting for us and accompanied us.

Off to the bus and the "Comana Natural Park", a marshland about 45 minutes from the centre. More than 1153 different plants and 212 bird species can be found. Unfortunately, this unique landscape has already been strongly "adapted" to the pressure of those seeking recreation and also to the demands of agriculture.



Lunch at 3:30 pm on site, simple but good. A short tour and with many pictures in the mobile phone, even more impressions, and afterwards back to the hotel.

Short walk to a restaurant in the old town, and our first impression of Bucharest at "Night". Everywhere was clean, however some pavement slabs were uneven creating sudden tripping points. Fortunately we had an accident-free return to the hotel, and were all eagerly awaiting what the next day will bring. (Diethard Klüh, association of Marburg)

**Day 2/Tuesday**

At about 10 am, guide Michael welcomed us in the minibus and driver Roman started the bus towards Wallachia and the Carpathians. We all had small luggage with us, as we wanted to spend the night in a hostel in the Carpathians. Unfortunately, before noon we got stuck in a traffic jam that lasted over 60 minutes, which jeopardized the entire planning of the day. But our flexible organizer Camelia led us with plan B directly to Peles Castle, the former summer residence of King Carol I. The castle was built between 1873 and 1914 and already had electric light, central heating, lifts, telephone and a glass roof that opened electrically. The approx. 170 rooms are magnificently furnished in different styles and eras. Everywhere you come across collections of weapons, including complete knight's armour for rider and horse weighing over 100 kg.



King Carol's wife, Queen Elisabeth was born in 1843 at Monrepos Castle near Neuwied on the Rhine. Under the pseudonym "Carmen Sylva" she wrote poems and novels and was also fond of music as well as weaving and embroidery art. A ship on the Rhine between Koblenz and Neuwied still bears her name

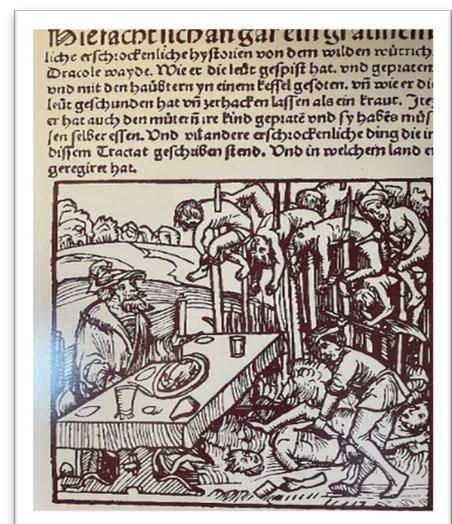


to linger there.

We had lunch in Sinaia at the elegant Palace Restaurant, opened in 1911. Afterwards we headed for our next destination, Bran Castle.



Vlad Țepeș  
Voievod al Țării Românești



It is a tourist attraction because the Wallachian prince Vlad Tepes III lived here from 1431-1476.

Romanians revere him for his bravery and incorruptibility. He treated his enemies and prisoners very cruelly, that's why he got the nickname "Tepes" in German "the impaler". For the Irish writer Bram Stoker, he was the model for his novel character "Dracula", which made him world-famous as a Transylvanian vampire.



During our visit, Dracula suddenly appeared and - as can be seen in the picture - quickly disappears into a narrow dark corridor. Probably someone in our group had carried a suitcase with the cross, garlic and other vampire-repelling



utensils.



The next destination, the Namaiesti hermitage, is less cruel but just as mysterious. The icon of Mary kept in a rock church is said to have been painted by the evangelist St. Luke and hidden in the rock by the apostle St. Andrew. A nun shows us a large group of over a hundred dolls with old costumes, some of which are supposed to



represent their ancestors.

At about 8 pm we set off by bus to our hotel. Roman leads us higher and higher into the Carpathians on narrow, partly unpaved roads. Just when we thought we were lost, at around 10:00 pm, "La Pensiunea Ciprian" appeared in the headlights. Here, a dinner with traditional food from the region and live music awaited us. The young violinist and keyboardist soon made us forget our tiredness and after dinner really got us going. He is a

virtuoso on the violin, conjuring up melodies such as the musette waltz "Sous le ciel de Paris", the film

melody "The Godfather", and of course the European anthem, and in between, with a mischievous smile, makes bird calls sound. When it comes to rock 'n' roll, some twinnars are knocked off their chairs. It's already well past midnight when we go to our rooms. Silvia,



Camelia's colleague, who accompanied us during the Carpathian tour, also liked it very much. (Willi Elz, association of Bonn)

### Day 3/Wednesday

A strong coffee the next morning ensured mental fitness again and so we climbed into two waiting jeeps in a good mood and full of expectation and set off for an adventurous tour with the boss of the house and Roman as drivers.

And so on through the Carpathians on some - not passable with a normal car - bumpy roads. Later we stopped with the jeeps in the middle of a boulder-strewn riverbed.



On this day we not only got to know the enchantingly beautiful landscape of the

Carpathians and Wallachia, but also got an authentic impression of rural life in Romania. Everywhere we see hay piled up like in earlier times. Sometimes a horse-drawn carriage also passed by leisurely. The villages make a clean and well-kept impression with many houses being built or renovated.



We visited the small former hermit monastery Schitul Bradetu, where a mass

was being celebrated with 3 monks.

Another church with a small museum attached provided us with information about geological finds from the area.

In the municipality of Corbi in Arges there is a unique house, the "Blue House", built in 1868, which has remained unchanged since that time. From the old beds to the cradle, from colourful woven carpets to the veranda decorated with flowers, everything



appears magical, from times gone by. The surrounding garden and behind it the 8 m high natural waterfall, which pours into a puddle that doesn't grow bigger, are reminiscent of a mystical place. Accordingly, there are many legends that our guide Michael brings us closer to. For example, the bone-like shapes in the rock behind the blue house are said to refer to giants who lived in Corbi several millennia ago.



Now someone wants to get to the bottom of the matter!

What is certain is that the place has an indescribable charm. The rock supposedly also fills people with special energy. On top of the rock - when you touch the ground with your hands - you are supposed to be charged with energy. After the steep, strenuous climb up the rocks, we are in desperate need of fresh energy, so we try this out. In any case, well rested we can then face the descent again.



At the bottom, more rock formations with strange crosses and the corresponding legends await us, but we also see the

oldest cave monastery in Romania (Corbi de Piatra) that actually exists within the rock. This also houses the oldest painting collection.



The two jeeps bring us back to the pension, where lunch awaits us. Then our bus continues through forests, valleys and romantic roads. We make a short stop at the gigantic Vidraru dam and at the end of our Carpathian tour we visit the Byzantine monastery of Cortea de Arges.



After arriving in Bucharest, we can settle back into our rooms at the hotel and end the eventful day with a late dinner. (Michaela Alber, association of Böblingen/Tübingen)

### **Day 4/Thursday**

After we had already visited Bran Castle on Tuesday, considered to be the home of the so-called Count Dracula, this was followed on Thursday by a tour of Snagov Monastery, which was built on an island in Lake Snagov.

In the monastery church (14th century) is the tomb of Count Vlad Tepes, who served the author Bram Stoker as a model for his novel Count Dracula.

The next stop on the tour was the Mogosoaia Palace - built at the end of the 17th century by Prince Constantin Brancoveanu as a summer residence. The style of the house, with its unusual balconies in the stairways, arcades and columns, was later called the Brancovenesc architectural style.

On the way back we discovered wonderful/spectacular paintings by various artists and poetry to go with them.



Back in the present, our driver took us to a large shopping centre for a late traditional Romanian lunch. Afterwards we could browse in chic boutiques and take some time for an ice cream or a cup of coffee.

We ended the evening in a cosy restaurant in Bucharest. (Rita



*Caumettes and Edeltraud Hübner, association of Stuttgart)*

### **Comment by Rita Caumettes:**

Romania is rich in historical and cultural sites and treasures. In 1994, we, the Stuttgart association, were able to visit our new twin city Bucharest for the first time to get to know it. Since then, the country has changed in many ways and is developing into a modern European country in which the first foreign language is no longer French but English and, fortunately, German is preferred by pupils.

### **Day 5/Friday**

Participants enjoyed free time on Friday. Some of the participants used the time to visit the historic old town with its venerable university, the National Bank and other churches and monasteries. Others visited the beautiful Parcul Regale Mihail in the middle of the big city of Bucharest. Spacious paths invite you to hike on and around Lake Herăstrău.



### ***Gala dinner, anniversary celebration***

In the evening, the anniversary event with gala dinner took place as the highlight of the friendship week, namely in the legendary restaurant Caru' cu bere.



The Gala Dinner was also an opportunity for former Romanian Jumelages Presidents to be with us: Valeriu Benea – former President of the Romanian Twinning Federation together with his wife Mrs. Maria Elena Benea, Mrs. Mariana Petre – former General Secretary of the Romanian Twinning Federation and her husband Mr. Vasile Petre. Mrs. Mariana Petre, currently Honorary President of Eurojumelages Bucharest, was very pleased to meet her old and good friends from Germany.



Mr. Benea was very happy to participate in this celebration of the Romanian Twinning and addressed a few words to the guests, emphasizing the importance of friendship, the joy of meeting and spending beautiful days together.

There were also speeches by Mr. Peter Backes, President of Eurojumelages and Mrs. Camelia Bitea, President of Eurojumelages Bucharest.

Mr. Peter Backes stated that it was a great pleasure to be in Romania in his capacity as the Chairman of Eurojumelages, to congratulate us on our anniversary. He presented in a few words the history of Eurojumelages Romania and the partnerships that have been established with France, London, Coimbra and Stuttgart. He expressed the hope that the Eurojumelages movement will continue in the future and requested Romanian friends to make the advantages of Eurojumelages known to many people in Bucharest and throughout Romania and to inspire them with the idea of Eurojumelages.

In concluding Mr. Backes thanked us for the hospitality, also in the name of the Bonn association, participants could enjoy here in Romania during the last 7 days:



*„Experiencing this together with friends is much more than just spending a holiday in Romania”.*

He emphasized that we continue to organise these wonderful encounters within our organization, Eurojumelages, and should look positively to the future.

Mrs. Michaela Alber thanked us on behalf of all the guests for the warm welcome, the beautiful places visited and wished us much success in the future, to succeed in enlarging our association.

Mrs. Rita Caumettes also spoke and expressed her delight in the progress made in Romania in recent years, comparing to her past visits. She invited us to participate in the celebration of their association next year, the associations in Bucharest and Stuttgart being partners. Mrs. Edeltraud Hübner congratulated us for the effort in organizing the action and gave us advice for new actions.



With fireworks, Beethoven's 9th Symphony and sparkling wine, we received the birthday cake and toasted to 31 years of Eurojumelages Romania.



For Romanian twinner, this week of friendship was considered as an injection of new life - a new beginning.

Colleagues and friends who participated in the event want to join Jumelages Bucharest, those who saw various photos on Facebook were interested and also want to participate in the future.

We are trying to organize other actions in the future and we want the German twinner to return.

There are many other beautiful places that you would enjoy visiting and seeing: Danube Delta, the monasteries of Moldova, the beauties of Transylvania and Maramures.

Thank you dear friends from Germany for being with us. We hope that the memories you take with you, will remain for a very long time. (*Camelia*

*Bitea, association of Bucharest)*

### **Departure on Saturday**

On Saturday it was time to say goodbye to our Romanian friends, but we`ll come back soon.



Farewell Camelia and Mariana...