

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

R O M A N I A



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



August 2008



A WELCOME LETTER

Congratulations on your invitation to become a Peace Corps Volunteer, and to join our program here in Romania. I hope you will accept this opportunity to serve, as I believe it is one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences available to American citizens. The people of Romania, along with the Peace Corps staff members and currently serving Volunteers, look forward to welcoming you and working with you over the next two years. As a Volunteer, you will be challenged in many ways and your patience will be pushed to its limits. But, if you come with an open mind, a warm heart and a good sense of humor, you will do well. Along with the excitement of being a Volunteer, come frustrations, language barriers, bouts of loneliness and days when things just don't work out as planned. However the excitement and opportunities win out!

Serving in Romania is unlike the vast majority of Peace Corps assignments around the world. Romania has seen dramatic economic growth and development over the past twenty years, culminating with membership to the European Union in 2007 and NATO in 2004. Luxury cars fill the streets, cellphones are common, and the "Golden Arches" can be spotted in several major cities. However, while much of the country advances, portions of the population are not enjoying the benefits of recent growth. Peace Corps Volunteers have a unique opportunity to assist Romanian communities in developing a society of opportunity, diversity, and inclusion for all residents, working to shorten the gap between the country's growing number of "have's" and the potentially overlooked "have not's."

PC/Romania achieves this vision by making a sustainable contribution to the country's underserved populations and development challenges. PC/Romania Volunteers work as

culturally sensitive development facilitators in partnership with governmental, nongovernmental and community-based organizations within the project areas requested by our partners: English education, institutional development and the environment. Volunteers also address other emerging issues identified by their communities, and promote volunteerism, respect for diversity, and the empowerment of Romanians to take action to address development challenges.

We assign all Volunteers in Romania to areas outside of Bucharest and match you with a request for a Volunteer based on your skills and knowledge, and the needs of our partner agencies and beneficiaries. Placements vary, but all require self-sufficiency, persistence, and the ability to identify opportunities and take action. PC/Romania prepares Volunteers for this experience with 10 weeks of language, health, safety, technical and cross-cultural training. Subsequent training events over the course of your two-year tour will support Volunteers in enhancing their ability to contribute to the well-being of interested Romanians.

If you are confident in your commitment, motivation, and flexibility to carry out the tasks of a Volunteer in a unique program such as Romania's, we look forward to having you join our program and our great group of currently serving Volunteers.

My warm regards to you and your family.

Ken Goodson
Country Director

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PEACE CORPS/ROMANIA HISTORY AND PROGRAMS



History of the Peace Corps in Romania

After the 1989 revolution in Romania, U.S. economic assistance to the country focused on aiding Romanian street children and children who had been institutionalized during the Nicolae Ceausescu regime. Peace Corps programming began in 1991, when 18 trainees arrived to initiate an orphanage project. Peace Corps/Romania now has four program sectors: community economic development; environmental management and education; institutional development; and teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL).

History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in Romania

In the community economic development sector, Volunteers work with their Romanian partners to help communities participate successfully in the global economy and upgrade their standard of living. Romania's accession into the European Union in January 2007 requires attention to improving infrastructure and raising the standard of living in industrial towns and rural villages. Projects work with city halls, municipal and county councils, local development agencies, business support organizations, high schools, and universities. This sector includes farm management and agribusiness, and urban (town) planning, as well as small and medium enterprise development. In the environmental management and education sector, Volunteers work with community and regional environmental organizations, schools, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in a long-term

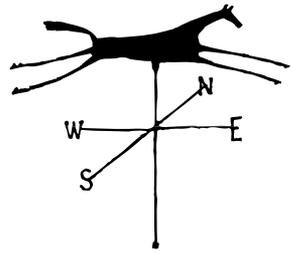
effort to introduce new or expand current environmental education programs for students and adults. They also assist in increasing the public's awareness and involvement in addressing local environmental problems and facilitating cooperation among local and national NGOs, local government officials, and communities.

In the institutional development sector, Volunteers work to improve the quality and impact of services for at-risk youth and other marginalized populations by strengthening local government agencies and NGOs that provide social services. Volunteers work in the areas of ethnic integration and youth development, and with a variety of organizations focused on HIV-positive children, the mentally ill, people with physical disabilities, orphaned or abandoned children, and the elderly. Some Volunteers, who are certified special education providers, work directly with the beneficiaries of these organizations. Because of the increasing demand for qualified English teachers, the Peace Corps, along with Romania's ministry of education and research, developed an English program for secondary schools. In the TEFL sector, Volunteers focus on improving students' communication skills and on developing better English language teaching material. Some TEFL Volunteers also teach advanced subjects, such as critical thinking skills. Many Volunteers are also active in a variety of secondary projects that they initiate in their communities.

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COUNTRY OVERVIEW: ROMANIA AT A GLANCE



History

Romania, one of the most populous countries of eastern Europe, has a rich and complex history. Its culture has evolved over centuries and is a product of many conquering tribes and empires whose civilizations eventually blended together. Since the overthrow of Nicolae Ceausescu and the communist system in 1989, Romania has struggled to restructure its political, economic, and social institutions into free and democratic establishments. Although communism and the Ceausescu dictatorship can be held accountable for many of Romania's current challenges, its complicated history has also had a lasting influence.

The current government was elected in 2004, with Traian Basecu as president. The head of government is Prime Minister Popescu Tariceanu. Parliament is elected by popular vote for a four-year mandate; the prime minister is appointed by the president and approved by the Parliament.

Government

Romania's constitution is based on France's Fifth Republic Constitution and proclaims Romania as a sovereign, independent, unitary, and indivisible national republic. The Romanian Parliament consists of two chambers: the senate and the chamber of deputies. Members of both chambers are elected to four-year terms by party list vote. The president is also elected by universal vote for a four-year term and can be reelected just once. The president represents the Romanian state abroad, monitors the activities of public institutions,

and is the supreme commander of the armed forces and chairman of the defense council. The president nominates a candidate for prime minister and appoints the government on the basis of a confidence vote by parliament. Local councils and mayors, elected by direct vote and coordinated by county councils, administer cities and towns.

Economy

In the decade following its 1989 revolution, Romania began a difficult transition from a centralized to a market economy. Privatization, the pace of economic reform, and attitudes toward foreign investments became political issues that disrupted the transition. The country experienced periods of boom and bust with major fluctuations in production and persistent high inflation. Over the longer term, the major challenge is achieving sustainable growth. For that to happen, inflation needs to continue to come down, budget constraints need to be implemented, and the business environment needs to improve.

Romania is committed to integration with the European Union and a strengthened transatlantic relationship. It joined NATO in April 2004 and joined the EU in January 2007. Per capita income in Romania is about 25 percent of the average in the EU, one indication of the many challenges the country faces. Other significant problems include high poverty levels with low income dispersion; a large proportion (40 percent) of people living in rural areas, combined with a low level (12 percent) of agricultural output; low government spending (as a percentage of GDP) on education and healthcare, significantly below the level in most countries of central and eastern Europe; deteriorating infrastructure; the need for public pension reform; and the need for restructuring and modernization of the energy sector.

People and Culture

Foreigners are often tempted to generalize about Romanian national characteristics, but this tendency becomes more difficult the longer and better they get to know Romanians. The complexities of Romanian history, including major invasions of Romanian lands by a variety of peoples and empires, have exposed the Romanian people to many different influences. Both the Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman empires were multinational, resulting in a patchwork of ethnic groups in the Balkans, particularly in Romania.

Romanians are survivors in the most basic sense of the word. During the centuries of invasions, open opposition to power and authority occurred periodically, but did not last long against heavy odds. With their history of foreign rule and 45 years of communism, Romanians today are generally nonconfrontational and are always on the lookout for artful compromises to save themselves from complete defeat. Courtesy goes a long way in Romania. Genuine hospitality and assistance to foreigners by ordinary Romanians may astonish a visitor.

Foremost on the scale of Romanian values, the family has acquired a significance it seldom has in Western societies. Traditionally, the Romanian family, which had always been strong, was defined to include uncles, aunts, and cousins. A family relies upon the active participation of members to help gather and supply basic commodities and foodstuffs that are time-consuming to find. The roles of men and women are fairly traditionally defined, but they are changing, especially in the larger cities. In marriage, equal partnership is not viewed as incompatible with the concept that women should bear the main responsibility for household work. Most Romanian women now work, and while few have reached positions of high visibility, this, too, is changing in urban areas.

There are now a number of professional women's organizations and networks around the country.

It seems the Romanian family is capable of any number of sacrifices in order to ensure its children's future. Education is widely viewed as a determining factor of upward mobility, and parents will use all means available to get their children into the best schools. Outside tutoring is common and a must among children who plan to further their education.

Environment

Romania, slightly smaller than Oregon, is located at the junction of central Europe, the Balkan Peninsula, and the eastern Slavic lands. It borders Hungary to the west, Serbia to the southwest, Bulgaria to the south, the Black Sea to the southeast, and Ukraine and Moldova to the east and north. The geography is diverse, ranging from rolling agricultural lands to high mountains in the central regions. Romania has a continental climate, particularly in the region east of the Carpathian Mountains and south of the Transylvanian Alps.

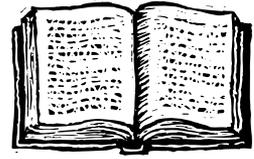
Language

Romanian is a Romance language with a grammar similar to Latin. This familial resemblance makes it easier for anyone who speaks French, Italian, Spanish, or Portuguese to recognize words and phrases in Romanian. The language also contains words of old Dacian, Slavic, Greek, and Turkish origin, with more recent additions from French, German, and English. German is widely understood in the areas of Transylvania and the Banat, as Saxons traditionally inhabited these regions.

French is a common second language among the older generation, and many students speak English. Hungarian is spoken in areas of Transylvania, where there are significant numbers of ethnic Hungarians.



RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



Following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps and Romania and to connect you to returned Volunteers and other invitees. Please keep in mind that although we try to make sure all these links are active and current, we cannot guarantee it.

A note of caution: As you surf these sites, be aware that you will find bulletin boards and chat rooms in which people are free to give opinions and advice based on their own experiences. The opinions expressed are not those of the Peace Corps or the U.S. government. You may find opinions of people who were unhappy with their choice to serve in the Peace Corps. As you read these comments, we hope you will keep in mind that the Peace Corps is not for everyone, and no two people experience their service in the same way.

General Information About Romania

www.countrywatch.com

On this site, you can learn just about anything, from what time it is in Bucharest to how to convert from the leu to the dollar. Just click on Romania and go from there.

www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm

This online world atlas includes maps and geographical information, and each country page contains links to other sites, such as the Library of Congress, that contain comprehensive historical, social, and political information.

www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm

This site includes links to all the official sites for governments worldwide.

www.state.gov

The U.S. State Department's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find Romania and learn more about its social and political history. For the U.S. embassy in Romania, go to www.usembassy.ro.

www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp

This United Nations site allows you to search for statistical information for member states of the U.N.

www.worldinformation.com

This site provides an additional source of current and historical information about countries around the world.

www.aboutromania.com/

Check out this comprehensive site, which offers good photos, menus, and advice.

www.cimec.ro/

Learn about Romania's cultural heritage project.
(Not in English)

www.culture.ro/index.php

This site offers a wealth of information on Romanian cultural resources.

www.dictionare.com/english/dictionary.htm

Look up Romanian words with this online dictionary.

<http://students.missouri.edu/~romsa/romania/index.html>

This site was designed by Romanian webmasters.

<http://peacecorps.ro>

This site was designed by PC Romania Volunteers and staff.

Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees

www.rpcv.org

This is the site of the National Peace Corps Association, made up of returned Volunteers. You can find links to all the Web pages of the “friends of” groups for most countries of service, made up of former Volunteers who served in those countries. The site for Romania is www.friendsofomania.org.

www.peacecorpswriters.org

This site is hosted by a group of returned Volunteer writers. It is a monthly online publication of essays and Volunteer accounts of their Peace Corps service.

<http://peacecorpsonline.org/messages>

This site is billed as an independent news forum for returned Peace Corps Volunteers.

www.rec.org

Regional Environmental Center; environmental NGO in central and eastern Europe

www.soros.org

George Soros Foundation, including Open Society

www.undp.ro and www.undp.org/rbec changed to

<http://rbec.undp.org/>

United Nations Development Programme’s work in Romania and southeastern Europe

www.unicef.org/

UNICEF

www.worldbank.org

World Bank activities

Travel Sites

<http://rotravel.com/romania/>

Information on Romanian's history and regions, including maps

www.inyourpocket.com

One-stop travel portal for central and Eastern Europe sites with travel advice about almost any country in the world

www.traveldocs.com/ro/index.htm

Travel Document Systems' website; guidelines about everything from vaccinations to visas

Recommended Books about Romania and Eastern Europe

1. Drakulic, Slavenka. *Café Europa: Life After Communism*. New York: Penguin Books, 1999 (paperback).
2. Drakulic, Slavenka. *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1993 (paperback).
3. Fonseca, Isabel. *Bury Me Standing: The Gypsies and Their Journey*. New York: Vintage Books, 1996 (paperback).
4. Gal, Susan, and Gail Kligman. *The Politics of Gender After Socialism*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000 (paperback).

5. Hoffman, Eva. *Exit Into History: A Journey Through the New Eastern Europe*. New York: Penguin Books, 1994 (paperback).
6. Kaplan, Robert. *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994 (paperback).
7. Klepper, Nicolae. *Taste of Romania: Its Cookery and Glimpses of History, Folklore, Art, Literature, and Poetry*. New York: Hippocrene Books, 1999.
8. Magris, Claudio. *Danube*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Inc., 1989 (paperback)
9. *The Rough Guide to Romania*. New York: Rough Guides, 2001 (paperback).
10. Verdery, Katherine, and Sherry B. Ortner. *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996 (paperback).

Books About the History of the Peace Corps

1. Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960's*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.
2. Rice, Gerald T. *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
3. Stossel, Scott. *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.

Books on the Volunteer Experience

1. Dirlam, Sharon. *Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place*. Santa Barbara, CA: McSeas Books, 2004.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. *Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience*. Gig Harbor, WA: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. New York, NY: Picador, 2003.
4. Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. New York, NY: Perennial, 2001.
5. Kennedy, Geraldine (ed.). *From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps*. Santa Monica, CA: Clover Park Press, 1991.
6. Thompsen, Moritz. *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).
7. Townson, Annabelle. *We Wait for You...Unheard Voices from Post-Communist Romania*. Hamilton Books, under Rowman and Littlefield Publishing Group, New York, Toronto, Oxford, Boulder and Lanham.

NOTES



LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE



Communications

Mail

Mail service in Romania is quite reliable. Mail from the United States takes a minimum of one to two weeks to arrive. Advise your family and friends to write “Airmail” and “Par Avion” on their envelopes.

Your mailing address during pre-service training (for letters only) will be:

“Your Name”
Peace Corps/Romania
Str. Negustori, Nr. 16
Sector 2, Bucharest
Romania

Do not have packages sent to you during the 10-week training period. All packages go to a central post office in Bucharest, and you must pick them up personally to prove who you are and pay the customs fees. This will be virtually impossible for you to do during training and the Peace Corps cannot do it for you, so you could lose anything that is sent. The Peace Corps will forward letters sent to the Peace Corps office in Bucharest to the training site on a regular basis. Once you have been sworn-in as a Volunteer, you will have your own mailing address at your new site. Express mail from the United States is becoming more common, and DHL, UPS, and World Express all offer services in Romania.

Telephones

Telephone service in Romania is not as reliable as what you are accustomed to in the United States, although it is improving in most places, especially as mobile phone services increase. Sprint, MCI, and AT&T provide international long-distance services in Romania, and you can access such services from public phones or post office phones. Regular long-distance calls from private phones are possible but expensive. Many Volunteers purchase their own mobile phones as the best option for making calls. Prepaid cards that offer a variety of discounts for both telephone and Internet access are available locally.

Computer, Internet, and E-mail Access

Many Volunteers find having their own laptop computer very useful. Access to the Internet is available at some organizations, though some will have older, slower systems.

If you decide to bring a laptop, we advise you to insure it against breakage and theft. The Peace Corps will not reimburse any expenses for repairs or lost or stolen equipment; nor does it provide technical support to Volunteers. If you choose to obtain Internet service where you live, you will have to pay for it out of your living allowance. Refurbished desktop computers with warranties can be bought in some Romanian cities for \$200 to \$300. There are also cybercafes where you can access the Internet (at varying connection speeds).

Housing and Site Location

You will live with a Romanian family in your assigned site for one to two months after being sworn-in as a Volunteer. Living with a family will give you an anchor in your new community. The connection to a family will help ensure your safety and security and make it easier to integrate into the community.

Through this experience, you will improve your language skills and gain a better understanding of Romanian culture and the norms of your local community. After your initial months at site with a Romanian family, you and your host organization will locate appropriate permanent housing for you.

Your host organization will identify housing for you that meets Peace Corps standards for safety, privacy, a healthy environment, and proximity to shopping and work. The Peace Corps asks host organizations to provide housing, but contributes part, or even the entire, cost for rent, if necessary. The populations of towns and cities where Volunteers live range from 5,000 to 300,000, and the type and availability of housing varies accordingly. Volunteers serve throughout Romania, except in Bucharest, and there are regional differences in housing as well. The most common accommodation is a small, one-room apartment in a large building.

In rural communities, there are often only single-floor houses and privacy can become a difficult matter. If assigned to a rural community, you may need to live with a host family for the entire two years of your service.

In the winter, you may lack central heating, hot water, and perhaps cooking gas, which are controlled by the government. Electricity is usually reliable. The availability of hot water depends upon the town in which you live. Many towns have hot water every other day for two to three hours. The Peace Corps supplies electric space heaters to Volunteers who need them.

If you choose to move into your own housing, Peace Corps must ensure that it meets our housing criteria. This includes safety, private space, healthy environment, proximity to shopping and work, basic furniture with cooking space, and a private bathroom.

Living Allowance and Money Management

You will receive a monthly living allowance in Romanian lei, which the Peace Corps will transfer by wire directly into your bank account. The exchange rate in August 2006 was approximately 2.76 RON (Romanian New Lei) to the dollar. The living allowance is intended to cover the costs of food, utilities, household supplies, clothing, recreation and entertainment, local transportation, reading materials, and other incidentals. The Peace Corps discourages you from supplementing your living allowance with additional money from home. You are expected to live in an unpretentious manner in order to fit in with your community.

Credit cards can be used on a limited basis in Bucharest and other large cities—usually only at expensive restaurants, shops, and hotels. Bank ATMs are quite common throughout Romania and most of them support withdrawals from stateside bank accounts. Personal checks cannot be cashed in Romania, so it is advisable to bring some new American currency (worn or old notes may not be accepted) in \$10 and \$20 denominations for vacation travel. Exchange bureaus in Romania will not change \$1 bills and may not change \$5 bills. Traveler's checks are another option for vacation travel.

Food and Diet

The variety of food in Romania is steadily increasing, especially in larger towns. In the summer, fresh vegetables and fruits of very good quality are widely available. In the winter, apples, oranges, and bananas are likely to be available, but there are fewer fresh vegetables. Meat and bread are the predominant foods in the Romanian diet and are usually eaten at every meal. As the Romanian economy moves toward a free market, the availability of imported foods is increasing dramatically, although the imports are more expensive

than locally produced items. American and local fast-food restaurants also exist in many parts of the country.

Vegetarians may have a difficult time in Romania during the winter months when fewer fresh vegetables are available. They may need to adjust their diet to stay healthy. In addition, being offered meals heavy on meat will be a challenge when visiting Romanian families.

Transportation

Getting around via train, bus, or “maxi-taxi” is usually quite easy and reliable, albeit often slow, and the costs are reasonable. Some Volunteers may have a 12- to 14-hour train ride to travel to the Peace Corps office in Bucharest. Volunteers in Romania are not allowed to own or drive cars or motorcycles, or to ride as a passenger on a motorcycle, for any reason.

International train and air service is readily available. The Peace Corps encourages you to travel within Romania or to other countries in eastern and central Europe on your vacations to enhance your understanding of the country and the region.

Geography and Climate

Romania is the largest central European country after Ukraine. The Danube River forms its southern border, and the U-shaped Transylvanian Alps and Carpathian Mountains extend through much of the central and northern regions. An eroded plateau with hills and valleys occupies the center of the U, while the Moldavian plateau lies to the east. Mountains account for about one-third of Romania, with alpine pastures in the higher regions and thick forests below. Another third is covered by lower hills dotted with orchards and vineyards.

The final third, mostly in the south and east, is an agricultural plain.

Romania has long winters (lasting from mid-November through March), a delightful spring (April through May), a hot summer (June through August), and a beautiful autumn (September through mid-November). The winter months can be extremely cold and windy, especially in the mountains and the northern part of the country. The summer months can be very hot and humid, especially in the lowland areas. Rainfall is heaviest from April through July, averaging 5 inches in June.

Social Activities

The cultural and social life of Romania is one of its most enjoyable aspects. You will have opportunities to attend concerts, operas, and ballets, some of which are outstanding. The works of Shakespeare are performed alongside those of contemporary foreign authors and classic Romanian writers such as Ion Luca Caragiale. Cinemas in larger towns often show English-language films with Romanian subtitles. Entertainment at your site will depend on the town's size. Some sites have a cinema and various sporting activities. Soccer, basketball, handball, tennis, and karate are the most popular. Dance clubs and discos also exist in most sizable towns. For winter activities, you can ski in the mountains or ice skate at local rinks. During the summer, visiting the Black Sea coast and hiking in the mountains are favorite forms of recreation. Many social activities center around the family, and you will be invited to many family events at your site.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

One of the challenges for you as a Peace Corps Volunteer is fitting into the local culture while maintaining your own cultural identity and acting as a professional. Your appearance at work can help set the appropriate tone and make your adjustment to your site easier. Romanians tend to dress up more for the office than Americans do, partly because it's a luxury to be able to do so after so many years of communist rule. Because of this, they may react negatively to the equally extreme casualness of some American dress, such as baggy jeans. While you are at work, you will demonstrate respect and win credibility if you dress in a professional manner, as they do. Most of the people you work with will not have expensive clothes, or large quantities of clothes. For Volunteers, in most cases, pressed shirts, slacks, skirts, and sweaters are fine. A suit or sports jacket or a dressy dress or skirt will be needed for special occasions.

Observing what your co-workers wear is the best way to identify the appropriate dress code for different situations. As in the United States, people in larger cities tend to dress more formally than those in smaller cities and towns. Your program sector may also influence how you dress. Environment Volunteers can wear more casual clothes at work but still need some formal clothes for meetings with agencies and certain school activities. Community economic development and institutional development Volunteers dress in business-casual or business clothes, the latter meaning jackets and ties for men and dresses, skirts or pants with tops, or suits for women. In some organizations, particularly in smaller cities, jeans for men and women are the norm, except when meeting with authorities or attending special events. TEFL Volunteers work in schools, where women wear dresses and skirts or pants with tops and men wear slacks with shirts and

sweaters (and sometimes ties). Younger Volunteers will boost their professional demeanor by dressing somewhat more conservatively than they might in the States.

Personal Safety

More information about the Peace Corps' approach to safety is outlined in the Health Care and Safety chapter, but it is an important issue and cannot be overemphasized. As stated in the *Volunteer Handbook*, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment (oftentimes alone), having a limited understanding of local language and culture, and being perceived as well-off are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Many Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty thefts and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although most Romania Volunteers complete their two years of service without personal security incidents. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies designed to help you reduce your risks and enhance your safety and security. These procedures and policies, in addition to safety training, will be reviewed once you arrive in Romania. At the same time, you are expected to take responsibility for your safety and well-being.

Rewards and Frustrations

The Peace Corps experience can be described as a series of emotional peaks and valleys that occur as you adapt to a new culture and environment. The potential for being productive and satisfied with your service is high, but so is the probability of being frustrated. Your school or organization may not always provide the support that you want, or it may not be

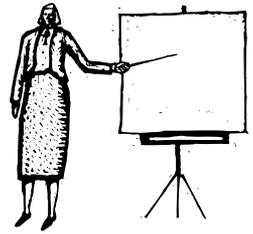
sure about what it wants you to do. The pace and focus of life and work may be different from what you expect, and many people will be reluctant to change age-old practices.

On the positive side, you will be given a high degree of responsibility and independence in your work—perhaps more than in any other job you have had. You will find yourself in situations that require an ability to motivate yourself and your co-workers with little support or guidance from supervisors. You may work for months without seeing any visible impact from, or without receiving any supportive feedback on, your work. Development is a slow process. You must possess the self-confidence, patience, and vision to continue working toward long-term goals without seeing immediate results.

To overcome these difficulties, you will need maturity, flexibility, open-mindedness, and resourcefulness. Romanians are warm, friendly, and hospitable, and the Peace Corps staff, your co-workers, and fellow Volunteers will support you during times of challenge as well as in moments of success. Judging by the experience of former Volunteers, the peaks are well worth the difficult times, and most Volunteers leave Romania feeling they have gained much more than they gave during their service. If you make the commitment to integrate into your community and work hard, you will be a successful and satisfied Volunteer.



PEACE CORPS TRAINING



Overview of Pre-Service Training

The Peace Corps provides 10 weeks of training that begins immediately upon your arrival in Romania. The schedule is Monday through Friday and Saturday mornings. Pre-service training contains five major components: technical training, language training, cross-cultural training, health training, and safety and security training. Training is a time for you to reexamine your commitment to becoming a Volunteer in Romania and a time for Peace Corps staff to get to know you and be assured that your skills and attitude are a good match for the program in Romania. Throughout the training period, self-assessment, as well as assessment by Peace Corps staff, will measure your progress toward meeting training objectives.

Technical Training

Technical training prepares you to work in Romania by using development techniques, including community participation, to gain acceptance of the skills you have learned through work and school experiences. You will also develop new skills in a manner appropriate to the type of work you will be doing. Training places great emphasis on learning how to transfer the skills you have to the community in which you will serve as a Volunteer.

Technical training focuses on the knowledge and skills you will need to be effective in your program sector. It includes sessions on the general economic and political situation in Romania and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review your technical sector's goals and will meet with the Romanian agencies and organizations that invited

the Peace Corps to assist them. You will be supported and evaluated by experienced Romanian trainers and Peace Corps staff throughout the training to build the confidence and skills you need to undertake your project activities and be a productive member of your community.

Language Training

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are the key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are critical to your job performance, they help you integrate into your host community, and they can ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Language training is the heart of the training program, and you must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete training and become a Volunteer. Experienced Romanian language instructors provide language instruction five days a week in small classes of four to six people.

Your language training will incorporate a community-based approach. In addition to classroom time, you will be given assignments to work on outside of the classroom and with your host family. The goal is to get you to a point of basic social communication skills so you can practice and develop language skills further on your own. Prior to being sworn in as a Volunteer, you will work on strategies to continue language studies during your two years of service. There will also be follow-up language study during in-service training.

Cross-Cultural Training

As part of your pre-service training, you will live with a Romanian host family. This experience is designed to ease your transition to life at your site. Families go through an orientation conducted by Peace Corps staff to explain the purpose of pre-service training and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in Romania. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families.

Cross-cultural and community development training will help you improve your communication skills and understand your role as a facilitator of development. You will be exposed to topics such as acculturation, conflict resolution, gender and development, values analysis, and understanding local institutions.

Health Training

During pre-service training, you will be given basic medical training and information. You will be expected to practice preventive healthcare and to take responsibility for your own health by adhering to all medical policies. Trainees must attend all medical sessions. The topics include preventive health measures and minor and major medical issues that you might encounter while in Romania. Nutrition, mental health, safety and security, setting up a safe living compound, and how to avoid HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are also covered.

Safety Training

You will learn how to adopt a lifestyle that reduces your risks at home, at work, and during your travels. You will also learn appropriate, effective strategies for coping with unwanted attention and about your individual responsibility for promoting safety throughout your service.

Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service

In its commitment to institutionalize quality training, the Peace Corps has implemented a training system that provides Volunteers with continual opportunities to reaffirm their commitment to Peace Corps service while increasing their technical and cross-cultural skills.

During your service, there are typically three training events. The titles and objectives for those trainings are as follows:

- *In-service training*: Provides an opportunity for Volunteers to upgrade their technical, language, and project development skills while sharing their experiences and reaffirming their commitment after having served for three to six months.
- *Midterm conference*: Assists Volunteers in reviewing their first year, reassessing their personal and project objectives, and planning for their second year of service.
- *Close-of-service conference*: Prepares Volunteers for the future after Peace Corps service and reviews their respective projects and personal experiences.

There are also opportunities for Volunteers to network with one another across program sectors. Training events are integrated and interrelated, from the pre-departure orientation through the end of service, and are planned, implemented, and evaluated cooperatively by the training staff, Peace Corps staff, and Volunteers.

NOTES



YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN ROMANIA



The Peace Corps' highest priority is maintaining the good health and safety of every Volunteer. Peace Corps medical programs emphasize the preventive, rather than the curative, approach to disease. The Peace Corps in Romania maintains a clinic with two full-time medical contractors and an office assistant to take care of Volunteers' primary healthcare needs. Additional medical services, such as testing and basic treatment, are also available in Romania at local, American-standard clinics and hospitals. If you become seriously ill, you will be transported either to an American medical facility in the region or to the United States.

Health Issues in Romania

Health issues in Romania are similar to those in other eastern European countries and include respiratory problems (a result of air pollution) and hepatitis. Major problems are rare; when they do occur, they are often the result of individuals not taking adequate preventive measures. Other problems include colds, sinus infections, the flu, skin infections, headaches, dental problems, small injuries, sexually transmitted diseases, adjustment problems, and alcohol abuse. At the beginning of your service, the Peace Corps will give you immunizations for tetanus, diphtheria, measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis A and B, and polio. If you have recently had any of these immunizations, bring documented proof with you to avoid unnecessary second shots.

Helping You Stay Healthy

The Peace Corps will provide you with all the necessary inoculations, medications, and information to stay healthy. Upon your arrival in Romania, you will receive a medical handbook and a medical kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first aid needs. The contents of the kit are listed later in this chapter.

During pre-service training, you will have access to basic medical supplies through the medical office. However, you will be responsible for your own supply of prescription drugs and any other specific medical supplies you require, as we will not order these items during training. Please bring a three-month supply of any prescription drugs you use, since they may not be available here and it may take several months for shipments to arrive.

You will have physicals at mid-service and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the Peace Corps' medical contractor will consult with the Office of Medical Services in Washington, D.C. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in Romania, you may be sent out of the country for further evaluation and care.

Maintaining Your Health

As a Volunteer, you must accept a certain amount of responsibility for your own health. Proper precautions will significantly reduce your risk of serious illness or injury. The old adage "An ounce of prevention ..." becomes extremely important in areas where diagnostic and treatment facilities are not up to the standards of the United States. The most important of your responsibilities in Romania is to take preventive measures for the following:

Many illnesses that afflict Volunteers worldwide—such as food poisoning, parasitic infections, hepatitis A, dysentery, and typhoid fever—are entirely preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. The Peace Corps will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation in Romania during pre-service training.

Abstinence is the only certain choice for preventing infection with HIV/AIDS and other STDs. You are taking risks if you choose to be sexually active. To lessen risk, use a condom every time you have sex. Whether your partner is a Romanian, a fellow Volunteer, or anyone else, do not assume this person is free of HIV/AIDS or other STDs. You will receive more information about this important issue throughout your training and service.

Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent an unplanned pregnancy. The medical office can help you decide on the most appropriate method to suit your individual needs. Contraceptive methods are available without charge from the medical office.

It is critical to your health that you promptly report to the medical office or other designated facility for scheduled immunizations, and that you let the medical office know immediately of significant illnesses and injuries. For example, rabies exists in Romania, and if you are exposed to an animal that is known to have or suspected of having rabies, you should inform the medical office at once so you can receive post-exposure shots.

Women's Health Information

Pregnancy is treated in the same manner as other Volunteer health conditions that require medical attention but also have programmatic ramifications. The Peace Corps is responsible

for determining the medical risk and availability of appropriate medical care if the Volunteer remains in-country. Given the circumstances under which Volunteers live and work in Peace Corps countries, it is rare that the Peace Corps' medical and programmatic standards for continued service during pregnancy can be met.

If feminine hygiene products are not available for you to purchase on the local market, the Peace Corps medical office in Romania will provide them. If you require a specific feminine hygiene product, please bring a six-month supply with you.

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

The Peace Corps medical office will provide you with a medical kit that contains basic items necessary to prevent and treat illnesses that may occur during service. Kit items can be periodically restocked at the medical office.

Medical Kit Contents

- Ace bandages
- Adhesive tape
- American Red Cross First Aid & Safety Handbook*
- Antacid tablets (Tums)
- Antibiotic ointment (Bacitracin/Neomycin/Polymycin B)
- Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner (Hibiclens)
- Band-Aids
- Butterfly closures
- Calamine lotion
- Cepacol lozenges
- Condoms
- Dental floss
- Diphenhydramine HCL 25 mg (Benadryl)
- Insect repellent stick (Cutter's)
- Iodine tablets (for water purification)

Lip balm (Chapstick)
Oral rehydration salts and Gatorade
Oral thermometer (Fahrenheit)
Pseudoephedrine HCL 30 mg (Sudafed)
Robitussin-DM lozenges (for cough)
Scissors
Sterile gauze pads
Tetrahydrozoline eyedrops (Visine)
Tinactin (antifungal cream)
Tweezers

Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

If there has been any change in your health—physical, mental, or dental—since you submitted your examination reports to the Peace Corps, you must immediately notify the Office of Medical Services. Failure to disclose new illnesses, injuries, allergies, or pregnancy can endanger your health and may jeopardize your eligibility to serve.

If your dental exam was done more than a year ago, or if your physical exam is more than two years old, contact the Office of Medical Services to find out whether you need to update your records. If your dentist or Peace Corps dental consultant has recommended that you undergo dental treatment or repair, you must complete that work and make sure your dentist sends requested confirmation reports or X-rays to the Office of Medical Services.

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, contact your physician's office, obtain a copy of your immunization record, and bring it to your pre-departure orientation. If you have any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment shortly after you arrive in Romania.

Bring a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication you use on a regular basis, including birth control pills. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for this three-month supply, we will order refills during your service. While awaiting shipment—which can take several months—you will be dependent on your own medication supply. The Peace Corps will not pay for herbal or nonprescribed medications, such as St. John's wort, glucosamine, selenium, or antioxidant supplements.

You are encouraged to bring copies of medical prescriptions signed by your physician. This is not a requirement, but they might come in handy if you are questioned in transit about carrying a three-month supply of prescription drugs.

If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pairs with you—a pair and a spare. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace it, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. We discourage you from using contact lenses during your Peace Corps service to reduce your risk of developing a serious infection or other eye disease. You may not have appropriate water and sanitation at your site to support eye care with the use of contact lenses. The Peace Corps will not supply or replace contact lenses or associated solutions unless an ophthalmologist has recommended their use for a specific medical condition and the Peace Corps' Office of Medical Services has given approval.

If you are eligible for Medicare, are over 50 years of age, or have a health condition that may restrict your future participation in healthcare plans, you may wish to consult an insurance specialist about unique coverage needs before your departure. The Peace Corps will provide all necessary healthcare from the time you leave for your pre-departure orientation until you complete your service. When you finish,

you will be entitled to the post-service healthcare benefits described in the Peace Corps Volunteer Handbook. You may wish to consider keeping an existing health plan in effect during your service if you think age or preexisting conditions might prevent you from reenrolling in your current plan when you return home.

Safety and Security—Our Partnership

Serving as a Volunteer overseas entails certain safety and security risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, a limited understanding of the local language and culture, and the perception of being a wealthy American are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Property thefts and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although almost all Volunteers complete their two years of service without serious personal safety problems. In addition, more than 84 percent of Volunteers surveyed in the 2004 Peace Corps Volunteer Survey say they would join the Peace Corps again.

The Peace Corps approaches safety and security as a partnership with you. This Welcome Book contains sections on: Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle; Peace Corps Training; and Your Health Care and Safety. All of these sections include important safety and security information.

The Peace Corps makes every effort to give Volunteers the tools they need to function in the safest and most secure way possible, because working to maximize the safety and security of Volunteers is our highest priority. Not only do we provide you with training and tools to prepare for the unexpected, but we teach you to identify and manage the risks you may encounter.

Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk

There are several factors that can heighten a Volunteer's risk, many of which are within the Volunteer's control.

Based on information gathered from incident reports worldwide in 2004, the following factors stand out as risk characteristics for assaults. Assaults consist of personal crimes committed against Volunteers, and do not include property crimes (such as vandalism or theft).

- Location: Most crimes occurred when Volunteers were in public areas (e.g., street, park, beach, public buildings). Specifically, 43 percent of assaults took place when Volunteers were away from their sites.
- Time of day: Assaults usually took place on the weekend during the evening between 5 p.m. and 2 a.m.— with most assaults occurring around 1 a.m.
- Absence of others: Assaults usually occurred when the Volunteer was unaccompanied. In 82 percent of the sexual assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied and in 55 percent of physical assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied.
- Relationship to assailant: In most assaults, the Volunteer did not know the assailant.
- Consumption of alcohol: Forty percent of all assaults involved alcohol consumption by Volunteers and/or assailants.

Summary Strategies to Reduce Risk

Before and during service, your training will address these areas of concern so you can reduce the risks you face. For example, here are some strategies Volunteers employ:

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of theft:

- Know the environment and choose safe routes/times for travel

- Avoid high-crime areas per Peace Corps guidance
- Know the vocabulary to get help in an emergency
- Carry valuables in different pockets/places
- Carry a “dummy” wallet as a decoy

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of burglary:

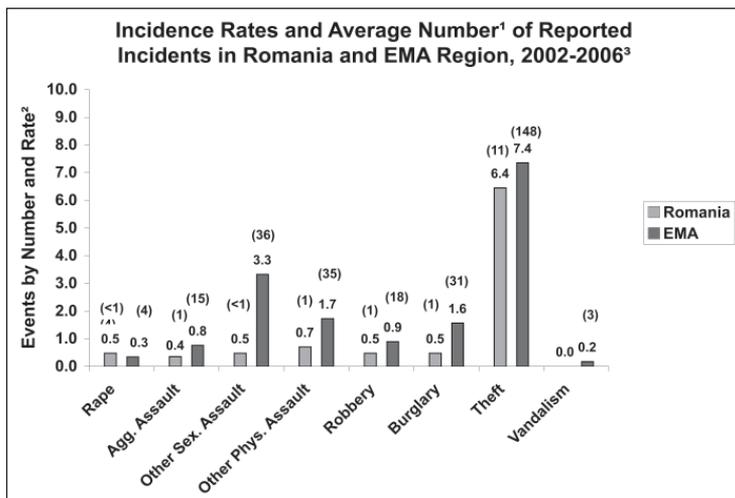
- Live with a local family or on a family compound
- Put strong locks on doors and keep valuables in a lock box or trunk
- Leave irreplaceable objects at home in the U.S.
- Follow Peace Corps guidelines on maintaining home security

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of assault:

- Make local friends
- Make sure your appearance is respectful of local customs; don’t draw negative attention to yourself by wearing inappropriate clothing
- Get to know local officials, police, and neighbors
- Travel with someone whenever possible
- Avoid known high crime areas
- Limit alcohol consumption

Support from Staff

In March 2003, the Peace Corps created the Office of Safety and Security with its mission to “foster improved communication, coordination, oversight, and accountability of all Peace Corps’ safety and security efforts.” The new office is led by an associate director for safety and security who reports to the Peace Corps director and includes the following divisions: Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security; Information and Personnel Security; Emergency Preparedness, Plans, Training and Exercise; and Crime Statistics and Analysis.



¹The average numbers of incidents are in parenthesis and equal the average reported assaults for each year between 2002–2006.

²Incident rates equal the number of assaults per 100 Volunteers and trainees per year (V/T years). Since most sexual assaults occur against females, only female V/Ts are calculated in rapes and minor sexual assaults. Numbers of incidents are approximate due to rounding.

³Data collection for Romania began as of 2002; due to the small number of V/T years, incidence rates should be interpreted with caution.

Sexual Assaults are termed Other Sexual Assault and Other Physical Assault per CIRF definitions as of the year 2006. Prior to CIRF and prior to 2006, Sexual Assaults were termed Minor Sexual Assault and Minor Physical Assault per ANSS definitions.

Source data on incidents are drawn from Assault Notification Surveillance System (ANSS), Epidemiologic Surveillance System (ESS), and Crime Incident Reporting Form (CIRF); the information is accurate as of 04/18/08.

The major responsibilities of the Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security Division are to coordinate the office’s overseas operations and direct the Peace Corps’ safety and security officers who are located in various regions around the world that have Peace Corps programs. The safety and security officers conduct security assessments; review safety trainings; train trainers and managers; train Volunteer safety wardens, local guards, and staff; develop security incident response procedures; and provide crisis management support.

If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure that the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff provides support by reassessing the Volunteer's work site and housing arrangements and making any adjustments, as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also assist Volunteers with preserving their rights to pursue legal sanctions against the perpetrators of a crime. It is very important that Volunteers report incidents as they occur, not only to protect their peer Volunteers, but also to preserve the future right to prosecute. Should Volunteers decide later in the process that they want to proceed with the prosecution of their assailant, this option may no longer exist if the evidence of the event has not been preserved at the time of the incident.

What If You Become a Victim of a Violent Crime?

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of violent crimes. The Peace Corps will give you information and training in how to be safe. But, just as in the U.S., crime happens, and Volunteers can become victims. When this happens, the investigative team of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) is charged with helping pursue prosecution of those who perpetrate a violent crime against a Volunteer. If you become a victim of a violent crime, the decision to prosecute or not to prosecute is entirely yours, and one of the tasks of the OIG is to make sure you are fully informed of your options and help you through the process and procedures involved in going forward with prosecution should you wish to do so. If you decide to prosecute, we are here to assist you in every way we can.

Crimes that occur overseas, of course, are investigated and prosecuted by local authorities in local courts. Our role is to coordinate the investigation and evidence collection with the regional security officers (RSOs) at the U.S. embassy, local police, and local prosecutors and others to ensure that your rights are protected to the fullest extent possible under the laws of the country. OIG investigative staff has extensive experience in criminal investigation, in working sensitively with victims, and as advocates for victims. We also may, in certain limited circumstances, arrange for the retention of a local lawyer to assist the local public prosecutor in making the case against the individual who perpetrated the violent crime.

If you do become a victim of a violent crime, first, make sure you are in a safe place and with people you trust and, second, contact the country director or the Peace Corps medical officer. Immediate reporting is important to the preservation of evidence and the chances of apprehending the suspect. Country directors and medical officers are required to report all violent crimes to the inspector general and the RSO. This information is protected from unauthorized further disclosure by the Privacy Act. Reporting the crime also helps prevent your further victimization and protects your fellow Volunteers.

Security Issues in Romania

When it comes to your safety and security in the Peace Corps, you have to be willing to adapt your behavior and lifestyle to minimize the potential for being a target of crime. As with any country in the world, crime does exist in Romania. You can reduce your risk by avoiding situations that make you feel uncomfortable and by taking precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the large cities; people know each other and generally will not steal from

their neighbors. Train and bus stations, for example, are favorite worksites for pickpockets, especially in large towns. Fortunately, violent crime has not been a severe problem.

Harassment and pickpocketing. Volunteers have reported varying levels of harassment, such as having objects thrown at them by teenagers, being called derogatory names, and receiving overt sexual comments. Strategies for coping with harassment are discussed during pre-service training. Most places in Romania are considered safe, although women should have an escort or travel in a group at night. As economic hardships increase, street crimes have become more frequent. Areas and buildings considered risky, such as train or bus stations, should be avoided at night whenever possible. Never carry more money than you are prepared to lose.

Robbery and burglary. Because you are a foreigner and will probably be considered rich, your new home may be more prone to break-ins than those of your neighbors. You will need to take the same precautions that you would take in the United States. The Peace Corps requires landlords to install two good locks on Volunteers' doors and will advise you on other home safety measures during training.

Motor vehicle accidents. These represent the single greatest risk to your safety in Romania. We urge you to wear seat belts whenever they are available and to avoid riding in overcrowded public buses or maxi-taxis.

Alcohol abuse. People abuse alcohol in Romania, just as they do in the United States. It is best to avoid frequenting bars, particularly at night. Alcohol use impairs judgment, and all Volunteers who drink must do so responsibly. The most common factors in injuries or safety incidents involving Volunteers in Romania are alcohol consumption and staying out late at night.

Sexual assault. Volunteers have been targets of sexual assault in Romania. Alcohol consumption and cross-cultural differences in gender relations are often associated with sexual assaults, and the assailant is often an acquaintance of the Volunteer. Should you become the victim of violence, the medical office is ready to help you. It is important that you involve the medical office so you can receive appropriate care, including care for your emotional well-being. The medical staff will keep all information confidential. The office can also advise you about your options for prosecuting an attacker.

Homosexual behavior in Romania was illegal until late 2001, when new legislation was passed. Some Romanians are homophobic, and there have been incidents of violence toward Romanians who are openly gay. The Peace Corps is committed to providing support for all Volunteers, regardless of sexual orientation.

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

You must be prepared to take on a large degree of responsibility for your own safety. Only you can make yourself less of a target, ensure that your house is secure, and develop relations in your community that will make you an unlikely victim of crime. In coming to Romania, do what you would do if you moved to a new city in the United States: Be cautious, check things out, ask questions, learn about your neighborhood, know where the more risky locations are, use common sense, and be aware. You can reduce your vulnerability to crime by integrating into your community, learning Romanian, acting responsibly, and abiding by Peace Corps policies and procedures.

Observing safety and security policies in Romania, especially if you are a woman, may require that you accept some restrictions concerning your current lifestyle. For example,

the Peace Corps strongly recommends that women not travel by train alone at night unless they have a sleeper car with a reserved seat.

Volunteers attract a lot of attention both in large cities and at their sites, but are likely to receive more negative attention in highly populated centers than at their sites, where “family”, friends, and colleagues look out for them. Unwanted attention can be reduced if you dress appropriately, avoid eye contact, and do not respond to negative comments or gestures. Keep your money out of sight by using an undergarment money pouch, the kind that hangs around your neck and stays hidden under your shirt or inside your coat. Do not keep your money in outside pockets of backpacks, in coat pockets, or in fanny packs. You should always walk with a companion at night.

Preparing for the Unexpected: Safety Training and Volunteer Support in Romania

The Peace Corps’ approach to safety is a five-pronged plan to help you stay safe during your two-year service and includes the following: information sharing, Volunteer training, site selection criteria, a detailed emergency action plan, and protocols for responding to safety and security incidents. Romania’s in-country safety program is outlined below.

The Peace Corps/Romania office will keep you informed of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety through **information sharing**. Regular updates will be offered by the country director and medical contractor through telephone, mail, and e-mail contacts. In the event of a critical situation or emergency, Volunteers will be contacted through the emergency communication network.

Volunteer training will include sessions on specific safety and security issues in Romania. This training will prepare you to

adopt a culturally appropriate lifestyle and exercise judgment that promotes safety and reduces risk in your home, at work, and while traveling. Safety training is offered throughout service and is integrated into the language, cross-cultural, health, and other components of training.

Certain **site selection criteria** are used to determine safe housing for Volunteers before their arrival. The Peace Corps staff works closely with host communities and counterpart agencies to help prepare them for a Volunteer's arrival and to establish expectations of their respective roles in supporting the Volunteer. Each site is inspected before the Volunteer's arrival to ensure placement in appropriate, safe, and secure housing and worksites. Site selection is based in part on any relevant site history; access to medical, banking, postal, and other essential services; availability of communications, transportation, and markets; different housing options and living arrangements; and other support needs.

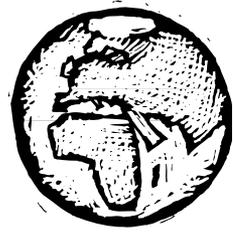
You will also learn about Peace Corps/Romania's detailed **emergency action plan**, which is implemented in the event of civil or political unrest or a natural disaster. When you arrive at your site, you will complete and submit a site locator form with your address, contact information, and a map to your house. If there is a security threat, Volunteers in Romania will gather at predetermined locations until the situation is resolved or the Peace Corps decides to evacuate.

Finally, in order for the Peace Corps to be fully responsive to the needs of Volunteers, it is imperative that Volunteers **immediately report** any security incident to the Peace Corps medical office. The Peace Corps has **established protocols for addressing safety and security incidents** in a timely and appropriate manner, and it collects and evaluates safety and security data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize risks to future Volunteers.

NOTES



DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES



In fulfilling the Peace Corps' mandate to share the face of America with our host countries, we are making special efforts to see that all of America's richness is reflected in the Volunteer corps. More Americans of color are serving in today's Peace Corps than at any time in recent years. Differences in race, ethnic background, age, religion, and sexual orientation are expected and welcomed among our Volunteers. Part of the Peace Corps' mission is to help dispel any notion that Americans are all of one origin or race and to establish that each of us is as thoroughly American as the other despite our many differences.

Our diversity helps us accomplish that goal. In other ways, however, it poses challenges. In Romania, as in other Peace Corps host countries, Volunteers' behavior, lifestyle, background, and beliefs are judged in a cultural context very different from their own. Certain personal perspectives or characteristics commonly accepted in the United States may be quite uncommon, unacceptable, or even repressed in Romania.

Outside of Romania's capital and other large cities, people have had relatively little direct exposure to other cultures, races, religions, and lifestyles. What people view as typical American behavior or norms may be a misconception, such as the belief that all Americans are rich and have blond hair and blue eyes. The people of Romania are justly known for their generous hospitality to foreigners; however, members of the community in which you will live may display a range of reactions to cultural differences that you present.

To ease the transition and adapt to life in Romania, you may need to make some temporary, yet fundamental compromises in how you present yourself as an American and as an individual. For example, female trainees and Volunteers may not be able to exercise the independence available to them in the United States; political discussions need to be handled with great care; and some of your personal beliefs may best remain undisclosed. You will need to develop techniques and personal strategies for coping with these and other limitations. The Peace Corps staff will lead diversity and sensitivity discussions during pre-service training and will be on call to provide support, but the challenge ultimately will be your own.

Overview of Diversity in Romania

The Peace Corps staff in Romania recognizes adjustment issues that come with diversity and will endeavor to provide support and guidance. During pre-service training, several sessions will be held to discuss diversity and coping mechanisms. We look forward to having male and female Volunteers from a variety of races, ethnic groups, ages, religions, and sexual orientations, and hope you will become part of a diverse group of Americans who take pride in supporting one another and demonstrating the richness of American culture.

What Might a Volunteer Face?

Possible Issues for Female Volunteers

As with other social matters, there are large differences in attitudes toward gender between smaller and bigger communities and between older and younger generations. Stereotypes concerning behavior toward women that exist

in southern European cultures can be applied to Romanians as well. By tradition, women are expected to be able to cook and look after the needs of their husbands and children while having their own jobs. On the other hand, men are expected to open doors for women, to offer them seats on public transportation, and to kiss women's hands when being introduced to them. At work, female Volunteers may feel their skills are questioned in the predominantly male environment. Many Romanian men will intervene if a woman is performing a task that is considered difficult or demeaning. It is considered masculine to help a woman who seems confused by a minor mechanical or equipment-related problem. In addition, women may be honked at by drivers or yelled at by groups of young men in the streets. In such situations, it is generally best to continue walking and try not to get involved in any conversation.

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

There are relatively few people of color in Romania. Most of them are African students and immigrants who live in Bucharest and a few other large cities. Even though there is no history of institutionalized discrimination or hatred directed at black people, African-American Volunteers may hear offensive remarks by younger people who have seen instances of racism in Western movies and think it is acceptable to act in a similar manner. Someone may utter an offensive term because he or she is not aware of the acceptable term in English and not because the person really means to be offensive.

Hispanic American Volunteers may encounter preferential treatment from some Romanians, many of whom are very proud of, and even defensive about, their Latin origins and view Hispanic Americans as kin. Romania has a small community of Asians, many of whom work in business. As

a result of news stories about business irregularities in the past years, Asian Americans may be looked at with suspicion. The most common behavior they encounter is being called “Chinese” or “Japanese” for no reason. Young people may irritate you by demanding that you demonstrate the martial arts skills they suspect Asian Americans have. Residents of smaller communities may find it difficult to understand that a Volunteer is American, and may ask you when you immigrated to the United States.

Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

Seniors receive great respect in Romanian culture. In Romanian folklore, the hero often seeks the counsel of the wise old man or woman. There are situations in which senior Volunteers will find themselves challenged, however. A senior who teaches English in a high school may face some disappointment from counterparts and students who wanted a younger teacher. It may take a little time for them to see that age does not have anything to do with a Volunteer’s energy and eagerness.

Older people in Romania generally are less active than seniors in the United States. A senior Volunteer’s Romanian friends might assume that the Volunteer does not want to socialize that much and that he or she would rather stay home and watch television. They may fail to include senior Volunteers in some of their social activities. Another stereotype about older Volunteers is that they have old-fashioned ideas and are not able to adapt to new trends.

Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

Laws that discriminated against sexual minorities recently have been changed, but Romania still has a rather homophobic culture. The younger generation in large cities tends to be more accepting, having been exposed to Western culture through films, documentaries, and even gay people’s

visibility. The gay scene has recently grown, but it is still small, underground, and confined mostly to the largest cities. In any event, it is advisable to be careful about revealing one's sexual orientation in the workplace and the community.

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

More than 85 percent of the population is Eastern (Romanian) Orthodox, with less than 5 percent Roman Catholic, 4 percent Protestant, 0.3 percent Muslim, and 0.2 percent Jewish. The Romanian Orthodox Church is hierarchical, dogmatic, and fairly well-to-do. New churches are being built even in poor villages to accommodate the growing membership. You may be asked about your religious affiliation and invited to attend an Orthodox church, but not likely in a pushy manner. It is possible to politely decline if the church or religious practice is not one of your choice. If you want to attend a church other than a Romanian Orthodox one, your options may be limited, especially in smaller towns and rural areas.

Possible Issues for Volunteers With Disabilities

As a disabled Volunteer in Romania, you may find that you face a special set of challenges. As in other parts of the world, some people may hold prejudicial attitudes toward people with disabilities, who are often institutionalized or kept out of public view in Romania. In addition, there is very little infrastructure to accommodate people with disabilities.

As part of the medical clearance process, the Peace Corps Office of Medical Services determined that you were physically and emotionally capable of performing a full tour of Volunteer service in Romania without unreasonable risk of harm to yourself or interruption of your service. The Peace Corps/Romania staff will work with disabled Volunteers to make reasonable accommodations for them in training, housing, job sites, or other areas to enable them to serve safely and effectively.

Possible Issues for Married Volunteers

Married couples may face challenges in their relationships with Romanians resulting from gender role expectations specific to the Latin and male-centered culture. A Volunteer wife may be questioned—directly or as a source of gossip among older Romanian women—as to whether she is taking proper care of her husband, whether she can cook and preserve vegetables for the winter, and whether she spends too much time with other men. The independence demonstrated by the members of an American couple may be perceived as immoral. The wife may be expected to perform all the domestic chores, while the husband may be expected to assume an overtly dominant role in the household. Some Romanian men’s respect for a married male Volunteer may decrease if they learn that he performs domestic tasks. In some instances, a husband may be expected to make a decision without consulting his wife. Yet because of women’s increasing social and professional visibility, perceptions of gender roles in marriage have been changing toward a more Western way of thinking, at least in larger towns and cities.

NOTES



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Romania?

Most airlines have baggage size and weight limits and assess charges for transport of baggage that exceeds this allowance. The Peace Corps has its own size and weight limits and will not pay the cost of transport for baggage that exceeds these limits. The authorized baggage allowance is two checked pieces of luggage with combined dimensions of both pieces not to exceed 107 inches (length + width + height) and a carry-on bag with dimensions of no more than 45 inches. Checked baggage should not exceed 100 pounds total with a maximum weight allowance of 50 pounds for any one bag.

Peace Corps Volunteers are not allowed to take pets, weapons, explosives, radio transmitters (shortwave radios are permitted), automobiles, or motorcycles to their overseas assignments. Do not pack flammable materials or liquids such as lighter fluid, cleaning solvents, hair spray, or aerosol containers. This is an important safety precaution.

What is the electric current in Romania?

The electric current is 220 volts, 50 hertz. The standard electrical outlet accommodates a round, two-prong plug (standard European). It is best to buy electrical current converters and plug adapters for electronics (hair dryers, radios, CD players) before you leave the United States. However, an abundance of European-made electronics that do not require converters and adapters is available for purchase in Romania.

How much money should I bring?

Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the people in their community. They are given a settling-in allowance and a monthly living allowance, which should cover their expenses. Often Volunteers wish to bring additional money for

vacation travel to other countries. Credit cards and traveler's checks are preferable to cash. If you choose to bring extra money, bring the amount that will suit your own travel plans and needs. Bring only new bills in pristine condition if you plan on exchanging them for Romanian lei. Exchange bureaus usually will not change anything smaller than a \$10 bill.

When can I take vacation and have people visit me?

Each Volunteer accrues two vacation days per month of service (excluding training). Leave may not be taken during training. International travel is prohibited during the first three months of service, or the last three months of service, except in conjunction with authorized emergency travel. Family and friends are welcome to visit you after pre-service training and the first three months of service as long as their stay does not interfere with your work. Extended stays at your site are not encouraged and may require permission from your country director. The Peace Corps is not able to provide your visitors with visa, medical, or travel assistance.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?

The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects. Volunteers are ultimately responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. However, you can purchase personal property insurance before you leave. If you wish, you may contact your own insurance company; additionally, insurance application forms will be provided, and we encourage you to consider them carefully. Volunteers should not ship or take valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage, and in many places, satisfactory maintenance and repair services are not available.

Do I need an international driver's license?

Volunteers in Romania do not need to get an international driver's license because they are prohibited from operating privately owned motorized vehicles. Most urban travel is by

tram, bus, or taxi. Rural travel ranges from trains, buses, and maxi-taxis to lots of walking.

What should I bring as gifts for Romanian friends and my host family?

This is not a requirement. A token of friendship is sufficient. Some gift suggestions include knickknacks for the house; pictures, books, or calendars of American scenes; souvenirs from your area; hard candies that will not melt or spoil; or photos to give away.

Where will my site assignment be when I finish training and how isolated will I be?

Peace Corps trainees are not assigned to individual sites until well into pre-service training. This gives Peace Corps staff the opportunity to assess each trainee's technical and language skills prior to assigning sites. Keep in mind that many factors influence the site selection process and that the Peace Corps cannot guarantee placement where you would ideally like to be. The most important factor is the match between your skills and knowledge and the needs of the community. Volunteers live in small to medium-size towns scattered all over Romania but usually are within one hour from another Volunteer. Some sites require a 12- to 14-hour train ride from Bucharest.

How can my family contact me in an emergency?

The Peace Corps' Office of Special Services provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, you should instruct your family to notify the Office of Special Services immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. The number for the Office of Special Services is 202-692-1470. It can also be reached through Peace Corps' toll-free number at 800.424.8580, extension 1470. For non-emergency questions, your family can get information from your country desk staff at the Peace

Corps by calling 800.424.8580; select option 2, then extension 2419 or 2420.

Can I call home from Romania?

All Volunteers have access to phones, either in their apartments, in post offices, or in the phone booths that are common throughout the country. The phones in post offices and phone booths accept prepaid phone cards (which are readily available for purchase in Romania). Many Volunteers purchase cellular phones locally and pay for service out of their living allowance. The best way to communicate with family and friends in the United States may be for them to call you. You will not have immediate access to phones upon your arrival in Romania, so do not promise family or friends that you will call as soon as you arrive. It may take several days before you have the time, access, and information necessary to successfully call home.

Should I bring a cellular phone with me?

Not unless it is a multiband GSM phone that accepts a SIM card. The most common U.S. cellular phones will not work in Romania.

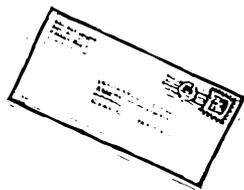
Will there be e-mail and Internet access? Should I bring my computer?

Some host organizations have Internet access, but Volunteers in smaller communities may have to travel to a nearby town to find an Internet cafe. Most Volunteers find laptop computers to be very useful for both personal and professional purposes, and a few have Internet access (including cable) at home. If you bring a computer, you will be responsible for insuring and maintaining the equipment. One can generally find what one needs for repairs and maintenance in larger towns with technology centers or universities.

NOTES



WELCOME LETTERS FROM ROMANIA VOLUNTEERS



Congratulations and welcome to Romania! The highs are high, the lows are low, nothing goes as planned, and I wouldn't trade this experience for the world. I put together a list of suggestions that I think will serve you well over the next two years ...

Do not:

- Presume your assumptions are correct.
- Compare your experience to other Volunteers.
- Take yourself too seriously. You will be in many unfamiliar and uncomfortable situations and will make some missteps. Have compassion for yourself and others, and learn to find the humor in the situation.

Do:

- Take the language classes seriously (trust me on this one).
- Be curious and observant. Ask a lot of questions and keep your eyes open.
- Be flexible. Perhaps your tenacity and persistence served you well in the States. In Romania, your ability to adapt will serve you better. However, ask for help and stand up for yourself and your needs.
- Open your heart and listen to people with different backgrounds and world views - both Romanians and your fellow Volunteers.
- So far, this has been the greatest challenge and the greatest gift of my experience.

As far as material possessions, the things I'm happiest I brought with me are my laptop, a really good pair of sneakers, and a couple of super-thin super-absorbent towels.

Bafta! Noroc! Good luck! You're in for an adventure.

—Eva Seligman

Group 23 TEFL Volunteer

Congratulations on your invitation to serve with Peace Corps/Romania! Bring some comforts along, leave others behind. Look forward to new challenges. Varied experiences come from individual creativity, flexibility, curiosity, humor, patience, open mindedness and sense of adventure. Bring all of these along to enhance your Volunteer journey!

Two bags. What to pack? A few suggestions. Definitely bring your laptop, a camera, music, a few good books (to read and to share) and sturdy, comfy shoes and boots — Romania's walking surfaces and weather test footwear endurance. Most things can be found in Romania — searching adds to the adventure. Whether big or small, clothing often comes via secondhand shops — good quality for every size at low cost! Laundry by hand? Yes. So, be modest in the amount and colors of clothing you bring.

Training. Language and culture immersion. Life with a gazda, a Romanian host family. Jump into it all with full energy. Overwhelming at times, in-country training provides valuable tools for survival at your permanent sites and work assignments. Listen well, participate fully, ask lots of questions. Peace Corps/Romania's terrific training team wants your experience to be a success.

Romania's abundant natural beauty awaits you, traveling by bus and train; each region presents one slice of this rich and varied land. Embrace Romania's culture, language, glorious countryside, and the friendship of its people. The Peace Corps journey is a unique lifetime experience!

—Karen Lindquist
Group 19 TEFL Volunteer

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Congratulations! Let your adventure begin in Romania! Even though you are still in the States, knowing where you will be going is a big step. Now you can focus your imagination, get a grip on what to pack, and prepare as best you can in all other ways.

I found early staging, exactly where you're at now, exhilarating. So much abandon, hope, and curiosity of what it

will be like and how it will all be. At the same time, I tried to keep my expectations in check, although I really didn't know what that meant until later when I realized how many I had! Having a sense of humor, especially about myself, went a long way.

Somehow we all manage through the best and the worst and everything in between. We find our way and make things happen. It's kind of magical, I think. And I just want to say, you're going to do it, too! You might not know how, and you might not know for some time after being here. But that's OK. It's normal. We didn't either.

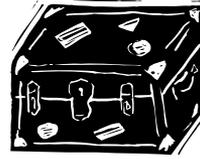
But here are some things that might be helpful. Romania is subtly deceptive in a way. So much seems familiar (which is nice), but then there are the ongoing realizations that it's not (which is daunting, actually). At some point, I realized Americans tend to trust at first, until there is a reason not to. However, Romanians tend to not trust at first, until there is a reason to. So, building relationships with your counterparts, colleagues, and neighbors is very important. Spend lots of time doing this.

Also know that your time in Romania passes in stages. For example, the first three months, you'll be with many other Americans like (and unlike) yourself in training, and then those first six months at site are so random and weird. But hopefully, after about nine months, you'll start feeling yourself again, though changed. But in a good way — better adapted and at home with the people you share your daily life with and in the work you're doing. And then, after about a year, you might just realize that things are humming along quite well, kind of the way you're imagining right now, but better. Much better. Because life is more fun than one's imagination.

—Mary Louise Marin
Group 20 Environment Volunteer



PACKING LIST



This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Romania and is based on their experience. Use it as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that each experience is individual. There is no perfect list! You obviously cannot bring everything we mention, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. You can always have things sent to you later. As you decide what to bring, keep in mind that you have a 100-pound weight limit on baggage. And remember, you can get almost everything you need in Romania if you look long enough to find it.

When choosing luggage, remember that you will be hauling it in and out of taxis and trains and often lugging it around on foot. It should be durable, flexible, lightweight, and easy to carry. Duffel bags and sturdy backpacks are good choices.

Do not bring anything that is so valuable or precious that you would be heartbroken to lose it.

General Clothing

- Shorts and T-shirts for relaxing in hot weather
- Slacks and jeans and short-sleeved cotton shirts for summer
- Wool or flannel shirts, turtlenecks, and sweaters for winter
- Heavy socks (wool and cotton) and lightweight cotton socks (socks wear out quickly)
- Heavy-duty poncho (if you plan to do any camping)
- Warm hats, scarves, and earmuffs
- Two or three sets of long underwear

- Flannel pajamas (sweatsuits can also double as PJs)
- Heavy winter coat or ski jacket and a down vest
- All-weather coat (preferably in a dark color)
- Swimsuit and goggles (local pools have a lot of chlorine)
- Men: Collared shirts (turtlenecks are also appropriate professional wear), a few ties, and at least one jacket or suit to wear to weddings and other celebrations
- Women: Two or three professional outfits (one should be fancier for special occasions)

Shoes

- At least one pair of sturdy, thick-soled walking shoes (for cobblestone streets)
- Plastic shower shoes
- House slippers
- One pair of insulated, waterproof, ice-gripping boots

Note: Winter boots, as well as dress and casual shoes, sandals, and slippers are readily available in Romania, but they may not have the fit, quality, or style that you prefer; women who wear size 10 or larger may have difficulty finding shoes.

Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items

- Any favorite nonprescription medical supplies, though the items the Peace Corps supplies are good (i.e., you do not need to bring a two-year supply of aspirin, vitamins, dental floss, insect repellent, or eyedrops)
- A three-month supply of any prescription drugs you take, to last until we can order your special needs
- Two pairs of eyeglasses, if you wear them (replacements can take a long time to arrive from the United States)

- Contact lens solution (if you bring contacts)
- Hand lotion and body cream
- Towels (bath-sized ones are difficult to find locally)
- Women: If you have favorite brands of cosmetics like Clinique or Estée Lauder, bring them with you (but they may also be available in larger Romanian cities)

Kitchen

- Good can and bottle opener and corkscrew
- Measuring cups (both metric and nonmetric)
- Potholders
- Plastic water carrier for traveling (some types are available locally)
- Strong string or twine for use as a clothesline
- Rubber gloves for washing clothes by hand
- Plastic food containers
- Favorite cooking utensils
- Basic cookbook
- Plastic storage bags
- Packaged mixes of your favorite sauces, salad dressings, and soups
- Favorite spices (Mexican, Chinese, Indian, and Italian spices can be hard to find and make good gifts)

Miscellaneous

- Money belt
- Folding umbrella
- Camera—35 mm compacts are best because they are inconspicuous and travel well, but digital cameras are also good if they are small and you have the appropriate computer equipment

- Small, relatively inexpensive tool kit (e.g., Leatherman)
- Good scissors
- Duct tape (can be used for many things)
- Swiss Army knife (very important to many Volunteers)
- Two good flashlights (one small enough to carry in a pocket) and extra batteries
- Travel sewing kit
- Pictures of home and postcards of common sights in America
- U.S. stamps (you can often have letters mailed in the States by people traveling home from Romania)
- Games (e.g., Scrabble, Pictionary, chess), Frisbee, volleyball, etc.
- Good sleeping bag (compact with a stuff sack and fully unzippable for use as blanket)
- Good bedsheets (not fitted ones because you will not know the size of your bed in advance)
- Books and materials you might need for your assignment, as described in the Volunteer Assignment Description
- Reference books, such as a good grammar book, an English dictionary, and a thesaurus
- A few novels to read and trade
- Credit cards
- Shortwave radio (but such radios work with limited success in Romania and may not be worth the bother)
- Exercise materials (e.g., exercise tape or jump rope; some sites have gyms, and some Volunteers teach aerobic classes, so bring music and new steps if you have them)
- Reliable watch—durable, water-resistant, and inexpensive

- Reliable battery-powered alarm clock and back-up batteries
- Sunglasses
- Small daypack without frame
- Tape or CD player and recorder
- Cassette tapes or CDs
- Retractable tape measure (inch and centimeter)
- Pens and pencils
- Journal
- Calendars
- Paper clips and rubber bands
- Clothespins
- U.S. maps



PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST



The following list consists of suggestions for you to consider as you prepare to live outside the United States for two years. Not all items will be relevant to everyone, and the list does not include everything you should make arrangements for.

Family

- Notify family that they can call the Peace Corps' Office of Special Services at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (telephone number: 800.424.8580, extension 1470; after-hours duty officer: 202.638.2574).
- Give the Peace Corps' *On the Home Front* handbook to family and friends.

Passport/Travel

- Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for the Peace Corps passport and visas.
- Verify that luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel.
- Obtain a personal passport if you plan to travel after your service ends. (Your Peace Corps passport will expire three months after you finish your service, so if you plan to travel longer, you will need a regular passport.)

Medical/Health

- Complete any needed dental and medical work.
- If you wear glasses, bring two pairs.
- Arrange to bring a three-month supply of all medications (including birth control pills) you are currently taking.

Insurance

- Make arrangements to maintain life insurance coverage.
- Arrange to maintain supplemental health coverage while you are away. (Even though the Peace Corps is responsible for your health care during Peace Corps service overseas, it is advisable for people who have preexisting conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. If there is a lapse in coverage, it is often difficult and expensive to be reinstated.)
- Arrange to continue Medicare coverage if applicable.

Personal Papers

- Bring a copy of your certificate of marriage or divorce.

Voting

- Register to vote in the state of your home of record. (Many state universities consider voting and payment of state taxes as evidence of residence in that state.)
- Obtain a voter registration card and take it with you overseas.
- Arrange to have an absentee ballot forwarded to you overseas.

Personal Effects

- Purchase personal property insurance to extend from the time you leave your home for service overseas until the time you complete your service and return to the United States.

Financial Management

- Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service.
- Execute a Power of Attorney for the management of your property and business.
- Arrange for deductions from your readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through the Office of Volunteer Financial Operations at 800.424.8580, extension 1770.
- Place all important papers—mortgages, deeds, stocks, and bonds—in a safe deposit box or with an attorney or other caretaker.



CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS



The following list of numbers will help you contact the appropriate office at Peace Corps headquarters with various questions. You may use the toll-free number and extension or dial directly using the local numbers provided. Be sure to leave the Peace Corps toll-free number and extensions with your family so they have them in the event of an emergency during your service overseas.

Peace Corps Headquarters

Toll-free Number:

800.424.8580, Press 2, then
Ext. # (see below)

Peace Corps' Mailing Address:

Peace Corps
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters
1111 20th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20526

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/ Local Number
Responding to an Invitation	Office of Placement Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia Region	Ext. 1851	202.692.1851
Programming or Country Information	Jim Zalansky Desk Officer E-mail: romania@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2414	202.692.2414

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/ Local Number
Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or Other Travel Matters	Travel Officer (Sato Travel)	Ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal Clearance	Office of Placement	Ext. 1845	202.692.1845
Medical Clearance and Forms Processing (including dental)	Screening Nurse	Ext. 1500	202.692.1500
Medical Reimbursements	Handled by a Subcontractor		800.818.8772
Loan Deferments, Taxes, Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney	Volunteer Financial Operations	Ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Staging (Pre-departure Orientation) and Reporting Instructions <i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks before departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>	Office of Staging	Ext. 1865	202.692.1865
Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas)	Office of Special Services	Ext. 1470	202.692.1470 (24 hours)

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