

JACKDAW 04

Posted on 2023-06-14 by spd_wp_admin

Dear Reader (2023-06-14),

A Nigerian friend of mine once asked if I had been to Africa. With a smile, he said that our trip to Morocco didn't count. I could say the same about our initial time in Istanbul. It doesn't really count as a visit to Eastern Europe. Though Istanbul is very different from say London, there are enough similarities to feel things are familiar. Romania is unfamiliar. The trauma of corruption, desperation, and disarray that was part of the 90's and early 2000's is well remembered.

It is easy to think our deluxe hotel is still frequented by mobsters. In Bucharest the streets feel gritty and slightly seedy. There are enough incongruities, lines and textures to keep me engaged for ages. There is also colour and hope.

And now you know what to do – you can either jump to the photos or read on. But first I shall answer the question, Why all these words? The answer is that my brain is a sieve and I forget much, quickly. In the case of this trip, there is much I would like to remember.

Romania – Brief Context [1]

- SIZE: 92,043 square miles
- POPULATION: 19.9 (2022)
- LANGUAGE: Romanian (official); also Hungarian, Romany
Romanian, is not a Slavic language but a romance language [2]
- CURRENCY: Romanian leu (RON)
- GEOGRAPHY: The three main mountain chains are the southern, middle, and eastern Carpathians. North and west of these ranges lies the Transylvanian Plateau, and to the south and east are the plains of Moldavia and Walachia.
- BORDERS: Ukraine, Moldova, Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary
- RELIGION: 81.9% Eastern Orthodox, 6.4% Protestant, 4.3% Roman Catholic, 0.9% Islam, 6.5% none/other/unspecified
- ETHNIC GROUPS: 83.4% Romanian, 6.1% Hungarian, 3.1% Romany, 7.4% other
- GOVERNMENT: Semi-presidential republic
- GDP (2022): US\$ billion 291.7
- INCOME INEQUALITY: Romania has one of the highest income inequality ratios in the EU [3]

- COST OF LIVING: Romania is the 3rd cheapest country in Eastern Europe (10 out of 12) [4]
- Key Dates [5]
 - ~ 1989, November – Berlin Wall comes down
 - ~ 1989, December – Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu tried and executed by firing squad
 - ~ 1991, December – dissolution of the Soviet Union
 - ~ 2007, January – Romania joins the EU

Bucharest – The Palace of The Parliament [6]

Bucharest has, according to the Guinness World Records, the heaviest building in the world. The Palace of Parliament in Bucharest contains 700,000 tonnes of steel and bronze, 1,000,000 square feet of marble, 3500 tonnes of crystal, and 900,000 square meters of wood.

The Palace is also the second-largest administrative building in the world (after the Pentagon), encompassing 365,000 square meters (3,930,000 sq ft) and 1,100 rooms.

The gigantic structure was the brainchild of Romania's former dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu, who spared no expense to build it. Despite being a sad memento to dictatorial madness, the Palace of Parliament is one of the most popular places to visit in Romania. As for its patron – Ceausescu was executed before he could see his dream castle completed.

Bucharest – The Grand Hotel

Our hotel, The Grand Hotel, was built in the same style as The Palace of The Parliament, and it too was not finished before the end of 1989. I think our guide called the architectural style neo-classical brutalism. Inside the Grand, there is a shopping concourse called Grand Avenue, with a set of shops where a token of appreciation is required just to look through the window. The display window at Yves St. Laurent had a pair of running shoes that could be yours for a mere Cdn \$1,600.00.

Bucharest – Arcul de Triumf [7]

The triumphal arch of Bucharest was originally constructed in wood shortly after Romania gained its independence in 1878. ... The wooden arch soon disintegrated. In 1922, a second arch was built on the site of the first one. This arch was demolished in 1935 to make way for the current one, which is built of Deva granite and stands at 27 metres (85 feet) high.

People Salvation Cathedral [8]

Let me know if you can find any rational reason to build such a thing for such a vast sum.

Notes on Photos

- ~ 1 – Arcul de Triumf – Through A Bus Window
- ~ 3 – People Salvation Church
- ~ 5,6 – The Grand
- ~ 14 – Through A Bus Window
- ~ 16 – A Bookstore
- ~ 17 – Open 7 days a week – Saturdays 18:00 – 06:00
- ~ 18 – Title “MEC meets D&G”, Dolce and Gabbana, Grand Avenue, 2 of these people have not been photoshopped
- ~ all other images – Bucharest -> Out and About



01 - Through A Bus Window



02 - Through A Bus Window



03



04



05 - The Grand



06 - The Grand



18 - "MEC Meets D&G"















13



14 - Through A Bus Window



15



16 - A Bookstore



17

References

- ~ [1] adapted from printed Viking daily information sheet – no link
- ~ [2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanian_language
CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=543275>
- ~ [3] <https://www.romania-insider.com/romania-income-inequality-ratio-eu>
- ~ [4] <https://www.expatistan.com/cost-of-living/country/romania>
- ~ [5] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romania>
- ~ [6] adapted from <https://travelnotesandbeyond.com/fun-and-interesting-facts-about-romania/>
- ~ [7] adapted from <https://www.solosophie.com/bucharest-arcul-de-triumf-romania/>
which in turn looks like it came from
<https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/arcul-de-triumf>
- ~ [8-1] <https://www.newsgram.com/special-coverage/2023/01/17/romania-worlds-largest-eastern-orthodox-cathedral-takes-shape-above-bucharest>
- ~ [8-2] <https://www.romaniaexperience.com/romanias-next-monster-building-peoples-salvation-cathedral/>

You are welcome to share a link to this page with others.
As always, all comments are welcome and sought.
Cheers, Sean

2 Replies to “Jackdaw 04”

1. **Keith Cartmell** says:

2023-06-19 at 11:35 Edit

How is Morocco not Africa? I've heard that Egypt isn't Africa either. Oddly enough, the cranes and traffic lights and light standards in 3 make the photo for me. Then the red sign. Then the gold domes. 6 had me saying oooohhhh! Lovely tones and gentle light. 13, A reflection photo brings up the textures, and layers of uncertainty. 15, all the leading lines. The textures of the walls. 18, a reflection selfie, though I don't think it was intended as a selfie.

1. **spd_wp_admin** says:

2023-06-19 at 12:20 Edit

Thank you for visiting and commenting. For 3, I waited until the led sign changed colour to red, and I too like the light standards and cranes. 18 was intended as a reflection selfie. I was drawn to the incongruities between, me and the store poster.