

# Back to Bob – Servas Romania

Servas was founded by Bob Luitweiler on the basis of Work- Travel – Education. Many of us have noticed travel becoming the dominant theme of Servas and we worry at meetings about rivalry with Couchsurfers and others and declining membership.

During the summer Marian Slader and me wanted to revisit Romania, a country they had visited in 1969, a beautiful, wild [complete with bears and wolves in the winter], mountainous country with an interesting history. We had all heard the horror stories of Ceausescu’s Romania and the aftermath. We had heard of Romanian children begging on the streets of London [since been on TV]. We knew Romania had joined the EU and now, it is easy to travel to, by road, rail or air and with no visas. With Brian and Anne Heagney, another Servas couple from London joining us, we decided to see for ourselves, a still remote country, with about 10 or 12 Servas hosts. So our education was the goal.



Sinaia-Spa Town

The Sladers drove their camper to Buchar-est, 2000km from Calais and met the Heagneys there. Simona Dragoi is the national Secretary and we had a wonderful welcome. We went with her to Sinaia, a spa town developed during the Austro-Hungarian Empire which ruled maybe half the country at the time. There is still a 15%

Hungarian speaking minority in Transylva-  
nia. We found it an easy country to travel in  
with friendly help all the way, lots of Eng-  
lish spoken and little bureaucracy for the  
tourist.



Transylvania

The Servas hosts were keen to meet us and discuss. While staying with Maria Toth, a Servas host in Hungarian speaking Transyl-  
vania, we were introduced to an organiza-  
tion ‘Alliance for Life’ founded by Father  
Csaba Bojte ofm, a Franciscan Monk. He  
has set up his organization to care for  
destitute children of all religions and eth-  
nicity in Transylvania. 2300 children are  
looked after by his organization, in 60  
homes and cared for in small family units of  
about 10, each with a house parent.

We were introduced to his children’s home  
in Baile Tusnad, The unit cares for 104  
children. They are aged from 3 to 19 years.  
We spent the day at these children’s home  
in Baile Tusnad and talked with an 18 year  
old German volunteer; a family volunteer-  
ing from Hungary who had decided to work  
for the home doing repairs and endless  
washing; and the ‘boss’ a young man with a  
degree in Psychology, named Tibor who  
speaks perfect English and told us all about  
the home and organization. He has been  
there for 5 years, is married and has his  
own child in his own ‘family’ quarter. All

the homes have a visitors' wing and it is possible to go and visit or volunteer.



Deva in South Romania

We next went to HQ in a town in South Romania called Deva and met the Economic director of the organisation. Cecilia has a degree in Economics. This home has 200 children and was similarly impressive.

The children all seemed happy and looked in good health. They clearly responded to the staff and the love and friendship was a joy to witness. They fundraise to find one euro per day per child.

Both Tibor and Cecilia showed great interest in the spirit of Servas and have taken steps to join. We think they will be a great asset to Servas Romania and their organization could provide a focus point for Servas travelers in Europe and Romania. Any help, volunteering, or donations given, are a personal undertaking but perhaps we can all use our Servas network to raise awareness of this need and similar needs in other countries. Our travel experience is much enriched by becoming part of such projects.

Why not travel in Romania and see for yourself? You will be welcomed and in-

formed and, like us, may be inspired to help them.

We would like to see many examples of projects such as this, joined into the Servas family, and on the Servas map. We know many Servas people are involved in projects around the world. Tell us about them. Let us give our travelers a focus. Help fulfill Bob's dream of a Global Village.

If you want to see details of this particular organization there is a web site:

[www.magnificat.ro](http://www.magnificat.ro)

It is in Hungarian but if you access it through Google it can be translated. There is a section about the St Francis Foundation, with subsections about its history, parenting, donations etc.



Children of Magnificat

Perhaps, drop by drop, we can all help to fill the bucket.

Love and greetings

Anne, Brian, Chris and Marian

Text: Chris Salder  
Pictures: Internet

{Chris Slader was International President of Servas during the late 1990s}

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