

# CUSTOMS AND CULTURE: A LIVED CHRONICLE IN ARAD



# MY FIRST DAY: FALLING IN LOVE WITH THE LITTLE THINGS

WHEN I FIRST FOUND OUT I HAD THE CHANCE TO DO AN ERASMUS IN ROMANIA, MY REACTION WAS... MIXED. I WAS CURIOUS, YES, BUT ALSO A BIT UNSURE. SPENDING A WHOLE MONTH AWAY FROM MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS FELT SCARY. HONESTLY, MY EXPECTATIONS WERE LOW. I THOUGHT I WOULD FEEL HOMESICK ALL THE TIME AND COUNT THE DAYS UNTIL I COULD GO BACK.



*On my very first day in Arad, I did what I love most when arriving in a new place: I went out to explore. No plans—just walking, observing, letting the city reveal itself little by little.*

**And honestly... I loved it from the start.**

Maybe Arad isn't a big or famous city, but that's exactly what made it special to me. It felt calm, welcoming, and full of charm. The trams caught my eye immediately—those colorful, slightly vintage carriages passing by felt like something out of a movie. The buildings had this mix of old European style and quiet elegance, and the people, even if I didn't understand the language yet, smiled at me with warmth.

I remember thinking, "This place might be small, but it's full of life." It wasn't loud or overwhelming—it was just right. It felt like the perfect setting to slow down, be present, and start this journey.

That first walk through Arad was when I realized: maybe this month won't be so scary after all.

# “CE FACI?” A LANGUAGE THAT SOUNDS LIKE ITALIAN BUT ISN'T

ROMANIAN SOUNDED KIND OF FAMILIAR—LIKE A MIX BETWEEN SPANISH AND ITALIAN. UNTIL I ACTUALLY TRIED TO UNDERSTAND IT. STILL, I LEARNED THE SURVIVAL WORDS QUICKLY:

## *Nasira's Mini Glossary:*

Mulțumesc = thank you (took me days to pronounce)

Covrig = pretzel (they're everywhere!)

La revedere = goodbye

Scuzați-mă = excuse me

Ce faci? = how are you?

LET'S JUST SAY I SMILED A LOT AND USED HAND GESTURES UNTIL THE WORDS STUCK.

The first time we went to get an ice cream, we used this vocabulary.





## TRADITIONS

“Christmas with Cozonac and Folk Music”

**While working at the supermarket, Carmina, one of the kind employees there, Micky, offered us a slice of cozonac to try. It's a traditional Romanian sweet bread, filled with nuts, cocoa, or raisins. It was my first time tasting it, and it was absolutely delicious!**

**SHE EXPLAINED TO US THAT COZONAC IS ESPECIALLY POPULAR DURING CHRISTMAS AND EASTER IN ROMANIA. IT'S A SYMBOL OF CELEBRATION AND IS OFTEN HOMEMADE BY FAMILIES, PASSED DOWN THROUGH GENERATIONS.**



# FROM TRAMS TO RENTAL SCOOTERS: MY ROUTINE IN ARAD

I worked in a supermarket for my internship. At first, everything was new and unfamiliar, but I slowly got the hang of it—and even managed to interact with customers using smiles, gestures, and English.

My routine included peaceful walks, vintage trams (so retro, but always on time!), and exploring the city with electric scooters—which were super fun... except for that one time I crashed into a signpost



## Biggest culture shocks:

- The people use bicycle a lot
- Friendly people, but not overly talkative
- Rental scooters everywhere
- Vintage trams





## FROM STRANGERS TO FAMILIE

One of the best surprises of my Erasmus experience was meeting my Portuguese friends. At first, we were all a bit shy and unsure of how to start a conversation—but that awkwardness didn't last long.

*Very quickly, we discovered that we shared the same kind of humor: silly jokes, funny expressions, and that kind of laughter that makes your stomach hurt. It felt natural, like we had known each other for years.*

We started doing everything together—cooking, exploring, getting lost, and laughing at things no one else found funny. Even the simplest moments, like waiting for the tram or shopping for snacks, turned into little adventures with them.

*Having them by my side made everything better. It reminded me that friendship doesn't need time—it just needs connection*





## BETWEEN SARMALE AND PAPANASI: THE CUISINE THAT SURPRISED ME

One of the best parts of my Erasmus adventure was trying food—not just alone, but with my Portuguese friends, which made every bite even better.



**Together, we tried traditional Romanian dishes like sarmale (cabbage rolls filled with meat and rice) and papanasi (fried doughnuts with sour cream and jam). And wow. papanasi instantly became our shared obsession. We even joked about opening a papanasi fan club!**



But it wasn't just Romanian food—we also enjoyed delicious local pizza (yes, it's different!), and tried many traditional sweets. One of the most surprising was that hard textured sweet—almost like nougat or a bar—that they sometimes cover with chocolate or fill with fruity cream. I still don't know its name, but we loved it!

*Everything tasted amazing. And the best part? We turned every meal into a moment of laughter, discovery, and joy. Food brought us together—and gave us memories we'll always carry with us.*



# FINAL REFLECTION

*When I think about my time in Arad, it feels like a beautiful chapter in my life that went by too fast. I came here with low expectations and a little fear—afraid of being away from my family and stepping into the unknown. But now I realize: this experience gave me more than I could have imagined.*

I learned to be more independent, more open, and more curious. I connected with people from other countries, shared laughs, explored new places like Budapest, Vienna, Timișoara, and Hunedoara, and discovered pieces of myself along the way.

Romania surprised me with its calm beauty, its traditions, and especially its people. Arad may not be a huge city, but that was exactly what I loved about it. It felt cozy, peaceful, and safe—like a second home.

*This Erasmus didn't just teach me about work or culture. It reminded me how quickly strangers can become friends, how stepping out of your comfort zone is always worth it, and how much you can grow when you simply let go of fear.*

WOULD I RECOMMEND ROMANIA? ABSOLUTELY. I ARRIVED UNSURE. AND I'M LEAVING WITH A HEART FULL OF STORIES, MEMORIES, AND A DEEP LOVE FOR A COUNTRY I DIDN'T EXPECT TO CALL MINE—EVEN IF JUST FOR A WHILE.



# PHOTOBOOK





ALL THE PICTURES WERE TAKEN BY ME



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