

Nina Porzucki, Peace Corps Volunteer, Romania (2002–2004)

Biography

Salut! Ce mai faceti? (Hello! How are you?) My name is Nina Porzucki. But my students usually yell out my name, NEEEEEEENNNNNAAAANNNEEEE EEEEEENNA like an ambulance siren rushing down the hallway. For the past



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year, I have been teaching at a high school in Ramnicu Valcea, Romania. Valcea (VOOL-CHA), as I fondly call it, is a medium-sized town

tucked into the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains. The town has two rivers running through it—the mighty Olt and the baby Olanesti—a philharmonic orchestra, an art museum, the Pizzeria Okay (the place to be seen), and my luxury from home: McDonald's.

Before coming to Valcea, I graduated from the University of California-Santa Barbara, where I majored in Spanish and global studies. I studied in Spain my junior year of college, and it was then that I caught the travel bug. I knew that I wanted to live abroad again. I applied to the Peace Corps, thinking that I would work in Latin America, and somehow I got placed in Eastern Europe. Although most Romanians don't speak Spanish, Romanian, like Spanish, is a Romance language—both languages have the same Latin-based origin. So, knowing Spanish has really helped me to understand Romanian. After one full year here, I can't imagine myself serving anywhere else.

Site Assignment

What a year it's been! My primary assignment is teaching ninth-, tenth-, and eleventh-grade English at Colegiul National Alexandru Lahovari, a local high school. However, the most rewarding experience so far has been planning summer camps. At the beginning of July, I led a leadership camp with some other Volunteers and fellow Romanian teachers in the heart of Transylvania. We talked about leadership, hiked, and played Ultimate Frisbee, baseball, and capture the flag. We taught the kids to tie-dye and we even ended up tie-dying a Volunteer's shorts as a prank. It was great, but the best part of the week was coming home and meeting with my kids to discuss a leadership project they had developed in camp to start in Valcea. Their energy is what makes my Peace Corps experience worth it.



Nina (center) at camp with students Roxana and Alexandra