



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**ROMANIA**

## SUCCESS STORY

# Attracting Tourists from Afar

### Taking the information highway to get off the beaten track



Guests enjoy a leisurely lunch and watch traditional Romanian dancers at the Casa Andrei guesthouse in Sibiu, Romania.

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As any Romanian will proudly say, Romania has everything a visitor could possibly want: mountains, lakes, a long stretch of beach by the Black Sea, ultramodern cities, and quaint villages. But there is one asset Romania’s tourism industry often lacks: the ability to attract tourists through computers.

The picturesque mountain villages near the city of Sibiu offered comfortable and affordable guesthouse accommodations but their owners were not able to market to international audiences. When USAID suggested developing computer reservation systems, the owners were wary — especially when it came to using the Internet. The solution? To teach children of guesthouse owners how to build and manage Internet-based reservation systems. Now both guesthouse owners and their children are using e-mail and managing reservations online.

With help from USAID, 14 guesthouses from 12 villages near Sibiu registered their accommodations on reservations websites used by tourists from all over the world. The first international guests to book via the Internet arrived at Casa Andrei just two months later. “I wasn’t sure at the beginning that the online registration of my guesthouse would be something serious,” said owner Andrei Danut Gheorghe. “I understand that it’s very useful now that we’ve had our first international guests — all the way from Israel — because of the system. I’m convinced that my business is really going to develop a lot, and it’s all thanks to USAID.”

USAID is also working to expand capacities of local and national tourism associations in Romania. Technical assistance to guesthouse owners like Andrei, artisans, tour operators, and others working in tourism is helping to build their skills and increase awareness of technology-based opportunities for marketing and networking. In trying to help Romania’s tourism industry take advantage of Romania’s future accession into the European Union, USAID is helping tourism operators learn to advocate for policy and fiscal changes, financing upgrades, and business expansion. With this assistance, Romania’s tourist industry will be better able to share with visitors why Romania’s mountains, lakes and villages have everything they could possibly want.