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Transylvania with a Difference

[This is a shortened version of a longer article (complete with photos and video clips) that Mikhail has posted on his blog: http://mikhailtank.com/transylvania_trip]

I decided to experience Transylvania on my own and write in a diary, as did Jonathan Harker (the protagonist of *Dracula* by Bram Stoker). In time, a book will be released, titled *Tea With Dracula*, giving a detailed account of the journey along with many color photographs and personal reflections.



I stayed at an 84-acre Count's estate and castle guesthouse (with the family living on the premises), visiting Bran Castle, Peles Palace, and Rasnov Fortress. I ate delicious homemade meals in hand-painted dinnerware, drank hot fresh cow's milk and ate fresh baked potato bread. I took private tours to a 13th century fortified church, a graveyard on All Soul's Day (November 1st) and a horse and carriage ride along the Carpathians. I walked with sheep, visited two wells, met two performing Roma (gypsies) and had an aristocratic going away dinner. All of this has fortified my Spirit and created new valves in my artistic Soul. Travel always seems to update one's life-pattern, allowing for fresh air

to visit the mundane. It allows you to reflect and change gears.

Here are a few observations. On October 28th, on the way to Brasov from Bucharest by train, I saw a funny thing out the window: an elderly lady (wrapped in a shawl) walked a giant cow on a leash, like a pet.

My English-speaking driver, Levi, took me to the village of Zabola, where I stayed at the 15th century, 84 acre Count Mikes (Mee-kesh) Estate and Castle for five nights. There I had my first Hungarian-Romanian dinner (awesome, organic food) and went to sleep with a slight trepidation.

On October 29th, after a complete breakfast, Udit (the wonderful administrator) along with a horse-driver, took me on a horse-carriage ride along the village, the forest and the Carpathian mountains. We stopped at a haunting well. After lunch, we took a hike to the forest and saw the outskirts of town, where the Roma (gypsies) live.

On October 30th, Levi drove approx. 1.5 hours to the Peles Castle completed in 1883. King Carol I originally chose the location of this exquisite mountain property. There I purchased a CD by a street musician, Romanian guitarist Catalin Comnoiu.

November 1 was a special day. In the early morning, I took a walk with the sheep. Udit then took me to a Transylvanian cemetery, to observe the day of the dead, followed by a private tour with the Pastor of the Zabola Fortified Church. The road from Brasov to Zabola was interesting and intense. One way lanes meant cars swerving, corn and hay were on fire some of the time (normal farming routine/nothing out of the ordinary) and it looked as if one was driving through hell (with smog & flames rising from both sides of the road, following the grapefruit-like setting sun). Cows at one point were walking home on the freeway and we drove between them, separating our way.

The Transylvanian energy was deep and inviting.

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