

Bună!

Dear readers, friends, ladies and gentlemen, I am sending best regards from Alba Iulia. I will spend the next four months studying here, and I will try to share with you everything that happens during my stay. Since I have been here for more than ten days already, it is time for the first part. On the very beginning, I will try to describe briefly the town I am in. Once again, this future Romanian is sending you best regards.

Alba Iulia is a small town that spreads to an area of a little over one hundred square kilometers, with about sixty thousand residents. One of the interesting facts about this town is that it is located in the center of the country, in the historical region of Transylvania (over a certain period it was the capital of the Principality of Transylvania), and one of its former names was Erdel Belgradi. One of the most important sights is certainly the fortress built in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. The wall, which is about twelve kilometers long, was built by two thousand serfs. The fortress contains seven bastions which form its famous stellar shape. Near it, you can find the Orthodox cathedral, the Roman Catholic cathedral, the University of Alba Iulia where I will be studying for the next four months, as well as the place in which I ate two amazing chicken steaks with a lot of fries, a salad and different sauces for no more than three euros.

And now, the crazy, euphoric adventure named “A ticket to Alba Iulia” begins. I could not decide what to pack, so I packed everything. Luckily, in China shops you can find human-sized suitcases, so I managed to find a suitcase large enough to pack everything I need. Of course, you always forget something when you pack, but then there are a small bag and a backpack to save the day. So, dragging with him a bunch of things, a student from Belgrade takes off to Romania. Since their time zone is different than ours (when it is two o’clock here, it is three o’clock there), I explained to the agency which drove me to Timisoara that I needed to be at a certain bus station by half past two, so that I could “hop on” to the bus that goes to Alba Iulia. Of course, you never know what the road will be like, if one of the passengers will be late, and so on, so I could already imagine myself wandering around Timisoara looking for a hostel because I did not make it on time for the bus. However, miraculously I arrived on time – but to the wrong station. I only realized that when I went into the information office asking for a ticket, but the only answer I got was that there was no bus to Alba Iulia from there. Now what?

I have to hand it to the driver who works for the agency, he helped me immensely. He waited outside the office while I was inside, to see if everything would be alright, and when I came out disappointed, he immediately started talking to people and asking if anyone was going to Alba Iulia. He found a man who could speak English, and he directed us to a small minivan and said that it would go through Alba Iulia. All this happened within the time span of three minutes, so I, now completely lost, got into the minivan driven by our fellow Russians. Nobody could speak English, the conductor was tirelessly trying to explain something to me, while I, not understanding a word, was just thinking about whether I am in the right bus or not. It was a long trip, and about halfway I realized there was a wireless connection in the minivan, so from time to time I checked the map to see if we were getting closer to or further from Alba Iulia. Four hours later, I arrived to my destination. With my suitcases, I began a new adventure of finding a taxi. As I saw one, I went towards it, but someone jumped in before me, and I was left standing there and waiting, with my suitcases. Finally, I successfully stopped a taxi in the street. As you can guess, the

taxi driver did not speak English either. I gave him my cellphone through the window so he could read the address, and he nodded his head to show me he knew where to take me and that I should come in.

When we arrived in front of the dormitory, I tried to pay for the ride, but I did not manage. The taxi driver kept talking in Romanian, while I was constantly trying to give him five euros, because I had just gotten there and I could not pay in lei. I saw that he was getting nervous, so I asked the security guard to translate what the driver was trying to say. Once we got that sorted out, and when I officially walked into the yard in front of the dorm, I realized I had no idea where I was supposed to move in. That is when I realized how good the people here are. Some guys who were passing by saw that something was happening and immediately came up to me to help. They took my luggage and called a person in charge who showed up in twenty minutes and found me a room. That is when the adventure called "A ticket to Alba Iulia" was officially over.

However, from that moment on a new adventure began, called "Ivica, you have to try every sort of alcohol your roommates have". I could not have wished for better roommates. They are positive, they love joking, they love drinking a bit, and I love all those things too. All in all, the night was great, and I love the relationship between people here more and more every day. The dormitory I am in has over sixty rooms, each room has three beds, and there are so many people from all over the world, but they all function as one. I believe that a person has to experience this in order to understand it, it cannot be described in words. So many different nationalities, religions, lifestyles, and yet, nobody hates anyone or wishes ill upon them, nobody fights, they are all one big happy family.

This is what I lacked in Serbia, and cannot describe just how happy I am for coming to Romania. I know that this sort of relationship among people is what I will miss when I get back. It is incredible how you can just show up out of nowhere and be accepted by everyone. I must say again how happy I am for coming here and having this experience. I would like all of you who are reading this to think these last two paragraphs through. Try to cut the hatred out of your life, try not to discriminate people based on their nationality, ethnicity or religion and you will make yourself, as well as the world, much better and happier. You can easily read my feelings in these paragraphs - I am happy, and I wish the same for you.

I hope you did not find this boring, and I hope that you are looking forward to the next part, just like I am looking forward to writing for you again. Now off I go, one does not become Romanian just like that. Salut!

Translated by: Milica Jakovljević