

The average U.S. Peace Corps volunteer spends about 800 days serving in a foreign country.

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News and perspectives of Rîșcani and the Republic of Moldova • Mark Gilchrist, U.S. Peace Corps volunteer

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Work is changing in Moldova

A hardy work ethic was strengthened in Soviet times, and is moving toward specialization.

Life in Moldova is not managed by money the way it is in the United States, but is still managed — especially in villages — directly by work.

People everywhere have, for millennia, grown their own food, collected their own fuels, and built and maintained their own homes, tools, clothing and possessions. Moldovans are moving from this, into lives of specialization, but not so quickly.

An average day for a Moldovan in a village may include: milking the cow, taking milk to the dairy, walking the cow to the field to eat, feeding chickens, goats or geese, gathering wood or other fuel for the winter, and tending to the garden.

They may also repair tools, clothing or their home, but they won't touch their lawn.

A Moldovan yard is beautiful. As in much of Europe, they call it the "garden" because that is where they grow food. Grass is something in the field that cows and goats eat, so you won't see a Moldovan mowing a lawn.

Families also grow crops near their village, in plots deeded to them after the breakup of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s.

While responding to the survey

below, many people noted that they work more hours during the spring and summer, as they build their gardens and grow their crops.

This is all a part of subsistence living, or living "off the grid," which is in contrast to the lives of people in more developed countries (and many Moldovans — mostly in the cities) where specialization has made work

daycare fees, etc. Few people dine out often, here, and leisure sports are nearly nonexistent.

During five decades under communism, (1940s-1980s) when all men and women were forced to work, people didn't have to enjoy their jobs, they just had to do their jobs. The reward was a paycheck, the satisfaction that good labor brings, and being a good citizen.

This is in contrast to the U.S. today, where love for one's career is becoming a priority.

A pension program is in place here, but with few other social welfare programs, the only option often is work.

Moldovans are used to working all day, and leisure time is rare. There are no

golf courses here, very little recreational boating, and only traces of what in the U.S. is a major industry: recreation and leisure.

With such an expansive and capable workforce, Moldova will surely grow its manufacturing industry, and through it all, hard work and the independence of self-sustainability are the basis of a beautiful life here.



Planning ahead — This man will chop every branch of the felled tree into short pieces, and stack it all for fuel through the winter, a common chore throughout Moldova.

more efficient, and people can earn enough money at a single job to pay for everything they need.

Moldovans live with far less money than Americans do. (GDP per capita in Moldova is about \$2,000, or roughly 4% of that in the U.S.) They can do this because of what they do not have. Most do not have mortgage payments, or car payments, or insurance premiums, large property tax bills, big grocery bills, subscriptions,



Rîșcani Raionul President Iurie Urzica, left, escorts Moldova Prime Minister Pavel Filip into the council building Jan. 26 for a meeting with mayors.

Prime Minister visits raion

Moldova Prime Minister Pavel Filip visited Rîșcani Jan. 26, speaking to mayors and other invited guests at the raion council offices in the city of Rîșcani, and then travelling to Costești to review recent repairs made on

the hydroelectric dam on the Prut River.

The prime minister is officially the head of government in this republic, and is appointed by the president, who is elected by the people, and is the head of state.



New Christmas — Dancers from the village of Corlăteni, dressed as soldiers and led by a horseman, perform at a "new" Christmas celebration Dec. 25 in Rîșcani. Legend is that horses swallowed all evil enemies during important battles. Photos: Click

Winter is festive in Moldova!

Are they transitioning from the "Old" to the "New," or are Moldovans just enjoying a beautiful way to celebrate two beautiful holidays by magically making four (and adding a fifth)?

In the West, Christmas is celebrated mostly on December 25, but the traditional holiday in Moldova is 12 days later, on January 7. Then, people who like to celebrate the new year on the Julian Calendar do so 14 days after those on the Gregorian Calendar.

Most Moldovans do not

celebrate Christmas or New Year nearly as enthusiastically as do Americans, but they recognize all four days.

Then, on January 20, Moldovans and other Russian Orthodox Christians

celebrate the baptism of Jesus Christ with outdoor baptisms and blessing of water.

I have not

focus on gift-giving or elaborate parties, but rather, more community celebrations for all ages, including outdoor concerts, children's games, and dancing in the street.



A baptism pool, cut into lake ice in the shape of a Russian Orthodox cross.

JOKE OF THE MONTH

Did you hear about the man who was fired because, while on a bus, he gave his seat to a blind man? He was the bus driver.

"There are three things I can watch all day: waves on the ocean, a campfire, and someone else working."

MOLDOVAN OF THE MONTH

The Moldovan of the month for February is the average worker, who braves the cold, the heat, and the rigors of the job to build or sell a product or serve the people.



THE WORKER

Why put salt all over the ground?

People put salt on their foods, but on their roads? "Rock salt" is used around the world this time of year to manage ice on roads and sidewalks. so it can easily be removed or



Rock salt crystals

will melt more easily.

Unfortunately, this natural resource is not abundant in Moldova, so here, we have to walk carefully until ice melts naturally.

Moldovans have developed strategies for walking on ice, such as holding hands with friends, or walking arm-in-arm.

But it is also a good thing that salt is not used on roads here, as it makes vehicles rust more quickly.



Post offices offer more than just mail

In the U.S., mail can be delivered or picked up from every home, office or P.O. Box six days a week, and Americans average 50 pieces of mail each month.

Post offices are in every city and in most villages in Moldova, but there is very little home delivery, and no "junk" mail. Utility companies hire couriers to deliver bills, tucking them into doors or gates.

Commerce has suffered here with this system, as businesses are unable to advertise through the mail, and are less able to sell products through the mail.

When you visit a post office

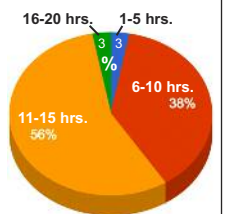
here, you can buy soap, magazines, or a few other products, and you'll wait in line with people picking up their mail, as if everyone has a P.O. box, but without the box.

The Moldova postal system has little competition for package delivery, as UPS and FedEx serve mostly the large cities.

I have hardly missed my six-days-a-week mail delivery, so with "snail mail" losing popularity in the U.S., and with the USPS looking for other forms of revenue (selling soap, maybe?) perhaps Moldova is just ahead of its time?

100 People

I asked 100 people how many hours they worked each day, at their jobs, and in their homes and gardens. More than half said they work more than 11 hours, and more than a third said they work 6-10 hours.



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