

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

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

June, 2017

Free of charge, free of politics, free of religion, free of advertising, free of SPAM, compliments of the U.S.A...



## Agriculture grows Moldovan economy

All life springs from the soil beneath us, and Moldovans have some of the richest soil on the planet. "Chernozem" is a very fertile, dark-black soil that will grow most anything, and it is all over this country.

Above that soil is a hardworking, skilled workforce who for generations have tilled this soil and toiled endlessly to grow crops to feed their families. Add to this a mild climate and a central location for distribution, and it's no wonder that agriculture and food processing make up 40 percent of Moldova's GDP, and 45 percent of its exports, to more than 70 countries.

The Moldova Investment and Export Promotion Organization (MIEPO) notes that Moldova has seven Free Economic Zones with tax breaks and free-trade agreements offering duty-free trade to a total of 880 million people.

About 75 percent of Moldovan land is used for agriculture, which is the highest rate in Europe, and nearly twice the rate of the U.S., at **40 percent**.

Moldovans' work ethic was strengthened during the Soviet occupation, when everyone was required to work or study, and land was used for collective farms. A spirit of cooperation and dedication to labor built a very productive work force.

After the Soviet Union broke up in the early 1990s, land was privatized, giving each family about 4-6 acres. But this created a patchwork of very small farms that are terribly inefficient with modern machinery.

Over the past two decades, that patchwork has eroded, through transfers of land, sharecropping, farm associations and service co-operatives. This has improved efficiency, but poor access to credit and crop insurance still make large-scale farming difficult.



Sunflowers are everywhere in Moldova, on more than 500,000 acres, including 26,440 acres in Rîșcani.

## Cows mean cash for Moldovan families

Moldovans have an efficient production chain for milk and dairy products that allows easy entry in trade for hard work.

There is no dairy industry where I lived in America, as all the small farms had given way to large ones near dairy processors.

But here in Moldova, thousands of fami-

amount they bring is recorded, and they are paid each month, (about 40 cents per gallon.)

Some people earn money by outfitting their horse carts or vans with large containers and carrying milk to the collection stations for people.

The cows must be fed each day, and in summer, this usually means walking them to a field and leaving them for several hours. A rope or chain attached to a stake in the ground keeps them from roaming.

People organize into groups and share the feeding part, with each family volunteering certain days each month. Mothers, fathers, grandparents and children all participate, herding dozens of cows from homes in the village to large fields, tending to them for several hours and returning them home in the evening. Numbered ear tags and each cow's instincts help get them back home again.

When a cow is ready to "retire," the family can really cash in by selling their old milk machine for its meat.



A boy coaxes his cow onto a field.

lies own cows, earning a steady income and a large bonus when it is time to sell.

Here is an average day in the life of a Moldovan family with a cow: First, someone will milk the cow, usually before sunrise, (except in the summer when it is light before 5 a.m.) They may take a little milk for their family, and put the rest in a pail or jug, which they will carry by hand, cart, sled, or wagon to a nearby collection station, usually run by someone in their community. The

## Moldova Beautiful

Moldova is a beautiful country, with lovely landscapes of forests, lakes, rivers and farmland with few buildings in sight. Is this by accident? No, it's all by design.

(Moldova is so bereft of crime, and is so beautiful, that I haven't decided whether the entire country is just one big gated community or a large national park.)

Two laws help keep this land so undeveloped. One, clearly made centuries ago, is that buildings are not allowed on farmland outside of villages or cities. One could locate the entire population of the country on a map, just by circling every city and village. So, traveling through Moldova, as you leave a community, all you see are beautiful forests and farmland until you reach the next community. This is great for the traveler, but perhaps not so



This land in Duruitoarea Noua is like a park.

good for people who would like to live, as Americans say; "out in the country."

This does not appear to be a regional or European thing, as houses line rural roads in Romania and other countries I have visited.

Another beautiful thing about Moldova is that land around bodies of water is owned by the government. So, everywhere you see a lake, pond or river, you will not see a single home. In America, lakes and rivers are lousy with houses, docks and boats, and that is great for people who live there, but not so much for everyone else.

Other reasons few homes are built near water may be little control of water levels, and lack of flood insurance.

There are exceptions to these rules, but I haven't seen many. Sometimes (rarely) a farmer will build a makeshift shelter in the field for workers to relax, or sleep at night.

I have enjoyed the scenery here for two years, but I didn't really appreciate it until a Moldovan explained the rules to me. Now, when I walk around a lake here and it resembles a public park, I marvel at the accomplishment. I relax and breathe deep and enjoy the beautiful scenery of beautiful Moldova.

100 People



I asked 100 Moldovans which country they thought donated the most aid to Moldova. About one-third believe Romania gives the most aid, followed closely by Russia. One-out-of-five people each responded with either Germany or the U.S.

According to the OECD, in 2014-15, the EU gave the most aid, (\$134.8 million USD,) but the largest single-country donor was the U.S., (\$108.6 million.) Romania was second, (\$40.3 million,) followed by Japan, (\$31.7 million.) Considering population, however, each Romanian donates about \$2, much more than an American's 34 cents. Russia gives very little aid to Moldova, the FPRI reports, and is not on the list of Top-10 donors.

June		
	1st	30th
Day length	15:38 hrs.	15:50 hrs.
Sunrise	5:13 am	5:12 am
Sunset	8:52 pm	9:03 pm
Full Moon	9th	
Avg. Temp.	67°F	
Rainfall	3.5 inches	
<b>Holidays &amp; Special Days</b>		
1 - International Children's Day		
5 - World Environment Day		
21 - June Solstice		

Photographs and Videos, at:  
[www.Markstrail.com](http://www.Markstrail.com)

**Imagini**  
RÎȘCANI

This month: Balanul Nou and Duruitoarea Noua.  
Photos: [Click](#)

**JOKE OF THE MONTH**

**Question:** What did the farmer say when he lost his tractor?

**Answer:** "Where's my tractor?" \*

\* Moldovans: This joke is funny because it is not funny, like our "Why did the chicken cross the road?" joke. American humor!

"Anything can be done in three ways: Correctly, incorrectly or Moldovan."  
A Moldovan