

Rob & Gayle in Romania this Summer

1. Rob and Gayle in Alba Iulia

Hi! After leaving our house in Teddington at 4.30am the 2 and a bit hours flight from the very crowded Luton airport to Cluj, in Northern Romania, on a pink, purple and white coloured plane flown by a company called Wizzair, was thankfully uneventful. (By the way, the I on the Wizz is upside down - very creative and fills you with confidence!) Then we passed three bad accidents, two involving trucks, in the 2 hour drive south to Alba Iulia. Do pray for safe travels on the usually busy, sometimes dodgy, occasional crazy driver, roads in this country.



We head off north again this morning (Saturday) to the campsite near Cluj with some of the leaders to set up for the first camp which begins on Monday. We have 3 camps in a row, two at this campsite with another (more like a holiday club) in a village near Alba in between. I expect that internet access will be somewhat problematic at the camp site. In other words, don't expect to hear from us for a week, but your prayer for us all during these weeks is vital!



I've attached 3 pics - 2 of the open air meeting in Leicester Square a week ago, and 1 of our staff here in Alba. Many of you prayed for Traian and Lidia during the difficult circumstances of the birth of Natan, but all is now well and it was great to see them all! The reason we are here at this time is because Lidia, an incredibly gifted, creative and talented lady, who designed the program of the camps and is usually heavily involved, will be at home in Alba with the baby. Do pray for her, too.



Many blessings!
Rob and Gayle

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2 Rob and Gayle at Somesu Rece

Hi! It was a good time at the kids' camp finished yesterday (Saturday) at Somesu Rece deep in the hills of Transylvania. There were nearly 60 kids at the camp with 17 responding to a call for first-time commitment and many others on subsequent nights making decisions to follow Christ more closely. PTL!

There was an incredible amount of work done in preparation before the camp for both the input ("Something from Nothing"... see the attached pic... the story of Moses from his birth to the crossing of the Red Sea) and because absolutely everything has to be carried up to the campsite from toilet paper to bed sheets. Traian and Delia (another of the staff here - a pint-sized bundle of energy, and a great artist who combined painted backdrop with flannelgraph figures... see pic) did a fantastic job in leadership. Rob did a number of the



stories (see pic - just love that lingo!) and led the leaders' devotion each morning, whilst Gayle's help during craft and numerous other activities was appreciated, and Chloe the clown proved to be a hit on the final night!

The campsite is somewhat rustic, but in a beautiful gorge and was quite cool at times in those mountains. It rained quite a bit but this did not stop any of the planned activities. The rooms, basically in the attic of an old hay barn, were packed with the smaller kids 2 to a mattress on the floor, and even in the ladies leaders' room, 8 to 5 mattresses joined together on the floor. I've attached a pic of the longdrop loos, the 2 doors on the left for the girls; the 1 on the right and a urinal on the far right for the boys. It was a bit of a challenge by the end of the week with 71 people in total using the place! By the way, turned out only 4 of the kids had head lice, so not everybody had to be de-bugged!

We're now back in Alba Iulia for an afternoon kids 'camp' at a village this week, starting tomorrow, then back north next week to the campsite for the teens version of the same thing. This arvo Rob will have a brief input in Traian and Lidia's home church as we present a report of the camp with some of the kids singing the theme song.



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3 Rob and Gayle at Santimbru



Hi again. The first day of the afternoon 'camp' at Santimbru had 39 kids attend, all but 1 are gypsies. It was a bit sad to turn away those who are younger than 6, but the venue couldn't hold any more and the teaching is aimed at the older kids in any case. Chloe the clown, and Andreea (yes, double e - local teen trained by Gayle) did a great job rounding up lots of kids from the small village. It was a bit like the Pied Piper leading all the kids to the meeting! We basically kept them under control for the whole meeting, but it is certainly a challenge with these kids. What a needy place!

The Alba Iulia teens did a great job in setting up, leading small groups, the drama and helping out in various other ways.

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4 Rob and Gayle still at Santimbru

The afternoon holiday club continues Mon - Fri this week and is going well. More older children were there yesterday and not only do the kids turn up every day but often a few parents and grandparents and random adults, some of them in various states of inebriation. When we're outside for games there's as many spectators as there are kids, all of them cheering and calling out various instructions. And some of them, like one grandmother yesterday, get actively involved in the games!

There's some funny moments. Maybe these kids don't understand the concept of a relay race, but after one game was explained and demonstrated, when the whistle was blown for the first person to start, nearly every kid in the 4 lines of teams started at the same time! And yesterday, with a large plastic spoon and plastic egg (that comes apart if it falls and the plastic yoke inside falls out) since winning is a big deal and cheating seems to be a way of life, many of the kids just hold the egg onto the spoon and run as fast as they can despite repeated attempts to get them to do it properly. These gypsy kids are a delightful handful!

There's some sad moments. The general state of some of the kids' clothing, washing habits and health (e.g. one young guy's teeth!) is poor. There's lots of very young mums. There seems to be no concern at all for the general appearance of the homes and of the village, with rubbish and weeds in abundance.

Our part time staff member, Delia, runs a weekly club here during the school terms. Gotta admire her hard work and inner spirit as she hangs in here. Although not without its challenges, it's an incredible joy and privilege for us to be part of it for a while, bringing the liberating truth of the Gospel to these needy people.

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5 Last from Santimbru

Well, it's warming up here and forecast to be in the high 30's for the start of the teens camp coming up. Could be a bit tough in those loos! But the water games that featured on only one afternoon at the first camp with kids 'cos it was coolish, may be popular! Apparently everybody at the teens camp, and we mean everybody... cooks, leaders, foreign guests... all get 'baptised' before the week is out in the large, blow-up plastic pool that we took up before the first camp.

We head up there first thing tomorrow (Sunday) morning as there is a bit less work to do in preparation than before the first camp, when a heap of cleaning, mowing, weeding, etc needed doing. The 46 teens arrive Monday mid morning. We leave the camp on Thursday evening for an overnight train trip to Vienna, then a fast train for 1 and a half hours on to Linz, where we have the first of two 4-day Reach The City training and outreaches.

The kids' 'camp' at Santimbru finished very well. The picture shows Gayle leading a revision quiz, translated by Simona, one of the great bunch of Alba teens. After answering a question correctly, the kid chooses from a bag the end of a piece of wool which are of different lengths. They are then all tied together by the group leaders to see which is the longest.

Response at Santimbru was sought by getting the kids to write why they would choose Jesus on a piece of paper. Answers varied from nothing at all, to "My name is Ema", to "I know I've done wrong and I'm sorry. Please forgive me." More rejoicing in heaven!

We'll send our next update from Linz.



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6 Rob and Gayle in Linz

Hi! The teen camp continues at Somesu Rece, where we saw some good response to a call for salvation on Wednesday night. More PTL! Pray for them as they continue on until Sunday. Attached a picture from Santimbru - they weren't all shabbily dressed... this little cutie looked a million dollars one day.

On Thursday night we had a very hot, though relatively comfortable on a bunk bed, overnight train trip with 4 other people in a small 6 berth compartment. One couple came in at 2am from the train restaurant, waking us all and getting a long and loud mouthful of abuse, mainly in English, from the Romanian woman on the bottom bunk. Then the guy snored a bit! Then you are wakened by the passport folks leaving Romania, again a short time later entering Hungary; and later leaving Hungary, then entering Austria. So, not the best night's sleep of our lives. This was followed by the train from Vienna to Linz which was just under 2 hours with nice views, arriving about 11.30am.

Here in Linz the training started at 3.00pm with the basics of how to run an open air meeting, then we went and did it for 2 hours from 5.00 -7.00pm with those of us who were more experienced doing the preaching. We had some good crowds, especially for the intros, but managed to hold some folk right through the message. The first mention of sin clears some and the cross clears others, but there were some very interesting conversations afterwards. We've got 3 full days of training and outreach here, then we move on to Vienna on Tuesday.

We're staying in a very nice apartment, sharing with Greg Burton from NZ. Gotta say it's a step or two up from the longdrops at the camp! ;-)

Stefan, our Austrian OAC Director, shared some great verses as our team devotion this morning. Prov 10

"The mouth of the righteous...

...is a fountain of life" (v11)

...is as choice silver" (v20)

...feeds (or refreshes) many" (v21)

...flows with wisdom" (v31)

...brings forth what is acceptable" (v 32) In the German Bible this means "proclaim grace." That's why we're here! May it be true of you wherever you are.

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7 Rob and Gayle back in Alba

Hi! Thanks for praying about our tiredness. Feeling good now and really looking forward to what God is going to do over these 2 weeks here in Alba Iulia.

Picture 1 shows the old city wall of Alba in a star shape. Our open air meetings are held in the park just outside the wall near the church at 1 in the picture. They are spending lots of EU money to rebuild the walls and have a walk right round them, which we've done. They are also doing up the entire old city, buildings, cobblestone streets, etc, as a tourist attraction.



Our first afternoon on Monday we met a young lady who sells icecream from a small van in the park where we do the outreaches. Her English is pretty good so we shared briefly with her why we were in Alba. The next two afternoons Dave and Greg (two other guys from down under who are here with us) went back and

shared the Gospel with her while enjoying her icecream! She is very open but sees no need of a Saviour yet. She'll hear more 'cos the guys like icecream (and they like sharing the Gospel).

Our first night in the park Tuesday went well. Smallish crowds 'cos a coolish weekday night, but lots of the local teens were there so it seemed like a good crowd. A group of older youth from the Baptist Church did a good drama beforehand. There were some meaningful conversations afterwards, including with one of the cops assigned to us. There are always 2 cops as we have to get permission to hold these programs and the cops want to make sure the crowd behaves. Pic 2 shows me at work with Traian as usual. Thank God for him! The crowd is back a bit from the board as there had to be room for the drama beforehand.



Wednesday night we were here in the OAC base for a youth night. Several of the committed younguns brought their unsaved friends and some of them were very moved by the message, (pic 3) so we're told, and plan to come back to some of the training. This morning I dealt with handling difficult questions, so that was good for the friends to hear, too. Pray for fruit!



Tonight it is back out into the open air at the city centre park. It's a much warmer day so it should be a good night.

Rob and Gayle

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8 Rob and Gayle - early Sunday morning in Alba

G'day again from Alba! Thursday night in the park (attached pics) was a good night; Friday night we missed our first meeting of the summer due to steady rain all day and evening; Saturday less folks than usual in the park as it was coolish, but still some great talks went on after people stayed for the whole program and listened attentively to the Gospel.



A typical night here this year begins with a drama at 8.30pm (about 5 minutes), then the sketchboard preaching with normal paint as it is still light (about 15-20 minutes with the translation). Then about 30 minutes of one-to-one, or to small groups. Some talks continue as the second program begins about 9.20pm with another drama. The second message is with the black light and flourescent paint. Our permit to hold the meeting ends at 10pm, but one-to-one or Greg and his flip chart (see below) often continues well beyond that.



The pics:

1. Rob and Traian preaching the cross, the crux of our message! I'm painting over the word pacat (sin). Greg's flip chart (turned up so the pictures can't be seen) is in the background.
2. Gayle witnessing 1-to-1. Sometimes for us English speakers it is 2-to-1 with a translator (in this case the tall guy) but many people, especially the young, speak some English. Traian, and others, in the background also sharing with small groups.
3. Dave's Thursday night flourescent message. Can you recognise a famous, probably the most famous, Bible verse? The title is "The best



love." It begins with the heart (love) in the top right. The word credo is believe. It finishes with everlasting life in the top left.

4. Greg, from New Zealand, has brought his flip chart. It has a number of pictures that are shared one at a time and is Greg's version of Ray Comfort's "The Good Person Test." This particular sheet is the ninth commandment. Can you see the word (as well as the face)? Tilt your head a little to the right. Sorena, the girl in the army fatigues (for the drama) is translating for Greg.



Rob and Gayle

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9 Late Tuesday in Alba Iulia

Sunday night in the park went well. We have had a few folks come for more than one meeting. One staunchly Orthodox guy that Greg spoke to on Saturday, and prayed for because he had a health issue, came back on Sunday even before the program began saying that he "felt different." Then a young couple, Calin and Onea (pronounced like the number: one-a) heard Rob preach the first message on Sunday night, had a long talk with Traian afterwards, then came back to hear Dave preach and stayed because they had more questions. Gayle and I shared with them – they are searching!



Our day off on Monday was great. Just over 2 hours in the van brought us to Sighisoara and the site of a large medieval castle, a whole village within the walls. Pic 1 shows Rob and Dave in one of the entrances - on our way out actually. One of the old homes inside this place was once lived in during the mid 1400's by the ruler of that part of Romania at the time. We are in Transylvania, and it is a castle, so finally I've seen some Dracula souvenirs for tourists. The origin of it all has nothing whatsoever to do with vampires. This ruler, whose



name was Vlad, was a rather nasty piece of work who was called Tesel, which means 'stick' because of his propensity for impaling people for the pettiest of crimes. He was also called Dracul (no 'a', it means 'devil') because of all the blood that he spilled. So there you go, no vampires, but there really was a Dracul! If you want to see some great photos of the village, and even of Vlad, go to Dave Knight's Facebook page... www.facebook.com/daveknightaus ... he's in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, but not right at the moment!

Today (Tuesday) we are back to the routine of morning trainings with the local youth here. A more practical emphasis this week with smaller groups on the object lessons, the sketchboard, and the flip chart. Then this afternoon we had two kids' programs in a row. One in a cow paddock outside a small village about 45 minutes away called Daia. In pic 2 Chloe and Delia (opposite end of the line to Chloe) are teaching a memory verse. The other program was after that here at the OAC base in Alba. Both good opportunities.

Tomorrow more morning/early arvo training, then we're back to Daia for part 2, then an evening youth outreach here at the OAC base. From Thursday it is back to the day trainings and evening open airs in the city centre.

Rob and Gayle

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10 Early Friday afternoon in Alba

Hi! Gayle is busy training a few young ladies in balloon modelling as I type. One is Andreea (yes, double e) a great girl who has been a part of the earlier camps and these 2 weeks of outreach. Gayle has trained her in clowning (she's called Andy when she's in clown - see pic 1: on the way to the second kids' program at Daia on Wednesday arvo where we had many more kids than the previous day). The second pic shows little Natan (Traian and Lidia's baby) with one of Gayle's "hopping mice" which can be made to jump out of your hand when you pull its tail. We say we have big jumping mice in Australia - we call them kangaroos.



The Wednesday night teens program went well with a challenge about "consequences" in a message from Dave. I did a trick on the same theme as an intro.



Last night (Thursday) we had our best crowd yet this year. The drama team has gone off to a church camp, so Dave drew the crowd with a trick or two. I returned the favour for him later. In the first meeting most stayed for my preaching and except for a drunk guy near the beginning, listened attentively. The response at the end was amazing with many coming forward to take a tract. Usually we only get a very few, sometimes none, actually responding to the invitation, but of course, the team approach listeners anyway. Never quite sure what it means when someone comes forward, and some were kids just coming to get something for free, but it was great to see! Exciting stuff! In addition to this, Greg talked to a small group of 3 men, with his translator and his flip chart, for well over an hour. (Pic 3)



We have a couple more nights of this - please pray for great God moments. Also pray for us to be a great encouragement for Traian and Lidia and Delia in our final few days here and as we supply them with some feedback. And, whilst I'm asking for prayer, think also of a small team from the U.S. led by OAC staff man Paul Adams, in Copenhagen, Denmark right now doing the same thing we're doing, with local staff man, Torben.

Rob and Gayle

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11 Last from Rob and Gayle in Alba Iulia

Hi! Hope all is well!

It's with mixed feelings that we come to the end of our time here. Glad to be heading off on a holiday, glad to be closer to our time of arriving home (and seeing the grandkids!) but sad to finish our great time of outreach here and especially sad to be leaving our great friends here. Couldn't resist including a pic of Natan wearing a shirt we brought him from home.

Friday night was a very good night in the park with pretty good crowds. I preached on "Things that will kill you in Australia." (Pic 2 - apologies to Tasmanians.) Snakes, spiders, crocs, sharks, the desert,



box jellyfish, blue ringed octopus, stonefish and SIN! The latter kills people in Romania, too! Traian had fun translating some of those dangers. I did warn him beforehand so he had some time to prepare. Many good conversations after the preaching and throughout the night with Greg, and a couple of young guys here that's he's trained, on his flip chart.

Last night (Saturday - pic 3) was the warmest night since we've been here and maybe because of that our biggest crowd. I counted near the beginning of the first message (Dave on "Are You Prepared?") and there were over 80 not counting our team. 15 minutes or so later as Dave came to an end there were still 50. One of the responses to his message was from 3 young ladies (Emma, Christina, Sonia, the latter two in their teens) who are cousins and until very recently lived in 3 different countries (Romania, Italy, Spain). Their English was pretty good so Dave and Gayle had a good long talk with them. They stayed for the second, blacklight message (Rob on "Bill's Interview" - he thought he had got his job test all wrong, but actually got it right... we need to know we've got it wrong (sin) so that we can get it right with God). Then another conversation with them led to them leaving with literature and the promise of praying for salvation at their home. The eldest young lady knows Traian (I thought she was "vaguely familiar") and that he has a youth group, so hopefully will get her cousins involved in that. Did I say "exciting stuff" in my last email?!

There were other good positive responses after both messages, too. Traian had a very long talk with a guy we've seen on a few nights. He's a youngish pretty self satisfied and well educated Orthodox guy with Jehovahs Witnesses tendencies - go figure! So, you get all sorts out on the street, even on this one night the huge contrast of this guy and the soft-hearted cousins.

This evening I preach at the Baptist Church, followed by a little party for Delia's birthday tomorrow. Dave and Greg catch the overnight train back to Vienna leaving at 10.30pm while Gayle and I have to wake at 2am for Traian to drive us to Cluj for a 6am flight to London Luton.

Thanks so much for being with us throughout this long ministry trip.
Maybe you'll even get an update of our fun in Scotland!

Love,
Rob and Gayle

