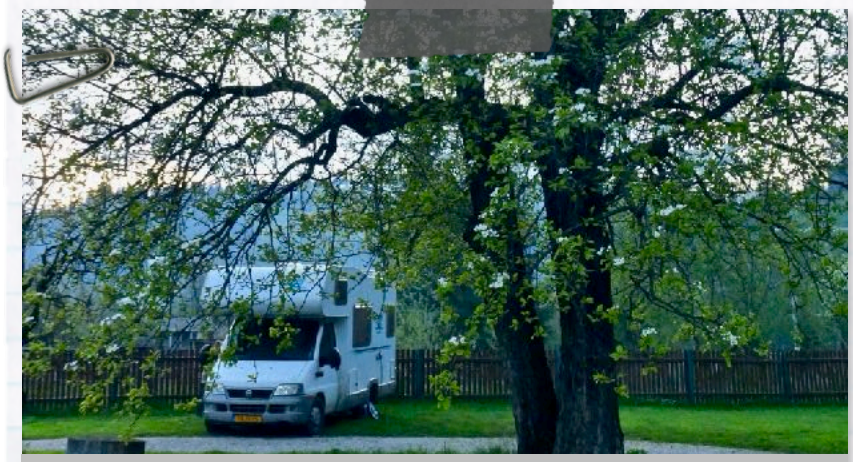
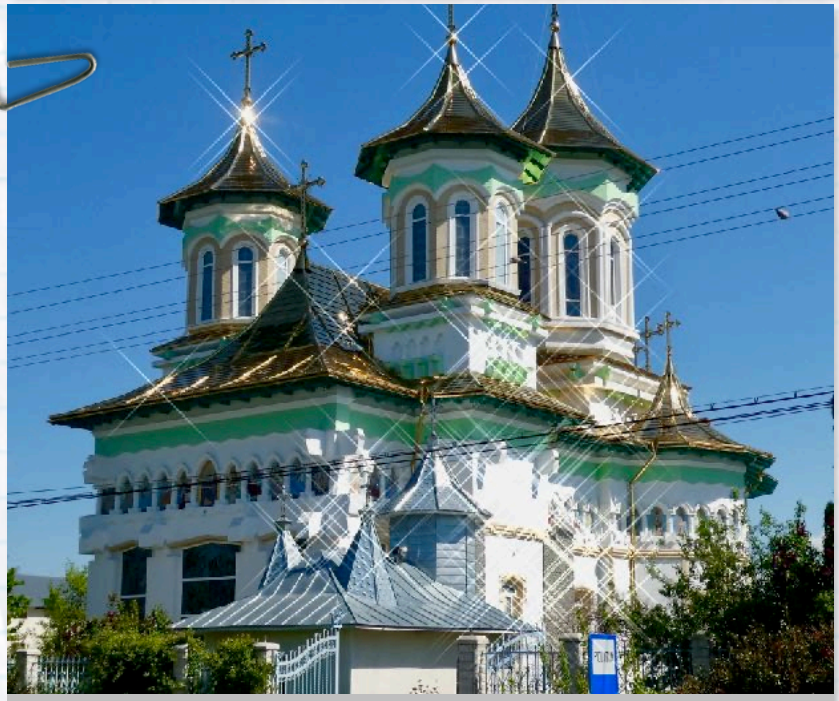
ROMANIA



The mother tree that produced the pear for the "pear spirit



Church spires clad in gold or silver - either way they sparkle.

Heading South

What a beautiful day. We had always intended to go south after seeing Bucovina, but we have skewed the direction a bit to arrive at a camp site that also has a caravan maintenance business attached to it. Our last camping place owner organised for us to met up with "Nicoli" and have a new battery installed. It was a 250km trip that took nearly 5 hours. Can you believe that! Everywhere we go in Romania it takes about twice the time it would at home. It is a matter of the quality of the roads, the fact that a lot of the roads pass through built-up areas where the speed limit can drop to 30km per hour and the fact that we are driving a large van.

Despite the distance the trip was very enjoyable. We love seeing the country, the buildings and the people as we saunter by. The mountains were left behind us and we travelled to the east of the Carpathians. The land flattened out and the country was less densely settled. Here, as in other parts of the country, the

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BEWARE Had us fooled too. Could see the police car from a long distance so everyone slowed down only to realise it was only a cardboard car. Lol.

CARAVAN FOOD Full 3 course service with pear spirit, red wine, entree (borscht beetroot soup), main course with meat and then sweets. All traditional fare.

PHOTO? Father and son stopped when they realised we were taking photos of them and their rig. The boy knew exactly how to ask for money. We paid the son.

Spirits of Romania ……. both pear and prune.

towns and villages are linear in nature in that all the properties hug the main road. Many have narrow plots of land out the back. However in this region, these "plots' are much larger. There is also more agriculture on a bigger scale. We even saw a few tractors! Mind you, the horses and carts still appeared in great numbers.

We happened to be stopped and out of our van admiring the countryside when a cart passed so we starting snapping photos. The driver (and his son the passenger) stopped to commune with us and set up some poses for us to take some snaps. Their horses were adorned with coloured strips of material and their cart was packed with iron scraps (iron for the junk yard I suggest). They introduced themselves as "Romanie". After a few photos the young boy indicated that we should give him something. We gave him some money and then his father (we assumed) also asked for some money. We politely declined and we parted amicably. The father was very disappointed nevertheless.

We arrived at the camping site at about 2pm and Nicoli indicated that he would be able to replace the battery in the morning. That gave us a great opportunity to wash the van and our linen and to generally tidy up.

Later that evening Nicoli paid us a visit. He bought with him his prune "drink" - 50% proof spirit alcoholic version of prune juice!! Of course we had to drink it and pretend that it tasted beautiful. Like all alchohol it was not to our taste. It just so happened that last night we had the same experience with our previous camp owner who presented us with his "pear" version. Maybe we might eventually get into the taste of Romanian spirit - that is if this is the custom in caravan parks in this country.

And so with clean sheets, clean undies and a sparkling clean van we settle in for the night. Life is good. We need more exercise but have not had an opportunity to go for a bike ride. Maybe tomorrow. Hopefully we will get a replacement battery so that we can confidently free camp in the future.