

Impressions of Iași

(David Hemsley, UK)



We heard that there was thick fog at the airport, and were lucky not to be diverted.

The plane dived down into the fog and the world outside disappeared. We were talking about food when suddenly the ground lept up towards us – but the plane landed as easily as if it had been a sunny day. Everyone applauded.

The people working in passport control were friendly. (Luton, take note!)



I was surprised about the road between city and airport – it looked like a country road, miles from anywhere.

But city and airport are so close – one minute you are in woods around the airport, the next minute you are almost in the city centre.



Straight into a traffic jam.

A problem in cities the world over.

At least the drivers seemed very patient. There was none of the pointless, angry hooting you get in some cities from drivers stuck in queues.

But trams ... mass public transport is the best way to combat increasing road traffic in a city.

Does Iași have plans to expand the tram network as the city expands?

A line out to the airport would remove the need for many car journeys each day.





The centre of the city is very impressive at night.

As a one-time city dweller, I felt quite at home.



Jumping forward a couple of days, I thought the city's Christmas lights were spectacular.

In the daylight, and starting on the walk to the college ...

I admit my thoughts are now influenced by the notebook from Kaunas, but I also saw the contrasts: from brand new buildings and international businesses (the shopping centre, or Subway and Lego); to Communist era concrete towers and flats; to much older city buildings (some well looked after, but many in need of care); to delightful art and carvings on buildings; to buildings that seemed out of place entirely. And everything linked by what seemed like miles of wires, cables and pipes.

But for me this is normal for a city – it is this way because the people living in it are constantly making and remaking their environment; generation after generation.

And it felt to me, above all, like a European city, because there was so much familiar to me from British, Dutch, French, German cities. But laid over all that there was something quite *unlike* cities in those four countries – the clothing styles of the older people, the colour of the buildings (little or no red brick or exposed stone), the massive flats, the trams being from an older generation than the ones you can now find in many cities, for instance. Yes, trams again! I don't know if what I note here can be useful for future tourism, but it's a fascinating and exhilarating city.

My photos of some of these contrasts are in the pages below ...



Old trams and historical streets.



Beautiful details on buildings.



More fine details.



Miles of cables: practical, but not beautiful.



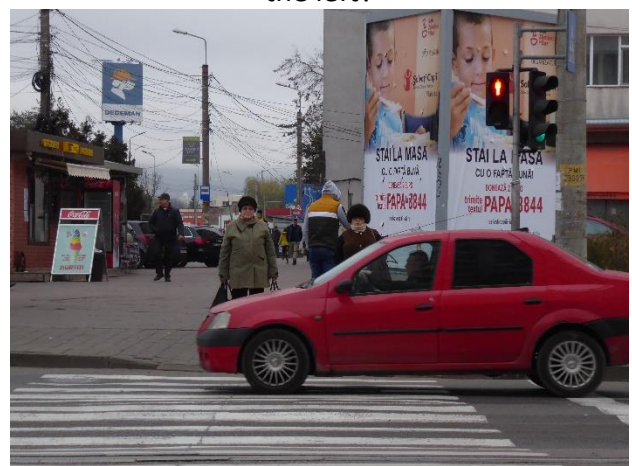
Old and new together – commercial and spiritual.



Almost in the middle of the city – a building that looked abandoned. Is it worth saving or will it make way for an office block like in the photo on the left?



As a native English speaker, I'm often surprised how much English is used across the world to sell things. Iași is no exception



Pedestrian crossings everywhere – people will wait patiently until the lights change, unlike in the UK.



I didn't see much wall art, but this is a striking painting.



On the edge of the city centre, there were fine old houses, but many showed a lack of maintenance, like this one. Houses like this could be part of a tourist trail – showing the work of the best local architects.



I love the idea of scenes in tram/bus stops. Could there be more – make a trail?
Is the idea that people should take selfies and put a picture on social media?



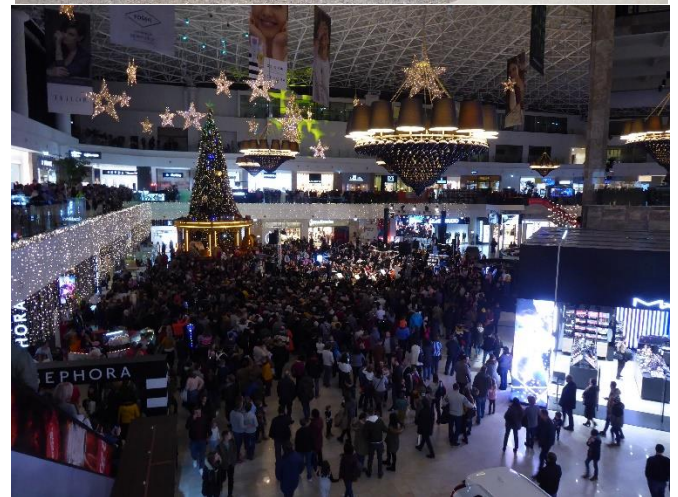
I loved seeing some houses decorated with plants and squashes/pumpkins.



A very understated historical building in the centre of town 😊



I thought at first that it is a pity there is a very busy, wide road between the walk along Bulevardul Ștefan cel Mare și Sfânt, which stops you walking straight up. *But*, waiting at the crossing does make you stop and look at the building, rather than looking at your feet!



Two commercial contrasts. In the short time I was here, the Piața Agroalimentară Păcurari was the only time I saw a place where people were selling their own produce.

The Palas Mall has many international shops – but I could have been in Birmingham or Paris – the Christmas music was from Bing Crosby and other English-language songs.

I've never seen a modern shopping centre with a performance area – that's a great idea.



The Romanian tower blocks I saw have very interesting details: curved windows, strange fin-like protrusions and the occasional artwork. There are obviously problems with the concrete decaying, and wires and cables are everywhere, but maybe these buildings could become an urban architecture trail?



A very impressive wall painting in the college.



Contrasting wall painting – new to go with the old (or not-so-old) on the left.

Wall art shows care for the surroundings.

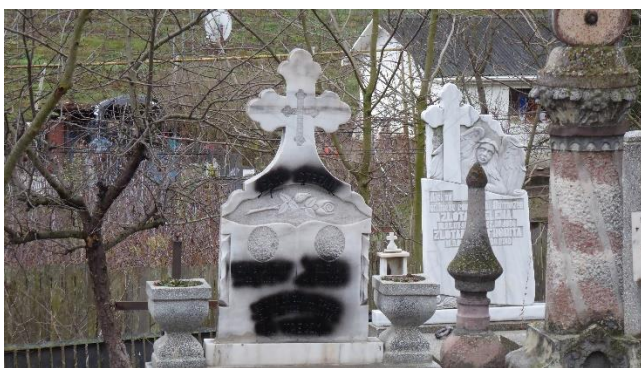


But on the hill at Repedea, many visitors show a lack of care of their surroundings. A waste bin might help here? (A private room might help other visitors!)



But in the park at the bottom of the botanic gardens, this waste bin was neglected and burnt out/rusting. (Also a problem in the UK.)

I don't have a good answer!

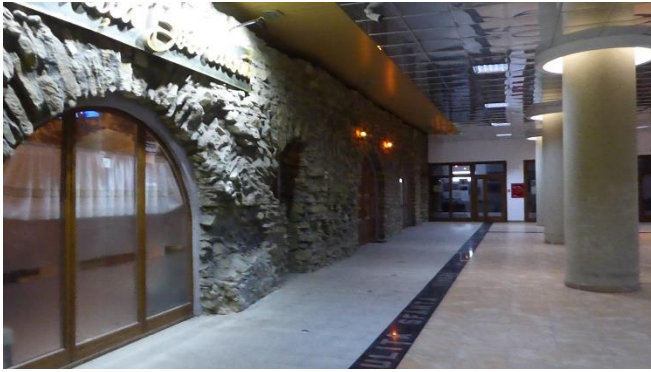


Why?
(Mănăstirea Copou)



The first rule of Tram Club ...

I hadn't heard of this club. Have they linked up with any other European tramway heritage organisations?



A city of many fascinating surprises, like these old ruins converted into a restaurant under a road junction.



Or this interesting artwork outside the botanical gardens.



Or this 1940s/1950s steam locomotive in the railway station yards next to the restored (?) water tower. But no access to the tower?



Tourist steam trains would draw some visitors,
along with the trams!