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“Learning to appreciate safe drinking, and so much more!”



Figure 1. Rasnov Citadel, Rasnov, Romania

For the most part, Americans have easy access to safe drinking water. Rarely do we have to be concerned with the possibility of contracting infectious diseases from just drinking water. We can simply turn the faucet on, fill up the cup with water (sometimes we filter it), and then drink it down. Most of us have heard about people living in developing countries who do not have access to clean water. We may even have knowledge of the scale and seriousness of this situation. However, we cannot fully understand just what it means to lack access to safe drinking water without experiencing it for ourselves, in some shape or form. Although I did not spend my summer in a third-world country, I got to learn first-hand the steps needed to treat water before the general public can consume it safely.

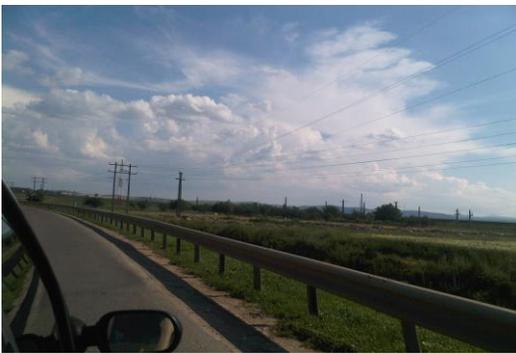


Figure 2. This is the typical scenery one would see going from one city to another.

I worked with researchers in the Environmental Health Center (EHC) at Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj Napoca, Romania. My Internship Mentor gave me a brief introduction on the water treatment process. We then visited two water treatment stations that provide clean water to the largest city in the county. We also planned out the collection methods for a water sampling study: how many and which cities would be targeted, how many water samples should be collected overall, and how many water samples were to be collected in one day. My colleague and I spent a total of four days going to nine different cities in Alba County, Romania collecting 31 water samples. I did not realize how much coordination and planning

are needed to conduct fieldwork like this. Frankly speaking, going into the field can be quite tiring. However, it was all worth the time and effort because I got to learn about water sampling and water treatment issues first-hand. I was even given the chance to use the different instruments and techniques myself. It was truly a unique experience!

To be honest, prior to this internship I took drinking water for granted. I knew that there are millions of people around the world who do not have access to safe water, but I did not understand the severity or complexity of this critical global health challenge. However, observing and learning about all the procedures required to treat water prior to human consumption has drastically changed my perception. It has made me realize just how precious clean water is and become more conscious about water usages, its sources, and processes. I am extremely grateful that I got the opportunity to complete this international internship. I will never forget all the things I learned, nor the wonderful people I met along the way.



Figure 3. A photo of us at the salt mine called Salina Turda. From left to right: Gabi, Denise, Olivier, me and Adrianna (Not in Picture)