

This past summer, from June 26 to July 26, 2018, I received the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to visit Romania on a CULP trip. Before this trip, Romania always seemed a distant, unknown place to me, like it wasn't real. I was pleasantly surprised by this little Eastern European gem. To begin with, my teammates included other cadets from universities across the United States. I genuinely enjoyed meeting them and getting to know them throughout the month we spent together. By the time we came back to the States, we shared countless memories and had formed life-long friendships. Furthermore, while I was in country, I stayed at the Nicolae Bălcescu Land Forces Academy in Sibiu. During the week, we trained alongside Romanian cadets as they conducted their version of our Advanced Camp, which included a week living in the mountains. The training was challenging, but my team members and I enjoyed it. Although the Romanians base their military doctrine on America's, they conduct training and operations differently. Further, they have limited resources and equipment. It was eye-opening and informative for me to see the way our allies operate in terms of strategy and tactics. Moreover, it was fun to hang out with the Romanian cadets. One day they taught us a traditional wedding dance and in exchange we taught them the Cotton Eyed Joe, which they loved learning. Finally, on the weekends, my team would go sight-seeing and immerse ourselves in Romania's fascinating culture and beautiful landscape. If I was given the chance, I would absolutely go on another CULP trip!

Picture: Two of my teammates and I after playing soccer with some Romanian cadets.

