

Press Release: Online Premiere of Documentary Film “A Small Country with a Big Heart”

After making its rounds in documentary film festivals in Europe, “A Small Country with a Big Heart” now has its [online premiere](#) for the world to see! This documentary tells the little known story of how Moldova’s rural guest houses and tourism sector immediately opened their doors and hearts to Ukrainian families fleeing the war and looking for safety. Through these stories from seven guest house hosts, we see the meaning of true hospitality.

See Moldovan Hospitality in Action Through This Documentary

Last year, Moldova, one of the smallest and least known countries in Europe, welcomed almost 800,000 Ukrainian refugees into their homes and hearts, despite the country’s small size of 2.6 million people and its limited resources. The international press and United Nations began to refer to Moldova as “a small country with a big heart” because of this heartfelt response.

This year, as we passed the one year anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the documentary film “[A Small Country with a Big Heart](#)” has its online premiere on Monday, 27 February, 2023. **We invite you to watch this 30-minute human interest documentary on the [Moldova Travel YouTube Channel](#).**



Told through the stories of seven hosts from five rural guest houses throughout Moldova, the documentary film explores the theme of what hospitality truly means and why they decided to open their guest houses to host Ukrainian refugees and provide safe refuge and a welcoming smile. They didn’t hesitate when they found themselves unexpectedly on the front line of a refugee and humanitarian crisis. Instead, they immediately opened their doors and hearts to host thousands of refugees from Ukraine, known in Moldova simply as guests.

This is the story of Moldovan hospitality and spirit. Genuine and for *everyone*, even in times of crisis.

Director: Daniela Donici, [Lucia Lupu](#) | **Image:** [Lucian Spătaru](#) | **Editing:** [Vlad Bolgarin](#) | **Sound:** Alexe Pupăzan | **Production:** [ANTRIM](#)

The Story Behind the Documentary

Filmed in spring 2022 as Ukrainian families were fleeing their homes and crossing into Moldova for safety, the documentary film “A Small Country with a Big Heart” shares this human interest story through interviews with eight hosts from five rural guest houses throughout Moldova who were hosting Ukrainian refugees.



Ana Statova from Gaguaz Sofrasi Guest House



Liuba Railean from Vila Roz Guest House



Olesea Cojucaru from Eco Resort Butuceni

The five guest houses featured in the film were not alone in their refugee support efforts. Moldova's small tourism and hospitality sector supported over 10,000 Ukrainians in the first weeks and months of the war. To help coordinate these tourism support efforts, ANTRIM and Moldova Travel used its social media and [website channels](#), normally used for destination marketing and promotion, to communicate refugee support services and connect those who needed help with guest houses, hotels and wineries providing accommodation, hot meals, transport and other assistance.

Daniela Donici, one of the directors, describes why it was so important for her to tell this story through a documentary: **“The film originated out of a need to tell the world what we have been through as neighbors of war and hosts of our Ukrainian neighbors.** It started after days of communication on the [Moldova Travel social media platforms](#), where we were communicating available accommodation and services for refugees. Later, I volunteered at the Palanca border with Ukraine where **I would meet refugees, hug them and simply tell them that they had arrived in Moldova and were safe.** After all this, one morning the idea for the documentary came to me.

For me, the film and its story was a way of coping with the fear of war by being there with the hosts, learning their stories, talking to the refugees, recording this moment. It felt like I had a meaning, a purpose in these absolutely uncertain times. In the course of filming, I also discovered that if I didn't tell the stories of the hosts, they wouldn't, out of modesty. As they say "we did what we had to do".



Sergiu Hanganu from Hanul lui Hanganu Guest House



Zaharia, Dan and Tatiana Arama from Casa Vehce

Lucia Lupu, documentary director, further explains: "At the time it was decided to film the documentary, the situation was still unstable. Everyone expected Moldova to be attacked. **We didn't have time to write a storyline, so we took the camera in our hands and went out into the field. That's the charm of this film. We made it because it was the right time.** While we were filming there were also some explosions in the Transnistrian region and we had no idea what we were going to capture in the shots. The protagonists of the film were very open, they answered our most personal and deepest questions. There were tears, there were smiles, there were moments of heartbreak.

Through this experience, we discovered many good things about our culture and especially our education as a nation."

Reflecting upon this time and how the tourism sector responded to this humanitarian crisis, Media and Marketing Manager of [ANTRIM](http://antrim.md), **Alina Casian**, explains: "The tourism sector of Moldova proved itself as a shining example of humanity during this humanitarian crisis caused by the war in Ukraine. **By tourism businesses providing support, shelter, and comfort to those in need, we are reminded of the power of hospitality to bring people together and act in times of crisis.** ANTRIM members include 101 companies that represent Moldova's tourism sector and we are so proud of our wineries, guesthouses and hotels that opened their doors and focused all resources and attention to helping and sheltering our Ukrainian neighbors in need.

The protagonists of the film actually represent the hosts of all the tourism guest houses in Moldova who are full of kindness and hospitality, always looking forward to welcoming guests."

*If you would like to share this inspiring and unknown Moldovan story and would like more details or interviews with the directors or hosts, please get in touch with us at: **media@moldova.travel***