

"The Spirit of Romania" or an attempt to brand a country

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**By Anca Echim**

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What's the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word "Romania"? Eastern European poverty? Gold Medal Gymnasts? Dracula?

One of the last things you might think of is travel and tourism, and a small Romanian based advertising company aims to change that with the help of a daring project - The Spirit of Romania.

Take several images signed by incredibly gifted photographers, mix them with catchy stories, travel journals, add a little bit of passion and voila! You have the perfect recipe for digitally branding a country as an amazing and unique travel destination.

This past June, Spirit Ad, a small, start-up advertising company located in Bucharest, Romania, launched the first stage of an online campaign meant to brand a country. A web site found at <http://www.spirit.ro> that aims to show people a different side of Romania. It aims to show the beauty hidden inside this country that would make travelers tell their friends back at home that YES, this was definitely THE TRIP of my life.

The best people to promote a travel destination are of course the travelers that visited it. With that in mind, the website combines unbiased opinions and journals of the travelers who visited Romania with stunning images signed by some of the best Romanian photographers, and in depth articles covering from wide-known travel destinations to out of this earth places hidden only in the photographs of the lucky ones.

Another goal is to promote Romanian photography, and to that end you will find the largest online stock photography gallery with images exclusively devoted to Romania. These striking photographs show the natural beauty of a land few people know about. Until now.

PR Manager, Spirit Ad

## **The Perfect Ten Of Nadias Life**

**By Jonathon Hardcastle**

What happens to Olympic medallists when they retire from competition? Well some of them get married with other gold medallists and become parents. At least this is the case for Nadia Comaneci and Bart Conner. Comaneci gave birth to their first child, a boy, named Dylan Paul, on June 3, 2006. It sounds as a perfect story of family happiness, but life was not always good for the legendary gymnast Nadia Comaneci.

She was born in the factory town Onesti, Romania in 1961 and was given the non-Romanian name Nadia by her mother after the heroine of a Russian film. Nadia is the shortened version of the Russian name Nadyezhda, which means literally "Hope." At the age of 14, Nadia became the star of the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal winning three gold medals, a silver medal and a bronze. Comaneci became also the first gymnast at the Olympics to receive the perfect score of ten.

After her triumph in Montreal young Nadia became a national hero in Romania. She kept on participating in games having to confront apart from her strong components the highly politicized environment of sports during the Cold War. After her coach's defection to the US her life changed drastically she was under constant surveillance, she was no longer allowed to travel outside Romania. Although she denies the rumors that she had tried to kill herself by drinking bleach and to have been sexually harassed by the dictator Nicolae Ceausescu's son Nicu or to have been her lover she had become a prisoner in her own country. Finally in December 1989, shortly before the fall of Nicolae Ceausescu, she defected to the United States risking her life and walking for six hours at night through half-frozen lakes and impenetrable forests, to cross the Hungarian border.

With her arrival in the States Comaneci was surrounded again by controversy. Some American media suggested that she became the lover of the man who helped her escaping from Romania Constantin Panait, who was married and father of four children. In fact Panait held her captive for free months till she moved to Montreal to live with Alexandru Stefu, a Romanian rugby coach, and his family. In 1991 Nadia was again in the news when Stefu died in a scuba-diving accident.

It was then, when Comaneci was invited to Norman, Oklahoma by another legendary gymnast, Bart Conner to work with him in a gymnastics academy. A new life begun for her and she got back into gymnastics. In 1994 she returned to Romania for the first time since she fled and in 1996 she returned again to get married with Conner in Bucharest. Since then they live together in Oklahoma working with young gymnasts and promoting the sport worldwide.

For all the fans of gymnastics worldwide, Nadia Comaneci will remain the young sweet girl of 1976 Olympics, who changed the history of the sport, but Nadia is not a little girl any more. She is a woman, who opened a new chapter in her adventurous life, called motherhood. As she stated to The Associated Pres, "We've been through a lot of high moments in our life in sports through what we accomplished but this is just something that is totally unique."

Jonathon Hardcastle writes articles for

"The Spirit of Romania" or an attempt to brand a country

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