

When it comes to the area the Carpathians cover, they are the second largest mountain range in Europe. They stretch for almost 1300 km, forming a characteristic arc from the Balkans – Romania, through Ukraine, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary – up to the border with Austria.

Numerous relics and historical landmarks hide among the stunning scenery of the mountains.

The mountains have had a significant impact on the lifestyle of their inhabitants.

The thickly treed forests were the source of wood used to build houses and furnishings.

Wood was also used to make the musical instruments that accompanied the songs of the inhabitants of the mountains.

The motif uniting the culture of the mountains was a rosette that appeared as an ornament or decoration. It was an ancient solar sign

believed to bring life and security as well as to have a special power.

THE WORLD OF CARPATHIAN ROSETTES

NATURAL HERITAGE

The Carpathians, stretching across the territories of eight countries, are a range and chain of mountains traversed by river valleys.

The Carpathians are divided into three main sections: The Eastern, Western and Southern Carpathians. The so-called Outer Eastern Carpathians are of a flysch structure and they form the Eastern Beskids: the Bieszczady mountains, the Gorgany mountain range, the Pokucko-Bukowskie Beskids and the Polonynian Beskids with the Czarnohora Range.

The Carpathian Mountains constitute the European watershed that separates the basin of the Baltic and the Black Sea.

Gorges and river cascades are frequent phenomena seen in the region. There are also spectacular waterfalls.

The primeval Carpathian landscape was dominated by forest. To this day, the largest stretches of forest can be found mainly in the elevated areas. Vegetation is laid out in different belts. The highest being the mountain pasture belt. It is covered by alpine grassland, which stretching up to the horizon, creates favourable conditions for herding.

The dense forests of the region were associated with superstition and legend and were feared by their former inhabitants.

Michailo Didyszyn (from the Aleksy Dovbusz Museum in Kosmacz) vividly keeps up the legend of Dovbusz the highwayman, who stole from the rich and helped his own people.

Good morning and welcome to my hometown Kosmacz. We are in the backyard where there still stands a 300-year-old cottage near which Dovbusz was fatally wounded.

Nobody has ever found Dovbusz's treasures, which allegedly are hidden somewhere in mountain pastures. In Kosmacz, artifacts interlace with mysterious creations of nature and one can smell magic in the air.

Mount Howerla in the Czarnohora Range was perceived in an almost mythical way.

Tadeusz Baraniuk, Ph.D., the University of Warsaw, an ethnologist:

All along the Carpathian arc, one encounters places which stand out in some way. Most often magical and unusual properties are attributed to these places. They symbolise natural forces. For example, Mount Howerla in Czarnohora is visited by people not only from the nearest area but also from the whole of Ukraine. They go there the day before St.Ivan's Day to spend time in the mountains, see the sunset, collect herbs and sense special forces flowing from the earth on this day.

The inhabitants of the Carpathian Mountains

In the Middle Ages, the area of the Carpathians was the place of settlement for peoples and tribes

Hubert Ossadnik, Ph.D., The Museum of Folk Architecture in Sanok:

The area where we are now, was the place where the influences of two large early-medieval countries - Rus and Piast Poland – clashed.

So-called Vlachs contributed to the formation of ethnographic groups.

They were people from the Balkans who came to the northern part of the Carpathians in search of new lands for grazing their livestock.

Ph.D., the University of Warsaw, an ethnologist: ***Vlachs were occupied with transhumance – a form of high-mountain nomadism. Sheep, goats and cattle in the lower parts of the mountains were herded onto pastures during the summer and during the winter they would be moved down to valleys.***

Tadeusz Baraniuk, Ph.D., the University of Warsaw, an ethnologist – ***the Vlach colonisation based on nomadic shepherds and their herds moving along the northern Carpathian arc – an area covering Ukraine and Poland - started in the 15th century, and continued through the 16th and 17th centuries, when Vlachs reached Orava.***

The Vlach colonisation was important in terms of Vlachs' defence capability.

Paweł Królikowski, a Vlach voivode – ***Vlachs were brought here by Polish rulers as the guardians of the mountains, villages and pastures.***

Hubert Ossadnik, Ph.D., The Museum of Folk Architecture in Sanok: ***In this mountain area, where it was difficult to set up villages according to German***

law, Vlachs brought the so-called Vlach law. Instead of a financial obligation to a landholder, he was given a tribute of different products: rams, cheeses, etc.

In the regions previously used for farming, there appeared herding, offering a lot of new possibilities.

Tomasz Strączek Ph.D., the University of Warsaw, an ethnologist: ***herding provided meat, leather and dairy products. Vlachs brought rennet cheeses to Ukraine, Poland and Slovakia.***

Władysław Franos, Shepherd's hut in Ośławica: ***we make such cheeses with wild garlic or tomatoes. We smoke them and we also make a lot of other types of cheese: bundz (sheeps' milk cheese), gołka (cows' milk cheese), korbocz (string cheese).***

Vlachs assimilated with Slavs living in the foothills. Over time, they formed ethnographic groups.

Tadeusz Baraniuk Ph.D., the University of Warsaw, an ethnologist: ***Starting from the west: Lemkos live on the northern and southern side of the Carpathians; this is Slovakia. They inhabit the area from the Biała and Poprad rivers up to the Bieszczady mountains and the so-called Wielki Dział, also known as the Ośława river Valley.***

Boykos inhabited the area to the east of the river Ośława.

Tadeusz Baraniuk Ph.D., the University of Warsaw, an ethnologist: ***this large ethnic group reached the Bystrzyca Sołotwińska and Bystrzyca Nadwórniańska river Valley.***

And finally, moving to the east, there is a third ethnic group, called Hutsuls. They occupied the area stretching from both Bystrzyca rivers to the border with Romania and along the border up to Czerniowce.

Inhabitants of the Carpathian countryside were surrounded by nature. It provided people with wild species of plants used for medicine or food.

Łukasz Łuczaj, Ph.D., a botanist from the University of Rzeszów – ***During pre-harvest season, people used wild edible plants. In the spring, when grain was***

scarce or being saved, a lot of young leafy vegetables were used. For instance: nettle, goosefoot or sorrel.

It was believed that some plants had magical powers.

Łukasz Łuczaj Ph.D., a botanist from the University of Rzeszów: People feared different spells. They worried that a child could enter a semi-conscious state, so when it was crying, they were trying to undo the spell. When a cow stopped producing milk, they again believed that one of the villagers had cast a spell on it and the spell had to be undone.

Despite deeply rooted superstitions, the inhabitants of the Carpathians were religious.

Hubert Ossadnik, Ph.D., The Museum of Folk Architecture in Sanok: In 1596, after the so-called Union of Brest, a part of the Orthodox Church joined the Roman Church and as a result, the Greek Catholic Church was formed. It was called the Uniate Church.

The Orthodox chanting is an indispensable element of the Eastern Church liturgy and its characteristic feature is polyphony.

Marianna Jara, a musicologist and an organizer of cultural events – our music is based on a cappella singing – we don't use any instruments because a human voice is the most beautiful instrument of all.

The whole congregation sings and everybody tries to join the prayer. Previously the singing was performed by a psalmist, a diak (a leading singer). This is how 'samoliwka' came about. A diak was singing in his own voice and other people were trying to sing in harmony with him.

ARCHITECTURE

What the inhabitants of the central-eastern part of the Carpathians (Lemkos, Boykos and Hutsuls) had in common was their herding tradition. The Vlach law would allow them to log a part of a forest and build houses.

Tadeusz Baraniuk, Ph.D., the University of Warsaw, an ethnologist: *these three ethnic groups differ in terms of a cultural landscape and types of area development.*

Lemkos created a particularly distinctive construction style. Their cottages, called chyžas, provided both a living area for people and a shelter for animals.

Marcin Krowiak, Ph.D., The Museum of Folk Architecture in Sanok: *a distinctive element of a chyža was its entrance, often built in the middle of the front wall. There was an entrance hall leading to a living area. The other part of the cottage was designed for farming purposes and consisted of a barn, a threshing floor and a characteristic gate leading to it. The other elements were stables and a fold. Lemkos' cottages were decorated. By the front door or by the window shutters were geometric patterns painted mainly with lime. Outside, beams were covered with clay and flaxseed oil, which dyed them brown. To paint the shutters people used an indigo pigment.*

A rosette was both: a magical and protective element that was to keep the inhabitants from evil. A rosette would be placed in the most visible and stable parts of a house.

Marcin Krowiak, Ph.D., The Museum of Folk Architecture in Sanok:

In the living area, under the wooden ceiling and all along it, was a beam with a date, a cross and a rosette – a symbol protecting the household members, and known throughout the Carpathian arc.

Churches had an original decor and style. The differences were depending on which ethnic group they belonged to.

Marcin Krowiak, Ph.D., The Museum of Folk Architecture in Sanok: *Boyko and Lemko churches are easily distinguished by looking at them from side-on. A Lemko church looks like a right-angled triangle, whereas a Boyko one resembles an isoscelent triangle.*

The interior of an orthodox church is decorated by an ikonostas that separates the nave from the sanctuary pointing east. An iconostasis itself is divided into a few parts. There are icons in the Sovereign (bottom) tier and in the Feasts

tier. Another tier, called Deesis, depicts the Apostles, and an icon of the Enthroned Christ in the centre. Above that, there is a tier of icons of prophets. At the very top of an iconostasis one can see a cross.

St. George Orthodox church in Drohobycz is considered to be the most beautiful orthodox church of today's Ukraine. Its characteristic features are its vivid colours and its abundance of paintings, not only in the iconostasis but also on all the walls and vaults.

Manyava Monastery is considered to be a sacred place surrounded by nature. It has been attracting pilgrims for centuries. There used to be an orthodox singing school there and it was visited by pilgrims from such distance places as Moldova and Romania.

HANDICRAFT AND DYING PROFESSIONS

Music, especially that played using archaic instruments, has always accompanied shepherds and travellers. The tradition of playing old instruments has been maintained in different regions of the Carpathians. Michailo Tafijczuk makes folk pipes, trembitas (alpine horns), violins and hurdy-gurdies.

Thanks to Stanisław Wyrzykowski, here in the Podkarpacie region, the forgotten instrument of the hurdy-gurdy was restored. Despite his old age, he still enjoys his passion for lutes.

A wide range of musical instruments can be found in Werhowyna, where one can visit the Roman Kumłyk Museum. Roman Kumłyk was a virtuoso and his daughter shows people around the museum of her late father.

Natalia Kumlyk: I've been looking after this museum for 5 years now. I've also learned how to play 15 instruments. We are visited by tourists who are shown around every day. I try to welcome everyone. We are glad when guests visit us.

Practical and decorative pottery is a handicraft typical of these regions of the Carpathians. Its characteristic colours are yellow and green. **Sergiej Dutka: Green**

and yellow – the colours of Kosovian pottery. This is copper oxide – the green one, and iron oxide – the yellow one.

One can follow the whole process of clay wedging, shaping, the applying of colours, dyeing and firing. These high-quality products even find buyers overseas.

Visitors are also intrigued by the local Easter eggs. Their creation requires precision and takes long hours. Natural, plant-based dyes were used for the colouring of eggs.

Maria Kiraszczyk – a folk artist – we have been making Easter eggs since ancient times and we pass the tradition on from generation to generation. Our great-grandmothers and grandmothers would pass it down to our mothers, and now we are making them in the same way. Together with our children we have learned how to do it and I think that our grandchildren will learn it too.

Icon painting, as a form of art, connects with spirituality. This time-consuming job can be mastered during icon-painting workshops. The material needs preparing and going through consecutive stages: starting from a sketch and finishing with gilding.

Beadwork is an art that isn't as difficult as it may seem. ***Ewelina Matusiak-Wyderka – a folk artist: Carpathian bead jewellery was fashionable among Lemko, Boyko and Hutsul women. A similar type of jewellery can also be found in Romania – towards the Balkans, as well as in Moldova.***

Weaving is a popular activity in the Carpathians. So-called liźniks (thick blankets with geometric patterns) are made of sheeps' wool.

Natalia Kiszczuk: It is a bedspread; a handmade sheeps' wool blanket, very warm and unique. When it is cold - and in our region it can be cold such blankets are used a lot.

Throws, blankets and bedspreads have various patterns. People also weave tablecloths and clothing.

Ending

The Carpathians are remarkable mountains – as remarkable as the people living there. They adjusted to the harsh conditions while preserving their own cultural identity. The heritage of this culture is accessible today and is waiting to be

rediscovered. There lies a story behind every orthodox church and every Lemko cottage. The icons depict biblical scenes and mysterious signs; embroidered, painted or carved solar rosettes still protect from any perceived evil. There are still places where time seems to have stopped in the Carpathians. We can smell old wood, taste traditional food or get to know and learn various forms of handicraft.

Not only are the Carpathians majestic mountains but they are also home to a unique people with a unique culture. They are a heritage united by the sign of the Carpathian rosette.