

From Maramureș

Mara-Cosău-Creasta Cocoșului

Your Eco-destination Guide





Sundew

photo: Emil Pop

From Maramureș

Mara-Cosău-Creasta Cocoșului

Your Eco-destination Guide



EcoLogic Association

430232 Baia Mare, Str. Florilor, Nr. 8/36

Tel./fax.: +40 362 412 197; +40 745 332 022

E-mail: ecologic@email.ro; editp@nvn.ro

Web: www.ecologic.org.ro

Valea Verde Publishing House, August 2015

Text: Rada Pavel, Ion Mariș, Peter Lengyel, Florian-Rareș Tileagă

Translation: Horea Nașcu

Front cover photo: Vali Tămaș

Back cover photo: Emil Pop

Design: Pinter Visual

Print: Kumar Print

Contents

Ecotourist Plea	02
Gathered from Villages	03
Breb, the Village under the Mountain	08
Old Wooden Churches on the Mara and Cosău	10
Fabulous Nature: Protected Natural Areas	18
From the World of Hay	24
Made under Creasta Cocoşului	26
Time to Eat	30
Ecotourist at an Eco-destination	32
Green Trails	36
Holidays over the Year	38
Eco-useful	42

Creasta Cocoşului

photo: Peter Lengyel



Ecotourist Plea

Disconnect everything from the mains. Go to the window, pull the curtains, close your eyes, and replace the concrete in the neighbourhood with the grassy paths of a village you have had in your head since childhood. You are, right now, exactly like the people from one hundred years ago: in front of a window, with the sun in your eyes, your mind on the yard, on the animals, and on the homemade butter. Without cables, gadgets, and other trifles which take us away from life.

The village you have in mind is out there. And thank God, there are many such villages, not just one! And all these villages, paths, mountains, farmyards, and peasants still live, to the delight of people like us, who seek life in its purest form: anti-desk, anti-depression, anti-city nerves. They all exist, unspoiled, and the land which holds them is found somewhere in the north of Romania. In Maramureş.

In fact, in Historical Maramureş. We are talking here about the **Mara-Cosău-Creasta Cocoşului** region, which contains two rivers (the Mara and Cosău), a volcanic mountain with a massive rock formation (Creasta Cocoşului Reserve), and the villages among them. Not long ago, in the same year the *National Geographic* recommended Maramureş as one of best travel places to visit, the area was declared an ecotourism destination. But let's be honest: to simply have awards, certifications, and testimonials or to merely visit places is not enough. What is essential is to be able to enjoy, to touch, to taste, to discover such places in the intimacy of their old age. And here, in northern Romania, the Mara-Cosău-Creasta Cocoşului region is a land which offers this privilege – against time and everything which is modern, sleek, and hi-tech.

Here is where nature is. Here is where Creasta Cocoşului (Rooster's Crest) is, in the Gutâi Mountains; a huge magmatic rock nine million years old, its name derived from its unusual shape, resembling a rooster's comb. Here there are both lakes and forests – habitats for birds and mammals –, and unique flora, and gentle hills decked in inviting, fragrant grass.

Here is the sacred wood. Used to construct everything; the houses, the iconic gates, and the beautiful churches, two of which are on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

Here's where the life of old is. Our land invites you to our past, to times when people still make their way through villages by wagon, still toil to make hay only by the vigor of their own arms, still make their own clothes and hats, and, moreover, still have faith in the order of things as left on earth by God. It is a world where food still tastes like food, the food which can otherwise only be found in cookbooks and commercials; a world where the word "bio" has not been invented yet – for here things cannot be other than bio.

If ecotourism is a way to travel through nature and amongst people, while understanding nature and understanding people, then Mara-Cosău-Creasta Cocoşului is the name of the best eco-destination. **In Maramureş. In Romania.**

Council of haystacks



Photo: Peter Lengyel

Gathered from Villages



Flight over the villages

photo: Peter Lengyel

A harmonious play of volcanic mountains, verdant hills, rivers, lakes, forests, meadows, houses and households, costumes, traditions and occupations forgotten by others, the settlements on Mara and Cosău (organized in the communes of Budești, Desești, Călinești, and Ocna Șugatag) became in 2014 a part of the **Mara-Cosău-Creasta Cocoșului ecotourism destination**, one of the first two of its kind in Romania.

Access to the area can be made on both the main road linking Baia Mare to Sighetu Marmăției and on county roads and cart roads,

*"Hello there, good ol' friend,
My way to you have I made;
I'm not come to take a seat,
I have travelled you to meet"*

on footpaths which take you through meadows, on paths which move across wonderful landscapes no tourist guide whatsoever writes about...

There are two altitudinal floors in the area, of different ecological characteristics: the mountain range and the depression area. In the mountain area we will find Platoul Munților Igriș (the Igriș Mountains Plateau), the high floor of Munții Gutâi (the Gutâi Mountains) with their Creasta Cocoșului Reserve, and part of Munții Lăpușului (the Lăpuș Mountains). The low depression area of the Mara basin

displays a rural-traditional character. **The Mara river** forms in the Igniș Mountains at the confluence of the Runcu and Brazi valleys, collects water from a basin of over 400 square kilometres, and then flows into the Iza at Vadu Izei. In the Mara river basin there are two main arteries: one is that of the actual Mara, the other, of its main tributary, the **Cosău river**, which has its springs in the north-west of the Lăpuș Mountains and collects the waters in the Sermetieș area. It is along these two significant watercourses you can find the villages described below; attested in the 14th century, these villages once belonged to the ancient knyazates (local political units in the Middle Ages) of Maramureș, themselves bearing the names of the local rivers (the Knyazates of Mara and Cosău) and preserving, in architecture and traditions, traces of the old times.

The old wooden churches, testimonies of the skill of known or anonymous craftsmen, are the architectural landmarks of these settlements. Let us look for a short while into the village streets and the yards of the locals: the wooden gates once set the social status of the owners. The most common carved motif is the woven rope, which is part of another symbol design, the tree of life, while at the same time intersecting the image of the sun or of the fir tree. On the wood of the gates we also see various rosettes, “wolf fangs”, and other zoomorphic, anthropomorphic, cosmic, or astral motifs.

Alongside (ever more numerous) modern houses, in the villages still stand the **old wooden houses**, with hipped roofs covered with *draniță* (shingles) and preserving carved motifs in the door and window frames. Built by the locals from oak or fir, the old houses were designed strictly in accordance with the principle of functionality, having a deck and a minimum number of rooms: the porch, the living room (or “house”), and the main room (or good room) with the compulsory *rudă*, a thin beam on which rugs, traditional costumes,

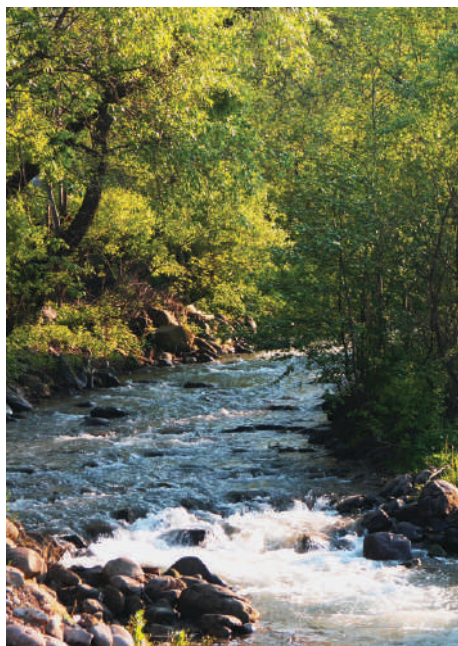


photo: Rada Pavel

The Mara river crossing the village of Mara

huckaback towels, and pillows, all handmade, are stored and displayed.

On the walls of the stables are exhibited parts of disused wooden ploughs and harrows, carts, noddies, and sleds, and the *ocoale* (yards) are populated by animals, the breeding of which is the main occupation of the locals. Signs of pastoral life can be found everywhere in the villages; and if you so desire, you can go to a sheepfold, where, besides all sorts of tools and pots and barrels needed to make cheese, today's shepherds also keep mobile phones.

The crosses on the graves have their stories as well, those in the graveyards by the churches in Sat Șugatag, Hărnicesti, and Breb bearing, according to experts, obvious Celtic elements. Many of the villages still keep, nearly forgotten, their Jewish cemeteries, proof of this significant ethnic group having lived around here and having left a mark upon the history of these places in a not too distant past.

To take you in the toils of the legends of the villages here, we will also tell you that on these lands lived, shrouded in mystery, an outlaw; called a “bandit” by some researchers and a hero by others, **Grigore Pinte**a became *Viteazu’* (the Brave) after the common people inflated the deeds through which, together with his band, he had sought to put an end to the social injustices of his time. They say that Pinte (who, in 1703, fought alongside the Kuruc in their anti-Habsburg rebellion) was born in 1670 in the village of Măgoaja in today’s Cluj County, but some of the villagers of Budești could swear that the legendary figure actually comes from around their area. And since we have mentioned **Budești**, a village whose name comes from Bud, the son of a *knez* (ruler of a *knyazate*), this is the first settlement on the Cosău river as well as one of the villages granting access to our destination, which is “miraculous” from the

very beginning: right before entering Budești, on the road from Căvnic, there is a place where gravity seems to have gone amok, for there, cars with their engines shut off climb uphill instead of going downhill. For years on end there have been numerous debates about the mysterious phenomenon, some claiming that the ex-planation would be a magnetic, volcanic, or even extra-terrestrial anomaly, with the “earthly” answer stating that all would be neither more, nor less than an ordinary optical illusion – compelling enough, though, to turn the place into a tourist attraction. Besides the two old wooden churches (of which the one in Josani is UNESCO-listed), in Budești, at the picturesque spot called *Gura Izvoarelor* (meaning “Mouth of Springs”, the birthplace of springs such as the Red, Black, and Călina’s springs), another, new wooden church is located; built between 1995 and 1998, it

The way home

photo: Kalmár Zoltán



belongs to the Monastery of St. Constantine and Helena. If we also recall that two or three centuries ago, gold mining (the Totoș, Jereapăn, and Irma mines) attracted numerous foreign investors to Budești as well as that around here there is a sulphurous mineral water spring, we can imagine how much wealth these lands have to offer. Keeping the course of the Cosău river, we reach the village of **Sârbi** (commune of Budești), which was first mentioned under that name in 1459 and was formed by the fusion of two older settlements: Balotești and Cămărzana. Sârbi is the village with the highest number of traditional water-powered installations which are still operational, and it can also boast two wooden churches which are historic monuments, wooden houses and gates, and skilled craftsmen. Next comes **Călinești**, a village first documented in 1381; here, archaeologists have found Late Bronze Age artefacts. Călinești preserves two old wooden churches, from the 17th and the 18th centuries respectively, as well as other old wooden buildings. From here, the road which starts for Bârsana moves through **Văleni**, where there are a very old little church, a monastery, traditional households, healing springs, skilled beekeepers, and the most exquisite of vistas. Returning to the course of Cosău, we reach **Cornești**, which, in its turn, displays traditional households and an old wooden church. In **Ferești** we are where the Mara meets the Cosău. The road to the right heads towards Berbești, Vadu Izei, and Sighetu Marmăției, the one to the left leads us back to the centre of our eco-destination, upstream of the Mara river, first reaching **Giulești**, with its stone medieval church ruins and brightly-coloured pots hanging in trees. They say that **Mănăstirea**, which you get to next – a small village sheltered from traffic, with a wooden church from the 17th century –, has been cursed by monks to forever have the same number of inhabitants. Then comes **Sat Șugatag**, which preserves, besides a wooden church, peasant households and installations. **Hărnicești**, too, hosts a wooden church as well as the oldest wooden house in



Sunlight through the gate

photo: Gabriel Motica

the Mara valley (1792).

In **Desești**, which is first mentioned in writing in 1360 as the property of Giula from Giulești and his descendants, besides the UNESCO-monument church one can also visit a traditional blacksmith as well as traditional carpentry and textile workshops. Here we arrive again at the “fringe” of the destination, at **Mara**. The village, which belongs to the commune of Desești, was first mentioned in a document in 1415 as *Crăcești* (Hungarian *Krácsfalva*). Mara is the access point, following the greenway called the *Maramureș Heritage Trail*, to the Runcu dam and Cheile Tătarului (Tatar’s Gorge) in the Ighiu Mountains. For a while now, Mara has been the village to also lure tourists with “rustic” trout-farm restaurants located in plain sight, on the side of the main road.

Between the two rivers, the Mara and Cosău, in a picturesque hilly area, lie the villages **Ocna Șugatag**, **Hoteni**, and **Breb**. The history and the name of the place are linked to the richness of

the soils and the exploitation of salt. The first written references attesting salt mining here are those which mention the existence of the Paul Silvestru mine in 1489. Towards the end of the 18th century, the Habsburgs brought specialized miners to Ocna Şugatag. In 1950, as a consequence of massive freshwater seepage, the salt mines were closed. Gradually, water dissolved the salt, which ultimately led to the collapse of the mines and the creation of salt lakes, of which Lake Găvrilă is the largest salt mining lake in Romania: it has an area of 23,5 square meters and a maximum depth of 30 meters. The salt water in the area is still used by the locals to prepare food as well as for its curative properties. Thanks to this healing salt water, a spa grew here (according to some, as early as 1911, according to others, in 1920). Today, the dozens of guesthouses in Ocna Şugatag, many of which feature pools (with hot or cold, salty or fresh water), await tourists in search of treatment of various ailments. Colourful and unique for tourists is also the weekly fair, which takes place in Ocna Şugatag every Thursday. Pădurea Crăiască (The Royal Forest) enchants the visitors with its ancient oaks and the diversity of bird trills, highly appreciated by connoisseurs.

The village of **Hoteni**, with its wooden Church of St. Archangels and its enigmatic marshes (*tinoave*), is where, every year, on a Sunday in early May, *Tânjaua* is held, an old agrarian custom to celebrate the first ploughman out to till the land. Hoteni is also home to well-known traditional singer Ioan Pop (Popicu), founder of Grupul Iza (The Iza Group); a number of editions of *Jocul Satului* (The Village Dance) have been organized in the yard of his beautiful old wooden house. Popicu's concerts have been hosted for years by the great stages of the world, just as his, and his wife Anuţa's, household has itself hosted important guests from all over the world.

Ethnographers, writers, and many a journalist from the *Daily Mail*, *The Telegraph*, or *National*



photo: Peter Lengyel

The salt lakes at Ocna Şugatag

Geographic have spoken, voluntarily and willingly, about the village of **Breb**; we will write about it ourselves, in more detail, in the next chapter.

Our brief introduction to the world of the Maramureş villages on the Mara and Cosău has, thus, reached the end – and we are far from having said everything there is to say. Each village in the area comes with its own personalized historical baggage, with old customs, fascinating Christian holidays, their roots lost in the mists of time, an amalgam of folk rituals and beliefs, creating a unique and miraculous universe. A universe which the ecotourists have, still barely, started to discover.

Breb, the Village under the Mountain

Coming on the road between Budești and Ocna Șugatag, your eyes bathed in the scenery offered by the Gutâi Mountains and the hills laid with agricultural terraces, you will no doubt be tempted to stop at the place from where the sight of Creasta Cocoșului is the most eye-catching and alluring, wondering what magnificent settlement is hidden away in the valley, waiting to be discovered by travellers come from afar.

That is the village of **Breb**. And once you have seen it like that, from a distance, it's a must to head towards it on the road emerging from the main road and explore it more thoroughly. The village is named after the *breb* (beaver), which

was once abundant in the area. The first church you see upon entering Breb is the new one, of the Holy Trinity, yet the village also shelters an old wooden church, dedicated to the St. Archangels and located on a hill near the edge of the village on the way to Hoteni.

In Breb you can still find many traditional households, with wooden houses and gates, about twenty *horincii* (fruit-brandy distilleries), and skilled craftsmen. Although this is not a village with many inhabitants, Breb is a large settlement of many streets and crossroads – and, you won't believe it, in Breb it is nice to get lost. For not knowing which way to take and asking the locals for directions, you will be sent

View over Breb



photo: Emil Pop

on the best paths and through the most beautiful gardens and orchards. That is how you will find “**casele lu' Charles**” (“Charles’ houses”): that is what the locals call the two old wooden houses brought to Breb from the villages of Berbești and Ferești, then restored by the **Mihai Eminescu Trust**. The charity has until recently been patronized by **Charles, the Prince of Wales**, who visited the village in 2004 and whose photograph standing outside the houses with a group of locals has made it into magazines worldwide. Some historians say that the village was also visited by Emperor Joseph II of Habsburg, in the eighteenth century, during one of his journeys in Transylvania. From 1846 to 1918, a spa was operational in Breb (where the *borcut*, the mineral water spring, is today, at the border with the village of Budești); its sulphurous baths were famous at the time. Roaming the streets and crossing bridges over the streams of the village (the main one being the Breboia creek), you will also end up in traditional craftsmen’s yards. One of them, the old **Pătru Pop** (a Niții), carves wooden *pecetare* (seal engravers), spindles, crosses, and spoons, and always has wise counsel to share, which will stay with you for years to come.

You may also meet **Vasile Oanea**, the one who can tell you everything about Breb and its people; he knows the village so well, that he will count the wooden houses in his head. Since about 1983, Oanea has kept a sort of “chronicle” of the village, featuring both important and daily events in the community. He declares himself a “lover of culture and literature”, but he is also a lover of the village he has always lived in, which he writes daily a line about and which he knows how to treasure, saying, among other things, that, “he would not trade one gate from Breb for an Eiffel Tower”.

Do not expect the people of Breb to speak to you about Creasta Cocoșului. To them, the Crest is *Gutâi* (The Gutâi Mountains), or *Munte* (Mountain), or *Piatra* (The Stone), and it is neither a geological reserve, nor a hiking destination, but instead, the place where water is brought to their households from, where they



photo: Peter Lengyel

A house in an eco-story (Breb)

put up their sheepfolds, or which, at dawn, heralds the weather for the day. If villagers tell you about “Claude”, know you that it’s about **Claude Karnoouh**, the French sociologist who has spent a lot of time in the village, doing ethnographic and folklore research; and when they tell you about “Willie”, they are talking about **William Blacker**, the Englishman who lived in Breb for years, got merry or grieved with the villagers, worked and celebrated with them, and, later, gave us all a book in which he describes the village like no other: *Along the Enchanted Way: A Romanian Story*. No wonder that, having read its pages, many other foreigners have strayed to Breb to see the “miracle”. “The courtesy and kindness of the Brebeni was the very essence of the Romanian peasants, the sort that I had read about in many books”, William Blacker writes. Much has changed in Breb since Willie lived in the village: they have raised new and modern homes, the households have Wi-Fi connections; yet the “courtesy and kindness of the Brebeni” have stayed the same. It seems that the people here know how to make a credo of the words “*Dumnezeu este iubire*” (“God is love”) entered in wood on the beautiful gate, made by Ion Sima of Breb in 1964, which keeps watch over the yard of the old parish house.

Old Wooden Churches on the Mara and Cosău

People have written about the wooden churches of Maramureş since as far back as around the eighteenth century, until they ran out of metaphors. The daring, Gothic-inspired towers, the astounding balance of proportions, the craftsmanship of the wooden beam joints, the void of nails or any other iron components, have attracted onlookers, researchers, and writers. Not long ago *Lonely Planet Traveller* described these structures as “beached Noah's arks”.

That churches have had a special significance to the people of Maramureş is obvious in every detail of their construction. They stand out even in the way, in the days of yore, the craftsmen in the region decided on which wood was worthy

of becoming a church: it was chosen carefully, from among the old trees, after prolonged observation, and it was cut only on certain days of the season, with a skill which combined popular faith and technique. That is how churches got to be lasting; and if they still perished, they did so because they were hit by lightning or were burnt down by the Tatars. The ones we see today date from the 16th through the 18th centuries; many of them are built on the site of older edifices, now gone. More than a few have arrived here after travelling quite a number of kilometres, having been brought from other villages, from other communities, for whom they had become too small.

Wooden gate and church in Hoteni

photo: Dorel Găină



At a quick glance, one could say that, except for the dimensions and year of construction, there are not many differences between the old wooden churches. All have the same plan, with their three traditional rooms: the *pronaos* (women's church), above which rises the tower, the vaulted *naos* (men's church), and the polygonal *altar*. All have interior paintings depicting the Last Judgement, all have walls decorated with homemade huckaback towels which are donated to the church by the village women. All have beams ending in *cheutori* (beam joints), shingle roofs, small windows, and low front doors meant to remind you to bow your head before God when you walk into his house.

It takes a closer look to notice that particular touch bequeathed in wood by every craftsman or to understand the story of a travelling church. You must stop and raise your eyes to the walls of the *pronaos* and the vault of the *naos* to find out how one painter or another saw the sinners or the enemies of the day, or how Jesus or the saints were portrayed in a, sometimes, more unusual situation. Such details are available only to observant, curious visitors or... to those who are accompanied by a good guide. There are only three villages on Mara and Cosău where wooden churches cannot be seen today: Mara, Giulești, and Berbești, but other three settlements in our destination – Budești, Sârbi, and Călinești – compensate for that, each showcasing not only one old church, but two, named in accordance to how the villages are divided: *Josani* (lower village) and *Susani* (upper village). But let us see them one church at a time:

The **St. Nicholas wooden church in Budești Josani** (a UNESCO monument) is made of thick oak beams, cut from trees felled in the winter of 1642-1643¹. It is one of the churches of Maramureș showing bold sizes, being 18 meters long, 8 meters wide, and having a slender tower 38 meters high. An architectural characteristic feature of the church is given by the four lower towers laid out at the base of the spire, a sign



photo: Gabriel Motica

The church in Budești Josani

that the village used to have a Council of Elders which had the right to prosecute the wrongdoers. From the (partially lost) text above the doorway, engraved in Romanian with Cyrillic letters, we learn that the church was built by "master Gozdă". The interior painting of the *naos*, *pronaos*, and iconostasis dates back from 1762 and has Alexandru Ponehalschi as "painter", whose mastery is certified by many other churches in the area, while the altar was decorated with paintings by Ianoș Opreș in 1812. The painting on the *naos* vault has not been preserved, but the Holy Trinity can still be seen on the vault of the apse. In the *naos* we can still admire works depicting the Expulsion from the Garden of Eden, the Tree of Good and Evil, St. Elijah in the chariot of fire, etc. Of the paintings of the *pronaos*, scenes from the cycle of The Passion of the Christ stand out. The heritage of the church is enriched by valuable icons on wood, most of which were made in the 17th century. The icon of St. John the Baptist,

¹ The years of church construction are those laid down by Alexandru Baboș in *Tracing a Sacred Building Tradition. Wooden Churches, Carpenters and Founders in Maramureș until the turn of the 18th Century*, Lund University, 2004.

made by “painter Gheorghe”, and the icon of St. Nicholas are among the oldest icons on wood in Maramureș, dating from the 15th century. Visitors to the church are also drawn by the chain mail shirt and the helmet which are said to have belonged to the legendary Pinteia Viteazu; they have been kept in the pronaos after being recovered from Budapest by the local community around the turn of the 20th century. Of interest, too, is the cross discovered in a tree trunk by a teacher from Budești in 1998. In the churchyard, there are the slabs of *Masa Moșilor* (The Table of the Ancients), where alms for the dead used to be offered; the names of the old families of Budești can still be read on them.

Also dedicated to St. Nicholas is the church in **Budești Susani**, which is where the Greek-Catholic believers attend services today. Erected in 1760 on the site of an older house of God, the church has a mural painting made in the year of construction by the same Alexandru

The tower of the wooden church in Sârbi Josani



photo: CJMM

Ponehalschi, but also by Radu Munteanu from Ungureni (Lăpuș County). In the Genesis scene in the naos, in addition to horses, dogs, wolves, and kids, one can distinguish unusual animals such as a tiger, a camel, or a centaur with bow and arrow. Another painting, on the northern wall of the naos, expressively depicts Adam digging the ground and Eve, spinning wool. According to the inscription in Slavonic, the holy doors date from 1628 and “were brought by Mariș Vasile with his wife and children, who gave them to the church for forgiveness of sins”. The entrance door has elaborate decorations, carved with craftsmanship. The roof of the church is one of the few which have survived unchanged after the last century's restorations.

The wooden church in **Sârbi Susani** is reached after a climb on wooden stairs framed by trees. According to dendrochronological dating, the wood of this church was cut in 1638 and the building was erected the following year. Modest in size and built with limited financial resources, the church is, however, not an ordinary one, distinguishing itself by several other features. Thus, the front door, which is very well preserved and, probably, one of the oldest in Maramureș, amazes with a portal painstakingly decorated with twisted ropes, rosettes, and crosses. It seems that the skilful craftsman of the little church in Sârbi is the same master Gozdă who, several years later, would astonish the community with the grandeur of the church in Budești Josani. Inside, the reredos still preserves the original paintings done by Alexandru Ponehalschi in 1760 and then by Iosip Iacovu, deacon of the church in Sârbi, while the altar was painted in 1800 by Nicolai Famochevici. The church is consecrated to St Parascheva, celebrated on 14 October.

The **St. Nicholas wooden church in Sârbi Josani**, erected near a former monastery which was burnt down by the Tatars, dates from 1685, although tradition places its construction two decades earlier. Inside are kept the holy doors and a few valuable icons made by Radu



Iconostasis in the wooden church in Călinești Josani (Căeni)

photo: Rada Pavel

Munteanu (1775), but the original mural is lost. Here and there are inscribed the names of painters, among whom one can find Alexandru Ponehalschi, referred to as “Alexa Zugrău”.

When it comes to the **Church of the Nativity of Mary in Călinești Josani (Căeni)**, one will by all means remember the legend of Călina, the child whose hand-held candle would light up by itself every time she would pass through. The villagers took the incidents as signs from God and built a church on that spot. We do not know why Călina would be on the cemetery hill at dusk; what we know, from scientists, is that the oak the church is made of was cut in the winter of 1628. It is also said that the church was originally placed on the border with Călinești and was brought to its current location in 1663. In the 19th century, the church was enlarged and modified through the addition of a porch

which is unusually large compared with the other churches in Maramureș. The interior painting, which marks the 1754 debut of Alexandru Ponehalschi on the Cosău valley, has been restored. In the pronaos, the Judgement Day scenes stand out as the single major theme, and in the naos, God the Father is surrounded by seraphim and various Christian parables. The same prolific painter Ponehalschi left here icons on wood painted in the second half of the 18th century.

In the wooden church in **Călinești Susani** we do not enter through a door on the west façade, as we are accustomed to, but through an entrance located on the southern wall. The building design itself is not characteristic of the wooden churches of Maramureș. This time we are dealing with a triconch plan (*i.e.*, a clover-leaf shape, with pentagonal naos and altar apses),

of Moldavian influence. It is said that the believers of Călinești, who were traditionalists, would not easily be persuaded to have the church built “differently” by craftsmen who were alien to the area. An inscription on the portal of the entrance door reads “Made in 1774”, but, in all likelihood, that is the date when the framing was carved, the church itself being much older. Of the old mural only a few fragments have been preserved. The icons in the church did not have a better fate, as they were destroyed in 1977 by the flames of a fire sparked by lightning. The church is dedicated to the Assumption of Mary.

To reach the little wooden church of **St. Archangels in Văleni**, you need to move away from the course of the Cosău and towards Valea Izei. If tourists knew the age and the tumultuous history of this little place, they would by no means drive carelessly past it on their way to Bârsana. Built at the beginning of the 16th century (1516-1526), the church, which is said to be the oldest in Maramureș (some of its beams dating back to 1367), belonged to the Cuhea Monastery (in Bogdan Vodă, a village formerly known as Cuhea) and was brought to Văleni in 1670. Here it served as parish church until 1944, when lack of money and the need of a larger church caused the locals to sell it (for the price of two oxen). It is said that when they first tried to demolish it, a strong wind started, and the frightened craftsman did not continue his work. Thus, fear of God's wrath kept the church standing for three more years. In 1947, the church was finally dismantled; its wood was divided into three and sold on, each part taking a different way. Almost unbelievably, the part we can see today rebuilt in the parish court in Văleni was for a while used as a stable in Călinești. The paintings made by Toader Hodor in 1806 have not been preserved; of the old church only the Holy Table in the altar, the Holy Ark, banners, and the holy doors still exist.

Returning to the course of the Cosău, we get to **Cornești**, the Maramureș village with the oldest church which has not been moved, dated (according to certain sources) to 1615, but including much older components: a sanctuary from the beginning of the 16th century and a few beams from 1406. Toader Hodor from Vișeu de Mijloc painted its walls, as we can read in the naos, on whose vault we notice the Holy Trinity surrounded by angels and the four evangelists. In the altar we can see Jesus portrayed washing the feet of St. Peter, the Last Supper, St. Elijah in the chariot of fire, saints with heads girded by vine. To this day, the church, which is dedicated to St Nicholas, preserves two icons on wood by Alexandru Ponehalschi.

The wooden church of St. Parascheva in **Sat Șugatag** was built around the year 1700. Once you pass through the monumental portal of the entrance door, you can admire the mural done in 1812. In the church's graveyard are found crosses inscribed in circles, of Celtic influence.

The wooden church in Sat Șugatag



photo: Gabriel Motica

Built in 1679 on the ruins of a former monastery, the **Church of the Nativity of Mary in Hărnicești** has gone through many changes: the old pronaos was extended in 1893, the wall which separated it from the naos being completely destroyed then; in 1911 a porch was added; and in 1942, the altar, too, was replaced. The beautiful icons on wood, by anonymous authors, depicting the Entry into Jerusalem, the Ascension of Christ, and the Annunciation have seen, and been seen, by the whole world, having been shown in various international exhibitions. The church still has the original holy doors, which are richly decorated, and a painted wooden cross.

Once again, steps surrounded by old oak trees and grave crosses direct us towards yet another monument included on the **UNESCO** World Heritage List: **the Saint Parascheva Church in Desești**, built, according to Alexandru Baboș's dating, in 1780, but according to other datings, in 1717, 1720, or 1770. We know that the interior paintings were made in 1780. The inscriptions in the pronaos, iconostasis, and altar reveal the names of the noble families who financed the decoration of the church with paintings. Also from the inscriptions we find out

the names of the painters: "painter Radu Munteanu and Gheorghe". Even if Alexandru Ponehalschi does not sign his name anywhere here, it is assumed that he is the author of the painting on the iconostasis as well as of some of the icons. The pronaos of the church in Desești is dominated by the Last Judgement scene. On the eastern wall, opposite the entrance, Jesus as Judge has his apostles by his side and Adam and Eve kneel before him. To them flock both the hosts of the righteous, represented on the northern wall, and the hosts of the sinful, represented, on the southern wall, as the nations considered enemies at that time, identified by the garments they wear: Jews, Turks, Tatars, Germans, and "frânci" (old Romanian generic name for the Latin Westerners). Also on the southern wall is an impressive River of Fire, which bears the souls of the damned towards the gaping mouth of hell. On the western wall and near the entrance to the church we also see scenes of the Last Judgement as well as the parable of the ten virgins. On the naos vault we see representations of Jesus and the Holy Mother, episodes from the Genesis, and the parable of the Good Samaritan; the naos walls depict various themes from the Old and New Testaments, while in the

Adam and Eve in the naos of the church in Desești

photo: Gabriel Motica





The old church in Breb

photo: Rada Pavel

altar we find the four evangelists, the holy women at the tomb, Abraham's sacrifice, and Jesus as vine, of Eucharistic significance.

In some cases, the itinerary of travelling churches is so tangled, only God understands it. Scientists do too, after extensive research: **the wooden church in Hoteni**, dedicated to St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel, was built in 1790, having been brought to Hoteni from Slatina (in today's Ukraine) in 1895, on the site of a church which had been moved here from Budești Vințești more than a century before. Unfortunately, the interior painting has been destroyed almost completely; the interconfessional relationships, though, are well

preserved, as today both an Orthodox priest and a Greek-Catholic priest serve, alternatively, in the same church.

About the wooden church of **St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel in Breb** we know that it was brought from Copăciș, a neighbouring hamlet which has since disappeared. The wood for the church was cut, according to dendro-chronological dating, in the winter of 1621-1622. The tower retains parts of the old church from Copăciș, dating from 1530, which gives it the record status of "the oldest wooden tower in Romania". The church is not outdone when it comes to the age of the murals, either, preserving, as it does, on the interior walls the

remnants of paintings done around the third decade of the 17th century (most probably, in 1626). The treasures inside the church also include old icons, the altar table, and huckaback towels, whereas in the graveyard there are still many old crosses, made of wood or stone, including crosses inscribed in circles. The church has gone through many changes, such as

in 1643, 1715, and 1864. In the churchyard stands a cross carved by the local craftsman Pătru Pop a' Niții and in the neighbouring yard there is a beautiful (and, sadly, now abandoned) wooden house built in 1903 on the site of an older building. Here lived father Mircea Antal, he who served in the wooden church in Breb for four decades (1955-1996).

April in Hoteni

Ten villages, thirteen churches; similar, and yet, different, described here in a few words. Much more could be said, a book could be written about each and every one of them.

These churches, with their spires piercing the sky, hide in their old wood itineraries of skilled craftsmen, the humbleness of the people living in the countryside, passions and disturbing Judgement Days – centuries of life in Maramureș.

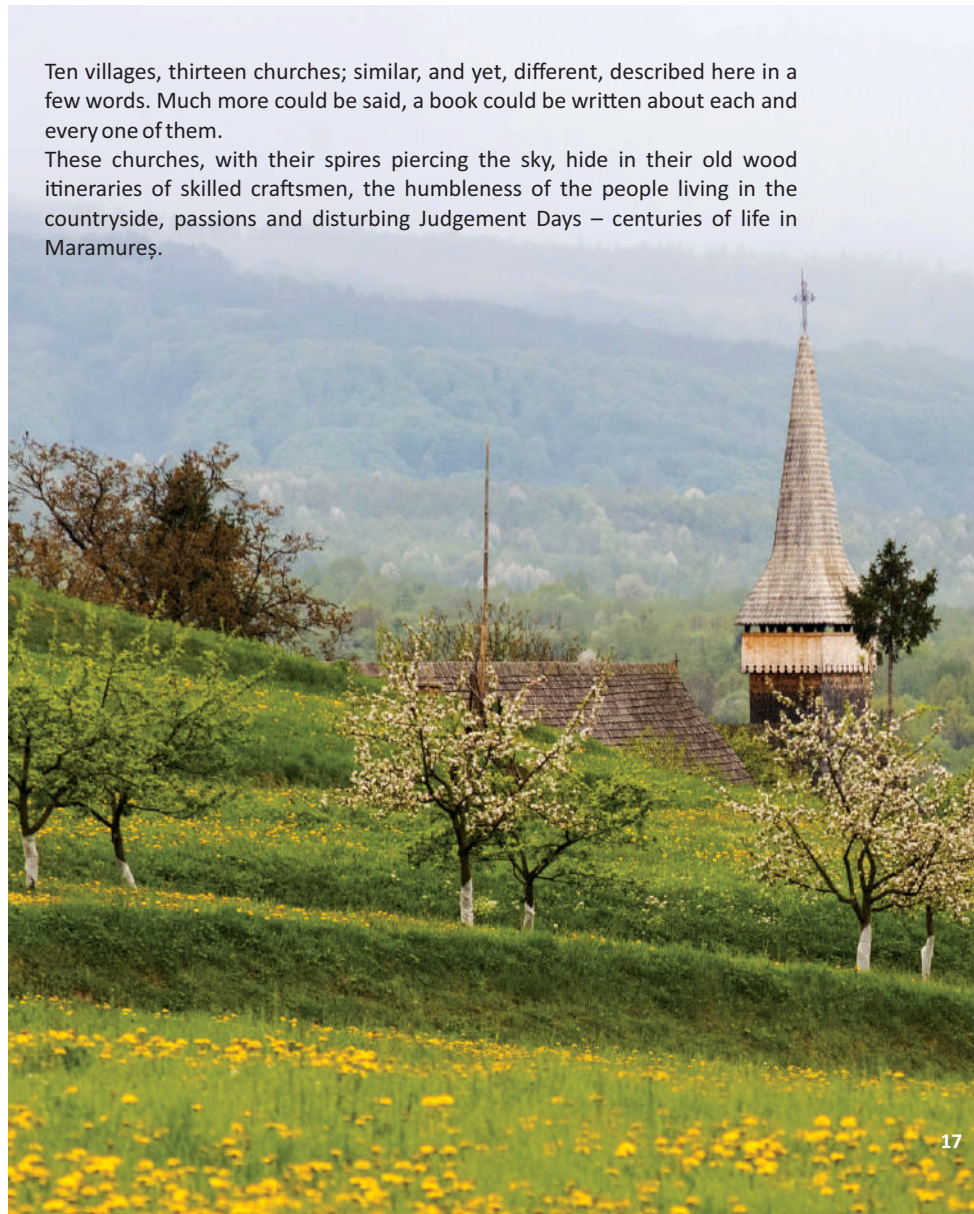


photo: Lorand Valares, Sinteza Magazine

Fabulous Nature: Protected Natural Areas

The Mara-Cosău-Creasta Cocoşului eco-landscape is a series of **seven protected areas** catalogued as reserves and a number of **Natura-2000 sites**, the latter covering the higher regions of the Gutâi and Igriş Mountains. The protected areas are valuable both for specialists, as places showcasing a rich biodiversity, natural geological and landscape phenomena, and diversity of flora and fauna, and as places of attraction for the tourists who crave to enjoy the wonders of the area.

Creasta Cocoşului (Rooster's Crest)

Munţii Gutâi (the Gutâi Mountains) have several higher regions: Gutâiul Mare (1,443 m), Creasta Cocoşului (1,395 m), Trei Apostoli (1,398 m), Gutâiul Doamnei (1,426 m), Secătura (1,390 m), and so on. Creasta Cocoşului, a place which is emblematic for the historical Maramureş and impresses owing to its size and wilderness, is a protected area of national interest and is included in the **Gutâi-Creasta**

Tăul Chendroaiei mirroring Creasta Cocoşului



photo: Peter Lengyel

Cocoşului Natura-2000 site. A ridge formation about 200 metres in length and located at an average altitude of 1,200 metres, Creasta Cocoşului is worth the effort of climbing the paths which lead to it: from the top, you can enjoy a panoramic view of the Maramureş Depression, you can see the extensive mixed forests, large beechwood and spruce areas, the peat bog at Tăul Chendroaiei (Chendroaia's Pond), juniper areas and mountain pastures; a diversity of habitats in which the bear is at home. Similarly at home here are wolf, lynx, wild boar, and deer. If you are lucky enough to see golden eagles or peregrine falcons slashing the air, you will feel what complete freedom is; these birds sometimes nest on the giant rock walls of Creasta Cocoşului. The landscape turns magical when the rays of the setting sun bring in an orange-reddish light, so that cliffs and forest are bathed in a warm, golden light for a few

good minutes, before darkness sets in. If you spend a few days and nights camping in the area, you have a great opportunity to better perceive the natural existence of things in all of their splendour and toughness.

Tăul Chendroaiei (Chendroaia's Pond)

In the immediate vicinity of Creasta Cocoşului there is a marshy area of unique biodiversity; two water pools surrounded by bogs have large deposits of peat up to eight meters deep. This special place is the vital habitat for a multitude of plants, including the carnivorous plant *Drosera rotundifolia* (common sundew), different species of sedges, and numerous species of invertebrates (trichoptera, plecoptera, dragonflies, and so on). For photographers it is not just the fauna that is special, but also the appearance of the waters which mirror Creasta

The king of the Carpathian forests



photo: Peter Lengyel



Tăul Morărenilor: another mirror for Creasta Cocoșului

Cocoșului: the contrasting dualism of the feeble marsh vegetation opposed to the rough massiveness of the dark rocks above it. Around the water pools there is a belt of marshes, surrounded in turn by pastures, which are followed by beech forests, higher still, by spruce woods, and, above them all, by the rocky walls of volcanic memories...

Tăul Morărenilor (Morăreni's Pond)

Between Creasta Cocoșului and the village of Breb, in a mosaic landscape of forests, thickets, and untrodden meadows, there is a hidden lake – of rare beauty, too: Tăul Morărenilor (Morăreni's Pond; also known as Breb's Pond). If you happen to get on its shore, you see the glare of the quiet waters (no more than seven meters deep), laced here and there by marsh plants

and circled by a forest belt. In some places, the water surface moves into oligotrophic swamps... the beginning of the formation of a bog, a series of processes of slow, but steady, ecosystemic transformation. The diversity of plants and animal life is extraordinary: from species of peat moss to sedges, from aquatic snails to caddisflies, from amphibians to water birds, the glacial relict called *Ligularia sibirica* (*curechi-de-munte* in the local dialect, meaning "mountain cabbage"), sundews, three species of alders, and many more. Local legends "enhance the mystery of the place": some speak of two young lovers who, persecuted, find their end in the pond, others speak of herds of sheep swallowed by the swamp, and still others, hard to believe, tell of how the two ponds, Tăul Morărenilor and Tăul Chendroaiei, are linked to the Black Sea by underground channels.

Pădurea Crăiască (The Royal Forest)

Pădurea Crăiască is the most beautiful community of old oaks and holms of all Historical Maramureș. Here there are also huge specimens of larch and pine trees, that is, an oasis of ancient forest surrounded by the landscape of the hills of Maramureș covered in meadows, salt lakes, and orchards. A walk through this landscape of living pillars is truly special. Some of the holms reach heights of over 30 meters, have a trunk diameter of two meters, and are over 300 years old. On a spring visit, especially in the morning, when countless birds which nest here sing, when you see the manifold insects characteristic to oak forests, when you find badger tracks and stumble upon their dens, it becomes obvious to you that Pădurea Crăiască is a hotspot of biodiversity, an extraordinary concentration of species. What else can you do in these woods? You can touch the rough bark of the ancient oaks, the pads of moss on the damp patches... You can listen to the high-pitched shrieks of the sparrow hawk or the caws of the ravens whose nests are in some crooked giant pine tree. You can see how, from a hollow situated somewhere above, in the massive colossus of living wood, bats go out hunting for insects in the evening. To all these is added the diversity of fungi which manifest themselves visibly after rainy summer days.

Lacurile de la Hoteni (The Lakes at Hoteni)

Not far from the houses at the outskirts of Hoteni, a few dimples in the ground shelter the Lakes (or Ponds) at Hoteni, forming a protected natural area of local interest. Here you can see two types of wetlands, both being part of this complex of ponds: the water of the ponds and the marshes of the peat bog. If you stroll around the area, you will see that here there is an elongated body of water surrounded by shrubs and arbors, a kind of aquatic oasis where a small isolated population of pond turtles live. You can admire water birds, such as moorhen, large ducks, grey herons, and so on. Dragonflies of



photo: Peter Lengyel

Pădurea Crăiască's shades of green

various species fly amid the marsh plants, land on sedges, arrowgrass, or cottongrass or venture to hunt insects among the alders, birches, aspens, or oaks. Not far from the water's sheen there is a peat bog area, a marsh with thick peat deposits - actually, a floating layer of vegetable matter under which there is a layer of water. Around Tăurile Hotenilor there are two species of carnivorous plants: bladderworts and sundews... deadly traps for the insects which happen to land on them. Here, then, there is familiar biodiversity... and who knows how many species of which nothing is known about by anyone yet.

Cheile Tătarului (The Tatar's Gorge)

Cheile Tătarului! Old spruces which bend over blackish rocks, basaltic andesites which rise in the guise of walls, columns, or needles! Among the spruce there are also a few deciduous trees, which add to the autumnal palette of colours. Situated at the south-east edge of the extensive volcanic plateau of the Igriş Mountains, Cheile Tătarului (The Tatar's Gorge, a natural protected area of national interest and a part of the Igriş Natura-2000 site) is a special geomorphological formation made up of andesitic rocks while most other gorges are formed in limestone. From a large rippled area of the Igriş volcanic plateau, waters gather in the brook which has deepened Cheile Tătarului. The stream which flows through the gorge is interspersed with low waterfalls formed on weirs, foamy rapids, and whirlpools wherein the trout dash. One of the walls of the gorge is vertical, with cliffs also showing overhangs, whereas on the opposite flank there is only wooded debris. The diversity of lichens and moss is compelling. There are chances you will spot a golden eagle here. A mere rocky irregularity in the vastness of the forest for



photo: Peter Lengyel

Overflying Cheile Tătarului

thousands of years, Cheile Tătarului have, for the past decades, become a tourist attraction for those who love the grandeur of wild landscapes.

"Horses are free" upstream of Cheile Tătarului

photo: Peter Lengyel



Turbăria lezerul Mare (The Big Tarn Peat Bog)

The volcanic plateau of the Igriș Mountains is a wavy landscape of outspread areas of grassland, patches of forests, and numerous marshes. Such marshes are oligotrophic bogs, small in size, installed in places where persistent moisture and the climate have allowed the accumulation of peat deposits over the course of millennia, the deposits here adding up to millions of cubic meters. Among the many marshes on the Igriș Mountains, one of the most representative is lezerul Mare (The Big Tarn), a protected area, of national interest, located at the eastern edge of the volcanic plateau.

On the andesites of a flattened crater – a rock basin of about 100 hectares –, we see a convex-domed bog of about twelve hectares which is six to seven metres higher towards the middle. In some places, the peat deposits exceed ten meters in thickness. By studying spores and pollen extracted from different depths in the peat accumulated at lezerul Mare, it has been possible to sketch the characteristics of the vegetation in the area over the millennia elapsed after the warm post-glacial climax... until our own days. The peat bog has specific flora today, dominated by sphagnum, undergrowth, crowberries, green leopard plants, common sundews, and so on... a biodiversity which is protected by the reserve.

Turbăria lezerul Mare

photo: Peter Lengyel



From the World of Hay

“This flowery miracle is maintained not by nature, but by nature worked with a human hand. The richness is there only because a meadow stays a meadow if it is mown every summer” (*National Geographic*, July 2013).

One might think that a tourist who has seen the Dolomites, the Apennines, or the Styrian Alps would not have much left to marvel at in the setting offered by a handful of villages at the foot of the Gutâi Mountains. And yet, here are the Italians, the Swiss, or the Austrians, marvelling. It is not the mountain heights which amaze them, nor is it the fully-equipped ski

slopes. Instead, it is the distinct cultural landscape, the terraced fields, enlivened by the peasants toiling all day long to raise the haystacks scattered as far as the eye can see.

That is only talking about what you can see. But the above are complemented by the smell of the grass freshly cut on a summer's day and that inebriating sweetness of the air which envelops you from all sides. And of course it will envelop you, for this grass lying at your feet is not ordinary grass, but grass mixed with tens and hundreds of species of flowers which have never known either pesticides or chemical

On the haystack under the mountain



photo: Village Hotel Breb

fertilizers. And then, there's the music of the places: the singing of crickets and of bees, the sharpening of a scythe, and the creaking of the hay carts which travel along the country roads.

If the realm between the Mara and Cosău were a film, then the main character would be hay. The hay which feeds the cattle which in turn feed the families. The hay which has to be mown, raked, tedded, dried in the sun, stacked up in haystacks, boarded on carts, transported to the barn and stable, and fed to the cattle. And then the grass is mown again, raked again... two to three times a year, from summer till autumn, owing only to the strength and skill of one's arms and with the help a few tools: a scythe, a rake, and a hayfork. Connected to hay are the measuring of time, the family's welfare, and even the ruddiness in the children's cheeks. For if the eco-hay did not exist, the milk the children drink would not be clean and healthy, either.

Journalists working for foreign travel magazines journey thousands of miles to document on how bees live in Maramureș, on how the biodiversity of the meadows is preserved, on how the people of these places fool time, stress, and the urban baubles and commotion. They



photo: Emil Pop

Climbing down the haystack

wonder at how the local peasants climb high atop the haystacks and at how they climb down, while the peasants wonder at their wondering. For in the countryside, all these are part of the natural order of things, of the usual order of the day, of the eternity of time.

Hay all the lifelong day

photo: Kalmár Zoltán



Made under Creasta Cocoşului

They say that in the villages in Maramureş, the most industrious is the water of the rivers. Without it, the flour for polenta would not be ground, the loom-woven cloth would not be beaten, the carpets and blankets would not be washed, and the horinca (the local fruit brandy) would not be made.

Since as early as the ancient times, the rapid rivers of **Mara and Cosău** have been used by peasants for all these perfectly natural, perfectly genuine, and perfectly self-sufficient activities with the help of their (perfectly ingenious) traditional installations: whirlpools, fulling mills, flour mills, threshers, distilleries.

Whirlpool in the village of Sârbi

During the communist decades, many of these installations were seized. Others were dismantled afterwards, with the decrease of economic self-sufficiency, their maintenance being expensive and exhausting. Fortunately, some have still been preserved to this day and are functional, especially in the villages on the Cosău valley; most of these installations are concentrated in the village of Sârbi.

Whirlpools (*vâltori*), which are funnel-shaped constructions made of wooden planks, are traditional installations where the large pieces of fabric are washed and thickened. Water,

photo: Gabriel Motica





Waterwheel

photo: Village Hotel Breb

guided through gutters, flows abundantly from a pool positioned at a height and, once in the whirlpool, spins endlessly, battering the fabric. Here it is where the villagers bring their carpets and rugs to wash, especially before Easter, when homes are freshened for the big celebration. Sârbi is the village where four such ancestors of the washing machine still work today, the one belonging to the “Morăreni” becoming a star, in 2013, in an issue of *National Geographic*. In the area, whirlpools are also found in Budești, Călinești, Ferești, Sat Șugatag, Hărnicești, Mara, and Breb.

Also in the household of the Morăreni from Sârbi is a **water-driven carding machine**, whose brushes stretch wool to make it fluffier and easier to spin.

The same water which feeds the whirlpools also spins the vertical wheel which powers the fulling mills. These are installations where oaken hammers beat the loom-woven cloth, for two days and one night, to make it **thicker** and prepare it to become winter clothing: *gube* (hairy woollen coats), *cioareci* (warm felted trousers), and *pieptare* (fur-lined vests). Also in Sârbi, yet this time at the Opriș family, in addition to a whirlpool and a fulling mill you can

see a functioning threshing machine, built in Budapest, in which grain is threshed, and a mill where flour is ground, both of them driven by the same water of the Cosău river.

As for **distilleries**, they are found by the dozens in all the villages. How could they not to be when, without the local brandy, the life of the *Moroșeni* (the people of Maramureș) would be duller, somewhat tasteless, somewhat odour-

Distillery in Călinești



photo: C/IMM

less, somewhat lacking in opportunities to sing. In their turn, distilleries are located along the banks of rivers and streams, whose water is again of great importance, especially in the cooling process. Making brandy is an art, and the *Moroşeni* know all the secrets to making a drink good. The very best. Strong, about 50% ABV, following two rounds of distillation (since a single distillation makes a beverage of only about 25% ABV, too mild for the locals' taste). After the fruit have fermented for the right amount of time, the distillers' wash is set to boil. In the spring and in the autumn (sometimes until winter), the smell from copper boilers under which the fire burns entices in the passerby from afar. And if you enter the distillery to understand what it is about this technique of making brandy, you might very well get out tipsy. Not (only) from tasting, but because of the vapours which permeate the air. A distillery is not only a "liquor lab", it is also a meeting and storytelling place, where you will learn about everything which has happened in the village. Moreover, they say there is no meat tastier than the meat roasted on the embers from under the copper still wherein the "firewater" is made.

Traditional Crafts

The river water of the Mara and Cosău is industrious, but more industrious are the inhabitants of the villages here, who have always known how to make the things necessary for daily living. A decent, self-sufficient living, which shows people's skill in thoroughly using the resources around them. As proof of that, in the villages between the Mara and Cosău, we see the traces of peasant labour everywhere: carved gates, houses, windows, shingle roofs, seal engravers, spindles, agricultural tools, sheepskin coats, vests, woollen coats, felted trousers, shirts, leather peasant sandals, socks, carpets, huckaback towels, woven baskets – a whole universe of things made by hand. There are many skilled craftspeople in these places; to list them all here would be a difficult endeavour since nearly



Pătru Niță, the sculptor from Breb

photo: Gabriel Mărica

every villager is good at handcrafting one thing or another.

The carpenters of Maramureş have long been renowned as gifted. Pătru Pop a Niții from Breb has travelled to exhibitions and fairs throughout Romania, his works in wood having also been admired in many countries abroad. In his small backyard workshop, he still makes spindles on which bells swing, spoons, crosses, and especially beautiful seal engravers, which are used by women living in chastity to stamp religious letters on prosphora.

Vasile Pop-Taina from Desești builds and restores wooden churches, the master craftsmen Ioan and Ștefan Borodi from Budești or Vasile Sima from Breb raise carved gates, Ioan Hotea from Budești makes shingles. Experts in the art of woodworking are also Ion Toporan and Ion Tămaș from Budești, Gheorghe Opriș and Petru Ștețiu from Sârbi, Gheorghe Chindriș and Ion Tiran from Breb, and many others.

Petru Pralea (Sârbi) is one of the ever more numerous artisans who can painstakingly embellish the brandy bottles, inserting wooden ladders and spindles in them – tourists can but marvel at their sight.

The *Moroșeni* of the Mara and Cosău valleys still go to church dressed in peasant clothes. These are the clothes which keep them warm in winter and cool in summer and also distinguish them from one village to the next. Women who weave or sew are found in every village, and the locals can tell you which houses you can find them at. Or you may see them in the street, dressed in some stunning shirt; asking how you, too, can have one like theirs, you discover, in astonishment, that it is made by none other, but themselves! Juja Haiducean, Ileana Mihoc, Ileana Borodi (Sârbi), Maria Marinca, Maria Ciceu, Maria Bud, Maria Pop, Anuța Ciceu, Ileana Roman (Budești), Maria Codrea a lu' Pașcu, Ileana Șandor, Ana Andreica, Pop Maria a lu' Adam, Ileana Borodi a lu' Pricote, Năstafa Mărginean a Niță, Dorina Ciuc a Sârbanului,

Berci Maria a Vălenarului (Călinești), Ileana Hotea (Hoteni), Ileana Bozai, Ileana Pop (Breb), Maria Pop (Desești), Ileana Vișovan (Hărnițești), Pălăguța Bârlea (Mănăstirea), and Ileana Godja (Văleni) are only some of the women who can show the city people how much meticulousness is required to weave or embroider and how much work is needed for wool to become coats, vests, felted trousers, slippers, or rugs. **Sheepskin coats** are made by Ion Bălin from Sârbi, Gheorghe Pop a Uliului from Desești, Ion Tăut from Breb, Sultănica Bledea from Sat Șugatag. The hat makers of the Cosău, such as Victoria Borodi from Budești and Vasile Borodi from Sârbi, can show you how many steps straws or wood shavings go through to turn into hats, while Petru Opreș (Sârbi) is the only one in the area who still crafts leather **peasant sandals**. Then there are craftsmen who weave **hazel-twig baskets** (such as Onisim Vișovan from Breb), blacksmiths who shoe horses, and others like them who are keen on taking forward, through their handicraft, centuries-old traditions.

Maramureș hat

photo: Ioana Socaciu



Time to Eat

On the Mara and Cosău, but, really, all across Maramureș, work has always been highly praised. And survival, through hard work, in a difficult and sometimes unfriendly mountain environment, requires, beyond any doubt, **culinary moments** of reward and regeneration. Both during fasting as well as during feasting, the people here are accustomed to hearty meals; with them, food refinement does not reside in the diversity and exoticism of the ingredients – as is customary in other parts of

Europe –, but, rather, in the simplicity and quality of the raw ingredients. And yet, who says that the **cuisine of Maramureș** is not varied might utter an untruth. Else, how come in Breb the cabbage rolls (Rom. *sarmale*) are called *brozbuțe* when in the very next village, in Budești, they are called *curechi umpluți* (stuffed cabbage) and in another village close by, *haluște*? And the potatoes (Rom. *cartofi*) are *picioici* here and only a few kilometres away, *corompei*?

Maramureș eco-food



photo: Gabriel Motica



photo: Emil Pop

Come and feast!

The local drink – *horinca* – made from plums, apples, or pears is as the men of the places: rough, vigorous, lively. When you gulp it down, you immediately feel warmth, and a great love for people fill you:

“Horincuța de ce-i bună/ De băut sara pă lună/ Cu mândra care-i nebună” (“For what is horinca good/By moonlight to change your mood/With the lover who is shrewd”).

That in the area and all throughout Maramureș drink is, like food, highly praised cannot be denied. But it is also true that the residents’ health is “conserved” by brandy – for, if you drink it, you no longer need either cure or medicine, as nothing ails you any more:

“Câte-un pahar, câte două/ Că așa ne place nouă” (“One glass at a time, or two/ That’s the way we like to chew...”).

Every meal starts with a glass (or two) of brandy, which gives zest for life and for the “heavy”

foods which the feast continues with: from polenta with cheese and fried fat to stuffed cabbage and well-roasted sausages, they are all made to comfort the taste buds of any “mortals”, be they locals or passers-by. Eventually comes the dessert, together with the strong air from the surrounding mountains. The large, golden, fluffy doughnuts (*pancove*, in the local dialect) will lift your spirit to the heights of Creasta Cocoșului.

There is no eco-culinary experience stronger than when you drink the milk given by the cow you hear mooing in the barn and eat the cheese made by none other than the host who lays it on the table for you or the onions and lettuce grown in the little garden by the house. All while listening to the stories of those who have managed to live in holy communion with nature, with the mountains and the forests, with the waters which have borne their songs and dances, but also with the apparently poor land which feeds them royally.

Ecotourist at an Eco-destination

You have arrived in Maramureș. In the countryside. At an eco-destination. You already know that you are awaited by a lot of old wooden churches, protected natural areas, craftspeople and whirlpools, copious meals, and hay. Lots of hay. What you do not know yet, perhaps, is that this destination does not disclose itself just like that, it does not exhibit everywhere what is most precious and most authentic about it, and the inquisitive traveller, desirous of knowing, active, willing to forget their car in some yard and open all of their senses to this corner of the world, is the one worthy to discover its strengths.

The old wooden churches, whether UNESCO

monuments and famous or hidden and almost unknown to strangers, are endpoints which deserve to be given time and paid attention to. It is not enough to walk into them; you must enter them with both your mind and soul, you must find their pictorial and architectural treasures in order to better comprehend the spirit of this realm. And since they are “treasures”, visiting the wooden churches will most often prove to be a genuine “treasure hunt” itself. Churches do not have permanent opening hours, only in a few of them visiting tickets are sold, and to have access to them, you must, by necessity, call the number displayed on the front door. Or ask about the key at the

A greenway for sustainable transport

photo: Gabriel Motica



houses near the church. All this happens in case you have not hired a local guide, who would arrange everything in advance and spare you any worry. But once you have entered the church, you will not regret for a minute the time spent in search of the key.

Fortunately, there are still many **craftspeople** in the villages of the Mara and Cosău who have survived modernization. You can see them at work anytime, in their workshops or in their yards. All you need to do is ask about them, knock on the gate, and tell them you want to see how they work. Go inside the workshops of the vest makers, of the hatters, of the women weaving, of the artisans making baskets or decorating bottles with wooden spindles and tiny ladders. You are likely to go home with the objects they have crafted. As a matter of fact, we are urging you to get those objects. They require a lot of work and it is good not to leave the artisans' houses without rewarding their effort one way or another.

Just as it is good to reward the time of those who will start the **flour mills** and the **fulling mills** for the tourists and explain, as only they can, how flour is made, the wool processing stages, or the ingenious mechanisms of whirlpools and distilleries when those, too, are visited. And you will visit them, for otherwise the journey to the Mara and Cosău would not be complete.

You will visit everything which is to be visited, but you have to also take into account the way you will do that. We advise you to get your backpack, take something to eat from the kitchen of the guesthouse where you stayed the night, lace your boots, and **start on foot** through the villages and between the villages. It is one thing to get to the tourist sites on the paved road and another thing to walk through orchards and travel along paths and meadows. And if you have those boots, a backpack, some snacks and if the weather is favourable, **hiking** can carry on. To ponds hidden by vegetation,



photo: Thomas Maxim

Adrenaline on Creasta Cocosului

through forests, to the volcanic rock formation which you can see from everywhere reigning over the villages.

If your feet are strong and you are well-equipped, try **climbing** the huge walls of Creasta Cocosului or, why not, **paragliding** towards the abysses which open from above. Finally: do not forget the binoculars behind (you will not be able to get enough of watching birds...), and especially the camera.

Or have you thought about how many places you can see and how many experiences you can try if you **get on a bike** and pedal on paths, village streets, tracks, cart roads, and former railway embankments? And that all these can be done easily in a destination which has an ideal setting for cycling, marked bicycle trails, and bikes for rent?

Or if you want to move, contemplating the



Innocent reunion

photo: Gabriel Motica

scenery, effortlessly and together with local people, you can make such a trip by **horse-drawn cart**. With no seatbelts or heating in the seats, the cart will take you gently, leisurely, to the rhythm of peasant life, along village streets. Besides, you will not spoil the harmony of nature: your means of transportation, despite the fact that its every single joint squeaks, is neither noisy nor polluting. Transportation by cart can be arranged, on request, by guesthouse owners.

And if you have exchanged a word with the locals in the cart and you have found this and that about their lives, you may want to become more local yourself, you may want to ask them to give you work and, thus, get involved in their **daily activities**. The milk which is milked by you first thing in the morning has a totally different

taste. And it is one thing to take pictures of a day's work in the hay and another thing to get your hands on a scythe or hayfork and find on your own what it is like to toil. If you want to feel what this mystery is, ask the peasants to teach you to scythe, to ted hay, to put it on stacks and get it on carts. Do not be shy, embrace the tradition, and you will understand why manual labour is the best thing which can happen to a city dweller in the summer. Furthermore, you will be rewarded with the best gift: the scent of mown grass. You will never forget something like that.

After all this trouble, you deserve a portion of regeneration: in Ocna Şugatag, through a **salt water cure**, which works wonders. There are more and more guesthouses which have swimming pools filled with water from the salt

lakes of the resort, a remedy for stress, rheumatism, neurological, circulatory, and gynaecological diseases. The only worry you will still be left with will be to be able to wake up in time on Sunday to go to church and once more join the locals and watch them honour their celebrations. Another must on the list of the Maramureş holiday activities!

Now that you have enjoyed this much freedom and learnt first-hand everything the Mara-Cosău-Creasta Cocoşului region has to offer, it would be good to know that a responsible tourist has a set of rules to obey to be a true ecotourist. Below is the Decalogue of ecotourism:

*1. The more you learn about a place before you visit it, the more responsible will you be once you get to your destination. Before embarking on the journey, inform yourself on its culture;
2. To contribute to the preservation of crafts or traditional installations, try to offer something in return. Buy handicraft products or offer small*

donations to artisans who show you their work(shops);

3. If you want to know as best as possible the culture of your destination, contract a local guide, who knows the roads, the villagers, the habits, and the little secrets of the villages;

4. Eat local and seasonal products. If the host should offer you food "from the town", insist and say that you want those from the country;

5. Spare the resources. Do not consume more water and more electricity than you need;

6. Protect nature: do not collect plants from the natural reserves, do not disturb the animals;

7. Avoid motorized transport and, in particular, do not travel by car in protected natural areas;

8. Collect the waste you make during the journey;

9. Be a traveller, not a tourist. Find time to know the music, cuisine, traditions, and everything which bestows uniqueness upon your destination;

10. Respect the local customs, even if they are alien to your own.

About tourists and mountains

photo: Vali Tâmaş



Green Trails

The Mara-Cosău-Creasta Cocoşului eco-destination is crossed by a national highway and a few county roads. But it is time to leave them behind in exchange for roads which usually only see bicycle and cart wheels and only very rarely, if ever, those of cars. Otherwise, you will not find out what these places have to show which is greener, wilder, and more beautiful. The area is replete with trails marked for both hiking and cycling. Some of these trails remind us of “imperial” times: **Măriuța’s Road**, for instance (marked with a blue stripe), has its name linked to Empress Maria Theresa and the places where the Austrian stagecoaches used to cross the Gutâi Mountains on their way between Maramureş and Vienna. In the same

area, a stone carved with the inscription “Renov 1803”, related to the redevelopment of this road, is found in a clearing, *Poiana Boului*. Then, marked today with a red C for cyclists, there are the embankments of **disused narrow-gauge railways**, which had been used to transport wood and salt ever since the times of the Habsburg emperors.

Another noble privilege of the Mara-Cosău-Creasta Cocoşului region is that it is only here that you can hike the **Maramureş Heritage Trail**, a greenway which connects, over a distance of 88 km, two Natura-2000 sites (Igniş and Gutâi-Creasta Cocoşului), seven protected areas (already mentioned), and seven villages on the Mara and Cosău.

Tips for the cyclists reaching Breb



photo: Unicorn Records

As expected, most of the **marked hiking trails** aim for Creasta Cocoşului, the star of the area; there are eight such trails and they average between 2 ½ and 4 ½ hours:

Hanul Pinteazul – Poiana Boului – Creasta Cocoşului (marking: red stripe);

Baia Sprie – Forestry station – Măriuţa's Road – Poiana Boului – Creasta Cocoşului (marking: blue stripe until Poiana Boului, then follow the red-stripe markings to Creasta Cocoşului);

Baia Sprie – Mogoşa Chalet – Şuior Tourist Complex – Poiana Boului – Creasta Cocoşului (marking: red triangle to Poiana Boului, then follow the red-stripe markings to Creasta Cocoşului);

Cavnic – Gutâi Valley – Gutâi Chalet – Poiana Mlejniţă – Creasta Cocoşului (marking: blue cross);

Cavnic – Şuior Valley – Poiana Mlejniţă – Creasta Cocoşului (marking: red triangle to Poiana Mlejniţă, then follow the blue-cross markings);

Cavnic – Şuior Valley – Poiana Mlejniţă – Secătura – Creasta Cocoşului (marking: red triangle to Poiana Mlejniţă, move past the Secătura Peak, then follow the red-stripe markings);

Village of Mara – Hopşia Valley – Şesuri Glade – Creasta Cocoşului (marking: blue cross);

Village of Breb – Tăul Morărenilor – Tăul Chendroaiei – Creasta Cocoşului (marking: red cross).

Once on Creasta Cocoşului, if you are properly prepared and equipped, you are invited to venture against the old volcano, choosing from among the 37 laid-out climbing routes.

Across the Mara river, in the Igriş Mountains, among the most desirable destinations for hiking are **Cheile Tătarului** (reachable by following the red-cross marked trail starting from the village of Mara) and **Iezerul Mare** (reachable by following the red-triangle marked trail starting from Deseşti).



photo: Unicorn Records

Markings leading to Creasta Cocoşului

Since 2014, **bike trails** have also been marked in the area. Following the red-C markings, these trails connect Creasta Cocoşului to the villages of Breb and Mara and then the villages of Breb and Mara to Fereşti and Ocna Şugatag, crossing paths, orchards, cart roads, short segments of county roads, and the old embankments of the Fereşti-Mara-Runcu and Ocna Şugatag-Fereşti-Sighetu Marmăţiei railways.

These are some of the trails marked with blazes, but there are dozens of other, unmarked country roads, which people travelled on from village to village before the age of horsepower; these roads link, for instance, Breb to Hoteni, Sârbi, Deseşti, or Budeşti; Budeşti to Călineşti and Văleni (and, farther away, Glod); Călineşti to Ocna Şugatag; Ocna Şugatag to Mănăstirea; and all of the villages on the Mara Valley are connected by paths moving across gardens of paradise which, in early autumn, spoil you with all sorts of varieties of apples.

Holidays over the Year

The peasants of Maramureş work all day long, but when there is **opportunity for celebration**, they can put their labour aside and turn to God, to honour their saints and **old customs**. Now is the chance to see them clad in their best clothes (the most beautiful shirts, sheepskin coats, kerchiefs, and hats), walking the village streets to the church or knelt there while praying. That happens every Sunday and, even more so, when they celebrate the patron saint of the village church or some other big holiday.

At **Christmas** and **Easter**, not only do all the souls in the village gather for the religious

services, but tourists from all over come and enjoy the wonderment of holidays whose meanings have not been forgotten. The religious feeling combines with the traditional belief; as such, a whole lot of customs and age-old superstitions are linked to all the Christian events. Then, not few are the religious holidays which offer opportunities for dances and village festivals (especially at Easter and Pentecost).

Although increasingly rare, the **agrarian custom celebrations** are colourful and rich in rituals; of all, *Tânjaua on Mara Valley* is the most popular. And if you travel through Maramureş when the

Young and old, heading for the church

photo: Gabriel Motica



locals do not fast and you hear about a traditional wedding under way in the village, get ready to witness a display of adorned riders and horses, a colourful procession of wedding guests, godparents, musicians, quips and rituals which you have never heard or seen before:

"Cine n-a juca mireasa/La vară nu-i taie coasa..." ("He who will not dance the bride/In June will have no cutting scythe...").

"Cetera-l inima me'..." ("The fiddle is my heart...") is the line which many a song from the repertoire of Maramureş open with, and this is not by chance or lack of inspiration, but because, indeed, the fiddle is the instrument which gives voice to the most diverse feelings of the people in these places. Whether it accompanies sweetly, as if from nowhere in particular, the bereavement of the singer or it entices to dancing through bouncing tunes, the fiddle is always present in the life of the Moroşeni. In the Cosău Valley we find it alongside the guitar (*zongoră*) and drums (*dobă*), although in other areas of Historical Maramureş the fiddle is only accompanied by the guitar.



Tânjaia in Hoteni

photo: Emil Pop

Here are the main yearly Christian festivals as well as the other significant events which are held in the villages on the Mara and Cosău:

1 January – New Year's Day, St. Basil's Day: Children go carolling and are gifted cake and money;

6 January – Epiphany: The priest blesses the houses with holy water and the children who accompany him sing *Kyrie eleison*. After the Holiday of the Epiphany, weddings are allowed again, until Lent;

25 March – the Annunciation (Rom. *Blagoveştenia*): To protect the village from diseases and beasts, the householders clean their gardens and light fires;

23 April – St. George's Day (Rom. *Sânjorzul*): The gates and eaves of the houses are decorated with birch branches;

Palm Sunday (the Sunday before Easter): The believers decorate their houses and gates with blooming willow branches (catkins) and give alms for the dead;

Easter: After a long fast, the renewal of the house, sacrificing lambs, painting eggs, and preparing the eatables, the Moroşeni participate in the church service to celebrate Christ's resurrection. On the morning of Resurrection Sunday, the whole village take their baskets to church for consecration (the Paschal foods);

The second day of Easter: dances are held in some of the villages;

The third day of Easter – Dances from the Cosău Valley, Sârbi: Groups of children and young people from Budeşti, but also from other counties, sing and dance in the barn in the centre of the village of Sârbi;



The village dance

photo: Gabriel Motica

The Beginning of May –The Measuring of the Sheep Milk: The day when the sheepfolds are made in the mountains, the sheep are milked, and the milk is measured. During the grazing period, each sheep owner will be given a quantity of cheese in accordance with the milk milked from their sheep. This pastoral custom closes with music and food and drinks brought in knapsacks from the village.

The second Sunday in May – Tânjaua on Mara Valley, Hoteni: An ancient agrarian custom which celebrates the first householder out to plough the land. He is ceremoniously taken to the river by lads carrying twelve adorned cart poles (Rom. *tânjele*, used to yoke the pairs of cows) and by musicians; before reaching the course of the Dărasca stream, the celebrated man tries to escape so as not to be obliged to treat the village to a feast. After the ritual of abundance at the creek, feasting and dances begin. The custom used to be held at Sânjorz (23 April) in several villages on the Mara river;

21 May – St. Constantine's and Helen's Day: The day of the patron saints of the monastery in Budești; **Pentecost (50 days after Easter):** The villagers decorate their houses with green branches; in Budești, the religious ceremony of blessing the crops takes place; also in Budești, the “Nu vă uitați că-s micuț” (“Never mind that I am little”) Festival takes place, where children folk ensembles gather from all the regions of Maramureș. Also on the day of Pentecost, in Văleni they organize dances: *Învârtita vălenarilor* (“The Round Dance of the Vălenari”);

The Holy Trinity (the second day of Pentecost): The day of the patron saints of the Orthodox church in Breb;

29 June – Holy Apostles Peter and Paul Day: In Breb, after the religious service, the faithful start on a procession from the church to the crosses in the village, singing religious songs;

15 August – the Assumption of the Virgin Mary: Pilgrims dressed in white head to the places of worship; the celebration of the patron saint of the wooden church in Călinești Susani;

August – the Goulash Festival, Ocna Șugatag: In the past, the Hungarian residents of Ocna Șugatag were the majority; meanwhile, their number has somewhat decreased, but the recipes for preparing the Hungarian goulash have been preserved;

8 September – Nativity of Mary: The wooden churches in Hărnicești and Călinești Josani celebrate their patron saint;

14 October – St. Parascheva Day: The day of the patron saint of the wooden churches in Desești (UNESCO monument), Sârbi Susani, and Sat Șugatag;

1-2 November – All Souls' Day: The villagers light candles in cemeteries and pray for the relatives gone to the other world;

8 November – St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel's Day: The old wooden churches in Breb, Hoteni, Văleni, and Mănăstirea celebrate their patron saints, and so does the new church in Budești;

30 November – St. Andrew's Day: The most widespread customs on St. Andrew's Day are related to finding one's destined soul mate and to making predictions about the weather and the harvest;

6 December – St. Nicholas: The day of the patron saint of the wooden churches in Budești Josani, Budești Susani, Sârbi Josani, Ferești, and Cornești;

24-26 December – Christmas Traditions: On Christmas Eve, the light never dies and the gates are opened for the hosts to receive carollers in the festively-decked houses. Star singers carry a star on a pole and sing "The Star" (*Steaua*), other carollers perform "The Goat" (*Capra*), while still others deliver dramatized versions of the birth of Jesus (*Viflaimul*);

26 December – The Carols Festival: "Wondrous is the Christmas Eve" (*"Mândră-i sara de Crăciun"*), Budești;

31 December – the New Year's Eve: Customs related to wooing, to finding one's destined soul mate. The New Year's Eve is the night of men; they say that, if a woman enters your house on the night between the years, you will have an entirely bad new year. Children sing "The Little Plough" carol (Rom. *Plugușorul*). In Călinești, the lads observe the custom called, "Shouting over the village".

Every Sunday, in Călinești they attempt a revival of the "Dance in the Barn" (*Jocul la șură*), a recent initiative of Măriuca Verdeș (traditional music singer).

In Breb at Christmas

photo: Gabriel Motica



Eco-useful

How to get to the destination?

You can reach the villages on the Mara and Cosău by road (for drivers) or footpath (for hikers or cyclists). By train, you will only get as far as the railway stations in Baia Mare and Sighetu Marmăției.

For car access, there are the following roads: DN18, from Sighetu Marmăției and Baia Mare; DJ184 and 109F, from Cavnic-Baia Mare (via Neteda Pass); DJ-185, from Bârsana-Valea Izei.

Public transportation: Baia Mare, Sighetu Marmăției, and Borșa are the main bus stations in Maramureș, but there are bus stops all throughout the county, the coaches providing direct or indirect links with the majority of villages. The most frequent trip is Baia Mare-Sighetu Marmăției (and return).

More information at: +40 262 221 777 (Baia

Mare), +40 262 311 512 (Sighetu Marmăției), or www.autogari.ro.

Rent a car:

www.auto.rentacarbaiaamare.ro

www.intechcar.ro

www.ccamotors.ro.

Rent a bike (at the destination):

Babou Hostel, Breb, tel.: +40 262 374 717;

Mărioara Guesthouse, Breb,
tel.: +40 262 374 593;

The Village Hotel, Breb, tel.: +40 725 141 545;

Bontoș Guesthouse, Budești,
tel.: +40 262 373 847;

Irina Guesthouse, Desești,
tel.: +40 262 372 603;

Popasul din Deal Guesthouse, Ocna Șugatag,
tel.: +40 262 374 133.

"To ride or... to ride"

photo: Unicorn Records





Eco-certified guesthouse

photo: Mirel Mihail

Where will you stay?

There are dozens of guesthouses, some more traditional, others more modern, many of which are concentrated in the Ocna Șugatag resort. The guesthouses which are most attractive to tourists are, of course, those nearest to the architecture specific to Maramureș. If they should happen to lack in design and style, the other guesthouses can compensate thanks to the courtesy of the hosts. Currently, there are three Eco-Romania certified guesthouses at the destination:

Mărioara Guesthouse, Breb, www.marioara.ro, tel.: +40 766 271 254;

Padiș House, Breb, tel.: +40 749 080 235;

Țiplea Guesthouse, Ocna Șugatag, www.pensiunea-tiplea.ro, tel.: +40 749 581 135.

Others are under way of certification. Go to www.ecomaramureș.com for updates.

You will find something different at the **Village Hotel**, Breb (www.villagehotelmaramureș.com).

There are campsites both in Ocna Șugatag and in Breb.

Located in an inviting décor, **Babou Maramureș** (Breb, www.baboumaramureș.com) offers camping spots, but also rooms in a hostel set in a former barn which has been refurbished for tourists.



At the sheepfold

photo: Emil Pop

Where to eat?

At guesthouses. At people's places, together with the locals. If you want to order dishes from a menu, you can find a few restaurants in Mara and Ocna Șugatag.

Tourist Information

At the time of writing this guide, tourist information centres (currently not operational) are being set up at Călinești, Ocna Șugatag, Sat Șugatag, and Desești.

Maps and brochures can be found at the guesthouses at the destination or at the tourist information office in Baia Mare (Str. Gh. Șincai, Nr. 46, tel.: +40 262 206 113, www.visitmaramureș.ro).

Maps and outdoor equipment: MaramontSport shop, Baia Mare, Piața Păcii, Nr. 1, tel.: +40 744 503 664, www.maramontsport.ro.

Travel Agents (at the destination)

Greenway Tour, Ocna Șugatag, Str. Unirii, Nr. 1D (Popasul din Deal Guesthouse),

tel.: +40 741 773 683,
www.maramureșgreenways.ro

Authorized Tourist Guides

www.ecomaramureș.com (section Things to Do – Local Services).

Shopping

Souvenirs can be bought from the local craftsmen, food, from the small village shops and from the locals.

At Țiplea Guesthouse (Ocna Șugatag) you can get homemade cakes, pickles, jams, or syrups, all of these preserved by methods passed from generation to generation. You can buy high-quality honey from Gheorghe Pop in Breb, who, besides keeping bees, holds a document proving his noble lineage.

Anything else (from animals to clothing) can be found at the **Ocna Șugatag fair**, which takes place every Thursday.

Pharmacies:

Ocna Șugatag (3), Călinești (1), Budești (1), Desești (1).

ATM's:

There are two ATM's (BRD and CEC) in Ocna Șugatag.

Gas Stations:

At the destination: Ocna Șugatag, Desești.

Useful telephone numbers:

Single number for emergencies: 112;
Mountain Rescue: +40 725 826 668
(+40 SALVAMONT);

County Police Inspectorate: +40 262 207 600;

Bureau of Consumer Protection:

+40 262 218 887;

Budești Town Hall: +40 262 373 669;

Călinești Town Hall: +40 262 373 084;

Desești Town Hall: +40 262 372 601;

Ocna Șugatag Town Hall: +40 262 374 005;

Baia Mare Railway Agency: +40 262 219 113;

Sighetu Marmației Train Station:

+40 262 310 952.

Useful sites:

www.ecomaramures.com

www.maramuresgreenways.ro

www.visitmaramures.ro.

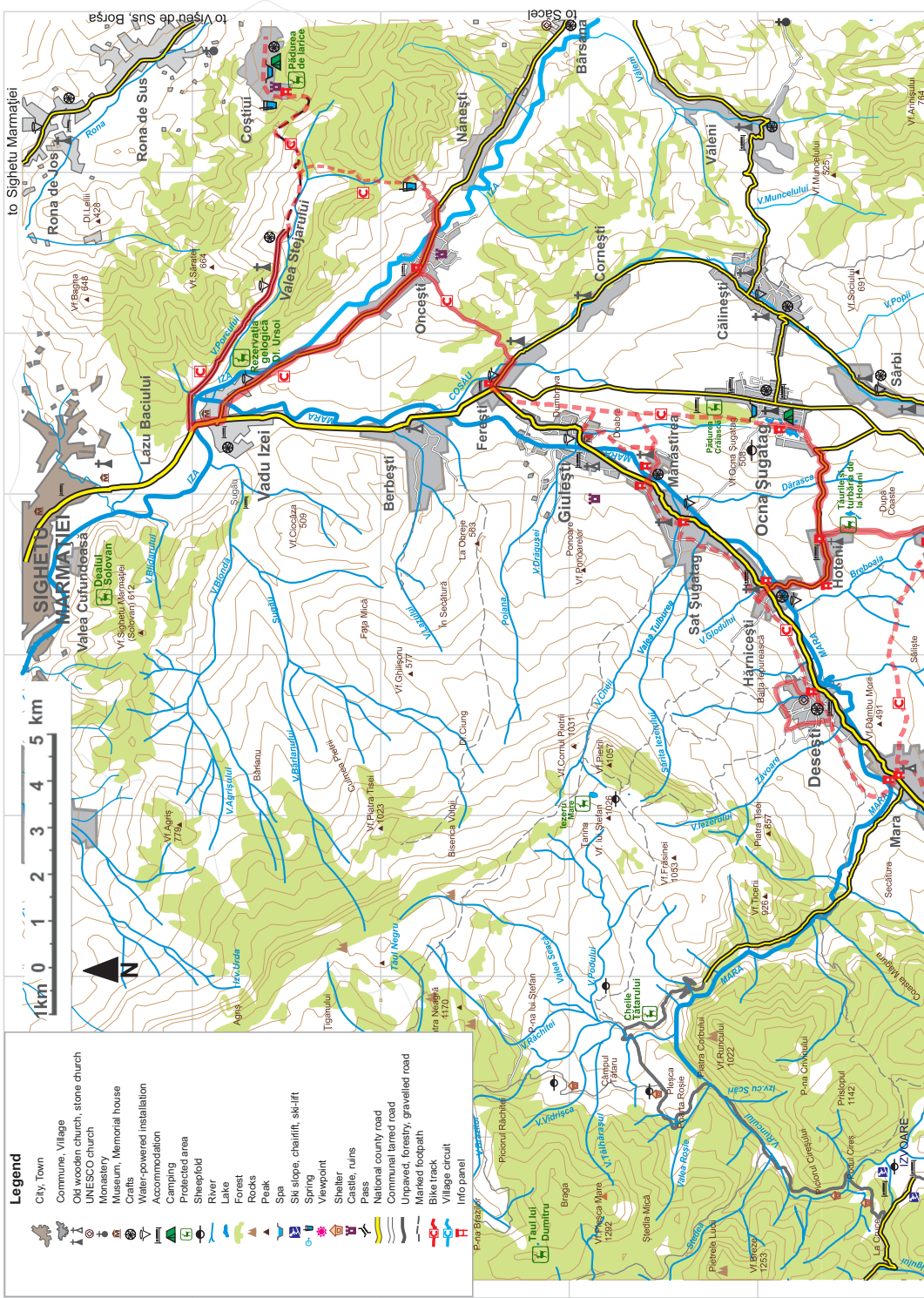
Welcome to our guesthouse!

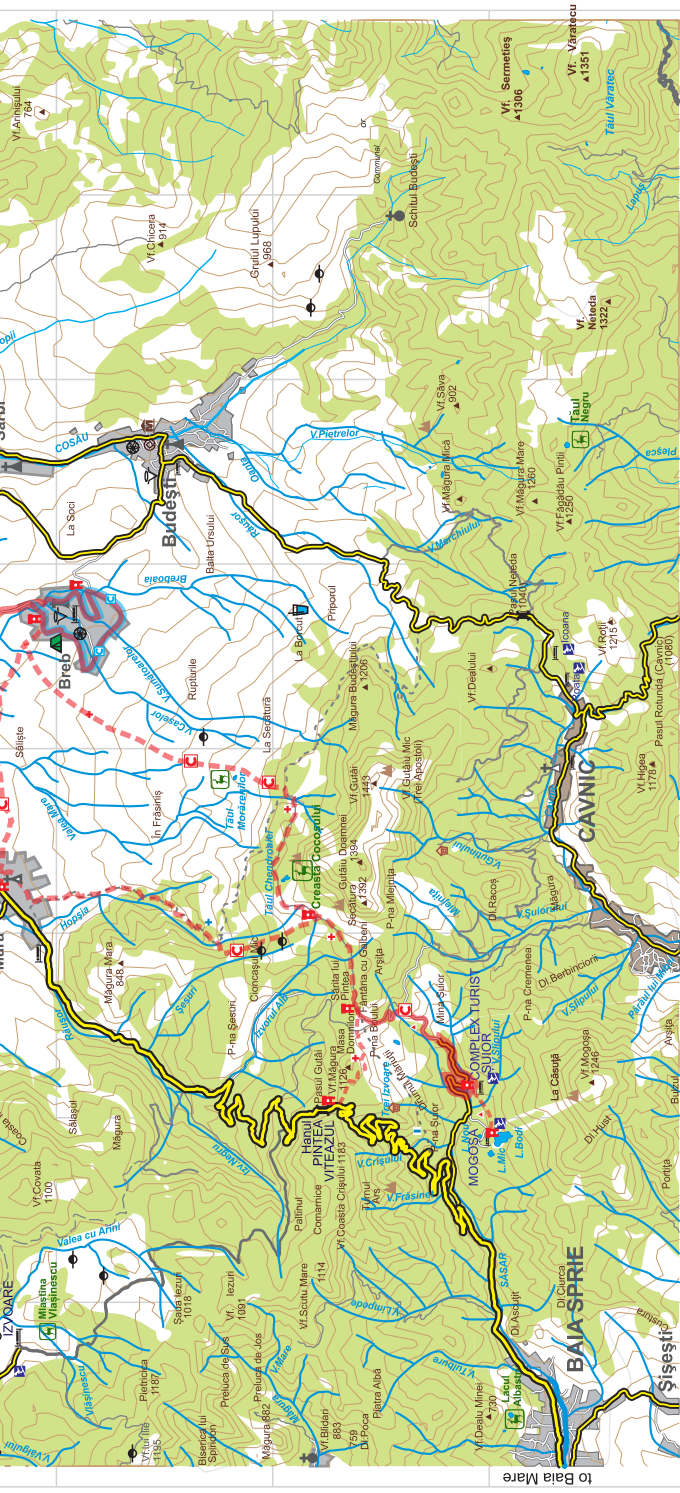
photo: Mirel Mihail



Legend

- City, town
- Commune, village
- Old wooden church, stone church
- UNESCO church
- UNESCO monument
- Museum, Memorial house
- Crafts
- Water-powered installation
- Accommodation
- Camping
- Protected area
- Sheepfold
- River
- Lake
- Forest
- Rocks
- Peak
- Spa
- Ski slope, chairlift, ski-lift
- Spring
- Viewpoint
- Shelter
- Castle, ruins
- Pass
- National county road
- Communal tarred road
- Unpaved, forestry, gravelled road
- Marked footpath
- Bike track
- Village circuit
- Info panel





Mara-Cosău-Creasta Cocosului

The eco-destination map

“Transylvania is not yet a fossil”, wrote *National Geographic* in 2013. Rightly so, the villages of Maramureş – particularly those on the rivers Mara and Cosău – are still alive at their old age. So alive, that it is a pleasure to go through them and see that they have withstood, albeit not entirely, the process of renewal. A bucolic world lives its existence and causes amazement and delight in the city dweller, escaped here from a life hijacked by hamburgers, television, and the Internet.





photo: Volf Tamas



www.eeagrants.org



www.fondong.fdsc.ro



www.repf.ro

This publication has been produced as part of the project "Development of the ecotourism destination Mara-Cosău-Creasta Cocoșului".

Project financed by the EEA grants 2009 – 2014, through the NGO Fund in Romania.

The contents of this material do not necessarily reflect the official position of the EEA grants 2009 – 2014.

Valea Verde Publishing House, August 2015