

World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism in the Carpathians



Background document

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Cover photo: The view from my kitchen window © Zbigniew Niewiadomski

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Executive summary

In September 2015 the UN Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development containing 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and resulting targets, which include SDG target 8.9 to devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products. According to SDG target 11.4 the Member States shall strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage, while by adopting SDG target 15.4 they committed to ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, in order to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essential for sustainable development.

In December 2015 the UN General Assembly proclaimed 2017 the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, emphasizing the potential of sustainable tourism to significantly contribute to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals.

Throughout the last century the Carpathians competed with the Alps in the European tourist market, by replicating the 'Alpine tourism development pattern' and trying to attract the attention of downhill skiers, with limited success. Mostly due to the relatively poor transport accessibility of the Carpathians, resulting from their peripheral geographical location in Europe. Also due to the less developed transport and tourist infrastructure, and less favourable snow conditions than available in the Alps.

However, this apparent backwardness of the Carpathian region can nowadays become a valuable asset for sustainable tourism development. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) the Carpathians are expected to become one of the three most attractive European destinations, in particular for 'ecotourism', nature-based tourism, and culture tourism. Sustainable development of tourism is an opportunity to accelerate the economic development of the region and improve the economic situation of its inhabitants. In order to achieve the above, the unique natural and cultural values of the Carpathians must wisely be used for creating the own Carpathian model of sustainable tourism development, and the unique, comprehensive and all-season tourist offer of the Carpathians.

The Carpathian region is represented on the World Heritage List by 19 properties (mainly representing cultural heritage), which include as many as 87 individual sites or objects, dispersed over the whole region. A relatively high percentage of transboundary World Heritage properties in the Carpathians proves the success of common efforts undertaken by several Carpathian countries, and great potential for further transboundary cooperation on cultural and natural heritage protection in this region.

The most obvious benefit beyond inscription of a site on the World Heritage List is that it brings an incredible increase in public awareness of the site and global recognition of its outstanding values, thus fostering tourism development, which, if organized accordingly to the sustainability principles, can significantly support the revival or development of the local economy. Hence, the successful inscription to, and later the constant appearance on the World Heritage List, together with globally famous top tourist destinations is truly a distinction worth every effort, certifying the globally outstanding value of the site, and determining its tourist attractiveness.

The Carpathians have their own instrument of international law, providing basis for transboundary cooperation and a platform for multi-stakeholder consultations - the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Kyiv, 2003), supplemented by additional Protocols (including the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism). The main goals of the Convention are protection and sustainable development of the Carpathian region, with the overall objective to improve the quality of life, strengthen local economies and communities, and maintain the natural and cultural heritage values of the Carpathians. The Parties to the Carpathian Convention are the seven countries of the region: Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, and Ukraine.

In the context of the Carpathian Convention process (serviced by UN Environment, which provides the Secretariat of the Convention), the World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme by UNESCO, and the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017, coordinated by United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) it is recommended that these three parts of the United Nations system join forces in a multi-stakeholder partnership (as encouraged by SDG target 17.16), in order to allow possible synergies of their concerted activities, involving central, regional and local authorities of the Parties, responsible for sustainable tourism development and heritage conservation, and the local stakeholders in the Carpathians.



Mt. Petros seen from Mt. Hoverla in the Eastern Carpathians, Ukraine

Photo: Stanislav Rico / Wikimedia Commons

Objective of the paper and methodology

The following background document has been prepared with the main objective to facilitate discussions during the international conference “Benefits Beyond Inscription: Leveraging the UNESCO Brand for Sustainable Tourism Development in Central European Regions” on 5 May 2017 in Bardejov (Slovakia) and further consultations concerning cooperation between the Carpathian Convention (which Secretariat has since 2004 been provided by UN Environment through its Office in Vienna), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the UN World Tourism Organization, central, regional and local authorities responsible for sustainable tourism development and heritage conservation, and the local stakeholders in the Carpathians.

This paper has no ambition to be an extensive study, containing scientific and statistical data. Instead, it is much more a compilation of the basic background information collected from existing sources, structured in a way allowing for instant absorption of elementary information on the most relevant facts, concepts and ideas, programmes, and provisions of selected international legal instruments in force in the region concerned. The overall intention of the author was to save your time - firstly by searching himself for various information dispersed among the multitude of documents and websites, secondly by keeping this document submitted for your attention as short as possible.

The author used this opportunity to pose some questions, concerning the potential and prospects for the future development of sustainable tourism in the Carpathians, and allowed himself to suggest few answers - with the hope to provide food for thoughts, stimulate discussions, dialogue and cooperation.

Introduction

Tourism is one of the world’s largest industries, generating some 9% of employment worldwide and 10% of the world’s GDP. Moreover, it is one of the world’s fastest growing economic sectors, with an annual average growth rate about 5%. Tourism, accounting for some 7% of total world exports (and 30% of world services exports) is also an important branch of international trade, ranked sixth after trade in fossil fuels, telecommunications, computer equipment, automotive products, and agriculture.

However, contrary to the other above listed economic sectors which require the access to the deposits of exhaustive natural resources or highly educated personnel and specialized services, tourism industry is mostly dependent on assets generally available worldwide, both in developed and developing countries - nature, landscape, historical monuments, local culture and traditions. This is why the tourism sector is an important source of employment and income for many developing countries.

The tourism industry generates substantial economic benefits, which motivates different countries, regions and municipalities to promote themselves as tourism destinations. The positive socio-economic impacts of tourism include the development or revitalization of local economies, diversification of income sources and increased incomes of the local population, generated directly by investments and employment in the tourist infrastructure and tourism related services, and indirectly through the increased demand for the supply of goods and services required for the operation of tourism-related businesses. The development of tourism usually implies increased investments in infrastructure, e.g. water supply, sewage and solid waste treatment systems, roads and public transportation networks, which further improve the quality of life of permanent residents of a tourist destination.

Tourism development can also translate into increased education and job training opportunities for the local inhabitants, as tourism businesses require the qualified local staff. By offering education and employment opportunities the tourism development can help to mitigate current global demographic trends adversely affecting remote rural areas, in particular mountain regions (ageing of the society, and depopulation in result of migration of younger generations from villages and small towns to larger cities and academic centres).

Last, but not least, the tourism sector, if managed sustainably, can not only strengthen local economies and communities, but also foster the preservation and revival of local cultures, as well as protection of scenic landscapes and nature. However, like all other forms of development, the already large and rapidly growing tourist industry does have an impact on the environment and local communities, often with adverse effects.

In September 2015 the UN Member States, by adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹ which defines 17 **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) and resulting 169 targets, committed themselves to “devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products” (SDG target 8.9) by the year 2030.

Other two global commitments resulting from the 2030 Agenda particularly relevant for sustainable tourism development in the Carpathians are to “strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage” (SDG target 11.4) and to “ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, in order to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essential for sustainable development” (SDG target 15.4) by the year 2030.

In December 2015 the UN General Assembly proclaimed² **2017 the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development**, emphasizing the potential of sustainable tourism to significantly contribute to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals. The Resolution proclaiming the 2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development has mandated the World Tourism Organization (as the United Nations agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism) to facilitate the organization and implementation of the International Year, in collaboration with Governments, relevant organizations of the United Nations system, international and regional organizations and other relevant stakeholders. This Resolution encouraged all States, the United Nations system and all other actors to take advantage of the International Year to promote actions at all levels, including through international cooperation, and to support sustainable tourism as a means of promoting and accelerating sustainable development, especially poverty eradication.

However, several organizations of the United Nations system had been active in the field of sustainable tourism development well before the proclamation of 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. In January 2011 the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) launched the Global Partnership for Sustainable Tourism. In July 2012 the UNESCO World Heritage Committee adopted³ **the World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme**, aimed at involving local stakeholders at WH sites in integrated planning for sustainable tourism development and heritage management at a destination level.

In the context of sustainable tourism development in the Carpathian region the ‘Carpathian Convention’ - **the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians** (Kyiv, 2003) should be mentioned. The Convention came into force in January 2006 and has already been ratified by seven countries of the Carpathian region (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, and Ukraine). This Framework Convention contains a separate Article on sustainable tourism in the Carpathians (Article 9), which provisions were further enforced by the thematic protocol to the Framework Convention - **the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism** (Bratislava, 2011). The Protocol came into force in April 2013, and has so far been ratified by six countries of the Carpathian region (except for Ukraine).

Hence, the Carpathian Convention and the above mentioned Protocol to this framework convention are the only international agreements concerning sustainable tourism development in the Carpathians, in force in countries of this region.

¹ Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Resolution 70/1 adopted by the UN General Assembly on 25 September 2015.

² Resolution 70/193 adopted by the UN General Assembly on 22 December 2015.

³ World Heritage Convention (2012) Decision 36.COM/5E. World Heritage Tourism Programme



Carpathian Biosphere Reserve, Transcarpathia, Ukraine

Photo: Vian / Wikimedia Commons

The Carpathians in a nutshell

The Carpathian Mountains stretch from Austria in the West to Serbia in the South East, and cover border areas of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Ukraine, significant part of Romania and a major part of the Slovak Republic. The southernmost point of the Carpathians, close to the city of Nis in Serbia, is where the Carpathians meet the Balkan Mountains. The entire length of the Carpathian Arch accounts for some 1,550 kilometres, while its part between Danube at the Austrian-Slovak border and Danube at the Romanian-Serbian border, stretches over some 1,300 kilometres. The Carpathians cover an area of over 216 256 square kilometres (an equivalent to five times the size of Switzerland, an area slightly larger than of the Alps which cover 191 thousand square kilometres). However, mountain ranges of the Carpathians are in general much lower than their Alpine neighbours - the highest peak of the Carpathians, Mt. Gerlach in High Tatras, Slovakia, reaches 2,665 m above sea level.

Covering mostly border areas the Carpathians can simultaneously be perceived either as less-favoured or most favoured region of the Central Europe. Less favoured from the market economy point of view, due to political factors banning development in the past, present political and economical marginality, less developed transport infrastructure, high unemployment rates and poverty in some regions, as well as due to natural factors such as topography, low productivity soils and the short vegetation period. Most favoured in biodiversity and cultural heritage terms due to well preserved nature, forests and landscape, rich water resources, traditional way of life and land-use still maintained in highland communities, non-intensive agriculture and limited influence of industry.

The Carpathians support a wealth of biological diversity, which is unparalleled in Europe. This region harbours some of the least disturbed ecosystems of Europe (also vast tracks of montane primeval beech forests) and more than one-third of all European vascular plant species, including numerous endemic and threatened mountain plant species and communities. The Carpathians constitute one of the most important refuges for large animals of primeval habitats of Europe, supporting viable populations of all big native carnivores (including the brown bear, wolf, lynx and wildcat) and all big native herbivores like the red deer, or reintroduced primitive Hutzul horse and free-roaming European bison. The Carpathian mountains form a long ecological corridor linking Western, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, allowing migrations of animal populations and genetic exchange, thus offering one of the last opportunities for bringing some of these rare species back to existence in other regions.



Pip Ivan Observatory (1938) built at 2028 m, Carpathian National Nature Park, Ukraine

Photo: Nikolay Khoroshkov / Wikimedia Commons

Another distinctive feature and important asset of the Carpathians is the rich cultural heritage reflecting centuries of human presence in the mountains. The richness of local cultures in the region constituting a melting pot of Roman and Byzantine rites, developed from interactions and exchanges between various nations and ethnic groups, including Vlach shepherds who migrated and settled along the range between the 13th and 17th century. Today, this cultural diversity is increasingly threatened due to changing social and economic conditions, migration, and globalization. In particular, the depopulation of rural areas has aggravated the loss of traditional land management, agricultural practices, arts, crafts and occupations. Some of the open landscapes (including natural meadows of high biological diversity) and semi-natural habitats, in particular those of mountain pastures used throughout the past centuries for traditional shepherding, are seriously threatened due to the spontaneous forest succession.

The population of the Carpathians accounts for some 18 million people, the prevailing part of which inhabits small towns and mountain villages. However, the distribution of the population is uneven throughout the region, and the socio-economic conditions vary among the different countries (some of which are not the EU Member States). But, in general the local economies, usually based on forestry and small-scale agriculture, can no longer provide enough workplaces to keep the younger generations in the region, if not supplemented by the services sector - in particular tourism-related services. Fortunately, the unique natural and cultural heritage of the Carpathians constitute great assets for sustainable tourism development, and determine the unique tourist attractiveness of the whole region.

Tourism development in the Alps and in the Carpathians

The Carpathians are recently often compared with the Alps, also due to the fact that the Carpathian Convention (Kyiv, 2003) is a younger sister of the Alpine Convention (Salzburg, 1991). In fact, the similarities between these two neighbouring European mountain ranges are countless. The Alps and the Carpathians, both formed by the same (Alpine) orogeny, stretch over areas of more or less similar size, shared by a similar number of countries, including both EU and non-EU member states (i.e. Liechtenstein, Monaco and Switzerland in the Alps, Serbia and Ukraine in the Carpathians).

Both the Alps and the Carpathians are “the water towers of Europe” of vital importance for the major part of the European continent, as the human existence, subsistence and all economic activities conducted in ‘downstream’ regions largely depend on the availability of water, constantly gathered, stored and disbursed by the mountains. Both mountain ranges perform the same important ecological functions, support the wealth of biological and landscape diversity, are home to many different local cultures, and face similar anthropogenic pressures on their natural values.



Cattle grazing in the Alps

Photo: Pexels / Pixabay CC0 Public Domain

Furthermore, both mountain ranges have a similar history in terms of economic development. Until the late nineteenth century the main economic activity of both the Alpine and Carpathian highlanders was the extensive grazing of livestock (cattle, sheep, goats). Throughout the centuries highly elevated mountain areas in the Alps and in the Carpathians always belonged to the least economically developed regions of respective countries.

But, around 1880, in the times of *La Belle Époque*, visiting mountain health resorts, often advised by the doctors to the representatives of the upper class, came into fashion all over Europe. Simultaneously, revolutionary technical inventions (e.g. the telephone, automobile, motorcycle, aeroplane) and the rapid development of the railway network (later followed by the birth of the civil aviation and growing popularity of car and bus transportation) made remote mountain regions more accessible than ever before.

The emergence of new forms of recreation, such as skiing and mountain climbing, contributed to the development of tourism both in the Alps and in the Carpathians. The formerly somnolent small towns and idyllic mountain pastoral settlements gradually transformed into vibrant centers of mountain tourism and spas, offering clean air and pristine mountain landscapes, and utilizing the healing properties of mineral and thermal waters.

Soon after the early pioneer period, the development of tourism in the Alps substantially accelerated, at a pace not feasible for the Carpathians. It has to be noted, that at that time (until 1918) the prevailing part of the Carpathian mountain range (except for its southernmost and easternmost sub-regions) belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which encompassed also many other mountain regions, like the major parts of Eastern Alps, Dinaric Mts., Sudetes, Ore Mts. (Erzgebirge), and Šumava. For obvious reasons the Alps were most interesting and promising for the potential investors, in result private and public investments towards the development of the tourist and accompanying infrastructures (like roads, railways, cable cars, rack railways) in the Alpine regions of the country were much higher than in the remaining, more remote mountain regions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Later, in the first half of the 20th century, the richer societies of Western Europe could easier afford the costly reconstruction of the infrastructure, badly damaged during the two world wars, than their neighbours from Central and Eastern Europe. Finally, the growing popularity of private car travel in tourism, continuing since the late 1950s, further improved the accessibility of Alpine tourist destinations. At the same time the whole Carpathian mountain range remained under the communist regime, which, in particular in its first three decades, supported and promoted rather collectively organized mass tourism than individual holiday making and private car ownership.

In result, throughout less than one century, the Alps have become one of the most important tourist regions of Europe. At the same time, not all Europeans can tell what are the Carpathians, and where can one find them on the physical map of Europe.

Alpine experience

Nowadays the Alpine region is visited annually by approx. 120 million tourists coming from all around the world, especially in the winter ski season. Unfortunately, such intensive mass tourism, concentrating primarily in the more developed ski resorts and spas, has an impact on the chances for maintaining the diversity of cultural heritage and the condition of the natural environment of the region.

Today the Alps are one of the most recognizable tourist brands worldwide, which has achieved a perfect global brand awareness, facilitating further tourist industry development. A good example justifying the above statement could be the fact, that nowadays, regardless of the region and language spoken, the notion of a mountain climber and mountaineering are most often associated with the Alps, by using words "alpinist" and alpinism", instead of other expressions. For instance, these words superseded in Polish language the previously used ones ("taternik" and "taternictwo"), meaning exactly the same, but linguistically associated with climbing High Tatra Mountains, stretching along the Polish-Slovak border.

However, intensive marketing of the Alpine tourist brand over the last decades in conjunction with the steadily increasing globalization of culture led to the proliferation of a number of simplifications and stereotypes. As a result, younger tourists visiting the Alps are sometimes disappointed by the lack of violet cows on alpine pastures, while their parents often expect that every encountered local inhabitant of the Alps must be wearing leather trousers with braces and a Tyrolean hat, plus yodel all day long.

The mass affluence of tourists into the Alps resulted in the urgent need for infrastructure development, in particular: accommodation and catering infrastructure, as well as ski slopes, cable cars and ski lifts, communication and transport infrastructure (roads, tunnels, bridges, viaducts, railway lines), municipality and energetic infrastructure.

This rapid development of infrastructure, undoubtedly conducive to economic development and raising the standard of living of the inhabitants of the Alpine municipalities, progressed at a time when the concepts of "sustainable development" and "sustainable tourism" had not yet been applied in practice. This has led to many immediate environmental threats (e.g. the depletion of water resources, increase in the amount of waste and wastewater discharge, air pollution, soil erosion and landslides, destruction of forest areas), changes in the landscape and environmental degradation, and thus to a partial reduction of natural and landscape values, which determine the tourist attractiveness of the Alps.

In result, beginning from mid-1980s, some of the previously overcrowded and prosperous mountain tourist resorts had lost much of its former popularity and visitors. Moreover, several destinations focused solely on servicing different snow-dependent recreation activities, often remain almost deserted out of the main winter tourist season, while numerous ski resorts at lower altitudes (e.g. Les Portes du Soleil, Kitzbühel, Kranjska Gora) already face the challenge related to the reduced levels of snow and shortened snow seasons, resulting from ongoing climate changes. Last, but not least, the European population is constantly ageing, thus the number of skiers will continue to decrease each year.



View from the lookout tower at the Edelweißspitze, Austria

Photo: Bahnfreund / Wikimedia Commons

The Alps, containing 82 peaks over 4000 m asl, are higher than the Carpathians, thus highly elevated areas and steep slopes in the Alps are much more extensive, less accessible, and less suitable for infrastructural investments than in the Carpathians. Thus, the size and inaccessibility of high altitude mountain areas of the Alpine region partly prevented such from overinvestment and complete clear-cutting, "concreting" and "asphalting", observed in the most visited tourist resorts and ski stations.

Nevertheless, the awareness of the above mentioned risks, for the environment and for the stability of the economic development of the region, led in 1952 to the establishment of the Commission for the Protection of the Alpine Region (currently: CIPRA) by the governments of the Alpine States, and later (in 1991, thus after almost 40 years of continuous efforts) to the adoption of an international agreement on the protection of the environment and natural resources of the Alps - the Alpine Convention (the **Convention for the protection of the Alps**).

Conclusions for the Carpathians drawn from the Alpine experience

Throughout the last century the Carpathians tried hard to compete with the Alps in the European tourist market, by replicating the 'Alpine tourism development pattern', with limited success.

One of the disadvantageous factors is the relatively poor transport accessibility of the Carpathians, resulting from their peripheral geographical location in Europe. In particular when compared to the Alps, centrally located and easily accessible from the big cities of Western Europe by different means of public transport, in just few hours. Most recently this accessibility factor became even more important, as currently the Europeans prefer to split vacations into three or even more shorter tours, of different purpose and to different destinations, depending on the season of the year (e.g. skiing in the mountains in winter, sunbathing and swimming in summertime at the sea coast, plus short city visits, culture tourism, or travels to other continents undertaken in all seasons) than to spend their whole holidays once per year in one location. The accessibility of many regions of the Carpathians recently improved in terms of transport infrastructure. But, many potential visitors are not yet aware of those new developments, and are not yet mentally prepared to undertake a demanding journey to these 'wild, remote and hardly accessible mountains'.

There is also little hope that the Carpathians could quickly catch up with the Alps in the saturation of the whole region with different kind of tourist infrastructure of adequate quality, built and constantly improved in the Alps throughout the last century, by the much wealthier countries than those of the Carpathians. Or, provide a similar extensive offer of diversified 'après ski' activities. Moreover, being higher than the Carpathians, the Alps offer much better snow conditions for downhill skiing, plus more complex and attractive ski packages. 'Alpine' downhill skiing can be practiced there all year round (also on glaciers, completely absent in the Carpathians), while the adverse effects of climate changes (resulting in less snowy winters and shorter skiing season) are more challenging for mountain tourist resorts in the Carpathians than in much more elevated highland regions of the Alps.

Of course, there are some positive exceptions from the above discouraging general picture in the Carpathians - several relatively easy accessible destinations perfectly suited by nature and topography for servicing downhill skiing, having well equipped and relatively easy accessible recreation and seasonal sport facilities, providing top quality overnight accommodation infrastructure and interesting cultural offer. Downhill skiing is very popular in the Carpathian countries, and revenues from winter tourism substantially contribute to the development of local economies throughout the whole Carpathian range.

But, in general, due to the different level of infrastructural investment and different natural conditions in both regions it seems unrealistic for the Carpathians to win the competition with the Alps for the attention of downhill skiers.

It also has to be noted, that the seasonal character of tourist business focused on snow-dependent recreation activities is often the source of economic problems for destinations that are heavily dependent on it. In a case when a particular destination can expect the tourist traffic solely in winter - the local owners of tourist infrastructure (hotels, restaurants, ski-lifts etc.) have to survive the whole year basing on revenues generated over just few months per year (which has also an influence on the prices for their services, paid by their customers). It is also quite a challenge for the seasonally employed personnel (most often recruited among the local inhabitants), facing job and income insecurity (limited opportunities for receiving comparable incomes in-between subsequent winter seasons, and little or no guarantee of employment in the next season), problems with maintaining their public health insurance status, little chances for getting job training and no motivation to settle down or stay in the region. Last, but not least, the prosperity of businesses in such 'seasonal monoculture destination' is uncertain in a longer run, as the demand for services is too much susceptible to fluctuations, accordingly to current temporary fashions in particular years, e.g. for skiing in best marketed destinations, like the Dolomites, the Austrian Carinthia, or famous Three Valleys (Les Trois Vallées) in the French Alps.

The above justifies the conclusion, that the expectation that a simple replication of the development model applied in the Alpine region in the past could allow the Carpathians to compete with the Alps in the European tourist market possible, would be naïve and unrealistic. Such replication is neither feasible nor advisable, and more importantly - is not in the interests of the inhabitants of the Carpathians.

If the development of tourism is not carefully planned and sustainable, it can bring adverse consequences not only for the environment and the authenticity of the cultural heritage of the region, but also the quality and style of life of its residents. The Alpine model of tourism development turned out to be far from sustainable, and there is no need for the Carpathians to follow the same path - mistakes made in the Alps can still be avoided in the Carpathians.

The apparent backwardness of the Carpathian region (understood as less developed skiing, transport or hotel infrastructure) can become a valuable asset for sustainable tourism development, attracting more adventurous visitors, or those already bored with 'civilized areas'. The Carpathians definitely deserve their own strong 'Carpathian' brand for sustainable tourism, instead of trying to imitate the Alps.



Hala Gąsienicowa in High Tatra Mountains, Poland

Photo: uroburos / Pixabay CC0 Public Domain

Potential for sustainable tourism development in the Carpathians

Increasing popularity of travelling to mountain regions is one of the recent trends in the world tourism market. The reasons for the above can partly be explained by the process of urbanization, accelerating on the global level. Every day urban areas grow by almost 150 000 people, either due to migration or births. Between 2011 and 2050, the world's urban population was projected to rise by 72 % (i.e. from 3.6 billion to 6.3 billion) and the population share in urban areas from 52 % in 2011 to 67 % in 2050⁴. People still move to urban areas in the hope of finding a better job and enjoying a higher standard of living. However, for several reasons, they prefer not to stay in cities for their vacations.

The European Union is already one of the most urbanised areas in the world. Today, according to Eurostat, more than 70% of Europe's citizens lives in urban areas, while the UN projects that by 2050 this share will reach 80%. Thus, this growing number of city-dwellers might be attracted to the clean air and water, pristine open landscapes, well preserved wildlife, vast mountain forests, local cultures and their products (incl. handicrafts, 'slow food' and regional traditional agricultural products), and the whole multitude of recreational opportunities that mountain destinations offer.

Other global trends in tourist markets, potentially advantageous for the Carpathians, are the shift from large hotels designed for group tourism to individual tourism, requiring smaller accommodation facilities (e.g. B&B, pensions and chalets) as well as the growing interest of tourists in nature, wildlife, rural areas and culture. This can help to generate awareness and support for conservation and local cultures. Moreover, it can create economic incentives for communities to protect natural and cultural resources, due to synergy effects between tourism, nature conservation and rural development.

⁴ International Electrotechnical Commission (2014) *Orchestrating infrastructure for sustainable Smart Cities. White Paper*. Geneva, Switzerland.

Several years ago it was estimated⁵ that the actual Carpathian region (i.e. considering only those regions and counties that are geographically located in the mountain range) receives approximately 45 million overnight stays (including domestic and international travelers) in a year. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) the Carpathians are expected to become one of the three most attractive European destinations, in particular for 'ecotourism', nature-based tourism, and culture tourism. Sustainable development of tourism is an opportunity to accelerate the economic development of the Carpathian region and improve the economic situation of its inhabitants. But, the unique natural and cultural values of the Carpathians must wisely be used for creating the own Carpathian model of sustainable tourism development, and the own, unique, comprehensive and all-season (resistant to seasonal demand fluctuations) tourist offer of the Carpathian region.

Synergy of conservation activities and sustainable tourism development

The decision to go on holiday, and then on the choice of the destination is primarily determined by the tourist attractiveness of the place, in particular opportunities for interesting use of the time other than necessary for sleeping and eating. Simply put - everyone can comfortably sleep and eat at home, avoiding the hardships and extra costs related to traveling. Therefore, the mere fact of the existence of overnight accommodation and catering facilities in a given municipality is not yet enough motivating potential tourists to choose it as the main destination for their holiday. There must be something else, enough attractive and unique, to make this place "special" and worth a visit.

The inhabitants of the Carpathian region might not always be aware that they live in the immediate vicinity of important cultural or natural heritage objects, unique in the region, country, Europe, or the world. Such objects are tourist attractions, distinguishing a given municipality from among other Carpathian communities. Such attractions (either alone, or together with other interesting objects in the close neighbourhood) can make the tourist chose this particular municipality, town or village as a holiday destination (or at least for a few hours stopover on the route to the other, final destination).

Promotion of such cultural and natural heritage objects as tourist attractions is primarily an opportunity for those municipalities which are currently not among the most fashionable holiday or weekend destinations, and thus cannot count on longer (stationary) tourist stays. It allows for at least temporary absorption of some part of transit tourist traffic, as tourists wishing to visit such interesting sites on their way to their destination may be willing to take advantage of the local catering or accommodation offer. The tourist may also consider that due to the number of attractions, the quality or diversity of the local tourist and recreational offer available, it may be worth to spend the next vacation or holiday there.

The presence of valuable cultural or natural heritage objects, protected by the law, significantly increases the tourist attractiveness of a municipality, allows to enrich and diversify the local tourist offer and better utilize the tourist potential of the municipality, which automatically translates into increased incomes of its inhabitants and the ability to create new jobs locally. In addition, the close proximity of such attractive objects or protected areas increases the attractiveness of the municipality to investors, and the market value of land, allocated for settlement or service purposes under the local land development and spatial management plans.

The outstanding natural and cultural features of the Carpathians are those which make this region "special" and worth a visit. Therefore, protection of cultural and natural heritage of the Carpathians directly contributes to maintaining and building the tourist attractiveness of towns and municipalities in the region, and creating new jobs to handle tourist traffic.

It is worth noting that tourism based on the cultural and natural heritage resources of the Carpathians can yield profits all year round, which could partially reduce the negative impact of the seasonality of tourist traffic during the winter season.

⁵ Ecological Tourism in Europe - ETE (2014) *Background Document of the Strategy for the Sustainable Tourism development of the Carpathians*

Benefits beyond inscription to the World Heritage List

The most important, prominent and globally best known 'quality mark' for cultural or natural heritage objects, confirming and certifying their exceptional outstanding values for mankind is their inscription onto the World Heritage List by UNESCO. The legal basis for establishing, updating and publishing such list is Article 11.2 of the **Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage** (Paris, 1972). Pursuant to Article 4 of this Convention the duty of ensuring the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage belongs primarily to respective States. However, in Article 6 the Parties recognized that the protection of the world heritage is also the duty of the international community as a whole. Therefore, each State Party to this Convention can count, if necessary, on international assistance and co-operation, in particular financial, artistic, scientific and technical assistance.

Accordingly to Article 11 of the World Heritage Convention every State Party shall submit to the intergovernmental World Heritage Committee an inventory of property forming part of the cultural and natural heritage, situated in its territory and suitable for inclusion in the **World Heritage List**. As for today, this list includes 1052 properties in 165 countries. As many as 814 properties (over 77% of the total number) represent the cultural heritage category, 203 properties (over 19%) belong to natural heritage category, while only 35 properties (some 3%) are so called 'mixed' properties, of both cultural and natural values. Only 34 properties are transboundary ones, which implies and requires cooperation of neighbouring Parties.

It should also be emphasized that in 1992 the World Heritage Convention became the first international legal instrument to recognise and protect cultural landscapes, by adopting (at 16th session of the World Heritage Committee, responsible for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention) guidelines concerning inclusion of cultural landscapes in the World Heritage List. To date, as many as 88 properties (including 4 transboundary ones) have been included as cultural landscapes.

So far, in the 45-year long history of the Convention, only two properties had been 'delisted' (removed from the List), which indicates that most Parties usually do their best to maintain and protect the values which justified the successful inscription of a particular site to the List. Some of the World Heritage properties, where such values are officially considered as threatened, are indicated on the **List of World Heritage in Danger**, currently listing 55 properties (37 cultural and 18 natural) in 33 Parties, including not only countries affected by ongoing military conflicts (like e.g. the Syrian Arab Republic) but also those located in prosperous well-developed countries (e.g. "Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City" property in Great Britain, or Everglades National Park in the USA). It should also be noted, that in addition to the World Heritage List, there is also an official **Tentative List** being an inventory of properties which each State Party intends to consider for nomination (currently listing 1 689 sites proposed by 175 State Parties).

All above mentioned lists are updated at least every two years. The most update lists (including the Tentative Lists submitted by States Parties as of 15 April 2017) shall be revised and decided upon by the World Heritage Committee during its coming 41st session, to be held 2 - 12 July 2017, in Kraków, Poland.

The most obvious and immediate among the numerous different **benefits** of implementing the Convention is raising awareness for heritage preservation. Another benefit, particularly important for developing countries, is access to the World Heritage Fund. Annually, about US\$4 million is made available to assist States Parties in identifying, preserving and promoting World Heritage sites. Emergency assistance may also be made available for urgent action to repair damage caused by human-made or natural disasters. In the case of sites included on the List of World Heritage in Danger, the attention and the funds of both the national and the international community are focused on the conservation needs of these particularly threatened sites⁶.

⁶ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/convention/>

Today, the World Heritage concept is so well understood that sites on the List are a magnet for international cooperation and may thus receive financial assistance for heritage conservation projects from a variety of sources. Sites inscribed on the World Heritage List can also benefit from the elaboration and implementation of a comprehensive management plan that sets out adequate preservation measures and monitoring mechanisms. In support of these, experts offer technical training to the local site management team⁷.

But the most obvious benefit beyond inscription of a site on the World Heritage List is that it brings an incredible **increase in public awareness of the site and global recognition of its outstanding values**, thus fostering tourism development, which, if organized accordingly to the sustainability principles, can significantly support the revival or development of the local economy.

The World Heritage brand is well recognised worldwide and always attracts attention from tourism players, particularly tour operators, tourism developers and tourists themselves. The fact that the label represents “Outstanding Universal Values” gives tourists the expectation that visiting the site will be a unique experience and at the same time provides the tourism industry with an easily promoted and almost fail-proof destination. World Heritage Sites are therefore amongst the most popular and heavily promoted attractions⁸.

The World Heritage List encompasses the **most prominent and globally best known tourist destinations**, in particular sites representing the cultural heritage of mankind, such as e.g. Stonehenge in Great Britain, the Pyramids in Egypt, the Acropolis in Athens, Venice and its Lagoon in Italy, Taj Mahal mausoleum in India, Angkor Archaeological Park in Cambodia, the Great Wall in China, Pre-Hispanic Cities of Teotihuacan and Chichen-Itza in Mexico, the City of Cuzco and the Machu Picchu temple in Peru.

Well known natural sites in the World Heritage List include e.g. the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, Yellowstone and Grand Canyon National Parks in the USA, the Galapagos Islands in Ecuador, Serengeti and Kilimanjaro National Parks in Tanzania, the Victoria Falls in Zambia and Zimbabwe, Lake Baikal in the Russian Federation, and the Białowieża Forest in Belarus and Poland.

Therefore, the successful inscription to, and later the constant appearance on the World Heritage List, together with globally famous top tourist destinations is truly a distinction worth every effort, certifying the globally outstanding value of the site, and determining its tourist attractiveness.



Machu Picchu temple in Peru
Photo: Alberto Benini / Max Pixel CC0 Public Domain



Grand Prismatic Spring, Yellowstone National Park
Photo: Clément Bardot / Wikimedia Commons

⁷ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/convention/>

⁸ Borges, M.A., Carbone, G., Bushell, R. and Jaeger, T. (2011) *Sustainable Tourism and natural World Heritage – Priorities for action*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.

World Heritage sites in the Carpathians

The Carpathian region is represented on the World Heritage List by 19 properties (which accounts for only 1.8% of all properties inscribed to this List), located in all seven Carpathian countries. However, due to the fact that the above number includes several serial nominations (where a single WH property may include up to 16 individual separate sites or objects) these 19 World Heritage properties located in the Carpathians include as many as 87 individual sites or objects, dispersed over the whole region.

The World Heritage properties in the Carpathians include (in alphabetical order):

- Bardejov Town Conservation Reserve (SK)
- Caves of Aggtelek Karst and Slovak Karst (HU, SK)
- Churches of Moldavia (RO)
- Dacian Fortresses of the Orastie Mountains (RO)
- Gamzigrad-Romuliana, Palace of Galerius (SRB)
- Gardens and Castle at Kroměříž (CZ)
- Historic Town of Banská Štiavnica and the Technical Monuments in its Vicinity (SK)
- Kalwaria Zebrzydowska: the Mannerist Architectural and Park Landscape Complex and Pilgrimage Park (PL)
- Levoča, Spišský Hrad and the Associated Cultural Monuments (SK)
- Monastery of Horezu (RO)
- Old Village of Hollókő and its Surroundings (HU)
- Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians (SK, UA)
- Tokaj Wine Region Historic Cultural Landscape (HU)
- Vlkolínec (SK)
- Wieliczka and Bochnia Royal Salt Mines (PL)
- Wooden Churches of Maramureş (RO)
- Wooden Churches of the Slovak part of the Carpathian Mountain Area (SK)
- Wooden Churches of Southern Małopolska (PL)
- Wooden Tserkvas of the Carpathian Region in Poland and Ukraine (PL, UA)

Surprisingly, despite the unique natural values of the Carpathian Mountains, the vast majority (almost 90%) of the Carpathian properties inscribed on the World Heritage List belongs to the cultural heritage (including two properties inscribed as cultural landscapes), while the ‘natural category’ is represented here only by two properties, however both serial and transboundary ones. Currently none of the Carpathian properties inscribed to the World Heritage List is considered endangered.

It should be emphasized that the World Heritage List (where the properties from the Carpathian region constitute only 1.8% of the total number) includes three **transboundary properties** in the Carpathians (which accounts for as much as almost 9% of transboundary properties inscribed worldwide), that clearly demonstrates the success of common efforts jointly undertaken by several Carpathian countries, and great potential for further transboundary cooperation on cultural and natural heritage protection in this region. Furthermore, it should also be noted that the two ‘natural’ transboundary properties in the Carpathians account for 50% of ‘natural’ transboundary World Heritage properties located in all mountain ranges of Europe (four in total, the other two are Pyrénées - Mont Perdu in the Pyrenees, and Monte San Giorgio in the Alps).

In other words - the Carpathians are the only mountain range in Europe with more than one ‘natural’ transboundary property inscribed by UNESCO on the World Heritage List. Similarly, one of these Carpathian transboundary properties of the ‘natural’ category is simultaneously the first transboundary Ramsar site, and one of the two transboundary Ramsar sites⁹ in the mountains of Europe (the other are subalpine peatbogs in Karkonosze Mountains in the Czech-Polish border area).

⁹ Ramsar Convention (2016) List of Transboundary Ramsar Sites



Trekking in Retezat Mountains, Romania

Photo: Alex Ciopata / Wikimedia Commons

The above numbers and percentages (as for April 2017) may change in the near future, as the Carpathian countries propose a number of **new sites considered for nomination** (included in their Tentative Lists) to be potentially added to the previously inscribed ones. The proposals from the Carpathian countries include many cultural objects (e.g. the wooden churches of the northern part of the Carpathian Basin in Hungary, or the Smederevo Fortress in Serbia) as well as sites relevant to the 'natural category', like e.g. the Dunajec River Gorge in the Pieniny Mountains (at the Polish-Slovak border, proposed by Poland), the Retezat Mountain Range (Romania), Djerdap National Park in Serbia, and natural reserves of Tatra Mountains in Slovakia.

For the purposes of this background document the following 'ad hoc' invented categorization of World Heritage properties in the Carpathians might be useful:

- Natural sites of either non-animated or animated nature (two serial transboundary properties)
- Cultural sites, related to ancient civilizations (two properties)
- Cultural landscapes related either to traditional practices, or intangible heritage (two properties)
- Cultural sites including historical town centres or important technical monuments (five properties)
- Cultural sites including rural architectural arrangements and village architecture (two properties)
- Cultural sites including historical monuments of traditional sacral architecture (six properties)

Let us now visit all World Heritage properties present in the Carpathians, following the above 'ad hoc' invented categorization, and see which features justify their allocation to a particular 'ad hoc' category (basing mainly on brief descriptions available at respective World Heritage websites).

Natural sites



Domica Cave

Photo: Jojo / Wikimedia Commons



Dobšinská Ice Cave

Photo: Dariusz Woźniak / Wikimedia Commons

Caves of Aggtelek Karst and Slovak Karst

The Caves of Aggtelek Karst and Slovak Karst¹⁰ are a transboundary property, inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1995, and extended in 2000. This property consists of seven components: four sites in Hungary (Aggtelek, Szendrő-Rudabánya Hill, Esztramos Hill, and Plešivec plateau) and three sites on the Slovak side (Silica and Jasov, Koniar plateau incl. Ochtinská Aragonite Cave, and Dobšinská Ice Cave). Moreover, the Baradla-Domica cave system (in Aggtelek component) is simultaneously the first transboundary Ramsar site worldwide, the only transboundary Ramsar site in the Carpathians, and one of only two transboundary Ramsar sites in the mountains of Europe.

The Caves of Aggtelek Karst and Slovak Karst are outstanding for the large number of complex, diverse and relatively intact caves, concentrated into a relatively small area. Located at the border between Hungary and Slovakia, this exceptional group of 712 caves (as recorded at time of inscription, today more than 1000 caves are known in this area) lies under a protected area of 56,651 ha and a larger buffer zone. Karst processes have produced a rich diversity of structures and habitats that are important from a biological, geological and paleontological point of view.

The most significant cave system in the property is that of Baradla-Domica, a cross-border network richly decorated with stalagmites and stalactites, which is an important active stream cave in the temperate climatic zone and a Ramsar site. Also worth mentioning is the Dobšinská Ice Cave - one of the most beautiful in the world. Among the ice-filled caves in the property, the Silica Ice Cave is located at the lowest latitude within the temperate climatic zone. The close proximity of many different types of caves of diverse morphology, as well as important archaeological remains, makes the property an outstanding subterranean museum.

More than 99% of the Caves of Aggtelek Karst and Slovak Karst is preserved in its original natural condition and is well protected. The other 1% has been substantially modified as “show-caves” to allow human use, which includes 300 000 visitors annually.

¹⁰ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/725/>

Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians (and the Ancient Beech Forests of Germany)

The Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians¹¹ property, inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2007 and consisting of ten mountain forest complexes of the total area of 29 278 ha, has recently been extended (in 2011) by adding additional five sites in Germany, encompassing natural ‘ancient’ beech forests totaling 4 391 ha. However, in the context of this document only the original ten sites are relevant, as located in the Carpathians.

In 2007 the Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians property included ten components - four forest complexes in the easternmost part of Slovakia (Havešová Primeval Forest, Rožok, Stužica - Bukovské Vrchy, Vihorlat), and six forest complexes in Ukraine (Chornohora, Kuziy-Trybushany, Maramarosh, Stuzhytsia – Uzhok, Svydovets, Uholka – Shyrykyi Luh).



Primeval forest Havešová, Poloniny National Park, Slovakia
Photo: Benjamín Jarčuška / Wikimedia Commons



Beech forest, Bieszczady National Park, Poland
Photo: Zbigniew Niewiadomski

The Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians represents an outstanding example of undisturbed, complex temperate mountain forests and exhibit the most complete and comprehensive ecological patterns and processes of pure stands of European beech across a variety of environmental conditions. They contain an invaluable genetic reservoir of beech and many species associated and dependent on these forest habitats. They represent key aspects of processes essential for the long term conservation of natural beech forests and illustrate how one single tree species came to absolute dominance across a variety of environmental parameters.

¹¹ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1133>

Cultural sites, related to ancient civilizations

Dacian Fortresses of the Orastie Mountains

The Dacian Fortresses of the Orastie Mountains¹² property, inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1999, includes six sites in Romania (Sarmizegetusa, Costesti-Cetatuie, Costesti-Blidaru, Lunca-Piatra Rosie, Banita, Capalna) containing ruins and traces of fortresses built in the 1st centuries B.C. and A.D. under Dacian rule, which demonstrate an unusual fusion of military and religious architectural techniques and concepts from the classical world and the late European Iron Age. The six defensive works, the nucleus of the Dacian Kingdom, were conquered by the Romans at the beginning of the 2nd century A.D.; their extensive and well-preserved remains stand in spectacular natural surroundings and give a dramatic picture of a vigorous and innovative civilization.

Gamzigrad-Romuliana, Palace of Galerius

The Gamzigrad-Romuliana, Palace of Galerius¹³ property, inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2007, is currently the only World Heritage site in the Serbian part of the Carpathians. Gamzigrad-Romuliana is a Late Roman palace and memorial complex built in the late 3rd and early 4th centuries, commissioned by the Emperor Caius Galerius Maximianus. It was known as Felix Romuliana, named after the emperor's mother.



Felix Romuliana

Photo: Pavle Marjanovic / Wikimedia Commons

The site consists of fortifications, the palace in the north-western part of the complex, basilicas, temples, hot baths, memorial complex, and a tetrapylon. The group of buildings is also unique in its intertwining of ceremonial and memorial functions. The spatial and visual relationships between the palace and the memorial complex, where the mausoleums of the Emperor and his mother Romula are located, are unique.

¹² <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/906>

¹³ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1253/>

Cultural landscapes



Tokaj wine region (view from the Slovak side)

Photo: Pixabay CC0 Public Domain

Tokaj Wine Region Historic Cultural Landscape

Tokaj Wine Region Historic Cultural Landscape¹⁴ property in Hungary was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2002. The property consists of seven components: one bigger area (Tokaj Wine Region, including settlements of Tokaj, Tarcal, Bodrogkeresztúr, Mád, and Tállya) and six small sites (Ungvári Wine Cellar, Rákóczi Wine Cellar, Koporosi Cellars, Gomboshegyi Cellars, Oremus Cellars, and Tolcsva Wine Museum Cellars). The property and its buffer zone together cover the administrative area of 27 settlements (13,245 ha and 74,879 ha of the buffer zone).

The cultural landscape of Tokaj located at the foothills of the Zemplén Mountains demonstrates the long tradition of wine production in this region of low hills and river valleys. The intricate pattern of vineyards, farms, villages and small towns, with their historic networks of deep wine cellars, illustrates every facet of the production of the famous Tokaj wines. The entire landscape, its organisation and its character are specially shaped in interaction with the millennial and still living tradition of wine production. There are two basic types of cellar in Tokaj: the vaulted and the excavated. Some of wine cellars were carved by hand into volcanic rocks, that of King Kalman in Tarcal is known to have been in existence as early as 1110. The socio-cultural, ethnic and religious diversity of the inhabitants, together with the special fame of the Tokaji Aszú Wine has contributed to the rich and diverse cultural heritage of the region.



Tokaj cellars

Photo: Wikimedia Commons - Public Domain



Photo: Pixabay - Public Domain

¹⁴ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1063>

Kalwaria Zebrzydowska: the Mannerist Architectural and Park Landscape Complex and Pilgrimage Park

The property Kalwaria Zebrzydowska: the Mannerist Architectural and Park Landscape Complex and Pilgrimage Park¹⁵ located in the Polish part of the Carpathian region was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1999. Kalwaria Zebrzydowska is an exceptional cultural monument in which the natural landscape was used as the setting for a symbolic representation in the form of chapels and avenues of the events of the Passion of Christ. The result is a cultural landscape of great beauty and spiritual quality in which natural and man-made elements combine in a harmonious manner. The Counter Reformation in the late 16th century led to a flowering in the creation of Calvaries in Europe. Kalwaria Zebrzydowska is an outstanding example of this type of large-scale landscape design, which incorporates natural beauty with spiritual objectives and the principles of Baroque park design. Its natural setting has remained virtually unchanged. It is still today a place of pilgrimage.



Basilica of St. Mary in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska
Photo: Ludwig Schneider / Wikimedia Commons



Sanctuary in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska
Photo: Flickr / Mariusz Cieszewski / Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland

Cultural sites including historical town centres or important technical monuments

Wieliczka and Bochnia Royal Salt Mines

Wieliczka and Bochnia Royal Salt Mines¹⁶ property located in Poland (near Kraków) was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1978 (as one of the first twelve World Heritage sites worldwide), later extended in 2008 and 2013. This property consist of three components: Salt Mine in Wieliczka, Salt Mine in Bochnia, and Saltworks Castle in Wieliczka.

The Wieliczka and Bochnia salt mines are located on the same geological rock salt deposit in southern Poland, which has been mined since the 13th century. This major industrial undertaking has royal status and is the oldest of its type in Europe. The Wieliczka and Bochnia Royal Salt Mines illustrate the historic stages of the development of mining techniques in Europe since the 13th century. Both mines have hundreds of kilometers of galleries with works of art, underground chapels and statues sculpted into the rock salt, that have been preserved in both mines, along with an ensemble of tools and machinery. An underground tourist route has existed since the early 19th century, making a fascinating pilgrimage into the past. The mines were administratively and technically run by Wieliczka Saltworks Castle, which dates from the medieval period and has been rebuilt several times in the course of its history.

¹⁵ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/905>

¹⁶ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/32>



St. Kinga chapel, Wieliczka

Photo: Flickr / laslandes



Salt altar, Wieliczka

Photo: Max Pixel CC0 Public Domain

This property was subject to successful restoration works. In 1989 the Wieliczka Salt Mine was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger, as its 300 kilometres of galleries containing famous works of art with altars and statues sculpted in salt were seriously threatened by humidity due to the introduction of artificial ventilation at the end of the 19th century. UNESCO's World Heritage Fund has contributed US\$100,000 towards the cost of installing efficient dehumidifying equipment in the mine. During nine years of joint efforts by both Poland and the international community, this dehumidifying system was installed, and the Committee, at its session in December 1998, had the satisfaction of removing the site from the List of World Heritage in Danger¹⁷.

Gardens and Castle at Kroměříž

Gardens and Castle at Kroměříž¹⁸ were inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1989, as a property consisting of two sites. This property is currently the only World Heritage site in the Czech part of the Carpathians. The buffer zone of this property encompasses the historical Kroměříž town centre, proclaimed the 'national urban heritage site'. Kroměříž stands on the site of an earlier ford across the River Morava, at the foot of the Chriby mountain range which dominates the central part of Moravia. The gardens and castle of Kroměříž are an exceptionally complete and well-preserved example of a European Baroque princely residence and its gardens of the 17th and 18th centuries. The ensemble at Kroměříž, and in particular the Pleasure Garden, played a significant role in the development of Baroque garden and palace design in central Europe.



Kroměříž Town Square

Photo: Ladislav Baroš ml. / Wikimedia Commons



Kroměříž Gardens

Photo: Markéta Hanušová / Wikimedia Commons

¹⁷ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/107/>

¹⁸ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/860>

Historic Town of Banská Štiavnica and the Technical Monuments in its Vicinity

The Historic Town of Banská Štiavnica and the Technical Monuments in its Vicinity¹⁹, a single property inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1993, is an outstanding example of an important mining settlement that has developed since the Middle Ages. Located in the mountains of Štiavnické Vrchy, this property includes the urban centre of Banská Štiavnica as well as the surrounding landscape featuring relics of the mining and metallurgical activities of the past, especially gold and silver. Most of the mining resources are located outside the urban area but within the Štiavnické Vrchy Protected Landscape Area.



Banská Štiavnica in autumn

Photo: Ralle7 / Wikimedia Commons

The town of Banská Štiavnica, the oldest mining town in Slovakia, was established in the 13th century, although evidence of mining dates back to the late Bronze Age. While it served as an important town during the Middle Ages, the surviving urban centre was formed during the 16th century. It is characterized by the grand late Gothic and Renaissance burgher houses, the town hall, and the late Gothic Church of Saint Catherine. In the same era, a fortification system was built which has visible remains in the fortress of the Old Castle, the Renaissance watchtower of the New Castle, and the only surviving town gate.

The establishment of the first Mining and Forestry Academy in Europe in 1762 demonstrates the importance of this town as a centre for the education of mining experts. Moreover, an extensive complex of technical works, connected with mining and processing of polymetallic ores, can be found in the town and in its vicinity. Surviving components include shafts, tunnels, mining towers, a knocking tower, and a sophisticated water management system.

¹⁹ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/618>

Bardejov Town Conservation Reserve

Bardejov Town Conservation Reserve²⁰ is a single property, inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2000. Bardejov is located in north-eastern Slovakia near the Polish border. Due to its proximity to the major trade route across the Carpathian Mountains, from Hungary into Poland, Bardejov was able to develop into an important town. Bardejov is a small but exceptionally complete and well-preserved example of a fortified medieval town, which typifies the urbanisation in this region. Bardejov provides exceptionally well-preserved evidence of the economic and social structure of trading towns in medieval Central Europe. Its surviving building stock represents a developed burghess culture and Jewish community, thus illustrating a multi-national and multi-cultural society.



Basilica of St Giles, Bardejov

Photo: Jozef Kotulič / Wikimedia Commons

The town's surviving urban plan, with a regular division of streets around a spacious market square, is an indication of European civilization from the 13th to 14th centuries. Burghers' houses, dating from the first half of the 15th century, surround three sides of the square and document the highly developed burghess culture. The fourth side of the square is closed by the Roman Catholic Church of St. Giles, a three-naved Gothic basilica with a precious collection of eleven late Gothic altars. The Renaissance town hall occupies the centre of the square. The historic core of the town is encircled by the fortification system which was, at the time of its construction, one of the most advanced in Central Europe. The area of the town's historic core was declared a Town Conservation Reserve in 1950. Bardejov also has a well-preserved small Jewish suburb. This quarter, developed over the 18th century around a synagogue (1725-1747), still contains a unique set of surviving buildings from that era: a kosher slaughter house, some ritual baths, and a meeting building.

²⁰ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/973/>

Levoča, Spišský Hrad and the Associated Cultural Monuments



Spišský Hrad castle

Photo: Pierre Bona / Wikimedia Commons

Levoča, Spišský Hrad and the Associated Cultural Monuments²¹ is a property inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1993, consisting of two components: Spišský Hrad and the its Associated Cultural Monuments, and Levoča and the work of Master Paul in Spiš (the latter added during property extension in 2009). The castle of Spišský Hrad, the town of Levoča, the associated sites in Spišské Podhradie, Spišská Kapitula, and Žehra constitute a remarkable group of military, urban, political, and religious elements, of a type that was relatively common in medieval Europe, but of which almost none have survived in such a complete condition with equivalent integrity. Spišský Hrad has one of the largest ensembles of 13th and 14th century military, political and religious buildings in this part of Europe, and its Romanesque and Gothic architecture has remained remarkably intact. The extended site features the historic town-centre of Levoča founded in the 13th and 14th centuries within fortifications. Most of the site has been preserved and it includes the 14th century church of St James with its ten alters of the 15th and 16th centuries, a remarkable collection of polychrome works in the late Gothic style, including an 18.6 metre high altarpiece completed around 1510 by Master Paul.



Spišská Kapitula

Photo: Pierre Bona / Wikimedia Commons

²¹ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/620>

Cultural sites including rural architectural arrangements and village architecture

Vlkolínec

Vlkolínec²² property, situated in the northern part of central Slovakia, was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1993. Vlkolínec represents the region's best preserved and most complex urban unit of original folk architecture consisting of wooden houses and outbuildings, the wooden bell tower built in 1770, and mural buildings of school and the Church of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary built in 1875. It is a remarkably well preserved rural medieval settlement, dating back to the late 14th century, featuring wooden architecture typical of hillside and mountain areas. Its layout, defined by the hilly terrain of the mountains of Veľká Fatra, features log houses situated on narrow lots with stables, barns and smaller outbuildings in the rear. It is the best preserved and most comprehensive unit of its kind in the whole region. The surrounding landscape is formed by narrow strips of fields and pastures with haylofts. In 1977 Vlkolínec was declared a Reservation of Folk Architecture.



Vlkolínec

Photo: Sebastian Mierzwa / Wikimedia Commons

Old Village of Hollókő and its Surroundings

The Old Village of Hollókő and its Surroundings²³ property was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1987. Hollókő is an outstanding example of a deliberately preserved traditional settlement. This village, which developed mainly during the 17th and 18th centuries, is a living example of rural life before the agricultural revolution of the 20th century. The rural architectural ensemble, which covers 145 ha, consists of 55 residential buildings, farm buildings and the church.

²² <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/622>

²³ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/401>



Hollókő, main street

Photo: Batomi / Wikimedia Commons

Together, the traditional use of architectural forms and materials form a harmonious unit with the surrounding landscape and natural environment, characterized by strip-field farming, orchards, vineyards, meadows and woods. Hollókő is a living community that provides an exceptional and maybe unique example of voluntary conservation of a traditional village. The property also includes the medieval castle ruins situated on the hill perched above the village, which is mentioned as early as 1310.



Hollókő castle

Max Pixel CC0 Public Domain

Cultural sites including historical monuments of traditional sacral architecture

Monastery of Horezu

The Monastery of Horezu²⁴ property, located in Walachia (Romania), was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1993. Founded in 1690 by Prince Constantine Brancovan, the monastery of Horezu is a masterpiece of the 'Brancovan' style. It is known for its architectural purity and balance, the richness of its sculptural detail, the treatment of its religious compositions, its votive portraits and its painted decorative works. The school of mural and icon painting established at the monastery in the 18th century was famous throughout the Balkan region.

Churches of Moldavia

The Churches of Moldavia²⁵ serial property was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1993. It includes eight components, out of which only four are in the geographic scope of the Carpathian Convention implementation in Romania, namely the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin of the former Monastery of Humor, the Church of the Annunciation of the Monastery of Moldovita, the Church of St George of the former Voronet Monastery, and the Church of the Resurrection of Sucevița Monastery (the latter added during property extension in 2010).



Voronet Monastery

Photo: Max Pixel CCO Public Domain

The churches with external mural paintings of northern Moldavia, built between late 15th and late 16th century, are masterpieces inspired by Byzantine art, particularly well preserved. Far from being mere wall decorations, the paintings form a systematic covering on all the facades and represent complete cycles of religious themes. Their exceptional composition, the elegance of the characters, and the harmony of the colors blend perfectly with the surrounding countryside. The interior and exterior walls of the Church of the Sucevița Monastery are entirely decorated with mural 16th century paintings.

²⁴ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/597>

²⁵ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/598>

Wooden Churches of Maramureș

The Wooden Churches of Maramureș²⁶ property (Romania) was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1999. It is a serial property, including eight wooden churches:

- Bârsana - Church of the Presentation of the Virgin at the Temple (1720)
- Budești - Church of Saint Nicholas (1643)
- Desesti - Church of the Holy Paraskeva (1770)
- Ieud - Church of the Nativity of the Virgin (early 17th century)
- Plopiș - Church of the Holy Archangels (1796-1798)
- Poienile/Poiana Izei - Church of the Holy Paraskeva (1604)
- Rogoz - Church of the Holy Archangels (1633/1663)
- Surdești - Church of the Holy Archangels (1766/1777)



Bârsana - Church of the Presentation of the Virgin at the Temple (1720)

Photo: Luminita / Wikimedia Commons

These eight Maramureș wooden churches are outstanding examples of religious wooden architecture resulting from the interchange of Orthodox religious traditions with Gothic influences in a specific vernacular interpretation of timber construction traditions, showing a high level of artistic maturity and craft skills. They show the variety of designs and craftsmanship adopted in these narrow, high, timber constructions with their characteristic tall, slim clock towers at the western end of the building, either single- or double-roofed and covered by shingles. As such, they are a particular expression of the cultural landscape of this mountainous area of northern Romania.

²⁶ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/904>

Wooden Churches of the Slovak part of the Carpathian Mountain Area

The property Wooden Churches of the Slovak part of the Carpathian Mountain Area²⁷, inscribed in 2008 is a serial property, consisting of nine components, including eight wooden churches:

- Bodružal - Church of St. Nicolaus (1658, Greek Catholic)
- Hervartov - Church of St. Francis (around 1500, Roman Catholic)
- Hronsek - articular Church (1725-26, Evangelic church and belfry as a separate site)
- Kezmarok - Church of Holy Trinity (1687, Evangelic)
- Ladomirova - Church of the Archangel Michael (1742, Greek Catholic)
- Lestiny - articular Church (1688, Evangelic)
- Ruska Bystra - Church of the transfer of Saint Nicholas' relics (1730, Greek Catholic)
- Tvrdosin - Church of All Saints (2nd half of 15th century, Roman Catholic)



Bodružal (1658)

Photo: Peter Zelizňák / Wikimedia Commons



Hronsek (1725-26)

Photo: Prskavka / Wikimedia Commons

The Wooden Churches of the Slovak part of Carpathian Mountain Area property consist of two Roman Catholic, three Protestant and three Greek Catholic churches built between the 16th and 18th centuries, most of them in quite isolated villages, using wood as the main material and traditional construction techniques. These wooden churches represent one of the best examples of European wooden religious architecture from the late Middle Ages to the end of 18th century. Their characteristic appearance, construction and at times rather naïve decoration derive from earlier local traditions, partially influenced by professional architectural concepts of Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque styles. Western (Latin) and eastern (Orthodox) building concepts are reflected in these wooden structures, creating specific religious architecture with diversified design, technical solutions and unique decorative expressions. These wooden churches illustrate the coexistence of different religious faiths within a small territory of central Europe, where Latin and Byzantine cultures have met and overlapped.



Hervartov (around 1500)

Photo: Lure / Wikimedia Commons



Ruská Bystrá (1730)

Photo: Henryk Bielałowicz / Wikimedia Commons

²⁷ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1273>

Wooden Churches of Southern Małopolska

The Wooden Churches of Southern Małopolska²⁸ property (Poland) was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2003. It is a serial property, consisting of six wooden Roman Catholic churches:

- Binarowa - Church of the Archangel Michael (around 1500)
- Blizne - Church of All Saints (before 1470)
- Dębno - Church of the Archangel Michael (1490)
- Haczów - Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary / Archangel Michael (after 1459)
- Lipnica Murowana - Church of St Leonard (end of 15th century)
- Sękowa - Church of St Philip and St James the Apostles (around 1520)



Haczów (1459)

Photo: Lucekbb / Wikimedia Commons



Binarowa (1500)

Photo: Sebastian Mierzwa / Wikimedia Commons

The wooden church in Haczów (built around 1459) is the largest wooden gothic church in Europe, and simultaneously the oldest wooden church in Poland. All these wooden churches represent outstanding examples of the different aspects of medieval church-building traditions in Roman Catholic culture, and are the most representative examples of surviving Gothic churches built in horizontal log technique, particularly impressive in their artistic and technical execution, and sponsored by noble families and rulers as symbols of social and political prestige. They offered an alternative to the stone structures erected in urban centres.



Dębno (1490)

Photo: Marek & Ewa Wojciechowsky / Wikimedia Commons



Sękowa (1520)

Photo: Jerzy Strzelecki / Wikimedia Commons

²⁸ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1053>

Wooden Tserkvas of the Carpathian Region in Poland and Ukraine

The serial property Wooden Tserkvas of the Carpathian Region in Poland and Ukraine²⁹ was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2013. It is currently the only transboundary cultural World Heritage property in the Carpathians, and consists of sixteen wooden 'Tserkva' churches (eight in Poland and eight in Ukraine):

- Brunary Wyżne (PL) - Tserkva of Saint Michael the Archangel (1797)
- Chotyniec (PL) - Tserkva of the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1615)
- Drohobych (UA) - Tserkva of Saint George (around 1500)
- Kwiatów (PL) - Tserkva of Saint Paraskeva (2nd half of 17th century)
- Matkiv (UA) - Tserkva of the Synaxis of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1838)
- Nyzhniy Verbizh (UA) - Tserkva of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1808)
- Owczary (PL) - Tserkva of Our Lady's Protection (1653)
- Potelych (UA) - Tserkva of the Descent of the Holy Spirit (1502)
- Powroźnik (PL) - Tserkva of Saint James the Less, the Apostle (1600/1604)
- Radruż (PL) - Tserkva of Saint Paraskeva (around 1583)
- Rohatyn (UA) - Tserkva of the Descent of the Holy Spirit (brake of 15th and 16th century)
- Smolnik (PL) - Tserkva of Saint Michael the Archangel (1791)
- Turzańsk (PL) - Tserkva of Saint Michael the Archangel (1801-1803)
- Uzhok (UA) - Tserkva of the Synaxis of the Archangel Michael (1745)
- Yasynia (UA) - Tserkva of Our Lord's Ascension (1824)
- Zhovkva (UA) - Tserkva of the Holy Trinity (1720)



Uzhok (1745)

Photo: Elke Wetzig / Wikimedia Commons



Turzańsk (1801-1803)

Photo: Ewa Szewczyk / Wikimedia Commons

These tserkvas are an outstanding example of a group of buildings in traditional log construction type which represents an important historical stage of architectural design in the Carpathian region between the 16th and 19th centuries. The architectural forms of the tserkvas with tri-partite plans, pyramidal domes, cupolas and bell towers conform to the requirements of Eastern liturgy while reflecting the cultural traditions of the local communities that developed separately due to the mountainous terrain. The structures, designs and decorative schemes are characteristic for the cultural traditions of the resident communities in the Carpathian region and illustrate a multiplicity of symbolic references and sacred meanings related to the traditions.

The tserkvas represent either Hutsul types in the Ukrainian south-eastern Carpathians at Nyzhniy Verbizh and Yasynia; Halych types in the northern Carpathians either side of the Polish/Ukrainian border at Rohatyn, Drohobych, Zhovkva, Potelych, Radruż and Chotyniec; Boyko types either side of the Polish/Ukrainian border at Smolnik, Uzhok and Matkiv, and western Lemko types in the Polish west Carpathians at Powroźnik, Brunary Wyżne, Owczary, Kwiatów and Turzańsk.

²⁹ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1424/>



Smolnik (1791)

Photo: Jacek Piecuch / Wikimedia Commons



Kwiaton (17th century)

Photo: Krzysztof Suszkiewicz / Wikimedia Commons

Built using the horizontal log technique with complex corner jointing, and exhibiting exceptional carpentry skills and structural solutions, the tserkvas were raised on wooden sills placed on stone foundations, with wooden shingles covering roofs and walls. Integral to tserkvas are iconostasis screens, interior polychrome decorations, and other historic furnishings. The tserkvas with their associated graveyards and sometimes free-standing wooden bell towers and gatehouses are bounded by perimeter walls or fences and gates, surrounded by trees. 13 tserkvas are still used as churches, the other three - Radruż, Rohatyn and Drohobych are kept intact as museums.



Chotyniec (1615)

Photo: Pawel Mazurkiewicz / Wikimedia Commons

The Carpathian Convention

The **Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians** (Carpathian Convention) is the second (after the Convention on the Protection of the Alps) multilateral international agreement on the protection and sustainable development focused on a single mountain region. The Carpathian Convention was adopted and signed on 22 May 2003 in Kyiv, and entered into force on 4th January 2006. The Parties to the Carpathian Convention are the seven countries of the region: Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, and Ukraine.

The Parties to the Convention committed to cooperate, and pursue a comprehensive policy for the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathian region, with the overall objective to improve the quality of life, strengthen local economies and communities, and maintain the natural, landscape and cultural heritage values of the Carpathians.

The Carpathian Convention has no intention to 'replace' other relevant global, regional and subregional agreements, strategies and programmes - by adopting the Convention its Parties aim at ensuring a more effective implementation of such already existing instruments. The Convention constitutes the legal basis for cooperation of the Parties on the issues vital for the sustainable development of the shared Carpathian region. Furthermore, the Convention provides a platform for cooperation and a forum for the dialogue between the inhabitants of the Carpathians, local self-governments, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and government agencies.

The thematic scope of the Carpathian Convention includes:

- Integrated approach to the land resources management (Article 3)
- Conservation and sustainable use of **biological and landscape diversity** (Article 4)
- Spatial planning (Article 5)
- Sustainable and integrated water/river basin management (Article 6)
- Sustainable agriculture and forestry (Article 7)
- Sustainable transport and infrastructure (Article 8)
- **Sustainable tourism** (Article 9)
- Industry and energy (Article 10)
- **Cultural heritage** and traditional knowledge (Article 11)
- Environmental assessment/information system, monitoring and early warning (Article 12)
- Awareness raising, education and public participation (Article 13).

Due to the framework character of the Convention, it does not contain detailed and specific substantive obligations. Such have to be inscribed into additional agreements called "**thematic protocols**", related to different areas of cooperation under the Convention. Thematic protocols result from, and supplement the provisions of the framework convention. Thematic protocols to the Convention are instruments of the international law binding for the Parties, requiring ratification.

Four thematic protocols to the Framework Carpathian Convention have been adopted so far:

- the Protocol on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity (Bucharest, 2008)
- the Protocol on Sustainable Forest Management (Bratislava, 2011)
- the **Protocol on Sustainable Tourism** (Bratislava, 2011)
- the Protocol on Sustainable Transport (Mikulov, 2014).

The 'Biodiversity Protocol' is in force in all seven Parties since 2013. The 'Forestry Protocol' is already in force in six Parties (pending ratification by Poland), similarly as the 'Tourism Protocol' (not yet ratified by Ukraine). The recently adopted 'Transport Protocol' has so far been ratified by three Parties and has not yet come into force. Furthermore, the Protocol on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development is currently being prepared for possible adoption at COP5, to be held in October 2017 in Hungary.

The **Conference of the Parties (COP)**, where all Parties to the Convention are represented is the highest decision-making body of the Carpathian Convention. Its competencies include the adoption of thematic protocols to the Convention, work programs and budget for the following years of implementation of the Convention, establishment of subsidiary bodies of the Convention, and supervision over the implementation of the Convention. Decisions of the COP are taken unanimously, not as a result of a formal voting, but by consensus, where an agreement is reached through negotiations.



Carpathian Convention COP4 family photo

Photo: UN Environment

The key role for the implementation of the Convention between the COP meetings plays the Carpathian Convention **Implementation Committee (CCIC)**, a subsidiary body involving representatives of all Parties to the Convention. The CCIC tasks include preparation of the decisions of the COP, monitoring the progress and recommending activities towards the implementation of the Convention and its Protocols.

Thematic intergovernmental **Working Groups** are subsidiary bodies of the Carpathian Convention, involving experts and representatives of Ministries concerned, from all seven Parties to the Convention.

Eight thematic Working Groups currently support the implementation of the Carpathian Convention:

- Working Group on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity
- Working Group on Spatial Development
- Working Group on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD)
- Working Group on Sustainable Forest Management
- Working Group on Sustainable Industry, Energy, Transport and Infrastructure
- **Working Group on Sustainable Tourism**
- **Working Group on Cultural Heritage and Traditional Knowledge**
- Working Group on Adaptation to Climate Change.

Since 2004 the Carpathian Convention is serviced by the Secretariat, hosted by UN Environment Programme Office in Vienna (UNEP Vienna - **Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention**), supported by the European Academy (EURAC) from Bolzano/Bozen. The Secretariat facilitates communication between all Parties, supports the activities of the various bodies of the Convention, is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the Convention Programme of Work, supports the preparation and implementation of joint projects, and prepares materials for meetings of the Conference of the Parties and its bodies.

Sustainable tourism in the Carpathian Convention

In order to answer the fundamental question “How should sustainable tourism be developed in the Carpathian Mountains ?” it is necessary to answer a couple of other questions, e.g.:

- what are the potential competitive advantages of the Carpathians over other mountain regions of Europe?
- which tourist attractions of the Carpathians can be appealing to tourists already bored with the so-much ‘civilized’ Alps?
- which attractive forms of tourism and recreation can be practiced in the Carpathians, also outside the winter ski season?
- how could tourism development be beneficial for a more Carpathian municipalities than today?
- how to prevent the further concentration of tourist traffic in few selected resorts and the most valuable natural areas?
- how to protect the natural wealth and diversity of the cultural heritage of the Carpathians from the adverse effects the mass tourism can bring?

The above questions are partly answered by the Carpathian Convention and its thematic Protocol on Sustainable Tourism.

Pursuant to **Article 9 on Sustainable Tourism** the Parties to the Carpathian Convention shall take measures to promote sustainable tourism in the Carpathians, based on the exceptional nature, landscapes and cultural heritage of the Carpathians, providing benefits to the local people. The Parties committed to promote transboundary cooperation facilitating sustainable tourism development, e.g. on coordinated or joint management plans for transboundary or bordering protected areas, and other sites of touristic interest.

The provisions of Article 9 of the Convention were further enforced by the **Protocol on Sustainable Tourism** (Bratislava, 2011) to the Framework Carpathian Convention, adopted at the 3rd Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP3). This Protocol came into force in April 2013, and has so far been ratified by six countries of the Carpathian region (except for Ukraine).

The thematic scope of the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism includes:

- promotion of the Carpathian region as the destination for sustainable tourism (Article 8)
- development, promotion and marketing the Carpathian regional sustainable tourism products, services and packages (Article 9)
- ensuring the common high quality standards of sustainable tourism (Article 10)
- managing tourist traffic for the benefit of the environment and sustainable local economic development (Article 12)
- planning the sustainable development of tourist transport and infrastructure (Article 16)
- information and experience exchange, capacity building for development and management of sustainable tourism (Article 19)
- promoting transboundary cooperation on sustainable tourism development (Article 20)
- enhancing the contribution of tourism to: the sustainable development of the local economy (Article 11), conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity (Article 13), sustainable agriculture (Article 14), sustainable forest management (Article 15), preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage and of traditional knowledge of the local communities (Article 17), public education and awareness on sustainability issues (Article 18)
- managing impacts of tourism on the biological and landscape diversity (Article 21), managing environmental impacts (Article 22), and socio-economic and cultural impacts (Article 23).

Article 3 of the Protocol defines “sustainable tourism” as *tourism which provides for sustainable use of environmental resources, prevents threats to the biological and landscape diversity on which it is intrinsically dependent and minimizes adverse environmental, ecological, cultural and social impacts; provides educational opportunity increasing knowledge of and respect for natural ecosystems and biological resources; respects the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities conserving their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, contributes to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance, contributes to ensuring viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.*

Article 9.2 of the Protocol perceives the common natural, cultural, traditional and historical heritage of the Carpathians as the specific Carpathian competitive advantages for sustainable tourism development.

In order to allow for a more equitable distribution of the benefits and revenues from the tourist services sector between all municipalities of the Carpathian region, each of the Parties (according to Article 12.2. of the Protocol) shall take measures towards the dispersal and redirection of the tourist traffic. Channeling part of the tourist traffic out of the current main tourist destinations and sensitive sites (such as protected areas) to the areas being less ecologically sensitive, less developed and less explored by tourism, but having sufficient potential to absorb and accommodate part of the tourist traffic.

Due to the fact that the historical objects of the cultural heritage of the Carpathians are mainly located in urban areas (in villages and towns), such redirecting of the part of the tourist traffic, currently concentrated in national parks or nature reserves, would benefit the environment, by reducing the tourism pressure on protected areas of the Carpathians, and mitigating the adverse impacts of mass tourism on fragile mountain ecosystems. At the same time such policy shall contribute to poverty alleviation and allow for more equal sharing of the economic benefits of tourism across the municipalities of the Carpathian region. This can contribute to mitigating current negative migration and rural depopulation trends. Hence, the effects of such policy could simultaneously be beneficial both for the natural environment of the region, and the local economic development.

Another strategy inscribed into the Protocol is to provide economic incentives for heritage preservation and to promote thematic cultural-heritage routes and trails, which disperse tourism and can generate demand for tourist services and local employment even in the off-seasons.

Last but not least, pursuant to Article 17.3 of the Protocol, each Party shall encourage channeling part of the tourism revenues towards supporting the preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage and traditional knowledge of the local communities in the Carpathians, in particular for the preservation and revitalization of traditional architecture objects, traditional handicraft, land-use patterns, local breeds of domestic animals and cultivated plant varieties.

In 2014 the **Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol** (during COP4) adopted the **Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development of the Carpathians** in 2014 - 2024, containing the international “Joint Action Plan” as well as the uniform “Country Action Plan” to be implemented by each Party to the Protocol.

The Carpathian Convention **Working Group on Sustainable Tourism** includes experts and official representatives of Ministries responsible for tourism-related policies of the Parties. The main tasks of the Working Group is to coordinate and guide the implementation of the Strategy for sustainable tourism development, to support the implementation of the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism, and the development of future projects and programmes. Working Group members consult the activities of the WG with their national, regional and local stakeholders (public administrations, NGOs, private sector etc.), transmit the stakeholder’s view to other WG members and ensure the stakeholders’ involvement in the implementation. Working Group members share their expertise and take active part in online consultations, coordinated by the Secretariat, and participate in WG meetings (eight times since 2007). The Working Group reports to the Conference of the Parties through the CCIC.



Protiate Kaminnia Natural Geological Monument, Pokuty-Bukovinian Carpathians, Ukraine

Photo: Sergey Ryzhkov / Wikimedia Commons

Natural heritage in the Carpathian Convention

Article 4 of the Carpathian Convention contains provisions related to the protection and maintenance of the natural heritage of the Carpathians.

The **Protocol on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity** (Bucharest, 2008) specifying detailed substantive obligations of the Parties resulting from provisions of Article 4 of the Convention, is the first thematic protocol adopted to the Framework Carpathian Convention. The 'Biodiversity Protocol' entered into force in April 2010, since July 2013 (when it came into force for Serbia) it is already in force for seven Carpathian countries. Hence, the Biodiversity Protocol is currently (as for April 2017) the only thematic protocol in force for all Parties to the Convention.

The thematic scope of the Biodiversity Protocol includes:

- conservation, maintenance, restoration and sustainable use of natural and semi-natural habitats (Article 8) and the restoration of degraded habitats (Article 10)
- continuity and connectivity of natural and semi-natural habitats, ecological network in the Carpathians (Article 9)
- conservation and sustainable use of species of flora and fauna of the Carpathians (Article 11), including endangered species, endemic species, and large carnivores of the Carpathians (Article 12)
- prevention of the introduction of invasive alien species and/or genetically modified organisms threatening ecosystems, habitats or species, their control or eradication (Article 13)
- cooperation under the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas (Article 14)
- enhancing conservation and sustainable management in the areas outside of protected areas (Article 15)
- consultation, harmonisation and coordination of measures undertaken in border areas (Article 16)
- development and implementation of management plans (Article 17)
- harmonisation of environmental monitoring systems, and development of a joint information system on biological and landscape diversity in the Carpathians (Article 18)
- coordinated scientific research and exchange of information (Article 19)

In 2011 the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (during COP3) adopted the common Strategic Action Plan (SAP) for the implementation of the Biodiversity Protocol, which is coordinated by a similar subsidiary body of the Convention like in the case of the Sustainable Tourism Protocol - the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological and Landscape Diversity.

Cultural heritage in the Carpathian Convention



Sokoliki Górskie - ruined tserkva of the Great Martyr Dimitri (1931) at the Polish-Ukrainian border

Photo: Zbigniew Nlewiadomski

The Carpathian Convention is **the first international agreement directly related to the cultural heritage of the Carpathians**. Pursuant to **Article 11 of the Carpathian Convention** the Parties shall pursue policies aiming at preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage and of traditional knowledge of the local people, crafting and marketing of local goods, arts and handicrafts. The Parties shall aim at preserving the traditional architecture, land-use patterns (reflected in the cultural landscape of the Carpathians), local breeds of domestic animals and cultivated plant varieties, and sustainable use of wild plants in the Carpathians.

The 2nd meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP2) in 2008 in Bucharest decided to develop and establish a **Carpathian Heritage Inventory**, as a tool for the identification, protection and promotion of Carpathian Heritage, thus in line with relevant provisions of other Conventions, ratified by the Parties to the Carpathian Convention, according to which the identification of the cultural heritage is the duty of each State Party (Article 4 of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, Articles 2 and 12 of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Article 6 of the European Landscape Convention, and Article 2 of the Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe).

The **draft Protocol on Cultural Heritage** to support implementation of Article 11 of the Convention has been elaborated in 2012-2014, and discussed at several meetings of the **Working Group on Cultural Heritage and Traditional Knowledge**, involving experts and official representatives of the Ministries responsible for policies of respective Parties concerning the cultural heritage.

The thematic scope of the proposed Protocol on Cultural Heritage includes:

- identification and documentation of the cultural heritage (Article 9)
- inventory of the cultural heritage of the Carpathians (Article 10)
- preservation of the traditional architecture (Article 11)
- preservation of cultural landscapes (Article 12)
- preservation of the traditional land-use patterns (Article 13)
- preservation of local breeds of domestic animals and cultivated plant varieties (Article 14)
- sustainable traditional use of wild plants (Article 15)
- promotion of the cultural heritage (Article 16)
- promotion of the traditional local products, arts and handicrafts (Article 17).

Pursuant to Article 8 of the proposed Protocol, the Parties shall encourage active cooperation among the competent authorities, institutions and organisations at the international level, and with **UNESCO**, with regard to the preservation and promotion of the Carpathian cultural heritage. Furthermore, the Parties shall cooperate, where appropriate, on the preparation and submission of joint applications concerning the inclusion of **serial or transboundary properties** into relevant UNESCO lists.

According to the proposed Article 10 the Parties shall maintain and update inventories of the cultural heritage of the Carpathians. Hence, this Article provides a link between obligations concerning the identification of the cultural heritage, resulting from other Conventions (mentioned above) with the particular priority focus of the Carpathian Convention. The Parties shall also cooperate on defining the criteria, and agree upon the procedure for the nomination of the most valuable and representative elements of the cultural heritage by respective Party for inclusion into the **Carpathian Cultural Heritage Inventory**. Pursuant to subsequent proposed Articles - such nomination should result in an obligation for respective Parties to ensure **preservation of the cultural heritage** included in the Carpathian Cultural Heritage Inventory, e.g. objects of the traditional architecture of the Carpathians (Article 11), and areas important for the preservation of cultural landscapes (article 12).

The above solutions proposed in the draft Protocol on Cultural Heritage to the Carpathian Convention take into account, that not all valuable objects and areas, of vital importance for the preservation of the cultural heritage of the Carpathian region can be nominated by the Parties for the inclusion to the **World Heritage List** by UNESCO. Hence, the nomination for the Carpathian Cultural Heritage Inventory under the Carpathian Convention could enhance the preservation of these sites by providing international recognition of their exceptional values, in the absence of the World Heritage status. Another benefit behind the establishment of the Carpathian Cultural Heritage Inventory could be the elaboration of a 'shadow list' of objects proposed for inclusion into the Tentative Lists by the Parties, under the World Heritage Convention.

In the context of this document another relevant provision of the proposed Protocol on Cultural Heritage to the Convention is the draft Article 16, according to which each Party shall take measures to promote the cultural heritage of the Carpathians as an asset for the development of **cultural tourism**, in particular by supporting the development of **thematic cultural routes and trails**, linking sites where particular elements of the cultural heritage of the Carpathians can be experienced, in particular those included in the Carpathian Cultural Heritage Inventory.

During COP4 in 2014 the High Level Summit adopted the **Ministerial Declaration on Cultural Heritage in the Carpathians**. The Parties encouraged the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Cultural Heritage and Traditional Knowledge to further develop the draft Protocol on Cultural Heritage and a proposal for a corresponding Strategic Action Plan, in consultation with relevant institutions and local stakeholders (Decision COP4/7.4).



Working Group on Cultural Heritage (field visit)
Photo: Małgorzata Fedas



Working Group on Cultural Heritage (at work)
Photo: Zbigniew Niewiadomski

Cultural heritage as a valuable asset for sustainable tourism development in the Carpathians

Many treasures of cultural heritage of the Carpathian region have not yet been discovered by tourism, which determines an enormous potential for the development of culture tourism in the near future.

The Carpathians indeed have many heritage-related 'unique selling points'. These include different objects of the Carpathian **tangible cultural heritage**, such as historic castles, towns and towns centers, sacral and secular buildings, and historical monuments. Most attractive for the visitors are the objects of wooden folk architecture, following traditional design patterns typical for particular sub-regions of the Carpathians.

Some of these historic buildings are to be seen in **ethnographic parks and open-air museums** of traditional wooden folk architecture (being important tourist attractions themselves), quite common in the region, e.g. in the Wallachian Open Air Museum in Rožnov pod Radhoštěm (Czech Republic), the Museum of Folk Architecture in Sanok, the Orava Ethnographic Park Museum in Zubrzyca Górna, the Sądecki Ethnographic Park and the Galician Town in Nowy Sącz (Poland), Skanzen Vychylovka - Museum of Kysuce Village, and the Open-air Museum of Liptov Village in Pribylina (Slovakia), or the Museum of Folk Architecture, Art and Life in Uzhgorod (Ukraine).

But the vast majority of these objects can still be seen in their original place of construction, where such had been erected centuries ago. Or, what might be surprising, in a different location, like e.g. in the case of the two wooden 'tserkva' temples, both built in Sianki (in Poland, on the northern side of the range) and later transferred across the mountain pass to other nearby villages in Transcarpathia (Ukraine) on the southern slopes of the Carpathians - one built in 1645, then sold in 1703 and moved to Kostryno, and the 'new one' (which in 1703 replaced the 'old one'), sold in 1831 to Sil' village.

Wooden temples of great historical and aesthetic values are probably the best known and most typical manifestation of the Carpathian cultural heritage, probably the most valuable contribution of the region to the treasury of world art.

Despite that a large number of historic buildings (in particular the wooden ones) disappeared forever in the conflagration of the two world wars, the Carpathians region still harbours several hundred wooden temples of different rites. Very few of them are inscribed to the World Heritage List (14 objects in the Polish part of the Carpathians, further nine in Slovakia, eight in Romania and eight in Ukraine).

This is neither much, nor enough, as e.g. only the Polish part of the Carpathian region encompasses as many as 278 Roman Catholic or Evangelical **wooden churches**, plus over 160 Greek Catholic or Orthodox **wooden 'tserkvas'**. The Slovak part of the Carpathian region harbours 38 wooden Greek Catholic tserkvas (incl. three on the WH List), eleven wooden Roman Catholic churches (two of them already on the WH List), six wooden Evangelic churches (three on the WH List) and four wooden Orthodox tserkvas. The Tentative List by Hungary includes the wooden churches of the northern part of the Carpathian Basin. Some other wooden churches had also been nominated by respective Parties, but failed to meet the World Heritage criteria for inscription (however, could possibly still gain the international recognition by their inclusion to the planned Carpathian Cultural Heritage Inventory). Most of these wooden temples can be visited, as a valuable element of thematic cultural tourist trails and routes (e.g. trails of wooden architecture or icons).

An important element of the tangible cultural heritage of the Carpathians, determining the tourist attractiveness of this region, are the **cultural landscapes**. Some of these landscapes include well-preserved historical urban and rural architectural arrangements, other are the result of traditional agricultural land-use and land management patterns, e.g. mountain pastoralism practices, common throughout the region in past centuries.

The 'tangible' category includes also other elements of cultural heritage, quite attractive for the tourists, related to traditional crafts and vanishing occupations, in particular **products of local traditional arts and handicrafts**, as well as **traditional local agricultural and regional cuisine products**.

Carpathian **intangible cultural heritage** includes beliefs, representations, practices, rituals, ceremonies, expressions, traditional knowledge, skills, dialects and cants, music, oral and dance traditions specific for the Carpathian region, as well as the accessories, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith. This cultural and spiritual heritage not only provides the sense of identity and continuity for the local communities inhabiting the Carpathians, but is also another source of tourist attractiveness of this region. Visitors are attracted to different folk **festivities and celebrations** (e.g. those related to Easter and Christmas traditions, traditional weddings, sheep round-up events), as well as traditional **folk music, song and dance festivals**, reflecting the whole diversity of cultures of many nations and ethnic groups inhabiting this mountain region.



Dubai marina
Photo: Pixabay / CC0 Public Domain



Princess Juliana international airport approach
Photo: Lawrence Lansing / CC BY 3.0 CreativeCommons

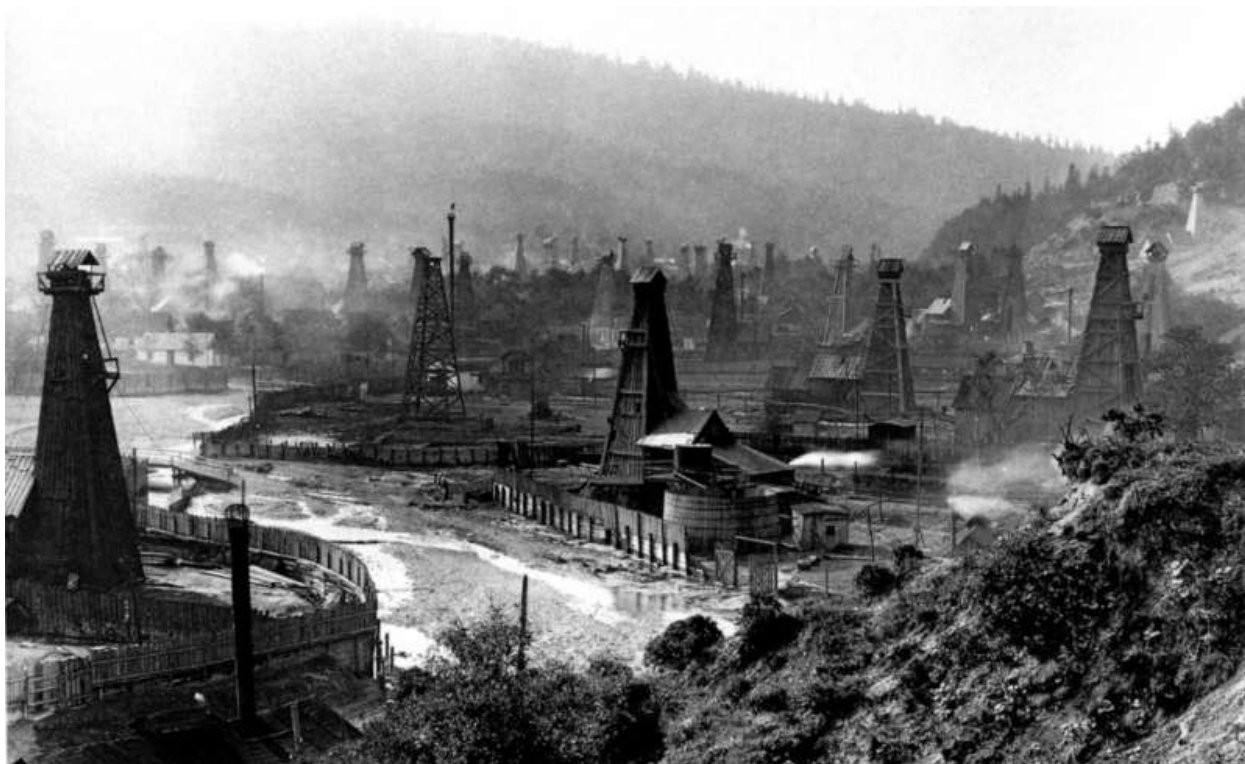
One could probably ask - what does Dubai have in common with the Carpathians? Or a large passenger airplane landing in a tropical Caribbean tourist destination?

Almost unknown in the world (and still untapped for the marketing of the Carpathian cultural heritage) is the fact, that the Carpathians are the original cradle of an industry, currently one of the most important sectors of the global economy. Which additionally allowed the development of two other large global industries so much dependent on the combustion engine - aviation and automotive industry. Going one step further, one could ask: **“How could the global world tourism sector develop without passenger airplanes, tourist busses and private cars?”** (none of which uses steam power, and very few can use electric drive, in particular not yet the aircrafts).

This important industry, originating from the Carpathian region is the **oil mining and refining industry** (currently blamed for its large contribution to the global climate changes).

The modern history of petroleum (used since ancient times for military purposes, later as a lubricant, and liniment for cattle) began in mid-19th century with refining kerosene from crude oil. In 1852/1853 a Polish pharmacist Ignacy Łukasiewicz together with his colleague Jan Zeh, researched the processes of refining crude oil and discovered the method of fractional distillation (patented in Vienna in Dec. 1853, and provided by Mr. Łukasiewicz free of charge to J.D. Rockefeller, later founder of the Standard Oil Company). Mr. Łukasiewicz constructed the first kerosene lamp (prototype of the one used during an urgent overnight surgery in a hospital in Lviv on 31 July 1853, commonly considered the birth date of the world’s oil industry). In 1854 Mr. Łukasiewicz co-founded the world’s first crude oil mine in Bóbrka (in the Polish part of the Carpathians, currently an open air Museum of Petroleum and Gas Industry, but the mine is still in operation!). In 1857, in Kłęczany near Nowy Sącz, Ignacy Łukasiewicz established the world’s first petroleum refinery, producing naphtha, lubricants and asphalt.

The demand for fuel, initially for kerosene used for lighting of houses and whole towns was enormous worldwide, this is why the oil mining industry developed so rapidly, and in result in the 19th century the Carpathian region became one of the centres of the world’s oil industry (already in 1909 the annual oil extraction in the Carpathians exceeded two million tons). Furthermore, the boom in the oil industry created demand for timber coming from Carpathian forests (used for the construction of drilling towers, wells, pipelines, tanks and barrels), which transportation required the development of a dense network of narrow gauge forest trains.



Crude oil drilling towers in Borislav, one of the former centres of the world’s oil industry
Photo: © R. Nater / Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention

Mountain **narrow gauge forest trains and railway networks**, some of them preserved by the law as historical monuments but still in operation, are another great tourist attraction of the Carpathian region, of immense potential for sustainable culture tourism development. In the first half of the 20th century the narrow gauge forest railway network in the Carpathians accounted for some ten thousand kilometres of track, and accounted for some 10% of the whole railway network in the region. Nowadays, the few remaining narrow gauge railways which are still in service, in particular those which continue to use the steam locomotives, are the famous flagship tourist products in respective sub-regions of the Carpathians, attracting tourists from other countries and continents (e.g. Japan). The best know and most frequently visited are Čiernohronská railway in Čierny Balog (Slovakia), Vișeu de Sus (Romania), Bieszczady Forest Railway in Cisna-Majdan (Poland), as well as eight narrow gauge lines in Hungary (in Nagybörzsöny, Kemence, Királyrét, Gyöngyös, Felsotárkány, Szilvásvár, Miskolc and Pálháza).



Vișeu de Sus narrow gauge railway, the last of the Carpathian forestry railways in Romania
Photo: CFF Vișeu de Sus official website (<http://www.cffviseu.com/content/en>)

Some of the treasures of the Carpathian cultural heritage are already used for developing the tourist industry (however in a quite sustainable manner) along **thematic tourist trails and routes**. Many thematic trails in the Carpathian region are building on the tangible cultural heritage, by highlighting traditional **wooden architecture, icons, the oil industry, traditional crafts, regional cuisine and local products**, each offering its own touristic appeal.

The **Wooden Architecture Route** in the Polish part of the Carpathians, developed since late 1990s, is primarily targeted at motorised tourism, mainly due to its significant length (over 1400 kilometres in the Małopolska Province, further 1202 km in the Podkarpackie Province, and another 113 km in the Silesian part of the Carpathian region). Several smaller routes in the Małopolska section link as many as 252 most valuable and interesting historical wooden objects (incl. 125 wooden churches, 49 'tservkas', 30 other buildings like old manors or bell towers, 23 groups of buildings, 16 museums and nine open air museums). The nine tourist routes of the Podkarpackie section link 127 wooden architecture objects, and the Silesian section includes 18 single objects and 6 regional museums. Only 14 (out of several hundred) of these wooden buildings are inscribed to the World Heritage List by UNESCO, while the vast majority of other historical monuments of traditional wooden architecture probably deserves inclusion to the planned Carpathian Cultural Heritage Inventory.

Some of the already existing thematic tourist trails and routes in the Carpathians have a **transboundary** character. The **Oil Industry Route** links Polish and Ukrainian parts of the Carpathian region where the world's first oil mines and refineries were operating in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including of course the Museum of Petroleum and Gas Industry in Bóbrka (close to the city of Krosno and the route of the currently developed Via Carpathia towards the nearby border crossing with Slovakia).

The transboundary **Gothic Route**, resulting from the common Polish-Slovak cooperation initiative, links numerous historical gothic monuments (including gothic castles and wooden churches) in the border regions of Poland and Slovakia (Podhale and Spisz/Spiš), many of them already inscribed to the World Heritage List by UNESCO.



Niedzica Castle in Poland, on the Gothic Route

Photo: Łukasz Śmigasiewicz / Wikimedia Commons

Other transboundary thematic cultural heritage tourist trails in the Carpathians refer more to the **intangible heritage**, like e.g. literature. A perfect example here would be the transboundary tourist trail **On the tracks of Good Soldier Švejk**, linking as many as six countries of the region: Czech Republic, Austria, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland and Ukraine, referring to the famous novel by Jaroslav Hašek (*The Fateful Adventures of the Good Soldier Švejk During the World War*), which is the most translated novel of Czech literature, considered to be one of the first anti-war novels, predating Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Another trail linked with a famous writer (Aleksander Fredro Trail) links the Kamieniec Castle in Poland with Lviv in Ukraine.

Some other heritage trails refer to the ancient history of the region, e.g. the **Amber Trail Greenways** running from Budapest in Hungary through Banská Štiavnica in Slovakia, Krakow in Poland to the Baltic Sea coast, jointly developed by three independent NGOs operating in Poland (Fundacja Partnerstwo dla Środowiska), Slovakia (Nadacia Ekopolis) and Hungary (Okotárs Alapítvány). This cycling trail resembles the prehistoric trade route (from at least the sixteenth century BC) along which the Baltic amber (called "the gold of the North") was transferred to the Mediterranean and Middle East markets, including not only the relatively "young" Roman Empire, but also older civilizations in e.g. Egypt or Syria. This heritage trail, consisted of the international cycle trail and local thematic loops, links famous historical towns and UNESCO world heritage sites with spectacular rural landscapes rich in natural values, cultural tradition, colorful trade fairs, local handicrafts and delicious local cuisine.

But, fortunately, many other treasures of the Carpathian historical and cultural heritage are not yet broadly known to visitors, or heavily promoted. Fortunately - because such **still have to be discovered !**

A good example could be the oldest 'tserkva' temple (initially of the Orthodox rite, later Greek-Catholic) preserved in Poland - the Saint Onuphrius church, which oldest parts date back to 1367, hidden in a mountain valley surrounded by dense forests, in an almost-deserted village of Posada Rybotycka (in the Polish part of the Carpathian region), where impressive Byzantine-type wall paintings from the 15th century have recently been discovered.



St. Onuphrius tserkva in Posada Rybotycka (1367)
Photo: Mapo / Wikimedia Commons



Byzantine-type wall paintings from the 15th century
Photo: Wikimedia Commons (Public Domain)

Conclusions and Recommendations

As clearly visible throughout this document - the whole Carpathian region has an immense potential for the development of sustainable tourism, based on the incredible wealth and diversity of the natural and cultural heritage. Some of the most valuable sites and objects have already gained the international recognition, due to their inscription to the World Heritage List by UNESCO, while some other still miss the adequate level of protection, and/or promotion in the tourist markets.

However, regardless of all possible natural and cultural assets at disposal, the successful development of sustainable tourism requires harmonised and concerted efforts of many different stakeholders relevant to sustainable tourism – state and public administration (incl. central, regional and local governments), regional and international players, business sector, international organizations, financial institutions, academia and civil society (represented e.g. by different NGOs, aiming at, and committed to the preservation of the local cultural heritage, and/or revival of local economies).

Resolution 70/193 adopted by the UN General Assembly on 22 December 2015, concerning the 2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, encourages all States, the United Nations system and all other actors to take advantage of the International Year to promote actions at all levels, including through international cooperation, and to support sustainable tourism as a means of promoting and accelerating sustainable development, especially poverty eradication.

The **UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme Action Plan 2013-2015** lists actions, facilitating the accomplishment of its objectives. Most relevant here would be Objective B, aimed at strengthening the enabling environment by advocating policies, strategies, frameworks and tools that support sustainable tourism as an important vehicle for protecting and managing cultural and natural heritage of Outstanding Universal Value. These actions include **Action B.2**, which shall facilitate multi-stakeholder cooperation, and encourages work with relevant international agencies and organisations (e.g. other UN related organisations) in order to promote and support the dissemination of relevant policies, frameworks and tools to World Heritage stakeholders.

Activities planned under Action B.2 of the UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme Action Plan include the following tasks:

- Establish contact and collaboration with relevant international agencies and organizations.
- Provide a platform for information exchange and disseminate relevant policies to World Heritage stakeholders.
- Use existing fora to promote and advocate the development of policies, frameworks and tools.

In the context of sustainable tourism development in the Carpathians, to be based on the common natural, cultural, traditional and historical heritage of the Carpathians, perceived as the specific Carpathian competitive advantages over the other mountain regions of Europe, the accomplishment of the objectives of the UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme would largely be facilitated by the use of already existing legal and organizational framework - the Carpathian Convention, in force in all seven countries of the region.

It is important to note here that throughout the last decade the Convention proved to be an effective platform for cooperation and a forum for the dialogue between the inhabitants of the Carpathians, local self-governments, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and government agencies (thus key stakeholders for the preservation of both natural and cultural heritage, and the sustainable development of tourism in the Carpathian region).

Moreover, the implementation of the Carpathian Convention, which broad thematic scope includes heritage preservation, sustainable local development and tourism, is enforced and supported by the presence of supplementary international agreements - thematic Protocols, on biodiversity conservation, and on sustainable tourism development (while another Protocol, concerning the cultural heritage in the Carpathians, is still pending).

Furthermore, the Carpathian Convention intergovernmental platform involves official representatives and experts of Ministries from all seven Parties to the Convention, responsible for particular sectoral policies, including those related to sustainable tourism development, as well as natural and cultural heritage preservation. These experts, most often recruiting from scientific and research institutions collaborating under the framework of the Carpathian Convention, members of the thematic intergovernmental Working Groups having the status of subsidiary bodies of the Convention, are another important asset of the Convention, and determine its potential for identifying the most appropriate solutions, and formulate proposals for triggering and accelerating common concerted initiatives, at various levels - from international, through national, to regional and local.

Thus, the recommended way forward, towards the successful accomplishment of the UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme objectives in the Carpathian region would be to **join forces, and benefit from possible synergies** of activities undertaken by:

- UNESCO, under the World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme,
- UN WTO in the frame of the 2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development,
- the Carpathian Convention, which Secretariat is provided by UN Environment,
- state and public administration (of central, regional and local levels), tourist sector, and all other relevant stakeholders.

The proposed collaboration could be perceived as a **common response to UN General Assembly Resolution 70/193**, encouraging all States and the whole United Nations system (to which UNESCO, UNWTO and UN Environment belong) to cooperate towards the accomplishment of the objectives of the 2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.

Moreover, the proposed collaboration would help to achieve the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs), also by considering the **SDG Target 17.16** emphasizing the need for **multi-stakeholder partnerships** (*Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, in particular developing countries*).

The above would also be in line with Decision COP4/13 by the Parties to the Carpathian Convention, welcoming and supporting further specific cooperation with international conventions and international bodies, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

On the other hand, the Carpathian Convention could largely benefit from such collaboration with UNESCO and UNWTO, e.g. in the context of the further implementation of the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism, as well as towards the accomplishment of tasks set up by the Conference of the Parties, including the development of the Carpathian Heritage Inventory (Decision COP2/8.3), and of the draft Protocol on Cultural Heritage and a corresponding Strategic Action Plan (Decision COP4/7.4).

It is highly recommended to further discuss and consult such opportunities for cooperation in the Carpathian region between the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the Carpathian Convention, serviced by its Secretariat, provided by UN Environment (UNEP), which should also involve central, regional and local authorities of the Parties, responsible for sustainable tourism development and heritage conservation, and the local stakeholders in the Carpathians.

It is further recommended that once the potential areas for collaboration are agreed upon, such multi-stakeholder partnership could be inscribed into a Memorandum of Cooperation with UNESCO and UNWTO, which could possibly be signed at the Fifth Meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP5) to the Carpathian Convention, to be held on 10 - 12 October 2017 in Lillafüred, Hungary.



Carpathian Biosphere Reserve, Ukraine

Photo: Vian / Wikimedia Commons

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Caves of Aggtelek Karst and Slovak Karst

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/725/>

Churches of Moldavia

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/598>

Dacian Fortresses of the Orastie Mountains

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/906>

Gamzigrad-Romuliana, Palace of Galerius

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1253/>

Gardens and Castle at Kroměříž

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/860>

Historic Town of Banská Štiavnica and the Technical Monuments in its Vicinity

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/618>

Kalwaria Zebrzydowska: the Mannerist Architectural and Park Landscape Complex and Pilgrimage Park

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Levoča, Spišský Hrad and the Associated Cultural Monuments

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/620>

Monastery of Horezu

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/597>

Old Village of Hollókő and its Surroundings

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Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and the Ancient Beech Forests of Germany

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1133>

Tokaj Wine Region Historic Cultural Landscape

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1063>

Vlkolínec

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/622>

Wieliczka and Bochnia Royal Salt Mines

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/32>

Wooden Churches of Maramureş

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/904>

Wooden Churches of the Slovak part of the Carpathian Mountain Area

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1273>

Wooden Churches of Southern Małopolska

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1053>

Wooden Tserkvas of the Carpathian Region in Poland and Ukraine

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1424/>

Other websites worth visiting:

Alpine Convention

<http://www.alpconv.org/en/>

Carpathian Convention

<http://www.carpathianconvention.org>

Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>

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<http://www.ramsar.org/>

Cultural landscapes

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape/>

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UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme

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UNESCO World Heritage List

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Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska

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