



**The story
of a PAN-CARPATHIAN passage
1980 and 2015**

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The story of a PAN-CARPATHIAN passage 1980 and 2015



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ANDREI DUMITRESCU,
VLAD SPIRU
ROMANIA
ASOCIAȚIA CARPATINĂ
ARDELEANĂ A TURIȘTILOR



ASOCIAȚIA CARPATINĂ
ARDELEANĂ A TURIȘTILOR
SIEBENBÜRGISCHER
KARPATENVEREIN

Why the Pan-Carpathian passage ?

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- The Carpathians are the mountains in which Polish tourism was born,
- The Carpathians are an area of many nations, cultures, religions,
- The Carpathians join rather than divide,
- Poles have always wanted to achieve the crossing of the whole range,
- Polish trekkers have tried to walk the Carpathians several times.

Earlier attempts

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- 1962** – geography students of the University of Warsaw,
- walked in Poland from Cieszyn (southern Silesia) to the Uzhok Pass (end of Western Bieszczady),
 - drove to Romania and walked almost all of the Romanian Carpathian section.
 - 3 trekkers reached Orșova on the Danube.
 - the Poles walked in the company of Romanian trekkers.

- 1967** – Student Club of Beskid Guides in Warsaw
- planned to organise the „Carpathian Friendship Expedition 1967”,
 - dreams remained only on paper.

Earlier attempts

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1973 – students from mountain guide club planned to walk the Carpathians in the form of a relay.

- the route was divided into 7 stages,
- only 2 stages were done.



Badge of the expedition

Arc of the Carpathians 1980

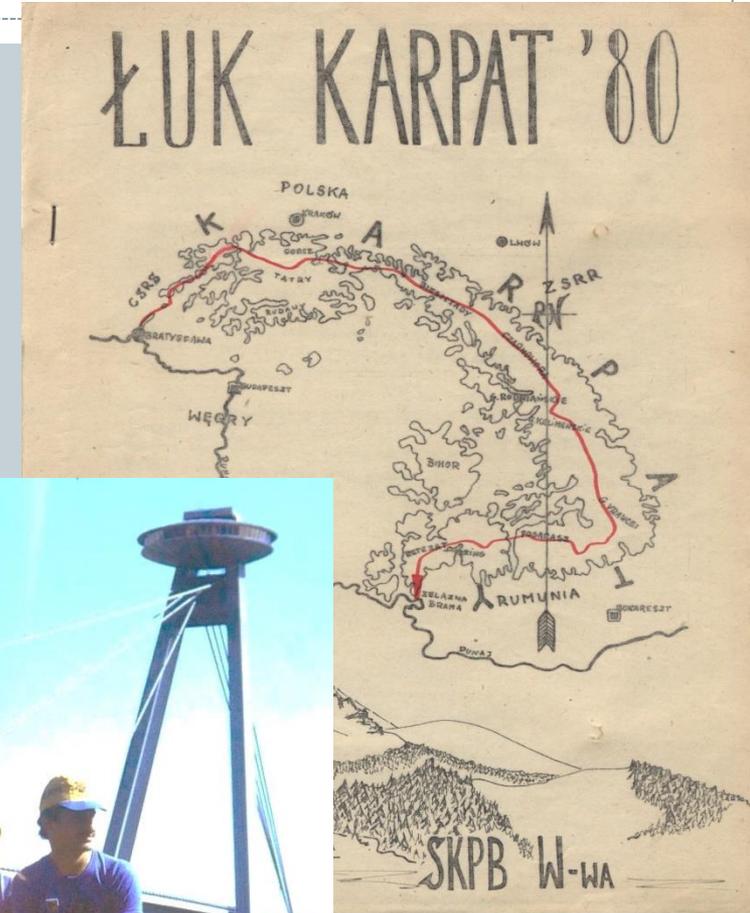
Student Club of Beskid Guides, Warsaw

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Leader: **Andrzej Wielocha**

Participants:

- Piotr Kurowski,
- **Jerzy Montusiewicz (Lublin),**
- Zdzisław Pecul,
- Wiesław Tomaszewski.



Badge of the expedition
in 1980





Expedition co-financed by Switzerland through the Swiss Contribution to the enlarged European Union



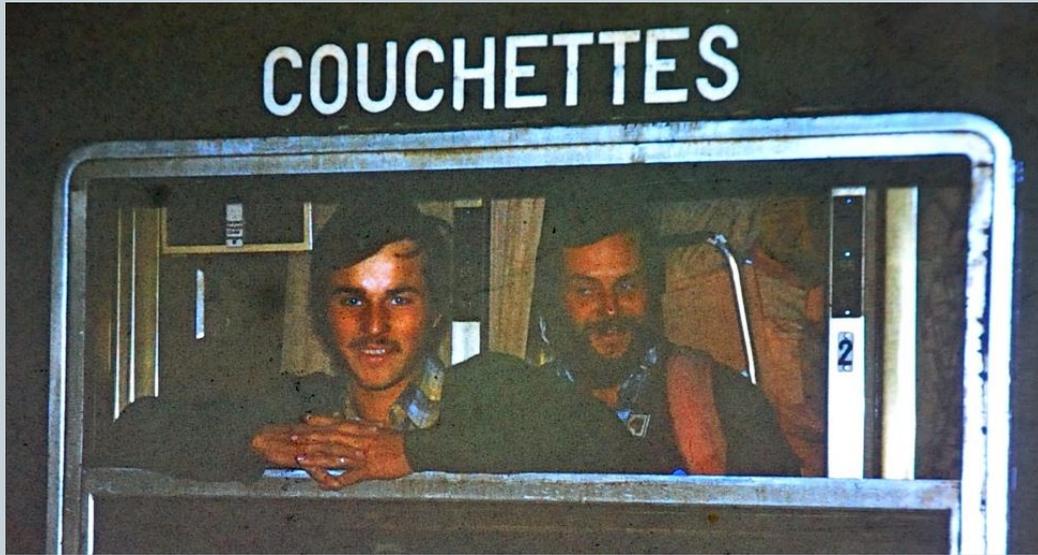
Participants:
- Andrei Dumitrescu,
- Vlad Spiru
(Ciprian Brânzoi)

Arc of the Carpathians 1980

Student Club of Beskid Guides, Lublin

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I was 21 when we set off from Warsaw.



I celebrated my 22 birthday
in the Ciucaș Mountains (Romania)

On the peak of Popadia (1742),
the Gorgans, Ukraine



Via Carpatica Expedition 2015

Asociația Carpatină Ardeleană a Turiștilor

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Vlad Spiru

03.05.1991

Bran, Brașov, România



Andrei Dumitrescu

23.05.1987

Tirgoviste, Dimbovita, România

Arc of the Carpathians 1980

90 mountain days, over 1900 km and 80000 m climbs

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Bucharest, after crossing the Carpathians.

Via Carpatica Expedition 2015

93 mountain days, over 2800 km



Start in SokoBanja, Serbia

Finish in Bratislava, Slovakia



AC 1980 – the idea of the crossing

- walking the route in a non-stop trek

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**Piatra Craiului Mts,
Romania**



**Făgăraș Mts,
Romania**

VCE 2015 – the idea of the crossing

▪ E8



Retezatul Mic Mts, România



- ViaCarpatica like ViaAlpina
- Mapping a new long distance path
- Connecting associations in the Carpathians

AC 1980 – the idea of the crossing

- walking the section in the former USSR

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- mountains were not accessible to foreign tourists,
- we were there illegally, but conscious of the dangers

Pass of the Legions, the Gorgans



Plaque
on the
monument

**Young ones of Poland, look at this cross,
The Polish Legions lifted it up,
Traversing mountains, forests and walls
Bound for you, Poland, for your glory.**

**In 1915 Polish soldiers
defeated the Russians**



VCE 2015 – the idea of the crossing

■ walking the section in Serbia



- A lot of help from the local association
- Through the mountains there were illegal migrants crossing the boarder



AC 1980 – the idea of the crossing

- **keeping the continuity of the mountain ranges (border crossings)**

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**Mount Rozsypaniec 1273 m,
end of the Polish section**



**Village Sianki (Uzhok Pass area)
Start of the Soviet (Ukrainian) section,
at night after getting off the train**

VCE 2015 – the idea of the crossing

- keeping the continuity of the ranges



Border Serbia-Romania



Border Romania-Ucraina

Border Ucraina-Slovacia



- Impossibility of crossing through the mountains, excepting Slovakia, Poland, Czech Republic



Border Slovacia-Polonia

AC 1980 – the idea of the crossing

- a day of rest after 6 days of walking

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- in practice we had only 2 rest days, out of the 12 planned,
- route planning had been too optimistic,
- at the beginning our physical condition was poor,
- then the weather took a bad turn,
- the mountains proved very demanding.



The Bieszczady Mts,
Ukraine

VCE 2015 – the idea of the crossing

▪ a day of rest after 6 days of walking



- We had this rule all over the trip
- We managed to keep our main plan all along the route
- We started fast and took 2 weeks to find the best rhythm
- After 3 weeks one of our companions quit
- 17 days of rain from 93



AC 1980 – the idea of the crossing

- cooking on camp fires,

20



Usually 3 times a day.

AC 1980 – the idea of the crossing

- walking down to villages for food, and back up to the ridge

21

- my longest trip for food was from the Bratocea Pass (1272) to Braşov (40 km one way),
- another time, from the Foll Pass (1343) to Zărneşti (25 km), myself and a companion carried 51 kg of food.



VCE 2015 – the idea of the crossing

- crossing through the village for food, every 4 days



AC 1980 – the idea of the crossing

- relying on support teams

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No mobile telephones then,

- communication with coordinator in Warsaw (J. Will) was sporadic, via support persons returning



**The Low Beskid Mts,
Poland, supplying
food on 2 bikes**

AC 1980 – the idea of the crossing

- **relying on support teams**

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- **meetings with support teams was organised on a time table basis**



Lotru Mts, Romania, packing new food provided by support team

AC 1980 – the idea of the crossing

- relying on support teams

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- the Ukrainian section was done together, we were 11 people in all (6th support team)



**Howerla (2061),
Czarnohora, Ukraine**

VCE 2015 – the idea of the crossing

- “support team”



Eugen was our Ukrainian companion through Ukrainian mountains



**Hoverla (2061),
Czarnohora, Ukraine**

AC 1980 – the idea of the crossing

- staying on the mountain ridge,

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**Bucegi Mts,
Strungele Mari (2168),
Romania**



**Lotru Mts
in the background the Parâng Mts,
Romania**

AC 1980 – the idea of the crossing

- staying on the mountai ridge

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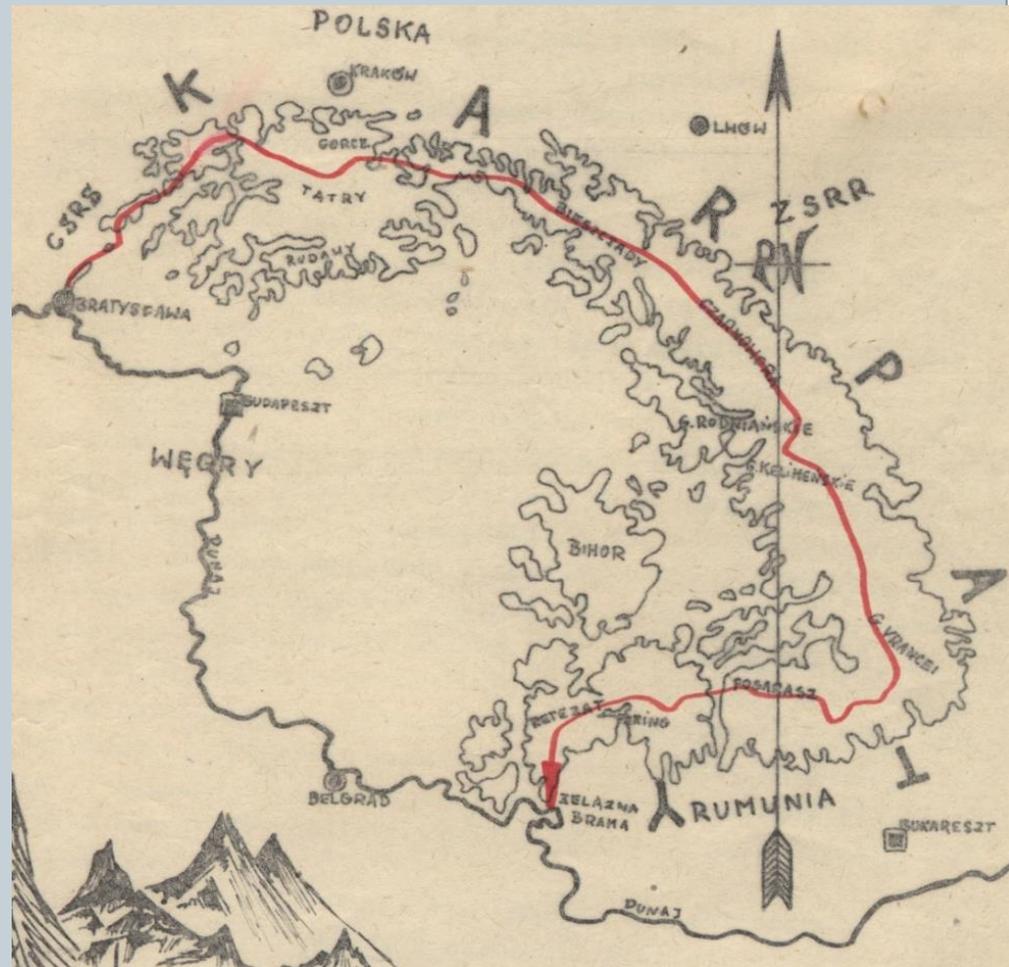
**Munții Ciucului,
Romania**

AC 1980 – the route

Czechoslovakia-Poland-USSR (Ukraine)-Romania

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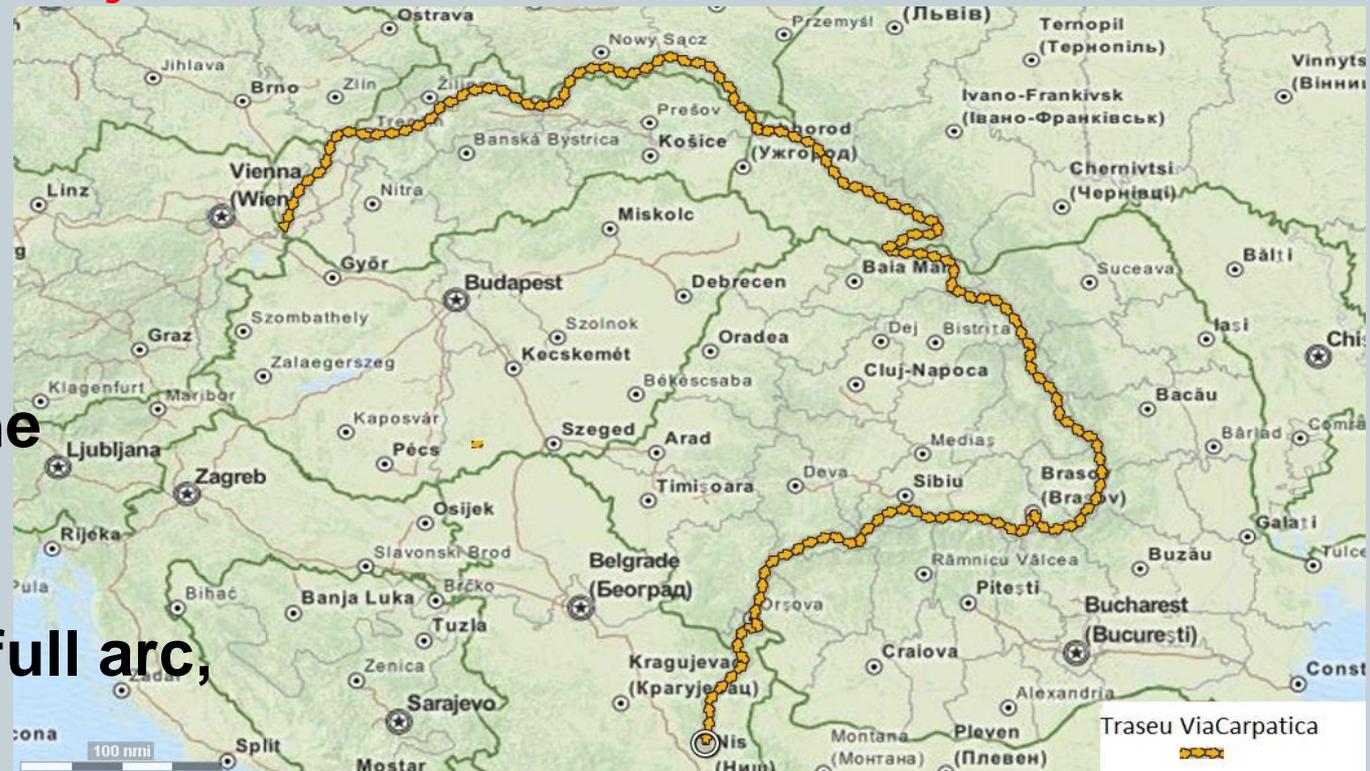
- **Start:**
16 June, Bratislava
(now Slovakia)
- **Finish:**
13 September, Orșova
(Romania),
 - generally walk along the Carpathian watershed, (bypassing the Tatras),
 - walking the full arc, (bypassing the Transylvanian Upland)



VCE 2015 – the route

Serbia-Romania-Ukraine-Poland-Slovakia

- Start:
18 July **Sokobanja**
(Serbia)
- Finish:
18 October **Bratislava**
(Slovakia),
walk along the
Carpathian
watershed,
- walking the full arc,
(bypassing
the Transylvanian
Upland)

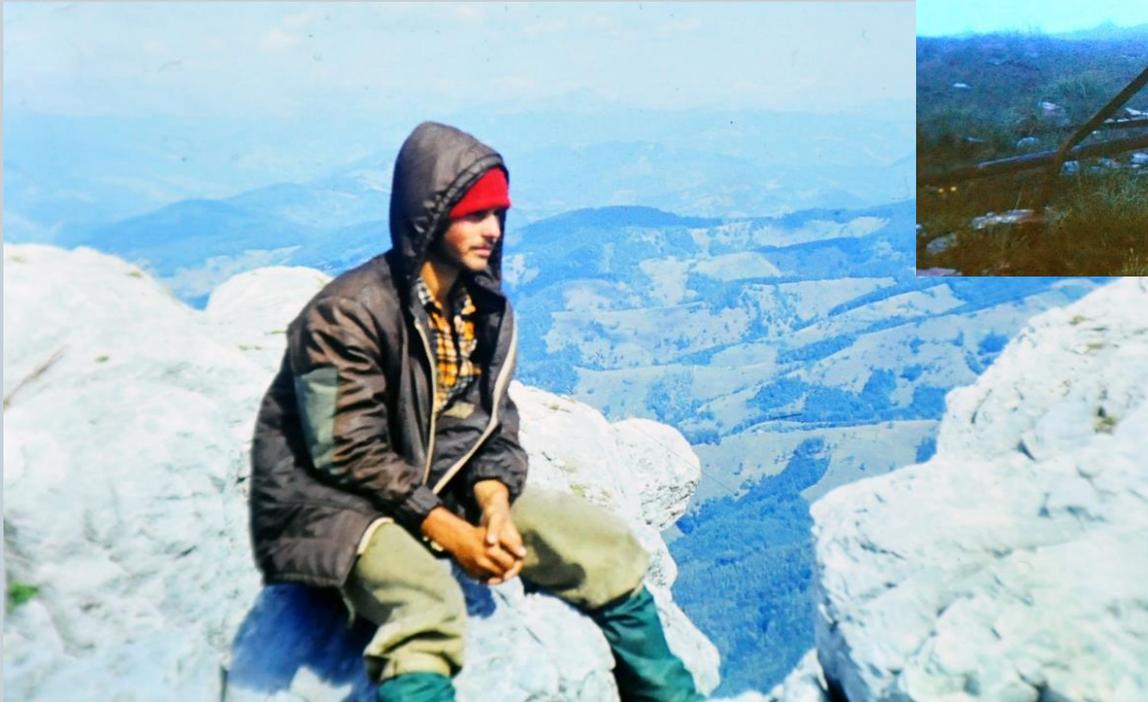


AC 1980 – the route

- We climbed over 250 peaks above 1000 m

31

**The Gorgans,
Greater Bratkowska (1792),
Ukraine**



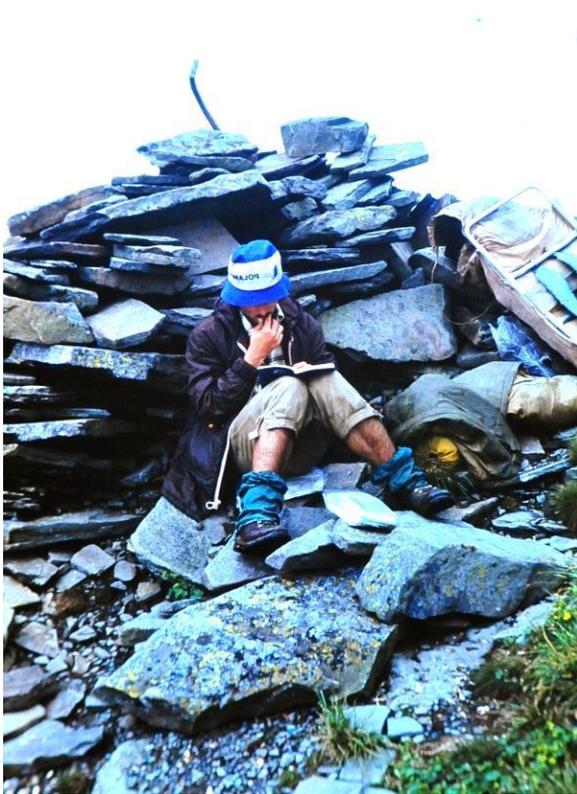
**Munții Mehedinți,
Vârful lui Stan (1466),
Romania**

AC 1980 – the route

- We climbed over 50 peaks above 2000 m

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**Pietros (2020), the Czarnohora, Ukraine,
meeting with shepherds at the top**



VCE 2015 – the route

- We climbed over ? peaks above 1000 m



Ciuc Mts, Romania

Topas peak, Ukraine



VCE 2015 – the route

- We climbed over ? peaks above 2000 m



We tried to stay as much as possible in the highest part of the mountains



Tatra Mts, Slovakia

Fagaras Mts, Romania



AC 1980 – the meals

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There was no freeze-dried food, we had no chocolate or energy bars.

There was a food crisis down below, not just up above.

We had 3 meals a day.

- **Breakfast: milk porridge, pâté sandwiches, jam, tea.**
- **Lunch: spam or cheese sandwiches, onion, tea.**
- **Supper: tinned beef or pork with rice or pasta, tea.**



VCE 2015 – the meals



- We had a vegetarian diet for most of the trip.
- Our plan was to eat at least one hot meal a day.
- We cooked mostly with fire, had a burner for the wet days and enjoyed a meal in a hut about once a week.

Breakfast:

- At the beginning porridge but it proved to be not enough
- Switched to honey, butter and bread

Lunch and supper:

Pasta with cheese, milk or jam

Peas, lentils or mushroom stew

Chees with toast bread

Fruits, vegetables, fish or bacon from time to time



AC 1980 – the accommodation

- **Mountain bivouacs**

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**Munții Rodnei, Lacu Lala Mare,
Romania**



AC 1980 – the accommodation

- tent bases, mountain chalets

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**Student tent base,
Gorce Mts, Poland**



Ukrainian tent base, the Bieszczady



The Gorgans, Ukraine



VCE 2015 – the idea of the crossing

- sleeping in different places

Camping



Huts/ guest houses



Interesting places

Shelters



AC 1980 – maps

40

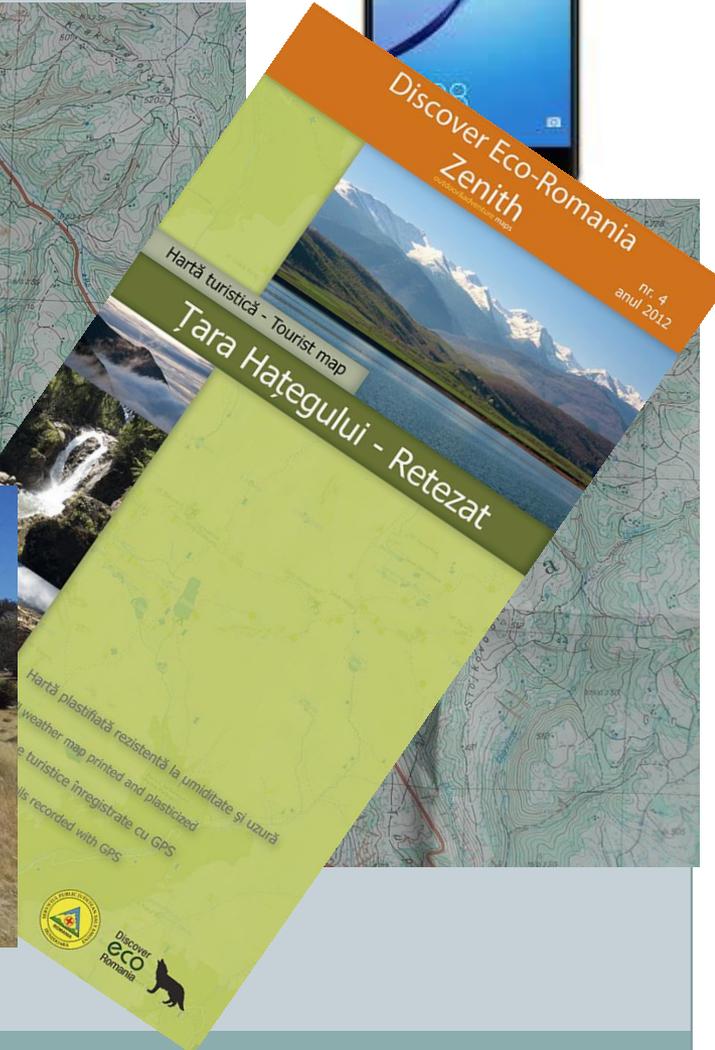
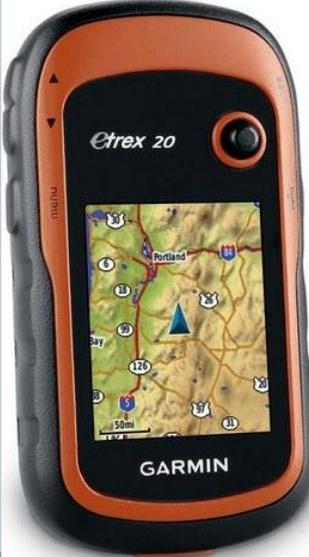
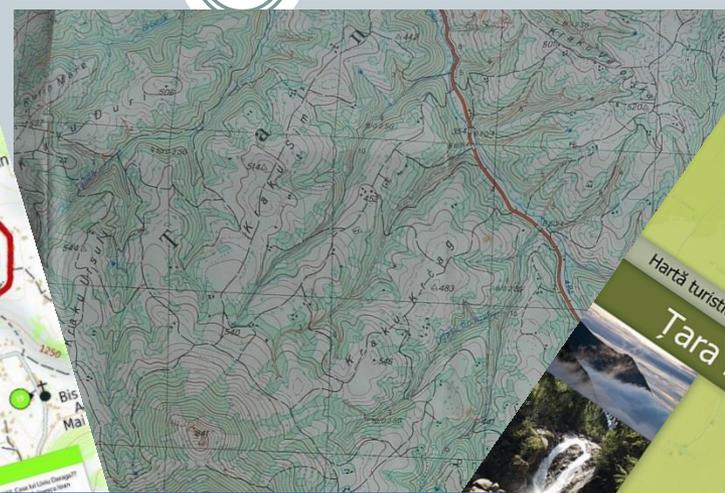
- **No GPS,**
- **No Hungarian DIMAP maps,**
- **Only 21 ranges were published in the Romanian Munții Noștri series (8 concerned our route),**
- **good tourist maps covered the mountains of Slovakia and Poland,**
- **in the Eastern Beskids (Ukraine) we used photocopies of Polish military maps from 1930-38, scale 1:100.000.**
- **in Romania we used photocopies of Austrian military maps from 1880-1915, scale 1:75.000 and 1:200.000.**

AC 1980 – maps

Maps – sketchy and old



VCE 2015 – maps



AC 1980 – equipment

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- no Gore-Tex and no thermal clothes,
- no 11-zone socks and no lightweight tents.

We had tents with tarpolin tropics (after rain their weight doubled).



VCE 2015 – equipment

- **Weight was an important factor in selecting our gear:**

- **Lightweight tent – 2kg**
- **Light backpacks**
- **Down sleeping bags – 1kg**
- **Light sleeping mats**
- **Synthetic shirts**
- **Fleece or down jackets**
- **Lightweight waterproof jackets**



AC 1980 – equipment

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We had:

- flanel shirts, tricot T-shirts,
- ordinary insulated jackets,



Leota Mts, Romania

Drying clothes after washing



AC 1980 – equipment

46

- Not everyone had carimats; I used a sponge mat, it was smaller, heavier, and it soaked in water.
- Our rucksacks were large, because our equipment and food were heavy. We carried between 25 and 35 kg, the load dropped when the food was consumed.



AC 1980 – Slovakia (once Czechoslovakia)

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Little Carpathians – White Carpathians – Javorniki.
route length: 275 km, 11 days



White Carpathian Mts

Little Carpathian Mts



AC 1980 – Poland

No Schengen zone then

48

The Żywiec Beskid – The Gorce – The Sądecki Beskid –
The Low Beskid – The Bieszczady, **route length: 460 km, 20 days**

- We had permission to walk along the border



Beskid Niski Mts, state border

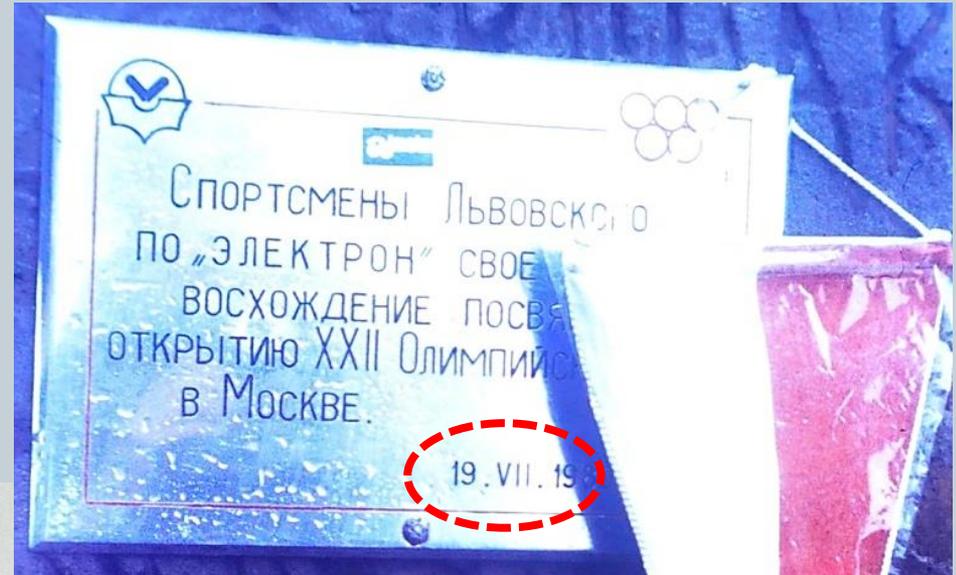


World War I cemetery

AC 1980 – USSR (Ukraine)

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**The Bieszczady – The Gorgany – The Czarnohora,
route length: 285 km,
12 days**



**Pikuj (1406),
the Bieszczady,**

**20 July
(plaque above: 19 July)**

AC 1980 – USSR (Ukraine)

- 7 days of non-stop rain

50

- 36 rainy days during whole trek



Jasinia, The Czarnohora

**Aftermath of the local flood
Płajska Valley, The Gorgany**



AC 1980 – USSR (Ukraine)

51

Howerla (2061), The Czarnohora, champagne at the top



In the background: defaced plaque with Lenin (no longer there)



AC 1980 – Romania

28 mountain ranges, route length: 900 km, 45 days

52

Eastern Carpathians: Maramureşului – Rodnei – Suhard – Bârgău – Călimani – Giurgeu – Haşmaş – Ciuc – Nemira – Vrancei – Întorsurii – Siriu – Ciucaş – Braşov – Girbova – Piatra Mare



**Haşmaş Mts,
Hăghimaşul Mare 1792 m**

AC 1980 – Romania

28 mountain ranges, route length: 900 km, 45 days

53

Eastern Carpathians



Siriu Mts, Siriu 1640 m

Siriu Mts,
Siriu 1640 m



AC 1980 – Romania

28 mountain ranges, route length: 900 km, 45 days

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Eastern Carpathians



**Munții Rodnei,
Gargaleu 2076 m**

AC 1980 – Romania

28 mountain ranges, route length: 900 km, 45 days

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Southern Carpatians: Bucegi – Leaota – Piatra Craiului – Făgăraș – Lotru – Șureanu – Tulișa – Retezatul Mic – Retezat – Godeanu – Vulcan – Mehedinți.



Retezat, Peleaga 2509 m

AC 1980 – Romania

26 mountain ranges, route length: 900 km, 45 days

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Southern Carpathians:



Munții Mehedinți



AC 1980 – Romania

26 mountain ranges, route length: 900 km, 45 days

57

Southern Carpathians:



Făgăraș Mts



AC 1980 – Romania

Finish: The Danube, Orșova

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VCE 2015 – Serbia

265 km in 8 days



Starting point : Soko Banja
End point: Iron Gates Donau dam

The first objective:
Rtanj Peak 1560m – the highest peak
in the Serbian Carpathians



Limestone rock formations



Rtanj Peak 1560m

VCE 2015 – Romania

1215 km in 45 days



Southern Carpathians: Mehedinti – Cerhei – Godeanu – Retezat – Parang – Lotrului – Cindrel – Fagaras – Piatra Craiului - Bucegi

Starting point : Orsova

End point: Sighetul Marmatiei



Retezat Mts

Cernei Mts

VCE 2015 – Romania

1215 km in 45 days



Parang Mts



Fagaras Mts

VCE 2015 – Romania

1215 km in 45 days



Eastern Carpathians: Piatra Mare – Neamtului – Grohotis – Ciucas – Siriu – Penteleu – Bretcu – Oituz – Nemira – Ciucului – Hasmas – Giurgeu – Bistritei – Suhard – Rodnei – Maramuresului



Neamtului Mts



Bretcu Mts

VCE 2015 – Romania

1215 km in 45 days



Nemira Mts



Hasmas Mts

VCE 2015 – Romania

1215 km in 45 days



Suhard Mts – shepherd's hut



Rodnei Mts

VCE 2015 – Ukraine

410 km in 13 days



Chornohora – Svydovets - Polonyna Krasna - Polonyna Borzhava

Starting point : Solotvyno

End point: Uzhhorod

Polonyna Krasna



Polonyna Borzhava

AC 1980 and VCE 2015, Ukraine

66

Howerla (2061), The Czarnohora

2015

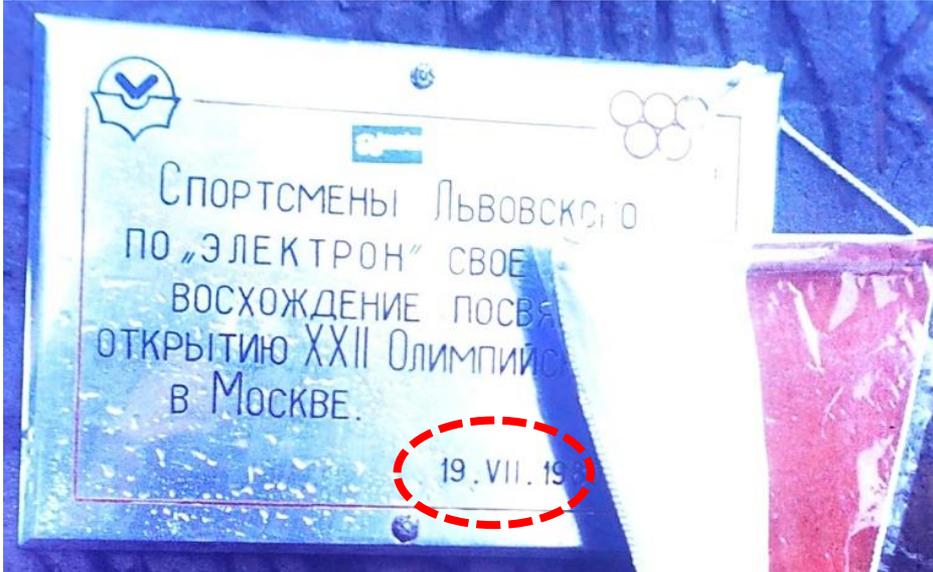


1980

AC 1980 and VCE 2015, Ukraine



Pikui Peak 1405m



1980

2015



VCE 2015 – Poland

331 km in 11 days



Bieszczady – Beskid Niski – Beskid Sadecky

Starting point : Balnica

End point: Niedzica



Low Beskids

Polish – Slovakian border

VCE 2015 – Slovakia

495 km in 12 days



High Tatras - Slovak-Moravian Carpathians

Starting point : Veľka Frankova

End point: Bratislava

White Carpathians



Gerlachovsky Peak 2654m

Other crossings

Polish: solo – 8, other – 4, in instalments – 3

70



Majchrowski 2015

T. Świst 2015



on a pole above
Lake Avrig



D. Księżki 2017

Sanocki & Łukaszewska 2015

Other crossings

foreign

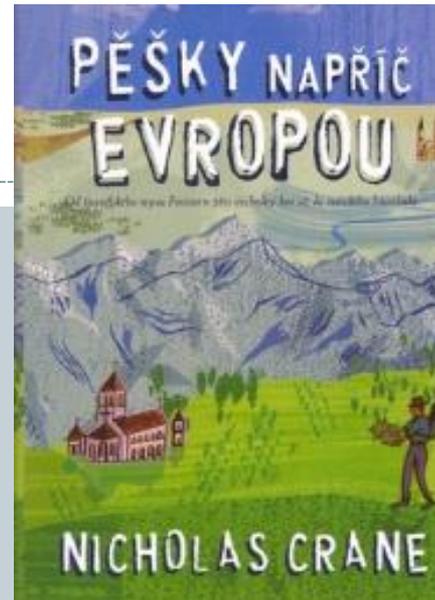
71



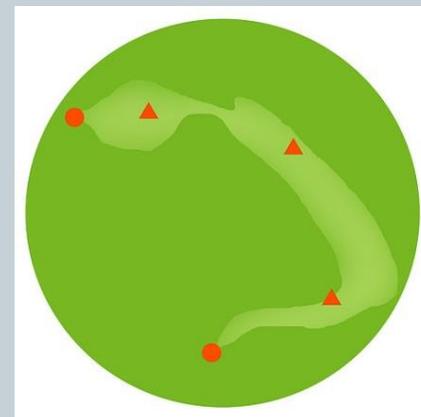
Dubuis 2011 (France),
including Serbia



Krno 1984 (Slovakia),
via Hungary



1993 (UK)



Hlavačkova 2015
(Czech Republic)

Conclusion

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- **This was my biggest mountain adventure.**
- **This expedition permanently binds me to the Carpathians.**
- **After 35 years I won the Crown of Romania's Mountains (97 highest peaks of all mountain groups).**
- **Polish tourists conquered the whole Carpathians the most often,**

[Film “ViaCarpatica”](#)

Post Scriptum

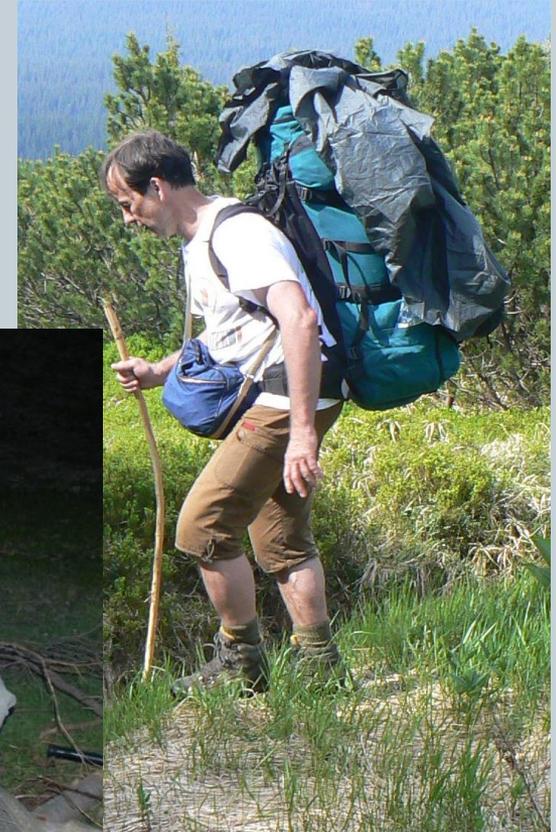
Do I still walk the mountains?

Carpathians

73



2017



2011

Lillafured,
11-10-2017



Post Scriptum

Do I still walk the mountains?

Dolomites

74



**Piz da Lech
2911 m, 2013**



**Bivouac Fiamme
Gialle 3002 m,
2017**



**Civetta 3220 m,
2016**

Au revoir!

See you!

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Do widzenia!

Na shledanou! До побачення!

Dovidenia!

Viszontlátásra!

Auf Wiedersehen!

La revedere!

Видимо се!