



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

Lillafüred, Hungary, 10-12 October 2017, Carpathian Convention

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



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VLAD SPIRU**  
ASOCIAȚIA CARPATINĂ  
ARDELEANĂ A TURIȘTILOR  
ROMANIA



ASOCIAȚIA CARPATINĂ  
ARDELEANĂ A TURIȘTILOR  
SIEBENBÜRGISCHER  
KARPATENVEREIN

Lillafüred, Hungary, 10-12 October 2017, Carpathian Convention

# Why the Pan-Carpathian passage?

3



- 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

4

**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

5

**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

6

Leader: **Andrzej Wielocha (1)**

Participants:

- Piotr Kurowski (2),
- **Jerzy Montusiewicz (Lublin, 3)**,
- Zdzisław Pecul (4),
- Wiesław Tomaszewski.



Badge of the expedition  
in 1980





# Via Carpatica Expedition 2015

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



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN  
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

Participants:

- Andrei Dumitrescu, 1
- Vlad Spiru, 2
- (Ciprian Brânzoi, 3)



ASOCIAȚIA CARPATINĂ  
ARDELEANĂ A TURISTILOR  
SIEBENBÜRGISCHER  
KARPATENVEREIN

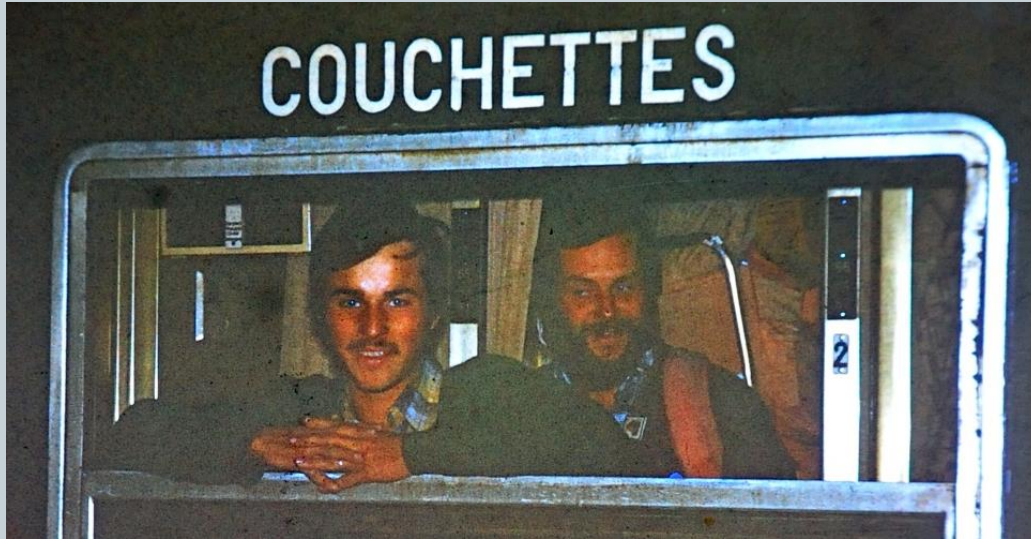


# Arc of the Carpathians 1980

## Student Club of Beskid Guides, Lublin

8

**I was 21 when we set off from Warsaw.**



**I celebrated my 22 birthday  
in the Ciucaș Mountains, Romania.  
I was a student of the Lublin University  
of Technology (now I am a professor).**

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



# Via Carpatica Expedition 2015

## Asociația Carpatină Ardeleană a Turiștilor

9



**Vlad Spiru**

**03.05.1991**

**Bran, Brașov, România**



**Andrei Dumitrescu**

**23.05.1987**

**Tirgoviște, Dimbovița, România**



# Arc of the Carpathians 1980

90 mountain days, over 1900 km and 80000 m climbs

10

4

3

1

2

5



**Andrzej Wielocha (1)**  
**Piotr Kurowski (2),**  
**Jerzy Montusiewicz (3),**  
**Zdzisław Pecul (4),**  
**Wiesław Tomaszewski (5).**

**Bucharest, after crossing the Carpathians**

# Via Carpatica Expedition 2015

93 mountain days, over 2800 km

11



**Start in SokoBanja, Serbia**

**Finish in Bratislava,  
Slovakia**





# AC 1980 – the idea of the crossing

- walking the route in a non-stop trek

12

**Piatra Craiului Mts,  
Romania**



**Făgăraș Mts,  
Romania**

# VCE 2015 – the idea of the crossing

- E8 trail in Romania – along the Romanian Carpathians

13



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

## Retezatul Mic Mts, România





# AC 1980 – the idea of the crossing

- walking the section in the former USSR

14

- 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, and for your glory.**

**In 1915 Polish soldiers  
defeated the Russians**

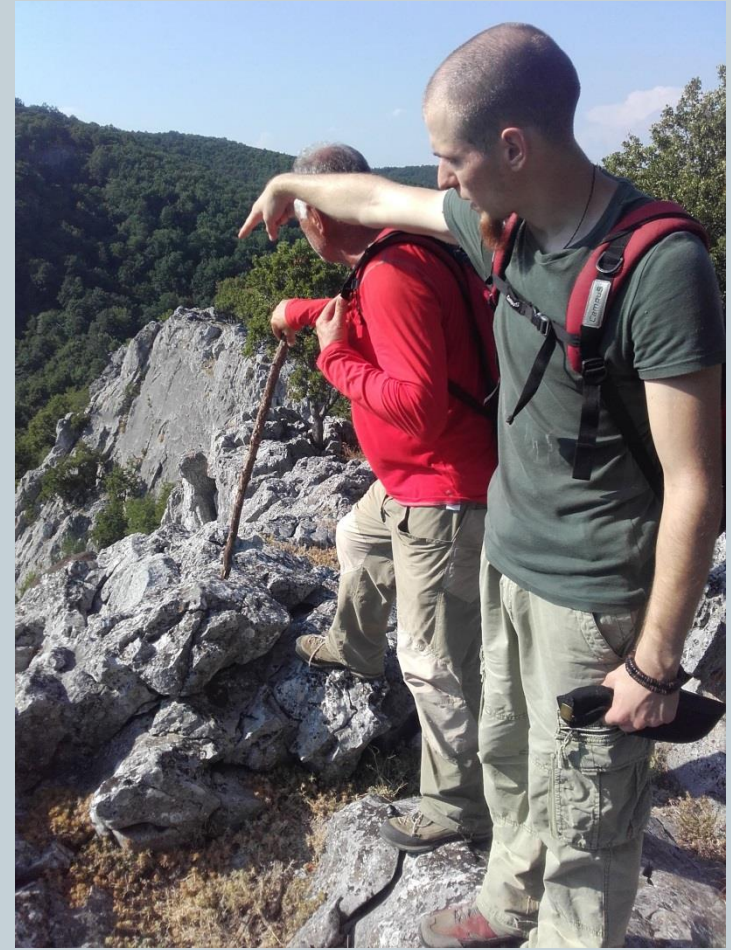


# VCE 2015 – the idea of the crossing

## ■ walking the section in Serbia

15

- A lot of help from the local association,
- There were illegal migrants crossing the border in the mountains.





# AC 1980 – the idea of the crossing

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

16

**Mount Rozsypaniec 1273 m,  
end of the Polish section,  
J. Montusiewicz, Z. Pecul**



**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

17

Border Serbia-Romania



Border Romania-Ucraina

Border Ucraina-Slovakia



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



Border Slovakia-Polonia

# AC 1980 – the idea of the crossing

- a day of rest after 6 days of walking

18

- 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

19

- 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 villages for food, every 4 days

22





# AC 1980 – the idea of the crossing

- relying on support teams

23

**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

24

- 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

25

- 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”

26

**Eugen was our Ukrainian companion through Ukrainian mountains**



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

# AC 1980 – the idea of the crossing

- staying on the mountain ridge,

27



**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

28



**Munții Ciucului,  
Romania**

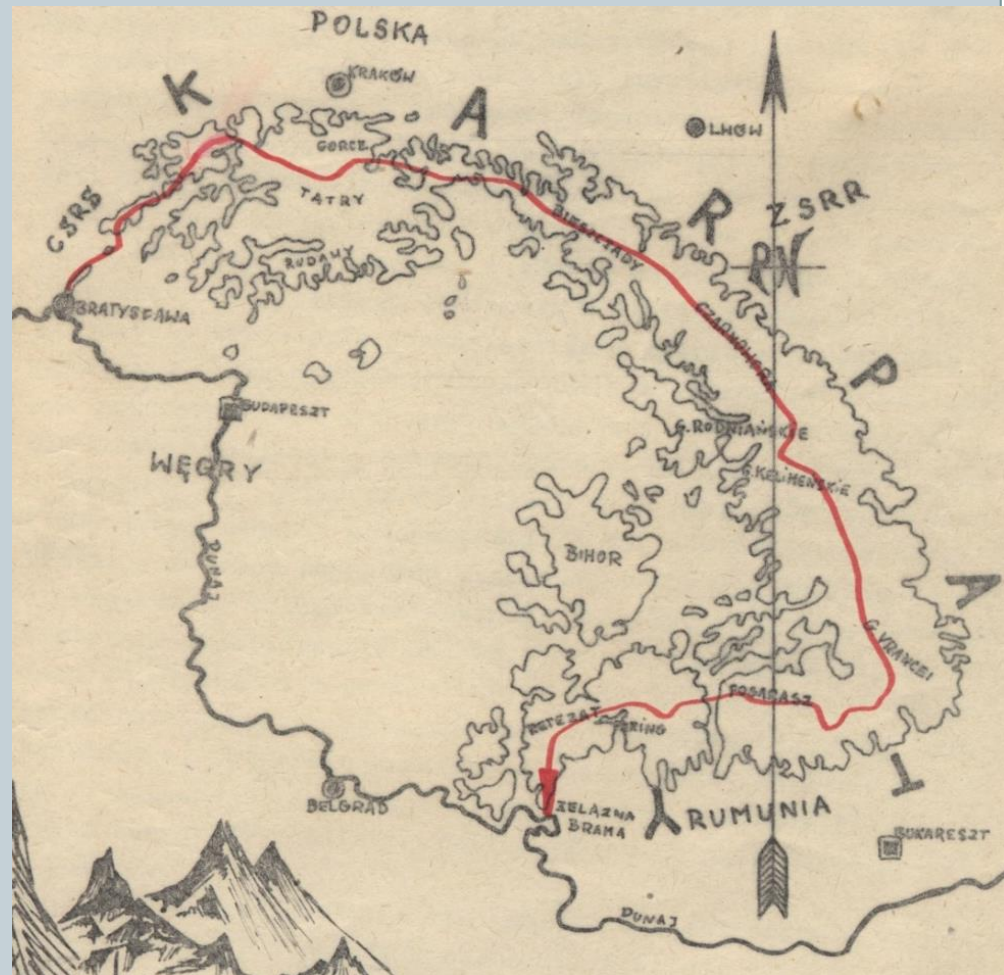
**From left:  
Z. Pecul,  
W. Tomaszewski,  
A. Wielocha.**

# AC 1980 – the route

## Czechoslovakia-Poland-USSR (Ukraine)-Romania

29

- **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)



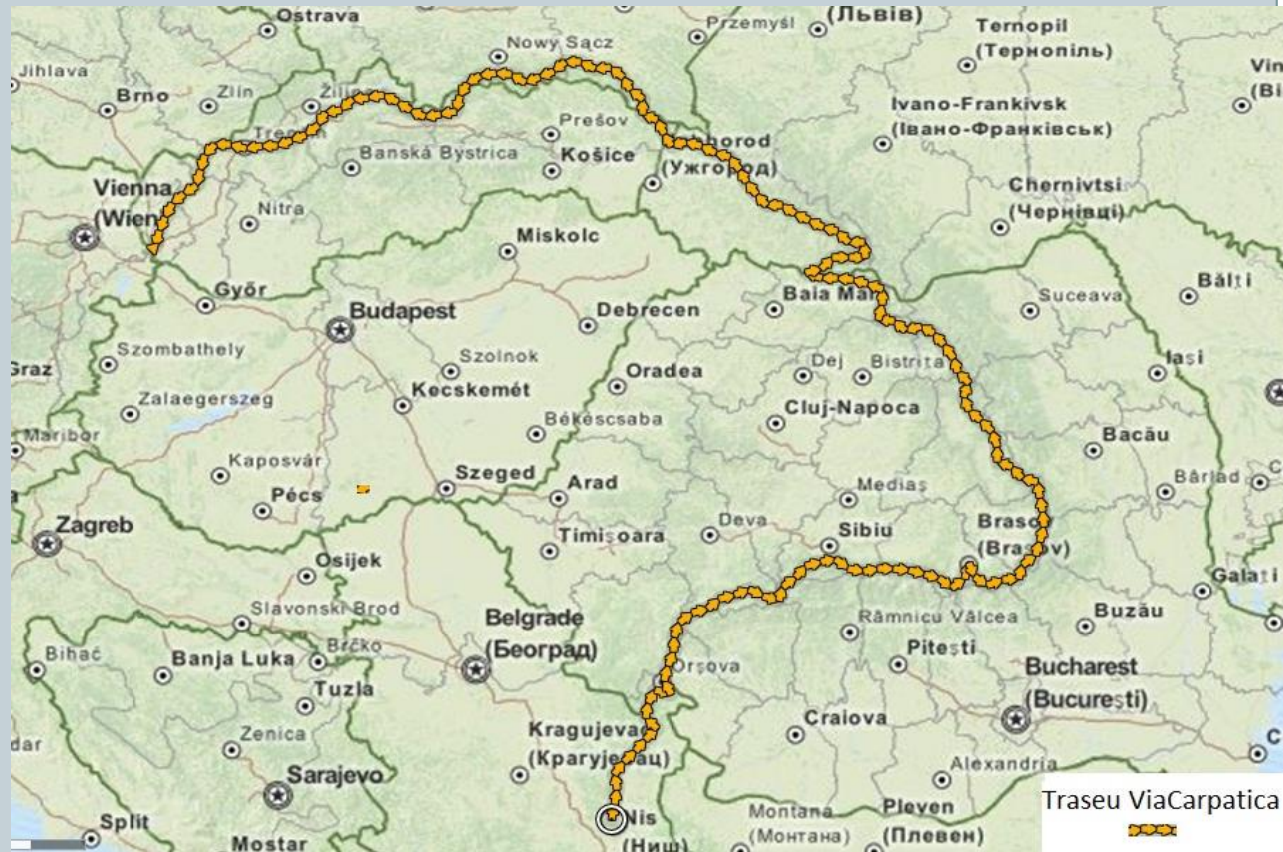


# VCE 2015 – the route

## Serbia-Romania-Ukraine-Poland-Slovakia

30

- **Start:**  
**18 July**  
**Soko Banja**  
(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

32

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





# VCE 2015 – the route

- We climbed over ? peaks above 1000 m

33



**Ciuc Mts, Romania**

**Topas peak, Ukraine**



# VCE 2015 – the route

- We climbed over ? peaks above 2000 m

34

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

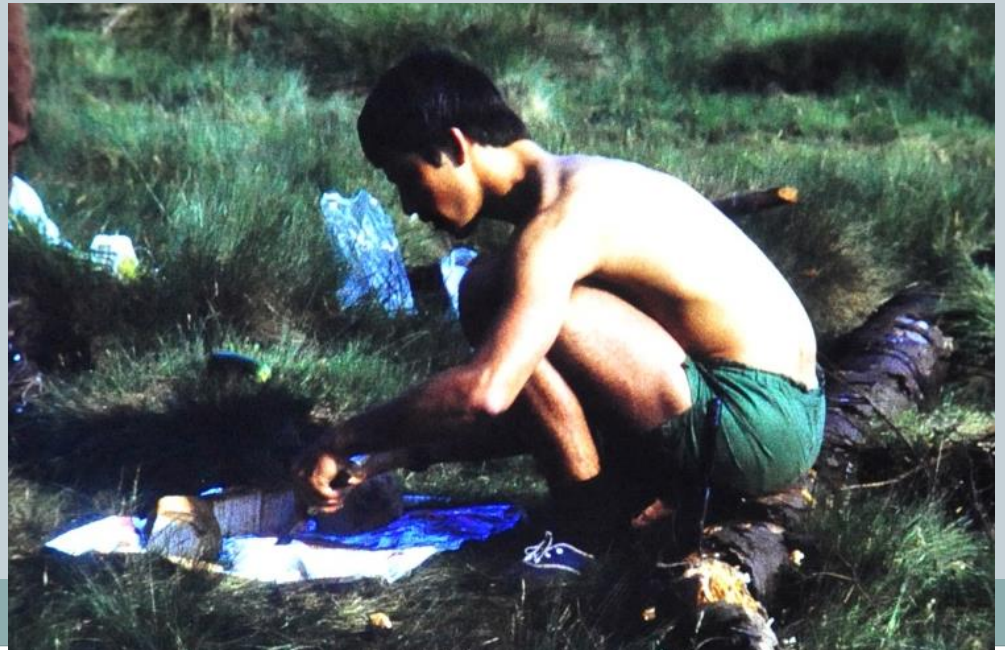
35

**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

36

- 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 not to be enough,
- switched to honey, butter and bread.

## Lunch and supper:

- pasta with cheese, milk or jam
- peas, lentils or mushroom stew
- cheese with toast bread
- fruit, vegetables, fish or bacon from time to time





# AC 1980 – the accommodation

- **Mountain bivouacs**

37



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



# AC 1980 – the accommodation

- tent bases, mountain chalets

38

**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

39

**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.**

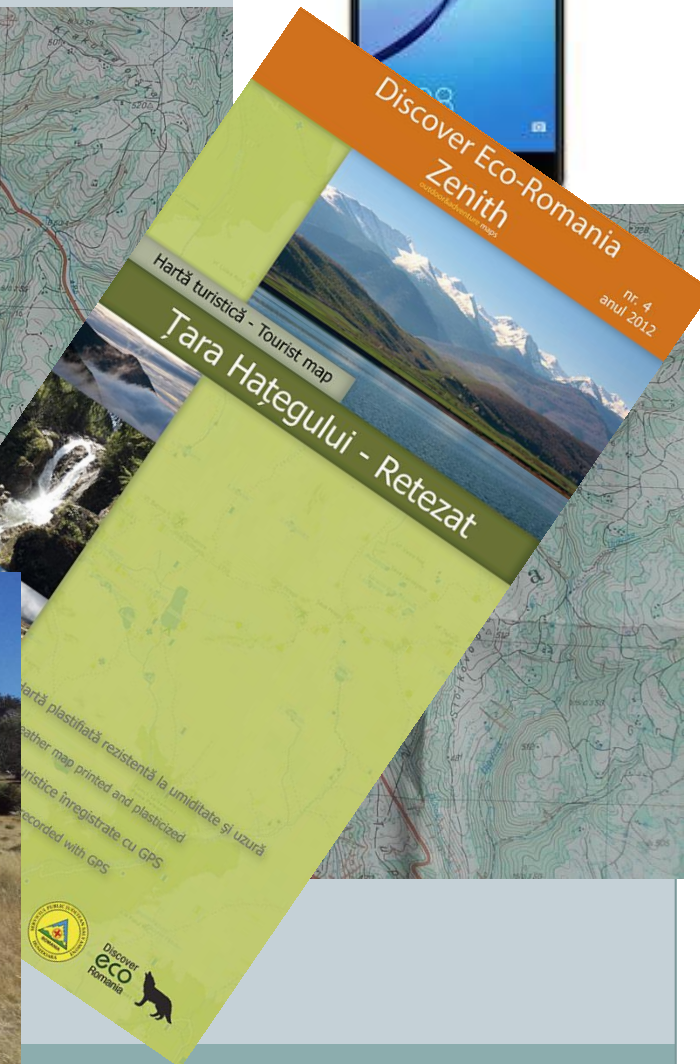


## Maps – sketchy and old





## 42





# AC 1980 – equipment

43

- 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:**

44

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





# AC 1980 – equipment

45

**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)

47

**Little Carpathians – White Carpathians – Javorníky.**  
**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**

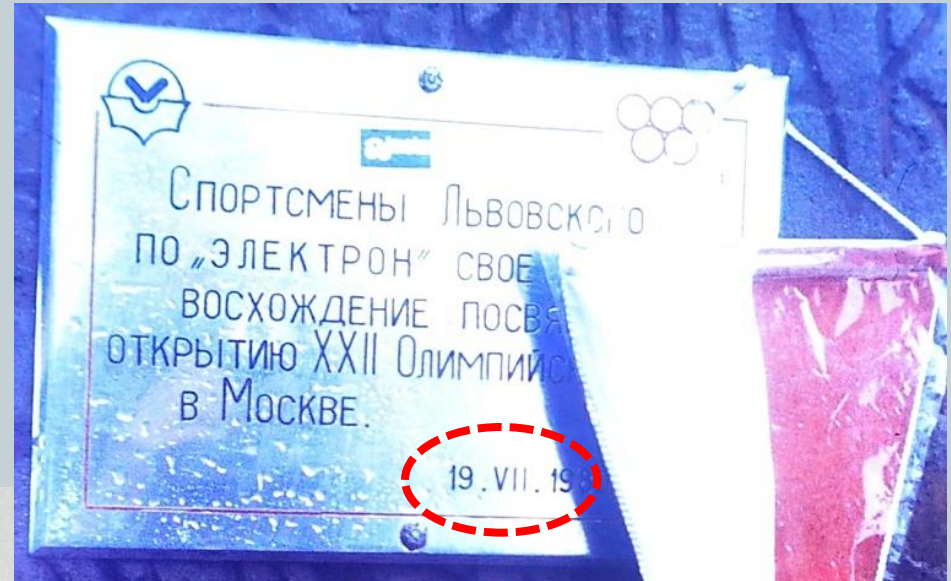




# AC 1980 – USSR (Ukraine)

49

**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

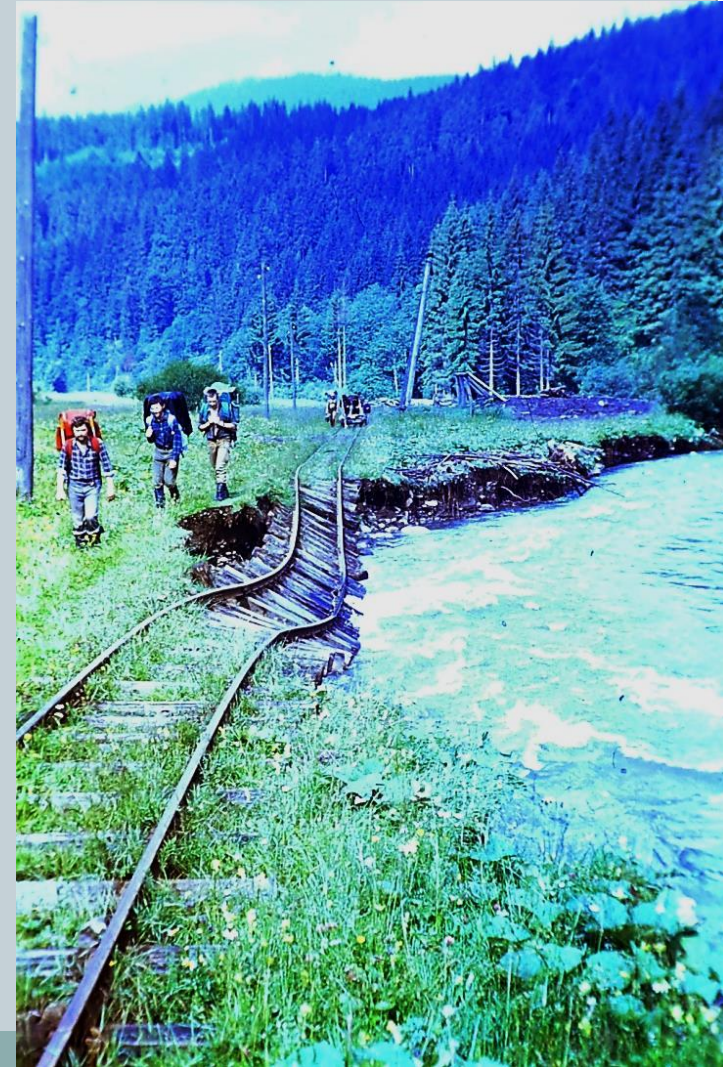
50

- 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

Now in Valea Buzau there is a water reservoir.



**Siriu Mts, Siriu 1640 m**

**Siriu Mts,  
Siriu 1640 m**



# AC 1980 – Romania

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

54

## Eastern Carpathians



**Munții Rodnei,  
Gargaleu 2076 m**



# AC 1980 – Romania

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

55

**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

56

## 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

58



**From left:** J. Montusiewicz,  
Z. Pecul, W. Tomaszewski,  
P. Kurowski, **A. Wielocha.**





# VCE 2015 – Serbia

**265 km in 8 days**

59

**Starting point: Soko Banja**

**End point: Iron Gates – Danube dam**

**The first objective:**

**Rtanj Peak 1560 m – the highest peak in the Serbian Carpathians**



**Rtanj Peak 1560 m**

**Limestone rock formations**

# VCE 2015 – Romania

1215 km in 45 days

60

**Southern Carpathians:** Mehedinți – Cernei – Godeanu – Retezat – Parâng – Lotrului – Cindrel – Făgăraș – Piatra Craiului – Bucegi

Starting point: Orșova

End point: Sighetul Marmăției



Retezat Mts

Cernei Mts



# VCE 2015 – Romania

1215 km in 45 days

61



Parang Mts



Fagaras Mts

# VCE 2015 – Romania

1215 km in 45 days

62

**Eastern Carpathians:** Piatra Mare – Neamțului – Grohotiș – Ciucaș – Siriu – Penteleu – Bretcu – Oituz – Nemira – Ciucului – Hasmaș – Giurgeu – Bistriței – Suhard – Rodnei – Maramureșului



Bretcu Mts

Neamtului Mts





# VCE 2015 – Romania

1215 km in 45 days

63

**Nemira Mts**



**Hasmas Mts**

# VCE 2015 – Romania

1215 km in 45 days

64



Suhard Mts – shepherd's hut

Rodnei Mts





# VCE 2015 – Ukraine

**410 km in 13 days**

65

**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



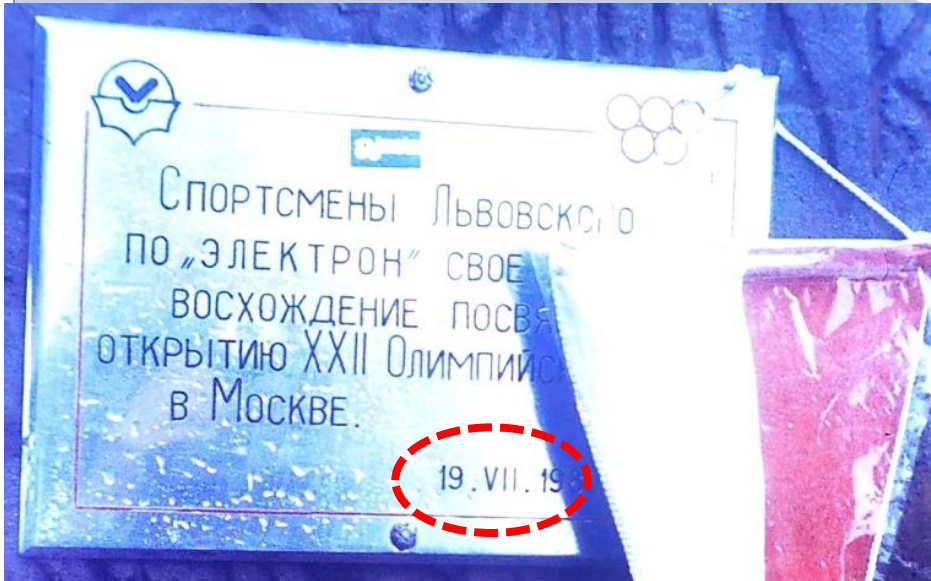
1980



# AC 1980 and VCE 2015, Ukraine

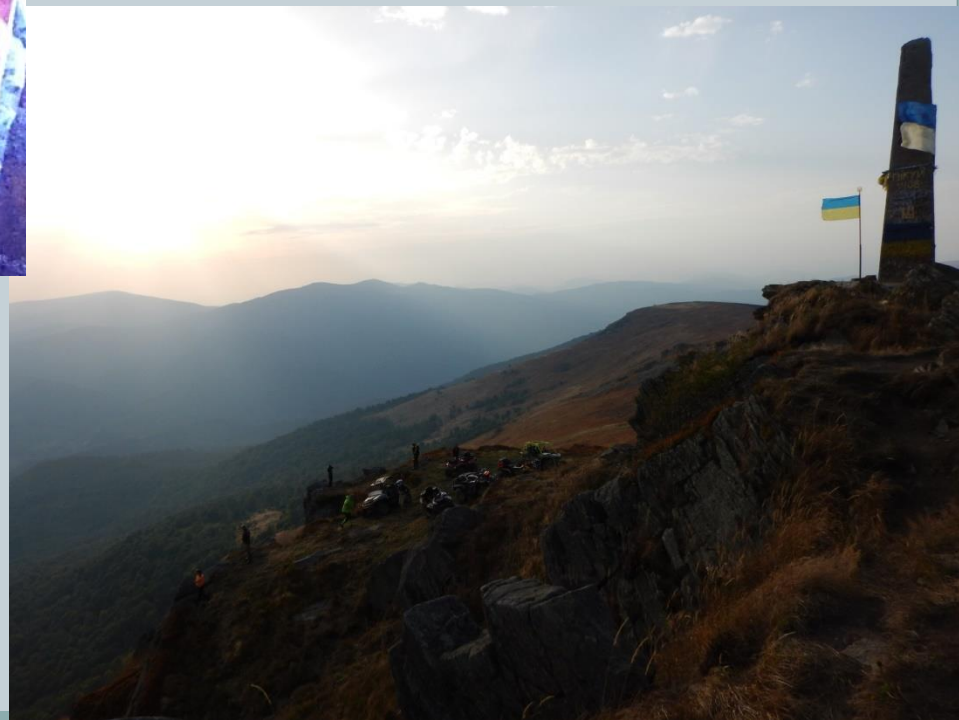
67

**Pikui Peak 1405 m**



**1980**

**2015**



# VCE 2015 – Poland

331 km in 11 days

68

## Bieszczady – Beskid Niski – Beskid Sądecki

Starting point: Balnica

End point: Niedzica



Low Beskids

Polish-Slovakian border



# AC 1980, Poland-Slovakia, VCE 2015

69

## Beskid Niski Mts, state border



No Schengen zone, 1980



Schengen zone, 2015

# VCE 2015 – Slovakia

495 km in 12 days

70

## High Tatras – Slovak – Moravian Carpathians

Starting point : Veľka Frankova

End point: Bratislava

### White Carpathians



Gerlachovsky Peak 2654 m



# Other crossings

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

71



Majchrowski 2015

T. Świst 2015



on a pole above  
Lake Avrig



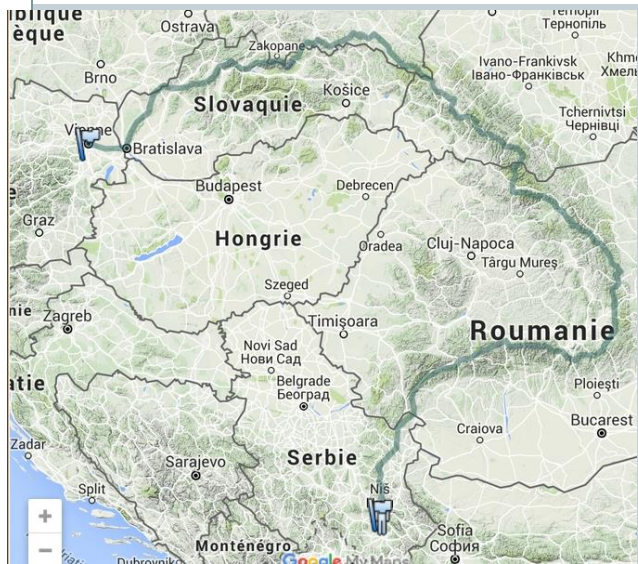
D. Księski 2017

Sanocki & Łukaszewska 2015

# Other crossings

foreign

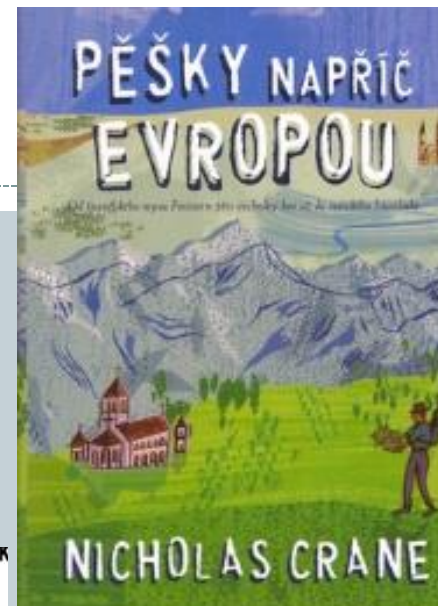
72



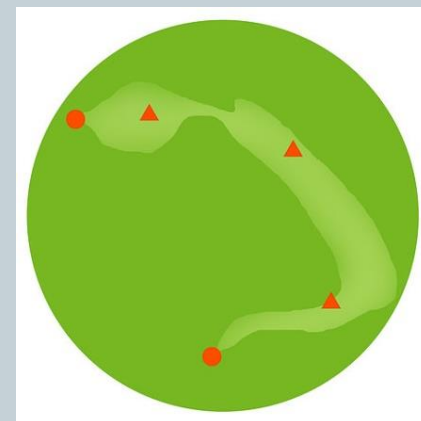
**Dubuis 2011 (France),  
including Serbia**



**Krno 1984 (Slovakia),  
via Hungary**



**1993 (UK)**



**Hlavačkova 2015  
(Czech Republic)**



# Conclusion

**Jerzy Montusiewicz**

73

- **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

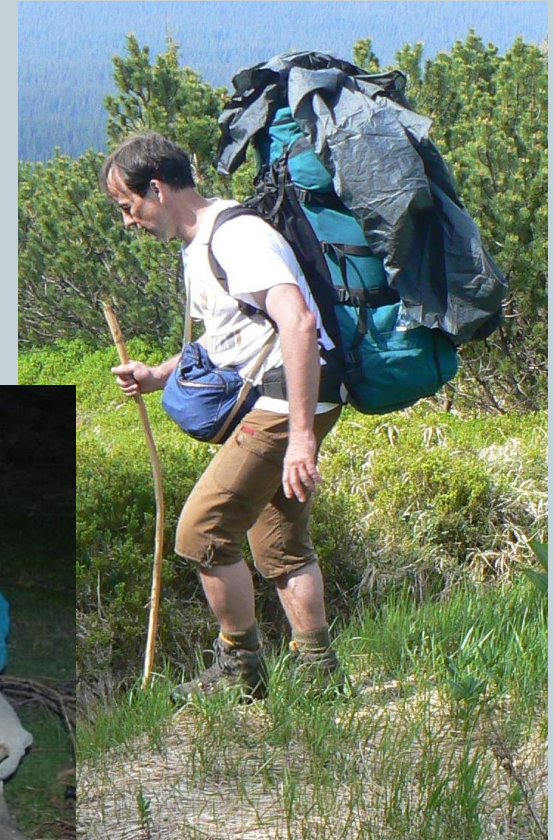
Do I still walk the mountains?

**Carpathians**

74



**Lillafüred,  
11-10-2017**



**2011**



# Post Scriptum

Do I still walk the mountains?

**Dolomites**

75



**Piz da Lech  
2911 m, 2013**

**Bivouac Fiamme  
Gialle 3002 m,  
2017**

**Civetta 3220 m,  
2016**





# Post Scriptum

Lillafüred, Hungary, 12 October 2017

76

## Carpathian Convention



From left: Vlad Spiru,  
Jerzy Montusiewicz,  
Andrei Dumitrescu



Lillafüred, Hungary, 10-12 October 2017, Carpathian Convention



**Au revoir!**

**See you!**

77

**Do widzenia!**

**Na shledanou! До побачення!**

**Dovidenia!**

**Viszontlátásra!**

**Auf Wiedersehen!**

**La revedere!**

**Видимо се!**