

PRESERVATION OF THE SACRED WOODEN ARCHITECTURE OF THE UKRAINIAN–ROMANIAN HISTORICAL REGION OF MARAMUREȘ

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Maramaros

The Romanian-Ukrainian historical and ethnographic region, which was divided between Romania and Subcarpathian Ukraine during World War II, is one of the few places where a rich heritage of wooden architecture has been preserved. The main attraction of Maramures is its amazing wooden churches, which impress not only connoisseurs of church architecture, but also ordinary tourists. The tradition of building wooden churches in central and southern Maramures (Romania) began in the 16th century. Since then, they have spread all over Europe, and the wooden churches of the region have become classics of architecture and a striking example of the great skill of local craftsmen.

Churches of Maramures

Nowadays, there are almost a hundred wooden churches in Marmarosh, a third of which are over two centuries old. They're known for their unique architecture, which combines elements of Byzantine and Gothic styles. Craftsmen usually used oak or coniferous wood to build the churches. Also, a distinctive feature is the wall paintings inside the churches.



Kraynikovo: St. Michael's Church



*Danilovo: Church of
St. Nicholas*



Oleksandrivka: Church of Saint Paraskeva

Churches of Maramures

One of the most visited attractions in Maramures, the Orthodox women's monastery of Birsana, is a monastic ensemble consisting of several wooden buildings built in the traditional Maramures style. The Church of the 12 Apostles stands out, with a tower rising 57 m high, one of the tallest in Europe. The village of Bârșana is also known for the Church of the Presentation, which was first considered part of the monastery, but in 1806 was moved and converted into a parish church. Since 1999, it has been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List.



Church of the Presentation, Birsana village, Romania

Churches of Maramures

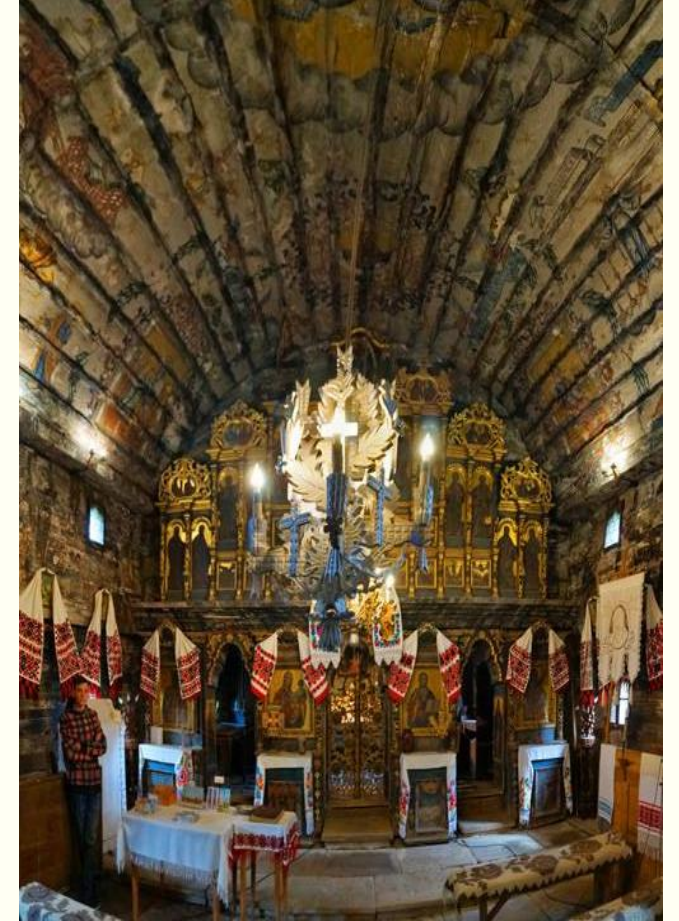
The small wooden church of the Ascension of the Lord in the village of Poliany also plays an important role in the history of the inhabitants of Maramures. It was built shortly after the arrival of some inhabitants of Slavic origin from Christian lands, namely Polish Galicia. This is the first Ukrainian church in these territories. It is recognized as a historical monument, being the oldest church of its type in Romania. The roof of the church tower is shaped like a bell, which is very different from the style of other religious sites in Maramures, reminiscent of Ukrainian influences. Services are still held there, but only on church holidays.



Church of the Ascension of the Lord,
Polany village (Romania)

Churches of Maramures

In the village of Shrudreshta, there is a church that belongs to the list of UNESCO masterpieces on Ukrainian ethnic lands in Marmarosh. It is a Greek Catholic church, built in 1721 in honor of the St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel. The bell tower of this church reaches a height of 72 meters and is considered the second tallest wooden bell tower in the world. This church is a national historical monument of Romania. It is also famous for its incredible paintings and inscriptions made in Cyrillic, which did not come here from Russia at all.



Greek Catholic church, Shurdești village (Romania)

Churches of Maramures

The Church of St. Paraskeva in the village of Oleksandrivka (formerly known as Shandrovo), Khust District, Zakarpattia Region, is a unique monument of the 15th century, belonging to the “Marmaros Gothic” style. Inside, there are well-preserved 18th-century wall paintings by folk artists, including Stefan Terebelsky. During the Soviet era, the church was an architectural monument of the Ukrainian SSR, at that time it housed a local history museum, and in 2018 it became a cultural heritage site of national importance, which it remains to this day.



Church of St. Paraskeva, village of Oleksandrivka (Khust district, Zakarpattia region, Ukraine)

Conclusion

So, the wooden churches of Maramures are exceptional because they combine common features of Ukrainian and Romanian traditions: wooden plasticity, tall slender bell towers, and symbolism that has remained almost unchanged for centuries. Their value is so high that some of the churches have been included in the UNESCO heritage list, which means that they are of global significance, not just local.

Maramures is a place where tradition really “lives.” The very fact that these churches are still used for their intended purpose makes them part of the daily spiritual life of the community, not a museum exhibit. Therefore, preserving this architecture, historical memory, artistic heritage, and spirituality of the region is very important, as it is what unites the generations, cultures, and traditions of Ukrainians and Romanians.

Thank you for your attention!