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UKRAINE

WEST. EAST

The guide

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

A 25 000 kilometers long journey in Ukraine is how one could describe the contents of the book you are holding in your hands now. It was an approximate mileage of the odometer of my Subaru Forester SUV was during the last two years, while I was roaming in the country, exploring lots of familiar as well as some new routes, driving on splendid highways and forcing my way off road, visiting big cities and small remote villages and discovering various resorts, both developing ones and those going into decline. My goal was the wonders of nature and historical sights, well-advertised nature reserves and forgotten ruins, calm and quiet beaches and death-defying rides. And of course, my primary goal was all those interesting people who really love their country, who genuinely care about its future and actually do something in order to increase its attractiveness to the tourists.

This book is based on a few dozens of reports telling about the attractions and tourist potential of different regions of our country. Almost all of them are combined into little cycles, and each of these cycles could possibly become a route for your weekend trip or a getaway in any part of Ukraine, excluding only some regions of Donbas and Crimea, temporarily inaccessible for the free visiting.

I've seen with my own eyes almost everything I described in this book. Some of facts I knew from other people who shared with me

their knowledge and their experiences. I tried all the dishes of the regional cuisine and wrote down all the recipes. I visited and tried all the hotels and restaurants I mentioned in the book, choosing only the best ones or those that didn't have any alternative at all, if there were no other options available in the area. However, some of the establishments and businesses described here could have been shut down since the moment of publication of this book, although some new ones could have been opened as well. I made sure to write separately about the conditions of the roads on all the routes I was writing about, which I consider being extremely important while choosing the direction of a trip.

If you opened this book, it means that you either belong to the travellers' tribe already or seriously consider the possibility to really see and experience Ukraine in its natural and cultural richness and beauty. Trust me, these personal impressions are definitely worth a vacation or a weekend. I really hope that the stories you are about to find in this book will convince you of it. And I hope that you will pack your travel bag, fill the tank of your car, out this book in the glove compartment and will hit the road, heading towards the unknown and following your passion to explore.

I wish you a pleasant read and unforgettable adventures!

Andrii Tychyna

Cycle 1: Subcarpathia (January)

Ivano-Frankivsk in Stanislav fashion

*In the middle of winter we decided to head to snow covered Subcarpathia.
At the first stage of our long journey we visited the cradle of Halychyna,
discovered the remains of Stanislav fortress
and found a funeral boat of a Varangian warrior.*

The route: Halych—Krylos—Ivano-Frankivsk

Is Ivano-Frankivsk region a part of European Union yet? Because the road sign at the approach to the city is doubled with a noticeable plate with the EU flag, with a circle of stars against the blue background. Driving past the European integration creative inputs of the local officials, we can clearly feel how our vehicle literally jumps on every slough and pothole. According to the roads conditions, Subcarpathia haven't really become closer to Europe yet, although in this regard it is definitely ahead of the neighboring Lviv region.

The road::

One can drive six hundred kilometers from Kyiv to Ivano-Frankivsk using a few alternative routes, and each of them has its own drawbacks. This time we've been driving on a terrible bumpy H-09 highway, from Rohatyn direction. We left behind a monument to Nastia Lisovska, a native of Rohatyn, better known to the world as Roxolana, a wife of a Turkish Sultan, and an apocalyptic smog cloud hanging in the sky above the chimneys of Burshtyn thermal electric power station, one of the biggest power stations of this kind in Ukraine. The bridge crosses the Dnister



River ahead of us. This river divides Ivano-Frankivsk region in two unequal parts. There are dull and boring Opillya flatlands here, while over the river one can already see quite promising Carpathian foothills. Long trains of vehicles loaded with ski equipment head there in winter from all over Ukraine.

Halych: the second defense line

Bronze prince Daniel of Galicia (Danylo Halyskyi) hides his unsheathed sword between the pleats of his cloak, sitting on horseback and looking with suspicion on the city residents, walking leisurely on the central square of the city of Halych. He definitely doesn't trust the locals anymore, especially after the constantly scheming Galician nobles conspired in 1230 and almost succeeded in poisoning a young ruler.

Only fifteen years later he finally settled in Halych and managed to unite an enormously big Kingdom of Galicia-Volhynia. Maneuvering through the short streets of this town one can hardly imagine that in the times of prosperity it was one of Ruthenia's biggest cities. One can estimate the former scale only looking at a model installed near the Nativity Church (built in XIV century).

An archeologist Ihor Krekhovetskyi catches my quizzical look and tells me that in the former times it was just the port suburb, while the city centre was located between the hills, on the opposite side, across the lines of the city quarters and a shining river bend.

I stand on the hill near the restored tower of Starostin Castle. I am accompanied by the two scientists of the "Ancient Halych" reserve and a security guard. We are talking about the perspectives of the restoration works that somehow got stuck at the moment.

According to Ihor Krekhovetskyi, the budget the reserve currently receives is barely enough for paying the salaries for the employees. What kind of restoration works are we talking about?! Even archeological excavations are carried out mostly with the help of sponsorship and aid of the German colleagues. However, every season presents the archeologists with the new discoveries.

Ihor tells us with agitation about the landslide that happened on the western slopes of the hill and revealed numerous examples of pottery, iron nails and the remains of the brickwork. When the archeologists team explored the terrace on the territory of this landslide, they found the traces of the bastioned fortifications of the XVII century. It is known that Starostin Castle was built in 1658 by Galician steward Andrzej Potocki. The prototype of the castle was a model of an Old Russian port fortress. It was considered earlier that the castle had a quite simple triangular form, but researchers offered a version that there was a second defense line on the terrace!

The White Croats

Until X century the territory of modern Galicia and Volhyn was known as White Croatia, and its inhabitants used to call themselves the White Croats even much later. It was a tribe union allied to the Slavonic people, with its own form of government, which is still barely studied, with the big cities and with its own unique culture. After their lands have been annexed to Kyivska Rus by the prince Volodymyr the Great, the White Croats assimilated with the Slavonic people, although they are still considered to be the ancestors of the modern Galician people.

Shevchenkovo: a stone chronicle

Heavy fog deteriorates orientation in space drastically. They say there is high humidity here, which is a quite common thing, as the proximity of the river and an amphitheatre of hills create a unique, extremely humid microclimate here. I trust the hints of our guides and start noticing the milestones and benchmarks on the road: a bridge over the River Lukva, a monument to Khmelnytskyi, a little chapel, a high cross...

A shadowy silhouette of a massive cathedral can be seen through the thick fog. The features of the Old Ukrainian and Roman styles are entwined in its architecture. There is almost no exterior decorative elements, except of the ornamental carving of the main portal. There is the only one fully preserved building of the pre-Mongolian

period right in front of us: a Saint Pantaleon Church of the XII century.

The building is made of the white-stone joint blocks, fitted carefully to each other. This is what makes the cathedral in Halych totally different from the cathedrals in Kyiv and Chernihiv, built in the same period of time, as they've been usually built from the plinthiform brick (thin buff brick).

The entire building perimeter is covered with the countless pictures and inscriptions. Mostly they are the crosses of various forms, but there are also pictures of horses, some buildings, some abstract figures and shapes, sometimes some inscriptions in Old Bulgarian or in Latin. Some of them could be dated, and archeologists use them to learn Halych history. Thus, one of these inscriptions says that the church was established before 1194 by the Galicia-Volhynian prince Roman Mstyslavovych and was named after his grandfather, Kyiv prince Izyaslav, who's Christian name was Pantaleon.



A blossoming cross

Among the numerous paintings of Saint Pantaleon Cathedral the most significant and impressive one is a blossoming cross, an early Christian symbol of life's victory over the death. This blossoming cross can be also seen on the coat-at-arms of modern city of Halych.



Saint Pantaleon Cathedral

Krylos: a grave of a father-founder

We approach the centre of Princely Halych. Archeologist Oleh Melnychuk tells us that there was a complicated system of various defense installations consisting of a few rows of massive embankments built here.

Then we climb up the Krylos Mountain which is five kilometers away from the modern city of Halych, in front of the Vernacular Museum. The highest place on the site of the ancient town is marked with the Halychin Tomb. The legend says that the father-founder of the city, a prince of the White Croats tribe Galice was buried here. Inside of the tomb the archeologists discovered recently a symbolic burial place of a Varangian warrior of the X century. B burial boat, a Scandinavian scramasax sword, shield gold plating, axes and some other items have been found here. The chronicles mention a special "inaugural" ritual when the new princes and rulers climbed the Halychin Tomb. These traditions are usually preserved in the folk's memory for quite a long time.

Oleh Melnychuk is a native of Krylos. He graduated from Kosiv Arts College and in 1994 became an employee of the National reserve "Ancient Halych". Oleh is especially proud of the archeological excavation of a huge prince's palace on the territory of the citadel he participated in.

Dormition Church in the centre of the citadel was built in XVI century from the materials left of the ancient Dormitory Cathedral which was the main cathedral of Princely Halych, the third largest city of Ancient Ruthenia, and which was destroyed during the Tatar and Mongol invasion. Many stone blocks still have the visible fragments of the Old Russian frescoes, reliefs and inscriptions. After the city was plunged and nearly destroyed by the Tatar-Mongol hordes, and the region's capital was temporarily transferred to Kholm and later to Lviv, Halych still remained the main spiritual centre of Western Ukrainian lands and the main residence of Galician metropolitans for quite a long time. Even the modern name of the village has a sacral meaning: Greek word "kliros" was used in old times to call the clerical establishment. Collection of personal pendulous seals of the bishops is being shown to us in the former metropolitan chambers. In olden times

there was a personal summer residence of the Greek-Catholic Metropolitan Archbishop Andrey Sheptytskyi here. It was him who first initiated establishing of a museum in Halych.

Archeologist Ihor Krekhovetskyi explains us why Halych haven't turned into a tourist Makkah yet. "In times of Soviet Union it was not popular and common to mention Halych as one of the main centres of Old Russian nationhood and state mechanism," he says.

When asked what prevents popularisation of the historic reserve today, Ihor Krekhovetskyi responds: "Well, you've seen our roads though..."

"The Halych Serpent"

The "Halych Serpent" is a name of a picture of a winged dragon that could be seen painted on a stone block in the inner walls of the Dormition Church, to the left from the entrance. Instead of the flame a Tree of Life grows from his chaps. In Hutsul dialect the word "Galica" means "a serpent", "a snake". It is considered that the winged serpent was the first symbol of Halych.

The Princely Well

For more than a thousand years the water flows from the Princely Well on the slopes of the Krylos Mountain. According to the legend, the spring appeared on the spot where the prince hit the ground with his sword during the long siege of Halych when the city defenders, suffering from terrible thirst, were ready to give up and abandon the city to the enemy.

Museum of history of Ancient Halych

The village of Krylos, 1 Ivan Franko Street

Vernacular Museum of Subcarpathia

The village of Krylos, H-09 highway

Ivano-Frankivsk: in search of Stanislavov

The road from Halych to Ivano-Frankivsk doesn't actually give any problems, as the road surface is quite smooth, with no significant holes, and there are almost no slow moving trucks as well. But while approaching the city centre, traffic gets busier until we get stuck in a traffic jam on the intersection of Halytska and Dnistrovska streets. Everything gets clear now: it's a market

day, the market is really close, there are many unplanned street parking, and pedestrians cross the street wherever they want to. The drivers, who are not really familiar and comfortable with such extreme traffic conditions, just block the movement on the intersections. I am trying to leave the main roads and to drive through the side streets and suddenly I am finding myself in a mysterious labyrinth of numerous one direction streets, where a foreign driver who doesn't use a GPS navigator could easily get lost. Ivano-Frankivsk is quite a small town, with the population of nearly 250 thousand people, yet the municipal authorities definitely have to think about the more efficient traffic management due to the tremendous increase of the numbers of the private vehicles on the streets of the city.

A fifty meter high City Hall tower with the clock, located right in the centre of the pedestrian zone, serves as a sort of a tourist landmark in Ivano-Frankivsk. There is a very useful tourist information centre operating there,

where one can buy city maps and city guides and book a city tour with the experienced and certified tour guides. There are a few interesting museum exhibitions inside, but one should trudge through the crowd of numismatists in the hall in order to get there. I found the museum attendants and inquired where I could see the legendary scamasax sword from the Halychin Tomb. It turned out that this item was undergoing restoration works at the moment, but next I was being escorted to the history department, while the museum attendants bragged about the other highlights of their exhibition, such as Polish and Cossacks weaponry, a stone sarcophagus of Yaroslav Osmomysl and a model of medieval Stanislaviv, which was the name of the city since the moment it was founded in 1662 by Galician warden Andrzej Potocki. The model demonstrates a neat polygonal planning of the bastioned city fortifications. Nowadays location of the embankments and ramparts, destroyed later by Austrians, are barely visible on the city



Model of medieval Stanislaviv



*Andrzej Potocki —
founder of Stanislaviv*

map. The only one preserved bastion of the Stanislaviv fortress in the city was turned into a shopping mall with the numerous boutique shops which resembles more some underground walking tunnel rather than the authentic vaults. The former Palace of Potocki family stands abandoned, hiding its facades, mutilated by the barbarian reconstruction works, in the park behind the gate of honour. The stone knights on the pylons are the only remnants of the former noble glamour of the mighty magnate's residence.

Although historical image of the city is slightly damaged with some inappropriate inclusions of faceless and dull Soviet housing development, it is still interesting and pleasant to walk here. For a couple of hours we've been just wandering through the stone-block pavements of the pedestrian zone, examining ancient churches and cathedrals and checking out new coffee shops. We tried to feel the vibe of Stanislaviv in Ivano-Frankivsk. And then we took a decision to visit an interesting and quite unusual private museum which was recommended to us at the local tourist information centre.

"I saw this museum in my dream, and that was how I built it later right on my land, in a form

of kolyba (Ukrainian hut)", the owner and founder of the museum, Roman Fabryka, says, leading us to the world of his ideas.

His main profession is a journalist. Twenty three years ago he participated in establishing of the first regional TV-channel. His TV-programme was called "News of our land", and since that time locals are often being addressed as "Honorable residents of our land".

Mr. Roman tells us that he has mastered over thirty various professions and skills, and that he built this part of his house with his own hands, together with his brother and his son. When he was young, he worked as a miner in Vorkuta, in Russia. This museum actually started from his miner's helmet, miner's lamp and his drain cleaner.

A small annex of the house in the corner of a little fruit garden located on seven hundred square meters of his land is filled with his working equipment, tools and various household items from different epochs, from plough to computer. All of them somehow represent 150 professions of Fabryka family and their ancestors for the last 200 years.



Stone Knight on the pylon of the front gate

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