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Mountain Tourism in Ukraine and Poland

Mountain cliffs that seem launching straight into the blue sky, deep dark forests with light green islands of fields and blue eyes of lakes, looking boiling but ice cold rivers and blue smoke of tourists' fire – all this is the spirit of mountains. Though, it's not only about the wild and beautiful nature – mountains is a unique cultural region where contemporary way of living reveal thousands years old folk traditions and rituals.



Let's look into the beauty of the mountains in Slavske (Ukraine) and Zakopane (Poland) and development of tourism there.

Slavske is the one of the most popular ski resort in the Ukrainian Carpathians, situated 130 km southwest of Lviv. Zakopane district is considered as the most attractive tourist region in the southern Poland, about 100 km to the south of Krakow, close to the border with Slovakia. It lies in a valley at the foot of the Tatras, the highest mountains in Poland.

Slavske is the heart of Boykivshchyna region, a place that welcomes real connoisseurs of beauty, people who desire to feel themselves part of this wonderful world anytime during any season. Slavske is situated in the beautiful valley of the Opir river – land full of legends – local people still know whereabouts of old Drevlian tribe prince Sviatoslav's grave, a prince who died in the battle over here in 1015. Some researchers think that settlement raised near the 10th century, but its name has an ancient Slavonic origin of Slavka River or with glorious fighters of prince Sviatoslav. The first documentary recollection about Slavske like settlement dates back to 1483. A special development of Slavske took place in 1970-1980. Today, Slavske has a resort status.

Zakopane, instead, is not so ancient. It is only four centuries old. It was founded between the 16th and 17th centuries as a farmers' and shepherds' settlement. In 1845 the first parish was set up in the village and two years later Zakopane was visited by one of its legendary persons – priest Józef Stolarczyk. He encouraged the highlanders to rent their houses to the visitors, later on people started to build special houses for tourists. The first hotel called “Pod Giewon-

tem” was built in 1885. In 1899 Zakopane was connected by the railway which started a new chapter in its history. In the XIX century Zakopane became famous as a tourist and health resort.

By the way Slavske also developed railway infrastructure - trains from all over Ukraine, as well as from Russia, Hungary, Slovakia and Austria arrive there. In addition, local bus transport is easily available and reliable.

Located in the Tatra Mountains Zakopane is Poland's self-proclaimed “winter capital”, and a trip here has become little less than a rite of passage for many natives. Polish premier mountain town has long been known for its ski jumps and cross-country trails, so much so that it was at one stage an outside shot to host the 2006 Winter Olympics.

During the 70's Slavske became the training centre for no less than the USSR olympic team, and legend says that Ukrainian pole vault hero Sergey Bubka once vaulted an entire house after a particularly lively days adventures, however thus wouldn't help Slavske to become Winter Olympic capital.

The development of Zakopane and its skiing facilities, has been thwarted to some extent by the establishment of the Tatra National Park to the south.

In comparison Slavske has achieved it a couple years later but nowadays you can visit numerous shops specializing in ski rental, with prices starting from 30 UAH per day for a pair of battered skis.

After skiing you may visit restaurants that in the majority are made in old local wooden style, where a chef cooks tasty Ukrainian food, or anything else you'd like to.

Zakopane proposes you: lamb, sheeps cheese, pork scratchings and goose; the menu here will leave you needing to be rolled all the way back to your hotel.

Finding accommodation in Zakopane is not a problem. The cheapest places to stay are in private rooms, usually costing between 40 and 60 PLN. Signs for free rooms or guest rooms or rooms with bathrooms are literally everywhere. Or just check out the hotels, pensions and mountain huts listed. One of Zakopane's hotels "Giewont" offers renovated rooms carried with all the mid-range traits one would expect: cable TV, prints on the walls. Instead of it, hotel "Mercure Kasprowy" proposes swimming pool, bowling lane, tennis courts and a fleet of stuff working around the clock to make this Zakopane's most professional hotel. Rooms are chock-full of extras: internet, hairdresser, satellite TV etc.

Slavske also does not lag behind. Apart from 25 large hotels and centers, today Slavske receive visitors in 50 mini-boardings-houses and private farmsteads. The most popular hotel is "Perlyna Carpat", situated in the center of Ukrainian Carpathians in ideal ecological and beautiful nook of Europe.

This hotel offers you 28 comfortable rooms including 6 rooms "Luxe" class with satellite television, mini-bar and all conveniences. From all rooms you can see wonderful landscape. Other hotels also offer very comfortable conditions, like relaxation rooms, rooms with fireplace, digital sat TV, stereo. There are also restau-

rants, bars, billiard, tennis courts and swimming pools. In addition to cheap hotels there are many pensions and bases.

Besides that there are many possibilities to stay at the cheapest places, but it is, as the saying goes, with conveniences on the yard.

Regarding mobile services Slavske has excellent covering: Kyivstar, UMC and others which have roaming with Polish operators such as Era GSM, Plus GSM, Idea GSM. So you don't have to worry about keeping in touch with your family and friends.

Yes, the rest in the mountains is really absorbing. But you must remember about tricks of nature. For example, the Tatras are high mountains and can be dangerous. You must always remember about the changeability of the weather – even in midsummer there may be some snowfall, beautiful sunny weather may turn to thick confusing fog. Another serious danger are storms; when you see there is going to be a storm you must take the nearest trail down from the ridge to the lower areas. But I think that no bad weather can't ruin your holiday if you are with good company – with your friends.

Hiking in the mountains and forests, horse and bike riding, or winter time downhill skiing followed by the warm lodge with tasty natural food and hot sauna - this is a happiness formula.

I must admit, Zakopane has better developed infrastructure than Slavske, but if you prefer green mountain tourism and winter sports – Slavske is what you need!