

CULTURAL ROUTE: MĂLÂNCRAV LIVING MULTIETHNIC HERITAGE

The project „**Cultural Route – Mălâncrav Living Multiethnic Heritage**” initiated by the **Mihai Eminescu Trust** and launched at the end of March 2015, brings to fruition the national and international recognized experience of the organization in bringing heritage to its best valorization, by making an innovative contribution to the development of the local community in Mălâncrav, under the objectives of the programme PA16/RO12 „**Conservation and revitalization of the cultural and natural heritage**”, supported through the Financial Mechanism SEE 2009 – 2014.

The general objective of the project is the sustainable development of the community in Mălâncrav, Sibiu county, by creating a cultural route to showcase the immaterial and material multiethnic local heritage.

The total value of the project is 384,887.40 Lei, of which 89.20% are nonrefundable grants.

During the implementation of the project several activities were organized: the inventory of the local material and immaterial heritage was made with photo and video documentation of the identified elements, workshops were organized where local craftsmen of all ethnic groups present in the village, practising the traditional techniques, showcase their crafts, such as wickerwork, brickwork, carpentry, cooking and baking, sewing and weaving.

To ensure the sustainability of the the project results, the local actors were consulted at each stage of the project planning and implementation, they were involved in decision-making. By promoting the equality of chances for the Roma people, who preserve the crafts, and by paying special attention to the preservation of the authenticity, in order that the example of a good practice could be created and handed over to the community.

Now the visitors have the opportunity after spending a night in the traditional guest houses in Mălâncrav to discover the attractions on the map of the cultural route created by us. They have a complete experience addressed to all the senses simultaneously, to take an interactive part in learning the symbolic significance of hand woven and embroidered patterns, shaping clay to bricks and tiles, weaving hazelnut rods, carving oak, baking, smelling and tasting bread or specific cakes to identifying the herbs of the spontaneous flora, and many more experiences, carefully selected for their authenticity.



MĂLÂNCRAV IN BRIEF

The village Mălâncrav is located in the Mălâncrav Valley, south of the village Laslea and 17 kilometres from the national road (DN) connecting Sighișoara to Sibiu. The history of this village extends over more than 700 years, during the time it was also known under the names Malamcrav, Malemkref or Malenkrag. Evidence that this territory has been inhabited since ancient times was brought by several archeological findings: a settlement of the Coțofeni culture (discovered on the Târnava Mare River), Roman treasure consisting of Roman imperial coins, from Augustus to Valentinian (discovered in 1968), a Celtic tomb (discovered in 1971 in the Târnava Mare meadow).

The village was first documented in 1305 under the name “possessiones Al-

makerk et Ujfalu”. Several years later it became the possession of the noble family Apafi which brought forth two princes of Transylvania: Michael Apafi I (1632 – 1690) and Michael Apafi II (1676 – 1713). In 1775, by royal decree, the village and other properties of the Apafi family become property of the noble family Bethlen. Later it enters into possession of the Haller family, its last owner being countess Susanne Haller.

Today, in the village today exists one of the largest Saxon communities in south-east Transylvania. More than one tenth of the 1100 inhabitants recorded at the last census are Saxons, the others being Romanians, Roma and Hungarians. Today, it is one of the most important touristique destinations in south-east Transylvania, well-known for the pres-



ervation of its built heritage, for the idyllic landscapes, for the customs and traditions and for the biodiversity of the area.

Here some important historical monuments can be visited, such:

- **The Evangelical Fortified Church** – built in the 14th century decorated with frescos, unique in the Transylvanian cultural scenery, which are largely preserved until today. Under the sacristy there is the tomb of Michael Apafi II, prince of Transylvania.
- **The Orthodox Church** – erected under the patronage of „The Presentation of Blessed Virgin Mary” at the end of the 1600-ies and built of brick and stone at the beginning of the 1700-ies
- **The Roman Catholic Church** was built in 1865 by order of Countess Susanna Haller and served the Hungarian com-

munity of the village until 2010, when the last Roman-Catholic parishioner died. Its value consists in its very existence, an evidence of the religious tolerance and multicultural diversity of Transylvania.

- **The Apafi Manor** was built in the 15th century by the noble family Apafi. With the support of architect Jan Hülsemann and the local craftsmen Fritz Klusch and Ernst Linzing with his team, the manor was restored according to the building plans of the 18th century. The restoration process was not easy but was achieved at high standards. Local artisans and craftsmen have been also involved for the embroideries and interior and exterior furniture. The awarding of the prestigious Europa Nostra Prize in 2007 is a recognition of the efforts of the Mihai Eminescu Trust.

CRAFTSMEN



EMBROIDERY

The sewing and embroidery workshop

Making clothes is one of the oldest human activities. In the countryside clothes for daily wear and the traditional costumes were made by the women, from hand-woven wool, cotton or linen fabric, either in their home or when getting together for work and chat. Throughout the whole year it was also the women who did the sowing, harvesting and processing of the materials used for clothing.

The traditional costume, worn with pride by all the 4 ethnic groups, is the best representation of traditional

clothing and can be “live” – admired – in this Transylvanian region, especially at traditional events.

The seamstresses of Mălâncrav, knowing the age-old techniques of combining traditional pattern and symbols, continue to make traditional costumes with regional patterns, as well as napkins, tablecloth, towels and embroideries.

People who want to take a piece of Transylvania back home, can order or buy such items straight away.



The brickworks

Making bricks and tiles has been a centuries-old practice in Transylvania and has grown with the development of the human settlements.

In many of these Transylvanian villages, there is a source of yellow clay soil, which, mixed with sand and water, is the raw material for the handmade and industrial brick and tile making.

The brickmakers of Mălâncrav are still manufacturing traditional bricks and tiles from the material found at the end of the village. On a workday, using special moulds, they will make several hundred bricks, while it is very interesting to watch the ancient skill of this

valuable craft. After being left to dry for ten days, or even more in spring and autumn. The bricks and tiles are fired for 5 to 10 days in a specially built kiln, according to the direction of the wind, to raise the inside temperature to 900-1000 degrees.

The brick and tile kiln in Mălâncrav, has the capacity of 12,000 tiles, was built in 2009 and is similar to the kiln at Viscri which started production in 2006. Both projects belong to the Mihai Eminescu Trust and were developed in partnership with the Horizon Foundation, to meet the increasing demand for hand-made bricks and tiles.



BRICKS



WICKER

The wicker workshop

Wicker weaving has been a craft since the times when the houses were made of thick wickerwork covered with clay and thatched roofs. Wickerwork was also used to make various objects used for the harvesting, carrying and preserving of farming products.

In Romania this tradition seems to have derived from the woodworking craft practised by the gypsies, who descended from ancient Indian goldsmiths and for whom wood processing was a means of earning their living. In time they specialized on making household and decorative objects, toys, baskets, mats, cradles and fences.

The craftsmen from Mălâncrav have preserved and continued this tradition

and today they make different models and shapes of baskets of hazel, twine or willow, baskets of bigger or smaller size for holding firewood, hops or toys.

The raw material is brought from the forests and from the surrounding hills or from the valleys, throughout the whole year. In their natural state or softened in hot water, the twigs are carefully selected and woven to objects of different sizes and shapes. Towards the end of summer corn leaves and reed are collected to make mats, baskets and objects for decoration are still used in the traditional houses.



The carpentry workshop

Derived from Latin and meaning “beyond the forest”, the name „Transylvania“ was first mentioned in 1075. The name lasted over the years due to the vast forest areas that still exist here today. Until the middle of the 17th century, when stone started to be used for buildings, wood was the common material of construction. In all the Transylvanian villages we can find little farms with barns, sheds and gates made of wood, nevertheless the most distinctive constructions are the fortified churches whose bell-towers built on solid support oversee the area. An interesting characteristic of these constructions is the joinery technique using wooden nails or the “swallow-tail joint”, which proved very efficient over the years.

The diversity of tree species has contributed to the preservation of the

carpentry skills, wood being used for making tools or household goods such as dowry chests, traditional furniture simple or with inlays, flour chests, solid window-frames and doors.

The Mălâncrav craftsmen, are very skilled in the traditional techniques and they are working mainly with oak and pine wood. The wood is usually cut in winter, in the southern part of the forest, where the humidity is lower, then left to dry for a period of time before being used. The carpenters are using the axe and chisel to make wooden beams, boards and lath used for construction and restoration of traditional houses, barns, roofs or household goods. Keeping alive the traditional carpentry skills is contributing very much to the preservation of the traditional and authentic character of the village.

CARPENTRY



The Traditional Cooking Workshop

The Transylvanian cooking ingredients and tastes of authentic recipes are considered to be the most diverse in Romania. Both the cultural and the culinary diversity of this area are the result of the turbulent history of this territory lying at the crossroads between the Western and the Eastern civilizations. The ethnic groups once living here have influenced the way food is prepared and served.

The people living here today are excited to welcome guests with food prepared in their homes. The dishes follow Romanian, Hungarian or Saxon recipes and the results are delicious.

The local traditional cuisine is based on seasonal ingredients and the meals differ from one season to another, from one home to another. Here we can taste dairy foods, different types of cheese (*caș*, *telemea*, *brânză frământată*), homemade meat dishes, homegrown fruits and vegetables, fresh or preserved.

The menu also includes sausages, bacon, *zacuscă*, eggs, soups, *ciorbă*, stew, pickles, and desserts such as cake, ginger bread, pie, doughnuts, jam and natural fruit juices. It's impossible to miss the *pălincă* to awake your appetite.

In Mălâncrav many homes still use traditional ovens for baking bread and cakes for daily meals or for family and holiday celebrations. Leavening and kneading the dough is done very early in the morning. Once the willow-wood fired oven is hot, the dough is sized, all the ingredients are added and, once put in baking tins it's ready to sit in the oven. Later in the day, after several hours of household chores, the atmosphere is invaded by the smell of baking bread, *hanklich* (plain, with semolina, apple or cream) or *striezel* (with nut, Turkish delight, raisins or cinnamon), all waiting to be tasted.

