

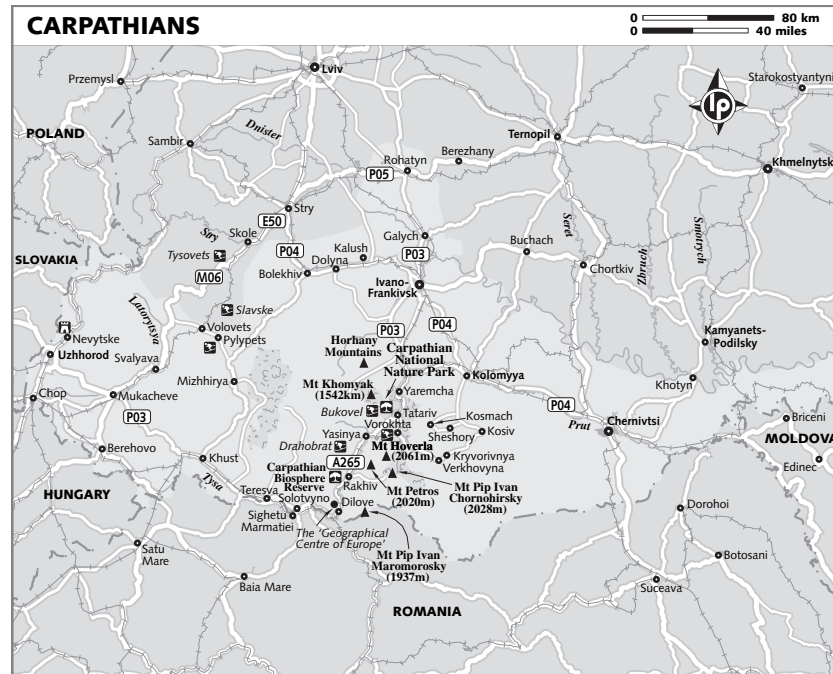
# The Carpathians Карпати



Welcome to the Hutsul Alps, one of Ukraine's premier natural beauties. True, Ukrainians themselves only refer to the mountains around Rakhiv as the Hutsul Alps, but for foreign visitors the local Hutsul culture helps distinguish this section of the Carpathian Mountains from those in neighbouring countries. Here long, thin villages stretch out languidly along potholed roads, with tiered wooden churches dotted periodically in between. Haystacks ring farmhouses decorated with unusually embossed tin walls and roofs. Horse-drawn carts clip-clop along, babushkas herd their geese, and *marshrutka* passengers cross themselves as they pass roadside chapels.

But while the everyday reality of 'Hutsulshchyna' is overwhelmingly rural, this beautiful region is also one of Ukraine's leading holiday spots. These rolling peaks have been a long-term hit with Ukrainian hikers and skiers. The Carpathian National Nature Park, the country's biggest such park, lies in this region, and within the park's boundaries stands Mt Hoverla – Ukraine's highest peak at 2061m. Ukraine's glitziest ski resort is also here. But what's most impressive about this region are the clear mountain vistas, visible from the barely marked hiking trails, and the chance to explore unknown nooks and crannies.

Each of the region's gateway cities – Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsi and Uzhhorod – has its attractions. However, the whole point of visiting the Carpathians is to head off-road and off-piste. So, although language and transport difficulties undoubtedly make this region slightly mystifying to foreigners, now's the time to grab your sense of adventure and head for them thar hills.



## History

Formed some 50 million years ago, during the same geological upheavals that produced the Alps, the crescent-shaped Carpathians were the cradle of Hutsul civilisation, and they're still home to this hardy mountain tribe.

A natural barrier between the Slavic countries and Romanised Dacia (Romania), the Carpathians have always provided a refuge from conquest and authority. When the Mongols sacked Kyiv in 1240, many of the city's citizens fled here, and when Poland and Lithuania invaded in the 14th century it's questionable how much control they exercised here in the region's higher altitudes. The Poles' lengthy struggle to capture the 'Ukrainian Robin Hood' Oleska Dovbush (see boxed text, p144) suggest it was very little.

Signs of 19th-century Austro-Hungarian culture haven't penetrated deeper than Ivano-Frankivsk and Chernivtsi. And when the Soviets rolled up after WWII, they were made to feel very unwelcome. The Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) lived as guerrillas in the Carpathians well into the 1950s, using the mountains as a stronghold from which to fire

on the authorities (the UPA is a controversial entity because of its probable, but unquantified, role in the extermination of Ukrainian Jews during WWII). However, even ordinary Carpathian villagers resisted Russian rule, too.

The Soviets weren't initially keen on the Hutsuls' folklore and pagan traditions, but came to see their culture as a tourist attraction and largely let them be. However, the Hutsuls have long been integrated into mainstream western Ukrainian culture. Their arts, crafts, cuisine and farming lifestyle all survive, but they reserve their traditional dress, music and dancing for celebrations and ceremonies.

## IVANO-FRANKIVSK ІВАНО- ФРАНКІВСЬК

☎ (8-0)342 (6-digit Nos), (8-0)3422 (5-digit Nos) / pop 204,000

With pastel-coloured neoclassical buildings, neatly landscaped gardens and orderly, tree-lined cobblestone pavements, the spruced-up

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Admire the pastel-coloured heart of **Ivano-Frankivsk** (opposite)
- Spend a few days in **Kolomyia** (p146) seeing its museums and letting its friendly folk unlock the surrounding countryside for you
- Hike to the top of Ukraine's highest peak, **Mt Hoverla** (p142), or persuade a local to show you a less-populated route
- Ski a potential Winter Olympics venue at ritzy **Bukovel** (p145) or get super-gnarly at **Drahobrat** (p146)
- Sample Hutsul cuisine and buy local handi-crafts in **Yaremcha** (p143)
- Have a laugh at the supposed '**Geographical Centre of Europe**' (p150) outside Rakhiv
- Expand your mind at the flamboyantly designed **Chernivtsi University** (p152) before picnicking at nearby **Khotyn Fortress** (p155)



■ POPULATION: 3.5 MILLION

■ HIGHEST POINT: 2061M

city of Ivano-Frankivsk is increasingly becoming one of Ukraine's most pleasant.

Just a few years ago 'Ivano' seemed more of an unfinished colouring-in book, where the renovated centre bled off into a monochrome past. But somebody's been busy with the paintbrush, while the service, food and general ambience have all improved.

Clearly reaping the benefits of a more open Ukrainian regime, Ivano-Frankivsk is starting to look and feel as you'd expect from a gateway resort to the mountains.

## Information

**Bukinist** (☎ 238 28; vul Nezalezhnosti 19; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) Maps of the city and surrounding region are sold here.

**Central post office** (maydan Vichevy; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat)

**Karpaty Tour** (☎ 537 042; www.karpaty-tour.com; vul Nezalezhnosti 40) Located in Hotel Nadiya, this agency conducts Carpathian tours.

**Tourist Information Centre** (☎ 502 474; www.tourism-carpathian.com.ua; pl Rynok 4; ☎ 11am-12.30pm & 1.30-4pm Mon-Fri) This privately run centre offers some English-language pamphlets about regional cities, although its opening hours are rather brief.

**Ukrtelekom** (maydan Vichevy; internet per hr 2uah; ☎ internet centre 8am-11pm, telephone centre 8am-10pm) Go to the left for long-distance phone calls and right for internet access.

## Sights

'Ivano' is somewhere nice to wander through, rather than a place offering loads of individ-

ual things to see. In fact, many travellers just change buses or trains here en route to the surrounding mountains. However, the city's charming centre is worth a brief exploration.

Following vul Hryunvaldska and vul Hrushevskoho from the train station to the centre, you can't miss the hulking Soviet-realist edifice of the **regional government administration office** (vul Hrushevskoho 21). But turn right just past here, into vul Melnychuka, and you'll come across an entirely different style of architecture. The 1762 **former Armenian church** (vul Virmenska 6) boasts an attractive baroque façade and twin bell towers.

The church sits on the eastern edge of **pl Rynok**, which is ringed with other colourful buildings. The star-shaped town hall at its heart also houses a not-particularly-exciting **Regional Museum** (☎ 223 26; pl Rynok 4A; adult/child 60/40 kopeks; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun).

To the west from here, in maydan Sheptytskoho, there's the baroque **Cathedral of the Holy Resurrection** (maydan Sheptytskoho 22), and a faintly entertaining **Art Museum** (☎ 440 38; maydan Sheptytskoho 8; adult/child 3.50/1.50uah; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) in the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary with an attic-like jumble of religious sculptures and paintings.

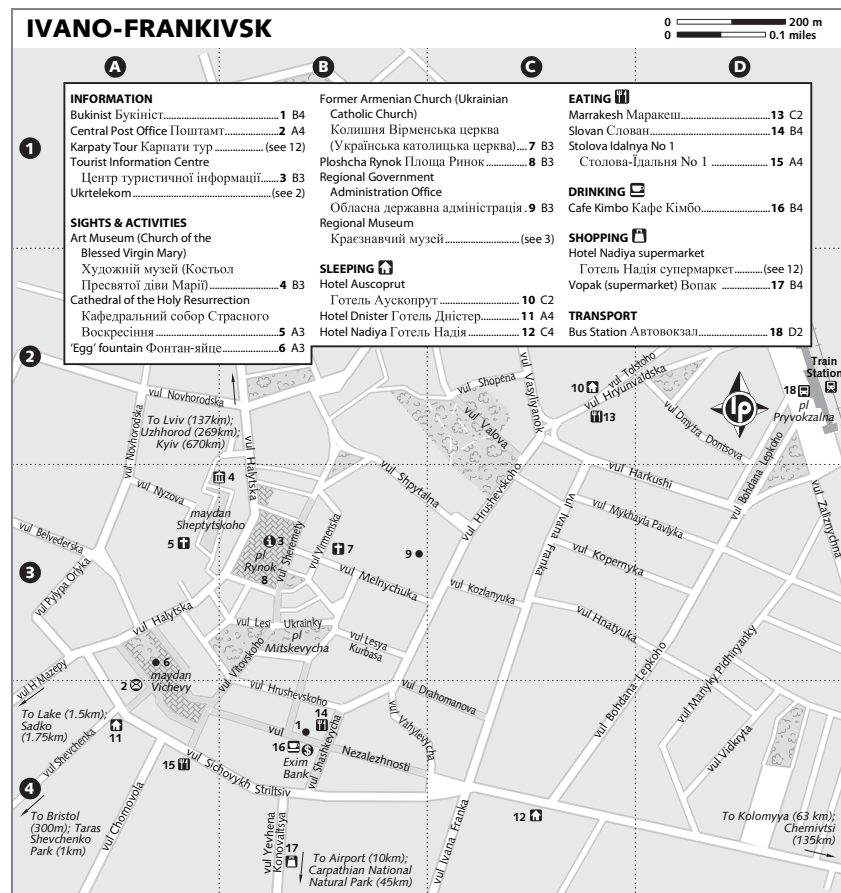
Heading south, you'll soon enter maydan Vichevy, whose dominant feature is its so-called **'egg' fountain**, a popular meeting spot. If you descend the steps below the fountain's main 'bowl' you can stand beneath the cascading water without getting wet – a little factoid of which locals are inordinately proud, especially those posing for wedding photos here.

## HOW IVANO-FRANKIVSK GOT ITS NAME *Marc di Duca*

Ivano-Frankivsk is the most prominent example of the many places in Ukraine named after a poet, politician, translator, writer, journalist or academic whom locals revere. Ivan Franko (1856–1916) was a typical 19th-century polymath and, alongside Taras Shevchenko, became a leading figure in the revival of Ukrainian language and culture under the Austro-Hungarian regime.

Born the son of a village blacksmith near Lviv, Ivan Frank (he added the 'o' later to make his name sound Ukrainian) studied Ukrainian literature at the Lviv university that now bears his name. Over his short lifetime, he wrote countless poems and articles, edited numerous (often banned) newspapers and led several left-wing workers' groups. His nationalist and Marxist leanings saw him serve three terms in imperial jails for political agitation. Ironically, some of his most eloquent works date from his time in prison.

Franko died in 1916 in a house purchased for him in 1902 by Lviv University students who were ashamed to see such an inspirational figure living alone in poverty. Today, hundreds of streets, squares and buildings across the country bear his name. Indeed, in 1962 the Soviets offered up his moniker as an olive branch to Ukrainian nationalist guerrillas in the Carpathians, who'd been taking pot shots at them since WWII. That's when the one-time Polish town known as Stanyslaviv became Ivano-Frankivsk.



Maydan Vichevy lies at the eastern end of the main pedestrian drag of **vul Nezalezhnosti**. With rows of refurbished neoclassical buildings in differing pastel colours, housing restaurants, cafés and fashion boutiques, this is Ivano's single most attractive street.

Another 20 minutes' walk south from maydan Vichevy, along vul Shevchenka, there's a further beauty spot. The entrance to **Taras Shevchenko Park** is lined with refurbished Austro-Hungarian mansions and its grounds have been beautifully landscaped thanks to EU money. The park also adjoins the town's large man-made **lake**, where there are **rowboats** (per hr from 10uah) and the occasional alarming sight of male joggers wearing only Speedos and trainers.

## Sleeping

**Hotel Dnister** (☎ 235 33; vul Sichovykh Striltsiv 12; s/d with shared bathroom \$10/16, d with private bathroom \$30-60) The Soviet-style Dnister has nice staff but depressing rooms, and the shared bathrooms could use a little scrubbing. The hot water supply is also unreliable.

**Hotel Nadiya** (☎ 537 077; www.nadia.if.ua; vul Nezalezhnosti 40; s/d \$50/60; ☎ ☒) If you're looking for generic, Western-style comfort, central Nadiya is the one for you. The camel-toned rooms are well built with excellent bathrooms, and there's a good buffet breakfast served in the restaurant adjoining the sparkling, tiled lobby. If this ex-Soviet establishment is still renovating and renting out its cheaper old rooms, it's not letting foreigners near them.

**Hotel Auscoprut** (☎ 234 01; www.auscoprut.if.ua; vul Hryunvaldska 7/9; s \$52-92, d \$66-110, ste \$130-150; (P) (Q)) This slightly faded Austro-Hungarian *grande dame* has much more character than the slicker Hotel Nadiya. Past the duck egg blue, baroque exterior, you'll find creaky parquet flooring, stained-glass windows and wrought-iron lacework, offset by some amusingly dated furniture. Modern bathrooms, efficient service and a decent restaurant make this hotel near the train station well worth considering.

## Eating & Drinking

In addition to those listed here, a walk along vul Nezalezhnosti will reveal a host of other restaurants. In summer, watch out for the ice-cream stall in front of No 6, which serves cheap, tasty cones.

## RESTAURANTS & CAFÉS

**Stolova Idalonyia No 1** (vul Sichovykh Striltsiv; mains 2-9uah; ☎ 8am-8pm) It's fun finding such a Soviet-style student cafeteria in forward-looking Ivano. Even more surprisingly, some of the dinner ladies dishing up simple fare like fried chicken,

pork cutlets, spaghetti, salads, *borshch* and Crimean Tatar *plov* (rice and meat) also speak English. The cafeteria's sign is virtually illegible, so look out for neighbouring Kafe Petrus.

**Marrakesh** (☎ 559 036; vul Hryunvaldska 4a; mains 6-20uah) This North African restaurant might be more to write home about if it always served the tajine, couscous and *plov* dishes on the menu. Usually you have to improvise with salad, baba ganoush style pickled eggplants, spicy sauce or other alternatives. Still, the bright colours make the place cheerful and the oriental-style concrete basement is cool in summer.

**Slovan** (☎ 712 594; vul Shashkevycha 4; pizzas & other mains 8-42uah; ☎ 8am-11pm) Slovan's white walls, dark wooden panelling and brown floor tiles make it one of Ivano's most stylish restaurants and its wooden-decked terrace is a popular spot to be seen on in summer. Breakfasts (French, Italian or Hutsul; 15uah) are complemented by homemade pastas, gourmet fillets of beef and humble fare such as jacket potatoes (8uah) and pizza (19uah to 37uah).

**Bristol** (☎ 527 855; vul Shevchenka 68; most mains 30-50uah) Treat yourself at this elegant Ukrainian-

European-French establishment. Among a menu that includes Caesar salad, spaghetti, veal, frogs' legs and even pâté de foie gras (106uah), the pork served with zingy mustard sauce comes highly recommended. The Georgian and Moldavian wines, especially the Acorex Select Cabernet VDCC, are reasonably quaffable too.

**our pick** **Sadko** (☎ 710 193; vul H (Hetmana) Mazepa 138; most mains 27-90uah) With a balcony offering primo views across the lake, Sadko produces a fine interpretation of Chinese cuisine. There's sushi in the clubby room downstairs too. Although some to-share dishes like Peking duck (198uah) and Mongolian mutton (190uah) are quite luxurious, you can also eat frugally here. Simply add a filling plate of delicious rice shortcakes with onion (13uah) to an order of soup (around 6uah).

**Cafe Kimbo** (☎ 778 794; vul Nezalezhnosti 10A) Black-and-white photos and old newspaper-style menus give this café an arty atmosphere – with the accompanying smoke. In summer head for the outdoor seating. Besides coffee or beer served in a frosty mug, there are good desserts.

## SELF-CATERING

**Vopak** (☎ 779 772; vul Yevhena Konovaltsya 13A; ☎ 8am-11pm) For a wide range of well-priced supplies, try this popular supermarket chain.

**Hotel Nadiya supermarket** (vul Nezalezhnosti 40) This hotel also houses a delicatessen with slightly more exotic and expensive wares.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

One airline's flights between the rest of Europe and Ivano-Frankivsk's small **airport** (☎ 598 348; vul Yevhena Konovaltsya 264A) were canned during a 2007 EU safety move, but there are still planes to Kyiv and possibly some other charter services. The airport is 10km south of the city, and is served every 15 minutes by buses 21, 24 and 65 (1uah, 30 minutes) from the train station.

### BUS

The bus station is in front of the train station on pl Pryvokzalna. There are numerous services into the Carpathians including to Yaremcha (12uah, one hour and 10 minutes, half-hourly), Kolomyia (8uah to 10uah, one hour, every 15 to 30 minutes), Chernivtsi (24uah, four hours, at least three daily) and Rakhiv (18uah, four hours, three daily).

Heading north from Ivano-Frankivsk, at least 12 buses daily go to Lviv (20uah to 24uah, three hours), leaving every hour until early evening. Longer-distance buses also go to Kyiv (66uah to 78uah, 12 hours, twice daily).

### TRAIN

From **Ivano-Frankivsk train station** (☎ 212 223) there are daily trains to Kyiv (95uah, 12 hours) and twice-daily trains to Lviv (from 24uah, 3½ to seven hours), plus services to Uzhhorod (56uah, seven to eight hours, twice daily), among others.

Local train services serve Kolomyia (5uah, four to five daily) and Rakhiv (4uah, 5½ hours, twice daily). Three to four trains daily pass through to Chernivtsi (18uah, 3½ hours), but only one at a sensible time.

# CARPATHIAN NATIONAL NATURE PARK КАРПАТСЬКИЙ АЦІОНАЛЬНИЙ РИЙОДНИЙ ПАРК

This is the heart of the Carpathians and Ukraine's largest national park. However, it's a very different sort of national park – industrial logging occurs here, for example. Only about a quarter of the area is completely protected, but that hasn't detracted too much from the natural beauty of the place...yet.

Founded in 1980, the Carpathian National Nature Park (CNP) covers 503 sq km of wooded mountains and hills. Parts of it shelter small numbers of animals (see Environment chapter p57) and there is a lot of flora. Realistically however, hiking and skiing are the main reasons to come here.

Train services are less frequent and extensive in the mountains than in other Ukrainian regions, so be prepared to ride the frequently old and crowded buses and *marshrutky*, and budget for the occasional taxi. Otherwise, agencies and hotels in Lviv (p116), Ivano-Frankivsk (p138) and Kolomyia (p146) can organise guided tours and transportation.

## HUTSUL-MANIA

When Ukrainian pop star Ruslana stormed the stage during 2004's Eurovision song contest, decisively snatching the crown, it was the first most foreigners had ever heard of Ukraine's Hutsul people. Sung with her hair flying and feet stamping, Ruslana's anthemic 'Wild Dances' had more to do with skimpy outfits and leather cuffs than with authentic folkloric tradition. But if her dress and music lacked the necessary degree of flowery Hutsul embroidery, the shouty singer's attitude perfectly encapsulated the character of this hardy mountain people.

Fiercely independent and individualistic, the Carpathian-dwelling Hutsuls are a mainstay of Ukrainian national identity. They were first identified as a separate ethnic group at the end of the 18th century. According to some accounts, the 'Hutsul' encompass several tribes – including Boiki, Lemli and Pokuttian – so who and what they are is open to some interpretation.

Ethnographers describe Hutsul life as dominated by herding sheep from high mountain pastures (*polonyyny*) to lowland fields, with a little agriculture and forestry thrown in. They point to a dialect incomprehensible to other Ukrainians, a canon of pre-Christian, pagan legends and a diet based on mountain ingredients, including mushrooms, berries, *brynza* (a crumbly cow's or goat's cheese tasting like feta) and corn-based *mammylha* (like polenta).

Wooden architecture, particularly churches, and a host of handicrafts, from decorated ceramics and embroidered shirts to woollen rugs and embossed leather, are also totems of Hutsul culture.

But whereas a traditional Hutsul would dress colourfully, carry an ornate *toporet* (hatchet) and play the *trembita* (a long alpine horn), most modern Hutsuls don't bother much with any of these. The few occasions on which they are likely to drag out their folk costumes include dances and weddings. For the former, men wear baggy trousers and women floral hair arrangements. For the latter, guests deck trees with paper flowers and ribbons, eat special flat breads and consume lots of vodka.

Hutsul souvenirs are touted throughout the region, particularly in Yaremcha. If you want more, keep an eye out for the wandering Hutsul festivals that take place around the Carpathians each summer. For more on the Hutsuls, see the boxed text, p149.





need it, the **CNNP Headquarters** (☎ 8-034 342 1157; cnp@jar.if.ua; vul Stussa 6, Yaremcha; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri), a white concrete building with a distinctive stained-glass window, can be reached by heading uphill from the railway line in central Yaremcha.

### Activities

First, a word of warning: hiking 'trails' criss-cross the Carpathians, but only now is any serious attempt being made to systematically signpost them. Most Ukrainians rely on a combination of personal family memory, logging roads and topographical maps to find their way. However, the trail to Ukraine's highest peak of **Mt Hoverla** (2061m) is well marked, as is the continuing journey along the Chornohora ridge.

These aside, hiking in the Carpathians is usually best done in the company of locals. Alternatively, instructions on getting to Lake Nesamovyte and Mt Khomyak can be found at [www.members.aol.com/chornohora](http://www.members.aol.com/chornohora) under 'travel info/hiking trails'.

For information about skiing destinations, see Bukovel (p145), plus the boxed texts Off Piste (p146) and My Favourite Carpathian Spots (p145).

### HIKING HOVERLA

It's hardly the most remote trail in the Carpathians, nor the most litter-free, but the popular ascent to Ukraine's highest peak is relatively easy to achieve. On a clear day, the expansive views from Mt Hoverla are also breathtaking. Initially, the trail follows the Yaremcha-Vorokhta-Zaroslyak road, so how much of the way you want to hike and how much you want to cover by *marshrutka* (which goes as far as Vorokhta) or taxi is up to you.

About 6km south of Vorokhta (Map p142), you will need to take the right fork in the road, heading west to Zaroslyak, where there's a **hotel** (☎ 8-034 344 1592; r from \$10). En route, you will cross the CNNP boundary and pay the entrance fee (adult/child 10/5uah). From Zaroslyak (20km from Vorokhta) it's about 3.5km to the summit of Mt Hoverla, which is marked with a big iron cross and a Ukrainian national flag.

### ALONG THE CHORNOHORA RIDGE

The southern Chornohora peak of 2028m **Mt Pip Ivan Chornohirsky** (not to be confused with Mt Pip Ivan Maramorosky; see p151) is

well known for the abandoned astronomical observatory atop it. The Poles completed this observatory just before WWII and anything of value has been looted, but the place still retains atmosphere.

One of the easiest routes to Pip Ivan is along the crest of the Chornohora ridge from Mt Hoverla via Lake Nesamovyte (Map p142). It's hard to get lost this way, as your views are unimpeded, and the route follows the former interwar border between Poland and Czechoslovakia, passing the old boundary markers. At more than 40km return, the hike will take at least three days.

Other routes to Pip Ivan include coming from the village of Verkhovyna via Dzembronya and over Mt Smotrych (requiring at least one night's camping out). Alternatively, you can approach the mountain from Rakhiv (p149).

### Yaremcha Яремча

☎ (8)-03434 / pop 7600

Alighting at Yaremcha's downtown bus stop – as opposed to its main bus station on the town's northern edge – one's first impression is that this a pretty, leafy resort. However, heading south along Yaremcha's long main road, you swiftly understand Ukrainian criticisms that the place is too touristy. On the left of the main road (a few minutes from the bus stop) you'll come to a market of Hutsul souvenirs, before passing another souvenir market on the right. Head up the slight incline, following the crowds jumping across the railway line, then pass some knick-knack stalls and a theme restaurant before arriving at the town's leading attraction (yep, you guessed it) – a souvenir market, this time above a waterfall.

Sadly, the impression you get of Yaremcha is even worse if you leave the main road at the second market and follow the shamefully littered Prut River.

Still, Yaremcha's not all bad. The aforementioned theme restaurant, Hutsulshchyna (see p144), is great for a bite and there's an even better eatery (see p144). Additionally, if you continue past Hutsulshchyna, to where a trail rises left off the road, you can enjoy a not-too-taxing trek to the **Dovbush Cliffs** (see boxed text, p144). These are actually a series of boulders, which were pushed off a cliff to form 'caves' that outlaws once hid in. With several looped trails around here, you could spend anything from half an hour to three hours walking.

Also in Yaremcha's favour is that it's comparatively easy to reach and makes a good staging point for an ascent of Mt Hoverla. By catching a *marshrutka* or taxi to Vorokhta or beyond you can get to Ukraine's highest peak and back in a day or two, depending on your preferred pace.

Finally, Yaremcha is, of course, quite good for souvenir shopping...

### SLEEPING & EATING

**U Lesi** (☎ 213 04, 8-067 907 6432; mama86yaremche@meta.ua; vul Kovpaka 24; d \$20; (P)) What this youthful family home lacks in space it makes up for in friendliness and laughter. This is a top choice for language students or budget travellers with some Ukrainian language skills. Should the bonhomie ever get too overwhelming, there's also a nice gazebo for chilling.

**Mriya** (☎ 221 68, 8-067 902 1718; www.mriya.neza.barom.com.ua; vul Hnata Hotkevych 8A; d \$20-30, summer & Christmas period d \$40-50; (P)) Having built a brand new wooden cottage, Mriya's owners have

Because it stands a little apart from the main CNNP, the adjoining Carpathian Biosphere Reserve is discussed under its main entry point, Rakhiv (p149).

### Orientation

The Carpathian National Nature Park straddles the Ivano-Frankivska and Zakarpatska oblasti. From the city of Ivano-Frankivsk, the A265 cuts southwards into the heart of the park. Yaremcha, 60km south of Ivano-Frankivsk, sits across the park's northern boundary. Yasinya, 37km further south along the A265, marks the park's westernmost point. Rakhiv, 62km south of Yaremcha on the A265, is just outside the southwestern boundary.

Maps 165 and 184 in the *Topograficheskaya Karta* map series (see p247) cover the park and surrounding area (in 1:100,000 scale), but feature few hiking trails.

### Information

Visitors tend to pay the CNNP entrance fee (adult/child 10/5uah) as they pass one of the rangers' huts that are on virtually every trail into the park. In the unlikely event you'll

### KIPPING IN THE CARPATHIANS

Several websites advertise homestays in the Carpathians, including [www.adventurecarpathians.com](http://www.adventurecarpathians.com), [www.greentour.com.ua](http://www.greentour.com.ua), and [www.members.aol.com/chornohora](http://www.members.aol.com/chornohora). However, none is as well maintained, organised, user-friendly and up-to-date as the excellent [www.karpaty.info](http://www.karpaty.info), which contains more listings than any guidebook could feasibly include. Hotels, guesthouses and B&Bs are visited by the website's administrators, who post photos, prices, the languages hosts speak as well as basic transport information. Although not all of the website's content is in English, a significant and increasing proportion is.

If you're looking for something a little cheaper still, wild camping is allowed within most of the Carpathian National Nature Park, apart from the eastern side of Mt Hoverla. You will, however, have to pay the CNNP entrance fee (see opposite).

There are no mountain huts or properly equipped camp sites. You'll find some well-used fireplaces, although fires are officially prohibited in the park.

then bizarrely filled it with old-fashioned furnishings in green-grey tones. However, the bathrooms, price and riverside location are all pretty decent, while the sauna and 'smoking room' with open fire lend a touch of elegance. To get here, find the Favorit store (Фаворит) on the main road, head south, take the next left, first right and next left and then keep going to the end of the street.

**Krasna Sadyba** (☎ 212 75, 222 53, 8-097 900 6201; vul Ivasyuka 6; s/d with shared bath \$26/34, s \$51-82, d \$60-90; (P)) In a secluded corner yet just minutes from the centre, this red-brick hotel on the river looks like something from *Hansel and Gretel*. Bringing your baggage up the steep stairs briefly makes it a cruel fairy tale, but otherwise it comes sans witch. Most rooms are spacious and fashionable, and the few more basic rooms are good bargains. The river here is unusually free of litter, making a dip quite appealing.

**Hotel Edelweiss** (☎ 225 78 reception, 8-034 255 9546 reservations; www.bukovel.com; vul Petrasa 60; s \$65, d \$67-82 weekdays, s \$86, d \$90-110 weekends; (P) ☒ ☑ ☒) All Yaremcha's top-end hotels – Edelweiss, Vodospad, Karpaty, Stanyaslav – lie in this enclave south of the town centre, and if you're going to spend this sort of money, the Edelweiss is the best pick. Its panoramic glass lift takes you up to the admittedly compact but elegant rooms, decorated in classic French style. Getting to Edelweiss might be tricky without your own car, but the hotel belongs to the Bukovel resort (opposite) so you should be able to arrange transfers to the snowfields from here.

**Kolyba Krasna Sadyba** (☎ 212 48; vul Ivasyuka 6; most mains 8-26uah, spit-roasted dishes per 100g 8-24uah; ☒ 11am-midnight) Krasna Sadyba's *kolyba* (wooden hut) is rightfully considered the best eating spot in Yaremcha. That's despite slightly pushy waiters and a smoky grill room that overheats in summer, because you can't beat eating sumptuous spit-roasted pork, beef *shashlyk*, chicken wings or salmon on a terrace overlooking a leafy, quiet stretch of river. *Borshch*, forest mushroom soup, carp, trout, rabbit or scrambled eggs are other options.

**Hutsulshchyna** (☎ 223 78; vul Svobody; most mains 12-28uah) Quite understandably the backdrop to many souvenir photos, this ornate log cabin, with its central spire and faint sprinkling of Hutsul colour, serves pretty decent food. The menu includes river fish, forest mushrooms, polenta, pancakes and all sorts of other regional cuisine.

#### GETTING THERE & AROUND

There are regular buses and *marshrutky* to Yaremcha **bus station** (☎ 223 17) from Ivano-Frankivsk (12uah, 1¼ hours) and Kolomyia (6uah, one hour 10 minutes). Yaremcha also lies on most routes in and out of Rakhiv (10uah to 11uah, three hours), one of which heads to Chernivtsi (18uah, 3¼ hours) daily. Nearby destinations include Bukovel and Vorokhta.

All the following services stop at Yaremcha **train station** (☎ 223 56): Kolomyia–Rakhiv (one each way daily), Lviv–Rakhiv (one each way daily), Ivano-Frankivsk–Rakhiv (two each way daily).

#### UKRAINE'S ROBIN HOOD *Marc di Duca*

All around the Carpathians you'll discover cliffs, rocks, streets and caves bearing the name 'Dovbush'. Legend has it that these are spots where the 'Robin Hood of the Carpathians', Oleska Dovbush, and his band of merry Hutsuls slept while on the run.

Like his Sherwood Forest dwelling counterpart, Dovbush robbed from wealthy merchants, travellers and nobles and distributed the loot to the poor – in his case Ruthenian peasants and poor Hutsul villages. Born in 1700 near Kolomyia, he joined and later led a band of *opryshki* (outlaws). Many other bandits operated in the region, but Dovbush's particular generosity to the highlanders led to his legendary status.

Despite the best efforts of a hapless Polish army, which sent thousands of troops into the mountains after him, he was never captured. In the end it was his mistress who betrayed him in 1741 to her husband, a Polish official. Arrested in the village of Kosmach (see boxed text, p148) he was executed without trial and his body parts displayed in villages around the Carpathians as a warning to other outlaws.

Western Ukraine continued to have a reputation for banditry until the 20th century. The 'tradition' was even revived for several years during the early 1990s when whole convoys of trucks would mysteriously vanish from the highways of the region.

#### MY TOP CARPATHIAN SPOTS

Roman Kalyn is a member of GreenJolly, the rap three-piece whose song 'Razom nas bahato' (Together We are Many) became the anthem of the Orange Revolution and Ukraine's 2005 Eurovision entry. A resident of Ivano-Frankivsk, Roman spends a lot of his free time in the Carpathians.

- **Bukovel** – Our band name, GreenJolly, means 'sledge' or 'ski' in Ukrainian, and skiing is one of our greatest pleasures. Not many people abroad would think of Ukraine as a skiing destination, but Bukovel is world-class. It's Ukraine's most prestigious and expensive resort with trails for all levels, snowboarding, snowmobiles and numerous spas.
- **Drahobrat** – This is basically a ski area rather than a resort. It's a very democratic spot not yet touched by the hands of businessmen and entrepreneurs. This makes it unique in nature and spirit. Mt Steg is the major attraction and the only way to get to its summit is by army truck. Drahobrat attracts a lot of young people who are true ski fans but can't afford anywhere more expensive. The routes are pretty wild.
- **Hoverla** – You know, you can easily travel by jeep to the highest spots on Ukraine's tallest mountain, and many government officials use helicopters. However, the most beautiful route to the top is on foot. Actually, President Yushchenko climbs it every year.
- **Sheshory** – The thing I most enjoy about Sheshory village is its waterfalls; they are fantastic. Yes, the **Sheshory Festival** (www.sheshory.org) has moved away (p245) but the nature around Sheshory is still splendid and wild.

#### Tatariv Tarapiv

Tatariv is little more than a cluster of buildings clinging to an intersection. However, its proximity to leading ski resort Bukovel makes it a popular winter destination. In summer, it's also a useful base for hikes into the Eastern Horhany Mountains, particularly Mts Khomyak and Synyak. Central **Prutets Sadyba** (☎ 8-034 343 5295, 8-067 744 6624, Ukrainian & Russian only; lileja@gmail.com in English; vul Nezalezhnosti; d \$32; (P)) is a surprisingly chic place for such a rural setting. With sheepskin rugs and a vaguely Scandinavian-like fireplace in the open living room, it seems a bit like a ski pad straight from a vodka advert. The welcome you'll get is also incredibly warm for a place looking this cool.

Regular Yaremcha–Vorokhta *marshrutka* and bus services all go through Tatariv.

#### Bukovel БУКОВЕЛЬ

☎ (8-0)3434

Hard-core regional skiers were sceptical when this ritzy resort opened in 2003–04 and immediately began attracting oligarchs from Kyiv and other 'new Ukrainian' guests. However, as the country's first fully planned ski area, **Bukovel** (☎ 372 89, toll free from Ukrainian landlines 8-800 505 0880; www.bukovel.com) soon won doubters over with its sensible network of lifts and trails, printed trail maps, orderly queues,

snowmaking machines and 'night-time' slopes (5pm to 8pm).

Here comes the science bit: Bukovel's 50km of runs are at altitudes of 900m to 1245m. There are at least 14 lifts and probably more by now, because the government recently released 106 extra hectares for expansion of the resort. By 2008–09, the resort wants to be one of Europe's largest, with 280km of piste and 35 lifts. Plans to bid for the 2018 Winter Olympics have already been announced.

With all this mind-boggling investment in infrastructure, it's not surprising that ski passes here are the most expensive in Ukraine. But at \$32 a weekday (and \$36 a day on weekends), they're still cheaper than in major western European resorts.

There are regular and seasonal bus services from Yaremcha (via Tatariv) and Kolomyia. There have been fast Lviv–Chernivtsi trains specially put on for Bukovel's high season, but they are sometimes removed, so it's best to enquire at the time you're travelling.

#### Vorokhta ВОРОХТА

A typical Carpathian sprawl, the village nearest to Mt Hoverla is quite difficult to get a handle on. If you wish to stay here, the best-known accommodation is **Kermanych** (☎ /fax 8-034 344 1082; vul Danyla Halytskoho 153; s/d/tr from \$40/40/50, winter

## OFF PISTE

The Carpathians are one of eastern Europe's premier skiing regions and, if you're already coming this way, these slopes provide an unusual alternative to those in the continent's west. Outside pricey Bukovel, ski passes in this area are about \$10 to \$20 a day, and equipment rental costs around the same. Hotel rooms can go up to \$100 a double in high season, but homestays can be as cheap as \$20. **Pilgrim** (☎ 8-032 297 0551; www.pilgrim.lviv.ua) and **SkiUkraine** (www.skiukraine.info) both have useful information and bookings. The latter's 'Peculiarities of Skiing in the Carpathians' (www.skiukraine.info/info/skiing.shtml) makes entertaining reading.

In addition to the following resorts, a new \$60 million resort is planned near Bystrets village, some 6km from Verkhovyna. This would be the first resort built on the higher Chornohora peaks.

- **Drahobrat** (www.ski.lviv.ua/drahobrat in Ukrainian) Want to go skiing in April? At snowy Drahobrat, 1300m above sea level, you often can. Ukraine's only truly 'Alpine' skiing spot is remote and its conditions are suitable only for the experienced. It's also popular with snowboarders. The resort is 18km from Yasinya.
- **Slavske** (www.slavsko.com.ua in Ukrainian) This still popular resort has blue, red and black runs, but slopes tend to get bumpy and icy by the season's end. Slavske is 130km south of Lviv, on the rail line to Uzhhorod.
- **Podobovets & Pylypets** (www.ski.lviv.ua/volovets-podobovets in Ukrainian) These neighbouring resorts are slowly developing, with fewer crowds and new tow lifts, but less accommodation than other resorts. Volovets on the Kyiv-Uzhhorod line is the nearest train station, 12km away.
- **Tysovets** (www.ski.lviv.ua/tysovets in Ukrainian) You'll hear this former Soviet Army winter sports base mentioned, but its facilities are a little lame. Skole train station is 32km away.

up to \$110-130), where log cabins have been built around a restaurant, a Russian *banya* (bathhouse) and a Finnish sauna. However, some guests do complain about noise and frequent parties. Much cheaper, and a good choice for German speakers, is **Raitshtocky** (☎ 8-034 344 1501, 8-067 794 3010; vul Bohdan Khmelnytskoho 38; d \$20-30, tr \$30, f \$40; P ☒). This family-run B & B has a nice feel, but is difficult to find, so read the directions on www.karpaty.info carefully beforehand or ask to be picked up.

Regular *marshrutka* and bus services run from Yaremcha (one hour) and Verkhovyna (30 minutes). There's also a daily local train to and from Kolomyia (2½ to three hours).

## AROUND THE CNPP Kolomyia Коломия

☎ (8-)03433 / pop 58,700  
Pretty as a picture, Kolomyia is one of the best introductions to the Carpathians for foreigners, despite being more than 50km east of the main part of the Chornohora range. Spruced up in 1999-2000 to host a Hutsul folk festival, it has the feel of an Austrian spa town, with a few good accommodation options and two interesting museums. In another country, Kolomyia might be too twee

and touristy, but in Ukraine it's a breath of fresh air.

The most eye-catching attraction is the freshly repainted **Pysanky Museum** (☎ 278 91; vul Chornovola 39; adult/child 3/1.50uah; ☎ 10am-6pm), which showcases the colourful, hand-painted Easter eggs (*pysanky*) that are a Ukrainian tradition (see p45). Any visiting Australians will immediately rename this the 'Big Egg' as the two-storey museum is itself that shape – reminding one of the many 'big things' that infamously dot the landscape down under. Inside, there are hundreds of *pysanky*, decorated in various regional designs.

Behind the Pysanky Museum, cut diagonally left towards the next street, to the **Museum of Hutsul Folk Art** (☎ 239 12; vul Teatralna 25; adult/child 4/2uah; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun). This well-curated exhibition is probably the best of its kind in Ukraine, with decorated stove tiles and other ceramics, musical instruments, carved wooden tools, boxes, furniture, traditional and embroidered folk dress and woven wall-hangings.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Good Morning B&B** (☎ 547 97, 8-066 162 9870; mvoyet ska@hotmail.com; vul Rankova 4; per person \$18; P ☒) This B & B is a private establishment in all

senses of the word. Your charming hosts, Maria and Yuriy, will help whenever needed and they speak English, after having lived in the US for years. However, they leave you plenty of space to get on with your business. The Hutsul-themed room is the most striking of the three immaculate guest bedrooms.

**our pick On the Corner** (☎ 274 37, 8-067 980 3326; onthecorner.bb@gmail.com; vul Hetmanska 47A; per person \$18; P ☒) Proof that a prominent Lonely Planet mention doesn't always lead to complacency, Vitaliy, his mum Ira, wife Anna, and the rest of the extended Pavliuk family, continue to wow guests with their legendary hospitality. Indeed, the place just gets better, with cable TV now in the (non-en suite) rooms, wi-fi and a greater hum of activity. With the cooking and coffee as brilliant as ever, a multitude of hikes and excursions on offer, and help still provided in English, German, Ukrainian, Russian and Italian, comments praising 'the best place I stayed in Ukraine' just keep flooding in.

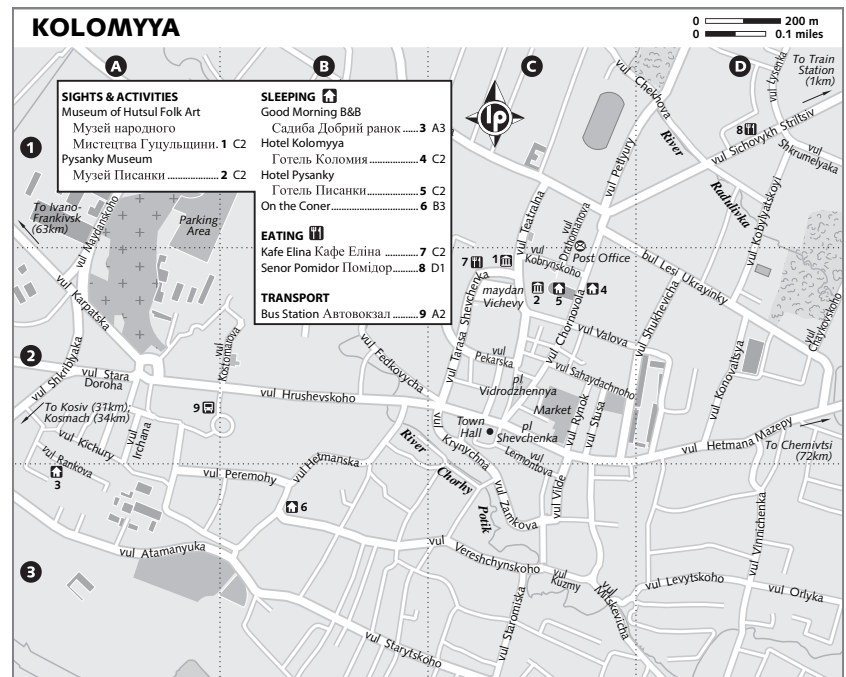
**Hotel Kolomyia** (☎ 203 56; www.kolomyia.com.ua; vul Chornovola 26; d/f from \$34/64, superior d \$38, ste \$50-70, breakfast extra \$3) Each of the town's two

large hotels has its little idiosyncrasies. Hotel Kolomyia's is that you have to walk through a shopping mall to go from reception to your room. The accommodation is comfortable and generously sized, especially the huge bathrooms. Depending on availability, Hotel Kolomyia may sell beds in its quad rooms individually as dorm accommodation (\$16 each). Staff can arrange lots of tours, too.

**Hotel Pysanky** (☎ 203 56; hotel@yes.ko.if.ua; vul Chornovola 41; s/d/tr from \$26/35/46, ste \$35-55; ☎) Once the only show in town, Hotel Pysanky's quirk is to have rested on that reputation for too long. It does face the Pysanky Museum and breakfast is included, but its 23 rooms are showing a few signs of wear and tear, and its atmosphere is relatively impersonal for Kolomyia.

**Senor Pomidor** (☎ 204 08; vul Sichovykh Striltsiv 25; pizzas 15-32uah) Senor Pomidor's not so much a pizza joint as a local cult, much-loved for its truly delicious thick toppings and crispy, thick crusts. The results are easily some of the best pizzas in Ukraine, and the fact the place delivers, is striking for this part of the country.

**Kafe Elina** (☎ 259 00; vul Taras Shevchenka) This café behind the Museum of Hutsul Folk Art





**OFF THE BEATEN TRACK: KOSMACH**

We hesitate to call Kosmach off the beaten track, as the only road to it is very beaten indeed. The road's infamous potholes and Kosmach's vigilant villagers even managed to keep the Soviets at bay after WWII. Today the place is famous among Ukrainians for the private Oleska Dovbush Museum, run by Mykhailo Deidyshyn. It's a very *Pan's Labyrinth* experience.

Deidyshyn claims the hut housing his small museum is the one in which the 'the Ukrainian Robin Hood' (see box, p144) was killed and he even shows you Dovbush's very own hat. However, the museum is mostly taken up with the strange figures Deidyshyn has carved from tree roots. Outside, he shows you a meteor, and a little forested plot that really is like the 'Garden of Eden'. Here you'll find the 'holy tree', whose fruit is supposed to have similar powers to a Latin American worry doll – whisper your problems to the fruit and your troubles will disappear.

Even for atheists it's an intriguing place, as you learn about pre-Christian Carpathian mysticism. The fact that you'll see oil – yes, real black gold – bubbling up beside the road to Kosmach just makes a weird day weirder. Public buses do run to the village, but to find the museum, you will need to get a local guide; ask one of the hotels in nearby Kolomyia.

is a typical Hutsul, *kolyba* arrangement with tables and knick-knacks in a wooden hut serving salad and *shashlyk*. Many visitors, however, will be reminded of a German beer garden, and will plump for a bottle of tasty Chernihivske Bile.

**GETTING THERE & AWAY**

From the **bus station** (☎ 202 51; vul Hrushevskovo) services leave every 15 to 30 minutes to Ivano-Frankivsk (10uah, one hour), about every 30 minutes to Kosiv (8uah, one hour) and hourly to Yaremcha (6uah, one hour 10 minutes) and Bukovel, among others. There are two to three services a day to Rakhiv (16uah, 3½ to four hours) and many to and from Chernivtsi (12uah, 1½ hours).

Kolomyia **train station** (☎ 226 68) is north-east of town. There are at least three trains a day from Lviv to Kolomyia (from 12uah, 5½ hours), all stopping in Ivano-Frankivsk. Additionally, local trains go to and from Ivano-Frankivsk (5uah, 1½ to two hours, four daily), Chernivtsi (4uah, 2½ hours, four daily), and Rakhiv (6.50uah, 4½ hours, once daily). A basic train timetable to/from Kolomyia can also be found at <http://kolomyia.org/rizne/rozklad.htm>.

**Kosiv Косів**

☎ (8-)03478 / pop 9000

Sitting pretty in a river valley, tiny Kosiv is synonymous with serious, high-quality Hutsul crafts. They're sold at its famous weekly **craft market** (🕒 6am-2pm Sat) and produced in the surrounding hills as well as at the **Kosiv State Institute of Decorative and Applied Arts** (☎ 212 60;

[www.kdipdm.kosiv.info](http://www.kdipdm.kosiv.info); vul Mitskevycha 2). The village also boasts a **Museum of Hutsul Folk Art** (☎ 216 43; vul Nezalezhnosti 101).

If you want to be here early for the crafts market – and the best buys do go in the first few hours – you could stay at the **Hotel Kosiv** (☎ 215 57, 246 73, 8-050 575 4927; [www.tur.kosiv.info](http://www.tur.kosiv.info); vul Nezalezhnosti 65a; s/d from \$30/32), in the centre of town. It doesn't have loads of personality and seems under-used midweek. However, behind its jaunty yellow and green concrete exterior, its rooms are new and comfortable.

There are regular services to and from Kolomyia (8uah, one hour) and one overnight bus from Kyiv.

**Verkhovyna Верховина**

☎ (8-)03432 / pop 5300

Among the villages in the Ukrainian Carpathians, Verkhovyna is probably the most gorgeously located (alongside tiny neighbour Kryvorivnya). It sits on a wide valley floor ringed by mountains; Mt Smotrych is just one peak visible from here. While larger towns outside the mountains, such as Kolomyia, were the first to develop the infrastructure to cope with foreign tourists, Verkhovyna is now opening up to adventurous travellers.

Local hiking guide **Vasyl Kobyluk** (☎ 219 41, 219 71, 8-096 372 4400, Ukrainian & Russian only; skala2002@ukr.net in English; vul Stus 4A/8; per person \$10) is good at showing people the region, and also has a handful of humble rooms on offer in his apartment (\$10 per room).

Meanwhile, B & B **Nad Cheremoshem** (☎ 222 70, 8-067 287 4390, 8-067 768 2671; [www.nad-cheremoshem.nezabarom.com.ua](http://www.nad-cheremoshem.nezabarom.com.ua); vul Popovycha 15; s/d/tr/f\$16/32/42/56;

**SHADOWS OF FORGOTTEN ANCESTORS**

'A god-forsaken Carpathian region; a land of Ukrainian Hutsuls'. So declares an opening screen of one of the most celebrated Soviet films, Sergei Paradzhanov's *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* (1964). Paradzhanov's judgment of the Carpathians is a bit harsh, but it's no doubt made to set the scene for the tragic tale that follows. Part *Romeo and Juliet*, part *Wuthering Heights*, it's the story of how Hutsul shepherd Ivan is haunted by the untimely death of his childhood sweetheart Marika, the daughter of a rival family.

The simple plot is based on an 1894 novel by Ukrainian writer Mykhailo Kotysyubinsky, which itself emanates from folklore. However, it's not the narrative that makes this a spellbinding movie – it's the flamboyant cinematography. Paradzhanov intersperses saturated colour with a black-and-white interlude and uses Hutsul customs and the primeval howl of *trembity* (long alpine horns) to great effect.

Stylised camerawork makes the movie resemble a medieval fairground one moment, and avant-garde *Nouvelle Vague* the next. Underpinning it all is a gut-wrenching melancholy as a heartbroken Ivan rejects all around him, resulting in tragedy.

Across the world, this vintage movie is still available on rare videos and a couple of central sequences might even be on YouTube. In North America it's been released recently on DVD via [www.kino.com](http://www.kino.com). The winner of 16 international film awards, it makes great viewing before visiting the Carpathians. For more on Hutsul culture, see the boxed text, p140).

(P) is picture-postcard idyllic. Covered in climbing flowers, this rustic red-brick cottage sits on the Cheremosh River, and has a barbecue site, above-ground pool, sauna and private apiary. The bedrooms might be quite old-fashioned and dreary, but who cares when you can sample homemade Carpathian cuisine under the arbour?

Verkhovyna boasts a private museum of Hutsul folk instruments. However, you'll almost certainly have to contact a local guide to get the museum to open for you, especially if you don't speak the lingo. As always, for arranging guides in this immediate area, try asking at the hotels in Kolomyia.

Buses and minibuses run regularly to Verkhovyna from neighbouring villages such as Kolomyia, Kosiv and Vorokhta.

**Yasinya Ясіня**

☎ (8-)03132

The village at the turn-off to the Drahobrat ski slopes (18km away) has definitely seen better days. However, the newly built **Hotel Yasinya** (☎ 424 40, 8-067 267 5700, in Ukrainian; vul Maskovskoho 56; per person \$15; (P) 🚿) offers excellent value. The painting in the billiards room of Lenin and Stalin on the ski slopes is quite memorable too.

All bus services travelling between Rakhiv (see p151) and northern or eastern destinations like Yaremcha pass through Yasinya, including some extra services terminating

in Solotvyno. A timetable is posted outside the ticket booth at Yasinya's tiny bus station, which opens and closes depending on whether a bus is expected. Many Ukrainians prefer to hail private cars instead of waiting.

**Rakhiv Раків**

☎ (8-)03132 / pop 14,400

Travelling west over the Carpathian Mountains just before coming into Rakhiv, you pass a clapped-out concrete monolith where apparatchiks once enjoyed their après-ski. Today this huge resort is literally a shell of its former self, a little bit like Rakhiv itself. Or, as the *Wall Street Journal Europe* has put it, this is 'a poor logging region that has lost most of its tourist trade since the collapse of the Soviet Union'.

Not that this one-time skiing mecca and quintessentially Hutsul region could be described as completely dead. The continuing need to make a living and the proximity of the Romanian border ensure the hustle and bustle associated with ad-hoc (and often illicit) trading continues.

For foreign travellers that border can provide good reason to visit as, when the border posts are open at least, Rakhiv makes a handy staging post between the Ukrainian Carpathians and Romania's idyllic and increasingly popular Maramures region.

While in Rakhiv, there's also the chance to have a laugh visiting a 'geographical centre of

Europe' that's not really, or to enjoy a little hiking. A Swiss-Ukrainian project, **Forza** ([www.forza.org.ua](http://www.forza.org.ua)), is working on regional regeneration, including the marking of trails into the Carpathian National Nature Park.

Rakhiv's proximity to the CNNP means that, although it's officially in Transcarpathia (see p156), the city is best covered here.

#### ORIENTATION

The train and bus stations sit together, across town from the Tysa River. Arriving on the other riverbank from the stations, the main vul Myru runs left (southwest) to Hotel Europa and eventually to the headquarters of the Carpathian Biosphere Reserve (5km away). Meanwhile, vul Kyivska runs right (northeast) past Smerekova Hata and eventually on to Yasinya (32km away).

#### INFORMATION

The volunteer-run 'Hutsul's Place' tourist information centre, **Rakhiv Tour** ([www.rakhiv-tour.info](http://www.rakhiv-tour.info); ground fl, Hotel Europa, vul Myru 42), keeps unpredictable hours, but the website has information on hiking, skiing, mountain-biking and other tips. Click on 'Tourism' and then 'Rural Tourism' for downloadable accommodation listings.

#### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Rakhiv hosts an annual **Hutsul cheese-making festival** early in September, but otherwise its main attractions lie outside town. It's also possible to use Rakhiv as a base to go skiing in Drahobrat (see boxed text, p146).

#### Carpathian Biosphere Reserve

Some 5km southwest of Rakhiv the highway leads to the **Carpathian Biosphere Reserve headquarters** (☎ 221 93; <http://cbr.nature.org.ua>; Krasny Pleso 77), which isn't so much of interest for itself as for what's surrounding it. The reserve is slightly better maintained than the main CNNP.

First up, the **Museum of Forest Ecology** (☎ 229 14; admission 3uah; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Tue-Sun) stands on the hill behind the HQ building. This old-school museum of natural history is surprisingly informative, rich and colourful as well as slightly kitsch. So, in between chuckles at the odd moth-bitten, taxidermied sheep, you'll learn a bit from the handy Carpathian Mountains relief map, and the dioramas of forest landscapes and Hutsul festivals – even without reading the signs.

Leaving the museum, turn left at the path just below it, and continue until you see a hiking sign pointing uphill to a spring. This is the start of the so-called **Transcarpathian Hiking Trail**, which heads south to the village of Kostylyvka and is planned to eventually curve back north up the Chornohora ridge and further north towards Poland for 380km.

For more details, see [www.rakhiv-tour.info](http://www.rakhiv-tour.info). This site also explains how to hike from Rakhiv to Mt Hoverla and Mt Pip Ivan Chornohirsky. Click on 'Tourism/Hiking/One-day' (weekend routes).

#### Geographical Centre of Europe

Another 7km south of the Carpathian Biosphere Reserve headquarters lies what Ukraine contends is **Europe's geographical centre**, just before the village of Dilove. Ukraine is not the only country to declare itself the continent's centre: Germany, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia have all staked rival claims. Furthermore, Austrian experts, quoted in the *Wall Street Journal Europe* in 2004, say the pillar erected by Austro-Hungarian geographers in 1887, in what is now back-country Ukraine, was never intended to mark Europe's middle; its Latin inscription of simple longitude and latitude was mistranslated.

None of this has dented official Ukrainian aspirations to the honour, although some locals are more sceptical. Today, a Soviet-era spire has joined the Austro-Hungarian pillar at the 'geographical centre of Europe', as has a restaurant complex, souvenir stalls and opportunistic photographers equipped with stuffed bears and deer as props.

Many passing motorists stop to look just for the hell of it, but when we flagged down a bus to Uzhhorod and asked to go 'na tse nter Evropy' the driver and first several rows of passengers exploded into laughter at the 'dumb tourist' (we laughed along) – so go with a sense of humour. Make sure you have your passport, too, as the marker lies after a Ukrainian control point.

#### SLEEPING & EATING

Some local campers pitch their tents next to the Carpathian Biosphere Reserve headquarters, using the neighbouring river to wash and relying on the HQ's (smelly) toilets or Cafe Flora's perfumed WC.

**At Erika's** (☎ 228 03; [raho\\_lovagja@freemail.hu](mailto:raho_lovagja@freemail.hu); vul Bohdan Khmelnytskoho 86; r per person \$10; ☎ ☎) The

#### OFF THE BEATEN TRACK: PIP IVAN MARAMOROSKY

As well as leading tourists and groups, hiking guide **Serhiy Stepchuk** (☎ 8-098 976 0211; [www.turkul.com](http://www.turkul.com); [stepchuk\\_serg@mail.ru](mailto:stepchuk_serg@mail.ru)) has helped produce a 120-page book on Transcarpathia in German (*Transkarpatien Reiseführer: Die 9 Besten Wanderrouten*). Contact him in English for details. Here he describes a two-day hike southeast from Rakhiv.

This is my favourite Carpathian region. It used to be the border of the Soviet Union, when it was closed off and consequently well protected. Now it's still pretty wild and unusually clean. The main summit is Mt Pip Ivan Maramorosky (1937m; not to be confused with the better-known Mt Pip Ivan Chornohirsky near Mt Hoverla). The mountain is steep and cliff-like on its northern side – just like mountains in the Alps. Neighbouring Mt Petros (1780m) has the highest tree line in the Carpathians.

To climb Mt Pip Ivan Maramorosky from Rakhiv, first cross the Tysa River, heading for the railway station. Just after the bridge turn right, continuing between the market and hospital. Then cross the railway line and, near the school, start climbing the hill towards Mt Shoimul (follow the dirt track). Once you're on the range, turn left to Mt Menchul. At the foot of Menchul, turn right towards Mt Megura. From here keep hiking south in the direction of Pip Ivan.

Near Mt Latundr (1730m) there's a *polonyna* (alpine meadow) called 'Lysycha'. It'll take you five to eight hours to reach Lysycha and although it is just 45 minutes from Pip Ivan's summit, you should pitch a tent here, or sleep in the alpine hut (if there's room).

The next day, crest the summit overlooking Romania, and descend west to Dilove village. This will take four to five hours (16km). From here, buses go to Rakhiv. Always carry your passport in this border region.'

rooms are more suburban than charmingly folksy here, but there's a friendly atmosphere and the hosts (one of whom speaks basic English) like to prepare Hutsul meals. Guests are free to use the kitchen. Three internet-enabled computers, a sauna, and a large garden complete the package, but it's a good 20 minutes' walk or 8uah to 10uah taxi ride from the bus station. To walk there, take the first right just before the bridge and keep going to No 86.

**Our pick** **Smerekova Hata** (☎ 212 92, 8-096 964 7603; <http://rakhiv-tour.narod.ru>, [www.hata-smerekova.nezabarom.com.ua](http://www.hata-smerekova.nezabarom.com.ua); vul Shevchenka 8; r per person \$10-18; ☎) Rakhiv's most central and clearly signposted guesthouse is a charming three-storey timber building run by older hosts Vasyi and Anna (with their cute dogs). The gardens with their fruit trees and outdoor seating are instantly attractive. However, the place swiftly develops a fascinating anthropological dimension as you find yourself involuntarily falling into Ukrainian self-catering holiday habits. Vasyi speaks enough English to help you out a bit.

**Hotel Europa** (☎ 212 48; vul Myru 42; 'blok' dm \$10, s & d \$20, ste \$50; ☎) Despite the name, there's nothing particularly European about this hotel. Although quite recently built, it takes a leaf out of the Soviet style book. Still, it is nice and central and has a café-restaurant serving basic meals.

**Cafe Flora** (Krasny Pleso 77; mains 3-15uah; ☎ 11am-11pm) The chic, white leather seats and black tables here seem strangely out of place in this otherwise run-down building with dodgy stairs. However, its coffees, salads and basic meals are a godsend for local campers and hikers.

#### GETTING THERE & AWAY

##### Bus

Many more buses than trains arrive in Rakhiv, but they're still wildly oversubscribed and crowded in summer and the vehicles are usually old. Buses winding over the mountains to and from the north and east connect Rakhiv with Chernivtsi (27uah, five hours, at least one daily), Ivano-Frankivsk (18uah, four hours, three daily), Kolomyia (16uah, 3½ to four hours, two to three daily) and Lviv (38uah, seven hours, one daily). Most of these services go through Yaremcha (10uah to 11uah, three hours).

Heading west, there are 12 sensibly timed services taking two different routes to and from Uzhhorod (27uah to 32uah, six to eight hours) plus four separate services to Mukacheve (21uah to 24uah, five hours). Four to five services a week go to Prague (see [www.rega.bus.cz](http://www.rega.bus.cz)).

##### Train

Only eight daily trains operate to and from Rakhiv's dilapidated terminus: two each way



### FROM RAKHIV TO ROMANIA

Officially there are two ways of travelling from Rakhiv to Sighetu Marmatei in Romania. On Monday, Wednesday and Friday, there are two train services (one morning, one afternoon) from nearby Teresva across the border to Sighet. Any bus from Rakhiv to Uzhhorod, Khust or Mukacheve will get you to Teresva (one to two hours). Additionally, in 2007 a car-pedestrian bridge was opened across the Tysa River between Sotolvyno and Sighetu Marmatei. But the train has been stopped in the past to thwart cigarette smugglers and the bridge has already had a chequered career. So you might want to check whether either route is open before venturing to Sotolvyno. The English-speaking folks at Cobwobs hostel in Sighet ([hostel@cobwobs.com](mailto:hostel@cobwobs.com)) keep abreast of the latest. See p257 for details on getting from Chernivtsi to Suceava.

from Ivano-Frankivsk (7uah, five hours), one service to, and one from, Lviv (36uah, 8½ hours) and one return service from Kolomyia (6.50uah, 4½ hours). All of these go through Yaremcha.

### GETTING AROUND

Travelling south from Rakhiv to the Museum of Forest Ecology and the 'Geographical Centre of Europe', takes patience as the buses are usually only hourly, and there seem to be few, if any, *marshrutky* in between. Heading north, there are hourly *marshrutky* to Bohdan, which will bring you towards the start of the hiking trail to Mt Hoverla. Two services a day will drop you in Luh, even closer to the trail. Tickets cost 2uah to 5uah.

## BUKOVYNA

### CHERNIVTSI ЧЕРНІВЦІ

☎ (8-)0372 (6-digit Nos), (8-)03722 (5-digit Nos) / pop 260,000

Chernivtsi is a glorious hotchpotch, a bitter-sweet ruin that might be smartening itself up in the coming years. Leafy but dishevelled – especially its pavements – it displays the signs of a more elegant past. Its phantasmagorical university is not only the best preserved of its many historic buildings – combined with the huge Kalynivsky Market on the city's outskirts, that temple of higher learning is also responsible for this shabby city's lively atmosphere.

Six hundred years old in October 2008, Chernivtsi was once the chief city of Bukovyna (Beech Tree Land) in old Moldavia (now Moldova). It belonged to the Habsburg Empire in the 19th century, when much of the city's ornate architecture was built, and after WWI was temporarily drawn into Romania. Today the city remains the 'capital' of the un-

official Bukovynian region, but its past Jewish, Armenian and German communities are now just ghostly presences.

### Orientation

Chernivtsi sometimes advertises itself as being on the Prut River but the centre is a good 3km south of it. The old city core surrounds pl Tsentralna. Trolleybuses 3 and 5 run between the bus station in the south and the train station in the north, stopping en route in the centre.

### Information

**Post office** (vul Khudyakova 6) A block north of pl Tsentralna; there's also a telephone office next door.

**Tourist Information Centre** ☎ 553 684; [www.city.cv.ua](http://www.city.cv.ua); vul Holovna 16; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri) Staff don't speak English but can offer a couple of English-language pamphlets.

**VIP Internet** (basement, vul Universytetska 36; per hr 3uah; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Sat) Downstairs from the анмалія hair salon.

### Sights

With Chernivtsi such a jumble of sights, and perhaps only the university a crucial one, the following section offers a mere taster. Keener or longer-term visitors should go to the tourist office for a map of architectural monuments.

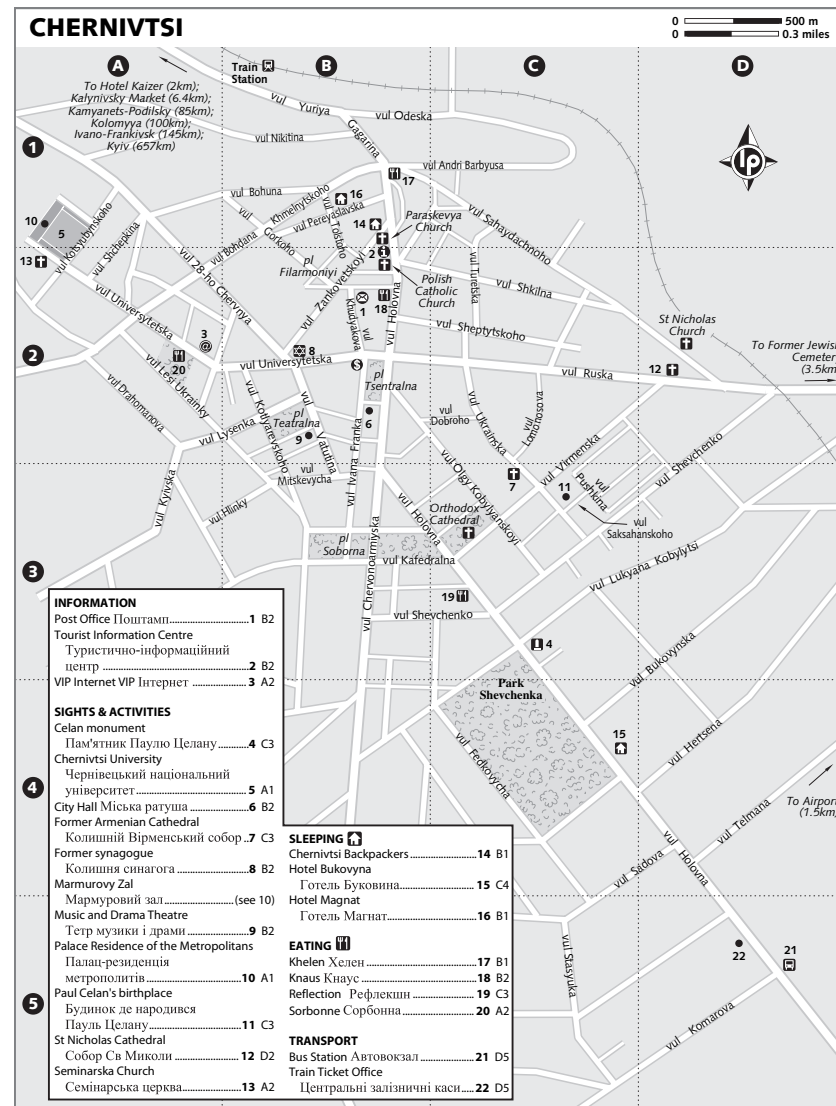
**CHERNIVTSI UNIVERSITY** ЧЕРНІВЕЦЬКИЙ НАЦІОНАЛЬНИЙ УНІВЕРСИТЕТ University buildings are often called 'dreaming spires', but **Chernivtsi's** ([www.chnu.cv.ua](http://www.chnu.cv.ua)) is more like a trip on LSD. This fantastic red-brick ensemble, with coloured tiles decorating its pseudo-Byzantine, pseudo-Moorish and pseudo-Hanseatic wings, is the last thing you'd expect to see here. The architect responsible was Czech Josef Hlavka, who was also behind Chernivtsi's **Former Armenian Cathedral** (vul

Ukrainska 30), as well as large chunks of Vienna. He completed the university in 1882 for the Metropolitan (Orthodox Church leaders) of Bukovyna as their official residence. The Soviets later moved the university here.

The wings surround a landscaped court. To the left as you pass the gatehouse is the **Seminarska Church**, now used for concerts and

ceremonies. Straight ahead stands the former main **palace residence of the Metropolitan**, housing two remarkable staircases and a fantastic, 1st-floor **Marmurovy Zal** (hall). Whether you'll be able to access them is uncertain, but it's always worth trying.

The university is about 1.5km northwest of the centre. Any trolleybus heading down



vul Universytetska will take you there, particularly trolleybus 2. Bus 22 travels to the university from Kalynivsky Market.

### THE CENTRE

The **City Hall** (1847) on its southern side is the nicest thing about pl Tsentralna. Otherwise, stroll down the main pedestrian venue of **vul Olyg Kobyljanskoyi**. The street is named after a 19th-to-20th century writer and civil activist, and its vine-covered Habsburg façades give it an attractive and aged look.

The **Music and Drama Theatre** (pl Teatralna) was designed in the same style of De Stijl that also inspired the Viennese architects of Odesa's Opera and Ballet Theatre (see p173).

### CHURCHES

The city's most unusual church is **St Nicholas Cathedral** (vul Ruska 35). It's called the 'drunken church', because of the four twisted turrets surrounding its cupola. Painted blue with golden stars, these turrets create an optical illusion, much like an Escher sketch. The cathedral is a 1930s copy of a 14th-century royal church in Curtea de Arges (Romania).

### JEWISH SIGHTS

One of Chernivtsi's most famous sons was leading 20th-century poet **Paul Celan** (1920–70) who was born into a German-speaking Jewish family at vul Saksahanskoho 5 (formerly Wassilkogasse), when 'Cernăuți' was part of Romania. His parents died in Nazi concentration camps during WWII and Celan himself survived one to write his most famous 1948 poem 'Todesfuge' (Death Fugue). He later drowned himself in Paris' River Seine. There's also a **Celan monument** on vul Holovna.

Chernivtsi's **former synagogue** (cnr vul Universytetska & vul Zankovetskoyi) was once famous for its exotic African/Middle Eastern style, but was turned into a cinema in 1954. The **former Jewish cemetery** is a melancholic jumble of leaning, overgrown headstones. To get here, follow vul Ruska (or catch trolleybus 4) across a bridge. Take the first left, vul Zelena, and continue 750m.

### KALYNIVSKY MARKET

With its own police station, first-aid point and dedicated bank branches, the 33 hectare **Kalynivsky Market** (www.kalina.cv.ua, in Ukrainian; ☎ 8am-2pm) is like a town unto itself. As a conduit into Ukraine for goods from neigh-

bouring countries, it attracts some 50,000 shoppers a day and is a frenetic, wonderful phenomenon. You might not want to buy anything in particular, although it is good for baseball caps and trainers, and it's great for people-watching. Take any of the numerous *marshrutky* to калинівський рунук; many leave from in front of the train station.

### Sleeping

**Chernivtsi Backpackers** (☎ 525 533, 8-098 677 9786; www.hihostels.com.ua; apt 4, vul Zankovetskoyi 25; dm \$15-20; ☎ 📺) This English-Ukrainian hostel has rapidly made a good name for both itself and Chernivtsi. A friendly, helpful hang-out, its service not only includes local insiders' tips, but nights out and summer trips into the Carpathians.

**Hotel Magnat** (☎ 526 420; vul Tolstoho 16A; s \$18, d \$32-36, luxe ste \$55; ☎ 📺) More intimate than Hotel Bukovyna, the nine-room Magnat is tucked away in a tiny off-street alley; look for the bed sign. While rooms are superficially pleasant, they're also a little smoky and their construction is a bit cheap. The normal 'poly-luxe' accommodation is actually more tasteful than the pricier luxury suites, with fewer animal prints. There's just one single. There's a 20% booking fee.

**Hotel Bukovyna** (☎ 585 625; www.hotel.cv.ua; vul Holovna 141; s/d from \$22, superior poly-luxe s/d \$36-45, ste from \$75; ☎ 📺) It's far from perfect, and the service can be desultory (at best). However, owing to its convenient location, its relative value for money, and its large number of rooms, this jolly yellow giant has an understandably sizable chunk of the local market. The rooms themselves are quite decent, and the open-air bar on its landscaped front lawn is perfect on a summer's evening.

**Hotel Kaizer** (☎ 585 275; vul Gagarina 51; s/d \$50, ste from \$60; ☎ 📺) Kyiv, Moscow, New York, Berlin, Rome, Warsaw, Istanbul: the world clocks ticking loudly in Kaizer's empty lobby presage Chernivtsi's nicest rooms, which have a strangely appealing mix of new and retro furniture. They, and the lovely grill restaurant out the back (complete with wooden windmill), are wildly underused though – probably because of the slightly out-of-the-way location on the wrong side of the train station.

### Eating

**Khelen** (☎ 237 00; vul Sahaydachnovo 2; mains 2-7uah; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Sat) This is a very laid-back local

café with humble food that's excellent value. Choose a Formica table near the counter, or head for one of the private booths.

**Knaus** (☎ 510 255; www.knaus.cv.ua; vul Holovna 26A; mains 12-44uah) Although its menu retains a solid Russian alignment, Knaus does now offer Bavarian bratwurst to accompany its range of German beers. The restaurant also rents an apartment on the same courtyard.

**Sorbonne** (☎ 281 47; vul Universytetska; sandwiches 15-25uah, other mains 12-75uah) With its French pretensions writ large in dishes like 'Mon Cher Ami', 'Tête a tête' and 'Déjà vu', this is pretty upscale for the university district. However, the shaded terrace is a charming spot to cool off in summer and even if the grilled prawns (200uah) are out of your reach, sandwiches and salads remain affordable.

**our pick** **Reflection** (☎ 526 682; vul Holovna 66; mains 18-75uah; ☎ 9am-11pm) A completely atypical menu in such an unlikely city makes Reflection worth every extra kopeck. As if Waldorf and Caesar salads, vegetable fajitas, bruschetta, pesto with penne, teriyaki salad, lentil soup, pork with ripe mangoes etc weren't sufficient reminders of the culinary world you thought you'd left behind when entering regional Ukraine, there are also freshly baked croissants or oatmeal at breakfast. The food is also usually well executed – our 'fresh mango' amazingly was.

### Getting There & Away

#### BUS

The **bus station** (☎ 416 35; vul Holovna 219) is 4km southeast of the centre, where services leave to Khotyn (10uah, two hours, half-hourly to hourly), Kamyanets-Podilsky (15uah, 2½ hours, half-hourly), Ivano-Frankivsk (24uah, four hours, at least three daily) and Lviv (42uah, 7½ hours, at least twice daily) among others. Longer-distance services to Kyiv (90uah to 100uah, nine hours, two daily) and Odesa (100uah, 13 hours, two daily) are also available, as well as to Simferopol in Crimea in summer.

Some services to and from Kolomyia (12uah, 1½ hours) do pass through Chernivtsi bus station, but many instead terminate at Kalynivsky Market, where you must change to local *marshrutky*. Heading north, you can catch services from the market to Kolomyia, but the chaos makes choosing the right bus difficult. Much easier is to head for the Drizhdzhi zavod (Дріжджі завод) stop, which

### FROM CHERNIVTSI TO ROMANIA

Early birds get the scheduled buses and trains to Romania. There's just one early-morning scheduled bus a day from Chernivtsi to Suceava. Luckily, many private cars and *marshrutky* also head that way. The best approach is to ask people at Chernivtsi bus station; or just do your best to look lost and they'll ask you.

The daily train to the Bulgarian capital, Sofia, (450 uah, 23 hours) via Suceava (six hours) and Bucharest (260uah, 12 hours) also leaves before most of us would normally have finished breakfast. See p257 for more details.

is the northern terminus of trolleybus 3, on a huge roundabout. All northward-bound buses or *marshrutky* here go to Kolomyia. Or you can join the local hitchhikers.

### TRAIN

The **train station** (☎ 592 432; vul Gagarina 38) is 1.5km north of the centre. Advance train tickets are sold at the **train ticket office** (☎ 429 24, 055; vul Holovna 128; ☎ 9am-7pm).

Mainline services include those to Kyiv (85uah, 12½ to 15 hours, two daily) and Odesa (17 hours, daily); an extra service to Moscow also stops in Kyiv en route. Services to Lviv (50uah, 5½ to 11 hours, three daily) go via Ivano-Frankivsk. Local trains go to Kolomyia (5uah, 2 to 2½ hours, at least four daily).

### Getting Around

Trolleybuses 3 and 5, plus a whole host of *marshrutky*, run between the bus station and the train station. They're jam-packed, so be prepared to squeeze in or do a little walking. *Marshrutky* 22 takes you directly to the university.

### KHOTYN ХОТИН

Although you might first pass it on the way from Chernivtsi, Khotyn is closer to Kamyanets-Podilsky and best visited as a day trip from there.

While Kamyanets-Podilsky is awesome taken as a whole, its castle building is upstaged by **Khotyn Fortress** (admission 4uah; ☎ 10am-6pm). Eastern European filmmakers love to use this massive fort overlooking the Dnister River as a location; recently refurbished, it served

as Warsaw Castle in the recent Russian-language blockbuster movie *Taras Bulba*. With walls up to 40m high and 6m thick, today's stone fortress was built in the 15th-century, replacing an earlier wooden building. Its location safeguarded river trade routes making it a sought-after prize. The defining moment in its history came in 1621, with a threatened Turkish invasion. The incumbent Poles enlisted the help of 40,000 Cossacks and managed to rout a 250,000-strong Turkish army. This improbable victory made a hero of Cossack leader Petro Sahaydachny, whose huge statue greets you near the fortress' entrance. However, any notion of the fortress' impregnability was dispelled in 1711 when the Turks finally nabbed it. The Russians took over in the 19th century.

The fortress walls have red Turkish markings and a mystery damp spot, but it's the large riverfront grounds that make the place. Some of the outer fortification walls remain and you can clamber precariously over these. In one far corner, locals even pose for pictures where it appears they're jumping over the fortress. But whatever you do, don't forget to bring a picnic.

### Getting There & Around

There are regular *marshrutky* making the 20km journey between Kamyanets-Podilsky and Khotyn (5uah, 30 to 45 minutes) and every Kamyanets-Podilsky–Chernivtsi bus stops en route. The fortress is about 4km north of the bus station. It's simplest to get a taxi from across the street (about 7uah), but if you want to walk, turn right at the bus stop and head back in the direction of Kamyanets-Podilsky. It's a 45-minute walk north along vul Shevchenko, across the market square and beyond, following the occasional sign that says 'Fortetsya' (фортеця). Turn right after the road curves and head towards a statue in the distance. Walk past the statue, through the first set of walls and through to the other side for a spectacular view down a grassy hillside towards the fortress, perched above the river.

## TRANSCARPATIA

This corner of the world is one for connoisseurs. That's to say, it's pretty enough, albeit a little neglected. As a melting pot of Hungarian, Slovakian and Ukrainian cul-

tures, it has a fascinating social mix. Deeper in the mountains around Rakhiv (see p149), Transcarpathia offers hiking and skiing opportunities. However, ultimately, there are few must-sees in this most westerly section for travellers without family connections here. Most people are only likely to pass this way if entering or leaving Ukraine via neighbouring Hungary or Slovakia.

### UZHGOROD УЖГОРОД

☎ (8-)0132 (6-digit Nos), (8-)01322 (5-digit Nos) / pop 118,000

Uzhhorod (formerly Ungvar) is a typical border town – buzzing, full of energy, and often quite brusque. However, it is quite pretty, particularly the old town centre and tree-lined river embankments.

The main town of the Transcarpathian (Zakarpatska) region, Uzhhorod has large Hungarian and Romanian minorities, giving it a Balkan feel. The long autumn is the best season to visit, with the beech leaves turning and the grape harvest coming in. Troyanda Zakarpatsya (a red dessert wine) and Beregivske (a riesling) are among the best-known Transcarpathian wines.

### Orientation

The old town centre lies on the northern bank of the Uzh River, which wends its way roughly east–west through town. The train and bus stations are 1km directly south, and most traffic heads northwest up pr Svobody, before crossing the main bridge (near the Hotel Uzhhorod) and turning back east to the pedestrian area and pedestrian bridge near pl Fentsika. Uzhhorod Castle and the Folk Architecture and Life Museum lie about 400m northeast of this. See p158 for details on getting into town.

### Information

**A Club** (basement, vul Korzo 2; per hr 3uah; ☎ 24hr) An internet venue of the popular-with-teenage-boys variety.  
**Post and telephone office** (vul Mynayska 4) Opposite Hotel Zakarpattya, this place also has internet terminals.  
**Turkul** (www.turkul.com; club@turkul.com) Turkul's enterprising local hiking guides are based in Uzhhorod, but will meet your group's train as far afield as Lviv if you wish.

### Sights

On the hill overlooking town stands the 15th-century **Uzhhorod Castle** (vul Kapitalna; grounds only 1uah; ☎ 10am–6pm Wed–Mon), with massive walls



and big bastions built to stand against the Turks. The **Transcarpathian Museum of Local Lore** (adult/child 4/1uah) inside the castle isn't completely fabulous, but it does have its moments, and the grounds are peaceful. Wander behind the building to the far corner where you can peer over the thick wall and look down on the town below.

Doing this, you'll also spy the open-air **Folk Architecture and Life Museum** (vul Kapitalna; adult/child 3/1uah; ☎ 10am–6pm Wed–Mon) next door to the castle. It's one of the tidiest and nicest of its kind in the country, albeit small. The highlight, **Mykhaylivska Church** (St Michael's Church), is shut but can be admired from the exterior.

Between the pedestrian bridge and the castle are the Moorish red-brick **Philharmonia building** (☎ 332 38; pl Teatralna) and the tiny **Transcarpathian railway**, which puts 1km east along the river in summer.

### Sleeping

Uzhhorod's modern **train station** has better than average rooms for about \$18 per person (although at this price, you might have to share with one other stranger). They're at the

INFORMATION	
A Club	1 B2
Post and Telephone Office	2 A3
Поштамт та Укртелеком	
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	
Folk Architecture and Life Museum	
Музей Закарпатський народної архітектури та побуту	3 B2
Philharmonia Філармонія	4 B2
Transcarpathian Museum of Local Lore Закарпатський Краєзнавчий музей	(see 6)
Transcarpathian Railway Дитяча залізниця	5 B2
Uzhhorod Castle Замок-фортеця	6 B2
SLEEPING	
Hotel Atlant Готель Атлант	7 B1
Hotel Uzhhorod Готель Ужгород	8 A2
Hotel Zakarpattya Готель Закарпаття	9 A3
EATING	
Cafe Da Da Кафе да-да	10 B2
Delfin Дельфін	11 B2
Kaktus Kafe Кактус Кафе	12 B2
TRANSPORT	
Bus station Автовокзал	13 B3

eastern end of the main lobby. If the snack bar is on your left, you'll see the stairs to the rooms in the right-hand corner.

**Hotel Zakarpattya** (☎ 671 370; www.intur-zak.com; pl Kyryla i Mefodyya 5; s \$18–32, d \$24–36, deluxe s/d \$52/78; ☎) There's been some renovation, especially in the deluxe rooms (and at the top of the main price bracket), but overall it still feels quite Soviet in here.

**Hotel Atlant** (☎ 614 095; pl Koryatovycha 27; s \$24, d \$32–40, ste \$45–62; ☎) These 21 European-style rooms are as sweet as can be and great value, especially the singles, which are on the top floor (no lift) and have skylights and sloping ceilings. It's popular though so book ahead if you can.

**Hotel Uzhhorod** (☎ 619 050; www.hoteluzhgorod.com; pl Bohdana Khmelnytskoho 2; 4th-fl standard s/d \$25/28, s \$45–60, d \$68–\$76, apt \$90; ☎) Hotel Uzhhorod is like a layer cake, with rebuilt levels one (ground-floor lobby), two, three and five offering fully Western-standard rooms popular with UK travellers. But floor four, unmentioned on the website, has been left unreconstructed and Soviet-style – like a spread of sweet but slightly stale jam running through the middle. Budget travellers, note you want a 4th-floor 'standard' room, not a 4th-floor 'poly-luxe' or 'luxe' room, which are big, but shabby and expensive.

### Eating & Drinking

**Cafe Da Da** (☎ 323 46; vul Kapitalna 5; mains 3–20uah; ☎ 7am–10pm) Funky-arty-bohemian is what



it is, just down the hill from the Uzhhorod Castle. Not much serious food here – mostly just snacks and beverages.

**Kaktus Kafe** (☎ 325 15; vul Korzo 7; mains 8-25uah) Probably the most popular hang-out in town, this smoky, noisy joint is full of beer- and coffee-drinkers. The theme is decidedly Wild West upstairs; downstairs it seems to be Aztec. The food is pretty good, but the service can be slow.

**Delfin** (☎ 614963; nab Kyivska 3; mains 8-45uah) Locals consider this one of the better restaurants in town. European and Ukrainian dishes are served, but it's known for its grilled meats and rooftop terrace. It's at the end of the pedestrian bridge on the south side of the river. You'll have to go upstairs once you get to the building.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

There's at least one daily flight (and sometimes four) to Kyiv, and a weekly Budapest flight, from Uzhhorod's **airport** (☎ 975 04, 428 71; vul Sobranestka 145), 2km northwest of the centre. Check the website of **Kiy Avia** (www.kiyavia.com) for flight details.

### BUS

Uzhhorod's **bus station** (vul Zaliznychna 2) is opposite the train station at the southern end of pr Svobody.

There are long-distance buses to Lviv (37uah, six hours, four a day) and to Chernivtsi (56uah,

10 to 12 hours, twice daily), the latter stopping en route at Rakhiv (27uah to 32uah, six to eight hours). An overnight service run by **Autolux** (www.autolux.ua) goes to Kyiv (14 hours).

Locally, **marshrutka** 145 goes to Chop (4uah, 45 minutes) every 15 minutes until 8.20pm from the side of the bus station facing the train station. Unnumbered services leave from the main tarmac on the other side of the bus station for Mukacheve (5uah, one hour), nominally every 15 to 20 minutes, but more likely when they're full.

Cross-border buses link Uzhhorod most usefully with Košice (42uah, three hours, at least two daily) in Slovakia. **Regabus** (www.regabus.cz) has services to Prague.

### TRAIN

Trains to and from Western Europe don't stop in Uzhhorod; you must go to nearby Chop (see boxed text, below, and the bus section on this page).

Domestic trains go to and from Lviv (56uah, seven to eight hours, twice daily) and Kyiv (111uah, 19 to 21 hours, two daily). Additionally, there's a red-eye Moscow service (440uah to 550uah, 33 hours, daily) also passing Lviv and Kyiv. Other destinations include Solotvyno (42uah, 7½ hours, daily).

## Getting Around

On leaving the train station, you'll see the bus station. Across the roundabout, the street

heading northwest along the bus station's right is pr Svobody. Go to the bus shelter that's opposite the bus station on pr Svobody, and from here **marshrutka** 5 or 16 will take you into town, passing the hotels Zarkarpattya and Uzhhorod, and landing you near the market, which is right by Hotel Atlant.

Alternatively, it's about a 1.5km walk into town. A taxi from the train station to the centre should cost no more than between 6uah and 8uah; over the years we've found Uzhhorod taxi drivers to be remarkably honest.

## MUKACHEVE МУКАЧЕВЕ

☎ (8)-03131 / pop 81,300

With its cobblestone pedestrian centre lined with pastel-coloured neoclassical buildings, and the rustic horses and carts competing for road space in its shabbier unrenovated suburbs, Mukacheve has more charm and good looks than nearby Uzhhorod. However, there's slightly less to do here.

Mukacheve's highlight is the hilltop **Palanok Castle** (www.zamokpalanok.mk.uz.ua, in Ukrainian; adult/child 10/5uah, video photography extra 10uah, ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun, last entry 5pm), which pops up from the surrounding plain as you approach Mukacheve from Uzhhorod, like something in a fairy-tale fantasy. Famous as the site where Croatian-Hungarian princess Ilona Zrini held off the Austrian Emperor's army for three years before finally capitulating in 1688, the 14th-century castle includes one or two interesting exhibits with English explanations, and has some excellent views. To get here, catch bus 3-4, 3-9, 14-1 or any bus or **marshrutka** heading to timirязева.

With Transcarpathia producing slightly better wine varieties than Crimea, there's an annual **red wine festival** from 12 to 15 January, and a **honey fair** in autumn. Mukacheve also houses a **tourist office** in the duck-egg blue Town Hall on central pl Myru. Good luck on finding that open, but the souvenir shop next door is good.

## Sleeping

**'Motel'** (☎ 8-050 281 6678, 8-050 501 2050; vul Yaroslava Mudroho 82-84; s/d/f \$26/30/40) If you're just leaving the train in Mukacheve to stretch your legs for a day or so, staying at this family-run motel makes eminent sense. Beaming a hard-to-miss bright pink just minutes from the station, it's right on

many **marshrutka** routes to the centre, which is about 25 minutes on foot. The rooms are cosy B & B style and the husband speaks some German (hence the flag in the stairwell).

**Hotel Star** (☎ 320 08, 545 10; www.star-ar.mk.uz.ua; pl Myru 10-12; s \$50, d from \$64, ste from \$84; ☎ ☎) This yellow neoclassical building, in Mukacheve's attractive central pedestrian zone, sure looks like a star, with rug-lined, flagstaff halls and dark wooden doors leading to spotless rooms with minibar and international satellite TV. However, multiple complaints in the guest book will prepare you for some lousy, high-handed treatment.

Also available:

**Intourist Mukacheve** (☎ 379 05; www.intourist.mukachevo.net, in Ukrainian; vul Dykhnovycha 93; s/d/tr \$25/36/42; ☎ ☎ ☎) This astoundingly pleasant ex-Soviet renovation is superb value, but isolated at a good 30 minutes' walk northeast of the centre. No **marshrutky** go right to the gate.

**Hotel Palanok** (☎ 8-050 351 1008, 8-050 555 0755; vul Grafa Shenborna 2A; d \$30-35, f \$70-80; ☎) Nice, newly built hotel under the castle hill, but regular musician guests have given rooms some harsh treatment.

## Getting There & Around

The **train station** is on vul Yaroslava Mudroho, 1.5km southwest of the centre. Heading eastwards from Mukacheve, daily trains go to Lviv (50uah, six hours) and Kyiv (89uah, 19 hours). Heading west, there are at least 18 daily **electrychka** (4uah) and mainline trains to Uzhhorod via Chop (where you can pick up international services originating in Chop). Alternatively, westbound international services like the Moscow-Budapest or Kyiv-Bratislava train stop in Mukacheve itself.

Buses go more frequently to Uzhhorod (5uah, one hour), every 15 to 20 minutes, or when they're full.

**Marshrutky** to the town centre leave regularly from outside the train station, including 6, 16 and 18. To walk, head right up vul Yaroslava Mudroho for about 25 minutes.

The **bus station** is 1.5km east of the centre off vul Myru, the street extending southeast from pl Myru. Leaving the bus station, take the street ahead, just to the left of the exit. Turn left at the end of this street, and follow the road as it curves right. The pedestrian zone of Mukacheve starts about 10 minutes' walk down this road.

## FROM UZHGOROD TO HUNGARY & SLOVAKIA

Chop, 22km west of Uzhhorod and 44km northwest of Mukacheve, is the international rail crossing between Ukraine and Hungary or Slovakia. Here, the broader old Soviet Union rail gauge meets the narrower standard gauge of the EU, and there's a delay of anything between one and three hours while your train's carriages are lifted in the air and onto different bogies.

Trains affected are long-distance services like the Budapest-Moscow or Kyiv-Bratislava, but half the time these delays occur barely noticed in the wee hours. The other half of the time, you could use the delay as an excuse to break your journey in Uzhhorod or Mukacheve. As Chop is treated as the last stop on the Hungarian rail system, several additional services (eg Budapest-Chop-Budapest, Bratislava-Chop) originate from and terminate at its station.

On services heading west from Kyiv and Lviv, domestic trains stop at Chop before reaching Uzhhorod; international services don't stop at Uzhhorod at all (think of it as being on a little rail appendix). By comparison, both domestic and international services travelling west stop at Mukacheve before Chop.

The quickest way between Chop and Uzhhorod is to take a **marshrutka**; between Chop and Mukacheve it's usually an **electrychka** or other train. See the Getting There & Away section in Uzhhorod (above), and Getting Around in Mukacheve (opposite).

It's also possible to catch buses from Uzhhorod to Hungary or Slovakia. See p254 and p257 for more train and bus details.

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