

Wooden sacral architecture

Objects of wooden sacral architecture are permanently inscribed in the municipality's landscape. Ten modern objects (nine tserkvas (Russian Orthodox churches) and one church) have survived until modern times, two of which are world-class monuments listed by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites.

The church in Sękowa

The little church in Sękowa was built around the year 1520. It owes its current shape to redevelopment in the 17th and 18th centuries, during which time it was surrounded with so called 'sobota' ('Saturday) arcades, and a steeple with a bell chamber was added on to the west side. Elements surviving from the temple's inception include a stone baptismal font, crucifix and consecration crosses painted on the walls.

Before World War I, this church was richly outfitted with, among others, a pulpit and three late-Renaissance altars from the 17th century. Walls and the ceiling were covered with polychrome decoration. A bell dating back to 1540 was hanging in the tower. The temple was destroyed during World War I.

In 1994, the Sękowa parish was awarded the Prix Europa Nostra prize for exemplary use of the facility and the conducting of restoration works. In 2003, the temple was entered in to UNESCO's World Heritage List.



The tserkva in Owczary

This building, erected in 1653, is a classical example of the western Lemko tserkva. Acclaimed as an edifice of high architectural and artistic value, it received the Europa Nostra medal in 1994. Formerly a Greek Catholic tserkva, it currently fills the role of a Roman Catholic church. Nonetheless, it is used by the faithful of both rites. It is a timber building with a log frame structure, facing towards the east (orientated). A sacristy was added near the presbytery, and a pole-frame tower with a bulbous cupola was added above the narthex. The nave and presbytery have separate tented roofs transforming into bulbous spires with blind lanterns. The walls of the narthex are surrounded with a musical choir suspended on protruding beams of the log frame. The temple's interior is lavishly decorated with rich adornments and paintings. The entire width of the nave is claimed by the 17-18th century iconostasis of high artistic value. In 2013, the tserkva was entered onto the UNESCO World Heritage List.





Męcina Wielka

The Sts. Cosmas and Damian tserkva built in 1807 is a three-section log frame structure. It has a shingle-covered roof. An iconostasis and two altars in the Baroque tradition from the 19th century are found inside. The temple currently serves as a Roman Catholic church.

Ropica Górna

The St. Michael the Archangel church dates from 1813 or 1819. It is a single-nave wooden building with a log frame structure and pole-frame tower. Gabled roof above the nave and presbytery. Sheet-metal cupolas crowned with spires. A heritage Rococo iconostasis and two Baroque side altars of the 18th century, walls covered with figural and ornamental polychrome paintings are found inside.



Bodaki

The St. Demetrius tserkva is situated directly near the road to Bartne. It was built in 1902. The temple building is a three-section timbered log frame structure, with a sacristy added near the presbytery. Gabled roof covered with sheet metal above both the nave and presbytery. The iconostasis inside was created by Szajna of Rymanów. A figural and ornamental polychrome decoration from the 20th century is also found here. The tserkva presently serves as a Roman Catholic church.



Bodaki

Nearby, on the other hand, sits the Orthodox St. Demetrius tserkva from 1934, a three-section timbered log frame structure with two small helmeted cupolas on its roof. The tserkva was used for some time as a barn after the deportations.



Bartne

The St. Cosmas and Damian Greek Catholic tserkva was built in 1842. It is three-sectioned with a sacristy near the presbytery. The pole-frame tower has sloped walls with a simulated starling. Load-bearing pillars founded on rocks delimit the narrower narthex. Ceilings inside. Tented mansard roofs above the nave and presbytery. Gabled roof above part of the narthex. Cupola tower helmet with a simulated lantern. Roof finials take the form of simulated lantern turrets.

Currently serving as a museum facility, the temple belongs to the Karwacjan and Gładysz Manor Museum in Gorlice. Inside one can see a Baroque iconostasis of the 18th century and a Rococo side alter depicting the Crucifixion, dating from 1797. Part of the icons and fittings were moved to Bartne from the no longer existing tserkvas in Nieznajowa





Bartne

On the other hand, the construction of the St. Cosmas and Damian Orthodox tserkva was completed in 1930. It is a wooden log frame temple with a sheet-covered roof with three octagonal drums. An iconostasis brought here in the 1930s from Chelm Land and 12 icons from the no longer existing tserkva in Świerzowa Ruska are found inside. The tserkva was used as a barn after the deportations. It currently again serves the Orthodox faithful.

Wołowiec

The formerly Greek Catholic and now Orthodox Guardianship of the Blessed Virgin Mary tserkva was erected in the 18th century (or 1880 according to a different account). After the deportations of the Lemkos it gradually fell into ruin, even being used as a sheepfold. Thanks to renovation works, the temple's destruction has been averted. It is a three-sectioned shingle-timbered log frame building. The pole-frame tower has a starling. The iconostasis was filled up with icons taken from the Łańcut collection.



Krzywa

The tserkva situated here dates from 1854. During World War I, however, it was destroyed and needed to be rebuilt (1924–1926). It is a three-sectioned long frame wooden building crowned with three octagonal cupolas sitting on drums. The largest cupola extends above the nave. The roof is covered with sheet metal. An altar adorned with paintings has been preserved inside. A wooden belfry from 1924 stands nearby. It is presently used as a Roman Catholic church.



World War I

There are 23 war cemeteries throughout the Sękowa municipality, belonging to the 3rd district (where the heaviest fighting to break up the Russian front line took place in the spring of 1915) and the 1st, where a total of 5,000 soldiers of the Austro-Hungarian, German and Russian armies lie interred, having fallen during the Battle of Gorlice or the Gorlice-Tarnów Offensive.



masses. The outcome of the battle also had an impact on the creation of an independent Poland.

The largest cemetery within the borders of the municipality is cemetery no. 80 in Sękowa. It was designed by Hans Mayr. 'It may well be the most characteristic example of the monumental style. Massive stone wall, four stone pylons at the front, a concrete cross inside; at the back, on the higher terrace, a large pergola.' The cemetery is the resting ground of 1206 soldiers.

On the other hand, the Małastowska Pass is home to cemetery no. 60, designed by Dušan Jurkovič — one of the most beautiful and at the same time most known cemeteries in the region. 'Original dodecagonal plan. Wooden crosses on the graves. The main accent is a type of wooden altar (by some associated with a Proto-Slavic khram) with a copy of the Our Lady of Częstochowa painting.' 174 soldiers of the Austro-Hungarian army are buried here.

Due to next year's centennial of the Battle of Gorlice, Sękowa is hosting historical picnics with reconstructed battles to commemorate the event. From one year to another, the show has been attracting larger and larger crowds of tourists. Right now, experts are counting it among the largest WWI battle reconstructions in Europe. Approximately 250 reconstructionists from Poland and the rest of Europe were in attendance this year.

Despite its being the largest and most important battle of the entire eastern front, its awareness among the Polish society is poor. The Gorlice operation led to the destruction of the 3rd Russian army along with the entire south-western front, and with it the north-western front. The Gorlice breakthrough therefore was the turning point of the entire war in the east. It initiated a series of Russian defeats. Those, in turn, contributed to the weakening and disrepute of the tsarist regime in the eyes of the broad



The forgotten hamlets of Lemkovina

The influx of the Wallachian and Ruthenian population into Lemkovina, i.e. Beskid Niski and part of Beskid Sądecki, took place between the 14th and the first half of the 16th century. The people were transferred to their current abodes in 1947 as part of the Vistula Action.

The Sękowa municipality includes villages once inhabited by Lemko communities. Part of the hamlets remain empty up to this day following the forced migration of their inhabitants. It is hard to believe that several decades ago Czarne, Nieznajowa, Długie, Lipna and Radocyna were settlements bustling with life. Today there is practically no trace of them, and roadside crosses and fruit trees gone wild, which, like signs on a map, show a sophisticated onlooker where the homesteads once lay are one of the few and mute witnesses of history. At present, the land is drawing many tourists. Beginning from 2008, so-called doors with information boards are being placed there as part of the project titled: 'Through grass-grown ruts of roads that end at dead orchards... The forgotten hamlets of Lemkovina,' organised by the Lemko Union and co-financed by the Voivodeship of Lesser Poland. The boards contain descriptions and maps of settlements back from the time they were still inhabited.



Kornuty rock formation reserve



This geological reserve spanning 11.9 ha is located within the Magura Wątkowska range, at the height of 760–825 m. It was established in 1953 and is one of the largest and most developed flysch rock slides. It currently fills the role of the municipality's most popular and accessible natural attraction. The history of the protection of peculiar rock formations beneath the Kornuty peak goes back to the year 1935, when they were declared a monument of nature.

During the interbellum, the reserve housed a mountain refuge which burnt down and, despite many endeavours, has not been rebuilt ever since. The protected rocks are outcrops of sandstones from Wątkowa, originating approximately 30 million years ago in the early Oligocene. Numerous rock forms have developed here, in the shape of towers, pulpits, clubs or blocks, slabs and rubble. Apart from rock forms, the protection of the Kornuty reserve also extends to the slide area. Numerous boulders lie deposited between the picturesque walls of the rockfall of up to 20 m height, across their 800 m length. Due to mass wasting, several small fissure caves have come



into existence here, the largest of which — the Mroczna, 'Gloomy', cave — reaches up to 17 m depth, and its total corridor length equals 175 m. According to a popular local legend, it was in this cave that the Męcina highwayman Sytko would hide his loot.

The Carpathian-Galician Kerosene Route



The Carpathian-Galician Kerosene Route is the starting section of the crossborder Kerosene Route that runs from Gorlice, through Jasło, Krosno, Sanok and Ustrzyki Dolne into Ukrainian territory — to Boryslav, Drohobych and Lviv. As one of the region's principal tourist products, its goal is to save the relics of the kerosene industry that had developed in the Gorlice powiat since the 2nd half of the 19th century from oblivion. 'It is a fact that the first rock oil mine in the world came into existence in the Pusty Las ("Empty Forest"), at the intersection of Siary and Sękowa in 1852. the first in the world (non-pharmaceutical) kerosene distillery in the world' was also established in Siary, in 1856. Furthermore, the many wellbore cellars scattered across the forests clearly demonstrate that Sękowa Land was the cradle of the kerosene industry not only in Poland but globally.

One can find locations bearing witness of the activities of pioneers of Gorlice Land's kerosene industry (e.g. Wojciecha Biechoński, Władysław Długosz, Wiliam H. Mac Garvey, Adam Skrzyński, Józefa Szymonowicz and Ignacy

Łukasiewicz) throughout the route's itinerary.

Siary is the place: 'where the first oil wells in West Galicia came into being. The old drilling facilities, including active holes Siary 101 (on private property) and Siary 105 (near the Siary-Owczary powiat road, about 3 km from the Siary intersection)', are highlighted here.

The next settlement on the route is Sękowa. A local monument commemorates Władysław Długosz. The parish cemetery, on the opposite side, is home to the family crypt. The region's industrial heritage is showcased by the Kerosene Open-Air Museum (near national road no. 997), with a collection that familiarises the visitors with the technological process of oil extraction, treatment and transport. Later, the route leads through Męcina Wielka and Wapienne.



Magurski National Park

It is one of the six national parks of Lesser Poland.

At present, it is also the only one that cannot be accessed from the Lesser Poland side. Problems with the entrance have caused the Sękowa municipality to be brought up as an oddity in conversations, given how it is probably the only one in the entire country to have a great attraction in its territory, to which, however, it cannot let any tourists in. Thankfully, after long years of trying, talks have started in order to open the park to Lesser Poland. The partnership envisages the creation of two 'satellite' units of the park in Wapienne and Bartne, equipped with modern exhibition rooms and lecture halls. Environmental paths will be let out of the two villages, and a lookout tower will be erected on top of the Ferdel Mountain.

The Magurski National Park was established on 1 January 1995. Its surface spans 19,962 ha. One of the park's principal tasks is to protect the invaluable transitional area between the Eastern and Western Carpathians. The vegetation here is characteristic of the foothill and montane levels of the transitional zone. Mountainous ridges are covered with beech and fir trees, with a touch of sycamore. The Magurski National Park is also home to 200 animal species (bear, wolf, elk, raccoon dog, lesser spotted eagle, golden eagle, black stork) and approximately 800 plant species, from which 57 are under strict protection and 11 are under partial protection. Truly unique species listed in Polish Red Books also can be found at the park: 12 plant species and 10 animal species. The latter include three particularly precious bat species, classified in the CR category, i.e. critically endangered species. Furthermore, territorial strict protection applies to three areas, i.e.: Kamień, Zimna Woda and the most territorially extensive Magura Wątkowska.



Health resort tourism

Health resort tourism in the confines of Sękowa municipality centres around Wapienne — the smallest health resort in Poland. Wapienne is one of the most attractive settlements in the municipality.

Located in the south-eastern part of the Voivodeship of Lesser Poland, Gorlice powiat, Sękowa municipality, it belongs geographically to the Beskid Niski, being situated at the feet of the north-western end of the Magura Wątkowska range, in the Wapienka creek valley at the height of 380 do 460 m above sea level. It is surrounded by five elevations: Mały Ferdel 577 m, Ferdel 648 m, Góra Męcińska 675 m, Kamienną 619 m and Barwinok 670 m. One part of the settlement is located within the Magurski National Park, while the rest belongs to the Protected Landscape Area. The health resort is adjoined by forest expanses with a mixed tree stand, forming part of the Carpathian Primeval Forest.



According to local tradition, the springs here were in use already in the 17th century, mainly as a cure for venereal diseases. Napoleonic soldiers returning to their country after the Moscow defeat were among the visitors at the beginning of the 19th century. It is that period that the operation of the health resort dates from. During the turbulent years of World War I, the establishment was destroyed. Reconstruction took place from 1920 to 1924. It is a curious fact that during the interbellum period Wapienne's patients were recruited from less affluent social strata, mainly the surrounding peasants and town dwellers. And that was no small oddity, considering how during that time 'trips to the waters' were mainly reserved to the elites. During World War II the black scenario repeated itself, and the resort was destroyed once again. The year 1955, with a takeover of the area by the Poviast National Council in Gorlice, livened things up a bit and a modernization started together with the adaptation for sanatorial and recreational purposes.

Thanks to being located in a valley, the resort enjoys a beneficial foothill microclimate. High water and air purity parameters place Wapienne among those few springs meeting the heightened pollution standards required of health resorts. Curative and preventive properties may be used in climatic therapy of locomotor, rheumatic and respiratory diseases, as well as neurological disorders. Thanks to a diversity of climate and terrain stimuli, it can also be of assistance in treating thermoregulatory disorders.

The Wapienne mining area spans across 6,499,100 m². It currently has two springs and two drilling holes with curative waters. Those are infiltration waters, which undergo slight mineralization and H₂S saturation amid the rock formations, which makes them low-mineralized waters. The modern demand for curative water is secured by the Kamila and Marta springs, and W-1 and W-2 drilling holes can be put back in commis-

sion if needed. They have no longer been in use after 1997, remaining only as backup intakes. Wapienne is also home to the Zuzanna mineral water spring. Another example of the natural riches of Wapienne is the therapeutic mud found here — an organic peloid produced by the dry rot of plants, which, after breaking up and mixing with water, creates a pulp with curative proper

Ski tourism

The hilly terrain is naturally conducive to winter sports. Alpine skiing and snowboarding enthusiasts have three resorts to choose from. Ski slopes and lifts on the flanks of Magura Małastowska are among the greatest tourist attractions of the region. One of the longest ski slopes in north-western Poland is situated near the refuge. Artificially snowed, groomed with Snowcats and lit, the track is 1,400 m long, with a difference in altitudes of 260 m. The chair lift has a bandwidth of 2,200 people/hour and a length of 1,071.5 m. The low terminal building is equipped with a catering outlet and toilets for customers. A skiing and snowboarding equipment rental service is available at the resort. Free parking is available in the low terminal area.

The OSIR lift in Małastów is another interesting highlight. It offers 3 lifts and 3 skiing tracks with 550, 450 and 150 m track lengths. A food stand, skiing equipment rental service, repairs workshop and training schools are located near the lifts, awaiting the tourists. Parking for 100 cars is available not far from the low terminal.

The Sękowa Ski lift rounds out the offer for skiing novices. It is a 250 m long single platter lift length, with a bandwidth of 750 people/hour. The difference in altitudes on the descending track alongside the lift is 30 m. The track has been classified as easy. Snowcats are on site, and the track is lit for night-time rides.



The Sękowa municipality also is an ideal place for cross-country skiing. The Forest Snow Tracks complex includes 80 km of marked and maintained tracks with varied difficulty levels, led through the most beautiful recesses the mountains have to offer. They pass by the Lemko tserkvas, war cemeteries, through no longer existing villages, where traces of homesteads can be found, or roadside shrines and crosses. The 2.5 km length Jagoda of, situated in the peak parts of Magura Małastowska is another highlight for cross-country skiers. Starting from 2014, the Recreational and Therapeutic Centre at Wapienne has three cross-country tracks with 750, 1,000 and 1,500 m trails installed. Tracks come with varied difficulty levels. Equipment rental service rounds out the offer. Coaching is also available.