

UPF Bieszczady, Poland: 8-Day Mountain Trek Unites Polish and Ukrainian Youth

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Bieszczady, Poland - Young people from Poland, Ukraine and other countries joined a long-distance trek through the Bieszczady Mountains in southeast Poland, as part of the worldwide Peace Road 2024. The daring group of mountaineers, including participants from Belarus, Russia, Austria, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Philippines and Australia, trekked for eight days, from July 20-27, over wild and rugged terrain.



The course from Lesko to Komancza in Bieszczady covered a distance of 160 kilometers. Some did not hike the whole route but joined for two or three days. The area is a famous wilderness, and the course led through muddy trails, thickets of nettles, and prickly bushes as well as mountain meadows and beautiful views. Besides mastering the muddy patches and bushes, the hikers enjoyed jumping on stones and climbing trees, above the level of the clouds, to see the sky.



The Polish-Ukrainian relationship has historically been very difficult, stained with blood and tears. Both nations need to forgive and be forgiven. Although the current war in Ukraine and its unspeakable tragedies have brought these peoples closer, deep thorns still provoke pain. As the hikers extended one another a helping hand, and sacrificed their progress to help each other, they learned to see each other as individuals, rather than representatives of an alien nation. Along the way, speaking about a shared difficult history helped to make this pain less acute. In the evenings everyone prayed together with gratitude for that day and for world peace.



The last day was filled with tranquility, thankfulness and a feeling of having gone through the valleys of darkness and worries to reach the plane of reconciliation. A bridge had been built over the ravine that divides our nations. This bridge needs further care and reinforcement, but it is stable, and each hiker felt privileged to have been a part of it.