***Title: THE LAND OF ORAVA FAIRYTALES AND LEGENDS***

***Theme*:** walking the Quest trail, you will enjoy magnificent scenic turnouts, the lookout tower particularly noteworthy – and learn a lot the about Orava’s most interesting legends.

***Start line:*** the expedition begins in Winiarczykówka where the yellow trail turns from road 962 onto Zgrzebniowska Meadow, near the Polish-Slovakian border. GPS co-ordinates: 49.457924 N, 19.588195 E.

I am Sobek Śmietana, Lipnica’s head the first.

Centuries ago, I brought early settlers, who burst

forth, behind us foreboding Tatra peaks,

ahead of us – Mount Babia’s forests and creeks.

Dear Explorer, today do join me for a walk

to encounter legends; you’ll find out they have flocked

in Carpathian woods, on summits and in brooks,

in shepherds’ wistful songs, in wispy clouds’ books.

On the road to Slovakia our trail begins,

the nearby road sign accurate like a Google Maps pin:

how far to Bobrov’s centre? ***4.5*** kilometres. 4-20

Many border posts along the way are greeters

of curious travellers. For use of Polish be prepared:

Marysina *Polana* (*Meadow*) awaits, and there

a ***PUNKT*** *WIDOKOWY* (*SCENIC TURNOUT*), of allure a shower, P-11, U-10

Polish borders visible from the local lookout tower.

Aunt Marysia welcomes us to the meadow pretty

named after her house. The carving’s for the witty:

how many buttons in our highlandress’ corset? ***TEN***. T-19

Once you finish the count, that’s the moment when

to Ziembowa (***STYRUŁOWA***) – another Meadow – you’ll proceed. S-9, A-3

Before you do, here’s a spot of history to read.

we Vlachs were migrants: from the Carpathian Arc

shepherds walked to Lipnica Wielka, here made their mark.

Just like sheep are driven, we will walk right up

to the lookout tower, in grass and buttercups.

Let’s take the path to meadows, gentle and mellow,

the colour of the trail in bright and vivid yellow.

Once you start walking, stay alert and deft:
a shepherds’ hut made of ***WOOD*** here to your left. O-6

Taste cheese and whey from milk given to us by ewes;

a wondrous view of Kriváň waits here for you.

Listen to stories of the Zgrzebniowska Meadow,

follow local legends, their many ghosts and shadows.

Diligence in reading every sentence of the Quest

will make riddles easy, a piece of cake the test.

The road curves to the left, and hugs the forest line,

traditionally grazed sheep no longer here aligned.

Yet if – once the treasure’s found – we walk on to take a peep,

when the season is right, we can find many sheep.

Once you reach the turn, and duly take a right,

Look for a high hunting seat. It will soon come to sight

in a grove to your right. How many ladder rungs? ***NINE***. N-7

The count must be exact. Got it? Great job. Fine.

Walk on, the Tatras looming behind you in a chain.

Local legends claim, all in similar vein,

that Orava was inhabited by people strong and tall,

calling themselves giants. Regardless, all in all,

these giants played with soil as if with grains of sand,

making deep cool valleys and tall mountains, and

giving the ones with Gerlach a very special name:

Tatras. The ones you’re looking at. Exactly the same.

Towards Mount Babia now, of the Beskids Queen,

we will walk, encountering ancient tales and scenes.

Of Orava highwaymen we will find many treasures,

followed by keys to Lipnica’s secrets, for good measure.

In and out of the forest and meadows we will wind,

soon a little house all in wood we will find,

used by the staff of the local urbarium community.

A blue sign marks a ***PARKING*** lot, a handy amenity. P-12, R-14

Walk on along what is called the Lipnica Freedom road,

By rhyming verse or riddle don’t let yourself be slowed.

Highwaymen’s songs assist the fearless and the smart,

The willow humming tunes of *“serdecko”*, or *heart*.

*My heart has always been divided in two,*

*one half laughing, the other – touched with grief, and blue.*

*Follow Orava’s heart, whether in old age or in youth –*

*your heart will always lead you to the beauty of truth.*

Can you hear Orava’s heart, its steady, forceful beat?

It’s how shepherds thank, and travellers they greet.

When I came to Lipnica with settlement plans,

with shepherding the village’s history began.

*“Lipnica”* was my gift, the new settlement’s name,

its origins assorted – as it has been claimed

by some that Alpine rye-grass was here referred,

the species abundant. Others say the word

alludes to a lime, a great and wondrous tree,

in its shade the first mass held, locals on bent knee.

Regardless of the moniker, whether tree or grass,

the highwaymen’s road is your questing Treasure pass.

Orava was their lair, their mysterious den.

They kept robbing travellers, again and again.

One highwayman was famous, his final story grim:

It’s Juraj Jánošik – I’m sure you’ve heard of him.

Białoń was the name of the region’s last raider.

He kidnapped Lipnica’s parish priest. This was a trader:

*“Cure my woman, and with gold I will let you go”.*

That’s exactly what happened, as it goes to show.

The priest used the gold to build the church’s spire.

What happened next? Irony one has here to admire,

since here the highwayman met his tragic end:

hanged near the spire, his offences duly to amend.

It doesn’t pay to follow paths of crime and greed.

You’ll lose everything. Much better choice to heed

the word of law. The magnificent Orava road leads

to truth, beauty and freedom. Another sign to read

will come into sight soon, encouragement to rest.

By no means will it be the end of our Quest!

A breather place – the ***GRILL***. Perfect for a break. L-2

To ***MARYSINA*** (***PIASKOWA***) Meadow now you will take A-8, P-16, K-5, O-17

the path. Keep walking towards the lookout tower,

on the way admire the beauty and true power

of an enormous lime tree on a road to the side.

Nearby road signs you will have to take in stride,

adding up the digits of our current altitude.

Found the sign and numbers? That’s half the job. Good.

**7+1+0 = *EIGHT*.** That’s the correct count. T-15

It’s time to reach the tower, wooden steps to mount.

Wooden sculptures on the way are a charming sight,

not here in my time, a more recent delight.

Find the Tatra photo frame for a lovely souvenir,

and walk up the steps of the lookout tower near.

The panoramic view will take your breath away,

best enjoyed, of course, on a cloudless day.

Add the digits of the height of the lowest peak:

\_+\_+\_+\_ = ***9*.** Yes! Maps the truth will speak. (9-22)

The tallest one is ***GERLACH*** – can it be found today? C-4

If you want to climb it – guides need to lead the way.

Pachoł’s altitude: ***2,167*** ASL. You’ll need the digit last 7-21

(some peaks are only seen once clouds have passed).

One’s all on Polish soil. 2,291 m ASL – that’s the one –

***KOZI*** *WIERCH*. Look behind for Mount Babia. Done? O-13

They say that on Good Thursday on her Diablak peak

Robbers’ gold-filled dungeons open, worth a peek,

pots of treasure glittering, and priceless coins cans –

yet their depths will admit only an honest man.

A greedy woman found her way, as the legend goes,

carrying out pots of gold and silver. Unbeknownst

to her, the great void shut its doors

on her last trip back, evening the score

by keeping her daughter. Remember what we said?

Queen of ***BESKIDS***, Mount ***BABIA***, a place of mighty dread, S-18, B-1

warriors asleep within, brave and noble knights,

awaiting between two rulers a great fight.

They will be awakened by the sound of a horn.

Justice for all men and women will be born.

Congratulations on learning Orava legends’ charm.

Got the password? Great! The code can be disarmed.

I used to survey Orava lands centuries ago –

that’s what you did today, its beauty duly shown.

**PASSWORD:**

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| **B** | **L** | **A** | **C** | **K** |  | **O** | **N** |  | **A** |  | **S** | **U** | **P** | **P** | **O** | **R** | **T** |  | **P** | **O** | **S** | **T** |  | **4** | **7** | **9** |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  | 6 | 7 |  | 8 |  | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |  | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |  | 20 | 21 | 22 |

**PASSCODE: 479**