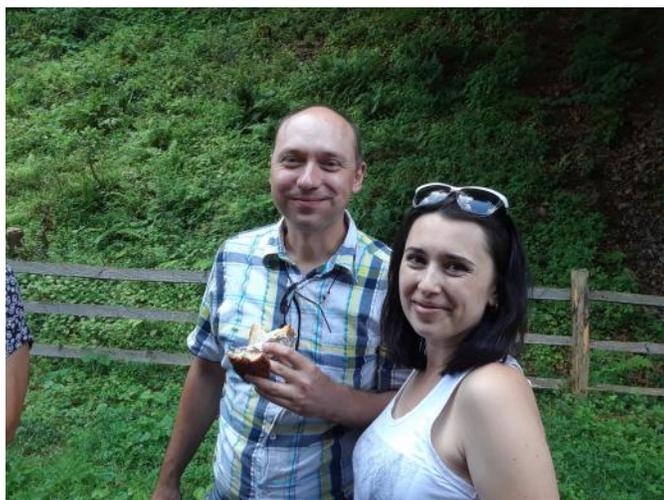
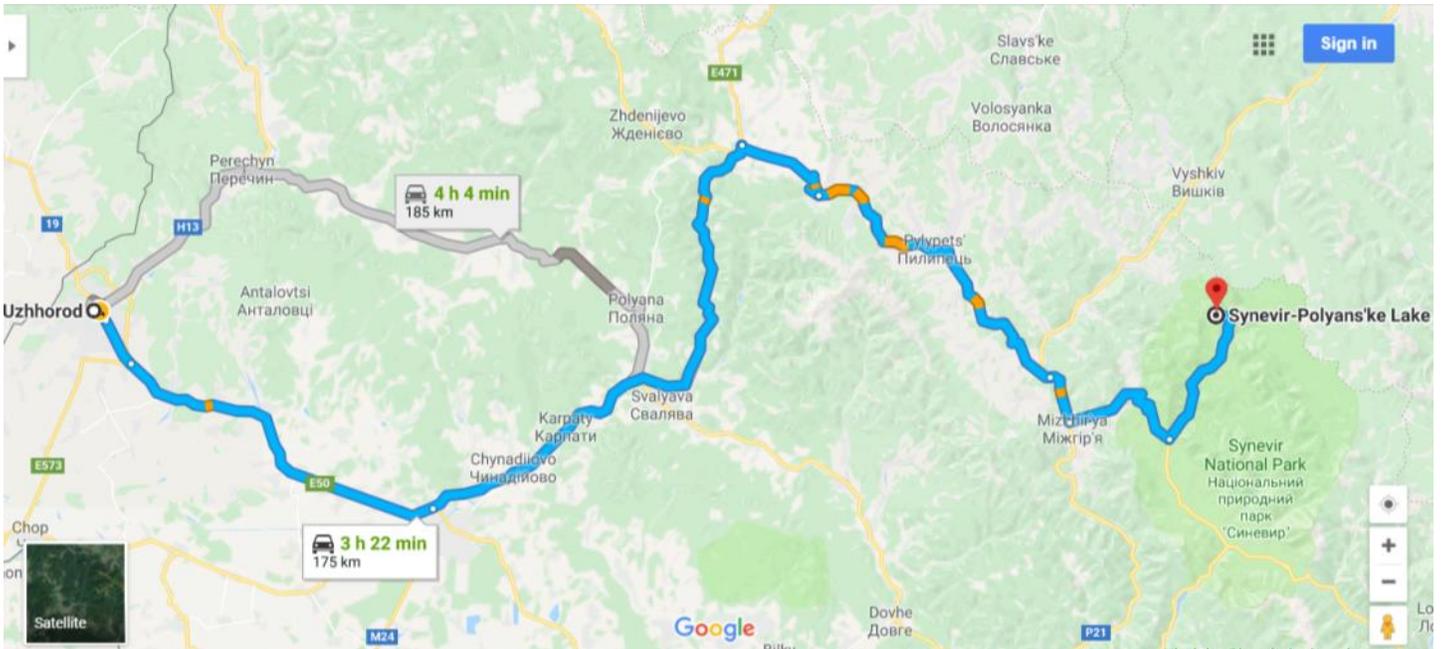
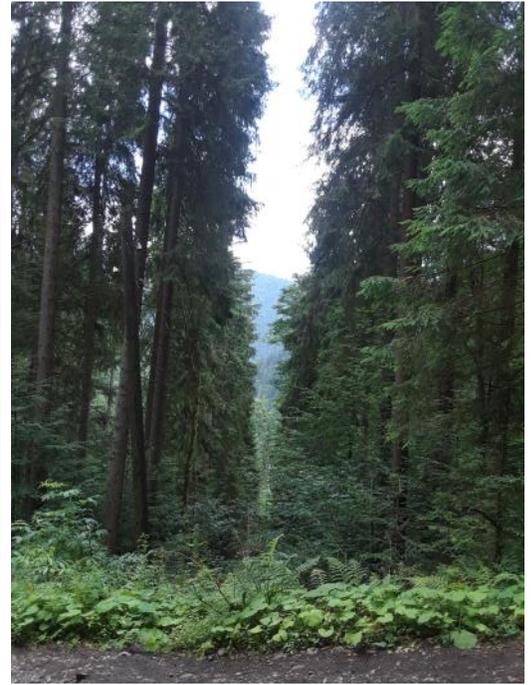


On Saturday, July 20, I was invited on an excursion with the Reformed church of Szurte, pastored by Zsolt Kotiuk to the Synevir National Park in the Carpathian mountains. We had a very nice coach and the roads have been or are in the process of being repaved. I cannot over emphasize the miraculous aspect of this! My back still remembers past trips to the mountains in the old “red bus”. You literally felt every bone jarring pot-hole of the thousands along the way. Not this time! We stopped short of the park in a roadside pavilion area that we shared with a local horse for a picnic lunch of peppers, tomatoes, schnitzels, fried cauliflower, and assorted cookies and pastries.





The scenic lake is located atop the mountain. It is a 1200 meter hike from the parking area up an asphalt path that averages a 12% grade. It seemed a lot longer! An alternative is to ride up in a car for about \$1 per person. At the top there is a café and some shops and a number of table top vendors selling all sorts of jellies, jams, honey, dried herbs, and mushrooms. If you still have a hiking spirit there is a trail that leads around the lake and back. The really adventurous can try crossing the lake on one of two log rafts that have water rolling over the deck and appear in imminent danger of sinking. All considered, the great natural views and peace and quiet are worth the hike.



Lazslo Katko, daughter, Adel, and friend take a break on the trek up the mountain.





On the way home we again stopped at the roadside park and had a serious Hungarian-style picnic. A fire was started while others prepared slabs of smoked pork backfat by scoring the fat side down to the skin to create slivers of fat that were still attached to the rind. These pieces were skewered and heated over the fire until the fat began to melt. This dripping fat was then dabbed onto pieces of bread until they were nicely soaked and coated with a layer of fat. Add sliced onions and some of the slivers of fat and “Enjoy!”.





The trip home was uneventful except for the occasional cow delay. Cows in the mountains are often just turned loose to graze wherever they want, the owners knowing they will come home at the end of the day. They own the roads.

The road at the left has not been resurfaced yet but it has been patched. In previous years the patches would be 6-8" deep potholes. The Ukrainian government's reforms include giving the regions more money and more control over how it is spent in addition to increased federal road funds as well. Roads across all regions are rapidly improving.



The Carpathian Mountains start in Romania and make a crescent shaped arch through Ukraine, Slovakia, southern Poland, and very eastern Czech Republic. For centuries they served as a barrier to invasion of the Hungarian plain from the eastern hordes.

