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BSB831/HERIPRENEURSHIP

“RUGS FROM MOLDOVA – A TREASURE OF WRITTEN SIGNS!”



Republic of Moldova

Craft Complex Arta Rustica, Clisova-Noua village

Weaving stories in Moldova

Common borders. Common solutions.



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Description

Get ready to embark on a thrilling journey with Anna, a curious young girl, as she delves into the mysteries of the past and discovers its profound influence on her life today. Her insatiable curiosity drives her to unravel the secrets of the women who came before her, those who raised their families, cared for their children, and yet managed to infuse art and beauty into even the most practical household objects. Feel the enthusiasm radiating from Anna as she radiates with impatience. Her heart overflows with an important revelation, one that compels her to share it with her lover. Prepare for an exciting journey as Anna embarks on an extraordinary quest to unravel the intricate tapestry of traditional Moldavian crafts and unearth priceless artifacts, each steeped in a rich cultural heritage. Material developed with the support of the European Union and the Black Sea Basin Program through the Heripreneurship project.

Main character of the stories:

The main character of the stories is a young girl Anna, who is curious to find out more about the past and how it influences her daily life in the present. Especially, she wants to find out how women lived in the past, how they managed their families, grew their children while still finding the time to create art and beauty even in some practical objects that they would use in their household.

Anna was a young woman filled with excitement and anticipation. She had just received important news that she was eager to share with her beloved one. News that led her on a journey of discovery about the rich cultural heritage of Moldovan traditional fine crafts and priceless artefacts.

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ASSET 01: Chisinau City Hall

Amid the hustle and bustle of Chisinau, Anna came upon the magnificent City Hall building, a symbol of the city's resilience and history. Anna recalled a piece of information she had once come across. She was in front of the City Hall.

Now and Then

The City Hall building was erected at the end of the 19th century, as a new headquarters for the City Duma. The initiative was put forward by the city mayor, Karol Schmidt. He was the longest serving mayor of Chisinau, who held this position for 26 years (from 1877 to 1903), with a special contribution to the modernisation of the city. He successfully managed to turn provincial Chisinau into a modern European capital.



On the wall of the building she saw a memorial plaque on which a portrait was carved with the inscription "Alexandru Bernardazzi – chief architect of Chisinau between 1856 and 1878, honorary citizen of the city."



"What a combination," thought Anna, "Aleksander Osipovich Bernardazzi, a Russian architect from the 19th century working in Chisinau was of Swiss-Italian origin." Actually, there was nothing odd about his multicultural heritage, considering that the city's mayor of that time was Karol Schmidt, a Bessarabian German¹ born into a German-Polish family.

It was Karol Schmidt who took the initiative to build new headquarters for the City Duma on the site occupied by the fire station. The design was entrusted to the city architect of that time, Mitrofan Elladi, and the architect Aleksander Bernardazzi was invited to help him. The concept of the building's architecture was as an eclectic one, based on the tradition of Italian Renaissance architecture, and is currently one of the city's few remaining structures from this period.

¹ The Bessarabia Germans were a German ethnic group (formerly part of the Germans of Romania) who lived in Bessarabia (today part of the Republic of Moldova and south-western Ukraine) between 1814 and 1940.

From 1814 to 1842, 9,000 of them immigrated from the German areas Baden, Württemberg, Bavaria, some Prussian areas of modern-day Poland and Alsace, France, to the Russian governorate of Bessarabia at the Black Sea.

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Nowadays the City Hall building is still bustling with life and administers the city, but also serves as a hub of local commerce, housing various shops, including *Din Inima* (English: *From the heart*) shop which sells clothing designed by local artisans, as well as the handmade crafts shop *Fantezie*.

This building stands as a testament to the perseverance and creativity of the people of Chisinau, offering both a historical perspective and a glimpse into the modern spirit of the city.

„Come inside,” she heard a voice, although nobody was around her. She felt the urge to buy something today that would be treasured for generations to come. Anna found the perfect dress, a timeless piece that she was now determined to pass down to her daughter someday. She asked the seller if she could wear it straight away. The girl behind the counter nodded.

Leaving the store, Anna felt that that day was going to be a special day.

Stepping outside, she turned her gaze up and saw the Tree of Life embedded in the country’s brand logo. It has something in common with a tree she saw some time ago on an old carpet. This symbol of the tree was somehow different, but she could see similarities.

This was the country’s brand logo, the tree surrounded by symbols of the various sectors of the Moldovan economy, including winemaking, light industry, automotive and electronics, agriculture, infrastructure, and energy. Wine glasses celebrate the pride of the nation’s legendary wines, while fruits and vegetables remind us of the delicious taste of traditional cuisine. A basil flower symbolises protection and pure love, while the letter M signifies the fertile land that nourishes the lively spirit of the Moldovan people.

Next to that Tree of Life Anna noticed the sign **i** for **Information**, and she thought that it probably was the Tourism Information Center. She didn’t plan to be a tourist today, but that Tree of Life was calling her, so she decided to enter and find out more about her roots, her ancestors...



Entering inside she was captured by the videos playing on a screen. Probably seeing her captured by all this, a young lady approached her (she looked like a student to Anna).

“Can I help you? What would you like to visit in Moldova?”, asked the young lady;
”Mm, I would like to..., to know more about my past”, said Anna after a while.

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The questions were as simple as they were complicated. What did she want at that moment?

“I would like to follow in the footsteps of the women of the past”, continued Anna;

“That’s a piece of cake!”, answered the lady with a smile on her lips, giving her a booklet captioned Weaved Stories.

“That was exactly what I needed, “thought Anna, while leafing through the booklet.

“It is a cultural route, a collection of places that keep the traditions alive, places where the culture is preserved, as well as places from where people are inspired for their artworks, culture, tradition and even benefits for their daily life”, explained the young lady from the Info Center.

Is tradition a value or a process?

“Though the world may change, and traditions may evolve, a woman’s unwavering love, devotion to her home, family, and future remains unchanged.” With that thought in mind and the booklet in her hand Anna began her journey to the past.

Outside she noticed that the City Hall building is like a symbol of change, even if she never saw it like that. A change that happens every day: the municipal officials are taking decisions that will influence the life of the townspeople; the shops lit up the eyes of passers-by; and the Info Center will guide visitors to discover the culture of the country.



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ASSET 02: The National History Museum of Moldova

Anna was a young woman filled with excitement and anticipation. She had just received important news that she was eager to share with her beloved. News that led her on a journey of discovery about the rich cultural heritage of Moldovan traditional fine crafts and priceless artefacts.

After her visit at the Information Center in the City Hall, Anna started her journey in the world of her ancestors. Her first stop would be at The National History Museum.

As soon as she entered the first exhibition room, all her hectic thoughts and feelings vanished. The room was filled with an almost palpable sense of reverence, with everyone speaking in hushed tones, respectful of the artefacts that surrounded them. Anna slowed her pace and gazed around in wonder. The first thing that caught her eye was a tiny clay figure of a woman. It was familiar to her, as she had seen it in history books and on the internet, but now she was finally face to face with it. The sign next to the glass box read “Cucuteni-Trypillia culture, 5th-3rd century B.C.”

Cucuteni-Trypillia culture inhabited a vast region stretching from the Carpathians to the Dnieper for approximately 1,500 years, from the late 5th millennium B.C. to the early 3rd millennium B.C.

The Cucuteni-Trypillia culture elevated the craft of pottery to an art form through their innovative use of technology, shapes, and intricate ornamentation. Their work is considered on par with Greek ceramic art and porcelain. The ornamental compositions include cosmological scenes, astral symbols, fantastic animals, and anthropomorphic deities. The uniformity of the pottery's ornamental style over a vast region attests to the existence of communities with shared aesthetic tastes and a persistent cultural connection between them.



The woman figurine

Anna was overcome by an unusual feeling, as if the glass was not just protecting the pieces from the visitors, but also protecting the visitors from the pieces. The two tiny dots that represented the figure's eyes seemed to gaze deep into Anna's soul. Despite the fact that the two women were vastly different - the figure was thin and dry, almost like a mummy, while Anna was fleshy and alive - there was still something that made them feel connected to each other. Was it the spirit, the strength, the essence? Anna couldn't quite put her finger on it, but she couldn't ignore the feeling.

As Anna stood in the room, surrounded by the remnants of a long-forgotten civilisation, she couldn't help but be struck by the absence of male representation. The only figures

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to be found were those of women, deified for their ability to bring life into the world and protect their families. It was a concept foreign to her, having always been taught that men were the conquerors and providers.

The weaving loom exhibited in the Prehistory wing

One of the oldest human inventions exhibited in the Red Room
Lost in thought, Anna's gaze wandered from the booklet in her
hand to the various artefacts, before settling on a tapestry
loom. It was an exact replica of a much older one, designed
for a vertical type of weaving that had since been replaced by
more modern techniques. The sight of it really moved Anna, reminding her that even
the most primitive societies held onto their traditions and passed them down through
generations.



The National History Museum of Moldova's permanent exhibition "History and Civilisation" features a reconstruction of a possible vertical loom used by the Cucuteni- Trypillia culture in the Neolithic period.

The loom provides valuable insight into the textile production techniques used by the Cucuteni-Trypillia culture. The ropes used in the weaving process were commonly made from materials such as linen, hemp, or various animal fibres.

This museum piece was created using a combination of contemporary and original materials, with the wooden frame and support imitating the original construction, supported by two wooden legs or pillars. The hemp threads used in the reconstruction were complemented by 51 weights of clay, which were sourced from the Costesti settlement and discovered in 1958. These clay weights played an essential role in the functioning of the loom, helping to maintain the tension of the warp threads and providing stability.

With every heave of the loom, Anna felt the weight of her ancestors' struggles, the difficulties that the clay women of yore had to deal with within their everyday lives.

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Weaving was more than just a physical task to her; it was a metaphor for the trials and tribulations that life presented, a never-ending cycle of toil and perseverance. The thoughts of her ancestors' generations removed, were always in her mind, a constant reminder of why she had to keep going, to keep "weaving" her life into something strong and resilient, like the cloth woven on the loom.



Weaving reflects a community's cultural heritage, as the ornamental styles and motifs found on textiles reveal the spiritual beliefs and aesthetic tastes of a people.

The art of weaving played a crucial role in the development of civilisations, as it allowed for the production of a wide range of essential items for daily life. The discovery of textile technologies in the Upper Paleolithic era is a testament to the remarkable ingenuity and creativity of prehistoric people. The loom was one of the man's oldest inventions, and it dates to the 7th millennium B.C. The evidence of the existence of textiles multiplied starting from the Neo-Neolithic era and is represented by the impressions of textile materials on vessels discovered in cultures such as Starcevo-Cris, Liniare, Pre Cucuteni ceramics, Gumelnita, and Cucuteni. Despite the perishable nature of organic materials from this time period, hints of the Stone Age's "textile" technology can be gleaned from textile prints on various materials, stone, clay, bone, and ivory tools used to create them, as well as various archaeological discoveries of furniture art such as Venus-type statuettes and ornaments, and parietal art like engravings, drawings, and cave paintings. However, only a few actual textile objects have been preserved from the Stone Age.

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ASSET 03: The National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History

Preserving the traditions. Presenting history through ethnography in connection with nature.

Anna's thoughts swirled as she gazed at the intricate clay figurine displayed in the National History Museum of Moldova. This small artefact had suddenly awoken something deep within her, something that transcended her own being. She felt as though she was being pulled back in time, to a place where her ancestors had lived, breathed, and nurtured their traditions. The women who had lived long before her had kept their heritage alive, now they stood behind her, and she felt a sense of duty and honour to continue their legacy.



The thought of losing precious elements of the past made her heart ache. The stories, beliefs and customs were the foundation of her people, and they were in danger of being forgotten. She felt an overwhelming urge to protect them, to keep them safe from the eroding effects of time. Her heart was not enough, it was too small a space to contain all of her nation's traditions. Her thoughts landed at the National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History, an astonishing building, the perfect chest to keep the wealth of her people's traditions.

At the entrance Anna found a booklet with a short piece of information on the history of the place.

"This is a museum that dates back to 1889 when it was established as the Zemstvo Museum of Bessarabia, the first public museum in the Prut-Nistru region."

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In 1902, the museum participated in the First Exhibition of Domestic Industry from the Russian Empire and the First International Exhibition of Historic and Modern Costumes in Saint Petersburg, which led to the creation of a department dedicated to traditional regional crafts.

The museum's growing popularity and recognition resulted in the construction of a new building, designed in pseudo-Mauritanian style by architect Vladimir Tsyganko, in 1903-1905."

While reading this, she understood why she was drawn to this place. It was due to the unusual architecture of the building that didn't resemble other buildings in the city or even the country. It was exactly the reason why the architect had chosen this style – to grab the attention of people passing by and invite them to take a journey into the past, so that they could understand the present and choose a direction into the future.



Anna's journey through centuries was accompanied by more than 150 thousand objects from different fields that the museum had in its collections.

The museum proved to be a real treasure of cultural heritage that offered a comprehensive view of the complex relationship between humanity and the natural environment through its permanent exhibition, "Nature. Humans. Culture". This exhibition showcased the intricate details of Moldovan folk art and tradition.

The Casa Mare room

Anna was immersed in her time travel, until she saw something that looked familiar and spoke to her. It was the **Casa Mare** section that grabbed her attention. Traditionally, Casa Mare – which is the Romanian for 'the big house' – was the largest room in a family's home, where the most valuable things were kept, and special events were held. It featured some of the finest traditional fabrics, carpets, costumes, and dowries. The masterpieces displayed in the Casa Mare section of the museum reflected the rich spiritual heritage of Anna's ancestors and embodied their cultural identity.

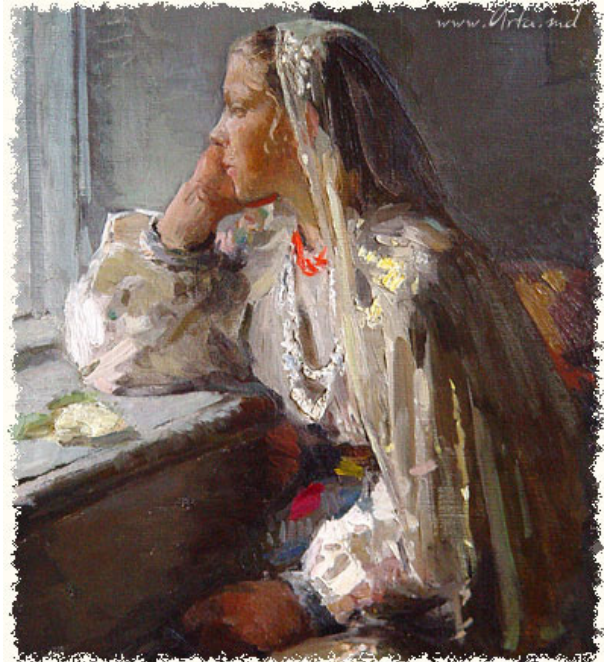
Anna started to analyse the folk costumes from different ethnographic regions of Moldova, which were accompanied by a beautiful painting, named "Joc", on the background wall. In Moldovan villages, 'joc' was the word for a holiday, usually accompanied by a feast, music, and traditional dance.

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While admiring the folk costumes, she noticed that all the female costumes had some sort of head covering. She was wondering why... The simple answer to that question was offered to her by the museum curator: *“head coverings have always had not only a decorative role for women, but were also a way to mark their marital status. In the past, only unmarried girls did not have to cover their heads. Wives used several types of coverings – head kerchief, head scarf, kerchief, scarf, shawl, etc. It was really shameful for a married woman to uncover her hair in public”*.



Images: 'Peasant from Muscel' by Nicolae Grigorescu;
'The girl at the window' by Valentina Rusu-Ciobanu.

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Changing the status from a girl to a married woman

The moment of changing the status from a girl to a married woman was represented nearby by a scene under the name The Wedding. That section depicts the custom of removing the dowry from the bride's house. It is staged in a scenic Codri landscape and presents the diversity of folk customs. The peasant architecture elements in wood and stone displayed in this section illustrate the influence of nature on Moldovan culture and demonstrate man's ability to seamlessly integrate into the natural environment.



Anna's mind wanders back to the days of her great-grandmother, where the traditions and customs were quite different from the current ones. She imagines herself surrounded by elderly women who share a love for weaving, braiding, and other crafts. Anna was thinking about the life she could have lived if she had been born in those times. She could almost see herself as a young girl of 10-12, living in a close-knit community of women who share the same interests and a passion for traditional crafts. She can feel the warmth of the women's love and support as they work together, passing on their knowledge and techniques from one generation to the next.

“Just like the young girls of that time, she would start working towards her marriage settlement, preparing her own dowry.

She embarks on a mental journey of sewing, embroidering, and weaving all the items needed to 'dress up' a house – tablecloths, carpets, pillowcases, towels. As she works, she feels a sense of pride and responsibility towards her future family. The bigger her dowry, the more diligent and competent she would seem to her future husband and in-laws.”

“Don't forget about the mother-in-law's shirt,” her grandmother's voice spoke in her mind.



Back in time, but not so long ago there was a tradition according to which the bride, together with her bridesmaids, was sewing the mother-in-law's shirt, uncut at the neck, so that she would have a small mouth and not scold her daughter-in-law.

A scene from the fairy tale Mother-in-law with three daughters-in-law written by Ion Creanga, an acclaimed 19th century Moldovan Writer of children stories, fairy tales, and anecdotes.

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Preserving tradition

Preserving tradition is not just about showcasing it in a museum, it's about igniting its flames in the hearts of every individual, keeping it alive and warm like the comforting fire in a family home.

Anna probably won't sew the mother-in-law shirt, but looking at the representation of the bride's costume, she thought that when the time comes, she will wear a traditional costume for her wedding. She was thinking about costumes as about valuable pieces of art that inspired many artists and writers of the past.

Ia – the traditional woman's blouse, a Historical Timeline through Art

Ia, the folk blouse, has its roots dipped in ancient folk tales. It is a piece of cultural heritage left by the first inhabitants of this land that goes far back to the Cucuteni culture (5500 B.C.-2750 B.C.). Symbols of the Cucuteni culture are recognised in the hand-sewn patterns of the blouse even today. Moreover, some of the geometric designs found on pottery items dating back to the Bronze Age can be admired on an ia blouse even today.

Art, along with the everyday life of people, is often the first-hand source of history. For example, some of the basic designs appear on the bas-relief figures enacting Trajan's victory in the Dacian Wars, found on Trajan's Column in Rome: collarless blouses with pleated necklines and wrap-around skirts worn by women, and long, belted shirts worn by men.

"I should keep that in mind for later, when I visit Rome one day", – Anna thought to herself... She was thinking how the events of the past intertwined with the present, and how even travelling away from your motherland made you discover traces of your own cultural past.

But the story of the blouse didn't remain printed only on Trajan's column. The attire is depicted by the Vienna Illuminated Chronicle, a 14th-century mediaeval illustrated chronicle from the Kingdom of Hungary, a source for the cultural history of the Late Middle Ages.

Paul Poiret, pre-WW1 Parisian fashion designer, apparently was dazzled by Queen Marie's Romanian folk attire and promoted it in his designs. In the first half of the 20th century Henri Matisse painted 'La Blouse Roumaine' (The Romanian Blouse).

From Queen Mary of Romania, Henri Matisse to Yves Saint-Laurent, the traditional Romanian blouse has become a symbol of universal femininity. After being an exclusive piece of clothing, part of the traditional costume for many centuries, the Romanian blouse has crossed the borders to become an international fashion trend.

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The painting of Henry Matisse (left) and the Queen Mary (right)

The process of making an la blouse

The blouse is cut in a cross shape, its symbols are meant to generate positive energy and transfer it to the one who wears it. Thus, the embroidery on the chest and sleeves is meant to channel the positive energy downwards through the body, for strength and protection. The cloth on which these symbols dance is considered sacred, as it was born through spinning and weaving, an activity over which songs, heartfelt words, and prayers would have been whispered.

Sewn on fabrics such as cotton, flax, hemp or silk, the blouse has motifs dedicated to the important events that mark a human life: weddings, baptisms, religious holidays, and even the sequence of a marital status (married women wear modest colours and patterns, while young girls wear bright, colourful blouses).

With needle and thread, the story of one's destiny is written on cloth: love, fertility, faith, luck, and hope.



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ASSET 04: Craft Complex Arta Rustica, in Clisova-Noua

Rugs are weaved stories

Stories are the threads that connect the past with the present, weaving the history of humanity. The patterns on old carpets are woven letters that are part of the nation's story.

As she gazed upon the textiles and blouses from the Ethnographic Museum, Anna was transported back to a conversation she'd had with Ecaterina Popescu, a wise woman and the owner of a Craft Complex in Clisova-Noua. Ecaterina's words echoed in her mind: "Old carpets are the thread of communication between generations, they are to be seen as woven letters sent from the past through the present to the future". Moldovan carpets proved that affirmation as they have always had a significant place in history, particularly in the testing times of deportations, famine, and post-war depression. These woven works of art served as a lifeline, providing warmth, comfort, and a sense of personal space to those in need.

Here goes the story told by Ecaterina, the owner of Craft Complex Arta Rustica, to Anna:

Once upon a time, in a small Moldovan village, there was a family with two girls passionate about weaving. They spent hours in front of their looms, creating the most beautiful and intricate carpets the village had ever seen. One such carpet, hung on a big wall, held a special place in their hearts.

The Bolsheviks came and deported the family to Siberia, but the rug proved to be their saving grace on the harsh journey. It kept them warm and offered comfort in an otherwise cold and unkind world. When they arrived in Siberia and were housed with another family in a cramped room, the rug served as a partition, giving each family a sense of home and personal space.



Years later, the family was allowed to return to Moldova and took the rug with them to hang on the wall of their daughter's home. Eventually, the carpet found its way to the Museum of the Craft Complex Arta Rustica, where it became a prized exhibit. It was donated by a descendant of the original weavers who works at the museum as an artisan. She saw it as her duty to preserve the traditional fine craft of weaving and

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pay homage to her ancestors and their incredible story. The carpet remains a symbol of survival, perseverance, and a thread of communication between generations, telling the tale of a family's journey through hardship and their triumph.



The Craft Complex Arta Rustica, Clisova-Noua

The Craft Complex *Arta Rustica*, located in the picturesque village of Clisova Noua, is a testament to the preservation and promotion of traditional folk art. With its easily recognisable massive wooden gate, crafted by local artisans, the complex serves as a hub for those who appreciate the beauty of handmade crafts.

Founded by the renowned craftswoman, **Ecaterina Popescu**, the Craft Complex *Arta Rustica* has grown into a multifaceted facility that includes a museum of authentic fabrics, a craft enterprise, a training centre for folk crafts, and an exhibition hall showcasing traditional clothing and Bessarabian carpets.

At this complex, ancestral traditions are preserved. Here natural paints, extracted from leaves and flowers, are used on natural textiles to give the carpets warm shades of colour bringing people closer to nature.

The employees of the Complex are keeping the technique of weaving carpets practised hundreds of years ago: manual processing of wool, dyeing with natural colours, authentic ornaments and motifs are used.

Anna was amazed by the process and the atmosphere and could not stand aside when one of the weavers invited her to try weaving a carpet.

The emotional involvement of the weaver adds a personal touch, making the rugs not just functional items, but also a source of comfort and joy. The positive energy of these rugs is believed to accumulate through the emotional involvement of those who create it, from the gathering of raw materials to the actual weaving process. This energy contributes to the durability and longevity of the rugs, making them more than just a functional item, but also a cherished heirloom to be passed down through generations.

This experience brought her back in time as she remembered her ancestors. For Anna's grandparents' generation, the carpet was not only a source of income and heat

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insulation in the room, but it also served as a form of therapy. Weaving the carpet was the only antidote to depression and a way to express themselves creatively. The carpet was their colouring book, and often their only source of income during a time when any rise to power meant a change for the worse. The rug was watched by family members night after night, like a TV series, before going to bed and in all these years, the carpet has never broken and never contained any episodes of horrors of the war.

Anna thought that the role of the Moldovan carpet in a home was that of a silent witness of a family's passage through life, where they learned to keep the red thread that connected them with those who were and those who were about to come...

Preserving tradition means ensuring its legacy lives on.

Hand-woven rugs do more than decorate walls or warm beds, they remain a constant reminder of bygone days and otherwise forgotten traditions. To descendants of these artisans who wove and hand-dyed the rugs, they are priceless artefacts that offer future generations a sense of tradition and continuity.

Paying attention to each element, Anna understood that these exquisite creations are more than pieces of fabric, they are woven tapestries that tell the story of a vibrant nation and its communion with nature.

Just by looking at the carpets, the spirit of life could be felt, as one of the main patterns weaved is the Tree of Life.

Symbols on Rugs as Written signs

Since the beginning of time, man has always found inspiration, consolation and guidance through symbols. We find symbols in rugs from Islamic, Christian, Buddhist and Hindu weaving cultures. All of them speak of human values, surrender and faith. One of the oldest and most profound symbols is the Tree of Life. As an ancient religious motif, this symbol is found throughout all of the world's weaving cultures. The Tree of Life represents immortality, longevity and resurrection. In Biblical scenes, it stands for the Garden of Eden. In the Muslim carpet design, it represents Paradise, along with its fruit which signifies sustenance and abundance. In Chinese rugs, the Tree of Life symbolises immortality.



The pictorial shapes of the tree lead us into a philosophical world. The Tree of Life is the embodiment of the great force and vitality of Mother Nature.

Embrace the beauty and heritage of Moldova in every knot of these stunning works of art.

*A charming carpet, like a charming piece of music, cannot be depicted or explained by words...
The carpet, like music, has its own language.*

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ASSET 05: Dried fruits and medicinal plants at the Arta Rustica Craft Complex

Woven memories with dried fruits and medicinal plants

Looking at the woven patterns, Anna could not stop thinking about the power of nature.

The Power of Nature and Herbal Remedies

The relationship between humans and plants has been a long and intimate one, dating back to the earliest times of human civilisation. As early humans began to settle down and form communities, they also started to notice the properties of different plants and learn how they could be used to alleviate ailments and improve health. Over time, the knowledge around the use of plants for medicinal purposes was passed down from generation to generation, forming the basis for what would later become the science of botany and herbal medicine.



In the case of Moldova, this knowledge continued to thrive beyond the use of dried plants and into the use of various dried fruits. At first, they were known for their health benefits, but later contributed to the country's economic boost. Namely, at the turn of the 20th century, dried plums became an important source of Moldova's economic and trade development. With its fertile soil and favourable climate, Moldova quickly became one of the leading exporters of prunes, a fruit known for its many health benefits.

Whether as sources of food, medicine, or raw materials, plants and fruits have been an indispensable part of human history and will likely continue to be so for centuries to come.

Anna's grandmother was a nature's secrets keeper. She was a true wizard, and her knowledge of plants was beyond that of ordinary humans. Anna saw her grandmother as the Good Fairy who used the gifts of nature to heal the people. As a child, she would watch in awe as her grandmother brewed potions using the plants she collected on her walks. The process of collecting the plants was often shrouded in mystery, sometimes starting in the early hours of the morning, when the dew still shone on the leaves, or after the sun had set. Anna felt like she was experiencing magic with her grandmother every time she saw her making the natural remedies. The results of these potions were always nothing short of a miracle.

Anna's grandma told her once that nature was a constant companion to those who lived close to the land. It was a source of solace, inspiration, and resourcefulness woven into

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the fabric of their daily lives. For many communities, the traditional art of rug making served as a means of preserving their cultural heritage and beliefs, and each woven strand was a symbol of their connection to nature. By examining these textured tapestries, we are given a glimpse into a time when the rhythms of nature were inextricably linked to the rhythm of life. Traditional Bessarabian carpets are a reminder that, although our world may have changed, the beauty and power of nature remain an enduring source of comfort and inspiration. Traditional rugs stand out due to their extensive use of plant motifs, which hold significant cultural and spiritual meanings for the Moldovan people. Remembering a carpet weaved by her grandma, Anna noted that the plants were depicted as being larger than the people in the carpet, which highlighted the importance of nature and its relationship to humankind.



The plants were not only depicted on the carpets, but they were also used for dyeing. During the summer times Anna used to stay at her grandmother's house, and that was the time when the threads for future textiles were coloured.

Anna was fascinated by the way her grandmother used dried plants for so many different purposes, beyond their medicinal use. The wool for weaving traditional carpets was dyed using the same plants she used for her remedies. The bright hues of red, green, blue and yellow came from the roots, leaves and flowers of the plants that surrounded them. During the spring holiday season, Anna's grandmother used the same plant dyes to colour the Easter eggs.

She often wondered how many other hidden talents and secrets her grandmother held, but it was too late to wonder.

***Natural dyes of the earth**

The textiles used in the production of Moldovan carpets were woven from raw materials that were locally sourced, often gathered from their own households. The plants used for dyeing were collected from the fields, the mown hay, and weeds from the garden such as wormwood, nettle, and furrow. The herbs were dried in the shade and then steeped in water in enamelled dishes, with a ratio of 1 to 10. The vessel was heated, and the fibres to be dyed were immersed into the water, brought to a boil, while being constantly stirred. After rinsing, the fibres were dried on a fence.

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The colouring of textiles used in carpets, kilims, and embroideries was done through this procedure. Different colours were obtained from various plants. For instance, a dark brown colour was obtained from the green rind of oak, the yellow-brown hue was created from corn silk, and black was derived from the green walnut shell. The ancestors discovered that the concentration of the dye depended on the time of year and the time of day the plants were collected.

The ancestral traditions and the use of natural dyes in some processes resulted in harmonious combinations of pastel colours that became a distinctive feature of Moldovan carpets.

“Don’t forget about the spiritual meaning of plants”, Anna heard while thinking that plants were present in all aspects of life. At that moment Anna felt the scent of basil and her journey went on.

Basil is a Physical and Spiritual Booster

Her grandmother has always been saying to Anna that basil played a central role in the beliefs and customs of the people in this region, and it remains an important symbol of cultural identity to this day. Whether it was used to adorn their homes, to mark the changing seasons, or to celebrate important life events, basil has always been present in the lives of these people, helping to bring meaning and purpose to their everyday experiences.



Her grandmother’s voice echoed in her mind, singing the timeless melody: *“Basil at birth, basil at death. Flower of sadness, flower of luck. God, how does our whole life fit between two little basil leaves”*.

The scent of dried basil leaves lingered heavily in the air, a reminder of the sacred tradition of using basil threads in the creation of holy water used for the most important rites of passage – baptism, wedding, and funeral.

Basil is a plant that has a rich cultural and historical significance in the Danube-Carpathian region. It is closely tied to the cultivation of the land and has deep roots in the ancient cult of fertility and prosperity. In many traditional societies, basil was seen as a sacred plant that brought luck, and it was used in a variety of ways to mark important events and milestones. It was a common practice to decorate carpets and textiles with basil motifs, and it was also used for family events and traditional holidays, as well as the ceremonies that accompany all rites of passage.

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Anna, like any girl, loved flowers, but she never paid much attention to basil, apart from the one she used for salads.... But then again, that was another type of basil.

The name *basil* comes from the Latin *basilius*, and the Greek βασιλικόν φυτόν (basilikón phutón), meaning royal plant.

Basil has religious significance in the Greek Orthodox Church, where it is used to sprinkle holy water. The Bulgarian, Serbian, Macedonian, Romanian and Moldavian Orthodox Churches use basil to prepare holy water and pots of basil are often placed below church altars. The wide use of this plant made it indispensable for all the important rites of passage – religious ceremonies and family events alike. Basil became a symbol of the local customs, traditions, and religious practice. In this sense, the Christian church has ascribed a certain symbolism to basil. It is required for all the religious ceremonies. It is a precious flower – it is needed at church, at funerals, at weddings, at baptisms, it is needed to sanctify water – it serves everywhere. Basil is present at all calendar holidays, but also at the most important moments in human life – from birth to death. “Basil at birth, basil at death. Flower of sadness, flower of luck.

God, how does our whole life fit between these two strands?!”

Vasile Romanciuc’s Poem Basil expresses how one’s life is full of luck from the moment of birth, until the end. Basil is the one that holds our whole life between just two tiny strands.

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ASSET 06: Château Vartely Tourist Complex

“So this is it, then,” Anna thought, “another piece of history lost to time. We can visit museums and read about the traditions of our ancestors, but is reviving them possible or is it nothing more than a dream?”



But then again, perhaps it wasn't as hopeless as it seemed. Maybe we could find a way to bring history back to life, to honour our heritage in a way that would speak to the modern world. She could start using dry basil to decorate the house and put it near the icons she had from her grandmothers.

At that moment the projection of a vine leaf appeared on a barrel, then flashing lights and vivid animations projected on the walls and ceiling. Anna felt a dream coming to life. It seems that the basil is not the only plant important to her ancestors.

Anna, carried on the wings of the wind, above a hill with vineyards, arrived at the Château Vartely winery.

At that moment the history of the country was revived in an animated story reflected on the barrels full of wine. It was the story of wine, the story of the nation, of the cultures existing in these lands.



The women statue from the Cucuteni civilisation that she saw at the History Museum, the symbols from the carpets seen at the ethnographic museum, the surrounding nature, they all came together as a whole, which was then poured into a glass of intense red

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wine with an incredible aroma.

Anna could see this was the legend of Moldovan Wine brought to life through flashing lights and vivid animations projected on the walls and the ceiling. She decided to embark on a journey, to delve deeper and uncover the secrets of these modern-day alchemists. The Château Vartely winery was the right place to discover the beauty of winemaking. Lost in space and time, Anna needed someone to guide her in this world of wines. Although her ancestors practised winemaking for centuries, Anna did not have the slightest idea about the local wine production process. So she asked at the reception of the Wine Complex about someone that could lead the way to the winemaking process and tasting the final product. She was surprised to see a young lady coming to assist her on this journey.

Unlocking the Secrets of Moldovan Wine

The local guide started her story.

Wine has been a living legend for thousands of years. The tradition of winemaking in Moldova has been in place for over 3,000 years and has withstood the test of time, surviving through centuries of challenges.

The evidence of vines' presence on this land dates to the Cenozoic era and the Miocene era, evidenced by the old imprints of vine leaves and seeds found here. It is believed that domestication and cultivation of wild vines took place during the Cucuteni-Trypillia civilisation, one of the oldest civilisations in Europe. The people cultivated other crops as well, such as wheat, barley, millet, oats, peas, and vetch, they grew cherry plum and plum trees, greenery, and vines, with seeds and stones being found in several settlements.



Winemaking in Moldova has gone through its ups and downs, with the full story available on the [National Office of the Vine and Wine's official page](#).

Winemaking has always been a delicate balance between honouring tradition and embracing innovation. But the winemakers of today have found a way to elevate this art form to a whole new level. By seamlessly blending cutting-edge technology with the timeless tales of their heritage, they are forging a path forward that is as rich and full-bodied as the wines they produce. And wineries are offering various experiences to their visitors.

One of the known wineries opened to visitors is Château Vartely from the city of Orhei.

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Orhei takes its name from the mediaeval city of Orheiul Vechi (Old Orhei), about 10 miles (16 km) below the modern city on the Raut River, which was destroyed by the Crimean Tatars between the 14th and 16th centuries. It was the Ottoman-occupied military centre of northern Bessarabia until it was ceded to the Russian Empire in 1812. The word orhei was used by the local population, meaning “strengthened hill, fortress, and deserted courtyard”.

Château Vartely is more than just a winery. It is a place where visitors can immerse themselves in the culture of high-quality wine and learn about responsible wine consumption. Here modern technology blends seamlessly with the passion for producing exceptional wine, as this winery sets a new standard in the art of winemaking.

Nestled in the rolling hills just 45 km from Chisinau, the Château Vartely Tourist Complex offers a stunning panoramic view of the surrounding landscape. With a total vineyard area of 260 hectares, the winery produces a volume of over 4.5 million bottles annually.

Wines crafted at Château Vartely have been awarded with more than 120 medals and diplomas at various international competitions, where they competed with noble wines from France, Portugal, Spain and other major wine making countries. Hidden inside of a limestone hill, the winery cellars benefit the most from the stone’s natural property of maintaining the cool temperature.

By the standards of winemakers in the old world and the new world, Château Vartely is a company that combines state-of-the-art technologies in vine growing and grape processing with a passion for producing quality wine.

Celebrate the Art of Wine



Step into the Château Vartely Winery cellar where the wine matures in oak barrels and be enchanted by the barrique video projection, a unique light show that tells the tale

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of winemaking in a mesmerising and innovative way. The show transforms the entire surface of the cellar into a canvas, immersing the visitors in the legend and making them part of the story.

With a professional guide leading the way, Anna embarked on the tour and tasting that brought the wine-making process to life. The tastings rooms at Château Vartely were specially designed to provide the perfect environment for a truly unforgettable wine tasting experience.

After the tour Anna was invited to choose one of the three villas for staying overnight. It was not an easy choice, as all three were different, with architectural elements specific to the traditional construction in the North, Center and South of the country.

“At Château Vartely, we believe that the combination of tradition and technology elevates the wine tour experience, capturing the attention of visitors of all ages. Come and be inspired by the art of winemaking at Château Vartely Winery,” – ended the tour guide.

Tradition is a foundation that we can build upon, a strong one, but our modern era is the canvas that we paint with new colours and create our own masterpiece. We are the pioneers of a new legacy, crafting and infusing vitality and meaning into every fibre of our culture, our wines and our lives. We are the architects of our own destiny, shaping and moulding it into something magnificent, just like the intricate patterns woven onto our carpets and the rich, full-bodied flavour of our wines.

The experience was unforgettable, and it sparked an idea in Anna’s mind. Maybe, just maybe, there is a way to use technology and modern storytelling to preserve the traditions of the past, to keep them alive for future generations to cherish.

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ASSET 07: Belvedere Point at The Cultural and Nature Reserve Orheiul Vechi

The place where nature can be observed in combination with human activities.

Arriving at the Cultural and Nature Reserve Orheiul Vechi, nestled in the heart of Moldova, Anna discovered a wonder of nature. The reserve stretches along the Raut River gorge. The landscape was defined by the winding course of the river and towering cliffs that created a hemispherical amphitheatre. “This place couldn’t have appeared overnight, it must have been the result of the millennial impact of human genius on the environment, located in a natural fortified space created by nature,” thought Anna. Recalling her knowledge of geography and history, Anna concluded that here nature and history have merged into harmony, creating a special cultural landscape consisting of natural and man-made objects.

The complex is an open-air natural museum, where time seems to have stopped, and the connection with the past is striking.

The surrounding stones whispered to Anna that *archaeological research carried out at the Orheiul Vechi has uncovered many well-preserved settlements. The earliest of them is a Late Paleolithic (ca. 30,000 - 20,000 B.C.) campsite. Several long-term rural settlements were uncovered at the gentle slopes of the Pestera Promontory on the hill where the Belvedere platform is located.*

Anna saw a Belvedere platform and went there to have a better view of the place. The platform was recently constructed, and was offering the chance to experience the breathtaking beauty of the area without damaging its natural state and preserving the place for future generations.

From the Belvedere Platform Anna could take in the entire view of the Raut River gorge, the archaeological complex of Orheiul Vechi, and more. Anna admired the beauty of the landscape with its unusual geomorphology, and its surroundings rich in subsistence resources: fertile black soils, meadows and medicinal herbs. At the same time, the area abounded in building materials: limestone, sand, clay and wood. The landscape provided excellent natural defensive conditions, not just the natural escarpments, but also because it is at a generally higher elevation than the wide surrounding areas, while the Raut and its



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tributaries ensure the connection with the Black Sea, where maritime trade flourished since the 5th Millennium B.C..



Watching the surroundings, Anna understood why humans have been attracted to the area since prehistoric times.

With this image in mind Anna closed her eyes to feel the history of the place and the murmur of nature. She remembered her grandmother's words as her thoughts ventured deeper into the lush and verdant hills of the Orheiul Vechi reservation. The rustling of the leaves, the thrill of the birdsong, and the soft whisper of the wind became a symphony that played just for her. She felt like she was discovering a new world. At that time the only thing that existed was the rhythm of her breath and the beating of her heart. The world around her transformed, no longer just a collection of plants and animals, but a living, breathing entity that welcomed her with open arms. Each blade of grass, each grinder, each snail became a character in her own personal story, a reminder of the boundless beauty that surrounded her.

She felt her heart grow lighter and her spirit soared. She felt like she was walking in the footsteps of her grandmother, and that each step she took was a step closer to finding her own home within the wild, untamed beauty of nature.

As a nature enthusiast, she was delighted by the peaceful beauty of the reserve. The picturesque view of the valley was like a hidden gem, tucked away behind the peaceful cliffs.

The reservation includes vertebrate fauna species, insects and mollusks, all of which are concentrated in 7 ecosystems: forests, steppe meadows, meadows, rocks, rivers, agricultural and rural localities.

The vegetation within the reserve is equally diverse, ranging from forests to steppe and meadows. The intersection of the forest, steppe, and forest-steppe areas has created a unique and varied landscape that is sure to impress and delight nature enthusiasts.

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At the Belvedere Platform in Orheiul Vechi, Anna started to discover the soul of Moldova with its timeless beauty. She embarked on a journey to understand the essence of the culture and heritage, where humility, strength, and vulnerability are woven together to create a tapestry of depth and courage. Anna let the peaceful and serene landscape be her guide, as she uncovered the secrets of her people. Here she could take a step back from the fast-paced world and embrace the stillness of a timeless village, where eternity was born and continues to live on.

The landscape guided her look on the opposite side of the platform, where she saw a hill dotted with grottoes that have been adapted over time into cave settlements. Some of them seemed to be functional even today, as she observed a monastic cave on the opposite promontory in the Butuceni village. Above the cave monastery was installed a stone cross and a bell tower.



Curious to find out more about that complex, Anna decided to continue her journey into that direction, to discover the secrets of the cliffs.

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ASSET 08: Cave Hermitage Pestera at the Cultural and Nature Reserve Orheiul Vechi

In Butuceni village, nestled beneath the rolling hills of Orheiul Vechi, there is a notable location steeped in history and spiritual significance. This hidden gem is a true testament to the devotion and perseverance of our ancestors. With its Bell Tower and cross, this religious site is more than just a place of worship, it's a symbol of hope and a connection to the past. Hidden below the earth's surface, there is an awe-inspiring Orthodox cave monastery carved into the rocky cliffs by monks. This remarkable piece of architectural history is a must-visit destination for anyone exploring the region's rich cultural heritage.

Anna looked at the surroundings and stopped near a stone cross dated from around the 17th century. The rock used for carving the cross was a witness of the place's history that flowed in time like the water of the Raut River that snakes through the limestone rocks beneath it.

The rocks murmured to Anna that they were formed in the Sarmatian limestone cliffs near the villages of Butuceni and Trebujeni. People developed the complexes and they created new cave rooms inside the Sarmatian limestone cliffs. The caves were used as shelters, but they had a sacral meaning as well.



The presence of the cave complexes determines the unity of the Orheiul Vechi landscape. The complexes chime with the other types of heritage from the territory of the Reserve: archaeological, architectural, and natural one and forms a unique ensemble of cultural and natural elements that reflect the lifestyle of the ancient people. Anna found out that this place was inhabited from the oldest times and that traces of the Cucuteni culture (5th - 4th millennium B.C.), as well as 8th-9th and 15th century settlements, were found here.

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The *Pestera* monastic hermitage is part of the Butuceni Cave Complex, which spans approximately 460 metres and includes a system of caves and former hermit rooms.

From ancient times until today, the caves were often treated as sacred places, seen as a source of religious inspiration and an appropriate location for cult practices. Important evidence for religious practices includes about 200 caves carved into the limestone escarpments along the Raut River. The earliest caves were dug in the 15th century A.D. Many of them were - and some still are - the scenes of religious rituals. Most of the caves were used as shelters for the monks. In some of them, floor plans and other evidence suggest that they were used as churches or places of prayer or rituals.

Anna's contemplation of the area and her time travel was interrupted by the sound of a bell, she redirected her attention to the Bell Tower that marked the place of the Pestera church. She looked around and found an entrance that was dug into the cliffs, ensuring the connection of the church with the Butuceni village through a tunnel about 25 metres long.

Curious to find out more, Anna stepped into the tunnel that goes down to the depths of the Earth, where the hermitage was dug in the cliffs. At the end of the tunnel Anna found the ancient church and stood in awe, admiring its timeless beauty, illuminated only by flickering candlelight and framed by small windows carved into the cliff. She marvelled at the way the mediaeval icons glimmered in the warm glow, a testament to the unchanging devotion of the faithful orthodox Christians who still seek solace and guidance within its walls. The cave church remained a sacred place, where religious ceremonies were still held with reverence. It welcomes faithful orthodox Christians in search of God, as well as wandering tourists, to this day

Anna observed that the Pestera hermitage consisted of two main parts: the church and the monastic cells. The church was built on the foundations of older rooms, and its layout was clearly visible in certain areas. It ran along the slope and included an altar, a nave, a pronaos, a porch, and an old entrance. A surprise for Anna was to still find a hermite inside of the church. The old man showed Anna a door leading to an exit. Using that exit, Anna found herself on a balcony that had a view of the river's valley that meandered between the cliffs. From that balcony, the traces of an old entry that probably was destroyed by an earthquake could be seen.



Looking at the cliffs that were forming natural protective walls, Anna understood that the Archaeological Landscape of Orheiul Vechi was an exceptional example of the

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imprint of human values on a place. For the people who live in villages, traditions are often equivalent to human values.

Immersing in the spirit of the place, Anna entered back into the church where she saw a couple getting ready for the wedding ceremony. She observed that someone present at the wedding procession was holding a carpet. The wedding carpet tradition was especially dear to Anna's heart. She watched it with a sense of wonder, as couples stood or knelt on a special carpet, symbolising their commitment to each other and to God. The carpet was their personal island, a place where they received the sacrament of marriage, put on their crowns, and became one before their family, friends, and most importantly, the eyes of the Lord. The religious wedding ceremony was not just a joyous occasion, but a rite of passage, a momentous responsibility, and an affirmation of their love for each other.

Traditions connected to rugs

Carpets have a positive energy, they are pleasant, cosy and, at the same time, always remain enigmatic, maintaining the thread of communication between several generations. Probably, for all these reasons, in many localities, there were various customs associated with the scoarta carpet. For instance, on the last night before the wedding, the bride slept on a scoarta (English: rug), so as not to forget her parental home, and the next day, during the wedding in the church, this carpet was spread under the feet of the bride and groom, "so that they would be happy in marriage." In fact, the tradition of the bride and groom standing in front of the altar on the carpet continues to this day. At the same time, during the wedding, the bride knelt on a carpet in front of her parents to ask for forgiveness and receive a blessing, and while the bride and groom left the bride's parents' house, the bridegrooms showed the dowry, (including the carpets), so everyone could see how rich and hardworking the bride was.



Getting out of the Pestera church, Anna was climbing the stairs of the tunnel, and step by step she was coming back to the present from her time travel into the past that seemed to be so close to her heart.

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ASSET 09: The Ethnography Museum Traditional Peasant House from the Butuceni village at Orheiul Vechi

Eternity was born in a village

*“Little girl, put your hands on my knees.
Eternity, I believe, was born in a village.
Here, every thought is slower,
and your heart throbs at a quieter pace,
as if beating not in your breast,
but deep in the earth somewhere.”
(excerpt from the poem Soul of the village by Lucian Blaga, a Romanian writer)*

Anna struggled to hold onto the memories of her grandparents’ traditional home. She longed to feel the warmth and comfort of their modest but cosy abode, filled with the fragrance of freshly whitewashed walls and burning wood.

However, as modernisation took hold, more and more traditional homes were being replaced by modern family houses, and Anna feared she would eventually lose her connection to the national identity of her ancestors. But she found solace in a special place – a small museum, where she would go to be surrounded by the hand-woven carpets on the walls, reminiscent of the ones that adorned her grandparents’ home. Here, she felt protected, as if she were in the safe embrace of a walnut shell, and the memories of her childhood came flooding back.



In this place Anna stepped back in time and immersed herself in the traditional Moldovan way of life at the Peasant House of the Ethnographic Museum in the village of Butuceni. This historic household offers a unique glimpse into the rural life of Moldovans from the 19th to 20th centuries. It is a testament to the unique architectural and cultural heritage of the region.

In front of the house, Anna sat down on the porch to admire the area surrounded by the limestone cliffs. Nestled within the Cultural and Nature Reserve Orheiul Vechi, this place showcased the harmonious relationship between traditional rural life and nature.

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The limestone cliffs were formed during the Miocene period (13.0-8.0 million years ago) within the Sarmatian Sea and still are part of the local community's life.

Towards the 19th century, a style of peasant stone architecture crystallised here, very expressive in relation to the traditional wooden architecture of the other ethnographic areas. It appeared as a stone replica of the existing wooden architectural forms. Here too, it was possible to create an architectural order that had all the components of the classical orders. It was the only case in Europe, when this performance was achieved within a small peasant community, in the middle of the Middle Ages.

The crystallisation of this specific style of architecture had historical premises: the presence of several craftsmen brought by the Golden Horde in the 14th century, crystallisation towards the 15th century of the so-called Moldovan style and its amplification thanks to the existence in the area between the Prut and Nistru rivers of other important mediaeval centres of limestone extraction and artistic processing of limestone.

The defining element of the traditional peasant household in the Orheiul Vechi area is the stone wall surrounding the courtyards, present along the streets and alleys of these villages. The variety of the way the fences were built, combined with the variety of the architectural decoration of the stone pillars of the gates, recalls the cave-like character of the landscape in the area.

The household wall symbolically delimits the peasant's universe from the rest of the world.

A decisive role in the formation of vernacular architecture was played by the village of Butuceni, which represented the epicentre of the popular craft of stone carving. In this village, until the 60s-70s of the 20th century, many renowned craftsmen worked. They exported the pieces of architecture to localities more than 80-90 km away.

Anna admired the Peasant House as being a model of vernacular architecture of the area. The household as a whole and each individual component represents the result of people's efforts to provide a shelter for their families, to care for their animals, to make the necessary tools. They strived to organise a space for the production, storage and preservation of food, and, at the same time, a space to live and enjoy.

Anna paid attention to the fence of each household, thinking how it served as a symbolic boundary between the world of one family and the wider community, with the gate serving as a passageway between the two realms.

As soon as she entered the yard, she stopped in front of the house painted in white. Anna found out from the local museographer that the **walls of the house were built of broken stone and plaster with clay, then limewashed to give them a clean and bright look.**

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The peasant house detailed elements

The interior of the peasant house

The interior of the traditional home was conceived as a true sacred space, where family members were born, raised, and where they learned from their ancestors to work the fields, breed the animals, cultivate vines and grow fruit. Also at home, under the guidance of their mothers and grandmothers, the girls learned the secrets of processing textile fibres, sewing and weaving. The house was a space where Easter and Christmas were celebrated, where the family received carolers and guests, where their children got married, and where their grandchildren were raised.

A typical local household consisted of a dwelling house with two or three rooms, and a porch. Usually, there was also a stable for the animals, one or more outbuildings for storing foods, a yard, and a garden.

Entering the house, Anna saw only two rooms. The first room, located on the left wing of the house, served as the primary living and working area. It featured a massive brick oven, a weaving loom, and a small, collapsible table - a typical traditional furnishing in that region. The second room, known as Casa Mare, was the most spacious and elaborately decorated space, used for important family events, rituals, and for entertaining guests.

The mistress and the artist of the house

In the decoration of the room, Anna noticed the great effort made by the mistress of the house to make sure her home was not only comfortable to live in, but also aesthetically pleasing. Each home was unique, much like no two pieces of clothing were identical within the community. Interior textiles played a crucial role in the domestic economy and were a solution to many problems faced by the family. The textiles were used to create a warm and cosy atmosphere, to dampen the noise and to provide thermal insulation. One could see various types of woven rugs covering the walls, each with its own unique function and technique - from the scoarta (a wall-carpet) to the ladar (a carpet covering a chest-of-drawers). Each textile served a purpose, adding to the comfort and beauty of the home.

Handmade carpets, main elements of interior design

In the bygone days, when large families lived in cramped quarters during the harsh winter months, it was crucial to have interior textiles that would provide both warmth and comfort to the mind and soul. The living room, the heart of the home, was the main focus of the design effort. To create an illusion of space and width, horizontal wool carpets, known as scoarta, were hung along the entire length of the walls, adding depth to the interior, and making it appear larger. Additionally, to elevate the ceiling and give a sense of height, textiles with vertical designs, such as woven wall hangings, were incorporated into the decor.

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This traditional use of wool carpets, known as scoarta, was widely practised in the countryside, providing both function and beauty to the humble abodes. The artful use of interior textiles was a testament to the ingenuity and resourcefulness of the locals.

Anna was amazed to discover the rich cultural heritage of Moldova at the Peasant House, where history came to life and she could experience the traditional way of life in a unique setting.



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ASSET 10: Pedestrian Street Eugen Doga, Chisinau

A place where memories are created.

Anna stirred away from her daydream and gazed at her smart watch, aghast as she realized the time had flown by. It was already past 6 PM, the appointed hour when she was to meet her soulmate and confidant. They had agreed to rendezvous at their favorite spot, the Statue of Two Lovers on the pedestrian street, nestled in the heart of Chisinau. The pedestrian street Eugen Doga is a symphony of bustling life and cultural heritage.



The Statue of Two Lovers is a romantic piece of art located on the Pedestrian street Eugen Doga in Chisinau. It was created by the sculptor Pavel Obreja and depicts a young couple meeting for a date. The man is holding flowers and checking his watch. The woman is approaching him from his back, holding her high heels shoes in her hand to surprise him. The statue was installed in 2017 and at once became an attraction for tourists and locals alike.

Anna thought that this was a magical place where memories were created, as on this street the earliest photographs of Chisinau, known to us, were taken.

While approaching the statues, Anna saw her beloved and the creation of her own memories began.

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He was standing there, anxiously scanning the crowd, his heart beating faster with each passing moment. His eyes darted back and forth, searching for her, and his feet were nervously tapping against the pavement. The clock seemed to mock him with its relentless tick, as he pondered where she might be.

Just then, his senses caught her familiar scent and he turned to see her, and a dazzling smile illuminated his face. She was late, as usual, but he didn't mind, he was used to that. She approached him, and he asked,

"Where have you been?"

"Back in time," she replied with a mischievous twinkle in her eye.

"And where would you like to go now?" he asked, with a hint of amusement in his voice.

"To the future," she answered, with excitement in her voice.

"Let's go together," he said, taking her hand.

But just as they were about to leave, she paused and said, "Do you mind if someone else joins us?"

He was taken aback, but before he could respond, she added, "We're expecting..."

With a smile, he took a deep breath and replied, "It was worth the wait."

Past and future of the city

The young couple walk down the pedestrian street till the intersection with the street Alexandru cel Bun. This place has a special meaning for them as they met there for the first time at the local grocery store.

"This place is special for the history of the city as well," Anna told her beloved. "Back in the 18th century the city ended here. But the wind of change transformed Chisinau and influenced the way it looks today".

From the beginning of the 19th century the Republic of Moldova was transformed into a gubernia of the Russian Empire, and Chisinau was declared the capital of the gubernia. Thus, new administrative buildings were needed and the easiest way for development was to build everything in a new area. Considering that, the face of the city started to change and new buildings and streets spread starting from the street Alexandru cel Bun and continuing with the Cathedral Park, the City Hall, and above. Beginning at the north-eastern edge of the grand Cathedral Park, this lively area winds its way towards the crowning jewel of its architectural splendour, the Monument of National Significance - the urban mansion of the Catargi family that can be still admired by the architecture lovers.

Anna was thinking about the transformations of the city in time. And the wheel of time opened the doors to the period of transformations, to the 19th century. In front of her eyes appeared different images telling stories of the city's past.

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In June 1867 the pedestrian Street Eugen Doga and Chisinau itself was in preparation for the visit of Empress Maria Alexandrovna. At that time this was a significant event in the life of a small city at the end of the empire.

Thanks to this, we have a unique chance to look at Chisinau of 1867 as the preparations process and the city were captured by a photographer, and those pictures are one of the earliest photographs of Chisinau known to us.



Not long after the famous visit, in 1877, the house of Catargi family appeared in *Le Monde illustre* - on April 21, 1877.. The illustration presented the quarters of the grand duke Nicolas commander-in-chief in Chisinau.

The house of the Catargi family (located on the crossroads of the streets E. Doga and Columna), can be admired even today, hosting a public institution.



Of course, many things happened here during that time, so Anna brought her thoughts back into the present day. By the way, the pedestrian street was named after the world-renowned musician Eugen Doga.

The great composer Eugen Doga

Eugen Doga is a composer from Moldova who has created ballets, operas, instrumental and choral works, music for plays and movies, songs, romances and waltzes, and music for the 1980 Moscow Olympics. The World Intellectual Property Organization (Geneva), in recognition of his outstanding achievements in music, awarded him with a special certificate in 2007. Currently Eugen Doga lives with his family in Chisinau. He continues to perform live, and still participates in various festivals. Maestro Eugen Doga continues to write new music even now, as he will be celebrating his 86th birthday this year (2023).

From time to time, the musician passes by on the pedestrian street named after him. A couple of times Anna caught him there and thought to herself that the only missing thing was the sound of his world-famous waltz in the background. For a perfect mood *My Sweet and Tender Beast*, the piece by Eugene Doga that came to Anna's mind, was designated by UNESCO as the fourth musical masterpiece of the 20th century.

Looking for the artist, Anna saw a small arts and crafts market instead. The selling

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points were using street furniture with the symbol Tree of Life. This ancient symbol spoke of the idea of life going on, of eternal youth and immortality, and acted as a bridge between heaven and earth. Anna saw it as a connection between the past and the present, as the artisans were selling souvenirs made nowadays with the techniques used by their ancestors. Anna thought of her time travel again.

Anna continued the discussion saying: *“A few hours ago, I was gripped by fear, but now my confidence is back and it is growing every minute.”*

“Your firm grip on my hand is a testament to your strength,” said her beloved.

“I mean it. Though it may seem like we are facing our challenges alone, we have an immense community behind us. I can sense it. The signs are all around us. Just look at the Tree of Life, with its abundant fruit and full branches, it represents the bounty and generosity of life. And just like the tree, we too have so much to offer. We should write our history bearing in mind our traditions and culture.”

And with that thought, they embarked on the next chapter of their journey, hand in hand, filled with the promise of a bright future.

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