

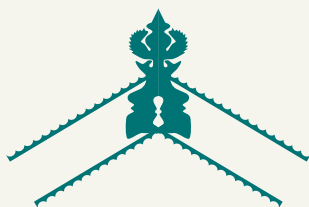


Architecture

Adapting to nature – houses in the Danube Delta



© Camelia Ionescu



**TRADITIONAL DELTAIC HOUSES
BLEND IN WITH THE REED AND
WATER SURROUNDINGS**

Architecture, how people chose to build their homes, says more about the people than they might actually be willing to share otherwise. The way they go about their day, their main activities, traditions, cultural beliefs, struggles and how they take advantage of opportunities is accurately mirrored by the way houses are placed in a yard and of course by the functionality of these yards, by the materials and technologies people use as well as how they color and decorate their homes. All these aspects can be seen in the specific architecture of the Danube Delta.

The villages in the Danube Delta blend in naturally in the flat, reed, rush and water surroundings. Deltaic villages are structured in a different manner than the other human settlements in the area, one of the reasons being the fact that the road is not differentiated from the walkway. This is because few cars if any get to these villages, a unique characteristic which has helped maintain a picturesque society with rules of its own. The lanes here have their own trademark, being a mixture of fine sand and sharp fragments of seashells.

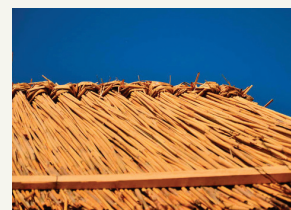


Traditional deltaic houses are mainly colored in a combination of white and bright blue or green. Houses have a low ceiling and only a ground floor. They have a rectangular shape, the front of the house being one of the long sides, but usually none of these face the road, but instead one of the smaller sides does. And a sauna-bath can be found in almost any lipovan house, this usually being built before the house itself.

Beside the color, another specific aspect of deltaic houses is the gable roof (sometimes hip roof), a basic element of the overall architecture, one by which you can easily recognize them. The lateral sides of the roof are mainly made of reed, which unite through a gable (pediment) made out of wood or reed. The craft of making this kind of roof, if once traditional, is now mastered by few locals. Techniques of thatching reed, layering it, “combing” it and “braiding” the roof ridge are the secret ingredients that turn these houses into artisanal works of art.

What makes each house different is the gable, where locals usually tell their family’s story by adding small decorative pieces made of wood: fish, birds, floral elements, mythical symbols. An interesting example is the way they symbolize the tree of life, through a small tree branch with a flower or a vase with flowers, or sun rays that form the shape of a tree, combined with cosmic or animal elements. This shows the people’s belief in the forces of nature, and it is said that the purpose of these decorations which suggest life, rebirth, is to draw in the good spirits.

Text inspired from “*STUF. Traditional houses from the Danube Delta*” – igloopatrimoniul, 2008.



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To stop the degradation of the planet’s natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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