

TOURIST ACTIVITIES IN THE MOUNTAINOUS BANAT VILLAGES

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***Abstract:** Mountainous Banat is characterized by a remarkable tourism potential, represented by both the numerous natural attractions and by cultural ones. Thus, Banat Mountains, in the variety and originality of the natural morphology of overall climate peculiarities, fauna and flora, which define the specificity of natural tourism is an area with great potential in developing activities in tourism. However, the existing tourism potential is poorly capitalized as small businesses in tourism are only in the Brebu Nou - Garana, Văliug Oravita, Bozovici, Teregova, Domaşnea, Danube Gorge.*

***Keywords:** authenticity, potential for tourism, rural tourism, villages, tradition*

Introduction

In our country, rural tourism is one of the ways to make known Romania's tourism potential. Year after year, statistics show that tourism in rural areas has more and more adepts.

The Banat area is an intercultural space where habits, attitudes, secular practices, religious rituals etc. belonging to Romanians, Swabians, Serbs, Bulgarians have combined

Banat folklore presents original and varied forms of expression generated by realities and historical conditions. Houses, architecture dwelling constitutes the villages' representative appearance. The technical installations, the mills, the processing wool installations in Poneva and objects inside the peasant dwellings form the world of unexploited tourist villages of Banat.

Banat villagers have ancient traditions and customs that were handed down from generation to generation. Folk customs have a varied repertoire and a special charm.

A representative customs in the Banat villages is usually Nedeea or pray. Tradition is respected every year when it celebrates the patron of the local church. Usually with a special charm, it takes place in a festive atmosphere for two days, where, along with locals relatives and friends from the neighboring villages also participate.

The realities of contemporary ethnographic villages in Banat Mountain tourist keep awake tourists’ interest by the richness of values of civilization and traditional folk culture. There are shelters in specific pastoral areas, with textiles: cilimuri, Poneva, tablecloths etc., all characteristic to Banat peasant house, there are skilled craftsmen, mostly potters and furriers, a there is a costume with distinct features using excessive ornaments, shiny gold thread, technical installations popular ancient tradition, such as bucket mills, whirlpools, fishing areas, museums with a rich heritage and original customs and habits.

Rural tourism cannot develop separately from traditional rural activities. Due to the fact that rural tourism offers need to have an increased value, related activities need to be at a high level. This principle applies not only to the attractiveness exercised by rural environment, but also to the specific activities of life in the countryside.

Mountainous Banat

A historical part of Banat, Banat Mountains are located in the south-western Romania, identified mostly with Caras-Severin, being completed by the Danube Boilers Orşova-. Mountain Banat covers an area of 9015 square kilometers (Popovici Gh., 2013, p.8).

Caras-Severin is located in the south-west of Romania, bordering the counties of Timis (in the northwest), Hunedoara (in the northeast), Gorj (in the east), Mehedinti (south-east) and the Republic of Serbia (southwest). Orşova area - Danube Boilers and Orşova municipality consists of localities: Eşelniţa, Dubova and Sviniţa in Mehedinti County.

Administrative structure

Tabel nr.1

Data	Caras-Severin County	Orşova-Cazanele Dunării Area	Mountainous Banat
Area (square km)	8.520	495	9.015
Number of towns	8	1	9
No. of villages	69	3	72

Source: www.insse.ro

Tourism in rural settlements in Mountainous Banat

Village, rural tourism centerpiece is the place to practice this activity, which leaves its mark on forms of tourism in the area. Such villages clustered on the mountain line, which was developed rural tourism are Văliug, Garana,

Brebu Nou, Sasca Montana, Dognecea, Eșelnița Teregova, Turnu Ruieni, etc. Brebu Nou area-Gărâna.

Located on the slopes of the mountains Semenic in the area of the spring of Timis river, Garana and Brebu Nou villages are the first to begin practicing rural tourism in the mountain Carasan.

These villages became almost deserted beginning with 1997. The people of Timisoara were the first who bought homes at very low prices, which have been transformed into holiday homes. Thus in the area mainly pensions developed where tourists started to arrive. In the same year, in the courtyard of the inn "At the Crossroads" the first Jazz Festival was organized. Every year the festival has grown, from a dozen people to several thousand. The festival became an international event, the largest jazz festival in the country and one of the most important events of its kind in Southeastern Europe. The accommodation in the village are insufficient, tourists looking for accommodation in the neighbouring villages and towns: Resita, Văliug, Brebu Nou, Garana became host to sculpture and painting camps, rock and folk festival, exhibitions, book launches, competitions and Enduro competitions. The area is now considered "The cultural space for tourism in Eastern European".

Between Garana and Brebu Nou, in the upper basin of the Timis River, at an altitude of 815 m, an area of 52.6 ha there is The Trei Ape Lake (1970), formed by the accumulation of three water streams: Brebu, Grădiștea and Semenic.

In the village there is a network of accommodation units with famous names: "Mountain Breeze", "Up In The Village," "Brebu Nou", "the Crossroads" Hotel "Perla Trei Ape" etc. Over 300 people can be accommodated in the area.

The Văliug-Crivaia Area

Văliug is located in the vicinity of the Semenic Mountains at an altitude of 645 m, and it is known since the interwar period, nicknamed by locals as "Romanian Semmering".

The resort began to develop after the construction of the reservoir Gozna in 1950, when there were places of recreation on Lake: jetties where boats could be rented, pedal boats, restaurants. After 1990, the resort faced a new period of prosperity with accommodation facilities and services at current European standards, basic recreational tennis courts, etc. Gozna Lake can rent boats and pedal boats, swimming and fishing can practice. Currently, the town is one of the most beautiful resorts in mountainous Banat due recreational scenic landscape and the two lakes situated on Bârzava: Gozna and Breazova. Văliug town administration has Crivaia and Mount Semenic Tourist Area, the municipality carries on 18 accommodation units with a capacity of 700 seats.

Located in the forests of Banat Mountains, Crivaia has positive health effects (such as the endocrine and respiratory diseases, neuroses and asthenic disease).

The tourist resort is located in the Semenic Mountains, at over 1410 m altitude, between peaks Goznei Stone (1447), Semenic (1446 m) and Neda Stone (1437 m). There are 6 ski slopes with different degrees of difficulty, with lifts and over 400 beds.

Dognecea

Dognecea is surrounded by Dognecea Mountains that reach the maximum height in Great Peak (617 m). In the northern village, there are two lakes - Lacul Mic, hidden among the hills, known as the Lake with water lilies, it is studded with white lilies and pink being declared botanical reservation, and Lacul Mare, right next to the access road to the village. Dognecea is similar to a spa, with a large number of negative ions in the atmosphere.

The township and village belongs to Dognecea Calina, where Bruscel Spring has the purest spring water in Romania, the water here contains trace of colloidal silver that gives the water the quality not to deteriorate. Calina village has one of the oldest wooden Orthodox churches in Romania: it was built in 1780. The church is dedicated to "Salvation Virgin" and it is on the new list of historical monuments in LMI code CS-II-mB-11053.

At a distance of 12 km from Dognecea, in Ocna de Fier, there is the Mineralogical Museum of Iron "Constantin Gruescu", a museum of crystals and minerals or Mine Flowers Museum. The museum is unique in the world and it is a true geological heritage, artistic and national.

From the tourist point of view, Dognecea has not developed greatly in recent years, there is only one hostel „Colț de Rai, it is located on Lacul Mare. This pension is classified 3 stars and has a capacity of 34 seats. It provides tourists with leisure equipment: kayaks, pedal boats, boats, waterslides.

Many residents from Timisoara have bought houses in Dognecea, The village is famous in Caras-Severin, but also in neighboring counties, for the beauty of the area and the therapeutic effect of air. Unfortunately, tourism in Dognecea is practised only during summer.

Carașova

On the website of the local municipality, Carașova is presented as follows: "A piece of heaven, in the Caras Valley founded more than eight centuries ago, Carașova is the largest and oldest settlement in the basin of Caras.

The seven villages in the Basin of Caraș have a unique aspect: the houses are large and beautiful, households are neat, as proof of good material condition.

They represent an interesting ethnographic center. The beauty stands in remarkable costumes, worn on holidays (on Sundays or for Nedeea events). Female costumes are elegant: a white skirt, a long black fota and a kerchief

knotted under the chin. Male costume: a festive shirt with an embroidered collar and cuffs, with stunning embroidery shirts and towels, crafted hats or coats.

In Caraşova there is over 60% of the Semenic-Caras Gorge National Park, its western boundary being the locality carasova. It covers an area of 36364.8 ha, which includes 10 declared reservations (14420.8 ha) and 8 proposed reservations. Of the 10 reserves, two are under the administration of Caraşova (reservations Comarnic Cave and Cave Popovat).

Caraşova ruins are located on the outskirts of Caraş river, at 415 m altitude. Built in the thirteenth century, the city was part of the fortification system that Banat had against Ottomans. Located in a beautiful natural environment, with great tourist potential Caraşova has only one boarding house, Perla Caraşului. It is classified 2 stars and it has a capacity of 8 beds.

Sasca Montană

Sasca Montana is located in southwestern part of Caras-Severin, in Şuşara river valley, tributary of the Nera river.

At the confluence Beusnitei with brook Beiul Sec, there is Lacul Ochiul Beiului, formed by an intermittent spring, the lake has a diameter of about 20 m and depth of 3 m. The position is close to three waterfalls of the river Beuşniţa Nature Reserve with the same name alongside wild surroundings, is one of the most beautiful tourist spots in Banat.

Sasca Română, the border village after shedding Beiul in Nera enters the Natural Reservation, where the traveler is passing through tunnels dug into the rock.

Oral folk tradition preserved the beautiful legends that give added value and places great interest in the area: Lacul Ochiul Beiului, the Ottoman Cross, Red Mill, Devil's Lake, Tower of Beg.

One of the customs that is celebrated in villages and Sasca Română and Potoc is on Shrove Tuesday before Lent, is Făşang, a carnival where people wear masks to ward off evil spirits and bring good luck in local homes.

In Sasca Montana, geologist Victor Tăutu formed a museum collection that illustrate the history and culture of its inhabitants. Thus, in the museum there are pieces of furniture from the late nineteenth century, photographs, ceramics executed in Sasca Română, there woven carpets and other objects fittings such as: lamps and other appliances mine, irons, locks doors and gates, locks, keys, scales, etc. The small museum contains rocks and ores from mines in Sasca which are closed nowadays, an old book collection and a collection of stamps.

The originality of the place, along with many recreational opportunities (hiking, biking, climbing, exploring caves, kayaking, fishing, and hunting) are key tourist attractions. In recent years, the beauty of the surroundings has gradually attracted people from other parts of Banat (especially Timisoara),

who bought houses and have renovated or built new ones. At the same time, they established several boarding houses, which offer tourists more than 200 beds, so Sasca Montana tends to become a true mountain resort.

Bozovici

Located in southwestern part of Caras-Severin, Bozovici is close to Almaj and Anina, and to two heights mountainous distinct Gosna at the foot of which lies the meadow with the same name, and Bigăr, where there is the famous waterfall and which marks the point of 45 degrees parallel.

Izbucul Bigar is situated on the Minis valley. The protected area of national interest has an area of 177 ha and is included in the National Park Nera - Beuşniţa.

Peasant installations in the area are: mills, ovens for fruit and peasant crafts are represented by woodworking, pottery, spinning, weaving. The most important cultural event is Almăjului Valley Festival, which makes Bozovici an attractive cultural center. Bozovici tourist potential is huge with extraordinary landscapes, forests, rivers and streams, lakes, hunting. From Bigăr waterfall (near the parallel 45 degrees) to Nera, tourists can see trout in the Minis Valley, water mills from Rudăria (most representative mill complex in Romania and the largest in South East Europe), the dam and the lake Poneasca valley, the lake behind the dam Minis Valley, Poiana Gosna.

Although the Bozovici area is beautiful, there is only one accommodation unit in the area with a capacity of 28 beds.

Turnu Ruieni – Borlova Area

Turnu Ruieni is located in the north-east of the Timiş-Cerna area, in the foothills of Muntele Mic on the Valley of Sebeş River.

The main occupation of the locals is agriculture, fruit gathering, animal breeding and woodworking. A special traditional profession in the locality Zervesti is making costumes with gold thread and pennies.

In the southern part of the village Zervesti on an area of 40 hectares, there is the Reservation "Meadows with daffodils" and upstream of Zervesti is the lake and dam. At a distance of 27 km from the village Borlova, the Mountain Resort Muntele Mic is situated. The ski slope on Munetele Mic is the most important point of attraction of the area in winter. There is a monastery that is dedicated to St. Ilie.

The area rural tourism and agri-tourism were developed by attracting tourists eager to know the beauties of the Banat Mountains on motorcycles. Since 1995, every summer there is a program called Enduromania (result of cooperation between the German state of North Rhine Westphalia and Banat, materialized by developing active tourism in the region).

Located near the ski lift at Mount Mic Borlova village has become a known village for tourists from Romania and abroad. Each season, Borlova hosts mountaineers from Austria and Germany for the Enduromania motorcycle contest.

In Borlova there are 4 hotels with a total capacity of 55 beds that offer accommodation to tourists. Upon request, the area can be organized for guided hikes and motorcycle trips.

Eşelnița

Eşelnița is a village in Banat Mountain, located in the western part of the county, in the Danube Gorge, on the foothills of Almăj Mountains.

The landscape is varied, being dominated by the southeastern terminus of Almăj Mountains, known as the Clisurii Mountains. According to H. G. 1284/2007 Almaj and Locvei (156,619.6 hectares) were declared Natural Area Nature 200 - Special Protection Area. Eşelnița village occupies 55% of the surface area.

On the side facing the Danube, Almaj are extremely fragmented, creating wild gorges of: Putnei Rudari and Sirin. The highest peaks of these mountains face the tourist area "Iron Gates – Portile de Fier". In Almaj, the Danube has cut most spectacular sectors that have formed the famous Danube landscape. Although they are not very tall mountains, alternation of spaces with the assistance of the Danube have created landscapes of undeniable attraction. 86% of the commune's administrative territory is occupied by forests, which forms non-polluted area.

The main activities of the population are agriculture, animal breeding, fisheries, all private holdings. Another occupation of the inhabitants of Eşelnița is the craft of brick factory.

The presence of ethnic minorities in the local community stands in the way of expression, specific to the port, customs, traditions and dialects spoken. They are seen on the occasion of "The days of Eşelnita" in the days of the first weekend in May when an ethnic cultural festival takes place in the village.

Along the Danube's bank, in the low hills of Eşelnița, a whole neighborhood of cottages and guesthouses was built after 1990. Some of these buildings are in operation, with all conditions and requirements for accommodation, meals and entertainment, others are waiting for classification and authorization, and some are in their final stage of construction work. Guest houses and holiday homes in Eşelnița can accommodate about 400 tourists. In addition to accommodation and food services, they are offering different ways of leisure (fishing, boating, hiking, etc.). Tourists can rent: boats equipped for fishing, cruising motor boats, recreational boats, water skiing, kayaking, jeep for off-road excursions, bicycles etc.

Teregova – Rusca Area

Teregova is located in the south-eastern part of Caras-Severin County in the central part of the Timiș-Cerna valley, on the upper course of the Timis River, in a beautiful mountain area, with opening to the West to Semenic and northeast to Țarcu Mountains and Godeanu Mountains.

The activities of the region are agriculture, animal breeding, horticulture, apiculture, agro-processing, wood processing services, brandy making.

The village is famous for its traditional peasant houses and folklore. There are skilled craftsmen - potters and furriers, popular technical installations as mills, whirlpools and fishery tools. Households have a wide range of fabrics and stitching wool and hemp: carpet, pricovița, towels, tablecloths, Poneva, knapsacks. In Teregova weddings have the habits and customs inherited from ancestors.

The local community center houses a museum which has a rich collection of pastoral tools, traditional costumes and interior textiles. There is an intense cultural life: Nedeea - Teregova, which takes place on Oct. 26. St. Demetrius; "Brandy Festival" is held every autumn and Rusca-Teregova prayer takes place on June 29.

On the website of the Bureau of tourism within the County Council Caras-Severin, Rusca has only two rural locations: Colț de rai, classified 2 flowers, has 6 rooms with a capacity of 12 beds and Mirela classified three flower has 5 rooms, with a capacity of 10 beds.

The largest accommodation capacity in the studied rural areas is in Văliug-Crivaia, in the resort Semenic, followed by the Garana - Brebu Nou area. It should be noted the large number of beds in the Danube Gorge, in the village Eșelnița and Dubova. The poorest tourist reception capacity, with only 4 seats is situated in the villages of Potoc - Sasca Montana and 8 seats in Carașova.

Development of Rural Tourism in Mountainous Banat

Tourism development in rural areas aims to solve, besides the main purpose of the activity - satisfying tourist motivation - economic problems of areas due to depopulation caused by migration of rural population to urban centers.

Extremely rich and diversified tourist potential in the Mountainous Banat enhances the appearance of many forms of tourism (recreation tourism, adventure tourism, hunting and fishing, cultural tourism, etc.) and increases the activity of rural tourism in the County.

Accommodation capacity in Caraş-Severin County (2000-2014)**Table nr. 2**

Year	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2014
Total	78	102	143	149	181	188
Hotels and motels	21	22	29	33	32	34
Chalets	13	7	7	6	7	9
Camping	2	2	1	2	1	1
Villas and bungalows	17	15	8	9	11	9
Student camps	11	7	4	4	4	3
Urban guest houses	7	24	46	48	64	62
Rural guest houses	4	16	36	35	52	57
Hostels	-	2	5	5	5	8
Tourist relaxation places	2	4	6	6	5	5

Source: Direcția Județeană de Statistică Caraş-Severin

From the presented data a major increase in accommodation establishments can be seen in the Caras-Severin County in the 2000-2014 period. The number of accommodation units increased from 78 to 188, the highest increases being recorded in urban and rural hostels. A decrease was registered in student camps and campsites. In 2014, rural tourist guest houses represent 33% of all housing units.

Accommodation structures in Mountainous Banat are diverse and numerous: cottages, hotels, villas, guest houses, apartments for rent, accommodation in private homes etc.

Conclusions

The need to develop the rural tourism sector is higher in the studied area, due to poor economic conditions of the county, but also because tourism potential - natural and anthropogenic – is important. From the presented data, we can conclude that in recent years in the region there have been large investments in building accommodation structures, particularly guest houses. However, in some areas new accommodation units are needed and / or an improvement of existing ones. A better promotion of the region would bring more tourists.

The development of tourism in rural areas in Mountainous Banat could emphasize the potential of the area, as rural tourism can generate stability, and multiple economic and social benefits.

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