

DOFTANA VALLEY - TOURIST ALTERNATIVE FOR PRAHOVA VALLEY

Alin BUTOI
Vasile POP
Andrei DUCMAN
Nicoleta BIRA
Elena BECHERU

***Abstract:** The tourist activities in the area of Valea Doftana commune took place before the 90's, being closely related to the appearance in the landscape of the Paltinu reservoir lake, with the construction of the homonym dam on the Doftana river, completed in 1971. An important contribution to the development of these activities also had the subsequent modernization of the county road that connected, on a distance of over 30 km, the town of Campina and the village of Traisteni, the latter being located 5 km north of Tesila, the residence of Valea Doftanei commune. The beauty of the Doftana Valley landscapes, its wild nature, the pure air of the area and the possibilities of leisure and hiking on the paths of Baiului and Grohotiș mountains, along with the leisure and relaxation options (fishing, water sports, sunbathing) that Paltinu Lake may offer, have favored the appearance of the tourist reception structures in this area, which have become more and more attractive for tourists as time has passed by. The objective of the study is to promote the main objectives of Valea Doftanei Commune. This one comes to support the point of view of the tourism consumers who believe that Valea Prahovei has already reached considerable values in terms of capitalizing on existing potential. There are also those who prefer family tourism, where nature and anthropic goals intermingle themselves. All these are offered by the Doftana Valley, which is a tourist area in full development process.*

***Keywords:** Rural tourism, tourist, pensions, development alternative, local potential*

INTRODUCTION

Each geographical area, through relief or anthropic arrangement offers a tourist attraction (Dinca et al., 2015; Cojocaru, 1978). The Doftana Valley perfectly fits this context of human facilities and arrangements in the

welcoming natural environment of the area. (Arsene et al., 1998, Rădoi et al., 2020).

On the vast meadows on the eastern shore of Paltinu Lake, there were built, in the early '80s, a tourist stop and several camping houses for the accommodation of tourists who use to come here especially on weekends for relaxation and rest, in the area of Campina, Ploiesti or right from Bucharest city.

After 1990, these tourist facilities deteriorated and gradually disappeared from the landscape, but later several villas and tourist pensions were built in the lake area at the end of the '90s and especially after the year 2000 (the peak period between 2007 -2009), when the range of tourist reception structures has diversified, so that, nowadays, in Tesila and Traisteni, there are also several agritourism pensions, chalets or holiday homes.

This process of expanding the tourist reception units has continued in recent years; there has been built a small campsite with several houses entitled "La Boboc", a mansion called "Conacul Dascalu" - built on the ruins of the old boyar house of the steward Dascalu; the last edifice has been documented since 1717 and is a tourist complex with three villas called "Cabanele Trei Ursuleti", a chic cottage ("Cabana Haiducului") and several tourist pensions known as "Pens. Iordache", "Perla Muntilor", all being located in the north of Traisteni town, in the area of Valea Neagra-Vadul Lui Zeghe, on the upper course of the Doftana River.

As well, in the south of Tesila locality, near Paltinu lake and Doftana gorge, several tourist guesthouses with modern facilities named "Atra Doftana", or built in rustic style (known as "Craita") have been built; there has also been erased a villa of the inn- type, where anyone can stop for a pleasant break, known as "Villa" Popas Viaduct" and which is located near the grandiose viaduct of the road that crosses the eastern sector of the lake.

To all these there is added the presence of marked or unmarked tourist routes that cross the beautiful mountainous areas in the surroundings, which include natural tourist attractions such as the Upper Doftana Valley, Craitele Lake, Prisciu Mountain, protected areas like Rezervatia Naturala Padurea Glodeasa (Glodeasa Forest Natural Reservation), comprehensive viewpoints locations such as the peak called Vf. Secariei- 1153m; the peak named as Vf. Unghia Mare-1847m, routes near the villages of Traisteni and Tesila.

Along with the beauties of the natural setting of the Doftana Valley, a series of anthropic tourist objectives with architectural, artistic, historical, ethno-folkloric or tourist-economic potential (churches, museums, monuments, traditional houses, stone quarries, accumulation dams), as well as local cultural-traditional events such as "Cașcavelei Festival", "Paltinu

Lake's Day", have been contemplated every year; they have boosted in recent years the tourist circulation in the area, so that tourists could come here, in any season, from the country and even from abroad (Teodorescu et al., 2019).

The anthropic tourist potential – the artistic and architectural potential, the historical, the ethno-folkloric, the tourist-economic potential as well.

Anthropic attractions such as museums, churches, historical relics, monuments, authentic Doftana's area houses, local holidays, traditional customs and occupations, costumes and folk art objects in the area, as well as the buildings and constructions or arrangements with economic role, are just some of the elements that have contributed to the significance of the anthropic tourist potential of Valea Doftanei village.

The anthropic tourist attractions in the village of Tesila

The accumulation dam and Paltinu Lake - represent the most famous and imposing anthropic tourist attraction of the area, due to the important contribution to the economic development of the entire Doftana valley, in the modern period, after 1971, when it was put into use on the purpose of public providing with drinking water, as well as industrial water of Campina city and Ploiesti city, irrigation water supply in Prahova Meadow, for sanitation of Dambul River in Ploiesti, for electricity production in Paltinu-Voila hydropower plants, but also for water supply of downstream localities on Doftana River.

Paltinu Lake has resulted from the construction of the homonym dam on the middle course of the Doftana and has become over the years, due to its very clean waters which are so rich in fish, a real tourist pole of the Doftana valley; by the enchanting mountain scenery with a relatively gentle climate, the area attracts numerous tourists who are eager for recreation, rest and relaxation, who are passionate about water sports, as well as passionate fishermen, who come here from all over the country, in any season (fig 1).

The "Museum of Fine Arts" – which has also been open within the Tesila Cultural Center, brings together over 300 works of art, many of them by established artists; it comprises the fruit of the 18 editions of the "International Camp of Art" in the Black Valley, which has addressed professional artists in the field of sculpture, graphics or painting. Held until recently, at the beginning of August, the camp gathered about 15 famous artists, from whose hands there resulted valuable works of art, of real artistic, ethnographic and popular interest, recognized in the country and even abroad. All these exhibits are appreciated by the visiting tourists who love fine arts, beauty and traditions. (Teodorescu, 2009).

"The museum in my own house" - is located in the house of Constantin Clinci, none other than the father of the librarian Ramona Tintea, a thrifty and art-loving man who has arranged in one of the rooms, a real museum with beautiful objects, memories inherited from his father and grandfather, who had fought in World War II and World War I, respectively. Here visitors can admire objects such as pistols found in the mountains around the Doftana valley, perhaps a hundred years old, roots or pieces of yakca almost inanimate, lamps, irons and other household objects of considerable age. Also on display here there is a collection of old coins and banknotes, including typewriters, typewriters, deer horns and skulls, wild boar fangs and fox or goat furs hanging on the walls. Each object has its own story, this small museum having the potential to be the basis of a future museum of the region, the passion and tradition of the family being taken over by the younger generations.



Fig. 1. Paltinu Lake - Doftana Valley

In Tesila there is also a village museum belonging to Tutuiatu Ion Benone, "Nea Benone" - as the owner is known in the village, who is an original folk craftsman and also an art lover from Valea Doftanei commune. He has recently decided to open a museum in his own home, including a series of old objects exhibited, such as furniture, looms, a spinning wheel, a spindle, wooden and clay pots, as well as objects handmade by him, both of wood and stone. In this museum there are exhibited several different specimens of wild animals from the area: squirrel, goat, hedgehog, turtle. This appreciated folk craftsman has also made various sculptures depicting Dacian deities, but also the Dacian flag. "Nea Benone", besides being a keeper of popular traditions, is also known in the area as a skilled craftsman because he sews his own hats and hats made of leather or sheepskin (Teodorescu et al., 2017; Susu, 1998).

"Paltinu Lake Day" - is an event that takes place every year in August, being celebrated for many years on the plateau in the "Plateau" area on the eastern shore of the lake, near the county access road, southwards of Tesila (fig. 2).

The cultural-traditional event is meant to promote the picturesque tourist area of Lake Paltinu and always enjoys a large audience (tourists and locals) who attend various musical performances held on a stage especially built by local organizers; among the artists there are soloists and popular bands from the area, but also well-known singers and well-known bands from all over the country. The stands with various local food products, "seasoned" with traditional drinks, those with bee products or natural fruit juices picked from the area, but also those with handicrafts and crafts arranged here on the occasion of this country celebration, are attended by the crowd of tourists arriving here in order to spend the weekend in the fresh air on the lake shore or in the surroundings; thus, the vast meadow is annually being "invaded" by tents and caravans.



Fig. 2. Paltinu Lake Day

Anthropic tourist attractions in the village of Traisteni

"Museum of Ethnography and Folklore" - was opened in the building of the "Traisteni Cultural Center"; it has been built since 1936 and is an edifice that attracts by its massive architecture, made of white stone, with one floor and tin roof metal, with many "pairs" of tall windows, framed by vaulted and straight ornaments "worked" in stone, but also with white facades that complete its appearance, leading us to the "culele" of the boyars in Oltenia's and even in the Brancoveanu's epoch style.

In this building, since 1950, there is also a "Public Library" opened through the efforts of the villagers; this edifice is taken care of, just as the museum as well, by the kind librarian Carmen Enache. The multitude of books of prose and Romanian and universal poetry fully contributes to the "dowry" of 12,000 volumes contained in the libraries of Valea Doftanei commune.

On the first floor of the building, "above" the library, the "Museum of Ethnography and Folklore" has been operating for several years, a real collection of traditional folk objects and costumes from the area, reunited and displayed in an artistic way, in two bright and welcoming rooms. The museum depicts aspects of the traditional peasant dwelling in the Doftana valley, preserving objects of testimony of the crafts and folk traditions of this area: clay pottery dishes, embroidered towels, wood engraved ornaments, perforated, embossed, a loom, old icons painted on wood or glass, wooden objects used in sheepfolds for the preparation of various dairy products, old local photos, an "old" violin eager to delight us with her chords, as well as traditional "fote" (skirt aprons) and Romanian traditional blouses with selected embroideries, authentic elements of the Romanian folk costume (fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Folk art in Valea Doftanei Commune

Some of these exhibits are more than a hundred years old, being collected "from all over the villages" and being kept here with great care. In this environment, on the walls that accompany the access stairs to the ground floor, there are also several other handicrafts delighting the eyes of visitors, and in the entrance hall there are presented a series of interesting drawings painted by students from the commune and some funny dolls, handmade by the librarian Carmen Enache herself, whom I thanked anyway for the time dedicated to my visit, on a sunny December morning,

encouraging her with all conviction and confidence with respect to her approach which is worthy of appreciation.

"Sfintii Voievozi" Church - is located in the center of Traisteni village and is one of the largest Orthodox places of worship in Prahova County and also one of the largest village churches in Romania. The church is dedicated to the "Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel" and was built between 1924-1932, during the pastorate of the first patriarch of Romania - Miron Cristea, being a true "cathedral" of shepherds and foresters in the area. It is the second church in the country, after the "Metropolitan Cathedral" in Iasi, where there is a painted fresco depicting the face of the young King Michael I of Romania, located in the narthex (fig. 4).



Fig. 4. The "Sfintii Voievozi" Church in Traisteni

The church was built by the locals and is entirely made of stone and brick, on an area of 255 square meters, in the shape of a cross, in the Byzantine style and has a height of 36m, including the Holy Cross on the big tower. Inside, there are 4 arches, a large vault, 2 small vaults and 2 domes. The eight holes in the vault of the Holy Altar enhance the acoustics of the shrine. The iconostasis, the dividing wall between the altar and the rest of the church, as well as the pews are made of oak, they are beautifully

carved with various floral ornaments. The sanctuary was painted between 1935-1940, in the Byzantine style, in oil, by the historical painter Dimitrie D. Stoica from Bucharest (Szemkovics et al., 2020). In 1970, a new bell tower was built, being equipped with 2 bells and a chancellery; the place was in time subject to various restoration and modernization works, meant to further beautify its appearance.

At the " Sfantii Voievozi" Church in Traisteni, one of the oldest local customs has been preserved, which has greatly strengthened the Orthodox faith of the people; it is usually called "Church Weddings", where sons-in-law, brides and godparents of the year get married and go to church together. On this occasion, everyone gathers at these symbolic weddings, eats, drinks, plays folk dances, displays the dress, after which all the gifts remain in the church treasury, for the needs of the parish. Tourists arriving in Traisteni are fascinated by the imposing architecture of the " Sfantii Voievozi" church, by its exterior and interior painting and the bright white of the side facades, aspects that give the religious building a distinctive and picturesque note.

"The ruins of the old church" - are found in the northern part of the town, on the left of the county road 102 I which runs through the village upstream, advancing towards the upper valley of Doftana River. The old church was built between 1830 and 1832, but due to numerous weather and earthquakes it was almost completely demolished, around 1940; today only some ruins are still preserved and they have the potential to become an important tourist attraction in the north of the commune (fig. 5). Doftanei Valley (Szemkovics et al., 2020). Near the ruins there are several stone and iron crosses, which bear witness to the fact that there was also the first cemetery in Traisteni (Szemkovics et al., 2020; Teodorescu et al., 2016).



Fig. 5. The ruins of the old church from Traisteni

"The sheepfolds around Traisteni village" - about 25 in number, are located on the slopes of Baiului and Grohotis mountains and are true treasures of the old local pastoral traditions, inherited from the first inhabitants of the village, the shepherds from Tara Barsei and from Marginimea Sibiului more than 300 years ago. At some of these sheepfolds' places, tourists can see how traditional products are prepared; we exemplify by mutton pastrami, grilled meatballs, mutton stew, smoked cheese or cheese dressed in fir bark, cottage cheese, "urda" (a kind of cheese, with soft, crumbly texture; it is defined as a dairy product obtained by boiling the remaining whey after preparing the curd; it is similar to "ricotta" cheese and it is rich in protein and low in fat); tourists can also participate in sheep-milking activities together with the local shepherds, who are well-known as hardworking people, welcoming and eager to story-tell with the passers-by, the teachings-filled stories of the mountain life-style (fig. 6).



Fig. 6. "Stana Glodeasa" from Traisteni

The traditional peasant houses of Doftana" - slightly better preserved than in Tesila, delight tourists' sight with their rustic architecture, in which wood predominates, but also by their sobriety, given by the chromaticity of the walls or by the river stone used at the preponderantly high foundation of houses. Beautifully shaped clay, leveled and whitewashed in white or warm colours, illuminates the walls of houses, while the wood carved by carving and piercing in various popular floral motifs, such as rosettes, crosses, adorn both sides of it; the porch is connected by supporting pillars (also made of wood) from the roof built "in four waters" (as they say to the

four plans of inclination of the roof, with shingle covering the roofs, placed in the so- called "beak and shell" technique (fig. 7).



Fig. 7. The traditional architecture of Trăisteni

The roof is in turn supported by thick beams of lacquered beech wood, closed at the corners in the type known as "staneste", which support the walls and ceiling of the house, which is as well made of the same wood essence, above which there can be seen a thick layer of pressed earth, known as "beaten" earth, and which is leveled neatly, corresponding to the attic of the house. In the two rooms on either side of the porch, the elegant silhouette of the brick stoves stands out: a stove with a hob for cooking, in the living room and a stove with a cot and a niche in the guest room. According to the tradition, in the "big house" (the house for guests and ceremonies, particularly) there generally used to be kept the folk costumes - photos with the chosen embroideries, but also the so-called "dolls", meaning patterns for artistic models of cheese. In the same room, during the Easter holidays, decorated eggs were displayed in a vase, many models being specific to this area and representing different floral motifs, "the lost way/ path" or even work tools.

The Doftana – style houses, not very big, still have, as before, the window sills full of flowers, and in front of them, the enchanting presence of the kindergarten with multicolored flowers brings an extra beauty to the houses. In the peasant households from Traisteni, wood is predominant, being used in the construction of the annexes, such as "sura" (a serie of annexes where animals and agricultural tools used to be sheltered) or the stable; wood used to be used as well in the manufacture of certain household objects ("ciubar"- a big wooden barrel used as a bathing pool; barrels, scythe, fork, spindle, weaving loom), knowing that the exploitation and wood processing in the surrounding mountains has long been the main occupation of locals, along with animal growth (Teodorescu et al., 2016; sava et al., 2020).

"Cascavela Festival" – has taken place every year in September in Traisteni, since 2002, being a real country celebration, organized by the City Hall and the Local Council of Valea Doftanei, on the lawn of the local football field. This event gathers thousands of people from the area and from the country, who are happy to participate in the "celebration of the bell", the product that has become the "brand" of the commune (Ducman et al., 2019). This traditional festival brings together hundreds of producers and traders, along with the tasty cheese being presented to the public and other cheese specialties (smoked cheese, cheese dressed in fir bark, cottage cheese, "urda", "bellows cheese"), pastrami and other peasant dishes of mutton, pork or beef (fig. 8).



Fig. 8. Stands with traditional products at the Cascavela Festival in Traisteni

Also one may see here products as the traditional drinks produced in the Prahova area or even in the locality, such as blueberries, raspberries, cherries, plum brandy, pear and apple brandy, red currant wine, but also white, pink and red wines from the sub-Carpathian vineyards. Tohani-Dealu Mare-Urlati wines, or natural berry syrups harvested from the surrounding mountains. All these "goodies" are joined by the famous braided rolls, gingerbread, various homemade cakes, but also the indispensable and appreciated natural honey of bees accompanied by the whole range of bee derivatives.

CONCLUSIONS

The sustainable tourism development program at Doftanei Valley will involve drawing new tourist markings and restoring the old ones in the surrounding mountains, as well as reopening the "Tourist Information Point" located in Traisteni village, an office that will be equipped with new guides, brochures, local maps, views and souvenirs, or with promotional documentation about these picturesque lands; they are printed on digital

support, constituting materials so necessary for the visitors of the commune. Thus, the rich tourist potential of this area will be capitalized at an optimal level that will allow more and more guests to arrive here; detailed knowledge of the attractions of the area will lead to a substantial increase in revenues from tourism activities in the prosperous commune of Valea Doftanei.

Considering the tourist development projects already underway, but also the fact that the Valea Doftanei area has become known in recent years for rural and ecological tourism, we can say that in the near future this region will be a tourist destination for within the southern part of the Oriental Carpathians, close to the notoriety of the resorts on Valea Prahovei.

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NOTES ON THE AUTHORS

Prof. Pr. Alin Florian BUTOI - "Tudor Vladimirescu" Middle School, Călărași City, e-mail: butoiflorianalin@gmail.com

Pr. Ph.D. Vasile POP - Priest St. Elefterie Church, Bucharest, Romania, e-mail: isalev5@yahoo.com

Master Andrei DUCMAN – University of Bucharest, Faculty of Geography, Research Centre for Integrated Analysis and Territorial Management, Bd. Nicolae Bălcescu, Sector 1, 0100411, Bucharest, Romania, e-mail: ducmanandrei@gmail.com

Prof. gr. I. Nicoleta BIRA, Teacher, Middle School "Spiru Haret" Oltenita City, Calarasi, e-mail: nicoletabita@yahoo.com

Prof. gr. I. Elena BECHERU, Teacher, Middle School "Dimitrie Ion Ghica" Middle School, Radovanu, Calarasi, e-mail: becheru.elena@yahoo.com