

## ȘIRNEA, THE FIRST ROMANIAN TOURISM VILLAGE

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*Abstract: The authors of this paper present the first tourism village in Romania, Șirnea, Brașov County. They emphasise the natural and cultural potentials of the village with special focus on local traditions and customs. The main methods used in the study are observation, analysis, synthesis, and data processing. Analysis results point out the main issues of the tourism village Șirnea: ageing population, lack of investments, and poor infrastructure.*

**Key words:** *tourism village, Șirnea, tourism, rural*

### INTRODUCTION

In a context where sustainable development promotes economic and social development without affecting the natural balance of the environment, the topic of this article, "Șirnea, first tourism village in Romania", is of great interest. [1] The village of Șirnea, the first tourism village in Romania, is a picturesque rural settlement that preserves its traditions and a rich historic past. [3]

In Romania, there has been concern for rural tourism and rural development ever since the 1960s and 1970s, when they considered important that tourists get into contact with rural traditions and customs. [2] The village of Șirnea is a quiet one, located between Piatra Craiului Mountains and Bucegi Mountains, where landscape, climate and seasons are favourable to tourism development of all sorts. [6] The water of Șirnea has been tested and analysed and it became a pure water standard for South-East Europe. Professor Nicolae Frunteș was the promoter of tourism villages in Romania, and this is how the village of Șirnea became a tourism village in 1968: they arranged there the first night skiing slope in Romania.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The main methods used in this study are observation, analysis, synthesis, and data interpretation and processing. Indirect observation was used in the study of bibliography and of statistics.

### RESEARCH RESULTS

**Șirnea is a village in the Brașov County, Romania, and part of the Commune of Fundata**, located at the foot of the Piatra Craiului Mountains, 1,360 m altitude, at the boundary between the counties of Brașov and Argeș, in the Rucăr-Bran Gorges. It can be reached by road from Brașov or Pitești on E547: the road is on a mountain relief with serpentines. The closest town is Râșnov, 26 km far from the village, followed by Brașov, 42 km. The village of Șirnea is the highest Romanian Carpathian settlement with dwellings 1,400 m high in the mountains. [18] [9]



**Figure 1.** Location of the village of Șirnea on the map of Romania

Sursa: <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Șirnea>, <http://adevarul.ro/locale/brasov/Sirnea-sat-turistic> [18,9]



**Figure 2.** Location of the village of Șirnea

Sursa: <http://adevarul.ro/locale/brasov/Sirnea-sat-turistic>, <http://www.cazari.ro/sirnea/> [18,9]

The climate is specific to Romania's geographic feature and to the mountain relief. The annual mean air temperature is 4-5°C. The mean number of summer days with maximum temperatures is 20. Rainfalls are abundant, particularly in spring and autumn, with an annual mean of 1,200 mm. Predominant snows produce permanent snow layers during 140-200 days per year. The first snow falls at the middle of October in lower areas.

At the end of 2017, the number of inhabitants of the village of Șirnea was 229, most of which retired with only 20% active people.

Analysis of the pre-schoolers evolution in the village of Șirnea shows that it halved in the last ten years, which explains the ageing population.

**Table 1.**

**Evolution of pre-schoolers in the village of Șirnea**

School year	Number of pre-schoolers
2009-2010	10
2010-2011	9
2011-2012	10
2012-2013	10
2013-2014	10
2014-2015	8
2015-2016	5

Source: *Strategia de dezvoltare a comunei Fundata* [8]

Most of the population in the commune practice agriculture (about 85%). Even those who have other jobs practice plant cultivation and animal raising.

Developing tourism activities could contribute to the diversification of economic activities in the area and to the economic growth of the area given that it has numerous natural and anthropogenic resources.

**The natural resources of the locality that are also important tourism landmarks are:**

- *The Piatra Craiului National Park*, considered unique in the Romanian Carpathians due to the impressive relief of the calcareous crest 25 km long harbouring rare flora and fauna species. According to data supplied by the County Office for Statistics Brașov for 2015, this park is visited annually by about 100,000 tourists who come here for day-trips, hiking and picnic.

- *The Natural Park of National Interest Bucegi*, with attractive landscapes, provides tourists with opportunities for the practice of mountain hiking, mountain climbing, snowboarding, cross-country skiing and Alpine skiing.

- *The Rucăr-Bran Gorges* are the main access road between old historical provinces – Transylvania and Wallachia.

- *Tourist natural landmarks* are Piscul Păltiniș, Stâncă Seninare, La Trei Șipote, Peștera Liliecilor, Curmătura Groapelor, Țurțudău, Colțul Spărturilor and Poiana Lungă.

**The anthropogenic resources of the locality that are also important tourism landmarks are:**

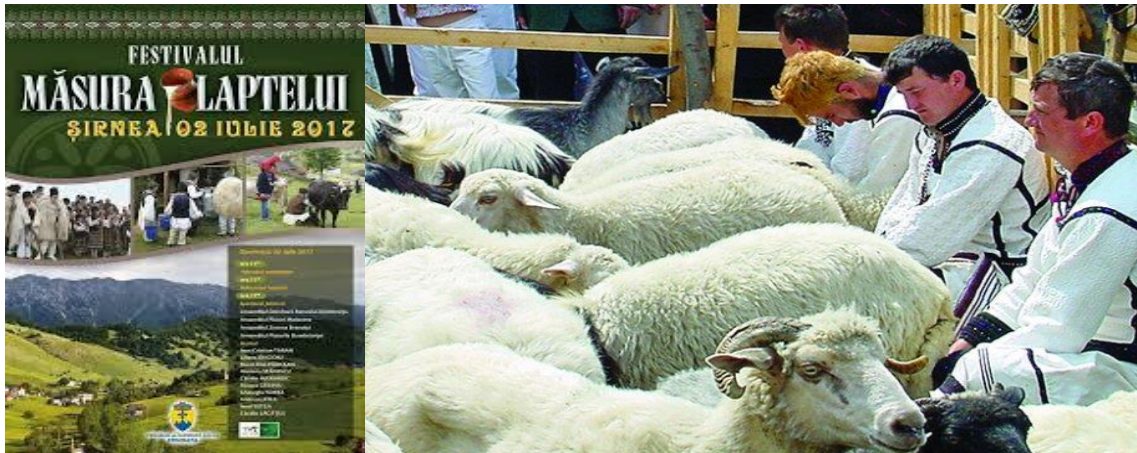
- *The “Nicolae Frunțeș” Museum of Ethnography* established in 1961 by Professor Nicolae Frunțeș. It has seven halls and hosts an important local ethnographic treasury: folk costumes, pastoral items, tissues with decorations specific to mountain villages, scientific works, textbooks, manuscripts, Olympic medals, works of contemporary art, etc. At present, the Museum needs rehabilitation works and inclusion in a tourism circuit at county level.

- *The Heroes’ Monument* was built in 1967 to honour the village soldiers who died in World War II. It is made of stone and is set on the very place where World War II trenches once were.

- *The ski slope*, unapproved, was built in the 1960s and it is 600 m long. It was the first night ski slope in Romania.

Professor Nicolae Frunțeș, initiator and developer of the tourism village, promoted two local festivals to develop the village and attract as many tourists as possible: “**Milk Count**”, organized every June, and “**Winter in Șirnea**”. These festivals were followed by “**Olympic Day**”, “**Gentle Fairies Night**” and “**Sumedru’s Fire**”.

*Milk Count* is a tradition linked to Saint Peter’s Day, June 29. On this day, livestock owners whose animals are up in the mountains go there to measure the amount of milk produced which helps them determining the amount of cheese they are to get at the end of summer. Nicolae Frunțeș had the idea of valorising this pastoral tradition and of turning it into a festival. The festival strictly observes the milk count tradition, which makes it an event organized with responsibility and successfully.



**Figure 3. Images from the Milk Count festival of the village of Șirnea**

Source: <http://www.brasovultau.ro/articol/stiri/masura-laptelui-eveniment-pastoral-plin-de-savoare-la-sirnea.html> [15]

*Winter in Șirnea* was initiated in 1969: it consists in a ski race carrying torches, in sleighing, and in feasting at the Culture House in the village.

*Olympic Day* is organised in partnership with the Romanian Olympic Committee every year on June 23. It consists in athletic and cultural events to which all inhabitants in the area and tourists take part.



**Figure 4. Images from Olympic Day in Șirnea**

Source: <http://newsbv.ro/2013/06/20/ziua-olimpica-noaptea-sanziene-sirnea/> [11]

*Gentle Fairies Night*. On June 24, the Romanians celebrate the birth of Saint John Baptist, a Christian celebration that overlapped a pagan celebration, the Gentle Fairies Night. On this day, the inhabitants of Șirnea carry on the tradition according to a well-preserved ritual passed on from generation to generation.



**Figure 5. Images from the Gentle Fairies Night in Șirnea**

Source: <http://www.ziare.com/brasov/stiri-actualitate/sanzienele-sarbatorite-la-sirnea-5543948> [16]

The three local traditional festivals – Olympic Day, Gentle Fairies Night and Milk Count – are celebrated within an annual community event, the *Days of Șirna*.

*Sumedru's Fire*. This is another tradition preserved by the villagers. On the night of October 25, on S. Dimitri's Day, there is a nocturnal ceremony of time renewal. Around a huge funeral fire set by the youth on a high place in the village, the villagers gather and shout out, in a choir, the consecrated formula "Let's go the Sumedru's Fire!" Women share pretzel, walnuts, apples and alcohol. Upon leaving, the participants take with them pieces of hot charcoal with which they fertilise vegetable gardens and orchards.



**Figure 6. Images of Sumedru's Fire in Șirnea**

Source: [http://adevarul.ro/locale/brasov/Sirnea-sat-turistic-dinromania\[9\]](http://adevarul.ro/locale/brasov/Sirnea-sat-turistic-dinromania[9])

The village of Șirnea used to be visited, in the 1980s, by 3,000 tourists every year but later on this number decreased. Events that marked Romania after December 1989 caused the decrease of both the number of tourists and of tourism activities in the village, almost "killing" them.

After studying the village of Șirnea, Brașov County, Romania, we see that there is some interest in reviving tourism activities, but the lack of proper promotion and of proper infrastructure are major impediments in the re-launching of tourism activities, which makes the youth leave the area. Tourists can be accommodated in tourism boards ranked 2 or 3 daisies (Table 2).

**Table 2.**

**Accommodation units in the village of Șirnea**

<i>Tourism board name</i>	<i>Ranking</i>	<i>Number of rooms</i>	<i>Places</i>
Crai Nou	3 daisies	11	21
La Gheorghiiță	2 daisies	4	8
Luca	3 daisies	7	14
Soarelui	3 daisies	7	14
Valea cu struți	3 daisies	15	30

Source: *Strategia de dezvoltare a comunei Fundata* [8]

**CONCLUSIONS**

The authors of this article believe that, in order to revive the first tourism village in Romania and to attract a larger number of tourists, we need to include it in a tourism circuit at county level because the village of Șirnea is a brand of Romanian tourism.

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