

STUDY REGARDING THE TYPES OF TOURISM IN HUNEDOARA COUNTY - PRIORITIES AND DEVELOPMENT MEASURES

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Abstract: Hunedoara County stands out for its varied tourist offer, where history and nature harmoniously intertwine: Corvin Castle, the UNESCO Dacian fortresses, the Roman ruins at Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa and the Retezat National Park, with its glacial lakes and spectacular biodiversity, attract tourists passionate about culture and adventure every year. Traditional villages keep alive local customs, crafts and gastronomy, offering authentic experiences to those who want to discover the charm of the countryside. Looking to the future, Hunedoara aims to capitalize on this potential through investments in infrastructure, the development of ecotourism, the support of agritourism and digital promotion, transforming itself into a competitive, modern and sustainable destination, with direct benefits for local communities.

Key words: tourism types, Hunedoara County, development measures

INTRODUCTION

Hunedoara County is located in the southwestern part of Transylvania and occupies part of the watersheds of the Mureș and Jiu rivers. The county is intersected by the parallel of 46° north latitude and the meridian of 23° west longitude (published absolute values 46°16' north latitude, Bulzești locality, 23°24' east longitude (Aurel Vlaicu locality, 45°19' east longitude, Parâng Mountains). The extreme points of Hunedoara County, without indicating the absolute coordinates, are: the NW area of the village of Rusești (Bulzeștii de Sus commune) to the north, the western border of the village of Pojoga (Zam commune), to the west, the sources of the Lăpușnic river, to the south, and the branches of some right tributaries of the Jieț stream, to the east.



Figure 1. Hunedoara County's map

Source: <https://www.replicahd.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/judetul-Hunedoara-harta-administrativa.jpg>

The county also has numerous vestiges of the past, historical monuments that may arouse the interest of discerning tourists. Mountain tourism, hiking and excursions can be practiced all year round, in all seasons. In the Retezat massif there are numerous alpine routes that include the peaks of Peleaga, Bucura, Judele Mare, Turnul Portii or the ridges of Stânișoara and Pintenul Slăveiului, all located in the central area of the massif. The huts in Retezat and Parâng (Pietrele, Gura Zlata, Buta, Lunca Florii, Groapa Seacă, Valea de

Pești, Montana, Brazi) are just as many places to stop and relax. The tourist itineraries also cross several gorges such as those on Crișul Alb (downstream of Vața de Jos), the Jiu and Mureș gorges (Deva-Zam corridor), the Iron Gates of Transylvania, the gorges on the Cerna River (Teliuc - Hunedoara) at Zlaști and the three "gates" of the Strei at Ohaba de sub Piatră, at Ciopeia and Subcetate. The mountain lakes, of glacial origin, are tourist attractions of great value.

In the village world, numerous traditions and customs have crystallized throughout history, related to life cycles, occupations, seasons, beliefs or other events that have been transmitted from generation to generation, all of which contribute to the fundamental feature of Romanian folk culture, "unity in diversity". Among the customs and traditions in the villages, those related to the cycle of the seasons and the religious ones are still preserved to some extent. Better preserved are the winter customs, related to the Nativity of the Lord and the New Year.

Folk architecture constitutes one of the most complex forms of manifestation of the culture of our people. Linked to the conditions of material life, folk architecture expresses the people's conception of life and beauty. Harmoniously combining, like other folk arts, the practical needs of life with the aesthetic manifestations of a strong creative drive, the people gave birth to an architecture that represents the materialization of a settlement of proportions both in the development and combination of volumes, as well as in the distribution and emphasis details.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The main purpose of this research is to analyze the structure and diversity of the types of tourism existing in Hunedoara County, to identify priorities for the development of the tourism sector and to propose concrete measures for the sustainable use of tourism resources. The research aims to:

1. Mapping and classifying the main forms of tourism (cultural, rural, ecotourism, mountain tourism, adventure tourism, religious tourism, etc.).
2. Formulating strategic priorities and recommendations for authorities and investors, aiming at sustainable development and increasing the attractiveness of the county as a tourist destination.

To achieve these objectives, the study uses a diversified set of research methods: documentary and bibliographic analysis, by studying specialized literature, reports of tourist institutions and strategic plans regarding the development of tourism in the County.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Types of tourism practiced in the county. Due to its relatively small space, characterized by a specific mountainous tectonic-structural dominance and a moderate human component in size, in the current socio-economic context, Hunedoara County allows the development of a relatively small number of forms of tourism, some of them at an incipient level. Given the territory's equipment to international standards and a prosperous economic situation, by expanding the range of services offered and by increasing the solvency of demand, the forms of tourism practiced locally could be much diversified. The following forms of tourism have the most significant current impact [1,11] on the geographical and socio-cultural space of Hunedoara County:

- mountain tourism (hiking), with a starting point from the depressional area to the peaks of the surrounding mountains. The most spectacular and therefore most frequented routes start from the villages on the southern edge of the depression (Râu de Mori-Brazi, Sălașu de Sus-Nucșoara, Pui-Hobița) towards the high central area of the Retezat massif,

where the national park, the impressive glacial relief, the numerous glacial lakes (82) or the pyramidal peaks exceeding 2300 m altitude are visited. Other circuits highlight the karst and pastoral settlements in the Ohaba-Ponor plateau area (Șureanu Mountains), and others head from Clopotiva and Hobița-Grădiște towards the Țarcu Mountains or from Densuș towards the Poiana Ruscă Mountains;

- traffic tourism, favored by the existence, especially in the western compartment of the depression, of a varied range of tourist attractions (Dacian and Roman remains, old religious monuments, medieval fortresses, noble castles, man-made dam lakes, mountain tourism management centers, paleontological sites, etc.) and of a dense network of modernized, well-maintained roads;

- mountain tourism associated with winter sports, requiring a large volume of investments and large-scale technical equipment, is practiced in an organized manner only around the Râușor Complex, where a ski slope has been arranged and a cable car facility has been built. Under natural conditions, some winter sports are also practiced in other favorable sites, especially in the northern valleys of the Retezat;

- transit tourism is linked to the position of Hunedoara County at the convergence of important communication axes that connect Transylvania to Oltenia and Banat, all benefiting from remarkable tourist resources, located in the adjacent submontane and mountainous regions. The railway and the European road 79 (Simeria – Petroșani - Targu Jiu), as well as the national road 68 (Hațeg-Caransebes) channel appreciable flows of tourists in transit to the objectives in northern Oltenia, southern Transylvania and the Apuseni Mountains, or eastern Banat. It is no coincidence that the few accommodation capacities in the heart of the depression are located, with predilection, precisely along these axes (Sântămăria-Orlea, Hațeg, Pui, Sarmizegetusa);

- cultural-scientific tourism has developed in connection with the existence in the Hațegului Depression and its surroundings of several unique objectives of great cultural and scientific value, for the study of which there is a permanent influx of specialists from various fields: history-archaeology (caves, Dacian, Roman and medieval sites), geography, biology, paleontology (Retezat National Park, the mountain-glacial complex, endokarst, dinosaur fossil resorts, specific types of settlements, etc.), sociology, anthropology, etc. Annually, numerous teams of specialists and students from university centers such as Timișoara, Cluj-Napoca, Bucharest, Craiova and even from abroad, arrive on research internships with scientific and educational-didactic purposes. However, the precariousness of the stay conditions obstructs the development of this type of tourism at the level of the potential offered by the local geographical environment;

- weekend tourism attracts less the population of Hunedoara County and more that of the nearby industrial-urban regions - Hunedoara, Călan, Valea Jiului, from where, as a rule, groups of young people head to the chalets in the Retezatu Mountains or to the objectives in the Șureanu Mountains. A recently reoriented phenomenon is that of the weekend stay, practiced in the summer by Hunedoara families at the summer residences on the Râușor and Râu Mare valleys;

- balneo-climatic tourism (for treatment and rest) is not specific to Hunedoara County, except in terms of the demand for such services, a demand satisfied in the nearby balneo-climatic units (Călan Băi, Geoagiu, etc.), from various other regions of the country or in the seaside resorts;

- agritourism, which is still in the experimental and organizational phase, finds remarkable potential in Hunedoara County through the quality of the natural environment, the socio-cultural environment, the standard of the habitat, the diversity of economic

activities with a traditional touch, mandatory conditions for attracting a diverse clientele to this form of tourist stay. [8,16]

Priorities and measures for the development of rural tourism in the county. At the county level, there are large differences between the levels of development of the rural environment compared to the urban environment, as well as between the development regions. These gaps are manifested both at a global level (on total economic development) and at a branch level (for example, the agricultural branch). The mitigation of the gaps in the rural environment and especially the agricultural ones can be achieved by acting simultaneously in two main directions:

- adapting, modernizing and developing the rural economy in a coherent integrated vision, promoting viable agricultural holdings and non-agricultural enterprises with a strong participation of investors from the country and abroad;

- promoting rural development programs that ensure the application of selection criteria in accordance with the national strategy for sustainable rural development and compatible with those of the EU member states.

To achieve coherent actions, it is necessary, first, to have an in-depth socio-economic analysis of existing resources, identifying the gaps, causes and circumstances that generated them. Adapting, modernizing and developing the rural economy in a coherent integrated vision, by promoting the development of non-agricultural rural enterprises and a strong participation of all economic agents and institutions interested in this complex process, represents an option worth considering. This also implies reducing or correcting the negative effects of the adaptation process of rural areas, by preserving and maintaining the traditions of rural society. The priorities that must be considered for the development of the rural economy of Hunedoara and beyond are:

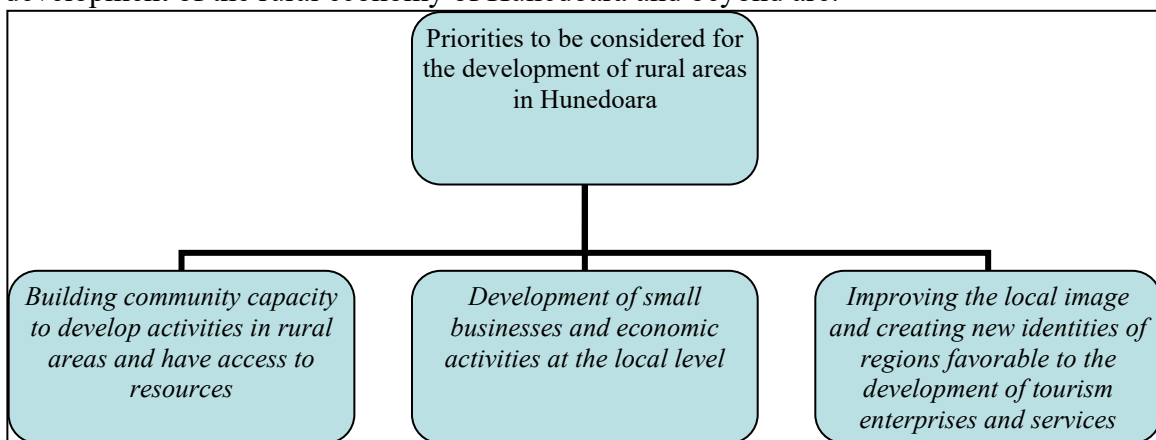


Figure 1. Priorities to be considered for the development of Hunedoara's rural areas

a) Building community capacity to develop activities in rural areas and access resources for which the following actions are required:

- establishing coordination structures for rural development;
- formulating a rural enterprise program to provide support for projects that promote the adaptation, modernization and development of rural areas;
- establishing local working groups to formulate socio-economic strategies;
- initiating training programs for local administration staff;
- establishing information centers in the main areas of interest in each municipality near city halls, schools or cultural centers;
- establishing intermediary agencies for employment;
- increasing funding for socio-economic programs;
- conducting training programs for job creation.

b) Developing small businesses and economic activities at the local level, by practicing the following measures:

- investing in the development, modernization, improvement of road infrastructure;
- expansion and modernization of the communications infrastructure;
- creation of facilities (legal, financial) for the establishment of local enterprises for the production of specific/traditional products (industrialization, forestry and non-timber products);
- expansion of consulting centers for small and medium-sized enterprises and service providers;
- placement of a representative of SMEs at the local council level;
- training of local people, and optimization of partnership conditions for the development of craft activities.

c) Improving the local image and creating new identities of regions favorable to the development of tourism enterprises and services by adopting the following measures:

- creation at the local level of a cultural center to promote traditional products;
- support for cultural activities and traditional programs and their coordination at the regional level;
- preservation of local culture and traditions;
- provision of facilities for the development of rural tourism (ecological, forestry tourism);
- financing of a tourism marketing study;
- improving the quality of tourism services;
- improving the participation of local communities in tourism development.

Proposals for the development of rural areas in Hunedoara with agrotourism potential. Regional development policies and plans in recent years have increasingly considered the tourism sector, as a strategic sector for ensuring a dynamic and sustainable economic growth of regions with significant tourism potential. [2,4,5,14,15]

Rural tourism in Hunedoara County represents one of the most valuable local development resources, through the diversity of the natural environment, cultural heritage and traditions preserved by rural communities. Its potential is considerable, but, unfortunately, the way in which it has been exploited to date leaves much to be desired. The lack of a unitary strategy, clearly outlined and correlated with a general urban plan, has led to sporadic developments, often uncorrelated with each other and lacking a long-term vision. In the absence of substantiated market studies, numerous tourist attractions have been created haphazardly, based on the principle of stimulating interest through the simple existence of the attraction, and not through rigorous and sustainable planning.

This approach has led to the emergence of major dysfunctions: tourism infrastructures developed outside a coherent framework, investments that have not been integrated into the specifics of the areas and, sometimes, even a deterioration of the cultural and natural landscape. Moreover, the traditional villages, defining the identity of the county, are exposed to an accelerated process of change, caused by the chaotic real estate expansion, which risks compromising the authenticity of the rural space. In parallel, the customs, traditions and ethno-folkloric values, which constitute a heritage of inestimable value, are in danger of disappearing, being less and less practiced and transmitted to the younger generations.

Table 1.

Designing a plan of priorities and measures for the development of rural tourism in the county	
PRIORITY 1. ENCOURAGING LOCAL INVESTMENTS IN RURAL TOURISM	
Target group	Residents of rural localities
Purpose	Residents who are willing to invest in rural tourism activities
Measures	Development of tourism in rural areas of the county 1. Carrying out information campaigns on the possibility of practicing rural tourism and the advantages it presents 2. Carrying out information campaigns on the possibility of accessing European funds for investments in agritourism and rural tourism 3. Providing facilities to encourage the practice of agritourism and rural tourism
Location	Rural localities in Hunedoara County
PRIORITY 2. DEVELOPMENT OF AGROTURISM AND RURAL TOURISM	
Target group	- residents of urban localities - tourists from the country, interested in the traditional aspects of the villages in Hunedoara County - foreigners attracted by the elements of the Banat village and other ethnic groups
Purpose	Attracting tourists affected by urbanism by offering special conditions in a traditional environment as close to nature as possible.
Measures	1. Development of a network of rural tourist units 2. Development of tourist services based on the valorization of the traditional style of Arad villages 3. Promotion of agrotourism and rural tourism in the county
Location	Rural localities in Hunedoara, especially in areas where traditions have been preserved or where the natural setting is special.
PRIORITY 3. ENCOURAGING THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM PROJECTS WITH EUROPEAN FUNDING	
Target group	- owners of rural tourism units - residents of rural areas with the willingness to invest in forms of rural tourism
Purpose	New projects comply with certain quality standards that make a difference when the tourist has the opportunity to choose a new destination.
Measures	1. Information campaigns 2. Technical assistance for the preparation of the necessary documentation
Location	The rural area of Hunedoara County
PRIORITY 4. TRANSPORT	
Target group	- Romanian and foreign tourists visiting rural areas in Hunedoara - residents of the region - tourist establishments in the area
Purpose	Accessibility and transport options are decisive in the decision to approach a tourist destination.
Measures	1. Modernization of road infrastructure 2. Modernization of railway infrastructure 3. Modernization of customs points 4. Development of new public transport routes to tourist attractions
Location	Rural localities in Hunedoara County

Source: author's suggestions

In this context, it becomes imperative that the future of rural tourism be built on the principle of the sustainable conservation and valorization of cultural and natural heritage. Protecting and promoting local traditions must become a central pillar of development strategies, as they constitute the main element of attractiveness for tourists interested in authenticity, cultural experiences and reconnection with the rural environment. [3,6,7,10,12]

However, the transformation process is not an easy one. Changes are made slowly, often with hesitation, timidity and insufficient support. The bodies coordinating tourism

activities at the national level, but also those dedicated to rural tourism, [13,9,17] must intensify their presence and make their influence felt through the active involvement of specialists. Currently, many activities in the field of agritourism are carried out almost randomly, without professional guidance or without a minimum of consultancy. Under these conditions, coordination, monitoring and the provision of technical and logistical support are necessary conditions for the professionalization and consolidation of the sector.

In order to move from intentions to concrete actions, a clear phasing of the implementation of a development plan is necessary:

- Adoption of the strategic plan – a process that involves public debate, integration of the observations received, finalization of the document and approval of the final version.
- Training of human resources – training of personnel involved in the field of rural tourism on the mechanisms for accessing and implementing European funds. This can be achieved by organizing specialized courses and seminars, which develop skills in project management and in attracting external financing.
- Creation of an integrated tourist offer – development of a coherent and attractive offer, capable of highlighting the rural specificity of Hunedoara County and attracting private investors. Their involvement is vital for the co-financing of projects, especially in the field of infrastructure, given that European financing usually involves a retroactive reimbursement mechanism.
- The actual implementation of priority actions – the materialization of planned projects and their implementation in a coordinated and sustainable manner, so as to achieve balanced and beneficial development for the entire community.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of such a strategy cannot be observed immediately but will become visible only after a period of several years. In addition, the effects must be analyzed globally, since their impact is reflected on several levels.

1. **Economic impact.** Rural tourism has the capacity to become an essential pillar of the local economy, by diversifying sources of income and stimulating entrepreneurship.

- Creation and maintenance of jobs – accommodation units, agro-tourism guesthouses, traditional restaurants, guide and transport services generate direct jobs. Indirectly, opportunities will arise for farmers, craftsmen, local producers or providers of related services.

- Additional income for the rural population – villagers can capitalize on their own products (cheese, honey, meat products, handicrafts), thus obtaining complementary income, which can ensure a more stable living.

- Increasing investment attractiveness – with the development of infrastructure and the promotion of tourist areas, Hunedoara can attract private capital in construction, services or creative industries related to tourism.

- Multiplication effect in the economy – the money spent by tourists does not remain only in the tourism sector, but is redistributed to other sectors: agriculture, trade, transport, handicrafts. This can generate a stronger and more resilient local economic network.

- Contributions to local budgets – taxes and duties from tourism activities increase the capacity of local administrations to invest in infrastructure, education and public services.

2. **Social impact.** The development of rural tourism has a major influence on the quality of life of local communities.

- Reducing migration and maintaining the young population – through employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in the tourism sector, young people can find viable alternatives to emigrating to big cities or abroad.

- Increasing employment – especially for women and the elderly, who can contribute through activities such as traditional gastronomy, crafts or family accommodation services.

- Improving the standard of living – additional income generated by tourism allows for investments in housing, education and health, which leads to an increase in the standard of living.

- Strengthening community cohesion – collective involvement in tourism projects stimulates collaboration between locals and strengthens the sense of belonging and common identity.

- Training and continuing education – rural tourism requires new skills (foreign languages, hospitality, management, digitalization), which stimulates learning processes and adaptation to market requirements.

3. **Cultural impact.** Rural tourism becomes a vector for the conservation and revitalization of tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

- Preserving traditional architecture – guesthouses and houses restored in authentic style contribute to maintaining the architectural identity of Hunedoara villages.

- Revitalization of customs and traditions – thematic events, festivals and folk fairs stimulate the practice and transmission of customs from one generation to another.

- Promotion of local gastronomy – traditional dishes become an element of tourist attraction and, at the same time, contribute to the preservation of authentic recipes.

- Creation of a regional cultural brand – Hunedoara can be promoted as a unique destination by combining history (Dacian fortresses, Corvin Castle) with rural specificity (music, dance, folk costumes, gastronomy).

- Cultural education of tourists – visitors will learn about local values, traditions and identity, which contributes to positive intercultural exchanges.

4. **Ecological impact.** Responsible tourism development can contribute to environmental protection and sustainable use of natural resources.

- Protecting biodiversity and natural landscapes – Hunedoara's mountainous areas, forests and protected areas can be exploited through ecotourism, without degrading them.

- Stimulating ecological agricultural practices – to meet tourists' demand for organic products and authentic experiences, farmers can adopt more environmentally friendly production methods.

- Reducing pollution through green tourism – guesthouses and tourist units can be equipped with solar panels, recycling systems and energy-efficient solutions.

- Ecological education of visitors – tourists can be involved in environmental awareness and protection programs, which increases collective responsibility towards natural resources.

- Preservation of landscape heritage – in the long term, maintaining balanced and controlled tourism will prevent excessive urbanization and the destruction of the authentic rural setting.

5. **Long-term impact.** The combination of these dimensions will generate a synergy effect:

- Sustainable local development – rural tourism becomes a stable source of income, independent of seasonal fluctuations, supporting the economic resilience of communities.

- Strengthened cultural identity – traditions, customs and values are not only preserved but also transformed into development resources.

- Increased visibility of Hunedoara County – it can become a model of good practice in rural tourism at national and even European level.

Thus, the implementation of a coherent development plan, well-founded and supported by both the authorities and the private sector, can transform rural tourism in Hunedoara County into an important vector of local and regional development, with direct benefits for communities and an essential role in preserving and promoting local cultural identity.

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