

TOURISM AND AGRO-TOURISM RESOURCES IN BIHOR COUNTY

Roman Lucian

University of Oradea, Faculty of Environment Protection, Gen. Magheru nr.26
lucianroman54@yahoo.com

Abstract

This paper intends to present a part of the tourism and agro-tourism resources of Bihor County. The relief in Bihor County is characterized by a great diversity of the landscape, generated by the various forms of relief, by the alternation between mountains and hills, with depressions and valley lanes which are completed by various components of vegetation, fauna and waters.

This diversity of the forms of relief, coloured with anthropic attractions and local traditions and customs, have created the necessary premises for the development of tourism and agro-tourism in the Northern part of the historical-geographical area called Crisana. Bihor County is included in the category of counties with a high tourism potential, having 16.8% of the total area of the Apuseni Mountains.

In Bihor Mountains all the conditions necessary for the development of rural and agro-tourism are fulfilled: an attractive and not polluted natural landscape, with several varied natural and anthropic resources.

Key words: springs, waterfalls, caves, glaciers

INTRODUCTION

Bihor County is situated in the North-West of Romania. It has an area of 7,544 square km, occupying the sixth place in the country as regards the area and a population of 595,685 inhabitants in the year 2005, occupying the 13th place, as regards the number of inhabitants.

Taking into account the natural elements (skiable area, configuration of slopes, the aspect of the landscape), the Bihor mountains occupy the 4th place in the country, regarding the climate potential the 5th place, and accessibility the 8th place in the country.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The karst complex called ‘Cetatile Ponorului’ (The Fortresses of Ponor) represents the greatest karstic phenomenon of Romania, known and appreciated all over the world.

‘Cetatile Ponorului’ is formed of three great calcareous cirques, situated in a huge forest depression, 300 m deep.

In Bihor Mountains we face a special phenomenon: the huge ravinement called ‘Groapa Ruginoasa’ (The Rusty Hole). On all its area, a very active erosion process revealed quartz layers, whose red-violet colour gives the area a special aspect; from the distance it seems to be an open wound in the mountain. The erosion advanced very fast, 80 years ago, the place being marked only by a very small valley.

At present its depth is over 100 m and the width over 450 m, and it is declared as being a geologic reservation.

Its fantastic aspect makes you think it is a little part of the Colorado Canyon.

The following forms of relief make the object of tourism:

Plateaus: Padis – Cetatile Ponorului, Lumea Pierduta (The Lost World), Ferice Plai – Hoanca Crisul Pietros, Culmea Carligatele, Sesul Padis, Poiana Florilor (Flowers Glade);

Depression fields: Groapa de la Barsa (The Hole of Barsa), Depresiunea Balileasa and the area La Grajduri (At the Stables)

The caves from the Bihor Mountains have a strong attraction on the visitors due to the resources they possess:

- the size and form of the cave;
- the presence of *speleothems* specific exclusively to the endokarst;
- the presence of underground rivers and waterfalls;
- the climate with curing properties;
- the presence of the absolute darkness and the special acoustics;

The most important caves in Bihor County are: Pestera Ursilor (Bears Cave), Pestera Cetatea Radesei (Radeasa Fortress Cave), Pestera Ferice (Ferice Cave), Pestera Micula (Micula Cave), Pestera Capul (Head Cave), Pestera Cetatile Ponorului (Cave of Ponor Fortresses), Pestera Zapodie (Zapodie Cave).

The great attraction of the caves in Bihor County is given by the existence of speleothems: *stalactites*, *stalagmites*, *baldachins*, *stalagmite flows*, *helictites*, *anthodites*. The stalactites, stalagmites, baldachins, stalagmite flows are speleothems which can be found in the Bears Cave at Chiscau.

In the same cave it was discovered a skeleton of a cavern bear, in an anatomic connection, which is very rare.

A particularity of the karst in the Bihor Mountains is the presence of ice caves; there are three ice caves in Bihor County: Avenul din Bortig,

(The Gap of Bortig), Ghetarul Focul Viu (The Glacier of the Burning Fire) and Ghetarul de la Bursa (The Glacier of Bursa).

The Glacier of Bortig, situated in the vicinity of Cetatile Ponorului Cave, is the second ice block in Romania regarding its size, with over 30,000 cubic meters of ice, after the Glacier of Scarisoara. The peerless charm of the Glacier of the Burning Fire situated in the same area of Bihor Mountains is given by the reflection of sunrays at a certain time of day.

The great lakes of accumulation from Bulz, Munteni, Lesu are elements of tourism attraction. Fishing is generally authorized, but swimming and shipping activities are not always possible for security reasons and for maintaining the quality of water. The pensions near the lakes of Lesu and Bulz are very popular.

The Mountains of Padurea Craiului (Lovelace's Forest) are crossed by an extremely disorganized hydrographic net, characteristic to karstic regions. This mountain is crossed by Crisul Repede River in the North and by Crisul Negru River in the South.

Crisul Repede and its affluents: Galaseni, Misid, Bratcuta, Roiul and Iadul cross the northern slopes of the mountain. All the affluents have interesting streams, with important and beautiful quays, slopes, foaming springs, caves and underground streams. The above mentioned rivers can be used for fishing, an oz for promoting shipping activities. Activities such as rafting and kayak can be done on some sectors of Crisul Repede River, especially on Vad – Bratca sector.

The waterfalls are of great importance for tourism. They are spectacular because of their fall and the acoustic of the waves. The size, the vertical fall, is the defining factor of their attractive value. The most representative waterfalls in Bihor County are: Saritoarea Iedutului (The Billy Goat's Waterfall) (about 23 m), Valul Miresei (The Bride's Veil) (about 35 m), Iadolina (about 20 m), in the Crisul Repede basin, the Waterfall of Vadul Crisului (about 20 m) on Crisul Repede River, Saritoarea Bohodeiului (Bohodei Waterfall) (80 m), in Bihor Mountains.

The springs are attractive for the unique coming at the surface of the underground waters, often true rivers with artesian splashes. The most representative are: Izbucul Galateni, Izbandis, Bratcanilor, Toplita, Rosia, Toplicioarei, all in Padurea Craiului Mountains, the intermittent Izbuc of Calugari from Platoul Vascau, Izbucul Remeti from Bihor Mountains.

The various natural reservations situated in the mountainous area of Valea Iadului are also considered to be of great interest for tourism.

Botanic reservations

The Reservation of the Carpathian Lilac (*Syringa josikaea*) from Valea Iadului (*corn Bulz-Remeti*) includes an endemic species in the Carpathians. At present it is observed and administrated by Forestry Department Bulz.

Two specimens can be found at Stana de Vale, near the former complex Excelsior;

Buteasa Peak (1792 m) has a sub alpine vegetation with mountain pine (*Pinus mugo*) associated with *Alnus viridis*, gentiana (*Gentiana punctata*), omag (*Aconitum paniculatum*), and small juniper (*Junipetus sihirica*). The Buteasa Peak is situated near Stana de Vale, above the picturesque Moara Dracului (Devil's Mill) Waterfall.

Speleological reservations

The Water Cave from Valea Lesului – a horizontal cave, developed in Jurassic limestone, active, with a meandered underground – 1177 m length, with a bio-speleological importance of *amphipods* and *coleopters*;

The Water Cave from Bulz is situated in the inferior basis of Valea Iadului and represents in fact the emerging of waters from Pestera – Ponor Sancuta and from the karstic depression Ponoare, which form one of the most impressive karstic systems in Padurea Craiului Mountains; at present it can be visited on a distance of 1170 m;

The Cave from Fata Apei is situated on the middle stream of Valea Iadului, around Bulz Commune, Remeti Village, at a basis of a limestone wall (Peretele Cornilor). It has a modest size (350 m);

The Bears Cave situated 86 km far from Oradea City, on DN 76 (national road), Oradea – Sudrigiu Commune + DJ 763 (county road) Chiscau Village, is a rare beauty and enchants the visitors with its superb speleological architecture. The speleological reservation (over 1 km length, at the altitude of 419 m) presents a variety of stalagmites and stalactites, as well as fossils of the cavern bear – extinct 15,000 years ago;

The Cave of the Burning Fire, situated at a distance of 2 hours walking from Padis Hut, at an altitude of 1120 m, includes a glacier with a volume of 25,000 cubic meters (the second in Romania) that shines in the sunlight because of a 'window' in the ceiling that lightens the cave, giving the fairy-like impression of a 'burning fire';

The Cave of Meziad - (DN 76 up to Beius, then a deviation of 16 km), a speleological reservation in Padurea Craiului Mountains, one of the biggest caves in Romania (4,750 m length and several levels)

The following spectacular caves with the same importance are worth mentioning: the Cave of Cetatile Ponorului – the longest underground water stream in Romanian – 5 km; Corbasca Cave – famous for its big concretions; the Cave from Barsa Hole – in Bihor mountains (at 1100 m altitude); Vadu Crisului Cave – (DN 1 up to Topa de Cris, then deviation of 6 km), has 5 km length and is arranged for being visited; the Cave from Tasnad – (20 km south-east of Oradea), near Tasnad; the Bortig Gap, 40 m deep, is the second glacier regarding its size in Europe following the Glacier of Scarisoara; Cetatile Radesei Cave – (1-2 hours walking from the Padis

Hut) is famous for the 5 natural windows, the sunlight giving the cliffs fairy aspects, etc.

Valleys and waterfalls

Saritoarea Bohodeiului Waterfall – on the road Oradea – Deva, near Pietroasa, has a fall of 80 m, the third in the country regarding the height and together with the nearby area form a complex reservation (geological, floristic and forestry).

Crisul Repede Defile – comes together with the national road Cluj-Oradea and then passes through Padurea Craiului Mountains, being a complex reservation (geological, faunistic and floristic), with an area of 247 ha, includes 11 caves and the limestone defile of Crisul Repede River (from the springs to Bucea).

Bulbuci Waterfall – in Bihor Mountains (40 m height)

Moara Dracului (Devil's Mill) Waterfall – from Stana de Vale to Valea Draganului (20 m height)

Sighistel Valley – geological reservation (2 km from Sighistel, near Campeni)

Galbena Valley and Spring, with a rare spectacular sight, filled with rare natural elements: Galbena Spring (a karstic phenomenon which drains the waters from the Cetatile Ponorului Cave), Poiana Florilor (Flowers' Glade), Balcoanele Galbenei (Galbena's Balconies), Cheile Galbenei (Galbena's Quays), Cascada Evantai (Fan Waterfalls), etc.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Romanian territory and implicitly the area of Bihor County are characterized by a great variety of cultural and historical values such as: the popular area, ethnography, folklore, traditions and historical vestiges, natural surroundings combined in harmony with a varied and picturesque landscape. All these represent valences of the Romanian rural tourism.

Appeared and developed on the most varied forms of relief since the Thracian and Dacian times, the Romanian rural dwellings have kept, in a great extent, the ancient traditions and customs, a rich and varied folklore, original elements of ethnography and crafts that can be valued in tourism by a strategy of organization and development of the rural tourism, at the national and regional level.

CONCLUSIONS

The situation of the rural and agro tourism in Bihor County can be appreciated as being at the corresponding level, though it is not even close to the real potential of development.

The inexistence of any coherent and efficient projects that head to the same direction, the late privatization of tourism, the faulty quality of some types of management in tourism, the lack of instruments for tourists' informing and the lack of the financial instruments (credits with a low interest, non-reimbursable financing) position Bihor county in the same line of the counties with a tourism potential insufficiently valued.

The tourist's choice in taking part at a certain action or destination is determined, in a greater and greater extent, by the attraction of the offer, which is the product of the combination between the patrimony elements of an area (natural, anthropic, cultural, etc) and the tourism services (the structure and quality of services offered to the tourist) with the aim of fulfilling the necessities (comfort, relaxation, treatment, etc.)

If the human factor can intervene in a small extent to the component elements of the patrimony, the only element that can determine the development of tourism remains the provision of services specific to it, by development, diversity and their quality increase.

REFERENCES

1. TIGU GABRIELA, 2002 – Turismul montan (*Tourism in the mountains*), Editura Uranus, Bucharest
2. GLAVAN V., 2003 – Turism rural. Agroturism. Turism durabil. Ecoturism (*Rural tourism. Agro-tourism. Durable tourism. Ecotourism*), Ed. Economica, Bucharest
3. GHERES MARINELA, 2003 – Agroturism (*Agro-tourism*), Ed. Risoprint, Cluj Napoca