

POSSIBILITIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM IN THE WESTERN MOUNTAINS OF ROMANIA

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REVIEW, RESEARCH ARTICLE

Abstract

Romania, at the European level, has a chance of success in the tourism field if it can exploit, preserve and promote rural tourism. The main reason lies in the fact that Romania still has a rich and varied ethnographic heritage, and the Romanian village is still not very much penetrated by modern life. By this we should not understand that Romania doesn't have other tourist resources that can enhance it, but the Romanian village civilization represents a continuous source of tourist attractions.

The natural resources, the types of settlements, the ethnographic and cultural heritage of the inhabitants of the Apuseni Mountains, can have an important role in the development of rural tourism in Romania.

Keywords: (max. 5) rural tourism, volunteer tourism, local services, local culture, Cave.

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INTRODUCTION

Practicing rural tourism in the Apuseni Mountains represents an alternative to traditional, mass tourism, carried out in mountain tourist resorts, as well as to the standard tourist offer, as it attracts tourists who show interest in taking a vacation in an unpolluted environment. Rural tourist destinations offer holidays that are less affected by the disadvantages associated with mass tourism destinations, namely the crowding, the lack of personalized services, the need to organize holidays in advance, etc.

Rural tourism in the Apuseni Mountains interferes with mountain tourism, but differs from it in that the tourist infrastructure is smaller, the tourist flows are smaller, the holidays are unique, etc. In addition to mountain tourism, rural tourism can be connected with other forms of recreation such as:

- ecotourism (programs to observe some species of wild fauna and flora, thematic hiking, bicycle rides, dog sledding, skiing and hiking in the snow, visiting caves and other karst areas designated for this purpose, etc.);

- adventure tourism (sports caving and exploration of karst systems, skiing, climbing and mountaineering, ice climbing, rafting and kayaking, etc.);

- volunteer tourism
- cultural and patrimonial tourism
- scientific tourism (studies and researches in various fields related to the natural, social and cultural capital of the area);
- tourism for youth (camps for children and young people, etc.)

Rural tourism activities, well managed and combined in a balanced way with other economic and social initiatives within the Apuseni Mountains, would contribute positively to the sustainable development of this area, offering at the same time an occupational alternative for part of the local communities and ensuring a material valorisation of some traditional activities that tend to disappear from the everyday landscape.

The development of rural tourism in the Apuseni Mountains must presuppose:

- producing a minimal impact on nature and local culture;
- active conservation of nature and cultural heritage;
- use of local services;
- the visitor's special understanding of the elements of nature and local culture;
- the visitor's direct contact with locals;
- the determination of realistic expectations of the client, especially by carrying out a correct marketing.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

On the Romanian territory, the Carpathian Mountains have three large branches: the Eastern Carpathians, the Southern Carpathians and the Western Carpathians. The Apuseni Mountains represent a subdivision of the Western Carpathians, also having the role of closing between the branches of the Carpathian Mountains a beautiful, attractive and legendary region called Transylvania.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

If we were to summarize the elements of the Apuseni Mountains that can be the basis for the development of rural tourism, then the main aspects that must be taken into account are:

- primarily the forested karst and the endokarst and exokarst relief forms;
- the culture and traditional way of life of the inhabitants of the area (architecture, customs, port, crafts, sheep herding, working in the forest, mowing, liming, fairs, etc.);
- wild flora and fauna (large carnivores, cave fauna, medicinal plants, etc.);
- history (Tara Moșilor, Horea, Cloșca, Crișan, Avram Iancu, etc.).

The characteristics of the clientele practicing rural tourism in the Apuseni Mountains are:

- from the point of view of age, rural tourism is addressed to the mature and elderly population from the urban environment;
- from the point of view of income, the visitors are in the category of those with average or less, often below average incomes;
- from the point of view of the socio-professional category, visitors are generally people with a different level of culture.

The first factor for the development of rural tourism in the Apuseni Mountains is the relief.

The uniqueness of the landscape of the Apuseni Mountains, which combines ecosystems of great value in terms of biodiversity conservation with the variety of karst phenomena and traditional activities, required the creation of a natural park whose purpose is to protect and preserve them - the Apuseni Natural Park.

Among the mountain ecosystems, the most important is the forested karst one, characteristic of this area, housing plant and

animal species protected both nationally and internationally. The numerous caves and other karst elements give a unique touch, having a special value, both from a scientific and tourist point of view.

Most of the objectives of special speleological interest serve the purposes of protection, research and visiting.

Caves that are of particular scientific importance, e.g. Pietra Altarului Cave, Valea Rea Cave, Humpleu Cave, Micula Cave, Cold Cave, Vârfurașu Cave, Avenul V5, Hoanca Apei Cave, Pozarul Poliței Cave, Vârtoș Glacier, Cornii Cave.

In the practice of rural tourism, an important role is played by the rural settlements, respectively the local communities, which actually constitute the main rural tourism product.

The particularities of the relief in the Apuseni Mountains, associated with the other natural tourist resources (climate, hydrography), have determined a stronger humanization compared to other mountain areas in the country. Thus, in the Apuseni Mountains, the rural settlements, with everything they involve, namely agricultural crops, constructions, infrastructure - better or not developed, various activities - are found at over 1100 m altitude.

In the Apuseni Mountains, the rural settlements are scattered, with a small number of inhabitants (under 500 inhabitants, for example, in the Bihor Mountains) and which are found especially in the territories of Alba and Hunedoara counties. The distance between households can reach up to 250 m.

The rural settlements of Apuseni represent a tourist attraction through the very houses and households they are made of. The traditional architecture is simple, sober and highlights the connection between man and the natural environment. Thus, the traditional houses are built from a small stone plinth, the walls are made of wood and stone, and the roofs are high, inclined to be able to cope with the amounts of precipitation that we know are greater in the mountain area. The interior of the house is simple, practical and aesthetic.

The villages of Apuseni stand out for their old crafts preserved from generation to generation, some of which have a great aesthetic and artistic value.

The residents are recognized for woodworking (vats, barrels, dowry boxes-at Budureasa), pottery (at Vadu Crișului),

stoneworking, handicrafts, weaving, folk wear, etc.

Among the rural settlements of tourist interest we can mention: Gârda de Sus, Albac, Șuncuiuș, Ciucea, Vidra, Roșia Montană, etc.

The mountainous area is also famous for the existence of some ethnographic areas, which

can be included in the touristic capitalization. They are characterized by originality, authenticity and creativity. It stands out: Motilor Country, Beiușului Country, Călățele, Zarandului Country.

CONCLUSIONS

Educating and making the locals aware of the values that the area holds in terms of natural and cultural heritage is important because many of the locals still don't understand how the tourist activity can become a profitable one, nor do they know what they should do in this regard. It is very important that rural tourism in Apuseni to be coordinated in the future through tourism associations, or other forms of cooperation agreed by all parties, at the commune level, as well as a regional tourism association.

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