

TOURIST PROSPECTION STUDY IN THE LUNCASPRIE, BIHOR COUNTY, ROMANIA

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Abstract: The development of tourism at the level of the Bihor tourist destination and the growing demand for new forms and alternatives to spend free time led to the identification of new possibilities for diversifying the tourist offer. In this context, the present study aims at the prospecting and analysis of tourism resources and infrastructure in order to capitalize on them through tourism. The opportunity for this approach is also given by the proximity of the Municipality of Oradea, as well as by the need of the residents of this city to escape at the weekend in an area totally different from the city.

Key words: tourism resources, natural and mad-made tourism resources, infrastructure tourism, tourism potential

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INTRODUCTION

The analysis framework is a potential basic element in tourism activities, it has multiple functions, among which the material support of all activities, including tourism, decoration and finally, tourism resource (Herman and Tătar, 2015; Herman and Wendt, 2011; Herman et al., 2017; Ilie et al., 2017).

At the level of the studied area, it imposes itself as a basic, representative component in the geographical and landscape structure of the Luncasprie locality. The charm of the hilly landscape, with its forests of harmony, is complemented by the existence of numerous caves in the area, by the steep slopes in the Videi Gorges areas, by the caste forests or by the wonderful hunting grounds in the forest cantons area.

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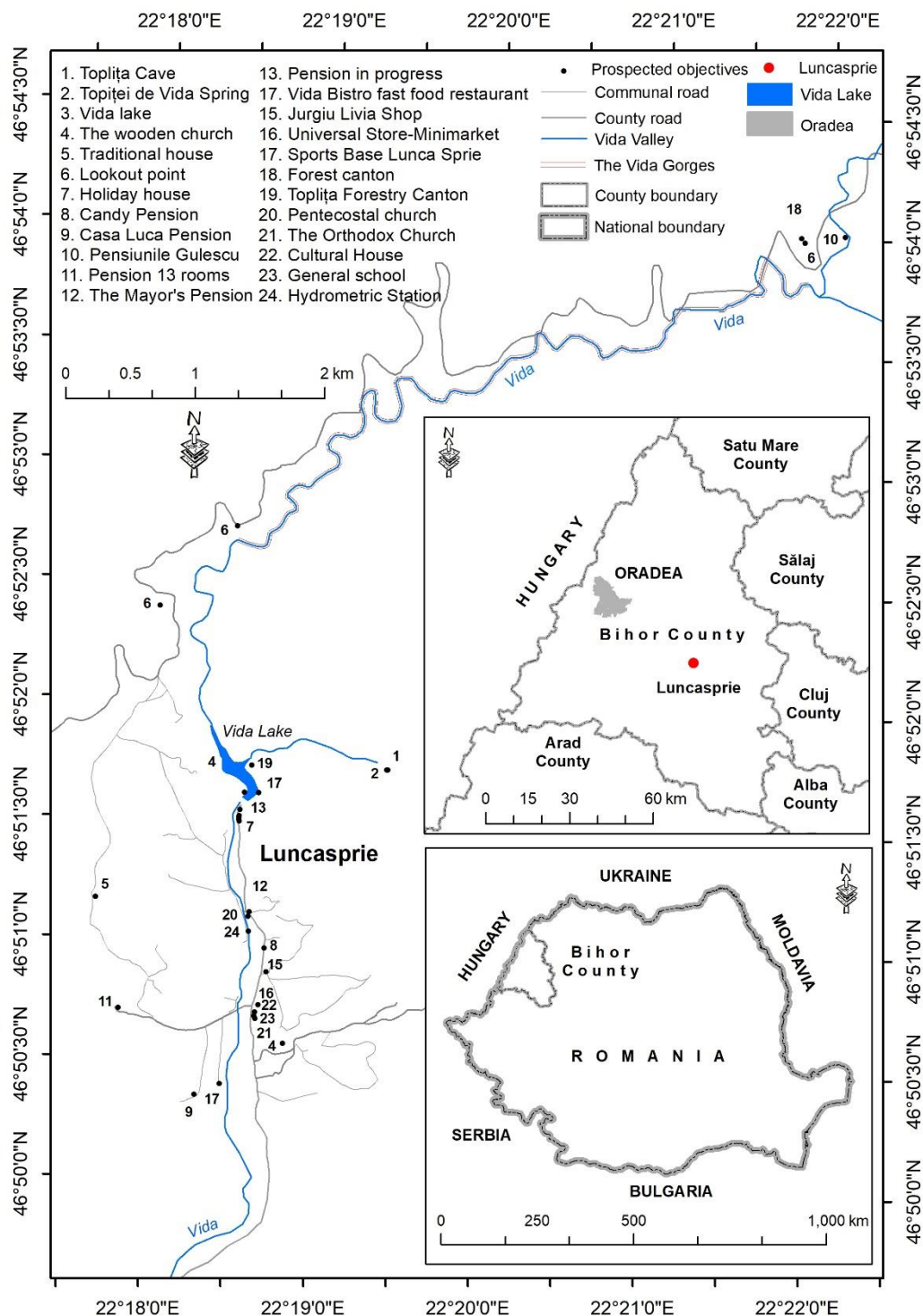


Figure 1. The studied area

The flora and fauna of the Luncasprie area are associated with the landscape components, complementing each other, and forming a unitary ensemble that hosts a tourist potential and agrees with high chances of capitalization in the immediate perspective.

The touristic and leisure value of the vegetation is increased by the existence of some species, among which stand out the maple (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), the forest cherry (*Cerasus avium var. silvestris*), the chestnut with edible fruits (*Castanea sativa*), etc.

The fauna was of touristic and recreational interest: species of hunting interest, among which stand out the wild boar (*Sus scrofa*), roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*), fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), hare (*Lepus europaeus*), pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*), etc.

The totality of the natural elements, together with the climatic ones, create in certain periods of time in this geographical space or comfortable atmosphere that determines a relaxing, relaxing, even sedative bioclimate, which makes these places attractive for visitors.

Against this background, the present study aims to prospect and analyze the tourist potential of the Luncasprie Locality, Bihor County, Romania, to establish the tourism development and capitalization strategy.

The town of Luncasprie is located in the northwestern part of Romania, in the central area of Bihor County, 52 km from the municipality of Oradea and 3 km from the commune of Dobrești to which it administratively belongs (Figure 1). The municipality of Beiuș is the nearest town, located at 35 km.

The study of tourism potential aimed at the analysis of tourism resources (natural and anthropic) and tourism infrastructure. Tourist resources represent one of the determining factors with a major role in the genesis, evolution and dynamics of tourism as an anthropic activity. From a structural point of view, tourism resources can be classified into natural and man-made tourism resources (Caciora et al., 2019; Herman and Tătar, 2015; Ilieș et al., 2013). The accommodation base represents the essential element of the material base on which the development of all tourist activities depends, having close links with the tourist potential related to the space where they appear and manifest (Herman and Tătar, 2015; Herman et al., 2019, 2020). Thus, these elements "represent a defining indicator in the shaping and evolution of tourist destinations" (Herman et al., 2020, p. 106).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study represents the results of the research undertaken in the specialized literature and in the field. In the time frame between 2021 and 2022, several field trips were undertaken to identify, analyze and map all tourism resources (natural and man-made resources) and tourism infrastructure. The tools used in this regard were the tourist prospecting sheets specially designed to capture the tourist potential. The software used for mapping the prospected objectives and drawing up figure 1 was ArcGis 10.6.

TOURIST RESOURCES

Natural tourism resources

The relief stands out for the variety of karst forms, their frequency in the territory, proportion and physiognomy. The main categories of objectives belonging to the relief in the studied area are gorges and caves (Cocșan, 1988).

The Vida gorges, with a length of over 10 km, are in the middle and upper basin of the valley, being bounded downstream by the homonymous lake, and upstream by the confluence of the valley with its tributary, Viduța (Cocean, 2000) (figures 2). A special charm of Vida Gorges is also given by the presence of numerous caves and caves (figure 3).

In conclusion, all these beauties that the Videi Gorges display are among the tourist attractions worthy of highlighting and which could be included in a relatively short time among the tourist routes of the area of which it is a part.

The Toplița cave is in the lower part of the Răcaș-Slavu Pleș karst plateau, in the Toplița Valley, approximately 20 m above the spring of the same name (Figure 4). In the year 2000, the cave was declared by law a protected area of national interest corresponding to the III category of the IUCN (cave nature reserve). It covers an area of 0.1 ha and overlaps the site of community importance Defileul Crișului Repede - Pădurea Craiului (Law 5, 2000; Olău et al., 2019).



Figure 2. Vida Gorges



Figure 3. Underground gallery



Figure 4. Entrance to Toplița Cave



Figure 5. Toplița Spring

From a touristic point of view, the hydrography of the karst presents two distinct features which, in turn, have a recognized touristic value. They are due to eruptions and groundwater draining the karst.

Topliței de Vida Spring or Cave no. 4, as it is also called by specialists from Topliței Valley, is located at 250 m altitude, being the source of the left tributary of Vida, next to the Vida Lake. This outcrop is carved in Cretaceous limestone, drains the waters of the karst plateau from Răcaș-Slavu Pleș (Preguz Cave 460 m altitude) and appears in the form of a cave mouth, occupied by the mirror of the siphon lake, with an average flow of 100- 120 l/s (Figure 5). The cave and its outlet are in the western part of the karst plateau at the lower level of the group of caves in Topliței Valley, arranged on four floors (Orășeanu, 2020).

A defining component of the geographical landscape, the vegetation leaves its decisive mark on the tourist values. Vegetation, respectively the forest, is the sine qua non condition for the existence of large fauna, which makes up the hunting funds so requested by sports tourists (hunters). Vegetation becomes a tourist attraction through its composition and the rare (endemic) species it contains. To protect them, natural areas were established. To a large extent, the eastern part of the administrative territory of the Luncasprie locality overlaps with the protected area Defileul Crișului Repede - Pădurea Craiului. The area was declared a site of community importance in 2007 and covers an area of 39.410 ha. The site represents a natural area, designated for the purpose of protecting biodiversity and maintaining a favorable state of conservation of wild flora and fauna, as well as some habitats of community interest that includes the northwest of the Craiului Forest Mountains and the middle basin of the Crișului Repede (Agency National for Protected Areas, 2021).

MAN-MADE RESOURCES

The evolution of the spatio-temporal manifestations of the local community has led to the emergence of man-made tourism resources, among which the economic edifices with a touristic, religious, architectural function and the ethnographic particularities specific to the area stand out (Herman and Tătar, 2015).

The Vida Lake (the emerald paradise of Bihor) is a special point of attraction, especially during the summer, for the inhabitants of the commune of Dobrești, and in the latter period throughout the year, for as many tourists as possible who visit these places. Those who come to visit the place are impressed by the unreal color of the lake, which changes according to how the seasons dress the forest that is mirrored in the water's shine. The lake is in the lower area of the hydrographic basin of the Vida Valley, upstream from the locality of Luncasprie in a picturesque area, surrounded by high hills, covered with deciduous forests mixed with conifers, which gives it a special beauty (Figure 6).

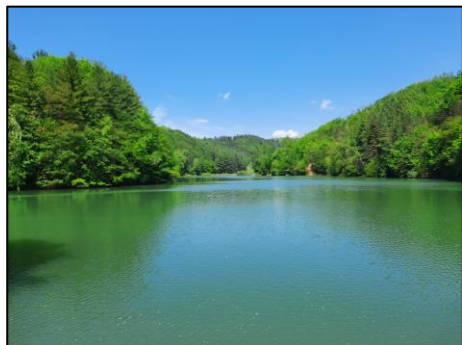


Figure 6. Lake Vida



Figure 7. Vida Lake spillway funnel

It has an area of five hectares of water, is stretched over a length of 1.5 km, and houses a rich fish fund (not exploited to capacity), being also the drinking water reserve of all the villages of the Dobrești commune (Anca, 2008).

Another aspect, which makes it unique in Romania and represents a tourist curiosity, is the funnel-shaped spillway, through which the lake waters drain, with the role of normalizing the flow of the river when there is abundant precipitation in the area (Figure 7).

The wooden church, "Sfinții Arhangheli Mihail și Gavril" from Luncasprie is located in the center of the village on a high hill with steep slopes. It was built in 1650 in the form of a rectangular nave made of thick beams of gorun wood, fitted in a dovetail system, on the site where another, older church would have existed (Figure 8). This is proven by the old Romanian prints identified at this place, including the famous *Pravilă* from Târgoviște, printed as is known, in 1652. The place of worship is documented in 1725, and a few years after its construction, the church did not had painted walls, taking the place of painting icons on wood. The painting of the church executed by an anonymous painter in the year 1769 was damaged in 1935-1936 in that the monument underwent an uninspired renovation in which the walls were covered both externally and internally with a thick layer of plaster. It was also then that the old shingle covering was replaced with another one made of "horjita" or "mare" tiles, as the locals call it. The changes undergone over time, including those of 1949 and 1987, but also the disappearance of assets with artistic or documentary value have greatly diminished the historical value of the current church (Godea et al., 1978).



Figure 8. The wooden church

The traditional peasant houses of Luncasprie built at the beginning of the 20th century from interlaced beams and glued with mud (china) mixed with wheat straw and chaff, with gorun plank ceilings and whitewashed or blue washed. These houses have a simple architecture, they consist of two rooms and an awning (hall), access to the house being provided through the awning, opening to the two rooms, respectively to the sitting room and to the "clean room" from the street. On one side of the length of the house, in the side towards the bypass (courtyard), there is the porch (porch), a plan and elevation element with multiple functionalities (Figure 9). "Târnațu" is bordered by pillars inlaid with certain ethnographic elements, with local specificity.

Under the aspect of the proportions of the traditional houses in the Luncasprie area, the high height of the roof (in two or four bays), about the same as the height of the wall, suitable roof for the area with heavy atmospheric precipitation (especially in winter and early spring) should be emphasized, allowing rapid drainage towards the eaves of water or heavy snow that usually occurs in the area.



Figure 9. Traditional house

TOURIST INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure has an important place in the tourist and leisure offer, contributing to a great extent to the organization and development of tourism, influencing the level of tourism exploitation of the territory. It contains all the accommodation and catering units.

Regarding the type of accommodation structures, this represents a small range of accommodation units at locality level, there are only two functional units, a guesthouse and a tourist house, but also three other guesthouses under construction, one of which is completed, but we still entered the tourist circuit.

On the right side on the way up to Lake Vida there are four small holiday houses, consisting of two or three rooms that are rented only to friends and acquaintances, not being classified in any way (figures 10).



Figure 10. Holiday homes



Figure 11. Holiday home

Also, here near the lake, the accommodation capacity of the fifth holiday house has been increased, which now has six rooms (Figure 11).

From the analysis of statistical data from the last 10 years on the studied area, it shows us an upward trend regarding the opening of new tourist reception structures with accommodation function.

The first boarding house opened in the town of Luncașprie in 2010 is the "Candy Pension", classified as three daisies (Figure 12). Located almost in the center of the village on the road that goes up to the Vida Lake, the guest house consists of three rooms with double beds and private bathrooms, but also an apartment consisting of two rooms with double beds each, plus a sofa bed with one bathroom. Also, on the ground floor there is a kitchen, where you can cook and dine, and in the outer courtyard there is a gazebo, where you can grill.



Figure 12. Candy Pension



Figure 13. Casa Luca Pension

Located on the edge of the village, in its southern part, in a place away from the noise of cars, "Casa Luca Pension" (Figure 13) offers its tourists the opportunity to enjoy peace in the middle of nature. Opened in 2018, the guesthouse offers tourists four spacious rooms with double beds and tastefully decorated private bathrooms, as well as a kitchen where tourists can find

everything they need to cook and eat. In the courtyard there is a hall for various events (birthdays, baptisms, engagements, etc.) with a capacity of approximately 50 people, but which can also be used for relaxation through various games, such as billiards or table tennis.



Figure 14. Mayor Pension



Figure 15. 13 Rooms Pension

Located in the old center of the village, on the dam road, the "Mayor Pension" (Figure 14) is 100% completed but is not yet included in the tourist circuit. It has seven rooms with double beds and private bathrooms, as well as a spacious living room with kitchen.

The largest boarding house (Figure 15) that is to be opened in Luncasprie, is located at the entrance to the locality, on the side of the county road (DJ 767C) that connects with the Dobrești commune. This guesthouse is designed on three levels, is 95% complete and has a capacity of 13 rooms, all with double beds, of which only 11 have their own bathrooms. On the ground floor of the pension, there is a space for a bar, but also for a restaurant with a capacity of about 250 seats, which can be used for various events.

Another guesthouse under construction is in the immediate vicinity of the Vida Lake, it is structured on three levels and is approximately 70% completed (Figure 16). It has five rooms with their own bathrooms, and on the ground floor a living room and a kitchen where you can cook and serve meals. In the courtyard of the pension there is a gazebo where you can make various grilled dishes, also in the courtyard there is a water tank, which can be heated, where tourists can relax.



Figure 16. Pension in progress



Figure 17. Gulescu Pension

About 20 km from the town of Luncasprie, on Videi Gorges, in a secluded place in the middle of nature, in a clearing surrounded by coniferous and deciduous forests, the Gulescu Pension await their guests (Figure 17). The two guesthouses benefit from a number of 19 rooms and 15 bathrooms, a kitchen and a dining room. Gazebos are arranged in the courtyard of the pensions where you can prepare products on the cauldron or grill, especially from game meat because they are not only rented to those who are passionate about hunting.

CONCLUSIONS

Following the prospecting of the tourist potential of the town of Luncasprie, Bihor County, six tourist attractions were identified, three natural (Videi Gorges, Topliței Cave, Topliței de Vida Spring) and three man-made (Vida Lake, the wooden church, "Sfinții Arhangheli Mihail și Gavril" from Luncasprie; a traditional house). The tourist infrastructure was represented by the existence of 10 accommodation bases (four holiday homes and six tourist pensions). So, these elements identified and analyzed both in the field and based on specialized literature represent a nucleus around which a touristic microdestination for weekend and rural tourism can be developed. In this context, the present study represents the informational support for other necessary steps, among which we mention: perception studies of residents, tourist service providers regarding tourism; the necessity of setting up tourist routes, etc.

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