

TYPES AND FORMS OF TOURISM IN THE ALBAC – ARIEȘENI TERRITORIAL SYSTEM (ALBA COUNTY, ROMANIA)

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Abstract: M. P. Debord defined tourism, "*the art of traveling for one's pleasure*", as a socio-economic phenomenon that creates benefits. Tourism includes the activity of a person who travels outside the conventional environment for a period of time, with the purpose of visiting "*for his/her own pleasure*". The Albac – Arieșeni territorial system has a complex touristic potential, with a lot of attractive and valuable components belonging both to the natural and anthropic environment, with a differential degree of development.

Key words: recreation, leisure, speleology, trip, climbing, climatic, culture

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INTRODUCTION

The Albac – Arieșeni territorial system is situated in the North-Western part of the Alba County (Figure 1), at the contact of three mountain units: Bătrăna Mountains in North and Biharia and Arieșului Mountains in South connected by the Vârtope saddle (1160 m). The touristic resources belonging to the natural environment can be favorable for the development of a major touristic region, taking into consideration the fact that the karst topography is predominating, spectacular in terms of tourism by its morphology (Ilieș et al., 1999, 2008). The anthropic resources are present predominantly in the peripheral mountain units, in the areas which have higher settlements density. The infrastructure has the same characteristics, with a high point of modernization in the peripheral area where the means of communication and the accommodation units are proper for the development of an important tourist region in the Western part of Romania.

METHODOLOGY

The analytical studies started from the study of bibliographical materials, taking into consideration the existing information (Ilieș et al., 2008), originated by researchers (Petrea & Petrea, 2000) for various purposes. Therefore, using the

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principles, the methods, the tools and the models verified and applied in the specialized literature (Williams, 1998; Ianoş, 2000; Riener, 2000; Gun & Var, 2002 etc), this scientific undertaking represents a thematic approach, which focuses on the types of tourism (Cocean, 2007) and the creation of a tourist complex with a high degree of functionality.

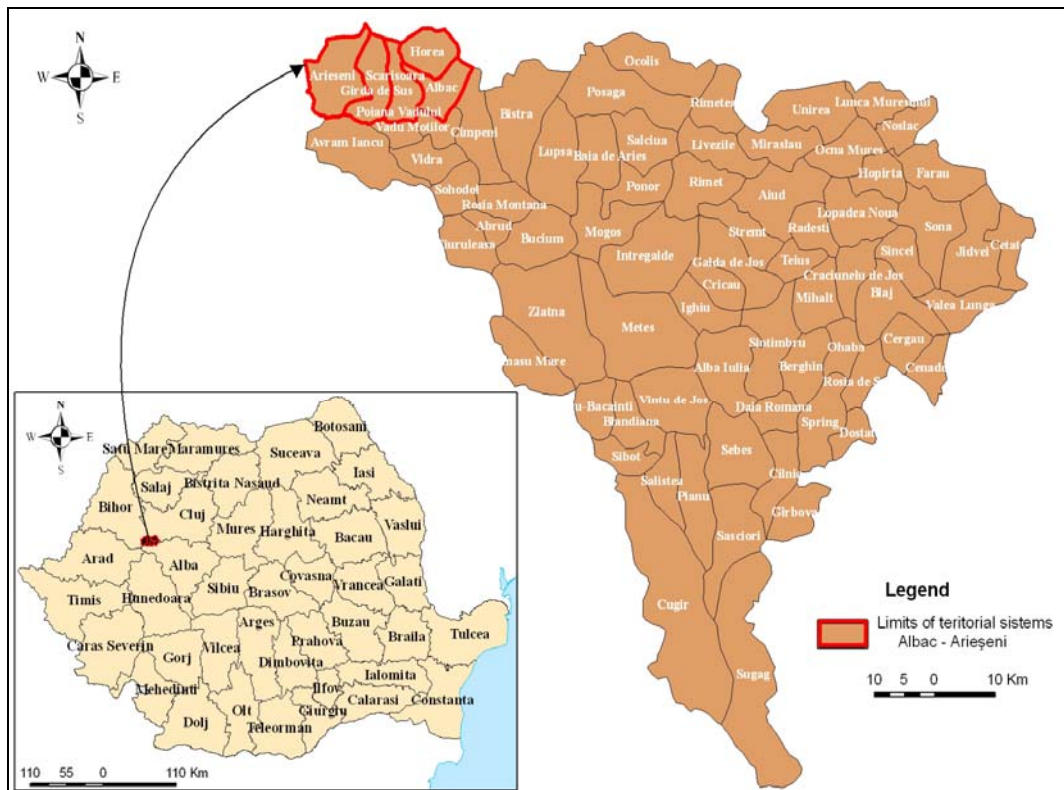


Figure 1. Geographical position of the Albac – Arieşeni territorial system

In order to elaborate this research paper, multiple methodological stages were needed, as follows:

- The research stage that implies the consultation of the bibliography and a study on the specialized documentation sources and on various research papers (Petrea, 2005; Olaru, 2000; Ritchie et al., 2005; Walker & Walker, 2011; etc), the analysis focusing mainly on the types of tourism existing in the investigated region. The relief analysis was carried out also indirectly through orthophotoplans and satellite images, using digital analysis techniques or the processing of digital images. The orthophotoplans allow, with a correct interpretation, the obtention of preliminary information concerning the layout of the landform, its position in the territory and inside the boundaries of the investigated area, its position towards the surrounding areas, the physiognomy of the landscape and its typology, etc.;

- Some of the methods used in the field research were observation, mapping and the use of the qualitative methods. Several conclusions concerning the types of tourism applicable in the studied area were drawn based on the field observations;

- The stage of processing all data collected in the field and the correlation with the specialized literature;

TYPES AND FORMS OF TOURISM

In practical tourism there is a multitude of criteria and possibilities of classifying the forms of tourism. Let us remember the main types of tourism in the Albac – Arieșeni territorial system:

Recreational tourism has the purpose to satisfy the recreational needs of the population and it covers the largest number of people, most of them coming from urban centres disconnected from the natural environment, while the rural population represents only a small percentage. It is practiced by every age group, especially by the young and mature population, in order to rebuild the psychological strength and to recover the tonus lost during the year due to the urban commotion. Short and medium term tourism generally predominates, being the equivalent of a weekend or a part of the vacation. Recreational tourism is practiced intensely in the studied area and the request gets higher in summer, during vacations and holiday time.

The mountain recreational tourism is situated at the top of the pyramid of the possibilities of achievement due to an attractive potential built by a large number of various touristic sights. The diversity of the resources determines the possibility to practice multiple tourism forms, such as: tourism for winter sports, speleology, climbing, hiking tourism, hunting tourism, fishing tourism, and so on (Cocean, 2010; Băltărețu, 2003, 2010; Ilieș, 2009; Munciu, Rodica, 1995).

Winter leisure tourism (for winter sports – ski, snowboard, sledging) takes place in particular morfoclimatic conditions, during a well delimited time interval and it presents opportunities of affirmation and development in the mountain areas. The practice of this type of tourism is favored by the technical improvements in terms of tracks and ski lift systems. However, these improvements are modest and the only ski tracks with a medium supporting system are at Arieșeni, where there are three tracks for skiing and one for sledging. Several ski tracks are in the process of being built in the Gârda de Sus commune. Inclination is very good, with a constant slope, and transportation is assured by chairlifts. An investment similar to the one in Gârda de Sus is desired for Bubești – Arieșeni. Five ski tracks with chairlifts and rope tows will be built in the Vârtop-Gălășoia-Bubești area. The Local Council of Horea has also initiated a project called “*Ski in Romania*”, supported by the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism through the acquisition of the lift systems. Arranging ski tracks (including cross-country skiing), bob and sledge tracks, which have different degrees of difficulty, arranging skating rinks, marking some complicated mountain tracks for snowmobiles, these are all requirements for a complete stay at a mountain resort.



Figure 2. Vârtop Glacier

Speleological tourism is one of the most unusual, most interesting and profitable form of tourism. It implies arrangement measures and adequate equipment of caves, including visiting circuits. Nowadays, this form of tourism is practiced in an unsystematic way, economically inefficient and extremely negative in terms of subterranean heritage protection. From its priorities we mention:

- complex, modern arrangement of several subterranean touristic circuits in the Vârtop Glacier (Figure 2), Dârninii Cave;
- adequate arrangement of caves for those who practice extreme speleology tourism (Hodobana cave, Big Coiba, Small Coiba);
- arrangements for a safe and easy access for visitors in the smaller caves situated in the Ordâncușii canyon (the Zgurăști cave, the Hoanca Apei Cave).

Hiking is widely spread and stimulated by its landscape value, getting attractiveness especially in the mountain areas where the spectacular and morphologically diverse views become the main resource. The canyon sections (Ordâncușei Gorge, Mândruțului Gorge, Albacului Gorge), the high peaks and the extensions from Bătrâna and Biharia (Figure 3) Mountains represent classical sights for those who practice this kind of trips. Lately, some terms borrowed from English like trekking, hiking and backpacking are used more and more often. The second term is the closest one to the meaning of classical trips in the mountains.

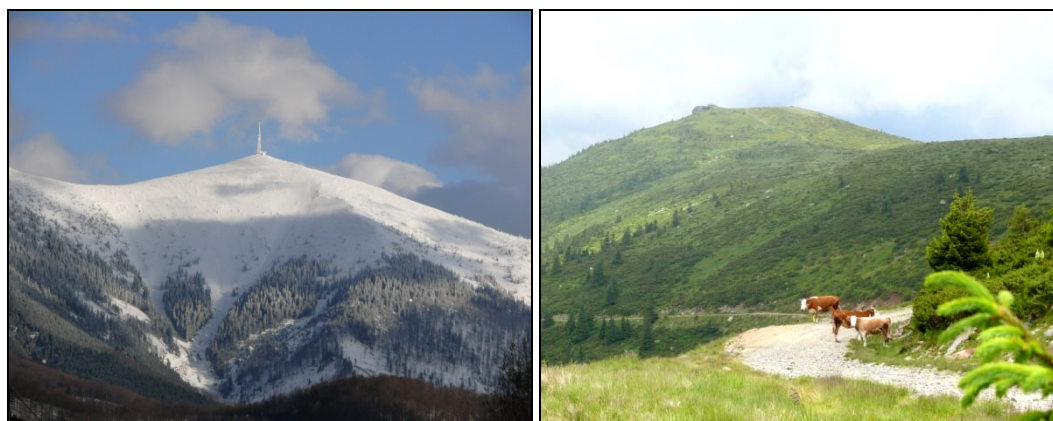


Figure 3. Bihor (Curcubăta Mare) Peak – 1849 m, Curcubăta Mică Peak – 1769.3 m



Figure 4. Mândruțului Gorge, Albacului Gorge

The real volume of the touristic circulation in the mountains is larger than the one resulted in the statistics, especially in cases where near the mountain units there are resorts which are considered a good starting point for one day hikes.

Mountaineering is another form of recreational mountain tourism, which can be practiced in some mountain areas from the territorial system of Albac – Arieșeni. It is a form of tourism strictly conditioned by the presence of mountain landscapes, being practiced by a relatively small number of tourists familiarized with the corresponding techniques and equipment. Climbing could be practiced in the areas of Ordâncușei, Mândruțului and Albacului Gorges (Figure 4). It is essential to properly equip the trails and the escalade areas. Climbing is an exclusively sportive form of mountain tourism, practiced by a small number of people with special physical skills and especially trained for this.

Hunting tourism is conditioned by the presence of the fauna: bear, deer, boar, wolf, fox, rabbit, some species being hunted for trophies. Although it is practiced by a small number of people, but with a high income, the hunting tourism is very efficient economically. The hunting resources from the mountain regions offer an appropriate location for practicing this kind of sport which also has a complementary role in the diversification of the area offers.

Extreme tourism (parachuting, hang gliding, motocross, etc.) can find favorable practicing locations in the mountain areas where the declivity, the level differences and the land fragmentation are optimal for these kind of activities.

Climatic tourism represents a form of tourism practiced in the mountain climacteric resorts, favoured by the existence of a mountain climate with curative qualities (strong ionization and oxygenation, strong solar radiation, high relative humidity), or of some caves with a topoclimate characterized by a reduced variation in temperature, humidity or air circulation. All these lead to more diverse possibilities for practicing multiple forms of tourism, with the involvement of wide surfaces around the resort. The activities become more diverse if more possibilities of practicing them are offered through facilities for sports (river rafting, athletics, fishing, hunting, skiing, mountain-bike), for pleasure, for entertainment, thus substantially contributing to the power of attracting not just Romanian but also foreign tourist in these resorts.

Culture tourism is situated on the second place in terms of possibilities of attracting attention, all due to the fact that the studied area possesses a lower number of historical, religious and ethnographic sights. Culture tourism is also a learning, educational tourism, supported by the historical and architectural values. We mention here the Memorial House, the bust of Horea from Fericeț village, the Horea commune, the Pătrăhăițești museum, and the Museum from the Tourist Information Centre from Ghețari. Culture tourism has two frequent forms of practice: rural and religious tourism.

Rural tourism has a strong cultural value because of the local customs, traditions or folklore. These rural civilization components are well preserved in the majority of the “*moștești*” villages. We include here localities from Arieșeni (Rock House, Cobleș, Hodobana, Izlaz, Păntești, Pătrăhăițești), from Scărișoara (Sforțea, Negești, Preluca, Trăncești, Lespezea, Lăzești, Fața Lăzești, Florești, Matei), from Albac (Băraști, Costești, Lămașoi Hill, Fața, Pleșești, Rogoz, Rusești, Sohodol) and from Horea (Baba, Fericeț, Giurgiuț, Măncești, Mătișești, Niculești, Preluca, Pătrușești, Petreasa, Teiu) etc.

The rural particularity is firstly highlighted by the tourist's desire to learn the traditional rural culture, which is mostly preserved, and to spend the vacation in an authentic, rural environment where they can find silence, clean air, and where they can practice hiking, sports and other activities. This complex type of tourism presents itself under different forms, such as: agritourism, vacations, curative, sports, ecological, religious and educational tourism (Petrea & Petrea, 2000; Petrea, Rodica, 2004).

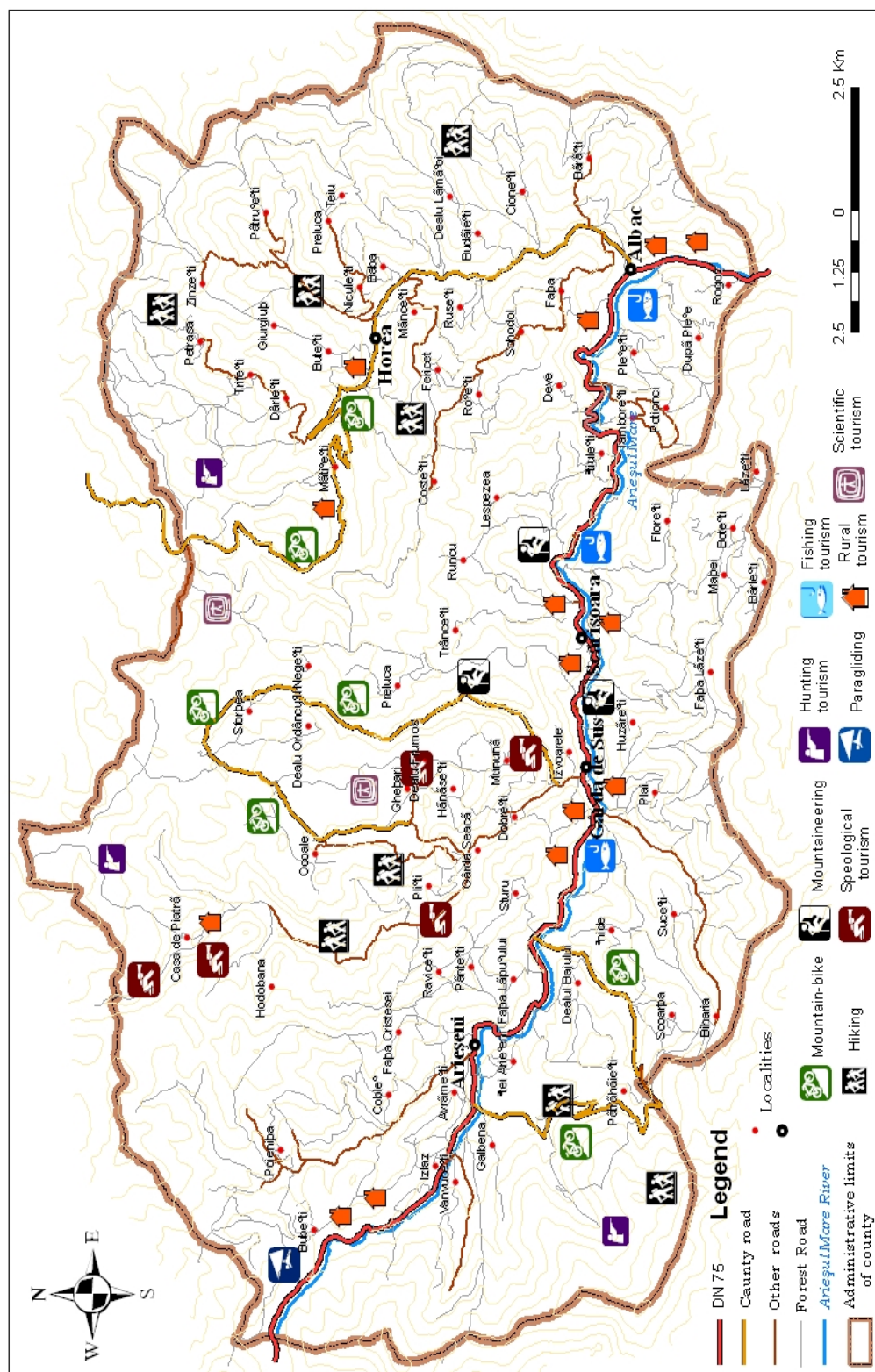


Figure 5. Harta tipurilor de turism specifice sistemul teritorial Albac - Arieșeni

Natural and cultural sights are visited and rural traditional activities are practiced as part of the rural tourism. Rural tourism focuses on the life of the rural community. Rural tourism attracts tourists who prefer modest accommodation with traditional architecture, authentic meals, visits to historical and cultural locations and beautiful views.

Agritourism is the form of tourism where a person (or a group) can travel, accommodate, and have almost all the activities in a natural, rural environment. Agritourism is capable to value the surplus of existing accommodations in the folk household, by implying tourists in the household life, and by supplying services and activities (meal, accommodation, interactions with social – natural environment) characteristic for the traditional households.

Religious tourism focuses on valuing religious sights and especially organized religious manifestations (wake, pilgrimage). It is a very old form of tourism, which keeps certain features, in what concerns the pilgrimage itself, but which has evolved a lot. Nowadays, religious tourism requires tourists to have a certain level of instruction and a higher level of culture that allows them to appreciate the cultural-religious sight from the point of view of architecture, construction, value, spiritual signification and art objects content. We include here the wooden church “*Înălțarea Domnului*” from the Arieșeni village (Figure 6), the wooden church “*Nașterea Sf. Ioan Botezătorul*” from the Gârda de Sus commune and the wooden church from Mățișești, Horea commune.

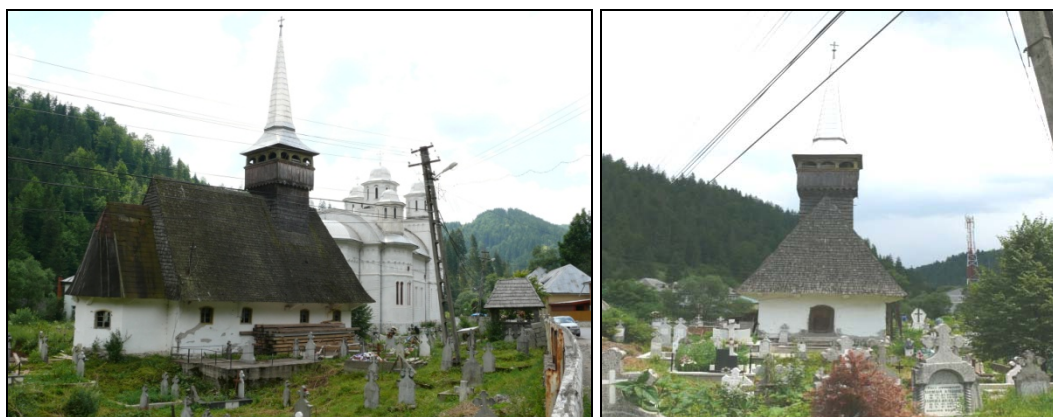


Figure 6. The Wooden Church „*Nașterea Sf. Ioan Botezătorul*” from Gârda de Sus

Mixed or polyvalent tourism results from the spatial association of two or all the above mentioned types of tourism, in order to satisfy faster and completely the tourist's needs. A frequent association is that between the recreational tourism and the cultural one inside the rural tourism, a form which gets more developed lately.

Other forms of tourism which can be successfully practiced in the setting of the Albac – Arieșeni territorial system:

Scientific tourism will grow in amplitude and participation, being stimulated by the higher education University of Oradea and Cluj-Napoca (Babeș-Bolyai University, Medicine and Pharmacy University, Technical University, the University of Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine) which annually organize a high number of events with internal and international participation. A large number of administrative, economic and cultural institutions with similar presence in the field are also enumerated.

Transit tourism is facilitated by the fact that the Albac – Arieșeni territorial system is crossed by the national route artery DN 75, which links two international routes

arteries E 79 and E 81, thus connecting the territorial system with the central and southern part of the country, but as also with Moldova. Transit tourism comprises tourists who cross an area in order to arrive to the established destination. Thanks to the large number of vehicles, transit tourism is largely spread, presenting a need for highways, services, motels, trains, hotels, etc. It is the form of tourism practiced by all categories of tourists who cross a territory. Tourists can be determined to visit the sights in the area, wishing to learn more about the local attractions. A necessary condition for a bigger flow of potential tourists is the modernization of the main traffic road, DN 75.

Business tourism includes team – buildings, business traveling, participations to training programs and it represents an important source of income for the Romanian operators. Although it is not very present in the analyzed area, some of the accommodation units from the Albac – Arieșeni territorial system have conference rooms with proper facilities (communication and projection equipment) for business meetings and conferences, symposiums, reunions, science sessions.

Weekend tourism represents the most simple tourism excursion, focused on weekends and having the purpose of recovering after a week of work. It appeared during the interwar period, along with the explosive urbanization determined by industrialization. Weekend tourism involves trips to regions not far from home (100 – 200 km).

Educational tourism includes touristic activities organized for educational purposes, usually for young people (pupils, students). The diversity and the beauty of the landscape attracts pupils, students and teachers from all around the country. In the analyzed area, the main sights visited for educational purposes are the Scărișoara Glacier, the Ordâncușei Gorge and the Vârciorog Waterfall.

It must be noted that in the practice of the touristic phenomenon, none of the above described types are totally pure, every one of them presenting negligible amounts of characteristics infiltrations from other tourism types. When there's a balance between these infiltrations, the mixed character of the activities appears (Cocean, 2007).

The knowledge and the orientation of the tourist flows towards one or more types of tourism (Figure 5) constitutes an important element in the development and the diversification of the region's touristic potential.

The analysis of the questionnaires applied within the Albac – Arieșeni territorial system concluded that the main reasons for which the concerted respondents visit the touristic areas are the following:

- visiting natural, historical and cultural sights;
- practicing winter sports;
- spending some time in weekends;
- spending some time in mini-vacations and holidays.

CONCLUSION

Taking into account that most of the tourists come and visit these areas in weekends and in mini-vacations, special attention should be granted to this market segment, through advertising and information campaigns.

In conclusion, the Albac – Arieșeni territorial system has a high touristic potential, with a predominant natural environment, but it is poorly developed.

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