

SOLUTIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEISURE TOURISM BY SPECIFIC ARRANGEMENTS (CYCLOTOURISM) IN THE ALBAC – ARIEȘENI TERRITORIAL SYSTEM (ALBA COUNTY, ROMANIA)

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Abstract: The natural attractions of the territorial system Albac – Arieșeni are important due to their beauty and originality. These were all analysed in other articles and in the PhD thesis, therefore, we consider that a detailed overview is not necessary. This study aims to present aspects of leisure tourism within the territorial system Albac – Arieșeni. Through its content and its role, tourism represents today a distinct field of activity, a component of primary importance of the economic and social life. Due to the fact that the touristic resources are practically inexhaustible, tourism is one of the economic sectors with real prospects of long-term development. Tourism has major implications on the economic and social dynamics, on the national and international relationships, by means of its extent and complex content, because it implies the natural and material potential, as well as the human potential.

Key words: cyclotourism, mountain biking, development of tourism activity, improvement, mountain, tourist locations, areas

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INTRODUCTION

Leisure tourism takes the most diverse forms and enhances, first of all, the esthetical potential of the geographic area; it is easily associated with all the other types of tourism and is suitable for all ages (Ilieș et al., 2008, 2014; Ciangă, 2006; Cocean & Dezsi, 2001; Gaceu et al., 2012; Gheorghilaș, 2011; Hall, 2008; Holden, 2008; Herman, 2014; Ilieș et al., 2013; Cocean, 2000, 2007, 2010, (coord.); Pop, 2013; Walker & Walker, 2011; Gaceu et al., 2013; etc). The main forms of leisure tourism appropriate for the Albac – Arieșeni territorial system are: hiking, horse riding, speleotourism, mountaineering, mountain biking or cyclotourism, paragliding, skiing, ski touring, canoeing, recreational fishing, as well as playgrounds for children, with various equipments.

This article is a follow-up of a larger study, published in 2012 and it includes some issues which were not tackled at that time. We are making some suggestions concerning the promotion, the development and the exploitation from touristic point of view of this area, especially regarding the trails for cyclotourism and mountain

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biking located within, but also in the surroundings of the Albac – Arieșeni territorial system. The natural resources which exist in the Albac – Arieșeni territorial system are plentiful, they are highly original and attractive, but the lack of some necessary conditions, essential in order to satisfy the needs of the tourism services consumers – much below the value of the natural landscape – limits much of the touristic circulation in this area.

In order to ensure the development of the touristic activity and to make the most of the touristic patrimony, investments which focus especially on the development of the means of communication and transportation and of the recreational areas are needed.

OBJECTIVES. METHODOLOGY. DISCUSSION

Cyclotourism and mountain biking are becoming more and more popular in Romania too (Figure 1, 2); they represent an opportunity to avoid sedentariness and have little impact on the environment. Mountain-biking is a form of sport tourism applied on mountain trails, with appropriately equipped bicycles and characterized by a stronger sense of adventure (in order to avoid unpleasant accidents, it is recommended to wear a biker helmet and personal protective equipment), according to the degree of difficulty of the chosen track.



Figure 1. Mountain-biking in Bistrița Năsăud
(Source: <http://www.timponline.ro>)



Figure 2. Mountain-biking
(Source: <http://www.dirtbike.ro>)

One of the objectives included in the Master Plan for National Tourism Development 2007-2026 is the promotion of cycling, the creation of maps for cycling itineraries along the Danube and the production of a promotional campaign for this itinerary, which should function as a prototype project. This should attract more tourists in the relatively underdeveloped regions of the country. Also, it should increase the interest in the development of additional cycling itineraries in other regions. According to the Ministry of Tourism a national network of touristic tracks for bikers will be established; these tracks will be covered in 5 up to 12 days or in maximum one day in the case of a local track. As stated in the Law no. 755/2001, the degree of difficulty of the track will be marked in blue for easy, red for medium, black for hard and yellow and black for experts (Gozner, 2012).

Cyclotourism can be a profitable affair not only by the opening of shops and service centres, but also by the organization of events, competitions, camps, etc. The President of the Romanian Cyclists' Federation stated that "in Switzerland, this

branch exceeded the income obtained from skiing. In Germany, during the last five years, the bicycle market has constantly grown with over 10% and on the Danube track between Germany and Austria 100 000 tourists travel every year, who wouldn't come but on bicycles".

The territorial system Albac – Arieșeni doesn't have especially arranged tracks, so cyclists must use the existing communication infrastructure: county roads, forest roads, as well as parts of the hiking paths. The arrangements which are necessary are linked to the infrastructure, roads and paths accessible to the cyclists, marked by specific signs, as well as halting places provided with wooden benches and tables, but also the development of the springs on the tracks (Bleahu & Bordea, 1981).

Other necessary elements are: boards with the tourist map for cyclotourism at both ends of each track, centres where one can hire bicycles, bicycle parkings near the tourist attractions etc. Also, stands where tourists could buy traditional products, maps and tourist guides, documentaries about the tourist attractions of the region etc. can be created. For those who love the trips "on two wheels", here propose some tracks for cyclotourism and mountain-biking.

Description of the tracks:

Cyclotourism track 1: Gârda de Sus - Arieșeni - Bihor Peak- Pătrăhăițești - Gârda de Sus (Figure 3);

Tourist attractions: Buciniș Waterfall, Bihor Peak (1848 m) and the Folkmuseum of Pătrăhăițești (Figure 4, 5).

Lenght: 30 km; undeveloped track.

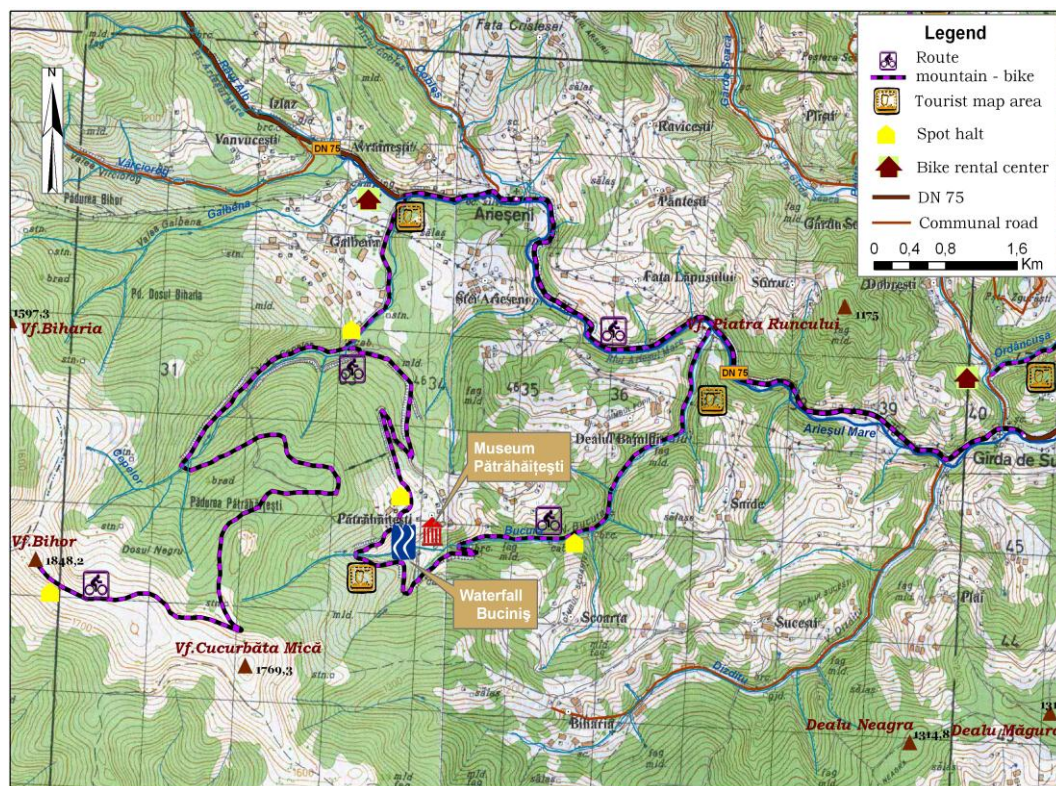


Figure 3. Cyclotourism track 1: Gârda de Sus - Arieșeni - Bihor Peak - Pătrăhăițești - Gârda de Sus

In order to develop this track, first of all the wood should be removed from the road and the road should be repaired in some sections difficult to access; other suggestions: the opening of a center for hiring and repairing bicycles, halting places provided with wooden benches and tables, recycle bins for collecting rubbish, some belvedere points marked with tourist signs etc. The track for the circuit Gârda de Sus - Arieșeni - Bihor Peak- Pătrăhăițești - Gârda de Sus starts in Gârda de Sus, ascending on the National Road 75 towards Arieșeni.

From Arieșeni, following the National Road 75, the tourist can ascend to the village Galbena, on the Cepelor Valley, passing through the Pătrăhăițești Forest, towards Bihor Peak, by the foot of the Cucurbăta Mică Peak (1769,3 m). When the tourist arrives on the Bihor Peak, he can admire a 360-degree panorama towards the Mountains Vlădeasa, Gilău, Codru Moma, Muntele Mare and the scattered villages of the communes Arieșeni, Gârda de Sus, Scărișoara, Criștioru de Sus, Criștioru de Jos; if the weather is stable and the sky is clear, one can see the Retezat, Parâng Mountains etc. Going back, the tourist descends through Pătrăhăițești Forest, until he gets near the village Galbena (the first crossroads of forest roads before entering the village Galbena). The track passes through a part of the forest from the village Stei-Arieșeni, then it arrives in the village Pătrăhăițești and at Buciniș Waterfall. From Buciniș Waterfall, the track descends on the Bucura Valley, passes through the village Dealul Bajului before arriving to the national road DN 75. The road descends then on Arieșul Mare Vally, till Gârda de Sus the from where the trail (route) started. Whatever area, the routes start and end at the same point, all are proposed in circuit system.



Figure 4. Images from the route passing through Bihor Peak (1848 m)



Figure 5. Folkmuseum of Pătrăhăițești



Legend

- Route mountain - bike
- Tourist map area
- Spot halt
- Guest house
- DN 75

Map Labels:

- County Bihor
- County Alba
- Groapa Ruginosa
- Vf. Tăpu
- Vf. Vârtope
- Guest house
- Gastelul Alpin
- V. Crisaniului
- V. Coraiului
- Pștr. Muncelului
- Pștr. Poarta Bihorului
- DN 75
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Scale: 0 0.25 0.5 Km

Map Features:

- Route mountain - bike
- Tourist map area
- Spot halt
- Guest house
- DN 75
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Cyclotourism track 2: Gârda de Sus - Arieșeni - Vârtop Mountain Pass - Groapa Ruginoasă - Gârda de Sus (figure 7).

Tourist attractions: Groapa Ruginoasă, Vârtop Mountain Pass, the wooden church of Gârda de Sus.

Length: 24 km; undeveloped track.

The arrangements which are required for the track Gârda de Sus - Arieșeni - Vârtop Mountain Pass - Groapa Ruginoasă - Gârda de Sus do not imply great expenses because the largest part is on the national road DN 75. It would be necessary to mark the cyclists' tracks, to develop the springs on the trail, to create halting places provided with wooden benches and tables and a belvedere point marked with tourist signs, to install recycle bins for collecting rubbish, etc. The route starts in Gârda de Sus, mounting on the DN 75 to Vârtop Mountain Pass.

Before arriving at the ski slope on DN 75, the route turns right, passing near the pension Castelul Alpin, mounting to the La Trei Morminți Peak (1318 m), then the ascent becomes gentler on a well-defined path which arrives at Groapa Ruginoasă. Then the trail approaches the foot of Țapu Peak, descends towards Pietrele Negre to the crossroads with DN 75, near the village Băița Plai. In figure 7 is shown the route from pension Castelul Alpin (Pasul Vârtop), Groapa Ruginoasă, Vârfului Țapu, Băița Plai, Castelul Alpin. The rest of the route overlaps DN 75.



Figure 8. Groapa Ruginoasă

Cyclotourism track 3: Gârda de Sus - Arieșeni - Cobleș - Călineasa Glade - Scărișoara - Gârda de Sus

Tourist attractions: Galbenă Valley, Padiș Plateau, Biserica Moțului Peak, Călineasa Glade, Scărișoara Cave, Ursoii Glade.

Length: 90 km; undeveloped track.

The arrangements required for the track Gârda de Sus - Arieșeni - Cobleș - Călineasa Glade - Scărișoara - Gârda de Sus are not different from those necessary for the two tracks analysed above. Taking into account that the track is length 90 km, the costs for developing this track could be a little higher than for the previous tracks. The third track recommended for development starts in Gârda de Sus too. From Arieșeni, the track will ascend on the commune road DC 131 which follows the Cobleș Brook and passes through the village Poienița.

At the confluence of Lunșoara Valley with Cobleș Brook, the track continues to ascend on the Lunșoarei Valley until it arrives at the hamlet Fața Glăvoaiei. The track

continues to ascend on Galbenă Valley up to the confluence with Crișul Pietros Brook, following the track which leads to Padiș Plateau, passing near the foot of Bălulesei and Biserica Moțului. At the confluence of Izbuluc Mic Valley and Izbuluc Brook, the track starts to descend on the Izbuluc Mic Valley, passing through Călineasa Glade, Ursoii Glade, Ocoale village, Scărișoara Cave, Gârda Seacă and Gârda de Sus.



Figure 9. Images from the route passing through Călineasa Glade



Figure 10. Scărișoara Cave

CONCLUSIONS

These tracks for cyclotourism and mountain biking are a way of spending the free time for the tourists who come to Arieșeni and Albac resorts. The arrangements which are necessary do not imply exaggerated costs which could not be borne by the town halls of the communes which are part of the territorial system Albac – Arieșeni.

The touristic development of an area can be made by finding some solutions in order to capitalize on the natural and anthropic resources, because nowadays tourism plays an important role in economy and this thing becomes very necessary. The touristic development, as well as the economic progress must take into account the characteristics of the natural and anthropic environment and the touristic development must be made in accordance with these two variables. The natural and anthropic resources which exist in the territorial system Albac – Arieșeni are plentiful, they are highly original and attractive, but the essential conditions for tourism are much below the value of the natural landscape limiting the touristic circulation in this area. These problems can be noticed at the level of the infrastructure and the touristic development of the area.

In the end, we express our hope that this paper will influence in a positive manner the local actors in the layout and the drawing up of the future strategies for the evolution and the development of the territorial system Albac – Arieșeni.

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Submitted:
12.12.2014

Revised:
20.04.2015

Accepted and published online
21.04.2015