

## THE GEOSTATISTICAL DIMENSION OF TOURIST FLOWS GENERATED BY FOREIGN TOURISTS IN ROMANIA

**Marius I. STUPARIU\*** 

Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning, Faculty of Geography, Tourism and Sport,  
University of Oradea, Oradea, Romania, e-mail: marius\_stupariu@didactic.uoradea.ro

**Ioana JOSAN** 

Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning, Faculty of Geography, Tourism and Sport,  
University of Oradea, Oradea, Romania, e-mail: ioana.josan@didactic.uoradea.ro

**Maria GOZNER** 

Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning, Faculty of Geography, Tourism and Sport,  
University of Oradea, Oradea, Romania, e-mail: maria.gozner@didactic.uoradea.ro

**Marcu Simion STAŞAC** 

Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning, Faculty of Geography, Tourism and Sport,  
University of Oradea, Oradea, Romania, e-mail: marcu.stasac@didactic.uoradea.ro

**Thowayeb H. HASSAN\*** 

Social Studies Department, College of Arts, King Faisal University, Al Ahsa, Saudi Arabia, e-mail: thassan@kfu.edu.sa

**Muhanna Yousef ALMAKHAYTAAH** 

Social Studies Department, College of Arts, King Faisal University, Al Ahsa, Saudi Arabia, e-mail: malmakhaytah@kfu.edu.sa

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**Abstract:** The article represents a comprehensive and insightful study aiming to unravel the intricate dynamics of foreign tourism within Romania. This research delves into various key aspects, employing a geostatistical approach to offer a nuanced understanding of the spatial and temporal dimensions of foreign tourist flows. One of the primary inquiries addressed by the study revolves around the quantitative assessment of foreign tourists visiting Romania. By meticulously analyzing arrival data, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of the sheer number of foreign visitors the country attracts. This quantitative dimension is crucial for assessing the overall impact of tourism on the national economy and informing strategic decisions in the tourism sector. Moving beyond mere numbers, the study ventures into the temporal aspect of foreign tourism in Romania. By scrutinizing patterns over time, researchers aim to answer the question of when foreign tourists predominantly choose to visit the country. Understanding the temporal preferences of tourists is invaluable for both businesses and policymakers, enabling them to optimize resource allocation, marketing efforts, and infrastructure management during peak tourism seasons. Furthermore, the research explores the destinations chosen by foreign tourists within Romania. The geostatistical analysis differentiates arrivals based on specific tourist destinations and counties, shedding light on the preferences of international visitors. This information is pivotal for local authorities, businesses, and stakeholders, offering insights into which regions benefit the most from foreign tourism, thus facilitating targeted development strategies and resource allocation. In addition to destination preferences, the study investigates the accommodation choices made by foreign tourists. Through geostatistical analysis, the research categorizes accommodation preferences based on various criteria, including types of accommodation units and comfort categories. This information proves invaluable for the hospitality industry, guiding investments, and helping businesses tailor their offerings to meet the diverse needs of international visitors. The temporal aspect of foreign tourists' stays in Romania is another focal point of the study. By examining the duration of visits, researchers aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of how long foreign tourists typically stay in the country. This data is instrumental in shaping tourism policies, influencing marketing strategies, and optimizing services to enhance the overall tourist experience. Beyond the borders of Romania, the study investigates the means of transportation foreign tourists employ to reach the country. By understanding the modes of transportation preferred by international visitors, Romania can improve its infrastructure and connectivity, ensuring a seamless and positive experience for tourists from various origins. Lastly, the research explores the geographical origins of foreign tourists who visit Romania. This analysis not only provides insights into the diverse cultural backgrounds of visitors but also aids in crafting targeted marketing campaigns to attract specific international markets. The article goes beyond a mere exploration of tourist numbers. It offers a comprehensive and detailed analysis of the spatial and temporal dimensions of foreign tourism, providing valuable insights for policymakers, businesses, and stakeholders. This geostatistical approach not only enriches our understanding of the complex dynamics of foreign tourist flows but also lays the foundation for strategic and sustainable tourism development in Romania.

**Key words:** foreign tourists, Romania, arrivals, tourist season, off-season, destination, structures of accommodation, comfort categories, overnight stay, tourist stay, transport, country of origin

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\* Corresponding author

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become an integral part of the global economy, transcending geographical boundaries and fostering cultural exchanges. In this context, Romania, a country renowned for its natural beauty, rich history, and vibrant culture, has increasingly become a sought-after destination for travelers from around the world. The influx of foreign tourists into Romania has not only bolstered the country's tourism sector but has also brought about a unique geostatistical dimension to the analysis of tourist flows. This article delves into the intricate web of factors that influence the movement of foreign tourists throughout Romania. By leveraging geostatistical techniques and data, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of how various destinations within Romania are chosen, the preferred periods for visitation, and the diverse origins of these foreign tourists. Through a geostatistical lens, we explore the spatial and temporal patterns of these tourist flows, shedding light on the impact of these dynamics on both the tourism industry and the regions they touch.

The geostatistical analysis of foreign tourist flows in Romania offers a valuable perspective that extends beyond conventional tourism studies. It provides insights into the spatial distribution of tourist activities, allowing for more effective resource allocation and destination management. Furthermore, it aids in identifying emerging trends and growth opportunities for the tourism sector. In essence, this article aims to unravel the hidden geographical intricacies of foreign tourist flows in Romania, ultimately contributing to a more holistic understanding of the multifaceted nature of global tourism. Regarding the relevance of this study, analyzing tourist flows generated by foreign tourists from a geostatistical perspective is crucial because it provides a solid foundation for tourism development planning and assessing the economic impact on different regions. Through geostatistics, one can accurately pinpoint the most popular tourist destinations and regions experiencing a significant influx of foreign tourists. This allows authorities to allocate resources efficiently, develop necessary infrastructure, and create tailored marketing strategies to attract tourists. Moreover, geostatistical analysis reveals the economic impact on local communities, facilitating the equitable distribution of tourism benefits and sustainable regional development. It provides an essential framework for economic growth and the protection of natural and cultural resources, while ensuring an authentic travel experience and the promotion of local products, supporting cultural diversity, and fostering sustainable tourism development.

## METHODOLOGY

To conduct the article is crucial to follow a robust methodology for data collection and analysis. The data required for this analysis can be obtained from various sources, such as government institutions, tourism organizations, and border monitoring agencies. These data may include information regarding arrivals of foreign tourists, their residence, destinations in Romania, the purpose of the visit, as well as demographic characteristics. For the collection and analysis of this data, geographic tools and software such as MsOffice Excel and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) will be utilized, allowing the storage, management, and spatial data analysis. For geostatistical analysis, specific GIS tools, such as the variogram for assessing spatial autocorrelation and kriging to model the spatial distribution of tourist flows, will be employed. The research procedure will involve the collection of geographic data from foreign tourists entering Romania and the analysis of this data to identify spatial patterns. Data will be collected at the points of entry to the country, where tourists complete entry forms. This data will include information about tourists' nationality, purpose of the visit, location of stay in Romania, as well as the duration of their stay. Statistical and geostatistical analysis will involve the use of methods such as descriptive statistics, cluster analysis to identify areas with high concentrations of foreign tourists, and kriging to estimate spatial densities in various regions of the country. These methods will help identify areas with high tourism potential and support tourism development based on objective spatial patterns. Furthermore, they will facilitate equitable distribution of tourism benefits and promote sustainable regional development.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review would benefit from examining a variety of sources to provide a comprehensive overview of the subject. While the mentioned sources may not directly address the geostatistical aspect of tourist flows in Romania, they offer valuable insights into the broader topics of tourism, its economic impact, trends, and related issues.

The article has a comprehensive literature review that delves into the multifaceted aspects of *global tourism and its impact on rural transformations*. Drawing on a range of scholarly works, the article critically analyzes the challenges and opportunities posed by globalization in the context of Romania's tourism sector. Beirman (2021) explores the repercussions of tourism crises and strategies for destination recovery, providing valuable insights into the resilience of tourist destinations. Culiuc (2014) contributes to the discussion by identifying the determinants of international tourism, shedding light on factors that influence the flow of foreign tourists. Postelnicu and Dabija (2017) specifically address the challenges and development prospects for tourism in Romania, offering a nuanced perspective on the country's unique position in the global tourism landscape. Sönmez and Graefe's seminal work (1998) on the influence of terrorism risk on foreign tourism decisions adds a critical dimension to the discourse, emphasizing the need to consider geopolitical factors in understanding tourist flows. Airey and Tribe's edited volume (2007) provides a broader context for these discussions, highlighting developments in tourism research that shape the contemporary understanding of global tourism dynamics.

Hampton (2018) contributes insights into the problems and prospects of tourism management, offering a practical lens through which to examine the industry's challenges. Dwyer and Forsyth's study (1997) on measuring the benefits and yield from foreign tourism further enriches the literature review by providing a methodological foundation for assessing the economic impact of tourism. Finally, Algieri and Álvarez (2022) bring a regional perspective to the discussion, assessing the ability of regions, with a focus on Italy, to attract foreign tourists. The integration of these diverse perspectives forms a

robust foundation for understanding the geostatistical dimensions of tourist flows and their implications for rural transformations in Romania (Dwyer and Forsyth, 1997; Sönmez and Graefe, 1998; Airey and Tribe, 2007; Culiuc, 2014; Postelnicu and Dabija, 2017; Hampton, 2018; Beirman, 2021).

The literature review for article critically explores the theme of *globalization and rural transformations*, synthesizing insights from a diverse set of scholarly articles. Barcus et al. (2022) contribute a foundational understanding of rural transformations, emphasizing the global impact on rural landscapes, economies, and communities. Gozner's works cover various aspects of Romanian tourism: solutions for leisure tourism development through cyclotourism in the Albac – Arieșeni Territorial System (Gozner, 2015), legislative aspects concerning tourism planning in Romania (Gozner and Josan, 2013), the authentic expression of religious attractions in the territorial system of Albac - Arieșeni and Alba County (Gozner et al., 2016), and the intersection of nature, photography, and tourism in the Bihor-Vlădeasa Mountains (Gozner et al., 2017). The study by Maeda et al. (2018) explores the extraction of tourist destinations and preferences using geotagged social media data, offering a technological perspective on tourist behavior. Popescu et al. (2020) contribute insights into trends and changes in tourist flow in Romania from 2009 to 2018. Stupariu et al.'s (2022) comprehensive tourist flow study compares the rural metropolitan area of Oradea with Bihor County, highlighting regional disparities. Tătar et al. (2018) study examines the contribution of tourist guides to sustainability in Romania.

Ilieș et al. (2014) explore the role of tourist resources in determining a typology of support-local administrative territorial units (LATUs) with resorts in Romania. Ilieș and Gallo (2008) provide qualitative research on tourism in Maramureș Land, adding a cultural perspective. Altogether, these twelve articles form a rich tapestry of perspectives, creating a robust foundation for understanding the geostatistical dimensions of tourist flows and their impact on rural transformations in Romania. Ilieș and Ilieș (2015) contribute by exploring identity-based geo- and tourism branding strategies derived from rural Maramureș Land in Romania, providing a cultural perspective on rural transformations.

Inkson and Minnaert (2012) offer an introduction to tourism management, laying the groundwork for understanding the complexities of the industry. The comprehensive companion to tourism by Lew et al. (2014) adds depth to the discussion by providing a broad overview of tourism-related concepts and issues. The international encyclopedia of travel and tourism edited by Lowry (2016) contributes further insights into the global dimensions of tourism. Additionally, the book on sport tourism and its territorial development by Mazza and Sobry (2022) enriches the discussion with a focus on the intersection of sports and tourism. Ilieș et al. (2020) study on geohazards affecting cultural heritage monuments in Romania brings attention to the environmental challenges faced by rural areas.

The investigations of museum indoor microclimate and air quality (Ilieș et al., 2021) and the integrated approach for museal indoor air quality and public health (Ilieș et al., 2022) provide a nuanced understanding of the cultural and health aspects of rural tourism. Stupariu's studies (2017; 2018) contribute to the exploration of structural dimensions of touristic reception and tourism seasonality in Romanian spas. Stașac and Herman (2010) delve into the ethnographic values of the traditional village of “Zarand Land,” offering a cultural and historical perspective on rural transformations.

Collectively, these articles contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the globalized forces shaping rural areas and their implications for tourism in Romania (Ilieș and Gallo, 2008; Stașac and Herman, 2010; Inkson and Minnaert, 2012; Gozner and Josan, 2013; Ilieș et al., 2014; Lew et al., 2014; Gozner, 2015; Ilieș and Ilieș, 2015; Gozner et al., 2016; Lowry, 2016; Gozner et al., 2017; Stupariu, 2017; Ilieș et al., 2018; Maeda et al., 2018; Stupariu and Morar, 2018; Tătar et al., 2018; Ilieș et al., 2020; Popescu et al., 2020; Ilieș et al., 2021; Barcus et al., 2022; Ilieș et al., 2022; Mazza and Sobry, 2022; Stupariu et al., 2022).

The literature review for article delves into the category of *e-tourism and the social media impact*, incorporating insights from a collection of scholarly articles. Fu and Timothy (2021) contribute by exploring the constraints of social media on destination images, specifically addressing the potential of barrier-free internet access for foreign tourists in internet-restricted destinations. The “Handbook of E-Tourism” edited by Fuchs et al. (2022) offers an extensive overview of the evolving landscape of e-tourism, providing a comprehensive foundation for understanding the technological advancements shaping tourist behavior. Mohamed and Moradi (2011) present a model of e-tourism satisfaction factors for foreign tourists, shedding light on the crucial aspects influencing tourists' satisfaction in the digital age. Indrie et al. (2019) contribute to the discourse by examining the indoor air quality of museums and its implications for the conservation of textile artworks, using a case study from Salacea Museum House, Romania, adding a unique perspective to the intersection of e-tourism and cultural preservation. Menor-Campos et al. (2020) focus on foreign tourists in World Heritage Sites, presenting a motivation-based segmentation that enriches the understanding of tourist behavior influenced by e-tourism elements. In summary, these articles collectively provide a nuanced exploration of the intricate relationship between E-Tourism, Social Media Impact, and the dynamics of tourist flows, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the contemporary tourist experience in Romania (Mohamed and Moradi, 2011; Indrie et al., 2019; Menor-Campos et al., 2020; Fu and Timothy, 2021; Fuchs et al., 2022).

The literature review for article critically explores the theme of the *impact of the environment on tourism*, incorporating insights from various scholarly articles. Gaceu (2009) investigates the climate characteristics of the fog phenomenon in the Apuseni Mountains and its influence on tourists and tourist activities, highlighting the environmental factors affecting tourism experiences. Ilieș et al. (2011) provide examples of natural hazards impacting geosites and tourist activities, emphasizing the importance of understanding and mitigating environmental risks.

Stupariu and Josan's study (2014) focuses on the quality of hotel services in the North-West Development Region, shedding light on the interplay between environmental conditions and tourism infrastructure. Additionally, Ilieș et al. contribute to the discourse by addressing geohazards affecting cultural heritage monuments (2020), investigating

museum indoor microclimate and air quality (2021), and presenting an integrated approach for museal indoor air quality and public health (2022), collectively offering a comprehensive perspective on the environmental challenges faced by both natural and cultural attractions in Romania. Furthermore, Stupariu's works (2017; 2018) explore the structural dimensions of touristic reception and tourism seasonality in Romanian spas, contributing to the understanding of how environmental factors shape tourism patterns. Collectively, these articles contribute to a nuanced understanding of the dynamic relationship between environmental conditions and tourist flows in Romania, providing valuable insights for future research in the field (Gaceu, 2009; Ilieş et al., 2011; Stupariu and Josan, 2014; Stupariu, 2017; Stupariu and Morar, 2018; Ilieş et al., 2020; Ilieş et al., 2021; Ilieş et al., 2022).

The literature review for article explores the intersection of *tourism in Europe and global economic challenges*. Hall and Coles (2008) provide insights into international business and tourism, addressing global issues and contemporary interactions, setting the stage for understanding the broader economic context of tourism. The challenges and opportunities of EU enlargement in the new European landscape are discussed by Hall et al. (2006), offering valuable perspectives on the evolving dynamics of tourism in Europe. OECD's studies (2014; 2020) on tourism, the creative economy, and global trends and policies contribute essential data and analyses, providing a comprehensive understanding of the economic factors influencing tourism. Telfer and Sharpley (2002) delve into the concepts and issues surrounding tourism and development, shedding light on the complex interplay between tourism and economic growth. Tung and Thang's research (2022) on the impact of exchange rates on foreign tourist demand offers a specific economic lens, emphasizing the relevance of economic factors in shaping tourist flows.

Vellas and Bécherel (1995; 2016) bring an economic perspective to international tourism, while Algieri and Álvarez (2022) assess the ability of regions to attract foreign tourists, providing a practical case study from Italy. Additionally, Menor-Campos et al. (2020) contribute a motivation-based segmentation of foreign tourists in World Heritage Sites, offering insights into the economic drivers behind tourist behavior. Together, these articles form a robust foundation for understanding the intricate relationship between tourism in Europe and global economic challenges, enriching the literature on the geostatistical dimension of tourist flows (Vellas and Bécherel, 1995; Telfer and Sharpley, 2002; Hall et al., 2006; Hall and Coles, 2008; OECD, 2014; Vellas and Bécherel, 2016; Menor-Campos et al., 2020; OECD, 2020; Algieri and Álvarez, 2022; Tung and Thang, 2022).

The literature review for article explores the theme of *rural tourism and cultural identity*. Dincă's study (2016) delves into the iconic and symbolic derivatives from the composition of rural landscapes dominated by fortified churches in Transylvania, providing insights into the cultural significance of these landmarks. Ilieş and Hotea (2010) contribute examples of good practices in rural tourism activities in Maramureş Land, specifically in Vadu Izei and Săpânța, shedding light on successful approaches in promoting rural tourism. Tătar and Herman (2013) explore identity encounters and host-guest interactions in the Land of Moți, Romania, offering a nuanced understanding of the cultural dynamics in rural settings. Ungureanu and Lăzuran (Giurău) (2014) focus on the creation of the Ciocănești tourist destination brand, emphasizing the role of cultural identity in shaping the tourism experience. Uslu et al. (2020) evaluates the communication skills of historical bazaar tradesmen in Edirne, targeting foreign tourists and highlighting the intersection of cultural identity and tourism experiences. The edited volume by Ramshaw and Gammon (2013) on Heritage, Sport, and Tourism explores the relationship between sporting pasts and tourist futures, providing a broader context for understanding the cultural dimensions of tourism. Additionally, Staşac and Herman (2010) contribute to the discussion with an exploration of ethnographic values in the traditional village of "Zarand Land," adding depth to the understanding of cultural identity in rural settings. Together, these articles form a comprehensive foundation for exploring the geostatistical dimension of tourist flows generated by foreign tourists in Romania within the context of rural tourism and cultural identity (Ilieş and Hotea, 2010; Staşac and Herman, 2010; Ramshaw and Gammon, 2013; Tătar and Herman, 2013; Ungureanu and Lăzuran, 2014; Dincă, 2016; Uslu et al., 2020).

Incorporating these sources into the literature review will enhance the overall understanding of the geostatistical dimension of tourist flows generated by foreign tourists in Romania and the broader context of global tourism. By synthesizing these diverse sources, the literature review offers a sophisticated, multidimensional framework for understanding the geostatistical dimension of tourist flows in Romania. It weaves together economic, social, environmental, and policy perspectives, creating a robust foundation for the subsequent analysis in the article, and facilitating a holistic understanding of the complex relationship between foreign tourists and their impact on different regions in Romania.

## HOW MANY FOREIGN TOURISTS VISIT ROMANIA?

Romania, a land of striking landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and captivating history, has been steadily gaining recognition as an enticing destination for travelers from across the globe. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the question of how many foreign tourists choose Romania as their destination has gained paramount importance in the realm of tourism research. This part of the article delves into the pivotal aspect of quantifying the influx of foreign tourists into Romania. It seeks to explore and decipher the numerical trends, patterns, and fluctuations in foreign tourist arrivals, ultimately shedding light on the country's appeal as a tourist destination. Understanding the volume and dynamics of foreign tourist visits is not only essential for policy-makers and the tourism industry but also for those interested in the broader implications of tourism on the nation's economy, culture, and environment.

By delving into comprehensive data and employing statistical analysis, we aim to unveil the figures and variations in the number of foreign tourists who choose Romania as their preferred travel destination. This inquiry not only serves to quantify the current state of tourism but also provides a foundation for future projections and strategies.

As we embark on this exploration, we will not only answer the question, *how many foreign tourists visit Romania?* but also contemplate the significance of these numbers. Beyond the statistics, we aim to unravel the impact of these visitors on the nation, its regions, and its people, and how Romania's allure continues to grow in the eyes of global travelers. This part of the article is an essential resource for anyone with an interest in the dynamics of international tourism and the role it plays in Romania's ever-evolving landscape. In order to methodologically understand *how many foreign tourists visit Romania*, we need to define *foreign tourist* (or international visitor) is and the *tourist arrivals* (or simply arrivals).

*Foreign tourist* (or *international visitor*), from a statistical perspective, refers to any individual who ordinarily resides or has their residence abroad and travels to Romania for a period not exceeding 12 months, without being remunerated for this journey. A foreign tourist is a person who travels to a country or destination different from their country of residence or citizenship. This individual visit another country for tourism, leisure, business, or other non-residential purposes. A foreign tourist may be a temporary visitor in a country, traveling for the purpose of exploration, relaxation, experiencing the local culture and tourist attractions, or participating in events, conferences, or business meetings (in the case of pseudo-tourists). This may involve staying in hotels, utilizing local tourism services, interacting with the local culture and community, and incurring expenses related to travel and tourism. The identification of a foreign tourist is usually based on information such as citizenship, residence, and the person's country of origin. In many cases, a foreign tourist may be required to present a valid passport or other travel documents to enter a country or tourist destination. International tourism and the arrival of foreign tourists in a tourist destination have a significant impact on the local economy, the tourism industry, and social development. Foreign tourists contribute to tourism revenue, job creation, the promotion of culture and local heritage, and can influence the development of infrastructure and tourism services. To attract and retain foreign tourists, tourist destinations engage in marketing and promotion activities, improve tourism infrastructure, develop quality services, and maintain their appeal by preserving the environment and cultural values. Statistical research on international travel is recorded at the state borders of Romania.

*Tourist arrivals* (or simply *arrivals*) refer to the total number of tourists who arrive at a tourist destination within a specific period. This metric serves as a measure of travel volume and tourism activity in a particular region, country, or specific destination. Tourist arrival can be expressed in various ways, such as the total number of tourists visiting a destination, the number of foreign visitors, or the number of tourists accommodated in authorized lodging facilities. It can be calculated based on official data reported by travel agencies, accommodation providers, tour operators, or local tourism authorities. Tourist arrivals can be influenced by a range of factors, including the destination's attractiveness and popularity, transportation accessibility, weather conditions, local events and festivals, tourism infrastructure, and tourism marketing. Additionally, political, economic, and social factors can play a role in attracting or discouraging tourists from visiting a particular destination. Tourist arrival is a vital indicator for evaluating the economic performance and impact of tourism in a specific region or country. It can provide insights into tourism trends, traveler preferences and behavior, the contribution of tourism to the economy, employment, and the potential for future tourism development. Data on tourist arrivals are utilized by the tourism industry, tourism authorities, researchers, and planners to monitor and analyze the evolution of tourism, identify growth opportunities, enhance tourism services, and develop effective tourism strategies and policies. Statistical research on tourist arrivals is recorded at tourist accommodation facilities with lodging functions in Romania. In the period spanning 1992-2022, Romania witnessed an impressive total of 257,041,587 tourists who explored the country. Among these tourists, 211,029,119, or 82.10%, were romanian tourists, while 46,012,468, or 17.90%, were foreign tourists (Figure 1). These figures depict an intriguing mix of romanian and international tourists who ventured to discover Romania over this significant three-decade period.

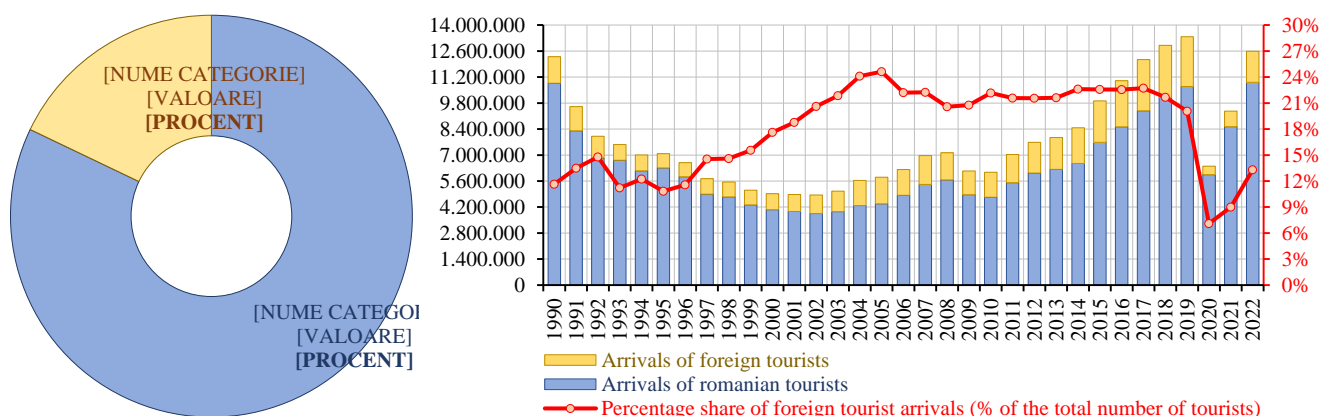


Figure 1. Arrivals of romanian and foreign tourists in the period 1990-2022  
 (Data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>)

It's noteworthy that romanian tourists constituted an overwhelming majority of the visitors, suggesting a strong involvement of the local population in tourism activities. This phenomenon can be influenced by various factors, including the ease of domestic travel and a growing interest in exploring their own country, given Romania's diverse geography and cultural heritage. Simultaneously, the substantial presence of foreign tourists, accounting for nearly one-fifth of the total tourists, reflects Romania's increased appeal as an international tourist destination. This can be attributed to the country's

natural beauty, rich historical heritage, and effective tourism promotion efforts. The economic impact of these foreign tourists can be significant, contributing to job creation and the development of tourism infrastructure. These data underscore the complexity of Romania's tourism landscape, with a normal balance between Romanian and international tourists, each bringing unique contributions to the country's tourism industry. It's vital to continue tourism development and promotion efforts to attract even more foreign tourists while encouraging further exploration by the local population. This balance can foster a thriving and sustainable tourism sector, enriching both the economy and cultural exchanges within Romania.

The dataset spanning from 1990 to 2022 offers valuable insights into the evolution of tourism in Romania. Notable trends include a consistent decrease in the number of arrivals of Romanian tourists over the years, with a significant drop in 2020, likely attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated travel restrictions. On the other hand, the percentage share of foreign tourist arrivals has seen a steady increase over the years, reaching its peak in 2019. However, the sudden drop in foreign tourist arrivals in 2020, followed by a recovery in 2021 and 2022, indicates the impact of the pandemic on international travel. Despite the recovery, the foreign tourist arrival percentage remains below the 2019 levels, highlighting the ongoing challenges in the tourism sector. These fluctuations reflect the sector's resilience and adaptability, as it navigates through economic fluctuations and global events. Moving forward, it's crucial for Romania to focus on measures that promote sustainable tourism growth while addressing uncertainties that may arise in the future. The dataset provides a detailed historical perspective of tourism in Romania from 1990 to 2022. Several key trends and shifts can be observed (Figure 1):

- *Decrease in Romanian tourists:* The number of Romanian tourists visiting Romania shows a consistent decline over the years. In 1990, 10,864,891 Romanian tourists arrived, but this figure dropped to 4,726,414 in 2010 and further declined to 4,342,412 in 2019. This downward trend can be attributed to various factors, including changes in economic conditions, preferences for international travel, and domestic tourism promotion efforts.

- *Increase in foreign tourists:* In contrast, the number of foreign tourists visiting Romania has shown a gradual increase. In 1990, 1,431,661 foreign tourists arrived, but by 2019, this number had risen to 2,683,748. The increase in foreign tourist arrivals suggests that Romania has become more attractive as an international destination over the years.

- *Foreign tourist percentage share:* The percentage share of foreign tourist arrivals, relative to the total number of tourists, has steadily risen. In 1990, it was 11.6%, but it reached a peak of 24.6% in 2005. This peak was followed by a temporary decline, primarily due to the global financial crisis in 2008. Subsequently, the percentage recovered, reaching 22.7% in 2017, only to decrease again in 2019, likely due to the impact of the economic and political landscape.

- *Pandemic-related disruption:* The year 2020 stands out as an outlier, with a sharp decline in both Romanian and foreign tourists, and a substantial drop in the foreign tourist percentage share (7.1%). This dramatic reduction was undoubtedly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and the severe travel restrictions imposed during that year.

- *Recovery and rebound:* In 2021 and 2022, there was a noticeable recovery in foreign tourist arrivals, with the percentage share increasing to 9.0% and 13.3%, respectively. While this indicates resilience and adaptability in the sector, the foreign tourist percentage share remains below the peak levels seen in the mid-2000s.

Overall, the data shows a complex interplay of economic, political, and global factors influencing tourism in Romania. It underscores the need for the country to continue adapting to changing circumstances, promoting the sustained growth of tourism, and addressing uncertainties that may arise in the future, especially in light of external factors like global pandemics and economic conditions. Romania's tourism industry has demonstrated resilience, and ongoing efforts should focus on sustaining and expanding its appeal as a tourist destination for both domestic and international travelers.

## WHEN FOREIGN TOURISTS VISIT ROMANIA?

Romania, a country endowed with diverse natural beauty, rich historical treasures, and a vibrant cultural tapestry, has been beckoning travelers from around the world. The question of *when* foreign tourists choose to visit this captivating European destination is a crucial aspect of understanding the dynamics of international tourism in the region.

This part of the article embarks on a journey to explore the temporal patterns and preferences that shape the decision-making process of foreign tourists when it comes to visiting Romania. Understanding the timing of these visits is not only an academic inquiry but also holds practical significance for the tourism industry, local businesses, and policymakers. It offers valuable insights into peak tourist seasons, off-peak opportunities, and the factors that influence the ebb and flow of visitor numbers. By delving into historical data, seasonal trends, and cultural events, we aim to uncover the temporal dimensions of foreign tourist arrivals. The *when* becomes a critical element in addressing questions related to resource allocation, marketing strategies, and infrastructure development. Moreover, it provides a lens through which we can evaluate the impact of seasonality on local economies and the sustainability of tourist activities. As we navigate the intricate fabric of *when* foreign tourists choose to experience Romania, we not only seek to provide a comprehensive overview of timing patterns but also to highlight the cultural and natural wonders that make Romania a year-round destination. This part of the article offers a nuanced understanding of the dynamics of international tourism in Romania, exploring how the timing of visits shapes the experiences of travelers and the impact on the host nation. In order to methodologically understand *when foreign tourists visit Romania*, we need to define *tourist season* and *tourist off-season*.

The *tourist season* represents the period of the year during which a tourist destination experiences a high volume of visitors and intense tourism activity. It is often influenced by factors such as favorable weather conditions, local events or festivals, school holidays, or other determinants of travel and vacation planning. The tourist season can vary depending on the destination and the type of tourism practiced in that particular area. For example, beach destinations may have a more pronounced tourist season during the summer when temperatures are high, and people travel to enjoy the sun, sand, and water. On the other hand, mountain destinations may attract more tourists during the winter when there are favorable conditions for



winter sports. The tourist season can have a significant impact on the local economy and the tourism industry, as an increased influx of tourists brings additional revenue through tourism services, accommodations, restaurants, entertainment activities, and other related businesses. During the tourist season, tourist destinations can prepare to meet the increased demand, such as expanding accommodation capacities, increasing staff, organizing special events, or actively promoting local attractions.

*The tourist off-season* represents the period during which a tourist destination experiences a lower volume of visitors and reduced tourism activity. During this time, destinations may witness decreased demand for tourism services, accommodations, and specific activities. The tourist off-season can be influenced by several factors, such as unfavorable weather conditions for certain types of tourism, like beach tourism during the colder months, or in some cases, mountain tourism during the warmer season. Additionally, school schedules and work periods can lead to decreased demand during specific periods outside of the main tourist season. Throughout the tourist off-season, tourist destinations have the opportunity to attract visitors through special offers, promotions, and discounts aimed at stimulating demand and maintaining a minimum level of economic activity. As a result, hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, and other related businesses may attempt to draw tourists with lower prices or attractive vacation packages. The tourist off-season can provide advantages to travelers who wish to avoid crowds and enjoy a quieter and more authentic experience in tourist destinations. It can be a favorable time to explore tourist attractions at a more relaxed pace, interact with locals, and discover lesser-known aspects of a destination. It's worth noting that the tourist off-season can vary depending on the destination and the type of tourism practiced. Some destinations may have a shorter and less pronounced off-season, while others may be more affected by fluctuations in supply and demand. Regarding the arrivals per month of foreign tourists, the dataset presents a comprehensive overview of foreign tourist arrivals in Romania spanning from January 2010 to December 2022. Several patterns and trends can be observed in the data (Figure 2):

- *Seasonal variations:* The data exhibits clear seasonal variations in foreign tourist arrivals, with the summer months (June to August) consistently recording the highest numbers, peaking at 337,836 in August 2017. This trend is typical of many tourist destinations, as summer is often the preferred time for travel.

- *Off-peak months:* In contrast, the winter months (December to February) typically show the lowest numbers of foreign tourist arrivals. December 2022 marked the lowest point in the dataset with 134,921 arrivals, likely due to the holiday season in Romania being a quieter period for foreign tourism.

- *Yearly growth:* Over the years, there is a general trend of growth in foreign tourist arrivals, with occasional fluctuations. For example, there is a noticeable upward trajectory from 2010 to 2017, followed by a decrease in 2018, and another growth period in 2019. This fluctuation might be attributed to various economic, political, and global factors impacting travel decisions.

- *Pandemic impact:* The dataset shows a significant disruption in 2020, particularly in March and April, with a sharp decrease in arrivals. This is undoubtedly linked to the COVID-19 pandemic and the extensive travel restrictions and lockdowns implemented during that time.

- *Recovery:* In 2021 and 2022, there was a notable recovery in foreign tourist arrivals, although they have not yet reached the pre-pandemic levels. The gradual increase in numbers in these years indicates a resurgence of interest in visiting Romania as travel restrictions eased.

- *Monthly fluctuations:* Beyond seasonal trends, there are also monthly fluctuations that may be influenced by factors like festivals, holidays, and events. For instance, July and August often see surges in arrivals, possibly linked to summer vacations.

This dataset reflects the dynamic nature of tourism, impacted by a range of external factors such as economic conditions, global events, and travel restrictions. Romania's appeal as a tourist destination is evident, and it remains an attractive choice for travelers, with a steady recovery post-pandemic. Analyzing these trends and understanding the seasonal and yearly variations is crucial for stakeholders in the tourism industry, allowing them to adapt their strategies and offerings accordingly.

Analyzing arrivals by month of foreign tourists, the data presents a comprehensive analysis of the monthly percentage share of foreign tourist arrivals in Romania, along with the average share. Notably, the months from May to October, which exhibit values higher than the average of 8.33%, can be identified as the peak tourist season for foreign visitors. During these months, the percentage share increases gradually, peaking at 12.0% in August, indicating a substantial influx of tourists during the summer. On the other hand, the months from November to April, with values below the 8.33% average, represent the off-peak tourist season for foreign visitors. December has the lowest share at 5.7%. This seasonal pattern reflects the typical behavior of foreign tourists, who are more inclined to visit Romania during the warm and favorable weather of the summer months, with a notable drop in the winter season due to colder temperatures and holiday-related travel. Understanding this seasonal variation is essential for the Romanian tourism industry, allowing for targeted marketing and resource allocation, such as promoting off-peak travel and extending the tourist season beyond the summer months to maximize the industry's economic impact (Figure 2).

The data on foreign tourist arrivals in Romanian counties for each month of the year reveals significant variations in monthly percentages and overall totals. In January and February, the minimum percentages are generally observed, ranging from 1.9% to 2.3%, with the exception of a few counties where it drops even lower. In contrast, July and August show the highest percentages, reaching a peak of 20.0% in counties such as Constanța. This variation illustrates the pronounced seasonality of tourism in Romania, with the summer months being the most popular for foreign visitors, driven by coastal and urban destinations. The monthly averages for all counties range from 5.7% to 13.8%, reflecting the diverse attractiveness of regions throughout the year. Furthermore, the total number of foreign tourists in 2022 surpassed 24 million, with Bucharest receiving over 10 million, emphasizing the capital's significance as a tourist hub. Understanding these trends is crucial for the tourism industry and policymakers to make informed decisions and allocate resources effectively, balancing the seasonal variations in tourist traffic among different regions.

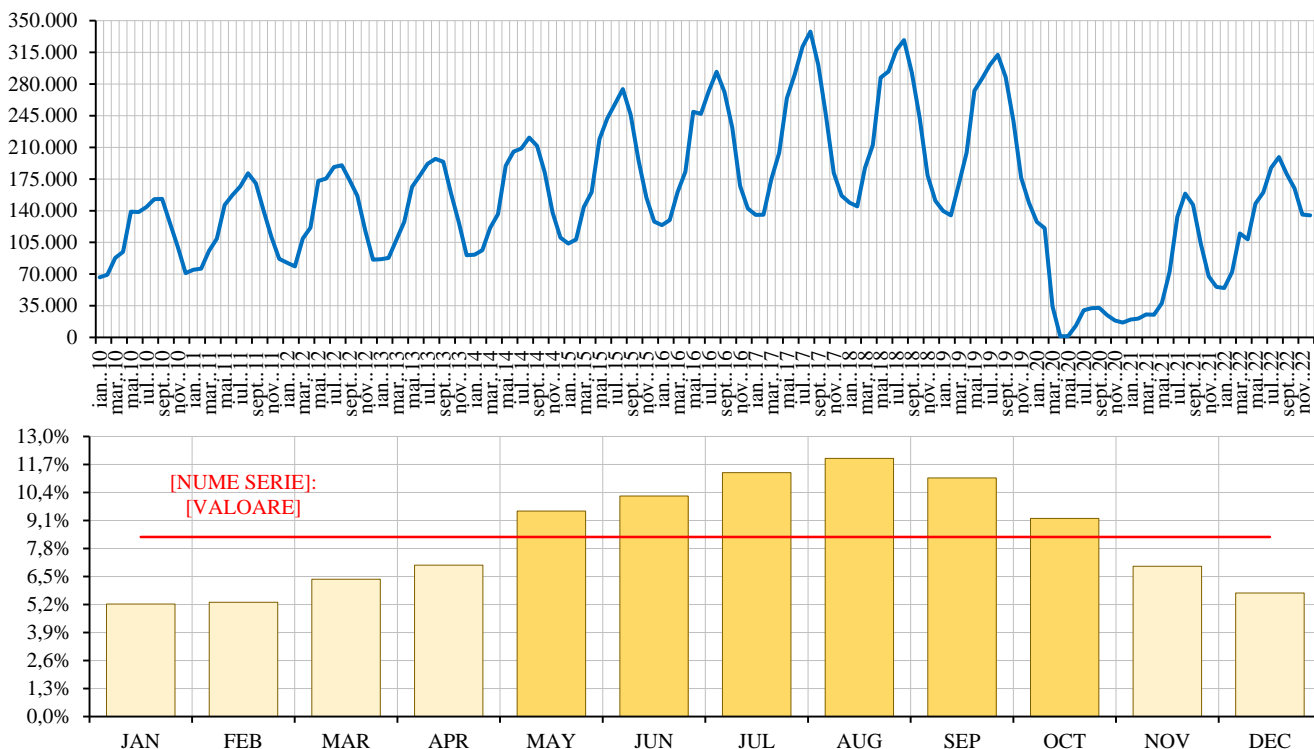


Figure 2. Arrivals of foreign tourists per month in the period 2010-2022  
 (Data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>)

**WHICH TOURIST DESTINATIONS FOREIGN TOURISTS CHOOSE WHEN VISITING ROMANIA?**

Romania, a hidden gem in the heart of Eastern Europe, has been increasingly capturing the attention of travelers from around the world. This country, known for its captivating landscapes, historic sites, and rich cultural heritage, offers an array of tourist destinations that cater to a diverse range of interests. The question of which specific destinations foreign tourists choose to explore while visiting Romania is a critical facet of understanding the evolving landscape of international tourism in this region. This part of the article embarks on a captivating journey to unravel the choices made by foreign tourists when it comes to selecting their destinations within Romania. We will delve into the diverse options that this country provides, including its iconic castles, picturesque mountain regions, vibrant cities, and the unique ecosystem of the Danube Delta. Understanding these choices is essential not only for the tourism industry but also for local businesses, conservation efforts, and cultural preservation. By examining data, preferences, and the cultural attractions that draw travelers in, we aim to provide a comprehensive overview of the tourist destinations that captivate the imagination of foreign visitors. This exploration not only showcases the country's inherent charm but also provides insights into the economic and cultural impact of these choices. As we navigate the enchanting landscape of *which tourist destinations foreign tourists choose when visiting Romania*, we aim to shed light on the rich tapestry of experiences available in this multifaceted country. This part of the article offers an essential perspective on the dynamics of international tourism, the allure of Romania's destinations, and their influence on the traveler's journey.

In order to methodologically understand *when foreign tourists visit Romania*, we need to define *touristic destination*.

A *tourist destination* is a geographic location, such as a city, region, country, or natural site, that is visited by tourists for the purpose of recreation, relaxation, or exploration. Tourist destinations can vary based on the attractions and amenities they offer, such as historical monuments, natural landscapes, beaches, spa resorts, theme parks, cultural centers, and other tourist attractions. A tourist destination can be popular at the local, regional, national, or international level, depending on its level of recognition and appeal. It can be influenced by factors such as cultural heritage, natural resources, cultural or sporting events, tourism infrastructure, and its reputation in the tourism industry. To be considered a successful tourist destination, it is essential to provide a pleasant and satisfying experience for tourists, including accommodation facilities, transportation services, entertainment options, culinary experiences, and other related services. Effective promotion and marketing of the destination are also key factors in attracting and retaining tourists. For a comprehensive analysis of foreign tourist arrivals in Romania, we have employed two categories of tourist destinations: actual tourist destinations (spa resorts, resorts in the coastal area (excluding the Municipality of Constanța), resorts in the mountain area, Danube Delta (including Tulcea Municipality), Bucharest and the county seat municipalities (excluding Tulcea Municipality), other localities and tourist routes) on the one hand, and Romania's counties on the other hand.

**Arrivals of foreign tourists by tourist destinations**

Analyzing the comprehensive dataset of foreign tourist arrivals in Romania from 1994 to 2022 by tourist destinations provides valuable insights into the dynamics and evolution of the country's tourism industry, offering a more detailed perspective on each year's performance (Figure 3):



- *Spa Resorts*: The data reveals that foreign tourist arrivals in spa resorts witnessed a steady increase during the 1990s, peaking in the mid-2000s. In 1994, there were 54,029 arrivals, and this number grew to a peak of 48,742 in 2004, emphasizing the growing popularity of wellness tourism. However, in the past few years, this sector has seen a significant drop, with 5,564 arrivals in 2020. Several factors could contribute to this decline, including changing tourist preferences, competition from other destinations, or economic factors.

- *Resorts in the Coastal Area (excluding the Municipality of Constanța)*: Coastal resorts, particularly along the Black Sea coast, witnessed substantial growth in foreign tourist arrivals during the 1990s and early 2000s, with a peak of 88,182 arrivals in 2005. These destinations are popular for their beautiful beaches, warm climate, and cultural attractions. However, the numbers started declining after 2015, with 25,582 arrivals in 2022, possibly due to increasing competition in the region, changing travel trends, and economic factors.

- *Resorts in the Mountain Area*: Resorts in the mountain areas demonstrated consistent growth throughout the analyzed period. Foreign tourists were attracted by activities like skiing, hiking, and nature exploration. The peak occurred in 2017, with 103,173 arrivals. This segment remained relatively stable compared to coastal and spa resorts, highlighting the evergreen appeal of the mountains. Factors influencing fluctuations include climatic conditions, international tourism trends, and infrastructure development.

- *Danube Delta (including Tulcea Municipality)*: The Danube Delta, with its unique ecosystem and natural beauty, witnessed irregular growth patterns. The number of foreign tourist arrivals reached 16,566 in 2003, but declined to 5,958 in 2022. This fluctuation may be attributed to the specific interests of eco-tourists, birdwatchers, and those seeking an authentic natural experience. The Delta's appeal is niche, and arrivals may be influenced by factors like environmental conditions, marketing efforts, and regional developments.

- *Bucharest and County Seat Municipalities (excluding Tulcea Municipality)*: Bucharest, as the capital, has consistently attracted foreign tourists, with a steady increase over the years. The peak was reached in 2019 with 1,305,700 arrivals. This is due to Bucharest's rich cultural heritage, historical significance, vibrant nightlife, and its role as a business and economic hub. The steady growth in county seat municipalities beyond Bucharest signifies the broader geographic appeal of Romania's tourist destinations.

- *Other Localities and Tourist Routes*: The segment of other localities and tourist routes experienced substantial growth from 1994 to 2018, with 259,944 foreign tourist arrivals in 2017. This diverse category likely includes destinations offering unique experiences not covered by the previous segments. Fluctuations may be influenced by regional developments, marketing initiatives, and evolving travel trends. These insights emphasize the need for Romania to diversify and enhance its tourism offerings, capitalize on the strengths of different destinations, and adapt to evolving traveler preferences. By understanding the dynamics of each segment year by year, tourism authorities and businesses can make data-informed decisions to boost Romania's appeal as a diverse and attractive tourist destination.

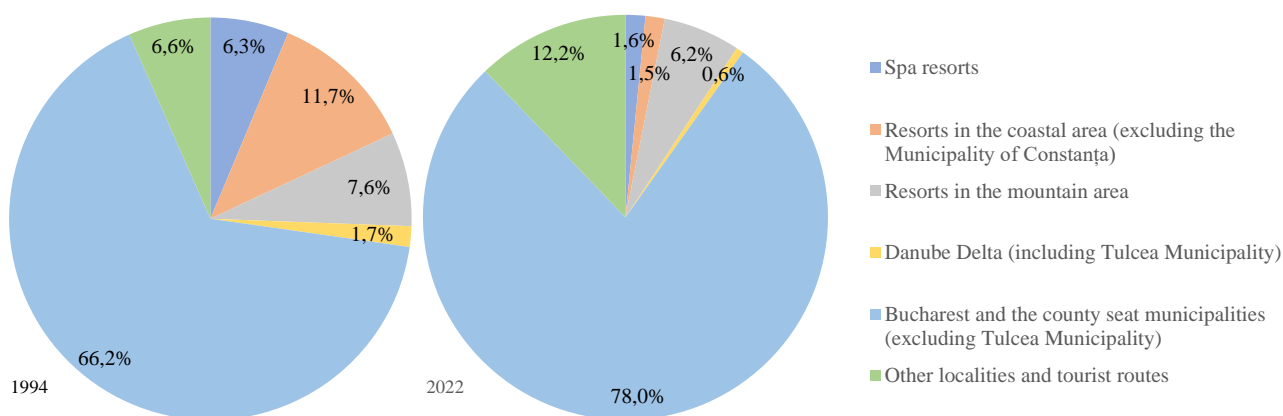


Figure 3. Arrivals of foreign tourists by tourist destinations in the years 1994 (left) and 2022 (right)  
(Data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>)

### Arrivals of foreign tourists by counties

Analyzing the 1990 data on the number of foreign tourists arriving in the counties of Romania, it is apparent that there are significant disparities in tourist influx among different regions. Bucharest, the capital city, received the highest number of foreign tourists with 312,764 arrivals, emphasizing its role as a major tourist destination. Other counties with substantial tourist numbers include Constanța (133,312), Bacău (92,561), Suceava (98,374), and Bihor (50,769), indicating their appeal to international visitors, possibly due to coastal areas, historical sites, or other attractions. Conversely, several counties reported much lower tourist figures, such as Gorj (652), Sălaj (1,222), Ialomița (4,474), Giurgiu (2,851), and Teleorman (1,022), suggesting that these areas were less frequented by foreign tourists in 1990. These numbers reflect the disparities in tourism development across Romanian regions and highlight potential areas for growth and promotion in the country's tourism industry (Figure 4). Analyzing the 2022 data on the number of foreign tourists arriving in the counties of Romania, it's evident that certain counties serve as significant tourist magnets, while others exhibit a relatively lower tourist influx. Bucharest, the capital city, stands out with a remarkable 769,583 foreign tourist arrivals, emphasizing its role as the primary tourist hub in the country. Other counties with substantial tourist numbers include Brașov (107,595), Cluj (103,920), Sibiu

(91,870), and Timiș (61,692), indicating their appeal to international visitors, likely due to their cultural, historical, and natural attractions. Conversely, several counties reported much lower tourist figures, such as Giurgiu (923), Teleorman (285), Călărași (1,258), Botoșani (1,564), and Vrancea (1,660), signifying that these regions are less frequented by foreign tourists. These figures underscore the regional disparities in Romania's tourism sector and highlight the need for targeted efforts to promote less-visited areas and diversify the tourism landscape (Figure 5).

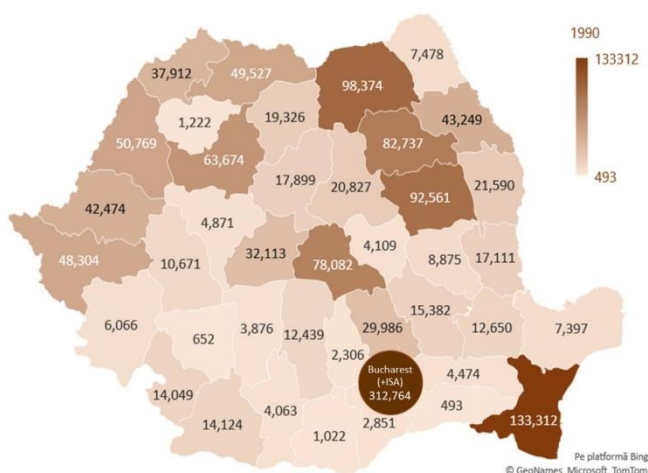


Figure 4. Arrivals of foreign tourists by county in 1990  
(Data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>)

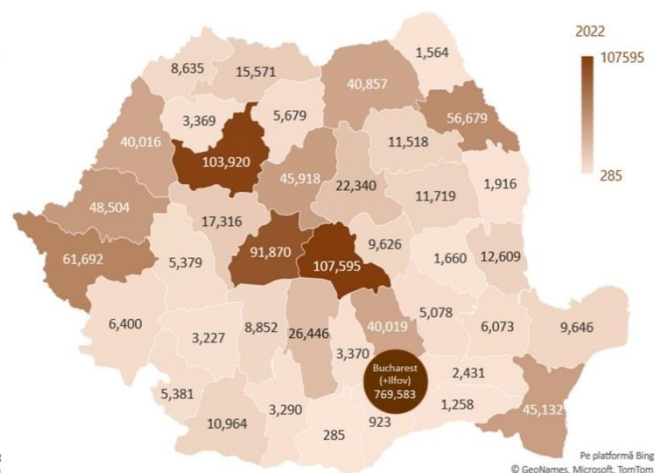


Figure 5. Arrivals of foreign tourists by county in 2022  
(Data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>)

A comprehensive analysis of the data pertaining to the influx of foreign tourists into Romania's counties in 1990 and 2022 provides a nuanced perspective on the evolving dynamics of the country's tourism industry over this 32-year period. In terms of significant differences, it's important to note that Bucharest, as the capital city, experienced a staggering surge in foreign tourist arrivals, growing by 456,819 visitors, representing an impressive 146.1% increase. This remarkable growth underscores Bucharest's transformation into a prominent global tourism destination. Similarly, Sibiu and Mureș displayed substantial growth percentages of 186.1% and 156.5%, respectively, signifying a growing appeal of these counties to foreign travelers. In contrast, several regions faced a decline in foreign tourist numbers. Constanța, once a prominent tourist hotspot, recorded a significant decrease of 66.1%, equivalent to 88,180 fewer tourists. Suceava and Maramureș witnessed notable drops of 58.5% and 68.6%, emphasizing changing preferences or perhaps infrastructure-related challenges in these areas. On the other hand, counties like Vaslui, Vrancea, and Botoșani exhibited the most profound declines, with each experiencing over 79% fewer foreign tourists in 2022 compared to 1990. These pronounced variations can be attributed to a confluence of factors, including changes in travel trends, infrastructure development, shifts in marketing strategies, global events such as economic crises or pandemics, and modifications in political, social, and economic landscapes. This extensive analysis thus underlines the multifaceted nature of the tourism industry and highlights the need for a holistic approach in understanding and addressing the diverse challenges and opportunities faced by Romania's counties in the realm of tourism (Figure 4, 5).

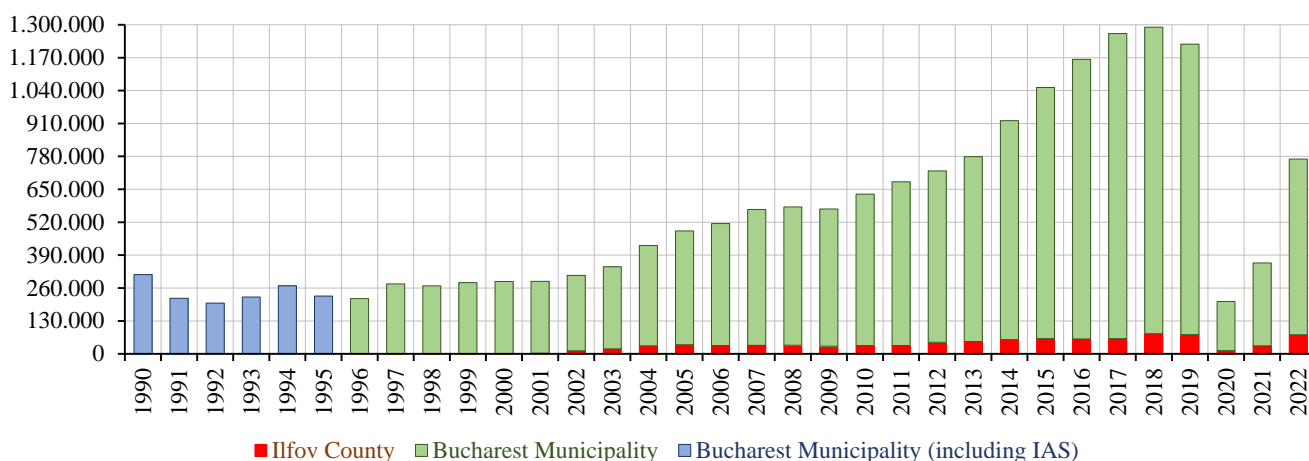


Figure 6. Arrivals in Bucharest and IAS/Ilfov of foreign tourists in the period 1990-2022  
(Data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>)

Analyzing the data for foreign tourist arrivals in Bucharest from 1990 to 2022 reveals a dynamic shift in the city's attractiveness to international visitors. In 1990, Bucharest Municipality alone welcomed 312,764 tourists, and over the years, there were fluctuations in numbers, reaching a low point in 1996 with 217,120 tourists. However, the most significant transformations occurred from the late 1990s onwards. Starting in 2004, the number of foreign tourists saw substantial growth,



## WHERE FOREIGN TOURISTS STAY WHEN VISITING ROMANIA?

Romania, a land of enchanting landscapes and captivating history, has been steadily gaining recognition as a destination of choice for international travelers. As these visitors journey across the country, one of the fundamental aspects that shapes their experiences and influences the local economy is the choice of accommodation. The question of *where* foreign tourists choose to stay when visiting Romania is a critical dimension in understanding the dynamics of tourism in this diverse and culturally rich nation. This part of the article embarks on an exploration of the varied accommodation choices made by foreign tourists as they traverse Romania's picturesque landscapes and vibrant cities. Whether it's a charming guesthouse in the Carpathian Mountains, a boutique hotel in Bucharest, or a rustic cabin near the Black Sea, the *where* of accommodation provides essential insights into the traveler's journey. By delving into the preferences, trends, and factors that influence these choices, we aim to offer a comprehensive overview of the accommodation landscape in Romania.

Beyond convenience and comfort, the *where* has a profound impact on the economic development of different regions, the preservation of cultural heritage, and the sustainability of the tourism industry. As we embark on this exploration, we will not only answer the question of *where foreign tourists stay when visiting Romania* but also consider the role these choices play in shaping the traveler's experience. This part of the article seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of the accommodation dynamics in Romania, highlighting the rich tapestry of choices available to foreign tourists and their profound influence on the country's tourism sector. In order to better understand where foreign tourists stay when they visit Romania, we will analyze this aspect both from the point of view of *accommodation units*, on the one hand, and *comfort categories*, on the other. In order to methodologically understand *where foreign tourists stay when visiting Romania*, we need to define *an accommodation unit: tourist reception structures with tourist accommodation functions (hotel, tourist guesthouse, agrotourism guesthouse, tourist villa, and hostel)*, and *comfort categories*.

### Accommodation in accommodation units

In order to methodologically understand *where foreign tourists stay when visiting Romania*, we need to define *a tourist reception structures with tourist accommodation functions (hotel, tourist guesthouse, agrotourism guesthouse, tourist villa, and hostel)*. A tourist reception structure with tourist accommodation functions represents any construction or arrangement that permanently or seasonally provides accommodation services and other specific services for tourists. A hotel represents the tourist reception structure arranged in buildings or building units, offering tourists properly equipped rooms, studios, or apartments, providing specific services, and having a reception area and on-site dining spaces. A tourist guesthouse represents a tourist reception structure with a capacity of up to 20 rooms, totaling a maximum of 60 accommodation places, operating in citizens' homes or independent buildings, ensuring tourists' accommodation in specially designed spaces and meal preparation and service conditions. An agrotourism guesthouse represents a tourist reception structure with a capacity of up to 8 rooms, operating in citizens' homes or independent buildings, providing tourists with accommodation in specially designed spaces and meal preparation and service conditions, as well as the opportunity to participate in household or artisan activities. A tourist villa represents a relatively small-capacity tourist reception structure, operating in independent buildings with specific architecture, located in tourist resorts or in other areas and localities of tourist interest, providing accommodation for tourists and the provision of specific services. A hostel represents a tourist reception structure with a minimum capacity of 3 rooms, studios, or apartments arranged on different levels in specially designed spaces, typically in buildings originally intended for purposes other than tourist accommodation.

The data on foreign tourist arrivals in Romania within various types of tourist accommodation structures from 1990 to 2022 reveal several significant trends. In 1990, the total number of foreign tourist arrivals was 1,289,338, with hotels accommodating the majority of visitors. However, from 1990 to 2000, the total number of arrivals experienced a noticeable decrease by 58%, which can be attributed to various factors. Subsequently, there was a consistent upward trajectory, culminating in 1,395,526 arrivals in 2022, marking a remarkable 8.2% increase compared to the previous year, showing signs of recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic's adverse effects. Hotels remained the most preferred form of accommodation, hosting 1,395,526 arrivals in 2022, although agritourism pensions, tourist villas, and hostels experienced substantial growth over the years. Additionally, tourist guesthouses witnessed a slight decrease in arrivals, which can be explained by the diversification of the tourism market and changing preferences. The significant rise in hostels' arrivals, particularly in recent years, reflects the evolving nature of tourism, attracting more budget-conscious travelers. In 2022, hostels hosted 59,972 foreign tourists, marking a 293% increase from 2010. The data underscores the tourism industry's resilience and adaptability, catering to a diverse array of tourists seeking various types of accommodation. Furthermore, when examining the percentages, it becomes evident that hotels maintained a consistent share of around 50% of foreign tourist arrivals throughout the entire period. However, other forms of accommodation structures have seen their percentages fluctuate. For instance, agritourism pensions, which accounted for a mere 0.18% of arrivals in 1990, have grown to represent 0.34% of arrivals in 2022, reflecting an increasing interest in rural and agricultural experiences. Meanwhile, the share of hostels experienced a substantial boost, growing from 0.02% in 1990 to 0.48% in 2022, showcasing the rising popularity of budget-friendly lodging options. On the other hand, tourist guesthouses saw a gradual decline in their share, going from 1.81% in 1990 to 1.27% in 2022, possibly due to the diversification of available accommodations and shifting traveler preferences. Tourist villas remained relatively stable over the years, while motels witnessed a slight drop in their share, emphasizing the need for adaptation and diversification to stay competitive in the evolving tourism market. The data illustrates the dynamic nature of foreign tourist arrivals in Romania, with various types of tourist accommodation structures experiencing shifts in their popularity over the years. Hotels have remained the dominant choice for tourists, but other forms of accommodation have seen growth, especially agritourism pensions and hostels. These



trends reflect the changing preferences and priorities of foreign travelers, influenced by factors such as economic conditions, emerging travel trends, and global events, including the COVID-19 pandemic. The data provides valuable insights for policymakers, investors, and industry stakeholders in understanding the evolving landscape of tourism in Romania (Figure 8).

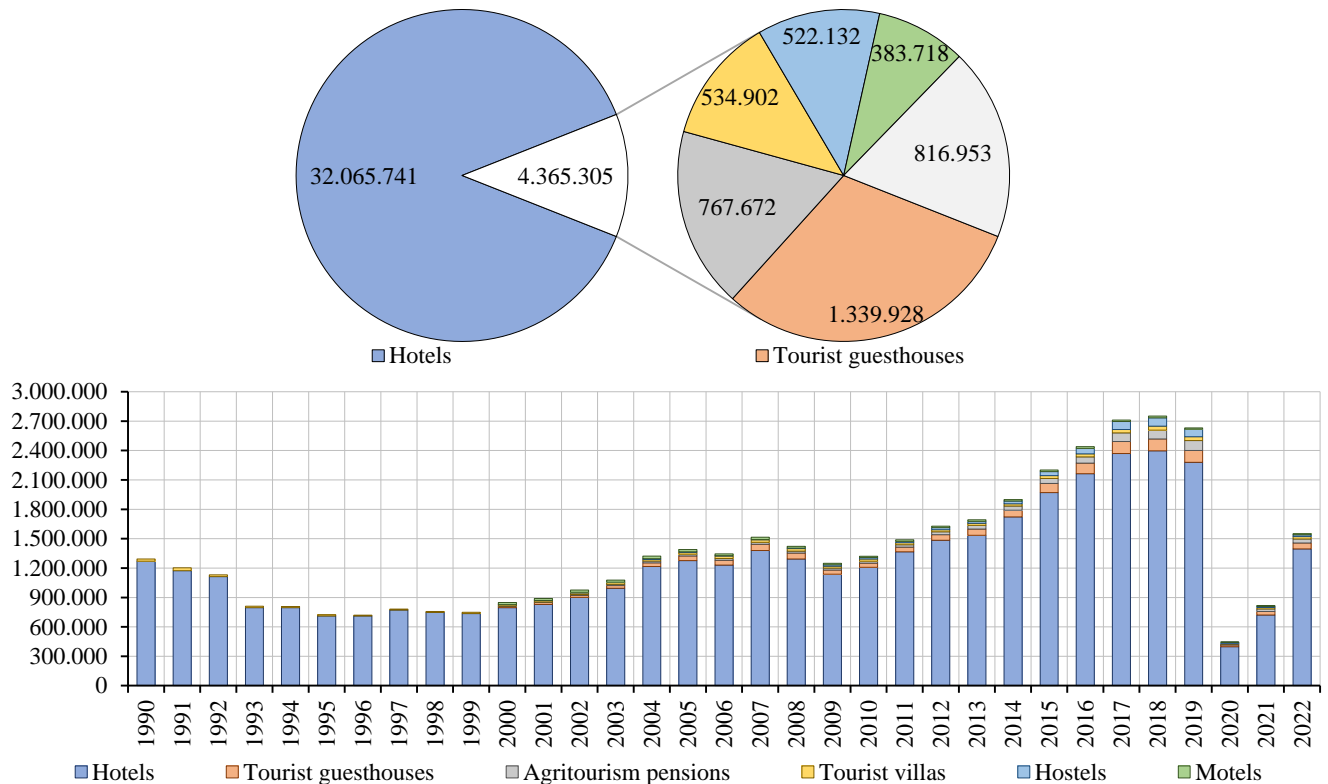


Figure 8. Arrivals of foreign tourists in Romania by accommodation units in the period 1990-2022  
(Data source: <http://statistici.inssse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/inssse-table>)

### Accommodation by comfort categories

In order to methodologically understand *where foreign tourists stay when visiting Romania*, we need to define *comfort categories of tourist accommodation structures*. The comfort categories of tourist accommodation structures represent the classification and evaluation of the level of comfort and services offered by accommodation units to tourists. These categories are used to indicate the level of quality and facilities available in a particular accommodation unit and help tourists choose the option that suits their preferences and needs. In Romania, the comfort categories of tourist accommodation structures are regulated by Tourism Law 275/23.11.2018, Government Ordinances 58/1998 and 15/2017, and the Classification Rules for Tourist Accommodation Structures (Order National Authority for Tourism no. 65/2013). These categories may vary by country and can be expressed through different classification systems, such as stars, keys, or other specific symbols. It is important to mention that these comfort categories are established based on criteria such as equipment, services, room comfort, provided facilities, hygiene, accessibility, and other aspects relevant to the tourist experience. Tourists can consult official classifications and evaluations of tourist accommodation structures to choose the option that suits their needs and preferences during their stay in Romania.

The data regarding the arrivals of foreign tourists in Romania by categories of comfort presents a nuanced picture of the changing preferences and evolving hospitality landscape in the country. Notably, the five-star or five-flower accommodations, despite starting with only 13 in 1994, have seen steady growth, reaching 220,802 in 2022, reflecting an increasing demand for luxury experiences. In contrast, one-star or one-flower accommodations have witnessed a gradual decline, decreasing from 122,682 in 1994 to 15,772 in 2022, possibly due to changing traveler expectations and the emergence of higher-quality lodging options. Four-star and three-star accommodations have remained the dominant choices for tourists, showing consistent demand over the years. The substantial growth in the unclassified category from 10,942 in 1994 to 222,917 in 2022 suggests an expanding variety of unique and unconventional accommodation offerings, aligning with the global trend of experiential travel. It is important to note that these shifts in accommodation categories are influenced by factors such as economic conditions, tourism marketing strategies, and the evolving expectations of travelers. This data provides valuable insights for the Romanian tourism industry and policymakers, helping them adapt to the changing landscape and cater to the diverse needs of tourists. Analyzing the data further, it's evident that the years leading up to the early 2000s witnessed a significant growth in the number of hotels with higher star/flower ratings, indicating a rising demand for upscale accommodations in Romania.

This trend continued, with four-star and five-star establishments consistently expanding. The year 2000 marked a pivotal moment when one-star or one-flower accommodations decreased, and five-star or five-flower options took a notable leap. This shift could be attributed to the country's tourism industry adapting to international standards and responding to the demands of more discerning travelers. Starting in 2000, four-star and three-star accommodations have been the preferred choice for most

tourists, remaining relatively stable in numbers. While the data exhibits slight fluctuations from year to year, it suggests that Romania has maintained a consistent level of mid-range accommodation options. The unclassified category has seen substantial growth, possibly indicating a trend of more diverse and unique lodging experiences that may not fit traditional star or flower classifications. This aligns with the broader global trend of travelers seeking unconventional and distinctive stays, including boutique hotels, guesthouses, and specialty lodgings. It's noteworthy that the year 2020 stands out due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a significant impact on the tourism industry, resulting in decreased numbers across all categories. However, there was a remarkable resurgence in 2022, indicating the potential for recovery and growth in Romania's tourism sector. The data reveals the evolving dynamics of Romania's tourism sector, with shifts in accommodation preferences influenced by changing consumer expectations, economic conditions, and global travel trends. Policymakers and industry stakeholders can leverage this information to make informed decisions and adapt to the evolving needs and desires of tourists, further enhancing the country's position as a tourist destination (Figure 9).

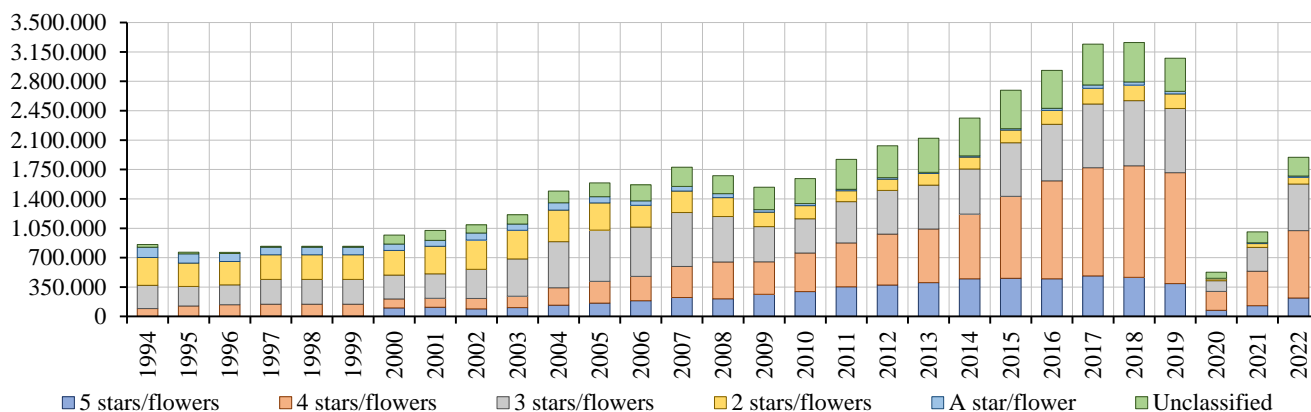


Figure 9. Arrivals of foreign tourists in Romania by comfort categories in the period 1994-2022  
 (Data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>)

### HOW LONG FOREIGN TOURISTS STAY IN ROMANIA?

Romania, a country of picturesque landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and historical treasures, has been attracting a growing number of foreign tourists in recent years. While the influx of visitors is undoubtedly significant, understanding the duration of their stay within the country is a crucial aspect of comprehending the dynamics of international tourism in Romania.

This part of the article embarks on a journey to investigate the temporal dimension of foreign tourists' visits, specifically, how long they choose to stay in Romania. The *how long* factor plays a vital role in not only assessing the economic impact of tourism but also the travelers' ability to delve deeper into the country's diverse experiences and destinations.

By exploring data, trends, and influencing factors, we aim to provide an in-depth overview of the duration of foreign tourists' visits. Beyond the numbers, we delve into the experiences and motivations that drive tourists to extend their stay, discovering the cultural treasures, natural wonders, and the hidden gems that encourage an extended exploration of Romania.

As we navigate the intricate fabric of *how long foreign tourists stay in Romania*, we aim to shed light on the travelers' interaction with the country and the role this factor plays in the broader context of tourism dynamics. This part of the article offers an essential perspective on the temporal aspects of international tourism in Romania, emphasizing the richness of experiences that can be had during various durations of stay. In order to methodologically understand *how long foreign tourists stay in Romania*, we need to define *tourist overnight stay*, and *a tourist stay*.

*Tourist overnight stay* (or simply *overnight*) refers to the temporary accommodation of tourists in tourist accommodation facilities such as hotels, guesthouses, rented apartments, or other lodging facilities. It involves spending one or more nights in a tourist accommodation facility during a journey or tourist stay. Tourist overnight stays are a crucial indicator in the tourism industry and are used to measure the volume and intensity of tourist activity in a particular tourist destination. Statistics on tourist overnight stays can provide valuable information about the number of tourists visiting a destination, the average length of stay, accommodation preferences, and can contribute to the analysis of the economic impact of tourism on a region or country. Tourist overnight stays can be influenced by various factors such as the attractiveness of the destination, the availability and diversity of lodging facilities, local events and festivals, the tourist season, transportation accessibility, and many others. A popular and well-developed tourist destination will attract a large number of tourists and, consequently, tourist overnight stays. To record tourist overnight stays, tourists must make a reservation and pay for accommodation in an authorized tourist accommodation facility. Tourist accommodation facilities are required to report tourist overnight stays to the relevant authorities for proper monitoring and tourism statistics.

*A tourist stay* refers to a limited period of time during which a tourist travels and accommodates in a tourist destination with the purpose of relaxation, entertainment, or exploration. A tourist stay can vary in duration, ranging from a few days to several weeks or even months (maximum 12), depending on the individual traveler's preferences and possibilities. During a tourist stay, travelers typically enjoy the attractions and facilities offered by their destination, such as visiting tourist attractions, exploring natural landscapes, participating in recreational and cultural activities, relaxing on the beach, or engaging in sports. Additionally, a tourist stay may include culinary experiences, shopping, museum visits, participation in local events, or other destination-specific activities. A tourist stay can be independently organized by the tourist or can be purchased as a travel package from



a travel agency or tour operator. Depending on personal preferences and interests, the tourist stay can be customized to fit the individual needs and desires of the tourist. It is calculated by the ratio of tourist overnight stays to tourist arrivals.

The number of overnight stays by foreign tourists in Romania has seen significant fluctuations over the years. In 1990, there were 4,238,153 overnight stays, which decreased to 3,269,191 in 1991. This downward trend continued in 1992 with 3,141,355 stays and further dropped to 2,744,042 in 1993. However, a noticeable increase occurred in 1994, reaching 2,758,400 stays, which was followed by a decline in 1995 to 2,380,706 stays. From 1996 to 1999, there was a relatively stable period with around 2.2 to 2.5 million stays. The year 2000 marked a significant increase to 2,149,358 stays, and this growth continued in 2001 (2,390,531) and 2002 (2,534,225). A remarkable peak was observed in 2005, with 3,464,134 stays, and then fluctuated in the following years, reaching the highest point in 2017 with 5,291,036 stays. In 2020, there was a significant drop to 997,365 stays, likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but it started to recover in 2021 with 1,924,533 stays and continued to rise in 2022, reaching 3,666,533 stays. These fluctuations reflect the impact of various factors such as global events, economic conditions, and tourism policies on foreign tourists' preferences for visiting Romania. The data on overnight stays of foreign tourists in Romania reveals several interesting trends and potential influencing factors. In the early 1990s, the country experienced a period of instability, which was reflected in the significant drop in overnight stays from 1990 to 1993, likely due to political and economic changes. The subsequent growth in 1994 may suggest increased confidence in the country as a tourist destination. From 1996 to 1999, overnight stays remained relatively stable, possibly indicating a period of recovery and growth in the tourism sector. The sudden increase in 2000 might be attributed to improved marketing efforts, infrastructure development, or emerging travel trends. This trend continued until 2002, suggesting that Romania's appeal to foreign tourists was on the rise. The data shows fluctuations in the following years, reflecting the global economic and political climate, as well as Romania's efforts to promote itself as a tourist destination. The peak in 2005 might be related to international events or marketing campaigns that boosted Romania's visibility. Starting from 2008, there was a noticeable decline, potentially influenced by the global financial crisis and its impact on travel. The data remained relatively stable until 2015, when Romania began to experience a substantial increase in overnight stays. This surge could be due to improved tourism infrastructure, better international marketing, or emerging travel trends that favored Romania. The sudden drop in 2020, with only 997,365 overnight stays, can be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, which severely affected international travel. However, it's promising to see a recovery in 2021 and 2022, with increasing numbers of foreign tourists choosing Romania as their destination, possibly driven by eased travel restrictions, vaccinations, and a renewed interest in exploring the country. The data on overnight stays of foreign tourists in Romania reflects the complex interplay of economic, political, and global factors on the country's tourism industry. It underscores the importance of adaptability and resilience in the tourism sector, as well as the potential for Romania to continue growing as a tourist destination in the post-pandemic era (Figure 10).

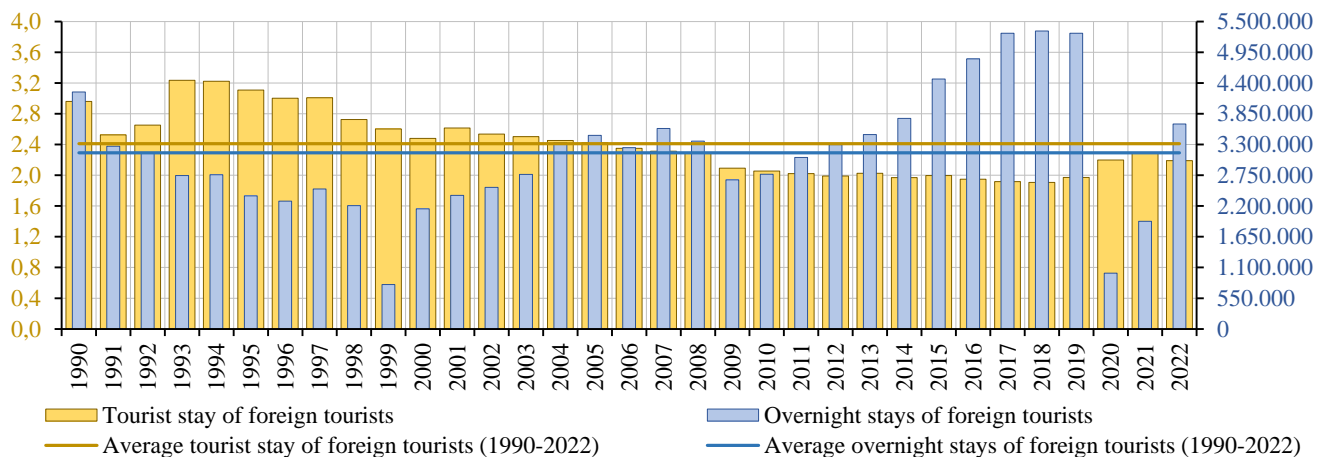


Figure 10. Arrivals of foreign tourists in Romania by comfort categories in the period 1994-2022

(Data source: <http://statistici.inse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/inse-table>)

The data on the average tourist stay of foreign tourists in Romania provides valuable insights into the dynamics of the country's tourism industry. In 1990, tourists spent an average of 3.0 days during their visits, indicating a reasonably extended stay, possibly influenced by the novelty of Romania as a travel destination following the fall of communism. The subsequent years showed fluctuations in the average stay, but the general trend remained relatively stable until 1999 when the average stay decreased to 2.6 days. From 1999 to 2011, the average tourist stay fluctuated between 2.0 and 2.7 days, revealing variations in travel patterns. The lowest point was reached in 2011 when the average stay dropped to 2.0 days, possibly due to changes in tourism offerings or economic factors. However, there was a slight recovery in the following years, with an average stay of 2.3 days in 2012, suggesting that Romania's tourism sector adapted to changing trends. From 2012 to 2017, there was a prolonged period of shorter stays, with the average stay fluctuating around 2.0 to 1.9 days, indicating changing tourism patterns, such as shorter getaways or business-related travel. In 2018, there was a small increase in the average stay to 2.0 days, and in 2019, it remained at the same level, indicating efforts to attract tourists for longer durations, emphasizing Romania's rich cultural and natural attractions. The data for 2020 shows a further increase to 2.2 days, which might be a result of strategic initiatives or external factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which prompted

travelers to seek longer, more immersive experiences in less crowded destinations. In 2021, the average tourist stay increased to 2.3 days, indicating a potential rebound in the tourism industry as travel restrictions eased and tourists sought longer and more meaningful stays. The overall average tourist stay of foreign tourists in Romania from 1990 to 2022 was 2.4 days, highlighting the adaptability of Romania's tourism sector to changing travel trends and the potential for further growth and development in the coming years, with a focus on attracting tourists for more extended and enriching experiences (Figure 10).

### WHAT MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION FOREIGN TOURISTS USE TO COME TO ROMANIA?

Romania, with its diverse landscapes, historic charm, and vibrant cultural offerings, has become a destination of increasing appeal to travelers from around the world. However, before foreign tourists can immerse themselves in the wonders of this Eastern European nation, they face a fundamental decision: how to reach Romania. The choice of transportation means is a pivotal element in the travel experience, shaping not only the journey but also influencing environmental considerations, local economies, and tourism infrastructure. This part of the article embarks on an exploration of the diverse means of transportation employed by foreign tourists to reach Romania. Whether arriving by air, land, or sea, these choices are driven by a combination of practicality, cost, and the desire to explore the less-traveled corners of this beautiful country. By delving into data, preferences, and the factors influencing these decisions, we aim to provide an in-depth overview of the means of transportation foreign tourists use. This exploration will not only unveil the practical aspects of travel but also highlight the unique experiences and cultural encounters that each method of transportation offers. Additionally, it sheds light on the impact of these choices on the nation's infrastructure and the environment. As we navigate the intricate web of *what means of transportation foreign tourists use to come to Romania*, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of international travel to Romania. This part of the article offers valuable insights into the choices made by travelers and the broader implications of transportation decisions in the context of tourism in this diverse and captivating nation.

In order to methodologically understand *what means of transportation foreign tourists use to come to Romania*, we need to define *road means of transport*, *railway means of transport*, *air means of transport*, and *naval means of transport*:

- *Road transportation*: Road transportation refers to all vehicles that travel on roads and highways, including personal cars, buses, minibuses, and coaches. Foreign tourists visiting Romania use road transportation, such as renting cars or traveling by bus or coach, to explore the country. This option offers them great flexibility in choosing their itinerary and provides access to less-known and less accessible areas compared to other means of transportation.

- *Railway transportation*: Railway transportation involves the use of trains to travel within and to Romania. Trains are a popular choice for foreign tourists who wish to explore the country, as they offer a comfortable and environmentally friendly mode of transportation. Through the railway network, tourists can travel safely and admire Romania's picturesque landscapes.

- *Air transportation*: Air transportation is a fast and efficient way to reach Romania from other countries. Major airports in Romania, such as Henri Coandă International Airport in Bucharest, serve as primary entry points for foreign tourists. This transportation option is preferred for long-distance journeys, reducing travel time and providing access to a wide range of destinations within Romania.

- *Maritime transportation*: Maritime transportation refers to journeys on water, including cruises and river or lake crossings. Tourists visiting Romania can opt for cruises on the Danube River or traverse the country's lakes and rivers using ferries or other watercraft. This mode of transportation offers a unique perspective on Romania's natural landscapes and cultural heritage along its waterways.

Foreign tourists visiting Romania have a wide range of transportation options to explore their preferred destinations, whether they prefer the freedom of road transportation, the comfort of trains, the speed of airplanes, or the serene experience of maritime transportation. The choice depends on personal preferences and travel itineraries.

Analyzing the data on the means of transport used by foreign tourists to enter Romania offers a comprehensive view of the changing dynamics in the tourism industry. In 1990, road transport was the dominant mode, with 3,670,000 arrivals, while railway and air transport accounted for 2,349,000 and 271,000 visitors, respectively, and naval transport hosted 242,000 tourists. Over the years, there were notable fluctuations. By 2004, road and air transport were nearly equal, with around 5.4 million arrivals each. This shift likely indicates increased accessibility through air travel, driven by factors such as expanding airline networks and affordable airfares. In 2015, air transport surpassed road transport, welcoming 7,475,000 tourists compared to 4,428,000 by road, reflecting the growing importance of air travel as a preferred means of entering the country. This trend continued in 2016, as air transport further expanded, hosting 2,257,000 visitors, while road and naval transport decreased. By 2022, the travel landscape had shifted again, with 9,547,000 tourists arriving by road, reflecting the increased importance of road connectivity in the region. Meanwhile, air transport remained significant with 2,547,000 arrivals, and naval transport experienced a noticeable increase with 451,000 tourists. These fluctuations can be attributed to various factors, including infrastructure development, economic conditions, and global events like the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly impacted the tourism industry in 2020. Analyzing these trends in the context of other tourism-related data reveals the interplay between the means of transport and other aspects of the tourism sector. For example, the number of overnight stays of foreign tourists and the average tourist stay length fluctuated over the years. In the early '90s, the average stay was relatively consistent at around 2.4 days. However, in the following years, it gradually increased to 2.5-3.2 days, potentially influenced by factors such as improved infrastructure and diversification of tourist attractions. These statistics highlight the intricate relationship between transport, tourist preferences, and overall tourist activity. The means of transport used by foreign tourists are both influenced by and influence the broader tourism landscape, reflecting changes in accessibility, infrastructure, and global trends in the travel industry. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for stakeholders in the Romanian tourism sector, as it helps adapt strategies and infrastructure to meet the evolving needs and preferences of international visitors (Figure 11).

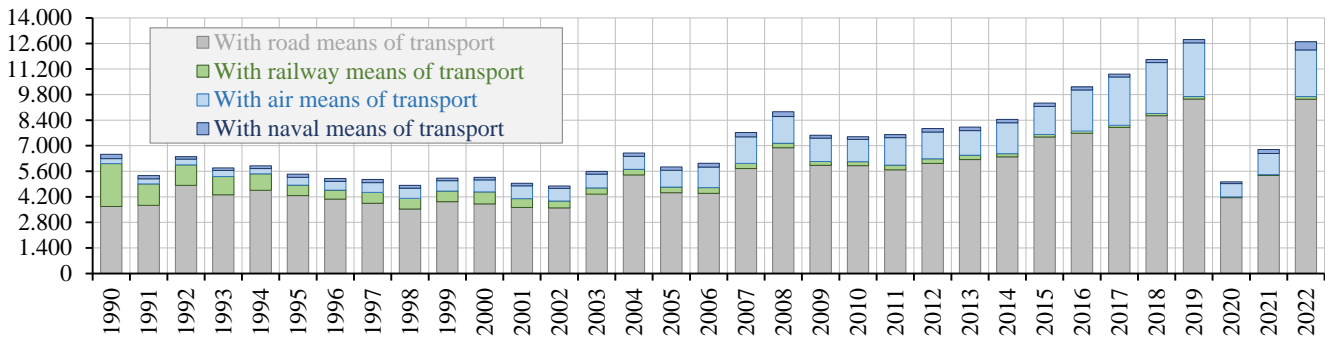


Figure 11. Arrivals of foreign visitors in Romania by means of transport used in the period 1994-2022 (Data source: <http://statistici.inse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/inse-table>)

### WHERE FOREIGN TOURISTS WHO VISIT ROMANIA COME FROM?

Romania, a nation blessed with natural beauty, rich history, and diverse cultural heritage, has become an increasingly popular destination for international travelers. The unique tapestry of experiences that Romania offers has not only drawn the attention of wanderers from around the world but has also sparked a significant question: where do these foreign tourists come from? This part of the article embarks on a journey to explore the geographical origins of foreign tourists who choose Romania as their destination. Understanding the diversity of nationalities and regions that contribute to the country's tourism sector is not only an exercise in cultural exchange but also essential for shaping marketing strategies, economic planning, and cross-cultural appreciation. By delving into data, trends, and cultural influences, we aim to provide a comprehensive overview of the nationalities and regions from which foreign tourists originate.

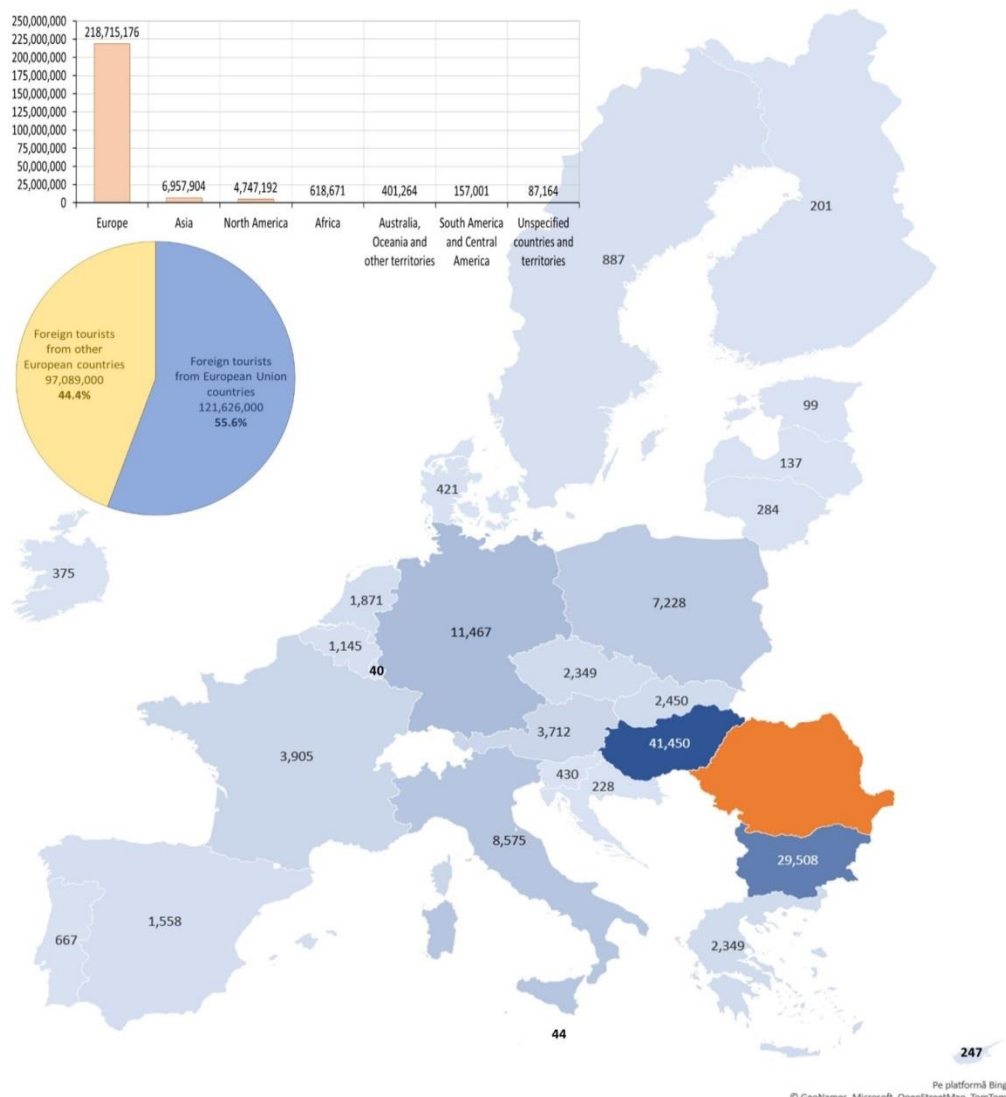


Figure 12. Tourists arriving in Romania by country of origin in the period 1990-2022 (Data source: <http://statistici.inse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/inse-table>, the values on the map are represented in thousands)

Beyond the numbers, we delve into the motivations, preferences, and experiences that drive travelers from different corners of the world to visit Romania. As we navigate the intricate landscape of *where foreign tourists who visit Romania come from*, we aim to shed light on the rich tapestry of global connections that Romania has fostered through tourism. This part of the article offers a valuable perspective on the geographical dimensions of international tourism in Romania, emphasizing the diverse backgrounds and cultural encounters that enrich the travel experience within this captivating nation. In order to methodologically understand *where foreign tourists who visit Romania come from*, we need to define *country of origin*:

The term *country of origin* refers to the country from which tourists visiting a particular tourist destination originate. It is a measure used to identify the geographical origin of tourists and to analyze the behavior and characteristics of tourists based on their country of origin. Determining the country of origin of the tourist flow involves recording and analyzing demographic and statistical data, such as the nationality and residence of tourists at the time of their visit. This information can be obtained through arrival registration forms in a tourist destination, surveys, immigration system databases, or through tourism companies and accommodation providers. Identifying the country of origin of the tourist flow provides insight into the source market and can be used to assess the effectiveness of tourism promotion and marketing strategies in different countries. It helps in understanding the preferences, travel behavior, and spending patterns of tourists from different markets, allowing the destination to better tailor its offerings to their needs and interests. It is important to note that the country of origin of the tourist flow can vary from one destination to another and may change due to factors such as economic developments, political changes, travel trends, and transportation accessibility. The dataset provides a comprehensive overview of foreign tourist arrivals in Romania between 1990 and 2022, categorized by regions and specific countries. The total number of arrivals displayed fluctuations, with a peak in 2019 at 12,697 thousand arrivals and a low point in 1999 at 4,831 thousand arrivals. European tourists, including those from the European Union (EU), constituted a substantial portion of the arrivals, with EU arrivals showing consistent growth over the years. Specific countries such as Austria, Bulgaria, Italy, and the United Kingdom exhibited varying trends, with some countries experiencing significant increases in arrivals in recent years. Other regions, including Africa, North America, and Asia, saw diverse patterns, with Asia showing a notable increase in arrivals. The dataset reflects the dynamic nature of tourism in Romania, influenced by factors like economic conditions and geopolitical changes, and suggests the country's appeal to a diverse range of international visitors (Figure 12).

## CONCLUSION

The analyses of the data offer a comprehensive study of foreign tourists visiting Romania, enriched with additional insights:

- *Tourist arrivals trends*: The dataset covering arrivals from 1990 to 2022 reveals significant fluctuations over the years, highlighting both growth and temporary declines. In recent years, Romania has been attracting a substantial number of foreign tourists, which aligns with the statistic that one in five tourists in the country is of foreign origin. This indicates the nation's growing appeal to international visitors.
- *Seasonal preferences*: Foreign tourists predominantly choose to visit Romania during the months between May and October, indicating a preference for milder weather and the opportunity to explore the country's scenic beauty during these months.
- *Destination choices*: The key destinations of foreign tourists, such as București and county capitals like Brașov, Constanța, Sibiu, Timișoara, and Cluj-Napoca, stand out as significant draws. These urban areas, known for their cultural and historical significance, are favored choices for foreign travelers.
- *Accommodation preferences*: Foreign tourists often opt for hotel accommodations, with a particular preference for establishments offering 4-star or 3-star comfort and service, highlighting their desire for a comfortable and enjoyable stay.
- *Average stay duration*: On average, foreign tourists stay in Romania for 2.4 days, which indicates that many come for shorter visits. This information is valuable for businesses and destinations to tailor experiences accordingly.
- *Travel by road*: Foreign tourists overwhelmingly use road transport as their primary means of reaching Romania, underlining the significance of efficient road infrastructure and connectivity to the tourism industry.
- *European origin*: As one of the primary sources of foreign tourists, Europe plays a pivotal role in Romania's tourism landscape. This data aligns with the fact that foreign tourists primarily originate from European countries.

Thus, Romania's tourism industry has experienced substantial growth, with increasing interest from foreign visitors. The data reveals that foreign tourists are attracted to Romania's cities, particularly during the warmer months. Their strong preference for hotels, the prevalent choice of road transport, and their average stay duration of 2.4 days provide valuable insights for further developing tourism infrastructure and services. It is essential for Romania to continue targeting European markets and urban destinations to maximize its appeal to foreign tourists.

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