

Improvement of Ecotourism Services Quality in Salaj and their Diversification

Alina Gheorghe

Assistant Professor PhD Student, The Bucharest University of Economics Studies, 41 Dacia Blvd,
Bucharest, Romania

E-mail: alina20eu@yahoo.com

Abstract

The article describes ecotourism services in Salaj County and suggests some activities that could improve and expand the accommodation and canoe services in this area of Romania. Ecotourism services represent a very important part of economics studies and they are „the key” for the Salaj County’s economy. The article ends with the researcher’s conclusions regarding the ecotourism services in Salaj County, Romania.

Keywords: Services, improvement of quality, ecotourism, accommodation structures index

Introduction

“If you travel a thousand miles by train, you will become a brute; go on cycling five hundred miles on a bike and you'll remain in principle a bourgeois; sail one hundred miles in a canoe and you're already a child of nature.” (Pierre Elliott Trudeau)

Salaj County is located in the North-Western part of Romania and is spread over an area of 3,864.2 km², almost 1.6% of the surface of our country. Access roads are: European route E81, Transylvania Freeway, Jibou-Baia-Mare railroad, Carei-Zalău railroad and Dej-Jibou-Zalău railroad. Regarding the landscape we can say that Salaj County is an area of hills and depressions located on Agrij, Almaş, Someş, Crasna and Barcău Valleys.

The mountain area is represented in the South-West by two Northern ramifications of the Apuseni Mountains: the Meses with the Magura Priei (996 m) and Plopis. Depressions have a wide spread throughout the County and represent important areas of agriculture. Points of tourist interest in this county are: cave with old paintings from Cuciulat, Wesselényi Castle in Jibou, Porolissum Castrum from Moigrad, Roman Castrum from Buciumi, Almas Fortress from Almas, Aranyos Fortress from Cheud, Mihai Viteazul’s Monument from Guruslau, Iuliu Maniu’s Memorial House from Badacin, Stramba Monastery from Paduris, Sfânta Treime Monastery, Vasile Fati Botany Garden, Poiana cu Narcise Natural Reservation, Lii Cave.

In existing tourist hostels you can spend unforgettable vacations in the middle of nature. Tourists can indulge with traditional foods and hospitality that will enchant all the soul travelers everywhere.

Table 1. The number of tourists Salaj County April 2012 compared to April 2011¹

| Period | Arrivals | | Staying Overnight | |
|-------------------|------------|------------|-------------------|------------|
| | April 2011 | April 2012 | April 2011 | April 2012 |
| Romanian tourists | 1835 | 2557 | 5273 | 6834 |
| Foreign tourists | 226 | 353 | 1107 | 1511 |
| Total | 2061 | 2910 | 6380 | 8345 |

As we see in the situation above (table 1), displayed on the National Institute of Statistics-Accountancy Salaj website, the number of tourists in the area corresponding to April 2012 increased by 41% compared to their number determined for April of 2011.

Romanian and foreign tourists staying Overnight in April 2012 have also registered an increase of 30% compared to staying overnight registered in April 2011. The using of accommodation structures index in April 2012 was 20.8% of total tourism accommodation structures in this county, up though, with about 0.5% compared to April 2011². According to the National Institute of Statistics-Salaj Accountancy, the situation of using accommodation structures index on 2012 (table 2), is the following:

Table 2. The situation of accommodation structures and using of accommodation structures index

| Accommodation structures | The using of accommodation structures index |
|--------------------------|---|
| Chalets | 50.4% |
| Hotels | 29.6% |
| Tourist cottages | 20.5% |
| Agro tourist hostels | 20.4% |

Ecotourism is the only form of responsible tourism in nature that respects its values and contributes to maintaining them unchanged in time. An important component should constitute the raising of the living standards of the local communities involved in tourist activities and to represent it in the same time a way of reducing pressures of all sorts that local communities have on the protected areas.

The main aim of ecotourism is preserving the biodiversity; development of tourist services is causing such a manner as not to run counter the conservation objectives. Increased worldwide interest for this kind of activity is recommend as an activity of the future because a growing number of tourists are guided towards practicing ecotourism and want to get involved in the

¹ www.insse.ro

² National Institute of Statistics-Accountancy Salaj

actions of nature conservation, appreciation and promotion of the traditional way of life, customs and traditions of local valuable.

Expeditions in nature on the Someș River and other rivers and lakes in the area may represent a solution for the development of ecotourism in this county. Admiring nature and stepping into a total relaxation due to its clean air provided by one of the largest forested areas in the country, you can learn new things and practice such as driving a canoe or a boat of cruise, observing interesting species of animals and plants. You can make trips in the protected areas of the Someș Basin like Lii Cave in Cuciulat famous for its Neolithic paintings located here, Clit Rocks, a beautiful natural reservation, Zmeilor’s Garden, a pearl of the geological resources, the gorgeous botanical garden in Jibou, sandstones of Rona, and the ruins of the Pinteas Castle and Wesselenyi's Castle, one of the regional architectural pearls. Currently, in Salaj County there is a commercial firm that has as object of activity, canoe rental service. Besides this, the commercial entity organizes touring canoe or boat descent running on the Someș in sections of course slower Cuciulat – Jibou and Jibou – Benesat. The data below are taken from the website www.somes-canoe.ro and represents the characteristics of the proposed routes of this firm, as follows:

Length: 26 km routes each
 Difficulty: Beginner
 Program duration: 1 or 2 days
 Period: May-September
 Access: Jibou, Salaj
 Table 3. Price list³

| Trip duration | Number of persons/beneficiaries | Service price |
|---------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 day | 1-8 | 150 Euros/group |
| 1 day | over 8 | 20 Euros/person |
| 2 days | 1-8 persons | 250 Euros/group |
| 2 days | over 8 persons | 30 Euros/person |
| 1 day | > 23 persons | 300 Euros/group |
| 2 days | > 23 persons | 400 Euros/group |

In price list (table 3) are included the following objects: equipment (canoe or boat, scull or pagai, lifejackets), guides, luggage, fishing lessons, shooting with rifle and archery. For work-shifts in two days accommodation at present are the following:

Two persons tents 3 Euros/person;
 EDEN hostel Jibou 18 Euros/person;
 Chalet 4 Euros/person.

Route proposals by Someș-Canoe are the following:

Route 1 Cuciulat – Jibou

³ www.somes-canoe.ro

Time-table of the day:

09:00 visiting Lii Cave;
Training, equipping and departure 10:00;
Break in Stanii Clitului's natural reservation 12:30;
Departure 13:30;
Arrival at 16:00;
Visiting the collection of Eocene fossils.

Route 2 Jibou – Benesat

Time-table of the day:

09:00 after visiting the collection of Eocene fossils;
Training, equipping and departure 10:00;
Break at Pinteia's fortress 12:30;
Departure 13:30;
Arrival at 16:00 and the way to Jibou;
Visiting The Botany Garden named „Vasile Fati”.
Other services offered by Someş-Canoe are the two hours trips in the presence of a tourist guide visiting:
Gradina Zmeilor (price 5 Euros/person);
The Roman Castrum from Porolissum (price 5Euros/person);
Botany Garden “VASILE FATI” Jibou (price 5Euros/person);
Wesselenyi's Castle (price 2Euros/person).

The area has a great tourism potential, which lead to enriching and diversifying the ecotourism services and cultural tourism, mainly to focus on a sustainable tourism. Among the services provided in this area there are: training courses in the use of the compass, the arch and arrow, navigating on Someş. For lovers of adventure in nature both in Romania and abroad, dancing under the moon night canoeing can present a growing interest regarding this package of ecotourism services offered by Someş-Canoe in Salaj.

Conclusions

Researcher considers that above mentioned services can be improved, both day and night, with the help of torches placed on both the canoe endings that brightens the way on water and in the presence of specialized persons to develop such activities, you can take rides for a distance of 10-20 km, as the degree of risk can be insignificant since Someş river has a slow course on the above routes and the equipment is unailing. It is recommended to carry out a short training before the trip on the water where the beneficiary of these services may understand what behavior should adopt regarding to maintaining balance in canoes, rowing technique and what attitude to have in case of overthrow of the boat.

This type of service must be aimed for people who are over 18 years old and are liable for their actions. Such a trip in the middle of nature under the moon as estimated can be performed at a price of 250 Euros/a group composed between 2-8 persons. This firm could also sell attractive

tourist packages that contain both the trips on the river with a canoe and accommodation services. For example, a weekend at the price of 100 Euros/person, in which it can be, including two days of trip on Someş River and one night accommodation at a hostel or hotel. The odor of the old traditions of Transylvanian localities, gives all region a particular air and a peculiar poetry.

References

Cioaca, A. (1986), *Gradina Zmeilor (Salaj County)-nature's monument, Protection of nature and his immediate environment*, no.2, Bucharest.

Gudea, N. (1977), *A few observations in connection with troops from Dacia and Dacia Porolissensis army*, Acta Musei Porolissensis, no. 1, pp. 115-122, Zalau.

Săuca, D., Hoblea, D., Gyorfi D. G., (2011). *"Caught by shells, seeds, suspects and other magazines"*, Silvane Notebooks.

Popescu, R., Zamfir, A. (2011) *„Strategic role of ecotourism for the regional development in Romania"*, Conference OSU, University of Ostrava.

Buiga A., (2011) *„Competitive strategies in European context"*, Terra Nostra Publishing House, Iasi.

Baute P., Bourdeuet M., Marache B., Paillot E. (2012), *„L'ecotourisme en Transylvanie"*. The European Ecotourism Labeling Standard - EETLS, EcoDestinet, A Network Developing a European Quality Label for Ecotourism Destinations", Education and Culture Lifelong Learning programme Leonardo Da Vinci, Athena, 2009;

„Ecotourism Development - A Manual Series for Conservation Planners and Managers", Volume 1, 2002, the Nature Conservancy, Arlington, Virginia, USA.