

AGRITOURISM-PROMOTING FORM OF THE SPECIFIC VALUES OF MARAMURES RURAL AREA

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Abstract: Rural tourism, but especially agritourism is the activity that allows the superior capitalization of the cultural resources of the rural area. Maramures County is recognized for the richness of rural cultural values but also for their preservation and promotion. Maramures is a unique destination, located in the heart of Europe, which has carefully preserved the culture, traditions and lifestyle of the peasant from ancient times. The region takes the place of a testament of the traditional, a romantic era of simplicity and moral values that today we only read or hear from our grandparents.

Keywords: *agritourism, cultural values, rural area, traditions and customs*

INTRODUCTION

The Romanian rural area is among the few in Europe where the traditional and spiritual valences are preserved, still unaltered, especially the ethnofolkloric ones, the socio-economic life and the environment. [1,11] Through these qualities, the rural environment offers favorable conditions for the development of rural tourism and agritourism. Romanian villages have a wide variety of tourist resources: ethnofolkloric traditions and values, historical and art monuments, unpolluted natural environment and with diverse potential. [2,3]

In the field of tourism, agritourism has a relatively small share compared to other categories, but by improving the quality of supply in this field, and by expanding the areas of agritourism, nationally, there are hopes that this share will increase systematically. [5,8,9]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Agritourism is a form of tourism that highlights the popular culture specific to each area. Maramures, the region that still preserves, alive, the ancestral traditions and customs, stands out as a real agritourism destination. This paper presents the main aspects of Maramures culture and analyzes the agritourism activity, based on specific indicators: the number of accommodation units, the degree of comfort of their use and the intensity of tourist traffic and average length of stay.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Maramures County is located at the N-NW end of Romania, on the border with Ukraine, and stretches in the northern part of the Eastern Carpathians, where they split into two branches: Rodna and Maramures Mountains, closing the depression of the same name. [10]

Maramures is the area where ancestral traditions, folk costumes and old art are preserved like nowhere else in Romania. The county is practically a huge open-air museum. In Maramures country, people also use household objects and tools that elsewhere can only be seen in museums. Therefore, the primary element of tourism in Maramures is the life of the village.

The diversity of landforms, the extent of forests, the presence of historical and architectural monuments, houses, traditional gates, tools, churches, pottery, fabrics, the

multitude of mineral springs and the presence of climatic resorts give to Maramures County a valuable tourist potential. Of all these, tourists are attracted by the beauty and diversity of houses, traditional gates, tools, churches, ceramics and fabrics. [10,15]

Peasant crafts have appeared to meet human needs. The torso, the weaving and the sewing represent the activity through which the people of Maramures obtain textiles of different shapes, sizes with various decorative motifs that have a well-defined chromatic, all these giving a specific note to the area.

Woodworking. Maramures is distinguished by the richness of the forests it possesses. Due to the deciduous and coniferous forests, today the craftsmen of gates and houses still use the old traditional techniques: carving wood with an ax, making with a bard, planers, chisels, drills. Within Maramures, Sapanta commune makes a special note regarding the art of wood. The master Stan Ioan Patras colored the wood also sculpted by him, in blue as a background, and for the underlinings he used yellow, red and white.

Pottery. Even today, if we choose to visit a household from Maramures, we will find old ceramic pieces. They are of different shapes, and the harmony between the shape and the simplicity of the decorative motifs, gives a note of antiquity and authenticity for these objects.

The house and the peasant household represent the main attraction of tourists when it comes to Maramures. Maramures's household includes two components: the household itself (garden, orchard, yard with house) and the lands outside the household (hayfields, arable land, forest). Today, the Maramures household has been modernized, but in general the structure of the traditional model has been preserved. In Maramures, the architecture of the buildings is in perfect harmony with the landscape, which gives the tourist the opportunity to rest and recreate in a fairytale place. All the components from the entrance gate to the house were made of wood, as were the mills and whirlpools.

Folk dress and customs. The folk costume has undergone and still suffers changes in terms of decorative motifs, but its significance is the same. The emphasis on the women's suit falls on the shirt, which is made of white fabric woven in the house. For young women and girls, the neckline and sleeves are accentuated by various ornaments with variously colored threads. The female breastplate generally has two variants: the one made of woolen cloth and the lambskin coat, embroidered with fine wool. At the neck it still wears "collars" of colored beads, woven in geometric motifs. The men's suit consists of the traditional shirt, made of hemp or cotton, woven at home. The chest is made of cloth and edged on the edges with black velvet but also blue. The footwear for both men's and women's suits is made up of the woolen shoes tied with belts.

Habits are an important component in the existence of people who are a system of life. The decisive moments in human life such as birth, marriage, death but also the days of transition from one season to another have determined the appearance of ceremonies and rituals of a special beauty and originality.

Architectural monuments. Maramures churches and gates. The monuments of Maramures are undoubtedly considered the monuments of the Romanian nation. Maramures has left its mark over time through wooden constructions, houses and churches, mills and tombstones, household items and tools. Characteristic of the architecture of the Maramures churches is the elevation of the nave vault, which rests on a system of beams and consoles. The decorative elements come to support the majestic architecture of the building. The frames of the massive entrance doors, as well as of the windows, carry decorative signs that we often find in traditional houses and, which are the expression of a language that is difficult to decipher.

Among the monuments from Maramures we also find the border crosses. In the Ethnographic Museum of Maramures from Sighetul Marmatiei, component elements are

still preserved - sculptures such as "St. John", several crucifixes "Jesus Christ", "Saint Mary with the Babies" recovered from the crosses of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the Maramures area there are very few old wall monuments (stone, brick or earth) among which we mention: the Dacian fortress with medieval overlap from Ocnesti or the fortified settlement on the Citadel Hill in Sighetul Marmatiei.

One of the most important elements of Maramures households is the gates. These are considered true works of art, being handcrafted by simple peasants, without special training, but with a well-defined sense of appearance, due to the beauty with which they amaze the world that admires them. A Maramures gate is an ensemble made up of fixed parts and moving parts. The "classic" gate is made up of three basic oak pillars, arranged in parallel and in the same plane. The sketch of the Maramures gates is unchanged, which demonstrates that they represent the identification symbol of Maramures.

Maramures decor. The Maramures decor is represented by various symbols, among which the most common on church doors is the twisted rope, which symbolizes the connection between Heaven and Earth. [7,10,14] The most common decorative elements, not only on the majestic entrance gates, are the sun - it is also found on household objects, embroidered fabrics and crosses in cemeteries, being the symbol of life, but the measure of time; the moon- as a symbol most often represents the power of woman, the mother divinity; the tree or tree of life represented either carved in wood or painted next to the sun, means the symbol of eternal life, "youth without old age"; crown - symbol of joy, funeral, guard against diseases; flowers, wheel, cross, snake, ram's horns.

The analysis of agritourism activity

The analysis of the tourist offer is based on the analysis of the evolution of the tourist accommodation units, of the accommodation capacity and of the degree of its use. [4] In Maramures County, in the period 2000-2020, there was an increase in the number of tourist reception structures with accommodation function. In 2020, the existing accommodation units, on the territory of Maramures County, represented (28.16%) of those existing in the region. [10,13]

From the total of 298 accommodation structures, 62.08% are agritourism units, Maramures County being recognized as a remarkable agritourism destination.

Table 1

The evolution of tourist reception structures in Maramures County, 2000-2020

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total	66	112	191	197	277	264	262	298
Hotels	16	16	22	25	29	34	33	34
Tourist villas	3	1	3	1	1	3	3	3
Tourist chalets	7	1	2	2	3	4	3	5
Tourist pensions	6	19	49	72	79	66	63	60
Agrotourism units	22	66	104	79	147	144	147	185

Source: <https://statistici.insse> [18,19]

Table 2 shows the evolution of the number of agriotourism units, on the main localities with agritourism potential, from Maramures County. In 2020, in the locality of Ocna Sugatag, a number of 24 units were registered, being in fact the locality with the largest number of agritourism units from the county.

Other localities recognized for their agritourism potential and which practice these activities, standing out by the large number of agritourism units are: Moiseni (15), Boitiza (10), Vadu Izei (14), Poienile Izei (10), Sighetu Marmatiei (8) , Desesti (7), Ocnesti (7), Sapanta (6), Barsana (6), etc.

Agritourism shows a tendency to intensify the activity, on the territory of Maramures County. This set is also supported by the upward trend of the index of intensive use of agritourism units. [10, 12]

Table 2

The evolution of the number of agritourism units, by localities, Maramures County

	2005	2010	2015	2018	2019	2020
Maramures County	66	104	79	144	147	185
Sighetu Marmatiei	2	-	-	2	5	8
Borsa	-	-	1	4	4	3
Barsana	2	4	8	5	5	6
Botiza	25	26	6	9	9	10
Budesti	-	1	3	3	3	4
Coltau	2	3	3	5	5	5
Desesti	-	1	4	5	4	7
Giulesti	-	1	1	3	3	5
Moisei	1	2	2	10	10	15
Ocna Sugatag	7	12	11	20	21	24
Oncesti	3	6	1	4	4	7
Poienile Izei	3	7	7	9	10	10
Sacel	1	1	2	4	2	4
Sapanta	4	8	3	4	4	6
Sieu	-	2	1	3	3	4
Sisesti	1	1	1	2	2	2
Vadu Izei	3	9	8	12	12	14
Valea Chioarului	1	2	2	2	2	1

Source: <https://statistici.insse> [18,19]

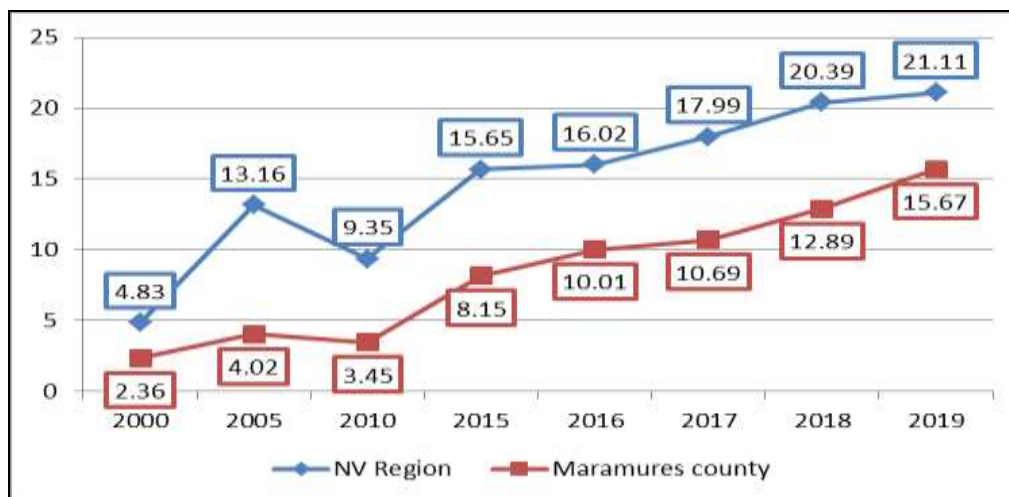


Figure 1. The evolution of the net capacity utilization index, agritourism units, 2010-2019, [18,19]

The analysis of the tourist demand is made on the basis of some indicators that aim at: the arrivals of tourists, their overnight stays and the average duration of the stay, etc. [16] Table 3. Centralizes the arrivals and overnight stays of Romanian and foreign tourists, registered in the agritourism units from Maramures County.

Table 3

Tourist arrivals in agritourism guesthouses from Maramures County

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2017	2018	2019
ARRIVALS							
Total	247	4195	7785	17961	44403	51918	58516
Romanians	158	3387	6763	16404	40475	48294	55381
Foreigners	89	808	1022	1557	3928	3624	3135
OVERNIGHTS							
Total	530	8308	14382	35545	82438	102652	123550
Romanians	332	6533	12363	32628	74218	95498	118344
Foreigners	198	1772	2019	2917	8220	7154	5206

Source: <https://statistici.insse.ro> [18,19]

For the period 2000-2019, there is an increase in tourist arrivals, in agritourism units, from Maramures County, of 247 tourists, in 2000, to 58,516 tourists, in 2019, a value recorded being 236.91 times, higher. In 2019, out of the total number of tourists arriving in Maramures agritourism guesthouses, 94.64% are Romanian tourists and 5.36% foreigners.

In the period 2010-2019, tourist arrivals indicate different values, depending on the categories of tourists, Romanian and foreign. Thus, in the case of Romanian tourists, increases were registered of 350.51%, in the analyzed period, and of 35.22%, in the case of foreign tourists. [10,17]

In 2019, the overnight stays registered in the agritourism guesthouses from Maramures County, represent 23.86% from the total of this indicator calculated at regional level, 95.79% being overnight stays of Romanian tourists and 4.21% of foreign tourists.

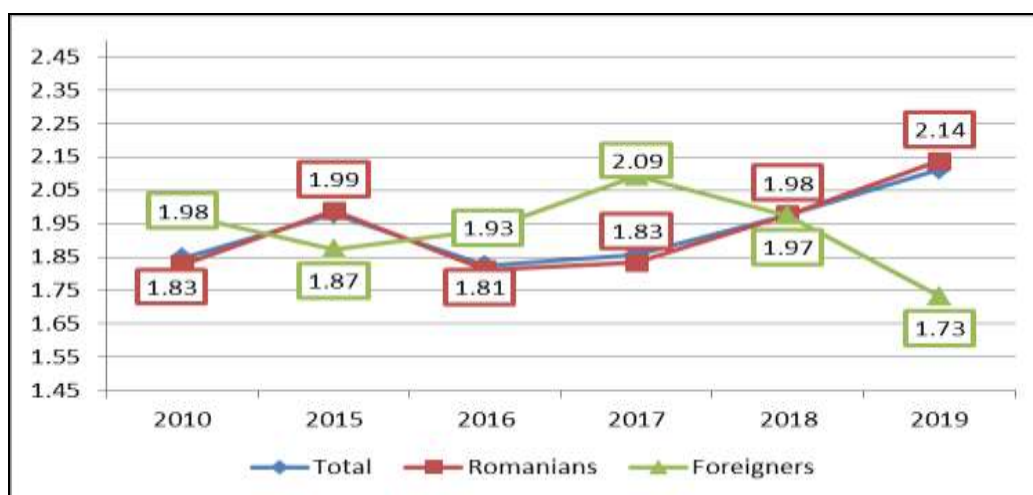


Figure 2. Average length of stay in agritourism guesthouses, Maramures County, 2010-2019, [18,19]

The average length of stay registered in the agritourism units at the level of the region and in Maramures County, is presented in figures 2. and indicates an increasing tenure from 1.83 days/tourist, in 2010, to 2.11 days/tourist in 2019. The ascending trend of the indicator the average length of stay is maintained both in the case of Romanian tourists (2.14 days/tourist) as well as foreigners (1.73 days/tourist).

CONCLUSIONS

In the northwest of our country, within the Eastern Carpathian Mountains, a depression of rare beauty opens, known as the Maramures Country. Maramures County is located in northern Romania and has as neighbors Ukraine, Suceava, Bistrita-Nasaud, Cluj, Salaj and Satu Mare counties. Maramures is considered an "oasis of archaic life full of charm" and is certainly the largest open-air ethnographic museum in Europe and its values recommend it to occupy a place on the UNESCO list of cultural values of humanity.

One of the main attractions of Maramures is the wooden churches that have been maintained and are still maintained in a very good condition being the most visited tourist attractions. The ornamental motifs, the folk costume, the customs and crafts are elements that clearly define the Maramures framework through the harmony that blends between them with the help of the landscape, but also of the locals.

Due to its spiritual and moral values and beauties, Maramures County is an attraction for thousands of tourists from the country, but also from abroad.

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