

ANALYSIS OF THE TRENDS AND DYNAMICS OF TOURISM AND AGROTOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN HUNEDOARA COUNTY (2012–2023)

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Abstract: *The paper analyzes the evolution of tourism and agrotourism in Hunedoara County between 2012 and 2023, based on official data from the National Institute of Statistics and regional development strategies. The study evaluates key indicators such as accommodation structures, capacity, arrivals, overnight stays, and average stay length. Results show a steady growth until 2019, a temporary decline in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and a consistent recovery after 2021. Agrotourism recorded the highest growth rates, supported by investments in infrastructure and modernization. Although the average stay remains short (around two days), the county demonstrates strong potential for sustainable development through diversification of tourism products and regional cooperation.*

Key words: *tourism, agrotourism, Hunedoara County, development, sustainability*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism represents an essential sector of the national economy and a key factor of regional development through its contribution to job creation, the diversification of economic activities, and the sustainable valorization of natural and cultural resources [11,13]. In recent decades, rural tourism and agrotourism in Romania have experienced a remarkable evolution, supported both by the changing preferences of tourists and by public policies aimed at developing rural areas and local economies [11,14].

Hunedoara County, located in the West Development Region, possesses exceptional tourism potential through the combination of its natural heritage — the Retezat Mountains, Ținutul Pădurenilor, and protected natural areas — with its historical and cultural heritage, including the Corvin Castle, the Dacian fortresses in the Orăștie Mountains, and numerous churches and historical monuments [3,4,13]. This complex potential gives Hunedoara County a competitive advantage within the national and regional tourism market, offering multiple opportunities for sustainable tourism and agrotourism development.

At the same time, the strategic development framework promoted by the West Regional Development Agency and the Hunedoara County Council supports the expansion of tourism activities through investments in infrastructure, digitalization, and promotion [1,2]. Agrotourism has emerged as a priority direction of development, contributing to the revitalization of Hunedoara’s rural areas, the preservation of local traditions, and the diversification of household incomes [14,15].

This paper aims to analyze the trends and dynamics of tourism and agrotourism development in Hunedoara County during the period 2012–2024, by examining the main statistical indicators and highlighting both the quantitative growth of accommodation structures and capacity, as well as the evolution of tourist arrivals and overnight stays [4]. Based on these results, a set of conclusions is formulated regarding future development directions and the need to strengthen the agrotourism infrastructure at the county level [1,10,16].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The analysis was based on official statistical data provided by the National Institute of Statistics (INS) through the TEMPO-Online database [11,12,13], as well as on information published in the *Statistical Yearbooks of Hunedoara County* for the years 2023

[14,15]. In addition, strategic documents elaborated by the West Regional Development Agency and the Hunedoara County Council were consulted, providing an overview of tourism evolution at the regional level [2,11,12,13].

The indicators analyzed included the total number of tourist accommodation structures, the number of agrotourism guesthouses, the accommodation capacity, tourist arrivals, overnight stays, and the average length of stay [1,13,15]. Data for the period 2012–2023 were extracted from TEMPO-Online time series and the most recent statistical publications [14,15].

Based on these data, growth rates and dynamic indices were calculated, and the evolution of the indicators was illustrated using color tables and graphs, expressed in absolute values for the 2012–2023 period. The interpretation was carried out by correlating statistical data with the main regional strategic documents and with specialized literature concerning rural tourism and agrotourism development in Romania [3,11,14,16].

RESEARCH RESULTS

The analysis of tourism evolution in Hunedoara County during the period 2012–2023 highlights a significant increase in the main statistical indicators, both at the level of the overall tourism sector and specifically in agrotourism guesthouses. Based on the data provided by the National Institute of Statistics through TEMPO-Online and the county statistical yearbooks [1,11,13,14,15], a clear trend of consolidation of rural tourism and diversification of the accommodation infrastructure can be observed.

Evolution of Tourist Accommodation Structures

The total number of tourist accommodation structures in Hunedoara County recorded, over the analyzed period, an increase of approximately 236.46%, while the number of agrotourism guesthouses rose by about 529.41%. These values indicate a rapid expansion of the accommodation network, with a particular emphasis on rural and agrotourism development [1,10,13,15].

Recent data, presented in the *Statistical Yearbooks* for 2019–2023, show a clear upward trend. The number of existing tourist accommodation units increased from 274 in 2019 to 424 in 2023, representing a growth of over 50% in just five years. Within this total, guesthouses (including agrotourism guesthouses) hold a significant share, confirming their role as a central element of the rural tourism offer [14,15].

Table 1.

Total Tourist Accommodation Structures

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	%
	96	93	99	108	125	217	243	274	313	301	403	424	341.67

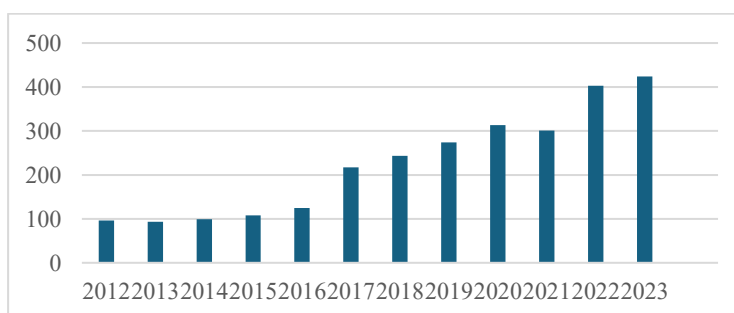


Figure 1. Total Tourist Accommodation Structures

Source: INS, TEMPO-Online Database; *Statistical Yearbooks of Hunedoara County (2023, 2024)*, National Institute of Statistics, Bucharest, 2025

Accommodation Capacity

The increase in the number of tourist accommodation structures was accompanied by a significant expansion of accommodation capacity. At the county level, the total available accommodation capacity more than doubled between 2012 and 2023, while in the case of agrotourism guesthouses the growth exceeded 480%, suggesting both the establishment of new units and the modernization or enlargement of existing ones [2,11,14].

For the most recent years analyzed, data from the *Statistical Yearbooks* show a clear upward evolution: the accommodation capacity in operation (measured in bed-places-days) rose from 1,723,402 in 2019 to 1,496,590 in 2023, with some fluctuations caused by the pandemic context in 2020–2021, but with an overall trend of recovery and consolidation [14,15]. Within this total, guesthouses represent an increasingly important share, exceeding 350,000 bed-places-days in 2023, confirming the adaptation of the agrotourism infrastructure to market demand.

Table 2.
The tourist accommodation capacity in operation in Hunedoara County (2012–2023)

Year	
2012	933,110
2013	984,918
2014	1,002,377
2015	1,122,261
2016	1,208,040
2017	1,318,879
2018	1,495,224
2019	1,723,402
2020	1,001,781
2021	1,367,160
2022	1,491,958
2023	1,496,590

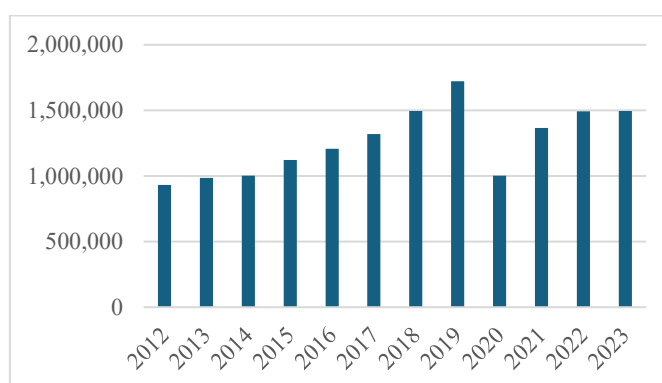


Figure 2. The tourist accommodation capacity in operation in Hunedoara County (2012–2023)

Source: INS, TEMPO-Online, *Statistical Yearbooks of Hunedoara County 2023-2024*, 2025

Tourist Arrivals and Overnight Stays

The evolution of tourist flows also reflects the positive dynamics of the tourism sector. The number of tourists accommodated (arrivals) in Hunedoara County's tourist accommodation structures increased from 194,245 persons in 2019 to 139,166 persons in 2023, showing a sharp decline in 2020, followed by a strong recovery during 2021–2023 [14,15]. The decrease recorded in 2020 is directly associated with the restrictions imposed

by the COVID-19 pandemic, a phenomenon observed at both national and European levels [14].

The number of overnight stays followed a similar trend, decreasing from 383,496 overnight stays in 2019 to 126,412 in 2020, and then rising again to 233,925 in 2021, 234,555 in 2022, and 267,238 in 2023. This development indicates not only a return to pre-pandemic levels but even an increase beyond them, confirming the tourism potential of Hunedoara County as an attractive destination [10,11,12,15].

Within the accommodation structures, guesthouses, including agrotourism guesthouses, recorded particularly significant increases in both arrivals and overnight stays. For the period 2012–2022, the initial analysis revealed an increase of approximately 476.55% in overnight stays and 568.17% in arrivals at agrotourism guesthouses, highlighting the growing interest of tourists in rural tourism and in the authentic experiences offered by Hunedoara’s rural environment [14,16].

Table 3.

Total overnight stays in tourist accommodation structures (number)

Year	
2012	192,451
2013	215,840
2014	249,796
2015	270,922
2016	296,258
2017	347,704
2018	384,166
2019	383,496
2020	126,412
2021	233,925
2022	234,555
2023	267,238

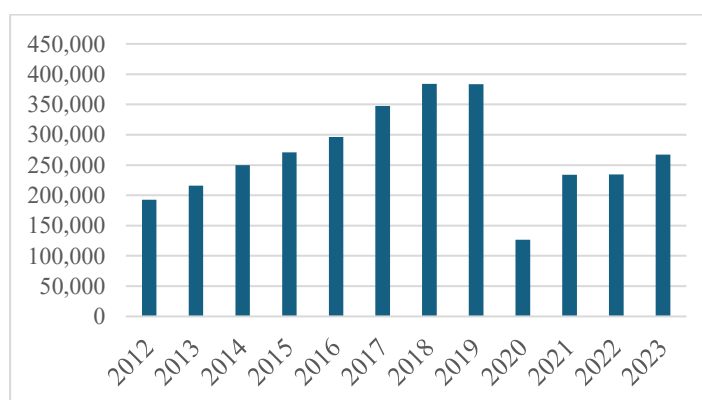


Figure 3. Total overnight stays in tourist accommodation structures in Hunedoara County (2012–2023)

Source: INS, TEMPO-Online code TUR104B; Statistical Yearbooks of Hunedoara County 2023, 2024)

Table 4.

Number of tourists accommodated (persons)

Year	
2012	102,194
2013	113,373
2014	127,741
2015	144,955
2016	159,671
2017	177,821
2018	194,473
2019	194,245
2020	71,723
2021	119,953
2022	124,146
2023	139,166

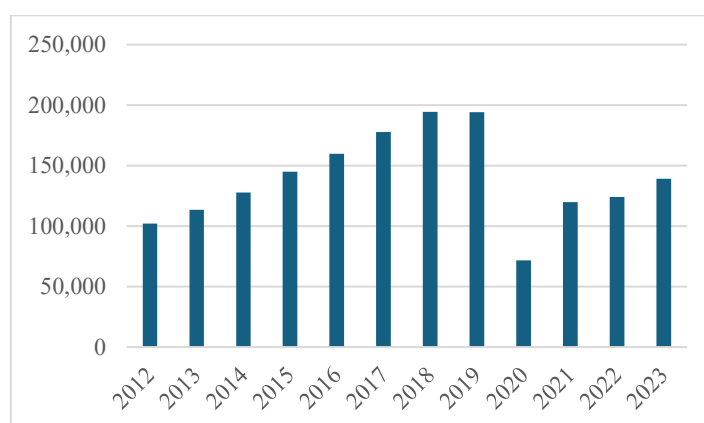


Figure 4. Number of tourists accommodated (persons)

Source: INS, TEMPO-Online, Statistical Yearbooks of Hunedoara County 2023, 2024), 2025

Average Length of Stay

The average length of tourist stay in Hunedoara County generally remains around two days, both for the total tourist accommodation structures and for agrotourism guesthouses. This relatively short duration indicates that rural and cultural tourism in the area is predominantly perceived as a weekend or short-term form of tourism [3,11].

Table 5.

Average length of stay in tourist accommodation structures in Hunedoara County (2012–2023)

Year	Overnight stays (number)	Tourists accommodated (persons)	Average length of stay (days %)
2012	192,451	102,194	1.88
2013	215,840	113,373	1.90
2014	249,796	127,741	1.96
2015	270,922	144,955	1.87
2016	296,258	159,671	1.85
2017	347,704	177,821	1.96
2018	384,166	194,473	1.97
2019	383,496	194,245	1.97
2020	126,412	71,723	1.76
2021	233,925	119,953	1.95
2022	234,555	124,146	1.89
2023	267,238	139,166	1.92



Figure 5. Average length of stay in tourist accommodation structures in Hunedoara County (2012–2023)

Source: INS, TEMPO-Online codes TUR101B and TUR104B; own calculation based on official data

Although the variations in the average length of stay during the period 2012–2023 are moderate, a slight upward trend can be observed in agrotourism guesthouses, suggesting the potential to extend service packages through the inclusion of complementary activities, such as thematic routes, gastronomic experiences, or traditional crafts workshops. Extending the average length of stay represents an important objective for increasing local income and for strengthening rural tourism as a sustainable form of development [11,12,16].

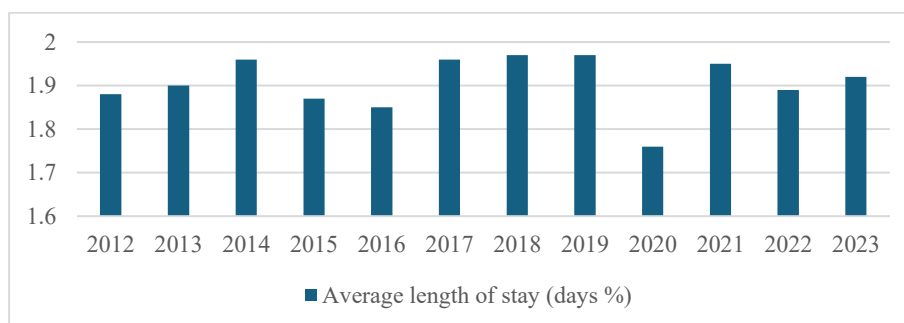


Figure 6. Average length of stay (days %)

Source: INS, TEMPO-Online, own calculation based on official data, 2025

The average length of stay in Hunedoara County has remained relatively stable throughout the 2012–2023 period, oscillating around two days. This stability suggests that the county’s tourism is predominantly characterised by short visits, typically weekend or city-break tourism. The minimum value, recorded in 2020 (1.76 days), corresponds to the COVID-19 pandemic, when travel restrictions significantly reduced the duration of stays across Romania.

Starting from 2021, the indicator shows a slow but consistent recovery, reaching 1.92 days in 2023. This gradual improvement reflects a growing tourist interest in the area’s natural and cultural attractions, such as Hunedoara Castle, the Dacian fortresses, and rural landscapes, which are increasingly promoted through regional and national development programs [2,11,12,15].

Nevertheless, the relatively short average stay continues to highlight the need for further diversification of the tourism offer. Encouraging longer visits could be achieved by integrating agrotourism, cultural routes, and local events into coherent packages. In this regard, the collaboration between local authorities, tourism operators, and the West Regional Development Agency (ADR Vest) remains essential to increase the competitiveness and sustainability of Hunedoara’s tourism sector [3,11,16].

General Synthesis

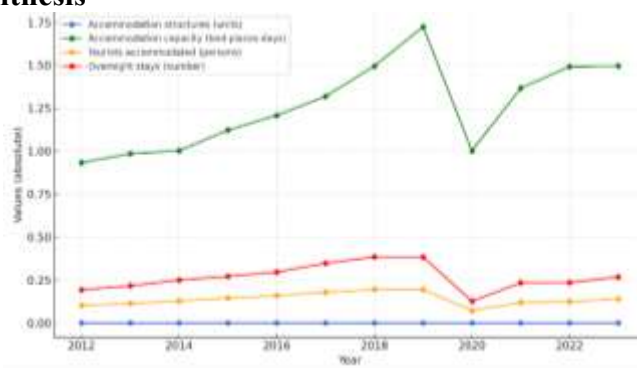


Figure 6. General evolution of tourism indicators in Hunedoara County (2012–2023)

Source: INS, TEMPO-Online; own processing of official data, 2025

The synthetic chart illustrates the general evolution of the main tourism indicators in Hunedoara County during 2012–2023. All variables show a clear upward trajectory up to 2019, confirming the continuous development of the local tourism infrastructure. The year 2020 marks a sharp decline across all indicators, directly linked to the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed on travel and accommodation activities.

Between 2021 and 2023, the recovery becomes evident, with the number of accommodation structures, tourists, and overnight stays all increasing steadily. The accommodation capacity in operation has returned to pre-pandemic levels, while the number of overnight stays and tourists shows strong potential for further growth.

Overall, the data confirm a positive and resilient evolution of the tourism sector in Hunedoara County, supported by investments in infrastructure and by the diversification of rural and cultural tourism offers [10,11,12,14,15].

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the evolution of tourism in Hunedoara County during the period 2012–2023 highlights a constant and significant upward trend in almost all statistical indicators. The total number of accommodation structures, as well as the number of agrotourism guesthouses, recorded considerable increases, demonstrating the growing attractiveness of the area and the effectiveness of local and regional tourism policies.

The accommodation capacity in operation more than doubled between 2012 and 2023, confirming the sector's expansion and modernization. Despite the temporary decline caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the subsequent recovery was fast and consistent, proving the adaptability and resilience of the local tourism industry. The year 2023 marks the highest level of accommodation capacity ever recorded in the county (1,496,590 bed-places-days).

The number of tourists accommodated and the total overnight stays show similar dynamics, with a gradual recovery after the pandemic period and with increasing interest in rural and cultural tourism products. Agrotourism, in particular, has become an essential component of the tourism offer, benefiting from investments in infrastructure and from the promotion of authentic local experiences.

The average length of stay, which remained around two days, indicates that Hunedoara County is primarily perceived as a short-stay or weekend destination. To increase competitiveness, future strategies should focus on extending the duration of visits through thematic tourism routes, cultural events, and integrated packages that combine natural, historical, and rural attractions.

Overall, Hunedoara County demonstrates a **positive and sustainable evolution** of its tourism sector, driven by infrastructure development, diversification of the offer, and

regional cooperation supported by the West Regional Development Agency (ADR Vest) and local authorities. Continued efforts to enhance service quality, promote destination branding, and encourage longer stays will further strengthen its position as a dynamic tourism destination in western Romania [2,11,12,14,15,16].

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