

EUROPEAN UNION STRATEGY FOR THE DANUBE REGION - OPPORTUNITIES FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT OF THE ROMANIAN DANUBE GORGE

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Abstract: The European Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) promotes culture and tourism. For Romania, an area of interest in the field of biodiversity conservation and tourism development is the Danube Gorge area from the Iron Gates. Iron Gates Natural Park is a protected area established as a territory where the remarkable beauty of the landscape and the biological diversity. This protected area constitutes a space with a real tourism potential given the existence of some natural and cultural values of national and European importance.

Keywords: EUSDR, tourism, Danube gorge, protected area, Iron Gates Natural Park, tourism resources

In 2008, Romania, together with Austria, initiates the European Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). The European Council has endorsed on 24 June 2011 the Danube Strategy. The Danube Strategy is a project of the European Union to which non-EU countries from the Danube basin are also invited to participate. At the Danube Strategy fourteen countries participate: nine EU Member States (Austria, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany – as federal also through Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria Lands, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary) and five non-EU countries (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Moldova and Ukraine). Each objective of the strategy corresponds to a specific area of action, grouped into 11 priority areas, each priority area being coordinated by 2 states / lands in the region.

In this framework formed by EUSDR, opportunities for collaboration are created and some projects aimed at developing the areas covered in the Danube basin are implemented. (Ágh, Kaiser, Koller, 2010)

An area of interest, especially for Romania, in the field of biodiversity conservation and tourism development, is the Danube Gorge area from the Iron Gates. The region of the gorge forms the Iron Gates Natural Park (Porta Ferea in Latin, Danje Djerdap in Serbian, Vaskapuin in Hungarian, Demir-kapi in Turkish, Porțile de Fier in Romanian). (Manea, Matei, 2009)

Iron Gates Natural Park is a protected area established as a territory where the remarkable beauty of the landscape and the biological diversity can be harnessed while preserving unaltered the

traditions and improving the quality of life of the communities to be the result of the economic activities of the residents, conducted in harmony with nature. (Matei et al., 2011)

Iron Gates Natural Park is located in the south-west of Romania, at the border with Serbia, with an area of 115,655 ha, partially occupying the territories belonging to Caraş-Severin and Mehedinţi Counties, in the southern part of Locvei and Almăjului Mountains and in the south-west of Mehedinţi Plateau.

Iron Gates Natural Park stretches between 21° 21' and 22° 36' east longitude and between 44° 51' and 44° 28' 30" north latitude. The main access points are in the vicinity of Drobeta Turnu Severin and Orşova cities in Mehedinţi County as well as Socol and Naidaş localities in Caraş Severin County. The territory of the Iron Gates Natural Park overlaps on the territory of 15 administrative units from the category of localities.

In accordance with Law no. 5/2000, Order no. 552/2003 of M.A.P.A.M., G.D. no. 2151/2004 and GEO 57/2007, in the Iron Gates Natural Park are included a total of 18 protected areas (reservations). Also, in accordance with G.D. 1284/2007, on the territory of the Iron Gates Natural Park two avifaunistic special protection areas were declared, as part of the European ecological network NATURA 2000 in Romania, namely: ROSPA0026 Danube Course-Baziaş-Iron Gates (10,124.4 ha) and ROSPA0080 Almăjului Mountains-Locvei Mountains (118,141.6 ha). According to Order 1964/2007 of the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development it was declared as a Site of Community Importance, ROSCI0206 Iron Gates (124,293.0 hectares), part of the European ecological network NATURA 2000.

1. Nera Puddle – Danube

The importance of the reservation (10 ha) is given by the wetland area with specific hydrophilic and hygrophile vegetation (*Typha sp.*, *Phragmites sp.*, *Carex sp.*, *Salix sp.*), with a rich aquatic fauna: the small egret (*Egretta garzetta*), the grey heron (*Ardea cinerea*), the pygmy cormorant (*Phalacrocorax pygmaeus*) etc.

2. Baziaş Natural Reservation

It is a mixed type reservation, it has a forestry profile and protects the vegetal associations of *Fraxinus ornus*, *Cornus mas*, *Tilia tomentosa*, *Quercus cerris* with the Banat peony in the herbaceous layer (*Paeonia officinalis var. banatica*, *Paeonia mascula*) on a surface of 170.9 ha. Among the protected fauna are included Hermann's tortoise (*Testudo hermanni*), the dragon (*Coluber caspius*) etc.

3. Avifaunistic special protection area – Calinovăţ wetland area

The area has a surface of 24 ha and includes Calinovăţ Island located on the Danube River, including the bordering water surface of the island to a depth of 2 m. The composition of the fauna and flora is similar to that of Moldova Veche Isle. On Calinovăţ Island there is a fully consistent forest having *Salix alba* as predominant specie.

4. The Ravine with martins

The mixed type reservation was established on an area of 5 ha for protecting the nests and colonies of martins (*Riparia riparia*) constructed in the slopes formed in the Quaternary loess deposits.

5. Divici – Pojejena avifaunistic special protection area

The area has a surface of 498 ha and the fauna and flora composition is similar to that of the other two avifaunistic special protection areas. Locally, rare clusters of *Salix alba* and *Populus alba* appear.

6. Great Valley Natural Reservation

The floristic importance of the reservation (1179 ha) is given by the high number of *Daphne laureola* (great ivy) specie, tertiary relic. The beech forests, descending along the valleys up to lower altitudes of 150-200 m, occupy an area of about 400 ha. Alongside the beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), the hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), the silver linden (*Tilia tomentosa*), the small-leaved linden (*Tilia cordata*), the cherry (*Cerasus avium*), the maple (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), the horn (*Cornus mas*), the hawthorn (*Craetegus monogyna*) and here and there the oriental hornbeam (*Carpinus orientalis*), the ivy (*Hedera helix*), the shrub (*Ruscus hypoglossum*), the thorn (*Ruscus aculeatus*), the broom (*Genista ovata*), the woodruff (*Asperula taurine*), the tendril (*Clematis vitalba*) etc. vegetates. The steep limestone vegetation is very diverse, with specific formations of thermophilic shrubs (“şibleac”). The hedges are made up mostly of lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*), sumac (*Cotinus coggygria*), manna (*Fraxinus ornus*), Turkish cherry (*Padus mahaleb*) etc. The limestone walls and beams are covered with *Sesleria filifolia* bushes or sweet Williams (*Dianthus kitaibelii*, *Dianthus banaticus*), with the Carpathian endemisms *Erysium saxosum*, *Draba lasiocarpa*, accompanied by feather grass bushes (*Stipa eriocaulis*), *Centaurea atropurpurea* etc. Suitable life conditions find as well a series of Mediterranean and Balkan plant species, such as: *Acanthus longifolius*, *Allium petraeum*, *Bupleurum praealtum*, *Calamintha officinalis*, *Echinops banaticus*. The geomorphological importance is due to the complex relief developed on limestone (ditches, sinkholes, roof valleys, intermittent springs, whirlpools, gorges, caves, potholes) met on the Great Valley or its tributaries (Mudaviţa Seacă, Ogaşul Rău, Ogaşul Tisa, Ogaşul Greci, Valea Apele Albe). In the Great Valley’s basin there are known 45 caves and potholes, among them Gaura Haiducească (1370 m long) and Avenul Roşu (149 m level difference).

7. The Water Cave from Polevii Valley

The reservation has an area of 3.2 ha and contains the cave as well as a land area of 3.2 hectares with forest, located on the outside - The faces of the Danube, Moldova New Forest District.

8. Ostrovul Moldova Veche

The avifaunistic special protection area, the wetland area Ostrov - Moldova Veche has an area of 1,627 ha of which 345 ha are occupied by the island itself. On the island there have been identified 72 bird species belonging to 30 families of 14 orders. Of their total, 28 species are included in the Directive on the conservation of wild birds, among which may be cited: *Phalacrocorax pygmaeus*, *Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis*, *Ardea purpurea*, *Nycticorax nycticorax*, *Egretta garzetta*, *Oenanthe hispanica*, *Anas strepera*, *Anas platyrhynchos*, *Larus argentatus* etc. Among the rare species of fish the following stand out: *Lota lota* and *Umbra krameri*. The flora is represented by arboreal elements such as *Salix alba*, *Populus alba*, *Salix purpurea* and herbaceous such as *Salvinia natans*, *Elodea canadensis*, *Phragmites australis*, *Butomus umbellatus*, *Iris pseudacorus* etc.

9. Şviniţa fossil place

It is a famous reservation in Europe, with ammonites from the average Jurassic (Dogger). Strong red ferruginous fossil limestones with cephalopods are found in the facies of Klaus and outcrop over a length of 5 km, containing over 60 types of ammonites, belemnites, brachiopods, molluscs (including *Oppelia aspidoides*, *Lytoceras adeloides*, *Macrocephalites macrocephalus*, *Holcophyloceras mediterraneum* etc.). It is one of the most important Mesozoic fossil points in the Carpathians.

10. Great and Small Gorges

The Natural Reservation Great and Small Gorges has an area of 215 ha. In this area the Danube crosses the narrowest and the most grandiose area of the Danube Gorge, Great Gorges being separated by from the Small Gorges by the Dubova bassinet. Through Great and Small Danube Gorges it is understood the area of the gorge comprised between Plavişeviţa and Ogradena, forming an well individualized geomorphological unit. The Miocene Basin from Dubova divides Great and Small Danube Gorges into two distinct parts: Great and Small Gorges. Great Gorges are situated between Dubovei Bassinet and Plavişeviţa. With a length of 3.8 km and a width of 200-350 m, they are made of Dealul Ciucaru Mare (318 m), whose steep walls border the left side of the river and Dealul Ştirbăţul Mare (768 m) located on the right side. Small Gorges are situated between Dubovei Bassinet and Ogradena, having 3.6 km in length and 150-350 meters width. They are made of Dealul Ciucaru Mic (313 m) and Dealul Ştirbăţul Mic (626 m). The flora from the Gorges area contains many Mediterranean elements mixed with the central Europe ones. At the base of the steep there are found European beech arboretums (*Fagus sylvatica*), Crimea Beech (*Fagus taurica*), oriental beech (*Fagus orientalis*), Oriental hornbeam (*Carpinus orientalis*), manna (*Fraxinus ornus*), Montpellier maple or trilobated maple (*Acer monspessulanum*), Turkish hazel (*Corylus colurna*). In the sunniest areas grows the Turkey oak (*Quercus cerris*), together with the downy oak (*Quercus pubescens*), the durmast (*Quercus dalechampii*, *Q. polycarpa*), the wild lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*). In the shaded areas, at only 120 m altitude, grows the yew (*Taxus baccata*), tertiary relic and natural monument. Other plant species protected in the reservation: gorges tulip (*Tulipa hungarica* var. *Undulatifolia*), the rock iris (*Iris reichenbachii*), gorges bells (*Campanula crassipes*), *Cephalarea laevigata*, *Saponaria glutinosa*, *Cerastium banaticum*, the feather grass (*Stipa Aristel*, *Stipa danubialis*) etc. The karstic relief is well represented by forms of surface (clints and fields of clints - especially specific to the Small Gorges, sinkholes and uvala - giving the keynote of the Great Gorges) as well as of depth (there have been identified seven caves with a total length of 2,155 m, of which the most important is the Ponicoava cave). Upon entering Ponicoava cave, the creek by the same name creates some short and wild keys and a natural bridge of about 25 m long and 6-8 m high. This cave has a total length of 1,666 m, crossing Ciucaru Mare and going out into the Danube.

11. Bahna fossil place

The paleontological reservation (10 ha) is one of the best known and most interesting fossil points from Romania, with a high scientific value. It is described a rich fauna of marine invertebrates, dominated by bivalves (Ostreid), corals and gastropods. There are two points of interest: one at Iloviţa, where limestone and clay marl deposits contain numerous mollusks, echinoids and fossil foraminiferas, belonging to the Sarmatian and another to the northwest of the

town of Bahna, at Curchia, where the reef limestones contain numerous coral, gastropods, bivalves, echinoids, brachiopods, etc.

12. Duhovnei Hill

The forest type reservation covers an area of 50 hectares and has as object of protection the secular forests of Turkish hazel (*Corylus colurna*) mixed with durmast (*Quercus petraea*) – forests of dry trees.

13. Gura Văii – Vârciorova Natural Reservation

The floristic and forestry reservation (305 ha) is located in the eastern extremity of the Park. Within it, the forests with a very diverse floristic composition, with many rare species in Romania are protected. In their composition falls the golden durmast (*Quercus dalechampii*), the Hungarian oak (*Quercus frainetto*), the Turkish cherry (*Padus mahaleb*), Turkish hazel (*Corylus colurna*); in the bushes and subshrub are found the black hawthorn (*Crataegus Pentaginul*, *Crataegus nigra*), the royal purple (*Cotinus coggygria*), the fig (*Ficus carica*), and in the herbaceous one – the Rustyback (*Ceterach officinarum*), *Asplenium cuneifolium*, *Cheilathes marantae*, *Tunica Saxifraga*, *Dianthus banaticus*, *Dianthus varciorovens*, the rock violets (*Viola rupestris*, *Viola luteola*), the Iron Gates dill (*Cachrys ferulacea*), *Verbascum varciorovae* etc.

14. Fața Virului

Due to the extremely varied landscape within the reservation (6ha) exceptionally beautiful small waterfalls and gorges were formed. On the background of a varied climate as well (Central European and sub-Mediterranean), a characteristic flora is protected, with *Cachrys ferulacea*, *Minuartia cataractarum*, *Rubus severinensis* endemites, and many species of trees – *Quercus virgiliana*, *Corylus colurna*, *Celtis australis* etc. The tertiary relict association of nettletree with walnut presents a special value (*Celto – juglandetum regiae*).

15. Cracul Crucii

It is a floristic reservation with an area of 2 ha, located next to the dam at the Iron Gates I hydroenergetic resort, for preserving the grassland of a rare landscape value with *Minuartia capillacea*, *Cachrys ferulacea* and *Cheilanthes maranthae*.

16. Valea Oglănicului

The reservation has an area of 150 ha, having similar flora, the area is home to a unique species in Romania – *Gladiolus illyricus* as well as other endemic species such as *Tulipa hungarica* var. *undulatifolia* (endemic for the Iron Gates area), *Paeonia dahurica*, *Stipa eriocaulis* (*Stipa pulcherima* ssp. *mediteranea*).

17. Cracul Găioara

The floristic reservation located in the eastern end of the Park protects on an area of 5 ha the *Ephedra distachya* tertiary relics (tendrîl), *Scorzonera lanata*, and the *Stipa danubialis*, *Cephalaria uralensis* var. *Multifida* endemites.

18. Văranic Hill

Mixed reservation having an area of 350 ha, it protects the habitats of European importance developed on limestone – sub-Mediterranean bushes formations (șibleac) with Oriental hornbeam (*Carpinus orientalis*), wild lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*), manna (*Fraxinus ornus*). Among the protected

fauna there are Hermann's tortoise (*Testudo hermanni boettgeri*), the horned viper (*Vipera ammodytes*), etc.

Iron Gates Natural Park distinguishes by the unique features with a high degree of interest in tourism, (Țigu, Andreeva, Nica, 2010) which can be classified into the following resource categories:

A. Landscape resources resulting from combining the environmental elements and the human existence ever since the Paleolithic and Epipaleolithic in the area of the Iron Gates. (Mitroi, Mazilu, 2014)

B. The natural resources, respectively:

- the variety of the geological and geomorphological features imposed by variety of petrographic and geomorphological processes;
- the existence of the largest gorge in Europe and on the course of the Danube (134 km);
- the presence of some unique paleontological sites through their composition and diversity;
- the large number of superior plants (1,668), of which a large number of endemism, rare plants at national level, but also many species of Community interest;
- the high number of animal species (more than 5,200 faunal elements), many of national and Community importance;
- the presence of some wetland areas which constitute important habitats for worldwide protected bird species;
- the appreciable surface occupied by forestry areas, some sheltering species of particular value from the scientific point of view;
- the high diversity of the habitats, in this area being identified 171 habitats, of which 26 are unique to Romania and 21 of Community interest.

C. Cultural and human resources, respectively:

- traces of settlements from the Paleolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic period;
- testimonies attesting the habitation history: castles, monasteries, churches, buildings with special architectural features: houses, water mills unique from the point of view of the operating system, stone furnishing, etc.;
- the existence of some ethnic diversity raised with various customs and traditions (Romanians, Serbians, Czechs, Swabians, Gypsies, Hungarians), without ethnic conflicts;
- the presence of the largest hydrotechnical facility in Romania and the Danube basin (Iron Gates I Hydro-Energetic and Navigation System).

D. Scientific resources, respectively:

- plant and animal species of national and Community importance;
- habitats of national and Community importance;
- outstanding geological and geomorphological values;
- cultural and human values;
- existing research stations in this region.

E. Educational resources, respectively:

- natural and cultural objectives from Iron Gates Natural Park;
- Documentation and Information Centers and the information point.

F. Other resources of the area:

- the low population density, as well as the high degree of naturalness increases the importance of the Iron Gate Natural Park for recreational activities.
- the dominance of the forest and the high degree of isolation from the urban influences contribute to increasing the attractiveness of the Iron Gates Natural Park.

In the park there are 15 marked tourist trails of varying degrees of difficulty, which provide opportunities for tourism industry:

1) Starişte-Trescovăţ. It is a route that crosses Turkey oak, the Hungarian oak, beech forests and meadows, with a medium degree of difficulty, which is covered in about 6 hours. The main point of attraction is Trescovăţ volcano's neck.

2) Şviniţa-Tricule. It is a route that has an average degree of difficulty and it is covered in about 5 hours having as points of attractions: the accumulation lake, the Şviniţa town, the remains of the traditional houses and of the church from the old village, as well as the ruins of the medieval fortress from Trikule. Trikule Fortress was represented by three towers arranged in a triangle along the Danube riverbank. The whole fortress was flooded after the development of Iron Gate I accumulation lake, on the surface being visible only two towers.

3) Cioaca Cremeneasca-Rudina Route. Route of average difficulty, it can be covered in 4 hours, many contrasting landscapes being along it such as abandoned dumps, the serpentinite of Tişoviţa and Plavişeviţa, the traditional architecture represented by bi-cellular houses.

4) Liubotina Valley-Rudina. It's a fairly long route, of medium difficulty, which is covered in about 6 hours. It is a scenic route, along Liubotina Valley where a series of waterfalls can be found and on Rudina plateau a wonderful overview towards the Danube opens.

5) Great Gorges. The route is of medium difficulty and is covered in about 2 hours.

6) Small Gorges. It is a route of medium difficulty and is covered in about 1 hour. It is one of the most beautiful routes in the park, with numerous panoramic view points that open towards the Great Gorges and the Serbian side of the Danube.

7) Orşova-Alion Hill. It is a route that is covered in 2.30-3 hours and has an average degree of difficulty. Along the route one can find numerous panoramic view points offering an impressive view over the Cerna Bay, Iron Gates hydropower plant and Kladovo village on the Serbian side.

8) Orşova-Tarovăţ. It's a route with medium degree of difficulty that can be covered in 5 hours and crosses wooded, hilly areas, without steep slopes. The terminus of the route is the confluence of the Danube with Bahna River.

9) Racovăţ-Boldovin. It is a medium difficulty route and can be traversed in 5 hours. The main attraction is one of the 3 places that make Bahna Fossil Reservation – the first paleontological reservation from Romania.

10) Vodiței Valley-Duhovna Hill. It is a medium difficulty route that can be traversed in 5 hours and climbs on Duhovnei Hill where a view over Bahna-Orsova Depression can be admired.

11) Dubova-Great Gorges. The route is of medium difficulty, it can be crossed in 2 hours and offers a number of panoramic view points from where one can admire the Great Gorges, as well as the Serbian side of the Danube.

12) Balta Nera - Ostrov Moldova Veche. The route presents medium difficulty, it can be covered in about 8-10 hours by bicycle and crosses a number of reservations and avifaunistic special protection areas.

13) The Water Mills Valley. It has 4 secondary options (one in Gornea town, one in Şicheviţ, one on Gramensca Valley and the fourth on Zăsloane), it presents medium difficulty and can be covered in 6 hours by bicycle.

14) Gura Văii-Dealul Crucii (St. Peter's Cross). It is a medium difficulty route that can be covered in 3 hours and offers a magnificent view over the entire Iron Gate I Hydropower and Navigation System.

15) Dubova-Small Gorges. The route is of medium difficulty and can be crossed in 4 hours. Here are found numerous panoramic view points offering great images over the Great Gorges and the Serbian bank of the Danube.

Based on the valuable resources for the tourism activity, (Andrei, 2010) through the natural and ethno-cultural heritage it holds, through the special tourist routes, this space offers the possibility of developing all the main forms of tourism:

Scientific tourism has emerged as a result of discovering on the territory of several localities from the region, on both sides of the Danube Gorge, numerous sites with geological structures or with fossil fauna that have intrigued geologists and paleontologists, living elements of endemic or rare flora and fauna entered the sphere of attention of botanists, entomologists, zoologists, traces of prehistoric, ancient or feudal habitation, which have attracted historians and archaeologists in the area.

Cultural tourism is a form of tourism that addresses a wider spheres of tourists and is achieved by sightseeing the historical heritage (archaeological remains, monuments, religious buildings, ethnographic museums and popular technique sites), visiting museums, attending cultural events (folk music performances, dance, traditional festivals, exhibitions). Thus, one can visit the archaeological sites from the ancient period (the Dacian fortresses from Divici and Liubcova Rock, the Roman fort and the foot of Apollodorus of Damascus' Bridge), the Middle Ages (the ruins of St. Ladislau, Drencova and Tricule fortresses) and the modern history (Veterani Cave, Navigation and Iron Gate I Hydropower and Navigation System). The territory holds also important monuments for the Romanian national identity (Tabula Traiana, the bust of King Decebal). (Mazilu, Andrei, Dumitrescu, 2012)

Ecumenical or monastic tourism has existed ever since the Middle Ages and has developed very strongly in the modern times. The pilgrimage to settlements such as St. Ana Monastery, Vodița Monastery, the Catholic Cathedral from Orsova, etc. led to the construction of roads and settlements, made trade and industries flourish, has popularized their cultural aspects.

Tourism for rest and recreation. The natural environment of the area offers favorable conditions for developing this form of tourism, especially since this form of tourism is the least costly, virtually addressing to all categories of tourists. Depending on how is done, the characteristics of this type of tourism, are the hike and the health tourism. The most spectacular scenery throughout the course of the Danube is that of Great and Small Gorges.

Rural tourism is defined by spending the holidays in rural areas. To be favorable to agritourism, rural localities must be located in an environment free of pollutants, to hold cultural, ethnographic and folk values, and rural traditions, with a rich historical past or other tourism resources that allow for diversified and personalized offers.

Ecotourism represents visiting an area relatively unaffected by human activities, with a reduced environmental impact, which has an important educational component and provides a direct economic benefit to the local economy and the population.

Birdwatching is a form of tourism that addresses those passionate about photographing and tracking the feeding, the nesting and flight behavior of the bird species. This form of tourism can be practiced in the wetlands areas within the parks from the both sides of the Danube, where there are two bird observatories equipped in this regard.

Forestry tourism is a form of tourism that highlights the beauty of forests' landscapes, with the well-known variety of structures, forms and coloring. Forestry tourism is practiced having as basis the forest lodges and cantons specially designed for this purpose. Forestry tourism has as related forms tourism for hunting and fishing.

Speotourism is one of the forms of tourism that can harness the geological, speofaunistic, speopeisagistic potential of this area. The most famous and visited caves are: Ponicoava, Gaura cu Muscă, Peștera cu Apă din Valea Polevii, Zamonita, Veterani, each of them with their own legends about fantastic animals, outlaws or battles between those who ruled these lands.

Cyclotourism is an increasingly common form of active tourism which may bring great benefits with minimal investment efforts and is also an activity with low environmental impact.

Mountain biking is a form of sport tourism related to cyclotourism but which is applied on special, mountain routes, with bikes properly equipped. In the parks from the banks of the Danube, this form of sport tourism can already be practiced on many tracks.

Nautical tourism is one of the forms of tourism with the greatest impact because of the existence of the Iron Gate I accumulation lake, lake that enables the development of all forms of sport and leisure tourism.

Iron Gates Natural Park constitutes a space with a real tourism potential given the existence of some natural and cultural values of national and European importance. Remoteness from population centers and the frontier regime, as well as the shortcomings to the ways of communication (low density, precarious state, insufficient coverage etc.) have determined a very slow and unconvincing development of tourism. Tourism remains, however, one of the alternatives for developing the Iron Gates Natural Park, which can be developed in a variety of forms as mentioned above. The development of this sector cannot become a certainty without improving the tourism infrastructure, which covers accommodation, recreation spaces, access roads, sanitary facilities. The natural potential of Iron Gates Natural Park can only a temporary attraction factor for the tourist flow, given that the technical facilities are lacking or insufficient.

Rural tourism is not yet a viable alternative for this space due to the low living standards of the region, the reduced volume of agricultural products, the reduced number of shopping centers and their scarce supplying. This however can be an important source of income in the future given that investments in educating people and improving domestic facilities will be made.

The delimitation, marking and media coverage of the tourist routs will help increase the popularity of this area, with possible implications for increasing tourist flow, the activity of the qualified staff being a guarantee of increasing the quality of tourism services promoted in the Iron Gates Natural Park.

Promoting tourism in the Iron Gates Natural Park cannot be achieved without increasing opportunities for these. In order to promote tourism in the Natural Park Iron Gate area is necessary to improve the infrastructure for receiving tourists and promoting their services. A priority for the Iron Gates Natural Park is represented by the consolidation of the tourists receiving infrastructure and the construction of a visiting center. The tourist offer can create alternatives for the development of this space and possibilities of routing the tourism activities to avoid direct or indirect prejudices brought to natural and social environments in order to promote especially tourism scientific (flora, fauna, geological, ethnographic and folk, speological).

Development of tourism and tourist flow orientation must take into account the support capacity of the environment, aiming to avoid degrading natural and cultural values. Tourism should not become a stress factor for natural environments nor for the human communities in this space. (Andrei, Păun-Manolache, 2013) Iron Gate Natural Park Administration must intervene and take measures, within its powers, whenever tourist activities tend to put pressure on the natural and social environments. Therefore, a tourism strategy based on knowledge of the park's exploitable heritage through tourism and directed towards the implementation of a controlled tourism, according to the priority directions of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region must be made.

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