

THE TOURISM IN THE BĂLĂCIȚA PIEDMONT
TURISMUL ÎN PODIȘUL PIEMONTAN AL BĂLĂCIȚEI

Mihaela OGLINDOIU¹

Abstract: The Bălăcița Piedmont can not brag itself with spectacular landscapes, neither with spas, but just with a few historical sights, some oases of silence and food made in traditional Oltenian style. A close exploration of every inhabited part of the region under study shows the lack of interest of the local authorities in developing the region. It can be said that, in the studied region, in time, if the transportation infrastructure is restored, if more money is invested in sights, agritourism and ecotourism will be practicable.

Key-words: rural tourism, archaeological vestiges, tourist infrastructure, promotion of the traditional values

Cuvinte cheie: turism rural, vestigii arheologice, infrastructura turistică, promovarea valorilor tradiționale.

The tourism represents one of the most important economic branches. Putting to good use the natural and human resources, the tourism can lead to the economic development of the area of the Bălăcița Piedmont Tableland.

“The tourism is a complex activity, able to lead to mutations also in the territorial profile development, from this viewpoint being considered an instrument that can attenuate the interregional imbalances that are seen at national scale” (Melinda Câdea, G. Erdeli, T. Simion, D. Peptănatu, 2003, *Potențialul turistic al României și amenajarea turistică a spațiului*, Editura Universității din București.

In order to achieve a high-quality tourist product, the area must own remarkable natural and human resources, it must be connected with tourist areas that are already well-known (the Danube Gorges, the tourist region of Northern Oltenia) and it must offer entertainment possibilities, a good tourist infrastructure and a good road network.

The tourist resources within the Bălăcița Piedmont Tableland could permit various types of tourism: rural tourism, agritourism, ecotourism. The rural tourism attracts persons that often demand modest accommodation, with traditional architecture, authentic food, visits to historical and cultural sites, beautiful landscapes. The agritourism implies spending one’s holiday within a rural local community, in an agricultural household. The tourist may be involved in the

¹ University of Bucharest, Faculty of Geography, Human and Economic Geography Department

traditional household activities (the vintage, the harvest of the fruit crop, milking the sheep or cows, the grain reaping) or he can choose not to get involved. To observe and to appreciate nature and the local traditions are activities that define the ecotourism.

At present, the local rural communities do not develop sufficiently the ecotourism activities, the exception being represented by the areas endowed with valuable tourist potential, where the rural tourism and the agritourism are mainly practiced (regions such as Maramureş, Bucovina, or the Apuseni Mountains).

Romania holds the most important tourist potential in Europe for the development of the rural tourism, which could represent an important source of income both for investments and for the State budget.

The rural tourism is still at the beginning, as the Romanian authorities do not recognize its importance and potential.

Here are some of the obstacles that hinder the development of tourism:

- the lack of infrastructure (especially of the roads) that would facilitate the access towards the places of destination;
- the lack of promotion;
- the lack of know-how – the knowledge that permits to offer to the tourists an experience beyond good accommodation and rich meals.

The Bălăcița Piedmont does not attract tourists through its spectacular relief, but more through the historical elements of interest (vestiges, ruins, monuments, churches).

1. THE NATURAL TOURIST RESOURCES

Taking into account the area under study, i.e. a piedmont tableland, it is obvious that the relief is not spectacular. The Bălăcița Piedmont presents a low relief, with altitudes that do not surpass 300 meters; its morphology facilitated an intense pedogenesis, as well as a similar humanisation. The temperate-continental climate, with sub-Mediterranean influences, is favourable to the tourist activities. The succession of seasons only gives a totally different look to the landscape. In certain places, the hydrographical components create genuine oases of silence, delight, purification. The watercourses that cross the relief unit, i.e. the Huşnița, the Argetoaia, the Rasnic, the Desnățui, the Drincea etc., enhance the beauty of the places. One can enjoy the presence of small water bodies even in places where nothing seems to indulge the eye. The water courses attract tourists of all ages, especially during summer, for swimming, sun baths, recreation and fishing. Although the riverbeds, riverbanks and beaches could be arranged, this kind of development lacks in the area under study, the tourism being practised in a temporary and unorganised manner, and with a small number of participants. In the week-ends, besides the local inhabitants who come here for fishing and swimming, the area hosts the tourists who wish to escape the agitation of the city and to find the tranquillity that they long after during the entire week.

The few lakes are places where the tourist can enjoy the coolness of water and the fishing (Dumbrava), as well as a ride in the boat or in the hydro-bicycle

(Râpa Roşie). Just one of all the lakes that exist in the Balacița Piedmont is used for tourism, i.e. the lake from Râpa Roşie (Photo 1), the others being left in their natural state. Some of the lakes in the piedmont could even host hunting contests (Fântânele Lake – Photo 2).



Photo 1. The Lake from Râpa Roşie



Photo 2. Fântânele Lake

Only one area with lakes is capitalized for tourism (Râpa Roşie), the others preserving their wild character.

The vegetation represents another element that could attract the tourist's view. The Piedmont hosts Balkan and Mediterranean southern vegetal associations, along the route, the tourists seeing small forest clumps of Turkey Oak and Hungarian Oak (*Quercus cerris* and *Quercus frainetto*), and forests of Pedunculate Oak, Holm Oak, as well as steppe meadows. The forest plays an important role in tourism, being a relaxing environment for tourists, generating oxygen and representing an oasis of tranquillity (it attenuates the noise).

The fauna is generally used for hunting and scientific tourism, but the tourists who only visit the area do not place much importance on this element. Whoever wanders through the forests might run into deer, wild-boars, squirrels, wolves, foxes. In the forest steppe area, near the agricultural fields, there appear: the hare, the dormouse, the ground squirrel, the field mouse, the grey rat, the steppe polecat, the quail, the partridge, the pheasant, the sparrow-hawk. In the piedmont lakes, especially in those artificially populated, the tourists can fish carps, chubs, barbells.

At the contact with the Oltenian Plain, near Plenița, there is located the nature reserve *Poiana Bujorului*, with forest steppe peony (*Palonia peregrina*). The Bucovăț fossiliferous site (Pliocene – Pleistocene molluscs) can be another attractive point for the research tourism. In the Stârmina Forest, on about 49.4 ha, there can be encountered the Balkan Beech (*Fagus moesica*), the Balkan Holm-Oak (*Quercus dalechampii*), the Silver Linden (*Tilia tomentosa*), the Tatarian Maple (*Acer tataricum*), the Field Maple (*Acer Campestre*). On the floor of the forest there appear shrubs (*Ruscus aculeatus* and *Ruscus hypoglossum*).

2. MAN-CREATED TOURIST RESOURCES

The man-created tourist resources within the piedmont can become tourist attractions. Although they had other destinations than the tourist one, with little

interest and money from the part of the local administration, they can be transformed in genuine tourist attractions. Following closely the area, one can say that these tourist resources are in advanced state of degradation and the notice-boards, the maps and the panels are missing. The only way a tourist can find more about this kind of objectives is to ask the local people about the history of the village.

The human-created tourist resources comprise archaeological vestiges, worship monuments, commemorative monuments, museums, architectural monuments, the rural settlements and the traditional popular architecture.

Vestiges of the Palaeolithic and of the Neolithic are present at Verbița, Verbicioara and Sălcuța. The Neolithic is represented here through the discoveries realised at Verbicioara and Sălcuța, the latter giving the name of a culture that was characteristic for the end of the 4th – 3rd millennium B.C. The Coțofeni culture realised the transition from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age (about 2500-1800 B.C.). It was thus named after the important discoveries realised at Coțofenii din Dos. The *Coțofeni Culture* with the Bronze Age is represented through bronze tools and clay pots discovered at Verbicioara, settlement where coulters made up of buck horns were found. The Bronze Age left behind the Verbicioara Culture (16th – 13th centuries B.C.), the culture of a sedentary population, which dealt with agriculture and with animal breeding. The Hallstatt Period is represented by the Basarabi Culture (9th – 6th centuries B.C.), through numerous traces of settlements located at Coțofenii din Dos, Vârtop, Ploșor, Teiu. During the second Iron Age, there appear Geto-Dacian settlements, the more important ones being located at Bucovăț, Coțofenii din Dos and Brabova. The Roman presence in the area left traces through camps, fortifications and settlements.

The precincts of Botoșești Paia settlement were inhabited since old times. On the Paia Valley there is a Dacian settlement and north of it there is a Dacian-Roman one. Near the area called Piscul Ciutacilor, on the northern slope of the valley, there were found Roman reliefs, statuettes made up of bronze and ceramics; northwards of the Botoșești Valley, there is a Dacian fortification. The continuity of living, the cohabitation, the subsequent assimilation of the populations that crossed the region (migratory people) are testified by historic proofs: iron hatchets, swords etc., located at Lazu, Vârtop, Vela. On the left bank of the *Răchita Seacă Valley*, in Brabova, there is a Dacian fortress with ditch and wave, while eastwards of the village there is another smaller fortification. In 1968, in Brabova village there were identified fragments of handmade ceramics, made up of rough black paste – brick decked with stripes of wave incisions, which were realised with the comb that dates to the 8th – 9th century.

The following list presents the historic monuments that are in the evidence of the National Institute for the Historic Monuments:

- *Brazda lui Novac* from Ploșor, defensive wave construction, Ploșor village, Sălcuța commune;

- the settlement from Verbița – *Eleșteu*, located 3 kilometres south-westwards of the church, civil inhabitation, Șopot village, Verbița commune, Neolithic, Roman period, 4th century;
- the prehistoric settlement from Sopot - *La Bârzuica*, civil inhabitation, Șopot village, Sopot commune, Bronze Age, Neolithic;
- the archaeological site from Coțofenii din Dos - *Dealul Botu Mare*, located 3 kilometres south-south-westwards of the church, habitation, Coțofenii din Dos village, Neolithic, Bronze Age, 5th – 2nd centuries B.C.;
- the archaeological site from Botoșești-Paia - *Piscul cazacilor*, located 3 kilometres westwards of the village, habitation, Botoșești-Paia village, Roman Period, 2nd – 4th centuries;
- the Dacian fortress from Botoșești-Paia - *Cetatea Micului*, located 2 kilometres eastwards of the village, civil habitation, fortress, Botoșești-Paia village, 1st century;
- the Dacian fortress Pelendava-Bucovăț, located in the former Cârligei village, civil habitation, fortress, Bucovăț village;
- the Latene settlement from Bucovăț - *La Jidovii*, located 200 meters southwards of the village, civil habitation, settlement, Bucovăț village, 3rd – 1st centuries B.C.;
- the Sălcuța settlement from Plopșor - *Piscul Cornișorului*, located 2.5 kilometres north-eastwards of the church, civil habitation, settlement, Plopșor village, Sălcuța commune, Neolithic;
- the fortress from Potmelțu - *Botu Cetății*, located 5 kilometres westwards of the village, civil habitation, fortress, Potmelțu village, Coțofenii din Dos commune, Roman Period, 2nd century;
- the Bronze Age settlement from Verbicioara - *La Cetate*, located 4 kilometres westwards of the church, civil habitation, fortified settlement, Verbicioara village, Verbița commune;
- the Dacian fortress from Voița - *La Cetate*, located one kilometre southwards of the village, civil habitation, fortress, Voița village, Brabova commune, 1st – 2nd centuries;
- the earthen wave from Cleanov – *Troianul*, earthen wave fortifications, Cleanov village, Carpen commune, Roman Period;
- the earthen wave from Lazu, on the terrace located eastwards of the village, earthen wave fortifications, Lazu village, Terpezița commune, Roman Period;
- the earthen wave from Terpezița - *La Mese*, earthen wave fortifications, Roman Period;
- the Roman wave from Orevița Mare, which continues towards Hinova, Șimian, Bălăcița and Livezile, earthen wave fortifications, Orevița Mare village, Vânu Mare, Roman Period, 3rd century;
- *Sf. Nicolae* Church from Tâмна, near the former local Hall, church;
- *Sf. Ioan Botezătorul* Church from Dumbrava de Sus, Dumbrava commune, church;

- the settlement from Almăjel - *Fântânele Mari*, in the precincts of the village, civil habitation, settlement, Vlădaia commune, Hallstatt, Bronze Age, Neolithic, 9th – 8th centuries B.C.;
- the Sălcuța settlement of civil habitation, located at Corlățel, northwards of the village, on the Drincea riverside, Neolithic;
- the Verbicioara settlement from Dobra, located in the schoolyard, civil habitation, settlement, Bălăcița commune, Bronze Age;
- the Roman wave from Livezile, which continues towards Hinova, Șimian, Bălăcița, Orevița Mare, earthen wave, Roman Period, 3rd century;
- the Roman wave from Bălăcița, earthen wave, Roman Period, 3rd century;
- the Latene settlement from Opișor - *La Carieră*, near the *Vinalcool* building, civil habitation, 4th – 3rd centuries B.C.;
- the Verbicioara settlement from Orevița Mare – *Cetate*, located 2 kilometres eastwards of the village, on the Măroiu Hill, civil habitation, Bronze Age;
- the Hallstatt fortified settlement from Orevița Mare - *Cetatea Latină*, on the slope located in front of the village, Hallstatt, 8th – 6th centuries B.C.;
- the settlement from Rocșoreni - *Piscul Barăngii*, located 300 meters eastwards of the village, civil habitation, Dumbrava commune, Roman Period, Bronze Age, 2nd – 3rd centuries;
- the Sălcuța settlement from Valea Anilor - *La Glămie*, located on the Drincea riverside, 2 kilometres eastwards of the village, civil habitation, Corlățel commune, Neolithic;
- the *Iulian Grosu* wooden house, Fântâna Domnească village, Prunișor commune, 1920;
- *Sf. Calinic* wooden church, Fântâna Domnească village, Prunișor commune;
- *Sf. Apostoli* church, Gutu village, Prunișor commune, at the entrance to the village, 1863;
- *Sf. Nicolae* church, Greci village, Greci commune, located in the centre of the village, 1889, rebuilt in 1910;
- *Sf. Nicolae* church, Gvardenița village, Bălăcița commune, 1804;
- *Sf. Nicolae* church, Prunișor village, located in the centre of the village, 1842-1889;
- *Intrarea Maicii Domnului în Biserică* church, Rocșoreni village, Dumbrava commune, located in the centre of the village, 1787, rebuilt in 1892;
- *Nașterea Domnului* wooden church, Sălătruvc village, Greci commune, 1704, rebuilt in 1864;
- *Sf. Gheorghe* wooden church, Valea Ursului village, Tâмна commune, 1776;
- Stone crosses, Corzu village, Băcleș commune, in the courtyard of the church, 19th century.

As architectural monuments, there can be noticed the worship places (Photo 3), few buildings with remarkable architecture having other destination (boyar's houses, fortified boyar's manors, schools).



Photo 3. *The Dormition of the Mother of Jesus and of St. Nicholas Church, Breasta*

The church was built in 1784 by the High Stewart's Wife Maria Bengescu, being repaired between 1904 and 1909 by the division general Ion Argetoianu and once again later, in 1939.

In Bărboi village, Grecești commune, there is a school (built in 1924) on the facade of which there are paintings showing the rulers of the country. It is to be noticed the fact that the faces of all these rulers were erased during the communist period, and painted again after the fall of the communist regime.

The *Sf. Ioan Botezătorul* church from Grecești was built in 1820 and painted later on by the apprentices of Grigorescu. In order to resist, the walls are realised with goat hair. In the courtyard of the church, there are buried the members of the Grecescu family, those who built the Grecescu Church and the Grecescu Hospital in Drobeta Turnu-Severin. The parish house, located in the courtyard of the Grecești Church, was an archpriest office between 1924 and 1944.

Only one museum functions in the area under research, i.e. the museum of Cernătești. The fortified manor was built in the 14th century, by the Sward Brave Dimitrie Cernat, following the order of the ruler Mircea cel Bătrân. At the beginning of the 18th century, one of his descendents fortified the house and added one level; later on, after 1800, the manor was added a massive wall buttress. This fortified manor was abandoned and degraded in time, being repaired between 1967 and 1969. In 1972, the Cernătești Museum was founded in this manor.

The tourist who visits the area can see typical rustic houses, which, in most of the cases, have two rooms, a hall and an entrance room, all made up of adobe – a

mix of soil and straws that seems to have been thrown in a hurry over a wooden framework. The poverty of the inhabitants is reflected by the poor and degraded aspect of the houses. There are not the houses that attract the tourists here, but the people living in them; they are simple, welcoming people who do not have much school but who know how to make a stranger feel good in their poor household. The peasant household is made up of a dwelling, a warehouse and a store for the cereals, a stable for the animals, a shed for the tools, a cellar where they preserve the grape vine products and the food products. The structure of the household reflects the activities practiced by the inhabitants (cultivation of cereals, breeding of animals, viticulture). The presence of the cellars under the form of mud huts dug in the ground, on the outskirts of the village, is due to one of the occupations of the villagers, i.e. the cultivation of the grape-vine (Lazu, Orodell, Caraula); subsequently, these mud huts were abandoned and cellars were constructed in the precincts of the village. The interior of the peasant dwelling represent an important component of the popular civilisation.

The rustic architecture is enriched by the presence of the Medieval civil constructions, namely of the boyar's mansions, of the fortified manors and houses (the fortified manors from Brabova, Cernătești, the boyar's mansion from Igiroasa). Matei Basarab had a mansion and an itinerant residence at Fântâna Domnească, but the mansion was destroyed, the only thing left being the fountain that gave the name of the village.

The spectacular joining of the traditional architectural art with the Balkan architecture played an important role in the Medieval architecture within the Piedmont. The Romanian fortified manors prove the artistic sense and the deftness of the craftsmen who took elements from the architecture of the fortified boyar's houses. The buildings, which can still be admired in certain places in the country, posses an architecture that combines the features of the peasant houses, resulting an original synthesis. Generally, the fortified manors are tall buildings with whitewashed walls that are pierced by bulwarks, in other words they are small fortresses built to satisfy the needs of a family. Their name comes from the Turkish word "kule", which means "tower". The main fortified manors within the piedmont are the following:

- The fortified manor of the Izvoranu family (18th century), Brabova commune. The access is realised from Craiova, on the local road that leads towards Vânu Mare;
- The fortified manor of the Cernătescu family (18th century), Cernătești commune, 35 kilometres from Craiova.

The wooden churches located in villages such as Verbița, Verbicioara, Gogoșu, Corlate, Salcia, Rasnicul Bătrân, Cornița, Valea Ursului, Sălătruc, Fântâna Domnească are also important architectural monuments.

3. THE ETHNO-CULTURAL TOURIST RESOURCES

The cultural tourism concentrates on the cultural aspects, such as traditions, festivals, craftsmanship and handicraft art, music and religious activities. The

popular costume from the area of the piedmont has been almost entirely lost. The aged population seems to keep traditions, specific clothing, songs and traditional ring dances closed in a time chest, almost all being apparently forgotten; the aged people live the rest of their lives only working on the fields and taken care of their poor households. In the evening, when enjoying their only leisure time in front of the gates, they recall the happy moments, the ring dances, those occasions when the boys and girls, beautifully dressed in festive clothing, walked through the village. They say that nowadays only the thoughts and the needs scour the villages, as even the children forgot their parental house and the places where they used to run barefoot.

The popular traditions are still preserved in the villages within the piedmont. They are related to the moments of the life cycle, to the seasons, to the religious celebrations and to the agricultural works (*the Fate tellers*, the bounding of the bride by her godmother, the walking with the buckets to the fountain, the bringing of the ewer to the parents of the bride, *the mother of the rain* and *the father of the sun*).

The tourist is invited to come to these places and try different traditional folk dances; when feeling tired with the dance, he should head towards the table full with rich dishes and taste the fresh vine brought from the cellar, chosen from the best cask that has been specially kept for this occasion. Among other village traditions that are kept in the Bălăcița Piedmont we mention: The Feast of the Linden Tree (Carpen commune) and the Feast of the Reaping (Cernatești).

In the villages of the piedmont there used to be practiced diversified handicraft art, such as: the pottery (Argetoaia), the manufacture of musical instruments (of ocarines and of Jew's harps, in the commune of Terpezița), the production of local brandy (Lazu, Sărbătoarea, Ploșor etc. – there was only one oven in the entire village and it was usually located near a spring, so that the alcohol vapours should get cold more rapidly; the earthen oven heated the big alembic where the fruits were put; the men of the village gathered there, around the alembic, and they started the singing and the entertainment), the wool spinning, the weaving. The revival of the handicraft art could have a positive impact on the development of the tourism in the area.

4. THE TECHNICAL AND MATERIAL BASIS

The tourist infrastructure must satisfy the demand through specific endowments. The tourist service is to comply with all the needs that the tourists have. The tourist services fall into two categories: basic services (accommodation, transportation, alimentation and treatment) and complementary services (information, cultural and sports activities, renting).

In the case of the Bălăcița Piedmont Tableland, two distinct areas are contoured: the Mehedinți area and the Dolj area. When it comes to the infrastructure investments, it is to be noticed a higher need for investments in the area of Mehedinți County, while the Dolj County needs a smaller capital. One of the causes of this difference is the fact that much more villages have water networks in Dolj than in Mehedinți; the roads in Mehedinți are degraded (most of

them not being asphalted and on certain segments being impracticable for the means of transportation), while in Dolj County the state of the roads is good, most of them being repaired during the last years. The tourist infrastructure in the area is missing almost entirely. The access roads are in precarious state, the accommodation and alimentation basis are more than modest. Because of the small number of tourists that cross the area, those who wish to get involved in tourism do not head very much their attention towards this area.

The local inhabitants are both suppliers and consumers of tourist services, representing the population segment that visits most the area of the piedmont. The higher number of local consumers, as compared to the outsiders, is explained by the poor promotion of the tourist services in the area, through mass-media, tourism fairs etc.

The most important accommodation basis is represented by the Râpa Roşie Tourist Complex. It is located 35 kilometres far from Craiova, on the administrative territory of Sălcuța commune. The name of the place comes from the valley of the Desnățui stream, which is made up of red clay agglomerations that slowly descend from the forest to the water.

The Desnățui watercourse was modified through hydrological improvement works for the realisation of a dam lake. The lake is not present on any map. The complex has an accommodation capacity of 200 places in two villas, one of them functioning as a manor until 1989. The quality of the accommodation conditions is good, the rooms being endowed with modern furniture and central heating. The complex also has a restaurant with 300 places. The aliments used in the preparation of dishes come from their own breeding complex for swine, cattle and ostriches. Those who love nature can stay in tents within the complex. The complex has stables and paddocks, the tourists having the possibility to horse ride, in the careful company of specialised instructors, to fish in the lake (carps and hornbeams), to take a ride in the hydro-bicycle. Sports can also be practiced, the complex having a football field, a basketball field, and pools; there is also the possibility to practice table tennis and billiards. The owner of the pension plans to build a fitness hall, a massage room, a bowling room and even a ski and sledging track for wintertime. Other accommodation units within the Bălăcița Piedmont are located at:

-Breasta – agro-tourist pension (two daisies) – Lex, with 4 accommodation places.

-Breasta – holiday village with 50 little houses, but with unsatisfactory accommodation conditions.

On the side of Vârtope Lake and at Râpa Roşie, there are also some private property holiday houses. In the piedmont, the public alimentation units for tourists are represented by the Râpa Roşie Restaurant, buffet-bars located in some villages, although these later ones do not serve food.

5. SUGGESTIONS REGARDING THE PROMOTION OF THE TOURISM IN THE AREA

In order to bring suggestions for the tourist development in the Bălăcița Piedmont Tableland, it was first necessary to realise a SWOT analysis that would reflect the reality in the area under research.

The SWOT analysis shows the following aspects:

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the existence of a space surplus in the households of the area, - the existence of the houses constructed in traditional Oltenian style. 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the lack of knowledge that characterises the possible local investors in the rural tourism, - the lack of advertising, - the poor palette of the agritourist services, - the lack or poor collaboration with the tourism operators.
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the existence of funds dedicated to the development of these activities, - the opportunities offered by the natural, cultural and historic conditions, - the existence of the system that deals with the rising of the tourism knowledge level. 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the existence of preconceptions, - the confusion between the notions of <i>guest</i> and <i>tourist</i>, - the low quality of services and the insufficient use of the opportunities offered by the rural tourism.

The following strategic objectives must be fulfilled, so that the tourism could develop in the area:

- the covering of the area with tourist services,
- the reinforcement and enlargement of the accommodation, alimentation, recreation and sports infrastructure,
- the consolidation and extension of the transportation and communication infrastructure, in order to ensure the access towards the sites and objectives of tourist interest.

The measures plan that must be followed in order to have a good tourist development is the following: to modernise and to enlarge the tourist capacity; to ensure the connection of the accommodation capacity to the utilities (drinking water, sewerage, waste management, TV cable, Internet etc.); to facilitate the realisation of new tourist structures with higher comfort degree, near the main access points in the area; to encourage and to stimulate the increase of the number of tourist structures in all rural settlements; to particularise the offers by underlining the specific of each village.

The cultural tourism implies the promotion and the introduction within the tourist circuit of the Dacian, Roman and Medieval vestiges in the area. It is necessary to develop and to diversify the sports and recreation offer, the realisation of new structures and the promotion of forms of adventure tourism (rafting, paragliding, canyoning, bungee-jumping), nautical entertainment on the lakes.

In order to promote the traditional values that are specific to the area, it is necessary to encourage the practising of the old occupations, traditions, handicraft arts; to create a village museum; to realise a network of handicraft workshops and stores for the traditional products; to continue the organisation of folk manifestations that are traditional in the area. At the territorial level, it is necessary

to develop the human resources for the tourist sector. In the village, the tourist activities are possible all the year long, in the time of the harvest, as well as afterwards, through the offering of the fruits and of their derivatives.

In order to satisfy the tourist, ten components must be taken into account:

1. the client's satisfaction and the stages of the sightseeing cycle;
2. the conceiving and the management of the facilities;
3. the elaboration of a menu, the safety and food health measures;
4. marketing notions;
5. the improvement of tax performances and of the financial management;
6. the communication during the stages of the sightseeing cycle;
7. the gathering of information during the stages of the sightseeing cycle;
8. the sale;
9. the satisfaction of the client and the environment: communicating the image of the place;
10. the tourist package centred on the specific market niche.

In order to increase the sightseeing frequency, the guests must be encouraged to come back to the pension. It is much easier and less financially demanding for a firm to advertise for persons that have already been its customers, than to find other clients. If the owner of the pension maintains the contact with its former guests (through postcards, e-mails or periodic news bulletins), there is the chance of them returning as clients of the pension.

The connections of the Bălăcița Piedmont with the surrounding regions are only realised by means of the roads. No railway crosses this relief unit. The road network in the Bălăcița Piedmont is the only one in the Getic Tableland to have west-east orientation. The location of the two important urban centres – Drobeta Turnu-Severin, in the west and Craiova, in the east – played an important role in this orientation. One of the obstacles that the development of the piedmont as a tourist area faces is represented by the lack of interest from the part of the local councils and mayoralities. The first step that could be done concerns the development of the communal roads infrastructure, which is very bad at the moment. At present, the Romanian tourism faces a period of decline, but this situation should increase the importance of agritourism. For the moment, the pensions generally develop only in the richest ethnographical areas, where the spirituality and the old traditions are best preserved. One of the impediments standing in the way of the rural tourism development is represented by the lack of money that should be destined for the development of infrastructure, especially for building new constructions or modernising the already existent ones. The dwelling fund in the Bălăcița Piedmont is poor, the houses are very old, and most of them only have the ground floor, while the materials used for construction are mainly the wood and the earth. The most important economic activity in the piedmont is the agricultural one, but it is developed only in individual households. The collaborations with the craftsmen would represent an advantage in the tourist development. Many tourists, especially those in holiday, wish to buy souvenirs from the region where they

spent their vacation. In order to satisfy this need, it is necessary to create a space for the sale of souvenirs. These kinds of stores satisfy the tourists, who leave with a keepsake of the visited places, but they also bring supplementary incomes. The methods through which the tourists' attention can be directed towards the traditional and art objects are various and include: decorating the rooms with traditional objects; information note – the tourist is informed that similar objects can be bought in the store of the pension; the inviting of craftsmen for folk art demonstrations; correct prices; showing the objects in public spaces (lunch rooms); guided tours that would bring in front of the tourists the living and working conditions of the craftsmen; their collaboration with the artists and craftsmen in the community.

The pension, together with the local partners, must realise varied tourist packages. Among the partners who could contribute to the realisation of a tourist package, we mention: historic places, museums, protected nature areas, restaurants, entertainment places (entertainment parks, bars, theatres, and cinemas), music and arts festivals. It is important that the owners of the pensions and the members of the community demonstrate the value of the tradition and of the places of interest within the area. The tourists enjoy spending money on art and handicraft objects, as well as other souvenirs that would remind them of the holiday. This shows to the local inhabitants that what they offer is valuable. The tourists wish to explore the areas that they visit, but quite often they do not have information concerning the things they might see or the activities they might do. The responsibility of the tourist operators and of the community members is to be informed and to be able to inform the tourists in their turn. Some of the branches of the rural economy (handicraft art, farms, rural attractions and the food sector) must be connected with the tourist sector. Any tourist who wishes to travel with no help from the part of a specialised guide needs maps, and it is also the pension that could offer him these instruments. Information will be supplied concerning persons, places and objects of interest and the tourist will be very happy with his discoveries.

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