



## POSSIBILITIES TO DEVELOP CULTURAL TOURISM IN THE TIMIȘ COUNTY, ROMANIA

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**Abstract** *Tourists' motivations are multiple and varied, and the decision to spend free time in a destination is personal and subjective, determined by endogenous and exogenous incentives. Therefore, several types and forms of tourism have developed, capable to meet the needs of tourists. Cultural tourism is one of the forms that attract more and more people and that offer the possibility to develop the intercultural dialogue. The Timiș County, located in the west part of Romania, can be considered a traditional, dynamic and innovative cultural area. The development of cultural tourism in this area has real chances to succeed.*

**Key words:**

Tourist motivations,  
cultural tourism,  
tourist resource,  
development

### Introduction

Tourism has known a continuous development following the action of several factors: economic, social, technical, demographic, psychological, educational, political-organizational and legal. Among the economic factors we include the population's incomes and their fluctuations, the unicity and variety of the tourist offer and the evolution of prices and fares. The urbanization degree and the weekly and annual paid holidays are part of the social factors category. An important role is played by the technical factors that are construction technologies, technical indicators of installations and equipment, and their performances. The evolution of the number of population, the change in life expectancy, the structure of the population according to age, sex and social-professional categories are demographical factors that act upon the development of tourism. People's desire to spend their free time outside their home come under the psychological, educational and civilization factors, namely the training level, the knowledge desire, the thirst for culture, temper and trends. The national legislation in force, the border formalities, the visa requirements, the facilities or the priorities of organized tourism are the political-organizational and legal factors that influence the tourism activity.

Each individual has their own personality, dreams and preoccupations that influence tourist motivation. This is subjective, personal, influenced by a series of endogenous (psychological) or exogenous (from the social environment) incentives. The motivation is what influences the decision to purchase a tourist product and its consumption.

The analyst Plog S., in „Why destination areas rise and fall in popularity” (1972)<sup>1</sup> classifies the tourists as follows:

- psychocentrics, those always looking for and choosing destinations close to their home and planning ahead their holiday;
- near psychocentrics, those under the influence of the group they belong to;
- mid-centrics, those always resorting to the services of a tourist agency;
- near allocentrics, those who are attracted to rural, religious, hunting and fishing, and sport tourism, trips on the continent;
- allocentrics, those interested in various and unique attractions; their travels will be semi-organized or on their own account.

According to the main motivation that generates the trip, tourism can be:

- recreational;
- leisure;
- cultural;
- sport (amateur sportsmen or spectators);
- religious;
- ethnical;
- business;
- technical;
- scientific.

Currently, an upward trend is recorded for cultural tourism. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) estimates an annual growth of 10-15% of cultural trips given the fact that there is a 4-5% increase in average of the total tourist industry in general. According to a European Commission study, 20% of foreign tourists

visiting Europe have as main motivation culture, and 60% of European tourists are at their turn interested in culture.

Annually the European Tourism Forum is held. Here are debated European Union tourism issues, related to existing competition and tourists' preferences. The topic of the meeting in Naples in October 2014 was "Tourism and culture in Europe, innovative actions in jobs and economic growth". During the meeting, the European Commissioner for Industry and Entrepreneurship, Fernando Nelli Feroci noted that "promoting culture and improving the quality of tourist services support social cohesion and integration, regeneration of disadvantaged areas, create local jobs and improve the quality of life in local communities."<sup>2</sup>

Romania, as a member of the European Union can align with this policy through its own cultural tourism offer.

### Cultural tourism

The International Council on Cultural and Historical Monuments published in 2002 a definition of what means, in its view, cultural tourism, namely: "cultural and cultural - cognitive tourism is that form of tourism that focuses on the cultural environment, and that also includes cultural and historical landmarks of a cultural destination or the cultural-historical heritage, values and lifestyle of the local population, arts, crafts, traditions and customs of the local population".<sup>3</sup> In its turn, in a 2012 report, the WTO considers that cultural tourism means the organization of tours aiming at visiting sites and participating in various events with cultural and historical value recognized as a cultural heritage of the community.

Cultural tourism is driven, on the one hand, by people's desire of knowledge, and on the other hand by the desire for profit of local authorities where there are significant anthropogenic resources which might increase people's desire to visit. Across Europe, the action "European Capital of Culture" initiated in 1985 has a contribution to the development of cultural tourism.

This form of tourism includes anthropogenic sightseeing in a city, historical, religious, industrial, local cuisine, traditions, architecture, literature and visual arts in an area.

In order to achieve it there can be organized:

- Stays;
- Pilgrimages;
- Circuits;
- Training courses;
- Excursions;
- Visits.

Not always can we talk about pure cultural tourism, since it is most often combined with other forms of tourism.

The characteristics of persons practicing cultural tourism are:

- average and over average income;
- the majority come from the urban area;
- with a higher educational level or medium level (pupils, students);
- obviously attracted to culture;
- specialized in a culture-related field;
- on holidays, whose main motivation was different, but also visits some existing sights in the respective cultural destination.

Through cultural tourism we maintain human identity, territory, history, traditions, civilization, that is the whole cultural heritage, and intercultural dialogues take place. In the current context, in which globalization is increasingly obvious, this form of tourism preserves the national identity of the people.

### Timiș County and cultural tourism

Timiș County is the westernmost county of Romania, between coordinates 20° 16 ' and 22° 33' east longitude and 45° 11' north latitude, and the most extended with an area of 8.697 km<sup>2</sup>. The landscape of this county is varied but predominantly plain, lower in the west and highest in the centre. The hydrographic network is well represented, the rivers Bega and Timiș being the most important. The thermo-mineral waters are also present in Timiș County. The climate is continental with sub-Mediterranean influences and has influenced the development of flora, vegetation and fauna.

According to the National Institute of Statistics the county's population was 650.544 inhabitants in 2013, of which 424.732 inhabitants in urban areas (65.28%). Along Romanians who are the majority (85.53% of the total county population) live in great harmony Hungarians (5.43%), Roma (2.24%), Serbs (1.6%), Germans (1.31 %), Ukrainians (0.92%), Bulgarian (0.7%) and other ethnic groups.

From the administrative point of view there are two cities (Timișoara and Lugoj), 8 towns (Sânnicolau Mare, Jimbolia, Buziaș, Făget, Deta, Ciacova, Receaș, Gătaia), 89 communes and 313 villages.

The existing tourist resources in the Timiș County support tourism development. A greater emphasis is placed on anthropogenic resources and the forms of tourism that they support, which is due to the less spectacular landscape (the plain takes 77.2% of the total area of the county and mountains 3.45%), as well as to history and the culture of the places.

The forms of tourism that are currently practiced are:

- movement tourism that has emerged, especially due to the geographical location and the access roads, the travel and transit tourism being more obvious;
- wellness and spa tourism in Baile Buziaş and Calacea;
- recreational tourism is practiced in areas with recreation facilities on the river banks, at the edges or forest clearings;
- business tourism developed due to the existent economic traditions;
- sport tourism (miniature golf, horse riding);
- hunting and fishing tourism;
- speleological tourism (Româneşti Cave, Blue Cave, "Rock of Florian" Cave - all located near Faget in the eastern part of the county).
- wine tourism, generated by the existing vineyards (Recaş, Teremia Mare, Buziaş - Silagiu, Petrovaselo);
- scientific tourism that takes place in Timișoara university centre and in protected areas (swamps of Satchinez, Arboretum - Bazoş, Rădămăneşti fossil place and Sărăturile from Dinias);
- cultural – everywhere in the county there is a valuable cultural and artistic heritage.

Within cultural tourism we distinguish the following forms of tourism:

- cultural-historic;
- urban;
- architectural;
- religious;
- archaeological;
- gastronomic;
- ethno-folklore;
- industrial.

These forms of cultural tourism are based on valuable anthropogenic resources from the Timiș County, among which we mention:

- Historical sites:
  - archaeological findings from Bobda, Timisoara, Parța, Cenad, Beba Veche etc.;
  - fortresses (the ruins from Jdioara XIVth century, Cenad XIth century, Margina – XVth century, "dungeon" called „cula” by the locals in Ciacova XIIIth century, the Bastion of Timisoara XVIIIth century);
  - castles (the Castle in Banloc built in 1793, the Castle of Comloșu Mare, built at the end of the XIXth century, Nako (XIXth century) in the town Sânnicolau Mare, Huniade - Timisoara, built between 1307-1315;
- Religious settlements:
  - hermitages (Luncanii de Sus, Fârdea, Pietroasa);
  - monasteries (Cebza, Șemlacul Mic, Șag, Partoș, Românești, Birda, Dobrești);
  - wooden churches (Povergina, Curtea, Margina, Poieni, Românești);

- churches (Metropolitan Cathedral Timisoara - 1936-1946, Serbian Orthodox Cathedral Timisoara 1745-1748, Roman Catholic Dome Timișoara- 1734-1754, the Great Church of Lugoj- 1759-1766, etc.)
  - Cultural-artistic heritage:
    - museums (Timișoara, Lugoj, Sânnicolau Mare, collections in Deta, Ciacova, Buziaş, Găvojdia);
    - monuments and architectural sites (Union Square, Liberty Square and Victory Square, Dicasterial Palace, the houses Eugene of Savoy and Mercy of Timisoara, the Post Office's Inn, the Obelisk on Liberty Field, Union Monument, the Tower of "St. Nicholas" Church, the Old Theatre in Lugoj built in 1902, the old mechanical mills from Sânnicolau Mare, Balinț, the wooden houses from Buzad etc.);
    - memorial houses (of writer Ion Popovici Bănățeanul, poet Victor Vlad Delamarina, tenor Traian Grozăvescu, composer Ion Vidu from Lugoj, Serbian Enlightenment Dositej Obradovic from Ciacova, Traian Vuia from Traian Vuia village, Nikolaus Lenau from Lenauheim, Béla Viktor János Bartók from Sânnicolau Mare, Traian Iancu from Faget);
    - pottery from Jupânești.

They are supported by various events that are held regularly and increase the number of visitors, such as:

- Traditional prayers and kirvai in the Timiș County villages;
- Folklore festivals (Faget, Lugoj, Timișoara, Strunga, Liman Valley);
- Ion Vidu Coral Festival of Lugoj;
- Feast of the Padeș from Nădrag;
- "Vatra de olari" Fair from Jupânești;
- Gastronomic festivals (Buziaş, Faget, Timișoara, Gottlob);
- Romanian Drama Festival (Timișoara);
- Amateur International Theatre Festival (Lugoj);
- Musical Timișoara Festival;
- Jazz TM Festival;
- Opera and Operetta Festival;
- Euroregional Theatre Festival in Timișoara - Teszt;
- Timishort - Film Festival;
- International Singing Competition Traian Grozăvescu (Lugoj).

Both Timisoara and Lugoj are two urban centres with an active cultural life, which began long ago. In addition to the cultural life of Timișoara there is also the curiosity that may occur due to the city premieres recorded over time. Among them we can mention a few highlights:

- the oldest brewery in Romania – mentioned in documents in 1718;
- the opening of the first elementary school in the country in 1718;
- 1728- beginning of the Bega River drainage, the oldest navigable canal of Romania;

- 1745- the opening of the first town hospital in Romania (24 years before Vienna and 34 years before Budapest);
- 1760 - the first town of the Habsburg Empire with streets illuminated by lamps, and then in 1855 the first town of the Habsburg monarchy with gas-lit streets and in 1884 the first town in continental Europe with electrically illuminated streets (731 lamps);
- 1815 - opening of the first public lending library in the Austrian Empire;
- 1854 - first telegraph service in a town of present day Romania (Vienna-Timisoara-Sibiu line), and in 1881 the first telephone network in the country;
- 1864 -first horse-drawn tram in the country;
- 1886- first ambulance station in Hungary and Romania;
- 1895- first street with asphalt in our country;
- 1897 - the first film screenings in Romania;
- 1953- the only European town with three state theatres (in Romanian, German and Hungarian).

In 2013 there were 8 institutions and performance companies in the Timiș County, where were held 983 performances and concerts, as well as 29 museums and public collections.

For a development of tourism in this part of the country, in 2013 there were a total of 163 accommodation facilities, which had a capacity of 8.459 beds. The number of tourists staying in the existing accommodation facilities was 279.707 people.

Cultural tourism in the Timiș County has sufficient resources to develop and promote. Currently Timișoara is trying to win the nomination, from Romania, in order to be able to apply for the 2021 title of European Capital of Culture. This title may place Timișoara, also called "Little Vienna", on the map of tourist cities.

## Conclusions

The cultural heritage of an area may represent the holiday motivation for certain people. That is the reason cultural tourism has developed. Tourists who practice this form of tourism have a high cultural level and are willing to pay more than for a holiday.

The Timiș County has a cultural-historical and ethno-folkloric heritage that is valuable and attractive. Currently, its exploitation for tourism purposes is achieved through various events taking place, especially in Timișoara and Lugoj. For now travel agencies have not introduced on the market independent cultural tour packages for these events, like "A weekend in the capital of Banat (visiting anthropogenic resources in Timișoara, carriage ride with a tour of the brewery, etc.)", " Monasteries in the Timiș County Tour"; "At Traian Vuia's home", "In the Footsteps of Ion Vidu" etc.

The possibilities of developing cultural tourism in the Timiș County are real, and with a better and more aggressive promotion of its cultural attractions and events of this kind we may speak of the intensity of the cultural tourism.

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<sup>1</sup> S.C. Plog, 'Why destination areas rise and fall in popularity,' Unpublished paper presented to the Southern California Chapter, The Travel Research Association, 1972

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