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**ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT VALUATION OF THE TOURIST POTENTIAL IN GORJ COUNTY**

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**Abstract:** In this article we will present the natural and anthropic potential of Gorj county. The studied area has a diversified tourist potential which is represented by a picturesque natural setting, by monuments of architecture and art of great artistic value, some of them of international interest, but also by a valuable folklore and ethnographic heritage. The present paper aims to stimulate interest and draw attention to the existing tourist attractions in Gorj County and highlights the fact that tourism represents an important lever for the local development of urban and rural localities.

• **Introduction**

Gorj County has been attested since the Middle Paleolithic and is located in the southwest part of Romania, on the course of the Jiu River. It is limited by the counties: Dolj, Mehedinți, Caraș-Severin, Hunedoara and Vâlcea. The total area of the county is 5,602 km<sup>2</sup>, occupying 2.34% of the country's territory, having in its composition 7 cities (Târgu Cărbunești, Țicleni, Tismana, Turceni, Novaci, Rovinari, Bumbești-Jiu), 2 municipal towns (Târgu Jiu and Motru) and 61 municipalities.

• **Material and method**

For the creation of this article, data was obtained from various websites, bibliographic sources and field investigations. They were analyzed, processed and interpreted, allowing us to draw the most important conclusions regarding the tourism potential of Gorj County.

• **Results and discussions**

With a diversified tourist potential, Gorj county is represented by a picturesque natural setting, monuments of art and architecture of great artistic value (many works being of international interest), representing an important folklore and ethnographic heritage, these settlements and places presenting their history from ancient times until today.

The figure below shows a static map with the main objectives and points of interest in Gorj county (European road routes, balneoclimatic resorts, springs and mineral waters, tourist stops, inns, cabins, natural monuments, folk art, reserves, monuments historical sites, castles, historical vestiges, ruins, fortresses, museums, memorial houses, quays), as well as its neighbors

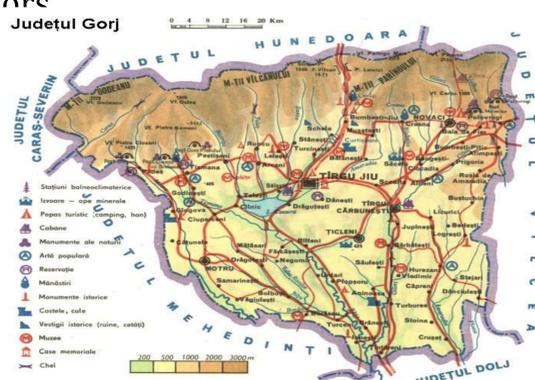


Figure 1. Tourist map of Gorj county

Among the anthropological sites, the **Constantin Brâncuși sculptural ensemble** from Târgu-Jiu includes 4 monuments of great artistic value, internationally renowned: the Kissing Gate, the Infinity Column, the Table of Silence and the Alley of Chairs.

• **The Sohodol Keys** represent one of the most impressive karst landscapes in Romania, a landscape stretching for about 12 kilometers inside the Vulcan Mountains. Also, here we find over 300 species of plants specific to these places.

• **The Olteț Keys** are part of a nature reserve in Gorj County, one of the most beautiful tourist attractions in the area, and have extraordinary landscapes to show, with waterfalls, bare rocks, caves dug into the top of the mountain and meadows surrounded by various types of trees, from deciduous to conifers.



Keys of Sohodol

Keys of Olteț

**The Transalpina** or "King of the Road" is the highest road in the country, stretching over a road of 137 km. Transalpina starts from Gorj (the town of Novaci), and then passes through the counties of Vâlcea and Sibiu until it reaches Alba (the town of Sebeș).

• **The Tismana monastery** was founded by Saint Nicodemus, being the oldest monastic settlement in Romanian country. The first church was built of yew wood, which is where the name of the monastery comes from. Here was established the first school of calligraphers and copyists of church books who made translations into various languages.

• Regarding the total number of tourists arriving in tourist reception structures in Gorj county, during the analyzed period, it increased from one year to the next. The year 2022 totaled a number of 123,599 tourists, of which 120,372 Romanian tourists and 3227 foreign tourists, as can be seen in the figure below.

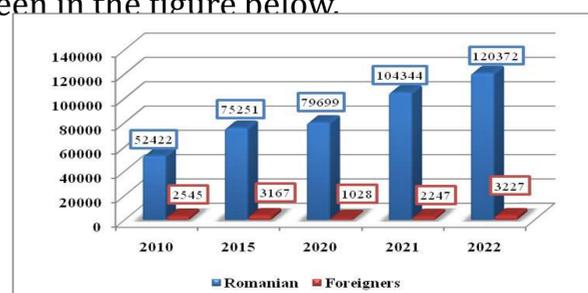


Figure 2. Evolution of the number of tourists arriving in Gorj county, 2010-2022

• **Conclusions**

Gorj County has a diversified tourist potential which is represented by a picturesque natural setting, by art and architectural monuments of inestimable value, as well as by a valuable ethnographic and folkloric heritage.

A point of great interest is the Transalpina, the highest road in Romania, which is said to reach the clouds, in fact, an old road, used since the time of the Dacians and Romans by sheep for transhumance. The view offered by this route is spectacular.