



13-14 November 2025

IDENTIFICATION OF THE FORMS OF TOURISM THAT CAN BE DEVELOPED IN THE SÂNTIMBRU-BĂI AREA, HARGHITA COUNTY

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Abstract: The paper investigates which tourism formats are most suitable for Sântimbru-Băi (Harghita County, Romania), a locality noted for mineral springs and natural mofettes. Using desk research and on-site observation, we assess the feasibility of balneary or health tourism, wellness, rural and agritourism, ecotourism, cultural and ethnographic tourism, and recreational activities. Results indicate that, if developed responsibly and integrated with the area's cultural assets, Sântimbru-Băi can position itself as a sustainable destination that combines health benefits, nature-based activities, and local authenticity.

• Introduction

Tourism is an important driver of local development, with direct effects on employment, income, and quality of life. Sântimbru-Băi, located in Harghita County, benefits from a natural mountain setting, clean air, and hydro-mineral resources with a long tradition of therapeutic use. The choice of this area as a case study is motivated by its potential for spa and health tourism, as well as the possibility of creating complementary offers based on nature, culture, and local gastronomy. The objective of this paper is to identify relevant tourism resources and forms of tourism that can be developed sustainably, with positive effects on the community.

• Results and discussions

The best opportunity for differentiation comes from integrated packages that combine spa, wellness, nature, and culture. Useful examples are themed stays for recovery and hiking, or for traditions and gastronomy. Seasonal programs and collaboration with local producers and artisans can extend the average length of stay and reduce seasonality.



Conclusions

Sântimbru-Băi has a diverse portfolio of resources. These include mineral springs and mofettes, an attractive mountainous natural setting, and a valuable local cultural heritage. All of these support the development of spa and health tourism, complemented by wellness, ecotourism, rural, and cultural tourism. Through integrated packages, targeted investments in infrastructure, and sustainability-oriented management, the locality can strengthen its position as a sustainable destination. The benefits can be seen at the economic and social level for the community, and visitors can enjoy authentic and health-promoting experiences.