UNIVERSITY OF LIFE SCIENCES ”KING MIHAI I” FROM TIMISOARA
”YOUNG PEOPLE AND MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH IN APPLIED LIFE SCIENCES”

05-06 November 2026



WEEKEND TOURISM IN MOLDOVA NOUĂ: BETWEEN THE DANUBE AND NATURE

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Abstract: *The paper examines the potential of Moldova Nouă (Caraș-Severin County, Romania) to become a weekend tourism destination for urban markets in western Romania, mainly Timișoara and Reșița. The town, historically built on copper mining, lies where the Danube enters the Iron Gates gorge, inside the Iron Gates Natural Park, and is linked by ferry to Golubac (Serbia). The study combines document analysis, statistical data on accommodation capacity and tourist flows, an accessibility assessment and a SWOT analysis. Results show that the area has nationally significant natural and cultural resources that remain poorly valorised due to limited accommodation capacity, the absence of integrated tourism products and a post-industrial image. The paper proposes three weekend packages and a set of measures for local authorities.*

• Introduction

Moldova Nouă lies in south-western Romania, where the Danube enters the Iron Gates gorge, close to the Iron Gates Natural Park. The area is known for its landscapes, biodiversity and cultural heritage, while its **mining history** has strongly shaped the local community, economy and landscape.

Aim: to analyse the tourism potential of Moldova Nouă – natural and cultural resources, tourism infrastructure and opportunities for sustainable development – as a **weekend destination** for Timișoara and Reșița.

• Materials and methods

Materials
- scientific articles
- official documents
- tourism websites
- INS statistics, 2019–2023

Methods
- bibliographic analysis
- geographical analysis
- identification of natural and cultural tourism resources

• Results and discussions

The area has natural and cultural assets of **national significance**: the Danube entering the Iron Gates gorge, **Ostrov Island** with its colony of wild horses, the **Baba Caia** rock formation and the cross-border ferry to Golubac (Serbia). They remain poorly valorised due to limited accommodation, the lack of integrated products and a post-industrial image.

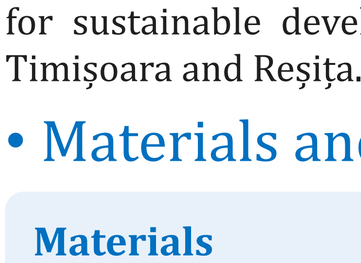


Fig. 1. The Danube landscape, Iron Gates Natural Park

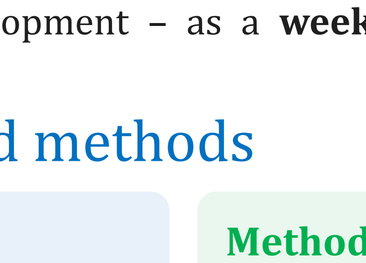


Fig. 2. Baba Caia rock formation

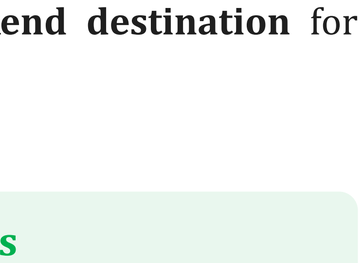


Fig. 3. Ruins of the Moldomin copper mine

The former copper mining facilities could become part of the town’s tourism identity through **industrial heritage tourism**, provided that their safety and environmental conditions are assessed – diversifying the offer when combined with the Danube Gorge.

Tourism in Caraș-Severin County, 2019–2023

337	10,604	238,654
reception structures in 2023	accommodation places in 2023	tourist arrivals in 2023
+38% vs. 2019	+15% vs. 2019	–2.4% vs. 2019

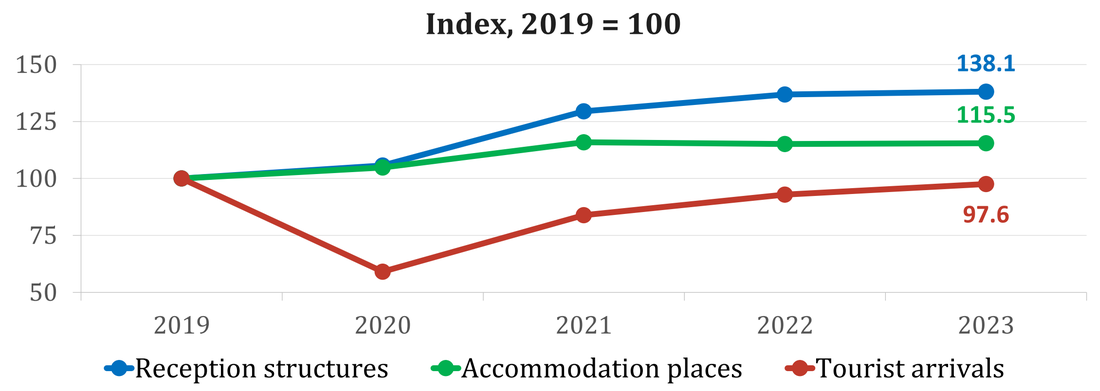


Fig. 4. Evolution of tourism supply and demand (2019 = 100). Source: own calculation based on INS data

Supply expanded steadily, while arrivals – after falling to 144,665 in 2020 (COVID-19) – had not regained the 2019 level. Romanian tourists dominate (230,544 in 2023), so the **domestic market** is the main target. More beds alone are not enough: **integrated products and promotion** are needed.

Proposed weekend packages

Nature and the Danube
boat rides and exploring the fauna of Ostrov Island

Cross-border Heritage
medieval fortresses and the connection with Serbia

Gastronomy and Traditions of the Gorge
local cuisine and customs of the Danube Gorge

Measures for local authorities: attract European funds, rebrand the area’s image and simplify tourist reception infrastructure – while protecting the biodiversity of the Natural Park.

• Conclusions

Moldova Nouă can become a **weekend destination** by combining nature, cultural heritage and industrial history. As arrivals lag behind accommodation growth, the three packages, supported by cooperation between authorities, businesses and residents, can diversify the offer and attract visitors from regional urban centres. Visitor surveys are needed to assess demand.

Selected references

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