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### Abstract

Iara Hasdate Depression is located on the eastern side of Western Carpathians, being an exclusively rural area. Most of the tourist objectives have a local importance, excepting Turzii Gorges which represent the only national tourist objective in the area. Villages in the area have a worthily ethnographic potential, maybe partly unknown, as well as cheap resources that make it the main object of an early management by constructing new secondary and permanent residences, especially from wealthy people in the two nearby urban centers, Cluj-Napoca and Turda.

Planning the Transylvanian Motorway route on the depression axe will have as result perceptive changes in what concerns land price, and, implicitly, amplifying the rural tourism and weekend tourism.

**Key words:** Iara - Hasdate, Depression, Cluj County, touristical potential

# Touristical Potential of Iara Hasdate Depression, Cluj County, Romania

Iara-Hasdate Depression represents an intermediate relief level between the Western Carpathians (Muntele Mare Mountain) and the Transilvanian Depression in the East. In the North, Iara-Hasdate Depression lies between Somesul Mic and Aries basins. In the South and South-East, there lies the Petresti limestone massif in which Tureni and Turzii Gorges were formed.

As the name states, there are two rivers (Iara in the West and Hasdate in the East) which flow almost parallel throughout Iara-Hasdate Depression and are two left tributaries of Aries river. Even though the flow capacity of the two rivers is low (2,8 m<sup>3</sup>/sec for Iara river and less than 1 m<sup>3</sup>/sec for Hasdate river), they have a local importance for fishing and domestic needs. Iara-Hasdate Depression's North - South length is 15 km. The West - East extremes cover 25 km.

There are no towns inside Iara-Hasdate Depression, yet it lies in between a city and a town: Cluj-Napoca (330.000 inhabitants) 1<sup>st</sup> rank in the national hierarchy and Turda (55.000 inhabitants) 4<sup>th</sup> rank in the national hierarchy.

Heights vary between 350 and 400 m at the base and 800 m (Peana Peak - 832 m).

Iara-Hasdate Depression includes 29 villages out of which 4 are commune centers (Iara, Baisoara, Petrestii de Jos and Ciurila), totaling 10.434 inhabitants (March, 2002

census). A village medium size comprises 359 inhabitants, a value under the national level (775 inhabitants per village). The medium distance between two settlements is 3,2 km. The general density is approximately 30 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>, which demonstrates a low demographic pressure upon the territory.

The two urban centers, Cluj-Napoca and Turda, are situated at equal distances from Iara-Hasdate Depression centre (i.e. 20 km), and this is the place where their influence area ends. Even though the depression is close to the urban centers mentioned above, Iara-Hasdate Depression has a peripheral status and is characterized by an increased rural character.

Iara-Hasdate Depression is crossed by two county roads (107L on Hasdate Valley and 107M on Iara Valley). The other categories of roads are of communal level (local roads), most of them being in a mediocre state, speaking of quality.

It must be emphasized that, Iara-Hasdate Depression has most of its major touristic sites, of a local importance, of which turning account lays on the two towns population (Cluj-Napoca and Turda).

It has to be observed the existence of two touristic objectives, having special worth, Turzii Gorges and Turului Gorges, both being touristic sites of a national level, and which, besides the limestone relief, these



Figure1. Location of Iara-Hasdate Depression

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caves hide archeological vestiges since Paleolithic and Neolithic ages; in addition, it may be added some rare floristic species (*Alium Oblicum*). Hence, Turzii Gorges as well as Turului Gorges are stated as natural reservations. They benefit of a good accessibility by car or by walking through touristic paths.

Between Turzii Gorges and Turului Gorges it interposes the Sandulesti limestone quarry. This one, through its specific activity (explosions noise, soil cleavage) makes it obligatory to limit the quality of these two objectives from the natural point of view. The noise produced by the explosions in the quarry, besides the effects that overwhelm the fauna, contributes in weakening the anchors for climbers. In both of the cases by deepening the fissures in which these are located.

The second category of natural objectives which have touristic importance are represented by fishing lakes on the middle of the water course of Hasdate Valley and the leisure one on the superior course of the Micusului Valley.

Among the objectives that have touristic and landscape architecture importance worth to be mentioned Faget Forest, in the North-Central part of the depression, as a primary leisure area for Cluj-Napoca city to which we may add the sector of defile of Iara downstream Surduc.

Other potential objectives which have touristic value are the drinkable water springs, very numerous in depression area, to which it can be added the salted spring from Micesti, of which water is used by the population of the depression for conserving meat. This spring has also curative properties, but they are not put in good use.

Having a legendary resonance for the population in the area is the spring of Alex-

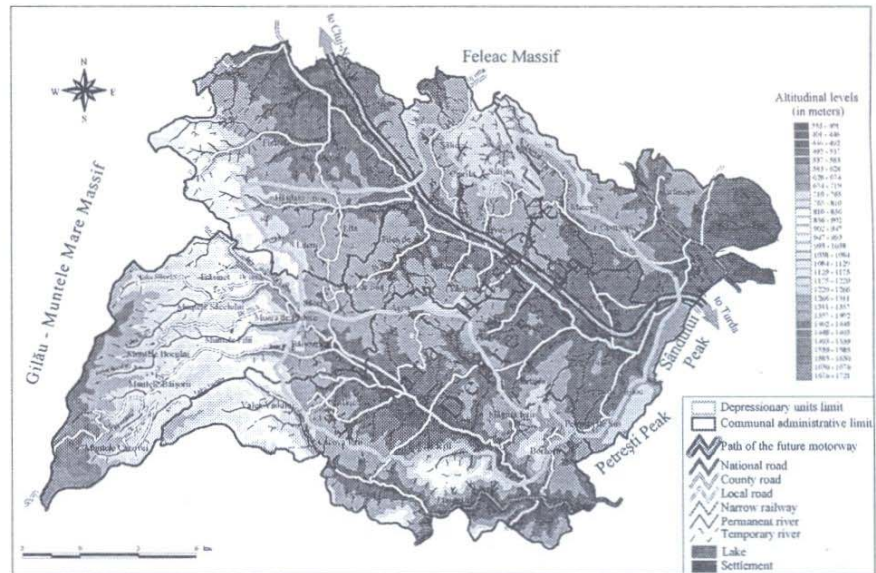


Figure 2. The limits, physical framework, roads and settlements of Iara-Hasdate Depression

ander the Great, located in the proximity of Petrești de Jos village, on Negoteasa Valley.

Among the antropoc touristic objectives category we can bring up the wood churches of Saliste, those from Micesti and Baisoara dating from eighteenth century, having valuable wall pictures.

All these touristic objectives, natural and antropoc, except for Turzii Gorges, are very low turned account mainly because of the difficult access as well as of the non-existing adequate form of touristic propaganda.

In the Eastern part of the depression on the alignment of the villages Petrești de Jos, Deleni, Micesti functioned for a month (September, 20, 1944 – October, 20, 1944) a front line during the World War II. About these tragic events there exist, in the soil, numer-

ous evidences of the conflagration (ditches, shelters, ammunition rests).

A specific form of exploiting the living potential that exists in these villages is the residential secondary house. After 1990, as for the industrial collapse in the two big cities and also for the advantage of existing the water and energy sources as well as the low price of the land, there began an irreversible process of valorizing the rural space by the urban population and also a urban-rural migration process, as a response to the migration process which characterized the Romanian villages between 1955 and 1985.

Even though there is an ageing process ongoing and a process of depopulation in all of the villages, it is to be noted that in each of the 29 villages there are at least two secondary residences, a positive sign of gaining life again of the rural space in Romania. The most solicited from this point of view are the villages of Salicea, Ciurila, Petrești de Jos and Micesti.

After the Transilvania Motorway constructing began, of which range is passing over the axe of the Hasdate Depression, it started a real boom of the land price besides the improving of the communication system.

As an overview and as a conclusion Iara-Hasdate Depression subscribes as a space reserve, good and necessary, for the two big urban centers, Cluj-Napoca and Turda, mainly touristic value consists of weekend tourism.

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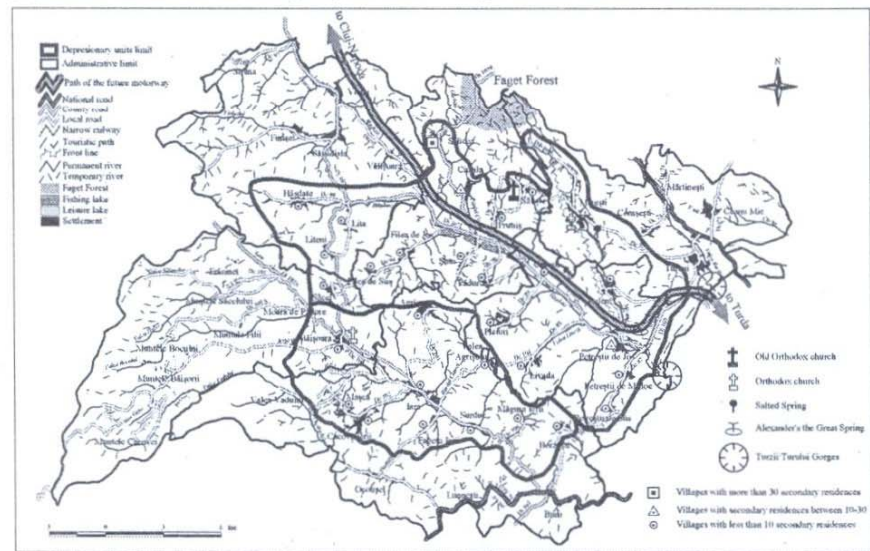


Figure 3. Main touristic objectives of Iara-Hasdate Depression