



Centre for Research on Settlements and Urbanism

Journal of Settlements and Spatial Planning

Journal homepage: <http://jssp.reviste.ubbcluj.ro>



Current Trends in Unlocking the Potential of Rural Tourism in Romania. Case Study: Snagov Area

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Keywords: rural tourism, tourism potential, Snagov

ABSTRACT

This paper is aimed at demonstrating that rural tourism is a viable source of income for all Romanian communes. To prove this point, we will refer to the circumstances of the Snagov area. Snagov's tourism resources are not used to their full potential and tourism, as currently managed, has detrimental effects on the environment, which is deteriorating by the year. Therefore, the paper is also a warning to those who are in the position to improve the technologies for the transformation and preservation of the environment - particularly of the man-made one - and who should be aware that tourist sights of great historical, architectural and cultural value need conservation and restoration. When properly used, the natural and the man-made environments are likely to generate important income for local communities, as they are a source of new jobs and can thus lead to better living standards and lower levels of commuting and final migration, respectively. Besides, our study is a warning to the tourists that go to the area. They must be aware that any alteration of the natural environment is irreversible, and that the attractions enticing them now to visit Snagov could turn into their very opposite and end up being repulsive, if the natural environment is affected beyond its regenerative capabilities. The Snagov lacustrine complex gives physical specificity to the area and impacts the economic landscape and the human personality. The Snagov fluvial liman is part of the locals' life and has significant bearing on the development of rural tourism in this area.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism will continue to develop in Romania's rural areas due to the beautiful landscapes, the places that are little affected by man, the well-preserved, unique traditions and customs, the biodiversity of the natural heritage. Furthermore, rural tourism develops very differently from one geographical and/or historical area to another. A tourist area should be labelled as such only after checking whether tourists go sightseeing there. Tourism can have a significant impact on the local economy if the area is provided with accommodation facilities; otherwise tourists will see it as a mere transit area. The major issues of the rural environment concern the poor infrastructure in general and in particular the one for access to tourist areas. Other deficiencies would be the low number of tourist routes, lay-bys, refuges,

tourist information centres, recreational and entertainment areas, as well as sports facilities.

Rural tourism players, which are currently very few, lack the necessary means to intensely promote the tourist services they can provide. The cultural and natural heritage and the various tourist routes have benefited from very poor international promotion.

Those deficiencies could be addressed by making a number of investments, such as:

- adequately building, modernizing, expanding and equipping the buildings and the related utilities, for rural tourism purposes;

- promotion and information (flyers, billboards, promotional events and campaigns);

- works to the land to be used for entertainment and recreational activities, including alleys and platforms, green areas, bars, outdoor cafes.

Rural depopulation could be stopped, the rural living standard boosted and the country's development improved, if the biodiversity as well as the cultural, architectural and historical heritage of rural areas were used to their full potential. Furthermore, biodiversity should be maintained within the limits of its self-regenerative capabilities.

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

The study relies on on-site research in Snagov and the neighbouring communes (on-site visits for observation, mapping and photographing purposes), bibliographic research to clarify the issues remained unsolved after the on-site checks, analysis and processing of data on accommodation infrastructure, tourist flows and scopes of business of Snagov-based companies. It may as well be used as a tourist guide for the area, since it presents natural and historical tourist sights and the accommodation infrastructure.

The graphical part was developed based on processed statistical data. The maps were drawn in Corel Draw, starting from the mapping materials obtained from the Snagov Commune General Development Plan (2004) (ro. PUZ).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. SNAGOV area's tourism potential

3.1.1. Natural tourism potential

3.1.1.1. Natural reserves

Snagov commune contains two natural areas of national interest, protected under Law no. 5/2000 – Protected areas: Snagov Lake (100 ha) and Snagov Forest (10 ha). The Ciolpani Forest includes a 50-ha dendrology reserve, and a forestry research station.

Snagov Forest is protected for the conservation of arboreta. It is home to natural items of special importance for dendrology, and is therefore reserved for scientific research, but also open for educational visits and research. It was declared a natural protected area on account of its 15 *Fagus Sylvatica* trees, which usually grow on hills.

The main entrance point to the protected area is located in the Ciolpani commune, DN 1 Bucharest-Ploiești (National Road No. 1). The forest is what is left today of the old Vlășiei Woodlands, a mixed foliage forest.

The protected tree species of the area are the oak (*Quercus robur*), the silver linden (*Tilia tomentosa*), the hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), the common ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), the elm (*Ulmus carpiniifolia*), the field maple (*Acer campestre*), the Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*), the chequer tree (*Sorbus torminalis*), as well as various shrub species. Some of the common ash, oak and lime-trees growing

there are impressive, reaching 80-90 cm in diameter and 30 m in height.

Snagov Lake is regarded as one of the important wetland areas of our country and has been declared a natural reserve on account of hosting Indian waterlilies (*Nelumbo nucifera*), taken there and adapted with indigenous species, tertiary relict *Aldrovanda vesiculosa*, *Nuphar luteum*, *Sagittaria latifolia*, *Urticularia vulgaris*, *Myriophyllum verticillatum*, the Carpathian-Black Sea relict *Dressena polymorpha*. It is also home to endemic gobies *Gobius gymnostrachelus* and *Proterrorhynchus sp.*

People in search for the recreational and entertainment opportunities offered by Snagov Lake area prove an inadequate attitude and jeopardize the local flora, fauna and habitat that caused the area to be declared under protection. Even though it is under the administration of the Ministry for Environment and Water Management, no legal woodland has been appointed for this area and the monitoring process is very difficult.

Moreover, if the nearby built-up areas are expanded, water birds that are natural monuments will be deprived of their nesting sites. The same will happen to *Lutra lutra*, the otter species assigned priority interest in Nature 2000 areas (Nature 2000 - the European ecologic network).

Human aggression translates in the Snagov area into housing centres or holiday houses located in the woods, uncontrolled discharge of wastes in natural areas, illegal harvesting of timber, discharge of domestic/industrial waste water into wetlands, running motor boats and jet-skis on Snagov Lake, illegal picking of flowers (white water lilies, lotuses, snowdrops, elder-tree flowers) for subsequent sale, poaching of various species including those protected under the law (the red duck). To reduce man's pressure on the county's natural and architectural heritage, we would need to have in place a data base including all natural and architectural heritage items, supervisory and protection measures for conservation purposes, and to raise public awareness of the natural heritage value. It is absolutely mandatory to clearly delimit protection zones around the natural protected areas, so as to maintain a proper environmental balance.

Another issue is that the identification plates of the centennial trees are either missing or deteriorated. Centennial trees should be protected in-situ (according to Government Urgency Ordinance no. 236/2000, as amended and approved by Law no. 462/2001) and provided with identification plates.

3.1.1.2. The natural framework – an important factor for the development of rural tourism

The Vlășia Area is located in northern Ilfov County. Home to forests, lakes and extremely valuable

historical monuments, it is the most attractive area and also the largest.

The Bălteni-Țigănești Complex, developed in the Bălteni Lake area, hosts forests and historical monuments located around the lake. The 135 ha lake is a fluvial liman, also known as Țigănești, Mânăstirii or Ciolpani, and it used to be a great point of attraction, especially for sport fishermen. After several failed attempts to make it into a fish farm, it is no longer present on the tourist and economic map. With proper improvements, it could become a very successful recreational and entertainment venue.

The Snagov Complex is located at the center of the Vlăsia Area, and it includes Snagov Lake and Forest and the surrounding areas. The extremely picturesque landscape, the valuable historical monuments, the numerous access ways, as well as the facilities, which are the best on offer in the areas around Bucharest, make it very enticing for Bucharest's inhabitants and very interesting for national and international tourism.

The lake is the largest fluvial liman of the Ilfov County, being 13-km long, up to 9-m deep and having a 575-ha surface area. It is provided with the best resting, entertainment and canoeing facilities. The 1,700 ha Snagov forest, which is a mixed foliage, plain forest, offers exquisite recreational opportunities.

The existing tourist resources are a catalyst for Snagov's business activity. The vast forest landscape, the plain bioclimate with temperatures moderated by the influence of the forest microclimate, the fish and animals and their habitat, create proper conditions for tourist recreational activities and stir interest, especially among the inhabitants of the nearby city. This business activity does not necessarily mean a change for the better in the natural environment, but it contributes to the economic prosperity of the commune.

The Snagov commune was declared a climatic resort under Government Decision no. 962 of December the 29th, 1994, as published in the Official Gazette no. 373 of December the 30th, 1994.

The forested land, so much more valuable for its proximity to Snagov Lake, needs to be operationally managed in all respects, paying due attention to its accessibility, the number of potential tourists, the modernized roads and their condition, forest roads and tourist facilities, hotels, villas, restaurants, sports and recreational facilities, and last but not least to the protection and sustainable use of these natural resources.

According to the *"Feasibility study on the organization of the Snagov health resort and the effective use of its geothermal water"*, conducted by S.C. Foradex S.A., in Bucharest, in 1993, the geological research conducted around Bucharest led to the drilling of a well on the eastern shore of Snagov Lake, which can pump over 20 l/sec of 80°C geothermal water. The extracted water contains sulphur and sodium chloride,

and is recommended for the internal treatment of various conditions (such as colecistitis) and for the external treatment of the locomotor system, the peripheral nervous system, chronic rheumatism, gynaecologic diseases or post-traumatic articular problems.

A rational use of the tourism potential is likely to ensure to a large extent the total incomes of the commune.

3.2. Historical heritage potential

3.2.1. Toponymy and history of the human settlements that existed on today's snagov territory

Ilfov County was first mentioned in documents in Basarab the Young's charter of Gheorghiața, dated March, the 23rd, 1482, whereby the ruler presented Snagov monastery with a number of villages and other advantages. Documenta Romaniae, Historica, B.Țara Românească (volume 21 out in 1965) shows that the Ilfov county was originally named "Elhov" and existed way before 1482, when mentioned in documents for the first time.

According to *"Marele Dicționar Geografic al României"* (Romania's Great Geography Dictionary) of 1902, prepared by Societatea Geografică Română (Romania's Geography Society), Snagov used to be the State's property. In 1864 some of the inhabitants of the Trestioara commune, Vărbilău, Prahova County were put in possession over Snagov. The same source indicates that the name of "Snagov" comes from the *"Znagov pond"*, located in *"the northern part of the territory"*.

June the 30th, 1441 is the date that the Snagov locality, formerly known as Dobrușești (Dobroșești) was mentioned in documents for the very first time. The name is derived from Dobrescu, the man who held the agricultural lands under tenancy. According to the documents in the archives of the former Dobrușești commune's municipality, the locality existed under this name until 1937. A deed dated March the 23rd, 1482, shows that Snagov monastery held in possession 16 villages, including Dobrușești. Ghermănești was mentioned in documents that very same year (1441), and Tâncăbești only in 1482, March the 28th. Vlădiceasca, formerly known as Mitropolia, used to be a hamlet that was part of Tâncăbești.

The Snagov commune is part of an area full of material evidence that people existed there from very old times, on a continuous basis. Archaeological researches revealed items thought to date since the Polished Stone Age, the Bronze Age, the Geto-Dacian era, the Romanian people's formation time or since early feudalism. A historical study compiled by S .C. URBANA S.A. related to the Ilfov Land Use Plan lists all such archaeological sites.

As to Snagov Monastery, some historians say it was built in 1457, under the rule of Vlad Țepeș, and some others say the year was 1453, during the reign of Vladislav-Voivode. However, some reject both such hypotheses, relying on the existence of a metal panaghiar¹ owned by Snagov Monastery, dated 1431, i.e. a year that preceded the reigns of Țepeș and Vladislav-Voivode. In support of this assumption come two documents dated 1431 and 1453, respectively – both prior to 1457 – and which are presented in Eufem Mihăileanu's extremely valuable work, "*Snagovul: monografie*" (Snagov-a monograph). The inscription on the panaghiar as well as the icon prove that the monastery was built long before Vlad Țepeș's reign. The panaghiar made of silver plated with gold is now on display at Romania's Art Museum.

In 1452 Vladislav Voivode built a chapel dedicated to the "Annunciation", on the Southern side of the monastery, and which no longer exists. The legend says that the chapel sank during a storm that pulled out the carved doors. The doors were carried by waters all the way to the Turbați village, and then taken by the nuns from the local convent. The doors bearing the inscription 1452-1453 are now on display at the National Art Museum.

Monasteries used to keep their own chronicles, recording the events of those times, the gifts or the succession of abbots, the death of churchmen or other prominent figures. These records are a first-hand source of historical information on the Middle Ages, especially because back then monasteries were important cultural and spiritual centres.

"The chronicle of Snagov Monastery contains a document from the 23rd of March 6908, i.e. 1400. This is the oldest document related to the history of Snagov. The year when the monastery was built is an impossible thing to know. But one thing seems beyond doubt after a thorough enquiry into historical resources: Snagov Monastery is not the work of Vlad Țepeș" [6 p. 16].

In the past, to arrive on the island you had to cross a wooden bridge that stretched from the shore to the island land. The bridge was destroyed in 1821 during the Ipsilanti-led Eterist fights against the Turks, who had set fire to the bridge. Al. Odobescu wrote that "the bridge burnt for one day and one night, stretching a bow of flames across the pond's surface". A mobile bridge, propelled by oars, was then used.

Snagov Monastery was specializing in printing and disseminating church books. Snagov was one of the rich monasteries, actively involved in the cultural life. In 1643 Matei Basarab, assisted by his wife, Lady Elena and Ștefan the Metropolitan, set up the first house for the printing of books in the country's language. Subsequently, i.e. in 1709, Antim, former father

superior of Snagov Monastery, now the elected Metropolitan of Ungro-Wallachia, "*made the monastery shine with all its might*" (Mihăileanu, 1913). Antim Ivireanu's days at Snagov Monastery were a time of intense cultural activity and great artistic productions. He was an engraver, carver, architect, painter, typographer, monk, father superior, bishop and metropolitan, and a renowned, exquisite orator of the Romanian Orthodox Church. In the 17th century and in the former half of the 18th, all the churches in Jerusalem, Alexandria and Antioquia availed themselves of the books printed in Arabic and Greek at Snagov. The paper press that Antim Ivireanu used to obtain his first printed materials is still preserved at the Monastery.

Because of the earthquakes of 1940, 1977 and 1986, the damaged church underwent consolidations between 1998 and 2000. Only the church is left today out of the old monastery. However, it is no longer a monastery church².

A 19th century inn is located in the Tâncăbești locality, across km 32 of National Road 1 (Ro. DN1). There are 12 well-preserved rooms, currently used for the operation of a metal carpentry shop. A monument designed by D. Mățoanu in the memory of the military heroes dead in the 1916-1919 war for country reunification is built close to the inn.

Historical records testify that human settlements were built around Snagov Lake as early as the 14th century. They were located there in search for an isolated position at the heart of the Vlăsiei Woodlands, so as to be protected from the Tartars' and Turks' attacks. But more important in the choice of this location was the wealth of fish of Snagov Lake, the large stock of game and the close vicinity with the Ialomița river, an important travel route that allowed easy access to Walachia's capital, which was Târgoviște, at that time.

Historical records mention among the settlements and villages around Lake Snagov the following villages: Frângișești, Izvorani, Ghermănești, Popești, Dobroșești și Tâncăbești.

Around mid-19th century Old Believers (lipoveni) from the Danube Delta were brought here and colonised this area for a better exploitation of the fish resources in Lake Snagov. Because the Old Believers were wearing beards, the area of the village where they settled was named Barboși ("*the Bearded*"), a name still designating at present a forest parcel nearby Snagov village. This fact is also confirmed by Alexandru Odobescu, the writer, in his work "*Câteva ore la Snagov*" ("*A Few Hours in Snagov*"), written after a trip to Snagov Monastery in 1862.

Ciofliceni village is named after a brook, Cioflec, tributary of the Snagov valley, which does not

¹ An object made of precious metals used as a support for Virgin Mary's icons (translator's note).

² This church holds religious services attended mainly by laymen (translator's note).

exist any longer, but left traces in Ghermănești and Cioflăceni villages.

Ghermănești village is named after Gherman, an estate tenant, a name still existing today in the commune villages, both as surname and name.

The first documented evidence of Căciulați village dates back to 1622 including Mavrodin and Fienari hamlets situated to the left of Lake Cociovașiștea. The present village was named Căciulați because the soldiers coming back from the war were given land here to build their houses on. At that time the Romanian soldiers' uniforms included "căciula" ("the cap") as well.

Rural settlements in Snagov area evolved progressively to a peri-urban stage. This was possible in the context created by the proximity to a large urban area continuously developing, namely Bucharest.

An actual dynamical evolution in Snagov commune is noticed after 1990. Up to that time the intention was to include the commune territory into the metropolis area and the actual disappearance of the villages. This intention is proved by the total demolition of Vlădiceasca village in 1987, pursuant to the order of the president of the Socialist Republic of Romania, and displacement of the population to Ghermănești and Snagov Sat. A pseudo-urban atmosphere had been created here by building 2 and 3-storey blocks, with no heating systems, gas or other minimum habitability standards. Vlădiceasca village was resettled after 1990.

After 1990, in all villages, not only in Vlădiceasca, the dwellings and private industrial buildings were subjected to a modern and utility rebuilding process while the state-owned buildings were continuously degrading.

A main characteristic of the settlements here is that this area has been continually inhabited, mostly due to the physical-geographical conditions. Vlădiceasca village being wiped off the map for three years, between 1987 and 1990, was due to political and not geographical reasons. This process was sudden and was not the result of a progressive evolution. The proof of maintenance in time is the fast pace at which this village was rebuilt when the population could make a choice. The settlements have gone through many stages along the time, have been subject to different socio-political conditions, but the place and particularities were maintained.

3.2.2. Man-made sites of historical, cultural and architectural value

Snagov blends harmoniously the remembrance of the past with the present and monuments of outstanding historical and artistic value can be visited here. Snagov Palace and „Vlad Țepeș” Monastery stand out as the works having the greatest architectural and historical value. The churches in Cioflăceni, Ghermănești, Tâncăbești and Snagov are recognised as

masterpieces and places of worship that may be included in touristic routes.

„Sfântul Nicolae” Church in Ghermănești (Str. Călugăreni), was built in 1790 and rebuilt afterwards between 1928-1940. It is a triconch church with a wooden iconostasis. Two spires are placed one on the narthex and the other one on nave.

“Sfantul Nicolae Cioflăceni” Church (the 19th century) in Tâncăbești is a triconch church with a neo-Byzantine fresco. The iconostasis is an outstanding sculpture in linden wood.

Of all the monasteries around Bucharest, Snagov is the one that enjoys most appreciation. The building of the church, a wonderful piece of Medieval architecture, dominates the isle in the middle of the lake, surrounded by history and legend.

The 15th century frescos beside the portraits of Neagoe Basarab and his son, Teodosie and of Mircea Ciobanul and his family (1539- 1568) may be admired inside.

The fame of Snagov monastery is also related to the personality of voivode Vlad Țepeș, who built a surrounding wall, fortifying the building, constructed a bridge, a steeple, a well, a refuge tunnel and a prison for traitors and ill-doers. Killed in the forest around Bălteni in 1476, Vlad Țepeș is supposedly buried in Snagov, where his tomb stone is placed. However the researches have not confirmed the existence of the voivode's body, followed by the hatred of the foe even after his death.

Snagov Palace was built in 1930 by Camil Roguski, the architect, on the initiative of Prince Nicolae, the fourth child of the royal couple Ferdinand and Maria, and it was extended in 1980 by the Ceaușescu family, subsequent to the extension having 1500 m² area.

The first plans were designed by the architect Henriette Delavrancea Gibory, daughter of Delavrancea, the writer. In 1937, Prince Nicolae is disinherited by his brother and expelled from the country. He would never see Romania or Snagov again, the latter having been successively used by Antonescu and Gheorghiu Dej as a residence for meetings, for short periods. Between 1970 and 1989 the complex was host to receptions, dinner parties and the Ceaușescu family occasionally lived here. Snagov Palace is now administered by the Public Corporation for the Administration of State Protocol Heritage (“Regia Autonomă a Patrimoniului și Protocolului de Stat”).

To the South-East of Snagov commune is Balamuci Monastery (Balta Neagră village, Nuci commune) and Căldărușani Monastery (Lipia village, Gruiu commune, on County Road 101 C (Ro. DJ 101C), between the communes Moara- Vlasiei and Gruiu), founded by Matei Basarab between 1638- 1639.

The monastery refectory displays a medieval art collection, old books, few early paintings by Nicolae Grigorescu and an exhibition of old icons.

The following buildings are located nearby the administrative territory of Snagov commune: Țigănești Monastery (Ciolpani commune), Brancovenesc Palace at Mogoșoaia (Mogoșoaia commune), Ghica Palace (Caciulați village, Moara-Vlasiei commune) and „Nașterea Maicii Domnului” Church belonging to the former Turbați hermitage (Siliștea Snagovului village, Gruiu commune).

Țigănești Monastery built in 1812 on the shore of Țigănești lake accommodates a museum and the canonicals weaving workshops, and a church built in 1799 may be visited in Țigănești village. At the far end of the lake, amid forests, there is the church of the former Bălteni monastery built in the 16th century, vandalized by Turks in 1602 and re-built in 1626, an outstanding monument representative of the Old Romanian Art, but rarely visited due to the low number of access roads. On the lake shore and on the bank of the Ialomița river, on the narrow interfluvium between Ialomița and Bălteni valleys lies Piscu village (Ciolpani commune) renowned for its pottery, the Piscu earthenware being well-known and highly appreciated.

In Snagov area there are other significant historical monuments that are not used to their full potential, such as „Adormirea Maicii Domnului” Church in Ciolpani and „Sfinții Voievozi” Church in Lipia village.

Țigănești Monastery was built in 1812 by Radu Golescu. A unit of textile industry manufacturing carpets for export operates here under the parish management.

Mogoșoaia Palace was built in 1702 in Romanian renaissance architectural style or Brancovenesc style, displaying a mix of Venetian and Ottoman features, a style that was previously used in another palace of Constantin Brancoveanu, at Potlogi. The complex includes the actual building, the yard with the surveillance tower, kitchen (cuhnia), guest house, winter gardens, ice house and Bibescu family vault, as well as „Sfântul Gheorghe” church near the yard walls. The palace is named after the name of the widow of boyar Mogoș who owned the land whereupon it was built. Mogoșoaia Palace was owned by Brâncoveanu family for approximately 120 years, and then by the Bibescu family.

Dimitrie Ghica, father of the ruler, begins in 1832 to build Alexandru Ghica Family Palace as a summer residence, between Mavrodin and Fienari hamlets and in the same year he laid nearby the foundation stone of the church dedicated to the “Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God” built in Neo-classical style. The inscription at the entrance of the church includes the following text: “*This holy church was built from the foundation by pious Alexandru Ghica, ruler of Wallachia in 1832 and was restored by Mrs. Maria Blaremburg in 1890*”. In 1924, after some quarrels, the inheriting families,

Blaremburg, Filipescu and Mavrocordat, donated the palace to the Romanian Academy, by which it is administered also today. The palace is well-maintained; it has large parlours and rooms with all utilities. It is located in a park with old trees, the terrace in the back overlooking a lovely but untended garden and a lake. The Louis the 16th furniture in one bedroom belonged to Elena Lupescu who lived here for some time.

„Nașterea Maicii Domnului” Church was founded by spatharios Mihai Cantacuzino, in 1644. The church is a point of interest for the passionate about history and art visiting Snagov, being a model of traditional architecture.

3.3. Tourist infrastructure

Considering the types of resources, their value and diversity the following 5 main areas in Ilfov county have been identified as top tourist attractions and potentially developable for tourism-recreation; the most important area is Bălteni - Ciolpani – Snagov area, and the other four areas are Căldărușani - Grădiștea, Mogoșoaia - Buftea, Argeș and Cernica - Brănești.

Within Bălteni - Ciolpani - Snagov area tourist complexes and touristic units may be developed, and the Snagov commune General Development Plan (2004) proposes the following touristic purposes: rest and recreation, spa, nautical sports and sports fishing. For all existing endowments and developments adequate parking areas are required, and signs of tourist attractions and tourist services should be placed on the roads. By such developments, Snagov commune could significantly increase its touristic function.

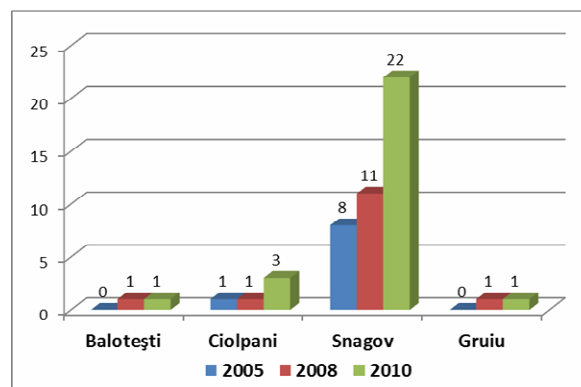


Fig. 1. Evolution of accommodation facilities in Snagov area (source: Locality sheet between 2005 and 2008. Data collected by authors for the year 2010).

Tourist infrastructure is diversified and thus it may serve a wide range of tourists. In 2010 the following units providing accommodation and food services were inventoried in Snagov area: 7 hotels, 4 villas, an inn, a bungalow, and 13 rural guesthouses. All guesthouses in Snagov area have central heating systems, parking area, sports hall and in certain cases

sauna, outdoor or indoor pool, free Internet, air conditioning, bathroom, telephone, TV and mini-bar. Each guesthouse has a restaurant that can accommodate more guests than the rooms.

Astoria Snagov Complex is located in Snagov Village on the shore of Snagov lake, within a 20 ha forest, being highly appropriate for entertainment and relaxation. The tourists may benefit of accommodation services from 2 to 4 stars (3 villas, a bungalow and a hotel), may eat in the restaurants and open-air terraces accommodating up to 550 persons, traditional and international fare being served. The complex has conference rooms, 4 tennis courts, basketball courts, football fields, table tennis tables, open-air pool (200 persons), parking area for motor vehicles and coaches, barbecue areas, playgrounds and an open-air discotheque (for 80 people). Oar boats may be rented and boat trips as well as visits to Snagov Monastery may be organised for groups, upon request.

In 2010, Mirage Hotel, a 4-star hotel was opened in Vlădiceasca, Snagov commune, on the shore of Snagov lake, and it may be accessed from National Road 1; it accommodates 236 guests and its two restaurants can hold up to 600 persons.

'Sydney 2000' Olympic Centre Izvorani in Ciolpani commune accommodates 54 guests and the restaurant can seat up to 70 guests. The conference centre building has 6 training rooms endowed with modern equipment for simultaneous interpretation, audio-video devices and Internet. The complex has a gymnasium, sauna, pool, billiards room, tennis court, table tennis tables and water scooters.

From 2004 cruises on Snagov Lake and other events (business meetings, dinner-parties or private parties) may be organised on the luxury motor yacht Leader Yacht, having a capacity for 40 passengers. The lake trips may be combined with visits of Snagov Monastery and Snagov Palace. The boat was owned by Nicolae Ceaușescu, having been refurbished and reconditioned.

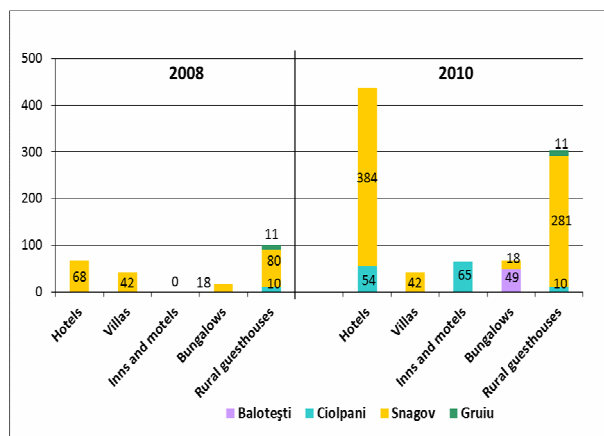


Fig. 2. Evolution of the number of guest between 2008 and 2010 (source: Locality sheet between 2005 and 2008. Data collected by authors for the year 2010).

4. CONCLUSION

In Snagov area communes tourists may engage in the following types of tourism depending on the main motivation:

- tourism for rest and recreation, mainly at weekends (city dwellers travel to the holiday houses or tourist facilities in the area);
- religious tourism, visits to Snagov Monastery, the churches in Snagov commune and the churches and monasteries in the neighbouring communes;
- sport tourism as active recreation (fishing, horse riding, swimming, rowing, field tennis, basketball, football, table tennis);
- cultural tourism, including visits to the museums and palaces in Snagov area and the archaeological sites in Snagov commune, if they are developed;
- SPA tourism, due to the favourable climatic factors and thermal water discovered here, if it is exploited for curative purposes.

Further to this study certain deficiencies likely to have an adverse effect on the economic and tourism development in the area have been found. The economic development of the area with a significant but inappropriately exploited tourism potential may be boosted by rural tourism. However, in order to achieve such objective, these deficiencies should be remedied:

- certain areas having tourism and leisure potential but inappropriately developed require specific endowments and parking areas;
- the poor condition of the road network (except for the national road and county road 101B) requires the existing network modernisation and extension to the areas having a tourism potential (at least paving in a first stage);
- Snagov lake area involves shore erosion control and grading and reintegration of shores to touristic purposes as well as establishing a protection area.
- the existence of uncontrolled dumping in Snagov area, on the rim of the forest and near the thoroughfare and on the agricultural plots;
- the lack of any technical-urban public works or their poor condition are a source of problems for the guesthouse owners, causing higher maintenance costs. Improvement of the technical-urban public equipment (drinking water supply and centralised wastewater sewage, electricity supply, telephony, thermal energy and gas supply) is a top priority for the area subject to analysis.
- the existence of some unexploited geo-thermal water resources. The Snagov commune General Development Plan (2008) mentions the importance of finding investors for exploitation of therapeutic thermal water.

- the green areas, the sports-entertainment areas and protective curtains should be widely extended;

- the archaeological sites and historical monuments as well as the natural reserves in Snagov commune have no protection areas (according to Law no. 422/2001 and Law no. 426/2001, respectively);

- the water in the commune area may be better exploited if fish farms, sport fishing centres and swimming centres are developed, however monitoring of the compliance with environment protection norms being always a must;

- accommodation facilities should be developed – building new guesthouses, health centres, entertainment facilities, sports fields and hippodromes and swimming clubs.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are most grateful to Prof. Cristian Tălângă, PhD., our doctoral degree coordinator at „Simion Mehedinți - Nature and Sustainable Development” Doctoral School, University of Bucharest, Faculty of Geography, department of Human Geography, who helped us in the preparation of this study who has, throughout all these years, always supported and guided us in geographical research. With much gratitude we also thank the other professors with the Human Geography Department with our Doctoral School for assisting and sustaining us every time we needed. We are particularly indebted to Professor Cristian Braghină, PhD., Head of „Simion Mehedinți” Doctoral School and to Professor Ioan Ianoș, PhD.

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This work was supported by project: POSDRU/88/1.5/S/61150 “Doctoral Studies in the field of life and earth sciences”, project co-financed through Sectorial Operational Program for the Development of Human Resources 2007-2013 from European Social Fund.

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