

CYCLING TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IN TULCEA COUNTY



Cycling tourism development strategy in Tulcea county

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INTRODUCTION

The document is part of the activities under the project - Fostering enhanced ecotourism planning along the Eurovelo cycle route network in the Danube region, EcoVeloTour. The objective of the project is to implement the concept for ecosystem services for cycling tourism development in 6 countries – Germany, Hungary, Slovakia, Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria. The concept is implemented at NUTS II territorial level and in Romania the region selected is the Northern Dobruja region, which is crossed by the EuroVelo 6 route (EV6).

The document is based on the “*Guidelines for sustainable cycle tourism*”, elaborated by the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences in Vienna – BOKU and on the “*Guidelines for ESS-based ecotourism strategy*”, elaborated by the Corvinus University of Budapest, scientific partners in EcoVeloTour project.

Thus, we consider it important that in the following we quote a series of information from the “*Guidelines for sustainable bicycle tourism*¹”, developed by the BOKU, as part of this project. All the information in subchapters 1.2 - 1.7 have been taken over and translated, as well as adapted from the mentioned guide.

At the time of writing, the SARS-COV-2 pandemic is still international and is associated with strict measures to limit travel and to impose isolation at national and international levels, reducing tourism to almost zero during this period. However, it is important to note the evolution of cycling in recent years, until the emerging of this crisis, as it is expected that after this period cycling will be one of the first recreational and holiday activities that will resume and develop.

1. THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

1.1 The size of bicycle tourism

In 2018, cycling tourism is not only still attractive, but also growing. The number of cycle-tourists in Germany, the world’s strongest market, grew in the years 2014 to 2016 by 30 % from 4.0 Mio to 5.2 Mio (ADFC and Travelbike 2017). However, it is essential to look at the different guest-segments. **While the percentage of long-distance cycle journeys remain relatively stable, the increase was mainly observed in the segment’s cyclists with fixed accommodation and daytrips.**

In 2016, 682.000 cyclists travelled along the Austrian section of the Danube Cycle Path, a section of the EuroVelo 6 (ARGE Donau Österreich 2017). Interviews revealed the different types of cyclists:

26 % cycle tourists with changing accommodation,

¹http://www.interreg-danube.eu/uploads/media/approved_project_output/0001/36/cfb8514ba973699218d4caf1fb4ec0371766d5d9.pdf

33 % day-trippers and
41 % everyday cyclists.

Important driving forces of recent developments are e-bikes, which in turn appeal to new cycle guests, as well as trends towards internationalization among cyclists and the demand for border-crossing routes. Other indicators for the increasing importance of cycle tourism in countries like Austria are the growing demand for the certification of cycling friendly hotels and B&Bs, or the foreground position of cycle tourism in marketing (Hinnenthal and Miglbauer 2017).

1.2 The objectives of cycling tourism development

According to the “*Guideline for sustainable bicycle tourism*”, the main goal in cycling tourism is to generate value added and sustainable business models driven by core stakeholders (tourism destination, incoming agencies, hotels, guesthouses and restaurants, transport service operators etc.).

Further subordinate goals of cycling tourism can be:

- improving the competitive position,
- becoming a leading region in cycling tourism,
- fostering cycling as a soft kind of tourism and
- targeting special interest groups for cycling holidays.

1.3 Positive impacts of cycling based eco-tourism

According to a study commissioned by the European Parliament in 2012, cycling tourism contributes with more than € 44 billion to the EU (+ Switzerland and Norway) economy per year (Weston, Davies et al. 2012). Approximately a share of 8 % to 10 % of the added value of the whole summer tourism is triggered by the key motivation cycling in holidays. In 2009 a study by the European Parliament found that an average of about 16 € was spent on daytrips. For multi-day trips expenses were estimated with 353 € per trip (ECF n.a.). While a study made in France found, that cycle tourists spent on average 68 € per person per day (ECF n.a.). The Health Economic Assessment Tool (HEAT) of the WHO (www.heatwalkingcycling.org) calculates a health benefit (including pollutant exposure, accident costs and greenhouse gas emission costs) of approx. 0.70 €/km by switching from private car to bicycle. The environmental benefit of cycling clearly is to reduce emissions in the transport sector by switching from other modes of transport.

1.4 Diversifying trends in supply, demand and motivation

In the early phase of cycle tourism, the cycle tourists were content with a moderate offer of waymarked routes, mostly along rivers and around lakes, printed maps and guides, overview folders for hotels and B&Bs and printed train schedules. 40 years later, the general conditions in the tourism business have changed. Relevant keywords are more competition among cycle tourism providers, digitalisation and higher standards concerning offers and products.

➤ **Cycling on a conventional journey with sightseeing in attractive regions**

Every cycle tourist has to start somewhere, some start cycling as a tourist on a typical city trip. Thereby experiencing the advantages of bicycle tourism. These tours are often coached or led by a tour operator. Many operators provide guided tours through larger cities (e.g. Vienna, Munich, Salzburg, Bratislava, etc.). This combines traditional cultural heritage tourist programmes with the cycling experience.

✓ **Long distance cycling tour as the leading pattern in cycling tourism**

In comparison to shorter forms of cycling (day-trips, loops) the main motivation for cyclists to go on a long-distance trip is the desire of riding several days on a prominent route between a defined starting point and a destination, all while discovering regional specialities and differences throughout the trip.

✓ **Discovery of routes beside the big cycling routes**

After their first experience of long cycle routes, many guests want to complete deviating regional routes as well as to discover further attractive landscapes.

✓ **Pilgrimage by bike**

Corresponding to hiking the famous pilgrimage route towards Santiago de Compostela on the Jacobs Trail, Operators offer to travel similar paths per bike; rental bikes can be included in the package.

✓ **Pedelecs**

Pedal electric bicycles (pedelecs, also known as e-bikes) are bicycles where a motor amplifies one's pedalling power. Pedelecs are established in everyday mobility at home or for commuting to the workplace. Meanwhile e-bikes are widely used in cycling tourism as well. They are a main driver in cycling tourism because of reducing uncertainty about one's own physical capabilities. E-bikes contribute to the homogeneity of performance in groups of cyclists.

✓ **Use of former railway tracks for cycling**

Cycling on abandoned railway tracks is very attractive among all types of cycling guests because of its qualities (cycling away from motorised traffic, low gradients, big curve radii etc.). Using the paved tracks and when possible the related infrastructure (e.g. bridges, tunnels, train stations) creates a wonderful experience. Old train stations are in use as cafes or remodelled into accommodations.

Worth to mention here the two extremely important tendencies identified in the Guide for sustainable tourism:

Certified quality of accommodation and routes

More and more companies are interested in the certification of their accommodations or routes. The growing segment of bicycle tourism drives the demand for certified quality in the last years.

Meanwhile quality labels for bicycle friendly hotels, guesthouses or camping areas (e.g. “Bett+Bike”: <http://www.bettundbike.de/en/>) are spreading in about 15 countries throughout Europe (Hinnenthal and Miglbauer, 2017).

Digital information

The demand for GPS-tracks is increasing, but these do not substitute signage. In the planning phase of a bicycle tour, potential tourists often want to download routing material or maps, to use it later for off-line navigation. If you provide an app for your region or route, consider an off-line mode, so the app is usable without permanent internet connection. Availability of digital information has become a “must-have” in cycling tourism, including web portals and apps of cycling related tourism destinations and businesses, GPS-tracks for navigation on routes, social media and blogs for reports and information. Wireless internet access (Wi-Fi) has become a “must-have” at accommodations.

1.5 Customer segmentation

In cycling tourism, customer segments can be identified using the following criteria:

- ✓ Motives and accommodation choices during the tour,
- ✓ Bicycle type used,
- ✓ Specific interests besides cycling.

All types of tours need to offer their potential tourists a perfect mobility chain including intermodal transport (arrival > tour > return home), regardless how many stages the tour has or how long it is. Furthermore, the infrastructure of local or regional routes must be of good quality to satisfy tourists and create a long-lasting experience.

Segmentation by different motives and accommodation during the tour

A tour of several days can start from a fixed accommodation (e.g. coming back at the end of the bike tour or day) as well as stage tours with changing accommodation every day like on most long-distance cycling routes. This segmentation brings some requirements to tackle different users' needs:

✓ **Cyclist day-trippers**

Day-trippers, as the name suggests, do not stay overnight. Therefore, they start and end their trip at home on the same day. They either travel to the starting point of the tour by train or public transport, or start right at their homes. Their preferred routes can either be circular, to one point of interest and back, or connect multiple spots. Day-trippers are quite weather sensitive, since planning is not that time-consuming. When the weather is bad, they simply postpone the trip to another date. Their motives are experiencing nature and physical activity for a healthy lifestyle. Their main demand is a route in a safe natural environment, with possibilities for resting at beautiful places, rest stops in cafés etc.

✓ **Cyclists with fixed accommodation**

In this segment tourists travel to another location, and book a central accommodation there to reside and explore the region from this place. Possible route characteristics are the same as in the segment of day-trippers. Compared to day-trippers the main motives differ slightly and are experiencing nature and getting in touch with locals. Experiencing local traditions is important in this segment. For the majority doing something healthy is a positive side effect rather than a key motivation. Anyhow there might be a significant sub-segment for which doing sport and cycle training is the key motive. Hotels, guesthouses or camping sites are key players in this segment by being of cyclist friendly quality. Stops at sites for environmental and ecological experience (viewpoints, short visitor education, visitor centres in nature parks etc.) are perfect for this type of cycling guests.

✓ **Cyclists with changing accommodation**

In this segment cyclists change accommodations after every stage of their tour. Tourists often book them in advance, to have certainty about their overnight stays. When booked through a tour operator or booked in advance, spontaneous changes in the schedule are difficult to fulfill in order to keep to the tour plan without extra organizational effort and expenses. As in the other segments, experience of nature and sociability are of importance. Pedaling a certain number of kilometers per day is not a negligible aspect. Hotels, guesthouses or camping sites must commit to cyclists, allowing one-night stays and provide safe facilities for bicycle storage. As above, experiencing environmental and ecological sites are in demand among these guests.

Segmentation by bicycle type used

In addition, a segmentation by bicycle type is of touristic relevance and includes four main categories:

✓ **Touring bicycles and trekking bikes**

These bicycles are ideal to transport your luggage for longer distances, because they are designed for high endurance and mechanical resilience. However, many tourists use them for every tour type, not only for long multi stage trips.

✓ **Mountain bikes (mountain bike tours)**

Mountain bikes are designed with wide-range gearing and studded tires for off road cycling in rough terrain and on mountain slopes. Typically used by day trippers or tourists that stay at a fixed accommodation.

✓ **Racing bicycles**

They are designed for traveling on roads at higher speeds, with a minimum of luggage to carry. Mainly used by day-trippers or when staying at a fixed accommodation.

✓ **E-bikes**

Bicycles with an integrated electric motor, supporting propulsion, available for all bicycle types mentioned above.

Segmentation by core activities and interests besides cycling

During their holidays bicycle tourists often combine cycling with other activities. These other activities can be categorized in:

✓ **Nature-bound activities**

This segment does not only travel to regions abroad to experience nature, they want to explore the local fauna and flora in detail. For example, certain species or plants which can only be found in your region. If your region can provide a certain niche or uniqueness, use it actively to address a specific target group (e.g. ornithologists, geologically interested tourists, etc.).

✓ **Cultural activities**

Especially tourists of advanced age want to combine their holidays with more cultural aspects, than younger ones. Museums and historical heritage are a lovely change and opportunities for a break.

✓ **Regional cuisine**

Often tourists are interested in the local specialities, food, wine or local products. Amongst other reasons, the regional cuisine is a convincing argument to visit a region.

✓ **Other sports**

Cycling tourist often integrate other sports (e.g. canoeing, rock climbing, sailing, etc.) along the tour as a diversion to cycling. This way they can experience nature in different ways or spots otherwise not accessible to them.

1.6 Steps to establish bicycle based eco-tourism

Considering the above-mentioned goals in cycling tourism – namely to generate added value and sustainable business driven by key stakeholders – the following requirements and challenges have to be addressed:

- Conduct a market research: market analysis (touristic potential, status quo analysis, concrete target groups etc.), stakeholder analysis, exchanges with partners and using synergies, fairs etc.
- Identify attractive routes with interesting sights along them. Collect and locate potential attractions and activities
- Construct and improve the infrastructure according to qualities/standards to meet essential needs and constantly improve the quality of:
 - Cycling routes and resting places (infrastructure for cycling),
 - Transport services and intermodality (arrival, departure),
 - Accommodation (hotels, camping areas, guest houses) and restaurants,
 - Offer cycling tours and products with the necessary information, marketing and communication.
- Find and include necessary partners in transport and tourism planning,
- Build relationships with external partners for marketing and communication, sales and distribution, such as:

- o Transport operators (bus, rail, micro bus, shuttle bus, on-demand service, taxi, ship, tour buses),
- o Bike rentals and shops,
- o Partners in the origin markets of tourists,
- o Attractions in the region (e.g. museums, heritage buildings, natural heritage, mines, caves, leisure activities, local products such as food, wine, pottery, wool or perfumes, etc.),
- o Special interest associations (nature, cycling etc.) in the guest markets,
- o Tourist information centres,
- o Regional / local incoming tourism operators,
- o Regional / local hotels, guesthouses, etc.

1.7 The general framework for defining ecosystem services

The current strategy is also integrated in the field of ecosystem services. This subchapter is based on the *Guidelines for ESS-based ecotourism strategy*² developed by a working group at Corvinus University in Budapest within the ECOVELOTOUR project.

In the context of this document, as well as of the whole project, the cultural ecosystem services were identified and separated into several categories. Chan et al. (2012) generated the following categories of cultural ecosystem services:

- ✓ subsistence,
- ✓ for outdoor recreation,
- ✓ support for nature-based education and research,
- ✓ basis of inspiration in nature-based art,
- ✓ ceremonies related to a natural place.

These categories of cultural ecosystem services are related to several categories of benefits that contribute to human well-being: activities, heritage and spirituality, inspiration, knowledge, aesthetics, identity, materials and existence, employment.

Cultural ecosystem services are closely linked to the specific characteristics of the material environment and cultural practices. Material and symbolic practices or physical and spiritual benefits cannot in fact be separated in the case of cultural ecosystem services.

Therefore, according to global ecosystem services, recreation and tourism can be understood as activities and experiences through which cultural ecosystem services benefit people. Ecotourism is specifically based on activities and experiences that inherently include an awareness of nature's contribution to human well-being and the desire not to harm nature through recreational and tourism activities.

²http://www.interreg-danube.eu/uploads/media/approved_project_output/0001/36/a92d419c2ec3f67ce47bcc311774b703931c53ea.pdf

2. THE EXISTING SITUATION AT TULCEA COUNTY LEVEL

2.1 Accommodation

According to the official database of the Ministry of Economy, Energy and Business Environment³, on March 13, 2020 in Tulcea County were classified a total of 486 accommodation facilities, summing 10,887 beds, distributed according to the table below. Reported at the national level, in Tulcea county there are approximately 10% of the number of accommodation facilities at national level, but only 3% of the total beds in Romania.

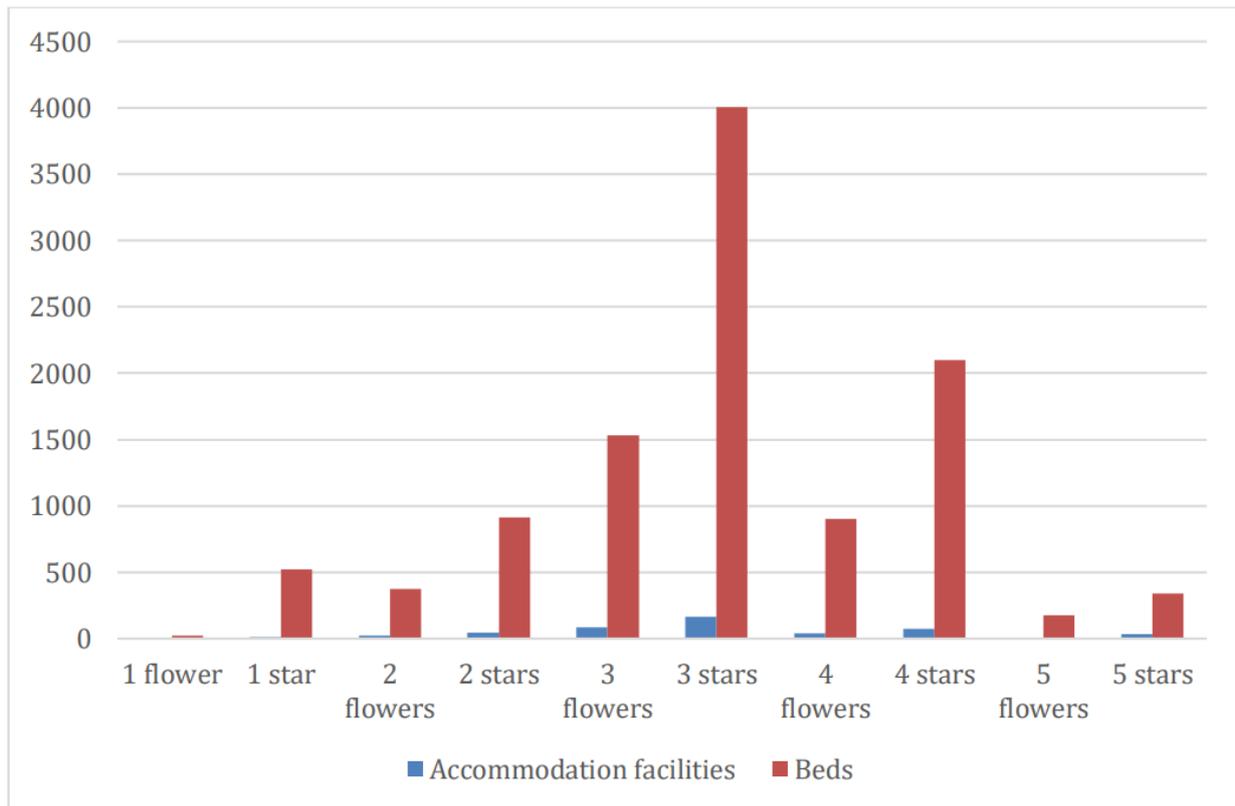


Figure 1. The distribution of the accommodation facilities and beds according with the comfort category

The graph above shows that the 3-star/flower⁴ account for more than half of both the number of accommodation facilities and the number of beds available in Tulcea County. The 4 and 5 star / daisy / flower structures represent about a third, and the 1 and 2 star / daisy / flower structures represent less than a fifth of the total accommodation facilities, while the share of beds is even lower.

³<http://turism.gov.ro/web/autorizare-turism/>

⁴ Flower (or daisy – margarete in Romanian) is the official simbol used for classification of gueshouses in the rural area in Romania. As star is used for hotels or guesthouses in urban area, there is a ranking system from 1 flower (the minimum) up to 5 flowers (the maximum) to clasify accommodation structures.

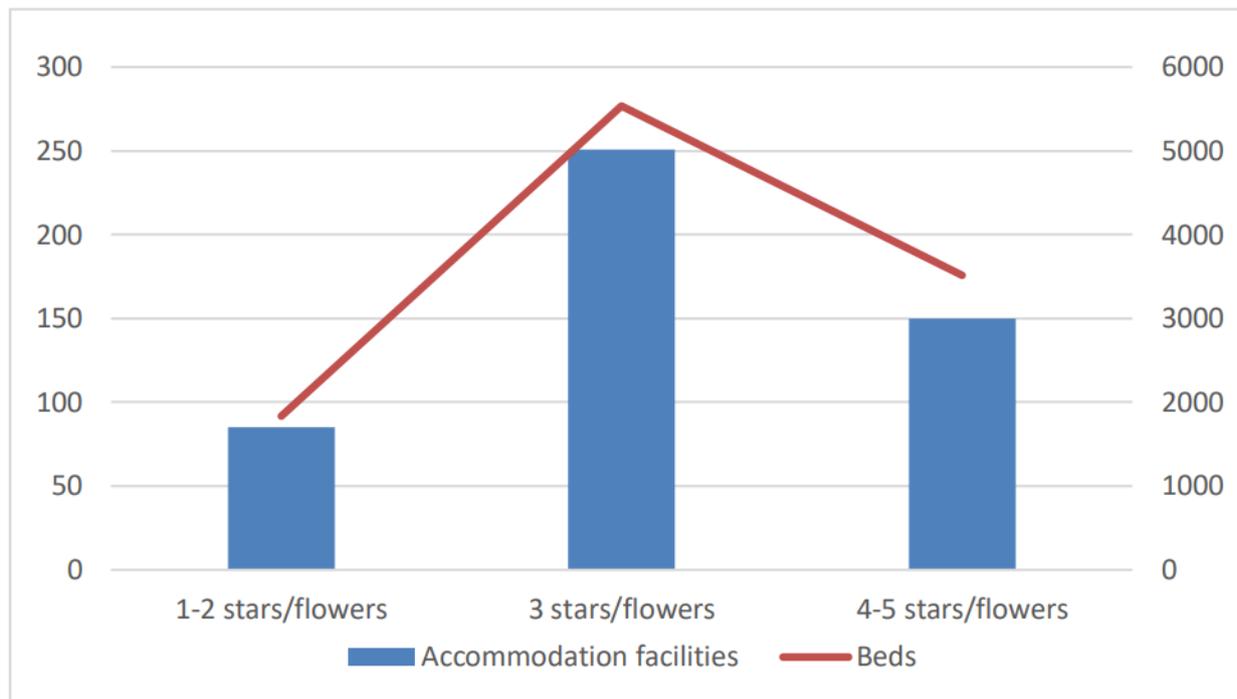


Figure 2. The distribution of the number of accommodation facilities and beds according to the comfort category

Regarding the number of arrivals and the total number of overnight stays, the latest data available on the website of the National Institute of Statistics⁵ are for 2018. Then, a number of 168,173 arrivals of tourists were reported in the tourist hosting structures (number of people) and a total of 378,758 overnight stays. This means an occupancy rate of only 13.10% and an average length of stay of 2.25 days. Although the average length of stay is practically equal to the national average where a value of 2.22 days is recorded, the average occupancy rate is extremely modest compared to the national average where it is 22%.

It is also interesting to distribute the tourist seasonality at the level of 2018 by analyzing the number of arrivals for each month. According to the chart below, almost a quarter of the total number of arrivals reported for the whole year was recorded in August. The figure shows a strong seasonality, with the peak season in August, while the seasonal shoulders (March - May and September - October) are quite poorly represented. This is somehow paradoxical given the potential for outdoor activities specific to these periods (bird watching, non-motorized water activities, cycling, etc.).

The spatial distribution of accommodation facilities and beds is shown in the two figures below. It is noted that almost 70% of the total accommodation capacity is located in the Danube Delta

⁵<http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/>

(without taking into account the almost 20% of accommodation in Tulcea). It turns out, therefore, that the vast majority of accommodation in the county is located in the delta or at its border (as is the case of Murighiol or Mahmudia).

Therefore, the beds in the county are strongly polarized by the Danube Delta, and areas such as the Măcinului Mountains National Park, the Babadag Plateau and the Razim-Sinoe lagoon area have a deficient accommodation infrastructure.

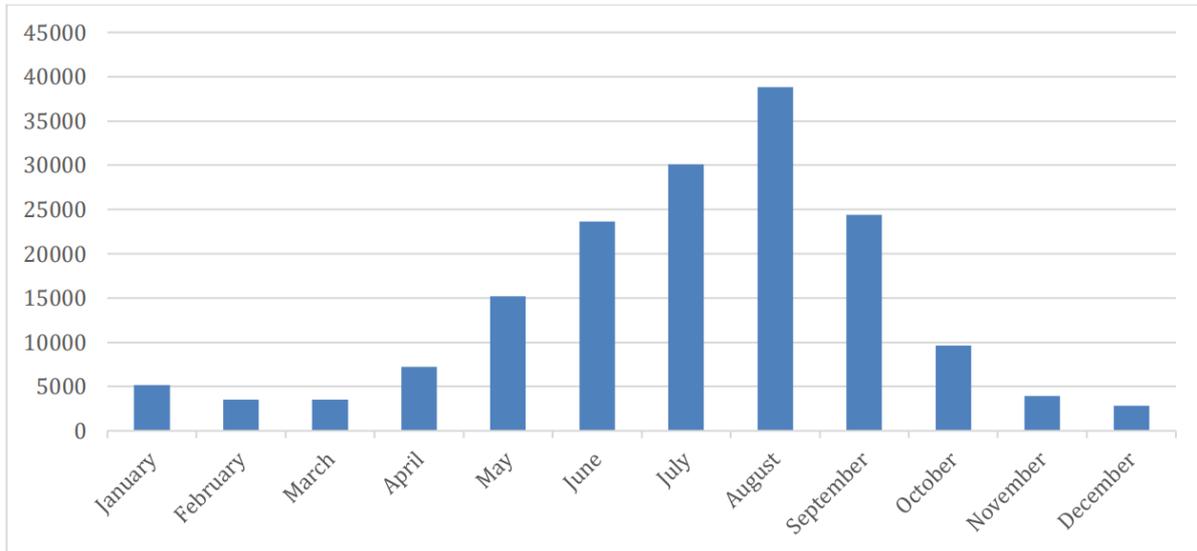


Figure 3. The seasonality according with the recorded number of tourist arrivals for year 2018 (Source: The National Institute for Statistics)

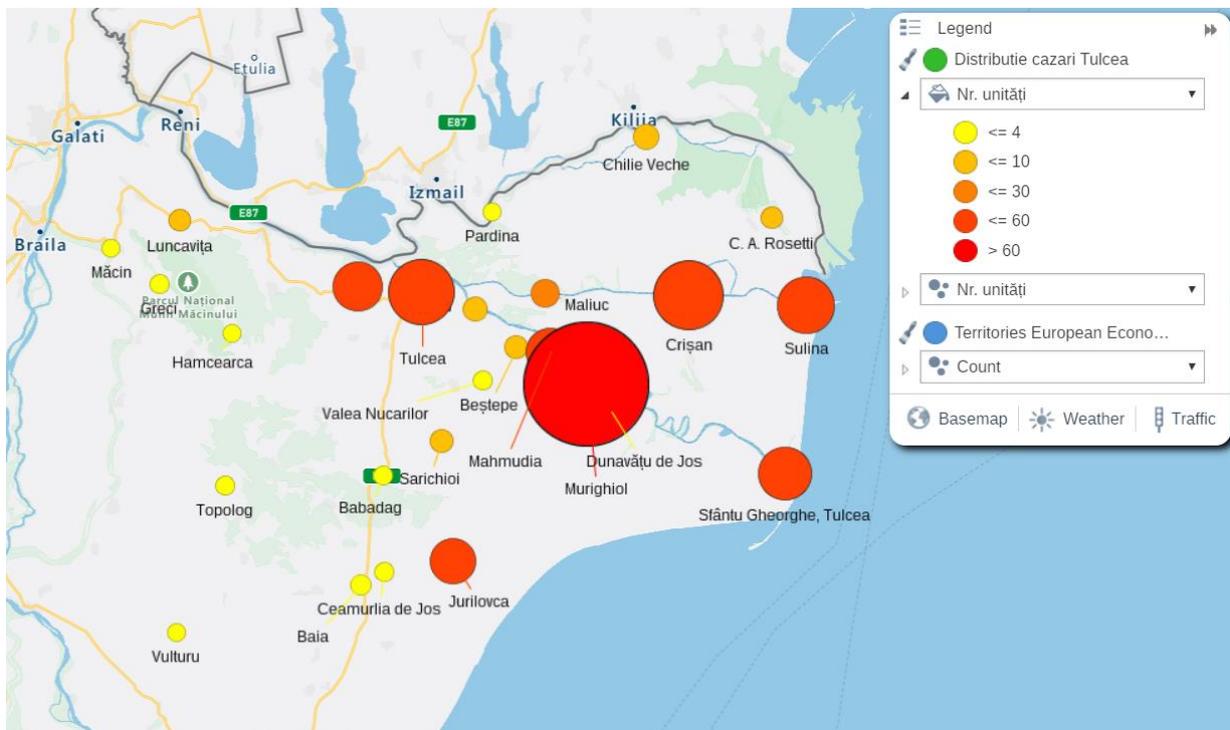


Figure 4. The distribution of the accommodation facilities in Tulcea County (Source: The centralized list of accommodation facilities issued by the Ministry of Economy, Energy and Business Environment, march 2020)

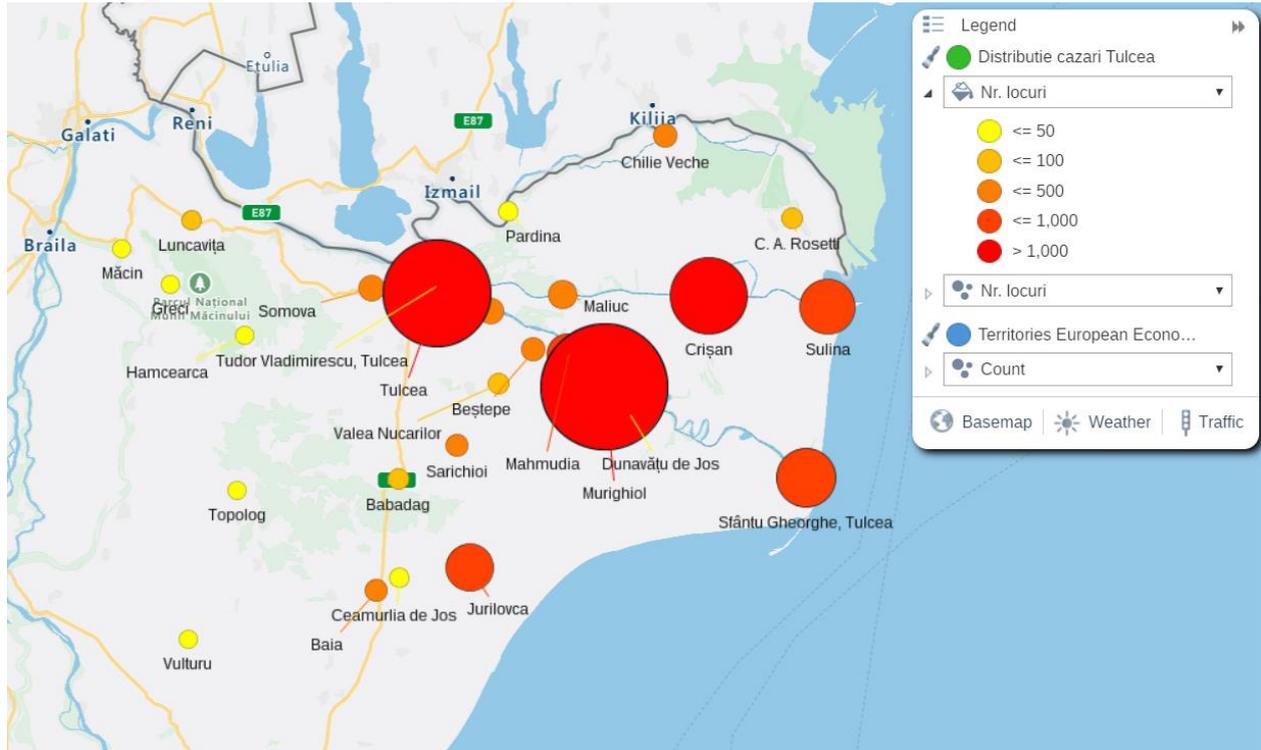


Figure 5. The distribution of the beds in Tulcea County

(Source: The centralized list of beds issued by the Ministry of Economy, Energy and Business Environment, March 2020)

Table 1. The distribution of the number of accommodations facilities and beds in the territorial administrative units of Tulcea County

Territorial Administrative Unit	No. accommodation facilities	No. beds
Dunavățu de Jos	1	16
Hamcearca	1	20
Măcin	1	25
Pardina	1	28
Tudor Vladimirescu	1	12
Vultur	1	20
Babadag	2	61
Ceamurlia de Jos	2	28
Greci	2	25
Topolog	3	23
ValeaNucarilor	3	60
Baia	4	107
C. A. Rosetti	5	88
Luncavița	5	56
Beștepe	6	128
Sarichioi	7	117
Nufăru	8	198

ChilieVeche	9	135
Maliuc	12	249
Jurilovca	31	717
Mahmudia	34	552
Somova	36	185
Sfântu Gheorghe	40	984
Sulina	43	886
Tulcea	53	2160
Crișan	57	1405
Murighiol	118	2602
TOTAL	486	10887

(Source: The roundup list of accommodation facilities issued by the Ministry of Economy, Energy and Business Environment, March 2020)

The tourism indicators for each territorial administrative unit (T.A.U) were calculated based on data from the NIS to perform an analysis of tourism performance (occupancy rate and average length of stay). From their analysis it resulted that the data reported in the rural area are not conclusive due to the much too low values recorded. For example, in our experience, an occupancy rate of less than 10% raises a big question mark regarding the correctness of the data reported to the NIS. Even the other values, even if they are higher, must be treated with caution. Of course, this uncertainty hovers over all reported data and, therefore, for the other indicator, the average length of stay, too.

Table 2. The main tourist indicators calculated for each T.A.U. according with the data provided by NIS for 2018 (with red are highlighted the T.A.U. with an occupancy rate lower than 10%)

T.A.U.	Overnights	Arrivals	No. Beds	Average length of stay (overnights / arrivals)	Occupancy rate (overnights *100 / (accommodation places * 365 days))
TULCEA	160062	84278	1758	1,90	24,94
BABADAG	800	421	58	1,90	3,78
SULINA	27226	8053	874	3,38	8,53
BAIA	334	200	33	1,67	2,77
BESTEPE	3804	1730	54	2,20	19,30
C.A. ROSETTI	2589	571	50	4,53	14,19
CEAMURLIA DE JOS	1881	817	14	2,30	36,81
CHILIA VECHE	1612	627	76	2,57	5,81
CRISAN	17121	7959	686	2,15	6,84
JURILOVCA	25178	8010	422	3,14	16,35

LUNCAVITA	702	383	44	1,83	4,37
MAHMUDIA	4819	2411	264	2,00	5,00
MALIUC	10947	3188	323	3,43	9,29
MURIGHIOL	66365	30710	1944	2,16	9,35
NUFARU	9558	2921	140	3,27	18,70
SARICHIOI	1805	848	106	2,13	4,67
SFANTU GHEORGHE	38496	13108	884	2,94	11,93
SOMOVA	4097	1559	94	2,63	11,94
TOPOLOG	841	118	18	7,13	12,80
VALEA NUCARILOR	521	261	60	2,00	2,38

Note: The data in Table 1 come from the centralization list of the Ministry of Economy, Energy and Business Environment, in March, 2020, while the data in Table 2 are those recorded at the NIS in 2018 (the last year for which the NIS provides the complete set of statistical data at the time of writing). The data set from NIS is indispensable for calculating statistical indicators, while data from the Ministry of Economy, Energy and Business Environment provide an up-to-date picture of the accommodation infrastructure.

Most likely the data from the municipality of Tulcea are the most reliable due to the large accommodation structures that usually report the data correctly to the NIS. Thus, the average occupancy rate in the municipality is almost 25%, *ie* each bed was occupied on an average of 91 nights. This is a very good performance considering the strong seasonal nature of tourism in the Tulceacounty, as seen in Table 2. On the other hand, the average length of stay is 1.9 nights, below the county average, but somewhat anticipated having in view the fact that nowadays the consumption of the tourist product has an accelerated character.

Conclusions of the analysis of the existing situation:

- ✓ The seasonality is extremely accentuated considering the current concentration of the tourist offer in the Danube Delta, an area where it is easy to extend the seasonality to the shoulders of the season (April - June and September - October). Therefore, seasonality can be improved.
- ✓ The length of stay in the Tulceacounty is relatively short, and this can be increased by developing new elements of tourist infrastructure, attracting the right segments of visitors or developing services.
- ✓ Tulcea municipality fails to capture enough overnight stays, so the offer must be diversified to increase the duration of stay by developing tourist infrastructure, including cycling tourism.
- ✓ The distribution of accommodation structures is very disproportionate, with an overwhelming distribution in the Danube Delta area, while in other areas accommodation is very low.

2.2 Tour operators

According to the list available on the website of the Ministry of Economy, Energy and Business Environment, in Tulcea County is registered a number of 13 travel agencies with a valid license, of which only 8 are tour operators. Following the analysis of their websites, 5 of the total number of agencies have tourist packages from Tulcea County displayed on the first page (mostly from the Danube Delta), and 4 of them do not have any information / offer for Tulcea County, concentrating exclusively on outgoing. It should also be noted that from the analysis of the websites, we did not identify any cycling packages offered by the travel agencies and the tour operators running in the area.

From our analysis, some bizarre statistics also emerged, such as the fact that in Botoşani or Vaslui counties there are more licensed travel agencies than in Tulcea. At the same time, it is true that at least the Danube Delta is included in the tourist offer of many tour operators from all over the country, but we want to emphasize the lack of local initiatives that have the potential to create nature-based tourism programs.

2.3 Tourist information centers

The centralization on the website of the Ministry of Economy, Energy and Business Environment includes 3 national tourist information and promotion centers located in Tulcea County in Tulcea, Măcin and Babadag. From the analysis of their websites, we found that only CNIPT Măcin⁶ mentions cycling tourism, but provides very general information.

2.4 EuroVelo 6

EuroVelo is the European network of cycling routes and is a project of the European Cyclists Federation, managed in collaboration with national and regional partners⁷. According to the official website, at the moment EuroVelo includes a total of 15 European long-distance cycling routes, two of which reach Romania: EuroVelo 6 Atlantic - Black Sea Route and EuroVelo 11 – the Iron Curtain Route.

⁶<https://turism-macin.ro/ro/resurse-turistice/trasee-turistice/cu-bicicleta/>

⁷<https://pro.eurovelo.com/organisation/about>



Figure 6. The two Eurovelo routes from Romania (Source: <https://en.eurovelo.com/romania>)

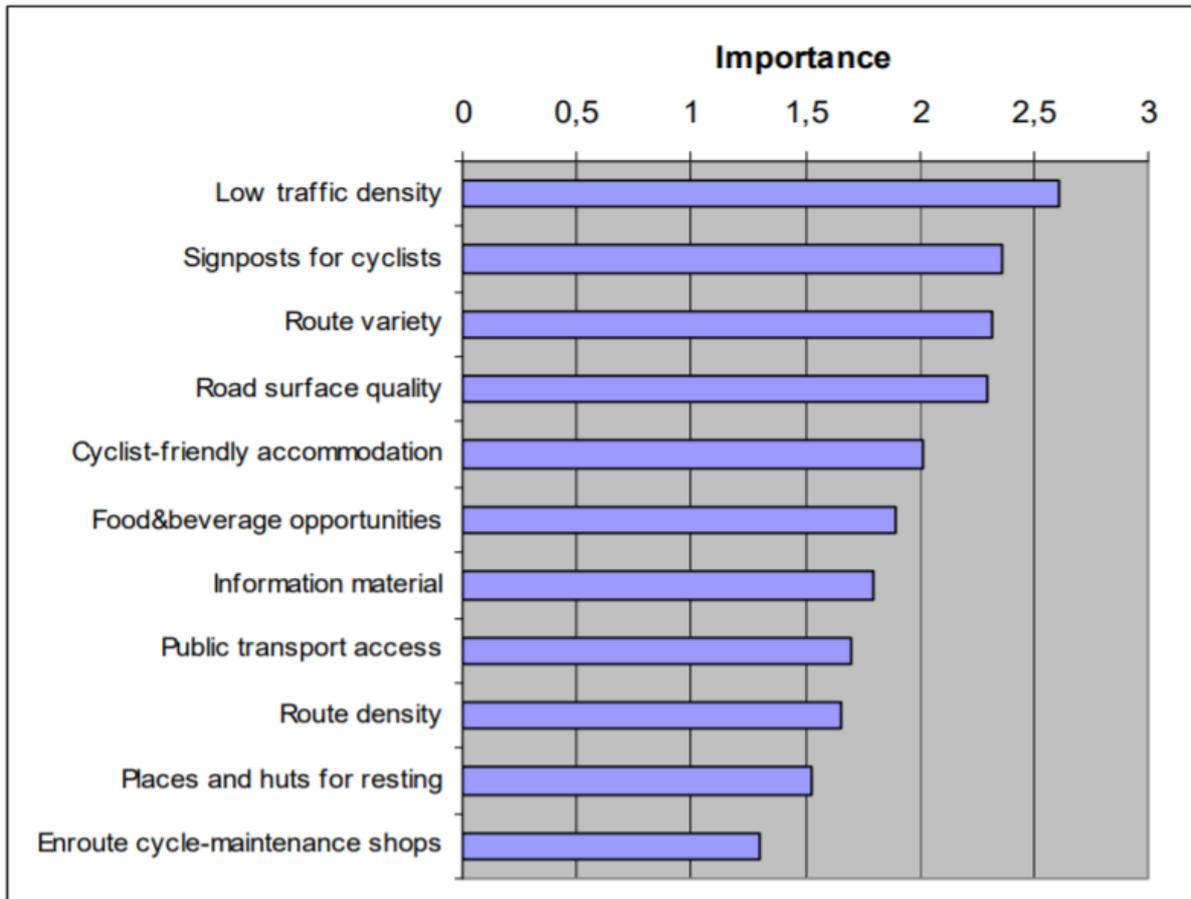
According to the same source, at present in Romania there is no National EuroVelo Coordination Center and no national partner. Also, in Romania there is no specific legislation for cycling routes, although a draft law in this regard has been submitted to national authorities since 1999 by the Napoca Cycling Club.

According to a study⁸ elaborated by the Institute of Transport and Tourism at Central Lancashire University, the United Kingdom and the University of Applied Sciences NHTV Breda, the Netherlands, in 2012, at the request of the European Parliament's Transport and Tourism Committee, the European cycling market varies between 13% of total tourism revenues in Denmark in 2008, 3% in Germany or 3.3% in France. In absolute terms, these percentages translate into revenues of billions of euros (3.9 billion euros in Germany, according to Mercat, 2009). These estimates include all direct and indirect revenues generated by cycling tourism. As a general note, the exact determination of the share of cycling tourism or the volume of revenues is almost impossible due to the fact that some states or regions do not collect such detailed statistical data. Existing estimates in the literature were made on the basis of market studies or structured interviews with tour operators and experts in the field.

The same study mentioned above estimated that in the 27 Member States at that time there were 2.295 billion bicycle trips per year, with an estimated total economic impact of 44 billion euros. In the case of Romania, the total estimated annual revenues from cycling tourism are 0.18 billion euros, while Hungary and Poland each have about 2 billion euros.

⁸<https://ecf.com/sites/ecf.com/files/EP%20study%20on%20EuroVelo%20network.pdf>

As we can see from the map above, the proposed route crosses Tulcea County on three sides and connects the main tourist attractions in the county. The problem, however, is that this route only exists on the ground to the extent that public roads with heavy traffic are followed. In fact, neither the section in Tulcea County, nor any other section in Romania meets most of the characteristics considered important by users (see figure 7).



Source: Trendscope (2008b).

Figure 7. The importance of the cycling routes or sections characteristics <https://ecf.com/sites/ecf.com/files/EP%20study%20on%20EuroVelo%20network.pdf>, p. 40

2.5 Existing cycling routes

Over time, there have been several initiatives in Tulcea County to identify and build cycling routes, but none is approved and do not meet European standards. They use only the existing roads and possibly paths and are not intended for the exclusive circulation of cyclists. The signposting is precarious or completely missing, and the tourist services are not adapted to this form of tourism.

In our research, the following entities have been identified that have identified and promote bicycle routes:

- The Association of Ecotourism in Romania has identified four cycling routes in the area of the Măcinului Mountains National Park. These are available on the website www.eco-romania.ro in a detailed presentation for browsing them (technical sheet with detailed description, altitude profile and map, GPS track in GPX format that can be downloaded and then used for guidance using applications specific on the smartphone).

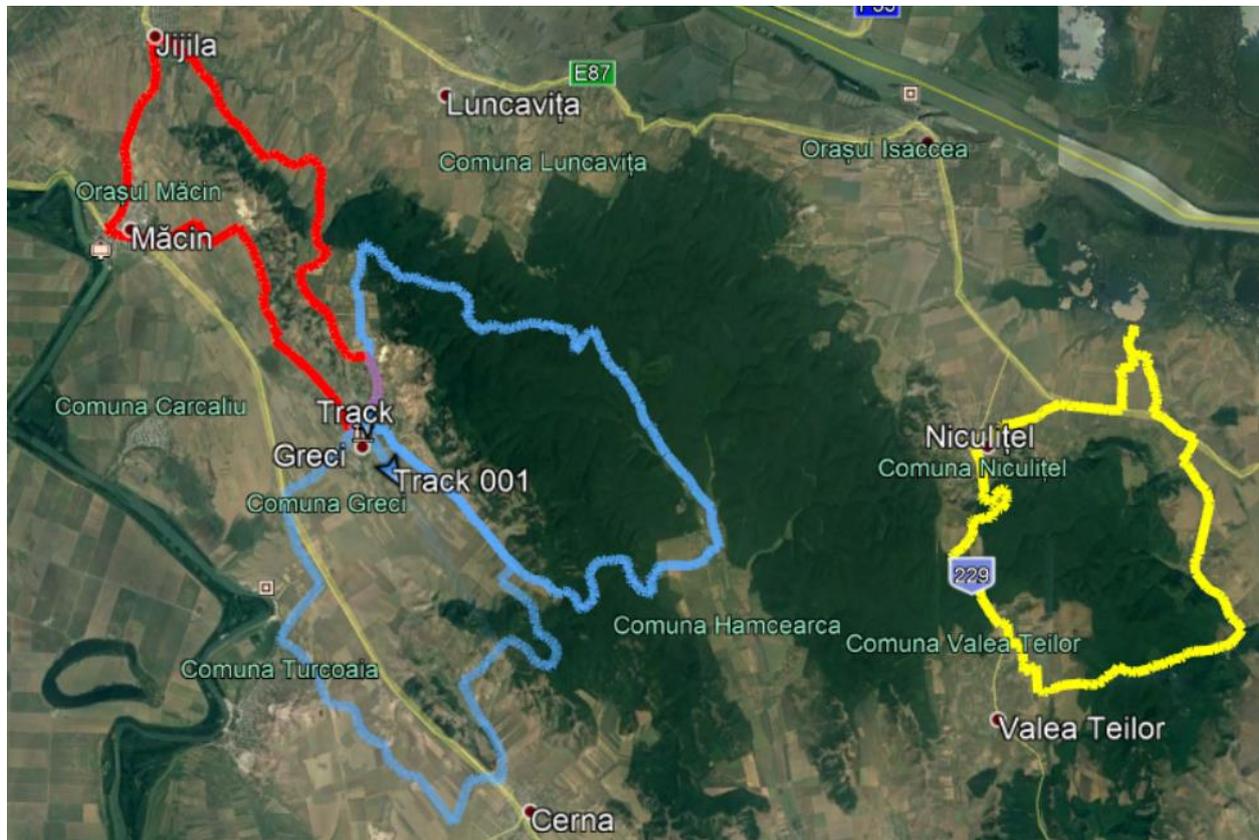


Figure 8. The 4 cycling routes identified by REA in the area of Macin Mountains National Park, available on www.eco-romania.ro (Source: Google Earth)

- The Măcin Mountains National Park Administration mentions on its website⁹ that it has a network of 120 km of cycling routes, but on the tourist maps available online and in the tourist routes section on the website, no details are provided on this topic.
- The National Center for Tourist Information and Promotion Măcin is the only one of the three such centers in the county that provide information about a cycling route¹⁰. Unfortunately, they are extremely brief, being practically irrelevant in planning and completing the route.
- In addition to those mentioned above, several routes described as lap journals or personal experiences of passionate cyclists were identified. Although some of them were detailed, they do not present however the more in detail, such an altitude profile, a map or a GPS track.
- A notable exception is the www.bikemap.net platform where there is a wide variety of user-uploaded routes. The problem with this platform is that the available routes are not moderate or

⁹<http://www.parcmacin.ro/trasee-turistice>

¹⁰<https://turism-macin.ro/ro/resurse-turistice/trasee-turistice/cu-bicicleta/>

filtered at all, they vary greatly in terms of quality and relevance of information. The vast majority of them do not include a description of the route, and in some cases the GPS track has recording errors, making it virtually unusable. Therefore, this platform can be used, but with great reservations.

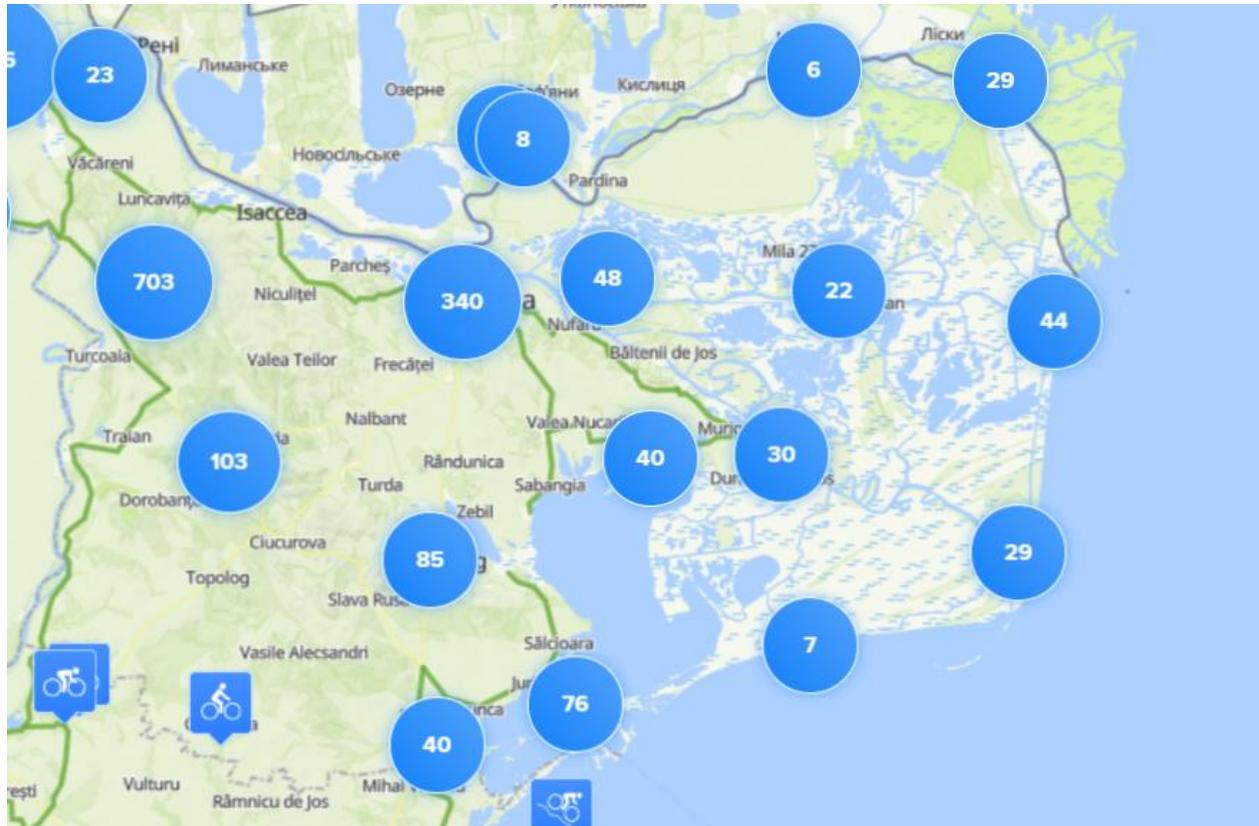


Figure 9. Available cycling routes on www.bikemap.net. (Source: bikemap.net)

2.6. Existing offers on cycling tourism

In our research we looked for tourist packages with obvious commercial purpose that include in whole or in part only routes in Tulcea County. After searching on the Google search engine in both Romanian and English, we found the following results:

- <https://www.carpbike.ro/tour/dobrogea-and-danube-delta-by-bike-and-boat/>
- <https://cyclingromania.ro/between-danube-and-mountains/>
- <https://natureguide.ro/danube-delta-by-bike-and-boat-8-days-cycling-tour/>
- <http://epicbikeride.ro/dobrogea-epic-bike-ride/>
- <https://www.cycletoursglobal.com/tour/carpbike/dobrogea-and-danube-delta>
- <http://plateaucycling.com/?en-danube-delta-from-bulgaria-to-romania-cycling-tour,29>

We consider that the list of cycling packages above is very poor compared to the county's potential, especially if we take into account the fact that the Danube Delta is one of the most important nature tourist destinations in Europe and that the county is crossed by the EuroVelo cycling route 6.

3. THE METHODOLOGY

The methodology of elaborating this strategic concept included the following stages:

- a. research of the existing documentation (online and offline) which included on the one hand documents carried out within the current project, but also other local studies and strategies and existing regional statistics, as well as statistical data on tourism at the destination level,
- b. workshop in Tulcea with regional actors (20.11.2019),
- c. elaboration of analyzes based on existing information (Jan - March 2020),
- d. field activities for route identification and proposal (March - May 2020),
- e. consultations with the administration of the Măcinului Mountains National Park for the validation of the routes proposed
- f. elaboration of the final document.

During the workshop with local actors, AER identified a local organization, the Explorer Association Tulcea branch, whose members have extensive knowledge about the cycling potential of the area and at the same time good field experience. Given that in March-May period there were still traffic restrictions due to the health crisis generated by COVID-19, the partnership with the Explorer Association was beneficial because the field activities could be carried out largely by its members.

Given that the current document is in a final stage of elaboration, it still requires further consultations with the main actors within the county and local public authority, the relevant associations, including the Danube Delta Tourist Destination Management Association and the representatives of the private sector and protected area managers. Following these future consultations, it is possible to finalize the action plan proposed in this strategy document.

4. VISION AND OBJECTIVES

The Northern Dobrogea will become one of the most attractive destinations in Romania for cycling, with an adequate infrastructure for cycling tourism, high-performance marketing and good quality of services. Cycling will improve the high seasonality of the destination, will support the guest houses and small adjacent services and will improve the recreational offer for the locals. It will contribute also to the development of a sustainable tourism and ecotourism in the area.

Objectives:

1. Identification / development of a network of cycling routes mainly for cyclists using the same accommodation during their stay,
2. Identification / development of alternative routes for cyclists in transit (changing their accommodation frequently) on EuroVelo 6,

3. Identification / development of a network of routes mainly for local cyclists from Tulcea, interested in recreational tours.

5. ZONATION

The surface of Tulcea county was divided into five areas whose typology differs depending on the physical-geographical characteristics, the accommodation capacity and the type of experience offered (Fig. 10):

- Zone 1: Tulcea and its surroundings
- Zone 2: Măcinului Mountains and surroundings
- Zone 3: Jurilovca - Babadag - Enisala
- Zone 4: Danube Delta
- Zone 5: EuroVelo 6, Dobrogea section



Figure 10. The cyclotourism zonation of Tulcea County

Table 3. The distribution of accommodation facilities and beds per cyclotourism zone, according to the centralized list provided by the Ministry of Economy, Energy and Business Environment, 2020

	No. of accommodation facilities	No. of beds
Zone 1: Tulcea Municipality and its surroundings	98	2555
Zone 2: Măcin Mountains – the Eastern and Western part of the National Park	9	126

Zone 3: Jurilovca – Babadag – Enisala	55	1218
Zone 4: Danube Delta	320	6945
Zone 5: EuroVelo 6, Dobrogea section	-	-

Zone 1: Tulcea and its surroundings

Description

This includes the city of Tulcea and its surrounding area. Tulcea is actually one of the main gateways to the Danube Delta. In addition to being a starting point for a trip to the delta, in Tulcea there are a number of important tourist attractions: the Danube Delta Ecotourism Museum Center, the ruins of Aegyssus Fortress, the Museum of History and Archeology, the promenade and others. Therefore, the attractiveness is high, but the city fails to capitalize on this, relevant fact even if we look to the average stay of less than 2 nights.

Types of experiences offered

- Cultural experiences at the city's attractions;
- Sports and cultural events (Rowmania FEST - International Rowing Boat Festival, Pelicam - Environment and People Film Festival);
- Short walks for recreational purposes for the inhabitants of the area;
- Day trips to the Danube Delta with the rapid consumption of the tourist product.

Accommodation infrastructure

In this area is concentrated a large part of the accommodation capacity of the county, especially in the municipality of Tulcea, characterized by large accommodation structures. Other localities that are part of this area are Somova, Tudor Vladimirescu and Nufăru. In total in this area there are 2,555 accommodation places, approximately 25% of the total number in the county.

Development objectives

1. The main development objective is to create infrastructure for local cyclists in Tulcea, who want recreational tours, to be connected and used by potential tourists in Tulcea.
2. Diversification of the recreation offer in Tulcea which, together with other measures, can lead to the transformation of the municipality of Tulcea from the gateway to the Danube Delta, with a low average stay, into an independent destination with an offer on events, city break, nature and bicycle-based recreational opportunities with trails around the city.

Bicycle tracks width sizing recommendations

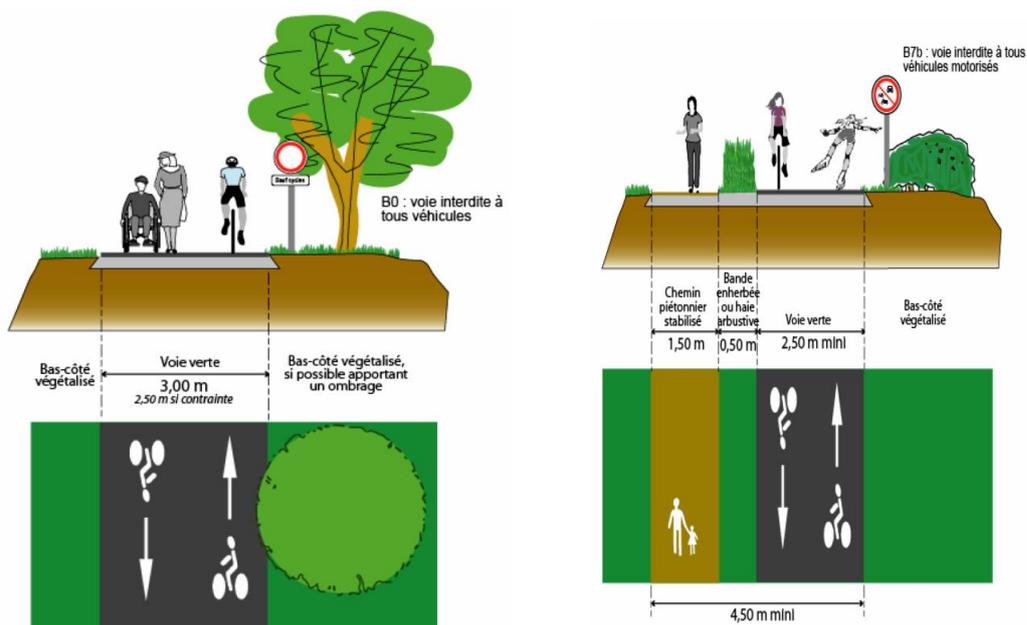
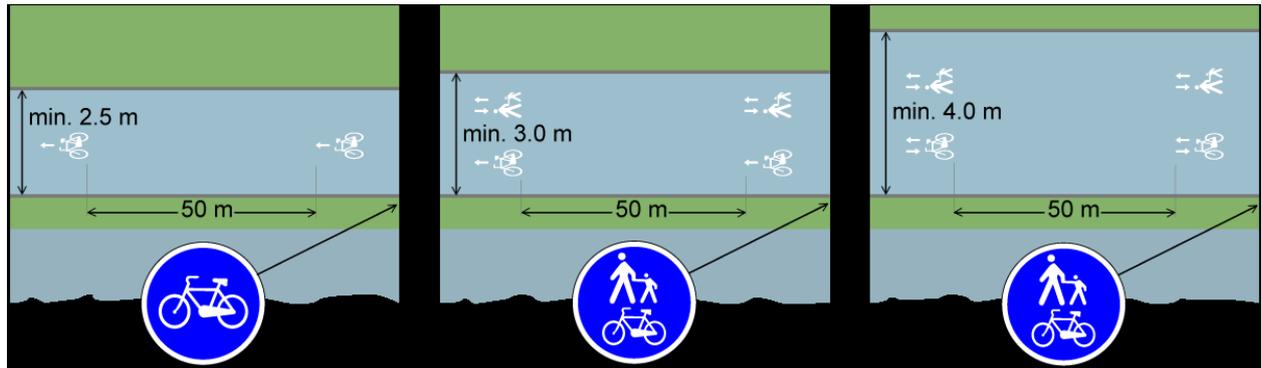


Figure 11. The size and the shape of the bicycle tracks (Sursa: Greenways along the Danube, 2012)

Proposed routes

This strategy proposes the realization of two routes specially arranged for cycling tourism, with an asphalt running surface of about 4 m wide, in the immediate vicinity of the Danube, both departing from Tulcea.

T1. The <7-pipes> route

With a length of 6.25 km, it leaves from Tulcea Railway Station, follows Ivanov Dumitru Street on a length of 2.4 km (behind the industrial port) and then on a length of 3.85 km (up to the pump area).

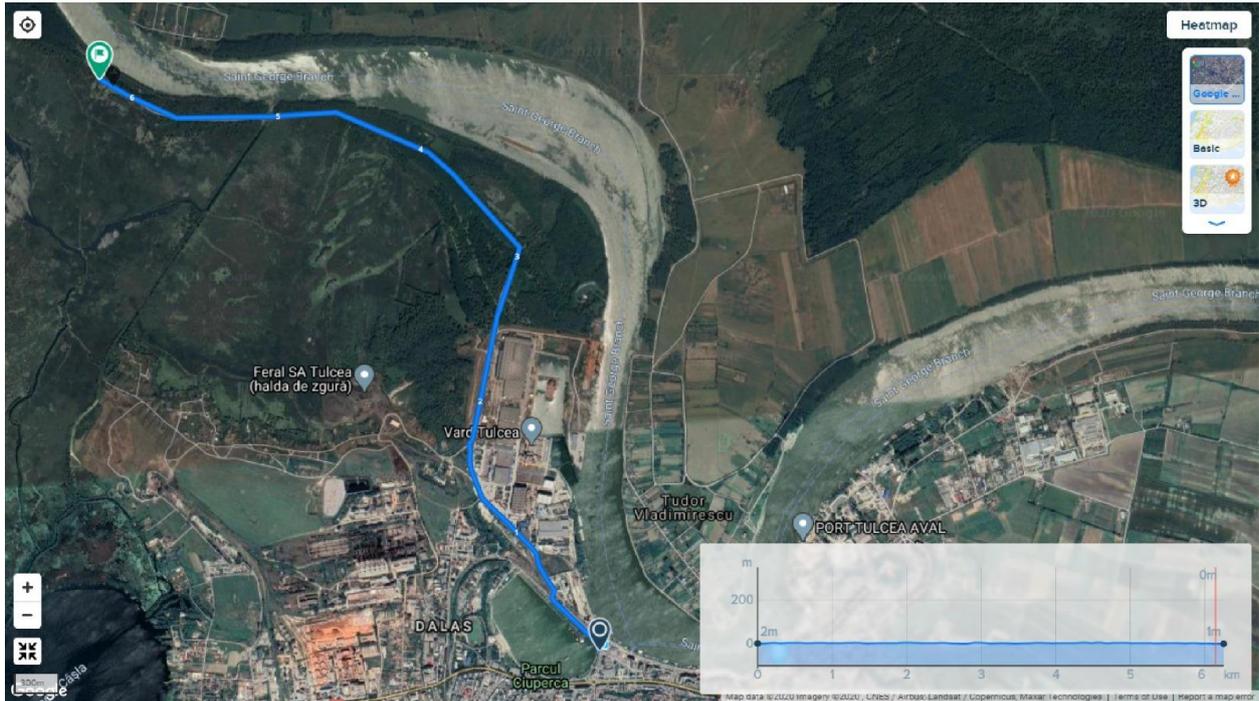


Figure 12. The proposed <7-pipes> route

This route is meant to be used for cycling, rollerblading, for persons with special mobility needs or for light running.

Table 4. The segments of the proposed <7-pipes> route

Section	Users	Length (km)	Width (m)	Necessary arrangements	Comments
S1. Gară – Str. Ivanov Dumitru	Cycling, rollerblading, walking	2,4	2,5	Separate track along the street	
S2. The corner of VARD SHIPYARD – Pump station building	Cycling, rollerblading, walking	3,85	min 4	Asphalting the street, a rest point and a view to Danube	The cars access to be permitted just for authorized technical works

T2. Tulcea - Nufăru

With a length of 13 km, starting from the traffic roundabout from Hotel Delta following the following streets: GrigoreAntipa, Independenței, Timișoara, Mistreți, Grădinarilor, Bacului and Digului and continuing with a segment on the dam to Nufăru locality (Fig. 13).

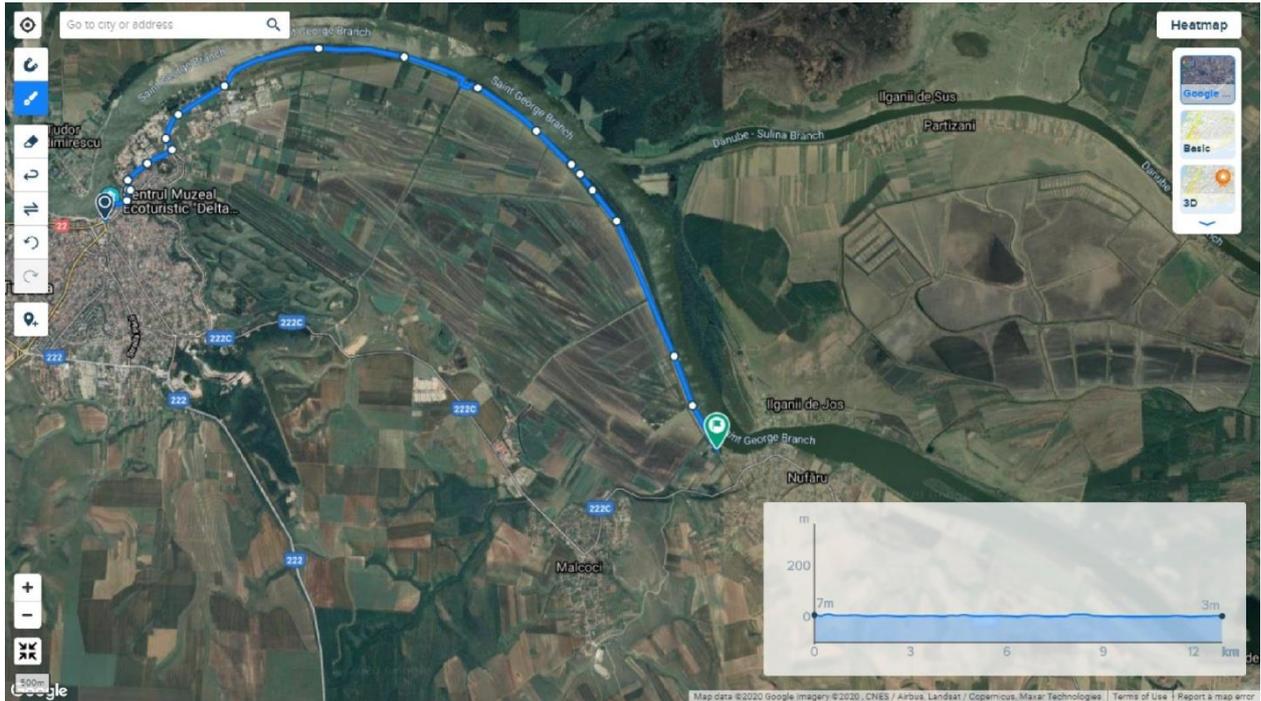


Figure 13. The proposed Tulcea-Nufăru route

The 10 km section of the jetty is intended to be used for cycling, rollerblading, for people with special mobility needs or for light running.

Table 5. The segments of the proposed Tulcea – Nufăru route

Section	Users	Length (km)	Width (m)	Necessary arrangements	Comments
S1. Hotel Delta (GrigoreAntipa, Independenței, Timișoarei, Mistreți, Grădinarilor, BaculuiDigului streets)	Cycling	3	2,5	Delimited track	
S2. The dam till the entrance in Nufăru locality	Cycling, rollerblading, walking	10	min 4	Asphalting the street, a rest point and a view to Danube	The cars access to be permitted just for authorized technical works

The costs of building a track with asphalt surface are approximately 30 euro / sqm (excluding VAT) (Annex 1).

Zone 2: Măcin area, West and East of the National Park

Description

The Western part of the Măcin Mountains National Park and its neighboring localities are in fact the most visited area of this protected natural area. The area is known for the typical landscapes associated with the Măcin Mountains, the Pricopan Peak and the Țuțuiatu Peak, representing emblematic landscapes for the only Hercynian mountains in the country. Here are concentrated most of the attractions of the national park, as well as a good part of the hiking and cycling routes. In addition to the landscapes and attractions offered by the protected natural area itself, a number of other attractions complete the offer in the area: Lake Iacobdeal, Troesmis Fortress, Măcin Mosque, Arrubium Fortress, Visitor Center of Măcin Mountains National Park, Panait Memorial House in Cerna, Dobrogean Winery from Măcin, etc.

In the Eastern area of the National Park, the cultural tourist objectives predominate, the area covered by the Măcin Mountains National Park being mostly forested and without special attraction elements. Regarding the cultural attractions, they include the chain of North Dobrogea monasteries, such as Cocoș, Celic-Dere and Saon, the early Christian basilica Niculițel, the fortress of Noviodunum, the Church of St. Athanasius from Niculițel, etc.

Types of experiences

- Exercise in nature (outdoor): hiking, cycling and climbing;
- Nature-based experiences: observation of typical flora and fauna;
- Oenological experiences;
- Pilgrimage;
- Educational experiences on nature topics on thematic paths and the visiting center of MMNP.

Accommodation infrastructure

In this area the accommodation infrastructure is very poorly developed, comprising only 8 units totaling 106 beds. This fact can be explained by several considerations: (1) most of the attractions are not arranged for visiting, (2) lack of tourist information and signs, (3) the area is little known as a national hiking destination, (4) it is a transit area on the way to the Danube Delta or it is used for day trips, (5) visitors who still spend the night in the area use the camping areas designated by the park administration, etc.

Accommodation units in this area are in Greci, Macin and Luncavița.

In the Eastern part of the National Park, the accommodation infrastructure is almost non-existent because in the list of the accommodation units provided by the Ministry of Economy, Energy and Business Environment, there is only one guest house registered in Hamcearca, with 20 beds. This situation is caused by the fact that the area is mainly used as a day destination, almost exclusively for cultural and especially religious tourism. However, our research shows that the monasteries mentioned above provide accommodation for pilgrims, but they do not appear in official statistics.

Development objective

Development of the area for outdoor, educational and oenological activities by increasing the accommodation capacity and attracting visitors from new areas.

Proposed routes

A number of 11 mountain bike routes are proposed in this area (**Table 6**). The routes have been chosen so that the departure can be made from the area with existing accommodation units to facilitate the access of tourists to multiple cycling options and to encourage the extension of the stay for several days.

Table 6. The 11 mountain bike routes proposed in Macin area

No.	Route name	Distance (km)	Elevation (m)	Level	Access	Departure/ Arrival	Type of surface
1	Celik Dere Route	24	317	medium	From DJ229A Cataloi – Telița	CelicDere Monastery parking lot	Cobbled roads, dirt roads, asphalt
2	Explorer MTB Challenge	39	703	medium	From DJ229A Luncavița-Nifon	Poiana Babei-Cetățuia	Cobbled roads, dirt roads, asphalt
3	Explorer MTB Long Ride Challenge	68	1511	advanced	From DJ229A Luncavița-Nifon	Poiana Babei-Cetățuia	Cobbled roads, dirt roads, asphalt
4	Greci MTB Tour	35	746	medium	From DN22D Cerna - Măcin on DJ222K to Greci	Greci commune center	Cobbled roads, dirt roads
5	Niculițel - Nifon	37	688	medium	From E87 – on DJ229C to Niculițel	Niculitel commune center	Cobbled roads, dirt roads, asphalt

6	Teke Trail	50	756	advanced	From DJ229A Cataloi - Telița	CelicDere Monastery parking lot	Cobbled roads, dirt roads, asphalt
7	Valea Morilor	29	479	medium-advanced	From DJ229A exit Telița to Cataloi	The bus station from the exit Telita to Frecatei	Cobbled roads, dirt roads, asphalt
8	Northern Dobrogea Monasteries circuit	40,6	512	medium	From E87 – on DJ229C to Niculițel	Niculitel Paleo-Christian Basilica	Cobbled roads, dirt roads
9	Pricopanului circuit	39	420	medium	From DN22D Cerna - Măcin on DJ222K to Greci	Greci commune center	Cobbled roads, dirt roads
10	Turcoaia circuit	40	353	medium	From DN22D Cerna - Măcin on DJ222K to Greci	Greci commune center	Cobbled roads, dirt roads
11	Valea Fagilor circuit	43	631	medium	From DN22D Cerna - Măcin on DJ222K to Greci	Greci commune center	Cobbled roads, dirt roads

The variety and the multitude of the mountain bike routes, make this area a real cycling destination for those who want holidays with this specific activity. It should be noted that there is the possibility to organize wine tastings both at the wineries in Măcin (Alcovin) and at Niculițel. At the same time, in Jijila commune there is the possibility to taste the local wine called Jijileancă.

Zone 3: Jurilovca - Babadag - Enisala (Razim - Sinoe)

Description

This area includes the localities near the Razim-Sinoe lagoon complex and includes a variety of natural and cultural attractions, such as: Enisala Fortress, GuraPortiței beach, Popina Island and the Razim-Sinoe lagoon complex etc.

Types of experiences

- Bird watching;
- Observation of fauna and flora;
- Cultural experiences;
- Fishing;
- Relaxation & beach.

Accommodation infrastructure

The area is more developed in terms of accommodation infrastructure compared to other rural areas in the county except the Danube Delta, totaling 55 units with 1218 beds. Most of them are concentrated in Jurilovca, and later in Beștepe, Sarichioi, Babadag, Baia, Valea Nucarilor and Ceamurlia de Jos.

Proposed routes

Two asphalt cycling routes are proposed for this area:

- T1: Babadag circuit, with a length of 67 km, level difference of 470 m, duration 1 day;
- Q2: The Tulcea - Murighiol - Enisala - Jurilovca - Slava Cerchez - Horia - Luncavița - Somova - Tulcea circuit, with a length of 264 km and a level difference of 740 m, duration 3-5 days.

Both routes are on national and county roads as follows:

- T1: DJ 223A, DJ 222, DN 22D;
- T2: DJ 222C, DJ 222, DJ 223A, DJ 222A, DN 22.

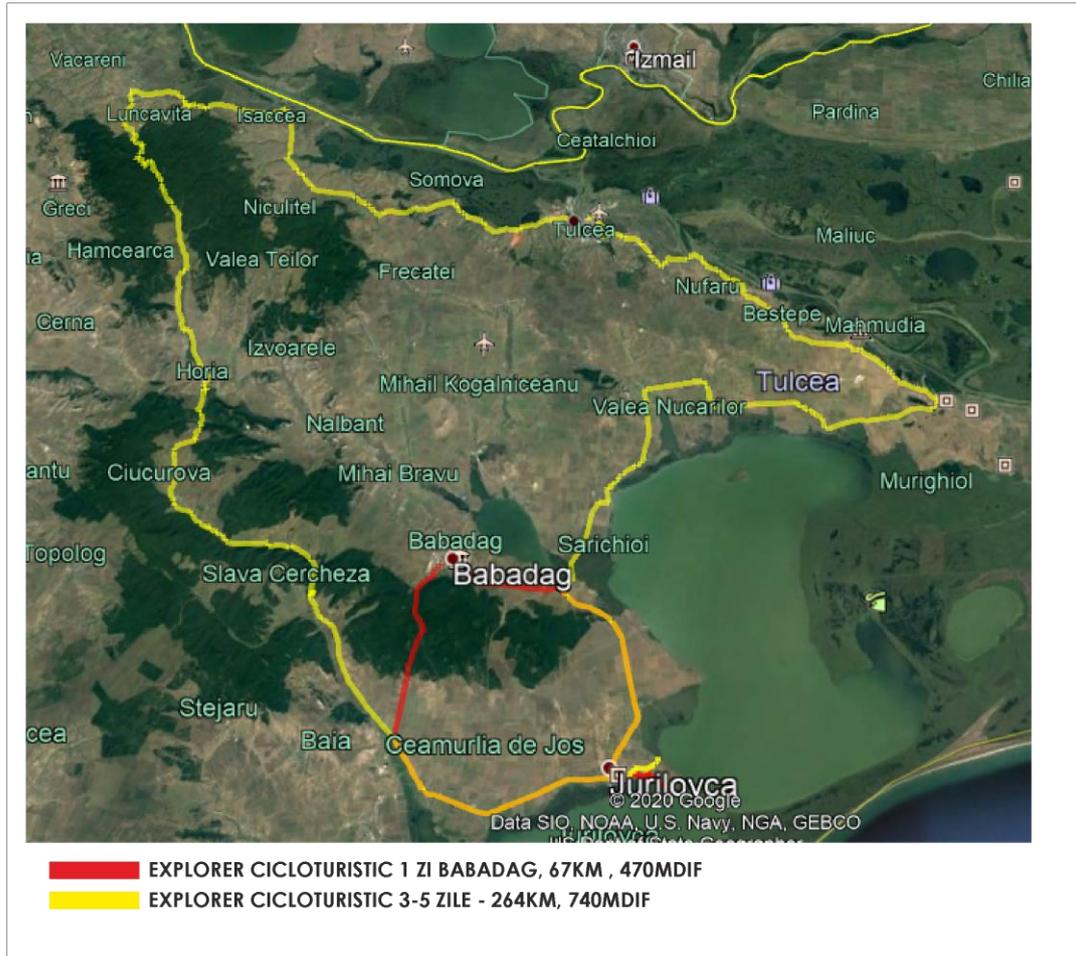


Figure 14. The proposed route of trekking type on asphalt Tulcea – Murighiol – Babadag – Jurilovca – Slava Cerchez – Tulcea and the circuit Babadag – Jurilovca

These routes are proposed to be used by cyclists with trekking bicycles, experienced in the use of public roads, who can spend the night in boarding houses on the route, thus making a multi-day circuit in one of the most attractive areas of Dobrogea.

Zone 4: Danube Delta

Description

This area is not only very large, but also heterogeneous. In turn, it could be divided into several subareas depending on the types of experiences they offer. The main feature of this area is the centering of the tourist experience around the Danube Delta. Thus, both more isolated localities are included, such as Chilia Veche or C.A. Rosetti, as well as places where access is extremely easy, such as Murighiol or Mahmudia.

Types of experiences

- Bird watching;
- Observation of fauna and flora;
- Active tourism, especially through non-motorized nautical activities;

- Fishing;
- Easy motorized excursions;
- Relaxation & beach.

Accommodation infrastructure

The accommodation units are extremely numerous, but generally small. 320 units are registered in the area, totaling 6,945 beds. In other words, the area concentrates almost 70% of the county's accommodation capacity. Their distribution varies, of course, extremely much, as shown in Figure 5. Most are in Murighiol, followed by Crişan, Sfântu Gheorghe, Sulina and Mahmudia. In the other localities the accommodation infrastructure is less developed, possibly due to the long distance or the lower degree of attractiveness.

Proposed routes

Inside the Danube Delta there is no possibility to build a complete route without assistance for crossing secondary canals or even the main canals Sulina and Sfântul Gheorghe. The current document proposes two variants of routes, practicable especially in the dry season due to the structure of the dirt roads. There are semi-organized groups that practice this type of tourism in the Delta, using various local contacts (locals with boat) to cross the canals. Two routes are still proposed:

1. The perimeter route of the Danube Delta, the circuit on the perimeter of the Romanian Delta, starting from Tulcea and crossing by boat to Tudor Vladimirescu, after which it is traversed on the Pardina dirt road and crosses Chilia, then Letea, C.A. Rosetti, Sulina and Sfântul George. The return will be made by passenger ship from Sfântul Gheorghe to Tulcea.

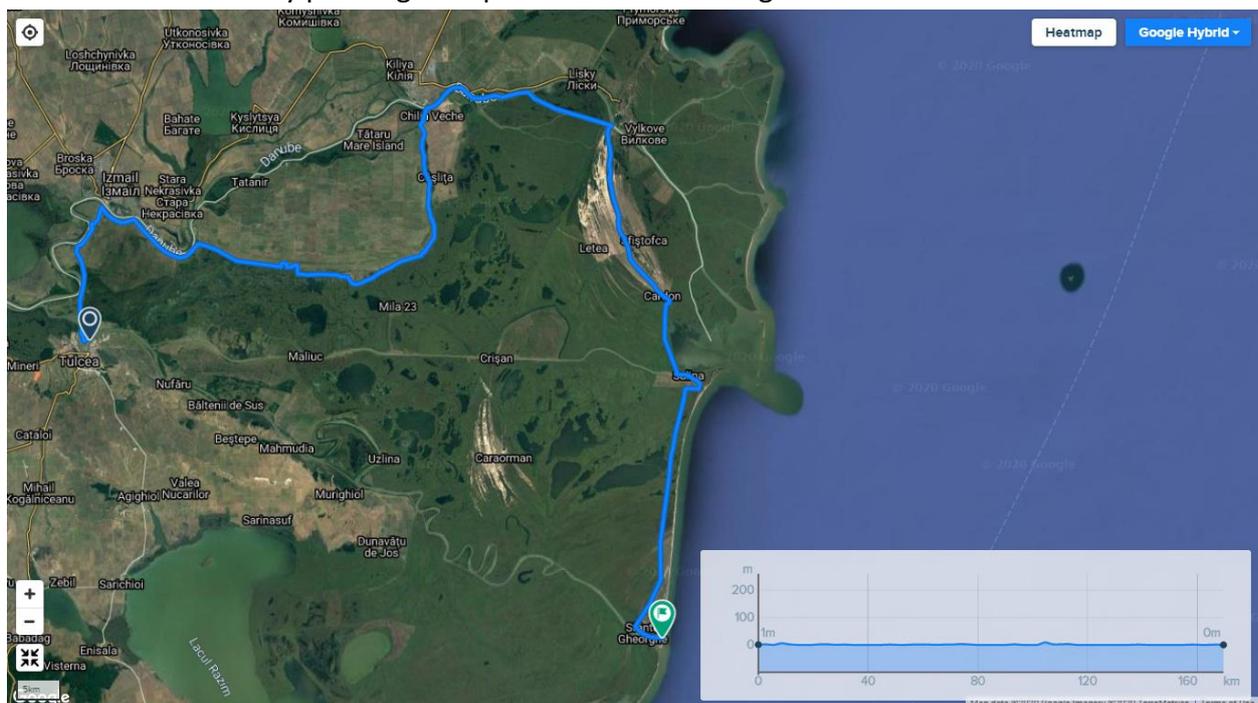


Figure 15. The perimeter route of the Danube Delta, 170 km length, 12 m elevation

The central route of the Danube Delta

The route starts from Tulcea following the dam to Nufăru, after which it crosses the Danube arm and follows a dirt road to Partizani, Vulturul, Maliuc and Gorgova (Fig. 16).



Figure 16. The central route of the Danube Delta, 42 km length 26 m elevation

Zone 5: EuroVelo 6, Dobrogea section

This is not an area per se, it is in fact along the alignment of the EuroVelo 6 route, which with the increase of the quality of the infrastructure can also generate an adequate tourist development. This document proposes an alternative route for EuroVelo 6 starting from Giurgeni / Hârșova (entrance to Dobrogea), following the Măcin - Dunărea Veche arm with two options (on the county road or on the dam), passing through Tulcea, until the final destination Constanța. The current proposal is a mix between the use of county roads with small segments of national roads and tracks dedicated exclusively to cycling (Fig. 17).

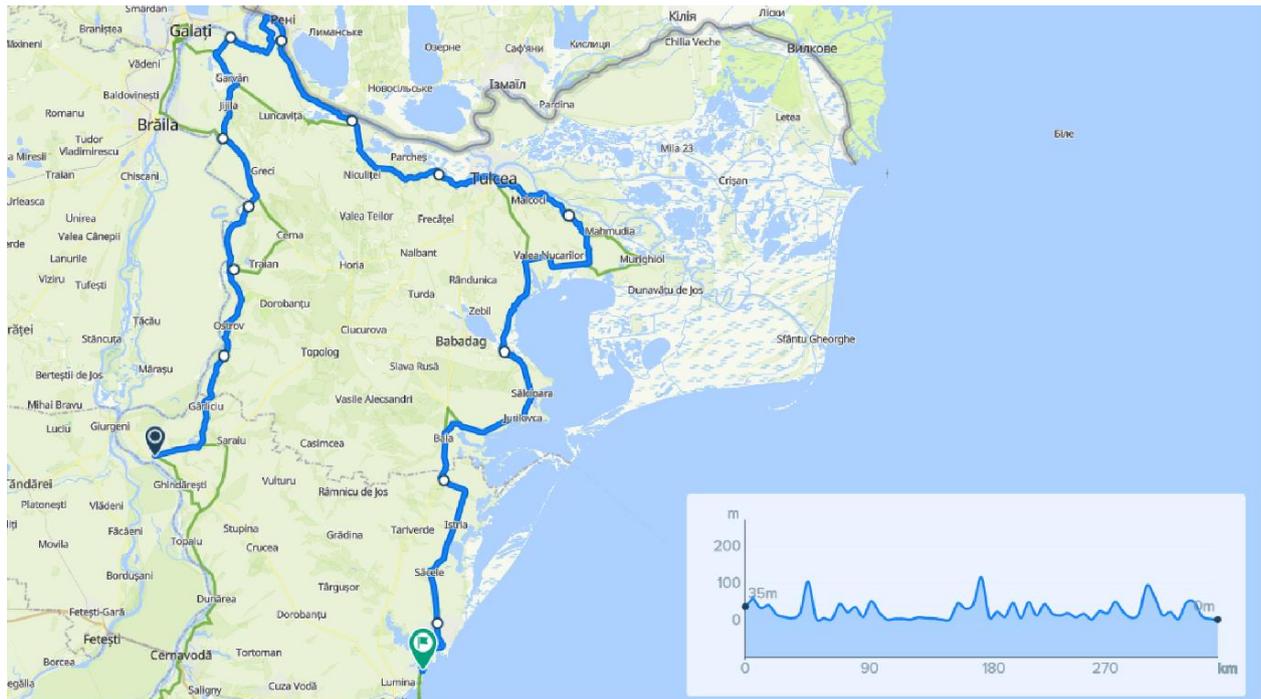


Figure 17. The proposed alternative route for EuroVelo 6

The table 7 highlights the road segments used and their alternatives for the EuroVelo 6 cycle route.

Table 7. The segments of the proposed route for EuroVelo 6

No.	Segment	The cumulated distance from Harsova (km)	Road type	The necessary infrastructure
1	Hârșova – the intersection with DJ 222F	8	DN 22A	Alternative cycling track (alternative cycling track on the dam)
2	The intersection with DJ 222F, Gârliciu, Ostrov, Peceneaga	49	DJ 222F	Warning sign <road frequented by cyclists> and accompanied by speed reduction
3	Peceneaga - Turcoaia	59	Road pn the dam	Cycling track construction
4	Turcoaia – the intersection with DN 22D	64	DJ 222H	Warning sign <road frequented by cyclists> (alternative cycling track on the dam)
5	Greci, Măcin	90	DN 22D	Warning sign <road frequented by cyclists> (alternative cycling track)

6	Măcin, Jijila, Gărvan	100	DN 22	Warning sign <road frequented by cyclists> (alternative cycling track)
7	Gărvan - Grindu	105	DN 22E, DJ 222E	Warning sign <road frequented by cyclists> (alternative cycling track)
8	Grindu - Isaccea	140	Road on the dam	Cycling track
9	Isaccea– X (intersection)	160	DN 22	Warning sign <road frequented by cyclists> (alternative cycling track)
10	X (intersection) - Tulcea	176	Non-existing	Cycling track construction
11	Tulcea - Nufăru	192	Road on the dam	Cycling track construction
12	Nufăru, Mahmudia, Murighiol, Agighiol	244	DJ 222C	Warning sign <road frequented by cyclists> (alternative cycling track)
13	Agighiol, Sarichioi, Enisala	262	DJ 222	Warning sign <road frequented by cyclists> (alternative cycling track)
14	Enisala, Jurilovca, Vișina, Lunca, Ceamurlia, Baia	297	DJ 222	Warning sign <road frequented by cyclists> (alternative cycling track)
15	Baia, Mihai Viteazu	306	DN 22	Warning sign <road frequented by cyclists> (alternative cycling track)
16	Mihai Viteazu, Sinoe, Istria, Săcele, Corbu de Jos, Constanța	363	DJ 226	Warning sign <road frequented by cyclists> (alternative cycling track)

The current proposal is an alternative vision from which one can start in the elaboration of a pre-feasibility study for establishing the final trajectory of a dedicated cycling track for the Dobrogea section of EuroVelo 6.

6. THE ACTION PLAN

This action plan is a proposal that will be validated and implemented by various local and county institutions and organizations, with national support. It must be consulted with the representatives of the County Council, Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority (DDBR), the

municipalities with routes on their administrative territories and with relevant associations (Table 8).

For this Action Plan there were used terminologies and concepts that are partially legislated (the Organization of Destination Management - ODM), or in the process of being legislated (like the County Commission for Cycling Routes or the County Registry of Cycling Routes).

Table 8. The Action Plan

No.	Action	Responsible/coordinator	Potential source of financing
	At the county level		
1	Establishment of the County Commission for Cycling Routes (CCCR) with representants of Tulcea County Council, municipalities, DDNI and relevant associations	Tulcea County Council	County Council, EU Funds
2	Identification and official recognition of the cycling routes by establishing the County Registry of the Cycling Routes at the county level	CCCR	County Council
3	Signing and posting the tourist attractions along the cycling routes and construction of resting places	CCCR in partnership with the Municipalities and the County Council	EU Funds, Municipalities
4	Annual monitoring of the quality and usage rate of these routes and coordination of the maintenance works	CCCR in partnership with relevant associations	County Council, Municipalities
5	Setting up of an online platform with the catalogue of the cycling routes in Tulcea County with the possibility of downloading the GPS tracks of each of the routes	CCCR in partnership with relevant associations	County Council, Municipalities, EU Funds
6	Setting up of a raising awareness program on the bike-friendly concept for the accommodation units along or surrounding the cycling routes	CCCR in partnership with relevant associations	County Council, Municipalities, EU Funds
7	Cooperation with the destination management organizations (DMOs) for the promoting of Northern Dobrogea as a cyclotourism destination	CCCR in partnership with DMO-s	County Council, Municipalities, EU Funds
	Zona 1: Tulcea and its surroundings		

8	Development of the Feasibility Studies for the proposed cycling routes in the proximity of Tulcea Town	Tulcea County Council, Tulcea Municipality in partnership with CCCR	County Council, Municipalities (Tulcea, Nufaru), EU Funds
9	The identification of the financing sources and the elaboration of the project	Municipalities, CCCR	Municipalities, EU Funds
10	Project implementation	Tulcea Municipality in partnership with CCCR	Municipalities, EU Funds
11	Monitoring and maintenance works	Tulcea Municipality in partnership with CCCR	Municipalities, EU Funds
12	Setting up of a mobility plan for bicycles for Tulcea Municipality	Tulcea Municipality in partnership with CCCR	Municipalities, EU Funds
13	Organizing the sport events aiming on promoting cycling for Tulcea Town and its surroundings inhabitants	Tulcea Municipality in partnership with CCCR	Municipalities, EU Funds
	Zone 2: Măcin area, the Western and Eastern part of the National Park		
14	Adequate signing and posting of the cycling routes	CCCR in cooperation with the Municipalities and relevant associations	Municipalities, EU Funds
15	Annual monitoring of the usage rate, quality and impact	CCCR, DMO, MMNP Administration, relevant association	Municipalities, EU Funds
16	Inclusion of the cycling routes in the tools for promoting Macin area as tourist destination	CCCR, DMO	Municipalities, EU Funds
	Zone 3: Jurilovca – Babadag – Enisala (Razim – Sinoe)		
17	Adequate signing and posting of the cycling routes (according to legislation in force)	DDBRA and CCCR in cooperation with the Municipalities and relevant associations	DDBRA, County Council, Municipalities, EU Funds
18	Annual monitoring of the usage rate and quality	DDBRA, CCCR	DDBRA, County Council, Municipalities, EU Funds
19	Inclusion of the cycling routes in the communication tools of Northern Dobrogea, Razim-Jurilovca destination and promoting the discovery of the area on bicycle: birdwatching, archeological sites,	DDBRA, CCCR, DMO	DDBRA, County Council, Municipalities, EU Funds

	cultural events, wine tasting, relaxation.		
	Zone 4: Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve		
20	Adequate signing and posting of the cycling routes	DDBRA and CCCR in cooperation with the Municipalities and relevant associations	DDBRA, County Council, Municipalities, EU Funds
21	Annual monitoring of the usage rate and quality	DDBRA, CCCR, DMO	DDBRA, County Council, Municipalities, EU Funds
22	Inclusion of the cycling routes in the communication tools of Danube Delta destination and promoting the discovery of the area on bicycle: birdwatching, cultural events, gastronomy, etc.	DDBRA, CCCR, DMO	DDBRA, County Council, Municipalities, EU Funds
23	Identification and promotion of the necessary contacts for scheduling the crossing over channels of the bikes and bikers	DDBRA, CCCR in cooperation with the Municipalities and relevant associations	DDBRA, County Council, Municipalities, EU Funds
	Zone 5: EuroVelo 6, Dobrogea sector		
24	Identification and structuring the Working Group (WG) Eurovelo 6 Dobrogea, as subcomponent of CCCR	CCCR	County Council
25	Assessment of prefeasibility studies for the two alternative routes for Eurovelo 6 (on county and communal roads or dams, as much as possible)	Tulcea County Council in cooperation with CCCR	EU Funds
26	Assessment of feasibility studies for the sections in need of infrastructure investments	Tulcea County Council in partnership with the Municipalities and in cooperation with CCCR/Eurovelo 6 Dobrogea WG	EU Funds
27	Implementation of infrastructure projects	Tulcea County Council in partnership with the Municipalities	EU Funds
28	Adequate signing and posting of the cycling routes (according to legislation in force)	CCCR/ EuroVelo 6 Dobrogea WG in partnership with the Municipalities	EU Funds

29	Annual monitoring of the usage rate and quality	CCCR/ EuroVelo 6 Dobrogea WG	EU Funds
30	Inclusion of the cycling routes in the communication tools Eurovelo 6 and promoting the discovery of the entire area of Dobrogea on bicycle	CCCR/ EuroVelo 6 Dobrogea WG	EU Funds
31	Identification and promotion of necessary contacts of the assistance services related with cycling	CCCR/ EuroVelo 6 Dobrogea WG	EU Funds

This action plan makes it possible to implement this strategic concept of development of cycling tourism in the northern part of Dobrogea. The action plan can be refined and it needs to be reviewed each year to include the progress of certain activities as well as its adaptation to the current situation.

7. ECOSYSTEM SERVICES AND PROPOSAL FOR A PAYMENT FOR ECOSYSTEM SERVICES (PES)

In the context of this document, according to sub-chapter 1.8, we can talk about how nature with its elements in Dobrogea offers cultural ecosystem services that generates a basis for recreation activities and tourism, in our case based on cycling tourism.

We offer, for example, three natural components that make the area particularly attractive:

1. the course of the Danube and the possibility to cycle near it;
2. Măcinului Mountains, with their special diversity for Romania, offering five major types of habitats (rocky, forest-steppe, forest, steppe and wet) included in the Măcinului Mountains National Park;
3. more than 120 species of birds in the Măcinului Mountains, to which are added more than 320 species in the Danube Delta.

These natural components, to which is added a very special relief and climate for Romania, offers, in fact, an extremely high degree of uniqueness for this area, turning it into an attractive destination for cycling and beyond. Thus, we can say that from the point of view of recreation and tourism, the nature of Dobrogea offers extremely important ecosystem services.

In this context, the current strategy proposes a possible financial mechanism that can contribute to carrying out nature conservation actions in the future and raising visitors' awareness of the importance of nature in these areas.

Below, you can find the steps for creating a payment scheme with an environmental component:

1. Setting up the Services Network <Friends of the bicycle>, which can be composed of bikefriendly boarding houses, guides, transport operators, wine tasting services, etc.

2. Creating means of communication of this network with the public like Facebook, Instagram etc.
3. Organizing/transforming the network into an Association, with the development of an image of the network (brand) based on a logo and a slogan.
4. Creating a donation mechanism from customers and an annual membership fee for the participating services in exchange for using the association's trademark.
5. Distributing the obtained funds in two components, annually: measures for the development of the network services (50%) and measures for nature conservation (50%).

This payment scheme has largely an awareness function and it has a possible degree of relatively small collection, but if it still manages to be implemented it can bring funding to some small projects with high visibility which can be a stimulating factor for donations from tourists as well as other local services and companies. For the implementation of this proposals, it is necessary to detail the steps briefly mentioned above.

CONCLUSIONS

The Northern Dobrogea area is fitted to its development as a cycling destination. It is important because it can provide attractiveness for almost all four seasons and a high degree of diversity and difficulty of cycling routes.

A partnership agreement between local partners, public administrations, associations and the private sector is extremely important to initiate the implementation of the measures proposed in this strategy.

At the same time, a decisive factor is the identification of funding sources for these measures and prior to this, the need to convince the central authorities that the subject of cycling paths must be supported through special financing lines from EU funds 2021 - 2027. This approach must be doubled by the urgent need to legislate the existence of cycling paths as transport and leisure infrastructure and clearly define the public structures and public-private partnerships that can manage this issue.

Cycling in the Northern Dobrogea area can soon become an important economic development factor considering the fact that the first steps to implement this strategic concept are starting according with the Action Plan.

ANNEXES

Annex 1

Estimating the costs for the construction of a cycling path

This estimation comes from the SC Axidrom SRL company and is based on the following technical data:

- 2.5 m wide path;
- an arrangement for a length of 40 km.

Note: 1. prices do not include VAT,
2. costs may differ depending on the distance from which the construction materials are brought.

Category of works	UM	Quantity	EUR PU	EUR Value
Arranged bike path	m ²	100.000,00		2.867.400,00
Digging in hard ground	m ³	37.000,00	5,20	192.400,00
Ballast layer 30 cm	m ³	20.000,00	20,50	410.000,00
Ballast layer stabilized with cement	m ³	12.000,00	33,00	396.000,00
Priming 0.6 kg/	m ²	100.000,00	0,55	55.000,00
Wear layer BA16 4 CM	m ²	100.000,00	8,50	850.000,00
Large border 10x15	m	80.000,00	11,85	948.000,00
Markings	m ²	2.000,00	8,00	16.000,00
TOTAL				2.867.400,00
TOTAL /mp				28,67
TOTAL /km				71.685,00

Annex 2

The roadmaps of the cycling routes identified in zone 2: Măcin area and the Eastern and Western part of the National Park

- **Route 1: CelikDere Trail**

Source: Explorer Association Tulcea Branch

Technical details

Access: From DJ229A Cataloi - Telița

Distance: 24 km

Departure / arrival point: CelicDere Monastery parking lot

Level difference: 317m

Travel time: 3 hours

Level: medium

Surface: cobbled, dirt, asphalt roads

Route description

The Celik route is a loop route, of medium length (24 km), which starts and ends in the parking lot of CelicDere monastery, one of the most famous places of worship in Northern Dobrogea. The road takes us on the Celik Valley (Iron Stream - in Turkish), and the return is made on Morilor Valley, along Telița stream. The landscapes on the route are typical of the Northern Dobrogea forest, with a great variety of plant species.

From the parking lot of the monastery, we go West on the cobbled road that continues with asphalt. The first 4 km, a succession of very easy ascents and descents, takes us along the CelikDere stream, with small meanders that can be seen to the left of the road. Just before the road crosses the CelikStream over a concrete bridge to continue to the left, at kilometer 3.95, our route crosses a small stream which comes from the right and continues to North (right) with a relatively difficult ascent of almost 1500 m. The landscape is spectacular, being on the edge of a deep valley, and at km 5.35 we are rewarded with a small point of panoramic view, a colorful meadow in any season (peonies, rosehips, smoke bushes) - a good short stop for photos and hydration. From here the road continues on the edge of the wheat fields until km 6.3, where we have a small green barrier on the left (on the road coming from the agricultural field). We will turn short to the right and follow the road again for 120 meters, taking care not to miss an intersection from which we will choose the leftmost road (at 90 degrees). For the next kilometer we will make sure to choose the roads on the left side so that we don't move away from the edge of the forest (left side) for more than 50 m.

From km 7.5 we will dive into the forest and follow the busiest road, using GPS when needed, because it is the only part of the route with more difficult orientation and no landmarks. At km

10.3 we reach a meadow at the edge of the field, continue 50 m on the exploitation road and then to the right easy downhill for the next 500 m, to the paved road DJ229 Niculițel-ValeaTeilor. From here we can see to the south the yellow fields and the mosaic landscape with portions of forest, as well as 2 wind turbines. We we will continue in a slight ascent to the north, to the right, on the asphalt, on the road that looks like a tunnel between trees, up to km 12, where we turn short to the right on the cobbled road. After 600 m, on the left side of the road, relatively hidden under the road, we find a small circular spring. Unfortunately, we cannot always rely on it, because it can dry out in dry periods. Anyway, from here we will follow the paved road for another 7 km, with the Telița brook on the right side, until the village with the same name. We will go out on the asphalt right on the edge of the village, and from there we turn right on DJ229A, on the shady edge of the forest, to the CelicDere Monastery - the end of the route.

Potential Problems

- Small orientation problems, due to the multitude of roads in certain parts of the route;
- In some places there may be a risk of flat tire caused by the burs or snakebite;
- Because there is no water on the route, it is recommended to supply yourself from the water source located in the monastery yard;
- Dogs can appear, usually they run away, but sometimes, when they are among those who accompany the sheep, they can be more aggressive;
- Beehives - only at certain times of the year.

Recommendations

- Use a guidance application that uses google maps;
- Departure on the route with a reserve of at least 2 L of water and food for 3-5 hours;
- Flat tire kit and an extra inner tube, preferably 2 inner tubes;
- Pepper spray against animals;
- Sunscreen and sprays or other products against mosquitos;
- First aid kit
- GSM coverage is uncertain, so let your family or friends know about the route you follow.

Places to Visit

- CelicDere Monastery, windmill and a small museum of religious art objects
- The church from Telița village - with a monumental architecture with 6 towers (under renovation)

Images



Source: Explorer Association Tulcea Branch



- **Route 2: Explorer MTB Challenge**

Source: Explorer Association Tulcea Branch

Technical details

Access: From DJ229A Luncavița-Nifon

Distance: 39km

Starting point: Poiana Babei-Cetățuia

Level difference: 703m

Travel time: 3-5 hours

Level: medium

Surface: cobbled, dirt, asphalt roads

Route description

Explorer MTB Challenge starts from Poiana Babei, located in the commune of Luncavița- Cetățuia village.

From here we take the DJ229A towards Nifon, near km 1.5 turn right on ValeaSeacă, on the tourist route Țuțuiatu, continue on the paved road and later on the dirt road until km 6.8 where we turn left and climb under the peak of Căpușa.

We continue our way until km 9.5 where is a spring called The Spring of the Italians, we go down to it, cool off and return to the route. We continue until close to Țuțuiatu hill, where, following the tourist route, we can reach the Țuțuiatu Saddle or the Țuțuiatu Peak. After taking photos we return to the route and continue until km 11.5, where we turn left and start to descend to the paved road that starts at km 14.5 and continue on it until DJ229A.

Here we can shorten our route, if we want, by turning left and in 8 km we can reach Poiana Babei. We continue the route turning right until the entrance to Nifon, at km 22.5 we turn left on the road that goes up towards Cocoş Monastery, at km 28 we turn left on the dirt road that enters the forest and we go until we reach a paved, wide road, that will take us to the end of our route, in Poiana Babei Ioana.

Potential Problems

- Small orientation problems, due to the multitude of roads in certain parts of the route;
- In some places there may be a risk of flat tires cause by burs or snakebite;
- Lack of drinking water, there is just 1 spring, the Spring of the Italians;
- Dogs can appear, usually they run away, but sometimes, when they are among those who accompany the sheep, they can be more aggressive

Recommendations

- Use a guidance application that uses google maps;
- Departure on the route with a reserve of at least 2 L of water and food for 3-5 hours;
- Flat tire kit and an extra inner tube, preferably 2 inner tubes;
- Pepper spray against animals;
- Sunscreen and sprays or other products against mosquitos;
- First aid kit
- GSM coverage is uncertain, so let your family or friends know about the route you follow.

Images



Source: Explorer Association Tulcea Branch

- **Route 3: Explorer MTB Long Ride Challenge**

Source: Explorer Association Tulcea Branch

Technical details

Access: From DJ229A Luncavița-Nifon

Distance: 68 km

Starting point: Poiana Babei-Cetățuia

Level difference: 1511 m

Travel time: 7-10 hours

Level: advanced

Surface: cobbled, dirt, asphalt roads

Route description

Explorer MTB Long Ride Challenge is a mountain bike route that is part of the series of competitions called MTB Marathon Romania Cup. It passes through Măcinului Mountains National Park, mostly through the forests but also reaches the Pricopan Peak and passes very close to Greci commune.

The route starts from Poiana Babei, a location located in the commune of Luncavița-Cetățuia village. From here we take the DJ229A towards Nifon, near km 1.5 we turn right on ValeaSeacă, on the tourist route Țuțuiatu, we continue on the paved road and later on on the dirt road until almost km 7 from where we start the descent through the loess canyons to the exit of the forest. We continue to the right on the edge of the forest till the hill at km 11.5 where we turn right and enter a long descent on paved road that ends on a dirt road in the Jijilei Valley, near a sheepfold. Here we continue to the left in a slight ascent, we go on the dirt roads from the fields there up to km 16.5 from where we take a right and climb through the forest near the spring, to the benches under the Piatra Râioasă. From here we continue on the cobbled road that winds down under the Pricopan Peak until we reach the plain, at km 20, from where we turn left and keep the paved road until close to Greci, where, at km 25.5 turn left and start the climb on the paved road that intersects at km 27 with another paved road which descends to the right towards the village of Greci.

Then, we turn left and continue to climb, cross the stone quarry and climb to the entrance to the forest, from here through loess canyons, up to km 35.5 where we turn right and climb under the Peak of Căpușa. We continue the road our way to km 37.8 where the Spring of the Italians is, we go down to it, cool off and return to the route. We continue until close to Țuțuiatu hill, where following the tourist route we can reach the Țuțuiatu Saddle or the Țuțuiatu Peak. After taking photos we return to the route, we continue until km 41.1, where we turn left and we start to go down to the paved road that starts at km 44, and continue on it until DJ229A.

Here we can shorten our route, if we want, by turning left and in 8 km we can reach Poiana Babei. We continue the long route turning right until the entrance to Nifon, at km 51.5 we turn left on the road that climb towards Cocoș Monastery, at km 57.5 we turn left on the dirt road that enters the forest and we pedal until we reach a cobbled, wide road, which will take us to the end of our route, in Poiana Babei Ioana.

Potential Problems

- Small orientation problems, due to the multitude of roads in certain parts of the route;
- In some places there may be a risk of flat tires caused by burrs or snakebite;
- Lack of drinking water, there is 2 springs, one at Km 17 and the Spring of the Italians;
- Dogs can appear, usually they run away, but sometimes, when they are among those who accompany the sheep, they can be more aggressive

Recommendations

- Use a guidance application that uses google maps;
- Departure on the route with a reserve of at least 2 L of water and food for a day;
- Flat tire kit and an extra inner tube, preferably 2 inner tubes;
- Pepper spray against animals;
- Sunscreen and sprays or other products against mosquitoes;
- First aid kit
- GSM coverage is uncertain, so let your family or friends know about the route you follow.

Images



Source: Explorer Association Tulcea Branch



- **Route 4: Greci MTB Tour**

Source: Explorer Association Tulcea Branch

Technical data

Access: From DN22D Cerna - Măcin on DJ222K to Greci

Distance: 35 km

Starting point: Greci Commune Center

Level difference: 746 m

Travel time: 3-5 hours

Level: medium

Surface: cobbled, dirt roads

Route description

The route starts from the center of Greci Commune and goes to DealulȘcolii, climbing up to km 7 in the Imbulzita area where the forest begins. From here we turn right and go on the edge of the forest to the barrier at km 8.5, where a dirt road begins. The road climbs through the loess canyons until km 11.5 where we turn right and climb under the Peak of Căpușa. We continue our way until km 14.5 where the the Spring of Italians is, we go down to it, cool off and return to the route.

We continue until close to Țuțuiatu hill, where following the tourist route we can reach the Țuțuiatu Saddle or the Țuțuiatu Peak (if we want to shorten the route, from the Țuțuiatu Saddle you can go down directly to Greci). After we take photos, we return to the route, continue on it until km 24, where we turn right and start to descend to the road next to the agricultural fields which starts at km 27.5 and which leads us to the end of our route.

Potential Problems

- Small orientation problems, due to the multitude of roads in certain parts of the route;
- In some places there may be a risk of flat tires cause by burs or snakebite;
- Lack of drinking water, there is just 1 spring, the Spring of the Italians;
- Dogs can appear, usually they run away, but sometimes, when they are among those who accompany the sheep, they can be more aggressive

Recommendations

- Use a guidance application that uses google maps;
- Departure on the route with a reserve of at least 2 L of water and food for a day;
- Flat tire kit and an extra inner tube, preferably 2 inner tubes;
- Pepper spray against animals;
- Sunscreen and sprays or other products against mosquitos;
- First aid kit
- GSM coverage is uncertain, so let your family or friends know about the route you follow.

Images



Source: Explorer Association Tulcea Branch

- **Route 5: Niculițel - Nifon**

Source: Explorer Association Tulcea Branch

Technical details

Access: From E87 - via DJ229C to Niculițel

Distance: 37 km

Starting point: Niculițel Commune Center

Level difference: 688 m

Travel time: 3-5 hours

Level: medium

Surface: cobbled, dirt, asphalt roads

Route description

The Niculițel-Nifon route is a 37 km route, it starts from the center of Niculițel commune, in the direction to Valea Teilor where, at km 4.8, we can enter the cobbled road that goes to the right and reach the panoramic area above the commune, in the area where the GSM antennas are located. From here we return to the road DJ229 and continue in the direction of Valea Teilor until km 8, where we turn right on the paved road to Nifon then, we go through the forest until km 18, where the village of Nifon begins. We continue the road turning right on DJ229A in the direction of Cetățuia-Luncavița, we cross the village until a road intersection, located approximately at km 20, here we enter the road that starts to climb to the right towards Cocoș Monastery. The paved road climbs about 6 km then descends to the entrance on the alley which leads to Cocoș Monastery, at km 31. Here we can go to the monastery, we can visit it and return on the same road and continue on the asphalt to Niculițel commune, where our route ends.

Potential Problems

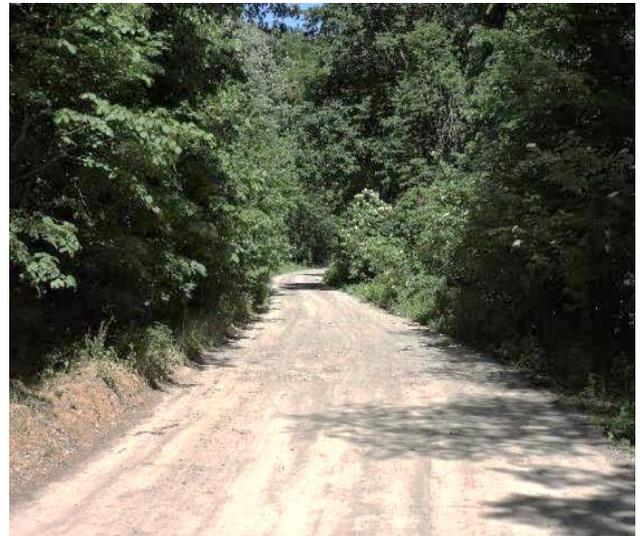
- Small orientation problems, due to the multitude of roads in certain parts of the route;
- In some places there may be a risk of flat tires cause by burs or snakebites;
- Lack of drinking water;

- Dogs can appear, usually they run away, but sometimes, when they are among those who accompany the sheep, they can be more aggressive

Recommendations

- Use a guidance application that uses google maps;
- Departure on the route with a reserve of at least 2 L of water and food for a day;
- Flat tire kit and an extra inner tube, preferably 2 inner tubes;
- Pepper spray against animals;
- Sunscreen and sprays or other products against mosquitos;
- First aid kit
- GSM coverage is uncertain, so let your family or friends know about the route you follow.

Images



Source: Explorer Association Tulcea Branch

- **Route 6: Teke Trail**

Source: Explorer Association Tulcea Branch

Technical details

Access: From DJ229A Cataloi - Telița

Distance: 50 km

Departure / arrival point: CelicDere Monastery parking lot

Level difference: 756 m

Travel time: 5-7 hours

Level: advanced

Surface: cobbled, dirt, asphalt roads

Route description

The Teke Trail is a 50-kilometer route that traverses the forests around the Monastery CelicDere and Telița village and reaches above Niculițel Commune, in a beautiful panoramic viewpoint. We start from the parking lot of the monastery, leaving the monastery on the left in a slight climb to the edge of the forest where we turn left on a dirt road for a few hundred meters. Here, we turn right on another dirt road that climbs through the forest about 2.5 km where, in a meadow we intersect with a road. Here we turn left and pedal carefully until we see a grassy road open to the right, from which we begin to descend on it 1.5 km.

From here we can see on the hills on the left the modern "windmills", the gray metal wind turbines. Here we turn right through the scattered trees until we reach a dirt road where we turn right through the forest, climb 2 km and turn left on a dirt road that we will meet. Here, if we turn right, we arrive back to the monastery. From here, on a beautiful descent on the left side of Tekel Peak (hence the name of the route) we reach km 8.7 of our route, the only place where we can have water. For that we have to turn towards left by the bed of a torrent to the spring arranged a few hundred meters below. We cool off, restore the water reserves and return to the same point where we left the route in order to continue the route. We turn right under the CarasanTeke natural reserve, go through the forest on a road mixt cobbled and dirt until we intersect with a wider, cobbled road. Here our route continues to the right (on the left we can reach the village of ValeaTeilor). From this point we continue to climb up to km 13 from where we descend to km 14.7 where we will meet a concrete bridge, where we turn left next to a stream and we reach a dirt road (in this point, if we do not turn left and continue ahead on the cobbled road, we reach the monastery). From here we start the climb, we reach the edge of the forest where the road goes on the edge of a agricultural field and we continue up to km 19 from where a section begins with successive descents and ascents up to km 20.5. Here we reach a meadow and we continue the road and exit the forest where we turn right on a slight descent to DJ229 where we turn right (to the left we can reach the village of ValeaTeilor).

We continue for about 200 meters and turn left, we enter the forest on an uphill dirt road and continue on it until we intersect with a paved road at km 23, where we turn left and start the

descent on the road that leads to ValeaTeilor Monastery. Here we continue until km 24.5 where we leave the cobbled road by turning right and start a beautiful road that climbs sinuous through the forest up to km 28 where we intersect with a cobbled road where we turn right. After 200 meters we reach another cobbled road that connects Niculițel (to the right) to Nifon (to the left). Here we turn left and after about 200m turn right on a dirt road that goes through the forest to the panoramic viewpoint above Niculitel from where we can look far into Ukraine (we are here at km 30 of our route).

From here we go to the right next to the communication antennas and go down to DJ229 where if we turn on the right, we reach the Teilor valley and if we turn left we reach Niculițel. We will turn right and after 200 meters we turn left next to the edge of the forest where is a dirt road that continues through the forest until we cross DJ229 again. We continue to the right on this road for another 300 m from where we will turn right on a dirt road that goes through the forest, bypassing Niculițel. At km 36 we will reach the most difficult part of the route, with a slightly technical descent of about 300 m and an ascent quite brutal of about 200 m. We continue to climb slightly to km 39, 5 from where we descend through the forest up to km 40.5, where we go out on an agricultural field and after 300 meters, we turn right next to a lonely tree and we continue the descent to Telița, through ValeaMorilor. Here at km 44.8 we turn right next to a stream and we keep the dirt road until it starts to climb on the right slope, where we turn left through a stream and we climb through the forest to the hill at km 47. From here we start the descent through a former forest exploitation up to the forest where we turn right and pedal carefully until we see under the branches the road that goes to the left. We enter it and continue the descent to a meadow from where we can see the CelicDere monastery. Here we continue the road, reach DJ229A, turn right and enter the road to the monastery where we reach the parking lot from where we left.

Potential Problems

- Small orientation problems, due to the multitude of roads in certain parts of the route;
- In some places there may be a risk of flat tires caused by burrs or snakebite;
- Lack of drinking water – there is one spring which is not on the route (to reach it you have to leave the route and return on it);
- Dogs can appear, usually they run away, but sometimes, when they are among those who accompany the sheep, they can be more aggressive
- Beehives: only at certain times of the year

Recommendations

- Use a guidance application that uses Google Maps;
- Departure on the route with a reserve of at least 2 L of water and food for a day;
- Flat tire kit and an extra inner tube, preferably 2 inner tubes;
- Pepper spray against animals;
- Sunscreen and sprays or other products against mosquitoes;

- First aid kit
- GSM coverage is uncertain, so let your family or friends know about the route you follow.

Places to Visit

- CelicDere Monastery, windmill and a small museum of religious art objects
- The church from Telița village - with a monumental architecture with 6 towers (under renovation)

Images



Source: Explorer Association Tulcea Branch

- **Route 7: Valea Morilor**

Source: Explorer Association Tulcea Branch

Technical details

Access: From DJ229A Exit Telița to Cataloi

Distance: 29 km

Departure / arrival point: bus station from the exit from Telița village to Frecăței

Level difference: 479 m

Travel time: 4-5 hours

Level: medium-advanced

Surface: cobbled, dirt, asphalt roads

Route description

ValeaMorilor route is a loop route, of a medium length (26.2 km), which starts and ends at the exit from Telița village to Frecăței (the bus station). The road crosses ValeaMorilor (along Telița stream), climbs on the plateau with Dobrogean steppe vegetation above Niculițel and descends to the village of Telita through the forests of North Dobrogea type (characterized by a wide variety of tree and plant species).

We start from the edge of the village, on a cobbled road, and after 600 m we enter ValeaMorilor (after a short climb). During the next 8 kilometers the road winds parallel to Telița stream, which sometimes forms small and surprising meanders, with turns of 180 degrees. The trees on the both sides of the road form a green tunnel of vegetation, protecting us from the sun. Near the exit to county road 229, ahead of the last ascent (km 8.5), on the right side of the road, hidden under the shore, there is a small circular spring, but which can be dried in dry periods.

At kilometer 9 of the route we cross the county road 229 and turn right on the asphalt. We continue for 1 kilometer and then we leave the road, following the cobbled road that goes to the left (with a sign "to monastery"). On this road we will take care that at km 10.9 to not miss the Monastery / Nifon intersection, where we choose the option to the right (Nifon) but we do not go more than 100 m and we turn right on the first road through forest. We go north about 1200 m, parallel to the edge of the forest, and exit at km 12.2 on a yellow dirt road in the area with steppe vegetation typical for rocky hills. After another 700 m sustained ascent we reach the highest point of the route - Niculițel Plateau. Here we will make it mandatory a stop for photos, hydration and nutrition, because the landscape is extraordinary, offering a panoramic view. To the north, beyond Niculițel and the Danube, you can see Yalpug Lakes and Kugurlui from Ukraine, but also Saon, Rotund and Telincea from the Romanian side - part of the Upper Delta of the Danube.

After this well-deserved stop, we continue to the right, descending, until kilometer 13.7 where we cross the road 229. To the left we reach Niculițel, but we will turn right and after 200 m we leave the asphalt to go straight ahead (the road has a curve to the right in that place). We climb slowly about 300 m and then go down to km 14.9, where we will make sure to turn left and follow the path through the forest, descending another 500 meters. At the end of this descent, at the base of the hill we will turn left and we will continue to follow the road, which after about 400 m has a serpentine climb to the right (as a reference point). At kilometer 17 the road will approach a few meters from DJ229, but we will turn right through the woods on a relatively busy road. From here it is good to rely on GPS and track available because the forest is full of small paths

that separate and reunite, being relatively difficult to navigate. However, we can't get lost if we follow the East-Northeast direction, and to get out faster to the cobbled road on the Valley of the Mills it is enough to follow any road with more traffic to right side(south).

If we followed the correct route we will exit, at kilometer 22.7, in a wide meadow and we will continue to the right on the dirt road, which after another 300 m becomes paved and takes us to the road on Valea Morilor, where we came from. At the intersection (km 24) we turn left and head towards the end of the route, at km 26.2.

Potential Problems

- Small orientation problems, due to the multitude of roads in certain parts of the route;
- In some places there may be a risk of flat tires cause by burs or snakebite;
- Lack of drinking water – because there is no water on the route, it is recommended to stock up at the village store
- Dogs can appear, usually they run away, but sometimes, when they are among those who accompany the sheep, they can be more aggressive
- Beehives: only at certain times of the year

Recommendations

- Use a guidance application that uses google maps;
- Departure on the route with a reserve of at least 2 L of water and food for a day;
- Flat tire kit and an extra inner tube, preferably 2 inner tubes;
- Pepper spray against animals;
- Sunscreen and sprays or other products against mosquitos;
- First aid kit
- GSM coverage is uncertain, so let your family or friends know about the route you follow.

Places to Visit

- The church from Telița village - with a monumental architecture with 6 towers (under renovation)

Images



Source: Explorer Association Tulcea Branch

- **Route 8: The Monasteries Circuit**

Source: Association of Ecotourism in Romania

Technical details

Access: Niculițel

Distance: 40.6 km

Departure / arrival point: early Christian basilica from Niculițel

Level difference: 512 m

Travel time: 5 hours

Level: medium-advanced

Surface: asphalt road, dirt road, paved road

Route description

The route starts from the Paleo-Christian basilica from Niculițel and turns left on the asphalt road, towards the national road. At the intersection, turn right (towards Tulcea) and after 3-4 kilometers turn left on a agricultural dirt road. Here you can already see quite well the towers of the church of Saon Monastery and it doesn't take long until when, following the well-marked road, you reach the paved road that leads to the monastery. There you can go to the Danube or to see the exotic birds at the end of the parking lot (ostriches, pheasants, peacocks, etc.).

From the monastery follow the paved road until you come out again on the national road, turn left and go until the intersection with the road leading to Telita, where you turn right. Continue on this road, pass the village Telita, and at the intersection with Celic-Dere turn right towards the monastery. After visiting it, keep climbing on the Celic-Dere stream valley on the technical right side (the left side of the stream in the direction of travel), then go to its left, and at the next tributary on the left (right in the direction of pedaling) exit the well-marked forest road and enter a dirt road that initially climbs quite steep (actually at the intersection you have to keep the direction forward), but then the slope becomes slow and continues until the exit of the forest where you will meet agricultural crops. Here you have a wind farm, and behind the hill on which the wind farm is located is the village of Valea Teilor, hidden from your view. Go down the agricultural road to the valley where you will find a spring from which you can fill in your water can, then start climbing the other slope to the first intersection where you turn right.

Turn left at the second intersection and then continue ahead until you reach the village. If you want to avoid the village (which we also recommend), from the last intersection turn right on a grassy road that goes straight down to the valley, then continue up the valley until you see on the agricultural field on the left, a lone tree. Start climbing on the left, next to the bike, go by the tree until you reach the first dirt road. Here you already notice that you are quite close to the road that connects the Valea Teilor and Niculițel, but turn right on the agricultural road and go

parallel to the road a little more than a kilometer until you meet the first road that turns left and will take you on the county road. Here you turn right and follow this road until you reach Niculițel, enjoying a very beautiful descent on the last part of the route.

Potential Problems

- Car traffic on the national road sections;
- Difficult orientation on the Celic-Dere - Valea Teilor section;
- The burs that will bite slowly but surely from the bicycle tires.

Recommendations

- Use a guidance application that uses google maps;
- Departure on the route with a reserve of at least 2 L of water and food for a day;
- Flat tire kit and an extra inner tube, preferably 2 inner tubes;
- Pepper spray against animals;
- Sunscreen and sprays or other products against mosquitos;
- First aid kit
- GSM coverage is uncertain, so let your family or friends know about the route you follow.

Places to Visit

- Saon Monastery;
- Celic-Dere Monastery;
- The early Christian basilica from Niculițel.

Images



Source: Association of Ecotourism in Romania



- **Route 9: Pricopan Circuit**

Source: Association of Ecotourism in Romania

Technical details

Access: Greci

Distance: 39 km

Departure / arrival point: the center of Greci village

Level difference: 417 m

Travel time: 4 hours

Level: easy

Surface: asphalt road, dirt road, paved road

Route description

From the center of Greci village, start towards the mountainous area, and then turn slightly left on Dumbrava Street (it is the only intersection in Y with two seemingly equally important roads; the intersection is very wide). From here go ahead, cross the stone quarry and turn left on the cobbled and very well highlighted road which is now heading to the base of the Pricopan Peak. Start climbing slightly and go straight on the cobbled road, and at the next intersection go ahead, leaving the cobbled road on the left which is climbing over the ridge and descending again into the village. Continue on the less used road, but well highlighted, until you reach the top.

Here, after passing the beginning of a former stone quarry, the road continues with a dirt road and start descending gently, you taking care to turn left onto a grassy road just before the forest. This bypasses the forest and, after a short climb, begins a long and beautiful descent to the valley where we reach a cowsfold. We pedal about 100 meters down the valley, then turn left and start to climb steeply on the other bank, the road immediately turning into a very well-marked dirt road. Follow this road regardless of the intersections up to Jijila village where, after exiting the national road, make left towards Măcin.

At the main intersection of Măcin locality turn left (direction Constanța), and when you reach the right Lukoil gas station (there is also a billboard with Macinese Wines) turn left. You can stop for a tasting at the Dobrogean Winery of those from Alcovin Măcin, where Măcin wines are produced. If you don't drink too much, you can continue ahead, very soon entering another agricultural road which, not long after, turn sharply to the right and exit on the road leading to the stone quarry or to the Fântâna de Leac Monastery. Follow this road until you reach the base of Pricopanului Peak and turn right on a dirt road which goes further on the level curve to the village of Greci. Shortly before the village we meet a paved road that we follow to the village.

Potential Problems

- Car traffic on the national road sections;
- The burs that will bite slowly but surely from the bicycle tires.

Recommendations

- Use a guidance application that uses google maps;
- Departure on the route with a reserve of at least 2 L of water and food for a day;

- Flat tire kit and an extra inner tube, preferably 2 inner tubes;
- Pepper spray against animals;
- Sunscreen and sprays or other products against mosquitos;
- First aid kit
- GSM coverage is uncertain, so let your family or friends know about the route you follow.

Places to Visit

- Măcinului Mountains National Park
- Măcinului Mountains National Park Visitor Centre (Greci)
- Măcin Wine Cellar

- **Route 10: Turcoaia**

Source: Association of Ecotourism in Romania

Technical details

Access: Greci

Distance: 40 km

Departure / arrival point: the center of Greci village

Level difference: 353 m

Travel time: 4-5 hours

Level: medium

Surface: asphalt road, dirt road, paved road

Route description

Leave the center of Greci commune in the direction of the national road and turn left just before a blue bus station on the right side of the road, after the intersection. Continue on this street and turn onto the third Street on the right. You will leave the village, pass the former IAS and not long after you'll arrive at a disused landfill, which the locals still use. Here you turn to left and go down to the canal, where you turn right on the road that goes along it, until the national road where you will turn left. Cross the canal and turn slightly to the right on a dirt road that goes up smooth beside the paved road. Be careful not to take the dirt road that leads to the Igltă, but you must keep the road closest to the Măcin - Constanța road.

After climbing the hill, you come across another canal (this time dried up) and you have to follow the dirt road along it, leaving to the right another one heading towards the Danube. Once you get to a confluence of three canals and cross the bridge, you immediately cross another road where you will turn right over the bridge. From here there are two options: continue on this road straight ahead and reach the fortress of Troesmis or immediately turn left onto a road that starts after the bridge and continues through a vineyard until intersects the county road that connects with Turcoaia. These two variants meet again at the entrance to Turcoaia, at the intersection

with the road leading to the former Iacobdeal stone quarry. From this point continue on the road to the former quarry (on the left), and when you reach the former quarry you have the opportunity to visit Lake Iacobdeal, an anthropic lake formed in a basin of the former quarry by flooding it by a groundwater source. To get to the lake you have to turn on the second road to the right and then right again.

To continue on our route, you must turn on the first road on the left that you will encounter in the premises of the former stone quarry, or go straight ahead as you descend from the lake. Follow this new path to another quarry, turn right, and then first left on a less used but visible dirt road. Of here you have to go straight ahead until you reach an irrigation canal and turn left. Continue on it, turn right past the former water pumping station and take the national road where you turn right, towards Cerna.

After about 400 meters turn left onto a dirt road (here you will also find signs for the equestrian center of the Măcinului Mountains National Park), then immediately left again and go straight ahead, pass the wine farm and turn second to the right next to a groundwater basin; this is where the vine terraces it starts too. Climb the road that climbs along the plantations and exit into a ridge that offers a wonderful view of the Cerna Depression. On this hilltop, in fact a wooded pasture with scattered trees, you should always follow the most visible path, but be careful with turtles which are very numerous. The path through the forest is difficult to find because of the little usage of roads lately. Thus, we recommend that for this last segment to use the GPS track or a local guide who knows the area very well.

Potential Problems

- Car traffic on the national road sections;
- Difficult orientation between Cerna and the Greci;
- The burs that will bite slowly but surely from the bicycle tires.

Recommendations

- Use a guidance application that uses google maps;
- Departure on the route with a reserve of at least 2 L of water and food for a day;
- Flat tire kit and an extra inner tube, preferably 2 inner tubes;
- Pepper spray against animals;
- Sunscreen and sprays or other products against mosquitos;
- First aid kit;
- GSM coverage is uncertain, so let your family or friends know about the route you follow.

Places to Visit

- Troesmis Fortress;
- Lake Iacobdeal;

- Landscape with forest-steppe vegetation and tree species specific to the area.

Images



Source: Association of Ecotourism in Romania

- **Route 11: Valea Fagilor**

Source: Association of Ecotourism in Romania

Technical details

Access: Greci

Distance: 43 km

Departure / arrival point: the center of Greci village

Level difference: 631 m

Travel time: 4-5 hours

Level: medium

Surface: asphalt road, dirt road, paved road

Route description

From the village of Greci, start in a South-Easterly direction towards the place called FundulPlopilor where you will meet the marking tourist red dot, as well as the sign for cycling routes "C" blue. Enter the forest, turn at left at the first intersection and keep going until you reach a resting place in a small meadow on the right side. Take the road on the right that takes it in an Easterly direction. Your direction will be confirmed by the presence of the cyclotourist route marking, which shows you the right way to enter the village of Nifon.

Go down through the village until you reach the first intersection with an asphalt road, turn right and then left at the intersection with the county road that goes to Luncavița. Go on the county road about 10 km until you reach the intersection with ValeaFagilor, a forest road on the left with a barrier. Of here begins the blue triangle tourist marking that goes on Țuțuiatu Peak.

Go along this road along the valley, pass the campsite on the left, leave the cyclotourist route mark crossing the valley to Țuțuiatu, too and then take the first road on the right that starts to

climb on the right slope, in fact the left slope of the valley from a technical point of view (all the time you have to follow the most walked and visible road). The route climbs continuously, making small serpentines; uphill you will meet again the blue "C" bicycle marking like appeared out of nowhere. It will lead you to the exit of the forest, above the village of Greci.

On the route you will meet various intersections, but all the time you have to follow the West or Northwest direction. After leaving the forest, turn left and go down through the agricultural fields and then pass the stone quarry to the village.

Potential Problems

- The multitude of forest paths;
- The burs that will bite slowly but surely from the bicycle tires.

Recommendations

- Use a guidance application that uses google maps;
- Departure on the route with a reserve of at least 2 L of water and food for a day;
- Flat tire kit and an extra inner tube, preferably 2 inner tubes;
- Pepper spray against animals;
- Sunscreen and sprays or other products against mosquitos;
- First aid kit
- GSM coverage is uncertain, so let your family or friends know about the route you follow.

Places to Visit

- Măcinului Mountains National Park
- Măcinului Mountains National Park Visitor Centre (Greci)

Images



Source: Association of Ecotourism in Romania

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