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Original article

## RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN ROMANIAN MOUNTAIN TOURISM

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### Abstract

*Aim.* Romania is a country with a very varied and diverse tourism potential and a landscape consists of 27.91% mountains of total country area, with altitudes between 600 – 2500 m, an average height of 840 m and 10% of the country's territory above 1500 m (Cernaianu et al, 2017). In Romania the winter sports tourism are focused on the skiing activity and ski resorts. There are some 27 licensed ski areas in Romania with around 80 authorized ski slopes, and a variety of ski lifts, gondolas, chair lifts, skid lifts and cable cars with a capacity of over 35,000 persons an hour serving these areas (Romania National Tourism Master Plan 2007 – 2026). There is heavy demand at weekends during the winter when snow conditions are favorable. Sport event tourism is a huge and growing global industry with important economic implications for both the sport, the event and the impact of travel and tourism related benefits on host destinations (Candrea et al, 2010). The most popular winter touristic destinations in Romania are: Poiana Brasov, Predeal, Sinaia. Previous quantitative marketing research outlined that 45% of tourists are entirely satisfied with the quality of the accommodation units in Braşov city and 37.9% of tourists feel the same way about Poiana Braşov (Candrea et al, 2010). Many tourists wish to participate in recreation, sports and adventure and to learn about culture history and the natural areas of the places visited. Snow recreational activities include cross-country, skiing, snowboarding, tobogganing, snowshoe walking and sledding.

The purpose is to present the most popular ski resorts in Romania and contribution the winter recreational and sport activities to the tourism development.

*Conclusion.* Mountains are ideally places for doing sport, recreation and educational trip. In Romania the mountain tourism based on physical activity (skiing, snowboarding) and educational trip is considered one of the most popular forms of tourism, especially among young people.

*Keywords:* didactic trip, tourism, recreational and sport activities

### Introduction

Standeven et al., (1999) defined sports tourism as “all forms of active and passive involvement in sporting activity, participated in casually or in an organized way for noncommercial or business/ commercial reasons, that necessitate travel away from home and work locality”. Pigeassou (2004) indicated that people could only truly engage in sport tourism if they have a desire to experience sport culture, and that just participating in sport on holiday is not enough. Tourism has become a primary source of revenue for many mountain areas, providing a rare opportunity for mountain people to participate directly in the global economy. In many parts of the world, mountain tourism is driven by outdoor recreation activities such as downhill skiing, snowmobiling, backpacking etc. (Fredman, 2008). Sport tourism is one of the fastest-growing segments of the tourism industry and a relatively new focus in destination

planning (Turco et al., 2003). Romania is a country with a very varied and diverse tourism potential and a landscape consists of 27.91% mountains of total country area, with altitudes between 600 – 2500 m, an average height of 840m and 10% of the country's territory above 1500 m (Cernaianu et al., 2017). In Romania the winter sports tourism are focused on the skiing, didactic trip and leisure activity. There are some 27 licensed ski areas in Romania with around 80 authorized ski slopes, equipped with a variety of ski lifts, gondolas, chair lifts, skid lifts and cable cars with a capacity of over 35,000 persons an hour serving these areas (Romania National Tourism Master Plan 2007 – 2026). There is heavy demand at weekends during the winter when snow conditions are favorable. Sport event tourism is a huge and growing global industry with important economic implications for both the sport, the event and the impact of travel and

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tourism related benefits on host destinations (Candrea et al., 2010).

### Romanian mountain tourist destinations

In recent years, the facilities for winter sports have developed rapidly not only in the traditional mountain resorts (the area Prahova Valley - Poiana Braşov remains the most important in terms of facilities and tourist flows), but also in some smaller resorts (Şureanu, Râncea, Bran, Topliţa, Sovata, Praid, Petroşani-Parâng, Miercurea Ciuc, Harghita-Mădăraş, Cavnic, Gura Humorului, etc.), located in many other mountains or even peri-mountainous areas, but close to major cities emitting tourists (Simoni, 2017). Communication between ski resorts and environmentalists is important. Ski resorts will have to look at environmental problems as business issues and make environmental investments for the same reasons they make other investments (Hudson, 2004). Ski resort-based tourism development brings many benefits to a region, including economic and income

diversification, improvement of services and infrastructure, and the creation of “psychological stability” among residents. However, there are also several negative impacts, including environmental damage, landscape changes, social confrontation between those who support and reject tourism, and degradation of cultural and urban heritage. (Lasanta et al., 2007).

**Braşov County** is a beautiful and unique place in Romania. It attracts more than 400,000 visitors annually because it is at the heart of one of Romania’s most important tourism assets, the Carpathian Mountains and the rolling hills of Northern Transylvania (Mac Gregor, 2005). The most popular winter touristic destinations in Brasov County are: Poiana Brasov, Predeal, Sinaia. Previous quantitative marketing research outlined that 45% of tourists are entirely satisfied with the quality of the accommodation units in Brasov city and 37.9% of tourists feel the same way about Poiana Braşov (Candrea et al., 2010).

**The best longest ski slopes in Romania (2016)**

Pos.	Ski slope name	Location	Length (m)	Difficulty	Administrator
1.	Drumul Roşu	Poiana Braşov	4,752	easy	Braşov Municipality
2.	Sulinar	Poiana Braşov	3,394	moderate	Braşov Municipality
3.	Sub Teleferic	Poiana Braşov	2,200	difficult	Braşov Municipality
4.	Clăbucet	Predeal, Braşov	2,100	moderate	Predeal Municipality
5.	Sorica	Azuga Prahova 2	2,100	moderate	Local Council Azuga
6.	Kalinderu	Buşteni, Prahova	1,500	moderate	Buşteni Municipality

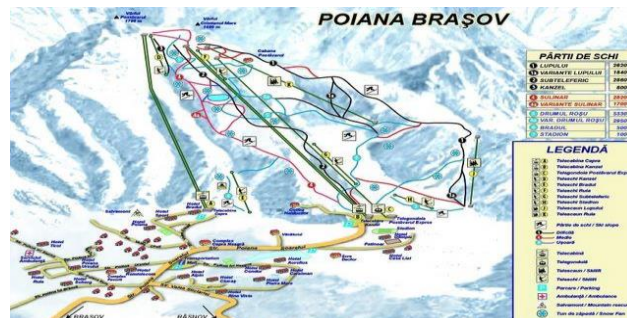
Source: own processing of data provided by the Ministry of Tourism, 2016

The Law no. 526/2003 launched the program "Ski in the Carpathians", an important moment in Romanian white tourism development. The program specified the appropriate areas, identified by specialized studies, for practicing winter sports, the arrangement, development or rehabilitation of ski slopes, ski lifts, artificial snowmaking installations, maintenance and illumination of ski slopes (Simoni, 2017).

**Poiana Brasov** is located in the Carpathian Mountains, at an altitude of 1020 m and it is surrounded by four mountains: Postăvaru 1799 m, Piatra Craiului 2238 m, Bucegi 2505 m, and Piatra Mare 1843 m (<https://www.youcouldtravel.com/travel-blog/a-guide-to-poiana-brasov-romania>).

Is the most popular ski resort in Romania and a great European ski resort by telegraph.co.uk. After the 2010s modernization, the ski area has expanded from 50 hectares to 80 hectares and the slopes length was increased from 13.8 km to 23.9 km. most slopes now have snow cannons installed.

In 2013, it hosted figure skating, alpine skiing and short track in the European Youth Olympic Winter Festival ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poiana\\_Bra%C8%99ov](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poiana_Bra%C8%99ov)). It is also an important area for educational trip, Bran Castle and Brasov City. Poiana Brasov is a resort rich in forests, flora and fauna, including the brown bear.



<http://www.ski-in-romania.com/resort.php?id=27>

**Predeal** is a well-known tourist destination in Romania, especially in winter. Predeal is situated in the Centru development region of Romania, in the Prahova Valley, in the southern part of Brașov County. Neighboring towns include Azuga to the south, Bușteni to the southwest, Râșnov to the northwest and Brașov to the north. The town is mountainous, with the Piatra Mare mountains to the north, the Bucegi mountains to the southwest and the Postăvarul Massif to the northwest. The woods around Predeal have a rich and

diversified fauna, including a high number of wild boars, European pine martens, bears, foxes, gray wolves, deer, squirrels, rabbits, badgers and heather cocks

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Predeal#cite\\_note-7](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Predeal#cite_note-7)).

Predeal has five major ski runs, each with a difficulty grade. Most of them have snowmaking guns, and some are fitted with floodlights and ski lifts. The slopes range from 790 metres (Clăbucet) to 2,243 metres (Cocoșul) (forum.wintersports.ro.).

*Tourist attractions in Predeal* include the Râșnov Citadel, The Old Town of Brașov



<http://www.ski-in-romania.com/resort.php?id=27>

**Sinaia** is a town and a mountain resort in Prahova County. It is situated in the historical region of Muntenia. The town was named after Sinaia Monastery of 1695, around which it was built. The monastery in turn is named after the Biblical Mount Sinai. King Carol I of Romania built his summer home, Peleş Castle, near the town in the late nineteenth century. Sinaia is about 65 kilometres (40 miles) northwest of Ploiești and 48 kilometres (30 miles) south of Brașov, in a mountainous area on the Prahova River valley, just east of the Bucegi Mountains. The altitude varies from 767 to 860 metres

(2,516 to 2,822 feet) above sea level. The city is a popular destination for hiking and winter sports, especially downhill skiing.

*Tourist attraction in Sinaia:*

- Peles Castle;
- Sinaia Monastery;
- Sinaia Casino International Conference Center;
- Carmen Sylva Cultural Center;
- George Enescu Memorial House;

- Dimitrie Ghica park and the Bucegi Reserve Museum;
- Heroes Cemetery;
- Franz Joseph and Saint Anne Cliffs;
- Old electrical power plant;
- Sinaia railway station;
- Many other old villas;
- Bucegi Mountains with a cable car connecting the resort with Cota 1400 and Cota 2000;
- Baiu Mountains (<http://www.primaria-sinaia.ro/obiective-turistice/>);
- 16 ski slopes (<http://www.sinaia-ski.ro/Partii.html>).



<http://www.ski-in-romania.com/resort.php?id=27>

The climate is a characteristic of low-altitude mountain passes. Annual average temperature: 8 °C. Average temperature in June: 15 °C. Average

temperature in January: -4 °C. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sinaia>).

### Winter sport activities on mountain

<i>Traditional winter sport activities</i>	<i>Contemporary winter sport activities</i>
Skiing	Snowboarding
Cross-country skiing	Snowmobiling
Telemarking	Snowshoeing
Cat-skiing	Heli-skiing
Winter sports events	Parapente/hangliding
Ice-skating	Tubing
Horse-drawn sleigh	Dog sledging
Curling Tobogganing	Snow cycling
	Thrill-sleds/extreme sledging
	Ice-climbing Ice-drawing Ice sculpting
	Snow skating

Source: After Hudson, 2004

Winter sports embrace activities, ranging from ice-skating to ice climbing, but it is skiing that is the mainstay of the winter tourism industry (Markovic et al., 2013). The ski and snowboard industry has experienced remarkable growth in the last fifty years. It is estimated that today there are some 120 million skiers and snowboarders worldwide, with around 2,000 ski resorts in 80 countries catering to this important market. The physical exercise and tourism represent two activities which, together can contribute to life improvement (Teodor, 2006). In recent years, it is seen that relationship between tourism and sport is

increasing. Especially, the last part of 20th century, defined as a term that witnessed increase of sport and tourism rapidly (Higham et al, 2002). Skiing activities represent very important attributes of winter tourism, being at the same sport activities, generating an entire industry within mountain areas (Agrawala, 2007).

### Conclusions

Mountains are ideally places for doing sport, recreation and educational trip. In Romania mountain



tourism based on physical activity (skiing, snowboarding) and educational trip is considered one of the most popular forms of tourism, especially among young people. Ski resort-based tourism development brings many benefits to a region, including economic and income diversification, improvement of services and infrastructure, and the creation of "psychological stability" among residents. However, there are also several negative impacts, including environmental damage, landscape changes, social confrontation between those who support and reject tourism, and degradation of cultural and urban heritage. Winter tourism depends on good snow conditions and the quality of the ski slopes.

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