

## **AUTHENTIC ROMANIAN AND RURAL TOURISM IN THE SUB-CARPATHIAN MUNTENIA AREA. ORIGINAL CASE STUDY "SATUL BANULUI GUEST HOUSE"**

**Carina Andreia DOBRE, Adina Magdalena IORGA, Paula STOICEA**

University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest, 59 Marasti Blvd,  
District 1, Bucharest, Romania, Emails: dobrecarina@yahoo.com, iorga\_adinam@yahoo.com,  
stoicea.paula@gmail.com

**Corresponding author:** dobrecarina@yahoo.com

### **Abstract**

*In contradiction with globalization, we meet the increasingly current of conservation of the traditional regional specificity of each area in Romania, the trend also found in other European countries. The study aims to promote the authentic traditional in a guest house representative for the sub - Carpathian Muntenia area. In this sense, we observe the development of rural tourism in the Sub Carpathian Muntenia area, presenting a case study based on a private tourism initiative. The guest house from "Satul Banului", Măgureni, Prahova, consists of a set of buildings organized in a specific smallholder property, which offers tourist services: accommodation, local gastronomy and tourist-cultural routes, all in the spirit of a peaceful, specific life. We argue for the traditional authentic value of each element, through a careful documentation that we will present punctually, using bibliographic references from the ethnographic and monographic literature as well as original local sources. Promoting the authentic Romanian, through a private initiative in tourism, proves to be a successful way, which draws attention to the traditional local specificity, helps to preserve the characteristic ethnographic elements.*

**Key words:** authentic, traditional, Muntenian household, rural tourism

### **INTRODUCTION**

Despite the last 20 years trend towards globalization in Romania (EU integration), preserving the specific values of the regions, the traditional elements /resources characteristic of each area in Romania, are elements found also in other European countries. In this sense, we observe the local specific tourism development in the sub-Carpathian Muntenia area, presenting a case study based on a private tourism initiative, which strongly reflects the Romanian authenticity of this province. Each of the elements that make up this rural household, as a local socio-economic nucleus (buildings, functions of buildings, exterior and interior decorations, customs, gastronomy) can be found in the tourist offer for amateurs for traditional with local specifics.

In this context, the purpose of the paper is to promote the authentic traditional in a guest house that is representative of the sub-Carpathian Muntenia area more exactly it is about Satul Banului Guest House, 702c

Vlaicu Street, Măgureni village, 107350, Prahova County, Romania [15].

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Promoting the authentic Romanian through a private initiative in tourism, proves to be a successful way, which draws attention to the traditional local specificity, and helps to preserve the characteristic ethnographic elements.

In fact, in contradiction with globalization, we meet more and more the current of conservation of the traditional regional specificity, characteristic of each area in Romania, this trend is also found in other European countries.

In this sense, we observe the development of local tourism in this province, presenting a case study based on a private tourism initiative which strongly reflects the Romanian authenticity of this province.

The paper is based on the description of the exterior and interior of the guest house with

its specific items reflecting the fold architecture and decorations.

The information were collected directly from the owner of the guest house who allowed to be presented an promoted within this research work.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The guest house from Satul Banului, Măgureni village, Prahova, consists of a group of buildings organized in a typically local smallholder property – named "gospodărie moșnenească" which offers tourist services: accommodation, local gastronomy and tourist-cultural routes, all in the spirit of a peaceful, specific life, of old village courtyard that preserves the Muntenian lifestyle.

The village is documented in 1526 and developed until 1897 as the village of Măgureni Banului [2].

It is a hilly area, full of forests, meadows, and springs and is part of a larger area, metaphorically called "under the mountain Muntenia", a sub-Carpathian zone, located south of the Carpathian Mountains and north of the Romanian Plain, from the Olt River on the west to the Buzau area on the east [4].

The village was formed at the intersection of two extremely important trade routes, near Provița River. The most important road was the Trade Road on which the Dacians transported salt. This road was part of the "Silk Road". The second road, perpendicular to the first, appeared with the development of the King's Road from Prahova Valley, to Câmpina where custom was located. For those who wanted to bypass the toll point, and there were many of them, the Provița Valley was the best alternative.

After reaching the left bank of Prahova and leaving Comarnic, the traders turned right over the water towards Gura Beliei, Târsa Valley, and from here they went down on Provita Valley until they crossed with Târgoviște trade road. Practically all those coming or going to Transylvania to avoid the customs, passed and stopped through the Satul Banului area [5].

A characteristic of the peasant household, especially the old one in this region, is the tendency to withdraw the house towards the middle of the lot that forms the yard, even in the villages drawn to the road line, the house remains towards the bottom of the yard [3]. (Photo 1).

The façade of the house is oriented to the south and only sometimes the houses on the right side of the roads (generally in a north-south direction) face the road and therefore to the east at the same time.

The traditional household in this area includes the main house, stable, hay deposit, food and drinks storage, cellar, summer kitchen, or even craft workshop, due to specific occupations. The fencing of this big household is traditionally made of wooden gutters, the traditional type has the quality of being "transparent", so the perception of public and private space is unitary. All these buildings can be merged or isolated but are usually located independently of the main house [10]. (Photo 1).

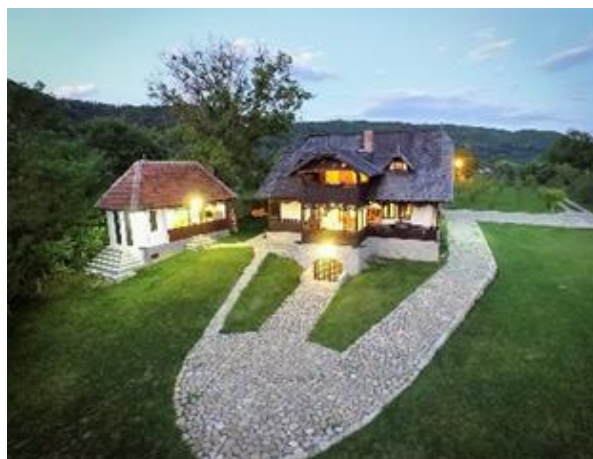


Photo 1. Main house with a pavilion, towards the middle of the lot that forms the yard

Source: Satul Banului Guest House [15].

The main house is a tall house with a pavilion. Defined by the placement of the porch and the pavilion and considering the number of rooms and entrances, we find several types of house plans in the presented region. The most common is the one with two rooms with a single entrance. In our case, the 3-room type was chosen, with two entrances and a porch with a pavilion. The pavilion is centrally positioned, the porch is fenced with a

"parmalâc", along the entire length of the house, and with wooden lace poles specific to the area. The specific volumetry in this area is 0.5/ 1/ 1, with a four-pitched roof, with spikes or bolts at the top of the roof, with double-pitched skylights. The roof is covered with broken oak shingles, beaten in 3 or 4 rows. The windows had a cross at the bottom to protect against evil spirits. The house has on the ground floor a cellar with the entrance usually through the base of the pavilion, a front entrance of the cellar named "gârlici". In order to enter the cellar, there are two doors, the first made of crossed and joined in half thick slats - "zăbrele" and the second, at the entrance to the cellar, built on the wall line of the floor, massive, strong, door closed with a padlock [10].

The specific interior of the house includes some basic elements: plastered and whitewashed walls, ceilings with exposed beams hatched carved and fir plank floors. In the large room, on the opposite corner of the entrance there is a large brick stove with a hob, the dowry box on the opposite wall to the stove, placed on a bench [16, 17] (Photo 2).



Photo 2. The living room with a large brick stove  
Source: Satul Banului Guest House [15].

The table with the chairs, the bed, the cabinets without doors, are decorated with great finesse perforated or inlaid geometric motifs. In the "clean" room we find a stove without a hob and a bed decorated with chisels and perforations at the bar that surrounds it on three sides. Also, here we find a high table with drawers. In the whole house there are tassels, supports, hangers made of a fir stalk with the legs up, on which are hanged cups,

woolen tools, and sometimes pieces of smoked cheese made in patterns [16, 17]. Inside the houses in the Prahova area, the current and decorative fabrics with vegetal and anthropomorphic motifs are remarkable from a chromatic point of view: pillows, rugs, wiping, walling, decorative plates which give the interior a sumptuous look [18, 19]. (Photos 3 and 4).



Photo 3. Bedroom interior with decorative fabrics - walling  
Source: Satul Banului Guest House [15].



Photo 4. Interior decorative fabrics – decorative plates, walling  
Source: Satul Banului Guest House [15].

The main annex is the stable, with two rooms, left and right and in the center a gangway with a role of passage and shelter for harness and chariots. It has the same volume, a gabled roof and the hay deposit is present on the first floor, the access to this being made through a central skylight.

The hay deposit has the bars, beaten obliquely, and is made 0.5-0.7m out of the console [10] (Photo 5).

The summer kitchen is traditionally present in all courtyards, it is equipped with a foot stove, oven and a hob. The roof is made in one rafter, supported on four legs and a fixed work table with two or four legs, embedded in the ground (Photo 6).



Photo 5. The stable and hay store  
Source: Satul Banului Guest House [15].



Photo 6. Summer kitchen interior  
Source: Satul Banului Guest House [15].



Photo 7. The corn warehouse — loft on pillars  
Source: Satul Banului Guest House [15].

The corn warehouse (loft on pillars), built of woven twigs, retains the important stock of corn.

It is built on 6-8 pillars, about 3-4 meters high, the access being made through a staircase [10] (Photo 7).

The villagers worked with wood, a source of raw material for practicing the trades of carpenters, and others. In order to complete the household, it was absolutely necessary to build the craft workshop, which contains the original equipment used in carpentry. Specific to the workshop are the small windows frameworks, the porch that was used to dry wood materials in the sunny days.



Photo 8. Craft workshop interior  
Source: Satul Banului Guest House [15].



Photo 9. Craft workshop exterior  
Source: Satul Banului Guest House [15].

In order to be inhabited, the craft workshop has a bedroom in the attic and a living room downstairs [16, 17]. (Photo 8 and 9).

The wealthy villagers' traditional houses were made of masonry walls, with plaster ornamentation, and window frames with wooden ornaments, perforations including traditional symbolic elements.

They have a special value maintained on the basis of an old and strong tradition and proves

the social status of the owner [11, 9, 8].  
(Photo 10).



Photo 10. Wooden ornaments, perforation in the pavilion  
Source: Satul Banului Guest House [15].

As a peculiarity of Satul Banului village, almost 80% of the households had a lime kiln in the yard - "varnița".

Tourists come to stay "in the yard" and for this purpose the buildings that are part of the household have acquired functions specific to accommodation and meals. Thus, the stable is reorganized as a dining room and relaxation area, the hay deposit is divided into 3 rooms with private bathroom, the corn warehouse has two rooms with individual bathroom and the craft workshop is arranged as a house with ground floor and an attic and can accommodate up to 4 people. Each of these household buildings is decorated inside with traditional elements in full accordance with the interior elements of the main house. This recreates the old ambiance in the present modern comfort (Photo 11 and 12).



Photo 11. Inside traditional elements - walling  
Source: Satul Banului Guest House [15].



Photo 12, Inside with traditional elements – decorative plate and walling  
Source: Satul Banului Guest House [15].

If you step into the atmosphere of the Muntenian village and you know their true values, you will notice that in fact Muntenia hides a much more beautiful and much richer history than the ones you have heard so far in this country, with worthy personalities who have honored this nation.

The multitude of historical relics in these places and the people who brought them to life make of it our duty to promote and bring to light all their stories. Even though some have been "mutilated" by times and history and are almost unrecognizable, they are part of the real and beautiful history of this nation. From this point of view a great advantage of this pension is given by the fact that the distance to the farthest historical /cultural objective is less than 50 km and an hour by car, no road to the proposed objectives does not overlap with another busy road on Prahova Valley.

On the way to the Iulia Hasdeu Museum, you can visit the ruins of the Mavros Cantacuzino Palace, the Măgureni Church, the ruins of the Drăghici Cantacuzino Palace, the Ruins of Lady Stanca's Princely Court and the Memorial House Nicolae Grigorescu. You cannot miss Little Trianon from Florești that was erected by Gheorghe Grigore Cantacuzino (Nababul) the richest man in Romania of 19th century and designed by architect Ion Berindei and also Drăghici Cantacuzino's Palace "The Wonder of Magureni". Pană Filipescu Mansion, was erected in the 18th century by Pană Filipescu,

the husband of Maria Cantacuzino, the eldest daughter of Postelnicul Cantacuzino. Over time, the manor degraded and it was restored between 1968 and 1971 and now is a splendid museum.

Many of the village's customs are from the pre-Christian period, the Getae period and the Roman period (carols) [7].

One of these customs, like shouting over the village/ over the hills, as it was called in the village, symbolizes the beginning of the new agricultural year [7]. In the Christian period this custom was practiced in the evening before the beginning of Easter fasting the coincides with the new agricultural year. Dialogues on tabu subjects dialogue taking place over the village and all the people listening to what was said. Children's choir, which was held the night before Christmas Eve. Groups formed in the morning, leaving the village singing carols, the girls had triads and the boys had "carols" (wooden sticks) in their hands [6, 7].

Eaters of wild mushrooms - "burețari", of pies - "plăcintari", of potatoes "cartofari" or brandy drinkers - "țuicari", are the nicknames that the inhabitants of the area have received over time. And these are completely justified because Satul Banului is also an area rich in extremely tasty wild forest mushrooms. Radu Anton Roman mentioned in one of his books that "between Cheia and Tismana, in all the Wallachian under the mountain villages, I ate corn cakes with anything or as anything" [13]. Throughout the household there are many common spaces, which bring us together, to rejoice that we are together, to give us peace and respite to know the customs of the place, to taste with pleasure the dishes prepared according to traditional recipes, but reinterpreted.

The culinary habits of the place are brought to the fore, stories about the dishes that the housewives made on certain holidays or on other special occasions. We value the fruits of the earth and tell our guests that the vegetables from our or the villagers' gardens are put on the table, and we get the meat products from the small local farms. We like to honor our guests with Dealul Mare wines and homemade brandy - "țuica". Quality is

our best business card and we do not discount it and, along with cleanliness, it impresses anyone who crosses our doorstep.

The most sought after and most promoted dishes made at the pension are: tăbârca - baked pumpkin with walnut milk and honey (Photo 12), wild mushrooms soup, onion of Câmpina - cheese and tomato paste in an onion, sărățele - salted Muntenians bakery, mâncare de orez cu prune loșnite - rice food with dried smoked plums, măcinici - cooked pasta with nuts and cinnamon (Photo 13).



Photo 12. Tăbârca

Source: Satul Banului Guest House [15].

Although it is cooked subtly, elaborately, with jeweler's ticks - something unusual for a "peasant" dish - the "ingredients" are elementary, of a primary simplicity " said Radu Anton Roman [12].



Photo 13. Măcinici

Source: Satul Banului Guest House [15].

The process of economic and social transformation, with industrial transport

system development, the modern, intensive tourism, the influences of modern construction techniques, have gradually determined the disappearance of the old village architecture. In this context, the restoration of some old houses, the reconstruction of some traditional households, to bringing back to the tourists the customs and traditions in a setting as close as possible to the original one, represents a tendency to approach the authentic traditional values.

This tendency to return to traditional values is found everywhere in Europe, each region is thus distinguished by its local specificity and preserves traditional values. Promoting these values through tourism is a viable solution along with promotion actions through ethnographic culture institutions.

More and more agrotourism pensions in Romania, gathered in rural profile associations, such as ANTREC (National Romanian Association for Rural, Ecologic and Cultural Tourism) [1], offer tourist accommodation services, local gastronomy and tourist routes oriented towards Romanian traditions and customs specific to different areas of the country.

In this sense, the Satul Banului Guest House was recognized by Romanian Association of Tourism Journalists and Writers in 2019 for the way of life and by the boarding of ANTREC for the quality of the services offered to the tourists and for the preservation of the authentic Muntenian with the Golden Daisy award in 2021 (Photo 14 and 15).



Photo 14. Diploma - Golden Daisy award 2021

Source: ANTREC, 2021 [1].



Photo 15. Diploma -The way of life 2019

Source: Romanian Association of Journalists and Writers of Tourism from Romania [14].

## CONCLUSIONS

Promoting the authentic Romanian, through a private initiative in tourism, proves to be a successful way, which draws attention to the local traditional specificity, helps to preserve the characteristic ethnographic elements and offers the possibility to experience a complex, beautiful and peaceful life like our ancestors.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research work was carried out with the support of Satul Banului Guest House, which provides the original photos and documents with permission for publication.

## REFERENCES

- [1]ANTREC, National Agency for Rural, Ecological and Cultural Tourism 2022, <https://www.antrec.ro/>, Accessed on 18.01.2022.
- [2]Brătescu, P., Moruzi, I., Alessandrescu, C., 1897, Prahova County Geographical Dictionary, Viitorul Printing House, Bucharest, pp.257-259.
- [3]Ciobotea, D., 2010, The history of the Mosnenilor, Vol. I, Part I. (1829-1912), Tipo Moldova Publishing House, Iasi, p.67.
- [4]Cosmoiu, A., Zecheru, I., 2001, The Provitei Valley, Granada Publishing House, Bucuresti, pp.32-33.
- [5]Enachescu, D., M., 2001, At our home, Măgureni Commune Monograph, Prahova County, Relal Promex SRL Publishing House, Ploiești, pp.60-63.
- [6]Ghinoiu, I., 2004, The paths of the soul, Etnologica Publishing House, Bucuresti, pp.38,39.
- [7]Ghinoiu, I, 1997, Popular customs over the yaers. Dictionary, Romanian Cultural Foundation Publishing House, Bucuresti, pp.48,49,52,128.

- [8]Hoinarescu, C., Hoinarescu, M., 2013, The traditional rural habitat of Prahova, Restitutio Edit Publishing House, Ploiesti, pp.36-39.
- [9]Ionescu, G., 1957, Romanian folk architecture, Tehnica Publishing House, Bucuresti, pp.160.
- [10]Order of Architects of Romania, 2017, Architecture Guide for framing in the local specifics of the rural area - Prahova Subcarpatica Zone, pp. 14,15,17,48.
- [11]Panoiu, A., 1977, From wood architecture, Tehnica Publishing House, Bucuresti, pp. 87,88,158,159.
- [12]Roman, R. A., 2016, Romanian dishes, wines and customs, Paideia Publishing House, București, pp. 401, 423.
- [13]Roman, R. A., 2008, Romanian dishes, wines and customs. the Banat and the Hilly Muntenia, Paideia Publishing House,, Bucuresti, pp. 14-15, 25.
- [14]Romanian Association of Tourism Journalists and Writers, 2019.
- [15]Satul Banului Guest House, Măgureni village, Prahova County, <https://satulbanului.ro/>, Accessed on 22.02.2022.
- [16]Stanculescu, F., Gheorghiu A., Stahl P., Petrescu, P., 1957, Romanian folk architecture. Ploiesti Region, Poligrafica Enterprise no.4 Publishing House, pp.37-41.
- [17]Stanculescu, F., Gheorghiu A., Stahl, P., Petrescu, P., 1958, Romanian folk architecture, Pitești Region, Poligrafica Enterprise no.4 Publishing House, p.18.
- [18]Stoica, G., 1989, Romanian folk architecture, Meridiane Publishing House, Bucuresti, pp.31-37
- [19]Stoica, G., 1973, The interior of teh peasant house, Meridiane Publishing House, Bucuresti, pp.27-30.