



Riding in the Carpathians

High Elevation Equestrian Ecotourism





Riding in the Carpathians

A journey for the soul in the very heart of wilderness

A riding tour inside a national park is totally different from any other trip in the mountains, as one can see here rare plant and animal species protected within the park. Caves with prehistoric cave paintings, waterfalls exceeding 90 m in height, spectacular gorges, stone megaliths sculptured by wind and rain within thousands of years or, maybe, by the ancient inhabitants of the area, are only some of the nature beauties that sheltered by the four parks: the Apuseni, Călimani, Măcin and Rodna Mountains.

“Riding in the Carpathians” is not only a trip inside the core of nature, it is the voyage in time of the soul, because up there, in the mountains, time runs slowly, gently, and the technology of the 3rd millennium has little affected a rural life which is still intact, as genuine and beautiful as a visit to a live Village Museum.



CĂLARE ÎN
CARPAȚI

Ecoturism equestru
în srijinul
comunităților.

The project “Riding in the Carpathians” aims at using Equestrian tourism as an ecotourism alternative for the development of the communities around or within protected areas in Romania, to support nature conservation on the medium and long term. The parks in Măcin, Apuseni, Rodna and Călimani mountains have been chosen for the development of this form of tourism because in these areas there already exist small horse riding activity cores both under the direct administration of the parks and in the local communities.



Equestrian tourism in Padiș, Apuseni Mountains, 1907.

EQUESTRIAN ECOTOURISM IN THE CARPATHIANS

Nature protection and development of local communities

WHAT IS ECOTOURISM? Ecotourism is that type of tourism in which the tourists observe and appreciate nature and the local traditions in the nature areas making use of local services, actively supporting the initiatives of nature conservation and taking part in tourist programmes of exceptional quality and professionalism.

Equestrian tourism is in full development. There were few equestrian centres and horse breeders at the beginning, but they have developed rapidly and today there is a National Committee of Equestrian Tourism (C.N.T.E.), which groups all of them and provides the training of specialised guides.



HORSES

The horses used for the tours are calm, well balanced, and capable of sustained effort. They are used to extreme weather conditions and sudden changes of the weather because in the mountains the weather is unpredictable.

Depending on the area, for the equestrian tours, the breeds of horses used are Lipizzan, Shagya Arabian and Hutul, or local breeds such as Apuseni or Bucovina mountain horses.

EQUESTRIAN TOURISM GUIDES

They were born in the mountainous area and have spent most of their lives along the trails in the mountains, always looking for pure nature and real life. In their company, tourists feel safe and at home everywhere.

TYPES OF EQUESTRIAN ROUTES

Beginners may experience the delight of long rides at a walking pace in an attractive environment, while experienced riders may enjoy trotting and galloping across longer areas.



Those who are attracted by horses but do not want to ride, may discover the beauty of nature from carriages or covered wagons.

Riding Trails cover long distances and the circuit routes require advanced techniques and the capacity to resist long hours in the saddle.

Stationary Riding Trails offer our guests the opportunity to visit different objectives, while feeling at home in one location, a guesthouse or a shelter.

Most of the horseback programmes can be adapted to the requirements of

our clients. There are available:

- Programmes for experienced riders.
- Programmes for occasional riders.
- Programmes for children and beginners.
- Special (luxury) equestrian programmes.

GOOD TO KNOW

- Duration of an equestrian programme: 5–6 hours on horseback/day.
- Riders must be in good physical and psychological condition, able to spend several hours in the saddle each day.
- Required equipment for equestrian tours: light boots (high boots), chaps (1/2 chaps), raincoat, front electric torch, riding gloves, UV cream.
- In the mountains, 25 km on the map, equivalent to 30–35 km in the field/day.
- Mountain tours are better estimated in hours than in kilometres.



Located in the west of Romania, in the central and northwestern part of the Apuseni Mountains, including part of Bihor and Vlădeasa massifs and covers an area of 75,784 ha.

i Headquarters: Sudrigiu, commune Rieni, Romania, 417419
Web: www.parcapuseni.ro / www.apuseniexperience.ro
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North: E60 Oradea - Huedin - Cluj-Napoca.
West: E79 Oradea - Beiuș - Deva.
South: DN75 Ștei - Câmpeni - Turda.

✈ Cluj-Napoca International Airport.

There are three visitor and tourist information centres: on Padiș Plateau, and in the villages Gârda de Sus and Doda Piliș.



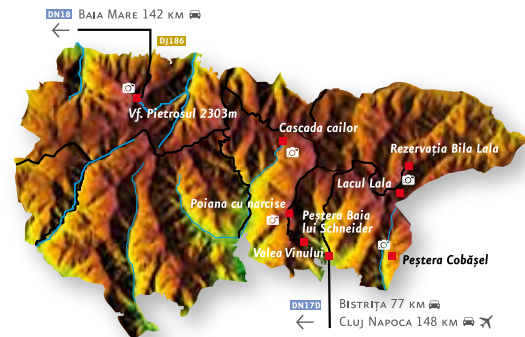
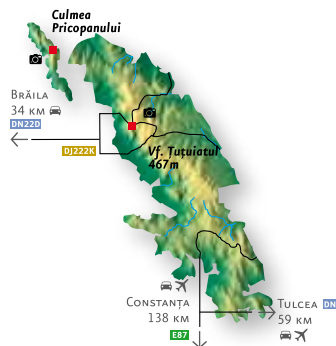
It is situated in North East Romania, in the Eastern Carpathians, on most part of Călimani massif, covering an area of 24,041 hectares. Access: communes Drăgoiașa, Gura Haitii, Poiana Negri, Dorniașoara (Suceava county), Colibița (Bistrița-Năsăud), Răstolița, Lunca Bradului (Mureș county), Toplița and Bilbor (Harghita county).

i Headquarters: 22 Decembrie street, no. 5, Vatra Dornei, 725700
Web: www.calimani.ro / www.taradornelor.ro
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Tel./fax: +40 230/371104, 374197

✈ E576 / DN17 Suceava - Vatra Dornei - Bistrița-Năsăud, to Vatra Dornei and Poiana Stampei.
DN15 Tulgheș - Toplița - Rastolita - Târgu Mureș, with park entrances at Toplița, Lunca Bradului and Rastolita.

✈ Suceava Airport and Cluj-Napoca International Airport.



NATIONAL PARK

MĂCIN MOUNTAINS

Located in the north of the Dobrugea Plateau. It covers an area of 11,141 ha and represents a miniature synthesis of two continents: Europe and Asia.

i Headquarters 1: Tulcea, 9 Mai street, no. 4 bis
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E-mail: macinparc.tulcea@rosilva.ro

🚗 DN22D / DC51 Greci (Valea Morsu, Valea Racova, Cozluk and Valea Plopilor).
DN22D / DN22A Măcin (Valea Regiei and Fântâna de Leac).
DN22A Luncavița (Cetățuia).
DN22D Cerna (Valea Cernei and Valea cu Frâsinți).
DJ222A / DN22D Hamcearca (Valea Vinului).

✈ Tulcea Airport.

NATIONAL PARK

RODNA MOUNTAINS

Is situated in the central part of Rodna Mountains, in the Eastern Carpathians, covers a surface of 46,399 ha.

i Headquarters: Rodna, Principală street, no. 1.445, 427245, Bistrița-Năsăud county.
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🚗 DN17D, DN17C, DN18, through acces points Rotunda, Valea Blaznei, Cobășel, Valea Vinului, Anieș, Cormaia, Parva, Telciu, Romuli, Dealul Ștefăniței, Pasul Șetref, Dealul Moisei, Moisei - Izvorul Dragoș.
North: Borșa - Pietroasa, Buza Muntelui or Complex.
North-East: DN18, through Cărlibaba.

✈ Cluj-Napoca International Airport.

NATURE PARK

Apuseni

The Nature Park Apuseni equally belongs to people and wild animals. In the helmets scattered on the top of the mountains, the villagers live their lives according to ancient rhythms, and archaic traditions and beliefs are still alive. Meadows and forests cover large areas of tens of kilometres and nothing but the neigh of horses freely running through glades perturbs the tranquillity of the mountain. Deep underground, the park hides 1,500 caves and avens, the largest fossil glacier in South-eastern Europe, and over 25,000 years old cave paintings.



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The depths of the gentle ridges of Apuseni Mountains hide a true underground world – over 1,500 caves and avens covering tens of kilometres.



APUSENI · A Park for nature and people

The Apuseni Mountains are gentle, covered with enchanted forests full of mystery and pastures that feed a large number of animals. Deciduous and coniferous forests alternate with grazing lands where almost the entire European flora is to be found: arnica, rosebay, and thousands other medicinal herbs represent a true nature pharmacy; people living here know very well such herbs and use them in everyday life.

ITINERARY „RIDING IN APUSENI”

Sights: Cetățile Ponorului, Lumea Pierdută, Vălul Miresii Waterfall, Beliş-Fântânele Reservoir, Valea Firii Cave, Someșul Cald Gorges, Scărișoara.

+ **Duration:** 7 days.

+ **Trail:** Doda Piliu – Padiș – Cetățile Ponorului – Șesul Padiș – Râchițele – Poiana Călineasa – Ghiurcuța – Someșul Cald Gorges – Scărișoara.

+ **Time of the year:** all year round, except for high elevation trails in wintertime.

+ **Difficulty:** medium.

+ **Type of programme:** tailored for each category of tourists.

+ **Accommodation and food:** local guesthouses or, at request, for adventure tourism, tent camps.

+ **Contact:** Association Descoperă Natura, www.ridingadventures.ro.

+ **Start point:** Doda Piliu.



CETĂȚILE PONORULUI. Represents the most grandiose karst phenomenon in Romania. The huge portal of Cetăților Ponorului suggests a gothic ogive, which has become the symbol of the Apuseni Mountains.



LUMEA PIERDUTĂ. Lumea Pierdută – name originated in the past wilderness of this area, is a forested plateau, bordered by Bear's Brook, Dry Brook and the southern ridge of Gârdișoara Peak. This area shelters the largest bear population in the park.

VĂLUL MIRESCII WATERFALL. A two-step cascade with an erosion marmite of 10 m diameter. In the opposite wall, one can see, at height, the entrance into the Șușman Cave, reminding of the resistance hero who

for more than 15 years turned this into his shelter, hiding from the Secret Police; being a symbol of the anti-communism resistance.

BELIȘ-FÂNTÂNELE RESERVOIR.

Storage lake created in 1970–1974 on the place of a former village. The lake, situated at an elevation of 990 m, covers an area of 9.8 km² and is 13 km long.

VALEA FIRII CAVE. Behind the portal of Valea Firii cave, over 40 km of underground galleries hide, and the potential for development is almost double. It is the place for training the survival techniques: knots, Tyrolean.



SOMEȘUL CALD GORGES. Offer picturesque sights of limestone steep slopes with a height exceeding 100

m, which go down to the bottom of the valley. Other sights are: the Moloh Canyon, Uscată Cave, Honu Cave, Tunelul Mic Cave, and the 110 m high Cuculății limestone wall. Beyond it, one can see the crest that links the ridges Piatra Arsă, Piatra Grăitoare, Vârful Briței and Piatra Tâlharului, to



continue towards Vlădeasa.

SCĂRIȘOARA. Scărișoara Glacier shelters the largest fossil ice deposit in Romania: 75,000 m³. The cave has a total length of 720 m, and a depth of 105 m. A 48 m deep aven with a diameter of 60 m provides the access inside. The cave is open to visitors.

NATIONAL PARK

Călimani

In Călimani, it is difficult to decide what to admire first: the steep ridges exceeding 2,000 m elevation, the shady fir forests, or the rosebay that in summer turns the alpine meadows red. The Călimani Mountains deserve particular attention due to the bizarre shapes of the stones at 12 Apostoli, the weird legends related to the area and the magnificent landscapes.



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The megalithic group 12 Apostoli, rocks shaped by the time into fantastic creatures, compared by many travellers to the megaliths in Easter Island.



CĂLIMANI · *The unrevealed mysteries of 12 Apostoli*

Călimani Mountains are some of the youngest mountains in Romania, with peaks exceeding a height of 2,000 m lined around the edge of a huge volcanic cone. The horseshoe shaped caldera inside the volcano, with a diameter of about 10 km, is one of the largest caldera in Europe.

ITINERARY "RIDING TOWARDS PIETRELE ROȘII"

Sights: Geological Reserve 12 Apostoli, Călimani Village Feast, Iezerul Călimanului Reserve, Negoii Ungureșc/Pietrosul.

+ **Duration:** 2 days.

+ **Trail:** Gura Haitii – Lucaci Peak – 12 Apostoli – Pietrele Roșii – Gura Haitii.

+ **Time of the year:** all year round, except for high elevation trails in wintertime.

+ **Difficulty:** medium.

+ **Type of programme:** tailored for each category of tourists.

+ **Accommodation and food:** in local guesthouses.

+ **Contact:** www.calimani.ro

+ **Start point:** the horse-riding centre of the Park, in Gura Haitii (in the north of Călimani National Park).

GEOLOGICAL RESERVE 12 APOSTOLI. The reserve includes several megalithic groups with fantastic shapes. The strangeness of these rocks challenged the imagination of the onlookers making some of them to compare these rocks with the megaliths on the Easter Island. Actually, they are the result of the weathering of the stone, erosion, thermal disaggregation, of the wind and rain acting together to

give the present shape to these rocks. Yet, the supposition of our ancestors having sculptured the rock fascinates many a mind.



CĂLIMANI VILLAGE FEAST. The statuary complex, the 12 Apostles, as well as Lucaci Peak (1,760 m) keep the testimony of magical-mythical events originated in the Dacian culture and transformed, in time, in forms of the Romanian orthodox faith. The ceremonies, known as "Moșii de la Călimani" or "Moșii de Sănpetru", organised on the top of the mountain during the summer solstice, have their origins in the ancient cult of the sun, of the fir tree and the fire and have as central element the cult of the ancestors.



IEZERUL CĂLIMANULUI RESERVE established in order to protect the landscape around the lake with the same name.

NEGOIUL UNGUREȘC/PIETROSUL is the highest and most spectacular ridge of Călimani, showing an alpine relief very different from the rest of the volcanic mountain range.



NATIONAL PARK

Măcin Mountains

Măcin Mountains, some of the first mountains of Europe, show at present only a few ridges that reach an elevation of 450 m above the sea level. Granite rocks, eroded by time, torrents, wind and rains, populate the rocky desert of the depressions between the peaks. Lunar rocky landscapes alternate with vividly coloured forest clusters, creating thus a fairytale world.



www.parcmacin.ro
Tulcea, t: +40 240/517718
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The million-year process of rock disaggregation has shaped these rocks to create a unique, mysterious and archaic landscape.



MĂCIN · The oldest mountains of Europe

The National Park Măcin Mountains is situated in the north of the Dobrougea Plateau. It covers an area of 11,141 ha and represents a miniature synthesis of two continents: Europe and Asia. Măcin National Park is a unique area in Europe where intermingle the climate, fauna and flora characteristics of the Pontic-Balkan steppe, Submediterranean forests, Asian and Central European elements.

ITINERARY "RIDING IN MĂCIN"

Sights: Troesmis fortress, Dinogetia fortress, sheep and goat breeding, beekeeping.

+ **Duration:** 1 day.

+ **Trail:** Cerna locality, paddock of National Park Măcin Mountains - Arsu Valley, Arsu Peak - Șaua Mare Peak - Arheziu Peak - Archizel Peak - Lifante Peak - Pietrele Albe Peak - Mengina Peak - Puturoasa Valley - paddock of the National Park Măcin Mountains.

+ **Time of the year:** all year round.

+ **Difficulty:** medium.

+ **Type of programme:** tailored for each category of tourists.

+ **Accommodation and food:** local guesthouses or, at request, in tent camps.

+ **Contact:** www.parcmacin.ro.

+ **Start point:** Cerna locality, the paddock of National Park Măcin Mountains.

The route goes up and down the gentle slopes of the peaks in the southern part of the park, spotted with steppe glades with rock formations, openings that provide large panoramas



over Cerna Depression and the south peaks of Măcin Mountains. Meadows alternate with forests and open woods. The riders leave the Park's paddock and follow an earth road that takes them through agriculture fields and vineyards towards the park perimeter where they meet, while riding up towards Arsu Peak, silvosteppe habitats (open forests with pubescent oak, oleaster-leaved pear tree, flowering ash and oriental hornbeam), steppe meadows and peak associations of saxicola. The descent goes through the noble grapes vineyards that cover Puturoasa Valley area.

SHEEP AND GOAT BREEDING. Sheep and goat breeding is a local tradition as well a necessity for the local population. Sheep and goats live and feed in ecological environment, on

works have revealed three defence earth embankments, a canal, two aqueducts, towers with horseshoe shaped corners, two Christian basilicas and the walls of several buildings.

DINOGETIA, ROMAN-BYZANTINE FORTRESS. The Roman-Byzantine fortress, is located on a small island named "Bisericița". The ruins were discovered in early 19th century. The oldest mention of the fortress belongs to Ptolemy (Dinodheteia), who accurately locates it. From the fortification existent in the 6th century, there is still standing the 3 m thick precincts wall, guarded by 14 towers. Inside the walls, there are the ruins of the oldest and most important basilica in Romania, some roads, agricultural and household tools indicating the military destination of the fortification.

the meadows with specific silvosteppe vegetation surrounding the park.

BEEKEEPING. This is an ancient occupation of the local people. Due to the mild climate, beekeepers from different areas of the country come with their beehives inside the park and keep their bees here from spring until late summer.

TROESMIS FORTRESS. In antiquity, Troesmis was an important strategic point. The first mention appears in Ovid's Epistulae ex Ponto. The research works have not yet covered the entire area. So far, the research



NATIONAL PARK

Rodna Mountains

The wild Rodna Mountains reveal their beauties at elevations exceeding 1,400 m. Nature gifted this apparently unfriendly massif with hard rock, forests that fearlessly touch the sky and mysterious waters. There are 23 glacial lakes within this park. The steep rocky ridges are the kingdom of the chamois, and shady nooks hide the marmots. The National Park Rodna Mountains is an UNESCO Biosphere reserve.



www.parcrodna.ro

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Lala Mare Lake, at 1,815 m altitude, is the kingdom of chamois and of some plant species that are unique in the world.



RODNA · Steep ridges where the chamois reign

Rodna Mountains National Park, situated in the central part of Rodna Mountains, in the Eastern Carpathians, covers a surface of 46,399 ha. The National Park Rodna Mountains offers a large variety of sights: glacial lakes, spectacular ridges, peaks reaching 2,300 m elevation, colourful meadows, and rare wild animals.

ITINERARY "RIDING TO THE DAFFODIL MEADOW"

Sights: The Daffodil Meadow, Lala Mare Lake, Izvorul Roșu – Valea Secii, Valea Vinului.

+ **Duration:** 1 day.

+ **Trial:** Valea Secii – the Daffodil Meadow – Izvorul Roșu – Valea Secii.

+ **Time of the year:** May - June, for observation of the white daffodils, June - October for observation of landscape, plants and animals.

+ **Difficulty:** medium.

+ **Type of programme:** tailored for each category of tourists.

+ **Accommodation and food:** in local guesthouses or mountain lodges.

+ **Contact:** www.parcrodna.ro

+ **Start point:** Valea Secii Lodge, in Valea Vinului commune, 6 km from Rodna commune (south of the National Park Rodna Mountains).



POIANA CU NARCISE. The Daffodil Meadow is located on the west side of Saca Mount, at 1,600 m and covers an area of 5 ha. In the blossom time, months of May and June, the sight of the meadow is unique: it becomes all white, as if late snow had fallen over the mountain already prepared for springtime.

LALA MARE LAKE. Situated in the glacial cirque Lala, at 1,815 m altitude, the largest glacial lake in Rodna Mountains covers an area of 5,637 m². Plant species rare among the Romanian flora grow in the land surrounding the lake, as well as the endemic *Silene nivalis* (Rodna Pink, or Lamp of Rodna Mountains).

IZVORUL ROȘU – VALEA SECII. An area covered with forests in which largely spread tree species (beech, fir and spruce), grow together with mountain elm, ash, sycamore maple, aspen, birch and even hornbeam, at lower elevation. The rock formations and meadows are rich in rare plant species: *Silene nivalis* (Lamp of Rodna Mountains) and edelweiss (*Leontopodium alpinum*).

VALEA SECII stream, tributary of Valea Vinului, forms a sector of the southern limit of the National Park Rodna Mountains. Here and there, along the banks, grey alder riverside coppice make a true shield against the erosion produced by the swift currents and the high flow resulted from rain or snow melting. Due to these ecosystems, the waters of the mountain streams are always clear and cold.



MĂGURA CASELOR. This "gigantic pyramid with rectangular base" shows, on the top, the remains of an ancient circumvolution. One can see inside it some wall ruins, rising above the grass. It is thought that the smaller mounds are hiding slug heaps resulted from gold and silver melted in the foundries that once existed here.

VALEA VINULUI. Village in Rodnei Mountains, established around mid 18th century, when gold and silver were discovered in the area. A large number of German, Hungarian, Polish, Czech, Italian and Romanian miners were brought in here to revitalise mining and to extract the precious metals from the soil. Although the mining activity stopped between 2005 and 2007, traces of it can still be seen in the village.

THE ASSOCIATION OF ECOTOURISM IN ROMANIA (AER)

in an innovative manner brings the public and private sectors together, in a partnership for nature conservation and sustainable tourism development.

AER contributes to the quality improvement of the ecotourism related services and promotes nature as an essential element of the Romanian tourist destination image.

The association addresses the development of ecotouristic services and infrastructure within the ecotouristic destinations, the nature conservation and the sustainable development in Romania.

Further information on the eco-touristic destinations promoted by AER and on the eco-certified products can be found in the map collection "Discover Eco-Romania".

www.eco-romania.ro

DESCOPERĂ NATURA ASSOCIATION (ADN)

is actively involved in creating environment and equestrian education programmes (outdoors riding stages and altitude equestrian ecotourism techniques) and in promoting altitude equestrian ecotourism in Apuseni Mountains.

www.ridingadventures.ro

ECORODNA ASSOCIATION

contributes to the development of the local communities through the development of alternative economic methods such as traditional products, ecotourism, etc. The main aim of the association is to know, monitor and preserve all biodiversity related aspects.

www.ecorodna.ro

DORNA ARINI, TOURISM, ECOLOGY AND CULTURE ASSOCIATION (ADATEC)

aims at promoting the equestrian tourism as ecological entertainment and education

form in Dornelor – Călimani area, especially in Vatra Dornei resort. In order to support this type of recreation, informal partnerships were concluded with all the guesthouses (120 tourist locations) in the area, which are included in the local promotion offer.

www.taradornelor.ro

THE ROMANIAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF EQUESTRIAN TOURISM (CNTE)

is a partnership for the development of equestrian tourism in Romania, for the implementation of equestrian tourism quality standards and for the safety and health guarantee of the horses and tourists involved in horse riding tours. CNTE is a member of the International Federation of Equestrian Tourism (FITE) since 2003.



www.eco-romania.ro • www.calareincarpati.com

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