

POIANA RUSCĂI: ONE MOUNTAIN AND TWO MONUMENTS

Ribana LINC *

University of Oradea, Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning,
University St., 410087, Oradea, Romania e-mail: ribanalinc@yahoo.com

Eugenia ȘERBAN

University of Oradea, Faculty of Environmental Protection, 26 Gen. Magheru St., 410048,
Oradea, Romania, e-mail: eugeniaserban@yahoo.com

Tudor CACIORA

PhD candidate, University of Oradea, Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning,
University St., 410087, Oradea, Romania e-mail: tudor.caciora@yahoo.com

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Abstract: A subunit of the Romanian Western Carpathians, Poiana Ruscăi Mountains are considered a complex with a medium concentration of tourist, natural and anthropogenic resources "National Territorial Plan, Section VI - Areas with tourism resources", but on this background, some outstanding tourism resources stand out, that is the two monuments from the early twentieth century dedicated to tourism, one from 1914 in Timiș County (common Nădrag), the other from 1936 in Caraș-Severin (commune Rusca Montană). This year marks the 105th anniversary of the edification of the Nădrag monument.

Key words: Poiana Ruscăi Mountains, Nădrag Tourist Monument, tourism resources, local economy

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INTRODUCTION

The relief is a first-rank element in shaping the tourism potential of a region, while also representing the support for all activities in the sphere of tourism. Of all the typologies that the relief has, no one gives the tourist the feeling of greatness, of freedom, of wildness, of loneliness deeper than the mountain (Blasco et al., 2013). Due to the very large spatial extent of the mountain areas, occupying about 24% of the planet's land, and the relatively homogeneous distribution within the continents, the mountain spaces are required to be very frequented by tourists (de la Cruz del Rio-Rama et al., 2018).

Mountain tourism is one of the most developed branches of this phenomenon (Brătucu et al., 2017), having a high economic profitability and folding on a wide typology of tourists (Kuscer et al., 2016; Herman et al., 2017). The mountain landscapes by their intrinsic value, the nature least disturbed by the human intervention that characterizes the mountainous areas and the varied opportunities for leisure (Herman et al., 2019; Nepal, 2002; Beza, 2010; Boller et al.,

* Corresponding Author

2010; Ilieş et al., 2017a; Ilieş et al., 2018), attract as a magnet a very large number of tourists from all over the world (Vujadinovic et al., 2013). Contributing with about 15-20% annually to global tourism and making up to \$ 90 billion in revenue each year (Mohd Taher et al., 2015), mountain tourism is the second type of tourism in terms of profitability, after the coastal tourism.

Romania is a country with a strong tourist vocation, due to the great diversity of the relief and the unique material heritage created over the centuries by the Romanian people (Cocean, 1998). And due to the approximately 28 percent of the total area of the country occupied by the Carpathian Mountains (Ilieş et al., 2017b), it is identified as one of the important destinations for mountain tourism at European level.

Poiana Ruscăi Mountains are a subgroup of the Western Romanian Carpathians (Ancuţa et al., 2012), which due mainly to low altitudes, do not stand out for their first rank tourist attractions, as compared to major relief units of the Romanian Carpathians. It is a less tourist promoted area, but which it also has a complex potential to be noticed due to the petrographic structure that gives rise to a diversified relief (volcanic, limestone, etc.), but also due to the numerous records of the habitation of these lands since ancient times, which are still preserved today as archaeological sites (Ciorogariu, 2009). The Poiana Ruscăi mountains have been over time research subject for numerous scientific studies (Toma and Lincă, 2013; Dobra et al., 2018; Chirilă et al., 2018; Golosie and Baliga, 2010) which were focused mainly on determining the tourism potential of this region and identifying new ways to promote it.

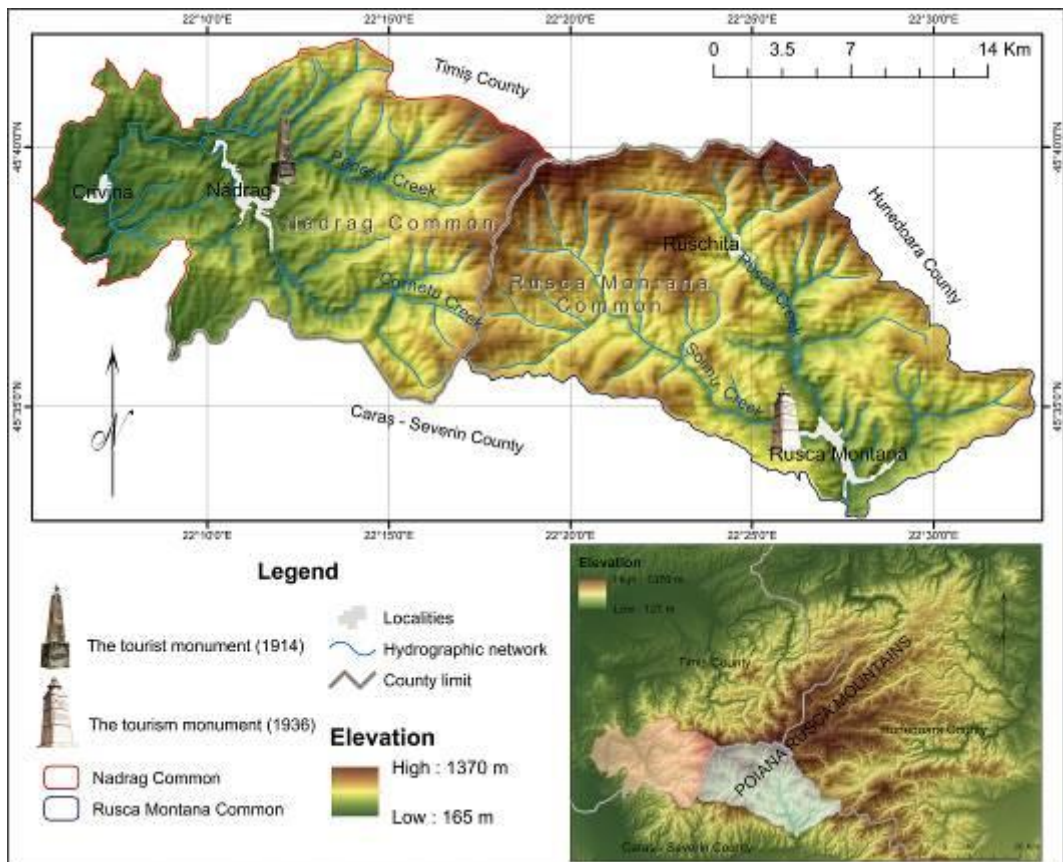


Figure 1. Geographical location of the two monuments in Poiana Ruscăi Mountains

As was shown above, there is no mountain unit that does not have its own resources with tourist attraction attributes. It is up to us whether and how we capitalize these resources and turn them into tourist attractions. Among the numerous anthropogenic attractions of Poiana Ruscăi Mountains (Ciorogariu, 2011), in this study we discuss about the two monuments dedicated to tourist / tourism and the implications they have on local communities and tourism development in the region (Herman, 2012; Herman and Benchiș, 2017; Herman et al., 2018). It is about two monuments in two neighboring communes, which belonging to different counties: the monument on the Cireșului creek, in Nădrag (Timiș county) and the marble monument from Ruschița - Rusca Montană (Caraș-Severin) (figure 1).

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Field study is the main tool we have used since there are no written documents in this regard, only oral stories that altered over time (there are less and less locals who lived in the early twentieth century and had direct contact with its realities). We turned to such elements of oral history ("life stories", „récit de vie”, "family history"- Știucă, 2006) and memories of Auntie Esterle Aurora (named Oronko) who worked at the cottage "Pescărie" (at the time when i used to stop there on my way home from school, but also later on, after going to the university) and those of my father's Imi Linc, who lived his childhood and youth "two steps" away from the cottage "Pescărie" and with the "forest train" passing by his family home. At the same time, ArgGis 10.6 and 3D Map Generator were used for mapping, and image processing was done in Adobe Photoshop CC 2015.5.

RESULTS

105th anniversary - Nădrag Tourist Monument

Back when tourism was merely a concept in our country, being anyway the prerogative of the rich, back when local people were working hard in steel industry (back then "The Iron Industry in Nădrag" - Linc et al., 2008) to earn their daily bread, in Nădrag village on the Cireș creek (a tributary of Padeșului valley), in the year of grace 1914, in cottage "Pescărie", located on one of the major access routes to the Pades Peak (this route isn't used anymore, it's barely known), lived Jahn Volgy, a passionate hunter and well acquainted to these lands, in charge of Nădrag forests.

We learned that Jahn Volgy, probably wanting to highlight the beauty of nature but also to leave a written record of his existence, engaged in erecting an unusual monument on this pathway to the heart of Poiana Ruscăi Mountains and stand there over centuries as a witness. Thus appeared the oldest monument in the country dedicated to the tourist, on which some verses in Hungarian are inscribed (figures 2, 3, 4), signed Jahn Volgy, 1914.

"HA AZ UTAD ERRE VEZET,
ÉLVEZNI E KIES HEYLET,
BORITSD FÁTYOLAL A GONDOD,
MERT KI FELED, AZ A-BOLDOG".

Located at an altitude of 350 m, the monument itself consists of three concrete blocks with the shape of a pyramid 3,20 m high, a 70 x 70 cm base and a 40 x 40 cm top. In its middle there is a bronze plaque which has inscribed the words above on. The monument does not mention explicitly if it is dedicated to the tourism or the tourist, but because it has a human figure in bronze with a backpack on top (figure 2), image that today is associated to a tourist who goes to the mountain, we may say that ... it is a monument dedicated to the tourist. Jahn Volgy is buried in Nădrag, in the old cemetery (called the "German Cemetery"), but nobody knows exactly where, as a part of the cemetery is overgrown with woody vegetation. After the death of Jahn Volgy, in the turbulent times that have succeeded over the twentieth century (the two world wars, changing political regimes), in an almost perpetual poverty, the people have slowly forgotten about this monument. Nestled at the base of the left slope of a valley which entered into obscurity after ceasing extraction of iron ore from Dâmbu cu Fier (not far from Padeș Peak), without any resonance echo today (Cireșului creek), although very old, not much is known

even in Nădrag about this monument, and many locals just know that it is somewhere on the "the Padeș" (meaning Padeșului Valley), not far from the "Pescărie".



Figure 2. The Tourist Monument on Cireșului creek (right) and the translation of these lyrics (left)
(photo: Nelu Balaș)



Figure 3. The lyrics in hungarian call at enjoying the beauty of the places
(photo: Nelu Balaș)



Figure 4. The year of raising this monument
(photo: Nelu Balaș)

In childhood (ie 40 years ago), my father Imi Linc used to tell us about "Monument", but he never took us there, saying that the forest grew over it.

No indicator anywhere, no visible sign of existence speak of this old monument. It is our reliable collaborator Nelu Balaș's merit (without a doubt, the best knower of the whole massif of Poiana Ruscăi), that after 1990 the existence of this monument was brought to the public (even the locals) this Tourist Monument and ever since he has been desperately trying to insert it in the tourist circuit, often taking there various groups (larger or smaller) of tourists, in this way hoping to promote this objective orally. In the early '90s Nelu together with some friends of his and his brother Tudor "cleared the

"Monument's surroundings and next to it they erected a wooden billboard on which they put a metal sheet (coming from the "Ciocanul" Plant from Nădrag) and translated the lyrics in Hungarian (Mr. Szelle Ladislau) (figure 5) for the visitor to understand the message of their authors over the centuries.

„If in your way you pass through here,
 Enjoying these charming places,
 Drop the oblivion veil over worries and thoughts,
 For only the one who forgets can be happy”.



Figure 6. Ensemble “Tourist Monument”

(photo: Nelu Balaș)



Figure 7. Towards the Tourist Monument, on Cireșului creek

(photo: Nelu Balaș)

And to avoid any misunderstanding of the message, on the panel that bears the translated lyrics, Nelu Balaș and his brother Tudor Balaș, specified "The Tourist Monument, 1914". It just seems to be missing the phrase "You, tourist !", followed by the flow of four lines: " If in your way you pass through here ..." (figures 5, 6).

Since translations sometimes give rise to heated discussions, we have asked two opinions on the translation of the lyrics from Mrs. Elizabeth Rozin, teacher and Mr. St. Nistor Lecturer (Hungarian speaking). It can be seen that there are no major background differences, so the 20 year old translation can stay where it is now, that is on the panel next to the monument.

In Romanian

Varianta d-nei Elisabeta Rozin
 Dacă drumul te aduce pe-aici
 Să savurezi acest loc,
 Acoperă-ți necazurile cu un voal,
 Căci cine uită, va fi fericit.

Varianta d-lui Stelian Nistor
 Dacă drumul tău ajunge pe aici,
 Să te bucuri de acest loc,
 Acoperă-ți gândul cu o năframă,
 Pentru că fericit este cel care poate să uite.

In English

Translation of Mrs. Elizabeth Rozin
 If your way brings you through here
 Savour this place,
 Cover your troubles with a veil,
 For he who forgets shall be happy.

Translation of Mr. Stelian Nistor
 If your way brings you through here,
 Enjoy this place,
 Cover your thoughts with a veil
 For happy is he who can forget.

At the present time, the monument is quite degraded, concrete being "pinched" by the action of exogenous factors (much moisture because of its location in the forest, near the bed of a creek, in a narrow, shaded valley) and both the base of the monument and the main body, on which the inscription plate is, are overgrown with moss. This year - 2019 marks the 105th anniversary of the construction of the Nădrag Tourist Monument. The same Nelu Balaş has been struggling to make it known to the world through as many channels of information as possible, but so far there has been no echo from local and regional authorities.

Much closer to the cottage "Pescărie", on the left side of Cireşului Creek, there is another Ruschiţa marble plate (indirectly illustrating the communication between two rural communities: Ruschiţa and Nădrag), installed by the same Jahn Volgy with an inscription on hunting, only the hunters' fervor of the contemporary locals has expanded over it, so it is now all holes after being "hunted" with the rifle.

Compared to Tourism Monument, carved in Ruschiţa marble (which rivals the famous marble of Cararra), the monument on Cireşului Creek impresses not only by design or construction material, but also by its age and the scent of history that it denotes.

Nădrag - Tourist Monument trail on the Cireşului creek

Nădrag commune is linked to the network of settlements outside the Poiana Ruscăi Mountains through the county road DJ 681 (Lugoj - Făget) (from the intersection with DN6 / E70), thus providing communication with the towns Lugoj and Făget. You can get to Nădrag by bus (which has four roundtrip rides a day) leaving from the bus terminal „Atlasib” in Lugoj and its stations in the town (at Parc and Stadium) or by car on the route Lugoj - Caransebeş (E70), from the intersection with DJ 681.

There are three bus stops in Nădrag: the "Red Block", the "Cityhall" and the "Green market" which is the last stop (or most upstream). From the last bus stop the access to the Tourist Monument is very simple and easy.

This monument is at a short distance from the last house in Nădrag (str Padeş, no. 69) (figure 8) (2.5 km) and requires almost no sustained physical effort to reach it, an easy walk is enough (about 30-40 minutes walk). Here ends the freshly paved road of Padeş street and you have to follow the valley upstream on a not long ago forest road (it is now a communal road DC 140!) until you get to the old cottage at the "Pescărie" (in the early twentieth century there really was a trout fishery here, you can still see the old pools overgrown with brambles and bushes).

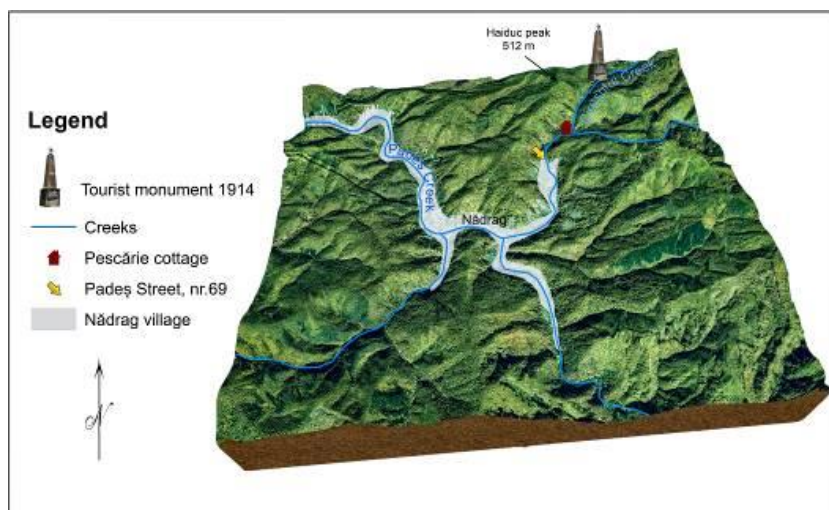


Figure 8. Topographic background

One can also use the old "wagon road" called "the old road" which is on the left side walk upstream on the bank of Pades, past the last house (currently under reconstruction). It has been destroyed on a 10 m length by a slide of the ground covertures on a slope (the story is old, happened about 30 years ago, the rock is now exposed, nothing else happens) but it is interesting because it goes right through the forest and is slightly cooler in summer.



Figure 10. Cottage „Pescărie” on the right bank of Cireșului creek, at the confluence with Padeș (photo: Ribana Linc)



Figure 11. Nădrag forest nursery on the left bank of Cireșului creek at the confluence with Padeș (photo: Ribana Linc)

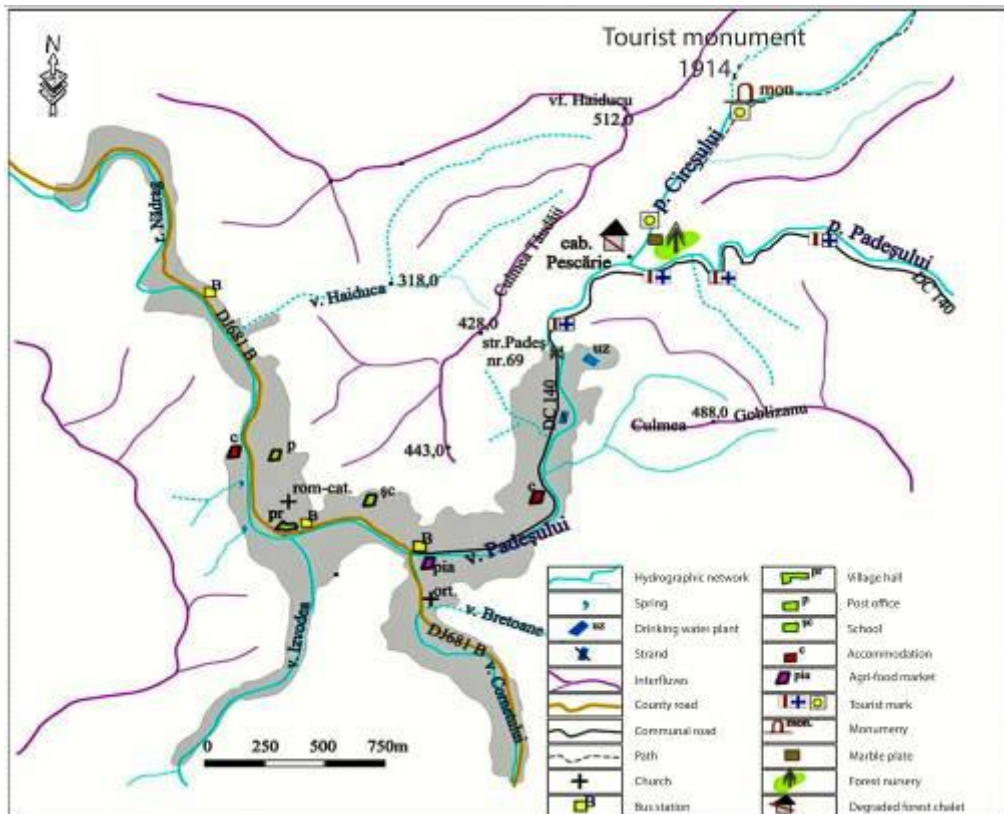


Figure 9. Drawing of Nădrag route to the Tourist Monument on Cireșului Creek

About the cottage Pescarie, the confluence of Pades valley with Ciresului Creek as a permanent tributary, take place. There, the paved village road ends and the way gets over the bridge (or through the water). The old road leads straight to the cottage.

By the cottage there is a trail that follows the Ciresului creek (figure 9). The trail is marked with the "yellow dot" up to the monument, but do not expect a circuit trail (it's just a "back and forth" trail), in Nădrag tourist markings are placed at random by various amateurs (not necessarily locals).

Opposite the cottage "Pescărie" (figure 10) on a smooth spur, there is the Nădrag forest nursery (spruce and pine seeds are planted in a small greenhouse, then the seedlings are moved outdoors for a certain period of time after which they are taken on the field and planted on deforested hillsides) (figure 11). After the inlay of the trail along the narrow and forested Ciresului creek (mixture forest of hornbeam - *Carpinus betulus* and beech - *Fagus silvatica*) the slope gets a little bit steeper, but not enough to cause any problems and after completing the 1.5 km, at a level difference of 50 m (between the cottage "Pescărie" and the monument), one arrives at the old Tourist Monument.

Rusca Montană Tourism Monument

The second monument in Poiana Ruscăi Mountains, more widely known and publicized, is the Ruschița Tourism Monument (figure 12), built 22 years later than that of Nădrag, in 1937 under the Tourist Club Banat (TCB) Caransebeș, commissioned in 1937 (figure 14). The original location of the monument was within Ruschița village limits, in the mountains as well, at the edge of the forest in the section called "Seven Springs", on the trail leading from Ruschița to the top of Padeș Peak, through Tău Ursului lap. In 1984, due to the expansion of mining and water entrapment 'Seven Springs', the Tourism Monument was moved in the commune centre - the settlement of Rusca Montană, on the county road DJ 684 Voislova-Ruschița.

The Tourism Monument is represented by a marble column, 2.2 m high (H.G. Kräutner, 1984) which bears the following verses inscribed (belonging to Basil Magdaș forestry engineer, the promoter of this monument) (figure 13):

"You, tourist who get to this woodside
Throw away your grief and spite
Try to grasp the nature`s ways
The divine spark: virtue of love."

It's worth noting that this monument sets out on the frontispiece "The Tourism Monument" but the lyrics are clearly addressed to the "Tourist" and people generally perceive it as a monument of the tourist. Although the monument is made of eight blocks of white Ruschița marble, the main body has three massive blocks (like the one in Nădrag), the entire setup is placed on a pedestal in the form of a regular quadrangular prism with an 80 cm base and 40 cm height. On the website 2 and 3 there is the monographic file of the monument where the marbles blocks that make up the monument are described in detail; it is signed by Professor Viorel Florea, the correspondent of Nelu Balaș from Nădrag, both strongly concerned about preserving the history of places, and also by getting it known by as many people as they could.^{1,2}

Rusca Montană commune is not exempted from heavy socio-economic problems, the consequences of ceasing complexes ore mining in this area and mine closures, but there is much involvement and tourism initiative from the local authorities. In this sense, every year since 1997, they organize the "Tourism Monument Day" and in the year 2013 a second marble monument dedicated to the village was celebrated.

¹ http://www.banaterra.eu/romana/in_memoriam/monumente/monumentul%20turistului_poiana%20ruscai/index.htm

² <http://scoalastefanvelovan.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/31.AGENDA-4-2006-31-august-MONUMENTUL-TURISMULUI.pdf>



Figure 12. The Tourism Monument in Ruschița ³



Figure 13. The lyrics incrustated in Ruschița marble ⁴

Figure 14. Inauguration of the Tourism Monument in Ruschița, held on August 1st 1937 ⁵

Ruschița is very popular nowadays due to the exploitation of generous marble deposit (figure 16) and the existence of bright white marble monument hasn't been left forgotten or unmentioned (as happened at the Nădrag), so that both the quarry and the monument enhance the fame of Ruschița village and implicitly of Rusca Montană commune.

³ http://www.banaterra.eu/romana/toponimii/r/.../monumentul_turismului.doc.

⁴ http://www.banaterra.eu/romana/toponimii/r/.../monumentul_turismului.doc.

⁵ http://www.banaterra.eu/romana/toponimii/r/.../monumentul_turismului.doc.



Figure 15. Now, two Ruschița marble monuments are guarding on the side of the road, at the entrance in Rusca Montană⁶



Figure 16. Ruschița marble quarry
(photo: Ribana Linc)

CONCLUSIONS

In a mountain massive with a tourism potential regarded as modest in the present times, people who inhabit Poiana Ruscăi Mountains felt the need at some point to draw attention to the beauty of nature - and not just from Poiana Ruscăi Mountains - and in the early twentieth century,

⁶ <http://www.caon.ro/zjua-turismului-aniversata-la-monumentul-dedicat/1334206>

by the initiative of forestry engineers, they expressed it in a very plastic way by raising two monuments (one in Nădrag and the other in Ruschița), one dedicated to His Lordship the Tourist, perhaps sensing that without tourists there would be no sights, no travel, the other (younger) dedicated both to the Tourist and the Tourism.

The two monuments were strategically placed at that time on roads that connect to Padeș. On one of its sides were the iron ore mines, led then towards the steel industry in Nădrag, on the other side, the most beautiful Ruschița marble is exploited; it reaches the most diverse corners of the world and is highly appreciated. Then the vicissitudes of time have caused these trails to be abandoned, but the destiny of the two monuments was different. The one in Nădrag fell into oblivion prey to the weather whereas at Ruschița it was brought closer to civilization and taken care of, so that it's been known for a long time and now is an important tourist attraction of the village Rusca Montană, and the Poiana Ruscăi mountains, being a kind of access key to the fabulous marble quarry at Ruschița, and to Padeș Peak (it receives a larger tourist movement to the peak from the Ruschița side than from Nădrag). Thus, it appears that Poiana Ruscăi Mountains is the only mountain complex in the country where human recreation by tourism is praised by the existence of two monuments dedicated to the tourist, although tourism activity present in these mountains is clearly modest.

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