

Current tourism trends in Romania

*Goreanu Maria, Phd student,
Business Administration in Tourism , Trade and Services, Faculty of Economics, University “ 1 Decembrie
1918”, Alba Iulia, Romania,
E-mail: goreanu.maria.aacts24@uab.ro*

Abstract:

Nowadays, tourism is an essential component of contemporary lifestyle, and Romania is increasingly aligning itself with European and global tourism trends. The expansion of access to information, the development of infrastructure, and the increased interest in authentic experiences have significantly influenced the behavior of tourists. Domestic tourism is experiencing considerable development, increasingly oriented towards forms of sustainable tourism, especially ecotourism. This paper analyzes the main current trends in tourism in Romania and highlights how tourists' preferences are adapting to new market requirements, such as sustainability, digitalization, and personalization of tourist services.

Keywords: Hidden Tourist Heritage, Tourism, Tourist attractions, Tendency impact.

JEL Classification: A1, M1, M3, O3, Z3

Introduction

This article analyzes the impact and perception of Romanian tourists who have traveled in recent years regarding Romanian tourism. It intends to interpret statistical data from recent years regarding the tourism sector. But also through an analysis of the case study carried out in recent months. Which aimed to measure the degree of interest of Romanians to travel within the country or abroad. Also, what are the preferred destinations, but also the reasons why they choose to return to a certain destination in the country or recommend it to other people. At the same time, this article describes the importance of tourism and its impact on the economic development of the country.

Literature review

Romania has a complex and diversified tourist heritage, the result of the interaction between historical evolution, cultural traditions, natural environment and human creation. Over time, some of these resources have been integrated into the tourist circuit, but a significant proportion of the heritage remains insufficiently known, poorly exploited or even neglected. Tourists who choose the Romanian territory as a holiday destination tend to choose rural areas for rest, while the urban area is more intended for business tourism.

However, we note certain tourist attractions that are in the top, among which are Constanța, Brașov, Suceava, Maramureș, Cluj and Tulcea. Although, in the past, hotel accommodation units represented the predominant option for tourists, currently a strong trend can be observed towards flexibility in choosing accommodation types. Thus, in the case of small groups or families, preferences are increasingly directed towards apartments or rooms for rent, guesthouses, villas or chalets. Romania is characterized by a rich geographical territory, which includes both natural and anthropic tourist attractions. However, there is a low level of knowledge

of these resources among the population, a fact highlighted by the existing discrepancies in terms of the valorization and visibility of historical monuments, of which only 32 are internationally recognized by UNESCO. Based on estimates, the National Institute of Heritage¹ currently has 438 registered historical monuments, which represents only 7.31% compared to those recognized.

According to the White Paper on Tourism in Romania 2025, published by IMM Romania and Groupama Insurance², the Honorary President of IMM Romania Florin Jianu, sounds an alarm regarding tourism in our country. Although it is a very high field, with significant records year after year, the return rate of tourists decreased from 50% in 2024 to 45% in 2025. The decrease in this indicator suggests the need for better investments aimed at increasing the quality of services, diversifying the offer and building tourist loyalty. According to the case study also carried out by them, the results of this year's barometer highlight significant transformations in the tourism sector. In 2024, holiday vouchers and the reduction of VAT to 9% for accommodation and meals represented the main factors favorable to business development, supported by the fact that 59.56% of operators reported increases in revenue. However, the trends for 2025 indicate a pronounced deterioration in economic conditions: only 15.55% of operators register increases, while 73.34% face decreases in income. This distribution reflects a sharp pressure on the industry and suggests the need for adaptation strategies and effective intervention. The perception of tourism operators on the support provided by local authorities highlights significant dissatisfaction: 66% of respondents consider that the support was insignificant, which underlines a high level of dissatisfaction with local public administrations. This perception indicates a clear need for more active involvement and more effective local policies to support the sector.

At the same time, according to estimates made this year by the National Institute of Statistics³ and the World Tourism Organization⁴, the tourism sector was valued at over 4.3 billion euros in 2024, an increase compared to the previous year, despite regional economic fluctuations. The direct contribution of tourism to GDP is estimated at approximately 5.7%, and the extended impact, including transport, HoReCa, events and related services, exceeds 10% of GDP. At the same time, approximately 7.5% of the active workforce is engaged in tourism and hospitality activities, highlighting the strategic importance of this sector.

In a country with such a vast natural and cultural heritage, entrepreneurs and operators in the tourism industry play an essential role in capitalizing on this potential. Romania remains one of the most promising destinations in Central and Eastern Europe in 2025, offering a diversity of internationally acclaimed tourism products, from the Carpathian Mountains, the Danube Delta, and the Black Sea coast, to traditional villages, fortified churches, castles, and fortresses. Spectacular landscapes, unique biodiversity, and historical multiculturalism give Romanian tourism an authentic and distinct character.

¹ National Institute of Heritage, "Unesco World Heritage List", patrimoniu.ro (<https://patrimoniu.ro/ro/articles/lista-patrimoniului-mondial-unesco>)

² IMM Romania and Groupama Asigurări, White Paper on Tourism in Romania | 2025 (study, PDF), 2025, (https://www.groupama.ro/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Carta-Alba-a-Turismului-din-Romania-2025_IMM-Romania.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

³ National Institute of Statistics (INS) (<https://insse.ro/cms/>)

⁴ UN Tourism (World Tourism Organization), (<https://www.untourism.int/>)

Case study on current tourism trends in Romania

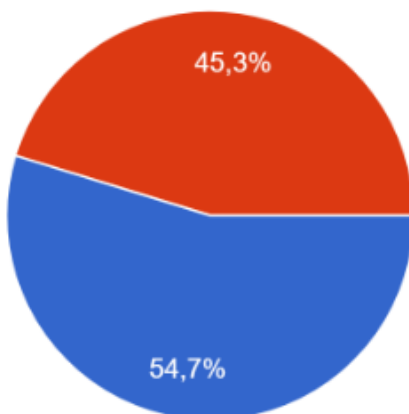
Tourism is often perceived as a globalized phenomenon, characterized by a considerable scale and high complexity of infrastructure. Its importance is highlighted by the profound impact it exerts on multiple dimensions of contemporary society, including the economic, political, cultural, and social spheres. There is a general consensus in the specialized literature that tourism should be understood as a phenomenon specific to modernity, whose emergence is associated with the development of middle-class society in the second half of the 18th century. However, this perspective does not exclude the existence of previous historical forms of mobility, considered “related” to modern tourism, which are at least worth mentioning in order to understand the evolution of this phenomenon. It is important to emphasize that not every form of travel can be considered tourism. Human mobility manifests itself in multiple forms, and an essential distinction must be made between travel as a means to achieve a specific goal — such as migration, war, expulsion, religious or commercial activities, and travel as an end in itself. The latter corresponds to the concept of tourism, being associated with objectives such as education, recreation, relaxation, leisure, sociability and entertainment.

The study analyzed a sample of 106 participants, coming from different areas of the country and belonging to various age groups. Most responses were recorded from participants aged between 18 and 35. Geographically, most respondents live in the regions of Transylvania, Muntenia and Moldova. Also, the participants fall predominantly into the categories of university, high school and postgraduate studies.

In recent years, 44.3% of respondents preferred to travel in a balanced way, both in Romania and abroad. A percentage of 31.1% traveled mainly in Romania, while 21.7% of participants traveled more abroad. At the same time, there was a percentage of 2.8% of respondents who did not travel at all in recent years, which corresponds to a number of 3 people out of a total of 106 participants. Regarding the frequency of travel, most participants stated that they travel at least twice a year. These data highlight a general trend of maintaining constant tourist mobility, with a relatively balanced distribution between domestic and foreign destinations.

Regarding the preferences of Romanians regarding the typology of chosen destinations, the majority show a predilection for mountain resorts. Continuing the hierarchy of preferences are seaside resorts, tourist villages, urban centers, destinations located in natural areas and spa resorts. Regarding the degree of notoriety of destinations, tourists show a stronger preference for well-known destinations, these being chosen by 9.4% more compared to lesser-known destinations. These results indicate a predominant orientation towards established tourist spaces, perceived as offering a higher level of safety and predictability in the travel experience. See *Figure no. 1* below.

Figure no. 1- Tourist preferences for tourist destinations in Romania 2025

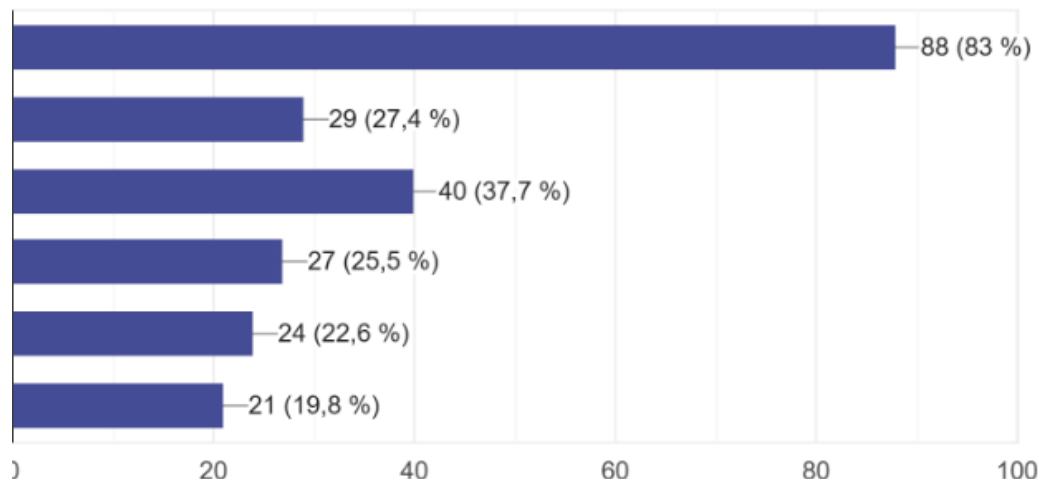


Source: [Author processing based on the case study](#)

The factors that influence Romanians' decision to travel within the country are multiple and reflect both the intrinsic characteristics of the destinations and external elements of information and stimulation of tourist demand. Among the most important factors are natural landscapes, which represent a major competitive advantage of Romania, followed by the price level and the accessibility of the destinations. Also, recommendations from other tourists play a significant role in the decision-making process, contributing to strengthening trust in the chosen destinations. Cultural and historical heritage is another determining element, while online promotion and the influence of intermediaries, such as attractive offers proposed by travel agencies, complete the set of factors that shape domestic tourist behavior.

Regarding the motivations underlying the decision to travel within Romania, the data highlights a predominant orientation towards relaxation and recreation, a motivation indicated by approximately 83% of respondents. Practicing nature tourism, through activities such as hiking, sports or ecotourism, is an important reason for 37.7% of the participants. At the same time, 27.4% of the respondents are motivated by the desire to explore and capitalize on cultural and historical heritage, while 25.5% choose to travel to participate in cultural, artistic or traditional events. A percentage of 22.6%, respectively 24 people out of the total of 106 respondents, declare that they are motivated to travel to visit their relatives or friends. The lowest percentage of the entire sample is recorded among those who travel for professional, educational or business reasons, with a share of 19.8%. These results all emphasize that domestic tourism is dominated by recreational and experiential motivations, which highlights Romania's high potential to strengthen its tourism offer by capitalizing on natural and cultural resources, as well as by adapting promotion strategies to the diversified expectations and needs of tourists. See *Figure no. 2* below.

Figure no. 2 – The main motivations of tourists in Romania 2025



Source: [Author processing based on the case study](#)

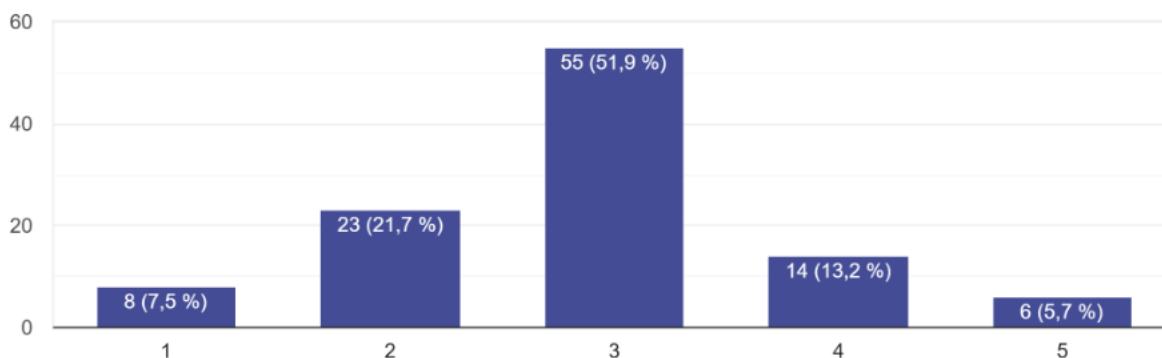
Regarding the assessment of Romania's tourism potential in relation to other European destinations, the results obtained highlight the existence of distinct, but relatively balanced perceptions. Thus, two predominant opinions were recorded, each representing a percentage of 39.6% of the total number of respondents. A number of 42 people consider that Romania has a remarkable tourism potential, comparable to that of the main European destinations, arguing this appreciation through the diversity of natural landscapes, the wealth of cultural resources and the value of the historical heritage. This perspective reflects the recognition of Romania's competitive advantages, which allow it to offer varied tourism experiences, capable of responding to a wide spectrum of preferences and motivations of tourists. Equally, another 42 respondents consider that Romania has a high tourism potential, but consider that it is insufficiently exploited and promoted both at national and international level. This opinion highlights the existence of structural and strategic deficiencies, such as the unevenly developed tourism infrastructure, the lack of coherent and integrated promotion or the insufficient involvement of institutional and private actors in the process of capitalizing on the available resources. From this perspective, the discrepancy between the real potential and the current level of exploitation becomes a limiting factor in consolidating Romania's position on the European tourism market.

On the other hand, 11 respondents out of a total of 106 consider that Romania's tourism potential is moderate, highlighting the existence of significant differences between regions developed in terms of tourism and those that, despite having valuable resources, remain insufficiently exploited. This perception indicates an uneven

distribution of investments and tourist flows, as well as the need for more balanced regional development policies. Overall, these results reveal that Romania is perceived as a destination with considerable tourism resources, but with a level of capitalization that does not fully reflect the existing potential. Consolidating a coherent tourism development and promotion strategy, oriented towards sustainability and the integration of less visible regions, could significantly contribute to improving Romania's image and competitiveness in the context of European tourism.

Regarding the effective promotion of Romania as a tourist destination, the respondents' opinions are divided, reflecting varied perceptions on the effectiveness of tourism communication and marketing strategies. The evaluation was carried out by assigning a rating on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means "not at all effective" and 5 "very effective". The results indicate that approximately 51.9% of the participants, respectively 55 people, gave the rating 3, suggesting a neutral or moderate perception on the level of promotion, see *Figure no. 3* below. This assessment can be interpreted as an acknowledgement of the existence of some promotion efforts, but is considered insufficient to produce a significant impact on the tourism market. At the same time, the analysis of the distribution of responses highlights a general tendency of the balance tilting towards opinions that claim that Romania does not benefit from effective promotion. This perception indicates the need to strengthen tourism marketing strategies, through more intensive use of digital channels, the development of a coherent brand identity, and increased visibility on foreign markets. An integrated approach adapted to the current requirements of tourism service consumers could contribute to improving Romania's image and more efficiently capitalizing on its tourism potential.

Figure no. 3 – Tourists' perception of the promotion of Romania 2025



Source: [Author processing based on the case study](#)

Regarding tourism development, 96.2% of respondents believe that the development of lesser-known areas could contribute significantly to local economic growth. At the same time, most participants say they do

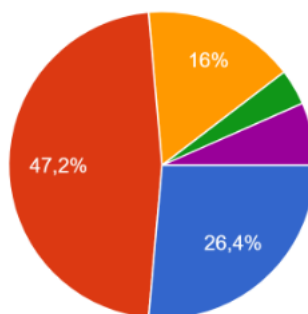
not know of any under-promoted tourist attractions that they could recommend, although they believe that they would be worth visiting and capitalizing on from a tourism point of view.

However, respondents who indicated that they could recommend such destinations mentioned a wide variety of tourist attractions in Romania, including: Roșia Montană, Detunata, Rimetea village, Bethlen Castle, Aiud Fortress, Deva Fortress, Beliș Lake (Cluj County), Ciucaș Mountains, Ciucaș Waterfall, Muierilor Cave, Greaca Domain, lavender gardens, Enisala Fortress, Căpâlna Fortress, Piatra Craivii, Sâncrai Castle, Apuseni Mountains, Roman, Dacian and medieval fortresses, mountain trails, Toplița Thermal Waterfall, local gastronomic centers, Scărișoara Glacier, Herculan Baths, Danube Delta, archaeological sites (e.g., Histria, Dobrogea), traditional villages, Apuseni Mountains protected area, fortresses in Sălaj County, fortified churches, Jidvei, Cheile Băniței, Peștera Bolii, Șinca Veche and Brașov municipality. Lesser-known areas were also mentioned, such as those crossed by the Via Transilvanica route, which visibly contributes to bringing back to the public's attention some marginalized regions from a tourist point of view. Transylvania, as a whole, is perceived as a space with considerable potential, characterized by a high density of fortresses, castles, fortifications, historical sites and insufficiently maintained and promoted natural areas. A relevant example is the Roman forts at Comărnicești, mentioned as not being properly marked and affected by uncontrolled activities, such as the circulation of motorized vehicles. At the same time, some respondents express their reservations about mass tourism, similar to that practiced in destinations such as Barcelona, supporting instead a tourism model based on research, cultural exploration and responsibility towards the natural environment. In this context, the need for careful and efficient exploitation of tourism resources through responsible organizations capable of managing the impact on the environment is highlighted. Sustainable alternatives are promoted, such as reducing the use of plastics, encouraging healthy food consumption, developing therapeutic and cultural tourism, as well as creating jobs at local level. Such an approach is perceived as essential for ensuring a balance between tourism development and the conservation of natural and cultural resources, avoiding their excessive and unsustainable exploitation.

Romanian respondents believe that the main reasons why certain tourist attractions in Romania remain unknown to the general public are the lack of promotion, insufficient investment, poor infrastructure, and the low interest shown by the authorities. Despite these difficulties, participants expressed their willingness to visit lesser-known tourist attractions, provided that they would benefit from adequate promotion. Thus, on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates “not at all willing” and 5 “very willing”, 55 people out of a total of 106 gave the maximum rating, 37 respondents opted for a rating of 4, and 14 people chose the median rating of 3. These results reflect a high interest in exploring alternative destinations, mainly conditioned by the visibility and accessibility of available information. Regarding the promotion methods considered most effective for capitalizing on Romania's lesser-known tourist heritage, 78.3% of respondents indicate the use of online platforms and social media networks. Media campaigns are also mentioned by 51.9% of participants, local cultural events by 46.2%, collaborations with influencers by 42.5%, and educational programs by 41.5%. These options highlight the importance of digital communication and the involvement of local communities in the tourism promotion process.

Overall, respondents are optimistic about the capitalization of lesser-known tourist attractions in the next 5–10 years. 47.2% believe that development will be moderate, characterized by gradual progress in the field of promotion and tourism services. At the same time, 26.4% believe that there will be significant development, marked by an increase in the number of visitors and an improvement in tourism infrastructure. On the other hand, 16% of respondents anticipate maintaining a relatively constant level, without major changes in the tourism sector, while 6.6% did not provide an answer, citing the lack of information necessary to formulate an estimate. A small percentage, 3.8%, believes that a setback could be recorded in the next 5–10 years, amid economic, infrastructural or administrative challenges. These perspectives highlight both the positive expectations of the respondents and the need for coherent strategic interventions for the sustainable development of Romania's tourism potential. See *Figure no. 4* below.

Figure no. 4 - Perspectives on the valorization of lesser-known tourist attractions in the next 5–10 years



Source: [Author processing based on the case study](#)

Conclusion

Overall, the research conducted coherently highlights the perceptions, attitudes and experiences of Romanians towards national tourism, outlining a complex but predominantly favorable image of Romania's tourism potential. The results obtained indicate that the majority of respondents know and have visited at least one destination in Romania in recent years, and the recommendations made cover an extremely varied spectrum of tourist spaces, from well-known mountain areas, such as the Retezat Mountains, the Apuseni Mountains, the Ciucaş Mountains or the Făgăraş Mountains, to special natural, cultural and historical sites, such as the Bicăz Gorges, the Transfăgărăşanul, the Danube Delta, Peleş Castle, Alba Carolina Fortress, Sighişoara, Maramureş, Bucovina, Turda Salt Mine or Via Transilvanica.

The diversity of recommended destinations reflects the richness of Romania's tourism resources and confirms that memorable tourist experiences are closely linked to the authenticity of natural landscapes, the value of cultural and historical heritage, as well as interaction with local communities. Numerous responses highlight the

importance of traditional villages, the hospitality of people and a slower pace of life, perceived as a valuable alternative to mass tourism and oversaturated destinations. In this sense, rural tourism, ecotourism and cultural tourism appear as directions with significant potential for sustainable development. At the same time, the experiences reported highlight a clear need for a balance between development and conservation. Respondents show a clear preference for forms of responsible tourism, based on respect for nature, heritage and local communities, rejecting models of excessive exploitation and aggressive commercialization. It is also noted that high prices, poor infrastructure and insufficient promotion represent important barriers to choosing Romania as a tourist destination, especially compared to some foreign destinations considered more accessible. The messages addressed to other potential tourists outline Romania as an authentic destination, with spectacular landscapes, a strong cultural identity and tourist experiences capable of generating emotion, relaxation and reconnection with nature. The Carpathian Mountains are frequently mentioned as a symbol of the beauty and regenerative force of the Romanian space, being perceived as the ideal starting point for discovering the country. At the same time, historic cities, archaeological sites, thematic routes and contemporary cultural initiatives are appreciated for their ability to combine tradition with modernity.

Therefore, the analyzed data confirm the existence of a valuable tourist capital, supported by positive personal experiences and a strong emotional attachment to the national space. Capitalizing on this potential depends essentially on coherent investments, effective promotion strategies and the adoption of sustainable tourism development models, capable of transforming existing resources into real benefits for communities and the local economy. Romania is thus emerging not only as a destination worth discovering, but as a space with the capacity to offer authentic and memorable experiences, relevant for both domestic and international tourists.

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Beneficiary of the scientific performance scholarship in the University “ 1 Decembrie 1918 ” from Alba Iulia for the period July-December 2025.