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The tourism potential in the Ukrainian sector of the Prut River basin and its problems of promotion and exploitation

Bacal Petru¹, Moroz Ivan¹, Bunduc Petru¹

¹Institute of Ecology and Geography of the Academy of Sciences of Moldova, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova

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THE TOURISM POTENTIAL IN THE UKRAINIAN SECTOR OF THE PRUT RIVER BASIN AND ITS PROBLEMS OF PROMOTION AND EXPLOATATION

Bacal Petru, Moroz Ivan, Bunduc Petru¹

Abstract. The aim of this study is evaluation of the tourism potential of the Ukrainian sector of Prut River Basin. The main objectives are: evaluation of the main tourist attractions and areas of natural and anthropogenic origin; identification of the main premises and difficulties of the exploitation of tourism potential; determination and analysis of the main tourist flows; promotion of trans-boundary tourism routes; elaboration of recommendations for the optimization of exploitation of tourism potential.

Keywords: tourism, potential, Prut, basin

Introduction

The Prut River Basin includes border areas that separate the three neighbour states: Ukraine, Romania and the Republic of Moldova. The total area of the Prut River Basin is 27,5 thousand km², 11,0 thousand km² (40%) of them in Romania, 8,24 thousand km² (30%) in Ukraine, and 8,2 thousand km² (30%) in the Republic of Moldova. The majority of the Middle and Lower Basin of the Prut River is in the trans-boundary sectors of Romania and the Republic of Moldova and that of the Upper Basin is in the trans-boundary sector of Ukraine.

The Ukrainian sector of the Prut River Basin has a predominantly mountainous relief and the most of the territory is covered with forests and alpine meadows. The degree of exploitation and deforestation of the Ukrainian Carpathians, even in the perimeter of the Prut River, is much more reduced if compared with the Romanian Carpathians or other neighbouring countries. As a result, in the Upper Basin of the Prut River are very extensive and well-preserved surfaces of protected natural areas with a rich biodiversity. Unique natural landscapes, clean air and quiet ambience, can attract major flows of tourists. During the Soviet period, up to 10 million tourists from all the republics of the USSR were coming annually here. This region was intensely requested both for summer and winter active leisure and tourism was the main occupation for the majority of local population.

The main prerequisites for tourism development in the Ukrainian sector of the Prut River Basin are: the spectacular and well-preserved natural landscapes; mountainous relief favourable for the development of winter sports; numerous mineral springs, alpine lakes and rivers; rich ethno folk heritage; valuable religious objects, especially old wooden churches;

¹ Institute of Ecology and Geography of the Academy of Sciences of Moldova, Chisinau.

architectural monuments in Chernivtsi and other cities; spa resorts; and proximity to Central European countries.

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1. The natural touristic potential

The Ukrainian sector of the Prut River Basin and its neighbouring areas concentrate the most extensive, most numerous and most valuable protected natural areas and eco-tourism objectives, both in Ukraine and the Prut River Basin, overall. This region includes 5 national parks and 5 hydrological reserves and monuments of international and national importance, 1 landscape reserve, with a total area of about 130 thousand ha (Table 1).

National parks occupy a total surface of over 100 thousand ha and represent the most important eco-touristic objectives from the Ukrainian Carpathians [8]. *Carpathian National Park* was founded in 1980 and represents the oldest national park in this region. The park area exceeds 30 thousand ha (table 1). The length of the national park is 55 km from north-west to south-east and 20 km from west to east. The Carpathian National Park is located on the eastern slopes of the Chernohora massif, from where the Prut River (Figure 1). In the Chernohora massif is located the Hoverla peak (2061 m) – the highest and most visited peak from the Ukrainian Carpathians. From the Hoverla peak opens a very spectacular mountain panorama and one can see most of the other peaks from this zone, including peaks Popa Ioan and Pietrosul.

Table 1. The main eco-touristic objectives in the Ukrainian sector of the Prut River Basin

No.	Name	Surface, thousand ha	Location	Year of formation
National Parks				
1	Carpathians	30,4	Chornokhora Massif, Ivano-Frankivsk region	03.06.1980
2	Hutsulschyna	32,3	Ivano-Frankivsk region	14.05.2002
3	Vyzhnytsya	11,2	Bucovina, Ivano-Frankivsk and Chernivtsi regions	30.08.1995
4	Verkhovyna	12,0	Massive Verkhovina, Ivano-Frankivsk region	22.01.2010
5	Cheremosh	7,1	Bucovina, Chernivtsi region	11.12.2009
	Total	103		
Hydrological reserves				
6	Black Cheremosh	2,5	Ivano-Frankivsk and Chernivtsi regions on the border with Romania	
7	Pistynka	1,14	Near the Kolomyia town	
8	Rybnitsa	1,1	Kosiv district Ivano-Frankivsk region	
	Total	4,7		
Mixed natural monuments				
9	Slope swamp	0,005	Verkhovina massif	
10	Lebedyn	0,044	Chernohora Massif	
Landscape reserve				
11	Chernivtsi	21,5	Chernivtsi region	
	Total	130		

Source: elaborated by the authors according to [3, 8].

Also, at the foot of Hoverla peak are situated very attractive waterfalls and glacial lakes. The succession of alpine meadows with clumps of juniper trees and conifer forests forms a gorgeous natural carpet, a mysterious and captivating ABC of Nature. On the Carpathian National Park territory are over 1000 watercourses, 85 mineral springs, numerous glacial lakes [3, p. 42].

Flora and fauna is very rich and well preserved. The most widespread trees species in the park are silver fir, European beech and spruce. Representative animal species are lynx, brown bear and viper. In the proximity of the Carpathian National Park are two protected areas of high ecological importance: the biosphere reserve “Carpathians” and scientific reserve „Gorgany”, into which the access is strictly limited. In addition, the area of the Carpathian National Nature Park was historically inhabited by the Hutsuls and contains a number of monuments of history and architecture, including historical wooden buildings.

The headquarters of the Carpathian National Park is in the town of ***Yaremche – the most important tourist centre of the region***, with great diversity of accommodation and agreement. The most requested touristic attractions in the town of Yaremche are the waterfalls and river rapids of the Prut River, ski runs, the great railway bridge (XIXth century), old wooden churches, handicraft markets, spa centres, the Museum of History and Ethnography, Zoo, touristic routes for pedestrian, bike or drive walks, and the peaks in and around town.

In the near proximity of the Carpathian National Park is located ***the most famous ski centre in Ukraine – the modern resort Bukovel*** with over 60 km of ski runs [1, p. 102]. It is highly appreciated among the amateurs of winter sports not only from Ukraine, but also from most neighbouring states, even Romania. Bukovel resort has a very dynamic development, multiple facilities at accessible prices for winter sports.

Hutsulschyna National Park is the largest state natural protected area from the Prut River Basin with an area of over 32 thousand ha. This park was created in May, 2002, for the purpose of preservation, restoration and sustainable use of unique natural ecosystems and ethno-cultural heritage in the spread area of the Ukrainian Hutsuls. The flora of the park includes more than 950 species of vascular plants, 10% of which are endemic, rare and vanishing species. Other 61 species of vascular plants are listed in the Red Book of Ukraine, including lesser butterfly-orchid, perennial honesty, fir clubmoss, belladonna, henbane bell, Polish larch, common snowdrop, Swiss pine. The diversity of fauna is also very rich. The park is the habitat of brown bear, lynx, moose, deer, badger, pine marten, otter and squirrel. The avifauna of the park includes about 190 species, among which stand out those typical for mountain peaks (golden eagle, capercaillie, owls) and mountain watercourses (black stork) rich in fish. In the Red Book of Ukraine are listed brown bear, Eurasian lynx, Mediterranean water shrew, wildcat, lesser horseshoe bat (mammals); black stork, western capercaillie, golden eagle, homed owl (birds); smooth snake (reptiles); fire salamander, Carpathian newt, agile frog (amphibians); Danube salmon and Ukrainian brook lamprey (fishes). There are well preserved the traditional and local crafts (shepherding, wool weaving and embroideries, tannery, wood harvesting and processing, etc.), traditions and customs, which can be admired both in the festive and in the everyday life of local people.

National Park Vyzhnytsya has a major scientific and eco-tourism value. It was founded in 1995 on an area of 11.200 thousand ha. Over 90% of the park is covered with forests, especially of beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and fir (*Picea abies*). The fauna is very diverse and includes about 3000 species, through which 137 species of birds, 41 species of mammals and 20 species of fish. The park is a habitat for 62 species which are listed in the Red Book of

Ukraine, 20 species which are listed in the European Red Book, as well as for other 70 species that need protection at regional level and approximately 200 endangered species are included in the list of the Berne Convention [3, p. 43]. The National Park Vyzhnytsya and its surrounding area also has a very rich ethno-cultural heritage and is positioned as an area of ethno-cultural and linguistic interference between the Hutsuls, the Ruthenians, the Ukrainians and the Romanians – a model of peaceful century-old co-existence, a territory with common traditional occupations and customs etc.

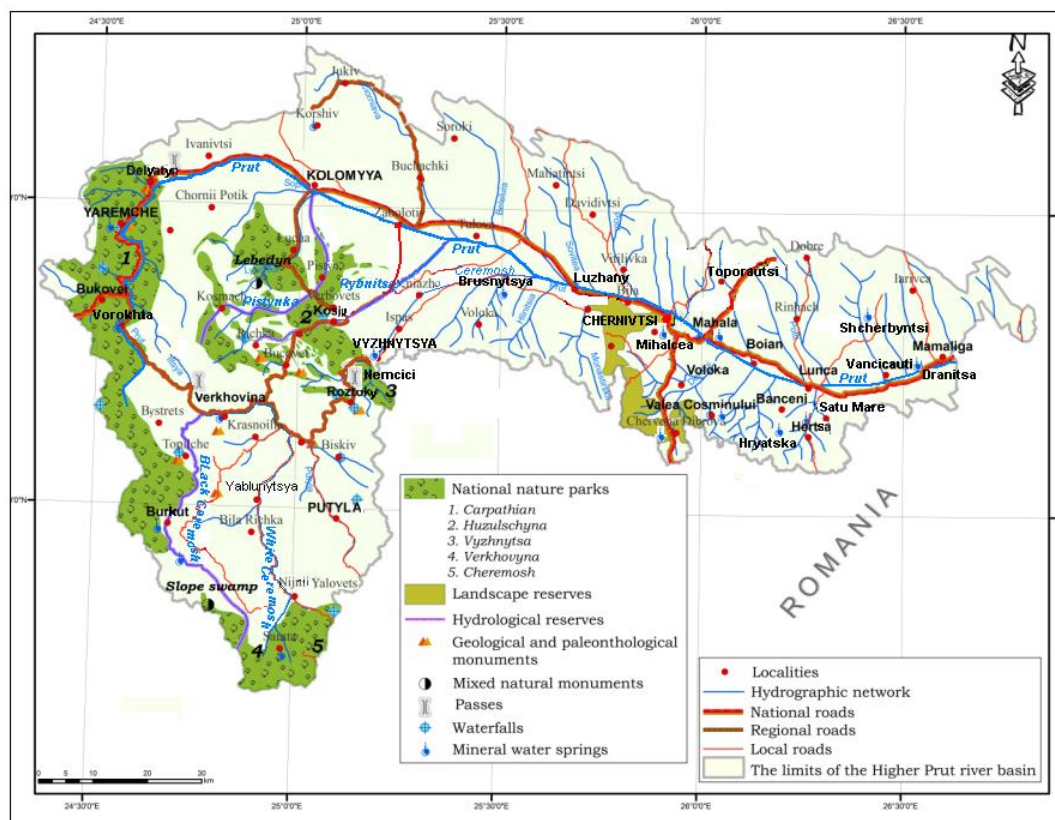


Figure 1. Distribution of the main natural tourist attractions in the Ukrainian sector of the Prut River Basin

National Park Verkhovyna was created in 2001 on the surface of 12,2 thousand ha (Figure 1). It is designed to preserve and protect mountain ecosystems and wetlands habitats in this area. There are 700 species of vascular plants, 59 species of which are included in the Red Book, as well as 3000 species of animals [3, p. 43]. Very spectacular are the pastures on the alpine ridges and in the surrounding villages populated by the Hutsuls and the Ruthenians, the succession of agricultural landscapes with the forest ones, the water streams.

National Park Cheremosh was founded in 2009 on an area of 7,1 thousand ha along the Black Cheremosh – the main tributary of the Prut River in the upper basin. It is located on the western margin of Bukovina in Putyla district, on the border with Romania. The purpose of park foundation is the preservation of natural, historical and cultural complexes and objects of the northern branch of Chyvchyny-Maramorosh massif within the Zlupiany and Chornyi

Dil ridges. The Park is covered almost entirely with natural forests of spruce, silver fir, Carpathian yew, beech, relict forests of cedar and pine. There are 12 species of fishes, 6 species of amphibians and reptiles, 93 species of birds and 29 species of mammals. Undisturbed biological conditions, safe environment, preserved river water purity and territory-protected status contribute to the good preservation of this natural park. In this zone, it is worth visiting the Ukrainian churches with an interior rich in local embroidery.

The hydrological reserve of local importance „Black Cheremosh” occupies an area of 2510 hectares. It is a riverine forest strip of 87 km long and 300 m wide being intended to protect the eponymous river and its fish habitats [8]. The access to the reserve is assured in Storozhynets, the Chernivtsi region, but the state of the roads to the destination is very bad in most sectors, especially near the border with Romania and in the Ivano-Frankivsk region.

Pistynka hydrological reserve is also a strip of riverine protection with a length of 57 km, a width of 200 m and a surface of 1140 ha. In the bed of this tributary of the Prut River we meet very numerous particularly spectacular waterfalls and rapids, as well as sectors rich in fish.

Rybnitsa hydrological reserve includes a forested riverine strip with a length of 54 km, width of 200 m and an area of 1080 ha. In some places the river valley is very narrow and the speed of water drainage is very fast. In the wider sectors of the river bed are practiced extreme water sports that are very widespread in the upper basin of the Prut River and its greater tributaries.

In the Ukrainian sector of the Prut River Basin are two unique natural monuments: „*The Slope Swamp*” and „*Lebedyn*”. „*The Slope Swamp*” is situated in the Burkut Forest of Verkhovyna massif and occupies an area of only 0.5 ha. However, it is the largest slope swamp in the Ukrainian Carpathians [3, p. 45]. The high ecological value of this natural monument is also conditioned by high abundance in species and associations of rare plants. Here can be found 17 species of sedge and other rare hydrophilic species.

„*Lebedyn*” is a mysterious alpine lake surrounded by virgin forests of conifers. Lake Lebedyn has an area of 44.5 ha and is located in the Iablunivka forest, the Kosiv district (fig. 1).

Landscape Reserve „Chernivtsi” includes protected forest areas situated westwards and southwards Chernivtsi within a radius of up to 50 km, including secular oaks in Valea Cosminului village. Landscape Reserve “*Chernivtsi*” has a surface of 21.5 thousand ha and is the largest protected natural area from the plain zone of the Ukrainian sector of the Prut River Basin. There are taken under protection the areas occupied by *Quercus robur*, sessile oak, beech, fir and hornbeam. Within the reserve it is a very precious botanical monument – „*Tisovyi Yar*” with an area of 10 ha, in which ancient forest of European yew and beech are protected. There are 25 protected species of plants that are listed in the Red Book of Ukraine. Also, between the villages of Valea Cosminului and Dumbrava Rosie/Cervona Dibrova are located the legendary forests „*Codrii Cosminului*”, with secular oaks – living witnesses of the most brilliant victories obtained in these places by the army of the Moldavian ruler Stefan cel Mare (Stephen the Great) over the Poles and sacredly honoured by the locals.

The Ukrainian sector of the Prut River Basin is rich in *mineral springs* of therapeutic importance, geological and hydrological monuments, especially waterfalls, rocks and caves. The most valuable therapeutic mineral springs are around the settlements of Burkut, Verkhovyna, Yaremche/Vorokhta and Kosiv (fig. 1) in Ivano-Frankivsk region, where there were built spa resorts that are very demanded, especially for the treatment of gastrointestinal, respiratory, cardiac and renal diseases. In the Chernivtsi region are to be mentioned the mineral springs from Tsetsyna (Chernivtsi town), Mihalcea and Mahala (suburbs of Chernivtsi

town), Vyzhenka, Shcherbintsi and Shendreni/Dranitsa (Novoselytsya district), Brusnytsya (Kitsmani district), Sarata and Selyatyn (Putyla district), Valea Cosminului and Cervona Dibrova (Hlyboka district), and Hryatska (Hertsya district). Unlike the Ivano-Frankivsk region, most of the mineral springs are not exploited for therapeutic purposes, but only for bottling and marketing. However, spa resorts based on the use of local mineral waters are in Chernivtsi, Shcherbintsi and Brusnytsya.

The most spectacular *waterfalls* are situated: on the Prut River in Yaremche town; at the foot of the Hoverla peak of the mountain massif Cernohora; in the proximity of Roztoky village (Bucovina's Waterfalls) on the Cheremosh Valley at the border between Chernivtsi and Ivano-Frankivsk regions; to the east of Putyla town (Porkulin); on the river Pistynka in the vicinity of Shepit and Sheshory villages from Kosiv district.

A great popularity is enjoyed by the *rocky areas*: „Dovbusha” and „White Rock”/„Bilyi Kamini” near Yaremche town; „Drilled Stones”/„Pronzennye Kamni” (near Bucovina's Waterfalls), „Lady of Stone”/ „Kamyana Bagachka”, „Eagles Rocks”/„Sokilske Skely” near Roztoky village; „Dovbusha's Treasures”/ „Dovbushevi Komory”, „Painted Rock”/„Pisannyi Kamini”, „Eared stone”, „Vukhatyi Kamini” and „Ternoshorska Lada” in Verkhovyna district; „The Old Women”, „Baby” and „Black Works”/„Chornyi Dil” in the National Park Cheremosh.

A high eco-touristic and ecological value is possessed by *the caves* „Emil Racovitsa” („Cinderella/Zolushka”) and „Dovbusha”. The cave „Emil Racovitsa” is one of the largest caves in gypsum from the world. It begins in the Republic of Moldova, near the border village of Criva, and continues to Ukraine over a length of about 90 km. The cave „Dovbusha” is located in the National Park Huzulschyna, on the Pistynka River Valley, in the proximity of Sheshory village. In this cave there were discovered archaeological sites and artefacts of the tribes who lived here 3-5 thousand years ago. Another cave with the name „Dovbusha” is located near the Yaremche town in the homonymous rocky areas.

Very attractive are the *mountain passes*, especially: *Nemcici Pass* (586 m) near Roztoky village; *Yablonytsya Pass* (921 m) that separates the Prut River Basin from the Tisa River Basin and the Ivano-Frankivsk region from the Transcarpathian one; *Kryvopillya Pass* (1013 m) in the district of Verkhovyna; *Shoudrin Pass* (1173 m) – the highest road pass in the Ukrainian Carpathians, which separates the Prut River Basin from the Sirets River Basin; *Delyatyn Pass* and others. Around of the most mountain passes that are crossed by roads are built observation platforms, tourist stops, camping sites, accommodation and catering structures that increase their attractiveness and tourist functionality. Alpine passes are highly appreciated for the great mountain panoramas that open in these places, for beautiful photographs and images captured here. In addition, in the proximity of the mountain passes are built ski resorts and trails for skiing and other winter sports, especially the ski resorts of Bukovel near to Yablonytsya Pass, Vyzhnytsta near to Nemcici Pass, Verkhovyna near to Krivopillya Pass. Also, popular and accessible ski resorts are in Yablonytsya in the proximity of the resort Bukovel and in Boian in the suburb of Chernivtsi town with modern resort „Sun Valley”/„Solnecina Dolina”.

2. The anthropic touristic potential

As mentioned earlier, the Ukrainian sector of the Prut River Basin has a very varied and rich cultural and historical heritage. The region is marked by harmonious intercultural interferences between the co-habiting ethnic groups: the Ukrainians, the Romanians/Moldavians, the Ruthenians and the Hutsuls. A maximum attraction represents: the towns Chernivtsi, Yareamce, Kolomyya, Verkhovyna, Vorokhta, Hlyboka, Putyla; the Hutsuls villages in the western part of the region; the Romanian and Lippovan villages in

Bucovina [4]; the old wooden churches (Figure 2), and the traditional occupations and customs.

The most important tourist, cultural and politico-administrative centre of the Ukrainian sector of the Prut River Basin is **Chernivtsi town** – „*The Little Vienna*”. It was founded in 1408 during the reign of Alexandru cel Bun (Alexander, the Kind) [2]. This unique town has known in the last two centuries a multiple succession of state belonging which left a deeply footprint on the city's architectural and cultural heritage. The most important touristic and cultural attraction of this fascinating town is considered the National University „*Yu. Fedikovici*” (1862-1884) that is an architectural jewel of the Austrian crown, ex-headquarters of the Metropolitan Church of Bukovina in the inter-war period and now it is a great university centre and museum under the open sky included in the UNESCO Heritage List. The most valuable and visited religious objectives are: Orthodox Cathedral „*Holy Ghost Descent*” (1844) and Orthodox Church „*St. Nicolas*” (1927) or „*Drunk Church*” as it is called because of the sloping towers and where religious sermons are held in the Romanian language, too; Monastery „*Vedenya*” (1904); Greek Catholic Church „*Assumption of Virgin Mary*” (1821); Roman Catholic Church „*Sf. Paraskeva*” (1814); Armenian Church „*St. Peter and Paul*” (1875); old Romanian churches „*The Three Holy Hierarchs*” (the XVIIIth century), „*St. Nicholas*” (1607) and „*Assumption of Virgin Mary*” (1767) built of wood and located in the slums Horecea and Rosha; Jesuit Church. Among other categories of attractions worth visiting is the walking street „*O. Kobyleanska*”; the Central Square around which is located the Dramatic Musical Theatre (1905), the Town Hall (1846) and the Art Museum (1900); the Ship-Building, the Central Park „*T. G. Shevchenko*”, the Park „*Yu. Fedikovich*”, the Park „*Shiller*” and the Dendrological Park of the University; the Philharmonics Square; the Central Palace of Culture (1908) and the former Cultural Palace of the Romanians (1937-1943); the museum-houses „*M. Eminescu*”, „*Aron Pumnul*” and „*Gh. Asachi*”; the literary museums „*Ju. Fedikovici*” and „*Olga Kobyleanska*”; the Museum of Bukovina's Diaspora; the Medicine Academy, Palace of Justice, Museum of Local History, Folk Architecture Museum; Central Railway Station (1909); Central Cemetery [6, p. 206-230], etc.

The most valuable centres of pilgrimage and religious tourism from Chernivtsi region are at Banceni, Boian and Luzhany. The monastery „*Ascension of the Virgin Mary*” from Banceni is located just a few kilometres away from Herta town and is the most famous pilgrimage centre of Chernivtsi region. It was recently (1996) opened and includes: a modern and grandiose cathedral - „*St. Trinity*” (2011) - with the relics of St. Seraphim from Sarov and other religious relics; few stone churches, one of which is built in the old Russian style with azure facade and twisted and ornamented towers; a new wooden church; pavilions; a belfry with a height of 60 m; baptistery; a boarding house and hospital for children with disabilities; a museum; accommodation and catering units for monks and pilgrims. The nun monastery „*Nativity of Christ*” in Boian (1896) houses a miraculous weeping icon of Virgin Mary and represents the main centre of orthodox pilgrimage in Northern Bukovina [4]. Also, in this village it is located a great church „*Assumption of Virgin Mary*”, founded by the chronicler Ion Neculce in 1710. In the churchyard, the tourists can visit „*the Bells of Neculce*” – a donation offered by the Romanian King Carol I at the end of the XIX-th century and a museum with old icons and books donated by locals. In addition, a modern ski resort was built near Boian village. In Luzhany village is located the oldest church of the investigated region – „*Assumption of Christ*” (1453) where had preached the father of Hürrem – wife of Suleiman, the Magnificent – known as Roxolana for the Moldavians and Alexandra or Ana Lisovska for the Ruthenians. A modern great cathedral is located in the proximity of the old church and a

church from the XVIIIth century, where the relics of New St. Ioan from Suceava are preserved, is situated near the regional road.

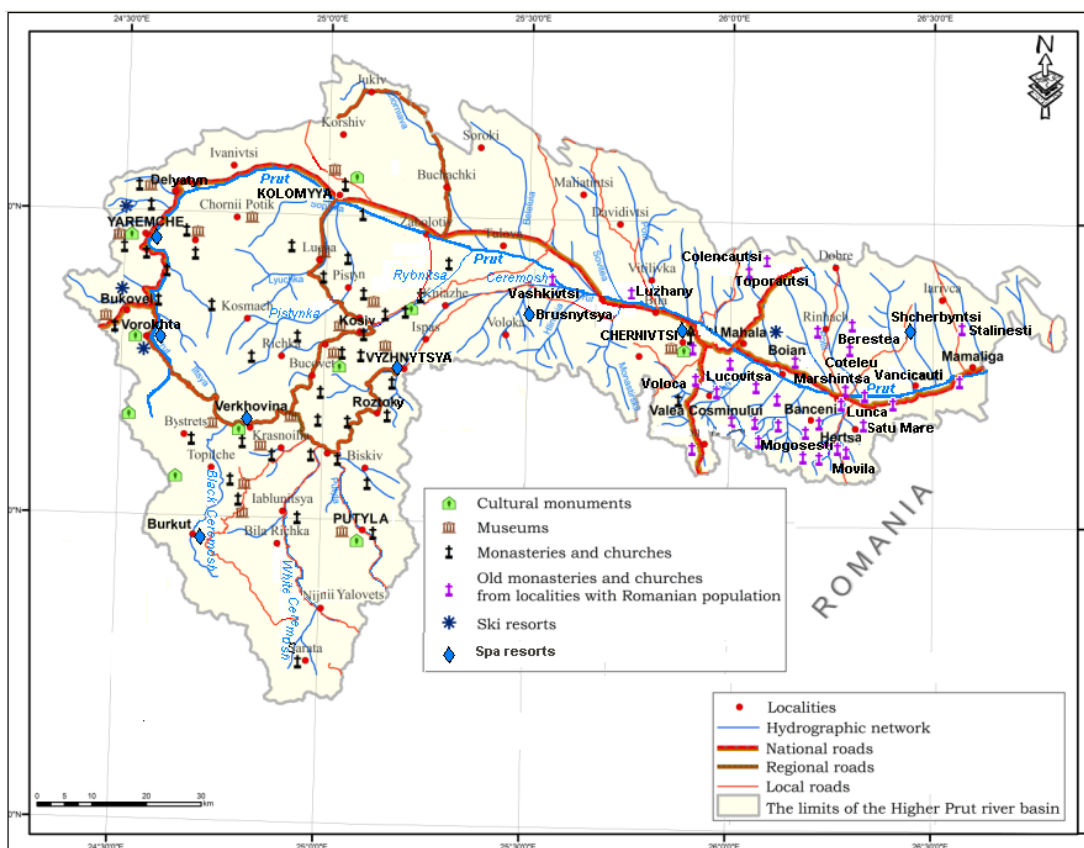


Figure 2. Distribution of the main anthropogenic tourist attractions in the Ukrainian sector of the Prut River Basin

In the settlements with Romanian population it is worth visiting the old wooden churches in Pilipautsi (Satu Mare/Velykosillya), Becesti/Pidvaline (1561), Mihoreni/Petrashivka (1663) and Lucavitsya (1757) from Hertsia district; also Rynhach (1730) and Berestea (1735) from Novoselytsya district. A similar high historical and touristic value is possessed by the old stone churches „St. Spiridon” (1798) from Hertsia, „Assumption of Virgin Mary” (the XVIIth century) from Lunca, „St. Ilie” from Toporautsi (1626), „St. George” from Horecea (1767), „St. Michael” (1930) from Valea Cosminului; the monasteries „Birth of the Virgin” from Horecea (1712) with religious relics, „St. Ana” from Vashkivtsi (1993), „St. Vladimir” from Colencautsi, „St. Afanasie” from Stalinesti; the churches in Mogosesti/Bairaky and Movila/Mohilivka (the XVIIIth century), Godinesti/Hodynivka, Molnitsa, Pasat/Krupyanske and Culiceni/Kulykivka from Hertsia district, in Mahala, Coteleu, Tarasautsi, Kosticeni and Marshenitsa from Novoselytsya district, in Voloka (1831) and Molodia from Hlyboka district etc.

The superior Prut River Basin is the area of spreading and interference of the Hutsuls and the Ruthenians, Orthodox and Catholic religion. Very popular are the old wooden churches in areas inhabited by the Hutsuls. These are characterized by original architecture

and interior rich in local embroideries which differ significantly from one settlement to another. The most of old wooden churches in the region are concentrated within the area of the settlements of Putyla-Vyzhnytsya-Kosiv-Kolomyia-Yaremche-Tatariv-Delyatyn-Vorokhta-Verkhovyna-Putyla (Figure 2). Also, it is worth visiting the wooden churches in the settlements: Selyatyn, Plyta, Shepit (Putyla district); Bystrets, Krivoryvnya and Yaseniv (Verkhovyna district); Roztoky and Vyzhenka (Vizhnytsya district); and Rojniv, Staryi Kosiv, Sheshory, Pistyn, Richka and Yabluniv (Kosiv district). In the Ruthenian villages stone churches of Old Russian style architecture with very beautifully decorated towers are noted. Their interior has common similarities with those of the Hutsuls and being rich in local embroideries.

The cultural heritage of the region is represented by valuable museums and memorial houses such as those from Kolomyia, Delyatyn, Yaremche, Verkhovyna, Kosiv, Putyla, Vyzhnytsya, Zelene, Yablunysya, Dovbusha and Yabluniv. Very requested are the memorial houses „*Ju. Fedikovici*” in Putyla and „*P. Kobylitsi*” in Sergi (Putyla district), and „*I. Franko*” in Krivoryvnya (Verkhovyna), the museum- houses „*M. Eminescu*”, „*Aron Pumnul*” and „*Gh. Asachi*” in Chernivtsi, the museum – manor of the Romanian painter Arthur Verona in Hertsa.

3. The problems of exploitation of touristic potential

In spite of the rich natural and ethno-cultural heritage, the touristic flows of the region are characterized by a relatively low intensity that is marked by a multiple reduction in both the number of tourists and the receipts from the tourism services, especially. The very tense situation in Ukraine and the military conflict in the east of this country significantly limit the number of tourists arriving in the investigated region, mainly from Russia and who previously were the most numerous, and condition high prices for local tourist services.

Access to the described national parks is difficult both from Romania, due to the lack of official border crossing points, and from Ukrainian due to the very poor condition of roads and road bridges. Much of the access roads to the national parks described here, especially to Verkhovyna and Ceremosh, are in a very deplorable state. They were greatly damaged during the floods in 2008 and 2010 and thereafter were repaired only superficially and only on parts. Some eco-tourism destinations, particularly in the border area, can be reached only by off-road terrain cars and on local roads. At the same time, the difficult access to valuable ecotourism destinations allows its conservation and limits their industrial exploitation and deforestation.

Another serious problem is the massive accommodation and leisure infrastructure shortage at natural tourist destinations except the Carpathian National Park, the major roads and Chernivtsi region. Also, there is a massive lack of road signs and tourist markings.

The difficult economic situation is largely maintained by the massive tax evasion in both individual unorganized sector and big accommodation structures of providing various tourism services including the big hotels, commercial centres of craft items, restaurants, points of delivery to ski equipment, skating rings etc.

Conclusions:

1. The Ukrainian sector of the Prut River Basin has a varied and rich touristic potential. Forest areas are more extensive and preserved if compared to Romania and to other neighbour states. Here are concentrated the largest and most valuable protected areas of the Prut River Basin and the cultural heritage is well preserved.
2. The mountain relief is favourable to the development of winter sports, but in the region there is only one modern resort that complies with the international requirements. Also, despite numerous mineral springs, there are only a few spa resorts of regional importance.

3. In the region we distinguish three ethno-cultural zones (Romanian, Hutsul and Ruthenian) and their harmonious interference. Particularly valuable are the old churches from the Romanian settlements, the churches and folk traditions of the Hutsuls, the architectural monuments from Chernivtsi, Kolomyia and Yaremche towns.

4. The main problems of touristic potential exploitation in the Ukrainian sector of the Prut River Basin are the following: the tense situation in Ukraine; the armed conflict with the Russian Federation; the poor state of transport infrastructure; the shortage of accommodation and leisure structures at the valuable touristic destinations; the poor accessibility in the border areas and the insufficiency of the customs points from Romania.

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