



BROCHURE

WORKING TOGETHER
TO INSPIRE SUSTAINABLE
SOLUTIONS



RESPONSIBLE TOURISM IN MARAMUREȘ

Romania

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Responsible tourism in Maramureș

We all like beautiful natural landscapes, but we largely take this “cultural service” for granted. What if we assess the value of this service nature provides us with and contribute to its maintenance so we enjoy it in the future too?

WWF chose a pilot area located in Maramures County, in the north of Romania and set out to demonstrate how the interlinked natural and cultural assets can be saved from depletion by inviting tourists and tourism companies to pay for conservation activities that make their holidays inspiring and pleasurable and their business profitable respectively.



Total surface
62.100
hectares

Architectural heritage
included in the
UNESCO
World Heritage

Characteristics of the area

With a total surface of 62.100 ha, the **pilot area Mara-Cosau-Rooster's Peak** occupies the valleys formed by the Mara and Cosau rivers, and is bordered by the Rooster's Peak Nature Reserve in the south. Here, local people are living off income generated by small-scale agriculture, forestry and tourism.

There are **7 small protected areas** and **7 settlements** here that can be visited by following “**The Maramureș Heritage Trail**”, an 86 kilometre greenway developed for slow and sustainable forms of tourism and mobility. The pilot area is also part of the **European network Natura 2000** (20.282 ha), still hosting wild mammals such as the brown bear, the lynx, the Carpathian chamois, the wild boar or the wolf, as well as birds such as the great owl, species of hawk, falcon, spotted eagle, and many other species.

Overall, the area is particularly known for the beautiful and **biodiversity rich mosaic landscapes** of alpine grasslands, meadows and forests habitats, for the **architectural heritage** consisting of **wooden houses, wooden gates and wooden churches** – 8 of these also included in the **UNESCO World Heritage**, and for the possibility to still experience **the authentic traditional lifestyle** of its people.

IDENTIFIED THREATS TO NATURAL VALUES

Lack of public
funding raises
**THE RISK OF
DEGRADATION**
in protected areas

The threats to natural values which prompted action are as follows:

- 🌲 improper visiting patterns negatively impacting protected areas and habitats (e.g. walking off trek, waste)
- 🌲 pollution from municipal waste (particularly in protected areas close to villages/urban centres)
- 🌲 a growing water demand (to satisfy the guesthouses' desire to diversify their services: e.g. construction of pools)
- 🌲 abandonment of traditional wood architecture (signalling the weakening of the link between man and nature, man and tradition that is typical of Maramures)

The establishment of protected areas is already a powerful instrument to pursue nature conservation. However, small protected areas like those in the Mara-Cosau-Rooster's Peak pilot area do not have a line in the state budget and custodians have to take on the responsibility to raise funds to cover both the costs of conservation measures and their administrative expenses. This is a difficult, bureaucratic and time-consuming endeavour and represents the reason why sometimes protected areas are left without management, which in turn raises the **risk of degradation**.

Furthermore, their natural features do not allow for a formally regulated access and the visiting facilities are basic and outdated. Finally, the low level of awareness and understanding of how nature works and what benefits it thus offers us highlights the necessity to undertake environmental education activities.



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Ecosystem services in the Maramureş pilot area

Annual value of key ecosystem services¹ individuals, communities and businesses in Mara-Cosau-Rooster's Peak depend on²:



Type of ES	Group of ES	Description	Euro
Regulation and maintenance	Maintenance of physical, chemical, biological conditions	Carbon sequestration	3,355,000
		Accumulation of biomass in the main forestry species (Spruce, Beech) both underground and above-the-ground	2,185,000
		Above-the-ground accumulation of CO ₂ for pastures and meadows	1,170,000
		Carbon storage	226,000
		Only forests where timber mass production is not allowed	
Cultural	Physical and intellectual interactions with biota, ecosystems and land-/seascapes	Tourism related income	145,000

¹ The area also delivers provisioning services related to water and food (e.g. food produced in high nature value farmlands).

² Based on CICES – Common International Classification on Ecosystem Services.





FROM FREE BENEFITS TO VALUED ECOSYSTEM SERVICES: AN INNOVATIVE FINANCING MECHANISM FOR NATURE CONSERVATION



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Ecotourism as a **SOURCE OF FUNDING** for protected areas

The financing scheme has been developed by WWF in Maramureș with the goal **to enhance (the protection and maintenance of) the cultural/aesthetic and the biodiversity values of the 7 small protected areas by supporting and promoting a responsible model of tourism.**






As an innovative conservation mechanism, it is based on a **voluntary commitment** between **local guesthouses and tour operators** on the one side and **protected area administrators** on the other. Financial donations made by guesthouses and tour operators in the form of annual fixed fees are collected in a **Conservation and Sustainable Development Fund** and then allocated to the protected areas on the basis of selection criteria that allow for prioritization among the many conservation measures in need of funding.

Additional funding streams identified along the way should enhance the impact of the scheme, both in terms of scale and complexity of specific conservation measures.

MEASURES FUNDED THROUGH THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND

WWF's mission is to build a future where humans live in harmony with nature. To achieve that, the **continuous balance between conservation efforts and the socio-economic needs of people** in the targeted areas has to be taken into consideration. In the case of Maramureş, the scheme is more than a conservation initiative: to build public acceptance around the scheme as well as to accumulate the critical amount of funds for (ongoing) conservation efforts, the Conservation and Sustainable Development Fund is also used to address local development needs. This is expected to raise the quality of life and of tourism services and offers, overall securing the delivery of the “cultural services”, among many other important benefits we get from nature.

In terms of conservation, the Fund covers the following types of activities:

-  biodiversity data management
-  maintenance of land and peat bog trails
-  marking and position of information boards
-  education activities
-  training of protected area personnel

Examples of local development needs covered are as follows:

-  diversification and development of sustainable, qualitative tourism products/services with positive economic and social impact and minimum negative impact on nature
-  capacity building targeting tourism stakeholders and public authorities (e.g. ecotourism product development, environmental awareness)
-  improvement of local development policies to further integrate sustainability principles

The management of the Fund is done by The Maramureş Ecology and Tourism Centre, a local NGO, with technical support offered by WWF and AER – the Association of Ecotourism in Romania. The principles of transparency and non-discrimination, as well as clear procedures ensure a sound management of the funds.



**Conservation
+ sustainable
development**

THE ADDED-VALUE OF THE SCHEME

A long-term
VISION
of sustainable
local development



The scheme pertains to a wider vision for Maramureş and particularly for the pilot area, stretching for a medium-long term, whereby Mara-Cosau-Rooster's Peak is officially and formally recognised as an **ecotourism destination**. A sense of participation and local ownership is also nurtured in order to ensure a successful continuation of WWF's efforts: the destination is managed by a **Local Partnership** formed of local public authorities, protected areas administrators, environmental NGOs and the private sector.

The value of the scheme comes not only from the wide range of benefits it generates, but also from its potential to be replicated in similar areas with important natural and cultural capital that can be lost without a long term view and strategy supported by integrated policies and proper investment.

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

There are several ways in which individuals, companies, and public authorities can get involved and contribute to the scheme, helping to achieve the vision described above, and they do not only encompass financial aid.

For detailed information and personalised contribution solutions, you are invited to contact the project team (contact details are provided on the back cover).

LOCATION OF THE MARAMUREȘ PILOT AREA



This case study was prepared as part of the project “Promoting payments for ecosystem services and related sustainable financing schemes in the Danube basin”. This project promotes and supports land managers who help us sustain the benefits that we all get from nature. The project is implemented by the WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme with the financial support of the GEF through UNEP and the European Commission. Implementation period: 2009-2014.

WWF in numbers

100%
RECYCLED



1961

WWF was founded
in 1961

+100

WWF is in over
100 countries,
on 6 continents



+5M

WWF has over 5 million
supporters

+5,000

WWF has over
5,000 staff
worldwide



Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and
to build a future in which humans live in harmony and nature.

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