Tourist Attractions in Eşelniţa

The touristic area of Cazanele Dunării is about 50 km long, on the northern shore of the Danube, between Svinița, upriver, and Orșova, downriver. Eșelnița stretches from Danube's exit from **Cazanele Mici** to the confluence of the **Mraconea Valley** and the Danube, a place dominated by **Dacian king Decebalus's face** sculpted into the cliff. For those in search of adventure in nature, the **Cazanele Dunării Natural Reservation**, the **Iron Gates Natural Park**, the **Monitoring Centre for Habitats and Species** and the Eșelniţa hunting area are elements that will make this experience an unforgettable one. The history of the place and the ethnic, spiritual and cultural mosaic can be found at the **Doina and Teodor Grigore Ethnographic Museum** and the **Eşelniţa Parochial Museum**. Here, one can find evidence of the drama suffered due to the displacement of the village, caused by the construction of the Iron Gates dam. The collection is surprising, thanks to the originality of the objects and the complexity of the stories. A boat ride on the Danube will bring to light the real treasures of nature and valuable historic monuments: when crossing the valley of the Mraconea River, one can admire the face of Dacian king Decebalus sculpted into the cliff. Upriver, one can stop and visit the Mraconia Monastery, a sanctuary of sacredness and a testimony of orthodoxy. When the water of the Danube is very low, the Mracunea gulf uncovers the ruins of the former Mraconea Monastery, with a history full of mysteries. In a boat ride through Clisura Dunării, one can visit the Ponicova Cave, which also has an entrance at the water's level, and the Veterani Grotto, an old Dacian sanctuary. At the exit from Cazanele Mici, on the Serbian shore, not far from the statue of Decebalus, there is Tabula Traiana, a monument built 2,000 years ago by Roman emperor Trajan, in order to commemorate the victories of the Roman Empire over Dacia, in 105. The Danube at Cazane, which frightened navigators for centuries, today attracts, like a mirage, tourists from all over the world, eager to discover nature and to relive the history of the places.



Eșelnița Commune



Bust of King Decebal

The Bust of Dacian King Decebalus Rex

The statue of Dacian king Decebalus is 55 m high and it is situated on the rocky bank of the Danube, between Eşelniţa and Dubova, close to the city of Orşova, Romania. The statue represents Decebal, the last king of Dacia, and it is sculpted into a cliff. It is the tallest stone sculpture in Europe. Businessman and historian Iosif Constantin Drăgan was the promoter and financer of this work of art, which was executed between 1994 and 2004.

It was sculpted taking as model the sculpture of Mount Rushmore, in the American state of South Dakota, and it is the largest statue in Europe; it is only 6 m shorter than the Statue of Liberty, but 8 m taller then the statue of Jesus Christ in Rio de Janeiro, and approximately 10 m higher than the legendary Colossus of Rhodes. The location of the sculpture is near the city of Orşova, in the area of the cataracts of Cazanele Mici (the Mraconia gulf), on the left bank of the Danube, where the water is deepest – 120 m.

The execution of this work of art took place under the supervision of Romanian sculptor Florin Cotarcea, despite the dangers represented by the height, heat and the presence of adders. The pontoon of the Mraconia gulf, where the largest stone sculpture in Europe is situated, is only accessible by boat.



The Bust of King Decebalus



Tabula Traiana - view from a boat

Tabula Traiana

On the Serbian bank, close to Cazanele Mici, there is an almost 2.000-year old antique memorial plaque, called Tabula Traiana. On the opposite bank, there was an old Roman road, with parapets. The Tabula is embedded into the stone and on it are represented two dolphins floating and an eagle in the sky. The figures and ornaments are sculpted in relief, and the writing is carved into the stone. Translated, the text of the Tabula reads as follows:

„Emperor Caesar, son of divine Nerva, Nerva Traianus Augustus Germanicus, supreme priest invested as tribune for the fourth time, father of the country, consul for the third time, by excavating mountain rocks, has built a road along the river".

Ten plaques were carved into the stone walls of the gorge. Four have been preserved in drawings and stamps from the 18th and 19th centuries, and the rest have been destroyed. Tabula Traiana is the only one still in existence today. Apparently, Romans have made extraordinary efforts between 102 and 105 A.D. in order to create a second route towards the heart of Dacia, along with the one in the valley of the Mureș river. Both the Sip navigation channel and the road crossing the Danube Gorge, as well as the effort made for building the bridge of Apolldorus of Damascus, show us that the Romans were in a hurry to conquer Dacia. Trajan had probably heard of the great riches of the kingdom of Dacia, represented by the treasure that was subsequently valued at 1,640 t of gold and 3,310 t of silver. This made Trajan not spare any effort for building the necessary passages for opening a second battle front in the south of the country, so as to surprise Decebalus from a direction that the latter considered safe, due to the protection offered by the natural obstacles that the Romans were working so hard on eliminating. With the whole expansion of the Roman Empire in the 2nd century A.D., which only took from Dacia one third of the current territory of Romania, the historians of the time considered the Danube to be the border between the Roman Empire and Dacia. After the Roman retreat from Dacia, in 271 A.D., the Danube became an uncrossable border.



The valley of the Mraconea river

The Valley of the Mraconea River

The Mraconea river is a water course tributary to the Danube. Where it flows into the Danube, the river creates a beautiful estuary, which is called the Mraconia Gulf. It is a place appreciated by tourists for fishing, swimming and other water sports.

Mraconea, the name of the river and of the mouth of the river is considered to mean both dark and hidden. Whether we are talking about the characteristics of the place or its history, the meaning of the name has a perfect correspondence in the reality. The place, hidden behind a narrow gorge and open beyond it, because of the forest-covered mountains that surround it, seems to not benefit from all of the sun's light, neither in the morning, nor in the evening. From the Mraconea River Valley, either from the land or from the boat, one can admire the statue of the last Dacian king, Decebalus, sculpted into the cliff.

The Ruins of the Mracunea Monastery Walls

The ruins of the Mracunea Monastery walls can be visited either on foot or on a bicycle tour. The ruins are visible when the waters in the Mracunea gulf are low. Repeatedly destroyed by the Ottoman hordes during their expansion towards the Habsburg Empire, the monastery, whose name means "dark, hidden place" in Slavonic, preserves some yet undiscovered mysteries. Within the ruins of the monastery, in 1823, the seal of the old place was found, with the Slavonic inscription: "*Peceat Mănăstirea Lubostinie Hram Uspenia Presvistaia Bogaraditi Leto 1735*". A few decades later, after the waters retreated, an icon of Virgin Mary was discovered under the ruins, which was then taken by painter Victor Schram, from Munich, to an exhibition in Vienna.

The Mraconia Monastery, located between Orșova and Moldova Nouă, at the mouth of the Mraconia river, where the most beautiful gorge on the entire river is, is visible from the water and is easily accessible by the DN57 national road. The Mraconia Monastery was erected on the grounds of a former vessel control and observation point, whose origin is uncertain and is lost along the former six centuries.

The monastery's patron saint is St. Elijah. The monastery attracts pilgrims and simple visitors each year. From a specialised guide, one can find out more details about the spirituality of the place and the turbulent history of the monastery.



The sunken ruins of the Mracunea Monastery walls


The Mraconia Monastery - view from the Danube


The Mraconia Monastery - access from DN57

The Mraconia Monastery

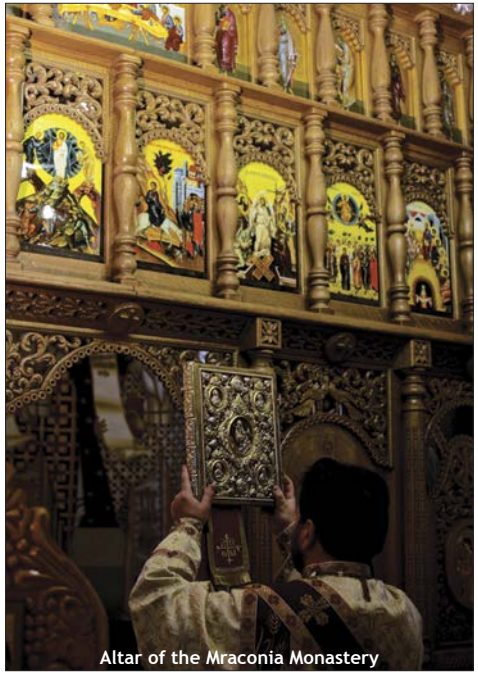
The Mraconia Monastery was erected on the grounds of a former vessel control and observation point; because of the architecture of the environment and due to the narrowness of the gorge, from place to place, there was no possibility for two vessels to pass through simultaneously. The monastery is close to Decebalus's Face. The Danube carries with it the mystery of the roots of Mraconia Monastery. Without an end, Mraconia seems to also refuse to have beginnings. Born and killed several times, this holy monastery is today, from beyond its death, a certainty of faith, a hope for Resurrection and a foundation of love. The current church's patrons are Sts. Michael and Gabriel and the Holy Trinity.

The monastery is made of a cross-shaped brick wall. Its interior is compartmentalised into an altar, a nave and an open porch.

Form the initial church, which is now under the water of the Danube, only the monarchal doors and a votive light have been preserved – in the parochial museum of Eşelniţa. The protopope of Mehadia, Nicolae Stoica of Haţeg, in the Chronicle of 1829, mentions that the monastery was deserted by the monks in 1453, because of the frequent Turkish incursions. The Mraconia Monastery was built in 1523 by the family of the Ban of Severin, Nicolae Gârlişteanu, his wife, Anca, their daughter, Irina, and their granddaughter, Nasta.

In 1628, Bishop Iosif of Mehadia, nephew of Nasta, retreated to Mraconia, wrote his will and died. He was buried in the Holy Church, with the founders. He had left his entire wealth to the monastery: "no relative shall defy my will. The monastery shall remain here forever, it shall be used and no one shall violate my will".

After the death of Bishop Iosif, the monastery was again destroyed. In 1658, votary Teophilus roamed through the entire south of Banat and collected money for restoring the monastery and for satisfying the greed of some chiefs in the Turkish administration. After seven years, in 1665, hegumen Isaia announced: "the walls have all been erected, the cells are ready and have been painted, and the Holy Church has been decorated. Brother Ilie, painter, master worker from the Holy Mountain, they have repainted the church and they have covered the altarpiece in gold, and the whole monastery is shining like the morning star." It is also known that, on 15 August 1682, hieromonk Vasile announced that "…the holy monastery was burned down by the Turks and was robbed of all the valuables, so that the only things left were our eyes, for us to cry after our holy monastery; it was a rare gem and all that is left today are the walls and the adders among the rocks. And we live huts and perform church service under the open sky…" With aid from the church-goers in the area, the monastery was resurrected. In 1690, some Jesuit monks stopped here, with hidden intentions. In 1993, the construction of the new church started, and in 1995, the new building was ready. At the meeting of the Metropolitan Council of the Metropolis of Oltenia, on 28 May 2008, it was approved that the Mraconia Monastery should be transformed from a monastery to a convent. Currently, the abbess of the convent is Teodora Angheluţă. The paintings were done by a family of painters from Severin, Eugen and Florica Papici. Even if the Danube were to stop flowing, the soil here would still be full of sanctity for a long time. The founders of the monastery, the Gârlişteanu family, Bishop Iosif, the monks killed by sword in 1715, are our mysterious ways towards God. If their monastery was born and killed so many times, they continue to live, without ever coming or going away from here, preparing Mraconia's place under God's sky.


Altar of the Mraconia Monastery


Detail of paintings from the Mraconia Monastery


Detail of paintings from the Mraconia Monastery



Altar door from the church of Eşelniţa

The Eşelniţa Parochial Museum

The Eşelniţa Parochial Museum was created in 1990-1996, thanks to parson Sever Negrescu and donors. It contains patrimony objects of great value, coming form the former villages and churches along the Danube Gorge: Tişoviţa, Plavişeviţa and Ogradena, which were covered by the water, and from the relocated ones, Dubova and Eşelniţa, due to the construction of the Iron Gates Hydroelectric and Navigation System. From the icon collection, two stand out, due to the fact that the Danube appears within the frame.

The icon of Virgin Mary with baby Jesus in a Romanian traditional blouse, holding a lily flower in his right hand, is unique and has powerful symbols. The icon comes from the church in Ogradena and dates from the first half of the 18th century. The second one was executed from gold thread on tapestry and it depicts Jesus Christ; His feet, the Danube and a boat with fishers are visible. From the old Mraconia Monastery, only the monarchal doors and a votive light have been preserved.



Old photograph from the former territory of Eşelniţa



Detail of an exhibit in the Eşelniţa Parochial Museum



Detail of an exhibit in the Eşelniţa Parochial Museum



Detail of an exhibit in the Eşelniţa Parochial Museum

Filigree books, miniature manuscripts, silver cups, inscriptions, a Dacian rushlight and other old objects filled with history and with the spirit of the water inspired the founder of the museum to collect and rearrange them under the name *"The Museum of the Water"*. The Parochial Museum also contains important proof about the life of hierarch Iosif Traian Bădescu, Bishop of Caransebeş, the first bishop from Banat, whose activity remained in everyone's conscience as productive and enduring, both spiritually and administratively. The bishop's will stipulated he should be buried in the village where he had spend his childhood and where his father had served as a priest for 50 years.

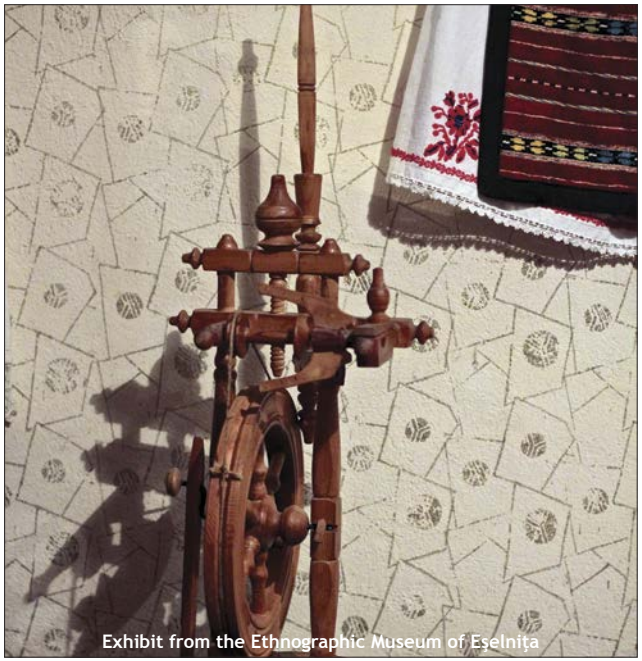


Exhibit from the Ethnographic Museum of Eşelniţa

The Doina and Teodor Grigore Ethnographic Museum

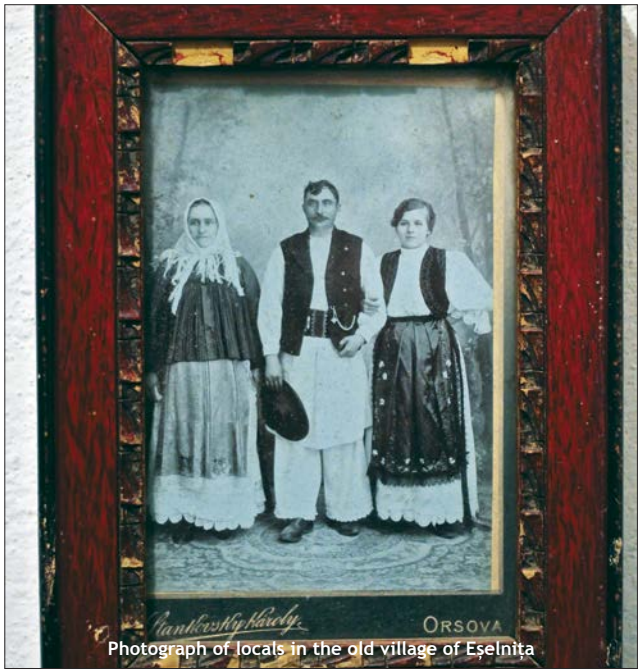
The Doina and Teodor Grigore Ethnographic Museum, set up in the family's home, contains an impressive collection of craft or household objects, as well as authentic traditional costumes specific to the region. The objects were collected by Mrs. Doina Grigore from the attics and the homes of people who, due to the trauma of the relocation, were about to abandon their spiritual identity. Thanks to Mrs. Grigore, almost the entire history and life of the people of Eşelniţa was preserved here. Thus, today, one can see original pieces of furniture, old ceramic objects, icons, unique wood and iron objects, an impressive collection of keys from the doors of former houses from the village which is now under the water; there is a fascinating story told by the old photographs of the former villages of Eşelniţa, Dubova and Ogradena, today covered by the Danube's water.



Exhibits of the Ethnographic Museum of Eşelniţa



Exhibits of the Ethnographic Museum of Eșelnița



Photograph of locals in the old village of Eșelnița

In all the rooms of this rural house, there are testimonies of this region's past, which speak to us about the lifestyle and work of the people living on the Romanian bank of the Danube. Moreover, among the old and original Romanian objects, there are also original and authentic objects collected by the Grigore family in Mexico, South America, India or Nepal; thus, visitors are offered the possibility to see how profoundly human and universally valid the authentic Romanian discourse is, when seen side by side with objects from all over the world.

The Doina and Teodor Grigore Ethnographic Museum is open during summers, in June, July and August, but, if you are in Eșelnița, regardless of the season, you can contact Mrs. Doina Grigore (tel. 0252.31.35.35), who lives in Drobeta Turnu Severin and, at 75 years old, is active and happy to see tourists interested in the history of these places. There is no entrance fee, as the museum is maintained by two kind neighbours.



Traditional costume from Clisura Dunării



Clay pots specific of the Clisura Dunării region



Traditional costume from Clisura Dunării



Clisura Dunării - view from Ciucaru Mare

The Cazanele Dunării Natural Reservation

The Cazanele Mari and Cazanele Mici Natural Reservation has a surface of over 495 acres and is situated between Valea Ogradena and Ogașul Turcului. In this region, the Danube passes through the most narrow and impressive area of the Danube Gorge, Cazanele Dunării.

Cazanele Dunării comprises the portion of the gorge between the mouths of the rivers Plavișevița and Ogradena, which are made of two different sections: Cazanele Mari and Cazanele Mici.

The two sections are separated by a semicircular gulf, the Dubova basin. Between Plavișevița and the Dubova basin, the Cazanele Mari area stretches over 3.8 km. It is made up of the calcareous massif Ciucaru Mare (318 m), whose abrupt cliffs border the left side of the river, and Stirbatul Mare (Veliki Strbac - 768 m), on the Serbian bank.

The flora in the Cazane area contains many sub-Mediterranean elements mixed with the central European ones. At the base of the abrupt cliff, there are brushes such as beech, oriental hornbeam, manna ash, field maple or Montpellier maple, Turkish hazel.

In the sunniest areas, there are pubescent oaks, holm oaks, lilacs. In shaded areas, at only 120 m altitude, grows the European yew (taxus baccata), a tertiary relic and a monument of nature.



Landscape - view from Ciucaru Mare



The Dubova-Cazanele Mici trail



Entrance of the Danube to the gorge - view from DN57

The Ponicova Cave



The Ponicova Cave - entrance detail

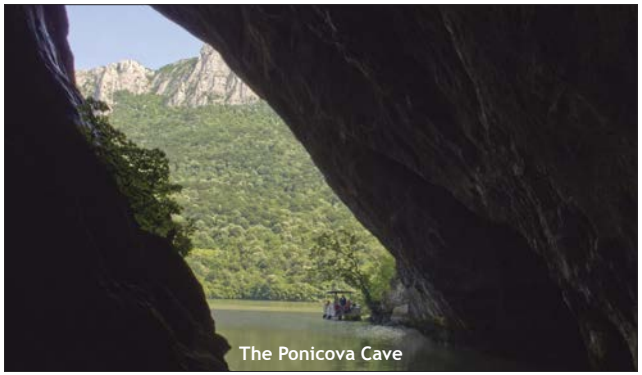
The largest cave in Clisura Dunării, the Ponicova Cave has had several names through the years; it was known as the cave at the River's Mouth or the Bats' Cave. The Ponicova Cave has been carved into the left cliff of the Danube, Cazanele Mari, Ciucaru Mare, and it was partially flooded after the creation of the barrier lake. Its galleries total 1,660 m, crossing Ciucaru Mare and opening into the Danube. The cave can be accessed in 2 ways: either from the valley of Ponicova, or from the Danube, by boat. The main entrance is also the most accessible one and is situated in Cheile Ponicovei, where one can get from DN57, by descending along the bridge over the Ponicova stream. The stream has cut into the limestone and formed a natural bridge, which leads to the entrance and then continues through the cave, creating a multi-level gallery system, after which it flows into the Danube, underwater. Also, the cave has an entrance situated at the current level of the Danube, accessible by motor boat, after 500 m under the cliff of Ciucaru Mare, up to the cave's entrance.

The Ponicova Cave is composed of a series of galleries that communicate with one another, situated on two levels. From the Ponicova gorge (on the land), one can enter the gallery of Ogașul Ponicova, or one can take a narrow path to the Bats' Gallery.

This is a long hall, over 100 m long, 60 m wide and 30 m high, which has on its floor collapsed blocks, holes, concretions and mounds of guano from the relatively large bats.



The Ponicova Cave - entrance from the Danube


The Ponicova Cave

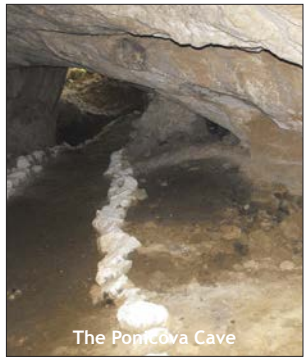
From the Ogașul Ponicova Gallery, two passages emerge, one leading towards the Concretion Gallery, the most beautiful part of the cave, with anemolites – a variety of eccentric formations created due to the action of the air currents on the subterranean waters, and then to the Columns Hall. The other the other passage leads to the Stairs Gallery and the Clay Gallery. Here, water and time have created stalactites and stalagmites of various shapes and sizes, domes and columns, the white calcite floor, rimstone, cave pearls, draperies, all formations specific to caves, carved into limestone. Bear and cave hyena bones were found inside the cave, as well as artefacts from the Hallstatt culture (the Iron Age). The karstic relief is well represented by forms of exokarst, such as sinkholes, limestone pavements, the short and wild gorges of the Ponicova stream, but also by forms of endokarst, a few pitches and several caves. The entire area belongs to the Iron Gates National Park, created for the protection of the species and of the landscape, unique in Europe.

The Ponicova Cave has been declared a speleological reserve because of some Ursus spelaeus fossils, a very old ceramic fragment and several endemic species. It is recommended for tourists to visit only between May and October, with the exception of the flooding periods, when the Ponicova Gallery may be entirely or partially flooded.

For an expedition inside the cave, it is recommended to have lamps, rubber boots and adequate equipment. The visitation of the entire cave takes 2-3 hours.



Veterani Grotto - entrance


The Ponicova Cave

The Veterani Grotto

The Veterani Grotto can be accessed from the river, on a wooden footbridge, hidden among some trees. The cave is at an altitude of 73 m, it is 173 m long and 28 m wide. Three centuries ago, it was used as a fortress, from which cannons would be fired at the Turkish ships that would not pay the toll. From the Antiquity until the Middle Ages, due to its position, the cave was used as a strategic and military observation point, but also as a control point for the traffic on the Danube. During the Dacians' time, the cave was considered to be Zamolxis' sanctuary. Those who visit it are impressed by the natural window at a height of 11 m, which gently illuminates the room housing butterflies, bats and a multitude of stalagmites and stalactites.

The Centre for Monitoring the Habitats and Species of Eșelnița

The Centre for Monitoring the Habitats and Species of Eșelnița represents a research base for the University of Bucharest – Centre for Environmental Research and Impact Studies (CCMESI), run by university professor dr. Maria Pătroescu. The centre was created in 2002, through a LIFE Nature programme of the European Commission, the same programme that led to the creation of the administration structures of the Iron Gates Natural Park. Initially, the Eșelnița Centre was called the Centre for Captive Breeding of Hermann's Tortoise. Hermann's tortoise, also known as the eastern Hermann's tortoise (Testudo hermanni boettgeri), is a protected species in Europe, and in the laboratory in Eșelnița there was an intensive programme for the monitoring and captive breeding of the populations of this iconic species of the Danube Gorge. For this purpose, successive generations of turtles were hatched at the centre, which were then raised in special enclosures, in the inner courtyard, until they reached the optimum weight for being released in the wild.

The partnership between CCMESI and the Administration of the Iron Gates Natural Park continued for a long time. The centre functioned as an information point for this protected area and as a space for educational activities with children.

Since 2005, the research profile has been changed, and the institution became the Centre for Habitats and Species Monitoring. Currently, it is a research base for the LIFE Nature LIFE10 NAT/RO/740 programme, carried out by the Environmental Protection Agency in Caraș-Severin, the Administration of the Iron Gates Natural Park, the University of Bucharest – CCMESI and the Grigore Antipa National Museum of Natural History. The goal of the programme is to improve the conservation status of the pygmy cormorant (Phalacrocorax pygmaeus) and the ferruginous duck (Aythya nyroca) (www.cormoran.portiledefier.ro). Since 2012, the laboratory in Eșelnița has an aquatic ecology laboratory, in which samples are being stored and processed, which are later analysed in the laboratories in Bucharest.

Also, there is a hall for educational events with a capacity of 25 places and the necessary infrastructure for working with children. The Eșelnița Research Centre for Habitats and Species has highly professional employees, who ensure the continuity of activities. The responsibilities of the employees are very diverse, from administration to research and visitor information. More details about the activity of the Centre for Environmental Research and Impact Studies can be found at the centre's web page (www.ccmesi.ro).


Hermann's tortoises in CCHS Eșelnița


Wild boar herd


Herman's tortoise egg incubator


Hermann's tortoise monitoring


Marking Hermann's tortoise eggs

The Eșelnița Hunting Area

The relief of Clisura Dunării is diverse, dominated by the south-eastern ends of the Almaj Mountains, also known as the Gorge Mountains. The maximum height of these mountains is between 700 and 900 m, measured from the base level of the Danube at Cazane. In Mehedinți County, there are four large hunting areas: Eșelnița, Punghina, Svinița and Dubova. In the Eșelnița commune, the forest covers 86% of the total administrative area and is the most important resource. The fauna contains a great diversity of low plain species, as well as elements characteristic to the hilly, karstic or even mountain areas. The main species that can be hunted here are: bear, fox, badger, otter, pheasant, hare, deer, boar, lark, quail, fallow deer, red deer, capercaillie, magpie etc.

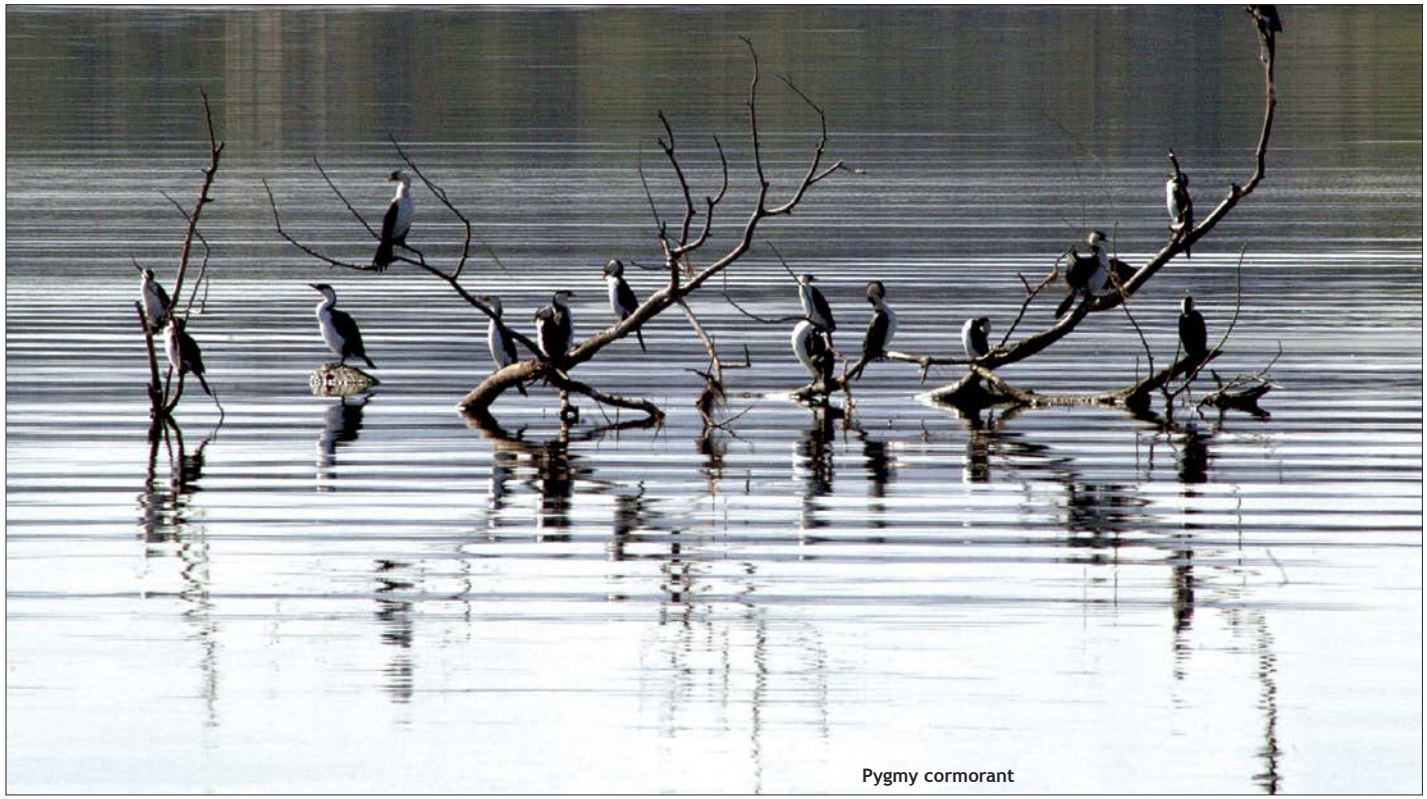
The Iron Gates Natural Park

The Iron Gates Natural Park is in the south-west of Romania, at the border with Serbia, occupying an area of over 285,650 acres and stretching over territories belonging to the counties Caraș-Severin and Mehedinți. The borders of the Natural Park are represented by the Danube waterway, to the south, the Nera river, to the west, the divide of Danube's tributaries, to the north, and a sinuous line that starts downstream of Gura Văii and ends in the Motarat Peak, to the east.

The Iron Gates National Park stretches from 21°21' to 22°36' east longitude, and from 44°51' to 44°28'30" north latitude. The main access routes are in the vicinity of the municipalities of Drobeta Turnu Severin and Orșova, in Mehedinți County, and near Socol and Năidaș, in Caraș Severin County.


Hermann's tortoise


Adder


Pygmy cormorant

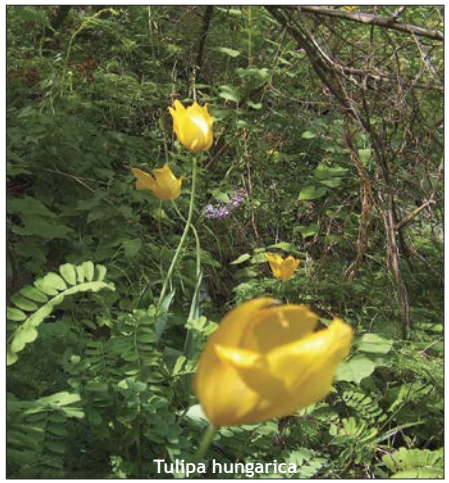
Fauna

In the Iron Gates National Park, 14 species of amphibians and 17 species of reptiles have been identified (P. Bănărăscu, O. Gheracopol, A. Petcu, 1975). Of these, the amphibian *Pelobatessyriacus* and the reptiles *Testudo hermanni, Ablepharus kitaibelii, Lacerta praticola, L. muralis, L. taurica, L. viridis, Coluber jugularis* and *Vipera ammodytes* are eastern Mediterranean and Mediterranean elements, respectively. Efforts will be made for the protection of the only sturgeon in the area, Acipenser ruthenus (the sterlet).

A large number of aquatic birds can be seen in the winter and in the spring on the surface of the lake and in the neighbouring watery areas: *Phalacrocorax pygmaeus* (pygmy cormorant), *P. carbo* (great cormorant), *Ardea cinerea* (grey heron), *Egretta alba* (great egret), *Anas crecca* (common teal), *A. acuta* (pintail), *Aythya ferina* (common pochard), *A. fuligula* (tufted duck), *Mergus albellus* (smew), *Fulica atra* (coot) etc. Most of these species can be seen during migration, some are winter guests, and some are sedentary.

Flora

The flora of the Iron Gates Natural Park is represented by a mixture of boreal, mountain and Mediterranean flora. At the same time, we can note the presence of mountain elements at lower altitudes and the presence of southern elements at higher altitudes. 171 cormophyte vegetal associations divided into 20 vegetation classes, out of which 26 are endemic, were described and identified. Some important species present in the Iron Gates Natural Park are: the black pine, the yew, Tulipa hungarica, the saffron crocus, the spiny cocklebur, the wild lilac.


Tulipa hungarica

Mountain Hikes, Trails and Climbing

Hiking is the most popular and cheapest leisure activity, which brings delight to the eye and a lot of joy to the soul. One can take several ecotouristic trails in the protected natural area Cazanele Mari and Cazanele Mici. In the Iron Gates Natural Park, there are 15 tourist trails marked for different degrees of difficulty, which offer possibilities for practicing mountain tourism.

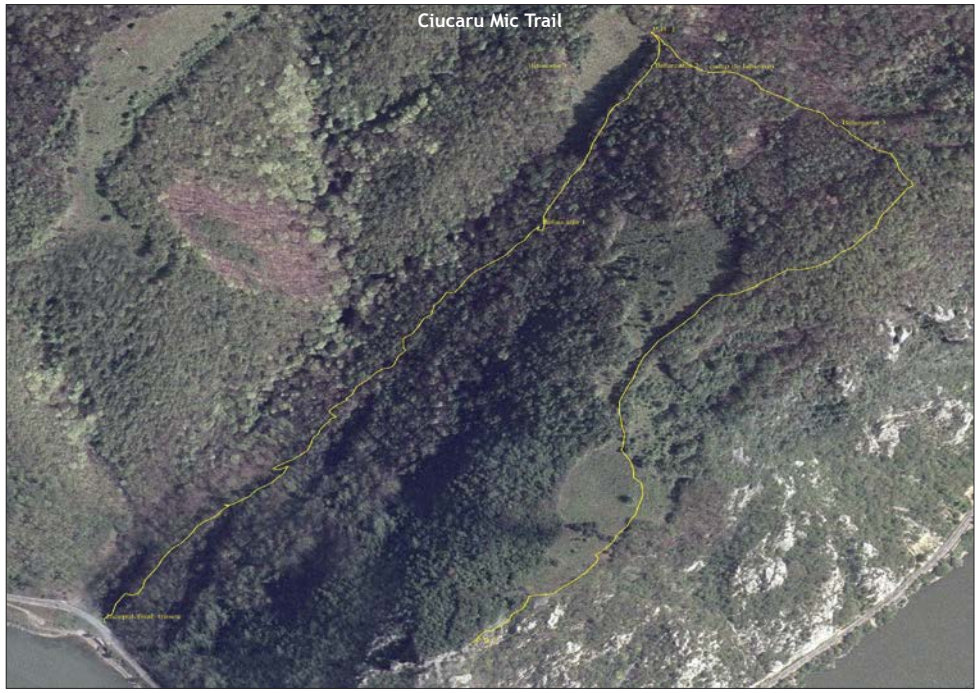
Tourist Trails in the Eşelnița Area

Ciucaru Mare 2 Trail

The trail can be accessed from DN57, at the exit from Dubova, towards Moldova Nouă, at approximately 2 km from the town hall of Dubova, through the place called "Poiana Popii" (the Parson's Clearing) by the locals. Approximate length of the trail: 1.6 km; medium completion time: 1 hour, at most 2 hours.

It is marked by a blue equilateral triangle, with a white border, on the trees and rocks in the proximity of the path. The ecotouristic trail follows mountain paths, which pass through oak and beech forests and grasslands. From the belvedere points, one can admire Cazanele Mari and Veliki Strbac, on the Serbian bank of the Danube. After 10-15 minutes, the ecotouristic trail bifurcates; one path leads towards Cazanele Mari, and the other one, directly to the Danube's level.





The Ciucaru Mic Trail

The trail can be accessed from the DN57 national road, at the entrance to the Dubova gulf, coming towards Orșova, on the right hand side, very close to the car parking. Trail length: approximately 3 km; medium completion time: around 2 hours. The trail is marked with a red equilateral triangle, with a white border, on the trees and rocks in the proximity of the path. The ecotouristic trail follows mountain paths. From the belvedere points, one can admire Cazanele Mici and Mali Strbac, on the Serbian bank of the Danube.



Sign - the Cazanele Mici trail



The Dubova-Cazanele Mici Trail

The trail can be accessed from the DN57 national road, at the Dubova gulf, approximately 24 km away from Orșova, in the direction of Moldova Nouă. The trail's length is approximately 9 km, and the medium completion time is around 1 hour, 6 hours maximum, for both variants. It is a medium difficulty trail. It is marked with a red equilateral triangle, with a white border, on the trees and rocks in the proximity of the path, at a visible distance, between 50 and 100 m away, on the parts of the forest or bordering areas that it crosses. Here, there are numerous belvedere points that provide unique views of Cazanele Mari and the Serbian bank of the Danube.

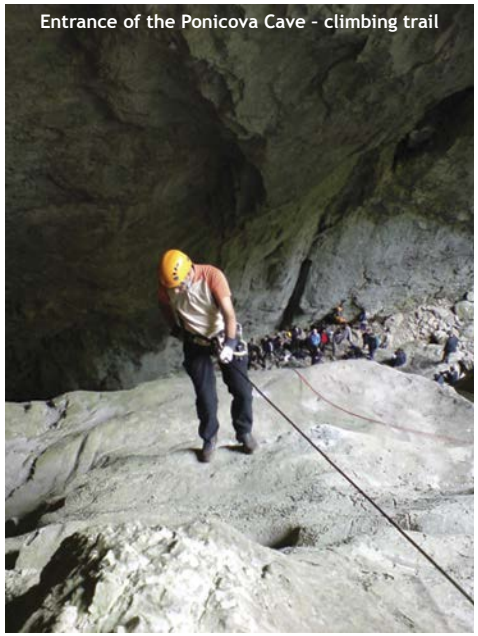

Map - the Dubova-Cazanele Mici trail

Climbing

For thrill-seeking tourists, there is a small climbing court, with low and medium-difficulty elements for climbing, rappel and zip line.

The activities in the court are overseen by monitors and licensed instructors, using very safe professional equipment. The activities in the climbing court are organised only for groups of at least 10 people.


Hiking - the Cazanele Mici trail


Entrance of the Ponicova Cave - climbing trail


Climbing at Clisura Dunării


Climbing at Clisura Dunării