

2. STUDY VISITS

Hațeg Country Dinosaurs Geopark is a UNESCO Global Geopark, the only one in Romania and one of the first to join the European and Global Geopark Networks in 2005. It covers 12 communities from the Hațeg Country cultural area, a depression in the Carpathian Mountains. This territory contains extraordinary geological heritage and also natural and cultural heritage, being one of the most interesting areas in Transylvania. The core of the geopark is the ancient Cretaceous fauna, or the Dwarf Dinosaurs found only in this region. Other relevant sites are the ancient roman capital, the stone medieval churches, the bison reserve, carnivorous plants, many species of butterflies and a rich tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

The Geoparks UNESCO designation is coordinated by the University of Bucharest, which was also in charge of the creation of the Geopark in 2000-2004 through a bottom-up approach, in partnership with local administrations, companies, universities, NGOs, schools and other. The University employs an integrated management of education, conservation and sustainable development. The Geopark uses local values to give the communities a sense of place and identity and to generate new incomes, especially through geotourism.

The Geopark is an open air laboratory for academic studies; it developed its own interpretation network. During the scheduled study visits, five of the seven Visitor Centres of the Hațeg Country Dinosaurs Geopark were visited. Instead of building a large geopark visiting hub, it has been developed a network of interpretation that includes seven visiting centres, with different themes, and spread across multiple localities of the park (House of the Geopark, House of Science and Art, House of Volcanoes, House of Miniatures, House of Traditions, House of Dwarf Dinosaurs, House of Stones). These, focusing on complementary themes, have managed to create an interpretive labyrinth within the geopark and at the same time to offer a variety of new tourist attractions within the ecotourism destination.

Also, the geopark created an educational network – EduGeopark and one of the most appreciated volunteer programs in the country – Volunteers for the Geopark.

The purpose of these visits was to observe how these three aspects of Interpretation - Education - Volunteering have been combined within the Geopark.

Also, other representative tourist objectives were visited at the destination (St. Nicholas Church of Densuș, Hațeg Village Museum of Peșteana or Mălăiești Fortress, and "Hațegana" Cooperative, a unit that has behind a tradition of 47-years in clothes craftsmanship). All of these objectives are partnered with the Geopark, being promoted by the latter or collaborating with it in various projects.

An important point within the study visit was the contact with the members of the Retezat National Park and the visit to the Falls of Lolaia. Hațeg Country Dinosaurs Geopark is a partner with Retezat National Park in the development of the ecotourism destination of Hațeg Country - Retezat and that is one of the four ecotourism destinations recognized so far by the Romanian Ministry of Tourism.

Another objective of the visit programme was the trip to Slivuț European Boar Reserve. During this visit, was emphasized the rich effort made at the international level to save this mammal race that is about to disappear. Also, on this occasion was presented the project related to the release of the bison into the wild.

A last aspect of the planned study visits was related to the involvement of local communities in Geopark's activities, and on the evening of 8 March 2018 was organized a traditional tasting of the typical products offered by the Women's Association of Sântămăria Orlea.

7th of March 2018

The House of Dinosaurs

The Exhibition "Dragons, Raptors and Dinosaurs" is housed at the headquarters of the Geopark of Hațeg. This concept exploits the legends of the dragons, the dragon myth and the fascination with dinosaurs that we display. The main hero is «*Balaurul bondoc*» / «*the stocky dinosaur*», a species of Transylvanian dinosaur, and the story of its discovery and reconstitution is the main attraction of the exhibition. Its reconstruction is carried out by Brian Cooley, who is a highly reputed international expert.

The House of Science and Art – is one of the Geopark's interpretation centres which tell the story of the dwarf dinosaurs' nests and eggs. Here can be seen three original 70 million years old nests and a scientific reconstruction of *Magyarosaurus dacus*. A second section of this visitor centre is dedicated to local artists, by providing a space where their works are exposed.

Hațeg Village Museum is a private museum where Nea Anton gathered, during a lifetime, interesting objects from the community's past and present.



Peșteana Marsh Nature Reserve – the place of the carnivorous plant *Drosera rotundifolia* or the Sundew. It is also an important mythic place for the locals, where animals are swallowed by the evil forces.



St. Nicholas Church Densuș - Some believe that it was at first a Roman temple of the Mars, transformed into a church in the 12-13th century. Others believe that it was the mausoleum of Roman general Longinus Maximus, whose wife discovered the Christian religion and arranged the first church north of the Danube in the place of the mausoleum. Today, the church is unusual, being a mixture of styles and materials.



The House of Volcanoes is part of the visiting and education network of the Hațeg Country Dinosaurs Geopark - a UNESCO International Geopark. This is an example of a partnership between the Geopark, the "Drag de Hațeg" Association ("[We are] Fond of Hațeg") and the local community and a model of good practice in involving volunteers into several activities. Through this infrastructure, visitors are given the opportunity to actively learn, experience, explore and fathom the Earth's Story.



8th of March 2018

"Hațegana" Association, a unit that has behind a tradition of 47-years in clothes craftsmanship.



Retezat National Park- Containing more than 60 peaks over 2,300 m and over 100 crystal clear deep glacier lakes, the Retezat Mountains are some of the most beautiful in the Carpathians. The area shelters one of Europe's last remaining intact old-growth forest and the continent's largest single area of pristine mixed forest. In 1979 the Man and Biosphere Program of UNESCO included the park in the international network of biosphere reserves.

Mălăiești Fortress - The only medieval reconstructed fortress in the region. It tells the stories of the Age of Knights in a dangerous region at the edge of Europe.

Bison Reserve, Slivuț - The reserve was founded in the late 1950s, being the oldest in Romania. The bison is the largest land animal in Europe, a re-wilding project is undergoing in the region.

The House of Dwarf Dinosaurs was set up in a former pub of Sânpetru Village. The role of the exhibition is not only to provide information, but also to educate those who come to see it, for people to become familiarized with the geological past and heritage of this area. The centre hosts a reconstruction of *Elopteryx nopcsai*.



The House of Traditions is a centre set up by Orlea Sănămăria Women Association in partnership with the Geopark.

The Centre regularly organizes events such as: Tincture Plant Workshop, Local Produce Fair (fabrics, pumpkin oil, and soap), Annual Celebration of the Geopark, Dinosaur Workshop.

