

## FIELD TRIP INFORMATION

The Danube River personifies a stone cutter gifted with power and obstinacy, patiently eroding its way in the Carpathians and nearby the Balkans Mountains. After breaching Romania through Bazias, the Danube depicts a river's most amazing course, stretching on 2.860 km from source, in Black Forest Mountains, to the Black Sea.

Out of the 125km of Danube Gorges, 45km represents the well known narrowing at "Cazane" ("cazan" meaning "kettle"), between Dubova and Ogradena. This narrow pass of the river is formed by the Great Cazan (4km length) and the Small Cazan (5km length). The name refers to the tumultuous currents, seaming to stir the river's water. Actually the Danube's width shrinks to only 180-250m in this mountainous area.

Due to the picturesque of the landscape and the presence of floral species like "Cazane tulip", Apus Melba, Flowering Ash, the region is recognized as a unique European natural monument.

Entering the river Macronia's bay, on the romanian bank of "Cazane", on a peak it can be observed Decebalus face carved in rock. It is here that authorities are reconstructing Macronia Hermitage, known as the "Submerged Monastery". The importance of the place is completed with the stone inscription "Tabula Traiana", marking the beginning of the suspended bridge (40km) that Traian, the legendary roman emperor, opened into Dacia.

There's an intricate network of forest and communal roads, more or less modernized, perfectly adapted to the need of adrenaline for mountain bikers and off road motorcycles passionate.

It is not only an adventure tourism destination, it is also a quiet place for fishermen to escape, either amateurs or professionals. Tourists can easily cast the angling line from Steaua Dunării guesthouse's pontoon or enjoy an organized hunting trip (wild boar, stag).



### ***Iron Gate Natural Park***

Being declared as a natural park in 1998, it is the largest one in Romania, including 14 strict scientific reserves, following the Danube Gorges and the Iron Gates, up to Schela Cladovei. With each conservation action it is closer to being included in Europe's natural and cultural heritage tour. Promotion of the park is accomplished by the creation of Information Centers at Drobeta Turnu Severin, Orsova, Brezeasca and Moldova Noua. Besides organizing expositions and a data base, these structures will be actively involved in programs regarding the protection and the studying of Danube-Carpathian habitats.

## PARCUL NATURAL PORTILE DE FIER



Covering a surface of 120km, from Bazias to the Iron Gates, The Danube Gorges is the tightest part of the river. As nowhere on its route, the Danube shows its strength and beauty through a succession of depression and narrowing areas called “clisura”. The effort of constructing hydroelectric power station at the Iron Gates significantly improved ships passage through the rocky sides of the Great and Small Cazane.

It's here that the Danube crisscrossed riverbed rocks and rapids, which made the gorge valley an infamous passage in shipping. The currents in the channel used to be so strong that ships were dragged upstream by locomotive. Nowadays tourists, resting on the ship's deck, perceive Danube's tranquility spreading from Bazias up to Belgrade.

The field trip starts from Orsova, near Eselnita, where the entrance in the Small Cazane is visible. The gorges can be crossed by road or by ship. The local topography imposed carving the road in the steep slopes.



Reaching the locality of Ogradena, the ship approaches the Serbian bank of the river, allowing passengers to read the “Tabula Traiana” inscription. It is a reminder of the roman military expedition in Dacia, during 101-104, when skilled craftsmen realized this mountain road.

At the exact D 967.3km, Macronia Valley splinters Small Ciucaru's versant. Both ships and cars rest here, while visiting the tourist attractions: Decebalus image chiseled in stone and Macronia monastery almost emerging from the river.

Upstream Macronia's valley a little bay surrounded by huts, a youth camping and a painting workshop are worth visiting.



At D 970km ships pass in the spectacular widening of Dubova's Bay, the Great Cazane following soon. Danube River is overlooked by the white peaks of Great Ciucaru (maximum altitude- 318m) and Great Stirbat (maximum 768m), on the over side. Here danubian records are set: minimum river width-150m and maximum depth- 80m. It is only by ship that one can witness the magnificence of the Great Cazane, while the road bypasses the mountain.

The next objective is located at D 985km, where two solitary towers rise from the waters blow, pinpointing Tri Kule (sec XIV) medieval fortress, now in ruin.

At Greben, D 1000km, the road over crosses shale and red limestone.

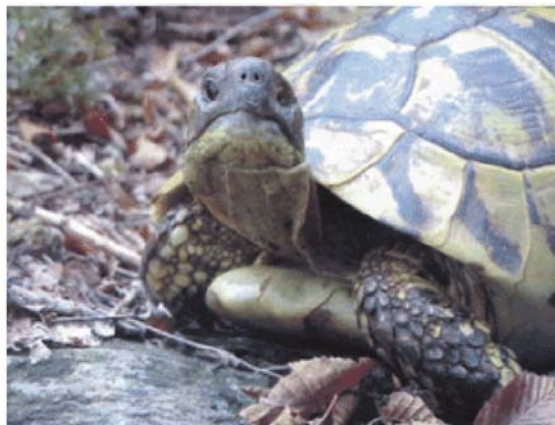
Upstream, the remaining Babacai crag is nearly exiting the Great Cazane. Formerly, seamen stopped here to raise prayers for well crossing the gorges.

The two “Cazane” form a complex reservation, covering 150 ha

The notorious landscape value results from blending high peaks, staggering slopes engulfing deep in the river.

The flora include rare species rich in submediterranean elements: Cazan’s Tulip-endemic, Flowering Ash, Filbert, Turkish Hazelnut Tree, Yew Tree, Prunus Mahaleb, Campanula Crassipes, Carpinus Orientalis, Iris Reichenbachii.

This diversity of fauna elements can rarely be found on such a small surface. Reptiles are characteristic: Land Tortoise (Testudo Hermmani Hermmani), the Antler Adder (Vipera ammodytes ammodytes), rare lizards (Lacertele Taurică, Muralis and Particola) and insects: cave butterflies, Carpathian Scorpion, etc.



The paleontological reserve at Svinița gathers Jurassic and Danubian fossil. The Svinița fossil point, on Scaraoschi brook, presents ammonite abundant limestone (over 60 forms, some resembling giant snails, contemporary with the dinosaurs). It can be visited only by ship at “Pescarie”.

The archeological diggings in the caves sheltered by the gorges raised great interest for: Clemete Cave and Cuia Turcului (Turk’s Staple) at Dubova. The anthropomorphic objects date from epipaleolithic: pottery, jewelry (the oldest in Romania), chiseled rock tools, some of them being used by seamen and hunters over 15.000 years ago. Other objects suggest a constant commercial relation between Greeks and settlers from Clisura. Local people discovered “The Cave with Paintings” (Chindia), associated with the metal epoch.

Ponicova Cave is undoubtedly the greatest and most magnificent out all those found in the Gorge. Located in Great Ciucaru it stretches over 1166m, being pierced by Ponicova brook. Various galleries are known, out of which The Bat Gallery is the largest: 100m length, 60m width, and 30m height, dimensions than remind of a hidden cathedral.

Veterani Cave is described as huge and “humanized”. Time after time it was used as a strategic post by Dacians, as well as Romans, Austrians, Turks, having a capacity of 700 soldiers. It was fortified by the Austrian general Veterani, afterwards bearing his name.

The villages from Danube’s Gorges have been relocated during the construction of the dam at Iron Gates, but they still carry the painful loss of their ancient precincts to the lake. In spite of this, villagers brought beautiful traditions to modern times and new homes. Eibenthal and Baia Noua

villages are inhabited by Czechs, settled here from Bohemia during the colonization of Banat. A gothic church (built 150 years ago) serves the local catholic cult Svinița, though located on steep rocky slopes, to the west extremity of Mehedinți County, at 80km from Turnu Severin, enjoys a modern systemization: drinkable water supply, asphalted streets, a centre for sports, and a cultural club at urban standards. Svinița encourages communication between various ethnic groups, like the Serbian one, by organizing the “Ethnics Festival”, ever since 1900.

