

## **European Cultural Routes in Romania. Opportunities for Developing Sustainable Tourism and Architectural Heritage**

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### **Abstract**

*Recognition in recent years of the growing importance of transnational cultural values conduced to the reconceptualisation of cultural routes and to their necessary advancement as a new category of heritage. As macrostructures of historic phenomena, cultural routes establish a set of associated cultural assets across borders and offer a new model for an improved view on the rich diversity, complexity and dynamics of human cultural interlinking. In their function as instruments for cultural cooperation programs, cultural routes in Europe impact the continental identity and the social cohesion of its communities, and, not least, they set in motion the structures of sustainable cultural tourism and economy. European cultural routes that extend over Romanian territory are to be approached distinctly from other valuable localized cultural routes, focusing on the particular characteristics that reflect the country's links to the common European heritage. European cultural routes in Romania posse to make rich contributions to the development of the routes, howbeit partaking to the routes has not been tapped into its full potential. A very low rate of Romanian heritage site subscriptions to the European routes may be due the difficulties to integrate unique heritage sites to generic themes, to the lengthy subscription process, scant interdisciplinary research or high membership fees. Steady action taken by Romanian official bodies demonstrates ongoing prioritization of this topic in the Romanian cultural and touristic agenda. More involvement from the architectural professional and academic community is called for the assessment and promotion of architectural heritage, as worldwide mobility and competitivy pushes for a rising in awareness about the unexplored potential of the European cultural routes of Romania.*

### **Rezumat**

*Recunoașterea în anii recentți a importanței în creștere a valorilor culturale transnaționale a condus la reconceptualizarea rutelor culturale și la dezvoltarea lor necesara ca nouă categorie a patrimoniului. Ca macrostructuri ale fenomenelor istorice, rutele culturale stabilesc un set asociat de capital cultural transfrontalier și oferă un nou model pentru o perspectivă îmbunătățită asupra diversității bogate, asupra complexității și asupra dinamicii întrepătrunderilor culturale umane. Prin funcțiunea lor ca instrumente ale programelor de cooperare culturală, rutele culturale europene impactează identitatea continentală și coeziunea sociala a comunităților sale și, nu în ultimul rând, ele pun în mișcare structurile economiei și ale turismului cultural sustenabil. Rutele culturale europene care se extind asupra teritoriului românesc au nevoie de o abordare distinctă*

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*față de alte rute culturale locale, concentrându-se pe caracteristicile particulare care reflectă legăturile țării cu patrimoniul european comun. Rutele culturale europene din România ar putea aduce contribuții bogate la dezvoltarea rutelor, cu toate că participarea la rutele europene nu a fost sondată la nivelul său potențial. Rata foarte scăzută de înscrieri ale siturilor patrimoniale românești la rutele europene se poate datora dificultăților de a integra situri patrimoniale unice în teme generice, procesului dificil de înscriere, cercetărilor interdisciplinare insuficiente sau taxelor de membru ridicate. Acțiuni constante ale organismelor oficiale românești demonstrează prioritizarea continuă a acestui subiect pentru agenda culturală și turistică românească. Mai multă implicare din partea comunității profesionale și academice arhitecturale este solicitată, în contextul în care mobilitatea și competitivitatea globală fac presiune pentru conștientizarea potențialului neexplorat rutelor culturale Europene din România.*

**Keywords:** European cultural routes, Romanian cultural routes, heritage, sustainable cultural tourism.

## 1. Introduction to cultural routes of European heritage

Advances in cultural heritage theory and conservation sciences by the International Council of Monuments and Sites (2008) furthered a reconsideration of the concept of ‘cultural routes’ and their emergence as a *new* category of heritage. Caused by both changes of vision regarding cultural properties, as well as the growing importance of transnational cultural values, cultural routes came to reveal the macrostructure of heritage beyond national borders and embraced a new model for the rich diversity, complexity and dynamics of human cultural interlinking.[1] As cultural routes are transfrontalier itineraries with a generic theme of important cultural value, they expand both over large regions and over long periods of time, enfolding in their essence a complexity of interchange. The concept of cultural routes adds an innovation to thinking about heritage particularly because it is taking in account the aspect of mobility and human interchange through time developed along the land roads and waterways. The cultural routes represent the communication track that facilitated their flow; however, they cannot be equated to the transportation ways that were used for the connection of people, goods and ideas; rather, cultural routes are historic phenomena that establish a set of associated cultural assets across borders. The concept of cultural route (as complex, multidimensional and evolutive) does not contradict nor overlap with established heritage categories such as ‘the monument’, ‘the town’, ‘the cultural landscape’ that may exist within the orbit of a cultural route.[2] However the *raison d’être* of a cultural route is given by its cultural richness, its variety of interrelationships and its characteristic assets such as monuments, archaeological remains, historic towns, vernacular architecture, intangible, industrial and technological heritage, public works, cultural and natural landscapes, transportation means and other examples of the application of specific knowledge and technical skills. The cultural route works as a system for these assets and intensifies their significance, building an interdisciplinary framework for an improved and multilayered view on history. Even though cultural routes stem both from peaceful and hostile historical encounters, their original functions are transcended by their shared dimension, thus offering a setting for the appreciation of tolerance and cultural diversity of the participating communities.

Institutionally speaking, cultural routes are highly regulated programs, that work as instruments for cultural cooperation and promotion. On European soil, the cultural routes are managed by the Council of Europe, implementing the “European cultural convention” of 1954. Its established body for route development, The European Institute of Cultural Routes (EICR), is a newer institution, dating from 1987, the year of the first route certification (certification of the Way of St. James to Santiago de Compostella). The objectives of EICR are “to demonstrate, by means of a journey through space and time, how the heritage of the different countries and cultures of Europe

contributes to a shared cultural heritage.”[3] The Cultural Routes put into practice the fundamental principles of the Council of Europe: human rights, cultural democracy, cultural diversity and identity, dialogue, mutual exchange and enrichment across boundaries and centuries.[4] Besides the Council of Europe, the European cultural routes are supported by The European Commission for Tourism, The World Tourism Organization, as well as by other partners in the private sector. Their shared goal is protecting, promoting and transmitting the cultural heritage and cultural diversity of Europe, as well as developing of intercultural dialogue and promoting sustainable cultural tourism. The cultural routes work as an instrument for reading the values of European cultures and they are representative of durable ethical, social models built on local knowledge, abilities and values. Routes that are recognized as significant for their power to illustrate European history, memory and heritage and also picture an image of cultural diversity throughout Europe are awarded the title of *European Cultural Route* or *Major European Cultural Route*. At present time, there are 29 officially certified European cultural routes[5](see Table 1), and many more being in process of developing.

## **2. European Cultural Routes across Romanian Territory. Development opportunities**

Crossing over Romanian soil, the particular differentiation of a European cultural route from a local cultural route is brought off by the requirement for the former to transpass at least three countries to be taken in consideration as representative for European heritage, as the latter may influence a smaller geographical area. The distinct history that unfolded in this geographical area across time resulted in cultural traits that can't necessarily be linked to the cultural evolution in Central and Western Europe. Adding to this, permanent wars in the carpathian-danubian-pontic region did not favour high urbanization, thus the richest Romanian heritage niches belong to the rural and to the religious domain, both sharing little resemblance with their neighboring European counterparts. Also, destructions during the independence wars of the Romanian medieval principalities, the anti-otoman and the anti-tartar defense, the national independence war, and the two World Wars impacted negatively the conservation of heritage sites. However, concomitantly with the modernization process reeled off since the mid 19th century, Romania equalized more and more economic, social and cultural course of Western Europe. Summed up, these are some limitations that Romania suffers as to its potential for integration in European cultural routes suffers. While the existence of local cultural routes is not excluded, their localness does not presume a diminution in value and overall cultural impact, but rather describe a localized cultural phenomenon that does not stand for the common European ground.

Then, the development of the European cultural routes on Romanian territory aims to elaborate on those characteristics that reflect the country's link to its European roots. Romania's adherence to European cultural routes also inscribes national tourism within the system of international cultural tourism, and impacts the economical development of sustainable cultural tourism in the country. Of the certified European routes, the ones that cross Romanian territory are: The Vauban Routes, The Routes of the Jewish Heritage, TRANSROMANICA, ITER VITIS, The Routes of the Cisterciene Abbeys, The Routes of Important European Cemeteries, The Prehistoric Rupestre Art Routes, The Route of Historical Bath towns, The Routes of Ceramic, The ATRIUM Routes of totalitarian regimes, The Art Nouveau Routes, VIA HABSBURG, The Viking Route and last but not least, The St. Martin of Tours Routes.

	Incorporation year	European Cultural Route	Heritage sites Komaman territory already subscribed to European Cultural	Preliminary list of candidate sites for European cultural routes from Romanian territory
1	1987	The Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes;		
2	1991	The Hanse. Hanseatic Places, Routes and Memorials;		
3	1992	The Heinrich Schickhardt Itinerary;		
4	1993	The Viking Routes; Vikings and Normans - European Heritage		4
5	1994	The Via Francigena		
6	1995	Military Architecture in Europe : The Wenzel and Vauban Routes;	1	3
7	1997	The Routes of El Legado Andalusi The Legacy of Al-Andalus		
8	2002	The European Mozart Ways between Milano and Salzburg;		
9	2003	The Phoenicians' routes		
10	2004	The European Routes of the Jewish Heritage;	2	88
11	2004	Route of Iron in the Pyrenees. Industrial Heritage in Europe		
12	2005	The Cluniac Sites in Europe; Influence of the monasteries		
13	2005	Saint Martin de Tours, A great European figure, symbol of sharing.		5
14	2005	The Routes of the Olive Tree		
15	2005	The Via Regia		
16	2007	TRANSROMANICA - The Romanesque Routes of European Heritage	1	43
17	2009	The Iter Vitis Route – The Ways of the Vineyards in Europe		5
18	2010	The European Route of Cistercian Abbeys		7
19	2010	The European Cemeteries Route		4
20	2010	The Prehistoric Rock Art Trail		4
21	2010	European Route of Historical Thermal Towns		6
22	2010	The St. Olav Ways		
23	2012	The Casadean Sites		
24	2012	The European Route of Ceramics		10
25	2013	The European Route of Megalithic Culture		
26	2013	The Huguenot and Waldensian trail		
27	2014	ATRIUM – Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes of the 20th Century in Europe's Urban Memory	2	13 → ∞
28	2014	The Réseau Art Nouveau Network		8
29	2014	Via Habsburg		5

Table 1. List of certified cultural routes of the Council of Europe. Data indicates the number of completed Romanian subscriptions to these routes and a preliminary estimation of potential candidates.

The development of European cultural routes of Romanian provenance involves multidisciplinary research efforts and multilevel implementation with the aim at identifying, certifying, promoting and raising awareness about heritage sites and cultural projects. For the pursuit of valorizing traditions that are closer to the common European heritage, the Council of Europe offers countries three opportunities of partaking to cultural routes. The first would be to identify sites that can be

subscribed to existing certified European routes; the second would be to help develop cultural routes that are ongoing certification; and the third would be to initiate new routes themes and to invite cooperation from other European states.

In the first available development opportunity - along already certified European itineraries - a preliminary selection of eligible routes is necessary. As indicated before, there are 29 of them but not all of them reach into Romanian territory. There are, however, several which do, and many of them render extensive and outstanding subscription candidates. Here are some of them, as researched by the National Institute for Research and Development for Tourism [6]:

*The Vauban Route.* The Vauban System was introduced in Transilvania in the 18<sup>th</sup> century at the time of the reconstruction of the fortifications of Alba-Iulia (Alba Carolina), Arad (a very well conserved citadel) and Temeswar (the third largest fortified citadel in the Habsburg Empire). Presently, only The Alba Carolina is included in the Vauban Route.

*The Jewish Heritage Route.* There are 88 sinagogues on Romanian territory. Presently, Romania has sites subscribed to two of the three jewis heritage routes: The Route of wooden Sinagogues of Central and Eastern Europe (The the wooden sinagoue of Piatra Neamț) and The Women in Judaism Route (with Ana Pauker). In the future, Romania could subscribe in the third route of Architectural Modernism of European Sinagogues (The Orthodox Sinagogue of Oradea – art nouveau style).

*The Saint Martin de Tours Route.* This route can potentially be continued on Romanian territory where there are 18 towns and 34 churches with this titular saint. Some of the most important ones are St. Martin Church in Brasov, the roman-catholic church of Târnaveni, Mureș, the roman-catholic church of Sânmartin, Harghita, St. Martin Church in Șomartin, Sibiu, Biserica din Deal from Sighișoara with its old Dominican altar sacred to St. Martin.

*TRANSROMANICA - The Romanesque Routes of European Heritage.* This route has only one subscription form Romania: the St. Michael cathedral in Alba Iulia. However there are many candidates for this route: the 13<sup>th</sup> century church of Densuș, Hunedoara; the 11<sup>th</sup> century reformed calvin church Rotonda from Geoagiu; the 12th century church of Viscri, Bunești; 13<sup>th</sup> century bazilicas in Sibiu, Ocna Sibiului, Cisnădioara, Cisnădie, Noul Săsesc, Drăușeni; 13<sup>th</sup> century evangelical church of Avrig, Sibiu; the fortified churches of Axente Sever and Cincu, the reformed church of Cricău, Alba; the 13<sup>th</sup> century evangelical church of Reghin, the 12<sup>th</sup> century church of Streisângeorgiu, Hunedoara, the reformed churches of Teiuș, Uileacul Șimleului, the basilicas from Herina and Acâș, the hall-churches of Homorod, Sântana de Mureș, Ciumbrud and Mănăstirea, the 13<sup>th</sup> century residential towers of Cheresig (Bihor) and Gârbova (Alba); the 13th century citadels of Feldioara, Colțești, Călnic, Deva.

*The Iter Vitis Route.* With regard to future integration of Romanian heritage sites in this European route, the Romanian Authority for Tourism developed two routes the area of the inferior Danube: the Route of Roman Emperors and the Danubian Route of Vine, the latter one including the areas of Terasele Dunării (Ostrov, Zimnicea), Dealurile Dobrogei (Alcovin, Murfatlar, Clos des Colombes), Dealurile Munteniei și Olteniei (Galicea Mare, Segarcea, Starmina, Vânju Mare, Oprișor). Other potential candidates are vineyards Dealu Mare (Prahova), Recaș (Timiș), Jidvei (Alba), Cotnari (Iași), Panciu - Odobești (Vrancea).

*The Route of Cistercian Abbeys.* On Romanian territory there have functioned two Cistercian monasteries: one in Igrîș (Timiș) that does not exist anymore, and one in Cârța (Sibiu), reconstructed in 1474. The fortified church of Richiș (Biertan) funcționat at first as a Cistercian abbey, but was later transformed în a catholic church. Potential candidates are the churches of

Feldioara, Sânpetru, Harman and Prejmer – all of which were transferred under Cistercian patronage in 1240 by King Bela IV.- and the St. Michael's Church in Cisnădioara (Sibiu) endowed to the Cistercian abbey of Cârța during 1205-1235.

*The Route of European Cemeteries.* Presently, the only subscribed site is the Bellu Cemetery. Potential candidates are: the Maritime Cemetery of Sulina, Cimitirul "Eternitatea" din Iași, the Happy Cemetery of Săpânța (famous for its colorful naïve paintings and humorous obituaries), the 16th century Házsongárd Cemetery (the Central Cemetery Cluj) the oldest medieval cemetery in Romania that is still in use.

*The Prehistoric Rock Art Trail.* Romania has three significant candidate sites for this route. The Coliboaia Cave (Bihor) was discovered in 2010 and it contains several animal paintings dating 23.000-35.000 years ago. The Gaura Chindiei II Cave (Caraș Severin) was discovered in 1971 and contains around 425 red clay drawings of geometrical and floral motifs, hands, fingers and other symbols. The drawings were dated back to the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Iron Age. The Cuciulat Cave (Sălaj) was discovered in 1978 and contains a red horse silhouette dated 10.000 years ago. None of these sites are accessible to the public, and the Cuciulat Cave is not accessible at all since 1985.

*The Route of Historical Bathtowns.* The Techirghiol Bath Resort is already subscribed to this route. Potential candidates are several other thermal resorts such as Geoagiu Băi, Băile Herculane, Borsec, Ocna Sibiului, Buziaș sau Călimănești Căciulata.

*The Route of Ceramics.* This is a prolific theme with diverse and original goods of Romanian production. Major centers of traditional ceramics making are to be found at Horezu (Valcea), Corund (Harghita), Marginea (Suceava), Rădăuți (Suceava), Baia Mare, Miercurea Ciuc, Vlădești (Vâlcea), (ceramică albă); Biniș (Caraș Severin), Săcel (Maramureș), Vama (Satu Mare).

*ATRIUM – Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Europe's Urban Memory.* The communist regime in Romania effected the importing of soviet artistic and architectural styles, leaving an ample repertoire of monumental buildings. A selection of six socialist buildings was nominated to be shortly included in the Romanian ATRIUM route: Casa Scânteii, The Heroe's Monument, The National Theatre and the New Civic Centre in Bucharest, Union's Square in Iasi and The House of Culture in Suceava. The list of prospective candidates in this category is in fact voluminous, taking in consideration that some 29 cities were extensively demolished and reconstructed in this period.

*The Réseau Art Nouveau Network.* The only Romanian member to this route is the city of Oradea, a city with a rich architectural heritage of this style. Cities with a very high potential for this route is Temeswar, where many buildings of this epoch are to be found. Also candidates are Cluj Napoca, Arad, Miercurea Ciuc, Deva, Târgu Mureș, Gheorgheni, Satu Mare.

*Via Habsburg.* After the late 17<sup>th</sup> century inclusion of Transilvania and Banat in the Habsburg Empire, and for a short period of Oltenia, Austrian city-building extended on Romanian soil, and carried to the construction of the Vauban fortifications in Alba Iulia, Arad and Temeswar, the erection of planned towns such as Blaj and Gherla, the partial reconstruction of Temeswar – styled as "Little Vienna" - and the urban development of Arad.

*The Viking Routes.* 9<sup>th</sup> century Viking routes towards east and south crossed the lands of present Finland and the Baltic countries, Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine, descending down the Dnepr towards the Black Sea. From here the Vikings were taking the route to Constantiople, but also they were often launching campaigns on the Danube. Their passing through Dobrogea is attested at the Rupestre ansamble of Basarabi (Murfatlar), at the roman citadel Dinogetia (Tulcea), at the

Proslavita citadel (Tulcea) at the Pacuiul lui Soare Citadel (Ostrov). None of these sites is adequately set up for visiting.

Besides subscribing sites to certified European routes, another potential for developing Romanian cultural itineraries is to make contributions to the development of new European routes. One of them is the European route of Roman Emperors with site proposals such as the Roman Castrum of Alba Iulia, the Roman Gallery of Rosia Montana, Sarmisegetuza Citadel (Colonia Ulpia Traiana Augusta Dacica), the citadel of Histria and the citadel of Adamclisi. This route is currently pending certification. Another proposal is the the development of the Roma Route that aims to aid intercultural dialogue between roma and non-roma people and to promote their cultural heritage across Europe. A third proposal is for the Salt Route, with important potential subscriptions from salt-mining-towns such as Turda, Cacica, Praid, Slănic Prahova, Ocna Sibiului, Bazna, Băile Figa. A last proposal is the Saint Mary route of pilgrimage churches dedicated to this saint, with many potential subscriptions from orthodox churches such as those in Șumuleu Ciuc, Radna, Cacica and the monasteries Nicula and Putna.

Also, there is potential for the introduction of new European routes. The criteria that describe a cultural route, as defined by the European Institute of Cultural Routes are, firstly, the reflection of mutual, multidimensional exchanges of goods, ideas, knowledge and values between people across significant periods of time; Secondly, the promotion of the intertwined enrichment of the participating cultures, observable both in the built heritage and immaterial heritage; and thirdly, the integration in a dynamic system both cultural goods and the historical links associated to the route theme.[1] Meeting these criteria are two themes of Romanian heritage. The first is the Transhumance Route and a project for its development was initiated in 2014 by *Asociația Județeană de Turism Sibiu pentru zona Mărginimii Sibiului* in cooperation with omologue organizations in France, Italy, Serbia and the Czech Republic. A second one is the route of fortified churches, a highly potent theme of the architectural heritage, poorly harnessed so far. Possible international partners are France, Gernay and Austria.

### **3. Conclusions**

The noticeable backwardness regarding the quantity of Romanian site subscriptions to European cultural routes impacts negatively the social, economic and cultural potential of their exploration. Possible hindrances explaining the current poor development of European cultural routes may be found in the elaborious subscription process, in the poor interdisciplinary research and administration effort and in the high annual cost of route membership. However, reliable advances are being promoted by the official organizations, reinforcing the priority of this topic for the Romanian cultural and touristic agenda.

The subscription of new sites to existing cultural routes collates with the problems of accomodating unique sites within the domain of generic themes. Clear guidelines by the Council of Europe frame the possibilities for expanding the existing certified routes and for new proposal of routes. New route themes need to be common for at least three European countries, they must bring forward opportunities for renewed cultural and educational exchange (such as youth exchanges), and need to aim at developing new touristic products and events within sustainable touristical development. Both subscriptions to existing routes and new route proposals need to demonstrate multidisciplinary and multiorganizational involvement. New contributions need to be propped by rigorous multidisciplinary research before undergoing the evaluation steps by several bodies of the Council of Europe. The process is lengthy and once approved, the registered site commits to paying an annual fee.

Membership fees vary from route to route, according to the destination importance, number of visitors and town size. Fees for site subscriptions are varied: 70 euro/year for The Viking Route, 55-165 euro/year for the Route of Cisterciene Abbeys dependant on the number of yearly visitors, 100 euro/year for the Saint Martin de Tours Route, 300 euro/year for the Route of European Cemeteries and for Via Habsburg. Fee for single entrances reach up to 1000 euro/year for a destination on Iter Vitis route, or even 4000 euro/year for The Route of Prehistoric Rock Art. The Transromanica has a single site member fee of 1.000 euro / year, and 10.000 euro/year for a network of sites. Town subscriptions vary from 500-3000 euro/year on the Atrium Route dependant on the town size, and can reach up to 2000 euro/year on the Art Nouveau Route, 2500 euro/year on the Ceramics Route, and 3000 euro/year on the The Route of Historical Thermal Baththowns.[7] With the additional costs of cultural site management, considerable effort needs to aim public promotion of these sites both inland and outland, before considering the sustainability of such enterprises.

Concrete measures to support the integration of Romanian heritage sites to European cultural routes are being taken by Romanian national authorities. A priority list of sites of heritage sites to included in European cultural routes between 2015 and 2019 are to be found at Cârța, Richiș, Hârman, Prejmer – the Route of Cisterciene Abbeys; Sulina, Iași, Săpânța - the Route of European Cemeteries; Arad, Timișoara, Oradea - The Vauban Routes; Cislăchioara, Densuș, Viscri, Feldioara, Călnic, Herina - Transromanica; Geoagiu, Băile Herculane, Călimănești, Borsec, Buziaș – the Historical Baththowns Routes; Drobeta – Turnu Severin, Tomis, Capidava, Porolissum – the Route of the Roman Emperors. [7] 2019 will follow up with a study regarding the impact of European cultural routes on Romanian tourism industry and local economies, and will launch a development plan for 2020-2024.[8]

The cultural richness and variety of sites, networks and assets of European heritage on Romanian soil testifies for their importance. Despite low subscription rates, many of the Romanian site candidates already function as a destination for cultural tourism, even though not exploited to their full potential. The development of the rural nice may be of higher importance for Romanian destinations, as 90% of the sites promoted as European cultural routes are located in less known rural areas. This could constitute an important component of economic and social development of Romanian rural touristic areas, especially for the fact that opportunities for place development are being based on the principles of sustainable, social and ethical model, built on local values. The mobilization of a large number of individuals, organizations, institutions and structures across Europe for this aim benefits Romanian local people by enhancing place identity and community construction, promoting both local and European identity.

A multidisciplinary approach with the active involvement of the architectural research community is highly called for. Besides partaking in multidisciplinary research teams, one particularly efficient course for stimulating heritage knowledge and cultural/educational exchanges would be practicing architectural education on-site, a niche activity crossing the disciplines of architecture and heritage tourism. This would promote heritage in itself and also conduct to the furthering of research around the assessment and valorification of architectural history and memory. Such initiatives go to stress that heritage tourism is not the exclusive domain of tourism agents, but that architecture professionals and academicians definitely play a significant role in innovating practices of sustainable tourism. Worldwide mobility and global tourism competition pushes for a rising in awareness about the untapped potential of the European routes of Romania.

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