Via Mariae
Neamț County

NEAMȚ COUNTY COUNCIL

Râșca

Neamț Monastery

Vovidenia Hermitage

Pocrov Hermitage

Secu Monastery

Sihăstria Monastery

Bison Land - Vânători-Neamț Natural Park

Old Agapia Nunnery

Agapia Nunnery

"Alexandru Vlahuță" Memorial House

Sihla Monastery

Saint Theodora's Cave at Sihla

Văratec Nunnery

The church made of a fir tree



Lake Cuejdel

The hermitage of Saint Daniil

Pângărați Monastery



Sihăstria Tarcăului Monastery

Tărcuța Monastery

Ghimeș-Făget

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Via Mariae - Neamț County
Pilgrimage Route
The pilgrim's guide

"Through traveling, as well as through music, one changes perspectives, mindsets and values, shapes oneself, emerges into a different person, thanks to the emotions one experiences, strengthens oneself through the hardships endured, enriches one's soul with wisdom and indescribable beauties."

Dumitru Almaș



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NEAMȚ COUNTY COUNCIL

INVITATION TO NEAMȚ COUNTY

We invite all those who want to escape the hustle and bustle of life to travel the *Via Mariae* pilgrimage route on the territory of Neamț County, to discover the secrets of history well preserved in the memory of the land, of chronicles and people of the area, to find peace at monasteries and churches shrouded in the aura of faith and tolling of bells, to sit with us around the table and taste delicious Moldavian dishes we have dearly prepared, to drink some wine together and tell stories old and new, by the fireplace.

On Via Mariae - Neamț County Pilgrimage Route you will be greeted at every step by churches and monasteries built in times long gone, testimonies of the good faith shared by the people and rulers alike, values carved in stone and in the letters of the historians. Listening to the stories of the places, you will discover that in Neamț there is a tendency to transfer the space and time into the fabulous: each church, hill, mountain, lake, and creek has a story of its own. Told over time by the "popular author", but also by Gheorghe Asachi, Alexandru Vlahuță, Nicolae Iorga, Mihai Eminescu, Ion Creangă, Calistrat Hogaș or Mihail Sadoveanu, to name only a few of the Romanian writers who wrote about Neamț area, you will discover that the border between legend and reality is barely visible, in this amazing land.

So, we invite you to take the road less traveled and to become pilgrims, even for a few days, to visit holy places full of spiritual, cultural and historical meaning, to enjoy en-route adventures and stunning landscapes along the way!

Neamț County Council



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What is Via Mariae Pilgrimage Route (Mary's Way)?

Via Mariae is a pilgrimage route dedicated to the Virgin Mary, which runs through Central and Eastern Europe and presents pilgrims with the most important Holy Places and Religious Sites of each region.

This route is addressed to all those who, regardless of nationality and religion, wish to become pilgrims for religious, spiritual, or self-improvement purposes, or who wish to travel this route only for tourist or sports purposes.

Also called the "Road of Reconciliation", it is a bridge between nations, religions, cultures, and people worldwide.

Between East and West Via Mariae connects Mariazell in Austria, Budapest, Máriapócs, passes through Șumuleu Ciuc in Harghita County, and then passes through Neamț and Suceava counties, while between North and South direction it connects Czestochowa, Esztergom, Budapest and Medjugorje. The road traces a cross on the map of Central Europe (Austria, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Poland, Croatia, Bosnia), thus creating a network of pilgrimage routes based on local values, very much similar to Camino de Santiago.

Why embark on this pilgrimage?

There are numerous reasons to undertake this journey. Since the Middle Ages, pilgrims have sought salvation through repentance. Some embarked on a pilgrimage to absolve guilt, while others did it on behalf of others, to earn some money.

After the decline of pilgrimage starting in the 15th century due to plagues and religious wars, we witness a revival of the pilgrimage traditions in the last 10-20 years. The beautiful nature, the tranquility, and simplicity of this route makes pilgrims want to get back on the trail. Whether motivated by a desire to find God or simply as a personal challenge born out of curiosity to explore the world, or maybe a special interest in discovering the

heritage, culture, or leisure facilities on the route, each pilgrim is on the verge of having an unforgettable experience.

Via Mariae - Neamț County Pilgrimage Route

In Romania, Via Mariae starts from Carei, located on the Romanian-Hungarian border, crosses the Satu Mare, Sălaj, Cluj, Mureş, Harghita, Covasna, Braşov, Bacău, Neamţ, and Suceava counties, reaching Putna, near the border with Ukraine. Its main objectives are the Marian sanctuaries in Nicula (Cluj County), Şumuleu Ciuc (Harghita County), Neamţ Monastery (Neamţ County), Cacica and Putna (Suceava County). In each place through which the route passes, there is at least one tourist, cultural, or natural attraction.

Via Mariae - Neamţ County Pilgrimage Route is a segment of the European pilgrimage route VIA MARIAE, arranged on the territory of our county by Neamţ County Council, in partnership with the Metropolis of Moldavia and Bukovina, Neamţ Forestry Directorate, Vânători-Neamţ Natural Park Administration



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Centre, the local councils of Vânători-Neamţ, Pipirig, Agapia, Crăcăoani, Gârcina, Pângăraţi, and Tarcău communes, and also Eco Travel Association, at the initiative of Via Mariae Association in Romania.

Via Mariae Pilgrimage Route enters Neamt County through the Râșca area, passes through Vânători-Neamț, Pipirig, Agapia, Crăcăoani, Gârcina, Pângăraţi, and Tarcău communes, and continues towards Harghita County through the Ghimeș-Făget pass. Besides the ancient monasteries and churches that have been here since ages, pilgrims will be pleased to discover picturesque landscapes, and outspoken, hospitable people.



How is the route marked?

The trail is marked with square signs attached to poles or various constructions, on which the letter M painted in red is depicted, with arrow-type indicators and information panels about the areas crossed and tourist attractions available on the route. The direction of marking the pilgrimage route is from Suceava County to Neamț County, and the indicative of the route on the territory of Neamț county is:

M05

Physical and mental preparation

The routes on Via Mariae, respectively Via Mariae - Neamț County involve several days of walking, covering distances of about 20-30 km per day, therefore, prior preparation is very important. The earlier you start your physical training, the better. It is recommended to take regular walks of 25-30 minutes, three times a week, alternating days and combining walking with jogging.
In addition to physical training, mental preparation is just as important for this journey. The motivation for completing the route must be well kept in mind, and attention must be focused on achieving personal goals.

Accommodation

Along the route, we recommend making reservations for overnight stays in advance, especially if you are part of a larger group of pilgrims.

Safety

The pilgrimage route within Neamț County can be traversed by bicycle on certain segments. We recommend traveling the route in a group, and for segments of the route located in the forest, it is necessary to have a guide accompany you.

Necessary equipment



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It is said that on a pilgrimage trail, you can guess where a traveler started his or her journey from, judging by the size of their luggage, which is inverse variation to the length of the route traveled: for a shorter distance, the luggage can be larger, but for those covering hundreds of kilometers, the backpacks are smaller and contain only the essentials.

Backpack - It is recommended to have a backpack with a capacity corresponding to a weight that does not exceed 10% of the weight of the pilgrim's body and equipped with as many compartments and pockets as possible, for easy use of necessary items while walking.

Water container - Hydration is extremely important, so one or two water or tea containers should not be missed.

Clothing - Clothes should be limited to the essentials and worn in several thin layers.

Footwear - The season should be taken into account first, but also the difficulty of the trail. Footwear should be soft, without a rigid sole, and as airy as possible. Waterproof shoes are recommended in cold months, which protect against cold and moisture. In warm months, lighter boots or even mountain sandals are recommended. A pair of light slippers are necessary for breaks or in accommodation areas, to allow the foot to relax and recover. It is very important not to use new footwear to avoid injuring the feet.



Snacks - Along the way, cafes, bakeries, shops, restaurants, etc. can be found. However, depending on the number of meals per day and the number of calories each pilgrim needs, it is recommended to bring snacks for the route.

Raincoat - A foldable raincoat with a hood and wide enough to cover the backpack, in case it does not already have protection, is recommended.

First aid kit - Even though there are pharmacies along the trail, it is recommended to stock up on creams, sprays, and everything necessary to prevent blisters or insect bites. The content of the kit should include over-the-counter pain relievers, supplements, vitamins, or other products that you know are necessary for you, band-aids for cuts and minor abrasions, a selection of sterile dressings for wounds, antiseptic wipes, tweezers, scissors, etc.



Documents - A smaller backpack can be useful to keep valuable items such as documents, glasses, money, or a mobile phone.

Optionally, a cane, a flashlight, earplugs, a sleeping bag, or a sheet can be taken. And some other items could be useful as well, like a spoon, a small knife, a map and a GPS compass, matches and a lighter.

Animal precautions & recommendations

The Via Mariae – Neamț County pilgrimage route involves traversing forested areas, where the fauna can be admired in its natural habitat but can also pose a danger to the pilgrims' lives.

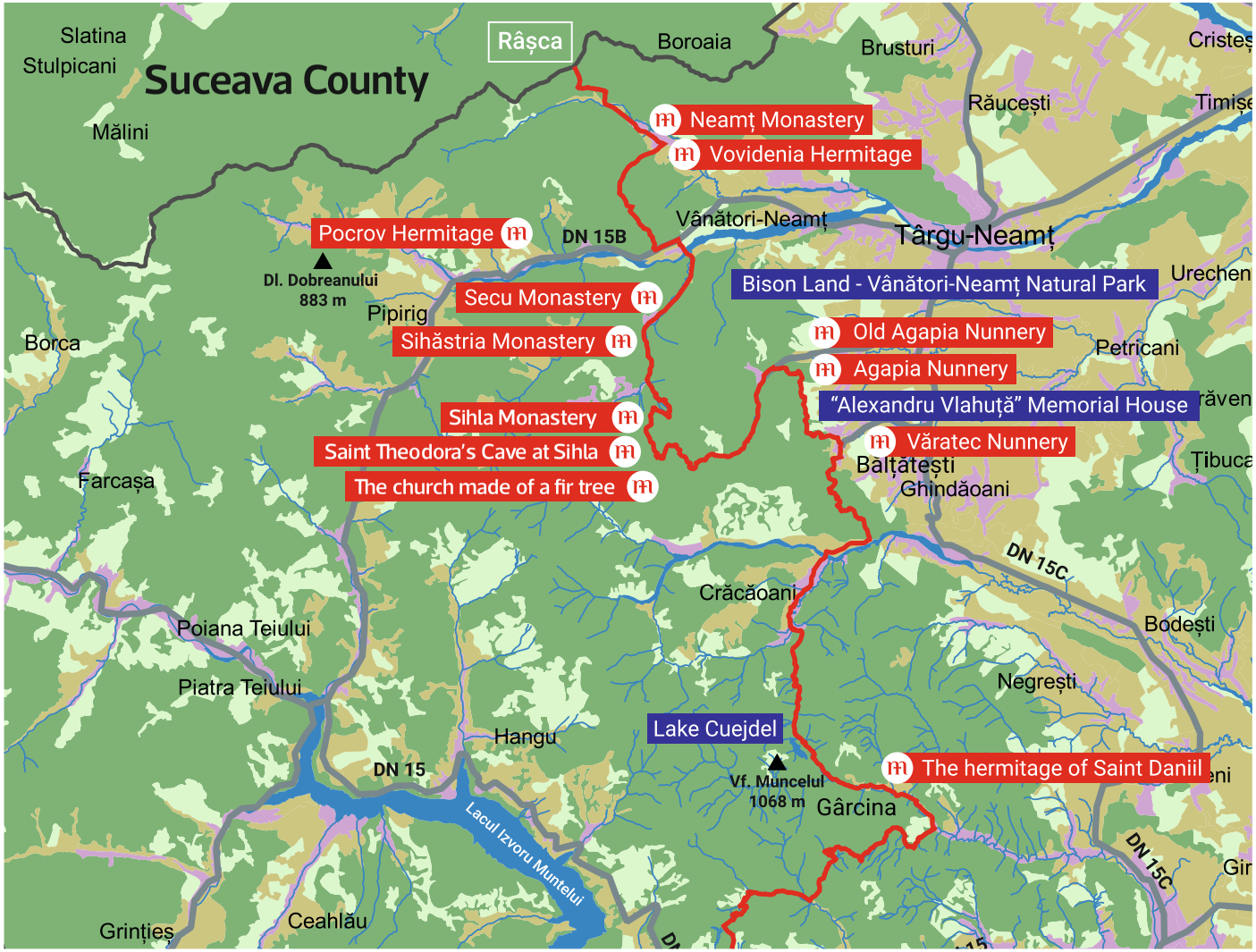
The Bear is a protected species in our country and is probably the most dangerous animal that travelers can encounter on the trail. Direct confrontation with a

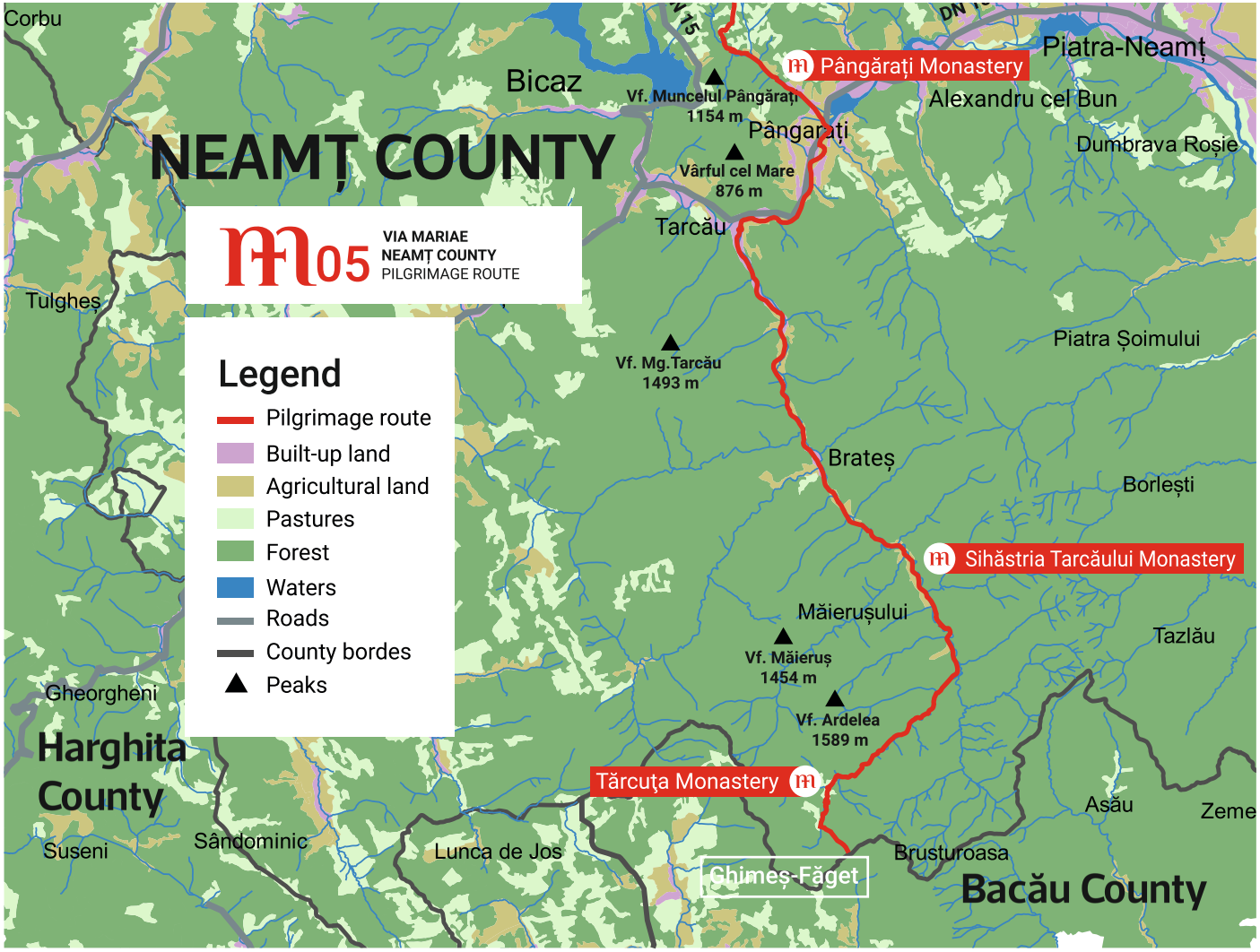


bear is unlikely, as they usually choose to move away if they detect the presence of humans. In the event of an unexpected encounter, if the group of pilgrims comes across a bear that approaches and has not yet detected them, it is advisable for group members to make their presence felt so that the bear can observe them and change its course before getting too close. The bear should not perceive the group of travelers as a threat, so pilgrims should not run, shout, and least of all, threaten or confront the bear. If the bear stands on its hind legs, it does not necessarily indicate an aggressive attitude, but may simply be trying to identify the group it has encountered.
In the event of an attack, it is recommended to remain calm and retreat as quietly as possible, especially if the animal is accompanied by cubs or is eating, as in these cases they may react somewhat aggressively out of a protective instinct. Additionally, if pilgrims discover signs of bear presence, such as large tracks or droppings, they should leave the area and deviate from the trail, always on marked paths. We also recommend: always carry an anti-bear spray with you; to schedule travelling during daylight hours and, if possible, go accompanied, and keep dogs on a leash; in case you are forced to flee to divert the attention of a bear, leave behind some clothes or a backpack.

Environment protection - Please be environmentally friendly and do not leave food scraps or garbage on the trail, which could be a source of pollution and whose smell could attract animals to the area. This kind of behavior is not only a civic norm that ensures nature protection, but also your own protection.

Ticks, mosquitoes, and other insects: It is recommended to apply an insect repellent cream before starting the hike.


Slatina
Stulpicani
Suceava County
Mălini
Râșca
Boroaia
Brusturi
Cristeș
Răucești
Timișe
Neamț Monastery
Vovidenia Hermitage
Pocrov Hermitage
DN 15B
Vânători-Neamț
Târgu-Neamț
Dl. Dobreanului
883 m
Pipirig
Secu Monastery
Bison Land - Vânători-Neamț Natural Park
Urechen
Borca
Sihăstria Monastery
Old Agapia Nunnery
Petricani
Agapia Nunnery
"Alexandru Vlahuță" Memorial House
Sihla Monastery
Saint Theodora's Cave at Sihla
Văratec Nunnery
Bălțătești
Țibuca
Farcașa
The church made of a fir tree
Ghindăoani
DN 15C
Crăcăoani
Poiana Teiului
Bodești
Piatra Teiului
Negrești
Lake Cuejdel
Hangu
DN 15
The hermitage of Saint Daniil
Vf. Muncelul
1068 m
Gârcina
Lacul Izvoru Muntelui
DN 15C
Grințies
Ceahlău


NEAMȚ COUNTY
M05
VIA MARIAE
NEAMȚ COUNTY
PILGRIMAGE ROUTE
Legend
Pilgrimage route
Built-up land
Agricultural land
Pastures
Forest
Waters
Roads
County bordes
Peaks
Corbu
Bicaz
Vf. Muncelul Pângărați
1154 m
Pângărați Monastery
Piatra-Neamț
Alexandru cel Bun
Pângărați
Dumbrava Roșie
Vârful cel Mare
876 m
Tarcău
Tulgheș
Vf. Mg.Tarcău
1493 m
Piatra Șoimului
Brateș
Borlești
Sihăstria Tarcăului Monastery
Măierușului
Vf. Măieruș
1454 m
Tazlău
Vf. Ardelea
1589 m
Gheorgheni
Harghita County
Tărcuța Monastery
Asău
Zeme
Suseni
Sândominic
Lunca de Jos
Brusturoasa
Ghimeș-Făget
Bacău County

VIA MARIAE - NEAMȚ COUNTY

Description of the northern part of the Pilgrimage Route (Râșca – Lake Cuejdel)

From the border with Suceava County, the route descends over a distance of 0.4 km until it crosses forest road 178 D, continuing to the left for a distance of 0.94 km, after which it turns right onto DF 179D (Alunu) continuing on it for a distance of 0.5 km until it intersects with DJ 155C. From the intersection, the route turns left onto DJ 155C for a distance of 2.7 km, reaching Neamț Monastery. From here, it continues on DJ 155C for a distance of 0.3 km to the intersection with DF 169D (Maghernița), from where you can easily reach Vovidenia Hermitage. From the intersection, the route turns right onto DF 169D, for a distance of 3.7 km, reaching Pocrov Hermitage. From here, the route descends on DF 143D (Carpenu), passing through the forest boundary markers 9, 21, 6 and 4 from FMU I Secu, Vânători Forest Bypass, over a distance of 2.4 km until it intersects with DN 15B (Târgu-Neamț - Poiana Largului). From the intersection, the route turns left onto the mentioned DN for a distance of 1 km until the intersection with DJ 155C. From the intersection, the route turns right onto DJ 155C where, after 4.2 km, reaches Secu Monastery. From there, pilgrims can also visit Nifon Hermitage. After Secu Monastery, the route continues on DJ 155C for a distance of 2.8 km until it crosses DF 245D. From this intersection, if you turn right, you reach Sihăstria Monastery and "Poiana lui Ion" Hermitage. From here, the route turns left onto DF 245D, passing by the trail that leads to Daniil Sihastru Hermitage and then, after another 6.7 km, reaches Sihla Monastery.





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After leaving behind Sihla Monastery, the route continues on DF 97D for a distance of 7.6 km until it intersects with Nicolae Iorga Street, Agapia Village, Agapia Commune (DN 15F). This section of the route overlaps with Sihla Monastery - Agapia Monastery Tourist trail (marked with a blue triangle on a white background). From this intersection, turning left and traveling 2 km will take you to Agapia Veche Hermitage. From the intersection, the route turns right to Nicolae Iorga Street for a distance of 0.5 km until it reaches the intersection with DF 398D, after which it continues on DF for a distance of 5.2 km. After exiting DF 398D, the route continues on Lahovari Street for a distance of 0.5 km, then turns right onto a village road for a distance of 0.28 km until it reaches the intersection with DN 15G, after which it turns right again, and after 50 m arrives at the parking lot of Văratec Monastery.

From Văratec Monastery, the route turns left onto Schimbarea la Față Street, then continues on DF 92D which connects Văratec Monastery to Magazia Village, Crăcăoani Commune, for a distance of 5.4 km. This section overlaps for a distance of 1.6 km with Bălțătești - Vârful Bradului Tourist trail (marked with a yellow triangle on a white background). After leaving the forest road, the route turns right onto DC 164, an asphalt road, for a distance of 2 km until the intersection with DC 165, in Magazia Village. From that intersection, the route turns left to DC 165, Cracăul Negru Village, which it follows for a distance of 4 km until the intersection with DF Pârâul Gardului, continuing left onto the forest road for a distance of 5.3 km until Lake Cuejdel. The route continues along Lake Cuejdel shoreline, upstream to downstream, for a length of 1.2 km. (After 0.7 km on the route, a spring with drinking water is found). The segment of the route from the border with Suceava County to Lake Cuejdel is 56.8 km long.

VIA MARIAE - NEAMȚ COUNTY

Description of the southern part of the Pilgrimage Route (Lake Cuejdel - Ghimeș-Făget)

After Lake Cuejdel, the pilgrimage route exits the territory of Vânători-Neamţ Natural Park and enters the marked path, which connects DF Cuejdiu Axial and Lake Cuejdel and is 3.5 km long (marked with red-white-red circles). The route continues on DF Cuejdiu Axial for a length of 1.6 km, meets Cuejdi Hermitage, intersects Pârâul Adânc forest road (on the right side of the route), and after 0.8 km intersects Ţiganca forest road (on the left side). The route continues on DF Cuejdiu Axial for a distance of 0.9 km, then overlaps with the DC 145 communal road for 1.7 km to Runcu Forest canton, from where it continues to the right, on Pângărăcior - Cuejdiu forest road. After 3.1 km, it intersects Putredu forest road, then continues to the right, and after 1.9 km, at the watershed, it leaves the territory of Gârcina Forest Bypass and enters the territory of Vaduri Forest Bypass. From here, after 4.4 km, the route intersects Pângărăcior Axial forest road, after 0.4 km Plutonaş forest road, and after 1.3 km intersects Arşiţa Lungă forest road. After another 1 km, on the route, there is a spring with drinking water (at the intersection with Pângăraţi Axial forest road), and after 200 m, Mestecăniș Forest canton is encountered. The route continues on the forest road for a length of 3 km, then enters a narrow path that can only be traversed on foot. After 3.2 km of uphill and downhill through the forest, pilgrims reach Pângăraţi Castel gravel forest road, and after 0.8 km, the route intersects Grohotiş forest road. After another 1.8 km, a spring with drinking water can be found on the right side of the road. The route continues on Pângăraţi Castel forest road for a length of 2.1 km, intersects with DJ 157B asphalt road (at the intersection with the access road to Pângăraţi Monastery), continues on this road for 1.8 km, then enters a

village road, for a distance of 1 km, after which it crosses DN 15, nearby the bridge over River Bistrița, on the territory of Oanțu Village.

The pilgrimage route continues on DC 134 communal road for 2.4 km, then passes through Oanțu Village, enters Poiana Village, and after reaching the church in the village, continues on a cobblestone road for another 0.8 km, after which it enters the grazing land and follows a 3 km long trail until it reaches the forest road which, after 2.1 km, reaches Forestar mark. From here, the route continues on DC 135, and after 300 m, on the right side, it arrives at Chez Marie Guesthouse. After 2.5 km, also on the right side, there is Măieruş Guesthouse. From here, after 4.1 km (still on DC 135) Sihăstria Tarcăului Monastery is located, in Schit Village, Tarcău Commune.

After another 3.5 km on the route reaches Ardeluţa Hunting Cabin, and after another 1.3 km the route leaves DC 135 and continues on Tarcău Obârşie forest road for 0.9 km. Here, on a secondary road of 200 m long, located on the left side of the route, Goşman Hunting Cabin is found.

The route continues on Tărcuța forest road and is intersected by the following forest roads: after 0.7 km from Goşman Hunting Cabin, it is intersected by Obârşia forest road, after another 0.7 km it is intersected by Căşărie forest road, and after another 4.7 km, by Argintărie forest road. The route continues and reaches Tărcuța Monastery after 2.4 km.

The pilgrimage route leaves Brateş Forest Bypass – on the territory of Neamţ Forestry Directorate and enters Ghimeş Forest Bypass, on the territory of Bacău Forestry Directorate, continues on Hanu Mare forest road and is intersected by Hanu Mic forest road, after 2.4 km from Tărcuța Monastery (on the right side), then continues on Pârâul Hoților and Pârâul Liniei forest roads. The route continues on the same forest road, but which is paved, for a length of 2.7 km, up to the border between Neamț and Bacău counties, at Ghimeş Făget, at the watershed.

The southern part of the route is approximately 75.3 km long (Lake Cuejdel - Oanțu bridge: 40.2 km and Oanțu bridge - Ghimeș Făget: 35.1 km).

Rules and Regulations regarding walking on Via Mariae - Neamț County Pilgrimage Route

The conditions for using the route vary depending on the specificity and accessibility of the traversed area. Thus, the route includes sections that can be traveled on foot or by bicycle, freely, without accompanying guides, as well as segments that can only be covered with accompanying guides. The conditions for using the route, for each type of segment of the route, are as follows:

No.	Route segment	Type of route	Owner/ Administrator	Conditions of Use
1.	**Alunu - Bouru** area (from the border with Suceava County to the intersection with DJ 155C)	Forest road, path	Vânători Forest District	Route can be traveled with accompanying guide, on foot
2.	**Neamț Monastery** area (DJ 155 C area)	DJ 155C	Vânători-Neamț Local Council	Route can be traveled without accompanying guide, on foot or by bicycle

3.	**Pocrov** area (from the exit of DJ 155C to the intersection with DN 15B)	Forest road, path	Vânători Forest District	Route can be traveled without accompanying guide, on foot
4.	**DN 15B** area (from the intersection with DF 143D Carpenu to the intersection with DJ 157F)	DN 15B	Pipirig Local Council	Route can be traveled without accompanying guide, on foot or by bicycle
5.	**DJ 157 F** area (from the exit of DN 15B to the intersection with DF 245D)	County road 157 F	Vânători-Neamț Local Council	Route can be traveled without accompanying guide, on foot or by bicycle
6.	**Sihla** area (from the intersection with DJ 157F to Agapia Monastery)	Forest roads	Neamț Forestry Department, Vânători Forest District	Route can be traveled without accompanying guide, on foot or by bicycle
7.	**Agapia – Văratec** area (from Agapia Monastery to Văratec Monastery)	Asphalted forest road, village road, DN 15F, DN 15G	Neamț Forestry Department, Vânători Forest District	Route can be traveled without accompanying guide, on foot or by bicycle

8.	**Văratec Monastery – Magazia forest road** area (from Văratec Monastery to the exit from the forest road)	Forest road	Neamț Forestry Department, Vânători Forest District	Route can be traveled without accompanying guide, on foot or by bicycle
9.	**Magazia Village** area (intersection with DF 92D to intersection with DC 165)	Communal road DC 164	Crăcăoani Local Council	Route can be traveled without accompanying guide, on foot or by bicycle
10.	**Cracăul Negru Village** area (from intersection with DC 164 to exit onto forest road)	Communal road DC 165	Crăcăoani Local Council	Route can be traveled without accompanying guide, on foot or by bicycle
11.	**Pârâul Gardului forest road** area (from Cracăul Negru village to Cuejdel Lake)	Forest road, path through the woods	Neamț Forestry Department	Route can be traveled without accompanying guide, on foot or by bicycle

12.	**Lake Cuejdel** (from Lake Cuejdel to the barrier on the Cuejdiu forest road) - Axial Cuejdiu forest road	Marked path in the forest	Neamț Forestry Department	Route can be traveled without accompanying guide, on foot
13.	**Axial Cuejdiu forest road** (from the barrier on the road to Lake Cuejdel) - **entrance on DC 145, to Runcu Forest canton** (Cuejdiu village)	Axial Cuejdiu Forest Road and DC 145	Neamț Forestry Department, Gârcina Local Council	Route can be traveled without accompanying guide, on foot or by bicycle
14.	**Runcu Forest canton** (Cuejdiu village) - **Bejenia Cabin - Arșita Lungă Forest canton - Pângărați Castle forest road** area	Forest road and forest paths	Neamț Forestry Department	Route can be traveled without accompanying guide, on foot

15.	**Pângărați Monastery** (from the end of the Pângărați Castle forest road) - **DN15** area - **entrance to Oanțu village**	DJ 157B, village road, DN 15	Pângărați Local Council	Route can be traveled without accompanying guide, on foot or by bicycle
16.	**Oanțu village - Poiana village** area (until the village exit)	DN 15, DC 134, village road	Pângărați Local Council	Route can be traveled without accompanying guide, on foot or by bicycle
17.	**Poiana village** (from the exit of the village) - **Forestar** area (up to the parking lot in Tarcău commune)	Village pasture for about 2 km and forest road for about 2 km	Neamț Forestry Department, Pângărați Local Council	Route can be traveled without accompanying guide, on foot or by bicycle

18.	**Forestar** area - **Ardeluța** (up to the exit from Ardeluța village)	Village road DC 135	Tarcău Local Council	Route can be traveled without accompanying guide, on foot or by bicycle
19.	**Ardeluța** (from the exit from Ardeluţa village) - **Ghimeș - Făget** (the border between Neamț County and Harghita County)	Forest road	Neamț Forestry Department, Ghimeș -Făget Private Forest District	Route can be traveled only with accompanying guide, on foot or by bicycle

VÂNĂTORI-NEAMȚ COMMUNE

Documented since ancient times, the area of Vânători-Neamț has been attractive to people due to the expanses of pastures and meadows that could provide food for animals, as well as forests that offered game, fruits, and a refuge in times of need. Archaeological sites discovered in the Vânători-Neamț Natural Park area (Lunca, Poiana Slatinei, Cetățuia, Târpești, Davideni) prove that the area has been constantly inhabited since the Roman period. Starting in 1350, monks from the Romanian Feudal State – Wallachia, began to come to Moldova and settle in small hermitages. Over time, these became famous monasteries such as Neamț Monastery (approximately 1,000 monks during the time of St. Paisie Velichikovschi), Secu Monastery (400 monks), Agapia and Văratec Nunneries (each with 400 nuns). A wave of Transylvanians settled in Vânători-Neamț after the defeat of the rebellion led by Horea, Cloșca, and Crișan in 1784. The traditional occupation of the commune's inhabitants was animal husbandry, with activities such as milk processing, wool and leather processing, weaving, and knitting. Fishing, beekeeping, and hunting were also important in the past. In fact, the name of the commune derives from the reputation of its skilled hunters. With "Ozana, the beautifully flowing and crystal-clear stream" and the traditional villages of Lunca, Mănăstirea Neamț, Nemțișor, and Vânători-Neamț, the commune is considered one of the most picturesque sub-Carpathian depressions in our country, and the road that crosses it leads to the monastic sites in the area.

Within the commune, there are several protected areas, including: "Dumbrava" Oak Reserve, an ancient oak forest with trees between 200 and 300 years old; "Codrii de Aramă / Cooper Forest" Reserve, on Filioru Hill; "Pădurea de Argint / Silver Forest" Reserve, an ancient birch forest, and a special conservation area for the pure fir

species. By far the most famous is "Dragoș Vodă" Bison and Carpathian Fauna Reserve, established in 1968.

In the Vânători-Neamț commune, there are two archaeological sites: the tumular necropolis "at Branișste", near the village of Nemțișor, dating back to the 3rd-4th centuries, where the largest cemetery in Romania belonging to the "Carpathian Tumuli Culture" was discovered; and the site at "Poiana Slatinii" in the village of Lunca, where traces of settlements from the Early Neolithic (Starčevo-Criș Culture), Neolithic (Precucuteni Culture), Middle Neolithic (Linear Pottery Culture), and Eneolithic (Cucuteni Culture) were found.

Every season, but especially in autumn, local producers, talented craftsmen and artists from Neamț gather at *EcoBrunch in Bison Land*, an event celebrating both culture and gastronomy, that supports the preservation of local authenticity, and the promotion of ecotourism in Neamț County.

Town Hall contact: 174 Ștefan cel Mare Street, Vânători-Neamț village, Vânători-Neamț commune, postal code 617500, tel. +40 233.251.001, vanatori neamt@nt.e-adm.ro, primaria@vinatorineamt.ro; vinatorineamt.ro; **pharmacy:** Vânători-Neamț village, 1 Decembrie 1400 Street, tel. +40 741.502.153; **dispensary:** 209 Ștefan cel Mare Str., Vânători-Neamț village, tel. +40 744.432.665, +40 751.857.816; **food service:** II Marian Șchiopu, 391 Fdt. Grădiniței Street, Vânători-Neamț village; **events:** *Mihai Eminescu Day* - National Culture Day, January 15; *Heroes' Day* (Nemțișor village), May 31; *"Childhood- a poem" International Festival*, June; *Bison Day* - Vânători-Neamț Natural Park Day, August; *"Daniil Sandu Tudor - Rugul aprins" Celebration*, December 7th; *New Year's Customs and Traditions Festival*, December 27th.



NEAMȚ MONASTERY

First documented in 1210, Neamț Monastery is the result of successive foundations from the 14th-15th centuries by the rulers Petru Mușat, Alexander the Blessed, and Stephen the Great. The monastery complex includes the church, dating from the 14th century, a museum, and a library dating from the late 14th century, which counted over 12,000 volumes in 1862, bearing witness to important historical, theological, cultural, and artistic events of the medieval period. The scholarly and spiritual traditions of this establishment are also linked to the brilliant activity of a famous school of calligraphers and miniaturists, trained and guided by the first teacher, calligrapher, and writer of Philocalic works, Gavriil Uric, and a printing press organized shortly after 1500, which increased the fame of Orthodoxy.

The Neamț Monastery houses a famous miracle-working icon, the Icon of Virgin Mary with Three Hands (Trihirusa), which is a copy of the icon from the Hilandar Monastery on Mount Athos, Greece. The painting of the third hand is linked to a miracle that occurred in the life of St. John Damascene, who lived in the 8th century. He was punished by the emperor Leo the Isaurian by having his hand cut off because he was known as a defender of the Holy Icons. St. John took his severed hand and went before this icon, asking to be healed, and the Mother of God healed the Saint's hand. In gratitude and recognition, St. John added a silver hand to the bottom of the Icon of the Holy Virgin.







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Contact: DJ 155C, Vânători-Neamț Commune, postal code 617502, tel. +40 233.251.580, +40 745.212. 708, neamt@mmb.ro, neamt.mmb.ro; **monastery's feast day:** *the Ascension of the Lord* (40 days after Orthodox Easter).

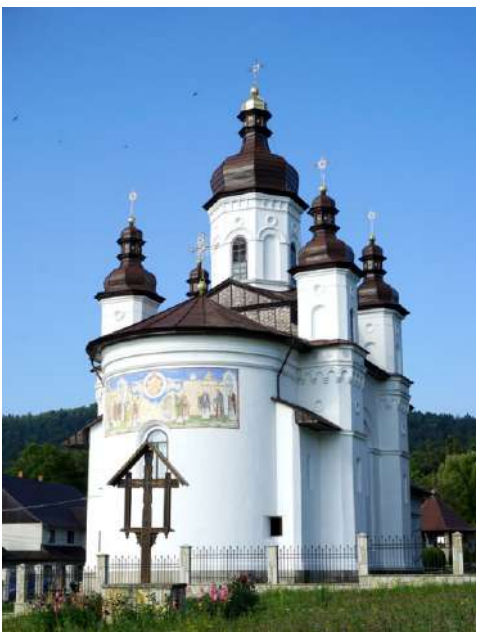
VOVIDENIA HERMITAGE

It is a wonderful place of prayer dedicated to the Mother of God, a historical monument with a history of over 300 years. Vovidenia Hermitage was founded in 1749 by Bishop Ioanichie, who completely renovated it. In place of the old church, he erected another wooden church, dedicated to the Entrance of Virgin Mary into the Temple, built cells, a refectory, and new bells, and changed the name of the hermitage from Slătioru to Vovidenia. He then gathered over 60 monks and dedicated the hermitage to Neamț Monastery.

One hundred years later, in 1849, Vovidenia Church was dismantled and donated to the villagers of Lunca (Vânători commune), and in the same year, the construction of the current stone church began, built between 1849 and 1853 by Hegumens Daniil and Gherasim Miron.

Mihail Sadoveanu was also attracted by the beauties of these places, and the house where he lived temporarily is organized as the Mihail Sadoveanu Memorial House and is managed by the Hermitage.

Contact: Mănăstirea Neamţvillage, Vânători-Neamț commune, tel. +40 233.251.874, neamt@mmb.ro, vovidenia@mmb.ro; **monastery's feast day:** *The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, November 21st.





MIHAIL SADOVEANU MEMORIAL HOUSE

Mihail Sadoveanu Memorial House in Vânători-Neamţ commune is located on Vovidenia Hill, in the vicinity of Vovidenia Hermitage, 1 km from Neamţ Monastery. The settlement (constructed in 1937) was built during the time and at the initiative of Metropolitan Visarion Puiu of Bucovina (1899 - 1964) with the purpose of an episcopal palace. In fact, the metropolitan only lived in it for a few years, after his exile in 1944, the house remaining under the administration of Neamţ Monastery, becoming a guest house, made available to writer Mihail Sadoveanu in 1944 and granted for lifetime use in 1949. The writer lived in the current museum building from 1944 to 1961, and it was his summer residence, with his last visit to the house in Vânători-Neamț in the summer of 1961. The hunting and fishing objects, which are illustrative of both the writer's life and work, arouse particular interest. With a keen eye, you can spot the Venetian furniture in the living room, an over hundred-year-old chest, and an impressive Viennese piano, played by George Enescu, Dinu Lipatti, and Maria Tănase.

Address: 85 Mihail Sadoveanu Street, Mănăstirea Neamţ village, Vânători-Neamț commune, tel. +40 745.639.908.





POCROV HERMITAGE

Located in a clearing surrounded by centuries-old forests, about 4 km southwest of Neamț Monastery, at the foot of Mount Chiriacu, Pocrov Hermitage was built in 1714 by Hieromonk Pahomie and his disciples, who erected a church in the style of Moldavian wooden churches, typical of the 18th century, but with some Russian influences expressed through the three large cupolas, covered with sheet metal and the bell-shaped roof, as well as the construction method of the vaults. Pocrov Hermitage, called by Mihail Sadoveanu *"Heaven's glade"*, represents a true place of tranquility where many devoted fathers lived, leading a very austere spiritual life. Many of them succeeded in founding and leading other hermitages, on their own.

Contact: Vânători-Neamț commune, postal code 617502, tel. +40 233.251.580, +40 745.212.708, neamt@mmb.ro, neamt.mmb.ro/schitul-pocrov-1, **hermitage's feast day:** *Intercession of the Theotokos*, October 1st.





BISON LAND - VÂNĂTORI-NEAMȚ NATURAL PARK



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Vânători-Neamț Natural Park is the only place in Europe where the bison, the heraldic symbol of Moldavia and the largest land animal on the continent, can be visited in all three forms of habitat: in the wild, in the forests of the Park, in semi-freedom, in the acclimatization enclosure, and in captivity in the Park's zoo. The release of the bison and the reintroduction of this legendary species to the forests of Neamț Land began in the spring of 2012, when five bison, three males and two females, were released. Currently, after 10 years, in an area of approximately 70 thousand hectares, there are over 60 bison in the wild, more than half of which were born in the wild. As a result of all the initiatives undertaken so far, starting in 2017, the ecotourism destination "Bison Land", which overlaps with Vânători-Neamț Natural Park, has been included each year in the Top 100 Sustainable Destinations, becoming the only destination in Romania awarded at this competition, organized globally by Green Destinations in cooperation with other international organizations interested in sustainable tourism. The competition includes tourist destinations from 55-60 countries annually, evaluated by a group of approximately 60 independent experts.

Contact: Vânători-Neamț Natural Park Administration, 2 Zimbrului Street, tel. +40 233.206.001, www.vanatoripark.ro, vanatoripark@gmail.com



SECU MONASTERY

The monastery has its origins linked to the existence of a hermitage founded here in 1530, known as the Hermitage of Zosima. The church was founded by the ruler Petru Rareș (1527-1546), and the stone wall around the hermitage was erected in 1550 by Elena, the ruler's wife, and their sons. The stone monastery was built by Nestor Ureche together with his wife Mitrofana, the parents of the chronicler Grigore Ureche. The entire ensemble impresses with its fortress-like appearance, the beauty of its treasures and artistic works, including the iconostasis carved in lime wood, sculpted in the Baroque style and gilded with gold. The reliquary of the monastery holds wood from the Holy Cross, the chest containing a fragment of the foot of St. John the Baptist, and particles from St. Archdeacon Stephen, the Holy Apostle Andrew, and the Saints Panteleimon, Charalambos, and John Chrysostom. A miraculous icon is the Icon of the Virgin Mary of Cyprus. Other attractions for pilgrims include the museum inside the monastery, which houses the Sermon Book of Metropolitan Varlaam (1643), the "Epitaph" adorned with pearls and precious stones (1608), religious objects, manuscripts belonging to the renowned school of scribes and miniaturists from Secu.

Contact: Vânători-Neamț Commune, postal code 617500, tel. +40 233.251.862, secu@mmb.ro; **monastery's feast day:** *Beheading of Saint John the Baptist*, August 29th.



SIHĂSTRIA MONASTERY



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It is one of the most blessed hermitages of the place, where the reclusive hermits retired from other places have strived and prayed. In Atanasie's Meadow, Bishop Ghedeon of Huşi erected a hermitage in 1655, rebuilt between 1824-1826, from river stone and brick, by the efforts of Metropolitan Veniamin Costache and abbot Dometian. The newly erected church was made in the Moldavian classical style, and the iconostasis was carved in lime wood and gilded with gold.

In recent decades, in addition to its spiritual aspect, Sihăstria Monastery has carried out an intense cultural-missionary activity, becoming an important center of Romanian spirituality, the great spiritual fathers Paisie Olaru and Ilie Cleopa being considered true spiritual fathers of the nation. The rich publishing activity of the monastery is largely due to Archimandrite Ioanichie Bălan, who founded the Sihăstria Monastery Publishing House. In the monastery, there is a reliquary with the relics of 30 saints, a piece of the wood of the Holy Cross, and a miraculous icon depicting the Virgin Mary. A pilgrimage site is represented by the cell of Father Cleopa and the monastery cemetery.

Contact: Vânători-Neamț Commune, postal code 617500, tel. +40 233.251.896, sihastria@mmb.ro, sihastria.mmb.ro; **monastery's feast day:** *Nativity of the Virgin Mary*, September 8th.

PIPIRIG COMMUNE

Pipirig is a commune with ancient villages, hardworking people, skilled farmers, and keepers of beautiful folk traditions, among which the customs and traditions specific to winter holidays and beyond stand out. It is an area where people know how to keep cultural traditions alive and unaltered, and to raise the locality to the new coordinates of present and future civilization.

The village of Pipirig, the seat of the commune, is mentioned for the first time in a document from 1437, in which Ilie Voievod, the ruler of Moldavia, established the boundary of the Munţii estate, donated to the Neamţ Monastery, which passed through the mouth of Peperigului. The name of the village is derived from the plant with the same name, which had a wide range of distribution on the swampy terraces of River Neamţ.

From the first mention until 1863, it remains the property of the monastery, not being the subject of other donations, the only mentions of the village being made on the occasion of some censuses. Thus, the first references regarding the number of inhabitants are given through the census of the population of Moldova from 1772-1773, when 38 taxpayers who lived in 38 houses were mentioned. Under the name of Pipirig, the village also appears on Otzellowitz's map in 1788, in the censuses from 1835, 1860, and in the census of 1864.

Contact: 4 Ion Creangă Street, Pipirig village, tel. +40 233.252.001, +40 233.252.449, primaria.pipirig@yahoo.com; **pharmacies:** "Sfânta Elena" Pharmacy, Pipirig village; Bucătaru Farm, Preot Munteanu Street, Dolhești village; **dispensary:** 476 Ion Creangă Street, Pipirig village, tel. +40 233.252.005; **food service:** Rustic Pizzeria, Pipirig village, tel. +40 758.264.955; II Bârgăoanu Elena, Pipirig village, tel. +40745.584.610; PFA Ungureanu Liliana, Pipirig village, tel. +40 749.618.092; **events:** *Ion Creangă's Days Festival,* March 1-3; *Commune Day,* last Sunday of August; *Hard Enduro National Competition*, first weekend of September, *New Year's Festival of Customs and Traditions*, December 31th.

AGAPIA COMMUNE



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Due to its geographical position and the variety of natural elements, the territory of the Ozana-Topolița depression, where Agapia commune lies, has provided favorable conditions for settlement since ancient times. During feudalism, the villages here experienced some development, and the silver and bronze coins discovered in the area are evidence of the trade activities undertaken here. According to locals, there were places on the territory of the current commune where reserve ammunition was kept for the defense of Neamț Fortress. The evolution of the villages in the commune is closely linked to the existence of the Agapia and Văratec monasteries, and the population of the area 300-400 years ago was also favored by the fact that those who worked on the monasteries' estates were exempt from taxes.

The villages of Agapia and Văratec reveal to visitors landscapes of perfect beauty, to which is added the historical and cultural significance of the area, thanks to the presence of notable figures of Romanian art and literature, who have contributed, if only through their sincere admiration, to the establishment of a well-deserved prestige, full of meaning and respect. The area is associated to the memory of Mihai Eminescu, Veronica Micle, Alexandru Vlahuță, Calistrat Hogaș, Gala Galaction, Mihail Sadoveanu, and Ionel Teodoreanu.



Town Hall contact: DN15F, Agapia village, tel. +40 372.522.208, primariaagapia@yahoo.com, www.agapia.ro; **pharmacy:** Agapia village, 138 Nicolae Iorga Street, tel. +40 233.244.673; **dispensary:** Agapia village, 139 Nicolae Iorga Street, tel. +40 233.244.604, +40 742.133.330; **fountains:** public fountain in the Agapia area, under the forest; Bacalului Fountain at Agapia Nunnery; **events:** *Commune Day* in September.

SIHLA MONASTERY

The monastery was founded in 1730, and the wooden church was built in 1741 by the Cantacuzino family. The current appearance dates back to 1813, when Archimandrite Benedict, the abbot of Neamț and Secu Monasteries, renewed it. The building was erected on a stone foundation, with walls made of fir beams, in the classic style of Moldavian churches, and was decorated with a carved lime wood iconostasis, painted and gilded with gold. Inside the building, which is considerably larger than traditional wooden churches, an imposing baroque-style iconostasis, with some neoclassical decorative elements, was brought from a stone church. The entire ensemble of the skete is declared a historical and religious folk architecture monument.

Contact: Agapia commune, postal code 617010, tel. +40 744.513.879, +40 743.961.818 – Priest Ioanichie for pilgrim accommodation, sihla @mmb.ro, sihla.ro; **monastery's feast day:** *the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist*, June 24th.



THE CHURCH MADE OF A FIR TREE

In an isolated area, in the heart of the forest and the wilderness of the rocks, there is a church made of a fir tree, with an old and interesting history. Hidden and peaceful places have been preferred by numerous hermits, among whom the most famous was Theodora, who was canonized for her piety and devotion. Near the cave, where this saint lived for many years, and under a huge

rock, there was an old church, replaced in 1763 by Ioniță Aga Cantacuzino-Paşcanu, with the current church, built from a fir tree in memory of his friend Ioan Coroi, who died while hunting deer in the ravine that bears his name today.

Contact: Agapia commune, postal code 617010, tel. +40 744. 513.879, sihla@mmb.ro; **church's feast day:** *Transfiguration of the Lord*, August 6th.



SAINT THEODORA'S CAVE AT SIHLA

Near the Sihla Monastery, not far from the church made of a fir tree and the old cells under the rock, is the cave of Venerable Theodora of Sihla, a hermit who lived in these parts towards the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century, and who spent many years in fasting and prayer. The unknown struggle of the saint, but especially the spiritual height she reached, rightfully likened to Saint Mary of Egypt, attracts a multitude of believers from all over.

Contact: Agapia commune, postal code 617010, sihla@mmb.ro.



OLD AGAPIA NUNNERY OR "AGAPIA ON THE HILL"





Agapia Veche Nunnery is located about 2 km from Agapia Nouă Nunnery (also known as Agapia down the Valley), in a clearing sheltered by tall and dense forests. This place of prayer represents the starting point of the famous monastic settlement now known as Agapia Nunnery. It was founded successively between the 14th and 17th centuries by the monk Agapie, on the site now called Livada părinților, by Voivode Petru Rareş and Princess Anastasia. It was completely reconstructed between 1990-1994 from thick pine beams, with the original bell tower remaining.



Contact: Agapia village, postal code 617005, tel. +40 730.146.948, agapiaveche@mmb.ro, agapia veche.mmb.ro; **nunnery's feast day:** *Transfiguration of the Lord*, August 6th.

ALEXANDRU VLAHUȚĂ MEMORIAL HOUSE

The memorial house of Alexandru Vlahuţă, where the writer lived during his childhood, is the monastic house of his sister and mother - the nuns Elisabeta Străjescu and Elisabeta Vlahuţă, who were part of the community of Agapia Nunnery. This house hosted famous literary gatherings attended by the writer's numerous friends, including Eminescu, Nicolae Grigorescu, Delavrancea, Hașdeu, Caragiale, Coșbuc, Slavici, Brătescu Voinești, and Goga.

The memorial museum was arranged and inaugurated in 1958, on the occasion of the celebration of the writer's 100th anniversary. The permanent exhibition includes pieces of the writer's original furniture, personal objects, books, manuscripts, and letters from his personal library.

Contact: Agapia village,
tel. +40 233.244.736.





AGAPIA NUNNERY

The first documented mention of the nunnery dates back to 1437. It is said to have been built near an older monastic settlement, whose name is associated with the hermit Agapie. He, along with his disciples, built a wooden church, which was later destroyed. The first stone church was built by Petru Rareş and Elena Doamna, and renewed by Petru Şchiopu. Due to frequent landslides in the area, in 1600 the monks decided to build a new church further down the valley, around which the Agapia Nunnery of today developed. The new nunnery was built between 1642 and 1644 by hatman Gavriil Coci, brother of the ruler Vasile Lupu. The mural painting, in a neoclassical style combined with Romanian art, belongs to Nicolae Grigorescu. Visiting Agapia, Calistrat Hogaş admired Nicolae Grigorescu's painting, which managed to replace "all the sharp and bony forms of Russian faces, which decorate the walls of all the other monasteries" with "the round and sweet forms of the profane school", managing to convey both maternity and virginity in the same figure, imprinting through lines and colors the tenderness of a mother on the face of a virgin.





Contact: Agapia commune, tel. +40 233.244.736, +40 768.085.709, agapia@mmb.ro; **nunnery's feast day:** *Saint Archangels Michael and Gabriel*, November 8th.

VĂRATEC NUNNERY



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The nunnery was founded by Mother Olimpiada in 1785, but the current stone church was built in 1812. The two identical bell-shaped domes are a characteristic feature of the nunnery. The interior painting dates back to the 19th century, in a Neo-Byzantine style, and the iconostasis is carved from yew wood. This historic monument has a library with old books and a museum of medieval religious art. The library contains 6000 volumes, of which 1600 are old manuscripts and prints. Among the personalities who have linked their biography and work to Văratec Nunnery are: Mihai Eminescu, Veronica Micle, Profira Sadoveanu, Metropolitan Bartolomeu Anania, Mother Benedicta (Zoe Dumitrescu-Buşulenga), and Priest Roman Braga. Today it is the largest monastery in the Orthodox world, with a monastic village around it, inhabited only by nuns. In the monastery grounds there is a shrine with relics of more than 30 saints and a miraculous icon representing Saint Anne.

Nearby is the Church of St. John the Baptist, a building from 1844, and next to it is the tomb of the poetess Veronica Micle.

Contact: Văratec village, Agapia commune, postal code 617013, tel. +40 233.244.616, +40 728.102.363, varatic@mmb.ro; **nunnery's feast day:** *Dormition of the Theotokos*, August 15th.



CRĂCĂOANI COMMUNE

The first written records about the existence of human settlements in the villages of the commune date back to 1399, in a charter by Iuga Voievode. Later, in the statistics of Moldavia from 1744, the villages of Crăcăoani, Cracăul Negru, and Ghindăoani are registered, and in "Condica Luizilor" from 1803, the records refer to the lawsuit between the estates of Buhalniţa Monastery, with the villages of Ghindăoani, Crăcăoani, Cracăul Negru, Buhalniţa, Izvorul Alb and the neighboring estates of Bălţăteşti and Mânzeşti. These places have a great historical significance: on the Ghindău Ridge, located between the villages of Ghindăoani and Crăcăoani, battles led by Ştefan I Mușat against the King of Hungary, Sigismund of Luxembourg, took place in 1395, who had invaded our country and was heading towards the town of Baia in the parts of Suceava. Later, Stephen the Great and other rulers organized their ammunition and food depots in Magazia village, from where they connected with Neamț Fortress through very little-known paths and trails, and many villagers from River Cracău valley participated in the battles at Războieni, fought against the Turks in 1476, under the command of ruler Stephen the Great.

Town Hall contact: DN15C, Crăcăoani village, Crăcăoani commune, postal code 617145, tel. +40 233.246.001, +40 233.246.009, pcracaoani@yahoo.com, primariacracaoani@yahoo.com, www.comunacracaoani.ro; **pharmacy:** Crăcăoani village, tel. +40 233.246.111; **dispensary:** Crăcăoani village, tel. +40 720.241.654; **food service:** Pizzeria Aurelio, Crăcăoani village, tel. +40 760.959.769; **events:** *Commune Day*, the first Sunday of September.



LAKE CUEJDEL

Rolling hills, decidous forests, and valleys with flocks of sheep and the water of Cuejdel dammed by a slope sliding over its course: a picturesque landscape of a mountain lake formed not long ago. This is Cuejdel, a natural dam lake, formed between 1978 and 1991, in the Stânişoarei Mountains. With a surface of 114 hectares and depths ranging from 7 to 14 meters, the lake was declared a protected area in 2004. With a water surface pierced by tree trunks, surrounded on all sides by forests, with flora and fauna specific to the area, Lake Cuejdel presents itself to hikers as a wilderness oasis, a landscape that changes its colors from one season to another, impressing every time.

Leisure: mountain hiking on marked trails (covering 25 km from Piatra-Neamţ by car, through Gârcina village, and then 3 km on foot, on a wide path, through meadows and decidous and coniferous forests).





GÂRCINA COMMUNE

Gârcina commune is a rural community with a history dating back thousands of years. Researchers reveal that the first settlers here belong to the Eneolithic period, indicating their settlement dates back approximately 5000 years. On the trails of Hîrcu-Almaș, explored by Professor Radu Vulpe and archaeologist Constantin Mătase almost 70 years ago, pottery remains, mud bricks from houses, and a clay idol (statuette, figurine) were found, pieces belonging to the Cucuteni B-type civilization. The documentary attestation of the villages Gârcina (Oprișeni) and Cuejdiu constitutes a true birth certificate: the first princely act was found in Constantinople and dates back to July 12, 1415.

At the end of the 19th century, the commune was part of the Piatra-Muntele area of Neamț County and consisted of the villages Gârcina, Cuejdiu, Dărmănești, and Ciritei. The 1925 SOCEC Yearbook records it in the same composition, in the Piatra area of the same county. In 1931, the commune, consisting of the villages Cuejdiu and Gârcina, became a suburban commune of the urban commune of Piatra Neamț. In 1950, the commune came under the administration of Piatra Neamț raion in Bacău region. In 1968, it returned to Neamț County, taking over the village of Almaș from Dobreni village.

Town Hall contact: Melchisedec Ștefănescu Street, Gârcina village, Gârcina commune, postal code 617200, tel. +40 233. 242.200, primariagarcina@primariagarcina.ro, www.primariagarcina.ro; **pharmacy:** Farmacia Ardealul, Melchisedec Ștefănescu Street, Gârcina village, Gârcina commune; **clinic:** DJ157D 99, Gârcina village, Gârcina commune; **drinking water sources:** Gârcina salt water spring, DJ 145, X8G7+8J Gârcina.



THE HERMITAGE OF SAINT DANIIL

The Hermitage of Saint Daniil is a wooden skete built in 1998 by the faithful from the area and by the Gârcina Village Hall, on the hill called Poiana Părului, at the foot of Mount Muncel.

Pious Daniil the Hermit was one of the greatest saints of Moldavia, considered the foremost advisor and spiritual guide of Stephen the Great, at whose urging the ruler built forty-eight churches and monasteries. In this way, Saint Daniil the Hermit proved to be a great defender of Romanian Orthodoxy and a spiritual founder. Saint Daniil the Hermit created in Moldavia a great hesychastic movement, almost without equal, thus renewing the spiritual life in the places of worship for many years to come, and raising an entire generation of hermits and monks for the nation.

Contact: Gârcina commune, postal code 617202, tel. +40 733.801.054, sihastria.mmb.ro/schitul-sfantul-daniil-sihastrul-1; **hermitage's feast day:** *Saint Daniil the Hermit*, December 18th.

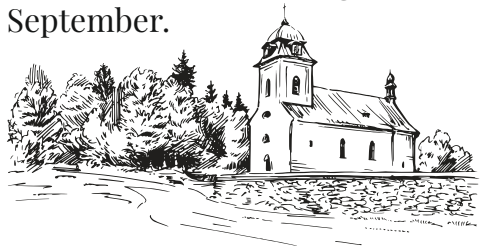


PÂNGĂRAȚI COMMUNE

The history of the commune is lost in the mists of time and is closely related to the Pîngăraţi Monastery. In 1432, during the reign of Iliaş Vodă, the eldest son of the ruler Alexander the Blessed, the hermit Simion and several monks, who had withdrawn from Bistriţa Monastery and settled at the foot of Mount Păru, are considered the first inhabitants of the Pîngăraţi commune. In 1461, with the help of ruler Stephen the Great, the hermit Simion built a wooden church, and from 1508, the venerable Amfilohie pastored over a half-century the small community made up of 40 hermits. During the reign of Alexandru Lăpuşneanu, a stone church and surrounding walls were erected in place of the wooden church (burned by the Turks). The church was endowed and immediately raised to the rank of monastery.

During this period, the first village settlements appeared, initially in the monastery area (Pângăraţi village), and later expanded to the current villages of Pângărăcior and Stejaru. According to some information, the villages of Oanţu and Poiana were largely formed by a population coming from Transylvania, around the second half of the 18th century. And in the village of Preluca, in addition to the native inhabitants, a population from the current Bacău county area, especially the Csango people, came and settled here in the early 19th century.

Town Hall contact: Pângărați village, Pângărați commune, postal code 617305, tel. +40 233.240.317, +40 233.240.317, secretariat@pangarati.ro, www.pangarati.ro; **pharmacy:** CSC Pharmacy, DN15, Pângărăcior village, Pângărați commune; **clinic:** Asclepion Clinic Point, 45 Barajului Street, Pângărați commune; **events:** *Village Day*, in September.



PÂNGĂRAȚI MONASTERY



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The name Pângăraţi according to historian Nicolae Iorga, comes from a monk named Pangratie who "seems to have been a hermit of old, giving his name to the nearby stream". It was built at the end of the 14th century by the hermit Simeon who, with help from Stephen the Great, built a wooden church. This was burned down by the Turks, and on the site of the old one, in 1560, Alexandru Lăpuşneanu built a stone church. It is a superposed church, the one in the basement serving as a crypt, later becoming a chapel with the patron saint of the Holy Roman Martyrs. After 250 years, in 1806, Hegumen Macarie transformed the crypt in the basement of Lăpuşneanu's church into a small church. This makes the Pângăraţi monastery a unique one, having two superimposed churches with different entrances and patron saints: St. Demetrius and Archangels Michael and Gabriel. The two churches are connected inside through a very narrow and steep spiral stone staircase. Also remarkable is the imposing silhouette of the new church on the nearby hill, enhancing the value of the monastic ensemble,



an important center of Orthodox Christian spirituality and culture. **Contact:** Pângăraţi commune, postal code 617305, tel. +40 233. 240.337, +40 735.425.924, +40 734. 334.333 (accommodation), pangarati@mmb.ro, pangarati.mmb.ro; **monastery's feast day:** *Pious Saints Simeon and Amphilochius*, September 7th, and *Saint Demetrius*, October 26th.

TARCĂU COMMUNE

The commune is located in the southwestern part of the county, on the border with Bacău County, in the Tarcău Mountains area, on the banks of the River Bistrița and its tributary, Tarcău.

Tarcău is mentioned for the first time in a medieval Moldavian document from October 10, 1458, in which *Stephen the Great confirms the Bistrița Monastery's old land with the borders of Pângărați, Păducelul Mare, Bistrița, Doamna, Tazlău Monastery, Răchitiș, Piscul Bălții, Tarcău...* The Tarcău estate is mentioned later on May 29, 1602, in the decree of Prince Ieremia Movilă, on July 23, 1606, in the decree of Simeon Movilă and in that of Prince Radu Mihnea from March 14, 1618, as the old land of the Bistrița Monastery.

At the end of the 19th century, there was no commune, only the villages of Tarcău and Straja within the Pângărați commune.

The date on which Tarcău became a separate settlement, meaning a commune, as recorded in the Civil Status Register - Marriages, pages 3-5, is July 7, 1908.

Today, the entire settlement is a beautiful mountain commune, with natural reserves, historical monuments, and tourist guesthouses worth visiting.

Town Hall contact: Tarcău village, Tarcău commune, postal code 617445, tel. +40 233.240.951, primaria@tarcau.ro, www.tarcau.ro; **pharmacy:** Yucca, Tarcău village, tel. +40 761.587.471; **dispensary:** Tarcău village, tel. +40 745.578.185; **water springs:** Bolta spring with cold water, Cazaci village; **events:** *Iulia Hălăucescu International Watercolor Symposium*, July/ August.

SIHĂSTRIA TARCĂULUI MONASTERY

Sihăstria Tarcăului Monastery was built in 1833, on the Tarcău Valley, by Hieroschimonk Avramie. Initially, it was a skete, and since 1990, it has been granted the status of a monastery. The church is built of ash wood, on a stone foundation, by local craftsmen. The church's architecture belongs to the classical style of Moldavian churches, being shaped like a cross with a single spire, the extremities at the west and east are rounded, and the side apses are well pronounced, with a pentagonal shape. The roof, with two steep slopes, emphasizes the presence of the lateral eaves through slight undulations. The interior is not painted. The bell tower is made of wooden beams, built on two levels, and the onion-shaped roof is less common in Moldavian churches.







Contact: Schitul Tarcău village, Tarcău commune, postal code 617449, tel. +40 742.333.500, sihastriatarcaului@mmb.ro, sihastriatarcaului.mmb.ro; **monastery's feast day:** *All Saints' Sunday*, November 1st.

TĂRCUŢA MONASTERY

Tărcuţa Monastery is a convent established in 2001 by the monk Ambrozie Velea. Located in the Tarcău Mountains, on the route connecting Tarcău commune in Neamț County and Tărhăuși village in Bacău county, the monastery is a resting place for those following the pilgrimage route.

Contact: Tarcău village, postal code 617446, tarcuta@mmb.ro, tarcuta.mmb.ro, **monastery's feast day:** *the Nativity of the Mother of God*, September 8th.





Accommodation options along the Via Mariae Pilgrimage Route - Neamț County

VÂNĂTORI-NEAMȚ:

Branişte Guesthouse***, tel. +40233.278.345, +40753.633.117, www.pensiunea-braniste.ro, **Han Maria Guesthouse*****, tel. +40753.634.032, +40729.391.311, **Mariana Guesthouse*****, tel. +40233.251.002, +40744.816.182; **Perla Neamțului Chalet*****, tel. +40754.293.419, +40233.251.511, contact@perlaneamtului.ro, https://perlaneamtului.ro/, **Edera Guesthouse******, tel.

+40233.251.901, +40742.543.498, +40745.436.818, e-mail: eurocompanytoursrl@yahoo.com, www.pensiuneaedera.ro, **Hostel Hanul Ursilor*****, tel. +40233.251.364, +40726.143.784, hanul_ursilor@yahoo.com, www.hanulursilor.ro; **Zimbru Guesthouse*****, tel. +40233.251.250; **Păstrăvăria Ursu Rooms for rent*****, tel. +40233.251.364, +40726.143.784, hanul_ursilor@yahoo.com, www.hanulursilor.ro

PIPIRIG:

Maria Mărioara Guesthouse***, tel. +40788.379.867, +40768.665.654, +40233.790.279, pensiunea marioara@yahoo.com; **Secu Guesthouse*****, tel. +40783.023.439, **Casa Afetelor Guest house*****, tel. +40746.140.408, +40233.252.066, casaafetelor2@gmail.com, www.casaafetelor.ro



AGAPIA:

Agapia Guesthouse***, tel. +40 746.790.742, e-mail: pensiunea.agapia@yahoo.com, www.pensiunea-agapia.ro, **Casa Anca Guesthouse******, tel. +40233.244.819, www.pensiuneacasaanca.ro, casaancaagapia@gmail.com; **Casa dintre pini Bungalow****, tel. +40741.074.999, e-mail: margohosting80@gmail.com; **Casa dintre pini Guesthouse*****, tel: +40741.074.999, +40740.245.985, contact@casadintrepini.ro, casadintrepini.ro, **Maria Guest house*****, tel. +40233.245.004, +40744.790.466, contact@pensiuni-agapia.ro, office@pensiuni-agapia.ro, **Punguța cu doi bani Guesthouse*****, tel. +40745.430.470, +40741.746835, +40722.441194, pungutacudoibani@ymail.com; **Eulor Guest house*****, tel. +40744.648.907, +40743.333.121, pensiuneagapia@yahoo.com, facebook: Pensiunea Eulor;

Denisa Guesthouse***, tel. +40749 859 515, **Eden Guest house******, tel. +40233.247. 217, +40728.821.013, rezervari@edentur.ro, www.edentur.ro; **Codrii de aramă Guesthouse*****, tel. +40233.244.900, +40721.234.020, +40721.232.424, neculajan@yahoo.com, filioreanu_ovidiu@yahoo.com; **Daria Guest house*****, tel. +40233.244.870, e-mail: pensiunea.daria@ yahoo.com; **Văratec Guesthouse*****, tel. +40233.245.113, rezervari@pensiuneavaratec.ro; **Villa Q Rooms for rent*****, tel. +40 742.550.326, office@vilaq.ro, www.vilaq.ro; **Eulor Guest house******, tel. +40743 333 121, +40744 648 907, e-mail: pensiunea gapia@yahoo.com, www.pensiuneaeulor.business. site

GÂRCINA:

Almaș Guesthouse***, tel. +40722.236.307, +40233.242.246, pensiunea.almas@gmail.com, pensiunea-almas.ro; **BĂLAN Guesthouse******, tel. +40233.242.542, +40747.768.607, +40723.854.765, pensiuneabalan@yahoo.com, **Craii Neamțului Guesthouse****, tel. +40745.653.955, craiineamtului@yahoo.com, **Bursucărie Guesthouse*****, Mătieș, Cuejdiu village, tel. +40757.792.758, danachirila10@gmail.com

PÂNGĂRAȚI:

Onţanca Guesthouse***, tel. +40749.786.074, **Balad' Or Guesthouse******, tel. +40727.736.685, www.balador.ro, office@balador.ro; **Vatra Bunicii Guest house*****, tel. +40734.009.493, **Vatra Satului Guesthouse*****, tel. +40722.619.547, **CASTELUL DE SMARALD Guesthouse******, tel. +40 753 477 627, e-mail: rezervari@casteluldesmarald.ro, www.casteluldesmarald.ro

TARCĂU:

Chez Marie Guesthouse****, tel. +40767.594.475, e-mail: contact@pensiuneachezmarie.ro, www.pensiuneachezmarie.ro; **Măieruș Guesthouse******, +40233.278.800, +40711.963308, maierustarcau@gmail.com, www.pensiuneamaierus.ro; **Poiana Soarelui Guesthouse*****, tel. +40744.497.045, alexa_cucu_2008@yahoo.com; **Alpin Chalet*****, tel. +40748.474.360, **Floarea Soarelui Guest house******, tel. +40752.893.706, rezervari@pensiuneafloarea soarelui.ro, www.pensiunea floareasoarelui.ro; **Corola Guesthouse*****, tel. +40233.890.960, +40744.427.785, e-mail: pensiuneacorola@yahoo.com, www.pensiuneacorola.at.ua; **Fortuna Guesthouse******, tel. +40742.081.932, e-mail: office@pensiunea-fortuna.ro, www.pensiunea-fortuna.ro; **Goșman Hunting Cabin*****, tel. +40233.240.057, office@neamt.rosilva.ro, www.neamt.rosilva.ro; **Teiuș Rooms for rent***, tel. +40233.240.080, office@neamt.rosilva.ro, www.neamt.rosilva.ro, ROMSILVA – National Directorate of Forests.



NEAMȚ COUNTY COUNCIL

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VIA MARIAE ASSOCIATION
Frumoasa Village, Harghita County, 7 Obor Street, viamariae.ro molnar.sandor@mariaut.ro, Tel. +40730.711.745; Skype: csulak2008

VÂNĂTORI–NEAMȚ NATURAL PARK ADMINISTRATION
2 Zimbrului Street, Vânători-Neamț Village, Vânători-Neamț Commune, Neamț County, vanatoripark@gmail.com, Tel. +40233.206.001

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Tel. +40233.252.001; +40233.252.449; primaria.pipirig@yahoo.com; primaria@pipirig.ro

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GÂRCINA COMMUNE

Melchisedec Ştefănescu Street, Gârcina Village, Gârcina Commune, Neamț County, Tel. +40233.242.200; primariagarcina.ro primariagarcina@primaria garcina.ro

TARCĂU COMMUNE

Main Street (DN 15), Tarcău Village, Tarcău Commune, Neamț County; Tel. +40233.206.253, informatiipublice@tarcau.ro; tarcau.ro

CRĂCĂOANI COMMUNE

Crăcăoani Village, Crăcăoani Commune, Neamț County; Tel. +40233.246.001, +40233.246.009; primariacracaoani@yahoo.com, pcracaoani@yahoo.com, comunacracaoani.ro

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Pângărați Village, Pângărați Commune, Neamț County, Tel. +40233.240.317; pangarati.ro; secretariat@pangarati.ro

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Tourism portal: www.visitneamt.com
Facebook: VisitNeamt
You Tube: VisitNeamt
Instagram: visit_neamt