

Romania's Vânători-Neamț Natural Park could become Europe's eighth UNESCO mixed site



Romania's Vânători-Neamț Natural Park, home to the historic monasteries of Neamț, could become the eighth mixed UNESCO site in Europe. "There are natural sites, and there are cultural sites, but those number in the thousands. However, there are only seven mixed sites in all of Europe. Vânători-Neamț Natural Park could become the eighth. This is very rare. We are comparable, for example, to Mount Athos or Meteora," explained engineer Sebastian Cătănoiu, the park's administrator, in an interview with Agerpres.

A Unique Blend of Nature and Monastic Heritage

The site's uniqueness lies in its dual status: it holds both natural and cultural significance. The natural aspect is complemented by centuries-old Orthodox monasteries that define the area.

"For 700 years, we have had continuous monastic life here, with all forms of monasticism represented: cenobitic life, where monks live and work together in a monastery; the idiorhythmic system, seen at Agapia and Văratec, where large monastic communities follow individual spiritual routines; and even hermitic life, with monks living alone in the forest, as they did centuries ago," explained Cătănoiu.

A Distinctive Orthodox Presence

"These monastic traditions have influenced both the landscape and nature itself, making this area unique in Europe. Unlike Mount Athos, which is exclusively male, we also have the two largest Orthodox nunneries in the world—Agapia and Văratec," he added.

The Rich Biodiversity of Vânători-Neamț

From a wildlife perspective, Vânători-Neamț Natural Park hosts the full range of Carpathian fauna, from large herbivores to apex predators such as bears, wolves, and lynxes.

Spanning 30,000 hectares, the park is home to more than 80 European bison,

including males, females, and calves. Notably, it is the only park in Europe that manages the bison in three distinct ways: captivity, semi-freedom, and full freedom.

Part of an Exclusive UNESCO Club

If recognized, Vânători-Neamț would join an exclusive list of UNESCO mixed sites in Europe, which currently includes:

Ohrid Region (North Macedonia and Albania),

Mount Perdu (France and Spain),

A designated area on Ibiza Island (Spain), among others.

This potential recognition would further cement the Neamț monasteries' legacy and the park's ecological importance on an international scale.

Photo: vânătoripark.ro

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