

Cultural Aspects

Historical and Archeological evidence in the area

The area around the Park has a rich history, which one can see by the numerous historic and cultural vestiges.

Evidence of **Stone Age** human populations has been found in the Cioclovina and Ohaba Ponor caves. Traces of the **Iron Age** were discovered at Subcetate and Unirea.

The silver coin collection discovered at Salasu de Sus is representative for the **Dacian civilization**, while the post-Aurelian epoch coins discovered in the same place confirm the continuity of the local population and the economic relationships of the Dacian/Roman inhabitants with the Byzantium.

still There are significant relics of the **Roman-Dacian** capital, Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa in Sarmizegetusa.

The Turkish invasions of the 15th century had a great impact upon the Hateg County area.

Towards the end of the **18th century**, after the revolt led by Horia, Closca and Crisan in the northern area of the County, the conflicts between the peasants and the barons grew in intensity all over the Hateg County and many serfs ran away from the estates and settled on the Jiu Valley, the new settlements had names that reminded the settlers of their native places. Thus, some of the inhabitants of the Retezat area from the villages of Valea Daljii, Paros, Coroiesti, Uric, Rau Barbat found in the Jiu Valley, the villages of Dalja Mare, Paroseni, Coroiesti Jiu, Barbateni.

Along the southern edge of the Retezat, an important coal mining area developed, the Jiu Valley mining area which, after 1990, had serious social-economical problems.

In the neighboring area of RNP, there are the following **historical and cultural** vestiges:

- the ruins from the Roman castle **Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa**, ex-capital of Roman Dacia and a museum exhibiting relics from the epoch;

The Church of Densus

, with an outstanding architecture, a 10th century symbol of early Christianity, the oldest Orthodox church in the world, where services are still held, has been built on the ruins of the Roman temple dating back in the 1st century AD, mostly out of materials brought from Sarmizegetusa;

The Church of Pesteana

, a 13th century building, dedicated to Saint Prophet Elijah ;

- **The Church of Rau de Mori**, whose dedication day is “The Sunday of all Saints”, dating back to the 10th century;

- **Candea Manor** in Rau de Mori, 15th century historical monument, unfortunately in an

advanced state of degradation at present.

- **The mediaeval fortress and the Abbey of Colt**, Suseni – Rau de Mori, which also belonged to the Candea family in the 18th century.
- **The Church of Ostrov**, lying in the Raului Mare everglade, built in the 13th century.
- **Prislop Monastery**, built by monk Nicodim in the year 1400, with the help of Mircea the Old. Lady Zamfira, the daughter of voivode Moise, was buried here in 1580.
- **Santamarie Orlea Castle**, 13th century, actually turned into a hotel
- **The Church of Santamarie Orlea**, built in the 13th century.
- **The Church of Sanpetru**, late 13th century princely building.
- **The Church of the Serfs of Salas**
- **The Prince Fort Yard of Salas**, dating back to the 14th century
- **The mediaeval fortress of Malaiesti**, 14th century
- **The Church of Nucsoara**
- **The Mediaeval Church of Sf. Nicolae from Rau Barbat**, first documented in 1411.

Significance, interest

IN 1928, at the „*First National Congress of Naturalists from Romania*” chaired by Professor Emil Racovita, Professor Al. Borza organized a conference for nature protection in Romania, with hopes to establish RNP, because

„*The Retezat Massif has* □ *outstandingly rich flora and fauna* □

[...] and is

„*one of the only regions in the country where vegetation is in its natural state, i.e. in biological balance.* “

Retezat has been an area of interest for **researchers** since the 18th century. Numerous researchers carried out specific studies in the area, the list of geological and biological studies published at the beginning of the century can be found at the Commission for the Protection of Natural Monuments. It includes over 300 titles, belonging to 160 authors.

The beauty and wildness of the area have always attracted various sorts of people researchers, tourists, hunters, and writers, who wrote about Retezat.. *The Romanian Touring Club* made a tourist map of Retezat in the 1940s.. Pietrele Chalet is one of the oldest tourist chalets in the country.

The wild, mysterious landscape inspired the locals who passed on **legends** about the park which have survived in Romanian folk literature. The best known are: the legend of the Retezat Peak, that of Iovan Iorgovan, the legends related to the people who actually lived on the outskirts of the Park, such as the legend of Baron Nopcea Black Face, and Count Hategani.

Historic relics in the area have attracted many **historians, archeologists, and writers.**, . The Colt Fortress may have inspired Jules Verne when writing his novel „The Carpathian Castle”.

Local people say that Retezat is a “center of cosmic energy” with **supernatural** phenomena, which they have witnessed in various parts of the park, such as the area around Bucura Lake.

Romanian mountain lovers consider the park a particularly important area when they are hiking through the Carpathian Mountains. They say that it is a “holy natural monument”, as Professor Alexandru Borza characterized it.