



# TIMIȘOARA AND RELIGIOUS TOURISM

**Sava Cipriana**

Christian University "D. Cantemir"  
București, Romania  
Faculty of Tourism and Commercial  
Management Timișoara

## Abstract:

Timișoara, the capital of Banat's historical region and the future European Capital of Culture 2021, can be placed on the map of the tourist destinations of religious tourism. On the territory of this city, due to its geographical position, people of different ethnic groups and different religious beliefs live in harmony. Over the years there have been several religious buildings specific to the various denominations. Any tourist arriving in Timișoara can visit and admire the churches, or even participate in pilgrimages that take place annually on the occasion of religious celebrations. There are several variants of religious trails in Timișoara that can satisfy the needs of Romanian or foreign tourists.

## Keywords:

tourists, religious tourism, tourism resources

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism has evolved over time, attracting an increasing number of people. The motivations of tourists are multiple and stem from their personal needs and values. One of the existing motivations since the beginnings of tourism is that of religious beliefs. The intensity of religious belief differs from person to person, and there are individuals who consider themselves atheists, but also religious fanatics. The influence of religion on the tourist movement is significant, yet within no religion, the concept of religion is not associated with the notion of tourism as it is a secular concept.

Religious tourism is the form of tourism that has as sole or partial motivation faith, religion.

The notions related to religious tourism are:

- ◆ Pilgrimage;
- ◆ Meetings occasioned by significant religious celebrations;
- ◆ Religious camps for youth;
- ◆ Tour that involves a visit to places or important religious buildings within a tourist itinerary.

Pilgrimage involves moving to the places considered sacred. It has been preserved over the years, being regarded as a constant of mankind, a penitentiary through which pilgrims sought spiritual edification.

Correspondence:  
Sava Cipriana

e-mail:  
cipriana.sava@gmail.com



Pilgrims can travel shorter or longer distances to the holy places either walking or using various means of transportation. In most cases, they travel in groups and with the involvement of the church they belong to.

Annually, on the occasion of important religious celebrations, large gatherings take place in certain locations, attracting pilgrims from all over the world.

Religious camps take place annually, during summer being supported by churches and aiming to promote spirituality among young people.

In these cases, we can talk about a unifunctional trip.

Inclusion of a religious tour in a tourist itinerary is up-to-date and appreciated by tourists, not by pilgrims.

Tourists visit religious sights as well as other tourist attractions, trying to meet their need for knowledge and enjoy the scenery. In order to appreciate the religious sights in terms of architectural evolution, construction materials, the value of works of art and spiritual significance, these tourists must have a high level of culture and at least a medium level of education. Some of the tourists who practice religious tourism combine religious beliefs with strictly cultural ones, thus promoting both cultural and spiritual values. In this case it is a multifunctional trip that allows visiting several tourist attractions in a single trip.

At present, religious tourism can be said to be a form of dynamic, ever-changing, but religion-based form of tourism.

“Religious tourism continues to have an important share in the total tourist flow (26%), worldwide, its size being even higher, but the number of tourists is not very accurate, the exact number of tourists is not known”(Sabău, G., 2016, March).

The desire to travel near the places of worship is of topical importance. This can be done by the existing accommodation facilities in the area or even by the rooms made available in the monastic ensembles or guest houses. In the latter, tourists must adhere to some religious norms in order not to disturb the tranquillity and the life of the monks.

“The resources of religious tourism are sacred buildings, religious monuments and statues, other buildings and monuments built from religious drive” (Sava, C., 2006. pag.17). Of these, the most visited are sanctuaries, temples, churches, synagogues, mosques. Buildings may be wooden or stone, of smaller or larger (cathedrals) dimensions, stand-alone or within architectural ensembles (monasteries). These are spread across all continents and can always constitute resources for the development of religious tourism.

Besides the resources presented, in support of religious tourism come:

- ◆ Christian cultural events;
- ◆ Religious-themed symposia;
- ◆ Exhibitions of icons and objects of worship;
- ◆ Concerts of religious music (instrumental and choral).

“Romania ranks 7th in the world, with 89% of the religious population, being the only country in the European Union to appear in the top 10, according to a worldwide study „Religiosity and Atheism Index”, made by the Gallup International Institute” (Albu, O. 2015, March)..

On the territory of the country there is an appreciable number of religious settlements, some of them of a heritage value recognized by UNESCO, namely:

- ◆ Fortified Churches in the Transylvanian Saxon villages (Biertan, Călnic, Dârjiu, Prejmer, Saschiz, Valea Viilor and Viscri);
- ◆ Horezu Monastery, which was founded by Constantin Brâncoveanu at the end of the 17th century, unique Brâncovenian architectural style in the world;
- ◆ Churches of the monasteries of northern Moldavia (Arbor, Humor, Moldovița, Pătrăuți, Probota, Suceava, Gura Humorului and Sucevița) painted on the outside;
- ◆ Wooden churches in Maramureș (Bârsana, Budești, Desești, Ieud, Plopiș / Sisești, Poienile Izei, Rogoz / Târgu Lăpuș and Șurdești / Șisești);
- ◆ Dacian fortress Sarmizegetuza Regia where the Dacian sanctuary is located.

The possibility of developing religious tourism is evident in Romania.



## TIMIȘOARA – EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE

Located in the southeast of the Pannonian Plain and in the south of the Western Plain, in the divisive area of the Timiș and Bega rivers, at an average altitude of 90 m above sea level, on an area of 130,5 km<sup>2</sup>, Timișoara is one of the major cities of Romania. The first mention in documents is not certain, specialists taking into consideration the years 1212 or 1266. The archaeological discoveries revealed that the area has been inhabited since the Roman times.

Timișoara as a geographical position is privileged being located at short distances from five European capitals (Bucharest - Romania 541 km, Belgrade - Serbia 164 km, Budapest - Hungary 300 km, Vienna - Austria 549 km and Sofia - Bulgaria 504 km).

The city is accessible by road, rail and air, via the international airport (Traian Vuia International Airport), which facilitates the movement of potential visitors from all over the world.

The largest architectural heritage of historical monuments in the country, around 14.500 buildings, is located in three old districts of the city - Cetate, Iosefin and Fabric.

At European level, the city is known for its tolerance and multiculturalism. In this space, the German, Hungarian, Serbian, Bulgarian, Roma, Italian and Greek ethnic groups coexist with Romanians.

According to the latest census of 2011, the population of the city counted 319.279 inhabitants.

Table 1. Timișoara's population according to religion (persons)

Religion	20 October 2011	Share (%)
<b>Population - total</b>	<b>319279</b>	<b>100</b>
Orthodox	239441	75
Serbian Orthodox	2551	0,8
Roman-Catholic	22692	7,1
Pentecostal	6540	2,05
Reformed	4159	1,3
Baptist	3943	1,23
Greek-Catholic	3662	1,15
Seventh Day Adventist	633	0,2
Evangelical of Augustan Confession	82	0,03
Evangelical Lutheran Synod Presbyterian	204	0,069
Mosaic	180	0,06
Christian Evangelical	343	0,11
Unitarian	84	0,03
Muslim	996	0,31
Old-rite Christian	284	0,09
Arminian	5	0,001
Evangelical (Romanian Evangelical Church)	268	0,08
Jehovah's Witnesses	441	0,14
Other religion	1260	0,39

Atheists	929	0,29
Without religion	548	0,17
Undeclared religion	30034	9,4

Source: Păun, L. (2017, June)

The structure on religious denominations highlights the tolerant European spirit but also the multicultural nature of this Romanian city.

Building on this, Timisoara has been a candidate for the European Capital of Culture title, and following the assessment of the submitted projects it was awarded this prestigious title for 2021. This title is recognition of the tourist potential and a chance of affirmation as a tourist destination, being awarded to a city in the European Union, candidate or pre-candidate countries for one year. This programme supports the culture of European countries, being a commendable and emblematic initiative of the European Union.

The 2021 programme called “Light up your City” aims at restoring the climate of cultural diversity, dialogue and tolerance, bringing back to life the values that defined Timișoara, adapted for this century.

This project consists of eight chapters, namely “Introduction - General Considerations”, “Contribution to Long-Term Strategy”, “European Dimension”, “Cultural and Artistic Content”, “Implementation Capability”, “Management” and “Additional Information”. The vision of the project is a journey, with “stations - programme/project” and trails on and along the Bega Canal, all connecting ideas, people and places.

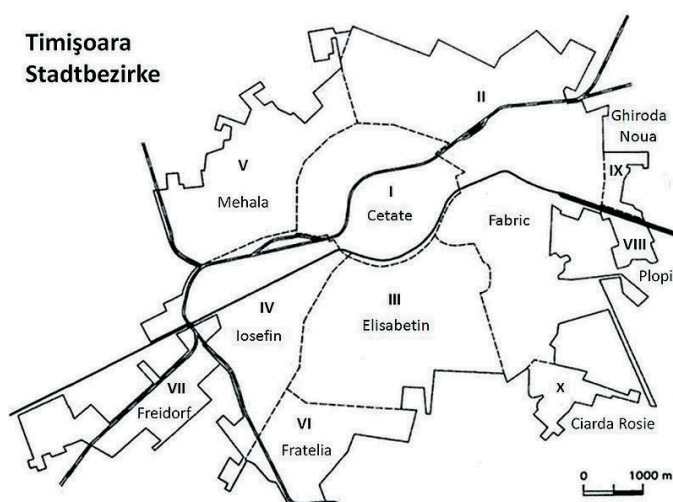
The Association Timișoara European Capital of Culture, the local authorities, the private sector, the non-governmental organizations, the population of the city will be able to turn Timișoara into an appreciated European cultural tourist destination.

## TOURIST RESOURCES OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM IN TIMIȘOARA

In Timișoara, although little promoted, there are many religious edifices belonging to several religions that can constitute resources for religious tourism. Multiculturalism and tolerance can be seen from this angle as well.

The old districts of the city are located around the centre, the former fortress and hold the most distinctive and valuable religious tourism resources (Figure 1)

Figure 1. Map of the ten historical districts of Timișoara



Source: Lescu, O. (2017, March)



At present there are 21 districts that have made Timișoara one of the largest cities in Romania.

Cetate, the oldest district of Timișoara, has always constituted the cultural, administrative and political centre of the city. There are religious buildings belonging to different religions here (Table 2).

Table 2. Religious buildings in Cetate district Timișoara

Name	Religion	Construction year	Architectural style	Patron Saint
Brothers of Mercy Church	Greek-Catholic	1748 - 1753	baroque	St. Joseph
Synagogue in Cetate	Mosaic	1862-1865	Moorish	-non-functional (under the administration of the Jewish Community Federation in Romania)
Serbian Church	Orthodox	1744 – 1748	baroque with classicist elements	Assumption of Mary
Serbian Orthodox Episcopalian Palace	Orthodox	1745 – 1747 renovated in 2013-2014	Austrian baroque with neo-Serbian façade	-
Dome (St. George Cathedral)	Roman-Catholic	6.08.1736 – 1774 Restoration 2003 – 2004	Austrian baroque	St. George
Piarists Church	Roman-Catholic	1908 – 1909	secession Style of the 1900s	Feast of the Cross
Evangelical Lutheran Church	Protestant - Lutheran	1837 – 1839	classicist	-
Orthodox Metropolitan Cathedral	Orthodox	1936-1946	Moldovan with eclectic elements	Main: Saints Three Hierarchs Secondary: St. Joseph the New of Partoș
Roman-Catholic Bishopric Palace	Roman-Catholic	1743-1752	baroque with rococo elements	Museum of the Bishopric
Roman-Catholic Parish Church former Franciscan Salvatorian	Roman-Catholic	1746-1755 reconstruction 1887-1889	baroque	St. Catherine

Source: Author research

Another old, large district, Fabric district, has different religious buildings that show us the communion between the inhabitants of Timișoara and the evolution of the architectural styles (Table 3).

Table 3. RELIGIOUS buildings in Fabric district Timișoara

Name	Religion	Construction year	Architectural style	Patron Saint
Synagogue in Fabric	Mosaic	1897 - 1899	Secession eclectic	- non-functional (under renovation for cultural purposes), now under the administration of Timișoara City Hall
Millennium Church	Roman-Catholic	1896-1901	eclectic-historicist, with neo-Roman and neo-Gothic elements	Saint Mary



Serbian Church	Orthodox	1745-1755	baroque	St. George
Saint Mary Church	Greeko-Catholic	1765	Austrian provincial baroque	Birth of the Virgin Mary
St. Elijah Romanian Church	Orthodox	1911-1912	Byzantine	St. Elijah

Source: Author research

Iosefin district was built in 1744, but it has borne the name since 1773 as a sign of respect for Joseph II, the son of Maria Theresia, who visited Timisoara a few times. And in this area there are several churches with interesting histories and different architectural styles (Table 4).

Table 4. Religious buildings in Iosefin district Timișoara

Name	Religion	Construction year	Architectural style	Patron Saint
Birth of the Virgin Mary Romanian Orthodox Church	Orthodox	1931-1936	Neo-Byzantine	Birth of the Virgin Mary
Notre Dame Church	Roman-Catholic	1893 -1894	eclectic historicist with neo-Romanesque elements	Holy Heart of Jesus
Roman-Catholic Parish Church	Roman-Catholic	1774-1775	baroque with rococo elements	Birth of the Virgin Mary
Synagogue	Mosaic	1895	eclectic historicist with Moorish elements	- functional

Source: Author research

Other churches worth mentioning are located in Elisabetin and Mehala districts. In Elisabetin district stand out the Roman-Catholic Church "Most Holy Heart of Jesus" (1912-1919), the Reformed Church (1901-1902), the starting point of the Revolution of 1989, the Orthodox Church (1784 renovated from the foundations in 1894). In Mehala district you can admire the Serbian Church (1786-1793) with the patron Saint Nicholas and the Romanian Orthodox Church (1925- 1937) with the patron saint the Lord's Ascension.

In all the districts you can find churches that can attract tourists interested in religion, architecture and iconography.

Two wooden churches specific to Banat were brought to Timișoara, one can be found at the Banat Village Museum (1750-1800), dedicated to St. Apostles Mihail and Gavriil and the other in the courtyard of the Eparchial Centre (1774) dedicated to St. Dimitrie.

Other buildings with a religious theme can also be admired in Timișoara, such as:

- ◆ Obelisk with a cross in Fabric district (on the pedestal there is an inscription in Serbian and an amonite);
- ◆ St. Mary's Monument built in 1906 from Carrara Marble in Iosefin district;
- ◆ Statue of St. Nepomuk in the courtyard of the Iosefin Parish Church;
- ◆ St. Mary and St. Nepomuk Monument (1753-1756) from the Cetate district - Liberty Square;
- ◆ Statue of the Holy Trinity (1740) from Cetate district, Union Square.

Art collections and religious documents can be found in:

- ◆ Matica Srpska Library (Serbian Episcopalian Palace);
- ◆ Orthodox religious art collection from the XVII - XIX centuries - (Serbian Episcopalian Palace);
- ◆ The Religious Art Collection (basement of the Metropolitan Cathedral).





In the Serbian Church in Cetate district there is a tomb that shelters the graves of 21 Orthodox founders and seven bishops. Also, the Dome has a tomb where bishops of the Cenad Catholic diocese, governors of Banat, and high-rank militaries sleep.

The Metropolitan Cathedral has under the altar a tomb where the hierarchs of the Orthodox Church are buried, and the relics of St. Joseph the New of Partoș are laid in its interior.

Besides the architectural styles, the tourists can also learn about the construction stages and some details related to the building materials, the height (the Metropolitan Cathedral measures 83.7 m being the tallest church in Romania), bells, architects, painters, sculptors, priests and others.

Apart from the older religious buildings, new ones, mostly Romanian Orthodox, as well as sectarian Christian (Pentecostal, Baptist, etc.), have been built over the last 28 years.

Annually, various events (besides the usual services) related to the celebration of the patron saint, the great religious celebrations, the procession with the relics of St. Joseph the New of Partoș, religious commemorations and concerts take place annually in the churches of Timișoara.

Meetings and symposiums on religious themes also take place in Timișoara, in various places belonging to the cults, as well as in the theological high schools and the Faculty of Theology.

## CONCLUSIONS

Religious tourism is a constant of mankind, always referring to the movements to places considered holy, regardless of religion.

The religious buildings and monuments of ancient Timișoara, together with the events organized, can always support religious tourism.

Various religious tours can be outlined such as:

- ◆ Visiting churches and other religious sights, regardless of religion;
- ◆ Visiting churches and other religious sights in Timișoara according to religion;
- ◆ Visiting church tombs;
- ◆ Visiting church art collections.

Religious tourists can also:

- ◆ Participate as pilgrims in processions;
- ◆ Participate in religious concerts;
- ◆ Participate as specialists in symposiums and other types of religious encounters;
- ◆ Participate in creative camps (addresses to children and teenagers).

All tourists arriving in Timișoara can include at least one church visit to their programme. Existing guided tours include the representative churches (at least one) of the city.

Timisoara can enrol on the religious tourism map, being an example of what tolerance and multiculturalism has meant over time.

Through the “Orizont 2025” Programme, the Romanian authorities support churches of different denominations, especially those who actively engage in social action.

As a future European Capital of Culture, Timișoara can promote religious tourism, which is considered as a form of cultural tourism.



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