

## The characteristics of tourism in the Telekes valley area

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### ABSTRACT

This paper presents a small and less-known sight of geotourism in the famous Aggteleki Karst region: the valley of Telekes creek and the settlements in its neighbourhood from touristic point of view. The gorge like valley of Telekes creek is located in the Rudabánya Hills, NE Hungary, which is one of the most spectacular sights in the region. The surroundings of the valley also have numerous interesting attractions for visitors, where small settlements and other geotouristic destinations can be found. The diverse touristic characteristics of the villages around the valley were also analysed, especially the number of tourism accommodations and the duration of stay in the region.

**Key words:** Telekes valley, geotourism, accommodations, duration of stay

### INTRODUCTION

There are many definitions to determine the geotourism, the first definition published by Hose and Vasiljević (2012). The most pertinent definition is the following: “Geotourism is a knowledge - based tourism, an interdisciplinary integration of the tourism industry with conservation and interpretation of abiotic nature attributes, besides considering related cultural issues, within the geosites for the general public” (Sadry, 2009). There is also some overlap with other tourism segments such as ‘ecotourism’, ‘sustainable tourism’, and ‘alternative tourism’, and ‘cultural-and heritage tourism’ (Hose et al. 2011). For a small geographic area, like the Telekes valley, the geotourism is a very good possibility to connect the touristic economy and market.

The aim of this paper to collect those potential geotouristic attractions along the gorge part of Telekes valley and related sights in the surroundings, which are suitable for bundling. Because of the diversity of the valley, it can be a potential destination for (geo)tourists and scientists as

well, however the area is less known. The characteristics and infrastructure of tourism were also analysed in the surroundings of the valley. Five settlements were selected to determine the basic touristic parameters such as number of accommodations and the number of nights spent in these accommodations.

### METHODS

Four settlements were selected along the Telekes valley for the analysis of the characteristics and infrastructure of tourism. Because of its numerous attractions and importance, the village of Szögliget was also taken into consideration. For the analysis statistical data were collected. The examined tourism related parameters were the following: number of commercial accommodations, number of rural accommodations, number of guests and the average duration of stay.

The sights of the Telekes valley are very less documented in the literature, these were mapped and were cataloged on several field trips.

## THE PHYSICAL-GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY AREA

The Rudabánya Hills is the southern part of the Aggtelek-Rudabánya Mts. it is situated in NE Hungary (Figure 1). The Aggtelek-Rudabánya Mts. and its northern continuation, the Slovak Karst are the beautiful karst elements of the Inner Western Carpathians where two national parks, the Slovak Karst National Park in Slovakia and the Aggtelek National Park in Hungary reserve the natural values. The most famous geological-geomorphological attractions are the caves (Caves of Aggtelek Karst and Slovak Karst UNESCO World Heritage site), the karst plateaus, the valleys and narrow gorges. The large formations, such as Baradla-Domica cave, Dobsina ice cave, Silica plateau, Plešivec plateau, Torna valley, Jósua valley, Zádielska tiesňava gorge etc. are well-known and frequented. However some parts and smaller landforms of national parks are less known even by

Hungarian tourists. The Rudabánya Hills and its most beautiful attraction, the Telekes valley is one of them.

The low Rudabánya Hills (highest peak: Szőlő hill, 375 m) characterized mainly by flat ridges (Zámbó, 1998), is geologically one of the most complex regions in Hungary (Less, 2000). It is mainly built up by Mesozoic sediments, which suffered multiple folding and were formed into nappe system. In the Tertiary (at the Oligocene-Miocene border), these rocks got into their recent position from the SW direction by lateral movements along SSW-NNE strike-slip faults of Darnó Zone (Dövényi, 2010; Zámbó, 1998).

Following these lateral movements, for the effort of vertical tectonical movements, the ridges were risen above their surroundings. As a consequence of this uplift, the younger, Tertiary sediments were eroded and the Mesozoic karstic rocks resurrected on the NE part of the mountains (Zámbó, 1998).

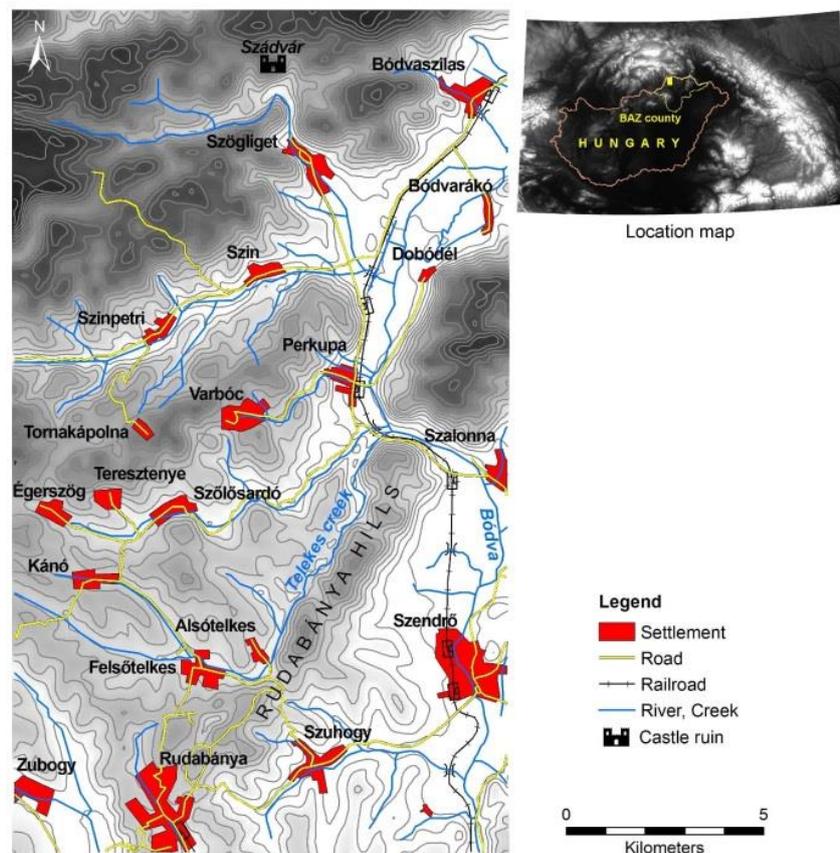


Fig. 1 Location and topographic map of the study area.

The Telekes creek is a left side tributary of Bódva river, its length is about 30 kilometers. The most beautiful section of the valley, the karstic gorge was formed in this area (Figure 2), where the diversity of Mountains' different rock types can be investigated. This some of kilometers long section of the valley is the only karstic gorge in the Hungarian side of Aggtelek-Rudabánya Mts.

Walking along the bottom of Telekes valley is a travel back to the geological ages, from Quaternary (incompact alluvial sediments at the mouth of the valley) trough Mesozoic (Jurassic and Triassic sandstones, marls, claystones, limestones and rhyolite) to Late-Paleozoic (anhydrite and gypsum at the upper entrance of the gorge) (Less, 1998).



**Fig. 2** Spectacular gorge section of Telekes valley

It is possible, that the whole gorge, but at least its section around the Ördög-gát was formed by the collapse of a huge cave (Hevesi, 2002). According to Cholnoky (1917) and Jakucs (1968, 1971) this process is as follows: the stream arriving from a non-karstic surface, reaching the karstic rocks gets into the deep through sinkholes. Running as an underground stream the water forms a cave with its erosional and solvent effect, then the water reach the surface in springs. This cave is widened by the underground stream, its ceiling is eroding continuously and getting closer to the surface. Finally the ceiling of the cave collapses. The evidences of this cave origin are the travertine formations (Hevesi,

2002), and the caves in the sides of the gorge, which were probably the side passages of the main cave (Hevesi, 2002; Láng, 1949).

Twenty-two caves are known in the Hills, most of them located at the most spectacular sections of the gorge named „Ördög-gát” (Devil’s dam) (Figure 3) and „Keringő” (Whirling). Keringő is a dry, abandoned meander in the valley with the length of 50 meters. The Telekes creek was forced here to change its flow direction by a very narrow limestone ridge. This ridge was cut across by a periodical tributary and the lateral erosion (and solvent effect) of Telekes creek, shortening its way and creating the rock formation of Ördög-gát (Figure 3). In periods with great discharge, the water flows through this dam by a small waterfall into a small pond. However, in the greater part of the year its water infiltrates under the deposits and debris of valley bottom.



**Fig. 3** Rock formation called „Ördög-gát” (Devil's dam).

Most of these caves are only some meters long, but three of them are longer than 10 meters. The largest one is the Ördög-gát-lyuk with its 82 m total length (Országos Barlangnyilvántartás). It is located 300 meters upwards from the Ördög-gát. Two of three entrances of the cave (the bigger oval shaped and the smaller flat) lead into a common hall (Figure 4). This 8 metres long section can be examined comfortably, its wall is covered by dropstones. The end of this corridor and its left side passages are

narrowing. However, the right side passage has a significant length, one of its side passages leads into the deepest point of the cave, while the other leads to the surface (Figure 5).

This part of the valley is rich in surface karren landforms as well. Among them the rillenkarren, rinnenkarren and karren fields are noteworthy (Figure 6).



Fig. 4 Entrance hall of Ördög-gát-lyuk cave.

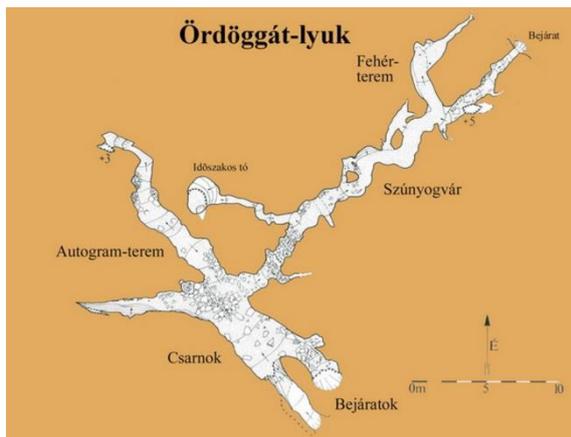


Fig. 5 Map of Ördög-gát-lyuk cave (source: Országos Barlangnyilvántartás – National Cave Register).



Fig. 6 Karren fields in Telekes valley.

## THE CHARACTERISTICS OF TOURISM OF THE FIVE SETTLEMENTS

In this paper 5 settlements, namely Égerszög, Perkupa, Szögliget, Szőlősdaró, Tereszténye were examined which are located in the surroundings of Telekes valley, in the area of the national park (Figure 1).

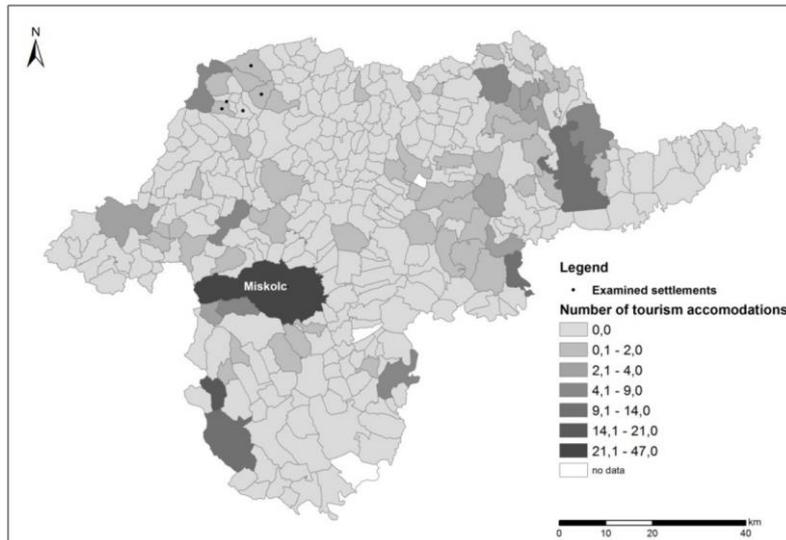
The examination of characteristics of tourism was started on county level, for the aim of positioning the settlements on the touristic scale of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county. On the basis of statistical data the spatial appearance of tourism indicators were analysed. According to these data the most frequented touristic areas of the county are the following: Miskolc (centre of the county), Mezőkövesd, Tokaj-Sárospatak area and the Aggtelek National Park area, where the examined villages are located (Figure 7).

In Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county Miskolc has the leading role in the tourism, where the number of guest is much higher than the county average (Figure 8). In the Aggtelek National Park area the most visited settlement is Aggtelek, the number of guests was 8340 in 2010. Among the 5 examined settlements, Szögliget is the most important (1529 guests on commercial accommodations), while Égerszög and Perkupa is much less visited, the number of visitors is only some hundred.

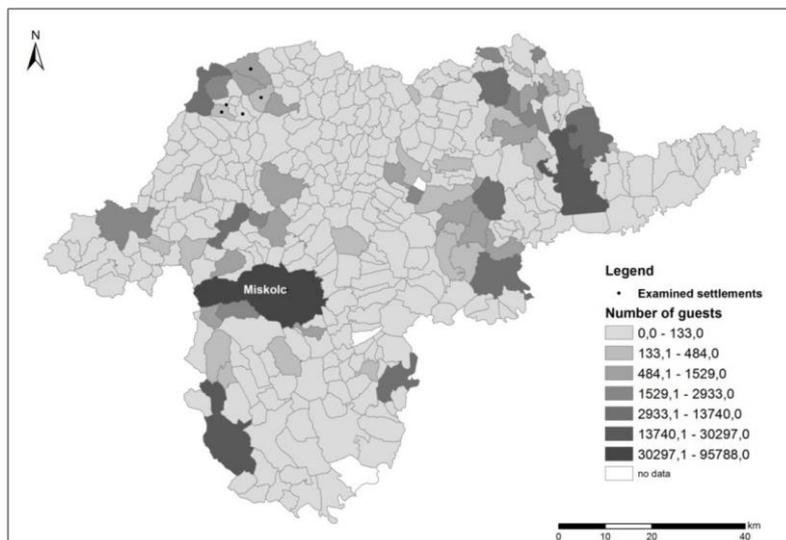
A more detailed research has to be carried out in the future to determine the exact number of guests in this area, because it is probable, that in case of these settlements the role of smaller, privately operated accommodation units is much higher than the commercial accommodations.

Analysing the data for average duration of stay in the county in 2010, it can be stated that the guests spend 2-2,5 nights on average on commercial accommodations. Among the 5 settlements the highest value had Perkupa, where the guests spent 3,6 nights on average (Figure 9).

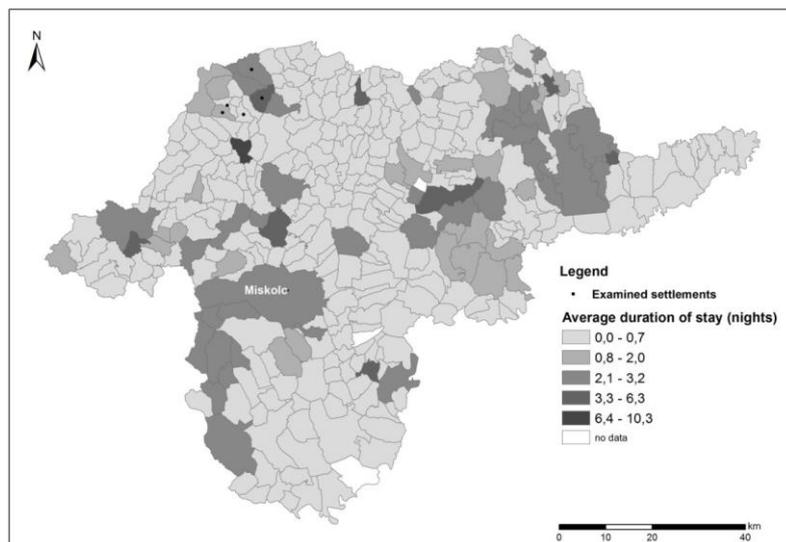
The examined settlements have significant



**Fig. 7** Number of tourism accommodations in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county, 2010. Source of data: Website of Registrar System



**Fig. 8** Number of guests on the accommodations in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county, 2010 Source of data: Website of Registrar System



**Fig. 9** Average duration of stay on tourist accommodations in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county, 2010 Source of data: Website of Registrar System

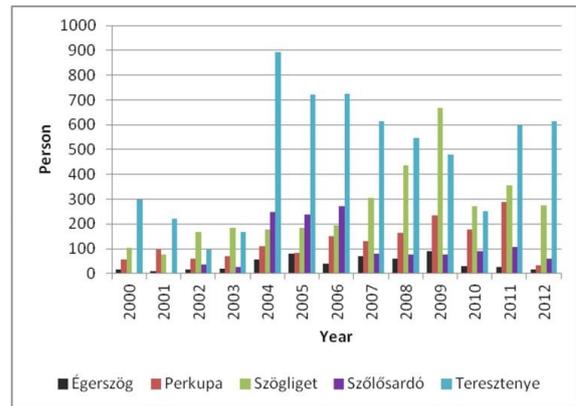
tourism potential in the region, which can be observed in their accommodation facilities and in the number of visitors as well. The peaceful, natural environment with its numerous attractions provides perfect possibilities for rural tourism. In our examination two types of accommodations were analysed: the commercial and rural accommodations.

Among the settlements Teresztenye has the best opportunities in rural tourism (Figure 10), where numerous guesthouses were renovated, preserving their original architecture. In the recent years Teresztenye and Perkupa – which has the second biggest number in guests – managed to attract the tourists continuously, despite the unfavourable economic situation.

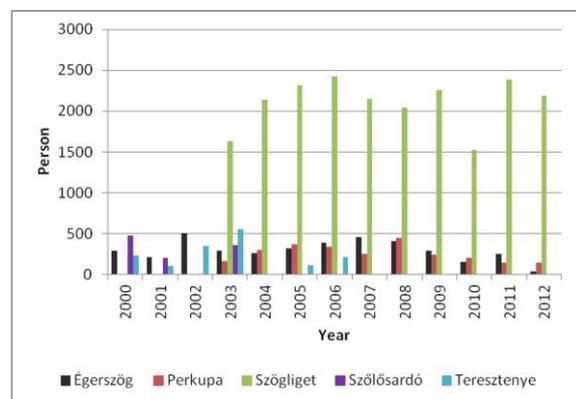
Analysing the commercial accommodations, it can be stated that Szögliget has the leading role, where the number of visitors was only slightly changed (Figure 11). Such attractions like Szádvár and the small pond in the outskirts of Szögliget, provide great opportunities for the recreation. This village offers various accommodations: guesthouse, hut, camping and tavern can also be found. In case of the other four villages, the role of rural tourism is more significant, they offer less commercial accommodations.

The average duration of stay on rural accommodations was 2,4 nights in 2012 in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county. Analysing the number of guests in the 2000-2012 period it can be stated that the visitors of the settlements around the Telekes valley generally spend here longer time than the county average. The highest average guestnights were registered in Égerszög, where in 2003 the average duration of stay reached the 12 days (Figure 12).

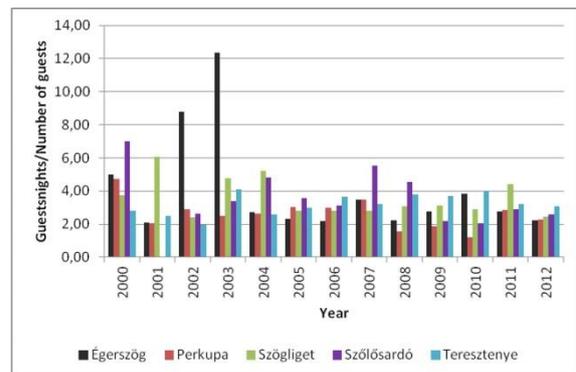
The average duration of stay on commercial accommodations is also significant in the area. The highest values can be seen in case of Teresztenye, where the average length of stay was 7 days in 2001. Since 2003, the visitors spent 4 days on average on commercial accommodations in Perkupa (Figure 13).



**Fig. 10** Number of guests on rural accommodations (2000-2012), Source: Országos Területfejlesztési és Területrendezési Információs Rendszer

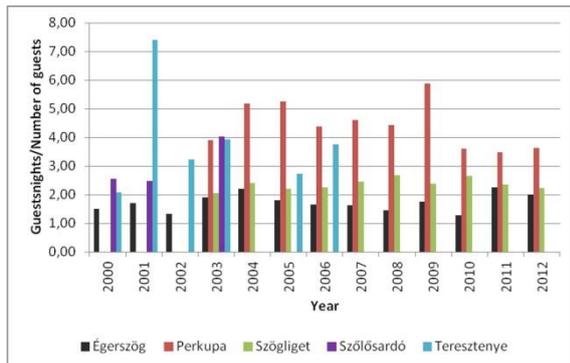


**Fig. 11** Number of guests on commercial accommodations (2000-2012), Source: Országos Területfejlesztési és Területrendezési Információs Rendszer



**Fig. 12** The average duration of stay on rural accommodations (guestnights/number of guests) 2000-2012, Source: Országos Területfejlesztési és Területrendezési Információs Rendszer

The seasonality is also typical in the villages, most of the guest are arriving in summer, due to the numerous touristic programs related to the natural environment. The number of guest is relatively small, some thousand person per year, but the time they spend in the area



**Fig. 13** The average duration of stay on commercial accommodations (guestnights/number of guests) 2000-2012, Source: Országos Területfejlesztési és Területrendezési Információs Rendszer

shows that the natural attractions and the offered programs are very diverse in the region of Telekes valley. Analysing the accommodations in details, it can be stated that these are very diverse, covering a wide spectrum from camping to guesthouses and these are available at relatively low prices. Beside the guesthouses, camping places the conditions are also given for families and larger groups as well. The costs of accommodations can be lowered by the “Gömör card” discount card, which entitles the visitors to discount the prices of tickets, rooms, dinners, etc. in Hungary and also in Slovakia (Website of Edelényi Microregion).

## CONCLUSIONS

The area of Aggtelek-Rudabánya Mountains has several well known attractions, most of them related to the Aggtelek karst area. Beside these famous sights, the southern part of the region also offer spectacular places to visit for the tourists. The settlements near to the gorge like valley of Telekes creek – because of its geographical, geological and geomorphological settings, specific landforms and rock formations – can be potential destinations for both inland and foreign guests. The settlements around the valley offer numerous and various touristic programs. Despite the relatively small number of guests and the time they spent in these villages, the touristic infrastructure and

potential are also given to improve the economic situation of the region.

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