



Trip to a 4th century hermit's cave at Casian, Dobrudja

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Found tucked between the hills of central Dobrudja, a region in south-eastern Romania, the cave which once belonged to Saint Ioan Casian, a local saint being celebrated by the Orthodox Church, attracts annually a significant number of visitors and pilgrims who are willing to go on a very difficult trip that consists of walking on a very dangerous path making its way through the rocky slopes of the hills on which the monastery sits in order to reach the cave in which the hermit spent most of his time.

The path to the cave is extremely dangerous, which results from the fact that the location of the cave is extremely remote. Believers need to go at first downhill, on a very abrupt path which swirls along the hill's edges to a rocky plateau. From that point on they need to climb a narrow ladder that makes the access to the hermit's cave possible.

The cave's interior is adorned with icons, candles and flowers. The main cave is quite spacious, a smaller shaft can be accessed from this area which leads to the space in which the hermit used to sleep.



The hamlet of Casian, formerly known as Şeramet, can be seen from the cave's opening. Once a prosperous little community, nowadays the tiny Doburjdan settlement hosts only seven inhabitants. The village doesn't benefit from any modern amenities, besides electricity. Its remoteness, the fact that the village can be reached only through an unpaved road that swirls through the neighbouring hills contributed to the migration of the youth, which left behind the elderly – those that constitute nowadays the villages' only inhabitants.



Icons, along with several other religious items, fill the cave's wall. The lands that are nearby the cave and hamlet are sometimes referred to as *Ținutul Casienilor* (Land of the Casians).

The monastery has two churches, the old one – also referred to as *biserica mică* (the small church), and a new church that is currently being constructed. The old church stands out through its masonry that is made out of stone blocks.

