

BĂILE OLĂNEȘTI RESORT. TOURISTIC POTENTIAL AND VALORIFICATION

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Abstract. **Băile Olănești resort. Touristic potential and valorification.** Băile Olănești Resort, located in the Olănești Depression in the Eastern part of the Getic Subcarpathians, is one of the most important spa resorts in Romania. The construction and development of Băile Olănești has been favored by the natural and anthropogenic potential of a geographical unit located in the depression area at the foot of the Căpățâni Mountains. The rich and varied hydromineral potential contributed to the early development of the spa tourism in this resort, where other types of tourism (religious) appeared, which contributed to a highly favored touristic movement and the position and favorable access from large urban areas located at relatively small distances R. Vâlcea, Pitești, Sibiu and Bucharest). Although in recent decades the resort has modernized, attracting a significant number of tourists, it is worth noting the need for a more extensive and efficient promotion of the existing benefits and the promotion of an environmental protection strategy.

Key words: mineral waters, resort, tourism, promotion, Băile Olănești

1. INTRODUCTION

Situated in a depression area in the Eastern part of the Getic Subcarpathians, the Băile Olănești resort is an area of special tourist attraction, favored by a rich and varied natural and man-made potential, as well as a favorable position and access to relatively close urban areas: Râmnicu Vâlcea (12 km), Pitești (65 km), Sibiu (100 km), Bucharest (188 km). The opening of Olănești Depression to the south with the towns of Râmnicilor Vlcea, Pitești and Bucharest and Valea Oltului from the nearby neighborhood 7 ties to the cities of the Transavania Depression.

The BăileOlănești town located in the Olănești Depression in the Vâlcea Subcarpathians, on contact with the Parâng Mountains (Capucinia Mountain), extends over an area of 16,650 ha, of which 4,000 ha constitute a tourist area.

The varied natural and anthropogenic potential provides a variety of tourism of which spa tourism is the most important, being favored by favorable bioclimatic conditions and the richness and variety of hydromineral potential.

2. TOURISTIC POTENTIAL AND FORMS

Olănești Depression has a natural and anthropogenic potential, which has favored the development of several tourism types, of which the spa is the most representative.

From the category of **natural tourism potential**, two factors were essential in the apparition and development of tourism activities in the studied region. The position of Olănești Depression at the southern foothills of the Parâng Mountains and the presence of hilly heights that close this depression area (Ticărel, Lacul Frumoasei and Iuga hills, and Culmea Olănești). It confers a *shelter climate* in the Băile Olănești resort, characterized by average annual temperatures above 9.20°C, average annual rainfall amounts of about 750 mm, relative humidity values that fluctuate within limits (87% in November and December and 68% in July and August), low wind speeds below 3 m/s (higher in spring and lower in autumn).

The studies carried out in the period 1966-1975 by specialists from the Institute of Physical Medicine, Balneoclimatology and Medical Rehabilitation in Bucharest regarding the influence of the climate from the Băile Olănești resort on the human organism concluded that it is a favorable bioclimate throughout the year and for the patients more sensitive especially in April-May and September-October. This explains that this bioclimate is very well tolerated by both the elderly and people with advanced organic states.

The shelter climate in Băile Olănești resort area and the air heavily ozonized and rich in radioactive emissions. are particularly favorable for the treatment of various diseases of the nervous system with sedative action. Particularly concentrated is the amount of radium emitted by the springs with low radioactive concentrations from mineral springs.

Hydromineral potential occupies a very important place within the tourism resources characteristic to the resort, generating one of the oldest forms of tourism - balneary tourism.

The documentary certification of Olănești treatment waters by chemical analysis is due to Al. D. Ghica, who commissioned the military doctor Dr. Johann Nepomouc Mayer in 1829 to look for "all new springs for treatment in Muntenia". The results of this action are published in 1830 in the "Romanian Courier".

Until the sixth decade of the XXth century, there was a period of stagnation regarding the endowment and evolution of the spa resorts, yet even in the fourth decade it can be considered that Olănești was constituted as a resort. This is evidenced by the work of Dr. Ștefan Vasile Episcopescu, published in Buzău in 1837, entitled „Apele metalice ale României Mari” ("The metallic Waters of the Great Romania"), which popularizes the therapeutic qualities of the mineral waters in the resorts Olănești and Călimănești, which record somewhat a revival. The press also notes that in 1852, in Băile Olănești resort, besides the soldiers, there were also patients of different social categories.

The hydromineral potential from Băile Olănești resort is represented by the 30 springs and 5 drillings, characterized by mineral waters with a very diversified hydro-chemic character:

- ✓ Sulfuric, bicarbonate, sulphate, sodium, calcium, magnesian (springs no. 11,12,24,31);
- ✓ Sulfuric, chlorinated, bicarbonated, sodium (drilling 5 bis);
- ✓ Sulfuric, chlorinated, brominated, iodinated, sodium, calcium, magnesian (drills 1, 2, 3,4 and 5);
- ✓ Chlorinated, brominated, iodinated, sodium, calcium, magnesian (springs no. 3, 4, 5, 7, 8,9,10,16,19,23,27,30, drillings 1,2,3,4,5).

The hydro-chemical diversity of the mineral waters allowed the treatment of a wide range of diseases, which led to an upward touristic flow over time, which led to the increase of the tourism activities in Băile Olănești resort.

The anthropic touristic potential is represented by religious elements (churches, hermitages), natural reservations, archeological vestiges and art monuments, ethnographic and folklore elements, cultural and artistic institutions and events, contemporary technical, scientific and economic achievements, human settlements.

Cultural - touristic objectives are present at the resort level through a series of hundreds of years old houses. For this we can mention the Central Pavilion, the Tower Bar, the Little Siren Statue and the Central Park (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Central Pavilionul and The Tower Bar (Source: Roanghes Ana)

The Tower Bar was built by Dr. Hoenig in 1940.

The Central Pavilion was built by the architect Gelu Ionescu at the beginning of the 20th century, but unfortunately in 2013 it suffered a fire. The access

to it was through the city center, while the alley to the mineral springs was located on the right. The link between the pavilion from the left side and the spring alley is made through a bridge that was built in an architectural style typical for the resort.

The Little Siren Statue is located in front of the Central Pavilion, at the entrance to the Central Park, where architect Gelu Ionescu made an ensemble of a bridge and a statuary group with several characters. After 1947, some of these statues (three of the four) were destroyed by the Communist authorities. The fourth statue, called the Little Mermaid, was ignored until 2000, when it was discovered in the archives of the locality.

The religious tourism is also present in the first place in the resort, and the wooden church of Horia, called the *Church from Albac*, was also erected, due to its origin in Albac, where the villagers decided to build a stone church at the beginning of the XXth century when it was decided that the church would be sold to another cult. The artisan Nicholas of Sohodol has dismantled it and transported it, being put out of peoples mind in the Florica village. Later, in 1954, due to the fact that the resort did not have a church for locals and tourists, Patriarch Justinian Marina investigated the forgotten church from Florica and ordered to be move to Băile Olănești resort.

The Iezer, Pahomie and Pătrunsa hermitages were built on the Cheia Valley. The first of them, the *Iezer hermitage*, is a nunnery that was founded in 1559 by the wish of ruler Mircea Ciobanul and his wife, Mrs. Chiajna. Although in 1700 the hermitage was to be drained, it was rebuilt by the bishop Ilarion of Râmnic. It is dedicated to the Entrance in the Church of the Most Holy Mother of God.

Two hours up to the mountain, there is the *Pahomie hermitage*, a hermitage that is remarkable because it is built in a rock from which a spring flows. With the feast of St. Elijah, the hermitage is a monk's hermitage. Also nearby is the *Pătrunsa hermitage* built at the foot of the Buila-Vânturarița Massif in 1740 by Bishop Climent and having as the patron saint of Paraschiva.

The Jgheaburi hermitage is found in the commune of Stoenеști, on the interfluve the separate it from Păușești Măglasi locality. The hermitage was built in 1310, from wood, during the time of Radu Negru Voievode, and attracts a large number of tourists, especially to celebrate the feats of Spring of Healing (Izvorul Tămăduirii) due to the fact that it possesses a sulphurous spring captured for hundreds of years.

Nature reserves and monuments of nature are also numerous, and are represented by:

-The lake with white and yellow lilies - located near Sanatorium 1 Mai, built by Nicolae Ceausescu as his residence.

-Yew tree Reservation of Cheia Stream (628 yew specimens);

-The Stogul natural reserve situated in the Buila-Vânturarița Massif (it has 100 ha and comprises over 35 caves and avenues);

- Rădița-Mânzu Reservation stretched over 10 ha is characterized by the presence of several rare plants such as the edelweiss, bulbuc de munte (*Trollius europaeus*), etc .;

- Lacul Frumos Reservation from Mosoroasa is a form of a marsh whose main attraction is the presence of the carnivorous plant *Drosera rotundifolia* (roua cerului);

- The Munteanu-Murgoci Cave - here can be met the largest colony of bats;

- Clopot (Bell) Cave - here are the largest stalagmites on the territory of Vâlcea County.

The Lacul cu ghiocei (Snowdrop Lake), Peștera Pescarului (Fisherman's Cave), Piatra Porumbiștei (Porumbiștei Stone) and Peștera Arnăuților (Arnăuților Cave) are also attraction points at the resort level.

3. TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE AND FLUX

The infrastructure of Băile Olănești resort is very varied and especially situated in the central part of the resort, from which it gradually expanded to the west (Fig. 2).

The analysis of the number of accommodation units in the period 2002-2015 shows an upward trend with an increase from 20 accommodation units in the year in 2000 to up to 45 units in 2012. In the next period can be observed a very sharp drop, reaching 38 units in the year 2015.

The number of places in accommodation units also underwent changes, but not too high. Thus, there are decreases in the period 2002-2008, a slight increase until 2012 and again a decrease to the level of 2015.

Although the number of accommodation units has been increasing, the number of arrivals and overnight stays is steadily decreasing (Fig. 3).

The time variation index was calculated for the period 2002-2015 using the formula:

$$C_t = T_1 / T_2 \times 100,$$

where: C_t – the time variation index of total accommodation capacity;

T_1 – the total number of accommodation places in 2015;

T_2 – the total number of accommodation places in 2010 and 2008 respectively, compared to 2002.

The lower the value of this index, the higher the seasonality, and the resort's tourist activity is less developed. The values of time variation index of total existing accommodation capacity (number of places) are very expressive. If we report 2015 as compared to the 2010 level, we notice a sharp decrease in the index value from 98.39 calculated in the years 2008 and 2002 to 96.93 for the period 2012-2015.

The rather high decreasing trend of arrivals and overnights noted at the level of the Băile Olănești resort constitutes an alert signal to be considered when developing an appropriate tourism promotion strategy in this representative unit for Romania.

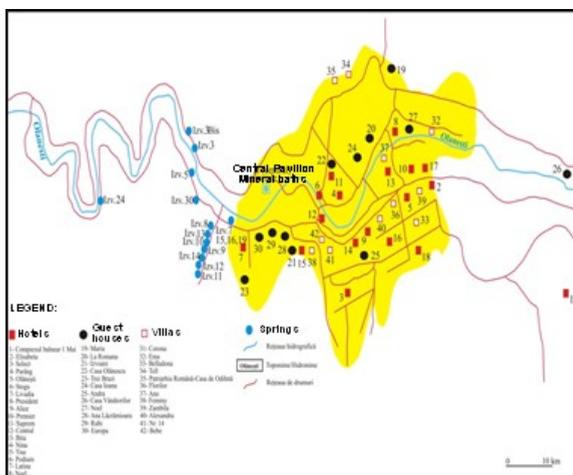


Fig. 2. Distribution of accommodation and treatment base at the level of Băile Olănești resort

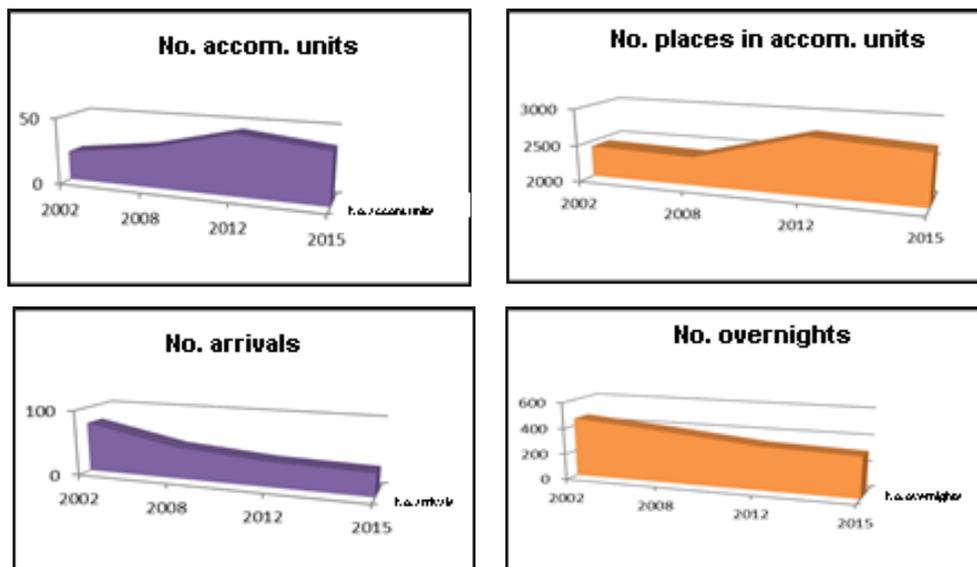


Fig. 3. Evolution of infrastructure and touristic flow in Băile Olănești resort (2002-2015). a. No. accommodation units; b. No. places in accommodation units; c. No. arrivals; d. No. overnights.

4. PERSPECTIVES OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AT BĂILE OLĂNEȘTI RESORT

In order to promote and develop tourism in the researched region, a series of measures have been taken concerning the protection of the tourism potential and its most judicious use. Thus, a decisive role in the protection of the mineral water sources were the measures taken in 2003, when the owners of Olănești Hotel - SC Olănești Riviera SA, based on Government Decision no. 700 of June 2003, were assigned several land plots in the public domain of the locality, including the land area of the central springs group. At present, the company has ownership attestations for all springs in the resort and may, according to the concession contract, do everything necessary to capitalize on the resource it has leased. Thus, all springs were insulated with thermopanels, and the access to them is no longer free as they were for decades, but by a counter-cost card and by specialized medical investigations.

On the other hand, the City Council has implemented a number of projects that have been finalized or still in work, which have led to the modernization of the resort, the infrastructure, as well as the base of accommodation and treatment existing at the resort level. Thus it can be mentioned the project to build a sports base in Olănești village. This investment will include a football field, a park equipped with urban furniture, alleys and utilities necessary for the young people in the locality and the teams that come to Băile Olănești resort to have a sport base appropriate to the current requirements. Other projects include the modernization of the public lighting in Băile Olănești and the localities included in it, the modernization and rehabilitation of the Băile Olănești parks, the endowment with urban furniture of the green areas, and the rehabilitation of the two buildings in the Central Park (the spa complex and the pool with sulfuric acid), etc.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Băile Olănești resort, located in the Olănești Depression, is one of the most important spa resort in Romania, also recognized internationally.

The sources of mineral water are numerous (over 30 springs) and have a very varied chemical composition. To the mineral richness is added the shelter climate, favorable for the spa treatment.

Băile Olănești resort has a complex infrastructure, which provides optimal conditions for accommodation of tourists and treatment of various digestive, nutritional and nervous diseases.

In addition to the balnear tourism, the tourist potential of the resort ensures the practice of other forms of tourism.

Although in the last decades the resort has been modernized, attracting a significant number of tourists, it is worth noting the wider promotion of the existing benefits.

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