

# THE EVOLUTION OF CURATIVE TOURISM AT BORSEC

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**ABSTRACT.** – **The evolution of curative tourism at Borsec.** Taking into account the natural resources - mineral water springs, natural landscape - and the geographical position, the tourism in Borsec health resort should develop much faster than today. The main condition of the development of tourism is to remove the deficiencies in touristic infrastructure and a more effective use of natural resources.

On the other hand the environmental protection has major importance. Since the 90s touristic flow decreases continuously, which can be explained by a lower quality of infrastructure and services. Although the curative qualities of mineral waters have been recognized they are not sufficiently used in spa therapy. The sustainable tourism is based only on the rational use of natural resources.

**Keywords:** mineral water, curative tourism, Borsec, spa treatment

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Borsec is located in: Northern region of Harghita County, in the center of the Carpathians mountain chain, on the east side Gurghiu Mountains, in Borsec depression, in the upper basin of Bistricioara, Wine Valley, the contact between Calimani, Giurgeu and Bistrita Mountains, at 26 km from Toplița on national road 15 which leads to Piatra Neamt. (the sole direct alternative accessibility)



**Fig. 1. Borsec depression**

The city is crossed by the creek Wine – collecting the watershed of depression, and its side streams. Borsec depression is adjacent to Borsec Bilbor and Giurgeu depressions. It is surrounded by Bistriței Calimani, Giurgeului and Ceahlau mountains, the city is located at an altitude of between 850 to 950 m

The geographic coordinates of the village Borsec are:

1. 46°54 '42" - 47° 0' 15" north latitude
2. 25°34 ' - 25°35'49" east longitude

Watershed erosion has made huge volcanic chain in the middle of Borsec depression, resulting two small plateaus of depression: the north-western Lower

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Borsec Depression and the northern Upper Borsec Depression (Ciangă, 1984; Imets, 1973).

Borsec Depression with an average altitude of 880 m, exceeds in height the Ciuc and Gheorgheni depressions, but from other depressions of the area (Bilbor depression, Glod or Dragoiasa having heights between 900-1000 m) is the smallest. In terms of area, it ranks second among small depressions-mentioned, with an area of about 50 km<sup>2</sup>, after Bilbor depression, with 159 km<sup>2</sup>, and before Glod depressions, with 12.5 km<sup>2</sup> and Dragoiasa, 11, 5 km<sup>2</sup>.

Hydrological studies and surveying conducted in Borsec the past 30 years have shown that the appearance of mineralized groundwater follows two distinct lines, namely (László, Dombay, 2003; Nagy Bodó, 1997):

- springs from crystalline limestone strip along which are strung Seven Springs, Spring Main and Republic, Springs 3,5 and 6.
- mineralized springs stationed in calcareous tufa along which are strung foreboding waters of the springs 10, 11, 12, 13, etc..

## 2. MINERAL WATERS IN BORSEC

Borsec's historical landmarks have always known two major areas that have evolved, sometimes together, sometimes different. The two are discovering and then using mineral water as the main resource for development or decline village. Although the two can be analyzed separately, but together they constitute the understanding of the historical development of the town.

Borsec place name is derived, according to some authors, the term "Borviz" (mineral water) and "borvizszek" (seat / land mineral water), a term that is so often the place where mineral water comes to the surface.



**Fig. 2. Old-fashion Borsec**

Borsec mineral water quality have been studied for centuries by countless doctors and specialists ages, from the sixteenth - century, when Italian doctor

Bucella prescribes to Prince Sigismund Bathory cure "a spring of water Borsec" (Nagy Bodó, 1997; Orbán, 1868).

Studies and conferences follows by Dr. Krantz from Vienna, who in 1770, describes the qualities of these waters. In 1773, Professor Heinrich Kranti has examined the therapeutic mineral water, highlighting the special qualities of the springs Lobogo and Principal (which disappeared in 1926). In 1774, L. Wagner published a study on mineral waters of Borsec in "Academische Dissertat." In 1793, a medical journal that appears in Sibiu, Dr. Neustadler presents a scientific statement about the waters Borsec. The first water analysis of the Main Spring were made by a group of doctors from Vienna in 1803, and in 1820 by Samuel Pataky, research being pursued at the University of Viena. At the beginning the mineral water was transported in wooden barrels in wagons at distances up to aristocratic courts of Europe.

In 1825, the first doctor of Bath, Dr. Schnee Dániel publish his work "Borsec mineral springs." In 1863 J. Mayer, and in 1873 Dr. Neustadter have examined the effects of mineral waters and curative bath building has begun. In 1893 in the journal "Siebenburgische Quartalschrieff" lists those diseases that can be cured with mineral waters from Borsec. Research is continued by Dr. Károly Than in 1873, and in 1890 Dr. Hanko Vilmos analyze the chemical effects of springs Republica and Principal, when the observations of Dr. Szilvassy Janos were proved, who previously investigated the similarities of the two springs. Meanwhile reveals the beneficial effects of these waters by external treatment, or making bath in these waters, though they came out of the ground at a temperature of only approx. 11°C.

Thus, in the mid-nineteenth century, built the first baths, known as "Lobogó", "Lazarus", "Saros" etc..

Scientific analysis of the chemical composition starts in 1927, in the laboratories of Bucharest, Cluj and Budapest Universities. Chemical analyzes performed in these laboratories, confirming the stability of the mineral components of Borsec water.

Formalizing health tourism takes place in 1918, when was founded the first company resort, whose primary task was the removal of traces WWI and resort infrastructure reconstruction. The greatest revival is found in the interwar period - when most villas are built, continuing the same architectural style with exquisite wooden lattices.

In 1926 the baths were rented by Tischler Mor, who make investments that lead to the discovery of the Main Spring in 1926.

A proof of the development of the spa is the fact that, in 1937, here takes place the International Congress of Balneology, with representation from many countries with tradition in this field.

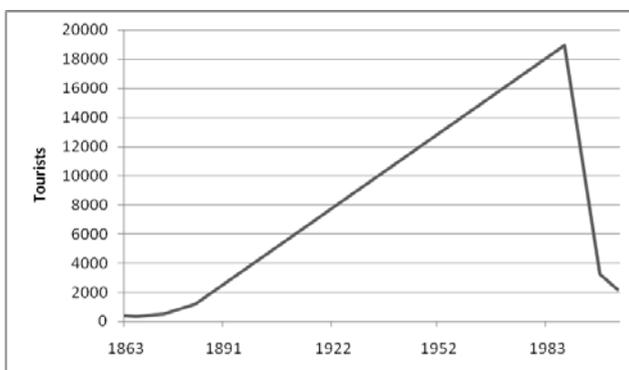
### 3. THE TOURISM IN BORSEC

Borsec resort begins to develop. Since 1850, close to the springs, villas are built. Accommodation capacity is reduced and the whole organization tends to serve - at great prices - a small number of visitors. Villas, most of them were not equipped for the winter months, the resort still operating only during the summer season. Lack of facilities and spa facilities, a medical center, determine Borsec is a seaside resort and no treatment.

Between 1918, when the company was founded Borsec spa, and 2001, when it ceased baths operation, the resort was profiled for the treatment of cardiovascular diseases, diseases of the digestive tract, hepatobiliary diseases and neurasthenia. Balneoclimatical physical therapy and rehabilitation agencies was provided by 12 medical specialized spa clinic with emergency room, recovery room, dental office to dental laboratory and clinical laboratory where they could perform the necessary analyzes. Clinics were serving both inpatient and outpatient country and even abroad, providing a comprehensive and individualized spa treatment within the treatment area (Călimănescu, 1981; Ciangă, 1984; Koszta, 1997).

In general, the entire medical therapy was profiled for recovery of patients with various diseases of different etiologies, to improve and reduce the number of days of temporary disability produced by the addition of a spa treatment complex, individualized case by case and especially the cure held by recreational walks, alleys and parks by estetoclimatism and outdoor physiotherapy, sports or medical gyms or indoor under strict medical guidance.

However, inadequate management of SCAT Borsec S.A. resulted in cessation of tourism services. Since 1990, due to degradation of resort arrive each year fewer tourists.



**Fig. 3. The evolution of tourists**

This sudden drop is due to lack of financial resources for upgrading the resort and lack of interest in attracting tourists. Also started the process of privatization of the resort, with nationalized villas restitution to former owners and asset sales. Tourism activity in the resort spa treatment after cessation services of

SCAT Borsec was continued by private entrepreneurs, who have limited accommodation and food services. There were built villa type accommodation and hotel with restaurant and several houses were used since 1995 purchased from the state.

Currently there is one particular medical spa for spa treatment and physiotherapy rehabilitation.

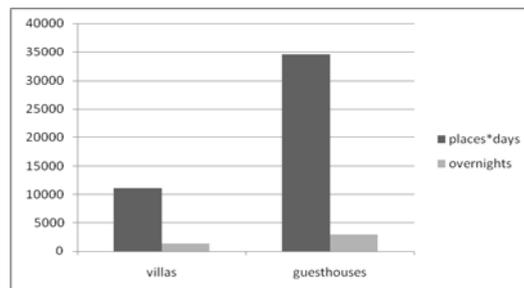
In the foreground, the interest of the city and the City Council is to recover Borsec resort, giving incentives to local and foreign investors in terms of the possibility of buying trains built-up construction of villas, necessary to increase the number of beds and comfort level, use surplus mineral water from existing sources (source Boldizsár, László, Petofi) and others with opportunities to be used for carbonated baths.

Borsec depression allows several forms of tourism (Kékesi, 2008):

- Spa tourism and treatment using mineral water and air quality mofettes
- Rest and recreation tourism
- Winter sports tourism;
- hiking
- Ecotourism
- cycling
- Tourism of adventure (dog sleds, off-road rally, off-road, etc.).
- Travel for sport fishing in mountain waters
- Hunting tourism;
- Scientific tourism based on observation and study of flora, fauna and earth energy.

**Table 1. Some characteristic data regarding tourism from 2010 in Borsec**

	ACCOMMODATION UNITS	ACCOMMODATION PLACES	ARRIVALS
villas	2	80	312
camping	1	100	
guesthouses	9	142	896
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>1208</b>

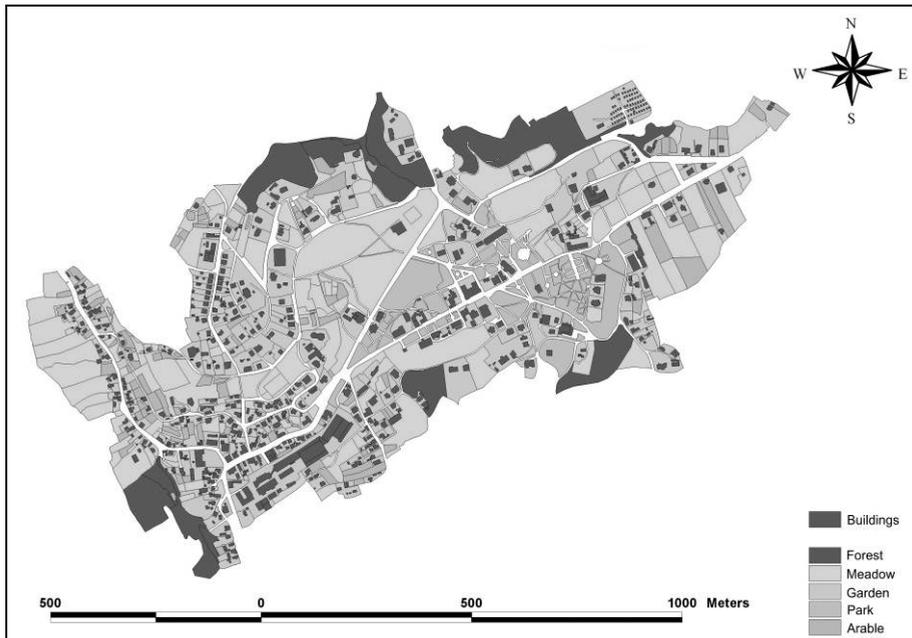


**Fig. 4. Comparison of theoretical and realized overnights in 2010**

#### 4. SWOT ANALYSIS

Based on the findings analysis phase identified the main strengths (S) and weaknesses (W) of the city, as well as opportunities (O) and threats (T) aimed at development. SWOT matrix of these elements is as follows:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
mineral water Location and attractive environment Cultural and historical values Variety of natural treatments Flora and fauna Mountains and ski slopes Nearby attractions New investments (treatment facilities) Strong local mineral water industry active administration	Low altitude of ski runs Degradation of historical buildings Limited number of accommodation units Lack of activities / entertainment for the evening Training programs in tourism short season Unresolved property Owners who do not rehabilitate buildings Lack of marketing strategies Lack of use of IT technology in marketing Far away from the cluster of populations
POSSIBILITIES	THREATS
New tourist products The natural recovery Increasing standards of services / utilities Increasing the number of vacancies EU assistance Villas refurbished and renovated public buildings Developing a tourism training units Providing winter sports products Borsec mineral water company image Tourism licensing system implemented Potential offered by Israeli market	Insufficient number of accommodation units to support recent investments Increasing the number of visitors Dependent business vouchers New destinations competitive Increased revenue makes traveling abroad Energy costs Lack of medical staff Minimum investment in marketing



**Fig. 5. *The area of Borsec***

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

Based on field research and the studied materials the following strategic objectives should be implemented to ensure sustainable development of spa tourism in the resort Borsec:

- infrastructure rehabilitation as soon as possible to restore tourism resorts in the former;
- rational use of mineral waters;
- development of the accommodation;
- renovating villas with architectural heritage value;
- diversifying tourism to increase the number of tourists, namely to increase the length of stay;
- finding financial funds: private investors at home and abroad, government resources, European projects, own resources;
- increased marketing activity;
- implementation of new types and forms of tourism based on existing natural resources. Among these may be mentioned: ecotourism, cycling tourism, "family", and so on;
- conservation and enhancement of natural and built heritage for tourism development.

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