

GRANTING TOURIST AND LEISURE VALUES TO A FORMER SPACE OF ARMAMENT AND AMMUNITION. CASE STUDY: ARSENAL PARK, ORĂȘTIE, HUNEDOARA COUNTY, ROMANIA

Lia-Maria CIOANCA

**"Babeș-Bolyai" University, Cluj-Napoca, The University Extension of Bistrița,
Romania**

Abstract: Arsenal Park, the object of study of this article, is a unique tourist complex in Romania and even in Europe, due to its military specificity, more precisely the complex and the amusement park were arranged in a former secret base and factory ammunition. At the same time, the complex is the largest museum of military equipment in the country, open to anyone who wants to visit it. In developing this article, I applied the case study as a research method, which allowed me to inventory and evaluate all aspects related to the evolution over time of this military objective. Throughout the investigations and the documents studied, I found the mastery and skill with which the subsequent granting of tourist values or even teambuilding opportunities to this military objective was achieved, but also the collection of certain data related to the impact of this tourist objective on the life of the local community of tourists who come to visit the area. This study shows the possibility of preserving in good condition and granting various values to areas that once served specific purposes, in this case a purpose of manufacturing and supplying ammunition to military units, the factory in Orăștie being the second largest producer of ammunition as a quantity in Europe.

Keywords: ammunition factory, arsenal, military equipment, amusement park.

1. General considerations and historical landmarks

Orăștie is a municipality in Hunedoara County and is one of the oldest cities in the country, located on an ancient hearth of Dacian inhabitants.

Orăștie is a tourist centre in Hunedoara with a historical significance due to the Orăștie Fortress, the ethnographic museums and the monumental churches from the 13th century that attest to this status.

The tourist activities that can take place in Orăștie form a wide and sometimes unique palette [1].

Arsenal Park was originally a secret base and ammunition factory, located in Orăștie and in 2009 became an adrenaline factory, more precisely, a 3-star tourist complex on epaulets, the only one with a military theme in Europe.

The territory of Arsenal Park has a strong military payload. Between 1936 and 1938, King Charles II ordered the army to use an area of 88 hectares for various experiments in the field of explosives and ammunition.

During World War II, the factory had become the second largest producer of ammunition in Europe. During the communist period it was said that it is the best guarded place in Romania, the ratio being one soldier for every three workers. The dark side of history has not bypassed this space either by the many accidents that have taken place throughout history, some reported others not [5].

After the fall of the communist regime, the factory went into a dramatic decline, the Hunedoara Company being put up for sale in 2003. It was acquired by the Timisoara

company Timco, a member of Bega Grup, and the prospects of the complex being excellently speculated by the group they directed towards a totally unique project for these lands, towards the creation of a tourist complex at the highest quality level, with a totally different theme from what similar locations could offer, namely military theme [4].

It was a brave project, especially since it is not found anywhere else in Europe; this is exactly what the owners of the former factory were based on. The complex was opened to the public in 2009, and since then has received many visitors, both from abroad.

Interestingly, the Arsenal Park still has a military feel, as well as a barracks atmosphere, largely due to the fact that the park was built right around the old bunkers, ammunition depots and workshops. In fact, tourists have the opportunity to sleep in bunkers, TABs or cannonballs, the sensations being unique [6].

2. The ammunition factory in Orăştie - past realities and current aspects

Where once mine and explosives were, made now peace is made. What seemed to be the end is a new page in the history of the place. Arsenal Park has created a new form of vacation: the quasi-military experience. In the perimeter of the former armament factory in Orăştie, the manly spirit and the barracks atmosphere have been preserved, but instead of the ruined workshops, bunkers and ammunition depots, a modern holiday oasis has emerged [5].

The abandoned bunkers and ammunition depots of the former Rompiro factory have been transformed into luxury villas and apartments.



Figure 1(a, b): Amusement park location and leisure offer
(Source: <https://www.traiestermaneste.ro> (a) & <https://booktes.com> (b))

Arsenal Park covers an area of 88 hectares, being located in the middle of a deciduous forest on the outskirts of Orăştie. The disused military equipment was purchased, the alleys of the tourist complex, being thus guarded by 70 cannons, TABs, track conveyors, anti-missile devices, machine guns and anti-aircraft guns, missile launchers, military trucks, a military ambulance, an IAR plane 93, a Kamov K.



Figure 2 (a-d): Exhibits from Arsenal Park (Source: <https://destepti.ro/arsenal-park-orastie-hunedoara>)

Flanked by the 2 terraces, "Restaurant-Popotă" is truly unique in the country, with its army decorations. Customers are delighted by the tastiest dishes in Romanian and international cuisine, but also by local specialties, served in an atmosphere of good mood before and after combat missions. And after a day full of adrenaline, the barbecue party continues around an impressive campfire, with music and good cheer! For cool evenings, the small Dacian Village, consisting of 3 cottages - is ideal for indoors parties with traditional dishes.

3. Arsenal Park - multi-purpose destination

Orăștie, the place that hosts Arsenal Park, is an important name when it comes to the Dacian kingdom, the mountains with the same name being used by the Dacians to build perhaps the most important fortresses: Sarmizegetusa Regia, Blidaru, Lunca - Piatra Roșie, Costești, Bănița and Căpâlnița. The tourist complex is located right on the edge of the village, at an equal distance from these fortresses.

The holiday complex includes 200 beds, and eccentric tourists can sleep on cannon beds in the Cannon Room, in TABs, in simple Officer rooms or luxurious in Colonel Apartments and General Villas. Of course, the difference is that these rooms are now luxurious.

Access to the three-star complex can be done in two ways: either by train or by car. If the first option is chosen, tourists should know that the town has its own train station and the station is almost 2 kilometres from the former factory. Instead, those who come by car must choose DN 7, the route Deva-Orăştie, and, right next to the entrance sign in the locality, they must turn right - in only 300 meters is the entrance to the park [8].

Guests have at their disposal a vast area of land for exploitation and a lot of activities to keep them trained: military training, treasure hunting, airsoft and paintball fights, shooting with firearms, with air soft and paintball weapons, archery, crawler rides, trinket competitions, golf car rental, bicycles, go-kart bikes, segways, etc. For children there is a playground, but also programs specific to their age, so they will never get bored.



Figure 3: Arsenal Park Leisure Centre, Orăştie (Source: <https://www.zf.ro/zf-24>)

Adrenaline and relaxation complement each other in the happiest way at Arsenal Park. The exciting activities alternate with relaxing sessions for body and mind at Arsenal Spa - the most modern spa in the west and centre of the country. The Arsenal Park Spa features a fitness room, Finnish and infrared saunas, a swimming pool with water massage and counter current swimming, a relaxation room, and massage and body treatments.

In 2014, Arsenal Park started the project "Increasing the quality of tourism services within Arsenal Park by creating a specific leisure infrastructure". Within it so far have been completed: an ice rink with a capacity of 80 people, the largest skatepark in Transylvania, with an area of 1.400 square meters, Aventura Park Arsenal and a playground for children. Work is currently underway on a 9 km network of bike lanes, the Arsenal riding school and the arrangement of the Arsenal water tower for a 560 m long zip line and assisted jumps with a 30 m drop, made by a PowerFun type. In 2015, the most modern Aqua Park in Transylvania and a multifunctional gym were completed [5].

Arsenal Park is an ideal place for those who want to organize a team building. In addition to the above activities, there are also well-known football and basketball matches or golf competitions - each of these sports is organized so that colleagues can

get to know each other better. Last but not least, tourists can have fun in the games room (where they play billiards, darts, table tennis, mini football and poker), get outdoor fitness or relax in the outdoor swimming pool [11].

The infrastructure of the park therefore includes a Command - Reception, a Restaurant - table and bar, flanked by 2 terraces, being unique in the country, through the army decorations, and after a day full of adrenaline, the party can continue around an impressive campfire, with music and good cheer. For cool evenings, the small Dacian Village is ideal for parties with traditional dishes; Conference rooms, Arsenal Park being the perfect place for teambuilding. In addition to exciting activities, groups can benefit from a conference room with a capacity of up to 150 seats, suitable for meetings, training sessions, conferences and other indoor events. For the good development of these events, we provide all the necessary technical support; Outdoor amphitheater: Commando movies, pac-pac, westerns, war documentaries or filming of team-building troops at Arsenal Park are projected on a huge screen in the middle of nature. Occasionally, more special events take place here, such as fashion shows. The 234-seat capacity makes the Arsenal Amphitheatre the largest open-air amphitheatre in Transylvania. The activities at Arsenal Park are the perfect combination of fun and relaxation [5].

Conclusions

Arsenal Park is a unique concept, the only military-themed resort in Romania and Southeast Europe.

The transformation of a former weapons and ammunition factory into a park dedicated to recreation and outdoor activities is the perfect recipe for the whole family, when it comes to a unique way to spend free time. The 88 hectares have been adapted to accommodate visitors, and as they explore the park, they will be able to find countless attractions and relics here, as everything has been designed in such a way as to satisfy a multitude of preferences.

At Arsenal Park you never get bored: AquaPark, Arsenal Adventure Park, PowerFanJumps, Military Museum, Spa, Golfcars, Bicycles, TreasureHunt, Military Training, Paintball, Airsoft, Archery, Zipline, Crawler Walking, Firearms Shooting, Games Room Playground, Multifunctional Gym, Multifunctional Gym, Fitness Park, Jeep Wrangler GoCart, Skating Rink, Skate Park and MiniGolf.

In recent years, Arsenal Park has become the largest resort for families with children, which has been a stepping stone from a resort originally intended primarily for companies organizing events and team building.

It's hard to explain in words everything that can be done or felt at Arsenal Park. Some things just need to be experienced in the largest military-themed amusement park in Romania, where adrenaline and relaxation are at home.

References List

- [1] Bogan, E., Simon T., Căndea, M., *Patrimoniul turistic al României*, Ed. Universitară, București, 2021, Pages 325-330.

- [2] Cocean, P., *Geografia Turismului*, Ediția a II-a, Ed. Focul Viu, Cluj-Napoca, 2004, Pages 209-215.
- [3] ***National Geographic Traveler, România, Editura Holding, Biblioteca Adevărul, Pages 122-124.
- [4] <https://arsenalpark.ro/>, accessed at April, 27, 2022.
- [5] <https://arsenalpark.ro/istoric/>, accessed at April, 27, 2022.
- [6] <https://www.gohunedoara.com/en/arsenal-park-adrenalina-si-relaxare-in-cel-mai-mare-parc-de-distractii-cu-tematica-militara-din-romani/>, accessed at April, 27, 2022.
- [7] <https://destepti.ro/arsenal-park-orastie-hunedoara>, accessed at April, 28, 2022.
- [8] https://adevarul.ro/locale/ploiesti/ultimul-racnet-materie-vacante-concediu-intr-o-cazarma-militara-1_50ae31da7c42d5a6639a93c3/index.html, accessed at April, 28, 2022.
- [9] <https://www.traiersteromaneste.ro/arsenal-park-militaria/>, accessed at April, 28, 2022.
- [10] <https://booktes.com/bilet/arsenal-park>, accessed at April, 28, 2022.
- [11] <https://www.zf.ro/zf-24/centrul-de-agrement-arsenal-park-din-orastie-al-fratilor-cristescu-merge-spre-afaceri-de-2-4-mil-euro-am-continuat-investitiile-in-noi-facilitati-si-asteptam-150-000-de-vizitatori-17320854>, accessed at April, 28, 2022.