

# KURŠUMLIJSKA SPA-THE OLDEST AND THE NEWEST OF THE THREE SPAS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF KURŠUMLIJA-SERBIA

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***Abstract:** The paper presents the history of the Kuršumlija Spa, which was used in the Roman Empire and the Serbian medieval state (there are archaeological findings), neglected during the Ottoman rule and rebuilt again in independent Serbia and Yugoslavia, until 2006. In the period from 2006 to 2020, it was out of use to be back in operation from 2023. Now it operated within the successful join-stock company "PLANINKA" with two other spas in the area. The start is presented briefly and suggestions are given for the further development of the entire tourist offer.*

***Keywords:** tourist offer, spa tourism, religious tourism, cultural tourism*

## INTRODUCTION: HISTORY OF KURŠUMLIJSKA SPA

Kuršumlijska Spa existed as a spa, according to archaeological findings, even in Roman times in these areas.

There are also archaeological finds from the period of the spa's medieval existence.

After the Ottoman conquest of these areas in the fifteenth century, there was no use of thermal water here because this area was off the road routes.

After the migration of the Serbian population in 1690 and 1739, almost no one lived here. The Turks tried to settle the Muslim population around the Toplica river, but it was not massive.

After Serbia's wars for independence and gaining independence in 1878, this region became part of the independent state of Serbia and the Muslim population withdrew. All the area around the hot springs was owned

by two Muslim families and was bought for 220 cell ducats (Buyers Stevan Petrović, treasurer of the Okrug Toplica and Aksentije Jovanović, lieutenant colonel commander of the Kuršumlija garrison, in 1883).

In 1884, they built the first houses in Kuršumlijska Spa, in 1885, Jovan Garašanin bought a plot of land and built a holiday home.

In 1885, six springs with thermal waters were used and the water from them was brought to the swimming pool in one of the houses through wooden gutters.

The first tests of the water at the four springs were performed by the famous chemist Marko T. Leko.

In 1886, a bathhouse with two swimming pools and a tavern of Sreten Petrović with 11 rooms for the night was built, on the site of which the Villa “Yugoslavia” was later built.

In addition to accommodation in those early years, they also built water mills (which were later converted into villas).

In 1912, Kuršumlijska Spa offers its guests an inn with 10 rooms and four buildings with 42 rooms.

During the Great War, the spa was almost destroyed.

After the Great War of 1914-1918. year marks a new beginning:

New construction, new owners until 1929. It's a spa for rural people.

Then in 1929, King Aleksandar I Karađorđević decreed Kuršumlijska Spa as “Generally useful and healing mineral water”. The spa changes the medicine! Joint-stock company “Kuršumlijska Spa” with headquarters in Prokuplje is formed and planned development and work begin:

Villa Yugoslavia in 1930 had 54 rooms with two beds each, electric lighting, water supply, sewerage, an expanded park, planted tree rows, built paths through the surrounding forests, treatment controlled by spa doctors, a telephone was introduced, the bathrooms with hot water are tiled, a restaurant was built, a school was opened...

Between 1930 and 1940, the Spa experienced rapid development and an increase in the number of visitors (800 in 1930, 1500 in 1940 with more than 20.000 overnight stays).

Then war again and suffering again.

Well, in 1947, all villas of the “Kuršumlijska Spa” Joint Stock Company were nationalized. By 1949 and later, new “socialist” construction and the use of thermal mineral water as a substitute for heating began. It is noted that there is insufficient hot water.

In 1963, 11.1 l/s of hot and cold mineral waters with a temperature of 14°C to 55°C were obtained from 10 shallow wells.

In 1974, five deep wells with water temperatures of 35°C, 46°C, 50°C, 61°C and 62°C yielded 10.7 l/s. They enabled the construction of a new spa facility of the hotel - stationary Žubor, built from 1977-1982. years with heating, indoor pools, bathtubs...

Hotel Žubor itself and Kuršumlijska Spa worked until 2006, when due to failed privatizations, the spa stopped working!

## SUMMARY OF THE NEW START OF THE SPA



The “PLANINKA” hotel was created by the renovation of the “Žubor” hotel

In 2020, AD “Planinka” bought the Kuršumlijska Spa, invested 12 million euros in renovation and started operations in 2023.

From 10.02.2023. until 31.03.2024. , the spa had 41,000 overnight stays. Most of the guests were from Serbia and its surroundings (North Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania, Bosnia & Herzegovina), as well as Russia, Italy and others.

In 2023, a tennis tournament was organized with visitors from Brazil, Chile, Japan, the Philippines, Bolivia, New Zealand...

Currently, guests come more for rest, recreation, wellness and less for treatment.

The average stay is 4 nights.

The average age of the guests is from 30 to 50 years old.

A total of 2.367 foreigners stayed in the mentioned period



Tennis courts

## POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN THE TOPLICA REGION

By purchasing and rehabilitating the Kuršumlijska Spa, the “Planinka” joint-stock company from Kuršumlija put into operation all three spas in the municipality of Kuršumlija (Prolom Spa, Lukovska Spa and Kuršumlijska Spa). They are also the guardians of the natural monument Devil’s town (placed under the protection of the state in 1959 and declared a natural asset of exceptional importance in 1995), which in their organization is visited annually by about 50.000 visitors.

Therefore, they work successfully and manage well with the natural resources they manage - for example, they bottle the water from Prolom Spa, which is highly valued and sought after, due to its low minerality and increased alkalinity, as healing water - exactly as much as the natural outflow of this water.

Thus, the future of the source is fully taken into account.

In their plans, they have the desire to work for the well-being of their

municipality of Kuršumljija and beyond in the Toplica district. In this direction we will give the beginning of four suggestion (later this number can be significantly increased).

SUGGESTION 1:

Bearing in mind that the municipality of Kuršumljija was once the center of the Serbian state at the beginning of the rule of the Nemanjić dynasty, i.e. their progenitor Nemanja (see [2]), numerous churches and monasteries were built here, which were later destroyed during the Ottoman Empire, the idea of restoring these churches was affirmed here at the beginning of the 20th century.

During the 20th century, the monastery of St. Nicholas was restored (the monastery is 92 years older than Notre Dame in Paris), but the restoration has not yet been completed. Also, the monastery of the Holy Virgin is from the same time and is also due for renovation.

Other churches in the vicinity of Kuršumljija also deserve attention to supplement the tourist offer of this region.

This is certainly an important area of activity for the “Planinka” joint-stock company.

SUGGESTION 2:

On February 26, 1917, the only uprising in the occupied territories by the Central Powers in the Great War began in the vicinity of Kuršumljija in the village of Mačkovac (see[3]). It lasted about a month. It was suppressed along with 18.000 Serbian victims and 50.000 houses and buildings of the participants of the uprising were burned.

The insurgents who survived went to the guerilla and in the autumn of 1918. they took part in the final liberation of the country together with the Serbian army that appeared from the Thessaloniki front.

There are numerous monuments and places that are related to this uprising and visiting these places and marking these events can be part of the tourist offer.

SUGGESTION 3:

In the neighboring municipality of Prokuplje, in the village of Pločnik (near Kuršumljija), there is an archaeological site of the Vinča culture. There are about 120 hectares here to explore (less than two have been explored).It is considered the oldest metallurgical center in the world.

Right next to the archaeological site, there are the remains of thermal baths and the remains of villas from the Roman period.

A battle with the Turks took place in the same village in 1386, where Serbian forces led by Prince Lazar (1371-1389) won.

Not far from here (less than two kilometers) are the sources of Banja Viča, which was famous in the Neolithic (and later in the time of Yugoslavia it was bottled and famous - today it flows into the river).

In the paper [6], the authors proposed the tourist use of this area. This can be one of the tasks for “Planinka” joint-stock company.

#### SUGGESTION 4:

In the neighboring municipality of Blace, in the village of Prebreza, a site was found with the fossil remains of numerous animals such as mammoths, elephants, hyenas, etc. which was declared a natural monument.

The paper [6] proposes a way of using this locality for tourism.

This can also be the goal of the development of JSC Planinka’s tourist offer.

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