

Mini internship "Evaluation of the impact of limiting and favouring factors on tourism development using the Karlovy Vary resort in the Czech Republic as a reference model, in order to implement the expertise acquired in the Colibița-Vatra Dornei-Gura Humorului tourist area (Romania)"

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The mini-internship took place between September 20-29, 2025, at the Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague and in the spa resort of Karlovy Vary, following the invitation of Prof. Dr. Mgr. Vera Potopová, from the Faculty of Agrobiology, Food and Natural Resources, Czech University of Life Sciences, Prague.

The mini-internship aimed to comparative evaluation of the factors influencing the development of outdoor and SPA tourism in Romania (Colibița-Gura Humorului area) and the Czech Republic (Karlovy Vary resort) and was funded by the Doctoral School of Applied Sciences and Engineering within Ștefan cel Mare University of Suceava, from FSS-CSUD funds.

Following the mini-internship, I accumulated valuable knowledge that will be applied in the process of developing the doctoral thesis.

Objective 1: Identifying the development model of the Karlovy Vary resort

The most famous spa resort in the Czech Republic, Karlovy Vary, is located in the western part, at the confluence of the Ohře, Rolava and Teplá rivers, near the Slavkov Forest. The resort is located approximately 120 km from Prague, and the nearest border crossing with Germany, Boží Dar, is only 28 km away.

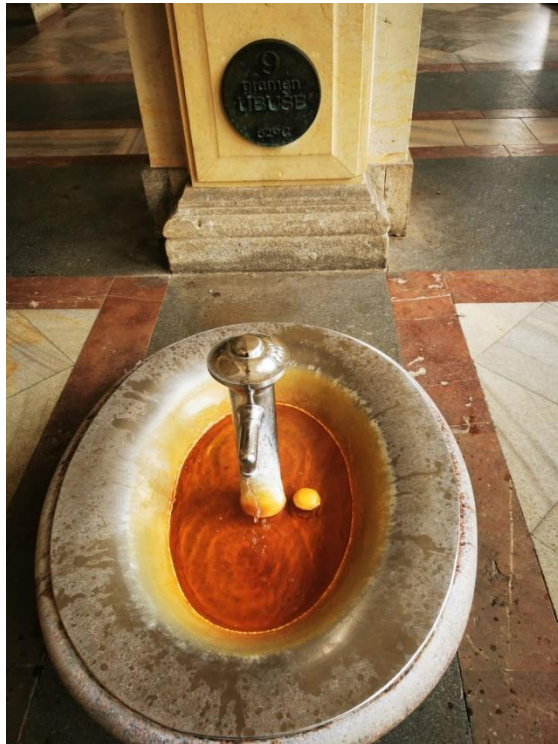
Karlovy Vary is known for its 15 main thermal springs used for spa treatments, as well as for the multitude of secondary springs. The temperatures vary between 30°C and 72°C, and each spring has a unique mineral composition. Colonnades have been arranged within the resort (Mill Colonnade, Park Colonnade, Hot Spring Colonnade) that allow visitors to taste the thermal water. The most famous spring is Vřídlo, with a temperature of 72°C, the thermal water reaching a height of about 10 m.

The thermal waters of the Karlovy Vary resort are used in the treatment of the following diseases:

- Digestive tract diseases
- Metabolic disorders
- Periodontitis

The resort is developed according to a harmonious territorial planning, integrating historical buildings with the natural landscape. Visitors have at their disposal countless parks and recreation areas, fountains with special shapes and rich vegetation.

The Karlovy Vary resort offers over 200 accommodation units, including hotels, guesthouses, apartments. The city has modern facilities for health tourism, such as thermal baths and complementary therapies (thermal mineral water baths, physiotherapy, thermotherapy, oxygen therapy).



Objective 2: identifying tourists' perceptions of the Karlovy Vary resort.

During the mini-internship, a questionnaire was applied, translated simultaneously into 3 languages (English, Czech and Romanian) and was carried out using the Google Forms program.

The application of the questionnaire was carried out based on interviewing different people (tourists and locals) in the Karlovy Vary resort with the aim of identifying tourists' perceptions of the Karlovy Vary resort.

So far, 16 responses have been recorded from tourists and locals, and the main results highlight the local architecture, thermal waters, natural potential and balneoclimatic treatments as the main motivations for visiting this resort.

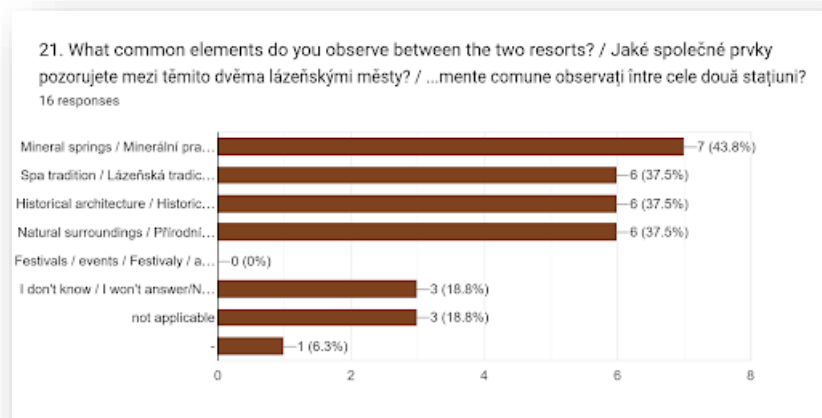
Objective 3: Comparative analysis of the resorts of Vatra Dornei, Romania and Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic

The mini-internship carried out a comparative analysis of the resorts of Vatra Dornei, Romania and Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic, by identifying the common points between these two resorts, identifying the strengths and weaknesses, but also identifying development opportunities through joint partnerships and applying the Karlovy Vary resort's good practice model to Vatra Dornei.

The results obtained reveal that the main sources of information about the Vatra Dornei resort used by the respondents are represented by the references received from family and friends, and the treatment facilities and natural potential are highlighted as the main reasons for visiting this resort.

The main similarities between the resorts of Karlovy Vary and Vatra Dornei highlighted by the survey participants are the natural setting, the balneoclimatic potential and the local architecture.

The differences were in the international recognition of the Karlovy Vary resort, comparative to the Vatra Dornei resort, known only by Romanian tourists, the much more developed tourist infrastructure in Karlovy Vary than Vatra Dornei, and the specificity of the natural waters: in the case of the Karlovy Vary resort, thermal waters, and in the case of the Vatra Dornei resort, mineral waters.



Objective 4: Identifying potential realistic, implementable project ideas that would stimulate the development of targeted Romanian resorts

During the mini-internship, I went to the Faculty of Agrobiology, Food and Natural Resources at the Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague, to discuss with Czech specialists and researchers from the university regarding health tourism in the Czech Republic and ways to develop health tourism in Romania.

During the meetings with Czech researchers, were discussed:

- The importance of the Karlovy Vary resort in the Czech Republic, but especially in Europe.
- The development of the Karlovy Vary resort.
- The conclusions identified following the application of the questionnaire in Karlovy Vary.
- New research perspectives: applying a questionnaire in Vatra Dornei, for the comparative evaluation of the two resorts.
- Writing a scientific article that highlights the conclusions of this research.

- Development prospects for the Vatra Dornei resort, following the Karlovy Vary resort model: investments in tourist infrastructure, rehabilitation of historical buildings and bringing them to their original historical splendor, diversification of tourist activities and organization/attraction of large-scale events that would bring visibility to the resort, modernization of treatment facilities.



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