



## Archaeology in the function of developing a new tourist product

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*Type of best practice*

Sustainable Cultural Tourism

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*Tuzla archaeological park – Neolithic Settlement of Pile Dwellings, offering a replica of the way people lived there 7,000 years ago. It is an outdoor museum with the total of 9 „houses“/pile dwellings and a display of the salt cooking dishes and scenes from the life of Neolithic men and women. This Archaeology Park is also linked to the Geology Museum in the Tuzla Lakes Complex and both are visited by many tourists and especially children and students.*

**Organisation in charge of best practice**

Public Utility "Pannonica" Tuzla

**Location**

City of Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Dates**

The park was opened in 2006 and still operates.

**Description**

Tuzla is a city whose name and history are closely tied to salt, a natural wealth that remained beneath Tuzla after the withdrawal of the Pannonian Sea into the Black Sea 10 million years ago, in the form of saline water and rock salt. The remains of the saline water were used to construct the Pannonian salt lakes complex in Tuzla.



Within the complex of the Pannonian Lakes, in 2006, the first Archaeological Park of a Neolithic pile-dwelling settlement in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Southeast Europe was built and opened. The Archaeological Park represents a reconstruction of a part of the Neolithic pile-dwelling settlement discovered in Tuzla. The park is an open-air museum that aims to present to visitors a portion of the archaeological and historical past of the city of Tuzla, as well as the way of life, both material and spiritual, especially the first salt production in the Neolithic era.

The Archaeological Park includes a semi-circular foundation curved around a hilly elevation, a leveled part of the hill arranged as a central plateau on which totem poles, a replica clay oven, a weaving hut, etc., are placed, 5 dwellings of characteristic shapes and dimensions, two smaller foundations connected by central foundations with wooden bridges to four more dwellings.





The first discovery of objects from the Neolithic era in Tuzla dates back to 1903. During work on regulating Appel Plac, now Trg slobode (Freedom Square), some archaeological material was excavated, providing the first indications of the existence of a Neolithic settlement in the Tuzla area. The archaeological material consisted of three perforated and polished hammers, a ceramic foot made of clay with traces of fine sand, and a large ball used as a grain crusher. After the expert analysis of these items, it was concluded that there was a Neolithic settlement in the present-day Tuzla area whose inhabitants, in addition to traditional livelihoods, also utilized sources of saline water.

Despite its interest and importance, this discovery was not sufficient to provide detailed information about the type, size, wealth, and true age of the settlement. It wasn't until 1955, in Rudarska Street, today's Džafer Mahala, that enough archaeological material was excavated, unequivocally confirming that there was a large and prosperous Neolithic pile-dwelling settlement in Tuzla, one of the oldest in Europe – with only one other Neolithic pile-dwelling settlement discovered in Switzerland.

Supporting the assumption that Neolithic inhabitants exploited saline sources are the discovered fragments of coarse pottery that, according to the opinions of contemporary top archaeologists, were used for isolating saline water. Two vessels have been reconstructed, one dating back to 3,500 years before the Common Era and the other to 5,000 years before the Common Era. Thus, from the Neolithic era to the present day, people in the Tuzla area have been producing salt.

The Neolithic vessels for isolating saline water serve as evidence that the pile-dwelling settlement in Tuzla was the first known Neolithic settlement whose inhabitants exploited this precious mineral. The oldest European cultures that used salt are dated to the Copper Age, meaning that the Neolithic discovery in Tuzla shifts the boundary of knowledge and use of salt in human diet from the Eneolithic to the Neolithic.

All findings provide evidence of the high culture of the inhabitants of this region during the flourishing of ancient cultures in Vinča and Butmir.

Since 2006 this Archaeology Park has become one of the tourist products of Tuzla, at first mainly relying on the visitors who come to visit the Pannonian Lakes, but now majority of visitors are pre-school children and students, as the visit to the Archaeology park is not only entertaining but also educational.

In 2012 an addition was made to the Archaeology park with opening of the Geological Exhibition 'Pannonica' which represents a significant element for the development of cultural tourism in the city of Tuzla, as it speaks to the continuity of life in this area and complements the offerings of the Pannonian Lakes complex.

### Links

<https://panonika.ba/arheoloski-park-neolitsko-sojenicko-naselje/>

<https://panonikasojenice.ba/>

### Resources needed

The value of the investment in building the Archaeology Park is estimated at 200.000,00 EUR.

### Challenges encountered

The Archaeology park was faced with a challenge of the need to reconstruct the pile dwellings due to weather effects and there was a need to ensure sufficient funding for the





rehabilitation of the dwellings. So, in 2018 the City of Tuzla prepared a project proposal along with partners from Serbia and applied to the EU IPA Cross-Border Cooperation programme and was awarded grant funds that were used to rehabilitate the park! During the rehabilitation another challenge was encountered - finding sufficient amounts of rye straw which is used to cover and pile dwellings and create the roofing covers.

### **Evidence of success**

Around 1500 visitors come to the Archaeology park each year in organized group tours/excursions with children and students mainly, but during the summer season (June-September) each year, the Archaeology park is open to all visitors who come to the Pannonian Lakes, and this adds much more visitors to the park every year. More and more schools are organizing day trips to the Archaeology park as it perfectly combines the educational component and touristic visit with entertainment elements. In the period 2019-2020 the reconstruction of the park included addition of children's playground designed as a mini archaeological site, which gives children the opportunity to play and act as "little archaeologists" and learn of our past in a fun and engaging way. Also, in 2012, the city of Tuzla and the salt lake complex were awarded the second prize of the UNWTO ULYSSES AWARD, the highest recognition from the United Nations World Tourism Organization for innovations in public policies and management. The award was granted for the project "Valorization of Natural Heritage – Pannonian Salt Lakes in Tuzla" and innovations in the field of tourism.

### **Potential for transfer**

There is an excellent potential for transfer and it was already recognized and utilized during the period of 2019-2020. Namely, within the EU IPA Cross-Border Cooperation programme Tuzla City (BiH) and Užice City (Serbia) implemented a joint project entitled "New life of Neolithic heritage in recognized natural areas of great importance – NeoLIFE" in which the experience of Tuzla was used as best practice and a foundation for construction and establishment of a new Open-air museum at the site of Staparska Banja in Užice. Neolithic Archaeological park StaPark that was formed has enriched the tourist offer of Užice and the region of Zlatibor in Serbia. The specific objective of this cross-border cooperation project was the preservation of the cultural and historical heritage of the cities of Užice and Tuzla through establishment and promotion of the sustainable cultural heritage simulation models based on networking and the process of experience transfer between partners in the cross-border area.

### **Further Information**

Apart from the display of exhibits in the Archaeology park which includes figures/statues of Neolithic men and women, vessels for salt production, tools and other items known to have been used in that period, this Park's added value is reflected in addition of the "Geological Exhibition Pannonica" since 2012. It is a museum with a very interesting exhibition that documents the history of this area. The museum houses about 100 minerals and around 120 fossils, including the only mineral in the world found in our salt deposits, and the exhibition is adorned with a mineral that is 500 million years old.

