



## Sibiu Public Bath – A century of Spa tradition preserved

### Author(s)

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### Terms of reuse

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### Type of best practice

Conservation and Preservation

### Keywords

#culturalheritage #architecturalheritage #restoration #historicalspa

### Theme

Management

*Sibiu city is home to the oldest spa in Romania, dating back to 1904. Sibiu Public Bath stands as an architectural gem, sharing its design with a counterpart in Munich. Through this restoration program the building has undergone a revitalization, transforming into a contemporary spa and wellness center while preserving its historical charm. Notably, it has embraced sustainability with the integration of a Smart Building Management System. This year-round attraction offers guests relaxation and rehabilitation. Its offerings include a pool, massage facilities, various sauna and saline therapies, and a fully equipped sports hall, ensuring accessibility for all guests.*

### Organisation in charge of best practice

Sibiu City Hall

### Location

Sibiu, Romania

### Dates

2018 - 2020

### Description

The architecture of the Public Bath seamlessly blends Baroque and Art Nouveau elements, crafted in 1904 by Karl Hocheder. Mr. Hocheder is the mastermind behind the design of the Müller Volksbad in Munich, renowned as one of the world's most spectacular public baths.

The rehabilitation of the Public Bath occurred between 2018 and 2020, encompassing a comprehensive range of improvements. These included the structural consolidation of the building, restoration of carpentry, and refurbishment of both interior and exterior plastering. Additionally, the architectural integrity of the building was meticulously preserved through the replacement and restoration of various elements such as railings, doors, wooden partitions of the shower cabins, the wooden staircase, stone columns, and the stone tub at the pool fountain. The ceramic tiling of the pool was also expertly redone.





The rehabilitation project wasn't solely about modernization; it was equally dedicated to the preservation of the historical character of the Public Bath.

Several original elements, present in the building since its inception, have undergone meticulous restoration as part of the rehabilitation process. These include the entrance doors, reception area, stairs, and certain interior doors and signs. There has been a modernization of utility networks and spaces, ensuring that the functionality of the Public Bath aligns with contemporary standards while preserving its timeless features.

The restoration efforts extended comprehensively to the entire complex, encompassing both interior and exterior spaces, facades, the building's shell, and framework. The meticulous restoration even included proposing new pieces of furniture and carpentry closely aligned with the originals. A notable structural intervention involved the replacement of the metal stairs in the stairwell tower and the envelope, along with the corresponding structure of the fitness room.

Furthermore, all existing facilities underwent a complete replacement with new additions to meet contemporary needs and standards. The restructuring allowed for the highlighting of representative historical spaces through a new circuit. This involved regrouping changing areas and freeing up spaces around the pool. Additionally, by reorganizing annexed spaces, there was a successful reintroduction into the public circuit, which included the industrial body of the thermal plant dating back to the early 19th century.

Today, Baia Populă has been reborn, featuring expanded spaces, technological modernization, and a completely restored and renovated historical building. This transformation unveils the beauty of a tradition spanning over 100 years, seamlessly blending the rich heritage with contemporary elements. The revitalized establishment now offers new services and facilities designed to cater to both the local community and tourists visiting Sibiu.

The extensive renovation project has opened new areas for exploration, including the loft which now houses offices and rooms specifically designed for various sports, educational, or relaxation activities. The basement has been dedicated to supporting vulnerable social categories, emphasizing the project's commitment to inclusivity. Additionally, visitors can now explore the water tower, where the former 5,000-litre reservoir has been replaced by a serene relaxation area offering a breathtaking view of the city.

The first-floor terrace, encircling the inner courtyard, has been revived to evoke a sense of relaxation and tranquility in the sunlight, reminiscent of times past.

The Public Bath services are now more accessible to individuals with special needs, thanks to the installation of an elevator that seamlessly connects all floors, from the basement to the loft. This thoughtful addition ensures that everyone can enjoy the facilities without hindrance. Moreover, the gym has been equipped with facilities tailored to accommodate the specific needs of individuals with disabilities, further enhancing inclusivity and accessibility. A cutting-edge software solution has been developed to generate computerized training routines, making it accessible for individuals with disabilities, including those who use wheelchairs.

The revitalization of the Sibiu Public Bath has sparked a renewed interest in sports practices, offering a diverse range of activities. The facility now conducts swimming courses for children, as well as yoga and Pilates classes.

To enhance convenience, booking for all services is seamlessly facilitated online. The reservation and payment system has been fully digitized for a simpler and more secure experience.





## Links

<https://www.baiapopularasibiu.ro/en>

[https://sibiucityapp.ro/en/places/the-public-bath-5\\_cy\\_t3lxtueya](https://sibiucityapp.ro/en/places/the-public-bath-5_cy_t3lxtueya)

## Resources needed

The restoration program was executed with a budget of approximately 4,000,000 euros, sourced from the local budget. The administrative operation of the public bath is efficiently managed by approximately 45 individuals

## Challenges encountered

An important challenge arose with the reopening of the Public Bath immediately after the pandemic period, during which certain preventive measures were still in effect. The online booking system allowed for optimal visitor management during the period of restrictions.

## Evidence of success

In October 2022, Baia Populă Sibiu was honored with the prize for the "Most Valuable Investment in the SPA Field" category at the Romanian Spa and Wellness Tourism Congress. This prestigious award acknowledged the significant achievements resulting from the comprehensive restoration and modernization efforts. The recognition highlighted Sibiu's success in establishing a state-of-the-art wellness center within a historically significant building. In November 2022, it achieved yet another accolade by securing the award in the "Best Traditional SPA" category at the Termalia Gala in Romania. This recognition holds significant importance as Termalia is a prestigious event in the Wellbeing Industry, garnering global recognition and operating under the esteemed patronage of the World Spa Organization. In the summer of 2023, the Sibiu Public Bath achieved the status of historical monument of national significance. This recognition, which followed a meticulous two-year process, underscores the architectural and cultural significance of the site. The number of visitors has increased considerably compared to the previous rehabilitation period, a trend attributed to the enhanced quality and the introduction of new functionalities.

## Potential for transfer

The success of this project serves as a compelling example, demonstrating its potential to become a best practice model for other similar public baths or historical buildings offering wellness services. The positive outcomes and increased visitor numbers should inspire other local authorities to embark on restoration projects for historically significant structures. Embracing modern technology is a crucial aspect of this endeavor. The mission of the Public Bath today is to reintroduce the spa's historical significance as a lifestyle accessible to everyone. It aims to contribute to the development of collective awareness that prioritizes health and aspires to foster a lifestyle centered around well-being.

## Further Information

Public Bath has been known to the people of Sibiu under several names throughout more than a century of activity, but regardless of its name, it has always been synonymous with health, relaxation and physical comfort. Over the course of a year, Sibiu Public Bath has over 85,000 visitors who come to benefit from its services.

