

From Prehistoric Salt Production to Contemporary Tourism: Archaeology, Heritage and Community at Băile Figa, Romania

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The archaeological site of Băile Figa, located near Beclean, in Bistrița-Năsăud County, in the northern part of the Transylvanian Basin, Romania, represents one of the most significant prehistoric salt-production landscapes in the Carpathian-Danubian region. Archaeological investigations have revealed extensive evidence of salt exploitation, including wooden troughs and other installations associated with the extraction and processing of salt. These remains provide important insights into prehistoric technologies, resource management and the long-term interactions between human communities and their environment. This paper traces the changing biography of the Băile Figa landscape, from prehistoric salt production and the subsequent rediscovery of the site to archaeological research, heritage safeguarding and its contemporary development as a tourism destination. Particular attention is given to the role of archaeological research in identifying, documenting, protecting and interpreting the archaeological remains. Heritage safeguarding measures, including site signage panels, are examined alongside museum exhibition, educational activities and other forms of public engagement that contribute to making the archaeological heritage accessible and meaningful to visitors and the local community.

The paper also explores the contemporary transformation of Băile Figa through the development of a recreational and spa complex that attracts thousands of visitors each year. The coexistence of archaeological, natural and recreational values illustrates the dynamic character of heritage and the challenges and opportunities of integrating protection, interpretation, tourism and local development. Băile Figa thus provides a valuable case study of how archaeological research, heritage safeguarding and community engagement can contribute to the ongoing transformation and sustainable valorisation of a cultural landscape.

