



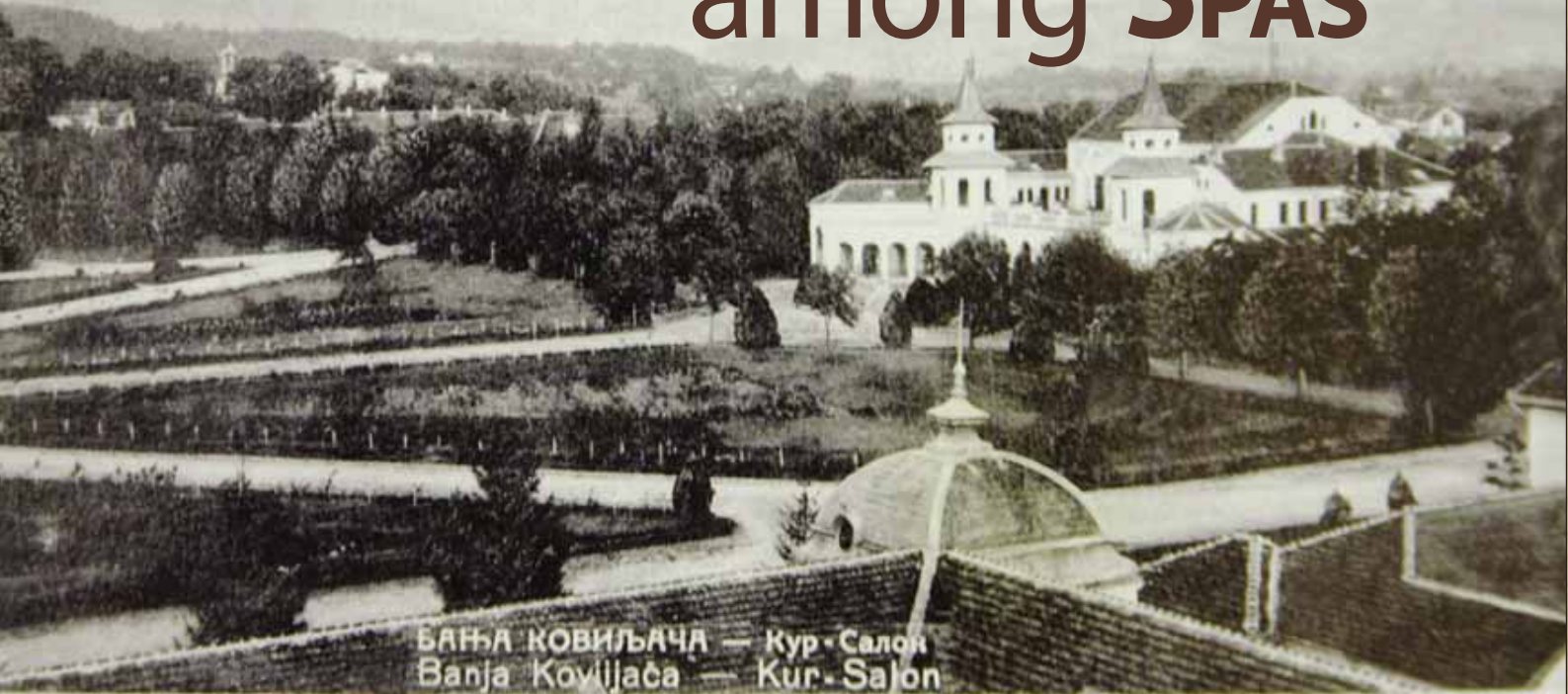
Koviljaca Spa

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The ROYAL JEWEL among SPAS



Precious examples of the preserved Spa architecture from the first half of the last century and the memory of the Royal Family Karadjordjevic, who financed its construction, not only by their staying in the Spa, but also by the foundation and state funds, determined the place of Koviljaca among the Serbian Royal Spas. The noble palaces in the spacious circle of the Spa park remained authentic and almost unchanged, but by their comfort and services they fully belong to the modern times.

The first building for the guest accommodation was built in 1858, but the new history of Koviljaca Spa started actually in 1867, when it was put under the state protection by Prince Mihailo Obrenovic, based upon the balneological certificates of Dr. Lindemayer. The interest in the

waters under Gucevo continued also during the reign of King Aleksandar Obrenovic. On August 1, 1898, the National Assembly proclaimed the law, by which Koviljaca Spa was conceded to the people of Podrinje County, to use it for the period of 50 years. The decision was confirmed by signatures of the King and Government. This date marked the beginning of the organized Spa tourism. The years of the Spa dynamic development and fast progress followed – but under the crown of the Karadjordjevics.

THE KING'S BATHROOM

Supporting the development of the Spa as a natural curing resort, Petar I Karadjordjevic, the new ruler on the Serbian Throne and already a certain guest of the Spa, supported the construction of an imposing building of the sul-

phuric bathroom, which will be financed from the State Treasury. As soon as he opened the door for the first guests, in 1907, the new bathroom not only changed the curing standards, but, with the central dome above the main entrance, it was a real decoration of the Spa and the favorite motif at its picture postcards. The grateful people called the bathroom by the name of their ruler – King Petar I.

In the luxury equipped interior space of the new bathroom, contemporary curing conditions were applied, which understood, in addition to the curative water and mud, also massage, rest as a must and relaxation, as well as the use of the swimming pool. King Petar left such treatment to himself, as well, already next year, 1908, but in a bathtub especially manufactured for him, which is at

present one of more exclusive Spa offers. A form part of the therapy was the night rest. Unlike some other Serbian spas, where the guests spent turbulent nights, waiting happily for the dawn, 'one could expect only decent fun and entertainment here, which contributes to a faster recovery', noted Dr. Sima. St. Petrovic, the Spa physician in Koviljaca after the World War I, adding 'there was no entertainment, rage, binge or gambling at all!'

THE SPA PARK BEAUTY

After the main bathroom, other facilities were constructed fast at the edge of the Spa Park, as well. Drinska Banovina (the Drina Regional Unit) to which the Spa belonged in 1929, built by its own funds

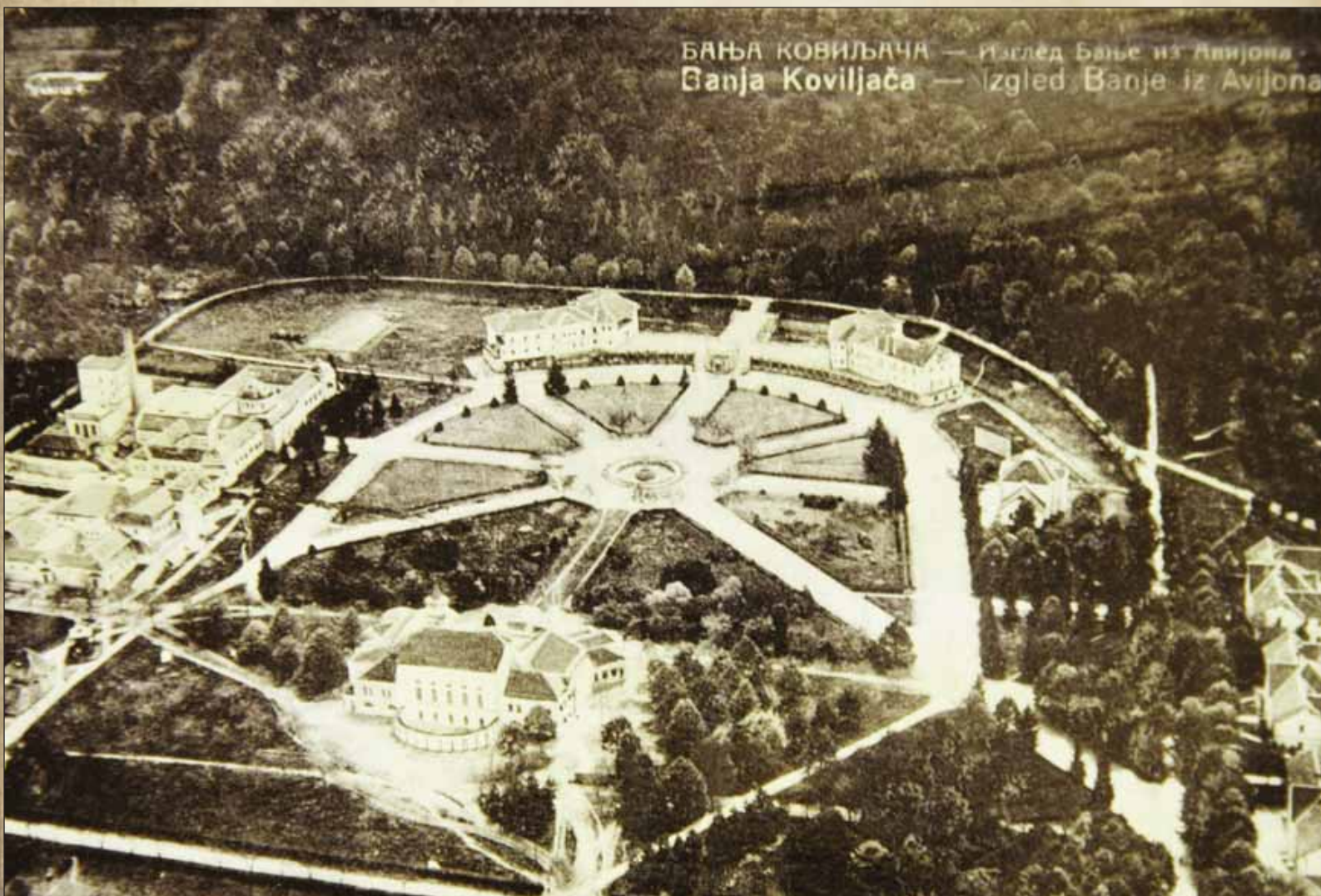
the Podrinje Hotel, the Villas Bosnia and Koviljaca, as well as the exclusive hotels Dalmatia and Herzegovina. Several foundations were built, as well as many private and very noble villas, remaining up to date an invaluable part of the Spa complex.

In 1930's, Koviljaca was completely constructed as a spa resort. The park in its central part was arranged, having the area of 20 hectares and a park forest complex of about 40 hectares around, ideal for a fiacre sightseeing. All Spa Park paths were leading to a beautiful water jet fountain, dominating the Spa panorama and was one of its recognizable symbols. However, in the 1960's, the water jet fountain was replaced by another one, and its most beautiful detail, four lion heads in bronze, was built

into a nearby tap. Rare plant species and a noble pavillion, from which the guests were entertained every evening by the Spa orchestra, as well as a precious wrought iron fence with four imposing gates and the guards service made this Park one of the most beautiful and prestigious at that time.

THE FIRST GAMBLING HOUSE IN THE BALKANS

A new rise in the construction of Koviljaca Spa was provided by the King Aleksandar I Karadjordjevic, the successor of King Petar. Convinced that Koviljaca was a spa with prosperity, he built by his own funds the elite Spa hall – Kur Salon (The Cure Parlor). Koviljaca is recognized by its luxury and beauty up to date. It was built as a prototype of one of





the Versailles castles, by the idea and surveillance of the architects Dragoslav Djordjevic, Nikola and Olga Krasnov and Milan Minic. This building of great beauty and luxurious interior space, opened in 1932, gathered under its skylights the chic personalities arriving from all sides. There were a theater and a dance hall with galleries, then two mansion halls and a dining room, two oval and two round parlors – for ladies and

WHERE THE FOREST NYMPHS SLEEP

In its history, Koviljaca Spa often changed its name. According to the notices of Vuk Karadzic, who had his sick leg cured in it, the Spa was mentioned for the first time in 1533, as a settlement at the base of Koviljka Town. In the middle of the 19th century, instead of the nice female name, it was called The Stinking Spa, due to the very strong evaporation of sulphuric springs. However, the travel reporter Felix Kanitz claims the name Koviljaca was probably derived from the famous and loved by Serbian people, gentle, downy plant – Kovilja (*stipa pennata*, Latin), growing on the nearby hills, on which forest nymphs sleep, according to a national legend.

gentlemen, then a reading room and an upright piano hall, a club hall, a beer hall... and all this overfull of guests. In this noble building, dances were a revered entertainment and the first gambling house in the Balkans was opened, as well.

Quiet nights under Gucevo were history. The Spa became a chic place, gathering young people, artists and bohemians, lawn tennis was played, there was entertainment with Amzici, far away famous Spa musicians, and a long sitting in the old inn Jadar, right behind the Parlor. Journalists from abroad arrived, especially from Vienna. Thus, the Spa under Gucevo became rather famous abroad, as well.

THE OLD TIMES SPIRIT PRESERVED

An important historical moment of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia is also related to the Kur Salon. The last ruler of the Karadjordjevic Family – the young King Petar II, who just came of age for the King's Throne, after the country occupation, in April 1941, proclaimed mobilization just in the Spa Parlor and then left the country, along with the Government.



The Royal Family presence especially raised the Spa's reputation, but its visit was certainly influenced also by excellent traffic connections. In addition to the luxury cars, by which King Aleksandar arrived, Koviljaca was accessible also by very tidy bus traffic or by the popular Cira, a narrow track train, always overfull of passengers. Due to its slow, but very pleasant drive, a seat in the open second class waggons was mostly demanded in summer. One could also take a ship to Sabac and then another transportation to the Spa, whereas the Drina was crossed by ferry.

The Spa preserved the old times spirit up to date, as well as many memorials reminding that the Royal Family Karadjordjevic was coming there. The high pine tree is still green, planted by King Petar himself in the Spa Park, whereas the Princess Jelena Spring was called by his oldest daughter, who used to come to the Spa, as well. At present, this is the Three Kings Fountain. In the Villa Dalmatia, the authentic apartment of the Queen Marija Karadjordjevic has been preserved, representing,

just like King Petar's marble bath tub, the exclusive offer of Koviljaca Spa – the Serbian Royal Spa.

