

THE PROVINCE OF LURA, TREASURE OF TOURISM, ALBANIAN CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL HERITAGE

KRAHINA E LURËS, THESAR I TURIZMIT, TRASHËGIMISË KULTURORE E HISTORIKE SHQIPTARE

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Abstract

Lura is a very attractive place with a treasure of history, tourism and Albanian cultural heritage. The offer packages range from history and its untouched nature, to cultural aspects, culinary, mountains, rivers, parks, ski areas, folk, religious harmony and of course one of the greatest assets is the people. The combination of all these components gives a unique high value product which is unfortunately not properly promoted. The frequent changes of the panorama make the visitors experience the uniqueness of the products. Lura has great potential for the development of all forms of historical and natural tourism and together with a better promotion, investment plans and human resources we will achieve that tourists learn the pleasant untold truth about this province.

Since tourism is experiencing growth in many areas of Albania, I think that Lura presents a rich historical and natural offer for the development of several forms of tourism, adding to various tourist packages. Thus, tourism can help reduce unemployment and increase income for Luria families. In order for Lura to return to its former beauty and to increase its tourist values, the authorities responsible for the administration of this property in cooperation with the local and central government should promote its values as much as possible with guides, leaflets, scientific conferences, etc. Through these routes:

- Lura can be transformed into a destination as it has a favorable tourist potential for the development of several forms of tourism.
- There is a rich natural, historical and cultural offer.
- the number of tourists increases.

This is Lura, such a large province with special historical and cultural values, with valleys and fertile plains, all mountains and mountains covered with forests, nature which sculpted the character of these inhabitants.

Keywords: Lure, tourism, historical value, cultural value, development.

Përmbledhje

Lura është një vend shumë atraktiv me një thesar historik, të turizmit e trashëgimisë kulturore shqiptare. Paketat e ofertës variojnë nga historia e natyrës së saj e paprekur, deri në aspektet kulturore, kulinare, malet, lumenjtë, parqet, vendet e skive, folkun, harmoninë fetare dhe sigurisht një nga asetet më të mëdha janë njerëzit. Kombinimi i të gjithë këtyre komponentëve jep një produkt unik me vlerë të lartë i cili fatkeqësisht nuk promovohet siç duhet. Ndryshimet e shpeshta të panoramës i bëjnë vizitorët të përjetojnë veçantinë e produkteve. Lura ka potenciale të mëdha për zhvillimin e të gjithë formave të turizmit historik e natyror dhe së bashku me një promovim më të mirë, planeve të investimit dhe burime njerëzore do ta arrijmë që turistët të mësojnë të vërtetën e këndëshme të pathënë për këtë krahinë.

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Meqënëse turizmi po njih rritje në shumë zona të Shqipërisë mendoj se Lura paraqet një ofertë të pasur historike e natyrore për zhvillimin e disa formave të turizmit duke iu shtuar paketave të ndryshme turisike. Kështu turizmi mund të ndihmojë në uljen e papunësisë dhe rritjen e të ardhurave për familjet luriane. Që Lurës t'i rikthehet bukuria e saj e dikurshme dhe të rriten vlerat turistike të saj duhet që autoritetet përgjegjëse për administrimin e kësaj pasurie në bashkëpunim me pushtetin vendor dhe qëndror të promovojnë sa më shumë vlerat e saj me guida, fletpalosje, konferenca shkencore etj. Njëpërmjet këtyre rrugëve:

- Lura mund të shndërrohet në një destinacion pasi ka një potencial turistik të favorshëm për zhillimin e disa formave të turizmit.
- Ka ofertë të pasur natyrore dhe historike e kulturore.
- rritet numri i turistëve.

Kjo është Lura, një krahinë kaq e madhe me vlera historike e kulturore të veçanta, me lugina e fusha pjellore, gjithë bjeshkë e male të mbuluara me pyje, natyrë e cila skaliti karakterin e këtyre banorëve .

Fjalë kyçe: Lurë, turizëm, vlera historike, vlera kulturore, zhvillim.

Lura province, tourism treasure, Albanian cultural and historical heritage

Today more than when it is extremely necessary to promote the historical, cultural and natural values of the province of Lura, it is very necessary to preserve them as an inexhaustible treasure not only for Lura but for the entire region, it is time to protect this province from thoughtless and economically unjustifiable damages and interventions, it is time to do something to stop further destruction and save these pearls of Lurjan culture and nature on behalf of present and future generations.

The history of the province of Lura is as ancient as the history of Dibra and Albania itself. This ancient and proud province like the mountains that surround it, has been raised as if to take the greatness from them. This greatness has been given to this province, with unrepeatable historical, cultural and natural values, by its inhabitants themselves with their wisdom, bravery, generosity and hospitality. Those who saw and visited her were amazed by her riches. Lura, the generous and hospitable province, has generously revealed its historical and cultural treasure over the years and across generations.

Over the centuries, Lura appears as an invincible fortress of history, a province of patriotism, national culture and armed resistance against various invaders. As for all Albanians and for the people of Lurjan, freedom is more expensive than life. The history of the wars of this province fully proves this. The people have expressed this in spiritual creativity:

"Lure, O high place, O place of valor,
Faith is connected there, the word of freedom".³⁰⁷

The traces of human history in the province of Lura are as old as those of the lands of Albania itself. Due to the suitable geographical conditions, fertile plains, river terraces, caves and valleys, this province dates back to the early Neolithic period. The archaeological findings and especially the findings in the Neolithic station testify to the early population of the Lura region and to the cultural encounters between the inhabitants of the Dibra basin with Kosovo and Central Illyria since about 6000 years ago. The most interesting parts of this area are the town or Murset located above Bori-Lure, Livadhi i Zhare, Čuka e Pasha, the cemetery where the Malla river passes, etc.³⁰⁸

The continuity of the habitation of Lura during different historical periods proves that its inhabitants have never been isolated from the surrounding provinces nor from those in the interior of the Albanian territories. The increase of settlements during this period proves the numerical growth of the population and the development of agriculture and animal husbandry as the basic branch of the economy.

³⁰⁷ MHD, "Dibra and dibranet", Peshkopi 1980, p.135

³⁰⁸ MHD, "Dibra and its ethnoculture", Diber 1995, p.15.

In the long path of this development, the civilization of the territories in the province of Lura, despite the relations with the cultures of the neighboring countries, preserved the peculiarities of the local culture that are typical of Illyria. During the Neolithic, Eneolithic, copper, bronze and iron periods, in addition to agriculture and livestock in this province, other branches of the economy and crafts were developed. The production of ceramics, the production of work tools, etc. increased, and their exchange expanded not only within the province, but also abroad.

About the continuity of the population of this province during the Middle Ages and modern times, the registers of the Ottoman period provide us with dense information. In the 12th-15th centuries, this province had a good economic, agricultural, craft and commercial development. According to the Turkish register of 1467, Lura is also mentioned among the villages of Dibra.³⁰⁹ According to a legend, in the 15th century, at the time of Skanderbeg, Luras are mentioned as his gunsmiths, while the following verses extend Lura's activity four centuries before Skanderbeg:

..Four hundred and odd years
Before the Skanderbeg law
Lurja ruled as king.."³¹⁰

The province of Lura, within its geographical units, represents a single physical-geographical, ethnic and cultural unit. It enjoys a favorable geostrategic position, a position which has historically enabled a satisfactory economic-social development for the entire region. During this historical period, Lura has been an economically developed province and a center of continuous liberation wars. In the composition of the Dibra Highlands, of the "Nanda Mountains of Dibra", Lura had a special organization named "Bajrak"³¹¹, while in the religious aspect, Lura was under the patronage of Teqe e Cereni.

The Highlands of Dibra and Lura had an autonomous administration that was ruled and governed by the canon, the Law of the Mountains³¹², known as the "Kararet e Dheut" or the Skanderbeg Canon³¹³. In the treasure of the mountain culture of Lura, as a continuation of the tradition, stand out for an important element of the popular culture: Kararet e Deu, Kararet e Besa, Kararet e Balazimi, Kararet for plants and living things, Kararet e Trojeve³¹⁴. "Kararet e Dheut" in Lure made a valuable contribution to establish order, peace and harmony among the residents.

These legal norms in the form of unwritten customs have been a political measure to unite the highlanders in the fight against the enemy. The Karares of the Earth were represented by 12 elders, 12 hammers and 6 farmers. The latter put their stamp on every decision together with the people. Disputes between the council of elders were resolved by the assembly of the land and the peasants. Their decision was called "Kararet e Deut" and had to be strictly implemented. For those who did not follow these agreements, "itifaq" was imposed.

³⁰⁹ MHD, Turkish Registry 1467.

³¹⁰ MHD, Folklore Fund, d.5, p.2.

³¹¹ A.I.H, Archives of Vienna, Lippich, "News from Shkodra", no. 66, 27 June 1880.

³¹² Zija Shkodra, "Albania at the time of the Tanzimat", Tirana, 1959, p.16.

³¹³ The canon of Skanderbeg operated mainly in the provinces of Kruje, Mat, Dibër, which were the lands of the Principality of Kastriots. The Canon of Skanderbeg was compiled by Dom Frano Ilia. The canon deals with the limits of its action, the way of creating and changing the canonical norms. The canon also includes legal and moral norms. Some norms of the Sharia were included in the canon, after the Islamization of a part of the population.

- In Topallti the Turkish military feudal rule was organized through the institution of chimneys (4 chimneys), teqes (7 teqes), and feudal families (19), in Malësi there was an autonomous administration governed by the bajraktars and elders of each mountain. The Bajraktari is known as the commander of the armed forces of the mountain, or his own Bajrak, while the old man was the judge of the country and dealt with conflict resolution, loyalty and reconciliation of blood.

³¹⁴ MHD, Folklore Fund, d.5, p.2.

In Lura, in addition to the authority of Karareve, the authority of the church and Teqe also operated. Lura is a rare example of food tolerance, understanding and coexistence between faiths. Lura is an example of mediation, reconciliation of conflicts, it nurtures peace and spiritual tranquility, it nurtures respect for other religious beliefs. In Lura, not only in the villages, but also within the family, there is understanding and tolerance, there is peaceful coexistence of all religions. The common religious ceremonies they organize are an expression of these cultural attitudes.

A great cultural value for Lura is the tower. Throughout their history, Lurjan towers (cakmaja, shelishanes with frenzies) turned not only into defense castles. The towers did not only have strategic values, but they retain great values in the field of construction for architecture, ethnography, etc. With its tower, the Lurian mountaineer created a valuable cultural asset, a symbol of the defense of freedom. On the architectural side, the tower represented a three-story or three-story building with stone material. The numerous stone towers, stone and especially wood carving techniques should not be seen as points of resistance but of beauty, as great cultural values that this province preserves.

Their construction with carved stone of different sizes, the door vault in the form of a chimney arch in which various ornaments are carved increase the cultural value of Lura. Of the symbols, the one who builds houses even today creates the inherited ornaments such as: the flag, the eagle, the helmet of Skanderbeg³¹⁵. Ethnographic Lura presents a diverse natural museum of folk clothing, in defined types and variants, brings special masters of songs and dances, artistic works of women and girls from Lurjan. The Lurians did not decorate the wood itself, but also the clothes of women and men. The costumes of Lurjan men and women are among the most beautiful in the Albanian lands.

The dress of the women of Lura is almost the same as that of other Dibran provinces. The change is in the embroidery motif of the sweater. The Catholic women of Lura used to embroider the cross on their backs. Lura brings the mastery of copper works, stone carving and especially wood, a mastery that has entered the fund of national popular culture as a special growth, where wood carvings are known in the history of the Balkans as the "Dibrane School". Wood carving was the rare Lurjan craft. They carved and decorated not only the ceilings, the mantels, the windows, the closets of the towers, but they also decorated with their carvings the bride's chests, pomegranates, trumpets, dining tables, forks, coffee boards, lids, spoons, tobacco boxes, etc., in these ornaments you will find the most beautiful and rare ornaments.

During the historical developments, the Luria did not separate the joy, the song, the dance, the instrument from themselves. Among the old musical instruments, the lahuria and the kavalli are worth mentioning, but the ziftelia and the fiddle accompanied the lurjan when he was alone in the tower. Weddings were the only joy not only of the householder of the tribe but of the entire village. Lura with its wonderful nature, history and culture offers very important potentials in the field of tourism. It is these potentials that qualify tourism as one of the most promising economic activities for Lura.

The potentials of Lura in the field of tourism are related to the nature that enables the development of all types of tourism such as: historical tourism, visitor (cultural) tourism, family tourism, sports tourism, curative tourism, rural tourism (agritourism), transit tourism, religious tourism etc. This variety of tourism is given to Lura by its very history, culture and its existence among mountain massifs, river valleys, glacial lakes, and picturesque landscapes of rare beauty and very attractive for local and foreign tourists. This diversity is also made possible by the climate as a very important natural component that combines with a very rich plant and animal world that attracts not only tourists but also various scientific researchers.

³¹⁵ Cultural Monuments, "Kullat në Lure", Peshkopi 1981.

The cultural heritage (material and spiritual), the natural potential and the improvement of the tourist infrastructure are the elements that will attract the attention of foreigners as well as locals to visit Lura. White tourism, ecotourism, agrotourism, cultural tourism, mountain tourism and adventure tourism are forms of tourist movement with development opportunities in the Lura region. In this way, Lura will take its rightful place in Albanian tourism. The central and local government are the main actors in the development of tourism in this area.

Natural beauties, natural monuments, different forms of relief: mountain massifs (Lura's Crown), numerous circuses, Lura's National Park (a complex of great beauty, considered one of the pearls of Albanian nature, but some special units create pleasure from the first sight.), the field of Pelav has (a diverse herbaceous flora surrounded by centuries-old conifers. In the development of this rich and diverse plant cover, the exposure of the slope plays a large role. The field with its large spatial extent creates very suitable and favorable conditions for setting up campsites and building ski tracks.), Lura Lakes (are known throughout Albania for their stunning beauty. There are twelve lakes in total, but only seven of them have long water. The main lakes of the park are: Lake of flowers: it has an area of 1.44 ha, a depth of 0.8 m and an altitude of 1585 m with a water surface covered by water lilies.

Black Lake: has a surface area of 2.5 ha, a depth of 10 m and an altitude of 1620 m above sea level. The Great Lake: has an area of 11.8 ha, length 423m, width 300m, depth 20m and height from sea level 1722m. Lake Kallaba: it has a surface area of 3.6 ha, a depth of 12 m and an altitude of 1575 m above sea level. Lake Rasave: has a surface area of 0.4 ha, a depth of 2.5 m and a height above the level of 1600m from the sea. Lake Hoti: it has a surface area of 1.84 ha, a depth of 3 m and an altitude of 1500 m above sea level³¹⁶. Lake Kalata: it has a surface area of 3.6 ha, a depth of 12 m and an altitude of 1500 m above sea level. The space around the lakes, despite the great damage it has suffered in recent years, offers suitable conditions for setting up campsites, developing lake tourism, fishing, nature walks, etc. The lakes form an ecosystem rich in hydrophilic vegetation and rich aquatic fauna.

Flora and fauna. The mountain range of Lura stands out for its rich plant cover, which belongs entirely to the beech, hemlock, black and white pine, as well as alder. Alpine pastures are widespread at an altitude of 1800-2000m above sea level in all mountain units of the region. They are quite rich and form a large reserve of summer pastures, widely used by the locals. The plant world rich in species and extent is accompanied by a rich fauna. The wild predatory animals are represented by the wolf (*canis lupus*), the fox (*canis vulpes*), the brown bear (*ursus aretos*), the lynx (*felix lumxe*), the wild cat (*felis silvestris*), the coot (*martes martes L*) and the vulture (*males faxus badd*). Non-predatory wild animals are represented by squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris L*), wild goat (*Rupicarpa rupicarpa L*), wild boar (*Sus scofa*) and rabbit (*Lepurus europens*).

A considerable number of reptiles and amphibians such as: vipers, bolas, different types of lizards, frogs, etc. are found. Aquatic fauna is also rich³¹⁷. Trout is an inhabitant of the waters of the rivers and lakes of the area, making the latter suitable for fishing. In Lura there are a large number of natural monuments that add even more value to its natural environment. In addition to scientific and economic values, these monuments also present great aesthetic values, offering great potential for the development of tourism. This development can be transformed into a source of income for local residents. Lura is an important part of the tourist structure of Albania. Lura is the only part of Dibra that has become part of organized tourist movements. Lura with the magic to create lakes and other natural beauties has been part of the tourist movement for a long time in the region. Anyone who comes to Diber finds it difficult to leave without visiting Lura. People of various ranks and professions are attracted by its magic.

³¹⁶ Draci Bilal, "Tourism in Albania", Tirana 2009, p.203.

³¹⁷ Draci Bilal, "Tourism in Albania", Tirana 2009, p.210.

Edith Durham has appreciated its beauty since the nineteenth century: "When I came to Lura I saw a wonderful field that I had not seen in any country in the Balkans." The number of tourists who visit Lura, despite the damages of the last few years, increases from year to year. This number reaches up to 5,000 tourists per year. Weekend trips to Lure are organized by several companies such as FANI TRAVEL&TOUR, ONUFRI VOYAGE, etc. During the last four years, the KORABI TRACKING&TOURS agency has been operating in Peshkopi. This agency operates with English, German, Czech and Polish tourists who are passionate about adventure tourism. The agency declares that the number of tourists it brings to Dibër has grown from one year to the next.

This number varies from 500 to 800 tourists per year. It is worth emphasizing the fact that some of these tourists returned the following year or expressed the desire to return again. This agency states that the guest houses and houses of the villagers in the area served as accommodation for tourists. Lura is the place where you can develop lake balneary tourism, white tourism (takes place in the high parts of the mountains), sports and adventure tourism (Sports such as: mountaineering, hunting, rafting, speleology, horse riding, climbing with bicycles and motorcycles, fishing are only a part of the activities that can be developed), cultural tourism (special folklore, lifestyle, cultural heritage, handicraft products, gastronomy and creative potential), tourism rural (it can mitigate the unemployment crisis to some extent), curative tourism (a type of tourist movement directed towards natural climatic centers as well as towards thermal waters with specific curative properties).

Conclusions

Lura is a very attractive place with a very complex tourist offer. The offer packages range from its untouched nature, to cultural aspects, culinary, mountains, rivers, parks, ski resorts, folk, religious harmony and of course one of the biggest assets is the people. The combination of all these components gives a unique high value product which unfortunately is not properly promoted. The frequent changes of the panorama make the visitors experience the uniqueness of the products. Lura has great potential for the development of all forms of tourism and together with better promotion, investment plans and human resources we will achieve that tourists learn the pleasant untold truth about this province.

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