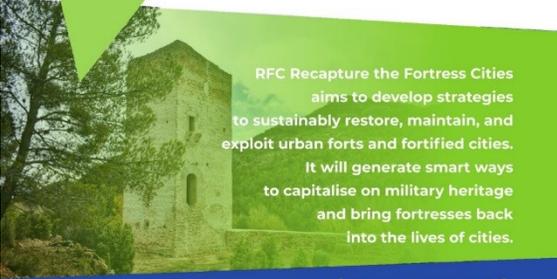


Tourism Analysis in Terezín Fortress City, CZ

SWOT ANALYSIS



RFC Recapture the Fortress Cities aims to develop strategies to sustainably restore, maintain, and exploit urban forts and fortified cities. It will generate smart ways to capitalise on military heritage and bring fortresses back into the lives of cities.

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An interregional cooperation project for improving natural and cultural heritage policies.

Project Partners

- Usti Region (CZ)**
- Regional Landscape de Woonkempen (BE)
- City of Magdeburg (DE)
- Municipality of Komotiv (EL)
- Provincial Government of Tiruvai (ES)
- North-West Regional Development Agency (RO)
- Prešov Self-Governing Region (SK)

Environment & Resource Efficiency



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

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Strengths

Historical site with number of different topics to learn about

Terezín city is being known mainly for its history as the Jewish Ghetto during the WW2. However, it is becoming a common knowledge for occasional individuals and groups of visitors that the city has much more to offer.

Being built as a bastion fortress in the 18th Century and used as one of the centers for the Czech military forces after 1948, it describes a full picture of the military history for more than 200 years. It was built under the Austria-Hungarian Empire, it remembers both world wars (further WW1 and WW2), history of the city includes the empire, two totalitarian regimes and last 30 years the taste of democracy. It is closely connected to nearby rivers Ohře and Labe (Elbe). The city importance outshined the importance of the town Litoměřice or the city Ústí nad Labem. At its peak it was the largest construction site and economy center of the region. Not only had the locals relied for a long time of the military presence which provided them with safety but mainly businesses to run.

Terezín is at this moment one of the largest bastion fortresses in the world. Some say it is the largest one. Its unique architecture and combination of the city, landscape and the nearby river makes many architects interested in the original design and building plans.

Sufficient amount of spaces to offer more services

At this moment, the city is vastly underpopulated. The original plans of the city provide housing and services for 6 000 soldiers on regular bases and maximum 11 000 soldiers for the time of the army emergencies. These days there are little over 2 000 inhabitants. There is a large amount of unused housing, empty storage space and possible spaces for commercial use.

The sufficient greenery of the city can be adjusted to more welcoming areas for the visitors. There is plenty of space which can be flexibly adjusted to meeting areas, restaurants, cafes or small shops. Most parts of the city have a very unique set up which can be used for a special experience for all visitors.



Location

The location of the city is very convenient as far as distance from large cities, but there is also a good accessibility by variety of means of transport. The distance of approx. 40 km from Prague makes the travelling to Terezín pretty easy. It can be reached in general in maximum 1 hr by tourist coach, public transport bus or about 1,5 hr by train to the nearby town Bohušovice. There are plans for a new port on the nearby river Labe (Elbe). The area of Terezín is also part of a bicycle path on a famous Labe path between the center of the Czech Republic and Germany (Dresden).

Uniqueness of the city

Terezín is, as already mentioned, one of the largest bastion fortresses in the world. It used to combine accommodation and leisure facilities for the soldiers as well as all servicing staff and plenty of defense premises from the military point of view.

The architecture combining the local resources and the rivers nearby make the fortress a very strong defense point. With the army presence, there was also a large supporting machinery which made the surrounding of the city a very strong economical center. We can still find traces of number of those within and outside the city.

Large amount of resources to create a unique learning site

The city is old enough to find plenty of objects, historical plans, archive materials, but not as old as not to be able to trace majority of the relevant information, should there be some missing pieces. As of today, there is a large exhibition in 2 accessible sites which provides a solid base for coherent and modern overview of the story of Terezín.

Weaknesses

Limited infrastructure for the visitors

With the increasing number of visitors (the increase in 2019 was by 10 000 visitors to almost 300 000 visitors per year in the Terezin Memorial only) the lack of services and infrastructure is more needed than in the past.

At this moment, there is one legal parking for buses in the city, there is no hop on/drop off area closer to the visited sites. The same legal parking is available for small cars as well. What is missing is sufficient bathrooms and refreshments corner which are not making the parking suitable and desirable enough for any of the groups visiting.

To visit some of the sites which are not connected to the Memorial is very difficult as there is not a proper side walk, let alone access for disabled people or people with baby carriage. There are no legal pedestrian crossings on some of the key points. Parts of the city museum are not safe to walk to.

Access to some parts of the city and find easy the orientation around can be challenging. There are signs with pointing arrows to the different sites, but the naming and description of the sites is less than sufficient.

When mentioned that some part and some sites, it means there is minimum of infrastructure which is expected in any city, but it is not enough for the large amount of people visiting every year.

Limited accessible resources

To our knowledge, there are archives of the National Museum and archive of the city itself. These are not open to public, but more important, there is no knowledge about them among the general public.



Some of the archive materials are available online, but these are only in Czech and rather limited.

Lot of the premises which can be suitable for tourist services or interests are in very poor shape.

Shortage of relevant human resources

Majority of the staff working with the tourists and educated in the field is commuting. It is difficult to find locals who can accommodate the needs of various groups. This limits the numbers of visitors to mainly visiting the Terezin of WW2, the rest are interested individuals who come with previous knowledge of the area or are goal oriented one of the specific topics.

Current exhibitions are outdated in their presentation

As already mentioned, there is large amount of valuable museum and archive artefacts in the city. The current exhibition offers plenty of opportunities to present more than the WW2 history, but in their presentation they are difficult to follow. There are suitable spaces to use for a modern, more interactive exhibition which can easily combine the existing materials with more modern approaches and components (e.g. audio-visual elements).

Promotion of certain parts of the local history

To find something more than the WW2 history is one of the key sore points of the city. There is an information center little outside the main routes and the direction signs can be misleading. The naming of the sites can be confusing, e.g. Cavalier II or Retrenchment 5, are of course correct in naming the function of the site, but for regular visitor it can be a no-name site.



Opportunities

Large potential for the development of the city

At this point, there is plenty of opportunities to re-develop the tourism in Terezín. Given the fact, that it was built in very strict urban planning mode, the structure of the city is easy to follow. The main square is in the middle and has space to accommodate majority of the needs of the regular visitor. Right next to the very well-known sites there is a possibility to develop the base for variety of services, starting from easier approachable information center to souvenir shops, restrooms, relaxing areas for a quick stop. In general, Terezín lacks food and refreshment services which can be easily provided in the city center by the locals or outsourced contractors.

All sites are easy to reach for visitors with disabilities, provided that the access routes are built or reconstructed. With careful planning there shouldn't be an issue to create a pedestrian zones and/or bike routes to attract yet different tourist groups.

Creating number of employment opportunities in the area with higher unemployment rate

So far majority of the people working on or with different Terezín sites are commuting. If there is enough of working opportunities, the main attraction for newcomers can be revitalization of the labor market. The real estate prices are very low compare to other part of the country and there are plenty of unused apartments and commercial spaces. Offering an employment can attract people to be more involved as locals, not just commuters. This can also help with rather high unemployment rate in the city.

Cooperation with significant amount of academic and travel institutions

Archive presence is one of the strong and starting points for further development of the academic cooperation of the city and various researchers.

History of the city can attract much focused groups, from army history, architecture, and specialists in water engineering, totalitarian regimes topics and many more. Again, the distance from Prague

or Ústí nad Labem, both being a university city, can offer plenty of internships or researches in various fields.

Creating a connection with other European cities

As this project is about cross-border cooperation, all cities involved could be connected with joint projects and activities. At this point, there are no limits to imagination and creativity in each site to develop interesting activities.

Sustainability of the sites

Each tourist site is as alive as the tourists are willing to spend their time and money into. With the current resources it is possible to attract number of new visitors every year. To achieve the sustainability, all sites need to be more pro-active and flexible along the new needs and ways how to attract and keep visitors.

Threats

City is in a long-term economic crisis

Maybe due to the dark history, maybe due to the army presence until 1990s, the city has stayed behind number of necessary developments right after the fall of the communism in 1989. With the army leaving, lot of people has moved out or lost their army-connected employments. With people leaving, the famous theories of broken windows has reached the city and with no financial help and no large interest in the city itself, the sites are in a very poor shape. There are no thriving businesses, no successful restaurants, and no facilities to attract tourists except for the brief visit of the Terezín Memorial sites.

Famous sites in the city are connected to short period of time only

Terezín Memorial is the most known tourist attraction at this moment. However, as mentioned above, the city offers more than 4 years of history during the WW2.

Surrounding area is predisposed to irregular floods

Since 1990s, the city was on steady decline, but the floods of 2002 and 2013 have created a big jump in the city economy. More people have moved out and moved their businesses with them. There are issues with the insurance policies, safe renovations and will to renovate and invest into unpredictable ventures.

Summary and goals

After going through the weaknesses and threats, the future of Terezín might look rather gloomy. But there are plenty of opportunities if the right professionals can handle them. For a list of short-term goals, it is necessary to focus on slow and steady increase of the visitors. Some of the adjustments don't have to be expensive or difficult. Renovation and creating of proper sidewalks, safe crossings of the major streets and creating a space to relax within the city can be the needed start. Appropriate snack and drinks stands/coffee/souvenir shops can be a very easy way how to offer the tourists more time in the city and attracts them to spend their money in the city and maybe even stay little longer.

Orientation in the city can be easier with proper design and placements of maps and orientation signs. Making things less “fancy” and more approachable can guide tourist to different sites than they were aiming for from the start. Adding interest to the WW2 sites with light information about the richness of the city can be a good hint for next trip to Terezín. A new easy understandable logo for the city museum sites can be also a small but worthy investment.

Freshening up of the city museums premises, including the exhibitions, is a very necessary step towards making those more attractive for visitors and more respectable for the sites and objects in them. It would be necessary to seek professional in the field to uplift those.



Long term goals are close to the perfect running tourist city. Sustainable and financially less dependable sites, profitable outsourced businesses attached to it.

With cooperation within the city it might be necessary to create suitable premises for the tourists on the main square, e.g. adding a new information center to the more central part of the city, creating a support system for the visitors.

The unfortunate COVID-19 issues, there is a unique opportunity to help with the city start once the tourism starts climbing back to its normal number of visitors. This might be the right time to create and re-create what is necessary for supporting the cities potential.

There will be a lot of cooperation, planning and involving the relevant professionals to the further steps of this project. Architects for the paths and museums, competitions for hospitality services, involvement of local community or interested parties from the nearby cities. With careful planning, budgeting and cooperation of all involved specialists, the city can for sure see a quick start and steady development in the near future.

Ústí Region, CZ, Eva Illnerová

Attachment:

Busy road without pedestrian crossing and missing sidewalk



Unattractive and unrepresentative space with animals behind the museum building



A crumbling wall and your stairs without the presence of railings

