

RETHINKING THE THEME PARK FORMULA: FOCUSING ON REGIONAL IDENTITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

ABSTRACT

The idea of pursuing a new take on the established theme park formula stems from the observation that tourists increasingly value authentic experiences over mass-market solutions, which offer little in terms of repeatability and sustainability. Nevertheless, the appeal of a more curated and refined experience remains strong for certain tourists.

Our proposal, therefore, revolves around the concept of a multi-building or “diffuse” park, consisting of various theme-centered parks scattered throughout the area, closely linked to their respective communities. These communities would represent both the "product" offered during the high season and the customers utilizing the facilities during the off-season.

In the province of Taranto, near the heart of the Apulia region, we envision the creation of five strategically positioned parks, each themed as follows: Roman, Greek, Norman, Messapian, and broadly Mediterranean. Each park would include:

- A small but elegant 4-5 star resort comprising 20 pet-friendly family bungalows, a swimming pool accommodating 250-300 people (partially open-air and partially located in an artificial cave), a spa, a green area with sun loungers and umbrellas, as well as restaurants and bars.
- A historically/mythologically themed area focusing on the civilizations that have inhabited the region, featuring performances, parades, exhibitions, and reenactments. The emphasis would be on role-playing and immersive experiences with historical figures and ancient crafts.
- A sports center offering activities such as horseback riding, hiking, archery, indoor and outdoor climbing, adventure trails, caving (abundant in the area), survival courses, paragliding, Greco-Roman wrestling, mud wrestling, and more.
- A cultural promotion center dedicated to experience-based entertainment, showcasing authentic shows, music, dance, theater, and poetry. It would also highlight regional crafts, both ancient and modern, such as textile processing, pottery making, tufa working, papier-mâché, dairy products, bread and wine making, local dishes, as well as ancient metalworking of arms and armor.

The five parks would be connected through a network of sustainable transit options, linking them to nearby tourist and historical sites. This network would make full use of the Via Francigena and the numerous trails and routes throughout the region.