

ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF KARAKALPAKSTAN

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ABSTRACT. The paper examines some theoretical and methodological issues of the development of ecological tourism in the Republic of Karakalpakstan. Presents the problems and ways to solve them, given the tourism potential assessment of Karakalpakstan, including analyze new ecotourism destinations in the Region. This paper examines some theoretical and methodological issues for the development of ecological tourism in the Republic of Karakalpakstan.

KEY WORDS: ecotourism, historical places, development, protected areas, tourism industry.

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1. Introduction

Today in economically developed countries special attention has been paid to the development of tourism services [18], which are an integral part of the service sector [19]. Today, ecotourism is the most intensively developing tourism industry, according to the WTO, "the annual growth of ecotourism is 30 %, and its share in global tourism revenues is 10-15 %". However, the rapid growth of mass tourism and environmental carelessness have had environmental impacts which has led to calls for increasing tourism. Ecotourism benefits the environment, society, culture and economy of attraction areas and local communities, and provides the best solution to long-term needs to protect and promote local natural and cultural diversity. However, many ecotourism developments fail due to the lack of a proper assessment of tourism potential [10] which is necessary for tourist attraction development [17]. Tourism potential is composed of the location, accessibility, accommodations, infrastructure, services, value, and abundance of resources within a community or location that can be transformed into tourist attractions or finished products [15].

There is a significant body of literature on improving the methodological foundations for the development of ecotourism, the rational use of natural resources, and developing and improving the regulatory framework for ecotourism. Studies have focused on determining the impact of tourism on the environment, maintaining a balance between nature and tourism, and developing a model for the development of ecotourism. At the same time, a number of important tasks include determining the influence of ecological tourism to the national economy and the impact of ecotourism in the economy [3].

2. Ecotourism in the Republic of Karakalpakstan

2.1. Potential in the region

The Republic of Karakalpakstan is the Republic located in the western side of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which has a rich tourism and recreational potential (www.karakalpakstan.travel). Many unique natural, cultural, historical and recreational resources, objects of world and national cultural and historical heritage are concentrated here. Karakalpakstan has a wide range of potentially attractive tourist sites and complexes, which are popular with both local and foreign tourists. The concentration of different types of tourist and recreational resources makes it possible to develop almost all types of tourism - from cultural-historical to business, from recreational to ecological, as well as rural tourism. [17]

Like in many regions of Uzbekistan, the Republic of Karakalpakstan has great potential to develop not only general tourism, but also ecotourism. This is due to Karakalpakstan's unique nature including, the Lower Amudarya State Biosphere Reserve, Ustyurt plateau, Kizilkum desert and the area of the Aral Sea, beaches of the Amudarya River, the remaining mountains of Sultan Uvays, Beltau mountains.

In particular, the Ustyurt plateau, located in northwestern of Karakalpakstan and bordering with Kazakhstan as well as the Russian Federation, and between the Caspian and the Aral Sea is extremely arid to the extent that farming is not possible. However, despite such a difficult environmental nature, remains of human settlements from the Old Stone Age to the early twentieth century can be found in the Ustyurt plateau. In particular, there are some fortresses in the Ustyurt Plateau whose construction is mysterious for science.

The Ustyurt Plateau is located along the Great Silk Road, the ancient trade route of strategic importance and a single place between the Caspian Sea and the Aral Sea. At present, the plateau is the gate of the Northwestern region of Uzbekistan connecting East and West. The highway and

railway located in the Ustyurt Plateau fit international standards and they are the blood vessels of the economy.

The Ustyurt plateau has about 600 species of plants, of which more than 70 are medicinal plants and the raw material for the global pharmaceutical industry. The 5.2 million hectare Ustyurt plains are used to feed horses, cattle, sheep and goats for nine months of the year. Bird fauna is unique, with more than 200 bird species living on the plateau over the course of a year. Fifty-two species of birds next on the plateau. Unfortunately, tourist on the Ustyurt plateau's can be considered its escarpments. This plane attracts tourists as it reminds the mountain from the side. One of the most important fauna species of Uzbekistan is the Saiga antelope, which is protected by the Red Book of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species.

2.2. Historical places

245 objects of historical and cultural heritage have been added to the state protection list, of which 46 are historical architecture and 118 are historical-architectural complexes. Several actions are being implemented to develop the tourism infrastructure of the region, including improvement of national legislation, increasing the implementation of legislation, improving the conditions of cultural, historical and archeological objects of interest to tourists, the conservation and restoration of these objects, and the creation of favorable conditions for tourists. [17]

In accordance with the State Program on the development of tourism, many services are planned for foreign tourists in archaeological sites of the regions of the Republic, as well as marking road signs in parking spaces and advertising banners. For this reason, on the basis of decrees of the local authorities, lands were given to organize tourist agencies, namely: "Ayaztur", "Djambaskala tur", "Toprakkala tur", "Akhunjan Shakhshanem" along the historical and archaeological complexes "Djambaskala", "Bazar kala", "Kumbaskankala", "Koykirilgankala" in the Turtkul district, "Great Guldursinkala", "Ayazkala 1-2", "Toprakkala" in the Ellikala district, "Shilpik" in the Amudarya district, the complex "Mizdakkhan" in the Khodjeyli district. In the next sections we describe key archaeological sites in Karakalpakstan.

3. CONCLUSION

According to our analyses, the Ustyurt Plateau in Karakalpakstan provides opportunities the establishment of scientific ecotourism. In particular, students of history, biology, geography, ecology and tourism from higher education institutions in Russian Federation, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan could use these sites for summer training, field classes (with topics including: herbaceous plants, archaeological excavations, hill

and measuring geographical coordinates and fauna lifestyle, nutrition, growth, plants, etc.), scientific research and to promote it among young people.

Our analysis yields five main conclusions:

First, there are the prospects to develop tourism through extreme auto rallies such as the "Paris-Dakar" race on the Ustyurt plateau;

Second, the people living in the rural areas of the Ustyurt plateau and at the foot of the plateau, have more potential for developing cultural tourism;

Third, the deficiency of tourism development is caused both by the lack of infrastructure development and lack of tourism companies.

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