



Problems and Prospects for the Development of Ecological Tourism in the Russian Federation

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this study is to identify the problems and prospects for the development of ecological tourism in the Russian Federation. The content of the concept "ecological tourism" is disclosed and the reasons for the growth of its popularity in various countries in recent years are shown. **Methodology:** The leading methods in the study of this problem were the methods of bibliographic search, theoretical and empirical methods, the method of consolidation and synthesis of research results, methods of expert evaluation and comprehensive analysis of problems. **Results:** The results of the study are that, based on a study of statistical data, the place of Russia in the world in the development of ecological tourism and specially protected natural territories has been determined. The large resource potential of the Russian Federation in terms of the development of ecological tourism has been substantiated, and a number of especially unique natural objects recognized as UNESCO World Heritage sites have been characterized. The authors identified a number of problems and promising areas for the most effective development of this type of tourism. The role and importance of environmental tourism as a locomotive of the socio-economic development of many remote regions of Russia, which do not have a powerful industrial base, but have a unique natural potential, are revealed. **Applications of this study:** Practical application of the results of this study is possible in the development of regional and municipal tourism development programs, as well as the formation of regional tourism products. The originality of the study is determined by an integrated approach to the study of the problems and prospects for the development of ecological tourism in the Russian Federation, including at the level of regional and municipal entities. **Novelty/Originality of this study:** The novelty of the research results consists in substantiating the reasons for the intensive development of ecological tourism in the world and in the Russian Federation, the conditions for the effective development of this type of tourism, promising directions for the development of ecological tourism, as well as the problems and priorities for the development of ecological tourism in the Russian Federation.

Keywords: ecology, ecological tourism, natural complexes, specially protected natural zones, ecological routes, regional tourist product.

1 Introduction

In recent years, the tourism industry has been developing at a booming pace in the Russian Federation, playing an increasingly prominent role in the country's economy. Along with the development of various types of tourism, such as cultural, recreational, beach, event, business, sports, etc., ecological tourism is becoming increasingly popular. This process is a reflection of global trends, manifested in many industrialized countries of the world. In recent years, ecotourism has been actively developing not only in European countries, such as Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, but also

in Asia: Thailand, China (Hainan Island), India; in North and South America: Canada, Argentina, Peru, Ecuador; Australia and other regions. According to forecasts of the World Tourism Organization, ecological tourism for the coming years is among the five most promising types of tourism in the world (1).

As it is known, ecological tourism is understood as rational use of natural resources in order to develop tourism (10, 11, 12, 15). Ecological tourism or ecotourism is a journey with responsibility towards the environment in relation to undisturbed natural areas in order to explore and enjoy nature

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and cultural sights, which contributes to nature conservation, has a “soft” impact on the environment, ensures the active socio-economic participation of local people and their benefits from this activity (3, 4, 5, 16). However, different authors differently understand the essence of this type of tourism. So O.A. Almukhamedova (2016) gives the following definition to the concept of “Ecotourism”: it is a type of tourism, which embodies the concept of creating a balance between the economic advantage derived from outdoor recreation and the ecological protection of recreational zones in the focus of the global plan - to preserve the nature of the planet as the basis of life on it (2). A.A. Gusanov (2010) gives the definition of ecotourism as a form of sustainable tourism, focused on visits to the relatively untouched anthropogenic impact of natural territories (8).

Thus, it can be concluded that this research topic is relevant and timely, both for the Russian Federation and many other countries of the world.

2 Methodology

The leading methods in the study of this problem were the methods of bibliographic search, theoretical and empirical methods, the method of consolidation and synthesis of research results, methods of expert evaluation and comprehensive analysis of problems. In addition, statistical data were analyzed from the official websites of international organizations of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and The International ecotourism society, as well as data from Rosstat.

2.1 Reasons for Increasing Interest in Ecotourism in the World

The interest in ecotourism, both in scientific and theoretical and practical terms, is due to a number of reasons, among which are the following (9):

- a significant increase in the anthropogenic load on natural systems, which necessitates the development of a scientifically based system of measures to preserve the environment and unique natural monuments;
- striving to protect the population of industrialized countries from stress, nervous exhaustion and various diseases caused by urbanization processes;
- changes in the behavior of people, consisting in the desire for closer communication with nature, “immersion” into it, lengthening the length of stay in the untouched corners of the wild nature;
- the importance of the formation of an effective system of environmental education and the education of the younger generation in the spirit of love for nature, its preservation and enhancement of natural resources;
- the need for the socio-economic development of territories with an underdeveloped sphere of industry and world cultural heritage sites, but with significant and often unique natural potential; able to interest tourists from all over the world;
- preservation and further development of the socio-cultural environment of the local population living near specially protected natural territories.

The development of eco-tourism currently requires the fulfillment of a number of conditions:

- development of modern transport infrastructure in tourist destinations;
- pursuing a reasonable pricing policy that makes this type of tourism accessible to the general population with a relatively low-income level;
- effective organization of ecological tours, involving the continuous development of new routes to remote and underdeveloped corners of the “wild” nature;
- the presence of attractive and unique natural objects that contribute to the ecological and aesthetic education of tourists who have visited them.

If in many countries, primarily European ones, ecotourism has already gained great momentum, and according to the World Tourism Organization, its volume in 2018 amounted to about 10% of annual income from all types of tourism, in Russia it takes only the first steps (14). For example, the income from ecotourism in the US has recently reached almost 15 billion dollars, while in Russia this figure is only about 20 million dollars, which is almost 750 times less than in the United States (6). Russia is significantly lagging behind in this issue from a number of other countries, such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, China, India, Thailand, etc. In recent years, ecotourism is beginning to actively develop in Russia, which is caused by the presence of unique natural objects that cause genuine interest from people from all over the world and significantly increase the tourist and recreational potential of a large number of Russian regions. It should be noted that many unique natural complexes are protected by Russian legislation, and some of them have been declared UNESCO World Heritage sites in Russia (by the beginning of 2019 there were 11 natural sites in Russia recognized as UNESCO World Heritage sites).

2.2 Assessment of the Role of Specially Protected Natural Territories in Various Countries of the World.

In terms of the area of specially protected natural areas, Russia is currently ranked fourth after the United States, Australia and Canada. At the same time, by the number of specially protected natural territories, Russia is on the 5th place in the world. Their total area in Russia is only about 2% of the entire territory of the country, and by this indicator the country ranks 9th in the world, passing ahead, in addition to the above countries, also Sweden, New Zealand, Norway, Indonesia and Finland (Table 1 and Figure one).

As can be seen from the data of Table 1, the leaders in the total area of specially protected natural territories are the leaders in the total area of specially protected natural territories in various countries of the world as a percentage of the country's territory (Figure 1).

2.3 The Role and Resources of Ecological Tourism in the Russian Federation

Thanks to the development of ecotourism, Russia is opening, first of all, to foreign citizens from a slightly different side. It becomes obvious that Russia should be associated not only with industrialized and urbanized territories, not only with the capitals of Moscow, St. Petersburg and other major cities, but also with a variety of environmental objects.

Table 1: Comparative characteristics of specially protected natural areas in different countries of the world (7)

№	Country	Number of Protected Areas (PA)	Total area of specially protected natural territories, thousand hectares
1	USA	803	54 312
2	Australia	2537	48 473
3	Canada	1814	45 636
4	Russia	144	42 568
5	Indonesia	122	5 668
6	Sweden	750	3 928
7	India	83	3 562
8	New Zealand	131	1 933
9	Kazakhstan	11	1 672
10	Norway	110	1 529
11	Finland	55	999
12	Turkmenistan	8	820
13	Uzbekistan	10	807
14	Ukraine	25	800
15	Japan	53	638
16	Italy	17	442
17	Spain	34	160
18	Germany	8	129
19	Austria	10	93
20	Denmark	22	11

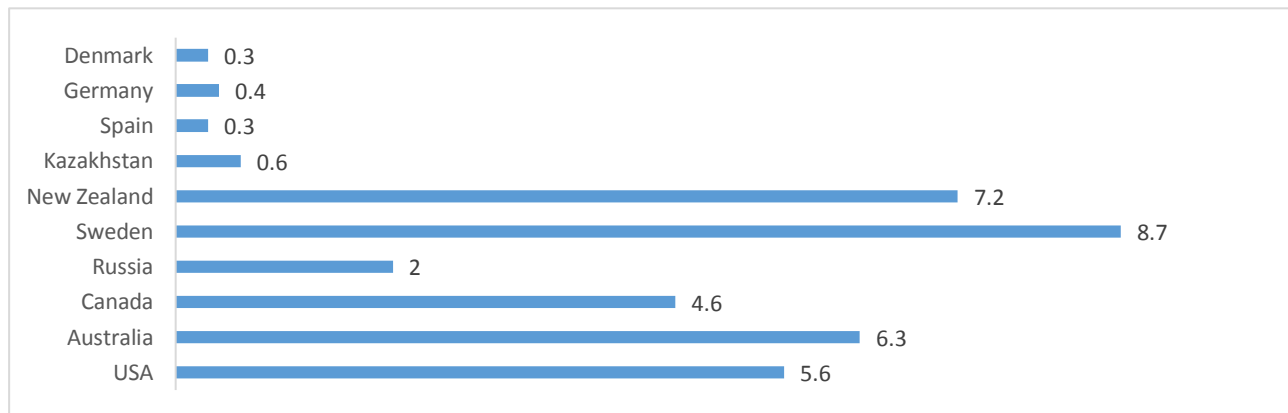


Figure 1: The total area of specially protected natural territories in various countries of the world as a percentage of the country's territory (13)

It should be emphasized that the Russian Federation is in the leading positions in the world in terms of natural diversity and the number of unique objects of nature. Among the places in Russia where ecological tourism has the strongest positions, we should first of all include Lake Baikal, the Altai Territory, Karelia, the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), the Kamchatka region and a number of other regions. One of the most amazing and picturesque natural complexes located on the territory of Russia is without a doubt Lake Baikal. As is known, this is the deepest and largest freshwater lake in the world, a unique reservoir of pure drinking water, pristine nature that has practically not experienced the impact of the anthropogenic factor, as well as many types of unique animals, birds and fish found only in these places.

Currently, more and more tourists from all over the world come to Lake Baikal to admire this wonder of nature, to join

the unknown place shrouded in ancient legends and secrets. It should be noted that recently tourist flows to this region have been constantly growing at any time of the year. The island of Kizhi in Karelia, where the State Historical-Architectural and Ethnographic Museum-Reserve is located, has been an extremely attractive place for tourists for many years. The pogost in Kizhi, built in the 18th century, is a unique example of the lost art of traditional Russian wooden architecture. The island has two impressive churches and an octagonal clock tower, all made of wood. This is the only remaining complex with two multi-headed wooden churches across the country. According to legend, the 37-meter-high Transfiguration Church was created without a single nail and did not use anything other than an ax, which the carpenter then threw into the lake, so no one could repeat this feat.

A completely unique natural monument is the Lena Pillars, which are titanic monoliths up to 200 meters high, lined up along the banks of the Lena River, about 110 kilometers from the city of Yakutsk in Eastern Siberia.

They were a sacred place for the indigenous peoples of these places: Yakuts and Evenki tribes. In the old days, people were afraid of the spirit of the rocks and did not dare to approach these unique natural objects. Only elders and shamans could safely approach what they believe turned people into stone.

In this national park one can find numerous caves, ancient rock paintings and abundant Cambrian fossils.

The real gem on the map of tourist ecological routes of the Russian Federation is the Golden Mountains of Altai, located in the south of Siberia. They are undoubtedly one of the cleanest and most beautiful regions of Russia. This is a permanent habitat for many rare and endangered animal species, such as, for example, the snow leopard. It covers two large Siberian rivers - Ob and Irtysh and is currently one of the most popular places for tourists and climbers from all over the country. Here you can truly appreciate the pristine beauty of Siberian nature, its uniqueness and originality.

One of the most amazing places on earth is the Kamchatka Peninsula. Ancient volcanic and glacial activity carved it into a whimsically beautiful landscape of fire and ice. Six Kamchatka volcanic objects were designated as World Heritage Sites, since they determine the peculiarities of the volcanic nature of the peninsula, consisting in the constant volcanic activity and high seismicity of the region. In this case, Kamchatka is considered a region of a very large species diversity of many valuable species of animals and birds.

Extremely attractive for tourists are the Caucasus Mountains, where you can build and effectively operate ski resorts, as well as mountaineering, taking into account the unique natural features of the region: healing mountain air, a large variety of ecosystems, with important endemic plants and wildlife.

The Western Caucasus, located 50 km north-east of the Black Sea, is one of the few large mountainous areas of Europe where there was no significant human impact on nature. Rest in the Caucasus Mountains is very healthy and attractive for tourists from all over the world.

Even such a very short and far incomplete enumeration of the unique and attractive for tourists' objects of the natural environment makes it possible to present the enormous potential that the Russian Federation currently has in the development of ecological tourism.

2.4 Problems and Perspective Directions of the Development of Ecological Tourism in the Russian Federation

The study revealed the following main problems at the level of local authorities (regions, municipalities):

- The lack of a system of established mechanisms that determine the permitted anthropogenic pressures, and the monitoring of the effects on natural landscapes;
- Virtually everywhere there is no infrastructure of the required quality – accommodation facilities, vehicles, tourist routes, equipped ecological paths and others;
- Lack of information from the objects of display (characteristics, distribution, characteristics, etc.).

- Lack of qualified specialists, as well as due experience necessary for the effective organization of activities in the tourism industry, mainly in the marketing sphere, educational programs for various categories of tourists, pricing, the implementation of quality services;

- Lack of variety of paid additional services and tourist products for visitors to PAs, which negatively affects the total profit from tourism;

- Lack of involvement of the indigenous population in the development of ecological tourism.

However, there are a number of promising areas for the most effective development of this type of tourism (Figure 2).

Attention should be paid to the fact that for many regions of Russia, especially located in Siberia and the Far East, ecological tourism is practically the only effective way to attract large tourist flows from around the world. In turn, this significantly increases the investment attractiveness of the respective territories and becomes a condition for their further successful socio-economic development. All this should prevent further outflow of the population to the European part of the country, promote the creation of new jobs and the development of small and medium-sized businesses in the services and hospitality sector. Ecotourism cannot only, but also have to become a driver of economic growth, promote the effective economic development of many remote regions of Russia, contribute to their further development, the creation of a modern transport infrastructure and the improvement of the quality of tourist services.

Priority tasks for the development of ecological tourism in the Russian Federation.

In order to significantly increase the volume of ecological tourism in the Russian Federation in the coming years it is necessary to solve a number of tasks:

1. Formation of scientifically based federal and regional strategic programs for the development of ecological tourism in the territory of the Russian Federation.

2. High-quality training of modern specialists in the field of ecological tourism.

3. Development of additional routes and directions in the field of ecological tourism.

4. Attracting domestic and foreign private investment in the development of ecological tourism in Russia.

5. Additional protection of natural territories from the impact of increasing tourist flows on them: timely and constant cleaning of natural tourist sites from debris, prevention and elimination of forest fires, protection of animals and vegetation from ill-considered actions of individual citizens (for example, improper feeding of animals or collecting very rare species flowers, herbs, etc.).

Effective management of ecological tourism is possible using the following methods:

1. Territory zoning involves the isolation of different types of territories: serious protection; limited operation; limited use of visitors; intensive use; infrastructure.

2. Coordination of tourist flows will be able to solve the qualitative and quantitative aspect of the problem - maintaining an acceptable anthropogenic load and reducing the inappropriate behavior of visitors in relation to the surrounding nature, respectively. It is necessary to concentrate visitors in places with a higher recreational capacity and distribute the flow of tourists to less intensive zones of utilization.

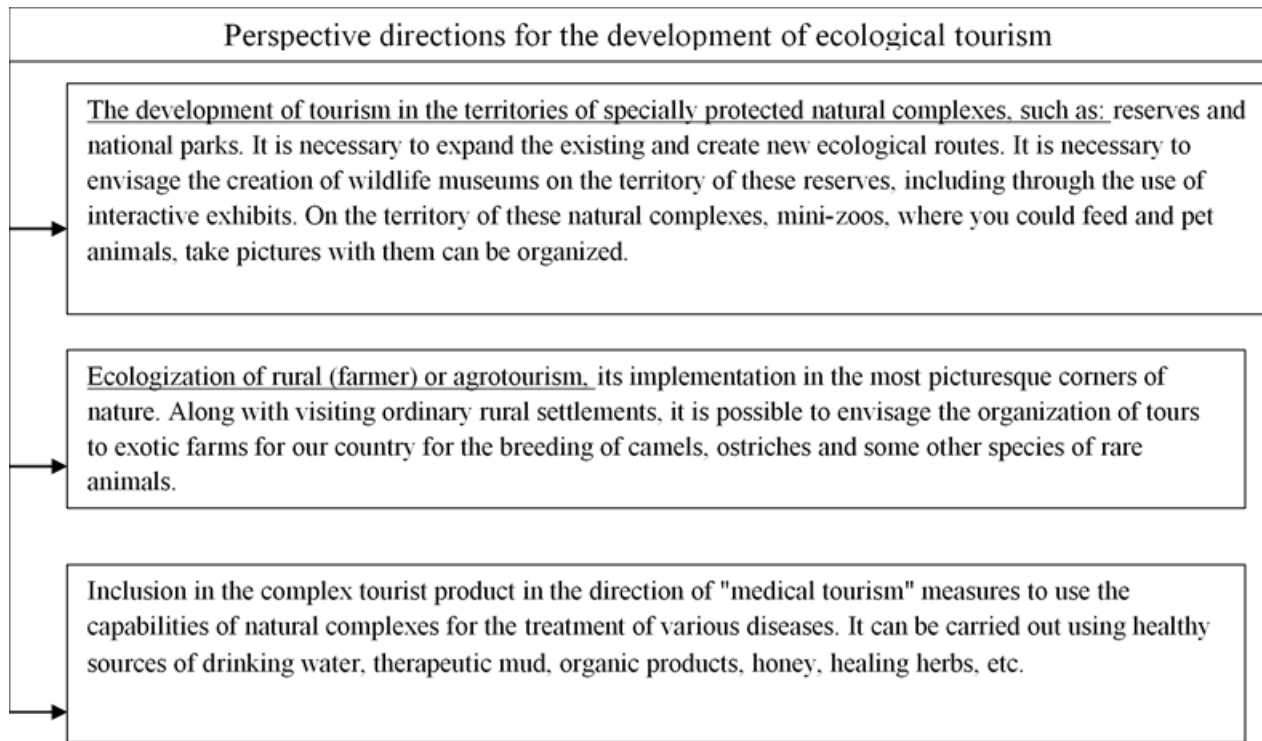


Figure 2: Prospective directions for the development of ecological tourism

3. Obtaining environmental education by PA staff, local guides, tour operators, a proposal for professional retraining to improve professionalism and competitive advantage.

4. The need to regulate the work of commercial organizations, to control the impact of tourist infrastructure on changing the environmental situation in the protected areas, as well as the activities of those who provide services in the field of tourism (tour operators, guides and others)

5. Establishing good working relationships with the most "environmentally friendly" tour operators and organizations.

6. It is necessary to allow the sale by other organizations of books, photographs, films, souvenirs that have been created on the territory of ecological tourism, which would entail self-financing of the protected areas.

7. It is necessary to establish reasonable prices for visits to protected areas. For example, to introduce differentiated contributions for foreign visitors, residents of the Russian Federation, as well as indigenous people.

3 Conclusion

Thus, Russia, which has an enormous natural diversity, has significant potential for the development of ecological tourism. In the coming years, the Russian Federation may become one of the leading countries in the world for the development of this type of tourism, significantly increase tourist flows to regions that are attractive from an environmental point of view and significantly improve the financial and economic results of tourist activities in this area.

At the same time, the intensive development of ecological tourism in the Russian regions is possible only if it is possible to overcome the problems that are justified in this article and to solve priorities, both at the federal, regional and municipal levels

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