Study of the Potential of the Territory for the Organization of Ecological Tourism on the Territory of the Volgograd Region and Measures for Its Development

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Abstract. Ecotourism, based on the principles of minimizing the impact on the natural environment, interactive eco-education, support for specially protected natural areas and the local population, is one of the most dynamically developing modern nature-oriented destinations in world tourism.

The development of tourist infrastructure is also relevant for the Volgograd region, which is rich in unique natural sites that attract tourists every year. Currently, it is required to develop measures for the formation and functioning of a unified system of ecological tourism in the Volgograd region, taking into account modern requirements in the field of environmental protection, the formation of ecological thinking among the population, and the organization of tourism.

1. Introduction

The development of conceptually new sustainable nature-oriented forms of tourism, among which ecotourism occupies a leading position, is a reflection of the global improvement of public consciousness.

Ecological tourism is a special sector of the tourism industry, which, according to estimates, covers about 12% of the tourism market with growth rates 2-3 times higher than the growth rates of the entire tourism industry. Every year, goods and services worth $ 55 billion are produced for the needs of ecotourism, which is 25% of international trade in services and 12% of the gross world product [1, 2].

Undoubtedly, the issue of developing tourism infrastructure is also relevant for the Volgograd region. The Volgograd region is rich in unique natural sites that attract tourists every year. Despite the fact that many of them already have traces of anthropogenic impact, there are still enough natural landscapes in the region that have preserved their pristine nature and meet the criteria for ecological tourism.
Measures are required for the formation and functioning of a unified system of ecological tourism in the Volgograd region, taking into account modern requirements in the field of environmental protection, the formation of ecological thinking among the population, organizing tourism.

2. Main part

Ecological tourism in the world is represented in all continents and even in Antarctica, but differs in the degree of development, types and direction of tours. The geography of ecological tourism is characterized by a certain originality. Ecotourists are sent mainly from developed countries to developing ones. Among the leaders here are Kenya, Tanzania, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Nepal, Brazil, the Philippines, as well as Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Almost every country has opportunities for organizing ecological travel. In the developed countries of Europe and America, ecotourists most often travel to their countries. The most popular tourist sites in these countries are national parks.

Russia, provided with resources for the development of ecological tourism, considers ecological tourism as one of the priority directions of the country's economic development.

By the end of 2008, 76 reserves in Russia (79%) have identified ecological paths and routes on their territory [3]. 22 nature reserves (24%) already have equipped ecological paths and routes, or are in the process of improvement. In 2008, tourist groups visited 64 reserves (67%), including foreign ones - 47 reserves (49%). The total number of visitors to the reserves exceeded 140 thousand, including over 5 thousand foreign visitors.

Thus, 2020 was declared in Russia as the Year of Rural and Ecological Tourism, in connection with which a legislative and regulatory framework is currently being prepared for the development and regulation of ecological tourism in the regions of the country.

The UNESCO World Heritage List includes five Russian natural sites: the Komi forests, Lake Baikal, the volcanoes of Kamchatka, the Altai Mountains, and the Western Caucasus. In these regions of the country, especially ecotourism can help nature conservation, employment growth and socio-economic development. In addition, there are many other equally valuable places in Russia that are attractive to ecotourists. Such territories should be considered - Karelia, Arkhangelsk and Murmansk regions, the North Caucasus, landscapes and unique natural objects of Siberia and many others.

The Volgograd region is a region rich in its natural features and one of the best places for a wide variety of recreation [4]. Located in the basins of the two largest rivers of Russia - the Volga and the Don, being at the junction of several natural, climatic and floristic regions, the region has a great landscape and biological diversity and tourism potential. According to expert estimates, as of 2019, more than 60 thousand people visited the Volgograd Region for the purpose of ecological tourism [5].

Currently, the following areas of ecological tourism are developing on the territory of the Volgograd region:

- ecological routes (walking, horseback riding, cycling);
- ecological trails, cycling, canoeing, equestrian tourism, hunting and fishing tours, rural tourism (agritourism), extreme tourism. On the territory of the region, 51 tourist and excursion routes are being implemented, including for school and student groups with accommodation in tent camps.

As an informational support for the tourism industry of the Volgograd region, one can consider the "Register of tourist routes operating in the natural parks of the Volgograd region" presented on the website of the Committee for Natural Resources, Forestry and Ecology of the Volgograd Region.

In 2000, together with the Dutch scientists of the RIZA Institute, about 10 eco-routes were developed on the territory of the Volgograd region. In 2015, Astrakhan students developed 4 eco-routes along the trails of the Nizhekhopersky Natural Park.

At the moment, within the framework of the project "Living Water of the Volga Region", a program has been developed to popularize the already well-known route in the Olkhovsky District, and 2 new ones have been designed, which, according to forecasts, will be in demand by residents and guests of our region. Each of the excursions is designed for 6 hours [6].
In the opinion of the authors, such an approach is effective for increasing the tourist attractiveness of the Volgograd region.

Analysis of the current situation in the tourism industry of the Volgograd region allowed the authors to identify its following problems:

1. There is a lack of information on the topic of eco-routes in the Volgograd region.
2. There is an actual lack of awareness of the population on the topic of ecological tourism.
3. There is no tourist service infrastructure.

A special role for the development of ecotourism in the region is played by a network of specially protected areas (PAs) of the region, which are the main objects of ecotourism development.

The system of protected areas in the Volgograd region is quite diverse and consists of both already approved by law and promising objects - a total of 203 objects. The following categories of protected areas are distinguished in the region: natural parks, reserves, natural monuments. The most common category in the Volgograd region is natural monuments - 114 items. Nature reserves represented in the region - 67 items [7].

Seven natural parks of the Volgograd region are considered potentially attractive for tourists: Volgo-Akhtubinskaya floodplain, Donskoy, Tsimlyanskie sands, Shcherbakovsky, Nizhnekhopersky, Ust-Medveditsky, Eltonsky.

They are located on the territory of several municipal districts of the region: Sredneakhtubinsky, Leninsky, Svetloyarsky, Ilovlinsky, Kulymzhensky, Alekseevsky, Nekhaevsky, Kamyshtinsky, Chernyshkovsky, Serafimovichsky, Pallasovsky [7].

The authors consider the following to be the main actions to ensure the development of ecological tourism in the protected areas of the Volgograd region:

1) Creation of infrastructure to maintain customer service through private and public investment;
2) Development of a single complex of excursion eco-programs for different categories of visitors;
3) Arrangement of eco-trails and eco-routes;
4) Creation of new and modernization of existing local history museums, information centers on the territory of protected areas and nearby territories;
5) Development of marketing, advertising and information support and promotion of an ecotourism product in the domestic and foreign markets;
6) Creation of a reference and information base for all protected areas of the region and historical and cultural attractions, routes, tours. Creation of a single package of information and advertising materials.

Today in the Volgograd region a lot is being done to preserve the culture and traditions of the peoples inhabiting it. The richness of ethnic groups and traditions of the region makes it attractive to a wide range of consumers from near and far abroad. The inclusion of ethno-tourism in the composition of ecological routes will significantly expand the program and attract more tourists to the region. The following should be considered as potential territories for the placement of ethnic settlements in the Volgograd region:

1. Rodnikovsiy khutor in the Novoanninsky region with the formation of a Russian ethno-settlement;
2. Petrovskoe settlement in the Uryupinsky district, the city of Serafimovich with the formation of an ethnic settlement of the Cossacks;
3. Nariman settlement of the Svetloyarsk region, Malyavskaya settlement of the Leninsky region with the formation of the ethnic settlement of the Tatars;
4. Kayatsky settlement in the Pallasovsky district with the formation of the ethnic settlement of Kazakhs.

It is required to create a unified information base on various ethnic events, museums, exhibitions held annually, in order to timely inform tourists planning to visit the Volgograd region. This measure will help to attract the flow of tourists planning to spend their holidays in the region. Tourists will be able to book tours and places for these events in advance.
The Volgograd region has no ethnographic complexes. However, there are interesting ethnographic museums in the region that could serve as the basis for the creation of such museum, entertainment and educational complexes:

1. Museum of folk architecture and life of the Don Cossacks - Ilovlinsky district;
2. Museum of the history of the Ust-Medveditsky Cossacks - Serafimovchesky district;
3. Cossack Museum - Chernyshkovsky District;
4. Ethnographic Museum-Center of National Cultures "Altyn-Nur" - Pallasovsky District;
5. Sabantuy - Svetloyarsk region, pos. m. Chapurniki;
6. Museum-reserve Old Sarepta - Volgograd;
7. Museum of Local Lore - Volgograd;
8. Cultural and ethnographic center of the Tatar people "Tugan Yak" - Svetloyarsk district, pos. m. Chapurniki;
9. Kamyshin Museum of History and Local Lore - Kamyshin;
10. Museum of the History of the Russian Cossacks - Volzhsky;
11. Volzhsky Museum of History and Local Lore - Volzhsky;
12. Regional Museum of History and Local Lore - pos. Light Yar;
13. Mikhailovsky Museum of Local Lore - Mikhailovka;
14. Sredneakhtubinsky District Museum of History and Local Lore - pos. Average Akhtuba;
15. Kalachevsky Museum of Local Lore - Kalach-on-Don;
16. Uryupinsk Museum of Local Lore - Uryupinsk;
17. Elan Historical and Ethnographic Museum - Elan;
18. Burials of the Bronze Age - Leninsky District, x. Turtles;
19. Beljamen - the city of oaks - Dubovsky district;
20. Levykinsky Cossack town-museum - Uryupinsky district.

Arid zones of the region should be considered a potential for the development of ecological tourism in the Volgograd region. Most of the region's territory is considered an "outpost of Asian deserts", representing a reference area of semi-desert, which has no analogues anywhere else in Europe. Throughout Russia, such small areas are available only in the Astrakhan region and in the Republic of Kalmykia. This exotic factor in relation to other natural areas in Russia and abroad can attract a significant number of tourists. For the full use of the potential of arid territories, the authors propose the inclusion of steppe territories in the network of eco-routes in the region. All steppe ecotours can be divided into several directions:

1) Landscape tour. The purpose of this tour is to show untouched steppe landscapes. The main aspect in the development of such an eco-route is a detailed study, taking into account the seasonality, passability of dirt roads. The route may include the territory of the steppe, as well as forest-steppe and wetlands. The duration of the tour can reach several days and pass through the territory of several districts of the region. For example, on the territory of the Pallasovsky district. It can include such places as Mount Bolshoy Ulagan, various springs in the gullies, small rivers with fresh and mineralized water.

2) Tour with an emphasis on the steppe fauna. Observation of the Red Data Book saigas, foxes, wolves, badgers and numerous rodents. For a better understanding of the tour program, it is necessary to consult a specialist-ecologist or biologist.

3) Tour with a focus on different types of birds. The aim of the tour is to see as many species of unique birds as possible. Larks, bustards, partridges, quails, sparrows, tits, steppe eagles, etc. prevail in the steppes of the Volgograd region. The trip should take place exclusively at pre-established birdwatching stops at the planned locations.

4) Botanical steppe tour. To implement this type of tour, a professional botanist guide is needed, who will allow ecotourists to get acquainted in more detail with the flora of the landscapes visited. Of particular importance for natural excursion tourism are typical plants of semi-deserts - wormwood, hodgepodge, saltwort.
5) Event ecotourism. May include observation of bird migration, flowering of ephemeroi (tulips, irises). These events should be scheduled for April-May.

6) Photo tour. Organization of trips to pre-selected territories of the steppes, filled to the maximum with individual natural features to create picturesque photographs.

7) Volunteering. Some ecotourists want to help the nature of the steppes free of charge. Such tourists may be offered free admission to any tour.

8) For lovers of extreme tourism, it is possible to organize a trip through the desert on horses or camels. The territory of the Pallasovsky district is suitable for these purposes.

A feature of steppe ecotours should be considered seasonality, where the optimal time for tours is spring and autumn.

Agritourism can become a special type of ecotourism in the Volgograd region. It allows the townspeople to actively spend time in the settlement, eating organic food, and rural areas an alternative to development. Ecological agritourism involves living in specially built cottages, huts with organized meals and prepared excursions. In the Volgograd region to date, the program of planned inbound agritourism has not been implemented, nevertheless, promising areas should be considered:

1) Creation of an eco-village on the basis of an existing peasant farm in the Leninsky district;
2) Construction of guest estates in the Vetyutnev farm of the Frolovsky district and on the territory of the Bukanovskaya village in the Kulymzhensky district.
3) Creation of eco-villages on the bases of peasant farms in abandoned settlements;

В составе программы агротуризма возможно: дегустация экологически чистых молочных продуктов, меда, фиточаев.

As part of the agritourism program, it is possible: tasting of organic dairy products, honey, herbal teas.

Taking into account the various components of ecotourism (arid tourism, ethno-tourism, agritourism), the authors consider it necessary to carry out zoning of the territory of the Volgograd region into 7 zones, each of which will include a certain natural park and adjacent territories of the municipal districts on which they are located. Zone boundaries will follow district or district boundaries. For each of the zones it is necessary to carry out the following preparatory work:

1) Determination of the boundaries of the park;
2) Determination of the boundaries of the zone;
3) Application of existing eco-trails and eco-routes;
4) Analysis of routes: duration, fullness, attractiveness for tourists;
5) Analysis of existing tourist accommodation in the area;
6) Analysis of transport accessibility of each of the eco-routes of the region;
7) Determination of missing elements (routes, accommodation facilities, transfer, service) in the territory of a certain zone;
8) Development of a universal model for the reconstruction of the zone, for broadcasting it to other zones of the Volgograd region.

The most promising and rational should be considered the use of the cluster approach in the development of ecotourism in the Volgograd region [8, 9]. It is proposed to form eco-clusters in close proximity to seven natural parks. Such a cluster should consist of various kinds of enterprises related to serving tourists: a universal recreation center, a food sector, production of souvenirs, local food products, markets serving ecotourists, and transport companies.

3. Conclusions
On the territory of the Volgograd region, the existing network of ecotours is poorly developed, there is no system of ecological tourism, the potential of the region's tourism sector has not been revealed. Measures are required for the formation and functioning of a unified system of ecological tourism in the Volgograd region, taking into account modern requirements in the field of environmental protection, the formation of ecological thinking among the population, organizing tourism.
To ensure the promising growth of ecotourism in the Volgograd region, the authors suggest using the following model for the development of ecotourism:

1) Connecting the territories of arid zones to the system of ecological routes of the region;
2) Resumption of activities under the program of inbound agritourism of the region;
3) Development of detailed universal and individual tourist routes, weekend tours (detailed route plan, timing);
4) Zoning of the territory of the Volgograd region depending on the location of ecotourism centers, consisting of a combination of several objects that attract ecotourists (protected areas, arid zones, ethno-objects, agritourism objects);
5) Development of a unified network of eco-routes for the Volgograd region.

The main steps in developing a network of eco-routes are:
1) General analysis of tourism resources and target audience visiting the eco-trail;
2) Identification of factors that in any way hinder the creation of a network of eco-routes;
3) Justification for the creation of a network of eco-routes.

Combining eco-trails and eco-tours into a single network allows you to regulate the flow of visitors in order to avoid overloading the most interesting and, therefore, repeatedly visited sites, makes it possible to flexibly combine the use of individual sections of eco-routes for the interests of a specific target audience, taking into account the age of the group members, group composition, etc.

To build a unified network of eco-routes for the region, the author determined the following parameters that are uniform for the entire Volgograd region:
- Seasonality of routes: May-September;
- The network is based on natural parks;
- Two types of territory used for design: protected areas and arid zones;
- The development of the network should be based on zoning and the subsequent creation of eco-clusters.

The design of a single network of eco-routes is aimed at meeting a wide range of recreational needs of ecotourists. Each route should be created after analyzing the natural and historical potential of the park, its current state, as well as on the basis of an analysis of the recreational flow of tourists.

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