ECOLOGICAL TOURISM IN THE SARATOV REGIO*N*

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INTRODUCTION. **From the history of tourism.**

Tourism began to develop in ancient times. Early travelling was essentially to seek food or to escape danger. It was also undertaken for trade.

The Egyptians travelled for pleasure. The Persians started to travel initially for military use. The Greeks were the first, who shaped the modern day travel. The Romans built excellent roads, transportation and communication systems, rest houses. Thomas Cook is the Father of Tourism. His first organized trip was 'Leicester to Loughborough' in 1841. It covered a distance of 22 km for 570 members. He acted as an agent by buying tickets in bulk and selling it to others on a nonprofit basis. This gave him an idea to package tours in a profitable manner. He organized the travel arrangements, accommodations, transport at the destinations and return to the homeland. He organized the first 'inclusive tour' to Paris Exhibition in 1855. 'Hotel voucher' was introduced by Thomas Cook in 1867 and 'Circular Note' in 1873 which made travel easier. First 'Round the world tour' in 1872.

The tourist activity is inevitably changing environment. In particular, the influence on water quality in rivers, seas, lakes and air quality, noise from the activities of various entertainment venues, destruction of wildlife by tourists, the destruction of historical monuments, the changing nature of the mountain slopes.

That's why an ecological tourism has appeared. Ecotourism is any kind of tourism and recreation in nature, which do not affect the natural complexes, promote conservation and improve the welfare of the local population.

To overestimate the usefulness of such tourism is very difficult. It warns and often prevents a negative impact on the environment. It is important that environmental socio-economic development of host countries promote the principles of ecotourism. Tour operators and tourists are interested in contributing to environmental protection.

Ecotourism is actively developed in different countries now. The aim of this paper is to study this new direction of tourism.

THE MAIN BODY **. The definition of ecotourism**

Ecotourism is a special kind of holiday. Ecotourists travel to those corners of our planet, where the wildlife is preserved. This direction of tourism is actively developing in different countries.

Ecotourism combines the features of adventure tourism and quiet ride, it assumes some physical activity, but it is quite calm and measured and does not require special athletic training from participants. Water, forests and mountains routes can be passed by everyone. During trip visitors have the opportunity not only to admire the surrounding beauty, but also learn a lot.

Ecotourism requires achieving harmony with nature, because this type of tourism based on the principle, which implies travel that does not cause any harm to nature.

**The appearance and the spreading of ecotourism**

The world's first continent, where ecological tourism began to be practiced is Africa. Even in the 80s people were puzzled by the fact that nature is harmed. Thus, the Kenyan Maasai tribe was evicted from the lands where they had lived only to organize the national parks here. However, members of the tribe had no opportunity to graze cattle and started to shoot with impunity, and poaching of animals that lived there. This is even more aggravated the situation of natural resources in those regions. The authorities were forced to return the displaced people of their land. It was organized to preserve nature and to be able to combine nature- based tourism with the cultural. And, indeed, the decision was justified.

The geography of ecological tourism is very distinctive. If a major international flows of traditional tourists aim from the developed countries to developed countries (this is France, United States, Spain, Italy), the ecotourists going to developing countries, which are located mainly in the tropics, because nature there is exotic and attractive for residents of developed countries. The leaders are: Kenya, Tanzania, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Nepal, as well as Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

Europe is the main tourist area of the world. On the European continent are the countries of the most developed tourism, which have favourable climatic conditions and diverse attractions.

In the developed countries of Europe and America ecotourists often travelled within their own countries.

Ecotourists want to deal with untouched nature, but such places on our planet are running out and many people have to settle for the secondary nature of the landscapes, which are significantly altered by human activity.

**The popularity of ecotourism in the world**

Since the end of 80's more and more people are becoming ecotourists. The reason is that people instead of the hot sun is increasingly prefer shady woods, and instead of urban communities - secluded village of traditional people. Also, people are attracted to affordable prices for ecotourism tours.

**Ecotourism in the Saratov Region**

The Saratov Region is a promising region for different types of tours: cultural, educational, adventure, hunting, fishing and of course, ecological. The nature of the Saratov Region has all the necessary prerequisites for the development of tourism. In addition to the national Park "Khvalynskiy" there are 79 specially protected natural territories of the regional significance, including 67 nature monuments, 3 forest reserves, 7 specially protected geological objects, 11 Botanical gardens. In the Saratov region there are 358 rivers longer than 10 km. It attracts lovers of kayaking and supporters of ecotourism. In the region there are mineral waters (balneological, medical) and mud, on the basis of which resorts, hospitals, health centers were created. In the region there are more than 100 boarding houses, rest houses and tourist bases, 23 sanatorium and Spa institutions. There are 124 monuments of nature, more than 300 monuments of architecture, 3 thousand monuments of archeology, 27 museums. The 18 cities of the Saratov region are included in the list of historical cities of Russia: Engels, Khvalynsk, Novouzensk, Petrovsk, etc. The ecological routes for tourists are developed in different parts of our region. " The Land of the Silver Springs and Ancient Pines" (Bazarno-Karabulakskiy district), "Kudeyarova cave" (Novoburasskiy district), " The Tour to Limonariy" (Saratov), "The Silver Springs of Saratov" on the protected territory of Kumysnaya Polyana have become popular not only among natives but also among tourists from different parts of our country. On the website of the regional Ministry we can see several tourist routes: the Tour to Bazarno-Karabulakskiy district with the attendance of the horse farm in the village Bolshaya Chachouka, the tour "Meeting with Ostriches" near Engels, the bus excursion to the equestrian school ( Marks), these activities are intended for students, families and represented as the day off excursions.. So Saratov region has all conditions to turn ecotourism into one of the main sectors of its economy: Every year over half a million people visit our region for tourism. In Saratov there are about 300 travelling companies. The regional Ministry of youth policy, sports and tourism adopted a program with the development of tourism for 2014-2018. The Ministry created a travelling passport of the region, through which it is easier to provide a potential of Saratov Region at the Federal level. WELCOME TO THE SARATOV REGION!!

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*Web sites:*

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2. [*www.ecovoice.ru*](http://www.ecovoice.ru)
3. [*www.ecotravel.ru*](http://www.ecotravel.ru)