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Natural Bases for the Development of Tourism in the Kyrgyz Republic and Its Potential in the World Tourist Market

Introduction

The present situation with world tourism shows that natural resources and conditions play a leading role in tourist use of a territory. Artificial resources are usually secondary for recreational activities of people, but the actual rest often loses its meaning without natural resources, as many physiological processes (functional systems) in a human body are functionally connected with surrounding environment and its elements.

Natural resources mostly serve as a precondition for tourist industry, since they satisfy tourist demands. Hence, natural blessings have appeared determinatives for occurrence and development of many resorts and tourist centers of Europe, Asia, and America. Lately, new potential tourist zones are intensively formed; they are characterized by uniqueness of natural resources and conditions. Such states and regions as Brazil, Kenya, Mexico, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand, Turkey, the Canary Islands, the Azores, and the Hawaii Islands are good examples of natural diversity attracting modern tourists.

The character of a territory surface has a paramount importance for tourism, in particular, mountainous surface. Considerable height above sea level and a relief variety predetermine a biological diversity and accordingly a variety of tourist resources. By our calculations, more than 60% of the areas suitable for recreation and tourism are located at high altitude, though mountains, according to experts, occupy only 10-12 % of the land on the globe (2, p. 19-29). As we see, the role of mountains in recreational activity is exclusive. Mountain tourist zones compete with the seaside and even surpass it in some characteristic qualities.

At the present stage, almost all mountain territories of the globe are developed and used for tourist purposes: the Alps, the Carpathians, the Crimea, and the Caucasus in Europe, the Himalayas in Asia, the Atlas Sky Mountains in Africa, and the Australian Alps. In this regard, the Altai Mountains in Russia, the Pamir in Tajikistan, and certainly the Tian-Shan in the Kyrgyz Republic become new perspective segments of the world mountaineering.

Mountain character of the Kyrgyz Republic environment

Natural features of the Kyrgyz Republic are defined by its geographical position in the centre of the Eurasian continent, among the largest deserts, far from oceans, and by the considerable altitude of its territory above sea level – a mountain relief. More than 3/4 of the republic's territory is occupied by the powerful, strongly broken ridges of the Tian-Shan and partly of the Pamir. Consequently the orographic relief of the republic is rather complex; it is characterized by the sharp contrasts where the general decrease of the absolute heights changes from 7439 m (the Pobeda Peak) in the east to 401 m (the Kulundu Hollow) in the west. In this connection, the natural features including climate, landscapes, water resources, plants, and animal life as well as socio-economic and ecological conditions of the country are defined by high mountains.

In the whole, the Tian-Shan represents a powerful mountain construction with a complex combination of ridges and intermountain valleys. Mountain ridges occupy the largest part (60-65 %) of the republic territory, comprising 88 big ridges. Among them there are the ridges of Sary-Dzhaz, Tengri-Tag, Enilchek-Too, Kakshaal-Too; they create a basis of the Central Tian-Shan with the world famous peaks of Pobeda (7439 m), Khantengri (6995 m), Voennye Topography (6873 m), Drujba (6800 m), and the Chon-Alai with the peaks of Lenin (7134 m), Dzerzhinsky (6713 m), Krasin (5996 m), etc.

Continuous influence of geologic-hydrological factors created exclusively various relief forms (high tops and peaks, passes, gorges, freakish rocks, falls, caves, grottoes, canyons, etc.) representing a big informative, sports, health-improving, religious, and scientific interest for a wide range of tourists. The Pobeda and Lenin Peaks are known to be recognized as the regions of the international mountaineering. For example, the international Pamir Alp Camp created in 1973 has accepted more than three thousand foreign climbers ascending to large tops of the Pamir and Chon-Alai ridge.

Natural mountain resources of tourism

Exclusively various hydro-geological conditions of the Kyrgyz Republic connected with mountain relief promoted the formation of practically all types of thermo-mineral waters and curative clay. They differ greatly in physical and chemical composition and percentage of the balneologically active micro elements. By this time more than 100 sources of the thermal and mineral waters have been discovered, including carbonic (Kara-Shoro, Ak-Suu, Karakeche, Chatyr-Kul), sulphide (Kara-Tube, Kyzyl-Jar, Rishtan, Changyrtash), radon, hydrosulphuric, iodine-bromic, salty and brine water deposits. Part of them has been developed, and such resorts as Dzhahalal-Abad, Issyk-Ata, Dzheti-Oguz, Dzhergalan, and Ak-Suu are now widely known within the republic and abroad. Eight deposits (Ak-Suu, Kara-Shoro, Zhalal-Abad, Chatyr-Kul, Bar-Bulak, Issyk-Ata, Furmanov, and Alamedin) are famous for their bottled mineral water.

Thirteen deposits of the curative clay are open with the general stock of about 5225 thousand m³. Only five of them have the asserted stock of about 573.1 thousand m³ that makes 11% from the general stock of curative clay (1, p. 12).

Climate is another important factor influencing development of tourism. Significant complexity of the relief in Kyrgyzstan – deep gorges, various expositions of hillsides in relation to the sun and air streams create an exclusive variety of environmental conditions. Hence, the republic's climate is rather diverse: from the climate of dry subtropics in the Fergana Valley, semi-deserts and dry steppes in the Chui and Talas Valleys to the permafrost highly in mountains. Despite such contrasts settled weather with a considerable quantity of sunny days usually prevails in the country; average annual duration of solar light fluctuates within 2500-2700 hours, which is comparable with Tashkent and Bajram-Ali.

It is not without reason that our republic is often called a “sunny” one. In the warm period cloudiness of the sky is insignificant and makes 15 hours; that increases comfort of a rest and creates possibility for heliotherapy. At the same time the absence of exhausting heat, long downpours, high humidity, and strong frosts on most parts of the country's territory creates the best conditions for a long rest in the open air.

In winter, steady frosts are rare, and that allows development of the winter rest. Besides, in a cold season it is warmer on mountain slopes than in valleys. The most favorable conditions for the winter tourism are available in the middle belt of mountains. In this view the northern slopes of the Kyrgyz Ridge are the most developed; there are operating ski lines (zones of Chon-Tash, Noorus, Toguz-Bulak, Shamsi).

In the conditions of the mountainous Kyrgyz Republic climate as a medical factor can be used not only in warm seasons, but also in cold ones (with outdoors winter tourism). For the better use of the republic's climate it is necessary to build climate-medical establishments and covered water pools; it will prolong the recreational and healing season from the current three months to six-seven months (3, p. 10).

There are over 40 thousand rivers in the country; they all flow from steep slopes and are characterized by strong stream of water. Thus, they do not freeze in winter due to a rapid current. There are 1923 lakes in the country. The lakes occupy 3.4% of the country's territory. Overwhelming number of lakes (94.8 %) are small. It is natural that the high-mountainous Issyk-Kul Lake is considered a natural phenomenon and called a pearl of Kyrgyzstan. It has a comfortable microclimate in a coastal zone and sandy beaches where duration of solar light considerably exceeds similar indicators in the Crimea. No wonder that the basic part of the country tourist enterprises (more than 60 %) are located there.

The mountain relief and a climate variety define richness and originality of the flora. 3786 kinds of the higher floral plants grow in the republic. The richness of flora includes not only a diversity of species; it also contains more than 1600 kinds of useful plants (edible, rich in vitamins, melliferous, medicinal, etc.). Presence of fruit and herbs predetermines development of the so-called “gathering” tourism for picking berries, mushrooms, herbs, etc. for phyto- and juice-therapy.

The woods are also valuable for tourism. The total area of the state forests makes 2861.3 thousand hectares, including 843 thousand hectares of the woods and 342.6 thousand hectares of the bushes. Forests make only 4.25% of the republic's territory. However, more than 50 % of juniper and 53.9 % of nut woods, 56 % of apple and about 34 % of pistachio wood areas of the former USSR are concentrated in Kyrgyzstan. Walnut-fruit woods represent

unique natural formation with a total area of 630.9 thousand hectares; they are considered the unique and largest stock of the relic walnut-fruit woods in the world. Mountain woods are remarkable as their many (a juniper, a fir, a nut, a moss, etc.) breeds are phyto plants, which are capable to allocate the special substances perniciously operating on bacteria and microbes. Therefore, mountain forests of the Kyrgyz Republic are considered the purest and healthy for a person.

The country's fauna is also rich and diverse. It is possible to meet more than 500 kinds of vertebrates, including 83 kinds of mammals, 368 kinds of birds, 28 kinds of reptiles, 3 kinds of amphibians, 75 kinds of fishes, and 3000 kinds of insects on this rather small territory. The Kyrgyz Republic is presented by a significant variety of biosensors. There are 0.4 kinds of mammals, 1.8 kinds of birds, 0.14 kinds of reptiles, and 0.23 kinds of fishes per 1000 km², whereas in the neighboring countries these indicators are much lower. Concerning tourism such animals as djeiran, red wolf, snow leopard, marmot of Menzbira, grey lizard are interesting, since they are in the Red Book, and taking pictures of them can become rare good luck for tourists.

For biodiversity maintenance in the republic there is a network of especially protected territories with a total area of 777.3 thousand hectares, which makes 3.9 % of all its territory. These protected areas include 6 natural reserves, 8 natural parks, and 69 artificial reserves (forest, botanical, and zoological (hunting) complexes) and nature sanctuaries. Almost all basic types of woods are covered by especially protected natural territories.

Especially protected territories of the Kyrgyz Republic have a certain orientation and differ under the basic characteristics. Thus, the Sary-Chelek and Issyk-Kul reserves are included in the international network of biosphere reserves.

The considerable quantity of contrast natural complexes is concentrated on the territory of the country – unique landscapes, nature sanctuaries and other noteworthy places representing huge value for the ecological tourism. Attractiveness of the mountain environment for tourists is also explained by such factors as natural obstacles, remoteness and sparse population, barren land covered with snow, water and other natural barriers. Recent development of a new direction in tourism – adventure tourism – is connected with all those factors. This type of tourism has big potential as a demand for it from citizens of the developed countries of the world constantly grows.

Thus, the Kyrgyz Republic has exclusively rich natural resources for tourism development. Almost all its territory, except large highly populated valleys, is considered a non-polluting zone due to its small population and absence of harmful manufactures. Therefore, virginity and diversity of the Kyrgyz Republic environment provide a basis for the world centre of the ecological tourism.

Possibilities of the Kyrgyz Republic for gaining its niche in the world tourist market

The choice of the target market in tourist sphere is impossible without an analysis maintaining its viability in quickly varying conditions of the market. Satisfying versatile requirements of tourists will maximize the profit.

Apparently, the Kyrgyz Republic possesses considerable tourist potential caused by favorable natural-geographical conditions and rich cultural-historical heritage, which makes it

competitive in the international market of tourism. The analysis of the recreational potential of the country predetermines formation and development of the following attractive types of tourism: sport, informative, ecological, hunting, resort, and religious tourism. There are objective preconditions for development of business tourism. The major common feature of these types of tourist activities is that they form directly the Kyrgyz niche in the tourist world market, both in Central Asia and in the universal scale and possibly might become a special product of tourist service export, and attract foreign tourists.

Unfortunately, tour operators of the Kyrgyz Republic for today cannot compete with the leading tourist operators of the world. In this connection the principle "offer what is not present at home" is comprehensible in tourist business strategy. In this respect, the mountainous Kyrgyz Republic is an ideal place for visiting, as it offers contrasting environmental change. Its market value is non-polluted untouched mountain nature and originality: high tops, glaciers, mountainous rivers and lakes, woods, thermo mineral waters and curative clay, different geological sights, and the people with its original culture.

Marketing advantage of the domestic market in a world conjuncture consists in offering to foreign consumers a tourist product of a natural origin in its primordial form at a reasonable restriction of every possible technical means of service.

Thereupon, the Kyrgyz Republic can occupy its niche in the market of world tourism with the following types and forms of tourist activities: ecological tours to natural zones (in particular, to walnut-fruit and juniper woods, sub alpine and Alpine meadows); zhailoo tourism with display of a nomadic way of Kyrgyz life; speleotours with training and informative purposes; exotic tours to high-mountainous zones riding horses, camels, and yaks; hunting with hunting birds and hounds; hunting a wild ram of Marco Polo and other animals (mountain goats, wild boar, pheasants, etc.); rest on Issyk-Kul Lake with talasso-, climate-, balneal- and peloidotherapy; travel along the Great Silk Way within the country; ethnographic tourism with the inclusion of the folklore, archaeological, craft and regional studies routes.

Conclusion

Hence, the use of all available resources for high-grade satisfaction of local and foreign tourists' requirements considering nature protection is an urgent task of the present time.

In summary it is necessary to notice that economic-geographical estimation of the country's tourist resources and tourism development faces the following urgent tasks:

- inventory of the tourist resources in the republic;
- development of a new system of payment for use of tourist resources according to market and ecology requirements;
- establishment of an admissible recreational loading on used zones strictly on a scientific basis with the account of complex of factors, first of all, natural-geographical;
- identification of possible dangers in tourist zones and working out measures for their prevention, estimation of natural risk and jeopardy of adverse environmental phenomena development;
- working out a comprehensive plan of rationalization and protection of natural tourist resources in order to increase their efficiency at the expense of natural reproduction and biotechnical actions;

- gaining by the Kyrgyz Republic its niche in the world tourist market (ecological, adventure and ethnographic tourism).

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Центральная Азия как геополитический феномен в системе международных отношений

После распада СССР интерес западных и региональных держав к Центральной Азии значительно возрос. Появилась возможность проникнуть в ранее закрытый регион и попытаться укрепить там свои позиции, учитывая геополитические, стратегические и ресурсные возможности независимых государств. Многие факторы и ключевые характеристики, которые не раз упоминали в своих трудах западные и российские историки, предопределили значимость региона в архитектуре международных отношений. Анализ географических и исторических аспектов региона объясняет растущий политический и экономический интерес США, России, Китая и других держав к государствам Центральной Азии и предпринимаемые ими попытки с целью снизить влияние соперников.

Центрально-Азиатский регион исторически находился в поле зрения великих держав и играл одну из ключевых ролей в мировой политике как связующий мост между цивилизациями. Уровень влияния на мировую политику процессов, происходящих в этом регионе, был весьма высок и неоднозначен. Л. Михайлов пишет, что «русская геополитическая школа традиционно называла Среднюю Азию ключом ко всей мировой политике» (19, с. 58).

Центральная Азия, представляющая по своей сути довольно однородный в пространственно-географическом отношении регион, расположилась в глубине Евразийского континента. На юго-востоке ее окаймляют Памир и Тянь-Шань, на севере и северо-западе окружают безводные пустыни и обширные степи, которые на западе доходят до Каспийского моря. В регионе расположены две водные артерии –