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PROMOTING TOURIST ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE CARPATHIAN NATIONAL NATURE PARK THROUGH INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

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Summary. *The article aims to disclose recreational potential and recreational facilities of the Carpathian National Nature Park along with the ways to promote its tourist attractiveness. International cooperation is considered to be an efficient tool to enhance the English-speaking visitors' awareness of the Carpathian region through organizing experience sharing trips, participating in joint international projects, cooperating with international organizations and volunteers.*

Key words: *Carpathian National Nature Park, international cooperation, non-governmental organization, recreational potential, volunteering, online resources.*

The relevance of the given research is determined by the recreational potential of the Carpathian National Nature Park, its important role in preserving natural and cultural values of the Carpathian region, taking into consideration the requirements imposed by development trends of the modern tourism and hospitality service market.

The Carpathian National Nature Park is the first and largest national park of Ukraine, created in 1980 for the purposes of conservation, reproduction and effective use of natural complexes and objects of the Chornohora and Gorgany mountain ranges, which are particularly valuable in terms of environmental protection, healthcare, history, culture, science, education, and aesthetics. Today, the area of the Carpathian National Nature Park is 50,495 hectares [1].

The main tasks of the Carpathian National Nature Park include:

- 1) preserving valuable natural complexes and park objects;
- 2) undertaking studies of natural complexes and their changes under conditions of recreational use, in particular, developing scientific recommendations on environmental protection and effective use of natural resources;
- 3) creating conditions for organized tourism and other types of recreational activities under natural conditions in compliance with the regime of protection of natural complexes and objects;
- 4) carrying out ecological educational work [3].

More than half of the area of the Carpathian National Nature Park (namely, 51.4%) falls within the zone of regulated recreation. On this territory, short-term recreation and healthcare services are provided, visiting particularly picturesque and memorable places is also at guests' disposal. Here, the arrangement and appropriate equipment of tourist routes and ecological trails is allowed. Tree felling, commercial fishing and hunting, as well as other activities that may negatively affect the state of natural complexes and objects of the protected area are prohibited.

A relatively small part of the territory of the Carpathian National Nature Park (namely, 0.2%) is occupied by the zone of stationary recreation. This area is used for accommodation of hotels, motels, campsites, and other service facilities for visitors to the park [1].

The territory of the Carpathian National Nature Park includes nearly 30 tourist routes with a total length of 140 km. The park is a habitat for a considerable number of animals and plants listed in the "Red Book". Historical and cultural objects of the park include 10 old churches [1].

It should be mentioned that the functions of national parks go beyond the preservation of biodiversity. One of the purposes of these objects of the natural reserve fund is recreation, that is tourists are allowed to visit and stay on their territory under certain conditions. The territory of the Carpathian National Nature Park is quite attractive for visitors, as this area is characterized by a unique cultural landscape [3].

Ecological and educational trails are popular among the recreational facilities of the Carpathian National Nature Park. As of the end of 2019, the total length of ecological and educational trails in the park was 122.5 km. The average length of ecological and educational trails is 7.5 km. Half of them are less than 5 km long, and the average duration of crossing these trails does not exceed 3 hours. Only three trails are longer than 10 km, which is determined by the difficulty of accessing some parts of the region. Checkpoints are set up on some trails, where controllers inform and instruct visitors. There are also route schemes providing description of the trail, its length, and key features. The equipment of the trails is harmoniously combined with the surrounding nature. On remote routes, there are benches and shelters built for recreation purposes [4].

In terms of healthcare, natural springs are of particular value. There are about 500 natural springs on the territory of the Carpathian National Nature Park, among which sulfate, bicarbonate, calcium-magnesium water springs predominate. There are two hydrogen sulfide springs on the territory of the Vorokhta nature protection and research department. In terms of salt content, the springs are classified as low- and medium-mineralized. In terms of the amount of dissolved mineral substances and the content of biological components, they belong to the group of natural-table and medicinal-table waters. Some springs contain silver, fluorides, and traces of bromides. In terms of the reaction of the environment, the waters range from weakly acidic to alkaline. Most of these waters are recommended for everyday use, because they are helpful with diseases of the biliary tract, chronic hepatitis, pancreatitis, and functional diseases of the large intestine [3].

The above-mentioned healthcare and recreational resources are prerequisites for popularizing the Carpathian National Nature Park as a brand not only within

Ukraine or Ivano-Frankivsk oblast, but also far beyond the borders of the Carpathian region. In our opinion, key components in this process should include borrowing progressive international experience, on the one hand, and information activities, on the other hand. As obvious, at the current stage of the development of tourism and resort business, establishing and strengthening relations with foreign partners, as well as creating information products of various kinds are of great importance in terms of attracting visitors to the region.

In this regard, we should note several important steps taken in the given direction. So for example, in October 2018, staff members of the Carpathian National Nature Park and representatives of the Institute of Development of Yaremche Region made an experience sharing trip to the Bavarian Forest National Park (Germany). The Bavarian Forest National Park is Germany's first national park, established in the southeastern part of the country in 1970. Its area, along with the territory of the Šumava National Park (Czech Republic), covers 95,000 hectares. This territory is presented as the largest nature conservation area of Germany and Czech Republic. Nowadays, the Bavarian Forest National Park is considered the best in Germany. During the experience sharing trip, the delegates from Ukraine visited Mount Lusen, the information center "Hans-Isenmann House", a local aviary farm, and a tourist trail called "Treetop Path" [2]. Financial support of the state is an important prerequisite for successful functioning of the Bavarian Forest National Park. Ukrainian delegates noted that "while on the territory of the park, they felt a powerful synergy between the state and local communities" [2]. In our opinion, the experience of such cooperation can be useful for more effective disclosure of the recreational potential of the Carpathian National Nature Park.

Participation in joint international projects and cooperation with international organizations represent other significant driving forces in terms of improving the image of the Carpathian region in general and the Carpathian National Nature Park in particular.

A significant contribution in terms of promoting the recreational potential of the Carpathian region was designing an English-language website and an electronic tourist guide "Discover Your Carpathians". This project was jointly implemented by the non-governmental organizations "PromoCarpathians" and the Carpathian National Nature Park. These digital resources, which provide useful information on the Carpathian National Nature Park and the Yaremche region, were developed with the participation of the US Peace Corps volunteers – Crystal Kotowski-Edmunds and Karl Donus. The US Peace Corps volunteers Denise and John Cappelli and Daniel Goldinger also took an active part in the implementation of the project. The non-governmental organizations "Eco-Play", "Center for Social and Business Initiatives", and "MAMA-86" also joined the project. The objectives of the website are:

- 1) increasing the awareness of English-speaking tourists of the Ukrainian Carpathians;
- 2) providing assistance to foreign guests in planning a trip along the routes and tourist attractions of the Carpathian National Nature Park, as well as informing them about activities and events they can participate in;
- 3) drawing attention of the global community to the issue of preserving the Ukrainian Carpathians [6].

The above-mentioned information materials are an opportunity for everyone to start discovering the Carpathian National Nature Park and the Yaremche region with the help of online resources from any corner of the world. In addition, there are new promotional approaches suggested by American partners that are more understandable for native English-speaking visitors.

To sum up, we have singled out the following key directions in terms of improving recreational activities of the Carpathian National Nature Park and increasing its attractiveness for foreign tourists:

1) studying progressive international practices in this field through experience sharing trips and internships (professional development);

2) grant activity aimed at attracting foreign investments to reveal the recreational potential of the region;

3) involving volunteers.

On the other hand, the implementation of these points requires:

1) intensifying cooperation with local communities;

2) providing stable financial support from the state [5].

Therefore, we see one of the important tasks of the development of tourism and resort business of the Carpathian region in the promoting its attractiveness for foreign visitors, who come here not only for health and relaxation reasons, but also to adore the unique beauty of flora and fauna, as well as to learn customs, traditions, and lifestyle of local people.

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