

THEORITICAL ASPECTS OF ECOTOURISM

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ABSTRACT

With adequate planning, organization and management, an extremely wide range of activities can be attributed to eco-tourism, from long scientific expeditions to short-term outdoor recreation on weekends. All this diversity can be conditionally classified according to various criteria, in particular, by groups of travelers, main objects of visit, types of tourist activities, length of stay, etc.

The main objects of ecotourism in its classic nature-friendly, narrow interpretation are relatively undisturbed natural complexes or their individual elements. Often, the objects of educational or scientific ecotourism are some of the most "popular" and remarkable biological species, the so-called flagship species, for example, elephants, lions, large ungulate species in East Africa, tigers in Asia.

A striking example of this kind are the mountain gorillas in Rwanda, for the protection of which the national park Des Volcans was created. Ecotourists are also attracted by unique objects of inanimate nature, hydrological and other features (certain mountains and canyons, caves, waterfalls, lakes and rivers, etc.), as well as paleontological finds. The objects of ecotourism can be exotic plant communities and biocenoses in general, for example, tropical forests, flowering tundra in summer or desert in spring.

In addition, cultural, ethnographic, archeological and historical sights, as well as natural-anthropogenic (cultural) landscapes in general can be objects of ecotourism - which is especially characteristic of ecological tours in their wide interpretation.

In English-speaking countries, according to the specifics of classes, scientific, educational and recreational tourism are conventionally distinguished.

Here it is necessary to clarify that in the Western countries tourism in relation to recreation is a broader concept. In other words, recreation in the understanding of Western specialists is a part of tourism. Russian scientific tradition and practice, on the contrary, treat recreation as a concept broader than tourism. Indeed, recreational activities are purely short-term activities of a wide range,

with a duration of less than a day, and already for this reason they do not fall under the definition of tourism adopted by the WTO.

Scientific ecotourism sometimes includes expeditions of scientists, summer field practice of students, other trips, including the collection of scientific information about the visited region. Scientific tourism usually makes up a relatively small share in the total ecotourism stream, but its role can be quite large. In particular, it can significantly add information about poorly studied areas and objects.

The information obtained can be useful not only for the development of science, but also for the further development of ecotourism in the region on a sustainable basis. This type of tourism can contribute to the expansion of scientific and educational ties between various countries, and to initiate important international projects carried out on grants from charitable foundations. Many Russian reserves consider scientific tourism to be one of the most preferred for them (and the simplest in organization) types of international ecotourism.

Some foreign protected areas for field research that do not require high qualification, are increasingly using the help of "ordinary" tourists - volunteers. For example, during a trip to Costa Rica, many ecotourists are willing to do mapping and protecting places for laying rare species of turtles, taking into account the number of birds and mammals. Cognitive ecotourism is "ecotourism in the classical sense."

Its varieties can be considered bird watching tours (birdwatching — from English birdwatching), whales or exotic butterflies, botanical excursions, archaeological, ethnographic and paleontological journeys, eco-safari, tours for video and photo lovers. The main purpose of recreational ecotourism is outdoor recreation, although, of course, it also has certain cognitive goals. Such tourism can be active (being a kind of "adventure" tourism) and passive.

Its active forms often include hiking, horseback riding and skiing, mountaineering, caving, many types of mountain and water travel (rafting on catamarans and rafts, canoes, canoes). Passive forms of recreational tourism can, for example, be considered: rest in tent camps, hikes and walks, picnics. Generally speaking, the allocation of all these categories of ecotourism, especially in Western countries, is rather arbitrary. Sometimes it is very difficult to draw a clear line between various types of ecotourism, for example, informative and recreational (if, contrary to the system of ideas and terminology prevailing in Russia, to distinguish this form of tourism) to determine which categories of visitors you would like to work with and which of them most closely match the specificity of your territory.

In this classification, built on a hierarchical basis, ecotourism refers to the type (group of species) of nature-oriented tourism. According to this defining criterion, tourism differs from such types as business tourism, congress tourism, etc. All variety of types of ecotourism should be divided into two of its main classes:

- Ecotourism outside the borders of specially protected natural territories and water areas, in the space of a cultural or cultural landscape (most often rural).
- A very wide range of types of ecologically oriented tourism can be attributed to this class of tours, starting from agrotourism and up to a cruise on a comfortable liner; This type of ecotour can be attributed to the "German" or to the "Western European" model.

As mentioned above, ecological tours can be classified according to many criteria - according to the method of travel, according to the composition of participants, according to duration, in relation to the borders of the country of residence of tourists, etc. However, the two essential species should be considered as the most essential - its purpose and its object. The main goal of the tour is to distinguish the following types of eco-tours:

- observation and study of a "wild" or "cultivated" nature with environmental knowledge training; a rest surrounded by nature with emotional, aesthetic goals;
- treatment with natural factors; tours with sports and adventure purposes. According to the main object, which largely determines the content of the tour program and, in part, the form of its organization, the following eco-tours are distinguished:
 - botanical, zoological, geological and similar tours;
 - ecological-ethnographic or archaeological, ecological-cultural tours;
 - agro tours;
 - speleological, water, mountain tours, etc.

Of course, the objectives of the tour and its objects are interconnected; Both main species characteristics cannot be considered as absolutely independent bases of classification (in a real tour program, its goals and objects are often combined and combined).

Finally, a very important classification feature for identifying forms of eco-tours are the age and health status of participants (in many countries with developed ecotourism traditions, for example, special tours for disabled people exist), as well as the number of groups. It is quite clear that the content of tour programs and their organizational features will be fundamentally different for children's trips and for expeditions designed for adults, as well as for small compact and for large groups of participants

It can be assumed that this laconic classification is convenient enough to identify the main substantive and organizational features of eco-tours, which are especially important to consider when planning and conducting them. Thus, first-class ecotours require the indispensable participation of professional guides responsible for observing the strict rules of tourist behavior prescribed by the protected area regime. The participants of second-class ecotours in many cases are provided with opportunities for fairly free behavior - of course, subject to certain restrictions.

In addition, the organization of first-class eco-tours does not provide for providing tourists with a highly developed infrastructure of accommodation and services, while second-class eco-tours are usually organized with a higher level of comfort. Similarly, types of eco-tours with predetermined clear main goals and objects of the visit require more special planning and support than, for example, the agrotour under the motto "rest in a peasant house."

In general, several trends are characteristic of the development of ecotourism in recent years.

On the one hand, ecotourism is becoming more diverse, its new species are constantly emerging. On the other hand, its integration with other branches of the tourism industry is increasing.

The adherents of the classical environmental ecotourism in its narrow interpretation, concerned about the increased negative impact of significant flows of ecotourists, call for ecotourism to leave the protected areas beyond the cultural landscape; in turn, elements of ecological tourism, for example, short visits to national parks and other natural areas appear in mass types of "resort" or "excursion" tourism.

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