

Sustainable Development of Tourism in the Baikal Region

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Abstract: In the article the issues of the sustainable development of tourism in the Baikal region are discussed and, first of all, maintaining the biological and landscape diversity of the area under conditions of the increasing anthropogenic burden. The Transbaikalian National Park was taken as the example. In the course of research the comprehensive assessment of the recreational degradation of the terrain, the quantitative accounting of the recreational load of the objects was carried out; those having a rest as well as the local residents were interviewed. Based on the results the methods for solving the problematic situations have been developed that can help to mitigate or prevent the escalation of the destructive natural processes. In order to radically solve the issues related to the further tourism development within the specified area it was suggested to use the method of the permissible landscape changes instead of the permissible recreational load method approved for the national planning system before. The research findings may be put to good use not only within the Transbaikalian National park but also on the entire Baikal natural area.

Key words: The Lake Baikal • National park • Baikal region • Sustainable tourism

INTRODUCTION

The Lake Baikal together with the surrounding area features various natural and cultural resources allowing to develop different kinds of the recreational activities: cultural-and-educational, ethnographic and ecotourism, health and therapeutic-related rest, etc. The most active and at the same time environmentally friendly enhancement of such activities takes place in the national parks which in 1996 along with the other specially protected natural areas (SPNR) were entered into the World Natural Heritage List as the components of the “Baikal Lake basin” object.

Within the boundaries of the mentioned object the tourist activities demonstrate in general terms the sustainable growth. However, to preserve the tourist natural resources under conditions of the annually increasing flow of visitors it is needed not only to determine its strategic areas but to develop a system of practical measures on their implementation.

Among all of the Baikal national parks, one of the oldest and most attractive to the domestic and foreign tourists is the Transbaikalian park established in 1986. It was it taken by us as an example of solving the issues arising by the development of tourism in the Baikal region.

The study was based on the principles of the sustainable tourism development [1], integration of the landscape-environmental and geoinformation approaches [2, 3], recreational zoning [4], assessment of the tourist potential [5, 6] and recreational load [7, 8].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

During the summer of 2013 the expedition of the department for geography by the Lomonosov Moscow State University was conducting research and practice works in the Transbaikalian national park under agreement on cooperation with its administration. The program of works included evaluation of the state of the tourist routes and places of resort within the recreational area of the park for the purpose of the sustainable tourism development. In the course of research the comprehensive assessment of the recreational degradation of the terrain, the quantitative accounting of the recreational load of the objects was carried out; those having a rest as well as the local residents were interviewed.

Increase in the attendance of the park area resulted in a great number of environmental problems the solution of which until quite recently was seen in the determination

of the maximum permissible load on the different park sites. However, this approach suffered significant disadvantages. As the comprehensive world and as of today relatively modest national experience shows, establishment of the accurate quantitative criteria of development of the leisure and tourist activities shall not be considered as necessary components of the planning materials at all.

As it follows from the special guidelines on the sustainable tourism in SPNR issued by IUCN [9], determination of the quantitative standards for permissible loads cannot be considered as an effective method of the tourist flow management any more. It was replaced through the method of maximum allowable changes based on the management approach: planning, first of all, not of the number of tourists but the range of the recreational options of the area and kinds of recreational activities on the basis of which the system of measures on improvement and environmental education of the visitors is developed. This method that was updated and adjusted by us to the particular conditions [10] was approved for solving the issues of the sustainable tourism development on the territory subjected to research.

RESULTS

The conducted survey of the recreational park area along the coast of the Chivyrkuysky and Barguzinsky bays has show the great unevenness in the degree of the tourist resources development. Also the environmental state of the coast stands in close dependence on the anthropogenic burden as well as on the recreational resistivity of the terrain which in its turn influences the modern dynamics and level of exposure to the destructive natural processes. On the most visited sites the signs of degradation of the vegetative ground cover are to be observed: soil denudation as the result of trampling (poaching) and soil drifting, erosion, bogging, etc. The results of evaluation supplemented by the findings of the opinion poll among the tourists served as practical guidelines to a fundamental solution of these problems by establishing the qualitative limits of the permissible landscape changes, improvement of the routes and their information content for the purposes of environmental education of the visitors.

Practical effects of the expedition activity are perfectly illustrated by the example of the Monakhovo bay – the most popular and along with that the most

troubled place of resort in the park. By means of comparing with the foreign and domestic similar models there was suggested a series of measures on determination of the permissible limit of changes of the natural complexes, further arrangement of the tourist flow (including transport one), planning of the tents placement, installation of the information stands (with guidelines according to their content), etc. Besides, it was suggested to widen the beach by means of depositing sand on the narrow wayside along the large sor-affected bog adjacent to the beach – shallow lake-like lagoon filled with the hygrophilous vegetation. Preliminary survey of its territory has shown that such beach extension will most likely not cause any substantial damage neither to bog fauna nor flora and therefore seems to be quite admissible. The only settlement in the bay – Kurbulik – accounting for about one hundred people represents in its present state the unique example of a fishing settlement preserved from the old times. It is appropriate for establishment of an open-air museum where visitors would receive the information about how the fishing industry is organized and how people live far away from the big cities in the severe natural conditions. The results of interview among the local residents have shown that notwithstanding the unanimous support of the necessity of preservation and development of the traditional business held in the settlement the majority of those asked are ready to work in the organized tourism after completion of the corresponding training. The implementation of these plans will substantially promote to the sustainable development of the settlement and will stop the rural depopulation.

Summary: The survey performed has shown the defining role of the recreational redevelopment (improvement) and informational saturation in the sustainable development of tourism in the Baikal region. The implementation of the suggested measures will promote to preservation of the tourist landscapes by prevention or regulation of the negative anthropogenic changes. The given research findings may be used not only in the Transbaikalian national park but also on the entire Baikal natural area and beyond its borders.

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