

## 4. ЕКОНОМІКА ПРИРОДОКОРИСТУВАННЯ ТА ОХОРОНИ НАВКОЛИШНЬОГО СЕРЕДОВИЩА

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### PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECOTOURISM IN THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

*One of the developing sectors of the economy in the non-oil sector is tourism. The recent development in the field of tourism. International competitions held in our country are one of the main factors ensuring the flow of tourists. As the interest of tourists to our country grows, so do the types of tourism. There are different types of tourism, and each of them is unique. One of them is ecotourism. Ecotourism is a type of tourism in which foreign visitors come in contact with the local population, rent their homes and use their kitchens. Locals also get information about the foreign tourists' country, history and culture, music and cuisine. When talking about nature tourism, experts draw attention to the income of the local population from this business, saying that it prevents both unemployment and people's dependence on the state. The rich nature of Azerbaijan, sights, fresh mountain air, cool springs, the world famous Caspian Sea have led to the creation of a number of international routes and the formation of the corresponding infrastructure. In this regard, our country, which has an advantageous position for any sphere of tourism, is very lucky.*

**Key words:** ecological cleanliness, winter tourism, hunting tourism, international tourism market, rural tourism, extreme tourism, mountain tourism, strategic road maps, specially protected natural areas.

**Formulation of the problem.** Since the mid-20th century, the number of factors threatening ecosystems has increased. In this regard, ecotourism can be useful in protecting ecosystems. The final declaration of the 2002 World Ecotourism Summit recommended the development of ecotourism policies and development strategies. The Quebec Declaration also calls for the development of educational programs to protect nature, its sustainable use, to get acquainted with local and unique cultures, and to inform children and young people about their relationship with ecotourism.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Various books, articles and Internet resources related to the environment, tourism in Azerbaijan and ecotourism, relevant legislation have been researched during the preparation of the article. From this point of view, it is possible to name such scientists as Martha Honey, Kelsey Frenkiel, V.Ye. Boreiko, A.A Vinogradov. For example, Martha Honey and Kelsey Frenkiel co-authored a book, "Overtourism: Lessons for a Better Future" published in 2021. On the other hand, V.Ye. Boreiko's work "The Trojan horse of ecotourism: death for nature reserves" is

very relevant from this point of view. From Azerbaijan researchers, the book by A.T. Asgarov, B.A. Bilalov, Ch.G. Gulaliyev "Ecological tourism", Sh. Mammadov's book "Azerbaijan: ecotourism potential" are interesting sources for research in this field.

**Formulation of the aim of the article.** The article aims to discuss the suitability of Azerbaijani nature and its opportunities for tourism purposes, what features are attractive to tourists, to make proposals for the development of this area of tourism.

**Main material.** In order to support the development of ecotourism, various programmes and projects are being implemented in Azerbaijan by international organizations. Within the framework of ecotourism, such international routes as "Alexander Dumas in the Caucasus" which amazed the French, "German settlements in Azerbaijan", "Silk Road", "Wine Road", "Seven Wonders of Azerbaijan" which are popular among the German tourists have been created in Azerbaijan. The creation of these routes leads to the creation of relevant infrastructure [5, p. 5].

In 2009, with the participation of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, the foundation of the

Shahdag tourist complex, the pearl of the country's tourism industry, was laid in the Gusar region, in the Shahdag National Park. The area where the complex is located is distinguished by its ecological purity, rich flora and fauna. Shahdag tourist complex is the first ski resort in the history of Azerbaijan. The uniqueness of this complex is that due to the production of artificial snow, this recreation center is the first in Europe to operate in all seasons. The construction of the Shahdag tourist complex, which will accommodate 5,000 tourists, costs 4 billion EUR [8]. Five 5-star hotels, oriental-style mansions and cottages have been built on 2,000 hectares. At the highest point of Shahdag, at an altitude of 2,500 meters, a restaurant has been built, which can be reached by cable car. A sports base has been established near the complex. Bobsley and ski trails, an ice rink and a hockey rink have been built here.

Currently, work is underway in Gabala and Sheki to provide services within the framework of winter tourism. The creation of such complexes will create conditions not only for the development of skiing, but also many winter sports and mountain tourism. Our country has all the conditions for ecotourism to become a profitable industry. A family recreation association has been established in Sheki. Homes are rented to tourists by locals. In many countries around the world, ecotourism, a type of hunting tourism, is a very lucrative field. Effective development of eco-tourism can increase the income of the local population, which can be a key impetus to increase employment. Azerbaijan has all the conditions for the development of hunting tourism. For example, in winter, in the Kyzylagach reserve, the presence of a large number of migratory birds is very favourable for licensed hunting. Thanks to the cooperation with the Eurasia Foundation, this type of tourism is developing in the regions of Azerbaijan. The project covers five southern regions - Lankaran, Masalli, Astara, Lerik and Yardimli. The second project includes Guba, Gusar and Devechi [6]. According to UNWTO and other international organizations, the current stage in the development of the tourism industry in Azerbaijan is characterized by positive changes in many areas. The attention of the country's leadership to this issue, the adoption by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan of the "State Program for the Development of Tourism in Azerbaijan in 2010–2014", the Development Concept "Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the Future" – all of this proves that Azerbaijan is rapidly integrating into the world space and successfully applying the experience of leading countries in the international tourism market. Activities carried out jointly with the UN, UNESCO, ISESCO, WTO and other international organizations in the field of tourism, and especially in the field of eco-tourism, show that our country is interested in preserving its cultural heritage and Azerbaijan's ancient culture and recognition in the world.

The development of ecotourism is also economically viable. New jobs are being created, people have the opportunity to apply their ideas, knowledge and skills. Ecotourism is very interesting for foreign tourists. Tourists

visiting our country admire the beauty of vast areas where wildlife is preserved, high mountains, rocks, waterfalls, thick forests. The increase in the number of national parks also stimulates the development of ecotourism in our country. New tourist routes are opened here. A project is being prepared to transform Absheron's Zira Island into a modern ecotourism complex. Here, the Bjarke Ingels Group, a Danish architectural firm, is designing an environmentally friendly resort complex. According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Azerbaijan, a magnificent tourism complex is planned to be built on the Absheron Peninsula in the next 20 years. It is planned to build 300 villas with a living area of 10,000 people, an international university, a hospital, 5 hotels (4–5 stars), a golf club with an area of 100 hectares, other administrative and public buildings, and beach complexes [9]. The complex will have 16 wind turbines, which will supply electricity to the entire complex. In order to ensure complete environmental safety, it is planned to establish a treatment system for the treatment of waste and water of the Caspian Sea.

Development of various types of tourism – ecological tourism, rural tourism, extreme tourism, mountain tourism – will give an impetus to increase the number of foreign tourists in our country.

Summarizing the above, we can show the most important components of ecotourism:

- promotion of tourists, i.e. creation of a tourist-oriented product aimed at expanding the knowledge and skills of tourists;
- carrying out companies with the participation of tourists and tour operators in the direction of careful use of natural resources on the route, protection of wildlife and ecosystems;
- respect for the customs and traditions of local communities, intercultural exchange and communication.

Recently, under the influence of various factors affecting the development of ecotourism, several modern trends have emerged. Firstly, new forms and manifestations of ecotourism are emerging. Secondly, ecotourism is being more closely integrated with other types of the tourism industry. Today, there is a trend in the world that net proponents of ecotourism, noting the negative effects of large influxes of ecotourists, demand a ban on any tourism activities in specially protected natural areas. However, despite their position, ecotourism has already become part of mass tourist routes. For example, during trips to the beach or cultural and educational tours, short trips and excursions to national reserves or parks are organized. Undoubtedly, the emergence of new trends changes the original meaning and importance of ecotourism, and expands the meaning of the concept of ecotourism. Statistics on tourism activities in the national parks show that in 2017, compared to 2010, the number of eco-trails and eco-routes increased by 5.3 times. The number of eco-tourists has also increased by 90 times. The number of tourists visiting museums in these areas has tripled. However, it should be noted that, unlike some Western countries, it is very difficult to estimate the

real flow of tourists in Azerbaijan. The methods of tourist registration are not clearly defined. Therefore, the actual flow of tourists is several times higher than shown in the statistics. This indicates that anthropogenic pressure on natural areas is high. It should be noted that only more accurate information can be obtained about tourists who have organised group visits to national parks and other protected areas, as the management of these parks keeps a strict record of this. According to statistics, the number of visitors to national parks is growing due to local tourists. This trend is more manifested than in 2015 [1, p. 58–62]. National parks and reserves are the main source of development of ecotourism. The preference of tourists for this or that park depends on the organization and infrastructure of these places, as well as the uniqueness of the facilities and the level of services provided.

Despite the increase in the flow of tourists to national parks and reserves, Azerbaijan is still unable to compete with other countries in this area and lags behind in the organization of ecotourism. The essence of the problem is the poor development of infrastructure in these parks and reserves, lack of funding, poor marketing and image of facilities. Azerbaijan, with its vast natural resources, can become one of the leaders in the field of ecotourism. However, Azerbaijan is still far behind in the ecotourism market and ranks last in the region among Russia, Turkey, Iran, and Georgia in terms of ecotourism revenues.

Although the process of development of ecotourism is active in different regions of Azerbaijan, one of the main goals is to unite this direction in the form of a single strategic policy, to ensure the socio-economic development of the regions, the natural and ecological balance. These objectives are also set out in detail in the Strategic Roadmaps adopted by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on December 6, 2016. The Strategic Roadmaps show that for the development of eco-tourism and outbound tourism in the country, the following key priority issues must be addressed:

- training of qualified personnel in this field;
- development of a wide range of new ecotourism products;
- application of flexible pricing policy;
- state support for the promotion of ecotourism products on the world market;
- joint activities of local communities and executive authorities for the development of ecotourism in the regions;
- attracting local and foreign investments, applying a simplified tax burden and promoting the participation of business people in the development of the region.

Today, eco-tourism is a complex direction that ensures the mutual interests of tourism, culture and ecology. Ecotourism is an event typical for the 21st century, which can have a strong impact on the economy of the country as a whole and its individual regions, the preservation of natural areas.

Thus, the strengths of Azerbaijan's tourism potential are as follows:

- Azerbaijan has a rich historical, cultural and scientific wealth. There are 9 climate zones in the country, which allows both to develop different types of tourism and to conduct interesting excursions;

- there are many cities and natural, historical and cultural monuments with developed infrastructure in the country; road infrastructure meets modern requirements.

However, certain factors have a negative impact on the development of tourism, for example:

- uneven development of the regions – small hotels do not meet world standards;

- small number of modern three-star hotels and motels;

- prices in 5-star hotels are very expensive, etc.

From the above, it can be concluded that the development of eco-tourism in Azerbaijan can ensure the rapid development of the country's economy. However, in addition to the strong positive advantages of eco-tourism, there are also certain dangers. These include the indifference of the local population and tourists to the environment, the evacuation of local villages as a result of the unfavourable demographic situation, and so on. The development of eco-tourism in our country is also conditioned by social order. Systemic approach to the health problems of the population, effective use of leisure time, promotion of a healthy lifestyle, creation of necessary conditions for its implementation, moral and ecological education of the population. For the development of eco-tourism, it must be promoted and approved by the population. To this end, it is necessary to make fuller use of natural and recreational potential, limit and regulate the unregulated flow of tourists to reserves, sanctuaries and national parks, and carry out landscaping work in the regions.

State regulation of tourism activities is carried out in the following areas:

- creation of regulatory acts aimed at improving relations in the field of tourism industry;

- assistance in promotion of tourism products in domestic and world tourism markets;

- protection of the rights and interests of tourists, ensuring their safety;

- licensing and standardization in the tourism industry, certification of tourism products;

- determination of the rules of entry, exit and stay in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan, taking into account the interests of tourism development;

- direct budget funds for the development and implementation of targeted state programs for the development of tourism;

- creation of favorable conditions for investments in the tourism industry;

- creation of preferential loans, tax and customs conditions for tour operators and travel agents engaged in ecotourism activities in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan;

- assistance in staffing of tourism activities;

- development of scientific research in the field of ecotourism industry;

– ensuring the participation of tourists, tour operators, tour agents and their associations from Azerbaijan in international tourism programs;

– provision of cartographic products;

– other methods applied in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan [7].

**Conclusions.** The current state of ecotourism in the Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as measures aimed at its development, allow us to assess the country's competitive advantages and disadvantages in terms of domestic and foreign tourism. One of the main challenges facing the tourism industry is to increase the level and quality of tourism services. This issue is reflected in the state programs adopted over the past 15 years. In terms of tourism, Azerbaijan is a very expensive country. Both domestic and foreign tourists suffer from high prices. In the regions, a three-day stay in a "very inexpensive" hotel and a tour of the surrounding nature, at best, costs 300-350 USD per person. There are several reasons for this. Owners of new accommodation are raising prices to cover investment costs quickly. Control structures also play an important role here, as costs affect the price of services. As a result, the

consumer suffers. High prices for tourism services are one of the factors limiting the arrival of tourists to our country. It should be noted that most Specially Protection Areas (SPAs) do not have mechanisms in place to monitor possible recreational loads and the environmental impact of tourism. Lack of infrastructure, living conditions, vehicles or low comfort, lack of tourist routes, equipped eco-trails, control towers and other equipment, lack of specific information, such as the flora and fauna of the area, are other factors that weaken the development of ecotourism. Also, the lack of knowledge and experience of local staff, especially in the field of marketing, the inadequacy of prices for the quality of services provided, the lack of sufficient paid products and services in national parks are the main reasons for low revenues from eco-tourism. There are also significant gaps in the promotion of ecotourism in Azerbaijan. The solution of all these problems can accelerate the transfer of funds from ecotourism to the development of local communities and increase employment there. Also, the local population can closely participate in ensuring the socio-economic development of the area, providing great support for the development of ecotourism.

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### ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ РОЗВИТКУ ЕКОТУРИЗМУ В АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНСЬКІЙ РЕСПУБЛІЦІ

Одним із секторів економіки, що розвиваються в нафтовому секторі, є туризм. Неможливо не побачити недавнього розвитку в галузі туризму. Міжнародні змагання, що проводяться в нашій країні, є одним з головних факторів забезпечення потоку туристів. Зі зростанням інтересу туристів до нашої країни зростають і види туризму. Існують різні види туризму, і кожен з них унікальний. Один з них – екотуризм. Екотуризм – це вид туризму, при якому іноземні відвідувачі контактують з місцевим населенням, орендують свої будинки та користуються своїми кухнями. Місцеві жителі також отримують інформацію про країну іноземного туриста, історію та культуру, музику та кухню. Говорячи про природний туризм, експерти звертають увагу на доходи місцевого населення від цього бізнесу, кажучи, що це запобігає як безробіттю, так і залежності людей від держави. Багата природа Азербайджану, визначні пам'ятки, свіже гірське повітря, прохолодні джерела, світ Відоме Каспійське море призвело до створення ряду міжнародних маршрутів та формування відповідної інфраструктури. У цьому плані нашій країні, яка має вигідне становище для будь-якої сфери туризму, дуже пощастило. Завдяки особливій увазі та турботі нашого великого лідера Гайдара Алієва та Президента Азербайджанської Республіки Ільхама Алієва, в нашій країні можна побачити безліч напрямків туризму. Яскравим прикладом цього є зимовий туризм, який розвинувся в наших визначних пам'ятках, таких як Шахдаг, Габала, Шекі. Крім того, завдяки співпраці з Євразійським фондом мисливський туризм досяг свого піку в різних регіонах. Наш туристичний сектор, який розвивається під особливим контролем ООН, ЮНЕСКО, ISESCO, COT та інших міжнародних організацій, розширився серед туристів. У цьому контексті роль екотуризму, створеного з точки зору збереження нашої культурної спадщини, пам'яток історії та культури, а також навколишнього середовища, дуже велика. Азербайджан має всі умови, щоб екотуризм став прибутковою галуззю. У Шеках створено товариство сімейного відпочинку. Дома орендують місцеві жителі для туристів. У багатьох країнах світу екотуризм, вид мисливського туризму, є дуже прибутковим полем.

**Ключові слова:** екологічна чистота, зимовий туризм, мисливський туризм, міжнародний ринок туризму, сільський туризм, екстремальний туризм, гірський туризм, стратегічні дорожні карти, особливо охоронювані природні території.

### ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ РАЗВИТИЯ ЭКОТУРИЗМА В АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНСКОЙ РЕСПУБЛИКЕ

Одним из развивающихся секторов экономики в нефтяном секторе является туризм. Невозможно не увидеть последних достижений в сфере туризма. Международные соревнования, проводимые в нашей стране, являются одним из основных факторов, обеспечивающих туристический поток. По мере роста интереса туристов к нашей стране растут и виды туризма. Есть разные виды туризма, и каждый из них уникален. Один из них – экотуризм. Экотуризм – это вид туризма, при котором иностранные посетители контактируют с местным населением, снимают дома и пользуются своими кухнями. Местные жители также получают информацию о стране иностранного туриста, истории и культуре, музыке и кухне. Говоря о природном туризме, эксперты обращают внимание на доходы местного населения от этого бизнеса, говоря, что он предотвращает как безработицу, так и зависимость людей от государства. Богатая природа Азербайджана, достопримечательности, свежий горный воздух, прохладные источники, мир знаменитое Каспийское море привело к созданию ряда международных маршрутов и формированию соответствующей инфраструктуры. В этом плане нашей стране, имеющей выгодное положение для любой сферы туризма, очень повезло.

**Ключевые слова:** экологическая чистота, зимний туризм, охотничий туризм, международный туристический рынок, сельский туризм, экстремальный туризм, горный туризм, стратегические дорожные карты, особо охраняемые природные территории.