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## Resource Potential of the Chuvash Republic for the Development of the Tourism Sphere

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**Annotation:** *the purpose of this article is to analyze the tourism potential of the Chuvash Republic, to define the importance of tourism in the development of the region's economy, and to identify negative factors in the tourism sphere of the region. As a theoretical and methodological basis of the study the following methods are used: analytical-synthetic method, expert evaluation methods, statistical data analysis, comparison, study of primary sources, secondary data analysis, etc. The scientific research reflects the actual problems in the tourism sphere of modern Chuvashia, reveals the role and importance of regional state policy in the development of the tourism industry. As a result, the new methods and forms of state regulation of development of tourism sphere at the regional level are offered and recommended.*

**Key words:** *tourism sphere, resource potential, tourism resources, Chuvash Republic, tourism potential of Chuvashia.*

**JEL classification:** A140.

### Introduction

At present, tourism industry is recognized as one of the fastest growing sectors of the world economy. Despite the fact that tourism is a relatively young industry, at the present stage of development of the world economy this sector is considered one of the most profitable and promising sectors of the economy [23, p. 91]. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) tourism industry accounts for 3.2% of GWP and 7.6% of the working population of the planet. In the countries with advanced economies the contribution of tourism in GDP constitutes from 2% to 10% [21, p. 118].

From the point of view of state interests tourism industry is an important economic and social component in the economy of the state, it has a positive impact on the social, cultural and educational spheres. Tourism serves as a means to create new jobs and increase level of employment. In general, the contribution of the tourism sector in providing employment is about 6–7% of the total number of jobs in the world [3, p. 77]. Tourism also contributes to the

preservation of the natural and architectural and historic treasures both of the region and the country as a whole.

The development of the tourism sphere in the region is largely predetermined by the existing set of tourism resources and the efficiency of use of its resource and tourism potential.

The resource potential of the region is considered to be a complex of all kinds of resources emerging on the given territory which can be used in the process of social production. The resource potential of the region is divided into ecological, economic and social types [6].

Tourism resources are historical, natural, social and cultural facilities, objects of tourist attraction, and other objects that can satisfy the needs of tourists, contribute to their vital activities, restoration and development of their physical strength, etc. [11, p. 30].

The tourism potential is a totality of natural, social, environmental, historical and cultural prerequisites for the organization of tourist activities in a particular area [15, p. 218].

Based on the foregoing, it is worth noting that the above criteria for the development of the tourism industry has the Chuvash Republic – a federal subject of the Russian Federation, located in the center of the European part of Russia – the Volga–Vyatka region, in the middle reaches of the Volga river and in the area between Sura and Sviyaga rivers.

### **General information on the tourism sphere of the region**

The Chuvash Republic has borders with industrially developed centers of the Volga Federal District: in the west with the Nizhny Novgorod Oblast, in the south–west with the Republic of Mordovia, in the south with the Ulyanovsk Oblast, in the east with the Republic of Tatarstan and in the north with the Republic of Mari El.

According to the Federal State Statistics Service the population of the republic on January 1, 2017 is 1 235 992 people [16].

The capital of the republic is the city of Cheboksary with the population of 480 741 people. In 2001 the city was the winner of the contest “The Most Comfortable City of Russia”. The distance between Cheboksary and the capital of the country is about 630 km.

The Chuvash Republic has a temperate continental climate and is situated in the forest and steppe natural zones. The average air temperature is –13 °C in January and + 19 °C in July.

Chuvashia is a region with a unique natural environment and rich tourism and recreation potential. The nature of the region successfully combines forest, ravine and lake landscapes [5, p. 3].

Equally important for the regional development of the tourism industry are cultural and historical factors: availability and accessibility of local theaters and history museums, organization of republic vocal and theater art performances, celebration of traditional national holidays, etc.

The most important factor for the promotion of tourism sector in the Chuvash Republic is ethnocultural potential of the Chuvash Land. Huge interest for tourists in “the edge of a hundred thousand words, a hundred thousand songs, and a hundred thousand embroideries” presents its titular nation – the Chuvash (Suvar) – who managed to preserve and carry through many thousands of years up to the present day their original culture, ancient traditions, national cuisine, trades, handicrafts, etc.

According to the statistics from the Ministry of Culture, Nationality Affairs and Archives of the Chuvash Republic tourism sphere in the region shows a positive trend. So, in 2016 the domestic tourism flow increased by 7% compared to 2015. Over the past year 143 republic tourism companies have served more than 246 thousand people (in 2014 – 180 thousand, in 2015 – 230 thousand people) [13].

According to the Federal State Statistics Service of the Chuvash Republic, on January 1, 2016 101 lodging establishments with a capacity of 7346 bedrooms operated in the region: among them: 33 hotels, 17 resort sanatoria, 15 establishments similar to hotels, 7 sanatoria for adults, 6 health sanatoria, 5 recreation organizations, 5 tourist centers, 4 motels, 4 dormitories

for tourists, 3 children's sanatoria, 1 year-round health camp and 1 establishment with furnished rooms [17].

In 2016 tourism organizations of Chuvashia provided services worth more than 1 milliard rubles, it is 250 million rubles more than in 2015 and twice higher than in 2013 (490, 0 million rubles) [19, p. 21].

#### **Natural recreational potential**

According to "The environmental rating of the subjects of the Russian Federation" of the Russian Public organization "Green Patrol" at the end of 2016 the Chuvash Republic entered the top 10 environmental regions of the country, taking the 6th place. Also, Chuvashia has one of the highest social and environmental index in the environmental rating – 73 [1].

The abovementioned indicators are rather objective. In the region one third of the territory is covered by mixed and pine forests. The Chuvash Republic accounts for 93 especially protected natural territories and objects of republic significance, including 67 natural monuments, 8 state nature reserves, 5 forest genetic resources reserves, 4 state game reserves, 3 districts of sanitary protection, 1 game reserved household and 1 arboretum. Also, there are 3 especially protected natural territories of federal significance: National Park "Chuvash Varmane", State Nature Reserve "Prisurskiy" and the Cheboksary Branch of the Main Botanical Garden of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The total area of protected natural territories is more than 100 thousand ha or about 7% of the total area of the region [4, p. 64]. Forests are more and more widespread as recreational facilities, which have a beneficial effect on human health.

In the Chuvash Republic there are about 1050 species of plants which constitute 2/3 of all plant species of the European part of the Russian Federation. In the region identified are 48 plant species and 29 animal species which are subject to special protection on the territory of the republic.

In Chuvashia there are 2356 small rivers, more than 800 ponds, 368 lakes and hundreds of crystal clear springs. There are sources of saline water used in the treatment of cardiovascular and neurological diseases in the sanatoria of the republic. In the region in a small wooded area there is a waterfall "Silver Cascade", which is rare and unique to the territory of the plains of the Volga. The waterfall is considered the largest in the Chuvash Republic; its height is 4 meters. In addition, "Silver Cascade" practically does not freeze in winter [22].

#### **Transport and communications potential**

The favorable geographical position to attract tourists to the Chuvash Republic is determined by transportation and geographical location. Transport is one of the most important components of the material basis of the economy of any region and plays a leading role in solving social problems, providing cultural and tourism trips of the population. Inspecting the main features of existing transport system of Chuvashia, the following can be identified. Through the territory of the republic run the most important road, rail and water routes connecting the region with the central, northern, eastern and southern parts of Russia.

Roads are the most important element of the transport infrastructure. According to the data of the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure of the Chuvash Republic the length of public roads of the republic is 12 253 km as on January 1, 2016 [14]. In the Chuvash Republic highways are highly loaded, in particular the Federal highway M7 "Volga". The daily traffic here counts about 45 thousand cars. The length of the M7 "Volga" on the territory of Chuvashia is more than 180 km.

Through the city of Kanash of the Chuvash Republic, which is one of the most important railway junctions of the Trans-Siberian Railway, round-the-clock pass freight and passenger trains, connecting the Republic by the shortest route with the metallurgical Urals, vast Siberia and Far East.

Cheboksary Airport is the only "air gates" to Chuvashia. The airport, which has an international sector since October, 1995, is able to send and receive cargo and passenger aircraft of practically

all types. The airport has been designed to serve up to 300 thousand passengers per year. According to the statistics in recent years the airport Cheboksary had an increase in the number of flights and passengers served. In 2015 the number of flights has increased by 2% compared with the year 2014 [20].

By navigable rivers Volga and Sura the Chuvash Republic is connected with international waterways' network. By the Volga ships can move in the southern direction to the Caspian, Black and Azov Seas, as well as up the Volga to the White and Baltic Seas. In this respect cruise tourism on liner ships on the Volga River is of great interest. It has the following routes: St. Petersburg – Volgograd, Moscow – Rostov-on-Don, Moscow – Astrakhan, and others. Cruise tourism gives opportunities for tourist excursions in Cheboksary or in small historic cities of the republic – Mariinsky Posad and Kozlovka [8, p. 55].

### **Cultural and historical potential**

In Chuvashia there are 655 historical and architectural monuments protected by the state, including 346 architectural monuments, 177 archeological monuments, 120 historical monuments and 12 monuments of art.

Equally important are the places connected with historical events of the country or the region, such as Surskiy line of defense – defensive line, built in 1941–1942 on the right bank of the river Sura to stop Hitler's troops on the outskirts of Kazan; places where the troops of Ivan the Terrible, Stepan Razin and Emelyan Pugachev passed by; ancient places of pagan praying of the Chuvash (Suvar) – kiremets etc.

As for cultural destinations, the Chuvash Republic has a network of republic cultural institutions composed of 6 professional theaters, 3 concert organizations, 3 museums with 5 branches, 3 libraries, 3 archival institutions and the Republic Palace of Culture and Folk Art. Municipal network of culture consists of 748 cultural and entertainment establishments, 537 public libraries, 25 archives, 13 museums, 7 recreation parks.

The most popular among tourist establishments are the only one in Russia Scientific and Technical Museum of Tractor History, in its collection there are more than 36 vintage wheel, caterpillar, industrial and skidder tractors; Memorial complex of a Soviet cosmonaut A.G. Nikolayev – the first and only rural museum in the country dedicated to a space theme; V.I. Chapayev Museum – the most visited museum in the city of Cheboksary (for the last three years the museum was visited by over 90 thousand people). The museum building is a unique monument of architecture of the second half of the XX century.

In the Chuvash Republic there is quite a significant amount of cultural institutions which activities are directly or indirectly aimed at the development and promotion of ethnic and cultural tourism in the region. Among the museum institutions it is Ibresi Ethnographic Museum Complex under the open sky which contains more than 4 thousand exhibits of material and spiritual culture of the Anatri Chuvash, including a peasant's farmstead of the beginning of the XIX century, a windmill, etc. It is Museum of the Virjal Chuvash in the village Morgaushi, which expositions are devoted to the culture and traditions of the Virjal Chuvash, objects of their everyday life of the early XX century. The Chuvash National Museum should also be distinguished, it is the largest depository of history and culture of the Chuvash Republic. The museum funds comprise more than 160 thousand museum objects.

In the village Verkhniye Achaki of Yadrin district Museum of subsistence farming of a Chuvash peasant of the XIX century is situated. Here, in addition to a Chuvash peasant's farmstead of the end of the XIX century, the tourists have an opportunity to perform work in the garden in the old-fashioned way – from sowing rye and flax to baking bread; to do weaving and brewing in a traditional way. Throughout the year on the museum grounds, ritual festivals are held in accordance with the Chuvash (Suvar) national calendar.

In 2015 in Cheboksary Chuvash Embroidery Museum was opened, it reflects the history of the Chuvash embroidery till the XIX century and its development in the XX–XXI centuries. This

museum aims to become an attractive tourism resource of the republic for the development of ethnic and cultural tourism.

It is necessary to note the important role of the Chuvash Academic Drama Theater named after K.V. Ivanov in forming ethnotourism conditions in the region. Chuvash Drama Theatre is both the heart of the Chuvash culture introducing its repertoire in the Chuvash (Suvar) language and a tourist destination for domestic and inbound tourists.

The ethno-ecological complex "Yasna" in the Cheboksary district has been working since 2016. The main idea of this tourist complex is restoration of the ethnic identity and spirituality, revival of peasant's daily life and the old methods of subsistence farming of the Chuvash (Suvar).

For lovers of rural tourism in the region there are 15 rural guest houses and 7 eco-tourism facilities.

#### **Event management**

Every year the Chuvash Republic holds large-scale events dedicated to musical, theatrical, cultural heritage and cinematography, contemporary fine arts, international and all-Russian festivals of national cultures, as well as events aimed at the preservation and development of folk arts of the Chuvash people and the peoples of Russia. In the context of development of regional tourism the most important of them is the Republic Day, including as key part of its program the Chuvash (Suvar) national holiday of land and the plow "Akatui" and All-Russian folk art festival "Springs of Russia".

Among the major events the most popular among the visitors and residents of the region are International Ballet Festival, International Opera Festival named after M.D. Mikhailov, Cheboksary International Film Festival, International Fireworks Festival, All-Russia Competition of Folk Craftsmen "Rus Craftsmen", Traditional Tsvilsk Tikhvin Fair, Maresyev Gathering of Friends of Light Aircraft, Games on Kamayev Field and many others.

It should be also noted that since 2015 the republic hosts the annual All-Chuvash Film Festival "Asam" for lovers of the Chuvash cinematic art and potential domestic and inbound tourists which shows feature films of the Chuvash directors: from comedies to documentary ethnographic films.

Thus, a comprehensive assessment of the current state of the Chuvash Republic, as a region favorable for the development of domestic and inbound tourism allows to suggest that Chuvashia has a promising resource potential to attract tourist flows.

#### **Negative factors in the tourism sphere**

Today, as the main problems in the field of tourism at the level of regions of Russia experts distinguish insufficient development of objects of tourism infrastructure and lack of favorable conditions for attracting investments in the tourism industry [2, P. 105]. Unfortunately, this problem is reflected in the Chuvash Republic as well. It should be noted that development of tourism infrastructure means not only the construction of new accommodations for tourists, but also accompanying infrastructure: tourist attractions, entertainment and eating facilities, transport, etc. [9, p. 169].

In the republic collective accommodation facilities constitute the material basis of the tourism industry; its indicators characterize the material and technical base of tourist and recreational complex of the region. These tourist organizations of the Chuvash Republic hold about 0.7% of the total measure of the performance of similar Russian organizations and 3.91% of the number of organizations operating in the Volga Federal District. According to the statistics, on average the hotels of Chuvashia are occupied at about 40–50%. There is a deficit of the number of rooms only during mass events.

Indicators of income and expenses of collective accommodation facilities of the Chuvash Republic suggest that revenues exceed expenses, but these differences are insignificant. According to the experts' opinion, this is due to the fact that many accommodation facilities, as well as a system of sanatoria, dispensaries and recreation centers of the region were built in the

Soviet times, and now their material and technical base requires additional capital investments to modernize the rooms, to renovate or reconstruct the buildings. One of the methods for solving the above identified problem is the construction of new accommodation facilities, aimed at mass tourism.

As it has been said earlier, in the Chuvash Republic monuments of nature, history and cultural heritage of federal and regional significance are in state charge. However, despite all this, the tourism resources of the republic are not used in full force. For example, today in Chuvashia there is a shortage of organized on the shores of picturesque rivers and lakes tourist shelters, houses for hunters and fishermen, camps, hostels with food prepared according to the recipes of the Chuvash (Suvar) cuisine, facilities for rental of sports equipment, etc. It should be emphasized that for the Chuvash Republic, the region with wonderful climate and natural resources, promotion of recreation and eco-tourism should be a priority in the development of the regional tourism industry.

According to the analysis of the tourism industry of the Chuvash Republic, in the region there is a respectively small number of created tourist routes (about 60 in the republic), and here it should be noted that in some municipalities of Chuvashia tourist routes are not existent or do not work. It is very important for the republic to create automobile, cruise routes and development of the excursion programs with visits to the industrial enterprises.

In recent years in Russia under the influence of the tourist demands a number of regional programs of informative-excursion tourism have undergone some changes with a shift to enhance the role of ethno-cultural aspects. The recently planned tours more often include sightseeing tours with visits to the largest museums, major historical and cultural monuments, etc. [18, P. 48]. In this regard, in Chuvashia there is a need to develop new tourist routes, special tourist programs and events, taking into account the peculiarities of the cultural heritage of the Chuvash (Suvar), as well as of the peoples living in the Chuvash Republic.

On January 1, 2016 the infrastructure of roadside service of the Chuvash Republic had approximately 435 facilities of roadside service, of which about 30 facilities are located along the federal highway M7 "Volga". Roadside service facilities are located along the highways extremely irregularly – mostly near cities and big villages. Out of the total number of roadside service facilities 260 objects are retail enterprises which constitute 55.6%. It follows that the region lacks multifunctional roadside complexes in sufficient quantities.

Today, the immediate development of a network of roadside service in the region should be a priority for the public authorities of the Chuvash Republic, as it is this sphere that primarily determines the quality of established economic, commercial and cultural relations of Chuvashia with other regions. In the market of roadside service of the republic there are quite profitable conditions to perform the designated tasks – the annual growth of the degree of road traffic which entails the demand for various services. At the same time, increase in the number of sites of roadside service enhances competition which contributes to improving the quality of customer service.

### **Conclusion**

Proceeding from the present situation one point is certain – for the further successful development of tourism infrastructure, both in the Chuvash Republic and in other regions of Russia, at the present time the regional authorities should actively involve the business community in the field of tourism on the principles of public-private partnership. It is a constructive approach, close cooperation and a lasting dialogue between business and government can significantly accelerate the process of formation, development and promotion of regional tourism product on domestic and international tourism markets.

With a purpose of qualitative and cost-effective promotion of tourism product of the Chuvash Republic on the Russian and international tourism markets the public authorities of the republic have to conduct actions aimed at "branding" of local places of attraction of the

region, to provide advertising and information support, including the media, and PR–support in promoting tourism services and products of Chuvashia.

State support for the development of the region’s tourism industry should be conducted with a united regional government strategy, jointly formed with the participation of the business community and civil society organizations.

Formation of tourism associations and unions on the territory of the republic can serve as an additional mechanism of interaction between the regional authorities and business representatives.

To develop the tourism sector in the Chuvash Republic as a means of replenishment of the republic budget it is necessary to solve several major problems, which include: expansion of the social base of tourism, attraction of investments for the development of tourism infrastructure, modernization of the existing material base in the social sphere, etc.

On January 1, 2017 in Chuvashia the grant support institute of small and medium business of tourism sector, in particular for persons engaged in non–agricultural activities in the rural areas is not working. In this context, it is very important for the public authorities of the Chuvash Republic to introduce the practice of regional financial support mechanisms for individual entrepreneurs of the tourism sector.

In the republic the level of service in the service enterprises remains low. Managers of hotels, recreation centers, entertainment and health institutions, eating establishments must be attentive to the selection of personnel in the service industry. It is necessary to give due attention to the qualitative reception of a visitor. In this regard, it is recommended that public authorities of the region should organize joint round tables with the heads of leading tourism organizations of the republic aimed at improving the quality of customer service, as well as organize targeted seminars on enhancing etiquette skills for working personnel of service enterprises of the Chuvash Republic.

Thus, tourism is a significant economic resource, a new economic factor for our state. Focus on tourism potential and regional tourism resources is one of actual promising opportunities for the economic and social development of the Chuvash Republic and the country in whole.

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