

Religious tourism as a moral basis for preserving the ecology of the region

Marina Ryndach¹, Anatoliy Kazak^{2}, Yelena Sergeeva², Victor Selivanov², Olga Gurevskikh³, Yulia Dolgushina³, and Anastasia Kryukova²*

¹Kherson State Pedagogical University, st. Universitetskaya, 27, Kherson, 273003, Russian Federation

²V.I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal University, Prospekt Vernadskogo 4, Simferopol, 295007, Russian Federation

³Ural State Pedagogical University, Kosmonavtov Ave., 26 Ekaterinburg, 620091, Russian Federation

Abstract. The paper examines the possibilities of the active influence of religious tourism on the preservation of the ecology of tourist regions. Currently, religious tourism is becoming more popular, every year more and more people are looking for peace in religious (often historical) monasteries, away from noisy cities and all-inclusive hotels. This article substantiates the idea that religious tourism is not only an opportunity to study the history of the emergence and development of a people, but also to gain new emotions by learning such enduring concepts as morality, humility, goodness, decency, faith. Many temples and monasteries are located in unique regions: in the mountains, on steppe plains or in virgin forests. Such a variety of landscapes in which holy monasteries are located makes it possible to realize all the greatness and uniqueness of nature, to awaken a desire to preserve it in its original form. Staying in holy monasteries is another opportunity for those who want to understand the essence and uniqueness of the world around us. This paper is also devoted to a philosophical understanding of the problem of the influence of religion on human behavior and attitude towards nature. Religion instills in a person responsibility for his actions. It is the moral institution of society. One of the goals of religion is the need to achieve a respectful attitude towards life. The prospect of a gradual improvement in the global environmental situation is largely associated with the revival of spiritual values and religious and ethnic norms.

1 Introduction

Religion plays a significant role in the lives of many people, and it also has an impact on tourism. Religious tourism is becoming increasingly popular as people seek to experience different religious cultures, visit sacred sites and take part in religious festivals. In this study, we will look at the role of religion in tourism, the influence of religion on the choice of tourist destinations, religious sites and pilgrimage, ethical and cultural aspects of religious tourism, and the problems and challenges faced by religious tourists [1-5].

* Corresponding author: kazak_a@mail.ru

Religious tours are trips to holy places located around the world. They attract not only religious tourists, but also those who are interested in the history and religions of other peoples. A trip to famous shrines will allow you to take a break from the daily routine and admire the most beautiful temples, churches and museums, feel the beauty of the surrounding nature, and think about the problems of preserving the environment, nature in its original form [6-9].

2 The role of religion in tourism

Religion plays a significant role in the choice of travel destinations for many people. Believers and those interested in religion often seek to visit sacred sites and places of pilgrimage to deepen their spirituality and experience a special connection with faith.

Religious places have a special energy and symbolic significance for believers. They may be associated with historical events, holy figures or important rituals. For example, for Christians this could be places associated with the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, such as Bethlehem, Jerusalem or Rome. For Muslims, important destinations may include Mecca and Medina, the holy cities and pilgrimage sites of Islam.

Religious holidays may also influence the choice of tourist destinations. Believers may seek to visit places where special religious ceremonies or celebrations take place. For example, many Christians travel to Jerusalem on Easter to take part in the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ.

The influence of religion on the choice of tourist destinations may also be related to cultural aspects. Religion is often an important part of the culture and traditions of a particular region. Thus, people may be attracted to visit countries or regions where a particular religion predominates to experience its customs, architecture and art.

In general, religion has a strong influence on the choice of tourist destinations. It can be a source of inspiration and spiritual growth for many people, as well as providing an opportunity to experience different cultures and traditions.

3 Types of religious tourism

Many researchers identify three main directions of religious tourism: pilgrimage, excursion and combined.

Pilgrimage tourism is a special type of tourism programs designed specifically for deeply religious people for whom it is important to worship holy places and perform religious rites there. Such journeys are called pilgrimages. They can be both international and within the country of residence. In addition to year-round pilgrimages, there are also trips dedicated to important religious holidays.

Not only pilgrims, but also ordinary tourists who are interested in the history of religion, paganism and other cultures go on excursion educational tours. Excursion programs are aimed at visiting shrines associated with the three main religions of the world: Christianity, Islam and Buddhism. In addition, there are excursion trips to study pagan cults.

Combined types of travel involve combining excursions to temples and religious centers with a pilgrimage. Also, guides often combine groups of pilgrims with other tourists if the shrine is located in a remote place or entry is limited.

4 Development of religious tourism in Russia

Religious tourism began to develop after the celebration of the millennium of the baptism of Rus' in 1988, when some Moscow churches began organizing pilgrimage trips to newly opened monasteries: Optina Pustyn, Tolgsky Monastery and others.

In the 1990s, interest in pilgrimage revived in Russia and travel agencies began to actively use the word "pilgrimage" to attract clients. Trips to sacred places in Greece, Egypt, and Israel were organized.

In 2013, the Solovetsky Monastery was visited by about 30 thousand pilgrims, the Valaam Monastery was visited by about 60 thousand tourists and pilgrims.

As of 2023, pilgrimage within the Russian Federation is carried out by about 300 thousand people a year, whose average age is from 45 to 50 years.

There have been several directions for the development of religious tourism in Russia - tours can be organized by travel companies, pilgrimage services under large religious and secular organizations (for example, "Pilgrim" - International Foundation for the Unity of Orthodox Peoples, "Radonezh" - Moscow Patriarchate), or pilgrimage services existing at temples.

As of 2023, there were about 500 Orthodox pilgrimage centers operating at churches and monasteries of the Russian Orthodox Church.

5 Relationships between man and the environment

Religion has always touched upon the problem of the relationship between man and the world around him. In existing religious traditions, various ideals of the connection between man and nature have been formed. In this regard, the ideological functions of religion acquire special significance. Theologians themselves emphasize the growing importance of religion in the matter of "guiding a person" on the true path.

Three circles of philosophical problems should be distinguished. The first is ontological, it is associated with the awareness of the contradiction between man and nature and the consideration of philosophical principles. The second range of problems is epistemological, which touches on issues of cognition of the interaction between man and nature in the subject-object relation. And the last, third circle of problems appears as ethical and aesthetic. It concerns a certain morality and aesthetic reevaluation of the attitude towards the natural environment of each person and the entire society.

The end of the twentieth century is characterized by the emergence of an ecological culture, the pathos of which lies in the fact that nature is the initial basis for the development and existence of culture. On the one hand, religious and cultural traditions clearly created a psychological mood for expansion into nature, its conquest and suppression. On the other hand, this tradition carries with it a sense of homeland and is a powerful factor in preserving the natural environment. Taking these points into account, they should be supported and strengthened in every possible way.

In the process of historical development of mankind, lifestyle and way of thinking have radically changed, which has improved the quality of life for some and worsened for others. We must realize that this global environmental crisis is the result of human misconception about science and technology's solution to all our problems. If we do not reconsider our beliefs and values, this can lead to further environmental degradation and the destruction of natural systems. To avoid this, a deeper understanding of life and the formulation of a new system of environmental ethics are necessary.

Worldview is an individual characteristic of everyone, the formation of which is influenced by the level of education, religious affiliation, traditional value system, etc. An interesting fact is that a significant part of the people surveyed by sociologists share the

opinion about the influence of religion and science, in equal opportunities, on the formation of environmental consciousness. We can conclude that it is necessary to restructure the consciousness of people on the path to an ecological society, including through the opportunities that religious values carry.

One of the goals of religion is to achieve a respectful attitude towards life, to create a spiritual and social space for a whole person.

The prospect of a gradual improvement in the global environmental situation is largely associated with the revival of spiritual values and religious and ethnic norms. Therefore, it is spiritual and moral values that are that “living substance within which man reveals and develops himself through nature, and nature reveals and develops himself through man.

6 Christianity and ecology

The Orthodox Church takes to heart all processes related to environmental protection and does everything in its power to solve this problem. Together with the state, it carries out extensive active work on environmental issues:

- participates in events at various levels on environmental issues;
- evaluates socially significant environmental projects;
- actively participates in public and scientific environmental work at various levels;
- participates in the development of information, educational and educational programs on ecology;
- participate in the discussion and development of regulations affecting environmental issues;
- strengthens and maintains feelings of solidarity in people for the preservation of God's creation.

The position of the Church on environmental issues is fully covered in the document that was adopted by the Council of Bishops on February 4, 2013. The document is called “Fundamentals of the ecological concept of the Russian Orthodox Church.”

With full confidence, the Orthodox Church considers the growth of religious self-awareness and voluntary self-restraint as a way out of the current environmental crisis.

A person must realize that any ways that he proposes to get out of the environmental crisis are nothing if he does not change internally and spiritually. He must understand that it is he, with God's help, who can stop the destructive mechanism that he himself launched.

7 The role of religious tourism in preserving the ecology of Russia

We can give many examples of how the development of religious tourism preserves and improves the environmental situation in various regions of Russia. Let's give some examples. Spaso-Preobrazhensky Valaam Monastery (Figure 1). This monastery is located on 50 islands in Karelia.

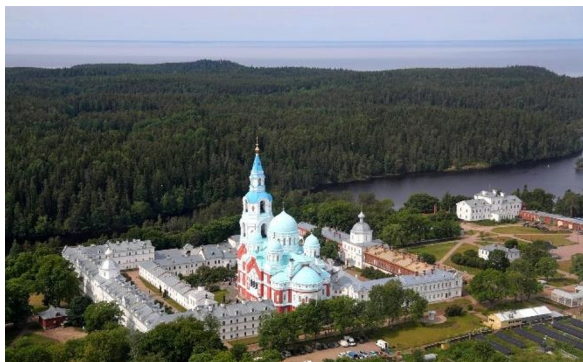


Fig. 1. The expanses of the Spaso-Preobrazhensky Valaam Monastery

On the territory of the monastery lands there are more than 480 species of plants, many of which were cultivated by the monks. Gardens with more than 150-year-old fruit trees have been preserved. The lands are covered mainly by coniferous forests (about 65% pine). These plants also remind of the great and long-term work of the inhabitants of Valaam, because its rocky landscape (there is only 15 cm of soil on it!) does not at all imply an abundance of trees and flowers. The monastery contains two internal lakes with a heavily indented coastline with a total area of about 100 hectares, connected to each other and to Lake Ladoga by canals; nine small forest lakes-lambs; an extensive network of reclamation ditches (19th century) (Figure 2).



Fig. 2. Lakes of Valaam

Holy Trinity Seraphim-Diveevsky Monastery (Figure 3). Monastery of the Nizhny Novgorod diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church.



Fig. 3. The unique beauty of the Holy Trinity Seraphim-Diveevsky Monastery

Thanks to financial income from tourist flows, the monastery's servants managed to create a unique ecological atmosphere and create a truly Edenic Garden on the territory and in the vicinity of the monastery (Figure 4).



Fig. 4. Man-made green oasis of the monastery

The monastic servants also improved and preserved several sources of clean fresh water (Figure 5).



Fig. 5. Source of St. Seraphim

Holy Trinity-Paraskeviyevsky Toplovsky Convent (Figure 6). Located among the mountain forests of Crimea.



Fig. 6. Majestic monastery among the Crimean forests

Despite the difficult history of the monastery, its servants managed not only to preserve the surrounding nature. But also to increase the forest wealth adjacent to the monastery. What is especially important for the Crimean foothills, which is characterized by a lack of fresh

water, in the area of the monastery three sources of clean drinking water were reclaimed and preserved (Figure 7).



Fig. 7. Inside the font of St. Paraskeva

8 Conclusions

Religion plays a significant role in tourism, influencing the choice of tourist destinations and creating demand for visiting religious sites and participating in pilgrimages. Religious tourism has its own characteristics, including ethical and cultural aspects, as well as economic impact. However, there are problems and challenges associated with religious tourism. Speaking about the development of religious tourism and its impact on the environment, one cannot help but ask the question: “Why, having ancient knowledge, which practically sounds the same in all faiths and calls for saving nature, for many years it was simply not perceived by humanity? How did it happen that, possessing these truths, a person did the opposite - “destroyed”?”

I would like to believe that the time has come for sensible people who are ready to do everything possible to save the planet.

There is no doubt that in the future, religious tourism will continue to develop and attract tourists from all over the world.

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