

POSSIBILITIES OF RURAL TOURISM IN RELATION TO THE NATURAL CONDITIONS OF REGION TEKOV IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Martin PRČÍK¹, Marián KOTRLA²

¹Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra, Faculty of European Studies and Regional Development, Department of Sustainable Development, Mariánska 10, 949 01 Nitra, Slovak Republic, Phone: + 421 (37) 6415628, E-mail: martin.prcik@uniag.sk

²Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra, Faculty of European Studies and Regional Development, Department of Ecology, Mariánska 10, 949 01 Nitra, Slovak Republic, Phone: + 421 (37) 6415613, E-mail: marian.kotrla@uniag.sk

Corresponding author: marian.kotrla@uniag.sk

Abstract

Landscape potential, reflecting the country's ability to provide some opportunities and prerequisites for the use to meet the needs of human society and long-term use along the lines of sustainable development, is considered as basic purposeful and value characteristic of the country. The aim of this paper is based on the analysis of natural conditions and landscape structure to determine the possibility of applying different forms of rural tourism in the Slovak Republic, namely the example region Tekov, which lies on the border of western and central Slovakia. Region Tekov is among the warmest regions of Slovakia. The results presented in this paper were processed using the method of scientific abstraction, landscape structure analysis methods investigated area based on the methodology of landscape-ecological planning and methods of SWOT analysis. Region Tekov occupies the territory of 48 municipalities with its total area of 776.58 km² and a population 73637. The dominant presence in the region has agricultural areas (67% of the area of the territory). This is the type of agricultural land, which their natural condition and on the basis of favourable landscape structure offers opportunities and space for application activities related to rural tourism, namely walking, cycling, water sports, agro tourism, viticulture, hunting and winter sports, especially skiing. Strengths of rural tourism in the region are heterogeneous landscape structure with the preserved natural environment and favourable climatic conditions, a strong tradition in viticulture, apiculture, horticulture and the presence of ecologically stable elements with plenty of usable water resources.

Key words: natural conditions, Region, Tekov, rural tourism

INTRODUCTION

Potential landscape is an essential utility, and value of landscape. Potential landscape reflects a country's ability to provide some opportunities and prerequisites for the use to meet the needs of human society and long-term use in the intentions of sustainable development. Potential can be natural, cultural- historical or anthropogenic. In terms of recreation, tourism and tourism development are [5] the most important natural, cultural and historical potential.

The total potential of the area is expressed through a combination of partial potentials that determine a country's eligibility for various forms of tourism. The occurrence of suitable materials, processes and energy, that

particular ecological quality of the landscape area is a prerequisite for the existence of potential [2]. A priority criterion for assessing the suitability of the location for tourism is mainly a system of individual components of the natural environment.

The most important factor affecting the country's potential for tourism is a relief. The relief is very diverse and attractive in the Slovak Republic. In addition, the climate, hydrology and flora and fauna diversity has a significant impact on tourism.

Country is able to meet the needs (demand) in terms of certain types of recreation, land capability and land use (or a combination of both) because of its diversity of habitats, wilderness, cultural heritage and various land use. To align the demand of different target

groups, offering the country and its load capacity is very important when planning a recreational area.

Rural tourism is based on the active use of the rural settlement for recreational and tourist stays. The main factor is becoming its own rural environment, which can serve as a starting point for the recreational environment, as a place of security, or of residence, destination city recreation and cognition. Rural tourism as a form of tourism is associated with residing in rural areas. In particular, the activities related to the return to nature and the use of natural heritage area. Better quality of the environment is an important motive for staying in the countryside during the holidays.

The tourism in rural areas is commonly called a rural or rural tourism [7].

The essences of rural tourism are friendly forms of tourism - agro tourism, eco agro tourism and ecotourism.

The development of tourism in a given area depends primarily on assumptions that the location has. The assumptions are expressed through attractiveness of the local nature and landscape or cultural and historical sights. Natural conditions are relatively constant in time, permanent in nature and include the determinant of the attractiveness of an area [8].

Rural tourism is one of the key forms of tourism in Slovakia. Rural tourism is in developing regions with low population density and target groups are mainly individual tourists. Almost all municipalities in Slovakia have prerequisites tourist use. Municipalities are gradually losing their economic function and have the natural and cultural potential for tourism development [3]. Key role for most destinations are natural effects [1]. People travel for rest and relaxation in an environment that with its natural character satisfies their needs.

Many rural areas are trying to integrate tourism with more traditional rural activities, such as agriculture [4]. In many rural areas, tourism is one of the few growth sectors, and although it is widely seen as one of several acceptable forms of rural development, conflicts may arise between the interests of

tourism and those that seek to preserve rural traditions of land use.

Ethnographic Atlas of Slovakia [6] outlined the regions folk culture according to the results of ethnographic research. To date, this breakdown also used in connection with the issue of rural tourism, respecting the characteristic traits to specific regions. On this basis was defined region Tekov well.

The aim of this paper is based on the analysis of natural conditions and landscape structure to determine the possibility of applying different forms of rural tourism in region Tekov as model example in the Slovak Republic.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Characterization and localization the monitored area

Tekov is situated on the border of western and central Slovakia (Figure 1). Tekov takes quite a long north-south strip that is adjacent to the northern boundary Turiec and the southern boundary is near the border with Hungary. The northern part Tekov is filled with mountains Pohronský Inovec, Vtáčnik, Kremnické hills, Štiavnické Hills and southeastern slopes Trábeč.



Fig. 1. Localization of region Tekov within the territory of the Slovak Republic

Region Tekov is not significantly geographically limited, nor to culturally unified whole. Tekov region is identical with the territory of the former Tekovská county and is now divided into three Self-governing Region: Nitra, Banská Bystrica and a small part extends into the Trenčín territory.

Hron River flows through the region Tekov. The river helps to create his character to a

great extent. In some tourist publications is region known as Lower Pohronie.

Region Tekov is among the hottest areas of Slovakia, where the average annual air temperature in the long-term average here is up to 10 °C.

July is the hottest month with temperatures of 20-23 °C and the coldest January with temperatures from -2 to -4 °C.

Average annual rainfall is 600-650 mm, of which in the growing season of about 350-400 mm.

Length of sunshine is about 2100 hours, which positively affects the development of tourism in the region.

The average annual number of summer days is 67.

The region has about 34 days per year with snow cover, the amount of which is an average of 10.8 cm, which is not the best prerequisite for the development of skiing, but in the northernmost part of the region, where is slightly chilly climate, that option is.

Methodological procedures

The method of scientific abstraction, abstracting the essence of which is the amount of information that have a direct or indirect relationship with the solution to the problem.

Analytic-synthetic method, thought the layout of the phenomenon on different parts of the analysis.

Method of the landscape structure analysis monitored area based on the methodology of landscape-ecological planning.

Within the secondary landscape structure were analysed landscape elements, expressed empirically and processed in graphical form. As the source data were used data from the database of regional statistics Slovak Republic RegDat.

As a strategic planning tool used for assessment of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats method was used SWOT analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Region Tekov with its natural circumstances and on the basis of favourable landscape structure offers opportunities and space for

application activities related to rural tourism. Options rural tourism following the natural conditions of region Tekov are expressed schematically on the figure 2.

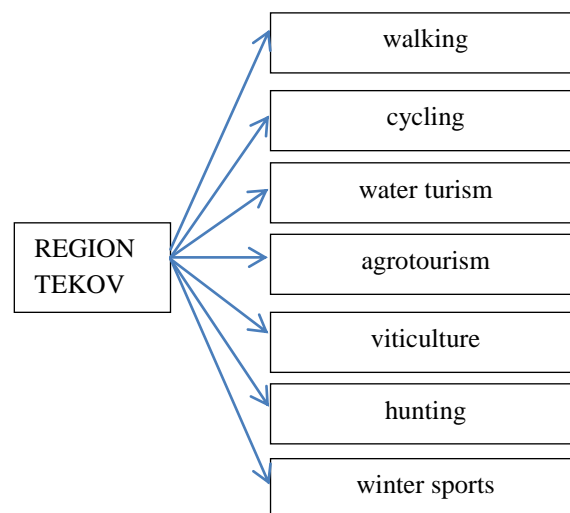


Fig. 2. Options rural tourism following the natural conditions of region Tekov in the Slovak Republic.

Analysis of landscape structure of region Tekov

Region Tekov is situated on the territory of 48 municipalities.

Surface area is 776.58 km². The population of the region is the 73,637.

The agricultural area has a dominant presence in terms of land use (67% of the area of the territory).

Arable land represents 54% of the total area. Region Tekov is an agricultural landscape type.

From ecologically valuable landscape elements in the territory are forests with 24% share and grassland 9% of the area. Opportunities for tourism are also important water features with a share of 1.5%. Significant representations of landscape elements valuable for rural tourism have vineyards and gardens with a share of the total area of 1.8 and 2.2%.

The Figure 3 indicates the proportion of types of landscape element of the present landscape structure in region Tekov.

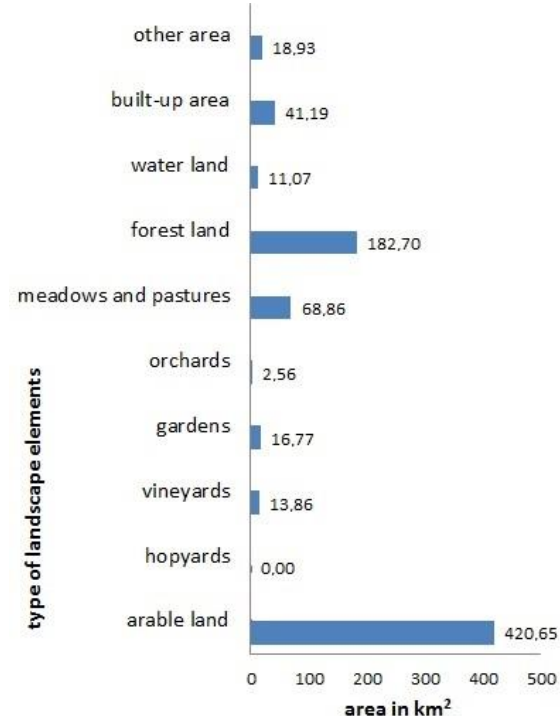


Fig. 3. Types of landscape elements of the present landscape structure in region Tekov in the territory of Slovakia in 2014

Source: Own calculation on the basis of data from Statistic Office of The Slovak Republic - RegDat (2014)

Possibilities for rural tourism in region Tekov

On the individual localities of region Tekov applies one or more tourist-attractive activities: as walking, cycling, water sports, agro tourism, viticulture, mining, hunting, fishing, and the application of winter sports, such as skiing.

Analysis of the various options is bind to specific examples of the use of the natural environment.

Within **walking tours** among the most popular sites (attractions) include Memorial Reservation of Brhlovce and their cliff dwellings. Its establishment dates back to year 1245. It is a small village with about 400 inhabitants. This locality is searched mainly due to the cliff dwellings and also found here finds from the Bronze Age (vessel decorated with tin foil, amphol from Podolian culture). The village is tourist attraction also due craftsmen (basketry, weavers, stonemasons) and viticulture. The biggest attraction despite these facts, are cliff dwellings, some of them still inhabited. Since 1983, the Brhlovce are

the Nature reservation of folk culture and the extended exhibition of the Tekov museum. Also the village been awarded the "Europa Nostra 93" awarded by the European Committee for the countryside and small towns.

Education trail "In the footsteps of the old ore mining" in Pukanec village was established in 2005 (thanks to the Civic Association TERRA BANENSIUM – The earth miners in Pukanec). The length of the trail is 5.2 km with elevation 160 m. Number of stops – 12. This education trail is located on the protected area PLA (Protected Landscape Area) Štiavnické hills. This trail is self-service, walking, unidirectional, mining type of trail, and transient throughout the year.

Another Education trail Čajkovské Bralie formed in 2000 (thanks to the Civic Association Čajkov). The education trail is 5 km long and represents elevation 282 m. Number of stops is 5. It is located in the PLA Štiavnické hills. This is a trail that focus more science, conservation, but also historic. It is self-service, linear; part is circular and can be used as the summer, as well as in winter.

Cycling is a popular form of tourism in region Tekov. One of the major routes, converging region Tekov, is the international cycling route Euroregion Danube-Váh-Ipeľ. This route is based on a previous project "Walking tour of medieval castles Euroregion Váh-Danube-Ipeľ. Another important cycle route in the region is a cycle route between the villages of Starý Tekov - Kalná nad Hronom - Jur nad Hronom. The length of cycle routes is 23 km. The cycle route leads along the unpaved road, 39.41% of the route leads through forest ecosystem, 29.27% over the meadow ecosystems, the rest through built-up areas.

To **water tourism** in region Tekov can be included water tanks, swimming pools, hot springs, as well as wellness, fishing and rafting. Important destination, offering water tourism, is Thermal Baths Santovka (built in 1740). Interesting in terms of tourism seems to be the springs of the acidulous and mineral water bottling (serving since 1945). Thermal baths called Recreation area Margita-Ilona is

one of the most popular options for tourism in the region. Within the complex there is a camping area and a cottage area. Wellness Kalná nad Hronom is a year-round opened along with applicable options for sport and recreation services. For the recreation purposes is used the water reservoir Lipovina. The rafting of the Hron River is organized since 2000, with a length of 68 km rafting.

Another possibility for the development of water tourism is **fishing**. Fishing grounds which are managed by the Slovak Fishing Association are carp and includes following streams (Perec, Sikenica, Korlát, Lipník, Kozárovský stream, Rybnický stream, Teplička, Kráľovka, Čajkovský stream including tributaries, Gondovský stream, stream Kamenec including tributaries, Ďúrsky stream including tributaries, Zahajský stream), gravel water surface Mýtne Ludany, water ponds (Bátovce, Kalná nad Hronom, Pukanec, Kozárovce, Veľký Ďur, Drženice).

Agritourism in its broader approach offers the use of environments and activities bound to a specific area. Agrotourism includes specific activities of local agro-entrepreneurs, according to natural conditions and possibilities of the region. As an example can be introduce Demandice village. There is the farmyard with the pension Stará Lipa. In the complex there is fireplace, bower, providing the agro-tourism services (simple farm work, horse riding and others). One possibility of the agrotourism is horse riding, for example in Nový Tekov village on the Ranch Bobi with all year round services including western events.

Vineculture is a further, specific form of rural tourism activities. In region Tekov are 13.86 square kilometres of vineyards. The first mention of viticulture comes from 1526 in the village of Staré Levice. Strip of vineyards is typical for the region, especially in Čajkov which is still annually held event Čajkov vintage or around Pukanec. Wine, typical of this area is Pesecká Leanka from the Pesek village and Levická Lemberger.

In region Tekov can be applied activities related to **hunting**. In region Tekov operates a number of dozens of associations that manage

hunting areas. This area is characterized with small game (pheasant, bustard, rabbit), ungulates (doe, wild boar, moufflon, fallow and deer. In the region are held annually events called Levické hunting days, where are exhibited trophies for those interested, it is possible to organize future cooperation.

Northeast Region (Region Štiavnické Hills) is region with typical mining economy and **mining activities**. To date, there can be seen the preserved construction. Today the tunnels create landscaping elements. These elements are an essential part of the scenery, and it is therefore necessary to include these activities in the context of activities in the region.

Areas suitable for the use during the **winter season** in the region are Uhliská village. There is a ski resort Ski Center called Nižné Uhliská. The resort offers three tracks (main - 1400 m, the race - 700 m and the lookout - 1930 m), relaxation running track 2600 m long and two ski lifts (1350 m and 300 meters).

Based on the analysis of landscape structure and opportunities for rural tourism in region Tekov been prepared SWOT analysis in relation to rural tourism:

Strengths

- ✓ heterogeneous landscape structure
- ✓ preserved natural environment
- ✓ the favourable climatic conditions
- ✓ tradition in viticulture, fruit growing and beekeeping
- ✓ environmentally stable elements
- ✓ enough of usable water resources
- ✓ proximity growth poles - Bratislava, Vienna, Budapest

Weaknesses

- ✓ the proximity of the region to a nuclear power station
- ✓ inadequate infrastructure
- ✓ absence of tourism services
- ✓ insufficient promotion of the region
- ✓ the dominance of arable land

Opportunities

- ✓ development of tourism activities realized through all seasons activities
- ✓ development of educational-sightseeing trail and cycling routes
- ✓ creating projects for rural tourism

- ✓ maintaining and developing folk traditions
- ✓ natural and water potential

Threats

- ✓ buying the land by foreign subjects
- ✓ under-use of region potential
- ✓ lack of finances in each sector
- ✓ possible pollution of environmental components

CONCLUSIONS

From the analysis of landscape structure of region Tekov and an analysis of the possibilities for implementing rural tourism activities it can be concluded that within the region there are enough localities where can be applied one or more parallel all seasons tourist activities, developing education-cognitive nature and preserving the folk traditions. Region Tekov has typical agricultural landscape. From ecologically important landscape elements in the territory are forests with 24% share and grassland 9% share of the area. For tourism opportunities are also important water elements with a share of 1.5%. Significant representations of landscape elements valuable for rural tourism are vineyards and gardens with a share of the total area of 1.8 and 2.2%. The basic activities implemented in the territory of region Tekov include walking, cycling, water sports, agro tourism, viticulture, mining, hunting, fishing, and from winter sports, for example skiing. Equally important fact is the presence of growth poles (Bratislava, Vienna and Budapest).

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