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REMARKABLE TOURIST PRODUCTS OF TRANSCARPATHIA

Despite all the late negative trends and processes that hinder its development, the tourism in Transcarpathia still has good chances to really become the key sector of the region's economy. This is also true for the international tourism, as, prior to the coronavirus outbreak there was (and after the end of the pandemic hopefully will be again) a growing demand for untraditional, authentic destinations, with the global decrease of customer loyalty and the second, third holidays becoming more frequent. The rich historical past of Transcarpathia, its peripheral location within Ukraine, the ethnic and religious diversity as well as the development of the specific local cultural and natural values into new tourist attractions can provide an excellent basis for creating an adequate touristic image for the region. In addition, it should be noted that in present-day Ukraine the inner touristic demand, the 'culture' of tourism is being formed now and it certainly affects the future of Transcarpathia.

Taking into account the total amount of Transcarpathia's tourism, its main product is *health tourism*, noting that the term "product" is only valid in this sense. The fundamentals of health tourism were laid in the Soviet era, what determinates the quality of the services offered (Berghauer S., 2010; Фодор Д. – Товт А., 2018).

As of 2018, there are 42 health resorts in Transcarpathia. Their number has decreased by about 30 per cent during the last decade. The number of

berths in health resorts has also been dropped significantly. The latter is mostly due to the fact that nowadays high quality service is by far more important than it was before, thus multi-bed apartments have been liquidated and redesigned.

The most important features of health tourism include the low level of seasonal variation and the long stay. The average number of days spent per patient is 12.9, which is not accidental: the emphasis in these resorts is on healing, the recommended courses last 21–24 days. In 2018 tourists spent a total of 0,97 million days at the resorts of Transcarpathia (www.stat.uz.ua). The Svalyava (43%) and Mukachevo (30%) districts had the highest patient traffic (see *Table 1*).

Table 1

**Dynamics of the number of health resorts
in Transcarpathia (1990–2018)**

	1990	1995	2000	2003	2007	2010	2015	2018
Sanitaria	14	15	15	15	22	19	21	19
Preventive sanatoria	14	14	14	11	6	7	2	–
Pensions and holiday resorts	23	29	36	43	41	36	32	23
<i>Total</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>42</i>

Source: Tourism in Transcarpathia 2002; 2005; www.stat.uz.ua

The offer of health tourism is set up only to satisfy the national demand, the region does not have developed health promoting services that are related to active tourism and have become increasingly popular worldwide (fitness, wellness, spa, thematic parks). Further development is expected in the future on the national and regional levels, while on the international level health tourism has many untapped possibilities (Berghauer S., 2012).

The formation of the *rural tourism* in Transcarpathia was greatly influenced by the lack of the offered accommodation in the period after the political transformation. Despite the fact that in recent years the supply and reliability of the institutions of commercial accommodation has increased significantly, rural tourism still flourishes due to the favorable prices and local hospitality, reviving traditions that are so characteristic for the countryside.

The development of Transcarpathian rural tourism is centrally supported as it covers underdeveloped territories. However, there are only estimates on the condition and development of the local rural tourism. There are no official data on the functioning of rural tourism in Ukraine, the expert estimations show differences of an order of magnitude (from 300 to 3000 rural guesthouses in total) (Berghauer S., 2010; Sass E., 2019a).

Active tourism in Transcarpathia is led by *skiing tourism*, which is one of the tourist products with most significant development prospects regarding the fact that the region has the most varied morphologic features in Ukraine. At present there are 70 acting ski lifts in the area, however, the length of ski runs usually does not reach one kilometer. The majority of ski runs have ski lifts and the equipment can be rented nearby (Tarpai J., 2013; Sass E., 2019b).

Nowadays, *touring and hiking* often complement other tourist products and are thus regarded. The best-known hiking tours are organized to Synevyr National Park and the Chornohora Massif. Climbing Ukraine's highest mountain peak, the Hoverla (2061 m) is now considered to be a "pilgrimage". Following the international trends and promoting rational use of the nature's heritage in Transcarpathia, the decision-makers should focus on the development of alternative and eco-tourism, as products related to it form a real opportunity to save and protect the present natural resources and to preserve the region's almost unspoilt image. Rational planning of tours to nature reserves, national parks that satisfies professional needs can lead to the development of an international level product to meet specific tourist needs in Transcarpathia (Berghauer S. 2010; www.turkul.com).

Keywords: Transcarpathia, tourist products, health tourism, rural tourism, active tourism

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