

Selected Studies on Rural Tourism and Development

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Edited by

Cetin Akkus and Gulizar Akkus

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables.....	vii
List of Figures.....	ix
Preface.....	xi

Part I: Rural Tourism Potential

Rural Tourism Competitiveness of Turkey	3
Gülizar Akkuş	
A Prominent Destination in Rural Tourism: Erzurum	15
Çetin Akkuş	
From Navigational Aids to Tourist Attractions: The Tourism Potential of Lighthouses	27
A. Celil Çakıcı, Seçkin Eser and Oya Yıldırım	
Investigation of the Nature Sports: Çoruh Valley Trekking Routes	39
Zuhal Aksakallı and Gulizar Akkuş	
Rural Tourism Potential of Iğdır.....	53
Gülşen Bayat	
Use of Geographic Indications in Farm Tourism: The Case of Southern Marmara.....	65
Gülizar Akkuş	
Determining the Potential Rural Tourism Areas and its Properties in Adıyaman	77
Eda Rukiye Donbak	
Evaluation of Rural Architecture Samples from Northeast Anatolia.....	89
Yusuf Bayraktar and Çetin Akkuş	

Exploring the Tourism Potential of Nallıhan District in Ankara and Proposals for Rural Development.....	101
Semra Akar Şahingöz, Mehmet Kızılelli and Kadir Çetin	

Ecotourism in Artvin	115
Ekrem Aydın	

Part II: Rural Tourism Development

A Sustainable Tool in Development of Local Communities: Community Based Tourism (CBT) Projects and Cases in Turkey	131
Sıla Karacaoğlu, Ebru Aslaner and Günay Erol	

The Importance of Gastronomy Image in Terms of Rural Tourism Development: Mardin Example.....	143
Salih Yıldız	

Evaluation of Rural Tourism Potential of Kırklareli and Utilizing Serious Leisure and Lifestyle Entrepreneurship for Development of Rural Tourism Supply	155
Onur Çakır and Mehmet Han Ergüven	

Rural Development and Rural Tourism: Beypazarı Example	167
Aykut Şimşek	

Transformation of Women's Labor into Income in the Scope of Rural Tourism: Local Foods.....	181
Aysu Altaş and Yusuf Acar	

Culinary Tourism and Rural Development: Taraklı/Sakarya	193
Nihan Akdemir	

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1. Turkey and Other Countries in regard to the Number of Species and Endemics	11
Table 3.1. Main Lighthouses Used in Tourism around the World	31
Table 3.2. Primary Lighthouses in Turkey	33
Table 4.1. Length (l), Difficulty (d) and Height (h) data of Uzundere and Ispir Trekking Routes	49
Table 6.1. Opportunities Offered in Farms	72
Table 12.1. Typology of Culinary Tourism Resources	144
Table 13.1. The Rural Festivals, Fairs, and Other Events that Take Place in Kırklareli	159

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1. Determinants of Rural Tourism.....	4
Figure 1.2. Geographical Regions of Turkey	5
Figure 1.3. Turkey's Food Culture According to Geographical Regions	6
Figure 2.1. Semi-Collared Flycatcher (<i>Ficedula Semiorquata</i>)	19
Figure 2.2. Stuffed Shredded Wheat.....	21
Figure 4.1. Some Routes in Uzundere	44
Figure 4.2. Ispir Yedigöller	46
Figure 4.3. Some Routes in Ispir	47
Figure 4.4. Narman Canyon and Red Fairy Chimneys.....	48
Figure 5.1. Mount Ağrı.....	55
Figure 6.1. Provinces Located in the Marmara Region and Southern Marmara.....	66
Figure 6.2. Place of Farm Tourism within Rural Tourism	69
Figure 6.3. Ecological Farms in Turkey	71
Figure 6.4. Ecological Farms in Southern Marmara.....	72
Figure 7.1. Adiyaman and Its Districts Map.....	78
Figure 7.2. Location of Zey (Indere) Village.....	79
Figure 7.3. Adiyaman Zey Village Cultural Route.....	80
Figure 7.4. Entrance of Karadağ Woodland and Adiyaman Panorama	80
Figure 7.5. Zey Village Iron Castle (Roman Period Rock Settlement)	81
Figure 7.6. Sötlügen (Euphorbia)	81
Figure 7.7. Mountain Hyacinth (<i>Muscari</i>).....	82
Figure 7.8. Old Water Mill of Village	82
Figure 7.9. Zey (Indere) Village Mosque and Bridge	83
Figure 7.10. Making Village Bread	83
Figure 7.11. God of Apollo on Mt. Nemrud Hierotesional Tumulus	84
Figure 7.12. Panorama from Karadut Village.....	84
Figure 7.13. Panoramic View from Besni District	85
Figure 8.1. Tandoori House	92
Figure 8.2. Dovetail Cover	93
Figure 8.3. Hekim Evi (House of Doctors).....	96
Figure 8.4. Russian Consulate / The House Belonging to Haşim Arıkan... 97	
Figure 9.1. Map of Ankara	102
Figure 9.2. Left to right, Black Stork and Long Legged Buzzard	103
Figure 9.3. Rainbow Hills.....	104

Figure 9.4. Left to right, Uyuzsuyu and Soğukkuyu Waterfalls	104
Figure 9.5. Kocahan	105
Figure 9.6. Tomb of Tabduk Emre	106
Figure 9.7. Samples of Needle Work (Oya)	107
Figure 9.8. Needle Work (Oya) Fabric Weaving	108
Figure 9.9. Meat Covered Rice.....	109
Figure 9.10. Cranberries and Tarhana	109
Figure 9.11. Left to right, Bazlama and Stuffed Bread.....	110
Figure 9.12. Pirpir.....	111
Figure 9.13. Nallıhan Baklava	111
Figure 10.1. Views from Borçka Karagöl National Park.....	117
Figure 10.2. Left to right, Mençuna and Maral Waterfalls	118
Figure 10.3. Delikli Kaya Waterfall	119
Figure 10.4. Karagöl Sahara National Park Karagöl Part.....	120
Figure 10.5. Left to right, Views from Yaylalar Village and Çevreli Rafting Camping Areas.....	122
Figure 12.1. Cercis Murat Mansion.....	150
Figure 13.1. A View from Hamdibey Village	157
Figure 13.2. Country Houses of Kula Village	158
Figure 13.3. Transformation of Serious Leisure Activities into Lifestyle Entrepreneurship	162
Figure 14.1. Traditional Beypazarı House.....	169
Figure 14.2. Hıdırlık Hill	169
Figure 14.3. Hamam Museum	170
Figure 14.4. Living Museum	171
Figure 14.5. Filigree	173
Figure 16.1. Taraklı / Sakarya	197
Figure 16.2. Preparation of Uhut Dessert	199
Figure 16.3. Rice with Chickpeas, Chickpeas with Meat and Semolina Dessert	200
Figure 16.4. Organic Products in Taraklı	200

PREFACE

In order to ensure economic growth and social prosperity, rural areas should necessarily participate in growth. Rural development activities are crucially important especially in developing countries. Rural tourism is a tourism activity made in the underpopulated rural areas and in the places that are exposed to migration because of economic problems. In accordance with their development level, countries try to increase social welfare with rural tourism activities. The rural tourism concept, strongly focused by especially developed European countries for many years, is considered to be a new approach for Developing Countries. Rural tourism is considered to be one of the principal actors of rural development, a subject frequently mentioned in the development policies of our country in recent years. The elimination of income imbalance, the creation of rural women employment and the protection of nature at the same time is possible with the successful rural tourism structure. But rural tourism activities are carried out in a small area with a modest budget that causes marketing problems. Therefore, natural wonders and cultural centres with high potential can not provide the expected demand.

Turkey is an ancient country that is surrounded by sea on three sides and has hosted many civilizations throughout the history. For this reason, it has many tangible and intangible values such as natural beauties, historic monuments, traditional architectures of different cultures, rivers, lakes, caves, local events, local life, and local cuisine. These values offer a wide range to meet different expectations of different cultures.

In the context of the book, there is information about primarily the potential situation of the regions that haven't reached enough recognition among hundreds of rural tourism areas. In addition, topics such as successful project examples, geographical indications, rural women employment, ecotourism, local cuisine and regional architecture are presented to the reader with regional examples.

This book is created with the contribution of 23 authors from 10 different universities in six geographical regions of Turkey. We express our endless thanks to the contributing writers for their effort and care.

The Editors

PART I:

RURAL TOURISM POTENTIAL

RURAL TOURISM COMPETITIVENESS OF TURKEY

GÜLİZAR AKKUŞ

Introduction

The destinations that have hosted more tourists than other destinations for many years and the destinations with more tourist payments have been regarded as more competitive. However, many researchers have argued that destination competitiveness is directly proportional to the welfare of the people living in the destination in the course of time. According to this idea, the most competitive destinations are those which offer the best opportunities for their citizens in the long term. Nevertheless, in order to be truly competitive, tourism development of the destination has to be sustainable in economic, ecological, social, cultural and political sense.

Rural tourism contributes to the welfare of the people through rural development in the long term. Besides this, it protects the local and traditional structure and begins the sustainability of the cultural heritage. For this reason, rural tourism is actually an important means of increasing the competitive power of destinations. Turkey is a destination that can easily compete with its competitors due to its structure that allows rural tourism in all regions. In this section, strengths and opportunities of Turkey in terms of rural tourism are discussed.

Strengths of Turkey in terms of rural tourism

Rural tourism is a type of tourism that has emerged against urbanization. People want to spend time in rural areas to get away from the busy business life and the stress. However, since the scope of rural tourism is very wide, it is explained with numerous different names such as farm tourism, village tourism, highland tourism, agricultural tourism and ecotourism. Therefore, in order to better understand rural tourism as a concept, it is very important to know the components that make it up.

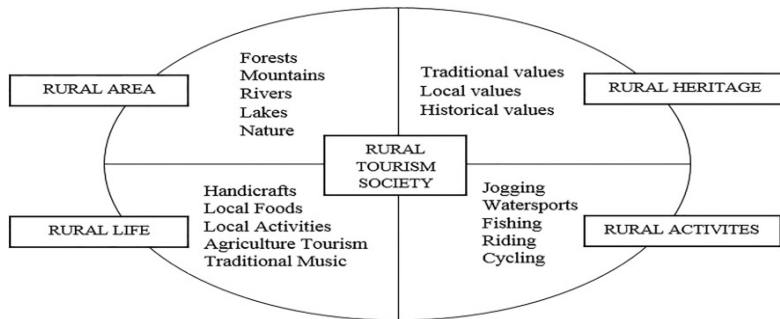


Figure 1.1.- Determinants of Rural Tourism

Rural tourism, as shown in Figure 1.1, is located in the circle of rural areas, rural life, rural heritage and rural activities, and there is a rural tourism community in the center. In this research, these components have been examined in order to reveal the competitive aspects of Turkey in terms of rural tourism.

Many studies have been carried out to increase Turkey's rural tourism potential. In particular, rural tourism projects have been carried out in various regions in order to provide rural development. However, with a general review, Turkey's advantages in terms of rural tourism are listed along with their reasons here:

Turkey is a peninsula surrounded by sea on three sides and has a unique natural beauty. There are mountains, lakes, rivers and forests and rural areas to fascinate people of all ages. In addition to the well-known natural beauty, in terms of tourists, there are many undiscovered and untouched areas. It offers tourists a spectacular view, thanks to many extinguished volcanic mountains, especially the Ağrı Mountain, forests in its northern part particularly famous for the plateaus, and lakes, each one more beautiful than the other on the migration route of birds. In other words, it has the entire spectrum of rural areas, one of the most important determinants for rural tourism. The tourists may encounter many rural areas where all these areas are intertwined.

Turkey provides many agricultural activities thanks to its seven different geographical regions (Figure 1.2) and the climate in which four seasons can be experienced together. Different and various agricultural products are produced in all its regions. While the Aegean Region is known for its variety of vegetables, spices and olive groves, a wide variety of citrus fruits are grown in the Mediterranean Region. While the Black Sea Region is known for its tea and hazelnuts, the Central Anatolia Region

is referred to as the "grain silo" of the country. The Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia Regions are important centers where cattle breeding takes place. In the Marmara Region besides these, sheep and goat farming are active. Turkey is the point where every incoming tourist will experience many agricultural tourism activities.



Figure 1.2. - Geographical Regions of Turkey

Due to the fact that it has a different geographical structure and provides different agricultural activities in each region, its eating and drinking culture also changes. The very spicy and meat-centered food culture in the Southeastern Anatolia Region is replaced with seafood in the Black Sea. According to Figure 1.3, the dishes in the Marmara Region are fried liver, meatballs, meatballs in tomato sauce, sekerpare (dry Turkish switheat), yogurt kebabs and Turkish cotton candy, respectively. Dishes in the Aegean Region are olives, cowpeas and stuffed grapes, respectively. In the Central Anatolia Region, there are Turkish burek, Konya tandoor, chickpeas and crisp flaky pastries, respectively. The Mediterranean Region is famous for vegetables & fruits, oranges, watermelon and Adana kebabs, respectively. In the Southeastern Anatolia Region, on the other hand, there are Urfa kebabs, multilayered flaky pastries, steak tartar a la turca and very thin Turkish pizza covered with seasoned minced meat and onions. The Eastern Anatolia Region is home to cag kebabs, pan fried filo pastries, fist sized burghul halls, Turkish ravioli and stuffed mutton intestines, respectively. The Black Sea Region is known for Atlantic bonito, Turkish pizza with ground meat, village bread, anchovies, yogurt and meat and rice wrapped in cabbage leaves. Apart from the dishes explained here, every region, even the village, has its own unique flavors. For this reason, it has the characteristics of making you fully feel the rural life.

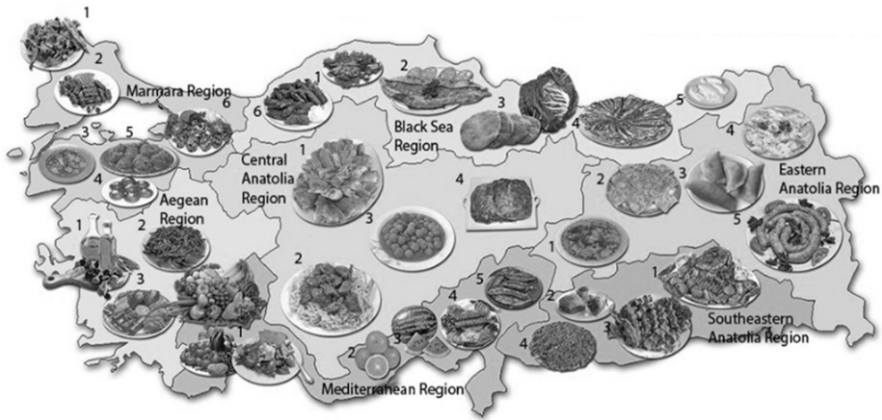


Figure 1.3.- Turkey's Food Culture According to Geographical Regions

Various local events are organized, especially in rural areas, in every period of the year in Turkey. Thanks to these activities, the opportunity for tourists to get to know the rural life increases. Activities such as oil wrestling organized in Kırkpınar and grass festivals in Alaçatı attract the great attention of both domestic and foreign tourists. Many rural festivals like these are organized in Turkey. These activities are important competitiveness factors in terms of rural tourism.

Turkey is a country very rich in traditional handicrafts. The most important of the traditional Turkish handicrafts, which usually bear Islamic elements include the following: “*calligraphy*” based on giving meaningful, harmonious and skillful shapes to the signs; “*art of water marbling*,” one of the most successful examples of the culture of Sufism; and “*miniature art*” that consists of small size pictures finely processed, an example of patience. However, “*illuminated manuscript art*,” in which the edges of written works are coated by gold, and the art of ceramics with its special patterns, should not be ignored. In addition, weaving is also a handicraft that has an important place in Turkey. Turkish carpets have become an especially important tourist product. Besides these, many traditional handicrafts such as copperwork, feltwork, glassware and pottery are still sustained. Handicrafts that can be important hints for the rural tourists to understand the life of the local community are a great advantage.

Turkey is at the intersecting and overlapping point of the main music cultures of the world. It has melodies that completely reflect the identity of Eurasia with its Turkish Folk Music and Turkish Art Music. However,

Sufi music, which is regarded as a reflection of the philosophy of Sufism to music, is also an important value. The aim in Sufi music is to remember servitude to God rather than having fun. The worship of the Mevlevi Dervishes (Semazen/Whirling Dervish) is performed accompanied with Sufi music. This music especially attracts great attention of foreign tourists and is found to be relaxing by most of them. Moreover, in many geographical regions of Turkey "*the Ashik Culture*" is sustained. The traditions of the Ashiks (literally means "lovers" in Turkish) are a sophisticated art that includes poetry, music and storytelling. Its most important characteristic is that it can appeal to the large masses of people by reflecting the lifestyle and view of life, as well as the ethical and aesthetic values of the period. Representatives of this develop by apprenticeship for many years beside the master lovers. All this traditional music is very important in terms of understanding the region and the life of the people. For this reason, it is an important component of rural tourism.

As of 2016, there are a total of 18,332 villages in Turkey. The population living in the villages is more than 6 million. It is seen that the villages are collective or dispersed according to their texture. While in collective villages, houses are always together; in dispersed villages, houses are at a certain distance from each other and scattered to the ground. One of the most important factors affecting the settlement with respect to being dispersed or collective is economic activities. According to economic activities, the villages are divided as forest villages, villages engaged in agriculture, villages engaged in animal breeding, villages engaged in fruit and vegetable growing, and villages where handicrafts and a number of manufacturing activities are important in Turkey. Forest villages are mostly found in the Black Sea Region (especially in the Western Black Sea) and in the higher parts of the Aegean and Mediterranean regions. The villages where grain farming is important are common in the Central Anatolia, Eastern Anatolia and Southeastern Anatolia regions and the Thracian section of the Marmara region. The villages where agriculture of fruit, vegetable and industrial plants are developed are mostly in the Aegean and Mediterranean regions, the Southern Marmara and Central Black Sea (Amasya, Tokat). The villages where animal breeding is prevalent are seen in mountainous and high areas with large highlands, and in places where climatic conditions make farming difficult. Such villages are most commonly found in the Eastern Anatolia Region. The villages where handicraft production activities are the main means of living have spread into almost every region of the country, but more intensely into Isparta, Manisa (Kula, Demirci, Gordes)

Uşak, Kayseri, (Bünyan), Muğla (Milas), Tokat (Niksar), Sivas, and Siirt. Turkey is one of the few countries where numerous rural tourism activities can be performed, thanks to the village number and variety it has. Moreover, the unlimited hospitality of Turkish rural settlers is well known all around the world and creates a very positive impact.

Due to climate differentiation, in all its geographical regions, an architectural structure unique to the region is seen. In the Black Sea Region, mostly in the high forestlands and highlands, there are one- or two-story wood houses. Stone houses are encountered in the Eastern Anatolia Region due to the severe climatic conditions. In Southeastern Anatolia, on the other hand, there are dome-shaped brick houses reminiscent of several funnels arranged side by side due to the hot climatic condition. Besides these, there are traditional houses with a quite different architectural quality than in the other regions. These are tangible cultural heritage examples having an important effect on practicing rural tourism.

Anatolian territories have hosted many civilizations over the centuries. In parallel, they also accommodate people of various ethnic origin. For this reason, in each region, even in territories or villages, different cultural structures are encountered. However, no matter how different they are, it is observed that all the people live peacefully together. This condition is very important in terms of discovering local values or indigenous cultural values. In particular, it is very valuable with respect to the authentic experiences the tourists have been searching for in recent years.

Turkey is home to a lot of tangible cultural heritage. In particular, the values detected in excavations and research are exhibited in museums and archaeological sites. So far, 16 cultural heritage assets have been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Among these, the historic areas of Istanbul [1985], the Divriği Great Mosque and Hospital (Sivas) [1985], Hattusa (Boğazköy) – Hittite Capital (Çorum) [1986], Mount Nemrut (Adıyaman – Kahta) [1987], Xanthos-Letoon (Muğla) [1988], Safranbolu Town (Karabük) [1994], Troy Ancient City (Çanakkale) [1998], the Edirne Selimiye Mosque and Social Complex (Edirne) [2011], Çatalhöyük Neolithic City (Konya) [2012], the Pergamon Multilayered Cultural Landscaping Zone (İzmir) [2014], Bursa and Cumalıkızık: Birth of the Ottoman Empire (Bursa) [2014], Diyarbakır Castle and Hevsel Gardens [2015], Ephesus (İzmir) [2015] and the Archaeological Site of Ani [2016] have been culturally included in the list. In addition, Göreme National Park and Cappadocia (Nevşehir) [1985] and Pamukkale-Hierapolis (Denizli) [1988] were included in the list as both cultural and natural heritage sites. Most of these historical and natural areas are found in rural

settlements. For this reason, rural tourists have the opportunity to experience all these historical and cultural values.

UNESCO's "Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage" was adopted in Turkey in 2006. Since then, Turkey has been included in the list of UNESCO with its 11 intangible cultural heritages. These are Arts of the Meddah, public storytellers [2008], the Mevlevi Sema ceremony [2008], Âşıklık (minstrelsy) tradition [2009], Karagöz (shadow play) [2009], the Kırkpınar oil wrestling festival [2010], the Semah, Alevi-Bektaşî ritual [2010], traditional Sohbet meetings [2010], Ceremonial Keşkek tradition [2011], the Mesir Macunu festival [2012], Turkish coffee culture and tradition [2013], Ebru: Turkish art of marbling [2014], flatbread making and sharing culture: Lavash, Katıрма, Jupka Yufka [2016], Nevruz [2016], and traditional craftsmanship of Çini-making [2016]. All these customs and traditions are still sustained in numerous settlements and draw great attention of the foreign tourists in particular.

Turkey has many geographical indications that are important in terms of the sustainability of either tangible or intangible cultural heritage. The reason for this is the width of rural areas and cultural and local riches. As of 2017, there are 204 registered geographical indications and 302 applications being evaluated in Turkey. When the distribution of the indications is examined on the basis of product, mostly goods such as carpets, rugs and blankets take place on the top, which are followed by unprocessed agricultural products and food in Turkey. About one-fourth of the geographical indications, however, are the products and promotional festivals of which are also held. When distribution of local festivals with a potential of geographical indication according to the geographical regions is examined, it is observed that such festivals are held in the Aegean Region and Central Anatolia Region the most. The number of such festivals is the fewest in the Southeastern Anatolia Region.

One of the most important components of rural tourism is rural activities. Without such activities, rural tourism cannot fully achieve its goal. Turkey has a structure that has intense rural areas and allows many rural activities such as horse riding, hunting and fishing, as well as trekking, cycling and water sports.

Since the Turks came from a nomadic culture "*horse*" refers to a special meaning. In particular, horse sports such as javelin and horseback archery are included in national sports. In addition, ambling horse (rahvan) races, corn wood (club) games and sleigh rides are some of the horse sports. Today, javelin is played in more than 10 provinces, and there are more than 60 javelin clubs in Anatolia. Horseback archery is sinking into

oblivion, but attempts are being made to revive it. Most recently, the International Horseback Archery Competition was arranged in Sivas in 2009. Additionally, Rahvan (Ambling) horse breeding is very popular in Anatolia, and there are Rahvan horse enthusiasts in almost every region. Corn wood (club) games are only played in Balıkesir and several places of the Aegean in Anatolia. Although sleigh rides were traditionally performed in many regions in the past, they are now performed in Belören Village connected to Küre district of Kastamonu, Ağrı and thereabouts. In addition to all these sports, horses are employed in numerous tourism activities in Turkey. Horse trekking is a tourism activity that is easily performed in many regions of the country. The most well-known location where horse trekking is made is Çömlekçiler Village of Kastamonu Daday. In addition, various horse trekking routes are available in Kayseri, Kırklareli, Malatya, Rize Highlands, Sakarya, Adana Taurus Mountains, Antalya and Gaziantep ve Afyon. Cappadocia, known as "*the land of beautiful horses*", is a haunt for the domestic and foreign tourists in terms of both horse trekking and horse riding trails.

Turkey has convenient areas for hunting tourism in terms of its richness in geographical structure, vegetation and wildlife. There are about 80,000 animal species including 132 mammals, 454 birds, 106 reptiles, and 345 fish species. However, the hunting grounds that will be opened to hunting tourism, by taking game animal potential into account, are detected and announced by the Ministry of Forestry (General Directorate of National Parks and Game Wildlife). Besides this, Turkey has a wide variety of climate types and rich biodiversity depending thereon. About 1/3 of 10,765 fern species and flowering plants are endemic. Turkey, in addition to this rich endemic flora structure, also has old-growth forest lands, grassland, shrubs, wetlands, peatlands, and dune areas. Three of the 37 flora regions determined in the world are located in Turkey. It has a great advantage of competition in terms of plant species and endemic plants. For this reason, it offers rural tourists a great visual feast especially in terms of endemic plants.

Turkey has unlimited opportunities for trekking with its various mountains, coasts and steep sloped valleys. It is surrounded by the Taurus Mountains in the south, regarded as the extension of the Himalayas, and the Black Sea Mountains in the north. Turkey, according to European standards, has long-distance walking-tracks with red and white expression flags every hundred meters. These are the Lycian Way and the Saint Paul Trail. Both ways are about 500 km long, and it takes 25-30 days to complete them. The Lycian Way is Turkey's first trekking route and opened in 1999. It is the longest walking route between Antalya and

Fethiye having a coast on the Mediterranean and also covering the remains the historical Lycian city. Saint Paul Trail, on the other hand, is the second longest distance trekking route located in Asia Minor, Turkey. It opened in 2004. A part of this trail consists of original Roman roads. Forest climbing is performed in the rough parts and steep sloped valleys near the forest complete the road. Apart from these long distance routes, there are extraordinary attractive trekking routes in almost every region in Turkey. Besides these, in the Kaçkar Mountains, the highest mountain range of the Eastern Black Sea Region, there are the most suitable trekking trails of Turkey for mountain climbing.

Table 1.1 - Turkey and Other Countries in regard to the Number of Species and Endemics

Country	Number of Type	Number of Endemic
Bulgaria	3750	250
Denmark	1000	0
Britain	1756	73
Spain	7500	516
Italy	5599	712
Iceland	485	1
Hungary	2450	50
Norway	1253	11
Poland	2468	15
Greece	4992	1100
Turkey	10000	3000

Turkey draws great attention from both domestic and foreign tourists with its numerous cycling routes. The best bike trails are the Cappadocian region (43 km), the Kaçkar Mountains (91 km), the Gulf of Gökova (295 km), the Thrace tour (245 km), the surroundings of Marmaris (106 km), the Gallipoli peninsula (114 km), the Amasra-Sinop route (331 km), the Dalyan and Fethiye route (61 km), the Assos-Mount Ida tour (87 km) and the Kapıdağı peninsula (95 km), respectively. Besides these, it also has very good routes in terms of mountain bikes. Some of these are Samadağ in Hatay in the southernmost of Turkey, Aydos and Belgrade forests in Istanbul, Yenice forests in Karabük (attracting attention with its wildlife and plant diversity), and Samanlı mountains in Yalova. All the tourists coming to Turkey for rural tourism can find a trekking or cycling trail suitable for them in the region they want.

There are hundreds of large and small rivers in Turkey. Many of these rivers are very convenient to water sports such as rafting, canoeing and

river skiing. Rafting can be performed in four seasons in Turkey. In particular, the Mediterranean Region and the Eastern Black Sea Region are suitable for many water sports. One of the Earth's fastest-flowing rivers, the Çoruh River, is known worldwide. Additionally, river tourism is integrated with historical, archaeological, cultural and authentic values. For this reason, it offers tourists a great visual feast.

Conclusion

Rural tourism has saved Turkey, especially known for its coastal tourism, from this invasion and made it possible to benefit from the relaxing atmosphere of rural areas. In addition, it has an important role in the promotion of Turkey. Now, the choices of the tourists coming to Turkey are shifting towards rural tourism. This is because Turkey is an exotic structure between the West and the East.

Rural tourism serves the concept of sustainable tourism in Turkey. In particular, it is a great advantage to have action plans for rural tourism within the 2023 tourism strategy. This strategy comprises policies to develop and provide sustainability for rural tourism.

Turkey has a great advantage thanks to its historical and cultural values, rural areas with natural beauties, all the marks of rural life and a variety of activities that can be performed in rural areas. It has a potential to compete with its close competitors in the Mediterranean basin and to provide competitive advantage. It is obvious that, with correct promotional and marketing activities, it will get to a better point in time.

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A PROMINENT DESTINATION IN RURAL TOURISM: ERZURUM

ÇETİN AKKUŞ

Introduction

The city having the largest surface area of Eastern Anatolia is Erzurum. The geographical structure of the province is bottom land in the east-west and mountainous in the north-south direction. Continental climate features are seen in the vast majority of the provincial land. While dominant vegetation is steppe, forest cover is not very common.

As of 2016, transportation to the province with 20 districts and 966 villages is possible by road, railway and airway. International Erzurum Airport has an annual capacity of 2 million passengers and can accommodate seven aircraft at the same time. Orient Express and Blue Train pass through the city located on the Istanbul-Haydarpasa-Kars railway line.

The number of domestic tourists coming to Erzurum in 2016 was 139,287 and the number of foreign tourists was 12,594. Erzurum takes a very low share of national tourism in terms of the entrance and exit of the visitors. Increasing this rate depends on the development and sustainability of the variety of tourism products. For this purpose, types of tourism products prominent in Erzurum tourism are examined.

Winter and sports tourism

Winter and sports tourism centers located in and around Erzurum city center are the first community of winter sports centers designed with a master plan in Turkey. These are the Palandöken Mountains, Erzurum Strait location, Gez Plateau and Konaklı Region. The Palandöken Mountains, which are among the ski areas of primary importance and priority in Turkey in terms of winter sports and winter tourism activities, provide winter sports opportunities in Erzurum's city center. The

Palandöken Mountains are an international station for skiing and winter tourism activities, and many of the tourist hotels are located in this region. The ski facilities where the Alpine discipline is easily performed are attractive for the sportsmen/women in terms of wide and long ski tracks and snow quality.

Erzurum Strait's location covers the Ejder Hill and its surroundings on the Palandöken Mountains. The ski resort in this area is 5 km away from Erzurum's city center. It is covered with snow for more than 150 days from the end of October to the end of May, and in normal winter conditions it is covered with 2-3 m of snow cover. Gez Plateau's winter sports center is 7 km east of Erzurum. This area with 54 hectares has three wide ridges extending from the summit to the northeast.

The features of the Konaklı region in terms of winter sports are more convenient than those of the Gez Plateau and Erzurum Strait. The topographic view of the area is similar to the Alps. Inclined slopes extending along a shallow valley are suitable for numerous mechanical facilities and tracks. Thus, due to the Erzurum Winter Universiade (EWU) 2011 games, many investments were made by the General Directorate of Youth and Sports in this region. 114,000 m² was allocated for the hotel investment of the private sector and allocation of this area is done by the General Directorate of Allocation of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. In addition, 1,768 athletes from 53 countries came to Erzurum for EWU 2011. Having achieved its organizational skills in 2011, the city continues to host many national and international events in winter sports. Having hosted a total of 23 international competitions from 2011 until 2014, Erzurum welcomed about 8,500 athletes in that period. A total of 700 athletes from 9 branches and 34 countries participated in the latest European Youth Olympics Festival (EYOF) competitions held in 2017.

History and cultural heritage

Erzurum is comprised of many historical architecture buildings and heritage attractions. One of the most important buildings in the city center is the Erzurum Castle, whose construction date is not certainly known. In addition, there are historical castles in many districts.

The Twin Minarets Madrasa (the Çifte Minareli Medrese) in the city center belongs to the Anatolian Seljuks period and is a monumental example of a madrasa with a courtyard, 2 stories and 4 iwans. The crown gate, dominated by the northern front, is an art masterpiece in itself. In addition, Yakutiye Madrasah, which is one of the rare artifacts surviving from the Ilhanlı period, is now being used as the Museum of Islamic

Works. Various works covering the period from the 4th century BC to the Seljuks period are exhibited in the Archaeological Museum. In addition, the house where Atatürk stayed during the Erzurum Congress, which is located in the city center, and the building where the congress was held, are the works emphasizing the historical significance of the city.

Only six arches and a 130-meter section of the Çobandede Bridge, which was built in 1297, survived until today. The Rüstem Pasha covered bazaar (bedesten), which carries the characteristics of the Ottoman architecture, serves as a bazaar where oltu stone sellers are active today. It is estimated that the Gümrük, Cennetzaade and Kanberoğlu khans in the city center survived from the 18th and 19th centuries. Located in Aşkale, the Karasu Khan, which was built as a "Derbent Khan" in the early 17th century, has a structure that draws attention as it consists only of a closed hall section.

In addition to its historical structures, its traditional architecture is also an attraction for tourists, both domestic and foreign. In traditional Erzurum houses, one or two rooms are reserved for housewives, and these rooms are called "Harem Rooms / Tandoori House Rooms (Kitchen)." Also called house, tandoori roof and soup kitchen, there are scarcely any "Tandoori Houses" in Erzurum today although there are still some houses sustaining this tradition.

Since Erzurum preserves the tradition of the Turkish bath, hamam, and is surrounded by mountains, it is a city where there are fountains on every side. Historical baths such as Lala Pasha Hamam, Kırkçeşme Hamam, Boyahane Hamam, Murat Pasha Hamam, Küçük Hamam, Saray Hamam, Çifte Göbek Hamam and Gümrük Hamam are historical and cultural values that have survived and are still used. Erzurum fountains, on the other hand, are one of the cultural values which are generally 18th-century structures and surround all four corners of the city. Pushkin, who wrote his memories of Erzurum, also states, "There is nothing more abundant than fountains in Erzurum. Each one has tin bowls connected to a chain thereon. Faithful Muslims drink water from these bowls and thank God."

Another aspect that reflects the character of Erzurum is its handicrafts. Ehram (i.e., the sacred dress of Muslim pilgrims), carpet weaving and oltu stone working are the most important material pieces of culture heritage of the city. Oltu Stone, which is one of the underground treasures of Erzurum, is of great importance as it is only found in and around Oltu, which is the eponym of the stone.

Erzurum is a territory which gained country-wide fame with its folk literature, folk music and minstrels and raised many lovers (i.e., ashiks). Nowadays, it sustains the folk culture, literature and music and thus, many

festivals are held here. Additionally, due to the dominance of folk literature and music, the culture of folk dances also covers a broad area.

Religious tourism centers

Erzurum is a city where mosque culture is intensely experienced due to its traditional texture and spiritual structure. The Grand Mosque and Lala Mustafa Pasha Mosque in the city center are among the important architectural structures. The Grand Mosque reflects all the grand mosque characteristics of the Anatolian Seljuks. Lala Mustafa Pasha Mosque is the first Ottoman mosque in Erzurum. Apart from these, there are 18 historical mosques and three domes in different locations of the city center. The three domes are made entirely of stone and are accepted as belonging to the end of the 13th century and to the beginning of the 14th century. The domes draw attention in terms of their different plans, materials and decorations compared to other domes belonging to the Turks. The mosque located near the Oltu Brook, in Oltu district outside the city center, is one of the most beautiful examples of the single domed mosques of the Ottoman art in Eastern Anatolia. Penek Castle, belonging to the Kingdom of Georgia in the 11th century, shows more church characteristics with its construction style and it is different from other churches due to its circular shape. The Virgin Mary Church, which is located in Bağbaşı village of the Tortum district and was built by the Georgian King David between 961-1001, is visited by many art historians and religious Christians.

Bird watching

In Erzurum, along with bird watching, butterfly and wildlife watching is also present. Along with many species of birds native only to the region, a total of 188 bird species were detected in 2005. This figure covers about 40% of the bird species that can be observed in Turkey.

In our country, there are four different species of vultures: Bearded Vulture, Griffon Vulture, Black Vulture and Little Vulture, and it is possible to see these four birds in Uzundere. Avian predator species such as Imperial, Steppe Eagle, Pallid Harrier that are very rarely seen in Turkey can be watched in Çoruh Valley, especially during autumn migration. Caspian Snowcock, which covers a very narrow area on the world, lives in the steep and rocky sections of the mountains hard to reach and can easily be seen in the high sections of Uzundere district and the immediate environment thereof in the early morning hours. Mountain