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The development of inbound tourism in the Republic of Belarus

Развитие въездного туризма в Республике Беларусь

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Tourism is one of the leading and most dynamic sectors of international economy. It is one of the important sources of increasing country's welfare. Due to rapid growth it was identified as an economic phenomenon of the century. The development of tourism plays an important role in solving social problems (employment, rising living standards, etc). Tourism has a positive effect on preserving and developing historic and cultural heritage, leads to good relations between peoples and countries. So every country tries to develop this sector of economy.

Therefore the aim of this work is to examine possible ways to improve inbound tourism in the Republic of Belarus. To achieve this aim a range of specific tasks should be provided:

- to consider social and economic influence of tourism on society;
- to describe tourism resources of the country;
- to characterize the activity of travel agencies, to identify the factors that restrain the development of tourism in Belarus.
- to consider possible prospects of the development of inbound tourism, to offer solutions of the existing problems.

Belarus pays great attention to the development of inbound and outbound tourism. The number of organized tourists, who visited Belarus in 2009, increased by 4,2% in comparison with the year 2008 and amounted to 95,5 thousand people.

However in Belarus this sector of economy gives only 0,4% of GDP and 9,5% of total services (2008). Inbound tourism in Belarus shows a small growth dynamics. Our country loses billions of rubles because of inefficient development of tourism. Nowadays the ratio of Belarusian people who travel abroad and foreigners who visit Belarus is approximately 3:1. For the successful development of the national tourism industry this ratio is desirable to be 1:3.

The Republic of Belarus has a very rich natural, historical and cultural potential, which is favorable for international tourism.

On the territory of our republic there are many cities and regions where various resources can make tourism a profitable branch of economy. In my work much attention was devoted to tourism resources. A short guide handbook "Why visit Belarus?" was made. The main points of it are:

1. Belarusian architecture through the ages.
2. Business tourism.
3. Rich cultural life.
4. Cuisine of Belarus.
5. Health-improving tourism.
6. History of Belarus.
7. Agrotourism.
8. Transit tourism.
9. Religious tourism.
10. Belarusian wildlife and «adventure» tourism.
11. Original culture.

However, the influence of the tourism industry on the Belarusian economy is slight. Its development is restrained mostly because of the lack of real investments, low level of service, the lack of skilled personnel, undeveloped tourism infrastructure, the view of Belarus as a risk country. Therefore it is necessary to direct all forces to the development of inbound tourism.

Chapter 5 provides a number of promising directions for the development of inbound tourism, as well as there is Top-13 attractions for further improvement of the tourist industry in Belarus.

Top - 13 prospects:

1. Cross-border tourism.

It is important to develop and reconstruct the border route "from the Varangians to the Greeks" and the Augustow Canal.

2. "Manor house" and ancestral estates.

A high-quality restoration will be possible if these estates are returned to former owners or their heirs. Here can be museums, good guest houses, luxury-hotels.

3. Gastronomic tourism.

Gastronomic tourism is well organized in many countries. So why not develop Belarusian gastronomic tour with national delicious cuisine.

4. Holszanyand Kreva castles.

Kreva Castle is one of the most important places for the perception of Belarus as a country in which European history was created. Nowadays these castles require professional and high-quality reconstruction.

5. Resorts – Lake Narach, Braslavsky lake group.

It is necessary to create high-quality infrastructure which will turn these beautiful places into resorts for rest and treatment.

6. Sports tourism.

It means organizing of the major sports events which will attract tourists audience from abroad.

7. Health-improving tourism.

Updating existing and creating new infrastructure in the sphere of recreational facilities with the expansion of tourist services; - creating summer health-camps, campgrounds.

8. Youth tourism.

There should be active involvement of young people in travelling around their homeland in order to develop pride of the historical past and to promote internal tourism.

9. Organizing nostalgic tours for immigrants from Belarus.

10. Belarus is an active participant in the world events, so it is necessary to organize international cultural festivals, concerts with the world known pop stars; international conferences, seminars, trade fairs;

11. Belarusian names - to «find» and buy lost values and relics connected with the work of Belarusian celebrities: Marc Chagall, Vankovich, etc.

12. Creative work and myths.

In Belarus, it is important to create and cultivate myths of Belarusian history (eg. places connected with Napoleon and others).

13. Struve Geodetic Arc.

6 items are included in the World Heritage List. The Struve Geodetic Arc is a chain of survey triangulations stretching from Hammerfest in Norway to the Black Sea.

As we can see, there are many promising areas of the development of inbound tourism in Belarus, the main thing is to find those who can embody these ideas.