

FOREIGN EXPERIENCE IN DEVELOPING RECREATIONAL TOURISM IN MOUNTAIN AREAS (THE MODEL OF THE ALPINE COUNTRIES)

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21719520>

Abstract. The paper analyzes the foreign experience of developing recreational tourism in mountain areas through the model of the Alpine countries (Austria, Switzerland, France, Italy). It examines the key elements of the Alpine model – year-round tourism, diversification, cluster-based management, ecological sustainability, local community involvement and state support. The possibilities of applying this experience to the mountain areas of Uzbekistan, in particular the Turkestan Range (Zaamin, Bakhmal) in the south of the Jizzakh region and the Nurata Mountains (Forish, Gallaorol), are substantiated.

Keywords: mountain areas, recreational tourism, Alpine model, seasonality, tourism cluster, sustainable tourism, ecotourism, regional development.

Introduction. Although mountain areas are rich in natural and recreational assets, they belong to the category of territories with limited agricultural potential, relatively underdeveloped infrastructure, and a peripheral location. For this reason, their socio-economic development requires a distinct approach. World practice shows that recreational tourism is one of the most effective instruments for developing mountain areas. In this regard, the countries of Europe's Alpine region have established the world's leading and most successful model. In Uzbekistan as well, the foothills of the Tien Shan and Pamir-Alay mountain systems – including the high parts of the Turkestan Range (3,000–4,000 m) in the Zaamin and Bakhmal districts of southern Jizzakh region, and the relatively lower Nurata Mountains (1,000–2,000 m) in the Forish and Gallaorol districts – possess considerable recreational potential. Therefore, studying the Alpine experience and drawing on it judiciously is of pressing relevance.

The Alpine region and the significance of mountain tourism. The Alps extend across the territory of eight European countries, and tourism is one of the leading sectors in the economy of their mountain regions [2]. In this region, tourism is recognized not only as a source of income and employment, but also as a social factor that prevents the depopulation of mountain villages and preserves local culture and traditions. The Alpine model is an integrated system, shaped over many years, based on ecological sustainability, local community involvement, and high-quality services.

The key elements of the Alpine model. First, year-round (two-season) tourism. Because climate change is shortening the ski season in the Alps and mountain areas more broadly, destinations are seeking to mitigate seasonality by diversifying their tourism offerings and encouraging visits during off-peak periods as well [5]. This is an important factor in ensuring the economic sustainability of mountain tourism.

Second, the diversification of services. Beyond skiing, wellness and spa services, gastronomic and cultural tourism, and event tourism have been developed. This enriches the tourism product and attracts customers across different segments.

Third, cluster-based organization and destination management. Small tourism enterprises, hotels, and local entrepreneurs unite within destination management organizations (DMOs) and pursue a common brand and marketing policy. This enhances competitiveness and efficiency.

Fourth, ecological sustainability. The Alpine Convention, signed in 1991, established the principles for protecting mountain ecosystems and developing tourism sustainably [1]. Development is carried out on the basis of strict spatial planning, in harmony with nature conservation [3].

Fifth, broad participation of the local population. Family-run hotels, farm-based agritourism, and local handicrafts ensure an equitable distribution of tourism revenues among the population and turn local culture into a tourism resource.

Sixth, state support. Targeted subsidies directed at mountain areas, investments in infrastructure, and regional development programs have underpinned the success of the Alpine model.

Examples from the experience of individual countries. In Austria (Tyrol), mountain tourism is oriented toward family holidays and is distinguished by a strong DMO system and the active participation of small businesses (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. The natural landscape of the Tyrol region

Source: <https://www.austria.info/ru/provinces/tirol-letom/>

Switzerland has developed a system of high-quality, premium services and a world-class, exemplary mountain transport network (mountain railways and cable cars). France is known for its large, purpose-built resort complexes and the state's centralized planning policy. In Italy, in turn, the Dolomites (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) exemplify the harmony between natural and cultural resources. Although these national models differ, they are united by common principles – sustainability, diversification, and local participation.

At the same time, the Alpine model is not free of challenges. Recent studies note that the ski market is approaching saturation, the stability of snow cover is declining under climate change, and the excessive expansion of real estate and infrastructure is placing pressure on mountain ecosystems; this situation is compelling Alpine destinations to diversify their tourism product and seek innovative solutions [4]. Therefore, in adopting this experience, it is necessary to learn not only from its achievements but also from these limitations.

Opportunities for adapting the model to the mountain areas of Uzbekistan. In applying the Alpine experience to Uzbekistan, and in particular to the mountain areas of Jizzakh region – the high Turkestan Range in the south (Zaamin, Bakhmal) and the relatively lower Nurata Mountains (Forish, Gallaorol) – it is advisable to take into account the altitudinal specialization of these areas. High-mountain areas are suitable for mountain recreation and summer travel, whereas the lower mountains are favorable for ecotourism, agritourism, and health tourism. In particular, the mountain areas of the Zaamin National Nature Park – internationally recognized as the “Switzerland of Uzbekistan” for its unique nature, climatic-therapeutic resources, and scenic appeal – have the potential to compete with the premium resort zones of the Alpine region (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. The Zaamin National Nature Park

Source: <https://uzbekistan.travel/uz/o/zomin-milliy-tabiati-bogi/>

It is advisable that the adoption of foreign experience be carried out on the basis of a national scientific foundation. The works of Uzbek scholars provide a comprehensive treatment of the theoretical and practical issues of the territorial organization of tourism, the assessment of tourism resources, and state support for the sector [6]. This makes it possible to align the principles of the Alpine model – such as diversification, clustering, and local participation – with the existing instruments of national tourism policy.

In mountain areas, the following directions appear promising: reducing seasonality by combining summer wellness tourism, ecotourism, and trekking (hiking) with winter recreation; developing a network of agritourism and family-run hotels; forming local tourism clusters; and introducing spatial planning that reconciles nature conservation with tourism [6]. At the same time, the Alpine model cannot be copied blindly: an adapted approach is required, taking into account climatic conditions, altitude, the limited nature of water resources, and cultural specificity.

Conclusion. The model of the Alpine countries offers a coherent and sustainable example of developing recreational tourism in mountain areas. Its main lessons – diversification that reduces seasonality, ecological sustainability, local community involvement, and cluster-based management – are also valuable for the mountain areas of Uzbekistan. Applying these principles in adaptation to local conditions will make it possible to use effectively the recreational potential of mountainous districts such as Zaamin, Bakhmal, and Forish, and to advance their socio-economic development. From this perspective, the systematic study of foreign experience constitutes an important scientific basis for formulating regional tourism policy.

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