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## Approaches to active tourism in the Urals and in Perm Krai

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## APPROACHES TO ACTIVE TOURISM IN THE URALS AND IN PERM KRAI

**Abstract:** Located in the south of Ural, Perm Krai, apart from mineral resources and well-developed industry, can boast vast areas that lend themselves to active and qualified tourism, with the quality of an amateur sport. The development of these forms of tourism often requires large expenditure needed for adjusting the space to various types of activity. It also requires a correlation between a given character of the space and the preferred form of tourism, which often leads to environmental conflicts between the development of tourism and nature protection. The article presents the most important elements of the tourism potential in Perm Krai, as well as the sports tourism development perspectives in the context of real and potential environmental conflicts.

**Keywords:** active tourism, sports tourism, tourism development, Ural, Perm Krai, nature protection.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The idea that the areas which are the most interesting in natural terms, must be used rationally in tourism and be protected from other, especially non 'environmentally-friendly', activities is quite commonplace in today's world and is almost universally accepted. It primarily concerns unique beautiful natural places. Such areas must have a certain system of organization in the form of national parks, reserves and other types of protection to encourage tourism and combine the functions of nature conservation and tourism.

A number of countries have succeeded in this field and have nationwide networks of national parks.

Creating such a network has always lagged behind the needs of tourism and recreation in the natural environment in Russia due to a shift in priorities towards the protection of the natural heritage from all economic activities, including recreation and tourism. Such 'sanctuaries' are the creation of the protected natural areas (PNA) system in Russia, a template for nature with a landscape-geographical base. What is more, no intervention in such areas is the main principle according to classical notions of wilderness protection and natural sanctuaries, formulated in late 19<sup>th</sup> - early

20<sup>th</sup> c. by Dokuchaev, Kojevnikov, Borodin, Sukachov and other prominent writers.

Specialized areas for nature-oriented tourism have been insufficiently developed because of this focus on establishing sanctuaries. The lack of such areas on the one hand, and vast undeveloped territories on the other, has led to the emergence of an independent 'self-regulating' tourism indigenous to the Soviet Union and Russia.

The vector of development and creation of the network of protected areas has changed in modern Russia. New national parks are formed every year for which recreation is one of the main functions. However, traditions which have been developing over a hundred years of 'self-regulating' tourism are impossible to overcome. Thousands of tourist trails, regardless of current environmental status, are laid out.

This article sets out the current concepts of self-regulating, active and sports tourism in Russia, highlights the present state of active tourism, and deals with its rational spatial organization in the Urals and Perm Krai.

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## 2. ACTIVE AND SPORTS NATURE-ORIENTED TOURISM: CONCEPTS AND CORRELATION OF TYPES

In formulating the concepts it is necessary to give a short retrospective review. Tourism, in terms of organization, was divided into planned and self-regulating in Soviet times. Planned tourism implied using trails developed by tourist organizations, pre-paid (when purchasing a package holiday) and with guaranteed services (accommodation, meals, excursions, etc.). Tourists used prepared trails with an experienced instructor by active means (walking, kayaking, catamaran sailing, skiing, horse riding). Currently, this is commercial tourism organized by tour operators. 'Self-regulating' tourism existed alongside and in contrast to the planned one.

'Self-regulating' tourism is using trails that tourists develop themselves, or are recommended by tourist clubs. In its turn, it is subdivided into mass 'self-regulating' tourism and sports 'self-regulating' tourism.

Russia has its own understanding of sports tourism, different from the rest of the world. The point is that sports tourism in Russia is a sport in itself and competitions are held at various levels, and categories and titles have been conferred since 1949. Two directions are distinguished in sports tourism: classical (trekking) and sports tourism competitions. These latter are for different types of tourism where a team must cover a certain distance via an obstacle course typical for the given type of tourism, as quickly as possible, observing safety rules, without making any mistakes and without losing any equipment. Typically, for most types of sports tourism, this distance is covered in one hour and routes have different levels of complexity. According to the competition results, sports categories and titles are conferred.

Sport treks can be of six categories of complexity. The meaning of trekking is to cover a trail in the wilderness and overcoming obstacles with maximum safety and ten types are distinguished: hiking, mountaineering, skiing, water activities, caving, cycling, car, motorcycle (here quadricycles and snowmobiles can participate too), sailing, and horse riding. The minimum duration of the trek for the first category is six days, and for the sixth category of complexity it is 20 days. These are the minimum standards, there are no upper limits.

Sports tourism is organized, but not commercial. To take such a trip it is necessary to obtain the relevant documents from the trail-qualification board and after the trip to fill in a special report to be submitted to the same board. Only then is it possible for a certain trail to be eligible for any competition and for categories/titles to be conferred. Besides, this report captures the

experiences of the participants necessary to attempt a more difficult trail next time. In Russia there is one large main organization, the Federation of Sport Tourism of Russia (FSTR), and every region has its regional federations, which, in their turn, include various tourist clubs, associations and other organizations.

Modern active tourism goes back to the mass 'self-regulating' tourism of the last century. Active tourism is commonly understood to be undertaken in an environment little altered and by active means. A wide range of types can be distinguished: water, hiking, caving, cycling, sailing, etc.

Sports and active tourism have common roots, but differ in their goals and content. Sports trekking has a specific sporting goal towards which the team put all their efforts which particularly concerns trails of the highest complexity category. Trails of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> etc. categories are stepping stones to more complex ones. With the increase in such excellence, sports tourists are mastering more and more challenging trails and areas, led by trails of the highest category and path finding (MISHLAVTCEVA 2007). Sports tourism is not on a mass scale. In total, several hundred thousand people are now engaged in it in Russia, and in Perm Krai, which ranks third nationally in terms of such development, up to ten thousand.

In active tourism preferences are given to trails which are unclassified, and have no or low (I, II, III) categories of complexity. In terms of organization, this can be done by tourists themselves or by tour operators. Active travel programs are developed on the basis of catalogs and classifiers and 'self-regulating' travel guides published at the height of 'self-regulating' tourism movement. This type is more large scale. Although it is extremely difficult to determine the volume of active tourists, and the official statistics do not keep a record.

Thus, the natural environment is the main resource for organizing both sports and active tourism, so both types are oriented towards it. Each of these types has its own nature and spatial organization.

## 3. THE URALS AS A TOURIST DESTINATION

In terms of nature, the notion of the 'Urals' covers territory spreading for over 2 000 km on a north-south axis from the coast of the Kara Sea to the steppes and semi-deserts of Central Asia. The Urals, as a mountainous territory, are surrounded by lowland plains (Russian and Western Siberian) to its west and east.

The Ural Mountains are a clearly defined tourist area and one of the most convenient world tourist

zones in the future, despite the fact that they are located inland and far from coastal areas. They are not too high, do not have such sights as volcanoes and geysers, and are far from the capital and national borders. The Urals in the broad sense, i.e. the Ural Mountains with adjacent territories, is filled with natural attractions. In this regard, over several decades active tourism areas have been developed with a great variety of tourist trails, primarily associated with nature-oriented types of tourism (ZIRYANOV & KOROLEV 2009).

Standard trails of varying complexity for many types of sports tourism have been developed and utilized for a long time in the Urals (ZIRYANOV & KOROLEV 2008).

The Ural Mountains and the adjacent zones of the Cis-Ural region and Trans-Urals could have been considered as 'tourist country' during the development of mass 'self-regulating' tourism in the USSR. Many tourists try to trek the greatest possible distance and even entirely from the north to the south or vice versa. Quite a few have achieved this during a single expedition. Most often tourists visit one region of the Ural Mountains followed by another; having trekked in the Central Urals, they then go to the Southern, Northern, and then Polar and 'Nether-Polar' Urals. The especially enthusiastic tend to visit the continuation of the Urals to the north (the Pai-Khoi range) and to the south (the Mugodzhar hills in Kazakhstan). There even was a club in Yekaterinburg, uniting those who have traversed the length of the Ural Mountains, stretching for over 2,000 km.

Many active tourist trails are cross the Ural Mountains as they are not wide. Populated areas are situated on both sides of the mountains in the southern half of the zone and cross mountain trails often have an inter-regional character.

In terms of opportunities and the role of tourist systems in major countries, the Urals can be compared to the Sierra Nevada and the Rocky Mountains (in the northern part of the USA). In the US the system of protected areas used for tourism in the mountains of Sierra Nevada forms a continuous belt. The nature of the protected areas, established in the Urals, is different. The 'sanctuaries' of Vishera and Basegi in Perm Krai, Denezhkin kamen in Sverdlovsk region, Bashkiria in Republic of Bashkortostan, founded in the last century, have become an obstacle for the development of tourism, dividing once whole trails.

The Ural Mountains occupy about a quarter of the area of Perm Krai, its north-east, and with the foothill belt of the Cis-Ural region about half of the territory. The Ural Mountains and the Cis-Ural region are the most attractive natural areas in terms of tourism in Perm Krai.

#### 4. ACTIVE TOURISM DISTRIBUTION IN PERM KRAI

The most important tourist attractions of Perm Krai are connected with the abundance of rivers, mountain and forest landscapes.

The eastern part of the region is the main area for aquatic tourism in spring and summer; traditions of rafting are very strong here. The Vishera, Berezovaya, Yaiva with Chanva, Chusovaia, Usva and Sylva Rivers are the most popular and a huge number of commercial trips are taken along these rivers, mostly in summer. This is due to good transport accessibility at the beginnings and ends of the trails, as well as the high landscape diversity of the Perm rivers. Also in Perm Krai, May rafting during high flows is very popular. Most of the rivers in the Central and Northern Urals are passable during high flow only, which increases their complexity level to the 2<sup>nd</sup>, and for some rivers, the 2<sup>nd</sup> with elements of the 3<sup>rd</sup>. The most popular for such sports rafting are the rivers Usva, Vilva, Vijay and Koiva. It is not difficult to get to the start of the trails on these rivers, nor is it hard to leave them. Rafting itself is carried out during certain days, and the starting place is a few hours' drive away from the regional centre. Mainly independent unorganized tourists and a small number of organized groups travel down these rivers in spring, totalling up to several thousand per river during the first ten days of May.

The Ural Mountain part of Perm Krai is the area for hiking which was on a mass scale in the recent past. The main advantages of the natural areas of the Northern and Central Urals in Perm Krai are mountains with different forms of terrain: conspicuous and expressive (peaks, cliffs, rock outcrops) as well as gentle and smooth. The latter are typical for the Northern Urals and used for hiking trips in the mountains. The trail along the Hoza-Tump ridge is a classic tourist trail along the Northern Urals.

The most accessible and visited area is the 'Stone Town' located on the Rudyany Spoi ridge in the Gremyachinsk region, and Ermak rock in the Kungur region. Longer hiking trails run through the Kvarkush plateau-like ridge (maximum height of 1066 m), where it is possible to meet wild reindeer. An amazing natural attraction of Kvarkush is the Zhigalansky waterfall located on the river of the same name. Another popular trail is to the Chuvalsky ridge, located on the border of the Vishera 'Sanctuary'. Oslyanka ridge (1119 m) is the highest point of the Central Urals.

The tourist attractions of Perm Krai which are the most interesting and difficult to access, are located in Vishera 'Sanctuary', which is genuinely mountainsou. Here one can find the Tulymsky kamen ridge (the

highest in Perm Krai – 1,469 m), the Isher ridge, Muraveini kamen (Ant Stone), Munintump, Saklaim-sori-chakhl and others. Due to the high conservation status visiting is strictly regulated.

As for caving tourism in Perm Krai, it is less on a mass scale than aquatic tourism. There are over 700 caves in Perm Krai, and the four main caves can serve as its emblems: Orda, 5,200 m, the longest flooded cave in Eurasia; Temni (dark) – (3B category of complexity) the most difficult cave in Perm Krai; Divya (over 10 km long) the longest in Perm Krai; and Kungur Ledyanaya (Kungur Ice cave) the most visited in the world (annually by 120,000) as well as the only cave in plaster where excursions are held.

In addition to these there are a number of very popular large caves with good transport accessibility: Russian, Geologists 1, 2 and 3, Pashieskaya, Kize-lovskaya, Chudesnica, Chanviskaya, Kichmenskaya, Zuyatskaya, Octabrskie, Tain caves and others. Each can be visited in a single day and are used on a mass scale for weekend visits. The most favorable season is from November to March when the level of ground water is very low and the caves are drier. All the caves of Perm Krai, except Kungurskaya and Orda, where cave diving has been developed, lack organized commercial tourist trails. They are visited only by independent and 'self-regulating' tourists, and the total number of visits to all caves by such tourists is several thousand a year.

## 5. ACTIVE TOURISM AND PRIORITIZING NATURE CONSERVATION

A system of active tourist trails has been created within the Urals over a seventy-year period. The highest concentration is found within the Ural mountain country in the outskirts of such regions as Perm Krai, Sverdlovsk region, Chelyabinsk region and the Republic of Bashkortostan. A system of protected areas of varying status began to develop there from the 1930s. Spatially, the two systems coincide closely which inevitably leads to conflicts between nature conservation and recreation. These are particularly acute in such protected areas where conservation status has been assigned, but its execution is controlled poorly. These areas include natural monuments, protected landscapes, landscape 'sanctuaries', etc. The simplest solution is seen to be through changes to the tourist trail network, reducing recreational pressure on the most valuable natural complexes. In practice, this does not seem feasible for several reasons. One is that the tourist network in the area was formed long before securing conservation status. Consequently, tourist specialization has had a longer period. Another reason

for the close existence of the two networks is that the natural environment requirements are very similar. So SPNAs (specially protected natural areas), especially large ones (e.g. 'sanctuaries') were created on the landscape-geographical principle in the least disturbed territories. From the very start setting up such preserves repeatedly faced difficulties in allocating large areas and as a rule, they were in low populated areas.

The tourist trail network gravitates to less settled and economically developed places. Finally, the tourist trails are laid in the most diverse landscapes and beautiful natural places.

Thus, the most valuable natural areas are under pressure from mass tourists. Problems primarily relate to littering the riverbanks with waste, trampling vegetation in the parking places, unauthorized cutting down of trees etc. Fires are especially a problem in the most accessible areas leading to the degradation of natural systems and, consequently, to a decrease in their value and recreational appeal.

## 6. MODERN APPROACHES TO ORGANIZING ACTIVE TOURISM IN PERM KRAI

As practice shows, the tourist and recreational needs of the population can be met with the least damage to natural systems in specialized areas, such as national parks and reserves. These areas are prepared for mass scale tourists, functional zoning has been carried out, recreational and no-disturbance areas have been allocated, infrastructure necessary for visitors has been created, trails have been designed, parking and camping equipped, logistics and navigation established etc. In the 20<sup>th</sup> c. national and natural parks combined environmental protection objectives and tourism in most countries of the world.

Currently, more than 40 national parks operate in Russia. In modern conditions it seems necessary to expand their network, especially in regions with a strong tradition for nature-orientated types of tourism. According to the concept of the development of specially protected natural areas of federal importance (*The concept...* 2011) another 20 national parks are planned to be created in Russia by 2020. Only one on this list is to be created within the Urals (NP 'Zigalga' in Chelyabinsk region). Thus, SPNAs of this category have been created in all the regions of the Urals, except Perm Krai (Table 1).

The need to create a national park in Perm Krai has been expressed by many. The territories proposed are the Sylva valley, Kungur 'city' (AKIMOV, AFANASEVA & STENNO 1996), Kvar Kush Ridge (KOROLEV 2012).

At present, the issue is not resolved positively, but the creation of such areas is necessary due to the high recreational load on the unique and typical natural complexes, leading to degradation of the latter. There is a real threat of loss to the Perm Krai natural heritage. If the creation of a national park as an area under federal jurisdiction is impossible at the moment, an alternative solution is proposed to organize a natural park, a regional specially protected natural area (SPNA), which combines the functions of nature conservation and tourism development (BUZMAKOV, ZAI-CEV & SANNIKOV).

Table 1. Nationals Parks in the regions of the Urals

No.	Region	National park	Year of creation
1	Republic of Komi	'Yugyd - Va'	1994
2	Sverdlovsk region	'Pripyshminskie groves (Боры),	1993
3	Perm Krai	none	-
4	Cheliabinsk region	'Taganay' 'Zyuratkul' 'Zigalga'	1991 1993 2014
5	The Republic of Bashkortostan	'Bashkoria'	1986

Sours: Autors.

Selecting the location for the establishment of newly protected areas is a complex task. Experts believe that the organization should take into account the park's natural potential and characteristics of modern wildlife management, as well as modern factors of the anthropogenic impact on natural systems. The latest research shows that among the latter, the recreational load is essential. Recreational degradation has been noticed in many protected areas located in different parts of Perm Krai. One reason for the spread of recreation in SPNAs is the lack of such a category of protected area in the Kama River region, which would combine preservation of the natural environment with recreation, namely, a natural park. The establishment of protected areas of this category on the basis of modern SPNAs will streamline and optimize the recreational impact, while protecting typical, unique and highly valuable sites.

Creating a natural park with the necessary environmental management and qualified personnel (security, guide and maintenance service, medical services and environmental education service) will prevent the degradation of ecosystems, reduce risks to public health, and will lead to increased environmental culture.

The territory for a natural park mid-stream Usva river valley (from the village Shumikhinsky to the village Mis) and the surrounding area is proposed due

to several factors. According to experts in the tourism field (KHU DENKIKH 2006), this area has a high tourist and recreational potential for the development of nature orientated (active) forms of tourism, such as water (rafting and inflatables), walking (hiking and excursions), rock climbing, ice climbing, caving, mountain skiing tourism, etc.

The area in question has good transport accessibility. The nearest towns, Gremyachinsk and Chusovoi, are situated 15 and 60 km respectively away from village of Usva, the distance to the city of the main centre for tourism (the city of Perm) is 190 km, and to Berezniki, 125 km. The village of Usva, which is located on the Kungur-Solikamsk road, can serve the 'gateway' function to the projected park while the Chusovoi-Solikamsk railway goes alongside. Some of the important sights are accessible via the roads maintained by local government ('Kungur-Solikamsk' to Yubileini, Yubileini-Bezgodova in Gremyachinsk region, the Kalino-Mis in Chusovoy region).

Tourist development of this area has a long history as result of a number of factors. River Usva is widely known in the region and beyond as a place for family rafting. Low difficulty, good transport accessibility, the landscape beauty of the mountain taiga on the border of Europe and Asia, and the 'Usvinske pillars' cliffs make it one of the most attractive rafting rivers. Tourist trails along the Usva River are described in guidebooks published in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. At present, the water trail along the River Usva (from Usva to Mis) is one of the most visited at weekends in summer.

A unique Central Ural landscape is the rocky mazes that adorn many of the tops of the wooded mountains. These are the so-called 'stone cities' or 'devil's settlements', One of the most spectacular is located on the Rudyansky Spoi ridge near the village of Usva. Stone outcrops here, as well as 'devil's settlements' are a favorite place for rest and exercise for hikers, climbers and campers.

Besides, the area has an abundance of caves with more than 10 on the territory of the planned nature park: Geologists 1, 2, and 3, Pervomaiskaya, Rebristaya, Dynamitnaya, Usvinskaya ledenaya, Vysotskogo, Usvinskaya-1, Usva ugolnaya, and Usvinskaya medvejaya (Bear) caves. The most characteristic geological sections of Permian period can also be found here. All the caves are actively visited by cavers.

Usva village itself is located within Gornozavodsk-Prikamye, one of the regions of the Gornozavodsky Urals, a belt of towns and villages that have grown due to the mining of various minerals. This is the Perm analog of Bazhovskie places with stories similar to Mistress of Copper Mountain and Malachite box.

Modern non-productive specialization of mining and metallurgical areas of Perm Krai is connected with mountain ski recreation. Significant variations in surface height (up to 200-300 m), good infrastructure, great snow depth, and high demand contribute to its development in the mountains of the Central Urals with the natural and socio-economic conditions for its development.

Here, on a relatively compact area of 26,500 ha, several SPNAs of regional significance are located: including the monuments of nature 'Pillars', 'Big Beam', 'Ponoramnaya rock' 'Swivel log', 'Omutnaya stone', 'Dry log', 'Stone Town', All the SPNAs are experiencing an increased recreational load.

Thus, all the sights have different degrees of tourist attraction and the most visited are 'Stone Town', Usvinskie pillars, the River Usva water trail, and 'Dry Log tract'. According to expert estimates, 8 000 people visit a season but distributed unevenly with the peak load falling at weekends in July-September. More than 200 people can gather at the same time over a September weekend in 'Stone Town'. For more accurate data on tourist flows and its distribution throughout the season it is necessary to conduct special surveys.

Cave visiting is not on such a mass scale, however they are also among important recreational sites. The most visited there are those in the 'Dry log' area (Geologists 1, 2, 3, Ribbed).

Currently, visits have an uncontrolled and spontaneous nature which leads to the degradation of natural systems. In this regard, one of the important directions of work on the creation of a new nature park is to determine the maximum allowable recreational load on the territory's ecosystems. This work remains to be done.

An effective method of environmental protection, in our opinion, is the creation of a large protected natural area of regional significance. Giving the territory a new status will enable the necessary work for its improvement and create conditions for the regulation and management of tourism.

As a recommendation for the maintenance of ecological balance it is necessary to develop proposals for the management of a natural park and preparations for visiting.

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