

Chapter 6

Title **Means of Sustainable Tourism Development
in Rural Areas of the Ukrainian Danube Delta**

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Means of Sustainable Tourism Development in Rural Areas of the Ukrainian Danube Delta

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Introduction Today tourism is a widespread industry. The development of the tourism industry has worldwide impacts – social, economic, environmental – that can be positive or negative. The negative anthropogenic impact is the reason why tourism will never be completely sustainable, but some forms of it can be more sustainable. The question of how to achieve this remains a subject of discussion and debate.

In this article the development of sustainable tourism in the territory of Ukraine is described. The Nature Reserved Fund of the Ukrainian Danube Delta is the object of the tourist activities. The article assesses the economic, environmental and social factors in the development of sustainable forms of tourism. The authors propose the mechanism of sustainable tourism's management formation as a guarantee of national strategies for the development of recreation and tourism activities in Ukraine.

Sustainable development and tourism The Brundtland Report defines Sustainable Development as “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. It is now the leading concept of development of any industry.

There are three aspects of sustainable development which are widely recognized and emphasized (Making tourism more sustainable (<http://www.unep.fr/shared/publications/pdf/DTIx0592xPA-TourismPolicyEN.pdf>):

- Economic sustainability, which means providing socio-economic benefit and generating prosperity at different levels of society, must be maintained in the long run.
- Social sustainability, which means the protection and preservation of living cultural heritage and traditional values in host communities, respecting human rights and equal opportunities for all. It may revitalize the social structure and culture of local communities.
- Environmental sustainability, which means optimal use of environmental resources that represent a key element in tourism development, conserving and effectively managing natural resources and biodiversity. It requires actions to minimize pollution and any damage to the environment (flora, fauna, water, soils, etc.), together with preserving biological diversity and natural heritage.

*Picture 1.
The Lake's
Gull in the
Bush of White
Lilies (Danube
Biosphere
Reserve,
Ukraine), Photo
of Maxim Yako-
vlev, Research
Associate of
DBR*



Sustainable tourism has to minimize any harm and negative impact and to optimize potential economic benefits. The 12 aims of the approach of making tourism more sustainable include:

1. **Economic viability:** To ensure the competitiveness of tourism destinations and enterprises, so that they are able to understand the market and continue to prosper and deliver benefits, visitor satisfaction and business support in the long run.
2. **Local prosperity:** To maximize the contribution of tourism to the economic prosperity of the host community with diversity of products, extending the length of visitors' stay and increasing their spending.
3. **Employment quality:** To increase employment opportunities, number and quality of jobs created by sustainable tourism, to encourage enterprises to provide skills training programs, higher level of payment, better provision of services and, to be concerned about workers who lose their jobs.

*Picture 2.
Pink Pelican
as the Symbol
of the Danube
Delta (Danube
Biosphere
Reserve,
Ukraine), Photo
of Maxim Yako-
vlev, Research
Associate of
DBR*



4. Social equality: To use income from sustainable tourism to support social programs and develop opportunities for disadvantaged people.
5. Visitor fulfilment: To provide quality and safe services for visitors, satisfy and fulfill their expectations; improve access for everyone, monitor visitor satisfaction and the quality of experience and tourist services.
6. Local control: To ensure appropriate engagement and empowerment of local communities, improve conditions for effective local decision making about the future of tourism.
7. Community wellbeing: To maintain the quality of life in local communities, mutual use of services by tourists and residents, including social structure, infrastructure, access to resources, avoid congestion and social degradation.
8. Cultural richness: To preserve cultural, heritage and local traditions, by working with communities to enhance their distinctiveness.
9. Physical integrity: To minimize the physical impact and degradation of the construction and operation of tourism facilities, maintain and enhance the high quality of rural and urban landscapes as a tourism resource.
10. Biological diversity: To support National Parks and other protected areas, promote the development of ecotourism, implement the conservation of natural areas, habitats and wildlife and minimize damage to them.
11. Resource efficiency: To minimize consumption of non-renewable resources, ensure the efficient use of land and raw materials in tourism development and operation.
12. Environmental purity: To reduce the use of damaging substances, air, water and soil pollution, and the generation of waste by tourists and tourism enterprises.

Sustainable tourism is considered as a part of the sustainable development strategy and programs of many countries because it is a very attractive method of achieving economic growth, improving the national balance of payments, stimulating investments, diversifying the economy, improving the quality of life, and so on.

Forms of Sustainable Tourism Here are some essential forms of sustainable tourism:
1. *Responsible tourism* is tourism that (Cape Town Declaration on Responsible Tourism, 2002)

- “minimizes negative economic, environmental and social impacts;
- generates greater economic benefits for local communities;
- improves working conditions and access to industry;
- involves local people in decision making;
- makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage;
- provides a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues for tourists;
- encourages respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence.”

2. *Agritourism, rural tourism, farm tourism* involves travelers visiting small communities and experiencing elements of traditional life in those communities. This experience encompasses a wide range of attractions and activities. Benefits of these forms of tourism are:

- job creation and retention;
- new business opportunities;
- opportunities for young people;
- service retention;
- community diversification;
- positive implications for community identity and pride;
- preservation of rural culture and heritage;

- landscape conservation;
- environmental improvements.

Farm tourism includes activities, which involve excursions, and provides tourists with farm animals (e.g., ostrich farms). This kind of tourism does not necessarily have to provide accommodation in the form of private housing.

3. *Ecotourism*, as the International Ecotourism Society defines it, is “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people”. All forms of tourism can be sustainable, but not all of them can be called ecotourism. Ecotourism involves visiting to relatively undisturbed natural areas in order to enjoy study and appreciate nature and promote conservation. It has low visitor impact and provides for the beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations” (*The official definition adopted by the IUCN in 1996*). The main aim of ecotourism is to form awareness of rational resource use and environment preservation.

4. *Green tourism* is the form of the outdoor recreation’s organization in clean areas with or without accommodation in private housing. Green tourism takes into account the needs of the environment, local residents, business and visitors.

5. *Geotourism* is defined by the National Geographic Traveller, as a concept focused on the ‘sense of place’ in an area rather than on industry’s efforts.

6. *Ethnographic tourism* is an activity that allows visitors to become familiar with the historical and cultural heritage, lifestyle, and rural crafts of the local place, as well as to attend traditional celebrations. It is dedicated to the revival and preservation of ethno-cultural heritage.

Sustainable Tourism Development in the Ukrainian Danube Delta The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria are organized around four main themes: effective sustainability planning; maximizing social and economic benefits for the local community; enhancing cultural heritage; and reducing negative impacts to the environment. It is possible to develop all forms of sustainable tourism, and rural tourism in particular, in the Ukrainian countryside. The experience of one small town in Ukraine, in particular, deserves attention. This settlement is Vylkove, which is located in the Odessa region of the country.

*Picture 3.
The Yellow
Heron (Danube
Biosphere
Reserve,
Ukraine), Photo
of Maxim Yako-
vlev, Research
Associate of
DBR*



Vylkove town is the original capital of the Ukrainian part of the Danube Delta, and it has had a rich and distinctive culture for more than two and a half centuries. Local people have not only maintained the traditions, customs, distinctive dialect and religious beliefs of the area, but have also played an important role in caring for the environment.

Vylkove (8,800 inhabitants) is a town on the Danube Delta near the Ukrainian–Romanian border. The Delta, an elevated flood-plain surrounded by swampy terrain, used to be a historic refuge for fugitives. In 1746, the Lipovans, Russian dissenters, fled religious persecution and founded the village of Lypovanske here; it was mapped thirty years later. After Russia had destroyed the Zaporizhska Sich, a unit of Cossack settled here, and in 1805 Vylkove became a major Cossack settlement. In Vylkove the Church of the Nativity was built (1850), which is a good example of Orthodox architecture in the south-west of Odessa Oblast. Due to numerous drains and streams Vylkove is popularly called the Ukrainian Venice. In fact, there is nothing like Venetian gondolas, and canals are functional only during flooding. The local gondoliers use lifeboats to convey tourists and show them the “0 km” monument at the point of inflow of the Danube into the Black Sea. The main economic activities in Vylkove city are fishing, growing strawberries and tourism. There are two main local tour operators in Vylkove, focusing on the Danube Biosphere Reserve (DBR) is the main attraction for “sustainable tourism”. The DBR features a large number of rare plants and animals from the Red Book of Ukraine as well as from other international red lists in Europe.

The Danube Biosphere Reserve has now opened its doors to tourists. The DBR territory belongs to the primary and secondary geosystems of the Danube Delta, and is located in the north-eastern part of the Delta in the eastern part of the town of Kealia and south of Lake Sasik. In the east, the DBR borders the Black Sea, and the south the Ukrainian–Ro-

manian border. The town of Vylkove and other outlying villages are located on the perimeter of the reserve. The largest population centers in the area include the towns of Kealia, Tatarbunary and Vylkove.

Involvement of NGOs and Local Communities in Recreational Activities in the Danube Biosphere Reserve Development of outdoor activities has become more important in determining involvement by commercial organizations and the local community, especially local businesses. For this purpose it is still necessary to plan and implement some pilot activities even during the drafting of the territory of the biosphere reserve, namely:

- to conclude agreements on joint activities with travel agencies and other organizations engaged in the tourism business;
- to develop and patent in the prescribed manner the reserve's logo;
- to offer commercial use of the logo in sales of products and provision of services by local businesses and organizations;
- to organize village meetings explaining the policy to attract local people to outdoor activities and increase the level of service;
- to create a database of possible services for the local population, including living conditions in private buildings (apartments);

*Picture 4.
The Wild Boars
Family Fed
Water Chest-
nuts (Danube
Biosphere
Reserve,
Ukraine), Photo
of Maxim Yako-
vlev, Research
Associate of
DBR*



- to establish a coordinating body of recreational activities within the administration of the reserve, local authorities, businesses and other stakeholders;
- to obtain the support of local governments in the development of certain types of tourism business, which will increase employment of local people and increase their income;
- to create the Club of Biosphere Reserve's Friends;
- to conduct environmental and educational activities and organize seminars for skills acquisition in small business.

The community development of sustainable tourism can be successful if:

- local people are actively involved in it;
- there is development of appropriate means of informing, training and planning;
- community law on income distribution is actively enforced and not merely enacted;
- priority in the use of natural resources is granted to the local community.

Private travel firms have been productively and successfully engaged in sustainable tourism activities, gaining relevant experience, expanding and strengthening infrastructure and improving advertising in Vylkove.

The significant increase in the number of tourists over the last few years in Vylkove offers the people a new way to treat this problem. Local people are beginning to realize that they may derive some benefit from an increase in tourists. There are new services for tourists beginning to develop, such as the manufacture and sale of souvenirs from natural materials, transporting tourists on boats on the canals, opening private museums, cafes, hotels, etc.

Increasingly, the administration of the Danube Biosphere Reserve is directing individuals who are willing to organize

trips for environmental water routes through the territory of the DBR. The administration of the Danube Biosphere Reserve controls and carries out visits of the trails. Touristic organizations take responsibility for complying with the legislation during any of the tourist activities. The administration works out, together with tourist organizations, the agreements about the conditions of visiting the territory of the reserve. These agreements determine the quantity of tourist groups on an annual basis.

The implementation of sustainable tourism forms in the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve requires the assessment of environmental, social and economic conditions, as well as how to set the goals that can be achieved from tourism, and the need for appropriate training. It should be borne in mind that the development of the tourism and recreation industry has become one of the main directions of social and economic development in Vylkove.

*Picture 5.
The Mosaic Plot
of Stentsovsko-
Zhebriyansky
Marshes
(Danube
Biosphere
Reserve,
Ukraine), Photo
of Maxim Yako-
lev, Research
Associate of
DBR*



The problem of sustainable forms of tourism development (such as ecological tourism, green tourism, rural tourism etc.) in Ukraine has gained particular importance in recent years. Tourism in the countryside has an extremely positive impact on the economy and ecology of the regions of Ukraine through the use of existing private housing, expansion of rural employment and the feasibility of on-site production of the subsidiary farm, providing travelers with environmentally friendly food and conservation due to lower anthropogenic pressure.

- Socio-economic conditions of rural tourism in the Danube region include**
- Existing private housing;
 - The rural population, which is unemployed or partially employed in subsistence agriculture rural population;
 - The problem of marketing of agricultural products, two thirds of which are produced on subsistence farms and other farms.
 - The development of sustainable forms of tourism is now one of the means of increasing employment by creating new jobs.

Environmental NGOs and environmentally oriented organizations may play an important role in developing sustainable tourism in the region. The administration of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve is working closely with some well-known entities, such as the Danube Tourist Information Center (Vylkove), Ecoclub “Danube” (Vylkove), Danube Youth Club (Vylkove), “MAMA-86” (Kyiv), WWF and others.

- Staffing and Scientific Support for Recreational Activities**
- We recommend that the improvement of staffing recreational activities should be provided with:
- measures for training and staff development;
 - exercises, seminars for the Reserve and travel agencies, educators (teachers) schools, businesses, including those

that provide accommodation and other tourism business sectors;

- a scientific software, which should be used to determine the maximum permissible loads on trails and paths of environmental objects and thus regulate tourism, sightseeing and eco-educational activities (group, time of visits, monitoring visit, etc.);
- the development of proposals to reduce recreational pressures on vulnerable areas of the reserve territory and even harmful to the prohibition of biological and landscape diversity or unpromising areas of recreational activities;
- a forecast of the tourism market;
- a monitor, which complies with environmental and other restrictions;
- the development of recommendations for improving recreational infrastructure and preventing degradation of BR values;
- the regulation of the flow of visitors within individual functional areas.

*Picture 6.
0 Km – The
Place Where
the Danube
River Falls
into the Black
Sea (Danube
Biosphere
Reserve,
Ukraine), Photo
of Maxim Yako-
vlev, Research
Associate of
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Basic documents on governmental regulation of tourist and recreational activities are the Law of Ukraine "On Tourism" (1995) and the Law to Adopt "on resorts" (2000), which have contributed to the adoption of an integrated approach to the problem of the overall efficiency of the tourism and recreation industry.

Conclusion The case of Vylkove can show that the development of sustainable forms of tourism such as ecological, rural and green tourism can not only attract potential tourists and provide economic benefits, but also minimize the burden on recreational resources and develop an ecologically oriented society. The development of eco-tourism in the Danube Biosphere Reserve region is certainly seen as a tool to enhance environmental education and awareness among the local population as a source of income to protect and preserve, as environmental sustainability of economic activity for locals is an opportunity to create new jobs.

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