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## **TRENDS IN TOURISM OF UKRAINE, CAUSED BY THE PANDEMIC CRISIS**

Quarantine, caused by the pandemic of COVID-19, has closed people at home. Tourism was one of the first industries influenced by it. Deserted cities, hotels and resorts, museums and galleries being left without their visitors is a very unusual scenery. The volume of travels has decreased crucially. There has never been such a recession in tourism for the last 100 years.

“Ukrainian tourism industry has already lost more than 1.5 billion dollars. If quarantine lasts, many tourist companies will not survive”, says the chief executive officer of Hospitality Association of Ukraine, PhD in Economics Anna Romanova. She also adds, that there’s only one encouraging sector. It’s domestic tourism [1]. It’s expected that due to the borders closed, Ukrainians will be travelling within the country, though a lot of people have lost their jobs or lost money because of health problems or businesses closed. So, not all the Ukrainians can afford travelling these days.

It is expected that domestic tourism will first start reviving. We have seas, rivers, mountains, though we have poor service and bad infrastructure as well. Very few hotels can provide tourists with the same high level of services as popular tourists destinations abroad, and at reasonable rates. Travel agencies should refocus on domestic tourists and improve the level of services in order to meet the needs of Ukrainians.

It’s very difficult to calculate domestic tourism statistics in Ukraine, as Ukrainians are more likely to arrange their travels to the Black Sea or Azov Sea resorts on their own, and do not contact any travel agencies or use official hotels, so it’s very difficult to estimate tourists’ flows to particular regions. Mobile operator Vodafone Ukraine decided to help. They claimed that the number of their subscribers in the southern regions has greatly increased in the summer of 2020 compared to the same period of 2019:

- Odesa, Mykolaiiv and Kherson regions accepted 30% more tourists, than in the summer of 2019;
- the Azov Sea resort of Kyrylivka was visited by 55% more tourists this summer;
- the city of Berdiansk hosted 37% more tourists compared to the summer of 2019.

The second popular domestic region to visit is Western Ukraine. The third popular destination is Kyiv the region. The fourth place take local tourist attractions all over Ukraine. Though tour operators consider that there are more official tourist accommodations in Western Ukraine, the Carpathians in particular, and the quality of service is better, these destinations cannot be an alternative for beach holidays. It’s also obvious that as soon as foreign resorts open for Ukrainian tourists, domestic tourism will decrease greatly.

There’s no doubt, that domestic tourism in Ukraine has a chance to develop these days, and attract the record numbers of tourists, but it also has a lot of problems. Tourist specialists define some factors hindering its development despite the borders closed.

- Ukrainian hotels, carriers and tour operators cannot establish constant cooperation, that's why they cannot offer bulk discounts or special prices, as the majority of foreign tourist businesses do.

- Poor quality of services in relation to prices. Many foreign resorts can offer better services for the same rates.

- Ukrainian tourist industry has a rather small market share in comparison with the majority of neighboring countries. For example, Krakiv, Poland, hosts 14 million tourists annually, and Ukrainian Lviv just a little more than 2 million correspondingly.

- The quality of beaches, tourist safety, state of roads and quality of water cannot compete with those abroad.

- The investment climate is not so favorable for the tourist industry in Ukraine compared to the one abroad.

- COVID-19 crisis has become the factor of uncertainty not only for outbound tourism, but also for domestic tourism.

- Ukrainian travelers, who cannot afford to pay such high prices for their holidays, visit popular tourist destinations as individual travelers, in their own cars, and sleep in their own tents instead of hotel rooms. In social networks we can observe multiple photos of Ukrainians enjoying themselves in holiday camps or posts in which people just share the information about picturesque places to spend holidays travelling in their own cars. It became a large-scale trend in 2020, and it is a worrying signal for the tourist industry, states Ihor Holubaha [2].

Tourism experts have defined an image of post-pandemic tourists. They consider that independent family trips using personal cars, camping, staying at countryside resort complexes, renting private cottages adhering to all the requirements of social distance and ensuring all necessary safety conditions and remedies will be most popular among tourists in Ukraine in the nearest time. [1].

Anyway, the tourist industry will not stay the same as it was before the pandemic crisis, it will adjust to the new reality and develop new areas of business. Coronavirus quarantine measures will decrease the number of trips all over the world, but it will improve their quality at the same time, and the tourism industry will be gradually reviving, states The Guardian.

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