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ECOTOURISM AND GEOTOURISM IN UKRAINE

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Abstract

Cognitive nature tourism in Ukraine has a long tradition of development. Today, ecotourism, active forms of tourism, ethnographic trips and trips to historical and cultural destinations are mostly developed. The most popular offers come from national parks and other natural areas with preserved natural, historical and cultural environments. Among the regions with active forms of tourism, the Carpathian mountain region and the Crimea with a well-developed network of hiking and biking trails should be noted. Rafting on the Black Cheremosh, Prut, Southern Bug, Dniester, Desna, Sluch, Teteriv and other rivers is quite popular as well as trips to caves (in Podillia, the Carpathians and the Crimea), which are often combined with visits to other natural attractions. Travel agencies, specialized clubs, national parks and nature reserves, which cooperate to promote their offers on domestic and international tourist market, organize informative trips.

Key words

cognitive nature tourism ecotourism, geotourism, national parks, geoparks, Ukraine.

1. Introduction

Cognitive nature tourism in Ukraine has a long tradition of development. Today, ecotourism, active forms of tourism, ethnographic trips and trips to historical and cultural destinations are mostly developed. The most popular offers come from national parks and other natural areas with preserved natural, historical and cultural environments. Among the regions with active forms of tourism, the Carpathian mountain region and the Crimea with a well-developed network of hiking and biking trails should be noted. Rafting

on the Black Cheremosh, Prut, Southern Bug, Dniester, Desna, Sluch, Teteriv and other rivers is quite popular as well as trips to caves (in Podillia, the Carpathians and the Crimea), which are often combined with visits to other natural attractions. Travel agencies, specialized clubs, national parks and nature reserves, which cooperate to promote their offers on domestic and international tourist market, organize informative trips.

Cognitive tourism is perhaps the oldest on the territory of Ukraine. At first, it developed as regional study trips in order to get to know natural and historical-cultural peculiarities of the native land, as well as health and recreational trips for the purpose of health improvement and keeping fit. The stages of development of various forms of cognitive (including ecological) tourism in Ukraine examined in their works in detail O. Liubitseva (Любіцева, Сташук, 2002), M. Malska (Зінько, Мальська, 2001; Мальська et al., 2004) V. Kyfiak (Кифяк, 2003), V. Fedorchenko (Федорченко, Дьорова, 2002); L. Ustymenko (Устименко, Афанасьєв, 2005), P. Masliak (Масляк, 2008) and many others. Now the travel industry of Ukraine is not in its best condition – domestic and foreign tourist flows decrease annually in all regions of the country. Hence, the issues of revaluation of touristic capabilities and resources, analysis of travel offers and creation of new strategies for promoting travel products are relevant.

The aim of the presented study is to review the current state of development of the most popular types of cognitive tourism in Ukraine. To carry out the study we have analyzed the scientific and popular scientific publications, travel offers of companies regarding cognitive nature tourism and own studies of the development of cognitive nature tourism within preparation of the Projects on organization of national parks and nature reserves territories in Western Ukraine, projects on tourism development in some regions of Ukraine.

2. Research results

Cognitive nature tourism in Ukraine is represented with various forms and types of travel activities. The most studied forms (categories) of cognitive tourism is ecotourism in protected areas, geotourism and cognitive types of active tourism (Fig. 1).

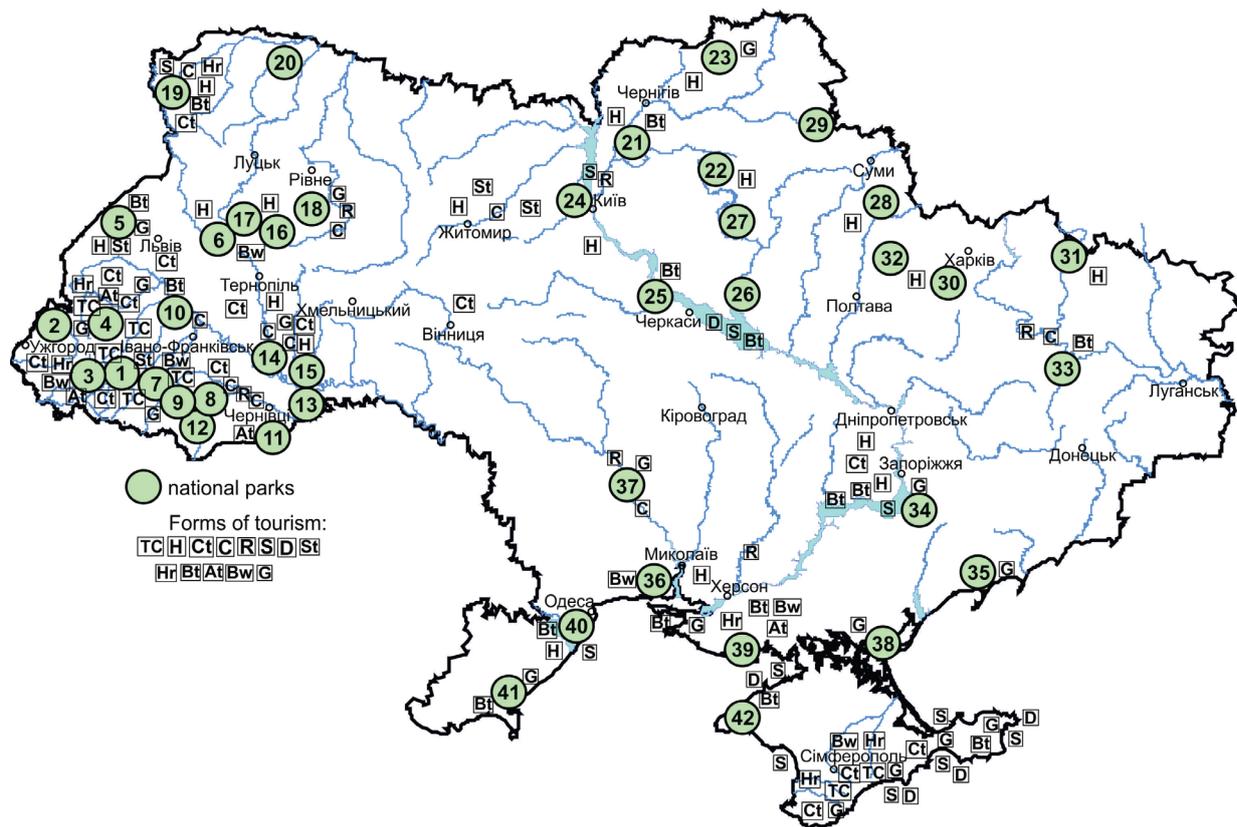
A net of 48 national parks of Ukraine with a total area of more than 10,000 km² (1.8% of its territory) located in 14 out of 24 administrative regions serves the interests of ecotourism, weekend- and sport tourism and recreation under natural conditions. They include reserves themselves surrounded by old agricultural zones, which nowadays serve the purposes of organized recreation.

One of the most popular forms of cognitive nature tourism is *ecotourism in national parks* and other protected areas. A peculiar feature of national parks in Ukraine is related to insufficient area of conservation territories and a large area of man-made landscapes, which are often the target of recreational use. Legal framework has been established for the

development of tourism in national parks, and the plans of parks protection envisage allocation of special territories for recreation and various forms of tourism. However, the current practice of touristic use of the Ukrainian national parks shows that their potential is still insufficiently used for domestic and international tourism, the range of offers remains limited and forms of balanced tourism are poorly introduced. There is a difference in recreational reclamation of parks. Some of them (Carpathian, Shatskyi, Holy Mountains) strongly experienced recreational pressure on the environment for the time of use, while most of the newly created are not ready yet to receive visitors. Therefore, there is a need to develop ways of promotion and regulation of tourist movement, improvement of touristic infrastructure, optimal territorial management and approaching the parks to the requirements for sustainable tourism development in these areas.

In travel terms, the national parks, including the developed touristic centers, are characterized by the diversity of types of recreation and tourism. The essential role here belongs to health-improving and leisure recreation at the premises of numerous sanatoriums and recreation camps (Carpathian, Shatskyi, Hutsulshchyna, Skolivski Beskids, Pryazovskiy, Charming Harbor). However, sufficiently developed here are the *qualified* tourism (Carpathian, Vyzhnytskyi, Cheremoskyi, Buzkyi Gard, Velykyi Luh, Nyznirodnistrovskiy, Dzhaharlytskyi, etc.), *cultural* (Podilski Tovtry, Carpathian, Hutsulshchyna, Khotyn, Holy Mountains, Mezynskiy, Dermansko-Ostrozkyi), and *ecoeducational* (all national parks). Touristic infrastructure in the majority of national parks is well-developed and there are two forms of tourist services: directly by special park structures and by parties of recreation and travel activities. Parks administration keeps records of visitors, who pass through the checkpoints and collect entrance fees to the park in the form of ticket sale. The number of visitors, who visit and receive health and recreational services on the territory of national parks from other parties, exceeds in several times the accounted one by the parks administration.

Western Ukrainian national parks can be divided into two types based on the figures of infrastructure development degree and intensity of touristic movement – *intensive* and *extensive* touristic reclamation. Each recreational type of national parks requires the development of specific strategies for sustainable tourism development with specification of actions plans for each of the parks. Due to the existence of two types of national parks, there is a need to develop two different technologies of introduction of components of sustainable tourism.



National parks of Ukraine: 1 – Synevyr, 2 – Uzhanskyi, 3 – Zacharovanyi Krai, 4 – Skolivski Beskids, 5 – Yavorivskyi, 6 – Pivnichne Podillia, 7 – Carpathian, 8 – Hutsulshchyna, 9 – Verkhovynskyi, 10 – Halytskyi, 11 – Vyznytskyi, 12 – Cheremoskyi, 13 – Khotynskyi, 14 – Dniester’s Canyon, 15 – Podilski Tovtry, 16 – Kremenetski Mountains, 17 – Verkhnie Pobuzhzhia, 18 – Dermansko-Ostrozkyi, 19 – Shatskyi, 20 – Prypiat-Stokhid, 21 – Zalissia, 22 – Ichnianskyi, 23 – Mezynskyi, 24 – Holosiivskyi, 25 – Bilozerskyi, 26 – Nyzhniosul’skyi, 27 – Pyriatynskyi, 28 – Hetmanskyi, 29 – Desniansko-Starohutskyi, 30 – Homilshanski Forests, 31 – Dvorichanskyi, 32 – Slobozhanskyi, 33 – Holy Mountains, 34 – VelykiLuh, 35 – Pryazovskiy, 36 – Biloberezhzhia Sviatoslava, 37 – Buzkyi Gard, 38 – Azovo-Syvashskyi, 39 – Dzhaharlycky, 40 – Nyzniodnistrovskiy, 41 – Tuzlovski Estuaries, 42 – Charming Harbor.

Forms of tourism: TC – trekking & climbing; H – hiking; Ct – cycle touring; C – canoeing trips; R – rafting trips; S – sailing trips; Hr – horse riding trips; St – ski-touring; D – diving; Bt – birding trips & birdwatching; At – animal trips; Bw – botany & wildflower tours; G – geotourism.

Fig. 1. Geography of different forms of cognitive nature tourism in Ukraine

Source: own research.

We should stipulate the following measures in the model of sustainable touristic development of the parks of the first type (with expressive recreational and travel function): implementation of conservation efforts and increasing the comfort level of recreational and sanitary institutions; modernization of places of public recreation and touristic infrastructure, dispersion of tourist flows and minimizing pressure on natural and aquatic systems; wider implementation of ecological forms of tourism (cognitive) and agrotourism; development in cooperation with the local authorities of action plans to introduce the components of sustainable development: by improving the appearance of localities, providing access to main attractions, support of traditional crafts, as well as ensuring development of food and lodging facilities.

For parks of the second type with extensive development of tourism, there a possibility to adapt to models of sustainable development used in the national parks of European countries. These models should be directed on the one hand – at the increase of the flow of tourists to these parks, and on the other – at the development of infrastructure for environmentally oriented forms of tourism. Among the priority measures we should ensure the creation of visit centers and ecoeducational centers, the development and arrangement of routes, preparation and provision of trails for qualified tourism, creation of thematic and ecoeducational paths, preparation of travel products focused on exploration of local natural and cultural values, and development of a food and lodging network in the protected zone of the park.

There are prerequisites in the national parks of Western Ukraine for the development of a wide range of forms of ecotourism (Зінько, Гетьман, 2002; Szczecinski et al., 2004). The basic form of ecotourism should be cognitive nature one, which should be based on a strong network of didactic and themed trails. Carpathian Mountain parks have the best opportunities for the development of hiking, rock climbing, caving tourism. Water touring has a chance for further development in Shatskyi, Vyzhnytskyi, Carpathian parks and NNP „Podilski Tovtry”. The projects of development of popular cycle touring and horse riding trips are being developed in some parks. Ethnographic tourism can eventually become a landmark of the National Parks „Hutsulshchyna” and „Skolivski Beskids”. Introduction of regional tourism management and marketing is appropriate for effective development of ecotourism in recreational areas of natural reserve fund, which is impossible without participation of local people,

their knowledge of history, culture and natural identity of the land.

The largest national park has been founded in the Carpathians to improve touristic infrastructure and to regulate tourist flows in the mountainous ecosystems, which are sensitive to anthropogenic influence.

Due to old agricultural cultivation of territories in Ukraine, wildlife preserves are the most popular type of protected territories. They differ from reserves by a more compact area and protect local ecosystems and habitats of the endangered species of a biota. A net of such objects has 2632 preserves with a total area of more than 1 mln. ha, that comprises 37% from a total area of protected territories of Ukraine. A majority of them are open for organized daily tours (Hetman, Zinko, 2002) (tab. 1). Nature sights of Ukraine, which consist of 3025 objects, are still more local. The rest of the nature protected territories (23.5%) include regional landscape parks (44),

Tab. 1. Rating of 20 national parks most popular among tourists

Name	Square [ha]	Characteristic features	Prevailing forms of tourism
Carpathian	50303	mountains, resorts, ethnographic village	winter and summer active recreation, ethnic tourism
Hutsulshchyna	32271	mountains, resorts, Hutsuls village	ethnic tourism, winter and summer active recreation
Skolivski Beskids	35684	mountains, winter resorts, Boiko village	winter and summer active recreation, ethnic tourism
Synevyr	40400	mountains & lake	winter and summer active recreation
Vyzhnytskyi	7928	mountains, Hutsul ethnographic village	ethnic tourism, summer winter and active recreation
Shatskyi	32515	lakes, forests	summer water recreation, nature and rural tourism
Holosiivskyi	4525	forests	sub-urban recreation
Yavorivskyi	7079	hills, rocks, forests, countryside	summer water and active recreation, ethnic tourism
Holy Tops	40609	hills, rocks, floodplain forests	pilgrimage tourism, summer active recreation
Podilski Tovtry	261316	hills, rocks, forests, river valleys and canyons, karst caves, countryside	summer active recreation, nature and rural tourism, visiting caves, castle and architectural tourism
Pryazovskiyi	78127	sand-stone rocks, steppe	nature and archaeological tourism, seaside recreation
Dzharylhatskyi	10000	sea island, steppe	summer seaside recreation
Azov-Syvaskiyi	52154	seaside wetlands, nesting birds	nature tourism, summer water recreation
Homilshanski forests	14315	river valleys, forests	nature tourism, winter and summer active recreation
Uzhanskyi	39159	mountains	winter and summer active recreation, ethnic tourism
Halytskyi	14685	forests, river valleys	nature tourism
Kremenetski Hills	6951	hills, rocks, forests, castles, church	nature tourism, castle and church tourism
Hetmanskyi	23360	floodplain forests, palace, countryside	nature, historical and rural tourism
Prypiat-Stokhid	39315	floodplains and floodplain forests, moorland	nature tourism
Desniansko-Starohutskiyi	16215	floodplains and floodplain forests, moorland	nature tourism

Source: Hetman, Zinko, 2002.

protected tracts (774), botanical gardens (22), zoos (13), parks-sights of landscape architecture (538) and dendrologic parks (39).

Tourism in Ukraine has traditionally flourished in national parks. The high quality of natural conditions in these areas is reflected in the intensive recreational utilization. As much as 9% of the capacity in collective accommodation facilities is located in large-size protected areas. From the point of view of realized attractiveness, the scale is dominated by mountain areas. This is mainly due to the relief that is suitable for tourism development and winter recreation: the most popular in the country zones of winter and summer tourism are located in recreational areas of the Carpathian, Vyzhnytskyi, Skolivski Beskids, Synevyr, Hutsulshchyna and other national parks. Every year each of these Carpathian parks accepts from 30 to 90 thousand tourists from all regions of Ukraine and from abroad. National parks of the plain part of Ukraine attract, with small exceptions, a much smaller number of tourists. As a rule, they satisfy the recreational needs of local population, mostly of the residents of large neighboring cities and urbanized districts with a complicated ecological situation. It should be noted, however, that touristic attractiveness is not determined by only one factor or uniqueness of a natural feature; rather, it is a complex of components including the shape of a landscape and nature of settlements.

The existence of international biosphere reserves „Eastern Carpathians” and „Roztochia” contributes to the development of various forms of nature cognitive tourism (Зінько, Мальська, 2001). Projects on popularization of nature cognitive tourism and creation of respective infrastructure for servicing of tourist flows are realized on their territories by joint efforts of international organizations, environmental institutions, local governments and communities.

3. Geotourism

Geotourism is a relatively young kind of tourism in Ukraine. Although pedestrian, water, bicycle and car trips to picturesque and unique geological objects and places have been popular for a long time in all regions of the country, it is only now that informational and educational aspects of such trips have started to attract attention.

The Carpathians, the Crimean Peninsula and Podillia Upland are the most popular geotouristic regions of Ukraine. The objects most visited by tourists are concentrated there.

It is possible to outline the most popular geotouristic objects and routes in the *Ukrainian Carpathians*.

There are several tourist paths in their highest part – the Chornohora: “2000 m Mountains of the Carpathians”, “Mountainous Lakes – Brebeneskul, Nesamovyte, and Maricheika”, and a number of mountain routes in the Carpathian Biosphere Reserve and National Park “Carpathian”. The region of the Volcanic Carpathians (Zakarpattia region) is interesting and not difficult for visitors. Geotouristic objects include there the domes of extinct volcanoes and other traces of volcanic activity: mountains Antalovetska Poliana and Palanok, and the Enchanted Valley rock complex (Fir-Tree Stone). Skole and Upper Dniester Beskids are rich in geological heritage. The most popular and visited geotouristic objects there are the Dovbush Rocks (a rock complex near the village of Bubnyshche made of Yamna sandstones up to 80 m of height, 200 m of width and up to 1 km of length) and Urych rocks (erosion relics of massive Yamna Paleocene sandstones up to 50 m of height) with valuable geological, geomorphological, historical and cultural heritage.

The Crimea Peninsula can be called an al fresco geological museum. The southern part of the peninsula is occupied by the Crimean Mountains, which stretch along the Black Sea coast for 180 km from the southeast to northeast with the width of 60 km. There are more than 1000 sinks, 135 caves, mines and pits on the Chatyr-Dag massive. The majority of them are inaccessible for regular visitors, and only two caves – Marble on the Chatyr-Dag and Kyzyl-Koba (Red) on Dolgorukivska yaila are visited by tourists. The Ghost Valley on the south-eastern slope of Demerdzhi mountain – a complex of chimera rocks (more than 100) formed as a result of the weathering of upper Jurassic conglomerates (weathering niches, cornices, subsided and bastion forms) are among the most popular geotouristic objects of the Crimean peninsula. The Kara-Dag Natural Reserve, mountains-laccolites Ayu-Dag and Kastel, the Great Canyon of the Crimea and the valley of the Bodrak River often become the objects of geotouristic tours.

On the Kerch peninsula, to the north of the village of Bondarenkove, there is the well-known Bulganatske field of mud volcanoes.

The Podillia Upland is popular due to its variety of well-studied objects of geoheritage, which are concentrated on relatively small territories and are accessible for tourists. The most popular are the Podillia Tovtry, a canyon of the Smotrych River, gigantic Karst labyrinths in gypsum and the canyon of the Dniester River. Tovtry is an arch-like ridge, 50-60 m of height, the relics of coast reefs, formed by parallel coastlines of old Miocene seas. The Karst gypsum caves of the Podillia Dniester area are popular among tourists. There are more than 100 caves

there, and the majority of them are protected: the Optymistychna cave (214 km, the longest gypsum cave in the world), Ozerna (116 km), Kryshdaleva (22.6 km), Verteba (8 km), Mlynky (36 km), Atlantis (1.8 km), Yuvileyna (1.7 km), Dzhurynska (1.2 km) have been announced to be of national geological value. In the canyon-like valleys of the Dniester and its left tributaries of the Strypa, Dzhuryn, Seret and Zbruch, a strong complex of sedimentary sequences is being exposed off the youngest ones – anthropogenic, and the oldest ones – Silurian sediments of the Palaeozoic Era. In the lower part of the Dniester canyon, Silurian and Devon sediments are exposed, and above them – Cretaceous and neogenic sediments. The Silurian and Devon sediments in Trubchyn, Zalishchyky, Ivan-Zoloty, Ustechko and Vistra deserve special attention. They have a great scientific value, and some of them are of global significance. The canyon of the Smotrych river (80 ha) and outcrops of Wend and Silurian in the neighborhood of the city of Kamianets-Podilskyi (Khmelytskyi region) are the other popular geotouristic places.

On the *Dnieper Upland*, the Kaniv Hills, Butskyi and Tiasmynskyi canyons in Cherkasy region seem to be promising geotouristic objects. The Kaniv Hills (the most known of them are Chernecha, Kniazha – 221.2 m, Maryany Hills – 224.4 m) were formed in the district of “Kaniv dislocations”, known for the dislocation of the sediments of its sedimentary cover, which are folded and form scaly and sleeve structures.

The places of the oldest rock outcrops – sediments of the Ukrainian Crystalline Shield – will be interesting for geotourists. Such a phenomenon can be observed in the valleys of the rivers Sluch, Southern Bug and in the exposed parts of open pits. The Southern Bug River is the only in Ukraine where rapids have been preserved in their natural form that add a mountainous character to the river. The Southern Bug cuts the crystalline rocks of the Ukrainian Crystalline Shield, which outcrop here to the surface.

Overall, the territory of Ukraine is extremely promising for the development of geotourism. Nowadays, the interest in geotouristic attractions is growing due to the improvement of information supply and the development of touristic infrastructure. The Geological Service of Ukraine, scientific institutions specializing in earth sciences, Ukrainian Branch of ProGEO, administrations of nature-protected territories with rich geoh heritage, as well as some tour operators actively popularize geotouristic trips and objects. In general, geotourism in Ukraine is in infancy: the appropriate infrastructure is insufficient, some interesting objects are located in inaccessible places, and there is a lack of informational and educational materials, as well as experts in geotourism. Now

specialists develop the mechanisms of management of promising geotouristic objects and of establishing new for Ukraine forms of geoh heritage protection and use – geoparks. In the west of Ukraine, two geoparks can be opened in the mountainous part of the Ukrainian Carpathians – “Rocky Beskids” and “Volcanic Carpathians”, one geopark in the Precarpathians – “The Galician Dniester region”, and three geoparks in Western Podillia – “Fossil Barrier Reef”, “Podillia Gypsum Karst” and “The Dniester Canyon” (Шевчук, 2012).

Cognitive forms of active tourism in Ukraine have very wide geography. A network of hiking, water, bicycle and car travel routes, which are divided by subjects, covers all regions of Ukraine. The feature of these routes is that most of them, including natural attractions, unite many of the valuable historical and cultural (archeological, historical, ethnographic and other) attractions. Natural routes cover all the most significant natural areas of Ukraine – tourist trails and ecoeducational paths in the national natural and regional landscape parks, to some of the greatest natural landmarks – „Caves of Podillia”, „Caves of Crimea”, „By Carpathian mountain trails”, „Crimean Mountains”, „South coast of Crimea”, to the rocks and rock-and-cave complexes, waterfalls, mountain and lowland lakes, etc.

Carpathians and Crimea are the main areas of hiking trips. This variety of natural obstacles makes it possible for tourists to master almost all arsenal of hiking techniques, trail orienteering, productively carry out training activities. The period of hiking trips in these areas is also extensive – from early spring to late autumn, and under favorable weather conditions – in winter. The most interesting routes in the Carpathians pass through the ranges of Chornohora, Gorgan and Svydovets. The oldest tourist route „By Carpathian trails” runs from Zakarpattia through Torunskyi Pass, Vyshkivskyi Gorgan, the entire southern border of Dolynskyi district, and from Yaiko-Ilem-skyi Gorgan turns to Osmoloda in Rozhniativ district (Lyubitsewa et al., 2012).

Rafting on the rivers of Black Cheremosh, Prut, Southern Bug, Dniester, Desna, Sluch, Teteriv etc. is popular in the warm season. Stationary tent rafting camps operate in the Carpathians (Black Cheremosh) and Myhiia (Southern Bug). Organizers of water tourism offer long-lasting rafts and rafts of the weekend, exercise instructions and groups accompanying, and provide all necessary equipment.

Most often, the Ukrainians organize trips with cognitive purpose on their own. However, there are a number of specialized travel companies and organizations, public associations (clubs) that provide services on organization of the various forms of

cognitive nature tourism – hiking, mountain, bicycle, water, speleological, horse riding, etc. The leading travel companies in this area have recently united into the Ukrainian Adventure and Ecological Tourism Association (Українська Асоціація..., 2014) to promote their products in the domestic and international travel markets.

It is worth pointing out that the tourism infrastructure for different forms of cognitive nature tourism in Ukraine is underdeveloped and in some cases obsolete. In the attraction natural touristic regions it is most developed in resort areas and near major touristic centers, or in economic zones of protected areas. Even more popular becomes the use for placing the base of rural tourism and agrotourism (agrohouses, farms). The largest network of such institutions is developed in the Carpathian region (Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv and Chernivtsi regions). The basic set of services in the Carpathian agrohouses includes accommodation, homemade food, water treatments, equipment hire, sightseeing tours.

4. Conclusions

Among the forms of cognitive nature tourism in Ukraine the most developed became eco-tourism, active types of tourism (hiking, water, cycling, climbing, spelunking, etc.), ethnographic trips by the territories with preserved natural and historical-cultural environment. The most popular are ecological travel offers of the national parks and other protected areas, and the densest network of hiking and cycling tourist routes is laid in the Carpathian region and the mountainous part of Crimea. Often the nature cognitive trips are combined with historical and cultural elements that only enhances cognitive effect. The issue of improving the touristic infrastructure remains relevant, including development of the network of tourist paths, trails and routes in different regions of Ukraine (including cross-border ones), creation of new compact accommodations and food establishments along the tourist routes and near attraction natural sites, improving the existing and creation of new products of cognitive nature and promotion of such trips among domestic and foreign tourists, development of scientific-popular information materials to raise awareness of a wide range of people with natural attractions all over Ukraine. Current research may become the basis for further scientific and methodological and practical developments in the field of development of nature cognitive tourism in Ukraine.

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