

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM IN THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS

One of the most rapidly developing types of tourism in modern times is religious tourism. It should be understood as activities related to the provision of services and meeting the needs of tourists traveling to holy places and religious centers located outside their usual environment.

The main purpose of a religious tourism trip is cognitive and spiritual enrichment through visiting sacred places and religious sites, but it is important to note that the emphasis is on the tourist experience. The purpose of a pilgrimage trip is to perform religious rituals and visit sacred places as part of spiritual practice. In this context, the aim of this study is to analyze the potential of our country in developing this type travel.

The Republic of Belarus has a great capability for religious tourism. Currently, the Belarusian Orthodox Church consists of 11 dioceses; there are 117 deaneries, uniting 1,582 parishes and 1,597 churches. The number of monasteries in Belarus has reached 34, of which 14 are male and 20 are female. Each diocese has departments for educational, catechetical, missionary, social activities, and cooperation with government agencies. However, the main problem in the development of religious tourism remains its promotion at the regional level, which is associated with low infrastructure development, but the most important aspect is the lack of advertising.

Studying any region of our country, one can easily identify at least 10 sites that represent both religious and historical interest. However, even if a pilgrim wishes to visit places of interest to them, there are no guarantees that they will be able to spend the night peacefully without returning to the regional center. Therefore, it is most logical to build accommodation facilities near sites of religious interest based on the experience of other countries. For example, in Russia, small hotels built by monasteries or churches provided by the state are used not only by Orthodox pilgrims but also by people of other denominations, as well as regular tourists. The services offered by these hotels are quite basic but still meet all the essential needs of people, making them affordable for anyone. It is also worth considering that pilgrims usually have much lower requirements for the level and quality of service, food, and accommodation. Moreover, their food choices are typically limited and modest, especially during fasting periods. However, building special hotels for this purpose is not economically viable for the state, so this option is unlikely to be implemented. Yet, this problem can be addressed by combining agrotourism with religious tourism. In populated areas, non-residential buildings can

be renovated if necessary and occupied by visitors. Furthermore, these accommodations can attract regular tourists living in big cities.

Due to the absence of advertising, pilgrims may not be aware of the sanctuaries they can visit. Therefore, a good solution to this situation is the creation of interactive maps for each region in the Republic of Belarus. These maps would provide detailed information about each temple or monastery located in a specific area. Such maps can assist both regular pilgrims and tourism professionals in creating and developing various routes and tours.

Thus, it should be noted that in modern Belarus, there are all the conditions for the development of pilgrimage tourism both within the country and beyond its borders. However, for pilgrimage tourism to truly thrive on a national scale, support from the state is needed in the form of moral, legal, and economic assistance. With such support, every believer would have the opportunity to embark on journeys to the sanctuaries, which are not only their goal but also the heritage of a nation aspiring to unity in the global religious community.