Ecotourism in Protected Areas: Case of Podilsky Tovtry National Nature Park

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres wrote that "Tourism can be a force for good in our world, playing a part in protecting our planet and its biodiversity, and celebrating what makes us human: from discovering new places and cultures to connecting with new people and experiences".

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is the United Nations agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. As the leading international organization in the field of tourism, UNWTO promotes tourism as a driver of economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability and offers leadership and support to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide. According to the UNWTO's definition, ecotourism refers to forms of tourism which have the following characteristics:

1. All nature-based forms of tourism in which the main motivation of the tourists is the observation and appreciation of nature as well as the traditional cultures prevailing in natural areas.
2. It contains educational and interpretation features.
3. It is generally, but not exclusively organised by specialised tour operators for small groups. Service provider partners at the destinations tend to be small, locally owned businesses.
4. It minimises negative impacts upon the natural and socio-cultural environment.
5. It supports the maintenance of natural areas which are used as ecotourism attractions by:
   o Generating economic benefits for host communities, organisations and authorities managing natural areas with conservation purposes;
- Providing alternative employment and income opportunities for local communities;
- Increasing awareness towards the conservation of natural and cultural assets, both among locals and tourists.

UNWTO has been involved in the field of ecotourism since the early 1990s and developed a set of guidelines focusing on the strong link between protected area and tourism, with the aim of ensuring that tourism contributes to the purposes of protected areas and does not undermine them. In the framework of the UN-declared International Year of Ecotourism (IYE) 2002, UNWTO undertook a wide range of activities, including the organization of regional conferences and the World Ecotourism Summit, and published guidelines and methodologies for ecotourism development and market studies, as well as supported regional and national activities. Ecotourism - a modern form of tourism in which through education, volunteering, learning about nature, we help protect and preserve nature. Tourism development in protected natural areas is particularly sensitive, and as such it involves the determination of carrying capacity, limits of acceptable changes, environmental impact assessment, tourism zoning and designing codes of ethics that would help tourists to coordinate their activities with the values of the environment.

Ecotourism typically involves travel to destinations where flora, fauna, and cultural heritage are the primary attractions. Ecotourism is intended to offer tourists an insight into the impact of human beings on the environment and to foster a greater appreciation of our natural habitats.

Ecotourism benefits include:

- Building environmental awareness.
- Providing direct financial benefits for conservation.
- Providing financial benefits and empowerment for local people.
sharing of all socio-economic benefits with local communities and indigenous peoples by having their informed consent and participation in the management of ecotourism enterprises.

- tourism to unspoiled natural resources, with minimal impact on the environment being a primary concern.
- minimization of tourism's own environmental impact.
- affordability and lack of waste in the form of luxury.
- local culture, flora, and fauna being the main attractions.
- local people, who benefit from this form of tourism economically, and often more than mass tourism.

For many countries, ecotourism is not simply a marginal activity to finance protection of the environment, but a major industry of the national economy. The increased contributions of communities to locally managed ecotourism create viable economic opportunities, including high-level management positions, and reduce environmental issues associated with poverty and unemployment. Because the ecotourism experience is marketed to a different lifestyle from large scale ecotourism, the development of facilities and infrastructure does not need to conform to corporate Western tourism standards, and can be much simpler and less expensive.\(^1\) There is a greater multiplier effect on the economy, because local products, materials, and labor are used. Profits accrue locally and import leakages are reduced.

Ecotourism can also bring in employment to the local. Protected areas for instance require park rangers, and staff to maintain and operate the ecologies and accommodation used by tourists. Also the traditional culture can act as a tourist attraction, and can create a source of revenue by asking payment for the showing of performances.

Ecotourism has become one of the fastest-growing sectors of the tourism industry - One definition of ecotourism is "the practice of low-impact, educational, ecologically and culturally sensitive travel that benefits local communities and host
countries". Many of the ecotourism projects are not meeting these standards. At the local level, ecotourism has become a source of conflict over control of land, resources, and tourism profits. In this case, ecotourism has harmed the environment and local people and has led to conflicts over profit distribution.

Although ecotourists claim to be educationally sophisticated and environmentally concerned, they rarely understand the ecological consequences of their visits and how their day-to-day activities append physical impacts on the environment. As one scientist observes, they "rarely acknowledge how the meals they eat, the toilets they flush, the water they drink, and so on, are all part of broader regional economic and ecological systems they are helping to reconfigure with their very activities. Ecotourism activities are, in and of themselves, issues in environmental impact because they may disturb fauna and flora.

Protected areas or conservation areas are locations which receive protection because of their recognized natural, ecological or cultural values. There are several kinds of protected areas, which vary by level of protection depending on the enabling laws of each country or the regulations of the international organizations involved. Generally speaking though, protected areas are understood to be those in which human presence or at least the exploitation of natural resources is limited.

Podilski Tovtry Park is the largest in Europe. Only in the United States (Grand Canyon, Yosemite) and Great Britain are similar in their geological structure of landforms.

The territory of Ukraine is mainly low and flat areas of the earth’s surface with absolute heights up to 300 m. In general, the surface of the territory of Ukraine is flat-concave. The lowest part of it is occupied by the valley of the Dnieper River, which divides Ukraine into Right Bank and Left Bank. The surface of the Right Bank of Ukraine rises to the west. In these areas there is the Volyn-Podilsky plateau, on which there are massifs exceeding 400 m in places. The exceptions in the relief of Central Podillya are the so-called Medoborsky mountains or Tovtry.
Tovtry is a rocky arched ridge, the height of which reaches 443 m on Mount Pidkamin. Above the surrounding plain, this ridge rises by 60-65 m. The length of the Tovtrov ridge reaches 250 km, width 15-20 km. Their surface is mostly wavy, the slopes are convex. The larger, Transnistrian part of the Podolia Plateau has some peculiarities: it is strongly and quite densely cut by deep canyon-like valleys of the left tributaries of the Dniester River. The valleys have a depth of up to 200 m, steep slopes and a narrow bottom. The rivers that flow through these valleys have a mountainous character-

I would like to describe the most interesting parts of Podilski Tovtry Park. **Smotrytsky Canyon** is as if nature has been minting this stone miracle for the ancient Kamianets-Podilskyi for millions of years, because there is no such geological product along the entire length of the Smotrych River. This absolutely unique piece of exceptional geological and morphological creation attracts Silurian mountain limestones of Paleozoic rocks, rich and specific flora and vegetation, not fully understood paleontological fauna of the past and a number of other aspects.

**Bakota Bay** is located on the left bank of the Dniester, 55 km from the town of Kamianets-Podilskyi, there is a picturesque corner, where once was the ancient city of Bakota, and today the waves of the Dniester Reservoir are flowing. When you turn the pointer to the rock monastery, you will see a large oak cross from afar. From it - unique landscapes of Kamyanets-Podilsky Transnistria with canyons and hills, streams and the Dniester riverbed and its tributaries. Gene-gene shows forests and fields, villages and tovtra, which attract and enchant with their beauty and grandeur.

Evidence of the scientific value of the territory near the town of **Kitaygorod** is one of the world's most complete sections of the Silurian and Devonian deposits. The international geological standard of exposure of the third and fourth periods of the Paleozoic era begins on the left bank of the river Ternava and covers the entire slope of the hill on the southwestern outskirts of the village.
**Atlantis Karst Cave** is located in the Kamenets-Podolsky district of the Khmelnytsky region on the territory of the Podilski Toltry National Nature Park in the village of Zavalye. It is also prominent among the caves of Ukraine in terms of the richness and variety of its interior crystal decoration. In 1981, the Institute of Geological Sciences of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR conducted a geological-hydrogeological and karstological-speleological study of the Atlantis Cave at the request of the Khmelnytsky Regional Council for Tourism and Excursions in order to prepare the basis for designing and operating the cave as a tourist attraction. As a result of this work, a comprehensive study of the morphology, secondary sediments, microclimate of the cave, the study of the geological structure, hydrogeological and engineering-geological features of the cave block, determination of the genesis and history of cave formation. Most of it passes through the galleries and halls of the main tier, has a common ring structure with one small branch.

**Karmalyukova mountain** is a unique part of the Tovtrov strand. Named after U. Karmalyuk - ukrainian people’s hero of the 19th century. In the middle of a wide field, the legendary Karmalyukova Mountain adorns the whole district. In this place the Tovtras seem to have stopped their slender harmonious running and, having gathered, create a unique mountain landscape. Here deep meadows alternate with high hills. Karmalyukova mountain is covered with forest up to the top. At its foot, the narrow river Muksha roars, twisting, trying to slip out of the rocks, but exhausted, often lost in the thickets…

**OWL RAVINE**, this unique work of nature, is located in the south-western part of Podillya. Surprising is the narrow, winding valley of the mountain-like river Studenitsa, which seems to be compressed in the palms of high and steep slopes. In a hurry to meet the Dniester, the Studenitsa River washes the thickness of the coral-reef barrier of the reserve, which arose from the bottom of the warm and shallow ancient Sarmatian Sea. This fascinating spectacle reminds everyone of an unusual mountain region. The whole territory of the reserve is permeated with
hills, which gives it a unique beauty and charm. The tract is so attractive that the locals call it "little Switzerland".

Four cavaliers - four gray brothers of the Sarmatian era. Glorious and long-suffering Podillya. It seems that in the middle of the field four cavaliers-brothers and guards of the fatherland of the earth rallied to repel the enemy, and four beautiful Podolian girls clung to them. All of them look at ancient Kamyanets and protect history from the human eye. In fact, each hill is adorned with its own tablecloth of earthly paradise… This beautiful spectacle beckons, attracts and will not leave you indifferent.

Existing natural and climatic conditions, diversity of landscape areas, valuable sources of mineral waters, numerous monuments of nature, history, culture make the territory of the National Natural Park "Podilsky Tovtry" near the Crimea, Carpathians and Transcarpathia among the most promising recreational areas. Significant tourist and recreational value of Podilsky Tovtry are forests. Along with rivers and other water areas, they play a key role in organizing short-term recreation for locals and tourists. The territory of the park can be used for tourist and recreational purposes throughout the year. The main possible types of tourist activities: hiking, water, car, horse, ski, cognitive and cultural (excursions, etc.); general health recreation (hiking, sports games, skiing), excursions (excursions on the Dniester reservoir are carried out on motor ships), delta-, paragliding, balloon trips, amateur crafts (mushroom and berry picking, fishing, hunting); climatic and balneological treatment.

Unique landscapes also contribute to the holding of various tourist competitions at the regional and national levels in hiking, water tourism, mountaineering and more.