

4.3 National holidays as a multiplier of ethno-tourism in the Komi Republic

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7557/5.3210>

Introduction

The Komi Republic has a vast territory, and a rich historical and cultural heritage. There is untouched wildness in most regions, which is a prerequisite for the development of various forms of tourism.

A relatively new, but actively developing, sphere of tourism industry in the republic is ethnic tourism linked to the lifestyle and traditions of the Komi people. People increasingly want not just to travel in comfort, but also through a special experience where they learn and try something new. How did our ancestors live without electricity? How did they stoke the stove and light up the house? What tools and objects did they use in everyday life? How did they cultivate crops, hunt, and fish? How did they conduct holidays and feasts, what did they drink and eat, how did they sing and dance?

Due to the geographic isolation of the Komi Republic, this Northern European ethnic culture is preserved in the form of traditions and customs, ideas about the world and beliefs, used instruments of labour, clothing and housing, monuments of antiquity, and legends and epic tales. This certainly provides a good basis for the development of ethno-cultural tourism in our region.

Ethno-tourism in Komi

Today, a number of ethno-tourism projects have been developed by some travel agencies within the republic. They are oriented to acquaint visitors with the culture and way of life of the Komi people. One of these recognized projects in our region is the private estate “Voyvyv Sikt” (“Northern village”) located in the village Sizyabsk of Izhma area. The project is aimed to



explore the reindeer-herders culture of Komi-Izhemtsy. During the year, the estate is visited by about 1,000 people, including tourists from the Finno-Ugric regions of Russia and other countries.

Nowadays tourism is recognized as one of the priorities of socio-economic development by the government of the Komi Republic. State support of traditional national holidays that are the hallmark of the republic, promotes the formation of ethnic tourism as a new resource for the development of our region. I would like to present a number of national holidays that are the base for important ethno-cultural projects in our region:

Ust-Tsilma Gorka (Ust-Tsilma Hill) is unique for its original dances, preserved from time immemorial. Gorka is a traditional festival designed to encourage conservation and the unique culture of Old Believers of the Ust-Tsil, a people living in the north of the republic. The roots of this holiday evolved from the archaic representations of pagan worship to the sun – “Yarila-god”. People gathered outside the village on a hill and greeted the sun with songs and dances. The Gorka ceremony was an important part of the spring-summer cycle and belonged to the category of so-called “sacred holidays”. Today the “Gorka” is led on St. Peter's Day (July 12). In the evening, all the villagers gather together on the shore of the Pechora River, kindle fires, cook porridge, commemorate the dead, and compete in agility and strength. Then the Gorka begins in the morning on July 13, the bright, colorful dance of the Ust-tsilma people.

Holiday of the Komi-Izhemtsy “Lud”. Since ancient times in every Izhma village, people came out to celebrate this event before going to cut hay. The “Lud” is held in early July in Izhma village and includes a number of different national ceremonies and holiday items, including “Round dance of Brides”, where young girls not only present national costumes, but also the knowledge of traditional culture. This action is an improvised presentation of meeting potential brides and grooms from different villages of the region. An impressive spectacle of celebration is the demonstration of sportsmen in national sports. Horse-riding races on callow makes the “Lud” unusual and original. This competition presents the transformation of traditional the wranglers’ run before festivities. Similarly, the grass was trampled and the place for festivities was leveled.



The Hunter's holiday "Voralysyaslou Gage" is held in late September every two years in the village Eremeevo within the Troitsko-Pechora region. The holiday presents the unique hunting culture the Komi people have kept for a long time without any transformation and loss of the rich experience of many previous generations. Historically, Komi-hunters lived in the Eremeevo village, which was founded in the middle of the 19th Century. Hunters from other villages gathered together in that location before expeditions over the Urals. Hunting dynasties were formed in the village. Today, Eremeevo' people still hunt and fish, maintaining the traditional way of life. The hallmark of the village is the "Eremeevsky march" that is traditional dance-outdoor fête of whole village. In the beginning of 20th Century there were 60 figures of traditional dances performed in the march. Now, according to local residents, there are about 20-30 figures kept. Among them there are special figures as "salmon fishing net braiding".

Holiday "Komi book" takes place in Udora region, each year in a different village. This year the holiday was held for the 25th time. The aim of the holiday is preservation of national traditions and popularization of the works of writers and poets from the Udora region. The holiday is a meeting place of writers and poets with young and adult population. Summaries of local content "Keen on reading", creative laboratories, and concerts are parts of the holiday. The main activities of the republic holiday, such as writers and poets meetings, book exhibition, national cuisine, arts exhibition, gala-concert "My unforgettable Udora", concert "Young Udora" are held in Koslan village.

Reindeer herders' holiday is held in Izhma and Inta regions in March, and in Vorkuta in November. The Reindeer herders' holiday is a colorful event, which expresses the ethnographic features of a region. The peoples of the Far North and their ways of life are of interest for city people and are exotic for people from other regions. During the holiday, reindeer herders compete in the national sports like reindeer racing, sledge jumps, and axe and lasso throwing.

There are national festivals which are of big interest for tourists. These include:

- ***International Festival "Zavalinka"*** that takes place in early July in Vylgort village of Syktyvdin region. Every summer the festival brings together dozens of art groups and professional artists. Despite its "young" age, the festival "Zavalinka" won the All-Russian professional award "Faces of Theatre of the masses" in 2011. "Zavalinka" is a music festival aimed at the revival of interest in native land, its music and culture.



Traditionally, the celebration of this musical festival includes talented youth groups, a festival of street rap bands and disco teams, as well as the performance of Russian and foreign “stars”.

-Festival of modern Komi songs “**Vasiley**”. It has been held on the eve of St. Vasillii since January 1993. The founders of the festival are three men from Ust-Kulom region.

- **Festival “Shondiban”**. This includes bright, original bands and individual performers who present music, songs, stories, rituals, and folklore preserving all local Komi people traditions. Each year the festival is held during Komi Republic Anniversary.

- There is also the orthodox religious complex of sacred sources in Yb village (Syktyvdin region), Trinity-Stefano-Ulyanovsk friary, Ust-Vym Mihail-Arhangelsk friary, and Kyltovsky convent, which attract visitors. As well, the heritage of the GULAG period also interests tourists.

Ecological tourism is in the process of development. The project “**Manpupuner rock formations**” in Troitsko-Pechora region recently became one of the “Seven wonders of Russia”. The biggest projects of United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Russia designed to strengthen the system of protected areas and eco-tourism development is implemented within the National park “Yugyd Va” territory and Pechora-Ilych reserve.

This year the Komi Republic is celebrating its 90th anniversary. It was the impetus for the presentation of a number of tourism projects, including:

The “Finno-urgish ethno-cultural park” in Yb village of Syktyvdin region. The park is a multifunctional year-round complex with functions that include cultural, educational, sport, and entertainment centers. The main idea of the park is the application of ethnocultural features with consideration of the cultural, intellectual, and social needs of modern population of the Komi Republic and its guests. Nowadays, the park is the biggest project of the region. The first turn of the park was introduced during the Komi Republic anniversary. In the near future there will be additional entertainment, educational, and sports infrastructure. The range of activities will allow the park to become a favorite place for recreation and leisure activities for both children and adults. The park has attracted great interest among citizens and guests of the republic. During two months, about 50,000 people visited the park.



The tourist train “Northern Lights”. This project is a journey in luxury carriages tied on to the regular trains. The carriages follow the route Syktyvkar-Vorkuta railway, as well as branches to the Udora region and the Troitsko-Pechora region. Excursions are included in the routes. Tourists will be able to visit Syktyvkar, the historic village of Ust-Vym, Ukhta, Sosnogorsk, Inta, National Park “Yugyd Va”, Pechora-Ilych Reserve, as well as to fish and hunt in Udora region and also visit the Malpupuner plateau. Tourists may visit reindeer herders, ride reindeer, try national cuisine, and come down into a mine. The carriages are designed according to a special project and they have everything for exacting travelers: impeccable interior, security, and telecommunications.

The route “In the footsteps of Old Believers” allows visitors to take a ride to the places of old believers on a tourist boat for 14 people. The tourists will have an opportunity to take part in the celebration of “Ust-Tsilma Gorka”, to catch fish, visit Skitskaya village, which is on the site of the Velikopozhenskogo monastery built by the old believers.

The project “Untouched heart of the Urals” gives unique opportunities for ecological tourism development. This is one of the most interesting routes. The route passes through the national park “Yugyd Va”. It begins in Inta. The next day tourists go to the foot of the “Narodnaya” or “Managara” mountain. A tour-guide is available. There are excursions to the “Ghelanyi” mine where rock crystal and silica were extracted. Crystal druses are the hallmark of the Polar Urals and are highly appreciated by specialists. Another excursion, “The Legends of gray Urals”, includes visits to sacred historical and cultural sites and natural monuments, such as “The Old Master”, “Stone Woman”, and “Shaman Mountain”.

Nowadays, ethno tourism for the Komi Republic is the combination of various types of tourism and ethnographical expeditions. It is impossible to imagine it without national holidays and festivals that allow for the discovery of the history and culture of Indigenous people, and to



meet masters of crafts and tradition keepers. Such events attract people interested in ethnic travels and help to stimulate the influx of tourists in a particular area. Ethnotourism is needed already today, and will be more needed in the future, due to its uniqueness and originality that provide great opportunities for the Komi Republic development.

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