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Orthodox Religious Infrastructure in the Tourism and Recreation Sphere of the Murmansk Oblast

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Abstract. Using the example of the Murmansk Oblast, the article analyzes the functioning of religious tourism within a region located in the conditions of the Polar and Subpolar areas. The region is considered as an example of the development of this direction of recreational economy, within which almost all objects of religious infrastructure, acting as the main objects of excursion display on thematic tourist routes, were lost during the Soviet period. A differentiated approach is used to apply the calculated coefficient of territorial concentration in order to identify the features of the placement of functioning monasteries, temples, and chapels. Their high concentration within certain areas of the Murmansk Oblast is recorded. On this basis, as well as on the basis of the analysis of the composition of the main thematic routes offered on the market, the following religious tourism clusters are proposed to be identified — Murman-Kolskiy, Tersko-Beregovoy, and Pechengskiy. The main conclusion of the article is that the role of religious objects in the implementation of educational routes throughout the Murmansk Oblast is significant, and religious tourism within its borders not only operates despite the high dispersion in the placement of monasteries and temples, as well as the losses of the Soviet period, but also has prospects for the introduction of innovative forms.

Keywords: *Murmansk Oblast, religious tourism, tourist-recreational cluster, educational tourism, multiplicative effect*

Introduction

The relevance of a detailed study of issues related to the functioning of the recreational system in the regions of the Russian Arctic is due to a number of reasons. Modern trends show that the vector of economic and political national interests is shifting towards the Polar and Subpolar regions. This concerns not only the high volumes of mineral resources in the administrative entities of the Russian North or their role in forming a guarantee of the country's strategic security. In recent years, the problems caused by the need to find ways of import substitution in the sphere of recreational services are gaining more and more practical significance and, therefore, require theoretical understanding, since the opportunities for citizens of the Russian Federation to travel abroad for tourism and recreation have been significantly limited in recent years.

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Despite the fact that, according to the typological scale of Russian regions, identified on the basis of the median of the National Tourist Rating for the period 2016–2020, most of the subjects of the European North of the Russian Federation, except for the Republic of Karelia and the Vologda Oblast, are characterized by either insufficient (Arkhangelsk Oblast, Murmansk Oblast, Komi Republic) or low level of tourist attractiveness (Nenets Autonomous Okrug) [1, Kondratyeva S.V.]. Interest in visiting them in the course of educational, sports and other kinds of thematic trips is fixed and is reflected in the increasingly expanded list of offers of the relevant routes and, judging by the dynamic group filling, stable demand for them ¹.

The population's interest in the Arctic regions of the Russian Federation as recreational areas acquires a special expression during the peak of high temperatures in the summer months, as well as in the season when it is possible to observe such a natural phenomenon as the northern lights. In addition to the indicated factors of attracting tourists, there are others, also important, characteristic not only of northern destinations.

Religious infrastructure facilities play a significant role in the tourism potential of the regions. They not only serve as the basis for the implementation of pilgrimage routes, by definition pursuing the goal of participation in religious rites, but also give attraction to excursion and educational trips. It is no coincidence that experts point to the fact that 90% of tourist interest is associated with churches and monasteries. Moreover, it is manifested both to the preserved and to the destroyed and ruined architectural structures of this type [2, Khadieva R.T., Semenyuk N.V.]. Such high and steady attention to visiting chapels, temples, monasteries and other religious and sacred destinations is still recorded, despite the obvious spread of secular trends both in Russian society [3, Markin K.V.] and among the population of economically developed foreign countries, especially European ones [4, Lunkin R.N., Filatov S.B.]. In the states that are part of the Arctic region, religious routes also continue to be in demand, and the infrastructure that ensures their comfortable and safe implementation is being developed [5, Balabeykina O.A., Yankovskaya A.A., Korobushchenko V.Yu.].

The above-mentioned circumstances emphasize the relevance of addressing such a subject area as the prospects for the development of religious tourism within the regions of the Russian Arctic. One of them, the Murmansk Oblast, acts as a testing ground for the research of the presented work.

Literature review

Scientific works, the content of which can serve as a theoretical basis for this research, are conventionally divided into subject-semantic blocks. In order to form a general overview, it is necessary to rely on the works that discuss issues related to the development and functioning of the recreational sector in northern countries and regions at a speculative level [6, Ivanov I.A., Mikhailov B.S.; 7, Manakov A.G.].

¹ Travel agency "Silver Ring". URL: <https://www.silver-ring.ru/ru/trip/ru/turi-v-murmansk-i-na-kolskiy-poluostrov> (accessed 20 April 2023).

Among the domestic and foreign specialists who left a noticeable mark in the formation of the scientific direction, the subject of which is religious tourism, one can name O.E. Afanasyeva [8], A.A. Bertosh [9], D. Liggett and E. Stewart [10].

An important group of scientific works, the results of which should be taken into account in the content of the presented research, are those in which the Murmansk Oblast acts directly as a testing ground for studying issues related to the development of tourism [11, Zhelnina Z.Yu]. Russian scientific space does not contain works of a complex nature, devoted directly to religious routes within the designated region. But the developments, where the considered type of tourism in the Murmansk Oblast finds a detailed mention in the list of other types of recreational economy that have the potential for further development [12, Bertosh A.A.], including at the level of individual districts [13, Davydova A.S.], are of significant importance.

Scientific publications, the authors of which examine in detail tourism on religious topics using the example of specific subjects of the European North — the Arkhangelsk Oblast [14, Balabeykina O.A., Gavrilova K.S., Kuznetsova Yu.A.], Republic of Komi [15, Kirosova T.A., Naydenov N.D.], Republic of Karelia [16, Zakharchenko S.O.], act as a valuable analogue base for the implementation of the presented research.

So, it can be stated that the list of scientific works devoted to the generally identified problems has been expanding in recent years, and their content is of a very diverse nature. The situation is different in relation to the Murmansk Oblast, which, unlike the Arkhangelsk Oblast and the Republics of Karelia and Komi, has not been a testing ground for comprehensive research on religious tourism.

Materials and methods

Initial data on the number of Orthodox monasteries, temples and chapels within the region under consideration and their descriptive characteristics are presented on the electronic website “Public Catalog of Orthodox Architecture”². They were analytically processed using calculation and statistical methods adopted in regional-economic research. For example, in order to identify the degree of uniformity of Orthodox religious infrastructure objects, such indicator as the coefficient of territorial concentration/differentiation was used.

Methods of content analysis and scientific synthesis of information were traditionally used.

Research results

The most important component of the tourist attractiveness of any Russian or foreign region is the provision of its territory with objects of interest for the consumer of recreational services. If we are talking about tourism with an educational or religious orientation, then monastery and temple complexes, chapels are attractive for excursion purposes. In turn, the number and degree of preservation of them depends on a number of factors — historical,

² “Public Catalog of Orthodox Architecture”. URL: <https://sobory.ru> (accessed 25 February 2023).

economic, social. In the post-Soviet period, when religious tourism received an impetus for development due to the transformation of the system of socio-political relations, the greatest potential was found within the most developed territories of Central Russia and some regions of the North-West, where in the pre-revolutionary period there was a high population density and, accordingly, there was a dense network of Orthodox churches. Many of them, due to their historical and cultural value, have been museumized, making them preserved and attractive for visitors.

The current situation with the provision of religious infrastructure objects in the Murmansk Oblast differs significantly from that in Central Russia, as well as within the old developed or densely populated regions of the North-West, and is determined by a combination of factors, the disclosure of which requires an appeal to retrospective.

Formally, the process of diffusion of Orthodox values on the territory of the Arctic region under consideration dates back to the 14th century. At the first stages, it was associated with the bearers of the culture of this Christian confession — Russian settlers, but already in the first third of the 14th century, attempts to Christianize the indigenous peoples of the Kola North are recorded. Gradually, as the population of the peninsula and the share of Orthodox Christians in its structure increased, parish churches were opened. When, by the end of the 17th century, their number reached a level appropriate for the allocation of a regional church-administrative unit — a diocese, it was established and named Kholmogorskaya and Vazhsкая (later — Arkhangelskaya and Kholmogorskaya).

Harsh natural and climatic conditions of the region and low level of inhabitation of the territory created prerequisites for the emergence of monasteries within its boundaries. So, in the middle of the 16th century, the Trifonov-Pechengskiy Monastery was founded in the extreme north-west of the Kola Peninsula, and in the course of time it occupied vast areas. By the 19th century, having gone through the stages of ruin and restoration, it became the historical, cultural and economic dominant of the Murmansk-Kolonistskaya volost [17, Koryakovskiy A.A.]. In addition to the mentioned monastery, the Kandalakshskiy and Kolskiy (Petrovskiy) monasteries were also functioning in the Kola North. Moreover, before the reform of 1764, the economic facilities of other monasteries were located there — Solovetskiy, Kirilo-Belozerskiy, Antoniyev-Siyskiy, etc.

By 1917, within the boundaries of the modern Murmansk Oblast, there were 53 Orthodox churches and 28 chapels [18, Grashevskaya O.V.]. They were concentrated in the most populated areas (Terskiy coast) and located in extreme distance from each other within underdeveloped territories. The system of placing buildings and structures of the Orthodox cult, inherited from that period, influences the development of religious tourism to this day.

The complication of church-state relations in the first decades of Soviet power led to the fact that in the early 1940s, Murmansk Oblast was included in the list of 25 subjects of the RSFSR, on the territory of which there were no functioning churches. Later, the situation changed: in 1947, 4 Orthodox parishes were opened, two of which were liquidated in 1960.

Subsequent transformations in the structure of the confessional space of the Murmansk Oblast are determined by the socio-political trends of the post-Soviet period. In 1988–1998, more than 20 Orthodox churches and chapels were opened within the region's boundaries, and their number increased in the future. The richness of the religious infrastructure entailed the establishment of the Murmansk and Monchegorsk Diocese in 1995. In 2013, it acquired the status of a metropolia, including 2 independent bishoprics — Murmanskaya and Severomorskaya. There are dozens of temples and chapels, monasteries within each of them.

The presence of Orthodox religious sites in the region is the most important, but not the only factor that creates the conditions and prerequisites for the development of religious-thematic tourism. As for almost any other direction of recreational economy, the provision of hotel and transport infrastructure, public catering enterprises, cultural and leisure facilities is of great importance. An important condition in the formation of routes of religious themes, both one-day and longer, is the location of objects provided for visiting for the purpose of excursion.

In order to identify the degree of uniformity in the distribution of Orthodox churches within the region, the calculation of the coefficient of territorial concentration/diversification (CTC) is used. In domestic scientific circulation, it finds application, for example, in the study devoted to the analysis of marketing tools used to increase the tourist attractiveness of the Arkhangelsk Oblast in the aspect of religious tourism [14, Balabeykina O.A.].

It should be noted that within the framework of the scientific work cited as an example, the approach to the selection of initial data was used, which requires some adjustment to make the results more objective. Thus, when calculating the CTC in relation to the distribution of Orthodox churches in the Murmansk Oblast, only functioning Orthodox religious objects were taken into account, and those that are lost or ruined, being not of significant interest to tourists and pilgrims, did not appear in the list of source data. In addition, the area of marine waters formally included in some areas of the region was not taken into account.

The following formula was used to calculate the degree of uniformity in the placement of Orthodox churches within the Murmansk Oblast:

$$CTC = \sum_{i=1}^n (O_i \div O - S_i \div S)$$

i=1, where

O_i — quantitative value of the characteristic being studied (temples) for the i-th territorial unit (administrative-territorial entity of the Murmansk Oblast);

O — total quantitative value of the studied attribute O (Orthodox churches) for all territorial units of the region under consideration (Murmansk Oblast);

S_i — area of the territory of the i-th territorial unit (each of the administrative-territorial entities of the Murmansk Oblast);

S — total area of the territory of all territorial units of the region under consideration (Murmansk Oblast);

n — total number of territorial units of the region under consideration (17).

The calculation results are presented in table 1.

Table 1

The degree of uniformity in the location of Orthodox churches in the Murmansk Oblast (2021)

| Administrative-territorial unit of the Murmansk Oblast | Number of Orthodox churches (2021) | Territory area, thousand km ² | Calculation results |
|--|------------------------------------|--|---------------------|
| Alexandrovsk, CATU | 5 | 0.5 | 0.046832 |
| Apatity | 2 | 2.5 | 0.002543 |
| Vidyaevo, CATU | 2 | 0.08 | 0.019637 |
| Zaozersk, CATU | 1 | 0.51 | 0.006499 |
| Kandalaksha district | 3 | 14.4 | -0.07141 |
| Kirovsk | 3 | 3.6 | 0.004874 |
| Kovdorskiy district | 2 | 4.1 | -0.00805 |
| Kola district | 19 | 27.6 | -0.00303 |
| Lovozerkiy district | 3 | 53 | -0.34385 |
| Monchegorsk | 2 | 3.4 | -0.00381 |
| Murmansk | 16 | 0.15 | 0.160557 |
| Olenegorsk | 2 | 1.9 | 0.006781 |
| Ostrovnoy, CATU | 2 | 0.46 | 0.016939 |
| Pechenga district | 12 | 8.7 | 0.059759 |
| Polyarnye Zori | 1 | 1 | 0.003037 |
| Severomorsk, CATU | 10 | 0.48 | 0.09762 |
| Terskiy district | 14 | 19.3 | 0.005088 |
| <i>Murmansk Oblast</i> | 99 | 141.572 | CTC = 0.430166 |

If we take into account that the limit values of CTC vary from 0 to 1, the resulting final figure indicates a high degree of concentration of Orthodox churches within the Murmansk Oblast. The concentration of religious infrastructure objects within Murmansk, as well as the Kola, Terskiy, and Pechenga municipal districts is confirmed by the data presented in the second column of Table 2. A number of features and restrictions on the development of religious tourism in the region under consideration are also imposed by the low density of Orthodox churches in the Murmansk Oblast as a whole and in its individual ATUs.

Table 2

Rating of religious tourism destinations in the Murmansk Oblast

| Administrative-territorial unit of the Murmansk Oblast | Number of Orthodox churches (2021) | Administrative-territorial unit of the Murmansk Oblast | Density of churches in the ATU of the Murmansk Oblast (thousand km ² per 1 church) |
|--|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Kola district | 19 | Murmansk | 0.009 |
| Murmansk | 16 | Vidyaevo, CATU | 0.04 |
| Terskiy district | 14 | Severomorsk, CATU | 0.048 |
| Pechenga district | 12 | Alexandrovsk, CATU | 0.1 |
| Severomorsk, CATU | 10 | Ostrovnoy, CATU | 0.23 |
| Alexandrovsk, CATU | 5 | Zaozersk, CATU | 0.51 |

| | | | |
|------------------------|----|------------------------|-------|
| Kirovsk | 3 | Pechenga district | 0.72 |
| Kandalaksha district | 3 | Olenegorsk | 0.95 |
| Lovozerkiy district | 3 | Polyarnye Zori | 1 |
| Apatity | 2 | Kirovsk | 1.2 |
| Monchegorsk | 2 | Apatity | 1.25 |
| Olenegorsk | 2 | Terskiy district | 1.38 |
| Ostrovnoy, CATU | 2 | Kola district | 1.45 |
| Vidyaevo, CATU | 2 | Monchegorsk | 1.7 |
| Kovdorskiy district | 2 | Kovdorskiy district | 2.05 |
| Polyarnye Zori | 1 | Kandalaksha district | 4.8 |
| Zaozersk, CATU | 1 | Lovozerkiy district | 17.67 |
| <i>Murmansk Oblast</i> | 99 | <i>Murmansk Oblast</i> | 1.43 |

However, despite the dispersed location of Orthodox religious infrastructure in the Kola North, Orthodox-themed tourist routes are being implemented.

The offer in the market of tourist and excursion routes of the Orthodox theme, focused on internal demand, is concentrated in the pilgrimage spiritual and cultural center “Ascension”, operating since 2002 on the basis of the Holy Trinity Theodorite Kola Monastery in Murmansk, which was called “Under the shadow of Trifon” until June 2021³. There is very little variety: two-day trips to visit the churches of Umba settlement and Varzuga village, located 138 km from each other along the highway, and the first of these settlements is 358 km away from Murmansk.

In addition, trips to the Khibinogorsk Women’s Monastery and the Saint Trifon Pechenga Monastery are organized twice a month on Sundays on a regular basis. In the first case, the list of excursion sites also includes churches in Kirovsk.

The extremely limited thematic diversity of the routes offered by the diocesan pilgrimage service, due to the small number of churches and monasteries of high interest to the target consumers of this service, as well as their dispersed location, is partially compensated by organized visits to events. For example, on July 21, 2021, a trip to the Khibinogorsk Women’s Monastery was timed to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the beginning of services in this monastery. In August of the same year, the opportunity to take part in the consecration of the monument to Saint Theodoret of Kola in the town of Kandalaksha was announced.

In addition to domestic consumers, religious routes or educational routes, including visits to religious sites in the Murmansk Oblast, are also oriented towards tourists from other regions. For example, the Moscow international pilgrimage center “Pokrov” offers a 5-day tour called “Kola Peninsula. Shrines of the Russian North. Here the Earth meets the sky”, which includes an excursion visit to the following settlements: Murmansk – Kola – Kirovsk – Pechenga village –

³ Pilgrimage Department of the Murmansk Diocese. URL: <http://mmeparh.cerkov.ru/palomnicheskij/?ysclid=I9qzxxvI52819622564> (accessed 20 April 2023).

Kandalaksha – Varzuga village – Kashkarantsy village – Umba – Kandalaksha (Murmansk)⁴. The basic price of the service in autumn 2022 was 40 thousand rubles, excluding transportation costs to the starting and final points and is quite competitive.

This route is of a broad educational nature and has a multiplicative effect, as it includes, in addition to religious sites, a sightseeing tour of Murmansk, a visit to the exhibitions of the city local history museum and natural sites, participation in an interactive ethno-program, as well as hotel accommodation and catering.

The offer, focused on demand from tourists from other regions, was expanded due to the 3-day tour package “Russian Lapland: pilgrimage to the “shores of the icy sea”: Khibiny, Pechenga, Murmansk”⁵, announced as a new product on the market. It involves visiting the shrines of Murmansk, Kirovsk, Monchegorsk, Luostari settlement. The element of attractiveness and variety of this route is given by excursion on special expositions of Polar-Alpine Botanical Garden. Moreover, the announced information indicates the possibility of purchasing plant seedlings.

It is positioned that during the summer season (from June to September) this route was implemented regularly once a month. It includes accommodation in a pilgrimage hotel, two meals a day, as well as relatively close in distance radial routes.

Individual entrepreneurs-tour guides of Murmansk also offer a popular, judging by the number and content of the reviews left, route “Murmansk and Kola: the main cities of the Kola Bay”⁶, in which semantic accents, in addition to the historical, local history and ethnocultural components, are also placed on objects of Orthodox religious infrastructure: temples, monasteries, chapels and worship crosses of Murmansk and Kola. This service is aimed at single tourists or mini-groups of up to 6 people, and its cost for the 2022 season is 8100 rubles.

The composition of educational and religious routes in the Murmansk Oblast offered on the market includes a limited list of settlements and sites to visit for excursion.

To reflect the peculiarities of the territorial organization of the considered type of tourism in the region, it is advisable to use a cluster approach, which is characterized by experts as an important tool for integrated territorial management, contributing to the competitiveness of the industry’s products [19, Kruzhalin V.I., Menshikova T.N., Kruzhalin K.V.].

Following the Concept of the federal target program “Development of domestic and inbound tourism of the Russian Federation (2019–2025)”, a tourist and recreational cluster is proposed to be understood as “concentration on a certain territory of enterprises and organizations integrated into one logistics scheme and engaged in the development, production,

⁴ International Pilgrimage Center “Pokrov”. URL: https://www.ps-pokrov.ru/poezdki/palomnichestvo_v_rossii/kolskij_poluostrov__svjatini_russkogo_severa.html?ysclid=I9tqggnc8b787058912 (accessed 14 March 2023).

⁵ Pilgrimage to Murmansk. URL: <http://palomniki.su/countries/ru/g14/murmansk/mode/advertsto.htm> (accessed 11 September 2022).

⁶ Murmansk and Kola: the main cities of the Kola Bay. URL: <https://provodniq.com/excursion/murmansk-i-kola-glavnye-goroda-kolskogo-zaliva> (accessed 13 March 2023).

promotion and sale of tourism products, as well as activities related to tourism and recreational services”⁷.

Focusing on the content of the main routes of religious themes in the Murmansk Oblast and the results of calculations given in Table 1, it can be stated that within the subject of the Russian Federation under consideration, tourism of a religious orientation has a cluster basis and we can identify clusters, designating them as Murmansk (Murman–Kola), Tersko–Beregovoy and Pechenga. Geographically, they coincide with such municipalities and their parts as the city of Murmansk, Kola, Pechenga and Terskiy districts of the Murmansk Oblast.

The Murman–Kola religious tourism cluster was formed on the basis of the Orthodox religious infrastructure of Murmansk and the Kola district of the Murmansk Oblast. Formally, there are about 20 Orthodox churches and chapels in the regional center⁸, but not all of them are of interest to tourists, since most of them are typical buildings of the late 20th–early 21st centuries.

The key object of educational excursion routes around Murmansk is the temple complex of St. Nicholas Cathedral and several other temple buildings that do not have historical and architectural value, but are attractive either due to the surrounding landscape conditions (The Savior on the Waters) or due to sacral significance (Church of All Saints in Vostochnyy).

Of particular interest is such an element of the Murman–Kola religious tourism cluster as the Holy Trinity Theodorite Kola Monastery⁹. Location within the outskirts of Murmansk on an area of 2.5 hectares, used including for subsidiary farming for growing crops, as well as the presence of buildings and premises that can be used for the purpose of leisure and cultural and educational events, overnight accommodation, and organization catering for tourists, allows us to talk about the possibility of creating an Orthodox retreat center on its basis in the future. The latter act as an innovative form of organizing tourism and recreation, created on the basis of monastery or temple complexes and aimed at a wide contingent of recreationists, regardless of their religion [20, Liro J.; 21, Liro J., Soľjan I., Bilska-Wodecka E.].

Christian retreats are positioned as tourism destinations with an emphasis on services, including opportunities to participate in spiritual practices and secluded recreation in a quiet environment. They are widespread and popular in European countries, including Northern ones, but are not currently represented in Russia. Christian retreats can be urban or rural by location, and depending on their spatial organization, they are objectified into sites or centers. Considering the degree of relevance of the problem of import substitution of tourist and recreational services in Russia, including in terms of the need to preserve their diversity, the question of creating Christian retreats, similar, for example, to the one functioning on the basis of the Spaso-

⁷ Kontseptsiya federal'noy tselevoy programmy «Razvitie vnutrennego i v"ezdnoogo turizma Rossiyskoy Federatsii [Concept of the federal target program “Development of domestic and inbound tourism of the Russian Federation”]. URL: <http://static.government.ru/media/files/FoFftF1dhGs4GZzEBPQtLCFVtBI2hHQD.pdf> (accessed 10 April 2023).

⁸ Murmansk (Murmansk Oblast), churches and monasteries, map. URL: <https://sobory.ru/geo/locat/1913> (accessed 17 April 2023).

⁹ Holy Trinity Theodorite Kola Monastery. URL: <https://feodorit.ru/about/architecture/ogorody> (accessed 20 April 2023).

Preobrazhenskiy Novo-Valaamskiy Monastery, which gained popularity among Russian tourists before the coronavirus pandemic Russian tourists, becomes urgent.

The Murman–Kola cluster also includes some churches in the Kola municipal district of the Murmansk Oblast. Its center, Kola, which emerged on the site of one of the oldest settlements in the region, is located 12 km from Murmansk and 15 km from the airport, which largely contributes to the active involvement of city religious sites in thematic excursion routes. The main temple of the city, the Annunciation Church, is the most attractive, not only due to its non-standard architectural design, but also because of an architectural monument of federal significance inside — a wooden memorial cross, dating back to 1635, associated with the name of St. Varlaam Keretskiy, who lived on the Kola Peninsula in the 16th century.

The temple consecrated in his honor is also a tourist attraction. What is interesting is not the building itself — a typical religious building of the early 21st century, but its location on an artificial embankment that connected the residential areas of Kola with the Monastyrskyy Island at the mouth of the river of the same name, where several successive Orthodox monasteries were located at different times.

So, the Murman–Kola religious tourism cluster is based on religious sites of Murmansk and its satellite town of Kola. The advantage in its development is the provision of transport infrastructure and the compactness of excursion objects. If we consider the manifestations of the multiplier effect from the functioning of religious tourism, then within the Murman–Kola cluster it is created due to the involvement of museum and exhibition historical and cultural complexes in the maintenance of routes, the use of hotel infrastructure (organized groups are most often offered overnight accommodation in Murmansk), as well as catering establishments.

Radial routes to settlements far from the centre are also most often started from Murmansk. One of the popular places visited by tourists in the Murmansk Oblast is the Terek Coast — part of the southeastern coast of the White Sea from the mouth of the Varzuga to Cape Svyatoy Nos. The Terek-coastal cluster was formed due to the ancient Pomor settlements stretching along this coast, among which Varzuga, Kashkarantsy, Umba, Kuzreka are the most popular among tourists.

The main factor hindering the organization of excursion, educational and religious routes within the designated territory is transport accessibility. The distance to Umba from Murmansk along the highway is 361 km (about 6.5 hours by car), so Kandalaksha is offered as an alternative starting point for thematic tours aimed at visiting Orthodox churches in Pomor settlements¹⁰. The tour package, in addition to a sightseeing tour of the southernmost city of the Murmansk Oblast, includes a visit to the museum of the Kandalaksha State Nature Reserve, Cape Korabl, etc.

¹⁰ Necklace of the Tersky Coast Murmansk — Kandalaksha — Umba — Kashkarantsy — Varzuga — Korabl — Kuzreka — Kandalaksha — Murmansk. URL: <https://www.hometravel.ru/karelia/murmansk/ozerelie-terskogo-berega.shtml?ysclid=laih0y1kdy203014518> (accessed 20 April 2023).

The Orthodox churches of the named Pomor settlements are repositioned as unique objects of wooden architecture and attraction dominants of this route, and tourist interest is formed due to historical and architectural value (one of the Varzuga temple complexes dates back to the end of the 17th century), and in case of its absence it is compensated by integration into other tourist infrastructure. For example, the Church of the Resurrection of Christ in the Uмба village was built on the site of a lost one and has no architectural value, but it is part of the circular route of the ecological and local history trail.

Therefore, the Terek–Coast tourism cluster of excursion, educational and religious orientation is characterized by its remoteness from Murmansk, which makes it difficult to organize a radial route to its destinations from this city as a starting point, although it does not exclude it. But in this case, the emphasis is shifting in favor of Kandalaksha and its tourist infrastructure. A characteristic feature of the Terek–Coast cluster is the high degree of integration of natural and ethno-cultural sites into tourist and excursion routes, the key attractions of which are the Orthodox churches of ancient Pomor settlements.

The dominant feature of the Pechenga cluster of educational tourism with a religious orientation is the complex of the Holy Trinity Trifonov Pechenga Monastery built in the village of Luostari. Bus travel time from Murmansk to Luostari is about 2.5–3 hours, which makes one-day excursion and educational routes possible. Historically, the monastery is associated with the town of Pechenga, since its partially preserved buildings were first moved there in the 16th century. The short distances between Pechenga and Luostari make it advisable to include them in the general thematic route.

Certain difficulties for tourist and recreational activities are associated with the regime position of the territories of the Pechenga district, along which the Russian-Norwegian border passes. In conditions of favorable relations between countries, this also created an advantage, since it opened up prospects for cross-border routes.

Like the Holy Trinity Theodorite Kola Monastery, the Pechenga monastery is the northernmost in the world and has the potential to create a Christian retreat complex based on its infrastructure and use the surrounding natural landscapes.

Conclusion

Orthodox monasteries, temples and chapels of the Murmansk Oblast, being represented in a small number, were integrated into tourist and excursion routes of educational and religious orientation. Religious tourism in the region belongs to the niche, and tour packages that can be attributed directly to this type of recreational services are limited. However, their range deserves attention because it is in demand among the target consumer and creates diversity in the market. In addition, a multiplier effect from the implementation of religious routes is recorded, since the package of services includes overnight accommodation for tourists in hotels in Murmansk,

Kandalaksha, Zapolyarnyy, etc., catering in cafes and restaurants, excursion visits to natural and historical and cultural sites.

An analysis of the descriptive characteristics of Orthodox religious infrastructure objects associated with their tourist attractiveness allows us to say that, despite the low level of preservation in the Murmansk Oblast of monasteries, temples and chapels, the buildings and interiors of which are of significant architectural, historical and cultural value, many of them they play a cluster-forming role in the recreational economy.

Based on the results of the calculated value of the coefficient of territorial concentration/diversification, a high degree of unevenness in the placement of churches, monasteries and chapels was revealed, which complicates the planning and implementation of routes, but allows us to justify the identification of three main clusters of religious tourism — Murman–Kola, Terek–Coast and Pechenga.

The restored monasteries of the Kola Peninsula, taking into account the natural landscape conditions within which they are located and the unique status of the northernmost monasteries in the world, can serve as a base for Christian retreat complexes that are popular abroad, but are just awaiting implementation in Russia.

Orthodox churches of the Kola Peninsula are involved in trending infrastructure projects (eco-trail), stimulate inter-industry and intra-industry collaborations, and participate in the implementation of the state's social policy.

The Murmansk Oblast is an example of a region of the Russian Federation, within which tourism of a religious orientation and tourism of an educational orientation with the involvement of religious infrastructure are functioning and have prospects for further development, including innovations, even with the condition that almost all ancient monasteries, temples and chapels in its borders were destroyed during the Soviet period.

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