TOURISM

THE SAMARA REGION GETS ON THE TOURIST FLOW

ABOUT 1.2 MILLION TOURISTS VISITED THE SAMARA REGION LAST YEAR, WHICH IS 13.4% MORE THAN A YEAR EARLIER. EXPERTS ATTRIBUTE THE GROWING TOURIST POPULARITY OF THE REGION NOT ONLY TO THE WORLD FOOTBALL CUP HELD IN SAMARA, BUT ALSO TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CORRESPONDING INFRASTRUCTURE. IN THEIR OPINION, WITH THE PROPER PROMOTION OF THE SAMARA REGION THE VOLUME OF TOURIST TRAFFIC TO THE REGION BY 2025 CAN GROW TO 2.3 MILLION PEOPLE. ANI KAMAZAYAN

CHAMPION RESULT According to the Ministry of culture of the region, 1.2 million tourists visited the Samara region in 2018, which is 13.4% more than in 2017. The agency states that the volume of tourism services in the region grew by 16%, of hotel services and specialized accommodation facilities - by more than 100%.

Experts attribute the increase in tourist flow to the holding of the World football Cup in Samara, but note that such interest to the region would not have been possible without creating the necessary infrastructure. “Football is an informational occasion to visit the city. But tourists would not have appeared if the city and the region had not prepared the appropriate infrastructure: airport, hotels, embankment, fountains, fan zone and the pedestrian zone on Kuibyshev street. The list is not very long, but decent enough compared to what has been done over the past 30-40 years”, explains Mikhail Segal, commercial director of Samaraintur.

Managing partner of the Veta expert group Ilya Zharsky highly appreciates tourism potential of the Samara region: “The presence of natural, historical, and cultural attractions, coupled with the fairly modern transport infrastructure created in preparation for the 2018 World Cup games, create the prerequisites for further growth in tourist flow, both at the expense of the Russians and at the expense of foreign tourists.”

BET ON BUSINESS Mikhail Segal believes that Samara needs to pay attention to the development of business tourism: “We need to develop business and business tourism. If we compare our city with Kazan, then Samara is in the most advantageous position for transport logistics. We have both a river and a railway. ‘We live in the center part of Volga, 22 million people live around us’. The expert recalls that the government of the Samara region has already concluded an agreement with the National congress bureau on cooperation in promotion of the event potential of the region at the international level and integration of the region into the global meeting industry. ‘Now they mainly go to Sochi, to Kazan. Because there are places where they can go, sleep, eat, walk, organize a cultural program. This is what we should strive for’, says Mr. Segal.

President of the hotel and tourism Association Irina Fan-Jung agrees with him. “We need comprehensive measures to attract international events to the region like it is in Kazan, we must work to promote the region’s tourism resources, formulate proposals for individual tourists who can hypothetically come from neighboring regions and spend at least a weekend. The medical potential is also good”, says Irina Fan-Jung, adding that now the Samara region, in the first place, needs competent systematic promotion.

According to Ilya Zharsky, the Samara region can become an attractive place for tourists in the field of ecotourism. “Among the natural attractions of the region, it is important to note primarily the Samariyskaya Luka national park, the Buzuluksky Bor national park, and the Zhigulevsky nature reserve named after Sprygin. As well as landscape reserves: Vasilievsky Islands and Sergeyevsky mineral waters”, Mr. Zharsky lists.

However, here, according to the expert, a competent information campaign is also needed. “In fact, the only thing that is necessary for development of ecotourism in the region is minimal investment in promotion, that is, an advertising campaign that will let the Russians know that there are such recreational areas in the region and that it’s easy to get to them, since the region already has a modern airport, high-quality roads, a hotel fund, and so on. Unfortunately, not so much is being done in this direction, which, in my opinion, hinders formation of the image of the Samara region as a tourist Mecca”, Ilya Zharsky believes.

LOCAL BRANDS According to the Ministry of culture, projects that have already become a brand for the region and new ones contribute to an increase in the tourist flow to the Samara region. This is the Grushinsky festival, as well as the Volgafest festival. Syzran tomato and Silver pipes of the Volga region. Within the framework of the new project “Cultural Heart of Russia”, which will be organized this year on behalf of governor Dmitry Azarov, many events are held in the region in open areas: concerts, festivals, processions, carnivals, exhibitions. Another event that can attract tourists to the region is holding of a beer festival in Samara, the idea of which was born in May at a retreat on the development of a tourist and recreational cluster in the Samara region. In addition, the region plans to revive the festival “Rock above Volga”.

Irina Fan-Jung notes that such large – scale events are beneficial for the region. However, according to her, city hotels to a lesser extent experienced an increase of visitors during Rock over the Volga: “Because people were not accommodated in city hotels. Maybe some other segment will be attracted now, and perhaps the hotels will be loaded”. The expert emphasizes that in order to increase interest in the region it is advisable to conduct international events that should be held systematically, at least once every three months.

According to Mikhail Segal, any event increases interest in the region: “Samara was the capital of event tourism in the Soviet Union. The Grushinsky festival brought together 100 thousand people, which was a unique phenomenon for the Soviet Union. We need to brand some of our potentials and increase the increase in the tourist flow to the Samara region is promoted by projects that have already become a brand for the region, as well as new ones. This is the GRUSHINSKY FESTIVAL, AS WELL AS THE VOLGAFEST FESTIVALS, AND ALSO SYZRAN TOMATO AND SILVER PIPES OF THE VOLGA REGION.”