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THE WAR IN UKRAINE IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO ENTER NEW TOURIST MARKETS

In 2022, russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine dealt a blow to many sectors of the economy, but the tourism sector suffered perhaps the most. Closed airspace, restrictions on travel abroad for men subject to mobilization, forced relocation of part of the population, inflation and the fall in the value of the hryvnia – all these negative

factors significantly affected people's ability to travel.

In March and April – the most critical periods for Ukraine – the travel industry stopped almost completely. However, later, when the Government called on Ukrainians to support the work of the economy, recovery gradually began. Although it was not possible to reach the indicators of the first months of the year [1].

As a result, only two months before the start of active hostilities – January and February – Join UP! sent 41% of the total number of tourists who used the services of a tour operator throughout 2022. Accordingly, all other 10 months account for 59% of travelers [2].

July, August and September have traditionally become the busiest months for the tourism sector. But if we compare with similar months of the 2021, tours were sold three times less in each of them.

Entering new markets has become almost a key opportunity to preserve the tourism business in Ukraine. During 2022, the brand Join UP! appeared in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, Poland and Romania. It should also add to this the strengthening of positions on the Moldovan market, where Join UP! has been present for several years [2].

How important such diversification is in the current conditions can be seen from the tour operator's booking statistics. So, for example, in December 2022 (when sales in Poland and Romania were not yet open), 60% of all tours were booked on foreign markets, while 40% were booked in Ukraine.

At the same time, Turkey and Egypt are traditionally the most popular destinations both in Ukraine and abroad. Other leaders include Montenegro, Greece, the UAE and Albania. In the winter season, the demand for the exotic category increases – UAE, Tanzania, Thailand, Dominican Republic and others.

The peculiarity of the national market this year is the rapid growth in demand for travel in Ukraine. In October, a record was even set – tourists booked twice as many tours to the country than a year earlier. Among the prerequisites of this trend, both the limiting factors regarding the departure of men, and the perceived increase in the demand for research into the history and culture of their country.

Under the new conditions, the tour operator has changed its approach to logistics – from mid-June, transfers to Chisinau, and later from Rzeszów with flights to popular summer destinations, became available. Currently, the capital of Moldova remains the most popular departure point for tourists traveling with Join UP! Since the start of flights, almost 51,000 travelers have traveled from there. However, the popularity of Rzeszów is also growing.

Another popular destination this year is bus travel. They are of interest to those who are uncomfortable flying from another country on their own, because during bus tours, travelers are accompanied from the very first point of their journey. In the summer season, bus tours to Antalya, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Greece were the most popular. An additional advantage was that departures were organized not only from Kyiv, but also from other cities of Ukraine [1].

Another large audience of tourists is Ukrainians who have found themselves abroad, but still trust Ukrainian travel agents and, accordingly, tour operators. Most often, they order ground service at their favorite hotels, and get to the place of rest on their own. Such orders in 2022 accounted for 35% of all tour bookings.

The situation in the country significantly affected the portrait of Ukrainian travelers in 2022. The number of women who traveled during the year is 4-5 times greater than men. At the same time, tours are now more often ordered for one person. 77% of all trips are made exclusively by adults.

Due to complicated logistics and the increase in the price of tourist services in resort countries, the average travel check has also increased. The difference between 2021 and 2022 was +23%.

The depth of reservations remains stable. As in 2021, tours are booked 14-21 days before travel. At the same time, previously (until 2020), the depth of reservations reached 6 months, but it significantly decreased after the start of the coronavirus pandemic [2].

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