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TOURIST RESOURCES OF THE SUMY REGION IN THE CONDITIONS OF WAR

The Sumy region, located in the north-east of Ukraine, is a unique region where centuries-old cultural and historical heritage and various natural resources are harmoniously combined.

This region, inhabited since the time of Kievan Rus, has become a center of significant historical events, spiritual development, and folk art. In addition, the diversity of landscapes, the presence of water resources, forests, and minerals contribute to the development of ecotourism, recreational activities, and sustainable use of natural resources.

Sumy region preserves a huge layer of cultural heritage, which is represented by architectural monuments, museums, literary and artistic traditions. There are over 3,000 cultural heritage sites in the region, a significant part of which have the status of monuments of national importance.

The city of Hlukhiv, which was the Hetman's capital in the 17th–18th centuries, is particularly notable. Unique churches have been preserved here, including the Three Anastasius Church (1893) and the Nicholas Church (1693), which are outstanding examples of the Neo-Byzantine style and Ukrainian Baroque, respectively. In Trostianets, the impressive defensive structure of the Round Courtyard, built in the 18th century, and in Putivl, the Sophrony Monastery from the 17th century [3].

Krolevets is known for its weaving industry, especially the production of traditional towels, which are part of the intangible cultural heritage of Ukraine. Sumy

is home to the regional local history museum, which has over 100,000 exhibits, including archaeological finds, ethnographic collections, documents, and photographs.

Sumy region has a significant potential of natural resources, including water, forest and mineral resources. An important component of the natural environment are the rivers Seim, Psel, Sula, Vorskla, as well as numerous small rivers and lakes (Table 1). Water resources are actively used in the agricultural sector, for the needs of the population and energy [3].

Table 1. – Main rivers of Sumy region

River name	Length within the region (km)	Tributary
Seim	293	Desna
Psel	362	Dnipro
Vorskla	177	Dnipro
Sula	118	Dnipro

Source: [3]

Forests occupy approximately 17% of the area of the region. Among the most common tree species, we can single out pine, oak, birch, and hornbeam. The region's forest lands are of great importance for preserving biodiversity, climate balance, and also serve as the basis for the development of recreational tourism and the sanatorium and resort sector.

The Nature Reserve Fund has over 300 objects, including reserves, nature reserves, and natural monuments. For example, the «Mykhailivska Tsilyna» is a rare area of virgin steppe, and the Yablunya Colony in Krolevka is a unique tree that has grown over an area of over 1 hectare.

Sumy region has great potential in the field of preservation and development of cultural, historical and natural resources. The variety of architectural monuments, deep traditions of folk art and the richness of the natural environment make the region attractive for both tourists and scientists. The preservation of this heritage, its popularization and use in sustainable development should become a priority of state

and regional policy.

Sumy Oblast, located in northeastern Ukraine, is a border region bordering the Russian Federation and is located near a war zone. Due to its border location and regular shelling by the aggressor, parts of the territory remain unsafe to visit. In particular, it is not recommended to visit border communities such as Bilopolska, Velykopysarivska, Seredino-Budska, Esmanska, and Yampilska, where restrictions on movement and tourist activities are in place.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent full-scale Russian invasion in 2022 have had a major impact on the tourism industry in Sumy Oblast. In 2022, tourism activity in the oblast fell significantly – tourism spending fell by 58% compared to 2021, becoming one of the lowest in Ukraine (only Kherson, Mykolaiv, Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts performed worse) [2].

However, a positive trend was already observed in 2024: revenues from tourism spending increased by 39% compared to the previous year, indicating a gradual recovery of tourism, although the growth rate is still moderate and lower than the indicators of the central and western regions of Ukraine [2].

Thus, before the full-scale war, Sumy region had a diverse tourist and recreational potential. Such areas as ecotourism (traveling to picturesque natural areas, reserves), rural green tourism, medical tourism (thanks to the availability of qualified specialists and affordable prices), as well as industrial tourism were developing.

Numerous tourist routes, cultural initiatives, and information resources also operated, including the tourist portal «Travel Sumy Region», which provided up-to-date information about recreation areas and attractions of the region.

Today, the development of tourism in the region faces a number of challenges, the main of which remains the security situation. However, the restoration of infrastructure, support for domestic tourism and the preservation of cultural heritage remain important areas of regional development. If the situation stabilizes, Sumy region has the potential to restore its position on the tourist map of Ukraine and again attract both domestic and foreign tourists [1].

The preservation and popularization of cultural and natural resources should become a strategic priority for the region, which will allow in the future to restore the tourist attractiveness of Sumy region and integrate it into the national tourist space.

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