

**Project CB005.1.22.105**

**“The beauty of Strandja - to explore, discover and spread the natural and cultural heritage in Bulgaria-Turkey cross-border region”**

**Elaboration of methodology for assessment and evaluation of sites**

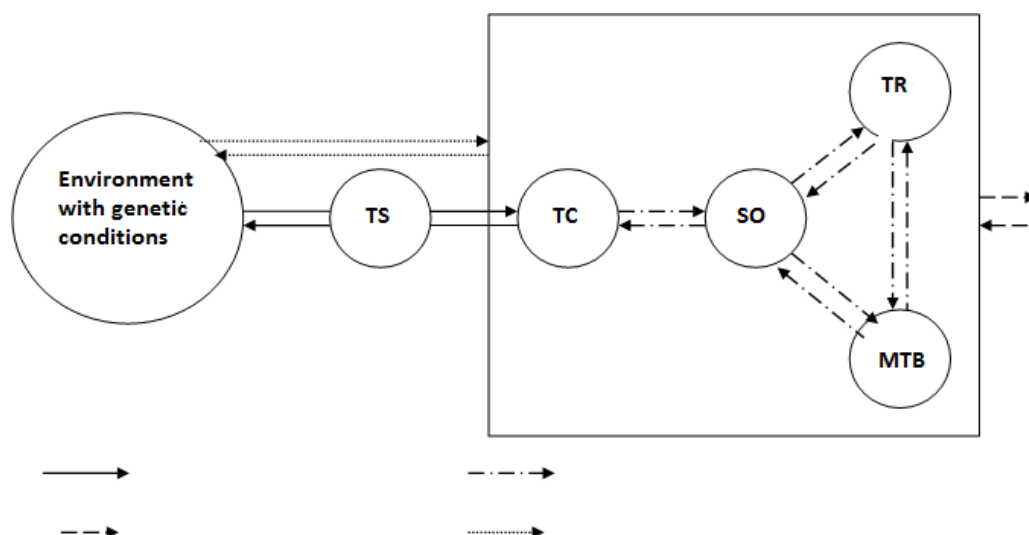
## INTRODUCTION

The current methodology is elaborated in order to assist the process of collecting, analyses and assessment of data, evidence and facts necessary for the survey of resources for tourism development in Strandzha. Using the methodology will enable the evaluation of the potential for development of tourism on the territory.

The methodology is elaborated in the framework of PROJECT **CB005.1.22.105** “The beauty of Strandja - to explore, discover and spread the natural and cultural heritage in Bulgaria-Turkey cross-border region”, INTERREG-IPA CBC Bulgaria-Turkey Programme

The foundation of the methodology is based on the principles of offer and demand of tourist products. The first question which is recommended be used by researches is “*whether it is worth to develop tourism in Strandzha?*”. In order to answer this question and at the same time to achieve agreement between the stakeholders it is necessary to collect considerable amount of data and secondary information, which is either connected with the offer of the tourist product or the demand of the tourist product (the potential market, target group of visitors, etc.). This requires the elaboration of situational analyses. Its aim is to assist the analyses and the evaluation of the collected information for the tourist potential in the region of Strandzha and the selection of the attractions with highest potential for attracting tourists.

The methodology for the evaluation of the tourist resources is based on the Territorial system of recreation and tourism (Bachvarov, 1975), in which the main elements in any tourist destination are described. The resources are closely related to the material and technical base for tourism and the organizational staff sub-system in order to be used for tourism purposes.



## **1. OVERVIEW OF LOCAL RESOURCES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM**

### Inventory

Since nature and cultural heritage are the basis for the development of sustainable tourism, it is natural to start with as wide a possible inventory of these factors. In addition, there may be new interests as well as their physical condition, which will help to assess the necessary investments to make them accessible to tourists.

After reviewing the different natural assets and cultural heritage, their attractiveness to the site as a whole has to be assessed. It is also important to define their relationship with major cities, airports and other tourist destinations. This step also includes an assessment of the local weather characteristics and the impact of seasons on the flow of visitors.

### Assessment of tourism potential

Once the survey is completed, a first assessment of the various aspects should be made to determine if the site has:

- o High interest in tourism, strong enough to attract people to come to the region;
- o Medium tourist interest, which can complement the main attractions and diversify the supply;
- o Little or lack of tourist interest.

At this stage, it would be useful to compare with similar destinations in the country and the region to determine if there is something special about this territory.

A good approach to obtaining this information is by exploring best practices. This analysis of the attractiveness of tourism will show not only what is being offered and successful elsewhere but will also identify the type of attractions that have so far been neglected. This, in turn, will help to select the right mix of tourism products and identify the areas that would be most competitive.

This review is the basis of a preliminary study of tourism resources in the area, which aims to determine the potential for tourism development and the types of tourism that can be developed. More in-depth research and analysis should be carried out as part of the tourism development planning process.

### **NATURAL RESOURCES**

The main natural resources that have the greatest importance for the development of tourism are:

- Beaches
- Coastal resources – cliffs, bays, fish wealth
- Mountains and landscapes
- Forests
- Waterfalls
- Lakes

- Caves
- Flora and fauna – incl. birds
- Mineral springs
- Protected areas – parks and reserves
- Other

ANTHROPOGENIC TOURIST RESOURCES – archaeological, historical and cultural resources, which have greatest importance for the development of tourism are:

- Archaeological remains
- Historic settlements, parts of settlements, separate buildings
- Settlements with traditional architecture
- Folklore and traditional medicine
- Festivals and ceremonies
- Traditional crafts and craft streets
- Traditional and contemporary economic activities
- Traditional and contemporary arts – dances, music, theatre
- Any type of museums
- Cultural institutes and centres
- Scientific and educational centres
- Villages and rural landscapes
- Other

SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS are also elements of the development of tourism in a certain territory. Those are:

- Sport events and facilities
- Evening entertainment and thematic parks

- Zoos and botanical gardens
- Casinos and types of gambling
- Other

THE CLIMATE in a certain territory is also an important factor for the development of tourism in it. The most important indicators are:

- Average annual values and the seasonal distribution of:
  - Temperature
  - Precipitation
  - Humidity
  - Number of sunny days
  - Prevailing winds

THE QUALITY OF THE ENVIRONMENT is another important factor in order to develop tourism successfully in a certain territory. The most important indicators which have to be observed are:

- Air condition
- Water condition
- Purity of nature
- Attractiveness of nature
- Maintenance of buildings and public areas
- Congestion and traffic jams
- Other

## **2. REVIEW OF INFRASTRUCTURE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM**

THE INFRASTRUCTURE is another important element for development of tourism. The main components which have to be observed are:

- Transport access to the region
  - By air
  - By water
  - Road network
  - Railway network
- Transport provision inside the region
- Water supply
- Electro supply
- Collecting and treatment of hard and liquid waste
- Post and communications
- Other

TOURIST INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES are also very important in order to determine certain territory as tourist. This includes:

- Accommodation establishments
- Restaurants
- Tourist services
- Guides
- Network of shops
- Tourist information centres
- Banks and change bureaus
- Medical facilities and services
- Police and security
- Other

Additional services are also important for well-developed tourism:

- Building of paths - eco paths
- Creation of thematic routes
- Active leisure
- Horse riding
- Velo routes
- Reconstruction of craft workshops and traditional productions
- Representing historical events, traditions and rituals
- Visits to churches, monasteries, spiritual places
- Organising of events

The information provision of the product is essential:

- Information boards
- Information points
- Information centres
- Visitor centers

### **3. REVIEW OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM**

THE HUMAN RESOURCES are also very important element of the system for development of tourism on a certain territory. The following should be assessed:

- qualification of the employed in tourism at the moment
- availability of tourism training institutions and programs
- preparing skilled workforce in the future
- other, related to the employment in tourism

#### 4. SCOPE (CONTENTS) OF THE ANALYSES

Once the above elements have been considered and evaluated, an analysis of the main elements of the tourism system and its environment and SWOT analysis should be made:

<b>STRENGTHS</b>  <b><i>Internal factors</i></b>  <i>Positive things in certain situation, project and activity which work well.</i>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>  <b><i>Internal factors</i></b>  <i>Things which do not work well or which could be done better</i>
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>  <b><i>External factors</i></b>  <i>Opportunities for upgrading on the basis of the strengths and overcoming the weaknesses</i>	<b>THREATS</b>  <b><i>External factors</i></b>  <i>Limitations that reduce the opportunities for growth or change</i>

The analyses should be complete - covering all relevant and important issues and aspects. Typical topics:

- Location
- Natural environment and cultural heritage (incl. as a resource), status of environment
- People (human resources) and quality of life, labour market
- Economics – level of development, structure, trends
- Technical and social infrastructure and services
- Stakeholders of development and resources of development
- Image

There is no general rule for the structure of the analysis, but it should be logical and consistent. It is not enough for the analysis to focus solely on the state of development, the conditions, the problems and the needs, the aspirations, commitments and intentions of the stakeholders in the territories as well as the available and potential resources should be taken into account:



- Resources (potential) in the territory and community (resources, human resources)
- Resources for assistance and directing the development (not only financial, social capital)
  - Resources of the municipality (local authority) – analyze the budget
  - Resources of other partners
  - Resources of other organisations and groups in the community
  - Regional, national and international resources – availability, access, requirements
- Regional, national, European and global context – development, policies, programs – how to “enter” it/them?
- Previous experience and current activities
  - Lessons learnt from the past – what worked well and what not? Current ideas?
  - Do we do the right things? Do we do them correctly? Needs for change?

## 5. EVALUATION OF DEMAND

So far, we have only looked at the supply of the tourist product. It has to be looked very seriously and **explore the other side of the problem - tourist demand.**

First and foremost, it has to be decided that there is a real opportunity to develop tourism in Strandja and what it might be before an attempt to develop tourism is at the earliest stage.

Consideration should be given to whether there is or will be any interest of tourists in the site concerned by looking at the **profile of the typical tourist, the market impact or the market potential for its different segments of a natural or cultural nature.**

The best choice for the purpose would be to do market research and study the most successful practice in the tourism business. The advantage of this type of survey is that the results will be much more accurate and real about the target, and this would help in choosing to invest in the site or not. It is highly advisable to seek the help of professionals in the tourism business to do a market survey. They are not only very familiar with the tourism business but also have extensive experience in the modern market and in potential competitive areas.

### **Demand on potential market**

There are two possible approaches to defining objectives: one is to see what the site can offer as a tourist attraction, the second is to look for an appropriate market for available tourism resources. The alternative is to see which type of tourism shows a strong growth potential, or which type is underdeveloped in the

given region, and accordingly choose the direction in the development of the site. In practice, this means using a combination of both approaches to make the best decision.

Starting with a potential list of tourist attractions derived from tourist questionnaires, the first predictions can be made on the basis of a typical tourist profile: that is, what could attract the tourist, what would motivate or interest him. This would give an orientation in exploring different market segments and determining how many tourists could attract, how, for how long and ...

The ideal case is for all possible markets to expand and the more diverse the sources of tourists, the more stable its base and the more invulnerable it becomes in case of market change.

The presence of a large number of tourists from different potential market segments would greatly assist the decision to process and expand the market. Conversely, a small number of tourists would require a new study or the idea of tourism development needs to be reviewed.

#### **Evaluation of the contemporary market**

There may be some kind of tourism in a region /district. In this case, it is best to start exploring existing tourists to determine their number, interests, complaints and recommendations.

Based on these studies it will be possible to determine whether the existing attractions have been fully utilized, whether there is a potential market for creating such attractions or changing existing buildings / equipment could be proposed to complement and diversify existing tourism.

Along with an assessment of the system of tourism resources, human resources and accommodation for recreation and tourism, there is a need to assess the demand, ie what is the profile of the tourists who visit a destination.

Why is tourism demand important?

Tourism is created for people, not people for tourism. Tourists are the main factor for the economic success of tourism. The core of modern marketing is market orientation - producing what can be sold and not selling what can be produced. Demand can be considered as the starting point of tourism management in all aspects (marketing, planning, etc.). That is why we need to know the tourist demand.

For the considered tourist destination Strandzha Mountain the most important are the Bulgarian tourists.

Profile of the Bulgarian tourist:

- Tourists in working age looking for rest and recovery;
- Families and groups (families and friends), seeking safety and guarantee for quality;
- Tourists with own experience, seeking good value for money ratio;
- Tourists travelling out of the active season – weekends and holidays;

- Tourists travelling for a short stay but most often all-the-year-round;
- actively seeking tourists, flexible in their choice and with their own opinion, organizing their trip themselves and willing to combine several types of tourism;
- emotional, Bulgarian-related tourists (Bulgarians living abroad) valuing the supply of cultural and cultural-historical landmarks;
- tourists seeking to meet additional needs with higher education and intellectual level with the need for additional products in different types of tourism;
- people related to nature and ecological lifestyle, with requirements for the appropriate use of natural resources and the use of sustainable tourism;
- active in the global network and using e-services, new technologies (mobile);
- people with their own property or holidaymakers with their own properties, willing to combine a "rural tourism" trip with another specialized type of tourism (mountain, eco, cultural, spa, hunting and fishing).

Characteristics of the trips of Bulgarians in the country:

- The Bulgarian tourist realizes three main types of trips: longer trip for the annual holiday; short trips for the weekends with no more 2 overnights; excursions abroad that depend on two main factors - financial resources and leisure time.
- Organized Bulgarian travels mainly abroad. Inside the country he prefers to organize his holiday alone. The factors that influence this behavior are: easy access to information on the Internet, general distrust of the quality and reliability of the offered tourist offers, price sensitivity .
- Bulgarians make their holidays mainly during the summer, as it is traditionally related to "going to the sea". There is a tendency to avoid the active summer season for two reasons - waiting for more favorable price offers and peace. Preferred destinations in Bulgaria are the places on the South Black Sea coast.
- The short trips of Bulgarians do not have seasonality. Although most often related to national holidays, when there are more days off, the trips are all year round. Basically, destinations are selected that are close to the user's location or near the mountains. Typically, these trips combine different types of tourism. An increased interest in the opportunities for spa and spa tourism, as well as for cultural tourism, is noticeable.
- In the winter season, the most frequent short weekend trips take place. Skiing is often practiced during weekends. A determining factor is the financial capability and the proximity to such a sports infrastructure.

- The main sources of information related to travel and tourism to potential users are the Internet and a recommendation from family and friends. The information available on the Internet is judged to be sufficient, even over-sufficient. It is a problem to sift reliable and useful information and set a precise search criterion when it comes to a specific object. It is important to create a unified information system with tourist information that is easily accessible to the average consumer.
- The list of the 50 little known tourist sites in Bulgaria is taken with great interest. Users would like to find more information and even visit some of these sites. An important condition for a visit is the availability of appropriate infrastructure.
- The decision to relax or excursion is strongly influenced by socio-demographic characteristics. Key factors include income, age and education, and related lifestyles and occupations. The most intensive travelers in the country are young people and middle-aged people with a more active lifestyle, mainly with secondary or higher education and over 500 leva income, students and workers, especially those in managerial positions.
- The destination itself is the leader in the decision on the last trip made, whether it was within the country or abroad. In people aged 15 to 40, leisure time is also a significant factor due to their engagement with educational and professional activities.
- Almost half of the trips are concentrated in 15 settlements, 11 of which are related to mass tourism and the other 4 are specialized. As top destinations, the resort Borovets, Velingrad and Sozopol. The largest competitive destinations are in the neighboring countries - Halkidiki, Istanbul, Bucharest, Thessaloniki, Thassos, Kusadasi and Antalya.
- The Bulgarian tourist is rather inert and prefers to do the same activities during his holiday, because he is used to it and that makes him feel good. There is no awareness of the need for diversity, ie. the combination of tourism types is not sought.
- Persons choosing to travel abroad are becoming "loyal visitors" to these places. However, it can be argued that this target group is not completely "lost" to domestic tourism. The loyalty index to the destination indicates that there are groups of users who are strongly attracted to destinations in Bulgaria.
- The strongest as an image for Bulgaria in the minds of the tourists is the sea and cultural tourism.
- The most distinctive characteristics, which have to be adapted to the offered types of tourism, for the Bulgarians are four - the opportunity for practicing in all seasons and all age groups, conditions for rest with children and mass (popularity) of the product / service.

## **6. SWOT ANALYSIS**

SWOT analysis of the Bulgarian tourist product

### **Strengths**

- Многообразие на природни и антропогенни ресурси, съсредоточени на сравнително малка територия, което предполага добра степен на достъпност и възможности за развитие;
- EU membership;
- Beautiful and clean environment ;
- Mild climate and moderate temperatures ;
- Extreme richness of mineral and thermal springs;
- Good food ;
- The product offered is of good quality and at a competitive price;
- Traditions;
- Rich and internationally recognized cultural and historical heritage and preserved traditions;
- Geographic proximity to the main target markets of Bulgaria;
- Hospitality towards foreigners;
- Renovated accommodation base;
- Image of a relatively safe destination;
- Attractive cuisine and quality wines.

### **Weaknesses**

- Lack of clearly recognizable image of Bulgaria as a tourist destination;
- Strong territorial disproportion and product dependence on sea tourism;
- Insufficient infrastructure inside the country (airports, roads, public transport);
- Lack of tourist representations on main target markets for Bulgaria;

- Insufficient experienced and trained staff;
- Insufficient planning of the use of the territory in the tourist regions;
- Initial stage of development of public-private partnerships (PPP);
- Initial stage of modernization and reconstruction of the predominant part of the existing museums, galleries, attractions, etc., related to the presentation of the Bulgarian cultural and historical heritage;
- Relatively neglecting the internal market.

#### **Opportunities**

- Existence of rich tourist potential to diversify supply and overcome seasonality; Възможности за разнообразяване на предлаганите туристически продукти;
- Development of specialized tourism types, both individually and in combination;
- Opportunities to increase the range offered. Services
- Unused opportunities for domestic tourism and tourism from neighboring countries for weekend breaks;
- Improving the qualification and skills of the personnel in tourism;
- Emphasis on recurring forms of tourism (eg spa, ski, etc.) and their combination;
- Establishing an effective link between early planning, demand and supply of the tourist product through the development of efficient electronic communication channels;
- Opportunities to attract foreign investments in tourism;
- Overcoming regional imbalances and development of tourism throughout the country.

#### **Threats**

- Economic and financial crisis, which has led to stagnation and recession in major emitting markets;
- Raising the price of the offered tourist services, leading to the loss of one of the most competitive competitive advantages of Bulgaria, namely the good price-quality ratio;

- Impact of campaigns targeting mass tourism by competing destinations;
- Failure to achieve thoroughness of advertising activities due to insufficient funding;
- Negative impact of force majeure such as natural disasters, diseases and terrorist attacks;
- Extinction of traditional crafts and skills;
- Deteriorated environmental parameters;
- Lack of adequate spatial planning and zoning in a tour. regions;
- Domestic crime;
- Corruption.

## **7. SCOPE OF TOURIST PACKAGE**

An analysis of existing tourist offer - tourist packages and programs needs to be done. Tourist package is a kind of offer to the customer, which combines several tourist services (accommodation, meals, additional services) and has a total price. The tour operators call their package another tourist program.

THE TOURIST PRODUCT includes:

- TOURIST ATTRACTION
  - Local attractions :
    - Natural and climatic conditions
    - Socio- cultural conditions
    - infrastructure
    - attractive events
- STRUCTURE FOR STAY
  - Accommodation facilities
  - Dining and entertainment places
- ACCESSIBILITY

The Tourism Act regulates the main types of tourist sites, services and policies for the development of this sector.

When analyzing tourism in a given territory, consideration should be given to:

Tourist objects: :

1. accommodation places :

- a) Class A – hotels, motels, apartment tourist complex, holiday village, tourist villages and villas ;
- b) Class B – family hotels, hostels, pensions, holiday houses, guest houses, guest rooms, bungalow, campaigns ;

2. dining and entertainment places (separate and adjacent to accommodation places) - restaurants, fast food restaurants, pubs, coffee shops and bars;

3. tourist huts, tourist educational center and tourist bedroom and the adjacent to them dining places tourist mess room, tourist buffet and mess rooms with waiters services ;

4. ski slopes – ski slopes for alpine skiing, snowboard and ski running, children ski zones and snow parks;

5. separate and adjacent to accommodation places balneological (medical SPA) centers, SPA centers, wellness centers and thalassotherapy centers ;

6. beaches – beaches to natural and artificial water resources ;

7. offices for tour operators and tour agencies activities;

8. tourist information centers ;

9. visitors centers for presentation and exposition of local natural and cultural heritage;

10. museums and public and private expositions with cultural values and galleries;

11. art and craft centers and temporary centers for tourist exhibitions ;

12. tourist roads/ paths and bicycle routs;

13. climbing places, paragliding, and routs type “Via Ferata”

14. hours base for amateur hours riding and routs ;

15. Aqua parks, water attractions and adventure parks;

16. attractions and thematic parks ;

17. golf courses;

18. wildlife and bird watching sites;



19. hunting holdings under the Hunting and Game Protection Act ;

20. wineries;

21. the immovable cultural heritage under the Cultural Heritage Act, the Cultural Institutes under the Protection and Development of Culture Act, the Protected Areas under the Protected Areas Act;

- **"Tour operator activity"** is the organization of group and / or individual tourist trips with a total price offered for sale, either directly or through a travel agent for the purpose of tourism, recreation, entertainment, business, participation or attendance of events and events of cultural and educational character , congress and business events or for any other purpose.
- **"Tourist agency activity"** is the mediation of: sales of organized tourist trips with total price to end users; passenger aviation, water and bus transport; reservation, visa and other additional tourist services, as well as travel insurance.
- **"Major tourist services"** are accommodation, meals and transportation.
- **"Additional tourist services"** are services related to travel, entertainment, events and other cultural and educational events, congresses and business events (organizing meetings, conferences, seminars, trainings, presentations and other corporate events), sporting cartoons and health services, health, spa and wellness services, use of rope lines, rental of beach equipment, ski equipment, vehicles and vessels for sport, tourism and entertainment, services provided by schools and clubs Antsy, riding, sailing and other water sports services provided by ski schools and other services offered and consumed by tourists during their travel and stay.

The potential of the tourist resources selected from the Strandja region is assessed according to the **following criteria**

- *Capacity (potential, capability) for development - tailored to the factors and conditions for resource development*
- *degree of impact / impact - the level of attractiveness / attractiveness is assessed;*
- *degree of change (as a result of tourism) - assessment of the usefulness / value / importance of the tourist attraction;*

The selected evaluation criteria should be applied not only for scientific purposes but also take into account the position (viewpoint) of the particular tourist attraction and the possibilities for practical use of the research results.

## **Requirements / Criteria, Properties and Procedure for Evaluating Tourist Resources**

The basis for defining the criteria for assessing tourist resources in a given destination should be taken into account simultaneously: the requirements they must meet to be defined as tourist; their properties and characteristics.

Tourist resources need to meet the following requirements:

- (a) be accessible: both for transport and for financial purposes, in order to provide opportunities for their use, regardless of their uniqueness or importance;
- b) to be complex: single resources (with certain exceptions and with equal other conditions) are more difficult to become attractive for visits compared to a group of resources and their complex location helps to attract tourists and stimulates long-term development of the territory through the system of tourist activities in it;
- (c) be attractive to tourists: they can attract with their beauty and exoticism or their uniqueness (size, unusualness, rare resource, etc.), but without complying with the attractiveness requirement, it is practically impossible to should be referred to the category of tourism resources;
- d) Safe: important in the case is the degree of their storage - the higher it is, with equal other conditions, the resources will be more attractive (the ruins of a medieval castle in unprotected form attract fewer visitors compared with its well-preserved building);
- (e) have a good geographical location: their location is advantageously combined with a variety of landscapes, natural and cultural-historical features;

Also, the origin of the tourist resources is decisive. Often those of natural origin attract more attention than anthropogenic. At the same time, the artificially created ones may have a greater attraction than the inherited anthropogenic resources.

The **main features** of tourism resources are: attractiveness (attractiveness), accessibility, degree of learning; significance (spectacularity); socio-demographic characteristics; potential stock and mode of use.

### **Specific properties are defined as:**

- *integrity (indivisibility) and elements in their existence in interrelation;*
- *capacity (capacity) - number of tourists who can accept the territory on which the tourist resources are located;*
- *Reliability - determined by all social, economic and political conditions within the boundaries of the tourist area;*
- *integrity (indivisibility) and elements in their existence in interrelation;*
- *capacity (capacity) - number of tourists who can accept the territory on which the tourist resources are located;*
- *Reliability - determined by all social, economic and political conditions within the boundaries of the tourist area;*



- *uniqueness (rarity, exclusivity) or probability of encounter and uniqueness;*
- *cognitive value - associated with specific historical facts, personalities, life path and creativity of famous people;*
- *popularity - popularity among tourists;*
- *exoticness - the degree of contrast of the site with the conditions of the permanent residence of the tourists, which also investigates the unusual nature of the tourist site;*
- *Expression - degree of interaction with the environment, infrastructure and nature;*
- *preservation - readiness for organized reception of tourists;*
- *safety - absence of possible negative consequences of the use of tourist resources by tourists and the local population.*

**The most important characteristics** of the tourist resources can be attributed to:

- volume of inventories - to determine the potential volume of tourist sites (resort centers, hotels, etc.),
- the level of utilization and optimized resource load: area of tourist territory, visitor potential of tourist landmark, etc.;
- area of distribution - determines the potential tourist territory, the circle of the sanitary guard, etc.;
- period of possible operation - determines the seasonality of the visits and their rhythm, the duration of the favorable climatic season, etc.;
- Territorial immobility - Measures the impacts on the construction of the infrastructure in the places of their concentration;
- low capital intensity and cost of operating costs - allow the rapid creation of adjacent infrastructure and achievement of social and economic effects in complex or independent use of resources;
- possibility of repeated use - observing norms and conducting regeneration and resource development activities.