

ASSESSMENT OF THE POSSIBILITIES OF USING SACRED SITES AND THE NATURAL AND RECREATIONAL POTENTIAL OF THE NORTH KAZAKHSTAN REGION FOR THE FORMATION OF TOURIST ROUTES

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Abstract: To analyze the potential of sacred places as well as natural and recreational objects within the borders of the North Kazakhstan region of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the development of complex tourist routes. We examined archival data and documents and assessed the results of a sociological survey using statistical and mathematical processing, with tourist routes mapped out. The material under analysis and the results of the sociological survey enabled us to evaluate the touristic appeal and relevance of sacred places, as well as that of natural and recreational objects, in the North Kazakhstan region. A number of complex routes characterized by cultural, historical, pilgrimage, archeological, and environmental diversity were proposed. The cartographic material at hand enabled us to display a spatial plan of routes and accurately reflect the development potential of the region's tourism sector. The land of North Kazakhstan has the potential to expand the tourism industry. The demonstrated sacred places and diverse natural sites enable the creation of complex routes. We assessed the sacred places' properties and determined the degree of attractiveness exhibited by complex routes, thus confirming the tourist opportunities offered by the region. These routes were designed to promote various directives such as historical, patriotic, and cultural education, natural world exploration, pilgrimage, spiritual awakening, and archaeology. Their use will contribute to the preservation of cultural and historical values, the expansion of international and domestic relations, and the development of the economy and sustainability in the region. Skillful management in planning complex tourist routes in the North Kazakhstan region will facilitate the strengthening of ties between different communities and cultures, which is of great relevance for the multinational and multicultural country that is Kazakhstan.

Keywords: recreational and natural sites, sacred places, complex tourist routes, North Kazakhstan region, tourism, tourism industry, local history, sociological survey

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INTRODUCTION

The development of tourism in the North Kazakhstan region has many significant aspects that can positively affect the local population, economy, and public welfare. Tourism contributes to the creation of new jobs and the development of entrepreneurship, and it can also facilitate the diversification of the economy. It encourages the creation and improvement of infrastructure such as roads, airports, public transport, cultural and sports facilities. The development of tourism can foster the conservation of natural resources and cultural heritage, as it often becomes a point of interest for tourists and results in economic growth (Kantarci, 2007a; Syzdykbayeva et al., 2015; Kuralbayev et al., 2016; Kuralbayev et al., 2019; Saparov et al., 2017). Kazakhstan offers a multitude of unique sights and attractions for tourists. Each region of Kazakhstan has a tourist potential represented by natural, historical, archaeological, cultural, and other places and objects (Smykova, 2015; Abubakirova et al., 2016; Aliaskarov et al., 2017; Aliyeva et al., 2019; Tiberghien, 2019; Wendt, 2020). It is essential to explore this potential, enabling its use in the expansion of the tourism business in the republic's multiple areas.

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The North Kazakhstan region is also uniquely distinct in terms of its tourism industry. The study of the tourism potential of the region in question is on the list of the region's development priorities. Studying the region's domain allows one to preserve and transfer knowledge about its history, traditions, culture, and customs. This serves to strengthen the community's identity, preserve the national, cultural, and historical heritage, as well as conserve the uniqueness of nature sites (Zhidkoblinova, 2013; Chlachula, 2019; Dmitriyev et al., 2021a). Learning about one's own region inspires people to assume an active role in its development, support local projects, and embrace shared values. Awareness of local history, culture, and ecology can attract travelers and help the region's tourism industry flourish. In combination with unique cultural and historical sites, the use of cartographic material and data on natural and recreational resources enables us to outline the region's tourist potential (Ziyadin and Takhtaeva, 2014; Zhakupov et al., 2015; Wendt, 2016; Dunets et al., 2019).

The North Kazakhstan region's geographical location has a considerable bearing on the region's tourism potential. One of the features that can enhance the area's touristic appeal at hand is its border-adjacent location, auspicious for tourism exchange and the development of cross-border tourism. The region boasts a diverse nature, including steppes, forests, rivers, and lakes. This natural land scape provides unique opportunities for eco-tourism, hunting, fishing, hiking, and cycling. The combination of various ethnic groups forms a unique cultural atmosphere. Local traditions, customs and cuisine can attract tourists who want to immerse themselves in the local culture (Matviichuk et al., 2023).

This richness of distinctive characteristics exhibited by the territory under study is of great touristic importance when creating complex or combined routes. This makes it possible to consider the needs of a wider range of tourists, combining all types of tourism and emphasizing the historical, cultural and natural attractiveness of the region (Bancerova and Kasimova, 2018; Ismagulova et al., 2020; Usmonova et al., 2022). The North Kazakhstan region is distinguished by its natural beauty as well as its rich and eventful history full of architectural sights, archaeological discoveries, and cultural land marks. A plethora of sites and objects within the region carry sacred significance and are recognized on the national level. At the same time, this list is not exhaustive. A number of sites and objects of sacred importance and relevance for developing the tourism industry can also be identified at the regional level. Thus, it is necessary to study the sacred places of the studied region in order to assess the possibility of using them to create tourist routes.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The following methods were used in this paper: analysis of archival data and documents, a sociological survey, methods of statistical processing and mathematical analysis, with mapping used for visualization. At the first stage of the study, the list of sacred places of the North Kazakhstan region was studied, and a classification was carried out.

At the second stage, a subjective assessment of the attractiveness of sacred places was obtained during a sociological survey. After analyzing the results of the survey, a list of the main criteria was compiled, and the weighting coefficient of these criteria was obtained to assess the tourist attractiveness of sacred sites. The level of sacred sites and objects' attractiveness was assessed using a comprehensive quality indicator. This indicator was calculated using the weighted mean.

$$k = \sum k_i \sum a_i, (1) \text{ Fomin et al., 2020}$$

where k_i is an indicator of the i -th property of the object, points; a_i is the weight coefficient of the k Indicators, a unit fraction ($\sum a_i = 1$). This formula is universal. This technique, the available scientific materials, and the results of the survey made it possible to calculate the weight coefficients and thus assess the properties of a sacred object with a view to calculating its potential. After that, complex routes were identified, which is based on the transport logistics of the North Kazakhstan region. Upon mapping the routes, we were able to visualize their spatial position within the borders of the region at hand (Semochkina, 2012; Baryshnikov et al., 2019; Dmitriyev et al., 2021b).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Today, each country has uniquely significant sites or objects (Kantarci, 2007b; Chernova and Sukhova, 2017; Juratargunov et al., 2023). Kazakhstan is no exception. One of the strategies employed by the Republic of Kazakhstan is the development of sacred geography, a branch of local history that studies the country's each individual region, locality, etc., a cause important for the population of each respective territory. Sites that carry special spiritual or sacred significance for a particular religious, cultural, or spiritual tradition are called sacred places. Moreover, there are a number of nuances depending on the particular term used when discussing objects or places in sacred geography. In light of the direction in which the tourism industry is developing within the borders of the North Kazakhstan region, we encourage using the term sacred place.

Sacred places or objects can be either natural landscapes such as mountains, rivers, forests, and others, or they can be created by man (temples, churches, mosques, etc.). People may consider these places special, worship them, perform rituals or prayers in them in the hope of receiving spiritual inspiration, protection, or healing (Rybina and Lee, 2021). Visiting sacred places is of interest to tourists, notably for education purposes. Cognitive tourism is a form of travel focused on educational and cognitive goals, cultural enrichment, and the acquisition of new knowledge. The key idea is not only to relax, but also to learn something new, and immerse yourself in local culture, history, art, and traditions (Đurkin et al., 2017; Monyók et al., 2020; Bógdał-Brzezińska et al., 2023; Mukatova et al., 2024).

The sociological survey we conducted included 822 respondents and revealed their keen interest in visiting and studying the sacred places of North Kazakhstan, and enabled us to flag the criteria of their attractiveness. The questionnaire list includes questions characterizing the cultural and historical significance of sacred sites, the level of development of logistics, infrastructure, natural and environmental attractiveness, etc. A sociological survey helps to identify research data

that needs to be analyzed (Ignatov, 2011). The analysis of the questionnaire resulted in drawing several key conclusions. First of all, the region's territory offers a unique potential of sacred and natural places and objects. Second, the study of the native land contributes to enlightenment and education and promotes patriotism. Third, the possibility of creating integrated routes will attract more potential tourists by combining their needs. Last but not least, we used the results of the survey to determine the scores showing the appeal of sacred places and objects. Naturally, every object or place included in the tourist route must be attractive to tourists. Determining the tourist attractiveness of unique sites consists of various factors, including cultural, natural, historical, and recreational aspects. Based on the sociological survey, we compiled a list of the main criteria and calculated their weighting coefficients, which, in turn, can be used to assess the tourist attractiveness of a sacred site:

I. The development of the transport network, Logistics.

II. Tourism potential: The facility's ability to attract a wide range of tourists and create a positive experience for different categories of visitors.

III. Tourist infrastructure: Availability of convenient transit, good accommodation, restaurants, and tourist services.

IV. Natural beauty: Attractiveness of a natural object, such as land scapes, mountains, waterfalls, beaches, which can inspire and enchant tourists.

V. Cultural heritage: The site's cultural and historical significance, including monuments, architecture, museums, and traditions.

VI. Environmental sustainability: Maintaining the site's ecological integrity and taking measures for sustainable tourism.

VII. Safety and convenience: Level of security for tourists and the facility's accessibility, including easy access and accommodation facilities.

VIII. Entertainment options: Availability of a variety of entertainment activities such as theme parks, festivals, events, and excursions.

IX. Ethno-gastronomic diversity: Unique culinary opportunities and traditions that attract food aficionados.

X. Innovation and technology: Using innovative technologies to enrich the travel experience, for example, virtual tours, interactive exhibitions, etc.

Table 1. Assessment of sacred places and objects' properties (Source: the authors' own calculations)

Properties of sacred objects	Quantitative assessment of the parameter regarding the object (<i>ki</i>), points					The weighting factor of the indicator (<i>ai</i>)
	1	2	3	4	5	
I	Lack of well-paved roads	Insufficient development of the transport network	Access to roads of regional importance	The presence of national importance roads	Good development of the transport network	0.15
II	Insignificant combination of sacred place types	Presence of a variety of sacred place types	A significant variety of sacred place types	Presence of sacred places of national importance	The presence of many sacred places of national importance	0.1
III	Minor land scaping	Land scaping of recreation areas (access to comfortable WCs, benches with sun and rain protection, etc.)	Availability of food outlets	Availability of overnight accommodation	Major facilities	0.05
IV	Absence of old-growth attractions	Ordinary old-growth natural objects	More significant natural monuments	Unique old-growth natural monuments	Old-growth objects protected by law	0.15
V	Lack of attractions	Minor attractions	More significant attractions	Sights of historical and artistic value	Attractions protected by law	0.1
VI	Presence of visible contamination	Odor composition	Compliance with the regulations	Compliance with the standards for drinking water	Uniquely clean reservoirs with springs	0.08
VII	Availability of industrial facilities	Presence of a rural settlements network, land fills	Large area of agricultural land	Predominance of protected natural areas	Many unique protected areas	0.05
VIII	Lack of recreational activities	Monotonous events and excursions	Availability of entertainment activities such as theme parks	No significant variety of recreational activities such as theme parks, festivals, events and excursions	Wide variety of recreational activities such as theme parks, festivals, events and excursions	0.1
IX	Lack of culinary opportunities and traditions	Monotonous gastronomic flavor	Presence of ethno-gastronomic traditions	No significant variety of culinary opportunities and traditions	Wide variety of unique culinary opportunities and traditions	0.12
X	Lack of innovative technologies	Insufficient development of innovative technologies	Availability of innovative technologies to enrich the	The development of innovative technologies to enrich the tourist experience: virtual tours, interactive exhibitions and maps	Good development of virtual tours, interactive exhibitions, interactive maps, etc.	0.1

Successful tourist sites often combine several of these criteria, providing diversity and sparking visitors' interest. To assess the potential of each sacred object, a complex quality indicator was used, with the weighted mean at its core (1). An assessment of each sacred object's potential is given, based on a modified complex quality indicator obtained via weighted mean calculation, with 10 criteria under a 5-point system. The properties of sacred objects were determined based on a number of criteria, enabling us to organize the material under analysis as a table (Table 1).

The analysis of the table's contents made it possible to identify the most significant criteria when assessing the potential of each sacred place and object. According to the respondents, the most important indicators are those pertaining to the development of the transport network and the presence of unique natural and recreational facilities. These indicators have a maximum coefficient of 0.15. A lower value was obtained for criteria characterizing the development of tourist infrastructure: 0.05; environmental sustainability: 0.08; the level of safety and convenience for tourists: 0.05.

The average values between 0.1 and 0.12 belong to the remaining half of the criteria. These include the tourism potential, entertainment opportunities, the attractiveness of a cultural heritage site, ethno-gastronomic diversity, innovations and technologies aimed at using virtual opportunities for tourists. The scores of these parameters describe the features of the thematic orientation of tourist routes, such as cultural and historical, archaeological, pilgrimage, natural and recreational. These are routes that notably combine enlightenment and education and offer an opportunity to touch cultural values by enabling visitors to explore the unique natural sites of the North Kazakhstan region. The subdivision of sacred sites can vary depending on various aspects such as religious beliefs, cultural traditions, and historical contexts. There exists a list of sacred places and objects of national significance within the borders of the North Kazakhstan region**.

Below is an overview of the suggested sacred site types in the region, with each selected sacred place about a certain type. We must mention, however, that we find the proposed typology rather crude. Cult sacred objects. These include buildings built for religious rites, prayers, and worship, as well as other religious buildings. Archistratigo-Mikhailovsky Convent. Located in the Zhambyl district, Presnoredut village, North Kazakhstan region. Despite its derelict condition, it is a place of pilgrimage. Kyzylzhar Central Mosque. Located in the city of Petropavlovsk.

Even though the mosque was built in the early 2000s, it is a crucial hub of spiritual and cultural life for the region's population. The Din Muhammad Mosque. Located in the city of Petropavlovsk. One of the oldest religious sites in the region, the mosque was built in 1854. The Church of All Saints. The Orthodox church is located in the city of Petropavlovsk; the consecration took place in 1894. Cathedral of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul.

The Orthodox church is an architectural monument located in the city of Petropavlovsk. One of the oldest preserved buildings in the city, the cathedral was founded in 1803. The Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The temple is the oldest functioning Catholic parish in the Republic of Kazakhstan, located in the city of Petropavlovsk. This church was built at the beginning of the 20th century thanks to exiled Poles and Germans.

The Star of Kazakhstan Altar. This altar was donated to the Kazakh people by Polish Catholics and consecrated in 2012 by Pope Benedict XVI. It is in the Tayynshinsky district, Ozernoye settlement, North Kazakhstan region.

Objects associated with the names of famous cultural, public, and political figures of Kazakhstan.

Memorable objects associated with the name of Magzhan Zhumabaev. A renowned cultural and political figure of Kazakhstan. The memorable places associated with his name are located in the territory of the eponymous district. These include: a memorial stone, the Sasykkul tract, and a museum located in the Magzhan Zhumabayev district, Sarytomar village, North Kazakhstan region. Sabit Mukanov House Museum. Sabit Mukanov was a pillar of Kazakh literature, poet, public figure, and academician. The museum is located in the Zhambyl district, Sabitvillage, North Kazakhstan region.

Memorable objects associated with the name of Gabit Musrepov. Gabit Musrepov was a famous Kazakhstani writer, translator, and public figure, who was awarded the Hero of Socialist Labor title. The sites commemorating him are combined into a complex and include the Kyzkaragai pine grove, the Ulpan burial place site, the Musrepov museum. The objects are located in the Zhambyl district, Zhanazhol village, North Kazakhstan region.

Ivan Petrovich Shukhov House Museum. Ivan Shukhov was a famous Kazakhstani writer, editor, local historian, public figure. The house Museum is located in the Zhambyl district, Presnovka village, North Kazakhstan region.

Archaeological sacred sites of the North Kazakhstan region. The settlement of Ak-Iriy. Translated from Iranian, it means "White Paradise". An outpost on the edge of the Saka world. The settlement belongs to the Saka era (V century BC), it was an outpost between the inhabitants who inhabited the steppe and the forest.

The settlement was discovered by scientists in 1968, and excavations are still underway. The settlement is in the Kyzylzhar district near the village of Dolmatova, North Kazakhstan region. The temple complex of Baykara. The temple complex was discovered in 1956 by the expedition of archaeologist Kamil Akishev. In the period 1997-1999, the burial ground was excavated by an international German-Kazakh archaeological expedition led by G. Parzinger and V.F. Seibert. The complex is located in the Shal Akyn district, north of the city of Sergeevka, North Kazakhstan region. Botai settlement. Botai settlement is an archaeological monument of the Eneolithic era (4-3 thousand BC). The main archaeological interest is related to the fact that the first evidence of domestic domestication of horses was found here. The researchers believe that the Botai cultural complex could play an important role in the process of domestication of horses, which was important for the development of steppe nomadic cultures in the future.

Research in the Botai Settlement provides a unique perspective on the life and economic activities of the Mesolithic and Neolithic peoples in the central part of Eurasia. Excavations began here at the end of the 20th century, and since then they have continued, expanding our knowledge of ancient times and the formation of human civilization. The settlement is in the Ayyrtau district south-east of the village of Nikolskoye, North Kazakhstan region.

Historical places

Abylai Khan's residence. The building is a monument of urban planning and architecture, it is one of the first stone buildings of the city of Petropavlovsk. The building is associated with the activities of Abylai Khan, known for initiating the unification of the Kazakh lands. It is located in the city of Petropavlovsk, North Kazakhstan region.

Syrymbet Manor. Syrymbet Manor, the Valikhanov family estate, is a monument of wooden architecture of the 19th century. The Valikhanov family are direct descendants of the Kazakh Abylai Khan. The manor was built by decree of Emperor Alexander I in 1824. It is located in Ayrtau district, near the village of Syrymbet, North Kazakhstan region.

"Akkusak meeting" Alash. It is a historical venue for the multi-thousandth national Assembly of Northern Kazakhstan. It is included in the list of sacred sites of national importance in Kazakhstan.

Memorial complexes

Karasai and Agyntaibaturov. The memorial complex is installed at the burial site on the site of the batyrs and is a symbol of unity, friendship, unity of the peoples of Kazakhstan. It is located southeast of the village of Karasai, Ayrtau district, North Kazakhstan region.

The burial place of Kulsarybatyr. Kulsarybatyr is a statesman and public figure, an associate of Abylai Khan. The place is in Yesilsky district, Bulak village, North Kazakhstan region.

The burial place of Kozhabergenzhyrau. Kozhabergenzhyrau is a famous Kazakh akyn, musician, commander-in-chief of the troops of Tauke Khan. The place is located in Zhambyl district, Blagoveshchenka village, North Kazakhstan region.

The physical, geographical and territorial features of the studied region contribute to the formation of the tourism industry. The region has an area of 97.99 thousand km², includes 13 administrative districts, is located in the northern part of the country and borders Russia in the north. The terrain of the territory is flat, forests and forest-steppes predominate in the north of the region, and steppes in the south. The Ishim River and numerous lakes are characteristic elements of the landscape, the area is rich in natural resources***.

High-quality roads are one of the necessary conditions for the development of domestic and foreign tourism, which becomes a source of new income for residents of adjacent territories, contributing to the economic growth of the regions and the country as a whole (Cerić and Więckowski, 2020). To further increase the tourist flow, it is necessary to provide a modern and safe transport infrastructure. There are several requirements for the transport and operational performance of public roads to ensure road safety. The main indicators of operational condition include roadway coverage, curbs, dividing lanes, technical means of traffic management, artificial lighting, visibility, etc. A well-developed transport network, including highways, which are represented by roads of republican, regional, and district significance. The total length is 8,996 km. Highways of republican significance have a length of 1,970 km, a regional – 1,983 km, and a district - 5,043 km, providing communication between the region and other regions of Kazakhstan and Russia****.

There are many sacred places and other distinctive sights within each district of the North Kazakhstan region, and many of them can be reached via highways of national importance. Each route can be used to build its unique tourist route, which includes its own set of sacred places and natural and recreational facilities (Teslenok et al., 2021). Using the marked sacred sites, several routes were proposed. These routes included the places and objects proposed by us that have natural, recreational and other attractiveness, which are of no less importance for our region.

According to the logistics of the highways of the North Kazakhstan region, five directions were identified, along which tourist routes were drawn up. These routes include sacred sites that combine religious, archaeological, historical sacred sites and memorial complexes, as well as natural and recreational facilities. As already noted, the starting and ending point of the routes will be the city of Petropavlovsk. Routes including sacred sites of republican significance in the North Kazakhstan region are shown in Figure 1.

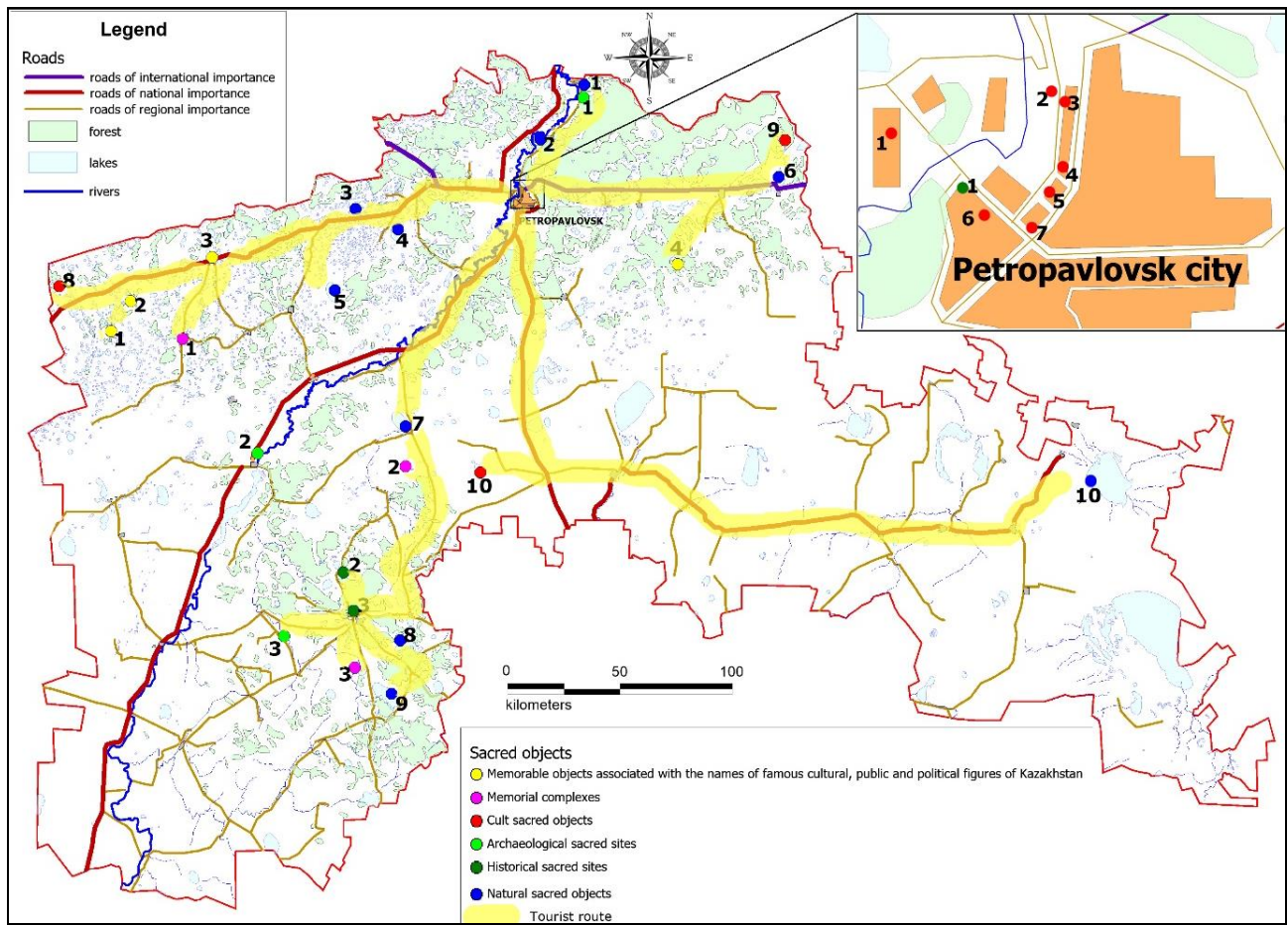
1. The route of the western direction from the city of Petropavlovsk. Visits to historical and educational sites are complemented by natural and recreational facilities. Petropavlovsk, Lake Stanovoe, Afonkin ryam, Lake Mengiser, Archistratigo-Mikhailovsky Convent, Sabit Mukanov House Museum, Kozhabergenzhyrau burial place, Ivan Petrovich Shukhov House Museum, memorable objects associated with the name of Gabit Musrepov.

2. The route of the northern direction from the city of Petropavlovsk. Visiting archaeological and natural recreation sites. Petropavlovsk, Abylai Khan's residence, Kyzylzhar City Mosque, Serebryany Bor, Ak-Iriy settlement. The Ishim River, Dolmat Lake with its unique nature, will harmoniously complement the proposed route.

3. The route of the eastern direction from the city of Petropavlovsk. Visiting Muslim sites: Kyzylzhar City Mosque, Din Muhammad Mosque, Central Kyzylzhar Mosque. Visiting Orthodox sites: Petropavlovsk, the Church of All Saints, the Cathedral of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, the Archangel Michael Convent. The route can be supplemented by the temples of Matrona Moskovskaya, Lebyazhensky (M. Zhumabaev district). The Salty Lake will be a great addition for balneological recreation.

4. The route of the south-eastern direction from the city of Petropavlovsk. Visiting Catholic and natural and recreational facilities. Petropavlovsk, Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Altar "Star of Kazakhstan", Lake Teke. This route will include the unique steppe landscapes along the route.

5. The route of the south-western direction from the city of Petropavlovsk. Visiting historical, archaeological, and natural recreation sites. Petropavlovsk, Abylai Khan's residence, the Baykar Temple complex, Tarangul Lake, the burial place of Kulsarybatyr. Sergeevsky reservoir, Botai settlement, Sarymbet manor, Karasai and Agyntai Baturov memorial complex, Lake Shalkar, Lake Imantau.



Legend

(A list and designations of sacred places and natural sites included in the proposed routes)

Memorable objects associated with the names of famous cultural, public and political figures of Kazakhstan

1. Memorable objects associated with the name of Gabit Musrepov; 2. Sabit Mukanov House Museum;
3. Ivan Petrovich Shukhov House Museum; 4. Memorable objects associated with the name of Magzhan Zhumabayev.

Memorial complexes

1. The burial place of Kozhabergenzhyrau; 2. The burial place of Kulsarybatyr; 3. Karasai and Agyntaibatyr.

Cult sacred objects

1. Cathedral of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul; 2. Kyzylzhar City Mosque; 3. Church of the Ascension of the Lord; 4. The Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; 5. The Church of All Saints; 6. Din Muhammad Mosque; 7. Kyzylzhar Central Mosque; 8. Archistratigo-Mikhailovsky Convent; 9. The Church of the Matrona of Moscow; 10. The altar of the "Star of Kazakhstan".

Archaeological sacred sites

1. The settlement of Ak-Iriy; 2. The temple complex of Baykara; 3. Botai settlement.

Historical sacred sites

1. Abylai Khan's residence; 2. Syrymbet Manor; 3. "Akkusak meeting" Alash.

Natural sacred sites

1. Dolmat Lake; 2. Silver boron; 3. Afonkinryam; 4. Lake Stanovoe; 5. Lake Mengiser; 6. Salty Lake
7. Tarangul Lake; 8. Lake Shalkar; 9. Lake Imantau; 10. Lake Teke

Figure.1 Map of routes, including sacred places of republican significance in the North Kazakhstan region (Source: own elaboration)

To identify the attractiveness of the proposed complex tourist routes, including sacred sites of the territory of the North Kazakhstan region, a comprehensive assessment of the recreational potential was carried out according to 10 criteria, on a 5-point scale. The result is presented as (k), taking into account the weighting factor of the indicator (ai). The results of the evaluation calculations are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 includes the results of the calculation of the criteria used in Table 1. The maximum score is 5 points. The ranking of the criteria is presented by the sum of the points. Based on this, 4-5 points are high, 3-4 points are average, 2-3 points are insignificant, and less than 1 point is a low level of attractiveness. After analyzing the results obtained, it was revealed that most of the proposed routes have a high final attractiveness score.

The first and fifth routes shown in the table have the highest possible score of 5. This can be explained by the variety of places and objects of interest to tourists, as well as the uniqueness of the natural and recreational potential. These routes are very rich, include a large number of sacred places and are combined with natural objects. The second and third routes have a score slightly lower, 4.7–4.8, respectively. The fifth route in the southeastern direction received a relatively low score of 3.78, which corresponds to the average attractiveness score. This can be explained by the limited

number of sacred sites and natural and recreational facilities included on this route. Nevertheless, the assessment of the attractiveness level of a significant majority of the routes presented has a high score.

Table 2. Comprehensive point assessment of the attractiveness of the proposed integrated routes of the North Kazakhstan region (Source: the authors' own calculations)

Routes	Criteria										Result
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	k , including (a_i)
1. The route of the western direction from the city of Petropavlovsk	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
2. The route of the northern direction from the city of Petropavlovsk	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.8
3. The route of the eastern direction from the city of Petropavlovsk	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	3	4.7
4. The route of the south-eastern direction from the city of Petropavlovsk	4	4	4	3	4	5	5	3	4	3	3.78
5. The route of the south-western direction from the city of Petropavlovsk	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5

The proposed tourist routes with categories of sacred places and natural objects of the North Kazakhstan region are not exhaustive, this is only the view of the authors of the article. Many sacred places can have many functions and serve various religious, cultural and educational purposes. Sacred sites can also attract pilgrims and tourists seeking to feel connected to a spiritual or historical heritage. These places often become the center of religious and cultural events, as well as a place of worship and reflection. In any case, these places are of interest not only from the local population, but will also be in demand for tourists coming to this region (Foo and Krishnapillai, 2019; Qiu et al., 2020; Polukhina et al., 2024). In addition, well-designed logistics and the availability of appropriate infrastructure will allow you to combine, among other things, various forms of recreation. For those who like active recreation, it is possible to include in the route, for example, hiking, rafting, etc. For tourists who prefer a calm, measured rest, it is possible to visit swimming pools, relax on the beach. The natural resources of the North Kazakhstan region have the potential for all types of tourist recreation, including balneological (Dmitriyev et al., 2023).

The starting point of the routes is the city of Petropavlovsk. It is an administrative, cultural and historical center, including a large number of sacred sites, with tourist potential. Cities are very often used for tourism (Wang et al., 2022; Taipakova, 2023; Vilcea et al., 2023). Therefore, for the organization of tourist activities in the studied region, it is important to rationally build a tourist route, make it diverse, that is, combined. Combined tourist routes are routes that include a variety of activities and various points of interest. Such routes may include hiking, cycling, horseback riding, water excursions, visits to historical monuments, cultural events, etc. They provide tourists with a diverse and rich experience. The developed combined tourist routes have a number of advantages, first of all, they can take into account different interests of tourists, providing historical, natural, adventure and cultural aspects. Tourists can enjoy a variety of activities, including outdoor enthusiasts, cultural excursions, nature trips, etc. A variety of activities can lead to increased sales of travel services, the creation of new jobs and the development of the local economy. The competent involvement of local communities in tourism initiatives helps them to benefit from tourism (Akbar et al., 2020). This can be through the creation of tourism services, craft projects, the sale of local products, etc. Effective tourist routes help promote the region by attracting the attention of potential visitors. This contributes to a positive image of the region and can attract investments (El Archi et al., 2023; Savanchiyeva et al., 2023; Teklebrhan et al., 2023; Waiyausuri et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

Consequently, the proposed option for developing the tourism industry in the North Kazakhstan region could have a variety of meanings. First and foremost, it promotes regional economic development (Aktymbayeva et al., 2020; Batyrova et al., 2018; Chlachula, 2020). Tourism contributes to the creation of new jobs, the development of local businesses and infrastructure such as hotels, restaurants, shops, transportation services, etc. Secondly, the development of infrastructure. A well-developed infrastructure is needed to attract tourists. Investments in roads, airports, museums and other tourist facilities can positively affect the quality of life of local residents and the overall infrastructure of the region. Thirdly, it will contribute to the preservation and popularization of cultural heritage (Vilcea, 2023). Tourism can contribute to the preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage of the region. Drawing attention to traditions, history, crafts and local customs can help preserve cultural uniqueness. Fourth, raising the level of education and awareness. The development of tourism can contribute to improving the education of local residents, as new jobs are created in the service sector, hospitality and tourism services. In addition, education will determine an increase in the level of knowledge, and contribute to expanding the horizons of tourists visiting the region (Wendt, 2020; Wendt and Bógdał-Brzezińska, 2024; Issakov et al., 2023; Iakovaki et al., 2023). Fifth, stimulating local entrepreneurship. The development of tourism can be an incentive for local entrepreneurs, creating opportunities for the development of small and medium-sized businesses in the field of tourism. Sixth, the preservation of the natural environment, sustainable development of the region.

With sound management, tourism can contribute to the conservation of the natural environment and biodiversity. Sustainable tourism usually includes measures for nature conservation and environmental protection (Berdenov et al., 2021;

Cavalcante et al., 2021; Aktymbayeva et al., 2023; Ivancsóné Horváth, 2023; Kang, 2023). And of course, intercultural interaction. Tourism promotes intercultural exchange and mutual understanding (Aldybayev et al., 2021).

This can contribute to strengthening ties between different communities and cultures, which is relevant for multinational, multicultural Kazakhstan (Aimagambetov et al., 2017; Bujdosó et al., 2015; Sergeyeva et al., 2022).

However, it is also important to consider that tourism development should be accompanied by skillful management to minimize possible negative impacts such as environmental damage, cultural urbanization, etc. (Alieva et al., 2021). Competent planning of tourist routes in the North Kazakhstan region ensures the sustainable development of the region, the preservation of nature and cultural heritage, and contributes to the well-being of residents.

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