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## Article

# Agrohotels and rural tourism in the Ukrainian and Polish border regions

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## **AGROHOTELS AND RURAL TOURISM IN THE UKRAINIAN AND POLISH BORDER REGIONS**

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this article is to highlight the specific character of development of rural tourism in Ukraine on the basis of the in-depth analysis of Ukrainian regions bordering Poland. This paper focuses on the analysis of territorial distribution of individual entrepreneurs' country estates of rural tourism in 2015 in Ukraine. Moreover, this paper aims at explaining the peculiarity of the territorial distribution of agrohoteles in Ukraine and the objective preconditions for the development of rural tourism. We also analyze and provide the diagnostics of the regions of Ukraine bordering on Poland represented by Volyn, Lviv, Transcarpathia and Polish provinces represented by Lublin and Precarpathian in terms of hotels density indicators.*

**Keywords:** agrohoteles, rural tourism, territorial objects, border regions, border provinces, hotels density indicator, hotel capacity

**JEL classification:** L83, O18, P25, R11, Z32

### **Introduction**

The United Nations General Assembly in its resolution declared 2017 the International Year of Sustainable Tourism Development. Following this event, we should focus on three points. First, the international community expresses hope that raising awareness about human heritage of civilizations and a better understanding of values typical of different cultures will contribute to peace in the world. Second, by initiating of declaring the International Year of Sustainable Tourism Development the public recognition of the importance of the tourism sector contribution to economic, social and environmental sustainability is stated. Third, it is expected that activities in the frame of this year celebration will contribute to the popularization of business projects in the field of tourism industry. The General Secretary of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Taleb Rifai, drawing parallels between the IT-revolution and the revolution in the travelling sphere, said: "... in 1950 there was only 25 million of international tourists, and in 2015 this number reached almost 1.2 billion" (Destinations branding: key to the development a successful reputation, 2017).

The urgent problem for Ukraine is its weak competitive position with regard to a tourism infrastructure in comparison with the leading countries of the world. This problem is not only

intensified by a low quality of tourist services, but also by the unstable political situation. Thus, the annexation of Crimea and military actions in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, creating the impression of a full-scale war (a hot spot), has led to the loss of Ukraine's popularity as a tourist destination. 24.7 million of foreign citizens entered Ukraine in 2013, in 2014 the number dropped to 12.7 million people. During 2015 the situation with inbound flow of foreign tourists deteriorated, their number was 12.4 million people, which is in 2.4% less than in 2014 and in 49.9% less than in 2013. The similar dynamics is common to the indicator of the number of foreign tourists serviced by the providers of tourism activity in Ukraine, during 2013-2015 – 232.3, 17.1, and 15.2 thousand people respectively.

Instead, the outbound flow of Ukrainian citizens demonstrates the reverse trend. Despite the fact that since 2014 the State Statistics Service of Ukraine promulgates data from the parts of the country outside the control of the government in Kiev, in 2015 the number of citizens who travelled abroad was 36.7% higher than the average number of the same indicator during 2000-2013 and 3.1% higher than in 2014.

Therefore, the question of intensification of demand for tourism services in Ukraine is of a particular importance. Its solution requires a versatile research, a separate niche among which, occupies a study of rural tourism. The social value of rural tourism is that it is "... not only facilitates preserving the peasantry as a carrier of cultural and spiritual mentality, and is one of the ways of diversification of the rural economy that ensures its financial improvement, stimulates the formation of a strong middle class in the countryside" (Halkiv, 2015).

## **Overview of the research literature**

Nowadays, the problem of rural tourism attracts more attention by Ukrainian and international scientists who by analyzing the international experience are creating the theoretical basis of business activity of this type (see e.g. Strielkowski, 2012; or Chiabai et al., 2014). The analysis of the latest research shows that the subject of rural tourism is expanding significantly (Janda et al., 2013). Tranchenko (2014) considers rural tourism as a factor of increasing the level of employment in rural areas; Kamushkov (2009) – as a link of tourism industry; Kolodiychuk (2016) - as an integral part of material production, Kariy (2013) – as a promising direction for socio-economic development of rural areas; Bilan (2013) - as a factor of conservation of social sphere. An interesting application of tourism is a so-called "dark tourism" (Heřmanová and Abrhám, 2015). However, the current state of development of rural tourism in regions of Ukraine bordering on Poland has not found the appropriate coverage in the scientific literature.

While giving reasons for popularity of rural tourism Kolodiychuk (2016) proves that the concept of the three «S» (Sun-Sea-Sand) changed into the concept of cognitive trips in the countryside from becoming familiar with local traditions and using organic products, known as the three «L» (Landscape-Lore-Leisure). In our opinion, it is more appropriate not to speak about changing of the concept of the three «S» into the concept of the three «L», but the parallel ongoing development of the latter, caused by activating of ancient traditions of recreational trips to the outside of the city. This activation is caused by imbalances in the ecosystem in industrial centers, the intensification of working conditions, increasing hectic lifestyles on the basis of increasing the cost of tours to health resorts. This situation happened to Ukraine. Here in general, and in the western regions of Ukraine in particular during the recent years the socio-economic basis for recreation in outside urban environment was formed systematically. This led to the development of entertainment in rural areas and to the spread of non-traditional rural business activities.

### ***Research of the development of agrohotels network in the regions of Ukraine bordering on Poland***

The analysis of scientific literature gives reason to say that a number of forms of rural tourism has been identified in Ukraine: 1) rural tourism proper as a holiday in the countryside - an activity that brings profit to the receiving side; 2) agrotourism that is developing on the farms of rural population or lands of agricultural companies and provides active outdoor recreation and voluntary participation of holiday-makers in agricultural work; 3) green rural tourism (a kind of ecotourism), in which the subject of tourism demand is an eco-friendly territory, natural diversity, an attractive landscape and the bases for its development are rural settlements, located mainly in or near the nature reserves, where there are certain restrictions on economic and recreational activities. In practice the possible combination of not only various forms of agriculture, but also other forms of alternative tourism (cultural, educational, handicraft, sports and health recreation, etc.) that are developing on the basis of rural settlements, because the private sector can be specialized in hunting and fishing, horseback riding, skiing, organizing events and parties, children's recreation and others (Bilan, 2013).

State Statistics Service of Ukraine publishes official information about rural tourism only by the individual entrepreneurs that own country estates for tourists' reception. For this analysis, all available national data are used, covering the period 2012-2015.

The analysis of territorial distribution of individual entrepreneurs' country estates of rural tourism in 2015 in Ukraine revealed that 37.5% of TO (in 9 regions – Donetsk, Zhytomyr, Rivne, Sumy, Kyiv, Luhansk, Zaporizhia, Kharkiv, Kherson), such businesses did not operate. We would like to note that after 2013 the three of the latter mentioned regions lost the studied means of location. However, in Poland in 2015 the following provinces where there were no agrohotels – *kwatery agroturystyczne* (agrotourism lodgings), – did not exist (Table 1).

In Ukraine, there is a much higher variation in agrohotels location as compared with Poland. Thus, the gap between the two countries as to the value of oscillation indicator was more than 11 times (1.569 to 18.281). The value of the quadratic indicator of variation (Ukraine – 362.3%, Poland – 49.8%) shows that in both countries a set of TO is heterogeneous in terms of the number of agrohotels. Besides, if half of the number of domestic agrohotels was not higher than 1, then for Poland, this figure was 42.

**Table 1:** Comparative analysis of the amount of agrohotels in Ukraine and Poland in 2015

Indicators	Ukraine	Poland	Deviation
Territorial objects (TO)	Region (oblast)	Province (voivodeship)	x
Number of TO	24	16	8
Number of agrohotels	235	811	-576
Number of agrohotels per one TO	10	51	-41
The maximum number of hotels in one TO	179	96	83
The minimum number of hotels in one TO	0	16	-16
Number of TO without agrohotels	9	0	9
Number of agrohotels median	1	42	-41

**Source:** Own calculation based on Tourist activity in Ukraine in 2015 (2016) and Tourism in Poland in 2015 (2016)

The state of development of rural tourism in the regions, bordering on Poland will be analyzed. First, we would like to note that the state border of the Republic of Poland goes along three regions of Ukraine: Volyn, Lviv, Transcarpathia. At the Ukraine's state border

with Poland 14 checkpoints for international travels are operating, 8 of which – for road transport and 6 – for rail traffic.

In Volyn, there are 4 checkpoints for international travels, including 2 – for road transport. Volyn region borders on Lublin province in the west. The common feature of both border regions is a lower level of socio-economic development within the country than in central regions. So, joint efforts within the cross-border cooperation are importance that will contribute to solving urgent problems of border regions.

Lviv region has got two border lines from Polish side – Lublin and Precarpathian provinces, the crossing of the Ukraine's state border which is provided by means of 10 international, checkpoints 6 of which is for road traffic. Lviv region is considered to be one of the most suitable for tourism regions of Ukraine. There is a considerable tourism potential. Here, it is said, about the rich natural resources, developed infrastructure of recreation and unique historical and cultural attractions. The activator of tourism in the region is the regional centre, the central part of which is declared to be the State historical-architectural reserve and is included into the UNESCO World Heritage List. The proximity to Poland and the presence of many tourist sites that are associated with this country, promotes the fact that Polish citizens dominate among the foreign guests of Lviv.

In Transcarpathia region the Ukrainian-Polish border is the shortest one (33 km), as compared with Volyn (190 km) and Lviv (258 km) regions. The specific character of the Transcarpathian region is that it borders on three other EU countries in addition to Poland: Hungary, Slovakia and Romania. The length of the state border with these countries is around 430 km, on which 19 checkpoints are situated. Instead, in Transcarpathia there is not any single checkpoint to the territory of Poland. Thus, the population and tourists have to walk the distance over 100 km to the nearest checkpoint in Lviv region or carry out a transit route through other countries.

Despite the territorial proximity, the border regions of Ukraine and Poland differ greatly as to the hotels density indicators (Table 2). In the border regions of Ukraine there were 3.47 agrohoteles on the area of 10000 sq. km in 2015 while in border provinces of Poland – 22.56. The hotels density indicator was 3.93 per 1 million people in three investigated regions, and in Lublin and Precarpathian provinces – 22.66. A similar gap can be seen in the national dimension: Poland is ahead of Ukraine in terms of agrohoteles provision indicator as to the territory in 6.5 times and as to the population – in 5.8 times.

**Table 2:** Agrohoteles density and level of the urbanization in Ukraine and Poland in 2015

Territorial objects	Number of agrohoteles			Level of the urbanization, %
	units	on 10 thousand sq. km	on 1 million population	
Ukraine	235	3,89	5,49	69
Volyn	2	0,99	1,92	52
Transcarpathia	5	3,91	3,97	37
Lviv	12	5,50	4,74	61
Border regions	19	3,47	3,93	53
Poland	811	25,94	21,24	61
Lublin province	30	11,93	13,94	47
Subcarpathian province	67	37,55	31,48	41
Border provinces	97	22,56	22,66	44

**Source:** Own calculation based on Tourist activity in Ukraine in 2015 (2016) and Tourism in Poland in 2015 (2016)

The share of urban population (potential domestic consumers of rural tourism) in Ukraine (8 percentage points) as well as in the border regions with Poland (9 percentage points) is higher than the similar indicators for Poland.

The analysis mentioned above shows that in Ukraine in general and its border regions in particular there are objective preconditions for the development of rural tourism. Except for low indicators that characterize the agrohotels network, the factor in the development of rural tourism serves the availability of lower prices in Ukraine in the close proximity to the border. The latter makes the presence of international transport routes in the border regions that affect tourist flows positively.

The peculiarity of the territorial distribution of agrohotels in Ukraine is that they are concentrated in the western regions of Ukraine. Thus, about 75% of the total agrohotels in Ukraine is located in one region – Ivano-Frankivsk (Table 3). During 2012-2015 in six regions – Donetsk, Zhytomyr, Kyiv, Luhansk, Rivne, Sumy - agrohotels did not function. In 2015 only 1 agrohotel was in Vinnytsia, Dnipropetrovsk, Mykolaiv and Poltava regions.

**Table 3:** Share of regions in total agrohotels and placed persons in Ukraine in 2012-2015 (%)

Ukrainian regions	2012		2013		2014		2015	
	hotels	placed persons	hotels	placed persons	hotels	placed persons	hotels	placed persons
Vinnytsia	0,44	0,08	0,35	0,06	0,43	0,10	0,43	0,09
Volyn	0,87	4,98	0,70	5,51	0,86	7,88	0,85	7,43
Dnipropetrovsk	-	-	0,35	0,10	0,43	0,12	0,43	0,17
Donetsk	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Zhytomyr	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transcarpathia	1,75	0,53	2,82	3,26	3,00	3,45	2,13	1,92
Zaporizhia	0,44	0,03	0,35	0,02	-	-	-	-
Ivano-Frankivsk	69,00	42,57	64,79	45,93	69,96	43,00	76,17	50,84
Kyiv	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kirovohrad	-	-	0,70	1,43	0,86	2,93	0,85	2,95
Luhansk	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lviv	13,54	33,55	12,68	16,65	9,87	13,30	5,11	4,47
Mykolaiv	-	-	-	-	0,43	0,05	0,43	1,02
Odessa	0,44	0,42	2,46	3,14	-	-	0,85	2,08
Poltava	-	-	1,06	0,34	1,29	1,21	0,43	0,14
Rivne	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sumy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ternopil	2,62	3,96	1,41	3,51	1,29	4,59	0,85	3,05
Kharkiv	-	-	0,70	0,76	-	-	-	-
Kherson	-	-	0,35	0,40	-	-	-	-
Khmelnyskyi	0,87	4,25	2,11	8,62	2,15	6,94	2,13	8,85
Cherkasy	2,62	0,63	3,17	0,58	2,15	0,71	2,13	0,69
Chernivtsi	7,42	8,41	5,63	9,45	6,44	13,25	6,38	14,39
Chernihiv	-	-	0,35	0,24	0,86	2,48	0,85	1,92
Ukraine	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

**Source:** Own calculation based on Tourist activity in Ukraine in 2015 (2016)

If we consider the regions of Ukraine, which border on Poland, we can note that there was business in rural tourism during 2012-2015. Thus, Lviv region occupies the second place as to agrohotels share in Ukraine. However, this indicator is decreasing each year. The tendency of decreasing in the agrohotels share in Lviv region is caused by the fact that the rate of change in the total number of agrohotels in Ukraine (2013: + 24.0%; 2014: -18.0% 2015: + 0.9%) was outgoing the pace of change in the number of agrohotels in Lviv (2013: + 16.1%; 2014: -36.1% 2015: -47.8%). In Volyn region during 2012-2015 there were only 2 agrohotels representing less than 1% of the total in the country. The share of Transcarpathian region as to

the number of agrohoteles ranged from 1.7% in 2012 to 3.0% in 2014. In 2015 in Transcarpathia there were 5 agrohoteles representing 2.1% of the total number in Ukraine.

Obviously, the regional dislocation of hotels affects the distribution of recipients of accommodation services in agrohoteles depending on the region. In Ivano-Frankivsk region, where a vast number of agrohoteles of Ukraine is concentrated, there is a smaller share of accommodated people in comparison with the hotels share (2012 – 26.4 p.p.; 2013 – 18.9 p.p.; 2014 – 27.0 p.p.; 2015 – 25.33 p.p.). This can be explained by a small hotel capacity than their low occupancy. Instead, by a total indicator of three regions of Ukraine with the common Polish border, there is a dominance of a share of accommodated people as compared with the hotels share (2012 – 23.0 p.p.; 2013 – 9.2 p.p.; 2014 – 10.8 p.p.; 2015 – 5.7 p.p.).

Among the regions of Ukraine, which border on Poland, the largest gap between the share of agrohoteles and the share of accommodated people in favour of the latter was observed in Volyn region. (2012 – more than 5 times; 2013 – more than 8 times; 2014-2015 – more than 8 times). Here is the highest indicator of capacity of rural estates usage. Thus, in 2015 in Volyn region agrohoteles capacity was used by 54%, while in Lviv and Transcarpathian regions – by 32% and 12% respectively. In agrohoteles of Volyn region the rotation of tourists is the highest. The average length of staying of accommodated people in 2015 is 1 day, while in Transcarpathia – 2.7 days, in Lviv – 4.9 days.

The following fact is characteristic for Lviv region: its share by a number of accommodated people in agrohoteles in 2015 as compared with 2012 decreased significantly (by 29.28 percentage points). In 2012 the region occupied the second place among the regions of Ukraine as to the number of recipients of holiday services in agrohoteles and by 2014 the share of accommodated people in hotels prevailed the hotels share, in 2015 Lviv region was in the fifth place according to this indicator, and the share of accommodated people in agrohoteles was by 0.6 percentage points less than the hotels share. The high length of staying of tourists in agrohoteles in Lviv region had a positive impact on their financial results. The amount of income per one agrohoteles was 80.4 thousand UAH in Lviv region in 2015, which is higher than the following indicator in Transcarpathian region in 1.7 times and in Volyn region – in 4,1 times.

In Transcarpathia large agrohoteles are situated in terms of the average capacity of country estates for the reception of tourists of rural tourism the region in 2015 exceeds Volyn in 2.3 times, according to the total area – in 136.0 times. For Lviv region the same excess amounted 2.0 times and 2.9 times respectively.

A distinctive feature of green tourism from other national tourism under today's reality is that "services relating to rural tourism are mainly provided by individuals with a very different profession (farm workers, service workers, teachers, musicians, etc.) that provide these services in rural areas directly at their place of residence (Malakhova, 2013). As a result the maximum benefit from this type of activity is not achieved as for owners of rural estates, and tourists.

As a result of this, we have come to the conclusion that there are objective prerequisites for business development in the field of rural tourism in Ukraine, there is a rising dynamics of indicators that place a demand on condition that lack of supply in many areas (in 2015 there was not only country estates in 9 regions, only there is a one rural estate was in 4 regions, two – in 3 regions respectively). In Poland, in each of the provinces agrohoteles are available and, accordingly, their variation of territorial location is much lower as compared to Ukraine. Entrepreneurship in rural tourism is more concentrated in western Ukraine. Natural, historical and cultural features explain the popularity of western regions. The prevailing share of agrohoteles is located in the Precarpathian region and in the Carpathians.

The regions of Ukraine, bordering on Poland (Volyn, Lviv, Transcarpathia) are significantly inferior to Lublin and Precarpathian provinces in terms of hotels density indicators per 10

thousand sq. km of area and 1 million population. Despite the specificity of rural tourism in each of the areas, we can state that the potential for the organization of providing services of rest in the rural location to domestic and foreign tourists they are not used sufficiently.

Nowadays, the main task of state institutions at the regional level is seen to provide favorable conditions for the development of tourism in rural areas based on social, economic, and environmental safety. For members of business projects in the field of rural tourism the free market should create opportunities for financial and economic maneuver, freedom of choice of priorities, forms and kind of activities but not a tough administrative regulation. In terms of a lack of financial resources for major capital investment the development of rural tourism will serve as an important factor of going out of crisis of depressed territories, stimulating business revitalization, contributing to wider capitalization of employment potential, providing improved living standards of residents, improving the infrastructure and the environment support. In addition, the development of rural tourism helps to reduce the loss of rural cultural heritage.

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