Tourism co-operation between Kostomuksha State Nature Reserve and Matka-Kos Tourist Company

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Matka-Kos Tourist Company and Kostomuksha State Nature Reserve began their co-operation in 1994. An agreement on co-operation in the field of tourism in the territory of the Reserve was signed. The idea of creating a tourist company resulted from numerous (during more than 30 years) water, ski and hike travels round Karelia and Russia. Practically all most popular tourist regions in Russia were visited. Very often we travelled round the reserves, where sometimes we fulfilled calculations of animals and birds. Deep inside we were glad to see the beauty of virgin nature of those places but at the same time we were sorry as other people have no possibility to look at it in reality, only at photographs in booklets. Luckily the situation in the country changed for the better, not only in the field of politics but in ecology as well. Sustainable ecological tourism in reserves was permitted. And nowadays people can admire nature objects seeing them with their own eyes. Matka-Kos Tourist Company and Kostomuksha State Nature Reserve started their co-operation at that very time.

The most interesting in the territory of Kostomuksha Nature Reserve are untouched forests characteristic of the north taiga subzone where all typical fauna species were preserved. All this can be watched along ecological routes. Tourists can hike round the reserve, or they can undertake water or ski travels. Having visited the Reserve tourists from Finland and Europe said that they had not seen such pristine forests in their own countries before. It is the fact that attracts tourists to the Reserve.

In the territory of Kostomuksha Nature Reserve water, ski and hike travels were organized. They were preceded by huge cartography and field work. The most popular route is along the Kamennaya River. Places for rest were built there at the distance of 8-10 km from each other. There are also special places for making fire and log houses (20-25 square m) for 4 persons, where travellers can dry their clothes. In the lower course of the river there is a large wooden house (about 80 square m) for 12 travellers. Near some log houses and near the large wooden houses there are saunas.

The most picturesque places are the Kamennaya River, Kamennoye Lake and the canyon called Kamenny Vopota. All routes follow in the direction of those beautiful nature objects. Recreation activities influence about 5% of the total Reserve’s area. Yearly surveys of ecological routes show that recreation activity along the routes is too slight to produce any influence over nature. On the contrary, plant cover, which has been damaged before establishing the reserve, is restoring now.

While taking part in seminars on tourism I am used to saying that joint tours should be created, one part of the tour should be held in Finland the other in Russia. It appears to be an additional motive for attracting tourists from Europe, who can be acquainted with the nature and culture both of Finland and Russia during one tour. Russian-Finnish Reserve Friendship, Kostomuksha State Nature Reserve being the part of it, is the most suitable territory for conducting such tours.
Co-operation between Matka-Kos Tourist Company and Kostomuksha State Nature Reserve is mutually beneficial. Matka-Kos finances a tourist licence, advertising campaign, provides tourists with necessary equipment, board and organizes different activities when on a route. The Reserve receives entrance fee, lodging and transport payment.

The Tourist Company takes part in different tourist exhibitions in Russia and Finland. Owing to it, Kostomuksha State Nature Reserve is known among hundreds of tourist companies in Russia, Finland and Europe. In Karelia the winter tourist season finishes in April but in the North of Russia and in Murmansk region and in the Polar Urals it continues. Our tourist company organizes ski tours to these regions. The Director of the Company is a ski sport candidate, with the aim of qualification improvement he undertakes yearly sport water and ski travels in different regions of Russia.

Everybody is invited to take part in travelling round Kostomuksha State Nature Reserve, Karelia and Russia.

Fruitful co-operation between Matka-Kos Tourist Company and Kostomuksha State Nature Reserve exists now and will go on in future, because the development of ecological tourism is necessity of present times.