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Assessment of the natural-cultural resources in Çanakkale for nature-based tourism

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Abstract While the world is going into different tourism expectations, the tourism understanding in Turkey is defined as tourism in the sea-sand-sun triangle. However, it is possible to contribute to the income and local development of the indigenous people by developing nature-based tourism. Besides, with the sustainable use and preservation of the natural-cultural assets, the damage of the traditional tourism industry on the natural and cultural environment could be reduced. In this study, it is aimed to bring up the nature-based tourism concept in Çanakkale by evaluating the nature-based tourism industry in the general of Turkey and assessing the natural-cultural resources that Çanakkale comprehends. The most important areas that have a nature-based tourism potential in Çanakkale and the tourism activities that are most suitable for these areas have been determined.

Keywords Çanakkale · National parks · Natural-cultural resources · Nature-based tourism · Recreational activities · Sustainable development

1 Introduction

Since 1945 tourism has grown rapidly to become one of the world's foremost economic phenomena (Deng et al. 2002). As tourism has been identified as one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world (Orams 1995), 'sustainable tourism' has become important in the debate on environmentally integrated tourism development, as a result of the insight that the environmental consequences of this rapidly growing industry can no longer be ignored (Gössling et al. 2002). In particular, the recent growth of nature-based or

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'ecotourism' has been singled out as the most important contributor to that growth (Orams 1995) with an estimated growth rate of 10–15% per year. In 1988 between 157 and 236 million ecotourists generated economic impacts from $93 billion to $233 billion (Gullette 2001). While tourism overall has grown at an annual rate of 4%, nature travel have increased at an annual rate between 10% and 30% (*Worldwide Statistical Fact Sheet* 2000).

As people become more and more environmentally sensitive, nature-based tourism or ecotourism receive increased attention from tourists and recreationists (Lee 1997). According to the Bureau of Tourism Research (1997, 1999); nature-based tourism is important both in terms of international and domestic visitor numbers as well as in creating employment (Priskin 2001).

The idea of nature-based tourism or ecotourism is to provide more direct income to local residents and some economic gains while preserving natural environments (Lee 1997). According to Goodwin (1996); nature-based tourism is described as all forms of tourism that, ''*... use natural resources in a wild or undeveloped form – including species, habitat, landscape, scenery, salt and fresh-water features. Nature tourism is travel for the purpose of enjoying undeveloped natural areas or wildlife*'' (Spenceley 2003). Nature-based tourism encompasses a variety of ways for people to enjoy nature, whereas ecotourism additionally requires that there be contributions to the conservation of species or habitats (Bejder and Samuels 2003). Ecotourism is a subset of nature-based tourism and it relates to an experience in remote or natural areas that fosters an understanding and appreciation of the need to conserve the natural environment in a way that sustains the resources, culture, the economy and the local community (Priskin 2001).

Nature-based tourism activities vary widely (Laarman and Gregersen 1994). The term nature-based tourism is generally applied to tourism activities depending on the use of natural resources which remain in a relatively undeveloped state, including scenery, topography, waterways, vegetation, wildlife, and cultural heritage (Deng et al. 2002; Spenceley 2003). Destinations for nature-based tourism vary considerably as well; however, natural areas such as national parks and conservation reserves constitute the largest components (Priskin 2001).

Despite many countries and agencies looking towards nature-based tourism as an answer to both economic and conservation objectives, many remain unconvinced that such ventures are a panacea that both protects the environment and supports economic activity (Orams 1995). A country can sink a great deal of resources into such development and facilities without recovering its investment and with a number of negative consequences (Laarman and Gregersen 1994).

In many instances, nature-based tourism is dependent on conservation and cannot survive without the protection of the natural resources. Through adequate management, tourism can be a compatible and a complementary land use. The future of nature-based tourism is strongly resource dependent and requires access to high quality natural environments (Priskin 2001).

Although the tourism activity that mostly depends on a clean environment has positive environmental and social impacts, when it is not organized well, it may lead to environmental damage just as much as mass tourism. The reason of this is because tourism destinations are sensitive ecosystems and any tourism activity to be made in these regions are to lead to the damage of the natural resources (biodiversity, fauna habitats) and even to environmental pollution. However, bringing tourism centers to more attracted situations and supporting applications that are sensitive to the environment, provides these companies to make profit (Mastny 2002; Bookbinder et al. 1998).

According to Laarman and Gregersen (1994); there can be several national objectives for a nature-based tourism program:

- developing natural attractions that can generate regional income and employment;
- generating revenue to maintain resources and to finance other programs (which means having users pay based on benefits they obtain).

As nature-based tourism continue to grow, protected areas witness increasing pressure from tourists, with the quality of destination attributes exerting a considerable influence over their experience (Deng et al. 2002). When planning tourism in rural and urban areas, the natural environment should be conserved, provided that future generations use these areas sustainability should be considered as the primary goal.

2 The development of nature-based tourism in Turkey

In Turkey, the tourism understanding is defined as tourism in the sea-sand-sun triangle. However, the world goes into different tourism expectations and the tourism profit shows difference according to this understanding. It is derived from the researches that the tourists in this profile are between the 35 and 54 age group, well educated, have more than an average income and have interest in nature, culture and gastronomy (local food) (Bakırcı 2002).

Parallel to the fast economic, politic and technologic developments in the world, in recent years, important differences in the tourism consumption model is seen. An inclination towards getting away from usual tourism centers is observed and participation to luxury tourism activities decreased (Bakırcı 2002). The tourism inclination that claims to combine environmental responsibility with the generation of local economic benefits (Wunder 2000), got increasingly important among the tourism activities in our country. This brand of tourism is also preferred because it encompasses celebrating and sharing with tourists the uniqueness and diversity of different cultures in the areas visited (Kepe 2001). For this reason, Turkey as a potential with its many ethnical groups and various local traditions, cultures and unique natural-cultural destinations is waiting to be assessed.

The Culture and Tourism Ministry of Turkey evaluates nature-based tourism under the headings below (Çağatay et al. 2002):

✔ Plateau tourism,	✔ Bird observation (ornithology),
✔ Mountain and nature walk,	✔ Botany (plant observation) tourism,
✔ Stream activities,	✔ Farm tourism,
✔ Bicycle tours,	✔ Photo safari,
✔ Horse riding,	✔ Camp-caravan tourism,
✔ Cave tourism,	✔ Local food (Gastronomy)

3 Study area

Nature-based tourism has been proposed as a solution to the dilemma that developing countries face in conserving their biological heritage and concurrently improving the economies of local human settlements (Savage 1993). In Turkey, this solution is being highly considered by the government and local authorities in the recent years.

Just like in the other parts of Turkey, Çanakkale has a unique potential for nature-based tourism when considering the natural and cultural enrichments it possesses (Fig. 1). The tourism development areas near and inside Çanakkale, the natural-cultural assets they have and the areas under conservation are the subject of the study area.

In this study, it is aimed to bring up the nature-based tourism concept in Çanakkale by evaluating the nature-based tourism industry in the general of Turkey, in addition to assessing the natural-cultural resources that Çanakkale comprehends. Consequently, the areas in Çanakkale that need to be evaluated for nature-based tourism are determined. Besides, the possible nature-based and recreational activities to be made in these areas are stated. As a result, it is referred to some points to be considered in the management and planning of these areas.

The study area, Çanakkale, is settled at the North-West of Turkey, at the two sides of the Çanakkale Bosporus that separates the Europe and Asia continents. It used to be named as Hellespont and Dardanelles in the ancient times (Anonymous 2002).

The city has a low urbanization rate according to the other parts of the country and has a population which may be considered as static. There is not much statistical

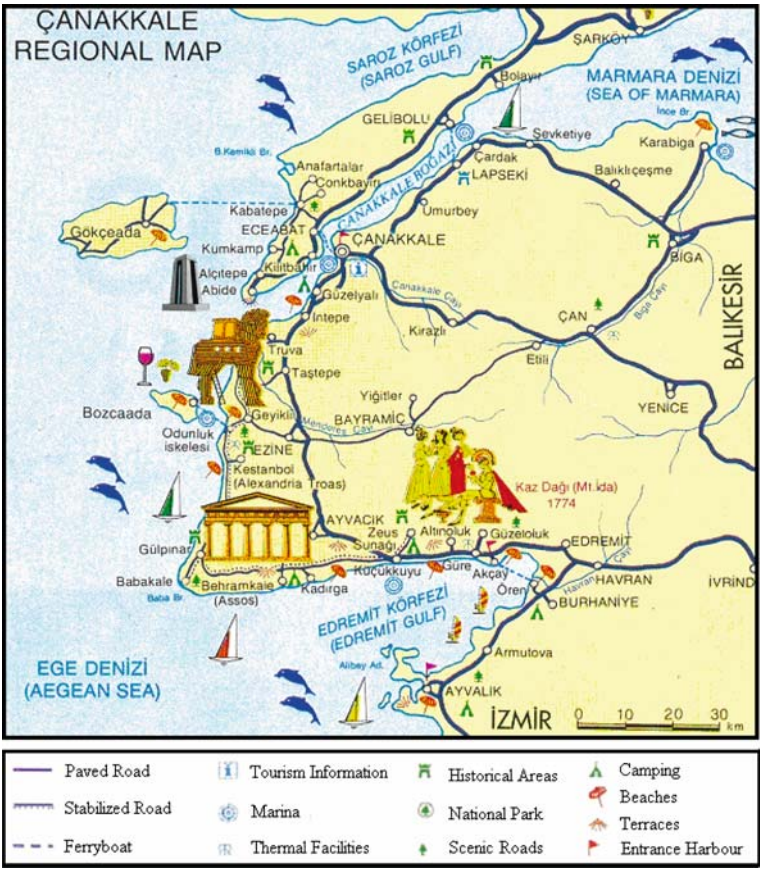


Fig. 1 The natural and cultural resource map of the areas that have a nature-based tourism potential in the Çanakkale City (Adjusted from Özel 2004)

Table 1 Projects and enterprises to ensure nature-based tourism in Çanakkale

Name of project	Organization	Arrangement date
Gallipoli Peninsula Peace Park Project Competition	International Architectures Union, Architectures Society and the Çanakkale Department, Local Observation and Inspection Committee	1998
The Preparation of the Ecotourism Aimed Master Plans of the Kazdağı National Park	General Ministry of Nature Conservation and National Parks	2001–continuing
Çanakkale Houses Revising Project	Historical City Committee	1994–1996
The Long Period Development Plan of Troy Historical National Park	General Ministry of Nature Conservation and National Parks, Ministry of Environment and Forest	2001–2004
Çanakkale-Troy Archeology Meetings	ÇABİSAK (Çanakkale Science Art and Culture Activities Society), Troy Friends, Çanakkale Municipality	2002–2003
The Long Period Development Plan of Gallipoli Peninsula Historical National Park	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	1981

information about the number of the domestic and foreign tourists that visit Çanakkale. It cannot be reached to healthy data, because foreign tourists come in from different borders (highways, airways and maritime lines). For this reason, there is only information about the domestic and foreign tourists that accommodate. According to the Tourism Statistics of the year 2002, the total visitor number that accommodated in Çanakkale was 214,034; whose 89,423 of them were foreign visitors and 124,611 were domestic visitors (Özel 2004).

When the projects that contribute to the development of nature-based tourism in Çanakkale are examined, it can be seen that the enterprises related with the subject gain importance in the local, national and international scales (Table 1). However, although such a potential, it is not possible to mention of any nature-based tourism activity in the last 5 years of Çanakkale, except for the nature walks organized by the University of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart, the Governorship, local administrations and some civil community organizations.

3.1 The nature-based destinations in Çanakkale

Çanakkale has experienced very important events and carried responsibilities from 3000 B.C. until the Middle Age. An example for this is the Troy antique city that is located at 30 km South of the Çanakkale City center. Important archeological settlements such as Dardanos, Abydos, Sestos, Madytos, Lampsakoz are also at the near surroundings of the city (Erten 1997).

Below are the destinations that have a natural-cultural resource value for nature-based tourism in Çanakkale:

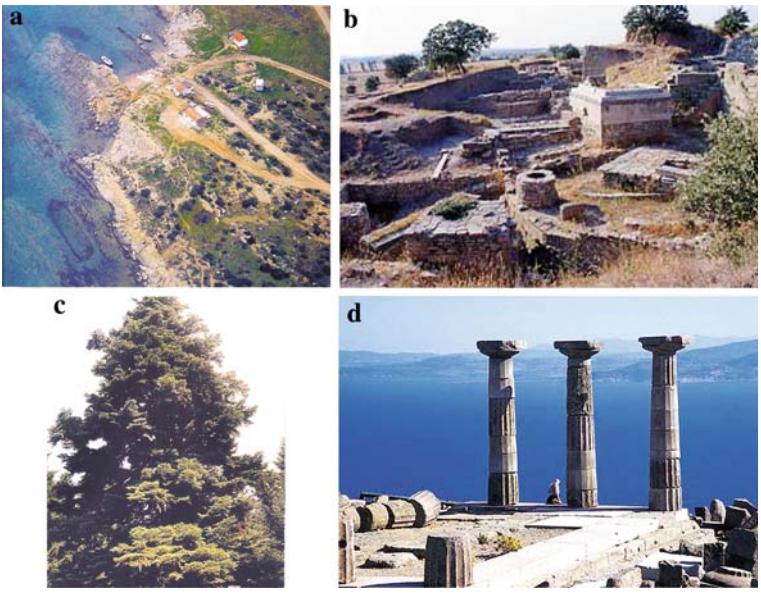


Fig. 2 (**a**) A sunken ship in the Suvla Cove at the Çanakkale Bosporus remaining from the Çanakkale Wars (Öge 2003) (**b**) A view from the Troy Ancient City (Original, 2004) (**c**) The endemic Kazdağı (Mount Ida) fir (*Abies equi-trojani* Ashers Sint) (Original, 2003) (**d**) Assos Athena Temple (Assos Information Page n.d.)

3.1.1 Gallipoli Peninsula Historical National Park

The park, established in 1973, is in the ''United Nations National Parks and Preservation Areas'' list, comprehending an area of 33,000 ha inside the borders of Çanakkale. It is located at the European coast of the Çanakkale Bosporus and at the South of the Gallipoli Peninsula (Anonymous 2002).

The areas where the sea and land wars were made in Çanakkale at the First World War are among the borders of this park. Besides the sunken ships, cannons, shields, castles, bastions and thousands of ruins (Fig. 2), there are the cemeteries and monuments of more than 25,000 Turkish soldiers and over 25,000 ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) soldiers. War sites, cemeteries, monuments and ruins of the war are registered as ''historical preservation areas'' and ''cultural wealth''. Also there are many ''archeological preservation areas'' and ''monuments'' remaining from the years 4,000 B.C. Among the varied ''natural preservation areas'' and ''natural monuments'' there are beaches, bays, maquis groups and assorted groves, geologic and geomorphologic formations with attractive sights; a salt lake and a ''cultural heritage'' collection which contains the 15th century military architecture examples (Anonymous 2002).

3.1.2 Troy Historical National Park

Troy Historical National Park is located among the borders of Çanakkale, Ezine and at the entrance of the Çanakkale Bosporus. The international fame originated from the wars between the ancient Troy and Aka settlements, which continued for 10 years. The myths of the hero warriors form the main resource value of the National Park (Anonymous 2002). It

is now evident that the events mentioned in the Illiada Legend, only comprehends one culture period of the nine ancient culture periods formed through 5,000 years of the old Troy history (Fig. 2b) (Mortan 2003). The most important characteristic about the natural environment of the national park and its surroundings is its geological character (Anonymous 2002).

3.1.3 Kazdağı (Mount Ida) National Park

Kazdağı, located between the Sea of Marmara and Gulf of Edremit, became a national park in the year 1993. It comprehends an area of 21,300 ha with its rich biodiversity (Fig. 2c), historical, geological, mythological values and recreation opportunities. Kazdağı that separates the Aegean and Marmara Seas from each other is an important potential for nature-based tourism with the deep valleys, canyons, streams and the flora-fauna it comprises (Yıldırım 2002).

3.1.4 Assos/Behramkale

The Assos ruins and the coastal settlements known as Behramkale today are one of the most important ancient settlement centers in Çanakkale. The ancient city Assos is located at the Behramköy Region of the Ayvacık District at the West of old Anatolia. It is constructed at the top of a 238 m high hill at the South coast of the Troy Region. At the North side of the hill, the Tuzla Stream (Satnioeis) flows (Özel et al. 2002).

Assos has an important historical asset with the 3 km long rampart surrounding the city and with the Athens Temple (Fig. 2d) constructed at the highest point of the Akropol in the Dor style (530 B.C.). A historical theatre, agora, gymnasium, necropolis and the ruins of an ancient harbor are also the important structures of the region (Özel et al. 2002).

3.1.5 Gökçeada (Imros) and Bozcaada (Tenedos) Islands

The coasts of Gökçeada and Bozcaada which are the most important islands of Turkey are the places that should be handled in a point of view of ''Sea Thermals – Thalassotherapie''. Through the enterprises made by TÜDAV (Turkish Marine Research Foundation), the first Underwater Sea Park of Turkey was established between Gökçeaada Yıldız Cove and Yelken Kaya, at an area of 200 m width and 1.5 km length (Aydoğan 2002).

At Kuzu Harbor (Gökçeada) there are sunken ships remaining from the First World War. There are many sunken ships and huge anchors at the region between Mermer Feneri and Anatolian Coast. The Orfoz, Karayer and Eşek Islands are the diving points where all kinds of marine life can be observed. Çanak Harbor, Pınar River and Bakla Taşı are the other diving points of Gökçeada. Mermer Cape and the South coasts of Tuz Lake are also suitable for unrestricted diving. Bozcaada, where many tourism activities take place, has an important natural character comprehending various diving points as well (Anonymous 2002).

3.2 The possible nature-based activities in the destinations of Çanakkale

As a result of the researches made in Çanakkale and its surroundings, the nature-based tourism activities that are possible to be made and the suitable areas for these activities are given in Table 2.

Table 2 The possible nature-based tourism activities in Çanakkale

Activity type	Gallipoli Peninsula Historical National Park	Troy Historical National Park	Kazdağı (Ida) Mountain National Park	Assos/ Behramkale	Gökçeada and Bozcaada Islands
Plateau tourism			X		
Mountain and nature walk	X	X	X	X	X
Horse riding			X		X
Bicycle tours	X		X		X
Underwater diving				X	X
Sportive fishing	X				X
Farm/Ecologic agriculture tourism		X	X		X
Photo safari	X	X	X	X	X
Plant observation		X	X		X
Wild life observation			X		X
Bird observation		X	X		
Gastronomy			X		X

Other than the areas mentioned in Table 2, Alexandreia Troas (Dalyan Village), Dardanos, Chryse (Gülpınar), Zeus Altar, Lysimakheia and Aigos Potamoi (Bayır Village) are also the places suitable for nature walks with their natural beauties, archeological and scenic values.

Research with the cooperation of the University of Tubingen (Germany) and the University of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart (Çanakkale) are continuing to determine if the agricultural areas of the Troy National Park are suitable for ecologic agriculture (Mortan 2003). Besides Troy, the Kazdağı Mountain and the Gökçeada–Bozcaada Islands have a potential for farm tourism based on ecologic agriculture. Here the traditional life style of the indigenous people and the local food (gastronomy) can be introduced to tourists. This would be possible by transforming a room in a village house into a pension. The participation of the tourists in a practice program can be provided and the traditional handcrafts of the region (pottery, muslin embroidery, carpet weaving) can be introduced to them in small workshops.

The characteristic plant vegetation of many dunes in Çanakkale, such as the Kavak dune (Gehu et al. 1989) and the dunes around the Gökçeada Salt Lake (Seçmen and Leblebici 1978) have a rich landscape value that may attract nature observers and plant researchers. Besides, many endemic plant species can be seen in the Kazdağı Mountain such as the Kazdağı (Mount Ida) fir (*Abies equi-trojani* Ashers Sint) (Fig. 2c)

The zone at the Northeast coast of the Gökçeada Island, 200 m from the coast between Yıldızkoy Cove and Yelken Kaya, is a great potential with its untouched biodiversity and diving opportunities (Öztürk et al. 2003). The Saros Gulf that is very much preferred by divers because of its location so close to İstanbul, has many sunken ships (Captan Franko, Lundy sunken) to attract the divers. Like in the Suvla Cove (Fig. 2a) it can be run across to all kinds of old-new sunken ships at many points of the Bosporus (Anonymous 2002).

4 Conclusions

Sustainable tourism could make significant contributions to the quality of the environment, economic development, and the well-being of the host community while providing a high-quality experience for the visitor and/or tourist if it is implied properly (Lim and McAleer 2005). With appropriate management and planning, the application of this kind of tourism based on the natural and cultural environment could be rather beneficial for developing countries.

Just as in the whole of Turkey, there is a need for the development of sustainable tourism in Çanakkale. The reason of this is because many destinations in Turkey (e.g. Pamukkale, Kuşadası) have lost their value, as a result of the negative impacts that mass tourism has brought during the last years. Although there is no such a loss in Çanakkale, except for some areas with the pressure of secondary housing, there is an increasing demand for the destinations of Çanakkale by domestic and foreign visitors. Besides there is a potential threat for the agricultural areas resulting from economic problems of the farmers and unplanned development.

As in other countries and regions, the opportunities that sustainable tourism provides for local development, employment and income are favorable for Turkey as well. The protected areas of Turkey have a great potential for this type of tourism with its natural-cultural resources and recreation opportunities. Consequently, it would be advantageous if nature-based tourism would be applied with proper management and planning in the many regions of Turkey, such as Çanakkale.

It is possible to contribute to the income and local development of the indigenous people in Çanakkale by developing nature-based tourism. Besides, with the sustainable use and preservation of the natural-cultural assets of Çanakkale, the damage of the traditional tourism industry on the natural and cultural environment could be reduced.

Although there are some enterprises of the government and local authorities towards this kind of tourism that aims to conserve the natural-cultural resources while taking advantage of them, they are not satisfying enough. Many destinations in Çanakkale are waiting to be monitored, evaluated, planned and managed appropriately in order to maintain the natural and cultural resources.

In planning nature-based tourism, it is important to match the numbers and types of nature tourists with the characteristics of the destination, understanding customer groups, their motivations and characteristics (Koeman 1998). Similar studies should be made in Çanakkale in order to give the right decisions and be successful in developing sustainable tourism.

The government policy should be in the direction of providing sustainability and supporting nature-based tourism in Turkey. Presentations and educative activities should be arranged for the concept of nature-based tourism in local, regional and national scales. This is especially necessary for the local communities of the destinations. Besides, the training of every authority to work on this subject should be the primary concern.

The quality of the destinations should be increased and the historical assets of the destinations should be preserved and developed with the income from tourism. The infrastructure and transportation network should be improved and developed. During these improvements, the ecologic and natural structure of the destinations should not be damaged in any instance. Any facility to be made in these areas should be controlled by strict regulations.

Tourism and recreation activities should be developed after determining the carrying capacities of the destinations. The cultural aspects of the communities should be taken into consideration and recreational activities specific to the area should be supported (e.g. farm tourism in agricultural areas). Tourism development in these areas should focus on the cultural identity.

In order to take advantage of tourism and prevent damaging the environment in Çanakkale, a strategy should be developed considering the sustainable use of natural-cultural resources and the destinations that have a nature-based tourism potential should be developed with proper planning and management.

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