Lura National Park values for geotourism development

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Geotourism and Protected area in Albania

Geotourism is a form of tourism focused on geoheritage and natural landscape. In Albania it is a new type of tourism, even though the landscape provides an ideal place to develop geotourism. The extensive system of National Parks and World Heritage Sites are already attracting many local and overseas tourists. In the context of the development of geotourism, National Parks occupy an important place for attracting tourists and influencing the community living there. Natural conditions of Albania (geology, landforms, climate, soils and biodiversity) have defined diversified landscapes. Based on Six Categories of IUCN, 18% of Albania's surface are declared Protected Areas. About 46% of protected areas surface in Albania are National Park, second category of IUCN. Lura National Park is one of the National Parks that within its territorial boundaries has a diversified geodiversity, with high geological and scientific values.

Lura National Park

Lura National Park is located in northeast of Albania, in municipality of Dibra. It has been declared a National Forest Park since 1966, by decision of the Council of Ministers of that time. On 2018, by the decision of the Council of Ministers in Albania, Lura National Park is expanded on 202.42 km^2 by encompassing the entire section of Kunora e Lurës, former Zall-Gjocaj National Park, and Dejë Mountain. Lura Lakes occupy an area of 40 ha and are the basis for geotourism development. They have a glacial origin (Wurm period) with the special hydrogeological importance. In the National Park of Lura there are 14 lakes, where 7 of them are declared hydro-monuments with high geological, hydric, biological, aesthetic and didactic values. Lura is also know for a very rich ecosystem, which is represented by coniferous forests (badly damaged by illegal deforestation), but in recent years are being invested to return to identity. The most common forest species are: beech (Fagus silvatica) at altitudes 900-1200m, black pine (Pinus nigra), predominant at altitudes 1600-1700m, red pine (Pinos heldreichi), white pine (Pinus peuce Griseb). At high altitudes are found Alpine pastures, while in the lakes grow hygrophilous plants (Nnymfanea alba L.) that with their large flowers cover the entire surface of the lakes. The park's woods are important because they provide shelter for numerous fauna. Most notable amongst them is the brown bear and grey wolf. Other large mammals include lynxes, roe deer's and birds such as the golden eagle.

Geodiversity and geoheritage of Lura National Park

Lura National Park is build from ultrabasic rocks with amfobilitet in the floor as a rare geological phenomenon. In the Lura mountainous region many traces of glacial activity of the Wurm glacial period are preserved. 12 glacial lakes, several moraines and complex cirques, erosion ridges, passes, gorges and river canyons are registered here. Some of them are: Seta canyon, Kreja tower (2078m), Kunora e Lures pyramid (2121m), Runja Peak (1991m), Bakullia Ridge (1766m) and the Maja e Madhe (1787m) ridges and one tectonic cliff (200-300m high) at the altitude of 1600-1800m. The Lura landscape fashioned by geology of special scientific importance, especially by stratified ultrabasic rocks, amphibolites and regional faults as well as the glacial features listed above, is one of the most interesting national park of virgin ecosystem, offering a unique diversity of natural attraction. As a result of scientific, geological, hydrological, aesthetic values, etc., some of them have been declared Natural Monuments. Based on the origin of their formation they are classified into: *Complex geosites* (geomorphologic sites of erosion, river erosion, karst, glacial and of neotectonic origins) which includes: Seta gorge, Fushe Lura moraines, "Kunora e Lurës" Cirques and Mare's field in Lura; Hydro geological

geosite, where included Glacial Lakes of Lura (Flower lake, Black Lake, Great Lake, Kallaba Lake, Rarasa Lake, Hoti Lake and Kalata Lake).

Conclusion

The geodiversity and ecosystem of Lura Geopark as well as the authentic culture and tradition of the local population have an important potential for the development of geotourism as one of the newest but most interesting forms of tourism in Albania. Based on this potential and their values, several geo-eco-tours have been designed which can be included in the tourist guides for the Lura National Park. Actually is working per dixhitalizimin dhe krijimin e gjeoinformacionit (nepermjet teknologjise GIS) per shtigjet turistike pergjate parkut te Lures. Pikat me te rendesishme per tu vizituar jane Cow lake, Tusha lake, Big lake, Rasat lake, Hoti lake, Kunora e Lures (Lura Wreath) cirques, Black lake, Flower lake, Seta canyon, etj. Three of tourist trails that are digitalization and defined on touristic map are:

- Fushe Lura village to the Farka Plain, then to the northern group of glacial lakes (Cow lake, Tusha lake, Big lake, Rasat lake) and back to Fushe Lura village.
- Fushe Lura village to the Kunore e Lures ("Lura Wreath") Peak, along the mountain ridge to 2070 m peak, and further to the south, turning to the east to the Hoti glacial lake, then through the Dushka plain and pine forest back to the Fushe Lura village.
- Fushe Lura village to the Gurra Lura village, westward to the southern groups of glacial lakes (Dry lake, Black lake and to Flower lake), to the west of the peak 1606 m and to the Horse plain and mountain. On the way back you can watch the Seta canyon.

In the National Park of Lura, tourists can practice a series of other activities such as: Kayaking on Lura lakes, Hiking, Cycling, Climbing, Riding, etc.

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