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3RD INTERNATIONAL AZERBAIJAN CONGRESS ON HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

NOVEMBER 26-28, 2022

(ONLINE & FACE TO FACE PARTICIPATION)

ISBN: 978-605-72169-1-5

EDITORS

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BZT AKADEMİ YAYINEVİ®

BZT ACADEMY PUBLISHING HOUSE 2021©

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ACADEMY

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CONGRESS PROCEEDINGS BOOK

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BZT ACADEMY PUBLISHING HOUSE 2021©
Publishing Date: 06.12.2022
ISBN: 978-605-72169-1-5

CONGRESS ID

CONGRESS NAME

3RD INTERNATIONAL AZERBAIJAN CONGRESS ON HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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NOVEMBER 26-28, 2022

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November 26-28, 2022
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AN ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL TOURS FROM TÜRKİYE TO GEORGIA AND AZERBAIJAN

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ABSTRACT

Today the popularity of Georgia and Azerbaijan destinations is rising among Turkish tourists. This is mainly due to geographical proximity and because of the opportunity for Turkish citizens of passport-free travel to both countries. There are also strong cultural, economic, and historical ties between Türkiye, Georgia and Azerbaijan.

The development of cultural tourism in the region can do a significant contribution to region's economic growth and it can be used as an important tool for maintaining peace and stability, improving the cooperation among the countries in South Caucasus. Cultural tours bring to a destination more income than leisure tours and thus contribute much more to the local economy. In addition, this type of tours can be used much more effectively in creating a positive image and promoting the history and culture of a country or a region. These tours also include a lot of interaction between tourists and locals and offer a rich tourist experience.

This research has two main objectives. The first one is to determine the characteristics of cultural tours from Türkiye to Georgia and Azerbaijan and identify which sub-destinations are mostly included in cultural tour programs. The second objective is, based on findings to provide recommendations for some alternative tour routes that can be created by assessing the potential of the region.

Document analysis was done to determine the characteristics of cultural tours. To obtain a data for analysis (cultural tour programs) firstly a search was conducted on the web (2-10 November 2022). Words "Georgia tour/s" and "Azerbaijan tour/s" on Turkish were used for the search. Only tours with minimum 2 overnight stays were included in sample. The tour programs and routes of the tours obtained were recorded to the previously created data collection form and evaluated using content analysis.

The analysis results indicate that the starting point for the short tours (with 2 or 3 overnights) to Georgia are usually four big cities: İstanbul, Ankara, İzmir and Antalya. These tours include a direct flight to Trabzon airport, and coach tours start there. Longer cultural tours to Georgia (at least 4 overnights) begin with direct flights to Batumi or Tbilisi. Most of the tours are organized to Batumi destination and average overnight length of tours included to analysis was calculated as 2,34 nights. Results related with Azerbaijan tours, show that the main starting point for short tours are mostly the same big cities in Türkiye, but they start with a direct flight to Baku. Two tours with direct flights to Ganja were identified too. Longer cultural tours to Azerbaijan were just a part of Georgia starting tours or multi-country tours including Iran or Armenia. Most of the tours to Azerbaijan are organized to Baku destination, but Ganja

and Sheki destinations are also often visited cities. Average overnight length of cultural tours from Turkiye to Azerbaijan was calculated as 3,04 nights.

Based on the findings of the research, it can be said that the potential for cultural tours of both Azerbaijan and Georgia is not used sufficiently. Travel agencies mostly offer the same type of city tours to Batumi or Baku. The offered tours must be differentiated and diversified. Multi-country tours which can unite the potential of Georgia and Azerbaijan destinations must be added to existing tour routes.

Keywords: Cultural tours, Tour routes, Tour programs, Azerbaijan, Georgia.

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