ALTERNATIVE TOURISM ACTIVITIES FOR THE RIVIERA OF TURKEY (AKSEKİ)

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Introduction

Places where coastal tourism develops are called 'rivieras,' which means 'coast' in Italian . Globally, the most popular rivieras are the French, Italian and Spanish Rivieras in the western Mediterranean Basin. In terms of when they developed, these rivieras came first, and tourists from middle and northern Europe have for years enjoyed the sea, sand and sun of the French, Italian and Spanish Rivieras. The Turkish Riviera has recently been added to the rivieras of the Mediterranean Basin. The Turkish Riviera has some advantages, and has attracted large numbers of visitors since the 1990s. Advantages include the unspoiled natural beauty of the coastline, and the relatively cheaper costs. These have been factors in the growth of tourism in Mediterranean Turkey. On the other hand, important disadvantages of the Turkish tourist industry are its insufficiency of tourism activities, as well as, a lack of variety. Another problem is that a significant number of people in Turkey do not – for cultural reasons – support tourism activities. There is also a lack of specialization in tourism by many in the work-force who seek employment in the industry, a major proportion of Turkey's labor force is uneducated, and many unqualified workers apply for employment in the tourism industry. As the western Mediterranean Basin will lose its prominent position in tourism over time, especially due to the effect of global warming, Turkey and other countries in the eastern Mediterranean will be in a position to develop new tourism opportunities. Therefore, the potential for Turkey to gain from the development of alternative tourism activities is considerable.

Since the 1980s, a number of alternative kinds of tourism have emerged and begun to be favored, while traditional types of tourism have been retained. Turkey has sought to develop alternative tourist resources since about 2000. The country has resources to meet the new demand of tourists, thanks to the strength of its geographical location, the distinctive features of its land such as climate, natural and diverse vegetation, rivers, lakes, etc, and a rich mosaic of culture.

Two models of alternative tourism activities are prominent: The first being the incorporation of new regions into tourism; and secondly an increase in alternative resources near regions that are presently devoted to tourism. In general, it is more profitable to adopt the latter model in order to immediately adapt to the changing tourist industry worldwide. This model is more suitable to a country like Turkey, where national revenues invested in tourism are inadequate. It is not possible to quickly incorporate new regions into the tourism industry, so until new regions are incorporated, seeking alternatives near places of well-developed tourism is a significant way for Turkey not to lose its place in the tourism sector around the world. For this reason, the natural and cultural richness near the Turkish Riviera should be thoroughly explored.

Alternative activities in Turkey should be appreciated and encouraged. Ecotourism and nature tourism are among the alternative tourism activities which may play an important role in Turkey in the future. Nature-based tourism is a kind of tourism which causes few problems in comparison to nature itself.

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[2-2] DOĞANER, S.,2001, Türkiye turizm Coğrafyası. Çantay Kitabevi, s 1, İSTANBUL

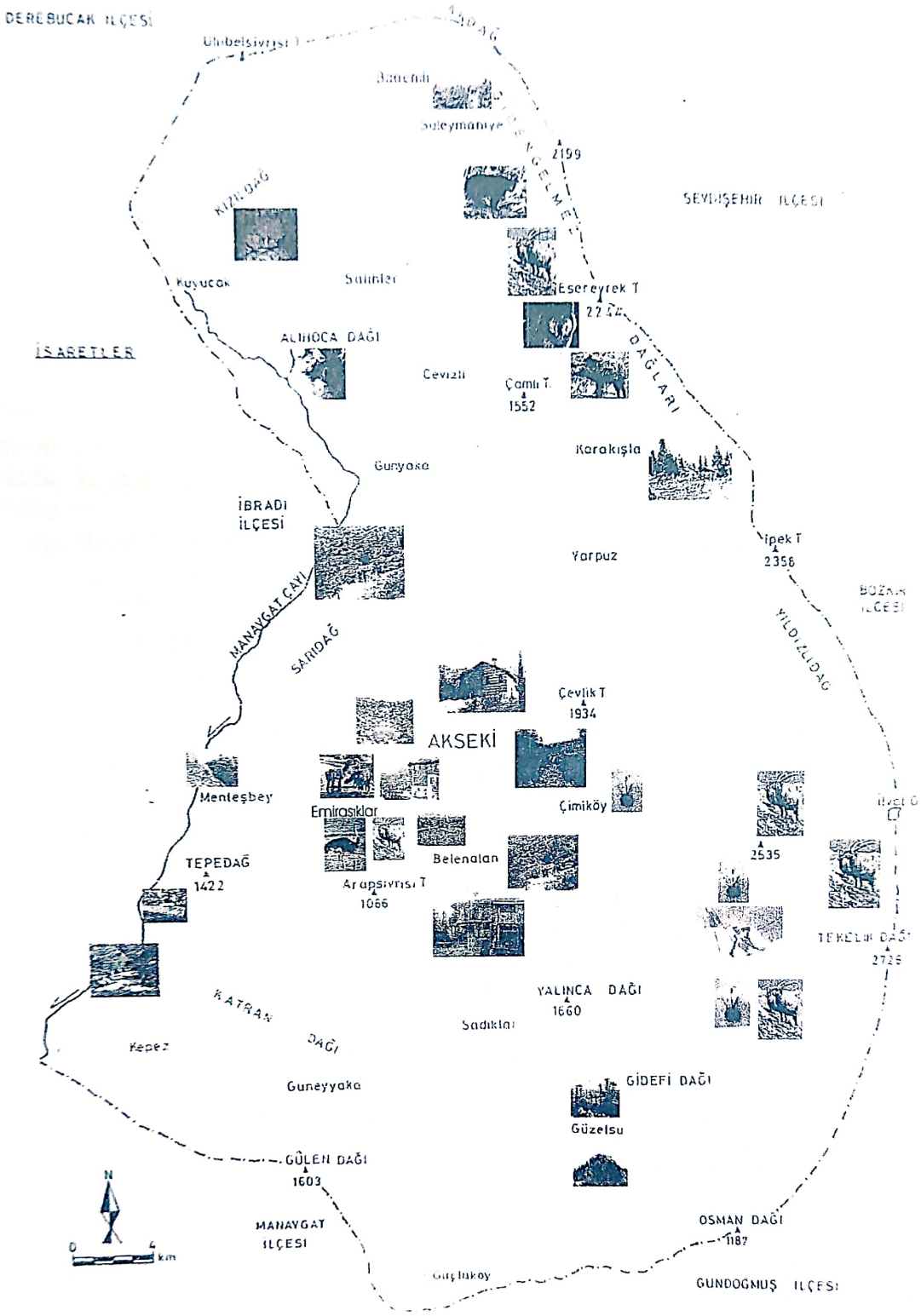


Figure 1. Resources Intended for Alternative Tourism in Akseki

Nature-based tourism consists of recreational and adventure types of sports activities being done in rural areas. Nature tourism offers hiking, hunting, mountaineering, mountain biking, horseback riding, and snowboarding. In contrast, ecotourism is defined as a journey for a specific purpose such as examining, experiencing or learning about natural scenery, wild flora and fauna; or exploring culture and experiencing relatively unspoiled and intact natural areas[3] . Ecotourism is an activity which has become popular in recent years, and which has been rapidly increasing. Two of the most significant factors in ecotourism are nature and culture. Indeed, attrac-

[3] ÖZGÜÇ, N., 1998, Turizm Coğrafyası, Özellikler-Bölgeler. Çantay Kitabevi, s.153, İSTANBUL

tions in ecotourism include both natural and cultural resources. While topography (mountains, canyons, caves, volcanoes, beaches), hydrology (rivers, lakes, waterfalls, cold and hot water springs), wild life (mammals, wild birds, insects) and vegetation (forests, meadows) appear in natural attractions; customs and traditions, houses, ancient buildings and historical places are included in cultural attractions. Nature-based tourism and ecotourism are often confused with each other. Although they are different from each other with regard to their aims and contexts, they also can't help but affect each other on account of several aspects. Thus, the activities of nature tourism and ecotourism are often managed together.

Alternative Tourism Resources in Akseki

Akseki is a town in the northeast of Antalya, and stands 150 kilometers from the city center. Akseki is located at a height of about 1030 meters above sea level. The town stretches from 400-2700 meters altitude and is about 2250 square kilometers. Akseki has a reputation for having skilled men in various trades, many of whom migrate to the cities in the Aegean and Marmara Regions. Actually, the town is the main reason for migration from Antalya. Akseki has spacious areas with unique natural beauty and has a scarcity of population. Hence, Akseki has been waiting to be discovered. The town had no relation to the Turkish Riviera, located 60 km by a bird's-eye view to the south of Akseki, until the early 2000s.

Insufficiently developed for tourism, the Akseki area, which has the potential for various types of nature-based tourism and ecotourism, will be able to contribute enormously to the nearby Turkish Riviera. The territory offers alternative tourism activities including hiking, hunting, mountaineering, looking at scenery, cultural tourism, bird watching and cave exploration.

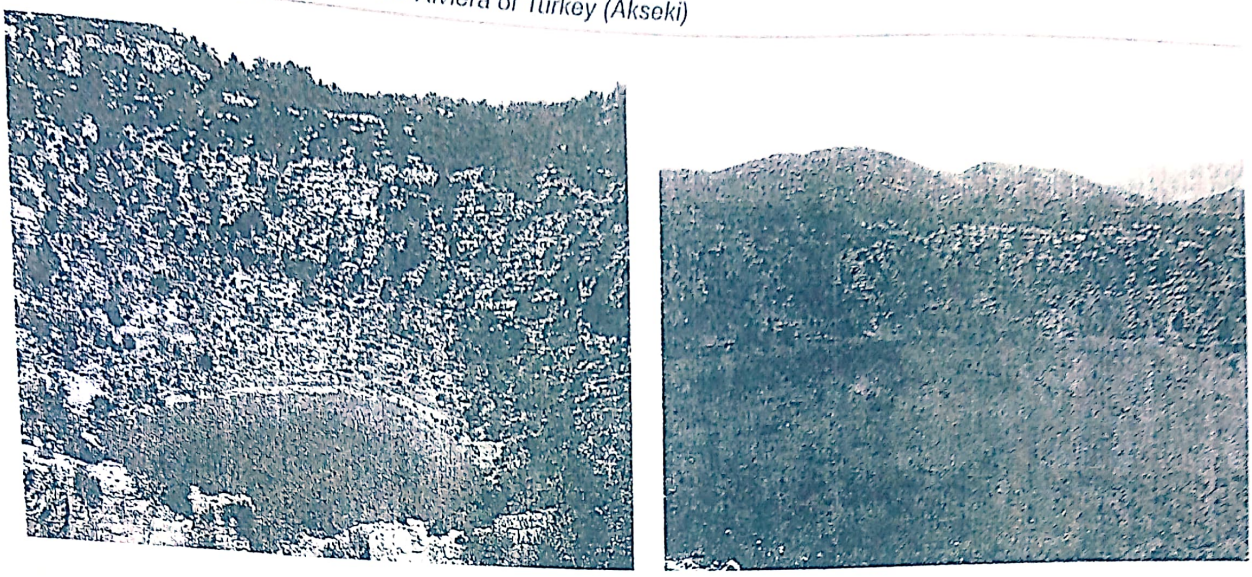
The natural and human resources of ecotourism in Akseki are rather varied. Topographical forms, wild life and vegetation are among the nature-based advantages offered by the region. The ancient buildings and historical houses are also things to consider among the human resources. The topographical resources of ecotourism in Akseki can be divided into three groups, namely mountains, valleys, and caves.

The area's mountains have considerable potential. The Gidengelmez Mountains in the northeast and the Beğik, Tepedağ and Gûlen Mountains in the southwest are among the significant territories in terms of nature tourism and ecotourism. Those mountains can support not only flora and fauna activities within ecotourism, but also trekking, mountaineering, and hunting within nature tourism. Moreover, The Gidengelmez Mountains and Papaz and Tekelik Mountains in the southeast, with relative altitudes of about 1500 meters, are particularly convenient places for mountaineering.

The Valley of Manavgat Stream is the western border of the Akseki region, and is also a potentially valuable resource for ecotourism. The valley, stretching north from the village of Sinanhoca, is very interesting with its narrow and deep breach shape near Menteğbey Village. The Menteğbey Canyon should be evaluated as a naturally attractive place in this region. The waterfall along the valley and the view of the huge cauldrons in front of the waterfalls are some of the qualities that greatly enhance the tourism value of Manavgat Stream.

Akseki is rich with caves which have erosion shapes. Due to the fact that most of them have vertical cave characteristics and are generally like swallow holes, some of them are not suitable for ecotourism because of their topography, thereby decreasing the number of suitable caves for ecotourism. Altınbeğik Cave National Park was the first place where caves formed and was on the border of Akseki until 1988. Although Altınbeğik Cave is on the border of İbradi, which left Akseki in 1988 to become a new town center, it continues to have a close relationship with Akseki. Today, Bağırcıkini Cave in Kuyucak and Çamdağı Cave in Kepezbelen, on the border of Akseki, are suitable caves for tourism. Aside from their natural beauty, their shapes are suitable for human activity and thus increase their tourism value.

Among the topographical features of Akseki are the karstic shapes – especially swallow holes and dolines – which are extremely important. The doline species, which have different characteristics on the west and east plateau surfaces of Akseki, should be evaluated as potential ecotourism resources.



Poto 5. Views of dolines which have developed in various types in Akseki.

Akseki's flora and fauna are perhaps the most important features which have potential for eco-tourism. Taurus Cedar (Cedrus libani) and Taurus Fir (Abies cilicica) forests in Akseki have great importance for flora richness. The mixed forests consisting of cedar, fir, and pine present unparalleled views to people interested in eco-tourism. The Katranlık area, located in the north of Güzelsu, has a cedar forest and the Gidengelmez Mountains are also rich in flora.

Apart from the tree species mentioned above, herbaceous and bulbous species in flora are also important. Especially in spring months, the meadows and herbaceous species seen in the karstic hole's bottoms at 1000-1200 meters with their variety of species, would greatly add to the area's eco-tourism experience. Furthermore, Galenthus (Snowdrop) is an endemic species and is one of the important flora resources found here[4]. The Snowdrop flower grows naturally in Çimi Village and on the Geyran and Aldürbe plateaus, where it has been greatly reduced for many years. Since 1991, the Snowdrop flower has been under protection. The Snowdrop, along with cedar forests, is an important flora species in this locale.

Akseki's fauna characteristics are also important for ecotourism. This includes chamois (whose other name is "wild goat," although its local name is deer). Chamois (Capra aegagrus erxleben) is the most important fauna. The species has been under protection and lives in the mountains in the north, east and southeast of Akseki. The Gidengelmez Mountains, Mount Papaz and Mount Tekelik are the best fields for observing this species. The hunting of chamois, with special permission from the Ministry of the Environment and Forestry, within the context of natural tourism is also potentially important. Furthermore, species such as pig (Sus sucrofa), wolf (Canis lupus), bear (Ursus artos) fox (Vulpes vulpes), marten (Martes spp), rabbit (Lepus europaeus), partridge (Allectoris chukar), and red falcon (Buteo buteo) illustrate the area's fauna richness. With controlled hunting of these kinds of animals, tourists will be attracted to the area and revenue will result from these activities. People in Değirmenlik Village, located near the Gidengelmez Mountains, can guide foreign hunters. Furthermore, the Dağ Hotel to the north of Bademli Village and on the Gidengelmez Mountains can provide lodging for hunters. Much more advertising should be done, even though hunting only takes place in particular months of the year. During the hunting period, preservation is necessary; so limits should be placed on the numbers on each of the various species hunted. The fauna richness in Akseki is exhibited in the zoo in Emirağıklar Village. The zoo, consisting of Llamas and Ostriches from abroad, as well as wild goats that are native to the area, is very important for local fauna attraction.

Natural plant and mushroom collecting are also done as an ecotourism activity. Akseki has suitable species and areas for this kind of activity. Thyme, centaury (Hyperigcum coris), blackberry, and the Morchella esculanta mushroom are the most important species for this kind of activity.

[4] BAKTIR, İ., 1996, Kardelenin (Galanthus elwesii) Doğal Yetiştirme Ortamında Soğandan Çoğaltılması Üzerine Bir Araştırma. Akdeniz Üniversitesi Ziraat Fakültesi Derg. Sayı. 9, s342-346, Antalya

Historical places, old buildings, houses and customs and traditions are valuable resources of cultural ecotourism. Old village areas, fair grounds, historical travel routes, places and events remembered by local people, old battle grounds, bandit hideouts and graveyards are also potentially attractive historical places and valuable for ecotourism.

The research area is along the old Konya-Alanya caravan route. Part of this caravan route suitable trekking tours and can be developed. Furthermore, traces of ancient life, frescos, and traces of different religions in Çamdağı and Bağırcıkini Caves, are also potentially important cultural sites.

Within the list of significant cultural ecotourism sites, a place should be reserved for the historical mansions of Akseki. Akseki's houses, with their individual characteristics, are 2 or 3 storied wooden houses and generally called mansions. The mansions, which were once used by rich people with large families, have been empty for many years due to outward migration. Akseki houses have been put under protection again, and some of them are being used as tourism sites by the Foundation of CEKUL and Unity of the Cities.

Today only some of the Akseki houses are visited and some of them serve local foods as part of the ecotourism industry. The number of Akseki houses are increasing day by day. Apart from the houses in the center of Akseki, the ones in the villages present the local family and house style to the tourists. Actually developing these houses as hotels and pensions would be important for developing rural tourism. Except for the mansion hotel in Emirağıklar Village, there are no means for accommodations in the other houses. The possibility of people being accommodated in these places will enhance rural tourism activities. Use of the mansions as places for rural or farm holidays, can house people interested in trekking, bird watching, gardening, and in having local culinary experiences.

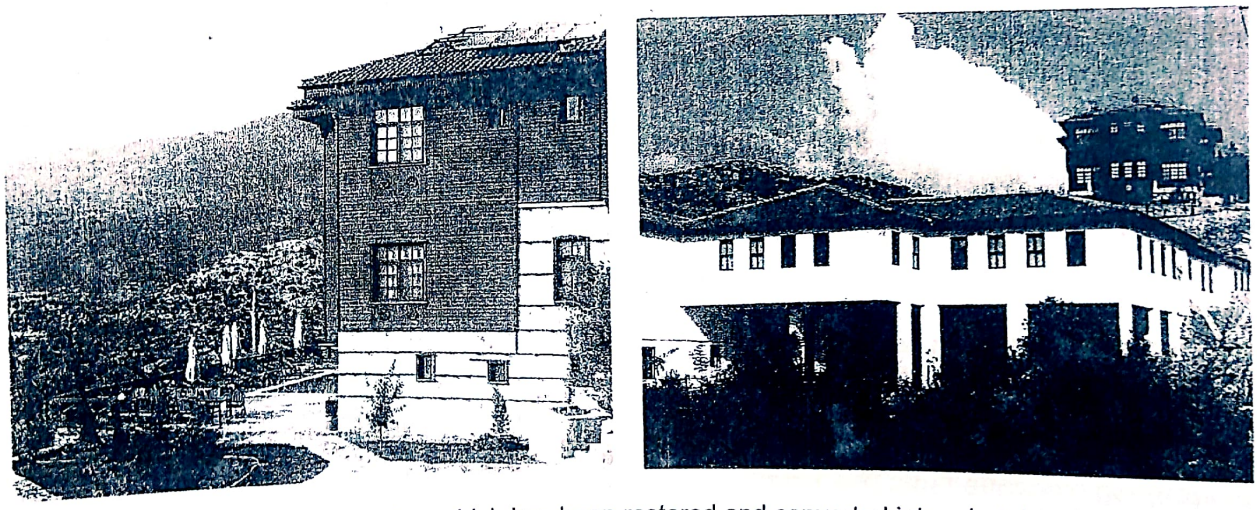


Photo 8 a). An historical mansion which has been restored and converted into a hotel. b) The building being used for a carpet workshop

Festivals are another activity which can be added to local ecotourism activities. Except for the Cevizli Ayran Festival, the festival culture has been spreading to almost every village since 2000. Festival days are days on which local people come together and have different activities expressing their values for the locals, as well as foreign tourists.

Handicrafts in the local area are targeted for development. New rug classes and workshops have been developed, and these activities especially have the potential for attracting tourists to the area. The rug center in Bucakalan is already one of the places receiving daily tourist visits. Through the rug business's cooperation with other alternative activities, in which handicrafts have priority over others in Emirağıklar Village, tourism has started to grow. The activity caused by the investment made in this local industry is remarkable. In the near future, new accommodations should also be developed.

The other points helping ecotourism activities in the local area are transhumance and traditional nomadism. Akseki has mountain pastures used by families who live in Manavgat's Villages and have sheep flocks. Apart from these, the places where errant tribes live and a nomadic lifestyle is practiced are also resources supporting ecotourism activities. These nomads live in tents and travel on horses, a lifestyle which is a very attractive addition to the ecotourism industry.

Akseki has great potential for nature tourism. Hunting, skiing, sightseeing and trekking are nature tourism activities which can be supported in this region. The Gidengelmez Mountains in Akseki, which have potential for hunting, are utilized for such activities, although its capacity hasn't been effectively exploited. While there are suitable places for goat and pig hunting, for which there is a high foreign demand, this activity is rarely engaged in. The possibility of hunting tourism, which is among the most up-and-coming tourism activities, is an option in the Akseki region.

Because of its geographical location and climate characteristics, Akseki also has the necessary natural conditions for skiing. Despite the fact that having a rough environment can decrease the number of ski slopes, the absence of sports facilities that support this activity in the eastern part of Antalya, makes it a potentially attractive area of investment in the region. The glacier valley that lays along the Aldürbe Plateau and the area between the Sırlavık Plateau and the Eğrikar Plateau on Mount Musa, one of the most appropriate areas for this activity, can be set up as ski slopes. The extended field from 1750 to 2200 km would be able to provide one of the most popular winter sports facilities because of the amount of snow that sticks to the ground, the thickness of the snow, and the suitability of the place identified for ski slopes.

Sightseeing is also an important nature tourism activity. Brinks of karstic hollows and mountain and hill peaks which dominate the region, are appropriate areas for this type of tourism. For instance, the Mediterranean Sea can be seen from a point in Güzelsu Village. Today, the village is used as a place to spend free time in the afternoons by the local population, but it can be turned into an attractive tourist center by adding the necessary infrastructure.

Akseki, with some well-developed tracks, also has some suitable main roads for jeep safaris. The greatest potential for trekkıng is in the Manavgat River Valley. That the participants can find the opportunity to see different specialties while on the trek from Sinanhoca Village through to the north of the village of Gümüğdamla and even to the village of Kuyucak, is among the charming qualities of the trek. The treck route from the village of Gümüğdamla to Ali Hoca spring is a significant field, allowing the opportunity to observe the diverse colors of the Manavgat River, many waterfalls and to swim in the huge cauldrons along the way. The trecking roads that could be created from Akseki to the southeast and to the Aldırbe Plateau; from Akseki to the west via the village of Sarıhaliller, through the village of Menteğbey Village; from Cevizli to the village of Susuzğahap and to the Değirmenlik-Süleymaniye villages, are significant ecotourism areas from the point of view of catching sight of the flora, fauna and other attractive geographic features. In addition, these local areas can meet the need for accommodations and water all along the way.

Results

Turkey has taken its place as one of the leading tourist countries in the Mediterranean Basin, thanks to increasing investments over the last twenty years. The potential of the country to host millions of tourists per year has significantly increased. The Antalya-Alanya coastline, being the most developed tourist area in Turkey, needs to be more fully utilized.

Akseki is among the locations that haven't been developed for years. After Alanya, Akseki is the oldest town of Antalya. With its wealth of alternative resources and natural beauty, it has qualities which can support tourism activities along the Turkish Riviera. The Turkish tourism sector will profit from relations between the Turkish Riviera and this area.

Some places should have priority in terms of the development of ecotourism and tourism resources in Akseki. The Manavgat River Valley is one of the most important areas for such development. With its canyons, waterfalls, wildlife, and springs it can be appreciated as a charming center of ecotourism. Roads from the village of Gümüğdamla to Ali Hoca springs must be constructed.

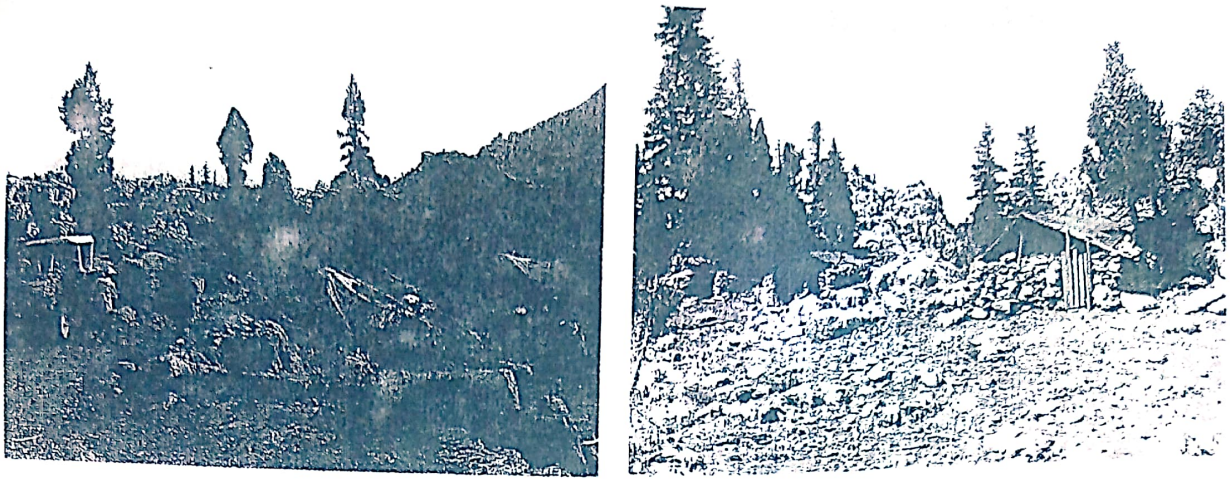


Photo 9.Accomodations which belong to the nobadic tribes on the Gidengelmez Mountains

The Gidengelmez Mountains in the north and the Tekelik and Papaz Mountains to the south-east of Akseki are convenient areas for tracking, hunting and sightseeing. Infrastructure works must be built without spoiling the nature of the region. Chiefly, the Gidengelmez and Tekelik Mountains have acceptable areas for hunting and climbing and must be properly utilized for this purpose. Using local people in order to achieve a productive effort in ecotourism activities is important for both preventing outward-migration, and reaching the aim of having a vibrant ecotourism industry.

Transportation and accommodation rank first among infrastructural investments supporting tourism. Accommodation opportunities in Akseki are quite restricted. A region having such a rich ecotourism and nature tourism potential, should have a great number of accommodations. However, accommodations must be built without spoiling the rich and valuable nature of the region. Furthermore, accommodations must be compatible with the architectural quality of the region. The opportunity for staying in historical Akseki houses must be improved.

Traditional lifestyles are still dominant, particularly on the plateaus. Transportation opportunities to these plateaus must be increased and countryside tourism must be encouraged. The natural structure of nomadic tribes must be protected, and the problems on migration routes solved. In addition, nomadic people must be supported to live in their hair-made tents in their natural living areas.

Traditionalism comes first in every activity in its rural parts. Agricultural production, carried out by ecological methods can be a good way to attract tourists to the region. There is a great potential for tourism activities based on ecological agriculture.

Akseki has a well-built highway network, especially in the summer. This highway net offers a great resource for jeep trips. However, accommodations for jeep tours must be located in more than one place in the area, and the people in the village must be able to continue in their own dwellings.

Trekking on horses and mules are among the possible alternative activities in Akseki. These kinds of activities are the most important tours for those who want to get away from the highway and integrate with nature.

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