

Evaluation of the Göreme Historical National Park in Terms of Tourism Practices

Anıl EVCI¹, Candan KUŞ ŞAHİN^{1*}

¹ Süleyman Demirel University, Faculty of Architecture, Department of Landscape Architecture, Isparta/Turkey

*Corresponding Author: candansahin@sdu.edu.tr

Abstract

Göreme National Historical Park is located in city of Nevşehir, Turkey. It has cover approx. 9.614 hectares (ha) which involve one city (Nevşehir), two towns (Ürgüp and Göreme) and two villages (Çavuşin, Aktepe). These regions have geomorphological, natural and cultural values. Due to very rich historical assets, it was declared to be National Historical Park in 1986 by Turkish Council of Ministries. It has also added to the list of Natural and Cultural Heritage under the name of "*Göreme National Park and Cappadocia Rocky Areas*" in the 357th order on the date of 12.06.1985 by United Nations Educational-Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the area is one of the nine places from Turkey which are all located within the list. Göreme Historical National Park, located in the Cappadocia region, which is in a very important position in terms of cultural and historical heritage of Turkey, has been one of the well known places in worldwide. Both the natural formation and the historical remains attract tourists from all around of the world and provide a great development in the region in terms of tourism. Thereby, the most important feature of the National Park is the fairy chimneys formed by the erosion of superficial waters on the rocks and rock assembles. However, Göreme Historical National Park, which has historical resources (underground cities, churches, chapels), geological formations such as fairy chimneys, endemic plant existence, landscape value, rest and entertainment and tourism resource values is a unique place worth seeing. The area is protected due to a national park status and also contains archaeological and urban sites. A number of touristic activities have conducted in these area including nature and culture tourism, balloon tourism, faith tourism, horse tourism, congress tourism and wine productio In this study, the tourism potential and the activities in the area have been examined in detail and current problems have been identified. Some suggestions and opinions for improving tourism potential of that area were given.

Keywords: Göreme, Göreme Historical National Park, Tourism

INTRODUCTION

Tourism can be broadly defines as; a travel and temporary accommodation movement for eliminating the necessities such as holiday, rest, entertainment as a consumer other than the place which is continuously living in general (Bayer, 1992).

However, it can be considered to be an industry without chimney, which strengthens the quality of life and communication in the international arena as well as economic prosperity and enabling socio-cultural exchange and social interaction (Nayir, 2009). In this sense, the tourism sector, which takes the role of locomotive when it is evaluated in Turkey, plays a important role for the development of areas and countries.

Nevşehir city has been a permanent settlement area since Cappadocia region in history. Cappadocia is a world-renowned region with its historic settlements, underground cities, natural valleys, beautiful and interesting scenes of fairy chimneys, endemic plants, landscape value, rest and entertainment and tourism resource values (Evcı, 2016). However, Göreme Historical National Park located in Cappadocia Region is clearly seen as one of the tourism centers of Turkey when it is

evaluated in historical process. There is a historical, natural, and cultural harmony in the region that has the potential to attract tourists from all continents of the world. Especially the open-air museums and natural valleys in the region are very interested. In addition, various agricultural activities contribute to the regional economy. It is inevitable to carry out evaluations and initiatives to strengthen tourism activities within the Göreme Historical National Park, which is in a very valuable position in terms of Turkey.

General Characteristics of Göreme Historical National Park Area

Göreme Historical National Park covers many valleys, like open air museums, churches and chapels, agricultural areas. Although the border of the National Park extends to Avanos in the north, the Avanos district center is not included in the national park area.

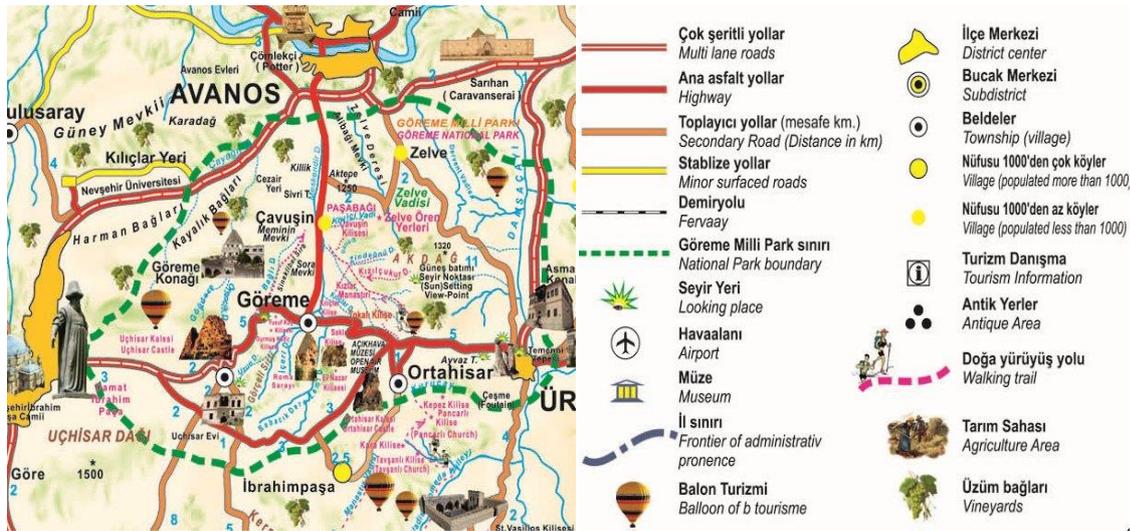


Figure 1. Göreme Historical National Park boundaries (Anonymous 1, 2016).

In the region where terrestrial climate is dominant, there are few clayey, sandy, tuffy and moisture free soils due to terrestrial volcanic formations. These lands, which are very favorable for viticulture and fruit-making, are not suitable for irrigated cultivation. The steppe plant formation, which glow in the spring and turn yellow in summer, is spread throughout the region (Anonymous 2, 2016). The tourism season covers a maximum of six months between May and November.

Settlements and Near Environs of Göreme Historical National Park

Göreme Historical National Park is bordered by Kızılırmak river to the north, Yeşilhisar town to the east, Hasan and Melendiz Mountains to the south, The National Park area is reached via the Ankara-Adana highway on the west and south sides and highway from Niğde or Aksaray to Nevşehir. The area is reached via from Kayseri to Avanos or Ürgüp on the eastern and northern (Anonymous 3, 2015).

Ürgüp Town

Ürgüp, which has a large number of name changes in the historical process, is located approx. 20 km east of Nevşehir city. It is one of the most important center of the Cappadocia region.

The town has a geological structure with a volcanic origin, was established in a region where typical examples of interesting natural formations, which are referred to as fairy chimneys, brought rain and wind erosion to the waterfall (Metin, 2010). However, Ürgüp, located in an important

position of Cappadocia in terms of touristic, reflects impressive face of Cappadocia with its natural structure and historical houses, churches and valleys.

Göreme Town

Göreme, 10 km from Nevşehir, is located between the Nevşehir-Ürgüp-Avanos triangle, surrounded by valleys (Anonymous 3, 2015). Göreme is the most diversified region in terms of the most protected and natural landscape of Cappadocia region. The main valleys in Göreme, Bağlıdere (love) valley, Zemi valley, Meskendir valley, Kızılçukur-Güldere valley.

Uçhisar Region

Uçhisar is 7 km away from Nevşehir city. Uçhisar Castle, used for defense and protection purposes in the past, is the highest point of the region. Uchisar reminds history with its location and architectural style which is a place famous for being the most enjoyable place to watch the sun set due to its height. There is a castle in the center of the town, and in its skirts there is a urban texture with traditional rock carved houses (Anonymous 4, 2015).

Ortahisar Region

Ortahisar, located on Nevşehir-Ürgüp highway, is 6 km away from Ürgüp. There are very interesting monasteries and churches in Ortahisar valleys. The most prominent structure is Ortahisar Castle, which is carved at the time of Etiler and at an altitude of 86 m. The castle was used for both strategic and settlement purposes. There are examples of characteristic civil architecture of Cappadocia on the skirts of the castle (Metin, 2010).

Zelve Region

Zelve, 5 km from Avanos and 1 km from Paşabağları is located on the steep slopes of Aktepe. Zelve ruins, which consist of three vents, are the place where the fairy chimneys are the busiest. The area that houses the Zelve Open Air Museum was one of the important settlement and religious centers of Christians in the 9'th and 13'th centuries.

Çavuşin Village

Çavuşin, one of the oldest settlements in the region, is 2 km away from Göreme on Göreme-Avanos road. The church built in the name of Baptist Yahya in Çavuşin, is one of the focal points of the region. The oldest church in the region is here.

Present Tourism Activities in Göreme Historical National Park Region

Nature and Culture Tourism

Göreme Historical National Park and its near environs, protected by Turkish National Park Authorities and UNESCO; keep to alive nature and culture tourism with historic open air museums, churches, unique valleys, settlements and natural wonders.

In particular, nature walks are held in the valleys with unique natural beauties accompanied by guides. During the march, the structure of the historical textures is explained and the nature-culture integrity is ensured. In addition, various courses are determined by Atv vehicles and the

valleys and settlements are visited. Also, some points are hosted and natural structures in rural areas are examined.

Tourists immortalize these unique formations by photographing their fields of interest. Foreign tourists visiting the open air museums find traces of their culture in the churches and chapels that reflect their past. In addition, the national park with diversity in terms of landscape characteristics provides a great contribution to tourism with green-nature-historical harmony. The dovecotes in some of the valleys offer natural habitat traces. In the region which has panoramic positions, especially Kızılçukur valley, sunrise and sunset are observed from various points.

Carpet-rug stands, pottery workshops which reflect Turkish culture and various ornamental items unique to Cappadocia are exhibited in the national park. These workshops and stands are attracting great interest by local and foreign tourists.

Faith Tourism

Having traces of various civilizations, Cappadocia was influential in spreading many religions. Especially churches carved into fairy chairs in the early days of Christianity and processed religious themes make the area important in terms of religious tourism. Especially the churches, monasteries and chapels in Göreme Open Air Museum constitute the most important parts of the region that have been opened to faith tourism. Foreign tourists come to the country to worship, to remember their past and discover the texture of the area.



Figure 2. Göreme Open Air Museum Dark Church fresco example

Balloon Tourism

Hot air ballooning, which started in 1991 with the Turkish Aeronautical Association in Cappadocia and accelerated with the opening of other businesses in 2006, is one of the high economic return sources of region. Today, 25 balloon companies are serving tourists with about 180 balloons. A representative office has been established by the General Directorate of Civil Aviation for safe flights to the region and all flights are carried out under the supervision of the General Directorate of Civil Aviation (Anonymous 5, 2014).

Horse Tourism

Cappadocia, which is remembered as a beautiful horse country in the past, attracts domestic and foreign tourists with its ever-developing horse tourism. There are approximately 25 equestrian tourism enterprises in the region. These enterprises aim to keep tourists in longer regions by arranging equestrian tours during various periods (Anonymous 5, 2014).

Congress Tourism

The extensive and luxurious facilities, which are established in the field with its attractive history and structure, introduce the region and host many national and international activities such as congresses, workshops and symposiums. The guests who come here attend both the training and the meetings and discover the unique beauties of Cappadocia.

Winery

Cappadocia is one of the important centers that come to mind when it comes to wine making in Central Anatolia. The region, which has a very long tradition of wine making, is famous for the quality of white wines produced from its local grapes. Cappadocia has many businesses that produce wine (İşcen, 2004).



Figure 3. Ürgüp Kocabağ wines sales point

Some Suggestions for Improvements Tourism Potential of Göreme Historical National Park Region. There are a number of problems noted in the Göreme Historical National Park as a result of planning, field use and various recreational tourism activities. Therefore, it is inevitable to take sufficient precautions and to increase the management efficiency analyzes and to make sufficient awareness about the field management. Furthermore, the organization of various organizations and training seminars to raise awareness of the local people are among the most important activities that should be in the region.

Some of the important problems can be summarized as follows:

- Mobile benches gathering at certain points of the valley, damages the visual quality of the area. Especially the benches in Paşabağları are the worst example of that. For sales equipment, special stands must be prepared, collected at certain points, positioned as far away as possible from natural formations, and completely removed from the valley, which will not damage the natural structure and create no bad image.
- There are active ATV vehicle tours within the national park at certain times of the day and these tours enter into the valley. These tours have auditory and physical effects and cause dust, noise and air pollution. For this reason, the routes of the ATV vehicle tours must be changed, especially to prevent entry into the valley walkways.
- The area is destroyed by tourists coming to the area and the natural formation is damaged. For this reason, security checks must be carried out continuously, especially in open air museums, and photographs must not be allowed in churches.

- One of the most striking features of Göreme National Park is the active balloon tourism in the region. Every morning, at the dawn of the sun, hundreds of people rise up to the sky with balloons, witnessing unique views on the peaks of Cappadocia. However, balloon tourism also has various effects on the environment. Especially helium gas affects the viticulture activities in the region negatively. From this point of view, it is necessary to put a quota on the number of air balloons.
- There are shortcomings in the fitted outfits. In particular, the lack of orientation-information plates leads to directional confusion. In particular, it is necessary to increase the information-direction signs that determine the valley entrances and exits, rovers of open air, roots of hiking trails, etc.
- There are a wide variety of maps, brochures, posters, etc., which are different from each other, issued by tourism agencies related to the area. They need to be standardized.
- The area is very poor in terms of accessibility. In order to overcome this weakness, guide strips, disabled ramps and sound warning devices should be used especially in the open air museums.

CONCLUSIONS

As briefly mentioned in above, a number of problems noted in the Göreme Historical National Park as a result of planning, field Göreme Historical National Park located in the Cappadocia region, which is in a very important position in terms of cultural and historical heritage of our country, has been one of the most interesting places of our country to date. Whether it is natural formation or historical remains, attracting tourists from all corners of the world every year and providing great development to the region in terms of tourism.

In the direction of the analyzes carried out, necessary inspections should be made in the region, the harmful effects of tourism should be minimized, the necessary care and careful inspections should be carried out in the protected areas in terms of landscape characteristics, the trip routes and axes should be well defined and the area must be made accessible.

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