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**ДҮЙНӨЛҮК КӨЧМӨН ОЮНДАРЫ 2018 - ТУРИСТТЕРДИН КӨЗ КАРАШЫ**

Бул макалада "Дүйнөлүк Көчмөн Оюндары 2018" Кыргыз Республикасынын маданий туризми тууралуу чет өлкөлүк туристтердин оң баа берүүсү жана Кыргыз Республикасынын туризм тармагын уюштуруунун кээ бир аспектилерин жакшыртуу боюнча көз чаптыруусу камтылат.

**Негизги сөздөр:** логистика, маданий баалулуктар, көп тилдүү көрсөткүчтөр, популяризация, маркетинг.

**ВСЕМИРНЫЕ ИГРЫ КОЧЕВНИКОВ 2018 - ГЛАЗАМИ ТУРИСТОВ**

В статье дается положительная оценка потенциала культурного туризма «Игры кочевников 2018» в Кыргызской Республике и некоторые аспекты совершенствования механизма управления туристической отраслью Кыргызской Республики глазами иностранного туриста.

**Ключевые слова:** логистика, культурные ценности, многоязыковые указатели, культурные ценности, популяризация, маркетинг.

**WORLD NOMAD GAMES 2018 - IN THE EYES OF THE TOURIST**

The article includes the appreciation of the potential of cultural tourism "World Nomad Games -2018" in the Kyrgyz Republic and some aspects of improving the management mechanism of the tourism industry of the Kyrgyz Republic through the eyes of a foreign tourist.

**Key words:** logistics, cultural values, multi-language guidelines, promotion and marketing.

**Foreword**

Tourism brings in large amounts of income into a local economy in the form of payment for services and goods needed by tourists, accounting for 30% of the world's trade of services, and 6% of overall exports of goods and services. It also creates opportunities for employment in the service sector of the economy associated with tourism.

The service industries, which benefit from tourism include transportation services, such as airlines, taxicabs and cruise ships, services such as accommodations, including hotels and resorts; and entertainment venues, such as amusement parks, shopping malls, music venues, theatres and casinos. This is in addition to goods bought by tourists including souvenirs.

Apart from it, tourism to its great economic importance plays a big role in expanding the boundaries of mutual understanding and trust between people of different religions and cultures. Its activities are not limited to the trade in goods and services and the search for new trading partners. It also aims to establish relationships between citizens of different countries for the preservation and prosperity of the world.

I hope that this article will be helpful to those who wish to cross the culture gap. It describes some values and customs of those from another culture and provides suggestions on how to begin thinking from a foreign perspective to make an event such as the “World Nomad Games 2018” (WNG) even more successful for the foreign visitor. However, it also has much to offer in general for those attempting to increase and improve tourism services in the Kyrgyz Republic. This brief article of cultural observance is in response to repeated requests to do better planning when lecturing on the subject “Tourist activity organization” at the Kyrgyz Economic University named after M. Ryskulbekov. This article was made possible after meeting a wonderful couple from the USA and interviewing them about their experience while attending the full week of activities at the World Nomad Games 2018.

### **Uniqueness of Kyrgyz hospitality**

#### **Areas of Appreciation**

My interviewees, polite as they were, were very forthright in stating how much they truly enjoyed the World Nomad Games as a whole. They had planned their annual visit to Central Asia around the dates of the games and made it a part of their cultural learning and enrichment about the region.



Firstly, they were so impressed that the Kyrgyz Republic has taken the initiative to come up with the idea of the games, organize and host the event, as it is unique. They appreciate the focus on the distinctiveness of nomadism, cultural pride and inclusion of sports that highlight these aspects, such as horse wrestling, «көк бөрү» (kok boru), «аркан тартыш» (tug-of-war), «бүркүт уулоо» (falconry), «жаа атуу» (archery), «бөз үй көтөрүү» (yurt raising), «кыз куумай» (kыз kuumai) and so much more.

They were present for the opening ceremonies and expressed their real interest in the Manas theme, its presentation, and the raising of their curiosity for deeper understanding of the meaning and history of the legend. They said that they heard others complaining that the previous event was better and longer, but they felt the one and half hour show was beautifully

executed and timely. Only their seating and viewing was a little disappointing, which is described more fully in the following section. There was also a Welcome Packet that included a cap, Kyrgyz flag, glow sticks and a brochure, which was a nice touch, but they did not receive one (they saw others who had them). Therefore, it seems that there was an insufficient number or mal-distribution of them.



The tourists were also generally happy with the overall schedule of events that was made readily available, and felt it was well planned and varied, although a detailed time schedule was missing. There was also an openness at the valley competitive events, making it easy to mingle with and get up close and personal with participants, learn from them and share their experience.

The foreigners also thoroughly enjoyed the regional areas of display with their distinguishing yurts, food, crafts, display of traditional dress and music. The bazaar was also a favored spot where they explored all types of handicrafts and souvenirs. They did not fail to mention the impressive committed volunteer participation of so many Kyrgyz citizens. By everyone contributing his or her part, each section was that much more authentic.

The last thing they mentioned as being very impressive, but which was by far not the least of importance, was the fact that the World Nomad Games were declared to be smoke-free and there were large banners displayed reminding the audiences and participants of this. As non-smokers and health professionals, these foreigners were especially pleased to breathe freely and without stress. **Areas for Improvement**

**Logistics** – The very first notable area for improvement was made obvious on the first day as they were trying to find their way to the Hippodrome from Cholpon Ata. They had been told that there would be free marshrutka rides to the Hippodrome during the week, but no one could tell them from where, or which bus or timing. They ended up walking half way to their destination (at least 1.5 km), found the buses and rode the rest of the way. This turned out to be their only free ride the entire week. Finding the return bus to Cholpon Ata the night of the opening ceremony was no different and this time they had to pay. Another aspect of logistical weakness was in crowd control and flow during entering and exiting at the Hippodrome and into the Kyrchyn Valley event compound. Some planning into this was clear, but it was still insufficient, especially during the opening ceremonies at the Hippodrome as well as the next day in Kyrchyn Valley. The need for security due to the presence of diplomats, special dignitaries and Heads of State at the entrances

was met, but it seemed weak and inefficient, creating bottlenecks, pushing and shoving and a general aura of unpleasantness, particularly for these foreigners.

**Signage** – There was a general lack of signage for the games. Simple signs for official games marshrutka buses and bus stops would have made life a lot easier for WNG attendants and participants. In addition, in Kyrchyn Valley, tourists saw a few arrow signs directing them to event locations, food and toilets and they would walk in that general direction until the need for a new direction, but there were no more signs to be seen. They were insufficient really. Towards the end of their second day as they headed back to the parking lot, they spotted a nicely posted map with key to the Kyrchyn Valley event compound, but one had to memorize it or take a photo as they never saw another one on the main side of the river.

**Hygiene, sanitation and garbage disposal** – Our foreign guests were not shy to point out that more public lavatories and better placement of them was necessary. They were informed that it was much better than the previous games, but still, after walking a long way to go to the lavatory and to find them, and being in somewhat of an “emergency” state, they also found long lines to wait in. Others, they noted, were hardly used at all, indicating ill placement. Nonetheless, they felt they were faithfully and well maintained and mostly clean. They also liked the look or design of the little one-person outhouses, simply pointing out that there were too few.

A general garbage disposal system was not entirely obvious as some of the bins were filled to overflowing. They did see some trucks coming through to empty them, so perhaps they just need a better time schedule and more bins for attendants and food preparation services to use.

**Seating/viewing** – During the opening ceremony at the Hippodrome, our guests did not have very good seats and they were largely dependent on the provided screens to see what was going on. However, the screens seemed rather small for the scale of the event. They suggest consideration of larger and fewer screen displays. Some screens blocked their view so that they could not even see the center stage and get the full effect of actually being present at the event.

Also, better seating and crowd controls at the Kyrchyn Valley opening ceremony need attention. They described poor seating for the average attendant, where most people were sitting on the grass and others stood in the back. For those standing in the back, there was a constant pressure of shoving and jostling to get to the front. It was entirely uncomfortable and one of them gave up half way through the event and removed herself from the fray. Although one could attribute this “uncomfortableness” to the western cultural preference of a larger personal space, an incident among the Kyrgyz attendants emphasizes the stress of crowd pressure regardless of culture. They described how one young woman and another woman (presumably her mother) were sitting down with a large beach umbrella to block them from the hot sun. As the ceremony commenced people behind and around kindly asked her to take the umbrella down so they could see, but she refused. Many people tried to persuade her, but when she adamantly hung on to her umbrella, someone grabbed it from her and threw it to the back. Somehow, she retrieved it, came back and put it back up. That is when the verbal, almost physical, fighting began and the two women eventually gave up and left to everyone’s applause. Our guests felt it was a very shameful thing to witness.

**Time schedule** – The interviewers stated that it was somewhat difficult to plan their days well so that they could see all the things they wanted to see because they could not find a clear time schedule in English, nor could they find anyone who knew the schedule or where to find one. It was not until Thursday that they found an English version of the time schedule on-line in some obscure location. This caused them to miss some of, what to them were highlights, such as the Americans trying to play «көк бөрү» (kok boru) and «аркан тартыш» (tug-of-war). Their



suggestion is to make the time schedule easily accessible, retrievable and in multi-languages and/or possibly include them in the Welcome Packet at the commencement of the games.

**Volunteers** - It was impressive to see such a large number of volunteers enrolled and participating in the event. However, whenever our guests asked one of them for information on events, directions or places, they could not really provide satisfactory answers. It seems they needed better training and clear roles that could even be rotated so they can experience various locations and issues.

**Multi-language guidelines** - Although these two tourists were not event participants themselves, they did speak with some of the foreign participants who expressed some disappointment about the way in which some of the events were scored or judged. They do not really feel it is their place to determine these actions as fair or unfair, but what does need to be considered is the advance provision of clear multi-language guidelines, instructions, rules and schedule for all participants for each event to avoid confusion and misunderstanding, especially since the rules of the game may be very different from what they are used to. For example, one contestant was surprised that his archery score was so low when he had hit the target numerous times. It turns out that his first two runs were not counted and were only “test runs”, but he had not been informed about that. Others waited all day for their turn as scheduled, but in the end were pushed to the next day.

**Food service information** – The interviewees were quite surprised at how confusing it seemed to find the right place for food and eating. They expected to easily watch national foods such as laghman or boorsok being made and sold. Instead, someone would point to one location to which they would walk (a long way), only to be told, “No, it is over there” (where they had just come from). It was also not clear which yurts were food service for the public and which were simply preparing food for their family or other workers and volunteers. Stoves and cooking often took place behind the yurts and the tourists felt a little uncomfortable wandering around behind, in what seemed to them, to be private space. Simple signs in front indicating what was available for sale would have been so helpful. In addition, it did not seem like the traditional drink kymyz was readily available either, except for being sold under the trees before crossing the bridge into the compound or from the back of vehicles in the parking lot. It seems like such an important traditional item would have more prominence for tempting tourists’ palates. The food arena of tourism really needed better marketing and promotion.

Furthermore, it would really be helpful if food service providers could begin thinking about the interesting world of vegetarians, which, as more and more foreigners find their way to Central Asia, and people become more health and nutrition conscious, will become a greater demand. It is clearly understood that Central Asian cuisine, particularly that of that nomad, is primarily meat focused. However, if an entrepreneur is interested in the bottom line of increased customers and income and high ratings, they should truly consider accommodating the needs of this segment of the population by making simple adjustments to provide a meat-free traditional taste. **Yurt Accommodations** – Our guests really wanted the experience of staying in a yurt overnight, sipping tea with a Kyrgyz host while discussing kok boru events, and curling up on a sheepskin rug next to a warm stove. However, they could not find one. They highly recommended this for the entrepreneurial of the tourism industry, to request an area of the event compound in the Kyrchyn Valley where tourists can pay for an overnight stay experience and at the same time save the almost three hour commute between Cholpon Ata and the valley. It is easily marketable.

**“Tourist’s shoes”** – Our tourists recommended that event planners place themselves in others’ shoes. What this means is to make every attempt to understand various cultures, differences in

personal space, differences in hygiene and sanitation needs, food preferences, etc. Attempt to attend other similar events internationally and take careful note of what you experience and observe and feel and make applications to your own planning event.

**Promotion and marketing** – The interviewers also felt that there needed to be a lot more planning ahead for high promotion and marketing activities for the games using media, internet, TV, radio, etc. and include segments that reach beyond the borders. This includes providing sufficient information ahead of time for purchasing of event tickets (dates, time, and locations), applying for participation in events and buying plane tickets for those traveling internationally.

### **In Conclusion**

As we know, tourism is a significant, even vital, source of income for many regions and countries. Its meaning was recognized in the Manila Declaration on World Tourism of 1980 as "an activity important to the life of nations because of its direct effects on the social, cultural, educational, and economic sectors of national societies and on their international relations.

Although these points, both positive and critical, are just a smattering of observations and experiences of just one couple attending the World Nomad Games 2018, they are nonetheless valid experientially. Moreover, since they are not entirely personal, but which in reality show effect on the public in general, as well as cross-culturally, why not consider these issues?

While reviewing some of these points with our guests, they were not afraid to admit that the "simplicity" and "openness", namely, its "rough" execution is also somewhat endearing and what provides the flavor of the nomad culture at the games. Removing this intrigue may nullify the overall purpose of sharing the nomad world. Thus, the objective of sharing these points is not to create a perfect experience in the sense of perfectionism, but to bring out issues that help develop a more pleasant affair.

Furthermore, an application of these points does not need to be confined to the hosting of World Nomad Games 2018, but can easily be adapted for the world of tourism services in general. Even the framework for critical analysis itself can and should be used for any kind of services. Together they provide a rudimentary basis for cultural understanding and exchange to prevent misunderstanding and offense, which in the end, makes for happy tourists and satisfied providers. The task of developing tourism requires solving a number of related tasks, for example, developing a transport system, developing a public catering system, improving the image, and developing an information infrastructure. Modern media and the internet are contributing to the concealing of cultural borders, leading us to think there are less and less cultural differences. People are traveling overseas and vice versa now more than any other time in history. Cultural differences among us provide both the richest color to our lives as well as the harshest wounding. Simple communication easily creates conflict. Innocent comments produce withdrawal and gossip. Virtually everywhere, we turn, we encounter people with very different values and customs, and we often find them to be offensive. In our desire to understand one another, however, the truth soon becomes apparent, but not always easily or without great effort.

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