



CARAVAN CAMPING AREA SUGGESTIONS AS A RURAL TOURISM OPPORTUNITY: CANAKKALE

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Abstract

Caravan camping tourism, also known as outdoor recreation camping, allows people to come closer to nature and discover new things. It is also environmentally friendly and has characteristics of sustainable rural tourism. Traveling by caravan is appealing since it usually entails lodging in forests, mountains, coastal locations, lakes and rivers, historical districts, and regions with great natural and cultural richness. Outdoor leisure has grown in popularity in Turkey, particularly during the pandemic period, and caravan users have also increased. Because it makes activities like utilizing natural and cultural resources in rural and urban settings, as well as closely watching and researching, enjoyable. The most crucial condition for enjoyable travel is the provision of utilities such as electricity, clean water, a kitchen, bathroom, and toilet in caravan camping places. In this perspective, this research focuses on caravan accommodations in the Canakkale region, which has many natural and cultural attractions. According to the report, there are 283 campsites authorized by Turkey's Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 34 of which are located in Canakkale Province. The investigation resulted in the mapping of the current licensed caravan campgrounds in Canakkale, as well as the identification of places where many caravans park uncontrollably. In this regard, it was noted that the potential of people who want to camp with caravans in the Canakkale region is gradually expanding, and area recommendations for new caravan camping designs were addressed.

Keywords: Rural Tourism, Camping Areas, Caravan Camping Design, Landscape Planning.

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Özet

Açık havada yapılan rekreasyon kampçılığı olarak adlandırılan karavan kamp turizmi, insanların doğaya yaklaşmasını ve ilginç deneyimler yaşamasını sağlar. Aynı zamanda çevre dostu olması ile sürdürülebilir kırsal turizm niteliği taşımaktadır. Karavan ile seyahatlerde genellikle ormanlar, dağlar, kıyı bölgeleri, göller ve nehirler ile tarihi bölgeler, ilgi çekici farklı doğal ve kültürel zenginliklere sahip bölgelerde konaklanabiliyor olması bu turizm çeşidini cazip kılmaktadır. Özellikle pandemi döneminde, açık hava rekreasyonu Türkiye'de popülerlik kazanmış olup karavan kullanıcıları da artmıştır. Çünkü kırsal ve kentsel alanların doğal ve kültürel kaynaklarını kullanmak, yakından gözlemlemek ve araştırmak gibi faaliyetleri eğlenceli bir hale getirmektedir. Karavan kamping alanlarında elektrik, temiz su, mutfak, banyo ve tuvalet gibi olanaklar sunulması konforlu seyahat edebilmenin en önemli gereğidir. Bu bağlamda bu çalışmada çok sayıda doğal ve kültürel cazibe merkezine sahip Çanakkale bölgesinin karavan gezginleri için konaklama olanaklarına odaklanılmıştır. Çalışmada Türkiye genelinde Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı'ndan belgeli 283 kamp alanı olduğu, bunlardan 34'ünün Çanakkale İl'inde yer aldığı belirlenmiştir. Çalışma sonucunda harita üzerinde Çanakkale'deki ruhsatlı karavan kamp alanları gösterilmiş ve çok sayıda karavanın kontrolsüz olarak kamp yaptığı alanlar belirlenmiştir. Bu doğrultuda karavan ile Çanakkale bölgesinde kamp yapmak isteyen kullanıcıların potansiyelinin gittikçe arttığı dikkate alınmış ve yeni karavan kamping tasarımı yapılabilecek alan önerileri tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kırsal Turizm, Kamping Alanları, Karavan Kamping Tasarımı, Peyzaj Planlama.

1. INTRODUCTION

Outdoor or recreational camping is a type of tourist activity that encompasses the act of spending leisure time in natural environments and temporarily dwelling in designated camping areas. Sustainable tourism and leisure activities that enable people, families, and groups to engage with nature, explore natural landscapes, and partake in outdoor adventures have significant popularity and widespread preference. Camping provides individuals with distinct opportunity to disengage from the rapid urban lifestyle and immerse themselves in the natural environment. This encompasses the preferences of those seeking to disengage from technology and embrace a more serene and uncomplicated way of life via immersing themselves in natural environments such as woods, mountains, coastlines, lakes, and rivers.

Camping provides individuals with the opportunity to establish a stronger connection with the natural environment. According to the Fédération Internationale de Camping, Caravanning (F.I.C.C., 2023) the predominant recreational pursuits among campers are fishing, hunting, swimming, botanical studies, wildlife observation, and nature photography. The individuals in question are classified as campers. Individuals that possess a preference for this way of life and derive pleasure from immersing themselves in natural surroundings opt to reside in tents or caravans.

Primitive tent camping is commonly conducted in rural locations or open spaces near urban areas. Nature-sensitive tourism and recreation activities are often favoured in controlled zones inside protected regions, such as National Parks and Nature Parks. There exists a diverse array of possibilities, encompassing adequately furnished camping sites that offer amenities such as potable water, electrical connections, a culinary space, a sanitary facility, and a lavatory. The essential amenities required by campsite visitors include picnic places, hiking paths, biking routes, nature observation facilities, fishing locations, beaches, and recreational areas.

This research was undertaken in response to the growing fascination with nature and camping pursuits, as well as the demand for lodging options for individuals traveling with caravans. The research area chosen for investigation is Çanakkale, a region that serves as a stopover for caravan travellers and holds global significance owing to its strategic position as a connecting point between the continents of Asia and Europe. Additionally, the area is renowned for its abundant natural resources and cultural heritage, making it a prominent destination for visitors from across the globe. This study provides an analysis of caravan camping tourism within the context of Çanakkale. It explores the essential traits, design concepts, and activities associated with this kind of tourism. Additionally, the study identifies the current caravan camping spots in Çanakkale and proposes new locations for future development.

Definitions and Properties Related to Camping and Tourism-Recreation

In the United States, camping is widely recognized as the initial country where the practice gained popularity. The term "camping" refers to lodging arrangements mostly using tents or sheds, whereas "camping" denotes a communal living arrangement within these lodging structures. Camping, or engaging in camping activities, is a popular recreational pursuit in rural areas, mostly aimed at achieving rest and enjoyment goals (Koç & Şahin, 1999). These activities, sometimes referred to as camping, encompass a combination of outdoor recreational pursuits and lodging arrangements. In contemporary times, there has been a notable transformation and progression in the utilization of temporary shelters, shifting from rudimentary tents to more sophisticated forms of accommodation, such as recreational vehicles including auto-caravans and towed caravans, which provide an array of opulent amenities (Brooker & Joppe, 2013).

Recreation involves the range of activities individuals engage in during their leisure time, outside of their formal job commitments. These activities encompass a diverse array of pursuits, including numerous hobbies, vocations, and pastimes. Engaging in recreational activities serves to provide individuals with a state of rest, relaxation, and regeneration, benefiting both their physical and psychological well-being (Sayan, 1991). Camping tourism is commonly categorized as a form of alternative tourism and falls under the realm of sustainable tourism endeavours. Sustainable tourism is a strategic framework that aims to address the present and future demands and desires of tourists, the natural environment, the tourism industry, and the local community (Ödemiş & Çalık, 2019). Sustainable tourism encompasses various forms of tourism that seek to mitigate the adverse impacts on the natural environment by effectively managing the resources utilized in tourism activities. Simultaneously, it strives to optimize the favourable social, cultural, and economic outcomes associated with tourism (Çelik Çanga & Polat Üzümcü, 2020).

Sustainable tourism includes several alternative forms of tourism that primarily involve engaging in activities that allow for the direct experience of natural environments and situations. Ecotourism is widely regarded as a significant kind of alternative tourism due to its inherent commitment to preserving and honouring natural and cultural values. Ecotourism is a type of tourism that involves engaging in activities within rural communities or natural areas, with a focus on ecological, economic, and aesthetic considerations (Gülbahar, 2009; Khabbazi & Yazgan, 2012; Açiksöz et al., 2015). Camping places are predominantly utilized in the context of responsible tourism that prioritizes the preservation of natural resources and operates with a conscientious commitment to sustainability.

In the last few years, there has been a notable increase in camping tourism, which has contributed to the overall growth of the tourist industry. This particular sector is considered to be very profitable for rural tourism, since it offers temporary lodging alternatives in rural regions (Mikulić et al., 2017). The practice of engaging with nature in a sustainable manner through the use of tents or caravans has gained significant popularity, resulting in a substantial growth in the variety of available lodgings. In contrast to other forms of housing, individuals have the ability to bring their own lodging choices together with them. The camping facility just offers the necessary facilities and designated area for camping purposes.

Using caravans for temporary housing while traveling and experiencing new places is called "caravan camping", a type of outdoor tourism and recreation activity. Caravan camping often involves the utilization of various types of recreational vehicles, such as RV caravan (including alcove, camper, semi-integrated, completely integrated, and craftsman models) or towed caravans. A towed caravan refers to a mobile, compact residential structure equipped with amenities such as sleeping quarters, a small kitchen, and toilet facilities. Typically, it is transported by a motor vehicle. The utilization of these vehicles offers a self-contained and mobile lodging alternative. Consequently, individuals residing in various sites have the opportunity to encounter the liberation and adaptability associated with a nomadic way of life (Figure 1).



Figure 1. RV Caravan (a) and Towed Caravan (b) Examples

Camping sites are typically found in ecologically significant regions, including coastal areas adjacent to seas and lakes, as well as forest perimeters. The optimal utilization of these regions may be attained by the establishment of leisure activities that align well with the surrounding ecosystem. Hence, it is imperative to engage in pre-planning of these regions and include the concepts of conservation, development, and use into the execution stage. According to Arslan (1988), there is a need to alter the existing classical, parallel road system, which allows vehicle traffic in various regions and lacks separation between residential areas and the sea in certain locations. This transformation should aim to create a functioning system that considers the genuine environmental values and recreational aspects of the region. Furthermore, it should be noted that campsites are strategically located along transit lines and near popular tourism locations (Yıldız, 2011; Yakut & Ceylan, 2021).

The expansion and diversification of transportation alternatives to natural and cultural places have led to a concurrent growth and proliferation of campsites (Yakut & Ceylan, 2021). The growing popularity of camping tourism has led to a rise in the expectations and demands of campers. As a result, there is a growing recognition of the need of providing excellent service to suit their wants, desires, and expectations (O'Neill et al., 2010). When addressing these requirements, the paramount concept is to ensure the preservation of delicate natural environments, with all materials employed being in harmony with the natural surroundings.

In recent years, there has been an observed rise in the inclination of individuals in Turkey to engage in travel activities within natural environments and utilize caravans, particularly considering the ongoing pandemic. Consequently, local authorities have responded to the growing demand by establishing designated sites to accommodate such activities (see Figure 2). An instance of this may be observed at the Ormanya Nature Park, situated in the Kartepe district of the Kocaeli province, which encompasses a total of 23 designated parking spots for caravans, along with a camping section that offers 42 designated areas for tents (Ormanya, 2023). The caravan park, owned by the Karatay Municipality of Konya Province, has been operational since 2021, offering a total of 20 parking spots for caravans (Karatay Belediyesi, 2023). The camping facility located within the Afyon Motor Sports Center, which adheres to international standards, is managed by the Afyon Karahisar Municipality, and offers complimentary services (Afyon, 2023).



Figure 2. Examples of Caravan Parks Located in Turkey (Ormanya, 2023; Karatay Belediyesi, 2023; Afyon, 2023)

Recreation and Tourism Activities of Caravan Campers

Photo Safari: According to Polat Üzümcü & Çelik Çanga (2019), the term "Photo Safari" refers to planned tours designed for anyone with an interest in photography, whether they are amateurs or professionals. These tours provide participants with the opportunity to capture natural photographs and enhance their skills in the field.

Bird Observation (Ornithology): The process entails the observation and surveillance of bird species inhabiting their native habitats within the specified geographic area (Sevindi, 2013). Given their remarkable migratory behaviour, migrating birds attract the attention of nature lovers who eagerly track their movements throughout many locations. These enthusiasts often form caravans to see these birds during their temporary stays. Given the requirement of specialized equipment for engaging in this endeavour, there exists the potential for group camping on some occasions.

Flora - Fauna Observation: There are specialized guided tourist activities that are designed for the purpose of conducting comprehensive examinations and research on biological varieties. These activities aim to facilitate the identification, collection, and study of various plant species (Albayrak,

2013). Individuals who prefer traveling by caravan are typically inclined towards the pursuit of immersing themselves in the natural environment, with a desire to engage in prolonged observations of nature across several seasons and at any given time of the day. Due to this rationale, individuals across various age cohorts and occupational domains predominantly engage in these endeavours. The province of Çanakkale has a significant abundance of these resources.

Bicycle Touring: Recreation, vacation, rest, and sports are among the activities commonly engaged in for leisure and relaxation purposes. This includes excursions in which the individual actively engages in bicycling, ranging from short outings to extended journeys. Bicycle tourism often encompasses the recreational journeys undertaken by those who actively engage in bicycling. Furthermore, it should be noted that engaging in travel activities to observe cycling events such as festivals, tours, and contests can also be classified as a form of passive cycle tourism (Çelik Uğuz & Özbek, 2018).

Fair and Festival Events: Festival tourism serves as a means for promoting economic growth and marketing various places and attractions (Getz, 2010; Çelik Çanga & Polat Üzümcü).

Experiencing Rural Life: Caravan campers opt to reside in rural regions and actively engage with indigenous populations. Consequently, individuals have the opportunity to acquire knowledge pertaining to the traditions, customs, and lifestyles prevalent among inhabitants residing in rural areas.

Mountain Walking (Trekking): Rural tourism encompasses the activity of individuals engaging in the exploration of natural landscapes and distant regions by means of walking, usually in rural or wilderness environments. Mountain hiking is a widely favoured recreational pursuit that affords individuals the opportunity to establish a profound connection with the natural environment, immerse themselves in local customs, and make a positive impact on the local economy (Astuti et al., 2019).

Amateur Fishing Tourism / Sportive Angling: It is defined as a type of tourism carried out by tourists for fishing in natural areas or specially created hunting grounds. Furthermore, sport angling refers to the organization of small-scale fishing competitions that mostly attract tourists who are solely interested in engaging in fishing activities. Consequently, these events do not provide extensive interaction with the local community. However, it is worth noting that local fishermen also partake in these tournaments (Bezirgan, 2019; Çelik Çanga & Polat Üzümcü, 2020).

Essential Uses and Services in Caravan Campsites

In camping units where accommodation is provided in tents and caravans, the net area required for a tent is between 2.65-1.2 m² depending on the number of people. The parking area for caravans should be planned with an average width of 2 meters and a length of 2.6-6 meters. The gross area of camping units varies between 120-285 m² depending on the country (Koç & Şahin, 1999).

With the "Regulation on the Qualifications of Tourism Facilities" published in the TR Official Gazette dated 01.06.2019 and numbered 30791, the features that should be in camping facilities are determined as follows (Regulation on the Qualifications of Tourism Facilities, 2019):

• **Landscaping:** The camping area is isolated from the environment with arrangements such as fences, walls, and greenery according to the environmental characteristics in a way that the internal and external security of the camping can be ensured and illuminated. The camping area is drained and afforested. Empty areas are mowed. Necessary arrangements are made for purposes such as reading, resting, sports, entertainment, eating, and drinking so as not to disturb the overnight units. Vehicle roads are arranged in a dust-free manner in accordance with terrain and climatic conditions. Arrangements are made at the entrance to provide parking, reception, safety deposit, and telephone services.

• **Capacity and camper units:** In camping, the area to be calculated per camper unit is 80 m². Each camper unit is for two people: Tent or tent-car; auto-caravan or bungalow. Necessary arrangements should be made for the maintenance, repair, and winterization of caravans or auto-caravans belonging to locals and foreigners. Bungalow units cannot exceed twenty percent of the total number of camper units, and no separate kitchen arrangements can be made in these units.

• **Common areas of use:**

- The floor of the area allocated for accommodation is arranged in accordance with the intended use,

- At least one female and one male toilet for every ten camper units; a shower and washbasin with sockets next to the washbasins, at least one washing machine and ironing facilities,

- For every five camper units, there is a covered space with at least one food preparation, cooking, and dishwashing facility and locked refrigerated cabinets.

• Services to be provided to campers: There should be a sales unit, suitable places to empty the toilets and wastewater tanks of the caravans, electricity service to the camper units, hot and cold domestic water, and healthy drinking water service to the campers.

Camping units should have various units related to structural and space utilization. Some of these can be listed as follows:

- Administrative office,
- Housing for the administrator,
- Infirmary,
- Buffet or market,
- Kitchen for shared use,
- Bathroom - shower,
- Laundry,
- Toilets - cesspools,
- Children's playgrounds,
- Sportive areas and structures,
- Lighting elements,
- Fire extinguishing equipment,
- Vehicle maintenance areas and car wash areas,
- Shades, resting places,
- Gray and black water (toilet water) discharge area,
- Controlled fire pit and materials,
- Vegetative hedges as a delimiting element (Koç & Şahin, 1999).

Certain units may be excluded based on several factors, including the specific function of the camping area, its proximity to the next community, and its overall population density.

The selection of an appropriate place and site for camping is influenced by several aspects, including landscape features, climatic characteristics, soil structure, and topographic structure (Koç & Şahin, 1999). One fundamental principle to be considered in the design of caravan camping is the strategic placement of camping units in a manner that is both visually appealing and environmentally suitable, ensuring the preservation of natural resources. The selection of a camping site should encompass a substantial portion of the surrounding terrain and offer unobstructed vistas. Therefore, it is advisable to prioritize the southern and south-eastern areas of the forested shore, particularly those that are next to hills and have an unobstructed view of the surrounding scenery. When considering the climate conditions for campsites, it is important to consider many aspects such as wind direction and strength, rainfall patterns, frequency of wet days, insolation levels, and the potential for fog development. Sloping topography is often favoured for its advantageous drainage properties following precipitation events. Additionally, the implementation of terracing techniques becomes imperative in regions characterized by pronounced slopes, as it facilitates the convenient installation of tents (Altan, 1984).

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The primary focus of this study encompasses the Çanakkale Province and regions that are deemed appropriate for caravan camping, as seen in Figure 3. Auxiliary resources in the form of maps of the province were employed. Çanakkale has become a prominent destination for both local and international tourists due to the significant influence exerted by the Gallipoli Historical Site and Troy Historical National Park on various nations, as well as the international recognition garnered by the ancient city of Asos. This has resulted in a heightened level of visitation to the region. Çanakkale, renowned for its historical and cultural significance, as well as its geographical and natural environment attributes, stands out as a very significant destination for caravan travellers seeking camping experiences.

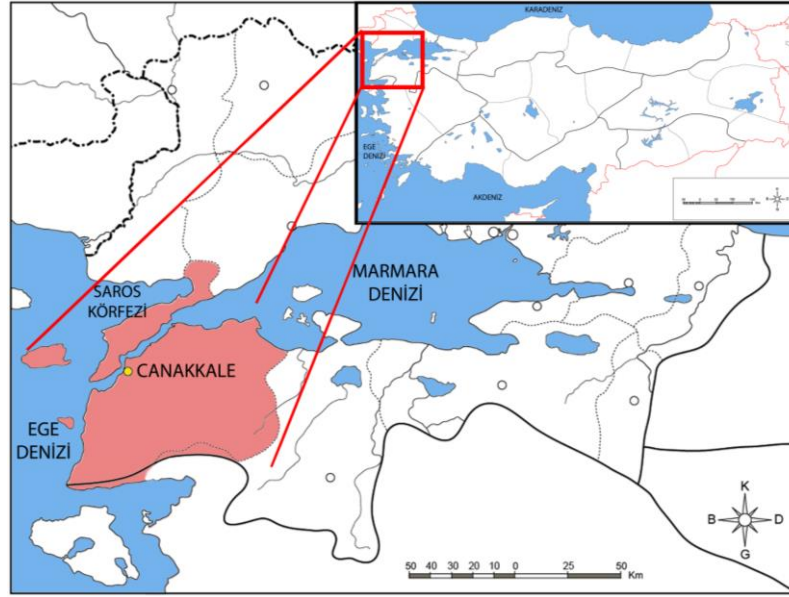


Figure 3. The Geographical Location of The Study Area

In the method of the study, after a literature review, maps of the region were examined and a suitable place for caravan camping design was determined by on-site field research. At this stage, the regions where visitors to the region are concentrated and the field data were taken into consideration.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Upon examination by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, it has been determined that there exists a total of 283 approved campsites around the nation. Although the central district of Çanakkale does not have any camping facilities that have been recognized by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (KTB, 2023), there are a total of 34 campsites located in different districts within the province. Furthermore, a significant number of caravans were discovered engaging in unregulated parking and overnight stays in locations adjacent to the city, lacking the necessary authorization from the government for caravanning or camping activities (see Figure 4).

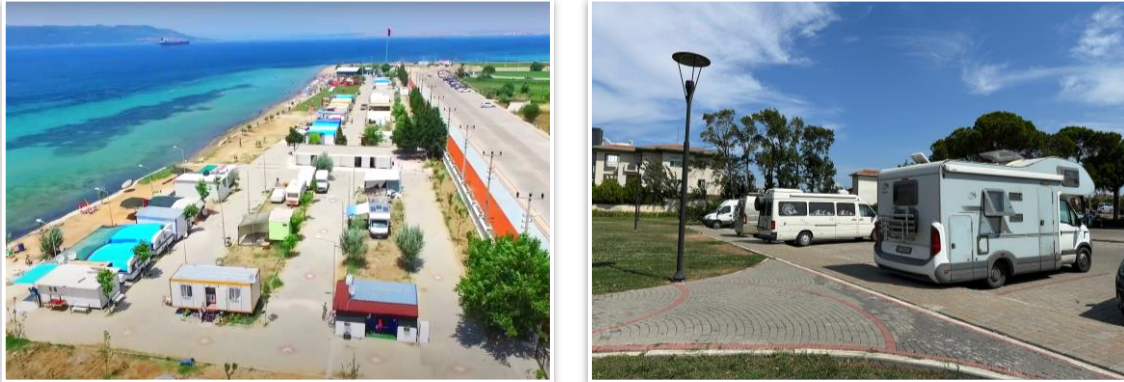


Figure 4. Kepez Coastal Road (Çanakkale, 2023) and Çanakkale Barış Cafe Car Parking Area

The investigation undertaken on the Campalov website revealed that there exists a significant number of unregulated caravan camping sites inside the city (Campalov, 2023). Figure 5 shows the locations of both these unregulated camping areas and the regulated camping areas by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

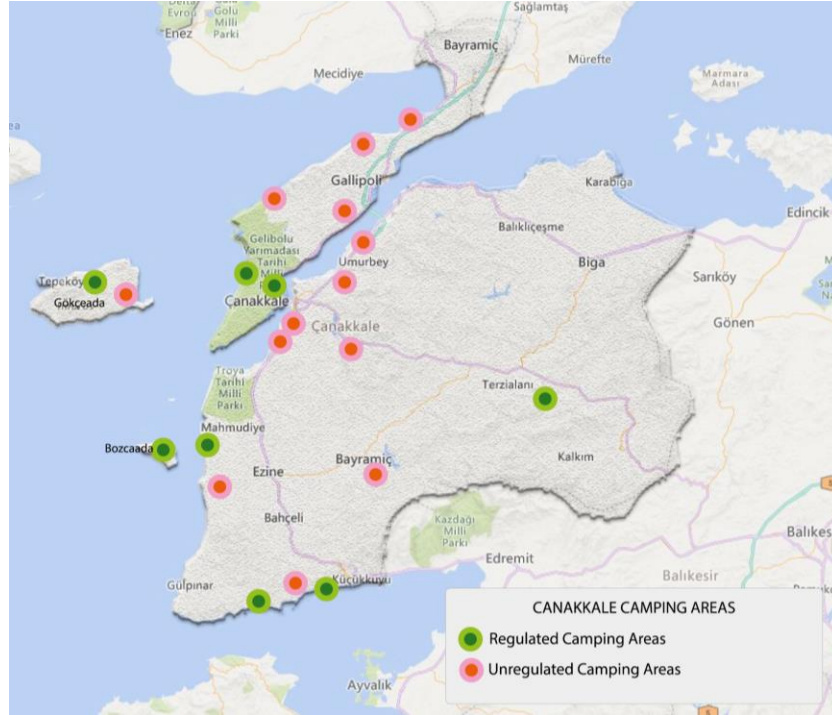


Figure 5. Location Map of Regulated and Unregulated Camping Areas in Çanakkale Province

4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Caravan campers derive advantages from their proximity to the sea and shore, as well as their immersion in nature and rural surroundings, so generating several positive outcomes for local communities and the environment. Local businesses play a vital role in bolstering the regional economy and fostering economic expansion by engaging in expenditures related to lodging, sustenance, and various goods. The revenue created from tourism possesses the capacity to invigorate the regional economy, foster employment opportunities, and augment small enterprises in remote locales. The diversification of the economy has significant importance, particularly in rural regions characterized by prevalent agricultural or natural resource-dependent enterprises. Caravan camping sites possess the capacity to provide seasonal employment prospects, particularly within the realm of tourism-related endeavours.

Caravan camping sites additionally encourage interaction between tourists and local inhabitants. The preservation of the social and cultural richness of the regions can be achieved through the promotion and dissemination of these aspects. This practice guarantees the safeguarding of indigenous cultural traditions and historical artifacts within a certain locality. Caravan camping holds significant value within the realm of rural tourism, as it affords travellers the opportunity to actively engage with and immerse themselves in local customs, cuisine, and cultural legacy.

The engagement of tourists in outdoor activities, such as caravan camping, seems to cultivate a heightened sense of gratitude for the natural environment. This, in turn, plays a role in supporting conservation and use initiatives as well as fostering environmental consciousness. Recreational vehicle (RV) camping has the capacity to serve as a proficient medium for imparting knowledge to tourists regarding indigenous ecology, wildlife, and associated environmental issues. Enhanced consciousness has the potential to prompt individuals to exhibit heightened accountability and make constructive contributions towards the preservation of the environment. The opportunity for revitalizing depopulated rural regions exists through the construction of caravan parks. The attraction of tourists may play a significant role in the revival of rural regions and serve as a deterrent against desertion. The achievement of this goal necessitates the use of efficient planning and management strategies. The construction of the 1915 Çanakkale Bridge has resulted in enhanced connectivity between Çanakkale, Istanbul, and Europe, leading to an increased utilization of Çanakkale as a transit hub for travel to the Anatolian and Aegean regions.

Camping area ideas were prepared for three distinct regions in Çanakkale, considering several parameters like closeness to the highway, natural resource values, rural tourist resources, accessibility to water, and infrastructure amenities. Based on the assessments conducted in this context, it is suggested that the coastal section of Yapıldak Village and Kangırlı Altı, designated as area 1 on the map depicted in Figure 6, along with the vicinity of the Atik Hisar Dam Lake, marked as area 2, and the region denoted as area 3 in Kepez, are deemed appropriate for establishing camping sites (Figure 6). The places, located at 12-18 km from the city centre of Çanakkale, serve as the initial destination for individuals visiting the region seeking respite. Areas 1 and 3 further provide prospects for engaging in marine sports and recreational activities while benefiting from enhanced resource availability owing to their proximity to nearby settlements. Area number 2 is situated within the shared vicinity of five adjacent villages in the Atik Hisar region. It is a historically significant zone, with the prominent Atik Hisar Castle constructed on substantial bedrock, reaching an elevation of 40 meters. The Atikhisar Castle is situated at a distance of 11 kilometers from the central area of Çanakkale, along the Çanakkale-Çan roadway. It is commonly referred to as Gavurhisar. The castle is situated in a hilly region, affording it a vantage position from which to see the Sarıçay valley and the Atikhisar dam (Erduran Nemutlu & Çizer, 2022).



Figure 6. Locations of Proposed Camping Sites in Çanakkale Province (Original, 2023)

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