A Review on Eco-Tourism Potentials: A Case Study of Kerman-Iran

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ABSTRACT

One of the important roles of ecological regions resources is to use tourism and nature tour function of these regions. Due to superior tourism attractions of Iran and since there are a high potential capacity in the development of international tourism; Iran’s tourism industry can be highly famous and outstanding. Therefore, tourism should be placed in the agenda of provincial planners and necessary exploitations should be placed in line with economic developments of the cities of the province. Most of eco-tourism regions of Kerman Province have various vegetation and animal species due to its moderate climate. Considering these regions, in addition to introducing the region, its various attractions and nature to all people, causes that authorities consider these places more than before, leading to their protection which it should be deeply considered since this region will be destroyed in case of disregarding the region. As an analytical-descriptive study, the present paper attempted to introduce some important features and natural and eco-tourism places of Kerman to protect the eco-tourism of Kerman in addition to identifying these places to tourists. According to the research findings, Kerman Province is one of the most intact nature tour regions and it has been known as one of the four-season provinces. Kerman has an appropriate and pleasant climate and there is the possibility of exploiting these facilities through proper planning. But unfortunately, these potentials have not been appropriately and properly explored so far.

INTRODUCTION

Today, tourism industry has been regarded as the widest service-providing industries of the world. The development of such an industry based on scientific principles and global standards not only can improve the quality of the available natural resources and prevent their destruction, but it can influences economic and social development of local communities. The relation between tourism and nature can be effective in contextualizing eco-tourism and geography interacting with the environment on the one hand and human on the other hand.

Eco-tourism is a managerial approach which directly and indirectly leads to maintaining the nature with respect to the value, economic, social, and environmental objectives with the cooperation of authorities and people through enacting appropriate rules and regulations [8] job creation and regional development is of important effects which are resulted by eco-tourism [7] Eco-tourism is an activity performed in natural intact regions and its aim is to protect environment, the improvement of local communities’ life and training visitors [1].

Visiting natural attractions of the region includes ecological features governing the region. Therefore, eco-tourist leaves the place after visiting without any damage to it and let others make use of the attractions. Accordingly, eco-tourist respects to the dignity and place of ecosystem and creates job opportunities and income for local people while recognizing the natural places.

Meanwhile, Kerman Province has highly appropriate conditions to develop eco-tourism industry due to various and unique ecosystems, various climates, different temperature, raining, and specific geomorphology. But unfortunately, all the mentioned potentials have not been considered.


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**Kerman Province:**

Kerman Province is the second wide province of Iran and it is regarded as one of the richest regions in the country. Having natural resources such as copper, coal, and Marble mines, green and fertile meadows and gardens, and diverse climate, Kerman can be regarded as one of the richest provinces and regions of the country. Kerman includes 11 cities. However, in spite of all the mentioned facts and the fact that Kerman is one of the oldest provinces of Iran, it has been changed into one of the poorest urban regions. Obviously, each city should be firstly able to have an appropriate planning in terms of the division of urban facilities and secondly, appropriate design in this regard. It is clear that every action performed in each place should be based on recognition and this recognition should be started from an environment investigating by researcher; therefore, it is attempted to present an introduction of Kerman and its natural and eco-tourism attractions here.

**Geographical location of Kerman:**

Kerman Province has been located at the south-east of Iran Plateau between 54-degree and 21 minutes to 59-degree and 34 minutes of the eastern length and 26-degree and 29 minutes to 31-degree and 58 minutes of the northern width from prime meridian. The minimum width of the province is changed in the northern part of 480 km and its minimum wide is changed in the southern part up to 80 km, the width of the province is 660 km. with an area of 182301 km². Kerman has been allocated 11% of the Iran’s area to itself. This province is limited to Yazd and Southern Khorasan from the north, to Hormozgan from the south, to Sistan and Balouchestan from the east, and to Fars Province from the east [2].

**Climate:**

Cities of Kerman have different climate. Some regions such as Shahdad, Bam and Jiroft may be the warmest regions and some others such as Baft and Bardsir and its mountainous areas may be the coldest points of Iran. Such a different climate has caused that cold and tropical fruits are cultivated in Kerman Province; even in some villages which are between cold and warm regions, both kinds of products are obtained. Some of these fruits are unique in their own type [3].

The maximum temperature degree in Kerman belongs to Shahdad (above 50 degrees). On the contrary, the temperature reaches to 30 degrees in some regions such as Sarbijan in Sardoeie. [5].

**Environment:**

Typically, environment is influenced by human and natural activities. Human activities can include population density in some specific places such as cities or specific economic and agricultural regions. On the other hand, some of the natural activities influence environment such flood.

In other words, a set of human and natural factors influence the environment. Environmentally, the important thing is that how human and natural activities can be controlled; for example, preserving and reviving the environment (water, air, soil, jungle, and biological diversity), appropriate and sustainable exploitation of available resources, promoting environmental culture at community level, and repairing the effects of previous activities on the environment.

**The Natural Factors Influencing the Environment of Kerman:**

The geographical area of Kerman approaches to Persian Gulf coastal areas and Oman Sea on the one hand and continues to the entry of one of the widest deserts of Iran. Kerman has been located in one of the most difficult desert conditions. Loot Desert encompasses a wide part from north and east-north of the country and the environmental conditions have strongly influenced it. The presence of such a wide desert is one of the most important factors caused that more than 56000 km² (30%) of the lands of Kerman become desert and more than 22000 km² (12%) has become desert. Near to 67000 km² (36%) of the lands of the province face the problem of high water erosion. As a result of continuing water erosion, the lands are washed and the soil particles are transported and due to the decrease or lack of the capacity of maintaining water in soils, the soils are transported to downstream lands and cause to the creation of sand hills after being exposed in dry environment and marsh salt. In this regard, near to 49000 km² (27%) of the lands of Kerman are exposed to a strong wind erosion and more than 21000 km² (11%) are strongly influenced by sand hills. Dry air, wider desert areas, raining and inappropriate distribution, geological situation of the region, the sensitivity of bedrock in some areas, vegetation poverty, human behavior and factors are the main factors of water and wind erosion in Kerman Province territory [6].

**Four-Fold Regions of Kerman Environment:**

The regions under the control of Environment Organization’s management and control are mainly selected with respect to the values related to vegetation and animal species and some other conditions. For the first time, 60 regions (with the total area of 7.840.854 hectares) were selected to support by Environment Organization.
under the titles of national park, wild life refuge, protected region, and national natural effects in the early 1971. In those days, with respect to the fact that two regions of Khaebr and Rochon are considered as the four-fold regions, the proportion of Kerman Province is about 2%. After 1991, other regions of the province were also selected with respect to the importance of environmental importance and having four-fold criteria or no hunting, the management of ecosystems’ revival and the improvement of population situation. The current area of the protected regions of Kerman is 816000 hectares and it has provided a 5%-proportion from total protected regions of the country. At the present time, in developed countries and many developing countries, tourism entails an important part of managerial activities in four-fold regions. Also, it is carefully planned with respect to the environmental values and other important factors in competition with other tourism associations such as forest parks. In Iran, there is not the opportunity of exploiting from eco-tourism part of these regions since there are not important beds such as treating with nature as well as adequate infrastructures.

Vegetation:

Vegetation plays an important role in distributing raining in the form of surface streams as well as in feeding underground aquifers. Due to vegetation, the soil membrane is not exposed to erosion factors, slopes and heights do not lose their soil cover and they are not changed in to rock land. In terms of production and exploitation, vegetation is regarded of highly important natural resources and lack of vegetation in the central plateau conditions equals gradual death and the destruction of the central plateaus regions. To explain the natural growth, the province is divided into two parts of north and south based on which, the northern space of Jebal Barez Mountain chains and Gere Hazar and Lale Zar are regarded the north of the province and the southern space of these heights is regarded the south of the province. These heights are important to determine plant combination and vegetation of the province. The northern areas of the province which are mostly deserts are placed in the region of Iran-Touranian growth. Usually, Iran-Touranian region is divided into plain and mountainous parts. Kerman has both parts. As obvious characteristics of this region, it can be referred to steps and dry and semi-dry plains of Dermane and Gavan. In Kerman, the heights belonged to Iran-Touranian region is specified by various species of almond, pistachio and Aras.

Natural resources areas of the province including jungles, meadows and deserts encompass about 87% of the area of the province. Wide range of changes in heights and raining has caused various vegetations and plant species in Kerman [5]

Animal Life:

There are different types of wild and domestic animals in plants and mountainous areas of Kerman Province such as leopard, cheetah, wolf, fox, jackal, hyenas, rabbit, and deer; prey species such as goat, sheep, ram, and zebra in plains; and some birds such as partridge. In mountainous regions of Anbar Abad, deer, bear, leopard, and goat can be found. Wild animals of these regions are few and in some species, their generation has been extinct or is endangering.

Several years ago, there were many crows called green crow who immigrated to these areas but now, they have been disappeared. In the deserts of around Shahr Babak City, there are zebra folks but unfortunately, due to excessive hunting, their generation are endangering. However, due to the efforts of Environment Organization, their number is now increasing.

The region of Arzouie in Baft City is a forbidden region for fishing and hunting and according to the estimations of Environment Organization, 12000 heads of various preys are found in this region.

Notably, this region has been registered by UNESCO due to the beautiful nature, vegetation and animal life. In the plains of these areas, deer is not found, particularly in Dolat Abad Region of Arzouie in which deer generation is unfortunately endangering due to hunting. In the region of Vakil Abad, zebra was abundantly found but their number highly decreased due to hunting and a few numbers of them has immigrated to around of Neyriz.

Tourism in Kerman:

Historic construction and significant natural places has changed Kerman Province to one of the regions attracting tourism of the country. This province host many domestic and foreign tourists per year and by developing its tourism attractions more than before, considerable economic benefits can be created in the province. Nowadays, attracting foreign tourists has been changed into an increasing competition among entities involved in tourism industry. This industry not only plays a significant role in the advancement of national economy and exchange incomes, but it is a clean and pollution free industry and creates new jobs. For the countries with tourism attractions such as Iran, tourism can be changed into the most important resource of foreign exchange income providing that a proper, comprehensive and prospective planning is regulated and implemented.

Global investment in tourism indicates that tourism industry is of income distributive industries. When tourists enter into a country, they should pay for the services provided for them, leading to entering foreign
exchange to the country. Therefore, single-product economy, i.e. oil income can be replaced with this industry.

In this industry, there are many job opportunities and its required human resources do not require long-term training.

Having strategic situation, beautiful nature and special climate conditions, cultured people, ancient customs, and very old places with unique architecture, there is a need of introducing Kerman Province to the world which can be achieved by rational and serious arrangements of tourism industry sector. Based on the official statistics, the number of tourists entered into Kerman Province in 2007 has had an 89.9%-growth relative to the previous year [2].

**Natural Protected Regions:**

Kerman Province has a diverse climate with its certain climatic conditions and it had various natural ecosystems to breed various plant and animal species which have been protected during the recent years.

Department of Environment Protection of Kerman has divided the natural regions of the province in protected regions to maintain appropriate life conditions of plants and animals. The protected regions include the following items:

- Wildlife refuge of Khebr and Rochoum
- Wildlife refuge of Mehroeie (Kahnouj)
- Protected region of Bidoueie
- No-hunting region of Siah Kouh in Sirjan
- No-hunting region of Goud Shahr in Shahr Babak
- No-hunting region of Anjarak Rabar (Kalanteri Khandani, 2008, P75-77).

**Some of the Villages and Nature Tour Destinations:**

One of the most important sub-branches of eco-tourism is rural tourism. With respect to the nature, specific residential texture, culture and life style as well as different space relative to other cities, rural regions are regarded as the important factors of attracting tourists to the cities. In Kerman Province, with respect to diverse climate and cultural differences, many villages and eco-tourism regions are seen which mostly the destination of short-term journeys are. In this part, the most important destinations of rural tourism in the province are introduced. With respect to their importance, many villages have the capability of small and big investments and need planning to perform service-providing and protective projects.

**Tarang Village:**

Tarang has been located in a 75-km distance of the south-east of Baft City. As a four-season destination, Tarang has a moderate climate. The existence of wild almond jungles, various wildlife, buttonwood and walnut gardens as well as the famous cave of Tarang are the beauty manifestations of this region. Moreover, there is a buttonwood tree in this village indicating its long presence in the nature of the region.

**Bidkhoun Region:**

Bidkhoun Village has been formed in a beautiful valley in the margin of Bidkhoun River. With respect to an old walnut (about 2000-year), the age of this village dates back to a long time ago. Based on the statistical census of 2006, the village has a population of more than 1000 people. It has been placed at a 2720-m of the sea height and its cold and pleasant summers is an important factor in attracting thousands tourists to the villages.

As another important natural attraction of Bidkhoun, it can be referred to ice cave and icebox port which has been located in the distance of 7 km of the south-east of the village in the end of the valley.

**Abad Chehel Tan Village:**

Abad Chehel Tan Village is one of the most popular villages of Bam City. The name of the village has been derived from Chehel Tan spring which has attracted many tourists from near and far. Abad Chehel Tan River originates from the heights of Chal Mountain Peak near to 2800m and snow peak. This beautiful peak is seen in white color due to the type of pebbles.

**Sardoutie (Darb Behesht):**

With a height of more than 2700 m from the sea bed, Sardoutie is the highest plaint of Iran. It has been located in an 800-km of the north of Jiroft. Dense gardens of cold fruits, particularly walnut, cherry and apricots as well as Sayad Sultan Ahmad shrine add to the attractions of this part for tourists.

**Halil Roud:**

Halil Roud is the greatest permanent river of the south-east of the country whose branches direct water from the heights of 4501 m of Hazar and 4351 m of Lale Zar in the central parts of the province with a distance of about 400 km from Jazmurian Pit in a low height about 350 m. During thousands years of continuous stream,
this river, in addition to creating many natural manifestations, has been the creator of rich civilizations and cultures and provided a context in which life stream has been always made glorious in different shapes and parts.

**Takht Sartashtak:**
Takht Sartashtak is an event land with moderate heights covered with grass and small ponds and flow spring in the height of 3600m from the sea. It is considered as the highest points of the province. Takht Sartashtak is one of the specific manifestations of mountainous regions of Kerman. It has been located in the border between the cities of Rabar, Joroft and Kerman and the location of high peaks of the province such as Hazar and Lale Zar can be easily detected by from the high points of the region.

**Trace of Dinosaur (Rad-e-Pay-e-Dainasor):**
15-kilometer of Zandar to Kouthbanan is a soil path which is a branch of the main road and it is continued in the middle of hills and heights of the right side to reach to Deh Alireza. From Deh Alireza, about 5-km in the direction of north-east, a soil way is continued in the slopes of the heights of the region such that a standing pebble wall hosts one of the unique attractions of Iran and Kerman’s nature in the floor of one of the valleys. According to the report of geologists, the foot of Dinosaur has an age of about 10 million years. This trace has been identified in 1973-1987 by French discovered performing geological investigations. This valuable work has been damaged now but it is still worth to be visited. Previously, 3 other traces have been transferred from this region to the museum of Geological Organization by researchers.

**Kaluts of Fahraj:**
In the eastern part, Fahraj City is neighbor to the southern part of Lute Desert and some parts of the city is influenced by the effect of desert conditions of the region and proportionally, considerable attractions can be observed in these regions. Kaluts of Fahraj are located in 50-km distance of the east of Bam City and in the path of Bam to Zaheden.

**Dasht Rivas (the plain of Rhubarb):**
With wide and green leafs and red flowers, rhubarb plant are like a beautiful carpet which reminds Kerman people the glory of this famous hand-weaved.

**Lute Desert:**
Lute Desert is one of the most valuable parts of diverse nature of Iran is Lute Desert. It is a pit encompassing the deepest points of within Iran Plateau and shows wonders and unique phenomena. What is called Lute Desert is not really a desert since desert generally refers to mash salt and Shour Hazar and it is while Lute has soil and its soil is mostly consisted of sand, providing a context in which in case of moist host vegetation. From another perspective, based on Koppen classification, due to raining less than 50 mm in a year and very high evaporation, it is regarded as the subset of BW group which is considered a real desert. Of course, in this sand desert, desert is also seen. Lute is a part of Iran Plateau which has been located between longitudes of eastern 56 degrees and 80 minutes to 60 degrees to 30 minutes and latitudes of northern 28 degrees and 38 minutes to 33 degrees and 10 minutes. This wonderful and immense plate is limited to Nay Band, Dihovak, Kavir Plain from north; to Ravar, Behabad, Shahdad and Golbaf from the west; to Barez Mountains, Shoure Gaz, Fahraj, and Narmashir form the south, and to Birjand and Hamoun Hirmand from eh east. It has an overall area of about 100,000 km² has been located between Kavir Plain and God Zere Afghanistan as a big pit. It can be regarded as one of the biggest pits of the world. The maximum height in Lute reaches to 1050 m which is related to the heights of its northern parts and the minimum height is about 150 m belonging to its central parts. However, some reports of a 76-m height are also seen in the area of the central Lute. Desert Lute includes three parts of northern, central and southern and each part has its specific geographical features and its own specific unevenness. The northern part is the highest part of Lute called Khorasani Lute. This part of Lute has been surrounded with disperse sand masses and heighst. The most important and famous part of Khorasani Lute is Gandom Beryan (baree wit) which is one of the warmest points of the earth. The central part is the most important part of Lute in which there are complete samples of desert lands. This part is the lowest and widest part of Lute Desert in which there are wonderful phenomena such as Kaluts and Yalan pebbles in the western and eastern parts, respectively.

**Roud Shour (Salty River):**
This river whose sources are out of the province origins from the heights of “Khousuf” and Southern Khorasan and from the northern part, it enters into Kerman. During the path, by adding external waters from Ravar heights, a distance about 2000 km is passed to be ended in Chale Shour (salty pint) in the northern part of
Kaluts after passing the western margin of Gandom Beryan. Those tourists pass the path of Shahdad to Nahbandan after watching wonders of Kalutes and the beauties of egg-like hills to Chale Shour.

Kalutes (Yardangs):
Kalutes are the most beautiful and wonderful desert lands of the world. It begins from 40 km of the north of Shahdad, passes from 25 km of the east of Shahdad and continues with a length of about 175 km to the south-west of Shur Gaz pit. The width of Kalutes is averagely about 70 km. These lands which are the result of wind and water erosion in the heart of Lute, have caused wonders in this point of the world for a long time. From the beginning of the current decade, this wonderful region has gradually taken into more consideration and currently, by exploiting Shahdad to Nahbandan road, ten-thousand foreign and domestic tourists visit Kalutes every day.

Nabkas:
Nabka or natural vase is the result of fight of some trees such as Gaz with flow sands which have been fixed after many years and caused a hill-like shape. In the head of the vases, tree or Gaz trees have found a safe life [4].

The Importance of Ecosystem of Lute Plain:
The set of natural conditions and what is generally known as desert is a natural phenomenon in which there is no human interference in the creation of governing status. The same status can allocate the greatest tourism attractions to itself. Lute Plain may be one of the greatest and most wonderful natural phenomena in the world and Iran.

As the reasons of desert regions’ ecosystem, especially Lute Plain, it can be referred to the natural perspectives and geographical situation, clean space, calmness and silence, wide vision, and being far from industrial and machine life. Natural slopes with all natural beauties is of tourism facilities which are exist in a place and in appropriate points and margin of Lute Plain such as Nayband in the north, Shahdad and Keshit in the west, and Lute Plain in the south.

Shahdad region has located in the west of Lute Plain, the nearest place of human settlement to the capital of the province and the margin of Lute Plain and the access to Kalutes and wide plains and sand hills which all three are the obvious symbols of desert area. It is one of the most attractive desert settlements. Shahdad is of the greatest cities of the country the oldest part of Kerman Province. To make use of tourism potentials of this plain to socially and economically develop Kerman, the first step is to recognize the natural and human features governing this plain and introducing it to people in Iran and in the world. Such an objective can be achieved through holding some conferences in various areas, using various Medias, holding scientific visits, providing special brochures specific to Lute Plain. Many soils of desert regions of Iran such as Lute Desert are salty. In these regions, there are many economically valuable minerals which can be extracted and exploited. These oil materials can compensate a part or even all costs of reviving desert regions such as mineral materials in desert area including salt, silicon, sulfur, etc.

Lute Plain has some potential such as tourism attraction and to make use of them, there is a need of system management to use this endowment for social and economic development [5].

Tourism-Natural Attractions of Kerman:
Countryside of Mahan City:
Mahan City has been located in a 35-km distance from the east of Kerman City in the slopes of the heights. It has many springs. Shahzade garden has been located in a 6-km distance from the south of Mahan and it is of most commonly visited regions of Kerman Province.

Jopar Countryside:
With beautiful perspectives, Jobar countryside city has been located in 130-km distance from the south of Kerman. It has many beautiful parks and interesting gardens. Imamzade Hosein has caused to attract many pilgrims to this area.

Rayn Countryside:
Rayn is of the interesting points of the province. It has been located in a 10-km distance of Kerman City. It is also considered as one of the regions with pleasant climate placed in the slope of Hazar Mountain peak, the highest peak of the province and the third high peak of Iran (4450 m). Hazar Mountain which is mostly covered by snow has many beautiful and interesting waterfalls.
Mountain-side Countryside:
Mountain-side has been located in a 30-km distance of the east end of Kerman. It has about 400 villages whose major part is countryside. In this region, there is a beautiful waterfall.

Ice Cave Located in Jopar Mountain Peak:
This cave has been located in the southern front of Jopar Mountain. At the beginning of entering into the cave, the first phenomenon which attracts the attention is stone tablets arranged in front of the cave and its middle has been covered with mortar.

Kaftar (Hyena) Cave:
This cave has been located in Saheb-al-Zaman Mountain of Kerman. It has artificial waterfall [5].

Other Rivers of Kerman Province:
Jazmurian River:
Hamoun Jazmurian has been located between two provinces of Kerman and Sistan and Balouchestan. Its water and width is variable and it does not regarded of permanent lakes. Halil Roud (river) moves towards this lake from the west and Bampour River moves towards the lake from the east.

Chale Lute (dry Basin):
Chale Lute, in the north-east of Kerman Mountains, is one of the basins of the region and one of the driest basins of Iran. Due to proximity to Kerman Mountains, its west margin is more humid relative to its other margins. Roud Shour (Salty River) in the north of Birjand and Roud Shour of Gaz in the south are of the most important rivers of this pit.

Mineral Spring:
There are various warm-water and mineral springs which are all structural and placed in the neighborhood of active earthquake-causing faults. In the studies related to earthquake prediction, mineral springs can be studied and used a useful factor. Mineral springs are regarded as one of tourism attraction areas [5].

Conclusion:
Currently, 5% of total level of the country is placed in the form of protected regions, national parks, national natural work, and wildlife refuge. A considerable area of the country is under the control and covering of forest parks and natural resources management which can play an important role in attracting eco-tourist throughout the world in case of creative use with effective management and planning with respect to important motivations of eco-tourism travels, i.e. natural attractions, intact wild regions, watching wildlife, and wandering in nature. Also, its resulted benefits can create a wonderful evolution in the life status of local communities related with these regions which are generally of rural communities with less developmental plans.

Eco-tourism regions are always as the most visited places of tourist attraction; therefore, the development of eco-tourism is regarded as one of the factors of tourism development in developed countries. However, lack of tourism installations and facilities, transportation vehicles and lack of recreational and welfare complexes in Kerman Province have obviously caused that less tourists travel to the region and enjoy its attractions. With respect to the eco-tourism of Kerman, these conditions have caused that Kerman has not had a considerable growth.

Some of the countries supporting tourism with the development of tourism infrastructures and facilities have widely changed tourism sector into the most income-creating sector; however, such an important issue has had a low growth due to lack of facilities and infrastructures necessary for tourism in Iran and particularly in Kerman.

Accordingly, some recommendations are presented to develop the region and make better use of tourism and eco-tourism potentials of Kerman.
1. Allocating necessary budget to execute research projects to identify eco-tourism of Kerman Province
2. Planning for sustainable development of communities through local people’s participation in executing welfare and recreational projects in tourism areas
3. Determining index places to plan and develop tourism industry, particularly eco-tourism
4. Informing and appropriate advertising regarding eco-touristic regions of Kerman Province
5. Providing necessary infrastructures, especially regarding energy and water supply and communication facilities
6. Promoting the quality of tourism services, especially residential services in free zones
7. Prioritizing environment preservation in all development planning
8. General culture building for attracting tourist
9. Training professional tourism personnel such as the mangers of hotels, agencies, employees, and guiders
10. Approving and providing comprehensive and scientific programs regarding using eco-tourism potentials of Kerman
11. Creating and setting up recreational-sport facilities and secondary welfare facilities such as restaurant, coffee-shop, or temporary residential places
12. In addition to having nature tourism attractions, eco-tourism regions of the region can be considered as an appropriate natural eco-system for various consumptions and/or as a research base.

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