

THE TOURIST  
AND RECREATION  
POTENTIAL  
OF HISTORICAL CITIES  
IN NORTH-WEST RUSSIA

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*In recent years, the development of historical cities has been high on research agenda. This is explained by the growing role of tourism and recreation in socio-economic development and the persisting problem of the national economy's spatial organisation amidst the absence of a clear-cut regional policy. The authors stress the discrepancy between the distribution of economic activities and the established system of settlement. This is particularly true for many historical cities, whose economic resources have been curtailed. This study provides a rationale for a more efficient use of the tourist and recreational potential to boost the socio-economic development of Russia's historical cities. The article describes problems of the cities' development using the country's North-West as an example. The authors explore factors behind the formation of a new development strategy for historical cities and analyse conditions necessary for the efficient exploitation of the historical cities' tourism and recreation potential. The findings obtained suggest that strategic areas of tourism and recreation development in Russia's historical cities should be identified depending on city type, development conditions and other relevant factors.*

**Key words:** historical town, Russia's North-west, tourism and recreation potential, development factors, typology

### Introduction

Spanning more than one thousand years, Russia's history has created a unique sociocultural and economic framework for the being of its people. This framework determined the development of a system of cities, which grew into centres of statehood and economic and cultural life.

Increased interest in history suggests that there are problems in the present, that social life lacks harmony, that peo-

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ple are not satisfied with the current state of affairs, and that the strategy for future development is unclear. Resorting to history is often an attempt to find new solutions and to prove or disprove contemporary ideological constructs and actions.

The above processes manifest themselves in popular attention to ‘historical cities’, to the past and current role of such settlements in the economy and culture, and to their lifestyle and development potential. This attention reflects serious problems in the socioeconomic development of Russian cities.

This study examines avenues towards a more effective exploitation of the tourism and recreation potential to boost the socioeconomic development of Russia’s historical cities. The research object is the North-West of the country — a test site boasting different types of historical cities as well as a developed tourism and recreation industry. The study focuses on management in developing the tourism and recreation potential of historical cities. Therefore, the major objectives of the research are to formulate the theoretical problems in studying the phenomenon of historical cities, to analyse changes in the development of such cities in North-West Russia, to examine relevant economic problems, and to identify criteria for a typology of historical cities, as well as conditions for, and factors in, their strategic development. In terms of methodology, a historical city is a complex system with a major historical and cultural component. The problems of exploiting the tourism and recreation potential of historical cities are considered in view of the need to improve management and regulation within the industry. Analysing the conditions for, and factors behind, the development of the tourism and recreation potential of historical cities requires comparative historical and typological approaches. It is also important to consider how historical cities change and to estimate influences on different components of the cities’ socioeconomic realm. The study employs the methods of statistical analysis, comparison, and analogy.

## Theory

The phenomenon of historical cities has been studied by experts from across different fields — historians, cultural studies scholars, architects, urbanists, geographers, economists, and sociologists [1; 2; 4; 5; 12; 13; 26; 28]. Lacking a single definition, the concept of ‘historical city’ is interpreted very broadly, depending on the context and the field of knowledge.

When analysing the concept of historical cities, N. B. Buldakova [3] interprets the word ‘historical’ as an attribute of the past events crucial for a nation or a society. Thus, a historical city is a city that was witness to important historical events. Otherwise, a city cannot be considered historical.

When defining a historical city, urbanists and architects [10] place emphasis on architectural heritage and surviving historical planning. In terms of geographical science and geography of cities, a historical city is inalienable from the historical processes of the settlement system formation, trade and

industry development, territorial labour division, and the population of the country [14; 25; 29; 33; 34]. Historical cities are often defined as cities founded in the distant past. Thus, the key attribute is the time of the first mention, foundation, and official recognition.

The Federal Law on the Objects of Cultural Heritage [16] defines a historical settlement as a city or village boasting objects of cultural heritage that have made a significant contribution to the national culture and human civilization.

Let us identify the characteristics that put a city or a village in the category of historical settlements. To estimate the tourism and recreation potential of a historical population centre, it is crucial to examine:

- the city/town's historical core, listed buildings, historical manors and parks;
- important historical events that took place there;
- the city/town's contribution to national development and liberation;
- sites and events that played a significant role in the development of national and world culture and crafts;
- the city/town's contribution to national security and defence;
- the city/town's contribution to the national economy.

It is important to identify the chronological framework for classifying population centres as historical. One hundred years ago from now can be taken as a reference point. Thus, a historical city or town must have the above-listed characteristics dating to before 1917. An exception can be made in the case of settlements founded after 1917 but having special historical and cultural significance. This applies to cities and towns that played an important role in the 1941—45 Great Patriotic War, national industrialisation, and space exploration. Settlements that were founded before 1917 but do not have sufficient cultural and historical significance cannot be classed as historical.

Firstly, historical cities are all the old large Russian cities that have all the above characteristics of a historical city and that were important economic and cultural centres of national and regional significance in the past.

Secondly, these are smaller cities and towns, including the recently founded ones that boast historical and cultural heritage.

Thirdly, these are villages that once were cities of significant cultural and economic importance and that still contribute to the national economy and culture.

All the above suggest that a typology of historical cities requires a flexible rather than formalised approach.

## History

For the first time, historical cities were listed in 1944 as part of the Soviet government's regulation on the rebuilding of the old Russian cities that had sustained the most damage during the WW II. Regional centres took priority. In the North-West of Russia, Novgorod, Pskov, and Velikiye Luki were listed. The reconstruction of Leningrad and its suburbs was considered

separately. A new list of historical cities, which included twenty settlements, ten of them in Russia, was approved in 1949 [3]. The list was revised in 1970, 1990, 2002, and 2010. The 1990 list included 536 historical settlements, including 56 villages [21]. Shortened to 478, the 2002 list contained 70 settlements of North-West Russia [18]. In 2010, the number of officially recognised historical cities was reduced more than tenfold to 41 [17]. Only eight Northwestern settlements remained on the list: Saint Petersburg, Vyborg, Veliky Novgorod, Veliky Ustyug, Belozersk, Solvychegorsk, Kargopol, and Totma. Neither Pskov, nor Vologda, nor Kaliningrad were included. The most probable cause of the reduction was a lack of funds for the preservation and restoration of the cities' architectural heritage and infrastructure. Of course, these changes are divorced from the need to preserve and develop national historical cities.

As to the development of historical cities, special attention has been paid to the effective exploitation of their tourism and recreation potential [9; 11; 12]. Many regional leaders identify it as a top priority. However, such ambitions do not always match with the actual contribution to the budget and the creation of new jobs [23]. Identifying the actual role of tourism and recreation in the socioeconomic development of historical cities is an urgent issue of regional politics and local governance.

This article addresses the problem of more effective exploitation of the tourism and recreation potential and better tourism and recreation resource management in historical cities in the case of North-West Russia. Bringing together 11 regions, the area is home to approximately 15 million people. In terms of socioeconomic performance, the North-West is a one-tenth-scale copy of the Russian Federation. The area has a similar structure of the key systems sustaining social development — political, administrative, demographic, economic, environmental, and other ones.

Northwestern cities developed very differently from those of central Russ'. The region was peripheral to the Russian lands. Boasting maritime outlets and a dense river network, the area had a rather severe climate. The differences between the South and the North were huge. The South had close ties with its national and international neighbours. With its severe climate, the vast territory of the North was sparsely populated. From the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Slavic tribes settled in the South. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the colonisation was largely completed. There were stable settlement areas, and the population density was growing. The colonisation of the North occurred in the 12<sup>th</sup>—16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The dispersed settlement was rather stable too, with population concentrating along the riverbanks, on sea and lake shores. Developed in the North-West in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the major settlement pattern has not changed significantly since then. For the most part, urban settlement followed that pattern.

First, the precursors of cities appeared. Small fortresses on important trade routes, later they were surrounded by villages. The first stage of the growth of cities proper was marked by fortified places developing into large — by the standards of the time — centres. Appearing in the areas of both Slavic

(Novgorod, Pskov) and Finnish (Staraya Ladoga, Beloozero) settlement, those places were growing into centres of governance, trade, and crafts [4; 8; 13].

In the early 12<sup>th</sup> century, Novgorod gained independence from Kiev. The Novgorod republic emerged to include most of the Northwestern lands. This marked the beginning of the second stage — the development of large regional centres that were subordinate to Novgorod (Veliky Ustyug, Velikiye Luki, Staraya Russa, Kholm, and others). At the same time, fortified places were appearing along the border. Later, they would grow into cities. The evolution of Northwestern cities and their economies was largely affected by their ties with the Hanseatic League [25; 31; 38].

The incorporation of Novgorod into the Moscow State marked the third stage — the emergence of a large number of market towns. Settlements with pronounced handicraft, transport, and military functions — *slobodas*, *posads*, *ryadoks* — appeared at the time. The incorporation into Moscow changed the Northwestern system of urban development. Novgorod ceased to be the centre of attraction. Some cities forged closer ties with Moscow, others stopped to develop.

A new stage began when Saint Petersburg was founded in 1703. The city became the metropolitan centre for whole Russia. The capital's connections crossed the region but bypassed many of its cities. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, an administrative reform was carried out. *Guberniyas* and *uyezds* were established. The centres of *uyezds* were granted the rights of cities. In 1770—1790, thirty-six new cities emerged in the North-West, as compared to the twenty-seven that had existed before. This official system of cities survived almost a century and a half. Only five new cities were founded before the October Revolution.

After the Revolution, the old system was restructured. Part of the old towns — which, in effect, had ceased to be such — was liquidated. At the same time, the largest 'factory' and 'handicraft' villages and railway stations were granted the status of towns. Socialistic industrialisation and developing economies of the periphery contributed to the rapid growth of towns. A total of 124 towns were founded in the North-West in the pre-war years [19].

The 1941—45 Great Patriotic War, on the one hand, led to the emergence of new towns and workers' villages, mostly in the country's North. On the other hand, the war disrupted the development of many towns and devastated the rural areas in the Novgorod, Pskov, and partly Leningrad region. For many years, towns and cities did not have sufficient resources for population growth [7].

### An analysis of the tourism and recreation potential of Northwestern cities and towns

The authors identify 106 historical cities and towns founded in different historical periods in Russia's North-West (the territory includes the Kalininograd region). Table 1 shows the distribution of historical cities and towns by periods when they were founded, and by parent regions. For the purpose of

the study, the foundation of a settlement is assumed to coincide with the year when it was recognised as a town/city — for instance, when a castle or a fortress was built on the site. Italics indicate historical towns that were demoted to villages. There are 25 settlements of the kind, 12 of them are villages proper. Historical settlements account for 1/3 of the total number of the cities and towns in the North-West of the country.

The historical cities of the Northwest are experiencing significant difficulties as a result of changes in the industry distribution and settlement patterns in modern Russia. The situation is rather favourable in the historical cities that enjoy the status of regional centres and in such large industrial centres as Cherepovets and Vlikiye Luki. However, in most cases, the economies of historical cities have dwindled. They are no longer capable of balancing the budget, creating jobs, and maintaining the infrastructure and historical heritage. Many historical cities lack a diversified economy and thus cannot attract capital. Exceptions are few and far between; they include Borovichi, Vyborg, Gryzovets, and Kingisepp.

Economic problems are causing people to leave the area. The first to leave are educated and creative specialists who could otherwise make a significant contribution to the development of the economy, in particular, to tourism and recreation. The youth is increasingly alienated from their home region. The pervasive negative stereotype urges people to 'leave, no matter what'. Potential investment is complicated by numerous and not always justified formal restrictions on the use of urban lands and historical buildings and on infrastructure development.

A serious problem is the low efficiency and quality of the implementation of state programmes aimed at the preservation of historical and cultural heritage. As a result, the funding of such programmes was reduced. Many historical cities lack the industrial capacities and qualified personnel to restore and maintain cultural objects and historical sites. The economies of many historical cities and towns are adversely affected by chain businesses that prevent small enterprises from preserving local traditions in providing services for tourists [9; 23].

To boost the socioeconomic development of historical cities and towns, it is important to exploit their tourism and recreation potential effectively.

The authors of this article define the tourism and recreation potential as the availability of tourism and recreation resources and the ability of a city or town to create conditions for the effective use of such resources. Probably, the most significant resource of historical cities is their cultural and historical image capable of attracting tourists and thus contributing to fuller exploitation of the tourism and recreation potential. The image of a historical city attracts investors and stimulates demand in the local market, as tourists come to the site in their desire to learn more about history and culture and to see the place everyone is talking about.

Tourism and recreation do not only increase employment rates and contribute to the local budget but they also have an important mediated effect. The industry can boost a territory's socioeconomic development and lead to a gradual diversification of the local economy.

Table 1

The foundation period and regional affiliation of Russia's Northwestern historical cities and towns

Regions	Number of cities and towns	Period of foundation (century)					19 <sup>th</sup> /20 <sup>th</sup>
		before the 14 <sup>th</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup> /15 <sup>th</sup>	16 <sup>th</sup> /17 <sup>th</sup>	18 <sup>th</sup>		
Arkhangelsk region <sup>1</sup>	13	Velsk, Shenkursk	Ksadinikov, Kargopol, Onezga, Solonetsky, Kholmogory Kirillov, Ustyuzhna	Arkhangelsk, Mezen, Yarensk, Pinega	Solvychegodsk, Krasnoborsk		
Vologda region	12	Belozersk, Veliky Ustyug, Vologda, Totma		Gryazovets, Verkhovazhnye	Vytegra, Nikolsk, Cherepovets	Krasavino	
Kaliningrad region	14	Guryevsk, Zelenogradsk, Kaliningrad, Svetlogorsk, Sovetsk	Bagrationovsk, Pravdinsk, Chernyakhovsk, Zhemalinsk	Dobrovolsk	Gvardeysk, Ozersk		
Republic of Karelia	10		Kem, Pudozh, Valaam	Olonets, Sortavala, Kurikijoki	Petrozavodsk, Povenets, Sumsky Posad	Medvezhyegorsk	
Republic of Komi	3			Syktvyvkar		Vorkuta, Ukhta	
Leningrad region	14	Vyborg, Shlisselburg, Koporye, Staraya Ladoga	Ivangorod, Kingisepp, Priozersk	Tikhvin	Gatchina, Lodeynoe Pole, Luga, Novaya Ladoga, Rozhdestveno	Volkhov	
Murmansk region	3					Kirovsk, Murmansk, Polyarny	
Novgorod region	12	Veliky Novgorod, Staraya Russa	Soltsy	Borovich, Lyubytino	Valdai, Kholm, Krestsy	Чудово, Kulotino, Opechensky, Posad, Demyansk	
Pskov region	14	Velikie Luki, Pskov, Porokhov, Izborsk	Gdov, Opochka, Ostrov, Pechory, Krasnogorodsk	Nevel, Sebezh, Pushkinskie Gory	Novorzhev, Ostrov Zalit		
Saint Petersburg	11				Kolpino, Krasnoe Selo, Kronshadt, Lomonosov, Pavlovsk, Peterhof, Pushkin, Saint Petersburg, Sestroretsk, Strelna	Zelenogorsk	

<sup>1</sup> including the Nenets autonomous region  
Compiled by the authors based on [6; 18; 19].

## A typological approach to managing the tourism and recreation potential of historical cities and towns

Managing the development of the tourism and recreation potential consists primarily in handling the factors at play and creating necessary conditions. State and municipal authorities and businesses in the industry manage the tourism and recreation potential.

The below classification of factors and conditions may prove helpful in managing the tourism and recreation potential of historical cities.

### **1. Economic factors and conditions.**

- development of the economic base;
- development of the local economy;
- development of small business;
- development of trade infrastructure;
- availability of trademark goods;
- prices in the local market;
- budget capacity.

### **2. Transportation**

- accessibility;
- quality of motorways;
- availability of water transport;
- development of public transportation;
- availability of parking;
- taxi services and car rentals.

### **3. Accommodation**

- development of the hospitality industry;
- amenities and sanitation;
- environmental security;
- climate;
- food safety;
- personal safety;
- development of medicine;
- development of sanitation infrastructure.

### **4. History and culture**

- historical significance and historical and cultural image;
- architectural heritage and its condition;
- pilgrimage sites and their condition;
- historical sites and sites that played an important role in the biographies of famous people;
- excursion services.

### **5. Leisure and entertainment**

- development of entertainment infrastructure;
- development of sports infrastructure;



- theatres, museums, etc.;
- recreation area;
- remarkable landscapes.

Managing each of the above factors and conditions requires organisational support, effective division of functions between the entities involved, and, in some cases, regional and municipal projects and programmes. A sine qua non is developing criteria and performance indicators for each of the above factors. This will make it possible to classify historical cities as objects of tourism and recreation potential management.

Regulating the development of historical cities and managing their tourism and recreation potential requires a typological approach. Such an approach contributes to better decision-making that takes into account the particularities of certain groups of historical settlements sharing common typological characteristics [23]. A typological approach is the first step towards a strategy for the development of historical cities and towards the implementation of key measures. When the basic principles have been formulated, an individualised approach can be applied. Without the first stage, unjustified decisions may be made regarding concrete cities and towns.

To analyse the situation in historical cities and to identify typical trends, problems, and features, the following criteria can be used.

1. Historical functions. It is essential to study how these functions change and whether they are still performed by the settlement. Based on this criterion, one can distinguish:

- trade and industry centres;
- trade and transport hubs;
- local administrative centres;
- handicraft centres;
- religious and pilgrimage centres;
- manors and palaces;
- resort and recreation areas.

A special type of historical settlements is a factory city [15]. In the North-West, these are Sestroretsk, Kolpino, Krasavino, and Kulotino.

2. Current tourism and recreation functions of historical cities. Historical cities and towns can be classed into different categories spanning all possible tourism and recreation services — there is no need to list those. It is important to study possible changes in these functions and classify settlements by the degree of the industry's development.

Preparing an analysis and a forecast is the first step towards managing the tourism and recreation potential of historical cities and towns. Management and regulation require that the types of historical cities be correlated with the functions of managing entities. These functions are described in regulations issued by relevant state and municipal agencies — the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, the Federal Agency for Tourism, regional and municipal Committees on Culture and Tourism, and others. The common function performed by all the above agencies is 'promoting the development of tourism and recreation'. This means

creating necessary conditions for, and managing factors in, the development of tourism and recreation potential. Regulations governing the state and municipal agencies describe these functions in greater detail.

If the conditions for, and factors in, the development of the tourism and recreation potential of historical cities are considered *en masse*, the following groups can be identified:

1. historical cities and towns with a stable economic base, a developed infrastructure, unique historical and cultural sites, and contemporary tourist and recreation services (Veliky Novgorod, Saint Petersburg, Vologda, and others);
2. cities and towns with unique historical and cultural objects and recreation opportunities but with a weak economic base and poorly developed tourist and recreation services and transport links (Belozersk, Veliky Ustyug, Kirillov, Tikhvin, etc.);
3. cities and towns boasting historical and cultural sites, a developed economy, and diverse service business but lacking transport links and modern tourism infrastructure (Arkhangelsk, Vytegra, Sortavala, etc.);
4. cities and towns with valuable and often unique historical and cultural sites but disadvantaged by a severe climate, small population, a weak economy, poorly developed infrastructure and transport links to the national centres (Kargopol, Solvychevodsk, Onega, Totma, and others).

A typological approach contributes to the efficiency of measures aimed at the development of tourism and recreation potential in order to boost the socioeconomic development of historical cities in North-West Russia. The current situation warrants the following measures.

To improve the management of the tourism and recreation potential of historical cities, it is important to solve the problem of coordination between state and municipal agencies responsible for tourism and recreation. A lack of coordination leads to ineffective budget spending, duplication of functions, and poor implementation of state and municipal programmes. This necessitates authorising certain agencies (without creating additional structures) to coordinate stakeholders.

Another major objective is to develop Northwestern tourist routes similar to the Golden Ring of Russia. This will require a division of regional and municipal functions. Therefore, it is essential to create new mechanisms for interregional and inter-municipal cooperation, public-private partnership, and joint funding of tourism infrastructure.

Seasonality — a crucial factor in the tourism and recreation industry of North-West Russia— calls for a programme for strengthening the economic base of historical cities. There is also a need to create or restore mainstay sites, to develop infrastructure, and to recruit specialists in tourism and recreation. All this will have a positive effect on local budgets.

The severe climates of many Northwestern cities and towns place emphasis on the development of all-inclusive sociocultural centres suited to provide services for tourists. This will reduce budget spending on maintaining sociocultural facilities. An important contribution can be made by small enterprises. However, it will require a special mechanism for supporting small businesses specialising in tourist services.

## Conclusions

The tourism and recreation potential is a major factor in boosting the socioeconomic development of historical cities. Analysing the problems in the development of Russia's Northwestern historical cities and towns suggests that an efficient exploitation of the potential requires a clear typological approach to management and regulation. The typology of historical cities should be practice-oriented. It cannot be divorced from the concrete functions of state and municipal agencies responsible for tourism and recreation and related industries, for municipal infrastructure, for culture and arts, and for environmental protection. The first priority is to strengthen the economic base of historical cities and towns specialising in tourism and recreation. Otherwise, it will be impossible to develop historical cities and towns, to unlock their tourism and recreation potential, to create necessary conditions for funding relevant projects, and to create new jobs. It is essential to overcome the agency-centred approach to managing and funding tourism, recreation, and culture. This aim can be achieved through creating all-inclusive sociocultural facilities based on the principle of public-private partnership and inter-municipal cooperation, with city administrations involved in the management process. Developing the tourism and recreation potential, creating conditions for tourism development in historical cities, and improving coordination between agencies requires a new strategy for promoting tourism and recreation in North-West Russia.

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