

## TOURIST INTENSITY IN THE POLOG REGION 2011-2019

Ilija Zakoski

### KeyWords

Polog planning region, tourism, tourism development, tourist intensity, tourist stays.

### ABSTRACT

Opportunities for tourism development in the Republic of North Macedonia (RNM) are numerous. The tourist locations attract more and more interest among the foreign tourists, but it is still not enough to say that they have a significant role in the overall economy of the country. This paper aims to analyse the tourist intensity based on realized arrivals and overnight stays of domestic and foreign tourists in the Polog planning region in the period 2011-2019 and to compare them with the tourist intensity at the state level. The tourist intensity in the RNM expressed through realized arrivals and overnight stays is on the rise. The share of domestic tourists in the total tourist intensity is still higher, but the number of foreign tourists is continuously growing as well.

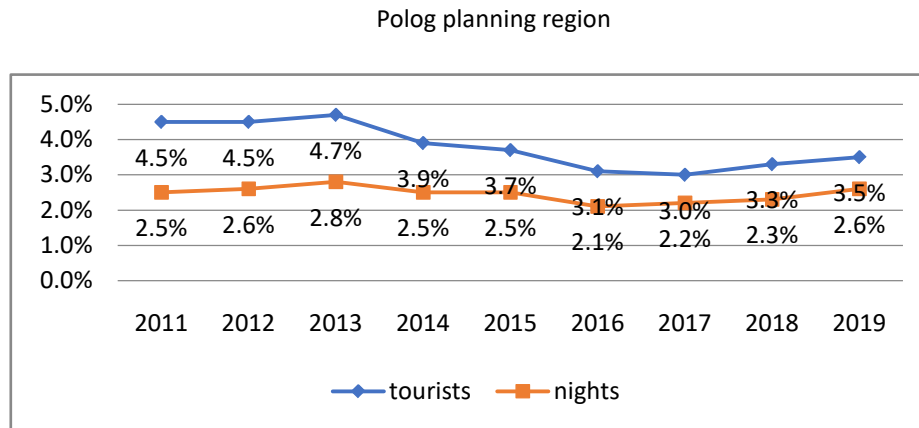
The concept of tourism development that has been practiced in recent decades for many years is in crisis whose result is the loss of the international tourism market. Part of the tourist intensity of the RNM is accounted to the Polog planning region. The realized tourist intensity based on realized arrivals and overnight stays in the period 2011-2019 as well as the perspectives for future development are presented.

### INTRODUCTION

With the adoption of the Law on Territorial Organization of the Local Self-Government in the Republic of Macedonia in 2004 and the new Regulation on the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NTES) by the European Parliament in 2003, the need to harmonize the existing classification with the new circumstances was imposed. The Government of the Republic of Macedonia, in December 2007, adopted NTES ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" No. 158/2007), and in 2014 adopted the amendments ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" No. 10/2014). NTES provides a unique and unified division of territorial units at a regional and local level and is the basis for collecting, processing, and publishing regional statistics used for planning and conducting regional policy in the RNM.

The planning regions of the Republic of Macedonia were adopted by the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia on September 29, 2009. Officially, Macedonia is divided into eight planning regions, which serve statistical, economic, and administrative purposes. The planning regions in the RNM are Skopje, Northeast, East, Southeast, Vardar, Pelagonija, Southwest, and Polog. Rural municipalities are quite present in almost all regions, but most of the population lives in larger urban centres, which indicates an uneven concentration of population within the regions. The Polog region stands out according to the high share of the population living in rural areas, while in other regions the rural settlements are less populated.

The Polog region includes the Polog valley, the Mavrovo plateau, the Bistra mountain massif, and the Radika river valley. The total area of the region is 2,416 square kilometres or 9.7% of the territory of the RNM. The Polog region consists of the following nine Municipalities: Municipality of Mavrovo and Rostusha, Municipality of Gostivar, Municipality of Brvenica, Municipality of Vrapciste, Municipality of Zelino, Municipality of Bogovinje, Municipality of Tetovo, Municipality of Tearce, and Municipality of Jegunovce.



Source: mk.wikipedia.org.mk

Tourism plays a significant role in a country's economy. Given the potential of the RNM in this area, it is realistic to expect better results. Part of the total tourist intensity belongs to the Polog region. The tourist potentials of the Polog region are evident but incompletely valorised.

The place of the Polog planning region in the total tourist intensity of the RNM is the target of this research. The realized tourist intensity based on realized arrivals and overnight stays in the period 2011-2019 is presented, as well as the perspectives for future development.

The Polog planning region is a tourist pearl that abounds in natural beauties, historical and cultural monuments. Tourism as an industry is not sufficiently developed in the Polog planning region, but many untapped potentials represent investment opportunities, and by using them the aim is to make the region one of the largest tourist destinations in the country and Europe. The already existing ski centres "Mavrovo" and "Popova Shapka" offer the opportunity to upgrade the development of ski tourism and the opportunity to promote and visit the other natural beauties that this region possesses.

### TOURIST INTENSITY IN THE POLOG PLANNING REGION IN THE PERIOD 2011-2019

The Polog region participates in the tourist trade intensity with a small percentage in the total tourist trade intensity of the RNM. The number of tourists in the Polog planning region from 2011-2019 is represented in comparison with the total tourist intensity of the RNM with figures reaching up to 4.7% in 2013, and reducing to 3.5% in 2019. The percentage of realized overnight stays varies from 2.5% in 2011 to 2.6% in 2019 (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Percentage of tourists and overnight stays in the Polog region from the total number of tourists and overnight stays in the RNM

(Source: own analysis)

In absolute numbers, the number of domestic and foreign tourists in the Polog planning region and the RNM is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of tourists in the Polog region and the RNM

	Domestic in Polog region	Foreign in Polog region	Total in Polog region	total in the RNM
2011	16196	12957	29153	647568
2012	17098	12786	29884	663633
2013	15491	15332	30823	701794
2014	15886	13257	29143	735650
2015	14565	15635	30200	816067
2016	13805	13513	27318	856843
2017	14150	15974	30124	998841
2018	16802	20289	37091	1126935
2019	18560	23434	41994	1184963

Source: State statistical office

The number of tourists in the Polog planning region in the period from 2011-2019 is continuously growing except for 2016 when there is a slight decrease. From 2015-2019, the number of foreign tourists is growing in a larger number than the domestic tourists. (Figure 2).

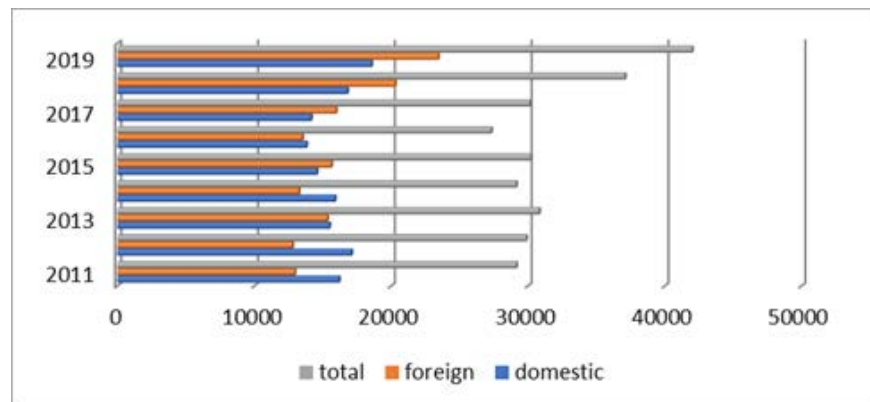


Figure 2: Polog region number of tourists  
(Source: own analysis)

However, the increase in the number of tourists in the Polog planning region is insufficient to have a greater impact on the region's economy, although the potential for tourism development is great.

Regarding the realized overnight stays in the period 2011-2019, variations are recorded. Regarding the RNM, the percentage of realized overnight stays is very small (2.1% -2.6%) (Table 1).

The number of realized overnight stays is increasing, especially in 2018 and 2019, and is primarily due to domestic tourists. The percentage representation of the realized overnight stays in the total number of overnight stays in the RNM is significantly small (Table 2).

Table 2: Number of stays in the Polog region and the RNM

	Domestic in Polog region	Foreign in Polog region	Total in Polog region	total in the RNM
2011	31661	23126	54787	2173034
2012	32008	24047	56055	2151692

2013	30806	30846	61652	2157175
2014	29675	24744	54419	2195883
2015	29041	31533	60574	2394205
2016	24887	27703	52590	2461160
2017	27457	32792	60249	2775152
2018	32464	39465	71929	3176808
2019	35513	48625	84138	3262398

(Source: State Statistic office)

The number of realized overnight stays of domestic tourists is higher than the number of foreign tourists except for the years 2019, 2018, 2017, 2015.

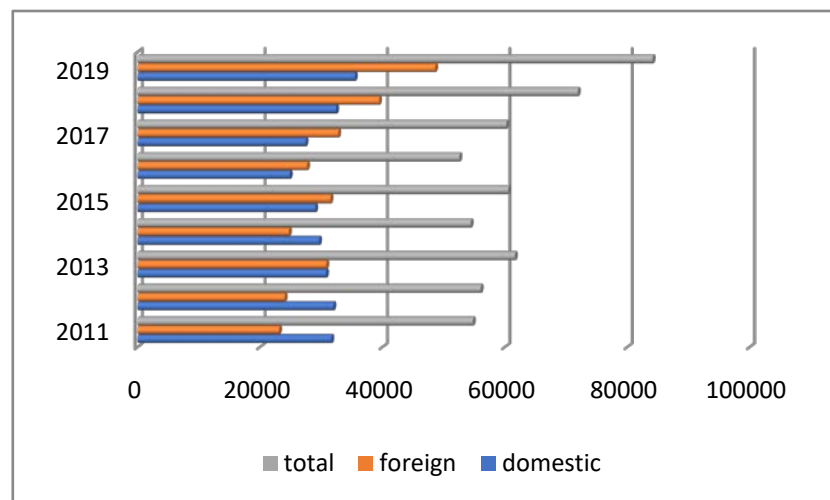


Figure 3: Number of nights in Polog region  
(Source: own analysis)

Accommodation facilities in the Polog planning region are present in a small percentage in the total accommodation capacity of the RNM (Table 3), which is following the number of tourists and realized overnight stays.

Table 3: Capacity and number of beds in the Polog region and the RNM

	capacity (rooms) in the Polog region	number of beds in Polog region	capacity (rooms) in the RNM	number of beds in the RNM
2011	1018	3058	26448	69737
2012	1014	3059	26877	70287
2013	1072	3153	26878	70297
2014	1111	3330	27422	71225
2015	1128	3443	27812	72021
2016	1142	3507	28305	73168
2017	1142	3503	28759	74257
2018	1267	3806	29702	76558

2019	1240	3769	29933	76942
------	------	------	-------	-------

Source: State Statistical Office

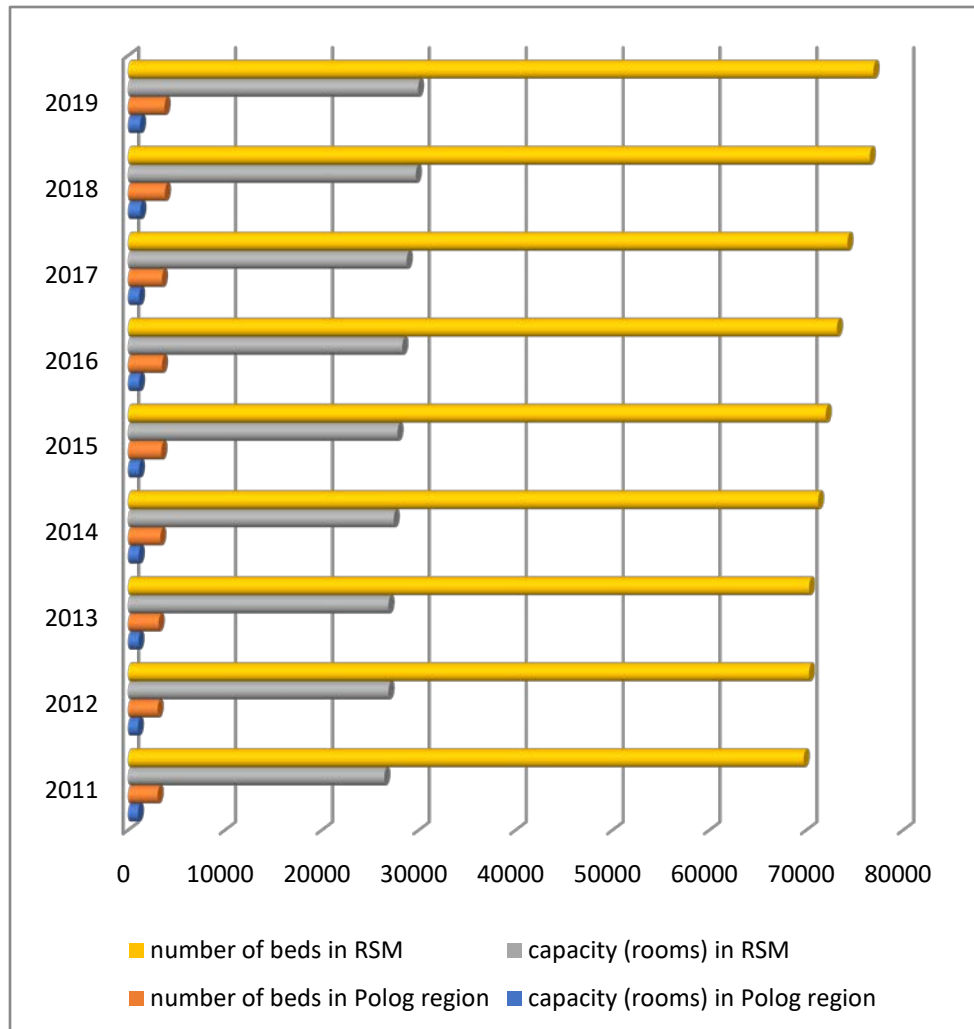


Figure 3: Capacity and number of beds in the Polog region and the RNM  
 (Source: own analysis)

### PERSPECTIVES FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE POLOG PLANNING REGION

Due to the complexity of tourism and a large number of participants, many countries expect and want to achieve greater results and effects of tourism approach its development and its planning regardless of the degree of their economic development.

Today, Macedonian tourism is facing a major milestone. But unfortunately, there is still no clear vision in which direction to go. The concept of tourism development that has been practiced in recent decades has been in crisis for many years, the result of which is the loss of the international tourism market.

The process of transition does not bypass the tourism sector, which in this period, like other sectors, is subject to various influences, especially wars and terrorism. Many hotel accommodation facilities, mainly seasonal, face financial and technical problems that do not allow them to compete in the market. The break-in relations with the tourism market in the last few years, the outflow of staff, and the lack of innovative and entrepreneurial development incentives emphasize the contradiction and difference between market demands and the possibilities of the overall tourist offer of Macedonia.

In the Polog planning region, there are excellent preconditions for the development and promotion of tourism, the abundance of natural and cultural-historical attractions. Such a situation could be achieved more realistically if the comparative advantages we have are used properly, and offered and organized in correspondence with the international tourist market, which would lead to the affirmation of the country as a potential international tourist destination.

In addition to the aforementioned, special attention should be paid to the further improvement, maintenance, and modernization of existing hospitality facilities. Special emphasis should be placed on the quality of their content (interior design, nutrition, additional activities, sports activities, etc.) and staff (professionalism, kindness, resourcefulness, etc.).

A good organizational set-up in tourism is a basic precondition for its development. To achieve results, it is necessary to establish and operate the coordination well and build cooperation and trust between the entities that participate in tourism. Another important precondition for the development of tourism is the planning which as part of the overall socio-economic planning must be in accordance and closely related to other plans, but at the same time, we must not forget that when creating plans for tourism development we must take into account the planning of tourism development of our neighbours, primarily to make use of comparative advantages.

When considering opportunities for tourism development, we should keep in mind that in recent years research conducted for tourism development at various levels increasingly indicates the need for the application of strategic planning in tourism. Having in mind the reality of the tourist market and the fact that the demand provision, the role, and importance of market research are further emphasized, which could determine the changes on the tourist demand-side and respond to them promptly.

From the above, it follows that in the Polog planning region there are opportunities for tourism development, but for that, it is necessary to overcome the existing above-mentioned conditions and circumstances.

## Conclusion

The tourist intensity in the Polog region expressed through realized arrivals and overnight stays has an upward trend. The tourist intensity of the Polog planning region belongs to a small percentage of the total tourist intensity in the RNM and that percentage decreases from year to year due to the increasing number of arrivals and overnight stays in other tourist places. The share of domestic tourists in the total tourist intensity is even higher, still, the number of foreign tourists is continuously growing.

Foreign tourists in the tourist trade of the Polog planning region participate in a small percentage of the total number of tourists in the RNM.

The tourist intensity in the Polog planning region is significant but insufficient to contribute significantly to the economy of the region. The growth of the tourist intensity in the Polog planning region should be increased, but investments in all segments of tourism are required, for which a national strategy is a must.

## References

- [1] Guide for investments in Polog Planning Region Center for development of the Polog region 2015
- [2] State Statistical Office. Statistical Yearbooks of the Republic of Macedonia (2011-2019) <http://stat.gov.mk>, Makstat database
- [3] State Statistical Office. Tourism in the Republic of Macedonia 2011-2015 <http://stat.gov.mk>
- [4] Kotevski, C. (2015). Contemporary theories in international tourism. University "Goce Delcev", Stip
- [5] Plans for the development of the destinations - Plan no. 8: Tourism Development Plan: Polog Region (Tetovo, Popova Shapka and surroundings)
- [6] The regions in the Republic of Macedonia (2017). Regional Yearbook, State Statistical Office
- [7] <https://rdcpolog.mk>
- [8] Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 158/2007
- [9] Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 10/2014