

KAPYAD VIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN CAPPADOCIA

Cappadocia, one of the world's most unique and distinctive tourism destinations, must adopt a sustainable tourism approach to ensure that this unique geography is passed on to future generations in the most accurate and complete manner, while simultaneously undertaking strategic initiatives to increase the length of stay, visitor numbers, quality, and tourism income.

As the Cappadocia Area Tourism Investors Association (KAPYAD), we have considered the **"sustainable tourism"** title one of our top priorities since our establishment. This report has been prepared with the awareness that no formation or structure that is not sustainable can maintain its existence in the long term.

In this report, we have endeavoured to identify the areas where sustainable tourism is of particular importance for Cappadocia and to present solution recommendations that can be implemented within the framework of **State-NGO cooperation**. We addressed the issue of sustainability not only within the framework of environment and energy but also based on the principle of the continuity of Cappadocia as an investable region.

I. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The main purpose of this report is to define the strategic steps that must be taken to ensure the sustainability of Cappadocia tourism.

Priority objectives are:

- To protect Cappadocia's cultural, historical, and natural values.
- To increase tourism revenue and the quality of the visitor profile.
- To establish a sustainable economic ecosystem for investors and the local population.
- To establish effective coordination and permanent cooperation mechanisms among the State, local governments, NGOs, and investors.

II. PROBLEM AREAS AND SOLUTION RECOMMENDATIONS

1. CAPPADOCIA-SPECIFIC ZONING LEGISLATION

The cave and stone structure of Cappadocia are not fully compatible with the existing zoning legislation. This situation creates legal and technical uncertainties, extending from the project design stage to the operation period, thus damaging sustainability. Especially the historical cave connections between neighbouring plots lead to serious property and licensing issues.

Solution-1: Three-Dimensional (3D) Cadastre

- A **3D cadastre** showing the under-over relationships of caves and multi-layered structures must be made mandatory.
- A permanent solution is not possible unless a registration system **similar to floor ownership** is established.
- Otherwise, investors and property owners will continue to face "illegal construction" accusations due to the *de facto* situation.

Solution-2: Leasing of Treasury Immovable Properties

- Empty spaces or plots belonging to the Treasury that fall between investor parcels should be allowed to be leased within standards. T
- his allows investors to develop holistic and original projects **specific to the parcel and block**. Cave structures used for centuries can be legalized.

Solution-3: Sub-Scale Plans

- While the processes related to the Upper-Scale Plan continue, the immediate implementation of Sub-Scale Plans is extremely important.
- The re-evaluation of protected site boundaries, which have become a chronic problem, is a critical necessity.
- It is important that issues such as terraces, roofs, building materials and colour, and *Emsal* (building density coefficient) in cave structures are addressed with a holistic approach at the village, town, and district level within the sub-scale plans.

Solution-4: Terrace Usage Standards

Cappadocia's view values are an integral part of the tourism experience.

- Existing and planned tourism facilities should be granted terrace usage rights through standardized, fair, and aesthetic applications specified in the zoning plan notes. Accordingly, it is important that terraces are evaluated within the scope of the "30%" application specified in the Planned Areas Zoning Regulation, and that these provisions are uniformly incorporated into the sub-scale plans across the entire Cappadocia Area.

- Instead of removing terraces constructed with incorrect materials and measurements that damage the appearance of Cappadocia, conversion in line with standards should be encouraged if possible.
- Regulating terrace use, rather than banning it, would be a more appropriate approach, especially given that many tourism destinations worldwide are famous for their terraces, and Cappadocia is famous for its balloons and unique nature views.

2. LIMITATIONS ON HOTEL NUMBER AND QUALITY

There are currently **over 800 hotels** in Cappadocia, and it is known that nearly 300 new facilities are in the project and construction phase.

It is an undeniable fact that small and unqualified facilities, especially those implemented in residential areas with TKDK grant incentives over the last 5 years, have started to harm Cappadocia tourism in many ways.

In this context:

- **Halting new projects outside tourism facility areas**, especially in residential zones, is a positive step. It is extremely important that tourism construction does not extend beyond the Tourism Facility Areas determined by the Upper-Scale Plan.
- Priority should be given to facilities that add brand value to the region, have high service quality, and meet environmental and cultural compatibility criteria.
- Small-scale projects incentivized by the TKDK Rural Development should primarily be carried out **in abandoned villages and rural areas** that require transformation, have been designated as Eco-Tourism Areas in the Upper-Scale Plan, and are currently outside the scope of Cappadocia tourism, rather than in central locations like Göreme, Uçhisar, and Çavuşin, which no longer possess rural characteristics.
- This approach will protect Cappadocia's brand positioning, strengthen the target visitor profile, and ensure rural development is implemented correctly and as intended.

3. WATER RESOURCES PROBLEM

Cappadocia is one of the regions in our country most affected by climate change, and it is foreseen that it will experience a water problem in the future if precautions are not taken.

While snow and precipitation amounts decrease, consumption due to population, agriculture, and tourism is increasing. Becoming a destination that experiences water cuts in the near future will conflict with quality tourism goals and lead to income loss. Although individual water efficiency investments by businesses focused on certification are important, they will remain inadequate without a regional strategy.

Solution-1: Prevention of Unauthorized Water Drilling

- Unauthorized drilling increases as water scarcity deepens.
- These drillings are mostly used for wild irrigation and low value-added production, negatively affecting groundwater levels and basins that supply water to tourism settlements.
- Deterrent inspection-sanction mechanisms and monitoring systems must be quickly implemented.

Solution-2: Termination of Wild Irrigation

- Most of the country's water use is in agriculture, and a significant portion of this is through wild irrigation.
- The region should move away from water-intensive, low value-added crop patterns, and the transition to modern irrigation techniques (drip, pressurized systems) should be supported.
- It is important for municipalities to cease water-intensive landscaping practices and to gradually transform existing landscaped areas.
- Water efficiency must be made a fundamental condition for incentive and support programs in our region.

Solution-3: Xeriscape (Drought-Tolerant Landscaping) Practices

- In destinations facing water problems, xeriscape (drought-tolerant landscaping) practices should be adopted instead of lawns and plants requiring high water consumption.
- Low water consumption landscape designs should be popularized in municipalities, hotels, and public areas.
- Local species such as lavender, sage, spurge, and desert spoon should be preferred, and low-cost applications should be implemented with natural materials such as pumice and scoria, which are abundant in the Cappadocia region.

Solution 4: Rainwater Harvesting

- Rainwater collection systems have become a legal requirement for new constructions implemented outside urban protected sites. Effective inspection and reporting mechanisms must be established in Cappadocia to ensure the implementation of these provisions in the field.

4. PROTECTION OF THE ECOSYSTEM IN THE VALLEYS

The valleys of Cappadocia are one of the fundamental elements of the region's tourism appeal. The protection of the natural structure and ecosystem of the valleys is a prerequisite for sustainable tourism.

Solution-1: Regular Cleaning and Maintenance

- Professional cleaning and maintenance work should be carried out at regular intervals in the valleys, supported by the coordination of local administrations and the participation of NGOs and volunteer networks.

Solution-2: Hunting Ban Policy

- Species such as foxes, rabbits, and partridges are an important part of the natural life in the Cappadocia valleys.
- Occasional relaxation of the hunting ban creates risks in terms of ecological balance and visitor safety.
- A permanent hunting ban should be implemented in tourism-intensive areas used by visitors (Göreme, Uçhisar, Ortahisar, Çavuşin, Mustafapaşa, İbrahimpaşa, Ayvalı, Çat, etc.).

Solution-3: Stray Dog Problem

- The stray dog problem, which severely affects urban life in our country, also presents a significant issue in the tourist valleys of Cappadocia.
- Tourists walking, cycling, or riding horses or ATVs in the valleys can be attacked.
- The populations of animals like foxes, rabbits, and partridges, which are important parts of the natural life in the Cappadocia valleys, are under threat due to packs of wild and stray dogs.
- In most valleys, the beginning and end of the valley may fall under the responsibility of different municipalities, leading to a gap in authority and responsibility. Furthermore, municipalities focused on stray dogs in cities may ignore the valleys, causing the increasing number of stray dogs to create serious problems.
- The coordination of the Nevşehir Governorship, Cappadocia Area Directorate, Municipalities, and Nevşehir Special Provincial Administration is urgently needed to address and rehabilitate stray dogs in the valleys with a holistic approach, and to establish a joint dog shelter for these animals.

Solution-4: Caravan Irregularity

- Caravans visiting our region can randomly park in the valleys without any impediment. This situation poses extremely significant risks in terms of both security and the cleanliness of the valleys.
- Everyone is aware of the great distress the region experienced after the attack on two Japanese tourists in the Zemi Valley in 2013, the negative effects of which continue

even after 12 years. Therefore, the potential security gap posed by caravans must be resolved.

- It is essential to take deterrent measures to ensure that caravans only stay in private campgrounds or in areas with the necessary infrastructure designated by the relevant authorities, where security and the needs of the caravans can be met.

Solution-5: Afforestation and Rehabilitation

- The Cappadocia valleys are the most wooded and green areas of our region. Species such as wild olives, hawthorn, wild almonds, wild apricots, and black poplars are abundant in the Cappadocia valleys. The existence of all these trees is extremely important for the current bird diversity and natural life.
- Regular planting should be carried out to replace trees lost due to drought; efforts should be coordinated between the Area Directorate and the Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry.

5. GENERAL APPEARANCE PROBLEMS AND DEFICIENCIES

One of the most important elements for sustainable tourism in Cappadocia is the preservation of the region's natural and cultural visual integrity. However, the increasing infrastructure, directional, and lighting pollution in recent years damages Cappadocia's aesthetic value, disrupting the "natural beauty - cultural heritage" balance that defines the region.

Solution-1: Undergrounding of Electricity and Telephone Poles

- Electricity and telephone poles, which are still intensely visible in the tourist centres of the region (Göreme, Uçhisar, Ortahisar, Avanos, Ürgüp, etc.), contribute significantly to the visual pollution of Cappadocia's historical silhouette.
- Taking into account the UNESCO World Heritage status, a phased plan for the undergrounding of **energy and communication lines** should be prepared.
- During this process, collaboration should be established with electricity distribution companies and telecommunication institutions, coordinated by the Cappadocia Area Directorate; pilot application areas should be determined, especially along the main tourism axes (around Göreme Open Air Museum, Uçhisar - Göreme connection road, Ortahisar centre, etc.).
- This transformation will provide long-term benefits in terms of security and infrastructure sustainability, in addition to increasing visual quality.

Solution-2: Transformation of Road Lighting Poles

- Large-scale "highway type" road lighting, especially along **the Göreme-Uçhisar road** and other characteristic view corridors of Cappadocia, disrupts the region's natural night silhouette and causes light pollution.
- The existing large-scale highway-type road lighting poles should be removed, and more minimal and energy-efficient pedestrian path-landscaping lighting, **suitable for the natural texture and our region**, should be implemented.

Solution-3: Order and Standardization in Signage

- There is a serious lack of order and visual pollution in business signs in the tourist towns, villages, and settlements of Cappadocia. Signs of different colours, excessive lighting, disproportionate size, and incompatibility with the architectural texture seriously damage the region's aesthetics.
- In densely populated tourist centres such as Uçhisar, Göreme, Ortahisar, Avanos, Ürgüp, and Mustafapaşa, this issue adversely affects the region's character by pushing the historical and traditional architecture into the background.
- To prevent this, a **"Commercial Signage Standard Guide"** should be prepared **under the coordination of the Cappadocia Area Directorate and relevant municipalities**; rules compatible with the region's identity should be determined in terms of size, colour, material, lighting type, and positioning.

- Following the guide, existing signs should be gradually renewed; a pre-approval system should be introduced for new businesses, and licensing processes should be tied to these rules.
- This will both protect the region's architectural texture and strengthen **the aesthetic integrity and brand value** of the tourist centres.

Solution-4: LED Lighting and Special Day Mapping Applications in Iconic Areas

- Iconic natural and cultural silhouette areas of Cappadocia, such as **Uçhisar Castle, Ortahisar Castle, Üç Güzeller, and Love Valley**, are not sufficiently emphasized in the night view.
- The irregular, colourful, and high-intensity lighting previously implemented in these areas causes light pollution throughout the region.
- Instead, a special lighting concept should be implemented using **low-energy consumption LED systems in tones compatible with the natural stone colour and texture**, highlighting the architectural character of the areas.
- **A lighting master plan** should be prepared for each area; applications should be carried out within the framework of UNESCO Visual Landscape criteria, with the joint approval of the Cappadocia Area Directorate, relevant municipalities, and energy administrations.
- Additionally, special mapping (light projection-projection shows) should be carried out on the region's iconic structures, primarily **Uçhisar Castle, on special days such as October 29th Republic Day, April 23rd, May 19th, New Year's Day, and international event days**. As seen in the example of the Galata Tower in Istanbul, these applications will both make cultural values visible with a contemporary narrative and help turn Cappadocia's night silhouette into a powerful tourism and promotion tool.

6. SUSTAINABLE HEALTH SERVICES

As a region hosting approximately 2 million tourists annually, Cappadocia requires a more sustainable perspective regarding health services.

Solution-1: Emergency Service Price Tariff

- Foreign tourists in need of emergency health services due to various reasons (injury, illness, etc.) may face exorbitant service bills in private hospitals, which causes serious problems in terms of guest satisfaction and tourism sustainability.
- It has become a crucial necessity for the relevant authorities to standardize the price tariffs or implement an upper limit for foreign guests in the emergency services of private hospitals.

Solution-2: Need for a Central Emergency Service Polyclinic

- Cappadocia, a region hosting approximately 4 million tourists annually including day-visitors, features a majority of medium-risk activities (horse riding, cycling, ATV, valley hiking, etc.), and the need for ambulance and emergency health services can arise at any moment.
- Currently, 112 ambulance services can be provided from Nevşehir centre and the Ürgüp and Avanos districts. Consequently, when an emergency arises in the Göreme – Uçhisar region, where tourism intensity is quite high, ambulance support is provided from hospitals located 15-20 minutes away in the Nevşehir centre.
- We believe it is extremely important to establish an Emergency Service Polyclinic located in the Göreme town, structured to provide 24-hour ambulance service, to serve the Göreme and Uçhisar towns and the surrounding valleys.