

# ULUSLARARASI SOSYAL ARAŐTIRMALAR DERĐİŐİ THE JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL RESEARCH

Uluslararası Sosyal Arařtırmalar Dergisi/The Journal of International Social Research

Cilt: 15 Sayı: 93 Ekim 2022 & Volume: 15 Issue: 93 October 2022

Received: Oct 03, 2022, Manuscript No. jisr-22-76409; Editor assigned: Oct 05, 2022, PreQC

No. jisr-22-76409 (PQ); Reviewed: Oct 19, 2022, QC No. jisr-22-76409; Revised: Oct 21, 2022,

Manuscript No. jisr-22-76409 (R); Published: Oct 28, 2022, DOI: 10.17719/jisr.2022.76409

[www.sosyalarastirmalar.com](http://www.sosyalarastirmalar.com) Issn: 1307-9581

## *PLANNING OF ACTIVITIES ON NOSTALGIC TRAIN JOURNEYS: A RECREATIONAL PERSPECTIVE*

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### **Abstract**

On the nostalgic train journeys, which are one of the recreational tours, it is seen that tourists meet new people along the way, watch nature scenes, and eat local dishes in various villages or towns. In addition, along the route, tourists can participate in cultural and nature trips in various destinations, visit historical bazaars, monumental structures visit national parks in some regions or do nature-based recreational tourism activities such as trekking, paragliding, mountain climbing, rafting, canoeing, rock climbing. For this reason, in this study, some examples from nostalgic train journeys are given and recreational activities carried out along these nostalgic train journeys are tried to be revealed. This study is a theoretical research using secondary data within the scope of nostalgic train journeys and recreational tour management. The study contributes to the literature of nostalgic train journeys, one of the alternative tourism types in tourism. At the end of the study, some suggestions were developed for tour planners, agencies and guides within the scope of recreational tour management.

**Keywords:** Recreational Tour Management, Nostalgia Tourism, Nostalgic Train Journeys, Tourism

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The railways, which date back to the 1500s, were first used in the mines in England in 1550 to transport horse-drawn coal wagons on wooden rails laid on the ground. After this application, which lasted for about 200 years, experiments that reduced friction with the ground were continued and finally, in 1776, the rail system made of mine was started in Sheffield for the first time. The 19th and 20th centuries are the years when the first locomotive, which is considered the beginning of today's railways, was discovered. The first locomotive was discovered by Richard Trevithick in England in 1803 and used in Wales. (Gürdal, 1995 as cited in Arıkan & AhipaŐaođlu, 2005: 32). The first railway tourism for fun and exploration started in the 1870s when tourists explored places with mountain or coastal views. After the 1950s, a second form of railway tourism, which we can call nostalgic, has emerged. Railway tourism has been enriched in different forms, from exploration and comfortable travel to nostalgia and historical experience (Gretha & Marchi, 2013). Train journeys, which are popular today, add a new color to people's lives. On train journeys that usually last one or two days, people get

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rid of the intensity and stress of city life and see mystical and exotic places intertwined with nature. In addition, in this triangle where culture, tourism and train travel come together, people's sharing of their experiences on social media by taking photos or videos adds color to their lives (Çakmak & Altaş, 2018: 391). Tourism routes are a type of travel that brings together a number of different attractions within the scope of a main theme and stimulates regional tourism as visitors travel from one place to another.

\*This article was presented as an oral presentation at the event held at the "I.International Mesopotamia Tourism Congress Cultural and Religious Tourism" between 27-27 November 2021 and this paper was published in the abstract book of Detay Yayıncılık, "Planning of Activities on Nostalgic Train Journeys: A Recreational Perspective", This is the completed version of the paper.

Recently, the demand of tourists for alternative tourism routes has increased considerably in Turkey. At the beginning of these routes, there are railway express services extending from the west to the east of Turkey (Alkan, 2018: 1016). Thanks to the developing technology, the progress made in the speed, comfort and services of the trains has led to the re-joining of trains in people's daily life and their frequent use in travels for tourism purposes (Çakmak & Altaş, 2018: 391). Recreational tours in the field of tourism include rafting, balloon tours, ornithology, underwater diving, trekking, paragliding, cave tours, camping, cycling, orienteering, safari, sky observation, fishing, helix (helicopter skiing), skydiving, wildlife observation, flora, canyoning, waterfall, skiing, mountaineering, geotourism, sport diving and nostalgic train journeys (Aylan, 2020: 38-137). In this study, some examples of nostalgic train journeys are given in this study for train journeys, the demand of which has increased with the development of recreational tours in the field of tourism, and the recreational activities carried out along these nostalgic train journeys have been tried to be revealed. In the first part of the research, nostalgic train travels and some recreational activities carried out in these trips are explained and then some of the nostalgia trains such as the eastern express, the southern kurtalan express, the transsiberian train, the canada: the rocky mountains train, the shiki shima train are included. At the end of the study, some suggestions were developed for tour planners, agencies and guides within the scope of recreational tour management.

## 2. NOSTALGIC TRAIN TRAVEL AND SOME RECREATIVE ACTIVITIES PERFORMED ON THESE TRAVELS

Rail travel was heavily used for public transport before passenger cars were common (Rodrigue et al., 2013). Tourism and entertainment trips made to transport tourists from one place to another by using railways are defined as railway tourism or nostalgia tourism. This definition includes various applications developed in France for about 150 years (Gretha & Marchi, 2013). In the Ottoman Empire, it is possible to collect the railways in two basic geographical areas. The first is the Balkan Railways line (the line connecting Istanbul to Paris, London through Serbia and the line connecting Thessaloniki to Macedonia and Bosnia). The second is the İzmir-Aydın line, which is the first railway line in Anatolia (Kâhya, 1988: 211-212). The first railway in Turkey was built between İzmir and Aydın in 1856 with a concession granted to a British company, and the construction of this 130 km long line was completed in 1866. İzmir-Turgutlu-Afyon line and the 98 km section of the Manisa-Bandırma line, which were built by another concessionary British company, were also completed and put into operation in 1865, and the remaining parts of the line were completed in the following years. İstanbul was connected to the European railway transportation system with the completion and commissioning of the 336 km-long İstanbul-Edirne and Kırklareli-Alpullu sections of the 2000 km-long eastern railways, whose construction concession was given to Baron Hirsch in 1869 (Arıkan & Ahıpaşaoğlu, 2005: 34). TCDD, which became a "Public Economic Institution" with the Decree No. 233 dated 8 June 1984 and has three subsidiaries, namely TÛLÖMSAŞ, TÛDEMSAŞ and TÛVASAŞ, continued its activities as the relevant institution of the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure (TCDD, 2020: 11).

Rail travel has the potential to influence children and young people to experience the experiences and nostalgic memories of the older generation (Michniak, 2016). Railway journeys offer a mystical and exotic travel opportunity, away from the intensity and stress of urban life, intertwined with nature (Çakmak & Altaş, 2018:391). In our country, railway connections to Europe are provided by the Bosfor Express that runs between İstanbul and Bucharest every day, and the train that runs every day between İstanbul and Thessaloniki. İstanbul-Sofia, İstanbul-Belgrade, İstanbul-Budapest and İstanbul-Chisinau connection are provided by wagons connected to the Bosphor Express (Arıkan & Ahıpaşaoğlu, 2005: 49).



“Why do people travel by train?” The following answer was given to the question: “People are affected by traveling by train, as in the past, and they especially enjoy traveling by steam train and independent travel. It is said that they prefer rail travel because of different route and train options, reasonable prices, walking around, enjoying the holiday with the scenery” (Archer & Syrratt, 2012: 97). The most important reasons for preferring to travel by train in transportation are as follows (Chooper et al., 1998 as cited in Arıkan & Ahıpaşaođlu, 2005: 55):

- Security,
- Opportunity to monitor the environment during the journey,
- Being able to move comfortably in the train,
- Convenient transportation to the destination,
- Personal comfort,
- Having central stations,
- Being an environmentally friendly mode of transportation,
- No traffic density problem.

Thanks to the developments in the railway industry, trains have various comfort facilities (secretary, telephone, internet, bathroom, toilet, music broadcasts, air conditioning, automatic doors, food and beverage services, TV and dance wagons). The importance of railways in terms of tourism is intensified in the following subjects (Usta, 2016: 36):

- Railways are the safest and cheapest means of mass tourism. Therefore, it provides the opportunity to travel especially to the social class.
- Railways provide the opportunity to travel to large masses of people by reducing unit transportation costs with public transportation.
- Railways have the advantage of carrying the highest number of passengers and cargo on a given line.
- Railways to tourists during their travel; It provides the opportunity to spend the night, meet the food and drink needs, move comfortably, watch the road routes and natural beauties.

During the train journey, passengers can engage in many different activities. In a study conducted in 2015, participants were asked what activities they did during the train journey. In this study, it was revealed that the most popular activities were “looking out”, “reading” and “chatting” (Hagen et al., 2017: 177-186).

As of 2021, there are trains in Japan reaching speeds of over 603 kilometers per hour. Similarly, many countries such as France, Germany, USA and Canada have knitted high-speed train networks. Today, the European Union continues to develop its own high-speed rail transportation network. U.S.A. Not content with this, it tries to strengthen the Europe-Asia link with two high-speed train lines, one via Romania-Crimea and the other via Turkey-Iran (Arıkan & Ahıpaşaođlu, 2005: 58). Roller trains have an impressive factor in terms of tourist attractiveness and tourist destination selection. Roller trains have made it easier to reach destinations and thus have been included in the competition between touristic destinations (Masson & Petiot, 2009).

Today, there are high-speed trains as well as trains that include nostalgia and luxury for tourists who enjoy nostalgic travels. Examples of luxury trains are the Eastem-Oriental Express, which travels between Chiang Mai-Bangkok and Singapore, apart from the Venice-Simplon Orient Express, the Great South Pacific Express, which travels along the east coast of Australia, the Blue Train in South Africa (Blue Train) or Royal Orient Express and the trains known as Palace on Wheels (Arıkan & Ahıpaşaođlu, 2005: 56). Silk road tourism has brought an important concept that has cost history back to the agenda and revived a historical value. If it can be fully implemented, it will provide great benefits for Turkey in today's economic conditions (Kozak & Bahçe, 2009: 161). Safety is a prerequisite for the criteria for choosing the means of transport for passengers. If the customer does not find the train journey safe, he will avoid choosing this means of transportation (Peek & Hagen, 2002).

Recreation is the activities that people voluntarily participate in and provide satisfaction in the period of their limited life, excluding obligatory behaviors (Hazar, 2014: 35). People want to regain their physical and mental health, which is endangered or adversely affected by daily intense work tempo, habitual lifestyle, or negative environmental effects. In addition, the activities that he performs voluntarily, individually or in a group, in his own free time, which will provide personal satisfaction for the purpose of obtaining pleasure and pleasure, are called recreation (Hacıođlu et al., 2015: 30). Participating in recreational activities is essentially a



phenomenon inherent in people. People want to do something other than their routine efforts to get rid of the routine standards of the life they live in and to renew both physically and mentally (Gül, 2014: 12).

One of the reasons why tourism is preferred is mostly for the purpose of resting and having fun. In other words, tourism is realized as an important economic and social potential in a wide variety of types or characters, generally in the form of a leisure activity, for rest and entertainment (Karaçuçuk, 2008: 203). Recreation management, on the other hand, is the effort of planning, organizing, directing and controlling leisure time activities in line with determined purposes. For example; activities to be carried out, expenses, the womb of the officials are included in the scope of recreation planning. The determination of the level of achievement of the goals together with the reasons and taking corrective measures when necessary are within the scope of recreation control. Recreation management is carried out by social institutions (state, foundations, associations, etc.) as well as by commercial enterprises (Hazar, 2014: 73). These recreational tours, in people's daily lives, in their spare time other than the time they spend to work and meet their basic needs; spending quality time, resting, having fun, doing sports etc. It can be defined as tours organized by travel agencies as a daily or overnight package tour outside the places of residence (Aylan, 2020: 36). For example, the French State Railways, SNCF, offers its passengers a number of extra services, including car, bicycle rental and hotel reservation. In addition, it is possible to travel all over France with rail-connected bus tours (Arıkan & Ahipaşaoğlu, 2005: 58). Below are some train routes that are considered important for nostalgia tourism and some recreational activities performed by tourists on these routes:



**DOĞU EKSPRESİ (EASTERN EXPRESS)**

Eastern Express operates daily between Ankara-Kars-Ankara and consists of pulman, covered couchette and dining wagons (<https://www.tcddtasimacilik.gov.tr/tren/dogu-ekspresi/>). There are different reasons that make the Eastern Express trend. Among them, social media is undoubtedly the most important reason. Eastern Express, which is used by small groups of young travellers, has also managed to attract the attention of different travelers with the posts made on social media. With the power of social media, the interest has grown even more. Doğu Express has become a frequent destination for Instagram users and Youtubers who want to present a popular topic to their followers (<https://www.38travel.com/>).

Çakmak & Altaş (2018), in their work, examined the Eastern Express train journey, which has been popular in social media in recent years. The study was carried out in the form of examining the three most watched Eastern Express videos on Youtube by discourse analysis method. As a result of the study examining these train journeys starting from Ankara and extending to Kırıkkale, Kayseri, Sivas, Erzincan, Erzurum and Kars; It has been determined that the passengers mostly prefer this train during the winter months, make new friends and friendships, eat local food, experience the excitement of the sleeper train journey, experience the nature view to the fullest, and are happy to share them in the social media environment. Buluk & Eşitti(2019), on the other hand, aimed to determine the thoughts of tourists traveling with the Eastern Express declared that they participated in cultural and natural tourism activities such as experiencing Kars cuisine, skiing in Sarıkamış, sleigh tour in Çıldır lake, visiting Ani Ruins, listening to bards within the scope of tourism and recreation activities they carried out in Kars.

It is not difficult to observe the effect that Instagram has had on the Orient Express flights. The number of shares and likes of content related to the Eastern Express on Instagram reached remarkable levels. There are



many hashtags related to the Orient Express on Instagram. Tags are used to increase the interaction rate on Instagram (Eryılmaz & Yüçetürk, 2018:215). There are many sources in the literature on the impact of social media on travel decisions with the Eastern Express (Eryılmaz & Şengül, 2016; Doğan et al., 2018; Demiral & Gelibolu, 2019; Korkusuz & Özdemir, 2020; Kaygın et al., 2021).



### GÜNEY KURTALAN EKSPRESİ (SOUTH KURTALAN EXPRESS)

The Southern Kurtalan Express operates between Ankara-Kurtalan-Ankara for 5 days a week (<https://www.tcddtasimacilik.gov.tr/tren/guney-kurtalan-ekspresi/>). The Kurtalan Express, which is the subject of songs and movies, is an important transportation axis between the southeast and west of Turkey, and is also an important line that provides transportation to many tourism regions such as Mardin, Hasankeyf, Diyarbakır, Tillo, Veysel Karani (Alkan, 2018: 1016).

Bingöl & Kozak (2020) was carried out within the scope of touristic trips on the East, South Kurtalan and Van Lake Express. Snowball technique was used to determine the people participating in the research. For this purpose, on March 3, 2020, interviews were conducted with two people first and then with 17 people in the scans made on Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube and Twitter. Among the indispensable recreational activities of train journeys; While the cheerful atmosphere, scenery, sleeping cars and activities were determined as the other services, the wide variety of meals and the serving of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks and long breaks at the stops were determined as other expected services. In his research, Alkan (2018: 1025-1029) re-evaluates the Kurtalan Express as a subject for tourism and contributes to eliminating the backwardness of the Southeastern Anatolia Region through tourism. As a result of the research, tourism types and activities that can be done along the route have been determined. The mentioned cultural richness of the region can be visited along the route and the tourist attractions that should be visited. Archaeological remains of the region can be seen. Rural architecture shaped by agriculture and animal husbandry can be seen in many villages and towns along the route. On the Kurtalan Express route, important cities can be visited from very rich civil architectural works, historical bazaars, squares and monumental buildings. The area is very rich in terms of intangible cultural heritage such as handicrafts, gastronomic culture and migration rituals on the route. This intangible cultural heritage can be experienced. Along the Kurtalan Express route, recreational activities can be carried out in areas very suitable for nature-based tourism activities such as rafting, canoeing, paragliding, mountain climbing, rock climbing, trekking, and water sports. Endemic plant species along the route can be studied. Passengers traveling with Kurtalan Express have the opportunity to see many protected areas and national parks on or near the route. : Provinces such as Siirt, Batman, Diyarbakır, Mardin and Şanlıurfa, which form the main route of the Kurtalan Express, have hosted polytheistic and monotheistic religions as mentioned before, and many cultural assets belonging to these can be visited. You can benefit from the thermal tourism facilities along the route.



**TRANS SIBERIAN TRAIN**

Railway connecting Western Russia to Siberia, Far Eastern Russia, Mongolia, China and the Sea of Japan. It is the longest railway in the world with a length of 9288 km from Moscow to Vladivostok (<https://tr.sputniknews.com/>).

There are three train lines that run regularly in Russia and go from Europe to the interior of Asia. Of these, the real Trans-Siberian line to the route of trains departing from Moscow and going to Vladivostok, the train line departing from Moscow and going to Ulan Bator, the Trans-Mongolian Line (Mongolia Train) and departing from Moscow to Beijing. The train line to E. is called the Trans-Manchurian Line (Chinese Train) (Üstünkaya, 2019: 6). Demir (2013), on the other hand, discussed the construction process and economic reflections of TSR, which enabled Russia to establish economic and political dominance in the entire geography from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean, as well as its contributions to the social and historical transformation of the country.

The world's top 10 train journeys include Trans - Siberian Express, Pride of Africa (14 Days) (34 Days from Cape to Cairo), Orient - Express (Venice - Vienna - Prague - Paris - London), Flam Express (Norway), Wheel Palace (India), Glacier Express (Swiss Alps), Train to the Clouds (434 Km / 15 Hours / 4200 M), Alaska Denali Express, Machu Picchu Train (Peru), Toy Train (India) (<https://www.festtravel.com/>).



**CANADA: ROCKY MOUNTAINS TRAIN**

The Rocky Mountains Train's First Westward Return Expedition, which runs between Vancouver and Banff, offers one of Canada's most scenic views. This trip, which is made with glass-covered wagons, which is luxuriously furnished and to see the whole landscape, passes through Fraser Canyon, Hell's Gate National Park and Thompson River. It is organized as a one-night tour and accommodation in Kamloops is included in the package. From the snowy peaks of the Canadian Rockies to the natural beauty of Banff, this ultra-luxury journey is bound to leave an unforgettable mark. In addition to the Rocky Mountains Train, Switzerland: Glacier Express, New Zealand: TranzAlpine, Scotland: West Highland Line, Australia: Ghan Train are among the important trains (<https://www.haberturk.com/>).



SHIKI SHIMA TRAIN

The demand for high quality train services in Japan is increasing day by day. A Japanese railway company has launched a new luxury train with sky views, luxury bathtubs and dark wood interiors. Inside, there are mats and bathroom cabinets made from special woods and mats, in keeping with Japanese traditions. Passengers can have a very luxurious dinner accompanied by live music. The wagons of the train named Shiki Shima are gold-plated. 33 passengers participating in the journey are treated by stopping at some spa hotels at the departure points. In order to see everywhere, including the sky, the train's 2 wagons are made of glass (Beyde, 2017).

### 3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Today, the speed of the plane is much higher than the trains; Since the trains, which can reach the same speed as the plane, are also more expensive than the planes, the railways lost the dominance in the main transportation to the airlines. Nevertheless, railways continue to make a significant contribution to tourism in places where planes cannot reach, medium-haul trips and overnight sleepovers (Arıkan & Ahıpaşaođlu, 2005: 58). Recreational tours, which are recreational tourism activities, constitute a large group in tourism movements and tourists can usually participate in daily, short-term recreational tours during their holidays. These tours are organized by tour operators and local agencies and offered to tourists. These tours are sold by reps (hotel guides) within the accommodation business where the holiday is spent, or by independent agencies outside the accommodation business (Aylan, 2020: 37). In many European countries, Canada, the United States of America, South Africa and Australia, "vehicle trains" that serve the tourists who go on long-distance journeys with their cars, with special wagons made for cars, have also been put on the expedition. Thanks to these flights, travelers are able to continue their journeys at night without using a car. Apart from their private cars, passengers can also carry other road vehicles such as bicycles and motorcycles. The most important contribution of railways to touristic activities can be shown to increase the mobility of individuals participating in tourism activities and to connect important centers as a reliable transportation type (Arıkan & Ahıpaşaođlu, 2005: 58). There are various dimensions and reasons for individuals to prefer and participate in recreational activities. The individual's desire to continue after performing an activity is the result of positive perception of the process and having a positive experience (Ardahan et al., 2016: 112). Participating in the nostalgic train journeys of individuals includes very different reasons. These include making friends, making a quiet journey, benefiting from recreational and tourism activities in the regions along the route, etc. is located.

In the management of recreational tours; While there are similarities in terms of services offered to the customer such as transfer, accommodation, transportation and guidance, there are also some differences. In these tours, professional people who have expertise or license (document) about the sport or activity that make up the content of the tour, rather than the guidance services that mostly require information transfer, as in classical cultural tours, are used (Aylan, 2020: 36-37). The trips made by these associations, which are especially common in England, to various countries and where they stipulate the use of old locomotives, have revealed a type of special interest tourism that can be called steam train tourism and nostalgic train tourism (Arıkan & Ahıpaşaođlu, 2005: 59). A wide variety of recreational activities attract the attention of tourists on these nostalgic train journeys, and tourists want to benefit from these recreational experiences along the way. New and interesting recreational experiences that will be added to the experiences of tourists throughout the journey will make these train journeys unique. For this reason, various suggestions have been developed below for tour planners, travel agencies or guides working in this context;



- Recreational tour planners can organize historical and cultural tours to important destinations on the tour route in nostalgic train travel and have them spend their lunch at a local restaurant.
- Attention can be paid to the types of breakfast served in the compartment and the variety of breakfast can be increased.
- Local guidance services can be offered.
- Expert professional guidance service can be provided throughout the tour in international train travels.
- All excursions and ruins entrances, accommodation should be pre-programmed and discounts should be requested for museum entrances,
- Visa and travel insurance must be made for international travels, travel assurance package must be presented,
- Tourists should be informed about the use of the Internet and telephone, and they should be informed that they are charged even when called, especially during phone calls to be made while traveling abroad. Considering that some trains may not have internet connection, information should be included in the tour program in advance.
- Recreational tour planners can provide informative materials such as route maps, guidebooks before visiting destinations along the tour route.
- Recreational tour planners should check the authenticity of the tour during the tour and control any possible mishaps.
- Recreational tour planners should enrich the tour program by identifying the types of tourism and activities that can be done along the route. Within this scope, canoeing, rafting, paragliding, skiing, mountain climbing, etc. nature activities can be carried out within the scope of tourism. In addition, national parks can be visited on the route.
- Also, one of the wagons can be designed as a dance wagon.
- In addition, there should be sufficient personnel trained in nostalgic train journeys.
- Taking additional safety precautions will increase the quality of the journey.

This research is a theoretical study that develops suggestions for recreational tour planners, agencies and guides in order to provide tourists with different recreational experiences on nostalgic train journeys. Future research can carry out empirical applications for the perceptions of tourists participating in nostalgic train journeys.

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