



# DEVELOPMENT OF ECOLOGICAL TOURISM IN UZBEKISTAN

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## ABSTRACT

*This article analyzes the development of tourism in Uzbekistan and its new direction, ecotourism, based on archival materials and scientific literature. The material on the development of ecotourism at the present stage in Uzbekistan is provided and the problems associated with the development of ecotourism in the republic are considered.*

**KEY WORDS:** *ecological tourism, eco-center, nature reserve, tourism fair, global economy, infrastructure, agreements, travel companies.*

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## DISCUSSION

Tourism today is one of the leading and most dynamic sectors of the world economy. For its rapid growth, it is recognized as the economic phenomenon of the century.

According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), the number of arrivals in 2000 was 698 million, and the amount of tourism receipts was \$ 478 billion. According to the forecasts of WTO experts, the number of trips in the world by 2010 may reach 1 billion tourist arrivals, of which 546 million will be in Central and Eastern Europe, including the CIS and Baltic countries, where tourism will develop at a faster pace than the European region as a whole [1].

The development of tourism in the republic is one of the economic sectors of the national economy, capable of creating thousands of new jobs in the future, accelerating the development of regions, increasing the income and quality of life of the population, which in turn will lead to an improvement in the country's image and investment attractiveness.

The tourism industry in Uzbekistan began its development in the 90s of the XX century, with the development of a market economy in independent Uzbekistan.

In this regard, in order to activate a new branch of the economy, namely tourism, the leadership of the Republic of Uzbekistan has taken a number of steps to develop the infrastructure of international tourism in the republic. This is

evidenced by the fact that even in the early years of the country's independence, a special resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On the development of international tourism infrastructure" created conditions for the development of the internal structure of the tourism industry and improving the quality of service. By a separate decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of October 20, 1992 "On the organization of the activities of the National Company" "Uzbektourism", in December 1992, the foreign trade association "Uzinturservice" was created. The main task of which was to conduct export-import operations for the company as a whole, as well as to provide various amenities for receiving foreign guests and providing them with various services [2].

The national company "Uzbektourism" in 1993 as a full member was admitted to the World Tourism Organization. This opened up wide opportunities for establishing close contacts with travel companies in many countries of the world, and raised their interaction to a qualitatively new level. At the same time, Uzbekistan, like many other countries of the world, has become a permanent participant in the International Tourism Fair (ITB) annually organized by the World Tourism Organization [3].

So, having created the necessary tourism infrastructure in the country and entering the orbit of international tourism, Uzbekistan began to build and implement a wide network of cooperation with travel



companies and firms of foreign countries and also to promote the tourism product in all directions.

The new industry began to develop rapidly and already in the first years of independence showed a good result, as evidenced by the following indicators. If in 1998 the total number of tourists visiting our republic was 6131 people, then in 1999 - 6940; in 2000 - 11155; in 2001 - 21174; in 2002 - 16,792; and in 2003 - 10,490 people [4].

In 2016, the number of operating travel companies amounted to 433 units, compared to 2012 by 75 companies more. The number of persons who received travel services in 2012 amounted to 511.6 thousand people, and in 2016 - 465.4 thousand [5].

From year to year in the world there is a steady upward trend in the number of international tourists. For example, in 2018 this figure reached 1.4 billion, and tourist exports amounted to 1.7 trillion US dollars. Thus, a country with tourism potential is simply obliged to develop its tourism industry. Uzbekistan is undoubtedly one of such countries [6].

According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism ranks fourth in world exports of goods and services, and in terms of profitability - third. Its share in world GDP is 10% [7].

International tourism continues to show strong and unrelenting growth, exceeding that of the global economy, with no significant signs of abating given that global arrivals are expected to grow 3.3% from 2010 to 2030, and will reach 1.8 billion by 2030, according to UNWTO's long-term forecast report *Tourism on the road to 2030*. Between 2010 and 2030, tourist arrivals in developing countries (+ 4.4% per year) are expected to grow at a double rate of that of developed economies (+ 2.2% per year). With the exception of Afghanistan, the Chinese Autonomous Regions of Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, and Turkmenistan, cumulative international tourist arrivals in the CAREC region in 2018 are estimated by the World Tourism and Travel Council (WTC) at just under 20 million, with growth projected ten years to 2028, almost 5%. Despite this, considered in a global context, the total share of CAREC countries (excluding the People's Republic of China) is less than 2% of world tourism [8].

A new turn in the development of tourism infrastructure, as well as in order to ensure its development, create favorable conditions and preconditions for the development of the private sector and increase tourist flows to the republic by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated December 2, 2016 No. UP-4861 "On measures to ensure accelerated development tourism industry of the Republic of Uzbekistan", an authorized state body was formed - the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for

Tourism Development, as well as by more than 30 decisions of the Head of State and the Government of the country, significant tax benefits and other preferences were provided to the subjects of tourism activities, the entry visa regime was canceled and simplified, innovative technologies were introduced in the field of tourism, conditions have been created for the effective promotion of the national tourism potential in the domestic and foreign markets [9].

Ecological tourism occupies a special place in the tourism industry of the countries. Now all over the world there is a tendency of development of this sector of the tourism industry. But often ecotourism is perceived only as a fashionable trend in the tourism industry. Ecotourism instills a love of nature, enhances the ecological culture of travelers, "respects" the interests of the local population and contributes to nature protection [10].

In Western countries, ecotourism is gaining more and more popularity from year to year. Almost every traveler chooses environmentally friendly trails for their routes. In the modern world, today ecological tourism is gaining popularity. Among the people, it is also called the "wild campaign", which, in general, has always been popular, but among a limited number of the local population of the republic. This type of recreation is now attracting more and more foreign tourists. This can be explained by the hustle and bustle of everyday life and the desire to relax in silence on the territory of a living, untouched by industry, pure nature. According to statistics, most tourists prefer direct live communication with nature [11].

Spending more time in untouched corners of nature, walking along the trails after animals, now it is becoming not only useful, but also fashionable. People began to prefer rest with their families on the territory of reserves, forest thickets or mountains. The people call this type of this tourism "green" or "soft" [12].

Uzbekistan has unique nature attractive for visiting guests, diverse landscapes (steppes, deserts, mountains, plateaus), various areas of flora, rare geological deposits, numerous architectural monuments that preserve the centuries-old history of our region.

Another treasure of the nature of our region is the Ugam-Chatkal State National Natural Park, located in the Tashkent region. The Chatkal Biosphere Reserve is located in the south of the Ugam-Chatkal National Park. The reserve is divided into two sections - Boshkizilsoy and Maidontol. The first one extends on the southern slopes of Chatkal, the second - on the northern slopes and glaciers. The picturesque landscapes of the reserve are represented by mountain ranges decorated with juniper forests, high-mountain alpine and xerophytic meadows and windy steppe zones. The Chatkal reserve is all dotted



with mountain patterns, caves and noisy waterfalls. And in the southern part of Maidontol, on the rocks near the banks of the Tereksai, in the Karasau tract, you can observe ancient rock paintings - the Tereksai petroglyphs. Even in the Chatkal reserve, very interesting bird watching tours are held [13].

The projects of the Eco-Forum of NGOs of Uzbekistan contributed to the involvement of the local population in ecological tourism activities on the territory of the Ugam-Chatkal National Park. The Rodnichok NGO promotes the development of youth ecotourism in the mountainous regions of the Tashkent region. Many summer camps, boarding houses and rest houses are located here, as this picturesque place seems to be just created for a comfortable pastime. Since 2017, the park has been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, and its protected part is closed for free visits.

One of the places actively visited places of ecotourism is the Ecocenter "Jeyran", created in 1997. It is located in the Kyzylkum desert, 40 kilometers from Bukhara. Its work is regulated by the State Committee for Nature Protection of the Republic of Uzbekistan. This is a nature reserve nursery, where endangered species of animals are bred. In the Ecocenter, gazelles, this rare species of animals, were studied and bred, and methods for the rational use of the population were developed [14].

Ecocenter actively cooperates with international environmental organizations, educational institutions and eco-movement. Various, world-renowned research centers regularly send their specialists to exchange experiences and train on the basis of the Ecocenter. Judging by the reviews of tourists, you can visit the eco-center with your family, live on the territory and enjoy the biodiversity of this place, or you can come as a volunteer and take an active part in the activities of the center. This, in turn, allows you to get closer to nature, to feel like a single whole, to become involved in solving the global task of reviving and preserving the population of the rarest animals, and also to make your own contribution to the nature conservation mission [15].

The natural and climatic potential of the republic is very diverse and rich - mountains with numerous caves, glaciers and lakes in the Tashkent region and the Fergana Valley, steppes, deserts and oases in Navoi and Bukhara regions, mountain landscapes in Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya regions, arid landscapes of Kyzyl Kum, large reservoirs with a rich avifauna in Karakalpakstan, Jizzakh and Syrdarya regions. As well as forests in the delta of the Amu Darya river, and the recently opened Kitab reserve, which testifies to the emergence of life on our planet, the region of "ecological disaster" near the Aral Sea, Nurata mountains and Lake Aydarkul, and many other natural places [16].

In order to promote the tourism product and facilitate the procedures for its promotion, a number of measures were taken in this direction.

In pursuance of the Decree of the President of Uzbekistan Sh. Mirziyoyev "On measures for the further development of the tourism sector in the Republic of Uzbekistan" from October 1, 2019, the "Open Skies" regime was introduced at the international airports "Karshi", "Nukus" and "Termez" with the use of the "fifth freedom of air" [17].

Also, according to the decree, the "Open Skies" regime is introduced at the "Bukhara" airport - with the use of the "fifth freedom of air" when transporting citizens of foreign states.

The fifth degree of "air freedom" is a right in relation to scheduled air transportation, granted by one state to another, according to which the designated carrier has the right to unload and take on board in the territory of the partner country, by agreement, passengers, mail and cargo coming from a third state or into it [18].

In order to develop and expand the tourism sector in the republic, the Concept for the development of the tourism sector in the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2019-2025 (Appendix N 1) to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan was developed and approved. from 05.01.2019 N UP-5611. The aim of which is to transform tourism into a strategic sector of the national economy. It touches upon the issues of further improving the regulatory framework in the field of tourism, implementation of international norms and standards, further liberalization of the visa regime for citizens of economically stable and safe states, providing the main flow of tourists in the republics [19].

An important issue is the development of new tourist programs, taking into account promising types of tourism (pilgrimage, educational, ecological, ethnographic, gastronomic, sports, health-improving, rural, industrial, business and others) to create a diverse, attractive and competitive tourist product at different times of the year. Of the Republic of Uzbekistan, including through the creation of thematic tourist zones and clusters in the regions of the country. To ensure the safety of tourists on the territory of the republic, it is planned to create specialized divisions of the internal affairs bodies to ensure safe tourism in the territories with the greatest tourist potential, equip them with modern technical and transport vehicles [20].

In this direction, work has been done to implement new transformations. The internal affairs bodies pay close attention to this area of activity. In particular, the Department for Coordination of Ensuring Safe Tourism of the Ministry of Internal Affairs is carrying out effective work to ensure the safety of



foreign tourists, to provide the necessary assistance for them in the route lines of their visit.

Another important issue in this case is the appearance of employees. It is the focus of the Safe Tourism Division. Recently, a project has been developed for a sample of a new uniform for employees of tourism departments. Uniforms of a new type are being tested by employees of the Tashkent and metropolitan service [21].

It should be noted that in the Department for Coordination of Ensuring Safe Tourism of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, a "Call Center" began its activity, the main task of which is to receive calls from tourists by phone and promptly organize the provision of the necessary assistance to them within the powers of the internal affairs bodies.

The call center is equipped with modern information and communication equipment and is connected to the duty units of the regional departments for ensuring safe tourism of the Central Internal Affairs Directorate of Tashkent, Tashkent, Bukhara, Samarkand, Surkhandarya, Kashkadarya and Khorezm regions [22].

Help will be provided by qualified specialists who are fluent in Uzbek, Russian and English, and who work around the clock, seven days a week. Ecotourism is one of the new directions of tourism today. And in this direction, our government takes a lot of efforts to improve its service that meets international standards. In this area, active work is underway on large-scale projects aimed at expanding tourist routes, organizing tourist services, and protecting the environment. For these purposes, organized and conducted master classes, trainings, seminars for guides of service personnel and owners of guest houses.

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