

DYNAMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INITIATIVES TO ENHANCE THE POTENTIAL OF GREEN TOURISM IN THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This scientific article summarizes current initiatives, current trends, economic indicators, prospects for further dynamic development of the tourism industry, enhancing the potential of “green” tourism of New Uzbekistan.

Keywords: UNWTO General Assembly, tourism industry, green tourism, tourism villages, Silk Road International University.

ANNOTATSIYA

Ushbu ilmiy maqolada Yangi O‘zbekistonning “yashil” turizmi salohiyatini rivojlantirishda joriy tashabbuslar va tendentsiyalar, iqtisodiy ko‘rsatkichlar, turizm industriyasini yanada rivojlantirish istiqbol yo‘nalishlari jamlangan.

Kalit so‘zlar: UNWTO Bosh Assambleyasi, turizm sanoati, yashil turizm, turistik qishloqlar, Ipak yo‘li xalqaro universiteti.

АННОТАЦИЯ

В данной научной статье обобщены актуальные инициативы, современные тенденции, экономические показатели, перспективы по дальнейшему развитию туристической индустрии, совершенствование потенциала «зелёного» туризма Нового Узбекистана.

Ключевые слова: Генеральная Ассамблея ЮНВТО, туристическая отрасль, зелёный туризм, туристические деревни, Международный университет “Шёлковый путь”.

The tourism industry is one of the fastest growing and promising sectors of the global economy. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, before the coronavirus pandemic, the tourism sector accounted for about 10 percent of global gross product and 7 percent of global exports. Last year, nearly one billion tourists traveled abroad globally, about 70 percent of the pre-pandemic figure. Recent years have been challenging, with global tourism experiencing its worst year on record in 2020, with international arrivals down 74 percent. Destinations welcomed 1 billion

fewer international travelers, resulting in an estimated \$1.3 trillion in lost export earnings, directly threatening 120 million tourism jobs. This downward trend continued in 2021 and 2022, and while much has turned positive since 2023 - international tourism has recovered 84% of its pre-pandemic level between January and July.¹

The first half of 2023 was a landmark year for tourism in Uzbekistan: the country welcomed a significant influx of tourists. 3.1 million people visited Uzbekistan for tourism purposes, 60% more than in the previous year 2022. In 2019, 6.7 million tourists visited Uzbekistan, and a total of 7 million tourists will visit the country this year. By 2030, it is planned to improve this figure to 15 million, the flow of domestic tourists - up to 25 million people. A visa-free regime has been introduced for citizens of about 100 countries and a simplified procedure for providing electronic visas has been established for citizens of 55 countries.

The member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), noting the importance of cooperation in environmental protection, ecological safety and prevention of negative consequences of climate change, development of specially protected natural areas and eco-tourism, agreed to declare 2024 the SCO Year of Ecology. The countries of the SCO organization will expand cooperation on environmental protection, adaptation to climate change, mitigation of its consequences, join efforts to combat air and water pollution and preserve biodiversity.

The XVI summit of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) developed a conceptual document "Strategic Objectives of Economic Cooperation - 2035", where special attention was also paid to deepening cooperation in the sphere of tourism, strengthening transport and communication interconnectivity, and combating climate change. The President of Uzbekistan made a proposal to establish a Tourism Advisory Committee under the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Secretariat, consisting of tourism administrations and leading experts of the member countries, and to hold its first meeting in the city of Shakhrisabz, declared the tourism capital of the organization.

The international cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative, following the principles of green and innovative development, has taken steps to establish the International Green Silk Road Coalition, implement the "Green Silk Road Envoy Program" and launch the initiative of partnership for green development of the "Belt and Road". All initiatives demonstrate that environmental friendliness has become a defining feature of high-quality cooperation under the Belt and Road. Former United

¹ President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev. Speech at the 25th session of the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization. "Xalq so'zi", № 219 (8520)17.10.2023.

Nations Under-Secretary-General Eric Solheim said that the initiative acts as the biggest impetus for global green development.

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, eco-tourism is recognized as one of the promising and fast-growing industries..

In Uzbekistan, priority attention is given to comprehensive modernization of the tourism industry, development and improvement of the regulatory and legal framework for sustainable development of the industry, organization of services for foreign guests in accordance with international standards, improvement of infrastructure, as part of large-scale and irreversible reforms to modernize the country. Favorable conditions have been created for conducting all types of tourism business, tax and customs privileges have been provided, credit and financial support has been strengthened. Despite pandemic-related constraints, more than 800 infrastructure projects have been implemented over the past two years. More than 1 billion dollars of investments were directed to improve the tourist infrastructure of Samarkand city. The fund of hotels was brought up to 140 thousand places, 70 new tourist routes were opened, 6 private airlines started operating. As a result, the number of foreign tourists arriving in Uzbekistan has increased 2 times. Revenues from export of tourist services have grown 4 times. For example, this year Uzbekistan was visited by 5 times more tourists from Japan, 3.5 times - from India and Italy, 2 times - from the United States. A significant contribution to the total number of tourists is made by four key states, which account for about 92% of the total flow. These include the following states: Tajikistan: 958.5 thousand visitors, Kyrgyzstan: 786.4 thousand visitors, Kazakhstan: 764.4 thousand visitors, Russia: 345 thousand visitors¹. A notable trend is the sharp increase in the number of visitors from all these countries in May and June. This growth testifies to the growing attractiveness of green tourism and natural riches of Uzbekistan for the most diverse categories of foreign travelers.

Green tourism is the only direction in the tourism industry interested in preserving the main resource - the natural environment or its individual components (natural monuments, certain species of animals and plants, natural landscapes, etc.). It involves traveling with environmental responsibility towards undisturbed natural areas in order to explore and enjoy nature and cultural attractions, which contributes to the protection of nature, has a soft impact on the environment, ensures the active socio-economic participation of local residents and benefits from these activities.² All actions of firms offering ecotours should be harmonized with the law on "Nature Protection". The nature protection legislation of Uzbekistan is harmonized with the criteria of the

¹ Statistical Agency under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 06.08. 2023. www.stat.uz

²A.A.Ablaizov. Problems of organization and development of ecotourism in Uzbekistan. Samarkand Institute of Economics and Service. Physical culture. Sport. Tourism. Motor recreation. 2019. T.4, №4

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Within the framework of the UNESCO program, biosphere reserves are created at the national level, geoparks are created, and sites are included in the World Heritage List. The total area of protected natural territories (PNT) is consistently increasing, and one of Uzbekistan's international commitments is to increase the area of protected natural areas to 12 percent of the country's territory by 2028.¹

Uzbekistan has established a solid legal framework that meets modern requirements; more than 30 laws and some 250 normative acts regulating ecology, environmental protection and the rational use of natural resources are in force today. The new version of the Constitution includes norms on the rights of everyone to a favorable environment, reliable information on its condition, the obligation to treat the environment with care, the protection by the State and the rational use of land, its subsoil, water, fauna and flora and other natural resources. In the context of global environmental problems, the country is consistently working on the adoption and implementation of laws, regulations, state programs aimed at protecting the environment and improving the ecological situation. Today it is important to improve the work on rational use of water resources, prevention of losses and excessive water consumption, stimulation of the use of water-saving technologies in spheres and industries, transition to renewable energy sources, improvement of waste management, prevention of air pollution, preservation of biological diversity.

Uzbekistan has a number of opportunities for types of ecotourism. These range from long scientific expeditions to short-term vacations in nature. The most popular types of green tourism are hiking, donkey or horseback riding, bird watching, photography, fishing, botanical and archaeological tours, and observation of various species of mammals, butterflies and reptiles. Green tourism gives an opportunity to see all the beauty of nature in Uzbekistan. Winter resort "Amirsoy", recreation areas "Afsonalar vodiysi", "Zamin" and "Charvak" have turned into international tourist centers attractive for many foreign tourists. The Republic of Karakalpakstan and the shores of the Aral Sea are of particular interest for the development of green tourism. The state takes measures to protect and restore the ecological system, social and economic development of the Aral Sea region.

Uzbekistan, in accordance with the principle of sustainable development, is implementing measures to improve, restore and protect the environment, preserve ecological balance, ensure rational use of natural resources, preserve the biodiversity of mountainous areas, support and develop a network of specially protected natural

¹ N. Shulepina. What is the future of ecotourism in Uzbekistan. Information eco-network. 03.03.2021. www.Sreda.uz.

areas, reduce the risks of natural destructive processes in the mountains and optimize environmental and economic relations concerning the exploitation of mountain resources and energy sources.

The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan elevates environmental protection to the rank of State policy. It clearly defines: "The earth, its subsoil, water, flora and fauna and other natural resources are national wealth, subject to rational use and protected by the State".¹

The system of protected natural territories (PNT) of Uzbekistan includes seven state reserves, one complex (landscape) reserve, twelve natural parks, one national park, eleven natural monuments, two state biosphere reserves, eleven wildlife sanctuaries, and one specialized nursery "Jeyran". Their total area is 6.041 million ha or 13.46 percent of the country's territory.

"Green" tourism allows you to travel without harming nature and the environment. Ecotourism is traveling to places with relatively untouched nature with the purpose, without disturbing the integrity of ecosystems, to get an idea of the natural and cultural-ethnographic features of the territory, which creates such economic conditions, when nature protection becomes profitable for the local population".² In order to ensure environmental protection, it is important to concentrate tourist facilities in certain areas with well-developed infrastructure, to carry out constant monitoring of environmental impacts and to make timely changes in the development of tourism in order to eliminate or minimize its negative impacts. Under the condition of competent development "green" tourism can play its role in solving the current socio-ecological crisis.

"Green" tourism implies accommodation of tourists in guest houses, camping, glamping (a young and fashionable trend of ecotourism, luxury vacation in nature), tourist villages. Tourist villages with traditional way of life and unique craftsmanship are improving. One of the centers of ecotourism in Uzbekistan is Sentob village in Navoi Region, winner of the Best Tourism Villages 2023 Awards. Sentob is regularly visited by foreign tourists from England, France, Austria, Germany, Italy, Russia and other countries. Other popular villages include Konigil in Samarkand Region, Sangardak in Surkhandarya Region, Ukhum in Jizzak Region and Avval in Fergana Region.

In the context of growing problems of climate change, the relevance of the International Program of Action for the Development of Green Tourism was emphasized. As practical steps, it is proposed to establish a nomination of our

¹ Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Chapter XII, Article 68, 01.05.2023. www.lex.uz

² Tukhliyev N. Ecological tourism: essence, trends and development strategy.-T.: State Scientific Publishing House "O'zbekiston Milliy Encyclopedia", 2006. - p.26.

Organization "The best city for the introduction of green tourism" within the UNWTO, to create a Global Laboratory of green tourism start-ups on the basis of the Central Asian University of Environmental Studies and Climate Change and the International Silk Road University.

Tourism as no other sector of the world economy depends to such an extent on clean water, beaches, air and generally on the state of nature as the tourism industry.

Tourism will be able to develop only with the rational use of natural resources. Environmental protection and nature conservation are natural allies of the tourism industry. Today the task of further tourism is formed as minimizing its negative impact on the natural environment, environmental safety, development of environmental culture of the population. A key role in promoting the education of the population, in solving the issues of harmonizing the relationship of mankind with the environment played United Nations environmental conferences (Rio de Janeiro, 1992; Johannesburg, 2002; Montreal, 2010; Cancun, 2010, New York 2013-2015, Stockholm 2022, etc.).

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