

PROSPECTS AND MODERN DIRECTIONS OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOURISM SECTOR IN UZBEKISTAN.

Razzakova Gulchekhra

Teacher of the Bukhara Technicum of Tourism and Cultural Heritage.

Uzbekistan, with its geographical location, rich cultural heritage, historical landmarks, and natural resources, has great potential to attract global tourists. In recent years, the development of the tourism sector has become one of the government's priority policies. Located in Central Asia, Uzbekistan boasts a 7,000-year-old history, unique cultural heritage (such as UNESCO-listed cities like Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva), and natural landscapes (such as the Kyzylkum Desert and Chimyon Mountains), giving it significant potential in the global tourism market. According to statistics published by the State Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan in 2024, the tourism sector accounted for 1.8% of the country's GDP in 2023.

This article discusses the prospects and opportunities for tourism development in Uzbekistan, as well as the existing challenges and ways to overcome them. The government of Uzbekistan has implemented measures aimed at creating a solid legislative framework for tourism development. Simplifying the visa regime, providing various incentives for foreign tourists, and enhancing competitiveness in the tourism sector will increase the attractiveness of Uzbekistan as a destination. In recent years, Uzbekistan's tourism infrastructure, including hotels, transportation, and entertainment venues, has developed significantly. The opening of modern hotel chains in areas with historical and cultural heritage is ensuring that tourists are provided with better facilities. The creation of convenient transport systems to Uzbekistan's most attractive destinations makes travel more enjoyable for tourists. Uzbekistan is not only focusing on its historical cities — Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva — but the government is also placing significant emphasis on developing new tourism sectors such as ecotourism, adventure travel, and cultural tourism. The country's mountainous regions and natural beauty offer tourists new and unique experiences.

The tourism sector in Uzbekistan has been rapidly developing in recent years. In 2024, nearly 8.2 million foreign tourists visited the country, an increase of 1.6 million or 24.2% compared to 2023. The average length of stay for tourists in

the country extended to around four days, which is 1.3 times longer than in 2023.

Since the beginning of 2024, the flow of tourists to Uzbekistan has been steadily increasing each month. In January 2024, 4,601 citizens from European Union countries visited Uzbekistan for tourism purposes. Between January and March, a total of 1.519 million foreign citizens arrived for tourism. By the end of the first five months, more than 2.8 million foreign visitors had traveled to Uzbekistan, including 10,600 tourists from the United States. By the end of six months, the number of incoming tourists exceeded 3.5 million, and by October 1, it reached 5.7 million.

The majority of tourists came from Tajikistan (2.15 million), Kyrgyzstan (1.76 million), Kazakhstan (1.33 million), and Russia (714,000). Additionally, the number of tourists from Arab countries and China increased by at least four times.

Domestic tourism is also becoming more active. In 2023, under the "Travel Across Uzbekistan!" program, 21 million domestic tourist trips were organized. During the same year, 810 new tour operators and travel companies were established, creating 70,000 new jobs. Moreover, 183 hotels, 215 hostels, and 356 family guest houses were launched.

On January 12, 2024, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan signed Decree No. PF-9 "On Measures to Sharply Increase the Flow of Foreign Tourists to the Republic and Further Accelerate Domestic Tourism." According to the decree, modern hotels (accommodation facilities) and tourism centers, including shopping and entertainment complexes larger than 5,000 square meters, will be built in districts and cities with high tourism potential.

It also provides for the establishment of major shopping complexes ("Luxury Tourism Village") featuring duty-free shops and international brand stores in areas such as the "Zomin" tourist and recreational zone, the "Chimyon" international year-round resort, and the "Amirsoy" ski resort.

Furthermore, the decree stipulates that an International "Uzbek Silk Fabrics" Fashion Week ("Silk Uzbekistan Fashion Week") with a prize fund of 2 million USD will be held every two years during the third week of May.

Additionally, national jewelry stores will be permitted to install vending machines for selling Uzbekistan-made measured ingots of precious metals and commemorative coins issued by the Central Bank. The decree also envisions holding seasonal tourism festivals titled "Travel in Every Season" to mark the opening of each tourism season.

The adopted measures for the development of tourism highlighted the necessity of improving the calendar schedule of festivals held in Uzbekistan and revising the requirements for organizing concerts featuring famous foreign performers. In addition, responsible authorities have been assigned the task of holding negotiations with their counterparts in neighboring countries to further simplify border crossing procedures.

Moreover, one of the challenges emerging from the increase in the number of foreign tourists is the difficulty they face in purchasing tickets for domestic flights and trains well in advance. In this regard, the launch of a unified online platform providing information on all routes and enabling ticket purchases is under consideration, as well as the introduction of a system to sell tickets at differentiated prices at least six months ahead of departure.

In order to develop the tourism sector in Uzbekistan, it is considered appropriate to design and implement measures in the following areas:

1. Development of Cultural and Historical Tourism through UNESCO Integration:

- Digitalization of seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva (introducing virtual tours, AR/VR technologies).
- Elevating local cultural festivals to an international level and providing necessary infrastructure to attract foreign tourists to festival locations.
- Improving transit routes such as Khiva–Bukhara–Samarkand and developing new historical tour itineraries.

2. Development of Ecotourism and Winter Tourism:

- Utilizing natural resources by creating eco-camping sites and pedestrian trails along the Zarafshan River, Aydar Lake, and Chatkal Mountains.
- Promoting winter sports by organizing international competitions at the "Amirsoy" ski resort.
- Integrating "Zomin" and "Chimyon" areas with duty-free shopping centers and hotels.

3. Improving Infrastructure and Service Quality:

- Increasing the number of five-star hotels and promoting the growth of boutique hotels.
- Expanding the number of high-speed trains on the Tashkent–Samarkand–Bukhara route and establishing bus routes to remote tourist destinations.

- Increasing the number of tourism service companies certified by ISO standards and developing incentive mechanisms for them.

4. Expanding the Use of Digital Innovations:

- Developing and implementing a unified system integrating the booking of all transport (air, railway) and hotel services.
- Conducting regular in-depth data analytics to study tourist behavior and preferences to develop attractive destinations accordingly.
- Reforming the visa system.

5. Supporting and Conducting International Marketing:

- Promoting Uzbekistan as the "Cultural Capital of Central Asia" through television and social media campaigns abroad.
- Organizing international tours along the "Great Silk Road" in cooperation with China, India, and Arab countries.

6. Supporting Domestic Tourism:

- Offering 30% discounts for local tourists at hotels and providing travel grants for youth.
- Continuing and expanding the "Travel Across Uzbekistan!" program, which attracted 21 million local tourists in 2023.

In conclusion, Uzbekistan's tourism sector has been developing rapidly in recent years, with a significant increase in both international tourist inflow and the volume of domestic tourism. Through the adoption of systematic measures by the government, the development of infrastructure, digitalization, the opening of new tourism routes, and the strengthening of international marketing efforts, the country's competitiveness in the global tourism market is steadily improving. The combination of cultural and historical heritage, natural resources, and modern services is making Uzbekistan an increasingly attractive destination for tourists. Looking ahead, the development of ecotourism, winter sports, modern transport, and digital services, as well as the support for domestic tourism, will contribute to the stable and consistent growth of the tourism industry. At the same time, it is essential to continue active reforms in areas such as simplifying the transport and ticketing system for foreign tourists, liberalizing visa regulations, and improving service quality. Overall, tourism is becoming one of the key pillars of Uzbekistan's economy and social life, making strategic planning and continuous improvement vital for sustainable development.

References

1. Valixanov Azizbek Ravshan o'g'li. (2025). ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF TOURISM FOR THE PURPOSE OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN. *EPRA International Journal of Economic and Business Review*, 31–34. <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra20180>.
2. Fei, X. (2024). RESEARCH ON THE DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS OF UZBEKISTAN TOURISM MARKET ECONOMY. *International Journal of Economics and Innovative Technologies*, 12(1), 237–245. https://doi.org/10.55439/eit/vol12_iss1/i27.
3. Ying, L., Ziyi, Q., Shizhuan, H., Yan, L., & Tongqian, Z. (2024). The development of digital tourism in China. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2024.2347013>.
4. AlShaalán, M. K., & Durugbo, C. M. (2024). City branding as innovation for tourism development: systematic review of literature from 2011 to 2023. *Management Review Quarterly*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-024-00431-2>.
5. Egamnazarov, K. (2023). How Does Smart Tourism Support Sustainable Tourism Development: the Case of Uzbekistan. *YASHIL IQTISODIYOT VA TARAQQIYOT*, 1(mx). https://doi.org/10.55439/ged/vol1_issmaxsusson/a617.
6. Razzakova Gulchekhra (2025). The role and opportunities of digital transformation in the tourism sector. Vol. 1 No. 1 (2025): CONFERENCE OF MODERN SCIENCE & PEDAGOGY. <https://tijst.org/index.php/USA/article/view/120>.