

Republic of Uzbekistan: An Attractive Country on the World Tourist Map

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Abstract:

Uzbekistan has a rich cultural heritage, historical monuments, picturesque nature, and hospitable people, which already today attracts tourists from all over the world. In the future, the country may offer even more diverse tourist routes, from pilgrimages to holy places to outdoor activities. The future of tourism in Uzbekistan promises to be bright and promising thanks to the development of infrastructure, strengthening international cooperation, and promoting its unique tourism product.

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Like pearls scattered along the Great Silk Road, the cities of modern Uzbekistan sparkle under the bright sun. This country is especially rich in historical artifacts. Life has always been in full swing here, cities have grown and appeared, and construction, trade, and crafts have developed. And all thanks to its advantageous location in a picturesque oasis, practically in the center of the Great Silk Road network of roads.

Such famous Uzbek cities as Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Tashkent, Termez, Urgench, and Fergana served as land beacons on the Great Silk Road. The flourishing oasis cities that grew along the Silk Road became international transshipment points for goods and were vital centers of trade, crafts, and the spread of various cultures.

The favorable territorial location of the cities made them attractive to various conquerors. The territory of modern Uzbekistan was conquered dozens of times by various conquerors. But caravan trade roads were revived again, and cities and settlements arose along them, well-groomed gardens and arable lands became green - the ancient walls of Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva carefully

preserve the memory of all this. Ancient cities with beautiful architectural monuments preserve the memory of many centuries.

The development of international air travel, the construction of new hotel complexes, the creation of tourist zones, and the development of infrastructure will help increase the number of tourists in the country. In addition, the authorities of our country are actively working to simplify the visa regime and create a convenient tourism infrastructure.

Last year, 2023, according to the Statistics Agency, 6.6 million foreign citizens visited Uzbekistan for tourism purposes. This figure is 1.4 million or 26.6% more than the corresponding period in 2022. Among them are citizens of Tajikistan - 2155.2 thousand, Kyrgyzstan - 1757.1 thousand, Kazakhstan - 1333.3 thousand, Russia - 714.3 thousand, Turkey - 106.5 thousand, Turkmenistan - 100.3 thousand. , India – 45.5 thousand; China – 42.5 thousand; South Korea – 37.1 thousand; Germany – 29.6 thousand; Italy – 25.6 thousand; USA – 23 thousand; France – 18.6 thousand; Great Britain – 16.2 thousand; Spain – 15.2 thousand; Belarus – 15.1 thousand; Azerbaijan – 14.7 thousand; Japan - 12.4 thousand.

Uzbekistan ranked 4th in the list of 20 rapidly developing countries in the tourism sector published by UNWTO, and the website of the popular Saudi newspaper “Sado” published an article entitled “Uzbekistan is carrying out large-scale reforms to include the country in the world tourism map.” The average length of stay of tourists in Uzbekistan is 4-5 days. This is 1.5 times more than in 2019 (2-3 days). In 2017, each foreign tourist who visited the republic spent an average of \$197. In 2023, this figure reached \$400, and the volume of tourism income for 9 months of 2023 amounted to \$1.72 billion.¹

The Presidential Decree on the Strategy “Uzbekistan – 2030” (goal 58) sets the task of increasing the number of tourists by creating large-scale conditions for the development of external and internal tourism in Uzbekistan. To timely and fully implement the tasks defined in the strategy, practical measures are being taken to develop tourism.

An action plan was approved to assign the status of “tourist mahalla” to 40 villages and mahallas. Based on this, the tasks for organizing tourism mahallas from 2024 have been defined.

The 25th session of the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) was held in Samarkand on October 16-20, 2023. This event was attended by delegates from 140 countries, ministers of tourism, heads of tourism departments, representatives of large companies operating in this field, and entrepreneurs, who got acquainted with the historical places of Uzbekistan and showed great interest in historical monuments.

In 2023, through the implementation of 508 projects with a total value of 9.5 trillion sums, 9,492 new jobs were created. Exports of tourism services amounted to 2 billion 143.5 million US dollars. This is the result of the comprehensive amenities created for tourists in the country.

As part of the program “Uzbekiston bo’ylab sayohat qil!” (Travel around Uzbekistan!), 15 million of the country’s population traveled. As social support, tours were organized for 1,100 people with disabilities and 570 thousand young people. In the regions of the country, 183 new hotels and 232 hostels were opened, the total number of accommodation facilities was 5,526, and the number of beds in them was 144,094. 452 family guest houses were created, and their total number reached 3,458, and the number of beds was 30,738.

In addition, as a result of the creation of 810 new tour organizations and travel agencies in 2023, their number increased to 2,649 units. Today, 2,551 tour guides are working throughout the republic.

¹ <https://kun.uz/ru>

To widely promote the tourism potential of Uzbekistan in the regions of Europe, North America, the Asia-Pacific region, the Middle East, China and Central Asia, agreements were concluded with foreign media corporations and TV channels “BBC WORLD NEWS” (audience 600 million), “CNN” (audience 1 billion) and EURONEWS (audience 800 million), as well as with the online travel platform Ctrip.com (audience 500 million) and the organization Visa Facilitation Services Global (audience 100 million).

In June 2023, in the international ranking of pilgrimage tourism “World Muslim Travel Index” (GMTI-2023), Uzbekistan took 13th place out of 140 countries.

Khiva received the "Islamic Heritage Tourism Destination of the Year" award at the Halal In Travel Awards 2023 event.

At the 25th session of the UNWTO General Assembly, held in the city of Samarkand, the village of Sentob, Navoi region, became the winner in the “Best Tourism Village 2023 Awards” category.

At the initiative of Uzbekistan, 2027 will be declared the International Year of Sustainable and Resilient Tourism. On February 26, 2024, at the UN headquarters in New York City, the General Assembly of the Organization unanimously approved the resolution “2027 - the International Year of Sustainable and Resilient Tourism.”

More than 80 member countries of the Organization were co-authors of the resolution initiated by the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Experts from leading countries such as Russia, China, the USA, Turkey, Germany, Great Britain, the EU delegation, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Egypt, Brazil, and Argentina took an active part in the consultations to agree on the text of the document. Representatives of UN member states noted the timeliness and relevance of the presentation of this resolution.

The main goal of the document is entirely based on the thesis put forward by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the Samarkand session of the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in October 2023 on the sustainability and flexibility of the tourism sector to new problems and challenges of our time.

The resolution enshrines the principles voiced by the head of our state on the important role of tourism in preserving the rich cultural heritage of various civilizations, strengthening peace and tolerance, and respect for the values of peoples.

Particular attention is paid to the development of “green” tourism to preserve the environment, and biodiversity and reduce air pollution.

The document decides to declare 2027 the International Year of Sustainable and Resilient Tourism and calls on UNWTO, together with governments, UN agencies, and regional organizations, to take comprehensive measures for its successful implementation.

The resolution highlights the importance of developing sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, which can contribute to achieving the SDGs, economic growth, full employment, as well as rural development and improving the livelihoods of rural people.

The resolution encourages all stakeholders to actively promote sustainable and resilient tourism as an important tool for poverty eradication, promoting the participation of women, youth, older persons, and persons with disabilities, expanding economic opportunities, and creating decent jobs and income sources.

The document decides that UNWTO will inform the UN General Assembly at its 83rd session (2028) on the implementation of this resolution, with particular attention to the assessment of the implementation of the International Year.

According to experts, the resolution put forward by Uzbekistan will mark the beginning of a new stage in the development of the tourism industry at the global level²

Tourism in Uzbekistan has great potential due to its rich cultural heritage, history, and beautiful natural landscapes. Government authorities are actively developing infrastructure for tourists, and building new hotels, routes, and attractions.

Uzbekistan is becoming an increasingly popular destination for tourists from around the world, which contributes to the economic development of the country.

For the further development of tourism in Uzbekistan, it is necessary to continue to invest in infrastructure, improve the quality of services, and promote the country as a tourism brand in the world market.

To quickly develop the tourism sector and infrastructure, an address list of 30 large tourism clusters has been approved, and their activities are being launched step by step.

Thus, the future of tourism in Uzbekistan promises to be prosperous, attractive, and diverse, which will allow the country to take its rightful place on the world tourism map.

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