



## The Tourism Potential of Uzbekistan (Navoiy Region)

**Amriddinova Rayxona Sadriddinovna**

Associate Prof. of Samarkand Institute of Economics and Service

**Ziyodullayeva Sevara Begali qizi**

Master student of Samarkand Institute of Economics and Service

**Abstract:** *Uzbekistan has great potential for the development of the tourism industry. As one of the activities reforms and economic growth, tourism in the country has increased five times over the past three years. If in 2016 Uzbekistan was visited by about 1 million tourists, then this figure rose to 2.7 million in 2017 and more than 5.3 million in 2018. The number of foreign tourists is expected to grow to 7 million by 2025, and the annual foreign exchange earnings from foreign guests will reach like 2 billion dollars. However, Uzbekistan's tourism sector still faces challenges. These include the poor transport and payment systems, lack of appropriate hotels, medical services, language assistance and information for tourists.*

**Keywords:** *Tourism, Potential, Tourists, Regions, Foreign countries*

### INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the sectors Uzbekistan has sought to reform and revitalize since 2016. Its reform process aims to create jobs and new business opportunities; further the diversification and accelerated development of regions; increase incomes and living standards and quality of life, boost foreign-exchange earnings; and improve Uzbekistan's overall image and investment. ix Uzbekistan held its first International Investment Forum on November 19-21, 2018 to expand international engagement in the sector and disseminate information about the country's tourism potential. Visa Policy Uzbekistan's complicated visa application process was an obstacle to its efforts to develop tourism. To deal with the problem, Uzbekistan introduced on July 15, 2018, electronic visas for citizens from 77 countries, including the United States. A single or multiple entry visa is valid for 30 days. The cost of obtaining a single-entry electronic visa is \$35 (a multiple-entry one is \$50), and travelers must apply for the e-Visa at least three days before their trip. A visa-free regime exists for citizens from 65 countries visiting Uzbekistan for 30 days or less. Additionally, a bilateral visa-free regime has been established with Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan (up to 60 days), Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan (up to 30 days), and Ukraine. Uzbekistan and Japan issue visas without consular fees on a mutual basis.x In January, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan planned to launch a unified service project called the "Silk Road Visa," which will enable foreigners with a valid visa from either country to travel in both countries.xi The project is still under discussion, but gained support from representatives of the tourism departments of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan during the first Tourism Fair of the CIS countries between July 9-10.xii The ultimate goal of the "Silk Road Visa" is to create an "Asian Schengen" with all Central Asian countries in the system. The complicated border divisions of Central Asian countries and their enclaves make it difficult for tourists to travel



across the border multiple times with one country's visa only. Such complications and the lack of connectivity within the region discourage tourists and reduce their number. Therefore, the "Silk Road Visa" program should attract more travelers to the region.<sup>11</sup>

Although Uzbekistan has made substantial efforts and launched numerous reforms to expand and improve its tourism industry as part of its program of economic growth, further actions are needed. The Uzbek government has addressed shortcomings/inconveniences still connected with border procedures, transportation, and guest accommodations. Still, some support facilities and services require action by the government or private sector, especially given the role they play in attracting tourists or encouraging them to become repeat visitors.

Building a bigger, more developed, more internationally competitive tourism market can help Uzbekistan's economy grow, just as tourism has been an engine of growth in western European and other countries. It can also have domestic social, cultural, and education benefits in addition to boosting a country's international reputation and identity. Uzbekistan has already made its national strategy, "Concept of the Development of the Tourism Industry — 2025," a guide and framework. The government has approved its Action Plan for 2019 for implementing the Concept. The Action Plan contains 36 points, including improving the regulatory framework, further developing the tourism infrastructure, developing transportation networks, establishing a regular intercity bus service, and organizing protected zones. The infrastructure construction will lay a solid foundation for the tourism industry and thus provide better service for tourists from all over the world.

Therefore, the Uzbek government should provide more space for the private sector, especially foreign partners who have more experience and capital. At the same time, foreign private sector actors should look at the opportunities they have — from facilities such as hotels, shopping centers, and restaurants, to services such as travel agencies, taxis, and online services for ride-sharing or hailing rides, and obtaining lodging reservations. Additionally, beautiful and varied Uzbek handicrafts and local agricultural and food products are very popular among foreign tourists. The private sector can, in addition to establishing and providing such goods and services, can also help provide a standardized system of marketing and sales channels to boost profits and foreign-currency receipts. A further benefit to a growing role for the private sector in Uzbekistan's tourism industry is to help empower women and promote gender equality in Uzbek society.

**Main part.** Navoi region is relatively young in comparison with other regions of Uzbekistan. Its administrative center is Navoi city. The total area of the region is 110.91 thousand sq. Km; the population is 942,843 people.

The nature of the Navoi region is diverse, with the Kyzylkum desert in the northwest, the Nurata mountain range in the southeast, and rich and diverse agricultural fields in the middle of the Zarafshan River. Along with the Zarafshan River, many large water sources, such as Aydarkul, Shurkul, Todakol, contribute to the diversity of the nature of the region.

The region is rich in natural resources, including non-ferrous metals and construction raw materials. Navoi Mining and Metallurgical Combine is one of the world's largest producers of pure gold. There are also large enterprises such as JSC "Navoiyazot", the joint venture "Electrochemical Plant", JSC "Navoi Thermal Power Plant", JSC "Qizilqumtcement".

Due to its convenient geographical location, the Uzbek government established "Navoi – a

<sup>1</sup> TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN UZBEKISTAN — CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES, Na Sha., PECIAL POLICY BRIEF BY CASPIAN POLICY CENTER



free Industrial Economic Zone” in 2008. It has a wide range of activities with foreign partners such as South Korea, India, China, and Singapore. An international intermodal logistics center has been set up at Navoi Airport, which carries out cargo transportation to various countries in cooperation with Uzbekistan Airways and Korean Air.

Although Navoi is a young and prosperous region, it has an ancient and unique history that has made a significant contribution to human civilization. List of sites to visit in the Navoi region:

- Alexander the Great fortress (IV century BC);
- Chashma complex;
- Chordara castle (V century BC);
- Dungalak village;
- Kasim Sheikh complex (XVI century);
- Mavlono Orif Deggaroniy mosque (XI century);
- Mir Said Bakhrom Mausoleum (X-XI centuries)
- Nurota/Nurata;
- Rabat Malik caravanserai (XI century);
- Sardoba water reservoir (XI century);
- Tash Mosque and Vangazi Minaret (XVI century).

**Conclusion.** However, to boost its profits from tourism, Uzbekistan should fully support and utilize the private sector. The travel and tourism industry consists of a wide variety of commercial and noncommercial organizations that work together to supply products and services to tourists.

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