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## **Improving tourism activities in Central Asia, the case of Uzbekistan**

### **Совершенствования туристической деятельности в Центральной Азии на примере Узбекистана**

**Аннотация:** Сегодня туризм мощная мировая индустрия, в которой задействованы огромные ресурсы. Целью данной работы является изучение состояния и развития туризма в странах Центральной Азии на примере индустрии туризма Узбекистана с особым акцентом на секторах туристической инфраструктуры страны. Полученные результаты указывают на основные тенденции и пробелы, на которых следует сосредоточить будущие исследования по этой теме, а также могут быть полезны при разработке государственной политики и стратегий развития туристической индустрии.

**Ключевые слова:** развитие туризма, Центральная Азия, Узбекистан, Шелковый путь, туризм, туристическая индустрия, туристическая деятельность.

**Abstract:** Today, tourism is a powerful global industry in which huge resources are involved. The paper aims to investigate the status and progress of tourism in Central Asian countries using the example of the Uzbekistan tourism industry with special reference to the country's tourism infrastructure sectors. The results serve to point out key trends and gaps on which to focus future research on this topic and also they might be useful in formulating public policies and strategies for tourism industry development.

**Keywords:** tourism development, Central Asia, Uzbekistan, Silk Road, tourism destination, the tourism industry, tourist activity.

Since its independence, Uzbekistan has begun to structure and organize its tourism industry. It is noticeable that the new institutions and relations at the world tourism market were established almost from scratch. During these years

of independence, the government has done a great job on the revival of the unique heritage of local people. Thanks to these measures, every year, the tourism potential in the country and requirements for the development of tourism and its infrastructure has improved radically and positively. Central Asian countries have a wonderful opportunity of exploiting their unique cultural and historical heritage, which form the basis of the main resources for the development of tourism. For example, Uzbekistan has more than 4,000 historical and cultural monuments, of which 140 are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Routes of the Silk Road on the territory of the country are also part of the potential attractions for international tourists.

The collaboration of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the Government of Uzbekistan continued on 8-9 October 2010 when a conference was held with the presence of delegates from over 25 countries in the historic "Registan" Square that (Samarkand). In the conference, there was a debate on the key issues relating to the development of tourism along the Silk Road. Excepting Silk Road tourism destination, Central Asia possesses tourism attractions and resources, there is potential for the development of different types of tourism products. In particular, it is determined that tourist activity is carried out by providing the following types of tourism.



**Picture 1. The Republic of Uzbekistan and its potential attractiveness.**

With the support of the World Tourism Organization UNWTO, the Ministry of Culture and Sports of the Republic of Uzbekistan, as well as the Association of Private Tourism Organizations and Uzexpocenter, the International World Tourism Fair “World of Rest”, a spring exhibition, is held annually, even if it is organized exclusively in 2013-2014. was highly appreciated by the tourist community.

Today, the number of international tourists increased by 5% in 2013 to 1.087 billion, representing 6% of world exports. The role of tourism is an important prerequisite for the tourism industry of Uzbekistan to prepare the country for more intensive development. For this reason, in Uzbekistan, great attention is paid to the development of tourism and the expansion of the relevant infrastructure as one of the priority instructions for the socio-economic deployment of the state.

Objectively assessing the situation, it should be noted that the government pays considerable attention to the development of tourism. During the years of independent development in Uzbekistan, a legal base and tourist infrastructure have been created. Today, more than 900 organizations and companies that have licenses for tourist activities operate in the field of tourism, of which 500 hotels, 371 are travel agencies, with about 90% of travel organizations and companies related with the private sector, which influences the formation of a competitive environment in the tourism system for the provision of tourism services. Air Gateway international airports are operating in Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, Urgench, Nukus, and Navay. From the below-mentioned graph, it could be seen that passengers carried by air transport in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan showed upward trends; however, other neighbor countries have unstable rates during the given period.



**Picture 2. Tourism infrastructure in Central Asia.**

To simplify visa procedures for tourists, government and responsible officials should make optimize the process of issuance as well as make some reforms of the legislature system in terms of visa periods, apply online access to visa applications.

By the way, border crossing advancement procedures and services for tourist's state should modify the potential for economic incentive and environmental enhancement by taking an inventive approach to cross-border rules.

### **Proposals for further improvement of services for tourists**

Upgrading level of the English speaking staff at the borders; tourist information; shopping; money exchange; transit accommodation; guided service through buffer zones (for guides, drivers with badges); regular working hours signage; food and beverage services; restrooms and first aid facilities.

To sum up, Uzbekistan as a major partner of the Silk Road tourist destination program could tackle various issues with the support of some international and non-governmental organizations. Therefore, some drawbacks of the tourism industry will be prevented and some privileges could be provided for small businesses and entrepreneurship.

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