

PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN UZBEKISTAN AND TAJIKISTAN

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Abstract: This article analyzes the current state of the tourism sector in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, existing problems, and possible solutions. It also highlights the prospects for developing regional tourism through enhanced cooperation between the two countries.

Keywords: Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, tourism, regional cooperation, infrastructure, cultural heritage, international integration.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, political and economic relations between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have significantly intensified. In particular, cooperation in the field of tourism has entered a new phase. Both countries possess rich cultural heritage, natural beauty, and historical landmarks, which can allow them to take a special place in the global tourism market. Effective use of these opportunities is one of the key drivers of regional economic growth.

1. Tourism Potential and current situation

Uzbekistan is famous for its ancient cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva, which are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Meanwhile, Tajikistan stands out for its natural landscapes, mountainous regions, and opportunities for ecotourism.

According to the 2024 data, more than 10.5 million foreign tourists were registered in Uzbekistan, while Tajikistan recorded 2.5 million. Both countries can further increase these figures by improving tourism infrastructure, expanding visa-free regimes, and enhancing transport connections.

2. Opportunities for regional cooperation

Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are taking significant steps toward achieving sustainable economic growth in Central Asia by developing regional cooperation in tourism, creating a shared tourist space, and strengthening cultural exchange. The two nations share historical, cultural, linguistic, and religious ties, which facilitate mutual integration.

In recent years, diplomatic relations between the two countries have improved drastically. In 2025, more than 10 border checkpoints were opened, which led to a significant increase in both trade and tourist flows. Simplifying border crossing procedures and introducing visa-free or simplified visa regimes will further boost tourism potential.

There is great potential in creating joint tourist routes based on the “Uzbekistan-Tajikistan-Ancient Silk Road” direction. For example, a tourist can visit ancient cities like Samarkand and Panjakent in a single day and then engage in ecotourism in the Fann Mountains-offering a unique and enriching experience.

Modernizing infrastructure such as the Samarkand–Panjakent highway and the Dushanbe–Termez railway is crucial for regional tourism development. In aviation, establishing regular flights like Tashkent–Dushanbe–Khujand will help stabilize tourist flows. Moreover, the development of cross-border bus and rail transport is also an urgent issue.

International cultural events held annually in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, such as the “Sharq Taronalari” (Samarkand) and the “Sayhun Festival” (Sughd region), further strengthen regional

cooperation. Artists, artisans, and chefs from both countries participate in these events, promoting a blend of tourism and culture.

Uzbekistan and Tajikistan also cooperate within international organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). These platforms offer opportunities for technical assistance, experience exchange, staff training, and joint marketing programs.

In the near future, the introduction of a single tourist visa for Uzbekistan and Tajikistan will provide great convenience for travelers. This model would especially appeal to tourists from distant countries such as European states, China, and South Korea, allowing them to visit the entire Central Asian region in one trip. Consequently, the two countries can not only offer unique tourism services but also become a unified regional brand.

3. New directions and investments

In recent years, the governments of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have prioritized the tourism sector within their national economies, focusing on the development of new tourist areas and service types. This process is directly linked to attracting foreign investments, encouraging local entrepreneurship, and creating new jobs.

The Fann Mountains, Zarafshan Valley, and Lake Iskanderkul in Tajikistan, along with the mountainous regions of Zomin, Boysun, and the Hissar Range in Uzbekistan, are ideal locations for ecological tourism. The following initiatives are being implemented in this direction:

- Construction of eco-friendly hotels and resorts based on the “green hotel” concept;
- Development of mountain trails, pedestrian and bicycle paths;
- Ensuring active participation of local communities in ecotourism clusters.

These efforts not only support the rational use of natural resources but also help increase the income of local populations.

Both countries possess areas rich in mineral springs and sanatoriums. For example:

- In Uzbekistan: resorts such as Chimyon, Beruniy, Khumson, Obihayot, and Zarkent;
- In Tajikistan: renowned hot spring zones such as Yavroz, Obigarm, and Garmchashma.

Investors are being offered preferences (tax incentives, land allocation) for building modern spa centers, rehabilitation clinics, and wellness facilities in these areas.

Archaeological tourism opportunities are also vast, with sites such as Panjakent, Hulbuk, and Hisor Fortress in Tajikistan, and Afrasiyab, Qal’ai-Zohak, and ancient Termez in Uzbekistan. The following steps are being taken:

- Involvement of foreign investors (e.g., from Japan via UNESCO projects) in the preservation and reconstruction of archaeological monuments;
- Development of 3D virtual tours using digital tourism technologies;
- Creation of routes supported by local guides and historical commentary programs.

Investments are often tied to infrastructure development. The following are being implemented in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan:

- Reconstruction of airports and train stations (e.g., Panjakent and Termez airports);
- Establishment of new tourist zones: “Charvak Tourist Zone” in Uzbekistan and “Nurobod” and “Varzob” in Tajikistan;
- Expansion of hotel networks in cooperation with international brands (Hilton, Radisson, and Hyatt).

There is increasing demand for digital tourism services in recent years. Therefore:

- “Digital Tourism” platforms are being developed in both countries (online booking, tourist route maps, mobile apps);

- Project competitions (grants) in tourism are being organized for startups and small IT companies;
- Simplified permit systems based on the “single window” principle are being introduced for foreign investors.

The World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and Islamic Development Bank are allocating grants and loans for tourism development in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. These funds are directed toward:

- Construction of infrastructure facilities (roads, power networks, water supply);
- Training and retraining programs for tourism personnel;
- Media campaigns to promote tourism.

CONCLUSION

Strengthening cooperation in tourism between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, supporting regional projects, modernizing infrastructure, and creating a unified brand will help solidify the region's position on the global tourism map. This will not only enhance economic ties but also strengthen cultural relations.

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