

# Afghanistan Builds Up Tourism, Will You Go?

Afghanistan is making efforts to build up its tourism industry as part of its economic recovery, but when will it be that people could consider traveling to Afghanistan safe?

Media are running stories about how a little province in Afghanistan is making hard effort to boost tourism in the region and show a different image of the country. Bamiyan is one of the safest parts of Afghanistan. There is a hotel there called Silk Road that is trying to bring tourists in the area.



“Bamiyan first attracted widespread international attention in 2001, when Taliban militants spent weeks blowing up two giant statues of Buddha. For more than 1,500 years, these colossal figures -- one was 53 meters (174 feet) high, the other 35 meters (115 feet) -- stood like sentries overlooking this alpine valley. Today, the massive caves where the Buddhas once stood are huge, empty pockets carved into cliffs that dominate the countryside,” reported CNN.

“Aid workers say tourism is one of the greatest economic hopes for reviving this isolated, yet visually -- and archaeologically -- stunning part of Afghanistan, a region that has seen little infrastructure development over the last eight years, even though Bamiyan is one of the safest parts of the country.”

Today in Bamiyan Valley there is a new building. It is not a military barrack or a school. It's a Tourism Information Center. Bamiyan is located north of the capital Kabul. The local government officials are putting money to train tour guides and customer service officials in an effort to boost tourism in this beautiful and safe part of Afghanistan.



“The tourism training program is funded through a Geneva-based Islamic organization, the Aga Khan Development Network, as part of a \$1.2 million ecotourism program. All Afghan tourism initiatives are currently funded by international donors, according to Deputy Minister for Tourism Ghulam Nabi Farahi. New Zealand and Japan are big donors in Bamiyan,” reported Fox News.

It is a great initiative to develop tourism in Afghanistan. The country, though, needs to do more to create a new image among the people who live outside Afghanistan. No matter how safe it is, it will be a hard sale.

Anyway, we greet with applause the effort to make Afghanistan (in reality it is a beautiful country, it's just we have not heard about that part here in the West) an attractive location for tourists.

### **Adventure travel warms to Afghanistan**

Pakistani, British and other tour operators specialising in adventure travels are increasingly including Afghanistan amongst their destinations. Recently, a single tour operator based in Kabul has also emerged. These adventure travellers are still limited to a few thousands each year due to lack of roads to some of the most attractive locations and seasonal weather problems, but in the short term this appears to be the most likely source of inbound travel for Afghanistan.

### **Big plans to bring tourism to the Afghan countryside**

With the launch of an ambitious plan to create 150 guesthouses throughout Afghanistan, the Afghan

government is trying to open much of Afghanistan to semi-adventurous travellers who have been deterred by the complete lack of facilities. If the plan succeeds, the face of Afghan travel and tourism will be transformed.

Photos: TR, Wikipedia

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