

UZBEK TOURISM TO PROMOTE MORE DOMESTIC AND RELIGIOUS MARKETS



In 2022, Uzbekistan received more than 5.2 million foreign tourists, 2.5 million more than expected and almost three times more than in 2021. As a result, the tourism revenue in 2022 reached \$1.61 billion, a significant increase from the previous year's \$296.4 million compared to \$1.55 billion and \$951 million in 2017 and 2019, respectively.

Uzbek tourism authorities reported that according to the latest data, visitors stay longer in the country with **an average of 4-5 days and a cost of up to \$305, compared to 3 days and \$195 in 2019**. In addition, hotel beds have tripled in the past three years to approximately 125,000, compared to just 37,000 in 2017.

Steps for Uzbek Tourism Promotion

Policies have been implemented to promote tourism to eliminate unnecessary checks and queues for tourists obtaining visas. Railway stations have introduced "green corridors," and an electronic guest registration system has been implemented. Currency exchange restrictions have also been lifted.

New routes have been developed based on tourist flows from over 40 countries with high tourism potential. Additionally, a tourist cash-back system was launched in September 2022 to reimburse a portion of domestic travel costs as part of the "Travel to Uzbekistan" program.

Religious Tourism in Uzbekistan

The Uzbek tourism authorities have developed new standards of requirements for tourist services for pilgrimage tourism. For example, international airports, railway stations, and hotels have organized prayer rooms and ablution facilities. In addition, halal, kosher, and vegan standards will be introduced in restaurants and tourist facilities.

Uzbekistan hosted the "International Week of Pilgrimage Tourism" in November 2022, and as a result, it ranked 9th in the 2022 Global Muslim Tourism Index report, up from 32nd place in 2017. Furthermore, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation bestowed the prestigious title of "tourist capital of the Islamic world" in 2024 Khiva. In addition, Shakhrisabz was named the tourist "capital of the Economic Cooperation Organization" in 2024.

Prospects of Uzbek Tourism

In 2023, Uzbekistan expects to welcome 7 million foreign and 12 million domestic tourists, resulting in potential revenue of up to \$2 billion. To accommodate visitors, 170 new hotels, 58 hostels, and 273 accommodation facilities will be established, along with more than 400 new family guesthouses in remote areas.

To facilitate travel, an agreement will be made with foreign airlines to start at least ten international flights daily from various regions to Samarkand and at least 1 flight daily to Fergana Valley, Nukus, Urgench, and Termez. The II International Uzbekistan Airports, **Aviation & Logistics Forum will be held in Samarkand to attract foreign airlines to regular flights**. Additionally, Wizz Air

flights to Samarkand from Abu Dhabi will be increased to a minimum of 4 per week, and flights to destinations such as Hungary, Romania, Italy, and Cyprus are being considered.

New tourist zones are also planned in Zaamin, Farish, and Bakhmal districts and the Aidar-Arnasai lake system. At the same time, safari tourism is being developed in the steppe regions of Karakalpakstan, Bukhara, Kashkadarya, Navoi, Surkhandarya, Ferghana, and Khorezm. In addition, ecotourism development programs are underway in Karakalpakstan and the Aral Sea region, and beach areas around lakes such as Akchakul, Ashshi, Zikri, Aidarkul, Tuzkon, and Tudakul will be further developed.

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