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TRENDS AND DIRECTIONS OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract. This article examines the current trends and directions of tourism development in the Republic of Uzbekistan. On the basis of official statistical data for 2022–2025, it analyses the dynamics of inbound tourist flows, the volume of tourism-service exports, the structure of tourist source countries and the targets of state policy. It is shown that tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the country's economy: in January–November 2025, Uzbekistan was visited by 10.7 million foreign tourists, while exports of tourism services exceeded USD 4.4 billion. The key growth drivers are identified and priority directions for the further development of the sector are defined.

Keywords: tourism, inbound tourism, tourism-service exports, Silk Road, visa liberalisation, Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

1. Introduction

Tourism plays an important role in diversifying the economy, creating jobs, developing the regions and shaping a country's positive image on the international stage. For the Republic of Uzbekistan, which possesses the rich historical and cultural heritage of the cities of the Great Silk Road, the development of tourism has become one of the strategic priorities of socio-economic policy.

Since 2017, large-scale reforms have been carried out in the tourism sector: the visa regime has been liberalised, entry procedures have been simplified, transport and hotel infrastructure has been expanded, and international marketing activity has been intensified. As a result, Uzbekistan has joined the ranks of the world's most dynamically growing tourist destinations.

The aim of the article is to identify the current trends and to determine the priority directions of tourism development in Uzbekistan on the basis of an analysis of official statistical data for 2022–2025.

2. Materials and Methods

The information base of the study comprises data from the Statistics Agency under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Tourism Committee, analytical materials of the World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism), as well as sectoral reviews and regulatory documents defining the tourism-development strategy. The methods of descriptive statistics and dynamic and comparative analysis are applied for the period 2022–2025.

3. Results

3.1. Dynamics of inbound tourist flows

Inbound tourism demonstrates steady growth. In 2024, about 8.2 million foreign citizens visited Uzbekistan for tourism purposes, which is 24.2 % more than in 2023. In January–November 2025, the number of foreign tourists reached a record 10.7 million, and from April 2025 the monthly flow exceeded 1 million people for the first time, indicating the structural nature of the growth in demand.

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According to UN Tourism, in January–September 2025 the number of international arrivals to Uzbekistan increased by 73 % compared with the same period in 2019, which placed the country among the seven fastest-growing tourist destinations in the world. At the same time, the average length of stay of tourists increased — from 4–5 to 7–9 nights.

3.2. Tourism-service exports

The sector's financial indicators are growing at an accelerated pace. Exports of tourism services rose from USD 1.61 billion in 2022 to USD 3.52 billion in 2024 and exceeded USD 4.4 billion at the end of 2025. The contribution of tourism to the country's GDP is estimated at about 3.5 %.

Table 1. Dynamics of inbound tourism and tourism-service exports, 2022–2025

Indicator	2022	2023	2024	2025
Tourism-service exports, USD billion	1.61	2.14	3.52	≈ 4.4
Foreign tourists, million	—	≈ 6.6	8.2	10.7*

* January–November 2025. Source: Statistics Agency under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan; Tourism Committee.

3.3. Structure of tourist source countries

The basis of inbound tourism is formed by the countries of Central Asia, reflecting the close historical, cultural and cross-border ties of the region. According to data for January–May 2024, the largest flows came from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. At the same time, the flow from countries outside the region — primarily China and India — is growing rapidly.

Table 2. Main tourist source countries (January–May 2024)

Country	Tourists, thousands
Tajikistan	871.5
Kyrgyzstan	857.0
Kazakhstan	498.2
Russia	289.6
Turkmenistan	53.8
Turkey	42.1

Source: Statistics Agency under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2024.

3.4. State policy and targets

Tourism development relies on systemic state-support measures: a visa-free regime for the citizens of about 90 countries and e-visas for 56 countries, the modernisation of the airports of Tashkent and Samarkand, and the expansion of air connectivity. From June 2025, a visa-free regime with China was introduced, with the goal of increasing the flow of Chinese tourists to 1 million people (against 74,300 in 2024). Major investment projects are being implemented, including the construction of the all-season Sea Breeze Uzbekistan resort.

Table 3. Tourism-development targets for 2030

Indicator	Current level	Target for 2030
Tourism share of GDP, %	3.5	7.0
Foreign tourists, million	10.7	20.0
Tourism-service exports, USD billion	4.4	> 6.0

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Source: gazeta.uz; Tourism Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2025.

4. Discussion

The results obtained indicate that tourism has turned into one of the key drivers of economic growth in Uzbekistan. The main success factors are visa liberalisation, investment in infrastructure, active international promotion and a unique cultural heritage. The growth in the average length of stay and the broadening geography of tourist flows point to the qualitative development of the sector, and not only to quantitative growth.

At the same time, a number of constraints persist. The high dependence on regional markets (the countries of Central Asia) increases the sector's vulnerability to external factors; further diversification of tourist flows is required by attracting high-spending tourists from countries outside the region. The issues of developing transport accessibility between tourist centres, improving the quality of hotel services and training qualified personnel remain relevant.

Achieving the target of 20 million tourists and a tourism share of GDP of 7 % by 2030 will require sustaining high growth rates, expanding the stock of 4–5-star hotel rooms and developing new types of tourism — eco-tourism, gastronomic and business tourism.

5. Conclusion

Tourism in Uzbekistan is at a stage of accelerated development: in January–November 2025 the country was visited by 10.7 million foreign tourists, exports of tourism services exceeded USD 4.4 billion, and Uzbekistan joined the ranks of the world's fastest-growing tourist destinations.

For the sustainable development of the sector and the achievement of its strategic goals, it appears advisable to implement the following directions:

1) diversifying tourist flows by attracting tourists from countries outside the region and from the high-spending segment;
2) developing transport infrastructure and reducing travel time between tourist cities;
3) expanding the hotel-room stock and improving the quality of hotel services;
4) developing new types of tourism — eco-tourism, gastronomic, business and medical tourism;
5) training qualified personnel and digitalising tourism services.

The consistent implementation of these measures will help consolidate Uzbekistan's status as a leading tourist destination on the Silk Road and ensure a sustainable contribution of tourism to the country's economic growth.

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