

Tourism – an Important Driver of the Economy

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Abstract: *This article provides information about the tourism potential of Surkhandarya region, its tourist attractions, infrastructure facilities, transportation and road logistics.*

Keywords: *Hotel, restaurant, infrastructure, transport, airport, Uzbekistan Airways and Silk Avia airlines.*

In the 21st century economy, the tourism sector plays an increasingly important role, making a significant contribution to the development of the global economy. It is considered an important driver that stimulates not only the travel and leisure industry, but also the growth of many other economic sectors. In recent years, great attention has been paid to the development of tourism in Uzbekistan at the level of state policy, and in this process Surkhandarya region holds special importance. With its rich history, unique culture, and natural resources, this region possesses great opportunities to ensure economic growth in the tourism sector and improve the welfare of the local population. The rapid development of tourism in the region provides strong momentum for the growth of many sectors of the economy. Revenues generated from tourism are directed to replenishing the regional budget, further developing infrastructure, and financing socially significant projects. In turn, this directly contributes to the creation of new jobs in the tourism sector, ensuring employment, and increasing incomes. The hotel business, restaurant services, transport companies, excursion bureaus, handicrafts, and many other sectors are part of this process. The construction and modernization of the necessary infrastructure facilities—such as transport and communication systems, modern hotels, recreational areas, and other facilities for the development of tourism—have a positive impact on the socio-economic development of the regions. This is especially important for the growth of remote and rural areas. The increase in tourist flows creates favorable conditions for the revitalization of local businesses, the creation of new jobs, and the improvement of infrastructure. Moreover, the development of tourism opens up broad opportunities for local entrepreneurs, encouraging them to implement new and innovative business projects and create additional employment. Taxes and fees collected from tourism serve to replenish the local budget, finance social projects, and further improve the standard of living of the population. In recent years, the reforms and state programs aimed at developing tourism in our country have shown positive results. In particular, the number of tourists visiting Surkhandarya region has been increasing year by year. Only in 2024, nearly 2.9 million tourists visited the region, of which more than 630 thousand were foreign tourists. This made it possible to increase the volume of tourism exports to 63 million US dollars. Currently, 285 business entities are operating in the tourism sector of the region, of which 221 are accommodation facilities (hotels, hostels, family guest houses, and yurt camps, with a total capacity of 4,425 beds), while 64 consist of tour operators and travel agencies. More specifically, the region has 53 hotels (1,324 rooms, 2,435 beds), 22 hostels (239 rooms, 683 beds), 2 yurt camps (20 rooms, 100 beds), 144 family guest houses (427 rooms, 1,269 beds), 54 tour operators, and 10 travel agencies providing services to tourists. Improving the transport infrastructure is of great importance for the sustainable development of tourism. The reforms carried out in Surkhandarya region in this regard are creating favorable conditions for the formation of tourism clusters. Termiz International Airport, the railway station, the river port, and passenger bus services have significantly enhanced the region's transport and logistics potential. This, in turn, contributes to the socio-economic development of the

region, increases competitiveness in the tourism sector, and strengthens its reputation at the international level. Transport services are considered one of the main pillars of the tourism cluster. Currently, the number of international and domestic flights at Termiz International Airport has sharply increased. The airlines Uzbekistan Airways and Silk Avia operate flights on several routes daily and weekly, including Termiz – Tashkent, Termiz – Kokand, Termiz – Moscow, Termiz – St. Petersburg, and Termiz – Jeddah. These transport opportunities serve to attract tourists to the region and strengthen international relations.

The railway station is also an important logistics hub of the region. Train services on the Termiz – Tashkent and Termiz – Andijan routes provide convenient transportation for tourists and local residents. In addition, inter-district train connections expand the communication system. The Termiz River Port, the only one of its kind in the country, provides opportunities for cargo and passenger transportation along the Amudarya River, which contributes to further development of regional trade and tourism. The strategic importance of the Hairatan Bridge also plays a key role in strengthening ties between the two countries. At the same time, the region has 14 buses, 10 minibuses, 2 electric cars, 9 motor boats, 8 off-road vehicles, and 4 quad bikes serving the local population and tourists in organizing trips.

In conclusion, Surkhandarya region has great potential in the field of tourism. By effectively utilizing these opportunities, it is possible to boost the region's economy, improve the well-being of the population, and preserve cultural heritage.

Improving infrastructure, diversifying tourism products, promoting the region's tourism potential, creating new tourist routes, developing marketing strategies, strengthening relations with foreign companies within the framework of international cooperation, and attracting investments will ensure the sustainable economic development of the tourism sector. Indeed, tourism is not only a driver of economic growth but also a means of strengthening the region's reputation on the international stage.

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