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## **TOURISM IN UZBEKISTAN**

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### **Abstract**

A tourist who is at least a little familiar with the history of mankind does not need to ask questions: what is so attractive about tourism in Uzbekistan and what makes it stand out among hundreds of other tourist destinations. Because the answer is obvious. In the same way that this land, called by the ancient Greeks Transoxiana, attracted Alexander the Great almost two and a half millennia ago. What fascinated the Arabs with the land they called Maverannahr - the land of two great Central Asian rivers - the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya, mighty oasis cities inhabited by skilled artisans, the land of generous fields and gardens, giving sun-drenched harvests. The article describes the main sites of tourism in Uzbekistan.

**Keywords:** tourism, land, history, tourist destination, oasis, sites of tourism, gardens, ancient, hospitable.

### **Introduction**

The waves passed through the fertile lands and thousand-year-old cities of Macedonians, Arabs, Mongols, each time proclaiming and establishing eternal empires. Their eternal empires are scattered by the winds of time, scattered and covered with sand, and the peoples of this land - skilled, skillful, enterprising, skillful, open and hospitable, also rejoice in the generous sun and every new face.

Of course, tourism in Uzbekistan is traditionally associated with UNESCO World Heritage Sites - Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva. Their history goes back centuries, the ancient walls of the ramparts remember the phalanxes of Alexander the Great, the hordes of Genghis Khan and the battle formations of the warriors of Tamerlane.

The ancient Samarkand Afrasiab where you will be shown the site of the ancient palace and where Alexander the Great killed Klyt in a fit of anger. Sacred Bukhara, whose majestic Kalyan minaret impressed the Mongols so much that even the heartless shaker of the Universe Temujin ordered not to destroy it. The amazing open-air city-museum of Khiva, which due to its remoteness from the Bolshevik maximalism of the communists, has been preserved for posterity in almost pristine beauty. But it is not only UNESCO World Heritage Sites that attract thousands upon thousands of visitors. Each city of Uzbekistan gives hundreds of reasons to visit it. Such cities as Tashkent, Kokand, Andijan, Shakhrisabz are an endless modern oriental fairy tale.

The most refined gourmet can be surprised by the exquisite Tashkent wedding pilaf. The knife, forged by hereditary blacksmiths in Shakhrikhan, will cut the thinnest cobweb. The imagination of the connoisseur will be amazed by the millions of stitches of the Shakhrisabz hand-made ancient traditional



embroidery of the "Basma" and "Iroki" styles. And there is also the Margilan atlas, Fergana wood carving, Surkhandarya tandir kebab, Andijan ceramic dishes, Rishtan terracotta jugs.

The diversity of Uzbekistan's nature - from the ski slopes of Chimgan and Beldersay to the sultry sands of the Karakum Desert - will amaze the imagination of a traveler who is plunging into the wonderful world of Central Asia for the first time. The vast expanses of the country are occupied by the Kyzyl Kum and Karakum deserts. In the once Hungry Steppe, fragrant honey melons the size of a torpedo ripen on melons. The unusual beauty of the Ustyurt plateau will remind the traveler of space photographs of unearthly landscapes of distant planets. The mountains of Uzbekistan are not as high as the Himalayas or the Alps - the height of the Khazret-Sultan peak is 4643 meters above sea level - but here you can also make a fascinating hike in the Tien Shan, Gissar and other mountain systems.

In different parts of the country, you can see carefully preserved rock paintings-petroglyphs of the late Stone Age - the work of prehistoric man, which has come down to us through the thickness of time tens of thousands of years.

At the same time, throughout your trip to Uzbekistan, you will have the opportunity to feel the hospitality and friendliness of the people of Uzbekistan, who have cordiality and respect for guests in their blood. "The guest is above his own father - Mekhmon otangdan ulug". This is what they say here and this is what they do here. In the river valleys, which since ancient times have served as the centers of agriculture in Uzbekistan, you will get acquainted with the rural life of the peoples of Uzbekistan. They will gladly tell you about the life, culture and history of their land, tell you a little, of course, and will certainly treat you to green tea, pleasantly refreshing in the summer heat.

You will carry the memory of the most delicious and sweetest natural fruits and vegetables in the Universe, which Uzbekistan is so famous for, throughout your life. So Uzbekistan is interesting. Vivid impressions and interesting rest here have been guaranteed for the last 2343 years since the time of Alexander.

## **Types of tourism in Uzbekistan**

Tourism in Uzbekistan today is a variety of tourist products for the most demanding tastes: historical and cultural tourism, ethnic tourism, ecological tourism, health tourism and the MICE industry.

## **Cultural tourism in Uzbekistan**

Cultural tourism in Uzbekistan promises to be no less interesting and exciting than a journey to such centers of civilization as China, India, Greece, Turkey, etc. After all, Uzbekistan is not inferior to these ancient countries either in age or in the richness of cultural and historical heritage. We have a common historical past with each of these countries: the Greeks, led by Alexander the Great, came to our land in the 4th century BC, initiating an endless change of ruling dynasties: from European to Asian; the era of the Great Silk Road began with China; India became a country where the local dynasty of the Great Mughals ruled for over 200 years, and Turkey was conquered by Amir Temur at the beginning of the 15th century.



As part of cultural tourism in Uzbekistan, you will learn even more interesting facts about this ancient land, which will vividly confirm the evidence of material culture - historical and architectural monuments: the floating remnants of fortress walls, ancient mosques and madrasahs, minarets, tombs, palaces, caravanserais...

This invaluable heritage of the past has reached our days through the thickness of the centuries and today it turns the cities of Uzbekistan into a modern oriental fairy tale. You've probably heard of many of them. These are world-famous centers of ancient states, whose borders stretched far beyond the borders of Central Asia.

Samarkand is the legendary capital of Amir Temur's empire, designed to become the most beautiful city in the world; Bukhara is the most important point on the Great Silk Road, the capital of the Persian dynasty of the Samanids, the center of an unprecedented cultural flourishing of the X-XI centuries; Khiva is the main city of the Khiva Khanate, a city-museum, where there is a record number of ancient monuments per square meter, Tashkent is an ancient center of oriental culture and spirituality. Each Uzbek city will tell you its innermost history, and its monuments, museums and sights will be more eloquent than any guides.

## **Ethnic tourism in Uzbekistan**

What can more colorfully and expressively characterize the country if not its national flavor! Ethnic tourism in Uzbekistan is one of the most fascinating types of travel: it is so great to travel around the country, getting to know the common people, the peculiarities of their way of life, customs, traditions, folklore, cuisine, and folk crafts.

Ethnic tourism in Uzbekistan promises to be bright and unforgettable. After all, you will meet with an ancient eastern ethnos, whose original national heritage is hundreds of years old! And here's what is surprising: ancient Uzbek customs are relevant to this day. All important events in a person's life: birth, matchmaking, wedding, funeral - are accompanied by colorful rituals that come from time immemorial and carry the wisdom of their ancestors. Uzbeks gladly invite foreign guests to their celebrations; acquaint them with their customs and traditions, national costumes, songs and dances. As a rule, at these celebrations, guests also get acquainted with the national cuisine. Pilaf, samsa, shurpa, manti - these are the most famous Uzbek dishes.

Another vivid impression for you will be acquaintance with the applied creativity of Uzbek artisans: elegant lacquer miniature, filigree jewelry, intricate national embroidery, original ceramics, and natural silk - all this is just a small part of what folk craftsmen of Uzbekistan produce with their own hands and offer as souvenirs in memory of a trip to Uzbekistan.

Various ethnic festivals and exhibitions tell about the richness of Uzbek culture. This is where there is something to see! One of the largest such events, the Boysun Bahori festival, takes place every spring in the Surkhandarya region, in the town of Boysun, almost untouched by civilization, famous for the incredible beauty of the local nature. Exciting folk festivals and fairs last for several days. Folk groups from all over the world, dancers, singers, bakhshis (folk storytellers), and artisans with carpets, fabrics, and jewelry come here.



## Active tourism in Uzbekistan

You will find a lot of opportunities for active tourism in Uzbekistan, full of adventure, drive and expression, because nature itself "built" its natural scenery for this. These are, first of all, majestic mountains, beckoning with romantic hikes and risky ascents. These endless deserts and steppes are an ideal springboard for a jeep safari. It's a paradox, but today the opportunity to be in a hot desert, live in a tent and every day overcome kilometers of sand and stone on an iron horse does not scare, but rather attracts!

For active tourism in Uzbekistan there is a ski area in the foothills of Chimgan. When it snows, all fans of skiing and tobogganing from all over the country come here. The combination of mild sunny winters and clean mountain air, plenty of snow and the presence of safe gentle slopes allow you to get the most out of skiing.

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## Ecotourism in Uzbekistan

Ecotourism in Uzbekistan is a journey to the land where the sun shines almost all year round, to the kingdom of dry hot summers, warm winters, soft honey autumn and bright blooming spring. Nature has created landscapes of Uzbekistan in soft pastel colors with a predominance of yellow, copper, ocher, dark green and blue. With graceful strokes, she applied to the canvas and waterless deserts, covered with golden sands, and gray steppes, and green valleys that in spring are covered with a red velvet carpet of blooming poppies, and murmuring mountain rivers, and picturesque blue lakes. But the most picturesque mountains turned out to be: from low mountain ranges in the northern part to a powerful rocky ridge with sheer cliffs in the south - they do not leave indifferent any traveler.

Few people know that Uzbekistan is not only a great cultural heritage, blue domes of minarets, directed upward for many centuries; noisy oriental bazaars, but also incredible and delightful nature.

When traveling in Uzbekistan, you should definitely combine visiting ancient cities with small insights into the life of real mountain villages, mountain hikes or nights in the desert.

Ecotourism in Uzbekistan, as a full-fledged and independent part of the entire tourism industry, began to develop not so long ago. As you know, before, foreign citizens needed registration for each night of stay in Uzbekistan. The registration rule is still in effect, but it is now possible to register at a campsite or as an independent traveler. However, we still do not recommend that you alone, without the



accompaniment of a travel company or a guide, stay outside hotels or guest houses for more than 3 days. There are a lot of natural monuments and places in Uzbekistan where you can feel the unity with nature.

## **Aral Sea**

A trip to the shores of the Aral Sea can be a unique experience. While traveling to the disappearing sea, you can enjoy the beauty of the pristine nature of the Ustyurt plateau. It is along this plateau that you will move along the road from Nukus to the yurt camp, located within walking distance from the water. There, alone with the starry sky and the huge desert around, you clearly realize how important it is to protect the world in which we live. There, far from civilization and communication, walking along the salty land, which some 50 years ago was the bottom of the sea, seeing the greatness of the immense Ustyurt plateau and enjoying the beauty of Lake Sudochoye, you return to yourself and comprehend your true goals.

## **Lower Amudarya Biosphere Reserve**

The Lower Amudarya State Biosphere Reserve is located not far from Khiva. A small visit center has been created on the territory of the reserve, where the staff are always glad to have visitors. Here you will not only be shown the center itself, but will also organize a short walk around the surroundings. If you are lucky, the Bukhara deer itself will appear to you from the thickets of the tugai forest.

## **Ecocenter "Jeyran"**

In the vicinity of Bukhara, 42 kilometers from the city, there is a unique for Uzbekistan eco-center "Jeyran". The territory of the center has the status of a nature conservation area; rare ungulates are bred here. For 30 years, viable populations of gazelle (*Gazella subgutturosa subgutturosa*) have been created - a vulnerable shrinking subspecies; kulan (*Equus hemionus Pallas*) - disappeared in nature; and Przewalski's horse (*Equus przewalskii*) - a species that has disappeared in nature (the world population is about 3000 heads).

It is possible to visit the eco-center Jeyran, most often it is a day trip from Bukhara back and forth. However, it is necessary to notify the administration of the center and inform about the need for an excursion. The staff of the center consists mainly of researchers who can tell a lot about the history of the center and its inhabitants, show visitors to enclosures with animals, and conduct eco-trails. Unfortunately, they do not fully speak foreign languages and can only conduct a full-fledged excursion in the state language. Therefore, if you have the opportunity to take a guide from Bukhara with you, who can act as a translator, use it. When organizing our day trips to the "Jeyran" eco-center, we take into account all the nuances and provide you not only with a car, but also with a guide.

## **Aydarkul**

The Aydar-Arnasay system of lakes deserves special attention. It includes the East Arnasay lakes, Tuzkan and Aydarkul lakes. The entire system spreads over the territory of two regions of Uzbekistan:



Navoi and Jizzakh. If you have a couple of free days on the route of visiting the ancient cities of Uzbekistan, be sure to get out to Lake Aydarkul. It is located four hours from Bukhara and Samarkand, relatively speaking between them. Taking a short detour, you can enjoy the beauty of the Kyzyl Kum desert and see a lake in the middle of the desert. Aydarkul is a closed lake, in essence it is an artificial reservoir. The lake is located far from settlements and is home to many species of fish and birds. This part of the country will be especially interesting for tourists who are fond of bird watching ("birdwatching" or "birding"). It is possible to go boating and fishing on the lake. At a distance of about 5 kilometers from the lake, there are yurt camps, where you can stop during your trip to the desert lake. Yurt camps offer accommodation and three meals a day. Among other things, each camp has its own camel route. So, by prior arrangement, you can make a camel trip to the shores of the lake and back. Also, a trip to the nearest village (about 12 kilometers) is possible, where you will be taught how to bake bread in a tandoor.

## **Nurata**

The Nurata ridge, stretching for 170 kilometers between the Kyzyl Kum desert in the West, and the Hungry Steppe in the East, is a spur of the Gissar-Alai system. The central place in the mountain range is occupied by the Nurata Nature Reserve, created in 1975 to preserve and restore the endangered species of achrar (Severtsov's ram), as well as to protect a rare species of walnut trees. In addition to them, the reserve is home to more than 160 species of birds, 629 species of plants grow, many of which are unique and are not found anywhere in the world.

A visit to the reserve itself is impossible, since it is a specially protected natural area. However, it is possible to visit the surrounding mountain villages and enjoy the carefully protected nature of the ridge. In addition, you will probably be shown an aviary with Severtsev's rams. You won't be able to get close, but binoculars will completely solve the problem.

There are guest houses in the mountain villages of Ashraf, Hayat, Ukhum and Sentyab. Local residents receive guests at home. Here you can fully get acquainted with the life and way of life of unique ethnic minorities. People living here consider themselves descendants of Alexander the Great himself. Geographic remoteness from cities allowed them to preserve their special ethnic authenticity. Language, culture, cuisine - all this is very different from the inhabitants of the flat part of the country. Here, during your stay, you will be taught how to bake bread, dry fruits on flat roofs of houses, give you water from a mountain stream and be sure to take you on a mini-hike along the surrounding slopes. It is best to come in spring or early summer.

In the forests of the Nurata Mountains, many bird species unique to the region nest, which makes these places especially attractive for birdwatchers and simply wild nature lovers.

## **Ugam-Chatkal National Park**

Ugam-Chatkal State National Park is located in the Tashkent region. The road from Tashkent takes no more than 2 hours. A huge number of summer camps, boarding houses and rest houses are located



here. It is located on the mountain spurs of the Western Tien Shan, and here nature lovers can find delight for the eyes, tired of the splendor of eastern architecture and the noise of cities.

Since 2017, Ugam-Chatkal National Park has been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The protected part of the park is closed for free visits, in addition, visits to the border areas require special permission from the border service and the park administration. This is exactly the permission that all foreign citizens need to visit the famous Jade Lakes - Urungach.

More than thirty ecotourism routes have been developed on the territory of the park. The most popular natural boundaries are Chimgan and Beldersay. Here you can either stay in mountain hotels or go hiking with tents for several days. If you plan to stay for a long time, you need a permit to stay on the territory of the national park.

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