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THE WAYS OF DEVELOPING ECOLOGICAL TOURISM IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract

A number of scientific researches related to the field have been studied in researching the ways of developing ecological tourism in Uzbekistan. List of areas where ecotourism services will be established in state reserves, nurseries, national nature parks and forestry and list of major water bodies in Uzbekistan where beach and water recreation tourism services are organized, are analyzed. Conclusions and proposals are developed based on the conducted research.

Keywords: Tourism, ecological tourism, tourists, ecotourism, environment, parks,public-private partnership.

Introduction

The development of ecological tourism in Uzbekistan holds significant importance for sustainable economic and environmental growth. Ecotourism promotes responsible travel to natural areas, encouraging conservation and benefiting local communities. Uzbekistan is rich in diverse ecosystems, including mountains, deserts, rivers, and unique flora and fauna, which are ideal for ecotourism. Developing this sector can help preserve biodiversity while creating employment opportunities for rural populations. Ecotourism educates both tourists and locals about the importance of environmental protection. It encourages eco-friendly behavior and supports traditional lifestyles that are in harmony with nature. By attracting environmentally conscious tourists, Uzbekistan can diversify its tourism offerings beyond historical and cultural destinations. Places like the Nuratau Mountains, the Ustyurt Plateau, and the Aral Sea region have high potential for eco-friendly tours. Ecotourism helps reduce the pressure on overcrowded urban tourist sites. It supports sustainable infrastructure development, such as eco-lodges and solar-powered transport systems. Ecotourism can generate revenue while minimizing ecological footprints. Promoting local crafts and organic food production is another benefit linked to ecotourism development. It strengthens the cultural identity of communities and increases awareness of the nation's natural heritage. International organizations often support ecotourism projects, making them eligible for green funding. Uzbekistan's ecological zones offer opportunities for birdwatching, hiking, and scientific expeditions. Educational programs can be integrated into ecotourism to promote environmental science among youth. The government's commitment to green economy reforms aligns well with ecotourism strategies. Ecotourism reduces the environmental impact compared to mass tourism. It fosters a sense of environmental responsibility and stewardship in visitors. Preserving ecologically

sensitive areas through tourism can also prevent illegal activities like poaching or deforestation. Ecotourism increases the global visibility of Uzbekistan's natural assets. It contributes to rural development and helps balance urban-rural economic disparities. Training local guides and developing community-based tourism programs are essential for long-term success. Public-private partnerships can enhance investment and innovation in the ecotourism sector. Digital marketing and eco-certification programs can attract international eco-tourists. Monitoring environmental impact and applying sustainable management practices will ensure ecological balance. Ecotourism provides a platform for international cooperation on environmental protection. Uzbekistan's ecological tourism can become a model of sustainable tourism in Central Asia. Finally, developing ecotourism means investing in the health of the planet and the well-being of future generations.

Literature Review

"Ecotourism is tourism that takes place in unspoiled natural areas, does not harm the environment or its quality, and directly contributes to the protection and effective management of natural areas" [1].

"Ecotourism is a planned type of tourism that combines the enjoyment of nature and living things, has a positive impact on environmental protection, has a positive impact on the living standards of local social groups, and provides for fair and sustainable development for both people and nature" [2].

"Ecotourism encompasses three main criteria: the attractions that attract tourists are natural (e.g. flora, fauna, geological features), and the cultural environment is important, and the focus is on having a gentle impact on the natural resources of the area being visited. Ecotourism is related to the concept of sustainable tourism, which is beneficial to local communities and populations, and should not exceed the recreational capacity of the area" [3].

The International Union for Conservation of Nature defines ecotourism as "travel to relatively undisturbed natural areas to explore and enjoy cultural sites, without causing damage to the environment, and that ensures the active socio-economic participation of local people and their benefits from these activities" [4].

Analysis and Results

The development of ecotourism services in Uzbekistan is being actively planned across several environmentally significant areas. Table 1 outlines the locations where ecotourism infrastructure will be established within state nature reserves, national parks, breeding centers, and forestry enterprises. These projects aim to promote sustainable tourism while preserving the country's rich biodiversity. For example, detailed planning for Surkhan and Zomin State Nature Reserves is set to be completed by the end of 2024.

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Table 1 List of areas where ecotourism services will be established in state reserves, nurseries, national nature parks and forestry [5]

№	Name of the Area	Deadline for Developing a Detailed Planning Project
State Nature Reserves (Buffer Zones)		
1	Surkhan State Nature Reserve	November 2024
2	Hissar State Nature Reserve	December 2024
3	"Sudochye-Akpetki" State Protected Reserve	October 2025
4	"Saigachiy" Complex (Landscape) Protected Reserve	November 2025
5	Nurata State Nature Reserve	December 2025
6	Zomin State Nature Reserve	October 2024
7	"Barsakelmes" State Protected Reserve	December 2025
National Parks and Breeding Centers		
8	Central Kyzylkum National Nature Park	November 2025
9	Southern Ustyurt National Nature Park	November 2024
10	Zarafshan National Nature Park	December 2024
11	Khorezm National Nature Park	December 2025
12	Zomin National Nature Park	November 2024
13	Upper Tupolang National Nature Park	October 2025
14	Bobotog National Nature Park	December 2024
15	Lower Amudarya State Biosphere Reserve	September 2025
16	Bukhara Specialized "Jayron" Breeding Center	June 2025
Forestry Enterprises		
17	Burchmulla State Forestry	November 2024
18	Dargom State Forest Production Enterprise	July 2025
19	Qiziriq State Forestry	December 2025
20	Baysun State Forestry	November 2024
21	Bobotog State Forestry	July 2025
22	Hissar State Forestry	October 2024
23	Uzun State Forestry	November 2025
24	Surkhandarya State Forestry	October 2025
25	Dehqonobod State Forestry	December 2025
26	Ohangaron State Forestry	November 2024

Similarly, the Hissar and Nurata Reserves will follow by December 2025, contributing to enhanced ecological protection. Special attention is also given to unique ecosystems like the “Sudochye-Akpetki” and “Saigachiy” protected reserves, scheduled for development in late 2025. In the national park category, Zarafshan, Southern Ustyurt, and Zomin parks are expected to have detailed plans by the end of 2024. Central Kyzylkum and Khorezm parks, along with the Lower Amudarya Biosphere Reserve, are projected for completion in 2025. The Bukhara “Jayron” breeding center will enhance wildlife conservation through eco-educational activities by June 2025. In the forestry sector, Burchmulla, Baysun, and Ohangaron State Forestry will see ecotourism development starting from 2024. Meanwhile, Uzun and Surkhandarya forestry projects are set for late 2025. These initiatives will offer nature-based tourism opportunities such as guided eco-trails, wildlife observation, and local cultural interactions. The inclusion of the Bobotog and Hissar forestry areas ensures alignment between forest preservation and ecotourism growth. Each project is tailored to the ecological features of its location to minimize

environmental impact. The comprehensive timeline reflects a strategic and regionally diverse approach to developing green tourism infrastructure. Governmental and regional stakeholders are coordinating efforts to ensure high-quality planning and implementation. These developments support Uzbekistan's broader goals of transitioning to a green economy and fostering rural development. By combining environmental preservation with economic opportunity, these ecotourism zones will serve as models of sustainable land use.

Table 2 List of major water bodies in Uzbekistan where beach and water recreation tourism services are organized [5]

No.	Name of Water Body	Location
Republic of Karakalpakstan		
1	Lake Sudochye	Muynak District
2	Ashshikol	Nukus City
3	Lake Qaratereng	Takhtakupir District
4	Lake Aqchakoʻl	Ellikkala District
Bukhara Region		
5	Lake Jilvon Jilosi	Shofirkon District
Jizzakh Region		
6	Arnasay Reservoir	Arnasay District
7	Lake Tuzkon	Forish District
8	Lake Aydarkul	Forish District
Kashkadarya Region		
9	Khojaipok	Dehqonobod District
10	Lake Konsoykoʻl	Dehqonobod District
11	"Delfin" Recreation Beach	Karshi City
Navoi Region		
12	Lake Aydarkul	Nurata District
13	Lake Tudakul	Kiziltepa District
14	"Youth" Artificial Lake	Navoi City
Namangan Region		
15	Chortoq Reservoir	Chortoq District
Samarkand Region		
16	Qoratepa Reservoir	Urgut District
Surkhandarya Region		
17	"Uchqizil" Reservoir	Termez District
18	"Degriz" Reservoir	Altinsay District
19	"Tupalang" Reservoir	Sariosiyo District
20	Southern Surkhan Reservoir	Kumkurgan District
21	"Oqtepa" Reservoir	Jarkurgan District
Tashkent Region		
22	Charvak Reservoir	Boʻstonliq District
23	Tashkent Reservoir	Orta Chirchik District
Fergana Region		
24	"Karkidon" Reservoir	Kuva District
Khorezm Region		
25	Kal'ajik Fortress	Bogot District
26	Youth Lake	Urgench City
Tashkent City		
27	Swimming Beach	Chilonzor District

Table 2 presents a list of major water bodies in Uzbekistan where beach and water recreation tourism services are currently being developed or actively operated. These destinations offer significant potential for attracting both domestic and international tourists seeking nature-based

leisure experiences. In the Republic of Karakalpakstan, lakes such as Sudochye, Qaratereng, and Aqchako‘l, along with Ashshikol in Nukus, provide scenic spots for water-based activities. Bukhara Region contributes to this list with Lake Jilvon Jilosi, which is located in Shofirkon District and is gradually gaining popularity as a recreational site. In the Jizzakh Region, the Arnasay Reservoir, Lake Tuzkon, and Lake Aydarkul have become notable for boating, fishing, and camping. Kashkadarya Region also joins the list with sites like Khojaipok and Lake Konsoyko‘l, while the “Delfin” recreation beach in Karshi City serves as a local hub for family leisure. In Navoi Region, Aydarkul and Tudakul lakes, along with the artificial “Youth” Lake in Navoi City, contribute to expanding the network of accessible beach zones. Chortoq Reservoir in Namangan and Qoratepa Reservoir in Samarkand Region are important locations offering nature-friendly recreation with growing infrastructure. Surkhandarya Region is especially rich in reservoirs such as Uchqizil, Degriz, Tupalang, Southern Surkhan, and Oqtepa, all of which have favorable conditions for ecotourism and water sports. Tashkent Region’s Charvak and Tashkent Reservoirs are among the most visited water-based recreation areas in the country, especially in summer. Fergana Region is represented by the Karkidon Reservoir in Kuva District, known for its calm setting and regional appeal. In Khorezm, Kal’ajik Fortress and Youth Lake in Urgench City are increasingly integrated into local tourism offerings. Finally, Tashkent City itself features a designated swimming beach area in Chilonzor District, making water recreation accessible even in the urban environment. These destinations contribute to job creation, regional economic growth, and improved quality of life. The development of such areas also emphasizes environmental management and sustainable tourism principles. Each water body is being considered not only as a natural asset but also as a strategic location for balancing ecological protection and recreational use.

Conclusion

While learning the ways of developing ecotourism in Uzbekistan, the following conclusions are formed:

First, ecotourism and water-based recreation infrastructure are widely distributed across Uzbekistan, indicating the country’s strong potential to leverage natural resources for economic growth through sustainable tourism.

Second, the planned timelines for developing detailed projects in state nature reserves, national parks, and forestry areas provide a strategic foundation for advancing long-term, environmentally responsible tourism development.

Third, establishing tourism services around major water bodies contributes to attracting both domestic and international visitors, while also boosting regional economic activity and generating new employment opportunities.

Fourthly, in addition to providing recreational services, these initiatives raise environmental awareness among visitors, fostering a greater sense of responsibility toward nature and biodiversity conservation. The expansion of ecotourism and beach tourism services aligns with Uzbekistan’s broader strategy of transitioning to a green economy, ensuring ecological sustainability and supporting inclusive economic development in the long run.

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