

## TRAVELING AND TOURISM INDUSTRY AND ECONOMIC , SOCIAL BENEFITS UZBEKISTAN

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### ANNOTATION

Traveling and tourism industry yields important economic and social benefits all around the world, and possesses the power to change people's lives for the better by driving economic growth and development, decreasing poverty through the provision of livelihoods, and fostering tolerance and peace through intercultural exchange and understanding. The sector has demonstrated strong and went on growth in the number of people travelling internationally each year, as well as its economic impact over the last six decades. Future predictions suggest that the sector will continue to expand.

### АННОТАЦИЯ

Индустрия путешествий и туризма приносит важные экономические и социальные выгоды во всем мире и способна изменить жизнь людей к лучшему, стимулируя экономический рост и развитие, сокращая бедность за счет обеспечения средств к существованию и способствуя терпимости и миру посредством межкультурного обмена и понимание. Сектор продемонстрировал сильные позиции и продолжал увеличивать количество людей, путешествующих по миру каждый год, а также его экономическое влияние за последние шесть десятилетий. Будущие прогнозы предполагают, что сектор будет продолжать расширяться.

**Key words:** Social benefits, pilgrimage tourism, domestic flights, human capital, tourism industry, social benefits, intercultural exchange, hospitality education recreational zones, aviation market, cultural heritage

The travel and tourism industry and its connected industries clearly contribute to the economic and social development of a nation, by driving economic growth, creating new jobs and wealth, fostering trade and urging investment. The emergence of a tourism sector within a country offers the opportunity to acquire business or language skills thanks to newly realised entrepreneurial and other professional opportunities, resulting in human capital development, and upward social mobility significance, amplifying its chance and responsibility to act as a force for good in the world. . The sector has demonstrated strong and went on growth in the number of people travelling internationally each year, as well as its economic impact over the last six decades. Future predictions suggest that the sector will continue to expand. Traveling and

tourism industry yields important economic and social benefits all around the world, and possesses the power to change people's lives for the better by driving economic growth and development, decreasing poverty through the provision of livelihoods, and fostering tolerance and peace through intercultural exchange and understanding

As the world becomes more connected and more focused on travel and tourism industry, innovative business models become significant to the development of tourism. At the same time, particular attention must be paid to the issues and threats that characterize the development and growth of the tourism industry. Situated in the heart of Central Asia, Uzbekistan is ready to develop its travel and tourism industry with its rich cultural and historical heritage, friendly people, and beauty of nature. The government of Uzbekistan views its tourism sector as having high growth potential. Uzbekistan was closed to foreign travellers for many years, and the government has initiated reforms to open access to its rich cultural and historical heritage to facilitate tourism grows. The tourism industry was hit hard by the pandemic in 2020-2021 and hospitality service providers and other sector participants received state support in different forms. Although the number of foreign tourists visiting Uzbekistan grew by 25% to 1.88 million people in 2021, it has not yet returned to 2019's pre-pandemic level of 6.75 million visitors. As of May 2022, Uzbekistan has established a visa-free regime for citizens of 86 countries and e-visas for citizens of 57 countries, including the United States. The government's aim is to expand tourism services from \$1 billion in 2018 to \$2.2 billion in 2025. This will require enormous investments in infrastructure – in February 2021, the President allocated \$100 million for tourism infrastructure development - and hospitality education, and attraction of global hotel brands. The development plan calls for government-subsidized construction of three- and four-star hotels with at least 50 rooms, increasing the total number of rooms from 20,200 (2018) to 64,000 (2025). Projected investments in the tourism industry of the capital city Tashkent in 2021-2023 amount to \$903.6 million (\$739.5 million of which are foreign investments) and include 90 projects: 66 hotels, 12 shopping and entertainment centers, 9 parks, and 3 artisan centers. Moreover, the government is developing pilgrimage tourism. In 2021 Uzbekistan ranked 16th out of 140 countries in the Global Muslim Travel Index. In 2022 the government updated its plans and set the goal to increase the number of foreign tourists to 9 million and domestic tourists to 12 million, and to invest \$300 million in creation of tourism and recreation zones by 2026.

To attract more foreign travelers, the country is modernizing and expanding the airports. Uzbekistan Airports was divided to the Uzbekistan Airways in 2019 and controls Uzbekistan's 11 international airports. The government invested \$140 million in the advancement of airports in 2021, primarily in Samarkand, and will spend \$200 million in 2022. In total \$1 billion will be needed by 2026 to meet planned

development targets. Uzbekistan Airports plans to work with private companies for airport reconstruction and management on a tender basis and hopes to double the airports' passenger throughput capacity and triple load throughput capacity by 2026. The government has promised to liberalize the national aviation market by breaking up Uzbekistan Airways' monopoly (pledging to sell 51% or more of its shares through IPO in the near future) and creating more domestic companies (in February 2021, the QanoSharq private airline signed a lease agreement with Air Lease Corporation for two used Airbus A320-200 aircraft; Uzbekistan Airports plans to establish its Silk Avia airline by October 2022 as a partner of Uzbekistan Airways in domestic flights, to meet expanding domestic tourism demand), while authorizing foreign companies to operate in Uzbekistan. The government plans to purchase short- and medium-haul aircraft to develop the regional passenger air transportation market. Uzbekistan Airways' current air fleet consists of 34 aircraft.

These numbers shows that opportunities and comforts of travel and tourism of Uzbekistan are being expected to make great progress. The Uzbek Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Heritage is developing a strategy specifically for the development of tourism in Uzbekistan until 2030, taking into account the global crisis and new competitive conditions in the industry. Future development of tourism in Uzbekistan will require a non-traditional approach to attracting travelers. The government's strategy will also be linked to the U.N.'s sustainable development goals, hopefully cementing progress in the industry for years to come.

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