



Developing Ecotourism in Urgut, Samarkand: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract: According to today's statistics, most types of tourism are increasing by an average of 5 per cent per year, but as a result of the need and demand for ecotourism, this direction of tourism is 2-3 times more. It should be noted that historical, religious, and cultural types of tourism have already been established in Uzbekistan. However, in Uzbekistan, there are about 800 tour operators, about 600 hotels, more than 30 protected areas (reserves, national parks, rare natural monuments, etc.), and 60 forestry farms, is operating. There are also more than 400 unique monuments of nature in Uzbekistan. Based on this, the formation of ecotourism in the territory of our Republic plays an important role.

Key words: tourism, ecotourism, the composition and geography of tourism, cultural and tourist facilities, natural tourist sites.

Introduction. However, mass and industrialized world tourism has already had and continues to have a very unfavorable, often destructive effect on the natural ecosystems of many tourist regions. This is especially true for beach and hunting tourism. For example, the continuous development of coasts with hotels, boarding houses and other residential buildings, as well as the concentration of a huge mass of tourists in a narrow coastal zone, have led to significant pollution not only of the coast but also of coastal waters. This led to negative changes in agriculture and to the deterioration of the social situation. In parallel with this, public opinion was growing in the world about the need to realize the negative consequences of human activity. Public attention to the environment has increased dramatically. Programs about nature and travel are gaining great popularity. Special interest tours appear (for example, bird watching or unique butterflies), and the number of popular excursions to natural objects (waterfalls, unique landscapes, caves, etc.) is growing.

The emergence and widespread development of environmentally responsible tourism, initiated by the joint efforts of environmental organizations, some tour operators, as well as scientists and tourism experts, would be impossible and unproductive if they did not meet certain needs of society. These needs, corresponding to the general strengthening of the role of the environmental imperative, began to clearly manifest themselves from the beginning of the 70s. So, in Germany, for the period from 1970 to 1990. the number of tourists who chose tours with a focus on passive recreation decreased (from 67 to 24%), and the number of tourists who are more active (additional excursions, hiking) increased from 12 to 24% [2]. At the moment, these changes continue to grow and have covered almost all countries.

Relevance and current status of the topic (Results). In fact, despite the fact that there are many ecotourism locations in Uzbekistan, only tour companies operate within the Chimyon-Chorvoq recreation zone. However, Uzbekistan's Hisar, Bobotog, Kohitangtog (Surkhandarya), Chakchar

(Kashkadarya), Nurota (Navoi-Jizzakh), Zarafshan and Urgut (Samarkand), Turkestan (Jizzakh), Oloy (Fergana), Qurama, Chotkal (Namangan) mountains, residual mountains in the Kyzylkum desert, Kyzylkum desert, dry bottom of the Aral Sea and shallow salt lakes, Ustyurt plateau, Borsa kelmas salt marsh, Mingbulok bog, The organization of complex and thematic eco-tours along Aydarkol, Dengizkol, Amudarya and Syrdarya coast forests, Muruntov quarry and unique monuments of nature has not been fully implemented. Ecotourism has great potential in Uzbekistan, which is rich in unique charm and unrepeatable scenery. At the moment, there are more than 500 caves in Uzbekistan, and according to information, eco-tours are not organized in any of them due to the lack of sufficient tourist infrastructure. According to the information of scientific research institutions and experts, today the development directions and prospects of ecotourism are formed in connection with the laws of nature and the stability of geosystems.

The level of study of the topic (Methodology). In recent years, a number of scientific researches aimed at revealing the scientific and methodological foundations of ecotourism have been conducted in Uzbekistan, candidate and master's theses have been defended, and scientific and educational literature has been published.

Discussion. The Mexican environmental economist Hector Ceballos-Lascurain proposed the first definition of eco-tourism in 1980. According to him, eco-tourism is the combination of travel with an ecologically sensitive attitude towards nature, which combines the joy of discovering and studying specimens of flora and fauna with the opportunity to contribute to their protection.

After the appearance of the first definition of eco-tourism, many other variants of it appeared. In accordance with the definition adopted by the WTO, ecotourism includes all forms of nature tourism, in which the main motivation of tourists is observation and familiarization with nature.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) defines eco-tourism as “tourism with the responsibility to the environment through relatively undisturbed natural areas for the purpose of exploring and enjoying nature and cultural attractions, which contributes to the protection of nature, has a “soft” impact on the environment, provides an active social-economic participation of local residents and their receipt of benefits from this activity” [5].

The World Wildlife Fund offers its own definition: “Ecotourism is nature tourism that contributes to the protection of nature” [5].

The nature of Samarkand presents great opportunities for the development of ecotourism, with the widest variety and magnificent landscapes. The composition and geography of tourism in the Samarkand region are diverse, and it is possible to create specific tourist routes in the region. Here, in our opinion, it is advisable to divide the tourism opportunities and resources of the region into the following main groups:

- cultural and tourist facilities. It is an important part of tourism region, including artificial historical buildings, architectural monuments, archaeological finds, ruins, religious shrines, shrines, cemeteries, national crafts, customs, weddings, items and more.
- natural tourist sites. These include unique monuments created by nature, including caves, waterfalls, healing springs, thousand-year-old plane trees and firs, picturesque landscapes, tugai and its vegetation, wildlife, blurry forms and much more. Natural conditions, relief, climate and waters of the Samarkand region were formed over time. It is also important to use them as a tourist attraction [4].

In this connection, in the Urgut district of the Samarkand region, with the support of the infrastructure development department and the investment attraction of the tourism development department, work is underway to build a new tourist facility for eco-tourism.

Summer and spring have blossomed in Urgut, a unique area in the Samarkand region. The majestic mountains of Zarafshan seem to guard this most beautiful landscape.

One of the main attractions of the area is the ancient Chor-minor garden. About fifty-thousand-year-old plane trees grow on the territory of the garden – giant trees, the coverage of which reaches 16

meters. Each tree is like a messenger from the past. With their marvelous trunks and curved rhizomes, they create a unique look for the garden.

In fact, the garden with plane trees is a huge bowl, at the lowest point of which, a spring lake with the purest water and goldfish is hidden. It is believed that the water of this holy spring nourishes the ancient plane trees. The unique nature of the region is reflected in the creativity of the people who produce carpets. Each ornament on the carpet has its sacred meaning.

However, the conscious attitude towards these territories not only of specialists, but also of the population of the region as a whole depends on the degree of their awareness of the significance, uniqueness and vulnerability of these objects. The demand for this information is largely determined by the ecological and tourist potential of these territories. It depends on the following factors:

- ✓ location of specially protected territories;
- ✓ diversity (to a large extent - biodiversity) and attractiveness of ecosystems and landscapes;
- ✓ bioclimatic and environmental friendliness;
- ✓ transport accessibility and remoteness from settlement centers that serve as customers' suppliers, which determines the cost of the trip;
- ✓ infrastructure, provision and level of social and economic development of the territory;
- ✓ the fame and popularity of the region and route.

The number of ecotourism facilities in Samarkand region is increasing by one more. In Sofiyan mahalla of Urgut district, the limited liability company “Abdunabi Maishii Servis” started the implementation of such a complex project in 2021.

The area where the ecotourism center will be established is located in the upper part of the Urgut mountains. All conditions for recreation, swimming, and enjoying nature are created in the territory of the complex. The total cost of the project is 16 billion soums.

Conclusion. Nature provides great potential for the development of ecological tourism. In Urgut, areas with traditional, aboriginal, forms of economy, which are of great ecological and cultural value, have been preserved. Unfortunately, in our country, mostly outdated technologies are used, and not only in industry but also in agriculture and forestry. A serious limitation of the development of ecotourism is the high sensitivity of many ecosystems in Urgut to anthropogenic impacts, their fragility, and just in areas that are attractive for wildlife or aboriginal forms of economy. Ecotourism offers a unique solution that will provide jobs and stable high incomes for the population and keep the wild nature of Urgut intact. One of the goals of developing ecotourism is to support specially protected natural areas, primarily national parks and reserves. The factors hindering the development of ecotourism in Urgut are the problems of the legislative framework, the lack of specialists in the field of ecotourism, as well as specialized tour operators, political and economic instability, expensive transport services, a low level of service and a culture of service in general.

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