

MAIN PERSPECTIVES ON TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: *This article examines the main aspects of tourism development in the Republic of Karakalpakstan, highlighting opportunities and challenges in this sector. It explores the economic contributions and emerging potential of the tourism sector and presents presidential decrees and government initiatives aimed at advancing national and international tourism. While Karakalpakstan's natural resources, historical, and cultural monuments provide significant tourism opportunities, challenges in infrastructure and service quality may hinder development. The article also discusses proposed solutions to address these issues.*

Keywords: *Karakalpakstan, tourism development, infrastructure, presidential decrees, cultural heritage, international tourism, economic development*

The Republic of Karakalpakstan, located in the western part of Uzbekistan, is renowned for its rich natural resources and historical and cultural monuments, attracting considerable interest from tourists. The region's natural attractions, such as the Aral Sea and the unique landscapes surrounding it, serve to enhance its tourism potential. This article analyzes ongoing reforms and presidential decrees on tourism development in Karakalpakstan, focusing on the challenges in this sector.

President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has issued several decrees to advance tourism in Karakalpakstan, with major investment projects underway. Plans for 2024 include strengthening Karakalpakstan's



economy with \$1.8 billion in new investment programs aimed at further developing the tourism sector. These funds will be allocated to projects such as road improvements, the construction of hotels, and other service facilities. The Nukus airport will be expanded, local and international flights will be increased, and museums will be modernized—all contributing to tourism development.

Additionally, tax incentives have been introduced to support local entrepreneurs. For example, entrepreneurs contributing to tourism development benefit from reduced tax rates and receive special loans from the state budget. In rural areas, loans are being provided for developing guesthouses and other tourist infrastructure, along with improving infrastructure, electricity, drinking water, and communication services.

These initiatives focus primarily on advancing Karakalpakstan’s eco-tourism and cultural tourism potential, including establishing eco-tourism facilities, sanatoriums, and resorts around the Aral Sea. Plans are underway to utilize the region’s natural resources, such as thermal springs, lakes, and historical monuments, to attract more tourists.

These efforts are expected to invigorate tourism, create new jobs, and contribute to the local economy, as well as provide Karakalpakstan an opportunity to establish a presence in the global tourism market.

In Uzbekistan, and particularly in Karakalpakstan, significant attention is being given to tourism development. In 2023, the President issued decrees focused on developing tourism infrastructure and promoting domestic tourism, which include several tax and customs benefits to foster regional infrastructure development and attract investors.

In recent years, the Karakalpakstan government has actively worked to develop eco-tourism, historical tourism, and cultural tourism in the area, involving various foreign investors and public organizations. Notable projects include the Savitsky Museum in Nukus, ancient monuments, and designated tourist zones along the Aral Sea coast.

The primary challenges facing tourism development in Karakalpakstan include:



- Infrastructure limitations: Poor road conditions. For example, difficulties accessing the Aral Sea and the limited hotel infrastructure slow the growth of eco-tourism.

- Environmental issues: The ecological crisis caused by the drying of the Aral Sea has had a negative impact on the region, limiting tourism potential and posing health risks to visitors.

- Service quality and workforce shortages: A lack of qualified personnel in the tourism sector and low service quality remain issues.

- Transport infrastructure: Reaching many tourist sites is hindered by insufficient transport and road infrastructure. Accessing tourist destinations like the Aral Sea and surrounding areas is particularly challenging due to poor road conditions, a lack of transportation options, and limited hotels, restricting the flow of tourists.

- Environmental hazards and the Aral Sea issue: The ecological issues arising from the Aral Sea’s drying have negatively affected the region, posing significant environmental risks for tourists. The drying of the sea and desertification have led to air pollution in some areas.

- Insufficient promotion of cultural and historical heritage: Although Karakalpakstan has a rich historical and cultural heritage, international tourists lack sufficient information about it. Enhanced promotion and advertising could increase the region’s attractiveness to tourists.

- Training qualified personnel and improving service quality: Training qualified specialists in hospitality, restaurants, and other fields is essential for improving tourism services. The government is emphasizing personnel training through special programs, including recruiting foreign instructors. Additionally, new programs in local higher education institutions are being established to train specialists in the tourism sector.

To address the challenges in the tourism sector, the government and investors need to implement the following measures:

- Infrastructure development: In accordance with presidential decrees, substantial funding is being allocated to repair roads, develop hotels, and enhance other infrastructure facilities, which will play a vital role in boosting tourist traffic.



- Eco-tourism development: Establishing designated eco-tourism routes around the Aral Sea and monitoring the ecological situation can create exciting opportunities for tourists.

- Personnel training and service quality improvement: To train qualified specialists in the tourism sector, it is crucial to introduce specialized training programs in collaboration with local higher education institutions and strengthen international exchange programs.

The presidential decrees on tourism development provide a significant boost to tourism in Karakalpakstan. For instance, one of the latest presidential decrees outlines plans to establish an “eco-tourism zone” around the Aral Sea and grants various tax and customs incentives to attract foreign tourists.

- Road renovation and transport infrastructure development: According to presidential decrees, plans are underway to repair roads and open new transport routes, facilitating access to tourist sites.

- Eco-tourism and strengthening environmental control: The development of special eco-tourism zones around the Aral Sea and efforts to restore the Aral Sea are helping to foster eco-tourism while reducing environmental hazards.

Karakalpakstan has significant potential for tourism development, and addressing existing challenges can enable this sector to make a substantial contribution to the region’s economic growth. The reforms being implemented based on presidential decrees and national programs are establishing a solid foundation for tourism development in the region. However, it is essential to focus on improving infrastructure, addressing environmental issues, and enhancing service quality.

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