

Article

Prospects for The Development of Pilgrimage Tourism in Uzbekistan Using Regional Resources

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Abstract: The article analyzes the rich historical and cultural heritage of our country, the mausoleums of dear saints, religious shrines as the basis for increasing the potential of pilgrimage tourism. As an object of the study, issues of effective and rational use of regional resources in the development of pilgrimage tourism in Uzbekistan were considered. The main purpose of the article provides an overview of the distribution of cultural heritage sites by region, the state of the existing infrastructure, the conditions created for foreign and domestic pilgrims. Based on the results of the study, it provides proposal - recommendations for the organization of new pilgrimage routes and the further development of the industry.

Keywords: Pilgrimage Tourism, Regional Resources, Cultural Heritage, Religious Pilgrimage Sites, Tourism Infrastructure, Scientific Pilgrimage, Pilgrimage Routes, Halal Tourism, Historical Monuments, Investments, Tourism Facilities, Mausoleums of Scholars, Pilgrimage Programs, Local Tourism Directions, Marketing Strategy

1. Introduction

Pilgrimage tourism is considered one of the most promising sectors within Uzbekistan's tourism industry. The country's rich historical, cultural, and religious heritage, its status as the homeland of prominent Islamic scholars, as well as the presence of ancient mausoleums, shrines, and sacred sites, offer significant opportunities for the development of this sector. The rational and efficient use of regional resources, improvement of local infrastructure, and enhancement of marketing strategies can serve as key drivers in advancing pilgrimage tourism in Uzbekistan.

In Uzbekistan, pilgrimage tourism has been recognized as one of the priority directions of state policy, and a number of legal and strategic documents have been adopted in this regard. These include the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan PF-6165 dated February 9, 2021, "On measures to further develop domestic and pilgrimage tourism," and decree PF №-60 dated January 28, 2022, "On the development strategy of new Uzbekistan for 2022–2026". In addition, the following government resolutions have played an important role: Resolution №-120 of the Cabinet of Ministers dated February 15, 2018, "On effective organization of landscaping works at sacred sites, shrines, mosques and cemeteries"; resolution №-100 dated February 24, 2021, "On additional measures for the development of domestic and pilgrimage tourism"; resolution no. pq-238 dated July 27, 2023, "on further acceleration of reforms in the field of tourism and efficient organization of the public administration system in the sector"; and

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resolution № PQ-135 dated April 26, 2023, “On additional measures to rapidly develop the country’s tourism potential and increase the number of domestic and foreign tourists”. These documents, along with other normative-legal acts, serve as an important foundation for the implementation of key tasks aimed at fostering the development of pilgrimage tourism in the country [1].

Literature Review

Indeed, Uzbekistan stands out for its abundance of tourism resources. The country is especially rich in religious tourism sites, including sacred places of pilgrimage. Central Asia in general—and Uzbekistan in particular—is home to countless shrines and holy sites where esteemed saints once lived and are now buried. In recent years, many of these sites have been restored and preserved in their original form. Among them are the mausoleums of such revered figures as Bahauddin Naqshbandi, Ghijduvaniy, Imam al-Bukhari, Mahtum-i A'zam, Maturidi, Hakim at-Tirmiziy and Zangiota. These places have become spiritually uplifting destinations for Muslim pilgrims.

Notably, the Imam al-Bukhari Complex has gained international significance as a key pilgrimage site. Within the Muslim world, it is considered one of the most important religious destinations after the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Therefore, creating favorable conditions for pilgrimage—especially by developing infrastructure—is a pressing priority. A key task is to ensure that foreign pilgrims can visit such sites without facing unnecessary difficulties. One of the crucial solutions in this regard is to modernize the Samarkand International Airport to meet global standards.

Since independence, the government of Uzbekistan has paid significant attention to religious heritage sites. The restoration, renovation, and improvement of places associated with great historical and religious figures have made Uzbekistan a focal point for the interest of the global Muslim community, which numbers approximately 1.5 billion.

At present, it is essential to prioritize the regional organization and development of religious tourism in the country. In particular, there is a need to attract pilgrims from Southeast Asia and Western Asia through the development of targeted programs. To achieve this, it is advisable to identify and catalog sacred pilgrimage sites across every region, district, and village, and to develop regional and national religious tourism maps. This should be accompanied by the creation of necessary conditions for pilgrims, construction of access roads, and analysis of transportation infrastructure.

There is no doubt that religious pilgrimage sites, even with minimal investment, can become significant sources of income. Dozens, even hundreds, of religious heritage sites exist throughout the regions of Uzbekistan. However, clearly defined pilgrimage routes have yet to be developed. Unfortunately, many of the burial places of saints who made great contributions to the Islamic world and were elevated to spiritual status are still only known at the local—district or regional—level.

Therefore, it is both feasible and necessary to transform these sacred sites into nationally and internationally recognized pilgrimage destinations. In conclusion, religious tourism has always been one of the most dynamic forms of travel. Human beings, by nature, seek faith, worship, and spiritual purification. This inherently leads to a desire to undertake pilgrimages. And for this, sacred sites are essential.

Uzbekistan, being a region rich in such sacred places, must continue to focus on the development of religious tourism. Doing so will not only contribute to the material well-being of the country but will also play an essential role in spiritual and cultural enrichment [2].

Given the above considerations, the prospects for the development of pilgrimage tourism in Uzbekistan remain one of the most pressing issues.

Despite Uzbekistan’s rich cultural and historical heritage and the presence of numerous religious monuments, the development of pilgrimage tourism in accordance

with modern requirements has not yet been thoroughly and systematically studied. There remain significant opportunities to enhance the infrastructure of pilgrimage tourism, as well as to improve its marketing and management mechanisms.

In the 1970s and 1980s, pilgrimage tourism mainly manifested itself in the form of rituals, being more focused on religious practices rather than tourism [3].

In the 1990s, new ideas and concepts were introduced to pilgrimage tourism, including the evolution of travel from a "pilgrim" as a religious traveler to a "tourist" who also seeks rest and leisure [4];

The role of pilgrimage and tourism in expanding both religious and secular knowledge [5];

The role of pilgrimage and tourism in promoting both religious and secular knowledge [6];

The complex relationship between pilgrimage and tourism, as well as the similarities and differences between a tourist and a pilgrim [7];

The relationship between religion, pilgrimage, and tourism [8].

Research shows that many tourists seek a variety of experiences, including the enhancement of enlightenment, knowledge, spiritual and physical well-being, as well as the pursuit of adrenaline.

Current literature views pilgrimage as a holistic phenomenon with both religious and secular foundations [9], encompassing sites that can originate from both religious and secular contexts.

Pilgrimage tourism is considered by many authors as a type of religious tourism. As O.A. Freyebiye emphasized, while the goal of religious tourism is pilgrimage, the approach also includes travel.

According to A.V. Babkin [10], religious tourism refers to the activities associated with providing services to tourists who visit sacred sites and religious centers, which are outside their usual environment, and meeting their needs. Pilgrimage tourism, as defined by this author, is the aggregate of travel undertaken by followers of different religions for pilgrimage purposes. Pilgrimage is understood as the desire of the faithful to pay homage to sacred places.

M.A. Vinokurov offers a broader definition of pilgrimage tourism. In his view, religious (pilgrimage) tourism aims at visiting sacred sites, church monuments, and centers of sacred pilgrimage. This type of tourism includes travel for participation in important religious rituals, educational journeys to learn about religious monuments, the history and culture of various religions, as well as scientific tours conducted by specialists in religious matters.

K.A. Mazin [11] considers it inappropriate to define the terms "tourist" and "pilgrim," and accordingly the concepts of "tourism" and "pilgrimage." Representatives of different religious denominations also oppose the classification of pilgrimage as tourism.

In explanatory dictionaries, the concept of "pilgrimage" is often understood as travel, taking pilgrims to sacred places. At the same time, in some explanatory dictionaries, such as that of D.N. Ushakova [12], the term "pilgrimage" has another meaning. Specifically, it refers to traveling to visit some landmarks or to meet famous people. Undoubtedly, in this context, such travels may not be related to religious purposes.

V.S. Senin, in his textbook "Organization of International Tourism," considers religious tourism to have three forms:

Travel for the purpose of pilgrimage, excursion travels on religious topics, specialized tours that combine pilgrims and tourists [13].

Considering the theoretical aspects of the definitions provided above, the researcher presents a definition and approach to pilgrimage tourism in the work. According to this, "Pilgrimage tourism is the process of spiritual growth, self-awareness, and enriching one's inner world during the journey, aiming for peace of mind. Pilgrimage is understood not only as a religious practice but also as a tool for personal development, leading to acquiring a wealth of knowledge."

Pilgrimage tourism is considered by many authors as a type of religious tourism.

In organizing pilgrimage tourism, excursions are designed based on the goals of the pilgrim tourists. These pilgrimage tourism excursions can be either long or short, including one or several days of tourist programs. In table 1 shows several types of such travels, see Table 1.

Table 1. Forms of pilgrimage tourism based on the goals of pilgrim-tourists.

Types of Pilgrim-Tourists	Goal	Expected Outcomes
Original Pilgrims	Their goal is solely to perform the pilgrimage. For example, this definition applies to those performing the Hajj rites.	Fulfilling religious obligations, spiritual purification.
Pilgrims who make up a significant share of pilgrimage tourism	Here, travelers not only visit sacred sites but also historical places. For example, in Bukhara, alongside visiting the tombs of Sufis, tourists may also explore historical sites like Ark, Setorai Moxi Xosa, or other historical landmarks.	Personal growth and development, spiritual purification.
Pilgrims with a significant pilgrimage component, but whose main goal is other types of travel	For instance, visiting mosques in remote villages through extreme tourism.	Personal growth, broadening of worldview.

A categorization of tourist-pilgrims based on their objectives and expected outcomes is proposed, distinguishing between: genuine pilgrims, pilgrims who constitute a significant portion of pilgrimage tourism, and pilgrims for whom the pilgrimage component is significant but their primary goal is another type of tourism. This categorization is based on the pilgrims' travel objectives and the expected outcomes of their travels. Pilgrims are classified as:

1. Pilgrims traveling based on religious faith.
2. Those who have chosen pilgrimage tourism as their main travel type.
3. Mixed-type tourists for whom pilgrimage is an element, but the primary objectives are cultural, historical, or recreational purposes.

This approach forms a deeper method for analyzing pilgrimage tourism by grouping pilgrims based on their objectives and expected outcomes.

2. Materials and Methods

In the article, the author utilizes scientific abstraction, comparative analysis, induction, and deduction methods.

3. Results and Discussion

In Uzbekistan, cultural heritage and pilgrimage tourism sites are distributed as follows:

Cultural heritage sites: as of January 1, 2025, the country has a total of 8,210 cultural heritage sites, with 7,827 of them being state-owned and 383 being privately owned. In accordance with the decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, dated December 19, 2018, PQ-4068, titled "Measures to Radically Improve the Protection of Tangible Cultural Heritage Objects," the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted decision No. 846 on October 4, 2019 [14].

According to this, a national register of immovable tangible cultural heritage objects has been formed. The total number of immovable cultural heritage objects in the Republic of Uzbekistan is 8,210. These include: 4,748 archaeological monuments, 2,252 architectural monuments, 678 monumental art monuments, and 532 places of interest, see Figure 1.

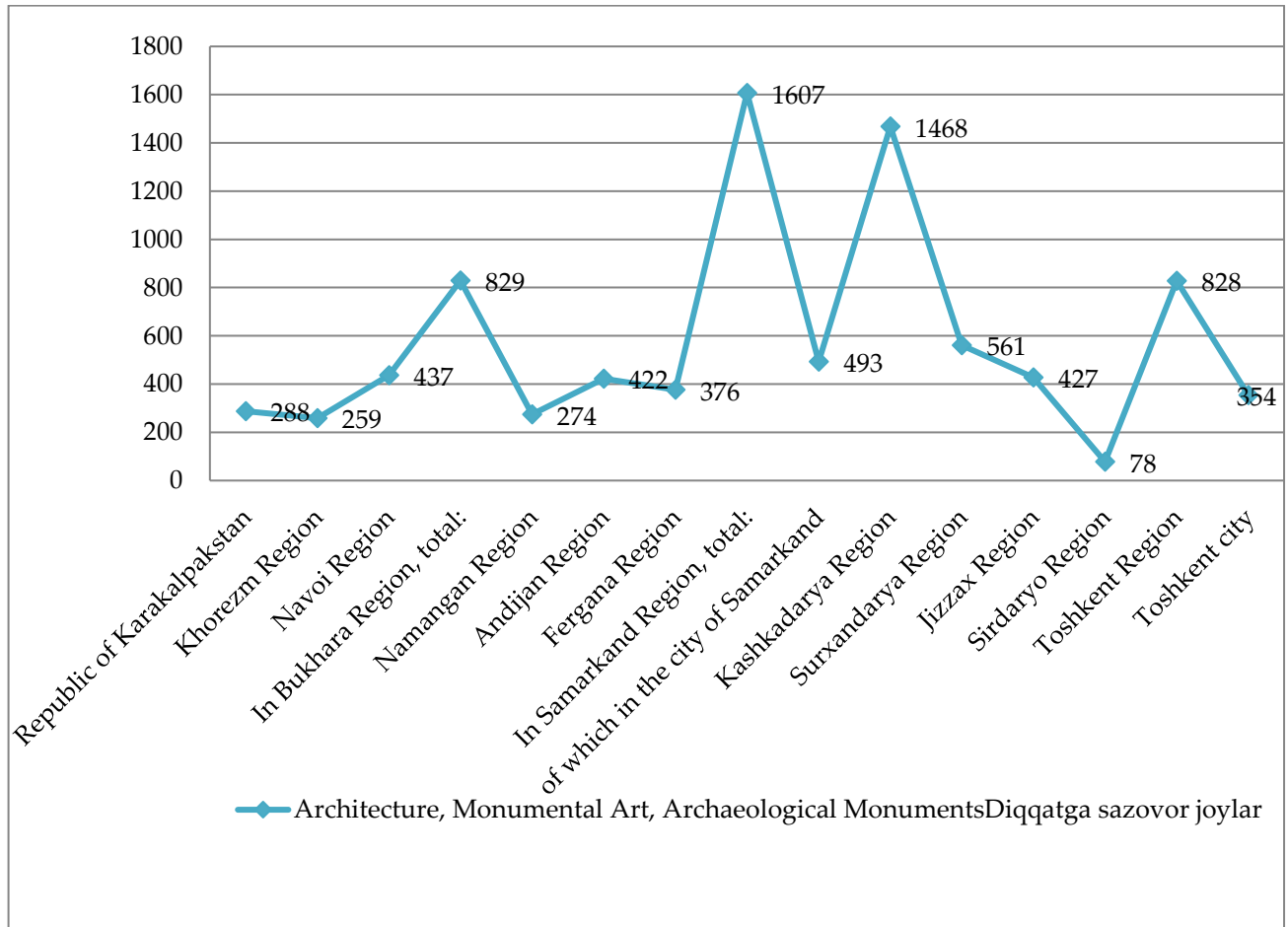


Figure 1. The number of immovable cultural heritage objects in the regions of Uzbekistan.

The figure above shows the number of cultural heritage objects in the regions of Uzbekistan. According to this, it can be seen that the regions of Samarkand, Bukhara, Kashkadarya, and Tashkent have the highest number of historical and cultural heritage sites in the republic. For tourists visiting our country, classical tours have been organized in these areas. In the next stages of our research, based on the tourist potential of Tashkent city and the resources of cultural heritage objects, the development of tourist routes for attractive pilgrimage destinations will be considered.

A series of events and international forums are being held with the goal of turning Uzbekistan into one of the largest pilgrimage centers in the Islamic world. Additionally, within the framework of the national program "Ancient historical jewels," the number of cultural heritage sites attracting tourists is planned to increase from 800 to 2,500. These indicators reflect the wealth of cultural heritage and pilgrimage tourism sites in Uzbekistan

and the efforts aimed at their development. Examples of measures to develop pilgrimage tourism include the following:

- a. "pilgrimage - tourism: history, facts, people" international online seminar on the topic "Current issues and importance of pilgrimage tourism in Uzbekistan"
- b. International hadith competition named after Imam al-Bukhari
- c. A series of cultural events within the framework of the "Islamic calligraphy" competition

In our country, several factors directly influence the development of the tourism sector. One of these factors is the presence of qualified personnel in this field. Considering that in the global tourism market, one qualified specialist is needed for every 7-10 tourists, having professional workers in the field of pilgrimage tourism, which is the subject of our research, will contribute to the successful development of the sector. Students are being educated in 35 higher education institutions in the fields of tourism and hospitality management. As part of targeted training of personnel, 30% of the expenses for the guide training courses of 7 universities are covered by the Tourism Committee. For this purpose, 2.8 billion soums have been allocated from the Tourism Support Fund [16].

The Tourism Committee has developed visit maps for 15 registered religious institutions in Tashkent city to promote pilgrimage tourism. A map has been prepared for halal food establishments, national cuisines, restaurants, and family visit destinations intended for tourists and guests from Indonesia and Malaysia.

Currently, there are a total of 1,257 pilgrimage sites in Uzbekistan. Of these, 1,183 are Islamic, 57 are Christian Orthodox, 8 are Roman Catholic Christian, and 9 are Buddhist pilgrimage sites.

In Uzbekistan, a total of 2,316 religious organizations representing 16 different religious confessions are currently operating. Of these, 2,125 are Islamic organizations, including 2,096 mosques. In addition, there are 191 non-Islamic (non-Muslim) religious organizations, comprising 8 Jewish synagogues, 174 Christian churches, 6 Bahá'í communities, 1 Buddhist temple, 1 Society for Krishna Consciousness, and 1 Bible Society of Uzbekistan. These statistics clearly demonstrate the existence of religious freedom in Uzbekistan, as well as mutual respect among the various ethnic and national groups residing in the country. This principle is also enshrined in law. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations" (Law No. 699, dated July 5, 2021) was adopted to regulate these rights. The law consists of 6 chapters and 35 articles [17].

As analyzed above, 16 religious confessions are currently active in Uzbekistan, and the number of pilgrimage sites includes not only Islamic shrines but also those belonging to representatives of other faiths. This diversity provides an opportunity to develop and offer specialized tourism programs for pilgrims of various religions. By designing targeted tour packages, formulating proposals, and conducting promotional and awareness campaigns, it is possible to increase the number of religious tourists visiting the country. The analysis indicates that Uzbekistan has considerable potential to attract adherents of different religions by leveraging existing pilgrimage sites for the purpose of religious tourism.

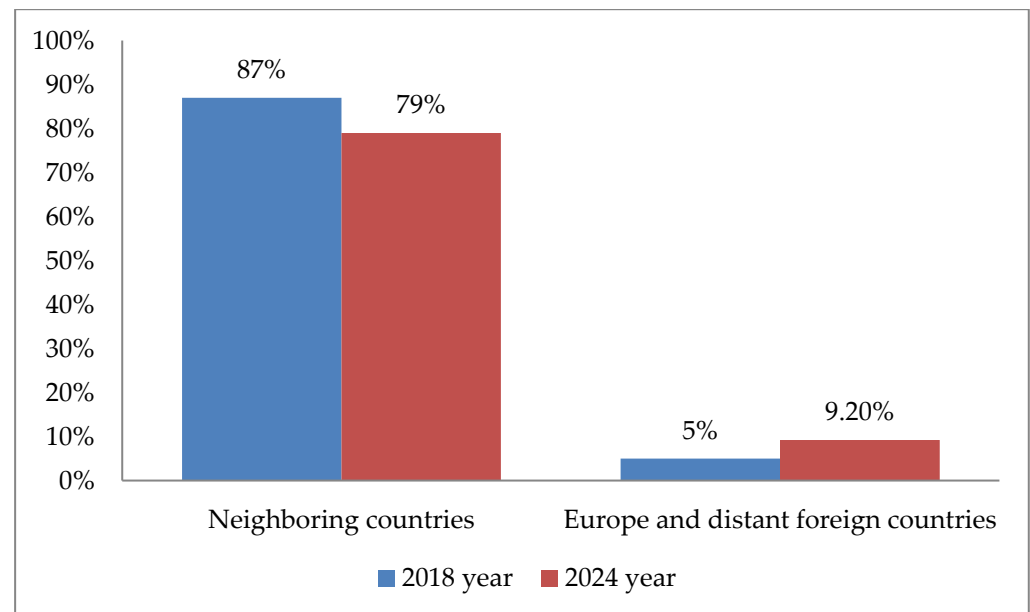
The development dynamics of the tourism sector in Uzbekistan during the period from 2016 to 2024 are reflected in the statistical data provided by the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics. Between 2017 and 2024, the volume of tourism service exports doubled. In 2017, it amounted to USD 546.9 million, increasing to USD 1.041 billion in 2018, USD 1.313 billion in 2019, USD 2.143 billion in 2023, and reaching USD 32.489 billion in 2024. Until 2016, the average annual growth rate in the number of international visitors was approximately 8%. In 2017, the growth rate was recorded at 7%, with the total number of foreign visitors exceeding 2.84 million, see Table 2.

Table 2. Indicators of the Number of Foreign and Domestic Tourists Visiting Uzbekistan and the Volume of Tourism Services Export in 2016–2024.

No	Years	Number of foreign citizens	Number of domestic tourist visits	Volume of tourism services exports, thousand USD
1.	2016	2070	8 855,2	430 746,2
2.	2017	2847.9	10 562,1	546, 9 00
3.	2018	5346.2	12 489,2	1 041 088,6
4.	2019	6748.5	14 748,0	1 313 032,3
5.	2020	1504,1	3 534,1	260 987,4
6.	2021	1 881,3	5 813,9	422 069,7
7.	2022	5 232,8	5 813,9	1 610 099,7
8.	2023	6 626,3	20 638,1	2 143 519,9
9.	2024	10 280, 0	22 670,0	3 489 000, 0

According to the results of 2018, 5.3 million foreign tourists visited the country, while in 2019, the number increased to 6.7 million. In 2023, the number exceeded 6.6 million, and in 2024, it reached 10.28 million. This is an increase of 3.65 million, or 55%, compared to the 6.63 million visitors in 2023. Additionally, the number of domestic tourists reached 22.67 million, representing an increase of 2 million people, or 10%, compared to 2023 [18].

If we look at the statistical data on the tourist flow from foreign countries, we can see a significant increase in the number of tourists from targeted foreign countries. In particular, the share of tourists from neighboring countries in the total number of visitors decreased from 87% in 2018 to 79%, while the number of visitors from Europe and distant countries increased from 5% to 9.2%, Figure 2.

**Figure 2.** The share of tourists from neighboring and distant countries in the total number of visitors from 2018 to 2024.

The figure above shows the share of tourists from neighboring and distant countries. According to this, the share of visitors from neighboring countries was 87% in 2018, decreasing to 79% by 2024. Meanwhile, the share of visitors from Europe and distant

countries increased from 5% in 2018 to 9.2% by 2024. Analyzing the countries individually, the number of tourists visiting from China increased by 1.6 times, from Italy by 1.6 times, from India by 1.5 times, from Germany by 1.3 times, from South Korea by 13%, and from Turkey by 7.2%. The number of tourists visiting for religious tourism purposes from Indonesia and Malaysia increased on average by 2.5 times.

If we aim to develop religious tourism in any region of Uzbekistan, each region of the country has its own unique features and attractions. In the course of our research, we have set the goal of analyzing the potential of religious tourism sites in the city of Tashkent.

“Tashkent – the Capital of Islamic Culture” is one of the international recognitions of the efforts being made in our country to restore and preserve Islamic culture and spiritual values. In January 2007, one of the institutions of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), declared Tashkent as the capital of Islamic culture. Alongside Tashkent, the cities of Fez (Morocco), Tripoli (Libya), and Dakar (Senegal) were also declared “Capitals of Islamic culture”. President Islam Karimov described this recognition as a well-deserved appreciation of the invaluable contribution of the Uzbek people to the development of Islamic culture.

In connection with this, construction and renovation works in the city were further intensified. In particular, within a short period, the Hazrati Imam Complex was completely renovated, new minarets, mosques, and boulevards were built, with many local residents contributing to these efforts with their voluntary labor. The Ko'kalosh Madrasah (16th century), Sheikh Zayniddin Bobo (13th–19th centuries), Zangiota (14th–20th centuries), Khoja Alambardor (19th century), Sheikh Khovandi Tohur (15th century), Yunuskhon (15th century) mausoleums, and Abulqosim Madrasah (19th century) were renovated. On August 14–15, 2007, an international scientific and practical conference on the topic “Tashkent’s Contribution to the Development of Islamic Civilization in Uzbekistan” was held in Samarkand [19].

In 2008, archaeologists declared that the city of Tashkent is already 2200 years old. One of the earliest records about the city was noted in annals from the 2nd century BC. Ancient Chinese sources referred to Tashkent as “Shi,” meaning “stone,” while in the medieval period, it was called Shosh or Choch. Scholars have concluded that the Turkic tribes who later migrated to this region used the same name because the word “tosh” in Turkic languages means “stone.” Throughout history, the city of Tashkent, due to its advantageous location, has been one of the main stops along the Great Silk Road.

Today, Tashkent is a modern metropolis that seamlessly blends medieval buildings with contemporary business centers in its architecture. The city offers all the conditions for an enjoyable stay. Here, ancient history and modern life coexist. Tashkent is served by two airports: one international and one domestic, as well as two railway stations. One of the city's modern landmarks is the metro, which opened in 1977 and is the first metro system in Central Asia. Each station boasts unique designs and distinct architectural styles. In Tashkent, visitors can explore historical monuments and modern mosques, travel through Eastern-style bazaars, learn about the thousand-year history and culture of the people in the city's museums, and relax in the city's parks, restaurants, and night entertainment venues.

According to the registry of the agency for cultural heritage under the culture and arts development fund of the cabinet of ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the number of immovable cultural heritage objects in Tashkent city is presented in Figure 3. The total number of cultural heritage objects in the area is 354, which includes 288 architectural monuments, 45 monumental art monuments, and 21 archaeological monuments. Today, tourism organizations offer more than 30 different thematic excursions to foreign tourists, based on the existing resources and tourism potential of Tashkent city.

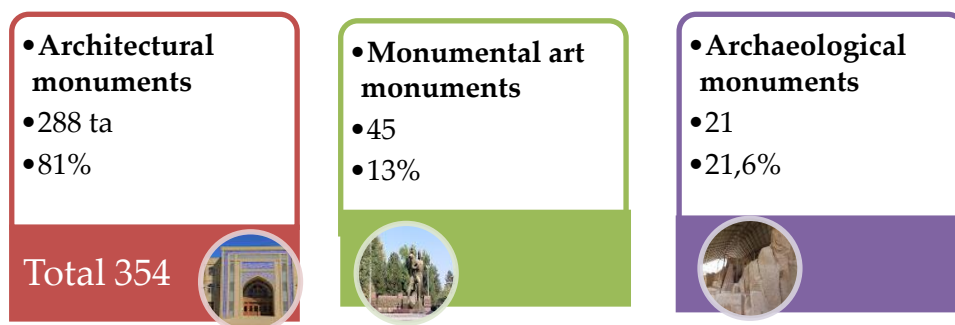


Figure 3. The number of immovable cultural heritage objects in Tashkent city.

According to the plan for 2024, it was expected that a total of 159,000 tourists would visit the existing pilgrimage sites and sacred places in Tashkent city, while the actual number reached 263,549, which is 65.7% higher than planned. In Tashkent city, the plan for organizing excursions and tours for domestic tourism in 2024 was 2,220,198, but in reality, it reached 3,079,789, see Table 3.

Table 3. Target indicators for the development of tourism in Tashkent city.

		Plan		Actually	
S/n	Names of districts and cities	Plan for foreign tourists visiting in 2024	Export of tourism services to be carried out in 2024 (million USD)	Number of foreign tourists visited during the 12 months of 2024	Tourism services export in the 12 months of 2024 (in million USD)
	Total for Tashkent city	3 100,0	1 150,0	4 050,9	1 497,5

As seen from the table, the number of foreign tourists visiting Tashkent city in 2024 was expected to be 3,100, but in reality, it reached 4,059.9. In 2024, the tourism services export was expected to amount to 1,150 million USD, but the actual figure was 1,497.5 million USD. This indicates that the efforts being made in the tourism sector of the region are yielding results.

Numerous projects dedicated to the tourism potential of Tashkent have been launched in various locations. Dozens of tourist destinations operating 24/7 have been established in the districts of Bektemir, Mirzo Ulug'bek, Mirobod, Yunusobod, Yakkasaroy, and Yangihayot. The old city area of Tashkent holds significant historical importance, attracting numerous foreign tourists throughout the year. Therefore, this area is being specialized for tourism services. For instance, last year, a street was established near Chorsu Bazaar in the Gulbozor neighborhood. The Abdulla Qodiriy Culture and Leisure Park is also being improved. In line with this, plans are underway to create gastronomic and tourism streets. A total of 17 streets and 32 closed streets have been selected for this purpose. These areas will be developed with additional infrastructure while preserving the unique architectural features of the Old City. As a result, the number of entrepreneurs operating in the region is expected to increase by 250, and 1,500 new jobs will be created. Importantly, the daily number of tourists is expected to rise from the current 4,000 to 11,000 [20].

According to the Ministry of Economy and Finance, a number of activities were carried out in 2024 with the aim of developing tourism. In this regard, it was reported that a total of 117 billion soums were allocated from the state budget for the tourism sector.

These funds were directed towards providing financial support to entrepreneurial entities. Specifically, 50 billion soums were allocated for promoting the country's tourism

potential in foreign tourism markets, 10 billion soums were used to cover part of the expenses for the construction and equipment of new roadways, 4 billion soums were allocated for the construction and equipment of new hotels, 10 billion soums were allocated for the construction of the International Tourism Academy in Samarkand under the UNWTO's patronage, and 43 billion soums were allocated for other expenses.

Additionally, within the framework of the social and production infrastructure development program, 322 billion soums were allocated for the construction and reconstruction of tourism facilities, and 80 billion soums were allocated to eliminate infrastructure problems in 20 districts with high tourism potential, totaling 402 billion soums. By the end of the year, the value of the completed work was 342 billion soums, with 366 billion soums (91 percent) being utilized.

In 2024, the number of foreign tourists visiting our country reached 10.28 million, an increase of 3.65 million or 55 percent compared to 6.63 million in 2023. Furthermore, the number of participants in domestic tourism reached 22.67 million, which represents an increase of 2 million people or 10 percent compared to 2023.

As a result of foreign tourists, tourism services exports in 2024 amounted to 3 billion 489 million USD. In 2023, this figure was 2 billion 143 million USD, which shows an increase of 1 billion 346 million USD or 62 percent.

In 2024, 627 new accommodation facilities (a total of 17,304 beds) were established, including 80 hotels, 215 hostels, 294 family guest houses, and 2 sanatoriums and wellness centers. As a result, the total number of accommodation facilities reached 6,153, and the number of beds increased to 161.4 thousand.

Additionally, to provide more convenient services, 961 new tourism organizations and travel agencies started their operations, bringing the total number to 3,686. At the same time, 3,200 guides and tour leaders are actively working in our country.

In 2024, the condition of 1,010 sanitary-hygiene kiosks was improved: 512 were newly built, and 498 were renovated. Also, 4 tourism information centers were opened in the cities of Khonobod in Andijan region and Shahrisabz in Kashkadarya region [21].

In addition, several Sufi orders such as Qadiriyyah, Yassaviyyah, Kubrawiyyah, Suhrawardiyyah, Naqshbandiyyah, Shadhiliyyah, Khilvatiyyah, Mawlawiyyah, Badaviyyah, Dasuqqiyyah, Jalwatiyyah, and Chishtiyyah, based on the Quran and Hadith, have emerged and developed in our country. Muslim nations have reached spiritual enlightenment and knowledge under the influence of these orders. Today, there is a targeted segment of people who come to our country to explore the rich heritage of our Shaykh scholars and to visit their mausoleums.

Our country is home to one of the oldest Quranic manuscripts in the world, the Uthman Mushaf, which is kept in Tashkent. This manuscript was written over 1,300 years ago on deer skin and has been preserved until today. Additionally, 114 different copies of the Quran are also kept in our country. In this study, we need to explore the existing opportunities and pilgrimage tourism resources, and develop pilgrimage tourism programs in the directions of "Scientific Pilgrimage Tourism" and "Uzbekistan's Islamic Civilization Heritage," as well as attract foreign tourists and promote these programs.

4. Conclusion

Overall, Uzbekistan has a high potential for pilgrimage tourism. At the macro level, we can increase the opportunities to attract foreign tourists internationally. There are pilgrimage sites in various regions of Uzbekistan that attract international tourists. Looking at our history, many scholars who lived in our country have contributed to Islamic civilization and have been promoters of various Islamic sciences. These include the science of tafsir (which is based on understanding and explaining the Quran), the science of aqidah (which teaches the correct belief), the science of fiqh (which regulates law), the science of hadith (which distinguishes and explains authentic and non-authentic narrations from the

Prophet Muhammad), and the science of tasawwuf, which aims to help individuals reach moral perfection.

Proposals and recommendations for developing new pilgrimage tourism routes and travel programs in Uzbekistan:

- a. Restore and enhance the significance of pilgrimage sites that are disappearing;
- b. Develop pilgrimage tourism routes and sightseeing tours by regions and districts, and it is advisable to create pilgrimage routes throughout all regions of Uzbekistan. Each region has unique aspects that contribute to its pilgrimage potential;
- c. Religious-historical tours: develop pilgrimage tourism routes along the ancient trade routes, such as the "great silk road";
- d. Depending on the incoming tourist segment, create individual and group pilgrimage travel programs tailored to specific audiences;
- e. Establish local transport services exclusively for pilgrimage sites;
- f. Organize press tours, info tours for professionals, and free travel for international bloggers to promote pilgrimage sites and attract tourists, thus reaching a wider audience;
- g. Organize tours introducing mosques and madrasas;
- h. Create thematic pilgrimage tourism routes targeting young people, using modern conveniences and technologies;
- i. Develop a pilgrimage tourism route called the "great scholars' path," connecting the mausoleums of famous Islamic scholars and intellectuals;
- j. Promote online travel options as well;
- k. Develop pilgrimage routes to the sacred sites in each region, especially those that are less explored;
- l. Create religious-cultural harmony tours: routes that include pilgrimage sites and cultural monuments belonging to various religious communities in Uzbekistan. Destinations: Tashkent: Hazrat Imam Complex, Catholic Church. Samarkand: Khwaja Daniyar Mausoleum (famous for the respect of three religious communities). Fergana Valley: Mosques and Jewish places of worship in Margilan. Bukhara: Kalon Minaret and Jewish Synagogue. Specialty: showcasing the harmony between different religions

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