

Article

Development of Pilgrimage Tourism in Samarkand

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Abstract: This article examines the development of pilgrimage tourism in Samarkand as an important aspect of Uzbekistan's tourism industry. It analyzes the region's historical and cultural resources, their importance in attracting tourists and pilgrims, and current trends in tourism infrastructure development. Particular attention is paid to the role of religious and historical monuments, such as mausoleums, mosques, and ancient complexes, which shape Samarkand's unique tourism potential. The paper also examines statistical indicators of tourist flow, the impact of tourism development on the region's economy, and prospects for further growth. The study demonstrates that pilgrimage tourism contributes to strengthening the country's international image and fostering intercultural dialogue.

Keywords: pilgrimage tourism, Samarkand, Uzbekistan, tourism infrastructure, cultural heritage, religious tourism, historical monuments, tourism development.

1. Introduction

In recent years, tourism in Uzbekistan has been rapidly developing and is becoming one of the most important sectors of the country's economy. Pilgrimage tourism, which involves visits to religious shrines, historical sites, and spiritual centers, occupies a special place in the structure of tourist destinations. Samarkand is one of the oldest cities in the world and plays a vital role in the development of this type of tourism. The city boasts a rich cultural and religious heritage, attracting thousands of pilgrims and tourists from around the world.[1]

Samarkand is renowned for its unique architectural monuments and sacred sites, including the Imam al-Bukhari Mausoleum, the Shah-i-Zinda complex, the Gur-e-Emir Mausoleum, and other historical sites. These sites hold great spiritual significance for Muslims and are important pilgrimage centers.[2]

The development of pilgrimage tourism not only contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage but also to the development of infrastructure, the creation of new jobs, and the enhancement of international cooperation. Therefore, studying the development of pilgrimage tourism in Samarkand is a pressing research issue.[3]

2. Materials and Method

The study utilized various scientific methods to comprehensively examine the development of pilgrimage tourism in Samarkand. The primary research methods included literature review, statistical analysis, comparative analysis, and observation.[4]

Literature review allowed us to explore the theoretical foundations of pilgrimage tourism and determine its importance for the development of the tourism industry. Statistical analysis was used to study the dynamics of tourist flows and assess the impact of tourism on the regional economy.[5]

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The comparative method allowed us to compare the development of pilgrimage tourism in Samarkand with other tourist destinations in Central Asia. In addition, observation was used to identify behavioral patterns of tourists and pilgrims visiting religious sites.[6]

3. Result and Discussion

Results

The conducted research shows that Samarkand has significant potential for the development of pilgrimage tourism. One of the most visited sites is the Imam al-Bukhari Mausoleum, which annually attracts large numbers of pilgrims from around the world. This religious complex is considered one of the most important spiritual centers of the Islamic world. Another important landmark is the Shah-i-Zinda architectural complex, a complex of mausoleums located within an ancient cemetery. This complex has great historical and spiritual significance and is one of Samarkand's most famous tourist attractions.[7]

Furthermore, the Gur-e-Emir mausoleum, the burial place of the great commander and ruler Amir Temur, is of significant interest to tourists. This monument is an outstanding example of Timurid-era architecture and attracts both pilgrims and history buffs.

Discussion

Soglasno statisticheskim dannym, za poslednie gody kolichestvo turistov, poseshchayushchih Samarkand, znachitelno uvelichilos. In 2018, the city was visited by about 500,000 foreign tourists, and by 2023, it will reach over 1.5 million people.

Znachitelnuyu dolyu sredni nix sostavlyayut palomniki, priezjayushchie iz stran Blijnego East, Yugo-East Asia i other regions. Razvitie aviasoobshcheniya, improvement of the visa regime and active gosudarstvennaya podderzka turisticheskoy otrasli sposobstvovali rostu turisticheskogo potoka.[8][9]

Aktje nablyudaetsya active razvitie turisticheskoy infrastructure: stroyatsya novye hostinitsya, uluchshaetsya transportnaya sistema, sozdayutsya sovremennye turisticheskie servisy. Vsyo eto povyshayet komfort prebyvaniya turistov i sposobstvuet dalneyshemu razvitiyu palomnicheskogo turizma.

In order to widely promote the tourism potential of the Samarkand region, in January-July 2025, the regional delegation, in particular, representatives of the tourism industry operating in the region, conducted tourism promotion campaigns in Moscow and St. Petersburg of the Russian Federation, Khujand of Tajikistan, Jakarta of Indonesia, Kuala Lumpur of Malaysia, Almaty of Kazakhstan, Paris of France, Milan of Italy, Seoul of South Korea, and Nara of Japan.

In addition, information tours were organized throughout the region for influential bloggers and representatives of large tourism companies from the USA, Russia, Malaysia, Indonesia, China, Pakistan, Singapore, India, Japan, Korea, the UAE, Qatar, and Kuwait, reaching a total audience of 600 million.

For example, an information tour was organized for 100 influential journalists and bloggers from the CIS countries with a total audience of 450 million.[10][11][12]

In order to provide cultural services to tourists visiting the region

- The "Street Art" project is being implemented in Registon square in order to promote our national art and attract young people to our national art and culture by performing theatrical concerts at historical monuments and tourist facilities by folk artistic amateur groups.

Samarkand region was accepted as a member of TRO (International Tourism Organization) located in Pusan, Korea. A tourism representative office of Samarkand region will be opened in Guangzhou province of China and Dubai in UAE. (Increases the flow of tourists in China and the UAE)

Samarkand tourism brand and design code was developed.

About 40 cultural entertainment events and festivals were held for foreign and local tourists. Including

A festival called "Samarkand Bread - People's Brand" was held in Samarkand. 22 ovens were installed by bakers from different regions and 50 types of unique bread and bakery products were prepared. 100,000 local and foreign tourists visited the festival for 3 days.

Geographical indications "Samarkand bread", "Samarkand pea soup", "Samarkand paper" were registered by the Ministry of Justice as "national brand".

International athletes from 10 foreign countries participated in the international paragliding festival on the territory of the Andak Federal District of Urgut district. BBC News and local media widely covered the event and exhibitions of handicrafts and oriental sweets, and the event was visited by 7,000 spectators.[13][14]

More than 100 participants from 10 countries participated in the "International Balloons" festival in Urgut district,

with 25 balloons, and more than 75 thousand spectators were attracted.

In order to honor great values, convey them to the younger generation, and promote folk oral creativity to the world, an international scientific and practical conference on the topic "Kurgan School of Dostanchilik and the Legacy of Ergash Jumanbulbul ugli" and the Republican Bakhshi Competition "Kushrabot Navasi - 2025" were held in the Kushrabot district,

and 6,500 spectators visited the events.

In May of this year, the ancient city of Samarkand, famous for its historical and cultural heritage, hosted the first-ever "Folk Fest – Samarkand 2025" gala concert.

The festival opened a new page in the cultural life of Uzbekistan and emerged as a major cultural project promoting a modern approach to traditional folk art.

"Folk Fest – Samarkand 2025" is expected to be not only a musical festival, but also a new stage in the dialogue of cultures, harmony of traditions and performing arts.

The international festival "Samarkand Oshi" was held on August 1-3 of this year. 7 tons of 140 kg of oshi were prepared at the festival. 50 chefs from 17 countries, including Pakistan, Qatar, Kuwait, Malaysia, Tajikistan, Indonesia, participated in the event. 14 types of national dishes were prepared by chefs from the regions of the republic, and 16 types of national dishes were prepared by chefs from the cities and districts of the region. More than 300,000 foreign and local tourists visited the festival.[15][16]

4. Conclusions

Thus, pilgrimage tourism is an important development area for Uzbekistan's tourism industry. Samarkand boasts unique historical and religious sites, which contribute to the region's high tourism potential.

Developing this type of tourism contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage, strengthening international ties, and developing the country's economy. To ensure further growth, it is necessary to continue modernizing tourism infrastructure, developing services, and actively promoting Samarkand's tourism potential internationally.

Proposals for the Development of Pilgrimage Tourism in Uzbekistan.

To further develop pilgrimage tourism in Samarkand, a number of measures are proposed. First, it is necessary to expand international cooperation in tourism and hold international tourism forums.

Second, attention should be paid to improving transportation accessibility to religious sites and developing modern tourism infrastructure.

Third, it is important to develop information resources and digital platforms that will allow foreign tourists to obtain comprehensive information about tourist routes and religious sites in Samarkand.

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