

## Directions for the Practice of Sustainable Tourism for Ecotourism Destinations in Uzbekistan

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**Abstract:** Tourism has already become an industry that can have a significant impact on the world economy. In many countries, it has emerged as a leading sector of the economy. This is due to the fact that the tourism industry has a wide range of services and can influence almost all sectors. While its economic benefits, such as income and employment, are often taken into account, its damage to the environment is often overlooked. Unplanned and uncontrolled tourism will become an unsolvable problem in the future firstly on a national scale and then on a global. Putting nature at risk in exchange for temporary economic benefits can be a huge obstacle in the future. Sustainable economic benefits are achieved through the creation and implementation of sustainable tourism criteria in each country. It preserves not only nature but also historical and cultural heritage, as well as the formation of similar concepts in society, such as environmental awareness, ecological culture. Uzbekistan also has a unique natural environment. It can be a sustainable tourism as a solution to prevent the consequences of future unmanaged and unplanned tourism. This article presents the approach and directions of sustainable tourism for eco-tourism destinations in Uzbekistan.

**Keywords:** sustainable tourism; eco-tourism; destination; environmental impact; negative impact, guideline.

### INTRODUCTION

Global climate problems and political conflicts in several countries limit some types of tourism whereas create a need for certain types. Current environmental problems make tourists look for "green destinations" and long for nature. From this, we can assume that the ecological form of tourism will become a trend in the next decade. The city, tired of the changes in the environment, longs for the beauty and calmness of nature. As a result, the flow of tourists to eco-friendly destinations will increase, and nature will also be at some risk. At the same time, "sustainable tourism" appears to be the most optimal solution for countries that offer eco-tourism.

Uzbekistan is a country with four different climatic zones and is an excellent destination for the development of ecotourism, which has recently become one of the most popular regions due to its diversity of natural and geographical features. Uzbekistan's convenient geographical location at the crossroads of East and West, climatic features, unique network of protected natural areas and colorful landscapes create great opportunities for the promotion of ecotourism, rich past and the historical attractions.

Therefore, it is possible and has a potential risk that these ecological sites will be spoiled by tourists in the future. The main purpose of this article is to develop sustainable tourism criteria and directions to

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prevent potential negative consequences for the long-term surviving of eco-tourism in Uzbekistan in the future.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

*The evolution of ecotourism:* Ecotourism is a specific kind of tourism in natural areas. The term emerged in the late 1980s with the increasing importance of ecotourism. According to Fennell (1999), “Ecotourism is a sustainable form of tourism based on natural resources that is primarily focused on experiencing and exploring nature and is ethically less impactful, non-consuming, and locally oriented (controlled) benefit, and scale. It is commonly found in natural areas and should contribute to the conservation or preservation of such areas” (Fennell, 1999).

*The Mohonk Agreement* proposes international certification of sustainable tourism and ecotourism, states ecotourism as “sustainable tourism that focuses on the natural area, benefits the environment and host communities, and promotes environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and awareness (*Global Ecotourism Network 2000*).”

*According to the UNWTO’s* definition (2002), “ecotourism refers to forms of tourism that have the following characteristics: (1) all nature-based forms of tourism in which the main motivation of tourists is to observe and appreciate nature as well as local culture. (2) It includes training and interpretation features; (3) It is common, but not organized only by specialized tour operators for small groups. The partners of service providers in designated locations are usually small, local businesses; (4) ) reduces the negative impact on the natural and socio-cultural environment; (5) It supports the conservation of natural areas used as attractions of ecotourism in the following ways: host communities, organizations and governing bodies for the protection of natural areas to benefit economically; to use alternative employment and income opportunities for local communities; Raise awareness among locals and tourists about the conservation of natural and cultural treasures. These features are sometimes referred to as ecotourism principles.

Another definition of ecotourism by the Global Ecotourism Network (GEN) is: “Ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas that create understanding the study of knowledge and skills through the interpretation and training of all participants (visitors, staff) who protect the environment, support the well-being of the local population” (2016).

*Ecotourism is not just a destination - it is the future of travel and the choice of millions!*

According to a survey conducted by the charity Tourism Cares, 55 percent of respondents have made a voluntary financial contribution to the place they have visited in the past two years.

The survey also showed that 73 percent of the younger generation is willing to invest in sustainability, compared to 51 percent of Baby Boomers.

This gives the assumption of that the needs of the young generation, as well as other generations, will increase in the future for ecological destinations, and the destiny of these endangered tourist destinations is becoming a concern.

*Outcomes:* The significant impact of climate change and environmental problems currently occurring means that the term sustainability cannot be ignored. It is clear that this will be an area that can have an impact on every industry in the world and become a trend in the next decade. The tourism sector is often cited as one of the main causes of global climate problems. This is due to the fact that in 2012 alone, the number of tourists reached a record one billion, which is a significant increase in carbon footprint (UNWTO, 2012). By 2030, these numbers are projected to reach 1.8 billion a year. So the question arises, if 1 billion tourists have already been exposed to

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the environment, how will this impact be estimated by 2030. And at this point, the increasing relevance of ecological addresses in the future will become obvious. For this reason, sustainability issues are considered as a solution for the problems of ecological destinations in the future.

*Vision of Sustainable tourism:*

Guidelines and management practices for sustainable tourism development apply to all forms of tourism in all types of areas, including mass tourism and various tourism segments. The principles of sustainability imply environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and an appropriate balance must be struck between these three dimensions to ensure its long-term sustainability (UNEP & UNWTO, 2005).

Thus, sustainable tourism:

- 1) Optimal use of ecological resources, which are a key element of tourism development, conservation of important ecological processes and assistance in conservation of natural resources and biodiversity.
- 2) to respect the culture of the host communities, to travel without compromising their historical and living cultural heritage and traditional values, thereby contributing to intercultural tolerance.
- 3) ensuring fairly distributed socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders, including sustainable employment and income opportunities, and the provision of social services to host communities and vital, long-term economic operations that contribute to poverty alleviation.

The development of sustainable tourism requires strong political leadership to ensure the participation of all stakeholders, as well as broad participation and consensus. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and requires continuous monitoring of impacts and the introduction of necessary preventive and / or corrective measures as needed.

Sustainable tourism should also achieve satisfaction and provide a meaningful experience for tourists by providing them with a high level of quality, raising their awareness of sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices among them.

*The World Tourism Organization’s definition of sustainable tourism*

*Simply put, ‘sustainable tourism can be defined as a type of tourism that meets the needs of industry, the environment, tourists, and host communities at the same time, taking full account of current and future potential economic, social, and environmental impacts’.*



**Source:** <https://www.devalt.org/newsletter/sep18/lead.htm>

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This concept can be described consistently as in the picture. It has an interdependence basis that comes from protecting the environment, ownership in community, and living a decent lifestyle. According to the International Ecotourism Society (TIES), the ultimate goal of ecotourism, which is a key component of sustainable tourism, is to preserve the natural resources and ensure the economic and social well-being of the local population.

Thus, further stabilization of tourism is achieved through tourism planning, which means taking into account these influences and needs in its development. It is a process that is constantly being improved and applies equally to tourism in cities, resorts, rural and coastal areas, mountains and protected areas. This also applies to all forms of business and leisure tourism.

**METHODS**

This article firstly examines the rising demand for eco-tourism in near future and its potential in Uzbekistan based on various statistical data and the results of surveys and publications conducted by various organizations.

Initially, both terms were defined by different scholars and UNWTO, creating a theoretical basis for the problem. Then, the potential of eco-tourism in Uzbekistan was studied. Also, directions and concepts for ecotourism in Uzbekistan have been developed to reduce the potential negative consequences for the growing leisure industry in the future.

This information was collected with the help of the following well-known international and national organizations: Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2019; UNWTO 2012 – UNWTO 2018 Tourism Definitions (UNWTO); Future Market Insights 2021 and etc.

For the analysis of the development perspectives and dynamics of ecological and sustainable tourism in Uzbekistan, information has been received from official sources, statistical reporting data of the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

**RESULTS**

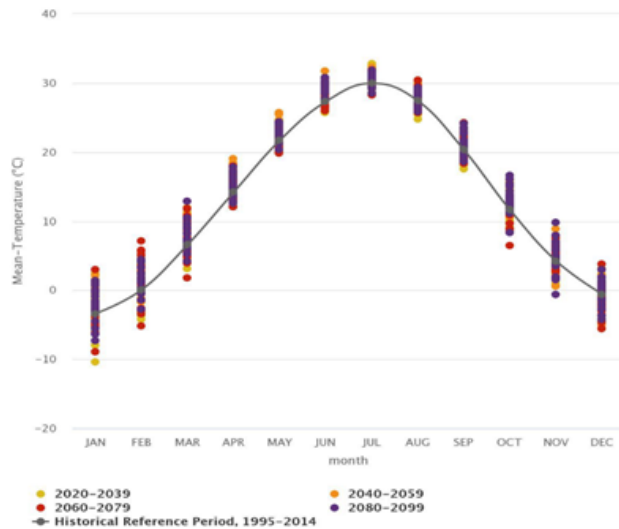
In recent years, ecotourism has become one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry, and the evidences showed above give its summery that it has a tendency to see a dramatic growth again in the near future. As a highlight, the World statistics illustrate the ever increasing growth of ecotourism in near future. Primarily, the global ecotourism market is projected to grow by 15% CAGR in 2021 and 2031. In 2021, the market value will exceed \$ 17 billion, Future Market Insights (FMI) (2021) finds in its latest study.

*Ecotourism: challenges and prospects:* Uzbekistan is also one of the leading countries in terms of eco-tourism potential and rich unrepeatable ecological destinations. One of the main factors that distinguishes the attractiveness of the tourist area is the exotic nature of Uzbekistan, rich landscape, diversity of flora and fauna because of four different seasons. The diversity of seasons creates a complex ecological system. Also, observation of different temperature dynamics for twelve months increases the choice of optimal temperature for tourists.

They visit ecological destinations in the seasons they want and find acceptable. That's why most tourists visit our country mainly for leisure purposes. This can be seen in the following indicators which illustrates diverse temperatures and overall market's choice.

*Projected Variability and Trends of Mean-Temperature across seasonal cycle in Uzbekistan.*

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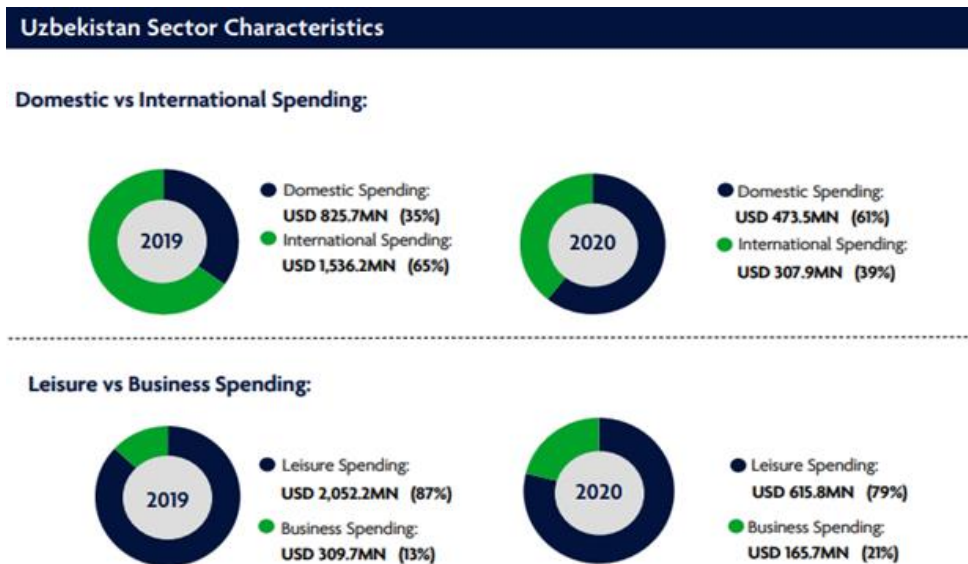
Source: <https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/country/uzbekistan/climate-data-projections>

The line graph given above illustrates the overall information about the temperature changes during the months with historical background and future predictions.

As can be seen, the changes in the years during the seasonal periods did not witness any considerable changes and predictions are in a mere level.

Therefore, we can summarize that Uzbekistan has almost stable temperature and diverse options for tourists to make their decisions in terms of temperature even in coming eight decades.

Another given pie chart below shows the sector characteristics of the tourism market of Uzbekistan. The market choice of travelers has a strong tendency to leisure rather than business. This is supported by their spending amount.



Source: WTTC report 2021, Uzbekistan: Annual Research: Key Highlights

Overall, the climatic conditions of Uzbekistan play an important role in the development of recreation and ecotourism. To exemplify the potential of ecotourism, protected natural areas itself have a major role in eco-tourism in Uzbekistan (Rakhmatulla Khidirovich Ergashev & Mohigul Khamidova, 2021).

The main factors that show the attractiveness of the tourist region are the exotic nature of Uzbekistan, the rich landscape, the diversity of flora and fauna. Today, protected natural areas are the main link of ecological tourism. According to the information of the State Committee for Nature Protection, there are 9 state reserves, and one of the reserves covering 209,600 km of land (Chotkal Mountain - Forest) has received the state status of biosphere.

Under the jurisdiction of the State Committee for Nature Protection - Chotkal mountain-forest biosphere reserve (Tashkent region), Hisar subalpine fir reserve (Kashkadarya region), Forestry under the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Management under the jurisdiction of the General Directorate of Jaligi: Zomin subalpine fir (in Jizzakh region), Baday-tokai plain-forest (in the Republic of Karakalpakstan), Qizilkum sandy-forest (in Bukhara and Khorezm regions), Zarafshan meadows (in Samarkand region), Nurota mountain-nut reserve (in Jizzakh region), Surkhan mountain-forest reserve (in Surkhandarya region) and under the jurisdiction of the State Committee for Geology and Mineral Resources - Kitab geological reserve operates.

The fauna differs from the flora in ecological systems precisely by their type and number, that is, by their biological diversity. There are many species of the fauna of Uzbekistan, which contains 97 species of mammals, 57 species of reptiles, and 410 species of birds. The Red Book of the Republic of Uzbekistan published in 2011 includes 23 species of mammals, 48 species of birds (51 with subspecies), 16 species of reptiles, 17 species of fish, and others were introduced.

Currently, only the Zarafshan reserve in the Samarkand region and the "Jayron" eco-center in the Bukhara region are constantly receiving tourists. Forests in Chotkal, Zomin, Nurota, Hisar reserves, Amudarya gorges, which have rich potential, are not being used in practical terms. Spectacular mountain and desert landscapes, botanical, geological and hydrogeological objects attract tourists and form a recreational element of ecotourism, covering sports tourism, mountaineering, mountain skiing, horse sports and other types of active recreation.

According to information, only 5% of the state-registered tourist enterprises in the Republic of Uzbekistan are focused on ecotourism. In most cases, large tourist companies offer mixed types of tourism. Pure ecological tourism or sustainable tourism has not yet been considered as an independent field of tourism in our Republic, and therefore it is not able to bring enough income and prevent possible negative impacts of mass tourism. In the modern economic infrastructure of the republic, mechanisms of eco tourism and its measures in eco-tourism destinations have not been established (Table 2.1).

This is the main reason for the low level of demand for Uzbek ecotourism products in the foreign tourist market.

**Table-2.1. Evaluation of demand and ecotourism resources potential**

<b>Touristic resources</b>	<b>Demand for tourists</b>	<b>Sustainability measures</b>	<b>Opportunity</b>
<b>Intact nature</b>	average	low	high
<b>Local culture</b>	average	low	high
<b>Protected areas</b>	average	high	high

<b>Offered events (walks, folk shows, ceremonies, seasonal events)</b>	high	high	high
<b>Exotic sphere and adventure</b>	high	low	high
<b>Service quality</b>	high	low	Avarage

*Source: Based on the data obtained as a result of the author's research*

Travelers are somewhat more interested in our national traditions and historical monuments. But the ecotourism potential of Uzbekistan cannot be considered low, the only problem is the measures of sustainability and infrastructure have not been established well. Also, it is required to develop its undiscovered potential. In this regard, creating an environmental free competition based on sustainability principles and principles of market economy, developing an environmental-legal mechanism is of great importance.

By implementing directions for sustainable tourism in ecotourism destinations, there can be great opportunities for accelerated development of ecotourism in Uzbekistan will be created.

**DISCUSSION**

Uzbekistan is a country with four different climatic zones and is an excellent destination for the development of ecotourism, which has recently become one of the most popular regions due to its diversity of natural and geographical features. Uzbekistan's convenient geographical location at the crossroads of East and West, climatic features, unique network of protected natural areas and colorful landscapes create great opportunities for the promotion of ecotourism, rich past and the historical attractions promise unforgettable trips. experiments.

Ecotourism is an important factor in the sustainable development of countries and the protection of the environment, without compromising the cultural and ethnographic features, the integrity of the entire ecosystem. Uzbekistan is one of the fastest growing countries in the field of eco-friendly tourism and has great ecotourism potential due to its rich natural resources.

Today, Uzbekistan is one of the leading ecotourism countries in Central Asia. At present, the system of protected natural areas of the country includes 8 nature reserves, 3 national parks and a complex of nature reserves (Baxtishodovich, Suyunovich, et al., 2018).

Uzbekistan is very rich in natural resources and has a variety of opportunities for ecotourism. The nature of Uzbekistan amazes travelers with its unique landscapes: vast deserts, impressive mountain ranges, many rivers and lakes, nature reserves and unique historical monuments, as well as the richness of animals and plants. The unique species of ‘plab’ attracts outdoor fans from all over the world.

In particular, the mountainous regions of the country - Chimgan, Zaamin, Chatkal, Kuzkuv, Piskom, Turkestan, Gissar, Zarafshan, Alay, Qurama, Nurata - have all the natural geographical conditions for tourism, trekking and mountaineering. There are also many opportunities to develop rafting species along countless mountain rivers and streams.

Sustainable tourism standards should be established in these ecological locations to prevent future potential environmental impacts. Sustainable tourism is a measure of sustainability for virtually all types of tourism. The integration of sustainable tourism with the tourism industry in our country will help to improve the environment in our country, minimizing the damage caused to it.

The criteria for sustainable ecotourism are as follows.

Sustainable Ecotourism:

- ✓ Reduces environmental impact using benchmarks
- ✓ Contributes to local sustainable development
- ✓ Requires minimal consumption of non-renewable resources
- ✓ Provides for the well-being of the local population
- ✓ Emphasizes local property
- ✓ Supports environmental efforts
- ✓ Contributes to biodiversity

Different concepts in the development of sustainable tourism are presented. The following ways of implementation of sustainable tourism are proposed based on the foreign experience (Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1. Sustainable tourism development management.**

Type	Basic Description	The main tasks of sustainable tourism	Examples of tools used
Ability capacity	The number of visitors to the destination may be acceptable when unless it has a negative impact on the environment, the local community and the visitor experience	Prevention of environmental degradation	Methods such as queuing, booking, lottery, pricing, timely access, zoning, permitting, and setting up protected areas.
Government Intervention	Mandatory measures taken by the central government to reduce environmental degradation	Contamination prevention and Management	Legislation and licensing
Economic Approach	Tools such as tax and financial incentives are used to encourage the tourism business to engage in sustainable activities	Prevent and control pollution and encourage sustainable practice	Taxes
Self-management	The tourism industry takes responsibility for its actions	Prevent and control pollution and encourage sustainable practice	Rules of conduct Awards
Education	To teach the tourist to develop and demonstrate sustainable movements towards a goal	Encouraging sustainable consumption patterns	Rules of conduct
Monitoring	Develop goals, objectives, and assumptions on the identified issue and evaluate the problem on an ongoing basis according to	Provide a clear measure of progress, with updated information and expanded knowledge	Development of indicators Ecological label



	this initial level		
Marketing and Information Services	Routes market segment to attract any tourists	Promoting certain types of tourism, influencing tourist behavior, promoting product offerings and reducing seasonality Promoting seasonal opportunities	Marketing and demarketing
The environment management	Determining the optimal allocation of resources that make maximum use of the environment and meet the needs of users and improve the quality of the environment within a specified period.	Environmental goals integrated into tourism policy and planning	Visitor management techniques, taxes, monitoring

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the previous chapters, the theoretical foundations of Sustainable Tourism were discussed and the importance of innovations was discussed. Considering the theoretical basis, based on foreign experience, it is recommended to take the following measures at environmental destinations.

Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism in ecological destinations:

- ⇒ Formation of signs of different responsible tourism in each ecological address;
- ⇒ Visitors should be shown how responsible they can be through various demonstrations, booklets, programs, information centers, signs, and accompanying tours;
- ⇒ Encourage tourists to enjoy more green travel by leaving their vehicles behind;
- ⇒ Popularization of bicycle services at ecological addresses;
- ⇒ Further revitalization of nature in urban and rural areas, the creation of various benefits by the state, the creation of "traditional gardens" in the area where the population lives, thereby benefiting the ecosystem and the country's economy;
- ⇒ More incentives for outdoor activities, without damaging natural and cultural monuments in rural and urban areas;
- ⇒ Encourage tourists to buy local products and food;
- ⇒ Maintaining green business systems to encourage tourism businesses to recycle, save energy, water, etc.;
- ⇒ Organize various forums, consultations and groups to get local people to share their thoughts and ideas.
- ⇒ Reducing erosion caused by tourists (by creating more pedestrian routes)
- ⇒ Pursue a policy to control the construction of buildings and their distribution and development in the suburbs;

- ⇒ Expanding the variety of buildings built through renewable energy systems and developing various grants and incentives for them;
- ⇒ Introduce projects and systems that support the use of small-scale renewable energy sources for the population (for example: sustainable energy provided by solar panels);

In accordance with the above guidelines, it is necessary to create infrastructure and infrastructure in ecological addresses. To do this, we propose to organize the following steps step by step.

- *Influence through symbols*: Be able to use words that increase responsibility when introducing info signs at environmental destinations.
- *Organizing donation boxes for the nature*: Charity boxes should be set up by responsible tourists in order to preserve nature and invest in its future revitalization. Proceeds will be used to rehabilitate the area.
- *Environmental education programmes for young people*: Organizing trips to ecological destinations for young children in order to form an ecological culture and at the same time relax in nature. This will create the potential for small but responsible future domestic tourists; It can also be a good practice to get to know nature. It is also possible to organize nature programs for young people. It also helps young people make international friends.

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