



Analysis of Ecotourism and Recreational Resources for Transboundary Regions in Surkhandarya, Uzbekistan

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Abstract: The mountains have a variety of tourist resources and a wide range of tourist activities. The Republic of Uzbekistan is distinguished by the attractiveness of its natural resources. Mountain-valley territories are characterized as areas with pronounced tourism potential. At the same time, the region is also attractive for foreign tourists. The formation of cross-border tourist zones in the field of tourism and recreation is a new socio-economic process associated with the beginning of the active development of international tourism in the world in the second half of the 20th century. The creation of transboundary ecotourism zones will significantly increase the level of international and national competitiveness of the ecotourism and recreational sector in the border areas of cooperation of each state.

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1. Introduction

Today, eco-tourism plays a significant role in the global tourism and hospitality industry. According to experts from the World Tourism Organization (WTO), in the 21st century, its growth rate will continue to be high, and the income generated will make a significant contribution to the development of the economies of many countries around the world, especially developing ones. This will stimulate socio-economic growth and environmental protection in backward regions. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), ecotourism is recognized as one of the promising sectors of the economy. This type of tourism is a young, but effectively developing industry sector, the income from which accounts for the bulk of the GDP of a number of countries around the world. Recreational services in many countries are the most widespread and massive sector of the economy, in which 10-15% of the employed population participates. The organization of recreational activities is related to the natural and economic conditions of the region, especially the geographical location of the region.

In border mountain areas, specific problems arise when organizing tourist and recreational zones, the cause of which is the state border. The border is a physical and psychological barrier for tourists, changing the conditions for organizing tourism. Prospects for the development of cross-border tourism are determined by socio-economic cooperation between neighboring states, the presence of their

common natural and cultural heritage, and the level of tourist interest in neighboring states. World experience shows that in the development of tourism, each region, region, district, in addition to prospects, has its own problems. Therefore, in our Uzbekistan there are several obstacles to the development of tourism. Among these problems, administrative barriers, poor infrastructure and services, expensive tariffs and staff shortages are the main reasons hindering the development of tourism. The above problems manifest themselves in every region, and in the Surkhandarya region, where we conduct research, they are the most relevant.

In 2018, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted Resolution No. 324 dated May 3, 2018 "On measures to develop the tourism sector in the Surkhandarya region." The program provides for a system of measures aimed at improving the territorial organization of tourism in the region, creating favorable conditions for the effective use of the region's natural resources. Preserve the recreational value of landscapes to support conservation efforts, public environmental education and sustainable development, develop transport infrastructure, improve the quality of services for tourists and visitors, and create new jobs [1]. The planned tourist areas provide for the construction of modern hotel complexes, cultural, recreational, shopping, entertainment and other facilities. Currently, the following projects are being developed in Surkhandarya region – (1) on the organization of tourist

infrastructure facilities, (2) organizing guest houses, (3) calendar of cultural, entertainment and sports events held in the Surkhandarya region.

Thus, the republic has developed a system of measures to plan the development of tourism at the republican and regional levels. Determine the ecotourism and recreational resources of the Surkhandarya region, constructing a functional zoning of the territory. The following noting shall be considered as hereunder:

- Characterize the main ecotourism and recreational resources, identify the most attractive natural landscape zones;
- Consider the territorial features of existing ecotourism destinations in the context of state policy in the field of ecotourism development in the Surkhandarya region;
- Develop maps of transboundary ecotourism and recreational zones.

The mountainous regions of the Surkhandarya region, which in recent years have acquired important national and international tourist importance, were chosen as the basis for theoretical and practical research into the ecotourism and recreational space of mountain territories. The transboundary nature of the mountain region determines the prerequisites for the development of tourism cooperation.

2. Main part

Recently, due to the deterioration of the environment, there has been a search for alternative uses of natural resources. One of these areas is tourism, since it is the most environmentally friendly type of environmental management. Tourism allows us to preserve the uniqueness of the natural environment, promotes the sustainable development of regions and ensures the ecological balance of the territory, including transboundary ones. Based on the most common definitions of the term “Trans-border ecotourism-recreational zone” in various sciences (fields of activity), it can be noted that the identification of such regions is carried out mainly on the basis of historical, ethnic, geographical, environmental or economic criteria, which are based on natural unity, as well as common historical and cultural traditions. An important condition for the existence and effective development of an international cross-border territory is good neighborly relations between states, their desire to develop economic ties, economic, social, cultural and other types of cooperation, mutually beneficial use of the potential of neighboring border territories, as well as the correlation of all actions within the framework of the legislation of the countries - participants [4]. Natural conditions and resources are the basis for the formation of tourist areas. In the global popularity of tourist destinations, mountains are second

only to coastal regions. In recent decades, many mountain regions have experienced significant socio-economic changes, the main feature of which is the intensive development of tourism. Many mountain regions belong to the periphery of the economic space, which negatively affects the standard of living of the local population. The development of tourism becomes a stimulus for the local economy, has a positive effect on the standard of living of local residents, but at the same time it causes new environmental, social and economic problems [2]. Mountain regions are geosystems in which tourism is the basis of cultural, economic, environmental, political, social and technological connections. In such regions, geosystems are formed that include natural and social components. Uzbekistan is among the countries in the world rich in eco-tourism resources. Another credible aspect of ecotourism is that residents of villages located in remote mountainous and foothill areas of the provinces have a source of income instead of important work. We can see an expression of this in the example of Surkhandarya, located in the extreme south of our country. The Surkhandarya region is located in the southern part of Uzbekistan, and in the parts of the region bordering with neighboring states, the national traditions of the Uzbek, Tajik, Turkmen and even Afghan peoples have merged and formed their own ethnographic characteristics. In order to become familiar with the national traditions of peoples and widely promote recreational and ecotourism activities, it is necessary to create transboundary ecotourism zones in this territory. Along with existing ecotourism areas in the region, it is necessary to identify unused sites, create a database of resources and data and map them (Figure 01).

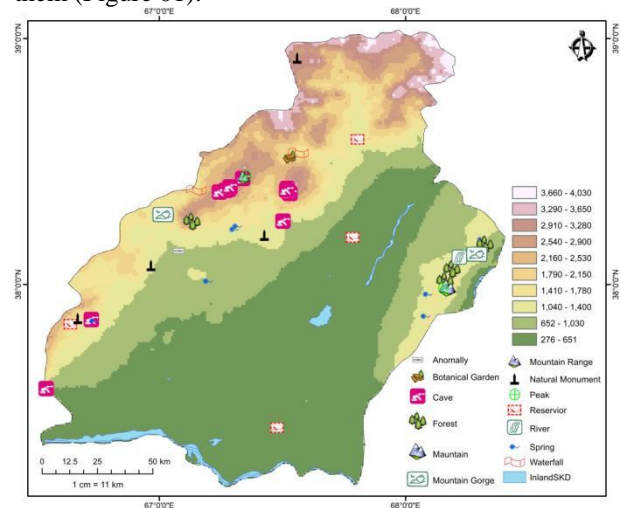


Figure 1 – Ecotourism resources of the mountain and foothills of the Surkhandarya region

Today, Surkhandarya region is traditionally perceived by specialists in the field of tourism as a region with rich natural potential, which, in fact, is the basis for the development of eco-tourism in the area. The natural potential of the region is determined, first of all, by such features as the diversity of relief, hydrological networks, karst phenomena, climatic features and the diversity of vegetation cover of natural complexes. A characteristic feature of the relief are winding layers of rocks, karst formations (above and underground) - karrs, funnels, depressions, numerous caves, etc. The Surkhandarya basin has enormous potential for organizing transboundary ecotourism and recreational resource zones in border areas with the neighboring states of Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, Afghanistan. The mountainous and foothill areas of the Gissar, Baysun, Bobatog, and Kohitang ranges, located within the borders of neighboring states, are considered especially rich in ecotourism, medical tourism, and speleotourism resources.

In addition, the region is rich in pharmaceutical resources; 35-40% of the Republic's medicinal plants are concentrated here. Here it is worth especially noting the recreational and tourist potential of the territory (Omonkhana, Uchkizil, Khojaikan, Vakhshivor, etc.). Therefore, in order to create conditions for the widespread attraction of tourists in 2022-2026, tourist villages "Sangardak" in the Sariasi district, "Chorbog" in the Sherabad district, "Khojaipok" in the Altynsay district, "Omonkhona" and "Sairob" in the Boysun district will be created [14]. Surkhandarya is located in the foothills of Gissar, Bobotag, Kohitang, Baysun is famous for its natural wonders, beautiful places, unique natural landscapes and healing springs that mesmerize tourists. About 70 percent of the territory of the Surkhandarya region is mountainous. On the northern side it is surrounded by the Gissar ridge. The height of this ridge reaches 4500-4600 meters. On the same mountain is the highest peak of Uzbekistan - Hazrat Sultan (4643 m). To the southwest of the Gissar ridge there are such branches as Boysun and Surkhantau, composed of the Hercynian mountain formation. Mount Boysun is quite high, with some peaks reaching 3,700 meters in the northeast. To the southwest of Boysuntag is Mount Kohitang. Kohitang extends 50 km to the southwest and reaches an altitude of 3137 meters. To the east of Mount Boysun, next to it is Mount Surkhantau, which is a short but quite high (3882 m) mountain. To the south of this mountain are the low mountains of Sherabad (1126 m).

Based on the above, we can conclude that the Surkhandarya region has significant ecotourism potential and has the opportunity to create several transboundary ecotourism areas (Figure 2).

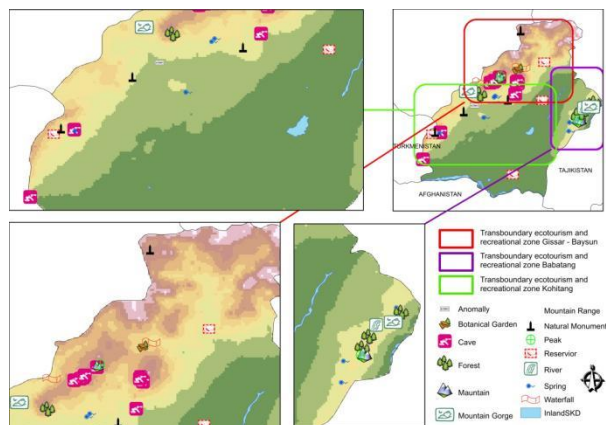


Figure 2 – Transboundary ecotourism and recreational zones of Surkhandarya region

A. Transboundary ecotourism and recreational zone Babatag.

These mountains are a heavily eroded and lowered mountain range in the east of the Surkhandarya region. It is located on the border of the republics of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, in the interfluvium of the Surkhandarya and Kofarnikhon rivers from the east, extends west to the shore of the Amu Darya basin 125 km, width 30-40 km. The highest peak is Mount Zarkosa, 2290 m. It is composed mainly of Paleogene and Jurassic limestones, clays, siltstones, and sandstones. The eastern slope of Bobotog is steep and narrow, with foothill plains located on the terraces of the Kofarnihon River. The western slope is quite gentle and wide, the main part consists of low mountains. The slopes of Bobotog are dissected by numerous dry streams. Karst is widely found here. The climate is dry and sharply continental. The average annual air temperature is 16° in the foothills and 8-10° at middle altitudes. Annual precipitation ranges from 170 mm to 350-400 mm. On the slopes of the mountain there are springs and streams that fill in winter and spring and dry up in summer. A variety of ephemeral and ephemeral plants grow on gray and brown mountain soils. At altitudes of 800-900 m there are rose hips, barberries, almonds and pistachios. On the hills above it (mountains Beshcha, Zarkosa) there are juniper forests. B One of the regions of Uzbekistan where wild mountain goats live. Foothills are pastures where cattle graze. In the community farm of the Kumkurgan region, Karakul sheep are bred, from which the world-famous Sur Karakul skin is obtained. Viticulture farms have also been organized. Irrigated agriculture was developed in the Cofarnijon valley in Bobotaga. Bobotaga has several destinations for ecotourism development. For example, picturesque forest groves, the mysterious Govurgan gorge, where snakes live, Karayumalok peak, Dense juniper forests, the village of

Chagam, reflecting the ethnic way of life, the Chagamsoy river emerging from the mountains, perennial pistachio groves characteristic of beautiful nature. Erosion and degradation (washing out) of pastures under the influence of human economic activity are also widespread in Bobotaga. Landscapes that require special protection abound.

B. Transboundary ecotourism and recreational zone Kohitang.

The main aspect of the ecotourism area is the Surkhandarya State Nature Reserve, established in 1987 in the mountainous Kohitang region on an area of 53.7 thousand hectares, aimed at protecting 800 species of plants and 290 species of birds, as well as more than 20 species of animals. During our research, we realized that this reserve is extremely necessary for the conservation of the unique flora and fauna of the Surkhandarya region. The territory of the reserve is characterized as a mountain-forest ecosystem. The territory of the Pamir-Alai mountain system is located at an altitude of 1500 to 3157 m above sea level in the southwestern spurs of the Gissar ridge. There are many permanent and temporary watercourses in the reserve, which provide a well-developed geographical system consisting of a large number of small streams. Currently, 578 vascular plants of 269 species and 55 families are registered in Kohitanga, of which 23 species of vascular plants are listed in the Red Book of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The area occupied by terrestrial (Forest, Field, mountain) vegetation is 16620 hectares (67.7%), the area occupied by rocky slopes, screes, slopes is 7839 hectares (31.9%). Forests occupy 9,288 hectares, or 37.8% of the territory. The main forest-forming plant is saffron juniper. The reserve is home to a large number and diversity of invertebrate species. But due to the lack of specialists, it has not yet been studied. Currently, 1 species of fish, 2 species of amphibia, 26 species of reptiles, 74 species of birds and 23 species of mammals have been identified in the reserve. The Surkhan State Reserve is part of the system of the Main Forestry Department under the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan and is managed by the department of reserves, national natural parks and hunting grounds. More than 100 species of animals are found on the territory of the reserve, several of which are listed in the Red Book of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Among the representatives of the animal world there are animals that are on the verge of complete extinction. These are Morkhur (winter goat) and Bukhara ram. On the territory of the reserve you can see very important archaeological monuments, the discovery of which was a major historical event. Among them are unique cave paintings depicting

ancient people hunting bulls and wild goats in a cave dating back to the Mezzo-Neolithic period. Surprisingly, the images did not lose their brightness and the colors did not fade. The composition of the dye still remains a big mystery to scientists.

C. Transboundary ecotourism and recreational zone Gissar-Baysun.

Boysun, the cradle of civilization, was recognized by UNESCO in 2001 as an oral and cultural heritage of humanity, and in 2008 included in the list of representatives of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity. This will help Boysun further develop its historical and ecotourism potential. It is worth noting the recreational and ecotourism potential of the region, including Omonkhana, Uchkizil, Khojaipok, Vakhshivor and others. The climate of the Surkhandarya valley is very favorable for the development of ecotourism. There are places in the region where you can watch 4 seasons in the middle of summer. One of them is the Sangardak waterfall, located in the mountain village of Sangardak, approximately 55 kilometers from the center of the Sariosi district of the Surkhandarya region. The waterfall falls from a 120-meter cliff. Its water content increases in summer and decreases in autumn. The existing caves in the Baysuntag Mountains, connecting the South Hissar mountain range with such settlements, served as a place of residence for primitive people. In particular, the oldest place in the region is the Teshiktas cave in Baysuntag, where Neanderthals lived. This cave is an important material source in restoring the appearance of primitive people. The cave of Amur Temur on Mount Baysun is also one of the ancient settlements.

This is also an area rich in balneological tourism resources. Mineral water reserves can become an important source for recreation, and the use of these resources will be an excellent source for the development of tourism. Such springs as the "Omonkhon spring" in the Baysun region are distinguished by their healing properties. Healing spring waters heal us better than any medicine. Healing waters are practically absent and are constantly renewed. Due to the fact that the healing mineral springs flow from deeper layers, the water temperature is much lower than usual, often around 8-12 degrees. This temperature has a pleasant effect on the human body and relaxes the body. Some healing waters have a high temperature. This is because tectonic faults penetrating deep into the mountainside collect rainwater that seeps into the ground, causing it to heat up in deeper layers.

One of the striking attractions of the Baysun Mountains is the Khoja Gur Gur Ota massif - an unusual peak with a five-hundred-meter cliff, located

on the territory of the Surkhandarya region. In addition, here you can see the Derbent Gorge, deep canyons, and fossilized traces of dinosaurs. Khoja Gur - Gur Ata claiming to be the deepest cave in Uzbekistan “underground Chomolungma” stretching for several kilometers and adjacent to each other, which were the highest in the Boysun Mountains. Baysun is also called the “father of caves” - these mountains are literally “cracked”, and mostly these are not labyrinths of galleries, but shallow, spacious grottoes.

3. Conclusions

Surkhandarya is provided with natural ecotourism and recreational resources, which allows for the effective use of tourism potential. Surkhandarya is famous for its unique and inimitable nature. There are majestic rugged mountains crowned with ever-white caps of glaciers, fertile plains occupied by endless pastures and fields, luxurious gardens with subtropical fruits and dry lowlands subject to desertification processes. In conditions of rich tourism potential and a lack of tourist routes connecting major tourist destinations in the region. Thus, the economic and political-geographical position of the Surkhandarya region is less favorable for its socio-economic development, and the natural resource potential can be assessed positively. Our research made it possible to identify the features of the organization of tourist and recreational zones in transboundary mountainous areas:

- i. the main part of tourist and recreational activities is the estimated height and fragmentation of the relief;
- ii. variety of climatic (microclimatic) conditions that determine seasonal differences in tourist and recreational activities;
- iii. diversity of natural landscapes (from foothill plains to snow-ice complexes);
- iv. diversity of flora and fauna, presence of endemic species of plants and animals;
- v. compiling and mapping registers of ecotourism recreational resources;
- vi. diversity and aesthetic appeal of mountain landscapes, creating conditions for the development of various types of tourism in one territory;
- vii. the transboundary state of the mountain region, which represents the interaction of states in the development of transboundary tourist territories.

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