

ETHNOTOURISM OPPORTUNITIES IN NEW KARAKALPASTAN

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Abstract

This article examines the development of ethnotourism in New Uzbekistan, with a focus on Karakalpakstan, within the framework of the "New Development Strategy for 2022-2026", which aims to attract 9 million foreign tourists annually. The study analyzes the role of museums and traditional handicrafts in promoting ethnic tourism, drawing on statistical data showing 118,000 foreign visitors to Karakalpakstan in 2023. The article traces the historical continuity of craftsmanship from the 19th century, when 1,445 artisans worked in the Amu Darya region, to contemporary initiatives such as the establishment of "Craftsmen's Town" in Ellikkala district and ethnographic villages near Nukus. Special attention is given to the revival of traditional Karakalpak crafts including yurt construction, carpet weaving, and textile production of "kok koylek" fabric. The research highlights successful examples of integrating handicraft workshops with tourism infrastructure, particularly A. Turekeev's family workshop-hotel-museum complex in Chimboy district. The article concludes with practical recommendations for developing ethnotourism through establishing specialized handicraft museums, creating "live exhibits" in craft workshops, and expanding tourist services in Karakalpak ethno-villages.

Keywords: Ethnotourism, handicraft, Karakalpak yurt, museum, Uzbekistan, Karakalpakstan, "ethno-village", history, national heritage, traditional crafts, tourism development.

Introduction

"The processes of globalization have opened up broad opportunities for the free movement of people around the world", said President Shavkat Mirziyoyev[1, p. 147].

In accordance with the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated January 28, 2022, No. UP-60, out of 100 goals outlined in the New Uzbekistan Development Strategy for 2022-2026, Goal 35: Within the framework of the "Travel around Uzbekistan" program, it is planned to increase the number of domestic tourists to 12 million and the number of foreign tourists arriving in the Republic of Uzbekistan to 9 million[2].

The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh.M.Mirziyoyev, in his Address to the OliyMajlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the people of Uzbekistan, noted that: "A separate program will be implemented to further familiarize the country's youth and foreign tourists with the unique historical and cultural treasures of our land, to develop museums in accordance with modern requirements"[3].

Tourism plays an important role in the development of any country's economy. In the "open



doors" policy being implemented in New Uzbekistan, special attention is being paid to tourism, and a visa-free entry system is being introduced for citizens of nearly 100 countries.

Uzbekistan ranks high on the World Tourism Organization's list of fastest-growing tourist destinations and the Gallup Social Research Center's "Safest Country for Tourism" ranking [1, p. 150].

Uzbekistan was recognized as the "strongest tourist destination" in the "World Muslim Tourist Index" in 2022.

It is known from history that Ruy González de Clavijo, in his diary, describes how Amir Timur showed great respect to ambassadors and travelers:

"He (Timur) showed great respect to travelers and gave orders to provide them with everything they needed. Moreover, they were given new royal horses every day so that they could travel faster; for, by the king's decree, about one hundred horses were prepared in one place every next day, and about two hundred in another. This continued until Samarkand. If the king sent someone here and there or if someone came to him, these horses had to travel as quickly as possible, day and night. These horses were prepared both in the deserted and inhabited parts of the country. In uninhabited areas, the Tsar ordered the construction of large houses similar to hotels..."[4, pp. 41-42]. This can be compared to a "service" with great conveniences of its time.

To create favorable conditions for tourists in New Uzbekistan, the number of hotel beds has reached 140,000, 70 new tourist routes have been opened, and 6 private airlines have commenced operations [1, p. 149].

During 2023, 118,000 foreign tourists visited the Republic of Karakalpakstan, while the domestic tourism indicator exceeded 1 million. Currently, there are 102 accommodation facilities, including 31 hotels, 45 guesthouses, and 26 hostels. The number of tourist enterprises reached 62 [5].

According to 2023 statistics from the I.V. Savitsky State Museum of Arts of Karakalpakstan, the number of foreign tourists was 13,287 citizens [6].

Today, it is almost impossible to imagine the process of reviving national values without the contribution of museums to this cause. Information concentrated in museum objects, historical and cultural monuments is inexhaustible. It allows us to reconstruct the course of social history in details and essential characteristics, to clarify various aspects of politics, economic activity, everyday life, and the spiritual life of people at different historical stages, to reveal the laws of continuity, the values of past eras by each generation of people, and to assess modern trends.

Ethnographic tourism involves visiting places that are significant for understanding the past, national culture, and its present, and allow for the representation of the cultural identity of a certain group of people. The purpose of ethnographic tourism is to study the way of life, the way of life of a particular nation, people, ethnic group, and their distinctive features and characteristics.

The ethnographic exhibits of museums are also objects for ethnographic tourism. For example, the museums of Karakalpakstan have the opportunity to become more deeply acquainted with the history of the Karakalpak people's crafts and handicrafts. That is why cooperation with museums in organizing ethnotourism routes yields positive results.

As a result of comprehensive measures being implemented to develop national handicrafts, folk arts and crafts, and to comprehensively support representatives of the sector, the number of



people employed in the sector has exceeded 230,000.

The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Sh.M. Mirziyoyev, stated: “Folk applied arts, an integral part of world culture, hold a special place in the life of every nation in the world, in the development of its way of life and values”. The emergence of craftsmanship in the conscious life of humanity is the most important historical step towards civilization” [7].

Among the measures outlined in the annex to Presidential Decree No. PP-77 of December 30, 2021, “On Measures to Further Improve the System of Supporting Handicraft Activities”, are the further development of the “Master-Apprentice” tradition and the widespread involvement of the population in handicrafts.

- Establishing a “Craftsmen's Town” in the territory of the “Jaloliddin Manguberdi Recreation Park” in the Ellikkala district of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, specializing in the production of skullcaps, carpets, felt, fur coats, skullcaps, and wood carvings, and including it in a tourist route;

- In order to study and restore the ancient Karakalpak national fabric “kok koylek”, as well as to create the necessary conditions for artisans working in this field, a “Crafts Center” has been established in the Khojeyli district.

Furthermore, Clause 11 of the aforementioned resolution stipulated the implementation of promotional activities to establish the production of new handicraft products by artisans based on replications of unique exhibits from museums that reflect the national customs, folk applied arts, and national statehood history of each region and generate significant interest among foreign tourists.

According to sources, at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, 1,445 artisans, one blacksmith for 304 households, one shoemaker for 87 households, and one carpenter for 204 households worked in the Amu Darya region. The Chimboy region has long been a center of craftsmanship. In the Chimboy district, 44.6% of all households were engaged in handicrafts [8, pp. 10-11].

In the villages and settlements inhabited by the Karakalpaks, almost every one had its own blacksmith, carpenter, cart driver, saddler, shoemaker, and jeweler. Among the Karakalpaks, there were many craftsmen who crafted various items from wood, including winches, boats, and carpenters[9,p. 123].

Azamat Turekeev from Chimboy is considered the third generation of master craftsmen. He initiated the opening of a workshop, a hotel, and a museum in one family to effectively utilize the conditions being created for entrepreneurs in our country to engage in handicrafts and attract tourists to the regions and create favorable conditions for them. A. Turekeev's initiative was supported by the State Committee for Tourism Support, the Craftsmen's Association, and the district administration, and practical assistance was provided to establish this activity.

- “Those who see the image of the national “black house” or go inside it will be able to recognize its finished state”, says craftsman and entrepreneur Azamat Turekeyev. The construction of the Black House is of great interest to our contemporaries, both locals and travelers. Therefore, we have established this workshop, and we have also set up a guesthouse so that tourists can directly observe the processes. More than 200 exhibits, including examples of our people's history, art, crafts, and ancient household items, are housed in our museum. As a result of this noble work initiated by the entrepreneur, not only are new jobs being created, but



the “Master-Apprentice” traditions of national handicrafts are also being continued. Exhibitions of folk applied arts are most prominent in the museums of Karakalpakstan. Our museums are not only preserving traditional crafts, which are the national heritage of our people, but also promoting them to the public through various events and introducing them to foreign countries. Master classes by renowned artisans are regularly held in museums.

Most importantly, in New Karakalpakstan, the conditions created for the development of handicrafts as one of the national values of our people contribute to the development of tourism. One of the important types of Karakalpak applied arts is the construction of a yurt. Today, yurts are used by the population of our country as seasonal accommodations and guest houses for tourists.

In Karakalpakstan, craftsmanship has been developing from century to century, and the richness of artistic imagination and the perfection of forms have left behind a unique heritage of artisans.

In November 2022, the opening of the Karakalpak Ethnographic Agrarian Village took place in Nukus. The guests, who visited the opening, were able to get acquainted with the new tourist route - the agricultural ethno-village located near Lake AshshyKul, along which there are 15 yurts that form a unique center of craftsmanship. The project was initiated by the head of NitsaNukuscompany, AminaBekzhanova [10].

She succeeded in implementing the idea in collaboration with USAID for Agribusiness Development ADA. The creation of workshops within the center was carried out in close cooperation with the Karakalpak regional branch of the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Karakalpak branch of the Association of Business Women of Uzbekistan “Tadbirkorayol”.

On October 18, 2024, the opening of the “KarakalpakEthnoaul” took place at the Berdakh State Museum of the History of Karakalpak Literature.

The main goals of opening ethno-villages are to attract tourists to the Republic of Karakalpakstan, promote tourism potential, and develop quality tourism services. Another goal of opening ethno-villages is, of course, to acquaint young people with our national heritage, to instill in them a sense of pride.

On the instructions of President Sh.M.Mirziyoyev, the world's largest Black House of the Karakalpak people with a diameter of 40,540 meters, built in the "White Bird" complex in the territory of the city of Nukus, was entered into the Guinness Book of Records [11]. This, in turn, also serves ethnotourism.

We would recommend the following:

1. Establish a handicraft museum in Karakalpakstan, including children's exhibitions.
2. Creation of “live exhibits” based on the activities of craft workshops in the museums of Karakalpakstan;
3. Production of souvenirs for ethno-tourism as a profitable activity.
4. Organization of photographs of tourists in national costumes in Karakalpak ethno-villages.
5. Increasing the variety of national dishes in Karakalpak ethno-villages.

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