

Tourism In Navoi Region: Potential And Opportunities

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Received: 24 July 2025; **Accepted:** 20 August 2025; **Published:** 22 September 2025

Abstract: This article analyzes the opportunities and prospects of tourism development in Navoi region. It emphasizes that the rich traditions, folklore, national games, and cultural heritage of the Uzbek, Kazakh, and Karakalpak peoples can serve as important factors in promoting tourism. In addition, it provides information about the historical and modern aspects of Navoi city, the spiritually rich settlement of Karmana, and natural attractions such as the Kyzylkum desert, Aydar Lake, and Sarmishsoy gorge. The article also notes that although certain steps have been taken to develop ecotourism in the region, the existing potential has not yet been fully utilized.

Keywords: Navoi region, tourism, ecotourism, cultural heritage, Karmana, Sarmishsoy, Aydar Lake, Kyzylkum, Nurota, Navoi city.

Introduction: Tourism is currently recognized as one of the most dynamically developing sectors of the global economy, acting as a vital driver of cultural exchange, socio-economic growth, and international cooperation. Uzbekistan, with its ancient cities, unique architectural monuments, rich cultural heritage, and diverse natural landscapes, possesses great potential for the development of different forms of tourism. In this regard, Navoi region is distinguished not only by its industrial and strategic significance but also by its historical, cultural, and natural resources, which make it an appealing destination for both domestic and international visitors. The advantageous geographical position of the region, located between the ancient cities of Bukhara and Samarkand, along with its unique desert landscapes, spiritual and cultural centers such as Karmana, and natural treasures including Aydar Lake and the Sarmishsoy gorge, provide broad opportunities for the promotion of tourism, particularly ecotourism. However, despite its considerable potential, tourism in

Navoi region has not yet reached the level of development it deserves. Therefore, systematic measures are needed to ensure the effective utilization of its abundant resources.

METHOD

When speaking about tourism in the Republic, the ancient cities of Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Shahrisabz, rich in historical and architectural monuments that astonish the entire world, first come to mind. However, the potential of Navoi region in the development of the tourism industry is in no way inferior to that of our historical cities, which can be seen from the following:

Firstly, the Navoi region and its surroundings are home to numerous historical and cultural monuments, as well as sites of interest. In Navoi region, 339 archaeological, architectural, and artistic monuments have been registered. Among them, 38 are included in the list of national monuments of the Republic, while 30 are of local significance¹.

Number and Category of Cultural Heritage Sites in Navoi Region

| No | Cultural Heritage Sites | Of Importance | Republican | Of Importance | Local | Total |
|----|-------------------------|---------------|------------|---------------|-------|-------|
|----|-------------------------|---------------|------------|---------------|-------|-------|

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| 1.Archaeology | _____ | 100 | 100 |
| 2.Architecture | 15 | 51 | 66 |
| 3.Monumental Art Objects | _____ | 60 | 60 |
| 4.Sacred Pilgrimage Sites | 3 | 10 | 13 |
| 5.Total | 18 | 221 | 239 |

The geographical location of Navoi region on the map of our country is also unique. It is situated right in the center of Uzbekistan, occupying the central part of the territory. A large portion of the region is covered by the Kyzylkum Desert. Since ancient times, this oasis has served as a divinely created corridor amidst lifeless and scorching deserts, facilitating cultural exchanges between East and West, fostering interaction among peoples, and ensuring their spiritual and ideological interconnectedness. In the past, the Great Silk Road passed through this land. Along this route were located some of the most beautiful cities of the East, such as Bukhara and Samarkand. Karmana served as a connecting hub between these two enchanting cities. The Great Silk Road began from the southeastern side of the city and extended through its southwestern part. For this reason, Karmana was one of the major trade centers of that era. By the decision of UNESCO, in September 1990, during a tourist route along the ancient Silk Road with the participation of representatives from more than one hundred countries, the city of Karmana was also included. Participants of the event visited Karmana and became acquainted with its history². Karmana is home to architectural monuments such as the Mausoleum of Mir Said Bahrom (11th century), the Rabati Malik caravanserai and reservoir (11th century), and the Qosim Sheikh complex (16th century).

Rabati Malik is considered the oldest monumental architectural monument in Central Asia and is a classic example of Karakhanid architecture. The Rabati Malik caravanserai, located 18 km west of Karmana, served not only as a caravanserai but also fulfilled the function of a fortress guarding the surrounding area and borders. Situated between Karmana and Tavois, it provided an important and essential stopover for travelers along the Great Silk Road. It was built

between 1069 and 1079 by Shams al-Mulk Nasr ibn Ibrahim (1068–1080), the son of Tamghach Khan Ibrahim (1046–1068), one of the sultans who ruled in Bukhara³. Rabati Malik is the product of the ingenuity of ancient architects and a vivid example of ornamental artistry, which has continued to attract people for centuries.

The Mausoleum of Mir Said Bahrom is located near the center of Karmana. Dating back to the 10th–11th centuries, the mausoleum is reminiscent of the Ismail Samani Mausoleum in Bukhara in terms of its architectural design. One of the most unique architectural structures in Uzbekistan is the Qosim Sheikh architectural complex. It includes the Qosim Sheikh khanqah, a tomb, a shrine, and the grave of Bukhara's Emir Abdulahad Khan.

Secondly, Navoi region is home to the Sarmishsay natural-historical site, which contains thousands of rock carvings and is located on the southern slopes of the Qoratog' mountains. The rock art gallery of the Sarmishsay gorge, carved by our ancient ancestors, represents an outstanding and unique example of spiritual and artistic heritage. The images were skillfully created with bronze, iron, and stone tools, through carving, chiseling, and engraving in schematic, contour, shadow, and ornamental styles. The Sarmishsay rock engravings were first discovered by Kh.I. Muhammadov in 19584. They were first studied scientifically by N. Toshkentboev⁵. Further research on Sarmishsay petroglyphs was carried out in the 1960s by archaeologist A. Kabirov, and later by M. Khojanazarov, a senior researcher at the Samarkand Archaeology Institute of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. Thanks to their studies, over 4,000 images of around 40 different types have been documented, depicting the lives of ancient people, their occupations, the rich fauna of the region, as well as a variety of religious,

mythical, and symbolic motifs. The petroglyphs of Sarmishsay gorge vividly portray figures of dancing people, archers shooting bows, horsemen galloping, long-horned primitive bulls and deer, lions and other wild animals, along with mountain goats, gazelles, wild boars, dogs, wolves, horses, and camels. Scenes of both individual and collective hunting are also represented. In addition, solar symbols, serpents, birds, and various geometric patterns can be found among the carvings. Today, significant efforts are being made to preserve the heritage of Sarmishsay for future generations and to include it in UNESCO's list of cultural heritage sites. For instance, international conferences held in Navoi city and Sarmishsay in October 2004 and November 2008 can be noted as examples of such initiatives⁶. At present, the Sarmishsay rock art gallery is under state protection and has become an "open-air museum" of ancient art, attracting visitors interested in the cultural history of the past.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In 2008, Sarmishsay was included in UNESCO's Tentative List of World Cultural Heritage. Indeed, Sarmishsay, described by scholars worldwide as an "open-air museum under the blue sky," has become a favorite destination for tourists⁷.

Thirdly, alongside the world-famous ancient cities and historical monuments that attract foreign travelers to our country, Uzbekistan is also endowed with unique and beautiful natural landscapes connected with ecotourism, including deserts, semi- deserts, mountains, and lowland plains. The rich nature of our land, with its diverse and rare flora and fauna, internationally significant archaeological finds, paleontological remains, and globally rare geological sections, as well as more than 38 million hectares of hunting and fishing areas (including 1 million hectares of lakes, rivers, and reservoirs), and over 800 natural monuments, all create vast opportunities for the development of ecological tourism⁸. The largest water reservoir in Navoi region is Lake Aydarkul. In the winter of 1969, the country experienced a long and extremely snowy season. In spring, this caused a rise in water levels and the overflowing of the Syr Darya River. The catastrophic level of water posed a threat to wash away the Charvak reservoir and several densely populated districts. As a result, the excess water was discharged through an emergency sluice into the saline Arnasay depression. Thus, a new water body—Lake Aydarkul—emerged in the Kyzylkum Desert.

With its unique nature, captivating aquatic environment, flora, fauna, and surrounding ecosystem, Aydarkul fully deserves the title of the beautiful "Pearl of the Kyzylkum." Its conditions are highly favorable for

the development of exotic

and ecological tourism. The frequent visits of travelers from the United Arab Emirates, who come here to enjoy the blue waters and hunting opportunities, serve as clear evidence of this potential.

Fourthly, another ecotourism route in the region is the Kyzylkum Desert. Kyzylkum is one of the largest deserts of Eurasia, stretching from the shores of the Aral Sea in the north to the relatively narrow and fertile oasis near the Zarafshan River in the south. The Kyzylkum is rich in both underground and surface resources. As it is often emphasized: "In Navoi region, God Himself has bestowed upon our people vast reserves of natural wealth, which make our land strong, elevate our dignity, extend our reach, and provide the foundation for people's prosperous lives. The most important of these is the Kyzylkum gold, world-renowned for its high quality⁹." According to experts, all the elements of Mendeleev's periodic table can be found here.

Fifthly, a unique miracle of nature and a monument of our history—the Chashma spring, its fish, and the architectural monuments surrounding it—have long attracted visitors. In Nurota, the most frequently visited site for pilgrims is the "Chashma" architectural complex, a majestic place with centuries of history. According to the writings of Academicians Yahyo Gulomov and Ahmadali Asqarov, the cultural layers along the "Chashma" riverbank are around 40,000 years old¹⁰. The healing properties of Nurota's Chashma water were first scientifically proven in 1912 by the famous Russian scholar from Petrograd, N.A. Dima, who conducted a chemical analysis and provided irrefutable evidence. His research showed that the water contained medicinal mineral salts such as chlorine, sulfate, potassium, calcium, magnesium, silicon, carbonate, and strontium, as well as a range of microelements. Later, A.I. Ivanchenko, a geophysicist from the Moscow Institute of Hydrogeology, conducted experiments confirming the presence of potassium and radon gases in the Chashma water.

From the Chashma spring in Nurota, between 360–400 liters of water flow per second¹¹. The water is crystal-clear, rich in healing microelements, consistently maintains a temperature of +19°C throughout the year, and is remarkably soft— making it unique not only in Central Asia and the former Soviet Union but also globally. The fact that the spring is home to the marinka fish (scientifically known as *Schizothorax*) testifies once again to the extraordinary purity of the water.

Sixthly, the rich cultural heritage of the Uzbek, Kazakh, and Karakalpak peoples—including traditions, customs, folk songs, and national games such as *kupkari*—can serve as a powerful factor for the development of

tourism.

Seventhly, among the younger cities of our Republic, Navoi, named after the great Uzbek poet and thinker Mir Alisher Navoi, possesses a special charm. Situated between the Syr Darya and Amu Darya rivers, on the banks of the Zarafshan River, it is the center of Navoi region, itself a “child of independence.” In the adjacent area of Karmana, many great sheikhs, saints, scholars, writers, and poets—such as the Karminagiy, Deggaroniy, and Qosim Sheikh Azizons—lived and created. Historical sources record that they left behind a rich cultural and spiritual heritage, and became widely known throughout Turan.

Navoi city is one of the greatest achievements of the 20th century. It was carefully planned with the vision of becoming a modern industrial city of Central Asia. When its location was chosen in the 1950s, special attention was given to the region’s strong spiritual foundation, its rich natural resources, geographical position, and its favorable conditions for industry and mining, as well as the processing of mineral resources. Navoi, an example of modern urban planning, is located between the ancient cities of Bukhara and Samarkand. Along with other remarkable and noteworthy sites such as Sintop, Sangijuman, and Langar Mountain, this demonstrates the great potential for tourism development in Navoi region.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the presence of the Nurota Chashma complex, the historical monuments of Karmana, the natural-historical heritage of Sarmishsay, as well as the unique nature of the region, the beauty of the Kyzylkum Desert, its distinctive flora and fauna, and the rare water reservoir of Aydarkul, all grant Navoi region exceptional significance. For tourists weary of city noise and eager to rest in the embrace of nature, these places are a guaranteed haven for spending their time in the best possible way. However, due to the lack of fully developed strategies for making use of this potential, the number of tourists visiting the region is three times lower than its actual capacity to receive them. In recent years, however, the first steps have been taken toward the development of tourism—especially ecotourism—and there are gradual trends of growth in this sector.

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