

# **USE OF RECREATIONAL AND TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES OF SPECIALLY PROTECTED NATURAL AREAS (USING THE EXAMPLE OF THE BUKHARA REGION)**

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**Abstract.** Studying the recreational and tourism potential of various regions holds a crucial place in economic and geographical research. This article discusses the types of recreational resources, highlighting the classifications of protected natural areas in the Bukhara region. Furthermore, it explores the recreational and tourism potential of these areas.

**Keywords:** protected natural areas, recreation, tourism, recreational resources, recreational opportunities, reserves, sanctuaries, natural monuments, breeding nurseries, infrastructure.

## **TABIY MUHOFAZA ETILADIGAN HUDUDLARNING REKREATIONS VA TURISTIK IMKONIYATLARIDAN FOYDALANISH (BUXORO VILOYATI MISOLIDA)**

## **ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ РЕКРЕАЦИОННО-ТУРИСТИЧЕСКИХ ВОЗМОЖНОСТЕЙ ОСОБО ОХРАНЯЕМЫХ ПРИРОДНЫХ ТЕРРИТОРИЙ (НА ПРИМЕРЕ БУХАРСКОЙ ОБЛАСТИ)**

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**Annotatsiya.** Turli hududlarning rekreations va turistik imkoniyatlarini o'rganish iqtisodiy geografik tadqiqotlarda muhim o'rin tutadi. Mazkur maqolada rekreasion resurslarning turlari

haqida fikr bayon etilgan. Maqolada Buxoro viloyatidagi muhofaza etiladigan tabiiy hududlarning turlari yoritib berilgan. Shuningdek, Buxoro viloyatidagi muhofaza etiladigan tabiiy hududlarning rekreatsion va turistik imkoniyatlari o'rganilgan.

**Резюме.** Изучение рекреационного и туристического потенциала различных регионов занимает важное место в экономико-географических исследованиях. В данной статье описаны виды рекреационных ресурсов. В статье описаны типы охраняемых природных территорий Бухарской области. Также были изучены рекреационные и туристические возможности охраняемых природных территорий Бухарской области.

**Kalit so'zlar:** muhofaza etiladigan tabiiy hududlar, rekreatsiya, turizm, rekreatsion resurslar, rekreatsion imkoniyat, qo'riqxonalar, buyurtma qo'riqxonalari, tabiat yodgorliklari, pitomnik, infratuzilma.

**Ключевые слова:** охраняемые природные территории, рекреация, туризм, рекреационные ресурсы, рекреационные возможности, заповедники, заказники, памятники природы, питомники, инфраструктура.

The continuous growth of the world's population-an increase of 80-85 million annually according to UN data-and the rapid development of industries such as agriculture, transportation, and manufacturing in various regions necessitate an improved relationship between humans and nature. As an integral part of nature, humans live within it, utilize its resources for their needs, and derive physical and spiritual satisfaction from it. Indeed, nature's resources are vital to human life, with recreational resources playing a special role among them.

Recreational resources refer to unique (inimitable) natural or anthropogenic objects that possess historical or cultural significance, offer aesthetic pleasure, and have therapeutic or health-restoring properties. These resources are utilized in organizing various forms of recreational activities. Among modern geographical studies, the exploration of regional recreational potential has emerged as one of the critical directions today.

The Bukhara region, situated in the southwestern part of Uzbekistan, occupies the southern zone of the Kyzylkum desert and the lower reaches of the Zarafshan River. Despite its desert characteristics, the region boasts a variety of recreational resources, which are generally divided into two categories [4]:

1. Natural recreational resources
2. Cultural-historical recreational resources

Natural resources include elements like relief, geological structure, climate, surface and underground water, soil, and flora that are suitable for recreational activities. On the other hand, cultural-historical resources, which comprise cultural objects, architectural monuments, archaeological sites, and sacred places, are vital for developing tourism.

Cultural and historical resources, which include a variety of material and cultural monuments, are key tourist attractions in specific regions. The richness of a region's architectural heritage significantly contributes to the development of tourism. It is proposed to preserve cultural and historical resources for tourism purposes through the following measures:

- Restoration of existing historical sites, buildings, and monuments as tourist attractions;
- Enhancement of efforts to protect cultural and historical resources;

- Increasing the responsibility of management organizations in preserving and improving the environment to meet tourism demands.

Cultural and historical recreational resources include cultural sites, architectural landmarks, archaeological monuments, sacred pilgrimage places, and unique locations of historical and ethnographic significance that contribute to the spiritual and cultural growth of individuals.

It is no secret that the Bukhara region is one of the areas rich in cultural and historical recreational resources. With over 800 historical monuments, archaeological sites, and sacred pilgrimage destinations, the region provides a strong foundation for the development of historical, religious, and pilgrimage tourism.

Although the Bukhara region possesses significant potential for tourism development, it primarily focuses on historical (sightseeing) and pilgrimage tourism. However, there are ample opportunities to diversify into other types of tourism, such as ecotourism (geotourism), rural tourism, ethnographic tourism, sports tourism, gastronomic tourism, and recreational (therapeutic and wellness) tourism. In particular, leveraging the region's natural conditions for recreational purposes offers great prospects for advancing tourism development.

The natural recreational resources of the Bukhara region are typically characterized by seasonality. For example, during spring (particularly in April-May) and partially in the autumn, people can enjoy excursions into the desert, restore their health, and experience the aesthetic beauty of the desert's unique nature and flora. These types of recreational activities have been developing relatively quickly in recent years.

The natural conditions and resources of the Bukhara region provide significant opportunities for tourism and recreation. According to available data, the protected natural areas in Uzbekistan are categorized into the following types<sup>1</sup> [1] based on their designated purpose and management regime:

- State reserves;
- Complex (landscape) reserves;
- Natural parks;
- State natural monuments;
- Areas designated for the conservation, reproduction, and restoration of specific natural objects and complexes;
- Protected landscapes;
- Areas intended for the management of specific natural resources.

According to available data, today there are: 7 state reserves (with a total area of 186,335 hectares), 1 complex (landscape) reserve (with an area of 628,300 hectares), 2 biosphere reserves (covering 111,670 hectares), 4 national nature parks (with a total area of 555,154.5 hectares), 1 'Dormon' national park (covering 32.4 hectares), 11 natural monuments (with a total area of 3,803.1 hectares), 12 state reserves (spanning 572,404 hectares), 1 specialized 'Jeyran' Ecocenter in Bukhara (covering 16,522 hectares), forest and hunting reserves (covering 11.5 million hectares).

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<sup>1</sup> The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan 'On Protected Natural Areas', No. 710-II, dated December 3, 2004.



The total area of protected natural areas (PNAS) ensuring the sustainable conservation of biodiversity (excluding Category VI) amounts to 13.5 million hectares. The areas encompassing biosphere reserves and Categories I-V protected natural areas cover 2.074 million hectares, which constitutes 4.6% of the country's total area. Additionally, the total area of state reserves and nature parks is 741,489.5 hectares, representing 1.65% of the country's territory<sup>2</sup>.

By the Decree No. PQ-131 of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, dated February 16, 2022, 'On Measures to Establish Protected Natural Areas within the System of the State Committee for Ecology and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Uzbekistan'<sup>3</sup>, the following state nature conservation institutions were established:

- The 'Central Kyzylkum' National Nature Park in the Uchkuduk district, covering a total area of 1,200,000 hectares;
- The 'Oqtog-Tomdi' State Reserve in the Tomdi district, covering a total area of 40,000 hectares.

In the Bukhara region, most categories of protected natural areas have been established and are operational. In the far western part of the region, near the border with the Khorezm region and adjacent to the Amu Darya River, the Kyzylkum Reserve was established. This reserve, founded in 1971, consists of riparian forest and desert areas. It spans a total area of 3,985 hectares, nearly half of which (1,883 hectares) is covered by forests.

The Bukhara region also has four state reserves, which include:

- Dengizkol
- Khadicha
- Koraqir
- Qumsulton

The Dengizkol reserve was established in 1973 and is included in the Ramsar List<sup>4</sup>, making it one of the four protected areas in Uzbekistan recognized under the Ramsar Convention. However, the remote locations of the Dengizkol, Koraqir, and Khadicha reserves from the regional center, combined with inconvenient access roads and a lack of infrastructure, result in low tourist flow to these sites. In contrast, the proximity of the Qumsulton reserve to the city of Bukhara provides a foundation for the potential development of ecotourism and recreational facilities in its vicinity.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://uza.uz/oz/society/tabiiy-ududlarni-mu-ofaza-ilish-y-lida-anday-ishlar-amalga-o-09-10-2020>

<sup>3</sup>

<https://www.norma.uz/oz/qonunchilikda-yangi/muhofaza-qilinadigan-tabiiy-hududlar-tashkil-etildi>

<sup>4</sup> The Convention on Wetlands, signed on February 2, 1971, in the city of Ramsar, Iran, by 18 countries, now has more than 170 member states. Uzbekistan joined this convention in 2001.

The region is also home to three state natural monuments: Vardonze, Varakhsha, and Poykent<sup>5</sup>. These sites primarily support domestic tourism and are distinguished by their seasonal tourism activities, with most visits occurring in spring.

Additionally, the Bukhara region is home to the specialized Jeyran Ecocenter, which operates as one of the protected natural areas with the highest potential for tourism and recreation. Several favorable factors contribute to its attractiveness:

- It is strategically located along the Bukhara-Qarshi highway;
- It has developed tourist infrastructure, including a modern hotel with a capacity of 20 guests;
- It is situated in close proximity to the Bukhara oasis.

Thanks to these advantages, the Jeyran Ecocenter experiences a relatively high tourist flow. If these existing opportunities are utilized effectively, the number of visitors can be significantly increased. The ecocenter's recreational potential is particularly substantial, offering activities such as nature walks, observing rare animals, sunbathing on sandy terrain, and relaxing in the embrace of nature. By leveraging these opportunities, the ecocenter can attract more tourists and generate additional revenue.

Overall, the recreational and tourism potential of the protected natural areas in the Bukhara region is significant. However, due to underdeveloped transport networks, road conditions, and tourism infrastructure, tourist flows to these areas have yet to be fully established. In the near future, improving road quality and transport infrastructure could enable the effective utilization of the recreational and tourism potential of these protected natural areas.

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<sup>5</sup> For reference, four areas in Uzbekistan have been included in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance: Dengizkol in 2001, the Aydar-Arnasay Lakes System in 2008, Tudakul-Quyui Mozor in 2020, and Sudochoye in 2023.



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