Tourism

General Information

After gaining its independence Kazakhstan laid the foundation for regulation of tourism activity and revival of people’s cultural and historic heritage.

In 1993 The Republic of Kazakhstan became a full member of World Tourism Organization. In order to develop the tourism sector Kazakhstan created necessary standard legal basis. In June of 2001 the new Law “About Tourism Activities in the Republic of Kazakhstan” was ratified. It determines legal, economic, social and organizational fundamentals as of one of important sectors of Kazakhstani economy. According to this Law the main principles of state regulation of tourism activity in Kazakhstan are the following:

- contributing to tourism activity and creating favorable conditions for its development;
- determining and supporting priority trends of tourism activity;
- positioning Kazakhstan as a country auspicious for tourism.

Tourism is considered as one of priority fields in state economy development because of its direct and indirect effects on key economic sectors such as transport, telecommunications, construction, agriculture, fast moving goods production, being hence a kind of catalyst of socio-economic development.

There are actually in Kazakhstan about 430 travel organizations and companies of different types of ownership. They employ about 6 thousand people and 1500 professional tourist guides.

Kazakhstani travel companies collaborate with 80 countries. Kazakhstan offers almost all existing tourism types: cognitive, entertaining, ethnic, ecologic, sanitary, children’s, sport, hunting, fishing, equestrian, others.

Companies propose more than 700 travel routes all over the Kazakhstan. There are in Kazakhstan 372 hotels of different categories with capacity of 32000 places. In Almaty, for example foreign guests are usually accommodated in “Alatau”, “Kazakhstan”, “Dostyk”, “Issyk”, “Otrar”, “Astana”, “Ankara”, “Hyatt Regency Almaty”, “Intourist” and many others rendering full range of services.

To render services to Astana tourists and guests there are 30 travel companies and 25 hotels including big “Okan Intercontinental Astana”, “Conform Hotel Astana”, “Tourist”, “Esil”, “Jybek Joly”, “Altyn Dala” and others. Tourism business is mostly developed in Almaty and Eastern Kazakhstan regions, Astana and Almaty cities. These regions and cities travel companies serve 88% of all tourists annually. Countries visited the most by Kazakhstani tourists are: China, Germany, Korea, Poland, Turkey and Arabian Emirates. Citizens of following countries visit our country the most: China, Germany, Korea, Pakistan, Poland, Turkey, Russia.

Tourist activity in the Republic of Kazakhstan 1996-2001 (people)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>(9 months)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tourists accepted</td>
<td>34542</td>
<td>57424</td>
<td>23868</td>
<td>2240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tourists from KZ</td>
<td>145716</td>
<td>101873</td>
<td>67360</td>
<td>29330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Domestic tourism</td>
<td>53654</td>
<td>72088</td>
<td>55687</td>
<td>88536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>233912</td>
<td>228320</td>
<td>146915</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tourism opportunities in Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan has all necessary conditions to develop tourism sector: various nature landscape, important historical and cultural monuments, advanced transport infrastructure, human resources.

**Kazakhstan also has potential opportunities to create profitable tourism industry, including:**

- beneficial geopolitical location of a country on the intersection of international tourism and commercial flows between West and East;
- Political stability, democratic reforms and “doors open” policy for any collaboration, ensure attractive investment climate;
- Re-orientation of external tourism activity on countries with low density of population and original culture;
- Originality of Kazakhstani historic heritage showing ancient traces of coexistence of nomad and settled civilizations;
- Presence of Zoroastrian, buddhist, Christian and Moslem monuments which are subjects of pilgrimage;
- Presence of historic architectural and town-planning complexes and roads on the Silk Road;
- Presence of museums, entertainment industry, representing rich Kazakh national culture;
- Diversity of tourist zones, nature landscapes, variety of flora and fauna.

There are unique resources in Kazakhstan for satisfaction of nowadays tourism industry demands. There are 80 main national parks, so called landscape recreation zones, which are suitable for all-the-year-round tourism activities.

**Hunting**

Kazakhstan land offers large variety of group or individual hunting tours opportunities. National hunting traditions actually revive - “Berkutchi” hunting with falcons, “Tazy” – hunting with Kazakh hound. Sport hunting as one of tourist activities has rich resources but still needs significant investments in creating material base, developing transport infrastructure, staff training.

**Mountaineering and trekking**

Kazakhstan is know worldwide as the country of high mountains and virgin nature. More and more people from the whole world visit the Kazakhstan, attracted by the beauty of undiscovered land.

There are great resources for development of sports and mountain tourism. There is a great, but little used potential for mountain-ski sport, which enters the period of intensive development during the last years. The international base of Alpinism Mynzhilki-Khantengri is based on the East of Almaty region in Narynkol (Rayimbek) region. Mynjylky-KhanTengri. Kegen and Enbekshikazakh regions have unique resources for outdoors activities development, construction of mountain hotels and balneal resorts.

The famous ski complex “Chimbulak” is located near Almaty. Though this ski base has undergone several enlargement projects in recent years, actually it hardly can host all weekend skiers.

Tien-Shan and Djungar Alatau mountains framing the South of the Republic have high level of glaciation, peaked glaced forms present a large range of opportunities for development of a profitable tourism industry. Zailiisky Alatau mountains, close to the biggest Kazakhstan city – Almaty- are the most favorable for it. Availability of highly qualified mountaineers in combination with presence of local travel companies makes available Zailiysky Alatau region for international trekking and mountaineering business without important money or time spending.

**Boating**

Presence of such mountain rivers as Charyn, Chilik, Koksu, Karatal, Ili, offers an opportunity for those whitewater adepts that seeks for adventure and sport performance. The lake Balkhash, Kapchagay reservoir, located in Southern resort zone, Irysh river, Alakol and Zaisan lakes, Bukhtarminske reservoir in Eastern tourism zone, Caspian sea in Western Kazakhstan – all of them are perfect subjects of water sports and tourism.
Scientific tourism

Kazakhstan has excellent opportunities for development of scientific and educational tourism activities:

- Tours over rock outcrops locations. Karatau mountains in South Kazakhstan region represents unique slate outcrops as well as over famous Charyn canyon in the east of Almaty region;
- Zoologic tours to saigaks’ habitats in arid-steppe territory of Jambyl and Almaty regions;
- Flora tours in Chu-Ili mountains and Balkhash deserts (Ili river’s delta);
- Tours in Chokpay ornithological center;
- Observation tours over starved lakes and artificial mountain mudflows.

Silk Road

Among potential trends of national tourism sector development much attention is paid to Great Silk Road tourism. Northern part of Silk Road is located in Kazakhstan territory and this object is qualified as priority among other United Nations and World Tourism Organization projects. Ancient caravans passed from Djungar gates (station Druzhba) from internal China, turn round the Alakol lake, through the Altyne-Emel pass to cities in the valley of Syrdarya and Amudarya rivers. Major part of railways and motor roads of Southern and South-Eastern Kazakhstan completely coincide with his unique commercial tract known in VI-XIV centuries as Northern Turk tract.

State Program

In Kazakhstan 2030 development strategy the tourism sector is considered as of first priority. On February 27 of 1998 the President’s Decree #3859 "About State Program "Revival of Silk Road historic centers, preservation and successive development of Turk nations’ cultures, development of tourism infrastructure" was ratified. The main coordinator of this program is OJSC "National Company "Silk Road Kazakhstan". The company has prepared indicative plan of socio-economic development for years 2001-2005 which envisages company’s activities in revival of historic monuments, organization of tourism tours on Silk Road tracts, preservation and restoration of medieval city center Turkestan and other tourism sites, in development of general tourism infrastructure, in construction and reconstruction of highways.

The State program if priority program in preservation and conservation of unique culture heritage – historic, architectural and archeological monuments, nature landscapes and environment, development of tourism infrastructure in Kazakhstan.

The program anticipates developing tourism industry on main international tract of the Silk Road covering historic centers of Almaty, Taraz and Turkestan ethnic areas as well as development of North-Western, Northern and Eastern branches of the main tract connecting historic centers of Aral and Mangystau, Central and Eastern Kazakhstan regions.

International collaboration

Collaboration with such international institutions as United Nations, World Tourism Organizations (UN, WTO, respectively) gives to Kazakhstan significant incentives to achieve domestic tourism activity objectives as well as important support in creation of Kazakhstan’s favorable image on world tourism market. UN and WTO’s international projects based on stable development policy permit to get stable profits and create new employment opportunities through tourism field development.
A special project promoting tourism activity in Silk Road countries was developed in collaboration with UNESCO and WTO. Project’s main goal is to contribute to monuments restoration, creating historic museums, carrying out of advertising campaigns on tourism markets as well as studying of these countries’ history and tourist routes.

A preliminary study of Kazakhstan’s tourism opportunities was carried out in 1997 with WTO’s support. Within “Silk Road” project realization WTO has carried out in 1998 in Almaty international workshop on Silk road for tourist operators. One of the main features of collaboration with WTO is the assistance in creating Kazakhstan’s positive uniform image on world tourism market.

In order to promote country’s tourism activities the WTO provided Kazakhstan with opportunity to place information about national tourism prospects on its corporate web site free of charge.

The National Company “Silk Road - Kazakhstan” has prepared investment program according to which a significant work on investments obtaining is being carried out. An agreement on preparing and developing of the Kazakhstan’s historic monuments restoration project was completed. The World Bank is ready to grant USD 440 000 to carry out preliminary investigations and preparing feasibility study. This project was included in the State Investments Program for years 2000-2002, ratified by Kazakhstani Government Decree ¹ 772 dated on 15.06.99.

Islamic Development Bank agreed in 2000 to grant USD 250 000 for the project of Kurday-Uspenovka highway construction.

The Almaty-Georgievka highway rehabilitation project was included in the list of the State Investment Program for years 2000-2002 with granting USD 65 000 by the Asian Development Bank.

Within State Investment Program realization of the Uznagach-Bystrovka highway construction project that costs USD 230M is considered as high importance project. In 1997 the Islamic Bank of Development has granted USD 257 000 to prepare this project’s feasibility study. Taking into consideration project’s high cost the “Silk Road” National company is seeking for investors interested in its realization.

Thus, Kazakhstani tourism sector development is based on development of general infrastructure of this industry. On the assumption of sector’s intensive development the tourism will bring in the national economy new investments, will create new employment opportunities, will increase revenues flows in country’s budget and contribute to small and medium business development. One of the important goals actually is finding grants and loans from institutions and donor countries within different tourism development and historic heritage preservation programs framework.

Owing to country’s big potential in the field, the tourism in Kazakhstan will certainly play one of the main roles in the national economy.