

## ISSUES OF ESTABLISHING NEW ECOTOURISM SITES IN KHOREZM REGION

**Xo`jyozova Dildora Shonazar qizi**

*Abu Rayhon Beruniy nomidagi Urganch davlat universiteti*

*3-bosqich talabasi*

*Email: [dilxojyazova@gmail.com](mailto:dilxojyazova@gmail.com)*

**Abstract:** *Ecotourism is one of the most promising directions of sustainable tourism that combines nature conservation with socio-economic benefits for local communities. The Khorezm region, located in the lower reaches of the Amu Darya River, has a unique natural and cultural landscape that provides a favorable environment for the development of ecotourism. This article examines the natural and geographical factors influencing the formation and development of ecotourism in the Khorezm region. The study highlights the importance of the region's relief, hydrological network, flora, fauna, and climate in shaping the ecotourism potential. The analysis also identifies the existing ecotourism sites, challenges, and perspectives for sustainable tourism growth. The findings emphasize that effective use of Khorezm's natural resources, combined with proper infrastructure and community engagement, can turn the region into one of Uzbekistan's key ecotourism centers.*

**Keywords:** *ecotourism, Khorezm region, natural resources, Amu Darya, sustainable tourism, landscape, biodiversity.*

**Introduction:** In recent decades, tourism has become one of the most dynamic sectors of the global economy. Among its various branches, ecotourism is gaining increasing importance as it promotes harmony between nature and human activities. Ecotourism focuses on visiting natural areas with the aim of environmental protection, education, and cultural awareness. For regions like Khorezm, where natural ecosystems are rich yet fragile, ecotourism plays a crucial role in sustainable development. Khorezm, located in the northwestern part of Uzbekistan, is characterized by its unique geographical position in the lower reaches of the Amu Darya River. Its territory is dominated by alluvial plains, irrigated lands, and remnants of ancient ecosystems. Despite being known mainly for its agriculture, Khorezm possesses considerable potential for developing ecotourism activities such as river-based tourism, birdwatching, desert expeditions, and cultural eco-routes around Khiva – a UNESCO World Heritage site. This paper aims to analyze the natural and geographical

factors of ecotourism development in the Khorezm region, reveal its potential, and propose recommendations for sustainable management.

The term ecotourism was first used in the 1980s to describe environmentally responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), ecotourism should minimize negative environmental impacts and contribute to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage.

Many countries, including Uzbekistan, are now recognizing ecotourism as a tool for regional development. In Uzbekistan’s case, the government has adopted several strategies promoting sustainable tourism in natural reserves, protected areas, and unique landscapes. The Khorezm region fits into this framework due to its distinct environmental conditions and historical-cultural heritage. Khorezm is located in the arid zone of Central Asia, bordered by the Karakalpakstan Republic and Turkmenistan. Its total area is about 6,000 square kilometers, with most of it being lowland plains formed by the Amu Darya River. Ecotourism is one of the most important and rapidly developing branches of the tourism industry today. It not only contributes to economic growth but also plays a crucial role in protecting natural resources and raising environmental awareness among people. The Khorezm region, located in the northwestern part of Uzbekistan, possesses a rich natural and cultural potential for the development of ecotourism. However, there are still several issues that need to be addressed to establish new ecotourism sites in the region. Khorezm’s unique landscapes, such as the Amu Darya River, desert areas, ancient fortresses, and oases, create excellent opportunities for ecotourism. The region’s flora and fauna are also diverse, especially in areas near the river and the wetlands. Despite these advantages, ecotourism in Khorezm has not yet reached its full potential. The main challenges include insufficient infrastructure, lack of modern tourist facilities, poor accessibility to natural areas, and limited promotion of the region’s ecological attractions. Another issue is the lack of qualified specialists in the field of ecotourism management and environmental protection. Local communities often do not have enough knowledge about the benefits of ecotourism, which leads to a lack of initiative in developing such projects. Moreover, environmental protection measures are not always effectively implemented, which can cause damage to ecosystems. To solve these problems, it is necessary to develop a comprehensive ecotourism strategy for the Khorezm region. This includes improving roads and transportation to natural sites, creating eco-friendly accommodation, organizing training programs for local residents, and increasing investment in the tourism sector. In addition, public awareness campaigns should be carried out to encourage sustainable tourism practices and to preserve the natural beauty of the region.

The region's landscape is mainly flat, with elevations rarely exceeding 150 meters above sea level. Despite its simplicity, Khorezm's landscape is rich in ecological diversity. The floodplain areas near the Amu Darya are covered with tugai forests, reeds, and meadows, which provide ideal habitats for numerous bird species.

#### Climate:

Khorezm's climate is sharply continental, characterized by hot, dry summers and cold winters. The average temperature in July reaches +28–30°C, while in January it drops to –5°C. Precipitation averages 100–120 mm per year. These climatic conditions are favorable for seasonal ecotourism, especially from March to May and September to November.

The Amu Darya River is the lifeline of the region, serving as a source of irrigation, biodiversity, and scenic beauty. The presence of lakes, canals, and reservoirs also provides opportunities for water-based ecotourism such as kayaking, fishing, and boat tours. The flora of Khorezm includes over 400 species of plants, many of which are adapted to desert conditions. The fauna is represented by more than 150 species of birds, including herons, ducks, pelicans, and migratory birds that rest in the wetlands of the Amu Darya delta. These areas are ideal for ornithological tourism and scientific expeditions. Khorezm has several potential and existing ecotourism sites. Among them are: The Amu Darya Ecological Corridor: offering boat trips, fishing, and wildlife observation along the riverbanks. Khiva Ecocultural Route: combining historical tourism with environmental awareness programs. Kurgashinkul and Shovot Lakes: suitable for birdwatching and ecological photography. Desert Ecotours: excursions into the outskirts of the Kyzylkum desert, where tourists can learn about desert flora, fauna, and traditional lifestyles. Several local and international projects have already initiated ecotourism development in Khorezm, such as the UNDP-supported “Sustainable Land Management in the Amudarya Lowlands” project, which encourages eco-friendly tourism and biodiversity conservation. Despite its potential, Khorezm faces several challenges in developing ecotourism.

These include insufficient infrastructure (roads, signage, eco-lodges), limited environmental awareness among local populations, and seasonal water scarcity due to Amu Darya flow reduction. Another challenge is the lack of trained personnel specializing in ecotourism management, guiding, and environmental education. Nevertheless, the region's potential is vast. Government programs aimed at developing “green tourism” and improving the transport network between Urgench, Khiva, and the Amu Darya delta are expected to boost the sector.

In conclusion, the establishment of new ecotourism sites in Khorezm can bring significant social, economic, and environmental benefits. With proper planning and cooperation between local authorities, investors, and communities, Khorezm can become

one of the leading centers of ecotourism in Uzbekistan, attracting both domestic and international visitors. In the long term, Khorezm can become a model of ecotourism development in arid zones, focusing on environmental sustainability, local participation, and cultural preservation. Khorezm region possesses all the natural and geographical prerequisites for ecotourism development. Its unique combination of river ecosystems, desert landscapes, and historical monuments makes it a remarkable location for ecological travel. However, realizing this potential requires integrated planning, scientific research, and investment in infrastructure. The success of ecotourism in Khorezm will depend on the cooperation between local authorities, educational institutions, and communities. Introducing educational programs in schools and universities, organizing eco-festivals, and creating eco-lodges can significantly increase public awareness and attract more visitors. In conclusion, ecotourism is not only a promising direction for Khorezm's economy but also a key to conserving its natural heritage for future generations.

#### References:

1. UNWTO (2022). Tourism for Sustainable Development. Madrid.
2. State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Tourism Development. (2023). Ecotourism Strategy 2023–2030.
3. Karimov, A. (2021). Natural Resources and Ecotourism in Khorezm. Urgench: Science Press.
4. Khudayberganov, B. (2020). Amu Darya Basin and Ecological Tourism. Tashkent.
5. Central Asia Regional Environmental Centre (CAREC). (2022). Sustainable Tourism Practices in Uzbekistan.