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ЖУРНАЛ ФУНДАМЕНТАЛЬНЫХ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЙ | JOURNAL OF FUNDAMENTAL STUDIES

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EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL OF ZIYARAH TOURISM IN UZBEKISTAN: A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF SAMARKAND

ANNOTATION

This article delves into the unexplored realm of Ziyarah tourism in Uzbekistan, focusing on the captivating city of Samarkand. Ziyarah, an Arabic term referring to pilgrimage or visitation, holds immense cultural and religious significance for Muslims worldwide. The article examines the historical, cultural, and economic aspects of Ziyarah tourism, using Samarkand as a primary example. This article highlights the role of Samarkand in the potential of pilgrimage tourism in Uzbekistan on the example of some pilgrimage tourism destinations located in Samarkand. By analyzing historical sites, religious landmarks, social and cultural contexts, and economic effects, this research reveals the untapped opportunities of Ziyarah tourism in boosting Uzbekistan's tourism sector.

Keywords: ziyarah tourism, Uzbekistan, Samarkand, pilgrimage, cultural heritage, sustainable tourism, pilgrimage tourism destinations, historical, cultural and economic aspects of pilgrimage tourism.

O'ZBEKISTONNING ZIYORAT TURIZMIDAGI SALOHİYATI SAMARQAND MISOLIDA

ANNOTATSIYA

Ushbu maqolada Ziyorat turizmi va O'zbekistonda Ziyorat turizmining istiqbollari Samarqand viloyati misolida atroflicha muhokama etiladi. Ziyorat arabcha atama bo'lib butun dunyodagi musulmonlar uchun madaniy va diniy ahamiyatga ega. Maqolada Samarqanddan asosiy misol sifatida ziyorat turizmining tarixiy, madaniy va iqtisodiy jihatlari ko'rib chiqiladi. Shuningdek, ushbu maqolada ba'zi ziyorat turizmi manzilgohlari misolida O'zbekistonning ziyorat turizmi salohiyatida Samarqandning o'rni yoritiladi. Bundan tashqari, mazkur maqola O'zbekistondagi ayrim tarixiy, diniy jihatdan diqqatga sazovor joylarni ijtimoiy va iqtisodiy tomondan tahlil qilib, O'zbekistonning Ziyorat turizmidagi imkoniyatlarini ochib berishda xizmat qiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: ziyorat turizmi, O'zbekiston, Samarqand, madaniy meros, barqaror turizm, ziyorat turizmi manzilgohlari, ziyorat turizmining tarixiy, madaniy va iqtisodiy jihatlari.

ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ ПОТЕНЦИАЛА ЗИЯРАТСКОГО ТУРИЗМА В УЗБЕКИСТАНЕ: КОМПЛЕКСНОЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ САМАРКАНДА

АННОТАЦИЯ

Данная статья погружается в неисследованную область зияратского туризма в Узбекистане с акцентом на захватывающий город Самарканд. Зиярат, арабский термин, означающий паломничество или посещение, имеет огромное культурное и религиозное значение для мусульман по всему миру. Статья исследует исторические, культурные и экономические аспекты зияратского туризма на примере Самарканда. Эта статья подчеркивает роль Самарканда в потенциале паломнического туризма в Узбекистане на примере некоторых мест паломнического туризма, расположенных в Самарканде. Анализируя исторические памятники, религиозные достопримечательности, социальные и культурные контексты, а также экономические эффекты, данное исследование раскрывает неиспользованные возможности зияратского туризма для стимулирования туристического сектора Узбекистана.

Ключевые слова: зияратский туризм, Узбекистан, Самарканд, паломничество, культурное наследие, устойчивый туризм, направления паломнического туризма, исторические, культурные и экономические аспекты паломнического туризма.

Tourism has become an increasingly vital component of economies and cultural exchange around the world. One emerging facet of this industry is Ziyarah tourism, which holds particular significance within the Islamic tradition. This study embarks on a journey to uncover the potential of Ziyarah tourism in Uzbekistan, concentrating on the enchanting city of Samarkand. By delving into the historical, cultural, and economic dimensions, we aim to shed light on the unexplored possibilities that this form of tourism offers.

Ziyarah tourism, also known as Islamic pilgrimage, involves visiting sites linked to Prophet Muhammad PBUH, his family, descendants, companions, and other esteemed figures in Islam. This includes prophets and scholars. The term “Ziyarah” originates from the Arabic word زيارَة, signifying the act of visiting holy locations and venerable individuals.

Ziyarah tourism is a special kind of religious travel where people visit important places like holy sites, shrines, and the tombs of respected figures in the Islamic faith. This has been a part of Islamic tradition for a long time. In recent years, it's become even more popular and is now a big part of Islamic culture. People from all over the world who follow Islam go on these trips to learn about the history and culture of Islamic places. This kind of tourism is important for the spiritual and cultural growth of the Muslim world. It also helps the economy by making money and supporting responsible travel. When Muslims choose where to go, they think about having access to Muslim-friendly food, places to pray, and Islamic historical sites. Many Muslim countries are encouraging this kind of tourism, like Uzbekistan, which is improving the places that people visit and creating special travel routes for them.

Uzbekistan, with its rich history and vibrant culture, has the necessary ingredients to become a hotspot for Ziyarah tourism. The concept of Ziyarah, deeply rooted in the Islamic faith, brings pilgrims and visitors to sacred sites of historical and spiritual significance. Samarkand, renowned for its architectural marvels and pivotal role in the Silk Road trade, presents a compelling case for further exploration. As global travel trends evolve towards meaningful experiences and cultural encounters, understanding the potential of Ziyarah tourism can provide a fresh perspective on tourism development in Uzbekistan. The primary objective of this study is to thoroughly assess the potential of Ziyarah tourism in Uzbekistan, using Samarkand as a focal point. By examining the historical context, cultural relevance, and economic implications, we aim to identify the untapped opportunities for both tourism industry growth and cultural exchange. Additionally, this study seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on sustainable tourism development by highlighting the value of promoting heritage and spirituality through Ziyarah tourism.

The research will be structured around the subsequent goals:

- Identifying potential sites suitable for Ziyarah tourism in Samarkand.
- Evaluating the standard of services and amenities from the perspective of Muslim visitors.
- Investigating the motivations behind embarking on an Islamic pilgrimage tour.
- To analyze the potential economic impact of promoting Ziyarah tourism in Samarkand.
- To understand visitor perceptions and attitudes towards Ziyarah tourism.
- To propose recommendations for sustainable development of Ziyarah tourism.

This research follows a descriptive approach using qualitative methods to achieve its goals. The method used involves looking at information from various relevant sources related to the article's topic. After gathering this information, a type of analysis is done that does not involve math formulas. Instead, the findings are described using explanations and concepts.

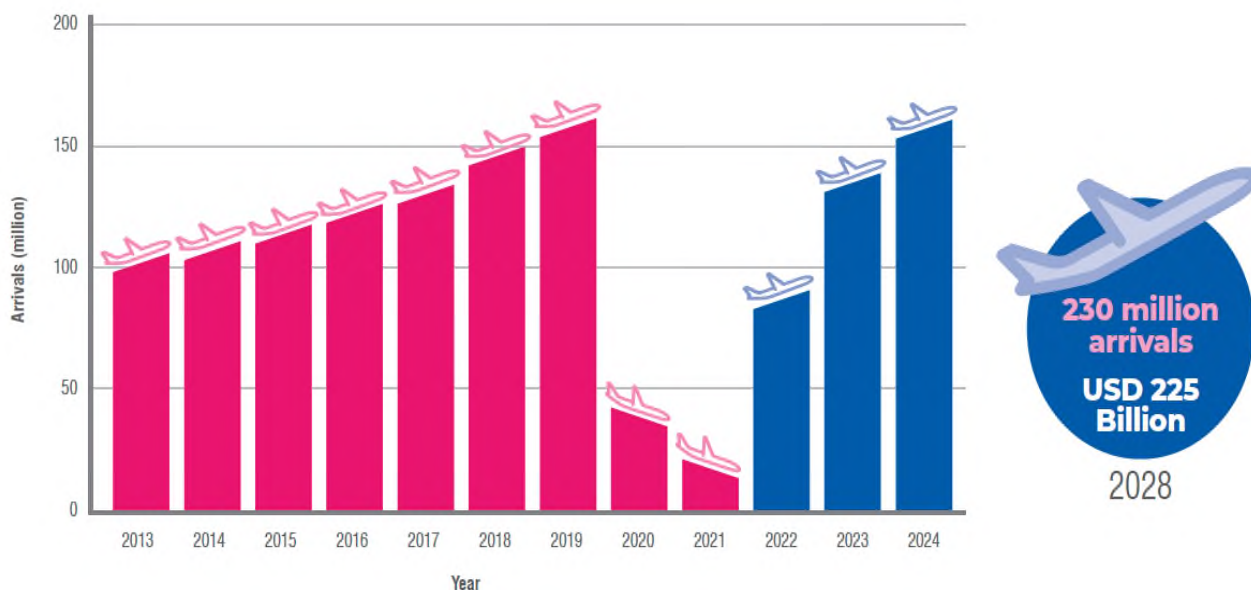
Ziyarah Tourism: Concepts, Trends and Significance.

Ziyarah tourism plays a crucial role in the spiritual, cultural, and economic development of the Muslim world. It is an essential aspect of Islamic heritage, and visiting holy sites is considered a way to seek Allah's blessings and forgiveness. Muslim tourists often undertake ziyarah tourism to strengthen their faith and spiritual connection with Allah. The practice also promotes intercultural dialogue and understanding among Muslim communities worldwide. Ziyarah tourism is a significant driver of economic growth, job creation, and infrastructure development in Muslim countries. It contributes to the growth of the tourism industry, generates revenue, and promotes sustainable tourism practices.

Ziyarah tourism is characterized as a variant of religious travel, wherein the primary motive is to journey to sacred locales affiliated with Islamic heritage and customs. According to Abraham and Laderlah (2018) [1], the conventional Arabic term for tourism is "siyahah". Nonetheless, there exists an array of alternative terms encompassing comparable meanings, including "safarah", "riyadah", "hajj", "umrah", "masyiah", "rehlah", "hijrah", and "ziyarah". In its literal interpretation, tourism can be understood as the practice of embarking on continuous expeditions, undertaking walks, fasting, and voyaging for the sake of worship and religious engagements. This notion also encompasses the idea of journeying across the globe to fulfill religious duties or venturing to different nations for leisure, cultural exploration, and observation. The foundation of the ziyarah tourism concept rests upon the Islamic belief that visiting sacred sites yields spiritual and communal advantages.

Ziyarah tourism, also referred to as spiritual or religious tourism, constitutes a type of travel involving visits to hallowed locations or sites imbued with historical and cultural significance. Such destinations are often linked to religious personalities or occurrences, holding profound worth and importance for adherents of that specific faith or belief system. Over recent years, the popularity of ziyarah tourism has surged, particularly among Muslim travelers aspiring to strengthen their spiritual bond and achieve personal development through their journeys.

According to Global Muslim travel index (GMTI) [2] conducted by Mastercard-CrescentRating (2022), in 2019, about 160 million people who follow the Islamic faith visited other countries. In 2023, it's estimated that around 140 million Muslims will travel, but this will go back up to 160 million in 2024 due to more international travel happening. Before the epidemic, experts predicted that by 2026, there would be 230 million arrivals. However, this milestone will likely be delayed until 2028. By 2028, the cost of this travel is expected to increase to \$225 billion. The recovery process is sensitive and could face challenges from the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, higher gas prices, and health risks like new cases of monkeypox or different versions of COVID-19.



International Muslim traveler arrivals. (source: Mastercard-CrescentRating, Global Muslim travel index, 2022, pp. 21)

The standpoint of Muslim visitors regarding ziyarah tourism in Uzbekistan stands as a pivotal element in promoting this particular type of tourism. Recent research endeavors (Usmanova and Mirkhamidova, 2021 [3]; Navruz-Zoda and Navruz-Zoda, 2016 [4]) have been conducted to delve into the viewpoints of Muslim tourists. These valuable findings can be utilized to effectively promote and enhance the development of ziyarah tourism in Uzbekistan.

According to Aniqoh and Hanik (2021) [5], Uzbekistan has implemented various strategies to boost international tourism and attract foreign visitors, including the introduction of visa-free regime. The implementation of a visa-free regime in 2018-2019 resulted in a significant increase in tourist arrivals from Indonesia by 170%, Malaysia by 158%, Turkey by 154%, and Muslim tourists from the UAE by 153%.

The Uzbekistan government’s practical actions in order to boost ziyarah tourism has already started to pay off. For instance, according to Global Muslim travel index (GMTI) conducted by Mastercard-CrescentRating, in 2022 Uzbekistan ranked 9th out of 140 countries in the Global Muslim Travel index (it was 16th in 2021).

As Islamic tourism encompasses tourism activities driven by Islamic motivations among Muslim travelers, several studies have been conducted to gain insights into the underlying factors influencing this form of tourism (Din, 1989 [6]; Yoon and Uysal, 2005 [7]; Battour et al., 2012 [8]; Raj, 2012) [9].

According to Kamarudin and Nizam (2013) [10] The rise of Islamic tourism can be attributed to the aftermath of the tragic events of September 11, 2001. Following these events, tourists from the Middle East began to alter their travel patterns, shifting their focus from Western countries to other Muslim-majority countries, particularly in Asia.

Muslim travelers predominantly find religious motivations compelling when journeying to Islamic sites. As Ahmed et al.’s study (2021) [11] indicates, the impact of Islam resonates significantly within Muslims’ attitudes and behaviors in their daily lives. This influence endures even in their recreational undertakings, including travel, where adherence to the tenets of Shari’ah law holds significant value. The research also establishes that halal labels are crucial factors for Muslim consumers when making purchasing choices. This demand has spurred non-Islamic destinations to provide comprehensive information about halal establishments and eateries for Muslim travelers. Furthermore, it is imperative for product details and ingredient listings to be accurately and comprehensively rendered in widely understood languages like English, particularly for items lacking halal certification.

The key things that impact Muslim travelers' choice to visit Islamic places are having places with Islamic history, chances to pray in mosques, and access to Halal food. So, when there are places that specifically meet the needs of Muslim tourists, like religious sites and services, it can really help Islamic tourism to grow. Understanding how important religion is in a very competitive tourism market is really important (Battour et al., 2014) [12].

One of the most important instances of ziyarah tourism among Muslims is the Hajj pilgrimage, which is a fundamental practice in Islam known as one of the Five Pillars. The Hajj is a yearly journey to the sacred city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia, and it's obligatory for all physically capable Muslims to undertake it at least once in their lives. The Hajj draws millions of pilgrims from different parts of the globe, making it one of the biggest gatherings of people worldwide.

Uzbekistan's potential as a ziyarah tourism destination

Numerous sources were employed to gather information. Upon reviewing these materials, it becomes evident that Uzbekistan possesses immense potential for pilgrimage tourism. The country is adorned with Islamic structures and mausoleums commissioned by past rulers to honor scholars who have significantly contributed to both Islam and the global knowledge. To exemplify, there exist over 7,300 sites deemed as cultural, architectural, and archaeological treasures (Khidirova and Raxmatullayeva, 2020) [13]. Moreover, Uzbekistan boasts over 200 historical landmarks designated as UNESCO World Heritage sites. B. Turaev, an expert, denotes that the country currently houses 545 architectural monuments, 578 historical landmarks, 1457 artistic treasures, and more than 5500 archaeological sites. Regrettably, many of these remain underutilized for tourism due to certain limitations. Over 200 historical buildings are undergoing restoration efforts, while 500 others are in need of restoration. In terms of pilgrimage sites, the figures indicate 144 in Tashkent, 118 in Samarkand, 201 in Bukhara, and 310 in Khiva (Khidirova and Raxmatullayeva, 2020) [13].

According to Sha and Cekuta (2020)[14] Uzbekistan's potential for tourism shines remarkably through its diverse historical, archaeological, architectural, and natural treasures. The country's ecological variety, ranging from deserts to glaciers and mountains to steppes, offers abundant opportunities for eco-tourism. These possibilities encompass various protected areas such as state reserves (201.7 thousand hectares), national parks (598.7 thousand hectares), biosphere reserves (68.7 thousand hectares), wildlife breeding centers (158.9 thousand hectares), and natural monuments (3.7 thousand hectares).

Moreover, the country's position along the ancient Silk Road gifts it with more than 4,000 historical and architectural gems, a well-preserved spiritual heritage, and over 7,000 historical monuments. Notable ancient cities like Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Shakhrisabz add to its allure. Uzbekistan's strong Islamic heritage boasts more than 160 historically significant Muslim sites and numerous sites connected to Sufism, such as the Mausoleum of Sheikh Zaynudin Bobo, Sheihantaur, and more.

Exploring Samarkand's pivotal role in the Ziyarah tourism of Uzbekistan

Samarkand, a historically significant city, holds a pivotal role in the Ziyarah tourism of the country. Several factors contribute to Samarkand's importance in Ziyarah tourism:

- *Islamic History and Architecture:* Samarkand boasts a wealth of Islamic architectural wonders that have attracted pilgrims and tourists for centuries. Prominent landmarks include the Registan Square, Shah-i-Zinda complex, and the Bibi-Khanym Mosque. These sites are not only architecturally impressive but also hold deep religious significance, as they house the tombs of revered Islamic figures and leaders.

- *Shrine of Imam al-Bukhari:* One of the most important sites in Samarkand for Ziyarah tourism is the shrine of Imam al-Bukhari. Imam al-Bukhari was a renowned Islamic scholar who compiled the hadith collection known as Sahih al-Bukhari, one of the most authentic and respected collections of sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad PBUH. His shrine attracts pilgrims and scholars from around the world.

- *Cultural Heritage*: Samarkand's cultural heritage is intertwined with Islamic traditions, and this heritage is showcased through its architecture, art, and local customs. Visitors are able to experience the fusion of history and religion, making it a significant destination for those seeking a deeper understanding of Islamic culture.

One of the most renowned sites for pilgrimage tourism is the mausoleum of Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari, a notable hadith scholar recognized across the Islamic world as the "Imam of the Hadith scholars". Back in the 1970s, although a memorial mausoleum was initially constructed at his burial site, it remained unnoticed due to the repressive and atheistic regime of the former Soviet Union. The restoration of the memorial complex came about following the approval of the Decree by the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which aimed to commemorate the 1225th anniversary of Imam al-Bukhari's birth in accordance with the Hijra-lunar calendar.

In November 1998, the UNESCO General Conference passed a resolution to participate in commemorating the significant date, marking the 1225th anniversary of the esteemed hadith scholar Ismail al-Bukhari. This led to the establishment of a memorial complex at Imam al-Bukhari's tomb, designed in alignment with the architectural traditions of ancient Islamic Central Asia. A spacious area of 10 hectares was designated for this complex.

Alongside the Imam al-Bukhari memorial complex stands the Imam al-Bukhari International Centre, established in 2008. Over the past two centuries, the Imam al-Bukhari complex stands as a distinctive and monumental edifice in our nation. This complex is not only a place of holy worship, it is one of those places in Uzbekistan that glorifies our homeland and has a huge impact on the young generation's education and horizon, with their history which makes every person think about life and eternity. Today, this monument is the most famous and important monument in Uzbekistan as a pilgrimage tourism destination for local residents and international tourists as well.

Another place important for pilgrimage tourism is the memorial complex dedicated to Sufi Sayyid Ahmad Kasani ad-Dahbidi, found in Samarkand. This Sufi is also known as Mahdum-i A'zam, meaning "the master of the world". He was a significant figure in the "Nakshbandiya" tariqah (spiritual path), named after the famous mystic Bahouddin Nakishband in the Islamic world. He followed this path from 1515 until he passed away. Notably, Khoja Kasani also served as the spiritual advisor to Sheibanid Ubaydulla-khan.

In the history of Central Asian nations, it was believed that spiritual leaders, known as sheikhs, should guide rulers in maintaining justice, and rulers should listen to their advice in applying Islamic principles in society. In 1619, Yalangtushbiy, the governor of Samarkand, built a khanaka, a building for religious rituals, which had a dedicated hall for Sufi practices. This building had six columns and twelve domes, along with a wooden porch. At the same time, he built a dakhma, a mausoleum, using gray marble from Samarkand. This mausoleum became the resting place for Mahdum-i A'zam and his descendants. The dakhma now holds seven commemorative stones and one gravestone. On the southern side, there are nine marble gravestones, one belonging to Yalangtushbiy. The enclosure around the dakhma, built in the 17th century, was done by Nadir Muhammad Divan-beghi.

Today, this site remains significant as an important destination for religious tourism, offering visitors insight into the spiritual heritage and historical richness of the region.

Another frequently visited destination for both local and international tourists is the Shah-i Zindah ensemble, believed to house the tomb of Kusam ibn Abbas, the cousin of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him). In the 11th century, the Karahanids constructed a small mausoleum called "gurkhana" complete with a gravestone and a funerary space featuring a "mehrab". Positioned at the complex's entrance is a small minaret. Notably, Karahanid Tamgach Bogra-khan established a masjid and a madrasah, which is considered the first in Central Asia, adjacent to the Kusam ibn Abbas mausoleum (Arapov, 2019) [15].

Within the gurkhana, a five-step ceramic gravestone from the 14th century is situated. It's adorned with majolica tiles portraying vegetative patterns and intricate lettering from Quranic texts and Hadiths.

According to the book “Samarkand Masterpieces of Central Asia”, the upper flanks of the gravestone bear an epitaph that reads: “It is a tomb of a son of an uncle, master of envoys, seal of prophets and the envoy of the Lord of the worlds; our regards to You, oh Emir of the true believers, Kusam, son of Abbas, may Allah be pleased with both of them, feed them and water...” On the third step of the gravestone, there’s a quote from the Quran: “And you, do not consider dead those who are killed on Allah’s way...” The fourth step carries this inscription: “This highest of palaces is paradise illuminating hearts, giving light and attracting true believers...” (Arapov, 2019) [15].

The southeastern part of Afrasiab became the primary sacred site of Samarkand after the construction of the Kusam ibn Abbas memorial complex during the time of the Karahanids. Over the centuries, a multitude of mausoleums and memorial mosques were erected within the Shah-i Zindah ensemble. Remarkably, the complex endured the Mongol period without destruction. According to Arapov (2019) [15] Even the well-known Arabian Traveler ibn Battuta visited the Kusam ibn Abbas mausoleum in the 1330s. The first remaining mausoleums of Shah-i Zindah were built in the northern section of the complex between 1360 and 1370. Under Emir Timur’s reign, the “chain” of mausoleums expanded up to the old fortification. During Ulughbek’s time in the 15th century, the complex’s construction extended downhill, and the most recent structures were added at the entrance in the 19th century. Since the early 21st century, the complex has been undergoing restoration, including the complete reconstruction of collapsed mausoleums (Arapov, 2019) [15]. To the left of the entrance is a masjid where Muslim tourists can offer their prayers.

According to Trono and Castronuovo (2018) [16], religious and spiritual expeditions have targeted sacred sites throughout history. Governments are now recognizing the significance of these locations not only from a cultural perspective but also in terms of their economic opportunities, as religious tourism has developed into a distinct and lucrative market segment.

Regrettably, there are several challenges associated with utilizing existing historical landmarks in Uzbekistan for pilgrimage tourism. To begin with, the majority of these sites currently remain untapped for tourism purposes due to insufficient infrastructure or a lack of popularity. Secondly, in Uzbekistan, according to current statistics, 94% of the local population adheres to the Muslim faith. Both local Muslim residents and international Muslim visitors often seek opportunities to engage in prayer or Quranic recitation at these types of tourist destinations. Regrettably, certain facilities lack the necessary accommodations for prayer. Furthermore, while certain historical and religious sites have undergone restoration and are being utilized for tourism, many still require refurbishment and remain relatively unknown to the public due to inadequate research efforts dedicated to them.

In terms of recommendations, firstly, the government should take active measures to safeguard all items of archaeological, historical, or artistic importance.

Secondly, there should be a substantial allocation of funds by the state to facilitate research and restoration efforts for these artifacts.

Thirdly, the existing institutes specializing in archaeological and historical research should conduct comprehensive scientific studies on all of the nation’s historical and archaeological landmarks, with a commitment to sharing their findings and data with the general public.

Fourthly, tourism entities within Uzbekistan ought to keep establishing adequate infrastructure to support pilgrimage tourism at these sites and undertake marketing initiatives to introduce them on a global scale.

Furthermore, it is essential to ensure the provision of prayer spaces at all Islamic monuments possessing religious significance. This is particularly crucial as Muslim tourists seek opportunities for prayer and Quranic recitation at these locations.

Additionally, organizing talks and meetings with famous Islamic scholars at the Imam al-Bukhari complex in Samarkand could be really helpful. This could attract more tourists from other countries that follow the Islamic faith.

Ziyarah tourism is gaining prominence as more Muslims are exploring destinations around the world for their religious and spiritual journeys. Uzbekistan, with its rich history and cultural heritage, has emerged as a top-ranking destination for Muslim tourists seeking ziyarah experiences according to recent rankings (in 2022 Uzbekistan ranked 9th (it was 16th in 2021) out of 140 countries in the Global Muslim Travel index).

Samarkand holds a significant role in Uzbekistan's potential for pilgrimage tourism, primarily due to its housing of tombs and mausoleums of individuals renowned not only within the Islamic world but globally. This sets it apart from other regions in Uzbekistan. People from all over the Islamic world aspire to visit the resting places of eminent figures like Imam al-Bukhari and al-Moturidi in Samarkand, along with historical sites like Shah-i Zinda, Guri Amir, and Registan. This desire extends to local residents as well. These factors underpin the growth of pilgrimage tourism in Uzbekistan, highlighting Samarkand's unparalleled significance compared to other regions.

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