Overview

Kazakhstan, occupying a favorable geopolitical position, possessing unique natural recreational resources and the original culture of nomadic people, has a huge unrealized potential for the development of domestic and inbound tourism.

Although tourism in Kazakhstan is at the stage of development, analysis of statistical data indicates an increasing interest in Kazakhstani tourism and favorable average yearly growth of 12% in the number of domestic and inbound tourists in the period before the pandemic.

According to the 2019 Global Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index Kazakhstan ranked 80th out of 140 countries, improving its position by one point in comparison with the index of 2017, when it was in 81st place, and moved up 5 positions compared to the 2015 year.

The tourism industry in Kazakhstan at the state level is recognized as one of the priority sectors of the economy and the state implementing different measures to develop tourism and attract both local and foreign investors.

Source: Bureau of National Statistics Kazakhstan 2020
The State Program for the Development of the Tourism Industry

One of such measures is the State Program for the Development of the Tourism Industry by 2025, successful implementation of which is expected to result in:

- an increase in the share of the tourism industry to 8% in GDP by 2025;
- investments in tourism development in the next 7 years in the amount of 2 trillion KZT;
- creation of about 200 thousand new jobs, including 72 thousand permanent ones;
- an increase in the number of domestic and inbound tourists from 7 to 15 million people per year.

As a part of the program, the state outlined 10 tourist destinations. On these territories, investors will be introduced with special privileges including:

- exemption from corporate income, value-added, and land taxes;
- reduction in the minimum investment requirement to 200 thousand MCI (583.4 million KZT, or 1.3 million US dollars) to obtain these preferences;
- subsidies for part of construction or reconstruction costs of a hotel or recreation center in the amount of 10% of the investment.

**Top 10 Rupublican level tourist destinations:**

1. Mountain cluster of the Almaty region
2. Lake Alakol
3. Shchuchinsk-Borovoe resort area
4. Bayanaul resort area
5. Imantau-Shalkar resort area
6. Lake Balkhash
7. Historical and cultural tourism of Turkestan
8. Beach tourism of Mangystau
9. MICE tourism of Nur-Sultan
10. Entertaining tourist hub Baikonur
The State Program for the Development of the Tourism Industry

Much attention is paid to the transport accessibility of tourist sites:

Under the program, one of the tools for attracting tourists to the top 10 destinations is the KIDS GO FREE mechanism - the possibility of free travel for children under 14 years old on domestic air flights.

Currently, in order to ensure the safety of flights and the development of domestic tourism, in the small towns of Urjar and Usharal, work has begun on the reconstruction of runways, which will provide air transport accessibility to the resort area of Lake Alakol.

In 2020, the newest airport in the city of Turkestan has started its operation, and the construction of a new international airport terminal was launched in Almaty, which will double the airport's capacity to at least 14 million passengers per year.

Moreover, until 2025, all highways will be equipped with roadside services that comply with international standards. Currently, COMPASS Comfort has opened its first modern complex of roadside service, and 34 more new-generation complexes are planned for opening, which will improve the transport infrastructure of the country.
The Almaty mountain cluster (AMC) is a key destination for attracting high-quality tourist flows, capable of offering a variety of tourist products, including eco and ethnic, recreational, and ski tourism. It serves more than 1.5 million tourists a year, which is about 20% of the total volume of domestic and inbound tourism in the country. According to forecasts, by 2025, the projected tourist flow to Almaty will reach 4 million people, of which 2.5 million only to the Almaty mountain cluster.

Currently, 439 objects are operating on the territory of the mountain cluster, of which 128 are hotels with a restaurant, 164 are hotels without a restaurant, 4 holiday houses, 3 recreational houses, 4 children camps, 105 bungalows, cottages and chalets, 1 tourist base, 2 tourist camps, and 28 other accommodation objects.

It is planned to develop 470 kilometers of mountain trails, 85 kilometers of bicycle trails, 45 kilometers of horse trails, and 250 kilometers of ski trails, which is 6 times the current length of the tracks. In addition, it is planned to build control points, as well as 15 huts to shelter tourists on mountain routes.

For the safety of tourists, the mountain cluster will be completely covered with WiFi networks, access to the Internet, and access to cellular signals and/or access to high-speed communication channels.