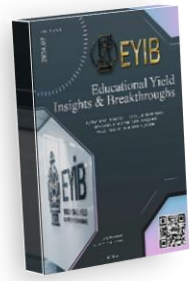
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Making Samarkand More Welcoming: Solving Language and Price Barriers for Tourists

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Annotatsiya

Gastronomy is an integral element within the cultural tourism industry as it allows traditional recipes to be maintained, supports local businesses and ensures cultural knowledge is preserved. Uzbekistan has a vast gastronomy culture as it has a rich history of trading, diverse produce and cultural exchange. Utilising cuisine can have positive impacts on a region by encouraging tourists to travel to smaller areas, engage with the local people and understand the cultural traits of a region. This article will explore how sustainable gastronomy can support the development of tourism in regions of Uzbekistan. A qualitative approach has been taken throughout this research project as it looks at academic sources and cultural heritage sources. Gastronomy tourism can support small businesses, increase local food chains, preserve traditional food knowledge and provide a diverse range of tourism products within regions. However, in order for it to be effective in the long term, community involvement, responsible resource management, appropriate infrastructure and cooperation between sectors of tourism should be included.

Kalit so'zlar: gastronomic heritage, sustainable tourism, regional tourism growth, Uzbek cuisine, cultural identity, culinary traditions, local communities, tourism sustainability.

Introduction

Samarkand is one of the most famous, historic, and oldest cities in the world, with a history of more than 3,000 years (Yuznews, [year]). It is inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List as "Samarkand – Crossroad of Cultures" (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, n.d.). It attracts millions of tourists every year. In 2025, more than 3 million foreign tourists visited Samarkand Region (Silk Road International University of Tourism and Cultural Heritage, 2026). The city was a popular Silk Road trade hub in ancient times, which helped it to develop and become even more famous. Historic monuments such as Registan Square, Siyob Bazaar, Shah-i-Zinda, Imam al-Bukhari, and the Mirzo Ulugbek Observatory play a crucial role in attracting tourists throughout the year. Besides these monuments, traditional Uzbek meals like plov, shashlik, and manti, and especially Samarkand bread, are something tourists never

miss. However, tourists who visit Samarkand for the first time may feel confused about where to go, what to do, what to buy, what to eat, and when to visit.

At the national level, Uzbekistan received 10.3 million foreign tourists in January–September 2026, which is 20.4% more than in the same period of the previous year (Uzbektourism, 2026a). These numbers also influence the economy. According to WTTC data for 2025, Uzbekistan was the most popular travel destination among Central Asian residents (Uzbektourism, 2026b). The main travel destinations of the region's population were:

- Uzbekistan: 25%
- Kazakhstan: 23%
- Kyrgyzstan: 18%
- Russia: 16%
- Türkiye: 6% (Zamin.uz, 2026)

Table 1. Tourism service exports of Uzbekistan, 2019–2025

Year	Revenue (USD)	Source
2019	1.313 billion	Scientific article citing official data
2020	395 million	Conference paper (University of Latvia)
2022	1.61 billion	President's speech (MFA of Uzbekistan)
2023	more than 2 billion	People's Daily, February 2024
2024	3.5 billion	Official statement, Arab News
2025	4.8 billion	WTTC report (via gov.uz, 2026)

These statistics show that tourism plays a crucial role in our economy. It is also important that an additional $100 million was allocated in 2026 for the development of Samarkand Region, with particular attention to its tourism potential (President of Uzbekistan, 2026). This shows that the government pays serious attention to tourism. However, despite these major efforts, there are some issues that are often not noticed, and they may lead to problems for tourists and dissatisfaction with our services.

Table 2. Number of tourists in Samarkand Region

Year	Foreign tourists	Domestic tourists	Source
2022	1.204 million	4.247 million	Deputy governor of Samarkand region (UzA, 2023)
2024	about 2.5 million	about 4.7 million	Shokh journal, vol. 11, issue 2 (2026)
2025	over 3 million	5.3 million	Silk Road International University website (2026)

Methodology

This article is based on direct observation and informal conversations conducted by the author, Dilmurodjon Allamuratov, a student of Silk Road International University of Tourism and Cultural Heritage, with foreign tourists at the Registan Square, Siyob Bazaar, and the Imam al-Bukhari complex. Two couples from Malaysia, three students from India, one traveler from the USA, and several other tourists shared their experiences of prices and language barriers. Official tourism statistics were taken

from published sources, including the website of Silk Road International University of Tourism and Cultural Heritage and regional news reports.

Results

At the Registan Square, two couples from Malaysia mentioned high prices for products such as bottled water, as well as entrance fees and taxi fares. Sellers at Siyob Bazaar often offer handicrafts, souvenirs, and national clothes to tourists at high prices. Similarly, tourists at the Imam al-Bukhari complex face many language barriers and have difficulty communicating while shopping and ordering meals.

In my observation, a glass of pomegranate juice at Siyob Bazaar costs about 50,000 som for tourists, while local people pay around 30,000 to 35,000 som. At the Registan Square complex, a one-litre bottle of water costs about 10,000 som for tourists, but locals usually pay around 5,000 som. At the Imam al-Bukhari complex, a group of tourists from Bangladesh struggled to buy local goods such as traditional skullcaps, key chains, scarves, and prayer beads because of the language barrier. In these historic places, it is also common to see local people selling their products at high prices and without any required documents.

Discussion

Local communities, the government, and the relevant authorities should work together to solve these problems and provide safer and more honest service for tourists. I would suggest several solutions that may be useful for tourists and tourism workers.

Firstly, people who work with tourists, such as sellers and drivers, should take short, intensive language courses focused only on tourist phrases, such as greetings, prices, and directions. These courses would help them communicate without misunderstandings, give visitors a positive impression, and also help them when they travel abroad. Secondly, the relevant authorities should check prices in these places regularly to keep them fair and balanced. Thirdly, the country should create a taxi app only for foreign visitors, with fixed prices, so that drivers cannot take extra cash outside the app. Many tourists are unhappy with local taxi fares, so this app would bring more comfort to both tourists and locals. Four, all organizations that serve tourists, for example shopping malls, taxis, and sellers, should obtain a certificate proving that they can provide service to foreigners. Fife, multilingual signs in main sites like the Registan and Shah-i-Zinda, and menus with clear translations, dish photos, and written prices, will make visitors feel more confident and protect them from unexpected costs. Six, students of tourism and languages can play an active role in solving the language barrier. By working as volunteer guides or at “tourist help” points, they can help visitors while gaining real practical experience for their future careers. Seven, a simple and fast channel, such as a hotline or a Telegram bot, would allow tourists to report about problems they face during the trip. Knowing that prices are being monitored would also encourage vendors and drivers to stay honest. QR codes also should placed at historical places, restaurants, and shops can give tourists instant access to audio guides, translations, and price lists in their own language. All they need is a smartphone, so it is a cheap and practical way to solve the language barrier without hiring extra staff.Clearly displayed prices for taxis, entrance tickets, tours, and souvenirs help tourists avoid being overcharged. When the same fixed price providing to everyone, visitors feel treated fairly and trust the destination more. Posting these prices in several languages makes the system even more effective.Turkey shows a good

example of how these measures work together. Tourism police units in major destinations help visitors with scams and theft, often in several languages, while consumer and tourist information hotlines allow travelers to report unfair pricing. Licensed taxis operate from official stands, and certification programs with QR codes let tourists check a business's inspection record. In 2025, Turkey welcomed about 52.8 million foreign visitors and earned over $65 billion in tourism revenue.(dailysabah)

Conclusion

Samarkand attracts millions of tourists every year, but language barriers and higher prices for foreigners are real problems. During my observations at several historic locations and my conversations with foreign visitors, I found some serious issues. However, solutions such as language courses for people working with tourists, regular price checks by the relevant authorities, a fixed-price taxi app for tourists QR codes in historic places, telegram bots for tourists,daily volunteeringamong tourism and language students could make a real difference. If these measures are put into practice, Samarkand will attract even more tourists and become better known around the world. It would also leave visitors with a positive impression of the city.

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