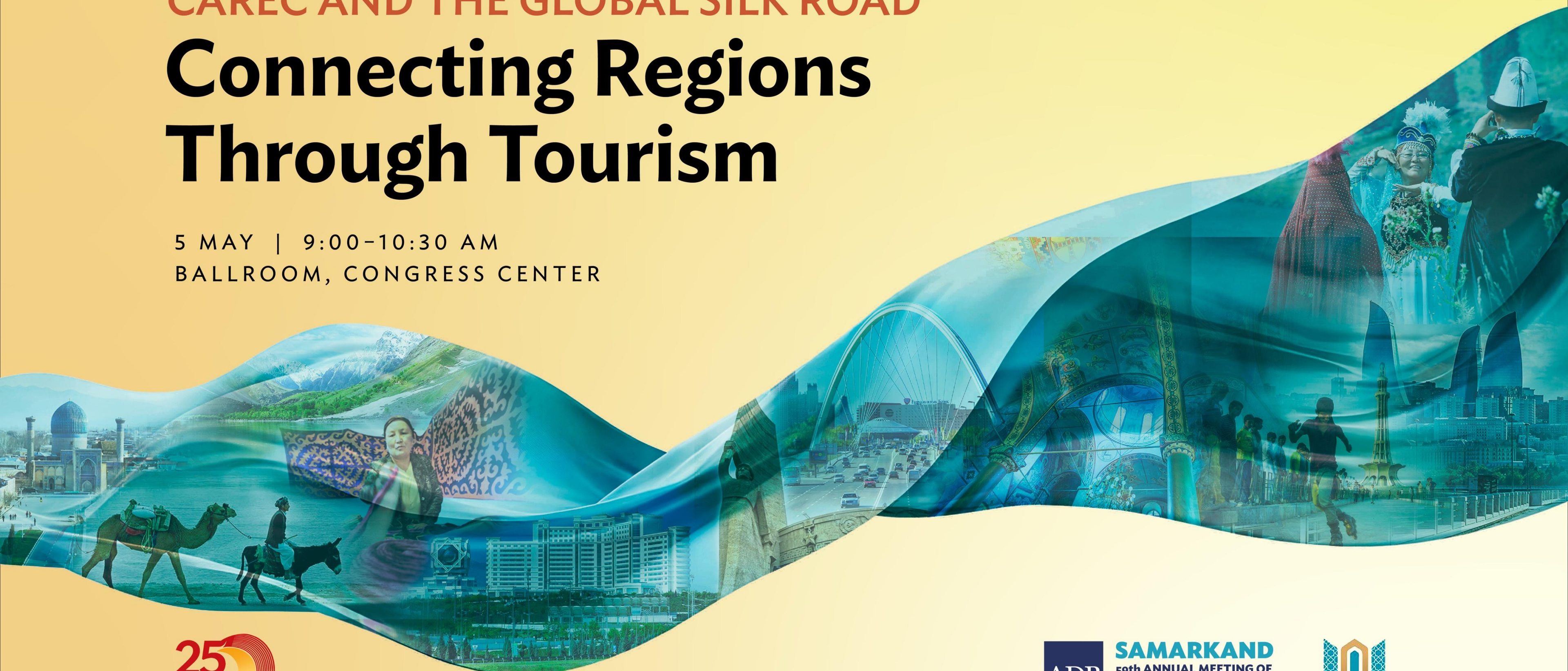


CAREC AND THE GLOBAL SILK ROAD

Connecting Regions Through Tourism

5 MAY | 9:00-10:30 AM
BALLROOM, CONGRESS CENTER



SAMARKAND
59th ANNUAL MEETING OF
THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK
3-6 MAY 2026



CAREC and the Global Silk Road

Connecting Regions Through Tourism

Opening Session



Mr. Abdulaziz Akkulov
Chairman
Uzbekistan Tourism Committee



Mr. Yingming Yang
Vice-President
South, Central and West Asia, ADB

Unlocking Cross-Border Tourism in the CAREC Region: Challenges, Opportunities, and the Path Forward



Mr. Asad Aleem
Regional Head
Regional Cooperation and Integration
Central and West Asia Department, ADB

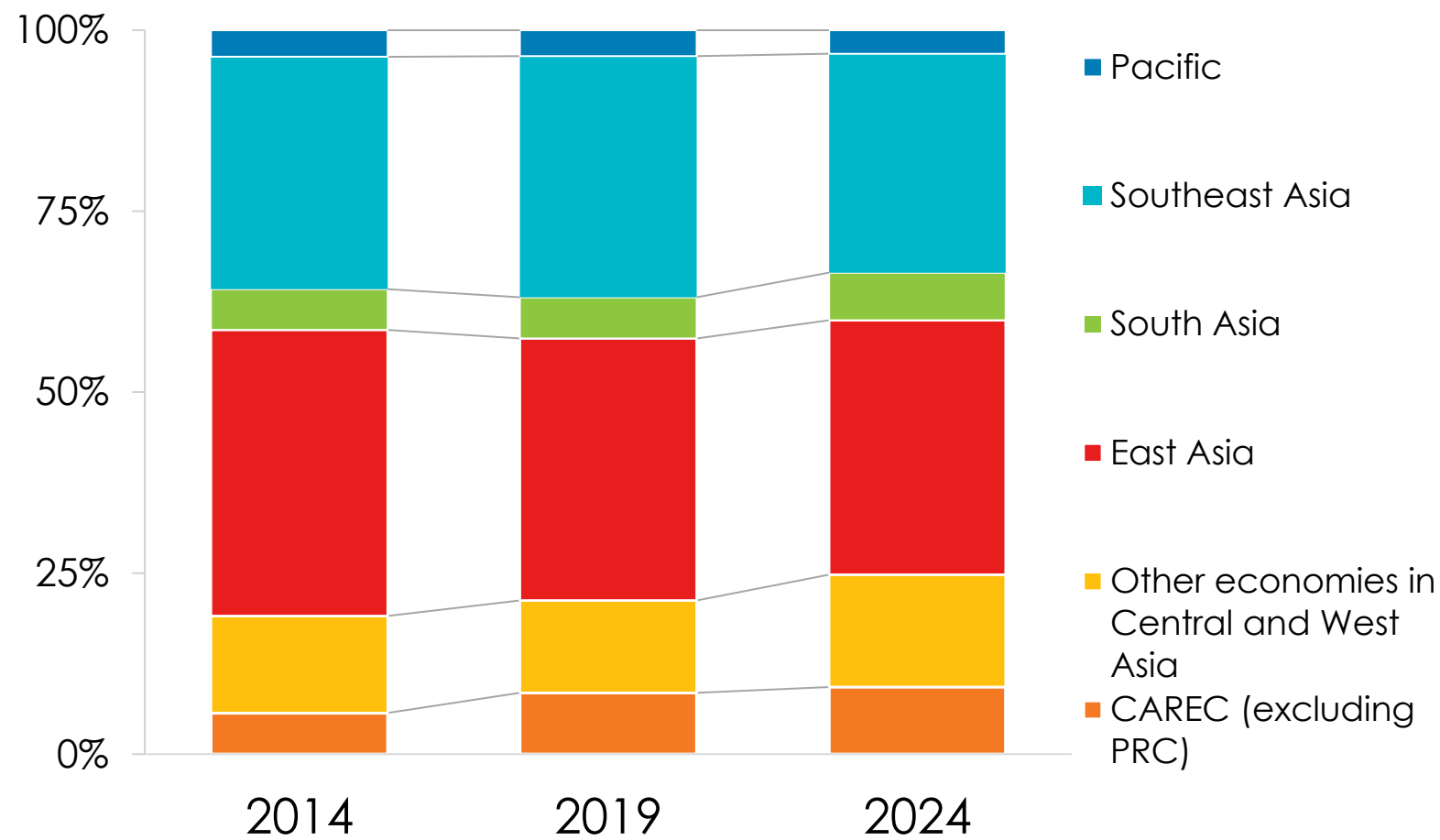
Presenter



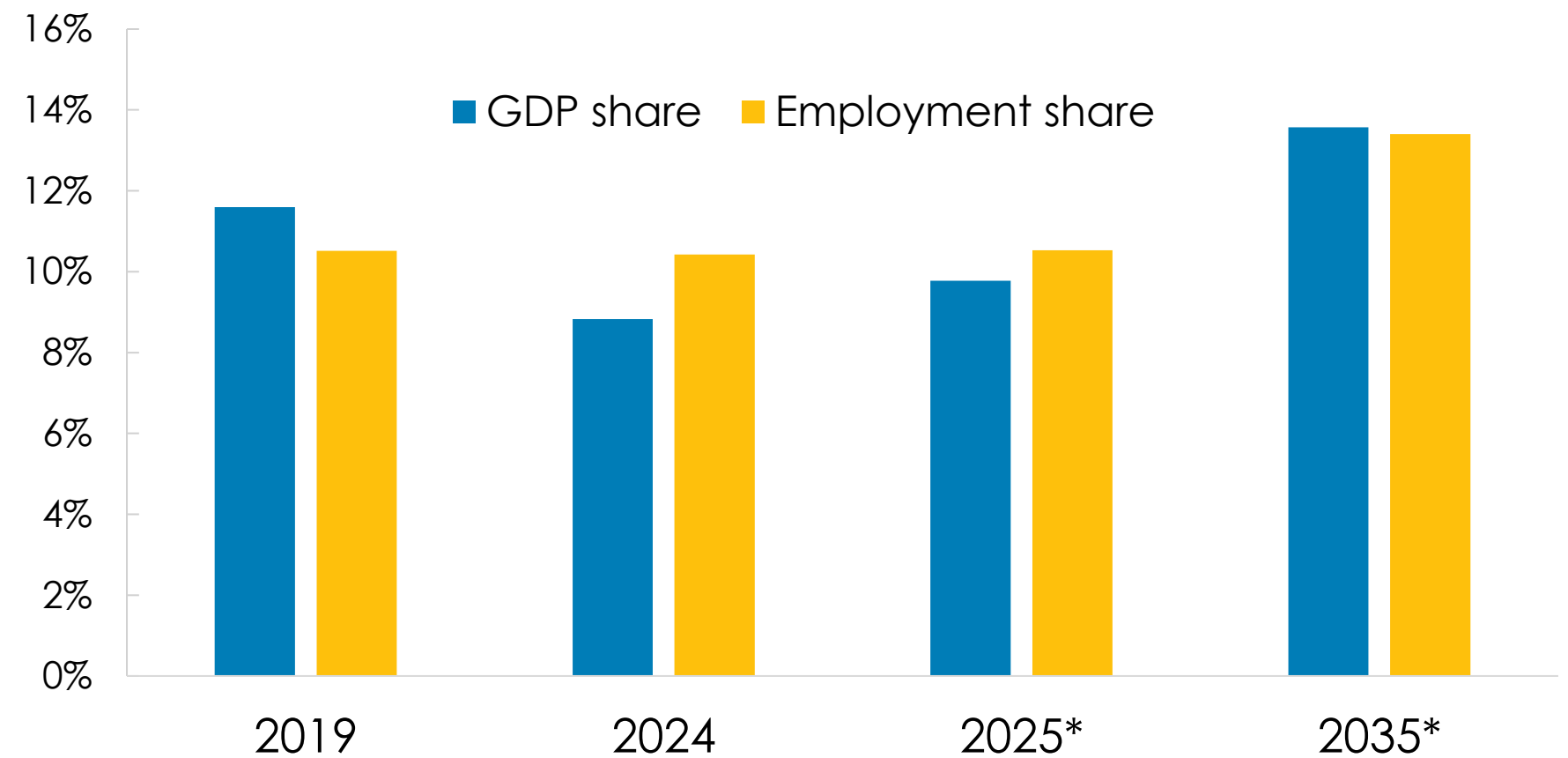
Share of international arrivals in CAREC members (excluding PRC) rose from 6% in 2014 to 9% in 2024

Tourism is increasingly becoming a significant contributor to CAREC members' economies

Subregional Breakdown of International Arrivals in Asia and the Pacific



Economic Impact of Tourism in CAREC members



Note: Data for CAREC includes Azerbaijan; Georgia; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyz Republic; Mongolia; Tajikistan; Turkmenistan; and Uzbekistan and excludes data from the People's Republic of China (PRC). East Asia includes PRC; Hong Kong, China; Japan; Republic of Korea; and Taipei, China. Other economies in Central and West Asia are Armenia and Türkiye. South Asia includes Bangladesh; Bhutan; India; Maldives; Nepal; and Sri Lanka. Southeast Asia includes Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; Indonesia; Lao PDR; Malaysia; Philippines; Singapore; Thailand; Timor-Leste; and Viet Nam. Pacific includes Australia; Cook Islands; Fiji; Kiribati; Marshall Islands; Micronesia; Nauru; New Zealand; Niue; Palau; Papua New Guinea; Samoa; Solomon Islands; Tonga; Tuvalu; and Vanuatu.
 Source: Asian Economic Integration Report 2026 Database using data from CEIC Data Company (accessed September 2025); Euromonitor Passport (accessed September 2025); UN Tourism. Compendium of Tourism Statistics data set. <https://www.unwto.org/tourism-statistics/tourism-statistics-database> (accessed September 2024); and UN Tourism. World Tourism Barometer, September 2025. <https://doi.org/10.18111/wtobarometereng> (accessed October 2025).

* = projection, GDP = gross domestic product.
 Note: Data includes Azerbaijan, People's Republic of China, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
 Source: Asian Economic Integration Report 2026 Database using data from World Travel and Tourism Council Research Hub. Interactive Economic Impact Dashboard. <https://researchhub.wttc.org/dv-dashboard> (accessed September 2025).

Regional and Structural Constraints

- **Limited air connectivity:** few direct routes between CAREC tourism hubs and some distant markets, limited low-cost carriers
- **Cumbersome border crossings:** time-intensive procedures, unclear requirements
- **Intraregional transport gaps:** poor last-mile access, variable road quality, public transport
- **Skills shortages:** tourism workers, guides, multilingual capacity, destination managers
- **Low international awareness:** some tourist destinations relatively unknown

Recent Geopolitical Concerns

- **Airspace and route disruptions** increase flight times, reduce seat capacity, and last-minute itinerary changes
- **Higher fuel and operating costs** (linked to oil price volatility) raise airfares and tour prices
- **Macroeconomic uncertainty** reduces discretionary spending, especially for long-haul trips
- **Heightened risk perceptions** (safety concerns, insurance advisories, and uncertainty) can trigger destination switching, shorter booking windows, and a preference for nearby or perceived lower-risk markets



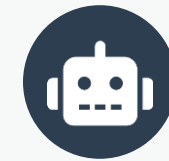
Adventure Travel
\$1.16 Trillion
 global outbound
 adventure market
 (2024)

Up 160% since 2016. CAREC region's tourism assets and offer is perfectly positioned for this high value market.



Cultural & Culinary
75% of travelers
seek authentic local
cultural experiences,
culinary top activity

Diversity of cultures and cuisines across CAREC members creates opportunity to create unique tourism experiences and cross-border routes.



Digital and AI in
Travel Planning
52% of travelers
using AI to plan travel
(up from 26% in 2024)

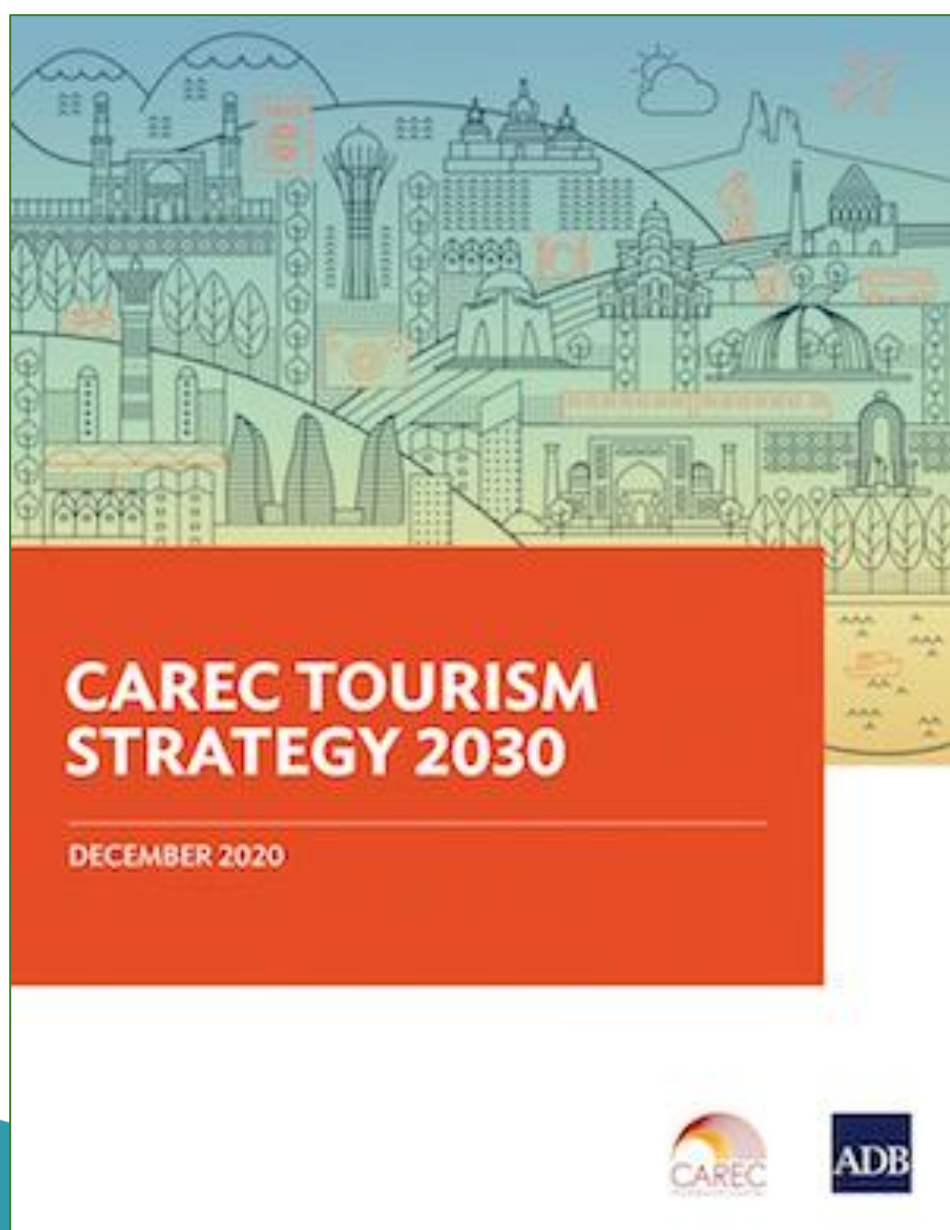
90% of tourists research travel online. Digitalized tourism sectors in CAREC are leveraging this to attract and sell to international markets.



Visa Liberalization
Supports Growth
Significant visa
reforms across
CAREC Region

Most CAREC members now offer visa-free or e-visa access to key source markets. This makes cross-border travel more seamless.

Coordinated Regional Tourism Development addresses these constraints and maximizes the opportunities through improved connectivity—from infrastructure to digital solutions—and other cooperation measures.



**VisitSilkRoad.org
Tourism Portal |
Networks**



**Capacity Building
| Knowledge**



**Regional Investment
Framework | Projects**



**MOU on CAREC Regional Tourism Development
November 2025, Bishkek**

... to investment projects...



KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

Issyk-Kul Environmental Management and Sustainable Tourism Development Project

\$56M | (June 2024 – Dec 2030)

- Climate-resilient wastewater infrastructure
- 1 museum, 1 TIC, 2 info points
- 3 parks + bike trails & walking paths
- 50 waste collection facilities



UZBEKISTAN

Integrated Urban Development

\$67.65M | (Oct 2022 – May 2028)

- 142,068 people benefit from green spaces
- 173,636 people get improved water (≥8 hrs/day)
- 341,400+ people with 100% waste collection
- Digital museum + visitor center in Khiva



GEORGIA

Livable Cities Investment Program

\$180.5M | (Nov 2021 – June 2028)

- Climate-resilient urban infrastructure
- Improved mobility & accessibility in tourism clusters
- Tourism-enabled regional development
- Institutional capacity strengthening



MONGOLIA

Sustainable Tourism Development Project

\$38M | (June 2019 – June 2027)

- Socio-economic benefits for 11,000 residents
- Eco-tourism development in two national parks
- Upgraded tourism centers and waste management facilities
- 260 park staff trained in tourism management and conservation



MONGOLIA

Integrated Livelihoods Improvement and Sustainable Tourism in Khuvsgul Lake National Park Project

\$3M (Apr 2016 – June 2021)

- 515 community-based enterprises supported
- Sustainable livestock and pasture management practices
- 100 waste management facilities installed
- 3300 residents trained in tourism services and waste management

\$345.15 million
total investments

Sustainable tourism outcomes delivered through multisector urban and environmental investments

ADB Tourism-Related Pipeline Projects

Pakistan: Sustainable and Green Infrastructure Project, *promoting cross-border medical tourism*

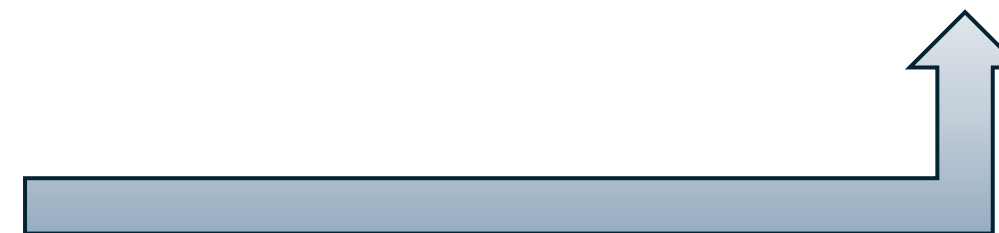
Kyrgyz Republic: Skills Development System Transformation Program, *training specialists for tourism sector*

Tajikistan: Tourism Development Multisector Project, *developing tourism sector*

Kyrgyz Republic: Advancing Green Investment and Resilient Economic Growth Program, *supporting reforms in implementing Sustainable Tourism Development Program and integration of Uzbekistan-Kyrgyz Republic **cross-border tourism** into social and economic development plan of the cross-border district*

Kyrgyz Republic–Uzbekistan: Sustainable Cross-Border Tourism Cluster Development

- **Boosts regional growth:** Higher visitor spending lifts Gross Regional Product in Jalal-Abad province with **1.3 million people** and Tashkent region with its **3.1 million people** through hospitality, transport, retail, and services.
- **Expands national value creation**
- **Reduces poverty, improves wellbeing**
- **Creates inclusive jobs**





11 Member States

127.1 Million International Arrivals (2024)

9.4% average GDP share from tourism

ASEAN Tourism Sectoral Plan 2026-2030

Regional Tourism Development Framework and Investment Areas

- **Resilient Tourism:** Intra-ASEAN travel promotion, MSME initiatives, crisis preparedness
- **Empowerment of tourism workers:** Skills development, certification, regional standards
- **Accessible and Seamless Travel:** Infrastructure, visa harmonization, connectivity,
- **Digital tourism, product and market diversification:** Digital tools, diversified products
- **Sustainable tourism:** Certification, low-carbon and nature-based models, community participation

ADB's Support for Regional Tourism Development

Supporting ASEAN's vision as global leader in quality tourism

- **Integrated investments:** \$3 billion tourism investment pipeline (2026–2030), \$4 billion
- **Policy support:** Harmonize policy across the region for seamless, inclusive tourism and standards
- **Technical assistance:** Innovative sustainable, data and digital solutions
- **Subregional programs:** Secretariat for Greater Mekong System (GMS)




CONNECT
We connect the region

Improve connectivity and seamless travel across the region, create quality cross-border tourism products and promote this unique tourism region rich with diverse cultures, natures, cuisines and experiences.



TRANSFORM
We transform how it's experienced and marketed

Digitalization and skills development to strengthen the region's tourism ecosystem to support a competitive private sector, quality tourism services, and innovative marketing to attract high value visitors.



BUILD
We build resilience for the long-term growth

Support sustainability and climate action policies and interventions to build resiliency, climate adaptivity and risk management skills in the region's tourism sector.

VisitSilkRoad Portal

SilkRoad News and Articles

- Best Seasonal Experiences in Afghanistan
- Best Seasonal Experiences in Uzbekistan
- Best Seasonal Experiences in China PR
- A Brief History of the Silk Road
- Best Seasonal Experiences in Kazakhstan
- Best Seasonal Experiences in Tajikistan
- Best Seasonal Experiences in Kyrgyz Republic
- Best Seasonal Experiences in Pakistan

Institutional Information

- Tourism Development**
CAREC Program Tourism Development Strategy, Working Groups and Development Partners.
[See more](#)
- Data and Statistics**
Find the latest statistics, market analysis and trends of the tourism activity. Registration required.
[View Statistics](#)
- Publications**
The CAREC eLibrary offers more than 999.999 tourism-related electronic publications for the CAREC region which are regularly updated. Registration required.
[View Publications](#)
- Events**
Key information from upcoming and previous meetings, conferences and workgroups. Registration is required.
[View Events](#)
- Tourism Contacts**
Connect with key Tourism authorities.
[View Directory](#)

Invest in SilkRoad

- Regulations and Legislation**
If you are looking to invest in CAREC Tourism projects it is critical to understand the regulatory framework, financing mechanisms and alternatives for each country and for the region.
[Read more](#)
- Investment Projects**
If you're an investor you can search among hundreds of projects.
[Search Projects](#)

Explore SilkRoad Destinations

Country Guides

Destinations and Experiences

- Archaeological, Ancient Monuments
- Culture, Festivals
- Eco-tourism, Nature, Parks, Gardens
- Entertainment
- Monuments, Museums
- Religious Tourism
- Shopping, Market, Bazaar
- Ski, Hiking, Resorts
- Villages, Culture

[Advanced Search >>](#)

Travel oriented features

Maximization of targeted traffic, further channeled to National Institutional pages and Private Sector Tourism Sites

Watch the video [Silk Road tourism promotional video](#) and visit the website: <https://visitsilkroad.org/>

Join the conversation!



CAREC and the Global Silk Road: Connecting Regions through Tourism

Option 1: Scan QR Code



Option 2: Your Web Browser

- Go to pigeonhole.at
- Enter passcode

SAMARKAND2026

CAREC and the Global Silk Road

Connecting Regions Through Tourism

Panelists



Mr. Shijun Liu
Executive Director
UN Tourism



Mr. Abdulaziz Akkulov
Chairman, Uzbekistan
Tourism Committee



Ms. Khulan Bat-Erdene,
Deputy Minister, Ministry of
Finance, Mongolia



Ms. Feruza Nazarova
Director and Founder,
Advantour



Mr. Timur Perkov
Deputy Director
Qanot Sharq Airlines

Moderator



Ms. Sunniya Durrani-Jamal
Country Director
Azerbaijan Resident Mission, ADB



UN Tourism



**Signing of Letter of Intent between
THE WORLD TOURISM ORGANIZATION AND ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK**

CAREC and the Global Silk Road

Connecting Regions Through Tourism

Closing Remarks



Mr. Muhammad Ehsan Khan
Director General
East Asia Department, ADB