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# CAREC Indicative Pipeline Projects: Transforming Corridors into Economic Engines for Tourism

CAREC Tourism Working Group Meeting | 9–10 September  
2026 | Tashkent, Uzbekistan

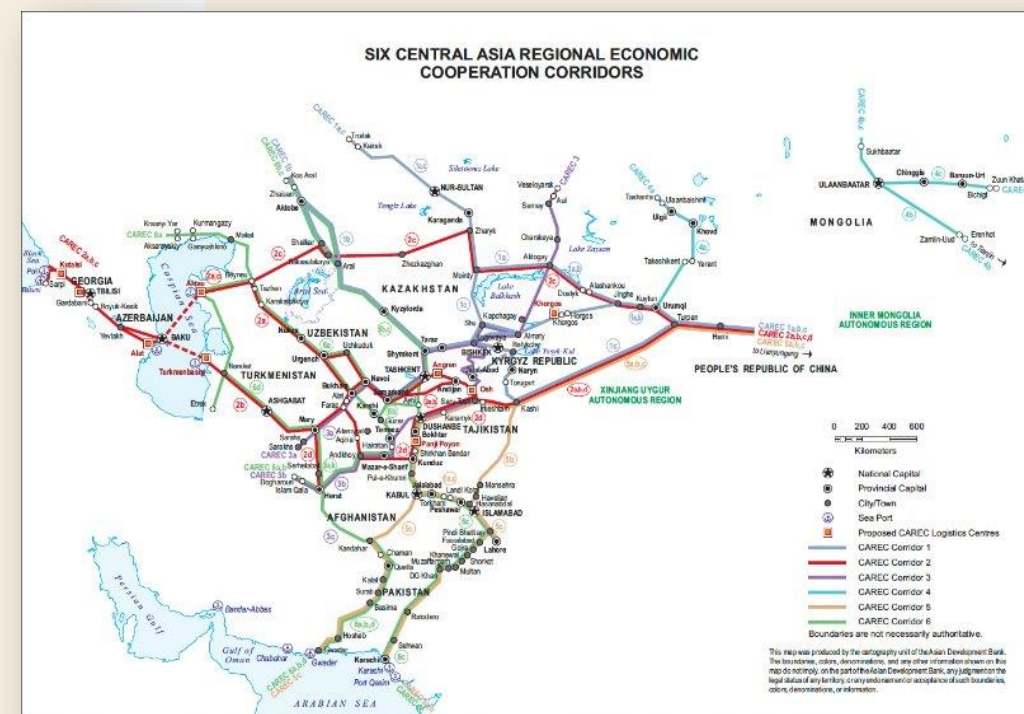
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ADB

# The Opportunity — Tourism as an Untapped Growth Driver

CAREC corridors carry people, not just goods — tourism is the sector that converts connectivity into livelihoods.

- Tourism drives economic diversification — especially in secondary cities and rural areas — through job creation, SME growth, and regional integration along CAREC corridors.
- Global travel demand is rebounding; CAREC countries are seeing a rise in regional tourism — yet connectivity gaps and service deficits still limit visitor spending.
- E.g., Central Asia's tourism sector generated about US\$20.1 billion in economic output in 2025, with international visitor spending reaching US\$9.9 billion and growth of 17.7%, the highest among all world regions.
- CAREC countries are prioritizing multi-destination tourism, cross-border routes, and sustainable, community-based models.
- The strategic moment: CAREC transport corridor investments create the physical foundation — **ADB pipeline projects now activate tourism's economic multiplier.**



# Strategic Anchor — CAREC Tourism Strategy 2030 and the 2025 MOU

*The pipeline presented today is grounded in agreed regional strategy and political commitment secured at the highest level.*

## Pillar 1

### CAREC Tourism Strategy 2030

Endorsed December 2020

-  Endorsed at the 19th CAREC Ministerial Conference, 7 December 2020 — sets the regional framework for competitive, sustainable tourism development
-  Provides multi-year strategic direction on competitiveness, sustainability, and regional integration for 9 CAREC member countries
-  CAREC 2030 Results Framework (Operational Cluster 2): 9 CAREC countries embed economic corridor concepts in national strategies

## Pillar 2

### MOU on CAREC Regional Tourism Development

Signed November 2025

-  Signed at the 24th Ministerial Conference, November 2025 — provides framework for project development, institutional capacity, cross-border facilitation, and private sector engagement
-  Mandates private sector engagement as a core pillar of CAREC tourism cooperation
-  Enables coordinated cross-border facilitation mechanisms and joint investment planning across member countries

## Pillar 3

### TA 10625-REG: Sustainable Tourism & Services Trade

Approved October 2025

-  Subproject 5 approved October 2025 — operationalizes the strategy through knowledge, project pipeline development, and institutional capacity building
-  Builds institutional capacity for policy formulation, coordination, and implementation of trade in tourism and related services
-  Translates high-level strategy into investment-ready projects and actionable cross-border tourism initiatives



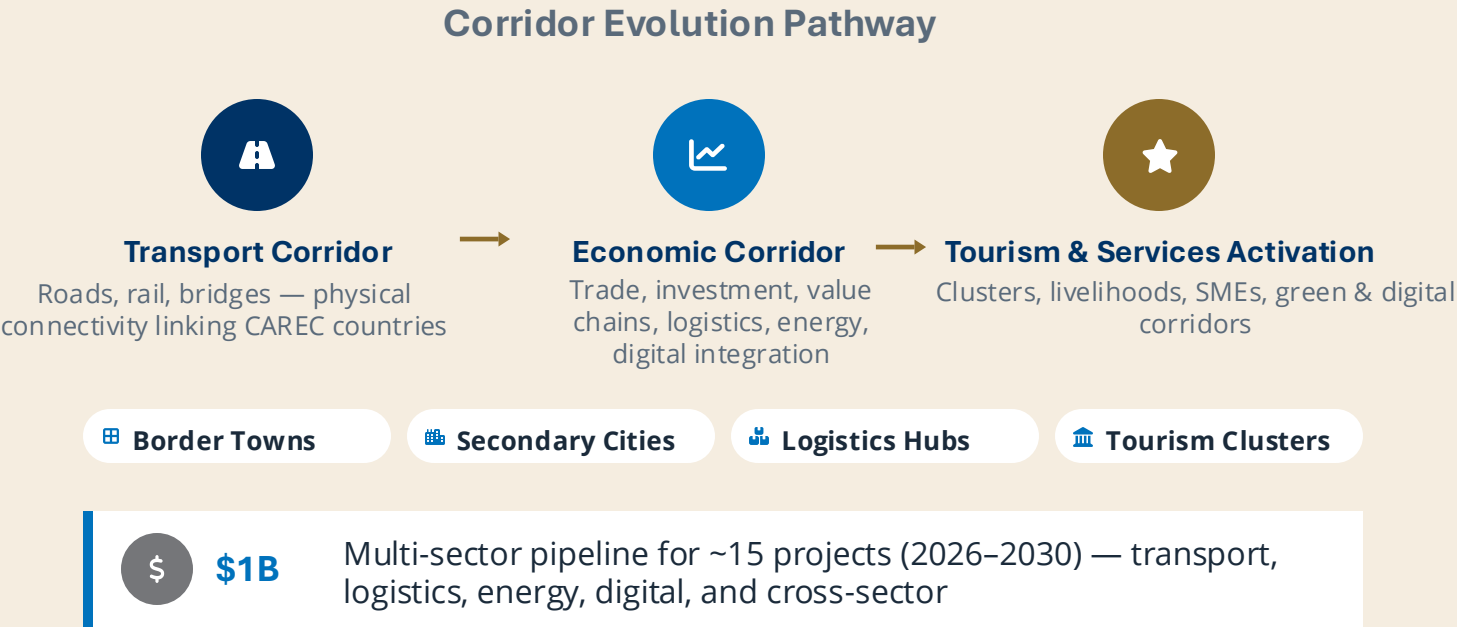
Strategy → Political Commitment → Implementation: an aligned, three-layer architecture supporting the CAREC tourism pipeline

2025–2030 Framework

# From Transport Corridors to Economic Corridors

*ADB's new RCI Operational Approach repositions corridors as multi-sector platforms — tourism clusters are explicitly part of that design.*

- ADB's Operational Approach for Revitalizing RCI (approved March 2026) identifies **Economic Corridor Development** as one of five transformative regional initiatives
- Corridors evolve: transport routes → economic corridors → **green and digital corridors**, integrating infrastructure, trade, investment, value chains, and jobs
- Key nodes: border towns, secondary cities, logistics hubs, and **tourism clusters** — all explicitly recognized as delivery platforms



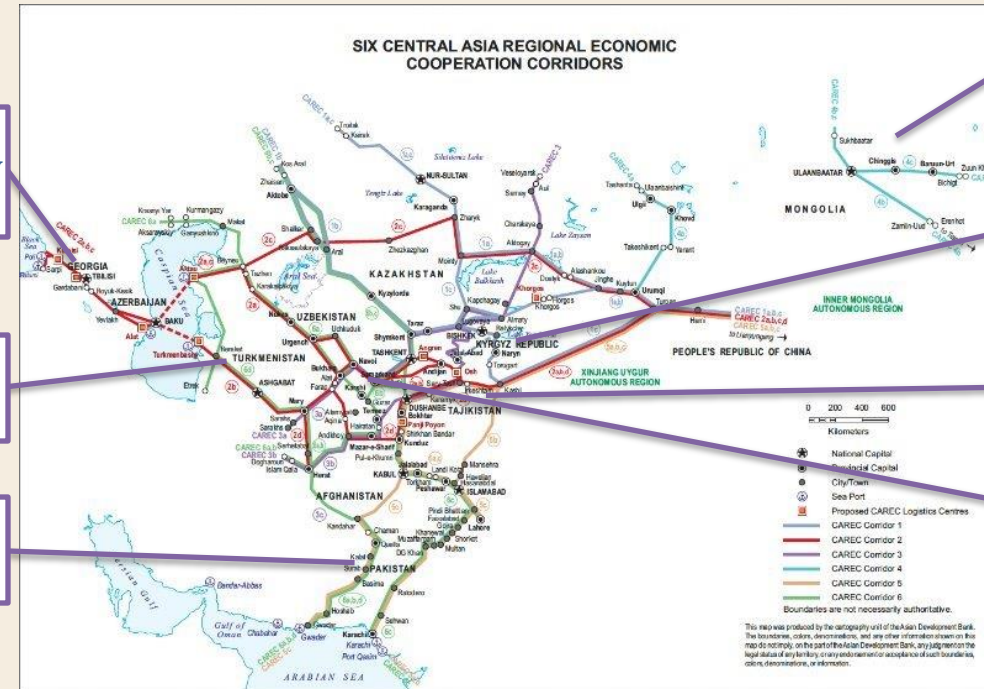
# From corridors to destinations: the indicative 2026–2030 pipeline by country

*Over 10 pipeline projects for nearly \$1B across 7 countries — urban, water and skills investments that build tourism-ready destinations*

**Georgia (2027–2028): resilient urban and coastal infrastructure for livable, climate-ready destinations**

**Turkmenistan (2029): urban development strengthening city services and public spaces for visitors**

**Pakistan (2026): green urban infrastructure raising service standards in gateway cities**



**Mongolia (2029): green, resilient infrastructure for a new satellite city at the international airport gateway, anchoring visitor services and tourism-linked business**

**Kyrgyz Republic (2026): skills system reform building the hospitality and services workforce**

**Tajikistan (2028–2030): tourism, water and waste investments with green-economy skills for destination readiness**

**Uzbekistan (2026–2029): corridor nodes, green urban modernization and vocational reform linking cities to tourism**

# Almaty-Bishkek Economic Corridor (ABEC): Water and Urban Infrastructure Enabling Tourism

*Livable, water-secure destinations attract visitors and protect host communities — infrastructure investment is tourism investment.*

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- ABEC portfolio demonstrates integrated model: projects span health security, climate-resilient agriculture, environmental management and **sustainable tourism at Issyk-Kul**, and clean energy
- ABEC STREAM project develops an Integrated River Basin Management Plan for Kazakhstan–Kyrgyz Republic transboundary rivers — environmental quality directly underpins tourism attractiveness
- Urban and water infrastructure along CAREC corridors improves destination readiness for both domestic and international visitors
- Pipeline principle: ADB packages water, urban, and environmental investments alongside tourism-enabling infrastructure — reducing cost of destination development for member countries

# Education and Skills for a Competitive Tourism Workforce

*Infrastructure without skilled service providers cannot deliver visitor satisfaction or capture tourism's full income potential.*



## Accommodation Standards

Harmonized Accommodation Classification System approved between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyz Republic — endorsed by Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 159, March 2025 — raising service standards region-wide.

Cross-border harmonization



## Professional Standards

Harmonized professional guidelines under development for mountain guides and hospitality workers — sample standards being drafted to ensure quality and consistency across CAREC destinations.

Guides & hospitality workers



## Capacity Building 2026–2027

CAREC Tourism Strategy work program includes targeted capacity-building workshops, knowledge-exchange sessions, and strengthened collaboration among public institutions, private sector, and development partners.

Public-private collaboration



## TA 10625-REG Institutional Capacity

Technical assistance builds institutional capacity for policy formulation, coordination, and implementation of trade in tourism and related services — operationalizing strategy through knowledge and project pipeline development.

Policy & services trade

# Employment, Income, and Private Sector Participation

*Tourism-linked investments generate jobs, catalyze SME growth, and create the services trade environment where the private sector thrives.*



## Employment & Income Generation

- Tourism is the primary lever for economic diversification in CAREC **secondary cities and rural areas** — direct employment in hospitality, guiding, transport, and food services; indirect employment in agriculture and retail supply chains.
- Cross-border tourism corridors facilitate **services trade**: accommodation, transport, tour operations, digital booking platforms — all sectors where private enterprise leads.



## Private Sector Participation

- **MOU framework** specifically mandates private sector engagement as a pillar of CAREC tourism cooperation.
- **Digital readiness assessment** (Georgia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan) and sustainability benchmarking (Tajikistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan) underway — identifying barriers to private sector entry and digital services trade.

### **BUILD Facility — \$400M (expected approval June 2026)**



Modernizing border crossing points — reducing transaction costs for tourism services trade and creating private sector opportunities in digital border solutions.

# What We Need From You — Priority Actions

The pipeline advances faster with strong national ownership, clear focal points, and readiness to co-develop investment-ready projects.



## Nominate Empowered Focal Points

Consistent TWG engagement is the foundation for pipeline co-development and cross-border coordination.



## Submit National Tourism Project Priorities

Inputs from tourism focal points will inform the CAREC Tourism Investment Pipeline (Q3–Q4 2026).



## Identify Cross-Border Synergies

Flag national projects where cross-border scope can attract additional ADB and co-financing support.



## Support Private Sector Inclusion

Identify relevant industry associations and SME networks for involvement in project preparation and services trade facilitation.

# Appendices

## Enabling Environment — Digital and Connectivity Investments

Seamless borders and digital tools transform corridor tourism from aspiration to actionable visitor experience.

- **Visit Silk Road platform upgrade:** enhanced functionality, AI-enabled trip-planning, cross-border itineraries, stronger private sector engagement, and digital marketing — website developer engaged
- **CAREC Advanced Transit System (CATS) & Information Common Exchange (ICE):** harmonized digital transit data exchange reduces border friction for travelers and tourism operators
- **E-queuing at Kyzyl-Kiya border crossing (Kyrgyz Republic–Uzbekistan):** pilot to cut truck and tourist vehicle waiting times — a direct quality-of-experience improvement
- **Cooperation with UN Tourism** strengthened via Letter of Intent signed May 2026 — UN Tourism Silk Road Thematic Office in Samarkand provides complementary regional platform