

UZBEKISTAN



Country Dialling Code (Tel/Fax): ++998

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Capital: Taskkent **Time:** GMT + 5

Background: Russia conquered Uzbekistan in the late 19th century. Stiff resistance to the Red Army after World War I was eventually suppressed and a socialist republic set up in 1925. During the Soviet era, intensive production of "white gold" (cotton) and grain led to overuse of agrochemicals and the depletion of water supplies, which have left the land poisoned and the Aral Sea and certain rivers half dry. Independent since 1991, the country seeks to gradually lessen its dependence on agriculture while developing its mineral and petroleum reserves. Current concerns include terrorism by Islamic militant groups from Tajikistan and Afghanistan, a non-convertible currency, and the curtailment of human rights and democratization.

Location: Central Asia, north of Afghanistan

Map References: Commonwealth of Independent States

Area: total: 447,400 sq km, land: 425,400 sq km, water: 22,000 sq km

Climate: mostly midlatitude desert, long, hot summers, mild winters; semiarid grassland in east

Terrain: mostly flat-to-rolling sandy desert with dunes; broad, flat intensely irrigated river valleys along course of Amu Darya, Sirdaryo (Syr Darya), and Zarafshon; Fergana Valley in east surrounded by mountainous Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan; shrinking Aral Sea in west

Natural Resources: natural gas, petroleum, coal, gold, uranium, silver, copper, lead and zinc, tungsten, molybdenum

Population: 24,755,519 (July 2000 est.)

Nationality: noun: Uzbekistani(s), adjective: Uzbekistani

Ethnic Groups: Uzbek 80%, Russian 5.5%, Tajik 5%, Kazakh 3%, Karakalpak 2.5%, Tatar 1.5%, other 2.5% (1996 est.)

Religions: Muslim 88% (mostly Sunnis), Eastern Orthodox 9%, other 3%

Languages: Uzbek 74.3%, Russian 14.2%, Tajik 4.4%, other 7.1%

Economy: Uzbekistan is a dry, landlocked country of which 10% consists of intensely cultivated, irrigated river valleys. It was one of the poorest areas of the former Soviet Union with more than 60% of its population living in densely populated rural communities. Uzbekistan is now the world's third largest cotton exporter, a major producer of gold and natural gas, and a regionally significant producer of chemicals and machinery. Following independence in December 1991, the government sought to prop up its Soviet-style command economy with subsidies and tight controls on production and prices. Faced with high rates of inflation, however, the government began to reform in mid-1994, by introducing tighter monetary policies, expanding privatization, slightly reducing the role of the state in the economy, and improving the environment for foreign investors. The state continues to be a dominating influence in the economy, and reforms have so far failed to bring about much-needed structural changes. The IMF suspended Uzbekistan's \$185 million standby arrangement in late 1996 because of governmental steps that made impossible fulfillment of Fund conditions. Uzbekistan has responded to the negative external conditions generated by the Asian and Russian financial crises by tightening export and currency controls within its already largely closed economy. Economic policies that have repelled foreign investment are a major factor in the economy's stagnation. A growing debt burden, persistent inflation, and a poor business climate cloud growth prospects in 2000.

Industries: textiles, food processing, machine building, metallurgy, natural gas

Currency: Uzbekistani som (UKS)

Railways: total: 3,380 km in common carrier service; does not include industrial lines broad gauge: 3,380 km 1.520-m gauge (300 km electrified) (1993)

Highways: total: 81,600 km, paved: 71,237 km (these roads are said to be hard-surfaced, meaning that some are paved and some are all-weather gravel-surfaced), unpaved: 10,363 km (dirt) (1996 est.)

Waterways: 1,100 (1990)

Ports and Harbors: Termiz (Amu Darya river)

Airports: 3 (1997 est.) Airports - with paved runways: total: 3, over 3,047 m: 2, 2,438 to 3,047 m: 1 (1997 est.)

Visa: required by all.

Duty Free: 1000 cigarettes or 1kg of tobacco products; 1.5 litres of alcoholic beverages and 2 litres of wine; a reasonable quantity of perfume for personal use; other goods for personal up to a value of US\$10,000.

Health: all water, particularly outside main centres, should be regarded as being a potential health risk.

HOTELS•MOTELS•INNS

TASHKENT

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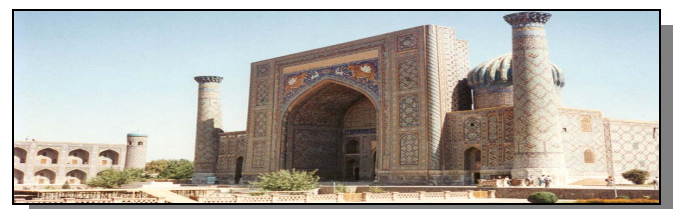
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