

## Analysis of Xinjiang Ecotourism Development in the Silk Road Economic Belt (Postprint)

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### Abstract

The construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt provides favorable policy support and strategic opportunities for Xinjiang's economic development. Capitalizing on the Silk Road Economic Belt as an opportunity to promote the rapid development of ecotourism in Xinjiang has become an important strategic choice for the region's economic growth. This paper first introduces the strategic significance and advantages of the Silk Road Economic Belt for Xinjiang's ecotourism development. The national Silk Road Economic Belt policy, the internal demand for tourism development in Xinjiang, and the unique resource advantages of Xinjiang's ecotourism collectively constitute the internal driving force and strategic advantages for the development of Xinjiang's ecotourism industry. On this basis, the article focuses on analyzing the practical problems and dilemmas faced by Xinjiang in developing ecotourism. The analysis reveals that in boosting Xinjiang's tourism industry development, the Silk Road Economic Belt encounters difficulties in effectively interfacing and linking with the traditional production and lifestyle patterns of local ethnic minorities and the weak infrastructure in tourist areas, which affects the role and effectiveness of the Silk Road Economic Belt policy. Moreover, the absence of a competition-cooperation mechanism further impacts high-level cooperation among tourist attractions along the Silk Road and the integration of tourism resources. The article argues that Xinjiang must attach great importance to ecotourism planning and tourism infrastructure construction, particularly by actively guiding ethnic minority farmers and herders to participate in ecotourism development, and by seizing the opportunity of Xinjiang's large-scale transportation construction to establish an interconnected tourism transportation network for the Silk Road Economic Belt. Simultaneously, it is essential to strengthen tourism cooperation among countries and regions along the Silk Road Economic Belt to enhance the domestic and international visibility and competitiveness of Xinjiang's tourism products.

## Full Text

### Preamble

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## 1. Introduction

Xinjiang possesses distinctive ethnic and folk culture alongside rich natural resources, demonstrating great potential for tourism development. However, due to relatively low economic development levels and lagging infrastructure construction, the region's eco-tourism resources and industries remain under-exploited and underdeveloped. The construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt provides strong policy support and strategic opportunity for developing Xinjiang's eco-tourism resources. This paper analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of the Silk Road Economic Belt in promoting Xinjiang's eco-tourism development, exploring pathways and countermeasures for efficient exploitation of eco-tourism resources through this initiative.

## 2. Current Status of Xinjiang Eco-Tourism Resource Development

### 2.1 Resource Endowment Advantages

Xinjiang covers a vast territory of approximately 1.66 million square kilometers, with a border exceeding 5,600 kilometers adjacent to eight countries. By 2012, the region had established 65 eco-tourism sites generating revenue of  $5.07 \times 10^8$  RMB, accounting for 48.99% of total tourism revenue, with foreign exchange earnings of  $49.13 \times 10^8$  USD (45.71% of the total). According to UNWTO forecasts, global tourist arrivals will reach  $18 \times 10^8$  by 2030, with cultural tourism comprising 41.1% and eco-tourism 29.6% of the market share. The Silk Road Economic Belt initiative creates unprecedented opportunities for Xinjiang's eco-tourism development by leveraging these resource advantages.

### 2.2 Development Status and Characteristics

In 2015, domestic tourists accounted for 94% of total visitors to Xinjiang. Tourism revenue reached significant growth levels, though per capita consump-

tion remained relatively low. The region has developed substantial infrastructure, including numerous highways and airports serving over 7,000 km of routes. The spatial distribution of eco-tourism resources follows a pattern characterized as “one belt, two clusters, three axes, and four zones,” forming a preliminary network structure.

### 2.3 Problems and Constraints

Key challenges include insufficient systematic planning, inadequate infrastructure, lack of investment, and product homogenization. The absence of effective cooperative mechanisms particularly affects high-level collaboration among Silk Road attractions and integration of tourism resources. Management systems remain fragmented, with weak linkages between tourism development and local traditional production modes, limiting policy effectiveness.

## 3. Impact of Silk Road Economic Belt on Xinjiang Eco-Tourism Development

### 3.1 Strategic Opportunities

The national strategy provides policy support for strengthening eco-tourism planning and accelerating infrastructure construction. Regional cooperation mechanisms offer platforms for tourism development consultation and product value addition. The initiative facilitates external power, internal tension, and competitive-cooperative forces that can drive resource exploitation.

### 3.2 Realistic Challenges

Despite opportunities, significant challenges persist. The existing infrastructure remains insufficient to support large-scale eco-tourism development. Product homogenization across attractions reduces competitiveness. Seasonal constraints limit year-round operations, and the lack of cooperative mechanisms hinders resource integration along the Silk Road corridor.

### 3.3 Development Paths

To promote efficient exploitation of Xinjiang’s eco-tourism resources, several pathways are essential: strengthening systematic eco-tourism planning, accelerating tourism transportation infrastructure construction, establishing consultation mechanisms for tourism development, and increasing added value of tourism products. These measures should address both the strategic opportunities and realistic challenges identified, ensuring sustainable development of Xinjiang’s eco-tourism industry within the Silk Road Economic Belt framework.

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**Keywords:** Silk Road; eco-tourism; sustainable development; Xinjiang

*Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.*

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