

Geography & Travel

Uzbekistan



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the northwest and north, [Kyrgyzstan](#) and [Tajikistan](#) to the east and southeast, [Afghanistan](#) to the south, and [Turkmenistan](#) to the southwest. The **autonomous** republic of Qoraqalpoghiston ([Karakalpakstan](#)) is located in the western third of the [country](#).

Uzbek: Ўзбекистон or Ўзбекستان
Respublikasi

Head Of State And Government:
President: [Shavkat Mirziyoyev](#),
assisted by Prime Minister ...[\(Show more\)](#)

Capital: Tashkent (Toshkent)

Population: (2024 est.) 37,197,000



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The [Soviet](#) government established the [Uzbek](#) Soviet Socialist Republic as a [constituent](#) (union) republic of the [U.S.S.R.](#) in 1924. Uzbekistan declared its independence from the Soviet Union on August 31, 1991. The capital is [Tashkent](#) (Toshkent).

Land

Relief

Nearly four-fifths of Uzbekistan's territory, the sun-dried western area, has the appearance of a wasteland. In the northwest the [Turan Plain](#) rises 200 to 300 feet (60 to 90 metres) above [sea level](#) around the Aral Sea in Karakalpakstan (Qoraqalpoghiston). This terrain merges on the south with the [Kyzylkum](#) (Uzbek: Qizilqum) Desert and farther west becomes the [Ustyurt Plateau](#), a region of low ridges, salt marshes, sinkholes, and caverns.

Southeast of the Aral Sea, small hills break the flatness of the low-lying Kyzylkum Desert, and, much farther east, a series of mountain ridges [partition](#) Uzbekistan's territory. The western [Tien Shan](#) includes the Karzhantau, Ugam, and Pskem ranges, the latter featuring the 14,104-foot (4,299-metre) [Beshtor Peak](#), the country's highest point. Also part of the western Tien Shan are the

Form Of Government: republic¹ with two legislative houses (Senate [100²]; Legislative Chamber [150³])

Official Language: Uzbek

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Uzbekistan



Khiva

Uzbekistan.

Chatkal and Kurama ranges. The Gissar ([Hissar](#)) and [Alay](#) ranges stand across the [Fergana \(Farghona\) Valley](#), which lies south of the western Tien Shan. The Mirzachol desert, southwest of Tashkent, lies between the Tien Shan spurs to the north and the Turkestan, Malguzar, and Nuratau ranges to the south. In south-central Uzbekistan the Zeravshan valley opens westward; the cities of [Samarkand](#) (Samarqand) and [Bukhara](#) (Bukhoro) grace this ancient cultural centre.



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Drainage

Disastrous depletion of the flow of the two historic rivers—the [Syr Darya](#) and [Amu Darya](#)—has brought rapid change in the [Aral Sea](#) and greatly altered the [delta](#) of the Amu Darya. Most streams of the delta have dried up, and the Aral Sea, once the fourth largest inland body of water in the world, has lost as much as nine-tenths of both its water (volume) and its surface area since 1961. On the north as well as on the east, huge shallow and dead ponds have become separated from the main remnant Aral Sea, cut off by sandbars that emerged as the water level dropped some 45 feet between 1961 and 1992. After 2010 the eastern lobe began alternating between wet periods and dry periods during which it would dry up completely. Overuse of water from the Syr Darya and Amu Darya in both agriculture and industry brought about this dangerous decline. The Syr Darya ceased to deliver any appreciable amount of water to the Aral Sea by about 1978, and flows from the Amu Darya became negligible in the first decade of the 21st century. The southern rivers tributary to the Amu Darya—the [Surkhan](#) and Sherabad, followed by the [Zeravshan](#) and Kashka—contribute little flow, for the last two trickle into nothing in the desert.



Aral Sea

Shrinkage of the Aral Sea, 1960–2014.

The Syr Darya, the second largest river in Uzbekistan, forms there by the [confluence](#) of the Naryn and Qoradaryo rivers.

The diversion of the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya has resulted in intense salinization of the sea, which also has suffered tremendous [pollution](#) from insecticides and chemical fertilizers during the past several decades. This chemical pollution and the decline in water level have killed the once-flourishing [fishing industry](#), grounded most ships that formerly worked within the Aral's shores, and contaminated wide areas around the sea with salty lethal dust. This in turn has poisoned vegetables and drinking water, most harmfully affecting the health and [livelihood](#) of the human population around the Aral Sea littoral.

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Climate

Marked aridity and much sunshine characterize the region, with rainfall averaging only 8 inches (200 mm) annually. Most rain falls in winter and spring, with higher levels in the mountains and minimal amounts over deserts. The average July [temperature](#) is 90 °F (32 °C), but daytime air temperatures in Tashkent and elsewhere frequently surpass 104 °F (40 °C). Bukhara's high summer heat contrasts with the cooler temperatures in the mountains. In order to accommodate to these patterns, Uzbeks favour houses with windows facing away from the sun but open to porches and tree-filled courtyards shut off from the streets.

Although more than 600 streams crisscross Uzbekistan, the climate strongly affects drainage, because river water rapidly escapes through evaporation and filtration or runs off into irrigation systems.

Plant and animal life

Vegetation patterns in Uzbekistan vary largely according to [altitude](#). The lowlands in the west have a thin natural cover of desert sedge and grass. The high foothills in the east support grass, and forests and brushwood appear on the hills. Forests cover less than 8 percent of Uzbekistan's area. Animal life in the deserts and plains includes rodents, foxes, wolves, and occasional gazelles and antelopes. Boars, [roe deer](#), bears, wolves, Siberian goats, and some lynx live in the high mountains.



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