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**ABSTRACT**

of the dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**GANJA CITY AS A SUPPORT CENTER IN THE TOURISM  
FIELD IN THE GANJA-GAZAKH SETTLEMENT SYSTEM**

Speciality: 6405.01 – Urban planning, settlement  
planning and landscape architecture

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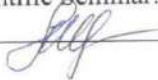
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## INTRODUCTION

**Relevance of the topic.** Today, tourism is considered one of the most promising areas of the economy. Many countries in the world pay special attention to the formation and development of tourism policy, since according to a number of indicators, tourism lags behind other areas of economic activity. A number of measures are being taken in this direction in Azerbaijan, decrees, state programs and laws are being signed and implemented.

The direction of tourist flows in Azerbaijan is increasingly covering more and more regions. The positive impact of tourism on the regional economy is well known, but not all regions of Azerbaijan can fully use their tourism resources to attract tourists and improve the regional economy. One of such areas is the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system, which encompasses various geographical conditions and diverse landscapes, has rich historical, cultural and natural monuments, is located on the western transport route and has the potential for different types of tourism. Considering that Ganja city is the urban core of this settlement system, has a rich architectural heritage, and is an administrative, financial, industrial, scientific and educational center for the entire Western region of Azerbaijan, its role as a support center in the field of tourism in the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system needs to be determined. In this regard, the topic of the dissertation is quite relevant.

**The degree of study of the topic.** Reference was made to the works of Azerbaijani researchers in the formation and development of Azerbaijan cities and its individual regions, including the scientific works of scholars on the history of architecture and urban planning, such as E.A. Gasimzada, D.A. Akhundov, Sh. Fatullayev, R.M. Efendizade, G.H. Mammadova, F.M. Huseynov, N.H. Nagiyev, A.A. Hasanova, R.H. Abdulrahimov, N.J. Abdullayeva, Kh.A. Jafarov, F.A. Mollazade, Y.A. Hajiyeva, R.R. Agazade, N.O. Yusifli, Sh.Sh. Gahramanova, Z.A. Mammadov, A.Z. Vakilova etc. Reference is also made to the scientific works of Russian and other foreign researchers on urban planning, such as Z.N.Yargina, G.A.Potayev, I.A.Iodo, A.V.Velichkina, N.N.Klimov, A.D.Chudnovsiy, Y.I.Usmanov, K.Linch.

**Purpose of the study.** To determine the role of Ganja city as a

support center in the field of tourism in the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system. Ganja city is the core of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system, has a rich architectural heritage, is an administrative, financial, industrial, scientific and educational, trade center for the entire Western region of Azerbaijan. The fact that the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system has a great tourism potential requires the determination of the role of Ganja as a support center and tourism management center for the organization of tourism activities here.

**Research questions.** The tasks of the research work are to determine the general urban planning conditions in the development of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system, to assess the tourism potential in the settlement system and to clarify the role of priority development directions of tourism as an important strategic element in the development of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system.

**The object of the research** is the territory of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system - including the cities and rural settlements of the Ganja-Dashkasan (Dashkasan, Goranboy, Goygol, Samukh districts, Ganja and Naftalan districts) and Gazakh-Tovuz (Gazakh, Tovuz, Agstafa, Gadabay and Shamkir districts) economic regions.

**The subject of the research** is to determine the role of the city of Ganja as a support center in the field of tourism in the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system.

**Research methods** is based on a systematic approach that includes theoretical work on the territories, cities and settlements included in the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system, analysis of project, archival and statistical materials, conducting in-kind research with photography of the objects under study, and summarizing the collected materials.

**The main provisions submitted for defense:**

- Analysis of the historical development of settlements in the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system;
- Assessment of natural and recreational resources, socio-economic and demographic conditions of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system;
- Analysis of tourism factors in the studied area;
- Structural analysis of the urbanization framework of the Ganja-

Gazakh settlement system;

- Assessment of the modern state of tourism infrastructure in the region;

- Determination of priority directions of tourism development in the region;

- Determination of the role of the city of Ganja in the development of the tourism sector in the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system

- Preparation of the activities of the tourism and recreation complex of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system in the sphere of development.

**Scientific novelty of the research.** For the first time, new priority areas of tourism and regional tourism clusters were determined in the territory of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system, and at the same time, the role of the city of Ganja as a support center in the field of tourism was determined.

**Theoretical and practical significance of the research.** The dissertation work can be used in the development of master plans and detailed planning projects of cities and towns included in the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system, as well as in the preparation of regional planning schemes for the Ganja-Dashkasan and Gazakh-Tovuz economic regions.

**Testing and implementation (of research results).** The main provisions of the dissertation were reported at the scientific-practical conference “Modern Problems of Design” (Baku, 2019), the conference “Problems of Formation and Development of Transport Infrastructure in the Environment of Large Cities” (Baku, 2019), the scientific-practical conference dedicated to the 100th anniversary of A. Gasimzada (Baku, 2012), the scientific-practical conference on “Innovation and Traditions in Modern Urban Planning” (Baku, 2022), the international conference dedicated to the 880th anniversary of Nizami Ganjavi (Baku, 2021), the International Scientific Conference “Modern Problems of Construction” (2023), the scientific-practical conference “Architecture and Construction Problems of Modern Sports Facilities of the Republic of Azerbaijan”, the international scientific conference ICETEA 2024 - “Energy and Environmental Technologies in Engineering and

Architecture” (2024). The main results of the dissertation were published in scientific journals published in the Republic and abroad.

**Name of the organization where the dissertation was completed.** The dissertation was completed at the Department of Architectural design and Urban planning at the Azerbaijan University of Architecture and Construction.

**Dissertation volume (the length of individual structural sections and the total volume of the dissertation are indicated in characters).** The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a list of used literature and illustrations (tables and pictures). The general content of the research is reflected in 143 pages of the computer compilation (256,205 characters) and 27 pages of illustrations and an appendix (1 table). Introduction – 6,058 characters, Chapter I – 67,255 characters, Chapter II – 82,480 characters, Chapter III – 53,457 characters, the conclusion of the dissertation – 11,019 characters.

## **MAIN CONTENT OF THE DISSERTATION**

### **CHAPTER I. GENERAL URBAN PLANNING CONDITIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GANJA-GAZAKH SETTLEMENT SYSTEM**

#### **1.1. Historical development of settlements in the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system**

The Ganja-Gazakh settlement system includes cities and towns of the Ganja-Dashkasan and Gazakh-Tovuz economic regions. In 1991-2021, these territories operated as a single Ganja-Gazakh economic region, covering 14.4% of the country's territory with an area of 12.48 thousand km<sup>2</sup>, ranking second in the republic in terms of socio-economic potential.

The territory is distinguished by its ancient settlements: there are 9 world and 259 republican archaeological monuments and numerous architectural, garden-park and monumental heritage monuments. This wealth is the main indicator that determines the historical and architectural potential of the settlement system.

The city of Ganja is one of the oldest and strategic cities of Azerbaijan. It is believed that it was founded in the 5th century and, due to its location on trade routes, continued to develop despite wars and disasters. Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it has become the second industrial center of the country, and during the period of independence it remains one of the main cities in the fields of industry, science and education.

The cities of Shamkir, Gazakh, Gadabay, Goygol, Agstafa, Tovuz, Dashkasan, Goranboy, Samukh and Naftalan are also distinguished by traces of ancient settlements, fortresses, bridges, religious and industrial heritage. Mining in Gadabay and Dashkasan, a healing oil resort in Naftalan, and settlements built by German colonists in Goygol and Shamkir have had their impact on the architectural development of the region.

The layouts of the cities are also diverse: Ganja is distinguished by a dense oriental-type structure, while Gadabay and Dashkasan are distinguished by complex planning in accordance with the mountain relief. In Shamkir, Goygol, Tovuz, Agstafa and Gazakh, the linear and compact planning principles of the 19th century German colonies prevail. Molokan villages also have their own architectural features.

## **1.2. Natural and recreational resources of the settlement system**

The tourism and recreational potential of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system is determined by the physical (geopolitical position, geo-economic situation, geological structure, relief, hydrographic network, climate, balneological resources) and biological (flora, fauna and landscape) characteristics of the region.

Due to its *geopolitical position*, the territory borders only with Georgia, and the lack of political risks creates favorable conditions for the development of tourism. The *geographical and economic situation* also prevails: international automobile and railway highways, as well as the Ganja airport, turn the region into an important transport hub. However, the tourism and transport potential of the Kura River is not sufficiently used.

In terms of *geological structure*, the settlement system is rich in

minerals, and the use of old mines in Dashkesan and Gadabay for tourism purposes, as in world practice, is of interest. The *relief* consists of four zones - sloping plains, foothills, middle and high mountainous areas, which is favorable for mountain, ecotourism and extreme tourism.

The *hydrographic network* includes the Kura and other rivers (Ganjachay, Agstafachay, Tovuzchay). The potential of Shamkir, Samukh, Agstafa and Gazakh regions for water tourism and sports is high.

*Climate.* The climate of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system is diverse. The diversity of climate allows for the development of winter and mountain tourism, water sports and medical and health tourism.

*Balneological resources* are one of the important advantages of the region. Resort zones such as Hajikend, Goygol, Naftalan have been operating for many years. There are healing water sources in Dashkesan. Naftalan oil, which is the only one in the world, is the rarest resource of the region, but since the infrastructure is not fully developed, the potential has not been fully realized.

*Flora and fauna diversity.* Natural areas such as the Goygol ecosystem, Tugay forests, Garayazi and Goygol reserves are of high value for tourism and form the landscape diversity of the region.

### **1.3. Socio-economic and demographic conditions of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system**

The socio-economic and demographic conditions of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system are determined by its historical development, natural resources and population dynamics. Ganja acts as the main industrial and service center of the region, while Gazakh, Tovuz, Shamkir and Samukh are distinguished by their agrarian specialization, border trade and transport functions. The regional economic base was formed by such areas as metallurgy, mechanical engineering, food industry, viticulture and animal husbandry, and the expansion of infrastructure strengthened the integration of settlement. Soviet-era industrial enterprises and the Shamkir reservoir strengthened the growth of settlements and the position of Ganja as a regional center. During the years of independence, economic changes, migration and suburban

settlement led to the renewal of the demographic structure.

Population growth differs by region: stable urbanization is observed in Ganja, a decrease due to migration in Gazakh and Tovuz, and an increase due to agriculture in Shamkir. The labor market also reflects this division: in Ganja, industry and service sectors dominate, and in the regions, agricultural employment dominates. The role of the Baku-Tbilisi transport corridor has increased, and the points located on it have taken a leading position in terms of trade and logistics. The renewal of infrastructure, the improvement of rural roads and the increase in service facilities have increased social well-being.

Renewal of education and healthcare infrastructure, preservation of ecological balance and digitalization of agriculture are among the directions of sustainable development of the region. This socio-economic measure creates conditions for the broad development potential of medical-health, rural, ethnic, excursion and cultural-acquaintance tourism.

## **CHAPTER II. ASSESSMENT OF TOURISM POTENTIAL IN THE GANJA-GAZAKH SETTLEMENT SYSTEM**

### **2.1. Analysis of tourism factors in the GanJa-Gazakh settlement system**

The main factors affecting the development of tourism in the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system are as follows:

1) ***natural and geographical factors***. The territory is surrounded by seismically active zones of the Lesser Caucasus and the Kura depression. The settlement system is subject to various types of soil erosion - water, wind and irrigation erosion.

2) ***cultural and historical factors***. Historical and cultural objects protected by the state affect the planning of the urban and rural environment, the formation of recreation areas and transport infrastructure.

3) ***material and technical base***. The region's tourism infrastructure - accommodation, food, transport and service sectors - determines its attractiveness. In 2019, there were 5,219 beds in 37 hotels

and hotel-type establishments (16.5% of the country's room stock). Although external transport connections are relatively good, the weakness of inter-regional connections limits the flow of tourists. The tourism potential of the Goygol National Park is high, but service and transport provision is not sufficiently developed.

4) ***financial and economic factors*** - The difference in income levels across regions affects the optimal placement of tourism facilities and determines the formation of potential tourism clusters.

5) ***socio-demographic factors***. 66.18% of the population is able-bodied (67.93% across the country). This indicator is important in terms of organizing tourism services, providing labor force, and planning the settlement system.

6) ***urban planning and spatial factors*** - the formed architectural structure and convenient navigation make historical centers such as Ganja, Shamkir, and Goychay attractive for excursion and cultural tourism.

7) ***information factor*** - covers the development of the information environment and marketing strategies of tourism (Internet, social media, digital platforms) in the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system and serves to increase the competitiveness and recognition of the region in the national and international tourism market.

## **2.2. Structural analysis of the urbanization framework of the settlement system**

The Ganja-Gazakh settlement system has a linear-nodal planning structure. Approximately three quarters of the city's population and production potential are concentrated in the centers. The main center of the settlement system is Ganja city, and the secondary centers are Gazakh and Shamkir. The "secondary cities" included in the system include Agstafa, Dashkesan, Gadabay, Tovuz and Goygol. Samukh, Goranboy, Naftalan act as the supporting centers of the regions. The urbanization axis extends southward along the Baku-Gazakh highway.

The settlement system includes 13 cities, 9 districts, 2 urban districts, 46 towns, 283 rural administrative territorial units and 523 rural residential areas. 80% of the population is concentrated on the highway

along the Kura River. The population density in the settled area of 526.5 km<sup>2</sup> is 2240 people/km<sup>2</sup>, which is only 4% of the region's territory. Agrarian functions prevail in the north, agrarian-industrial and industrial functions in the south.

The natural-ecological framework consists of specially protected areas and rivers, indirect axes. There are Mingachevir, Agstafa and Shamkir reservoirs in the region. There are higher education, schools and children's institutions in Ganja. Branches operate in other cities. Sanatoriums are mainly in the city of Naftalan.

From an economic point of view, the settlement system is mainly connected with natural resources and agriculture. The functional profiles of the cities: mining (Dashkasan, Ganja), industrial (Goranboy, Shamkir), agrarian-industrial (Goygol, Tovuz, Agstafa), agricultural (Samukh, Dalimammadli, Gadabay, Gazakh), resort (Naftalan). Transport highways, railway and airport provide connections of the settlement system.

Tourism potential is high in the following areas: Tovuz, Goranboy, Agstafa, Samukh, Shamkir regions have water resources, agriculture and historical and cultural areas. Southern regions (Dashkasan, Gadabay, Goygol) are suitable for extreme tourism with their landscapes and forest areas. Naftalan resort is known for its healing mud. Goygol National Park and river basins create recreational opportunities.

### **2.3. Modern state of tourism infrastructure in the region**

In 2023, the development status of tourism infrastructure in the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system was investigated, the number and capacity of hotels and catering facilities were studied. In 2006-2023, the number of hotels and hotel-type facilities increased from 17 to 64, and the number of rooms increased from 2282 to 2397, but the one-time capacity decreased from 5228 beds to 4903<sup>1</sup>. In Ganja, the number of hotel facilities increased fourfold and reached the highest level, while

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<sup>1</sup> Джафарова, М.А. Современное состояние туристической инфраструктуры в Гянджа-Газахской системе расселения Азербайджана // – Казань: Известия КГАСУ. – 2025. №3(73). – с. 159-170.

stagnation continues in Samukh and Dashkesan. The Chinar sanatorium in Naftalan has resumed its activities in accordance with international standards. In addition, the Naftalan health center, Park Naftalan Sanatorium and other sanatoriums also operate here.

In 2023, the cities of Ganja and Naftalan (3.9 and 3.5, respectively) and the lowest among the districts of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system in terms of hotel places per 1,000 people are Ganja and Naftalan (0.62). Samukh and Dalimammadli are not provided with hotels and similar accommodation places at all. The number of seats in public catering facilities (cafes, restaurants, bars) is 57,342. The largest number is Ganja (20,709), followed by Shamkir, Tovuz and Gadabay.

The problems of tourism infrastructure are: quantitative and qualitative insufficiency of facilities, lack of hotels in the periphery, weak service, transport and communication infrastructure that does not meet international standards, lack of water transport and high-speed railway. These problems negatively affect the full use of tourism potential, increase in tourist flows and regional economic development. The creation of competitive tourist and recreational clusters and a comprehensive, strategic approach to tourism development are recommended as solutions.

#### **2.4. Ecological risks for tourism development in the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system**

The study of ecological risks is an important stage in the development of tourism in the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system. Ecological risks in tourism development can be divided into 3 large groups: risk to the life and health of the population (social consequences of environmental hazards), risk to natural resources (economic consequences) and risk to the structural and functional characteristics of landscapes (economic consequences).

The ecological state of river waters in the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system is affected by anthropogenic variability of water resources. 2/3 of the rivers of Azerbaijan are transit rivers, and water pollution mainly comes from neighboring countries. Every year, 468 thousand m<sup>3</sup> of wastewater is discharged into the Kura River, and 5

million tons of pollutants are introduced into the rivers. The main industry in the region is concentrated in the city of Ganja, where the main components of atmospheric pollution are sulfur dioxide, dust, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides and fluorine compounds.

Natural biodiversity is mainly protected in specially protected areas - the National Park (Goygol), three state reserves (Karayazi, Eldar pine and Kor-river) and four state sanctuaries (Shamkir, Kor-river, Karayazi and Kyzyljan). In the remaining areas, pastures and landscapes are weakened by anthropogenic impacts.

The impact of vehicles is one of the main sources of pollution in the region. Pollution is high along the entire distance passing through the region in the areas within 50 m of the Baku-Tbilisi railway and 50 m of the Baku-Tbilisi highway. Pollution in large cities (Ganja, Gazakh, Tovuz) and along inter-district roads is medium-low.

Thus, in general, there are no serious ecological risk zones in the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system, the risks are mainly concentrated in Ganja city and along the highways. At the same time, biodiversity, rivers, forests, picturesque landscapes and transport accessibility create ample opportunities for the development of tourism.

### **CHAPTER III. THE ROLE OF PRIORITY DIRECTIONS OF TOURISM AS THE KEY STRATEGIC ELEMENTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GANJA-KAZAKH SETTLEMENT SYSTEM**

#### **3.1. Priority directions of tourism development in the region**

The priority development directions for tourism development in the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system are cultural-acquaintance, medical-health, event and art-tourism, sports, hunting-fishing and autotourism. Potential areas include agrotourism and ecotourism.

Analysis of tourism and recreation resources allows the formation of 6 specialized zones in the region:

*Central* (Ganja-Goygol-Samukh) - religious, ecotourism, art-tourism, business, cultural-travel tourism and ethnographic tourism;

*North - West* ( Agstafa, Tovuz, Govlar, Gazakh ) - excursion

tours, rural, agrotourism, fishing, cultural-travel tourism;

*North* ( Shamkir ) - excursion tours, cultural-travel, agrotourism, ethnographic tourism, fishing;

*Southwest* (Gadabay) – ecotourism, excursion tours, extreme tourism;

*South* (Dashkasin) – excursion tours, ecotourism, extreme tourism;

*East* (Goranboy-Naftalan-Dalimammadli) – excursion tours, medical-health and rural tourism, agrotourism.

Thematic specialization of the six zones strengthens the multifunctional character of the tourism destination. For their coordination, it is necessary to create a single “Tourism Destination Management System”. At the same time, the organization of thematic clusters on winemaking, cultural heritage, medical tourism and ecotourism increases synergy and improves the quality of service.

### **3.2. The role of Ganja city in the development of the tourism sector of the Ganja-Gazakh region**

Ganja city, the second largest city of Azerbaijan and the main center of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system, is a leading tourism hub with its historical and architectural heritage, developed infrastructure and favorable location<sup>2</sup>. Surrounding natural areas such as Hajikend, Goygol and Maraljol provide for the expansion of routes.

Despite the environmental problems left by the industrial heritage, strengthening the “green infrastructure”, protecting biodiversity and developing recreational zones should form the basis of sustainable tourism. Baku-Ganja high-speed trains and the renewal of roadside infrastructure increase the accessibility of the region. It is advisable to establish a regional management center in Ganja for the coordination of tourism.

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<sup>2</sup> Джафарова, М.А. Роль города Гянджи как опорного центра в развитии Туризма в г. Гянджа-Газахском регионе Азербайджана // ХСХІ Международная научно-практическая конференция «Культурология, искусствоведение и филология: современные взгляды и научные исследования», – М: «Интернаука» – №5(87), – 2025, – с. 115-117

In terms of urban planning, a pedestrian-oriented center, connecting functional zones, and laying “green corridors” in the direction of Goygol and Hajikend will balance the tourism load of Ganja. Other cities of the region – Gazakh, Shamkir, Tovuz, Goygol – will form a single tourism destination by presenting their resources synchronously with Ganja.

A digital tourism platform, GIS-based itineraries, and community participation strengthen intra-regional integration. Ganja can act as both a centralized tourism management platform and a development hub supporting urban-rural relations. Community-based tourism models create additional economic opportunities for peri-urban areas.

Thus, Ganja’s role as a tourism hub is determined by its resource coordination, management potential, and innovative approaches, creating real opportunities for the city to become a leading tourism hub in the South Caucasus.

### **3.3. Formation of regional tourism cluster of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system**

A regional tourism and recreation cluster concept was developed for the development of the tourism and recreation complex in the studied area, and within this framework, the formation of 6 local clusters was proposed. Three of them are potentially interregional in nature: travel and event tourism cluster (Ganja city, Goygol and Samukh), rural tourism and agrotourism cluster (Aghstafa, Tovuz, Govlar, Gazakh), ethnographic and travel tourism cluster (Shamkir), ecotourism cluster (Gadabay), extreme tourism cluster (Dashkasan), medical and health tourism cluster (Goranboy, Naftalan).

For the purpose of tourism development and determining the spatial structure, two types of zones are selected: support centers and autonomous tourism zones. The following were selected as the main tourism zones: 1) Central tourist zone (Ganja-Gazakh-Samukh); 2) North-western border tourism zone (Aghstafa, Tovuz, Govlar, Gazakh); 3) Northern tourist zone (Shamkir); 4) Eastern tourist zone (Goranboy-Naftalan-Dalimammadli).

The autonomous zones included in the regional cluster are the

“South-West Autonomous” (Gadabay) and “Southern Autonomous” (Dashkasan) zones. Although these zones are mainly of local importance, they will be included in complex and thematic routes in the future.

### **3.4. Activity of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system in the sphere of development of the tourism and recreation complex**

Within the framework of the regional strategy for the development of tourism in the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system, measures cover several main areas.

Monitoring the state of tourism and recreation resources *in the field of labor*; increasing their accessibility and efficiency of use; as well as the repair of demonstration facilities is required at the expense of the development of tourism infrastructure.

The main tasks *in the field of tourism personnel* are to increase the number of technical specialists for tourism infrastructure enterprises and improve the quality of personnel training in accordance with international standards.

*In the field of providing labor resources*, the development of tourism infrastructure is envisaged in two directions: construction of new facilities and reconstruction of existing ones (especially accommodation facilities, roads and roadside infrastructure), bringing the quality of service into line with international standards.

*In the field of transport services and transfers*, it is considered necessary to acquire a modern transport fleet, develop a specialized tourist transport repair base and develop roadside service infrastructure.

*In the field of tourism management*, the formation of a service quality management system, the development of a regional tourism cluster and the creation of a special economic zone of a tourism-recreation type are among the main requirements.

*In the field of mastering new markets*, it is important to form a regional promotion system, create business support structures, organize a marketing information system, and actively brand regional tourism products to promote local tourism products in foreign markets.

## **Main conclusions of the dissertation**

1. Historical cities have always been one of the most important objects visited by tourists, because objects demonstrating their development, formation and change over time of the country are concentrated in them. The cities and settlements included in the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system have an ancient history. This is confirmed by the historical and cultural monuments found during archaeological excavations in the area. However, the planning structure of the cities and settlements included in the settlement system differs depending on the history, natural-climatic, resource potential and social conditions.

2. In our opinion, the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system of Azerbaijan, which has rich archaeological and architectural monuments, natural-climatic and social infrastructure, has a very large tourist potential and creates the basis for the development of various forms and types of tourism. In addition to cities and settlements with a history of their formation and rich archaeological and architectural monuments, it is necessary to include settlements that meet other criteria in tourist routes. It include 8 settlements in the Goygol, Shamkir, Gazakh, Tovuz, Agstafa districts that were formerly German colonies (Helenendorf, Annenfeld, Georgsfeld, Alekseyevka, Grinfeld, Eygenfeld, Traubenfeld and Yelizavetinka), as well as Molokan villages (Slavyanka, Saratovka, Rus Borises, etc.). Here, tourists can get acquainted with the architecture and living conditions of former German and Molokan villages that constitute ethnic minorities.

3. The fascinating landscape, flora and fauna of the territory that makes up the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system are one of the main factors for the development of attractive, ecological, sensitive, cultural tourism and play the role of an energy resource. Phytotherapeutic resources, unfortunately, are limited to the recreational use of forests. However, it should also be remembered that the forest massif is damaged by constant visits by tourists, and this is the case not only in Azerbaijan, but also in many countries of the world. The Ganja-Gazakh settlement system has sufficient natural and recreational resources. The comfortable climate of the region, clean air, panoramic forested mountains, healing mineral waters create excellent conditions for the

creation of various world-class medical and health institutions, recreation and recreation areas here. The region has the Goygol and Hajikend recreation centers, located at an altitude of 1556 m above sea level, and the world-famous Naftalan medical and health center. However, today the natural resources in the settlement system are not fully used to attract tourists and turn the region into a multi-faceted tourism center of Azerbaijan. Today, it is important to use physical, biological and energy resources in this area more and more comprehensively.

4. The Ganja-Gazakh settlement system undoubtedly has sufficient socio-economic and demographic potential for the development of tourism. Here, the development prospects of event, health, active and sports, rural, ethnic, excursion and cultural tourism are clearly traced. The revival and development of social tourism at the regional level will allow solving both social and economic problems of the cities of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system. The recreational and resource potential of the studied region creates broad opportunities for the development of social tourism. This creates conditions for as many people as possible to use tourism. The Ganja-Gazakh settlement system is located relatively far from the capital, and in terms of tourism, a “revival” of the emergence of social tourism can be created here.

5. The main factors of tourism in the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system include: 1) **natural-geographic** (qualitative and quantitative characteristics of recreation and anthropogenic resources); 2) **cultural-historical** (these are historical and architectural monuments, the level of material and spiritual culture, customs and traditions); 3) **material and technical** (level of development of infrastructure: accommodation, catering, transport, etc.); 4) **financial-economic** (income level of the population, economic situation in the country, etc.); 5) **socio-demographic** (gender, age, marital status, education, standard of living of the population, ratio of rural and urban residents). In order to organize effective tourism activities in the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system, it is necessary to objectively take into account all of the above-mentioned factors.

6. Most of the neighboring states of Azerbaijan surpass Azerbaijan in terms of their tourism potential and the development of

the tourism industry. Given the current situation, the development of the tourism industry in Azerbaijan will be limited due to the large tourism giants located in the neighborhood, as well as the seasonality of most of the tourist centers in the country. However, like neighboring Georgia, if this sector of the economy can be developed, Azerbaijan can also count on its share in the tourism industry. It can also be a convenient link for tours to the South Caucasus.

7. The geographical position of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system creates favorable conditions for the development of autotourism. The territory is located on the Baku-Tbilisi state highway and can coordinate tours for guests wishing to visit the South Caucasus. Unfortunately, in the city of Ganja, transport communications within the settlement system are not sufficiently developed in terms of the availability of the main external modes of transport (automobile, railway and air).

8. The supporting frame of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system has a linear-nodal planning structure. Three quarters of the urban population and the main production potential of the region are concentrated in urbanized nodes (centers). Their hierarchy can be presented as follows: the center of the settlement system (Ganja) and sub-centers (Gazakh, Shamkir); "second cities" of the region - 6 (Aghstafa, Dashkesan, Gadabay, Tovuz, Goygol, Govlar - not available in all administrative territorial units); support centers - 3 (Samukh, Goranboy, Naftalan - not included in other categories). If in other regions the main settlement centers are agglomerations and large cities, here their function is often performed by small cities.

9. The location of 1/3 of the Ganja-Gazakh region in the mountain range plays an important role in the urban planning of the area. First of all, the mountain range conditionally divides the area into two parts, creating significant dynamics of the relief: the southwestern part is mountainous, the heights here reach 2000 meters above sea level; the rest is gently sloping, sometimes even steppe. The complex geological-geomorphological structure of the study area creates a "contact region" in the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system, which combines the following landscape types and significantly different climatic conditions throughout the entire territory (4 zones in total).

10. Different landscape conditions have formed 5 different economic specialization zones in the region in accordance with the form of land use: 1) Mining zone (Dashkasan, Ganja); 2) Industrial zone (Goranboy, Shamkir); 3) Agro-industrial zone - an area with favorable natural conditions for the development of agriculture, where food industry enterprises are located (Goygol, Tovuz, Agstafa); 4) Agrarian zone - a small population and mainly engaged in agriculture (Samukh, Dalimammadli, Gadabay, Gazakh); 5) Resort - the city produces therapeutic oil - naphthalene.

11. Based on the analysis, a number of interrelated and interdependent problems of the state and development of the tourism infrastructure of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system can be noted: 1) insufficient level of development of tourism infrastructure (lack of public catering facilities, tourist accommodation facilities, roadside infrastructure facilities, lack of elements of tourism infrastructure of the required category); 2) non-compliance of tourism infrastructure with international standards in terms of service level; 3) lack of water transport infrastructure, high share of transport costs in the cost of tourism products. Problems with the development of tourism infrastructure limit the discovery and use of the existing unique tourism and recreational potential of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system, and have a slowing effect on tourism activity and the economy of the settlement system as a whole.

12. The city of Ganja plays a key role in the development of the tourism industry in the region for a number of reasons: 1) the presence of a large number of architectural and historical monuments; 2) it is the administrative center of the settlement system and has a developed urban and engineering infrastructure (transport, service, science, education and information); 3) the geographically central location of the settlement system relative to other settlements will contribute to the creation of connected tourism routes in the region.

13. The main tasks of the tourism development program in the settlement system should be to transfer the attractiveness of investment and migration from the regional center of Ganja to other cities of the region by creating an ecologically healthy environment. This can be achieved by creating a favorable, infrastructure-provided, ecologically

healthy environment for living, working and recreation. Small agro-industrial cities of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system should play the role of focal points for the development of the rural population. In general, the issue of diversification and mutual coordination of the economies of the settlements of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system will maximize the development of tourism here. Ganja, being a regional center, should also play the role of a center for managing and solving joint issues (management should be carried out from Ganja city).

14. As a result of the study, priority directions for the development of tourism in the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system have been identified. The following types of tourism should be considered a priority for the development of tourism in the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system: cultural-educational and school, medical-recreational, event and art tourism, sports, hunting and fishing, auto tourism. At the same time, the following types of tourism should be included in the potential types of tourism: rural (agrotourism) and ecological (ecotourism).

15. Analysis of the location of the main tourism and recreation resources of the settlement system allows us to identify 6 tourism and recreation zones with the appropriate specialization: Central (Ganja-Goygol-Samukh) - educational tourism, religious tourism, ecotourism, cultural tourism, business tourism, event tourism, ethnographic tourism; North-West (Aghstafa, Tovuz, Govlar, Gazakh) - walking tours, rural tourism, agrotourism, fishing, educational tourism; North (Shamkir) - sightseeing tours, educational tourism, ethnographic tourism, agrotourism, fishing; South-West (Gadabay) - ecotourism, excursion tours, extreme tourism; South (Dashkasin) - excursion tours, ecotourism, extreme tourism; East (Goranboy-Naftalan-Dalimammedli) - excursion tours, health tourism, agrotourism.

16. Within the framework of the development of directions for the development of the tourism and recreation complex of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system, a concept for the development of a regional tourism and recreation cluster has been proposed for the development strategy of the region. In the territory of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system, two types of zones, including centers of tourism activity, are distinguished: support (main) and autonomous (secondary) tourism zones. The following are selected as support tourism zones: 1. "Central"

tourism zone (located in the central part of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system, in Ganja-Goygol-Samukh); 2. “North-West Border” tourism zone (located in Aghstafa, Tovuz, Govlar, Gazakh districts); 3. “North” tourism zone (located in the territory of Shamkir district); 4. “East” tourism zone (Goranboy-Naftalan-Dalimammedli). Autonomous tourism zones include: 1. “Southwest Autonomous” tourism zone (located in Gadabay district). 2. “Southern Autonomous” tourism zone (Dashkan district).

17. The study proposes measures in the field of development of the tourism and recreation complex of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system. The main strategic goal of the development strategy of the tourism cluster of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system is the formation of competitive business in the tourism sector and the improvement of the image of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system as a recreation zone. The complex of activities proposed within the framework of the regional strategy for tourism development includes the following: in the areas of labor subject, tourism personnel, provision of labor means, transport services and tourist transfer, increasing the efficiency of tourism management, expansion and mastering of new markets.

**The main content of the dissertation were represented and published in the following articles:**

1. Böyük şəhərlərdə urbanizasiya olunmuş yaşayış mühitinin əhalinin Böyük şəhərlərdə urbanizasiya olunmuş yaşayış mühitinin əhalinin yaşayışına və sağlamlığına göstərdiyi təsir / M.Ə. Cəfərova, X.Ə.Cəfərov // – Bakı: Urbanizm, – 2011. №17, – s. 24-32.
2. Gəncə şəhərinin inkişafına regional amillərin təsiri // – Bakı: Memarlıq, şəhərsalma tarixi və bərpa toplusu, – 2011. №1(2), – s. 189-194.
3. Gəncə-Qazax regional məskunlaşma sisteminin inkişafı // – Bakı: Memarlıq, şəhərsalma tarixi və bərpa toplusu, – 2012. №1(2), – s. 156-162.
4. Gəncə şəhərinin müasir şəhərsalma problemləri // – Bakı: Urbanizm, – 2013. №18, – s. 39-41.

5. Gəncə-Azərbaycanın, xalqımızın qədim və zəngin tarixini özündə əks etdirən bir diyar, gözəl şəhərdir // H.Əliyevin 100 illiyinə həsr olunmuş elmi konfrans, – Bakı: oktyabr, – 2013, – s. 80-84.
6. Gəncənin müasir ekoloji durumu və onun tənzimlənməsi imkanları // – Bakı: Ekologiya və su təsərrüfatı elmi texniki və istehsalat jurnalı, – 2013. №3, – s. 33-36.
7. Məskunlaşma sisteminin təsir dairəsinin funksional strukturunda Gəncə şəhərinin yeri / M.Ə. Cəfərova, X.Ə.Cəfərov // – Bakı: Urbanizm, – 2013. №18, – s.42-44.
8. Gəncə-Qazax iqtisadi rayonunun məskunlaşma sistemində Gəncə şəhərinin rolu // – Bakı: Memar, – 2017. №1(2), – s. 176-181.
9. Gəncə-Qazax iqtisadi rayonunun urbanizasiya karkasının struktur analizi // Nizami Gəncəvinin 880 illik yubileyinə həsr olunmuş beynəlxalq konfransın materialları, – Bakı: 18-22 sentyabr, – 2021, – s. 362-364.
10. Gəncə-Qazax iqtisadi rayonunun təbii-rekreasiya resursları və onların turizmin inkişafı üçün dəyəri // “Müasir şəhərsəlmədə novatorluq və ənənələr” mövzusunda elmi-praktiki konfransın materialları, – Bakı: 06 may, – 2022, – s. 58-65.
11. Gəncə -Qazax məskunlaşma sisteminin urbanizasiya karkası // “İnşaatın müasir problemləri” Beynəlxalq elmi konfransının materialları, – Bakı: 24 noyabr, – 2023, – s. 263-267.
12. Gəncə-Qazax məskunlaşma sistemini əhatə edən ərazi, burada, turizm sənayesini inkişaf etdirmək üçün güclü, iqtisadi potensiala malikdir // “Azərbaycan Respublikasının müasir idman qurğularının memarlıq və inşaat problemləri” mövzusunda Elmi-praktiki konfransın materialları, – Bakı: 21 dekabr, – 2023, – s. 34-37.
13. Gəncə-Qazax məskunlaşma sistemində yaşayış yerlərinin tarixi inkişafı // Şərqi ölkələri Beynəlxalq memarlıq akademiyasının respublika elmi-praktiki konfransın materialları, – Bakı: – 2024. Cild 24, №2 – s. 104-112.
14. Priority directions of tourism and recreation development in Ganja- Gazakh sitting system // International Conference

- “Energy and Environmental Technologies in Engineering and Architecture” (ICETEА 2024). – Baku: 19-21 December, – 2024. – p. 288-293
15. Роль города Гянджи как опорного центра в развитии Туризма в г. Гянджа-Газахском регионе Азербайджана // ХСVІ Международная научно-практическая конференция «Культурология, искусствоведение и филология: современные взгляды и научные исследования», – М: «Интернаука» – №5(87), – 2025, – с. 115-117.
  16. Роль города Гянджи в развитии туристического сектора в Гянджа-Газахской системе расселения // – Екатеринбург: Академический вестник Урал НИИ проект РААСН, – 2025. №1(68), – с. 23-27
  17. Современное состояние туристической инфраструктуры в Гянджа-Газахской системе расселения Азербайджана // – Казань: Известия КГАСУ. – 2025. №3(73). – с. 159-170.

# CHAPTER I. GENERAL URBAN PLANNING CONDITIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GANJA-GAZAKH SETTLEMENT SYSTEM

## 1.1. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SETTLEMENTS IN THE GANJA-GAZAKH SETTLEMENT SYSTEM



The Ganja-Gazakh settlement system covers 13 cities, 46 settlements, and 521 villages within the administrative territorial unit.  
Area - 12.48 thousand km<sup>2</sup>

Share in the country's area - 14.4%

The weight of the population of settlements in the country's population - 12.9%

Settlement system includes the Ganja-Dashkan and Tovuz-Gazakh economic regions

### Ganja-Gazakh settlement system

Population - 1294,1 thousand people

Population density - 105 people/ km<sup>2</sup>

### Ganja-Dashkanan economic region

Area - 5,45 thousand km<sup>2</sup>

Population - 509,5 thousand people

Population density - 112 people/ km<sup>2</sup>

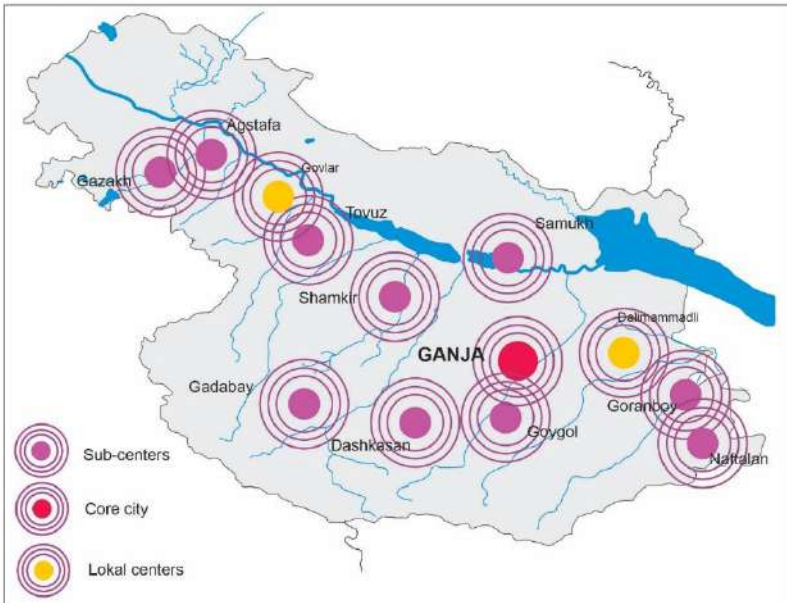
### Gazakh-Tovuz economic region

Area - 7,03 thousand km<sup>2</sup>

Population - 884,5 thousand people

Population density - 97 people/ km<sup>2</sup>

The position of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system in Azerbaijan



The position of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system in Azerbaijan



# CHAPTER II. ASSESSMENT OF TOURISM POTENTIAL IN THE GANJA-GAZAKH SETTLEMENT SYSTEM

## 2.2. STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE URBANIZATION FRAMEWORK OF THE SETTLEMENT SYSTEM



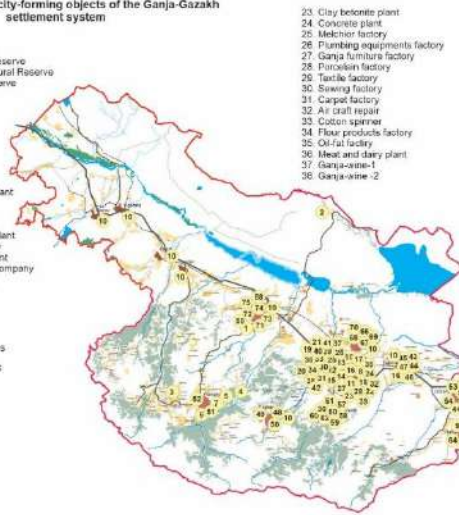
Table of planning elements of the local Ganja settlement system

Administrative district	City	Urban settlements	Villages	Area
Ganja	1	2	0	104,942
Naftalan	1	0	0	10,522
Shamakhi	0	7	0	100,000
Semakh	0	0	25	110,000
Dashkasan	0	0	40	104,942
Gadabay	1	0	100	100,000
Goranboy	0	0	19	100,000
Geysul	1	0	0	100,000
Gazakh	1	0	0	100,000
Agstafa	1	0	0	100,000
Tovuz	0	0	0	100,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>1,029,942</b>



Layout of the main city-forming objects of the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system

- Legend**
1. Shamkhi State Natural Reserve
  2. Elder pine tree State Natural Reserve
  3. Ozulu State Natural Reserve
  4. Goculu forest
  5. Godoksure forest
  6. Gamish forest
  7. Shamkhi forest
  8. Ganja airport
  9. Naftala airport
  10. Railway station
  11. Ganja industrial center
  12. Aluminum plant
  13. Iron metal processing plant
  14. Car repair shop
  15. Car factory
  16. Machine building plant
  17. Device manufacturing plant
  18. Communication industry
  19. Reinforced concrete plant
  20. Industrial construction company
  21. Building material plant
  22. Brick plant



23. Clay concrete plant
24. Concrete plant
25. Machine factory
26. Plumbing equipments factory
27. Ganja furniture factory
28. Textile factory
29. Textile factory
30. Sawing factory
31. Carpet factory
32. Air craft repair
33. Cotton spinner
34. Flour products factory
35. Oil-fal factory
36. Meat and dairy plant
37. Ganja-ame-1
38. Ganja-ame-2
39. Ganja brewery
40. Steel and cast iron production plant
41. Vegetable oils manufacturing
42. Leather factory
43. Fertilizer factory
44. Plaster factory
45. Agroservice and agroselling
46. Cotton cleaning
47. Grain receiving station
48. Dashkasan coke refining
49. Zeyik alumite mining office
50. Bakery
51. AINIK office
52. Potato processing plant
53. Goranboy industry construction
54. Oil and Knafal
55. Self group
56. Turk Yapi Industry
57. Fruit processing plant
58. Winery
59. Mechanical plant
60. Dairy plant
61. Telecommunication node
62. Stone carving workshop
63. Oil processing plant
64. Cokli storage
65. Nursery complex
66. Agro Dairy
67. Box-dag livestock complex
68. Ulluz 2011
69. Garadag Region MKT
70. Region Agro
71. Quarry
72. Azerkhalcha
73. Shamkhi Agropark logistics
74. Hydropower station
75. Shamkhi poultry farming



# CHAPTER II. ASSESSMENT OF TOURISM POTENTIAL IN THE GANJA-GAZAKH SETTLEMENT SYSTEM

## 2.2. STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE URBANIZATION FRAMEWORK OF THE SETTLEMENT SYSTEM

The study identified five local settlement systems based on a unified methodology for defining urban agglomeration boundaries proposed by P.M. Polyan, N.I. Nainnik, and I.N. Zaslavsky.

To achieve this, the following steps were taken in accordance with the methodology:

1. The cores of local settlement systems were identified. These are the cities of Ganja, Shamki, and Goygol.
  2. The potential zones of influence of agglomeration connections were determined. The isochrone of transport accessibility from the cores and small towns to the central city within 1.0 hour (60 minutes) (gross) was connected with the 30-minute isochrone of small towns.
  3. The development coefficient was calculated,  $K = P_n / (M_n + N_n)$ , where  $P_n$  is the urban population in the agglomeration;  $m$  and  $n$  are their share of the urban population of the agglomeration.
- For the agglomeration to be considered formed, the development coefficient  $K$  must be greater than 1.0.

The Ganja local settlement system is located in the immediate vicinity of the city of Ganja, the dominant city of Ganja, as well as the nearby towns of Goygol and Samukh, formed from 19 urban-type settlements and 60 villages.

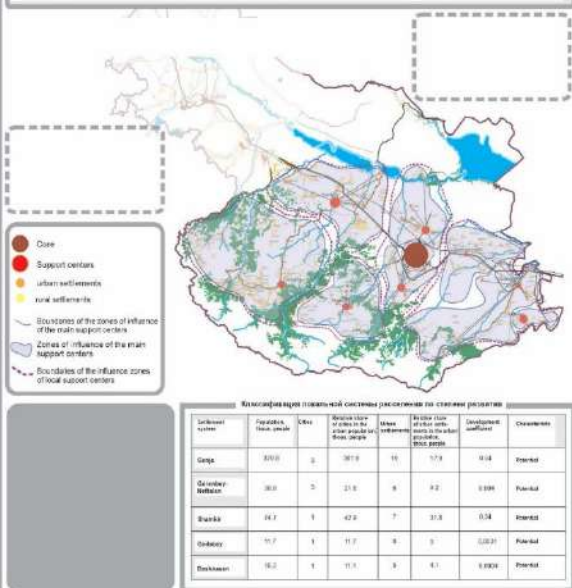
The Goranboy-Naftalan local settlement system is located primarily within the influence zone of the core—Goranboy and Naftalan, as well as the nearby town of Dalimammadli and a number of urban-type settlements (6) and villages (81).

The Shamki local settlement system is located in the middle zone—the city of Shamki, as well as seven urban-type settlements and 58 villages near it.

The Gadabay local settlement system is located in the middle zone—the city of Gadabay and 106 villages surrounding it.

The Dashkasan local settlement system is located in the middle zone—the city of Dashkasan and 43 surrounding villages.

Local systems in the territory of the Ganja-Dashkasan settlement system



Local settlement system	Population, thousand people	Cores	Number of urban-type settlements in the zone of influence of the main support centers	Urban-type settlements	Number of villages within the zone of influence of the main support centers	Development coefficient	Comments
Ganja	339.0	2	367.9	16	57.8	0.18	Formed
Goranboy-Naftalan	38.0	5	23.8	8	4.2	0.998	Formed
Shamki	14.7	1	42.9	7	31.8	0.34	Formed
Gadabay	11.7	1	11.7	9	0	0.021	Formed
Dashkasan	16.2	1	11.1	3	4.1	0.693	Potential

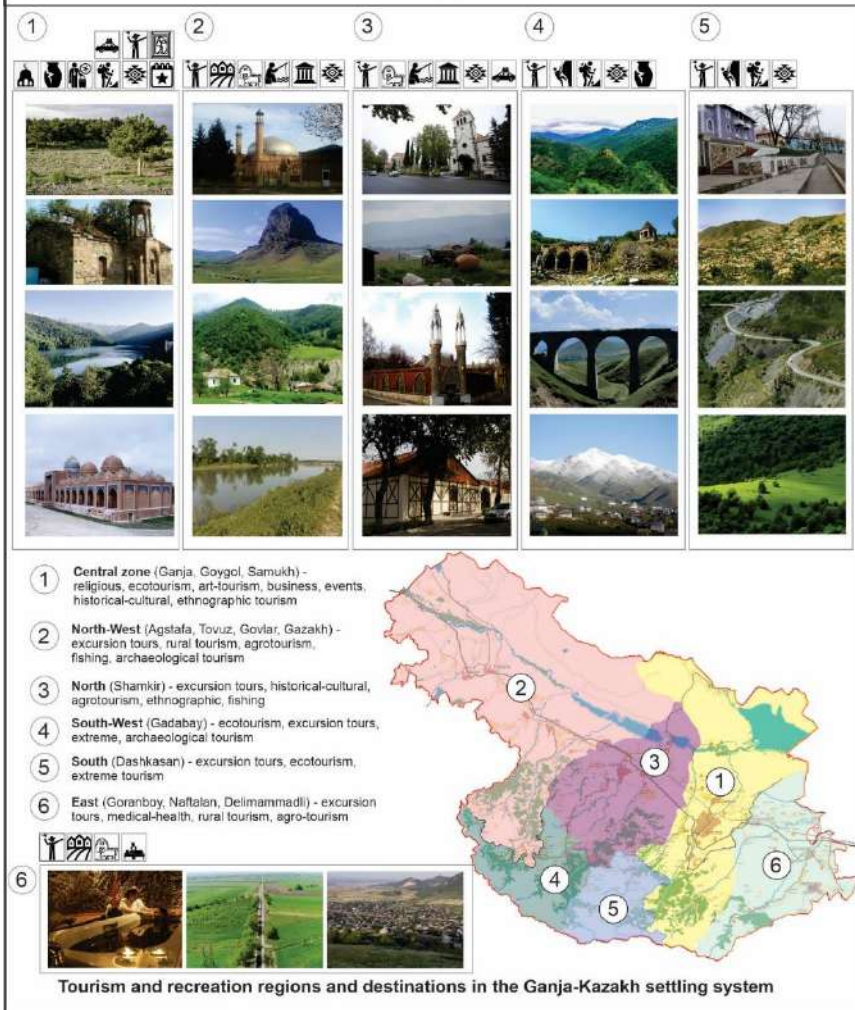
Information on the construction of public roads and overpasses in the Ganja-Gazakh settlement system for 2006-2021

No	Title	Total length of roads	2006	2007	2008	2009	2021	Sum
1	Construction and repair of national highways (km)	203,7	337,5	157,5	164,4	115,9	98,1	873,4
2	Construction and repair of republic highways (km)	300,0	139,2	37,2	21,2	17,9	11	228,6
3	Construction and repair of local roads (km)	4560,7	198,3	120,3	143,2	98	87,1	648,9
4	Construction of new bridges and tunnels (km)		12	3	3	-	9	27

Convenience of transport links in the Ganja-Dashkan settlement system

# CHAPTER III. THE ROLE OF PRIORITY DIRECTIONS OF TOURISM AS THE KEY STRATEGIC ELEMENTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GANJA-KAZAKH SETTLEMENT SYSTEM

## 3.1. PRIORITY DIRECTIONS OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE REGION

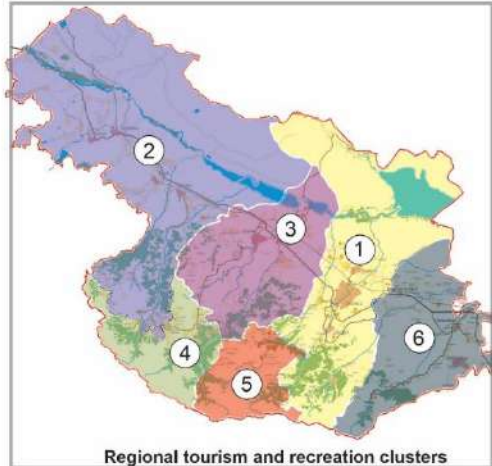


# CHAPTER III. THE ROLE OF PRIORITY DIRECTIONS OF TOURISM AS THE KEY STRATEGIC ELEMENTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GANJA-KAZAKH SETTLEMENT SYSTEM

## 3.3.FORMATION OF REGIONAL TOURISM CLUSTER OF THE GANJA-GAZAKH SETTLEMENT SYSTEM

- 1 Travel and events tourism cluster (Ganja city, Goygol ve Samukh regions)
- 2 Rural tourism and agrotourism cluster (Agstafa, Tovuz, Govlar, Gazakh regions)
- 3 Ethnographic and travel tourism cluster (Shamkir region)
- 4 Ecotourism cluster (Gadabay region)
- 5 Extreme tourism cluster (Dashkasan region)
- 6 Medical and health tourism cluster (Goranboy region, Naftalan city, Dalimammadli city)

Tourism zones in the Ganja-Kazakh settlement system



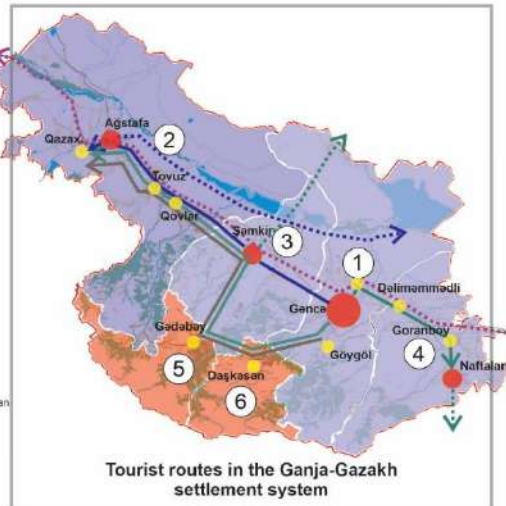
Main tourist areas

- 1 Central tourist zone (Ganja city, Goygol ve Samukh regions)
- 2 Northwestern border tourism zone (Agstafa, Tovuz, Govlar, Gazakh regions)
- 3 Northern tourist zone (Shamkir region)
- 4 Eastern tourist zone (Goranboy region, Naftalan city, Dalimammadli city)

Autonomous tourism zones

- 5 South-West Autonomous Tourism Zone (Gadabay region)
- 6 Southern Autonomous Tourism Zone (Dashkasan region)

- Location of central tourism infrastructure facilities
- Wine road
- The historical heritage route of the Germans in Azerbaijan
- National culinary route
- ..... The historical route of our ancestors' path of victory
- ..... Fishing route



The defense will be held on 12 06 2026 at 11<sup>00</sup> at the meeting of the Dissertation council FD 2.29 of Supreme Attestation Commission under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan operating at Azerbaijan University of Architecture and Construction.

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