Uzbekistan

travel guide

tourism.uz
“Uzbekistan” – is a unique and modern Handbook for all those who wonder to know more about Uzbekistan, its traditions and customs, ancient cities and the Capital, as well as their attractions and other issues.

The Handbook is of descriptive character. The chapters are devoted to description of such cities as Tashkent, Bukhara, Samarkand, Khiva and many others; there is detailed information about The Great Silk Road, Uzbek traditions and many other aspects.

The Book has been written by executives of “Global Study Travel Company”, having extensive experience in Tourism Industry.
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Tourism.uz is the subsidiary of Global Study Travel Company. Our company is engaged in inbound and outbound tourism and has been working in tourism for more than 5 years. During these years the company has gained important experience in organization and realization of various tours both in Uzbekistan and all Central Asia.

We organize guided tours to historical cities of Central Asia located on The Great Silk Road – Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva and others. The company staff consists of highly skilled specialists in tourism sphere – tour operators, having a good command of foreign languages, guides of high category, as well as skilful drivers.

Besides tourism, the company has longstanding and successful experience in preparation and enrolment of students in state and private colleges, institutes and universities worldwide.

We are located in Tashkent, the capital of sunshine Republic of Uzbekistan. The company has branches in Almaty, Astana and in Prague.
Uzbekistan

Area: 447,8 thous.sq km (roughly the size of Sweden).

Capital: Tashkent.

Time: GMT + 5:00.

Country Code: +998.

Languages: Uzbek, Russian, Tajik, Karakalpak.

Money sum: US$1 = 1716 sum (July 2011).

Population: 30 million (67 people per square kilometer), (the most populous in Central Asia, more than 60%).

Phrases: Hello (assalomu aleykum); Thank you (rakhmat), good bye (khayr).

Ethnic Groups: 80% Uzbek, 5% Tajik, 5% Russian and 7% others.
Location and geography

The Republic of Uzbekistan the ‘land of the Uzbeks’ lies in the heart of Asia, between the two major rivers of Central Asia, the Syr Darya (Jaxartes) and the Amu Darya (Oxus), in the territory known since ancient times as Bactria, Maverannahr (the land beyond the river), and later on as Turkistan. Uzbekistan forms the very centre of ex-Soviet Central Asia, for it alone boarders on each of the new republics – Kazakhstan to the north, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to the east and southeast, Turkmenistan to the southwest, as well as Afghanistan to the south.

Administratively the republic consists of the republic of Karakalpakistan (Capital – Nukus town territory – 166,59 thousand sq.km. Population – 1551,9 thousand people) and 12 regions (Andijan, Bukhara, Jizzakh, Kashkadarya, Navoi, Namangan, Samarkand, Surkhandarya, Sirdarya, Tashkent, Ferghana, Khorezm).

Uzbekistan’s blend of desert, steppe, oases and river valleys places it at the heart of the complex interaction of nomadic culture and oasis settlement that patterns the history of Central Asia. Most of the territory of Uzbekistan is occupied by plains (near four fifth of the territory). One of the main is the Turanian plain (lowland). There is one of the largest deserts of the world – the Kizilkum desert on the north of central part of the territory of Uzbekistan. In the east and northeast of the country are situated spurs of Tien Shan and the Pamirs, here is the highest spot of the country (4 643 м).

Climate

Uzbekistan is a dry country aptly termed ‘the sunny republic’, as every year brings over 300 days of sunshine and 300 millimeters (12 inches) of rainfall. The climate is classified as continental, with hot summers and cool winters. Summer temperatures often surpass 40 degrees above zero; winter temperatures average about minus 8 degrees, but may fall as low as minus 30.

History

Rich archaeological remains in the area preserve an intriguing mix of Hellenistic, Buddhist and Scythian influences in the laconic desert castles of Khorezm and Bactria and trace a development to the rich Sogdian palaces and wall paintings of Varakhsha and Afroiyab. But it was the arrival of Islam in the eighth century and its alien synthesis of styles that transformed the face of Central Asia as much as its soul.

The most powerful Kushan Empire and the
In addition to beautiful landscapes and great history, Uzbekistan is also the world’s fourth – largest cotton nation, world’s seventh – largest gold producer and harbors significant reserves of oil and natural gas, as well as uranium, silver, copper, zinc, coal and lead. Other mainstays of Uzbek economy include fruit and vegetables, animal husbandry and textiles, but it is the republic’s mineral wealth that most excites foreign investors.

**Economy**

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**The political system**

The political system of Uzbekistan is based on its Constitution in accordance to which the highest legislative body is a bicameral parliament – Senate and Oliy Madjlis (Supreme Council). The President who heads both the State and the Government is elected for seven years by universal suffrage through direct ballot.

**Distance between cities of Uzbekistan**

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Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, is the largest city in Central Asia. It is located in the northeast part of the republic, in the valley of the river Chirchik, at the height of 440 – 480 m above the sea level. To the northeast 80 km from Tashkent snow caps of the Big and Small Chimgan, spurs of Tjan–Shan are visible. Tashkent in Uzbek means “the Stone Settlement” and also known as a city of striking contrasts.

The history of Tashkent dates back to the II th century BC. In 2009 the city celebrates its 2200 year jubilee. During its centuries-old history it has repeatedly changed its name: Shash, Chach, Chachkent, Binkent. The archeological excavations have revealed that present – day Tashkent was the site of an ancient town which has continued to exist as a commercial and cultural centre of the East. For the first time the name Tashkent was mentioned in the XIth century in works of Al–Beruni. At the beginning of the twentieth century there lived about 200 thousand inhabitants in Tashkent (Uzbeks, Tatars, Russians, Jews and other nationalities). In the city there were the following educational institutions: men’s grammar school, real school, military school, female grammar school, the private female gymnasium, two city 4 class man’s schools, craft and technical railway school and a parish school.

Historically there was a conditional division of the city into two parts – the old and the new city. The old city was the centre of craft and trading life, and the new city of industry, formed on the place of gardens, fields and summer residences of locals. From 1930 till
1991 Tashkent (in Uzbek Toshkent) was the capital of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic in the structure of the former USSR and the regional centre of the Tashkent area, the fourth Soviet Union city in population with the population to 2 million people and the second by the occupied area. In 1966, a destructive earthquake shook Tashkent and razed half of the city into ruins. All the republics of the former Soviet Union held out their helping hand to the Uzbek capital and in a year Tashkent actually revived and became even more beautiful.

Since September 1991 Tashkent is the capital of independent Uzbekistan and the centre of Tashkent province. Now the area of the city is 256 sq.km. This figure constantly grows at the expense of city expansion. The population of Tashkent is more than 3 million people. Administratively the city of Tashkent is divided into 11 districts: Uchtepa, Bektemir, Mirzo Ulugbek, Mirabad, Sergeli, Sabir Rahimov, Chilanzar, Shayhantaur, Yunusabad, Yakkasaray, Hamza.

Tashkent is the political and economical centre of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The residence of the president Republic Uzbekistan, Legislative chamber Oliy Majlis (the Supreme Council), The Senate Oliy Majlis, the Cabinet of ministers, embassies of the foreign states, public organizations, and also the central administrative boards of all ministries and departments of Republic Uzbekistan are located here. Today Tashkent is a large industrial centre. 20% of the total output of the republic is produced in Tashkent. Many large and average enterprises of the republic are located in Tashkent. Planes, cotton-picking and cotton cleaning machines, tractors, compressors, dredges, TVs, etc. are produced in Tashkent. Tashkent is a large railway junction, the centre of the dense network of highways and air ways. All kinds of a municipal transportation are well developed. Stations of the Tashkent underground are distinguished with their fine decorating.

Tashkent is famous as one of the world centers of science and culture. The academy of sciences and more than 40 scientific research institutes, The Academy of the state and public building at the President of Republic Uzbekistan, the Academy of arts of Uzbekistan, and more than 40 higher educational institutions are located in it. The Alisher Navoi Public Library with more than four million books is a subject of pride. The academic Opera and Ballet Theatre, built in 1947, is truly unique in its architecture and interior design.
Tashkent TV tower

Tashkent television tower — the largest broadcasting center in Central Asia. Tashkent TV Tower is the highest structure in Central Asia. Its height is 375 meters. The TV Tower was built over 6 years, beginning in 1978. It was officially put into operation on 15 January 1985.

15 January 1985 State commission signed an act regarding the most unique building in Central Asia — The Tashkent TV Tower. Into the silhouette of the city was inserted a TV tower, which became a symbol of the high technical and cultural level of Uzbekistan.

As a unique architectural building, the Tashkent TV Tower is a favorite stop of tourists and guests of the capital. Guides provide professional tours, including information about the construction of the TV tower and some of the other sights of Tashkent in the Uzbek, Russian, and English languages.

To take visitors to the top of the TV tower, three high-speed lifts made by the “Shindler” company have been installed. They rocket people to a height of 100 meters in just a few seconds. Visitors proceed from the observation deck to the “Koinot” restaurant (The Space), where the two comfortable rooms of Uzbek restaurant “Blue” and European “Red” can accommodate 120 visitors simultaneously. Rotating once every hour, visitors can admire the panorama of Tashkent again and again.

In 1991 the Tashkent TV Tower became a member of the World Federation of Great Towers and now it is the 9th highest tower among more than 200 towers in the world. At the same time, it the only tower of its kind in Central Asia, and the 2nd highest tower, after the Ostankino Tower (Moscow, Russia), among the CIS countries.

Famous landmarks close to Tashkent TV Tower are the InterContinental Hotel, the building of National Bank of Uzbekistan, the prestigious Business Center complete with cafe and catering service and Tashkent Plaza, the exclusive shopping mall. Just beneath the tower near the Bozsu canal is the square of victims of repressions, devoted to the victims of Stalin and other repressions, with a museum by the canal.
Aqua Park

This park located just behind the InterContinental hotel and the Japanese Garden is favorite among recreational areas both for young and old.

Business Center

This prestigious landmark is among other sights of Tashkent: InterContinental Hotel, NBU (National Bank of Uzbekistan) and Tashkent Plaza.

“Bunyodkor” Square

“Bunyodkor” Square consists of a big concert hall called the “Istiqlol” Palace, the building of the Oliy Majlis (the lower chamber of the parliament), Madrassah Abdulqosim and the national park of Uzbekistan after Alisher Navoi. The blue domed building of the Oliy Majlis was built in 1997. The parliament building is a sample of new Central Asian architecture with the use of glass material in its construction. Oliy Majlis is the lower chamber of the Parliament of Uzbekistan the upper being the Senate. 120 deputies sit in it.

The building in its vicinity is the Abdulqosim Madrassah, which today accommodates the masters of Hunarmand Art association. Miniatures, woodcarving, metal works and other crafts are produced and sold on premises and folk dance ensembles entertain the visitors upon advance request. A few meters from the parliament building is an open space where theatrical shows devoted to main holidays like Navruz and Independence day are held. The national park named after Alisher Navoi, the famous Uzbek poet and writer, the founder of Uzbek literary language, is also nearby with the monument to Alisher Navai on hilltop inside the park, and a huge pool.
Alisher Navoi Opera and Ballet Theatre

Designed by the same architect who designed Lenin’s Tomb in Moscow, Aleksey Shchusev, and built by Japanese prisoners of war of World War II, this theatre hosts Russian ballet and opera. A night in the opera can be easily arranged. Tashkent has its own ballet company and the repertoire of the musical ensemble comprises famous European, Russian as well as Uzbek operas and operettas. The audience does still dress up and the ticket price allows everybody to enjoy a performance.

The Tashkent Metro

The Tashkent Metro (underground) faced with marble, granite and ceramic tiles, is deservingly considered one of the most beautiful and spacious Metro networks in the world. It is the only underground in Central Asia today. The construction of the Tashkent underground began in 1968–1970, and the first line (received later the name Chilonzor) the length of which is 12.2 km and 9 stations was constructed in 1976, but started operating in 1977.

The second turn of this line started operating in 1980. The first part of the second line of the Tashkent underground (named Uzbekistan) started operating in 1984, and started fully functioning in 1992. During the years of independence the first part of the third line (the Yunusobod line) was designed and in September 2001 it was put into operation. Now the Tashkent underground totals 3 lines (Chilonzor, Uzbekiston and Yunusobod), 29 stations with the general extent of 37.5 km.
Bukhara is one of the most ancient cities in Central Asia. Long ago it was nicknamed as “Bukhoroi – shanf” – “Noble Bukhara”. The city is more than 2500 years old dating back to the Bukhara oasis (Sogdiana) mentioned in Avesta – the holy book of Zoroastranism. As some sources say, the word Bukhara is taken Most of the monuments in this romantic Eastern city, which attracts tourists from all over the world, date back to the Middle Ages.

In the ancient past, the Bukhara oasis formed part of Sogdiana, a vast region of Central Asia which had been conquered by Alexandr of Macedon. After seizing Samarkand, Alexandr spearheaded his legions deep into the Bukhara oasis.

The process of town formation was very active and the ancient settlements surrounding Bukhara developed into towns Varaksha, Vrdanzi, Ramish (Ramitan), Kerme, Paikend. Archeologists conducting excavations at Varakhsha have discovered an early feudal palace of the bukharkhudats displaying exquisite mural paintings in no way inferior to the famous murals of Pendikent.

All these towns had more or less a similar structural pattern: the ark (citadel), the shakhristan – well – planned residential core, and a necropolis beyond the town limits where crypts were built to accommodate ceramic urns with the bones of the dead.

Architectural monuments and sights of Bukhara

More than 140 monuments have remained in Bukhara. Most of the monuments in this romantic Eastern city, which attracts tourists from all over the world, date back to the Middle Ages. The old citadel, the monument of Bukhara was the nucleus of this medieval town.
The Ark citadel

The oldest monument in Bukhara – the Ark citadel (from the Persian “Arg”) and residence of the local rulers was built on an artificial hillock. It dates back to the third century B.C. Legend, however, refers us to even greater depths in history, and associates the ancient fortress with the names of mythical characters from the ancient eastern epic poem “Shahname” which was handed down from generation to generation. Here is what the sixteenth – century chronicle says:” the citadel in Bukhara was built for the following reason. Siyavush Ibn – Keikavus fled his father.

He crossed the Djeihun and went to Afrasiyab who received him kindly and gave him his daughter in marriage. It is said that (Afrasiab) gave all his property to him. Siyavush wished to leave the memory of himself in these lands because he knew life was short and would not favour him. Thus he ordered the construction of the Bukhara citadel and lived in it most of the time. When slander (gave rise to enmity) Afrasiab killed him. Siyavush was buried in the same citadel at the entrance to the eastern gates which are called “Kakfurushan” (vendors of hay) and also known as “Gates of Gurian”. The fire – worshippers of Bukhara, for this reason, revere the given land. Every year, on the day of Navruz before dawn people bring a rooster to the place.

The people of Bukhara have special laments to commemorate the killing (of Siyavush). Musicians have set them to music and call them “lament of the Magi”. These words are pronounced over three thousand years. Some say that Afrasiyab built the Bukhara citadel. The Ark was a city in itself and comprised closely spaced courtyards, offices, the residence of the emir, his wives, relatives and courtiers.

Within the trapezoidal fortifications the construction layout was rectangular with the crossing of the main streets facing the four sides of the world. The Ark housed the residence of the emir, including the salomkhona (greeting hall), the kurinishkhona (audience chamber), the police department, the stables, various store houses, the treasury, the armory, the prison, the mint, mosques, mausoleums, jewelers’ workshops. Just outside the western walls of the citadel was the marketplace or Registan (registan is a Persian word which means “sandy place”).

Opposite the Ark, at a small pond, is the Bolo hauz mosque built in 1712: a richly decorated iwan was added by the last emir of Bukhara emir Alimkhan early in the XXth century. On Fridays Emir himself would come down to this mosque for prayer. The colors and carvings on the columns and the coffered ceiling are remarkable.
Another interesting monument is the nearby mausoleum **Chashma Ayub** (the Well of Job). By its style it belongs to the XIIth century but the inscription above the entrance gives the date of a reconstruction as 1380, or 1384. The conical shape of the cupola, in contrast to the usual bulbous one, is an element alien to Transoxiana. In one can see the influence of Khorezm style, as it was built by Khorezmian builders brought in by Amir Timur after destruction of Gurganj.

The oldest monument in Central Asia, the **mausoleum of Samanids**, sometimes described as the tomb of Ismail Samanid is located in a park to the west of The Ark citadel. Ismail Samanid ruled Bukhara from the end of the IXth century to the beginning of the Xth. According to some historians this building is linked by all its principal elements to the pre-Islamic Soghdian traditions when architecture still had to make use of less solid and less durable materials – wood and sun-baked bricks. It is one of the rare monuments which have survived undamaged from pre-Mongol times.

### The Poi – Kalyan Complex

Once the Karakhanid ruler of Bukhara Arslan-khan, decided to build a new minaret. It was erected in 1127 and was named **“Minorai Kalon”** – “The Great Minaret”. This impressive tower, 47 meters high (170 feet) with a diameter at the bottom of 9 meters (40 feet) is cylindrical structure of baked bricks. Travelers approaching the city on their “ships of desert” – camels, fastened their eyes on the minaret as if it were a lighthouse shining in the darkness. The name of the tower is no accident–minaret. Minora means “lighthouse” in Arabic. Its unusual architectural form, taller than most buildings of its time, was generally used in many other monuments built later. The “Minorai Kalon” visually united the buildings of the city and served as a prime example of architectural perfection, exuding the pride of architects through the centuries.

The area at the foot of the minaret is called Poi.
to Bukhara from Yemen, with money gained from the sale of several thousand Shi'ite Persians into slavery. He himself and Sheikh Mir – i – Arab lie buried in one of the corner rooms. The style of the madrasa is horizontal; a rectangular yard with four iwans surrounded by four two-storey wings of cells. There are two domed halls, right and left of the main portal. Next to this portal are two domes, one for the assembly hall, and the other for the mosque, supported by cylindrical drums. Mir – i – Arab is the only madrasa in Central Asia that has served the same purpose for more than 400 years – it was one of the two Muslim colleges allowed to operate in the former Soviet Union.

A feature of sixteenth century Bukhara was a number of domed bazaars built by the Sheibanid khans. Several of them have survived; still retaining their original names derived from their function – Toki Zargaron (the Cupola of Jewelers), Toki Telpakfurushon (the cupola of Cap – Makers), Toki – Sarrofon (the Cupola of Money – Changers). Usually there is the main dome over the actual crossroads and around it a group of smaller and lower cupolas covering the shop premises. Near Sarrofon bazaar is the oldest surviving mosque in Central Asia – the Magak – i – Attari, dating from the twelfth century and built on a site where there was already a temple in Soghdian period. The main twelfth century facade, now about 5 meters below ground level, was uncovered and restored in 1930.

Around the water reservoir Labi – hauz is another architectural complex of central Bukhara. It includes two madrasa – The Kukeltash and the Nadir Devanbegi and The Nadir Devanbegi Khanaka (hostel). The Kukeltash madrasa (1568) contains 160 cells and therefore one of the biggest of its kind. In the corners are octagonal vestibules around which the cells are grouped radially. The Nadir Devanbegi madrasa (1622) on the East side of the pool, was originally designed as a caravanserai, but was soon converted for a more pious purpose. Rather crude mosaic
depicting imaginary birds of paradise decorates the entrance iwan, lined with an inscription frieze in ornamental Kufic.

The so-called Char-Minar (Four Minarets), built in 1807, is a little building full of character. It consists of four turrets with small turquoise cupolas and a square domed house between them. Originally, it was a gatehouse to a madrasa, built by a wealthy merchant, Khalif Niyazkul, for his four daughters. This little structure ranks among the most original monuments of late Muslim Bukhara. West of the city, a large necropolis called Char Bakr was the burial ground of the Juybar clan. There are two large seventeenth-century monuments: a khanaka and a mosque, a small minaret, a cemetery and a small mausoleum of Khodja Islam, also built in 1660. North of the city is the mausoleum of Hazret Bahauddin Naqshbandi, the founder of Naqshbandiya order. The monument, dating from mid-fourteenth century, is an important pilgrim place of Muslims. Sitorai Mohi Khosa, built in 1910, was the summer palace of the last emir, emir Alimkhán. Now the palace houses the museums of traditional clothes and embroidery.

### 1 day. Tour to Bukhara

**Breakfast.**

Transfer to the airport to catch morning flight to Bukhara.

Arrive in Bukhara, meeting at the airport and start sightseeing of Bukhara: Ismail Samanid mausoleum (a burial place of the Samani dynasty founder Ismail Samani, 10th century), Kalon Minaret and Poi Kalon Mosque, Miri Arab Madrassa (16th century), Ulugbek Madrassa (15th century) and Abdilazizkhan Madrassa (17th century), Magoki Attory Mosque (a very interesting construction, reconstructed in the 16th century with the 12th century facade and Zoroastrian temple ornaments underneath), Lyabi House complex, Ark Fortress (a home to the rulers of Bukhara), Museums inside Ark Fortress, Chor Minor.

**Lunch during the day.**

Transfer to the airport. Evening flight back to Tashkent.

Arrive in Tashkent. Transfer to the hotel.
The face of the Ground, “The Precious Pearl of the Islamic World”, “Eden of the East”.. all these names have been given to this ancient city. The biggest city in Zarafshan valley Samarkand, located at the crossroads of the Great Silk Road, was almost the most important city, even during the Sheibanids period when Bukhara was the capital. The Great Silk road from China split into two at Samarkand, one branch going to Persia, the other south to India. The city had a favorable position for trade with the North, where the steppe nomads supplied furs, cattle hides and slaves in exchange for more sophisticated products of the craftsmen. In 2007 the 2750 year anniversary of the city was widely celebrated. In Ancient Greece the city was known as Marakanda. The Middle Ages period knows it as Samarkand. The mound of Afrasiab, which lies in rubble, was the site of Samarkand up to the Mongol destruction (XIII cent.) After this catastrophe the city center was never rebuilt and the new town grew up in the south suburb and by the end of the XIV century.

Glory of the city of Samarkand reached its zenith, as a “heaven – like” city, probably, from the time, when Amir Timur has transformed it into the capital of his huge empire and made it a major cultural and trade center. Building was an integral part of Timur’s governmental program. So most architectural monuments of Samarkand were built in the epoch of Amir Timur and Timurids.
The cathedral mosque
Bibi Khanum

It is one of the largest buildings of its kind in the Islamic world, with inner court of 85 by 55 meters, an entrance gateway 37 meters high. The diameter of the iwan arch is 17 meters, its height is 28 meters. The towers flanking the portal are octagonal thinning towards the top. The outer decoration consists mainly of brick patterns, eigher girikhs or Kufic inscriptions. Bibi Khanum means The Old Queen, after the elder wife of Amir Timur, the Daughter of Mongolian Khan, Serai–Mulk Khanum.

Registan Square

Ten minutes walk away from the mosque is the main square of the city, the Registan, where once converged six radial thoroughfares leading to the gates of the city built by Amir Timur in 1371. Originally, the square was covered by a domed bazaar, built either in Timur’s time or after. Under Ulugbek the square was the site of military parades public promulgation of orders, public executions etc. The square consists of three madrasa (religious college). The oldest of them is the madrasa of Ulugbek located on the western side of the square. It was built early in the fifteenth century by Ulugbek. Between 1619 and 1635 another madrasa, the Shir – Dor (Bearing Tigers), was built opposite that of Ulugbek. On the northern side instead of caravanserai built by Ulugbek another madrasa Tilla Kari (Adorned with Gold) was constructed between 1646 and 1659.
The Mausoleum Gur Emir (The Grave of The King) originally consisted of a madrasa where youngsters of the noble family were educated and a khanaka, or a guest house, for government guests. Timur’s beloved grandson and successor designate died in 1403. Then Timur ordered a mausoleum to be built on his grave. In 1404 the mausoleum was completed. Timur himself died in 1405 and was buried here. Under Ulugbek the mausoleum became a family tomb, where next to Timur and Mukhammad Sultan three sons of Timur — Omar Sheikh, Miranshah and Shahruh are buried; Ulugbek himself was also buried here. The only non-relative is the famous sheikh Mir Said Baraka, who is buried on the head of the Conqueror. The monument is divided into three equal parts: a bulbous double dome of 35 meters high with 64 ribs, flanked by minarets 26 meters high.

The whole complex of Shah — I Zinda consists of sixteen buildings clustered along an ally 225 feet long. Most of the mausoleums belong to the family members of Amir Timur, including women. The nucleus of this complex is the tomb of Kussam Ibn Abbas. He, allegedly, was a cousin of the Prophet, and is supposed to have arrived in Samarkand in the year 676; according to one source he was killed, according to another he died a natural death. His tomb, or what is believed to be his tomb, became the object of a cult and the place of pilgrimage. This tomb is known as Shah — I Zinda (The living King). There is a legend that he was not killed, but in saving himself from the infidels entered a cliff that opened miraculously before him and closed again after him. (Barthold, “Turkestan”, p.91). The portals and interiors of most these mausoleums are decorated with flat ornamental tiles, mainly of glazed incised terracotta. The ornaments are geometrical, their main color is turquoise.
The mosque of Hazret-I-Hizr

Next to the Shah – I Zinda necropolis stands The mosque of Hazret – I – Hizr, built in the mid – nineteenth century. This is a modest building, but remarkable for its asymmetrical composition and the harmonious effect achieved by the combination of the smallish portico. As the story of the mosque says, it appeared approx. 1280 years ago, when by the legend Hizrat Hizr pointed at that place, where prophet Husniyo was buried. From that place a graveyard began, it grew, and in 1969 it was closed. Now this is a memorial under UNESCO protection. There are seven levels of burial here and each one keeps bodies of saints and prophets. As the legend says, Allah created the spirit of Hazrat Hizr 300 years before creation of the Earth and all the rest. When at last he put Hizr in a material body, he gifted him an infinite life and made him the master of all waters. In a Greek mythology they falsely arrogated godlike attributes to him, and there he corresponds to Neptune – the god of water. He is regarded as one of those saints making people who meet with them happy, healthy and rich; all wishes begin to realize. They say, a person can meet Hizrat Hizr three times during one’s life.

The Shrine of Khodja Doniyor or Saint Daniil

One of the most well known cites of worship in Samarkand is the Mausoleum of Saint Daniel, located near the northern walls of Afrasiab hills, an ancient settlement. Doniyor, Daniil and Daniel are the names of the Saint in Muslim, Christian and Judaic literature. The shrine became the place of pilgrimage of people from all over the world. According to one legend, Khodja Daniyar was a companion of Kusam ibn Abbas, who was believed to be a relative of the Prophet and one of the first Islamic preachers in Central Asia. According to the biblical interpretation, ‘Daniel’ in Hebrew means ‘the judge of God’, or ‘the God is my judge’.

Daniel was born in Jerusalem in 603 B.C. and was a descendant of David and Salomon, the kings. When Israel was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylonia, in 586 B.C. Daniel was brought to Babylon together with other young men of noble decadence to study with the premier scientists of the era also in the fields of astrology and the art of dream interpretation. It appeared that the most capable of the Jewish youth was Daniel. Besides, he proved himself adamant about religious beliefs. He even gave up drinking wine and eating meat, having obtained permission to eat only vegetables in order to observe his religious rules. Therefore, Daniel’s wisdom is treated in the Bible as God’s reward for devotion.
For Daniel’s wise interpretation of a dream Nebuchadnezzar reviled to him, the king declared Daniel his closest confidant. In his declining years, Daniel asked the king to let him go into retirement. He moved to Susa (present-day Shush in Iran), where he ultimately died and was buried in the royal burial—vault. It is believed that the spirit of the prophet keeps the town safe from all misfortunes and misery, that Daniel’s remains bring prosperity. So how did this shrine appear in Samarkand? The most widespread version of the legend says that during his seven—year campaign to Asia Minor Amir Timur could not take Susa by storm. Having asked the theologians, the grand conqueror found out that the city was protected by Saint Daniel’s hallows.

After that Amir Timur agreed with the besieged that he wouldn’t touch any inhabitant of Susa if he received a permission to take away a part of sacred hallows of the prophet, namely — the right hand of the Saint so that it protected Samarkand. The camels bringing the remains of the Saint while approaching stopped near the Siab river and didn’t want to move. That is why it was decided to build the shrine here and commit the remains to the earth, because that place resembled the shrine in Susa. Soon a spring appeared near it, the water of which is considered holy and collected by pilgrims. A peculiar feature of Khodja Doniyor’s legend is that the saint continues to grow in the tomb. To accommodate this, his tomb has been periodically extended. Nowadays this is a six domed Mausoleum, of which five sustained, with a 18m sarcophagus, stepping into which (with Your shoes off please) You can see pilgrims circumambulating it. The mausoleum was built at the beginning of the XXth century by the guild of the Samarkand soap makers.

**Ulughbek Observatory**

On the north – eastern outskirts of the city there is another unusual monument. Here, in the years 1424 – 28, the prince scholar, the grandson of Amir Timur, Ulughbek, who was probably more famous as an astronomer than a ruler, erected an astronomical observatory, a 3—story tall sextant, one of the largest ever constructed, in order to measure the positions of the stars with unprecedented accuracy. It was at that time probably the best — equipped establishment of that kind in the world, both East and West. The building above the ground was circular, on three storeys, decorated with ornamental tiles.

Observations and measurements were made by means of an astrolabe. Ulughbek himself constructed astronomical tables called “Ziji – Kuragoniy” (tables of the king’s son – in – law). His works on astronomy were known even in Europe. Nothing of it has been preserved, except a few fragments and 11 meter underground part of the sextant, divided into degrees and minutes. The ruins were unearthed in 1908 by Russian archeologist Vyatkin.
Shahrisabz (Green City), 90 kilometers from Samarkand, is located in Kashkadarya valley, a province in the south of Uzbekistan. It is a 2700 – year – old city – the center of folk art, embroidery and ceramics. This name was given to this town of Kesh by Amir Timur, who was born 13 kilometers from here, in the village of Hodja Ilgor. At the end of the fourteenth century, he decided to build here his most magnificent residence, the Ak Saray (White Palace). This building was even more ambitious than the Bib Khanum mosque in Samarkand.

The construction took 20 years to complete and wasn’t finished when a Spanish ambassador Clavijo saw it in 1404. All that remains from that once proud monument are the two flanking towers of the entrance iwan and parts of the richly decorated walls at the base of the big arch. Some of the artifacts that have been preserved from Ak – Saray Palace are unsurpassed masterpieces of ornamental mosaic. An inscription on the portal of palace states in large letters: “If you question the power of making miracles—look at our buildings!”

Fortification walls

Parts of the fortification walls are still preserved today, right behind Ak–Saray. The magnitude of Ak–Saray is best understood after consulting the map in the museum, showing its original closed off palace compound holding “mahallas”, city section allocated the clergy, to different crafts masters and the ruling family.
If possible, Shakhrisabz should be visited on Friday. To witness the wise old men of the area with their white beards, white turbans and beautiful striped coats approaching the Juma Mosque, is a beautifully privileged moment, when fantasy meets reality.

Malik Adjar mosque, XV

One of the few painted aivan (Uzbek: place for sitting and relaxing) wood ceilings, carried by stalactite wood pillars. According to legend, Malik Adjar was a wealthy man who generously helped those in need. The length of his legs was of such fame, that when mounting a camel, his knees would still touch the ground.

Chorsu covered market, XIV

The ancient major crossroads bazaar, having parallels only in Samarkand and Bukhara, will serve as an extension of the museum, exhibiting local crafts.
The Dar-ul Siyadat complex to the south of the Ak Saray is the mausoleum that Amir Timur had built for his eldest son, Jakhangir. It is a fortress-like structure with a high portal and conical cupola built in the late fourteenth century. Beside the mausoleum is the sixteenth century mosque with 600 year old plane trees in it. Amir Timur’s would be grave yard is next to this complex. Inside, it is lined with marble and decorated with bands of inscriptions, and houses a sarcophagus of an unknown person.

Timur had his burial arrangements carefully planned. He himself chose the granite slab, the location of his mausoleum, deep in the ground. For political reasons; however, Timur was laid to rest in Samarkand. When Galina Pugachenkova discovered the site 50 years ago, the remains of a man and woman were found inside the casket.

A short distance to the west is the complex Dorut-Tilovat. The Ko‘k Gumbaz (Green Mosque), is an imposing construction with a blue dome built by Ulugbek in the middle of the fifteenth century. Interior walls have painted decoration. Opposite are two mausoleums, Gumbazi-Saidon and Shamshiddin Kulol Mausoleum.

Shamshiddin Kulol Mausoleum, XIVc

A small hall with high cupola ceiling holds a beautiful white marble gravestone. Originally from a potter’s family, Shamshiddin Kulol later became the mentor of Bakhauddin Nakshbandi and the spiritual teacher of Amir Taragai, Timur’s father as well as of Timur himself. On the far side of the carved stone pilgrims pour water into an indentation, which, when drunk, will cure men of snoring and women of barrenness. The mausoleum was built by Timur in the 1370s.

Gumbazy-Selidan tomb, XV

Inside the mausoleum next door with turquoise dome and beautifully painted tiled decoration, the cupola lay remains of Timur’s father and other close members of his family. The original door to the mausoleum is displayed in the museum. It is believed, that prophet’s descendants, on their way from Termez to Samarkand died in Shakhrisabz and were buried in this mausoleums. A number of cenotaphs inside the mausoleum may prove this.

Medieval public bath, XIV

Of many bath houses only this one remains. Accessible for men only, it comprises hot and cool bathing rooms, a massage vault and a barber’s room.
Khiva is the central town of Khorezm province, located in the oasis of Khorezm to the south and west of the Aral Sea on both sides of lower reaches of the Oxus (Amudarya). Throughout its history Khorezm an isolated oasis accessible only by long and hazardous caravan routes across the formidable deserts Karakum and Kyzylkum (Black and Red sands) or across the equally dangerous, lifeless plateau Ust – Urt.

The first capital of Khorezmshahs Gurganj because of devastations and the changes in the water system (the Amudarya river changed its course) was abandoned and the population shifted to eastwards, upstream, where Khiva became the new capital of the independent principality of Uzbeks in the late fifteenth century. Sometime in the seventeenth century one of Uzbek khans Aulghazikhan finally transferred the remaining population from Gurganj to the neighborhood of Khiva, where the present Urgench – new Urgench was founded. Nowadays Khiva is one of the most beautiful architectural cities in the world, included in the UNESCO list.

Ichan – Kala (the Inner City or Fortress of Khiva) has a completely preserved belt of 2 kilometer long walls with ramparts, bastions and gates, built partly of clay and partly of sun – baked bricks. The majority of the Ichan – Kala’s architectural monuments were constructed in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The mausoleum of Pahlavan Mahmud, Abdullakhan’s Palace, medreseh and caravan – serai, the medreseh of Mukhammad Aminkhan and the complexes of royal palaces Kunya Ark (Old Castle) and Tash – hauli (Stone House) are particularly interesting examples of the later architectural styles. The Djuma mosque (Friday, or cathedral mosque) is a vast structure with a light roof supported by rows of 212 carved wooden columns.

The skyline of the city is dominated by two minarets: the Ko’k Minor (Blue minaret), also called Kalta Minor (The Short Minaret), and the tall and beautiful Islam-Khoja minaret. Kalta Minor is remarkable for its unusually large diameter of 16 meters and the predominance of green and yellow in the color scheme. It was begun in 1852, but remained unfinished. The Khodja Islam minaret (1908) is the last notable architectural achievement of the Islamic era in central Asia.
Tour Summary:

Day 1: Tashkent

Arrival to Tashkent. Transfer from the airport to the hotel. Sightseeing program in Tashkent.

Day 2: Tashkent – Urgench – Khiva


Day 3: Khiva – Bukhara

In the morning depart Khiva and drive to Bukhara (500 km, 7 hours). On the way stop to see Amu – Darya river. Arrival to Bukhara in the afternoon. Check in to the hotel. Free time. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 4: Bukhara


Day 5: Bukhara

Continue sightseeing Bukhara. Trip to summer palace of Bukhara emirs Sitorai – Mokhikhosa, Chor – Bakr and Bakhoutdin Naqshbandi mausoleum. In the afternoon free time in Bukhara.

Day 6: Bukhara – Shakhrisabz – Samarkand

In the morning depart Bukhara and drive to Samarkand via Shakhrisabz. Stop in Shakhrisabz for sightseeing. Visit ruins of Ak – Saray palace, mausoleum of Jakhongir and Omar – Shaykh, mausoleum Dorut – Tilovat where conqueror Tamerlane’s father and his spiritual tutor are buried, Kok – Gumbaz mosque. In the afternoon continue driving to Samarkand. Arrival to Samarkand, check in to the hotel. Free time.

Day 7: Samarkand


Day 8: Samarkand

Continue sightseeing Samarkand. Free time in the afternoon. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 9: Samarkand–Tashkent

In the morning depart Samarkand and drive to Tashkent. Arrival to Tashkent, check in to the hotel. Free time.

Day 10: Tashkent – departure

End of the tour. Transfer to the airport, departure.
Termez is the center of the southern province of Uzbekistan Surkhandarya. It is one of the ancient towns of Uzbekistan located on the bank of the Amudarya (Oxus), on the borderline of Uzbekistan with Afghanistan. A modern bridge, built on the river, a few kilometers from the city center, connects the city with Mazar – I – Sharif, a city in northern Afghanistan.

For more than 2000 years the city played the role of the most important trading and military post, political and cultural centre on the southern borders of Central Asia. There are three different sites of the city. Old Termez, situated on the river bank, seven kilometers north of modern Termez, dates back to the period of Seleucids, Greek – Bactrian kings. As a result of archeological excavations districts of handcrafts, rich mansions, squares, and Buddhist temples were found. In the ruins of the pre – mongol city, the mausoleum of Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Ali Termezi, called Khakimi at – Termezi can be found.

The mausoleum was built towards the end of the ninth century. Khakimi at – Termezi – a very famous theologian, founder of the “Khakimi” order and spiritual patron of the town is well respected in the Muslim world. At the end of the 14th century a large tombstone was built above the grave of Khakimi at – Termezi with an inscription consisting of biographical information about Khakimi at – Termezi and the date of his death. Next to the mausoleum is a small mosque.

Other monuments are the Zul – Kifla complex, The Kyrk – Kyz castle ruins and The Sultan –Saodat complex.
The fertile Ferghana Valley is situated to the north - east of Uzbekistan, bordering on Kirgizstan and Tajikistan. The valley resembles that of an enormous bowl framed by mountain ridges. Having a milder climate gave Ferghana the edge to produce some very famous fruits and pomegranates. Besides the agricultural aspects, Ferghana valley is also famous for producing delicate hand painted pottery and glasses as gifts and souvenirs. It is also widely known for its local man –made fabric made of silk, like khon – atlas.

The city of Ferghana, formerly named as Skobelev, was founded slightly over a century ago. It is one of the modern centers in Uzbekistan. Ferghana is a green with streets lined with shady plane trees, poplars and acacias and numerous parks and gardens with flower beds and fountains. The monument to Ahmad Al – Fargani, a great 10th century astronomer, geographer and mathematician, best known in Europe as Alfraganus, is in the centre of the central park of the city.

Situated 12 km from Ferghana, is Margilan city. In 2007 the city celebrated its 2000 year anniversary. This city was very famous for producing silks and carpets in times unmemorable. Margilan caravans would carry the silks and carpets through the Great Silk Road, to Arab countries and Europe. Today, Margilan has one of the country’s largest silk factories targeted for the international market.

The ancient village of Rishtan on the way from Margilan to Kokand is famous for its hand painted blue pottery works. Their jugs, plates and teapots are made of a special kind of clay and it rings like a bell every time at the flick of a finger. Large plates called «lagans», deep cups called «shokosa», water – jugs, vessels for milk decorated with glaze ornament «ishkor» of unforgettable turquoise and ultramarine colors, have made the Rishtan’s masters famous at many international exhibitions, they decorate the expositions of many world museums and private collections.

One of the cultural centers of Ferghana Valley is the town of Kokand. Kokand has always been the major city of Fergana Valley. At first the town was known as “Khavokand”, which in translation stands for “beautiful” and also “the town of wind”, then it was called “Khukand, and later – “Kukon”.

According to historical data, Kokand was founded in the 10th century. In the 13th century it was destroyed by the Mongols and later it was
restored again. In the 17th century Kokand was the capital city of the Kokand Khanate, one of the three Uzbek khanates. The Kokand Khanate had expanded its power to the most part of Uzbekistan’s current territory, including Tashkent city, and the territory of neighboring states. The khanate was the first to be eliminated by the tsarist army in 1876. The city of Kokand was also a large religious center. In the years of prosperity there were thirty five madrasahs and one hundred mosques in the city.

City of Namangan, homeland of Mashrab, famous Uzbek poet has a unique place in the ring of cities and towns of Fergana Valley. Ruins of the ancient city of Aksikent are located not far from Namangan. Archeological researches showed that the city had citadel and strong fortress walls. Trade and handicraft production were well developed here. From X to XIII centuries Aksikent was the capital of Fergana Valley. But then it was destroyed by Mongols, and in XVII century – by strongest earthquake. In 1875 Namangan accessed to Russia. At the same time the new city was founded under regular plan. It was separated from the old city by the fortress, from which radial streets branched apart according to established order. In early XX century Namangan was the second biggest city by population and it was the center of cotton processing in Fergana Valley. At the same time the cult buildings such as Khodji Amin mausoleum, Mulo Kyrgyz madrasah and others were built and they are preserved to our days.

City of Andijan, homeland of Zahiriddin Babur, poet and author of famous «Baburname» epos, commander, statesman who conquered India and founded the Great Moguls’ Empire is situated near to Namangan. By age Andijan is one of the most ancient cities of Fergana Valley. Ancient city of Markhamat, capital of the ancient state of Davan – «Ershi», which was famous for fast horses, is located in 30 kilometers from the contemporary city. From this ancient city such horses were delivered to the courts of Chinese emperors as precious jewels. In IX and X centuries Andijan became the possession of Samanids. In XV century the Temurid Babur was Andijan’s ruler.

In 1902 Andijan suffered from strong earthquake, and the city was practically built anew. Among the monuments of past centuries only Djami madrasah was preserved. Today Andijan is one of the largest industrial centers of Uzbekistan. Joint Uzbek – Korean venture for production of cars, which has recently been purchased by general Motors, was built here. There is a machinery plant, cotton mill, textile factory in Andijan. The city is surrounded with fruit gardens, cotton and wheat fields.

Kuva is also one of the most ancient towns of Fergana Valley. Remains of city buildings of III century BC were found in the ancient town of Kuva. Buddha temple of VI – VIII AD were researched and excavated on the territory of ancient town.
Nurata, a small town flattened by the desert Kizilkum against the range Nuratau, has an ancient history. It is the administrative, economic and cultural center of the most mountainous area in Navoi province. The town lies at the foot of the Nurata Mountains, occupying 170 sq. km, from Djizak town in the east to Navoi town in the west on the border with the Kizilkum desert.

The highest peak of the whole mountain range is Hayatbashi (2169 m). Nurata is the land of acclaimed masters of stock-breeding, the land of folklore, the land of affable welcoming and diligent people.

The holy places are still in place here, which attract travelers from all over Central Asia. Already in the antique times here was a large settlement. Khusan’s mosque and the holy mineral spring “Chashma” has special significance among Muslim holy places. According to the legend the history of the spring’s origin is as follows: prophet Mohamed’s son-in-law Hazret Ali hit the ground with his stick and drove in a spring to give the people to drink.

Hundreds of holy fish “marinkas” inhabit in Chashma spring, which ensure the purity of the spring. It is a great pleasure to feed and observe the fish.

We can also see the ruins of walls of ancient Nurata citadel, which has been depleted by time. An ancient bazaar sits nearby the spring, which is unique with its eastern style. A special interest is taken in Namozgokh mosque (X century) which was reconstructed by Emir Abdullah in 1582. The roof of the mosque is adorned by 25 domes.

In Sarmysh gorge, located 40 km away from Nurata, you can see more than 3 thousands ancient petroglyphs (rock drawings) which date back to the Bronze Age. The majority bears pictures of animals that inhabited here in ancient times: bulls, mountain goats, Siberian mountain...
goats – teke, wild rams, wild boars and others. Camel farms, located in the north of Nurata, can provide for a ride anyone willing to take a look at life in the desert with Silk Road’s habitual style. A greater number of Kazakh families live in Kizilkum. Kazak yurts (traditional dwellings) sit nearby modern huts and preferable for summer use. Two parts of desert life that have been preserved for centuries are the Yurt(round tents) and the Camel (the “ship of the desert”). Despite their drab appearance, the yurts are decorated with colorful blankets and jewelry pieces inside. So Just as in ancient times, today you can experience a night in the yurt and camel ride on two – humped Bactrian camel. A trip to the desert is the perfect complement to sightseeing, as it is quite a different experience from sightseeing. You are able to be both active while also having an opportunity to rest and enjoy the natural environment.

The guests are always welcomed and treated with fresh jugs of Kumis (a traditional drink made out of horse milk).

Sarmish – Say Petroglyphs

Sarmish – say is a river gorge on the south slope of the Karatau mountain ridge belonging to the Zarafshan mountain range. It is situated about 30 km northeast of the city of Navoi, which is about 170 km southwest of Samarkand.

The petroglyphs (the carved drawings of primitive people) from the Bronze Age (ca 6000 – 4000 BC), with a total number of more than 4000 thousands, constitute the most important part of the archaeological landscape of Sarmish – say. They are spread all over the territory of the site – at the first sight rather spontaneously, wherever the suitable rock material is found, but in fact their location is determined by certain natural conditions of the landscape, and also by the cultural and functional contents of its particular elements.

The best examples of petroglyphs of all epochs are concentrated in the picturesque canyon, that has rather limited conditions for the building of settlements, but is most suitable for the rock art activity and, probably, for the collective rituals. Also, there are single petroglyphs and simple compositions of the common contents (depictions of animals and scenes of hunting) found on separate stones near the sources of water, along the transit mountain routes and on the tops of hills or mountainous stones dominating there. Nevertheless, despite of the high concentration of petroglyphs and other monuments within the complex, the landscape to a considerable degree keep its desert virgin character.

In addition to the petroglyphs, there is a cave used by primitive people. Many complicated paths connect rooms located underground, which was an ideal place to stay cool during the hot summer days and warm during cold winter nights.
Muynak, an Uzbek town, has become a symbol of the Aral Sea’s tragedy. 30 years ago Myinak was a prosperous port – town. Local people were proud with wonderful beaches and plenty of fish in the Sea. Once a bustling fishing community and Uzbekistan’s only port city with tens of thousands of residents, Moynaq is now a shadow of its former self; dozens of miles from the rapidly receding shoreline of the Aral Sea. Fishing had always been part of the economy of the region, and Moynaq became a center of industrial fishing and canning. However, overfishing the shallow sea in the past made it very susceptible to economic collapse as the Aral Sea has dried up. Today Myinak is located more than 100 km far from the Aral Sea.

Now it is the unique tourist object. Perhaps the old harbor of Myinak (nowadays called “the graveyard of ships”) makes the grimmest impressions on visitors: rusty ships are standing in the sand with the flocks of goats roaming among them. One can see dead sea beached boats, walk around fantastic ‘moon’ landscape of west bank and along Usturt plateau that is flanking the sea shore. Also it is possible to have adventure trip on boat by the sea that is near to disappear, to see fascinating sunsets and sunrises. Our company can organize two day tours to this site to witness all the tragedy of the Aral Sea.
Karshi, the regional centre of Kashkadarya province of Uzbekistan, was once one of the central cities of ancient Sogd. By the decision of the government of Uzbekistan together with UNESCO its 2700 year anniversary was widely celebrated. Karshi witnessed many historical events and battles, saw years of prosperity and destructions. The legions of Alexander the Great, the Arabian and Mongolian conquerors traveled and passed its territory. Several times it changed its location and its name — in ancient times it was named Nahsheb, then Nesef, and in the XVth century Karshi, that is a palace, from the headquarters of the Mongolian khans constructed in vicinities of the city. And from 1922 till 1937 it was called Behbudi in honour of writer—educator Mahmudhodzhi Behbudi, tragically killed here in torture chambers of the Bukhara emir.

In 1863 Karshi was visited by the Hungarian traveller Herman Vamberi. Here what he writes about the city: “Karshi, ancient Nahsheb, by its position and commercial value is the second city in Bukhara khanate. It consists of a city and a fortress (Kurgancha), which is on the northwest part and is badly strengthened. In Karshi now there are ten caravan—serays and a rich enough market and if political distempers did not interfere, it would take active part in transit trade between Bukhara, Kabul and India. 25 thousand inhabitants live in the city, mostly Uzbeks.

They comprise the nucleus of the army of Bukhara emir. Moreover, the population consists of Tadjiks, Indians, Afgans and Jews. On the manufactory point, Karshi is distinguished by different kinds of knife products. These products not only disperse across all Central Asia, but also are delivered by pilgrims to Persia, Arabia and Turkey where they are sold at three times and even four times as much as their initial costs. One kind of it made of Damask steel with the handles which have been laid out by gold and silver, really differs the big taste and durability that can shame the most well-known products of Sheffield and Birmingham”.

Along the Karshi oasis there are over 300 ruins of ancient and medieval settlements. Russian archeologists and historians made a big contribution in their studying. The first steps were made in the XIX—th century. Russian archeologist—fan B.Litvinov who visited Karshi in 1895 wrote: "Near Karshi the largest and the most valuable to archeology and history are the ruins of Shulluktepa (the Hill of bloodsucking leeches) fortresses. Nowadays inhabitants still take brick for their constructions from there, and a lot of houses and well—known baths of Karshi were constructed of this brick. And now the market of Bukhara is full of wonders and artefacts which have been dug out in Shulluktepa “.

Now Karshi and its vicinities are well—known for that the considerable part of gas and oil of Uzbekistan is extracted here. The earths of this area are also rich in other minerals.

The Kashkadarya province is also one of the main suppliers of cotton and grain of the country.
Nasreddin Hodja is Uzbekistan’s (and perhaps all of Islamic world’s) best-known trickster. His legendary wit and droll trickery were possibly based on the exploits and words of a historical imam. Nasreddin reputedly was born in 1208 in the village of Horto near Sivrihisar in Turkey. In 1237 he moved to Aksehir, where he died in the Islamic year 683 (1284 or 1285). As many as 350 anecdotes have been attributed to the Hodja, as he most often is called. Hodja is a title meaning teacher or scholar. He frequently is compared with the northern European trickster Till Eulenspiegel.

The many spelling variations for Nasreddin include:


The many spelling variations for Hodja include:

Hodja, Hodscha, Hoca, Chotza, Khodja, and Khoja.

The Nasreddin stories are known throughout the Middle East and have touched cultures around the world. Superficially, most of the Nasreddin stories may be told as jokes or humorous anecdotes. They are told and retold endlessly in the teahouses and caravanserais of Asia and can be heard in homes and on the radio. But it is inherent in a Nasreddin story that it may be understood at many levels. There is the joke, followed by a moral – and usually the little extra which brings the consciousness of the potential mystic a little further on the way to realization.

The anecdotes attributed to him reveal a satirical personality with a biting tongue that he was not afraid to use even against the most tyrannical rulers of his time. He is the symbol of Middle – Eastern satirical comedy and the rebellious feelings of people against the dynasties that once ruled this part of the world.
Everyone Is Right

Once when Nasreddin Hodja was serving as qadi, one of his neighbors came to him with a complaint against a fellow neighbor. The Hodja listened to the charges carefully, then concluded, “Yes, dear neighbor, you are quite right.” Then the other neighbor came to him. The Hodja listened to his defense carefully, then concluded, “Yes, dear neighbor, you are quite right.” The Hodja’s wife, having listened in on the entire proceeding, said to him, “Husband, both men cannot be right.” The Hodja answered, “Yes, dear wife, you are quite right.”

Faith Moves Mountains

The Hodja was boasting about the power of his faith. “If your faith is so strong, then pray for that mountain to come to you,” said a skeptic, pointing to a mountain in the distance. The Hodja prayed fervently, but the mountain did not move. He prayed more, but the mountain remained unmoved. Finally the Hodja got up from his knees and began walking toward the mountain. “I am a humble man,” he said, “and the faith of Islam is a practical one. If the mountain will not come to the Hodja, then the Hodja will go to the mountain.”

Walnuts and Pumpkins

Nasreddin Hodja was lying in the shade of an ancient walnut tree. His body was at rest, but, befitting his calling as an imam, his mind did not relax. Looking up into the mighty tree he considered the greatness and wisdom of Allah. “Allah is great and Allah is good,” said the Hodja, “but was it indeed wise that such a great tree as this be created to bear only tiny walnuts as fruit? Behold the stout stem and strong limbs. They could easily carry the pumpkins that grow from spindly vines in yonder field, vines that cannot begin to bear the weight of their own fruit. Should not walnuts grow on weakly vines and pumpkins on sturdy trees?” So thinking, the Hodja dosed off, only to be awakened by a walnut that fell from the tree, striking him on his forehead. “Allah be praised!” he exclaimed, seeing what had happened. “If the world had been created according to my meager wisdom, it would have been a pumpkin that fell from the tree and hit me on the head. It would have killed me for sure! Allah is great! Allah is good! Allah is wise!” Never again did Nasreddin Hodja question the wisdom of Allah.

The Smell of Soup and the Sound of Money

A beggar was given a piece of bread, but nothing to put on it. Hoping to get something to go with his bread, he went to a nearby inn and asked for a handout. The innkeeper turned him away with nothing, but the beggar sneaked into the kitchen where he saw a large pot of soup cooking over the fire. He held his piece of bread over the steaming pot, hoping to thus capture a bit of flavor from the good-smelling vapor. Suddenly the innkeeper seized him by the arm and accused him of stealing soup. “I took no soup,” said the beggar. “I was only smelling the vapor.” “Then you must pay for the smell,” answered the innkeeper. The poor beggar had no money, so the angry innkeeper dragged him before the qadi. Now Nasreddin Hodja was at that time serving as qadi, and he heard the innkeeper’s complaint and the beggar’s explanation. So you demand payment for the smell of your soup?” summarized the Hodja after the hearing.

“Yes!” insisted the innkeeper. “Then I myself will pay you,” said the Hodja, “and I will pay for the smell of your soup with the sound of money.” Thus saying, the Hodja drew two coins from his pocket, rang them together loudly, put them back into his pocket, and sent the beggar and the innkeeper each on his own way.
The Debt

Nasreddin was strolling through the marketplace when a shopkeeper accosted him, berating the Hodja loudly for his failure to pay a debt. “My dear friend,” answered the Hodja, “just how much do I owe you?” “Seventy – five piasters,” shouted the angry shopkeeper. “Now, now,” replied the Hodja. “You must know that I intend to pay you thirty – five piasters tomorrow, and next month another thirty – five. That means that I owe you only five piasters. Are you not ashamed of yourself for accosting me soloudly in public for a debt of only five piasters?”

The Older Wife

Nasreddin Hodja had two wives, one much older than the other. “Which of us do you love the most?” asked the older wife one day. “I love you both the same,” answered Nasreddin, wisely. Not satisfied with this answer, the older wife continued, “If the two of us wives fell out of a boat, which one of us would you rescue first?” “Well,” replied Nasreddi, “you can swim a little, can’t you?”

Eat, My Coat, Eat

The Hodja was invited to a banquet. Not wanting to be pretentious, he wore his everyday clothes, only to discover that everyone ignored him, including the host. So he went back home and put on his fanciest coat, and then returned to the banquet. Now he was greeted cordially by everyone and invited to sit down and eat and drink. When the soup was served to him he dunked the sleeve of his coat into the bowl and said, “Eat, my coat, eat!” The startled host asked the Hodja to explain his strange behavior.

“When I arrived here wearing my other clothes,” explained the Hodja, “no one offered me anything to eat or drink. But when I returned wearing this fine coat, I was immediately offered the best of everything, so I can only assume that it was the coat and not myself who was invited to your banquet.”
The Robe

The Hodja, bruised and limping, came upon a neighbor at the marketplace. “My dear friend, what happened to you?” asked the neighbor. The Hodja answered, “Last night my wife grew angry and kicked my robe down the stairs.” “But how could that have caused your injuries?” continued the neighbor. “I was wearing the robe when she kicked it down the stairs,” explained the Hodja.

The Recipe

The Hodja purchased a piece of meat at the market, and on his way home he met a friend. Seeing the Hodja’s purchase, the friend told him an excellent recipe for stew. “I’ll forget it for sure,” said the Hodja. “Write it on a piece of paper for me.” The friend obliged him, and the Hodja continued on his way, the piece of meat in one hand and the recipe in the other. He had not walked far when suddenly a large hawk swooped down from the sky, snatched the meat, and flew away with it. “It will do you no good!” shouted the Hodja after the disappearing hawk. “I still have the recipe!”

The Last Laugh

Nasreddin Hodja had grown old and was near death. His two grieving wives, knowing that his end was near, were dressed in mourning robes and veils. “What is this?” he said, seeing their sorrowful appearance. “Put aside your veils. Wash your faces. Comb your hair. Make yourselves beautiful. Put on your most festive apparel.” “How could we do that?” asked the older of his wives, “with our dear husband on his deathbed?” With a wry smile he replied, speaking more to himself than to them, “Perhaps when the Angel of Death makes his entry he will see the two of you, all decked out like young brides, and will take one of you instead of me.” With these final words he laughed quietly to himself, happily closed his eyes, and died.

Delivering a Khutba

Once, Nasreddin was invited to deliver a khutba. When he got on the minbar (pulpit), he asked “Do you know what I am going to say?” The audience replied “NO”, so he announced “I have no desire to speak to people who don’t even know what I will be talking about” and he left. The people felt embarrassed and called him back again the next day. This time when he asked the same question, the people replied “YES”. So Nasreddin said, “Well, since you already know what I am going to say, I won’t waste any more of your time” and he left. Now the people were really perplexed. They decided to try one more time and once again invited the Mullah to speak the following week. Once again he asked the same question – “Do you know what I am going to say?” Now the people were prepared and so half of them answered “YES” while the other half replied “NO”. So Nasreddin said “The half who know what I am going to say, tell it to the other half” and he left!

Two sides of a river

Nasreddin sat on a river bank when someone shouted to him from the opposite side: – “Hey! how do I get to the other side?” – “You are on the other side!” Nasreddin shouted back.

Whom do you trust

A neighbour comes to the gate of Mullah Nasreddin’s yard. The Mullah goes out to meet him outside. “Would you mind, Mullah,” the neighbour asks, “lending me your donkey today?
I have some goods to transport to the next town.” The Mullah doesn’t feel inclined to lend out the animal to that particular man, however; so, not to seem rude, he answers: “I’m sorry, but I’ve already lent him to somebody else.” Suddenly the donkey can be heard braying loudly behind the wall of the yard. “You lied to me, Mullah!” the neighbour exclaims. “There it is behind that wall!” “What do you mean?” the Mullah replies indignantly. “Whom would you rather believe, a donkey or your Mullah?”

Children saw Hodja coming from the vineyard with 2 basketfuls of grapes on his donkey, gathered around him and asked him to give them some. Hodja picked up a bunch of grapes, cut it up into pieces and gave each child a piece. “You have so much, but you gave us so little,” the children complained. “There is no difference whether you have a basketful or a small piece. They all taste the same,” Hodja remarked.

One day mullah Nasriddin entered his favorite teahouse and said: “The moon is more useful than the sun”. An old man asked: “Why, mullah?” Nasriddin replied: “We need the light more during the night than during the day.”

A friend asked the mullah: “How old are you?” “Forty” — replied the mullah. The friend said: “But you said the same thing two years ago!” “Yes” — replied the mullah. “I always stand by what I have said.”

The villagers once said to Nasriddin: “You may have lost your donkey, Nasriddin, but you don’t have to grieve over it more than you did about the loss of your first wife”. “Ah, but if you remember when I lost my wife,” all you villagers said: “We’ll find you someone else. So far, nobody has offered to replace my donkey.”

Nasriddin nearly fell into a pool one day. A man whom he knew slightly was nearby, and saved him. Every time he met Nasriddin after that he would remind him of the service which he had performed. When this had happened several times Nasriddin took him to the water, jumped in, and stood with his head just above water and shouted: “Now I am as wet as I would have been if you had not saved me! Leave me alone.”

“Of course not,” said mullah. “Why should I pay for something that I did not want to buy?”

More useful

Promises kept

Taste the same

Deductive reasoning

Tit for tat
Abu Ja’far Muhammad ibn Musa Al – Khwarizmi

**Born:** about 780 in Khwarazm (now Kharazm province in Uzbekistan.)

**Died:** about 850.

Al’Khwarizmi was an Islamic mathematician who wrote on Hindu – Arabic numerals and was among the first to use zero as a place holder in positional base notation. The word algorithm derives from his name. His algebra treatise Hisab al – jabr w'al – muqabala gives us the word algebra and can be considered as the first book to be written on algebra.

We know few details of Abu Ja’far Muhammad ibn Musa al – Khwarizmi’s life. One unfortunate effect of this lack of knowledge seems to be the temptation to make guesses based on very little evidence. But the name al – Khwarizmi may indicate that he came from Khwarizm south of the Aral Sea in Central Asia.

The algebra treatise Hisab al – jabr w'al – muqabala was the most famous and important of all of al – Khwarizmi’s works. It is the title of this text that gives us the word “algebra” and it is the first book to be written on algebra. The book was written in Baghdad, where al – Khwarizmi worked under the patronage of Caliph Al – Mamun and he dedicated two of his texts to the Caliph.

Al – Mamun was a great patron of learning and founded an academy called the House of Wisdom where Greek philosophical and scientific works were translated. He also built up a library of manuscripts, the first major library to be set up since that at Alexandria, collecting important works from Byzantium. In addition to the House of Wisdom, al – Mamun set up observatories in which Muslim astronomers could build on the knowledge acquired by earlier peoples. Al – Khwarizmi and his colleagues the Banu Musa were scholars at the House of Wisdom in Baghdad. Their tasks there involved the translation of Greek scientific manuscripts and they also studied, and wrote on, algebra, geometry and astronomy. These were his treatise on algebra and his treatise on astronomy.
Al – Khwarizmi also wrote a treatise on Hindu–Arabic numerals. The Arabic text is lost but a Latin translation, Algoritmi de numero Indorum in English Al – Khwarizmi on the Hindu Art of Reckoning gave rise to the word algorithm deriving from his name in the title. Unfortunately the Latin translation (translated into English in 19) is known to be much changed from al – Khwarizmi’s original text (of which even the title is unknown). The work describes the Hindu place – value system of numerals based on 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 0.

The first use of zero as a place holder in positional base notation was probably due to al – Khwarizmi in this work. Methods for arithmetical calculation are given, and a method to find square roots is known to have been in the Arabic original although it is missing from the Latin version.

Al – Khwarizmi wrote a major work on geography which give latitudes and longitudes for 2402 localities as a basis for a world map. The book, which is based on Ptolemy’s Geography, lists with latitudes and longitudes, cities, mountains, seas, islands, geographical regions, and rivers. The manuscript does include maps which on the whole are more accurate than those of Ptolemy. In particular it is clear that where more local knowledge was available to al – Khwarizmi such as the regions of Islam, Africa and the Far East then his work is considerably more accurate than that of Ptolemy, but for Europe al – Khwarizmi seems to have used Ptolemy’s data.

A number of minor works were written by al – Khwarizmi on topics such as the astrolabe, on which he wrote two works, on the sundial, and on the Jewish calendar. He also wrote a political history containing horoscopes of prominent persons.
The total number of works produced by al-Biruni during his lifetime is impressive. It is estimated that he wrote around 146 works with a total of about 13,000 folios (a folio contains about the same amount as a printed page from a modern book). The range of al-Biruni’s works covers essentially the whole of science at his time.

We know certain dates in al-Biruni’s life with certainty for he describes astronomical events in his works which allow accurate dates and places to be determined. By the age of seventeen al-Biruni was engaged in serious scientific work for it was in 990 that he computed the latitude of Kath by observing the maximum altitude of the sun.

His description of an eclipse of the moon on 24 May 997 which he observed at Kath means that he had returned to his native country by this time. The eclipse was an event that was also visible in Baghdad and al-Biruni had arranged with Abu'l-Wafa to observe it there. Comparing their timings enabled them to calculate the difference in longitude between the cities. We know that al-Biruni moved around frequently during this period for by 1000 he was at Gurgan being supported by Qabus, the ruler of the Ziyarid state. He dedicated his work Chronology to Qabus around 1000 and he was still in Gurgan on 19 February 1003 and 14 August 1003 when he observed eclipses of the moon there. We should record that in the Chronology al-Biruni refers to seven earlier works which he had written: one on the decimal system, one on the astrolabe, one on astronomical observations, three on astrology, and two on history.

His most famous work India was written as a direct result of the studies he made while in that country. The India is a massive work covering many different aspects of the country. Al-Biruni describes the religion and philosophy of India, its caste system and marriage customs. He then studies the Indian systems of writing and numbers before going on to examine the geography of the country. The book also
examines Indian astronomy, astrology and the calendar. The book might have been written, when al – Biruni was in India with Mahmud Ghaznavid during Mahmud’s military excursions into India. It is likely that al – Biruni was essentially a prisoner of Mahmud and was not free to leave and it meant that al – Biruni was taken to that country by Mahmud. From around 1022 Mahmud’s armies began to have success in taking control of the northern parts of India and in 1026 his armies marched to the Indian Ocean. Al – Biruni seems only to have been in the northern parts of India, and we are uncertain how many visits he made, but observations he made there enabled him to determine the latitudes of eleven towns around the Punjab and the borders of Kashmir.

Al – Biruni studied Indian literature in the original, translating several Sanskrit texts into Arabic. He also wrote several treatises devoted to certain aspects of Indian astronomy and mathematics which were of particular interest to him. Al – Biruni was amazingly well read, having knowledge of Sanskrit literature on topics such as astrology, astronomy, chronology, geography, grammar, mathematics, medicine, philosophy, religion, and weights and measures.

One of the most important of al – Biruni’s many texts is Shadows which he is thought to have written around 1021. The contents of the work include the Arabic nomenclature of shade and shadows, strange phenomena involving shadows, gnomonics, the history of the tangent and secant functions, applications of the shadow functions to the astrolabe and to other instruments, shadow observations for the solution of various astronomical problems, and the shadow – determined times of Muslim prayers. Shadows is an extremely important source for our knowledge of the history of mathematics, astronomy, and physics. It also contains
important ideas such as the idea that acceleration is connected with non-uniform motion, using three rectangular coordinates to define a point in 3-space, and ideas that some see as anticipating the introduction of polar coordinates.

The book details the mathematical contributions of al-Biruni. These include: theoretical and practical arithmetic, summation of series, combinatorial analysis, the rule of three, irrational numbers, ratio theory, algebraic definitions, method of solving algebraic equations, geometry, Archimedes’ theorems, trisection of the angle and other problems which cannot be solved with ruler and compass alone, conic sections, stereometry, stereographic projection, trigonometry, the sine theorem in the plane, and solving spherical triangles.

Important contributions to geodesy and geography were also made by al-Biruni. He introduced techniques to measure the earth and distances on it using triangulation. He found the radius of the earth to be 6339.6 km, a value not obtained in the West until the 16th century. His Masudic canon contains a table giving the coordinates of six hundred places, almost all of which he had direct knowledge.

Not all, however, were measured by al-Biruni himself, some being taken from a similar table given by al-Khwārizmī. The author of remarks that al-Biruni seemed to realise that for places given by both al-Khwārizmī and Ptolemy, the value obtained by al-Khwārizmī is the more accurate.

Al-Biruni also wrote a treatise on time-keeping, wrote several treatises on the astrolabe and describes a mechanical calendar. He makes interesting observations on the velocity of light, stating that its velocity is immense compared with that of sound.

Abu Ali al-Husain ibn Abdallah ibn Sina (Avicenna)

Born: 980 in Khārmaīthen (near Bukhara), Central Asia (now Uzbekistan).

Died: June 1037 in Hamadan, Persia (now Iran).

Ibn Sina or Avicenna was the most influential of all Islamic philosopher-scientists. He wrote on medicine as well as geometry, astronomy, arithmetic and music. Ibn Sina’s two most important works are The Book of Healing and The Canon of Medicine. The first is a scientific encyclopaedia covering logic, natural sciences, psychology, geometry, astronomy, arithmetic and music. The second is the most famous single book in the history of medicine.

Ibn Sina wrote about 450 works, of which around 240 have survived. Of the surviving works, 150 are on philosophy while 40 are devoted to medicine, the two fields in which he contributed most. He also wrote on psychology, geology, mathematics, astronomy, and logic. His
most important work as far as mathematics is concerned, however, is his immense encyclopedia work, the Kitab al-Shifa (The Book of Healing). One of the four parts of this work is devoted to mathematics and ibn Sina includes astronomy and music as branches of mathematics within the encyclopedia. In fact he divided mathematics into four branches, geometry, astronomy, arithmetic, and music, and he then subdivided each of these topics. Geometry he subdivided into geodesy, statics, kinematics, hydrostatics, and optics; astronomy he subdivided into astronomical and geographical tables, and the calendar; arithmetic he subdivided into algebra, and Indian addition and subtraction; music he subdivided into musical instruments.

**Great Amir Temur**

Right in the heart of Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, a fabulous statue of a man on horseback dominates a cool, tree-lined square. The rider’s pose is regal and military. The sculptor has captured the moment of a great leader in action. His right arm is raised aloft, perhaps addressing his troops or surveying the sweep of his empire. With his left hand he reins his horse in tightly, catching the snorting beast in mid-stride, its head sharply bowed, its left foreleg poised in the air. On his left sits a long, gently curved sword secured above a circular embossed shield. ...This is the monument to great Amir Temur.

All Turkic peoples are proud of the Great Son of the Uzbek people, the ancestor of genius, the famous fighter and military leader Sokhibkiron Amir Temur who contributed greatly to the formation and development of the Uzbek statehood.

Amir Temur Taragai Mukhmad Bakhodir ugli was born on April 9 (8), 1336 in the settlement of Khoja Ilgor which was located ten kilometers from the town of Shakhrisabz. In the Middle Ages Shakhrisabz’s name was Kesh.

In Europe he was known as Tamerlane or Tumbelane. The name was derived from the Persian Timur-i-lang, “Temur the Lame” by Europeans during the 16th century. His father Taragai Mukhhammad Bakhodir came from the Barlas clan and he belonged to the elite of the clan. Amir Temur’s mother Tegina Begim Mokh (according to some sources – Nekina) was a Bukharian by birth and she was a daughter of the famous theologian Sadr-ash-shariat Ubaydullakh Ibn Akhmad Makhbubi Bukhari.

Amir Temur was brought up in the atmosphere of fighting, competing and hunting, that’s why for him to lose honor was equal to death. The building up of Amir Temur’s character was the result of a number of conflicting events. The well known historian of that time Akhmad Ibn Arabshakh wrote in the Adjaib – al-Makdur book: ‘Temur’s qaze was steady and quiet. He didn’t
know what the fear of death was. He preferred truth, irrespective how bitter it could be to lie and secrecy. Being unbelievably brave and strong, this person made people respect and obey him”.

In 1360 Temurbek, serving to the Mongolian khan Tugluq Temurkhans became the ruler of Kesh district. At that time Amir Temur had negotiations with the ruler of Balkh Amir Husain with the aim to overthrow the Mongolian Khan Tugluq Temurkhans and put an end to the Mongolian sway over Movarounnahr. However they were defeated and they had to escape to Sistan and collect forces there. In 1364 he and his uncle Khoja Barlas managed to liberate Movarounnahr from Mongols and take power. In spring of 1366 forces of Amir Khusain and Amir Timur came to Samarkand. In 1370 Amir Timur occupied Samarkand and became the ruler of the whole Movarounnahr. At that time Amir Husain died.

Amir Temur added the word Kuragon to his name which meant “son in - law” because he married the sister of Amir Husain, a daughter of the representative of the Mongolian clan of Genhisids Kazankhan. Ruling the country Amir Temur had the “Rosti – Rusti” (force is in justice) motto and he always tried his best to follow his motto. The symbol of the new state established by Amir Temur was a sky – blue banner. The well – known scientist, professor of oriental languages and literature of the Pesht University Herman Vamberi writes that the portal of Amir Temur’s palace was crowned by a symbol consisting of three circles which meant Amir Temur’s ruling of three sides of the world, North, South, and West.

From that time Amir Temur’s political campaigns began which lasted 35 years. First of all he separated his power to the white horde Khanate which was located along the Sir – Darya River. In 1372 Amir Temur conquered Khorezm. In 1389 he began fighting against Tokhtamysh who was perfidious toward him. In 1392 the skillful Amir Temur marched on the Caucasus and occupied Georgia and Armenia. In 1395 the skillful fighter defeated Tokhtamysh on the bank of the Terek river and chased him up to Yelets. Some time after Amir Timur conquered the capital of the Golden Horde.

In 1398 – 99 he marched on India, conquered its capital, Delhi, and came back to Samarkand. In 1400 Amir Temur defeated the Sultan of Egypt on the territory of Syria. Two years later, in 1402, he gained a crippling victory over the forces of Bayazid.

In 1404 Amir Timur came back to Samarkand and began preparations for the march on China. Without taking the advice of his generals to remain in Samarkand until the spring, Timur and his army planned to advance northwards without delays, encamp at various points near the river Jaxartes and wait for the first sign of spring to strike towards China.
They left Samarkand early in January on a day chosen by the astrologers as auspicious. Thus Tamerlane led an enormous army and departed on his last and most fantastic campaign to conquer China when he was close to seventy years old. He was too weak to walk and had to be carried in a litter. Toward the end of January, they reached Utrar. There Timur’s health had suffered from the severity of the journey and he fell ill with pneumonia. On 17 or 18 February 1405, Tamerlane died.

His body was carried back and buried at the Gur-i-Mir, Samarkand.

Thus, as the results of numerous and lasting military campaigns Amir Timur managed to establish a vast and powerful empire consisting of Movarounnahr, Caspian Lands, Khorasan (it is Afghanistan and the north — western part of Iran), a major part of India, Iraq, Iran, the Northern Caucasus and a number of countries of the Front Asia. At that time inter-state cultural and economic relations reached a high level of development.

Character and personality.

There are abundant ancient sources written about Tamerlane. We have the primary source from Spanish Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, sent by King Henry III of Castile on a return embassy to Tamerlane. There is also a Persian biography of Tamerlane by Sharaf ad-Din Ali Yazdiy and the Arab biography by Ahmad ibn Arabshah; from Marlowe to Edgar Allan Poe, he continues to fascinate us as hero or viper.

He was said to be tall strongly built and well proportioned, with a large head and broad forehead. His complexion was pale and ruddy, his beard long and his voice full and resonant. Arabshah describes him approaching seventy, a master politician and military strategist: steadfast in mind and robust in body, brave and fearless, firm as rock. He did not care for jesting or lying; wit and trifling pleased him not; truth, even were it painful, delighted him...He loved bold and valiant soldiers, by whose aid he opened the locks of terror, tore men to pieces like lions, and overturned mountains. He was faultless in
strategy, constant in fortune, firm of purpose and truthful in business.

In 1941, the body of Tamerlane was permitted to be exhumed by a Russian scientist, M. M. Gerasimov. The scientist found Timur, after examining his skeleton, a Mongoloid man about 5 feet 8 inches. He also confirmed Tamerlane’s lameness. In his book The Face Finder, Gerasimov explains how he was able to reconstruct exact likenesses of Timur from a careful consideration of his skull.

Amir Temur contributed greatly to the improvement of cities and the whole empire. He did much to turn his capital — Samarkand into a more beautiful city. First of all, by his order, irrigation works were carried out, and wide avenues were built. Numerous, scientists, workers of literature and art, craftsmen, skilful builders, who came from occupied countries, contributed greatly to the development of Amir Temur’s state. It was not by chance that at that time Samarkand was called as “face of the Earth”, “invaluable pearl of the orient”. The Spanish Ambassador Rui Gonsales de Klaviho wrote in his book “Diary of the travel to Timur’s court in 1403 – 06” that Amir Timur ordered to build a wide trade street through the city with shops located on each side of the street. According to the Ambassador’s book Samarkand became a global warehouse thanking to Amir Temur.

Amir Temur began big construction works in the capital of Movarounnahr, Samarkand, which resulted in the appearance of true pearls of art. In the outskirts of Samarkand Amir Temur laid out beautiful gardens. They were Boghi shamol, Boghi dilkusho, Boghi maidon and others which impressed by their order and beauty.

By Amir Temur’s order the Bibi- Khanum mosque was built in Samarkand in honor of his first wife Saroi Mulk Khanum. The city was decorated by the Kok – Saroi palace and a number of mosques, mausoleums and madrassahs. The Ok – Saroi palace was built in Shakhrisabz, the Zangi – ota mausoleum — near Tashkent, a majestic mausoleum in Turkistan.

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The empire that Timur had built could not be kept together by his descendents, none of whom shared the same iron will that he had possessed. As had happened with Chingiz Khan’s empire, factions soon developed, and vassals on the periphery of the Timurid domains quickly seized their chance to assert their independence. Shortly after Timur’s death, little was left of the former empire except for Transoxiana and Afghanistan. However, although the size of the Timurid empire was drastically reduced, his successors went on to usher in the Muslim equivalent of the European Renaissance, centered in the cities of Samarkand and Herat.

Two of the Amir’s four sons had died before their father: Jahangir (1355 – 1375) and Umar Shaykh (1355 – 1394). His second son, Miran Shah (1366 – 1408), passed away shortly after his father, leaving only the youngest, Shah Rukh (1377 – 1447) as an heir. In fact, Timur had appointed his grandson, Pir Muhammad to succeed him, but he also died shortly after his grandfather, in 1406. In 1409, Shah Rukh seized power, making Herat his capital. His eldest son, Ulugh Beg (1394 – 1449) was appointed governor of Samarkand, while his second son,
Baysunghur (1399 – 1433) served as his wazir in the capital. None of these rulers had inherited Timur’s passion for conquest, but they did share his interest in building and played a major role as patrons of the arts and sciences. A chronicler of the time wrote that “From the time of Adam until this day no age, period, cycle or moment can be indicated in which people enjoyed such peace and tranquility.” Under their patronage, music, calligraphy, Persian miniature painting, literature, and various scientific pursuits flourished.

Ulugh Beg, who ruled over the empire during the two years between his father’s death and his own, was one of the greatest astronomers that the world has ever seen. He built a magnificent observatory in Samarkand and the calculations that he made with it gained him fame in Europe as an eminent scholar. Unfortunately, he was murdered in 1449 by his son Abdul Latif, who was alarmed at the secular pursuits of his father. A year after the murder, Abdul Latif also died.

In 1452, Abu Sa’id (1424 – 1469), a grandson of Miran Shah, brought the Timurid domains, still consisting of Transoxiana, Afghanistan and northern Persia, under his control. He was followed by Sultan Husayn Bayqara (1438 – 1506), a grandson of Umar Shaykh, who began his rule of nearly four decades in 1468. “It was under his beneficient direction that Herat achieved the zenith of its glory as a centre of art, literature and scholarship.”

It was at Husayn’s court that the poet Mir Alisher Navoi, who popularized Chagatay, the classical Turkic language, as a literary medium, rose to prominence, along with the miniature painter Bihzad and the poet Jami. However, at the same time, the ruler also continued the pursuit of pleasure which had been a mark of most of the Timurid dynasty and which had resulted in more than a few of Timur’s descendants dying from too much alcohol or other forms of debauchery.

Timurid power in Central Asia came to an end with the advent of another Turkic tribe from the north: the Uzbeks. These former nomads who had converted to Islam while members of the Golden Horde had become disaffected with a life of riding and raiding and were intent on settling in Transoxiana and adopting a sedentary way of life on the trade routes that ran through Central Asia.

In 1500, under their leader, Muhammad Shaibani Khan (1451 – 1510), they captured Samarkand from Zahiruddin Babur (1483 – 1530), a great – great – great – grandson of Timur and the ruler of Ferghana, who had himself captured the city in 1497. Babur recaptured Samarkand in 1501, only to lose it to Shaibani again in 1505. Herat fell to the Uzbeks shortly after, in 1507. Babur made one more attempt to regain Samarkand in 1511, but he was unsuccessful and was forced by the Uzbeks to flee south in the following year. However, his career as a ruler was not over, as he subsequently went on to found the Moghul dynasty, which ruled India until the British took over the country in the early nineteenth century. The Shaibanid Uzbeks established an empire in Transoxiana which lasted until the end of the sixteenth century.
Zahir – ud – din Mohammad Babur

Zahir – ud – din Mohammad Babur, Zahiriddin Muhammad Bobur (February 14, 1483 – December 26, 1530) (also spelled Baber or Babar), emperor (1526 – 30) and founder of the Mughal dynasty of India, a descendant of the Mongol conqueror Timur (Tamerlane). In 1526 he founded the Mughal Empire and the Mughal dynasty.

Babur is known to have been incredibly strong and physically fit. Allegedly, he would carry two men, one on each of his shoulders, and then climb slopes on the run, just for the exercise this afforded. Local legend holds that Babur made a point of swimming across every major river in India, again for exercise.

Babur - military career

When only twelve years of age, Babur succeeded his father as ruler of Fargana. His uncles were relentless in their attempts to dislodge him from this position; Babur spent a major portion of his life shelterless and in exile, as detailed below.

In 1497, Babur attacked and gained possession of the Uzbek city of Samarkand. While he was winning that city, a rebellion among Uzbek nobles back home robbed him of Ferghana. While he was marching to recover it, his troops deserted him; he lost Samarkand as well as Ferghana. Babur did manage to regain both places within a relatively brief period. However, in 1501, he was again defeated, this time by his most formidable enemy, Muhammad Shaybani, Khan of the Uzbeks; Samarkhand, his lifelong obsession, was lost again.

For three years, Babur concentrated on building up a strong army. In 1504, he was able to cross the snowy Hindu Kush mountains and capture Kabul. With this move, he gained a wealthy new kingdom and re-established his fortunes.

In the following year, Babur united with Husayn Bayqarah of Herat against Muhammad Shaybani. The death of Husayn Bayqarah in 1506 put paid to that venture, but Babur occupied his ally’s city of Herat and spent a year there, enjoying the pleasures of that city. A brewing rebellion finally...
induced him to return to Kabul from Herat. He prevailed on that occasion, but two years later, a revolt among some of his leading generals drove him out of Kabul; he was compelled to escape with very few companions. Babur however soon returned; he again captured Kabul and compelled the allegiance of the rebels.

Muhammad Shaybani died in 1510. Babur used this opportunity to regain his ancestral Timurid territories. He received considerable aid from Shah Ismail I, Safavid ruler of Persia, and made a triumphant entry into Samarkand in 1511. However, he was again defeated by the Uzbeks in 1514 and returned to Kabul with great difficulty.

**Babur – conquest of north India**

Babur now resigned all hopes of recovering Fergana. Although he dreaded an invasion from the Uzbeks to his West, his attention increasingly turned towards India. He had made several preliminary incursions, including an attack on the Gakhar stronghold of Pharwala, when an opportunity for a more extended expedition presented itself in 1521. Ibrahim Lodi, ruler of the Delhi Sultanate, was widely detested; several of his Afghan nobles invited Babur’s intervention.

Babur assembled a 12,000 – man army, complete with artillery, which was then a great novelty, and marched into India. This number actually increased as Babur advanced as members of the local population joined the invading armies. Ibrahim Lodi advanced against him with 100,000 soldiers and 100 elephants. Their main engagement, the First battle of Panipat, was fought on April 21, 1526. Ibrahim Lodi was slain and his army was routed; Babur quickly took possession of both Delhi and Agra.

Now Babur was having sleepless nights because of Rana Sanga, the rajput ruler of Mewar. Babur sent about 1500 choice cavalry to attack Sanga. These were butchered by Sanga’s Rajputs. Babur wanted to discuss peace terms. For discussions Sanga sent his general Silhadi (Shiladitya). Babur won this general by promising him independent kingdom. Silhadi came back and reported that Babur did not want peace and he wanted to fight. Battle of Khanwa started on March 17, 1527 and Babur’s army was being knocked out of the field and victory was certain for Sanga. At this juncture Silhadi and his army left the field and this tilted the war in favor of Babur and he won. On May 6, 1529, Babur defeated Mahmud Lodi, brother of Ibrahim Lodi, at the Battle of Ghagra, thus crushing the last remnant of resistance in north India.

**Babur – last days**

Babur spent the later years of his life arranging the affairs and husbanding the revenues of his new empire. He wrote his memoirs, the Baburnama, in the Turkish dialect known as Chaghatai.

Towards the end of Babur’s life, his son, Humayun, became deathly ill, and was declared by the physicians to have little chance of survival. Babur was devastated and began to constantly pray for his son. In these prayers, which he recited while circumambulating his son, Babur said that he wanted to take the disease away from Humayun, and die in his place. Strangely enough, Babur’s prayers were answered; Humayun recovered while Babur grew ill. He died at the age of 48, and was succeeded by his eldest son, Humayun. As per his wishes, Babur was buried at Kabul, Afghanistan.
Longing for traveling, desire to learn the world inhere a man from time immemorial. While traveling a man has an opportunity to compare the culture of his own people with spiritual values of other peoples and countries. Each culture is unique: it can be observed by comparing cultures of the East and the West. Simultaneously we can see a certain similarity and interrelation typical to these cultures, reflected in art, science, language and even in customs. It is not out of place to mention here about the influence of the East and the West, and interdependence of these cultural areas.

So here in Uzbekistan during your itinerary you will here a lot of “THE GREAT SILK ROAD” which played a great role in the history of our country.

For many centuries peoples of the East and the West were connected by a trading route stretching from South-East Asia to the countries of the Mediterranean Sea, and only in the XIX century this road entered to the science as “THE GREAT SILK ROAD” by the German geographer and geologist Ferdinand Von Richthofen. Until that time the Road was called as “Western Meridianal Road”.

Traveling the Silk Road has never been easy. Merchants would often travel at night to avoid the heat in caravans of up to 1000 camels, carrying the major commodity — silk along steppes, deserts and mountainous paths during those dangerous travels. According to the manuscripts, silk was first discovered by the Chinese. It was one of the most valuable fabrics,
and its production technology was kept in secret by Chinese masters for thousands of years. It is said that once the wife of the yellow Emperor, Princess Si Ling Chi watched a silk cocoon fall from mulberry tree into her cup and unravel in the hot tea before her very eyes. And the princess tried hard to remove it from her cup, but she could not manage to do it as it was very long.

However, caravans of camels carried not only silk. For centuries from the East to the West and from the West to the East they carried a great amount of raw materials and goods made from: bronze, porcelain, wool, cobalt. Besides that the Silk Road served as a channel for spreading ideas, technologies, art and religions, promoting mutual enrichment of cultures and form tuition of a common legacy of mankind. The history of “THE GREAT SILK ROAD” numbers not less than 2 thousand years – approximately from 500 B.C. to its decline by the XVI century.

The main well – studied part of the road done by UNESCO’s representatives stretched from Italy via Turkey to Iraq and Iran, where wells and reservoirs for caravans and merchants were built; then the road led to Central Asia and over the North Pamirs to Kashgar and Yarkand where it was divided into two, passing round Takla – Makan desert from the North and South and met near Labnor Lake, then it went to steppes inhabited by nomadic people and further to China. Only in its middle part – Central Asia – the Great Silk Road got narrow and further nearer to the end it divided into many paths which led to different cities and countries. From one side they ended near the shores of Ireland and Norwegian fiords, in Portugal and Denmark, Suzdal and the Urals, from other side it stretched to Japan, to the Spices islands behind Indonesia, to Ceylon and Philippines.
The volume of trade along the Great Silk Road was amazingly large. Today archeologists still discover articles which get there from far away countries along the Great Silk Road. They are silver sauces of Sassanid period (224 – 651) in Taiga and the North Urals and Chinese porcelain sauces at the foothills of the Caucasus and nephrite in Ireland. The trading route was a busy artery of the Middle Ages, a source of goods and information and an object of discords and wars. For example, one of the reasons for the expansion marches of Chingizkhan (XIII cent.) was the desire to dominate on the Great Silk Road.

Medieval Arab historians (X th century) considered that it took 200 days to get from the Red Sea to China. Actually nobody could cover the distance so fast because any caravan had to stop in cities and oases for trading. Chinese written sources convey a very interesting story about the discovery of the eastern path of this route. In the second century B.C. an ambassador of the Khan Empire Chan Tezyan was the first to get over the mountainous paths between West China and the Eastern city of the Fergana valley – Uzgan.

Thus, two great roads were connected: one, leading from West to Central Asia, trodden by ancient Greeks and Macedonians during Alexander the Great’s marches (336 – 323 B.C.) and Seleucid military leader Antioch 1 (280 – 261 B.C.) up to the Yaksart (the Syr – Darya) and the other, leading from East from Khan Empire to Central Asia.

Ancient and ever – young cities of Central Asia like Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Merv, Termez, Khodjent, Charjou and others were important capillaries of this network. Thanks to its favorable location Uzbekistan held a central place on the Road.

The Great Silk Road passes through all our basic cities which have great tourism potentials. The most ancient part of it, built as far back as the VI th to V th centuries B.C. by Indo – Europeans, to be more specific, by Indo – Iranian tribes (scythe – sakas, sogdians, bactrians, khorezmians, massagets), connects Bukhara with Samarkand through Vabkent, Gizhduvan, Karminah. An arrival of Turish nomadic tribes from the north – west (III – IV th centuries) heralded a new stage in the development of the Great Silk Road. They played a great role in strengthening cultural, trade and political relations between Sogd, Parthia, Khorezm on one hand and China and Eastern Turkistan on the other one. During the Samanids’ (IX – X th centuries), Khorezm Shahs’ (IX – XI th) and Gaznevids’ (X – XI th centuries) rule this trading route was highly busy and important.

As known, this period in the development of Central Asia came down in history as the “Eastern Renaissance”. This period gave the world such scientists of encyclopedic knowledge as Khorezm, Fergani, Farabi, Beruni, Avicenna, and others. Bukhara, Samarkand, Gurgenj (Kunya Urgench) used to be large political, scientific and cultural centers. During the Mongol conquest (XIII th century) Maveranahr’s cities were devastated. But it did not stop the movement of caravans. Passing through Syria, Iran, Iraq, Ukraine, Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia the caravan routes led to the territory of Uzbekistan. The period of Amir Timur’s rule (1371 – 1405) is also characterized by strengthening and expansion of interstate economic, cultural and trading relations. The book
“Traveling to Samarkand” by Spanish ambassador De Clavicho testify to it. He says that at that time Samarkand was “a warehouse of goods”. After the Sheybanids (XVI – XVII th centuries) came to power, Shaibani Khan implemented essential economic and political reforms. Though at that period trading caravans on the Great Silk Road kept getting rare, however, international relations in Maveranahr strengthened. In the course of the Shaibanids’ rule unique architectural monuments were built too.

The subsequent years are characterized by the decline of the Great Silk Road. However, cultural and economic relations between different countries of the West and the East had never been ceased. They were maintained by other means and existed in other forms.

The Great Silk Road, which united people of the West and The East in the course of many centuries, played a great role in the creation of a common culture legacy of mankind. As it is known, the best types of silk were produced in Central Asia, particularly, in Fergana Valley. Good name of Marghilan’s silk weaving masters have been coming from ancient times. As early as in the X th century the Arab manuscript said: “all lands of Bukhara can be given for one silk curtain woven in Marghilan”. Since then only the name of the city has been changed a little and its good name as of a silk – producer has grown and strengthened. Besides silk, weapons, instruments, different articles from iron and other metals made by craftsmen of Bukhara, Samarkand, Fergana and Khorezm were in demand. Thus, the Great Silk Road played a great role in the cultural exchange of peoples of countries through which it passed. A complex investigation of trading routes, conducted by UNESCO, includes the study and restoration of historical caravansarays. Nowadays, about 1500 caravan – sarays in Turkey, Iraq, Egypt, and Iran are being investigated. Since 1989 UNESCO’s delegation and scientists of Uzbekistan have been conducting investigations related to the study of caravan – sarais on the territory of Uzbekistan. Besides, Tourism Ministry of Uzbekistan put forward a proposal on the development of a joint inter – state transcontinental touristic route connecting the countries where the Great Silk Road used to pass.
Tour Summary:
Destination: Uzbekistan—Turkmenistan—Kyrgyzstan
Route: Tashkent, Khiva, Kunya Urgench, Ashgabat, Mary/Merv, Bukhara, Samarkand, Fergana, Osh, Bishkek
Duration: 16 days/15 nights

Day 1: Tashkent

Day 2: Tashkent—Urgench—Khiva
Breakfast at the hotel. Transfer to the airport for flight to Urgench (according to time table), flight, and arrival to Urgench, transfer to Khiva (30 km), check-in at the hotel. City tour around Ichan-Kala architectural complex (12–19th c.), the Residence of the last Khan including Ismail Khodja Mausoleum, Mohammed Amin Khan madrassah, Kunya—Ark Castle (16–17th c.), Kalta Minor tower, Tash—Hovli Palace (19th c.), Pahlavan Mahmud Mausoleum (14–18th c.), Juma Mosque (10th c.). Overnight at the hotel.

Day 3: Khiva—Kunya Urgench—Ashgabat
After breakfast departure to Uzbek—Turkmen border to the city of Tashauz and Kunya Urgench. After some customs formalities, excursion in Kunya Urgench. Lunch at a local restaurant. In Kunya Urgench You will visit the mausoleum Sultan Tekesh XII — XIII centuries, monument of Turabeg Khanum (XII century) and a stop near the highest minaret in Turkmenistan—minaret of Kutlugh Timur (XI – XII centuries). Then return to Tashauz for evening flight to Ashgabad (1 hour). After the arrival accommodation in the hotel. Dinner. Night in the hotel.

Day 4: Ashgabat
“Tolkuchka” Bazaar (open on Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays) Nisa (III c) Parthian dates capital inhabited till the 19c. Grandiose architectural complex consisting of ceremonial hall, treasure house and residences. Anau is the medieval city located 12 km in the south-east of Ashgabat is well known by its medieval mosque called “Seitjemal – ad – din” National Museum of Turkmenistan (closed on Tuesdays) – museum has a large historical section, which includes Bronze Age, Antiquity and Middle age sections and very interesting golden exhibits.

Day 5: Ashgabat—Mary—Merv (352 km)
After early breakfast drive to Mary. Check-in at the hotel in Mary. Lunch at a local restaurant. Merv ‘pearl of east’ is one of oldest inhabited cities Central Asia. It was rebuilt over the centuries spread more than 100 sq km. Merv is site of no less than five cities from different periods, each built beside the last. Sultan Sanjar mausoleum impresses with size & solidity, Gayir Kala has an area of 360 ha, regular planning, right contour of walls and for gates one to each part of the world. Mary regional museum — features traditional Turkmen life and culture including displays on weddings and carpet weaving. Dinner. Overnight in the hotel.

Day 6: Mary—Turkmenabad—Farab border—Bukhara (300 km)
Early drive to Turkmenabad—Farab Turkmen—Uzbek border. Check point “Farab”, border formalities, crossing the neutral territory (800 m), meeting with Uzbek partners; continue the drive to Bukhara, settlement at the hotel. Overnight at the hotel.
Day 7: Bukhara
Breakfast in the hotel. Full day in Bukhara. AM portion of city tour for 4 hrs with the visit to the Ark Fortress (I – XX CC), Bolo Hauz Mosque (XVIII C), Samanids Mausoleum (XX – X CC), Chashma–Ayub Mausoleum (XII – XVI CC), Lunch. PM portion of s/s tour on foot along the old town of Bukhara from Poi – Kalyan complex with Kalyan Minaret(XII C) through orient bazaars with three trade domes of Toki Zargaron (XV C), (XVI C), Toki Telpak Furushon (XVI C), Ulugbek Madrassah (XV C), Abdulla Khan Madrassah (XVII C) to the Lyabi Dinner. Overnight at the hotel. Night in Bukhara.

Day 8: Bukhara – Shakhrisabz – Samarkand
Breakfast at the hotel. Drive to Shakhrisabz (290 km, 4 hrs). City tour: ruins of Ak–Saray Palace (14–15th c.), Dor–ut Saodat complex (Khazratiy Imam Mosque (14th c.), Jahongir mausoleum (14th c.), Dor–ut Tillavat complex: Gumbazi–Seiidan, Kok Gumbaz Mosque (15th c.) Continue to Samarkand (110 km, 2 hrs). Hotel accommodation. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 9: Samarkand

Day 10: Samarkand – Tashkent

Day 11: Tashkent – Ferghana
Breakfast at the hotel. Morning drive to Ferghana via Kokand through Kamchik Pass (where You can stop for photos shouting and short walk): visit Khudayar Khan palace, Mir Mosque, Dahmai Shahon Mausoleum in Kokand. Transfer to Rishtan to see private pottery workshop. Drive to Ferghana. Check-in at the hotel. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 12: Ferghana – Osh
Breakfast at the hotel. Transfer to Uzbekistan – Kyrgyzstan check point “Dustik”, border formalities, crossing the neutral territory (600m), meeting with Kyrgyz partners, continue the drive to Osh, accommodation in a guest house. Sightseeing Osh , town with 3000 years history.Visit Sulaiman Gora and the very colorful Bazaar; Overnight in the guesthouse. Night in Osh.

Day 13: Osh – Bishkek
Breakfast at the hotel. Early morning flight to Bishkek, arrival to Bishkek, transfer to the hotel for check in, the start sightseeing Bishkek: visits of Oak Park, Central Square, Philharmonic, Museums. P.M. Transfer to Ala–Arch National Park. A walk in the park. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 14: Bishkek – Issyk–Kul
Breakfast at the hotel. In the morning transfer to Issyk–Kul Lake (4 hours), on the way stop to see Burana tower, which is left from ancient city Balasagyn (XI – XIII), continue driving to Issyk–Kul (the World’s second biggest mountain lake), arrival to Issyk–Kul , accommodation in the hotel at the North coast of Issyk–Kul Lake and overnight.

Day 15: Issyk–Kul – Bishkek
Breakfast at the hotel. In the morning trip to Cholpon–Ata, where you can see ancient rock inscriptions and also visit Ethnographical Museum, then back to Bishkek, overnight at the Hotel.

Day 16: Bishkek
Breakfast at the hotel. Transfer to the airport, flight for the next destination.
The roots of the Uzbek people stretch back for many millennia, while the identity of modern Uzbeks was shaped by events during the early 2nd millennium CE. Different tribes and peoples have inhabited Central Asia and have made contributions to the modern Uzbek population.

Many of the ancient peoples who lived in Central Asia were Iranian peoples including Sogdians, Bactrians, Ferganians and the Saka — Messagetae tribes. It is believed that these populations were either absorbed into larger invading Turkic tribes and/or were pushed into smaller pockets, as in Tajikistan, or retreated further south into Iran and Afghanistan.

In ancient times, various Turkic-speaking tribes began to move to the area between the Amu Darya (Oxus in Greek) and Syr Darya (Jaxartes in Greek) rivers. Some of these early tribes included the Huns who eventually occupied this region around the 3rd century BCE and continued their conquests further south and west.

Following Arab incursions into the region, Islam supplanted Buddhism and other religions in Central Asia (such as Nestorian Christianity), while local Iranian languages survived into the next 2nd millennium. What drastically changed the demographics of Central Asia was the invasion of the Mongols led by Genghis Khan in the 13th century. Numerous native populations were wiped out by...
the Mongols and a process of population replacement began in earnest. During this period numerous Turkic tribes began to migrate and ultimately replace many of the Iranian peoples who were largely killed, absorbed by larger Turkic – Mongol groups, and/or pushed further south and Central Asia came to be known as Turkestan. Much of modern Uzbekistan took shape during the reign of Tamerlane, a prominent Turkic – Mongol conqueror who reigned over a vast empire from his capital at Samarkand. Later, between the 15th and 16th centuries, various nomadic tribes arrived from the steppes including the Kipchaks, Naymans, Kanglis, Kungrats, Mangits and others and these tribes were led by Muhammad Shaybani who was the Khan of the Uzbeks. This period marked the beginnings of the modern Uzbek nationality and formation of an Uzbek state in what is today Uzbekistan. So powerful was this early Uzbek state that it challenged much larger empires, the Safavids and Mughals, for control over Khorasan and Afghanistan. The origin of the very name “Uzbek” is in dispute. One view holds that the name derives from Uzbek Khan (1282 – 1342), the last powerful ruler of the Golden Horde and responsible for its conversion to Islam, though the nomadic Uzbeks were never subject to him. On the other hand, entomological argument states that the name “Uzbek” means Independent, “Uz” – the man himself, “Bek” a noble title of leadership. Their language Changatai or Uzbek, evolved in the 14th century. Following Shaybani, the Uzbek state broke up into three major khanates based in Bukhara, Khiva, and Kokand until the early 19th century. The Russian Empire eventually infiltrated Central Asia and the khanates were annexed to the empire during the mid to late 19th century. Uzbekistan, under Russian and then later Soviet administration, became multi-ethnic as populations from throughout the former Soviet Union moved (or were exiled) to Central Asia.
The best place to experience Central Asia and Uzbekistan is in the bazaars or eastern markets. Apart from its primary purpose of buying and selling or the place for vendors and consumers, the Bazaar is a place of interaction, the place for friends to meet and news and gossip or as the Uzbeks say “uzun kulak gaplar – long ear gossips” to be discussed. If you visit Uzbekistan you should surely go to a bazaar. Its noisiness, variety, bright colors, hustle and bustle will leave unforgettable memories for good. There is nothing like visiting an open – air market or bazaar to get the full essence of Uzbekistan. Here a traveler can experience the noise, hustle and bustle, exotic aromas and bright colorful produce abundantly. Everywhere are the sounds of upbeat conversation, loud bargaining, and friendly salutations.

Clouds of spice aromas fill the areas of bazaars, enticing you with the promise of delicious local flavor. Nutmeg, cloves, red and black pepper, saffron, cardamom and thyme are among the herbs and spices abundantly available. Near the spices are bags of rice, white balls of Kurt, (dried cottage cheese), and sugar. Vendors compete with one another, calling out tempting offers of dried apricots, raisins, almonds and pistachios, walnuts and peanuts. During the summer and autumn there is a wide variety of fruit: grapes, pomegranates, apricots – which are also dried and sold at other times of the year – and dwarfing them all and mountains of honeydew.

Market ware is displayed on the ground or on tables, and sometimes in stalls or stands. You are encouraged to try a national specialty of peanuts boiled in sugar or honey and sprinkled heavily with sesame seeds. In summer and autumn the piles of huge water melons and melons, the variety of which is overwhelming, can’t help but impress any tourist visiting this country. Honey
pears, rosy apples, and sweet grapes of black, amber and pink can also be found in Uzbekistan bazaars. Besides them, you will find irresistible arrays of ruby – seeded pomegranates, prunes, peaches, yellow figs and orange persimmons which market vendors also proudly offer. Also on display at Uzbekistan bazaars are arts and crafts reflecting traditional Uzbekistan culture. Many vendors have stands where they actually make their products and sell them on the spot. These include wares such as jewelry, ceramics, and gold embroidery. There is hand – made apparel for men and women, and carpentry work of wood chests decorated with metal. Knife makers are selling their craft, as well as designers of musical instruments. Many basket weavers are here selling their woven delights. Of course, the tourist will also find several vendors of oriental carpets, not only from areas of Uzbekistan but also from Turkey, Belgium, and Afghanistan. One can have no doubt that here is reflected the true heritage of Uzbekistan and its vital connection to the famous Silk Road. The best part of the bazaar is the bargaining. Bargaining is not only allowed, but expected. People just love to bargain.

Many bazaars and marketplaces are more than thousands of years. Some of the more modern bazaars are located in spacious pavilions under colorful tiled domes. Some are even equipped with refrigerators. Bazaar activity begins very early in the morning and continues until dark. A tour of Uzbekistan is not complete without a visit to at least one Uzbekistan bazaar.
The Uzbek Cuisine

The Uzbek cuisine is one of the most colorful Oriental Cuisines. You will be amazed to find some of the recipes are centuries old. There are about 1000 different dishes and these include national drinks, cakes and confectionary products.

The development of the cuisine benefited much from the new crops which had come from the countries of the Great Silk Road. Moreover, the local rulers used to bring the best culinary experts from the conquered lands.

Uzbek plov is a very solemn dish. It can be considered as an everyday dish as well as dish for solemn and great events like weddings, parties and holidays. Its recipe varies from one locality to another. But the basic ingredients for all kinds of plov are the same: meat (preferably mutton), rice, carrots (yellow or red), onions and three spices: pepper, barberries and cumin seeds, which create its characteristic taste. Other special spices, raisins, peas or quince may be added to give it extra flavor. It makes this dish very tasty and useful especially after long illnesses. However, locals believe that the best plov is always prepared by a man. Salads called “achchichu”, made of tomato and onion, are served as additional dishes to the plov. One very famous Uzbek appetizer is “kazy” horse sausage.

Special importance is placed on soups. Uzbek’s soup is rich with vegetables and seasonings and contains lots of carrots, turnips, onions and greens. Popular soups available are mastava, qaynatma sho’rva (boiled soup) and mokhora (chick pea soup).
To cook a qaynatma sho’rva, large pieces of fatty mutton (the ribs or the brisket) are put into cold water, brought to a boil and coddled, removing the foam from time to time. When the foam is no longer formed, pods of Chile peppers and cumin seeds are put into the broth. Some 45 to 50 minutes before the meat is cooked you add fresh tomatoes and whole or cut carrots. Some 10 or 15 minutes later you put in whole or halved potatoes, and 15 to 20 minutes before the soup is ready you add onions cut in rings, and salt. Cooked meat and potatoes are taken out of the broth and cut into smaller pieces. The broth is poured into the serving bowls, and the meat and potatoes are either put into the broth or served separately. The soup is seasoned with finely cut herbs. The sho’rva is served along with hot flat – cakes.

Traditionally any Uzbek feast treatment finishes with the mutton or beef kebab Shashlik (skewered chunks of mutton barbecued over charcoal – kebabs – served with sliced raw onions). Gourmets especially value jigar – kebab made of sheep’s liver. The most tasty shashliks (shish kebabs) in Uzbekistan are cooked in a small town Gizhduvan, 45 km away from Bukhara. Gizhduvan is also famous for other types of national dishes. You can also find cafes serving Bukhara and Gizhduvan dishes in other towns and cities of Uzbekistan too. Uzbek cuisine can’t be considered as such without the flaky pastry somsa, which has minced meat and a piece of fat of sheep’s tail inside; or the original ravioli – like Uzbek manty, which are filled with meat, potatoes or sweet pumpkin, and cooked in steam. Besides them, in hotel restaurants and other cafes you can find some food which shows a strong Russian influence: borsch is a cabbage soup, entrecote is well – done steak, cutlet are grilled meat balls and strogan is the local equivalent of Beef Stroganoff. Pelmeni originated in Ukraine and are small boiled noodle sacks of meat and vegetables, similar to ravioli, sometimes served in a vegetable soup.
So, if you visit Uzbekistan, try the local cuisine, and don’t forget to ask the hosts for the recipe of the dish which you liked best.

One of the famous Eastern candies is **halva** made of wheat flour, sugar with nuts or sesame seeds as toppings. Halva is especially sweet and delicious and is considered a must at weddings. It is customary for an Uzbek youth during courtship, to bring halva for his fiancée. When a baby girl is born into an Uzbek family, she is usually referred to as “halva”. There are 50 different types of halva in Uzbekistan.

Fragrant, oven-hot, with a crisp crust and an inside so tender and soft that it seems weightless... These are all about appetizing **Uzbek flat cakes**. Flat cakes in Uzbekistan are of two varieties: common and fancy. Common flat cakes (obi – non) are baked from wheat flour with leaven. Their surface is glossy and sprinkled with sesame or poppy seeds. Fancy flat cakes, called “Patyr”, may be baked from either fancy pastry or puff – pastry dough into which mutton fat is added giving them their characteristic taste and keeping them fresh for a long time. There is quite a number of recipes of Uzbek flat cakes, and as many different names. Samarkand flat cakes, which include about 20 varieties, are famed throughout Uzbekistan. They all have different names and recipes as well as nourishing and aromatic qualities. Each flat cake is decorated with its own pattern, often very intricate and beautiful.

Bread is considered to be holy for the Uzbek people. According to the tradition, when someone leaves the family he bites a small piece of Obi – non and it is kept until the traveler comes back and eats the whole bread. Anyone who finds a piece of bread that is unfortunately left on the ground, should take it up and kiss it before attaching it to the forehead three times and leave it there for a while. Traditionally Uzbek breads are baked inside the stoves made of clay called **tandyr**.

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**The Uzbek Tea ceremony**

Tea is the staple drink of Central Asia, and **chai – khanas (tea houses)** can be found almost everywhere in Uzbekistan, full of old men chatting the afternoon away with a pot of tea in the shade. In every Uzbek house a guest is always offered a piala (a small bowl) of aromatic green tea. According to the original Uzbek tea ceremony the tea from the teapot that has just been filled with boiling water to brew is to be poured into the piala and returned to the teapot three times. The first returning is called “loy”, the second “moy” and only after the third time it becomes “choy” or tea. Only in this way all the aroma and flavor of the tea is believed to emerge. As a token of respect for the guest the host fills only one — half of the piala, and then, putting the left hand to his heart, with his right hand holds out this piala to the guest. At the same time the fresh flat round Uzbek bread is served.
By far the biggest Central Asian holiday is the spring festival of Navruz (New Day), an Islamic adaptation of pre-Islamic vernal equinox or renewal celebrations, celebrated approximately on the vernal equinox (21 March). It is the celebrations of the nature’s awakening and start of sowing works, which preserved in its rituals the features of Zoroastrianism. In farming oases of ancient Uzbekistan large public festivities, holidays bazaars were organized annually. During the years of state independence the celebration of Navruz acquired the new scale and depth. It became the nationwide holiday of friendship, unity, eternity of all nations. Philosophical and poetic reflection of Navruz, its role in the public history is discovered in bright theater-type shows. Now it’s a two day affair consisting of traditional games, music, drama festivals, street art and colorful fairs. If that gets the adrenalin flowing, you can also check out wrestling, ram fighting and cock fighting. Traditionally, even today people cook “baursak” and prepare ritual dish – sumalyak. After celebration usually the field works start, which in the past were also accompanied by performance of various ceremonies: before going to the field the horns and neck of the bullock and bull were treated by oil. First furrow is performed by the most respected and eldest
member of the community. The religious holiday associated with the end of fasting, Ramazan Khayit and Qurban – Hayit are celebrated widely. Ramadan, the month of sunrise – to – sunset fasting, is observed with little fanfare in most parts of Uzbekistan, and travelers will still find plenty of food available. Ramazan – Khayit holiday is amazing – holiday of spiritual and moral cleansing. It starts from the end of 30 – days fasting which fall to the 9th month of Muslim year of Khidjra according to Islamic laws. On this holiday people commemorate the dead, visit the sick and elder people, are engaged in charity and other good works. Qurban Khayit, the Feast of Sacrifice, is one of the most important Muslim holidays. It is celebrated with the slaughter of animals and the sharing of meat with relatives and the poor. On this day after due rituals the believers pay visits or receive guests themselves, assist the sick, lonely people, express mercy to close people. On this day Muslims make pilgrimage to Mecca. More than 5000 Muslims from Uzbekistan go to Mecca annually 20 days prior to this day.

New year (January, 1st)

Is the first day of New Year. New Year is widely celebrated worldwide and at various times year. A symbol of New Year is the Grandfather a frost and the Snow Maiden, and also the dressed up fur – tree. Exactly at midnight from 31st December till 1st January, when hours solemnly beat 12 hours, there comes long – awaited New Year. People at this time celebrate and widely mark this holiday with native and close behind the covered elegant table. Also gifts and surprises are traditionally presented each other.

Day of defenders of the Native land (January, 14th)

This holiday in independent Uzbekistan is celebrated in honor of creation of own Army forces. The parliament of the country on 14th January, 1992 has made a decision on transition of all parts and connections, military educational institutions and other military formations deployed in territory of the country, under jurisdiction of the Republic of Uzbekistan. So the beginning was necessary to creation of own Army forces. On 29th December, 1993 January 14th has been declared by Day of defenders of the Native land.

Women’s day (March, 8th)

The international women’s day is a holiday of beauty, tenderness and feminity. On March, 8th also it is known as ‘Mothers day’. People celebrate this holiday, as a holiday of love, kindness and beauty. We are once again convinced and deeply we realize, concepts of
Spring and the Woman as they supplement each other are how much harmonious. The nature not has disposed of gift so, that the female holiday coincides in the first days of spring as beauty of the woman compare to a gentle flower. Men give this day to the mothers, wives and daughters flowers and gifts with sincere wishes.

With the obtaining of the country’s independence ancient customs and traditions of Uzbek people have revived, holiday Navruz also has been restored, and celebrating has got new scope and depth. It became a national holiday of friendship, unification, brotherhood of all people. In the bright dramatized representations of philosophic and poetic judgment of Navruz, it places in national history reveals. Now Navruz is celebrating annually on Alisher Navoi’s square.

Day of memory and honor (May, 9th)

In 1999 majestic Square of Memory has been opened in capital of Uzbekistan on 9th May and since then Day of memory and honor on May, 9th is celebrated. This holiday in independent Uzbekistan is celebrated in honour of memory of our compatriots which during centuries heroically, self-denyingly protected our native territory, its freedom and independence, a peace life of our people.

Concept “Day of Memory and honors” has very deep sense. This famous day a duty is to recollect and glorify those people who took part in fights against fascism, showed heroism and sacrificed a life in the name of protection of the Native land, and also such national heroes as Tumaris, Shiroq, Spitamen, Jaloliddin Maguberdi, Najmiddin Kubro, Namoz – batir which have sacrificed the life in the name of freedom of which during centuries people dreamed, to recollect such self – denying representatives of our nation as Kadiri, Behbudi, Munavar – kori, Chulpon, Avloniy, Fitrat, Usman Nosir.

People esteems that who has taken place through many tests and difficulties in a life, has not regretted the life in the name of the Native land, and senior generation, which and today among us.

Independence Day
(September, 1st)

The main national holiday of the Republic of Uzbekistan is the Day Independence. This holiday celebrated annually on the 1st September, is ceremonial and colorful. This national holiday personifies all dreams and expectations of all Uzbek people which lean on main principles friendliness, solidarity, charity, mutual respect.
Representatives of the various nations living in Uzbekistan, despite of a nationality, religion, the social status all actively celebrate a holiday in each street, the area and the people living in mahallas and in regions.

Representatives of art arrange various shows on the areas, and also in parks of city. Many foreign visitors and tourists participate in various unforgettable traditional entertainments and representations.

**Teachers’ Day**  
(October, 1st)

Annually on the 1st October in Uzbekistan Day of Teachers and Instructors is solemnly celebrated. The deep respect for the teacher has taken roots in our territory during old times. “Domlo”, “Muallim”, “Ustoz” – these words during many centuries with gratitude and respect the pupils received from the teachers not only knowledge on subject matters said, but also manuals about the valid attitude to people, love to the Native land, about high morals and spirituality.

Pupils of schools and educational institutions deeply esteem all those who have given them the first vital knowledge. This day pupils with gratitude give flowers and gifts.

**The Constitution Day**  
(December, 8th)

The constitution is the main law of the state, the document which possesses a high validity. The constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan is accepted by the Oliy Majlis on 8th December, 1992. The constitution consists of 6 sections, 26 chapters and 128 article. This holiday is celebrated across all Uzbekistan, and carries out various actions, devoted to the constitution day.

**The religious holidays with varying dates**

The religious holiday associated with the end of fasting, Ramazan Khayit and Qurban Khayit are celebrated widely. Ramadan, the month of sunrise – to – sunset fasting, is observed with little fanfare in most parts of Uzbekistan, and travelers will still find plenty of food available. Ramazan – Khayit holiday is amazing – holiday of spiritual and moral cleansing. It starts from the end of 30 – days fasting which fall to the 9th month of Muslim year of Khidjra according to Islamic laws. On this holiday people commemorate the dead, visit the sick and elder people, are engaged in charity and other good works. Qurban Khayit, the Feast of Sacrifice, is one of the most important Muslim holidays. It is celebrated with the slaughter of animals and the sharing of meat with relatives and the poor. On this day after due rituals the believers pay visits or receive guests themselves, assist the sick, lonely people, express mercy to close people. On this day Muslims make pilgrimage to Mecca. More than 5000 Muslims from Uzbekistan go to Mecca annually 20 days prior to this day.
Fine Arts Museum of Uzbekistan

Contains a major collection of art from the pre-Russian period, including Sogdian murals, Buddhist statues and Zoroastrian artifacts, serene 1000-year-old Buddhist statues along with a more modern collection of 19th and 20th century Uzbek applied art, such as suzani embroidered hangings. There is also Russian and Asian art upstairs. Of more interest is the large collection of paintings “borrowed” from the Hermitage by Grand Duke Romanov to decorate his palace in exile in Tashkent, and never returned. Behind the museum is a small park, containing the neglected graves of the Bolsheviks who died in the Russian Revolution of 1917 and to Ossipov’s treachery in 1919, along with first Uzbekistani President Yuldash Akhunbabayev. The ground floor often has exhibitions by local artists.

Museum of Applied Arts

Housed in a traditional house built in XIX and originally commissioned for a wealthy tsarist diplomat Polovstev, the Museum of Applied Arts opened in 1937 as a showcase for turn-of-the-century applied arts. Full of bright carved plaster decorations and carved wood, the house itself is the main attraction. More than 4 thousand artifacts and exhibits (rare ceramics, gold embroidery, carpets, pictures, silk, textiles and jewellery, musical instruments and toys) of the best master craftsmen from all over Uzbekistan are exhibited here.
The History Museum of the Peoples of Uzbekistan

The History Museum of the People of Uzbekistan, Tashkent’s biggest museum has 8000 exhibits in the former Lenin Museum. One highlight in the museum is a small, peaceful Buddha figure from a Kushan temple excavated at Fayoz – Tepe near Termiz.

The Amir Timur Museum

The Amir Timur Museum, Tashkent’s newest museum, stands just north of the Amir Timur Monument. It is an impressive structure with a brilliant blue ribbed dome and a richly decorated interior. Amir Timur Museum is one of the newly built museums in Tashkent. Marvelous architecture, gorgeous interior and rare displays of the museum produce a vivid impression for visitors and guests. The museum was devoted to the 660th anniversary of Amir Timur, the prominent statesman and general. He was the founder of Movaraunnahr Empire. The museum collection mainly consists of ancient manuscripts, paintings and engravings of Timurid’s age.

Navoi Literary Museum

A commemoration of Uzbekistan’s adopted literary hero, Alisher Navoi, with dictum manuscripts, Persian calligraphy and 15th century miniature paintings.

Complex “Shahidlar Hotirasi” and the museum of remembrance of repression victims

Shahidlar Hotirasi is the complex located on the bank of the Bozsu near the TV tower. It was built practically in the center of the capital of Uzbekistan on President Islam Karimov’s order in 2002. Uzbek historians maintain that the complex is located precisely at the site where “enemies of the people” were executed en masse in the 1930’s. A park was established there afterwards. The building of the memorial resembles ancient mausoleums. History of political repressions is what the museum is about. Organizers of the museum claim that repressions on the territory of modern Uzbekistan began when the Turkestan province of the Russian Empire was established and ended in...
the 1990’s, when Uzbekistan retained sovereignty. The beginning of the exposition is dedicated to the period of Russian conquest of Central Asia.

Here is what the explanatory notes say about this period: “Predatory policy of the Tsarist army in the 1860’s and 1870’s with regard to the Kokand, Khiva, and Bukhara emirates encountered ferocious resistance of our forefathers. The aggressors’ military superiority enabled them to crush the resistance. The Turkestan province was formed and colonial regime established on the conquered lands. Pursuing its aggressive policy, the Russian Empire inevitably destroyed statehood of the conquered countries and transformed the latter into its colonies. Trampling on the conquered peoples’ religious beliefs and national culture and violating their rights, the Tsarist Russia robbed the territories of everything.

The best fertile lands were turned over to Russian settlers.” The second section gives a thorough account of the anti-Russian revolt in Jizzak in 1916–1917. The uprising was fomented by the attempt to mobilize the local population for rear services in the Russian army fighting World War I. The next part of the exposition is dedicated to repressions of the Soviet era, defeat of the Turkestan autonomy in Kokand by the Bolsheviks, Red Army’s merciless war on the basmachi movement (enemies of the Soviet power in Central Asia), collectivization, and dispossession of the Uzbek dehkans or peasants. Visitors can see a 3D map of the GULAG camps, where the imprisoned were sent. The next major part of the exposition deals with the last several decades of Uzbekistan as a republic of the Soviet Union. Judging by the exposition, this period too culminated in a wave of colonial looting and repressions.

As the note says “$36 billion worth of cotton and gold were shipped from Uzbekistan to the center in the last fifteen years of existence of the USSR. Sum total of natural resources taken to Moscow in this period exceeded $75 billion. In the 1980’s, Compulsory introduction of cotton as the only plant to be cultivated proved to the undoing of the Uzbek people. Cotton fields expanded more and more under the pressure from the center. In the late 1980’s, the totalitarian regime transformed Uzbekistan into a zone of its predatory policy through fabrication of the shameful “Cotton Affair” also known as the “Uzbek Affair”. It was the will and determination of President Islam Karimov that exposed these political games and machinations on the part of the totalitarian regime and that ended in rehabilitation of the innocents.”
Karakul breed of sheep appeared hundreds of years ago on desert pastures around the Kara – Kul, or Black lake, near ancient Bukhara. Arab historian Ibn – Haukal was the first to use the term “karakul” in 978 AD. Karakul sheep is really a miracle. It drinks water so salty nothing else will accept. It regulates its breathing rate and blood corpuscle count according to the air temperature. It does not damage the desert pastures of Uzbekistan that take up 20 million hectares or nearly 50% of Uzbekistan. The desert is the first and main regulator of lamb lives and deaths. Temperatures in the Kyzylkum vary from 50 degrees above zero to 30 below. Plants are so coarse that only born survivors like camel, nannies, and karakul sheep find them sufficiently sustaining.

A newborn karakul lamb takes its first steps on desert sand speckled with dung pellets and fresh grass; its curls form a ridged pattern as unique as human fingerprints. In a few days, the curls will unfurl and get rough, turning the precious karakul pelt into sheepskin. That is why the lamb will be slaughtered before the first sunset of its life. At dawn lambs are herded to the slaughterhouse, where men butcher them and peel the pelts “like a stocking”.

The lambs’ ten – pound bodies will be utilized too meat cooked as a low – fat delicacy, hooves processed for glue, maw sold to cheese makers or pharmaceutical companies.

When sheep is already 6 – 7 years old, its teeth are worn down to stumps by coarse fodder. It then begets her last lamb – source of krimmer. This is the most precious kind of karakul whose undeveloped fur resembles wet silk. Sheep is slaughtered a fortnight before it is due. Fetus is retrieved and skinned, and the rest is processed into bone flour for poultry and pigs.

Pelts are processed, mostly manually. Men and women sitting on the ground outside the slaughterhouse rub the pelts clean with knives and scrapers. Then, the pelts are pickled in coarse salt and heaped on wooden scaffolds. For a week, fat and other fluids leach out, coloring the salt pink. Then they are dried and fermented with barley flour in a rotating barrel filled with tepid water.

After another cleaning and grading by size, pattern and tint, the pelts are dispatched to a sewing factory or state – affiliated export companies.

Velvet – thin and suede – soft, it came in a range of colors from black to platinum, rose and even lilac with names like “Sundown”, “Candlelight”, and “Apricot Flower”.

Karakul for Bukhara was what silk was for China. Until early twentieth century, the rulers of Bukhara held world monopoly on production and export of their golden fleece. The pelts were exported via Iran or Astrakhan, a town on the Volga River. Hence the Western names – Persian lamb or astrakhan.

The last Bukhara emir recklessly gave a herd of karakul sheep to the British ambassador in 1907 as a present. The British promptly shipped it to Namibia where it became known as swakara, or Southwest African Karakul.

Currently, Uzbekistan is the second largest manufacturer of karakul fur in the world these days, while other Central Asian countries like Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan lag far behind. Pelts from Uzbekistan go at $18 wholesale (swakara or Southwest African Karakul at $24). Fur coats, each of them made of 30 pelts and more, go at hundreds and thousands dollars.
The Aral Sea in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan was one of the largest inland seas in the world. Just short time ago it was the world’s 4th in size drainless water reservoir and was famous for its fish deposits. Both the sea itself and the rivers that flowed into it (Amudarya (Oxus) and Syrdarya (Yaksart) were of primary ecological and economical importance. These rivers and their flow cross borders on six countries; one of them is Afghanistan, which hasn’t started the serious use of the Amudarya water yet because of a long war. Water of Syrdarya and its tributaries is being shared among Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Water of Amudarya and its tributaries is being divided among Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Flows of these two rivers are being formed in Pamir and Tyan–Shan Mountains.

Deltas of Amudarya and Syrdarya rivers that were falling into it were flourishing oases. Until 1961 year the sea level stood stable with depth of 16 meters in average and 69 meters in maximum. The original surface area of the sea was 65,000 square kilometres — equal to the combined surface area of the Netherlands and Belgium, spreading on 435 kilometers from north to south and 290 kilometers from west to east. The sea volume was equal to 1 thousand cubic kilometers. The Aral Sea received Amudarya and Syrdarya river waters in 55 cubic km. annual volume. 22 kinds of fish inhabited the Aral Sea. The sea level began to drop quickly as a result of water distributing for irrigation purposes. In 1989 the sea became split into two parts, the water volume decreased by 80 %, the surface decreased by 35 thousand square kilometers, and the sea shore shrunk by
100 – 150 km. The sea flora and fauna eliminated completely, the salt concentration reached 70%. The salinity of the Sea reaches 60 g/l. If in the beginning of the 1950's the amount of the flow from both rivers in the Aral Sea was 100 cubic km per a year, now Aral gets only about 2 – 3 cubic km of water yearly.

The small island Vozrojdenie in the center of the Sea has become a peninsula which is very dangerous because it used to be a test site for biological weapons. The sea itself is surrounded by three deserts. By Kyzylkum (that means Red Sands) on the East, by Karakum (Black Sands) on the South, and by stone plateau Ustyurt on the West, Kazakh steppes to the North. What was once a sea has now been reduced to a dry and polluted desert. Quite soon the place used to be the Sea is going to be called Aralkum (that means Aral Sands). According to specialists’ forecasts the sea can flee its shores forever until 2010 – 2015.

Population, living in the basin of both rivers is about 45 million people. Among them there are 5 million who are living in the both deltas where namely the catastrophe are developing.

Shrinkage of the Aral Sea is resulting in growing concentrations of chemical pesticides and natural salts; these substances are then blown from the increasingly exposed lake bed and contribute to desertification; water pollution from industrial wastes and the heavy use of fertilizers and pesticides is the cause of many human health disorders; increasing soil salination; soil contamination from buried nuclear processing and agricultural chemicals, including DDT.

If you visit Karakalpakistan in the summer, you get the impression that you have wandered into a snow – covered steppe instead of a desert covered with salt. The local population maintains that twenty years ago or so this was still unusual for the area. Around the capital of Karakalpakistan you can see the former course of the Amu – Darya, over three kilometers wide; today most of this territory is covered in sand and the river, even in the wettest years, is no more than 100 meters across.
Other tours

2 days. Ferghana Valley
The picturesque Ferghana Valley is located in the eastern part of Uzbekistan. It is the most densely populated region of Uzbekistan, with almost a third of the country’s population. The diamond-shaped valley is 300 km from east to west and 170 km from north to south.

12 days tour. Tashkent – Urgench – Khiva – Bukhara – Samarkand – Shakhrisabz – Tashkent
TRAVEL TO THE MONUMENTS OF ANCIENT CULTURE

11 days tour. Khiva – Bukhara – Nurata – Samarkand – Tashkent
TRAVEL TO THE MONUMENTS OF ANCIENT CULTURE

8 days tour. Tashkent – Samarkand – Bukhara – Khiva
Tour package consists of historical components, best 8 day tour package for visiting the memorial complexes of legendary Samarkand, holy Bukhara, homeland of Amir Temur (Tamerlane) – Shakhrisabz and the capital of Uzbekistan–Tashkent.

5 days tour. Bukhara – Shakhrisabz – Samarkand – Tashkent
Our journey is discovery of such well known ancient cities as Samarkand, Bukhara and Samarkand. You will plunge into the interesting world of history. From the old times these cities belonged to the empire of Tamerlan.

8 days tour. Along the traces of Piirs (spiritual leaders) of Islam
Historical Tour across Uzbekistan.
Cities: Khiva, Bukhara, Shakhrisabz, Samarkand and Tashkent.

2 days. Chatkal – Chimgan
Greater Chimgan (3,309 m) of the Chatkal Mountain range (the Western Tian Shan) is located in the territory of the Ugam–Chatkal National Park, and it is in the Bostanlyk administrative district (Tashkent Province), Uzbekistan. Best season: April, 15 – September, 30.

Welcome to Uzbekistan – an oasis of peace, land where ancient history and liberal culture converge. It’s the oldest land in Central Asia having a 25 centuries long history. Cities: Khiva, Nukus, Moynak, Bukhara, Shakhrisabz, Samarkand and Tashkent.

4 days tour. Tashkent – Samarkand – Bukhara
High minarets, blue dome cupula, madraasahs, mosques, squares and mausoleums, eastern markets, interesting legends, the hospitality of Uzbek people, with its unique traditions and many other things will remain in your memory forever. Duration: 4 days/3 nights.
Global Study Travel Company is engaged in inbound and outbound tourism and has been working in tourism for more than 5 years. During these years the company has gained important experience in organization and realization of various tours both in Uzbekistan and all Central Asia.

We organize guided tours to historical cities of Central Asia located on The Great Silk Road – Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva and others. The company staff consists of highly skilled specialists in tourism sphere – tour operators, having a good command of foreign languages, guides of high category, as well as skilful drivers.

Besides tourism, the company has longstanding and successful experience in preparation and enrolment of students in state and private colleges, institutes and universities world wide.

We are located in Tashkent, the capital of sunshine Republic Uzbekistan. The company has branches in Almati, Astana and Moscow.