



## **Along Central Asia's Silk Road**

*Traveling the ancient Silk Road route connecting East and West, we encounter a mélange of culture and religion, art and architecture that conjures tales of trade and treasure, intrigue and empire. On this exciting small group journey, we relish the unfamiliar – and embrace the humanity we share with the people of Central Asia.*

### **Itinerary**

Created on May 23, 2024

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## Day-by-Day Itinerary

### **DAY 1: Depart U.S. for Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan**

### **DAY 2: Arrive Bishkek**

Upon arrival in the Kyrgyz capital late tonight, we transfer directly to our hotel.

*Accommodations:* Hyatt Regency Bishkek

### **DAY 3: Bishkek**

After time to rest and have lunch on our own, we meet our Odysseys Unlimited Tour Director and fellow travelers at a briefing about the journey ahead. Then we take our first steps along the Silk Road with a panoramic tour of this former Soviet republic's largest city. Tonight we enjoy a welcome dinner at a local restaurant.

*Accommodations:* Hyatt Regency Bishkek

*Meals:* Breakfast, Dinner

### **DAY 4: Bishkek/Burana**

We travel east this morning to the village of Burana, whose 11<sup>th</sup>-century tower is one of the few remnants of the ancient Silk Road city of Balasagun. We walk among the surrounding "balbal" stone statues dating from the 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> centuries then enjoy lunch in the home of a Kyrgyz family. Next: a yurt-making demonstration in this country where the nomadic lifestyle is still practiced.

*Accommodations:* Hyatt Regency Bishkek

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### **DAY 5: Bishkek/Almaty, Kazakhstan**

En route to Almaty this morning, we stop at Tamgaly Gorge to see the Tamgaly Petroglyphs that date to the Bronze Age. We enjoy a picnic lunch in this archaeological landscape and then continue on to Almaty, where tonight we dine at our hotel.

*Accommodations:* InterContinental Almaty

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 6: Almaty**

This morning we tour Almaty, Kazakhstan's largest city and cultural and commercial center. We begin at Panfilov Park and the adjacent Holy Ascension Cathedral, an example of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Russian Orthodox architecture. Next, we visit the Museum of Kazakh Musical Instruments, showcasing unique national instruments. Then we head outside the city to ascend Kok Tobe mountain by gondola to enjoy panoramic views of Almaty and the surrounding Tian Shan mountains. Late this afternoon, we attend a falconry demonstration.

*Accommodations:* InterContinental Almaty

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch

## **DAY 7: Almaty/Tashkent, Uzbekistan**

We fly this morning to the Uzbek capital of Tashkent, where this afternoon we visit the Museum of Applied Arts, housing fine examples of Uzbek crafts, including embroidery, jewelry, ceramics, and carpets. After checking in at our hotel, we have free time this afternoon before dinner at a local restaurant.

*Accommodations:* Hyatt Regency Tashkent

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 8: Tashkent**

Our morning tour begins in the Old City at the Khazrati Imam Complex of mosques and madrassahs. Here we see the world's oldest surviving Islamic holy book, the 8<sup>th</sup>-century Uthman Quran, brought to Tashkent by Tamerlane. Next: Chorsu Bazaar, under whose massive green dome locals purchase everything from produce to clothing. Tonight we attend a performance of ballet, classical music, or opera at the national opera house.

*Accommodations:* Hyatt Regency Tashkent

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch

## **DAY 9: Tashkent/Urgench/Khiva**

Very early this morning, we transfer to the airport for our flight to Urgench, then continue on to Khiva. We get a taste of Khiva's storied past as a major trading post along the Silk Road as we begin exploring the Itchan Kala, the "inner city" whose entirety is a UNESCO site. We start at the double-domed Pakhlavan Mahmoud Mausoleum and then visit the Islam Khoja minaret, followed by the Juma Mosque with its 200 wooden pillars. Late this afternoon, we attend a performance of the Khiva Puppet Theatre.

*Accommodations:* Hotel Asia Khiva

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 10: Khiva**

We continue our exploration of this 1,500-year-old city at the turquoise-tiled Kalta Minor minaret – enormous, stout, and unfinished. We continue on to Kunya Ark citadel; the immense Madrassah of Muhammad Rahim Khan, with its tiled façade; the 163-room Tash Hauli Palace; and the Hunarmand artisans' workshop. Tonight, we dine on a rooftop terrace overlooking the city, where we enjoy a sunset cocktail party followed by dinner with a local folklore performance.

*Accommodations:* Hotel Asia Khiva

*Meals:* Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 11: Khiva/Bukhara**

This morning we journey through the Kyzylkum Desert to Bukhara. Upon arrival in this ancient city of Silk Road commerce and religious piety, we visit the 15<sup>th</sup>-century Poi Kalyan religious complex. This evening we dine at Akbar House, the preserved home of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century Jewish merchant.

*Accommodations:* Hotel Minorai Kalon

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 12: Bukhara**

Today begins with a walking tour of the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Lyab-i Hauz religious complex. We continue to the domed Taki-Telpak Furushon bazaar known for its headgear: embroidered skull caps, turbans, and heavy fur hats; then on to a bazaar where we watch silk weavers at work. Next, we return to the Old Jewish Quarter to visit the home of a Sufi miniaturist, where we learn about his craft and enjoy a traditional lunch of *plov* – lamb and rice – the Uzbek national dish. Touring continues this afternoon at Chor Minor madrassah with its four minarets; the Chashma-Ayub Mausoleum; and the massive 5<sup>th</sup>-century earthen Ark of Bukhara Fortress.

*Accommodations:* Hotel Minorai Kalon

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch

## **DAY 13: Bukhara/Gijduvan/Samarkand**

This morning we call on a sacred pilgrimage site: the Memorial Complex of Naqshband, burial site of the founder of the world's largest order of Sufi Muslims. Next: the Narzullaev Ceramics Workshop, where potters have used traditional methods for more than a century. After lunch here, we board the train for Samarkand, legendary stop on the Silk Road. Tonight we get our first glimpse of vast Registan, the mosaic-tiled public square flanked by three ornate madrassahs that have stood here since the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

*Accommodations:* Hotel Grand Samarkand Superior

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 14: Samarkand**

Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan left their marks on Samarkand, as did Tamarlane (Timur), who made it capital of his Islamic empire in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Our touring today begins at Registan Square, once and current heart of the city, where we join in a calligraphy workshop. We continue to 15<sup>th</sup>-century Bibi-Khanym mosque, and Siyob Bazaar, the city's largest market. This afternoon we visit a historic winery for a tour and tasting. Dinner tonight is on our own.

*Accommodations:* Hotel Grand Samarkand Superior

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch

## **DAY 15: Samarkand**

Our discovery of this crossroads of culture continues today at the Afrasiyab Museum, a huge archaeological site and museum depicting the city's 2,500-year history; 15<sup>th</sup>-century Ulugh Beg Observatory, one of the finest in the Islamic world; and the Meros Paper Mill, where artisans craft traditional handmade paper. We join a local family in their home for lunch then explore the Shakhi Zinda Necropolis and temple complex, whose 20-plus buildings date from the 11<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. This evening, we visit the Gur Emir Mausoleum, Tamarlane's resting place. After dinner at a local restaurant, we make a last stop to see Registan lit up for the evening.

*Accommodations:* Hotel Grand Samarkand Superior

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 16: Samarkand/Tashkent**

We return today to the Uzbek capital. After arriving in Tashkent early this afternoon, we have time for lunch on our own and then visit the studio of renowned ceramicist Akbar Rakhimov. Tonight we toast our adventure along the Silk Road at a farewell dinner.

*Accommodations:* Hyatt Regency Tashkent

*Meals:* Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 17: Depart for U.S.**

Early this morning we depart for the airport for our connecting flight to the U.S.

*Meals:* Breakfast

This tour itinerary was generated for Along Central Asia's Silk Road on May 23, 2024. Please visit the Along Central Asia's Silk Road page at <https://www.odysseys-unlimited.com/tours/asia-the-far-east/along-central-asias-silk-road/> for the latest and most accurate information.