

The Silk Road

UZBEKISTAN, TURKMENISTAN, TAJIKISTAN, KAZAKHSTAN AND KYRGYZSTAN

April 4-23, 2012

Tour Cost \$4,500

The Silk Road was a network of trade routes across the Asian continent that connected East, South and Western Asia with the Mediterranean world, as well as North and Northeast Africa and Europe. It began in central China and the Indian subcontinent, stopping somewhere near the Mediterranean Sea.

Through the heights of the Tang Dynasty, until its slow demise six to seven hundred years ago, the Silk Road has had a unique role in foreign trade and political relations, stretching far beyond the bounds of Asia itself. It has left its mark on the development of civilizations on both sides of the continent.

Extending 4,000 miles, the routes enabled traders to transport goods, slaves and luxuries such as silk, satin, hemp and other fine fabrics, musk, other perfumes, spices, medicines, jewels, glassware and even rhubarb, as well as serving as a conduit for the spread of knowledge, ideas, cultures, zoological specimens and some non indigenous disease conditions between Ancient China, Ancient India (Indus Valley, now Pakistan), Asia Minor and the Mediterranean. Trade on the Silk Road was a significant factor in the development of the great civilizations of China, India, Egypt, Persia, Arabia and Rome, and in several respects helped lay the foundations for the modern world.

Our journey will closely following the ancient routes, taking us to the great Silk Road cities of history.



TOUR PRICE OF \$4,500 INCLUDES:

- ⤴ Accommodations, room tax, entrance fees
- ⤴ All sightseeing services with private air conditioned car/coach
- ⤴ English-speaking locally-stationed guides
- ⤴ Breakfast, lunch, dinner daily with a number of folk dance shows
- ⤴ Domestic flights and inter country flights as indicated in the itinerary, not international airfare from USA.

NOT INCLUDED:

- International airfare: \$1,600 est
- Visas: \$400 est
- Tips: \$150 est
- Single Supplement: \$620
- Personal Expenses
- Travel insurance

SUMMARY

UZBEKISTAN

Once part of the Persian Samanid and later Timurid empires, the region was conquered in the early 16th century by Uzbek nomads, who spoke an Eastern Turkic language. It was incorporated into the Russian Empire in the 19th century and in 1924 became a constituent republic of the Soviet Union. It has been an independent republic since December 1991.

As China began to develop its silk trade with the West, Iranian cities took advantage of this commerce by becoming centers of trade. Using an extensive network of routes in the province of Mawarannahr, a name given the region after the Arab conquest, the main cities of the region, Bukhara and Samarkand eventually became extremely wealthy cities and at times, Mawarannahr was one of the most influential and powerful Persian provinces of antiquity.

TURKMENISTAN

Alexander the Great conquered the territory in the 4th century BC on his way to Central Asia, around the time that the Silk Road was established as a major trading route. 150 Years later, Persian's Parthian Kingdom established its capital in Nisa, now in the suburbs of the capital, Ashgabat. Tough replaced by Persian Sassanids, the region remained territory of the Persian empire for several centuries till Arabs conquered the region in the 7th century. A short lived Turkoman-ruled Seljuk Empire rule in the region, Genghis Khan took control of the eastern Caspian Sea. For the next several centuries, the Turkmen people lived under various empires and fought constant inter-tribal wars. Prior to the Russian conquest, the Turkmen were known and feared for their involvement in the Central Asian slave market.

Though it was one of the last Soviet republics to secede, Turkmenistan declared independence on 27 October, 1991.

TAJIKISTAN

Most of Tajikistan's population belongs to the Persian-speaking Tajik ethnic group, who share language, culture and history with Afghanistan and Iran. Once part of the Samanid Empire, Tajikistan became a constituent republic of the Soviet Union in the 20th century. After independence, Tajikistan suffered from a devastating civil war which lasted from 1992 to 1995. Ancient arteries of the Silk Road contributed to commerce and culture were mainly three routes were the Sogdian, or North Road, which connected Samarkand and Kashgar, the Karategin Road between Termez and Kashgar and the Pamir Road linking Balkh and Tashkurgan. Besides its Silk Road sites, this robust and remote country boasts the Pamir Mountain Range, sometimes called, "the Roof of the World". From here spread the three great ranges of Central Asia; the Hindu Kush, the Karakorum, and the Tien Shan.

KAZAKHSTAN

Kazakhstan ranks as the world's ninth largest and the largest landlocked country. It also borders on a significant part of the Caspian Sea. The terrain of the country ranges from flatlands, steppes, taigas, rock-canyons, hills, deltas, and snow-capped mountains to deserts. For most of its history, the territory of



modern-day Kazakhstan has been inhabited by nomadic tribes. The ethnonym "Kazakh" is derived from an ancient Turkic word meaning "independent, a free spirit". It is the result of Kazakhs's nomadic horseback culture. The country declared independence on December 16, 1991 and since 2000, it enjoyed significant economic growth, partly due to its large oil, gas and mineral reserves.

KYRGYZSTAN

Kyrgyzstan is one of the world's six independent Turkic states along with Turkey, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. "Kyrgyz" is believed to have been derived from the Turkic word for "forty", in reference to the forty clans of Manas, a legendary hero who united forty regional clans against the Uyghurs who were the dominating power in the region in 8-9 centuries. The 40-ray sun on the flag of Kyrgyzstan is a reference to those same forty tribes and the graphical element in the sun's center depicts the wooden crown of a yurt, a portable dwelling traditionally used by nomads in the steppes of Central Asia. After the Russian and Soviet era, Kyrgyzstan gained full independence on 25 December 1991. Monster mountains ranges, and their valleys, glaciers, gorges and ice-blue



lakes dominate over 90% of the country. The Kyrgyz are renowned for their hospitality and guests are often treated to fermented mare's milk and bowls of fresh yogurt.

ITINERARY:

Day 1-3 – Apr 4-6 Departure; Tashkent, Uzbekistan

We will arrive early in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. We will meet our guide and driver who will take us to our hotel in Tashkent.

Overnight: Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Meals: No meals.

Day 4 – Apr 7 Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Tashkent is the capital city of Uzbekistan. It is an ancient city on the Silk Road. Little remains of that city after the 1966 earthquake and earlier modernization work following the 1917 revolution.

In the old Tashkent residential neighborhood called Sibzar, lies Khazrat Imam Square with a complex of architectural monuments that sprang up here in the course of several centuries around the burial-place of Kaffal ash-Shashi, Tashkent's first imam. It was he, after whom the square was named Khazret Imam ("Saint Imam"). We will visit his mausoleum and the Friday Mosque. Close to Khazret Imam Square, there stands Barak-Khan Madrasah. The height of its portal, decorated with majolica and glazed tile mosaics, is accentuated by a deep lancet niche with little decorative arches. Then we will go to the Kukeldash Madrasah in Chorsu Square, the largest madrasah in Tashkent. In this very place, there was a crossroad of caravan roads, "chorsu" and the town's trading square was formed. After the Madrasah, we will stroll through the Chorsu (Crafts' Bazaar). Our visit will be completed with a visit to the Museum of History of Uzbekistan.

Overnight: Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Meals: B / L / D

Day 5 – Apr 8 Tashkent – Khojand, Tajikistan

This morning we will leave Tashkent for Tajik border, to cross into Tajikistan and visit Khojand, its second largest city. The city sits at the mouth of the Ferghana Valley and until a new road was built, it controlled access to the valley. That gave its rulers made good use of its location by imposing heavy taxes on goods entering and leaving the valley on the Silk Road. The city was founded by Alexander the Great and named it as Alexandria Eskhate, "Alexandria the Furthest". We will visit the Museum of Archaeology with the fortress, Muslikhiddin Sheikh's Mosque and Mausoleum and the Panchshanbe Market.

Overnight: Khojand, Tajikistan

Meals: B / L / D

Day 6 – Apr 9 Khojand, Tajikistan – Tashkent, Uzbekistan

After finishing our sightseeing in Khojand, we will drive back to Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Some leisure time in Tashkent in the afternoon.

Overnight: Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Meals: B / L / D

Day 7 – Apr 10 Tashkent – Urgench – Khiva, Uzbekistan

We will fly to Urgench in the morning and drive to Khiva. Khiva contains some of the best-preserved examples of Islamic architecture in Central Asia within its walled Ichan-Kala (Royal Court). The Ichan-Kala encloses buildings dating from the 12th century, but most of its palace buildings, mosques, madrasahs, mausoleums and other structures date from 1780-1850, when the city prospered as a trade depot and fortress along the caravan routes. We will have a walking tour of the Ichan-Kala visiting the Kunya-Ark Fortress, Mohammad-Amin-Khan Madrasah, Islam Khoda Minaret, Palvan-Kari Complex, Abd-al Bobo Complex, Mohammad Rakim Khan and Amir-Tur Madrasahs, Sho-l-Kalandar Bobo Mausoleum, Uch Avlioli (Three Saints) Mausoleum, Jami Mosque, Kutlug-Murad Inaq Madrasah, Pakhlavan Mahmoud Mausoleum, Tash Hauli (stone yard) Palace, Alla-Kuli-Khan and Arab Mohammad Khan Madrasahs.

Overnight: Khiva - Urgench, Uzbekistan

Meals: B / L / D

Day 8 – Apr 11 Khiva, Uzbekistan– Konye-Urgench – Dashauz – Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

Right after breakfast we will drive to the Uzbek – Turkmen border to cross it at the check point, Shavat/ Dashoguz. We will drive to Konye – Urgench via Dashauz. Konye-Urgench houses the ruins of the 12th century capital of Khwarezm. Since 2005, the ruins of Old Urgench have been protected by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. Formerly situated on the Amu-Derya River, Old Urgench was one of the greatest cities on the Silk Road. The 12th and early 13th centuries were the golden age of Urgench, surpassing in population and fame all other Central Asian cities barring Bukhara. In 1221, Genghis Khan razed it to the ground in one of the bloodiest massacres in human history. The area was later inhabited by the Turkmen in 1831, but they built outside the old town, using it as a graveyard. Most of Urgench's monuments have completely or partially collapsed. We will see three small mausoleums of the 12th century and the more elaborate 14th-century Torebeg Hanim Mausoleum, which was much restored in the 1990s. The most striking landmark of Old Urgench is the early 11th-century Gutluk-Temir Minaret, which, at 60 meters, used to be the tallest brick minaret prior to the construction of the Minaret of Jam. To the north, sprawls a vast medieval necropolis. After our visit, we will drive back to Dashauz to take our domestic flight to Ashgabat (650 km south of Dashauz across the Karakum Desert).

Overnight: Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

Meals: B / L / D

Day 9 – Apr 12 Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

Ashgabat is a relatively young city, growing out of a village of the same name established by Russians first as a fort town in 1881. It's not far from the site of Nisa, the ancient capital of the Parthian Empire, and it grew on the ruins of the Silk Road city of Konjikala, which was first mentioned as a wine-producing village in 2nd century BC and was leveled by an earthquake in 1st century BC. Konjikala was rebuilt because of its advantageous location on the Silk Road and it

flourished until its destruction by Mongols in the 13th century. We will visit the archeological site of Old Nisa, one of the first capitals of the Parthians, which was traditionally founded by Arsaces I in 3rd century BC. It was reputedly the royal necropolis of the Parthian kings, although it has not been established that the fortress at Nisa was either a royal residence nor a mausoleum. The fortress at Nisa was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. After lunch we will continue sightseeing in Ashgabat including the Ashgabat National Museum of History, which displays artifacts dating back to the Parthian and Persian civilizations.

Overnight: Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

Meals: B / L / D

Day 10 – Apr 13 Ashgabat – Mary (Old Merv), Turkmenistan

We will take a domestic flight to Mary this morning. Upon arrival, we will drive to Old Merv.

Mary is the capital city of Mary Province in Turkmenistan. The city is an oasis in the Karakum Desert, located on the Murghab River. The ancient city of Merv was an oasis city on the Silk Road, which was claimed to be the largest city in the world in 12th century briefly. The site has been listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

Merv consists of four discrete walled cities very near to each other, each of which was constructed on uninhabited land by builders of different eras, used and then abandoned and never rebuilt. These cities correspond to the chief periods; the oldest and the smallest Erkgala, corresponds the Achaemenid Merv, and the second one is Gawurgala, which surrounds Erkgala, comprises the Hellenistic and Sassanian metropolis and also served as an industrial suburb to the Abbasid/Seljuk city, Soltangala is by far the largest of the four. The smaller Timurid city was founded a short distance to the south and is now called Abdylhangala. Various other ancient buildings are scattered between and around these cities; all of the sites are preserved in the “Ancient Merv Archaeological Park”.

After our visit, we will drive back to Mary and visit Mary Regional Museum.

Overnight: Mary, Turkmenistan

Meals: B / L / D

Day 11 – Apr 14 Mary, Turkmenistan – Bukhara, Uzbekistan

In the morning, we will drive to Turkmen-Uzbek border via Turkmenabad and cross the border at the check point, Farab. We will drive to Bukhara. Upon arrival, we will leisurely stroll through the Bukhara historic center.

Overnight: Bukhara, Uzbekistan

Meals: B / L / D

Day 12 – Apr 15 Bukhara, Uzbekistan

Bukhara is the capital of the Bukhara Province of Uzbekistan. The region around Bukhara has been inhabited for at least five millennia and the city has existed for half that time. Located on the Silk Road, the city has long been a center of trade, scholarship, culture and religion. The historic center of Bukhara, which contains numerous mosques and madrasahs, has been listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. Ethnic Tajiks constitute the majority in Bukhara, but the city long had a population including Jews and other ethnic minorities, as well. Our sightseeing will include Ismael Samani

Mausoleum, vault of Bukhara rulers' dynasty, Chor-Minor and Chasma-Ayub Mausoleums, Registan Ensemble, Ark Fortress, Bolo-Hauz Complex, Poli-Kalon Ensemble including the mosque and the minaret, Madrasah Miri-Arab, Amir-Alim-Khan Madrasah, Taqi (Trading Domes), Kukeldash Madrasah, Magoki Attari, Ulugh Beg and Abdul Aziz Madrasahs.

Overnight: Bukhara, Uzbekistan

Meals: B / L / D

Day 13 – Apr 16 Bukhara – Shakhrisabz - Samarkand, Uzbekistan

In the morning we will drive to Shakhrisabz.

Ancient Kesh, the city, where the Shaker of the Universe, Great Timur was born is now called Shakhrisabz, the “Green City”. Its monuments are mainly attributed to the Timur's time. The historic center called Shakhrisabz is another UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is near Shakhrisabz that Alexander the Great spent winters and met his wife Roxanna and that Ptolemy defeated the Achaemenid Empire. Being another Silk Road city, Shakhrisabz presents amazing monuments including Aq-Sarai (“White Palace”), Timurlaine's summer palace in the 1300s. It was the grandest of Timur's buildings with its archway the widest in Central Asia. Today only some parts of the palace remain. Later we will visit Kok-Gumbaz Mosque, named for its blue dome and Dorus-Siadat, the mausoleum of Timur's elder son Djehanghir.

After lunch, we will drive to Samarkand for overnight.

Overnight: Samarkand, Uzbekistan

Meals: B / L / D

Day 14 – Apr 17 Samarkand, Uzbekistan

Samarkand is the capital of the Samarkand Province and most noted for its central position on Silk Road between China and the West, and for being an Islamic center for scholarly study. Located on an irrigated valley of the Zeravshan River in the center of Uzbekistan, area of present Samarkand always ensured favorable conditions for human settlements. In the 14th century, it became the capital of the empire of Timur (Tamerlane) and is the site of his mausoleum (the Gur-e Amir). In 2001, UNESCO added the city to its World Heritage List as “Samarkand-Crossroads of Cultures”.

Today we will visit Registan, the heart of ancient Samarkand. It was a place of public executions, where people gathered to hear royal proclamations, as well, heralded by blasts on enormous copper pipes called dzharchis. Notable buildings of Registan are Ulugh Beg, Sher-Dor and Tilya-Kori Madrasahs. Chorsu, the ancient trading dome is situated right behind the Sher-Dor and is well restored.

In the afternoon, we will continue seeing the architectural monuments of Samarkand. We will visit Gur-e Amir Mausoleum, Bibi Khanum Mosque, Shah-i-Zinda Ensemble, Ulugh Beg Observatory, Ruins of Afrosiab- the site and the museum of the ancient town (6c BC-13c AD.)

Overnight: Samarkand, Uzbekistan

Meals: B / L / D

Day 15 – Apr 18 Samarkand – Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Depending on our schedule on the previous day, we can continue sightseeing in Samarkand in the morning. Then we will leave Samarkand for Tashkent.

Upon arrival some leisure time in Tashkent.

Overnight: Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Meals: B / L / D

Day 16 – Apr 19 Tashkent, Uzbekistan- Almaty, Kazakhstan

Early in the morning, we will fly to Almaty, the former capital of Kazakhstan and the nation's largest city.

In the 10-14th centuries, settlements in the territory of the so called "Big Almaty" became part of the trade routes of the Silk Road. At that time, Almaty became one of the trade, craft and agricultural centers on the Silk Road and possessed an official mint. The city was first mentioned as Almatu in books from the 13th century.

We will visit Panfilov's Park with Zenkov's Orthodox Cathedral, Great Patriotic War Memorial and National Musical Instruments Museum. Continue sightseeing tour at Republican Square and State History Museum, which exhibits terrific Scythian treasures, including the priceless Kargaly diadem, once the property of a female shaman. Later we drive to the Sunkar Falcon Center to see hundreds of indigenous raptors including golden eagles, endangered Saker falcons and Eurasian black vultures.

After city tour drive on cable car to the top of Kok Tube mount to admire view of the evening city and enjoy the views of Tien-Shan Mountain Range .

Overnight: Almaty, Kazakhstan

Meals: B / L / D

Day 17 – Apr 20 Almaty, Kazakhstan – Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

In the morning we will drive to Bishkek, the capital and the financial center of Kyrgyzstan. We will drive on the edge of the great fabulous Kazakh Steppe passing herds of horses, flocks of sheep. The steppe extends more than 2,200 km from the area east of the Caspian Depression and north of the Aral Sea, all the way to the Altai Mountains. It is the largest dry steppe region on earth, covering approximately 804,500 square kilometers. The Kazakh Steppe lies at the southern end of the Ural Mountains, the traditional dividing line between Europe and Asia. Much of the steppe is considered to be either semi-desert or desert.

Originally a caravan rest stop, possibly founded by the Sogdians, on one of the branches of Silk Road through the Tien-Shan Range, the location was fortified in 1825 by the Uzbek khan of Kokhand with a mud fort. Nowadays the capital and industrial centre of Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek is a city of wide avenues, handsome buildings and Soviet heritage. The gesturing statue of Lenin can still be seen in the city's vast central square, yet it is the permanently snow capped Kyrgyz Alatau mountain range which towers over Bishkek providing a quite stunning backdrop.

In Bishkek we will visit Manas Square, State History Museum and do a walking tour around the main Ala Too Square to watch ceremony of changing of the Guard of Honor, Independence Monument, main governmental buildings, and finish at the Old Square with Parliament House. Transfer to the Victory Square to finish the city tour by short excursion there.

Overnight: Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Meals: B / L / D

Day 18 – Apr 21 Bishkek – Issyk Kul Lake – Cholpon Ata, Kyrgyzstan

On our way to Issyk Kul Lake, we will visit Burana Tower, which is actually a large minaret in the Chuy Valley (80 km from Bishkek, 1,5 hours). The tower, along with gravel markers, some earthworks and the remnants of a castle and three mausoleums, is all that remains of the ancient city of Balasagun, which was established by the Karakhanids at the end of the 9th century. We explore ruins of that important trading point at the Great Silk Road and visit a little local museum telling about that civilization. Also watch a collection of Balbals, Turkic ancient tombs.

We continue our way to Issyk Kul Lake, which is an endorheic lake in the northern Tien Shan Mountains in eastern Kyrgyzstan and the tenth largest lake in the world by volume; second largest high mountainous lake in the world after Titicaca; and the second largest saline lake after the Caspian Sea. Although it is surrounded by snow-capped peaks, it never freezes, hence its name, which means "hot lake" in the Kyrgyz language. Lake Issyk Kul was a stop over on the Silk Road and is believed to be the point of origin for the Black Death that plagued Europe and Asia during the early and mid-14th century. We will stay in Cholpon-Ata, a resort town on the northern shore of the lake.

Overnight: Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan

Meals: B / L / D

Day 19 – Apr 22 Cholpon-Ata – Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

After breakfast, we will visit the so called "Stone Garden" or Cholpon-Ata Petroglyphs site, the temple in the open air of Scythians and Hunguns civilizations dated back 9-8 centuries BC till 3-4 centuries AD. The area of those stone drawing lies at the foot of Kungey Alatau Ridge with a beautiful view of the whole lake.

After seeing the Petroglyphs, we will drive back to Bishkek. Some leisure time in the afternoon.

Overnight: Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Meals: B / L / D

Day 20 – Apr 23 Departure

This is end of our adventure on the ancient Silk Road. We will fly back home after breakfast.

World Affairs Council of Houston

The Silk Road, April 4-23, 2012

Contact Information

Last:

First:

M.I.:

Address, City, State, Zip:

Day Phone:

Email:

Emergency contact (name, phone):

Passport number:

Expiration date:

Location issued:

Date of birth:

Citizenship:

Tour Cost

Basic tour cost

\$ 4,500

Terms:

1. Deposit of \$500 due 1/5/12
2. Deposit fully refundable up to 90 days before departure
3. Balance due 2/15/12
4. Balance partially refundable up to 45 days before dep.
5. Tips for guide, driver and bag handlers due 3/15/12

International airfare *
(estimated)

\$ 1,600

Air taxes
TBD

Single supplement
(\$ 620)

If sharing a room, with whom?:

Tips
(estimated)

\$ 150

* Flights - you are welcome to make your own flight arrangements as long as you provide us with your flight itinerary and arrive no later than the tour group.

Total Charges
(estimated)

Payment Information

Circle one: Master Card - American Express - Visa - Check

Amount: \$ 500.00

CC #:

Exp date:

CVS code:
(required)

Name (print as it appears on card):

Signature:

Do you have a theme, focus, or particular area of interest that you would like to study during the trip?

Important note: Please include a color photocopy of your passport & health insurance card

Mail to:
World Affairs Council of Houston
PO Box 920905
Houston, Texas 77292-0905

or Fax to: (713) 522-7812

World Affairs Council of Houston
Health information for

Name:

Are you healthy enough to travel internationally and keep pace with an agenda that includes

- ✓ Some stairs
- ✓ moderates walks
- ✓ this trip is considered moderate activity level

Do you have any medical conditions that should be known?

Please list any medications that you currently take

Do you have any allergies?

Your doctors name and Phone number

Your health insurance plan

Who to contact in case of emergency