

UZBEKISTAN: TREASURES OF THE SILK ROAD

3 – 15 MAY 2025

FROM
£3,975
PER PERSON

Tour Leader: Chris Caldicott


The Ultimate
TRAVEL COMPANY



This fascinating tour, designed by Chris Caldicott, follows the legendary Silk Road across the Central Asian Republic of Uzbekistan exploring the turbulent history of the region and the exquisite architectural highlights - fortresses, palaces, and spectacular mosques with dazzling turquoise tiles and soaring minarets.

Beginning in the capital, Tashkent, we fly west to Nukus, known for its remarkable art museum, before continuing to the beautifully preserved walled city of Khiva. From Khiva, we will spend a day in the Kyzyl Kum Desert to visit settlements dating back to as early as the 1st century.

We journey on to the fabled city of Bukhara stopping at the border of Turkmenistan, the isolated country known for its authoritarian government, which is one of the least visited countries in the world. Bukhara has been a spiritual, intellectual and cultural centre of Islam from the 9th century but reached its zenith in the 16th century with its university, 360 mosques and 80 madrassas. It was famous as a wealthy centre of trade, for its slave market and its splendid architectural monuments.

Finally, we visit Samarkand, once considered amongst the most important and magnificent cities in the world during medieval times, which was conquered in turn by both Genghis Khan and Tamerlane the Great.



Khast Imam Mosque



Blue and white pottery in Bukhara



Alisher Navoi Opera House

13-DAY ITINERARY, DEPARTING 3 MAY 2025

3 May London / Istanbul / Tashkent

Suggested flights (not included in the cost of the tour) with Turkish Airlines via Istanbul departing London Heathrow at 11.25 hrs.

4 May Tashkent

Arrive in Tashkent at 00.55 hrs. Group transfer to the modern Hyatt Regency Hotel, located right on Navoi Street adjacent to the prestigious National Library, where one night is spent. Rooms will be ready for immediate occupation. Morning at leisure. Depart on a city tour of Tashkent. Drive via the earthquake memorial, constructed following the devastating earthquake in 1966, and Khast Imom, the spiritual heart of Tashkent, to the bustling Chorsu Bazaar located in the old town of Tashkent.

Lunch in the bazaar. Walk through the old city to board Metro. The whole metro system was originally planned to be a city-wide nuclear shelter and each station is designed after a particular theme. Ride the Metro to the Alisher Navoi Station, inspired by Islamic architecture, and on to the Kosmonavtlar station, themed after space exploration and inspired by the Milky Way, with specks of glass 'stars' sparkling through the colonnade. Walk back to the hotel via the ornate Alisher Navoi Opera House and Amir Timur Square, which contains the Uzbek Hotel and the bronze horse statue of Amir Timur, the great statesman

and military leader and one of the founders of the Uzbek state. Welcome drink at the hotel before dinner at a local restaurant.



Amir Timur Square

5 May Tashkent / Nukus / Khiva

Early morning transfer to Tashkent Airport for an Uzbek Air domestic flight to Nukus. Visit the Savitsky Museum, often referred to as the 'Louvre in the Sands' as it holds the largest art collection in Central Asia.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Continue to Khiva and check into the charming Asia Hotel, nestled a 5-minute walk from Islam Khodja, where three nights are spent. Remainder of the afternoon at leisure to relax. Early evening, enjoy a walk to the sunset view point before dinner at a local restaurant.

6 May Khiva

Optional dawn walk with Chris. Full day exploring Khiva and the UNESCO World Heritage citadel of Ichan-Kala with its Emir's palaces, mosques, madrassas and impressive city walls. Visits include Muhammad

Amin Khan madrassa, Muhammad Rahim Khan madrassa, the turquoise-tiled Kalta Minar minaret, the Kunya-Ark fortress which was the residence of the rulers of Khiva, Djuma Mosque with its 212 carved wooden columns, Toshkhovli Palace with its 150 rooms and nine courtyards exquisitely decorated with tiles and carvings, the imposing mausoleum of local holy man Pahlavan Mahmoud and the 45-metre turquoise and red minaret of Islam Khodja.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Enjoy a traditional folklore show. Dinner under own arrangements.

7 May Ayaz-Qala & Toprak Qala / Khiva

Morning drive to the archaeological site of Ayaz Qala, an impressive mud-walled 4th-century fortress located on a hill on the western side of the Sultan-Uiz-Dagh Mountains in the Kyzyl Kum Desert. Continue to Toprak Qala, an excavated abandoned palace city dating back to the 1st to 5th centuries, which is considered the most important monument on Choresm from the Kushan time. In 1938, the ruins were explored by the Chorasman Expedition under the guidance of Sergey Tolstov and wall paintings, coins, fabrics and ceramics were discovered.

Return to the hotel for lunch under own arrangements. Afternoon at leisure. Dinner at a local rooftop restaurant.



Bolo-Khauz Mosque



Ayaz Gala



West gate of Itchan Kala

8 May Khiva / Bukhara

Morning departure for Bukhara stopping on the way at the Turkmenistan border.

Lunch at a local restaurant.

Afternoon visit to the Emir's Summer Palace, located on the outskirts of the city. Check into the Mercure Hotel, located on the edge of Bukhara old town, where three nights are spent. Dinner under own arrangements.

9 May Bukhara

Full day spent exploring the old city of Bukhara with its bazaar streets and trading domes, mosques and madrassas. Visit the Ark Fortress, an ancient royal fortress dating from the 11th and 12th centuries, and the 18th-century Bolo-Khauz mosque which was the Emir's official place of worship. Explore the Citadel Museums, the infamous Zindon (gaol) and the Po-I-Kalyan Complex including the imposing Kalyan Mosque with its 288-dome roof and adjacent spectacular 12th-century, 47-metre tall minaret which has become the symbol of Bukhara.

Lunch on the terrace of a local restaurant. Afternoon visit to the 15th-century blue-tiled Ulugbek madrasa, the 17th-century Abdulazizkhan madrasa and Chor Minor madrasa, a pretty 19th-century madrasa gatehouse with four decorative towers. Dinner under own arrangements.

10 May Bukhara

Morning at leisure.

Lunch under own arrangements. Afternoon at leisure. Dinner at a local restaurant.

11 May Bukhara / Samarkand

Morning departure for Samarkand stopping on route at the ruins of the 12th-century Rabati Malik caravanserai. Check into the 5-star Regency Hotel, with a spectacular roof-top bar with panoramic views over the city, where three nights are spent.

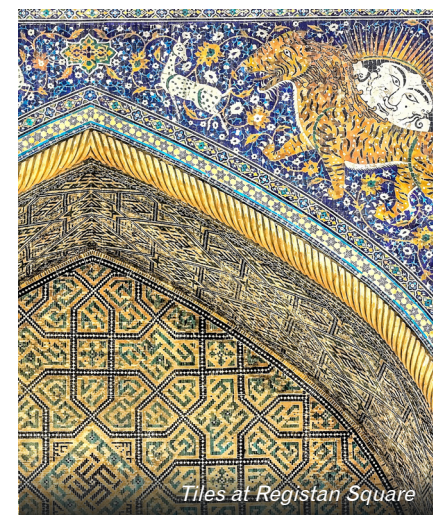
Lunch on arrival at the hotel. Afternoon visit to the spectacular Registan Square (meaning 'place of sand'), one of the finest architectural ensembles in Central Asia with its fine madrassas. Enjoy the evening light show. Return to the hotel for dinner under own arrangements.

12 May Samarkand

Morning tour of Samarkand to include early visit to the Shakh-Zinda Necropolis, a famous place of pilgrimage since the 11th century with its exquisitely decorated Timurid mausoleums, then the Afrosiyob archaeological site, which was the first settlement in Samarkand dating from the 8th century BC, and the Tomb of Saint Daniel. Continue to the famous Ulugh Beg Observatory, which produced advanced astronomical discoveries before it was destroyed by religious extremists in 1449. See

the gigantic Bibi-Khanim Mosque, which dates from the end of the 14th century and was the largest in Central Asia. It was reputedly built by order of Tamerlane after his victorious campaign to India. End the morning with a visit to the colourful and bustling Slab Bazaar.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Afternoon visit to the 15th-century Gur Emir Mausoleum containing the tombs of Tamerlane the Great and his descendants. Return to the hotel for time at leisure. Dinner at the hotel.



Tiles at Registan Square

13 May Samarkand

Day trip to the ancient town of Urgut, located to the south-east of Samarkand, to visit the gardens of Chor Chiyor, which translates as 'four plane trees' where the trees are meant to feed on a water from a holy spring.



Visit the Urgut bazaar, known for being a major centre for traditional crafts, which is surrounded by blacksmith's workshops. Continue to Shahr-i-Sabz to see Ak-Saray (the white palace), a ruined palace from the beginning of the Timurid period in the 14th century which is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Continue to the Dor-ut Tilovat, a memorial complex with its Kok-Gumbaz blue-domed mosque and the burial vault of Tamerlane's father. It was formed after the death in 1370 of the eminent religious leader Shamsiddin Kulal, the founder of Sufism, the spiritual mentor of Emir Taragay and of Timur himself. See the Dor-us Siyadat memorial complex founded after the untimely death of Timur's eldest son, Jakhongir, in 1376. End the morning with a visit to the bazaar.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Return to Samarkand on the scenic Takhta-Karacha Mountain Pass. Visit the Khovrenko Winery, one of the oldest wineries in central Asia. The tasting room is in a historical late 19th-century building, once the house of Russian merchant Filatov, who founded the first winery in Uzbekistan as far back as 1868. Dinner under own arrangements.

14 May Samarkand / Tashkent

Morning departure for Tashkent and check into the Hyatt Regency Hotel, where a further night is spent.

Lunch under own arrangements. Afternoon at leisure. Farewell dinner at a local restaurant.

15 May Tashkent / Istanbul / London

Group transfer to Tashkent Airport for suggested (not included) Turkish Airlines flight via Istanbul departing Tashkent at 09.00 hrs arriving London Heathrow at 16.45 hrs.

TOUR PRICES PER PERSON

Tour Price	£3,975
Single Supplement	£600

Please note we have not included the cost of the flights in the tour price. Please contact us for prices should you wish to book them through us.

PRICE INCLUDES

- Accommodation throughout as shown in the itinerary
- Breakfast daily; 8 lunches; 6 dinners
- All entrance fees, visits and excursions as per the itinerary
- All group transportation as detailed in the itinerary
- Local English-speaking guide/s
- Gratuities to driver/s; gratuities to guide/s; gratuities in restaurants; portage
- The services of your tour leader throughout

PRICE EXCLUDES

- International flights
- Travel insurance
- Items of personal expenditure (e.g. Telephone calls / laundry etc.)
- Visa fees
- Government levies or taxes introduced after costing and publication of this programme on 31/01/24



Khiva Islom Khodja



YOUR TOUR LEADER



CHRIS CALDICOTT

Since travelling to some of the most remote parts of the world as Photographer-in-Residence to the Royal Geographical Society, Chris Caldicott has continued his globetrotting lifestyle as a freelance photographer, writer and lecturer specialising in food and travel. He has had several books published about food, travel and the spice trade and visited 118 countries on assignments to capture evocative images and write about memorable experiences for publications such as Vanity Fair, Condé Nast Traveller, The Sunday Times, Harpers Bazaar, Tatler, House and Garden and The Telegraph. Chris will offer an initial workshop at the beginning of the trip on how to take better travel photographs and get the best out of your camera covering exposure, focus and composition illustrated with examples of his own work.



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