



THE FAMOUS SILK ROAD 2009

MAY 4 – 16, 2009

Day 1, Sun, May 3	Depart USA
Day 2, Mon, May 4	Arrive Tashkent
Day 3, Tue, May 5	Tashkent
Day 4, Wed, May 6	Tashkent • drive to Samarkand
Day 5, Thu, May 7	Samarkand
Day 6, Fri, May 8	Samarkand • day trip to Penjikent
Day 7, Sat, May 9	Samarkand • drive to Bukhara
Day 8, Sun, May 10	Bukhara
Day 9, Mon, May 11	Bukhara
Day 10, Tue, May 12	Bukhara • drive to Khiva
Day 11, Wed, May 13	Khiva
Day 12, Thu, May 14	Khiva • fly to Tashkent
Day 13, Fri, May 15	Tashkent
Day 14, Sat, May 16	Depart Tashkent

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Descriptive Itinerary

Day 1, Sun, May 3 Depart USA

Depart today on international flights to Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Meals: in flight

Day 2, Mon, May 4 Arrive Tashkent

Arrive in Tashkent. After clearing customs, transfer to the hotel to check in and overnight at our hotel.

Meals: Light snack provided

Tashkent Palace Hotel or similar

This four star hotel is one of the newest properties in Tashkent. Known already for excellent service, the hotel boasts three international style restaurants, three bars, a fully equipped health and fitness center with sauna and an outdoor swimming pool. All rooms have direct dial phones, TV, balconies, and mini bar.

Day 3, Tue, May 5 Tashkent

Today depart on a full day tour of Tashkent. Although it doesn't look it today, Tashkent is one of the oldest cities in Uzbekistan. Rock paintings in the Chaktal Mountains about 50 miles away show that humans have been here since perhaps 2000 BC. In the 2nd century BC the town was known as Ming Uryuk. A major caravan crossroads, it was taken by the Arabs in 751 and by Genghis Khan in the 13th century. Tamerlane feasted here in the 14th century and the Shaibanid *khans* in the 15th and 16th. The Russian Empire arrived in 1865, and Uzbekistan was not an autonomous country again until 1991.

Tashkent lost much of its architectural history in a huge earthquake in 1966, and although it is an old city, most of it has been built since then. Today, the city is a jumble of wide tree-lined boulevards, oversized 20th century Soviet buildings and reconstructed traces of the old city with mud-walled houses, narrow winding lanes, mosques and *madrassahs* (Islamic religious schools).

Visit the **Alisher Navoi Opera and Ballet Theater**, built in 1947 by Japanese prisoners of war and surviving the '66 earthquake; the **Shahid Memorial Complex**, its blue-domed rotunda reminding the nation of Uzbek leaders, artists and poets shot in 1938 during Stalin's purges; the **Courage Monument**, named for the workers who rebuilt the city after the earthquake; and **Independence Square**, its history revealed in its parade of names - first "Cathedral", then "Red", then "Lenin," and finally in 1992, "Independence."

We explore Old Tashkent, beginning with a visit to **Hast-Imam Plaza**, with its 16th century Kaffal-Shoshi Mausoleum and al-Bukhari Madrassah (Islamic school), then we walk thru the **Chorsu Bazaar** with its 16th century Kukeldash Madrassah, tour the recently renovated

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Jummi Mosque on the square where executions used to be held, and the **Eski Juva Bazaar**, whose Soviet name – October - was dropped in 1992.

After lunch we make a special visit in the old town to the **studio of ceramicist Akbar Rakhimov**, who, through research and his own artistic skill, has resurrected long-forgotten glazing and dyeing techniques. We will share tea and a question and answer exchange with the master at his studio.

Welcome dinner this evening will be at a local restaurant.

Meals: B, L, D

Day 4, Wed, May 6 Tashkent • drive to Samarkand

After breakfast we check out and depart Tashkent driving overland along the same Silk Road that many a merchant has traveled to Samarkand. Modern Samarkand is built on the ruins of ancient Afrosiab, and once went by the name of Marakanda. Its location between China and the Western world secured its importance as a trade center and a clearinghouse for cultural exchange. Islamic beliefs from the Near East crossed paths with spices from Southeast Asia and silk from the Middle Kingdom. Its strategic location, cultural wealth and worldly riches made Samarkand an attractive target for the world's most famous conquerors. Alexander the Great, upon his arrival in the 4th century BC said, "Everything I have heard about the beauty of the city is indeed true, except that it is much more beautiful than I imagined."

After a long period of Arab rule, the region came under the control of Genghis Khan, whose empire stretched from Beijing to Moscow at its height and encompassed much of modern-day Central Asia. The hundred-year rule of the Golden Horde set the stage for Tamerlane's conquest, which brought Samarkand to its apex.

Upon arrival, have lunch and check in to the hotel.

After lunch we will tour with a visit to the **Registan**, the centerpiece of Samarkand, and the most recognizable landmark for visitors. The three emblematic *madrassahs* frame the square, and loom over the empty space in the center. It was this central space that originally gave the place its name, for "registan" simply means "place of sand." This sandy place was at the center of ancient Samarkand and was a public square and marketplace before Ulug Bek built the *Ulug Bek*, *Tillya-Kori*, and *Shir Dor madrassahs*. In its reconstruction, the square maintains the majesty that it has radiated through the ages.

Meals: B, L, D

Malika Hotel

The Malika Hotel is newly renovated, designed around a double courtyard that harkens back to Silk Route caravanserais. Carved pillars adorn the courtyards, while wood furniture and design elements provide a comfortable feel. Inside the rooms you'll find western-style facilities, most with full baths, phone and air conditioning.

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Day 5, Thu, May 7 Samarkand

Tamerlane was born in nearby Shakrisabze, and made Samarkand the capital of his empire. He worked to improve the city, which had suffered under the Mongols, and he and his grandson, Ulug Bek, oversaw a flourishing of architecture and decorative art unmatched in the ancient world. Tamerlane built the world's largest mosque, while Ulug Bek created the *madrassahs* that frame Registan Square and constructed the world's most accurate observatory. Tamerlane and Ulug Bek had access to the best building and decorative materials, the finest architects and the most skilled artisans ever assembled in one place at one time. The modern city bears the indelible stamp of these two men and is a treasure trove today as it was in ancient times.

This morning, make stops at **Gur-Emir Mausoleum, Ulug Bek's Observatory,** and the **Bibi Khanum.**

Gur-Emir Mausoleum, is the final resting place of Tamerlane, but was originally built for his grandson after the latter's death, at the turn of the 15th century. The interior of the mausoleum has been restored and is brilliant in gold leaf and fresh tile. The heavily gilded central dome opens over the set of tomb-markers resembling sarcophagi (the bodies are located well below, but are on site). All are marble, with the exception of Tamerlane's, which is a slab of solid jade reportedly from Mongolia.

Learn about **Ulug Bek and his observatory.** Though concerned with conquest, politics, and other matters of terrestrial importance, Tamerlane's grandson Ulug Bek found his true interest in the heavens. The astronomer-king was fascinated by the stars and the cosmos and built one of the most advanced observatories of the ancient world. The observations, which he undertook with the naked eye only, predated the telescope by over 150 years. They were aided by the building itself, which housed a large vertical half-circle, only a quarter of which remains today. By using careful methods, rigorous observation and meticulous recording, Ulug Bek calculated the length of the year to within a minute of the modern accepted value. He also created the most comprehensive (to date) catalog of the heavens, earning his place in history.

The **Bibi Khanum Mosque** was built by Tamerlane to be the largest mosque in the Islamic world, and dedicated to the memory of his favorite wife. Architects from India and Persia were brought in to build the mosque, and 95 elephants were used to transport the marble and other building materials from India to Samarkand.

Dinner tonight is in the city with a free evening following.

Meals: B, L, D

Day 6, Fri, May 8 Samarkand

After breakfast today, we continue our touring of Samarkand. Today we will walk through the impressive **Shah-i-Zinda,** and then the **local Bazaar.**

The row of tombs and mausoleums collectively called **Shah-I-Zinde,** or "place of a living king," stretches between the present and the past. At its front is living Samarkand, and at its back

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the dusty slopes at the edge of ancient Afrosiab. Even on hot summer days the mausoleums remain shady and cool, and seem to lure the traveler to approach the oldest tomb at the far end. Behind the complex and set into the hill lies an active cemetery with gravesites dating back as far as the 9th century, and as recently as the present day.

Today you have lunch on your own and can try one of the small cafés.

This afternoon we will check out the lively Bazaar of Samarkand. Here you can see all the local produce grown in the region as well as purchase a traditional Uzbek hat.

Meals: B, D

Day 7, Sat, May 9 Samarkand • drive to Bukhara

This morning after breakfast depart for Bukhara along the Silk Road. On the way, make a stop to visit the **Afghan-Uzbek Carpet Factory**. This joint venture uses natural vegetable dyes to color the thread used in its carpets. Tour the gardens outside the factory where the weavers grow indigo, coleus and dahlias to use for dye. Observe the entire process of dying the thread and weaving the carpets, with an opportunity to shop afterward. The factory began in 1993 with 45 workers, and has grown to 450.

Enjoy lunch en-route or upon arrival into Bukhara. Upon arrival, check into a unique hotel located right in the old town.

Dinner tonight is in the city at a local restaurant, and then enjoy some free time to walk around the old town, or rest.

Meals: B, L, D

Amelia Hotel or similar

This small, privately owned hotel used to be a Jewish merchant's home and then a bakery. Located in the old part of Bukhara, near the Lyabi-Hauz monument, the hotel serves traditional and European cuisine in its 18th century aivan, or open porch. Each room is individually decorated in authentic Central Asian style and includes air conditioning, satellite TV, minibar and hairdryer.

Day 8, Sun, May 10 Bukhara

An oasis in the desert, Bukhara offers cool shade and rest to the modern traveler as it did to the camel caravans that plied the Silk Road hundreds of years ago. Bukhara is as old as Samarkand, and has preserved its ancient architecture and design to an arguably larger extent. The Old Town in Bukhara has a unified feel, drawn together by a central reflecting pool and plaza, by commonality in the structure of the domed bazaars and by the major monuments ringing the old town: the Kalon Assembly, the Zindan Prison, and the Ark Citadel.

Bukhara also has a Jewish Quarter in the heart of the Old Town, where in the mid 19th century 2,500 families of prosperous merchants were estimated to have been living. Cut off in the 15th century from contact with other Jews, the Bukharan Jews developed their own dialect of the

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Tajik-Persian language that incorporates many Hebrew words, their own style of dress and their own unique form of Judaism. The only Bukharan synagogue allowed by the Soviets to remain is an unassuming place near the Lyabi-Hauz pool. Almost underground and still somewhat run-down, the synagogue is the center of life for Bukhara's greatly diminished Jewish community. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, more than 70,000 Jews have left Uzbekistan.

A full day of touring in Bukhara includes the Lyabi-Hauz Plaza, the Kalon Mosque and Minaret, the Samanid Mausoleum and the Ark Citadel with its Zindan Prison.

With the feel of a true oasis in an oasis town, the **Lyabi-Hauz Plaza** is at the center of Bukhara's old town and is, as it has been throughout history, a place to meet friends, to eat, to drink, and to relax in the shade. The atmosphere is cooled by the long rectangular reflecting pool that makes up the center of the plaza, and by the shade of the mulberry trees that ring the plaza. The trees are hundreds of years old, as are the 16th and 17th century *madrassahs* that make up three of the four edges of the ensemble.

The **Poi Kalon** is also called the Bukhara Forum. The 12th century Kalon assembly, including the Kalon Mosque and Minaret, and the **Mir-i-Arab Madrasah**, surrounds an open plaza teeming with merchants and local vendors. The minaret towers over the dusty square, looking down from a height of more than 150 feet, and casting its shadow between the mosque and the *madrassah*. Fourteen distinct and unique bands of brickwork circle the tower at intervals, and at the top of the minaret resolve into a traditional stalactite formation.

In a clearing in a tree-filled park a small plaza is marked with a single building, the **Ismael Samani Mausoleum**. It is the 10th century resting place of Ismael Samani, founder of the (Persian) Samanid Dynasty, and was for some reason buried in the earth and not discovered until the 20th century. Though small, it is detailed in a fashion not seen in many other Bukharan monuments. More than sixteen styles of brickwork adorn the face of this cubic memorial, and their elaborate pleats and layering are still fresh today.

The **Ark Citadel** is the original fortress of Bukhara and likely dates back two thousand years or more. The current structure has been built and rebuilt on the same site throughout its history, and has preserved something of the form, purpose, and function of the first Ark. Like the medieval castle complexes of Europe, the Bukhara Ark served the Emirs of Bukhara as a residence, audience hall, as protection from neighboring enemies, and for more mundane purposes, such as a trade center and a police station.

Just behind the Ark Citadel is the infamous **Zindan Prison** and the even more infamous "bug pit" or "black hole," the cell where two of Britain's finest Great Game players were imprisoned before their execution.

Dinner and overnight in the city.

Meals: B, L, D

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Day 9, Mon, May 11 Bukhara

Travel outside the city today to see the **Palace of Moon and Stars**, or the Summer Palace of the last Emir of Bukhara, built at the turn of the century after the Russians took control of Bukhara. The grounds here are heavily planted, and arbored walkways connect the various pavilions and buildings. Wild peacocks and peahens stroll through the park-like setting, strutting with their long showpiece plumage. The palace itself is something of a showpiece, as it was designed to keep the emir in luxury, but removed from the city, in isolation and political importance. The main palace is a mixture of local materials, regional influences, and Russian style. Western furniture abounds, but design choices reflect traditional Uzbek decorations.

This afternoon will be open for independent exploration or just relaxing in the old town of Bukhara.

Enjoy dinner and a show this evening.

Meals: B, L, D

Day 10, Tue, May 12 Bukhara • drive to Khiva

This morning after breakfast depart overland to the last great Uzbek city on our itinerary – Khiva. The almost full-day journey will be well worth it, as you will see upon arrival in this almost entirely museum town. Legend says that the ancient Silk Road oasis of Khiva was founded at the place where Shem, son of Noah, discovered water in the desert, and that the city got its name from Shem's joyful shout, "Hey va!" at the discovery. Today the living city is part museum town, part re-creation of life hundreds of years ago.

Archaeologists have found traces of human habitation around Khiva dating from the 5th century BC. It was for hundreds of years a stop on the old Silk Road and a fortress town, but it was not until the 16th century that Khiva became the capital of the Khorezm Khanate. The khanate ruled the surrounding area for over 300 years, and was a well-known slave-trading center.

Check in to the hotel for dinner and overnight.

Meals: B, L, D

Asia Khiva Hotel or similar

The four star Asia Khiva was built in 2004 and is located just outside of Ichon Qala, a two minute walk from the city wall. The hotel offers a restaurant, bar, conference hall, Internet and sauna. All rooms have air conditioning, satellite TV, phone, and mini-bar.

Day 11, Wed, May 13 Khiva

Today, explore Khiva on foot. A full-day walking tour in Khiva includes the monuments of the Old Town, or Ichon-Qala, including the Tash-Hauli Palace, or Stone House, built in the 19th century for the reigning khan and his four wives; the Dzhuma Mosque with its interior forest of carved wooden pillars; the Kunya Ark, the original residence of the khans, partially destroyed

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in the Persian invasion of the 18th century; and the ancient well of Khievak, which made settlement here feasible.

Khiva's **Old Town** has been extensively preserved and restored, and exists today much as it did hundreds of years ago. Approaching the Old Town, modern-day travelers face the same sight as Silk Road caravans did, the dun-colored city walls, the main gate opening on a dusty stone thoroughfare, merchants hawking their wares from each side, and the distinctive minarets watching over the whole scene.

The walled Old City was an independent entity and the seat of the Khanate of Khiva. The largest of the existing buildings is the **Tash Hauli Palace**, the home of the Khan and his four legal wives. The intricate blue and white tile-work in the open-air throne room offsets the airy space set aside by the carved wooden columns.

Wood carving is a traditional specialty of Khiva, and more wooden columns are found at the **Dzhuma Mosque**. The mosque is partially below ground level and the 115 carved columns that support the wooden ceiling create a forest-like effect around two square light wells. The **Kunya Ark** was originally built in the 12th century as the Khan's fortress and residence, and encompassed numerous small courtyards surrounded by administrative buildings, sleeping quarters, kitchens, guardhouse, stables, parade area, and weapons strongholds. Much of it was lost when Persia invaded the Khivan Khanate in the 18th century, but what remains, including the mosque, harem, and throne room are beautifully decorated with ceramic tiles and majolica.

There are several places that offer **aerial views of the city**, and from any 3rd or 4th story balcony the unique minarets with their blue-green tiling stand over the domes, mud-brick walls and quiet feel of this museum town.

Dinner and overnight in the city.

Meals: B, L, D

Day 12, Thu, May 14 Khiva • fly Tashkent

Enjoy a leisurely morning in Khiva. Use the time to walk around the old town on your own or relax.

Today we depart Khiva with a drive to the nearby town of Urgench where the regional airport is located, where we catch our flight to Tashkent.

Meeting upon arrival and transfer to the hotel. Dinner this evening at a local restaurant.

Meals: B, L, D

Tashkent Palace Hotel or similar

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Day 13, Fri, May 15 Tashkent

After breakfast we continue exploring Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, with a visit to the **Museum of History of the People of Uzbekistan**. Founded in 1876, it is one of the oldest museums in Central Asia. The extensive exhibits include ancient, medieval and modern historical relics and artifacts.

This afternoon we have the opportunity to do some shopping and enjoy our last day in Uzbekistan.

We will make a short tour of the Tashkent Metro. Tashkent boasts the only metro in Central Asia. Completed in 1977, each station has a different theme, some incorporating Central Asian decorative motifs and some resembling Russian palaces. With granite and marble, chandeliers and mosaics, the stations on Tashkent's three lines are meant to be "art galleries for the people".

Tonight we gather together for a festive farewell dinner to celebrate our journey along the famous Silk Road.

Meals: B, L, D

Day 14, Sat, May 16 Depart Tashkent

Transfer to the airport and depart Ashkabad in the early morning.

Meals: in flight

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ESSENTIALS

DATES *May 3-16, 2009*

DEPOSIT *A deposit of \$750 per person is required at the time of registration.*

FINAL PAYMENT *Final payment is due 60 days prior to departure and is payable by personal check. Credit card charges for final payment are assessed a processing fee.*

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS *A visa is required for Uzbekistan for American or Canadian passport holders.*

SHOTS *None required or recommended. It is recommended you have your regular vaccinations up-to-date before traveling. For further information, visit the Center For Disease Control website.*

INT'L AIRFARE *Most European and some American carriers will fly USA/MOSCOW, the gateway to Central Asia. Only Aeroflot and Uzbek Airlines can be used to fly Moscow-Tashkent. We recommend booking at least 7 months in advance if you want to try to use Frequent Flyer Miles for free tickets or upgrades or the American Express Platinum card 2-4-1 program.*

MINIMUMS *All departures are guaranteed on a minimum of 2* participants. A Coda Tour Manager accompanies the tour on a minimum of 8 participants. (* Some modifications to the inclusions in the program may be made if participation is fewer than 5 travelers.)*

TOUR RATES - *12 nights first class hotel nights and 33 meals included*

2009		Land Price	Total Per Person
	Double	\$4995	\$4995
	Single	\$5395	\$5395

INCLUDED

Tour rates are per person in U.S. dollars. Most major credit cards are accepted for Tour Deposit. Final payment is payable by personal check. Final payment by credit card is assessed a processing fee.

Tour Rates include accommodations as listed in the itinerary, entertainment, special meals, air conditioned, motor coach, van or sedan transportation, sightseeing, luggage handling, admissions, local guides and drivers. Mineral water on busses and at meals.

Arrival and departure transfers are included.

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Most meals are included as indicated in the itinerary. The meal codes are: B=Breakfast; L=Lunch; D=Dinner; R=Cocktail Reception. Participants with specific dietary requirements must inform Coda Tours at least 2 weeks prior to departure. Every effort will be made to accommodate special dietary needs where possible. Most meals taken as a group are pre-ordered. Local cuisine is given preference over Western choices.

NOT INCLUDED

International airfare is not included. Coda Tour will be happy to assist with business, first or coach class airfares . If you are planning to use Frequent Flyer Miles for an upgrade or free ticket, we highly recommend booking your tour at least 7 months prior to departure.

Passport and visa expenses (if required). Please check our Travel Documents requirements for this trip. Always double check that your passport will remain valid for at least 6 months past your return to the U.S. and that you have sufficient empty pages in your passport to accommodate visa and entry/exit stamps. Always carry a copy of your passport packed separately from your travel documents and leave a copy with someone at home.

Trip Cancellation & Interruption Insurance which is highly recommended to protect your travel investment in the unlikelyhood you would need to cancel or return home early. We recommend Travel Insured International and will send you an application form with confirmation of your trip. You may check the rates for insurance on their website at www.travelinsured.com. We also recommend insuring any expense for airline tickets issued prior to the determination if a tour is guaranteed to operate. We cannot assume responsibility for losses incurred due to the cancellation of a tour.

Gratuities to porters, waiters and hotel staff are included. Gratuities to local guides & drivers are not included.

Personal Expenses such as phone calls, room service, alcoholic and bar beverages, laundry, airline excess luggage charges, vaccinations, visa fees (if applicable) and other optional incidental extras are not included and may be significant.