



HIGHLIGHTS OF UZBEKISTAN: THE ANCIENT SILK ROAD

Home to Central Asia's oldest architecture,
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make your draw drop.

Tailor-Made Journeys, Suggested Itineraries



Asia, Uzbekistan



8 days from AU\$6,950 pp



Private

Journey Overview

Home to Central Asia's oldest architecture, Uzbekistan has ancient ruins and relics that will make your jaw drop. Mosques, minarets and mausoleums are abundant, and the cities are steeped in the legend and mysteries of the old Silk Road. On this exclusive private journey visit two of the region's most famed cities exploring spiritual sites and archaeological marvels, trawling colourful marketplaces, and learning about age-old Uzbek handicrafts. From Tashkent to Samarkand and on to Bukhara, this journey will change the way you see the world.

Journey Highlights

- Discover the famed Tashkent underground, a soviet-era spectacle, where each station hosts dazzling art and architecture
- Visit the private studio of Rima Gazalieva for a masterclass in the art of painting onto porcelain; decorate your own glazed porcelain plates, bowls, vases or statues
- Take the high-speed train to the ancient city of Samarkand through some of the most striking mountain ranges in Central Asia
- Meet artisans and craftspeople at mulberry-paper and silk-carpet factories, learning age-old stories of the Silk Road
- See the majestic UNESCO World Heritage-listed Mausoleum of Gur-Amir, an architectural marvel
- Explore the 2000-year-old magical city of Bukhara — UNESCO protected with over 140 architectural and archaeological monuments



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive Tashkent

Welcome to Tashkent! Receive a warm A&K welcome and fast-tracked entry, before a private transfer to your hotel. The rest of the day is at leisure.

Hyatt Regency Tashkent

Day 2: Tashkent

Spend the day exploring the city of Tashkent, Uzbekistan's 2,000-year-old capital. Start in its spiritual heart: the Khast-Imam Islamic complex home to a number of mosques, minarets and mausoleums. Watch stalks wander the grounds and listen in as your guide decodes the origins of Islam. Next, it's on to the Museum of Applied Arts, with its exquisite ceramic and textiles exhibits, before continuing on to Kukeldash Madrassah and the old town. Kukeldash Madrassah is a beautiful example of middle-ages oriental architecture, while the old town is full of narrow winding streets, ancient mosques and madrassas. Wander through Amir Timur Square and visit the Tashkent underground, a soviet-era spectacle with nuclear-blast protection, and Central Asia's oldest metro system. Each elaborate station displays a unique architectural and artistic decoration; most of the metro stations have humble entrances, giving no hint of the dazzling architecture below.

In the late afternoon, visit the private studio of Rima Gazalieva for a masterclass in the art of painting onto porcelain. Porcelain painting is a fine art in Central Asia. In this hands-on introduction you'll decorate your own glazed porcelain plates, bowls, vases or statues with calligraphy — a beautiful souvenir to take home with you.

Hyatt Regency Tashkent / Meals: BL

Day 3: Tashkent - Samarkand

Rise early for your high-speed train to the ancient city of Samarkand; travel through some of the most striking landscapes and mountain ranges in Central Asia. After settling into your luxury accommodation, head out with your guide to explore this important stop along the Silk Road. Its long history is famously linked to the legacy of the great 14th century ruler Tamerlane whose aim was to create the richest city on earth. Start from Ulugbek Observatory and Afrosiab Museum with the original frescos of the first and most ancient settlement in Samarkand. Continue to the world famous and UNESCO protected Khujum hand-made silk carpets factory where the local manager teaches you about the production stages of their state-of-the-art carpets — from a single cocoon to a handmade masterpiece.

This evening enjoy a teaser promenade of magnificent Registan Square at sunset — the heart and pride of Samarkand, and the breath-taking set of two madrasahs and the gilded mosque.

Hilton Samarkand Regency / Meals: BL

Day 4: Samarkand

Explore mulberry-paper and silk-carpet factories to learn all about Uzbek handicrafts and their place along the ancient Silk Road. According to legend, the art of papermaking from mulberry bark came to Samarkand in 751 when the ruler defeated Chinese invaders and captured thousands of soldiers. To save their lives, craftsmen among the captives revealed their knowledge of papermaking to their captors. Enjoy tea and local sweets and try your hand at water painting. Next visit the vibrant Siab Market where you'll try your bargaining skills and get a vital glimpse into local trading culture.

After a delicious local lunch of Pilov, visit the Shah-i-Zinda necropolis to see beautiful examples of majolica tilework, before continuing on to the impressive and massive Bibi Khanym Mosque, a local bazaar and the Ulugh Beg Observatory.

This afternoon, visit the majestic UNESCO World Heritage-listed Mausoleum of Gur-Amir. This architectural marvel has a ribbed dome and vaulted walls completely covered with mosaic glazed bricks, gilding and painting. The relief rosettes on the dome are designed to imitate a starry night sky, while the interior is enriched with marble and onyx, and covered with paintings, carving and semiprecious stones. Absolutely stunning. Finish with an immersive exploration of stunning Registan Square.

Hilton Samarkand Regency / Meals: BL

Day 5: Samarkand - Bukhara

Head west to the ancient city of Bukhara — a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of the best places to glimpse pre-Russian Turkestan. Expect to lose yourself in the 2000+ years of history. En route take a leisurely stop at the small town of Gijduvan, an old-world trade and craft centre. Visit the famous ceramics centre and the private studio of 6th-generation ceramist, Alisher Narzullayev. Learn all about the Gijduvan ceramics technique and have a chat to the artisan with a cup of Uzbek tea.

Settle into your luxury accommodation in Bukhara, before enjoying a delicious lunch at a restaurant nearby. This afternoon, explore the Old Town Centre on a walking tour with your local guide. Kick back under the ancient mulberry trees that line the shores of the Lyabi-Haus pool — one of the most peaceful sites in the Old Town. Your guide will explain how the pool was once used by thousands of locals to gather water for drinking and bathing. Watch friendly locals drinking tea, listening to music, playing board games and socialising — the atmosphere here is wonderful. Continue on to the Silk Road Tea House for Uzbek tea and delicious local sweets.

Wyndham Bukhara / Meals: BL**Day 6: Bukhara**

The magical city of Bukhara is a living, breathing ‘town museum’ over 2,300 years old. With over 140 architectural monuments and renowned sites, Bukhara is quickly becoming an essential destination for history (and architect) buffs. You could wander narrow streets, green parks and gardens, and historical monuments for days. Explore the intricate columns, walls and ceiling designs of the stunning Bolo Hauz Mosque, before continuing on to the Ismail Samani Mausoleum (892 to 943). This fascinating tomb lay undisturbed in mud for many centuries before it was rediscovered in the 1930s by a Soviet-era archaeologist.

This afternoon, explore world-famous Kalyan Square, which is the central architectural ensemble of the city. The impressive square includes the Kalyan Mosque, also excavated by archaeologists, and rebuilt in the 15th century, following its destruction by the Mongols. Next, it’s on to the Summer Palace of Emir. Listen in as your guide unravels the lavish lifestyle of the court and learn all about how the Emir was chased away to Afghanistan leaving behind his 400 wives in the palace harem. Finish the afternoon discovering the iconic Trading Domes from the Silk Road days, before an evening at leisure.

Wyndham Bukhara / Meals: BL

Day 7: Bukhara - Tashkent

Today is an important opportunity to return to the Old Town, for further insights into the Silk Road era. Wander the once vast market area, discover further impressive caches of mosques, mausoleums, madrasahs and minarets — all of which have been referred to as great works of structural art. See more of this unbelievable open-air museum at your leisure.

There is an optional visit to the Bukhara Jewish quarter to discover a detailed history of the Uzbek Jews. Stroll through alleyways and narrow twisted streets, absorbing the dizzying atmosphere with its huge clay mansions and carved doors with gendered doorbells.

The evening is at leisure.

Hyatt Regency Tashkent / Meals: B

Day 8: Depart Tashkent

Your Uzbekistan discovery has come to an end. Transfer to the airport for your onward flight.

Meals: B

Map



Accommodation

Wyndham Bukhara



The four-star WYNDHAM BUKHARA hotel is nestled in the heart of downtown Bukhara, with state-of-the-art amenities and stellar service from welcoming and hospitable staff.

The 212 rooms and suites are designed with earthy hues and feature complimentary tea and coffee, plush linens, deluxe bath amenities, and other creature comforts. Guests enjoy a delicious free buffet breakfast every morning and stay satiated with two restaurants and 24/7 room service. Free high-speed WiFi keeps guests connected while the sauna and spa, outdoor pool, gift shop and fitness centre offer wind-down activities after adventurous days spent site seeing.

There are a variety of local specialties and international favourites at the Ramiz Restaurant or guests can grab tasty small plates and refreshing drinks at THE WELL Bar & Lounge and VOHA Pool & Bar.

Hyatt Regency Tashkent



This grand, white-fronted building was designed to reflect the rich cultural traditions of Uzbekistan. The lobby is luxurious, with marble floors and arches, and bright, spacious rooms are elegantly decorated with contemporary furniture and locally inspired artwork.

Each of the 297 rooms features floor-to-ceiling windows, a generous workspace with ergonomic chair and charging station, marble-floored bathrooms with a soothing walk-in rain shower and separate bathtub. The Regency Club rooms and suites include complimentary breakfast, and access to the Regency Club Lounge on the 6th floor, which indulges guests with complementary evening cocktails and hors d'oeuvres.

The à la carte Italian restaurant Sette Restaurant & Bar has a spacious terrace, the pool features a poolside bar, and the Khiva Restaurant serves authentic local dishes.

The property is located centrally, adjacent to the prestigious National Library, and a moderate distance from the Museum of Amir Timur and the architectural monument of the Sheikh Hovendi Tahir Mausoleum.

Hilton Samarkand Regency



Hilton Samarkand Regency is a luxury hotel located a two-minute walk to the Rowing Canal and three kilometres to the heart of Silk Road Samarkand, the Eternal City. The hotel offers deluxe comforts and first-class amenities with plush, contemporary and eclectic designs.

The hotel offers 232 rooms and 24 suites. Modern rooms feature king-sized beds or large twin singles, lots of natural light streaming through the panoramic windows, a 55-inch HDTV, complimentary WiFi, coffee machine, minibar, laptop safe, and iron with ironing board.

Other amenities include a Nephrite SPA&Wellness centre, indoor and outdoor pools, and fitness centre. Guests can indulge in several restaurants and bars on-site, including the El Sabor steakhouse and the top floor restaurant, serving an Asian-fusion inspired menu.

After an adventurous day taking in the sites of Samarkand, take a dip in the indoor and outdoor pools, then grab a drink at Sky Bar on the 20th floor, with terrace views of the city.

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