

## October 2021 – The Silk Road: Adventure and Culture in Uzbekistan

02 - 17 October 2021

*Small group departure, maximum 15 people. The ancient trade route connecting the mysterious East with the West, the Silk Road, will be the thread of our adventure. It was not only a gateway for precious silks and spices, but also for art, architecture and above all ideas and culture. As modern travelers we will visit some of the most important historical sites in all of Asia: ancient archeology, swarming bazaars, intricate mosques and evocative desert areas. We will travel aboard 4x4 cars, minivans, trains and airplanes through the whole of Uzbekistan, a country where nature blends with history and traditions are present in the most everyday aspects: both in the small shops where carpets and tapestries are created, as in laboratories where wooden lutes are built. We will have the opportunity to visit some of the most important commercial centers of antiquity located along the Silk Road such as Khiva, Bukhara and Samarkand; minarets, mosques, markets, fortresses, caravanserais; artisan workshops and the picturesque valley of Fergana; but Uzbekistan is not only culture, it offers unique natural spectacles such as the Aral sea and the Ustyurt plateau that we will reach by 4x4 cars, the Kyzylkum desert and the Aydarkul lake with its deep blue waters.*

### PROGRAM

#### 02 October

Arrival in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, in the morning and transfer to our hotel where we can check in.

After a short relax we will leave for the guided tour of Tashkent where among other things we will be able to admire: Kukeldash Madrassah, a splendid medieval madrassah which later became a fortress and caravanserai, the religious complex of Khast Imam, the colorful local bazaar Chor-Su. But we will not forget the modern part of Tashkent: the Independence Square, the Amir Temur square, the famous Tashkent clock towers, the Forum Palace and the local "Broadway".

Overnight at Hotel Asia Tashkent \*\*\*\* or similar.

#### 03 October

Transfer to the picturesque Fergana valley, crossing the scenic Qurama mountains through the Kamchik Pass. During the journey we will stop in Kokand where we will visit: the Historical Museum in the splendid Khudoyar Khan palace, the Jami Mosque with 98 wooden columns and the Nurbutabiy madrassah.

In the late afternoon we will arrive in Fergana.

Overnight at Hotel Asia Fergana \*\*\*\* or similar.

## 04 October

After breakfast we will drive to Margilan, an important hub on the Silk Road where we will visit the traditional silk factory in Yodgorlik.

A transfer to Rishtan will follow, one of the oldest and best known ceramic production centers where we will visit a craft workshop.

We will then return to Tashkent.

Overnight at Hotel Asia Tashkent \*\*\*\* or similar.

## 05 October

Transfer to the airport for the morning flight to Nukus.

Upon our arrival we will visit the "Louvre of the desert", as the Museum of the Arts is called. It is named after Igor Savitsky. The museum's collection is recognized as the second in the world in importance and volume among the collections of Russian avant-garde works, as well as the best art collection in the Asian region.

Overnight at Jipek Joly b & b \*\*\*\* or similar.

## 06 October

Two days of adventure await us in the area of the Aral sea!

Morning departure by jeep towards the Ustyurt Plateau. Along the way we will cross the areas of Kungrad, important trading centers at the time of the great silk road. We will continue towards the Plateau Ustyurt, a large desert plateau with lunar landscapes, inhabited by Urial mouflons and rare Saiga antelopes and finally reach Lake Sudoche. In the past connected with the Aral Sea, today this basin has lost much of its water volume but hosts a rich flora and fauna and it is an Ornithological Reserve for the protection of the Flamingos.

We will then continue towards the Aral Sea first through the village of Urga, stopping at the former airport of the village of Komsomolsk in Ustyurt. Along the way we will have the chance to admire splendid canyons and the steep coasts of the Aral Sea. Arriving at destination we will visit on foot the nearby ancient caravanserai Kurgancha-Kala, which is partially hidden under the hills of Ustyurt and we can enjoy a walk by the sea, and maybe enjoy a swim if the weather permits.

We will spend the evening at our beach camp and dinner will be cooked on the fire.

Overnight in Yurt with 4-6 beds.

## 07 October

Early wake up to photograph the beautiful sunrise over the Aral Sea.

After breakfast we will venture aboard our 4x4 cars on the bottom of the now dried Aral sea up to the village of Uchsai, on the way we will stop at some abandoned wells. We will then continue to Muynak, once a prosperous coastal city, where we will visit the legendary ship graveyard, the local museum and the city center. After the traditional lunch in one of the local Muynak pensions we will return to Nukus. Along the way we will visit Mizdakhan, a XIV century architectural complex and the ruins of the Gyurkala fortress.

Overnight at Jipek Joly b & b \*\*\*\* or similar.

## **08 October**

Transfer day to Khiva that we will reach in the early hours of the evening. On the way we will stop at the ruins of the ancient fortresses of Ayaz Kala.

Overnight at Hotel Asia Khiva \*\*\*\* or similar.

## **09 October**

Khiva is a very ancient city, in the X century it was mentioned as an important commercial center on the Great Silk Road. This is one of the few cities of this kind in the world where historic buildings have been preserved. Today we will visit the unique city of Ichan Kala, an open-air museum city surrounded by the fortress wall. However, Ichan-Kala is not just a museum city, but a part of it is inhabited by over 300 families that are mostly engaged in craft activities. The city hosts 60 unique historic buildings such as the Kunya-Ark citadel, the Tash-Hauli palace, the Kalta-Minor minaret, the famous Juma mosque with its 213 carved columns, the Islam-Khodja minaret and others.

Overnight at Hotel Asia Khiva \*\*\*\* or similar.

## **10 October**

Today we will drive to Bukhara through the Kyzyl-Kum, the desert of red sands, the largest desert of Central Asia. It has long been inhabited by various nomadic peoples and very likely during our passage we will encounter camel breeders. We will cross the Amu Darya river, once known as Oxus. Arrival in Bukhara in the late afternoon.

Overnight at Hotel Asia Bukhara \*\*\*\* or similar.

## **11 October**

Bukhara is one of the oldest cities in the East. Everywhere in the world, Bukhara is known as the "city of fairy tales", magical, beautiful and, of course, deeply eastern. It is so easy to feel the magic of the East here, simply walking through the narrow streets, looking at the mud walls of the houses or at the medieval monuments, breathing the sweet air of bazaars full of floral aromas of spices.

Today we will visit the ensemble Labi-Hauz, Poi-Kalyan, the Mausoleum of Ismail Samani, the Sitorai Mohi-Khosa palace and other places of interest .

Overnight at Hotel Asia Bukhara \*\*\*\* or similar.

## **12 October**

After breakfast we will leave for the Yangikazgan region, Kyzyl-Kum desert. We will stop for lunch in a typical local restaurant and continue to our destination that we will reach in the late afternoon. In Yangikazgan we will be guests in a yurts camp located a few kilometers from the beautiful Lake Aydarkul, which due to its splendid sandy beach and its size, can easily be compared by a sea. We will spend the night in a traditional nomad yurt and we will experience a camel ride. We will enjoy the dinner and the musical show of Akyn, a well known local singer, under the night sky, full of thousands of stars.

Overnight in Yurt with 4-6 beds.

### **13 October**

Today a dive in nature awaits us, we will go to Lake Aydarkul, a huge blue basin lost in the sands of the Kyzyl-Kum desert, one of the most picturesque places in Uzbekistan. We will have time to enjoy the long clean beach of Aydarkul, not yet altered by human activity, and we will not miss a delicious lunch cooked with fresh fish from the lake.

In the afternoon we will drive to Samarkand.

Overnight at Hotel Asia Samarkand \*\*\*\* or similar.

### **14 October**

Full day at the discovery of Samarkand, one of the oldest cities in the world together with Rome and Athens. In the Middle Age Samarkand was the capital of the powerful Tamerlane empire and was built by masters from all over the world. In the heart of Samarkand we will visit one of the icons of Uzbekistan, a real pearl, the famous Registan Square, the mausoleum of Tamerlane Gur Emir, the Bibi Khanum mosque and the necropolis of Shahi Zinda.

Overnight at Hotel Asia Samarkand \*\*\*\* or similar.

### **15 October**

After breakfast, transfer to Shakhrisabz, the birthplace of Tamerlan, UNESCO World Heritage, where we will visit: the Ak-Sarai palace, the Kok – Gumbaz mosque, Dorus-Siadat: the Djekhangir Mausoleum, the funerary vault of Timur, Dorut-Tilavat: the Sheikh Kulyal mausoleum.

We will return to Samarkand in the late afternoon.

Overnight at Hotel Asia Samarkand \*\*\*\* or similar.

### **16 October**

In the morning we will continue the visit of the city of Samarkand by going to the Ulugbek observatory, to the mausoleum of Saint Daniel and to the colorful local bazaar Siab.

In the afternoon we will move to the train station in time to catch the high-speed train that will take us to Tashkent where we will arrive in the early evening.

Overnight at Hotel Asia Tashkent \*\*\*\* or similar.

### **17 October**

Transfer to the airport in time for the return flight home.

## VOYAGE MAP



Included in the price:

- Double room accommodation breakfast included.
- All mentioned excursions.
- Domestic flight.
- Fast train ticket.
- English speaking guide.
- All meals excluded 17 October.

Not included:

- Flights.
- Not indicated meals.

**PRICE PER PERSON Euro 2870,00**