



CENTRAL ASIA

Following the Silk Road: Uzbekistan - Kazakhstan - Kyrgyzstan

September 16-October 1, 2022
16 Days / 14 Nights



**WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL
OF GREATER HOUSTON**

Global Perspectives, Local Conversations



Central Asia

Sep 16-Oct 1, 2022
16 Days / 14 Nights

ITINERARY

DAY 1	Leave USA for Tashkent, Uzbekistan
DAY 2	Arrive in Tashkent / Tashkent, Uzbekistan
DAY 3	Sightseeing in Tashkent / Tashkent
DAY 4	Fly to Urgench - Visit Khiva / Khiva
DAY 5	Drive from Khiva to Bukhara / Bukhara
DAY 6	Sightseeing in Bukhara / Bukhara
DAY 7	Visit Shakhrisabz / Samarkand
DAY 8	Sightseeing in Samarkand / Samarkand
DAY 9	Fly to Tashkent - Fly to Almaty / Almaty, Kazakhstan
DAY 10	Almaty sightseeing / Almaty
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ITINERARY

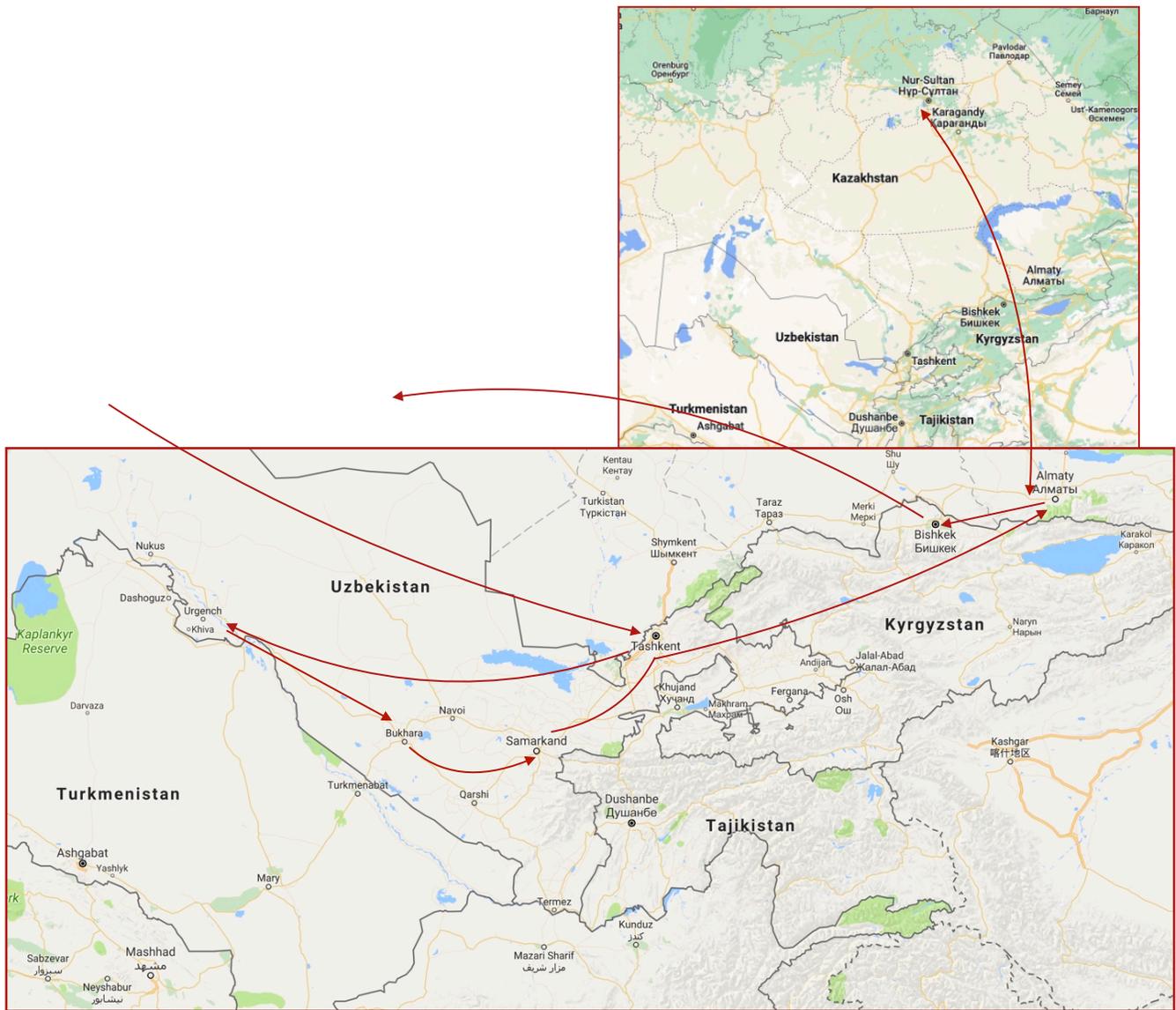
DAY 11	Fly to Nursultan - sightseeing / Nursultan
DAY 12	Sightseeing in Nursultan / Nursultan
DAY 13	Fly to Almaty - drive to Bishkek / Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
DAY 14	Sightseeing in Bishkek / Bishkek
DAY 15	Excursion to Balasagun / Bishkek
DAY 16	Departure

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MAP TRAJECTORY





HIGHLIGHTS

Khiva in Uzbekistan.

Crossing Oxus River following Alexander the Great's route.

Bukhara with numerous mosques and madrasas.

Legendary Samarkand.

Tomb of Tamerlane.

Almaty with big squares and impressive museum.

Nur-Sultan with its futuristic architecture.

Driving through Kazakh Steppes.

Kyzylkum Desert.

Impressive mountain ranges.

Local folk dance shows.

Delicious local food.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Tashkent

Lotte Tashkent Palace

<https://www.lottehotel.com/tashkentpalace-city/en.html>

Khiva

Farovon Hotel

<https://farovonkhiva.uz/>

Bukhara

Asia Bukhara

<http://asiahotels.uz/en/asia-bukhara.html>

Samarkand

Dilimah Premium Luxury Hotel

<https://dilimahhotel.com/en/>

Almaty

Rixos Hotel

<https://www.rixos.com/en/hotel-resort/rixos-almaty>

Nursultan

Rixos Hotel

<https://www.rixos.com/en/hotel-resort/rixos-president-astana>

Bishkek

Hyatt Regency Bishkek

<https://www.hyatt.com/en-US/hotel/kyrgyzstan/hyatt-regency-bishkek/bishk>

INCLUDED

14 Nights hotel accommodation with daily breakfast.

Daily lunch and dinners as indicated in the itinerary, including two special dinners with folk music and dances.

English speaking professional tour guides in each country.

Transportation with AC vehicles & driver.

Arrival and departure transfers - only for suggested flight arrival & departures.

Domestic flights in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

Two small bottles of water per person per day on the bus everyday.

All entry fees to places mentioned in the itinerary.

Porterage at hotels.

Tips for meals and accommodations.

Gratuities for guides and drivers.

NOT INCLUDED

International airfare.

Arrival & departure transfers if not on suggested flights.

Drinks as explained above.

Travel Insurance.

SUGGESTED FLIGHTS

Suggested flights will be on Turkish Airlines:

16 SEP TK 34	HOUSTON TO ISTANBUL DEP: 8:50 PM / ARR: 4:45 PM ON 17 SEP
17 SEP TK 370	ISTANBUL TO TASHKENT DEP: 6:40 PM / ARR: 1:05 AM ON 18 SEP
24 SEP HY 763	TASHKENT TO ALMATY (on Uzbek Airways) DEP: 2:00 PM / ARR: 4:30 PM
01 OCT TK 345	BISHKEK TO ISTANBUL DEP: 10:10 AM / ARR: 1:00 PM
01 OCT TK 33	ISTANBUL TO HOUSTON DEP: 2:10 PM / ARR: 7:10 PM

Economy class fare: \$1387

Business class fare: \$4872 (economy on Uzbek Airways)
as of 21 March 2022, including taxes, surcharges and fees.

Fares are not guaranteed; can change based on availability.

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PROGRAM DETAILS

DAY 1

Fri, Sep 16 Leave USA

We will leave USA for Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

DAY 2

Sat, Sep 17 Tashkent

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

Overnight in Tashkent

Meals: -



DAY 3

Sun, Sep 18 Tashkent

Today, we will explore Tashkent, Uzbekistan's capital enjoying a guided tour of its most important monuments.

We will visit Khazret Imam Square, with this important imam's 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). Then we will visit the Independence Square, with surrounding modern government buildings.

Our visit will be completed with a visit to the Museum of History of Uzbekistan.

Overnight in Tashkent

Meals: B-L-D

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").



DAY 4

Mon, Sep 19

Tashkent - Khiva

We will fly to Urgench early in the morning and drive to close by 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 center and fortress along the caravan routes.

We will spend our day in Khiva, exploring its interesting history and monumental buildings.

Overnight in Khiva

Meals: B-L-D

Along with Samarkand and Bukhara, **Khiva** is an important and often overlooked historical site on what was once the Great Silk Road. Famous for its long and brutal history as a slave trading post sandwiched in between the vast Kyzylkum and Karakum deserts, Khiva is now a quiet, sleepy oasis that turned into an important historic site. It's difficult to imagine what exactly ancient Khiva was like, considering the historical areas were restored by the Soviets in the 1970s. However, the clustered array of mosques, madrasahs and tiled minarets within an area of less than 2 miles gives us a sense of how crowded and bustling this town must have been throughout its history.



DAY 5

Tue, Sep 20 Khiva - Bukhara

Right after breakfast we will start our drive to Bukhara which will take most of the day.

We will drive across the Kyzyl Kum Desert and by the coast of Amu Darya river, which was called Oxus in ancient times.

We will arrive in Bukhara late in the afternoon.

Overnight in Bukhara

Meals: B-L-D

The **Kyzyl Kum Desert** is a desert in Central Asia. Its name in Turkic languages means “red sand”. Its average altitude is 980 ft. Most of the desert is covered with dunes and clay coatings. There are also a few oases, with agricultural settlements.

Local population uses the large spaces of the Kyzyl Kum Desert as a pasture for livestock, mostly sheep and Bactrian camels. The desert is well known of its deposits of gold, uranium, copper, aluminum, silver, natural gas and oil.

DAY 6

Wed, Sep 21

Bukhara

We have a full day program in Bukhara.

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.

In the evening, we will have a special dinner at a historic madrasah, with Uzbek music and dances.

Overnight in Bukhara

Meals: B-L-D

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.

Ark Fortress: From the most ancient times the Ark was the fortified residence of the rulers of Bukhara. Everything could be found there - palaces, temples, barracks, offices, the mint, warehouses, workshops, stables, an arsenal, and even a prison. Currently, the interior of the Ark is used as offices and museum.

DAY 7

Thu, Sep 22 Bukhara – Shakhrisabz – Samarkand

After breakfast we will leave Bukhara and drive to Samarkand.

On the way, we will visit Shakhrisabz.

Being another Silk Road city, Shakhrisabz presents amazing monuments including Aq-Sarai (“White Palace”), Tamerlane'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 in Samarkand

Meals: B-L-D

Ancient Kesh, the city, where the Shaker of the Universe, Great Timur (Tamerlane) was born is now called **Shakhrisabz**, the “Green City”. Its monuments are mainly attributed to the Timur's time. The historic center called Shakrisabze 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.

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DAY 8

Fri, Sep 23 Samarkand

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 in Samarkand

Meals: B-L-D

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”.



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DAY 9

Sat, Sep 24 Tashkent – Almaty, Kazakhstan

Very early in the morning we will be transferred to Samarkand airport for our flight to Tashkent. Upon arrival we will drive to the city center for some free time before afternoon flight to Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Upon arrival in Almaty, our guide and driver will meet us and take us to our hotel.

Overnight in Almaty

Meals: B-L-D

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.



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DAY 10

Sun, Sep 25

Almaty

We have a full day program in Almaty.

We will visit Panfilov's Park with Zenkov's Orthodox Cathedral, Great Patriotic War Memorial and National Musical Instruments Museum. We will 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 a show of indigenous raptors including golden eagles, endangered Saker falcons and Eurasian black vultures.

After city tour, we will take the cable car to the top of Kok Tube mount to admire view of the city and of Tien-Shan Mountain Range.

Overnight in Almaty

Meals: B-L-D



DAY 11

Mon, Sep 26

Almaty - Nur-Sultan

Before noon, we will fly from Almaty to Nur-Sultan, the capital of Kazakhstan. Upon arrival, we will have a panoramic tour of the city. Rest of the afternoon at leisure.

Overnight in Nur-Sultan

Meals: B-L-D

Nur-Sultan, originally known as Akmolinsk, Tselinograd, and most recently Astana, is the capital city of Kazakhstan. The city acquired its present name on 23 March 2019, following a unanimous vote in Kazakhstan's parliament. It was named after Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of Kazakhstan from 1990 to 2019.

The city lies on the banks of the Ishim River in the north-central part of Kazakhstan and is the second largest city of the country after Almaty which had been the capital until 1997.

Modern Nur-Sultan is a planned city, following the process of other planned capitals. After it became the capital of Kazakhstan, the city dramatically changed its shape. The city's master-plan was designed by Japanese architect Kisho Kurokawa. As the seat of the government of Kazakhstan, Nur-Sultan is the site of the Parliament House, the Supreme Court, the Ak Orda Presidential Palace and numerous government departments and agencies. It is home to a range of futuristic buildings, including many skyscrapers.



DAY 12

Tue, Sep 27 Nur-Sultan

Today, we have a sightseeing program in Nur-Sultan. Our program will include a number of important cultural sites and futuristic architectural examples. We will visit Baiterek Tower, Kazakh Eli Monument at Independence Square, Hazret Sultan Mosque and New National Museum of Kazakhstan.

Overnight in Nur-Sultan

Meals: B-L-D

Baiterek Tower, is one example of the futuristic architecture in the newborn city. Nicknamed “Chupa Chups” by the locals due to its similarity to a giant lollipop, this 320ft tall tower offers a great view of the city.

Kazakh Eli Monument is situated in the center of the Independence Square. It features a small statue of the first president of the Republic of Kazakhstan. It is about 300ft tall and has a mythical golden bird on the top. The monument is made from white marble and surrounded by beautiful fountains.



DAY 13

Wed, Sep 28

Nur-Sultan - Almaty - Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Early in the morning we will fly to Almaty, take our bus and drive to Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, crossing the land border.

Upon arrival, some leisure time in the city.

Overnight in Bishkek

Meals: B-L-D

We will drive on the edge of the fabulous Kazakh Steppe passing herds of horses, flocks of sheep... The steppe extends more than 1,400 miles 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 310,000 square miles.

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.



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DAY 14

Thu, Sep 29 Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

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.

Finally, we will transfer to the Victory Square to finish our city tour.

Overnight in Bishkek

Meals: B-L-D



DAY 15

Fri, Sep 30 Balasagun - Bishkek

Today, we will have an excursion to 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, ancient Turkic tombs.

Then we will have lunch at a local village, visiting a local family. After lunch we will drive back to Bishkek.

Overnight in Bishkek

Meals: B-L-D

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DAY 16

Sat, Oct 1 Departure

This is end of our adventure on the ancient Silk Road. We will be transferred to airport for our return flight.

Contact Us

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