

Pearles of Central Asia

Day 01 - 02: Istanbul - Tashkent - Urgench - Khiva

Arrival in Tashkent (Istanbul - Tashkent).

Meeting at the airport. Transfer to hotel. Accommodation in hotel.

Rest in hotel. Breakfast in hotel.

A.M.: SS tour of Tashkent incl.: Independence Square, Amir Temur Square, Alisher Navoi Theatre Square, Barak-Khan madrassah, Kukeldash madrassah (monuments preserved till our days date back to XVI c., constructed during the Sheibanids dynasty), a visit to the Museum of Applied Arts (where items of traditional Arts & Crafts both antique and contemporary are displayed).

Lunch in hotel.

P.M.: Transfer to airport for departure to Urgench by flight HY -1057 at 18:00.

Arrival in Urgench at 19:40. Drive to Khiva (30 km). Arrival and accommodation in hotel.

Dinner & overnight in hotel.

Day 03: Khiva

Breakfast in hotel.

Ancient Khiva is an architectural masterpiece of Central Asia, A city of palaces and splendid minarets, unique mausoleums and madrassahs. A walk in Khiva will bring you to the world of Thousand and One Arabian Nights' fairytales from a long forgotten childhood.

Khiva is situated in the southern part of the Khorezm oasis. In the south this romantic region of Uzbekistan borders on the Kara-Kum desert, and in the northeast, on another desert – the Kyzyl-Kum. The Amy Darya river waters cotton plantation, orchards and vineyards.

Full day SS tour of Khiva: Most of the monuments are concentrated in the more ancient part, Ichan – Kala (UNESCO World Heritage List), which is surrounded by a strong fortress wall, its fortified gates facing east, north, west and south. Inside Ichan-Kala there are towers, a heavily fortified citadel called Kunya-Ark – the Old Fortress. It housed a gunpowder works, an arsenal, a palace and a mint. Part of the palace-fortress Kurynyshkhana, an enormous structure intended for official receptions, has survived to this day. The entire surface of the high walls of the aivan (an arched chamber opening on to the inner courtyard) are covered with beautiful majolica ornaments. In the center of Ichan-Kala, there towers the multicolumn Juma mosque (10th c.) – One of the most ancient structures in Central Asia. Its fine wooden columns, decorated with amazing carved ornaments, are in an excellent state of preservation. The minaret standing next to the mosque dates back to the 9th century. The Seyid Allauddin mausoleum and the Bagbanli mosque were built in the 14th century, Mukhammad, Khurdzhum and Shirgazi-khan madrassahs – in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Among later structures, of special interest are the Kutlug-Murad-inak madrassah, the Pakhlavan-Makhmud mausoleum, the caravanserai, and Allakuli-khan madrassah, the Tash-Khauli palace.

Lunch in a local madrassah during the visits.

Dinner and overnight in hote.

Day 04: Khiva - Bukhara

Breakfast in hotel.

Drive to Bukhara through desert Kizilkum (450 km).

Picnic-lunch en route.

A.M.: Arrival in Bukhara. Accommodation in hotel.

Noble Bukhara, as it is sometimes called, was the centre of world civilization in ancient times, an attribute it enjoys even today. According to the legend, Bukhara was founded by Siyavush, who decorated this city with majestic palaces, fruit gardens and lush flowerbeds. The Great Silk Road connecting states of Near and Middle East, India and China, passed through the city. This ancient caravan route was used for trade and cultural exchanges. Located along the main trade route, the many small craft shops attracted the passer-by on foot, horseback and, of course, the camel caravans. This was a very beautiful and colorful picture: the Bukharas wearing dazzling white turbans and colorful silk robes, long-haired Chinese in wide caftans and skirts, the Indians with their silk-embroidered shoes...

P.M.: First SS tour in Bukhara: The Lyabi-Khaus ensemble (16th-17th cc.) (Includes the Kukeldush madrassah and Nodir-Divan-Begi as well as the Khanakas located near the pool, which gave the name to the ensemble).

The Nodir-Divan Begi Madrassah (was originally built as a karavan-serai, but after completing construction it was used as a madrassah). Dinner and overnight in hotel.

Day 05: Bukhara

Breakfast in hotel.

Full day SS tour in Bukhara:

A.M.: Mausoleum of the Samanids (the burial place of the Samanids (9th –10th cc.) is a masterpiece of Central Asian architecture. The building boasts no colorful facades and paintings, but claims its fame as being the first Muslim mausoleums in Central Asia), Chashmai-Ayub (12th c) were witnesses to this particular period), Mosque Bolo-Khauz, citadel Ark (the basic layout of the city is a citadel – the Ark which houses the Historical-Ethnographical museum today, is located on the highest point. From high walls of citadel the interesting skyline of the city is made up of a mixture of modern buildings and monuments of the past), Kosh madrassah, bazaar. Lunch in hotel.

P.M.: Ensemble Poi Kalian (Big Minaret from the 12th century is the symbol of the city. Its silhouette, with a stork's nest on top, is visible from far, rising 47 m into the sky), Madrassah Miri-Arab (1535-36 was one of the largest educational institutions of that time), Mosque Djuma (a cathedral mosque, the roof of which lies on wooden columns with unique acoustics and original technical ideas natural of lightning Mausoleum of Seid Alautdin with its gravestone made from colored majolica), Madrassah of Ulugbek (1417) was built during the time of Ulugbek, in spite of its modest facade it differs from the rest because of its exquisite decoration. Above the entrance it is written: "Aspiration towards knowledge is the duty of each Muslim man and woman")

Mausoleum Chor Minor (in the narrow old street, not far from the Mazar Gates, is a colorful madrassah with four peculiar looking towers – the Chor-Minor (1807) - was used as a library for students), Mosque Magoki-Attari.

Dinner in a local madrassah "Nodir Divan Beghi" with folklore show. Overnight in hote.

Day 06: Bukhara - Shakhrisabz

Breakfast in hotel.

Completing SS tour in Bukhara:

A.M.: Drive to memorial complex Chor Bakr, then trip to Bogoutdin Nakshbandi complex (XVI c.) – the most remarkable memorial centre of Sufism in Central Asia. Lunch in hotel.

P.M.: Drive to Shakhrisabz - motherland of Tamerlan (300 km). Arrival and accommodation in hotel.

Dinner and overnight in hotel.

Day 07: Shakhrisabz - Samarkand

Breakfast in hotel.

Shakhrisabz is located not far from Samarkand; in the Valley of Karadarya River there is a city of Shakhrisabz the birthplace of Timur. Here the great ruler and military commander Timur ordered to build Ak-Sarai Palace, two mausoleums for his sons, Djakhongir and Omar-Sheikh and a tomb for himself. Today Shakhrisabz is a small town at foothills with beautiful landscapes of snowy mountains, sunny steppes and herds of cattle.

A.M.: Sightseeing tour in Shakhrisabz: Remnants of Ak-Sarai Palace (15c.), bazaar of Shakhrisabz, Kok-Gumbas mosque, Khazret-Imam mosque (Dorut Tilyavat ensemble, XIV century), Gumbazi-Seidan mausoleum (Dorus-Siadat ensemble, XIV century).
Lunch during visit.

P.M.: Drive to Samarkand (150 km). Arrival in Samarkand. Accommodation in hotel.

Dinner and overnight in hote.

Day 08: Samarkand

Breakfast in hotel.

Majestic and beautiful city Samarkand has marvelous and attractive power.

Poets and historians of the past called it "Rome of the East, The pearl of the Eastern Moslem World". Its advantageous geographical position in Zarafshan valley put Samarkand to the first place among cities of Central Asia. Samarkand is about 2500 years old and has witnessed a lot of upheavals during the times of Alexander the Great (Macedonian), the Arabic Conquest, Ghengis-Khan Conquest and lastly Tamerlane's. Hence, Samarkand's culture was developed and mixed together with the Iranian, Indian, Mongolian and a bit of the Western and Eastern cultures.

Full day city tour in Samarkand:

A.M.: Sightseeing of glorious monuments of Samarkand including Mausoleum Gur-Emir (graves of Tamerlane and his descendants, 15c.), Observatory of Ulugbek (Ulugbek, Timur the Great's grandson, ruled the country for 40 years. During his rule Samarkand became one of the world's scientific centers of the middle Ages. In Samarkand Ulugbek created scientific school, which united outstanding astronomers and mathematicians. Ulugbek was the founder of the unique constructions of the observatory (1428-1429). There was a gigantic marble sextant, the radius of which was 40.212 meters and the length of the ark 63 meters. It was used to determine the coordinates of the Sun, the Moon and other planets. Ulugbek created the astronomic catalogue "Stars Tables").

Mosque Bibi-Khanum (15 c., The gigantic structure of Medieval Muslim architecture, Bibi-Khanum mosque named after Timur's favorite wife, stands next to market place), bazaar.
Lunch in a city restaurant.

P.M.: Registan square which since Tamerlane the Great's time became an official centre of Samarkand (14–15 cc). The word "Registan" means the "sandy place". The Square is surrounded by the Ulugbek's madrassah (1417-1420), the Sher-Dor madrassah (1619-1636), and Tilla-Kori madrassah (1647-1660).

Folklore performance in Registan Square.

Dinner in a local Uzbek house. Overnight in hote.

Day 09: Samarkand

Breakfast in hotel.

A.M.: Trip to countryside for visit of Memorial Complex of Al-Bukhari.
Visit to local silk carpet factory.
Lunch during the visit.

P.M.: Necropolis Shakhi-Zinda and ensemble of mausoleums of the 11th-19th centuries, (The most moving of Samarkand's sights is Shakhi-Zinda, a street of tombs mostly belonging to Timur and Ulugbek's family and favorites. The tombs are decorated with finest majolica tilework), Afrosiab archaeological site & museum of the city foundation.
Dinner in a city restaurant. Overnight in hotel.

Day 10: Samarkand - Tashkent

Breakfast in hotel.

A.M.: Drive to Tashkent (330 km). Arrival and accommodation in hotel.
Lunch in hotel.

P.M.: Free time.
Farewell dinner in a local Uzbek house.
Overnight in hotel.

Day 11: Tashkent - Istanbul

Early breakfast in hotel.

Transfer to airport for departure to Istanbul by flight TK-1369 at 06:15.

Price Includes:

- Accommodation on double base in above-mentioned hotels;
- Full board: (breakfasts, lunches, dinners);
- All transfers & transportation between the cities by A/C coach;
- All city tours & entrance fees indicated in the program;
- Porterage in airports;
- Folklore shows in Bukhara & Samarkand;
- English-speaking or French-speaking national guide;
- Visa fee for Uzbekistan;
- Ticket for flight Tashkent/Urgench - 45 USD/pax (price of 2004)
- Overweight of the luggage;
- Personal expenses (payment for photo in monuments, etc.).

Accommodation in 3* hotels:

- Tashkent, htl "Uzbekistan"4* or "Grand Mir"4*
- Khiva, htl "Khiva madrassah"2* or "Malika"
- Bukhara, htl "Lyabi-Khauz" 3* or similar
- Shakhrisabz, htl "Orient Star Shahrizabz" 3*
- Samarkand, htl "Orient Star" 3* or similar

Accommodation in 4* hotels:

- Tashkent, htl "Le Meridien"4* or "Sheraton"5*
- Urgench, htl "Khorezm Palace"3*
- Bukhara, htl "Bukhara Palace" 4*
- Shakhrisabz, htl "Orient Star Shahrizabz" 3*
- Samarkand, htl "Afrosiab Palace"4*