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Craft and Arts of Uzbekistan tour 15 days

Over the centuries, numerous ethnic and cultural groups have settled in Uzbekistan, forming a unique center of culture and craftsmanship. Respectable explorers and conquerors such as Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, Amir Timur left their mark. Russia and the UK had their latest adventures during The Great Game.

The romance of times past manifests itself in the names of Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva, all places we spend time at, exploring grand monuments, major historical sites, museums and workshops, and delving into ancient arts and crafts of Uzbekistan. We plan to visit famous craft masters practising woodblock printing, embroidery, silk carpets, ikat and silk, wood carving and more. Bazaars and souks, stocked with 'Silk Road' items from fruits to spices, gold and gems, fabrics, rugs, livery, and even camels, await our inquisitive eyes. These same eyes will be stunned by the exquisite mosaics and Islamic influences found on gateways, mosques, palaces and more. Accommodation has been selected for its character, service and location and ranges from 3* to 4*, along with a night in a yurt, where we are entertained and welcomed as special guests. We include all breakfasts and a number of home-cooked regional dinners and lunches. Exposure to traditional craft skills, our workshops, excellent guide, comprehensive itinerary, and the charming hospitality of Uzbeks combine to make this a very special journey. Recovering from the Soviet era, Uzbekistan can be likened to a flower bursting in the desert, and it is time for us to discover its beauty and character embodied in their cultural skills and traditions.

Detailed itinerary and costs

15 Days | 04 Oct – 18 Oct, 2022 | \$US2139 per person twin share. Joining and concluding in Tashkent. Minimum of 02 guests, maximum of 8.

Highlights

- Visit World Heritage sites and towns
- Be impressed by ancient buildings and palaces, along with Russian era extravaganzas
- Visit extraordinary metro stations in Tashkent
- Explore excellent and eccentric museums and galleries

- Experience numerous craft ateliers such as paper, ceramics, silks, ikat, and wood working.
- Meet artisans at their workshops and ateliers
- Travel in comfortable vehicles and high-speed trains
- Experience Uzbek hospitality at our selection of smaller hotels, and one-night yurt stay
- Participate in cooking experiences
- Discover the everyday life as you wander souks, villages and small towns
- Indulge in decent home-cooked traditional meals
- Be charmed by our guides, drivers and locals found throughout friendly Uzbekistan.

Itinerary

Day 1, TUE 04 Oct, Day 2, WED 05 Oct, Day 3, THU 06 Oct in Tashkent

You will be met at the airport and transferred to our hotel. Over our three days in the Nation's capital, a city rebuilt following the devastating 1966 earthquake, we plan to explore the cultural history.



The Applied Arts Museum houses a worthy collection of suzani ceramics, carved wood, metal work, as well as carpets, ikat and tribal costumes, located in the palace of the Tsarist diplomat Alexander Polovtsev, an authority of Oriental architecture and decorative patterns, who invited local master artisans to decorate his private mansion. It is an essential introduction to the applied arts you will see on tour.

Crafts are explored with a visits to a stunning embroiderer's workshop, and a ceramic studio. We also experience the Old City at Tashkent's largest *souk*, along with a number of other craft centres found here. Some of our travel in Tashkent utilises the decorative and efficient metro system.

Tashkent Options:

- We can arrange tickets for opera, music and ballet program at the Alisher Navoi theatre, or the famous Ilkhom Theatre, the Soviet Union's first experimental, independent theatre which has some programs with English subtitles. Tickets about \$US10.

Day 4, FRI 07 Oct, Train to Samarkand (Afrosiab bullet train) 0800-1010 or 0830-1040

A fast train takes us to 'Legendary' Samarkand for three nights at our family-run hotel, just a short walk to Registan, Samarkand's famous square.

Samarkand's history is forged by the principal forces of history – Alexander the Great, cultural and learning infusion by the Arabs, and destruction by Genghis Khan. In the 14th and 15th centuries Samarkand was Emperor Timur's empire's capital and nurtured Samarkand to its peak.

Like many locations, Samarkand was an important stop on the Silk Road, fostering exotic products in its bazaars, its scholars, artisans, along with construction of significant monuments and buildings which we visit during our busy stay. We visit monuments, ruins, the famed Registan complex, the Samarkand bazaar, Bibi Hanum.

Day 5, SAT 08 Oct, in Samarkand-Shahrisabz-Samarkand day trip

Today we see various workshops and studios, such as a designer who works with new and antique silk ikat fabrics and woodblocks, the complete process of natural-dyed silk carpets, along with exquisite tile mosaic work.



Skull caps of Shahrisabz

A day trip via the scenic Zeravshan range takes us to the birthplace of Amir Timur, a World Heritage site to see his palace, mosque, and stunning mosaic tile work. The area is also famous for its distinctive embroidery style.

Day 6, SUN 09 Oct, Samarkand-Urgut- Samarkand

Sunday is the best day to visit Urgut for first hand embroidery. fine tune your bargaining skills at Uzbekistan's largest continuous market. A vibrant bazaar complete with vintage textiles, jewellery, hats, traditional shoes and more. We also discover earth-hued Urgut ceramics



Embroidery masters

and beautiful silk embroidery pieces with traditional Urgut motifs. Returning to Samarkand we stop at a UNESCO project showcasing ancient paper making skills. Here, we see water mills and traditional techniques replicating the paper making skills of the past.

Included features at Samarkand

- Highlights include an Uzbek traditional music concert, dinner and fashion show at Nargis' boutique, and lunch in a family home in Urgut after the market.

Day 07, MON 10 Oct Travel to Bukhara by bullet train at 0945-1120

Briefly stop at restored Kagan Russian orthodox church of St Nicholas dating from 1892 on our fast train journey to Bukhara. There is free time this afternoon to wander the lanes and enjoy the tea shops.



Bukhara is a time-warp city reflecting the intellectual scholarship demonstrated by architectural treasures, museums, caravanserais, souks, and crafts such as wood block prints, silk and carpets, embroidery. Bargains in antiques can be found. We also include an ikat weaving demonstration.

Day 8 & Day 9, TUE 11 Oct and WED 12 Oct, Bukhara full day visit of historical sites and local craft masters' workshops

Included features at Bukhara:

- In the evening we take dinner in the courtyard of a restored merchant's house. Watch as our meal is prepared using traditional tandoor clay ovens.

Bukhara Option:

- Hammam's, or public baths, are a centuries old tradition and Bukhara has one of the oldest still in service. Seperate sections based on gender. Hammam's are more than a 'bath' – after a scrub, you soak in tubs, and massaged. (About US\$25) . Enjoy an ancient puppet theatre performance (about US\$8)

Day 10, THU, 13 Oct, Bukhara free day for private activities

Day 11, FRI, 14 OCT, Bukhara to Ayazkala Yurt located in the desert oasis

Crossing the Kyzylkum Desert and the Amu Darya river, known as the Oxus in ancient times to arrive at mud-walled Khiva. The desert-scape is mesmerising with vast steppes hosting shepherds and their flocks, small villages, military outposts, and interesting vegetation.

The ancient Ayaz Kala desert fortress complex located on the Khorezm section of the Great Silk Road is our next attraction. Nearby, we extend our experiences with a night in the steppe landscape in at a yurt camp. Tonight we witness a dance and music performance, over a local dinner.

Day 12, SAT 15 Oct, Ayazkala to Khiva

After breakfast, visit the nearby 4thC BC Red Fort by foot. Leave late morning for Khiva, where you have the afternoon free for roaming or shopping.



Khiva's position on the Silk Route made it a centre for trade in all manner of goods, including slaves. It was also the desire of numerous rulers, some ruthless, others odd. Today, Khiva's intact status (thanks to previous Soviet policies), makes it a most attractive destination. The small old town is packed with interesting buildings and wonderful craft studios and ideal for walking discovering weathered wood carved doors, magnificent tile work and exploring Khiva's superb mosques, palaces, and madrasa's. There are great silk carpet shops to entice you, too.

Day 13, SUN 16 Oct, Khiva to Nukus 200 km

From Khiva we take a side trip west to Nukus to visit the the second largest collection of Russian and Uzbek avant garde art in the world held at the Savitsky Collection. We also visit the Karakalpak Museum and its vast ethnographic collection of pile rugs, flat weaves, embroidery, appliqué work, jewellery and hand-made textiles. Both visits are featured highlights of our journey.

Evening flight back to Tashkent.

Included features at Khiva and Karakalpakstan:

- Dinner on the evening of arrival after the long road trip from Bukhara. Our café serves delicious soup and a dill noodle dish with chickpeas.
- A roof-top dinner in Khiva enjoying sunset views of the magnificent domes.
- A thrilling, traditional rope walking performance in the courtyard of the Muhammad Rakhim Khan by the Jabborov family.
- Our yurt camp with music and dance.

Day 14, MON 17 Oct, Tashkent

Our last day offers an optional visit to the Museum of Victims of Repression, dedicated to the suffering of Uzbeks during the Russian and Soviet periods. Many exhibits draw on information culled from the former KGB archives.

We can also visit the Barak-Khan Madrassah complex in the old city to see the impressive and world's oldest Koran. Evening is free.

Day 15, TUE 18 Oct, Depart Uzbekistan

Free time until transfer to airport for flight home. End of services.

Tour price: 02-08 person small group – US\$2139 per person in Twin room share

Journey Price Includes:

- Hotel accommodation in Double or Twin room. **Single supplement is USD240 pp.**
- Breakfast daily in the hotel, plus 5 dinners and one lunch
- Daily water provided in the bus
- Entrance tickets to the sites, mausoleums and museums as per program
- Local train tickets, Tashkent to Samarkand, and Samarkand to Bukhara
- Local flight Khiva to Tashkent
- Local and professional English-speaking guide throughout the journey
- Services of Christine Pearson from Intentionally Different Travel as Tour Concierge
- Pick up from airport on arrival and drop off to airport at the end of the tour, for group.
- Transport from Day 1 till Day 16
- Comprehensive information dossier

Exclusions:

- International air-ticket to / from Tashkent
- Early check in or late check out (early check in before 6 AM 100 % room rate, after 6 AM 50% room rate, late check out by 6 PM 50 % and late check out after 1800, 100% room rate.
- Tipping guides and driver
- Master classes (booked in advance, around \$10-15 per person depend on number of participants). Details to follow.
- Travel insurance, which is mandatory
- Phone, internet, communication costs
- Alcohol and other drinks.

Hotel Selection for the tour

Our selection criteria include central location, charm, cleanliness, cultural integrity, uniqueness, and standard of service. All rooms have private western-style bathrooms and comfortable beds.

Our *yurt* stay is a little different, but comfortable and charming.

Hotels for the tour booked in Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva

Navruz or Mirzo hotel in Tashkent



Jakhongir boutique or Arba boutique hotels in Samarkand



Komil or Fatima boutique hotels in Bukhara



Zukhra or Shahrezada or Muso Tura boutique hotels in Khiva



NOTE: mentioned hotels are on high demand and booked a year ahead. If the above hotels are not available we will book similar type of hotels with the same price range.