

CLASSICAL UZBEKISTAN

Day 1 (Thursday). Arrival to Tashkent. Night train to Urgench.

*Early arrival in Tashkent. Meeting at Tashkent airport. Transfer to hotel and check-in. Breakfast at the hotel. Check-out at 12:00. Sightseeing program in Tashkent: **Khast-Imam Square**, **Barak-Khan Madrasah**, **Kafal-al-Shashi Mausoleum**, **Kukeldash Madrasah**; the oldest bazaar of Tashkent "**Chorsu**". After lunch continuation of sightseeing program in Tashkent: **Museum of Applied Arts**. Transfer to the railway station. Night train in Urgench №56 (20:15-12:53). Overnight in train.*



Welcome to **Tashkent!** It is the fourth largest CIS city with a population of around 3 million. Tashkent grew to its present size mainly during the Soviet times, especially after the destructive earthquake of 1966. Today it has all the features of a modern metropolis, with a lot of Central Asian-style newly-built structures and Soviet-era buildings.

After you have relaxed and freshened up after your flight, you set out on a guided sightseeing tour of the city. First you go to Tashkent's Old City to see **Khazrati Imam Architectural Complex** (also **Hast Imam**), consisting of **Barak-Khan Madrasah**, **Tilla Sheikh Mosque**, **Muyi**

Muborak Madrasah, **Kaffal Shashi Mausoleum** (also spelled Kaffal Ash-Shashi), **Namazgoh Mosque** and the new **Khazrati Imam Mosque**. The complex is the top Tashkent historic site and Islamic center. Thoroughly restored in 2007, the edifices of the complex, with the earliest of them dating back to the 16th century, show their original splendor now. The new mosque featuring traditional Islamic architectural elements adds to the grandeur of the site.

Next, you visit the old Islamic college **Kukeldash Madrasah** (16th c.) and the large traditional Central Asian bazaar Chorsu near it. After lunch you see the modern part of the city, including the Independence Square and the Istiklol Square, Amir Timur Square, and visit **Museum of Applied Arts** boasting an abundance of fascinating exhibits.

In the evening we shall transfer to the Tashkent railway station and on a comfortable **night train** leave for **Urgench**, the administrative centre of Khorezm Province (also spelled Khwarezmia, Khwarizm, Khwarazm, Khwarezm, Khoresm, Khorasam, Harezm, Horezm, and Chorezm), situated in the opposite part of Uzbekistan. Most of the train route's length lies in the famous **Kyzylkum Desert**. Travelling by train during the night allows you to use your time in the best way, leaving the day for more interesting things.

Overnight in train.

Day 2 (Friday). Urgench - Khiva.

Arrival in Urgench at 12:53. Meeting at the railway station. Transfer to Khiva and check-in at hotel. Leisure time in Khiva. Overnight at the hotel.



The train arrives in Urgench at 1:05 pm, after which you will be transferred in half an hour to the fabulous **Khiva**, a city of **ancient Khorezm** (35 km).

Khiva is an amazing **historic city** called 'a museum under the open sky'. Khiva's **Ichan-Kala** 'inner city' historic part (also spelled Itchan-Kala), a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**, is a walled medieval Central Asian town being preserved as it was in the past - an artifact town.

Although protected by the state and having the status of a **museum reserve**, Ichan-Kala is populated with real people, mainly artisans. Khiva has no tall modern buildings and wide roads with much traffic. It seems time has stopped here to preserve what was built centuries ago. You are seeing a lot of magnificent Oriental architectural monuments and medieval adobe homes.

We recommend that you visit Khiva's bazaar and **handicraft shops**, where **traditional Khorezm** carpets, suzani tapestries, robes, embroidered scull-caps and an abundance of other souvenirs are offered. Only at the **restaurants of Khiva** you can taste traditional **Khorezmian dishes** that are cooked nowhere else in Uzbekistan.

Khiva is particularly beautiful at **sunset**. You can take magically beautiful pictures of the setting sun and the **ancient city** flooded with orange light standing on some elevation, such as the top of a minaret or an observation deck.

Overnight at the hotel.

Day 3 (Saturday). Khiva.

*Breakfast at the hotel. Sightseeing program in Khiva: **Ichan-Kala** (historical inner city), **Pakhlavan Mahmoud Complex**, **Kunya-Ark Fortress**, **Islam Hajji Madrasah & Minaret**, **Tash Khauli Alakuli Khan Palace**, **Juma Mosque**, **Muhammadinkhan Minaret & Madrasah**, and **Avesta Museum**. Overnight at the hotel. Overnight at the hotel.*



All the sights of Khiva are compactly located within the historical **Ichan-Kala old town walls**. Ichan Kala is encircled by brick crenellated walls whose foundations are believed to have been laid in the 10th c. The walls themselves date back to the late 17th c. Behind them there are **over 50 architectural monuments and 250 old houses**; most of them date back to the 18th - 19th c.

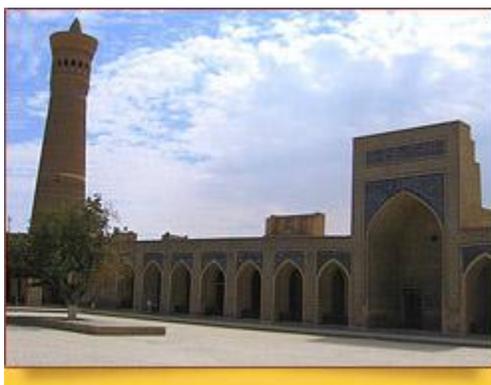
When you are in Ichan-Kala, you feel you find yourself in a Scheherazade's story of 1001 Nights. You can climb the stairs of the 44.5-meter-high **Islam-Hajji Minaret** - the highest minaret in Ichan-Kala and the **symbol of Khiva** - and have a fabulous panoramic view of the city

from its top window. Do not miss **Djuma Mosque**, which was built in the 10th c and rebuilt in 1788 - 1789. It is famed for its hypostyle hall, which still has **213 wooden pillars** of the previous 10th-century structure, decorated with unique carvings. Take a look at unfinished **minaret Kalta-Minor**, **Kunya-Ark Fortress** and the **complex of Pakhlavan Mahmud**, the famous Khiva's poet and powerful knight who became a local saint after death. **Avesta Museum** in Ichan-Kala deals with the history of Zoroastrianism; Khwarezm, with Khiva as its center, is believed to be its cradle. It is really worth seeing these and many other sights in Khiva "live".

Overnight at the hotel.

Day 4 (Sunday). Khiva - Bukhara.

*Breakfast at the hotel. Ride across the famous **Kyzyl-Kum desert** and along the **Amudarya River** to Bukhara. Lunch en route. Arrival to Bukhara. Leisure time. Visiting the souvenir shops and workshops. Overnight at the hotel.*



After breakfast you set out on a long (7-8 hours) and exciting journey to **Bukhara** across the **Kyzylkum Desert** (also spelled Kyzyl-Kum, Qyzylqum) and along the **Amudarya River** (also spelled Amu Darya; known as the Oxus from its Ancient Greek name in historical sources).

Bukhara is one of the world's oldest cities. It is over 2,500 years old, and seems to be emanating the breath of history. **Bukhara** was a large political and religious center in the Middle Ages; it is **one of the seven holy cities of Islam**. Bukhara boasts a large number of old **mosques** of different architectural styles, as well as a lot of **madrasahs**, minarets and mausoleums. The historic center of Bukhara is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**.

After you have checked in at your hotel, you still have some leisure time to spend before your overnight rest. We recommend that you stroll about the surroundings, feeling the charm of the city in the evening, and visit **souvenir shops**. In Bukhara you can perceive the Orient in full. At every step you will encounter a trader offering fine **craftwork**: astrakhan hats, masterly embroidered **suzani**, national shirts, skullcaps, **knives** and artfully decorated **jewelry**. This urge for trading seems to be inherited from the ancestors who used to travel in caravans along the trails of the **Great Silk Road**.

Overnight at the hotel.

Day 5 (Monday). Guided sightseeing tour around Bukhara.

*Breakfast at the hotel. Sightseeing program in Bukhara: Mausoleum of **Samanids**, **Chashma Ayub** Mausoleum, **Bolo-Khauz** Complex, **Ark Citadel**, **Po-i-Kalyan** Complex (Kalyan Minaret and others), **Ulugbek** Madrasah. After lunch continuation of sightseeing program in Bukhara: **Lyab-i Hauz** Architectural Ensemble, **Kukeldash** Madrasah, **Nadir Divan-Begi** Madrasah, **Nadir Divan-Begi**, domed **shopping arcade**. Overnight at the hotel.*



Your tour of Bukhara begins with **Ismail Samani Mausoleum** (9th c. - 10th c.), one of the most esteemed Central Asian architectural monuments. It was built as the sepulcher of Ismail Samani, the founder of the last Persian dynasty ruling in Central Asia. The mausoleum features fascinating brickwork patterns that look different as the light changes during the day.

The next sight is **Chashma Ayub Mausoleum**. Chashma Ayub is translated as 'Job's spring' in Persian. According to a legend, the biblical saint Job (Ayub) once visited the place during a severe drought in the area and opened a spring with a blow of his staff. This spring water is still

there, fresh and pure, and is considered to be healing. The mausoleum was built in the 15th century by master builders Tamerlane had brought from Khorezm after capturing Khiva, so the building features a Khorezm-style conical dome, uncommon in Bukhara.

Then comes **Bolo Hauz Complex** (17th c.). It is the hauz 'pond' and two surviving structures of Bukhara registan central square complex - a mosque, still functioning, and a minaret. Very rich in ornaments, the mosque is called 'a mosque of 40 pillars' because all its 20 pillars, decorated with beautiful engravings, are reflected in the pond.

Next, you go to **the Ark**, the impressive **Bukhara citadel** (6th c. - 7th c.). It is the location the city grew from. It is hard to imagine that just 100 years ago they still beheaded criminals on the square before the citadel and its dungeons were full of inmates suffering from poisonous insects. Today's Ark is a most interesting tourist attraction featuring reconstructions with dummies and housing a few museums.



Po-i-Kalan Complex (12th c. - 16th c.) you proceed to consists of **Kalyan Mosque**, **Mir-i-Arab Madrasah** and the famous **Kalyan Minaret** - a 45.6-meter-tall circular-pillar brick tower, narrowing upwards (built in 1127). The minaret miraculously survived many wars and invasions. It was used as an observation tower and an execution

tool in the past: criminals were killed by being tossed off the top of it in the past, so it is also known as Tower of Death.

You also see **Ulugbek Madrasah**, built in 1417 by order of Ulugbek, Tamerlan's grandson, the famous mathematician and astronomer called 'a scientist on the throne', and then **Lab-i Hauz Complex** (1568-1622) consisting of **Kukeldash Madrasah** (1568-1569), a khanaka monastery and hospice for **Sufi** travelers (1622) and **Nadir Divan-Begi Madrasah**(1622). All the structures of the complex stand around a large pond that is a perfect place to relax in the outdoor teahouses around it in hot summertime. You can also take a look at the statue of a man riding his donkey there. It is Nasreddin, the legendary medieval Central Asian folk character, famed for his wit and humor.

Visiting the above-mentioned Bukhara sights, you go past unique **medieval domed shopping arcades**. They are still used for retail sale and offer an abundance of souvenirs and other traditional merchandise: garments, old Bukhara coins, jewelry. We recommend that you visit them during your leisure time after the tour.

Overnight at the hotel.

Day 6 (Tuesday). Bukhara - Samarkand.

Breakfast at the hotel. Transfer to the railway station. Transfer to Samarkand by premium service train «Shark» (08:20-11:25). Arrival in Samarkand. Meeting at the railway station. Transfer and accommodation at the hotel. Leisure time in Samarkand. Overnight at the hotel.



Today you will make a journey to the beloved city of Tamerlane, the capital of his once great and mighty empire - **Samarkand**. **Samarkand** is probably the best-known Uzbekistan's historic city. Over 2,750 years of age, it boasts very **impressive architectural monuments** and has a rich history. Geographers and poets called Samarkand 'Rome of the Orient' and even 'Eden of the Orient' in the past. Samarkand, like Khiva and Bukhara, boasts world-famous masterpieces of medieval Islamic architecture, most of which are **UNESCO World Heritage Sites**.

A museum-city, the heart of caravan trade, the junction of cultures on the **Great Silk Road**, Samarkand has retained an aura of a Central Asian megalopolis. Samarkand occupied a key position on the **caravan routes** between China and Europe. Its favourable situation on the junction of caravan routes made Samarkand the centre of trade and cultural exchange. Unique recipes, religious ideas, innovations and even trade secrets used to travel along the roads of the **Great Silk Route** together with merchants.

Leisure time in Samarkand.

Overnight at the hotel.

Day 7 (Wednesday). Guided sightseeing tour around Samarkand. Railway crossing to Tashkent.

*Breakfast at the hotel. Sightseeing program in Samarkand: **Registan Square** (Ulugbek Madrasah, Sher-Dor Madrasah, Tilla-Qori Madrasah) - the most impressive square in the entire Central Asia, **Gur-e Amir Mausoleum** - necropolis of the Timurids, **Rukhabad Mausoleum**, **Bibi-Khanyim Mosque**, **Shah-i-Zinda Necropolis**, Ulugbek Observatory. Transfer to the railway station. Transfer to Tashkent by premium service train **Afrosiab** (17:00-19:10). Arrival in Tashkent, meeting at the railway station. Transfer to hotel and check-in. Overnight at the hotel.*



Today you will see the most spectacular sights of Samarkand.

First, you see the **Registan Square** and the three grand madrasahs (Islamic colleges) on its sides. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, it is certainly one of the world's most impressive historic squares. The madrasahs date from different times. **Ulugbek Madrasah**, the earliest of them, was built in 1417 - 1420 by order of Ulugbek. Two centuries later **Sher-Dor Madrasah** ("Possessing Lions"; also spelled Sherdor) and **Tilla-Qori**

Madrasah ("Gilded") were erected by order of Samarkand governor. Each of the madrasahs features

unique decoration: fascinating tile mosaics, delicate stone carvings, splendid gilt ceilings, etc.

Then you certainly visit **Gur-e Amir Mausoleum**, the sepulcher of **Tamerlane** (Timur) and the Timurid dynasty (1404; also spelled Gur Emir). It contains the graves of Tamerlane, his two sons, two grandsons, and his spiritual mentor. Gur-e Amir ("tomb of the king") is the precursor of the famous Humayun's Tomb in Delhi and Taj Mahal in Agra, which were built by Tamerlane's descendants, the ruling Mughal dynasty of North India.

Next, you go to nearby **Rukhabad Mausoleum** ("abode of spirit"; also spelled Ruhabad). This small mausoleum dating from the 14th century is said to contain seven hairs of Muhammad the Prophet.

After lunch you go see the **Friday communal prayer mosque Bibi-Khanym** ("senior princess" or "senior wife"; also spelled Bibi-Khanum). Built in 1404, it is **one of the largest historic mosques** in the Islamic world. According to Ruy Gonzáles de Clavijo, a Spanish ambassador to Samarkand in Tamerlane's times, the mosque was built by order of Tamerlane in honor of his senior wife's mother by 200 best architects and 500 workers brought from all the corners of his empire.



Shah-i-Zinda Necropolis (12th c. - 15th c.; also spelled Shohizinda, Shah-i-Zinde means "living king") you see next is a complex of more than 20 mausoleums with 44 tombstones; most of them are of Tamerlan's relatives, as well as military and clergy aristocracy. The main of them is the mausoleum of Kusam ibn Abbas, the cousin of Muhammad the Prophet. According to a legend, Kusam ibn Abbas came to Samarkand with Arab conquerors to preach Islam and was beheaded for faith in the city. However, he took his head and went down to a deep well where he remains alive.

You also see the surviving part of **Ulugbek**

Observatory (15th c.). It still has a section of the mural **sextant**, once the world's largest, which Ulugbek used to compile his world-famous **star catalogue**, the best between Ptolemy's and Brahe's. Ulugbek's discoveries greatly advanced knowledge in the field of astronomy and mathematics in the Middle Ages.

Then you go to the railway station and departure for **Tashkent** by the **high-speed train Afrosiab** (17:00 - 19:10).

Overnight rest in Tashkent hotel.

Day 8 (Thursday). Tashkent. Departure.

*Breakfast at the hotel. Check out at 12:00. Leisure time. Visiting the eastern bazaar **Chorsu**.*

Walking around the city. Independence Square, Amir Timur Square and National Park named after Alisher Navoi. Transfer to the airport. Departure.



On the last day of your tour you may still have time (depending on your flight) to walk around the city or visit **Tashkent Metro** - one of the world's most beautiful underground railway systems. Its stations are real works of art, each featuring unique designs covering various themes, such as famous people, events, valued notions, terms or just common nouns. For instance, there are stations named Pushkin, Cosmonauts, Great Silk Road, and Apple Orchard. Note, however, that taking photos in Tashkent metro is prohibited for security reasons.

You can also visit **bazaars** and choose some original **Uzbek souvenirs**, and also go for a walk in City

Park named after Alisher Navoiy.

We have attempted to show you **the main and most picturesque attractions of Uzbekistan** in this **tour**. However, it is but a small portion of interesting things you can find in this country. During your next trip you should visit gigantic Lake **Aydarkul** (Aydar) amidst a desert or the sorrowful shore of the disappearing **Aral Sea**, see the civilisation of the thousand clay fortresses of **Ancient Khorezm**, feel the freshness and wildness of the **Chimgan Mountains**, swim in the sky-blue **Charvak Reservoir** or drive across the fertile and unique **Fergana Valley**... This, however, will inspire you to come to the country again, for a longer tour now! Uzbekistan is full of contrasts, but some things remain stable and unchanged for many centuries: the Uzbek land always greets its guests with a warm sun, **hospitality** and an incredibly rich and delicious table!

We are looking forward to seeing you!

Cost includes:

- Accommodation at the hotels 3* on twin/double share with breakfast;
- Sightseeing tour in each city according to the tour program;
- Sightseeing tours with local guides in cities;
- Services of the driver with comfortable transport during the tour, including airport - hotel - airport transfers;
- Train tickets (4 seats in a compartment) for night train №56 (Tashkent - Urgench);
- Train tickets (economy class) for premium service train «Shark» (Bukhara - Samarkand);
- Train tickets (economy class) for high speed premium service train «Afrosiab» (Samarkand - Tashkent);

Cost does not include:

- International air flights;
- Sites entrance fees;
- Meals;
- Medical insurance.

Additional Services:

- Sites entrance fees - 70 USD/per person/on all route;
- Update to 2 seats in a compartment (lux compartment) for night train Tashkent - Urgench - 45 USD/per person;
- Board:
 - Half board (evening meals) - 95 USD/per person/on all route;
 - Full board - 180 USD/per person/on all route.
- Visa support for Uzbekistan - 45 USD/per person.

