

# silk road to samarkand via kashgar



## trip highlights

- Marvel at The Great Wall at Mutianyu
- Explore Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City and Summer Palace in Beijing
- Visit Xian and the famous Terracotta Warriors
- Cross the Torugart pass in the Tian Shan mountains on one of the world's most remote high altitude roads
- Take in the magnificent Labrang Monastery and Jiayuguan frontier fortress
- Venture to the Mogau Caves & Dunhuang
- Immerse yourself in the Sunday Markets in Kashgar
- Drive spectacular mountain scenery & visit Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan's capital.
- Journey to the fabled Silk Road cities of Samarkand, Bukhara & Khiva



<b>Trip Duration</b>	27 days	<b>Trip Code:</b> SRS
<b>Grade</b>	Adventure touring	
<b>Activities</b>	Adventure Touring	
<b>Summary</b>	27 day trip, 21 nights hotel, 3 nights guesthouse, 2 nights train	

## welcome to World Expeditions

Thank you for your interest in our Silk Road to Samarkand via Kashgar trip. At World Expeditions we are passionate about our off the beaten track experiences as they provide our travellers with the thrill of coming face to face with untouched cultures as well as wilderness regions of great natural beauty. We are committed to ensuring that our unique itineraries are well researched, affordable and tailored for the enjoyment of small groups or individuals - philosophies that have been at our core since 1975 when we began operating adventure holidays. Our itineraries will give you the very best travel experience, designed by people with incredible local knowledge who share our vision of authentic exchange and real exploration with a responsible tourism approach. Whether you like your adventures to include trekking, touring, cycling, mountaineering, kayaking or cruising World Expeditions can make it happen for you. We hope you will join us for a life changing experience.

## why travel with World Expeditions?

When planning travel to remote and challenging destinations, many factors need to be considered. Our extra attention to detail and operations on the ground ensure that you will have a memorable experience. We take every precaution to ensure smooth logistics, our vehicles and equipment are the best available on the market. Most importantly, our adventures have always sought to benefit the local peoples we interact with, safeguard the ecosystems we explore and contribute to the sustainability of travel in the regions we experience. You will be accompanied by local guides whose knowledge and passion for this region will add a unique dimension to your trip. Their experience and enthusiasm ensures that we maintain the leading edge in adventure travel and therefore providing excellent value for money. Given our local knowledge, experience and excellent leadership, we are quite sure that this tour will be a trip of a lifetime.

# silk road to samarkand via kashgar

An extraordinary journey following the ancient Silk Road from China to Uzbekistan



World Expeditions does not require single travellers to pay a surcharge for travelling alone. We will arrange for you to share accommodation with another traveller of the same gender and if we can not match you up we will provide a single room at no extra charge. If you prefer not to share a single supplement is payable to guarantee your own room. Please refer to our website for the additional cost.

For competitive airfares and stopover ideas to join this adventure, contact our expert staff today to receive a detailed quote.

## the trip

This extraordinary journey follows the ancient silk route from its source in Xian, China, through an ever changing landscape to the fabled city of Samarkand, Uzbekistan. We begin with a tour of Beijing visiting all the sights before transferring to Xian by train to view the remarkable Terracotta Warriors. Along the China Silk Road we will also visit Xiahe and the enormous Tibetan monastery at Labrang, the Buddhist frescos in the Mogao Caves and the serene 'Heaven's Lake' deep in the Tian Shan mountains, before flying to Kashgar in time for the famous Sunday markets. We depart China over the Torugart Pass and cross into Central Asia, visiting the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek, the tree lined streets of Tashkent and the walled city of Khiva. Continuing to Bukhara, we savour its rich history as we stroll through the bazaars, mosques and magnificent Summer Palace before travelling to Samarkand to view the impressive domes and minarets of The Registan - a collection of madrasahs, and one of the most impressive sights in Central Asia.

## at a glance

DAY 1	ARRIVE BEIJING
DAY 2	VISIT TO THE FORBIDDEN CITY
DAY 3	THE GREAT WALL & THE SUMMER PALACE
DAY 4	IN BEIJING, NIGHT TRAIN TO XI'AN
DAY 5	XI'AN CITY TOUR
DAY 6	TERRACOTTA WARRIORS & GOOSE PAGODA
DAY 7	TRAIN TO LANZHOU, TRANSFER TO LINXIA
DAY 8	BOAT TRIP TO BING LING TEMPLE, TRANSFER TO XIAHE
DAY 9	LABRANG MONASTERY, RETURN TO LANZHOU & NIGHT TRAIN TO JIAYUGUAN.
DAY 10	IN JIAYUGUAN
DAY 11	TO DUNHUANG
DAY 12	MOGAO CAVES & TRAIN TO TURPAN
DAY 13	IN TURPAN (OR TULUFUN)
DAY 14	DRIVE TO ÜRÜMQI
DAY 15	HEAVEN'S LAKE, FLIGHT TO KASHGAR
DAY 16	MARKETS OF KASHGAR
DAY 17	DRIVE TO NARYN VIA TORUGART PASS
DAY 18	DRIVE TO LAKE ISSYK-KUL
DAY 19	DRIVE TO BISHKEK
DAY 20	VISIT ALA ARCHA NATIONAL PARK, FLIGHT TO TASHKENT
DAY 21	MORNING FLIGHT TO URGENCH, TRANSFER TO KHIVA
DAY 22	IN KHIVA
DAY 23	TRAIN TO BUKHARA
DAY 24	IN BUKHARA
DAY 25	TRAIN TO SAMARKAND
DAY 26	IN SAMARKAND
DAY 27	TRAIN TO TASHKENT, CITY TOUR, TRIP CONCLUDES

## additional deposits required

In addition to the World Expeditions deposit, you will be required to pay an additional deposit of USD\$330 (paid in your local currency at the current rate of exchange) in order to book internal flights in Central Asia. Every year during the short summer period domestic flights fill very quickly so we require prepayment of this flight amount to secure seats This deposit is non-refundable and we recommend you take out travel insurance at the time of booking.



# silk road to samarkand via kashgar

An extraordinary journey following the ancient Silk Road from China to  
Uzbekistan



## trip dates

**2020** 22 Aug - 17 Sep  
05 Sep - 01 Oct  
10 Oct - 05 Nov

**2021** 27 Mar - 22 Apr  
24 Apr - 20 May  
21 Aug - 16 Sep  
04 Sep - 30 Sep  
09 Oct - 04 Nov

## important notes

**NB:** - It is possible to undertake the first 17 days of this trip only, refer to our China Silk Road trip online.

## fast facts

### Countries Visited:

China, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan

### Visas:

Yes\*

### Vaccinations:

Please consult a travel vaccination specialist for up to date information

### Private Groups:

Private group options are available for this trip\*

### Singles:

A single supplement is available for this trip\*

### Leader:

Expert local leader in each country

### Advice for people with limited mobility

This trip is not suitable for people with limited mobility.

\*Ask our staff for more information.

## what's included

- 26 breakfasts, 13 lunches, 15 dinners
- Comfortable well located hotels and guesthouses on a twinshare basis
- Local sightseeing, including entrance fees to monuments as listed in itinerary
- All internal transport by A/C 2nd Class train or private air conditioned vehicles
- Internal flights Urumqi/Kashgar, Bishkek/Tashkent/Khiva valued at approx. USD\$481
- National tour leader in China and Central Asia plus local specialist guides throughout
- Emergency medical kit
- Group airport transfers on first & last days
- Assistance in arranging visas

Local cash payments are becoming increasingly popular with many operators in the adventure travel industry. The policy seems to benefit the tour operators, more than the local economies or travellers, as it avoids local taxes and transfers the cost and risk of cash handling to travellers. In accordance with our Responsible Travel practices we have chosen a policy not to ask for such payments.

## what's not included

- Meals not indicated in the program
- Any optional tours, and entrance fees and permits during free time
- Expenditure of a personal nature such as drinks, souvenirs and laundry
- Visas – Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan (plus an administration fee), China – note visa costs subject to change without notice and may vary according to group size.
- Tips and gratuities
- International airfares and taxes
- Personal travel insurance (compulsory)
- Excess luggage charges

## detailed itinerary

### DAY 1 Arrive Beijing

If you are arriving into Beijing today you will be collected from the airport and transferred to the group hotel. This evening you will meet with the rest of the group in the hotel lobby for a trip briefing (your guide will advise you of the meeting time) before you head out for a group welcome dinner.

Overnight: Dong Fang Hotel or similar  
meals: D

### DAY 2 Visit to The Forbidden City

This morning we visit the beautiful Forbidden City, which is a masterpiece of 5000 years of Chinese civilisation and still vividly displays the power and prestige of the former dynasties. Sprawling over acres, the City is a magnificent group of palaces, pavilions, courtyards and deep terracotta walls. Ornately furnished palace rooms, priceless artworks and treasures are all now open to the public after 500 years of seclusion. In the evening there is an option to see an acrobatic show.

Overnight: Dong Fang Hotel or similar  
meals: B,D

### DAY 3 The Great Wall & The Summer Palace

We will make an early start this morning and head north out of the city to explore the Great Wall at the Mutianyu. Whilst this section is a slightly longer drive, at



# silk road to samarkand via kashgar

An extraordinary journey following the ancient Silk Road from China to  
Uzbekistan



## thoughtful travel

The natural environments that you'll travel through are fragile; the cultures and traditions precious and often the communities we pass through are reliant on tourism. It is our responsibility as visitors to minimise the impact of our presence, protect what is precious and where we can leave a positive impact. Learn how you can do this by downloading the Thoughtful Traveller booklet from our website.

## trip grading Adventure touring

This is an adventurous journey and we aim to keep the 'accent on the active'. We therefore suggest that any physical training you complete before undertaking the trip will be to good effect. Although there is no sustained physical activity during the trip, to get the most out of it you should exercise regularly before departure. There will be opportunities to ascend the ramparts of the Great Wall or climb a sand dune, and the fitter you are the more this will enhance your experience and enable you to fully participate in the trip.

There are long distances covered by road and train during the trip and some of the roads travelled may be bumpy and at times uncomfortable. You should be fit and healthy and mentally prepared to deal with 27 days travelling and the remote nature of the trip, accepting that things don't always go to plan, despite our best intentions.

around 1½hrs, than the Badaling Gate section, it is significantly less busy and therefore worth the drive. One of the Seven Wonders of the World, the Great Wall of China was built as a defence line to keep out marauding invaders, nomadic groups of the steppe from the north. The first sections were completed as far back as the 7th century BC. Since then, many successive dynasties built and maintained multiple stretches of border walls. The most currently well-known of the walls were built by the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). The Mutianyu section of the Great Wall is a masterpiece of restoration, with 23 original-style Ming Dynasty watchtowers. This is the longest fully-restored Great Wall section open to visitors. On arrival, you have the option for either a gentle walk with optional cable car assistance or for those feeling more active, we can complete a 2-3hr walk along this beautiful section of the wall. In the afternoon we'll head back into the city to visit the Summer Palace. First built in 1750, largely destroyed in the war of 1860 and restored on its original foundations in 1886, the Summer Palace in Beijing is a masterpiece of Chinese landscape garden design. The natural landscape of hills and open water is combined with artificial features such as pavilions, halls, palaces, temples and bridges to form a harmonious ensemble of outstanding aesthetic value.

In the evening we will be treated to a traditional Peking Duck dinner.

Overnight: Dong Fang Hotel or similar

meals: B,D

### DAY 4 In Beijing, night train to Xi'an

This morning has been set aside for leisure time to rest or catch up on shopping. Our local guides will be happy to make suggestions and organise arrangements as required. In the afternoon, we transfer to the train station for our overnight journey to Xi'an.

Overnight: Sleeper train - 4 berth cabin

meals: B,D

### DAY 5 Xi'an City tour

Xi'an is the traditional starting point of the Silk Road, the point from where traders departed on their long cross continental voyages. The walled city of Xi'an, the capital of Shaanxi Province, is a vivid example of old meets new China. The modernised new city bustles around the quaint, winding lanes of the Old Quarter, where retired men spend their days smoking pipes playing mahjong and chess while butchers pull their carcass-laden carts and hawkers sell all manner of wares.

Today, we will take in a city tour, starting on the old city wall which is the most complete ancient city wall in China. At 12m high and 15m wide, the 14km long wall is one of the largest ancient military defensive systems in the world and safeguarded the capital city of 13 Chinese dynasties. A walk along the wall provides us with a glimpse into the ancient and modern life of the city and its inhabitants. Later we also visit the fascinating Shaanxi Provincial Museum which houses a collection devoted to the Silk Road. In the evening, there is an option to dine at a special dumpling restaurant, which is highly recommended and very unique (additional cost).

Overnight: Ramada Bell Tower Hotel Xi'an or similar

meals: B,L

### DAY 6 Terracotta Warriors & Goose Pagoda

The thousands of Terracotta Warriors who stand outside the tomb of Qin Shihuang, were uncovered in 1974 by peasants digging a well. Each warrior stands over six feet tall and has individual features and characteristics. Some stand in a vanguard with crossbow and longbow bearers, others hold spears, daggers and axes at the ready.

# silk road to samarkand via kashgar

An extraordinary journey following the ancient Silk Road from China to  
Uzbekistan



## adventure travel

By its very nature adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected. In remote and developing countries do not expect standards you are used to at home. Remote areas are sometimes unpredictable and itineraries may be altered. To get the most out of your adventure it is important that you are flexible, positive and eager to take on all the challenges that arise. If you are uncertain about your suitability for this trip we recommend that you speak with your consultant or travel agent.

## important note

These trip notes represent the most current information for this itinerary, and may supersede any information in the current brochure, including but not limited to the itinerary and price. The itinerary should be seen as a guide only. This itinerary may change at any time due to inclement weather, forces of nature and other circumstances beyond our control.

They are accompanied by dozens of horse-drawn carriages and enormous terracotta horses. The sight of the warriors arising from their muddy grave, some intact, others still submerged in the ground, is truly an extraordinary one. In the afternoon we'll visit the Big Goose Pagoda which is a classic example of Chinese temple architecture. Originally built in 652AD during the Tang dynasty, it was rebuilt in 704 during the reign of Empress Wu Zetian, and its exterior brick facade was renovated during the Ming dynasty. One of the pagoda's many functions was to hold sutras and figurines of the Buddha that were brought to China from India by the Buddhist translator and traveler Xuanzang. Today, the interior walls of the pagoda feature engraved statues of Buddha by the renowned artist Yan Liben. This evening we have the option to attend a Tang Dynasty Dance Show.

Overnight: Ramada Bell Tower Hotel Xi'an or similar  
meals: B,L

### DAY 7 Train to Lanzhou, transfer to Linxia

This morning we transfer to the station to catch the high speed train to Lanzhou. Camel caravans traversed the rugged and barren Province of Gansu, as they threaded their way along the Silk Road. The capital Lanzhou is one of the oasis towns the caravans stopped in along the way. It has since become an industrialised city and remains a hub for travellers to this day. On arrival we enjoy a simple noodle lunch before a visit to the Gansu Provincial Museum. Home to the "Cultural Relics of the Silk Road" exhibition, it has some beautiful artifacts and a skeleton of a giant mammoth. From Lanzhou we ascend out of the city smog and into the clean mountain air, passing through beautiful, mountainous scenery and fascinating microcosms of minority life in China as we head towards Linxia, one of the main religious, cultural and commercial centers of China's Muslim community.

Overnight: He Huang Pearl Hotel or similar  
meals: B,L

### DAY 8 Boat trip to Bing Ling Temple, transfer to Xiahe

This morning we transfer by bus and boat to Bingling Temple which are a series of grottoes filled with Buddhist sculpture carved into natural caves and caverns in a canyon along the Yellow River. After visiting these fascinating grottoes we transfer on to the remote town of Xiahe (pronounced Shar-her), which takes approximately 1.5 hours. As we ascend further into the mountains we pass stupas identifying the beginning of the Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. On arrival in Xiahe you will likely notice the increase of altitude as the town is located at 2,900m.

Overnight: Laboleng Wangfu Hotel or similar  
meals: B,D

### DAY 9 Labrang Monastery, return to Lanzhou & night train to Jiayuguan.

Within Xiahe is the enormous Tibetan Monastery of Labrang, an important place of pilgrimage for Buddhist monks and is second only in size to the Potala Palace in Lhasa. Tibetan nomads dressed in their finest traditional clothing mingle with monks in bright pink robes and lamas in deep burnished saffron robes. Monks can be seen debating and deep in preparations for religious ceremonies, practicing ritual music and meditation. The Lamasery, built in 1709, has more than 10,000 rooms, where

# silk road to samarkand via kashgar

An extraordinary journey following the ancient Silk Road from China to  
Uzbekistan



over 3,000 lamas were once accommodated. It has a collection of books exceeding 65,000 volumes. Watch out for the huge pot in the Lamasery yard in which four oxen can be cooked together.

This afternoon we transfer back to Lanzhou before we catch the overnight train to Jiayuguan. Our return journey is just as impressive as mountains give way to fields of wheat and orchards bursting with fruit. Depending on the season, we may stop at one of the many roadside stalls selling local fruit and nuts.

Overnight: Sleeper train - 4 berth cabin

meals: B,D

## DAY 10 In Jiayuguan

Jiayuguan is the western most point of the Great Wall. Built during the Ming dynasty, the wall is guarded by the famous Jaiyu Fort, known as "the most Impregnable Pass Under Heaven". It was the last major stronghold of the empire to the west and remains an impressive and formidable sight. Then we're on to the Black Mountain to climb a restored section of the wall.

Overnight: Jiayuguan Great Wall Hotel or similar

meals: B,D

## DAY 11 To Dunhuang

We leave the Great Wall and follow the snaking Silk Road into the desert through the Hexi (pronounced "Hersh") Corridor. The drive from Jiayuguan to Dunhuang, another of the Silk Road's oasis towns takes around five hours with the geographic boundaries of the Gobi Desert to the north and the Qilin Mountains to the south defining the Hexi Corridor. On the drive we will pass many beacon towers which were used to send messages along the Silk Road. Oasis meets desert at the Crescent Moon Spring, a lake miraculously lying in the midst of the Singing Sand Mountains. Despite the constantly shifting sands, the 100 meter lake has never been filled. The view from the top of the dunes is magnificent. We might be lucky enough to view a sunset from the Mingsha dunes, the tallest of which, Mingsha Mountain, is 250m high. The dunes make a beautiful backdrop to the city of Dunhuang.

Overnight: Dunhuang Hantang Grang Hotel or similar

meals: B,D

## DAY 12 Mogao Caves & train to Turpan

Dunhuang is home to China's most magnificent Buddhist grottos. The grottos are set amidst mountainous towering sand dunes. The Mogao Caves, also known as the Thousand Buddhist Grottos, are 1,000 metres long, and are filled with superb Buddhist art, dating from 366AD. Over 45,000 square metres of frescos in the nearly 500 caves record the life of the Buddha. They are one of the great sights of China. In the afternoon, transfer to Liuyan to board the bullet train to Turpan (4hrs). We will be met at the station and transferred to our hotel.

Please note: At Dunhuang Station all passengers and luggage are required to pass through a security check at the station entrance. Blades including pocket knives (Swiss Army style) and all products in pressurised containers (hairspray, deodorants etc) are banned and will be confiscated.

Overnight: Jinjiang Ducheng Hotel or similar

meals: B,D

# silk road to samarkand via kashgar

An extraordinary journey following the ancient Silk Road from China to  
Uzbekistan



## DAY 13 In Turpan (or Tulufun)

The province of Xinjiang lies at the heart of the Eurasian continent. Skirting the hostile Gobi Desert it is a region of endless grassland, the Taklamakan Desert, snow peaked mountains, lakes, and primitive forests. We enter the Turpan basin, home of the Uighur (pronounced "Wee Ger") people. The town of Turpan is broad and flat with low slung mud brick houses and open channels from which the Uighur draw their water. The slow pace and vast expanses of the surrounding desert and sky make Turpan a wonderful place for relaxation. Grape Valley is a small oasis of vineyards in the desert that we visit with its mazes of grapevines and mud brick buildings used for drying, before heading to Atsana Tombs and the ruins of Jiaohe. The tombs contain portraits of the dead of Gaochang painted on the walls with two well-preserved corpses housed in another. A visit to the Karez Underground Irrigation Channels are also a must. Constructed over 2000 years ago, the Karez are one of ancient China's most remarkable public works. The 1000 wells that make up the system have been sunk to collect ground water from the melting snow of the Bogdashan Mountains. The water passes from the wells through underground channels to irrigate farms in the valley below, and is fed entirely by gravity.

Overnight: Jinxiu Jinhua Hotel Turpan or similar

meals: B,D

## DAY 14 Drive to Ürümqi

The Bezeklik Thousand Buddha Caves are picturesquely located on a cliff face overlooking a river valley. We visit them before driving on to Urumqi (approx. 3hrs). Situated at the foot of the Tian Shan Mountains, Ürümqi is the capital of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. With the opening of the Silk Route, Urumqi became a junction for cultural exchange between the east and west. We'll venture out for our first exploration of Urumqi and its strong Communist architecture. Furthermore, a visit to Xinjiang's capital of Urumqi would be incomplete without a visit to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Museum or the "Xinjiang Museum" for short. It is by far the best museum you'll find along the Silk Road and is home to some of the area's most famous and controversial artefacts: the Xinjiang mummies.

Overnight: Dushanzi Hotel or similar

meals: B,D

## DAY 15 Heaven's Lake, flight to Kashgar

From Urumqi we drive to one of the most impressive sights in China - Tianchi, or Heaven's Lake. Set amid the Tian Shan Mountains below the imposing Bogda Peak (5445m). The deep blue lake is framed by fir trees and mountain peaks, and it is sprinkled with yurts and Kazak nomad summer camps. We return to Urumqi in the late afternoon and take an evening flight to Kashgar.

Overnight: Kashi Tianyuan International Hotel or similar

meals: B,D

## DAY 16 Markets of Kashgar

Kashgar is a bustling market town which is prominent on the Silk Route, and is at the junction between the two main north/south arteries. Traders come from all over to sell their livestock, amongst thousands of different types of produce. Being populated by an overwhelming majority of Uygur people (93%), it seems on arrival that you have left China. This impression is quickly reversed on viewing the massive monument of Mao near the Idkah Square. Our time in Kashgar is spent predominantly at the markets where we can watch the traders dressed in their Sunday best (waistcoats and all), selling their sheep which were brought from miles away on their donkey cart.



# silk road to samarkand via kashgar

An extraordinary journey following the ancient Silk Road from China to  
Uzbekistan



We will also wander through the different sections of the market, where hats, spices, kitchenware, carpets, musical instruments richly decorated, clothing and tailors, and almost any other products are sold. The Fragrant Concubines tomb will be visited in the afternoon together with the Idkah Mosque. Kashgar was the centre of the Great Game staged between Britain and Russia in their attempts to secure the Central Asian states. We'll also make time today to visit a local family at their traditional home, to learn about the lifestyles of those living in this remote corner of China.

Overnight: Kashi Tianyuan International Hotel or similar  
meals: B,D

## DAY 17 Drive to Naryn via Torugart Pass

We may have to say goodbye to some of the people in our group today as they will remain in China. This morning we will make an early start for the long day of travel ahead. Our bus will make the 63km journey to the new border post in about 2 hours. On arrival we must change to another bus for the 104kms to the old border post, which should take approx. 2.5 hours. Actual timings are dependent on weather conditions and the border staffs' ability to process our departure from China and arrival into Kyrgyzstan. From the old border post we change vehicles again, and are met by our Kyrgyz guide for the crossing of the pass and the border formalities. The eight hour drive from here to Naryn is spectacular as we are in the Tian Shan mountains and on one of the world's most remote high altitude roads. We will spend the night in a guesthouse which is basic but clean and comfortable. Please note that accommodation is very limited in Naryn and that the guesthouse is located within the town and not in a rural setting.

Note: from our experience this day will be long and at times uncomfortable. We may arrive in Naryn anywhere between 8-12pm. Having your sense of humour and a flexible attitude is the order of the day, as is your spirit of adventure. Taking snacks in your daypack and perhaps a set of cards is recommended.

Overnight: Khan Tengri or similar  
meals: B,L,D

## DAY 18 Drive to Lake Issyk-Kul

Today we drive to Lake Issyk-Kul, the second largest alpine lake in the world after Lake Titicaca in South America. Measuring 182 km long by 58 km wide, the lake appeared as a result of volcanic activity. It is heated from below by thermal springs and never freezes even in the depths of winter. In the summer the water temperature reaches 25-28 degrees centigrade (warmer than the air) and you can swim in the lake enclosed on all sides by the snowy peaks of the Tien Shan Mountains. Extremely deep and pleasantly warm, over the centuries the lake has been something of an oasis in this inhospitable mountain environment. With diverse flora and fauna Issyk-Kul Lake and the surrounding environments are rightly considered to be one of Central Asia's most remarkable locations.

Overnight: Traditional yurt camp  
meals: B,L

## DAY 19 Drive to Bishkek

Today we drive further through spectacular mountain scenery where the peaks are like knife edges, to the quaint town of Bishkek.

Overnight: Plaza Hotel Bishkek or similar  
meals: B,L



# silk road to samarkand via kashgar

An extraordinary journey following the ancient Silk Road from China to  
Uzbekistan



## DAY 20 Visit Ala Archa National Park, flight to Tashkent

Weather permitting, this morning we drive to the Ala-Archa National Park, where we can see magnificent scenery as we walk through the national park and enjoy a picnic-lunch. Later today we fly to Tashkent.

Overnight: City Palace Hotel or similar

meals: B,L

## DAY 21 Morning flight to Urgench, transfer to Khiva

This morning we board a morning flight to Urgench, so we can enjoy a full day of sightseeing in Khiva. The ancient walled city of Khiva is a stunning monument to the rich history of the region. Slave caravans, wild tribesmen and a harsh and unrelenting desert are all part of its tumultuous history. We spend the afternoon exploring the World Heritage Itchan - Kala (the walled inner town of the city) and the Pakhlavan Makhmud complex.

Overnight: Malika Khiva Hotel or similar

meals: B,L

## DAY 22 In Khiva

We continue our exploration of the maze of mosques, tombs, alley ways, palaces, fortresses and medressas (Muslim centers of learning). This afternoon there is time to relax, shop or simply wander the streets and observe the local way of life.

Overnight: Malika Khiva Hotel or similar

meals: B,L

## DAY 23 Train to Bukhara

This morning, following breakfast, we depart Khiva. We'll board the train bound for Central Asia's holiest city, Bukhara. This journey across the desert will take around 5hrs, but we will be in the comfort of the air conditioned train. Upon arrival in Bukhara, we transfer to our hotel to relax and refresh. In the afternoon we'll venture out for our first exploration of the city centre, an architectural preserve, full of medressas and minarets, an expansive royal fortress and the remnants of a once-vast market complex.

Overnight: Kavsar Boutique Hotel or similar

meals: B,L

## DAY 24 In Bukhara

Bukhara is an ancient city boasting 2500 years of vibrant history. It has been a centre of world learning, succumbed to Ghengis Khan and Tamerlane, and after the Silk Road waned, was a capital for despot Bukhara emirs. Today we have a full day tour of the mosques, medressas and fortress of the old city. We will visit The Ark, the former Royal City and City Fortress that was the focus of the city for 2000 years, as well as Samanid's Mausoleum.

Overnight: Kavsar Boutique Hotel or similar

meals: B,L

## DAY 25 Train to Samarkand

This morning we visit the Sitora-i Mokhi Khosa: the Summer Palace of Bukharan Emirs. The summer palace consists of 3 buildings, set in rose gardens and surrounded by courtyards, a Persian-influenced style that harks back to Timurid days. Located in the outskirts of the city, the Summer Palace of the last emirs of Bukhara is a fascinating

# silk road to samarkand via kashgar

An extraordinary journey following the ancient Silk Road from China to  
Uzbekistan



place to dive into the lifestyle of the court in a time of great upheaval. After lunch, we'll board the train for the short, 1½hr journey to the most famous of Central Asia's Silk Road Cities, Samarkand.

Overnight: Hotel City Samarkand or similar

meals: B,L

## DAY 26 In Samarkand

Today we'll commence our sightseeing with the tomb of Tamerlane who made Samarkand his capital. He set about making it the richest city on earth by pillaging and destroying all other cities and removing their wealth and skilled traders to Samarkand. We will also visit Ulugbek observatory. We also take in the sights of the Registan complex, the remarkable market place of ancient Samarkand. It is enclosed by spectacular medressas on three sides. These huge buildings with domes and minarets covered in a mosaic of azure tiles were built from the 1400s. The Registan is one of the wonders of the ancient world. We visit another highlight of Samarkand - the huge Bibi-Khonum mosque. Tonight is the final night of our trip and therefore the perfect opportunity for one final dinner together to relive our epic journey.

Overnight: Hotel City Samarkand or similar

meals: B,L,D

## DAY 27 Train to Tashkent, city tour, trip concludes

We have a very early start today, to catch the morning train from Samarkand to Tashkent, the capital city of Uzbekistan. The journey north will take around 2½hrs. Upon arrival, we'll begin our sightseeing tour of Tashkent. Tashkent is a modern city of three million people but has a relaxed pace, and charming street side cafes. We start with a visit to the Old Town, including Osman's Koran - an essential part of Muslim historical and cultural heritage. Time permitting we will also visit the Courage Monument, Amir Temur Square - the city's oldest square, and the Museum of Applied Art. In the evening, depending on your onward journey plans, you will be taken either to the airport or to the group hotel, and the trip concludes.

Note: there is no accommodation included tonight. If you would like to extend your stay in Tashkent, please ask your World Expedition's Adventure Travel Consultant for accommodation options.

meals: B

This itinerary is subject to change with any change in Community regulations as well as Governmental changes and natural circumstances beyond our control.

## suggested extensions

Tashkent to Isfahan

## country information

Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire in 330 B.C, and with him, came Greek ideas, mythology and the language. It is believed that the people of the Hunza valley in the Karakoram are the direct descendents of the army of Alexander. After the Greeks, the tribes from Palmyra in Syria and then Parthia took over control of the Karakoram region. What follows is a history of conquest as various local peoples vied for supremacy. The ancestors of the Huns and Kushan people among them. The remnants of Greek culture eventually fused with Buddhism. The Romans, it is thought, first encountered silk in 53 B.C during their campaigns against the Parthians. Learning from Parthian prisoners that the silk came from a mysterious tribe in the east they sent agents to explore the route. The birth of the Silk Road in China came as the Warring States period was brought to an end with the consolidation of the Qin Dynasty. This saw the

# silk road to samarkand via kashgar

An extraordinary journey following the ancient Silk Road from China to  
Uzbekistan



unification of language, the standardisation of systems and the birth of Xi'an as the capital, as well as the joining of the sections of the Great Wall. In 138B.C the Western Han Dynasty emperor Zhang Qian, in an attempt to shore up alliances against troublesome northern tribes, sent emissaries west to gather intelligence. Their stories of hitherto unknown states and of a strange large breed of horse, led to further exploration. What ensued was a history of capture and escape; at one stage the emissaries were captured and held hostage for 10 years. In pursuit of the now immortalised horses, others pushed further west and may have reached Persia. They brought back with them many objects of art and beauty, including early Buddhist art, and in doing so opened the ancient world's most valuable trading links. Perhaps the most significant commodity to be carried along the route was religion. Buddhism came to China from India along the northern branch of the Silk Road. Various emperors sent missions to India to learn more about this mysterious religion. Slowly, as merchants, pilgrims and missionaries came into contact with Buddhism it spread along the route and stupas, monasteries and grottos bearing murals and Buddhist artwork, began to appear (some of the finest examples we will see in Dunhuang). China never fails to conjure up myriad feelings, images and a sense of mystery. Its history cannot be summed up here in a few paragraphs and to fully appreciate the currents that have shaped the country and its people; you must take the time to read at least one of the many excellent books available. Within the almost four million square miles of China's vast territory live more than 1.2 billion people, which makes it the most populated nation on earth. For centuries, outsiders have yearned to visit China and it's only since 1976 that tourism really started. As much as China is keen to display its stunning scenery, historical sites and impressive cities, it is also dedicated to conveying something about how its society works. Although its political system has set it apart from the west, China is now moving forward in leaps and bounds, especially in the areas of trade and commerce. The major cities are indicative of the burgeoning economy of modern China. As in the days of Marco Polo, travellers are still regarded as guests.

## Central Asia

Central Asia is a land of ancient civilizations. It was in this region that the ancient states of Bactria and Khorasm, Sogd and Parthia thrived. Through these states the famous Great Silk Road passed, linking Europe and Asia. Majestic cities with beautiful palaces, mosques, minarets and medressas were erected over thousands of years. Many of them were ruined, but several withstood the conquerors and passing of time, and today stand as monuments, reflecting their former glory.

Many of the artistic delights found in Central Asia are comparable with the architectural masterpieces of Egypt, India, China and ancient Greece and Rome. Central Asia makes up over 2% of the world's land mass. After the collapse of the USSR, five independent states were proclaimed: Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. The largest deserts and desert-steppes in all of Asia, the mountain massifs of the Tian Shan and the Pamir, caves and rivers are all found here. It is a land of diverse landscapes; deserts, give way to oases and valleys of cotton plants, pomegranates, grapes and melons. Immense steppes change smoothly into foothills and rise beyond the clouds to the eternal snows of its highest peaks. Emerald steppes merge into dark-green juniper forests and then, high in the mountains, into the many coloured grasslands of alpine meadows.

## climate

Our Silk Rd trips take place during the northern hemisphere spring and autumn. On our April / May departures temperatures will be slightly cooler in western China and Central Asia. Our September departures will experience slightly warmer temperatures. However these trips can expect to encounter snow on the Torugart Pass. Weather is unpredictable so we recommend being prepared for a range of climates. The pre-departure information will give you suggestions on clothing you should bring with you.



# silk road to samarkand via kashgar

An extraordinary journey following the ancient Silk Road from China to  
Uzbekistan



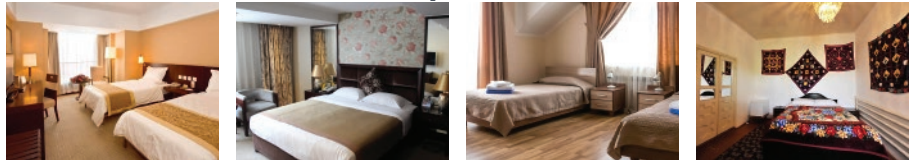
## a typical day

When touring in cities we will meet our guide early in the morning and full days will be spent sightseeing.

## dietary requirements

Provided we are advised in advance of your departure we are able to cater for vegetarian diets and can assist with medically recommended diets (allergies and intolerances). Please ensure you discuss your requirements with us well in advance (at least 1 month prior to your trip) to determine whether we can cater to such dietary requirements on your chosen adventure. Please note that options are likely to be limited in very remote locations or alternatives may be more expensive or unavailable. There may be times when those with special requirements may need to provide their own food. We are unable to guarantee a peanut-free or allergen-free trip, and therefore, we strongly encourage that travellers with life-threatening or severe allergies take all necessary medical precautions to prepare for the possibility of exposure. Passengers must travel with all necessary medications for food allergies and be capable of self-administering these medications.

## accommodation on the trip



In cities or large towns you will be accommodated in 3 to 4 star, twin share properties that are centrally located, atmospheric and reliable. We use quality guesthouses. They are not luxury Inns but we make sure they offer you a truly authentic experience. An overnight train standard is a comfortable 4 berth sleeper with a cabin door that locks. Speak to your reservations consultant should you wish to upgrade to private, 2 berth sleeper cabins.

## what you carry

You will be required to carry all your luggage between hotels and transportation. On sightseeing days you will be required to carry a day pack with your camera, water proof clothing and any other personal items you may require during the day.

## equipment required

Specialist gear required include walking shoes and day pack (a comprehensive gear list is provided in the pre-departure information provided on booking).

## vehicles & safety

During the course of your trip, we will use a variety of vehicles, all of which are fit for purpose and the conditions encountered. It should be noted that laws governing transportation safety may differ from those in your home country and whilst wherever possible, vehicles with seatbelts are provided, on occasion some vehicles may not have seat belts fitted.

## visas

China

Visas are required for passport holders from the following countries:-

- Australia

# silk road to samarkand via kashgar

An extraordinary journey following the ancient Silk Road from China to  
Uzbekistan



- New Zealand
- Canada
- United States
- United Kingdom

Details of obtaining visas are provided in your confirmation kit. If you are travelling to China via any other Asian countries please check visa requirements with your reservations consultant.

All other nationalities should check with your nearest embassy or consulate.

## Kyrgyzstan

UK, AU, NZ, CA and US passport holders do not need to have a visa when visiting Kyrgyzstan for up to 60 days. The traveller must:

Hold a biometric passport valid at least six months on entry with two blank visa pages

Hold proof of sufficient funds

Hold proof of onward/return airline tickets

Hold documents showing proof of purpose of trip

Hold all documents required for the next destination

All other nationalities, please check with your consulate or embassy for current visa requirement information. Allow up to 6 weeks prior to trip departure.

## Uzbekistan

Passport holders from the following countries and all European Union citizens are eligible for visa-free entry for a stay of up to 30 days. This service can be used for multiple entries:-

Australia

New Zealand

Canada

United Kingdom

US citizens can gain a visa via two ways. The easiest and quickest is an e-visa through the official website - <https://mfa.uz/en/consular/visa/> - The price is US\$20 and takes 2-5 business days to issue the visa. The e-visa works at all entry points: land borders and airports. No sticker is placed in your passport, only an entry/exit stamp. If you cannot apply to the e-visa website, you will need to apply through your in country embassy. The cost change regularly and can vary from US\$55 to US\$120.

Upon arrival you should carry spare passport photos (approx 2 photos).

It is very important that upon arrival in Uzbekistan you fill in a customs declaration form in duplicate and retain one form in your passport for your departure from Tashkent.

All other nationalities please check with your reservations consultant.

Please bear in mind that visas may be required for countries you are visiting en-route or transiting through on the way to your destination. It is important that you check the requirements of all countries you will visit.

Visa costs and requirements do change regularly so we suggest you check with your travel agent or World Expeditions reservations consultant.

## info nights

World Expeditions invites you to attend our inspiring adventure travel information nights. These special evenings are designed to inform and entertain and are hosted by our most experienced and passionate adventure travellers and mountaineers. Ask our staff for a info night schedule or register on our website - [www.worldexpeditions.com](http://www.worldexpeditions.com). Shows can fill early so it is important to register your attendance so we know to save a seat, or two.

# silk road to samarkand via kashgar

An extraordinary journey following the ancient Silk Road from China to  
Uzbekistan



## private groups

The adventures featured in our brochures, and on our website, are just a starting point for many of our private group travellers. Working closely with our Groups Department we can organise custom designed itineraries for groups of friends, clubs, charity's, schools or even work colleagues. Our team will assist you with all aspects of your private group adventure from itinerary design to group flights. Contact our team today.

## subscribe to our e-newsletter

Never miss an amazing deal, inspirational speaker tour or exciting new trips and cutting edge adventure news. Head to our website to subscribe to our regular e-newsletter.

## social networking

Connect with us on social

FACEBOOK: @worldexpeditions

Like our page at [facebook.com/worldexpeditions](https://facebook.com/worldexpeditions)

INSTAGRAM: @worldexpeditions

Follow us at [instagram.com/worldexpeditions](https://instagram.com/worldexpeditions)

YOUTUBE: World Expeditions

Subscribe to our channel at [youtube.com/worldexpeditions](https://youtube.com/worldexpeditions)

Share the love

Use the hashtag #WorldExpeditions on your best travel photos and videos to be featured.

## trip availability

If this trip seems right for you then we encourage you to call us now to check availability. There are many reasons why you may not be able to join your desired departure and limited space on our small group departures is just one of them. Many of our adventures require us to secure services on your behalf; such as trekking permits, train travel and visa invitation letters. The demand is increasing each year making it difficult to join a trip last minute. To ensure we can assist you onto your adventure of a lifetime we ask that you check your trip availability with our team at your earliest convenience.

## how to book

To book a World Expeditions trip, you will need to complete a booking form and pay a non refundable deposit which you can do by using our online booking function for most trips, or if you prefer, download a booking form from the website and return to us by fax, or mail your booking form and deposit to your nearest World Expeditions office or travel agent. We can also help you with any additional arrangements that you require, such as competitive airfares to get you to your destination, stopovers, pre or post trip accommodation or any additional tours that you wish to take in conjunction with the main World Expeditions trip.