Medicine and Society in Uzbekistan with a visit to Tajikistan with the Royal Society of Medicine

15 - 28 October 2023

Tashkent – Khiva – Bukhara – Samarkand – Penjikent (Tajikistan) – Tashkent

‘We were very impressed by the organisation from beginning to end. All very interesting.’

Daniel Allen, Uzbekistan 2022
Uzbekistan is the land-locked heart of Central Asia’s evocative Silk Road. The stunning architecture of its ancient cities links the empires of China and Persia, reflecting history that encompasses the giddy pinnacles of civilisation as well as oppression. Travel in the footsteps of Silk Road caravans through Uzbekistan and make a visit to Tajikistan to visit its mountains and archaeological site overlooking the Zarafshan Valley. Travel through vast isolated landscapes containing magnificent sites and cultures little changed over time.

Tour leader, Dr Chantal Sargent, will lead you through the ancient history and vibrant, contemporary society of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The itinerary includes a number of fascinating medical visits as you travel through the land of Avicenna, a polymath regarded as the father of early modern medicine, including a visit to his birthplace. Medical visits range from a modern teaching hospital to rural care and traditional healing.

There will also be ample opportunity to enjoy wonderful local food and wine, including several special meals.
Dr Chantal Sargent (MBChB MRCPCH DCH) is a paediatrician and works in the NHS in Worcestershire, UK. She recently took a sabbatical to complete a Professional Diploma in Positive Psychology and Coaching. Her passion is people and different cultures, and understanding the essence of what makes them human. As such, she has travelled extensively, both with an academic and cultural agenda, with an ongoing interest in healthcare systems around the world.

Born and raised in South Africa, she completed her MBChB at The University of Cape Town and subsequently worked in various rural hospitals in South Africa, where she started her career in paediatrics and did her DCH in Community Child Health. She completed her MRCPCH in London and went on to further her training and work as a paediatrician in the UK, South Africa and Australia.

Latterly, and since the COVID pandemic, she has embraced the practice of psychological well-being and positive psychology, with an interest in integrative medicine, which is reflected in her voluntary work as a well-being conversation facilitator and NHS coach for colleagues. She has also trained as a practitioner in NLP and Trauma, which she does in her spare time.

She has travelled extensively in South Africa, and has spent time in Morocco, Peru and the Amazon rainforest, Australia and New Zealand. She has enjoyed trips to Asia (Hong Kong, Singapore, Bali, China, Vietnam, Cambodia) and more recently helped lead a medical trip in South Korea. She has covered much of Europe and some of the USA; visiting Boston and the ‘ether dome’ at Massachusetts General Hospital being a highlight!
Day 1: Tashkent (Sun, 15 Oct)
Pm: Arrive in Tashkent, the largest and most cosmopolitan city in Central Asia, and transfer to the Marriott Courtyard Hotel. Take an orientation tour before a local dinner.

Day 2: Tashkent (Mon, 16 Oct)
Am: Explore some of Tashkent’s more ornate stations. Travel to Kosmonavtlar Station and visit the Museum of Applied Arts, where the curator will guide you through the decorative arts of Central Asia.
Pm: Visit a Tashkent city hospital and meet with local doctors, or at leisure.
Eve: Enjoy a welcome dinner at a local winery.

Day 3: Tashkent / Khiva (Tues, 17 Oct)
Am: Visit the Hast Imam, walk across Independence Square and visit a local herbalist and traditional practitioner.
Pm: Fly to the living museum of Khiva and transfer to the hotel.
Eve: Dinner on a terrace with a view of the walled city.

Day 4: Khiva (Wed, 18 Oct)
Am: Explore Khiva, which is perhaps the best preserved of all the Silk Road cities. Explore the city gates and walls, with the option to climb up to the gatehouse for magnificent views, and the Mohammed-Amin Khan Medressa, the Kalta Minor minaret and the Palace of the Khan.
Pm: Enjoy lunch at Zainab’s House before visiting the Museum of Khorezm History and the prison.

Day 5: Khiva (Thur, 19 Oct)
Am: Visit the starkly magnificent desert castles, including Ayaz-Kala and Toprak-Kala, and the archaeological sites of ancient Khorezm. Ayaz-Kala is unlike other Khorezm castles as it has unfortified rural settlements – a set of residential buildings, each with a large yard, enclosed by a low brick wall and planted, apparently, with gardens and orchards at the time. Toprak-Kala is remarkable for its size and intact representation of Khorezm culture as well as artworks.
Pm: Visit a village health clinic before returning to Khiva.

Day 6: Khiva / Bukhara (Fri, 20 Oct)
Am: Take the train across the desert, crossing the River Amudarya (Oxus) to Bukhara, once Central Asia’s religious, intellectual, scientific and commercial hub.
Pm: Arrive and transfer to the hotel before a city orientation tour, including the Kosh and Ulubek Medressa, and see the synagogue.
Eve: Rooftop dinner at Minzifa café.
Day 7: Bukhara (Sat, 21 Oct)
Am: Spend the next day exploring Bukhara, which looks much as it did 200 years ago. Gaze up at the Kalon Minaret, a 47-metre tower so impressive that even Genghis Khan was moved to spare its destruction. Visit Miri Arab Medressa and the Domes of the Jewellers, Hatters and Money Changers.
Pm: Lunch is at Lab-i Hauz, a cool plaza surrounding a pool which is shaded by mulberry trees dating back four centuries. Visit the Ismail Samanid Mausoleum, the Bolo Haouz Mosque and the lovely Chor Minor.
Eve: Candlelit dinner on the hotel terrace overlooking the Kalon Minaret.

Day 8: Bukhara (Sun, 22 Oct)
Am: Visit Bukhara’s great fortress and the zindan (prison) with its notorious bug pit.
Pm: Visit the village of Afshona, the birthplace of Avicenna, and visit the Museum of Abu Ali Ibn Sino (Avicenna). The museum houses reconstructions of surgical instruments from the period. Visit the adjacent medical college and medicinal herb garden.
Eve: Dinner at the private Dostan House.

Day 9: Bukhara / Samarkand (Mon, 23 Oct)
Am: Visit the pottery centre at Gijduvan, where sixth generation potters produce needle-fine work in traditional vividly coloured floral designs. Continue to Navoi and take the train to Samarkand.
Pm: Arrive and transfer to the hotel. Visit the tomb of Tamerlane and majestic Registan Square.

Day 10: Samarkand (Tues, 24 Oct)
Am: City of myth and fable, Samarkand was founded in the 5th century BC, razed to the ground by Genghis Khan in 1220 and re-built as Tamerlane’s capital in 1370. Tamerlane’s stamp can still be seen in superb Islamic architecture, while the city of old lives on in the main bazaar. A full day in magnificent Samarkand will take you to the Ulugbek Observatory, Daniel’s Tomb and the Bibi-Khanym Mosque.
Pm: Visit a private health clinic.
Eve: Walk to the winery for wine and cognac tasting. Dinner in a local restaurant.

Am: Visit Langar village, nestled deep in the surrounding foothills, and continue to Shakre Sabz, the birthplace of Tamerlane.
Pm: Return to Samarkand and at leisure.
Eve: Dinner in a private house.

Day 12: Samarkand / Tajikistan / Samarkand (Thur, 26 Oct)
Am: Drive to Tajikistan and visit Penjikent, the old centre of the Soghdian Empire, which was abandoned suddenly at the end of the 8th century and never built over. It is still possible to walk the streets laid out much the same way as they were the day the Arabs arrived in 772 AD. Visit the archaeological site overlooking the Zarafshan Valley and the Rudaki Tajik Museum.
Pm: Have lunch and visit the local market before returning to Samarkand.

Day 13: Samarkand / Tashkent (Fri, 27 Oct)
Am: Take the high-speed train to Tashkent and check into the hotel.
Pm: At leisure in Tashkent before a farewell dinner in the evening.

Day 14: Tashkent (Sat, 28 Oct)
Pm: Depart Tashkent.
Hotels

**Tashkent - The Courtyard by Marriott**
The new Courtyard by Marriott is the first Marriott International property in Tashkent. The contemporary hotel has a convenient central location, quiet comfortable rooms, a pleasant lobby and bar, as well as good restaurants and a pool.

**Khiva - The Malika Khiva Hotel**
This simple boutique hotel is full of charm. It has an outstanding location in the Ichan Kala Fortress around a central courtyard, in the heart of old Khiva. The customer service is warm and professional.

**Bukhara - Komil Bukhara Boutique Hotel (or similar)**
This pretty hotel is set within a traditional residence and is full of character, with courtyards and charming architectural details. The rooms are well appointed and the staff are friendly and helpful. The location is in a quiet lane, a short walk from Lyab-i-Hauz.

**Samarkand - Hotel Grand Samarkand (or similar)**
This intimate and cozy hotel has attractive traditional décor and is built around a leafy, central covered courtyard. It has a pool and provides exceptionally friendly customer service.
The ground only cost of the tour (excluding international flights and transfers) is £3,228

The cost of the tour with a room to yourself is £3,690

The cost includes:
- The services of a tour leader (Dr Chantal Sargent)
- The services of a national guide
- 13 nights’ accommodation in twin-bedded rooms with private facilities in medium grade and the best available local accommodation
- Breakfast and dinner with water daily
- Water on the bus
- All cultural and professional visits
- All admission fees
- Services of specialist English speaking local guide
- All transport services bus, trains and domestic flight from Tashkent to Urgench (Khiva)
- All tips and taxes

The cost excludes:
- International flights
- Meals not mentioned
- All optional excursions, tours and visits
- Travel insurance
- Visa

Flights from the UK are available via Uzbekistan Airways (direct flights on certain days) or on Turkish Airlines via Istanbul.

‘Universally high-quality food of good quality and more than enough. Delicious and beautifully seasoned salads.’

Maureen Kendal, Uzbekistan 2022
About Us

To travel with us is to dig below the surface, revealing the deeper destination. Of course, you will visit the great historical sites; marvel at the wonders of architecture and engineering; be moved by the riches of culture and art; and experience the most spectacular landscapes in the world. What we also do is make sure that you see the country as it is today, giving you privileged access that independent travel and other tour companies rarely get close to. We give you a variety of experiences, from the sublime to the humble, in the company of intelligent, curious, like-minded people. And while we can be worthy, we also make sure that you have a lot of fun.