

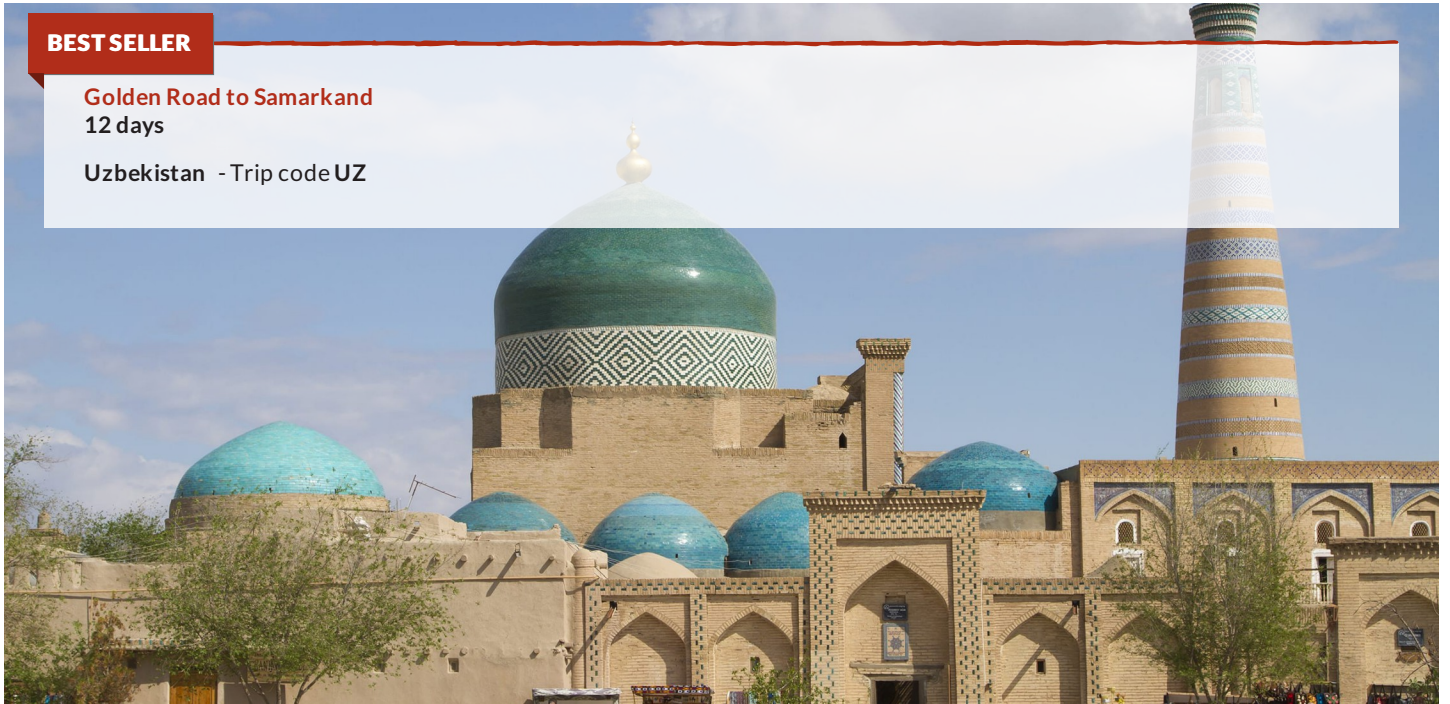
EXPLORE!

BEST SELLER

Golden Road to Samarkand

12 days

Uzbekistan - Trip code UZ



Golden Road to Samarkand

Join us on the ancient Silk Road as we travel through this remote Central Asian landscape. Highlights include the walled city of Khiva, where we discover a maze of twisted alleyways, medieval mosques and tombs. Following the old caravan route south, we see the fine Islamic architecture of Bokhara and Samarkand. Along the way we will experience the nomadic lifestyle and stay in a traditional felt yurt.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Tashkent** - Mingle with the locals in the lively Chorsu market
- ★ **Khiva** - Visit to the most romantic city on the Silk Road
- ★ **Bokhara** - Admire Islamic architecture and browse bustling bazaars
- ★ **Yurt stay** - Sample nomadic life with an overnight in a traditional felt tent
- ★ **Samarkand** - Discover the cultural gem of the Silk Road

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:

Full on

Full on paced trips are for travellers who like their holidays packed with activities and experiences, moving on quickly from place to place with lots of early starts and long, busy days. Some may find them tiring, but others get a buzz from packing their precious holiday-time as chock-a-block full of new experiences as possible!

GROUP SIZE:

12 - 18

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join trip in Tashkent

Our tour starts in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, which has been on this site for over 2000 years. Although much of it was destroyed in the earthquake of 1966, it has been rebuilt as a modern model city, with spacious avenues and ever-present fountains to cool the air. Today has been left free with no planned activities, as most international flights arrive into the city late this evening or early the following morning.



Accommodation: Hotel Uzbekistan (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Free morning. Afternoon city sightseeing; ride the flamboyant Metro

This morning has been left free to relax. After settling into our hotel, we head out with a local guide to explore Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, which has been on this site for over 2000 years. Our sightseeing tour includes various points of interest around the city, like the Independence Square, Navoi Theatre, Old City, Abu Khasim Madrassah and the Earthquake Monument. We also take a ride for 2-3 stops on the Tashkent Metro, which boasts some flamboyantly decorated stations.



Accommodation: Hotel Uzbekistan (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Fly to Urgench in western Uzbekistan and drive to the ancient city of Khiva

Today, we have a little free time to explore more of the city before our flight to Urgench in the early evening. A further 40-minute bus journey will take us to the remarkable ancient city of Khiva, which will be our base for the next two nights. The early history of this area is sketchy. We do know that, by the time the Arabs arrived in the 8th century, Khiva was one of three important cities which dominated the region. The city's strategic location on the Volga branch of the Silk Route made it a much sought-after imperial asset, with the British and Russians vying for sovereignty throughout the 19th century as part of the 'Great Game'. In 1873, it fell to the Russians as both Samarkand and Bokhara had already done. A 1970s Soviet conservation programme restored much of the city, turning it into what is effectively an open air museum.



Accommodation: Orient Star Khiva (Formerly Madrassah Khiva) (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - In Khiva, visit the Old Citadel; free afternoon

On this morning's walking tour, we may well feel like we are stepping into a scene from the film 'Arabian Nights' as we explore the majestic Old Citadel. This 12th century fortress dominated the city before a palace, harem, barracks and mosques were constructed. It is worth climbing the steps of the Dzhuma Minaret for a panoramic view of the maze of streets below. The rest of the afternoon has been left free to explore the mosques, tombs and palaces of this well-preserved city, which has hardly changed since ancient times. This evening, you may choose to explore a bit more of the city after dark, when magical moonlit silhouettes make it even more spectacular.



Accommodation: Orient Star Khiva (Formerly Madrassah Khiva) (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Scenic drive through vast plains to Bokhara

Today's drive to the fabled city of Bokhara will take up the day, but is broken up with plenty of stops as we travel through expansive plains and past old caravanserais. As home to the famous Islamic poets, Firdausi and Rudaki, Bokhara is considered by some to be the 'Bastion of Islam'. The town retains much of its Uzbek character and has more than 140 unique monuments. We will spend the next three nights here to explore this fabulous city.



Accommodation: Hotel Mosque Baland (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - In Bokhara, discover blue-tiled domes and minarets; learn about the city's history

Today's day of sightseeing starts off with a walking tour. Highlights include the Lyab-i Hauz which once supplied the city's water; the striking blue-tiled Abdul Khan madrassah and the 9th century Mghoki Arrar Mosque. We will also visit the Kalyan minaret, which, as the tallest monument in town, is known as the 'Tower of Death' because prisoners were once hurled to their death from here. In addition, we will take in the trading domes that are the most famous symbol of Bokharan architecture. This afternoon, we will drive to The Ark - a massive citadel which was used as a fortress from the 5th century until its fall to the Russians in 1920. Today it houses several small museums connected with Bokhara's history. Bokhara was the site of the imprisonment for two British soldiers during 'The Great Game' - an epic battle fought between Victorian Britain and Tsarist Russia across the vastness of Central Asia. We also plan to visit the summer palace of the Emirs of Bokhara, which is known as the 'Palace of Moon-like Stars'. Here, we will see the famous White Hall, which took 30 architects two years to construct. Finally, we will take in the Char Minar Mosque - the impressive entrance to a now-demolished madrassah, and wander the backstreets of the old town maybe stopping off at a 'chaikhana', a local tea house.



Accommodation: Hotel Mosque Baland (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Free day to explore Bokhara's sights further

Today has been left free for you to spend as you wish. You may choose to climb the 46 metre-high Kalyan minaret for stunning views over the city. Alternatively, you may like to explore the Taqi-Sarrafon market - one of the four domed bazaars in Bokhara. Used as a money exchange during the height of the Silk Road, it is now home to plenty of souvenir shops.



Accommodation: Hotel Mosque Baland (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast


DAY 8 - Drive to Yangikaskan desert camp for overnight in a yurt; optional camel ride

This morning, we will drive a short distance to Gijduvan - a town celebrated for its crafts and trade since the 10th century. Here, we will visit the famous ceramic centre. Our next stop is Karmana, where we plan to visit the 10th century Mir-Said Bakhrum Mausoleum. Heading off the main highway, we continue our journey north across the desert to Nurata. Famous for its sacred Chashma Spring, the town attracts visitors from across the Islamic World. According to legend, this healing spring, containing gold, silver and bromide, was formed by a meteorite hitting the ground. Whilst in Nurata, we plan to have lunch in a local house and see the remains of Alexander the Great's Karazy Fortress, affording excellent views of the desert landscape. This afternoon, we head to our overnight base in Yangikaskan, where we have the opportunity to go on a short optional camel ride, or simply relax and take in the remote surroundings. Tonight's desert camp accommodation is in yurts, typical of those used by the nomadic people of Central Asia. Yurts are circular dwelling structures made from felt and insulated with sheepskins, traditionally made to be portable.



Accommodation: Yangigazgan Yurt (or similar)

 Simple Yurt

 Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 9 - Drive to Samarkand; afternoon exploration of the city's monuments including Registan Square

We spend this morning driving to Samarkand. Stormed by Alexander the Great and reduced to ashes by Genghis Khan, Samarkand was nevertheless transformed into the most glittering city in Transoxiana by Tamerlane, who made it his capital in the 14th century. Even today, the monumental scale of the buildings overwhelms visitors. This afternoon, we will visit Registan, a majestic square framed on three sides by huge blue tiled madrassahs. We will also visit the Gur Emir, the gold-ceilinged tomb of Tamerlane himself.



Accommodation: Zarina Hotel (or similar)

 Standard Hotel



Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 10 - In Samarkand, discover magnificent mosques and mausoleums; free afternoon to explore further

This morning's sightseeing is accompanied by a local guide and takes us to the Shah-i-Zinda - a beautifully-tiled necropolis of tombs, mosques and mausoleums belonging to Tamerlane's family, friends and the prophet Mohammad's cousin. We will also visit the Ulug-Beg Observatory, considered to have been one of the finest observatories in the Islamic World. It was here that Ulug-Beg, the great medieval astronomer, built his gigantic sextant which enabled him to calculate the length of a year to within just 10 seconds. We see the Bibi-Khanym Mosque, once the largest in Central Asia; it was built by Tamerlane with loot from Indian campaigns and named after his favourite Mongolian wife. This afternoon has been left free to explore more of the city at your own pace. You may choose to soak up the atmosphere of the charming old town by wandering its winding, narrow alleys whilst traditionally-dressed locals perform their daily rituals. A stop-off at a tea house offers the opportunity to relax with a cup of traditional 'kokchai' tea. Alternatively, you may choose to visit ancient Afrosiab - the original site of the town in north east Samarkand, dating back to the late Stone Age.



Accommodation: Zarina Hotel (or similar)

 Standard Hotel



Single room available


 Meals Provided: Breakfast


DAY 11 - In Samarkand, free morning; afternoon high-speed train to Tashkent

Today, there is more free time for further exploration. Later this afternoon, we transfer to the train station for our modern high speed train back to Tashkent. Arriving just after 7pm, we will have time to enjoy our last evening of the tour.



Accommodation: Hotel Uzbekistan (or similar)

 Standard Hotel

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 12 - Tour ends in Tashkent

Our tour ends after breakfast this morning.

 Meals Provided: Breakfast



Why book this trip

This tour takes you on a classic journey along part of the iconic Silk Road through ancient exotic cities and epic landscapes. Not only will you learn about the history and culture of Uzbekistan but you will also spend the night in a traditional nomadic yurt, a highlight for many. Uzbekistan has been named as one of the top emerging destinations of 2015.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 11
Lunch: 1
Dinner: 1



Transport

Bus
Flight
Train



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

7 nights standard hotel
3 nights simple hotel
1 nights simple yurt

Trip information

Country information

Uzbekistan Trips

Climate

Spring and autumn are the best times to visit, when the temperatures are mild and there is the chance of occasional rains. April can bring colourful blooms to the normally barren desert landscapes, whilst summer days in the cities and desert can be very hot, when the temperatures can reach as high as 50°.

Time difference to GMT

+5

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Islam, predominantly Sunni, Eastern Orthodox

Language

Uzbek, Russian, Tajik

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

Khiva - Desert Castles: Half day trip to visit 3 Qala castles 140km from Khiva. From US\$40 per car / 2 pax, from US\$100 per minibus / 6 pax, from US\$160 per bus / 16 pax Bukhara - Hammam: US\$25 pp (40 mins) / Use of swimming pool at Hotel Asia US\$10 pp Samarkand - Day trip to Shakhrisabz, including transport, entrance fees and city tour, from US\$60 per car / 2 pax

Clothing

Light-weight natural fabrics such as cotton and linen are most suitable for the hot summers of Central Asia, it is best to avoid synthetic fabrics as temperatures can get very hot in the summer months. During spring and autumn temperatures are cooler and a good fleece or down jacket plus gloves and hat are recommended for yurt stays in Uzbekistan as the desert temperatures drop at night and a pair of thermals is good as an extra layer, or for wearing in bed. The region is traditionally Muslim so brief shorts and skirts, or clothes that are revealing or tight offend local sensibilities. Women should bring a headscarf as this may necessary for some mosque visits. Please pack a swimming costume.

Footwear

Good quality, comfortable shoes/trainers and sandals.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a daysac will be needed as you will not have access to your main luggage during the overnight Yurt stay.

Equipment

Bring sunscreen, a sunhat, water bottle and torch for the Yurt camp. An umbrella is recommended for shade.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of

the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly please allow approximately £20 for tips. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Country Information

Uzbekistan Trips

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Dinner price

£6.00 - 10.00

Beer price

£1.4

Water price

£0.7

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Sum

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Take your spending money in US\$ cash, as many bars and shops only accept hard currency (and often lack the facility to change travellers cheques). We recommend you take new (post 1990), good condition dollar bills in small denominations.

Where To Exchange

Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

ATM Availability

Very limited, do not rely upon this.

Credit Card Acceptance

Limited usually to larger outlets and restaurants.

Travellers Cheques

Not recommended.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Flight, Train

Accommodation notes

Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

The yurt camp consists of 20 traditional felt yurts, each accommodating four people. Single rooms are not available. Mattresses, pillows, linen, blankets and towels will be provided. There are 8 showers, 4 (western style) WC cabins and 2 wash basins. Each yurt is equipped with a 220v/50HZ power socket and an electric lamp. Meals will be served in either the ventilated restaurant hut or out

in the open air under shade, a campfire will be lit in the evenings. Summer temperatures (May to September) can reach 30-50 degrees during the day and around 20-25 degrees at night. During spring and autumn, the desert can be very cold at night.

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

Uzbekistan: Visas are required for all nationalities. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office. We strongly recommend that you obtain a visa that expires a day after the tour finishes to allow for flight delays. Some nationalities (not UK citizens) may be required to provide authorisation documents from the Uzbekistan authorities to support their visa application. Please contact your nearest embassy to check the requirements. If you require an authorisation letter please contact Explore as soon as possible after confirming your holiday. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure and check that your visa dates match your dates of travel.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure

your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Uzbekistan Trips

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis A. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on the need for and different prophylaxis available against malaria. The above is not an exhaustive list.

Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.
