

SILK ROAD ADVENTURE



ITINERARY

Highlights

- Persepolis: This ancient city was once the capital of the Achaemenid Empire, one of the largest empires in history.
- Isfahan: This city known for its beautiful mosques and bridges, including the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque and the Si-o-Se Pol Bridge.
- Shiraz: This city known for its gardens and poets, including Hafez and Sa'adi.
- Ashgabat: This city is the capital of Turkmenistan and known for its white marble buildings.
- Merv: This ancient city was once a major stop on the Silk Road. It is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is home to the ruins of several impressive buildings, including the minaret of Kalon.
- Khiva: This walled city considered one of the best-preserved examples of Islamic architecture in Central Asia.
- Samarkand: This city known for its beautiful mosques and madrassas, including the Registan, a square with three stunningly decorated iwans (arched gateways).
- Bukhara: This city is another UNESCO World Heritage Site and known for its Islamic architecture.



https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1fQICV-kpitKVnIDUP_yZXP_9cFVZfJE&usp=sharing

DAY 1: TEHRAN (IRAN)

Arrival in Tehran. Meet and greet your tour guide and transfer to the hotel (Early check in, upon arrival time). A full day of sightseeing in Tehran. Visit some of museums in downtown Tehran, like the **National Museum of Iran**. The national museum contains prestigious relics influential in shaping the world's culture and civilization (Closed on holy memorial ceremonies). Our next visit is the **UNESCO World Heritage Site Golestan Palace**, (the Rose Garden Palace), one of the oldest historic monuments belonging to a group of royal buildings in Tehran & Tehran traditional **grand bazaar**. (closed on Fridays and Thursday afternoon). Overnight in Tehran.

DAY 2: TEHRAN – ISFAHAN

Breakfast at the hotel. Drive to the famous city of Isfahan as Safavid shining capital with countless attractions is ahead of us today. At the city's heart stands **UNESCO-listed Naqsh-e Jahan Square** (Meidan Emam) flanked by azure-tiled mosques, Outstanding **Sheikh Lotf-ol- lah and Imam Mosques, Ali Qapu palace** and the entrance to a vast bazaar. Fountains dance where once polo players pranced to entertain Safavid Ruler, Shah Abbas. Delve into **traditional bazaar** with eye-catching handicrafts gives you the opportunity to get closer to Iranian culture. Stroll through **Khaju** and **Si-o-se pol historical bridges** at night make you ready for your visits tomorrow. Overnight in Esfahan.

DAY 3: ISFAHAN- YAZD

Breakfast at the hotel. Drive to Yazd, Full day sightseeing in Yazd, the old city with interesting desert architecture and amazing Wind Towers, the center for Iran's small Zoroastrian community. On this day you will visit **one of the two Zoroastrian abandoned Towers of Silence (Dakhma)**, dating back to the 18th-century, where until some 40-50 years ago the dead were carried and left to decompose and be devoured by birds; and the active **Zoroastrian Fire Temple**, the fire of which has been burning for about 1500 years. Among Yazd's Islamic sites is the **Friday Mosque (1324 A.D.)**, with the highest portal and minarets in Iran and **Amir Chakhmagh Ensemble, Fahaadan old Neighborhood, Zeyaeyeh School** (Aleksandra Prison) and **Water Museum**. Overnight in Yazd.

DAY 4: YAZD- PASARGADAE- PERSEPOLIS- SHIRAZ

Breakfast at the hotel. Drive to Shiraz. In route Visit the most important historical sites of Iranian civilization on the road, dating back to 2500 years ago, **Pasargadae** , the **tomb of Cyrus the great** , then we will visit **Magnificent Persepolis (Takht -e Jamshid)** , the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenes Empire that tells you the story of one of the world's most sophisticated civilizations. Overnight in Shiraz.

DAY 5: SHIRAZ

Breakfast at the hotel. Full day sightseeing of Shiraz, including **Nasir Ol-Mulk Mosque, Narenjestan Garden- Qavam House, Zinat Ol Molk, Vakil Complex (Mosque, Bath, Bazar), Karimkhani Citadel and Sa'adi Tomb (the great Iranian poet)**. Overnight in Shiraz.

DAY 6: SHIRAZ – MASHHAD

Breakfast at the hotel. Transfer to the airport of Shiraz and fly to Mashhad. Half day city tour of Mashhad, **Reza traditional bazaar, Goharshad Mosque** , awhile excursion of **Shandiz village** , visit the beauty of this village and eat delicious traditional Dinner (If time allows). Overnight in Mashhad.

DAY 7: MASHHAD – BAJGIRAN – ASHGABAT (TURKMENISTAN)

Breakfast at the hotel. Transfer to Iranian – Turkmen border “Bajgiran”. Turkmen guide will pick-up guests from crossing border and drive to Ashgabat. Transfer to hotel. Free time. You will have Ashgabat city tour. In 2013 the Guinness Book of Records named Ashgabat “white marbled city” – here you can see the biggest number of structures in the world made out of the white marble. You will see **Presidential Palace, Ruhyyet Palace, Wedding Palace, modern “Yildyz” Hotel, Ferris Wheel, Constitution Monument, Arch of Neutrality, Monument and park of Independence, Ertogrul Gazy Mosque, Ashgabat Sports and Housing facilities, the Earthquake and victims of WWII Monuments**. Overnight in Ashgabat.

DAY 8: ASHGABAT – DARWAZA - ASHGABAT

Breakfast at the hotel. Later drive to visit **Horse hippodrome** to see a national proud of Turkmen people - Akhalteke horses, the nicest horses in the world. 5000 years ago, Turkmen begin breed Akhalteke horses. The World's unique breed was never mixed with other breeds. Such illustrious Emperors like Alexander the Great, Darius I desired to own Akhalteke horses. Per superstition, every sick person who touches an Akhalteke horse will get well soon. Then drive to **Darwaza burning Gas Crater** (268km) dubbed by locals as "The Door to Hell". The Darwaza area is rich in natural gas. While drilling in 1971, Soviet geologists tapped into a cavern filled with natural gas. The ground beneath the drilling rig collapsed, leaving a large hole with a diameter of 70 meters. To avoid poisonous gas discharge, it was decided the best solution was to burn it off. Geologists had hoped the fire would use all the fuel in a matter of days, but the gas is still burning today. In the evening, watch the spectacular and fascinating view of the gas crater. Drive back to Ashgabat. Overnight in Ashgabat.

DAY 9: ASHGABAT – MARY – MERV

Breakfast at the hotel. Morning drive to Mary. You also see ruins of **Seyitjemaladdin mosque** in Anau. The mosque was built in 1456, when Abu-ibn-Kasim Baber Bahadurkhan ruled in Khorasan (1446-1457). Construction of the mosque was financed by Bahadurkhan's vizier, Muhammed Hudaidot, who also selected a site of construction—near the grave of his father, sheikh Jemaleddin, a native of Anau. The square central hall (with the sides of 10.5 meters) was crowned with a dome. In later periods, the Seyit-Jemaleddin mosque was partially reconstructed. By the nineteenth century, the subsidence of land had already damaged the building heavily, and during the 1948 Ashgabat earthquake it was destroyed completely. Now, only lower parts of the portal and some fragments of the walls are extant. On the way visit **Abiwerd** that was once an important trading town of North Khorasan. It was a key link on the Great Silk Road between Nisa and Merv, and also enjoyed ties in Nishapur, across Kopetdag Mountains to the south. Drive to Merv to explore **ancient Merv** – “Queen of the world”, was one of the most important capitals of Islam along with Baghdad, Cairo and Damascus. Sightseeing of ancient Merv includes Greater Kyz Gala & Lesser Kyz Gala (VI-VII), Complex of Askhabs (VIII-XIV), Erk Gala (VI BC), Gyaur Gala (IV BC), Hoja Yusup Hamadani complex, Sultan Sanjar mausoleum, Muhamed Ibn Zeid mausoleum. Overnight in Mary.

DAY 10: MARY – FARAP – BUKHARA (UZBEKISTAN)

Early breakfast at the hotel. Drive to Farap border to follow our route in Uzbekistan. Our driver will wait you at Alat crossing border point with sign “Name guest”. He will pick-up guests from crossing border and drive to Bukhara (85 km, 1:30 hours). Check in at the hotel. Lunch. A guide will meet you at hotel in Bukhara, which is a starting point of the city tour. Take a walking sightseeing tour with a guide in historic center of Bukhara which has been listed by **UNESCO as a World Heritage Site**. Its historic center has been preserved very well for the last two centuries. It therefore gives a great glimpse into a medieval Central Asian Muslim city filled with ancient religious architecture. Visit **Lyabi-Khauz Ensemble, Magoki-Attori Mosque, Chor-Minor Madrasah, trade domes, Kalyan Minaret, Kalyan Mosque and Miri-Arab Madrasah, Ulugbek and Abdulazizkhan madrasahs, Ark Fortress, Bolo-Khauz Mosque, Ismail Samani and Chashma-Ayub** mausoleums. Free time in the evening. Overnight in Bukhara.

DAY 11: BUKHARA - GIJDUVAN - SAMARKAND

Breakfast at the hotel. In the morning depart Bukhara and drive to Samarkand (280 km, 4 h*). On the way you will have stop: **Gijduvan pottery masters workshop** . Since ancient times Gijduvan has been known as a craft and trade center. The incredibly beautiful and truly unique ceramics is a special pride of the town. Gijduvan ceramics school has its deep roots. The skills have been passed from father to son from generation to generation. Participate in a master class and have lunch. In the afternoon continue driving to Samarkand. Check-in to the hotel. Free time. Overnight in Samarkand.

DAY 12: SAMARKAND - TASHKENT

Breakfast at the hotel. Explore the one of the pearls of Central Asian cities. Samarkand is one of the oldest cities in Central Asia. Its geographic location in the center of major trade routes attracted a lot of travelers and invaders. Through the course of its history, it has been ruled by Persians, Greeks, Turks, Mongols, Chinese, and Russians. Half a dozen religions have found a home here. The tour begins with a visit to **Ulughbek Observatory** , where part of the sextant from the 15th century is preserved. Continue to **Shakhi-Zinda Necropolis and remains of Bibi-Khanum Mosque** . Walking through an alley with souvenir shops, you will reach the spectacular **Registan Square** which has been the center of Samarkand for many centuries. The last point of interest to be visited is **Gur-Emir Mausoleum** – the final resting place of Timur, a great emperor. Late in the afternoon transfer to railway station to take the high-speed Afrosiyob train departing at 17:28 to Tashkent (journey time 2 h 10 min). Pick-up from Tashkent railway station at 19:40 and transfer to the hotel for overnight.

DAY 13: TASHKENT

Transfer to the International airport of Tashkent for flight to home.

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| Service includes: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter of Invitation in Turkmenistan • Accommodation in DBL/Twin room • 01-night early check in, upon arrival (Tehran) • Escort English speaking guide service • Transportation as per program per AC regular road vehicles • Business/Economy-class ticket for train Samarkand-Tashkent as per option (on rare occasions when the high-speed train is unavailable, we will replace it with the most-comfortable class of regular train) • Flight ticket: Shiraz - Mashhad • Meals: BF at hotel, BBQ dinner at Darvaza • 1,5 L water per person per day • Travel Tax: 2 usd per person per night • Entrance fee: per program |
| Service does not include: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International flights • Cost of Turkmen visa & border fees (70 – 100 USD) • Visa stamp Fee, In Iran's abroad embassy or consuls • Tips for guide and driver • Medical insurance • Consular fees for Uzbekistan tourist visa • Services not shown in the program • Payment for photo and video • Meals: L,D |

Notes:

1. *Due to the changing conditions of some roads & traffic there might take slightly more or less time for driving than mentioned driving time in the program*
2. *Flight times are subject to be change by Turkmenistan Airlines, hand language 5kg, baggage 20kg per person, if the baggage overweight you pay between 2-3\$ per kg).*
3. *If the traveler stays more than 3 working days in Turkmenistan, travel agency will register and stamp on your passport in a local Tourist Board.*
4. *An express PCR test for Covid-19 will be taken upon arrival. It costs between 35-45 USD.*
5. *Breakfast box in case of very early morning departures.*