

Uzbekistan Summer Tour August 1st - August 10th 2022



INTRODUCTION:

Uzbekistan has a lot to offer – you'll have heard about some pretty amazing places like the Registan, maybe Bibi Khanum's mosque, and the old cities of Khiva and Bukhara. We do all of them. Then there are some of the slightly weirder places like Nukus and the Aral Sea, and believe it or not, there's more to do in the ancient cities than just the famous ancient sites too, like a quirky fashion show! And then we've got a couple of really cool SAIGA specials – the second largest solar furnace in the world, where you'll learn all about the world of solar furnaces, and an almost abandoned formerly closed Soviet mining town, where we'll spend the afternoon exploring and speaking to the few locals that are left before staying the night in a nearby sanatorium.

HIGHLIGHTS:

Get lost in the ancient laneways of **Bukhara**

See the world's worse man-made disaster at the **Aral Sea**

Eat the national dish Plov at the **Plov Centre in Tashkent**

Explore the formerly closed research town of **Yangiabad**

Excited? Come with SAIGA to Uzbekistan

Travel to the 'Stans and beyond

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Tour Details:

DATES: August 1st - August 10th 2022

PRICE: \$1495 USD (twin share),
Single Supplement \$300 USD

START: Samarqand, Uzbekistan

FINISH: Tashkent, Uzbekistan



INCLUSIONS:

- Accommodation in twin share at roughly 3 star hotels/guesthouses, breakfast included
- Transport as per itinerary
- Entrance fees to most sites (as per itinerary)
- SAIGA guide and local guides

EXCLUSIONS:

- Visa fees if necessary
- Visa support if necessary
- Some activities, eg. treatments at sanatorium (as per itinerary)
- Meals other than breakfast
- Transport to and from the start and end of tour
- Personal expenses such as souvenirs or any optional activities
- PCR Tests and any other COVID related expenses

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Day 1	Samarqand
Day 2	Samarqand
Day 3	Samarqand - Bukhara
Day 4	Bukhara - Khiva
Day 5	Khiva - Nukus
Day 6	Nukus - Aral Sea
Day 7	Aral Sea - Nukus - Tashkent
Day 8	Tashkent - Yangiabad
Day 9	Yangiabad - Parkent - Tashkent
Day 10	Tashkent - End of Tour

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Day 1: Samarqand

- Today we'll meet at our hotel in the afternoon.
- Once known as the Pearl of the Muslim World, Samarqand is a city synonymous with the Silk Road. Full of towering minarets, shimmering domes and home to a splendid technicolour bazaar, it is the oldest continuously inhabited city in Central Asia.
- We'll start our time in Samarqand with a visit to the famous and spectacular Registan Square which is flanked by three beautifully decorated, sparkling blue mosaic madrassas. Once the city's commercial centre, Registan Square is modern Samarqand's centre piece.
- Optional wine tasting at the Khovrenko Winery, a small local wine factory with adjoining museum.

Day 2: Samarqand

- Today we will explore the main sites of Samarqand. Having already visited the Registan the day before, we'll start today's tour with a walk through the centre of town.
- Having died in September 2016, Islam Karimov, the First President of Uzbekistan, now has his mausoleum on the newly renamed Islam Karimov Street.
- Winding through the narrow streets of the old city, we'll stop at a particularly unique synagogue. Totally unrecognisable from the outside, it looks like any of the typical houses on either side, but inside is a bizarre and unique mixture of Uzbek and Jewish décor.
- We'll also pay visits to Bibi Khanum Mosque, Siyab Bazaar, and the grave of St. Daniel which is said to grow a foot in length every ten years.
- Visit Romanenko House, a place that is difficult to describe. This small suburban house has been transformed into a completely unique textile workshop where thirty men and women redesign ancient Central Asian clothing into colourful, modern designs.

Day 3: Samarqand - Bukhara

- Catch the train to Bukhara in the morning, and then we'll take a walking tour of the old town, including Lyabi Hauz Square, Bolo-Hauz Mosque, and the elegant blue-tiled Ulughbek Madrasa.
- On your way in and out of town you won't be able to miss a huge structure that looks like a giant ark. Known as the Ancient Ark Fortress, this was the Palace of Bukhara's Emirs, and parts of it are still open for us to visit.
- In the evening we'll sit by the lake, chilling out and taking it all in over a cold drink and a chat.



Day 4: Bukhara - Khiva

- You might like to get up for a sunrise view over Bukhara. With minarets a-plenty, there are loads of great viewing points, and the sunrise can be quite spectacular over the old city.
- After breakfast, we'll leave for Khiva, stopping for lunch at a roadside restaurant along the way.
- Arriving in Khiva in the afternoon, you might like to start exploring yourself. It's a very compact old town, so you can easily walk around and get a really good feel for the place.

Day 5: Khiva - Nukus

- In the morning we'll take a walking tour of Khiva, before driving to Nukus, the capital of the Republic of Karakalpakstan.
- In the afternoon we'll visit the Museum of Savitskiy. The Karakalpakstan State Museum of Art hosts the world's second largest collection of Russian avant garde art (after the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg). Savitskiy himself went to great lengths to save prohibited pieces of art during the Soviet Union, and amazingly you can see some of them now in this museum.

Day 6: Aral Sea

- Departure from Nukus first thing in the morning to drive towards the Aral Sea. Stopping at some Silk Road ruins and a canyon on the way, we'll drive up on to the Usturt Plateau.
- Picnic lunch at a ruined Soviet gulag, near the edge of one of the small parts of the remaining sea.
- Arriving at the main part of the sea, if you're game, you can go for a swim. There used to be 10mg of salt per litre in the sea, but now with 160g (yes, grams, not miligrams, so 16,000 times more!) it's not far off the Dead Sea (180g/l), and now you can easily float on top of the water. That's if you can bring yourself to get to the water, past all the oil and grime that's collected at the side of the sea.
- We'll spend the night in a yurt camp near the shore, from where you can watch the sun set over the rapidly disappearing sea.

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Day 7: Aral Sea - Nukus - Tashkent

- You can wake up early to see the sun rise over the water, otherwise it's breakfast then on to Moynak village, which used to be a thriving coastal town, but is now a disheveled and quiet desert town, most famous now for the ship cemetery.
- Ships lay abandoned on the old seabed as the sea receded. A lot of them were removed and destroyed, supposedly so the metal could be recycled, but a dozen or so of them were saved and are now in Moynak.
- Back in Nukus in the early evening to fly to Tashkent.
- There will have been various points during the trip where you've felt like you've returned to civilisation to different extents – arriving in Osh after Song Kol and Jalalabad, then Dushanbe after the Pamirs, Samarqand after Khoja Obigarm, but Tashkent really is the big smoke, and it will be quite exciting to get there.

Day 8: Tashkent - Yangiabad

- Our first stop in Tashkent will be the famous Chorsu Bazaar, with its iconic blue dome that's now home to meat, dairy and dried fruits. Exploring the stalls you'll learn about traditional bread-making methods, local remedies for everything including of course virility issues, and how Uzbek babies are taught to go to the toilet.
- Take a walk from Independence Square, formerly Lenin Square, through the park and past the statue of Amir Timur. Stop and browse in a small market in the park, full of old Soviet trinkets and sit under a shady pagoda for a cold drink or ice cream.
- Leaving Tashkent again, we'll drive into the mountains to visit the town of Yangiabad. A closed town during the Soviet Union, not even appearing on maps, it was built as a mining town where exiles were sent. Once home to about 10,000 people, the population is now a little over 300, and noone pays them much attention. We'll spend the afternoon wandering the streets, peeking into abandoned buildings and listening to stories from locals.
- We'll spend the night at a nearby Soviet “resort”. If it's hot you can go for a swim in the river, or if you just want to relax, we might be able to find the massage lady.

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Day 9: Yangiabad - Parkent - Tashkent

- Heading back towards Tashkent, we'll drive to Parkent, where we've been granted permission to visit a spectacular example of Soviet technology and architecture – the solar furnace. Still functioning, though never really having managed to fulfil its purpose, it's not open to the public.
- Return to Tashkent just in time for lunch. You'll probably have tried plov by now, but there's no better place to have it than at the Plov Centre. This gigantic hall, decorated as if for a wedding in the 1980s, is set up for large numbers of people to eat plov in. Prepared just outside by an army of Uzbeks, it is some pretty good plov, but more than that, it is an exceptionally unique experience.
- Go to Tashkent TV Tower for fabulous views of the city.
- Visit Tashkent Land, Central Asia's answer to Disneyland. With its faded welcome sign, crumbling gift shop and creaky rides, this is another step back in time. Most tourists don't make it to this gem of Soviet infrastructure, but we just can't resist it. If you're really game you can try out the “Boomerang” rollercoaster, or if you'd like something a bit more relaxing you can take a ride on the “African tour”, a boat trip through the jungleland.
- Next we'll visit the Museum of Railway Techniques'. This outdoor museum is full of all sorts of old locomotives, and they don't mind us climbing all over them. We can even take a little train ride around the train museum. You don't have to be a train lover to enjoy this charming museum.

Day 10: Tashkent - End of Tour

- Today we finish our tour of Uzbekistan.
- We'll organise a transfer to the airport for you.
- Uzbekistan is really the heart of Central Asia and is a great spring board to the other 'Stans. Please let us know if you want to continue your Central Asian adventure.