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# Tour Notes

Discovering Uzbekistan by Train

Tour Duration – 11 Days



## Tour Rating

Fitness ●●●○○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●○○ | Culture ●●●●○ | History ●●●●● | Wildlife ○○○○○

## Tour Pace

Moderate

## Tour Highlights

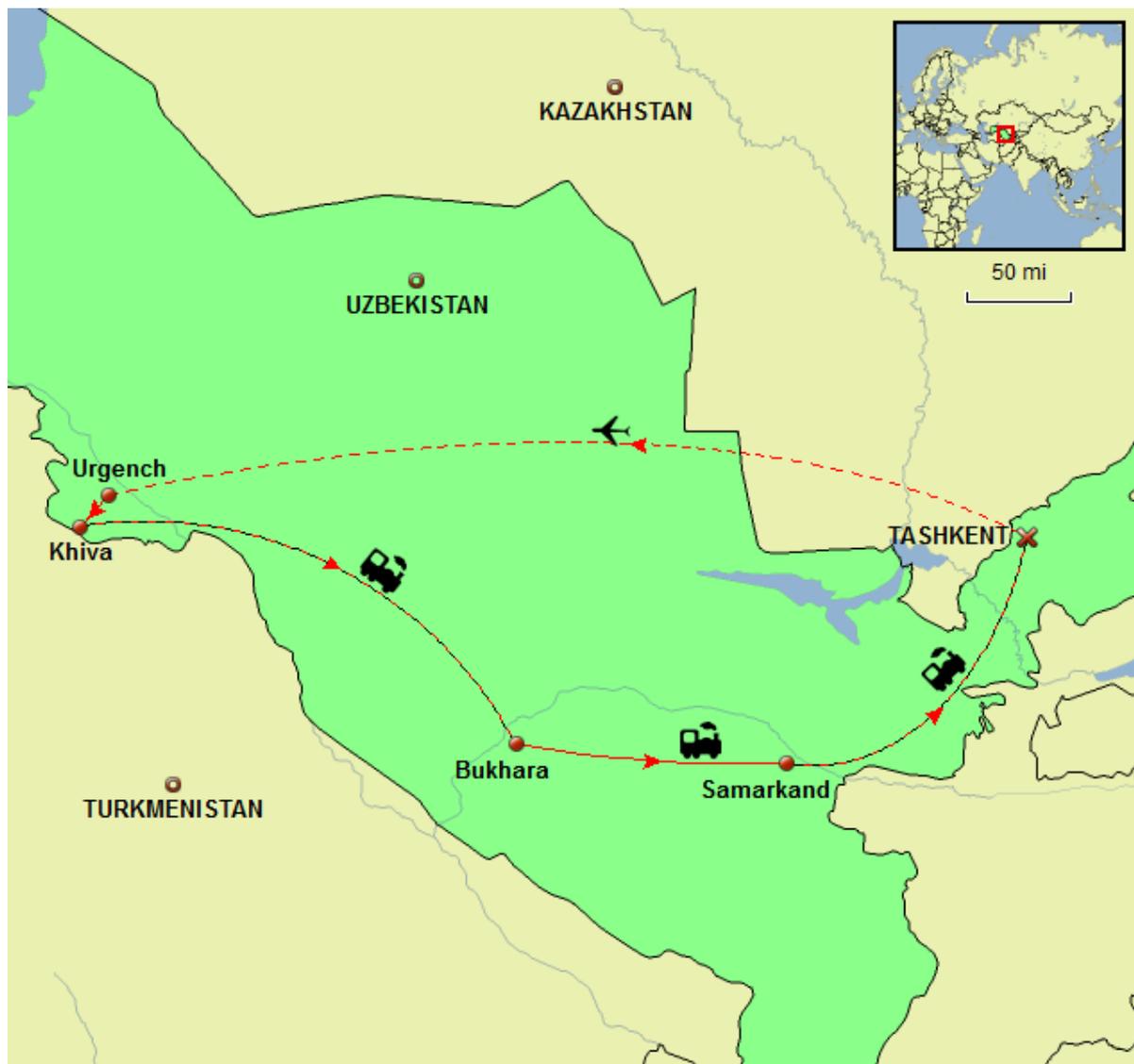
- ✓ Immerse yourself in the splendour of the Museum City of Khiva (UNESCO)
- ✓ Explore the superbly preserved old quarter of Bukhara (UNESCO)
- ✓ Observe the stunning architecture of Samarkand, in particular the Registan Square (UNESCO)
- ✓ Enjoy the comfort of travelling by train through Uzbekistan
- ✓ An exhilarating array of ancient cities and architecture





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## Tour Map Discovering Uzbekistan by Train



### Tour Essentials

<b>Accommodation:</b>	Comfortable hotels with private bathrooms
<b>Included Meals:</b>	Daily breakfast included except for Day 1. No other meals included.
<b>Group Size:</b>	Private tour
<b>Start Point:</b>	Tashkent
<b>End Point:</b>	Tashkent
<b>Transport:</b>	Private vehicle, internal flight and train
<b>Country Visited:</b>	Uzbekistan



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### Discovering Uzbekistan by Train

*The Silk Road cities of Tashkent, Samarkand, and the Khanates of Bukhara, Khiva are all names that have resonated through the centuries, heavy with exoticism and remoteness. It then may be surprising to know that many are now linked by comfortable rail links. After exploring Tashkent, take the only domestic flight on the itinerary to the northern outpost of Urgench and a visit to the stunningly preserved inner town of Khiva. Then travel in comfort by train to Bukhara and Samarkand and revel in a plethora of exquisite architecture, and immerse in the incredible depth of history of the fabled Silk Road. It is difficult to be unmoved by beauty inherent in the design and execution of mosques, minarets, mausoleums and madrassas. Uzbekistan is home to an exhilarating array of architecture and ancient cities, the unrivalled showstopper of Central Asia.*

### Tour itinerary notes

The day-by-day itinerary as printed below is an exemplar and, upon request, can have a large degree of flexibility built in. This may include additional side excursions, stop-offs en route or indeed further days to visit other sites. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested and on occasions alternative accommodation, of a similar standard to that named below, might be used.

### Tour Guide

Our guides are a key strength, chosen for their knowledge of and passion for the areas in which they work. All of our guides are carefully hand-picked, and are not just passing through these countries, but are usually locally born. Unlike some companies it should be noted we do not send a guide or tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations in the UK as we have every confidence in our locally appointed representative who is responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. On this tour it cannot be guaranteed that you will have the same guide throughout the entire duration of the tour.

## Itinerary

### Day 1: Arrival in Tashkent

On arrival in Tashkent transfer to your centrally located hotel accommodation. The rest of the day will be at leisure with no guided activities. Overnight Navruz Hotel or similar.

### Tashkent

Uzbekistan's capital displays its Silk Road heritage even today. An ancient city dating back 2000 years it is the largest in Central Asia and probably it's most cosmopolitan. Although much of it has been rebuilt following an earthquake in the 1960s, its old quarters still retain their charm with narrow streets and 500 year old mosques, medressas and other religious buildings. Tashkent has always been a centre of commerce and trading links established with Russia made it wealthy during the Middle Ages. In the middle of the 19th century it was a focus of rivalry between the Emir of Bukhara and the city of Khokand to which Tashkent paid tribute. Seizing the opportunity to take advantage of the regional turmoil, the Russian army was able to gain control of Tashkent, bringing it under the Tsar's rule in a gradual process of imperial expansion throughout Central Asia. Tashkent became the capital of Russian Turkestan and attracted great numbers of immigrants – today there are sizeable Russian and Korean communities within the city.

### Day 2: Tashkent

Spend the day exploring Old Tashkent, including the impressive Khast Imam Square, the spiritual heart of the city where the Telyashayakh Mosque houses the Uthman Koran, said to be the world's oldest. Afterwards there will be time to wander through Chorsu Bazaar, the largest farmer's market in Tashkent, filled with the heady smell of spices. Also visit Temur Square, the oldest public park in Tashkent. Overnight Navruz Hotel or similar. (B)



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**Note – On certain days it is also possible to take a sleeper train from Tashkent to Khiva. If you would prefer to take this option then please let us know at the time of your enquiry.**

### **Day 3: Tashkent – Urgench - Khiva** (Approximate driving time today: two hours)

This morning we head to the airport for a flight to Urgench in the North East of the country. On arrival you will be transferred by a driver to the ancient khanate of Khiva where the rest of the day will be at leisure for you to start to explore independently. Overnight Malika Khiva Hotel or similar. (B)

### **Khiva**

Khiva is one of the true highlights of this astounding region – its ancient monuments have been superbly preserved and its historic centre contains more than fifty of them, along with around 250 old houses dating back to the 18th and 19th centuries. The inner town, or Ichan Qala, is encircled by 18th century mud walls and holds the cream of Khiva's sites, a collection of remarkable palaces, mosques and mausoleums capped with bright blue domes and bedecked with stunning decoration. Minarets poke into the sky while its graceful archways betray links with Moghul India, and it is easy to visualise what this city once looked like when it was one of the most important in the region. Khiva was once an independent khanate renowned as a centre of the slave trade – raiders from Khiva would set off to vulnerable communities bringing back slaves to live in tortuous conditions, or be sold to end up somewhere else along the Silk Road. Peter the Great first sought to bring Khiva under his control in 1717, but it was not to be – Russian forces were tricked and then massacred, humiliating the Tsar. In following years, a number of attempts were made to free Russian slaves and take Khiva but it was not until 1873 that it fell.

### **Day 4: Khiva**

Today there's a full day guided city tour of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Ichan Kala, or inner town. Highlights include the 18th century Juma Mosque where 213 black elm pillars support the prayer hall's roof, and the later 20th century Islam Khoja Minaret whose colourful stripes reach almost 57 metres. Afterward, explore the 12th century Kunya Ark, a fortified residence of Khiva's khans, and its watchtower. Elsewhere, in the tiled courtyard of the 18th century Pakhlavan Mahmud Mausoleum, there's time to appreciate what must be one of the city's most beautiful retreats. Later visit the bazaar and a one of Khiva's many historic caravanserais. Overnight Malika Khiva Hotel or similar. (B)

### **Day 5: Khiva- Bukhara by train** (Approx. train journey time is 5.5 hours)

After breakfast transfer to the train station for the journey to Bukhara, where the city's historic centre is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. On arrival you will be transferred to your hotel and the remaining time today will be at your own leisure. Overnight Minzifa Hotel or similar. (B)

**Note – The train operates on Tuesday, Friday and Sunday at the time of writing. Refreshments are available on the trains but you may wish to stock up in Khiva.**

### **Bukhara (UNESCO)**

Mighty Bukhara is renowned as the holiest of Central Asia's cities and is said to have been in existence when Alexander the Great passed through the region, more than two thousand years ago. Its old centre is exceptionally well preserved and contains old medressahs and mosques, ancient minarets and protected buildings dating back as far as the 10th century. The independent khanate of Bukhara was one of the focal points of the 'Great Game' – a period of imperial rivalry between Britain and Russia in the 18th and 19th centuries that saw each seek to expand their influence. The British sent Alexander Burnes to the city in 1832 in an attempt to bring the city into their sphere of influence, but this was inconclusive and although Burnes was treated well, later emissaries were to fare far worse – two English officers were kept captive there for some time before eventually being executed in Bukhara's Registan square.



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### **Day 6: Bukhara (UNESCO)**

Bukhara is one of the region's most spectacular cities, where a superbly preserved old quarter lends itself to exploration on foot. Highlights of today's city tour include the spectacular 12th century Kalyan Minaret, one of the defining symbols of Bukhara and once the tallest building in Central Asia, and the three domed bazaars; the Jewellers' Bazaar, the Cap Makers' Bazaar and the Moneychangers' Bazaar. Explore the emphatic bastions of the Ark fortress, a royal town within a town and home to the city's khans for over a millennium. Finally, just outside the historic centre if time allows, observe the Samanid Mausoleum, an exceptional example of early Islamic architecture, completed in 905 AD. Overnight Minzifa Hotel or similar. (B)

### **Day 7: Bukhara (UNESCO)**

A further day of exploration awaits you in this remarkable museum city. Overnight Minzifa Hotel or similar. (B)

### **Day 8: Bukhara- Samarkand by train (Approx. train journey time: two hours)**

Spend this morning at leisure in Bukhara before boarding a train around mid-afternoon on the comfortable and modern high speed *Afrosiyob* service to the legendary city of Samarkand, where on arrival in the evening you will be transferred to your centrally located hotel. Overnight Malika Hotel or similar. (B)

### **Day 9: Samarkand (UNESCO)**

Samarkand has a spectacular collection of architecture, the most famous of which are found at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Registan. Early western travellers wrote extensively of Samarkand's remarkable mosques, madrassas and mausoleums, all elaborately decorated by blue ceramic tiles and traditional Islamic art. Nearby, at Gur-e-Amire, lies the 15th century tomb of Amir Timur, also known as Tamerlane, one of the most effective military leaders in history, and his grandson, Ulugh Beg a visionary astronomer. Elsewhere, after admiring the impressive Bibi Khanym mosque continue to the extensive Siab Market. This afternoon visit Shakh-i Zinda, a collection of richly tiled mausoleums for rulers and nobles of Samarkand. The site's name translates to Living King and refers to an original shrine thought to be the grave of Qusam ibn- Abbas, a cousin of the prophet Muhammad. Overnight Malika Hotel or similar. (B)

### **Samarkand**

Samarkand is perhaps the most atmospheric of all of Uzbekistan's and the whole region's cities, a glorious collection of immaculately preserved monuments that reach their climax in the superb Registan square, renowned as the finest architectural ensemble in Central Asia. Founded in the 8th century BC by the Persians, Samarkand has always been an important centre for the various forces passing through and has at times been controlled by Arabs, Sogdians and the armies of Alexander the Great. It was Timur who left the greatest mark on the city, designating it as his capital and embarking on a program of building that was continued after his death to produce one of the most startling sights in Asia. Vivid blue capped minarets jostle for space with tiled medressas, enormous arched gateways decorated with Islamic art and numerous mosques and mausoleums of the great and the good, as well as a marvellous observatory built by the ruler and astronomer Ulughbek. Samarkand takes your breath away – there is no other place like it.

### **Day 10: Samarkand at leisure – Train to Tashkent (Approx. train journey time 2.5 hours)**

Today is at leisure for you to explore further the exquisite delights of Samarkand independently before transferring to the station for a late afternoon on the comfortable and high speed *Afrosiyob* service to Tashkent. On arrival you will be transferred to the hotel. Overnight Navruz Hotel or similar. (B)

### **Day 11: Departure from Tashkent**

The tour ends with a transfer to the airport to connect with your onward flight. (B)



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# Tour Inclusions/Exclusions

## Tour Inclusions:

Arrival and departure transfers  
Domestic flight Tashkent to Urgench  
Train journeys as mentioned in the itinerary  
Private vehicle transport where required  
All accommodation as per itinerary – other properties can be booked/requested  
Services of English-speaking local guides  
Daily breakfast except on Day 1  
Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary

## Excluded:

International flights  
Any airport taxes  
Travel Insurance  
Drinks  
Tips  
Items of a personal nature  
Meals other than daily breakfast

# Important Information

## Foreign Office Travel Warnings

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At present there are no warnings against travel to Uzbekistan. Please feel free to contact us should you have any specific concerns or would like to know in detail what measures are being taken to ensure visits remain trouble free and without incident.

It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

## Accommodation and Meals

### Hotel Check-in Times

As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 2pm. Please note that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore please advise us if you would like to ensure that your room is available for an earlier arrival. This is particularly relevant on the first day of the tour and for early morning arrivals. One option is to pre-book and pay for an extra night at the beginning of your tour which will guarantee your accommodation is available irrespective of what time you arrive. Please contact us for information and costs.

If you are arriving early or before the start date of the tour and would like to organise some extra arrangements please contact us.





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### Accommodation Rating

On this tour you can expect accommodation to be comfortable small-scale hotels and you can expect rooms to be en-suite, with private bathroom. In general you will find your hotel has a restaurant and/or bar.

We welcome solo travellers and single rooms will be allocated subject to the applicable tour supplement. Please note that on occasions you may not always be allocated a double or twin room, as some hotels have designated single rooms. These may be smaller in size. However, the supplement payable takes this into consideration.

### Smoking

A ban on smoking in public places has been introduced in Uzbekistan and it is wise to adhere to it.

### Food & Drinks

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D). Please note that lunch may be a picnic. Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.

### Dietary Requirements

If you have any special dietary requirements you must notify us at the time of booking. While we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.

### Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

### Food

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.

Lunch \$4-8 / Dinner \$8-10

### Drinks

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Bottle of Beer \$2-3 / Water (Large bottle 1.5 L) \$1

### Tipping – Guide and Drivers

Tipping is common practise in Central Asia. If your local guide has been helpful then you could think about tipping. If you are travelling on our group tour, a reasonable amount to allow would be around \$3-4 per person per day for the guides and around \$2 per person per day for the driver.

### Foreign Exchange

**ATM Availability:** ATM machines are not widely available

**Credit and Debit Card Acceptance:** Cards are not widely accepted

**Local Currency:** The currency in Uzbekistan is the Som.

**Recommended Currency for Exchange:** US dollars – these should be crisp and free from any marks as many places will not accept them otherwise

**Where to Exchange:** Your guide will advise you



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### **Joining your Tour Flight Information**

Our advertised prices do not include the cost of international flights. Please contact us if you would like a quotation to book a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### **Joining your Tour Abroad**

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive a free airport transfer, both on arrival and departure. In order that the transfer can be arranged please ensure that you advise us of your flight information once available. Please advise the date, time and flight number for your arrival/departure. If we have not been advised of this information at least 2 weeks before travel, then you will be required to make your own way to the hotel on Day 1 of your tour.

### **Travel Insurance**

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance, the cost of which is not included in the price of the tour. 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, and must be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

### **Visa Information**

Many nationalities including UK, no longer require a visa to enter Uzbekistan for visits of up to 30 days. Please check the website for the details <http://www.uzbekembassy.org/>.

US citizens can obtain an e-visa for stays of up to 30 days which allows two or more entries for an additional fee. Please check the website for the details [www.e-visa.gov.uz](http://www.e-visa.gov.uz).

These guidelines can change at any time and you should check with your nearest embassies.

### **Passports**

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after your date of return to your country. We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities. In addition certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities.

For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country's embassy or consulate. Alternatively UK citizens can visit [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)

### **Vaccinations & Protection**

We strongly recommend that you contact your doctor's surgery or a specialist travel clinic for up-to-date information and advice regarding the necessary vaccinations. For a visit of less than one month, almost certainly you will be advised to have immunisations against the following: Diphtheria and Tetanus, Hepatitis A, Typhoid and Meningitis.

It is **VERY IMPORTANT** that you are aware that any form of pills and medication may be carefully scrutinised on arrival in Uzbekistan. If you are travelling with prescribed medication you should take a letter from your doctor and a prescription with you, which make it clear that you are legally permitted to take the items- this also applies to items such as sleeping tablets. A list of prohibited drugs as classified by the Uzbek authorities can be found here - <http://uzbekistan.travel/en/list-of-prohibited-drugs/>



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The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in your home country can be different in other countries. If you're travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on [best practice when travelling with medicines](#). For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you'll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you're travelling to.

## Preparing for your tour

### Climate

The region can be bitterly cold in the mid-winter months from December to February and fiercely hot during July and August. The best time to visit is generally accepted to be from mid-March to June, and September to mid-November.

### Clothing

When it comes to clothing it is usually recommended that lighter clothes are worn through the day, and warmer ones at night. It is also advisable to wear a hat during the day to protect from the sun. You should make sure that you bring a waterproof jacket for any rainy days. As Uzbekistan is conservative in terms of dress codes you should make sure that you bring a few outfits that are suitable for entering mosques and religious buildings – long sleeves and trousers / long skirts are a good idea.

### Equipment

The first thing on your list should be a first aid kit. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared: adequately immunized, with sufficient supplies of prescription drugs, along with a medical kit. Suncream/sunblock is a must. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have.

### Footwear

Footwear is a main priority on this tour. Comfortable walking shoes are recommended, while lighter footwear will be fine for relaxing and travelling between places.

### Luggage on tour

Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). One large suitcase/rucksack, and one small hand luggage sized rucksack is acceptable. Please note that you will be crossing land borders on this tour, so you may wish to take wheeled luggage; some border crossings can be lengthy.

### Electric Supply & Plugs

Electrical supply is 220V and plugs usually have two round pins like most European countries.

### Tour Itinerary Versions

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These tour notes were updated on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2020.