

## Uzbekistan and Tajikistan Group Tour

**Duration:** 9 days / 8 nights

**You will visit:** Uzbekistan, Tajikistan

### Tour Itinerary:

#### Day 1, Fri: Tashkent (Uzbekistan)

Arrive in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. Pick-up from the airport and transfer to the hotel, where check-in begins at noon.

Your guide and driver will pick you up from your hotel to begin your Tashkent city tour. Your private tour will include: Excursion to the Old City, including the architectural complex Khazret-Imam (15th century), which holds the oldest known Quran in the world. Visit to Chorsu Bazaar, one of the oldest markets in Central Asia, where you can sample or buy sweets, fruits and souvenirs. Ride on the Tashkent Metro, where ceramic tiles and murals depict a unique theme at each station. Walk through Amir Timur Square and Independence Square, admiring the paintings for sale on 'Broadway' Drive. Drive to Sacred Heart Cathedral. Tour of the Applied Arts Museum, an informative collection of Uzbekistan's finest handicrafts housed in an ornately decorated villa. Overnight at the hotel.

*Meals: none.*

#### Day 2, Sat: Tashkent – Samarkand (Uzbekistan)

In the morning your driver will transfer you to the railway station in the morning for a train journey to the stunning city of Samarkand. You will visit Gur Emir, and the impressive Registan Square, with its three Madrasahs dating back to the 15th to 17th centuries. Take in the beauty of Bibi Khanum Mosque and stroll through the multi-level complex of Siab Bazaar, where you can find souvenirs and sample local sweets, fruits, and the famous Samarkand bread. Explore the impressive Shakhi-Zinda, a 15th-century burial complex, and walk the imposing pathway to see its blue-domed tombs. End the day with a visit to the Ulugbek Observatory, where you can view the remains of a 14th-15th-century sextant and tour the Ulugbek Museum. After a full day of exploration, rest and relax at your hotel. Overnight at the hotel.

*Meals: breakfast.*

#### Day 3, Sun: Samarkand – border – Seven Lakes - Penjikent (Uzbekistan/Tajikistan)

Begin your day with a delicious breakfast at the hotel before transferring to the Uzbekistan-Tajikistan border crossing at Jartepa (50km). After passing through customs and passport control, your local Tajik guide and driver will be waiting for you on the Tajikistan side to take you to the breathtaking Seven Lakes (90km). Located in the Fann Mountains, each of the Seven Lakes boasts its own unique color, ranging from turquoise to purple. Take in the natural beauty of this special place and enjoy a lunch at a guest house near the fourth lake. Continue your journey to the charming city of Penjikent, where you'll spend the night at a hotel.

*Meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner.*

#### Day 4, Mon: Penjikent – border – Samarkand (Tajikistan/Uzbekistan)

Have breakfast and start a tour of ancient Penjikent, the ruins of a town founded by the Sogdians in the 5th century and abandoned by Arabs in the 8th century. In old Penjikent you'll get to see the foundations of houses, a citadel with Zoroastrian fire temples, the remains of the city bazaar and other excavated ruins in the old city. In the newer part of Penjikent, visit a local bazaar, mosque, and the Rudaki Museum. Drive to the Jartepa border crossing (30 km, 40 min) via Sarazm, a UNESCO World Heritage Site founded in the 4th century BC. After crossing the border, you'll continue your group tour in Uzbekistan, with your driver meeting you at the border to take you to your hotel in Samarkand. Overnight at the hotel.

*Meals: breakfast, lunch.*

#### **Day 5, Tue: Samarkand – Gijduvon – Bukhara (Uzbekistan)**

Uzbekistan and Tajikistan Group Tour continues with a drive from Samarkand to Bukhara via Gijduvon. Stop on the way at the Rabati Malik Caravanserai (11th century) and Sardoba. Visit Gijduvan, a small town whose traditional crafts and ceramics have been sought after in Central Asia for centuries due to their quality and colorful, decorative style. Visit the ceramic center and pottery master-class, before having lunch.

Visit the Emir's Summer Residence at Sitorai Mokhi-Khosa (19th century) near Bukhara. This is a unique site combining Oriental and Russian architecture. (No English-speaking guide provided here). Check-in to the hotel in Bukhara.

*Optional Activity: Immerse yourself, literally, in centuries-old traditions at the Bozori Kord Hammam, a traditional Turkic bathhouse. Opened in the 14th century, it's been in operation ever since. Price: 25 USD.*

*Meals: breakfast, lunch.*

#### **Day 6, Wed: Bukhara (Uzbekistan)**

Begin the morning with a city walking tour led by your local guide. Your private tour will include the Lyabi-Hauz Ensemble, Magoki-Attori Mosque and the Trade Domes (15-16th centuries) that serve today as a tourist bazaar. Continue your excursion to Poi Kalyan Ensemble, (including the Kalyan Minaret, Kalyan Mosque and Miri-Arab Madrasah). Visit Ulugbek and Abdulazizkhan Madrasahs. Discover the Ark Fortress and museum in Bukhara. Next site is Bolo-Khauz Mosque with a pond. Last site is the mausoleum of Ismail Samanid. Tour duration: 6-7 hours. Free time in the evening. Overnight in the Bukhara hotel.

*Optional Activity: The National Show at the Nadir Divan-begi Madrasah, which starts at 18:00. Price for show and dinner is 20 USD per person.*

*Meals: breakfast.*

#### **Day 7, Thu: Bukhara – Khiva (Uzbekistan)**

Breakfast. In the morning depart Bukhara and drive to Khiva (480 km, 7-8 h\*). Today we will have an overland transfer from Bukhara to Khiva through Kyzylkum desert. Caravans on the Great Silk Road carrying porcelain and spices used the same route for hundreds of years. Arrival in Khiva, the "museum under the open sky" late in the afternoon. After check-in, free time to discover Khiva. Overnight in a hotel located inside or near "Itchan-Kala", the historical center of Khiva and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

*\*As the cafés and restaurants on the way are basic and offer limited menus, you may wish to take a packed lunch on this trip.*

*Optional Activity: In the evening, take a masterclass on cooking tukhumbarak (egg dumplings) a classic Khivan cuisine. Dinner is included. Price is 25 USD per person, with a minimum of 4 persons required.*

*Meals: breakfast.*

### **Day 8, Fri: Khiva – Urgench – Tashkent (Uzbekistan)**

After breakfast at the hotel, take a walking tour around Itchan-Kala with a local guide. Start with Kunya-Ark Khan's castle and the inner citadel of Ichan Kala, before continuing to the following sites: Kalta Minor Tower, the tallest minaret in Central Asia. Muhammad Amin-Khan, the biggest medieval madrasah in Khiva and Mukhammad Rahimkhan Madrasah. Juma Mosque, with 212 wooden columns and a minaret 32.5 m high. Tash-Hauli Palace (Stone Courtyard Palace) with its high battlements, towers and fortified gates. Necropolis of Pahlavan Mahmud, the cultic center of Ichan Kala. Residence of Islam Khodja, vizier of the last khan.

In the late afternoon you will be transferred to Urgench airport (35 km, 45 min) for a flight to Tashkent (1093 km, 1 h 40 min). Upon arrival transfer to the hotel. Overnight at the hotel.

*Meals: breakfast.*

### **Day 9, Sat: Tashkent, departure (Uzbekistan)**

Free morning before hotel check-out by noon. Your driver will take you to the airport for your departure flight home. End of the Uzbekistan and Tajikistan Group Tour.

## **Inclusions:**

- Accommodation based on double/twin room sharing, with breakfast, 8 nights;
- All road transfers including airport and train station (2 persons in sedan, 3-8 persons in minivan);
- Local English-speaking escort guide on days 3 and 4;
- Local English-speaking guide for the city tours in Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva;
- Entrance fees to sights as per itinerary;
- Gijduvan pottery master class;
- Economy-class tickets for flights from Urgench to Tashkent;
- Economy-class tickets for Tashkent-Samarkand train;
- Meals as designated in the program;
- 1L bottle of water per person per day.

## **Exclusions:**

- Tour leader to accompany the group for the whole duration of the tour;
- Meals not indicated in the program;
- Hotel charges for additional services;
- Personal travel insurance;
- International flight tickets before and after the tour;
- All visas, e-visas and visa support letters to Central Asia countries;
- Tips are not included (driver, guide, porter);
- All other charges and services not mentioned under "Inclusions".