Silk Road in Central Asia & Iran

TASHKENT • SAMARKAND • BUKHARA • ASHGABAT • MASHAD • SHIRAZ
ISFAHAN • TEHRAN

April 6-23, 2019

“The rich history of the Silk Road cities we visited combined with the geopolitical situation of the area made for a fascinating trip. The people were some of the most friendly I’ve met anywhere.”

HARVARD ALUMNI TRAVELS
124 MOUNT AUBURN STREET
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138
PHONE: 800-422-1636 OR
617-495-2463
617-496-4011 FAX
TRAVEL.HMSC.HARVARD.EDU
About the Museums

The Harvard Museums of Science & Culture (HMSC) partnership was established in 2012 to develop a strong, coordinated public face for the six museums that are within the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Harvard. Its mission is to foster curiosity and a spirit of discovery in visitors of all ages, enhancing public understanding of and appreciation for the natural world, science, and human cultures.

HMSC works with Harvard faculty, museum curators, students, and members of the extended Harvard community to provide interdisciplinary exhibitions, events, and lectures, as well as educational programs for students, teachers, and the general public. HMSC draws primarily upon the extensive collections of the member museums and upon the research of their faculty and curators.

ABOUT THE TRAVEL PROGRAM

Harvard Alumni Travels is the umbrella organization for all Harvard alumni and museum travel programs. Harvard Alumni Travels and HMSC have formed a partnership to offer superior trips with expert planning, custom-designed itineraries, and Harvard lecturers. Journey in the spirit of expeditions gone-by, with small groups of like-minded travelers. Travel with HMSC and discover the world.

This focused survey of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Iran ranges from the Persian-Turkic Silk Road oases of Samarkand and Bukhara to the ruins of Darius I’s Persepolis, the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid kings, and over the graceful bridges of Isfahan’s Zayende River. Admire eight different UNESCO World Heritage sites along the old caravan routes from Central Asia into Iran, becoming familiar with the culture, nature, science, history, architecture, and spiritual beliefs that have had such a profound impact on the modern world. Get to know these countries, laced together with the traces of the old Silk Road that linked the Eastern and Western worlds.

Begin in Uzbekistan’s capital, Tashkent, a jumble of wide tree-lined boulevards, oversized Soviet buildings and traces of the old city. Explore the fabled Silk Road cities of Samarkand and Bukhara, with their blue-tile domes and elegant minarets. Admire the flamboyant gilded architecture of Turkmenistan’s capital, Ashgabat, and continue into Iran, a country that has been in existence for over 2,500 years. Browse its fabulous bazaars, admire its splendid architecture and complex ornamentation, wander its venerable archaeological sites, and converse with the hospitable people who call it home.

As this brochure goes to print, we have not yet confirmed the faculty study leader for this program. We intend, however, that you will be joined by a Harvard lecturer who will enhance your travel experience. You will discover that our lecturers are not only first-rate scholars and teachers but also friendly traveling companions, eager to share their insights through conversation as well as in scheduled presentations.

PRICING, PER PERSON

$9,495 double occupancy; $11,120 single occupancy

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: U.S. domestic and international airfare is not included in the program rates. On-tour airfare is included. Information about making flight arrangements will be sent to all participants.
TRIP ITINERARY

SATURDAY, APRIL 6 & SUNDAY, APRIL 7
HOME / TASHKENT, UZBEKISTAN
Depart home on international flights bound for Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Upon arrival, transfer to the hotel for check-in and rest. Lotte City Hotel Tashkent Palace (meals in flight)

MONDAY, APRIL 8
TASHKENT
Following breakfast and an introductory lecture, set out to explore Uzbekistan’s capital city, Tashkent. Stroll through a labyrinth of mud-walled houses surviving from the 19th century. View the Uthman Koran, written on deerskin 19 years after the death of Mohammed, and considered by Sunni Muslims to be the oldest Koran in the world. Visit the private art studio of a sixth-generation Uzbek ceramicist whose family has revived the lost art of natural dye use, and gather for a welcome dinner. Lotte City Hotel Tashkent Palace (B, L, D)

TUESDAY, APRIL 9 & WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10
SAMARKAND
Hop the high-speed train to Samarkand, Tamerlane’s beautiful blue-tiled capital. Explore the majestic UNESCO-listed Registan Square, and enjoy a home-cooked dinner with a local family. Visit the Bibi Khanum Mosque, built by Tamerlane to be the largest mosque up to that time, and admire Ulug Bek’s Observatory, one of the most advanced observatories of the ancient world. Drop in at a workshop where hand-crafted paper is made, and visit the private studio of fashion designer Valentina Romanenko. Emir Han Hotel (2B, 2L, 2D)

THURSDAY, APRIL 11 & FRIDAY, APRIL 12
BUKHARA
Depart for UNESCO-listed Bukhara, stopping for lunch in the village of Vobkent to learn about rural life. Begin at Lyabi-Hauz Plaza at the center of Bukhara’s old town, and admire the 12th-century Kalon Mosque and Minaret. Inspect the Ark Citadel, the original fortress of Bukhara, and meet its Senior Scientific Advisor. Discover the Zindan Prison, where two British “Great Game” players were imprisoned before their execution. Take a walk through Bukhara’s old Jewish Quarter, where in the mid 19th-century 2,500 families of prosperous merchants were estimated to have been living. Enjoy a performance by local dancers at a former madrassah. Hotel Sasha and Son (2B, 2L, 2D)

SATURDAY, APRIL 13 & SUNDAY, APRIL 14
TURKMENABAT / ASHGABAT, TURKMENISTAN
Cross the border into Turkmenistan and survey Turkmenabat, the second-largest city in the country, before boarding a flight to the capital, Ashgabat. Explore the modern capital, where marble and gold monuments have sprung up all over town. In 2013, the Guinness Book of World Records awarded Ashgabat the record for the highest density of white marble buildings in the world. Visit the UNESCO Site of Nisa, center of the ancient Parthian Kingdom, accompanied by a local archaeologist. More than two thousand years ago, the Parthian Empire spread out from Nisa, and took its place among such kingdoms as the Achaemenid under Cyrus the Great, and the Macedonian under Alexander the Great. Hotel Oguzkent (2B, 2L, 2D)
MONDAY, APRIL 15 &
TUESDAY, APRIL 16
MASHAD
Drive to the Iranian border, and continue to the eastern Iranian city of Mashad. In 817 the eighth grandson of the Prophet Mohammed, Imam Reza, died here suddenly on a journey. Pilgrims began arriving at his burial site, and today, his tomb is one of the holiest Shi'ite shrines in Iran, visited by 12 million Shi'ite Muslims a year. Visit the areas of the Imam Reza shrine that are permitted to non-Muslims, the tomb and museum of Nader Shah, and the Khajeh Rabi Mausoleum. Homa Hotel 1 (2B, 2L, 2D)

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17 &
THURSDAY, APRIL 18
SHIRAZ/PERSEPOLIS
Fly to Shiraz, and set off on the all-day tour of this “City of Roses and Nightingales.” Explore the lovely pink-tiled Nasir-ol-Molk Mosque, an explosion of color with fine examples of Persian Islamic tilework. Visit the Narenjestan Garden with its beautiful cypress-lined avenues, and continue to the Tomb of Hafez, one of Iran’s favorite poets. The teahouse by a cooling pool is a wonderful place to sit and people-watch. Depart for one of the most important sites of the Ancient World – the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid kings, Persepolis, a UNESCO World Heritage site built on a monumental scale of sculpted stone. Admire the rock carvings at Naghsh-e Rostam, thought to be the tombs of Darius the Great, Xerxes and Artaxerxes. Hotel Grand Shiraz (2B, 2L, 2D)

FRIDAY, APRIL 19 &
SATURDAY, APRIL 20
ISFAHAN
Under the rule of Shah Abbas the Great of the 16th century Safavid dynasty, Isfahan became a celebrated and beautiful city. Visit one of the world’s largest public squares, Maiden-e Naghsh-e Jahan, also known as Imam Square. Shah Abbas built the graceful ensemble in the early 17th-century. A UNESCO World Heritage site, the square was the symbolic center of the Safavid Empire. Here, find the Ali-Qapu Palace, where Safavid Kings watched polo games from the balcony. Imann Mosque, Flanked by two tall turquoise minarets, is considered by many to be the most beautiful in the world. Stop at the spectacular UNESCO-listed Friday Mosque, and visit the氩irmian Quarter, to see the sand-colored stonework of Vank Cathedral. Take some time to stroll the narrow lanes lined with artisans and shopkeepers at Isfahan’s amazing 17th century Qisarieh Bazaar. Abbasi Hotel (2B, 2L, 1D)

TUESDAY, APRIL 23
DEPART TEHRAN
The tour concludes with transfers to the airport for international departures. (B, flight times permitting, in flight)
PHOTOS: Ann Schneider, Donna Collins, MIR Corporation

HMSCTRAVEL@HMSC.HARVARD.EDU.
HARVARD MUSEUMS OF SCIENCE & CULTURE PRESENTS

Silk Road in Central Asia & Iran
April 6-23, 2019