Silk Road in Central Asia & Iran

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

October 6-23, 2018

With study leader Mark Van Baalen AB '66, PhD '95
Associate of the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences

“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.”
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.
**TRIP ITINERARY**

**DAYS 1 & 2**  
**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6 & SUNDAY, OCTOBER 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 (in flight)*

**DAY 3**  
**MONDAY, OCTOBER 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)*

**DAYS 4 & 5**  
**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 9 & WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 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)*

**DAYS 6 & 7**  
**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 11 & FRIDAY, OCTOBER 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)*

**DAYS 8 & 9**  
**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13 & SUNDAY, OCTOBER 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)*

 FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT [WWW.TRAVEL.HMSC.HARVARD.EDU](http://WWW.TRAVEL.HMSC.HARVARD.EDU)
DAYS 10 & 11
MONDAY, OCTOBER 15 & TUESDAY, OCTOBER 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)

DAYS 12 & 13
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 17 & THURSDAY, OCTOBER 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. Zandiyeh Hotel or similar (2B, 2L, 2D)

DAYS 14 & 15
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 19 & SATURDAY, OCTOBER 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. Imam 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 Armenian 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 Qeisarieh Bazaar. Abbasi Hotel (2B, 2L, 1D)

DAYS 16 & 17
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 21 & MONDAY, OCTOBER 22
KASHAN/QOM/TEHRAN
On the road to Tehran, visit Kashan to wander one of Iran’s most treasured gardens, UNESCO-listed Bagh-e Fin, with its centuries-old cypress trees. Make a stop in the sacred city of Qom, home to the important Shi’ite shrine of Fatima al-Masumeh, sister of the eighth Imam. Tehran, the capital since 1789, has grown in population from less than 300,000 to a metropolis of eight million. Modern Tehran is full of shops, museums, mosques, minarets, restaurants, teahouses and a sprawling bazaar. Begin exploring at UNESCO-listed Golestan Palace, encompassing several palatial buildings and the Marble Throne, created from 65 pieces of yellow Yazd marble. Browse the Archaeological and Islamic collections at Iran’s National Museum, and take a fascinating tour of Iran’s Crown Jewels. Celebrate the conclusion of the journey during a festive farewell dinner. Espinas International Hotel (2B, 2L, 2D)

DAY 18
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 23
DEPART TEHRAN
The tour concludes with transfers to the airport for international departures. (B, flight times permitting, in flight)
### TERMS AND CONDITIONS

**TOUR COST INCLUSIONS**: 16 nights hotel accommodations per itinerary with breakfast daily; local service charge and tax; arrival and departure airport transfers for those arriving and departing on the tour start and end dates; land transportation per itinerary by private air-conditioned vans or coaches; train tickets for the high-speed express train from Tashkent to Samarkand in business class; internal airfare per itinerary in economy class (Turkmenabat–Ashgabat and Mashad-Shiraz); all sightseeing and excursions including entrance fees per itinerary; local English speaking guides throughout itinerary; services of an experienced professional MIR tour manager throughout the land tour program; welcome and Farewell Dinners; meals as listed in itinerary; hotel breakfast daily; lunches and dinners per itinerary; beverages with included lunches and dinners; bottled water; choice of non-alcoholic drink, tea or coffee, beer and wine (alcoholic beverages are not available in Iran); bottled water on buses during tour days and drives between cities; gratuities to tour manager, local guides, and drivers; baggage handling at hotels, airports and railway stations where available; destination preparation information packet; $200,000 emergency medical evacuation insurance.

**TOUR COST EXCLUSIONS**: International airfare between the U.S. and the start and end cities; air taxes or fuel surcharges; pre or post tour services or extensions; visa or passport fees; medical and trip cancellation/interruption insurance; evacuation costs; food or beverages not included in group meals; items of a personal nature such as laundry, alcohol outside of group meals, telephone expenses, excess baggage fees, photo/video expenses inside museums (where allowed); other items not expressly listed as included; trip cancellation insurance.

**RESERVATIONS, DEPOSITS & FINAL PAYMENT**: To reserve a space on this program, a $1,000 deposit is required per person. Please either call us at (617) 495-2463 or fill out and mail or fax the registration form found in this brochure. Reservations are acknowledged in order of receipt until the maximum enrollment has been reached. Final payment, payable by check only, is due June 8, 2018, 120 days prior to departure. Please note: Credit cards are not accepted for final payment.

**CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS**: Notification of cancellation must be received in writing by Harvard Alumni Travels from the participant. Cancellations within 14 days of booking: full refund. Cancellations received up to 120 days prior to departure will be assessed a cancellation fee of $1,000 per person. Cancellations received within 120 days prior to departure are subject to 100% penalty of all deposits and payments.

**WHAT TO EXPECT**: All participants must be in generally good health. Any condition that may require assistance or special medical attention must be reported at the time of your reservation. All programs require physical independence and mobility. Any physical or mental condition that may require special medical attention or physical assistance must be reported in writing when you make your reservation. Travelers must be able to embark or disembark motor coaches alone or with minimal assistance from your traveling companion and climb stairs and step over raised thresholds without assistance. Travelers requiring assistance must travel with a companion who will be responsible for handling equipment. Participants with medical issues and/or dietary restrictions must make them known to us well before departure, and impairments regarding mobility must be disclosed prior to booking. If you have any questions about the level of activity of this program or your ability to participate, please call Harvard Alumni Travels at (800) 422-1636.

**ITINERARY CHANGES**: The itinerary contained in this brochure is accurate at the time of printing. We reserve the right to change the program or accommodations as conditions warrant.

**INSURANCE**: We highly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance. An application for insurance will be provided by Harvard Alumni Travels.

**RESPONSIBILITY**: Certain other provisions apply regarding limitations of liability and rights of Harvard Alumni Travels and the tour operator. The statement of responsibility is available at https://alumni.harvard.edu/travel/trips/silkroad-iran-2018. If you are not able to access the internet, please call Harvard Alumni Travels at (617) 495-2463.

**DISCLAIMER**: Every reasonable effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of information presented in this publication. Neither Harvard Alumni Travels nor the tour operator is responsible for errors in or damages resulting from use of the information contained herein. Information contained in this brochure is subject to change.

**QUESTIONS**: Please call Harvard Alumni Travels at (617) 495-2463 or e-mail hmsctravel@hmsc.harvard.edu.

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### PRICING, PER PERSON

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<tr>
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### 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.

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### RESERVATION FORM

**NAME (TRAVELER 1)**  
**ADDRESS**  
**PHONE**  
**E-MAIL**  
**DATE OF BIRTH**  
**SIGNATURE**  
**EXPANSION DATE**  
**CVV**

**NAME AS IT APPEARS ON THE CARD**

Accommodations:  
- **Double room**  
- **Single room at an additional charge of $1,625**  
- **Share room with**

I/we confirm that I/we have carefully read the information on refunds, general conditions, and the responsibility clause specified in the tour conditions.

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**NAME (TRAVELER 2)**  
**ADDRESS**  
**PHONE**  
**E-MAIL**  
**DATE OF BIRTH**  
**SIGNATURE**  
**EXPANSION DATE**  
**CVV**

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Please return this form with deposit to the address at the top right of this page or fax it to 617-496-4011.

**QUESTIONS?** Please call us at 617-495-2463 or e-mail hmsctravel@hmsc.harvard.edu.

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One membership in the Harvard Museums of Science & Culture opens the doors to four unique museums. As a member, enjoy access to the museums through free admission, behind-the-scenes tours, exclusive member events, and opportunities to interact personally with celebrated scientists, archaeologists, artists, and experts from Harvard and around the world. Additionally, membership supports the museums’ ability to bring dynamic exhibitions and engaging public programs to a broad and diverse audience.

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- **$85 Household**  
- **$125 Supporting**  
- **$250 Sustaining**  
- **$500 Patron**

Please enclose a separate check made out to Harvard University/HMSC for membership. **Thank you.**
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