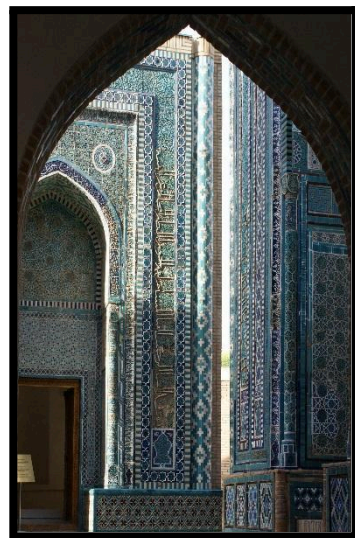
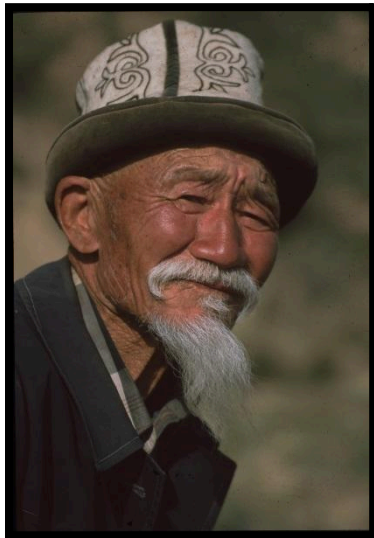


Silk Road and Celestial Mountains

September 4 – 20 2017

Group 2

September 11 - 27 2017



Some 26 countries claim they have been an important part of the Silk Road. We are content with traveling to two of them on this journey. We'll follow in the footsteps of Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan and Tamerlane through mythical fairytale cities of Uzbekistan and to celestial mountains of Kyrgyzstan.

In Samarkand and Bukhara we admire the most beautiful historic architecture, mosques and minarets adorned with matchless patterns of shimmering mosaic. In Kyrgyzstan, we learn about the nomadic life and enjoy the nature in the Celestial Mountains.

The countries in Central Asia have a short history as independent states, and are in the middle of a very exciting development, both when it comes to economy, politics and religion. It will be an interesting journey in past and present of one of the most exciting regions of the world.

Världens Resor will at one point along the way offer a special event to celebrate the 10th anniversary of you travelling together. Congratulations!

Itinerary

Day 1 / Departure from Stockholm in the afternoon.

Day 2 / Tashkent

Arrival in Tashkent early in the morning. Transfer to the hotel, check-in and breakfast. Short rest. We will visit the large Chorsu market and the area around it. This is the only part of Tashkent which is really old and has survived in spite of the earthquake that demolished much of the city in 1966.

Tashkent is a modern city and with its more than two million inhabitants is becoming a real metropolis. We walk downtown past the outdoor cafes, street performers and urban Uzbeks in the neighborhood around the opera house. We use the opportunity to take a short ride by subway.

Welcome lunch.

B, L

Day 3 / Tashkent - Nukus - Khiva

Morning flight to Nukus in the Kara-Kalpak Autonomous Republic. It was established in 1935 and enjoys nominal autonomy. Karakalpaks have in fact much more in common with neighboring Kazakhstan, both linguistically and culturally. We land in Nukus at about 9-00 / 9-30 in the morning.

In Nukus, we are going to visit the local museum which has a fabulous art collection. The museum was founded in the 1960s by a young artist, Igor Savitsky, who went on archaeological expeditions through the region and collected numerous samples of local art. In addition, he managed to gather many masterpieces of Russian avant-garde - a whole epoch of Russian art that was destroyed in the early 1930s by Stalin regime. We visit the art museum (about 3 hours). Lunch in Nukus.

After lunch, we continue to Khiva by a private rented bus. In the delta of the Amu Darya there were once fertile oases where early farming communities developed into mighty Khorezm state. As a reminder of the country's glory there are many remnants of impressive fortresses scattered in the desert. We visit a few of them on the way to Khiva. Arrival in Khiva late afternoon.

Check-in and dinner.

B, L, D

Day 4 / Khiva

After breakfast we start our walking tour of Khiva. Khiva became the capital of Khorezm after Konye-Urgench fell 1592. The old city is almost completely intact with most buildings from 18th and 19th cc. The town is surrounded by a city wall. Domes of mosques, minarets and buildings are generously adorned with mosaics in turquoise and blue.

We live inside the city walls and have time to stroll around this unique city. It is very nice to get on the wall and get a view of the medieval town located inside the walls. We visit workshops where they weave carpets and another one which works with wood engraving.

B, L



Day 5 / Khiva - Bukhara

On our own rented bus we travel from Khiva to Bukhara, the next fairytale city. Bukhara is truly a gem. It is large enough not to be a museum and sufficiently well preserved to feel as if you have gone back in time at least one hundred years. The old town is intact and there is no better place in the entire region which will give you a sense of how cities have looked like during the time when the Silk Road was in use.

B, D

Day 6 / Bukhara

There are over 140 buildings that are heritage listed and it is a lovely city to get lost in. We visit Kalon minaret which is there since the 1100s. We also visit the mosque next door. The mosque is really a magnificent piece of work and fully comparable with the more famous Registan in Samarkand. You can see plenty of fine mosaic.

We reach Labi Hauz, a fine square with one of many Bukhara pools. The unusual Char Minar with four minarets minarets, Samanid Mausoleum and a caravanserai or two (places that people in the caravans stayed in) are also on the program.

B, D (We see how Plov – the national dish reminiscent of risotto – is cooked, we eat dinner with a local family)



Day 7 / Bukhara

In the morning we continue our exploration of Bukhara. Lunch.

Afternoon free for own activities. Optional visit to the hamam - Turkish bath - can be arranged.

B, L



Day 8 / Bukhara - Samarkand

We continue to Samarkand where we will arrive at lunchtime.

There are few places on earth that can boast of such splendid historical architecture. The mosaic that gives sheen to the barren, sand-colored minarets and mosques is matchless. It is a bit like visiting Taj Mahal every day. Registan Square with its mosques and minarets is the top experience.

B, L



Day 9 / Samarkand

We spend the morning at the city center, Registan. Registan actually means desert since it was exposed to desert winds. This beauty reflects the country's history very well because Samarkand from antiquity and to the Middle Ages has been a focal point in world history.

Alexander the Great was here, and Samarkand was an important place on the Silk Road. Many of the most famous Persian scientists, poets and philosophers worked here. Genghis Khan conquered and devastated Samarkand. Tamerlane built up the city again and had it as a base for his campaigns to Moscow, Delhi and Baghdad before he was killed on his way to Beijing. We visit the mausoleum where he is buried.

After lunch we continue to the area around the nice city market, visit Bibi Khanum Mosque with its turquoise domes and Ulug Beg's observatory from the 1400s.

B, L, D

Day 10 / Samarkand - Tashkent

We continue exploring Samarkand before lunch. In the afternoon we board the express train for Tashkent. Arrival to Tashkent in the evening (17: 00/19: 10). Transfer to the hotel and check-in.

B

Day 11 / Tashkent - Bishkek - Chon-Kemin valley

Morning flight to Bishkek. Breakfast at the hotel on arrival. We go for a short tour of the city in the capital of Kyrgyzstan. During the Soviet times the city was called Frunze after a revolutionary leader, but in 1992 it went back to its old Kyrgyz name.

Most of Lenin statues have been removed (there's one left!), but much of the city reminds of the time it was Soviet. After the Soviet Union's breakup in 1991 Kyrgyzstan became like its Central Asian neighbors a nation of its own for the first time in history.

We continue our journey to the mountain areas north of the lake Issyk Kul. Valleys in Tien Shan are rich in plants and wildlife. Spruce trees, juniper, birch, maple and ash grow here. The land is rich in minerals and in the mountains there are hot springs.

Kyrgyz are traditional nomads. During the Soviet era, they were forced to abandon their traditions and switch to sedentary lifestyle, farming at large state-owned farms. But still, during the summer they move into yurts (a portable nomad tent) and travel to pastures in the mountains and plains. We continue to Chon-Kemin valley where we stay for two nights at a nice cozy inn.

B, L, D



Day 12 / Chon-Kemin

We use our stay in Chon-Kemin to learn about Kyrgyz life. There will be a day packed with activities associated with everyday life and nomadic traditions.

We visit the neighboring village to see how blankets, carpets and headdresses are made. Many in Kyrgyzstan are engaged in traditional crafts, making clothing, headgear and items of felt wool. Even carpets and items for yurt decoration are made in that way.

We see how the traditional nomadic yurt dwelling is rigged up. We watch bread in the traditional oven being baked and finally we attend a cooking class to prepare traditional noodle dish *besh-barmak*.

There will be time for those who prefer physical activity to make a short hike in Chon-Kemin gorge or go for a ride.

B, L, D

Day 13 / Chon-Kemin - Issyk Kul

Today we head for the mountainous lake Issyk Kul. We stay in the town of Cholpon-Ata at the lake. There is an area of about 42 hectares (a museum) where quantities of rock drawings and rock paintings have been found. The area is now a museum and we visit it to see the rocks depicting people and animals, hunting and war scenes. Researchers date the majority of the carvings with the beginning of 2000 BC.

We also make a boat trip on the lake. There will be time for swimming and relaxing.

B, L, D



Day 14 /Issyk Kul - Karakol

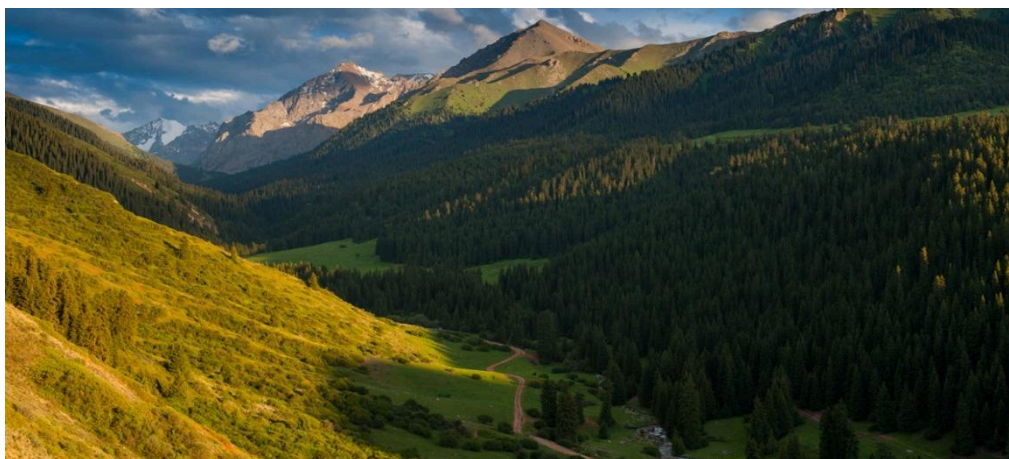
Departure for Karakol, which used to be one of first Russian outposts in the Tien Shan. We get there in the afternoon.

Karakol with its streets lined by low wooden houses with kitchen gardens has preserved its old charm. It still carries a distinct Russian flavor.

The population is mixed. Apart from Russians and Kyrgyz, there is a considerable presence of Dungan Chinese. We visit the mosque built at the turn of the century as well as the Orthodox Holy Trinity Church.

We also visit Przhevalsky Museum. The great Russian explorer, who made numerous expeditions to Inner Asia and Tibet, is buried here outside the museum. The museum houses much of his collection preserved. It was right here at the Issyk-Kulsjön the final chapter of his life was played out when he contracted typhoid and died.

B, L, D



Day 15 / Karakol, excursion to Altyn-Arashan

Today is a big nature day. We travel on two off-road vehicles to Altyn-Arashan which is known for its stunning scenery and hot springs. After a few hours of driving in a spectacular mountain landscape Arashan valley opens in front of us. We continue the journey to about

2600 m altitude where in beautiful surroundings among alpine meadows there are hot springs that gave the name to the area. *Altyn Arshan* means golden springs in the local language, and the water is said to have healing properties. Here you will be offered two options.

Option 1/ Hiking in Arashan valley

We will make a gradual ascent in the valley. The landscape is beautiful and there are great trails. We will go at our own pace and you will have your picnic lunch on the way. Count on about six hours of hiking in the canyon. We get back to Altyn Arashan to take our car back to Karakol.

Option 2 / Hot Springs

A spa dating from the Soviet time is still in operation and you can enjoy a warm bath looking out into the canyon.

(In case of rain, we will switch to another hiking area. We will hike in Djety-Oguz valley which is slightly lower and more accessible, about 2 000 m a.s.).

B, L, D



Day 16 / Karakol - Bishkek

Departure for Bishkek. We stop in a village where we visit a falcon hunter and have lunch. *Berkutchi* that the name for falcon hunters who work with birds of prey, often falcon or eagle. This is an ancient tradition of the Kyrgyz people.

We get to Bishkek in the afternoon. In the evening we will have a farewell dinner.

B, L, D



Day 17 / Homebound

Transfer to the airport. Outbound flight.

Travel details

Itinerary in brief:

Day 1-2 Stockholm - Tashkent

Day 3 Nukus

Day 4 Khiva

Day 5-7 Bukhara

Day 8-10 Samarkand

Day 11 Tashkent - Bishkek

Day 12 Chon-Kemin

Day 13 Issyk Kul

Day 14-15 Karakol

Day 16 Karakol - Bishkek

Day 17 homebound

flight

TK1796 E MO 04SEP ARNIST 1815 2245

TK 368 E MO 04SEP ISTTAS 2345 0615*

TK 345 P WE 20SEP FRUIST 1025 1320

TK1795 P WE 20SEP ISTARN 1430 1705

Preliminary dates: 4-20 September 2017

Preliminary rate: 31 500 SEK per person at 26 - 32 pax / SEK 30 300 at 29-32 pax

Preliminary rate with the international flight not included: SEK 26 300 / SEK 24 800

Single supplement: SEK 4000

Number of participants: 24-32 people

This is included in the rate:

- International flight Stockholm - Tashkent / Bishkek - Stockholm
- Domestic flight Tashkent - Nukus
- Flight Tashkent - Bishkek
- Express train Samarkand - Tashkent
- sharing a double room at hotels of tourist class
- Two nights at a guest house in Kyrgyzstan (Chon-Kemin)
- All transportation by own private bus
- All entrance fees to museums and attractions described in the itinerary
- Horse show and visits to the falcon hunter in Kyrgyzstan, as well as visits and workshops in Chon-Kemin
- Photo charges at museums and sites
- Half board in Uzbekistan (breakfast and lunch or dinner) and full board in Kyrgyzstan
- Visa to Uzbekistan
- Local English-speaking guides
- Tipping local guides and drivers

This is not included in the rate:

- Meals not included (see details above).
- Own activities and personal expenses.
- Connecting flights from various locations in Sweden (and the world)
- Accompanying tour guide from Sweden