

Textiles & Treasures of Central Asia, Uzbekistan *New*

A specialist tour of three of the Stans that delves deep into the Silk Road's rich artistic and cultural heritage



Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

Holiday overview

Style	Tour
Accommodation	Hotels
Grade	Tour
Duration	22 days from London to London
Min/Max group size	4 / 12. Guaranteed to run for 4
Trip Leader	Ms Susan Lawty
Land only	Joining in Tashkent, Uzbekistan
Max altitude	2,400m/7,875ft, Fann Mountains, Day 16

Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available



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Departures

Group departures

2026 Dates:

Fri 25 Sep - Fri 16 Oct

Group prices and optional supplements

Please contact us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or visit our website for our land only and flight inclusive prices and single supplement options.

No Surcharge Guarantee

The flight inclusive or land only price will be confirmed to you at the time you make your booking. There will be no surcharges after your booking has been confirmed.

Will the trip run?

This trip is guaranteed to run for 4 people and for a maximum of 12. In the rare event that we cancel a holiday, we will refund you in full and give you at least 6 weeks warning. Many trips do fill up quickly - we advise you to book early if you want to secure a place(s) on the dates of your choice.

Insurance

We offer a travel insurance scheme - please contact us for details.

Private Departures

We can also offer this trip as a private holiday. A Private Departure follows exactly the same itinerary as the group departure but at dates to suit you (subject to availability) - please contact us with your preferred dates.

Tailor Made service

We pride ourselves on the level of quality and choice we provide for our clients who want a fully tailor made holiday. A holiday will be created especially for you by one of our well-travelled experts. They will be able to advise on the accommodation best suited to your needs, the sights you should visit (and those to avoid!) and the best walks and activities matched to your ability. In short, we will work together with you to create your perfect holiday. If you would like to explore the idea of a Tailor Made holiday with Mountain Kingdoms then please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or see the Tailor Made pages of our website for further inspiration.

Your guide



Sue Lawty

Sue is one of Britain's finest artists. Alongside other mediums, Sue has worked with textiles all her life and has exhibited extensively across the world. She is a tutor and visiting lecturer and has travelled on 'weaving journeys' to Bhutan, Morocco, America, Australia, India, Nepal, Poland and Sweden.

Sue held a year-long Residency at the V&A in London and has been awarded prestigious Artist Research Fellowships at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, Washington DC, the Cooper- Hewitt Design Museum, NY and the Faculty of the Environment, University of Leeds. She was recently invited to take up a significant three-month international artist residency in Stockholm.

In addition to her artistic work, Sue is an accomplished fell runner and mountain trekker. She has led many successful trips for Mountain Kingdoms since she led our first Weavers' Trail in Bhutan in 1995, later also leading treks to Bhutan, Dolpo and Zaskar. More recently, in 2019 and 2025, she returned to Bhutan to lead our specialist Weavers' Trail walking holiday and in 2022, 2023 and 2025, led Colours of India, our textiles tour of Gujarat and Kutch.



Local expert guides

In the main cities and some other locations on this tour, you will also have an expert local guide. They will give you a real insight into the history and culture of the places you are visiting.

Pictured here is Shakhnoza who has been leading tours in Uzbekistan since 1999 and considers it a genuine privilege to share the passion she has for the art, architecture and history of her country with her 'guests' and to see their eyes light up.

Your transport

As you will be spending a lot of time driving across the great landscapes of the Stans, the comfort and quality of your vehicle is paramount.

We provide minibuses with varying capacities depending on the group size and the country. Vehicles are changed when crossing borders and after flights/train journeys. For smaller groups we use models such as the Hyundai Grand Starex and Toyota HiAce and for larger groups, a Toyota Coaster or Mercedes Sprinter. All the vehicles are equipped with air conditioning and seat belts and bottled water is carried.

For parts of the trips where minibuses are not suitable, we use 4x4 vehicles



Minibus



Interior of minibus



4 x 4 vehicle

Please note that these images are only examples of the types of vehicles we may use.

Your trip highlights

- Discover first-hand the rich artisanal and textile treasures of the legendary Silk Road routes
- Travel in the company of Sue Lawty, one of Britain's foremost textile artists.
- Learn from the best master artisans about traditional crafts such as woven silk ikat, carpet weaving, embroidery, ceramics and jewellery.
- Explore the architectural splendours of the earliest cities and ancient archaeological sites.
- Experience the contrasting natural beauty of the expansive Kyzylkum desert and the dramatic Fann Mountains.
- Enjoy relaxed masterclasses in traditional suzani embroidery and gold thread work.
- Stroll through colourful bustling bazaars where you may seek out a bargain.

At a glance itinerary

Days 1-2	Fly to Tashkent in Uzbekistan. Visit Madina Kasymbaeva embroidery workshop.
Day 3	Morning tour of Tashkent. Free time at the themed park
Day 4	Fly to Urgench. Transfer to Khiva. Sightseeing tour of Ichan Kala. Afternoon at leisure.
Day 5	Excursion to the Kyzylkum Desert. Visit cotton fields on return journey.
Day 6	Cross border to Turkmenistan. Visit local craftspeople in Dashoguz. Drive to Kunya Urgench to see ancient sites. Return to Dashoguz.
Day 7	Drive to Darvaza across the Karakum Desert. Visit 'Gates of Hell'.
Days 8-9	Drive to Ashgabat and city tour. Fly to Mary and visit ruins at Merv.
Days 10-11	Cross back into Uzbekistan and drive to Bukhara. Tour of Bukhara and visits to craft workshops.
Day 12	Zardozi embroidery masterclass.
Day 13	Drive to Gijduvan for masterclass in embroidery. Drive to Samarkand.
Day 14	Guided tour of Samarkand.
Day 15	Full day in Urgut with visit to Chor Chinor Garden and the bazaar. Meet the Ablakulov family of ceramists and learn about their craft. Return to Samarkand via the Hudjum silk carpet factory.
Day 16	Cross into Tajikistan and drive to Panjakent. Visit Sarazm UNESCO site, the Centre of Folk Crafts and other city sights.
Day 17	Day trip to Fann Mountains. Return to Panjakent.
Day 18	Drive to Khujand via the Shakhriston Tunnel. Tour of Khujand.
Day 19	Cross into Uzbekistan and drive to Kokand. Visit Khudoyar-Khan Palace. Drive to Rishtan and visit Rustam Usmanov - ceramics master. Drive to Fergana.
Day 20	Full day visiting Margilan's master artisans.
Day 21	Visit Yodgorlik silk factory. Take the train to Tashkent. Farewell dinner.
Day 22	Transfer to airport and fly back to London.

Trip summary

This magnificent tour visits Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, treading in the footsteps of the legendary Silk Road trade routes that once crossed the vast expanses of central Asia, connecting the Mediterranean with the east.

Across expansive deserts and in the fabled cities of Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva and Merv, you will discover an astonishing array of architectural sites, including blue-tiled mosques, mausoleums, madrasahs and crumbling archaeological ruins, each bearing witness to the historic importance and glory of this part of the world. Many are now designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Carefully designed to take you under the skin of the Silk Road's rich creative heritage, you will meet highly skilled and passionate artisans who keep alive traditions and ways of making that are at the heart of this astonishing region. There are so many, but include: intricately embroidered suzanis originally made as dowries, finely knotted silk carpets, ornate silver and gold jewellery embellished with semi-precious stones, colourful ceramics, and possibly the most renowned, the exquisite, naturally dyed and handwoven silk ikats, where vibrant patterns are dyed into the threads before weaving.

You will be welcomed into studios and workshops to spend quality, immersive time with the very best makers and designers - watching them work and often having the opportunity for hands-on experiences whilst learning about the processes. And of course, there will always be ample opportunity to explore the sensory delights of the local bazaars!

Throughout the journey, you will be looked after by our highly experienced tour leader, Sue Lawty, ably assisted by expert local guides. Sue will also bring a wealth of specialist knowledge from her many years as a textile artist and educator. Accommodation is in comfortable, mid-range hotels plus one night in a yurt-style camp.



Your trip itinerary

Day 1: Fly London to Tashkent

Depart London on an overnight flight to Tashkent.

Overnight: In flight

Day 2: Arrive Tashkent. Transfer to hotel. Rest. Visit Madina Kasimbaeva workshop.

You will land in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, in the early morning. On arrival you will be greeted by your tour leader and transferred to your hotel where you will check in, have breakfast and then have option of a few hours welcome rest after the long flight. Later you will meet for lunch at a local restaurant.

In the afternoon you visit the workshop of Madina Kasimbaeva - a renowned master of traditional Uzbek Suzani embroidery and an UNESCO Award-winning artist whose works have been showcased globally, including in the permanent collection of the British Museum.

The term 'Suzani' derives from the Persian/ Farsi word for needle. Traditionally, Suzani were the centrepiece of a young woman's dowry, the craft handed down through the generations as the women of a family came together to embroider the hangings and bedspreads. With roots embedded in early religious and nomadic traditions, each region developed its own distinctly different patterns, motifs and specific qualities. Those of Tashkent for example had a densely stitched ground fabric, which was extremely time consuming to make. Hence, during the 2000's when the art of suzani was being revived, most needlewomen were drawn to the less exacting techniques of other regions. Not so Madina Kasimbaeva who has dedicated over 24 years to mastering, preserving and developing the traditional processes and lost techniques of the Tashkent school.

Pursuing both ancient and contemporary design, Kasimbaeva's works are remarkable for their complexity and attention to detail. For example an eight-metre Suzani, created together with 15 students over 3.5 years, is entirely embroidered with tiny, close packed stitches onto a base of a handmade cotton/ silk fabric with high quality silk threads, which are dyed naturally using the likes of onion skins, nut shells and indigo. In her showroom, you can observe the process of creating these unique pieces.

Dinner will be in the town.

Overnight: Al Anvar Hotel or Similar, Tashkent (Meals: BLD)

Day 3: Tashkent city tour; visit the Khast-Imam complex, Chorsu bazaar and the Museum of Applied Arts.

In the morning you will be taken on a city tour. Tashkent claims to be the most cosmopolitan city of Central Asia and although it has been continuously inhabited for over 2,000 years, a massive earthquake in the 1960s levelled most of the city and a modern city was born. It is noted for its tree lined streets, numerous fountains and pleasant parks. On your tour you will visit the Khast-Imam complex. Khast Imam is the religious centre for Muslims in Central Asia and includes the Barak Khan Madrasah (16th century), Tilla Shaykh Mosque (the Osman Koran, believed to be world's oldest Koran, is kept in the library of this mosque) and the mausoleum of Abu Bakr Kaffal Shoshi (a 13-14th century Islamic scholar).



You will also visit the Chorsu Bazaar - this huge and busy bazaar, the largest in Tashkent, is set beneath a magnificent dome decorated in traditional Uzbek style with blue tiles. A vast variety of goods are sold here and a visit is a great introduction to daily life in Uzbekistan.

For a more modern-day attraction you will take a ride on the famous Tashkent Metro. The metro was built between 1966 and 1977 and was the first metro in Central Asia. The subway stations (especially those of the first two lines built) are very beautiful and are famed for their amazing architecture. Platforms are richly decorated with glazed columns, bas reliefs, stucco and enamel, chandeliers and original art.

After lunch at a local restaurant you will visit the Uzbekistan State Museum of Applied Arts. First created as an exhibition highlighting some of Uzbekistan's finest work in 1927, the museum has now become a permanent fixture showcasing a superb collection of applied arts.

For dinner this evening you will be taken to a themed restaurant and perhaps have your first taste of Uzbekistan's famous national dish, 'plov', a traditional dish of Central Asia which you will encounter throughout your travels of the Three Stans.

Overnight: Al Anvar Hotel or Similar, Tashkent (Meals: BLD)

Day 4: Early morning 2-hour flight from Tashkent to Urgench. Transfer to Khiva. Sightseeing tour of Ichan Kala architectural complex. Lunch. Visit silk carpet workshop in Khiva.

It's an early start today for you two-hour flight from Tashkent to Urgench. You will then transfer to Khiva.

Khiva is an ancient city of the Great Silk Road, once famous as a slave trading post. Nowadays the well-preserved city centre is a delightful labyrinth of narrow mud-walled alleyways and spectacular blue mosaics that will transport you back in time.

In the morning you will have a tour of the magnificent Ichan Kala architectural complex, built over the 12th to 19th centuries. Now a UNESCO World Heritage site it was the site of the residence of the last Khan and of high officials, clergy and rich merchants. The complex includes the Ismail Khodja Mausoleum, Mohammed Amin Khan Madrassa, Kunya-Ark Castle (16-17th century), Kalta Minor Tower, Tash-Hovli Palace (19th century), Pahlavan Mahmud Mausoleum (14-18th century), and the Juma Mosque (10th century).



Following this you will have a chance to visit the UNESCO-sponsored silk carpet manufacture a producer of high-quality silk carpets and embroidered textile in Ichan Kala.

After lunch you will have time free for your own exploration or for shopping.

In the late afternoon you will meet your tour leader to go to the Ark Watch Tower to enjoy a wonderful sunset over the city from the roof of the tower, from where there are all round panoramic views over Ichan Kala and the mosques, minarets and city walls of Khiva.

Overnight: Orient Star Hotel or Similar, Khiva (Meals: BLD)

Day 5: Morning departure to Kyzylkum desert. Visit Toprak and Ayaz Kala Fortresses. Picnic lunch in the yurt. On the way back visit cotton fields.

This morning you head out to the desert fortresses of ancient Khorezm in the vast Kyzylkum Desert, which lies between the two great rivers, the Syr Darya and the Amu Darya (the Oxus River of ancient times).

The Kyzylkum Desert (in Turkic meaning 'red sand', although it mostly isn't!) is one of the most extensive deserts in Asia. The crossing of this desert was an important stage on the Great Silk Road - Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan and Tamerlane all passed through here, as did British and Russian spies in the 19th century, often disguised as holy men and horse traders, during the secret stratagems of the 'Great Game', when Russia and England were vying for Influence in the region.

With the first fortified sites said to date from the 4th century BCE this extensive area of now-ruined desert castles, probably originally built to protect early agricultural settlements or to serve as border posts and lookout towers, is traditionally known Elliq Qala, translated as 'fifty fortresses. Each has quite a distinct character; we will visit at least two of them.

Ayaz Qala, possibly the oldest and most famous of these archaeological sites, comprises three fortresses. There are towers, remains of vaulted ceilings, ramparts and battlements with crenelated tops; some surviving sections of wall are up to 10m high. The main fort sits at the top of a 100m hill, rewarding the climb with wide views over the surrounding plains of the Kyzylkum Desert.

Topraq Qala, translated as 'clay fortress', was an expansive walled city thought to be both the fortified administrative centre of ancient Khorezm and a royal residence. At the height of its influence it accommodated a population of 2,500. Amongst the ruins, archaeologists have identified a complex urban layout, which included palaces, temples, houses and streets, plus a fire temple.

The day will include a picnic lunch. On the way back to Khiva you will visit cotton fields before returning to your accommodation.

Overnight: Orient Star Hotel or Similar, Khiva (Meals: BLD)

Day 6: Cross the border to Turkmenistan. Travel to Dashoguz. Visit carpet making facility. Visit architectural monuments.

Today its onward to Turkmenistan! From Khiva it's a just an hour's drive to the border at Savat. You will be accompanied and assisted through the border crossing by your tour manager. They will deal with all the paperwork and formalities and you will just walk through to the Turkmenistan side with your day pack to meet your onward transport. Be prepared though, the whole process can take 3-4 hours!

Welcome to Turkmenistan! Once at a crossroads of civilization, Turkmenistan is nowadays one of the least known and least explored of the Five Stans. It is a country of extremes, of harsh landscapes and extreme climate. Much of the country is desert - the Karakum Desert, (literally 'black sands') a region of vast landscapes and fearsome reputation, makes up eighty per cent of the country's area. In the past Alexander the Great passed through with his armies on his way to conquer India, and other empire builders such as Genghis Khan also left their mark. Important archaeological ruins such as Kunya-Urgench, Nisa and Merv mark major stops along the ancient Silk Road.

After lunch in Dashoguz, you will visit the carpet makers of the 'Turkmenhaly' State Company in Dashoguz. Here, you will be able to watch in detail how the official carpet makers craft beautiful, traditional carpets using long-established techniques and designs from the area.

You continue to Kunya Urgench, where you will visit the Mausoleums of Turabek Khanym, Il Arslan, Tekesh, Najmeddin Kubra, and Sultan Ali Minaret of Kutluk Timur, as well as the remains of the second minaret and the Caravan Saray Keneurgench. Drive back to Dashoguz.

Overnight: Dashoguz Hotel (Meals: BLD)

Day 7: Drive to the 'Door to Hell' at Darvaza - 270 km, approximately 6 hours.

From Dashoguz you will drive to Darvaza in the heart of the vast Karakum Desert, one of the largest sand deserts in the world. It's a long (rather bumpy journey) to get there and you may not arrive until late evening. Along the way, enjoy the stark dry landscapes and stop for photo opportunities.

The gas crater at Darvaza is one of Turkmenistan's most unusual and surreal sights. It is known as the 'Door to Hell'. This crater, set in the middle of the desert, has a diameter of 60-70 metres and is about 30 metres deep. It was formed when a natural gas field collapsed into a crater during gas exploration work and ignited, possibly as long ago as 1971.



In Darvaza you will stay at a yurt camp, surrounded by the vastness of the Karakum and enjoy a night of tranquillity in the desert. Away from city lights, the clear view of the stars is a breathtaking sight. After a fire-cooked dinner you will walk across to this now famous landmark and experience the eerie glow of the burning gas illuminating the floor and rim of the crater against the dark desert sky.

Overnight: Yurt Camp, Darvaza (Meals: BLD)

Day 8: Sunrise at Darvaza. Drive to Ashgabat - 280km, 4 hours. City tour of Ashgabat.

After enjoying a memorable sunrise over the desert, you will have breakfast before setting off for the drive to Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan. The road across this amazing desert can sometimes be a little challenging as it's rather rough and dusty, and you should anticipate a drive of around 4 hours. On arrival in Ashgabat, you will check into your hotel.

Ashgabat is the capital and largest city of Turkmenistan and is one of the strangest cities in the world. In 2013, the Guinness Book of Records awarded Ashgabat the record for the highest number of white-marble-decorated buildings. It's said to be the 'marble heart of central Asia'. It is a city of grand buildings which dazzle the eye, wide, wide avenues and manicured parks and gardens. All around are immense monuments to Turkmen pride.

In the afternoon, you will have a tour to visit some of the most impressive of Ashgabat's monuments, including the Monument of Neutrality, a huge three-legged arch, supposedly inspired by the design of traditional Turkmen tents. With a height of 95m it's higher than the Statue of Liberty! You will also stop by the gardens of Independence Park with its monuments and statues of national heroes. There will be time to visit the Carpets Museum and the excellent National Museum of Turkmenistan, containing many of the treasures recovered from the nearby ancient fortress of Nisa, which you will also visit. Nisa was the capital of an ancient and powerful civilisation, the Parthian Empire, which flourished in the region from mid-3rd century BC to the 3rd century AD. In Ashgabat, there will be an evening of authentic national cuisine accompanied by a vibrant folklore show where boys and girls in traditional attire perform classic dances set to local music, including the energetic "kushdepdi" dance. There may even be the opportunity to join in!

At night, the impressive buildings, monuments, statues and fountains of modern Ashgabat are illuminated in a colourful display, and you will be taken on a short drive to see the city lights - a fitting way to end your visit to this extraordinary city.

Overnight: Sport Hotel or Similar, Ashgabat (Meals: BLD)

Day 9: Fly to Mary. Visit Merv - 40 km, 1 hour each way.

This morning, you will take an early, 40 minute flight to the city of Mary, where you will take breakfast in a local restaurant. Mary is an important city in the southeast of Turkmenistan, founded in the 19th century near the ruins of the ancient, abandoned city of Merv.

You will drive the short distance to visit Merv, formerly an important oasis city in the Karakum Desert. Merv is nowadays a little-known cultural gem, but its importance in the ancient world should not be underestimated. In the 12th century, it is thought to have been one of the largest and most cosmopolitan cities in the world, with an estimated population of over half a million. As well as acting as a stopping place for traders on the Silk Road, Merv was famous for its textiles, notably silk and cotton, and was an important intellectual centre for cultivating notable poets, mathematicians, astronomers, physicians, musicians and physicists. Merv was destroyed by the Mongols, under the son of Genghis Khan, in 1221 AD, with an estimated 700,000 deaths, and it never recovered fully. Merv is one of the world's great vanished cities. In 1888, George Curzon, future viceroy of India, wrote of Merv, "In the midst of an absolute wilderness of crumbling brick and clay, the spectacle of walls, towers, ramparts and domes, stretching in bewildering confusion to the horizon, reminds us that we are in the centre of bygone greatness". You will have plenty of time to explore the numerous ruins and archaeological sites.



Planned for the afternoon is a visit to the Historical Museum in Mary, where you will see many of the archaeological artefacts from Merv and the surrounding areas. Exhibits include ancient manuscripts, pottery and weapons from the medieval period. Dinner will be at a local restaurant.

Overnight: Margush Hotel or Similar, Mary (Meals: BLD)

Day 10: Drive to border with Uzbekistan at Farap - 240 km, 5 hours approximately. Cross into Uzbekistan and drive to Bukhara - 120 km, 1½-2 hours.

Today you will make the long drive to the border at Farap. Again at this crossing into Uzbekistan, you will be looked after by your Tour Leader.

After the crossing you will make the drive to Bukhara, a key city of the Silk Road. Bukhara was for many centuries important to merchants and traders as well as being a major intellectual centre of the Islamic world, renowned for its scholarship and culture.

The city is a wonderful example of well-preserved Islamic architecture and has been listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. The writer Fitzroy Maclean visited Bukhara in 1938 and called it an enchanted city, whose buildings rivalled "the finest architecture of the Italian Renaissance".

Overnight: Rayyan Hotel or Similar, Bukhara (Meals: BLD)

Day 11: A day exploring the architecture and artistry of Bukhara.

As a crucial trading hub along the Silk Road, Bukhara's origins can be traced to the 6th century BCE. Dating largely from the 9th to the 17th centuries, well-preserved mosques, bazaars, madrasas and caravanserais abound.

Caravanserais became ubiquitous across much of the Islamic world by serving as staging posts providing safe respite for the merchants and caravans travelling on the early, landlocked, long-distance trading routes. Roughly a day's journey (20-25 miles) apart, they were typically a square or rectangular structure with a large central courtyard enclosed by stables for the horses and camels, plus many small rooms for storage and lodging.

Sometimes they included a hammam, prayer room or mosque.

Both in the cities and across the land, these caravanserais were significant in supporting the flow of commerce, information and people. From east and west, travellers from different religious backgrounds and speaking discrete languages traded not just merchandise but also stories and ideas; exchanges that seeded the cultural co-existences evident in this part of Central Asia.



Today and tomorrow will be spent soaking in the atmosphere of Bukhara's finest ancient architectural gems and exploring its sumptuous cultural heritage and artisanal treasures. Much of the latter is to be found within Bukhara's iconic historic Caravanserais and Trading Domes in the old city. These hives of activity, dating back to the 16th century, house colourful markets displaying textiles, costumes, carpets, spices, jewellery and other Silk Road treasures. There will be time to meander and explore.

Architecturally, we are spoilt for choice. Among the many places you will visit in this fascinating city are:

- The Chashma-Ayub Mausoleum originally built in the 12th century and rebuilt over the years. A place of great spiritual significance with a sacred spring at its centre, this mausoleum is said to be the site of Job's well, a holy spring connected in legend to the Prophet Job (Ayub's Well in the Koran) and known for its pure water and healing properties.
- Nearby is the fabulous Samanid Mausoleum, the tomb of Ismail Samani and other members of the Samanid dynasty who ruled central Asia in the 9th and 10th centuries.
- The Bolo Haouz Mosque, an example of one of Bukhara's gems from more recent times, built in the early 18th century and the official place of worship for the Emir at that time. The complex consists of a beautifully decorated Friday mosque, a small minaret, and a pond (hauz), which gave the name to the whole.
- The iconic buildings of the Poi Kalyan complex, which are considered the central architectural ensemble and possibly the most recognisable landmark of the old city.
- And indeed not forgetting the impressive earthen ramparts of the Ark of Bokhara, a massive fortress building which now houses museums about its history.

At some point we will find time for lunch in a local restaurant. Both today and tomorrow will be full and stimulating days!

Overnight: Rayyan Hotel or Similar, Bukhara (Meals: BLD)

Day 12: A second day exploring the architecture and artistry of Bukhara.

Bukhara is famed for Zardozi, the ancient art of gold embroidery using gold thread. Masters of this traditional craft use it to decorate men's and women's caftans, dresses, turbans and skullcaps. You will visit the home of a renowned Bukharian artist, Bakhshillo Jumaev and his son is Nodir Jumaev, from the Djumaev family. With over 50 years of expertise as a 6th-generation master—honoured with the title 'People's Master of Uzbekistan'—he

has written the book "Golden Embroidery Art," which details a 2000-year history of golden embroidery in Bukhara and presents more than 30 types of stitches. His house, workshop, and museum, located in the heart of the old city, are a living showcase of five distinct crafts: golden embroidery, silk embroidery, miniature painting, jewellery making, and national women's clothing design. He will explain the production of gold threads, the design of ornaments, and the creation and cutting of embroidery templates, while demonstrating various stitching techniques. You will be encouraged to closely observe the processes, ask questions and be invited to try your hand with this intricate embroidery.

A visit to one of Bukhara's master jewellers is also planned, where we will learn of the splendid traditions of local craftsmanship and discover the art behind exquisite designs such as *tumar*, *zevar*, *shampush*, and *kamar* – each of which carry deep cultural significance and a storied history.

Overnight: Rayyan Hotel or Similar, Bukhara (Meals: BLD)

Day 13: Suzani masterclass in Gijduvan. Drive to Samarkand - 230 km, 4 hours approximately.

This morning we drive the 50 km to Gijduvan for an immersive one-day masterclass on Gijduvan Suzani Embroidery, hosted by the renowned Abdullaev family, famous for their artisanal ceramics and embroidery. You will gain a keen insight into the distinctive design qualities of the Gijduvan embroidery school, which employs natural plant-dyed colours from the region.

We start with an introduction & tour of the Gijduvan ceramics museum and textile workshops, where we learn about the rich history and cultural significance of these craft practices and their symbolic meanings. This is followed by an overview of the tools, materials and pattern selection required for Suzani embroidery. Traditional stitching methods: "Bosma" and "Yurma" will be demonstrated before you participate in hands-on practice to master these techniques.

We break for a lunch featuring traditional Gijduvan dishes.

Later, the natural silk dyeing process, using ingredients like *marena* (from the madder family), *usma* (woad), onion skin and pomegranate rind, will be demonstrated before we embark on a small sample of our own. Choosing a small traditional pattern, you will transfer the design onto fabric and complete it with detailed stitching.

Later, you will drive to Samarkand (230 km, around 4 h). Check-in and dinner at the hotel.

Overnight: Reikartz Amar Hotel or Similar, Samarkand (Meals: BLD)

Day 14: Full day tour of Samarkand. Evening visit to the El Merosi Theatre.

Samarkand is located in the magnificent region of the Oxus and Syr Darya rivers and historically occupied a strategic and advantageous geographical position on the Great Silk Road. It is one of the world's most ancient cities, with a history that stretches back over 2,750 years, making it as old as Rome, Athens and Babylon. It served as the capital city for Tamerlane. There are magnificent examples of medieval architecture preserved in Samarkand, striking in their shape and rich colours

You will have a full day's sightseeing. Firstly, you visit Registan Square, one of the most impressive squares in the world. It was the heart of the ancient city of Samarkand - a public square where people gathered to hear royal proclamations and to enjoy celebrations, as well as having a grislier role as a place of public executions. The square is bounded by three madrasahs, masterpieces of Islamic architecture, the Ulugh Beg Madrasah, the Sher-Dor Madrasah and the Tilya-Kori Madrasah.



You will also visit the Gur-i Amir Mausoleum. Built in the 15th century, this mausoleum is a masterpiece of medieval Islamic architecture. The great Turk-Mongol conqueror Timur (also known as Tamerlane) is buried here along with his two sons and two grandsons. The Gur-i Amir is a fine example of medieval craftsmanship and is important architecturally as being the prototype of much Mughal architecture found in buildings in India, such as the Taj Mahal.

During the day, we will travel the 13 km to Konigil village to visit the Meros (which means ‘heritage’) Paper Mill where paper is made using the bark from mulberry trees. This is a family-run institution that has preserved the ancient art of handmade paper-making over several generations. The Konigil team combines traditional techniques with locally sourced natural fibres and dyes to create paper with a distinct texture and exceptional quality. Visitors are welcome to observe the entire production process from raw material preparation to final finishing—and even participate in a hands-on workshop, where the master artisan shares fascinating insights into this centuries-old craft.

And if time permits, you may explore Samarkand’s famous bazaar. The Siyob bazaar is normally packed with locals, and you can mingle with them as you browse the vast range of fantastic local wares and produce.

Later, before you go to dinner, you will visit the El Merosi Theatre - the theatre of historical costume - where you will see a show demonstrating the traditional costumes of Uzbekistan through the ages, along with classical Uzbek music.

Overnight: Reikartz Amar Hotel or Similar, Samarkand (Meals: BLD)

Day 15: Full programme in Urgut.

Urgut is a small town approximately an hour southeast of Samarkand and situated in the beautiful foothills of the Zeravshan Range at an elevation of roughly 1,000m.

The Urgut bazaar is a large, vibrant event where rural Uzbeks traditionally come to sell their wares. You can find most anything in the three venues, however, the smallish jewellery, textiles and antique section towards the back of the main market may hold particular interest. Be prepared to hone your bargaining skills!

By contrast, just outside the town is the extensive Chor-Chinor garden. ‘Chor-Chinor’ is Uzbek for ‘four plane trees’. Thought to be over 600 years old, the four plane trees, which grow within the garden’s mud-brick wall boundaries, are believed by the local population to be sacred. Legend has it that when the first trees were planted, a clear, cool spring emerged. Many consider this to have healing properties and be holy. Visitors to the garden describe a peaceful, magical atmosphere.



Urgut’s ceramics are instantly recognisable by their distinct decorative style. Vessels such as jugs, bowls and storage containers are adorned with archaic engraved ornaments (chizma) featuring dynamic spiral curls and multi-petaled rosettes in golden-yellow and green hues. Today you will meet the Ablakulov family of ceramists, descendants of the famous master Abdullo Ablakulov, who established the Urgut ceramic school in the 17th Century. The Ablakulov dynasty, now in its seventh generation, continues these celebrated traditions, offering visitors an authentic glimpse into their craft through live demonstrations and detailed discussions of their techniques.

After enjoying a traditional lunch in this cultural heartland, you journey back to Samarkand, breaking en route to visit the Hudjum Silk Carpet Factory. Samarkand, once famous along the Silk Road as a centre of silk production, has a fertile history of intricate carpet weaving. Renowned for its exquisite silk carpets, this enterprise preserves centuries-old weaving methods—from preparing fine silk threads with natural dyes to the meticulous hand-weaving of elaborate patterns—providing guests with a fascinating insight into the whole creative process.

Overnight: Reikartz Amar Hotel or Similar, Samarkand (Meals: BLD)

Day 16: Drive to border with Tajikistan at Jartepa - 45 km. Cross the border and continue to Panjakent - 10km. Sightseeing at Sarazm. Visit Rudaki Museum and Panjakent Centre of Folk Crafts.

Tajikistan is the smallest of the five Central Asian states and shares borders with Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in the north and west, China to the east and Afghanistan to the south. It has more and higher mountains than any other country in the region - nine tenths of the country is mountainous, and more than half of the country is over 3,000m. In the east are the Pamirs and, in the west, the stunning Fann mountains. The capital is Dushanbe, which you do not visit on this trip.

From the border, you drive the short distance to the town of Panjakhent, a UNESCO World Heritage location, built on the site of an ancient city dating back over 2,000 years and another important centre on the Silk Road. From the higher ground of the original city ruins, there is a beautiful view of the current city, river and mountains beyond.

From Panjakent, you will visit the nearby important but little-visited archaeological site of Sarazm, the location of one of the oldest settlements in Central Asia. Sarazm dates back over 5,000 years to the Bronze Age, when it was especially important for its local mines, especially for copper and tin, key components in the making of bronze. The most important find to date from this site is the so-called 'Lady of Sarazm', who was buried in the 4th century BC wearing beautiful jewellery of lapis beads and bracelets of seashells. You will also visit the Rudaki Museum which houses finds from Sarazm as well as from ancient Panjakent.

Later, you will visit the local bazaar and Panjakent's Centre of Folk Crafts, dedicated to showcasing and teaching handmade crafts created by the women of the Zarafshan Valley. The centre offers a vibrant collection of locally made items, including intricate embroidery, delicate needlework and colourful patchwork quilting. Here, visitors can explore authentic artefacts and learn about the traditions and customs that have been passed down through generations in the Zarafshan Valley, while also having the opportunity to engage with the artisans and perhaps even try their hand at some of these customary techniques.

Overnight: Panjakent Plaza Hotel or Similar, Panjakent (Meals: BLD)

Day 17: 4 x 4 day tour to the Fann Mountains, 2,139m/7,018ft. Explore the Seven Lakes. Take tea at local tea house.

It is just a short drive of about one hour from Panjakent to reach the beautiful Fann Mountains. The Fann Mountains are an extension of the Pamir-Alay range and feature about a hundred peaks, with several over 5,000 meters, including the highest peak of the region Chimtarga at 5,489 m. In these mountains Tajik shepherds graze their flocks on remote upland pastures and mountain villages are home to friendly local people with unique traditions, customs and language.



Though relatively unknown, these lovely mountains are becoming better known as (for Tajikistan!) they are more easily accessible and as well as spectacular landscapes, they offer excellent opportunities for some fine hikes and trekking. Here are numerous beautiful snowcapped summits and glaciers, as well as many dazzling blue and green lakes - known as the Marguzor Lakes (the Seven Lakes).

You will explore the Seven Lakes area and also have the opportunity to meet some local people and enjoy their hospitality when you take tea at a local tea house. After your exploration, you will return to Panjakent to overnight.

Overnight: Panjakent Plaza Hotel or Similar, Panjakent (Meals: BLD)

Day 18: Drive to Khujand - 275 km, 4 hours - passing through the Shakriston Tunnel, 3,378m/11,083ft. Bazaar in Istaravshan. Sightseeing in Khujand.

Your journey today takes you from Panjakent to Khujand through a scenic landscape of mountains and valleys and through the famous Shakriston Tunnel. At five kilometres long this tunnel, which was built with funding from China in 2012, is the longest road tunnel in Central Asia.

You break in Istaravshan to visit the bazaar, an authentic, bustling and vibrant oriental market where it is said you can find everything. Its intricately patterned arches and domes reflect the city's Persian heritage, under which the narrow alleys and stalls display a vivid array of goods from fresh produce, aromatic spices and breads to handcrafted jewellery, intricate wood carving, ceramics and metalwork.

You finally arrive at the city of Khujand, strategically set on the banks of Syr Darya River and lying at the mouth of the verdant Fergana Valley. Khujand was once an important Silk Road city, dating back about 2,500 years to the days of the Persian Empire, and said to have been founded by Alexander the Great. It is Tajikistan's second-largest city and is nowadays a bustling metropolis. One of the most impressive buildings in Khujand is the magnificently restored Khujand Fortress, which houses an interesting museum. Also in the historical centre of Khujand, you may visit the beautiful Mausoleum of Sheikh Muslihiddin, named after Muslihiddin Khujandi, a

poet and ruler of the town who lived in the 12th century. His mausoleum has been rebuilt and extended many times since the 12th century.

Across from this complex is the Panjshanbe Bazaar, one of the largest and most interesting covered markets in Central Asia. It is especially busy on Thursday, after which it is named - 'panchshanbe' being Tajik for Thursday. It's worth climbing the stairs to the top landings to experience the vista and energy of this large, airy market. A picturesque, buzzing and colourful view of laden stalls stretching in every direction.

Overnight: Hotel Parliament Palace or Similar, Khujand (Meals: BLD)

Day 19: Drive from Khujand to Kokand in Uzbekistan - 140 km, 5-6 hours. Tour Kokand. Visit a ceramic workshop in Rishtan and drive to Fergana.

Today, you drive for about 80 km to the border near the town of Koni Bodom, where you cross back into Uzbekistan. This is a very quiet border, and it should be a relatively quick and painless process. You then continue to the town of Kokand, situated in the western part of the Fergana Valley, the most fertile region of Uzbekistan.

Kokand city is one of the most ancient cities of Uzbekistan and was an important trade centre on the Silk Road up to the time of its destruction by the Mongols in the 13th century. It came to fame again in the 18th and 19th centuries as the capital of the rich and powerful Kokand Khanate, becoming again a cultural and trading centre. It was also famed as a religious centre and had a reported 300 mosques as well as countless madrassahs. Today, Kokand is known as the 'City of Artisans' and is famed for its artisan workers and fine traditional handicrafts. You will visit the Khudoyar Khan Palace, once the opulent residence of the last ruler of the Kokand Khanate and known as one of the most extravagant oriental palaces in Central Asia. Nowadays, the remaining façade, courtyards and rooms are still immensely impressive.



From Kokand, you will drive in an hour to the city of Rishtan, a city famous for its brilliant blue and white ceramics. Here you will visit the house and workshop of ceramic master Rustam Usmanov. Master Usmanov hails from a family of renowned Rishtan artisans whose legacy spans several generations, and he is celebrated for his expert glazing techniques and intricate hand-painted designs. Guests are invited to explore his workshop and observe the traditional ceramic production process firsthand.

From Rishtan, you drive to the town of Fergana (about 45 minutes).

Overnight: Tantana Hotel or Similar, Fergana (Meals: BLD)

Day 20: Explore Margilan's master artisans. Visit Yodgorlik Silk Factory.

Margilan (adjacent to Fergana) is known as the silk capital of Uzbekistan. It is where generations of skilled craftsmen and craftswomen uphold long respected traditions developed from the 10th century onwards when stunning silks were traded along the ancient silk routes into the Middle East and Europe. Here you will see all the silk hand weaving processes and gain a full understanding of the production of traditional silk fabrics such as Khan Atlas, Adras and Ikat.

You will visit the Yodgorlik Silk Factory, renowned for its exquisite Ikat patterns and learn about the cultural significance of Ikat in local heritage. Here skilled artisans preserve traditional resist-dyeing and weaving techniques that have been passed down through generations, producing vibrant and intricately patterned silk fabrics.

You will have a tour of the factory to witness the entire meticulous production cycle from sericulture and the unravelling of the silk thread from the cocoons, through to the tying and natural dying of the long lustrous warp threads, to the final weaving and finishing of this stunning cloth.

Overnight: Tantana Hotel or Similar, Fergana (Meals: BLD)

Day 21: Visit the Kumtepa Bazaar. Batik workshop with master Sobirjon Umarov. Visit the Madrasah of Sayib Ahmad Khodja (time permitting. Train to Tashkent.

Today we will visit the Kumtepa Bazaar and wonderful local market with a substantial area solely focused on textiles and fabrics.

You will then continue on to the house of the renowned master Sobirjon Umarov to witness the delicate art of traditional batik and suzani embroidery - an opportunity to observe his expert techniques and perhaps even try your hand at these intricate crafts.

If time allows, you will conclude your journey at the historic Madrasah of Sayib Ahmad Khodja, where you discover exquisite Kolip and Bakhmal (a silk velvet weave on silk and cotton base) fabrics, each piece reflecting the legacy of meticulous textile craftsmanship.

You will then bid farewell to Fergana to take the afternoon train to Tashkent and transfer to your hotel. There will be a farewell meal in the evening with the chance to reflect on your adventures and share your memories of this amazing part of the world.

Overnight: Al Anvar Hotel or Similar, Tashkent (Meals: BLD)

Day 22: Transfer to the airport. Fly to London.

After breakfast you will be transferred to the airport to catch your flight home. You will most likely go via Istanbul if you are landing in London.

(Meals: B)

Our grading system

This Textiles and Treasures of Central Asia is graded as a Tour, as described below.

Tours

Tours may include any of the following activities: sightseeing, visiting local villages, exploring temples, game viewing, birdwatching, husky sledding, mountain flights, city tours and dramatic journeys by road, rail, or river. Occasionally there will be gentle walks so that you can properly explore the cultural sites you are visiting.

What the price includes

Mountain Kingdoms aims to offer the best value for money. We do not charge extra for meal packages or apply local charges and try to ensure that all the key elements of your holiday are included.

What's included:

- ✓ 21 x breakfasts, 20 x lunches and 20 x dinners included
- ✓ Sue Lawty as tour leader
- ✓ Services of specialised city and local guides in different locations
- ✓ Good standard hotel accommodation (usually 3-4 star) in main cities, best hotels or guest houses available in outlying towns on a twin-share basis
- ✓ 1 night in a yurt camp on a multi-share basis
- ✓ Group airport transfers for international flights on arrival and departure
- ✓ Economy class return air fares from the UK & UK
- Departure Tax (flight inclusive only)
- ✓ All internal flights and domestic transfers
- ✓ All road transport by private vehicles
- ✓ Sightseeing and entrance fees where specified
- ✓ Carbon offsetting with the Ecoan Tree Planting Project (for clients taking our flight inclusive option)
- ✓ A free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle

Airport transfers

The cost of a transfer to/from the airport is included in the price of your holiday. This is a single group transfer which is arranged to coincide with the timings of the group flights. If you book your own flights which arrive/depart at different times to this, or we book flights at your request that have different timings, we will be happy to provide a quote for a separate transfer. Please contact us should you require any further information.

What's not included:

- ✗ Travel insurance
- ✗ Visa fees
- ✗ Camera fees (this is a very small charge levied to take photos inside some of the museum complexes)

Water-to-Go Reusable Bottle Campaign

We have joined the campaign to help cut down on the use of plastics and, in particular, single-use water bottles. To do this we have teamed up with the revolutionary company, Water-to-Go who have developed a multi-use drinking bottle with a reusable filter that eliminates over 99.9% of all microbiological contaminants. This makes water from virtually any source safe to drink and significantly reduces the need for travellers to buy bottles of water wherever they are in the world.

Our clients, who are not given a free Mountain Kingdoms kit bag for their holiday (these are required for certain treks), will instead receive a free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle. These unique Water-to-Go bottles can also be purchased from us at a discounted rate.

For further information about our campaign visit <https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/water-to-go-reusable-bottle-campaign>.

Your accommodation

We will endeavour to secure the hotels named in the itinerary but if our first choice of hotel is not available we will book a suitable alternative of a similar standard.



Al Anvar Hotel or Similar, Tashkent

We mainly use the Al Anvar Hotel in Tashkent. A modern, comfortable hotel with an indoor pool and sauna as well as a terrace and a bar. Rooms come complete with tea/coffee making facilities, fridges and free Wi-Fi.



Dashoguz Hotel

This is a new hotel near the centre of Dashoguz and is modern and spacious with a lot of white marble decor - seemingly obligatory in this part of the world! The hotel has a bar and a large restaurant serving a variety of cuisines, there is also an indoor pool and souvenir shop. Rooms are a good size and have air-conditioning and Wi-Fi.



Sport Hotel or Similar, Ashgabat

This large hotel is in the centre of Ashgabat, within the 'Olympic Village' and next to a lively mall. Like the city of Ashgabat it is built in marble and is quite ornate! Rooms are well-equipped and spacious with comfortable beds and good attached bathrooms. Wi-Fi is available. The hotel has a restaurant and an indoor pool and you can enjoy far-reaching views from the 9th floor roof terrace.



Rayyan Hotel or Similar, Bukhara

The Rayyan is a small restored boutique hotel located right in the heart of the old city. It is beautifully decorated in traditional style with colourful tiles and antique furnishings. The en suite guest rooms are air-conditioned with a good range of amenities including kettles and fridges. Free Wi-Fi is available.



Reikartz Amar Hotel or Similar, Samarkand

The Reikartz Amar is a new hotel in the centre of Samarkand with good facilities. Rooms are bright and modern and the hotel has its own restaurant and an attractive outdoor terrace. We may use an alternative hotel of a similar standard in Samarkand such as the 3* Zilol Baxt. It is centrally located within walking distance, or a 5 minute taxi ride, of the main sights of Samarkand. The hotel has a seasonal pool and sun terrace, whilst rooms have minibars and free Wi-Fi.



Panjakent Plaza Hotel or Similar, Panjakent

The Panjakent Plaza is a mid-range hotel on the outskirts of Panjakent town. Rooms are large and light with comfortable beds and modern bathroom facilities. There is a restaurant and bar on site, and the hotel has a sun terrace for relaxation.



Hotel Parliament Palace or Similar, Khujand

The Parliament Palace is located right on the river in Khujand. Large rooms have comfortable beds and private bathrooms and offer either river or mountain views. There is a fitness centre and spa at the hotel as well as restaurant and bar. Wi-Fi is available.



Tantana Hotel or Similar, Fergana

The Tantana is a modern, mid-range hotel that offers a comfortable stay in Fergana. Rooms are spacious with Wi-Fi and good private bathrooms. The hotel has its own restaurant which serves a generous buffet breakfast.

Meal arrangements

21 x breakfasts, 20 x lunches and 20 x dinners included

Flight arrangements

Flight inclusive from price

Our 'Flight inclusive from' price is based on the best fare available at the time of printing. As airfares change on a constant basis, this should be used only as a guide price. Rest assured that, at the time of booking, we will endeavour to get the best possible price for the flights you need. Remember, the earlier you book the greater your chances of securing the best fare.

Flight inclusive packages booked through Mountain Kingdoms are protected through our ATOL bonding scheme.

Flight upgrades and regional Airports

Please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 for flight options from regional UK airports, Business Class upgrades, alternative airlines and stopovers. Please also check our website for the most up to date flight inclusive 'from' prices.

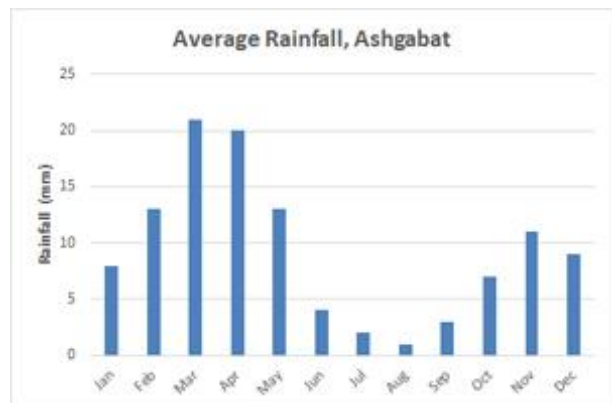
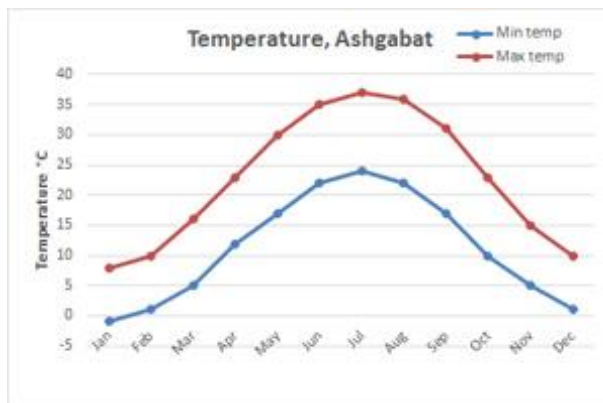
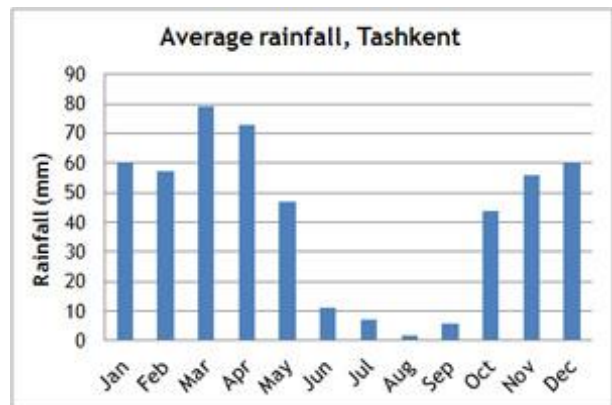
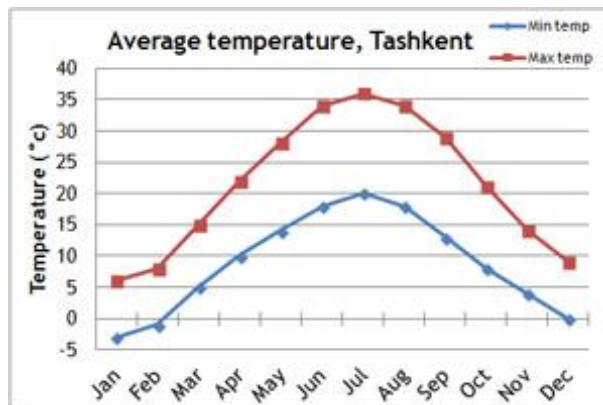
Further information

When we receive your booking, we send you a full Trip Dossier which contains details of any visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. If you do have queries at this initial stage do call us on 01453 844400 and we will be pleased to offer advice.

The nature of adventure travel

Every effort will be made to keep to this itinerary but we cannot guarantee that things may not change, either before you travel or while you are away. By its very nature, adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected, particularly in more remote areas. A variety of factors such as adverse weather conditions, changes to local schedules and difficulties with transportation can all contribute to the need to make changes to the itinerary, often at the very last minute. Our Operations Manager and your Trip Leader will make every effort to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary and minimise the impact of any changes, but an easy-going and flexible nature is a real asset! Please note that all timings and distances given are approximate.

Climate information



Extensions

Extending your holiday

If you would like additional inspiration on how or where to extend your holiday please call us on 01453 844400.

Please contact
one of our
experts for
extension ideas

There are many ways you can extend your holiday with Mountain Kingdoms: you could book extra hotel nights at the start or end of your trip, arrange a personal sightseeing tour or enjoy some other exciting activities. We can also assist with flight and hotel upgrades. In fact, whatever's available we can help make it happen. We're happy to suggest ideas, provide quotes and make all the arrangements.

Why book this holiday with Mountain Kingdoms?

- Textiles and Treasures of Central Asia is a unique, specialist tour only offered by Mountain Kingdoms
- This is a carefully curated tour of many of the most important cultural, historic and scenic sights across three of the 'Stans' of Central Asia.
- The tour is led by Sue Lawty, one of Britain's foremost textile artists who will bring an enormous amount of knowledge to the tour
- Sue will be supported by local expert guides, who will also help navigate the border crossings and other logistical complexities of the tour on your behalf.
- Accommodation is in comfortable and well-located hotels, there is also a night in a yurt camp in the desert.
- We use a modern, comfortable, air-conditioned minibuses and 4x4 vehicles (as appropriate) for the driving sections of the tour.
- Several members of the Mountain Kingdoms team have been to Uzbekistan and Central Asia and will be very happy to discuss their experiences and answer any questions you may have.
- We have a maximum group size of 12 to ensure all the benefits of a genuine small group experience.
- If you wish to fly with a specific airline, from a regional UK airport or on alternative dates to the main group we would be happy to arrange this for you. Please contact our Flights Manager for flight options, quotes and further information.
- As part of our commitment to 'Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency', we will be carbon-offsetting all international flights booked through us by donating funds to the Ecoan Tree Planting Project in Peru.

If we've tempted you to take your next holiday with us, we advise you to check availability and you can do this via our website: www.mountainkingdoms.com or by calling the team on +44 (0)1453 844400. Bookings can be made online, by phone or by completing a booking form and returning it to us. We can also provisionally hold places if you need time to consider your options.

Mountain Kingdoms - distinctly different

Truly independent

In an age where many so-called 'independent' travel companies have in fact been bought out by multi-national giants, we remain fiercely independent with all the benefits this offers our clients.

Value for money prices with an emphasis on quality

We are not in the business of cutting our itineraries and services to the bone to offer eye-catching cheap prices. We use some of the best airlines, and typically 3 or 4 star hotels in cities. We include the majority of meals and private transport for road travel. We use excellent equipment and appoint well-trained staff and leaders. Last year, over 98% of our clients rated their Mountain Kingdoms holiday as 'excellent' or 'good'. We are members of AITO and bound by their quality charter.

Complete financial security

You can book with us confident that your holiday has full financial protection. Flight inclusive holidays are financially protected by the Civil Aviation Authority under ATOL licence number 2973 and 'Land Only' holidays are covered by a bond secured with ABTOT.

No Surcharge Guarantee

Your peace of mind is important to us so we have a No Surcharge Guarantee on all Land Only and Flight Inclusive bookings. This means that there will be no change to the price of your holiday once we have confirmed your booking, regardless of fluctuations in exchange rates or fuel prices.

Award winning Responsible Tourism

We feel strongly that all our holidays should benefit local communities, protect the environment and respect local traditions, religion and heritage. You can read more about the charities we support and our Responsible Tourism commitments and initiatives on the following page or at www.mountainkingdoms.com.

Genuine small group travel

Almost all of our holidays have a maximum group size of just 12, plus leader. This provides more contact with your leader, readier access to off-the-beaten-path areas, greater interaction with local communities and a reduced environmental impact.

Loyalty Discount

If you have previously travelled with us we recognise your loyalty with a discount on future trips.

Booking your holiday - it couldn't be easier

Once you've chosen your Mountain Kingdoms holiday you can book online, call the office or complete and post a booking form which can be found in our brochure or downloaded from our website. If you would like to hold a place on one of our trips, whilst you make up your mind, please give us a call to make a provisional booking. This is a no-obligation, no-cost booking and we will hold your place until space comes under pressure or we need your decision.

Comprehensive information

When we receive your booking we send you a full trip dossier which contains details of visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. In fact, everything you need to know to give you peace of mind and allow you to prepare for your trip of a lifetime.



RESPONSIBLE TOURISM STATEMENT CLIMATE EMERGENCY PLAN



For over 33 years, Mountain Kingdoms has been offering people the chance to visit amazing places on this extraordinary planet. We now offer trips to all corners of the world, but we are conscious that inevitably our holidays have a detrimental impact on the world around us, and we want to do all we can to reduce our carbon emissions. We are a signatory to Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency, along with a growing number of like-minded, reputable tour operators. For more information, please visit www.tourismdeclares.com

From 2020 onwards, we will be focusing on how we can reduce the carbon emissions that our holidays produce, and how to counterbalance this carbon by supporting carbon offset measures. Here are some of our current and future plans to minimise the impact of our business as a whole:

Carbon Offsetting

Already doing:

- ✓ We have been offsetting carbon since 2007, but will be increasing our donations to the [Ecoan tree planting project](#) in Peru this year. This is with a trusted partner where the funds go directly to a project where the community plants trees on its own land.

Will do:

- ✓ We are working on making our carbon offsetting more accurate and targeted.
- ✓ In future, we will add to that a further estimate for carbon produced by hotels, local road travel, trains and internal flights to arrive at a carbon offset sum for each trip we operate.
- ✓ Carbon offsetting will be included in our holiday prices. For our Flight Inclusive holidays it will include the international flight and any emissions produced by inland travel and accommodation. Our Land Only prices will include the cost of offsetting emissions caused by inland travel and accommodation.

Reducing Carbon Emissions

Already doing:

- ✓ We already offer the majority of our customers a free filtered water bottle which means they can instantly cut down on their single-use plastic consumption. This will be an ongoing project.
- ✓ We already predominantly use locally owned hotels, but will continue to ensure that, where possible, we use these rather than multinational chains.
- ✓ We have joined the Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency initiative to stand alongside like-minded travel companies, to work together to initiate best practices to make tourism as sustainable as possible.

Will do:

- ✓ We will re-evaluate our flights to make sure we are using the most fuel efficient airlines with the youngest fleets and, where possible, direct flights for each trip.
- ✓ We will stop offering unnecessary optional flights – for example our Everest sightseeing trip.
- ✓ We will eliminate unnecessary staff flights wherever possible.
- ✓ We will look at minimising internal flights.
- ✓ We will be asking all our worldwide agents and suppliers to look at their own carbon footprint and encourage them to reduce it.
- ✓ We will promote our more low impact trips to give customers an informed choice.

As part of our wider commitment to Responsible Tourism, we will continue to support a number of charities with whom we have had a long standing relationship over many years. These include: Shiva Charity in Nepal (Ginette Harrison School), Simien Mountains Mobile Medical Service and Porter Welfare, as well as setting aside a sum for emergency disaster relief should the need arise.

