

### ***Monuments, Markets and Mountains of Central Asia***

As the title suggests, Central Asia is noted for important archaeological sites representing outposts of Greek, Persian, Chinese and Roman civilizations. However, Uzbekistan in particular, is blessed with whole city blocks full of some of the most evocative and striking buildings in the world, erected around the time of the great Tamerlane and his successors. Mosques, mausoleums, and *madrasas* are decorated with exquisite carving and tile work. Khiva and Bukhara offer not only these monuments but medieval era domestic and commercial sectors as well – in effect they are huge open-air museums. In almost every stop we will have difficulty tearing ourselves away from the wonderful *souks*, most of which have made few concessions to the tourist trade. You are as likely to find car parts as fine handicrafts. Two fabled Sunday Bazaars on our itinerary, in Ashgabat and Karakol, attract nomads from great distances. Lastly, our senses will be exhilarated by the extreme geography, from towering, snow-capped peaks to stark deserts. In Kyrgyzstan, we will plunge well off the beaten path as we trek past pastoral flocks, on our way to high mountain pastures, waterfalls and wild flowers.

#### **May 29- 30 USA to Turkey**

Depart from JFK on a night flight to Istanbul, Turkey arriving early the following morning. Transfer to the airport hotel for the day to rest or head out into the city for some sightseeing. Transfer back to the airport for our late night flight to Turkmenistan.

#### **May 31 Turkey to Turkmenistan**

Arrive in Turkmenistan very early in the morning. We will be met at the Ashgabat airport and taken to the Hotel Nissa or similar for early check-in. The remainder of the day is at leisure. (B, D)

#### **June 01 Ashgabat to Mary (Merv)**

Drive north through the Karakum Desert via Anau and Kahakato to Mary, known locally as Merv. Legend has it that camels were first domesticated in Anau. A holy site to Muslims, it was a Parthian city from the time of Alexander the Great until 300 CE. Upon arrival in Merv we transfer into the Hotel Marguch or similar for our overnight. (B,L)

#### **June 02 Mary (Merv) to Ashgabat**

We spend the morning touring Mary or Merv as it has been known since the time of Ghengis Khan. During the Greek era, it was called Margiana and it was once prominent under Persian, early Christian, Mongol, Timurid and Seljuk Turk hegemony. Places we will visit include the museum, and the giant circular rampart of Erk Kala, all that remains of a 6<sup>th</sup> century BC fortress. We stop at the Sultan Sanjar Mausoleum, an impressive building of exquisite brickwork completed in 1140 CE. We depart early afternoon for the return trip to Ashgabat and the Hotel Nissa or similar. (B,L)

#### **June 03 Ashgabat**

Full day tour beginning with the Tolkuchka Bazaar (Sunday market). For native handicrafts, especially carpets, this is one of the finest markets in the world. In the afternoon we will visit the National Museum of History and Ethnography which has a rich collection of ivory, discovered during the excavations at Old Nissa, residence of Parthian kings from the Arshakid Dynasty. Return to the Hotel Nissa or similar for overnight. (B)

#### **June 04 Ashgabat to Tashauz**

Morning flight to Tashauz and upon arrival we proceed directly to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Kunya Urgench. Situated across the Amu Darya (Oxus River), it was once the capital of Khorezm, known as Gurganj. We will see the mausoleums from the pre Mongol period and the later Mongol period tomb of Tjurabeg Khanum. Also preserved from the same period is a caravanserai with the stunning 62m Kutlug Temir minaret with winding brick staircase. Later, cross over into Uzbekistan and drive to Nukus to visit the Savitsky Museum, a collection of over

95,000 pieces including Uzbekistan fine arts, applied Karakalpak folk art, and ancient art from the region of Khorezm. We will proceed to Ayaz Kala, where we will overnight in a comfortable Yurt camp. Camel rides are optional. (B,D)

#### **June 05 Ayaz Kala to Khiva**

We begin our day with a tour of the fortress complex of Ayaz Kala, built in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE. Perched high on a hill with staggering views of the surrounding countryside, it is an imposing site. We proceed to another impressive ruin, Toprak Kala from the Kushan period. Built in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries CE, the fire temple is of particular interest. Our third stop is Kizil Kala one of the frontier fortresses from the Kang Kiui period. We depart for Khiva and overnight at the Hotel Malika Khorezm Hotel. (B)

#### **June 06 Khiva**

The UNESCO World Heritage site of Khiva is described as one of the best-preserved cities on the Silk Road and the most homogenous collection of architecture in the Islamic world. This compact, walled city was once rather isolated and a haven for slave traders. We will explore Ichan Kala, a forest of tall minarets and domed roofs surrounded by dwellings and public buildings reflecting rich traditions of popular oriental architecture.

Kunya Ark, the residence of the rulers of Khiva, is a massive, fortified citadel at the center of the city. First built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century by Oq Shish Bobo and later expanded by the khans of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it is comprised of living quarters, a mosque, the palace of the khan, the residence of his harem, the mint, the arsenal, the stables and the jail. Some of the other sites we will see include the Tomb of Sayid Allauddin, the Mausoleum of Pakhlavan Mahmud, the Shir Gazi Khan Madrasa, the Islam Khodja Madrasa and Minaret, the Juma Mosque and Tash Khauli, the most beautiful architectural decoration of the city. Return to our hotel for overnight. (B)

#### **June 07 Khiva to Bukhara**

We depart early morning for Bukhara via the Kizilkum (red sands) desert, stopping en route at a gazelle sanctuary. We will also stretch our legs in a lovely park situated on the Amudarya (Oxus river). Arrive Bukhara in the late afternoon and transfer to the Hotel Zargaron. Tonight we will attend a folk show, the Bukorcha Song and Dance Ensemble in Madrasa Nadirkhon Devanbegi. Return to the hotel for our overnight. (B,D)

#### **June 08 Bukhara**

This UNESCO World Heritage Site is known as Central Asia's most ancient living city. In the morning we will visit the Ark Citadel, home of the rulers of Bukhara for over a

millennium. We next visit the oldest commercial area of the city. Covered bazaars were among dozens of specialized markets in the town built at the junction of caravan routes. Four major cupolas or merchant buildings have survived: Toki Zargaron – cupola of jewelers, Abdulakhan Tim – a center of silk sales, Toki Telpak Furushon – cupola of the sellers of caps, and Toki Sarafon – cupola of moneychangers. We will have lunch at the Hammom Restaurant in what were once the Sarafon Baths. We continue our tour of with visits to the Lyabi Khauz in the heart of the city, the Jewish Quarter and the synagogue. This evening we will attend a wine tasting at the Nugai Caravanserai and time permitting we will visit the Silk and Spice Festival. Return to our hotel for overnight. (B,L)

#### **June 09 Bukhara**

In the morning we will visit the Ulugbek Madrasa (1417 CE), one of three built in Uzbekistan by Timur's grandson Ulugbek. Of interest is the Abdul Aziz Khan Madrasa constructed by the Astrakhanid ruler of the same name. Archaeologists have found the remains of a 5<sup>th</sup> century Zoroastrian temple destroyed by the Arabs and an earlier Buddhist temple underneath the *madrasa*. We continue to the "pearl of the east" the Samanid Mausoleum, the family tomb of the Samanid Dynasty from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> century. Following lunch at the Kafe Uchkoza our tour of the southwestern area of the city will include the 19<sup>th</sup> century house of Fazullah Khodjaev, the 17<sup>th</sup> century Volidoi Abdul Aziz Mosque and the 16<sup>th</sup> century Sheikh Jalal Gate. Return to our hotel for our overnight. (B,L)

#### **June 10 Bukhara to Shakhriyabz and on to Samarkand**

We depart very early for Shakhriyabz or "green town" the birthplace of Tamerlane, stopping en route at Karshi market. Upon arrival we have lunch before setting out on our tour. Monuments we will see include: Ak Sarai or white palace, Dorut Tilovat or House of Meditation, Kok Gumboz (blue dome) Mosque, Dorus Siodat – the seat of power and might, and the family crypt of the Timurids. We continue to Samarkand and time permitting we will visit Urgut. We will overnight at the Hotel Malika. (B,L, D)

#### **June 11 Penjikent in Tajikistan**

Today we cross from Uzbekistan into Penjikent in Tajikistan. Set in a beautiful high valley terrace near the banks of the river Zaravshan, Penjikent contains the best-preserved ruins of the Sogdian civilization, later the Roman Province of Transoxiana. First established in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE by the Archaemenid Persian Empire, Sogdiana was abandoned right after the Arab invasion in the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE. We will see remains of houses, a citadel with Zoroastrian temples, and the city bazaar. At the end of the day we return to our hotel in Samarkand for our overnight. (B,L)

#### **June 12 Samarkand**

We begin our full day of sightseeing in Registan Square site of a 13<sup>th</sup> century bazaar and the center of trade and cultural life in medieval Samarkand. It is surrounded by three beautiful *madrasas* built in different periods. Ulugbek Madrasa was built between 1417-1420 by order of Ulugbek, a grandson of Tamerlane. This monumental *madrasa* with portal decorated with five and ten-pointed stars and spirals of majolica was the greatest University of Central Asia in the 15th century. Shir-Dor Madrasa is the mirror reflection of Ulugbek Madrasa. The portal is decorated with mosaic tigers and gazelles. It was built in the 17th century, 200 years after Ulugbek Madrasa was erected. Tillya-Kari

Madrasa (built 1660) is the third madrasa on Registan Square. It has a mosque with golden paintings inside. It was built by the order of ruler Bakhodir Yalangtush, 10 years after the Shir-Dor Madrasa. Bibi Khanum Mosque, once the biggest mosque in Central Asia, was erected by order of Tamerlane after his victorious Indian campaign in 1399. The architects, artists, craftsmen from all the countries conquered by Tamerlane took part in the construction of the mosque. We will visit Shakhi Zinda Necropolis, a site of pilgrimage visited since the 11<sup>th</sup> century. It consists of about 20 mausoleums built between the 11th and 19th centuries. The complex appeared around the grave of Khusam ibn Abbas, the cousin of Prophet Muhammad who is said to have come to Samarkand in the 8th century. There you can see the finest samples of majolica, mosaic and terracotta tile work. We will also see Gur Emir, the 13<sup>th</sup> century mausoleum of the family of Amir Timur. This afternoon we will visit Afrosiab (old Samarkand) Site and Museum. It displays a model of the ancient city and fortress walls, pottery, weaponry, coinage, altars and most of all the mural paintings from the 7<sup>th</sup> century. In the outskirts of Samarkand on the hill of Khuhak is the Ulugbek's Observatory (15th century), with astronomical instruments. In that observatory Ulugbek and other scholars completed the famous "Tables of stars". This evening we will attend the Sound & Light show in Shir Dor Madrasa. Return to our hotel for overnight. (B)

#### **June 13 Samarkand to Tashkent**

Depart very early overland for Tashkent arriving in time for lunch. In the afternoon we will tour the Museum of the History of the Peoples of Uzbekistan. Containing 8,000 exhibits, it is Tashkent's largest museum displaying the archaeological findings of the life of people of Central Asia from ancient to modern times. We will also wander through the old city where we will see mausoleums, *madrasas* and the Chorsu Bazaar, the oldest market in the city. Tonight we attend a performance at the famous opera house. Afterwards, we return to the Dedeman Silk Road Hotel or similar for our overnight or head to the airport for our flight back to the US via Istanbul. The Turkish Air flight departs at 3:00AM (as of the time of this printing), the morning of **June 14**. (B, D)

#### **June 14 Tashkent to Bishkek**

Very early morning flight (6:00AM) to Bishkek where we will be met upon arrival and taken to the Silk Road Lodge or similar to rest before we set out for our day of sightseeing. Our city tour will include the bazaar, the main squares in the city center, most important being the central square Ala-Too with the Historical Museum. In the bazaar, we will meet colorfully dressed and quite South Asian-looking women and children who are begging or working as fortune-tellers. Most are Central Asian gypsies. Called 'luli' (loo-LEE) or 'chuki' (choo-KEY), they originally come from the outskirts of Samarkand, the Vaksh valley in southern Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. They number 20,000 to 30,000 in the region and mostly speak Tajik (Persian). We stop for dinner at 12 Chimney's Restaurant at the Tyoplye Klyuchi ("Hot Springs"), once a reputed sanatorium, now a place for rest and relaxation. Return to our hotel for our overnight. (B,L)

#### **June 15 Ala Archa National Park**

We depart early morning for Ala Archa National Park and a day of hiking or horseback riding. The park is just 40 km away from the city and within an hour of leaving the city center, we will be in an alpine gorge through which the fast

flowing Ala-Archa River runs, flanked by tall, snow-covered, peaks with steep-sided, forested mountain slopes. After arriving at the main gate of the park, a gentle 20-minute walk will bring us to the base camp at an altitude of 2100 m. From here there is a choice of several possible routes to explore further into the park, or one can choose to stay at the camp, relax and simply enjoy the magnificent views. A nice path gradually gaining height leads to the Tepshe plateau (altitude 2400 meters). A gorgeous view to gorge-head Ala-Archa opens from the plateau. From the upper boundary of the plateau the path leads to the slope and, ascending gradually, reaches rocks from where the 40 meter-high Ak-Sai waterfall rushes down. The area surrounding the waterfall offers many lovely spots for picnics. At the end of the day we return to Bishkek for our overnight. (B,L )

#### **June 16 Bishkek to Karakol**

We drive to and along Lake Issyk K l, with a slight detour to visit the 11th century Burana Tower. On the lake, we visit a co-operative in the village of Tamchy to witness the skills of local handicraftsmen and women with a large display of "shyrdaks" in front of a yurt. We also visit an open-air museum of petroglyphs in the lakeside town of Cholpon Ata where we stop for lunch. Lake Issyk K l which means "the hot lake" in the Turkic languages of Central Asia, is the second largest alpine lake in the world after Lake Titicaca on the border of Peru and Bolivia. At an altitude of 1609 m above sea level, it never freezes and, at the shore, warms up to 26 C in summer. Transparent and very clean, it is ideal for swimming and water sports. Two mountain chains of the Central Tien Shan range border the lake: in the north the Kungei-Alatau (in Turkic "facing the sun"), and in the south the Terskei-Alatau (in Turkic "turned away from the sun"). About one hundred large and small rivers flow down into the lake from these peaks carving gorges and canyons into the mountain flanks. 400 km from Bishkek we reach Karakol, a tidy town just southeast of the lake. Have dinner at the Kench restaurant and overnight at the Hotel Amir or similar. (B, L, D)

#### **June 17 Karakol**

Early morning visit to the Sunday Market mal bazari "... a must-see: several blocks jammed with people from throughout the region here to buy and sell horses, cattle, sheep, camels..." We will tour the mosque built without nails by the Dungans (Chinese Muslims) in 1910. It is unique due to the Chinese Buddhist influence on the design of the building and could easily be mistaken as a Buddhist temple. We also visit a classic wooden Russian Orthodox Church. In the afternoon we will take a flight over Inylchek Glacier and the high peaks of Khan-Tengri and Pobeda and land at Inylchek Base Camp for a short hike (see optional cost in pricing section). Return to the hotel for our overnight. (B, D)

#### **June 18 Altyn Arashan Valley**

Visit Altyn Arashan, a postcard-perfect alpine valley that offers countless walks. Wildflowers will be in bloom in this protected botanical reserve.

After a walk, the hot spring and a picnic awaits. The springs bubble up into a concrete pool that's enclosed in a small private cabin. Bathing is Japanese style - disrobe, rinse your body with the mineral water outside the tub, then get in for a long warm soak (optional for \$5 a person). Relax in the warmth while gazing out the window at the mountaintops. Return to our hotel in Karakol for our overnight. (B, L, D)

#### **June 19 Djety Orguz**

Travel southwest of Karakol into the lush valley of Djety Orguz. It has some striking red sandstone rock formations including the "seven bulls" from which the valley takes its name. As we approach the valley, we pass another rock formation resembling a broken heart and legend says that this is the heart of a beautiful woman who died of a broken heart after two suitors killed each other fighting over her. These two rock formations have become symbols of the Issyk K l region and are popular images for photographs and paintings. We continue on to Dolina Svetov, the valley of flowers and enjoy a picnic. It becomes a blaze of color from May to August as multitudes of poppies bloom through the summer. At Jety-Oguz Valley we will witness an eagle hunting demonstration after which we hike up to a beautiful waterfall. We overnight in the valley at Saidahmat Yurt Camp. A yurt is a thing of beauty but it is also extremely practical, built around a framework of curved wooden poles, which can be dismantled and erected in under an hour. Since independence from the Soviet Union, it has become something of a national symbol, even depicted on the Kyrgyz flag. The yurts at Saidahmat are typically cozy with felt rugs lining the walls for insulation and mattresses piled up on the floor. Dinner is served in a separate yurt, with guests sitting on cushions around a low table. (B, L, D)

#### **June 20 Barskoon**

Continue west around Lake Issyk K l to Barskoon village and a visit to the Ak Orgo Yurt Workshop to observe the making of traditional yurts.

Head into the Barskoon valley, where we hike for 1.5 hours to a beautiful waterfall and enjoy a picnic. Return to the lakeshore and drive a short distance to the town of Tamga. This region is perhaps the most beautiful along the southern shore. Snow capped mountains rise right up from behind the lake. We overnight at the Tamga Guesthouse, run by a friendly Russian couple. (B, L, D)

#### **June 21 Barskoon to Bishkek**

Leaving early with a picnic lunch, we travel along the most unspoiled and interesting part of Lake Issyk K l. The stretch around the villages of Ottuk and Kara-Talaa is part of the Issyk K l Nature Park. The combination of badlands, marshes, and the nearby Terskei Alatau Mountains make this an attractive area for frequent bird-watching stops. We return to Bishkek, arriving late in the afternoon. We will check into the Silk Road Lodge or similar for a few hours to rest and freshen up before we depart for the airport for our flight back to the US via Istanbul departing at 3:00AM on **June 22.** (B,L,D). Arrival USA the same day.

**Central Asia**, the area comprising of **Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan** and **Uzbekistan** was probably best know as **Turkestan**. It is the region where many great civilizations from the east as well as the West met, traded and fought. It is the area where Alexander the Great of Macedonia, the Silk Road, Genghis Khan, Amir Timur (Tamerlane), the Khanates of Kokand, Khiva, Bukhara, the Great Moghuls and the Russians all made their

inroads and left behind lasting influences on the culture, history and lifestyles of the people. Join us, as we follow the Silk Road from one world to another in the footsteps of the many invaders, poets, writers and above all travelers.

### TURKMENISTAN & UZBEKISTAN

Cost per person in double: \$4,450.00	Single Supplement: \$350.00
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*Minimum 10 participants and maximum 18*

### KYRGYZSTAN EXTENSION

Cost per person in double: \$1,475.00	Single Supplement: \$195.00
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*Minimum 8 participants and Maximum 12*

#### **Your trip cost includes:**

- Superior, first class, four-star or best available accommodations
- English-speaking private guide throughout
- Meals as specified in the itinerary
- Airport transfers and travel by modern, air-conditioned motor coach throughout
- All activities described in the tour and entrance fees to all sites mentioned
- All portorage at hotels and the borders
- Round trip airfare from New York City on Turkish Airlines (STS reserves the right to change airlines)
- Gratuities to guides, drivers, porters, restaurant and hotel staff
- Bottled water on the bus daily (one per person)
- Day use room in Istanbul hotel on day 2

#### **Cost excludes the following:**

- Visas to all countries visited
- Travel Insurance
- Meals not specified in the itinerary
- Optional helicopter in Karakol (\$600 per person for group size of 10) and camel/horse rides
- Dayrooms or extra hotel overnights if necessary (excluding arrival into Istanbul on day 2)
- Fuel surcharges, border departure taxes, airport taxes and security charges (approximately \$325.00)
- Expenses of a personal nature such as: beverages with meals, telephone, email, laundry bills, etc.
- Round trip airfare from your hometown to/from NYC
- Any other service/s not specified above

#### **Trip Grade: Moderately Vigorous Touring**

This area of the world is fascinating, yet it is not the easiest part of the world in which to travel. We will traverse many of the caravan routes while offering the comfort sought in modern day tourism. That said, these four countries are still off the usual travel path and therefore the tourist infrastructure is still in the evolving stages. Hotels may not be what one is accustomed to in the west and amenities may be lacking.

We will be covering a lot during this journey. The roads are good and the bus very comfortable. Some driving days are long. There will be several restroom stops along the way. It is important to recognize the exhausting nature of some of the long sightseeing days as well as some of the site visits where one may have to climb on uneven terrain, steps, rocks and sand as well as up

inclines and stairs. Be prepared with comfortable shoes and make sure you advise us if you have any medical condition that we need to know about.



**About your lecturer host...Dr. David F. Lancy** received degrees in psychology from Yale and anthropology and education from the University of Pittsburgh. Dr. Lancy is a Professor of Anthropology at Utah State University. His research interests include the role of culture in child development and ethnographic research methods and he's authored 6 books and over 60 articles on these subjects. Dr. Lancy's teaching interests include the study of early symbol and writing systems and the study of ancient civilizations, especially Egypt. In November of 2003, Dr Lancy was honored by the Carnegie Foundation at the Press Club in Washington, DC as one of the outstanding Professors in America.

#### **About your hotels...**

The Hotel Khiva Madrasah is located in the Architectural Museum Reserve of Ichan-Qal, the heart of the city where most historical monuments are located. The Mukhamed Aminkhan Madrasah, built in 1851-1855, was reconstructed as a hotel in the year 2000, and now has all the necessary conveniences.

The Hotel Zargaron (Persian for the quarter occupied by jewelers) is located in the center of historical Bukhara, not far from Poi Kalon ensemble. The hotel is constructed in 19th century architectural style of Bukhara. Balconies and verandas have a spectacular view to the famous monuments.

The Saidahmat Yurt Camp is a thing of beauty. Built around a framework of curved wooden poles, which can be dismantled and erected in under an hour a yurt is an extremely practical form of housing. Since independence from the Soviet Union, it has become something of a national symbol, even depicted on the Kyrgyz flag. The yurts at Saidahmat are typically cosy, with felt rugs lining the walls for insulation and mattresses piled up on the floor. That night, you will share in communal accommodations of 4 people per yurt plus shared bathroom facilities.

While we make every attempt to secure the above lodgings we cannot guarantee that they will be available at time of travel.

### **Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan & Kyrgyzstan**



*Monuments, Markets and Mountains of Central Asia*  
**May 29 to June 22, 2007**

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