



WORLD DISCOVERY
— HISTORY CULTURE WILDLIFE —

Sogdiana and Bactria



Registan Square, Samarkand

DAY 1 – Depart UK.

DAY 2 – Tashkent. Fly to Bukhara.

On arrival in Tashkent in the morning you will be met by a representative of World Discovery outside immigration and customs and taken by private car to your hotel, where a day room has been booked for you. In the afternoon take the short flight to Bukhara. After checking in at your hotel there should be time to walk through the narrow lanes to **Lyab-i-Hauz Square**, surrounded by 3 beautifully decorated madrassahs. Here you may sit at a cafe overlooking the ornamental pool, sipping green tea and simply watching the world go by - the perfect introduction to this wonderful ancient city.

DAYS 3 AND 4 - Bukhara.

Two days of sightseeing in Bukhara, the holiest of the ancient Silk Road cities with a history of more than 2,500 years. At the heart of the old city lies the **Kalyon Mosque** with its stunning 48m/155ft minaret. As well as exploring this and the nearby Islamic monuments, you will visit the infamous **Ark**, palace of the ruling emirs of Bukhara, including Emir Nusrallah who was responsible for the cruel treatment and subsequent beheading of the British envoys Stoddart and Connolly in 1842, an incident that caused international outrage. Just outside the Ark is a small park which is graced by the exquisite 10th century **Ismael Samani Mausoleum** with its intricately patterned brickwork. The unique **Chor Minar** with its 4 blue-tiled towers is on your itinerary, as is the unusual early 20th century **Summer Palace**, some miles outside the city proper, whose eclectic and somewhat bizarre decor is not to everyone's taste. An excursion is

also included to the ancient city of **Paikand**, dating back to the 1st century B.C., where you will visit the ruins in the company of a local archaeologist. One of the joys of Bukhara is simply wandering through the old city to take in the atmosphere, stop at a cafe or browse in a handicraft shop.

Meals included: Full breakfast each day. Dinner on Day 3 at Studio Bukhara.

DAY 5 - By road via Karshi Bazaar to Shakresabz.

Your journey continues eastwards through the Kizilkum Desert to Karshi Bazaar, an interesting marketplace on the desert's edge. Continue to **Shakresabz**, birthplace of the Emperor Tamerlane. Visit the remains of Tamerlane's Aksaray Palace, the tomb of his son Jehangir, and the Friday Mosque. Overnight in Shakresabz.

Meals included: Full breakfast, dinner.

DAY 6 - Through the Hissar Mountains to Termez.

A scenic drive today takes through the Hissar Mountains to the historic town of Termez, close to the border with Afghanistan. The town was named by Alexander the Great's Greeks from their word for 'hot' (thermos) and it is indeed still the hottest region of modern Uzbekistan. After checking into your hotel you will visit the ruins of **Kampir Tepe**, once a formidable citadel overlooking the mighty Amu Darya (Oxus) River. The Greek armies had to fight against the Persians and Sogdians for the control of this strategic crossing point. Also visit the ruins of the Buddhist Monasteries of **Fayz Tepe** and **Kara Tepe** (1st and 2nd centuries A.D.), and (time-permitting) the Archaeological Museum of Termez.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.

DAY 7 - Further Termez sightseeing. Cross into Tajikistan.

After breakfast visit the **Shrine of Hakim al-Tirimzi**, a renowned 9th century Muslim scholar and writer, before leaving Termez. A visit will be made to the ancient archaeological site of **Dalverzin Tepe**, an important Bactrian city which flourished from the 2nd to 7th centuries A.D. You can see a good collection of objects recovered from this site including a splendid vase with golden jewellery. Later cross the border into Tajikistan and proceed to the city of Dushanbe.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.

DAY 8 - Dushanbe.

A full day of sightseeing in and around Tajikistan's capital city. In the morning visit the **Antiquities Museum**, with its rich collection of Greco-Bactrian artefacts and its famous 14m reclining *Buddha in Nirvana* statue from Ajina Tepe; since the tragic destruction of the Buddha statues of Bamiyan in Afghanistan, this is now acknowledged as the largest representation of Buddha in Central Asia. Also visit the **Gurminj Museum of Musical Instruments**, the **Agha Khan Cultural Centre** and the blue-domed 15th century **Yakub-i-Charki mosque**. In the afternoon take an excursion to **Hissar** to visit the 18th century fortress, once a palace belonging to the powerful Emir of Bukhara, the nearby Kuhna madrassah and the small ethnographic museum.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.

DAY 9 - Shakre Tuz.

Depart for the southern region of Tajikistan, going off road to visit **Ajina Tepe**, where the giant reclining Buddha statue was discovered in 1966. Continue to Shakre Tuz. In the afternoon you will visit the superb **Khoja Mashad Madrassah** complex, dating back to the 9th century.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.

DAY 10 - Temple of Oxus. Return to Dushanbe.

This morning's excursion is to the **Temple of Oxus** (Takht-i-Sangin), an important Bactrian site in a spectacular setting at the confluence of the Vaksh and Amu Darya (Oxus) rivers. The site dates from the Achaemenid period (6th century B.C.). In the afternoon return to Dushanbe.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.

DAY 11 - Penjikent. Samarkand.

Before returning to Uzbekistan we travel through the heartland of Sogdiana to visit one of Tajikistan's best known archaeological sites, **Penjikent** in the Zarafshan Valley. This important city flourished between the 5th and 8th centuries and its wealth can be judged by the fine frescoes that adorned the villas of its wealthy merchants. Many of these are now in museums around the world, but some fine examples still remain to be seen in the town's Rudaki Museum. After the visit cross the border back into Uzbekistan and proceed to Samarkand.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch.

DAY 12 - Samarkand.

The very name of Samarkand conveys grandeur and extravagance as well as mystery and remoteness. Tamerlane's great capital city was one of the richest and most extravagant cities in the world and its remaining monuments bear clear witness to this. **The Registan** is undoubtedly one of the world's wonders - ".the noblest square in the world" according to Lord Curzon in the 19th century. Its unique combination of massive but elegant mosaic facades, turquoise domes and patterned minarets creates a perfect harmony and balance. You will spend time in and around The Registan before walking to Tamerlane's awesome **Bibi Khanum Mosque**, once the largest mosque in the world. Other included visits are to Tamerlane's final resting place, the **Gur Emir Mausoleum** with its distinctive ribbed dome, the beautiful **Shah-i-Zinda** tombs which contain some of Central Asia's finest majolica tilework, the **Astronomical Observatory** built in the 15th century by Tamerlane's grandson Ulug Beg, and **Samarkand Winery**, where you may sample some of the local wines.

Meals included: Full breakfast.

DAY 13 - Samarkand.

Further sightseeing in Samarkand will include the **History Museum**, with its vast collection of beautiful costumes and tribal art, and a visit to an Uzbek family house where you have the opportunity to join in a **cooking session** - making pullao and baking bread.

Meals included: Full breakfast.

DAY 14 - Samarkand. Return to Tashkent.

Morning free. In the afternoon drive back to Uzbekistan's capital and check into your hotel.

Meals included: Full breakfast.

DAY 15 - Tashkent sightseeing. Depart for home.

After breakfast your guide will take you for a morning's sightseeing in what has become the largest city in Central Asia. Visit the History Museum, the Fine Arts Museum and stroll along the main central thoroughfare of the city. Private transfer in the afternoon to the airport for your flight home.

Meals included: Full breakfast.