



WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL

of Philadelphia & Cooperating Councils



Silk Road Journey from Tashkent to Astana

Council Leader - Kay J. Maxwell

Tashkent • Samarkand • Bukhara • Merv •

Ashgabat • Almaty • Astana

October 3-19, 2017

Program Highlights & Special Meetings

- Enjoy a privately guided tour of Tashkent's Museum of Applied Arts, housed in the former mansion of a wealthy czarist diplomat.
- Visit a workshop where hand-crafted paper is made according to traditions handed down from the 8th century, when paper-making began in Samarkand.
- Visit the private Samarkand studio of internationally recognized fashion designer Valentina Romanenko.
- Converse with your hostess at a convivial meal in the home of a local family in Samarkand.
- Participate in an exclusive meeting with the Senior Advisor for Bukhara's Ark Museum.
- Take part in a walking tour of Bukhara's Jewish Quarter, in the heart of the Old Town, and meet with community representatives at the synagogue.
- Explore the extensive ruins of the ancient city of Merv, and learn about its turbulent history from an expert guide.
- Venture outside Ashgabat to visit a horse-breeding farm devoted to the renowned Akhal-Teke horse, arguably the oldest cultured breed of horse in the world.
- Observe the ancient Kazakh art of falconry in action at a farm outside Almaty.
- Survey the fantastical architecture of Kazakhstan's 20-year-old purpose-built capital city, Astana.
- Pay a visit to Astana's National Academy of Music, and meet with some of the young musicians.
- U.S. Embassy briefings will be added – a highlight of our tours.

Council Leader: Kay J. Maxwell

Kay Maxwell is Executive Director of the World Affairs Forum in Stamford, CT. She served as the 16th president of the League of Women Voters of the United States from 2002-2006. During that time, she conducted training of women leaders in Bosnia and provided oversight for several League international programs. Since 1999, she has traveled to various countries, including Azerbaijan, to conduct civic participation training sessions for women political, NGO and business leaders. She organized and led teams of experts to train local and regional level government officials, as well as members of the Presidential Administration, in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Kay's leadership in the League and her commitment to strengthening democracy worldwide has earned her several honors. She attended Smith College and earned a B.A. in International Relations from the University of Pennsylvania.



Land Program Rate: \$7,995

(per person based on double occupancy)

Single Supplement: \$1,225



Included: All accommodation, hotel taxes • Meals per itinerary (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner) •

Arrival/departure transfers for passengers arriving/departing on scheduled start/end days • Internal airfare from Merv to Ashgabat, Ashgabat to Almaty

and Almaty to Astana • All overland transportation per itinerary

by private vehicles • Special cultural events and extensive sightseeing, including entrance fees • English-speaking guides and Tour Manager throughout the itinerary • Baggage handling at the hotels and airports where available; gratuities to local guides, drivers, Tour Manager and restaurant staff during included meals • Visa support (excluding visa fees) • Comprehensive pre-departure packet

Not Included: International airfare to Tashkent/from Astana. Our tour operator MIR Corporation can assist with reservations • Travel insurance • Meals not specified as included in the itinerary • Personal items such as telephone calls, laundry, excess baggage fees, visa fees, alcoholic beverages with included meals

Air Arrangements: Program rates do not include international airfare to Tashkent/from Astana. Because of the global nature of our members and patrons, there is no group flight for this program. Information on a recommended flight itinerary will be sent by our tour operator upon confirmation.

What to Expect: This trip is moderately active due to the substantial distances covered and the extensive walking and stair-climbing required. The tour is not wheelchair accessible. To reap the full rewards of this adventure, travelers must be able to walk at least two miles a day (with or without the assistance of a cane) over uneven terrain while keeping up with the group, and stand for extended periods of time during walking tours and museum visits. Border crossings may require walking up to a mile on foot while handling your own bags without assistance. Availability of western toilets on the trip is unreliable, and squat toilets are prevalent at museums and many of the restaurants. Certain pain relievers such as Tramadol and Hydrocodone (among others), which are somewhat common in the U.S., are prohibited in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, even for personal use with a foreign prescription. Travelers are advised to bring alternative medications, and carry only an amount suitable for personal use in original pharmacy-labeled packaging. Flexibility and the willingness to accept local standards of amenities and services are essential to the enjoyment of this program.

Reservations and Payments: Please mail the completed registration form with check (payable to MIR Corporation-Trust) or credit card information to World Affairs Council of Philadelphia. Balance of payment for all land and air costs is due by August 4, 2017, 60 days prior to departure. Payment of the balance is due by check or bank transfer only.

Cancellations and Refunds: All cancellations must be made in writing to the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia and MIR Corporation and the following cancellation charges will apply: Cancellations received 61 or more days before departure, forfeit the \$500 per person non-refundable deposit; those received 31 days to 60 days before departure, forfeit 50% of land tour cost per person; those received 30 days or less before departure, no refund. Refunds cannot be made to passengers who do not complete the full tour for any reason at all. World Affairs Council of Philadelphia and our tour operator MIR Corporation reserve the right, without penalty, to withdraw the tour announced (i.e., cancel a tour). MIR Corporation reserves the right to decline to accept any person as a participant in a tour, or to require any participant to withdraw from a tour at any time at his/her own expense, when such action is determined by tour staff to be in the best interest of the health, safety, or general welfare of the tour group or of the individual participant, and subject only to the requirement that the recoverable cost of unused services and accommodations be refunded, if any.

Note: Neither World Affairs Council of Philadelphia nor MIR Corporation accepts liability for any airline cancellation penalty incurred by the purchase of a non-refundable ticket in connection with this tour. It is recommended that you not purchase international flights until instructed by MIR Corporation.

Single Travelers: We make every effort to match single travelers who request a roommate. However, shared accommodations cannot be guaranteed and a single supplement rate will apply.

Insurance: Trip cancellation/interruption insurance available from World Affairs Council. Details sent upon receipt of your registration.

Responsibility: A detailed statement of limitations and exclusions of liability of World Affairs Council of Philadelphia and MIR Corporation for loss of property, injury, illness or death will be provided to passengers upon enrollment and is available to prospective travelers upon request. A signed release of liability/assumption of risk agreement is required for trip participation.

Day by Day Itinerary

Oct 3-4

Depart USA • Arrive Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Depart USA on flights bound for Tashkent, Uzbekistan. (*In flight*)

Oct 5

Tashkent

Explore Uzbekistan's capital city, Tashkent, including Independence Square and the Courage Monument. In the old part of town, admire the Uthman Koran, scribed on calfskin in the 7th century and considered by Sunni Muslims to be the oldest Koran in the world. Enjoy a privately guided tour of the Museum of Applied Arts, featuring the painted carved plaster called ganche, carved wood and tile work. *Lotte City Hotel Tashkent Palace* (B, L, D)

Oct 6-7

Samarkand

Take the morning fast train to Samarkand and embark on an exploration of this UNESCO-listed oasis city, beginning with majestic Registan Square. Discover the Gur-Emir Mausoleum, the final resting place of Tamerlane, and the Bibi Khanum Mosque, dedicated to the memory of his favorite wife. Visit Ulug Bek's observatory, one of the most advanced of the ancient world, and spend some time at fashion designer Valentina Romanenko's studio, where she creates and shows her elegant modern fashions made with traditional fabrics and techniques. *Grand Samarkand Hotel* (2B, 2L, 2D)

Oct 8-9

Bukhara

On the road to Bukhara, pay a visit to the ceramics workshop of the renowned Narzulaev family, touring the kilns and the studio, and enjoying a meal. In Bukhara, tour the Ark Citadel, the original fortress of Bukhara, and meet its Senior Scientific Advisor, responsible for ongoing projects and renovations. Just behind the Ark is the infamous Zindan Prison and the even more infamous "bug pit" or "black hole," the cell where two of Britain's finest Great Game players, Colonel Charles Stoddart and Captain Arthur Conolly, were imprisoned before their execution. Admire the lovely Ismael Samani Mausoleum, with its sixteen different styles of brickwork, and Lyabi-Hauz Plaza, the center of Bukhara's old town. Attend a performance by local artists at a *madrassah*. *Hotel Sasha & Sons* (2B, 2L, 2D)

World Affairs Council of Philadelphia
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Oct 10-12

Mary, Turkmenistan • Merv • Ashgabat

Cross the border into Turkmenistan and explore the UNESCO-listed ancient ruins of Merv, where the earliest remains are from the time of Cyrus the Great in the 6th century BC. Continue to the capital, Ashgabat, for a visit to the History and Ethnography Museum, with artifacts ranging from stone-age tools to carpets and jewelry. Venture outside the city to visit an Akhal-Teke horse-breeding farm. *Hotel Mary (1 night); Hotel Oguzkent (2 nights) (3B, 3L, 3D)*

Oct 13-15

Ashgabat • Almaty, Kazakhstan

Fly to Almaty, former political capital and current business capital of oil-and-gas-rich Kazakhstan. Begin your exploration at Panfilov Park with its candy-colored Zenkov Orthodox Cathedral. Visit the delightful Museum of Musical Instruments, and the State Central Museum, with its chief archaeological treasure, the Golden Man, a warrior's armor made from 4,000 gold pieces. Observe traditional Kazakh falconry at a falcon farm outside of Almaty. Hunters on horseback wearing traditional costumes demonstrate how the beautiful birds are used for hunting here. Picnic at Turgen Gorge, one of southern Kazakhstan's best areas to experience Central Asia's unique flora and fauna. *Hotel Intercontinental (3B, 3L, 2D)*

Oct 16-18

Almaty • Astana

Hop a two-hour flight to the capital of Kazakhstan. Astana has been the capital only since 1997, when President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed a decree moving the capital from Almaty. Located in remote north central Kazakhstan surrounded by sparsely populated steppe, Astana has been transformed from a modest agricultural town into a capital befitting the resource-rich lynchpin in the new Silk Road envisioned by China and Central Asia. Nazarbayev hired famous architects, such as Norman Foster, to design and build the new city center, a futuristic landscape of curvy towers, faux Gothic administration buildings, modernistic arts centers and a shopping mall sheltered under what's called the "biggest tent in the world." *Marriott Astana (3B, 2L, 3D)*

Oct 19

Depart Astana

The tour concludes with transfers to the airport for international departures to the U.S.

(B flight time permitting)

