



## Ultimate Uzbekistan

Classic Tour | 13 Days | Physical Level 1

Tashkent – Nukus – Khiva – Bukhara – Samarkand – Tashkent

Enjoy an in-depth tour throughout Uzbekistan, famous for its ancient cities, beautiful mosques and mausoleums, as you travel the ancient trade route – the Silk Road. This journey takes you through nature where you will discover the beautiful rivers and lakes, mountains and architectural wonders.

- Visit Toprak Kala Fortress
- Explore Bukhara's monuments
- Discover Registan Square
- Shop at Chorsu Bazaar
- Wonder at the Savitsky Museum
- Stroll through Ichan Kala



#### Ultimate Uzbekistan Tour inclusions:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escort (if your group is 10 or more passengers) or Local Guides
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides

*The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, customary tipping, early check in or late checkout and other items not specified on the itinerary.*

#### Classic Tours:

These tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of Southeast Asia on an excellent value group tour whilst travelling with like-minded people. The tours are on a fully-inclusive basis so you'll travel with the assurance that all your arrangements are taken care of. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escorts and local guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

#### Physical Level 1:

All our tours feature a physical rating to help you select the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights.

'Ultimate Uzbekistan' is rated as a **physical level 1** tour. A reasonable level of fitness is required but it's more about spending time on your feet rather than covering large distances. You'll be getting on and off coaches, walking around the sights and climbing some steps.

- There will be sightseeing on foot for both short and extended periods of time often on uneven surfaces
- You will be required to get on and off small boats without assistance

Of course, our National Escorts and local guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

### Country Profile: Uzbekistan

Central Asia's cradle of culture for more than two millennia, Uzbekistan is the proud home to a mesmerising collection of architecture and ancient cities, all deeply infused with the fascinating history of the Silk Road.

Bukhara, Samarkand and Khiva, all Silk Road cities, hold some of the world's most exquisite Islamic architecture, with fabulous mosques, medressas and mausoleums, as well as half-hidden desert citadels and hectic bazaars.

Uzbekistan has a rugged and rocky landscape with deserts, mountains and valleys interspersed with pockets of fertile, green land. The combination of spectacular countryside and classic Islamic architecture make this nation a visual delight. Uzbekistan is also an extremely friendly country, where you will feel genuinely welcome by the people you meet.

### Joining Your Tour

The tour is 13 days in duration including international flights. Please note that depending on flight schedules passengers may arrive/depart on Day 2.

Travellers booked on 'Land Only, the price includes visa fees and your arrival/ departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour. Please advise your international flight times to reservations. Join the tour on Day One in Tashkent and end the tour on Day 11 in Tashkent. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

### Itinerary Changes

It is our intention to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate. In these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements maintaining the integrity of your trip.

## Itinerary – Ultimate Uzbekistan

### Days 1 - 2: Fly to Tashkent

Fly overnight from New Zealand to Tashkent. On arrival transfer to your hotel to rest before your afternoon explorations of the city. Visit the old town: Barak Khana Seminary, Tila Shaikh mosque and their archives. Continue to Chorsu bazaar, the oldest market in Tashkent and Kukeldash Madrassah. Attend a workshop of a famous ceramist family, Akbar and Alisher Rakhimov, where you will learn about the history of ceramics before enjoying a tea ceremony with freshly baked sweets and pastries just for you



#### Destination Information

**Tashkent** – Tashkent is the capital and largest city of Uzbekistan, as well as the most populated city in ex-Soviet Central Asia with a population of 3 million people. Much of the city was destroyed in the 1966 Tashkent earthquake, though it was rebuilt afterwards as a model Soviet city.

### Day 3: Tashkent - Nukus

This morning transfer to the airport for your flight to Nukus, visiting the Igor Savitskiy Museum, home to one of the finest collections of Soviet avant-garde art from the 1920s and 30s. The museum has an impressive collection of Soviet Realism and a surprisingly large collection of works by well-known European masters.



Later drive 15 km from Nukus to visit Mizdahkan complex of historical monuments located on three hills. The west hill is crowned with the ruins of Gyaur-Kala Fortress, while the eastern hill hosts the oldest Central Asian necropolis.

#### Destination Information

**Nukus** – This remote and isolated city hosts one of the best collections of Soviet art in the world. It is the 6<sup>th</sup> largest city in Uzbekistan.

## Day 4: Nukus - Khiva

After breakfast drive to Khiva, visiting ancient fortresses en route. Chalpikkala – the Tower of Silence. You will then visit Kizil Kala Fortress, built in the 1st or 2nd centuries AD. It was occupied until the 4th century and then abandoned. You will continue further to Toprak Kala fortress, an excavated town dating back to the 1st to 5th century, and considered the most important monument on Khorezm from the Kushan time.

Lastly you will visit Ayaz Kala, which is considered to be one of the biggest forts in Karakalpakstan. The site consists of three fortresses which were built from the 4th century BC to the 7th century AD, before arriving in Khiva.



### Destination Information

**Khiva** – It is believed that this small town was founded 2,500 years ago and was said to have been discovered by Shem, the son of Noah. The town certainly existed by the 8<sup>th</sup>-century as a minor fort and trading post on a Silk Road branch to the Caspian Sea and the Volga River.

## Day 5: Khiva

Khiva is a town made for walking. It is compact, well maintained, lived in and basks in beautiful desert light. Explore this ancient city today with leisurely sightseeing for 4-5 hours on foot. Visit Kukhna Ark Fortress, the turquoise-tiled Islom-Khodja, the mausoleum of Pakhlavan Makhmud. These are all located within the walled inner town called the Itchan Kala, which was the first site in Uzbekistan to achieve recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage listed site in 1990.

Later visit Madrassah Rakhimkhon where studies in religion, astronomy, geography and mathematics took place, the Kalta Minor Minaret and the 19th century Tash Hauli Palace decorated in fine china blue tile work.



### Destination Information

**Itchan Kala** - A well-persevered example of Muslim architecture in Central Asia at the beginning of the 19th century, Itchan Kala is the inner town of Khiva. The town is surrounded by brick city walls, with four gates at the cardinal points.

## Day 6: Khiva - Bukhara

Today you will set out for Bukhara across the famous KyzylKum desert ("Red sands"). It is a long drive, taking between 7-8 hours. The route you will travel is more or less the same path that the Great Silk Road followed across desert. There will be several photo stops made to capture the flora and fauna, as well as a stop on the banks of the Amudarya River (the fabled "Oxus" of Antiquity). Arrive in Bukhara.



### Destination Information

**Bukhara** - A city which has a long history spanning 2,500 years and what was an integral part of the Persian Empire for centuries. Within the city, there are more than 350 mosques and 100 religious colleges. Bukhara was part of what came to be called the 'Golden Road', the meeting point of the northern and southern branches of the Silk Road, and hence a great centre for commerce, religion and culture. The city's most famous landmark is the 12<sup>th</sup> century Kalon Minaret. It is said that when Genghis Khan attacked and destroyed the rest of the city, he left the minaret standing, supposedly because he was struck by its beauty.

## Day 7: Bukhara

Today explore the many interesting sites within this incredible city of Bukhara, one of the most famous names of ancient Islam. Gaze at the unique and legend filled Poi Kalon Minaret, explore the Ark Fortress of Bukhara and visit the Bolo Hauz Mosque. Lunch will be at the house of one of the best suzani makers, visiting his workshop and participating in a cooking class of traditional "plov" – cooked with mutton and rice and large quantities of carrots and onions.



### Destination Information

**Poi Kalon Minaret** - One of the most prominent landmarks of the city, the 47 m tall Kalon Minaret was constructed in 1127 by the Karakhanid ruler Arslan Khan.

**Ark of Bukhara** - The fortified residence of the rulers of Bukhara but also housed palaces, temples, barracks, offices, the mint, warehouses, workshops, stables, an arsenal, a prison and nowadays a museum.

**Bolo Hauz Mosque** - Translated the name of the mosque means "The Mosque of the Bala Lake", which refers to the octagonal pool located in the public forecourt lined with stone steps.

## Day 8: Bukhara - Samarkand

After breakfast continue sightseeing of Bukhara with an out-of-town excursion to visit the Sitora-i-Mokhikhosa, the summer residence of the former emir, showing a unique mixture of traditional Russian style architecture harmoniously mixed with local oriental traditions. Continue to Bahauddin Naqshbandi Mausoleum of the famous Sufi spiritual leader. In the afternoon transfer to the railway station for the train to Samarkand.



### Destination Information

**Sitora-i-Mokhikhosa** – Situated 4km outside the city, the summer residence dates back to the beginning of the 20th century. The first summer palace was built by Emir Nasrullakhan.

**Samarkand** - With a population of approximately 400,000, Samarkand is the second largest city of Uzbekistan. The real glory of Samarkand began in 329BC when Alexander the Great conquered and destroyed the nearby capital, Macaranda. According to local history, when Alexander first visited here he declared “I heard that Samarkand was beautiful but never thought that it could be so beautiful and majestic”. The finest builders, craftsmen, philosophers and scientists were invited to Samarkand and the reputation of its refined civilisation grew until Samarkand was a city of legend and wonder along the Golden Road. From here the Silk Road diverged; east to China, south to India and west to Persia.

## Day 9: Samarkand

Today, explore some of the most significant sites in Samarkand and its city centre, seeing the famous Registan Square, the three beautiful madrassahs: the Ulug-Bek Madrasah built in 15<sup>th</sup> century; the Tillya-Kori Madrasah built in 17<sup>th</sup> century; the Sher-Dor Madrasah, also built in 17<sup>th</sup> century. Visit Gur Emir - mausoleum of Great Tamerlane. Later see the grandest structure of Amir Temur's times - the chief Friday Mosque called Bibi-Khanum, the Silk Road bazaar and ShahiZinda necropolis. Enjoy wine tasting at Khovrenko winery with a visit to the museum.



### Destination Information

**Registan Square** - The Square is lined on three sides by sparkling turquoise tiled buildings of the Sher Dor and Tilla Qori madrassas. The interior and exterior facades of the madrassas are decorated with ornamental glazed brick, mosaics and carved marble. The square is considered an architectural gem representing the finest in Islamic Art and, most remarkably, a rare depiction of an animal's form. The huge colourful bazaar is located nearby and one can buy nuts, dried and fresh fruit, spices, honey and a multitude of other goods.

**Shah-I-Zinda** - A mausoleum complex located northeast of the city, the names translates to ‘Tomb of the Living King’. This refers to the important Muslim shrine in the region, the complex of quiet rooms around what is most likely the grave of Qusam ibn-Abbas, a cousin of the Prophet Mohammed who is thought to have brought Islam to this area in the 7th century.

## Day 10: Shakhrisabz

This morning you will travel the 2 hours to Shakhrisabz, the birthplace of the Great Amir Timur (Tamerlane), located approximately 80km south of Samarkand. Explore the city, visiting sites such as the remnants of Ak-Sarai Palace, Dorus Tilavat cemetery and Kok-Gumbas Mosque. Continue onto the Plateau of Devils an extensive plateau of granite slabs looking like sculptures of demons and monsters. Return to Samarkand.



### Destination Information

**Shakhrisabz** - Shakhrisabz is a 2700 years old city and has played a major role in the history of the Central Asian region, mostly due to Shakhrisabz being the birthplace of Amir Timur (or Tamerlane) in 1336. During the early years of the Timurid Dynasty, the city enjoyed his considerable patronage.

**Ak-Sarai Palace** - One of the greatest buildings in Shakhrisabz, Ak-Sarai Palace (Timur's residence) means 'White Palace'. Timur's most ambitious project, construction began in 1380 and took 24 years to complete, a few months before the death of the great ruler.

**Dorus Tilavat Cemetery** - Dorus Tilavat Cemetery is the original burial complex of Timur's ancestors and was formed after the death in 1370-1371 of the eminent religious leader Shamsiddin Kulal, the founder of Sufism, the spiritual mentor of Emir Taragay and of Timur himself.

**Kok-Gumbas Mosque** - Construction on the Kok-Gumbas Mosque began in 1435 on the order of Timur's grandson, Ukug Beg. The name translates to 'blue dome'.

## Day 11: Samarkand - Tashkent

Today we continue exploring Samarkand to visit Ulugbek's observatory, constructed by Ulugbek (Grandson of the Great Amir Temur) in 1428-1429. Visit the ancient settlement of Afrosiab, situated on the spurs of Chupan-Ata hills to the north-east of present-day Samarkand. According to the legend, it was here, on the banks of the river Siab, that the Turanian king and hero Afrosiab, a character of the folk epic 'Shahnama', founded the town that became the capital of Sogdiana. Late afternoon transfer to train station to catch your train to Tashkent.



### Destination Information

**Ulugh Beg Observatory** - Ulugh Beg was Tamerlane's grandson and a great astronomer. During his rule in the 15th century, he summoned the great minds of the Islamic world to Samarkand.



## Days 12-13: Depart Tashkent

You will be transferred from the hotel to the airport, according to the departure flight time of your international flight. Any time before your flight is at leisure. Fly to New Zealand, arriving the following day.

**Please note: Late check-out** is not included in our Ultimate Uzbekistan tour. If you wish to book a late check-out for your final day in Tashkent, please contact our reservations department who can confirm the additional price and make this arrangement for you, subject to availability at the hotel.

**Transfers:** In the event that your flight departs outside of the majority group departure time, you will be transferred to the airport by a shared coach (not with other Wendy Wu Tours passengers).

Please inform our reservations team of any allergies and/or special dietary requirements at time of booking.

## Ultimate Uzbekistan Travel Information

### Visas

Visas are not required for New Zealand passport holders for entry into Uzbekistan for stays of up to 30 days. Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it when you arrive back into New Zealand.

At the time of booking Visa conditions may have changed, currently no visa is required for New Zealand Passport holders. Your travel consultant will inform you if any changes are applicable prior to your departure.

### Insurance

We strongly recommend that you take out a policy as soon as you pay your deposit. Wendy Wu Tours cannot in any way be made liable for any additional cost incurred by the customer on any tour due to the customer not having adequate travel insurance.

We also encourage all customers to take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. These documents should be stored separately from the original.

### Eating in Uzbekistan

Central Asian cuisine is diverse and flavoursome with a legacy stretching back thousands of years. It is important to keep an open mind and be adventurous. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our fully inclusive Ultimate Uzbekistan from the groups' arrival until the groups' day of departure. Please be aware that dishes selected for your meals reflect the cooking styles and signature dishes of the local area you are in.

In Uzbekistan, the cuisine is influenced by Middle Eastern and Turkic (or Mediterranean) dishes – yoghurts, dried fruit, legumes, fruit vinegars, or mild spices like cumin season the common dishes such as lagman (handmade noodles), shashlyk (kebabs), naan (flat bread) and plov (rice pilaf dish). Mutton and chicken are the only meats available in most areas and feature in most dishes. Local breakfast dishes include naan and airan (like sour cream), savoury noodles with vinegar and green tea. You may also be served a fried egg, jam, honey or toast. Black tea and coffee can usually be requested. Fresh cow's milk is not generally available.

Vegetarian only alternatives are not usually available although Uzbekistani restaurants are more flexible. There are always plenty of salads, vegetables and bread offered at most meals. In remote areas, lunch may be prepared as 'picnic style' by the hotel that morning, or your guides may organise a simple meal at a local restaurant. Lunch is the main meal of the day, with dinner usually a lighter version of lunch. If you have any food allergies or any other preferences, please make them known to your guide/s at the start of your trip; they will do their best to ensure that your requirements are met, however, 'no guarantees can be made'. Long driving distances, road conditions or flight times may delay or alter your meal times, which could mean a dedicated meal is replaced by those supplied on the aircraft.

Despite the Muslim culture, drinking alcohol is acceptable and expected in this ex-Soviet region. Expect to be offered vodka (not included in your tour price) at every meal! The most popular mealtime drink is Chay (green tea) and is available at most meals, usually straight a large block of sugar crystal may be added to the pot, or even your glass. Black tea and coffee are not always served, however can usually be requested.

If you like, you can bring some supplements with you from home. Tea/coffee bags, instant soups or noodles, biscuits, energy bars, milk powder sachets, are all a good idea – consider your luggage weight though! There are numerous small supermarkets and shops in every town and village along the way where you can buy odd items e.g. instant noodles, muesli and chocolate bars, biscuits, drinks, chips, cakes and sweets.

Please read your travel guide, which you will receive with your final documents for more information about eating in Central Asia.

### Accommodation

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town. In more remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between New Zealand and Central Asia. All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort/Local Guide. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs. Please note that double bed requests can be made at time of booking but can't be guaranteed.

### Porterage

Please be aware that porterage is not included on our tours in Uzbekistan. You will therefore need to be able to handle your own luggage within the hotel and when using transportation like trains and coaches.

### Transport

**Coaches:** Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary.

Main and inner-city roads in Central Asia have a reputation for being very congested. For this reason, it may not always be possible to return to your hotel after sightseeing to freshen up before going to the restaurant for dinner. Roads in this region have generally improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road - not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the sections above are approximations only.

**Air:** Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines. Pre-flight seat allocation is not available on international and internal flight sectors.

### Development in Central Asia

Although Central Asia is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities. Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in New Zealand. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in New Zealand for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. All of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from your National Escort/Local Guides.

The former Soviet countries in Central Asia were isolated and less developed by western standards for decades and all levels of infrastructure remain affected today in some way. In the tourism sector, newly built and very good hotels may still have poorly trained staff with an abrupt manner, roads can be in poor condition and officials can be corrupt. The level of English spoken outside of hotels is minimal (except for the children) and the Cyrillic alphabet is used instead of the Latin one (though this is slowly changing in Uzbekistan), so you will find your guides indispensable. We have found that those customers who embark with a sense of humour and adventure, who accept that things can and sometimes do go wrong, are those who find their experience most rewarding.

### Public Holidays and Religious Festivals

Ramadan, the Islamic festival of sacrifice will fall from 1<sup>st</sup> April to the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2022. This festival is characterised by the faithful abstaining from consuming food and drink (including alcohol) between the hours of sunrise and sunset. After sunset, you will find the locals celebrating nightly with an iftar- a meal at sunset, which breaks the fast, followed by pre-dawn meal - Suhoor. Travellers are not expected to adhere to these customs, with food and drink available during daylight hours. Some businesses and tourist sites opening hours may be affected; though overall, there will be minimal disruption if your tour is travelling between these dates. Ramadan is an opportunity to travel through Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, witnessing this fascinating national holiday for yourself.

### Souvenirs

We want to be able to give you an opportunity to buy souvenirs so we include some stops at workshops or factories, which demonstrates a craft or product unique to that region with pieces available to buy. We understand that souvenir hunting is not for everyone so we aim to take you to places, which hold local interest. We trust you will enjoy these opportunities to learn about local arts and crafts and understand their historical and cultural importance.

### Group Size

The group size on our Classic Tours for Central Asia is 18 passengers. On our group tours we operate a seat-and-a-half policy, allowing you to travel in greater comfort.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). A national escort will accompany each group of 10 or more. However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so.

### Tipping Policy

Local tipping is customary in Central Asia. However, this can often lead to awkwardness in knowing when it is appropriate to tip and how much, as well as ensuring you have a suitable amount of change available at the time. For your convenience, with years of experiences in providing the best customer service, Wendy Wu Tours operates a kitty system on our Group Tours so your National Escort will look after this aspect of your trip for you. It also ensures that the amounts paid are reasonable for you but still fair for the local people. The amount is stated on each Group Tour page will be advised again on your final documentation. Tipping is in US Dollars and will be collected by your National Escort on arrival and distributed throughout the tour on your behalf. Any additional tipping on any of our tours is welcomed at your discretion. Further guidance for tipping contributions will be outlined in your final documentation.

We generally find that most customers appreciate the convenience of our tipping policy, but we do recognize that it may not suit everyone. However, as this is a group tour we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to be fair to other group members and to ensure smooth operation of your tour.

## Souvenirs

We want to be able to give you an opportunity to buy souvenirs, so we include some stops at museums or exhibitions which demonstrates a craft or product unique to that region with pieces available to buy. We understand that souvenir hunting is not for everyone, so we aim to take you to places, which hold local interest. We trust you will enjoy these opportunities to learn about local arts and crafts and understand their historical and cultural importance.

## Luggage

All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each; a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of five kilograms. It is essential that your luggage is lockable.

## Exchanging Cash

Please bring enough US Dollars in cash with you on your trip to cover your entire stay. Ensure you exchange any unspent local currency prior to departure as there is generally no exchange offices at international airports.

There are only a handful of ATM machines Tashkent and they can be unreliable. There are no ATMs in smaller cities and rural areas.

Credit cards are only accepted in some hotels and in a limited number of shops, therefore make sure you bring a sufficient amount of USD cash of different denominations. We recommend mostly 20 and 50 denominations with a handful of 100 USD notes.

In smaller cities, you will find banking facilities less reliable and may encounter staff that refuse to deal with a currency they are unfamiliar with, for this reason bring US Dollars with you for easy exchange.

It is highly recommended when travelling to towns outside of the major cities that extra care is taken when exchanging money. You should only change money at officially authorised currency exchanges. We suggest exchanging your money before travelling to remote areas and smaller towns, as exchange facilities can be limited. Your National Escort will remind you to do this before departure.

Please bring only fresh, undamaged US Dollars with no blemishes, printed after 2001 as these notes will be accepted for exchange. Notes with any additional markings or notes that are faded are often refused even by official travel exchange offices

## Personal Expenses & Optional Tours

Personal Expense - You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of NZD 250.00 per person, per week should be sufficient; however, for those that can't resist a bargain or may wish to participate in all of the optional excursions, consider allocating a higher amount.

Optional tours may be offered in each city you visit during your tour at an additional cost. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide.

### Climbing Steps

Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some mosques involves climbing quite a number of steps. These palaces were built to provide defense against potential invaders so nearly all of them stand on top of a hill, while the interiors have layers of narrow hallways and steps to slow down the advance of enemies once they were inside. The steps tend to be quite large, not level and sometimes without handrails. Hindu and Buddhist temples or pagodas also tend to be built at an elevation, as this is the most auspicious position according to ancient beliefs. This means you sometimes need to walk from the bus park to the entrance, and/or need to climb some steps inside. People with knee or hip injuries, who have poor balance or are otherwise unable to complete these activities independently should consider the suitability of this itinerary carefully.

### Cultural Difference

Central Asia has many religions, cultures and histories. Please be considerate of the local beliefs and customs and dress with consideration.

### Appropriate Dress

When visiting temples or mosques, both men and women should dress in conservative, non-revealing clothing. Full-length trousers with a shirt or t-shirt for men; and pants or skirts well below the knee with a top that covers the shoulders and upper arms for women. Women might also consider carrying a 'modesty shawl' in their daypack – this could be a sarong or light scarf – which they can wear over their shoulders and heads to feel more comfortable while sightseeing at mosques.

Religious sites and homes throughout Central Asia require all visitors to remove their shoes to enter. Even if you then need to walk outdoors, over hot or rough ground, you will not be allowed to wear shoes. You will often find shoe storage rooms near the entrance of a site where it is customary to leave your shoes near the entrance. Occasionally there are 'shoe minders' who will offer to keep your shoes safe for a 'tip' – this is not compulsory, so each customer can choose to tip for this service or not. If you do not want to remove your shoes, you will have to remain outside.

We recommend shoes that easily slip on and off and carry a pair of thick socks in your daypack, which you can wear to protect your feet from any rough or hot surfaces. The following itinerary will indicate when you need to consider this.

### Vaccinations and Your Health

We recommend that you contact either your Doctor or local health centre for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Travelsafe has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful [www.safetravel.govt.nz](http://www.safetravel.govt.nz)

Wendy Wu Tours is committed to always providing a safe and healthy environment for all passengers. We work closely with our airline partners to take effective measures to protect you from contracting and spreading COVID-19, in accordance with legal requirements and government guidelines. Please follow the link [here](#) for more details on our COVID vaccination policy

### COVID Safe

Your safety and well-being will always be our Number one priority which is why we've instituted the most stringent COVID health and safety protocols on all of tours. As we continue to monitor current restrictions and operational impacts, these protocols will evolve, and we will provide detailed guidelines for your particular tour prior to departure. For further details please go to the following link [here](#)

### Before You Leave

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with [www.safetravel.govt.nz](http://www.safetravel.govt.nz) as in the event of an emergency, New Zealand Consular assistance will be more readily available. You can also access the New Zealand Government's travel advisory service for up to date information about your destination on the same website.

### After your booking

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure

**Last updated: May 2022**