



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

TOUR MAP


 ULTIMATE UZBEKISTAN TOUR INCLUSIONS:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- Meals as specified
- 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
- Safe and secure with IATA

The only thing you may have to pay for is 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
 - Sightseeing at nearly all the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing several steps, often without handrails

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.

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 two in Tashkent and end the tour on Day 12 in Tashkent. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

ITINERARY CHANGES:

It is our intention is 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 whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Days 1-2: Fly to Tashkent

Meals: D

Fly overnight to Tashkent. On arrival transfer to your hotel to rest before your afternoon explorations of the city.

**Please note that check in on Day 2 is from 8am. If you arrive on an earlier flight and wish to check in before 8am, additional charges apply. Please enquire with our reservations team.



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

Meals: B, L, D

Today, explore the capital city and visit the old town: Barak Khan Madrassah, 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.



Later, go on to visit Amir Temur Square and the famous Tashkent Metro.

Destination Information

Barak Khan Madrassah - Built in the 16th century with funds donated by the Tashkent ruler Navruz Akhmed, today this is the oldest educational institution in Tashkent. Though this madrassah is no longer used for its original purpose, it attracts attention for its well-preserved architectural features.

Tila Shaikh Mosque - The original mosque was built in 1890 and nowadays one of the largest of its kind in the city of Tashkent. It is part of the famous historical and religious complex Hast Imam, which is situated in front of Barak Khan madrassah.

Kukeldash Madrassah - One of the biggest and one of the most famous historical monuments in Tashkent.

Day 4: Nukus – Khiva

Meals: B, L, D

This Morning, transfer to the airport for your flight to Nukus. Visit 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, journey to Khiva, visiting ancient fortresses en route, including Chalpik Kala – 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 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 8th-century as a minor fort and trading post on a Silk Road branch to the Caspian Sea and the Volga River.

Nukus - This remote and isolated city hosts one of the best collections of Soviet art in the world. It is the 6th largest city in Uzbekistan.

Day 5: Khiva

Meals: B, L, D

Khiva is a town made for walking. It is compact and well maintained and basks in beautiful desert light. Explore this ancient city today with leisurely sightseeing for 4-5 hours on foot.



Visit Citadel 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-preserved 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

Meals: B, L, D

Today you will set out for Bukhara across the famous Kyzyl-Kum 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 12th 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

Meals: B, L, D

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 "ploy" – 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

Meals: B, L, D

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 Nasrullah Khan.

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

Meals: B, L, D

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 15th century; the Tillya-Kori Madrasah built in 17th century; the Sher-Dor Madrasah, also built in 17th 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: Samarkand – Shakhrisabz – Samarkand

Meals: B, L, D

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 year 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 leaders 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

Meals: B, L, D

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

Meals: B

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).

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 in New Zealand.

Please note the visa procedures and requirements may change at any time. These changes are often made by the relevant embassy or consulate; Wendy Wu Tours acts as a third party and has no influence on the process of a visa. Currently a visa is required for New Zealand Passport holders. Your travel consultant will inform you if any changes are applicable prior to your departure.

As Central Asian immigration and customs officials are notoriously strict, please make sure you keep all forms for when you exit the country. A lost customs or immigration form could result in a fine.

When entering Uzbekistan, you will need to complete a foreign currency declaration form and keep a copy yourself. Failure to do so accurately or exiting the country with more currency than when you entered may result in delays, fines or the additional sums being confiscated.

Some medications available over the counter or by prescription in other countries, such as sleeping tablets, may be illegal or restricted in Uzbekistan. You should declare all prescription medications and other restricted items on arrival in Uzbekistan and carry a copy of the prescription with you

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. 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 mealtimes, 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.

GROUP SIZE:

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by both a National Escort and local guides. There will be no more than 28 travellers in each group although you may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 10 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). 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. For groups with fewer than 10 travellers, departures will operate with local guides only

ACCOMMODATION:

All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, TV, and a 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 Local Guide or National Escort.

Your accommodation has been 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 or a heritage-type hotel. In remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard but do please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between Australia and Central Asia. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards are met.

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. Please note that authorities will only allow bottles onto the aircraft if they have been checked in as main baggage. Bottles in hand luggage may be confiscated.

PORTEAGE:

Please be aware that portage is not included on our tours. 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.

TIPPING POLICY:

Tipping while on holiday is common in most parts of the world. However, it is not always clear who it is appropriate to tip and how much. Furthermore, travellers may not have the right amounts of cash available at the right time.

In order to avoid any inconvenience Wendy Wu Tours operates a tipping policy where a stated amount is given to your national escort at the beginning of your tour and tips are disbursed amongst your main service providers (for example local guides and drivers) throughout your tour. The amount is designed to be at a reasonable level for travellers while being fair to the local people and includes a gratuity for the national escort. Any other tipping, such as tips for bathroom attendants or hotel porters that are taking luggage to your room, is at your discretion based on satisfaction of services received, as are gratuities for additional requested special services.

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.

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.

SOUVENIRS:

We want to be able to give you an opportunity to buy souvenirs, so we include some stops at museums or exhibitions that 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 that hold local interest. We trust you will enjoy these opportunities to learn about local arts and crafts and understand their historical and cultural importance

PERSONAL EXPENSES AND OPTIONAL TOURING:

Personal Expenses - You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you.

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 and if seats are available.

Please ensure you have additional funds available if you feel you may wish to participate in any extra activities. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide, participation and tipping for optional excursions is completely at your discretion.

PACKING LIST AND CLIMATE:

Temperatures for most of your time spent in Uzbekistan will range from 23c to 35c between May and late September. Modest clothing such as long lightweight pants and shirts that cover your shoulders for men and women is highly recommended. Headscarves for ladies are required for visits to mosques and madrassas throughout Central Asia. Women should bring a scarf from home, as you are required to cover your head at some attractions. Seasonal weather patterns can be quite unpredictable. Up to the minute information on worldwide weather can be found on www.weather.com

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.

SIGHTSEEING:

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.

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

Ramadan, the Islamic festival of sacrifice will fall from 1st April to the 1st 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.

VACCINATIONS AND YOUR HEALTH:

We recommend that you contact either your Doctor or Health centre for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Safetravel has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful www.safetravel.govt.nz

BEFORE YOU LEAVE:

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with www.safetravel.govt.nz as in the event of an emergency, New Zealand Consular assistance will be more readily available.

Up until the day you travel, it is vital you keep up to date and familiarised with the entry requirements as these can change at short notice. You are personally responsible for completing any entry forms, conducting any covid tests (if necessary), etc and adhering to countries' specific entry requirements.

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 including a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

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