Central Asia’s Five ‘Stans

An Extraordinary Experience Along the Silk Road
Kazakhstan • Kyrgyzstan • Uzbekistan • Tajikistan • Turkmenistan

Valerie Hansen
Professor of History
Join us as we trace the path of the great camel caravans along the Old Silk Road, admiring the vaulted portals of the mosques and madrasahs, their domes cloaked in sky-blue ceramic tiles. Discover the fascinating Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, today finding themselves again at the center of international interest.

Explore five UNESCO Sites, including the historic Old Towns of the fabled Uzbek oases, Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva, living cities where ordinary daily life swirls around the extraordinary setting. Wander the fabulous bazaars and step into the past on the streets of Silk Road trade centers crowned with complex Persian architecture. Walk in the footsteps of the great camel caravans that redistributed the languages, architecture and spiritual practices of a huge region as they carried their cargoes of spices, silk, and precious stones along the seminal route.

Observe Kazakh falcon-hunting; attend a performance of the Kyrgyz Epic of Manas, listed by UNESCO as a part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity; and in Uzbekistan view the Uthman Koran, considered by Sunni Muslims to be the oldest Koran in the world. In Turkmenistan, visit a ranch where the renowned Akhal-Tekke horse, arguably the oldest cultured breed of horse in the world, is bred and raised. In Khujand, Tajikistan, enter the Historical Museum of Sogdiana through a reconstructed medieval city gate.

A rich concoction of deep culture, stormy history, evolving ethnicities and up-to-the-minute politics, this caravan through Central Asia is a compelling survey of a fascinating region of the world. We’d love to have you join us.

J. Weili Cheng, Executive Director
Association of Yale Alumni

Enjoy a dinner of Kyrgyz delicacies with a special folk performance of selections from the Epic of Manas, handed down by ear from father to son for generations.

Visit the private art studio of a sixth-generation Uzbek ceramicist whose family has been making pottery since the 1790s, resurrecting ancient glazing and dyeing techniques.

Meet with representatives of a local NGO over dinner in Khujand, and converse with them about their experiences of living and working in Tajikistan.
Valerie Hansen teaches Chinese and world history at Yale, where she is professor of history. Particularly interested in the history of the Silk Road, she is the author of The Silk Road: A New History with Documents, published in 2017 (an expanded version of her 2012 book). Her current research examines the interconnected world of the year 1000, exploring the goods, people, and ideas that travelled from one region to another in a time with no mechanized transport. In the past decade, she has spent three years in China: 2005-06 in Shanghai on a Fulbright grant; and 2008-09 and 2011-12, teaching at Yale’s joint undergraduate program with Peking University. In fall 2015, she taught at Yale-NUS in Singapore.


Upcoming Trips

Enchanting Douro River
04/16/2018 – 04/24/2018
Prof. David Jackson

Dynasties of China & Tibet w/Yangtze River
05/05/2018 – 05/19/2018
Prof. Marian Chertow

Northern Greece: Gastronomy & Culture
05/10/2018 – 05/20/2018
Prof. George Syrimis

Waterways of the Tsars
06/02/2018 – 06/12/2018
Prof. Elihu Rubin

Book Corner

The Great Game
by Peter Hopkirk
1994 Hopkirk’s spellbinding account of the great struggle for European supremacy in Central Asia captures the glamour, intrigue, treachery and adventure of the time and place.

The Lost Heart of Asia
by Colin Thubron
2008 In this classic narrative, Thubron recounts his travels to Samarkand, Bukhara and throughout Central Asia in the wake of the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Yale Educational Travel • Association of Yale Alumni
Box 209010, New Haven, CT 06520-9010
Reservations: 203.432.1952 edtravel@yale.edu
ITINERARY
MAY 1-19, 2018

WELCOME PHONE CALL
Thursday, April 18 (tent.)
Join the group at 4PM EST for a pre-trip welcome call with the professor in order to learn more about what to expect and to ask questions.

DEPART USA/ARRIVE ALMATY, KAZAKHSTAN
Tuesday-Wednesday, May 1-2
Depart the USA on international flights. Most flights arrive late at night or very early the next morning. Upon arrival, transfer to a five-star hotel in the city center for a two-night stay. (Meals in flight, Hotel Intercontinental)

ALMATY, KAZAKHSTAN
Thursday, May 3
Following an introductory lecture, begin an exploration of Almaty, Kazakhstan's business capital. Start at Panfilov Park with its candy-colored Zenkov Orthodox Cathedral. Visit the delightful Museum of Musical Instruments, and the State Central Museum, with a miniature replica of the Golden Man, a warrior’s armor made from 4,000 gold pieces. (B, L, D, Hotel Intercontinental)

BISHKEK, KYRGYZSTAN
Friday-Sunday, May 4-6
Before setting out on the drive to Bishkek, 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. In the Kyrgyz capital, meet with a resident Kyrgyz individual who participated in the April 7, 2010 revolution and together visit the “Ata-Beit” Memorial complex. Take a walk through the forested Ala Archa Gorge and enjoy a traditional performance of selections from the Epic of Manas. Out in the countryside, admire the Silk Road era Burana Tower, attend a demonstration of Kyrgyz horse games, and enjoy lunch at the home of a village family. (3B, 3L, 3D, Hyatt Regency Bishkek)

KHUJAND, TAJIKISTAN
Tuesday, May 8
Drive to the Uzbek/Tajik border and continue to Khujand, Tajikistan's second largest city. Visit the remains of the 10th century citadel of the Timurmalik Fortress, the poet Muslihiddin's memorial complex, the Historical Museum of Sogdiana, with its reconstructed medieval city gate, and the covered Panshanbe Bazaar. Meet with representatives of a local NGO and hear their experiences of living and working in Tajikistan. (1B, 1L, 1D, Hotel Sugd)

TASHKENT, UZBEKISTAN
Monday, May 7
Visit some of Tashkent's modern sites, including the Shahid Memorial Complex honoring the innocent people killed during Stalin's purges in 1938. Explore Tashkent's Old Town, and visit the private art studio of a sixth-generation Uzbek ceramicist whose family has been making pottery since the 1790s. By special arrangement, view the Uthman Koran, considered by Sunni Muslims to be the oldest Koran in the world. (1B, 1L, 1D Lotte City Hotel Tashkent Palace)

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SAMARKAND
Wednesday-Thursday May 9-10
Drive back into Uzbekistan and on to the fabled Silk Road oasis of Samarkand. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Samarkand is centered on monumental Registan Square, surrounded by three emblematic blue-tiled madrassahs. Visit Tamerlane’s Bibi Khanum Mosque, the row of tombs and mausoleums called Shah-i-Zinda, and Ulug Bek’s medieval observatory. Tour a workshop where paper is hand crafted according to 8th century traditions, and visit the studio of the internationally recognized fashion designer Valentina Romanenko, for a showing of her elegant modern fashions. (2B, 2L, 2D Hotel Emir Khan or similar)
Depart for Bukhara, stopping along the way to explore Shakrisabze, the birthplace of Tamerlane and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Admire the ruins of Ak Saray (White Palace), built in the 14th century, and one of Tamerlane’s most expansive undertakings. Continue on to UNESCO-listed Bukhara. Begin at Lyabi-Hauz Plaza, at the center of the Old Town, visiting the 12th century Kalon Mosque and Minaret and the Ark Citadel, dating back over two thousand years. Meet with a local architect for a look into the current state of historical renovation in Bukhara. Admire the 10th-century Ismael Samani Mausoleum, buried under the desert sands for centuries. Stroll the old Jewish Quarter, and visit the Summer Palace of the last Emir with its Museum of National Crafts. Enjoy dinner and a performance by local artists at a madrassah. (3B, 3L, 3D, Hotel Asia Khiva)

ASHGABAT, TURKMENISTAN
Wednesday-Friday May 16-18

Begin touring in Turkmenistan’s capital, Ashgabat, with a visit to the Lenin Monument and magnificent President Palace Square. Visit the National Museum of History and Ethnography, and a horse-breeding farm devoted to the renowned Akhal-Teke horse, arguably the oldest cultured breed of horse in the world. Explore the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the ancient Parthian Kingdom of Nisa, led by a professional local archaeologist. Celebrate your journey through the five ‘Stans with a toast at a farewell dinner. (3B, 3L, 3D, Hotel Oguzkent)

What is Included:

- All accommodation based on double occupancy per itinerary with breakfast daily, local service charge and tax (standard hotel check-in/out times apply unless otherwise noted): Almaty (2 nights); Bishkek (2 nights); Tashkent (2 nights); Khujand (1 night); Samarkand (2 nights); Bukhara (3 nights); Khiva (2 nights); Ashgabat (3 nights)

- Arrival and departure airport transfers for all travelers arriving and departing on the published tour start and end dates

- Ground transportation per itinerary by a private motorcoach

- Internal flights in economy class per itinerary: Bishkek-Tashkent one way and Tashauz-Ashgabat one way

- All sightseeing and excursions including entrance fees per itinerary

- Local English speaking guides throughout itinerary

- Services of a professional MIR tour manager throughout the land program

- Special Welcome and Farewell Dinners including local beer and wine

- Meals as listed in itinerary: hotel breakfast, lunch and dinner daily

- Beverages with lunches and dinners: water, tea, coffee

- Bottled/purified water with meals and on buses during city tours and transfers

- Gratuities to tour manager, local guides and drivers

- Baggage handling at hotels

- Destination preparation information packet

What is Not Included:

- International airfare between the U.S. and the tour start and end cities; air taxes or fuel surcharges; pre- or post-tour services; visa or passport fees; medical and trip cancellation/interruption insurance; evacuation costs; food or beverages not included in group meals; baggage handling at airports and land border crossing where porter services are not available; items of a personal nature such as laundry, alcohol, telephone expense, excess baggage fees, photo/video expenses inside museums (where allowed); other items not expressly listed as included.

Included meals indicated each day as B/L/D = Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner.

www.yaleedtravel.org/stans18
PRE-TRIP TO ASTANA

Capital of Kazakhstan only since 1997, Astana has undergone a massive transformation from sparsely populated steppe to an ultramodern metropolis dotted with shimmering gold towers, technicolor lights, and iconic white-and-blue high-rises. This focused pre-tour surveys a selection of Astana’s best-known highlights and spectacular structures, offering a fascinating glimpse into the country’s ever-changing political and economic future. Admire monuments such as Baiterek Tower, commemorating a Kazakh folk tale; the soaring steel-and-glass Pyramid of Peace, designed by renowned British architect Norman Foster; and the impressive Khan Shatyr Complex, dubbed the “World’s Biggest Tent.”

Visit the mammoth white Khazret Sultan Mosque, with the largest central dome in Kazakhstan, and gold-domed Assumption Cathedral, a striking Russian Orthodox church. Delve into the history of Kazakhstan at the National Museum of Kazakhstan, encompassing distinct halls focusing on various Kazakh highlights, such as the Hall of Gold, the Ethnographic Hall and the Hall of History. Pay a visit to the National Academy of Music and meet with some of the young musicians.

(2B, 2L, 1D, Marriott Astana)

Program Cost

The base cost this program is: $8,595 (based on double occupancy)

Single Supplement: $1,450 (limited availability)

Optional pre-trip extension to Astana

April 29-May 2, 2018.

$1,695 (based on double occupancy)

Single Supplement: $295 (limited availability)

Note: Itinerary subject to change. Some excursions in this program involve a significant amount of walking.

Reserve Your Central Asia Trip Today
Book online: www.yaleedtravel.org/stans18
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The right is retained to decline, to accept, or to retain any person as a member of this trip who, in the opinion of Yale Educational Travel ("YET") is unfit for travel or whose physical or mental condition may constitute a danger to themselves or to others on the trip. Passengers requiring special assistance, including without limitation those who permanently or periodically use a wheelchair, must be accompanied by someone who is fit and able to assist them, and who will be totally responsible for providing all required assistance.

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Terms and Conditions

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Photo Credit: MIR Corporation
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Valerie Hansen  
Professor of History

May 1-19, 2018

Embark on an adventurous journey through Central Asia, discovering Kazakhstan’s business capital, Almaty, the alpine vistas of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan’s string of blue-tiled Silk Road oases, Tajikistan’s corner of the Fergana Valley, and the bazaars of Turkmenistan, piled with deep red carpets.