Tourism Pearls of the Silk Road

Silk Road Initiative
China

- Natural Resources
  - Gansu Province .......................................................... 8
  - Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region .................................... 11
  - Shaanxi Province .......................................................... 12
  - Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region ................................ 13

- Cultural and Historical Resources
  - Gansu Province .......................................................... 14
  - Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region .................................... 17
  - Shaanxi Province .......................................................... 20
  - Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region ................................ 23

- Arts and Handicrafts ...................................................... 24

- Special Interest ............................................................ 26

- Cuisine ............................................................................... 26

- Accessibility ....................................................................... 28

Kazakhstan ........................................................................... 29

- Natural Resources ............................................................ 32

- Cultural and Historical Resources ..................................... 36

- Arts and Handicrafts .......................................................... 41

- Special Interest .................................................................. 44

- Cuisine ............................................................................... 45

- Accessibility ....................................................................... 46
contents

Kyrgyzstan

- Natural Resources ........................................... 50
- Cultural and Historical Resources ......................... 53
- Arts and Handicrafts ........................................ 56
- Special Interest ............................................. 57
- Cuisine ......................................................... 58
- Accessibility ................................................. 59

Tajikistan

- Natural Resources ........................................... 63
- Cultural and Historical Resources ......................... 68
- Arts and Handicrafts ........................................ 75
- Special Interest ............................................. 76
- Cuisine ......................................................... 77
- Accessibility ................................................. 78

Uzbekistan

- Natural Resources ........................................... 82
- Cultural and Historical Resources ......................... 83
- Arts and Handicrafts ........................................ 88
- Cuisine ......................................................... 90
- Accessibility ................................................. 92
The tourism industry has become one of the most important industries in the world - with 763 million international tourist arrivals worldwide in 2004 who generated US$ 622 billion in tourism receipts, tourism has tremendous potential in stimulating socio-economic growth in developing countries through its ability to generate employment and by spreading the economic benefits of tourism to all parts of a country, especially rural areas. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in collaboration with the World Tourism Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), have joined hands through the Silk Road Regional Programme, in assisting the Governments of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in developing their Silk Road tourism products. One of the first steps of this programme was to compile an inventory of Silk Road tourism resources in these five countries. The aim of this inventory is to familiarize the reader with the immense variety and high quality of the Silk Road tourism resources which can be located in these countries.

Once ran across much of the known world, from China in the East, across Asia and the Middle East, to the shores of the Mediterranean to the West. Although it was essentially a trade route, the Silk Road evolved to become a much greater phenomenon and played a fundamental role in the social, cultural, and religious development of many countries in the region through the exchange of goods, people, ideas, and religions. Over the past decade, there has been a significant revival of the Silk Road for tourism purposes. The cultural attractions of cities such as Xi’an, Bukhara, and Samarkand, the majestic beauty of the Tien-Shan mountains, the Gobi desert, river valleys and steppes, the rich cuisine, and variety of folklore and handicrafts, appeal to tourists who are eager to relive the legend and capture some of the magic of the ancient Silk Road.
The inventory of tourism resources is structured as follows:

- a brief introduction to the country;
- a description of its natural tourism resources, its cultural and historical resources, special interest resources, arts and handicrafts, and cuisine;
- accessibility to the country;
- information on accommodation;
- information on tourism services and facilities;
- latest tourism statistics of the country; and
- contact details of each country’s tourism administration should be reader wish to receive more information on a particular resource.

The resources have been listed in alphabetical order.

It is also pertinent to mention that this inventory is indicative by nature and by no means is it exhaustive. In the case of China, resources were only identified in the provinces which form part of the Silk Road Regional Programme and not for the entire country.

WTO would like to place on record its sincere thanks and appreciation to the tourism administrations of the five participating countries for their valuable support and assistance as well as to our partners, UNDP and UNCTAD.
China
China

Full country name: The People’s Republic of China
Capital City: Beijing
Area: 9,600,000 sq.km
Population: 1.29 billion
Official language: Mandarin (with many local dialects)
Religion(s): Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Christianity (Protestant and Catholic)
Currency: Yuan or Renminbi (RMB)
China is the third largest country in the world. It is a highly diverse country with its terrain varying from plains, deltas and hills in the east, to mountains, high plateaux and deserts in the West. The Silk Road was established as a transcontinental trade route during the Han dynasty, linking the West with China to become the most important connection between East and West. The Silk Road was the information super highway of its age, serving as the link not only for goods but also for the transmission of knowledge and ideas across the continent. It is believed that the first person to travel along the Silk Road was Zhang Qian.

China’s vast western region is accessible to travellers along the Silk Road. The ancient trade route starts in the old cities of Luoyang and Xi’an, reaching the Yellow River at Lanzhou, and moves westwards along deserts and mountains before dividing into three routes at the oasis of Dunhuang.
GANSU PROVINCE

Akesai County

✦ Scenic Spot of Sugan Lake - this lake is home to over 30,000 migratory birds including swans, black-necked cranes, bar-headed geese, and green-winged ducks among others. Tourist activities include horse-riding, camel-riding, yachting, sports and folk performances.

Dunhuang

✦ Dunhuang Yardang National Geological Park - located in the Gobi desert, 80km northwest of Yumen and 160km from Dunhuang, the main feature of the Park, which is a desert plain struck by strong, frequent winds, is the unique Yardang geological remains which are the result of millions of years of wind erosion since the Quaternary period. Many loose and flowing sand dunes, composed of light, yellow fine sand, dot the park in a southwest-northeast direction.

Jinta County

✦ Circulatory Flow of Heihe River Scenic Spot - running for 20km from Yixia Gorge in Heihe town to the Dadunmen Gorge in the Heihe River Valley, this attraction brings together sights of desert, river, grassland and mountains and has been described by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences as a "rarity on earth".

✦ Yuanyang (Mandarin Duck) Lakes Scenic Spot - located in Jiashan Gorge, 12km southwest of Jinta County, it was created from two reservoirs and again, brings together desert scenery combined with mountains, river valley and the resultant lake.
Jiuquan

- **Jiuquan Park (Spring Lake Park)** - with a history of over 2000 years, the Park is famous for its clear spring which flows northward into the lake. The lake, surrounded by willow trees, has a landscaped island in the centre and a stone bridge.

Tianshui

- **Maijishan Mountain Scenery Zone** - situated 45km from Tianshui and forming part of the West Qinling Mountain range, it comprises Maijishan Mountain, the Immortal Cliff, Stone Gate, Quxi Brook and the old town of Jieting. The scenery consists of steep cliffs surrounded by dense trees. It also comprises the Maijishan Grottoes which is one of the four largest cave complexes in China and consists of 194 caves with 7,200 clay and stone statues as well as 1,300 sq.m of mural paintings which span 1,500 years of Chinese history up to the Qing dynasty. The sculptures and paintings depict typical lifestyle scenes from the past.

Wuwei

- **Desert Park** - it is essentially a desert botanical garden, with 350 species from all over the world which were brought to the Park for scientific and recreational purposes. Apart from the plants and sand dunes, it contains facilities for sand therapy, a race course, a camel riding ground, an archery ground, an artificial lake, several yurts and other kinds of amusement facilities.

- **Ecological Agricultural Sightseeing Area in Liangzhou** - known as the hometown of Chinese wine, the famous Chinese Mogao wine is produced here. The winery and vineyards are located in the Huangyanghe River Farm and have a history of over 2,000 years. The grapevine corridor extends up to 18km. In the Mogao Winery, tourists can see the production line, the showroom and the research institute, as well as taste the wine. The sightseeing area comprises the Mogao Winery, the vineyard, the ancient Great Wall, the Tengger Desert, farmyards and apple groves.
Natural Resources

Other attractions in Gansu Province

✦ **Qilian Mountains** – these lie to the south of the Hexi Corridor and extend for more than 1,000km with a height of 4,000m. Their snow drifts and glaciers are principal sources of water.

✦ **Qiyi Glacier** – 116km from Jiayuguan, it is the glacier most closely situated to any Asian city. With a length of 50km and an average inclination of 45 degrees, it is relatively easy to climb.

✦ **The Yellow River** - formed in the Eocene period, the Yellow River runs an unusual 1,500km angular bend through Gansu and other provinces and along its path, one can see magnificent historic and modern sites such as the Yellow River bridge, an ancient fortress, the temple of tombs of the Han Dynasty as well as recreational options such as sailing and sandy beaches.
Liupan Mountain National Forestry Park - formed between 2-12 million years ago, the Liupan Mountain range runs for over 200km. With an average height of 2,500m, the highest peak, Migang, has a height of 2,942m. Rich in flora and fauna, it houses a total of 788 species of higher plants and a total of 206 species of wild animals including 158 species of birds, 39 species of mammals, 5 species of amphibians, and 4 species of reptiles.

Sand Lake Scenic Resort - it comprises a lake surrounded by sand dunes. Between May to September, the lake becomes a paradise for viewing several varieties of precious bird species, such as swans, white and grey cranes, black storks, and wild geese.

Shapotou Tourist and Scenic Zone – situated in close proximity to the Tenggeli Desert, the Yellow River and the Xianshan Mountain system, it is an ideal site for boating on the river and exploring the desert. It also comprises one of China’s four singing sand dunes where, when one slides down the dune, the peculiar geological structure of the dunes causes the sand to emit a resonant noise that reverberates like the tolling of a huge bell or the beating of a big drum, while giving the tourist the gliding sensation of descending from the sky. Cruising the river aboard goat-skin dinghies and camel-riding in the deserts are among many activities that are offered by locals. Bonfire parties, picnics, barbecue, and fruit-picking are also other activities pursued by tourists.

Suyukou National Forest Park - located in the Helan Mountain system, 50km from the city of Yinchuan, this Park consists of majestic mountains, dense forests, and numerous fauna and flora.
Natural Resources

**Hukou Waterfall of Yellow River** - situated in the middle of the Yellow River in Qin-Jin Valley, it is the second largest waterfall in China, after the Yellow Fruit Tree Waterfall in Guizhou Province. The width of the waterfall changes with the season. It is 30m in width and extends to 50m during the flood period with a fall level of 20-30m. Underneath the waterfall, Qi Langwo Bridge, which links Shaanxi and Shanxi provinces, can be found.

**Lishan Mountain** - Lishan Mountain has been a scenic attraction since ancient times. It is a branch of Qinling Mountain, covered with evergreen pine trees in the shape of a horse’s body. The mountain area is endowed with both beautiful scenery and famous ancient remains. The mountain provides a link to many scenic spots such as Laojun Temple and Yuxian Bridge, whilst enabling visitors to gain a birdseye view of Wei River.

**South Wutai Mountain** - situated about 8km to the east of Ziwu village of Chang’an County, South Wutai Mountain is a very steep and elegant mountain, home to many products of Chinese medicine. It is situated to the south of Wutai Mountain (The Mountain of Medicine King) of Yaoxian County.
XINJIANG UYGUR AUTONOMOUS REGION

Karez Wells - built by labourers from several ethnic groups, the wells are a series of underground channels which supply water throughout the year for agricultural purposes and are a successful attempt made by local people to adapt to the natural environment.

Tianchi Natural Reserve - situated north of Bogda Peak of the Tien-Shan Mountains, it comprises high mountains with snow-capped peaks, fir forests and beautiful lakes including Tianchi Lake which is a semi-moon shaped lake.
Dunhuang

- **Valley of Ten Thousand Buddhas (Yulin Grottoes)** - the Yulin Grottoes are a part of the Dunhuang art complex and consist of 41 major caves and hundreds of other smaller caves. The murals contained within depict scripture drawings, portraits of Buddha, rare animals and plants, agricultural scenes, weddings, banquets, games, music and dancing. The big scripture drawings are authentic portrayals of the highly developed art of painting in the Tang Dynasty more than 1300 years ago and are the essence of the Yulin Grottoes.

- **Yangguan Cultural Relic Site** - located 53km southwest of Dunhuang, it comprises an area of ancient passes, routes, cities, and beacon fire sites, which together form a spectacular sight in the desert. It was a famous pass on the Silk Road and is said to connect Dunhuang in the east, join Loulan in the west, and look towards Yumen and Jinan in the north and south.

- **Yangguan Pass** - the 'Gate of Yang', it derives its name from Yang Ming, an official in ancient times who fled through the gate to evade a warrant for his arrest. The remains of a citadel still exist at the site and many artefacts such as coins, arrowheads, pottery and gold jewellery have been found there. To the Chinese, it is considered a remote, forbidding spot – a place for farewells.

- **Yumenguan Pass** - Yangguan and Yumenguan passes are situated 86km apart and once stood within the Han dynasty sections of the Great Wall. In later years, caravans carrying jade from Khotan would pass through Yumenguan and it became known as the Jade Gate. Its precise location was not established until 1907, when the explorer Sir Aurel Stein discovered inscribed wooden slabs on which the site is named. Today, it is one of the most remote and desolate places on earth and was ever considered by the ancient Chinese as the limit of the civilised world beyond which lay a wilderness inhabited by demons.
**Jiayuguan**

- **Brick Paintings in the Tombs of the Wei and Jin Dynasties** - discovered in 1972, 18 tombs were excavated and dated from the 3rd – 5th centuries A.D. They comprise underground chambers, each composed of three connecting rooms with colour paintings on all brick walls. Most of the paintings are the size of individual bricks but some are bigger and occupy a group of bricks. The paintings are all preserved in perfect condition and feature a rich variety of themes including agricultural scenes, hunting, festivities, music, sports, warfare, silk-making and other activities.

- **Fortress of Jiayuguan Pass** - built in 1372 by General Feng Sheng of the Ming dynasty after having defeated the last remnants of the Mongols of the former Yuan dynasty, it is a brick fortress 733m in circumference and with a 11m high wall. Simpler, earthen citadels had guarded the entrance to the Gansu Corridor at least as far back as the Han dynasty (3rd century BC.), but this Fortress was soon considered as “the Strongest Pass Under Heaven” and was considered the limit of the Chinese Empire. It also marked the western terminus of the Ming Dynasty Great Wall.

- **Hanging Wall** - 8km north of Jiayuguan Pass, it was built in 1539 on the east side of Heishan Mountain. It is 750m long and hangs on the slope of the Mountain. The walls were made of compressed earth and, since it is almost vertical in some places, it is also known as the Cliff Wall. Climbing the Wall requires courage but it rewards climbers with a marvellous view of the vast desert, snow-capped mountains, the grass land and the Great Wall in the distance.

- **Mural Paintings on the Black Mountain Cliffs** - Heshan (Black Mountain) is located 20km northwest of Jiayuguan City and contains mural paintings on its cliffs in a 2km area. The pictures span a large period of Chinese history with the earliest dating from the 5th -3rd centuries BC to the Warring States Period and the latest form the 14th -17th centuries A.D. to the Ming Dynasty. They are of various sizes and can consist of a single scene of an individual or animal or a series of scenes.
**Jiuquan**

- **Jiuquan** - the name means wine spring and the city is located in the western part of the Hexi corridor. Due to its strategic position and historical significance, there are many attractive relics in Jiuquan such as the Bell and Drum Tower, Jiuquan Park and the Jiuquan Arts and Crafts Plant for producing jade cups. According to legend, during the Western Han period, Emperor Wu Di sent General Hurl Qubing a jar of wine as a reward for his victory over the I Hun. However, General Hurl poured the wine into the Gold Spring and shared it with all his soldiers hence the name of the city.

- **Brick Tombs of the Tang Dynasty** - these are several brick tombs of the Tang dynasty. The first layer of bricks of the back chamber have relief pictures of twelve symbolic animals representing the twelve Earthly Branches which is a typical folklore phenomenon and custom that took its form as early as during the Han dynasty.

- **Historical Scenic Resort of the Western Han Dynasty** – approximately 2km east of Jiuquan and with an area of 270,000 sq.m, it is a classical garden landscape which represented the grandeur of the Western Han dynasty.

- **Jiuquan Museum** - founded in 1978, it has a collection of 4,138 various cultural relics. The displayed items vary in terms of time, from pre-historical times to the Ming and Qing Dynasties and focus on history, politics, economy, science and technology, culture and arts, farming and animal husbandry, religion and customs.

- **Wooden Drum Tower** - the wooden drum tower was first erected during the 4th century but has since been rebuilt many times. Its purpose was to point the way for travellers since the inscriptions over the four gates on each side of the tower declare that to the North lay the Gobi Desert, to the South the Qilian Mountains, to the East was Huashan (a mountain east of Xi’an), and, to the West lay Yiwu (Hami in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region). Jiuquan continued to be an important trading town as late as the 17th century.

- **Mural Decorated Tomb in Dingjiazha** - located in the huge graveyard of the Wei and Jin dynasties 3km northwest of Jiuquan, it has a history of 1,600 years. Some of China’s earliest murals dating back to the East Jin dynasty (4th – 5th centuries A.D.) are located here.
Zhangye

- **Dafo (Big Buddha) Temple** – it is the biggest Sleeping Buddha statue in China. Construction began in the 11th century A.D. in the Xixai period where legend states that a small Sleeping Buddha statue covered by a green tile was discovered here. The present buildings include the Big Buddha Hall, the Buddhist Sutras Pavilion and the Clay Tower.

Yinchuan

- **108 Pagodas** - located on the eastern slope of a mountain near the west bank of the Yellow River at the gorge in Qingtongxia county, these 108 pagodas are arranged in twelve rows in the shape of a large equilateral triangle and is the only attraction of its kind in China.

- **Baisikou Double Pagodas** – situated at the eastern foot of the Helan Mountain, it consists of a pair of ancient, brick-made pagodas separated by a distance of 800m. Baisikou is one of the famous Helan Mountain exits. According to historical records, it used to be a royal temple in the Xixia dynasty period.
Chengtian Monastery Pagoda - also known as the "Western Pagoda", it was built in the 11th century A.D. during the height of the Xixia dynasty. The Monastery Pagoda, like the Wuwei Huoguo Temple and Zhangye Sleeping Buddha in Gansu Province, was a famous Buddhist site during the Xixia period. It consists of 13 storeys, each one having eight corners in which hang small bells. Ningxia Museum is located in the Monastery and exhibits many historical relics of Ningxia and cultural relics of the Hui people.

Haidao Pagoda - believed to have been built in the 5th century A.D., this square-type Pagoda is built of bricks and consists of 11 storeys. The niches in every storey protrude slightly outwards giving the Pagoda's façade the appearance of a Chinese character thereby giving it an unique impression.

Helan Mountain Rock Paintings - Helan Mountain is located 50km from Yinchuan and houses a collection of over 1000 rock paintings of various forms which are arranged on the walls of both sides of the valley. The art design of the rock paintings is realistic and simple, and depicts birds and beasts, people, Xixia characters and fingerprints. They offer valuable insights on the customs, religion and hunting habits of nomadic ethnic groups. According to experts, the paintings date back 5000 years to the time of the Ming and Qing dynasties.

Nanguan Mosque - a typical Arabian mosque built at the end of the Ming dynasty, its main worship hall is located on the upper floor and has a capacity for almost 1,000 people. The roof is composed of one big dome and four small thick round domes.
Xixia Imperial Tombs - located on the east side of Helan Mountain, 25km west of Yinchuan, 9 imperial tombs and 253 lesser tombs were discovered in 1972. Each imperial tomb has its unique architectural style.

Xixia Mausoleum - located in the suburbs of Yinchuan, it is the main historic site of the city. It consists of the royal cemetery of the Xixia Dynasty and holds 9 imperial tombs, orderly arranged and over 40 other tombs where concubines and slaves were buried.

Xixia Historical Museum - the first museum in China which truly and vividly demonstrates the whole history of the Xixia dynasty including 67 pieces of the most typical Xixia historical relics including carvings, inscriptions, wall paintings, Buddhist scripture and paintings, metal helmets and official seals.

Zhenbeipu Western Movie Studio – Zhenbeipu used to be a defence castle during the Ming and Qing dynasties. It was introduced to the movie circles in the 1980s as it provides the best background for movies and television series on western ancient China.

Other attractions in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region

Great Wall - Ningxia is known as the "Museum of the Great Wall" as its territory consists of mountains to the north and high plateaus to the south. Its portion of the Great Wall consists of two main parts: the Ming Wall and the Qin Wall. Remains of the Qin Wall can still be found today in Xiji County and Guyuan County and have been preserved quite well.

Xumishan Grottoes - these date from the Northern Dynasties period (4th – 6th centuries A.D.) and lie on the eastern side of Mount Xumi. Today, 22 grottoes remain intact.
Cultural and Historical Resources

**SHAANXI PROVINCE**

- **Famen Temple** - located in Famen Town at 10km north of Fufeng County and about 120km west of Xi’an, it was established in the Eastern Han Dynasty with the purpose to spread Buddhism. The Famen Temple Pagoda and Famen Temple Museum are the most representative structures in the Temple. The Temple Museum was established in 1987 and includes the most precious treasures of the Tang dynasty including gold and silverware, coloured glaze ware, porcelain and silks. Famen Temple has been known not only as a royal temple, but also as a holy place for Buddhists.

- **Xi’an City** (ancient Chang’an) – it was the capital of China during 11 dynasties from which 73 emperors ruled over China for an aggregate time of over 1,100 years. It was from Chang’an in 139 B.C. that Zhang Qian set out his westward long journey that opened the Silk Road. The importance and prosperity of this ancient capital left behind a wealth of valuable historical sites such as, the City Wall of Xi’an – the best preserved city wall of China.

- **Big Wild Goose Pagoda** - situated in the Da Ci’en Temple and located in the southern suburb of Xi’an City, it is a well-preserved ancient building and a holy place for Buddhists. On the exterior, it looks like a square cone, simple but majestic and is a masterpiece of Buddhist construction built of brick. Inside the pagoda, stairs twist up and the visitors can climb and admire the panorama of Xi’an City from the arch-shaped doors on four sides of each storey. The square on the northern side covers about 110,000 sq.m as well as 20,000 sq.m of water area and is the biggest Tang-culture square in Asia with the biggest fountain and the largest-scale sculpture area.
Da Xing Shang Si Temple - situated in the suburbs south of Xi’an, it is one of the oldest Buddhist temples in China built during the Western Jin Dynasty. The Temple is among the three temples where sutras were translated; the other two being Ci’en Temple and Jianfu Temple. Qing-style architectural features predominate inside the temple which include the Mountain Gate, the Devajara Hall, the Mahavira Hall, the Bell and Drum Towers and Kwan-yin Palace among many other halls in which Buddhists can pray. The Temple is an old royal temple and a tourist attraction.

Great Mosque - located in Xi’an and built in 742 A.D. during the Tang Dynasty, the Mosque is among the oldest, largest and best-preserved Islamic mosques in China. The Great Mosque is divided into four courtyards covering an area of more than 12,000 sq.m with beautiful gardens which make you feel serene once you stroll deeper inside. The first courtyard contains an elaborate 9m high wooden arch covered with glazed tiles built at the turn of the 17th century. In the second courtyard, there is a stone memorial gateway flanked by two tall steles, one on either side, with dragons carved on each. As visitors enter the third courtyard, they can see Xingxin Tower, a place where Muslims come to attend prayer services. The fourth courtyard houses a “Phoenix” and is the main pavilion of the mosque containing the Prayer Hall with fine mural paintings.
Cultural and Historical Resources

- **Terra-Cotta Museum** – a world cultural heritage site located 37km from Xi’an city, it is the most significant archaeological excavation of the 20th century. The museum covers an area of 16,300 sq.m. Life-size terracotta figures of warriors and horses arranged in battle formations are the star features at the museum. It was opened to the public in 1989, with 68 warriors, a war chariot and four horses. The Terracotta Warriors and Horses is a sensational archaeological discovery of all times which places Xi’an among the most attractive spots for tourists and was listed by UNESCO in 1987 as a world cultural heritage.

- **Xingjiao Temple** - situated at the foot of Shaoling Plateau, about 20km south of Xi’an, it is particularly famous because it is the burial place of Xuanzang, the pilgrim who spent 15 years in India and brought Buddhist scriptures back to China. There are grand palaces and pagodas inside the temple. The five-room main hall of the temple is built of red pillars and green eaves. It contains a white jade statue of the Buddha, a bronze statue of the Buddha, a porcelain Laughing Buddha and other ancient sculptures.
**Ancient City of Jiaohe** - this is the oldest and best preserved earth-built city in the world and is located 10km west of Turpan in the Yarnaz Valley. Its name means "intersecting rivers" and the ruins are located on top of a 30m cliff carved out by two rivers which have long since run dry. It used to be capital of the state of South Cheshi, one of the kingdoms of the Han dynasty over 2000 years ago. The dusty ruins reveal the structure of the city including the 1,650m long city walls, huts, temples, watchtowers, courtyards, streets and wells. A Buddhist monastery stands in the centre of the city.

**Asitana-Halahezhuo Ancient Tomb Group** - an "underground museum", 40km southeast of Turpan, it is the burial site of nobles, officials and ordinary people from the early Jin Dynasty. Over 2,700 pieces of silk and wool, frescoes, paintings, mud sculptures, wood carvings, pottery, woodwork, coins and books can be found here.
Arts and Handicrafts

- **Dances - Gaoqiao** - this is a dance on stilts and is a popular traditional performance of the Spring Festival, especially in Northern China. It is believed that Chinese first began using stilts to gather fruits from trees. This practical use of stilts gradually developed into a kind of folk dance. The *gaoqiao* performance requires high skills and varies in form.

Most stilts used today are made from wood. There are "double stilts" and "single tilt" performances. The double stilts are usually tied to the dancer’s shank to fully demonstrate his skill; and the single tilt is held by the performer so that he can go up and down freely. The performance can be divided into *wenqiao* (civil) and *wuqiao* (martial). The former stresses appearance and amusement, while the latter emphasizes individual unique skill. *Gaoqiao* has now assumed strong local flavour and national colour.

*Flower Drum Lantern* - it is a dance form which is composed of songs and dances and requires high skills and integrates the cultures of both south and north China, making it bold and candid and gentle and lovely.

*Yangge* - considered to be more a physical exercise than an art performance, it does not require expensive instruments or a formal stage but consists more of the dancer moving to the rhythm of the drumbeats.

*Yangko* - this is a popular rural folk dance which originated from rice planting and farming. During its development, it incorporated much from farming songs such as "lingge" (a kind of folk song), folk wushu (a form of physical culture), acrobatics and traditional operas to finally evolve into a folk dance. Roles include *niu* (girls), *chou* (clown), *gongzi* (young men) and *laokuai* (shrewish old women). Except for the *laokuai* who hold a wooden club, all others dance with a folding fan in their hands. The most striking performance is made by the *chou* who is charmingly naive, kind, humorous and optimistic. Closely accompanied by the suona (a kind of horn), which can imitate the sound of people, the *chou* makes people laugh.

- **Dough figurine** - these are popular in the Yellow River Valley and were made from moulding dough into pig-like and sheep-like figurines to worship the heavens and spirits as well as ancestors to pray for good weather for the crops. Now the figurines have evolved to assume other forms and shapes and are indispensable at weddings and funerals.

*Moonlight Cup* - this is a local product of Jiuquan (Gansu Province) and is made of jade. These cups are of high quality and bear beautiful patterns of green and black shading. Wines look crystal and sparkling in these cups under the moonlight. Moonlight cups are resistant to high tem-
peratures and freezing and preserve their natural tints well. They have proven to be excellent souvenirs and presents for visitors at home and abroad.

- **Night Market** - held in Dunhuang (Gansu Province) from 1 April till 31 October every year, it offers local flavour snacks, handicrafts and souvenirs as well as music tea houses.

- **Painting** - this is a very important part of China’s cultural heritage and traditional Chinese painting is distinguished from Western art in that it is executed on xuan paper (or silk) with the Chinese brush, Chinese ink and mineral and vegetable pigments. To attain proficiency in this field requires assiduous exercise, a good control of the brush and a feel and knowledge of the qualities of xuan paper and Chinese ink. A Chinese painter is at the same time a poet and a calligrapher. He will often add a poem in his own hand on the painting which invariably carries an impression of his seal. The resulting piece of work usually integrates four branches of art: poetry, calligraphy, painting and seal-cutting.

- **Puppet shows** - Chinese puppet shows originated in the Han dynasty and flourished in the Tang and Song dynasties and have a history of over 2,000 years. The art form is categorised into four types based on the shapes of the puppets and the operative skills: figure puppets, marionettes, stick puppets and wire-supported puppets. Each has its own artistic characteristics. At present, puppet shows are usually accompanied by the tunes of local operas and some adopt the form of dialogue or singing and dancing.

- **Shadow play** - this is a type of drama in which silhouettes made of hard paper and hide are projected onto a white screen. The performer manipulates the characters behind the screen while singing the libretto to tell the story. The story-telling is accompanied by music. Chinese shadow play came into being during the Han dynasty in northwest China’s Shaanxi Province and spread to South Asia, Central Asia, West Asia and North Africa in the 13th century, and, to Europe in the 17th century.
Special Interest

- **Gliding** - this can be done in the Jiayuguan International Sailplane Base which is one the three biggest gliding locations in the world.

- **Hunting** - this can be enjoyed in the Harteng Valley International Hunting Field in Gansu Province at the foot of the towering mountains and lying beside a beautiful valley. There are numerous kinds of wild animals to be found here.

- **Sand skiing** - this can be enjoyed in the dunes of Shapotou.

Cuisine

- Chinese food is characterised by the wide range of vegetables, fruit, meat and fish available in the country. The starch staples include millet, rice, kao-liang, wheat, maize, buckwheat, yam, and sweet potato whereas the legumes include soybean, broad bean, pea nut and mung bean. Fruits and vegetables include malva, amaranth, Chinese cabbage, mustard green, turnip, radish, mushroom, peach, apricot, plum, apple, jujube date, pear, crab apple, mountain haw, longan, litchi and orange. Common meats are pork, beef, mutton, venison, chicken, duck, goose, pheasant, dog and many fishes and popular spices are red pepper, ginger, garlic, spring onion and cinnamon. However, unlike the rest of its Silk Road neighbours, milk and dairy products have not taken a prominent place in Chinese cuisine.

Chinese dining habits do not usually involve serving food in individual portions. Rather, large plates are placed at the centre of the table so as to enable everyone to help themselves to the dishes served. These dining habits are facilitated by the use of **chopsticks** - a pair of wooden sticks which are used to facilitate reaching the items of food and eating them.
• **Dim sum** - a unique Chinese dish, it consists of small packets of dough with various stuffing served as snacks. They are mostly steamed but may also be fried or braised.

• **Noodles** - the Chinese were the inventors of noodles which is a basic component of Chinese cuisine. There are two kinds of noodles: egg noodles or *mien*, and rice noodles or *bijon* (also referred to as glass noodles because of their appearance). Whereas egg noodles are mostly in the shape of thin spaghetti, rice noodles are also commonly served as *ho fan* (wide noodles like the Italian fettuccine and tagliatelle). Noodles can be served in several ways: in a clear soup with meat and some vegetables, or mixed with meat with an optional thickened sauce poured over. If sauce is to be served, normally egg noodles are used while rice noodles are used if served without sauce.

• **Soups** - the two most famous Chinese soups, *shark fin soup* and *bird’s nest soup* get their thickened, glutinous texture from their two main ingredients, shark fin and bird’s nests, which are simmered for many hours.

• **Tea** - this is the preferred Chinese drink and is also drunk at mealtimes as it clears the palate of the taste of the former dish before proceeding to the next. The Chinese normally drink green tea without any additives such as milk, sugar or lemon.
Accessibility

China’s transportation system, comprising civil aviation, railways, highways, and water transport has developed at the same pace as its robust tourism industry. There are over 115 ports of entry and exit in China.

In 2003, the number of newly scheduled air routes and resumed air routes reached 266, of which 210 were domestic, four were to Hong Kong and Macao, and 52 were international. Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Hong Kong are the main hubs. The national authority of civil aviation is the General Administration of Civil Aviation of China (CAAC).

Chinese railway service boasts domestic and international operations. The total mileage of railways open to traffic in China amounts to 100,000km which form an extensive network with Beijing as the hub. International railway transportation is available on the following routes: Beijing-Ulaanbaator-Moscow; Beijing-Manzhouli-Moscow; Beijing-Pyongyang; Urumqi-Almaty; Beijing-Hanoi; Beijing-Ulaanbaator. It takes six to seven days for an express train to reach Beijing from Moscow by way of Ulaanbaator or Manzhouli.

Accommodation facilities

China has built, expanded and renovated many hotels and restaurants to satisfy the needs of tourists. Modern tourist facilities are available in major cities in China.

The following facilities and services are available in hotels rated with three or more stars:

- Chinese restaurant, Western restaurant, café, banquet hall, ball room, massage parlours, stores, beauty parlours, meeting hall, commercial center, gym, florist’s shop, clinic, parking lot, bookstore, credit-handling and foreign exchange conversion center, DDD and IDD telephone services, room service, child care, facilities for the disabled, karaoke hall, KTV room, chess and card playing room, billiards room, and ping-pong room.

Some four-star of five-star hotels are also equipped with swimming pools, bowling alleys, golf courses, saunas, safety-deposit boxes, as well as facilities for fishing, boating, horseback riding, hunting, sharp shooting and other sports.

Tourism facilities and services

There are travel agencies in every city in China able to provide a complete array of tourist service, including:

- transportation, sight-seeing, lodging, shopping, entertainment and tourist guides;
- handling entry, exit and visa procedures with the authorization of prospective tourists;
- booking air, boat, and train tickets, and providing luggage service for tourists.

By the end of 2003, the number of travel agencies in China totalled 13,361. The three major travel agencies in China are: China International Travel Service (www.cits.net), China Travel Service (www.cts.com.cn) and China Youth Travel Service (www.cots.com.cn).

National tourism statistics

Since 1990, China enjoyed a steady growth in the number of tourist arrivals, with the exception of a decline in 2003 due to the influence of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). However, recovery was better than expected with a 26.7 per cent increase in the number of tourists from 32.97 million in 2003 to 41.76 million 2004 (see table).

Contact details

China National Tourism Administration (CNTA)
A9 Jian Guo Men Nei Avenue
BEIJING 100740 - CHINA
Tel: (86-10) 6512 2827
Fax: (86-10) 6512 2096
Email: cta@ns.cnta.com
www.cnta.gov.cn
Kazakhstan
Kazakhstan

<table>
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Kazakhstan is divided into 14 provinces and 3 economic regions. The biggest towns are: Almaty, Shymkent, Karaganda, Zhambyl, Semipalatinsk, Pavlodar, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Astana, Uralsk, and Aktyubinsk.

Larger than all Western Europe, Kazakhstan is a vast country of steppes and mountains rich in natural beauty. For thousands of years, it was also a natural bridge between the East and West, with a northern spur of the Silk Road running through parts of southern Kazakhstan. Authorities are now aggressively marketing the country’s tourism attractions. These range from winter sports such as skiing and snowmobiling, to warm weather activities like hiking, fishing and hunting, or more relaxed pastimes such as visiting a health spa.

Kazakhstan has many nationalities and ethnic groups, all contributing to a rich cultural melting pot which developed over many centuries. Archaeological findings from the Kazakh region where the northern route of the Silk Road ran suggest early trade ties with Europe, China and Persia.

Most of Kazakhstan’s Silk Road sites are concentrated in an easily accessible area of the country well-served by transport from its biggest city – Almaty.
Aksu-Zhabagly Nature Reserve - a UNESCO biosphere reserve in southern Kazakhstan. It was set up in 1927 with a total area of 85,300ha. Surrounded by fresh greenery, there are no comparable juniper woods in any other part of the Tien-Shan system. Graig’s Tulip is the symbol of the reserve. The Aksu River canyon, with its almost vertical river banks which have a height of up to 300-500m, is another remarkable sight. This giant canyon is 15km long and 500m deep. The nearest distance between the walls of the canyon is 600-800m. In the Reserve, one can find 1,404 species of plants while the fauna is represented by 47 and 239 species of animals and birds respectively.

Almaty Nature Reserve - established in 1961, it encloses a territory of 73,300 ha. This rugged area is an important habitat of the elusive snow leopard, among other rare species. It contains Mt Talgar, the highest peak in the Zailiysky Alatau at 4979m, which takes experienced climbers four days to climb. It is also home to 137 species of plants, 39 species of animals and 200 species of birds.

Bayan-Aul National Nature Park - known as ‘the museum of nature’, the reserve is located in central Kazakhstan and is home to rock drawings, stone sculptures, clean, sparkling lakes and pine forests.

Charyn River Canyon - this is the country’s premier natural beauty spot. The red clay walls of the canyon are carved with deep fissures, caves, and grottoes of different shapes and sizes. They create an impression of a huge, ghost city inhabited by fantastic creatures.
Kurgaldjino - located in central Kazakhstan, this world-class nature reserve of international repute, with its feather-grass steppe is home to 300 types of plant and the most northerly settlement of flamingos in the world.

Lake Balkhash - one of the largest lakes in the world, half of it is salt water and the other half is fresh water.

Naurzum Nature Reserve - it offers a rich landscape of geographical contrasts with salt lakes ringed by forests, the remains of ancient pines strewn amongst sand dunes, pine forests growing out of salt-marsh beds, vast meadows, and rare animals such as hisser swans and grave eagles.

Observatories - there are three located near Almaty: the Tien-Shan observatory beyond the Big Almaty Lake, an observatory of the Institute of Astrophysics on Kamenskoye plateau and the Assy-Turgen observatory 150km north-east of Almaty. The first two can be visited to watch stars through telescopes while listening to a lecture on astronomy. The Tien-Shan observatory beyond Big Almaty Lake is a challenge to reach both for hikers and drivers.

Singing Barkhan - this sand dune, 80m high and 3km long, produces a peculiar sound reminiscent of loud singing as it crumbles and shifts.

State Park of Altyn-Emel - this unexpected paradise stretches from Ily river till the mountain ridges of Aktau. Here one can see rock paintings and observe the enormous variety of the fauna and the Singing Barkhan (already described previously).
Tien-Shan Mountains: Khan-Tengri International Mountaineering Camp - The two branches of the Engilchek (Little Prince) glacier which, at 65km, is the longest in the Tien-Shan system, are separated for 40km by the Tengri-Tag mountain range. Here, between Severni (Northern) Engilchek and Juzhniy (Southern) Enghilchek are Pobeda Peak and one of the most beautiful mountains in the world, Khan-Tengri. The starting point to reach this area is the International Mountaineering Camp of Karakara which lies in an enchanting valley surrounded by verdant mountains and covered with woods and flowery meadows where horses roam freely. At an altitude of 2,000m, this camp has tents, a canteen, a cafe and a sauna.

Kolsai Lakes - these comprise three mountain lakes located at altitudes of 1,000m, 2,250m and 2,700m, respectively, above sea level. Surrounded by rocks, forests of broad-leaved trees, pines spruces and mountain meadows, the lakes create an enchanting picture. There are a lot of opportunities for diverse forms of outdoor and water recreation: swimming, fishing, horseback riding, hiking, and skiing and skating in winter. The lakes are open for boat excursions.
**Pobeda Peak** - also known as Victory Peak (named so by an expedition led by V. Abalakov in 1956), it is the northernmost and tallest peak of the Tien-Shan system with a height of over 7,000m. The weather conditions during climbs are extremely rough. The rare days with good weather are separated by long periods of bad weather in which the icy wind from the Takla Makan desert - significantly called "Thousand Devils" - often buffets the mountain, making it impossible to climb.

**Usturt** - situated in west Kazakhstan in the Karagie Depression, 132m below sea level, this chalk-cliffed reserve is the largest in the country.

**Zaili Alatau Mountains** - these mountains add special charm to the city of Almaty, providing a fantastic diversity of beautiful surroundings, routes and landscape which attract tourists and lovers of active leisure. A real pearl of the Zaili Alatau is Bolshoe Almatinskoe Lake, situated at 2,510m above the sea level.
**Cultural and Historical Resources**

**Akyrtas Palace Complex** - one of most mysterious and interesting constructions not only of Zhambylskoy region, but also of Kazakhstan. The history of Akyrtasa has been studied for over 130 years and archaeologists have identified Akyrtas as the medieval city of Kasribas, located on the Silk Road. Tourists are surprised by the grandeur of the buildings and the size of stone blocks. The basement of the complex is 4m deep. Archaeological excavations are presently conducted by various archaeological institutions and it is proposed to build a museum complex within the framework of the “cultural heritage” national programme. Several legends exist as to the design of the building and the reasons of its lack of completion.

**Almaty** - formerly Alma Ata, the name means the “Father of Apples”. Almaty enjoys a beautiful setting between mountains and plains. It is a city of modern architecture, wide streets, cool fountains, parks and squares and spectacular mountain views. Attractions in the city include the Panfilov Park, which is dominated by one of the world’s tallest wooden buildings, built at the turn of the 20th century without using a single nail, and the Zenkov Cathedral. Other sights include New Square, which is usually the location for national ceremonies and parades and is overlooked by the City Hall and the Obelisk of Independence. Almaty boasts several fine museums including the Museum of Kazakh National Instruments, the Central State Museum and the State Art Museum which has, among its exhibits, traditional Kazakh rugs, jewellery and clothing. You can visit numerous theatres of different genres - drama, opera and ballet to name a few. The Arasan Baths, in the western area of Panfilov Park, have Eastern, Finnish and Russian saunas.
Astana - the capital of Kazakhstan since June 1998, it is a thriving and modern city developing at an amazing pace and a major political and cultural centre. Present day Astana boasts new modern government and business offices, beautiful squares and boulevards, modern roads as well as river promenades on both banks of the Ishim River. While the old part of the town was located on the right bank of the River Ishim, construction in recent years has led to the appearance of a totally new city center on the left bank comprising, among other things, many entertainment facilities.

Dzhambul - known earlier as Taraz, it is home to the Daudbek Shahmansur Mausoleum - this 13th century monument was built on the grave of one of the viceroys of the Mongol Khans who was killed in 1262. It is said to have been built lopsided in revenge for the man’s infamous cruelty. Two more memorials of interest to tourists are located 18km from Dzhambul. The hill on which the mausoleums are located offers an excellent panorama of Dzhambul city as well as of Talas River, which gave the name to the ancient city. A rock bridge (of the 10th - 13th centuries) is also located here and was crossed by caravans passing through Dzhambul. The architectural complex constitutes a pilgrimage place.

Karakhan Mausoleum - also located in Dzhambul, it was built in the 11th century on the grave of one of the rulers of Karakhanids’ dynasty. It consists of a portal-and-dome brick structure and some reproductions of ancient remains.

Tekturnas Architectural Complex - one of the earliest cult places dating from the 10th to 14th centuries. The mausoleum, dating from medieval times, was destroyed in 1935. Nowadays, a new mausoleum resembling the old medieval mausoleum has replaced the old one. Another mausoleum, built on the grave of Mambet, the Great Kazakh Batyr, is located nearby. The hill on which the mausoleums are located offers an excellent panorama of Dzhambul city as well as of Talas River, which gave the name to the ancient city. A rock bridge (of the 10th - 13th centuries) is also located here and was crossed by caravans passing through Dzhambul. The architectural complex constitutes a pilgrimage place.

Babadzi-Khatun Mausoleum - located in a village called Golovachovka, 18km from Dzhambul, it was built in the 11th century and has a marquee dome of unique construction.
Mausoleum Aisha Bibi - also located in Golovachovka, and dating from the 12th century, it is the only memorial in Kazakhstan entirely faced with carved terracotta with the richest ornamentation with 60 kinds of patterns, cornices and styled inscriptions. The paintings contained therein present the richest composition of motifs of folk ornamentation. On one of the corner towers of the mausoleum, one can read the inscription: “Autumn... Clouds... The Earth is beautiful”.

Museums: Central State Museum - contains four exposition halls in which one can admire objects of the material and spiritual culture of Kazakhstan and learn of the history of the country - natural history, ancient history, contemporary history and ethnography. Traditional Kazakh yurts and clothes, armoury, jewellery and archaeological finds including a miniature replica of the model of the unique “Gold man” found in the Issyk Burial Mound are located in the museum. Presently, the museum contains over 200,000 exhibits of permanent storage of which only one tenth can be exhibited in main halls.

Literature and Fine Arts Museum Zh. Zhabayeva - this was established in 1947 and comprises the house in which Akyn lived between 1936-1945, a conference hall, garage, and administrative building.

Museum of Folk Music Instruments - contains a unique collection of traditional musical instruments, each with a recording of its sound. The exposition contains more than 40 types and variants of musical instruments, mostly Kazakh ones.

Sheber Aul - an Artisans Village where tourists have the possibility to be introduced to the national way of life, traditions and cuisine, as well as observe techniques of handicraft production of leather, metal, and wood articles.
**State Museum of Arts** - named after a prominent Kazakh artist Abylkhan Kasteev, it was opened in 1976. Most of its resources were collected in the 1930's through donations of exhibits from the Hermitage (St. Petersburg) and Tretiakov Galleries (Moscow) and the Shevchenko Gallery in Almaty. The museum features the traditional, modern and contemporary art of Kazakhstan, other Central Asian and CIS countries, and has exhibits of 19th and 20th century French and Italian art. The museum has a souvenir shop which has Kazakh and Russian art products (jewellery, paintings, etc.) for sale and a batik shop. There is also an arts school for children at the museum.

**Shakpak-Ata Mosque** - dating from the 12th - 14th centuries, this subterranean cross-shaped monument was hewn out of rock and is an architectural heritage site. It is situated in western Kazakhstan.

**Tamgaly Ravine** - not far from Almaty, archaeologists discovered about a thousand rock-paintings, still unknown to the world, in this ravine. This place is really an ancient art gallery featuring pictures of discs, chariots, tamgas (family songs) and prayer inscriptions. The gallery of Tamgala’s petroglyphs is under the protection of UNESCO.

**Turkestan City** - an ancient city located on the Silk Road in the southern part of Kazakhstan, Turkestan is one of the oldest towns in Central Asia, once known as Yasy, the founding of which dates back to the 5th century. It is known that in the 19th century, Turkestan was a trading and an administrative center of the southern Kazakhstan region with social institutions peculiar to the feudal city of the late medieval period and advanced craft manufacture.

**Saksy Barrows (Golden Warrior)** - a monument from the time of the early nomads. The royal tomb of the “Golden Warrior Prince” of the Saka civilization, found in the ancient town of Issyk, close to Almaty, is famous for its beauty, elegance and craftsmanship. It is one of the most precious and earliest archaeological finds in Kazakhstan. Dating from the 4th century BC, the tomb contained over 4,000 finely wrought golden relics, including a dagger depicting 21 animals. The motifs of this cultural treasure became the basis of the modern Monument of Independence erected in Almaty in 1990s.
Kodja Ahmed Yassawi Mausoleum - this 14th century mausoleum located in Turkestan and built by Tamerlane has the largest dome in Central Asia. The Yassawi Mausoleum could be compared to unique ancient architectural constructions of Central Asia such as the Mosque of Bibikhanum in Samarkand, the Ak-Saray Palace and the Dorusaddat burial tomb in Shakhrisabz in Uzbekistan, and is protected by the UNESCO as a historical monument of world significance. This architectural-archaeological complex comprises:

- Mausoleums (15th - 17th centuries)
- Dzhuma - Mosque (19th century)
- The restored Great Hilyvet (12th century)
- Chillyakhana (14th century)
- Bath (17th - 19th centuries)

The mausoleum has also become a place of worship for Muslim pilgrimages. Three visits to the mausoleum are equal to one pilgrimage (hajj) to Mecca.

Zharkentskaya Mosque - located in the Almaty area, it is an immense construction of the 19th century, a combination of the Central-Asian and Chinese architecture motifs. Wood served as the main construction material used to build the mosque. One can see such architectural elements as a “hovering roof”, cylindrical columns of the gallery in the external appearance of the building, as well as a large cornice. The earthquake of 1910 significantly destroyed the mosque but later on between 1975-1978, it was restored and the architectural-artistic museum was created.
**Carpets** - there are many types of traditional Kazakh felt and woven carpets. They may be divided into several groups according to several criteria including the method of manufacture, technique, ornamentation, colour and so on. The most valuable Kazakh fleece carpets are kept in the SME and State Historical Museum. Among them is an original and unique carpet dating from the 17th century. Fleecy and fleece-less carpets are still manufactured in some regions of Kazakhstan, mainly in the south of the country.

**Ceramics** - significant amounts of the ceramic material found at the excavations of inhabited quarters of the medieval site of the ancient settlement Otrar were from a mosque, ceramic and brick baking shops, and a public bath. They have been dated with the help of coins stamped in various places including Otrar. They can be divided into two chronological groups: 1) Ceramics of the Second Half of the 14th and First Half of the 14-15th centuries and 2) Ceramics of the Second Half of the 14-15th Centuries. There are only a few ceramics schools at present: The Otrar (southern Kazakhstan), Taraz and Merkin schools.
Clothing - the Kazakh national dress clearly reflects national skills and creativity. It possesses nomad influences in materials and style. Kazakhs have always cherished the use of the skins and furs of animals. The outer clothing was made from furs of wild and domestic animals. Clothing have the following names: janat ton - raccoon fur coat, kara tulki ton - black-brown fox fur coat, kamshat boric - beaver cap, bota ton - a coat made from baby camel skin, jargak ton - a coat made from young horse skins, and others.

Dwellings - traditionally, Kazak people had nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyles. In winters, they lived in stationary dwellings such as the Shoshala which is a round, one-room construction with a cone or spherical top. The form of the construction looks like a yurt. Round yurt-shaped houses made of raw bricks were typical for the Saki tribe from the Syrdarya valley in the 4th century BC. Shoshala were made of wood, raw bricks, and stones. There are other types of ancient, one-room stone constructions, which are known as din (ding) and uyta which are still preserved in Kazakh territory.
**Jewellery** - the art of Kazakh jewellery was formed on the basis of a tradition that goes back to the culture of cattle breeding tribes who settled in the areas of modern Kazakhstan from Altai up to the Urals and from Syrdarya up to the northern forest-steppe. Throughout this huge territory, unique monuments from bronze, gold, and silver decorated with precious gems and jewels have been found. The art of jewellery used primarily polychrome styles which consist of using gold and coloured stones of almandine, facet, cornelian, and glass, bordering jacks in triangles and belts with granules, making filigree frames such as "Christmas tree", "lace" and other shapes.

**Music** - the most popular Kazakh musical instrument is the *dombra* - a two-stringed instrument with an oval, or more rarely triangular body. The strings are made from twisted sheep’s intestines. It appeared first when Kazakhs were nomads and thus is hardy and simple in design. It can be played while sitting, standing or on horseback.

Today the production of national musical instruments is considered an important craft to be renewed. It has a new lease on life since the concert activity of amateur and professional collectives is growing. They are also purchased by collectors.
Special Interest

**Arasan Baths** - located in the western area of Panfilov Park, it consists of Eastern, Finnish and Russian-style saunas.

**Baikonur Cosmodrome** - located 5km from the garrison city of Leninsk and 230km from Kzil-Orda, it is the Central Asian’s answer to Cape Canaveral. Tours are available during which visitors can witness space launches.

**East Sauna of Kali-Zhunus** - an architectural complex of the 19th century, it is especially attractive to tourists and local people due to the recreation of ancient traditional technological processes and its environment.

**Sari Agach** - an internationally renowned resort located in the south of the country.

A variety of special interest activities such as **alpinism, trekking, skiing, hunting, safaris, kayaking** and **biking** are available in Kazakhstan.

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**Traditional games:**

**Audaryspak** ("wrestling on horseback") - requires strength and superb horsemanship. The contestants fight while on horseback and the one who can pull the other off his horse wins.

**Kumis Alu** ("Pick up the coin") - this requires the rider to pick up a handkerchief (a coin was used in olden days) off the ground while galloping at full speed. It is reported that Alexander the Great witnessed such a contest during his campaigns in Central Asia and is reported to have commented “This is a training worthy of a warrior on horseback”.

**Kuuz Kuu** (catch the girl) - involves a contest between young boys and girls. In this race, the girl does her best to gallop away from the young man. When he tries to overtake her, she lashes him with a whip. If the boy cannot catch up before reaching a predetermined point, the girl may ‘reward’ him with more whipping. If he succeeds in besting her, he gets a kiss.
Kazakh dishes include *kazi*, *chuzhuk*, *suret* and *besbarmak* (made from horse meat or mutton). *Shashlyk* (skewered chunks of mutton barbecued over charcoal) and *lepeshka* (round unleavened bread) are often sold on street corners and make an appetising meal. *Plov* is made up of scraps of mutton, shredded yellow turnip and rice and is a staple dish in all the Central Asian republics. Other mutton dishes such as *laghman* and *beshbermak* include long thick noodles garnished with a spicy meat sauce. *Manty* (boiled noodle sacks of meat and vegetables), *samsa* (samosas) and *chiburekki* (deep-fried dough cakes) are all popular as snacks.

Almaty is renowned for its apples - indeed the city was named after them. Kazakh tea or chai is very popular and there are national cafes called Chai-Khana (tea-rooms) where visitors may sip this Kazakh speciality. It is drunk very strong with cream. Beer, vodka, brandy and sparkling wines are available in many restaurants. The national speciality is *kumis* - fermented mare’s milk and can be ordered in cafes by the name “*Kumis-Khana*”. Refusing it when offered may cause offence. In the steppe and desert regions where camels are bred, camel’s milk, called *shubat*, is offered to guests.
Accessibility

Regular flights to Astana are carried out by 12 companies of the CIS countries, together with 6 companies of other foreign countries. 5 national airlines carry out regular flights to 8 foreign countries from Kazakhstan, as well as on 11 domestic routes. There are daily flights from Almaty to Astana, Chimbent, Dzhambul, Karaganda, Kzil-Orda, Pavlodar, Semipalatinsk and Ust-Kamenogorsk. Flights also leave Chimbent for Almaty, Karaganda and Semipalatinsk.

In 2002, a special tourist train service was established along the Silk Road, travelling the following route: Almaty-Bukhara-Urgench-Samarkand-Rybach-Bishkek-Almaty. There are also two TurkSib trains leaving Chimbent daily, one to Tashkent (Uzbekistan) and the other to Novosibirsk (Russian Federation). There is a reasonable network of roads in Kazakhstan connecting all the towns and regional centres.

There are also regular public transport provisions, with bus connections between all the main cities of Kazakhstan, and taxis are available in all Kazakh cities.

Accommodation facilities

Most towns in Kazakhstan have a limited supply of reasonable accommodation. A star grading system is in use, with at least two five-star hotels in Almaty and several newly built hotels. Classification of hotels is conducted by the Department of Tourism.

‘Turbazas’, or tourist bases are an alternative to hotels, which provide visitors with basic accommodation in bungalows and full board. Designated campsites are also prevalent in permanent base camps, particularly for mountaineers.

Tourist facilities and services

Major international credit cards are accepted in the larger hotels in Almaty, as well as in major shops and restaurants. Several ATM points exist for cash card withdrawals. There is a large network of hospitals, emergency centres and pharmacies. The largest include the Central Hospital, the Maternity and Childhood Institute Clinic and the Medical Teaching Institute Clinic in Almaty.

National tourism statistics

Kazakhstan has seen a significant growth to its inbound tourism market in the past five years, which can mainly be attributed to the stable political and economic situation in the country, and the facilitation of visa formalities for tourists. Access to the country has also widened, with the national airline, Air Astana, increasing its network of flight services across Europe. Kazakhstan has also developed its marketing capacity and is now a well-established participant of international travel trade fairs such as FITUR and ITB. Its main source markets are Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Russian Federation and Tajikistan.

Contact details

Committee for Regulation of Trade and Tourism Activity
Ministry for Industry and Trade
“Transport Tower” Building
Kabanbay Batyt Av.
ASTANA CITY 473000
Tel.: (731-72) 299 034
Fax: (731-72) 240 916
Email: comtrade@list.ru
Kyrgyzstan
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A Central Asian country of tremendous natural beauty and proud nomadic traditions, Kyrgyzstan occupies the Tien-Shan mountain range which stretches over hundreds of kilometres across the north-eastern part of Central Asia. It is located on the same latitude as New York, Italy, Northern Turkey and Japan. While much of its land area is mountainous, between the snow-covered mountain summits lie broad grassy highland valleys and a large salt lake - Issyk Kul, which occupies a highland basin in the north-east. It is considered a remote and mysterious place to many, yet one filled with exotic sights and ruggedly beautiful scenery.

The geographic location of Kyrgyzstan rendered it an important focal point on the Silk Road. Three main branches of the Silk Road are known to have run through Kyrgyzstan. The first, the southern branch, ran from Termez via Samarkand to Dushanbe. The second led from Samarkand via Hodjent to Isfara, Koand and Osh. The third was perhaps the most important caravans were known to have travelled from Samarkand to Tashkent, then along the Kyrgyz range and into the Chu valley. From there they would travel along the Boom Canyon to reach the Issyk-Kul area and into China. Settlements and villages were situation along these routes.

The diversity of relief forms, abundance of mountain lakes and cascades, walnut and fruit-tree forests, alpine meadows and glaciers, Issyk-Kul, historic and architectural sites, traditional culture of the Kyrgyz people, variety and wealth of the Kyrgyz folk-lore, all combine to render Kyrgyzstan an attractive destination for tourism.
Abishir-Sai Canyon - located near Osh, this picturesque canyon takes its name from the Abishirsai River which flows through it. The river actually emerges from a cave in the steep rock face and falls in a 30m waterfall to the valley floor. The water is said to have curative properties and there is a hermit’s cave nearby where legend states that a holy man by the name of Idris changed the water into milk and then back into water.

Ala-Archa National Park - offers spectacular scenery for trekking and skiing. The national park is situated 45km from Bishkek and has a total area of 19,500sq.km. The Ala-Archa canyon is the center of the Park and is one of the main tourist attractions in Kyrgyzstan. The abundance of juniper trees gives the Park its name as Ala-Archa, means “many-coloured juniper”. A river with the same name crosses the canyon. Local fauna include the snow leopard, wolves, snakes, owls, as well as 1,100 species of plants. There are numerous trekking possibilities including treks to glaciers and to the highest peak. A tourist can opt to camp in the Park or use the shelters provided. The Park also has the Upper Ala-Archa Mountain Ski Base at an elevation of 2,100m as a starting point from which to ski on glaciers, even in summer.

Issyk-Kul Lake - is considered one of the pearls of Central Asia, its name meaning “hot lake” due to the fact that it does not freeze in winter. With sandy beaches, the Lake is surrounded by the snow-capped mountain ridges of Kungay Ala-Too and Terskay Ala-Too. These abound with picturesque gorges covered with fir trees and streams which are famous for their pure mineral water, hot springs and medicinal mud used for treating many diseases. A number of resorts and rest houses are located on the coast of the Lake and operate throughout the year.
Lenin Peak - at a height of 7,134m, it has several accessible routes which makes it suitable for climbers and trekkers without much experience. It is located in the Pamir mountain range on the border with Tajikistan. It includes a large body of ice and snow which stretches from Krylenko Pass (5,820m) in the east to Razdelnaya Mountain (6,148m) in the west and is covered by several glaciers such as Lenin Glacier to the north and Bolshaya Saukdara Glacier to the south.

Osh Mountains - these contain a network of caves located between the Aravan and Ak-Bura rivers.

Saimaluu-Tash - its name literally means “a place of patterned or embroidered stone”, and can be considered a museum of stones with a collection of black rocks with paintings and rock carvings dating from the Bronze and Iron ages. The images depict rituals, farming scenes and animals including elephants and lions which are not typical of the area.

Sary-Chelek Natural Reserve - one of the most remarkable places in Kyrgyzstan, it includes the stunning Sary-Chelek Lake Chatkal Ridge and fir tree forests. The Lake is approximately 7.5km long and is surrounded by meadows, pine and birch forests as well as walnut trees.
Tien-Shan Mountain Range - is the highest mountain zone of the Kyrgyz Republic and spans the country in a fan-wise manner from east to west. Approximately 500 lakes are located within the range, the largest being Son-Kul and Chatyr-Kul. Several convenient highways cross the Tien-Shan. In the Tien-Shan, one can practice sports, hunting and mountain tourism.

Khan-Tengry Peak - located in central Tien-Shan on the borders of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and China, it has a height of 6,995m and is mainly formed of marble and limestone.

Merzbacher Lake - discovered in 1903, this mysterious lake takes form, expands, dies a spectacular death, and is reborn. This is due to its location in a steep valley where two glaciers meet. During the melting of ice during the spring, water flows into the valley and collects on top of the glacier’s ice since it is penned by an ice dam. Towards the end of the summer, the dam breaks and the water runs off leaving the lake empty.

Pobeda (Victory) Peak - at 7,439m, it is the highest peak of the Tien-Shan mountains. Extremely difficult to scale, it is sometimes necessary to scale the nearby Khan Tengry Peak to reach Pobeda Peak.
Bishkek - the capital city of Kyrgyzstan. It was developed as a green city with numerous trees and parks which provide shade for the local citizens. It was established in 1878 on the remains of a fort built by the Khan of Kokand in 1825 and is located at the base of the Tien-Shan mountain range.

The State Museum of History - located in Bishkek, it contains two yurts, an archaeology exhibit, an exhibit of Kyrgyz carpets, embroidery and other handicrafts.
Kyrgyz State Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet - completed in 1955, it is the cultural centre of Kyrgyzstan.

Cholpan-Ata - located to the north of Issyk-Kul Lake and 250km from Bishkek at an altitude of 1,609m, the town contains a local museum which has collections of the relics of the tribes that settled in the area in Neolithic times. These include rock inscriptions and paintings depicting ibexes, snow leopards, camels and hunting scenes. Other images date from the 7th to 1st centuries BC when the area was occupied by the Saka tribes. The town is surrounded by the Kungei, Ala-Too, Chon-Koi-Suu and Cholpan-Ata mountain gorges with waterfalls, lakes and forests.

Karakol - situated at an altitude of 1700m, near the peaks of Pobeda and Khan Tengry, it lies on the eastern side of Lake Issyk-Kul and serves as the base from which to visit the Lake. It is the main town in the region and is famed for its apple orchards and Sunday market which is considered to be one of the best in Central Asia. It was established in 1869 as a military and trade point.

Osh - this is one of the oldest towns in Central Asia with a population of approximately 250,000 people. It is the main political and cultural town for southern Kyrgyzstan and is located to the south of Ferghana Valley and the north of the Pamir-Alai mountain range.

Osh was located on the caravan routes of the Silk Road and was an important trade and transit point and manuscripts have been found dating to the 9th century A.D..

Suleiman Mountain - located in the centre of Osh, it contains the remains of a Bronze Age settlement which dates to almost the 1st millennium BC. The mountain is considered a holy place as the Muslim prophet Suleiman is buried at the base.
Tash-Rabat Caravansarai - this is a rock fortress located on one of the most important branches of the Silk Road and was built in the 15th century. The fortress comprises a main hall surrounded by 31 rooms and enclosed by 20 domes and 11 vaults. The fortress has underground passages, an underground prison and even secret exits. Made entirely of stone, it served as a fortress as well as a religious learning centre and shelter for trade caravans.

Tokmak - located to the north of the country are two main monuments. Ak-Beshim - contains the ruins of the ancient town called Suyab which includes a Nestorian church and a Buddhist temple from the 7th and 8th centuries A.D.. Suyab was the capital city of the Western Turkic Khanate (6th century A.D.) as well as of the Qarluq Turks (8th century A.D.). It remained an important city under the Arabs from the 10th to 12th centuries A.D..

Burana Archeological and Architectural Complex - located 12km south of Tokmak, is the site of an ancient 10th century settlement believed to be the city of Balasagun which was the capital of the Karakhanid State from the 10th - 12th centuries A.D.. The complex houses the remains of the inner city as well as a minaret (the top of the minaret was destroyed by an earthquake in the 16th century) and the remains of three mausoleums. There is a small museum which exhibits findings from excavations. Balasagun was also the birthplace of the famous 11th century poet, Jusup Balasagun.

Uzgen town - situated on the right bank of the Kara-Darya river, it was founded in the 8-9th centuries A.D.. It soon became an important trading centre but was destroyed by the Mongols in the 13th century. Today, only the minaret and three mausoleums, as well as the ruins of the citadel and inner city remain. The three mausoleums which date from the 11-12th centuries are called Northern, Middle and Southern according to their location and were built in the centre of the city. The rulers of Karakhanids dynasty are buried here and it is believed that the actual founder of the dynasty, Nasr Ibn Ali is buried in the Middle Mausoleum. The Uzgen remains offer valuable insights on the Karakhanid culture and architectural style.
Kyrgyz handicrafts revolve around decorative-applied art such as felt carpets, ornamental felt for household articles, embroidery, leather articles, wood carvings, bone carving, metalwork, and weaving of various kinds of fabric.

**Ala-Kiyiz** - these are special felt carpets which can serve as wall hangings. They come in all sizes. They are made by placing wool of a single tone on the chiy mat and then placing woolen threads of other colours on top and create a design. The wool is soaked and the combined wool and chiy mat are rolled and tied up with string and then rolled and trod upon for several hours to ensure that all the wool melds together. Afterwards, the roll is unwound and left to dry.

**Chiy** - this is a mat which is made of a reed found on the steppes. The reeds are harvested and dried and since they are very strong, they can be braided with wool to make a sturdy mat. They can be plain or patterned in design. Unlike the fabrication of shyrdaks, the fabrication of chiys is highly specialized and skilled masters call cherbers design the patterns. The mats can be used both for decorative purposes as well as to provide insulation. The ashkana chiy is a mat that is sometimes used to separate women’s quarters within a yurt.

**Shyrdak** - this is a traditional Kyrgyz thick felt carpet which is found in virtually all Kyrgyz homes on the floor, on divans or as wall hangings. Although they were originally composed of two colours, they have now become renowned for their striking, contrasting colours and the use of geometrical designs as patterns. The Naryn region is particularly famous for the quality of its Shyrdak production.

**Tush Kiyiz** - these are wall hangings which again are used often in yurts all over Central Asia.

**Yurt** - this is the traditional dwelling made of felt. Given the nomadic lifestyle of the Kyrgyz people, it could be easily assembled and dismantled. Although lifestyles are changing in Kyrgyzstan, yurts are still often used as dwellings, particularly in rural areas.
Fishing - this is possible in many of the mountain rivers and lakes. Popular fish are trout and pike-perch.

Gliding - it is possible to participate in treks with gliders and paraplanes after completing certain formalities. It is also possible to take flights for photography and investigation.

Health resorts - there are several particularly in Issyk-Kul as well as one in Ak-Soo which has hot mineral springs.

Horse treks - this is a very popular tourist activity and can be practised throughout the Kyrgyz territory. These excursions provide light physical training in open air scenic destinations and also provides the tourist with the opportunity to enjoy horseback riding.

Hunting - there are various means for hunting including the possibility to hunt with golden eagles accompanied by the nomadic people of the mountains. Of the possible preys, Marco Polo sheep are the most popular and most expensive.

Mountain biking - given the variety of terrain in Kyrgyzstan, which ranges from deserts, steppes, mountains to glaciers, there are excellent circuits for mountain biking.

Rafting - this is another popular outdoor activity along the mountain rivers in Kyrgyzstan.

Scuba diving - this can be enjoyed in a clear water lake near Ulan (18km from Balikchi). The lake also contains the remains of a 12th century town.

Skiing - the most ideal sites are located in Lenin Peak.
Due to the nomadic lifestyle, Kyrgyz cuisine is based on meat and dairy products which are readily provided by the cattle, sheep and horses. Barley, wheat and millet are the other staple foods.

**Cereals** - a fundamental part of the diet, they are either boiled in soups or their flour is baked into bread or made into dumplings. Boorsocki are pieces of dough fried in animal fat.

**Dairy products** - butter is normally baked which is better for storing and cheese is dried into hard lumps. Aryan is fermented cow’s milk and kumys is fermented mare’s milk and is a unique drink.

**Meat** - this was often dried and preserved to enable the nomads to have meat at hand at all times. Horsemeat was the most popular for celebrations and includes specialities such as karta and karyn. Chuchuk is another speciality made of calf meat and served during celebrations. From mutton, a speciality called beshbarmak was made and kuyruk is thinly sliced liver.

**Shorpo** - this is a traditional soup which serves as a base recipe for many other foods.

**Tea** - as in other Central Asia countries, tea is the drink that binds people. It is served to all guests and is normally quite strong, black and can be had sweet or salty and with milk or cream.

**Drinks** - cereals are also fermented. Jarma is made from millet and maksim is similar to jarma but also contains milk. Bozo is a light alcoholic drink made from wheat and millet.
Accessibility

Kyrgyzstan Airlines is the national airline and has international routes to India, Germany, Russian Federation and Turkey. Additionally, several international airlines operate routes to Kyrgyzstan, including British Airways, Turkish Airlines, KLM and Lufthansa. There are also internal connections from Bishkek to Cholpan-Ata, Kara-Kol, Naryn and Osh.

There is only one national railway line, which runs from Bishkek to Balikchi at the western end of Lake Issyk-Kul. Osh, in the south of the country, can be reached by rail via Tashkent in Uzbekistan. There are also rail connections with the Russian Federation and other central Asian republics.

Kyrgyzstan has a network of roads spanning 28,400km (17,400 miles). There are also bus and trolleybus services operating in and around Bishkek.

Accommodation facilities

There are several large hotels operating in Bishkek. Accommodation is limited outside the capital. Turbazas’, or tourist bases within the country also provide basic accommodation and meals. Homestay is also possible throughout the country in traditional yurts.

The sanatoria on the shores of Lake Issyk-Kul, originally built by cooperatives and trade unions for fatigued workers - have started to take in tourists. Mountaineering camps are also available, run by private companies to climb the many mountains in Kyrgyzstan.

Tourist facilities and services

Foreign currencies can be exchanged at commercial banks and at authorised bureaux de change. The US dollar is the currency most widely accepted. Credit cards are accepted in some of the larger hotels in Bishkek and can also be used at banks to withdraw cash from the counter.

National tourism statistics

Kyrgyzstan has enjoyed a considerable growth to its inbound tourism market during the last decade, with total international arrivals increasing from 36,000 in 1995, to 140,000 in 2002. Its main source markets are the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Germany.

Contact details

State Committee of Tourism, Sports and Youth Policy
Togolok Moldo Street, 17
BISHKEK 720033
Kyrgyzstan
Tel.: (996-312) 622 499
Fax: (996-312) 625 217
Email: gktsm@bishkek.gov.kg
http://www.tsm.kg
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Tajikistan is a newly-independent state situated on the southern tip of central Asia with China to the east and the Indian sub-continent to the south.

Beautiful and remote, three major Silk Road routes ran through its present day territories. These ancient routes highlight the Tajik contributions to commerce and culture of the time, particularly between the 5th and 12th centuries. The three roads were the Sogdian (North Road) which connected Samarkand and Kashgar; the Karategin Road, between Termez and Kashgar; and, the Pamir Road linking Balkh and Tashkurgan.

The country consists almost entirely of folded mountains, although the country can be divided into four regions. The Fergana Valley to the north; the Gissar and Vakhsh Valleys to the south; the Pamir Mountains to the east which rise to 7,500m and the Gorno-Badakhshan Oblast which is a plateau at 3,650m; and, the Zeravshan and Gissar Ranges, which run east to west in western Tajikistan.

There are opportunities for alpine mountaineering, rock climbing, hiking, horse or camel riding, historical exploration, cultural experiences or simply relaxing among the majestic mountains and lakes.
**Dashtijum Reserve** - established in 1983 and with an area of 19,700 ha, it is situated on the southern slopes of the Khazrati-loh mountain ridge. It is formed by a rocky landscape with an elevation from 850 to 2,400m above sea level and a forested area of about 3,000 ha. and contains rare and endangered species of flora as well as the largest population of Tajik markhur, Himalayan rock agama, geckos and snake-eyed skinks.

**Fan Mountains** - these are famous for their fantastic lakes and peaks and are perfect for trekking (by foot or by horse) or rock climbing. Little known and rarely visited, these mountains form part of the Pamir Range tucked away in north-west Tajikistan. This beautiful wilderness is a haven for the amateur botanist and ornithologist and offers spectacular vistas of flower-strewn meadows, turquoise lakes and snow-melt rivers with a backdrop of 5,000m high peaks. Like many remote areas in Central Asia with a tradition of warm hospitality, tourists will likely receive pressing invitations from local nomads and herders.
Iskanderkul Lake - also known as the lake of Alexander Macedon, the crystal clear waters of the lake and rivers are surrounded by alpine meadows and forests where one can find green toad, water snake, Himalayan rock agama, geckos, Central Asian viper, Levantine viper, wood pigeon, blue hill pigeon, rock pigeon, and other animals. On a hiking tour, tourists can spend nights in a tent camp or cottages which are available at the Lake.

Kara-Kul Lake - located in the north of the Pamirs and formed by a meteor 10 million years ago, it is located at a height of 3,915m above sea-level and hence, is too high for any aquatic life.

Lake Sareskoye - in the heart of the Pamirs, it was formed in 1911 when the side of a mountain was dislodged by an earthquake and fell into the path of a mountain river.

Muragazor Lakes - this is a system of seven lakes of differing colours that change as the light alters and is located south of Penjikent.

Muzkol Range - these mountains are considered to be totally unclimbed with a number of 4,000m and 5,000m unnamed peaks of varying difficulty. Climbing should be adventurous without being extreme, and there will be an opportunity to enjoy some trekking in stark but beautiful surroundings. There is also the possibility of encountering wildlife such as Marco Polo sheep, wild camels and snow leopards.

Pamir Mountains - considered to be the hub of Asia and known locally as Bam-i-Dunya (the Roof of the World), it is the range from which several of Asia’s highest mountain ranges radiate, including the Karakoram and the Himalayas to the south, the Hindu Kush to the west and the Tien-Shan to the north, straddling the border of neighbouring Kyrgyzstan and China. These mountains form one of the most unexplored regions on earth which have attracted climbers and hunters for years. Amid its network of high, wide, deep valleys, swift-running streams, unspoilt mountain meadows and mountain peaks in excess of 7,400m, one can enjoy prime hiking territory, populated by wildlife including Marco Polo sheep, rare snow leopards, wild boar, ibex, and brown bears.
Peak Lenina and Mount Garmo - they are located to the northwest and west respectively of Lake Kara-Kul. At well over 7,000m, these two peaks tower over Tajikistan and neighbouring Kyrgyzstan to the north. Helicopter flights are available for those wishing to climb them.

Ramit Reserve - established in 1959 and comprising an area of 16,200 ha., it is situated on the southern slopes of the Gissar mountain ridge within Ramit gorge. A split rocky landscape with an elevation from 1,200 to 3,200m above sea level characterizes its territory. It has a forested area of less than 3,000 ha. and a few rare and endangered species of plants can be found here as well as a great diversity of fauna.

Sari-hisor Nature Park - established in 1959 and with a total area of 196,000 ha., it is located at an average elevation of 1,400 - 4,000m above sea level. Its primary goal is to conserve mid-mountain and high-mountain ecosystems, especially broad-leaved forests.
**Shirkent Natural Historical Park** - established in 1991, this Park consists of Paleozoic sedimentary-metamorphic and igneous rocks as well as carbon granitoids and other rocks. More than 30 regular watercourses and 8 types of ecosystems run through the Park. The Park is characterized by the series of 40 unique historical-geological monuments, including geomorphologic, lithologic, paleontologic, tectonic, hydrologic, glacial and historical monuments of which the most important are the collection of more than 400 dinosaur footprints dating from three different eras. The Park also contains more than 50 archaeological objects and some ethnographical monuments with unique natural-recreational resources. The Park covers an area of almost 32,000 ha. at an elevation of 800 - 4,500m above sea level.

**Tajik National Park** - it is the largest nature protection area in Central Asia with a wide spectrum of mountain and high-mountain ecosystems. Established in 2002, the Park has an area of 2.6 million ha. and includes numerous species of flora and fauna, including Marco Polo mountain sheep and ibex and snow leopard. It also contains a number of glaciers, encompasses rather big mid-mountain and high-mountain territories, which include 14 types of ecosystems and numerous natural monuments as well.
“Tigrovaia balka” Nature Reserve - spectacular woodlands inhabited by Bukhara Deer, pheasant, hyena, riparian and foxes. Established in 1938, the nature reserve (approximately 50,000 ha. in area) is located in southern Tajikistan. Its prevailing landscape is a flat delta terrace, 7km wide, of the Vakhsh River. It includes 10 lakes and bogs with a predominance of taiga forests as well as desert and foothill ecosystems of southern Tajikistan and agro-ecosystems.

Yashil-Kul - also known as Green Lake and located a short drive from Bulunkul, Yashi-Kul is a turquoise lake framed by an ochre desert, a couple of sandy beaches and warm springs on the southern side. A dam is being built at the west end of the lake. Trekking routes to Sarez Lake start nearby.

Zorkul - established in 2002 and with an area of 80,000 ha., the main objective of this reserve is to conserve and protect the habitats of rare and endangered species of birds such as the bar-headed mountain goose, brown-headed gull, Himalayan snow cock, and the Tibetan snow cock as well as several rare and endangered mammals such as the argali and the snow leopard. The reserve is located at an elevation of 4,100 to 4,200m above sea level.
**Cultural and Historical Resources**

**Buddhist Monastery Adjina-Teppa** - dating from the 5th - 8th centuries, it is located 12km east of Kurgan-Tube. The fortress, of rectangular shape, has two parts - the monastery and the temple. A large cruciform mortar is located in the temple yard. The monastery was built from raw brick and blocks and covered by arches and cupolas. The walls and halls of the temple are decorated by the numerous sculptures of Buddha and Bodhisattvas, among which is included a 12m statue of Buddha laying in Nirvana. There are also miniature paintings reflecting various scenes of the life of Buddha.

**Buddhist Monastery Vrang** - located on the left bank of the Vrang Darya River, this monastery which dates from the 4th - 7th centuries has a two-stepped mortar (there were originally three), on top of which is located a house which functions as an ostana (worship of stone), premises for servants and monks, and a yard all surrounded by a wall with a corner tower. Arches are cut on the slopes and terrace on the opposite bank. The monastery is built on Vakhin (the Great Buddhist route) which passed via ancient Vakhan after opening the Silk Road from east to west.

**Dushanbe** - (Stalinabad until 1961), is situated in the centre of the Gissar Valley, 800m above sea level. Although it is a young city, the first records of the existence of Dushanbe date from 1676 when it was a village on the crossroads of caravan routes connecting the Gissar Valley with Bukhara and Samarkand, the Pamirs and Afghanistan. The Tajik word "Dushanbe" means Monday as the weekly bazaar was held in the village on Mondays. The city has some interesting museums such as the new National Museum of Antiquities of Tajikistan, and, the Republican History, Regional Studies, and Fine Arts Museum. Also note-
worthy to see is a performance at the Ayni Opera and Ballet Theatre as well as the Children’s Puppet Theatre “Lukhtak”.

**Hissar Fortress** - located near Dushanbe, it was the central town of the Hissar valley, also named in manuscripts as Shodmon. It was settled from the 6th century BC till the mid-19th century A.D. It was the main administrative, political and economical centre of the Hissar valley. With a total area of 28ha. and surrounded by one defensive wall, the fortress-citadel consists of three parts and is located on a hill. During the time of Timur and the Timurids, Hissar was considered the center of Eastern Bukhara, where the representative of the Tsar Dynasty (son or brother of the Bukhara Ruler) reigned.

**Hissar Historic and Cultural Reserve** - situated not far from the capital city, this is a fascinating archaeological complex which dates back to the 15th century. A number of mosques, a caravanserai, a mausoleum and a madrase have all been excavated and are on display.
**Ismail Samani Monument** - this is a 40m high monument in Dushanbe, built to the memory of Ismail Saman-Khuda, founder of the Samanid dynasty in the 10th century. The base is paved in granite slabs and contains a permanent exhibition on the Samanids while the upper part of the statue is coated in gold.

**Mahdudi Azam Mausoleum** - it is located in the Hissar Historical Cultural Preserve and comprises three cupolas. The most ancient element is a small dome/gurhona in the shape of “chortok” with four arches constructed in the 11th century. The Mausoleum was restored in 1990 and hosts a museum on the history of Islam.

**Mirzo Tursunzade Mausoleum** - created in 1981 over the grave of the distinguished Tajik poet, Mirzo Tursunzade in Dushanbe, the monument consists of three open-book pylons, decorated with light marble, representing the clear thoughts and deeds of the poet.

**Houlbuk Town** - located in Kurbon Shahid village in the Vosse region, it consists of a citadel, palace of the ruler and the town, and dates from the 9th - 12th centuries. The total area is 70ha. Of note in Houlbuk are the palaces of the ruler with decorated walls in which geometrical and flora ornamentation blend with Kufic inscription and figures of lions and the exit portal gates.

**Istravshan** - formerly known as Ura-Tyube, it is situated in the north-west of Tajikistan, near Khudjand. The town is one of the most ancient urban settlements in Central Asia, dating back to the first millennium BC. The recorded history of Istravshan dates back to the 6th century BC when the region was a province of the Persian Empire under the Achaemenids. During the 2nd century BC to the 2nd century A.D., much of what is now Istravshan was known as Usturavshana, the capital of which was Bunjikat. It was a trading centre and benefited greatly from its position as an important staging post on the commercial roads that linked East and West, through Khudjand, Samarkand, Bukhara and Ferghana Valley. The ancient part of the city contains up to 60 mosques, 8 madrases, 7 baths, commercial stores, and workshops. Modern Istravshan is a town of craftsmen and wonderful pieces of carving, remnants of dec-
orative clothes, paintings, murals, jewellery, embroidery, and pottery of burnt clay glazed with calligraphy are the evidence of the high interest people took in art and handicrafts.

Khodzhentsky Fortress - shaped like a high hill and surrounded by defensive walls and gates, this 3rd century BC monument was destroyed in the 12th century A.D. but later restored.

Khodja Mashad Mausoleum - this is a unique monument of oriental architecture and is located in Saiyod village in the Shahritus district. Built in the 10th century, it originally had only one central building, some parts of which have been preserved. During the 11th - 12th centuries, a new dome-shaped building was adjoined to the mausoleum with a dense decorative arcade in the façade with ornamented brickwork and terracotta fretwork in the style of the Ismail Samanid Mausoleum. The dome-shaped structure was connected with the first building by a portal with the brick-laid arch behind it.
Khorog - one of the oldest settlements in the Pamirs, it was originally a complex of two villages which, in 1925, became the center of the region of the Pamir Highway. It is presently the capital of the eastern Tajik region of Gorno-Badakhshan and is a small town with a museum containing animal exhibits and a display of photographs of Lenin.

Khudjand - the second largest city in the country, it is one of Tajikistan’s oldest towns, founded by Alexander the Great more than 2,500 years ago. Commanding the entrance to the Fergana Valley, Khudjand enjoyed great prosperity and its riches spawned palaces, grand mosques and a citadel before the Mongols destroyed the city into oblivion in the early 13th century. During the 18th - 19th centuries, Khudjand became one of largest cities of Central Asia and today, it is a large industrial centre of Tajikistan. Famed attractions include the Panjshanbe Bazaar with its colour, exotic sounds and odours, and variety and abundance of fruit and vegetables, as well as the architectural complex of the mosque and mausoleum of Sheik Muslihiddin which is located near the market. The

Kayrakkum Reservoir (also known as the Tajik Sea) stretches eastwards from the city and was created as a result of damming the Syr Darya River for the construction of a hydroelectric power station. The reservoir is 65km long and its width ranges from 8-20km. Several attractive sanatoriums, holiday centres and tourist bases with appropriate infrastructure are located on its shores.

Kulyab - it is one of the largest cities in the country and is located about 200km south-east from Dushanbe. Some of its attractions include a two-storied mausoleum of the 14th century poet, philosopher and thinker Mir Said Hamadoni and Khoja Mumin Salt Peak, a unique natural monument located 20km west from the city which rises to an elevation of more than 1,000m above the surface and descending almost 4,000m underground. Plenty of silverwork, copper, wooden and clay utensils as well as cotton and silk fabrics are manufactured here as well as thick nomadic felts and carpets. 2006 will mark the 2,700th anniversary of Kulyab.
**Mausoleum of Amir Said Hamadoni** - located in Kulyab and dating from the 14th - 17th centuries, it is the burial place of the famous Persian-Tajik scientist, Mirsaid Khamadoni, and his successors. He was known for his books on philosophy, sophism, ethics, and didactics. The Mausoleum has a portal cupola structure with an asymmetric plan. The building is made from burnt brick on glue grout and the cupolas are made with alabaster grout. The central hall is covered by twin domes. The Mausoleum has been renovated several times.

**Libraries** - more than 1,600 libraries operate in Tajikistan. Of particular importance is the Firdavsi State Library which houses a significant collection of Oriental manuscripts.

**Museums** - Among the most notable museums in Tajikistan are the Behzad Museum of History, Regional Studies, and Art, and the Ethnographic Museum of the Academy of Sciences, both in Dushanbe. There are also significant museums of history and regional studies in several of the other cities.
**Cultural and Historical Resources**

**Opera and ballet** - The Soviet era saw the introduction of opera and ballet to Tajikistan as well as the organization of Tajik-style song and dance troupes. The Dushanbe Opera and Ballet Theatre was the first large public building in the city and its construction began in 1939. Dushanbe also has theatres devoted to Tajik and Russian drama, as well as a drama school. There are theatres for music, musical comedy, and drama in several other Tajik cities as well.

**Penjikent** - it is a small town on the banks of the Zeravshan River and located 65km east of Samarkand. Famed as one of the centres of the ancient Soghdian civilization (an Iranian people predominant during the pre-Islamic Central Asia period who founded several city states along the Silk Road), it was a major Sogdian city founded in the 5th century. Ancient Penjikent can be found to the south of the city, and, in its time, was a small but rich town.

**Sogdian City** - it flourished during the 5th - 8th centuries and is very well preserved. It was also known as “Central Asia’s Pompeii” and contains a sumptuous governor’s palace, residences and temples. It once controlled a key section of the Silk Road.

**Teahouses** - these are centres of hospitality in Tajikistan and are easily found near bazaars. People (mostly men) meet there for green tea, food, conversation, and chess.
Carpets - carpets, runners, curtains and various types of cushions essentially took the place of furniture in Central Asia. Carpets were divided into three types on the basis of the purpose to which they were put: wall carpets; floor carpets and runners; and, lastly, the felt rugs which were placed under the most richly decorated carpets. Carpets and carpet goods particularly from Kayrakkum are sold throughout the world. Widely using modern patterns and colour combinations, Tajik carpet-makers maintain a perfect harmony and balance between the form and colours which makes Kayrakkum carpets so original and elegant.

Costumes - richly embroidered in tinsel, silk or wool, both by hand and by special chain-stitching machines, embroidered garments continue to be cherished particularly in the south-eastern mountain ranges of Tajikistan. Men’s garments are simple in cut and less varied where the undergarments consist of a shalwar drawn in at the waist and a tunic-like shirt over which a robe is worn. Men’s belts, whether made of leather or fabric, are ornamented with massive silver buckles. Tajik youth prefer brighter colours, whereas older generations prefer moderate tones, while the elderly dress in fabrics of a dark or pure white shade. Although sharp contrast is essential, the gamut of favoured colours is broad, vivid and cheerful and never garish.

Ceiling Painting and Decorative Art - painted wood ceiling is an ancient art among Tajiks (and Persians) in Central Asia. Masterpieces can be seen in mosques, palaces and other buildings in Khudjand.
Embroidered skull caps - also know as tyubeteikas, they have always been popular among the Tajiks. The tyubeteikas for brides and bridegrooms are especially beautiful. Many Tajiks continue to wear their traditional tyubeteikas with the rest of their western-style wardrobe.

Jewellery - as well as armour, constitutes a separate branch of artistic metalwork. Archaeological finds from excavations in various medieval towns provide evidence of the level of development of the art of jewellery during the pre-Mongol period. Entire urban districts have been found which were occupied by jewellers and armourers. Women’s jewellery, elements of horses’ harnesses and of military equipment were made of gold, silver, copper, brass and other metals mined in the mountainous regions, and these were ornamented with insets of emerald, turquoise, cornelian, chalcedony, garnet and crystal.

Musical instruments - a general observation that can be made about the music of the Pamiris is that they have a strong predilection for plucked short- and long-necked lutes. Among the variety of lutes used by them, the most specific to Badakhshan is the rubabi pamiri, an unfretted three-(double) stringed short-necked lute, played with a wooden plectrum. Other common lutes are the tanbur, a seven-stringed lute with a varying number of sympathetic strings; the setar, which has a fretted long-necked lute with three melody strings and six or more sympathetic strings, and imported lutes like the Afghan rubab and the Azerbaijan tar.

Hodja Oby Garm Health Resort - for the treatment of the cardiovascular, respiratory and gynaecological systems, gastrointestinal circuit, liver as well as skin diseases and other ailments.

Kayaking or white water rafting trips - possible for those who can bring their own rafts.

A variety of special interest activities such as alpinism, trekking, skiing, hunting, safaris and biking are available in Tajikistan.
Traditional Tajik meals start with sweet dishes such as halwa and tea and then progress to soups and meat before finishing with plov. Plov is made up of scraps of mutton, shredded yellow turnip and rice, fried in a large wok, and is a staple dish in all the Central Asian republics. The appetising shashlyk (skewered chunks of mutton grilled over charcoal, served with raw sliced onions) and lipiostka (round unleavened bread) are often sold on street corners and served in restaurants. Manty (large noodle sacks of meat), samsa (samosas) and chiburekki (deep-fried dough cakes) are all popular as snacks. Shorpur is a meat and vegetable soup and laghman is similar to shorpur, but comes with noodles. Pirmeni, originating in Ukraine, are small boiled noodle sacks of meat and vegetables similar to ravioli, sometimes in a vegetable soup. Borcht is a beetroot soup and strogan is the local equivalent of beef Stroganoff. In the summer, Tajikistan is awash with fruit: its grapes and melons were famous throughout the former Soviet Union. The bazaars also sell pomegranates, apricots, plums, figs and persimmons. Tea or chai is the most widespread drink on offer and can be obtained almost anywhere. Beer, wine, vodka, brandy and sparkling wine (shampanski) are intermittently available in many restaurants. Kefir, a thick drinking yoghurt, is often served with breakfast.
Accessibility

The main airport in Tajikistan is in the capital Dushanbe. The national carrier Tajikistan Airlines operates weekly flights from Karachi, New Delhi and Munich to Dushanbe. There are few weekly flights from Moscow to Dushanbe operated by Aeroflot. There are regular air services that connect Dushanbe with other cities such as Khojand and Khorog.

Access by means of railway is available from Moscow via Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, with branch lines for the Tashkent-Dushanbe or Tashkent-Khojand sectors. There is no railway service operating between Dushanbe and Khojand.

Within the country, there are buses departing from Dushanbe to the following cities: Khojand in the North; Kurgan-Tybe, Kulyab, Pyanj and Ayvadz in the South; and Komsomolabad in the East.

Accommodation, tourist facilities and services

In 2001, the country recorded a total number of 345 rooms and 650 beds available to accommodate the tourists. More recent data is not available.

The majority of accommodation establishments are concentrated in the capital Dushanbe where the leading hotels offer standard quality service to the visitors. Outside of the capital, accommodation is harder to find. In Khorog, it is possible to stay in government ‘dachas’ (Russian country houses).

National tourism statistics

There has been a steady positive growth to Tajikistan’s inbound tourism market since 1999. Tajikistan’s main source markets are the Russian Federation, France and Germany.

Contact details

State Unitary Tourism Enterprise “Sayoh”
22 Shota Rustaveli St.
DUSHANBE 734025
Tajikistan
Tel.: (992 372) 211 140
Fax: (992 372) 219 072
Email: sayoh@bk.ru
Uzbekistan
**Uzbekistan**

<table>
<thead>
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<td>Tashkent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area:</td>
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<td>Population:</td>
<td>26.9 million</td>
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<td>Sunni Muslim (88%)</td>
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Uzbekistan can be divided into four regions: the Ustyurt Plateau as well as the delta of the lower Amu-Darya River; the Kyzyl Kum Desert east of the Aral Sea; the foothills of the Pamir-Alai Mountain/Tien-Shan Range; and, the fertile oasis of the Fergana Valley.

Uzbekistan is home to a number of Silk Road cities including Khiva, Samarkand, and Bukhara, which retain much of their historical atmosphere, and particularly the legend of Tamarlane. Samarkand is among the oldest cities in the world, with a unique cultural identity and endowed with diverse architecture and monuments. In addition to historical and cultural sites, Uzbekistan also offers tourists the modern capital of Tashkent, as well as a variety of natural beauty to interest the adventure traveller.

Uzbekistan has a long and interesting heritage and many well-known conquerors passed through the land. Alexander the Great stopped near Samarkand on his way to India in 327 B.C. and married Roxanna, daughter of a local chieftain. Conquered by Muslim Arabs in the 8th century A.D., the indigenous Samanid dynasty established an empire in the 9th century. Genghis Khan and his Mongols overran its territory in 1220. In the 1300s, Timur, known in the west as Tamerlane, built an empire with its capital at Samarkand. Uzbekistan's most noted tourist sites date from the Timurid dynasty. Later, separate Muslim city-states emerged with strong ties to Persia. In 1865, Russia occupied Tashkent and by the end of the 19th century, Russia had conquered all of Central Asia. In 1876, the Russians dissolved the Khanate of Kokand, while allowing the Khanates of Khiva and Bukhara to remain as direct protectorates.
Baday-Tugai State Reserve - with an area of 6,462 hectares, it is home to 91 species of birds including rare species such as the Egypt vulture and white head owl, 15 species of mammals such as hyenas, wild sheep, bald badger, and porcupine, and, 15 species of fishes.

Chatkal Reserve - this narrow, unspoilt gorge situated in the western Tien-Shan and with an area of 35,000 hectares, contains snow tigers, the rare Tien-Shan grey bear, the Berkut eagle and about 600 species of flora.

Ferghana Valley - this picturesque valley is located in the eastern part of Uzbekistan and stretches 300km from east to west and 170km from north to south. Its mild climate has made it an area favourable for agriculture with focus on the production on cotton, silk and other agricultural crops. In ancient times, the exceptional flora of the region gave the Valley the name "Golden Valley".

Gissar State Reserve - 870 species of plants and approximately 140 species of animals inhabit the 81,000 hectares of this reserve.

Kyzylkum State Reserve - established in 1971 on a network of Amudarya islands in the Khorezm and Bukhara Regions, it is home to a variety of wild cats, wolves, foxes, wild boars, reintroduced Bukharan deer, and the desert monitor.

Nurata Mountainous Nut-Fruit Nature Reserve - comprises a mountainous territory of 22,500 hectares, with rivers, gorges, massive rocks with a combined semi-desert and forest vegetation including walnut trees, wild apple trees, plum trees, mulberry trees and cherry plums. The highest point is 2,100m above sea-level.

Surkhan State Reserve - once home to the tiger, it now accommodates several species of wild cats, wolves, foxes, jackals, and Bukharan deer. A famous Islamic prophet is buried on the island and the location is sacred to the Muslim world.

Zamin Mountainous Forest (Juniper) Reserve - with an area of 10,500 hectares, the alpine juniper forests are home to over 700 species of plants under protection and an impressive variety of birds and animals including wolves, foxes, bears, lynxes, snow leopards, and several species of raptors. It is the oldest reserve in Uzbekistan.
Art Gallery in Nukus - the capital of Karakalpakstan, in the west of the country, it has the best collection of Russian avant garde art outside St Petersburg dating from the beginning of the 20th century to modern day. It also has a unique collection of Central Asian numismatics. Besides its exhibition area, it comprises 15 show-rooms, a duly equipped conference-hall for presentations, seminars, business meetings, video demonstrations and other events.

Baisun - located south of Shakhrisabz in the Surkhandarya province, along the ancient Silk Road, and hidden in a beautiful valley, Baisun was an important town of the Silk Road and has been included in the UNESCO List of Intangible Heritage. It is unique in that its attractions also include cave sites, and Palaeolithic rock paintings of magic hunting which are on display at a number of museums, especially at the newly opened Museum in Termez.

Bukhara - situated on the Silk Road, it dates back to the 8th century when it was, for 200 years, the centre of an expanding Islamic kingdom and prospered as a trade and intellectual centre for Central Asia. Once one of Islam’s most sacred cities, Bukhara contains many examples of fine Islamic architecture. It is the most complete example of a medieval city in Central Asia, with an urban fabric that has remained largely intact. Monuments of particular interest include the famous tomb of Ismail Samani, a masterpiece of 10th century Muslim architecture, and a large number of 17th century madrasas.
Ark Citadel - believed to have been settled in the 1st Millennium A.D., it is also possible that there were earlier settlements. As the fortified residence of the rulers of Bukhara, it comprised palaces, temples, barracks, offices, the mint, warehouses, workshops, stables, an arsenal, and even a prison. Of the two original gates, only the western gate remains which was restored in 1921-1923. Today, there is also a museum within the Citadel.

During the history of existence of the city, the Ark was repeatedly destroyed, but it was invariably restored by the new ruler. During the 16th century, under the Shaibanids, the Citadel was restored to the form in which it has been conserved till present time. Most of the current buildings in the Ark were built from the 17th - 20th centuries.

Chashma Ayub Mausoleum - located near the Mausoleum of Ismail Samani, in the Samanids Park of Culture and Recreation, the Chashma Ayub Mausoleum is a low structure with a high cone and several spherical cupolas and was built in the 12th century. It consists of four inner structures, each built during a different period. The Mausoleum is distinguished by the modesty of its decoration and simplicity of forms.

Magoki-Attori Mosque - one of the greatest mysteries of Bukhara, the name of the mosque indicates the approximate time of its construction. “Magoki”, means pit or hole and suggests that the mosque stood at a much lower than the present level of the city streets and squares. Ancient Bukharans worshipped fire and they professed Zoroastrian religion. Each family had its own idol to whom they prayed for happiness and wealth. These idols were sold twice a week at the bazaars. Mokh was the ruler at that time and controlled the marketing. In order to develop trade in the city, he ordered the construction of a temple for the fire-worshippers.
Trading Domes - since Bukhara was located on the crossroads of the Silk Road, it had a lively trade. The Shaibanids dynasty, which ruled Bukhara in the 16th century, paid great attention to the development trade and built five trading domes of which three remain and are named after the products they sold: Taki-Sarrafon - vault of the money-changers who were mostly Indians; Taki-Telpak Furushon - for the sale of hats; and, Taki-Zargaron - for jewellery.

Khiva - located northeast of Bukhara, it is known as a museum city under the open sky. It existed as a town for about 900 years, but only developed to its modern size in the 19th century when it was the market for captured Russian and Persian slaves. The town still lies within its original walls and has been converted into a museum town.

Itchan Kala Fortress - located in the inner town of Khiva and near the Khiva oasis, it was the last resting place for caravans along the Silk Road before crossing the desert into Iran. Although few very old monuments still remain, it is a coherent and well-preserved example of Muslim architecture of Central Asia with several outstanding structures such as the Djuma Mosque, the mausoleums and the madrasas and the two magnificent palaces built at the beginning of the 19th century by Alla-Kulli Khan.
Museums - **Museum of Decorative and Applied Arts**: located in Tashkent, it exhibits embroidered wall hangings and reproduction antique jewellery. **The State Art Museum** is also located in Tashkent. It houses a collection of paintings, ceramics and Bukharan royal robes. **The Museum in Ark Citadel** is located in the Ark Citadel of Bukhara and opened in 1922, it has three departments dedicated to nature, architecture and history.

**Samarkand** - this historic town of the Silk Road was a melting pot of the world’s cultures. Founded in the 7th century BC, its most significant development was in the Timurid period from the 14th - 15th centuries A.D.. Its major monuments include the Registan Mosque and madrasas, Bibi Khanum Mosque, the Shakhi-Zinda compound and the Gur-Emir ensemble, as well as Ulugh-Beg’s Observatory. Poets and historians called Samarkand the “Eden of the Ancient Orient”.

The architecture and townscape of Samarkand are masterpieces of Islamic cultural creativity. Ensembles in Samarkand such as the Bibi Khanum Mosque and Registan Square played a seminal role in the development of Islamic architecture over the entire region, from the Mediterranean to the Indian subcontinent. The historic town of Samarkand illustrates in its art, architecture, and urban structure the most important stages of Central Asian cultural and political history from the 13th century to the present day.
**Registan Square:** this bazaar square is surrounded by three majestic buildings.  
**Ulugbek’s Madras:** built in the 15th century, it includes 50 hudras (class rooms for students) where over one hundred students lived. Amongst them, according legend, lived and studied the famous Tajik poet Dzhami; **Sherdor Madras and Tillya-Kari Madras,** both built in the 17th centuries, are the other two buildings in registan Square.

**Tashkent** - the “Stone City” is one of the largest cities in Central Asia, and is the capital of Uzbekistan. It was also known as Chach during ancient times when it exported gold, precious stones, fruits and beautiful horses to other cities and states. Nowadays Tashkent has nearly 20 museums and the Uzbek Art Museum has one of the largest collections of sculptures, paintings and handicrafts in Central Asia. The most interesting part of Tashkent is an old town near Eskijivo Bazaar, the largest market place that sells everything from cooked food to clothing. Its centre-piece is the Barakhan Madrasa, a magnificent monument of the 16th century. A charming mixture of old and new makes Tashkent a highly recommended place for relaxation and holiday.
Carpet weaving - a very ancient tradition in Uzbekistan, they are mainly woven by numerous home-workers in rural areas and are perfect in technique and design.

Ceramics - these hold a prominent place among the numerous forms of popular applied art and the finest pieces show uncommon expressiveness and creative genius. Today, ceramic production is centred in Gizduvan, Shakhrisabs, Samarkand, Tashkent, Rishtan and Khoresm.

Copper chasing - this is the art of decorating metal items in relief. Through the continuity of traditions from century to century, it has developed very specific aesthetic principles and high standards of artistic performance. In great demand, copper chasing served as a source for disseminating new ideas and new methods of artistic expression. Local artisans created embossed work in various metals - gold, silver, copper, bronze.

Embroidery - it can be ornamental or gold in nature. Ornamental embroidery supplemented other kinds of architectural and decorative art such as gunch (plaster) and wood-carving and embroidered articles widely adorned dwellings and small household articles as well as in everyday and festive clothing. Local artistic styles eventually developed. In the 19th century Bukhara, Nurata, Shakhrisabz, Samarkand, Jizak, Tashkent, Pskent and Fergana were major centers of embroidery. Ornamental embroidery is exclusively women’s art. Gold embroidery was extensively developed in Bukhara in the 19th century. The magnificent articles of the Emir’s
court and the custom of presenting robes of great value led to orders being placed on a large scale. It was mainly done on velvet, chamois leather and wool and seldom on silk.

Unlike ornamental embroidery, gold embroidery was performed solely by men as popular belief stated that the golden thread would turn black if a woman touched it.

**Suzanei** is embroidery on a decorative wall hanging with the biggest being 2-3m long and 2m wide.

**Jewellery** - an Uzbek woman’s life is connected with jewellery right from the moment of her birth when she receives a bracelet and earrings from her grandmother. Normally, an Uzbek woman wears forehead and chest decoration, earrings, bracelet, beads, and pendants in her plaits. Uzbek jewellers or zargars use diverse methods of traditional metal working, such as cutting, smiting, casting, chasing, engraving, plated and gilding, inlaid work, blackening and enamellings.

**Weaving** - the people of Central Asia did not limit themselves to simple trading, but actively participated in the production of goods particularly in silk weaving. In the second half of the 19th century, various plain and patterned handmade cotton fabrics, silk and semi-silk cloths with simple and intricate interlacing were made in Margilan, Namangan, Bukhara, Andijan, Samarkand, Kitab and Urgut. Wool, flax, cotton and silk were used as raw materials in Central Asia. They were also used to adorn dwellings and for clothers. The most attractive aspect of Uzbek fabrics is the beauty of their colours and the pure dyes which are applied in delicate combinations.

**Uzbek Tubeteika** - this is the skull-cap which is one of the most popular applied art forms and is an integral part of the national costume.
Unlike its nomadic neighbours, Uzbeks had a settled civilization for generations and, as such, developed a particularly distinctive cuisine. Between the deserts and mountains, in the oasis and fertile valleys, they cultivated grain and domesticated livestock and the resulting abundance of products allowed the Uzbeks to express their strong tradition of hospitality, which in turn enriched their cuisine.

The seasons, specifically winter and summer, greatly influence the composition of the basic menu. In the summer, fruits, such as grapes, melons, watermelons, apricots, pears, apples, cherries, pomegranates, lemons, persimmons, quinces and figs, grow in abundance as do vegetables including some lesser known species such as green radishes, yellow carrots, dozens of varieties of pumpkin and squash, in addition to the more common eggplants, peppers, turnips, cucumbers and tomatoes.

The winter diet traditionally consists of dried fruits and vegetables and preserves. Hearty noodle or pasta-type dishes are also common chilly-weather fare.

In general, mutton is the preferred source of protein in the Uzbek diet. Sheep are prized not only for their meat and fat as a source of cooking oil, but for their wool as well. Beef and horsemeat are also consumed in substantial quantities. Camel and goat meat are less common.

Uzbek dishes are not notably spicy, though certainly full of flavour. Some of the principle spices used are black cumin, red and black peppers, barberries, coriander, and sesame seeds. The more common herbs are fresh coriander, dill, parsley, celeriac, and basil. Other seasonings include wine vinegar, liberally applied to salads and marinades, and fermented milk products.
A wide array of breads, leavened and unleavened, is a staple for the majority of the population. Flat bread, or non and lepyoshka, is usually baked in tandoor ovens and served with tea and at every meal. Some varieties are prepared with onions or meat in the dough and others topped with sesame seeds or kalonji.

Central Asia has a reputation for the richness and delicacy of its fermented dairy products. The most predominant - katyk, or yogurt made from sour milk, and suzma, strained clotted milk similar to cottage cheese, are eaten plain, in salads, or added to soups and main products, resulting in a unique and delicious flavour.

Plov or Osh, the Uzbek version of "pilaf", is the staple of Uzbek diet. It consists mainly of fried and boiled meat, onions, carrots and rice, with raisins, barberries, chickpeas, or fruit added for variation. Uzbek men pride themselves on their ability to prepare the most unique and sumptuous plov. The osh-paz, or master chef, often cooks plov over an open flame, sometimes serving up to 1000 people from a single cauldron on holidays or occasions such as weddings.

Tea is revered in the finest oriental traditions. It is offered to every guest and there exists a whole subset of mores surrounding the preparation, offering and consuming of tea. Green tea is the drink of hospitality and is predominant in the country. Black tea is preferred in Tashkent, though both teas are seldom taken with milk or sugar. An entire portion of Uzbek cuisine is dedicated solely to tea drinking. Some of these include samsa, bread, halva, and various fried foods.

The "choyhona" (teahouse) is a cornerstone of traditional Uzbek society. Always shaded, preferably situated near a cool stream, the choyhona is a gathering place for social interaction and fraternity. Robed Uzbek men congregate around low tables centred on beds adorned with ancient carpets, enjoying delicious plov, kebabs and endless cups of green tea.
Accessibility

Tashkent International airport is the main arrival point for national and international airlines. Main roads in central Taskent are relatively well maintained, but many secondary roads inside and outside Tashkent, and particularly those in the Tien-Shan and Fan Mountains, may be passable only by four-wheel-drive vehicles.

Accommodation facilities

During the past few years, luxurious hotels were built in Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara, which are managed by western hotel operators. In addition, there are a number of licensed independent hotels and B&B’s that provide suitable accommodation at a lower price.

Tourist facilities and services

Most transactions are conducted on a cash-only, local currency basis. Major credit cards are only accepted at the main hotels and a few shops and restaurants. Traveller’s cheques can be cashed into US Dollars at the National Bank of Uzbekistan.

Basic medical services are available for tourists at local hospitals and clinics. Telecommunications services are also available from major hotels. Postal services are available at the Main Post Office in Tashkent.

National tourism statistics

In the late 1990s, Uzbekistan experienced a significant increase in the number of its international visitors, from 92,000 in 1995 to 272,000 in 1998. Since the turn of the century, this figure has steadily increased to as much as 345,000 international tourist arrivals in 2002, and most recently has maintained a figure of 231,000 in 2003. Its main source markets are countries along the Silk Road and western Europe.

Contact details

Uzbektourism National Company
47 Khorazm str.
700047 TASHKENT
Uzbekistan
Tel.: (99871) 133 5414
Fax: (99871) 136 7948
Email: uztur@online.ru
http://www.uzbektourism.uz