

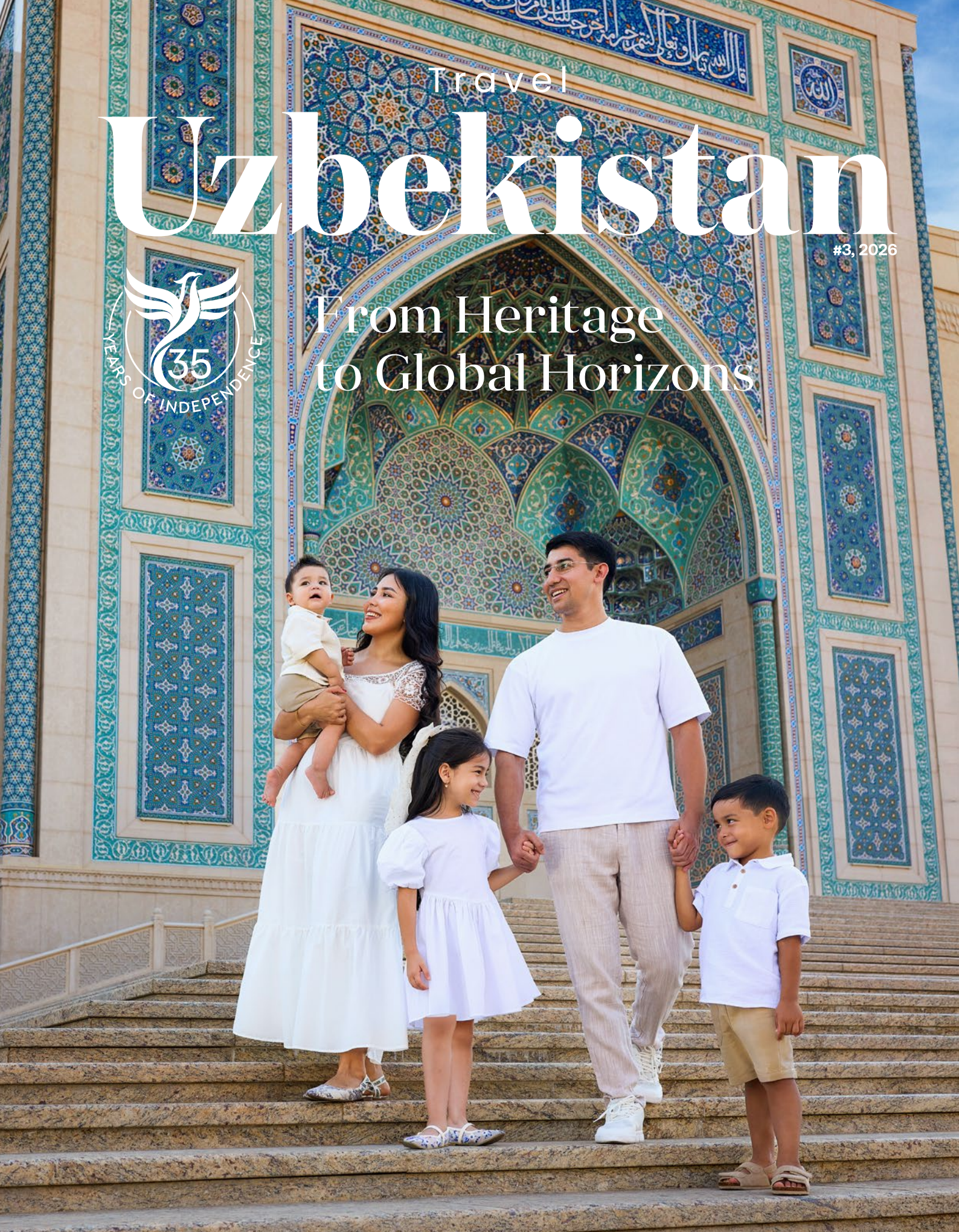
Travel

Uzbekistan

#3, 2026



From Heritage
to Global Horizons



Uzbekistan: 35 Years of Independence

Celebrating
a Legacy of Progress,
Culture and Hospitality

Visa-Free Uzbekistan

The Visa-Free Countries for Uzbekistan have been allowed different periods of exemption such as stays of 90 days, 60 days, and 30 days

No time limit

Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Russia, Armenia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Belarus

60 days

Kyrgyzstan

30 days

Australia, Republic of Austria, Republic of Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, The Vatican, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Hungary, State of Brunei Darussalam, State of Israel, Republic of Greece, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Canada, Principality of Andorra, Principality of Liechtenstein, Principality of Monaco, Kingdom of Belgium, Kingdom of Denmark, Kingdom of Spain, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Kingdom of Norway, Kingdom of Sweden, Republic of Latvia, Qatar and others. Also citizens of the People's Republic of China (in tourist groups), the United States and Vietnam who are 55 years of age or older.

up to 10 days

Kingdom of Bahrain, State of Qatar, State of Kuwait, Sultanate of Oman and the People's Republic of China, including the Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions of the People's Republic of China, provided that they submit air tickets on departure to their own or a third country

About e-visa

When passing the State Border of the Republic of Uzbekistan and while staying in the country, foreign citizen must present a valid travel document (passport) and electronic visa in printed or electronic form. In order to apply for an e-visa, a foreign citizen sends an application to the official e-visa portal of the Republic of Uzbekistan at www.e-viza.gov.uz. For consideration of the application for an e-visa, a consular fee of \$20 is collected via a portal for international payment systems. In this case, the applicant does not have to be a card-

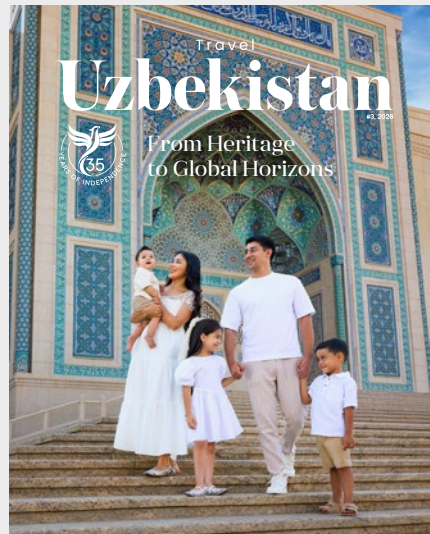
holder. The amount of the consular fee is charged only for consideration of the application for an e-visa and is not refundable. A foreign citizen may be denied an e-visa in cases established by the legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan. In this case, the corresponding refusal notice is sent to the e-mail address of the foreign citizen.



For more information,
visit www.uzbekistan.travel.



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Photo: Mukhiddin A Lee
Venue: Islamic Civilization Center
Models: The Kabulniyazov family

35 Years of Independence: A Journey That Begins with Family

Behind every achievement of the nation are its people — their dreams, dedication, and commitment to building a happy and prosperous future. A strong family is the foundation of a thriving society and a source of national strength.



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History Unfolding: Uzbekistan Today

There is no single word that can capture the essence of Uzbekistan, a country where ancient civilizations and modern cities exist side by side, UNESCO World Heritage sites share the landscape with emerging destinations, bustling bazaars give way to alpine resorts, and vast deserts are punctuated by fertile oases. What makes Uzbekistan remarkable is that its history is not frozen in time. Rather, it continues to shape everyday life, woven into the country's architecture and craftsmanship, its cuisine and family traditions, the rhythm of its historic cities and the warmth of its people.

Text by Aziza Rasulova

In 2026, the Republic of Uzbekistan is celebrating the 35th anniversary of its independence. Over the past three-and-a-half decades, the country has undergone a momentous transformation, turning its extraordinary cultural and historical heritage into the foundation of a vibrant, world-class tourism industry. Ambitious reforms have modernized infrastructure, expanded transportation networks, attracted international investment, and made exploring the country easier than ever. Today, Uzbekistan offers more than architectural treasures. It invites visitors to experience places where ancient traditions, contemporary culture,

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and breathtaking landscapes come together to tell a rich story.

This transformation has been driven in large part by the strategic initiatives of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, *Shavkat Mirziyoyev*, whose vision has placed tourism, cultural preservation, and international openness at the center of national development. Under his leadership, large-scale programs have been launched to restore historical monuments, develop new tourism clusters, and support regional destinations. Efforts to improve connectivity, simplify travel procedures, and promote Uzbekistan globally have not only strengthened the country's position on the international stage but have also ensured that economic growth benefits local communities while safeguarding the nation's rich heritage.

That story is resonating with travelers around the world. In 2025, Uzbekistan welcomed a record 11.7 million international visitors, the highest number in the country's history. During the first half of 2026, more than 6.5 million travelers from 205 countries arrived. These figures reflect more than the rapid growth of the tourism

sector—they signal Uzbekistan's emergence as one of the world's most dynamic, accessible, and compelling destinations.

In recent years, Uzbekistan's visa requirements have been significantly eased, the e-visa program has expanded, international flight connections continue to grow, and major investments have modernized airports, rail networks, hotels, and tourism infrastructure. Digital services and internationally recognized hospitality standards have made travel comfortable and appealing. Despite this rapid transformation, Uzbekistan has preserved the one thing that cannot be manufactured: its authenticity.

For much of the world, Uzbekistan is defined by the legendary cities of Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Kokand, and Shakhrisabz, places where history is not simply preserved behind museum walls or reflected in magnificent architecture. It lives on in family-run workshops, centuries-old neighborhoods, vibrant local markets, time-honored recipes, and the genuine hospitality that welcomes every visitor. At the same time, a new generation of destinations and experiences is inviting travelers to discover a country that is as dynamic as it is historic.

Travelers can spend a day skiing at Amirsoy Mountain Resort, explore the contemporary Silk Road Samarkand tourism complex, walk through the Boriq Buxoro historical and cultural center, or venture into national parks and protected landscapes. Across the country, culinary and wine routes, pilgrimage sites, traditional villages, desert landscapes, alpine lakes, and regional festivals reveal a country whose appeal reaches well beyond the familiar Silk Road narrative. Rather than replacing the past, these new experiences add another layer to it, broadening the way Uzbekistan is understood.

This broader perspective is increasingly reflected on the international stage. Uzbekistan is regularly recognized by leading travel publications and industry rankings as one of the world's most promising destinations. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, Uzbekistan ranked among the countries with the fastest growth in international tourism during the first quarter of 2026, underlining the country's growing presence on the global travel map.



Tourism to Global Standards

Over the past decade, Uzbekistan has undergone a significant transformation in its tourism sector. Investments in infrastructure, hospitality, and transportation have reshaped the visitor experience, while growing international partnerships have strengthened the country's position in the global travel market. Today, tourism is not only an important driver of economic growth but also an expression of the country's presence on the world stage.

Creating a seamless travel experience has become a national priority. Visa policies have been substantially liberalized, allowing citizens of more than 90 countries to enter Uzbekistan visa-free, while travelers from nearly 60 other countries can apply through the country's electronic visa system.



The results are reflected in growing international recognition. Uzbekistan continues to climb global tourism rankings and has been featured among the world's most compelling destinations by leading publications and industry organizations, including The New York Times, The Guardian, The Independent, the Global Muslim

Travel Index, the National Geographic Traveler Awards, and Lonely Planet.

Behind this progress is a long-term effort to strengthen every part of the tourism industry. International partnerships have introduced new expertise and raised service standards, while continued investment in hotels and visitor infrastructure has supported the adoption of modern management practices. At the same time, professional training has become a priority, with increasing emphasis on developing a hospitality workforce that meets international expectations.

The country's tourism offering has also become far more diverse. While Uzbekistan remains best known for its extraordinary architectural and cultural heritage, recent years have seen the rapid growth of ecotourism, pilgrimage travel, wellness retreats, recreation, and other specialized experiences. As a result, visitors are spending more time exploring the country, discovering destinations beyond the traditional Silk Road route, and gaining a broader understanding of Uzbekistan.

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Cultural Heritage and Pilgrimage

Uzbekistan is home to more than 8,400 cultural heritage sites, reflecting thousands of years of history at the crossroads of civilizations. More than 200 of these landmarks are recognized by UNESCO as part of four World Heritage sites: Ichan Kala in Khiva, the Historic Center of Bukhara, the Historic Center of Shakhrisabz, and Samarkand – Crossroads of Cultures. Together with more than 100 museums and galleries across the country, these sites offer an extraordinary window into Central Asia's cultural legacy.

Across these cities, monumental mosques, madrasas, mausoleums, and palaces offer

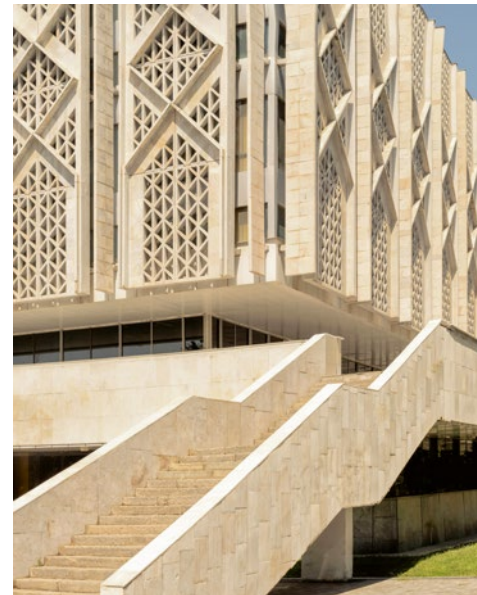
fine examples of medieval Islamic architecture. Among the best known are Registan Square in Samarkand, the walled city of Ichan Kala in Khiva, the Ark Fortress and Poi Kalyan Ensemble in Bukhara, Ak-Saray Palace in Shakhrisabz, and the Palace of Khudayar Khan in Kokand. Built by some of the greatest craftsmen of the medieval East, these landmarks remain remarkable not only for their architectural achievement but also for the stories they continue to tell.

Uzbekistan is also one of the most important destinations for pilgrimage in the Islamic world. Sacred sites such as the Bahauddin Naqshband Complex in Bukhara, the Imam al-Bukhari Memorial Complex near Samarkand, and the Imam al-Tirmidhi Complex in Termez welcome pil-

grims and visitors from across the globe. At the same time, the country's religious heritage extends well beyond Islam. Ancient Buddhist archaeological sites in the Surkhandarya region, Catholic churches in Tashkent and Samarkand, and Orthodox Christian cathedrals reflect centuries of cultural and religious coexistence.

Uzbekistan has also developed a wide range of travel experiences, including ecotourism, adventure travel, ethnic and community-based tourism, gastronomy, festivals and cultural events, wellness and medical tourism, and a growing MICE sector. Even Tashkent, with its distinctive blend of Soviet modernism, contemporary architecture, museums, parks, and thriving culinary scene, has emerged as a destination in its own right.





Tashkent – Layers of a Capital

As Uzbekistan's capital and the largest city in Central Asia, Tashkent is often a visitor's first introduction to the country, and an unexpected one. Wide boulevards, leafy parks, and contemporary architecture stand alongside centuries-old landmarks, creating a city where past and present carry on a quiet conversation.

The city's architectural landscape reflects this layered identity. Historic landmarks such as the Alisher Navoi State Academic Theatre, the Holy Assumption Cathedral, the State Museum of the History of Uzbekistan, the Palace of Friendship of Peoples, and the Romanov Palace tell the story of Tashkent's many cultural influences. Rising above the skyline is the Tashkent Television Tower, one of the tallest structures in Central Asia and a defining feature of the city's skyline.

Beneath the streets lies another of Tashkent's most distinctive landmarks: its metro system. Often described as an underground museum, the stations

are celebrated for their striking mosaics, chandeliers, and Soviet-era design, each with its own architectural character and artistic identity.

Recently, at the 48th session of the **UNESCO World Heritage Committee** in Busan, South Korea, some of the modernist architectural sites of Tashkent were officially inscribed on UNESCO's prestigious World Heritage List. This recognition highlights the value not only of individual buildings but of an entire era when, after the earthquake, a new image of Tashkent was created, one that successfully combined modern architecture, Central Asian traditions, and the unique characteristics of the climate. It is a major achievement for Uzbekistan and for Tashkent especially, and an important step towards preserving the country's architectural heritage.

Beyond its landmarks, Tashkent serves as Uzbekistan's cultural and business center. Its theaters, museums, galleries, concert venues, international exhibitions, and growing calendar of festivals and conferences make the city an increasingly important destination for both cultural and business travel, offering visitors a contemporary perspective on a country whose story continues to evolve.

Wellness and Nature

Uzbekistan has long been recognized as one of Central Asia's leading wellness destinations. The country's diverse landscapes, mineral springs, and favorable climate support a tradition of health retreats, with sanatoriums and wellness resorts across the country offering restorative escapes throughout the year.

Uzbekistan's varied geography also provides exceptional opportunities for nature-based travel. Visitors can explore the vast Kyzylkum Desert on safari excursions, hike along glacier-fed rivers, discover remote alpine valleys, or visit the country's national parks and protected nature reserves, each revealing a different side of its remarkable landscapes.

With four distinct seasons, Uzbekistan offers opportunities for outdoor travel year-round. Spring and autumn are ideal for hiking and exploring the countryside, summer brings visitors to waterfalls and higher elevations, while winter transforms the country's mountains into destinations for skiing and other snow-based recreation. Combined with the growth of rural, adventure, and ecotourism, these landscapes have become an essential part of the country's evolving tourism experience, offering a compelling complement to its celebrated cultural heritage.



Year-Round Tourism

Over the past decade, Uzbekistan has made significant investments in winter tourism, creating new opportunities for outdoor recreation while expanding the country's appeal beyond its cultural heritage. A defining example is Amirsoy Mountain Resort, located a short drive from Tashkent. Designed to meet international standards for safety, infrastructure, and hospitality, the resort has established itself as one of Central Asia's leading ski destinations.

Yet Uzbekistan's landscapes offer opportunities for exploration in every season. Travelers can visit remarkable natural landmarks, including Amir Temur Cave, the Suffa Radio Astronomy Complex, Svutushar Waterfall, the mountain villages of Kul and Gilan, and the Severtsov Glacier. Hot air balloon flights provide another perspective, revealing sweeping views of mountains, valleys, and desert landscapes from above.

Among the country's most distinctive natural destinations is Lake Aydarkul, an inland lake surrounded by the vast Kyzylkum Desert, about 50 kilometers from the city of Nurata. Nearby, Aydar Yurt Camp, one of Uzbekistan's largest traditional yurt camps, offers visitors an opportunity to experience the desert's quiet beauty while staying in accommodations inspired by nomadic traditions.

New developments have further expanded the country's outdoor tourism offerings. Silk Road Family Resort, on the shores of the Tudakul Reservoir, and Bukhara Desert Oasis & SPA in the Bukhara region combine modern amenities with access to Uzbekistan's diverse natural landscapes, reflecting the country's continued investment in year-round tourism.



Rural Tourism

Uzbekistan also offers travelers the opportunity to experience the country's rural traditions and everyday way of life. Community-based tourism has grown steadily, inviting visitors to stay in villages, meet local artisans, discover regional customs, and experience landscapes that have changed little over generations.

One of the country's best-known rural tourism destinations is Konigil Tourist Village, located on the outskirts of Samarkand. Set along the banks of a gurgling stream, the site is known for its traditional crafts, peaceful natural setting, and workshops that preserve centuries-old techniques. Its most celebrated attraction is the Meros Paper Mill, where artisans have revived the ancient craft of making Samarkand paper by hand using natural materials and traditional methods. The workshop offers visitors a rare opportunity to witness a craft that once played an important role in the cultural and commercial history of the Silk Road.



Gastronomic Tourism

Uzbekistan's culinary heritage reflects centuries of Silk Road history, where Persian, Turkic, Arab, Russian, and neighboring Central Asian influences blended into a distinctive national cuisine. Today, each of the country's regions preserves its own recipes, cooking methods, and local specialties, making travel across the country a true gastronomic journey.

Among Uzbekistan's greatest culinary symbols is plov, with more than 100 documented regional varieties prepared in the country. In 2016, the culture and tradition of preparing and sharing plov was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, recognizing not only the dish itself but also the values of hospitality, generosity, and community associated with it.

Visitors can experience Uzbek cuisine in a variety of settings. Traditional choyxonas (teahouses) remain the heart of local food culture, serving classic dishes such as plov, shashlik, shurpa, lagman, manti, and freshly baked non bread in a relaxed atmosphere where friends and families gather over green tea. Alongside these authentic establishments, Uzbekistan's major cities also offer modern interpretations of traditional cuisine in elegant settings, as well as an expanding selection of international dining options.

Gastronomic tourism also offers immersive cultural experiences. Visitors can participate in cooking masterclasses organized by boutique hotels, guesthouses, and local families, learning to prepare plov, samsa, manti, and traditional bread using ancient techniques. Exploring vibrant bazaars such as Chorsu in Tashkent or Siab in Samarkand is another essential part of the journey, where colorful displays of spices, dried fruits, nuts, sweets, and seasonal produce reveal the richness of Uzbekistan's agricultural heritage.

Uzbekistan was awarded first place in gastronomic tourism in the 2018 National Geographic Traveler Awards.



Growing Visitor Numbers

The diversity of Uzbekistan's tourism offerings has contributed to a steady increase in visitor arrivals. Of the **11.7 million international tourists** who visited the country in **2025**, more than **9.5 million** came from neighboring countries. Among the CIS nations, **Kyrgyzstan** ranked first with **3.3 million** visitors, followed by **Tajikistan (2.7 million)**, **Kazakhstan (2.6 million)**, **Russia (984,000)**, and **Turkmenistan (370,000)**. Uzbekistan also welcomed **1.09 million** visitors from countries outside the CIS, with **China, Türkiye, India, South Korea**, and **Italy** ranking among the leading source markets.

As international interest continues to grow, tourism is playing an increasingly important role in strengthening the country's global profile and showcasing Uzbekistan's rich heritage to the world.

Uzbekistan

Year-Round

Festivals and events worth planning your trip around

Text by Malika Kamilova
Photos by Mukhiddin A Lee,
Feruz Rustamov

Imagine you've arrived in Uzbekistan, visited its museums, galleries, architectural landmarks, and bustling bazaars, sampled plov more than once, and still have time left to explore. What else is there to do?

Beyond its remarkable historical sites, Uzbekistan offers a vibrant calendar of cultural events throughout the year. Every season brings its own atmosphere. During the warmer months, the country comes alive with open-air festivals, while autumn and winter are marked by more intimate cultural gatherings that celebrate tradition, music, and the arts.



Spring

Perhaps the most important spring celebration in Uzbekistan is **Navruz**, celebrated annually on **21 March**. Marking the arrival of spring, the renewal of nature, and the beginning of the agricultural year, Navruz is one of the country's most cherished holidays.

Festivities last for three days and include public celebrations, artisan fairs, concerts, and cultural performances in parks and public squares across the country. No Navruz celebration is complete without **sumalak**, the holiday's iconic dish. Prepared overnight in enormous cauldrons, cooking it becomes a celebration in itself, accompanied by singing, dancing, and communal gatherings. Seasonal dishes such as **kok samsa** and **nisholda**, a light dessert made from whipped egg whites and sugar, are also served. For travelers seeking an authentic introduction to Uzbek traditions, Navruz offers an unforgettable cultural experience.

Every two years, the ancient city of **Khiva** hosts the **Lazgi International Dance Festival**, bringing together hundreds of dancers and ensembles from around the world. Dedicated to preserving and promoting the ancient Khorezmian Lazgi dance, the festival

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takes place within the spectacular walls of the **Ichon Kala**, creating an atmosphere that feels as though history has come to life. Alongside dazzling performances in colorful national costumes, visitors can attend academic seminars, masterclasses, and exhibitions showcasing traditional musical instruments and regional costumes.

Spring also transforms **Tashkent** into a destination for ballet enthusiasts during the annual **International Ballet Festival**. For several weeks, the stage of the **Alisher Navoi State Academic Theatre** presents a program that ranges from Uzbek national productions and timeless classics to contemporary works by leading international companies. The festival demonstrates how tradition and innovation coexist within Uzbekistan's cultural landscape, offering audiences everything from the nationally inspired ballet



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Lazgi to celebrated masterpieces from the global repertoire. For visitors, it is a wonderful opportunity to discover another side of Uzbekistan's cultural life while spending an evening in one of Central Asia's most beautiful theatres.

Every May, the southern town of Boysun welcomes visitors to the **Boysun Bahori Festival**, held at the foot of the Boysun Mountains as the surrounding landscape bursts into bloom. More than simply a cultural event, the festival is an immersive celebration of Uzbekistan's living heritage.

Alongside performances by folk musicians, storytellers, and dancers, visitors can watch traditional **kupkari** horseback competitions, **kurash** wrestling,

and equestrian demonstrations. Artisans showcase centuries-old crafts, including ceramics, suzani embroidery, carpet weaving, and metal engraving. Set against a stunning natural backdrop, the festival offers one of the country's richest cultural experiences.

Coinciding with **International Jazz Day**, the **Tashkent Jazz Festival** takes place every year in late April and early May. Open-air concerts bring together acclaimed musicians from Uzbekistan and abroad, creating the perfect setting for a warm spring evening. As the day's heat gives way to cooler temperatures, the sounds of saxophones and pianos fill the air, making the festival one of the capital's most atmospheric cultural events.



living craft traditions and immerse yourself in the atmosphere of one of the Silk Road's most legendary cities.

For those looking to experience the contemporary side of the capital, **Mazza Fest** has become one of Tashkent's signature summer events. Combining gastronomy, live music, and outdoor entertainment, the festival attracts thousands of locals and visitors each year. For several days, one of the city's largest open-air venues becomes a culinary destination where guests can sample Uzbek, Asian, European, and Middle Eastern cuisine. Live performances, evening strolls between food trucks, and a lively festival atmosphere offer a glimpse of modern Tashkent, a city that is energetic, welcoming, and constantly evolving.



Another highlight of the summer season takes place in Bukhara. The annual **Silk and Spices Festival** transforms the city's historic center into a vibrant celebration of craftsmanship and culture. Artisans, musicians, and performers from across Uzbekistan gather to showcase the country's rich traditions. Streets fill with markets selling handwoven carpets, ceramics, jewelry, and traditional clothing, while fashion shows, concerts, and performances by tightrope walkers entertain visitors throughout the day. It is one of the best opportunities to experience Uzbekistan's



Summer



Summer in Uzbekistan begins with sport. Every June, Zaamin National Park hosts the international **Zaamin Ultra**, attracting trail runners from around the world. Unlike city marathons, the routes wind through mountain trails and rugged terrain at elevations of more than 2,000 meters above sea level, surrounded by pine forests and panoramic views of the Turkestan Ridge. Participants can choose from distances of varying difficulty, but even the shortest routes present a real challenge due to the steep elevation changes and demanding landscape. Beyond the competition itself, Zaamin Ultra offers a chance to discover one of Uzbekistan's most picturesque natural regions, often referred to as the country's own "Swiss Alps."

Autumn

Autumn in Uzbekistan traditionally begins with the opening of the theatrical season. In early September, **Tashkent** welcomes the new cultural year with an open-air symphony concert held in front of the **Alisher Navoi State Academic Theatre**. Against the backdrop of the theatre's magnificent façade, the orchestra performs classical masterpieces and excerpts from celebrated works under the evening sky. The event attracts not only devoted classical music enthusiasts but also those who simply wish to enjoy a rare moment of tranquility in the heart of the capital. It sets the tone for the cultural season that follows.

Those with an interest in contemporary art should look out for the **Bukhara Biennial**, held every two years. This ambitious multidisciplinary event brings together exhibitions, architectural installations, performances, poetry, and culinary experiences. What makes the biennial truly distinctive is the way contemporary art is woven into Bukhara's historic fabric. Installations and exhibitions are staged in centuries-old madrassas, caravanserais, and other architectural landmarks, creating a striking dialogue between ancient heritage and modern art. With its inaugural edition in 2025, the biennial has demonstrated that Bukhara is not only an open-air museum but also a vibrant platform for international cultural exchange.

Autumn in Tashkent is also marked by **Teplo Market**, a creative festival held in the serene setting of the **Japanese Garden**. For several days, this peaceful



green space transforms into a lively creative hub where local designers, artisans, and independent brands present clothing, accessories, home décor, and handcrafted goods. Alongside the market, visitors can enjoy live music, lectures, workshops, and a variety of food stalls. Wandering among the garden's ponds and bridges, guests can slow down, relax, and experience the gentle rhythm of autumn in the city.

The season concludes with the **Golden Autumn Classical Music Festival**, one of Tashkent's most prestigious musical events. Held each November, performances take place at the **Alisher Navoi State Academic Theatre** and the **State Conservatory of Uzbekistan**, bringing together the country's leading orchestras alongside internationally acclaimed soloists and conductors. Symphony concerts, chamber music performances, and solo recitals create an elegant finale to the cultural calendar, welcoming both dedicated classical music lovers and newcomers eager to discover the beauty of the genre.



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Winter

Winter in Tashkent brings a festive atmosphere as artisan markets and local craft fairs take over the city. One of the most popular seasonal destinations is Central Park, which transforms throughout December and January into a winter wonderland filled with sparkling lights, Christmas trees, and festive decorations.

Visitors can browse handcrafted gifts, locally designed clothing, jewelry, and home décor while enjoying the atmosphere of a charming holiday market. Warm drinks, seasonal treats, live music, and family-friendly entertainment make it as much a social gathering as a shopping destination. A similar festive spirit can be found near Humo Arena, where New Year celebrations feature open-air performances, an ice rink, amusement attractions, and holiday markets.

For those seeking a more active winter experience, the Tashkent region offers scenic mountain escapes just a short drive from the city. Destinations such as Amirsoy Mountain Resort and Beldersoy Resort become especially attractive during the colder months, with snow-covered slopes, fresh mountain air, and opportunities for skiing, snowboarding, and cozy retreats. These locations provide a perfect contrast to the city's festive charm, allowing visitors to combine urban winter atmosphere with outdoor adventure in the heart of nature.



A Destination for Every Season

Uzbekistan offers something unique throughout the year. Spring bursts into life with colorful festivals and national celebrations; summer is filled with music, outdoor adventures, and vibrant cultural events; autumn showcases world-class performances, exhibitions, and creative festivals; while winter embraces a slower pace with cozy holiday traditions and festive markets.

Together, these events create a living cultural calendar where ancient cities, dramatic mountain landscapes, and modern Tashkent become stages for unforgettable experiences. Whether you choose your destination based on the season or plan your visit around a particular event, Uzbekistan rewards travelers with authentic experiences that extend far beyond its famous landmarks.

Event dates and schedules are subject to change. For the most up-to-date information, please refer to the official website www.uzbekistan.travel.



Beyond Hospitality

How Tourism and Entertainment Group is helping shape Uzbekistan's tourism ecosystem

Text by Aziza Rasulova



Uzbekistan is entering a new chapter in its tourism story. While its Silk Road heritage continues to inspire travelers from around the world, a new generation of hospitality projects is redefining how the country is experienced and perceived.

Among the companies contributing to this transformation is Tourism and Entertainment Group, whose portfolio includes internationally recognized hotels, restaurants, and one of the country's leading exhibition venues. Through projects such as Hilton Tashkent City, Hampton by Hilton Tashkent, Wyndham Bukhara, Novikov Café, and Central Asian Expo, the company is helping shape a more connected tourism ecosystem, one that supports leisure travel, business events, and long-term investment alike.

We spoke with **Iroda Artikhodjaeva** about leadership, hospitality, and why successful tourism is built not only on memorable places, but on the trust and confidence a destination creates.

■ *Tourism and Entertainment Group brings together hotels, restaurants, and event infrastructure. What connects these businesses under one vision?*

At first glance, these businesses seem different. In reality, they all contribute to the same goal: strengthening Uzbekistan's tourism ecosystem. A hotel, a restaurant, or an exhibition venue may serve different purposes, but together they shape how visitors experience the country.

For us, hospitality extends far beyond hotels. International hotel brands build confidence, restaurants introduce guests to our culture, while business events create new partnerships and investment opportunities. Each project adds value to the others, creating an ecosystem that is stronger than any single business could be on its own.

For us, success is measured not only by business performance, but by the overall impression people take home. When visitors leave genuinely impressed, they become the country's most persuasive ambassadors.

"Hospitality is about creating confidence in a destination, not simply providing a place to stay."

■ *Over the past decade, Uzbekistan has emerged as one of the region's fastest-growing tourism destinations. From your perspective, what has changed the most?*

The biggest transformation has been in perception.

Many international guests arrive expecting to discover the Silk Road. What they find is something much broader: a country with a modern hospitality sector, high service standards, a welcoming atmosphere, and destinations that feel both authentic and dynamic.

Perhaps the most rewarding moment is hearing people say that Uzbekistan exceeded their expectations. They speak about the warmth of the people, the sense of safety, and the pace of development. Those experiences build trust, and trust is one of the most valuable assets any destination can earn.

In tourism, reputation travels faster than advertising. Every satisfied visitor becomes an ambassador for the destination, inspiring others to experience it for themselves. That is how sustainable tourism grows.

"The most powerful advertisement is a visitor whose expectations have been exceeded."

■ *International hotel brands have become an important part of Uzbekistan's tourism infrastructure. Beyond accommodation, what role do they play in shaping the country's image?*

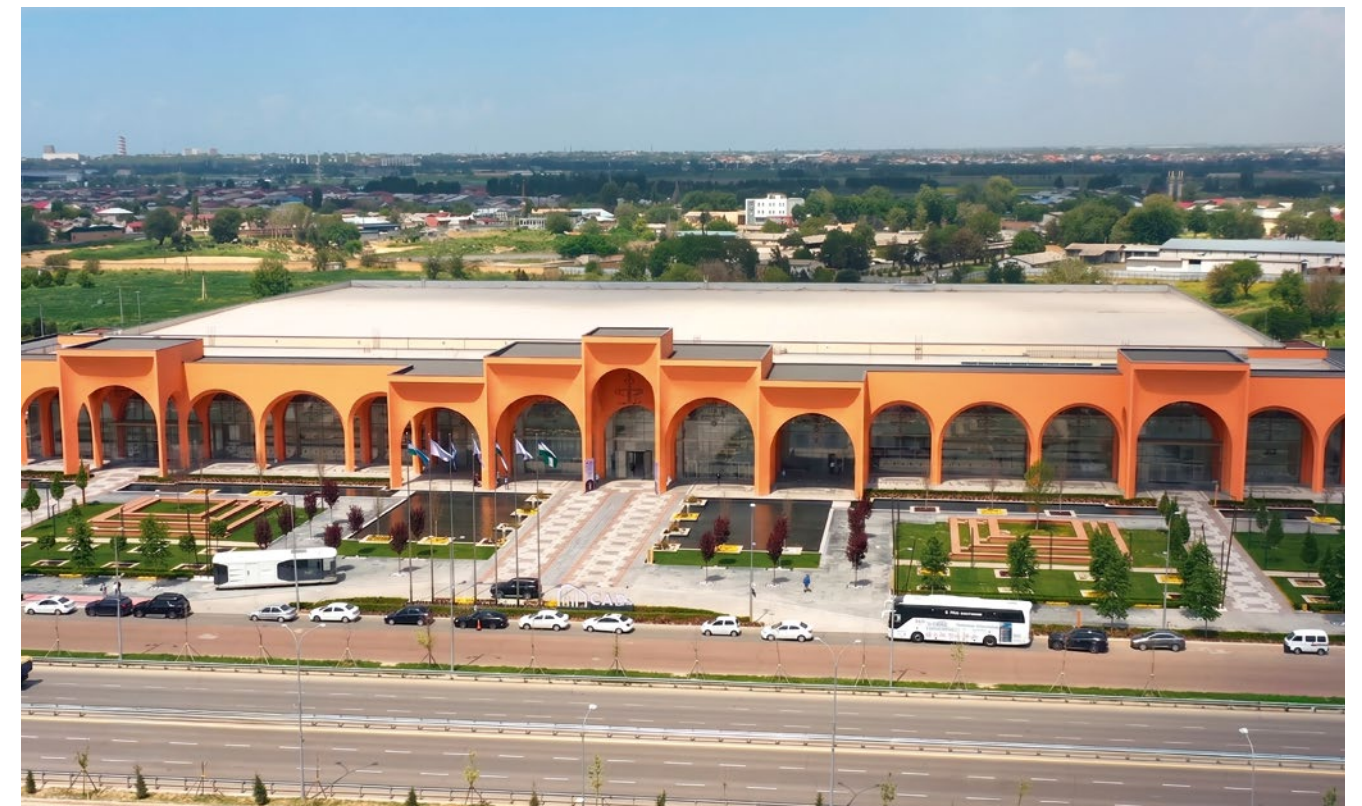
International brands do much more than provide a familiar name—they create confidence long before a guest arrives.

For many guests, their hotel is the first experience of Uzbekistan. When that first experience is seamless, professional, and

genuinely welcoming, it shapes how they perceive the country as a whole.

At the same time, international standards should never come at the expense of local identity. The most memorable hospitality experiences combine world-class service with an authentic sense of place, whether through architecture, local craftsmanship, cuisine, or the small cultural details that make every stay unique. A beautifully restored courtyard in Bukhara, traditional patterns woven into contemporary interiors, or a table celebrating Uzbekistan's seasonal produce can tell visitors as much about the country as any famous monument.

Our responsibility is not simply to meet international expectations, but to preserve what makes Uzbekistan distinctive. Authenticity is our greatest competitive advantage, and it should remain at the heart of every hospitality experience.





"Global standards create confidence. Local identity creates memories."

■ *Business events are becoming an increasingly important part of Uzbekistan's tourism strategy. Why is MICE such a powerful driver of growth?*

MICE is not simply about hosting events—it's about creating connections that continue long after they are over.

Every international event brings together business leaders, entrepreneurs, and experts who experience Uzbekistan not only through meetings and exhibitions, but through its people, hospitality, and business environment. Many return, not only as delegates, but as investors, partners, or repeat visitors.

That's why venues such as Central Asian Expo are designed not simply to host exhibitions, but to create platforms where ideas, expertise, and business opportunities can move across borders. A successful event generates value long after the final session ends by strengthening industries,

expanding professional networks, and raising the country's international profile.

As Uzbekistan continues to position itself as a regional hub for business and investment, MICE will become not only a driver of tourism, but a catalyst for broader economic development.

"Every international event is an opportunity to build relationships that last far beyond the closing ceremony."

■ *Where do you see the greatest opportunities for tourism investment in Uzbekistan today?*

Uzbekistan is entering a period of sustained growth, creating opportunities across the tourism sector. While internationally branded hotels remain important, there is increasing demand for projects that offer authenticity and distinctive local experiences.

Boutique hotels in historic cities such as Bukhara and Khiva, family-oriented attractions, and high-quality leisure in-

frastructure all offer significant opportunities. Today's travelers increasingly seek authentic experiences rather than simply comfortable accommodation, creating strong demand for projects that reflect the character of the destination.

I also believe medical tourism will become an important area of growth as Uzbekistan continues to invest in modern healthcare infrastructure and high-quality medical services.

When evaluating new projects, I always look for a balance between three factors: commercial sustainability, long-term value for the country, and meaningful opportunities for people. When those elements come together, an investment creates benefits that extend well beyond financial returns.

"The strongest investments create value for business, society, and the country."

■ *Your leadership style has evolved alongside the company's growth. What has been the most important lesson on that journey?*

Early in my career, I believed that leadership meant being involved in every decision and understanding every detail of the business. Over time, I realized that leadership is not about controlling every process—it's about building strong teams and creating an environment where talented people can thrive.

Today, I see time as the most valuable resource. It should be invested in strategic decisions, long-term vision, and people. When you trust capable professionals and give them responsibility, the organization becomes stronger, more resilient, and better prepared for future growth.

Leadership is ultimately about responsibility. You can delegate tasks, but you can never delegate accountability.

"A leader's greatest responsibility is not to manage every detail, but to help people achieve their full potential."

■ *If someone visits Uzbekistan for the first, what do you hope they will remember most about their journey?*

I hope they discover a country that constantly surprises them.

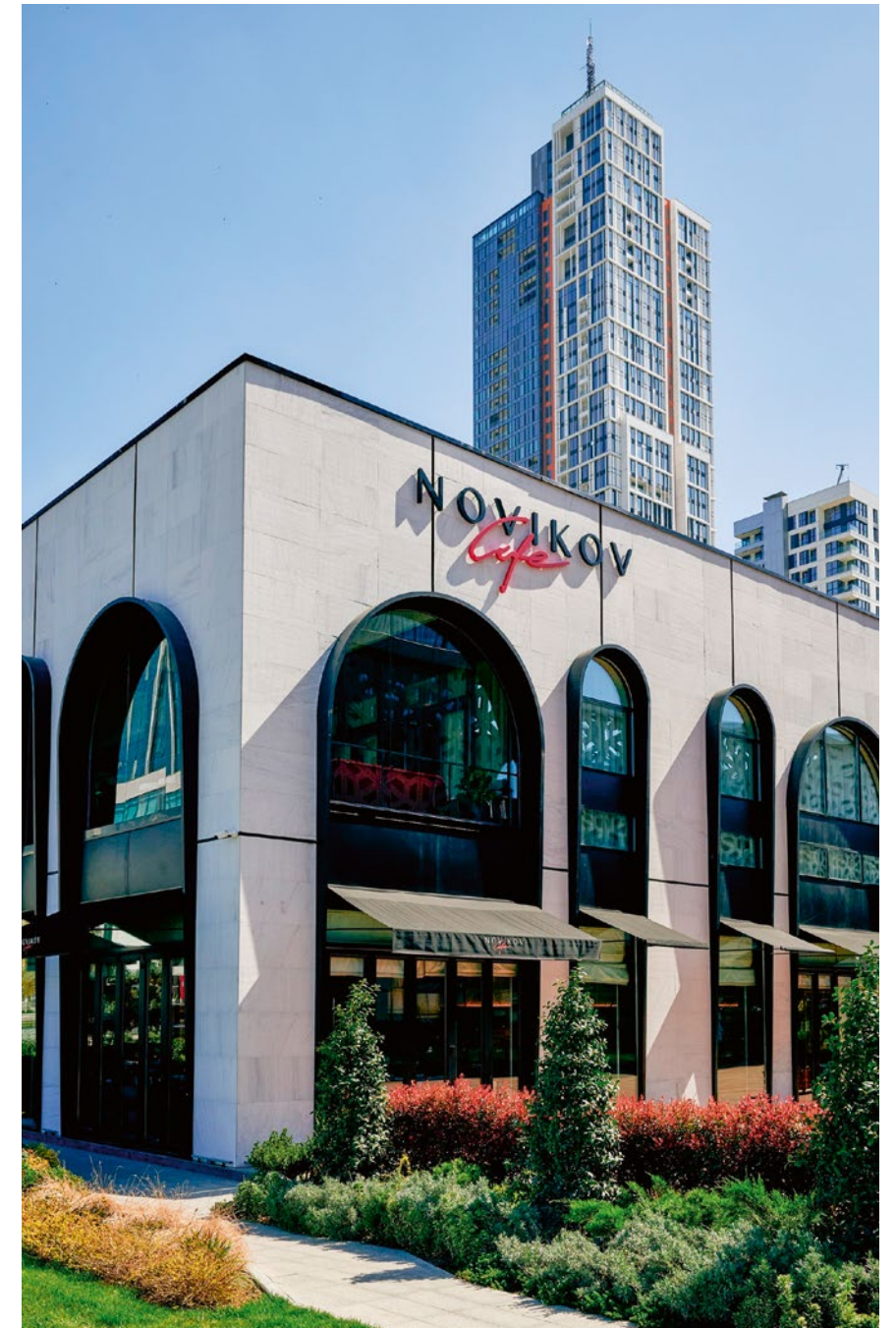
I hope they begin by exploring our historic cities, walking through ancient streets, discovering our architecture, and sharing a traditional meal that reflects the warmth and generosity of Uzbek hospitality. Those moments reveal the soul of the country.

Then I hope they will see another Uzbekistan—modern, confident, and forward-looking. A country with internationally recognized hotels, vibrant public spaces, contemporary restaurants, world-class business venues, and a new generation shaping its future.

To me, the true identity of Uzbekistan lies in the harmony between heritage and progress. Our history defines who we are, but it does not limit who we can become.

And if visitors leave already thinking about their next journey here—perhaps

Highlights & Events



even asking themselves, "Why didn't I come to Uzbekistan sooner?"—then I believe we have achieved what hospitality is meant to do.

"Our ambition is not simply to welcome more visitors, but to inspire them to return to a country that embraces the future while remaining true to its heritage."

Karakalpakstan: *Land of Wonders*

What comes to mind when you hear the name Karakalpakstan? For most people, the answer is obvious: the Aral Sea.

But what if we told you that this is also a place where you can watch thousands of pink flamingos, greet the sunrise on the shores of a lake locals call the "Lake of Wealth," spend the night in a yurt beneath a sky full of stars, wander through landscapes that resemble Mars, and discover ancient legends brought to life?

Karakalpakstan is unlike any other region in Central Asia. The farther you venture beyond the familiar tourist routes, the more you realize that the true wealth of this land lies in its people, nature, and the stories passed down from one generation to the next.

Even the region's name reflects the heritage of its people. In Turkic languages, qara means "black," while qalpaq means "headgear" or "hat." Together, they formed the word Karakalpak—"the people in black hats"—and later Karakalpakstan, the land of the Karakalpaks.

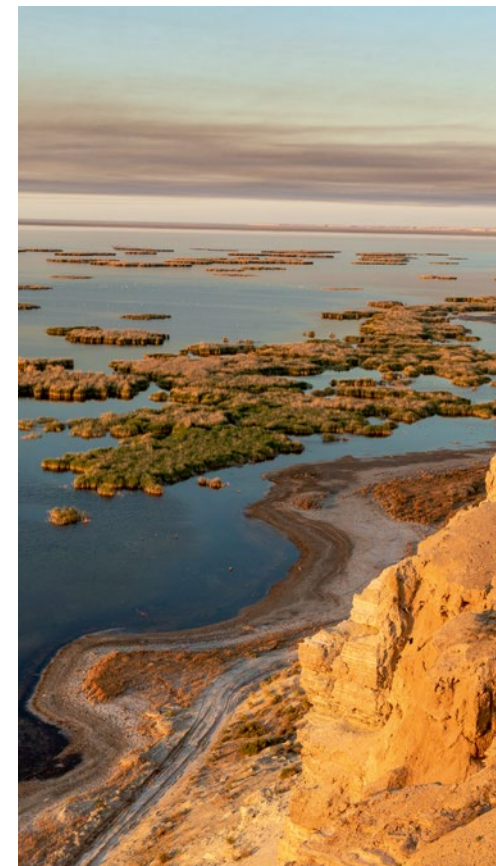
Join us on a journey through Karakalpakstan and discover a land where nature, history, and culture come together in one unforgettable adventure.

Text by Aziza Janabergen qizi
Photos by Feruz Rustamov

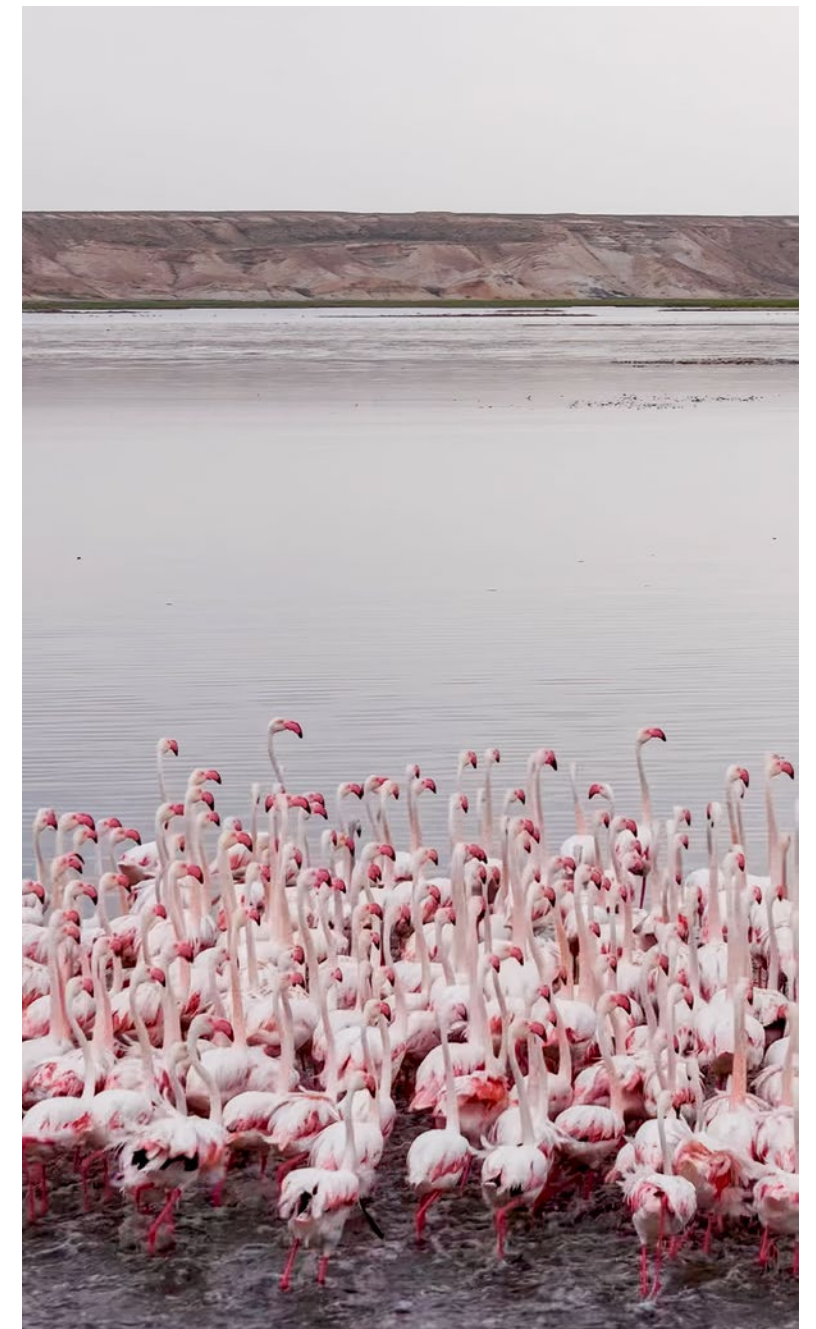
Nature

Few people expect to encounter thousands of pink flamingos amid the arid landscapes of Central Asia. Yet this is exactly the kind of surprise Karakalpakstan has in store for its visitors.

In the lower reaches of the Amu Darya, surrounded by vast steppes and desert plains, lies the Sudochoye lake system—a remarkable wetland oasis that serves as a sanctuary for hundreds of species of migratory birds. Every spring, the landscape comes alive as the lakes fill with activity and the sky becomes a breathtaking spectacle of soaring flocks. The stars of this natural performance are the pink flamingos, whose graceful silhouettes are reflected in the mirror-like waters, painting the landscape in delicate shades of pink.



Living Heritage



Flamingos are a rare species listed in the Red Data Book of the Republic of Uzbekistan. During their spring migration, the Sudochoye lake system becomes one of the most important stopover sites along their route. They are joined by Dalmatian pelicans, Asian houbara, white-headed ducks, and many other rare bird species, making this corner of the Aral Sea region one of the area's most valuable natural treasures.

The best time to visit is in April and May, when nature is at its most vibrant and birdwatching becomes an unforgettable experience.

Otherworldly Landscapes

Barsakelmes: The Point of No Return

Imagine that you've arrived on Mars. A vast expanse of white salt stretches to the horizon, the sun reflects so brilliantly on its surface that it is impossible to look away, and all around you there is nothing but endless space and profound silence. It feels as though the Earth has come to an end.

One of the region's most extraordinary natural attractions is the Barsakelmes salt flat. Its name translates as "If you go, you will not return," and for centuries local people have regarded this place as mysterious and dangerous. Millions of years ago, the waters of the ancient Tethys Ocean covered this land. Later, Barsakelmes became an island in the Aral Sea, and after the sea receded, it transformed into a vast salt plain covering nearly 2,000 square kilometers.

Today, the surface of the salt flat resembles a snow-covered plain. A thick crust of salt crunches beneath your feet, glittering like ice under the blazing sun. There is no familiar vegetation, no birdsong, and the endless horizon only adds to the surreal at-

mosphere. It is no surprise that Barsakelmes is often compared to the surface of another planet.

The Ustyurt Plateau: At the Edge of the Earth

If Barsakelmes feels like another planet, the Ustyurt Plateau resembles the edge of the world.

One of the largest plateaus in Central Asia, Ustyurt is tens of millions of years old. Its defining feature is its immense limestone escarpments, known locally as chinks. Rising to heights of up to 350 meters and stretching for hundreds of kilometers, these dramatic cliffs dominate the landscape. Standing on the edge of a chink, it feels as though an endless stone universe unfolds before you. The wind sweeps freely through the canyons, while the silence is so profound that the only sound is your own footsteps.

Despite its harsh and unforgiving landscape, the Ustyurt Plateau preserves remarkable traces of human history. Archaeologists have discovered prehistoric settlements, ancient necropolises, and the remains of caravan routes once connected to the Great Silk Road.

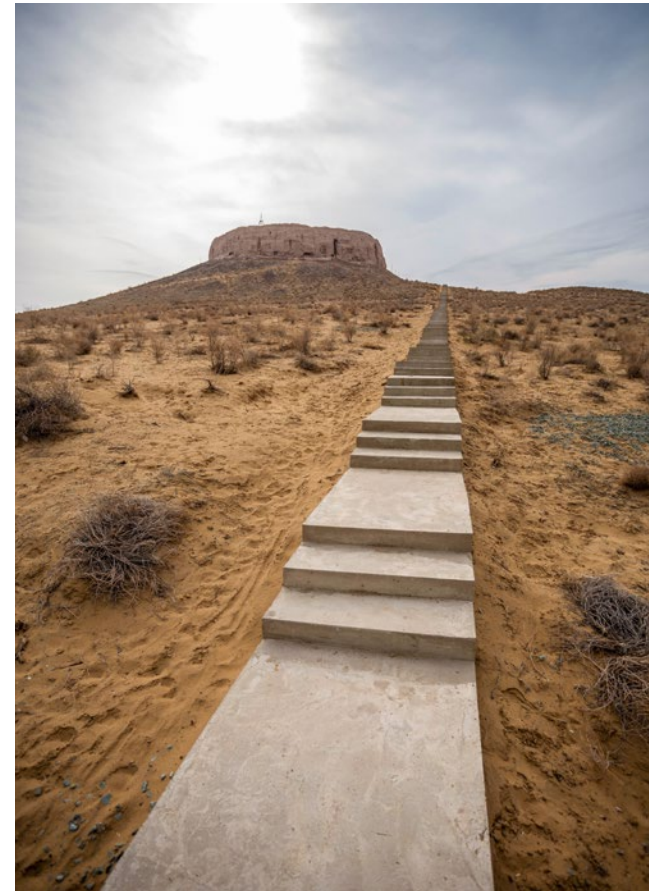
Some places leave you in awe of their beauty. Others remind you just how small we are in the face of nature's grandeur. The Ustyurt Plateau is one of them.

Mystical Places

Chilpyk: The Tower of Silence

Amid the vast open landscapes of Karakalpakstan, just 43 kilometers from Nukus, stands one of ancient Khorezm's most mysterious monuments. Perched atop a high hill, Chilpyk is a circular tower rising about 15 meters above the surrounding plain. Built at the turn of the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD, it has witnessed the rise and fall of civilizations, empires, and religions for more than two thousand years.

Chilpyk once served as a Zoroastrian dakhma, or "Tower of Silence." According to the traditions of one of the world's oldest religions, the deceased were not buried in the ground to avoid defiling the earth. Instead, their bodies were placed on top of the tower, where birds of prey would pick at them till only sun-bleached bones were left. These remains were then collected and placed in special clay vessels known



as ossuaries. This practice continued until the spread of Islam across Central Asia.

Some historians believe that Chilpyk later took on another important role, serving as a signal tower that warned the people of ancient Khorezm of approaching danger.

The Doomsday Clock

Just a forty-minute drive from Nukus lies another place steeped in legend—the ancient necropolis of Mizdakhan. Covering an area of around 200 hectares, it is one of the largest and oldest burial complexes in Central Asia. With a history spanning more than 2,400 years, this sacred site has long attracted pilgrims seeking blessings and spiritual peace.

Mizdakhan's most famous legend is connected to the so-called Doomsday Clock. According to local belief, a single brick falls each year from one of the ancient structures. When the final brick crumbles, the world will come to an end.

Living Heritage



For this reason, pilgrims carefully place the fallen bricks beside the wall and offer prayers in the hope of delaying the demise of the world.

Yet Mizdakhan is far more than a single legend. The complex is home to the Mausoleum of Mazlumkhan Sulu, the Mausoleum of Shamun Nabi, the ancient settlement of Gyaur-Kala, the mausoleums of Khalfa Yerezhep and Mademin Khan, the remains of a caravanserai, and many other monuments that tell the story of ancient Khorezm.

Among its ancient mausoleums, weathered ruins, and the silence of the steppe, the connection between past and present feels profound. That is why Mizdakhan is one of the most mysterious and intriguing places not only in Karakalpakstan, but in all of Central Asia.



The Ship Cemetery at Muynak

Some places preserve history within the walls of museums. Others preserve it beneath the open sky. The famous ship graveyard in Muynak is one such place. Once one of the Aral Sea's largest fishing ports, the town is now defined by dozens of rusting vessels left stranded in the sands.

Each ship is a reminder of a time when the waters of the Aral Sea reached the shoreline. Today, the sea has retreated by dozens of kilometers, leaving behind the Aralkum Desert where the seabed once lay. Against this vast expanse of sand, the silhouettes of the abandoned ships appear almost ghostly, creating one of Central Asia's most striking and emotionally powerful landscapes.

Next to the ship cemetery is the Muynak Regional Studies Museum, also known as the Ecological Museum of Muynak, where visitors can gain a deeper understanding of the region's past. Its collection includes archival photographs, historical documents, fishing equipment, model ships, and everyday household items that tell of a time when Muynak was one of Central Asia's leading fishing ports. The museum offers a glimpse of what the Aral Sea looked like only a few decades ago while also exploring the lives of local communities, the development of the fishing industry, and the causes of one of the 20th century's greatest environmental disasters.

After walking among the abandoned ships, the museum takes on an entirely new meaning. It transforms what might otherwise seem like a dramatic photographic backdrop into a deeply human story of the people whose lives were inseparably connected to the sea. That is why a visit to Muynak is not only a journey to one of Karakalpakstan's most iconic landmarks, but also an opportunity to reflect on the value of nature and humanity's responsibility to protect it.

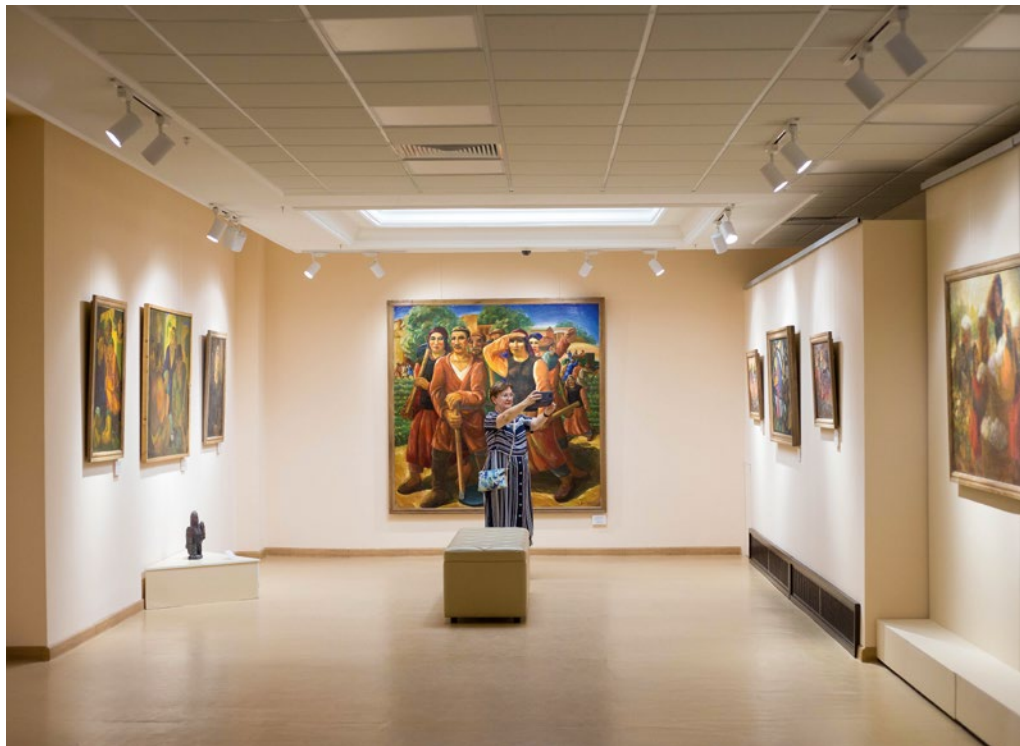
The Louvre of the Desert

Can you imagine a world-class museum in the middle of the desert? Karakalpakstan proves that it's possible. In the heart of Nukus stands the Savitsky Art Museum, a place that art historians and international media have long referred to as the "Louvre of the Desert."

The museum is home to more than 100,000 exhibits, with its greatest distinction being the world's second-largest collection of Russian avant-garde art, surpassed only by the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg. It houses works by artists who were banned during the Soviet era and whose creations were once destined to disappear forever. Thanks to Igor Savitsky, these masterpieces were rescued and found a new home in Nukus.

The museum's own history reads like an adventure novel. Artist, archaeologist, and collector Igor Savitsky first came to Karakalpakstan as part of an archaeological expedition. Captivated by the region, he devoted more than 30 years of his life to it. At great personal risk, he acquired works by avant-garde artists whom the Soviet authorities had deemed "undesirable." Ironically, the remoteness of Nukus helped preserve this extraordinary collection, which is now recognized as one of the most important in the world.

One of the museum's iconic masterpieces is *The Bull* by Vladimir Lysenko. It is among the collection's most recognizable paintings and one of the few surviving works by the artist, much of whose artistic legacy has been lost.



Karakalpakstan on the World Stage

Karakalpakstan today is far more than a land of ancient fortresses, vast deserts, and enduring legends. The region is increasingly establishing itself as an international platform for cultural, sporting, and social initiatives that bring together people from around the world.

ARAL CULTURE SUMMIT: Culture Shaping the Future

One of the region's most significant events is the Aral Culture Summit, an international forum that brings together art, architecture, ecology, science, and education, introducing the world to a new narrative for the Aral Sea region.

At the heart of the summit is a desire to transform the way people perceive the Aral region. Rather than focusing solely on the environmental catastrophe, its organizers present Karakalpakstan as a place of fresh ideas, rich cultural heritage, creativity, and sustainable development.

The program features contemporary art exhibitions, architectural and design projects, public lectures, panel discussions, educational initiatives, and meetings with leading artists, architects, environmentalists, researchers, and public figures from across the globe.

ARAL ULTRA: A Race That Leaves More Than Footprints

Another landmark event is ARAL ULTRA, the newest addition to the international charity Samarkand Marathon series, which features Uzbekistan's most inspiring sporting events.

The race will be held on 3–4 October 2026 across the Ustyurt Plateau, finishing at the current shoreline of the Western Aral Sea. Participants can choose from 100 km, 50 km, 25 km, and 15 km trail-running distances.

What makes ARAL ULTRA unique is its ever-changing finish line. Each year, it will shift to follow the changing shoreline of the Aral Sea, serving as a powerful symbol of nature's fragility and a reminder of the importance of protecting the environment.

Please note: Event dates are subject to change. Before planning your trip, we recommend checking the organizers' official websites for the latest information.

Travel Essentials

Best Time to Visit. Karakalpakstan is a fascinating destination year-round, but the most comfortable seasons for travel are April to May and September to October. In spring, the region comes alive, making it a paradise for nature lovers, while autumn offers mild temperatures ideal for exploring. During the summer, temperatures often exceed 40°C (104°F), and in winter, strong desert winds can make travel challenging.

Getting There. The main gateway to Karakalpakstan is the city of Nukus. It can be reached by direct domestic flights from Tashkent or by train connecting the capital with Nukus. The city also serves as the starting point for most expeditions to the Aral Sea, the Ustyurt Plateau, the ancient fortresses of Khorezm, and many of the region's other remarkable attractions.

Heart of a Civilization



Living Heritage

The Islamic Civilization Center opens its doors in Tashkent.

Text by Kamila Serova

Photos by Khamdam Sharakhmedov

For centuries, the land of Uzbekistan produced minds that shaped the world: mathematicians who gave us algebra; astronomers who mapped the stars; physicians whose discoveries guided medicine for hundreds of years; philosophers, poets, theologians – thinkers whose ideas traveled along the Silk Road to reach every corner of the known world. Yet for much of recent history, this extraordinary legacy remained scattered in foreign museum vaults, private European collections, and auction houses in London or New York. That era of dispersal is coming to an end.

In the heart of Tashkent, in the ancient quarter of Hazrati Imam, where the city's spiritual legacy runs deepest, the Islamic Civilization Center in Uzbekistan has opened its doors. It is, by any measure, one of the most ambitious cultural projects in Central Asia's modern history.

A Vision Rooted in Identity

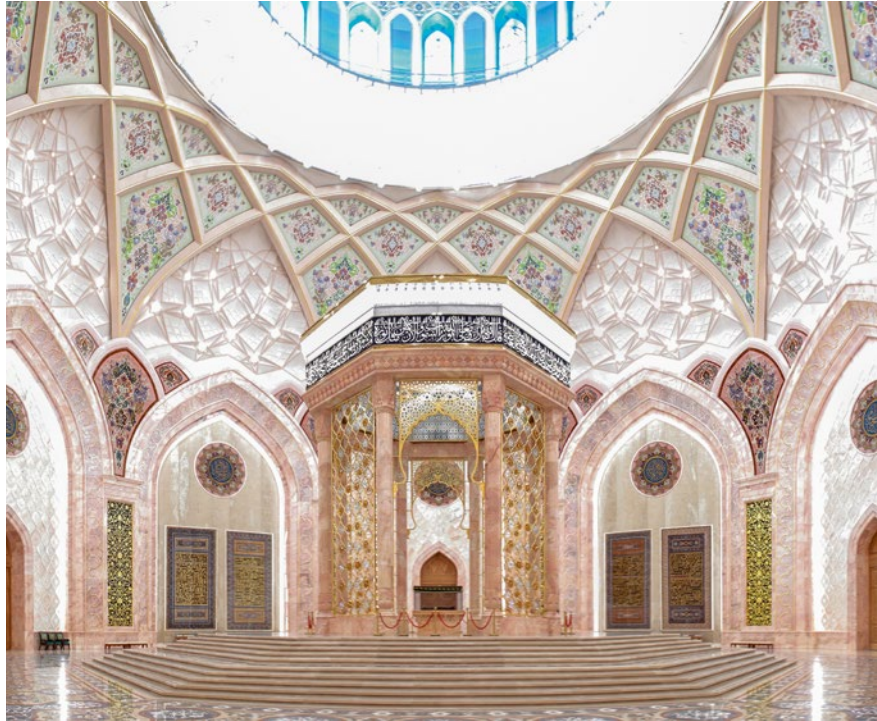
The story began in 2017, when President Shavkat Mirziyoyev addressed the United Nations General Assembly and spoke of Islam's humanist essence – its centuries-long role as a beacon of knowledge, tolerance, and progress. That same conviction gave birth to the Center, not merely as a building, but as a statement.

"Through this platform, we want to establish our nation's contribution to science, enlightenment, and culture," the President declared. Construction followed. Scholars, architects, and islamologists from across the world shaped its concept.

Its location is deeply symbolic. The building rises at a point where two worlds converge: on one side lies the Hazrati Imam ensemble, Tashkent's ancient spiritual heart, home to sacred manuscripts and the mausoleum of Abu Bakr Kaffal Shashi. On the other rises the skyline of the New Uzbekistan, modern and forward-looking. Past and future in conversation.

Architecture as Storytelling

Before a single exhibit is seen, the building itself speaks. Four monumental portals, each inspired by a different regional architectural tradition, welcome visitors from every direction. The eastern portal echoes the madrassas of Ulugbek's Registan; the western, the ornate brickwork of Bukhara; the northern, the woodcarving traditions of Khiva and Karakalpakstan; the southern, the vivid tilework of Kokand and Termez.



Every surface has meaning. Calligraphic inscriptions in Kufic and Suls scripts carry verses from the Quran, the hadith of the Prophet, and the 99 names of Allah, all thematically united around knowledge, mercy, justice, and spiritual growth. Geometric ornaments, muqarnas, glazed tiles in blue and gold – the visual language of Central Asia's greatest artistic era rendered with contemporary flair.

At the center of it all rises a dome 65 meters high – the crown of the Hall of the Quran, where the building's most extraordinary treasure resides.

The Uthman Quran

Few artifacts in the world carry the weight of the Mushaf Uthmani, one of the earliest extant copies of the Quran, written on gazelle skin and inscribed in UNESCO's Memory of the World register. It was first brought to Central Asia by Amir Timur after the conquest of Damascus in 1401 and has been in Tashkent since 1924. Now, for the first time, it is displayed in a space worthy of its significance, in an octagonal hall 45 meters in diameter, beneath the



soaring dome, on a lectern reminiscent of the marble stand where it once lay in Samarkand's Bibi-Khanym Mosque.

Surrounding it, 114 facsimile manuscripts – one for each surah of the Quran – trace the history of Islamic calligraphy across centuries of Uzbek history: Samanid, Timurid, and later periods, each representing a distinct school of writing and artistic refinement. Eight monumental silk carpets carry Quranic verses rendered in Kufic calligraphy. Multilingual audio guides, QR codes, and subtle lighting complete an experience that is both scholarly and deeply moving.

Four Galleries, One Journey

The museum's four thematic galleries take visitors on a journey spanning more than 10,000 years, from the pre-Islamic civilizations of Central Asia to the New Uzbekistan of today.

The first gallery represents the ancient world: the kingdoms of Khorezm, Bactria, Sogdia, and Fergana; the emergence of writing, metallurgy, and urban life; the Silk Road as a civilizational highway. A five-meter-high digital corridor – the Wall of Civilizations and Discoveries – brings these millennia to life through interactive panels and relief panoramas.

The second gallery chronicles the First Renaissance: the intellectual flowering of the eighth through 12th centuries, when Mavarannahr became one of the great centers of Islamic learning. Here are the works of Al-Khorezmi, whose algorithms still underpin modern computing; Ibn Sina, whose medical encyclopedias shaped European medicine for centuries; and Al-Beruni, whose scientific range remains astonishing. The gallery recreates the atmosphere of a medieval madrasa, where knowledge was seen as a path to the divine.

The third gallery portrays the Timurid Second Renaissance: Samarkand as the intellectual capital of the Muslim world, Ulugbek's observatory reconstructed through augmented reality, star tables and scientific instruments brought back to life. Artificial intelligence, 3D graphics, and holographic projections allow visitors



not simply to observe history, but to inhabit it.

Finally, the New Uzbekistan gallery speaks of the present and the future: the reforms of recent years, the rights and dignity of citizens, the country's emergence as a modern state. LED installations, VR experiences, and immersive digital architecture create a space of reflection and possibility.

Treasures Returned

Perhaps the most quietly extraordinary aspect of the Center is what lines its cases and walls: objects that were once lost.

Under a dedicated program initiated by President Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan has systematically recovered its cultural heritage from abroad by bidding at Christie's and Sotheby's auctions, through negotiations with private collectors, and via decades of patient diplomatic effort. The results are remarkable: pre-Islamic amulet collections once considered permanently lost, rare Sogdian textiles, Quranic fragments from the ninth through 15th centuries, original manuscripts of Ibn Sina and Al-Beruni's works, the world's largest

collection of Central Asian numismatics, and ancient maps outlining the territory of present-day Uzbekistan in different historical periods.

Each artifact is accompanied by a digital screen telling the story of its provenance – where it was, how it was found, and what its homecoming means.

A Living Institution

The Center is far more than a museum. Within its walls are one of Central Asia's largest libraries, with capacity for 200,000 manuscripts; restoration laboratories for ancient texts; a children's innovation zone; a school of calligraphy; a 550-seat international congress hall; television and film studios; an academic publishing house; and offices for international organizations specializing in science, culture, and education.

For young visitors, the Children's Museum – developed in partnership with the 1001 Inventions Foundation – transforms the legacies of Al-Khorezmi, Ibn Sina, Ulugbek, and Alisher Navoi into interactive games, puzzles, and immersive experiences designed for ages four through 16.

For scholars worldwide, the Center's digital archive – featuring high-resolution manuscript scans, multilingual resources, and a growing international research network – makes Uzbekistan's heritage accessible from anywhere.

"Through art, you can feel a country – its people, its soul, its inner world," goes a saying that resonates throughout this building. The Islamic Civilization Center is precisely that: an invitation to understand Uzbekistan not only through its famous domes and bazaars, but through the extraordinary depth of what was thought, written, and discovered here over 15 centuries.

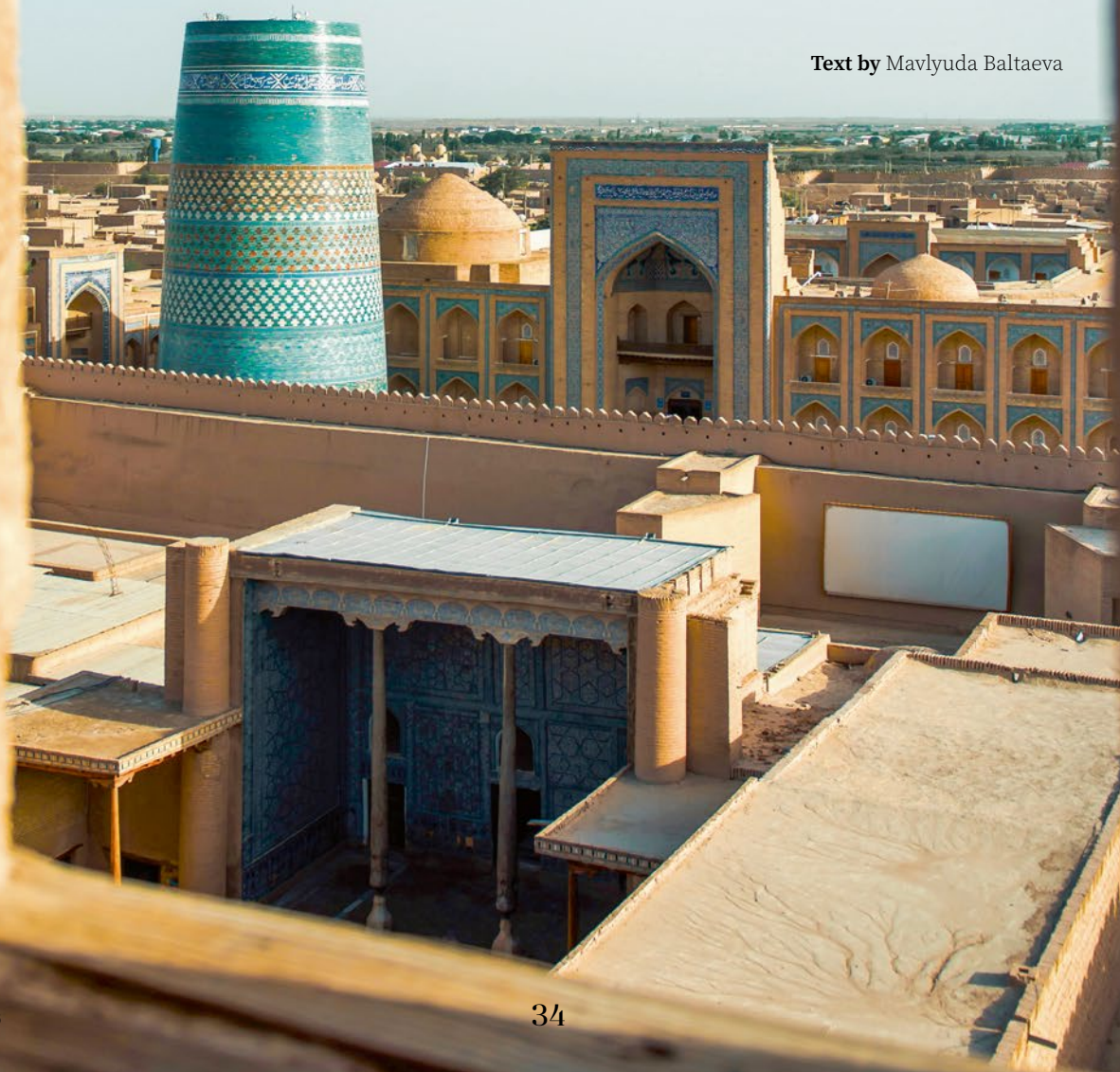
Come not only to see; come to understand. Come to feel the weight and wonder of a civilization that helped shape the world and is, quietly and confidently, reclaiming its place within it.

The Islamic Civilization Center is located in the Hazrati Imam quarter of central Tashkent. The Center is open daily from 9:00 to 18:00. Guided tours, digital experiences, and children's programs are available. Check Instagram for more information on events: @cicu_uz.

Finding Khiva's Heart

*The Only Intact Medieval City
in Central Asia*

Text by Mavlyuda Baltaeva



A City Built on Legend

Khiva—more precisely, its historic heart, the Ichan-Qala—is a monument to architecture and history unlike any other in Uzbekistan or, indeed, across the East. It is the only city in the country that has survived completely intact as a medieval ensemble, still surrounded by its formidable fortress walls. When you approach those walls, time itself seems to slow, and the modern world feels suddenly, blessedly distant.

The history of Khiva reaches back more than 2,500 years into deep antiquity. According to one legend, the city was founded around a well dug by Shem, the son of the biblical Noah. The water was extraordinarily sweet, and it was this very spot that became the magnet for the first settlement. From those modest beginnings, Khiva grew from a small oasis into one of the most important trading, cultural, and political centers of Khorezm.

Step through the gates of the Ichan-Qala's fortress walls and you are transported, quite literally, into a medieval world.

Narrow lanes, clay-built houses, majestic madrassas, and soaring minarets create the impression of a film set, except this city is neither a replica nor a reconstruction. It is entirely, extraordinarily real. For centuries, caravans on the Great Silk Road passed through these very streets, carrying silk, spices, porcelain, and ideas that connected East and West.

Inside the Fortress

Within the walls awaits a fairy-tale city of the ancient East. Here stand the palaces of Khiva's khans—simultaneously lavish and austere—alongside harems, reception halls where the fate of the state was decided, bustling trading rows, and dozens of minarets. Each has its own character, its own story.

One of Khiva's most recognizable symbols is the unfinished Kalta Minor minaret, striking in its proportions and brilliant tile-work. Legends and mysteries surround it, and visitors never fail to ask. Meanwhile, rising above the city is the tallest minaret in all of Uzbekistan—the Islam Khoja minaret, from whose summit unfolds a breathtaking panorama of the entire city.

But Khiva is far more than its famous landmarks. Hidden from the main tourist flow are countless "unremarkable" sites that reveal a different, quieter side of the city. The baths of Anush-Khan, for instance, are modest from the outside yet possess an astonishing history and unique architecture. It is precisely these places that allow you to feel the real, unstaged Khiva and understand how its people lived centuries ago.

How to Experience Khiva

Khiva can be experienced in many ways: a quick overview tour of one and a half to two hours for those with limited time; a more in-depth standard tour of five to six hours; or an entire day spent wandering unhurriedly through lanes, peering into courtyards, and listening to the legends, myths, and true stories that saturate every corner of the Ichan-Qala.



"I am sincerely in love with Khiva, and each time I try to share that love with my visitors. Perhaps the best proof that I succeed is when people return, this time bringing family and friends with them."

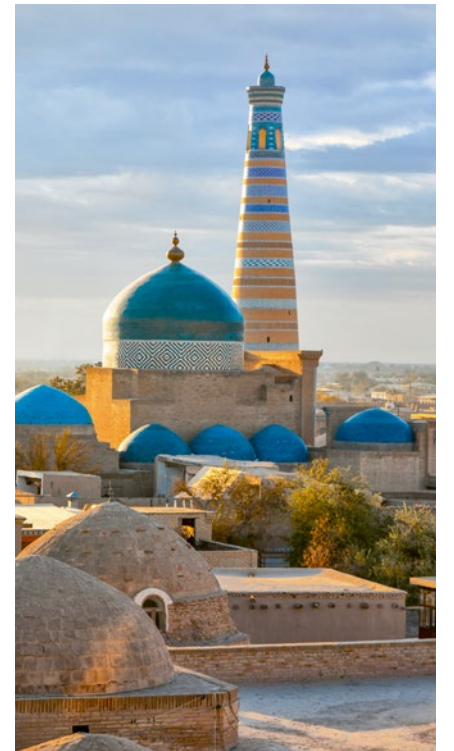
Nurullabay Palace: Where Two Worlds Meet

One place in Khiva deserves special attention: the Nurullabay Palace, one of the most unusual and most recent of the Khivan khans' residences. It was built in the second half of the 19th century on the orders of the great khan Feruz Khan for his beloved son and heir, the future

Isfandiyyar Khan. Unlike earlier palaces located within the Ichan-Qala, Nurullabay was constructed in a new era, when the Khanate of Khiva existed under the protectorate of imperial Russia. That historical circumstance made the palace truly unique.



The architecture of Nurullabay is a rare and harmonious union of East and West. Traditional Eastern forms, including the eyvan and various decorative elements, blend with European planning, stucco molding, tall windows and doors, and bright, airy halls. The palace reflects a



pivotal moment in Khiva's history: a time when ancient traditions coexisted with the influence of new European culture.

In the early 20th century, part of the palace was completed by Isfandiyyar Khan himself. It was then that Nurullabay acquired its truly luxurious appearance. The khan brought approximately four kilograms of gold leaf from Russia to adorn the palace interiors. Ceilings gleamed with rich decoration and, according to tradition, were inlaid with large diamonds. A particular symbol of ties with the Russian Empire came in the form of three crystal chandeliers—a personal gift from Emperor Nicholas II.

Today, the Nurullabay Palace astonishes not only with its beauty but with its history. It is a place where you can feel, especially vividly, the meeting of two worlds, two cultures, two eras, all leaving their mark on Khiva's fate.

Beyond Bukhara's Domes

A City That Reveals Itself Slowly

Living Heritage

Bukhara is not merely a collection of UNESCO-listed madrassas and minarets. It's a city that unfolds gradually in hidden courtyards, through morning light shining on clay walls and conversations with master craftsmen, and along quiet lanes where tourists seldom venture. As a guide who has explored every corner of Uzbekistan, I always say: Bukhara is a place you should feel rather than see. And spring is the perfect time to do so.

Text by Temur Khudayarov

Photos by Khamdam Sharakhmedov
and Feruz Rustamov

Spring in Bukhara: When the City Breathes

Spring transforms Bukhara into something magical. Especially with the arrival of Navruz, it becomes a place of blossoming trees, gentle sun, and unhurried strolls without summer's punishing heat. Light becomes diffused, ancient madrassas acquire a warm golden hue, and the air holds a peaceful stillness before the tourist season begins.

The best times for exploration are early morning and the pre-sunset golden hour. Between 7 and 8 am, the old city belongs to locals: shopkeepers unlock their doors, workers hurry past, courtyard gardens are watered. This is Bukhara without performance, raw and authentic.

Beyond the Postcards: Hidden Treasures

Most visitors limit themselves to the Lyabi-Hauz ensemble, the Kalyan minaret, and the Ark fortress. These are essential, certainly, but Bukhara runs far deeper. Here are some lesser-known places and routes that will reveal Bukhara's true character:

Living Heritage



Chor-Bakr

Fifteen minutes from the city center lies the Chor-Bakr necropolis. This is an entire "city" of mausoleums that developed over six centuries. The space is open, luminous, with a sense of air and scale. In spring it's particularly beautiful, as the greenery contrasts dramatically with sand-colored structures. It's a place for contemplation, without crowds or noise.

Sitorai Mokhi-Khosa

The palace of Bukhara's last emir blends Eastern traditions with European influences. Many tourists know of it but underestimate its charm. I recommend visiting not only for the architectural masterpiece, but for the garden's atmosphere. Peacocks roam freely across the grounds, trees blossom, and in the shade you can sense what the emir's daily rhythm must have been like, away from the urban bustle.

Old mahalla quarters around Bolo-Hauz Mosque

Step away from the central streets and you'll find yourself in mahallas (residential neighborhoods). The lanes behind Bolo-Hauz Mosque are particularly atmospheric, with clay walls, carved wooden doors, and old men playing nard (a board game similar to backgammon).



There are no souvenir shops here, only real life, infused with the essence of this magnificent city.

Spring Walking Routes

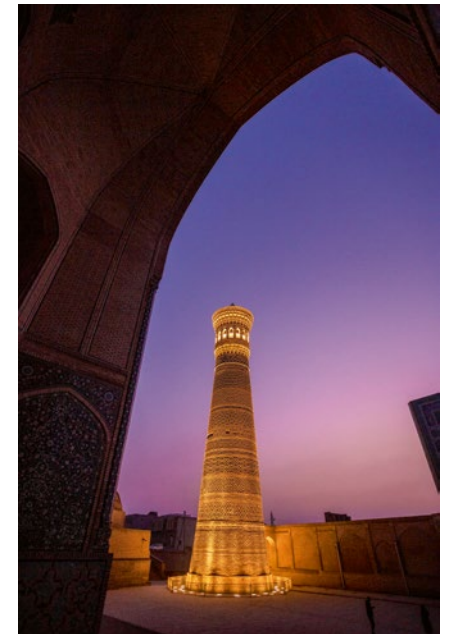
From Lyabi-Hauz to the Ark

Begin at Lyabi-Hauz pond in the early morning and slowly make your way toward the old city gates and the Ark fortress. Peer into courtyards along the way, as this route passes through lively streets.

In spring, you'll see locals setting out seedlings while children play in narrow alleys.

Evening by the Ark walls

Most tourists limit themselves to visiting the Ark on the inside. My advice is to linger until sundown and walk along its exterior walls. As the sun sets behind the clay fortifications, shadows lengthen, and the city is painted gold. This is one of Bukhara's most photogenic moments.



A Local Guide's Suggestions

Look up and down.

In Bukhara, details matter more than scale. Ceilings of ayvans (porticos), carved doors, antique locks, ceramic inlays on façades—many walk past without noticing these beautiful particulars.

Don't over-plan.

Bukhara is compact, so you can leave room for spontaneity: step into a metalworker's workshop, share tea with a spice merchant, converse with residents. These moments create genuine impressions.

Lunch where locals eat.

Away from central tourist cafés, you'll find small family-run chaikhanas. Spring brings exceptional greens, fresh herbs, and samsa with pumpkin or spinach. Don't be deterred by simple interiors; often the cuisine is most delicious there.

Respect the city's rhythm.

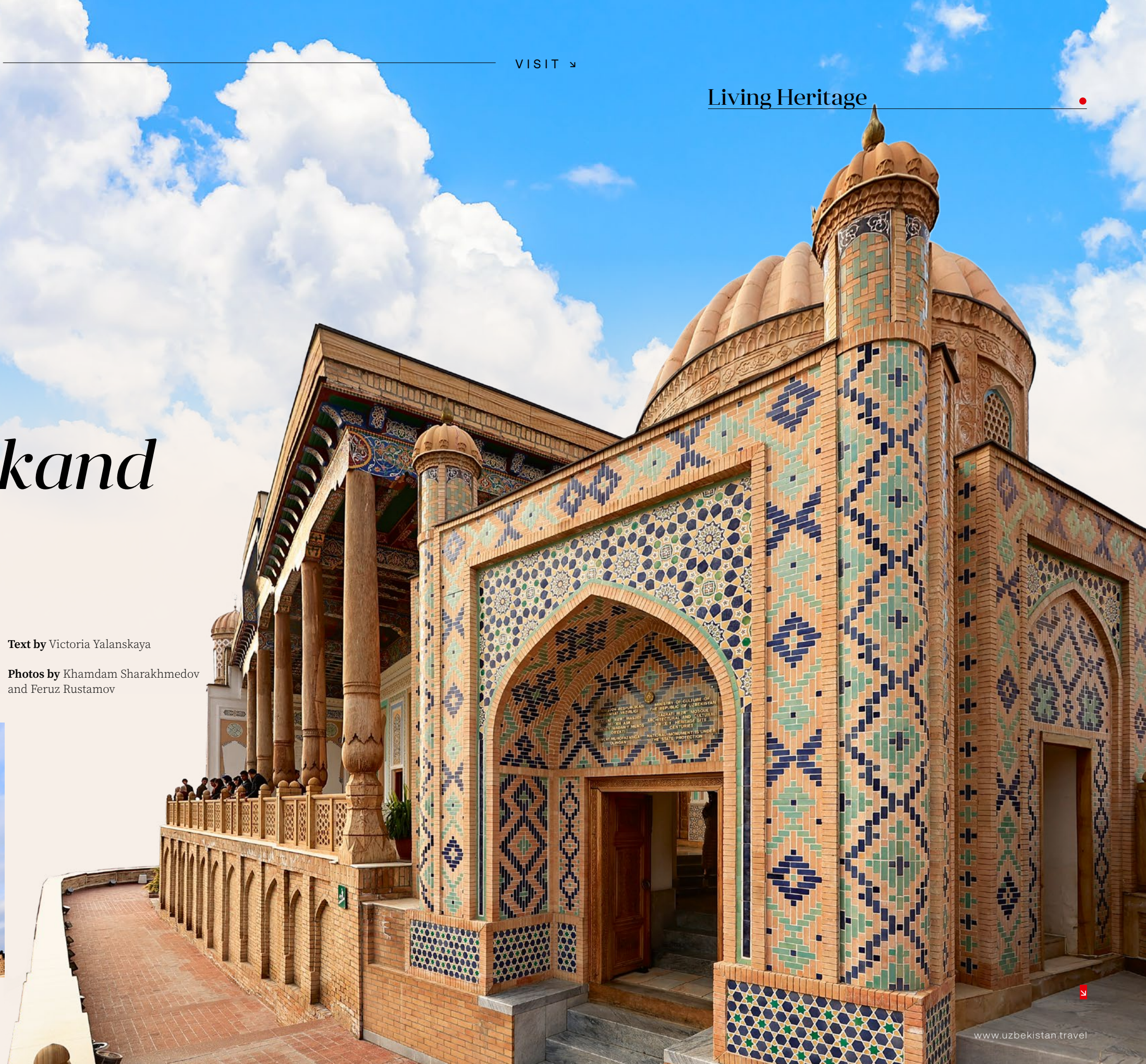
Bukhara is a traditional city. Move slowly. Sit. Observe. The city rewards patience with secrets it won't share with those who are in a hurry.

24 hours in Samarkand

“Welcome to Samarkand!” This phrase can be heard everywhere in the modern yet historic city. It has been visited for nearly three millennia, attracting millions of merchants along the Silk Road, as well as travelers, scholars, ambassadors, and religious leaders. And, of course, many rulers dreamt of including Samarkand in their empires.

Text by Victoria Yalanskaya

Photos by Khamdam Sharakhmedov
and Feruz Rustamov



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believed to house the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad's cousin, Qutham ibn Abbas. It is a place of pilgrimage for locals. The mausoleums line both sides of a long alleyway, perfect for wandering and absorbing the atmosphere. Many of the tombs were created between the 11th and 20th centuries by skilled craftsmen. Taking a guided tour is the best way to learn the details, such as the origin of mosaic patterns and interpretations of the philosophical sayings on the portal doors.

Next, I suggest a walk to see the **Hazrat Khizr Mosque**, which stands lonely but proud on a hill. It marked one of the four gates of the city of Samarkand before the conquest of Chingiz Khan. Stop for lunch at nearby **Afrosiyab Chaikhona**, where you can have meat or vegetable kebabs as well as bread with spices.

Further on, you will see the portal and the domes of **Bibi-Khanym**, once the biggest mosque in Asia. Built from the 15th to 17th centuries, it had a capacity for 15,000 worshippers. Here, you will hear the story of the mosque's construction and the legend of Amir Temur's beautiful and charismatic wife.

Next, stroll down **Tashkent Street** (now Islam Karimov Street), one of the best places to check out Samarkand's impressive lineup of fashion designers and souvenir

Our tour starts at the **Ulugh Beg Observatory**, where the sun's rays glint off the majestic mosaics, perfect for photography. It was here that the great descendant of Amir Temur and his astronomer colleagues observed the movement of the stars. In the 15th century, they discovered the coordinates of 1018 stars and 683 cities using a giant sextant, the 11-metre-high remains of which you can still see. Take a walk around the museum and listen to the story of the great discoveries made by early Uzbek scientists.

Next, head to the **Shah-i-Zinda Mausoleum**, an alley of mosaic-covered shrines



shops. At the far end of the street is the majestic c, a 15th-century market square now home to three stunning madrassas: Ulugh Beg, Tilya-Kori, and Sher-Dor. It's best to go in the afternoon or early evening to watch the sunset. You may see locals taking wedding pictures or spending time with their families. Here you can also visit a shop where they'll tell you about ceramics and a workshop that introduces mosaic-making.

The Mausoleum of Amir Temur is the next stop on the itinerary. This glittering, 15th-century tomb is full of stunning mosaics and stories about the conquests and reign of the great ruler.

Samarkand deserves special attention at night, when every building is illuminated and everything looks different. To experience the Samarkand of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, take a walk in the colonial part of the city, which was built in the period of the Turkestan General Governorship.

Hungry?

A good lunch stop is the caravanserai on Islam Karimov Street—a small oasis of good coffee and delicious baklava. For dinner, try Platan, Oasis Garden, or Man-ressa.





*From Gifted Child
to Celebrated Theologian:*

The Journey of Imam al-Bukhari

Imam al-Bukhari (Muhammad bin Ismail bin Ibrahim bin al-Mughira al-Bukhari al-Ju'fi) was born in Bukhara in 810 CE. From an early age, he demonstrated a talent for religious studies; by the time he was six, he had memorized many surahs from the Quran. At the age of 16, he undertook the pilgrimage to Mecca, accompanied by his mother and brother. He remained in Mecca for the next four years, studying the hadith under the tutelage of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal.

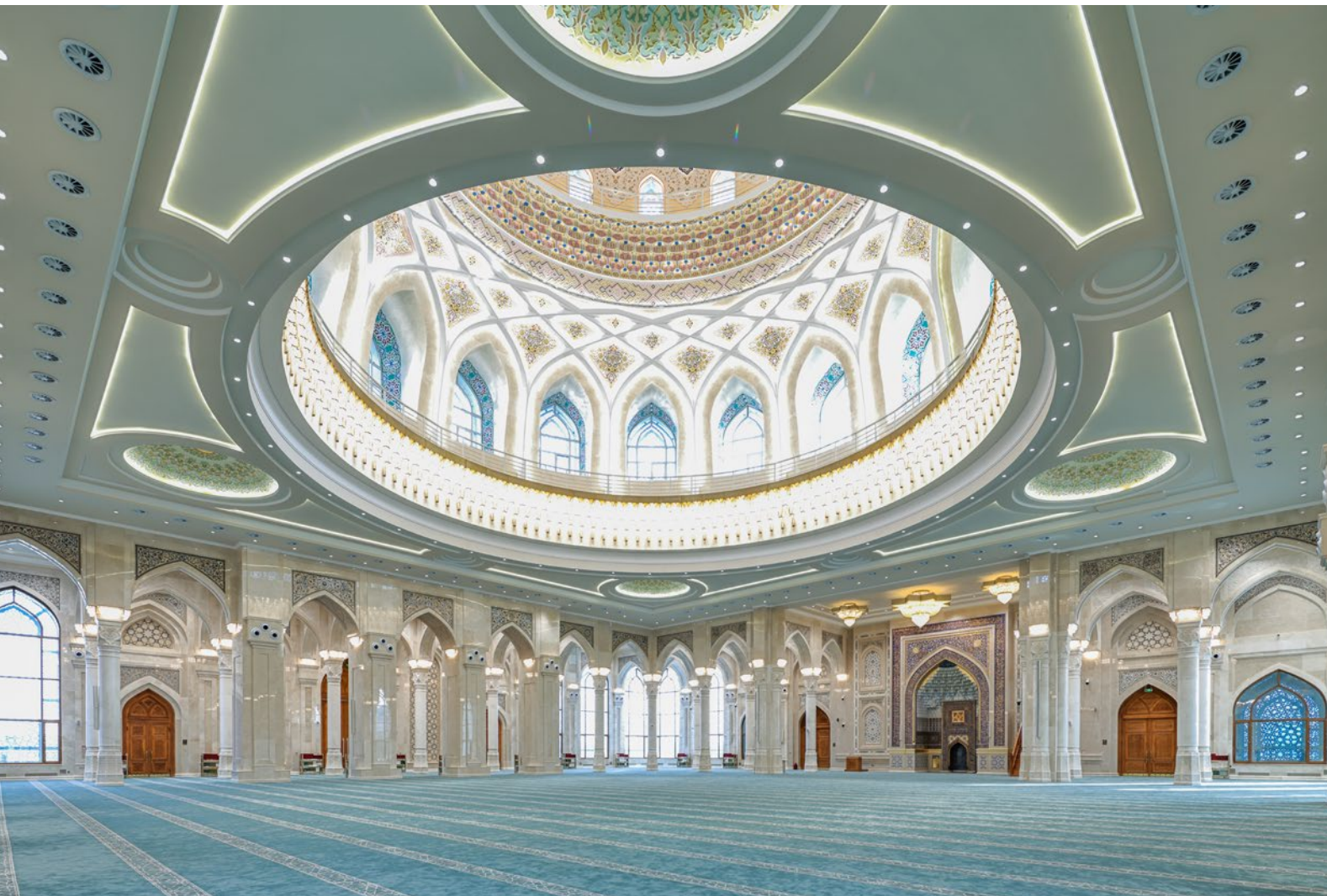
Text by Dmitriy Kostyushkin
Photos by Khamdam Sharakhmedov

Al-Bukhari's education continued in the most renowned centers of Islamic scholarship of the time: in Baghdad he met eight times with Ahmad ibn Hanbal, the greatest hadith scholar of the day, and he was taught by Abu Mushira in Damascus. He also studied in Nisapur with Yahya ibn Munhari, a renowned hafiz (a scholar who has memorized the Quran). According to al-Bukhari's own testimony, 1,800 teachers imparted their knowledge to him.

Al-Bukhari left behind a vast body of work, much of which was widely disseminated. His most important work was Al-Jami' al-Sahih, a collection of hadith that he painstakingly compiled and verified himself.

He traveled extensively throughout the Middle East to collect hadith and met with hundreds of hadith scholars. He was reportedly prompted to research, select, and write down the hadith by a dream in which he saw himself standing before the Prophet Muhammad, holding up a large fan to protect him. He interpreted this dream as a sign that he must defend the Prophet from lies and inaccuracies.

While working on the Sahih, al-Bukhari verified nearly 600,000 hadiths in common use at the time. He analyzed this vast body of material and selected 7,250 of them. He approached the task with responsibility and care, adhering to the strictest standards of analysis.



Work on the Sahih continued for 16 years, and the author developed several methods along the way, especially isnad, the tracing back in time of the chain of transmitters of a given hadith, from the last transmitter to the original one. He thus focused on identifying the individuals who were the primary sources. He considered only those hadith authentic whose sources were people who had directly witnessed the Prophet's actions or heard his sayings in person. The Sahih also made history in Islamic scholarship as the first to use the principle of musannaf in its compilation, namely, classification by subject.

The Sahih elevated its author to the highest rank of scholars and became a landmark publication for the entire Islamic religion. It immediately became Islam's most important text after the Quran. And many years later, this work retains its high scholarly and spiritual value. Its full title, literally translated, means "A collection of authentic hadiths with a connected chain on matters related to the Messenger of Allah, his methods, and his time."

Al-Bukhari was exiled from Bukhara in the last years of his life for refusing to teach the children of Khalid az-Zuhali, the Emir of Bukhara. He moved to Khartang, near Samarkand, and died there in 870 after the evening prayer on the night of Eid al-Fitr.

The Mausoleum of Imam al-Bukhari: A Spiritual Center Near Samarkand

The mausoleum of the great hadith scholar Imam al-Bukhari, located near Samarkand, is today one of the most important spiritual and pilgrimage destinations in Uzbekistan and the wider Muslim world. Following a large-scale reconstruction completed in recent years, the complex has been transformed into a modern space that brings together faith, scholarship, and culture.

At the heart of the ensemble stands the mausoleum itself, built over the burial site of Imam al-Bukhari. It is surrounded by a harmonious architectural complex where the traditions of Islamic design blend with contemporary elements. Spanning approximately 45 hectares, the expansive grounds create an atmosphere of tranquility, inviting reflection and prayer.

A key feature of the reconstructed complex is the grand mosque, distinguished by its 14 domes and four minarets rising up to 75 meters. Designed to accommodate up to 10,000 worshippers, it serves not only as a place for communal prayer but also as a platform for spiritual engagement and education.

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The Imam al-Bukhari Museum, composed of nine pavilions, holds particular significance. Its exhibitions offer in-depth insight into his life, scholarly legacy, and contributions to hadith studies. Visitors can also explore exhibits dedicated to Prophet Muhammad, other prophets mentioned in the Qur'an, and the process of collecting and compiling hadiths, making the museum an important educational center.

The complex also features a well-developed infrastructure for pilgrims and visitors, including hotels, guest-houses, landscaped areas, and visitor services.

Today, the complex serves not only as a memorial site, but also as a center for education and spiritual enrichment. It is envisioned as a space where enduring values meet contemporary learning, fostering a deeper appreciation of the intellectual and spiritual legacy of one of the most revered scholars in Islamic history.

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Lying in the vast Fergana Valley, between the great Tien Shan, Gissar, and Alay mountain ranges, is the richly historic city of Kokand. Centuries-old Uzbek customs are woven into the fabric of this city, where there is a story on almost every street corner.

Text by Thomas Hunt

Photos by Arina Pan

Uncovering Kokand

Bright hues color the walls of its old mosques and madrassas, punctuating otherwise austere streets. They are delicately patterned with small mosaic tiles in beautiful shades of blue. Kokand has 300 mosques, and its streets come alive with groups of men when the imam sings the adhan (call for prayer) over a booming speaker. They rush out of their houses and offices, some in casualwear and some in smarter clothing, and into the mosques to pray, then pour out again when worship has finished.

There is no doubt that Kokand has a simpler feel to it, in contrast with the urban mayhem of Andijan to its east. But that doesn't mean there is nothing to see. In fact, hidden along Kokand's back streets and quiet corners are a variety of sights. Among them is the impressive Jami Mosque, a three-sided, wood-ceilinged masterpiece with a wide-girthed prayer tower in the middle. Equally cool is the Madari Khan Mausoleum, a spectacularly decorated tomb built to commemorate the late Khan of Kokand, Muhammad Umar Khan. But the main attraction is un-

doubtedly the imposing Khudoyar Khan Palace, which stands proudly in the city's main park fronted by beds of gorgeous flowers. It looks even grander if viewed from the long-drawn bridge that connects the small amphitheater just outside to the palace's giant front doors.

Another building of note is the Museum of Great Scholars, which opened to the public in 2017, and overlooks a wide, open square below it. The museum chronicles the famous thinkers of Uzbekistan, from writers and poets to philosophers and architects, and contains manuscripts and large paintings of many historical figures. It is split into five sections focusing on the science and culture of Central Asia and the personalities of the Timurid era (15th century), when Uzbekistan flourished with artistic and intellectual life. The museum reflects the pride that the city's residents have for the heroes of Uzbekistan's past and showcases the depth of talent it has produced over the centuries.

Kokand's weather is similar to most of the rest of the country—a predominantly continental climate alternating between

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If you would like to try a local specialty, the flatbread from the region, called Kokand patyr non, is a good choice. These huge flatbreads, with a crumbly middle and chunky crust, are sold on almost every street corner and in the city's markets. They completely outsize the smaller, more familiar-looking Uzbek breads that are sold elsewhere in the country.

Another gastronomical specialty from the region is Kokand plov, a rice-and-meat dish with carrots, garlic, and hot pepper on top. The rice itself is a special local variety called devzira. It can be seen advertised on flimsy restaurant signs and is a staple dish for most locals, eaten with heaping spoonfuls of local pride.

It lived up to expectations, as did the hearty halva, a rich, oily confectionery. This delightful dessert comes in a variety of types including sunflower seed, nut, and peanut variations with additions of cocoa powder, chocolate, and vanilla. Halva has the appearance of Turkish delight and almost immediately melts in your mouth; it is commonly eaten with tea after a meal. There is even a festive halva, which is prepared for certain holidays and special occasions. For example, sugar syrup halva is bought for a wedding and put on a tray with the bride's dowry, along with other sweets.

If you want a dose of unique Uzbek culture, Kokand and its neighboring cities in the Fergana Valley make the perfect place to explore.



moderately cold winters and hot summers, and receiving only small amounts of rain all year round. I visited in October when the weather brought strong winds and cool, cloudy conditions with temperatures in the low to mid-teens (°C), a far cry from the scorching heat during the summer months. In fact, it reminded me much more of the UK's weather at that time of year.

As it was the start of autumn, yellow beech leaves were whipped by swirling gusts along the streets and through parks. On a stroll through town, I spotted busy men working away in streetside garages on clapped-out old cars, which people seemed determined to have patched up and continue to drive around.

This constant hustle was admirable: whether it be shopkeepers, garage staff or street vendors, everyone was busy at work, and I imagined most wanting to provide for their families. Flashpoints of activity were found in the markets, where big spreads of fruit, vegetables, bread, and pastries were guarded by women and men shouting out for people to buy their produce while punters hurriedly dashed about.



Five Villages Worth Exploring

For the traveler seeking authenticity, Uzbek villages offer a family atmosphere and interaction with open-hearted people. Here are the five iconic, breathtaking, and culturally vibrant mahallas and villages that deserve a spot on your bucket list.

Text by Umida Qodirova



Bogi Baland, Samarkand: The Garden of Legend

If you wish to walk through history, start at Bogi Baland. This is not just a neighborhood; it is the living legacy of Amir Temur. Out of the 12 legendary gardens built by the great conqueror, Bogi Baland is the only one that remains today.

Spanning 40 hectares, this sanctuary is home to over 10,000 white and black fig trees. Walking through these ancient groves feels like stepping back 600 years. The fruit here is grown without chemicals, offering a taste of nature in its purest form.

You can experience:

- **The taste of history:** Visit the local market to buy organic figs and handcrafted souvenirs made by neighborhood artisans.
- **Spiritual heritage:** Pay your respects at the mosque of Khoja Ishaki Vali, or explore the archaeological site of “Kizlar Teppa.”
- **The vibe:** Serene and profoundly quiet. With dedicated guest houses and clear signposts, this is the perfect place to disconnect from the digital world and reconnect with the earth.

Omonkhona, Surkhandarya: The Valley of Healing

Deep within the majestic mountains of Surkhandarya region lies Omonkhona, a village that feels touched by magic. Known for its pristine forests and mineral-rich springs, it is an ideal destination for those seeking rest and restoration.

The water here is legendary. Rich in magnesium and sulfates, it is used at the local sanatorium to treat everything from the heart to the nervous system. Nearby, you will find a “miracle cave,” a natural phenomenon where the temperature stays a cool 5°C in summer and a warm 25°C in winter.

You can experience:

- **Comfort:** With 21 traditional guest houses, you won’t be just a tourist; you will feel like a guest in a family home, sharing local food and stories. Taste the real “tandoor kebab.”
- **Spirit:** Pilgrims flock to sacred sites like Hazrati Sulton Vali Balagardon to find peace.
- **Active soul:** Listening to the mountain breeze.





Miraki, Kashkadarya: Where Clouds Touch the Peaks

At 1,000 meters above sea level, nestled at the base of the Gissar range, lies Miraki, just 30 km from Shakhrisabz. If your soul craves dramatic landscapes, this is the place to be.

Miraki is a feast for the senses. In spring, the fields are carpeted with wild tulips and irises. In summer, they turn to gold. The village offers proximity to the mighty Hazrat Sultan Mountain (4,083m) and the breathtaking Suvtushar waterfall. The stream of this waterfall originates from the glaciers of Mount Osmontalash and plunges down a vertical drop of 84 meters.

You can experience:

- **Scale and scope:** With over 120 guest houses and 19 hotels, Miraki is a masterclass in hospitality.
- **Adventure:** Take the cable car around the Hisorak reservoir for a view that will leave you breathless.
- **For everyone:** The Hisorak reservoir is near the Miraki mahalla. People can enjoy the picturesque views of the Kashkadarya region.



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Tersak, Samarkand: The Artisan's Sanctuary

Tersak is where the water sings. Tucked into the Kurgan mountains and watered by the crystal-clear streams of the Tersak waterfall, this village feels like a whispered secret. It is steeped in the legend of Kamar-Ota, a master artisan whose spirit is said to dwell in a nearby mountain cave. Craftsmen from across the region still visit this cave to seek blessings for their work.

You can experience:

- **Natural symphony:** Close your eyes, and you will hear the soft crunch of leaves and the constant, rhythmic lullaby of the mountain river.
- **Authentic living:** Stay in one of the 28 guest houses, ride horses along the mountain trails, and pluck fresh fruit straight from the trees.
- **Local wisdom:** Hire a professional guide to show you the hidden paths.



Nanay, Namangan: An Alpine Fairytale

Nestled in the foothills of the Chatkal range, Nanay is an alpine escape. With snow-capped peaks watching over the village almost year-round, the air here is crisp, clean, and endlessly refreshing.

Men here are masters of kupkari (a traditional equestrian sport), and their skill is a sight to behold. For those who want to see the world from above, the village offers ziplining over the mountain valleys.

You can experience:

- **Hospitality:** With over 150 guest houses and 20 dedicated “gastronomic houses,” your taste buds will embark on their own journey through Uzbek cuisine.
- **The vibe:** Lively, fun, and deeply rooted in tradition. Take a selfie in the designated zones, enjoy a horse ride, or simply breathe in the mountain air.

Uzbek Bazaars:

The Epicenter of Trade and the Heart of Everyday Life

A bazaar in Uzbekistan is a historically significant place for cultural immersion and social interaction. When visitors first arrive in the country, locals almost always take them to a bazaar as an introduction to Uzbek life. This may seem like a tradition, but its roots lie in history. Markets emerged at the crossroads of trade routes, just like Chorsu Bazaar—the largest in Uzbekistan. It has existed since the time of the Great Silk Road, and the city of Tashkent itself was built around it. Chorsu is the historical and geographical center of the old city. For this reason, Uzbek bazaars are far more than commercial spaces—they are part of the country’s cultural DNA.

Text by Malika Kamilova

Photos by Mukhiddin A Lee,
Feruz Rustamov, Khamdam Sharakhmedov



Atmosphere and Characteristics of Bazaars

Markets are typically open-air spaces divided into clearly defined sections that can feel overwhelming at first glance. Here, you will find fruits and vegetables, meat and dairy products, grains and spices, fabrics and carpets, clothing and shoes, dishes and souvenirs. And, of course, bread and samsa. In many cases, farmers and artisans sell their own goods directly, often with help from family members. This creates a warm, almost familial atmosphere throughout the market.



Walking between the stalls, you experience a rhythm that is different from the rest of the city. Vendors call out to invite you to taste their products, while customers negotiate prices—both sides smiling, joking, and eventually reaching a friendly agreement.

On weekends, the atmosphere becomes especially lively as people stock up for the week ahead. It is important to stay aware of your surroundings, especially when traveling in a group, as it is easy to get lost among the colors, sounds, and aromas.

On Sunday shopping trips, locals often run into neighbors, friends, or relatives. They may have seen each other just the day before, yet meeting at the bazaar feels like a joyful reunion. It is not unusual to see two men carrying large bags, laughing loudly as they talk.

The Culture of Buying

Bargaining is an essential part of bazaar culture. It is always acceptable to ask for a small discount, but it should be done in a friendly, playful manner rather than with pressure or dissatisfaction. Most vendors are willing to reduce prices by 5–10%.

Smalltalk is also an important part of the experience. Sellers may ask where you’re from, how to say “hello” or “thank you” in your language, and share brief personal stories. After that, the purchase is considered complete.



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It is important to note that cash is still the primary form of payment in most bazaars. While ATMs are available in some markets, it is best to prepare in advance.

What to Try at the Bazaar

Uzbek bazaars embody openness and hospitality. Before purchasing, you can always ask to taste a product; in many cases, vendors will offer samples themselves.

Fruits and dried fruits. Uzbekistan is famous for its exceptionally sweet and aromatic fruits: apples, peaches, persimmons, grapes, pomegranates, watermelons, and melons. Their availability depends on the season, but they are always abundant. You can easily ask for a slice to taste. The same applies to nuts and dried fruits—sellers often shell a walnut or almond right in front of you and offer it with a smile.

Sweets. Traditional Uzbek sweets served with tea are widely available in bazaars. These natural desserts are made from flour, fruit, nuts, and spices. Be sure to try halva, navat (crystallized sugar), pashmak, khashtak, and pishmaniye. In spring, sumalak can be found in most markets. It is served directly from large cauldrons, often with a spoonful offered for tasting.



Street food. The most iconic Uzbek street food is samsa. Traditionally, it consists of chopped meat and onions wrapped in layered pastry. Today, many variations exist, including potato, pumpkin, greens, chicken, and even cheese or mushrooms. Wherever there is samsa, there is also traditional bread: lochira, patyr, obi-non, katlama, and Samarkand-style loaves, each with its own distinctive flavor.

Of course, national cuisine should not be overlooked. Nearly every bazaar has milliy taomlar—eateries serving Uzbek dishes such as plov, naryn, mastava soup, and shashlik cooked over an open fire. At Chorsu Bazaar, there is even a famous “food row,” where ready-to-eat dishes are served at communal tables right inside the market.

What to Bring Home

It is almost impossible to leave Uzbekistan without gifts for loved ones, or for yourself. Here is a practical checklist of the best souvenirs.

Dried fruits, spices, and sweets. Their rich aromas and flavors are unforgettable.

Many bazaars sell pre-packaged gift sets. You can also buy loose-leaf Uzbek tea and nuts. Make sure everything is properly sealed and, if necessary, double-bagged to avoid spills or stains. These items are best transported in checked luggage to prevent strong aromas from affecting other passengers.

Ceramics. Traditional Uzbek ceramics bring a vibrant accent to modern minimalist kitchens. Each piece is hand-made and hand-painted, adding to its authenticity. You can choose from bowls, plates, lagans, and teapots. Besides making beautiful souvenirs, they are also functional. It is recommended to carry them in hand luggage, as they are fragile, and to wrap them in paper or clothing for extra protection.

Textiles. Like ceramics, Uzbek textiles are bold and expressive. They make excellent gifts for those who appreciate unique style statements. Look for embroidered scarves, silk atlas garments, and quilted adras chapan jackets. These pieces look like designer items, yet are lightweight and easy to pack.

Every country has its must-visit places, and Uzbekistan is no exception: historical landmarks, museums, ancient cities, modern exhibitions, and mountains. While all of these reveal the country’s spirit and culture, it is the bazaars that truly complete the experience. They remain the beating heart of Uzbekistan.





Traditional Crafts of Uzbekistan

The diversity of landscapes, the rich heritage of ancient cities, and the influence of the Great Silk Road have shaped the unique world of Uzbek craftsmanship. Each region has developed its own artistic schools, distinguished by their character, ornamentation, and techniques.

Text by Shakhlo Umargalieva
Photos by Khamdam Sharakhmedov



↑ Ceramics: The Colors of Earth and Sky

Ceramics are among the oldest and most recognizable crafts of Uzbekistan. For centuries, potters have created both functional and decorative pieces, combining practicality, beauty, and deep symbolic meaning in their designs.

Arts & Crafts

By the 19th century, major ceramic schools had formed across the country, each with its own distinct style. Today, the most renowned traditions come from the Fergana Valley, Bukhara, and Khorezm.

Rishtan: *The Blue Palette of Fergana*

The city of Rishtan is considered the leading center of ceramic art in Central Asia.

Its creations are instantly recognizable for their signature blue glaze and expressive ornamental compositions.

Decorative motifs include floral elements, geometric patterns, and symbolic representations of nature. The traditions of the Rishtan school continue today through renowned masters such as Rustam Usmanov, Ismail Kamilov, Firdaus Yusupov, and brothers Alisher and Bakhtiyor Nazirov.



Gijduvan: *Warm Colors and Family Traditions*

Located near Bukhara, Gijduvan is one of Uzbekistan's most famous ceramic centers. Its style is defined by vibrant colors, intricate compositions, and natural motifs. The leading dynasty of potters in Gijduvan are the Narzullaevs, who have preserved the craft for many generations.

Shakhrisabz: *The Identity of an Ancient School*

Ceramics from Shakhrisabz are known for their free compositions, rich colors, and use of ancient symbols. Typical pieces include decorative plates, lagans, and vessels adorned with zoomorphic patterns. Today, contemporary artisans continue to develop this tradition while preserving the region's distinctive style.



Weaving: The Magic of Pattern →

Uzbekistan is inseparable from its famous textiles—atlas and adras. These fabrics are not only part of traditional dress but also an important artistic heritage.

Margilan holds a special place as the silk capital of Uzbekistan. For centuries, it has been a center of textile production rooted in the traditions of the Great Silk Road. The hallmark of Margilan fabrics is the ikat technique, in which threads are hand-dyed according to a precise pattern before weaving. This process creates unique designs with soft, flowing color transitions. Each pattern contains natural motifs, symbols of fertility, and traditional concepts of beauty.





← **Suzani:**
The Language of Ornament
and Family Memory

One of the most recognizable forms of Uzbek decorative art are suzanis—embroidered panels that have adorned homes for centuries and marked important life events such as weddings and celebrations.

The word “suzani” comes from the Persian word for “needle.” Each piece is handmade and requires patience, skill, and artistic sensitivity. The pat-

terns reflect ideas of nature, harmony, and well-being. Flowers symbolize beauty and fertility, solar motifs represent life energy, and repeating patterns create a sense of protection.

Major centers of embroidery include Bukhara, Nurata, Samarkand, Shakhrisabz, Urgut, Jizzakh, Tashkent, and the Fergana Valley. Each school is distinguished by its composition, color palette, and ornamental style. Today, artisans continue this tradition by combining ancient techniques with contemporary design.



Carpet Weaving: Patterns of Memory →

Carpet weaving is one of Uzbekistan’s oldest crafts, combining history, symbolism, and artistic mastery. Carpets were not only functional items but also carriers of cultural meaning. Their patterns told stories about nature, protection, fertility, and the human worldview.

Major centers included Samarkand, Nurata, Kashkadarya, and Surkhandarya. Flat-woven carpets such as kilims and terma hold a special place among traditional textiles. Each ornament has meaning: geometric shapes symbolize order and harmony, while plant motifs represent life and abundance.



← **Wood Carving: Art in the Details**

Wood carving holds an important place in Uzbekistan’s architectural heritage. For centuries, artisans have decorated doors, columns, ceilings, and interior elements with intricate patterns. Key centers of this craft include Khiva, Bukhara, Samarkand, Tashkent, Kokand, and Shakhrisabz.

Local wood types such as plane, walnut, elm, juniper, and mulberry are used. Each piece is handcrafted, transforming wood into a work of art. Today, artisans continue to create decorative panels, furniture, boxes, and interior design objects while preserving traditional techniques.

Puppet Art: Small Figures, Great Stories ▾

Uzbek puppetry combines craftsmanship, theater, and traditional costumes. Its origins date back to ancient times, with significant development during the Timurid era. Puppets were made from wood, fabric, clay, and other natural materials. Special attention was given to clothing, jewelry, and headpieces, reflecting regional diversity.



Block Printing: The Ancient Art
of Textile Printing ▾

Block printing is a traditional technique of hand-printing fabric using carved wooden stamps. Using block stamps, artisans created patterns on cotton, adras, and silk using natural dyes. Major centers included Bukhara, Samarkand, and the Fergana Valley. Floral and geometric patterns were used to adorn clothing, household textiles, and decorative items.

The traditional handicrafts of Uzbekistan are more than just beautiful handmade objects. They are a cultural language through which people express their history, traditions, and sense of beauty. Ceramics, textiles, suzanis, carpets, wood carvings, and miniature paintings preserve the memory of generations while continuing to evolve through contemporary interpretations. For travelers, these crafts become a unique way to experience Uzbekistan through the hands of its masters, their stories, and the soulful works they create.



← **Wood Painting**
and Miniature Art:
The Art of Precision

Wood painting is one of the most refined forms of Uzbek decorative art. For centuries, artisans have adorned furniture, doors, boxes, trays, and other objects with intricate ornamentation.

Major centers include Khiva, Bukhara, Samarkand, Tashkent, and cities of the Fergana Valley. Uzbek ornamentation features two main styles: islimi (floral patterns with leaves and vines) and girih (geometric compositions).

Lacquer miniature painting is a delicate art form rooted in Eastern painting traditions. It was used to decorate manuscripts, pencil cases, boxes, and decorative objects, often depicting historical and literary themes.



Margilan: *City of Poetry and Silk*

Tucked into the fertile Fergana Valley of eastern Uzbekistan is Margilan, a Silk Road city known for its handicrafts. Margilan is truly ancient; the earliest written sources about it date to the 10th century, though its origins go much further back. Today, Margilan is in the throes of growth and change. Modern skyscrapers have been built alongside its well-preserved historical monuments, which include the Pir Siddiq complex, the Khanaqah mosque, and the mausoleum of Hasti Maoz.

Text by Sabina Odinaeva

Photos by Arina Pan

Located along the Silk Road, Margilan was an influential city and home to many artisans, particularly fabric and silk makers whose wares were traded up and down the Silk Road. Even today, the city remains well known as a center of silk weaving.

City of Sages and Poets

It was in the Fergana Valley that an urbanized, Indo-European speaking culture (the Dayuan) encountered Chinese civilization for the first time. This exchange eventually led to the opening of the Silk Road from the 1st century BC onwards. Margilan was mentioned in the 16th-century memoirs of the Timurid prince and conqueror Babur, the Baburnama, and later by 19th century Uzbek historian Iskhoqhon Ibrat in his book, History of Fergana.

According to Russian/Soviet historian Vasily Barthold, Margilan was the capital of the Fergana Valley in the Karakhanid period (from the 9th to 13th centuries).

The city is also sometimes referred to as the 'Sanduk ul-Arifin' ('Box of the Arifs'; in Arabic, 'arif' means smart, knowledgeable, and wise) because of the many scientists and sages present there, including Burkhaniddin al-Margilani, Uwais, and Khazin Margilani.

Margilan was also the hometown of Sufi poet Jahon Otin Uvaysiy (1780–1845), who was an otin (female scholar of Islam). Uvaysiy wrote some 15,000 lines of verse (hemistiches).

City of Silks and Fabrics

Margilan's best-known contribution to Uzbek culture is the production of traditional silks and fabrics. The city is home to the largest silk producers in Uzbekistan, Yodgorlik Shoyi Korkhonasi and Turon Shoyisi, as well as some 600 private workshops and small producers.

In recent years, the demand for Margilan ikat textiles (adras, atlas, shoiy, beqasam)

has increased dramatically, with orders coming from across Uzbekistan and around the world. The city owes its reputation for high-quality silk to the fact that all aspects of fabric production happen in one place, from cultivation of silk worms all the way to preparation of natural dyes using traditional methods.

Most tourists visiting the Fergana Valley want to buy Margilan atlas, and the presence of so many workshops means that there are ample opportunities to see how it is created and what types are available, as well as to meet the artisans and hear their stories and family histories.

Several master artisan families also run guesthouses, including Nabijon Toshtemirov and Rasuljon Mirzaakhmedov (Ikat House, 133 Ipak Yuli St, ikatuzcenter@gmail.com). A guesthouse stay generally includes a visit to the workshop and a chance to meet and talk with the master artisans, as well as home comforts like traditional Uzbek meals and cozy accommodation.

ART ↗

Arts & Crafts



What are abr-ikat fabrics?

The local name for ikat is abr ('cloud' in Persian), as the traditional patterns are said to resemble clouds floating in the sky or reflected on water. The abr-ikat fabrics of the Fergana Valley generally come in four varieties: adras, atlas, shoiy-bahmal and beqasam. They are made using ikat, a technique of bundle-dyeing thread before it is woven, resulting in unusual striped patterns. Traditionally woven with a glossy silk warp, adras is a mix of silk and cotton, while atlas is made of pure silk. Shoiy is the finest (and thus most expensive) type of velvety silk fabric. Beqasam is a silk-cotton striped fabric used for chapon robes and other men's attire, but now seen only rarely. Each of these fabrics also has subtypes. For example, khon-atlas features golden threads and more vivid red-yellow patterns, while a'lo-bahmal is a rare velvet.

Color plays a critical role in the symbolism of abr-ikat fabrics. Brilliantly hued, these textiles generally incorporate bright pinks, warm yellows, dark blues, rich reds, and so on. The dyes are created from various natural plants or the peels of some fruits. The beauty and staggering colors of abr-ikat fabrics make them a favorite souvenir for many visitors.



From Muse

In the history of Uzbek art, women were often portrayed within fixed cultural roles. They appeared as guardians of tradition, symbols of spring, or embodiments of motherhood and harmony. Their presence was beautiful and meaningful, but rarely personal or self-defined. The female figure was part of the landscape, the ornament, the national story — but almost never the one telling it.

Today, this is changing. In contemporary Uzbek art, women are no longer just subjects being portrayed — they are shaping their own image. They present themselves as thoughtful, self-aware, and evolving individuals, balancing motherhood and home life with study and professional careers.

This shift is not always dramatic or outspoken. It happens quietly — through subtle artistic choices, through explo-

rations of the body, memory, space, and cultural identity. In the work of today's women artists, femininity is no longer simply an aesthetic idea. It becomes a way of thinking and a way of speaking through art.

One of the artists shaping this shift through memory and a deep sense of place is Dilorom Mamedova. In her work, the traditional landscape is no longer just a backdrop — it becomes a space filled with inner life and quiet reflection.



Dilorom Mamedova:
The Space of Memory

At first glance, Mamedova seems to continue the tradition of national painting. With strong inner energy and remarkable dedication, she turns to the old quarters of Uzbekistan to preserve living memory. Narrow streets, mahalla courtyards, doors, arches, trees, soft shadows — her paintings are filled with light and air. Yet beneath this calm atmosphere lies something deeper.

Her landscapes rarely show action. Instead, they hold a sense of stillness, expectation, and quiet transition. There is no

staged “exotic” Eastern atmosphere — these streets feel real and personally experienced. Mamedova paints with thick, textured brushstrokes, so that light appears almost tangible on the canvas. Color carries memory, and texture captures the passage of time.

In works such as Mothers and White Unknown, a woman sometimes appears — in a window, in the shade of a courtyard, among blooming trees. She is not presented as a symbol or decorative figure. Instead, she feels like the emotional center of the space. In some compositions, several generations of women appear together, emphasizing continuity and inheritance. Architectural elements — windows and doors — play an important role. They are not just parts of a building; they suggest transition: from childhood to adulthood, from past to future, from shadow into light.

She does not reject tradition, nor does she try to dismantle it. She rethinks it gently and personally. Her art preserves cultural memory without turning it into mere decoration — allowing tradition to remain something lived and meaningful.



@dilorom_mamedova



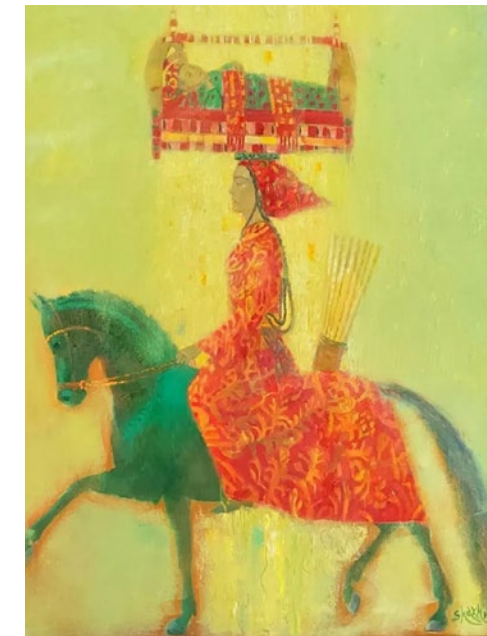
Shakhnoz Abdullaeva:
Sacred Femininity

If Dilorom Mamedova works with memory and space, Shakhnoz Abdullaeva works with timeless symbols. Her figures seem to exist outside of ordinary time — dancing, floating, and turning in rich, saturated colors, as if living inside their own mythology. Decorative patterns, flattened perspectives inspired by Eastern miniature painting, and deep greens and reds give her canvases a strong sense of rhythm and quiet intensity.

Abdullaeva draws inspiration from Persian miniatures, Uzbek ornament, Russian Symbolism, and Renaissance art, blending them into a visual language that is entirely her own. In her work, dance is more than movement — it is a statement of inner strength. The wide circle of a dress can feel like a self-contained universe. Ornament becomes energy. Color expresses emotion.

Her dancing women are especially powerful. They are not performing for the viewer. Their gestures feel inward, focused, self-contained. These figures live in their own symbolic world. Rather than simply showing tradition, they reshape it.

In The Happiness of the Amazon, Abdullaeva combines the image of a warrior with that of a mother. Motherhood is not shown as a limitation, but as a source of power and independence. A traditional Uzbek cradle — the beshik — balanced on the heroine's head becomes more than a household object. It symbolizes continuity, responsibility, and cultural memory. The woman is not



torn between roles; she carries them confidently, united in a single image of strength.

In works such as Three Graces. Dance and The Dance of Salome, the body becomes a space of transformation. It carries cultural meaning, but not as a simple ethnic marker. Instead, it becomes a living force. For Abdullaeva, femininity is not a social label or a decorative idea — it is a sacred energy that connects the visible and the invisible. She does not copy tradition; she transforms it into something deeply personal.

@shakhnazart





Nigina Mirzadzhanova:
Vulnerability as Strength

In Nigina Mirzajanova's work, the female image is stripped of decoration and exoticism. We do not see an idealized "Eastern beauty" or a symbolic national mother. Instead, we encounter a real woman — embodied, sometimes uncertain, vulnerable, yet deeply self-possessed.

Mirzajanova often explores themes of gaze and personal boundaries. Her female figures take up space without apology. The body is not an ornament or a symbol — it simply exists. Using soft, muted pastel tones, the artist creates a quiet atmosphere filled with inner reflection. The backgrounds are flat, the landscapes simplified, the trees stylized, and the



space almost childlike in its geometry. At first glance, the scenes seem calm and simple. But beneath this calm surface lies psychological tension. Something is always happening — not outwardly, but within.

Her large-scale female figures are particularly striking. They are solid, almost monumental, occupying space confidently, without trying to appear pleasing or "convenient." In traditional visual culture of the region, the female body has often been either beautified or hidden. Mirzajanova suggests another approach: the body as presence. Her women rarely smile. Their gaze is steady, sometimes distant, sometimes looking straight through the viewer. There is no flirtation, no request for approval — only a quiet statement: I am here.

Everyday moments are central to her work. A woman in a taxi with her child. A woman sitting at a table. A woman waiting. These are not heroic scenes. Yet it is in these ordinary situations that real strength becomes visible. Identity reveals itself in small gestures — a glance, a touch, a pause.

Her figures exist beyond decorative ideas of "Eastern" femininity. They do not try to meet expectations. Their vulnerability does not weaken them — it gives them power. In Mirzajanova's art, a woman is not an image to be admired from a distance, but a subject who defines her own space and boundaries.

📸 @mirzadzhanova_



Oyjon Khayrullaeva:
Deconstruction and Freedom

The most radical shift in contemporary Uzbek art can be seen in the work of Oyjon Khayrullaeva. She works with photography, digital collage, and animation, breaking apart traditional cultural symbols and reassembling them in new ways.

Her surreal portraits blend the historic architecture of Samarkand and Bukhara with modern female figures. These combinations create visual stories about social and environmental issues. For example, her digital collage Lymphatic System addresses air pollution. In her series Ozodiy ("Freedom"), the sky becomes a symbol of inner liberation. Women appear within arches, mosaics, and urban spaces — but instead of blending into these traditional settings, they transform them. For Khayrullaeva, tradition is not just something to preserve like a museum object; it is material to rethink and reinterpret.

Family hierarchy is a key theme in her work — especially relationships between mother-in-law and bride, inherited attitudes, and the pressure of customs. In one project, a simple household fan turns into a symbol of control and suppression (Executioner). A flower shifts from representing tenderness to symbolizing fragility. A faceless portrait suggests a silenced voice. These images are subtle rather than preachy, yet emotionally powerful. Khayrullaeva prefers visual metaphor over direct statements.

Importantly, the women in her art are never shown as helpless victims. Even



when they face tension or restriction, they remain strong and self-aware. They stand upright, look upward or forward, and carry themselves with quiet determination. In her work, liberation is not loud or dramatic — it is an inner process of rebuilding oneself.

Khayrullaeva offers a new way of engaging with tradition. She neither rejects it nor idealizes it. Instead, she enters into dialogue with it. In that dialogue, a woman is no longer just a carrier of cultural tradition — she becomes its editor and interpreter.



📸 @janajaaan

Arts & Crafts

Women as Authors

Contemporary women artists of Uzbekistan are not creating a fixed "image of womanhood." And this is precisely where the fundamental shift lies. Femininity is no longer confined to a set of traditional roles — it has become a process, an exploration, an act of authorship.

If Dilorom Mamedova speaks through the language of memory and space, and Shakhnoz Abdullaeva through the language of sacred symbol, then in the work of the younger generation — such as Nigina Mirzadzhanova — we already encounter the voice of inner dialogue. In the practice of Oyjon Khayrullaeva, the artistic language of deconstruction and digital freedom becomes radical and transformative.

Together, they are shaping a new visual map of the country — one in which woman ceases to be merely a subject and becomes a voice.

Today, the "image of woman" is no longer simply a figure on canvas or within a frame. It is a cultural position, a way of rethinking tradition and asserting the right to one's own gaze. And in this lies the central transformation of contemporary art in Uzbekistan.



Dramatic Action

Tashkent's theatre scene is full of spaces where the classical repertoire mixes with innovation and experimentation. Discover the capital's stages, which boast a history of creativity, avant-garde performances, and dynamic young casts.

Text by Valeria Galikhanova



State Academic Bolshoi Theater of Uzbekistan named after Alisher Navoi

Built in 1946, the Bolshoi Theatre and the adjacent grounds, home to a musical fountain, are at the heart of Tashkent's cultural life. The capital's leading theatre stages world-famous operas such as The Queen of Spades and Carmen, and ballets like Spartacus, Don Juan, Romeo and Juliet, and Faust. A highlight here is Lazgi – the Dance of Soul and Love, a modern ballet interpretation of Uzbek folk dance.

For many years, the Alisher Navoi Theatre has been successfully building strong creative ties with international choreographers and directors. In 2015, the theatre reopened after a major renovation. In addition to the main program, a number of accessible performances with audio commentary are held in each season.

📍 28 Zarafshan St.
🌐 www.gabt.uz



Ilkhom Theatre by Mark Weil

The independent Ilkhom Theatre has been operating since 1976 and was conceived as an Experimental Studio of Theatrical Youth. Founded by director Mark Weil, the first troupe consisted of graduates of the Tashkent Theater Institute.

Currently, actors from the theatre are successfully touring Europe's drama festivals. Audiences love the Ilkhom, including international casts in which Uzbek, Russian, English and French languages are often spoken.

"The theatre is a living organism and reacts sensitively to what is happening around us," says artistic director Boris Gafurov. "From our stage, we talk about love, today's circumstances and the people in these circumstances. This is the main thing—what the Ilkhom Theatre lives by."

Modern interpretations of classical works are presented in the theatre's chamber hall. The venue is also home to the Mark Weil Studio, an artistic educational center created according to Weil's teaching methods. There is also an exhibition hall, a platform for writers' meetings, jazz and rock performances, and an inclusive theatre laboratory.

📍 5 Pakhtorskaya St.
🌐 www.ilkhom.com



State Theater of Musical Comedy (Operetta) of Uzbekistan

Over the 50 years of its existence, the Operetta Theater's repertoire has branched in several directions. Classic performances of world heritage are a staple. For example, Emmerich Kálmán's The Bajadere and The Circus Princess, The Gypsy Baron by Johann Strauss II, Once in New York by Irving Berlin, and the musical My Fair Lady. These enrich the theatre's repertoire and give great scope for creativity.

Academic Russian Drama Theatre

The Russian Drama Theatre of Uzbekistan is a place where Uzbek and Russian cultures are closely intertwined. It was opened in 1934, and in 1967 it received the status of academic theatre. Since 1994, it has operated a studio school for young actors. Today, it is one of the flagships of Uzbekistan's national theatrical arts and its 88-year history is an inseparable part of Uzbek culture. It has played an important role in promoting Russian culture, literature, and language in Uzbekistan.

The theatre's repertoire consists of performances based on plays by Russian and Uzbek authors, popular sat-

The theatre also stages original Uzbek works, such as the musical comedy Khoja Nasreddin by composer Enmark Salikhov, and the play Heart in the Palm of your Hand, which is dedicated to the memory of People's Artist of Uzbekistan Botir Zokirov.

As well as works of modern operetta from Central Asian countries, there is a large children's repertoire of musical fairytales in Russian and Uzbek.

📍 4a Chapanata St.
🌐 www.operetta.uz

irists, and playwrights. Many audiences find Uzbek poetry and drama especially valuable, and the theatre prioritizes these when choosing a production. The play Confusion of the Righteous, based on the poem of the same name by Alisher Navoi, was enthusiastically received.



📍 24 Zarafshan St.
🌐 www.gardt.uz



Suzani

Flowers, suns, pomegranates, and creeping grapevines bloom across the fabric—this is the suzani, one of Uzbekistan’s most recognizable traditional crafts. These hand-embroidered textiles once adorned walls, bridal rooms, and family spaces, with every motif carrying meaning: wishes for happiness, prosperity, fertility, and protection. Suzani pieces were an essential part of a bride’s dowry, and the art of embroidery was passed down from mother to daughter.

Reimagined

Text by Malika Fattakhova

The word suzani comes from the Persian suzan, meaning “needle.” The art of embroidery in Central Asia dates back many centuries and took on its current form between the 15th and 18th centuries. Each textile was created by hand using silk or cotton threads embroidered onto a cotton, silk, or velvet base. According to an old tradition, artisans would often leave a small section unfinished because it would ensure that family happiness would never come to an end.

Over time, distinct regional schools of suzani emerged across Uzbekistan—Bukhara, Samarkand, Tashkent, Fergana, and Nurata—each with characteristic patterns, color palettes, and compositions reflecting local identity.

Threads for suzani embroidery are traditionally dyed using natural plant-based pigments. To fix the color, artisans add vinegar,



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soda, or salt during the dyeing process. Red tones are derived from madder root and hibiscus; green from walnut husks or a blend of yellow dye and indigo; black from oak bark and basma; and yellow from turmeric or onion skins.

Today, a suzani is rarely used in interiors in the same way it once was, yet the craft itself has not disappeared; on the contrary, it has found new life in contemporary fashion and design. Suzani embroidery now appears on chapan coats, jackets, dresses, accessories, and furniture upholstery.

Spanish designer Marivi Bombarelli has worked for many years with antique Uzbek suzanis, incorporating them into furniture and interior design objects. She says she fell in love with these embroideries at first sight and wanted to showcase their beauty beyond Uzbekistan.

A significant contribution to preserving and developing this craft has been made by Madina Kasimbaeva. Her works are exhibited at prestigious international shows and held in private collections worldwide. In her new Tashkent workshop, she demonstrates the entire suzani-making process, from dyeing threads with natural pigments to hand embroidery. The studio also houses the showroom of her brand, Suzani by Kasimbaeva, where visitors can view and purchase finished pieces.

One example of how suzani continues to evolve in a modern context was the 2021 collaboration between the brands SAADI and Suzani by Kasimbaeva. The collection featured hand-embroidered chapan coats and capes, crystal-embellished dresses, jackets with pomegranate motifs, jumpsuits, and other designs, reinterpreting traditional Uzbek embroidery through a contemporary lens.



New Contemporary Centre

Set to open in 2026, the Centre for Contemporary Arts Tashkent (CCA) aims to be an inclusive cultural hub, offering free access to all. Designed as a meeting point for the region, the CCA Tashkent will also feature a library, workshop areas, concept store and a restaurant, fostering connections between diverse cultures and generations. In addition to a vibrant schedule of exhibitions, the CCA Tashkent will offer a public program that extends beyond the centre itself, enhancing its role as a platform for dialogue and exchange across various disciplines and audiences.

Since October 2024, CCA Tashkent has been hosting an artists' residency. Starting from 2026, the center will also provide opportunities for internships, fellowships, and traineeships. The Centre is also collaborating with the Architectural Association on the AA Visiting School, which organizes workshops for local participants, offering them the opportunity to learn directly from leading international architects, designers, and educators while fostering the exchange of knowledge and practical experience. Together, these initiatives strengthen the center's commitment to artistic research, education, and experimentation.

Led by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's vision for the development of Uzbekistan's cultural and creative industries, and

spearheaded by Art and Culture Development Foundation (ACDF), CCA Tashkent is a cornerstone of the country's long-term strategy to strengthen cultural infrastructure. Through international partnerships, educational initiatives, and artistic research, the centre aims to nurture creative talent and contribute to the growth of a sustainable creative economy for future generations.



Uzbekistan at the Milan Design Week 2026

In its first Pavilion at Milan Design Week 2026, Uzbekistan showcased a stunning installation, marking this event as a significant milestone for the nation's burgeoning creative landscape. Milan Design Week has been transforming the Italian city into the capital of design since 1961. This annual event showcases the latest industry trends, unique product launches, and innovative creations from decision-makers. It also serves as a platform to discover new design talent.

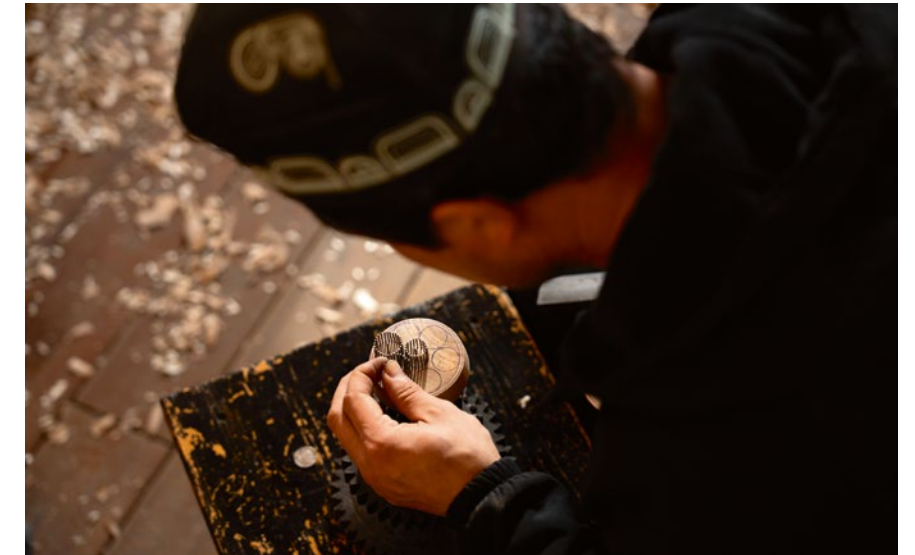
As a premier global event, Milan Design Week attracts artists, designers, and industry leaders from all over the world. It provides a vital forum for both emerging talent and established names, fostering international dialogue about contemporary design trends.

The exhibition, titled "When Apricots Blossom," is inspired by the rich tapestry of Uzbekistan's cultural motifs. It is presented by Gayane Umerova, Chairperson of ACDF, with the support of acclaimed Thai architect Kulapat Yantrasast as the artistic director, along with 12 world-renowned architects and designers. Visitors experienced a series of installations throughout the venue, each showcasing the country's unique heritage and modern interpretations of traditional aesthetics.

The Uzbekistan National Pavilion at the 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

Commissioned by Gayane Umerova, Chairperson of ACDF, the pavilion titled "The Aural Sea" offers a creative reimagining of the Aral Sea region as a site for mythmaking, climate resilience, and speculative futures.

The Pavilion's curatorial team, comprising Sophie Mayuko Arni (b. 1995, Switzerland), Aziza Izamova (b. 1997, Uzbekistan), Kamila Mukhitdinova (b. 2003, Uzbekistan), Nico Sun (b. 1998, China), and



Thái Hà (b. 1996, Vietnam), was formed through the Bukhara Biennial Curatorial School, an ACDF initiative commissioned by its Chairperson and led by the inaugural Bukhara Biennial Artistic Director, Diana Campbell. Each contributed distinct artworks centered on a common theme.

This pavilion builds upon the Foundation's ongoing commitment to the region, notably through the Aral Culture Summit – a groundbreaking initiative aimed at driving social and environmental transformation in the Aral Sea area via art, culture, design, and science. It is also closely linked to the recently launched Aral School, a design program focused on capacity building for the region's future.

Aral School

The recent inauguration of the Aral School in Nukus represents a significant advancement in tackling the environmental challenges faced by the Aral Sea region. The school is designed as a long-term educational and research initiative to promote sustainable development in the area.

Gayane Umerova, Chairperson of ACDF says:

"Through the new Aral School, the Aral Culture Summit, and a focus on Karakalpakstan as part of our wider

international cultural presence in 2026, we are reframing how we address the region's social and ecological challenges: by empowering local communities and inviting global expertise to contribute meaningfully to regeneration, education and our shared futures."

The school's mission emphasizes collaboration and regional specificity, with an approach that integrates various disciplines to tackle pressing issues. The inaugural cohort includes 22 participants, primarily from Karakalpakstan and Uzbekistan, along with international members from diverse backgrounds. This mix of local knowledge and global perspectives aims to create a dynamic learning community.

Moving forward, the Aral School intends to explore innovative strategies for ecological regeneration in the region. Its commitment to knowledge-sharing and research could significantly contribute to the restoration of the Aral Sea and its surrounding ecosystems while serving as a potential model for other areas facing similar environmental challenges.

The inaugural cohort of the Aral School will be enrolled from January to June, with their final projects to be presented at the second edition of the Aral Culture Summit in September 2026.

Once Upon a Library

Where
Books Are
Just the
Beginning

Text by Rayonakhon Kulmukhamedova

The Nationwide Children's Library captures attention long before you step inside. Its 19th-century historic building, with its distinctive fin-de-siecle architecture and atmospheric presence, has long been part of Tashkent's urban identity. Today, behind these walls lies a contemporary cultural space where books, art, education, and city life exist in a shared rhythm.



Housed since 1965 in the former mansion of the Vadyaev brothers, the library has been a familiar landmark for a long time, but it recently underwent a comprehensive restoration. The building was adapted to modern cultural and educational use while its historic character was carefully preserved. The restoration process revealed hidden architectural layers that directly shaped design decisions: bricked-up 19th-century columns were uncovered within the walls and now frame the entrance to one of the rooms. In the main hall, layers of paint concealed a Soviet-era mural depicting a seascape, which was meticulously restored and preserved as another element of the building's evolving history.

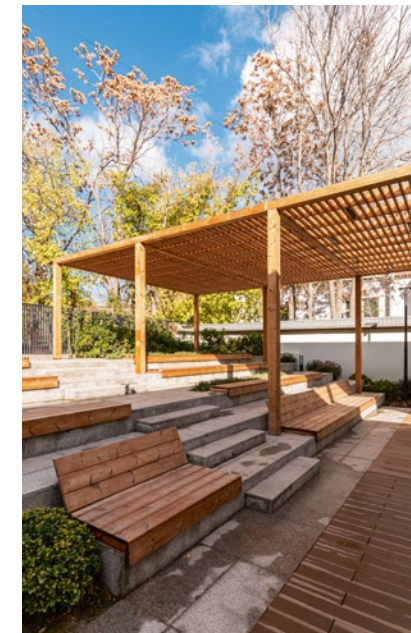
Today, the library functions as an open public space where past and present coexist naturally. It is not only a repository of books but also an active cultural platform,



hosting workshops, lectures, exhibitions, theatrical performances, and meetings with writers and illustrators. The library was relaunched by the Uzbekistan Art and Culture Development Foundation, which continues to support its development as a modern cultural institution of international standing.

The entrance opens into a changing exhibition space shaped by the library's team. In autumn 2025, it traced the making of Hello, Tashkent! through sketches, colour and type studies, original illustrations and book dummies, revealing the patient work behind a children's book. In autumn 2026, the space turns to Kydyrbay Najimov, whose illustrations helped define the visual identity of Karakalpakstan, one of the region's oldest publishing houses. Works from the Savitsky Museum will be shown.

Further inside, the library reveals another dimension. Beyond the reading halls are spaces that reflect the standards of contemporary libraries worldwide: a computer lab with open access, a music room for practice and rehearsal, and multifunctional areas for lectures and gatherings. The library is multilingual, and many events include simultaneous interpretation, making them accessible to children and teenagers from diverse linguistic backgrounds.



The library has a rich year-round public programme. Alongside regular book clubs, creative workshops, music classes, discussions, games and digital laboratories, it hosts festivals and seasonal celebrations, including Navruz, Children's Day, the autumn festival and New Year. Writers, artists, theatre companies, musicians and filmmakers are invited to shape these programmes, turning each occasion into a shared cultural experience for children, teenagers and their families.

These events demonstrate that the library has long moved beyond its traditional definition and has become a space of lived cultural experience. The latest program and upcoming events can be found on the official website: <https://acdflibrary.uz/en>

Despite its wide range of formats, books remain at the very core of the institution. The library houses a multilingual collection in Uzbek, Russian, English, French, Korean, Japanese, and other languages. It includes literature on art, architecture, psychology, history, and design. Alongside contemporary publications, rare editions are preserved and accessible exclusively within reading rooms.

The library is organized into thematic zones: sections for children and teens, fiction and academic collections, individual study areas, and spaces for reading and events. One of the most popular areas is the large reading hall dedicated to art books. Its shelves feature volumes on painting and crafts, biographies of artists and musicians, catalogs of international exhibitions, and travel guides.

Some visitors come to study for their exams, others seek quiet corners among the stacks, while many simply come for the atmosphere, luminous and peaceful. Large windows fill the hall with soft natural light, highlighting the building's historic architectural details and the understated tones of the interior.

The library is open to the public free of charge throughout the week. Visitors can read, work, or spend time browsing. Some books are available for borrowing with a library card issued on-site after registration. No additional registration is required for reading or working on site.

Beyond the Canvas

Text by Kamila Serova

Tashkent's gallery scene offers a different way to discover the city. Beyond the historic landmarks and bustling avenues lies a network of spaces where contemporary ideas, traditional craftsmanship, and cultural heritage intersect. Together, these galleries reveal how Uzbekistan's artistic identity continues to evolve while remaining deeply connected to its roots.

ANDAKULOVA GALLERY ▾

One of the most significant contemporary art galleries in the region, ANDAKULOVA GALLERY creates a bridge between Central Asian artists and international audiences. Originally established in Dubai in 2012, the gallery expanded to Tashkent in 2025, bringing its carefully curated approach closer to the cultural heritage that inspires much of its work. The gallery focuses on contemporary artists from Central Asia, presenting works that explore regional identity while engaging with global artistic conversations.



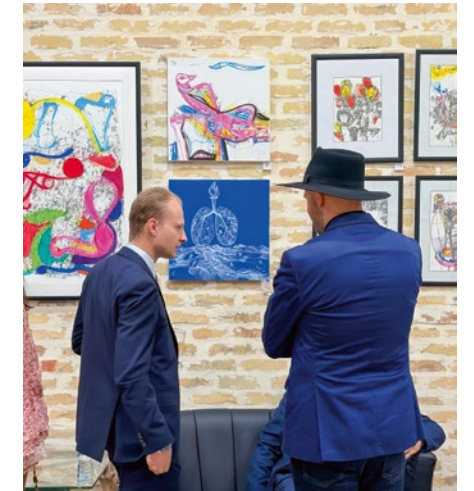
📍 Tashkent City Mall, Botir Zokirov 7

📷 @andakulovagallery.uz



STUDIOARTIKUL 32 ◀

Part gallery, part educational center, StudioArtikul 32 has established itself as a vibrant creative laboratory within Tashkent's cultural scene. The space combines artistic practice with learning, offering courses in drawing, painting, composition, and other visual disciplines. Alongside its educational programs, the studio regularly hosts exhibitions, lectures, concerts, and cultural gatherings.



📍 Bogibustan Street, 32 📷 @artikul32_

SUZANI BY KASIMBAEVA →

Dedicated to one of Uzbekistan's most celebrated textile traditions, this gallery offers visitors an intimate introduction to the art of suzani embroidery. Founded by renowned embroidery master Madina Kasimbaeva, the space combines exhibition halls, a workshop, and a training center under one roof. Among its highlights is an extraordinary eight-meter-long suzani created over three and a half years by Kasimbaeva and a large team of craftswomen.



📍 Suzukota Mahalla 35

📷 @suzani_kasimbaeva

Arts & Crafts

BRIGHT GALLERY →

Bright Gallery presents a carefully curated collection of contemporary craft and decorative arts from Uzbekistan. Ceramics, textiles, jewelry, and handcrafted objects are displayed in a setting that highlights both their artistic value and cultural significance. The gallery celebrates craftsmanship as a living art form, offering visitors an opportunity to discover works that combine traditional techniques with contemporary design sensibilities.



📍 Tashkent City Mall, 1st Floor

📷 @brightgallery.uz

REGENERATION ART GALLERY ↓

Regeneration Art Gallery serves as a platform for contemporary artistic dialogue. Through exhibitions, workshops, lectures, and collaborative projects, the gallery encourages experimentation and professional exchange within Uzbekistan's growing contemporary art community.



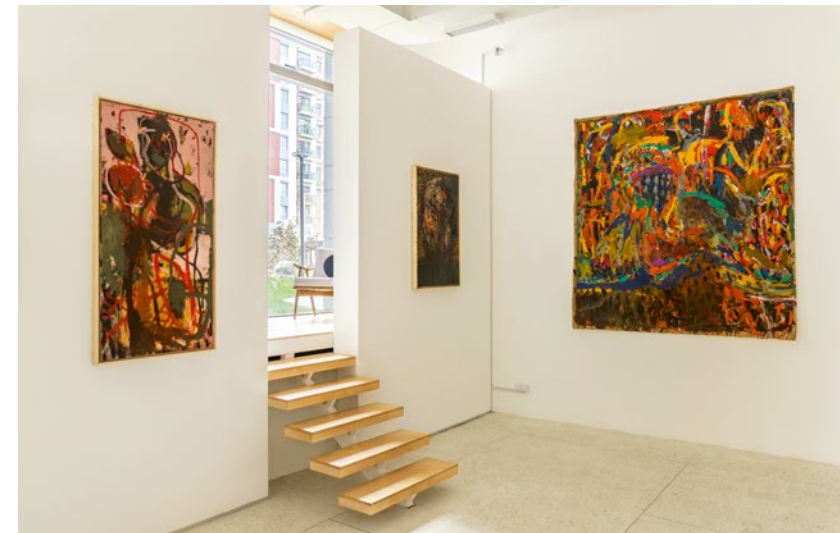
📍 13A Hamid Alimdjani Street

📷 @regeneration_art_tashkent_

HLMRDV GALLERY ↓

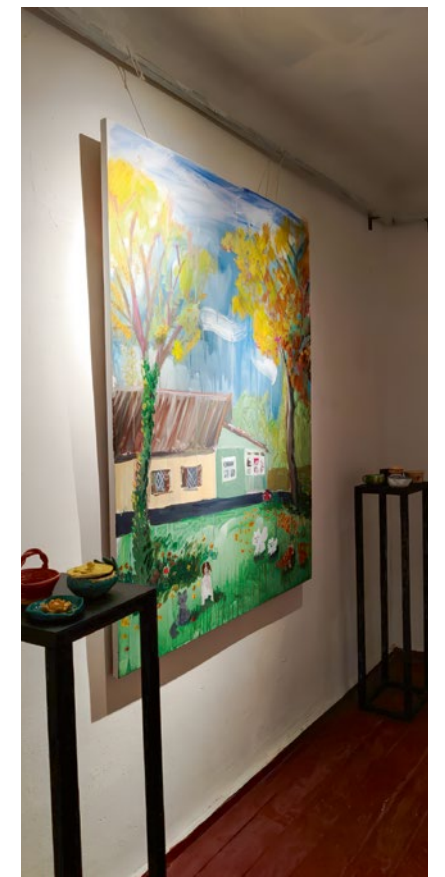
HLMRDV Gallery offers a multidisciplinary perspective on contemporary creativity in Central Asia. Alongside exhibitions of regional artists, the gallery presents designer jewelry, architecture and art publications, ceramics, and collectible design objects.

📍 NRG Oybek, Nukus Street 7 📷 @hlmrdiv_gallery



HAQIQIY ART SPACE ↓

One of Tashkent's most unconventional cultural projects, Haqiqiy Art Space occupies a former residential house awaiting redevelopment. Before the building disappears from the city's landscape, it has been transformed into a temporary venue for exhibitions, installations, and experimental artistic projects.



📍 115/2 Parkent Street

📷 @haqiqiy.project

AKMAL NUR GALLERY →

Dedicated to one of Uzbekistan's most celebrated contemporary artists, the gallery showcases the works of Akmal Nur, whose expressive style blends Eastern artistic traditions with Western influences. Alongside the artist's personal exhibitions, visitors can also discover works by emerging talents from Nur Art School, offering a glimpse into both established and contemporary Uzbek art.

📷 @nur.art.school



Together, these galleries reveal a city where tradition and innovation coexist naturally. They offer more than exhibitions; they provide insight into the ideas, stories, and creative communities shaping contemporary Uzbekistan. For travelers willing to venture beyond the familiar attractions, Tashkent's galleries present some of the city's most rewarding cultural encounters.

HUMAN HOUSE ↑

Located within a historic residence, Human House has become one of Tashkent's most distinctive cultural destinations. The space brings together traditional craftsmanship, contemporary design, and community engagement through exhibitions, workshops, and cultural events. Human House plays an important role in preserving traditional techniques while helping craftspeople connect with modern and international audiences.

📍 Kichik Mirobod Street, 43

📷 @humanhousegallery

A Hands-On Uzbekistan



Text by Kamila Serova

Uzbekistan is a destination best experienced through participation. Beyond its architectural masterpieces and historic cities lies another side of the country, one where travelers can learn traditional crafts, cook family recipes, and create something meaningful with their own hands. From pottery and embroidery to painting and gastronomy, these experiences offer a deeper connection to local culture while leaving you with more than a souvenir: a skill, a memory, and a story to take home.

SHAPING CLAY: THE LEGACY OF UZBEK CERAMICS

Ceramics are among Uzbekistan's most recognizable artistic traditions. For centuries, the country sat at the crossroads of the Silk Road, and its pottery became prized for its distinctive colors, intricate patterns, and remarkable craftsmanship.

No place is more closely associated with this heritage than Rishtan in the Fergana Valley. The town has been producing ceramics for more than a thousand years and remains famous for its vibrant blue and turquoise glazes. Local artisans still use natural mineral pigments and techniques passed down through generations, creating pieces that are instantly recognizable throughout Central Asia.

Arts & Crafts



Visitors can do more than observe the process. Many workshops invite guests to sit at the potter's wheel, shape their own vessel, and gain an appreciation for the skill required to transform a simple piece of clay into a finished work of art.

Where to try it:

- Potterville Ceramic Studio, Tashkent (@pottervillestudio)
- Traditions Square, Samarkand (@traditions_square)
- Dvoe Ceramics, Tashkent (@dvoeceramics)
- Said's Ceramics, Tashkent (@said_s_ceramics)
- Rishtan ceramic workshops, Fergana Valley

Arts & Crafts



THREADS OF MEMORY: SUZANI EMBROIDERY

Long before modern interior design, Uzbek families decorated their homes with suzani—large embroidered textiles filled with symbolism and meaning. Traditionally prepared as part of a bride's dowry, these pieces often required months of painstaking work and the involvement of several women from the same family.

Every motif tells a story. Pomegranates symbolize prosperity

and abundance, flowers represent beauty and renewal, while circular forms are believed to offer protection. Beyond their decorative value, suzani serve as visual records of family traditions and regional identities.

Today, travelers have the opportunity to learn basic embroidery techniques directly from artisans who continue to preserve this centuries-old craft.

Where to try it:

- Toshev Family Suzani Workshop, Bukhara
- Human House workshops, Tashkent (@humanhouse.events)
- Traditional craft workshops in Bukhara's Old City (@suzani_workshop)
- Madina Kasimbaeva Suzani Embroidery Workshop, Tashkent (@suzani_kasimbaeva.gallery)

THE ART OF WOOD AND ORNAMENT

The carved wooden columns, doors, and ceilings found throughout Uzbekistan's historic cities are masterpieces in their own right. Many were created without modern machinery, relying instead on hand tools, patience, and an extraordinary understanding of geometry.

Woodcarving has flourished in Central Asia for centuries,

adorning mosques, madrasas, and private homes with intricate floral and geometric motifs. Each region developed its own style, creating a rich artistic tradition that continues to thrive today.

Learning even the basics of woodcarving offers insight into the remarkable craftsmanship behind some of Uzbekistan's most fascinating architectural details.



Where to try it:

- Traditions Square, Samarkand (@traditions_square)
- Tashkent workshops (@art_time_uz, @master_wood_)
- Bukhara's wood crafting workshops with Shavkat Ashurov (@bukharawoodcarving)

FLAVORS OF THE SILK ROAD

Food has always been one of the most powerful expressions of Uzbek hospitality. Across the country, recipes are passed on from one generation to the next, preserving traditions that have evolved over centuries.

A cooking class reveals far more than ingredients and techniques. Visitors discover how meals bring families together, how regional identities are reflected in local dishes, and why preparing food remains such an important social ritual.

Even iconic dishes vary from region to region. Samarkand plov is traditionally layered rather than mixed, while the Bukharan version often includes raisins and chickpeas. Learning these recipes first-hand provides a deeper understanding of the country's culinary culture.



Where to try it:

- Kazan Culinary Arts School, Tashkent (@kazanarts)
- Traditions Square culinary experiences, Samarkand (@traditions_square)
- Family-run cooking classes in Bukhara (@plov_by_bigmama)
- Plov cooking classes in a Tashkent home (@risola_art_house)



PAINTING, SKETCHING, AND CONTEMPORARY CREATIVITY

While many visitors come to Uzbekistan seeking history, the country's contemporary creative scene is equally compelling. Across Tashkent and other major cities, a new generation of artists is exploring fresh ideas while remaining connected to local traditions.

Creative studios welcome visitors of all skill levels, offering painting workshops, drawing sessions, and opportunities to experiment with different artistic techniques. These spaces provide an opportunity not only to create something yourself but also to engage with the country's evolving cultural landscape.

Where to try it:

- Masterskaya Art Space, Tashkent (@masterskayauz)
- Painting workshops in Tashkent for all ages (@arttherapy.uz, @hopeart.studio,)
- Samarkand's arts and crafts workshops (@art_centre_sam)
- Bukhara's painting workshops and creative studio experiences (@simvol.workshop)
- Miniature masterclasses in Tashkent (@nur.art.school)
- Painting, candle-making and creative workshops in Tashkent (@sharm.studioi)
- Art workshops & painting courses in Tashkent (@by.shamu)
- Custom handmade carpet workshops and design studio in Tashkent (@koverna)

The finest souvenirs are not always objects. Sometimes they are skills learned, conversations shared, and experiences lived. Whether shaping clay in Rishtan, embroidering a traditional motif in Bukhara, carving wood in Samarkand, or preparing a family recipe in Tashkent, these hands-on experiences offer a deeper way to discover Uzbekistan, one that stays with you long after the journey ends.

Arts & Crafts



How Uzbek Designers
Are Reimagining
National Style

A New Identity

Text by Irina Perova

National style is becoming a space for dialogue between history and the present, craft and form, local context and global perspective.

Uzbek designers are increasingly working with cultural heritage not literally, but conceptually. They are moving away from direct quotation and surface decoration, choosing instead the language of form, silhouette, and meaning. This is not an attempt to preserve tradition unchanged; it is a desire to give it new life, relevance, and honesty.

There is no folkloric nostalgia in this fashion. Instead, there is intention, a search for identity, and a desire to speak to the world as equals. This is precisely how national style stops being an archive and becomes a novel statement.



Turon Couture:
Decorative Expression
and Form

Turon Couture works in an expressive, celebratory visual language. Their aesthetic embraces peplum jackets, lavish embroidery, and meticulous attention to detail and texture. Not everyday wear, but image-making.

Turon Couture balances tradition with contemporary femininity: recognizable elements of national costume are reinterpreted into forms legible to the modern eye. These are the pieces that often become visual markers of culture, the ones you want to study, try on, and remember.

@turon_couture



Nigora Hashimova:
Ikat as the Architecture of Tomorrow

Nigora Hashimova approaches ikat not as a symbol, but as architecture. Her signature bombers demonstrate how a traditional fabric can serve as the foundation for modern, even avant-garde design.

Particularly noteworthy are her hussar-style ikat jackets, a striking reinterpretation of one of 2026's defining global trends through the lens of Uzbek heritage. A precise silhouette, considered form, and traditional fabric create a rare combination that no other designer is currently exploring in quite this way.

Nigora Hashimova's signature coin purses are another essential element of the brand's visual vocabulary. Playful color combinations inspired by sun-drenched Uzbekistan, paired with characteristic ikat, transform a simple accessory into the defining accent of an entire look – not an afterthought, but the final stroke that brings everything together.



@nigorahashimova.dsgnt

Anor Couture:
Silence as Statement

Anor Couture is the antithesis of expressive, visually loud interpretations of national heritage. There is no pursuit of visual noise here. In its place are calmness, precision of line, and a deep attentiveness to texture.

The national code in Anor Couture's collections is never declared outright. It is felt in rhythm, in the structure of a silhouette, in a conscious and elegant restraint. This is fashion with depth, modesty, and refinement – qualities that speak with conviction today.

Anor Couture is design in which tradition speaks quietly, but with absolute certainty. And it is precisely in that quiet that its strength is found.

@anorcouture





LALI: When the Past Looks Toward the Present

In LALI's work, the past is not recreated; it continues. Archival imagery and historical silhouettes are transformed into living form, becoming a movement forward rather than a glance backward.



The brand draws from the archives and history of Uzbekistan, reviving forgotten images and meanings. A particular source of inspiration are portraits of Turkmen women. They serve as a starting point for designer Lali Akramovna, whose relationship with history flows through every piece she creates.

In one collection, LALI also pays tribute to the Jadids, the reformers and intellectuals without whom modern education and cultural norms might never have taken shape in Central Asia. It is a gesture of respect for the past that gives weight and purpose to the present.

@lalifashion

Morobulsin: The Voice of a Generation

Morobulsin is a contemporary reading of tradition, where cultural elements become a form of self-expression for a new generation. Freedom, playfulness, boldness, and irony work in harmony, shaping an aesthetic that feels alive. Morobulsin – a brand created by designers Klara and Rukha – has swept through the fashion world, from influencer feeds to runway shows and street style captures.

Their signature belts adorned with chilis, eyes, feathers, denim, and national motifs are not merely decorative details, they are a visual language. The national code is embedded subtly yet powerfully: it doesn't dominate a look, it amplifies it.

@morobulsin



Azukar Moreno: A Story Told Through Material

Azukar Moreno is a conversation between fashion, ecology, and history. Designer Kamola Rustamova works with recycled materials and traditional craft, reimagining national textiles and their cultural meanings within a contemporary design context.

In Azukar Moreno's work, the past becomes a raw material for the future. National style is not reproduced literally, it is transformed and transcends its local origins. The brand has presented Uzbek craftsmanship on the world stage, including at New York Fashion Week, proving that a local story can have universal resonance.

@azukar_moreno_

These designers work in very different ways, but they share one defining quality: a profound respect for heritage, yet without any desire to freeze it in time. In their hands, national style becomes a language rather than a constraint.

Uzbek fashion today is not about the past. It is about identity, intention, and a confident conversation with the world. And from all appearances, that conversation is only just beginning.

J.Kim: Eco-friendly Fashion Rooted in Asian Traditions

J.Kim has received worldwide recognition as an eco-friendly Uzbek designer. Each collection reveals a multicultural theme drawing on Asia aesthetics, from Korea to Uzbekistan. J.Kim reflects fashion with meaning, giving the opportunity to become acquainted with rich cultures, national clothes, lifestyles, architecture and traditions. To create collections, the designer uses antique fabrics, which do not add pollutants or industrial waste to the environment and give beautiful fabrics a second life.

@j.kim



Text by Sabina Odinaeva



Fire Takes Form

Shakhrisabz ceramics are instantly recognizable—the sun lives in their colors, while ancient meanings are hidden in their patterns. Rustam Muzafarov, a seventh-generation master, continues the tradition of his ancestors, fusing their artistic heritage with a contemporary perspective. His works are a language with which to read the history, culture, and character of Uzbekistan.

The workshop is quiet. Light falls on the still-wet clay, on shelves laden with finished pieces, on decorative patterns that replicate age-old designs, yet never exactly. Rustam Muzafarov, representing the seventh generation of Shakhrisabz's last surviving dynasty of ceramists, works in the same way as those who practiced this craft before him—his father, his grandfather, his great-grandfather. From an early age, he observed the process: how form is created, how ornament is applied, how fire completes what is begun by hand. Seven generations, seven lives in which clay was not just a material but part of everyday life.

The Shakhrisabz ceramic school is recognizable at first glance because it throbs with the colors of the sun—yellow, ochre, red, and brown. That's why in Europe this style is often called “fiery ceramics.” There is energy, warmth, and movement in these colors.

The master's works preserve the characteristic features of the school: rich red-orange tones, expressive forms, and traditional motifs including birds, pomegranates, sun-like flowers, as well as fine dotted and carved ornaments.

The pomegranate, which often appears in these works, is not just an ornament. It is a symbol of life, continuity, and inner strength. Birds represent lightness, simplicity, and freedom. Leaves are the breath of nature. Circles signify the wholeness of the world. Dots are like stars scattered across the night sky. Each element here is part of a system and part of a worldview.

Muzafarov pays special attention to materials, using red clay and natural pigments obtained from metallic oxides that give each piece depth and natural color. The process of creating ceramics requires time, precision, and patience. One of the most complex and unpredictable stages is firing. The temperature must be exact. With the slightest deviation, the work may change or be lost. There is risk in this process, and it requires patience—waiting in silence, when corrections and interventions are no longer possible. Only when the kiln is opened does a ceramic item finally reveal itself.

Muzafarov's ceramics are not only art, but also part of everyday life. They are used in daily activities, continuing an ancient tradition in which beauty and functionality were inseparable. It is believed that red clay tableware has a positive effect on health, helping to preserve balance and the natural quality of food.

Over the years of his occupation, Muzafarov has participated in numerous national and international exhibitions. His works are represented in private collections and galleries in France, the United States, Russia, and Japan. In 2014,



he received the UNESCO Award of Excellence, and his studio was recognized as a cultural heritage site. It later became known as the Muzafarovs Dynasty Pottery Courtyard, reflecting the continuity of family traditions and craftsmanship. In September 2018, Rustam Muzafarov's first solo exhibition, titled “Shakhrisabz Ceramics: Tradition and Innovation,” was held at the Kamoliddin Behzod Memorial Gallery in Tashkent. However, his main focus remains not only the development of his own art, but also the preservation of tradition—the transmission of knowledge, techniques, and the philosophy of ceramics to future generations.

Today, Shakhrisabz ceramics continue to live and develop, remaining a symbol of continuity and cultural depth. In the works of Rustam Muzafarov, this tradition takes on a new voice, preserving a connection with the past and opening itself to the modern world.

*This is an art in which fire takes form,
and clay becomes the language of time.*

The Taste of Uzbekistan: 5 Legendary Dishes

Text by Malika Shaydullina
Photo by Umida Shaymatova, Andrey Arakelyan

Uzbek cuisine is like a journey through centuries, where each dish tells its own story. Generous, aromatic, and soul-warming, it has absorbed the traditions of the Great Silk Road. Together with Sanjar Mukhiddinov, the cluster chef of the restaurants at the Silk Road Samarkand tourist center, we've selected 5 iconic dishes that everyone visiting Uzbekistan should try.



Samarkand Plov: *Philosophy in a Cauldron*

What it is:

The calling card of Uzbek cuisine — plov is a rice dish made with lamb, carrots, onions, and cumin, cooked in a cast-iron cauldron.

History:

Plov is often called "Timur's dish" — the legendary commander would feed his troops with it before campaigns. The birthplace of plov is Samarkand, where two unique types are still prepared: "Sitara Palov" (with raisins and chickpeas) and "Zigir Osh" (with a special oil from wild saffron seeds).

Taste:

An ideal balance of spices, melt-in-your-mouth meat, and rice that has absorbed the aroma of smoky fruit wood.

Where to try it:

In Samarkand — at "Zokir Osh" or "Kavchinon Osh," as well as in the restaurants of the "Eternal City" ethno-park.



Chef's Tip: "True plov begins with choosing the rice. My favorite is 'dev-zira': it absorbs fat but remains fluffy. We only julienne the carrots, and serve it with achik-chuchuk* and green tea. Plov reveals its best flavor in autumn when fresh vegetables and aromatic lamb fat add depth. The true taste of plov is only revealed when cooked in a cauldron over an open fire."



Samsa: *Crispy Sun from the Tandoor*

What it is:

Layered pastries filled with lamb, onions, and fat, traditionally baked in a clay oven. Variations with pumpkin or fresh herbs are also popular.

History:

A nomadic dish that has become a symbol of Uzbek streets. In Samarkand, samsa is made square; in Tashkent, it's shaped like a "drop" (tomchi in Uzbek); and in Bukhara, tomatoes and bell peppers are added to the filling.

Taste:

A crispy crust, juicy filling, and the smoky aroma from the tandoor.

Where to try it:

In Samarkand – "Chor Tanur," in Tashkent – "Minor Samsa".

Chef's Tip: "Onions should make up half of the filling – that's what gives it juiciness. Serve samsa with tomato sauce and vinegar to enhance the flavor."

Samarkand Shashlik: *The Poetry of Fire*

What it is:

Pieces of marinated lamb or beef on a skewer, grilled over coals.

History:

A tradition rooted in nomadic culture. In Samarkand, they love "Napoleon kebab" – a beef roll with fat.

Taste:

Smoky meat, a crispy crust, and minimal marinade – just onions, zira*, and salt.

Where to try it:

In the street chaikhanas of Samarkand.

Chef's Tip: "The coals should be from apricot wood. Marinate the meat for 12 hours, and serve it with flatbread, pickled onions, and chalop*."





Manty: Clouds of Dough

History:

A dish of the Great Silk Road. In Samarkand, manty are sometimes fried, and in Fergana, lamb fat is added for juiciness.

Taste:

Tender dough and flavorful broth inside.

What it is:

Large steamed dumplings with a filling of meat, pumpkin, or herbs.

Chef's Tip: "The key is to roll the dough thinly. Serve with sour milk and caraway seeds."



Lagman: The Culinary Thread of the East, Connecting Cultures

What it is:

A hearty soup with hand-pulled noodles, stewed meat, and vegetables.

Taste:

Springy noodles, rich broth, and vibrant spices.

History:

A Uyghur dish that has become a hit in Uzbekistan. In Samarkand, lagman is prepared with potatoes and star anise; in Fergana, with eggplants and bell peppers.

Chef's Tip: "Pull the noodles by hand. Cook it in a wok – that way, the vegetables will remain crispy."

Glossary:

Achik-chuchuk – a salad made from tomatoes, onions, and herbs.

Chalop – a cold drink made from sour milk and dill.

Zira – cumin, the main spice of Uzbek cuisine.

Eating on the Streets of Tashkent: Chorsu Gluttony Row

Text by Anna Martusevich

Photos by Anastasia Ivanova

I've heard it said that, to really get to know a place,
you have to try the street food.

After five years in Tashkent, I can confirm that this is the first and foremost thing that a visitor to Uzbekistan—no matter which city—should do. I'm someone who likes to have a good, hearty meal, and over the years here, I've scoured countless restaurants and cafes looking for the best eats. But I truly found my zen wandering through Uzbekistan's deliciously smoky streets, bazaars, and flea markets, inhaling the tantalizing smells of the best food in the world. Well, apart from my mother's cutlets, of course!

Today we're heading to one of the top spots on my personal hit list: Chorsu Bazaar. The biggest, noisiest, and longest-running bazaar in Tashkent, Chorsu is a place where you can experience all the joys of Central Asia and be endlessly amazed at the stories of the people who work there. I like to call it 'Gluttony Row' because of the rows of food stalls selling all manner of delightful Uzbek dishes. It's one of



my favorite destinations in town, and the first place I take guests when they visit Tashkent.

Not much has changed at Chorsu over the last half-century, except that in the 1990s, vendors used to cook only on charcoal. Water and electricity were only installed in the 2000s. Today, meats are still grilled over charcoal, but electric cooking methods are used as well.

Come in the morning and you'll see a cross-section of Tashkent life—wholesalers, tourists, students, and people who've just arrived to Tashkent by train, bus, or plane—flocking to Chorsu for one reason: breakfast. This is the best time to visit the bazaar. By evening, almost all the food will have been sold out. (Chorsu's food stalls are open from 6am to 5pm.) You can order takeaway or sit and eat at plastic tables and chairs while enveloped by the scent of grilling shashliks.



While the food assortment looks similar at all the stalls, each vendor has their own unique take or specialty. Husband and wife Murad and Shoir, for example, have been working at the bazaar for 20 years. They weren't always vendors—Murad is a journalist who used to work for a national radio company, and Shoir is a philologist. As students, they labored in the cotton harvest for five years. That's where Murad discovered his culinary skills, having to cook plov for all his co-workers. His signature dish here at the bazaar is nokhat shurak, a delicate, slow-cooked dish of marinated lamb and chickpeas.

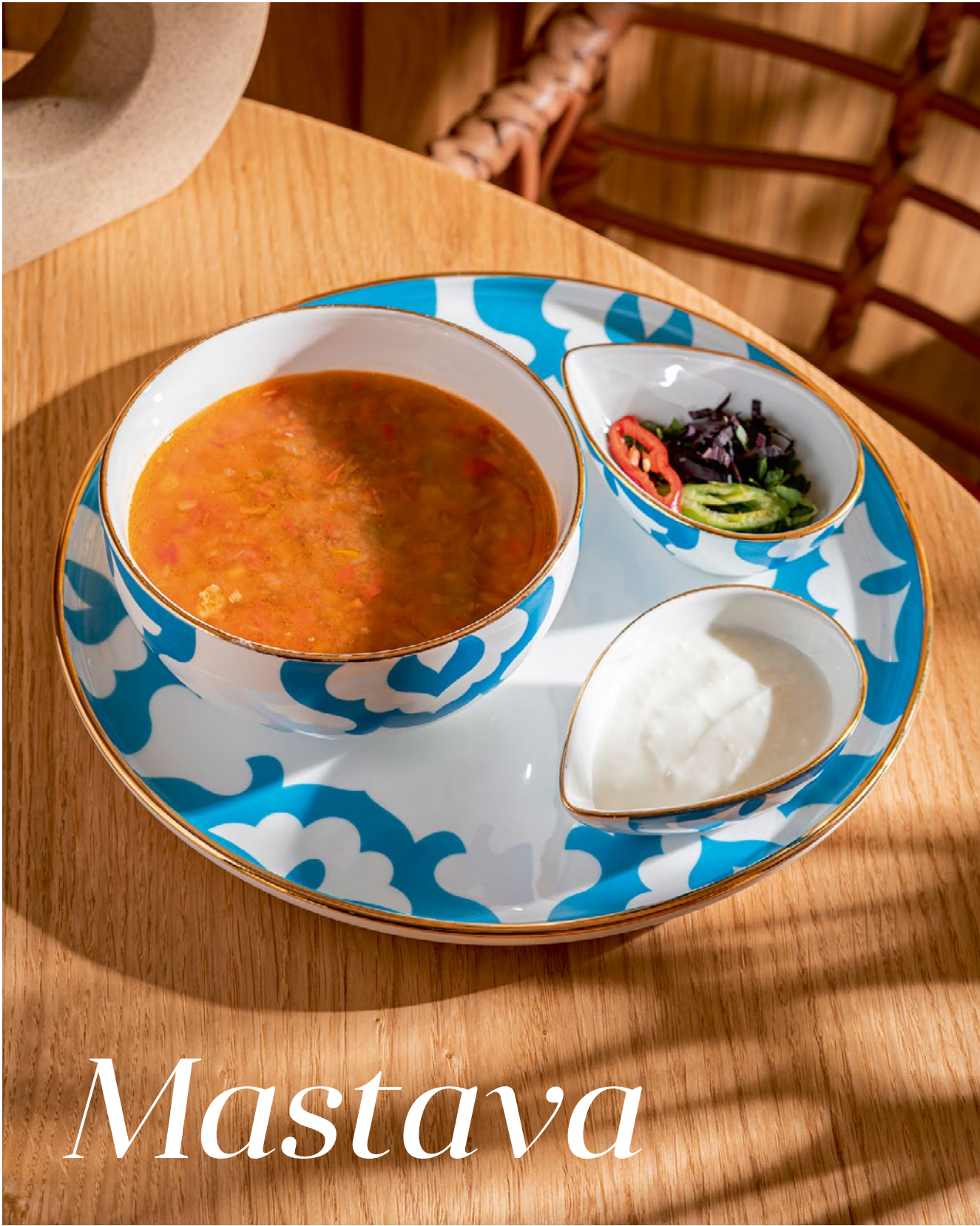
Shurpa (lamb and vegetable soup), lagman (noodles), fried catfish, hasip (homemade of-fal-and-rice sausage), shashliks, and chicken tabaka (Caucasian-style pan-fried chicken) are available from many sellers.

There are several stalls offering plov and khanum, a large steamed dumpling stuffed with potato and served with onions, herbs, and tomato sauce. While home-cooked khanum often contains meat, at Chorsu they serve only the vegetarian version. For the best khanum, head to Mashhura's stand, where she and her predecessors have been making the same recipe in the same place for over 50 years.

To find the food stalls, head to the east side of the bazaar and follow your nose. Mashhura and Murad's stalls are close to each other. Say their names to any seller in the bazaar and you'll quickly be directed to them.

I'm already looking forward to my next trip to Gluttony Row. Who's with me?





Mastava

A truly flavorful mastava begins with an exceptional broth. This recipe combines three types of meat—beef, lamb, and lamb offal—while the foundation is created from marrow bones and lamb knee joints. The bones are first roasted before being gently simmered for eight to nine hours.

For a rich, velvety broth, joints with high collagen content are essential. During the long cooking process, the water gradually transforms into a golden, silky stock that becomes the heart of the soup. About 30 minutes before the broth is ready, bay leaves, coriander seeds, and black peppercorns are added to deepen the aroma.

While the broth simmers, the meat and vegetables are prepared. Everything is cut into small, evenly sized cubes to ensure a balanced texture in every spoonful. The meat is first seared until golden, followed by onions and carrots, then potatoes, turnips, and sweet peppers. The broth is added before the rice is stirred in to finish the soup.

Spices play an equally important role. Uzbek cumin and coriander provide the distinctive fragrance that defines mastava. The cumin is traditionally rubbed between the palms just before being added, releasing its essential oils at the last possible moment for maximum flavor.

Mastava Recipe

Serves: 10

Ingredients

For the broth

- 500 g marrow bones
- 500 g lamb knee joint
- 4 L water
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 g black peppercorns

For the soup

- 300 g beef chuck
- 300 g lamb shoulder
- 300 g lamb offal
- 200 g onion
- 200 g potato
- 200 g bell pepper
- 100 g carrot
- 100 g turnip
- 100 g tomato paste
- 100 g fresh tomatoes
- 3 cloves garlic
- 100 g Alanga rice
- 100 ml vegetable (traditionally cottonseed) oil
- 5 g cumin seeds
- 5 g coriander seeds
- salt, to taste

To serve

Fresh herbs (cilantro, basil), tandoor flatbread, Dungan chili, and qattiq (Greek-style yoghurt).

Method

Roast the marrow bones and lamb joint in the oven for 20 minutes at 180°C. Transfer them to a large pot, cover with cold water, bring to a boil, then reduce the heat and simmer gently for 8–9 hours, skimming the surface regularly. Thirty minutes before the broth is finished, add the bay leaves, half of the coriander seeds, and the peppercorns. Strain the finished broth.

Dice the meat and all vegetables, except the tomatoes, into even 0.5 cm cubes. Mince the garlic and roughly chop the tomatoes.

Heat the oil in a heavy pot and brown the meat. Add the onions and carrots, cooking until softened. Stir in the potatoes, turnips, and bell peppers, cooking for about 10 min-

utes. Add the garlic and cook briefly until fragrant, then stir in the tomato paste and cook for another 2–3 minutes.

Pour in the prepared broth and simmer for 30 minutes. Season with salt, freshly ground pepper, the remaining coriander, and cumin that has been rubbed between your palms immediately before adding. Stir in the rinsed Alanga rice and cook until tender. Add the chopped tomatoes just before serving to preserve their fresh flavor.

Serve hot with fresh herbs, warm tandoor bread, Dungan chili, and qattiq or thick yoghurt.

Getting Away From It All

Remote Experiences in Uzbekistan

In a world defined by speed and constant connection, the true luxury of travel is increasingly found in silence and remoteness. Uzbekistan offers exactly that: vast landscapes, open horizons, and places where time seems to slow down. From mountain trails and desert lakes to ancient rock art and distant fortresses, these experiences invite a different way of seeing the country—one that leads you out of the cities and into the rhythm of nature.



Text by Jamshed Safarov

Photos by Marat Nadjibaev, Arina Pan,
Feruz Rustamov, Shakhodat Karimova

Head for the Hills

Uzbekistan's mountains offer a wide range of outdoor experiences, from gentle walks to demanding hikes. Just an hour's drive from Tashkent lies the village of Suqoq, surrounded by pine forests and fresh mountain air. A walk through the forest leads to the so-called Singing Cave, an at-

mospheric stop for a quiet break before continuing towards Shakhguran peak, where panoramic views open across the landscape.

For those seeking a more immersive experience, the Urungach Lakes—often referred to as “Jade Lakes”—reward hikers with striking alpine scenery. From Samar-

kand, the Urgut and Ohalik mountains offer similarly rewarding routes, combining natural beauty with a sense of deep history.

Explore Ancient Rock Art

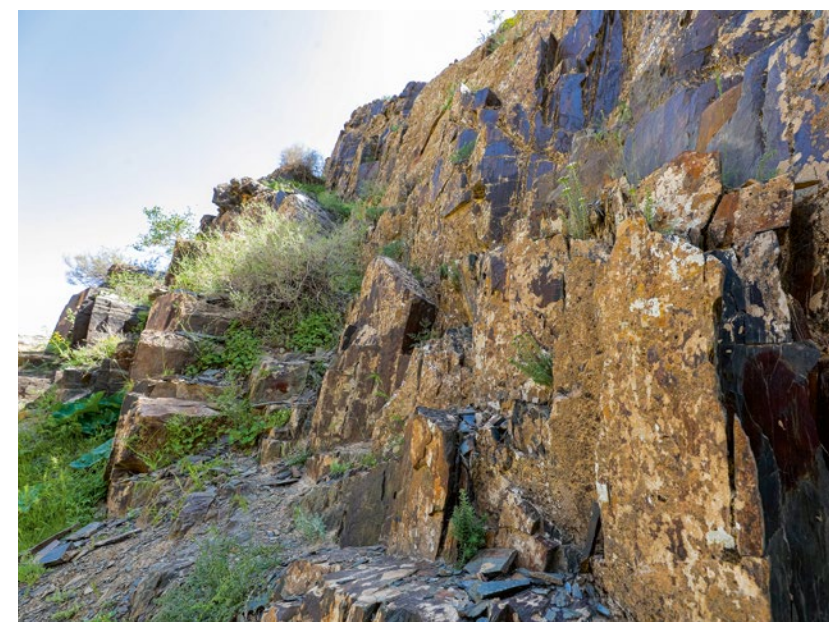
Central Asia holds some of the earliest traces of human civilization, and one of the most remarkable sites in Uzbekistan is Sarmishsay Gorge in Navoi region. Here, thousands of petroglyphs dating back to the Stone Age are scattered across the landscape.

These carvings depict animals, hunting scenes, and rituals, offering a rare glimpse into early human life. Walking through the gorge feels like moving through an open-air gallery, where history is etched on stone.

Swim in a Desert Lake

Remote and expansive, Aydarkul Lake stretches across the desert landscape, creating a striking contrast between water and sand. Surrounded by the Kyzylkum Desert, it is a place defined by stillness and an endless horizon.

Visitors come here to swim, watch birds, or simply spend time in the open air.





Nearby yurt camps offer an opportunity to stay overnight, where evenings are spent under vast star-filled skies and mornings begin with quiet views over the water.

See a Vanishing Sea

In the far west of Uzbekistan lies Muynaq, once a thriving fishing town on the shores of the Aral Sea. Today, it is a powerful reminder of the ruinous effects of human activity on the environment. The sea has largely receded, leaving behind a landscape of sand and rusting ships.

The former harbor—now known as a ship graveyard—has become both a historical site and a place of reflection. At the same time, the region is seeing gradual efforts toward ecological restoration, and Muynaq has begun to re-emerge as a destination for travelers interested in both history and environmental awareness.

Wander the Land of Fifty Castles

Karakalpakstan, vast and sparsely populated, is home to one of Uzbekistan's most unique landscapes. Besides the Savitsky Museum in Nukus, the region is known for its ancient desert fortresses, many dating back to the pre-Islamic era.

Among them, Ayaz-Kala stands out—a complex of three fortresses rising above the desert. These ruins, set against an almost otherworldly landscape, offer a sense of scale and isolation that is difficult to find elsewhere.

Uncover the Fortress of Legends

In the southern Surkhandarya region, near Termez, lies the archaeological site of Kirk-Kiz, often translated as “Fortress of Forty Girls.” While its exact origins are unclear, local legend tells of a princess and her 40 warriors who defended the land from invaders.



Wild Uzbekistan

Today, the site's quiet corridors and open courtyards create a space where history and myth coexist, inviting visitors to explore at their own pace.

Active Leisure in the City

Even within Uzbekistan's cities, open space and movement remain accessible. Tashkent's parks and green corridors—such as Ecopark and the Anhor canal embankment—offer opportunities for walking, cycling, and outdoor exercise. In Samarkand, University Boulevard remains one of the city's most pleasant routes for a leisurely stroll.

Sports and wellness have also become part of the urban lifestyle, with a growing number of studios and fitness spaces offering everything from yoga to tennis.



Go for a Ride

Horse riding is deeply rooted in Central Asian culture, and Uzbekistan offers a variety of ways to experience it. From short guided rides to multi-day treks through mountain terrain, these journeys allow travelers to connect with the landscape in a more traditional and immersive way.

Hit the Slopes

In winter, the mountains near Tashkent transform into a destination for snow-based activities. The Amirsoy resort, located a short 90-minute drive from the capital, offers skiing, snowboarding, and well-developed infrastructure set against dramatic alpine scenery.

Beyond the slopes, the experience can be atmospheric: quiet evenings, mountain air, and the sense of being removed from the pace of everyday life.

Uzbekistan reveals itself differently when approached through space and distance. Away from the main routes, the country offers not only landscapes, but a sense of perspective, one shaped by nature, history, and the quiet rhythm of place.



GO with the

Uzbekistan is blessed with rich nature, in particular its rivers, waterfalls, and green oases, which freshen up the arid climate with life-giving water. Here are some of the best places to go for a hike and a splash.

Flow



Text by Sevinch Umarova

Photos by Marat Nadjibaev, Arina Pan

Wild Uzbekistan

Koksu River

Koksu means 'blue river' in Uzbek, a name that hints at its clear mountain water. Visitors hike 15 km into this valley to see the so-called 'gap', where the river squeezes through a narrow, rocky breach.

Things to do

- Watch the sunset on the riverbank.
- Stay overnight in a tent.
- Observe the starry sky.
- Tell campfire stories with a group of friends.
- Unique features
- Tulips bloom on the rocks in spring.

Best time to visit

Spring, when it's not yet too hot but the weather is already warm, and the river is at its most tumultuous.



Start near the village of Brichmulla on Charvak Reservoir, in Tashkent region.



Karakiyasay

Karakiyasay is a mountain stream that flows down from the slopes of Mingbulak, a mountain whose name means 'thousand springs'. It eventually pours into the Chirchik River, which is the main waterway feeding Tashkent. A hike up the Karakiyasay valley leads to large boulders with hundreds of petroglyphs (rock carvings), some of which date back to the beginning of the first millennium BC.



Bostanlyk district
in Tashkent region.

Things to do

- Splash in several waterfalls.
- Admire the petroglyphs and ponder their history.
- Go fishing.
- Unique features
- There is a variety of wildlife present here, including badgers, foxes, and wolves.

Best time to visit

It's best to visit during the warm season to enjoy swimming and avoid attracting dangerous animals, which go higher into the mountains to escape the heat.

Make it happen

There are several ways to arrange a visit to any of the sights described above. The best option is to sign up for a tour, which are led by professionals who know these areas well and usually speak English. Very experienced trekkers can opt to rent a mini-bus with a driver and visit independently through perevozka24.uz, which provides drivers with an intermediate level of spoken English.

It's imperative that you wear hiking boots with good tread and solid ankle support, as some of the hikes include steep, rocky portions and uneven terrain.



What to bring

- Backpack
- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- Spare clothing and socks
- Sun hat
- 3 liters of water per person
- Lunch and snacks
- First-aid kit
- Phone power bank and charging cable
- Hiking poles

Lashkerek

The lush hills of Lashkerek were home to one of the largest known medieval silver mines in Central Asia. Today, travelers visit this valley to immerse themselves in nature, which almost feels like being in a foreign land.

Things to do

- Walk through juniper forests.
- Go swimming in the cool stream.
- Enjoy waterfall views.
- Unique features
- The slopes of Lashkerak are strewn with juniper forests, and fruit trees grow along the gorge.

Best time to visit

In spring, the weather is perfect for hiking, but it's worthwhile to visit Lashkerek in the summer as well, when the purest water flows in the river. It's also quite special to see the waterfall completely frozen in winter.



Near Angren,
in Tashkent region.



Text by Umida Qodirova

Photos by Jamshid Boyturaev

Switzerland of Uzbekistan

Stunning landscapes and clean mountain air, a variety of fauna and flora, ancient pilgrimage sites, and a unique national health resort: welcome to Zaamin National Park. Here are five reasons why you should visit.

1 Nature lovers, this is the place for you! Zaamin National Park is situated in the mountainous region of Jizzakh; you won't find a better place to experience the outdoors. It's one of the greenest regions of Uzbekistan, making the mountain air incredibly clear. With each breath, you inhale the fragrance of a variety of different flowers and herbs.

2 Zaamin spans a vast area of 268 square kilometers (26,840 ha). It's a wonderful place to learn about a variety of Uzbek plants and animals, and there are ancient places of pilgrimage as well as health resorts. Don't miss the 700-year-old hazel tree affectionately known as 'Boboyongok'. It's as huge as it is old: 20 m tall and 3 m in diameter. There is also the waterfall, which, according to legend, carries spring water with healing properties. With the help of a guide, the bravest can also descend into the depths of ancient silver mines in the National Park.

3 With its clear air and abundant plant life, Zaamin is perfect for year-round health treatments and preventions, as well as for winter recreation, giving rise to its nickname as the 'Switzerland of Uzbekistan'. Not surprisingly, therefore, it's home to the Zaamin Sanatorium, a national health resort located at an altitude of 2000 m, with the cleanest air, mountain views, and coniferous trees. The weather in Zaamin can be much colder than in neighboring regions due to the altitude and surrounding forests, so pack warm clothes even in summer.

4 One of the most striking sights in Zaamin is a set of tall red stones in bizarre shapes and sizes, located in a clearing in Kyzyl-Ataksai. Locals call this miracle of nature 'kirk kiz', which means 'forty maidens.' Peshagar Cave is located between the mountains of Takali and Kumbel and is surrounded by green shrubs. The underground road leading to the very depths of the gorge seems quite narrow and impassable due to the almost complete absence of sunlight. Due to erosion, unusual sheer walls formed in the cave. The Peshagar Cave became a popular place for tourists after the discovery of ancient artefacts, such as primitive tools and ancient petroglyphs.

5 The food across Jizzakh is delicious. The region's standout dish is the extra-large Jizzakh samsa, which can weigh almost a kilo. Another local dish that has become popular all over Uzbekistan is jizz—lamb that's boiled first and then fried in its own grease.

Practical Information



Currency & Payments

The official currency is the Uzbek som.

Currency exchange is available at banks, hotels, and official exchange offices.

ATMs are widely available, especially in city centers.

Visa and Mastercard are accepted in most:

- restaurants
- hotels
- shopping malls



Important: Cash is often required at local markets, in taxis, and at small businesses.



Climate & Clothing

Uzbekistan has a continental climate, with hot summers and cool winters.

- **Spring** (March–May) and fall (September–November) are the most comfortable times to visit. Light layers and comfortable shoes are a good idea.
- **Summer** (June–August) is very hot, with temperatures often above 95°F (35°C) and sometimes reaching 104–113°F (40–45°C). Wear light, breathable clothing, a hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen.
- **Winter** (December–February) can be cold, especially in the mountains. Warm outerwear, closed shoes, and cold-weather accessories are recommended.

When visiting mosques, mausoleums, and other religious sites, dress modestly: shoulders and knees should be covered. Women are encouraged to carry a scarf to cover their heads.



Connectivity & Internet

Mobile service in Tashkent is reliable.

Popular carriers:

- Beeline Uzbekistan
- Ucell
- Uzmobil

SIM cards can be purchased:

- at the airport
- at official mobile stores



Metro & Public Transportation

The Tashkent Metro is one of the most beautiful in the region.

- convenient for visitors
- stations feature unique architectural designs
- an affordable way to get around (card payment only)



Taxis & Transportation

Getting around Tashkent is easy and affordable. The most convenient option is to use apps:

- Yandex Go — the most popular service, with a user-friendly interface and fixed fares
- WB Taxi — a service operated by Wildberries
- MyTaxi — a local service

Tips:

- it's best to book taxis through apps
- rides around the city are generally inexpensive
- fares may be higher during morning and evening rush hours

Also available:

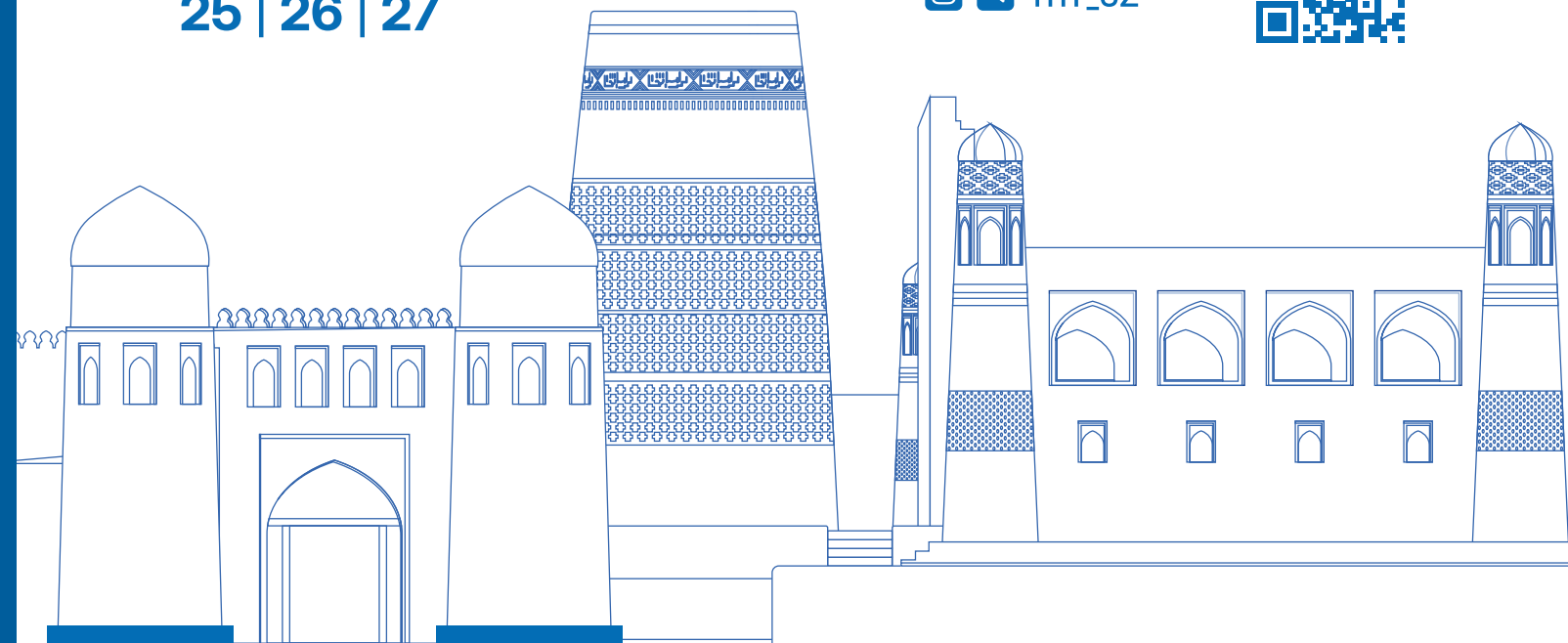
- street taxis (agree on the price in advance)



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