

workshop of Abdurakhim Mukhtarov, located in the village of Koni Gil on the outskirts of the city, produces lovely paper crafts and stationery as you watch.

Lotte City Hotel Tashkent Palace or similar

Located in the heart of the city, the updated Lotte City Hotel Tashkent Palace re-opened in 2013. The elegant hotel features two restaurants, one of them on the rooftop, serving regional and international cuisine. A piano bar, fitness center, outdoor pool, sauna and spa services round out the amenities. Rooms include deluxe beds, air conditioning, WiFi, satellite TV, minibar and hairdryer.

Meals: B L D

Day 14, Sun, Jun 23

Tashkent

Today is a full day exploring the city of Tashkent.



Today's Highlights

- Discover Tashkent
- State Museum of History
- Independence Square
- Museum of Applied Arts
- Old Town Tour of Tashkent
- Oldest Koran
- Rakhimov Family Ceramics Studio

Discover Tashkent

Although it doesn't look it today, Tashkent is one of the oldest cities in Uzbekistan. Rock paintings in the Chatkal Mountains about 50 miles away show that humans have been here since perhaps 2000 BC. In the 2nd century BC the town was known as Ming Uryuk. A major caravan crossroads, it was taken by the Arabs in 751 and by Genghis Khan in the 13th century. Tamerlane feasted here in the 14th century and the Shaibanid khans in the 15th and 16th. The Russian Empire arrived in 1865, and Uzbekistan was not an autonomous country again until 1991.

Tashkent lost much of its architectural history in a huge earthquake in 1966, and although it is an old city, most of it has been built since then. Today, the city is a jumble of wide tree-lined boulevards, oversized 20th century Soviet buildings and reconstructed traces of the old city with mud-walled houses, narrow winding lanes, mosques and madrassahs (Islamic religious schools).

State Museum of History

The State Museum of History was founded in 1876, making it one of the oldest museums in Central Asia. The extensive exhibits include artifacts and bones from the Neanderthal site at the Teshiktash caves, Bronze Age implements and weapons from Chust in the Fergana Valley, and a rich collection of Buddhist art.

Independence Square

The history of Independence Square (Mustakillik Maydoni) is revealed in the different names it has borne throughout its existence. Originally named Cathedral Square in honor of the Orthodox cathedral built here by Konstanin Kaufman, the first Russian Governor-General of Turkestan, it became Red Square in 1917. In 1966 it was designated Lenin Square, and it was not until 1992 that it became Independence Square.

Enter the spacious park-like square through a silver arch embellished with white storks. The golden globe of the Monument of Independence, constructed in 1991, sits above the 20-foot Happy Mother statue, who gazes lovingly at her child, the future of Uzbekistan. Among the fountains and flower beds other, sadder, mother figures wait for their sons around an eternal flame that honors the many Uzbeks who perished during WWII. On the outskirts of the square are Tashkent's administrative and government buildings.

Museum of Applied Arts

Browse the Applied Arts Museum. A wealthy czarist diplomat to Turkestan admiring Uzbek architecture, Alexander Polovtsev built a traditional mansion in 1898 and invited artisans from Samarkand, Bukhara and Fergana to decorate the interior. Featuring the painted carved plaster called ganche, carved wood, and tile work, the house itself is a main attraction. Exhibits include the Uzbek embroidered wall coverings called suzani, ceramics, jewelry, rugs, and musical instruments.



Old Town Tour of Tashkent

Explore Old Tashkent, beginning with a visit to Khast-Imam Plaza, with its 16th century Kaffal-Shoshi Mausoleum and al-Bukhari Madrassah; Chorsu Bazaar with its 16th century Kukeldash Madrassah; the recently renovated Juma Mosque on the square where executions used to be held; and Sayilgoh, a pedestrian street where one can shop for art and souvenirs. Dip down underground to admire the beautifully decorated Tashkent subway stations.

Oldest Koran

The Uthman Koran, considered by Sunni Muslims to be the oldest Koran in the world, is safeguarded in the library of the Tillya Sheikh Mosque in the Muy Muborok Madrassah, where several of Mohammed's hairs are said to have been enshrined. Written on calfskin some time after the death of Mohammed, the manuscript is believed to have been compiled in Medina by Uthman, the third caliph of Islam. (Shi'a Muslims believe that Uthman's successor, Ali, was the first true caliph, and his version of the Koran is held to be the only true version.) Only a third of the manuscript remains, about 250 large



pages bound into a huge book. It has been inscribed onto the UNESCO Memory of the World Register. The experience of viewing this 7th century sacred document is a powerful one.

Rakhimov Family Ceramics Studio

The acclaimed private studio of the Rakhimov family offers stunning examples of ancient traditional Uzbek ceramics – many of them previously displayed in Europe and Japan. Alisher Rakhimov is a sixth-generation Uzbek ceramicist whose family has been making pottery since the 1790s. He and his father, Akbar, have made an extensive study of the history and methods of Uzbek ceramics, with a scholarly emphasis on the period from the 2nd century BC to the 15th century AD. The massive work of their father/grandfather (Mukhitdin Rakhimov), "Artistic Ceramics of Uzbekistan," is considered a fundamental must-read for anyone desiring to learn about these ancient Uzbek styles and techniques; for his life's work Mukhitdin was awarded the prestigious Soviet-era title of People's Artist of the USSR.

Following in the footsteps of their ancestors, Alisher and Akbar are adept in ancient glazing and dyeing techniques, reproducing the golden ceramics of the Surkhandarya style and the stamped decorations of the Kashgari region. The father-son artistic duo has revived the lost art of natural dye use, teaching contemporary Uzbek ceramicists their rediscovered techniques. In true Uzbek hospitality, enjoy fragrant tea and sweets while conversing with Alisher and Akbar about their art and passion for preserving and passing on their family's prized ceramics legacy.

Overnight at Lotte City Hotel Tashkent Palace or similar

Meals: B L

Day 15, Mon, Jun 24

Tashkent • Fergana

Start the day transferring from Tashkent to the Fergana Valley by train. You will be met by bus to visit several stops in the valley before arriving at the hotel in the evening.

Today's Highlights

- **Discover Kokand**
- **Palace of Khudayar-Khan**
- **Rishton Ceramic Master's Workshop**

Discover Kokand

Kokand was first mentioned by Arab travelers in the 10th century as an oasis town on the trade route between India and China. Kokand was known throughout history as a prosperous trading and religious center and during the 19th century, it was the centerpiece of a powerful khanate stretching from the Fergana Valley to the southern Kazakh steppes.

Palace of Khudayar-Khan

The Palace of Khudayar-Khan was built between 1863-1873. At the time of its construction, it was one of the most luxurious palaces in Central Asia. Only 27 of the original 113 rooms have survived around six beautifully restored courtyards. Today the former palace is the Kokand Regional Studies Museum.

Rishton Ceramic Master's Workshop

The village of Rishton is famous for its ceramics. There is evidence of earthenware in the foothills of the Alai Range dating back one thousand years. Pottery became prominent in this region due to the unusual amount and excellent quality of locally accessible raw materials – red clay and pigments made of minerals and mountain grasses.



Modern Rishton ceramics are characterized by elaborate floral and geometric designs in bright blue and green hues painted on a creamy white background. The skills used to produce Uzbek ceramics have been passed down father-to-son for countless generations.

Asia Fergana Hotel or similar

Located within walking distance of the town center, the pleasant modern Asia Fergana Hotel features an indoor and outdoor restaurant serving Uzbek and European cuisine, WiFi in the public areas and a swimming pool. Rooms include air conditioning, satellite TV and minibar.

Meals: B L D

Day 16, Tue, Jun 25

Fergana

Continue exploring the Fergana Valley with stops to enjoy a silk tour and visit a silk factory.

Today's Highlights

- **Discover Fergana**
- **Margilan silk tour**
- **Margilan Silk Factory**

Discover Fergana

The city of Fergana is the newest settlement in the Fergana Valley, established in 1876 as a Russian garrison town under General Mikhail Skobolev. Located in the southern Fergana valley near the 16,000-foot Alai Mountains, Fergana can in places feel more Russian than Uzbek. Its first settlers were encouraged to plant trees, and today it has the reputation of being one of the greenest cities in Uzbekistan. The first building was the fortress, which still stands in the downtown part of the city.



Margilan silk tour

About 13 miles out of Fergana is the old town of Margilan, known as a center of silk production since the 9th century. A survey of the town includes a stop at Al-Margilony Park and the local bazaar, said to be one of the most authentic in the valley.

Margilan Silk Factory

Visit this now famous center of silk textile production. The workshop uses natural dyes to produce stunning pieces using traditional Uzbek ikat designs. Silkworms are raised here on mulberry leaves.

Overnight at Asia Fergana Hotel or similar

Meals: B L D

Day 17, Wed, Jun 26 **Fergana • Tashkent**

Today we will transfer back from Fergana to Tashkent on a morning train. After check into the hotel, the day is free for you to explore Tashkent independently. Gather in evening for the farewell dinner.

Overnight at Lotte City Hotel Tashkent Palace or similar

Meals: B L D

Day 18, Thu, Jun 27 **Depart Tashkent**

Following breakfast at the hotel, flights times permitting, there will be a transfer to the airport for international departures.

Meals: B

(This itinerary is subject to change.)

Tour pricing:

\$8,695 per person in a double occupancy
(\$1,050 Single supplement)

To book this tour, please contact Matt Welton: mwelton@uchicago.edu or call 773-834-9777.
\$1,500 per person is required for a tour deposit.

Final payment is due by April, 24, 2024.

Cancellations received after the final payment date will result in penalties according to the following schedule:

Cancellations between 44 and 31 days out are penalized at 50% of the cost of the trip

Cancellations at 30 or fewer days out are penalized at 100% of the cost of the trip

International airfare to and from your point of origin is not included in the tour price. All international airfare within the tour dates is included in the tour price.