



THE  
**ORIENTAL  
INSTITUTE**  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



**The Silk Road: A Journey  
through Time in Central Asia**  
Led by Gil Stein  
May 8-26, 2018



## Program Highlights

- Explore UNESCO-listed Nisa, once a major center of the ancient Parthian Kingdom, on an expert-led walking tour.
- Visit Bronze Age archaeological sites dating back to around 2000 BC, at the foothills of the Kopet Dag Mountains around Ashgabat.
- Drop in at the ghost town of Muynak, formerly the Aral Sea's biggest fishing port.
- Discuss current Central Asian political and economic affairs with specially invited local speakers and guests.
- Participate in an exclusive meeting with the Senior Advisor for Bukhara's Ark Museum.
- View the Uthman Koran in Tashkent, considered by Sunni Muslims to be the oldest Koran in the world.
- Discuss ongoing humanitarian projects with representatives of a local Tajik NGO in Khujand.
- Discover eight different UNESCO Sites in 18 days.

## Tour Leader: Gil Stein

Gil J. Stein is Professor in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Senior Advisor to the Provost for Cultural Heritage, and former Director of the Oriental Institute (2002-2017) at the University of Chicago. He received his PhD in Anthropology from the University of Pennsylvania in 1988. For over 25 years he has excavated and surveyed in Turkey, Syria and Iraq. He is the author of a wide variety of scholarly books and articles and the recipient of many academic honors.



**Land Program Rate: \$7,695**

(per person based on double occupancy)

**Single Supplement: \$1,100**



**Included:** All accommodation, hotel taxes

• Meals per itinerary (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner) • Arrival/departure transfers for

passengers arriving/departing on scheduled start/end

days for passengers arriving/departing on the recommended group flight • Internal airfare from Merv to Ashgabat and Ashgabat to Dashoguz • All overland transportation per itinerary by private vehicle

• Special cultural events and extensive sightseeing, including entrance fees • English speaking Tour Manager throughout the itinerary Welcome and farewell dinners • Baggage handling at the hotels • Gratuities to the Tour Manager, local guides and drivers • Uzbek visa support • Comprehensive pre-departure packet

**Not Included:** International round trip airfare to Ashgabat/from Dushanbe. Our tour operator MIR Corporation can assist with reservations • Travel insurance • Meals not specified as included in the itinerary • Personal items such as telephone calls, laundry, excess baggage fees

**Air Arrangements:** Program rates do not include international airfare to Ashgabat/from Dushanbe. Because of the global nature of our members and patrons, there is no group flight for this program. Information on a recommended flight itinerary will be sent by our tour operator upon confirmation.

**What to Expect:** This trip is moderately active due to the substantial distances covered and the extensive walking and stair climbing required; parts of the tour will not always be wheelchair accessible. To reap the full rewards of this adventure, travelers must be able to walk at least two miles a day (with or without the assistance of a cane) and stand for an extended period of time during walking tours and museum visits. Flexibility and a willingness to accept local standards of amenities and services are highly recommended as delays or changes in the itinerary are likely.

**Reservations and Payments:** Please mail the completed registration form with check (payable to MIR Corporation-Trust) or credit card information to our tour operator MIR Corporation to the address on the reservation form. Balance of payment for all land and air costs is due by March 9, 2018, 60 days prior to departure. Payment of balance due by check or bank transfer only.

**Cancellations and Refunds:** All cancellations must be made in writing to MIR Corporation and the following cancellation charges will apply: Cancellations received 61 or more days before departure, deposits paid or due in full of \$500 per person; those received 31 days to 60 days before departure, 50% of land tour cost per person; those received 30 days or less before departure, no refund. Refunds cannot be made to passengers who do not complete the full tour for any reason at all. UC Oriental Institute and our tour operator MIR Corporation reserve the right, without penalty, to withdraw the tour announced (i.e., cancel a tour). MIR Corporation reserves the right to decline to accept any person as a participant in a tour, or to require any participant to withdraw from a tour at any time at his/her own expense, when such action is determined by tour staff to be in the best interest of the health, safety, or general welfare of the tour group or of the individual participant, and subject only to the requirement that the recoverable cost of unused services and accommodations be refunded, if any.

**Note:** Neither UC Oriental Institute nor MIR Corporation accepts liability for any airline cancellation penalty incurred by the purchase of a non-refundable ticket in connection with this tour. It is recommended that you not purchase international flights until instructed by MIR Corporation.

**Single Travelers:** We make every effort to match single travelers who request a roommate. However, shared accommodations cannot be guaranteed and a single supplement rate will apply.

**Insurance:** MIR Corporation can assist with medical/evacuation and trip cancellation/interruption insurance for U.S. residents only.

**Responsibility:** A detailed statement of limitations and exclusions of liability of UC Oriental Institute and MIR Corporation for loss of property, injury, illness or death will be provided to passengers upon enrollment and is available to prospective travelers upon request. A signed release of liability/assumption of risk agreement is required for trip participation.



# Day by Day Itinerary

## May 9-10

### Arrive Ashgabat, Turkmenistan • Nisa

Arriving in the capital of Turkmenistan, note its modern marble and gold monuments. Head out of town to explore the World Heritage Site of Nisa, capital of the ancient Parthian Kingdom, led by a local archaeologist. *Hotel Oguzkent or similar (B, L, D)*

## May 11

### Ashgabat • Merv via archaeological sites

Drive to the UNESCO-listed ruins of Merv; the earliest of its five ancient cities is attributed to Cyrus the Great. Examine historic sites such as Namazga-Depe, where excavations have revealed six distinct periods dating back to the fifth millennium BC. *Mary Hotel or similar (B, L, D)*

## May 12

### Merv • Ashgabat

Explore the fortress town of Gonur-Depe, once a thriving urban center of the mysterious Bronze Age “Oxus Civilization.” Archaeologists have uncovered thousands of graves, both human and animal, and a royal tomb. Catch a short flight back to Ashgabat. *Hotel Oguzkent or similar (B, L, D)*

## May 13

### Ashgabat • Dashoguz • Nukus, Uzbekistan

Fly to Dashoguz, then drive to the Uzbek border, stopping at the Turkmen UNESCO Site of Kunya-Urgench. The remains of the old city include the 11th-century Kutlug-Timur Minaret, ringed with 18 bands of decorative mud brick and blue majolica tiles. Visit the necropolis of Mizdakhan, whose oldest grave mounds date back to the 2nd century BC. Arrive in the small Uzbek city of Nukus, capital of the autonomous region of Karakalpakstan. *Jipek Joli Hotel or similar (B, L, D)*

## May 14-15

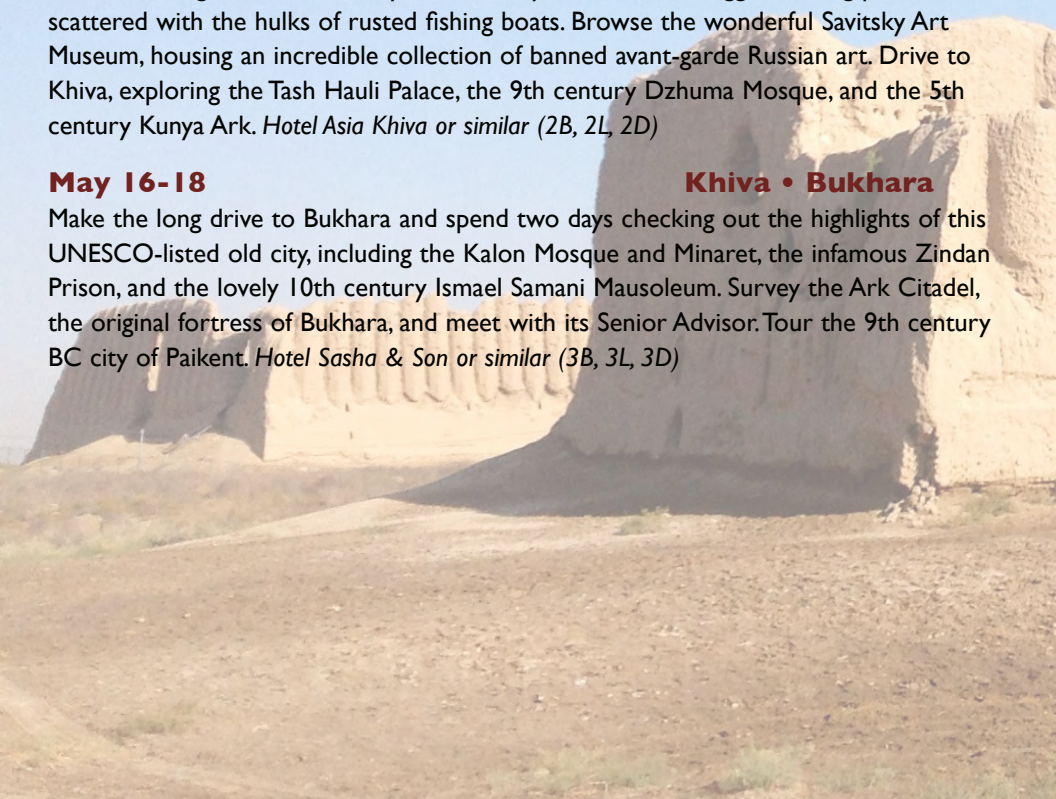
### Nukus • Muynak • Khiva

Discover the ghost town of Muynak, formerly the Aral Sea’s biggest fishing port, now scattered with the hulks of rusted fishing boats. Browse the wonderful Savitsky Art Museum, housing an incredible collection of banned avant-garde Russian art. Drive to Khiva, exploring the Tash Hauli Palace, the 9th century Dzhuma Mosque, and the 5th century Kunya Ark. *Hotel Asia Khiva or similar (2B, 2L, 2D)*

## May 16-18

### Khiva • Bukhara

Make the long drive to Bukhara and spend two days checking out the highlights of this UNESCO-listed old city, including the Kalon Mosque and Minaret, the infamous Zindan Prison, and the lovely 10th century Ismael Samani Mausoleum. Survey the Ark Citadel, the original fortress of Bukhara, and meet with its Senior Advisor. Tour the 9th century BC city of Paikent. *Hotel Sasha & Son or similar (3B, 3L, 3D)*





For more information or to register, contact:  
Nathan Cox at MIR Corporation  
(877) 535-9815 / [nathan@mircorp.com](mailto:nathan@mircorp.com)

### **May 19-20**

### **Bukhara • Samarkand via Shahrisabz**

On the way to Samarkand, stop to admire the UNESCO-listed Ak Saray in Tamerlane's home town, Shahrisabz. In the World Heritage Site of Samarkand, explore the majestic Registan, the Bibi Khanum Mosque, built by Tamerlane for his favorite wife, the Shah-i-Zinda mausoleum complex, Ulug Bek's Observatory, one of the most advanced of the ancient world, and Gur-Emir Mausoleum, the tomb of Tamerlane. Enjoy dinner at a private home. *Emir Han Hotel or similar (2B, 2L, 2D)*

### **May 21**

### **Samarkand • Tashkent**

Hop a train to Tashkent, and explore this leafy capital city, including the remains of the Old Town. View the Uthman Koran, considered by Sunni Muslims to be the oldest Koran in the world, written on deerskin 19 years after the death of Mohammed. Admire the 16th century Kukeldash Madrassah, on a hill above the Chorsu Bazaar, which spills out from its tiled dome. *Lotte City Hotel Tashkent Palace or similar (B, L, D)*

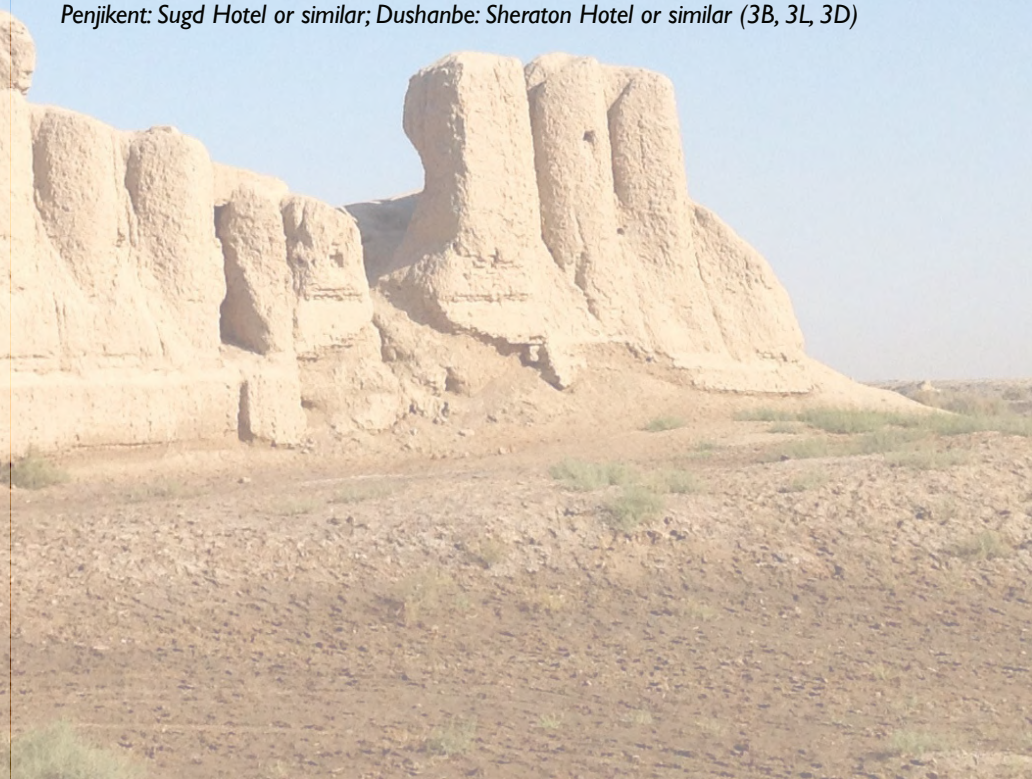
### **May 22**

### **Tashkent • Khujand, Tajikistan**

Cross the Tajik border and drive to Khujand. Visit the Timurlalik Fortress, the Muslihidden Madrassah, and the Sogdian Museum. Meet representatives of a local NGO over dinner. *Hotel Sugd or similar (B, L, D)*

### **May 23-26 Khujand • Istaravshan • Penjikent • Dushanbe**

Explore Istaravshan, founded in the 6th century BC by Cyrus the Great. Continue to Penjikent, and the site of an archaeological dig at Old Penjikent. Visit Tajikistan's first UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Proto-Urban Site of Sarazm, which reached its apex near the beginning of the Bronze Age. In Dushanbe, Tajikistan's capital, browse the Museum of Antiquities, whose centerpiece is a huge 5th-century Reclining Buddha, from the same Kushan civilization that produced the Bamiyan Buddhas. *Penjikent: Sugd Hotel or similar; Dushanbe: Sheraton Hotel or similar (3B, 3L, 3D)*





# THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE

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Chicago, Illinois 60637

Please mail the completed registration form with check (payable to MIR Corporation-Trust) or credit card information to MIR Corporation, 85 S Washington St. Suite 210, Seattle, WA 98104. Balance of payment for all land and air costs is due by March 9, 2018, 60 days prior to departure. Payment of balance due by check or bank transfer only. Space is limited. Reservations will be processed in order of receipt, subject to availability.

The enclosed non-refundable deposit of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (\$500 per person) to hold \_\_\_\_\_ place(s).

☐ Enclosed check, payable to MIR Corporation-Trust   ☐ Visa   ☐ Mastercard   ☐ American Express   ☐ Discover

Credit card number \_\_\_\_\_ Exp date \_\_\_\_\_ CVC \_\_\_\_\_

Billing Address (if different from mailing address) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of cardholder \_\_\_\_\_

Full name #1 (as listed in passport) \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Full name #2 (as listed in passport) \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address (no PO boxes please) \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (Home) \_\_\_\_\_ (Work/Cell) \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please note preferences:

☐ I am traveling alone and prefer a single room wherever available at the single supplement rate (\$1,100).

☐ I will share accommodations with \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I would like to share with a   ☐ Non-smoker   ☐ Smoker (shares are not guaranteed)

International airfare is not included in the tour price. Information on the recommended flight itinerary will be sent by our tour operator upon confirmation.

Please send me a recommended air itinerary and fare estimate between my home city \_\_\_\_\_ and Ashgabat/ departing Dushanbe in: ☐ Business class   ☐ Economy class

**For more info, contact MIR Corporation by phone (877) 535-9815 or email [nathan@mircorp.com](mailto:nathan@mircorp.com).**