

Help Sheet to Design a Tour for a Group Interested in the History of the Medieval Silk Road

Silk Road(s):

Learn more about the importance of the Silk Road trade, which cultures were connected, and how ideas (of religion, culture, science) spread along them. Some great Silk Road cities are in Uzbekistan: especially Samarkand and Bukhara.

How to research the topic:

Look up the history of the Silk Road and particularly the history of medieval Central Asia. Consider what great cultural ideas/influences (in art, architecture, religion, language, and culture) came into the area from other places and how those influences mixed with local traditions to make a vibrant culture. Which cities in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan became especially important centers of trade and culture? When and by whom were they built?

Planning your itinerary:

Find out which historical buildings, museums, and monuments to important people to visit. Also, look at examples of cultural diffusion (ideas, culture that have spread from one place to another). Which interesting ideas in food, architecture, or culture are shared with people from other parts of the world? (How can your travelers experience some of these? Look also at the spread of religious ideas and peoples outside their homeland (Muslim, Buddhist, or Hindu sites – as these religious started in other parts of the world; Jewish communities in Central Asia). Look at how Turkic (such as Uzbek, Kazakh) and Persianate (such as Uzbekistan's large Tajik minority) peoples and languages are intermingled. Explain why your selected sites/experiences are important to see.

Travel from place to place:

In planning your itinerary, you can take short regional flights to get to or from big cities that are far apart (e.g. from Nur-Sultan to Almaty or Tashkent). Be sure to check on Kayak.com or some other site to see if there are flights between cities that you want to visit. Remember that you don't want to waste time on travel from place to place, so find direct flights. Also, check into the high speed, very modern train system that connects some cities within Uzbekistan. In planning your itinerary, you must somehow strike a balance so that your travelers can see as many places as possible but not so many places that they spend all their time traveling without enough time to see things.