

ASIA · HISTORY · ARCHITECTURE · CULTURE · FOOD · SACRED SITES



Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan holds the finest Silk Road cities in Central Asia. Samarkand's Registan ranks among the world's great public squares, Bukhara's old centre still works like a medieval trading town, and Khiva stands intact inside its mud-brick walls. Fast trains link them, the food is hearty and cheap, and hospitality is generous.

 Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Uzbekistan and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 19 March 2026.

 CAPITAL Tashkent	 CURRENCY Uzbekistani som (UZS) £1 ≈ UZS 15,938	 LANGUAGE Uzbek, Russian Tajik	 BEST TIME Mar–May, Sep–Nov
 DAILY BUDGET £30–£150 ££ Moderate	 PLUGS Type C, F 220V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 6h 30m direct ~£350–£700 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+5 standard time

Uzbekistan sits at the heart of the old Silk Road, and its classic route almost plans itself. Fly into Tashkent, take the high-speed train to Samarkand for the Registan, Shah-i-Zinda and Gur-e-Amir, continue to Bukhara's ancient centre of madrasas and trading domes, then cross the Kyzylkum Desert to Khiva, a walled town of minarets near the Turkmen border. Ten days covers this loop comfortably. With more time, add the Fergana Valley's silk and ceramics workshops, village homestays and desert yurt camps around the Nuratau mountains, or far-western Nukus for the Savitsky Museum.

Tourism has boomed since the country began opening up after 2016, and the main sights are polished and busy in spring and autumn, yet prices stay low: good guesthouses, train tickets and plov lunches cost little. Summer is fiercely hot in Bukhara and Khiva, and winter is cold but quiet. Expect a mix of Soviet-era bureaucracy and modern convenience, with card payments and taxi apps spreading fast. It suits history and architecture lovers on any budget. Visitors are often surprised by the warmth of the welcome, how many people want to chat, and how good the bread is.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

ARCHITECTURE

Registan, Samarkand

Three monumental madrasas, built between the 15th and 17th centuries, face each other across Samarkand's central square in a blaze of turquoise and gold tilework. Visit early, return for the evening light, and step inside Tilya-Kori's gilded mosque.
- 2

HISTORY

Bukhara old city

A living medieval centre of madrasas, covered trading domes and the 12th-century Kalyan Minaret, which Genghis Khan reputedly spared. Eat beside the Lyabi-Hauz pool, and visit the Ark fortress and the tiny 10th-century Samanid Mausoleum.

3

HISTORY

Khiva's Itchan Kala

A complete walled inner town of mud-brick ramparts, turquoise minarets and khans' palaces, and the first site in Uzbekistan on UNESCO's list. Climb the Islam Khodja minaret, and stay inside the walls to enjoy it after the day-trippers leave.

4

CULTURE

Savitsky Museum, Nukus

A remote desert city's world-class museum, holding a huge collection of Soviet avant-garde art rescued from the censors by Igor Savitsky. Combine it with the ship graveyard at Moynaq on the shrunken shore of the Aral Sea.

5

CULTURE

Fergana Valley crafts

Uzbekistan's fertile, densely populated east, where Margilan's Yodgorlik factory still weaves ikat silk on traditional looms and Rishtan's potters make the country's famous blue-glazed ceramics. Trains from Tashkent tunnel under the Kamchik Pass.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Tashkent

≈ 3.1 million people

Central Asia's biggest city is mostly Soviet boulevards rebuilt after the 1966 earthquake; ride the palatial metro, browse Chorsu Bazaar and see the ancient Quran at the Khast Imam complex.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Samarkand

≈ 880,000 people

Timur's capital: the Registan's three tiled madrasas, the blue-domed Gur-e-Amir and the Bibi-Khanym Mosque deserve at least two days, with Siab Bazaar for bread and dried fruit.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Namangan

≈ 710,000 people

A conservative, fast-growing Fergana Valley city with leafy parks and the Mullah Kyrgyz madrasa; a useful base for the valley's craft towns, though short on headline sights.

Ranked by urban-area population where available. Figures are rounded estimates, and sources define city limits differently, so rankings of similar-sized cities can vary.

When to go to Uzbekistan

Best time: **Mar–May, Sep–Nov.**

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

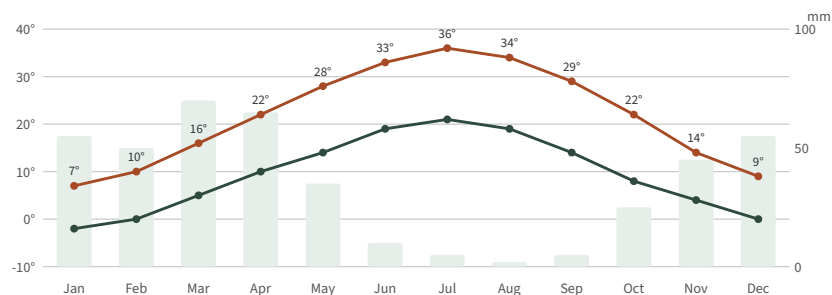
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Tashkent

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Mar	Navruz Persian New Year on 21 March, celebrated with music, dancing, family feasts and sumalak, a sweet wheat-sprout paste stirred through the night in huge cauldrons.
May–Jun	Silk and Spices Festival Bukhara's annual crafts festival, usually held in late May or June, fills the old city with textiles, embroidery, ceramics, dance performances and street food.

How much does Uzbekistan cost?

SHOESTRING £30 per person / day ≈ UZS 478,147 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £70 per person / day ≈ UZS 1,115,677 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £150 per person / day ≈ UZS 2,390,737 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

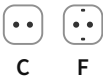
Plov The national dish: rice slow-cooked in a huge kazan with lamb, carrots, onions and cumin, traditionally eaten at lunchtime when plov centres fire up their giant cauldrons.	Samsa Flaky pastry parcels of lamb, onion and fat, slapped onto the walls of a tandoor oven to bake and sold hot from street stalls everywhere.	Lagman Hand-pulled noodles served in a rich broth or stir-fried with lamb, peppers and tomatoes; a Uyghur-influenced staple in every chaikhana.
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Getting around

Uzbekistan Railways' fast Afrosiyob trains link Tashkent with Samarkand in two to two and a half hours and continue to Bukhara; a few faster trains a week and slower services reach Khiva, and regular trains serve the Fergana Valley. Book on the railway's website or app, as seats sell out. Domestic flights serve Urgench (for Khiva) and Nukus. Yandex Go works for taxis in the main cities, and shared taxis fill the gaps.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



220V — bring a UK-to-C/F adapter

DIALLING CODE

+998

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Ambulance: **103**

Fire: **101**

Police: **102**

A new unified emergency services number, **112**, was introduced in **2024** to cover all emergency calls. The previous emergency numbers are still in operation.

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

TIME ZONE

UTC+5 (standard time)

TAP WATER

Not safe — drink bottled or treated water

DRIVING

On the right

TIPPING

Many restaurants add a 10–15% service charge; otherwise round up or leave around 10%. Tip guides and drivers, and caretakers who unlock minarets or rooftops.

ETIQUETTE

Never place bread upside down or throw it away. Dress modestly at mosques and mausoleums, remove your shoes when entering homes, and greet elders with a hand on your heart.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Islam Karimov Tashkent International Airport (TAS), Tashkent; Samarkand International Airport (SKD), Samarkand; Urgench International Airport (UGC), Urgench

Visas & entry for Uzbekistan

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can visit Uzbekistan without a visa for tourism or business for up to 30 days.

If you're travelling for any other purpose, or intend to stay longer than 30 days, check the requirements with the Uzbek Embassy in the UK.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A

Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Hepatitis B

Measles

Rabies

Tuberculosis

Typhoid

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Uzbekistan

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Tue 8 Dec 2026

Constitution Day

Thu 31 Dec 2026	Day off (substituted from 12/12/2026)
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Mon 8 Mar 2027	Women's Day
Tue 9 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Sun 21 Mar 2027	Nowruz
Mon 22 Mar 2027	Nowruz (observed)
Sun 9 May 2027	Day of Memory and Honour
Mon 10 May 2027	Day of Memory and Honour (observed)
Sun 16 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Mon 17 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (observed, estimated) (date may shift)
Wed 1 Sep 2027	Independence Day
Fri 1 Oct 2027	Teachers and Instructors Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Uzbek

ENGLISH	UZBEK	SAY IT
Hello	Assalomu alaykum	<i>ah-sah-LOH-moo ah-LAY-koom</i>
Thank you	Rahmat	<i>rah-MAHT</i>
Please	Iltimos	<i>il-tee-MOS</i>
Excuse me	Kechirasiz	<i>keh-chee-rah-SEEZ</i>
How much is this?	Bu qancha turadi?	<i>boo kan-CHA too-rah-DEE</i>

Know before you go

Book Afrosiyob tickets as soon as your dates are fixed; trains between Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara regularly sell out in spring and autumn.

Cards now work in many hotels and city restaurants, but carry some in cash for bazaars, taxis and small guesthouses; ATMs are common in Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara.

Use Yandex Go rather than hailing cars in Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara: the fare is fixed in the app, and you avoid haggling with drivers who rarely speak English.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.