

The Revival of the Great Silk Road

The Great Silk Road is rightly considered to be one of the remarkable achievements of the ancient civilizations. For the first time in the history of mankind it has connected different countries and nations from the Mediterranean to the Pacific Ocean, has combined their material, art and spiritual cultures. For many centuries on this route people were interchanging handicrafts, technologies, ideas and beliefs.



The historians date back the origin of the Great Silk Road at its full extension to the second half of the 2nd century B.C., when the Chinese diplomat and spy Chjan Tzyan originally introduced to his countrymen Central Asia – then unknown region located in the West.

The Great Silk Road had a considerable impact on the formation of political, economic and cultural order of the countries located along these routes. Time and again this region underwent predatory and internal wars; powerful and small states appeared and collapsed; former capitals gave way to new ones.

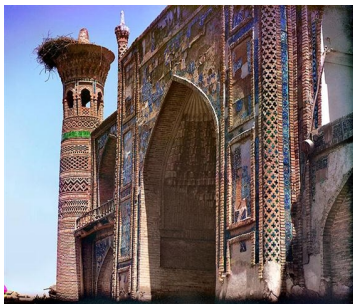
Landmarks and Cultural Heritage

The sights related to the Silk Road are scattered over several countries. In Uzbekistan alone there are more than four thousand ancient monuments, including those whose age exceeds 1000 years. Here one can find such treasures of the world culture as the Mausoleum of Ismail Samani and Minaret Kalyan in Bukhara, built in the 10th – 12th centuries, Registan square in Samarkand, Buddhist temples in Dalverzintepe and Fayaztepe and a lot more. According to the UNESCO decision the historical centers of Samarkand, Bukhara, Shakhrisabz, the complex of Ichan–kala in Khiva are included in the World Heritage List.

Among the historical landmarks on the Great Silk Road are such cities as the ancient Merv, located in Turkmenistan and called by Arab historians the "father of the cities", the majestic construction of Amir Timur epoch – the mausoleum of Hodja Ahmad Yassavi in the Kazakh town of Turkestan, the monuments on the territory of Iran – the ruins of ancient Elama, Chogi–Zembil, a well–known complex of Meydan–Imam in the centre of Isfahan, Tahte–Suleyman settlement with its Zoroastrian temple dedicated to the goddess Anahit.

The routes of the Great Silk Road also crossed South Caucasus – Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan. The UNESCO World Heritage List was supplemented with the names of cathedrals and monasteries of

Echmiadzin, temple of Zvartnots in Armenia, cathedrals of Sveti-Tshoveli and Bagraty and Ghelaty monastery ensemble in Georgia, the old urban ensemble with castle of Shirvanshah and Maiden's Tower in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan.



The Great Silk Road, however, is renowned not only for its man-made monuments, but also for ample spiritual heritage, including folklore. Just as famous are the Georgian polyphonic singing called "shakrullo", the cultural wealth of Boysun Region in Uzbekistan, other spiritual values illustrating the prime and development of various cultures throughout the whole length of Great Silk Road. At present UNESCO patronizes all of them.

Mountains and Rivers

The Great Silk Road however is not only the network of caravan trails and a number of cities and towns which used to be stopping places for traders. It is also a magnificent scenery: mountain peaks and alpine meadows of the Tien-Shan and the Pamirs, sandy deserts intersected by a unique handmade construction – the Karakum Canal, glittering waters of Lake Issyk-Kul and relic pine forests of Borovoye, skiing resorts of Chimgan and Beldersay, picturesque Charvak water reservoir, nut groves in Arslanbob tract and a number of other notable places to visit. Those who fancy extreme tourism could try their strengths by mountaineering, down-stream boating or rafting on the rapid mountain rivers, or, just as ancient pilgrims did, to make a horseback riding or even more exotic camel riding along desert dunes.

The Silk Road Today

Great Silk Road today is one of the most attractive tourist routes. It is much due to the revival of the Great Silk Road that the mankind has access to the global heritage of different nations that for thousands of years lived along this great transcontinental arterial road and that formed and matured their varied cultural wealth.

A rather important mission in reviving the Great Silk Road is assigned to the World's Tourism Organization (UNWTO), which has been implementing a long-term tourist project aimed at the promotion of tourism in this region.



The Great Silk Road as a tourist product has many peculiarities. Unlike classical tour, which implies the touring of one separate country, it is a transnational tour, where a traveler is given an opportunity to visit several countries at a time and to learn about the past and the present of these countries.

All of the landmarks along the route like many other historic monuments are major tourist attractions and are visited by crowds of travelers all the year round. At the service of tourists there are comfortable jet planes, high-speed buses, fast trains, developed infrastructure and comfortable hotels.

The Great Silk Road has luckily escaped the common lot of many ancient roads, known in the past but well forgotten today, as for instance 'Via Appia' – a road in ancient Rome. Today the Great Silk Road has been called for by the world community and experiences its rebirth, its renewed popularity. And for all those who take the routes of the Great Silk Road – the road of communication between the East and the West, we say: "Have a good trip on the Silk Road!"

<http://www.silkroad.travel>

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