

# Uzbekistan between Myths and Reality

## Uzbekistan, hmm... = Afghanistan and Pakistan?

Uzbekistan as a republic and as a unique and distinct nation exists only since 1924, the time of creation of “New Asia” or the manufacturing of nations by the soviet government (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan etc.). Therefore, from the etymological point of view, the phenomenon of “uzbekistan” has appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century.



The truth is that when mentioning Uzbekistan most of western people have no idea where the country is located mixing up Uzbekistan with Afghanistan or Pakistan.

Uzbekistan in the south borders with Afghanistan, a beautiful country looking for peace, which is still uncertain. In addition, northern Afghanistan has a relatively stable level of security. Mostly populated by uzbeks, northern Afghanistan is also the region that differs ethnically from the rest of the country. The people are very hospitable, in spite of their past life in many conflicts and wars.

The name “Uzbekistan” derives from the name given to the dominant ethnic group of the region: the uzbeks. The suffix of the name has its origin from the persian word “stan” (“country”, “place”). Uzbekistan thus means “The Land of Uzbeks”. The same rule applies to the other countries such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan etc.

## Uzbekistan = The Heritage of the USSR?

Carried by the peaceful wind, the sun tells a tremendous love story. That of Alexander the Great.

That of Genghis Khan. That of Turks, Arabs and Persians. That of Russians and their boundless passion for this region of Central Asia. Each of these love stories has left its mark without erasing its predecessors. Significantly each has played its positive or negative role, this is the history. We accept it, we appreciate it.

The 70-year dominance of communism left its mark on Uzbekistan and its people, but also in the minds of western people. As a result the western point of view perceives Uzbekistan as an old satellite country of the former USSR with kolhoz, sovkoz, huge military parades, KGB agents etc.

Such stereotypes are sticking to the cultures for a long time, but unfortunately they also exert a great influence on public opinion. The fabulous historical heritage and the countless mixing of populations that have occurred in Uzbekistan since ancient times decidedly open the door to wisdom.



This year Uzbekistan is celebrating its 20th anniversary of independence. What a great path it traversed throughout these years! It is well known that after having obtained the independence in 1991 Uzbekistan has chosen its own model of development. The political, economic and social reforms have been made. The State has become the main actor who initiates progressive, social oriented changes. We must objectively evaluate all the advances of the young independent state that has great potential and real opportunities for its development.

### **Uzbekistan = Samarkand?**

My observations show that the majority of French speaking people associate the country with Samarkand, a name that makes you dream of turquoise domes, colorful markets and fragrant spices, camel caravans, great adventures...

Samarkand, a key step on the Silk Road narrated by Marco Polo, described by Amin Maalouf in

his novel titled "Samarkand" is a city in the perfect setting for tales of the Arabian Nights. For some people, visiting Samarkand became the aim of life.

I have great affection for Samarkand, my hometown, however, the magnificent and majestic Samarkand is not all Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan is a country of high culture, that is deeply rooted in centuries of history of Central Asia. Throughout its history Uzbekistan has been a bridge between the East and the West between the peoples and nations, a crossroad of ancient roads, a meeting place for men through all their linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds.



Moreover Uzbekistan is a home of hospitable and friendly people, inquisitive and ready to offer the best of their self with ease. They will ask you to take pictures of them and as prize you'll see smiles on their faces. It is a welcoming country, because after all these years of isolation, the Uzbeks seize upon every opportunity to welcome new friends from afar.

Uzbekistan is a country rich in natural resources - there is the cotton, also Mourountaou gold, uranium in Navoi, a good production of oil and gas, and also the ancestral people with their know-how in agriculture and trade.

The greatest chance of Uzbekistan is that the current developments make it a sanctuary, a refuge of peace. Hopefully in the near future Uzbekistan will be recognized by its official name not only in favor of cotton, gas, turquoise domes, etc., but with the sparkling eyes and soothing smiles of Uzbeks who will welcome you with the open heart!

One look at this wonderful country and you will become its spiritual prisoner forever.

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Date: 2012-01-05

Article link:

<https://www.tourism-review.com/travel-tourism-magazine-myths-and-reality-in-uzbekistan-article1724>