

# Uzbekistan: Remarkable Heritage Despite Unstable Politics

Uzbekistan is one of the most compelling republics in Central Asia. It has a rich culture, stretches of rolling desert, a tumultuous history and a stunning architecture that marks its importance along the ancient Silk Road. Even though Uzbekistan may not offer the undiscovered feel of the neighboring Kyrgyzstan, there is a good reason why many tourists visit the popular sites in this country.

Uzbekistan is the best country to tour if you want to see the majestic marketplace mosques and buildings of the Silk Road era. When standing in a square in Bukhara, you can imagine how the place looked centuries ago when caravans and merchants arrived in town from far off regions.



Even though Uzbekistan has a rich history, its political past is not that steady. It gained independence in 1991 when the Soviet Union broke up and has been ruled by President Islam Karomov since then. Many people consider Uzbekistan to be the most corrupt country in Central Asia and one of the most corrupt in the world. However, this is not a reason for you not to visit the region. You can still travel comfortably and safely through Uzbekistan. The following are the cities you should not fail to visit.

## Samarkand

Samarkand is a great tourist destination since its historic Silk Road sites are scattered throughout the otherwise modern city. The ancient Registan, which is situated in the middle of the city, is iconic, impressive and listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Registan is magnificent and enormous. It is the ideal place to take holiday photos. In Samarkand, you can stay in a conventional bed and breakfast that is a short walk from the Registan or flashy departmental stores.



## Bukhara

Bukhara is the other great trading city that lies along the ancient Silk Road. Its historical center is listed as a World Heritage Site. The most popular ancient sites in Bukhara are mainly situated in its small Old Town. Therefore, you can explore all the ancient sites in this city if you stay in one of the inns in the Old Town. You can spend your time walking through the market stalls set up on the attractive Silk Road buildings. You can also buy traditional trinkets to act as souvenirs and chat with local shop owners as you drink tea. After seeing the historical sites, you can visit other parts of Bukhara to experience the modern Uzbekistan. There are many restaurants that mainly serve plov. This is a traditional pilaf dish of Central Asia, which is considered to be one of the best foods in the country.



## **Khiva**

Khiva lies 470 kilometers west of Bukhara but it is one of the places that you should not overlook when viewing attractions along the ancient Silk Road. Khiva is also listed as a World Heritage site by UNESCO. Its historical center is situated in Ichon Qala, which is a walled inner town in the city. You can tour Ichon Qala and most of the contemporary city of Khiva on foot.

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