

# THE MYSTICAL BEAUTY OF SAMARKAND



Ancient charm of once great cities is always an attraction hard to resist. Tourists who are devoted admirers of cultural heritage of old civilizations have another hot destination to visit. Its greatest asset is the fact that the 'hungry' travelers have not yet started to pour in. The Uzbek Samarkand is very true to its reputation as one of the historically most exciting cities in the world.

Its history goes back some 2,750 years. It is one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world; its fame and prosperity once came from its crucial position - Samarkand lay on the famous Asian Shadow of the Silk Road. It used to be one of the major hubs for merchants traveling to Europe and back.

This advantage naturally turned the city into an important strategic article - its colorful history only confirms it. Initially conquered by Alexander the Great, the city started to flourish. Consequently, the Arabs resumed control, as did the Mongol Genghis Khan and eventually, the great Timur the Lame (Tamerlane) made Samarkand the capital of his vast empire. It was this impressive emperor who changed the face of the city. In 35 years, he managed to basically build a new city and being a patron of the arts also made sure the esthetic effect of Samarkand would be absolutely stunning.

Today, Samarkand is the second largest city of Uzbekistan. Even though many of its original charming architectural treasures are long lost, much still remains to overwhelm the visitors. The majestic mosques, medressahs and mausoleums create a very believable atmosphere of the great past which still amazes anyone at first sight.

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