Travel with The Met

Arts & Traditions Along the Silk Road: Celebrating Nowruz in Central Asia
with Dr. Helen C. Evans, Curator Emerita, Byzantine Art

March 12–26, 2022
Dear Members and Friends of The Metropolitan Museum of Art,

Each year on the spring equinox, more than 300 million people worldwide celebrate Nowruz (Persian New Year), a 3,000-year-old festival meaning “new day” in Farsi. As Nowruz festivities enliven the streets of Central Asia, join me in March 2022 for two weeks along a fascinating stretch of the legendary Silk Road in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. A cultural crossroads between East and West, this region holds ancient treasures once revered by Genghis Khan and Alexander the Great, later concealed behind the Iron Curtain.

As a Byzantine art scholar who has led previous tours along these historic pathways, I am excited to introduce you to these countries’ superb art, marvelous blue-tiled mosques, Buddhist and Zoroastrian temples, medieval Jewish quarters, and spellbinding landscapes. With spring flowers, including Central Asia’s native tulips, in bloom, we will behold the region’s marvelous natural beauty. We will also visit private family homes to participate in Nowruz traditions not often experienced by travelers.

We will begin in the ancient Uzbek city of Tashkent, a former Silk Road trading post, to tour an excellent museum, wander a vibrant bazaar in the company of an award-winning chef, and meet an Uzbek ceramicist whose family has created wonderful pottery since the 1790s. We will travel to the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva, unforgettable cities dotted with kaleidoscopic mosques, centuries-old madrassas, and opulent monuments. In Samarkand, a phenomenal highlight will be exclusive after-hours access to the ornately decorated tomb of Mongol conqueror Amir Timur (Tamerlane), led by the director. We will conclude amid the domes and towering minarets of Ashgabat, where we will marvel at a diverse array of intricately designed Turkmen carpets in a magnificent museum.

I hope you join me for this once-in-a-lifetime journey during a wondrous time of spring celebration.

Sincerely,
Dr. Helen C. Evans
Curator Emerita, Byzantine Art
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

**Trip Highlights**

— Immerse yourself in the ancient traditions of Nowruz (Persian New Year) in Bukhara, visiting private family homes to participate in elaborate ceremonies not often seen by travelers, and gather for a memorable dinner of sumptuous delicacies

— Follow in the footsteps of Marco Polo and ancient traders along a fascinating stretch of the legendary Silk Road, discovering art and architectural treasures in timeless Central Asian towns, and experience unsung history in medieval Jewish quarters

— Join the director for exclusive, after-hours access to the opulent tomb of Mongol conqueror Amir Timur (Tamerlane) in fabled Samarkand, marveling at the blue-glazed mosaics of the vault walls and the spectacular rosettes on the dome

— Observe extraordinary artisans at work in private studios and workshops, including a sixth-generation Uzbek ceramicist whose family has created stunning works of art since the 1790s and a master marionette-maker creating traditional Uzbek puppets before your eyes

— Explore ancient Afrasiab, a vast city destroyed by the Mongols and one of the world’s largest archaeological sites. Marvel at ceramics, jewelry, and colorful murals from palaces excavated from ruins on an exclusive tour of the site’s museum in the company of a local archaeologist

**Traveling with You**

Dr. Helen C. Evans is Curator Emerita, Byzantine Art, formerly the Mary and Michael Jaharis Curator of Byzantine Art in the Department of Medieval Art and The Cloisters at The Met. Her exhibitions—including *Armenia!* (2018), *Byzantium and Islam* (2012), *Byzantium: Faith and Power* (2004), and *The Glory of Byzantium* (1997)—have explored the importance of Byzantine art and its connections beyond its borders as far as China. Dr. Evans received her B.A. with Honors from Newcomb College of Tulane University and her M.A. and Ph.D. from The Institute of Fine Arts, New York University.

State Museum of Applied Arts of Uzbekistan, Tashkent
Photos clockwise from top left: Regional map; Ertuğrul Gazi Mosque, Ashgabat, photo by Costas Tavernarakis; Chorsu Bazaar, Tashkent; photo by Dr. Thomas Liptak; Shah-i-Zinda Complex, Samarkand; photo by LBM1948; Ismail Samani Mausoleum, Bukhara; photo by Helen C. Evans; Khast Imam Square, Tashkent; photo by Martha de Jong-Lantink; Bolo Hauz Mosque, Bukhara. Front cover: Registan Square, Samarkand, photo by Ekrem Canli. Back cover: Bukhara, Uzbekistan (top); Hanging, early 19th century. Silk embroidery on cotton; couching, chain, satin, and buttonhole stitches. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1907 [07.72] (bottom).
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Tashkent / Samarkand
Wednesday, March 16
Take a high-speed train to the legendary Silk Road city of Samarkand. Discover Registan Square and three centuries-old madrassas, including one of the earliest Islamic astronomical observatories. Admire the tombs and mausoleums of the Shah-i-Zinda complex. Guided by the director, enjoy exclusive, after-hours access to Gur-e-Amir, the ornate, turquoise-domed tomb of Timur. Return to the illuminated Registan Square before dinner at a local restaurant this evening. B, L, D

Bukhara
Sunday, March 20
Visit the 10th-century Ismail Samani Mausoleum, the Chashma Ayub Mausoleum, and the Bolo Hauz Mosque. Lunch today includes a class on making plov, a meaty rice dish. After lunch, visit the Ark Citadel, former residence of Bukhara’s rulers; and see the infamous Zindan Prison. Next, visit the open-air plaza of the Po-i-Kalyan. Marvel at the surrounding 12th-century structures, including the Kalon Mosque and Minaret. In the Old Town, relax over dinner amid colorful hand-embroidered suzani (needlework) tapestries at the Laziz House. B, L, D

Samarkand
Thursday, March 17
Drive to the archaeological site of Afrasiab. Explore the Afrasiab History Museum on an exclusive tour led by a local archaeologist. Before lunch, return to Samarkand to visit the Ulugbek Observatory, one of the most advanced observatories in the ancient world, built by Timur’s grandson. After lunch, continue to a bakery and a paper-making workshop. See the vast, 15th-century Bibi Khanum Mosque. Tour the adjacent Siab Bazaar, one of the largest and oldest markets in Uzbekistan, and the old Jewish quarter. In the evening, enjoy a performance of traditional Uzbek dances. Savor dinner in a private family home. B, L, D

Samarkand / Penjikent, Tajikistan / Samarkand, Uzbekistan
Friday, March 18
Drive to ancient Penjikent in Tajikistan. On a ledge above the new town, discover the ruins of an important Sogdian trade center. Visit two Zoroastrian temples from the medieval city of Shakristan. Over lunch, learn about how NGOs are contributing to the development of Penjikent. In the new town, visit the Rudaki Museum, admiring its collections including Sogdian artifacts and frescoes from the archaeological site. Drive back to Samarkand for dinner. B, L, D

Samarkand / Bukhara
Saturday, March 19
Board a high-speed train to Bukhara, and tour the historic UNESCO-listed center. Visit the mausoleum of Sufi mystic Bahauddin Naqshband. After lunch, roam the Lyab-i Hauz, a plaza with a charming pond, madrassa, and a Sufi cloister. Watch the creation of traditional Uzbek puppets by a master marionette-maker at a private studio. In the 12th-century Jewish quarter, enter an age-old synagogue. Venture to the top floor of the Shukhov Water Tower, and enjoy drinks and hors d’oeuvres with panoramic views of old and new Bukhara, followed by dinner. B, L, D
Khiva
Wednesday, March 23
Explore Khiva’s Old Town, Ichon Qala (inner city), a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Marvel at the exquisitely decorated Tash-Khauli Palace and the 115 carved wooden columns of the Djuma Mosque. Visit the 12th-century Kunya-Ark Citadel, with its richly tiled mosque, harem, and throne room, and peer into the Kheivak well, said to have been discovered by Noah’s son Shem. Conclude at the turquoise-domed shrine to Khiva’s patron saint Pahlavan Makhmud, a 14th-century poet. Tonight, bid farewell to Uzbekistan with a special dinner.

B, L, D

Ashgabat
Friday, March 25
In the beautiful Kopet-Dag Mountains, discover UNESCO-listed Nisa, once the center of the Parthian Empire. Upon return to Ashgabat, visit the white marble Ertuğrul Gazi Mosque, built in honor of Ertuğrul, the father of Osman I, the founder of the Ottoman Empire. Continue to the Turkmen Carpet Museum, which displays gorgeous carpets, kilims, costumes, and one of the largest hand-knotted carpets in the world. While there, attend a private lecture on the varied Turkmen carpet and textile patterns. Enjoy a traditional Turkmen dinner at the hotel this evening.

B, L, D

Accommodations
Hyatt Regency Tashkent
DiliMah Premium Luxury Hotel, Samarkand
Boutique DEVON Hotel, Bukhara
Bek Khiva Hotel
Oguzkent Hotel, Ashgabat

Program Rate
$9,699 per person, double rate
$10,799 single rate

Rate Includes
— Thirteen nights accommodations as per itinerary
— Meals as indicated in the itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, R=Reception, D=Dinner); bottled water, soft drinks, juices, and coffee/tea with all meals; house wine at welcome and farewell dinners
— Internal economy-class flight (Dashoguz/Ashgabat)
— High-speed train rides (Tashkent/Samarkand, Samarkand/Bukhara)
— Airport/hotel/airport group transfers for all participants on suggested flights
— Escorted sightseeing by private motor coach; entrance fees for included visits
— Enrichment program of lectures and special events
— Taxes, service, and porterage charges; gratuities to local guides and drivers

Not included in rate
International airfare; passport/visa fees; meals not specified; alcoholic beverages other than noted in inclusions; personal items and expenses; airport transfers other than for those on suggested flights; excess baggage; trip insurance; any other items not specifically mentioned as included.

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Reservation Form

To secure your reservation, please call Arrangements Abroad at 844-TRVLMET (844-878-5638); or complete this form and return it with your deposit of $1,000 (fully refundable until 120 days prior to departure), to be paid by debit card, credit card, wire transfer, or check payable to Arrangements Abroad Mail to: Arrangements Abroad, 1040 Avenue of the Americas, 23rd Floor, New York, NY 10018-3721.

Name(s) in full. Please print.

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City    State  Zip

Telephone (home)     (business)
Fax

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Accommodations
Hotel room preference □ One bed □ Two beds □ Single
I wish to share a room with

Signature (required)

Date

For additional information, please call 844-TRVLMET (844-878-5638) or to opt out from receiving mail, email travelwiththemet@metmuseum.org
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