Silk Road: Wild Mountains, Fabled Towns
Kyrgyzstan & Uzbekistan

Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan may be Central Asian neighbours, but they couldn’t be more different. For while Kyrgyzstan is a land of epic mountain scenery and semi-nomadic shepherds, Uzbekistan is home to the atmospheric towns of Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva, probably Central Asia’s most revered Silk Road trading centres. Starting in the mountains of Kyrgyzstan we’ll visit great friends of ours, including Jergal, the caretaker of the medieval caravanserai in Tash Rabat. We’ll spend much of our time in traditional yurts and will be introduced to the ways of mountain life on the Old Silk Road, before driving on to the ancient city of Osh. From here we will cross the border into Uzbekistan and travel on to see the fabled cities of Khiva, Bukhara and Samarkand where merchants still ply their wares in the shadow of some of the world’s greatest architectural achievements. If you like to really get beneath a region’s surface, rather than simply travel through it, this is the trip for you.

“What a great trip! A hilarious group and a poetic balance between wild mountains, locals who welcomed us like old friends, dazzling architecture and romantic legends of the Silk Road cities...” Richard Guy

Duration: 16 Days
Average group size: 5 - 12
Start: Sat 13 Aug 16
Finish: Sun 28 Aug 16

Looking for alternative dates? Check the website or give us a call

WILD FRONTIERS Adventure Travel Ltd Tel: +44 (0) 20 7736 3968 Fax: +44 (0) 20 8741 3610
Email: info@wildfrontierstravel.com Website: www.wildfrontierstravel.com
TOUR DETAILS

TOUR CODE: WMF/C

HIGHLIGHTS

- Visiting the shepherds at Son Kul
- The stunning mountain scenery of the Tien Shan
- The Silk Road Caravanserai of Tash Rabat
- Travelling the Fergana Valley
- The amazing architectural sights of Khiva, Bukhara and Samarkand

Accommodation: As an overall ethos, wherever possible we aim to use characterful accommodation that enhances the overall travel experience, not just offers a bed for the night. This can obviously vary dramatically from country to country and from trip to trip. On this trip we will generally be in small hotels and guesthouses with Western-style en suite bathrooms, and also in yurts and homestays with basic communal facilities and no showers! Please note there are usually up to 6 people sharing a yurt, although most have cot beds provided, and toilets here are of the “long drop” variety. Please note that the accommodation mentioned in the itinerary is intended as a guide only and is always subject to availability.

Transport: On this tour we will use minibuses in Kyrgyzstan and coaster buses and cars in Uzbekistan, as well as a regional flight.

Climate: The weather conditions can be extremely varied on this trip. In the mountains of Kyrgyzstan you will often be travelling at heights in excess of 3000m and even in the middle of summer it can turn bitter with snow falling. At the same time mercury in the thermometers of Bukhara can be nudging 40 degrees.

Is this trip for me? It may sound obvious but Wild Frontiers tours are not always for everyone and it is important to us that the tour you choose is the most suitable. Please therefore take time to read the dossier carefully. All our tours are graded to give an overall picture of the trip but these are only guidelines and you should check the daily itinerary. Should you have any concerns about your ability to partake in any aspect of the tour then please contact the office.

Adventure Rating ★★★★★★★★
Comfort Grade ★★★★★★★★★
Fitness Level ★★★★★★★★★
Cultural Interest ★★★★★★★★★

Additional Comments:

Please be advised that on this trip vegetarians can be catered for, but the selection and variety may be limited.

Anyone in a reasonable state of health, with an open mind and a sense of adventure should be perfectly able to cope with this tour, as many of the walks and rides are optional. It should be noted that whilst in Kyrgyzstan you will be staying in yurts and homestays for much of the time, so you should be prepared for long-drop toilet facilities and no showers for this part of the trip. But don’t panic too much – this is genuine adventure travel and your overall experience will easily make up for the lack of modern conveniences, plus accommodation in Uzbekistan is considerably more comfortable!
Day 1: Tour starts in Bishkek: The tour will begin this afternoon at our hotel in Bishkek, one of the world’s more relaxed capitals. We will head out this evening to enjoy a local dinner and get to know each other a little. 

_Asi a Mountains Guesthouse or similar (D)_

Day 2: Bishkek - Son Kul: This morning we will make a short walking tour to see the main sights, before heading out of the city to Son Kul, the spectacular 3000m mountain lake used as summer pastures for many local shepherds. En route we will have a chance to visit the restored 11th century Burana Tower and we’ll stop in Kochkor village for lunch at a family-run handicraft centre. Arriving late afternoon in Son Kul, we will be welcomed to our yurt camp and enjoy a traditional dinner, and maybe the odd vodka toast!

_Son Kul Communal Yurts (B,L,D)_

Day 3: Son Kul: Today we will walk or ride (optional and payable locally) up into the hills looking for petroglyphs and enjoy the mind-blowing views over the lake. Those wishing to can hang out at the camp and enjoy some down time, with a chance to watch the plethora of bird life. Or you might like to visit the local shepherds and try a taste of kumis (fermented mare’s milk). We may also get the chance to see some traditional Kyrgyz horse games today.

_Son Kul Communal Yurts (B,L,D)_

Day 4: Son Kul - Tash Rabat: In the morning we’ll take a beautiful drive on to Tash Rabat, the famous ancient Silk Road caravanserai, where we will spend the next two nights. We’ll stop on the way in Naryn to visit the town and enjoy a local lunch. Having checked in to our yurt camp later this afternoon, we’ll have a chance to look around the caravanserai. Dinner will be provided by the family of Jergal, the caretaker of the caravanserai, whom Wild Frontiers have been staying with for over a decade.

_Yurt Camp (B,L,D)_

Day 5: Tash Rabat: Today is free to explore the stunning mountain surroundings. The walking in this area is wonderful and those wishing to ride (optional and payable locally) can also do so. We might head up towards the 3,500m Tash Rabat Pass or follow another beautiful circular route, or you could just do your own thing. This valley, just 35km as the crow flies from the Chinese border, is lush and green, groaning with horses, yaks and sheep and the nomads who live by them. We will take a packed lunch with us, as the ride or walk can take most of the day. This evening we’ll have a traditional dinner again with our friends.

_Yurt Camp (B,L,D)_

Day 6: Tash Rabat - Kazarman: Today we have a long drive but through some really stunning mountain scenery. We’ll stop en route for a picnic lunch and the odd photo opportunity. Arriving in the small village of Kazarman this evening, we’ll stay with a local family and enjoy their home-cooking.

_Kazarman Homestay (B,L,D)_

Day 7: Kazarman - Osh: This morning we’ll drive over Kaldama Ashuu pass (3062m) with some amazing views and stop...
in Jalalabad town for lunch with a local family. We then continue on to the ancient city of Osh, where we’ll have a chance for some sightseeing this afternoon. We’ll visit Solomon’s Throne - Suleiman Too - the rock that looms over the city and is an important Muslim pilgrimage site protected by UNESCO. Tonight we’ll stay in the wonderful home of our good friend Imanjan and enjoy a traditional dinner and hospitality.

Osh Homestay (B,L,D)

Day 8: Osh - Kokand (Uzbekistan): Today we make the short drive to the Duslik border, say farewell to our Kyrgyz team and go through formalities to enter Uzbekistan. Here we will be met and driven through the Fergana Valley, an incredibly fertile region that was the breadbasket of the Central Asian USSR and is still one of the wealthiest parts of the whole region. Our first stop today will be in the town of Margilon, centre of the still thriving silk trade in the area, where we’ll see the entire silk-weaving process from cocoon to end product. We will also visit nearby Rishton, renowned for its blue and green ceramics, before reaching Kokand where we spend the night.

Khudayar Khan Hotel or similar (B,L,D)

Day 9: Kokand - Tashkent - Khiva: After a chance to visit the 19th century Palace of Khudayar Khan this morning, we will drive in cars through the mountains to reach Tashkent. From here we’ll take a short flight to Khiva and check in to our hotel for the next two nights, in the heart of this UNESCO protected old town.

Orient Star Hotel or similar (B,L,D)

Day 10: Khiva: There’ll be ample time to soak up the atmosphere of Khiva today, wandering around the quiet streets of this wonderfully preserved Silk Road city. We’ll visit some of the most colourful and sumptuous sites, including the Kukhna ensemble and to take plenty of memorable photographs.

Malika Prime Hotel or similar (B,L,D)

Day 11: Khiva - Bukhara: Today we’ll take a drive across the Kyzyl Kum Desert towards Bukhara, crossing the famous Amu-Darya River (Oxus) en route. Arriving late this afternoon, we’ll check into our traditional-style guesthouse superbly located in the Labi Hauz region, the 17th century pool and eating area. There will then be time to take a first wander around the old town before enjoying dinner in a local restaurant.

Sasha & Sons Guesthouse or similar (B,L,D)

Day 12: Bukhara: Today we have all day for sightseeing. We will start at the Ismaili Samani mausoleum, and continue via the Jama Majid (or the mosque of forty pillars) to the Arc where Connolly and Stoddard - two luckless British officers - met their deaths while playing the Great Game. From here we will visit (and climb if you wish) the Kolan Minaret and the beautiful mosques and madrassas that lie beneath it. En route there is silk weaving, knife making and metal engraving to witness. After lunch the afternoon will be free to wander through the quiet, mellow streets and maybe explore the handicraft shops in this most characterful of the old Silk Road towns, and we have not included dinner tonight to allow you to explore by yourselves.

Sasha & Sons Guesthouse or similar (B,L)

Day 13: Bukhara - Samarkand: After breakfast we’ll drive along the Royal Road to the famous Silk Road city of Samarkand, stopping during the 4-hour journey to view the remains of an old caravanserai. After checking into our hotel we will make our visit to the Registan, the public square that is the heart of historic Samarkand and a particularly beautiful sight at sunset. There will be plenty of time to explore the three madrassahs that make up the ensemble and to take plenty of memorable photographs.

Malika Prime Hotel or similar (B,L,D)

Day 14: In Samarkand: We have all day in this amazing town, wandering through the gargantuan sights. In the morning we will visit Tamerlane’s tomb, followed by the Bibi Khanym mosque and the town’s excellent bazaar. In the afternoon we will visit the Shah-i-Zindar - the street of the dead, and then take some free time to explore this city at our leisure. Dinner will be at a local restaurant.

Malika Prime Hotel or similar (B,L,D)
Day 15: Samarkand - Tashkent: This morning we will drive back to Tashkent where there’ll be time for some sightseeing in this city that once played a pivotal role during the Great Game between the expanding 19th century British and Russian Empires. We plan to visit Kukeldash Madrassah, Kaffal Shashi Mausoleum, Barak Khan Mosque on Khasty, and the Museum of Fine Arts. Tonight we’ll have our final dinner together and reflect on our journey.

City Palace Hotel or similar (B,L,D)

Day 16: Tour ends in Tashkent: The tour ends after breakfast today, although those on the suggested group flights will depart in the early hours of the morning before breakfast.

(B)

Extensions: If you have more time available, why not arrive early to adjust to a new time zone or just to get a feel for the country before your tour starts? Or alternatively you might choose to allow a few extra days after the tour to relax or to undertake some further exploration.

The choice is completely yours and we can usually arrange anything from simply additional accommodation and transfers to full tailor-made itineraries.

Here is just a small sample of what you could do:-

See more of Uzbekistan with possible extensions out to the Aral Sea, the Fergana Valley, or experience a homestay option in the Yangikishlok region.

Please contact the office for more details and to discuss your individual requirements.

PRICING

Tour price: All our tours are priced on a land-only basis, giving you maximum flexibility when deciding how to get to and from your tour. For the latest prices, please refer to our website or contact the office.

Travelling Solo & Single Supplements: As a company approximately 70% of our clients are solo travellers, so it’s very unlikely you’ll be alone!

Our prices are typically based on twin-share accommodation but single supplements are not compulsory for any Wild Frontiers tour. If you prefer not to pay a single supplement we’ll pair you with someone else of the same sex for you to share with throughout the trip.

On this trip, if you do opt to pay for a single supplement then please note that it will cover you for all nights of the tour except while staying in the yurts and homestays in Kyrgyzstan.

Please remember that all Wild Frontiers tour prices mean NO hidden extras, NO local payments and NO compulsory single supplements.

WHAT IS INCLUDED?

- Full services of a Wild Frontiers Tour Leader with local guides and drivers
- Meal plan as detailed in the itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- with drinking water as required with the majority of meals being taken in local restaurants where viable
- All transport as outlined in the itinerary.
- All accommodation
- All entrance fees, as per itinerary
- A carbon-offsetting contribution to Carbon Clear (if booking international flights through WF office)

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED

- Visas (if applicable)
- Local airport taxes
- Tips (always optional, but some guidance will be given in the pre-departure information pack you’ll receive after booking)
- Beverages other than drinking water & any costs of a personal nature
- International flights to/from the start/finish of the trip
- Airport transfers (unless booking suggested flights through WF office)
GETTING THERE

For this trip our suggested flights from the UK (subject to change) are:

12 AUG SU2585 LHR-SVO 22:45/04:30 +1
13 AUG SU1880 SVO-FRU 08:05/15:10
28 AUG SU1871 TAS-SVO 04:50/07:05
28 AUG SU2578 SVO-LHR 10:05/12:05

Key:
LHR - London Heathrow
SVO - Moscow
FRU - Bishkek
TAS - Tashkent
SU - Aeroflot

NB If you wish to arrange your own flights you are completely free to do so and in this case we can arrange any transfers or supplementary accommodation that you may require.

Please note that if you are planning on making your own flight arrangements, we recommend that you first check with us to see if the trip is guaranteed. We then suggest that you purchase flights that are flexible and ideally refundable as due to the nature of adventure travel, itineraries and destination accessibility can change at any time. For more information, please refer to our booking conditions.

Insurance: Insurance that provides cover for emergency repatriation in case of a medical emergency is compulsory for all tours. You should be aware that due to some of the geographical areas visited and some of the activities included on certain of our trips some standard insurance policies may not always provide adequate cover. As such we strongly recommend that you purchase a policy that adequately covers your trip.

Travel & General offer a tailor-made policy that provides cover for all Wild Frontiers trips. Under this policy there are two different levels of cover available - Standard and Elite.

Cover explained:

Standard policy: a comprehensive travel insurance policy that provides cover for all Wild Frontiers activities, including trekking up to 6,000m. This policy does not provide cover for travel to areas where the FCO is advising against all or all but essential travel except where it has been previously agreed.

Elite policy: provides the same comprehensive level of cover as the standard policy. In addition the Elite policy also provides cover for travel to areas where the FCO is advising against all or all but essential travel. The policy will not provide cover for any claims arising from or relating to the reasons why the FCO is advising against travel.

For this trip the minimum requirement would be the Standard policy.

These policies are only available to those travelling on a Wild Frontiers holiday and can be purchased on a trip-specific basis or annual cover. For more information please refer to the details on our website www.wildfrontierstravel.com/insurance or by calling Travel & General direct on +44 (0) 845 345 3456. This insurance is available to EU residents (excluding Norway & Switzerland) up to the age of 75. It covers horse riding, mountain walking, trekking, white-water rafting and all other activities we offer as part of our tours.

If you are over 75 and/or a resident of a non-UK European country then you may still be able to get your insurance arranged by Travel & General Insurance Services Limited. Please contact us for assistance with this.

If you do decide to purchase alternative insurance, then you must ensure that it covers you for every aspect of this trip.

Wild Frontiers Limited is an Introducer Appointed Representative of Travel & General Insurance Service Ltd, details of which can be found at the website of the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) www.fca.org.uk

Please note that no insurance policy will cover every eventuality and terms and conditions will apply in the event of any claim.

Visas: Visas are necessary for many of the destinations we travel to and while we aim to provide you with the most up-to-date information, requirements frequently change and as such for the latest advice
we advise that you check with the relevant embassies or contact our recommended visa agency for this trip, details of which are below:

Travcour
+44 (0) 20 8543 1846
www.travcour.com

For this tour, UK passport holders currently require a visa for Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

Non-UK passport holders or non-UK residents should contact the relevant embassies for individual requirements.

Further details will be sent out to you on booking, however ensuring that correct and valid visas are obtained remains the sole responsibility of the client.

Responsible Travel: Responsible travel and sustainable tourism are fundamental ideas that Wild Frontiers has been committed to since our birth. It is our strong belief that these words should not be simply ‘tagged on’ to dossiers and websites but should be at the very core of each trip, and our adventures are therefore designed with the local people, culture and eco-system in mind. We believe that a successful trip not only delivers a unique and unsurpassable journey for our clients, but that it also benefits the peoples whose lands we are privileged to visit.

In 2012 we were delighted to be awarded the Guardian Observer Best Ethical Travel Award.

For more information, please refer to
www.wildfrontierstravel.com/rt

The Wild Frontiers Foundation: In order to facilitate an enduring support structure for the communities we visit, and to show a commitment to these values, Wild Frontiers has set up a charitable foundation through which we can channel funds to both existing NGOs and our own development projects. In addition to organising ethically sensitive tours, having our own charitable foundation allows us to raise money - through the cost of our tours, charity trips and fund raising events - which can then be used to fund various projects in education, sanitation, reforestations and a number of other important issues facing developing communities. Wherever possible we are happy for our clients to visit these projects to see for themselves where and how this money is being spent. Our website has more information about our responsible travel policy, the foundation and also has a full list of partner NGOs. Should you wish to read more or donate to the foundation please contact the office or follow this link:-
www.wildfrontierstravel.com/foundation

The Environment: Trying to do our bit for the environment, in 2005 we were among the first UK-based travel companies to automatically offset every client’s international flight (if booked with us) with a payment to Carbon Clear to help promote sustainable energy. To read more about the work of Carbon Clear, please follow this link:-
www.carbon-clear.com

AITO Membership: Wild Frontiers is a member of AITO, the Association of Independent Tour Operators. AITO’s charter states that its exclusive members strive to create overseas holidays with high levels of professionalism and a shared concern for quality and personal service. The Association encourages the highest standards in all aspects of tour operating. AITO sets criteria regarding ownership, finance and quality which must be
satisfied before new companies are admitted to membership. All members are required to adhere to a Code of Business Practice which encourages high operational standards and conduct.

British Foreign & Commonwealth Office: The travel advice of the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) highlights potential hazards people might experience when travelling abroad and as an advocate of their “Know Before You Go” campaign we strongly suggest that you refer to it before booking and contact us if you have any queries or concerns. Details can be found on the website below.

Non-UK citizens should consult the travel advice of their respective governments.

Wild Frontiers Community

If you’re still not sure if this trip is right or just want to see get some different perspectives, then why not have a look at the wide variety of resources we have on our website?

Clients’ Views: See what other travellers have said about our trips - www.wildfrontierstravel.com/views

Blogs: See what our tour-leaders, staff and clients have posted from the road - www.wildfrontierstravel.com/blog

Videos: They may not find their way on the list for Oscars nominations but we have an extensive (and growing) collection of short videos giving you an insight in many of our destinations - www.wildfrontierstravel.com/video

Photos: Our popular “Photo of the month” competition has added to the vast gallery of photos we already have from around the world. See them here - www.wildfrontierstravel.com/photos

Events: From time to time we hold informal presentations, photo exhibitions and dinner evenings mainly in the London area. To find out more see here - www.wildfrontierstravel.com/events

Wild Miles Club: Everyone that has booked a trip directly with us will become an automatic member of the Wild Miles Club gaining instant access to a range of exclusive discounts from a variety of travel partners from bookshops to outdoor clothing shops. In addition, regular direct bookers will earn “Wild Miles” which can earn you up to 10% in discounts off of all tours. For more information visit this page - www.wildfrontierstravel.com/wild-miles

Facebook: Keep up to date with the latest news and special offers by liking our Facebook page - www.facebook.com/wildfrontiers

KYRGYZSTAN & UZBEKISTAN - THE FACTS

The Silk Road: Lasting almost 2000 years, the Silk Road is surely ‘the most romantic and culturally important trade route in the history of the world.’ The term itself is in fact something of a misnomer for there was never one “road” but a labyrinth of tracks and trails treading their way from Xi’an in central China, across the mountains and deserts of Central Asia, and on to the great markets of Byzantium and Rome. The need for strong horses (see
‘Heavenly Horses’ section) and the desire to be clothed in the mysterious Chinese fabric were what gave birth to the trade route, but it soon developed into a thriving thoroughfare of people and commerce, carrying all manner of things along its path. As well as silk, from the east came porcelain, paper, tea, lacquer-ware, perfumes and medicinal herbs; while from the west came gold, silver, ivory, jade, wool, horses, coloured glass, walnuts, cucumbers, grapes, wine and spices. But it wasn’t only goods the caravans carried; just as importantly, through the traders and their escorts’ ideas, religions and technologies were spread across the world.

Caravans seldom travelled the road’s entire length, but instead carried their goods only a certain stage of the overall journey before handing them on to others. As a result great cities sprang up, such as at Samarkand, Bukhara, Kashgar and Merv, where agents, contract makers and brokers - the Silk Road’s middlemen - became rich on the trade. Much of their glory can still be seen today. But in the end the opening of the sea routes, with their quicker, safer and ultimately cheaper, means of transport caused the great Silk Road’s demise. That said, since the break-up of the Soviet Union and the thawing in relations between China and the newly-formed Central Asian states, the route is once again being plied and it is not unusual to see trucks from Turkey, Iran and even Italy thundering down the road between Samarkand and Bukhara where once the languorous camels wandered.

A thousand years later Genghis Khan and his Mongol hordes coveted them. Using the animals’ remarkable stamina, the ‘yellow peril’ or ‘horsemen of the apocalypse’ were able to conquer one third of the earth’s surface in less than 50 years. By means of a relay system, it was said a message could be sent 3,000 miles, from one end of the empire to the other, in under three weeks. The Akhel Tekes of Turkmenistan and their descendants could be said not only to have played a major part in the formation of the Silk Road, they had, it seemed, helped shape the political boundaries of Asia itself. And if that is not enough, at the end of the 18th century Lord Wellingborough crossed one with a Turk and an Arab breed and so produced the English Thoroughbred. In the equine world the Akhel Teke is a truly iconic figure.

The Mountains of Heaven: The Tien Shan, or Celestial Mountains, are quite simply one of the most beautiful mountain ranges on earth. Though perhaps not as immediately dramatic as the mighty Himalaya or Karakoram, the colour, variety, shapes and simple wildness of the

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Heavenly Horses: In 128 BC Zhang Qain, a Chinese emissary and Silk Road pioneer wrote: ‘The region has many fine horses which sweat blood; their forebears are supposed to have been foaled from heavenly horses.’ The horses to which he was referring are generally thought to be the famous Akhel Teke horses of Turkmenistan. The term stuck and though the blood had more to do with angry parasites living under the animals’ skin than anything celestial, soon these remarkable steeds, renowned for their size, speed and incredible endurance, had captured the imagination of emperors, soldiers and poets. Desperate to obtain some of the ethereal beasts to revive the flagging fortunes of a failing Chinese army, Zhang Qain’s emperor and sponsor, Han Wadi, dispatched missions to the courts of Ferghana, that in turn blasted open the trade routes between east and west, carrying, among other things, silk to Europe and wine to China.
Tien Shan will still have you buzzing with wonder. But what makes a trip into these mountains so special isn’t just in the views, it lies in the fact that here you really feel as though you are among them, a part of them, not simply staring up at far-away peaks. Living with nomads in their yurts or camping by wild rivers in forests of pine, for the most part many miles away from ‘civilisation’, after a few days in the Tien Shan, you will feel like a nomad yourself!

Tash Rabat: Sheltering in the lee of a black granite cliff, in what must surely be one of the prettiest valleys in the country, this ancient Silk Road caravanserai, constructed of dark stone with a huge arched entrance, domed roof and corner turrets, appears like some ancient eastern castle, a mythical outpost from some long forgotten legend. Before it, sweeping out of sight behind a sheer ridge, is a wide green valley, dotted with yurts and hundreds of animals: horses, cattle, yaks and sheep. With a friendly family to stay with in cosy, well-equipped yurts, wonderful walks and rides in the mountains around, a visit to Tash Rabat is one of the highlights of any trip to Kyrgyzstan.

Even today, standing in Registan Square, surrounded by exquisite fluted domes, mosaic madrasas, the majestic arches and towering minarets, the romantic mind drifts easily back to a mystical time of fables, myths and legend - to the world of Omar Khayyam and his famous Ruba’iyat; to the colourful Sogdian and Samanid courts; to the slaughter streets of Ghengis Khan and Tamerlane’s renaissance; to the lands through which Marco Polo, Xuan Zang and a thousand other great travellers passed. Over the centuries, nowhere has symbolised the romance of the east more than Samarkand.

Samarkand: ‘All travellers who set out for Central Asia hold in their hearts the dream of reaching Samarkand.’ In the third century BC Alexander the Great took ‘the Pearl of the East’ and declared ‘Everything I have heard about the beauty of the city is true, except that it is much more beautiful than I’d even imagined.’ In the thirteenth century the celebrated Moroccan traveller, Ibn Battuta, discovered ‘one of the largest and most perfectly beautiful cities in the world.’ And in 1898 Lord Curzon was to write ‘I know of nothing in the East approaching its simplicity and grandeur; and nothing in Europe which can even aspire to enter the competition.’
**Bukhara**: There is an ancient saying in Central Asia - ‘Samarkand is the beauty of the earth, but Bukhara is the beauty of the spirit’. During the heyday of the Silk Road, Bukhara became so rich from trade that it boasted 365 mosques, one for every day of the year. Lying at a strategically important crossroad between Heart, Kabul, Merv and Samarkand, Bukhara has played a leading role in the colourful history of the region. Home to the Kalam Minaret, once the tallest tower in the Islamic realm (and variously used to call the faithful to prayer, as a beacon to guide travellers in from the desert and, more notoriously, as a means of execution) the famous Arc and beautiful Labi-Hauz, here in Bukhara you will find the true beauty and serenity of urban Central Asia.
How to book:

In order to confirm your booking we need to have a completed signed booking form for each client together with a £400 deposit per person. You can either return your booking form to us by post or by booking online at [www.wildfrontierstravel.com](http://www.wildfrontierstravel.com)

You can contact the office by email to info@wildfrontierstravel.com or we are very happy to take your call on + 44 (0) 20 7736 3968.

Protection for your money:

You can book your holiday with Wild Frontiers in complete confidence that all monies you pay to us for your tour are fully protected. Wild Frontiers is fully bonded and licensed by ABTOT (The Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Ltd) in respect of all land only tour packages. Our ABTOT number is 5228. Under the terms of the bond, monies are secured by a bank guarantee. For further information visit [www.abtot.com](http://www.abtot.com)

If you choose to book your international flights with us then you will also be ATOL protected as we hold an Air Travel Organiser’s Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). Our ATOL number is 5975. In the unlikely event of our insolvency, the CAA will arrange to refund any monies to you that you have paid for an advance booking and ensure that you are not stranded abroad. For further information visit [www.atol.org.uk](http://www.atol.org.uk)

We recommend that you take out adequate travel insurance at the time of booking in the event that you are no longer able to travel as all deposits are non-refundable - full booking conditions can be found on the booking form and online at our website.

As I’m sure you can appreciate, Wild Frontiers trips can be quite complex affairs to arrange and certain elements (such as permits, visa authorisations, trains and flights) may need to be requested several months in advance. As such, wherever possible, we would encourage you to plan ahead and book early to avoid disappointment. Moreover, by booking early you are always guaranteed to get the best price with us as we will automatically offer you a retrospective discount if we happen to reduce the price of the tour later on. For further details, please refer to [www.wildfrontierstravel.com/price-guarantee](http://www.wildfrontierstravel.com/price-guarantee)

Further information:

When you make a confirmed booking with Wild Frontiers we will send you a pre-departure information pack giving you details on visas, health and vaccinations, packing lists, suggested reading on the region, photography and other useful tips to make your trip more enjoyable.
Why Wild Frontiers?

As a young and innovative independent company, Wild Frontiers is delighted to have been voted one of the ‘Top 10 Tour Operators’ by Wanderlust readers each of the last 6 years - coming third in 2007 and second in 2009. When National Geographic Adventure Magazine awarded us a similar accolade in 2010, we were equally thrilled.

We are frequently asked what makes Wild Frontiers different from other tour operators. Below are a few of the factors that we believe set us apart from our competitors and form the reasons as to why our clients travel with us again and again...

**Personal Service & Expertise:** Our London office is manned by experienced expedition leaders and most trips we run stem from our first-hand knowledge - in short, we run the kind of holidays that as passionate travellers, we like to do ourselves. When you ring our office, you can be guaranteed to chat to someone who knows the region and the terrain and is able to offer sound and practical advice.

**Authentic Experiences:** Our unique, original itineraries allow you to take journeys that venture beneath the surface of the region. We rarely run any group tour more than a couple of times a year and they are typically on routes we have discovered for ourselves, meaning we are able to give a truly authentic, off-the-beaten-track experience.

**Be the First:** Our style of travel is all about exploration, and nothing excites us more than opening up new routes to genuine travellers. We keep abreast of new destinations and are often the first to return to places that have vanished from the tourist map. We were the first back into Pakistan after 9/11, the first to return to Kashmir after a decade of tourist isolation, and amongst the first to run a commercial travel trip to Afghanistan for almost 30 years. Since then we have helped bring Colombia, Yemen, Georgia and Bangladesh back into the tourist fold, specialising in ground-breaking reconnaissance trips and imaginative expeditions.

**Small Group Size:** On our escorted tours, we believe it is imperative to keep the group sizes small. Most trips are limited to an average maximum of 12 travellers, thus giving you more access to fragile cultures, better opportunities to interact with local people, and the knowledge you are making less of an impact while there. “Having been a bit apprehensive about joining a group as a single traveller, I found myself surrounded by interesting, friendly, helpful people who I hope to catch up with again on future trips.”
Angela Chick, Kashmir Group Tour

**Cost of Group Tours:** We believe in an honest, upfront pricing structure so you know exactly what the tour will cost before you book. On our group tours we avoid local payments, ‘optional extras’ or forcing our clients to go through the annoying procedure of splitting every meal bill. Our tours are provided on a predominantly full board basis, with drinking water, government permits, entrance fees and transport all included.

**Our clients:** Your companions can make or break a trip, and it’s lucky therefore that our clients are often our greatest asset. Travelling to remote regions is not for everyone, and as such we tend to attract open-minded travellers looking for genuine experiences, and a desire to reach those hard to get to places.

**Responsible Travel:** Awarded 5 star status by AITO (Association of Independent Tour operators), responsible tourism (RT) has always been an integral part of our company ethos and our adventures are designed with the local people, culture and eco-system in mind. In 2012 we were awarded the Guardian Observer Best Ethical Travel Award. For further details please refer to the RT section of our website - [www.wildfrontierstravel.com/rt](http://www.wildfrontierstravel.com/rt)