The Splendours of Central Asia

UZBEKISTAN & KYRGYZSTAN

with Liz Gibson
20 September – 07 October 2014 (18 days)
Central Asia is a fascinating blend of ethnicities and cultures, encompassing extremes of landscape from arid deserts to fertile oases, from vast steppes to majestic mountain ranges. For over two millennia, migratory tribes travelled across its vast territory in a heady mix of conquest, destruction and construction. At the crossroads of the ancient Silk Road, Central Asia absorbed many religions, including Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Nestorianism and Islam, and many cultures as wide ranging as Greek, Persian, Turkish and Chinese.

This tour focuses on Uzbekistan, the undoubted jewel of Central Asia and the repository of the region’s most impressive treasures. During the reign of the terrifying tyrant Tamerlane (Amir Timur), in the mid to late 14th century, Transoxiana, as the area of Uzbekistan was known, became the cradle of one of the largest empires of history and the birthplace of the some of the most arresting architecture in the Islamic world. As we travel across the vast territory of today’s Uzbekistan, you will discover the architectural legacy of Timur and his successors, in the romantic oasis cities of Khiva, Bukhara and Samarkand, ancient citadels strung across the desert like rare pearls, their turquoise tiled mosques, madrassahs and minarets dazzling in the distance. You will also discover a rich tradition of arts and crafts, such as intricately embroidered suzanis, hand woven silk carpets, miniature paintings and tribal jewellery, found not only in these desert cities, but also in the verdant valley of Fergana, famous for its distinctive ceramic ware and exquisite silk Ikat weavings.

At a glance

- Optional pre-tour to Kyrgyzstan – the green heart of Central Asia
- Begin and end in the ancient – and modern – Silk Road trading city of Tashkent
- Stay in the historic old towns of Khiva and Bukhara
- Follow ‘the golden road’ to Samarkand
- Visit Shakhrisabz, the birthplace of Tamerlane and second capital of the Timurid Empire
- Explore the traditional arts, crafts and textiles of the lush Fergana Valley
In great contrast to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan also crossed for centuries by travellers along the Silk Road, is the lush heart of Central Asia renowned for its verdant landscape of mountains and lakes, popular with mountaineers, hikers and skiers. You will be pleasantly surprised not only by the stunning scenery but also by the warm hospitality of the Kyrgyz people, many of whom still live a nomadic existence tending their flocks and herds during the summer months. Traditional arts and crafts, particularly felt making, have been revived with many local enterprises flourishing once more. Like Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan was locked within the USSR for over 70 years, as a result its cities retain a Soviet face. But the spirit of the Kyrgyz people still resides in their beloved majestic mountains and open landscapes.

Optional pre-tour to Kyrgyzstan
13–21 September 2014

Sat 13 Sep 2014 Sydney – Seoul Morning departure from Sydney on Korean Airlines to Seoul. Late afternoon arrival and overnight at Seoul Airport hotel. 🏨

Sun 14 Sep Seoul – Tashkent Morning at leisure.

After lunch, transfer to the airport for your flight to Tashkent, arriving in the evening. After immigration and customs formalities, transfer to your hotel.

The capital of Uzbekistan and the largest city in Central Asia with a population of 2.3 million people, for centuries Tashkent has stood at the crossroads of the ancient trade route along the Silk Road. 🏨

Mon 15 Sep Tashkent – Bishkek Morning at leisure until midday checkout and transfer to airport for departure on an afternoon Uzbekistan Airways flight to Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan (approx. 1 hr).

Arrival in Bishkek, transfer to your hotel located in the heart of the business, government and cultural district of the city. 🏨

Tue 16 Sep Bishkek Join your local guide for a full day tour of Bishkek, located at an altitude of about 800 metres in the foothills of the Tien-Shan Mountains, along one of the ancient trading route of the Great Silk Road. Fortified in 1825 by the Uzbek khan of Kokhand, Bishkek was razed and rebuilt after annexation by Tsarist Russia in 1862. The city was renamed Frunze in 1926, reverting to its original name following independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

During the morning, see Ala-Too (the Central Square), Lenin Monument, Victory Square and visit the History Museum. After lunch visit the Central Asia Craft Support Association and see a felt making demonstration where you will learn about the two traditional types of rugs - Shyrdaks and Ali-Kee. 🏨
Wed 17 Sep  
Bishkek

Drive a short distance out of Bishkek to the stunning Ala Archa National Park. Enjoy a walk and lunch in the spectacular Gorge surrounded by the Tien-Shan Mountains. Enjoy a performance with traditional music.

Return to Bishkek in the early afternoon and visit the Fine Arts Museum, dedicated to Kyrgyz folk and applied art, and Russian and Soviet art.

Subject to performance schedules, it may be possible to attend a performance at the State Opera and Ballet Theatre, housed in grand monument of Classical architecture (not included in tour cost).

Thu 18 Sep  
Bishkek – Issyk-kul

Drive to Cholpan-Ata, a small resort town on the northern shore of Issyk-kul ('Lake Issyk') 250 km from Bishkek (approx. 5 hr). With a length of 182 km and a width of up to 60 km, Issyk-kul is the second largest mountain lake in the world behind Lake Titicaca in South America. Located at an altitude of 1,607 m, the lake's southern shore is dominated by the rugged Teskey Ala-Too Range of the Tien Shan mountains. Check into your resort.

Fri 19 Sep  
Issyk-kul

Enjoy a day trip exploring the towns around Issyk-kul.

First drive to Karakol, which was founded as a Russian military outpost in 1869 and later boomed with an influx of Dungans, Chinese Muslims fleeing warfare in China.

Visit the grave, memorial park and a small museum dedicated to the famous Russian explorer Nicholay Przhevalsky who died here in 1888 while preparing for an expedition to Tibet. Followed by a visit the Russian Orthodox Holy Trinity Cathedral and the Dungan Mosque.

Continue to Djety-Orguz, the extraordinary 'Valley of Seven Bulls', famous for its unusually bright, red sandstone rock formations.

Sat 20 Sep  
Issyk-kul

Morning visit to the Issyk-Kul Open-air Museum, featuring many petroglyphs dating from 800 BC to 1200 AD. The petroglyphs were carved and painted onto the surface of granite boulders, burnt black or brown by strong sunlight over thousands of years. Images of deer, goats, snow leopards, hunting and breeding scenes, all of different sizes, present an important source of information about Kyrgyz history and culture. Also, visit the nearby regional Museum with its modest but interesting history of Issy-Kul. Late afternoon and evening at leisure.

Sun 21 Sep  
Issyk-kul – Bishkek – Tashkent

Morning checkout and drive back to Bishkek.

En route visit Burana Tower, a large minaret in the the beautiful, verdant Chui Valley. The tower, along with grave markers, some earthworks and the remnants of a castle and three mausoleums, is all that remains of the ancient city of Balasagun, which was established by the Karakhanids at the end of the 9th century.

Afternoon arrival at Bishkek Airport in time for a Kyrgyzstan Airways flight to Tashkent (approx. 1 hr). Following immigration and customs formalities, transfer to your hotel in Tashkent.

Tour Prices

| Per person twin-share | AUD 4,250 |
| Single supplement*    | AUD 850  |
| Deposit per person    | AUD 250  |
| Final payment due     | 22 July 2014 |

*Single travellers may request to share. Please advise at time of booking.

Tour code  
AG1419

Fitness level  
Above average

Important information

Because of local customs, ‘vegetarian’, ‘gluten free’, ‘dairy free’ and other special meal requests cannot be catered for.

Tour price includes

- Flights SYDNEY SEOUL TASHKENT (if taking main tour on air-inclusive basis)
- Overnight at Seoul Airport hotel on 13 September (only if taking group flight)
- Accommodation in four-star hotels with daily breakfast. Many other meals.
- Flights TASHKENT BISHKEK TASHKENT in economy class (20 kg luggage allowance)
- Transfers on arrival and departure in Seoul, Tashkent and Bishkek
- Comprehensive sightseeing with local guides and drivers, including entrance fees, as per itinerary
- Tips and gratuities to local guides and drivers

Tour price does not include

- Multiple entry individual visa for Uzbekistan (obtained on arrival, current cost approx. USD 150). Australian passport holders currently do NOT require a visa for Kyrgyzstan.
- Drinks with meals
- Hotel and airport porterage
- Travel insurance
- Items of a personal nature (i.e. telephone, laundry, mini-bar etc.)

Your hotels

Seoul – Hyatt Regency Incheon Airport
Tashkent – Miran International
Bishkek – Hyatt Regency
Issyk-kul - Karven Hotel.

NB. Hotels of a similar standard may be substituted.
Uzbekistan
20 September – 07 October 2014

Sat 20 Sep 2014
Morning departure from Sydney on Korean Airlines to Seoul. Late afternoon arrival and overnight at Seoul Airport hotel. 

Sun 21 Sep
Morning at leisure.

After lunch, transfer to the airport for an afternoon flight to Tashkent on Korean Airlines. After immigration and customs formalities, transfer to your hotel.

The capital of Uzbekistan and the largest city in Central Asia with a population of 2.3 million people, for centuries Tashkent has stood at the crossroads of the ancient trade route along the Silk Road.

Mon 22 Sep
Welcome briefing and introductory talk.

Depart the hotel for a full day tour of Tashkent. Drive to Amir Timur Square, with its imposing statue of Uzbekistan's post Soviet hero, Tamerlane, continue past Independence Square, the largest city square of the former Soviet Union. Visit the State Art Museum of Uzbekistan, with an excellent collection of Uzbek and Russian painting, and also a fine collection of textiles, jewellery, wood carvings and ceramics. The museum is set in a traditional 19th century Uzbek style mansion. Lunch with the locals at a popular Plov (Pilau) restaurant.

After lunch explore the charming area of Old Tashkent. Continue to the restored Barak-Khan Complex, with striking blue tiled domes and decorative Iwans (entrance portals), built during the 16th century when the Shaybanid Dynasty (the Uzbeks) replaced the Timurid Dynasty. Visit the Hast Imam library to see an 8th century manuscript Quran written in the territory of modern Iraq in the Kufic script. It is believed by local Uzbek Muslims that it belonged to the third Caliph, Uthman ibn Affan and is the oldest Quran in the world.

Return to hotel for a screening of The Desert of Forbidden Art, a film on Nukus Museum, followed by early dinner at 7pm.

Tue 23 Sep
Following a very early breakfast, transfer to domestic terminal for flight to Nukus and the Igor Savitsky Museum (Karalpak Museum). Light refreshments on arrival. This remarkable museum, opened in 1966, is located in the most remote region of Uzbekistan and houses an enormous collection, including antiquities from Khorezm, traditional Karakalpak folk art, Uzbek fine art and, uniquely, the second largest collection of Russian avant-garde in the world (after the Russian Museum in St Petersburg). Tour of Museum with the Director, Marinika Babanazarova. Lunch at Museum.

After lunch, drive by coach to Khiva (200km, 3.5hrs) Along the way, see remains of Zoroastrian Tower of Silence (Chilpak Kala) and visit the remains of the towering mud-brick walls of the three fortresses at Ayaz Kala, dating from the 4th century BC to the 7th century A.D. Abandoned for 1,300 years, the fortresses were rediscovered in the 1940s by the Russian archaeologist S.P. Tolstov.

Evening arrival in Khiva and dinner at Art Café. Overnight in the unique Medressa Hotel.

Wed 24 Sep
Full day walking tour of Khiva, an ‘open air museum’ consisting of two parts, Dychan Kala the outer town, and Ichan Kala, the inner town protected by 2.2 km long sloping brick wall, with foundations laid in the 10th century. Visit Kunya Ark Citadel, residence of Khivan Khans founded in 1680s with further buildings added in the 19th and 20th centuries. Visit the 19th century Kalta Minar or Short Minaret, one of the most ambitious projects of the ruling Khan, intended to be the tallest minaret in the Islamic world. Its construction was abandoned at 26 metres because of the Khan’s death.

Visit the Djuma Mosque and Minaret, originally constructed in the 10th century, in typical Arabic mosque architectural style. Today’s building was constructed in the 18th century. The main hall has over 200 wooden columns, earlier columns are decorated in Kufic and Nashk inscriptions, while the later in the typical Khivan floral-vegetative pattern. Later explore the majestic Pahlavan Mahmud Mausoleum (14th/19th cent.) with its dazzling turquoise dome. The Mausoleum is the shrine of Khiva’s patron saint and gifted
poet, soldier, furrier, professional wrestler and healer of diseases, Pahlavan Mahmud. Lunch in a restaurant inside the walled city.

After lunch, visit the Islam Khodja ensemble originally built in the 11th/12th centuries and reconstructed in the late 19th/early 20th centuries. It consists of the smallest Madrassah and the tallest Minaret, the city’s symbol, ringed with stripes of lustrous blue tiles. Then visit the most ancient architectural structure in Khiva, the 14th century Sheikh Said Allauddin Mausoleum.

Early evening enjoy sunset from the platform on the City Wall. Dinner at the national house. Overnight in Khiva.

Thu 25 Sep
Further exploration of Khiva. Morning visit to the local bustling bazaar, and the 19th century Tash Hauli Palace and Harem, the main palace of the Khivan Khans, with its ceramic tiles, carved marble and painted wood, it is the most striking example of architectural decoration in the city. Lunch and tea ceremony at Zaynab’s family house. Afternoon and evening at leisure.

Fri 26 Sep
After breakfast drive by coach to Bukhara, considered since ancient times to be a sacred city. Bukhara is Uzbekistan’s fifth largest city, with a population of over 250,000. Travel across the Kyzyl-Kum (red sand) desert (480km, 8-9 hrs), stopping for a barbeque lunch at a Chai-Khana (tea-house). Check into your hotel, centrally located in the Old Town. Dinner at a local restaurant.

Sat 27 Sep
Full day tour of Bukhara, continuously occupied for at least 5 millennia. Located on the Silk Road, the city has long been a centre of trade, scholarship, culture and religion. Begin with the perfectly proportioned 9th/10th century Samanid Ismail Mausoleum, with its exquisitely patterned brickwork. Then visit the nearby 14th/16th century Chashma Ayub Shrine featuring a conical dome. Visit the most ancient archaeological complex in the city, the imposing 1st century Ark Citadel, rebuilt after it was largely destroyed by the Red Army in 1920. Opposite the Ark, see the 18th century Bolokhauz Mosque and its striking iwan, supported by twenty wooden columns with mushroom shaped, brightly painted stalactite capitals. Continue to the 12th/18th century Kaylan Square dominated by the Kaylan Minaret, the main symbol of city.

Break for lunch at Minzifa Café. After lunch, stroll through the central square, Lyabi-Hauz, built around a large pool. Visit the oldest preserved mosque in Bukhara, 10th century Magoki-Attori Mosque, built over an ancient Zoroastrian fire temple. Also visit the beautifully restrained 15th century Ulubek Madrassah and the larger, more lavishly decorated 17th century Abdulaziz Khan Madrassah, constructed on the Persian model with a large courtyard, divided by four iwans.

Late afternoon, enjoy tea and oriental sweets at the Silk Rd teahouse. Overnight in Bukhara.

Sun 28 Sep
Morning drive approximately 4 km north of the city, to the old European style Summer Palace, once the sumptuous residence of the Bukhara Emirs, built in the second half of the 19th century. Today the palace houses a museum of decorative arts. Continue to the Bahauddin Nakshbandi Memorial Complex, one of the most important pilgrimage sites of Bukhara. At the heart of the complex is the mausoleum of the famous Sufi philosopher Bahauddin Naqshbandi. Drive on to visit the grave of a local Sufi sheikh, poet and a theologian Sayf ad-Din Boharzi (1190-1261), famous for the conversion of the Golden Horde’s Khan Berke to Islam. Nearby is the 14th century Mausoleum of Boharzi’s pupil, Buyan-Kuli-khan. Return to Bukhara for lunch (on own) and free time for exploring the old bazaars situated under the medieval trading domes. Dinner followed by folk performance.

Mon 29 Sep
Morning drive to Samarkand. En route stop in Shakhrisabz, birthplace of Amir Timur and the second capital of the Timurids, after Samarkand. Lunch. After lunch visit the remains of the grandiose 14th/15th century Ak Sarai palace built by Timur. Visit the Dor as-Siadat complex and the Amir Timur crypt. Continue to the ancient city of Samarkand, once conquered by three of history’s greatest generals - Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan and Amir Timur. Under Timur, Samarkand became the glittering capital of a vast empire.

Tue 30 Sep
Full day tour of Samarkand. Visit the spectacular 15th/17th century Registan Square, framed by three madrassahs, Ulugh Beg Madrasah (1417–1420), Tilya-Kori Madrasah (1646–1660) and the Sher-Dor Madrasah (1619–1636), with their soaring entrance portals constructed in the distinctive Timurid architectural style. Visit the partial ruins of the gigantic early 15th century Amir Timur Mosque.
(Bibi-Khanyum Mosque). Lunch in a local restaurant. After lunch explore the expansive territory of the Shah-i-Zinda Necropolis, with rows of richly decorated Mausoleums built during the 14th /15th centuries for various members of the Timurid Dynasty. The main mausoleum is said to be the grave of Prophet Muhammad's cousin, Kusama Ibn Abbas. According to legend, Ibn 'Abbas came to preach in Samarkand in 640, where he was ultimately beheaded by the Zoroastrians. During medieval times, a pilgrimage to the grave of 'The Living King' was equated to Mecca hajj. According to a legend, water source at the grave possesses healing powers. Dinner at the national house.

Wed 01 Oct

Samarkand
Morning drive to the stunning 14th century Gur-Emir Mausoleum with its exquisite ribbed dome decorated in brilliant azure tiles. Originally built for Timur's grandson, it inadvertently became Timur's own resting place (instead of Shakhrisabz). Continue to the Observatory of Timur's grandson and astronomer, Ulugh Beg. Built in the 1420s, it was considered to be one of the finest observatories in the Islamic world. The observatory was only rediscovered in 1908. Drive to Afrasiab, the ancient area of Samarkand, to visit the Museum featuring the remarkable mid 7th century mural paintings, Ambassadors’ Painting, a rare example of Sogdian art discovered as recently as 1965. Afternoon at leisure. Dinner at the national house with music performance.

Thu 02 Oct

Samarkand – Tashkent
Morning free. Lunch at hotel and check-out.
Afternoon transfer to Railway Station for the high speed train, Afrosiyob, to Tashkent. Check-in to hotel.

Fri 03 Oct

Tashkent – Fergana
Morning drive (small taxis) crossing the Tien Shan Mountains (2,300m), with time to stop at the Kamchik Pass and admire the spectacular view. Continue onto the fertile Fergana Valley. Visit Rishtan, one of the most important and oldest centres of ceramics in Uzbekistan. After a picnic lunch, visit the workshop of a Rishtan master to see ceramics made from a local fine reddish-yellow clay and decorated with distinctive designs. Continue to the city of Fergana, with a population of around 180,000. Check into hotel Asia Fergana. (approx 340km 6hrs plus time for visit to Rishtan).

Sat 04 Oct

Fergana
Morning drive through Fergana city with its wide, orderly tree-shaded avenues and blue and white 19th century tsarist colonial-style houses. The city has a different feel to most other Uzbek cities, retaining an air of the Soviet, pre-Independence period. Continue to Margilan, which according to legend was founded by Alexander the Great and which for centuries has been renowned for its silk production. Lunch at a local restaurant. After lunch, visit Uzbekistan’s largest traditional silk factory, where you will see the extraordinary ikat dyeing and complex weaving process. Afternoon at leisure. Farewell dinner.

Sun 05 Oct

Fergana – Kokand – Tashent – Seoul
Pack overnight bag for stopover in Seoul. Drive to Kokand, situated on the crossroads of ancient trade routes and at the junction of two main routes into the Fergana Valley, one leading northwest over the mountains to Tashkent, and the other west. Visit the lavishly decorated Khudayar Khan Palace Complex built in 1871 and occupying a total area of four acres. Only two courtyards, with nineteen rooms, survive today and they function as an interesting museum of local history.
After lunch continue over the Tien Shan Mountains and the Kamchik Pass to Tashkent Airport.
Evening departure on Korean Airlines to Seoul. Overnight in flight. (Large bags may be checked through to Sydney).

Mon 06 Oct

Seoul
Morning arrive in Seoul and transfer to a nearby airport hotel. Day use of rooms until late afternoon return transfer to the airport for departure on Korean Airlines to Sydney. Overnight in flight.

Tue 07 Oct

Arrive Sydney
Morning arrival in Sydney.
Tour Prices

Per person twin-share incl. economy class airfares
AUD 8,750

Single supplement*
AUD 900

Reduction without international airfare and Seoul stopover – AUD 2,000

Business class surcharge on request

Deposit per person
AUD 500

Final payment due 22 July 2014

*Single travellers may request to share. Please advice at time of booking

Tour code AG1410

Fitness level Challenging

Please see terms & conditions for fitness level definitions.

Visas

Australian and New Zealand passport holders require a visa for Uzbekistan. The visa will be obtained at the airport on arrival in Tashkent. The cost of a single entry group visa is currently USD 40 p.p. and must be pre-paid prior to departure from Australia.

If you are planning to extend your stay in Uzbekistan, you need to apply for a single individual visa for which the application fee is approx. USD 85 p.p.

Tour price includes

• Accommodation in centrally located hotels (best available) with private facilities and daily breakfast (B)
• Overnight at Seoul Airport hotel on 20 September (only if taking group flight)
• Economy class flights SYDNEY–SEOUL–TASHKENT–SEOUL–SYDNEY on Korean Air (23kg luggage allowance)
• Taxes and fuel surcharges as at 01 August 2013
• Transfers on arrival and departure in Seoul and Tashkent if travelling on group flights
• Domestic flight Tashkent - Nukus in economy class incl. taxes (20kg luggage allowance)
• Meals as per itinerary (L=Lunch, D=Dinner) incl. special welcome and farewell meals
• Comprehensive sightseeing, visits to museums and attractions with Liz Gibson and local guides including entrance fees as per itinerary
• Lectures and talks with your tour leader throughout
• Gratuities for local guides and drivers
• Day-use room at Seoul Airport hotel 06 October

Tour price does not include

• Transfers on arrival and departure if not travelling on group flights
• Visa for Uzbekistan (obtained on arrival, current cost approx. USD 75).
• Hotel and airport porterage
• Items of a personal nature, including telephone calls, laundry, taxis etc.
• Drinks with meals
• Travel insurance

Important information

Please note that a good level of fitness and a sense of adventure are required for this tour. The tour includes the exploration of remote areas of Uzbekistan with basic tourist infrastructure.

Because of local customs, ‘vegetarian’, ‘gluten free’, ‘dairy free’ and other special meal requests cannot be catered for.

Your hotels (best available in smaller towns)

Tashkent – Miran International ★★★★★
Khiva – Asia Khiva ★★★
Bukhara – Omar Khayyam ★★★
Samarkand – Registan Plaza ★★★
Fergana – Asia Fergana ★★★
Seoul – Hyatt Regency Incheon ★★★★★

NB. Hotels of a similar standard may be substituted

St Uspensky Cathedral, Tashkent
Terms & Conditions

How to Book
Complete, sign and return the Booking Form available from Renaissance Tours with your deposit and page one of your passport.

Deposit / Final Payments
Your deposit is due at the time of booking and is used to pay hotel, airline, performance tickets and/or other deposits. It is non-refundable in the event of your cancellation.

Final payment is due 60 days before departure. Failure to make the final payment by the due date may result in cancellation of your booking and loss of deposit.

Payments are accepted in cash and by cheque, bank transfer, American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa. A 3% service charge applies for payment by American Express and Diners Club.

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a) Cancellation by You - Cancellation charges will be applied as shown below, calculated from the day written notification is received by Renaissance Tours. In addition to cancellation fees for tours operated by Renaissance Tours as shown below, airlines, hotels and other third parties may impose
day written notification is received by Renaissance
be applied as shown below, calculated from the
a) Cancellation by You
up to 100% cancellation charges.

Cancellation and/or amendment fees may apply for additional travel arrangements booked by Renaissance Tours.

Passports, Visas and Vaccinations
All travellers must be in possession of a valid passport – most countries require a 6-month validity from your date of entry or exit. For some countries (e.g. China, Vietnam, India, Russia), visas are included in the tour cost and will be arranged by Renaissance Tours prior to travel. For other countries, it is your responsibility to ensure you have the appropriate visa(s).

You are also responsible for obtaining all necessary inoculations and preventative medicines as may be required for the duration of the tour.

Tour Prices
Prices quoted in our tour information are based on exchange rates, cost of services and applicable taxes at the time of publication. Prices may be subject to change in the event of significant currency fluctuations or the introduction of new taxes, up until final payment is received.

In the event of a price increase, whether because of a currency fluctuation, increase in taxes or a correction in advertised prices, we will advise you and you have the option of accepting the amended prices, inclusions and booking conditions or withdrawing from the tour and receiving a full refund of all monies paid.

Once final payment is received, all prices will be guaranteed and no surcharges will apply.

Travel Insurance
It is a condition of travel that you are covered by comprehensive travel insurance for international tours. Your travel insurance can be arranged by Renaissance Tours.

Fitness and Participation
Most of our tours require a MODERATE level of fitness. However, in certain destinations (e.g. Silk Road, Central Asia, Outback Australia, tropical destinations) or in certain seasons (e.g. mid-winter, mid-summer) or because of the nature of travel (e.g. remote rail), certain tours will require an ABOVE AVERAGE or CHALLENGING level of fitness.

If you (or we) have any doubts about your level of fitness, you may be required to have a doctor’s appraisal. This would require your doctor to read the itinerary of your chosen tour, including the fitness level, and provide you (and us) with a written confirmation of your ability to participate.

MODERATE
for the overall benefit of the group, all tour members must possess a moderate level of mobility, including the ability to:

• negotiate airports and railway stations without wheelchair assistance
• use combined shower/bath facilities (it is impossible to guarantee walk-in shower facilities)
• undertake walking tour of 1-2 hours duration, including using stairs, walking over cobblestones and other uneven surfaces
• stand for long periods in museums and other sites.
• embark / disembark coaches, trains and other methods of transportation without assistance
• handle your own luggage

ABOVE AVERAGE
In addition to the above, tour members must also be able to:

• Undertake walking tours of 2 – 3 hours
• climb staircases of 100 or more steps

CHALLENGING
In addition to the above, tour members must also be able to:

• Handle extremes of temperature (e.g. below 0 or above 35 degrees)
• handle extremes of altitudes (e.g. 4000 metres and above).

You can find the full terms & conditions on the Renaissance Tours booking form. They can also be found at www.renaissancetours.com.au/booking-conditions/ or we would be happy to post you a copy on request.
For over two thousand years the Silk Road linked the Mediterranean world with the kingdoms of Central Asia and far China. Traders and spies, adventurers, rogues and missionaries all wandered its many routes spreading goods, artistic styles, ideas and faiths throughout one of the great melting pots of the ancient world.

Today, much of this route is once again open to the adventurous traveller. Traversing Tibet and western China, Central Asia and the Middle East, the Caucasus and Turkey, our Grand Silk Road Project offers a chance to make the great overland journey across some of the most exotic, romantic and breathtaking lands on earth.

Linked by a common theme, these tours are designed to be undertaken in succession, but can be equally enjoyed as ‘stand-alone’ adventures.

Part I: A Journey along the Silk Road: Xi’an to Kashgar

with Joyce Morgan
30 September–22 October 2014

The adventure begins with a journey along the fascinating Silk Road of China, from the Terracotta Warriors of Xi’an to the legendary Sunday Bazaar of Kashgar.

Along the way, discover Xiahe (‘Little Tibet’), visit Jiayuguan, explore the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang, stay in the desert oasis of Turpan and enjoy excursions to spectacular Heavenly Lake and Lake Karakol in Western China.

Part II: The Splendours of Central Asia: Uzbekistan & Kyrgyzstan

with Liz Gibson
20 September–07 October 2014

At the crossroads of the Silk Road, where East meets West, the ancient oasis cities of Tashkent, Khiva, Bukhara and Samarkand are an extraordinary blend of ethnicities and cultures.

The countries of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan encompass extremes of landscape from arid deserts to fertile oases, from vast steppes to majestic mountain ranges.
Part III: The Heart of the Silk Road: Turkmenistan & Iran

with Julian Droogan
16 September–07 October 2014

with John Tidmarsh
(Oct/Nov 2015, dates to be confirmed)

With a 6000-year long history encompassing many of the ancient world’s major empires, Iran and neighbouring Turkmenistan are rich in monuments and human civilisation of all eras.

Linking Central Asia and the Middle East, this is the critical mid-point of the Silk Road.

Part IV: Anatolia & the Mediterranean

Plans are underway for a tour – or several tours – in later years to complete our Silk Road journey from China to the Mediterranean.

These tours will feature northern and eastern Turkey, Cappadocia and possibly also Iraqi Kurdistan which is already welcoming tourism again. Details to be announced.

TOUR INFORMATION AVAILABLE NOW

TOUR PRICES
PP, twin share AUD 9,750
Single supplement AUD 1,950
Excluding airfares
TRAVEL WITH FRIENDS IN 2014

Dome of Hast Imam Mosque, Tashkent

Your travel agent is

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