



Uzbekistan

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ City Grill (p151)
- ➔ National Food (p150)
- ➔ Platan (p178)
- ➔ Minzifa (p197)
- ➔ Ogahiy Fish Restaurant (p209)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Jahongir B&B (p176)
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- ➔ Hovli Poyon B&B (p196)
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Why Go?

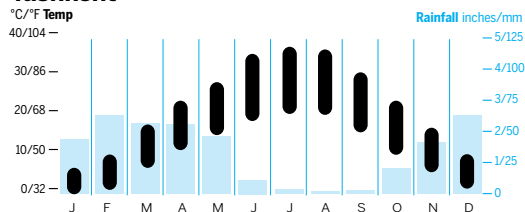
The region's cradle of culture for more than two millennia, Uzbekistan is the proud home to a spellbinding arsenal of architecture and ancient cities, all deeply infused with the bloody, fascinating history of the Silk Road. In terms of sights alone, Uzbekistan is Central Asia's biggest draw and most impressive showstopper.

Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva never fail to impress visitors with their fabulous mosques, medressas and mausoleums, while its more eccentric attractions, such as the fast disappearing Aral Sea, the fortresses of desperately remote Karakalpakstan, its boom town capital Tashkent and the ecotourism opportunities of the Nuratau Mountains, mean that even the most diverse tastes can be catered for.

Despite being a harshly governed police state, Uzbekistan remains an extremely friendly country where hospitality remains an essential element of daily life and you'll be made to feel genuinely welcome by the people you meet.

When to Go

Tashkent



Apr–Jun Clear skies, sunshine and cool air combine to create perfect travel conditions.

Jul The extreme heat of the summer means bargains can be had at many hotels.

Sep–Oct Days remain warm despite the summer having passed, and it's yet to get cold.

TOP TIP

Uzbekistan has some charming accommodation, but it's important to book in advance during high season, especially in Bukhara, Khiva and Samarkand, where the best places will normally be full. Lesser options are unfortunately still a big step down in comfort and atmosphere.

Fast Facts

- ➔ **Area** 447,400 sq km
- ➔ **Capital** Tashkent
- ➔ **Country code** ☎998
- ➔ **Languages** Uzbek, Russian, Tajik, Karakalpak
- ➔ **Population** 29.3 million
- ➔ **Famous for** *plov*, carpets, cotton, pomegranates, Timur (Tamerlane)

Exchange Rates

COUNTRY	UNIT	SOM (OFFICIAL RATE)
Australia	A\$1	1900S
Canada	C\$1	2000S
Euro zone	€1	2830S (black market 3500S)
NZ	NZ\$1	1650S
UK	£1	3300S
USA	US\$1	2100S (black market 2800S)

Resources

- ➔ www.advantour.com
- ➔ www.arostruz
- ➔ www.caravanistan.com
- ➔ www.stantours.com
- ➔ www.uznews.net

Visas & Permits

Uzbek visas are needed by almost all nationalities. They are relatively painless to obtain, and some nationalities no longer require a Letter of Invitation (Canadians, New Zealanders and Australians are exempt). Once in Uzbekistan, it's important to register at a hotel and to continue to do so at least every three nights (ideally for every night of your stay). The registration slips will be inspected when you leave the country, so it's important to retain them. For more information on visas see p225.

COSTS**Relative Cost**

Cheaper than Kazakhstan, more expensive than Tajikistan.

Daily Expenses

- ➔ Basic hotel double US\$25
- ➔ Comfortable hotel double US\$40
- ➔ Street snack 3000S, good restaurant meal 20,000S
- ➔ Bullet train to Bukhara economy/business 37,000/57,000S, bus 30,000S, flight US\$50

Price Ranges

- ➔ **Sleeping** (per two people) \$ < US\$40, \$\$ US\$40–80, \$\$\$ > US\$80
- ➔ **Eating** (main course) \$ < 6000S, \$\$ 6000–15,000S, \$\$\$ > 15,000S

Itineraries

- ➔ **One week** In one week you can cover 'the big three' in a trans-steppe dash. Start in impressive Samarkand to explore the pearls of Timurid-era architecture, zip to enchanting Bukhara to see Lyabi-Hauz, tour the Ark, and gape at the 47m Kalon Minaret and its stunning medressa before continuing to perfectly preserved Khiva.
- ➔ **Two weeks** In two weeks you can do the five major places of interest in Uzbekistan at an unhurried pace. Fly west to Nukus and spend a half-day appreciating Central Asia's greatest art collection before heading to Khiva via the ancient ruined fortresses of Elliq-Qala. Spend a few days in both Bukhara and Samarkand before ending up in Tashkent for some museum hopping, good food and a night or two on the town.
- ➔ **One month** All of the above sights can be seen in a month at a more relaxed pace. You can also visit both Termiz and the Fergana Valley and devote more time to exploring Uzbekistan's natural wonders, including hiking, rafting or skiing in Ugam-Chatkal National Park, and community-based tourism in the Nuratau Mountains.