

Extension: China's Great Silk Route

May 30-June 5 & October 27-November 3, 2019

Oct 27 Fly Almaty-Urumqi dep 2150

Late night transfer to airport for flight to Urumqi.

Oct 28 Arrival Urumqi 0035 (B,D)

Transfer to hotel, check in.

A late morning start (10 am) to **Xinjiang Regional Museum** to see archaeological treasures from the Silk Road and Xinjiang's minority cultures, including a display of well-preserved 3000 year old mummies excavated from Loulan at Takla Makan desert.

Afterwards, visit picturesque **Hong Shan Park (also called Red Hill Park)**. It is in the center of Ürümqi and contains a 1391-meter-high mountain. The temple lying on the hilltop is called Yu Huang Ge ("Chamber of Heavenly King") and is said to have been built during the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.) when monks studied scripture there.

There is a nine-storey red brick pagoda named Zhen Long Ta at the top of the mountain. It was built in Yuan Dynasty (1277-1367 A.D.). This 25-meter pagoda has been preserved carefully ever since it was built. This view used to be one of the eight most famous scenic spots in ancient Ürümqi. Before the Chinese government began the cultivation-planting project in Xinjiang In the 1950s, the mountain was bare. After several years of cultivation planting, the hill today is covered with trees.

Next we'll take a stroll around the **Xinjiang International Grand Bazaar** also known as **International Grand Bazaar Xinjiang**. This Islamic bazaar is the largest bazaar in the world by scale, combining Islamic culture, architecture, ethnic commerce, tourism and entertainment. It is also one of the most famous landmarks in Ürümqi, and in Xinjiang, though it is the opinion of many that it is now just a tourist "trap," especially compared to Sunday Market in Kashgar.

Professor of Chinese and Central Asian History at Georgetown University, James A. Millward wrote that foreigners often mistakenly think that Ürümqi was originally a Uyghur city and that the Chinese destroyed its Uyghur character and culture, however, Urumqi was founded as a Chinese city by Han and Hui (Tungans), and it is the Uyghurs who are new to the city.

The construction of the bazaar was completed in late 2002; it was opened to public on June 26, 2003. Combined with cultures of Xinjiang ethnic minorities (e.g. Uyghur, Kazakh, Hui, architecture in the bazaar were styled Islamic with its techniques of grinded-brick-to-gap and modern facings, facilitating modern architectural functions and reflecting contemporary spirits. The bazaar reproduces the commercial prosperity of the Silk Road and embodies the ethnic characteristics and regional cultures.

Based on your interest: visit Erdaoqiao Market, the largest retail and wholesale market for ethnic minority goods in Xinjiang. Erdaoqiao Market is a six-storied building. Erdaoqiao Market offers a mind-boggling array of goods, ranging from local dried fruits to expensive Hetian jade to rare antiques to ethnic clothes to Pakistan bronze wares and then to musical instruments.

The first, the second and the third floors of Erdaoqiao Market offer handicrafts including traditional Uyghur silk and Chinese cotton, and local dried fruits. The fourth floor is used as a comprehensive banquet hall, where the traditional Xinjiang dishes such as Roast Whole Lamb and Boiled Lamb are served. The fifth and the sixth floors are used as offices, where banks and post offices are located. The market has a history of over 130 years with many transformations. It used to serve as a trading hub for goods from both Xinjiang and central Asia. In 1982, a covered market was opened, 330 meters (1,083 feet) long and covering an area of 6,756 square meters (72,721 square feet). More than 660 stalls sell over 1,600 kinds of Uyghur goods there and each day more than 20,000

people, including vendors, merchants, visitors and customers, visit this market daily. In 2001, a new market, generally called New Erdaoqiao Market, was set up as an extension of the existing one. The market is open in the evening and there dancing and other activities also take place. **One market too many? Those who do not wish to see this market can be dropped off at the hotel. The group will reunite for dinner.**

Dinner at local restaurant.

Oct 29 Urumqi-Turpan (200 km) (B,D)

Morning drive to Turpan. On arrival transfer to hotel. Lunch on your own.

Afternoon excursion to **Jiaohe ancient city** – the Jiaohe ruins dates from 1st BC and flourished around 5th AD. Much of the city structure is understandable with well laid out city plan the administrative section to housing settlement and to the secular parts with surviving stupa ruins. It was part of Tang Dynasty in 7th AD continued under successive domination till 13th AD when the Mongols destroyed the city. City is comparatively well preserved.

We will see the remarkable **Karez system**, an old engineering miracle designed to bring water to the dry desert town. The Karez channels of Turpan have a history of more than 2000 years. Next, a visit to the notable **Emin Minaret** (44 meters high, completed in 1778) and Mosque.

Dinner at local restaurant.

Oct 30 Turpan-Kashgar (Kashi) (B,L)

Early morning visit the ancient picturesque **Tuyoq village** (70 km) to see the oldest Buddhist caves in Turpan area dated back to the 4th c. Visit local Uygur families and enjoy beautiful mountain and grapes sceneries.

We will go inside the Astana Tombs to see well preserved mummies and unique wall paintings dating to 1 AD.

Next, we visit the **Bezeklik Thousand Buddha Caves** (56 km) on the flanks of the Flaming Mountains, there are 67 caves dating from 317 to 1368, Bezeklik was an important center for Buddhist worship. These are superb murals many depicting Buddhist Sutras and Jatakas which were the part of Hinayana and Mahayana beliefs. Bezeklik caves were part of Gaochang Kingdom present day ruins of Gaochang.

Afternoon drive back to Urumqi. Lunch en-route at local restaurant.

Transfer to the airport for flight to Kashgar CZ6801 20:30 - 22:15. On arrival to Kashgar transfer to hotel.

Oct 31 Kashgar (B,L)

This morning visit colorful unique chaotic **Great Sunday bazaar** (open daily) where you will see numerous sections: silk and cotton, knives, hats, pots and pans, fresh vegetables and fruits, carpets and jewelry.

Kashgar was a famous historical and cultural city on the ancient Silk Road in history. What's more, it was also a distributing center because all the merchants traveling by way of the Silk Road would pass this city. It has a history that is said to date back around 2000 years. The Bazaar contains over 5,000 stalls and offers tens of thousands of commodities. It is located, because of its size, on the far end of town near the East Gate, and it is also known as the "International Trade Market of Central and Western Asia.

Lunch at local restaurant. This afternoon, visit the largest mosque in China Idkah Mosque (1442), Apak Khoja's Tomb – the holiest place in Xinjiang for Sufis (1640), Handicraft Street, and old parts of the town.

Dinner on your own.

Nov 1 Kashgar -Tashkurgan (300 km) (B,L,D)

This morning we drive to Tashkorgan via the famous Karakorum highway (approx. 4 hr drive). En route stop at Karakul Lake located at the foothills of the beautiful Muztagata Mountain at 3600 meters above sea level.

Tashkurgan is where the Kunlun, Kara Kunlun, Hindu Kush and Tian Shan mountains come together. It is connected to the Wakhan Corridor now in Afghanistan, to the Pamirs now in Tajikistan (Gorno-Badakhshan Province) and the upper Hapta-Hindu, the upper basins of the Indus and its tributaries now in Pakistani-administered Kashmir (Gilgit-Baltistan). The Kunlun Mountains are an eastern stem of the Pamirs. It is the eastern-most surviving Aryan enclave today. Its people are the only group within China that speak Sarikoli, a South-eastern Iranian language related to Avestan and Sanskrit.

Given its pivotal location, Tashkurgan was an important junction on the Aryan trade roads also called the Silk Roads. The last town before the Pakistani border, Tashkurgan lies 280km southeast of Kashgar, and about 220km north of the Pakistani town of Sust. Major caravan routes converged here leading to Kashgar in the north, Karghalik to the east, Badakhshan and Wakhan to the west, and Chitral and Hunza to the southwest.

The Chinese Buddhist pilgrim and Silk Road traveler Xuan Zang stopped over here in the seventh century, a time when, as now, it was the last outpost of Chinese rule. Today, Tashkurgan has a peculiar atmosphere. The native population is mainly Tadjik, but there are also groups of Han Chinese, thousands of miles from home, as well as intrepid Pakistanis setting up shops outside their country.

En-route we will visit Uygur traditional village Opal; the mausoleum of the well known 11 c. Uygur philologist Mohammed Kashgeri, Karavan Sarai old ruins by the bank of the Gaz River, Bulunkul Lake and white sand hill –a great photo scenic spot.

Enjoy fantastic views of the mountains and the surrounding grasslands as we are visiting nomadic Kyrgyz ethnic people, who still live in felt yurts.

Lunch will en-route either be at local restaurant or in a yurt camp. Dinner at local restaurant.

Nov 2 Tashkurgan - Kashgar (B,L)

Morning visit the local museum with history, archeology and culture sections. It houses a few local artifacts, a photographic display and, in the basement, two mummies - one of a young woman about 18, and another of a baby about 3 months old. They are labeled as dating from the Bronze Age to the Warring States period (475-221 BCE). The mummies were discovered in the nearby Xiabandi Valley on the old caravan route to Yarkand.

Visit local Tajik family. Lunch at a local restaurant.

Afterwards we embark on an excursion to the ancient (approx 7th century) Stone Fortress. Then return to Kashgar, enjoying mountain scenery of Karakrum Highway. Dinner on your own.

Nov 3 Kashgar-Urumqi-Almaty (or Kashgar-Beijing) (B)

Morning visit the Mor Stupa (3BC) which is a remnant of the big Buddhist temple, located 30 km northeast of Kashgar and picturesque Atush village nearby.

Afternoon transfer to the airport for flight to Urumqi, Air China 1478 dep 4:25 pm, arr 6:15 pm. Connection flight to Almaty CZ 6011 dep 8:45 pm, arr 8:30 pm. **(There is no transit hall in Almaty Airport, therefore you need to obtain a double entry Kazakh visa.)**

OR Afternoon transfer to the airport for flight to Beijing, Air China 1478, dep 4:25 pm, arr 10:50 pm

Hotels (based on availability)

Urumqi: Hotel Mirage B Tower 4* <http://mirage-hotel-urumqi.booked.net/>

Turpan, Hotel Houzhou 4* https://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel_Review-g303778-d1906905-Reviews-Huozhou_Hotel-Turpan_Xinjiang_Uygur.html

Kashgar, Radisson Blu <https://www.radissonblu.com/en/hotel-kashgar>

Tashkorgan, Hotel Crown Inn, 4* <http://crowninnkashgar.com/>

Price: \$2010 per person based on min 4 people. Single Room Supplement \$385

Plus flights (estimate/prices subject to change): Almaty-Urumqi-Kashgar-Urumqi-Almaty \$835 or Kashgar-Beijing: \$XXX. **If you fly back to Almaty you have to get double entry visa.**

***Tour Price valid only to travelers booked on our Silk Route-Five Stans tour.**

Includes: accommodation as listed or similar, meals as listed, accompanying guide (one Urumqi-Turpan, one Kashgar-Tashkorgan), airport transfers and sightseeing by private ac car/mini bus depending on group size, entrance fees to museums and sites. (driver and guide are two separate people).

Does Not Include: Visa Fees, meals not mentioned, camera fees, personal expenses such as phone calls, laundry, tips, drinks.