



The Modern Silk Road with its wealth of historical and cultural heritage as well as natural and geographical diversity presents a legendary and adventurous tourism destination. The Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (Turkic Council) attributes great importance to revealing the true potential of this destination for an unforgettable travel experience through the traces of the traditional Silk Road.

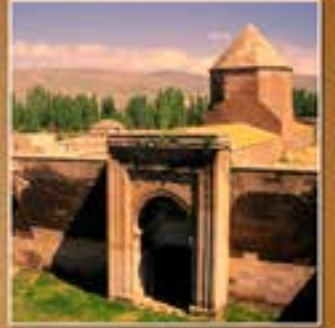
Established in 2009, the Turkic Council aims at deepening cooperation not only among its Member States –Republic of Azerbaijan, Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic and Republic of Turkey but also in the region. Among several fields of cooperation including economy, transportation, customs, culture, education, sports that we promote on a multilateral basis, tourism has a key role. Thus, the topic of the Fourth Turkic Council Summit at the level of Heads of State held in Bodrum, Turkey in 2015 was dedicated to the cooperation in tourism area.

We consider tourism as a significant component to build bridges among people, cultures and lives preparing the necessary ground to enjoy all beauties of the world. Its character to be one of the main driving forces of socio-economic development renders this sector more valuable as an element to boost regional cooperation. With this perspective, Ministers in charge of tourism affairs of our Member States as well as the working group on tourism regularly gather and put forward the ways and means to enhance regional cooperation in this field.

Since the Fourth Turkic Council Summit, we have been working on preparing the “Turkic Council-Modern Silk Road Joint Tour Package” as a project to share with adventurous and curious tourists. Therefore, let me underline that with this tour package, you will experience an UNFORGETTABLE JOURNEY THROUGH HISTORY, PRESENT AND FUTURE.

RAMIL HASANOV
Secretary General
Turkic Council

THE SILK ROAD IN TURKEY



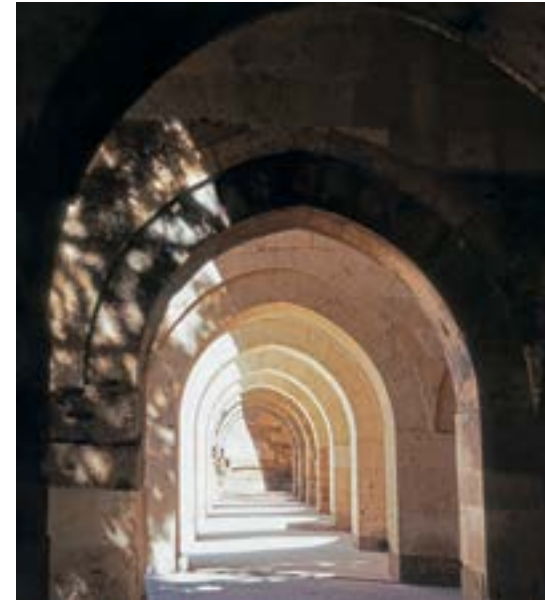


The Silk Road starts in China, going all across Central Asia and reaching to the far ends of Europe. The fact that one of the most significant parts of this route is within the borders of Turkey is, without a doubt, not surprising since the lands of Anatolia that came to be called as the bridge between civilizations hosted such big empires as the Romans, Byzantines and Ottomans. It has been home to commercial and cultural relations between different civilizations. With its geographical location that connects Asia to Europe, Anatolia is hugely assisted by the Silk Road to bring civilizations together.

The Seljuk Sultans undertook intensive works to better the Silk Road in the Anatolian lands where today's Turkey is located. The sultans provided security for caravans and made up for the losses of the traders in their lands, thereby bringing up one of the world's oldest insurances as connected to the Silk Road.

After the Seljuks, the Ottomans established dominion over the lands of Anatolia. The Ottomans, too, perceived the importance of the Silk Road. Whether they came from China or Iran, the important trade products of the Middle Age passed through Anatolia; some of them were being marketed in Ottoman cities and some being carried to European countries. The Ottomans provided some commercial privileges to those who did trade in their lands and continued this tradition coming along from the Seljuks by introducing acts concerning the protection of lives and products of the tradesmen.

You can see the traces and history of the Silk Road in Turkey most comfortably at the caravanserais. Caravanserais that were built by the sultans and high-level authorities with the aim of providing a secure and comfortable journey for travellers are an indicator of the importance the Seljuks and Ottomans attached to trade. They are also a symbol indicating that life and traveller security was brought



under the guarantee of the state. Regardless of their ethnicities and beliefs, travellers were welcomed in the caravanserais for three days without any charge. At the caravanserais, there were people from doctors to vets, from chefs to shoe repairers available to meet all the needs of the traveller tradesmen. Thus, Anatolia, which turned into a debris during the late years of the Byzantine Period and went through huge commercial and economic difficulties, started to get rich and develop thanks to the caravanserais.

Though caravanserais resemble each other in appearance due to common functions, they have differing qualities and reflect the creativity and search for originality of the artists. They seem like a castle from a distance, but they come up as glorious artworks thanks to the Seljuk architects and artists who had used their master skills in building these structures. It is possible to see the most beautiful samples of Seljuk stonemasonry and stone decoration at those caravanserais.





FROM KAYSERİ TO İSTANBUL: TRACING THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE SILK ROAD

As a result of the intensive commercial activities started by the Seljuks and sustained by the Ottomans, the Silk Road reached nearly every part of the land of Turkey. The most beautiful part of the Silk Road inside Turkey starts in Kayseri and ends in Konya. This is because you can visit several caravanserais stretching along this route and this route enables you to see the original natural fabric and historical and cultural riches together.

The armies that went to war, men of faith who went on pilgrimage and travellers after adventure. . . All benefited from this route for hundreds of years. Today, it still embraces those who would like to pass through a time zone and sense the feelings of tradesmen, religious people and commanders who hit it. Your happiness would multiply after you perceive you have joined the caravan of those welcomed by the Silk Road for centuries and it will bring you unforgettable memories. What remains unchanged during your journey that promises to provide unequal experiences will be the sincerity of people you come across and the pleasure you derive from this travel.

KAYSERİ: 4000-year old Commercial Hub

Kayseri has been along important routes throughout history and became a commercial hub. Kayseri's role on these commercial routes goes back to the time of Assyrian Trade Colonies. 4000 years ago, the goods and products brought from Mesopotamia were being marketed in Karum of Kültepe, the first commercial organized centre of the globe. The clay tablets unearthed during excavations there are the oldest written works and the most important documents that inform us about the Assyrian tradesmen and commerce of that time.



Kayseri was situated at the juncture of commercial routes and between the cities of Sivas and Konya, which made it a crucial city on the Silk Road during the Seljuk times. Seljuks used to set up Yabanlu Market nearby Pazarören town in today's Pınarbaşı district. It is considered as the first international commercial fair. Traders from different parts of the world like China, Russia and Iran used to sell their homeland products at this fair that lasted for 45 days.

With its stone decorations and beautifully-decorated gate where stone is embroidered, the Karatay Caravanserai is one of the most beautiful caravanserais of Anatolia. The inscription over the gate tells us that the Karatay Caravanserai was constructed by the Seljuk Visier Celaleddin Karatay in 1255. On the left handside of the muqarnas belt next to the entrance are animal figures taken from the ancient Turkish calendar and there are wyvern-headed figures on the arch of the entrance iwan at this caravanserai that is enriched with figured patterns of Seljuk art. The figures are not only for decorative purposes. Scattered around different parts of this caravanserai, these figured patterns were believed to protect the guests from mischiefs and diseases.

Kayseri's importance for the Silk Road carried on during the years of the Ottomans. Kayseri, still a lively commercial centre today, is



home to Grand Bazaar built in the 16th century. It still houses over 700 stores. Souvenirs that will remind you of Kayseri are available at this bazaar. Vezir Han is constructed on the southwestern edge of the Grand Bazaar. Having been built in 1727, Vezir Han still operates as a market place. Bedesten, on the West of the Grand Bazaar, is another building from the Ottoman Period and serves as a monument where trade is still being done.

Kayseri went through its brightest era during the Seljuk years. It was scene of reconstruction works and got adorned with health, trade and educations centres as well as mosques. The artworks that reached today show that Kayseri was an important commercial,

religious, scientific and art centre. You are highly recommended to visit not only the caravanserais but also the madrasahs, domes and mosques.

Gevher Nesibe Madrasa, dated 1205, is used today as a medical history museum. This building was built by the Seljuk Sultan Gıyaseddin Keyhüsrev I for his sister Gevher Nesibe and it consists of a madrasa and hospital. This structure is viewed as the first applied school of medicine in history. You can see within the museum the devices used for medicine-making, samples of prescriptions and medicine books that belong to 800 years ago.

NEVŞEHİR: The Silk Road at Cappadocia

Mostly known for its fairy chimneys- another natural wonder of Turkey and the world, the city of Nevşehir houses Saruhan Caravanserai, another stop at the Silk Road. Having been built by the Seljuk Sultan İzzettin Keykavus II in 1249, Saruhan has spaces for summer and winter use. With its mesjid, porch and rooms, this caravanserai will take you to a journey that traces back to 750 years. It is operating as a cultural centre today. You can watch the show of whirling dervishes there every evening.

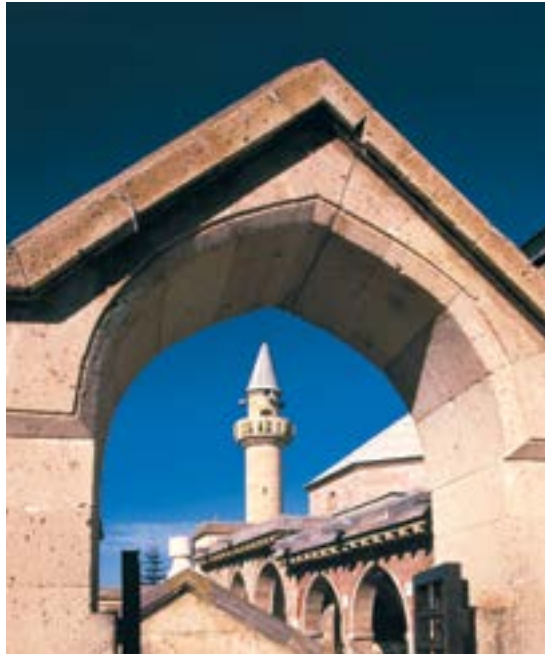
Nevşehir doesn't possess much from the rich traces of the Seljuks and the Silk Road. But it is located at the heart of Capadoccia, which is why it is home to natural beauties as well as underground cities carved and used for defense throughout centuries and rock-hewn churches, all of which are worth a visit.

The Cappadocia region adores the natural beauties, which are far beyond imagination, with aesthetic elegancies. At the center of Cappadocia is located Göreme Open Air Museum attracting millions of tourists from all around the world. The most significant two castles of the Cappadocia Region are Ortahisar Castle and Uçhisar Castle providing a panoramic view for visitors.

Mustafapaşa, located 6 kilometres south of Ürgüp, served as a place where Greek and Turks lived together until the start of 20th century and houses the most beautiful examples of civic architecture. You can come across this style of architecture along with rich stonemasonry in Ürgüp, Ortahisar, İbrahimpaşa, Uçhisar, Göreme and Avanos.

As a result of the excavations carried out at Sobesos Antique City in the Şahinefendi Village 30 km far from Ürgüp on the Ürgüp-Soğanlı





Road, a meeting hall and bath complex have been unearthed. The magnificent mosaic structure from the Roman Period here is unique to the Cappadocia Region.

There are 250 underground cities found in this region and they draw the wide attention of both domestic and international tourists. Among them are 8-storey Derinkuyu Underground City and 4-storey Kaymaklı Underground City, two of the world's biggest underground cities discovered yet.

Hacıbektaş District is another settlement of Nevşehir in which visitors can take an interest. This district took its name from Hacı Bektaş Veli, an Anatolian philosopher of 13th century. Its construction began in 13th century and grew thanks to the expansions by the Ottoman Sultans up to 19th century. Today, this complex is used as a museum.



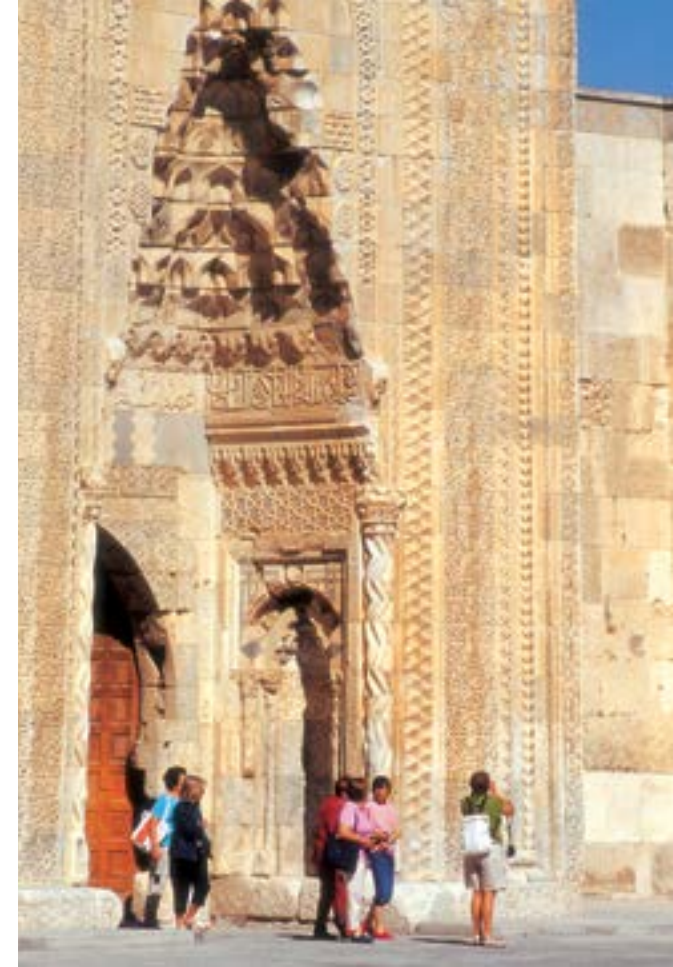
AKSARAY: A City Valued by the Silk Road

According to the findings in Acemhöyük, the commercial background of Aksaray goes back to 1800 BC, to the time of Assyrian Trade Colonies. However, it became more valuable with its role in the Silk Road during the reign of the Seljuks. At those times, the roads to Konya and Antalya Port where the products coming from the East were being transferred to Europe were passing through Aksaray. Aksaray is located on an area between Konya and Kayseri, two important cities of the Seljuks. That's why Aksaray became a scene of intense commercial activities and caravanserais from that period can be seen in different points of the city.

Despite not possessing an inscription, Alayhan Caravanserai, 40 km north of Aksaray-Nevşehir Road and naming the village after itself, has a lion relief on one of its gates, making researchers think that its builder was Kılıçarslan II. If this turns out to be true, it means that Alayhan was the first caravanserai to be built by the Seljuks after their arrival in Anatolia and therefore, it is of historical significance.

Öresin Han, also known as Tepesidelik Han, does not have an inscription, and its date of establishment is unknown. On the other hand, due to its architectural characteristics it is thought to be dating back to 12th century.

Naming the village after itself, Ağzıkarahan falls into the category of the Sultans Inns. This building was made possible thanks to the efforts of two Seljuk Sultans- Alaaddin Keykubat and Gıyaseddin Keyhüsrev II. Its construction started in 1231 and finished in 1239. This caravanserai seems like a castle for its tower and walls. It was used as a military mansion and shelter. This caravanserai is composed of one closed and one open section. There is the Köşk Mesjid in the middle of the caravanserai yard. The caravanserai is a complex having an imaret, bath and fountains. Like the other caravanserais, its most beautiful part is the Taç Kapı which was skillfully decorated with geometrical patterns, stars and rosettes.



Sultanhanı, built in 1229, has shown us that caravanserais were not made only for commercial purposes but they were pieces of artistic value, too. Its taç kapı catches the eyes of the visitors with its magnificent stone decorations as well as writings and geometric motifs. In the middle of the yard is Köşk Mesjid that has geometric motifs on the fronts and arch faces and dragons with mouths facing each other, making it an exceptional example of artwork. As one of the rare examples of the Seljuk architecture, it is the largest Seljuk caravanserai with a surface area of 4500 square meter and it constitutes a very developed example of Seljuk inns in every aspect.



Akhan is 30 kilometres from Aksaray, located between Aksaray and Sultanhan. There is no inscription inside or outside it, making it impossible for us to know about the date of its construction and builder, however, it is estimated that Sultan Keyhüsrev II had it made.

Alongside its importance on the Silk Road, Aksaray has 14-km long Ihlara within its borders- Cappadocia's longest walking track. You may have set foot and walked in many places of the world, but Ihlara Valley, full of surprises, is located on a route where natural beauties and historical riches merge together. You will be accompanied by Melendiz Çayı (Melendiz Brook) during your walk. Melendiz Brook flows through the Ihlara Valley shaping it and creating a canyon with a depth of 200 meters from place to place. The layer this brook shapes formed after the eruption of Mountain Hasan which had played a role in the formation of fair chimneys. That means, the valley is a co-work of natural forces. The ascetic monks used to settle here and they carved the rocks and made churches. These churches and magnificent natural landscapes turn the valley into a matchless place for spending nice time.

KONYA: The Heart of the Silk Road, the Glorious Capital of the Seljuks

Konya constituted for a very long time the juncture of the north-south and east-west directions of the Silk Road. Obruk Han, placed on the route of Aksaray, is one of those caravanserais that has a high number of visitors in Konya. According to the writings of travellers of that time, it was an important accommodation. Together with the Obruk Lake beside it, Obruk Han promises a higher appeal to visitors. Since it has no inscription, its age is unknown, but it is estimated to date back to 12th or 13th century. The devshirmeh materials seen on its walls is pointing to an ancient settlement nearby.

Konya is an ideal place to complete your journey along the Silk Road which will take you to a journey extending back hundreds of years and make you feel as if you were a traveller or trademan in one of those caravans of 13th century because Konya served as a capital for the Seljuks who made the most contributions to the betterment of the Silk Road. As the most impressive monuments of Seljuks, the caravanserais are placed in this magnificent city. Some of these

monuments are the Karatay and İnce Minareli Madrasahs, Alaeddin and İplikçi Mosques and the dome of Kılıçarslan II. But a must-see construction is the Mevlana Turbe that is a museum now and dates back to 1274.

Having been built by the Seljuk Sultan İzzeddin Keykavus II in 1251, Karatay Madrasa was used by the Ottomans, too. This madrasa, having given service until 19th century, is a museum now open to visitors, roofing the beautiful tile and ceramic works of the Seljuk and Ottoman periods.

İnce Minareli Medrese (İnce Minaret Madrasa or Slit Minaret Madrasa), dating back to the year of 1254, is a historical structure serving as a museum now and it retains Taç Kapı, one of the striking artwork of Seljuk stonemasonry. This museum displays stone and wooden works of art from the Seljuk and Ottoman Ages. The double-headed eagle- the symbol of Seljuks, and figures of winged angels are attracting the attention of all tourist visitors.



İSTANBUL: Capital of Empires

İstanbul, having served as an imperial capital to the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires for nearly 1500 years, has been continuously beautified worthy of its name, adorned with the most magnificent monuments and become a metropolis bringing unlike cultures, nations and religions together.

Another reason why this globally-known province is regarded the most beautiful city across globe is that striking human-made artworks are merged into natural beauties. Important reconstruction works started in the times of Byzantines and

continued during the reign of Ottomans who decorated the city with an artistic aestheticism that hit the peak of that period.

İstanbul's most impressive monuments are located within a triangle-shaped area that extends to Marmara Sea on south and west, the Golden Horn on north and the city walls on east. This piece of land is inscribed on the World Heritage List of UNESCO, sheltering the most telling structures of the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires. Within this land, Byzantines made a centre of power, Hagia Sophia as a glorious worship centre, the hippodrome as a social centre, and the Basilica Cistern as a source of water.

After the Ottoman's conquer, the Hagia Sophia was converted into a mosque but today it is a museum, enchanting its visitors with its splendid appearance. The Christian and Islamic elements are visible together there, which is why it is today viewed as a symbol of brotherhood of religions.

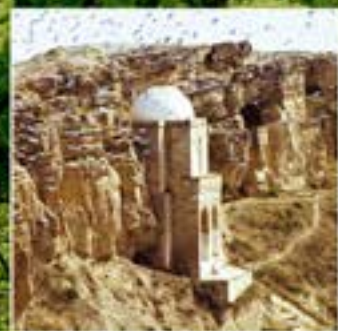
The Basilica Cistern, just across the Hagia Sophia, met the large part of water needs during the Byzantines. It is standing on 336 columns, accommodating the weeping column engraved with eye tears and the medusa head used as a column base that electrify the souls of visitors.

Sultan Ahmet Mosque, popularly known as the Blue Mosque, has become another symbol of İstanbul. The Blue Mosque takes its name from the blue İznik tiles decorating the inners of the mosque. These tiles were the most marvelous ones of the past. Its architect is Sedefkâr Mehmet Ağa, a pupil of Sinan the Great Architect. And Süleymaniye Mosque... the most epic structure of İstanbul... It was built by Sinan the Great Architect- one of the greatest minds of then Age, who engraved his name onto the history of architecture. This mosque is placed in Süleymaniye neighborhood. You can visit the türbes (tombs) of Süleyman the Magnificent and his legal wife and favorite consort Hürrem Sultan (Roxelana) in the mosque yard, too.

The Ottomans turned İstanbul into one of the most important cities in the world. The Egyptian Bazaar is also here in this world capital, selling the goods brought from Egypt- a central spot beside the sea where ships coming from Egypt used to stop. Since the old times, this bazaar has been offering every type of herbs and products to buyers and become a shopping spot of interest for the local and international tourists. As an attention-grabbing spot for all tourists, it brings together different cultures as it used to be.



THE SILK ROAD IN AZERBAIJAN



From time immemorial the caravan routes of the Great Silk Road invariably crossed Azerbaijan. It served as the “gate” between mysterious faraway China and rich Europe. In the 1st – 2nd centuries BC the busiest way laid across the Country of Lights. The way was usually called “Strabon” (after the great geographer who was the first to mention it). The way started from China and India across Central Asia, crosses the river of Uzbai flowing into the Caspian Sea and went across the territory of Azerbaijan.

There it split in two roads: one led upstream the Kura towards Colchis and Iberia, the second made a turn and went along the western coast of the Caspian Sea across Derbent and Caucasian steppes. Azerbaijan was the safest of the entire Road. Georgia, Iberia, Colchis, which followed after, were politically stable states which could provide the functioning of the route which in turn attracted merchants. Another attraction was the fact that the most of the way included transportation by water which used to be the cheapest. As a result that section was durable, stable and intensive as well as one of the major destinations of the Silk Road in antiquity. It was there, along the two branches of “Strabon way”, where numerous ancient cities of Azerbaijan were founded. During early Middle Ages Azerbaijan still remained the important center of the Silk Road. Barda, which became the capital of Azerbaijan in the 5th century, was considered the world’s greatest trading center on one of branches of the Silk Road and until the 10th century was one of the greatest centers of crafts of the entire Middle East and Transcaucasia. Talented handicraftsmen offered foreign merchants a great variety of useful goods - graceful jewelry, wind and string musical instruments, expensive weaponry, magnificent carpets, local sorts of silk. The merchants took to Europe oil, jewelry, salt, mercury, alum, wool, flax, cotton, mineral dyes, medicines and many other things out from there. Copper items were especially famous: kitchen ware, trays, candlesticks, astronomical devices.



Many centuries after, Islam was adopted as the official religion of the country. Medieval Azerbaijan continued to maintain trade relations and exchanged its cultural values with many countries. In the 14th – 18th centuries the role of Azerbaijan cities located on the Silk Road increased even more. It happened due to the development of the Volga–Caspian Sea waterway used by Russian and English merchants. During that period such cities as Shamakhi, Derbent, Baku, Ardabil, Tabriz, Maragheh, Ganja, and Nakhichevan become the transportation centers with warehouses for goods from Orient and Europe. As cities developed, they tended to specialize and market cities and port cities emerged. Urban life became markedly different from village life. Relatively efficient utilities were established; sources report on urban sewage systems and ceramic water supply pipes. Houses were often built with gypsum and fired brick with ceramic facings. The governors of the great



empires frequently had their residences in the medieval cities. A country's political independence enabled brisk trade relations and was a crucial factor in the level of its cities' socio-economic prosperity. The main trail of Eurasian transit trade crisscrossed Azerbaijani lands, passing through the expanding cities. This in turn seeded the development and prosperity of secular culture. Only this can explain the historical circumstances that produced the great thinkers and poets of the 'golden age', primarily Nizami Ganjavi, Khaqani Shirvani and Mehseti Ganjavi. The cultural environment generated interest in the past. Kitabi Dada Qorqud (The Book of Dada Qorqud, also written Dede Gorgud and Dede Korkut), which was put into written form in the 12th century, is today a principal source of the older history of Azerbaijan; an encyclopedia of its distant past and medieval life. Trade along the Great Silk Road stimulated the development of cities in the medieval East. While cities in Western Europe mainly served local markets, cities in Asia served international trade. These cities, including those of

Azerbaijan, had caravanserais, which combined the functions of hotel and warehouse.

Special bazaars were held for foreign merchants. The caravans created work for people of many professions – cameldrivers, guards, moneychangers and so on, helping to shape the development of the trading cities. Through ancient and medieval periods, Azerbaijan was at the crossroads of three civilizations – the old Christian Mediterranean, Zoroastrian Iranian and Muslim Turkic. Several important caravan routes passed through Azerbaijan. Ninth-century Persian geographer Ibn Khordadbeh said one of the branches of the Khorasan road was particularly valuable, as it connected the distant northern provinces of the Caliphate – Arran, Azerbaijan – with lands both near and far. At different periods of history, Azerbaijan was an imperial center for the Atabeyes, Hulagids, Agqoyunlu, and Safavids. And this was reflected in the social and economic shape of its cities, especially its capitals. The



silk trade was always a central subject of negotiation in diplomatic relations between the Safavids state, European countries and Russia. The raw silk trade was so lucrative that Shah Abbas I established a state monopoly over it and European travellers called him the 'richest monarch in the world'.

All trade within the Safavids state was divided between the Shah's huge operation and that of other merchants. The government itself organized the international caravan trade. However, Shah Safi I (1629-1642) eliminated the monopoly and banned government officials from intervening in the raw silk trade.

Thus private trade in silk was revived and cocoon production benefited. Adam Olearius was a member of an embassy sent by the duke of Holstein-Gottorp to Moscow and Persia, whose purpose was to conclude agreements with the two countries on conducting

the silk trade through Moscow into Holstein, a convenient location for onward trade through the Baltic and North Sea. As a member of this embassy, Olearius twice visited the Moscow region and Azerbaijan between 1636 and 1639 and he recorded that more than 20,000 cocoons were produced in productive years in Azerbaijan. Thousands of bags of silk were used domestically while the rest were exported.

GANDJA

Gandja is the second largest city in the country, a monument of the ancient culture, the industrial center of western Azerbaijan. City with a history that goes back to 494 BC (in 2013 Gandja celebrates 2507 anniversary) is of great interest for tourists. This area has a rich natural, cultural and historical heritage.

There are a lot of forests, vineyards, lakes, rivers and mountains. The area is famous for many mineral springs and unique medicinal oil – naphthalan. This natural substance is used as the most effective drug for the treatment of dermatological, rheumatic and neurological diseases. The Gandja sanatorium "Naftalan" is located in the heart of the ancient capital of Azerbaijan.





In addition in 48 km to the south-east (50 minutes) from Gandja there is a city Naftalan where are many specialized clinics. Gandja is a mover land of the great Nizami. Being in Gandja you can't escape visitation to the mausoleum of the great poet with a marble monument to the poet nearby with height of 20 meters. Behind it are cast in metal figures depicting scenes from Nizami poems. There are museum, art gallery, theater of poetry named after Nizami. City of the ancient culture Gandja has preserved the beautiful face of the city with many monuments of architecture.

Golden age – sanitation and literature- The 11th and 12th centuries are recorded in history as the 'golden age' of the cities of Azerbaijan, a phenomenal era. These cities were large, with populations of hundreds of thousands. Up to 500,000 people lived in Ganja at a time when cities of 20,000 to 30,000 were considered large in Europe. As the cities developed, so did handicrafts in Azerbaijan, which had some 30-40 different craft professions. One renowned craft was minasazi, the decoration of precious stones, and the products of these crafts, especially stained glass, were distributed over a wide area. Underwater archaeology along the Azerbaijani coast of the Caspian Sea has found large quantities of the ceramics that were being shipped to various countries.





SHEKI

Sheki is an ancient city of skill, silkworm breeding, and trade, which the Great Silk Road passed from the territory, united shopping centers of the Near and Far East countries with the West by means of caravan ways.

Ancient Sheki was at the route of commercial ways and was huge trading center and area of developed silky and handicraft manufacturing.

All travelers in all ages firstly always visited bazaars .

At the famous Sheki bazaars you can find markets of seeds, silk, ceramic products, relief dishes, jewellery decorations. However, the most part of all Sheki city gained honour by its silk. Merchants from Europe, Asia, Middle East the brought out towards countries of the world , airy transparent as veil sewed with the golden silk. We may just guess what liveliness was reigned in those places, when in the past via here passed the Great Silk Road. Sheki is rightly called the architectural reserve of the country.

Of particular interest to the tourists from all over the world is the Palace of Sheki Khans (1762) – a rare example of combining the national and palace architecture traditions. It is remarkable that during the construction of the palace, not a single nail was used, and the colored glass for shebeke (national mosaic) was brought from Venice.

There are many interesting historical monuments in Sheki. There were many caravanserais in Sheki, which was famous for its trade. Two of them are still here today; the Upper and the Lower Caravanserais. Upper and Lower caravanserais built in the XVIII century also survived to the present days. The dome of the upper caravanserai is one of the largest in the Middle East.

Also the Albanian temple in the village of Kish (I-II centuries) can



be noted. Not to mention the Albanian temple in the village of Kish (I-II centuries), where the famous Norwegian Thor Heyerdahl has repeatedly researched, as evidenced here by the mounted bust of the traveler.

Finally, Sheki is also famous for its mouth melting baklava, soup piti (stew with vegetables in a clay pot), and the sense of humor of its people. Due to their sense of humor, the city is twinned with the city Gabrovo in Bulgaria.

SHAMAKHI

Shamakhi is an ancient city of Azerbaijan founded in the V century BC. In XI-XVI centuries it was a capital of the kingdom of Shirvan and a residence of Shirvanshahs. Shamakhi was one of the most beautiful cities in the East. From the middle of XVIII century it was the centre of Shamakhi Khanate (if you remember Pushkin's the Queen of Shamakhi).

Natural conditions of Shamakhi lands attracted people since ancient times.

The unique nature, mild climate and mineral springs provide this district with special beauty. The climate here is temperate. Oak, beech and hornbeam forests in the highlands, green fields and bushes, caressing eyes green meadows give these places unforgettable beauty. More than 50 species of medical herbs grow here. The rich nature in forests provides with favorable conditions for birds and animals living there, for example deer, boars, bears, wild cats.

This area attracts a lot of tourists and vacationers all the year round. At the distance of 10 km from Shamakhi and at 850 m above sea level on the right bank of Pirsaat river is located a large village Chukhuryurt.

Local apples, pears, plums and peaches, mountain honey are in popular demand. Sulfur springs Badabag, Tufandag and Bazardyuzu are easily observed from the surrounding hills. Here live Molokans resettled from Russia.



BAKU

The capital of Azerbaijan, where past and present intricately intertwined, have always attracted tourists. Of particular interest to guests of Baku is Old City, enclosed within the fortress walls, or Icheri Sheher (Inner City).

This open-air museum, together with famous Maiden Tower (XII c.) located here was included into the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2000. The architectural appearance of a fortress differs by its unique originality. It contains 44 monuments of medieval architecture, including the unique Palace of the Shirvanshahs, former residence of the rulers of Shirvan (XV c.).

A little distance from Baku (60 km) in the village of Gobustan there is a rare monument of world culture, one of the earliest centers of human civilization, where were found 4,000 rock drawings of people and animals (petroglyphs) and 20 caves where our ancestors lived. The National Historical-Artistic Preserve was founded here and this historical-art reserve is also listed in the UNESCO World Heritage List since 2007.

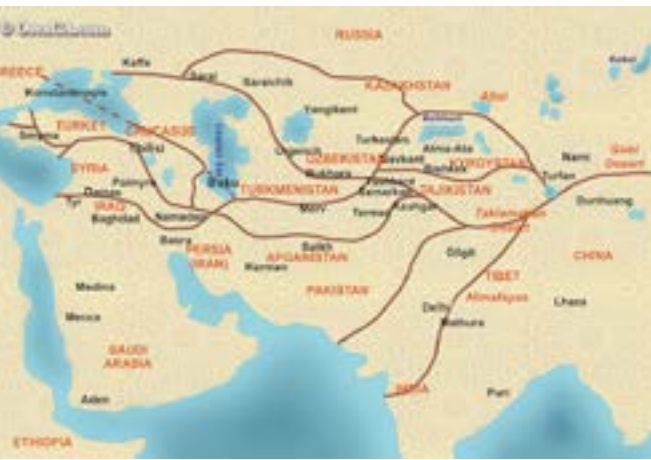
At the distance of 30km from Baku in the Surakhani village is located not less exotic ancient monument - a temple of fire-worshippers "Ateshgah" - a page in the chronicle of Zoroastrism.





THE SILK ROAD IN KAZAKHSTAN





For centuries the Great Kazakh steppe accepted caravans of the Silk Road in oases of its cities and settlements. The main line of the Silk Road on the territory of Kazakhstan laid across the country's south, from the border with China trade caravans moved through the cities of Almaty (Zhetisu region), Otrar, Taraz, Turkestan further to Central Asia, Persia, India to the Caucasus and from there to Europe.

In the latter half of the 6th century, the Zhetisu (Seven Rivers), South Kazakhstan became part of the Turkic Khaganate, a huge nomadic empire, stretching from the territory of Korea to the Black Sea. The revival of the Silk Way on the territory of the Zhetisu and South Kazakhstan at the end of the 6th century has played a significant role in the development of this region's urban culture. It has led to the emergence of city centers in the Zhetisu, as well as the rapid growth of cities in South Kazakhstan.

HISTORICAL TOUR TO THE CITIES OF THE ZHETISU

Several settlements in the valley of Zhetisu were mentioned in the writings of Genoese merchants, dating back to the 8-10th centuries. The historians suggest that one of those settlements, used as a transit point on the Great Silk Road, was called Almatu. The name "Almatu" can be mentioned as "Almalyk" in the writings of chroniclers.

During the Saks period, the region of Almaty was inhabited by the Saka and, later, by the Usun tribes. Some of the existing examples of that time period are kurgan burials, including huge kurgans of the Saka tribe's nobility.

The representatives of the Saka tribe's nobility were buried in the richly decorated attires in the kurgan tombs, made from the Asian spruce, along with their weapons, gemstones, clayware, utensils



and other luxurious items of those times. The luxury is evidenced from the materials of the Issyk kurgan's excavation.

"Kargaly diadem", found in the Trans-Ili Alatau Mountains on the height of 2300 m, is an example of the late Usun period.

The archeologists believe that the images on the diadem are related to the cult of Mother-Goddess and Dionysus, the God of fertility, thus, illustrating the Dionysus festivals.

The next stage of life on the territory of Almaty is related to the period of feudalism, when a variety of settlements and cities were established. It is the end of the 8-10th centuries, the period of the development of the urban culture and rise in international trade ties across the Silk Way. The route across Ili Valley was actively utilized in the 10-13th centuries. Researchers believe that modern city of Almaty was established as Almatu in the 10-11th centuries.



The history of the city can be traced back to thousands of years. The territory of Almaty had already been inhabited during the period of Bronze Age, 2000 years before the establishment of the medieval town.

The city was established on the lands, owned by the Saka tribes in the ancient times. In the 3rd century B.C., these lands became part of the powerful Usun state, occupying the territory from Syr Darya to the shores of Bulungir (North China).

Several villages and settlements existed on the territory of the modern Almaty in the 8-10th centuries. There were hay lands,



consequence, the ancient town fell into decay. Only a small part, inhabited by the Kazakhs of Senior Juz of the Dulat ancestry, was left untouched.

On February 4, 1854, Russian military fort, called “Zailiyskoye”, was established on the place of the destroyed ancient Kazakh settlement. It was further renamed as Vernoe, getting the status of town in 1867. The origin of Vernoe is related to the voluntary joining to Russia.

Almaty has been capital city from May, 1929 to November, 1997 and is considered to be one of the most beautiful cities of Kazakhstan, located at the foothills of the Trans-Ili Alatau.

The ropeway to the Kok-Tobe Mountain. The ropeway, connecting Abay square with Kok-Tobe mountain, was built in 1967. The length of the ropeway is 1 km 672 meters; it consists of 2 cars with the capacity of 25 people and speed of 22 km/h. It takes about 5 minutes to reach Kok-Tobe Mountain from Arman cinema.

Kok-Tobe Mountain («Blue Hill», «Verigin mountain»). The name of Verigin Mountain was given by Russian immigrants in the 19th century. This place was widely used as a picnic area, where people could rest and gather snowdrops, peony, iris, pie plants or go skiing during winter months. The local artists were famous for creating various beautiful masterpieces. This mountain was eventually renamed as Kok-Tobe in 1972.

Another outstanding landmark is a 372-metre-high Almaty TV Tower, built between 1975 to 1983. It was designed to withstand an earthquake of 10 on a Richter scale. The base of the tower is a 35-metre-long “steel cup” with the 2 meters thick walls, reaching 1050 meters above sea level. The televisions of Almaty received the first signal from the “Kok-Tobe” TV tower on June 1, 1984. It can also be considered as the tallest tower, calculated from the sea level.



pastures, as well as developed handcrafting and irrigated agriculture. A lively trade route was passing through the Zhetisu from Middle Asia to China. This region was inhabited by ancient semi-nomadic and nomadic tribes, who were the ancestors of Kazakhs: saka, usuns and the tribal union of Dulu in the 6th century. Since 1st millennium, this place achieved prominence among Arabs and Persians due to the merchant caravans passing through the Silk Way from Asia to Europe.

The territories of the northern slopes of the Trans-Ili Alatau were conquered by the dzungars in the 16-17th centuries. As a

Trip to the museums and parks of Almaty

Park of 28 Panfilov Guardsmen is a green area of 18 hectares, located in the Medeu District of Almaty. This central park has been renamed several times since pre-revolution period: originally named “Staroklabbischesky”, it was called “Cathedral” and “Church” Park due to the future plans of the establishment of Cathedral at this territory. It received its modern name in honor of the 28 Soviet soldier-heroes, who prevented the Germans from entering Moscow in 1942.

Museum of Musical Instruments. This museum was established in 1980, becoming one of the cultural sights of the Southern capital. The museum of Musical Instruments has 60 different types and thousands of units of ancient Kazakh musical instruments from all of the regions of Kazakhstan, as well as national instruments from CIS countries and different parts of the world. The exposition of the museum covers personal dombras of poets, composers and zhyraus, such as Abay, Makhambet, Zhambyl, Amre, Dina and other prominent figures of our country’s musical heritage.

Medeu ice-skating rink and Shymbulak mountain resort. Medeu is the world’s highest skating and bandy arena in the world located at 1,691 meters above sea level in the Trans-Ili Alatau Mountains. The mountain valley was named in honor of Medeo, a wanderer who lived in the last century and established own settlement in this picturesque site. Medeu has witnessed more than 120 world records set during 1951 to 1980s. The ride on the cableway from Medeu to the resort “Shymbulak” is taking approximately 15 minutes. It is the third longest cableway in the world. The cable car is passing over the road that is leading to the dam of Maloalmatinsky Gorge. A beautiful landscape of the Tien-Shan Mountains can be viewed on the way to Shymbulak.





Raptors show

“Sunkar” Raptor Sanctuary

“Sunkar” (Kazakh word meaning falcon) is a raptor sanctuary, established in 1989 for the purpose of breeding rare and endangered species of birds of prey and their reintroduction to the nature, with the particular emphasis on the Baloban falcon and the golden Eagle, included to the Kazakh Red Book.

South-Kazakhstan Region

Kazakhstan area of the Silk Road, moving from west to east, was passing from Shash (Tashkent) through the pass Turbat in Isfijab and Sayram. The name of the ancient city Sayram is still in existence. It is a settlement near Shymkent, with the remains of a medieval fort that was one of the largest centers of the Silk Road. Shymkent, has been known as a town-settlement since the 6th century, related to the famous scholar-traveler Xuanzang.

The location of the town favored the life activities of the population, evidenced from the traces of the ancient settlements and the remains of a highly developed material culture, found

during archaeological excavations. Arable farming and viticulture was developing in the mountain zone, while the stockbreeding was widely spread on the alpine meadows and grasslands of the river valleys. The caravan routes connected South Kazakhstan with Middle Asia, Near and Middle East, Turkestan, China and nomads from the great region of the steppes. Shymkent has faced different historical events, such as Genghis Khan’s military campaigns.

For this reason, the descendants of the conqueror controlled the town for years. In response to the successful military efforts of khans of White and Golden Horde, the town became part of the Timurid Empire. Shymkent can be considered as the most ancient city of the Central Asia and Kazakhstan.

Cultural and heritage sites of the South Kazakhstan

Ancient settlement Sayram. Sayram village is one of the most ancient settlements on the territory of South Kazakhstan. It is located on the river Sayram-Su, 15 km to the east of Shymkent city. During the Early Middle ages (9-12th centuries) Isfijab city stood on the spot of Sayram – center of the same title district, that was a part of Mawarannah. Monuments of the area include mausoleums and mazars of saints Karashash ana (18th century), Ibrahim Ata (13-19th centuries), Abdel Aziz Baba (15th-19th century), Khoja Talig (13th -19th century), Mirali Baba (end of 19th -20th century), Medieval minaret Hizr (13th-19th century).

Arystan Bab Mausoleum

Arystan-Bab Mausoleum (monument of the architecture of the 14th century), the Islam preacher, religious mystic, spiritual father and the mentor of Khoja Akhmed Yassawi, living in the 12th century, is located 150 km away from Shymkent, near to the city of Otrar.

The legend says that Amir Timur (1338-1405) started the establishment of the mausoleum on the top of the tomb of Khoja



Akhmed Yassawi. All efforts to build the wall were failing one after another due to the sudden arrival of the green bull that was ruining everything. The Saint, whom Timur saw in his dream, told that Mausoleum should be built on the top of the tomb of Saint Arystan-Bab who was the religious mentor of K.A. Yassawi. Timur followed this admonition. Therefore, Pilgrims are visiting Mausoleum of Arystan-Bab first and Mausoleum of K.A. Yassawi afterwards.

Complex of Akhmed Yassawi Mausoleum

Mausoleum of Khoja Akhmed Yassawi in Turkestan (city of Yassi until 16th century) in South Kazakhstan is a unique monument of the history of Kazakh nation.

City of Yassi was located on one of the branches of the Great Silk Road – trade route between Steppe of the Kipachak and Oasis in Middle Asia – cities of Khwarezm, Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara. It was a region of the ongoing trade – China was exporting porcelain, Persia – skins of tigers, golden and silver products, Byzantium – all types of fabrics. Caravans to Russia were carrying colorful Turkestan glass, finest silks and cottonseeds. The caravans of 500 camels were entering Turkestan annually.



Turkestan was a place of residence of the Kazakh khans in the 10-15th centuries.

The places to visit are historical museum “Azaret-Sultan”, cultural-ethnographic center, archeological museum, gates (Darvaza) (18-19 centuries), **Esimkhan mausoleum** (19 century), **Rabiga Sultan Begim mausoleum** (end of 15 century), Akhmed Yassawi khanaka-mausoleum (12 -14 centuries), **“Zhuma”** mosque (1878), underground **mosque Khilovat** (12-14 centuries), oriental baths (16-18 centuries), Big



khilvet (12 century), **Chillyakhana** (15 century), archeological site of ancient settlement Kultobe (15 century), **Khilvet Aulie-Kumchik-ata** (12 century).

Museum of Qajymuqan. Exposition of the museum is dedicated to Qajymuqan Munaipasuly, a Kazakh wrestler, famous as a first world champion in the French Wrestling (1900s).

The City of Taraz

Taraz is one of the most ancient cities on the territory of Kazakhstan, located on the former ancient “Silk Road” crossing the Talas Valley, leading from Byzantium and Iran to Eastern Turkestan and China.

Favorable natural-economical and geographical conditions, such as horticultural activities in Talas valley, proximity to the silver mining area, trade connections in the center of the populated region on the caravan routes, borders with the nomadic steppe, location on the natural elevation— are some of the factors contributing to the emergence of the city.

City of Taraz was called as a city of merchants during ancient times. All of the narrow roads were leading to the Bazaar that was the concentration of all life activities. This city of merchants with Citadels, Mosques, Caravan Palaces, clay houses, skillful craftsmen emerged from and around bazaar.

Ancient Taraz Today

Aisha Bibi Mausoleum

Aisha Bibi mausoleum of the 11-12th centuries, situated in the village Aisha Bibi of Zhambyl region 18 kilometers away from Taraz town. The massive columns are set in four corners. Small niches, small columns, arches, lancet arches, terracotta facing tile were used in decoration. The traditional kinds of ornamental art of ancient Kazakh tribes harmonize in the patterns of the mausoleum. They include the geometrical zoomorphic and solar motifs that go back to the art of Andron and Saks tribes. There are no authentic facts about the construction of the mausoleum. However there

is the Kazakh legend about love of Aisha Bibi to her bridegroom. There are 28 different versions of this legend. According to the most widespread one, beautiful Aisha was the daughter of the famous rich man – Khakim-Ata. After his death, she was raised at Sheikh Aykozhy’s house. Once, the ruler of Taraz Karakhan Muhammad asked for her hand, but her teacher, Sheikh Aykozhy did not accept it. Fraudulently leaving the family home Aisha Bibi went to Taraz and tragically died on the river Asa from a bite of the snake, hidden in a headdress. Mourning the death of the girl, Karahan established mausoleum of a fabulous beauty on the place of her death. Aisha Bibi’s nanny Babaji Khatun became the guardian of the mausoleum and was buried in 20 steps from Aisha Bibi in mausoleum Babaji Khatun after her death.

The Mausoleum of Tekturmas

One of the most ancient cult places built on the right bank of the Talass river, on the southeast suburb of the city of Taraz, at the top of the mountain. Tekturmas is considered to be the sacred burial of Sultan-Makhmud-khan. The Mausoleum, built during the Islamic period, was destroyed in 1935.

New Mausoleum was established based on the medieval prototype. It was located in near proximity to the Mausoleum, established on the tomb of great Kazakh Batyr Mambet. There is an excellent view across the Talas River to the green cityscape of Taraz from behind the mausoleum. Architectural complex is also a place of Pilgrimage.

Karakhan Mausoleum

It is situated in the central part of the city of Taraz at the intersection of Tole bi Street and Baizak Batyr Street. The mausoleum is a part of religious memorial complex, formed on the territory of medieval Taraz.





As early as in 1902 Karakhan Mausoleum delighted Russian experts in architecture as a genius creation of ancient Taraz. Archeological diggings found out 30 different designs of shaped bricks made with great skill. The mausoleum was built in the 11th century era of Karakhanids. Folk legends inseparably associate the construction of the mausoleum and the person buried here with mausoleums of Aisha bibi and Babadzhi Khatun. Historians associate the buried person with one of the khans of Karakhanid dynasty, who ruled in our region in the 10-12th centuries.

Karakhan Mausoleum was rebuilt and reconstructed in 1906, losing its architectural decoration. The cascade tomb was left in the inside of Mausoleum. Nowadays, the walls of Mausoleum are covered in modern bricks with the inside walls (cupola, arc niches) built from the bricks of Karakhanid period.

Ancient Caravanserai Tortkul 11-13th centuries

Located on the western suburb of the regional center, Caravanserai Tortkul used to be a massive kurgan. The specialists of Archeology Institute named after A.Kh. Margulan have performed archeological excavations in this area since 2008. The remains of the Caravanserai with hotel, bath and the infrastructure, similar to the Caravanserai of the ancient times were found on an area of 80 square meters. It is a rectangular area of 80x80 m and 1.5-2 m in height, with the possibility of the existence of the fortified walls. There are lots of remains of ceramic dishes excavated at this region. Nowadays, the building is limited by the residential developments, with the smaller northeastern corner due to the usage of clay for the house needs.

Thousands of travelers from different parts of the world discover cultural and heritage monuments of Central Asia and its unique nature.



We are inviting you to experience this delightful and unparalleled travel along the Great Silk road.



THE SILK ROAD IN KYRGYZSTAN



The Great Silk Road was one of the most significant achievements in the history of World civilization. An established networks of caravan roads crossed Europe and Asia from the Mediterranean to China and served as the most important means of trade and dialogue between cultures of the West and the East from distant ancient times up to the Middle Ages. The most extensive site of the Silk Road passed through the territories of Central Asia, including Kyrgyzstan.

The Great Silk Road glows in the imagination as the world's richest exchange of trade and culture. Caravans of camels, men and horses bore lazurite, silver and spices across thousands of miles, but the unseen interaction of ideas and religions was perhaps its greatest glory, enlightening civilisations from Beijing to Rome. Then as now, Kyrgyzstan stood at a crossroads, China's gateway to the west.

On the caravan routes rich cities, trade settlements and caravanserais began to arise and blossom. Turkmenistan - Merv; Uzbekistan - Bukhara, Samarkand, Urgench, Khiva. Kazakhstan - Otrar, Turkestan, Taraz, and Ispejab. Kyrgyzstan - Jul, Suyab, Nookent, Balasagyn, Barskoon, Tash-Rabat, Osh, and Uzgen. European nations cooperated and communicated with the countries of Asia.

BURANA TOWER HISTORICAL COMPLEX- THE STRATEGIC SPOT OF THE GREAT SILK ROAD

Situated 10 km to the South of Tokmok town on the route of the Great Silk Road stands the Burana tower. It's a favorite spot for day trips from Bishkek. The history of the tower is shrouded in mystery.

The legend tells us about a powerful khan who had a beautiful daughter, Monara, whom he loved very much and wanted to protect against the affections of local djigits and placed in isolation into the tower. But at the age of sixteen she was bitten by the black spider and died.



The tower is believed to be a minaret - and if so it is the oldest in Central Asia. The name

Burana itself is probably a corruption of the Turkic word Murana (= minaret). Originally 45 m tall only the bottom 25 m remain - the top was lost in an earthquake in the 15th century. The tower has an octagonal base and on this was constructed a conical tower. On the outside of the tower is pattern of relief work in brick. The diameter at the bottom of the tower is 9.3 meters and the top is 6m across.

In fact the tower is all that remains of the ancient city of Balasagyn set at the foot of the Shamshy valley. It was a strategic city right near the entrance to Boom canyon. All caravans traveled along the Great Silk Road, passed through the guardians of Balasagyn.



With Kashgar, Balasagyn was one of the capitals of the Eastern Khanate when the Karakhanid state split up. Established in the 9th century by Sattuk Kara Shan, this city had all the power of the ancient time. Defense of this place was one of the most advanced with toll walls and deep canals with the water around the city. It was spared from destruction by Genghis Khan's Mongols, and renamed Gobalik (= "good city") in the 13th century, but it lost its importance and had disappeared by the 15th century.

The archaeologists discovered that the town had a complicated layout covering some 25-30 square kilometers, surrounded by the two rings of walls. There were ruins of a central fortress, some handicraft shops, bazaars, four religious buildings, domestic dwellings, a bathhouse, a plot of arable land and a water main (pipes delivering water from a nearby canyon).

Today the entire complex covers some 36 hectares. It includes the tower itself, reconstructions of mausoleums found on the site, a mound that is all that remains of the palace/citadel, a collection of balbals (grave markers used by nomadic Turkic peoples who used to roam Central Asia) and petroglyphs (paintings on stones) and a small Museum.

A little further away is a collection of 80 balbals (small statues of the dead thought to have been nomadic grave markers) dating from the 6th century, petroglyphs (depicting mammals, hunt scenes and stone implements), millstones and threshing stones, dating from the 2nd century BC, brought and placed here from all around the Chu valley, Lake Issyk Kul and further afield in the Tien Shan. There are other collections around the Chu valley and in Southern Kazakhstan. The Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University has helped to publish a booklet, "Sculptured stone figures of Burana" - which is available from the museum.

The small museum, established in 1976, has some artifacts recovered from the site, (jars, coins, a board game . . .), but it is claimed that the best articles were removed a long time ago to Moscow or St. Petersburg. In the Shamshy valley, itself, a wide range of Scythian artifacts have been found, including a heavy golden burial mask" - which currently is stored in the Historical Museum in Bishkek.

- THE PEARL OF THE GREAT SILK ROAD.

Issyk-Kul ("hot lake" in Kyrgyz) is the world's second largest salt lake (after Caspian) and is 1609 above sea level. The lake is about 180 km long by 70 km wide and 668 meters deep at the deepest point, (the average depth is about 300 meters). The lake never freezes (hence the name), even though surrounded by mountains.



Issyk Kul Lake was always very important and strategic area on the Great Silk Road where many big or small towns and villages used to be.

The area was basically unknown to the Western world until Russian “explorers” like Tianshansky Semeyenov ventured into the mountains nearby. There was greater contact with the East, however, and the Chinese traveler Chjan Tzyan reached the lake in about 128 BC as part of a 6-year journey of exploration (138-126BC). Issyk Kul Lake was fully used in from the beginning of the Great Silk Road and Mr Chjan Tzyan was its founder (BC time).

The first written account of the lake comes from another Chinese traveler, Syma Tzyan, when describing his 16-year journey of exploration. The first written example of the use of the name, Isi-kul, dates from an anonymous work - “The boundaries of the world from East to West” - written in Tajik in 982 AD. It also accurately states the size of the lake.



From Bishkek the lake is approached through Boom Gorge. The lake lies at the bottom of a drainage hollow, or depression and has no outflow.

Issyk-Kul is a special place famous for its warm, sandy beaches, thermal mineral radon springs, alpine meadows, coniferous forests of the park type. All this is beside the enchanting and alluring peaks and glaciers, including many of the highest mountain verticals.

The lake Issyk-Kul has been held in high regard by the Kyrgyz - it is known as the “pearl of the Tien Shan”- and in 2004, the government declared the lake as the “property of the nation”.

Due to its size it sometimes appears like an inland sea, and it has a fair number of beaches. Most of these are on the Northern shore and have long acted as a magnet for tourists. There is a large number of hotels, sanatoriums, guesthouses and homestays at various points around the lake, many of which can make arrangements for services to the neighboring mountains. Some of the sanatoriums have hydrothermal springs and offer mud baths.

Issyk-Kul region is also home for many nesting and resting migratory and wintering birds, including swans, geese, ducks, cranes and many other representatives of the fauna.

DJETY OGUZ CANYON. THE HEART OF THE GREAT SILK ROAD.

About 25 km to the South West of Karakol is a lush valley with some striking red sandstone rock formations named Djety Oguz (“Seven Bulls” in Kyrgyz). The caravans of camels travelling along the Great Silk Road stopped near the famous “seven bulls” formations to have a rest. Merchants sat in the shade of the tree, drank Kumyz (fermented mare milk) and told the tales about mountains, rivers and local rulers. That’s how it appeared.

There is a legend about the rock formation. A Kyrgyz khan stole the wife of another, who sought advice from a “wise man” about how he could reap his revenge. The wise man was reluctant to give an advice but in the end relenting, telling the khan that he should kill his wife and give the body to his rival - “Let him own a dead wife, not a living one”. The Kahn made his plans and at a funeral feast arranged to sit next to his stolen wife and as the last of the nine bulls were being slaughtered as part of the ritual, he took out his knife and stabbed her. From her heart gushed blood and other fluids, which carried away the bulls down the valley and became these cliffs.

As you approach the valley, you pass another rock formation, which resembles a “broken heart” and legend says that this is the heart of a beautiful woman who died of a broken heart after two suitors killed each other fighting for her. These two rock formations have almost become symbols of the Issyk Kul region and are favorite images for photographs and paintings.

In the village there are an ancient cemetery and some barrows (burial mounds) dating from the 7th to the 5th centuries BC - they

are currently between 16 and 28 m in diameter and 1.7 and 3 m high, but once they were even larger.

Not far up the valley is the Djety Oguz sanatorium, built in 1932 - and the site of the first meeting between Presidents Akaev and Yeltsin in 1991 after the abortive coup in Moscow.

About 5 km south of the Jety Oguz sanatorium, is the Valley of the flowers that ablaze with colour from May - when there are multitudes of poppies - throughout the early summer. Apparently there are reputed to be petroglyphs here - but no-one seems to know exactly where. There are often yurts here, which can offer accommodation.

DUNGAN MOSQUE AND ORTHODOX CHURCH IN KARAKOL AT THE CROSSROADS OF THE GREAT SILK ROAD WAYS.

Karakol town was the crossroad of the Great Silk Road ways. Here we can meet many different ethnic nationalities. At the end of the 19th Century, the new people, migrated from famous China provinces Gansu and Shansy - Dungans appeared there. Like the Uighurs - the original Dungan community arrived in Kyrgyzstan as refugees from persecution in 1882 after a series of failed Muslim rebellions.





One of the Dungan communities settled in the area around Karakol. In 1904 they set about building a mosque. An architect was sent from China along with twenty master craftsmen. The architect included several oriental elements in his design, including dragons, and some Buddhist elements, and it is painted in a variety of colours, each of these elements giving it a unique and distinctive style and character.

Local materials, wood and stone, were used - but despite the fact that it was basically a wooden building, it was constructed without any nails being used.

In the courtyard outside the mosque there is a square wooden tower that serves as a minaret.

During the Soviet period, when religious buildings were taken over by the state, the mosque was put to use as a both a storehouse and also a dance club.

The mosque is currently undergoing reconstruction.

Although they have, on the whole, assimilated into the local community, (for example, only a few of them still speak their

native Chinese and they write using the Cyrillic script), the Dungan community in Kyrgyzstan has maintained certain features of their traditional culture and identity, (for example, they have their own newspaper - Huiming Bo = Muslim People), and their cuisine remains a striking feature and Dungan restaurants and cafes are popular.

Every year, many tourists come to see this unique construction, which dates back to the beginning of the 20th Century, when the Great Silk Road just finished its operations.

Orthodox Church in Karakol town.

As far as the Great Silk Road worked until the end of the 19th century, Karakol Orthodox Church was built at the end of this marvelous era.

The Holy Trinity Cathedral in Karakol is very popular tourist attraction in Kyrgyzstan. This is one of something like forty orthodox churches in the country, and a fine example of architecture and its checkered history stands as a witness to the commitment and dedication of the community of the faithful.

The story of the church goes back to July, 1869, when Karakol was basically a garrison town established as an outpost on the edges of the Tsarist Russian Empire. A chapel was established in the city centre to serve the Cossacks and other troops sent here, and a small brick building on stone foundations was erected.

The Karakol church, however, was destroyed in an earthquake in 1889 which caused havoc in the town and took several lives. It was decided to build a replacement on the same spot, but this time in wood. It took six years to complete, and was finally consecrated in 1895. During the period of construction, a yurt served the congregation as a church. When completed, it was the tallest building in the city, with the tip of the cross standing some 26

meters above the ground. That is not hard to manage as it is still surrounded by "low rise" buildings, despite the fact that just down the road in the city's main square there are newer, taller buildings including the regional administration.

Karakol was an important and thriving city and the church benefitted from donations from the faithful. As a result, it quickly established itself as one of the most beautifully decorated churches, not just in Kyrgyzstan, but in the whole of the Turkestan see.

It has seen considerable service, not just as a church. Over the years, particularly following the Revolution in 1917, it has been used as an educational centre housing a school, ladies' gymnasium and an institution of Higher Education; a Sports Hall; a Theater; a Dance Hall and even as a Coal Store. In a period of reconciliation between the Communist state and religion, in 1947, the building was returned to the faithful and by all accounts, members of the congregation were particularly active. Ten years later, in 1957, there were large crowds recorded at the Easter services. In 1961 it was once more returned to secular uses.

During its many different incarnations, the fabric of the building suffered much damage. One account puts the level of damage at about 50%. In particular, the five "onion domes" which surmounted the roof were destroyed. In 1986, however, in recognition of the historic nature of the building, the local authority began restorations and a small museum was established.

Then, in 1991, following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Independence of Kyrgyzstan, the local authority once again gave the building back to the church, with the proviso that all further restorations were their responsibility. Since then the church has undergone further restoration work and continues to thrive as a centre for the faithful, and support for several needy charities in the local community.



KURGANS- THE TUMULI OF THE GREAT SILK ROAD.

Kyrgyzstan has a large number of kurgans (tumuli), mainly in the Northern part of the country, along the Northern Branch of the Great Silk Road: around Lake Issyk Kul and along the valley of Chui River - in the foothills of the Kyrgyz Ala Too Range.

The word "kurgan" is derived from an ancient Turkic word for "castle" and is often used as a part of a site name. However, it does not refer to a fortress or fortification, but rather to a large tumulus, (burial mound or barrow), where earth has been heaped over the burial chamber of a tomb.

A large number of kurgans can be found at Issyk Kul region - from 250 to 40 barrows concentrated at a field dating from between the 6th century BC to the 10th century AD. They are all of different sizes. It is supposed that the size denotes the variety of "occupants" ranging from clan elites to simple nomads.

It is thought that kurgans may have been located near the territorial boundaries of a clan or a family lands. Until recent times, the Kazaks and Kyrgyz buried their deceased only near the winter pastures - that is at lower altitudes rather than high in the mountains.



The largest kurgan in Kyrgyzstan is at Darhan, a small village to the west of Kyzyl Suu in the Issyk Kul . Known locally as Kara Dube, it is thought to be a royal burial site and dates from somewhere between the 6th and 4th centuries BC. It measures 100m in diameter and is 12m high.



The Kurgans that are on the Northern shore of Issyk Kul Lake on the way from Cholpon Ata town to the East to Karakol town are nowadays mostly destroyed. The region was inhabited by Usun tribes when the first caravans of the Great Silk Road started moving here. The merchants quite often stopped at the field with weird hills, that were human made. Some of them were religious and made a pause in moving to say a pray and performed some rituals. Others were of no respect to the dead and stopped there to loot. As everybody was aware that a lot of expensive things were buried with the dead body. All silver, golden, and other precious metal objects were later sold at the bazaars of the nearest settlements, like in Balasagyn or Suyab towns.

PETROGLYPHS -THE SACRED STONES OF THE GREAT SILK ROAD.

The word “Petroglyphs” comes from the Greek (petra = “stone” and glyphe = “to draw”) and is used to denote pictures drawn or etched onto stones. These drawings, left for us on high rocks and in deep caves can provide evidence of the way of life and the environment of times gone by when there was no system of writing. Petroglyphs started before the Great Silk Road appeared, much earlier! But all travelers of the Great Silk Road worshiped them and spent lots of hours in praying and meditating.

Rock drawings appear to have been made in two ancient artistic styles. The first technique was silhouette or shadow, typical of many ancient pictures. Blows were made with a metallic or stone instrument to take out the entire surface of the rock nearly 2

Kurgans have provided us with a lot of information about civilizations that prospered in this area in ancient times. Archaeologists have discovered many artifacts in excavations of kurgans. Perhaps the best known example in this part of Central Asia, was Issyk Kurgan. Although it was just over Kungey Ala Too mountain range, to the South of Almaty city in Kazakhstan, it gives a good indication of the people who occupied the region at that time.

mm deep inside the silhouette. Some pictures were beaten by blunt tools which removed only a thin sun burnt rock layer, and this is typical of later periods. Another technique used tools with sharp edges and frequent blows with these produced a deep line engraved in the rock.

It is probably incorrect to think that ancient people only depicted the animals that they hunted. Many scholars think that the rock drawings depict mythological images and that the consciousness of ancient painters was restricted by their knowledge of the surrounding nature and society.

Petroglyphs are recognized as an important historical and cultural heritage. Efforts are underway to protect and preserve them - unfortunately, not all of them are particularly successful. One of the more accessible major sites of petroglyphs is at Cholpon Ata - where there are over 40 acres littered with fine examples. Unfortunately, some have been disfigured by the graffiti of more recent “artists”, but perhaps more worrying are reports that conservation work carried out in 2002 has resulted in the loss of many fine examples. Some 70 large stones were treated as part of a project - but in the opinion of some specialists, the restoration work carried out was done hurriedly, without observing conservation rules, and resulted in the disastrous loss. The lichen on the surface of the stones was removed and this will accelerate the destruction of their upper layer. Conservation rules stipulate that experiments should be conducted over many years on stones not bearing petroglyphs, but on this occasion some of the stones with the most interesting pictures were treated without preliminary tests. Sometime later the pictures grew dull. More work is being undertaken to remove the film covering the stones with solvents.

PRZHEVALSKY MEMORIAL COMPLEX.

In the middle of the 19th Century, all the mountains of the Great Tien Shan were wild. Nikolay Mikhailovich Przhevalsky was the first



who traveled across the undiscovered mountains and opened lots of different interesting animals and plants around the well-known routes of the Great Silk Road and tried to open new interesting itineraries. It all happened while the last merchant caravans traveled from China to Turkey. . .

Nikolay Mikhailovich Przhevalsky is one of the first Russian Scientist-Geographer who started studying in details the geography, flora and fauna of the Central Asian countries. Beginning from 1870, he arranged 4 large expeditions to Mongolia, China and the Tibet.

During his expeditions he revealed the exact directions of the mountain ranges and borders of the Tibet Mountains. He described the nature, relief, climate, flora and fauna in the territories under his study and discovered over 200 plant species. Przhevalsky also collected an enormous zoological collection which comprised several thousand of species of plant, animals, birds, fishes and insects.

For the outstanding achievements and contribution to the exploration of Central Asia Przhevalsky was elected Active Member of the Russian Geographic Society and also a Member of the Russian Academy of Science. In the year of 1888, he died from typhoid fever on the eve of his fifth expedition to Central Asia; he was buried on the Issyk-Kul lakeside not far from the city of Karakol.

The Memorial Museum of N. M. Przhevalsky was opened on 29 April 1957 in Karakol. From the first days of its existence the main task of its staff was the collection of materials from the Museum Fund. The work on collection of materials on N.M. Przhevalsky's life and activity was especially intensive.

For the first three years, the Museum Fund comprised already 386 exhibits. It was the local historical Museum named after N. M. Przhevalsky, which in 1957, initiated the Fund formation and handed over 8 works of N. M. Przhevalsky published in the period from 1883 to 1947, as well as 30 photocopies and photos. The materials also were received from the Geographic Society of the USSR.

Today there are personal things, documents photos and articles of Przhevalsky kept there. Not far from the Museum there is the traveler's tomb and monument.

EAGLE HUNTING SHOW.

Hunting with the golden eagle is an ancient tradition that goes back to the Mongol conquest of Central Asia around the 12th and 13th centuries, when a fine eagle and good horse cost the same price and both lent prestige to their owner. Even in time of Mongolian Yoke, when the Great Silk Road worked, merchants had an opportunity to keep trading relationships between countries. They used eagles as a high value trading point.

In general, practice of hunting with birds is gradually disappearing in Central Asia. But practice with eagles is still works in certain regions of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.



It is one of the aspects of Kyrgyzstan's traditional nomadic culture which attracts a lot of attention in the West press and in the travel blogs . . . along with Kok Buro ("Goat polo") . . . mainly, perhaps, because of the dramatic photographic opportunities it offers, (although a number are "negative" as a result of the raw "tooth and claw" nature of the activity).

Hunting takes place riding a specially trained horse, (called a "bercut"). To allow a rider to carry an eagle a special device (a "baldak") is fitted onto the saddle to support the rider's arm.

In many demonstrations and displays, however, the berkutchi launches their eagle from a standing position on a hillside rather than from horseback.

Sent out to hunt fawns, foxes, or other small animals, the eagle dives down and kills them. But often it is also capable of killing young wolves when they cannot negotiate the deep snow. Sometimes the eagles hunt in pairs, just as they would in the wild.

The capture, training and keeping of eagles is a highly ritualized activity, and both the Kazakhs and the Kyrgyz are experts. They even manage to get the bird to kill the prey while scarcely leaving a mark on its fur.

Training eagles takes a lot of time, (3-4 years), must be done by one person, and requires constant daily attention.

Most of the birds, which can have a life expectancy of 40 years, are caught young, hooded and placed in a cage with a perch that constantly sways while the berkutchi sings and chants to it, to imprint the sound of his voice and impress his personality on the bird. (Later on, the eagle is able to distinguish human voices and will obey only that of his master).

Every demonstration often includes the eagle swooping down on a live rabbit, but most berkutchi stop the process before the live bait is actually killed. The eagle does not go unrewarded for its efforts



however, as they offer it a morsel of meat they have brought along for the purpose

CULTURAL COMPLEX "SUPARA". THE NOMADIC SYMBOL OF THE OF THE GREAT SILK ROAD.

Nomadic culture was one of the main in time of the Great Silk Road. Sometimes, traveling in night time with tough weather conditions, merchants looked for the small cooperation of yurts staying around, where they can stop and wait until the bad weather will finish. "Supara" cultural complex created in traditional nomadic style, which saved thousands of life in the middle age.

The history of "Supara" is unique in that of its creation, design and implementation of the project life worked Tabyldy Egemberdiev - president of Shoro.

The very idea of ethno-complex requires the exclusive use of the natural materials available to the ancestors. When building the facilities were used stone, clay, wood, straw, reeds, chii and leather. Tabyldy with his wife Janyl, and their team worked briefly, but persistently, giving stunning results. Despite the fact that a lot had to be done by themselves, we can say this is one of the few cases where "all that what was done - was done to the best!".



As a proof, the title of Best Architect that Tabyldy Egemberdiev received after the building of "Supara". According to its plan - the ethno-complex should reflect the nomadic life of Kyrgyz people and their way of life, culture and traditions. This included all what is part of the glorious Kyrgyz history: yurts, fire places, horses and hunting. After all, the Kyrgyz were famous for the ability to regale guests. Remains the task of bringing it all together into a single concept.

The singularity of "Supara" was that the construction work began without a definitive project. All was created by intuition, step by step. All stones used in construction of houses, were found in same soil during excavation. These stone houses were brought to complete real life through the talented hands of carpenters, blacksmiths and seamstresses, whose work calls instinctive admiration. mattresses, kurak (kyrgyz patchwork) and embroidery - are the result of Forged lamps in the form of the sun and moon, hangers from bark, reminiscent of ancient sleigh (sani), tables and

chairs of original forms, fireplaces paved from the same stones, doors decorated with shields of ancient Kyrgyz soldiers - literally everything reminds us of our deep roots! Needlewomen also invested considerable effort: carpets of pure felt, pillow, toshoki (thin many days of hard work).

At present the bulk of work carried out not less than seven yurts -differing in size, interior design and style - and the complex is already successfully operating. One of the yurt has a rather restrained decoration consisting of Saimaluu-Tash petroglyphs, which cover the entire domed portion. In another one, the interior is decorated with 40-50-ies tush-kiyiz of XX century, hand-forged log holders in form of deers and leather belt with figures of tunduk related to the Kyrgyz people's history. Currently under construction the world's largest yurt, with an area of 350 sq m, is designed to play Ordo. Two more yurts are also being build, with an area of 150 sq. m and 450 sq. m for corporate celebrations.



