

Textile Arts Council presents

Echoes of the Silk Road

A Textile Tour to Uzbekistan

September 26- October 11, 2012

With a Tour Extension to Kyrgyzstan October 11-15, 2012

For centuries Central Asia was the crossroads of cultures. Ideas and inventions traveled back and forth along the Silk Road, and in areas such as Uzbekistan, the heart of Central Asia, wealth was created as its strategic location encouraged trade and introduced new ideas from East and West.

Not all outsiders brought peace and progress, however. This was the land of many violent conquests and suppressions. But with the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, Uzbek and Kyrgyz artisans began the long process of reviving centuries old traditions and with help from a number of outside sources as well as the artisans' own desire to make a sustainable living from craft production, there has been a successful revival of a wide spectrum of crafts in this region.

On our tour we will meet with many skilled artisans in their workshops and homes to demonstrate crafts such as carpet weaving, intricate embroidery and silk fabric weaving. We will also meet with scholars, collectors and modern designers who are expanding the uses of traditional craft skills to create contemporary products.

The tour will take us from Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan to the verdant Fergana valley, home of silk and ceramic craftsmen. Margilan, with its once-weekly market, is where silk was being produced before the ninth century and where the finest silk in the country is still woven.

The fabled cities of Samarkand and Bukhara are our next stops. Founded more than 2,700 years ago, Samarkand and its sister city Bukhara are now World Heritage sites whose mosques, mosaic-filled mausoleums and madrassas have been beautifully restored by Uzbek craftsmen. We will visit carpet and *suzani* or embroidery workshops and a paper workshop that is reviving a craft that first began in this region in 710 AD, the first paper to be produced outside of China. In nearby Urgut we will visit the oldest market still in existence in Uzbekistan.

Before returning to Tashkent we will drive to the ancient caravanserai of Khiva. Dubbed by UNESCO as 'the most homogeneous example of Islamic architecture in the world,' Khiva was also one of the first places outside of China to develop a thriving silk industry. Our tour will end in Tashkent with the option of returning home or going on for the exciting 5-day extension visit to Kyrgyzstan.

The tour to Kyrgyzstan begins in the capital, Bishkek, where visits to state museums will provide an overview of Kyrgyz culture. Today, a semi-nomadic culture still exists with yurt-dwelling shepherders taking their flocks to the mountains in the summer for pasture, and while many Kyrgyz live in modern homes, the yurt retains a special place in their hearts. Most vibrant folk art centers around the yurt. During our visit we will have the opportunity to visit villages where women are carrying on traditional crafts such as felting wool to make *shydrak* and *ala kiyiz* carpets and wall hangings and elaborately decorating reed screens, called *chiy*, used to delineate spaces inside the yurt. The tour will also take us to the beautiful alpine Lake Issyk Kul, the second largest mountain lake in the world.

Tour Cost: TAC members \$3405, for non-TAC members \$3440

The cost is based on shared occupancy of rooms and a group of 16 participants. The single supplement is \$468. The cost of tour includes a \$400 non-refundable tax donation to the Textile Arts Council, which will be acknowledged by letter for tax reporting purposes by January 30, 2013. The cost of the tour may change, depending on the number of participants. The maximum number of participants is 16 and the minimum is 12.

Price includes all hotels, meals, transportation, including in-country air fare, all relevant transfers to/from airports, services of an English speaking accompanying guide on the whole route, entrance tickets to sites and museums (without photo fees), sightseeing programs, gratuities and a Uzbek visa support letter. Not included are personal expenses such as laundry, beverages other than water, phone calls, photography fees at museums, etc. Also not included is the fee for the Uzbekistan visa and travel insurance, which is mandatory.

The Cost of the Five Day Tour Extension to Kyrgyzstan is \$1395 for TAC members and \$1430 for non-TAC members. The cost is based on shared occupancy of rooms and a group of 15 participants. Cost of the tour extension would increase if there were fewer and decrease if there are more participants. The price of airfare may also change. The single supplement is \$176.

Cost of the tour includes all meals, hotels, transportation including round trip airfare Tashkent-Bishkek, entrance fees to museums, national and state parks, services of an English-speaking guide throughout the tour and gratuities. Not included are personal expenses and the fee for a Kyrgyzstan visa.

Please join us on this tour especially designed for textile lovers and organized by intrepid traveler, Mary Connors.

For more information and to register for the tour please contact
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