

THE TRIP UZBEKISTAN AND TURKMENISTAN

This was a glimpse into a different world in terms of society and history. The itinerary included important cities of the ancient Silk Road such as Samarkand and Bukhara in Uzbekistan, and Mary and Merv in Turkmenistan.

As I travelled across Uzbekistan, I was surprised at how much of the historical sites have been restored, from Samarkand to Khiva. The Ak-Saray Palace in Shakhrisabz is a good example. Not much remains of Amir Timur's Summer Palace, aside from the giant portals that stand either side of the square. Started in 1380 and taking 24 years to complete, what is left of this grand palace are the beautiful filigree mosaics that adorned the portal. Timur was the founder of the Timurid Empire in Persia and Central Asia. While the enthusiastic restorers have not affected the Ak-Saray, its surroundings are a different matter. From a new shiny statue of Timur (pictured) to theme park rides on either side of the main thoroughfare to the palace, it seems like an attempt to Disney-fy historical sites but at the same time demonstrating restraint in restoration and pride in Uzbek history, however the contradictions may work.

Turkmenistan felt subdued in comparison with Uzbekistan, with very few tourists and far less commercial activity. Ashgabat on first encounter is new, glittering, excessive and, perhaps paradoxically, sparse. Despite

NAME

Jennifer Hsu, Beecroft, NSW

THE ITINERARY

Fourteen days across Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan

BEST BITS

The Uzbeks were genuinely warm and curious about other cultures.

BEST TIP

Photography fees apply at many sites and museums – take local or US cash.

WORST BIT

Flying Tashkent to London with Uzbekistan Airlines. Surly flight attendants and a Soviet-era aircraft.

NEXT TRIP

Kazakhstan, to see the Aral Sea.

my misgivings for the Turkmen capital, travels to Merv, Nisa and Khorezm conjured up images of a rich cultural history with many intersections with its Uzbek



neighbour and beyond. The huge expanse that is ancient Merv demonstrates what it was once like as the capital of the Seljuk sultanate and a thriving metropolis of Silk

Road trade up until the 12th century. I can't wait to return to Central Asia and explore the other cities of the ancient Silk Road.



TELL US ABOUT YOUR TRIP

Send 350-word submissions for The Trip to [travellerletters@traveller.com.au](mailto:travellerletters@traveller.com.au) with THE TRIP in the subject line. Use the same format as above and attach a high-resolution headshot. All published contributions to The Trip receive a guidebook from Lonely Planet, featuring the best sights and local secrets of each country in an easy-to-use guide, including inspiring itineraries carefully crafted by Lonely Planet's author-experts. See [lonelyplanet.com](http://lonelyplanet.com)



THE QUIZ ANSWERS FROM P36  
1. Chicago; 2. Step-pyramid and temple; 3. Broome, WA; 4. Pig; 5. Toronto; 6. Federation Square, Melbourne; 7. Lake Garda; 8. Brace for Impact (or Brace! Brace!); 9. Mount Fuji; 10. Scoot

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