

my summer time in uzbekistan #001



YNS TRAVEL ZINE

TASHKENT
BUKHARA
SAMARKAND
KHIVA



hi. salom. Привет.

Stories based on my summers in Uzbekistan and the experiences I've had living, studying, and travelling across the country.

Some places leave a mark on your passport. Others leave a mark on your heart.

My story with Uzbekistan began in 2019, when work took me across Central Asia. What started as business trips, soon became something much personal. I found myself returning again and again, drawn to its ancient cities and the warmth of its people. Years later, I return as a student, earning my Master's degree from Silk Road International Tourism University in Samarkand in 2024. By then, Uzbekistan no longer felt like a place I visited, it had become my second home.

This is my first series of zine with the collection of memories from my summers in Uzbekistan, woven together with the history, culture, and Islamic heritage that continue to inspire me. I hope these pages spark your curiosity, and perhaps encourage you to begin your own journey through this extraordinary land.

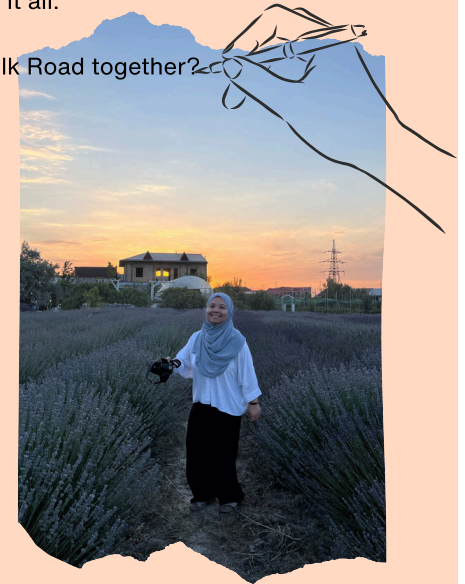
I have wandered through the bustling streets of Tashkent, watched the sun cast its golden light over the turquoise domes of Samarkand, listened to stories passed down through generations in Bukhara, and stood in awe before monuments that had witnessed centuries of history in Khorezm. Each visit revealed a different side of the country. Everywhere I went, I discovered that Uzbekistan was more than its breathtaking architecture. A place where ideas flourished and the legacy of great Muslim scholars continues to inspire the world today. It was an awesome time to have experienced it all.

So, shall we walk the Islamic trails of the Silk Road together?

"Travel changes you. As you move through this life and this world, you change things slightly, you leave marks behind, however small. And in return, life—and travel—leaves marks on you."

— Anthony Bourdain

**Y. Nabila,
Kuala Lumpur.
2026**



things i wish i knew before going.

BY Y.NABILA

If you're planning your first visit, here are the things I genuinely wish I had known beforehand.

Before visiting, I thought Uzbekistan was simply a destination for history lovers. I soon discovered this is a country that is rapidly evolving. Modern, young and ambitious population are transforming Uzbekistan into one of Central Asia's most promising nations. Beyond its ancient mosques and madrasahs lies a dynamic country that beautifully balances centuries-old heritage with a forward-looking vision for the future.

Summer is hot (36-45°C)

So mornings and evenings become your main time to explore. Midday is usually slower to rest and hiding from the sun like everyone else.



Cash is still useful in a lot of places.

Especially in the bazaars and local markets, so having some local currency makes things easier. ATM will charged you approximately RM12/transaction.



This is a soda drink that quenched my thirst almost immediately!



Uzbekistan Is Much Bigger Than It Looks

Looking at a map, it doesn't seem enormous. But once you're there, you'll realize that traveling between cities takes time.

The distance between Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva is considerable. Thankfully, the country has an excellent high-speed rail system connecting major cities, but tickets especially on the Afrosiyob train can sell out days or even weeks in advance during peak seasons. So book yours early!

The Best Way to Travel Across Uzbekistan

My trip to Uzbekistan was efficient and comfortable because of its railway system.

There are several types of trains available. The most popular is the **Afrosiyob**, Uzbekistan's high-speed train, capable of reaching speeds of up to 250 km/h.

For travellers looking for a more relaxed pace, the Sharq train is another excellent choice. Although slower than the Afrosiyob, it remains comfortable and more affordable.

If you're travelling overnight or heading to more remote destinations, Uzbekistan also operates night sleeper trains. These trains offer different classes of accommodation, from economical shared compartments to private cabins with beds, making long-distance travel both practical and memorable.





TASHKENT

AMIR TEMUR STATUE
PHOTOGRAPHED BY Y.NABILA

A vibrant capital, a home to beautiful metro stations, lively bazaars and museums. It is a perfect starting point for exploring the country's history, culture, and everyday life.

visit the home of the Uthman Quran.

One place that truly stood out during my visit was the **Hazrati Imam Complex** in Tashkent, home to one of the world's most treasured Islamic manuscripts—the **Uthman Quran**. Believed to date back to the 7th century, it is widely regarded as one of the oldest surviving copies of the Quran and is traditionally associated with Caliph Uthman ibn Affan.

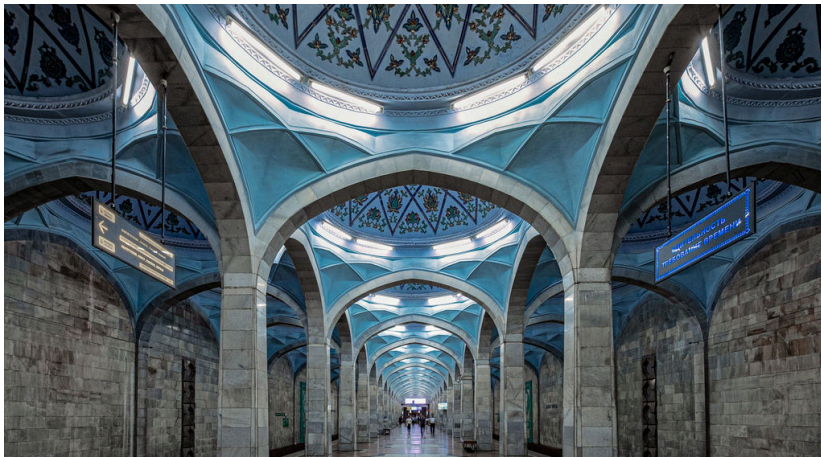
The manuscript is preserved inside the Muiy Muborak Library that also houses a remarkable collection of rare Islamic texts and handwritten manuscripts. The surrounding complex is equally impressive with its beautiful mosques, madrasahs, and tranquil courtyards.



Source: Google

inside tashkent's spectacular metro.

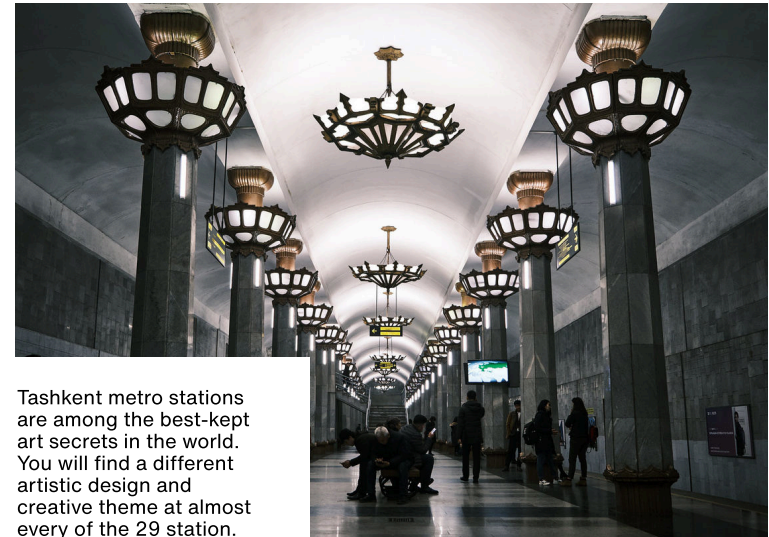
From the construction, which began in 1977, the metro lines were also intended to serve as a military site. Each station has its own distinct identity.



This is my personal favourite's--Alisher Navoi Station.

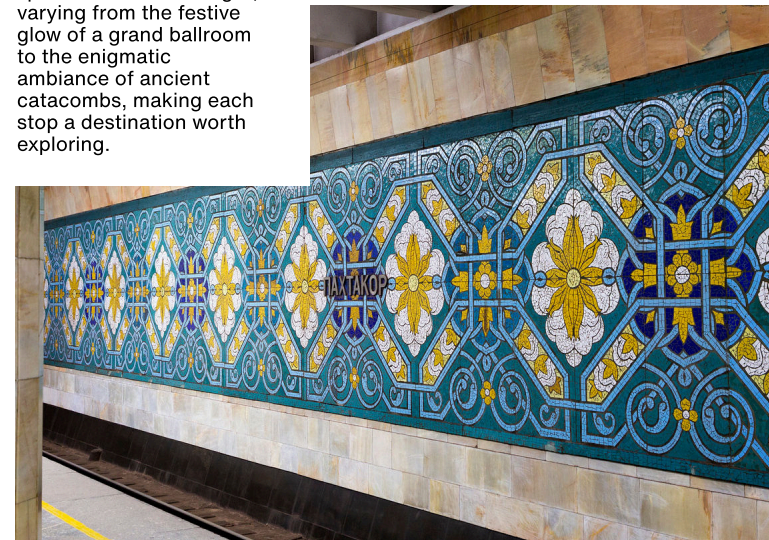
To take a ride in Metro, you must buy a blue coin at the start of the station, at a counter marked with the word 'KASSA' (costs 2000 soum, less than RM0.80).

After you have gone through the glass doors, just before the old Soviet tourniquets, there is a police checkpoint where security guards make a thorough search with the metal detector in the bags travelers brought.



Tashkent metro stations are among the best-kept art secrets in the world. You will find a different artistic design and creative theme at almost every of the 29 station. The lighting within these subterranean halls is a spectacle in its own right, varying from the festive glow of a grand ballroom to the enigmatic ambiance of ancient catacombs, making each stop a destination worth exploring.

Yunus Rajabiy Station (up) and Paxtakor Station (down)



BUKHARA

SAMANID MAUSOLEUM
PHOTOGRAPHED BY Y.NABILA

I was breathing in an open air museum. Walls are sun-baked, alleyways narrow, and every corner seems to whisper stories that predate memory.



BOLO HAUZ MOSQUE
PHOTOGRAPHED BY Y.NABILA

KALYAN MINARET
PHOTOGRAPHED BY Y.NABILA

under the glow of the

kalyan minaret

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Night settled gently over Bukhara, softening the city's ancient walls and quieting the footsteps that had filled its streets all day. From my table at **Old Bukhara Restaurant**, a steaming pot of tea sat between me and the illuminated Kalon Minaret, its silhouette rising effortlessly into the dark sky as if it had been holding the night in place for centuries.

Unlike others, Bukhara moves slowly. People gather for tea, shopkeepers sit outside their stores, and the warm brick buildings seem to glow in the afternoon light. Even when I got lost, it never felt stressful. The city felt made for wandering.

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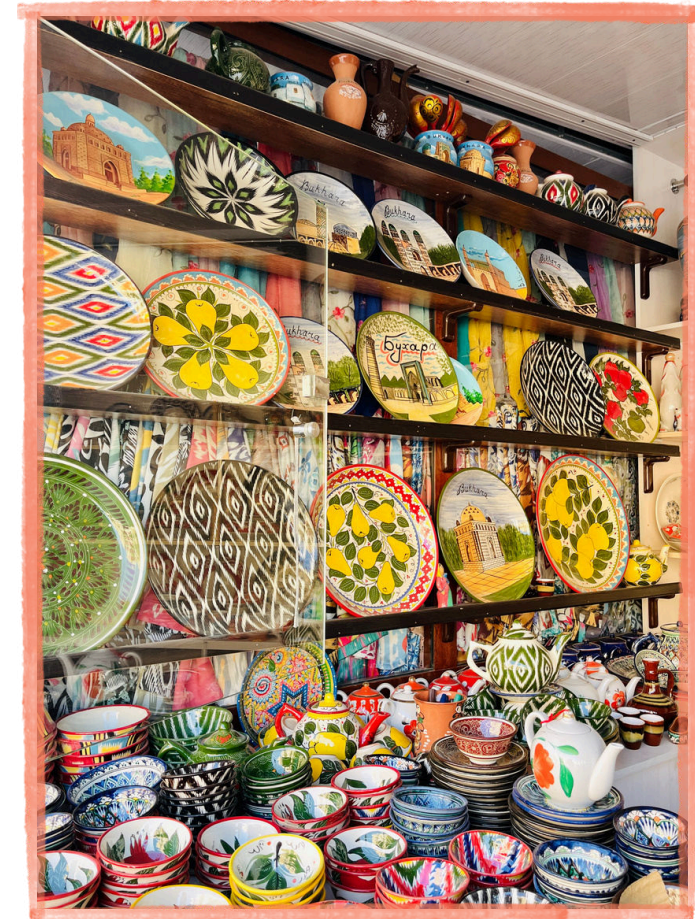
little treasures found in bukhara.



This is us with Xola Sitara (two from the left) who is selling souvenirs.

Bukhara's streets are lined with small artisan shops selling handwoven carpets, embroidered textiles, ceramics, miniature paintings, and handmade jewellery.

I loved wandering through them & admire the craftsmanship.



Support the local artisans whenever you can.

What I loved most was knowing that these weren't just souvenirs sitting on shelves. Each piece carried the hands, skills, and stories of the people who created them. The patterns, colours, and details reflected generations of Uzbek craftsmanship.

SAMARKAND

DOMES INSIDE TILYA KORI MADRASSAH
PHOTOGRAPHED BY Y.NABILA



Samarkand felt like a dream painted in blue. I was immersed in its grand domes to its intricate tiles, every corner that glows with the colour of history, beauty, and timeless wonder.

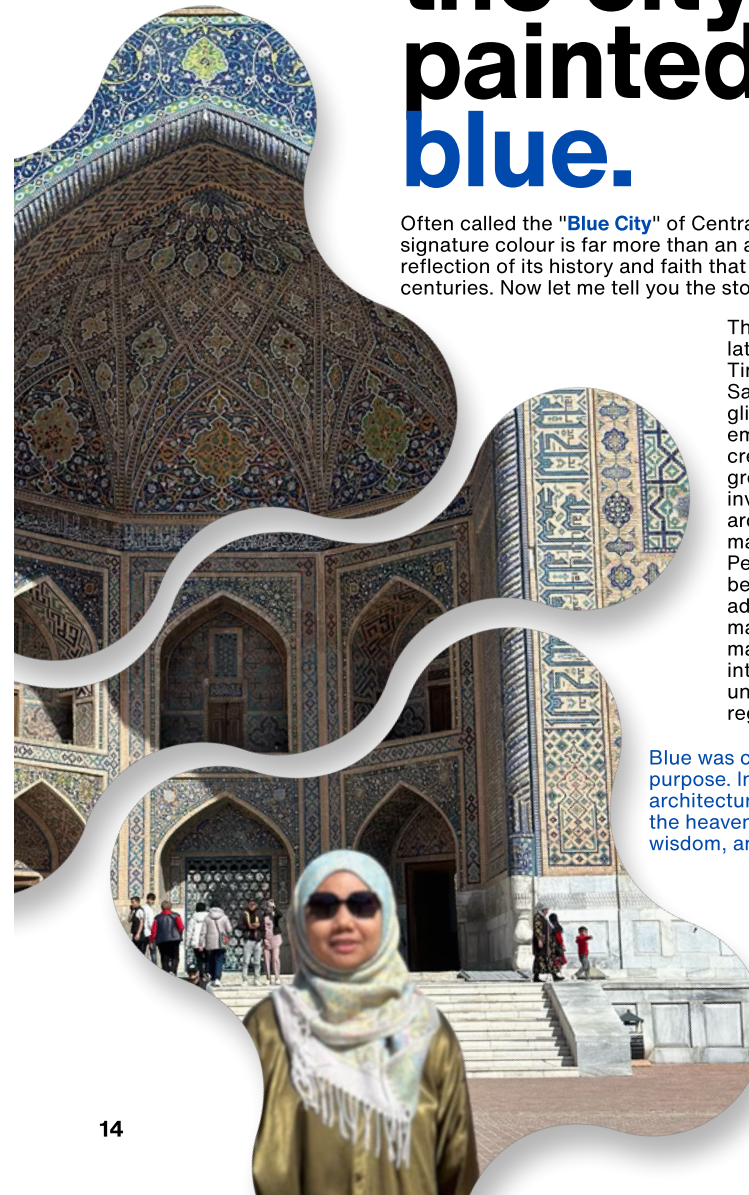
the city painted in blue.

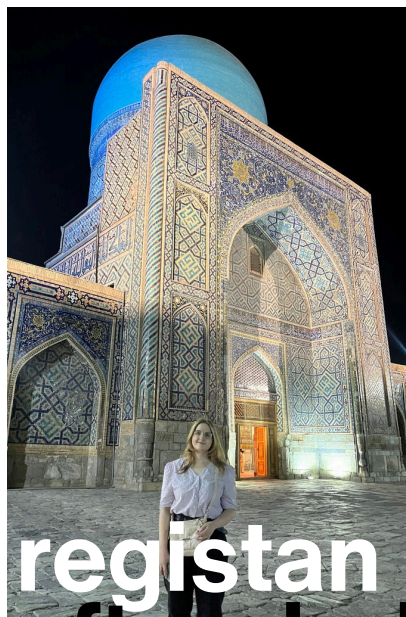
Often called the "**Blue City**" of Central Asia, Samarkand's signature colour is far more than an aesthetic choice. It is a reflection of its history and faith that has endured for centuries. Now let me tell you the story behind it.

The story begins in the late 14th century, when Timur transformed Samarkand into the glittering capital of his empire. Determined to create one of the world's greatest cities, he invited master artisans, architects, and ceramic makers from across Persia, Central Asia, and beyond. Together, they adorned mosques, madrasas, and mausoleums with intricate glazed tiles unlike anything the region had seen before.

Blue was chosen with purpose. In Islamic art and architecture, it symbolizes the heavens, eternity, wisdom, and paradise.

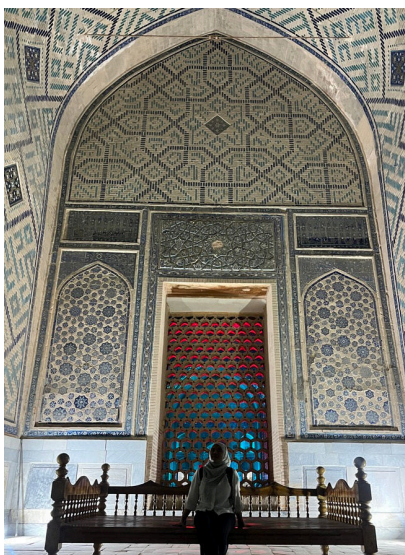
Looking up at the soaring turquoise domes was meant to inspire contemplation and remind visitors of the infinite beauty of the divine.





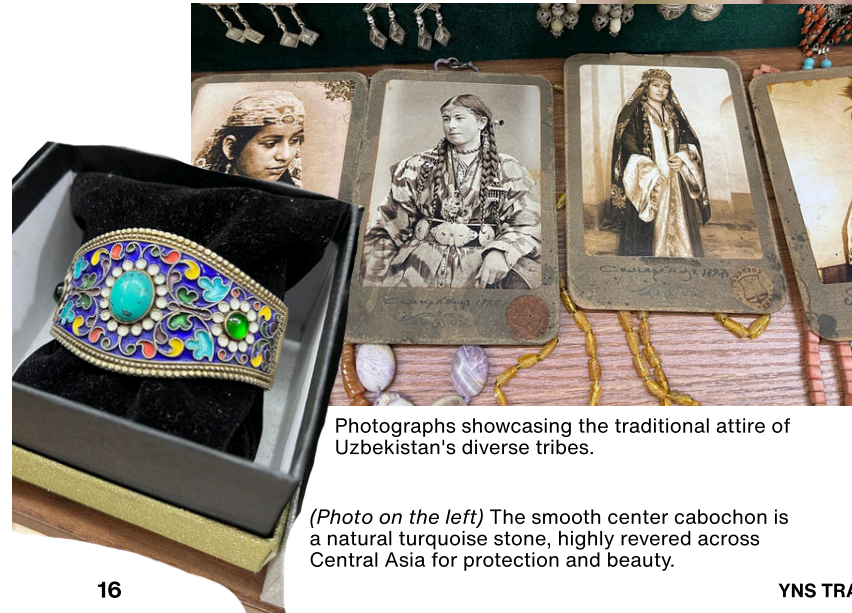
registan after dark is a different kind of wonder.

Night reveals a different side of it, trust me. The quiet atmosphere of the evening allows every detail to emerge so try to visit Registan at night too.



The silver jewellerys of Samarkand women.

(Photo above)
The door
knob found in
Madrasah
Ulugh Beg.

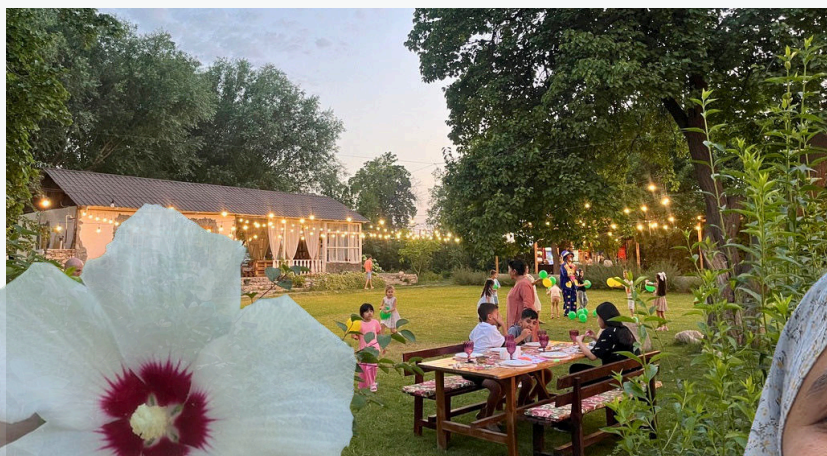


Photographs showcasing the traditional attire of Uzbekistan's diverse tribes.

(Photo on the left) The smooth center cabochon is a natural turquoise stone, highly revered across Central Asia for protection and beauty.



the joy of uzbek summer.



Eventhough I've been living my whole life under the tropical heat of Malaysia, watching my neighbourhood transform in summer became one of my fond memory in Uzbekistan. Seeing the cherry blossoms blooming, knowing they would soon give way to clusters of sweet, ruby-red cherries. Our landlord, Oleem, would often share a basket of freshly picked fruits from his garden. It was always special for me!

And of course, no Uzbek summer feels complete without watermelon. The sweet, refreshing taste of a cold slice of watermelon on a warm summer day become one of my favorite little joy.



morning walks to the bazaar.

Another favourite summer memories in Uzbekistan were created during my simple walks to the bazaar. I loved wandering through the colourful fruit stalls, surrounded by the aroma of fresh produce and the warm smiles of the *aga(s)* and *xola(s)*, uncles and aunties, who welcomed me like a familiar face.

One morning, I discovered fresh figs (*buah tin*) at Siyob Bazaar, a fruit I had mostly known in its dried form. Seeing them fresh for the first time felt like discovering a little summer treasure. Every visit brought me a new surprise, from seasonal fruits to local delicacies like *ikan masin* (salted fish) too!

After carrying my bags full of fresh fruits, I always looked forward to one little reward, naughty Yasmin loved her favourite kiwi-banana ice cream by the roadside on the way home.

the lavender secret of samarkand.

Flora Lavender Farm,
Chilkuduk, Samarkand.



All the lavender products sold here are made using lavender grown in the garden itself.

KHIVA

JUMA' MOSQUE INSIDE ITCHAN KALA
PHOTOGRAPHED BY Y.NABILA



Khiva is one of Uzbekistan's oldest regions, where ancient desert civilizations transformed an oasis into a thriving center of trade, science, and culture.



Every travelers normally begin their story of Uzbekistan in Tashkent, the capital city. But mine began somewhere unexpected — behind the ancient walls of Khiva.

September 2019, I arrived in this hidden oasis of history, not knowing that my first glimpse of Uzbekistan would feel like stepping into another world. I still remember the moment I walked through the ancient gates of Itchan Kala, my eyes trying to take in everything that stood before me. Its like turning some forgotten pages of an old Arabian tale.

I had never witnessed anything quite like Khiva. The towering mud-brick walls and the turquoise minarets glowing under the sun painted a picture I had only imagined in books. For a moment, I felt like Princess Jasmine wandering through her own magical kingdom in real life. It was so strange yet so exciting.

Khiva was the city that opened the door to my love affair with this country. Looking back, I couldn't have asked for a more magical beginning to my Uzbek journey.

my first
hello to
uzbekistan

For centuries, Itchan Kala was the heart of the Khiva Khanate, a powerful oasis kingdom that controlled important trade routes between Central Asia, Persia, and the steppe lands. However not many knows, while merchants arrived carrying silk, spices, and precious goods, another cruel trade also passed through these ancient gates: the trade of human beings.

Khiva became known as one of the major centres of the Central Asian slave trade. Captives from raids across the surrounding regions, including Persian territories and the Kazakh steppe, were brought to its markets and sold. Many prisoners spent years in captivity, and the city's wealth was partly connected to this painful history.

itchan kala: the dark history



now a living museum behind ancient walls

Today, stepping through the gates of Itchan Kala feels like entering a time capsule. This ancient walled city of Khiva has transformed into a living open-air museum, where visitors can walk through historic streets, admire turquoise-tiled monuments, and experience the atmosphere of a Silk Road city. Recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Centre site in 1990, Itchan Kala preserves remarkable examples of Central Asian Islamic architecture, including mosques, madrasahs, mausoleums, caravanserais, and traditional homes.



Itchan Kala aerial view from the Minaret

what i ate in uzbekistan

I got to try plov, the country's national dish, and I understood why everyone talks about it. Also tried horse meat on the beshbarmak even though it is more popular in Kazakhstan.

I also loved samsa, flaky pastries filled with meat or vegetables, and shashlik, grilled skewers cooked over charcoal.

No meal felt complete without non, the round Uzbek bread that's served with almost everything, and plenty of hot green tea.

The food isn't overly spicy or complicated but it lets fresh ingredients do the work. This is the kind of food that would never disappoint me!



The lamb shashlik that makes me drool



Beshbarmak



Veal Scallopini with Creamy Mushroom Sauce



Plov or Pilaf



A classic hearty breakfast normally served in Uzbek guesthouse

getting there: kuala lumpur to tashkent

Estimated Return Fare: RM1,800–RM3,000
(depending on season and booking window)



Tips for Finding the Best Deals:

- Book 2–3 months in advance to secure the lowest fares, especially for spring and autumn travel.
- Compare connecting flights through hubs like Istanbul, Abu Dhabi, Doha, or Dubai, which often offer the most competitive prices.
- Check Uzbekistan Airways for direct or seasonal services, as they can sometimes be more convenient than connecting flights.
- Consider flying into Samarkand instead of Tashkent if your itinerary begins in the historic Silk Road cities. Try looking for flights that depart from Penang. This can occasionally be cheaper and saves travel time.



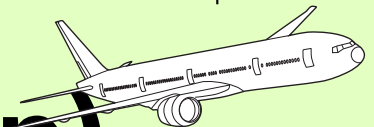
Inside Tashkent Airport

BY Y.NABILA
PHOTOGRAPH CREDIT: GOOGLE

Direct flights between Kuala Lumpur (KUL) and Tashkent (TAS) take approximately 7.5 to 8.5 hours.

direct (non-stop) flights

Covering roughly 5,335 km.
Major carriers including AirAsia X, Batik Air Malaysia, and Uzbekistan Airways operate non-stop routes between Kuala Lumpur International Airport and Islam Karimov Tashkent International Airport.



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