Dear Rice Alumni, Friends, and Parents:

Few places on the globe seem more romantically remote from our modern American lives than the ancient caravan cities along the Silk Road in Central Asia. For thousands of years, traders, conquerors, emirs, colonialists, and legendary heroes have traversed the distant yet well-trod desert roadways and colorful oasis cities that have given the region its fame. Simply the names of the places here conjure up images of the exotic and the unknowable. Places like Samarkand, with its dramatic and colorful architecture; the ancient power center of Merv, with its unparalleled 1500-year-old fortress still looming above the endless desert; or elegant Khiva, filled with centuries-old markets, madrassas, and mosques adorned with colorful tiles and striking motifs.

Join us for this one-of-a-kind journey through Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan and travel in the footsteps of Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, Marco Polo, and Tamerlane. Experience the timeless cities in more depth, showcasing not only their stunning monuments, but also their “living spaces” like markets, schools, and artisan workshops. This program is a two-week exploration covering 3000+ years of history, with much focus on the Silk Road heritage of the region, but also consideration of Central Asia’s ancient and contemporary political and cultural importance.

Enjoy the highest-level hotels along the way and three daily meals included throughout the journey. This colorful journey to the far side of the world will open your eyes and mind, with countless stunning places, people, and stories to encounter!

Kind Regards,

Dan Stypa
Associate Director of Alumni Programs
Rice University

About the Study Leader

Lisa Balabanlilar serves as Associate Professor in the Department of History at Rice University and joined the faculty in 2007. She is a scholar of the Central Asian empire, Mongols, and the descendants of Tamerlane. Dr. Balabanlilar’s scholarship and research is very much rooted in re-modern Central Asia. In 2012, she published her book *Imperial Identity in the Mughal Empire: Memory and Dynastic Politics in Early Modern South and Central Asia* and has had other articles appear in various academic journals. At Rice, she has been recognized as the 2014 winner of the George R. Brown Award for Superior Teaching. Dr. Balabanlilar has led Traveling Owls journeys to Turkey, India, Morocco, and Southeast Asia and is looking forward to leading this program.

For more information on this trip, please contact The Rice Alumni Traveling Owls at 713-34-TRIPS or via email at travelingowls@rice.edu.
Explore romantically remote ancient Silk Road sites:

- Samarkand, one of the oldest inhabited cities of Central Asia, with its dramatic and colorful architecture
- Merv's ancient power center, with its unparalleled 1500-year-old fortress looming above the desert
- Khiva, filled with elegant centuries-old markets, madrassas, and mosques adorned with striking motifs

Enjoy high-level deluxe hotel accommodations along the way.

Begin and end the tour at the Tashkent International Airport (TAS) in Uzbekistan.

Savor three meals a day, included throughout the program.

Travel with Rice Study Leader, Dr. Lisa Balabanlilar, a scholar of the Mughal dynasty and researcher on Islamic kingship among Turks. She is the 2010 winner of the Phi Beta Kappa Sophie Meyer Farb Prize for Teaching Excellence.
Treasures of the Silk Road

Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan

Led by Associate Professor of History Dr. Lisa Balabanlilar

June 4–19, 2016
June 4: Depart the U.S. Depart the United States for Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on independent flights.

June 5/6: Arrival in Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Arrive at Tashkent International Airport and meet your ISDI tour manager and local guide in the arrivals hall. (Most flights arrive either late in the evening or in the early morning the following day.) Transfer by private motorcoach to the luxurious and centrally located Lotte City Hotel Tashkent Palace.

Lotte City Hotel Tashkent Palace

June 6: Tashkent

After a long flight and late arrival the night before, the day is at leisure to relax and enjoy the hotel’s amenities or begin exploring Tashkent on your own. This evening, gather with the group and our Rice University Study Leader, Dr. Lisa Balabanlilar, for a welcome dinner at a local restaurant.

Lotte City Hotel Tashkent Palace (B, D)

June 7: Tashkent

Following a buffet breakfast at the hotel, set out on a guided city tour of Tashkent, Uzbekistan’s capital, and learn about the city’s 2,000-year history. Begin in Tashkent’s Old Town and tour the Kukeldash Madrasa, one of the largest and best-preserved Islamic schools in Central Asia; visit the Khazret-Imam Mosque Complex; and see the Uthman Koran, considered by Sunni Muslims to be the oldest Koran in the world written 19 years after the death of Mohammed. Following lunch at a local restaurant, experience the vibrant Chorsu Bazaar and observe locals as they buy and sell a colorful variety of fruit, meats, spices, and handcrafted clothes. Continue to Amir Temur Square, tour the monuments of Independence Square, and see the Alisher Navoi Opera and Ballet Theater. Return to the hotel for time to freshen up before gathering for dinner.

Lotte City Hotel Tashkent Palace (B, L, D)

June 8: Tashkent to Samarkand

Following an early breakfast, check out of the hotel and transfer to the Tashkent Railway Station. Board the “Afrosiab” high-speed train and travel through the Uzbekistan countryside to historic Samarkand (approx. 2.5 hours). Explore this major crossroads on the Silk Road and see the richly decorated Gur-Emir Mausoleum and the stunning architecture lining Registan Square. Following lunch at a local restaurant, continue to the massive

Tour Price*

- Land only package: $6,695
- Single supplement: $795

Tour Dates: June 4-19, 2016

Activity Level: Moderate, standing and walking for up to two hours at a time

*Tour price is per person based on double occupancy, with a minimum of 12 paying participants. Land prices are calculated as of February 2015 and are subject to change.

Deposit & Final Payment:

A deposit of $1,000 per paying participant will be required to guarantee participation in the program. This may be paid by check or by Visa or MasterCard. Each deposit is fully refundable in the case that the tour is cancelled due to low registrations. Final balance must be paid by check to ISDI. Final payment will be invoiced and is due on February 25, 2016. Registrations will be accepted beyond February 25, 2016, on a space-available basis.

Flights: International and U.S. domestic airfare are not included in the package cost. Participants are responsible for all aspects of their air arrangements, into and out of Tashkent International Airport (TAS) in Uzbekistan.

Terms & Conditions:

International Seminar Design, Inc. (ISDI) acts only as an agent for the participant with respect to transportation, accommodations, and all other services relating to this tour. ISDI, Association of Rice Alumni, and/or their agents assume no responsibility or liability for any act, error, omission, or for any injury, loss, accident, delay or irregularity, which may be caused by a defect in any aircraft, ship, train, bus, or other carrier, or through neglect or default of any subcontractor or other third party, which may be used wholly or in part in the performance of their duty to the participants of the tour. ISDI and Association of Rice Alumni reserve the right to cancel this tour prior to departure for any reason including insufficient numbers of participants, as well as the right to decline to accept or retain any person as a member of the tour at any time. If bookings fall below the minimum required, participants will be advised of additional surcharge before departure date.

Cancellations and Refunds:

All cancellations must be received in writing by ISDI and are subject to a non-refundable administrative fee of $500 per person. Written cancellation received by ISDI on or before February 25, 2016: full refund minus $500 per person administrative fee. Written cancellation received by ISDI between February 26 and April 20, 2016:...
After a visit to the Tashkent Chorsu Bazaar by Chris Shervey is also recommended. In the event of trip cancellation insurance may be the only source of reimbursement. Travel insurance information will be emailed to you from the Traveling Owls upon receipt of your registration.

Tour Price Inclusions:

Fourteen (14) nights’ accommodations, as outlined in the itinerary; breakfast daily, 12 lunches, 13 dinners, water, soft drinks, coffee and tea included at all meals, two glasses of wine or beer per person with welcome and farewell dinners; land transportation by private motorcoach per itinerary; one (1) group airport transfer upon arrival in Tashkent and one (1) group airport transfer upon departure from Tashkent; one (1) economy class flight (3rd class) from Tashkent to Samarkand; three (3) economy class flights for the following routes: Mary-Ashgabat; Ashgabat-Dashoguz; Urgench-Tashkent;

June 11: Bukhara In the renowned ancient city of Bukhara, which served as a major commercial center along the Silk Road, visit Lyabi Hauz reservoir and bordering madrasa of Nadir Divan-Beghi; Naqshbandi Mausoleum, resting place of the founder of one of the largest and most influential Sufi Muslim orders; the massive 5th-century Ark Fortress; and the elegant Bolo-Hauz Mosque. Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant and time for shopping for local crafts in Bukhara’s medi eval trading domes. Gather this evening for dinner at a local restaurant.

Devon Begi Boutique Hotel (B, L, D)

June 12: Bukhara Explore several of Bukhara’s madrasas, built centuries ago and decorated with magnificent multicolor mosaics. Following lunch, drive to the outskirts of Bukhara to visit Sitorai Mokhi Khosa, the summer palace of Bukhara’s last emir. Enjoy dinner at a local restaurant.

Devon Begi Boutique Hotel (B, L, D)

June 13: Into Turkmenistan Check out of the hotel and drive to the Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan border (approx 2 hours). Following immigration procedures, enjoy 50 percent of tour cost per person. Cancellations received on or after April 21, 2016: no refund. After the tour has commenced, it is not possible to issue any refunds. No refunds for any unused portion of the tour including, but not limited to, occasional missed meals or any missed sightseeing tours. Costs for promotion, staff, and other group expenses are not refundable. In the case of cancellation, substitutions are not accepted. The tour cost is non-transferable. If ISDI and Association of Rice Alumni cancel the tour, active registrants will receive a full refund of all tour payments. A package of cancellation, baggage, and medical insurance is strongly recommended.

Travel Insurance: The purchase of trip cancellation insurance is strongly recommended for coverage of expenses in conjunction with cancellation due to illness or accident. Baggage insurance is also recommended. In the

June 9: Samarkand After a visit to the 15th-century Ulugh Beg Observatory, tour the Mausoleum of St. Daniel (Khodja Doniyor) and the Shah-i-Zinda complex lined with rows of ornate tombs. Following lunch, visit a paper-making workshop founded with the support of UNESCO, where handmade techniques from the 8th century have been resurrected. After an afternoon at leisure, gather this evening for dinner at a local restaurant.

Hotel Grand Samarkand Superior (B, L, D)

June 10: Samarkand to Bukhara Drive west by motorcoach to Bukhara (approx. 5 hours) with stops along the way at local markets, ancient caravanserai ruins, and lunch at a local restaurant. Upon arrival in Bukhara, check into the charming Devon Begi Boutique Hotel, decorated in local Bukhara style and located across from the famous Lyabi Hauz reservoir. The afternoon is at leisure.

Devon Begi Boutique Hotel (B, L, D)

June 13: Into Turkmenistan Check out of the hotel and drive to the Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan border (approx 2 hours). Following immigration procedures, enjoy

Tour Price Exclusions:

Airfare from and to U.S.; airline taxes, and fuel surcharges; the processing, procurement, and delivery of visas for Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan (ISDI provides this service at an additional charge); passport fees; airline luggage fees; airport porterage; transfers to and from the airport for individuals not using group transfers; excursions, activities, or meals marked option;

32

Entrance fees to sites per itinerary; services of an ISDI Tour Manager; leadership of Dr. Lisa Balabanillar; expert local English speaking guides; gratuities to local guides and drivers; bottled water for daily excursions on private motorcoach; taxes, services and porterage fees.

Tour Price Exclusions:

Airfare from and to U.S.; airline taxes, and fuel surcharges; the processing, procurement, and delivery of visas for Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan (ISDI provides this service at an additional charge); passport fees; airline luggage fees; airport porterage; transfers to and from the airport for individuals not using group transfers; excursions, activities, or meals marked option; or during traveler’s free time; personal items; personal services; taxis; travel extensions; personal insurance for health, baggage and tour cancellation; gratuities for hotel housekeeping.
lunch at a local restaurant in Turkmenistan. Continue by coach (approx. 3.5 hours) to Old Merv, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the oldest and best preserved of the major oasis-cities along the Silk Road. Explore the ruins and excavations of Merv dating as far back as the Bronze Age, including the Mausoleum of Sultan Sanjar and the massive Erk-Kala fortress. Transfer to Mary, a modern city just outside Old Merv and check into the newly opened Mary Hotel. Enjoy dinner at the hotel. Hotel Mary (B, L, D)

June 14: Mary to Ashgabat Visit the Archaeological and Ethnographic Museum, housed in a former caravanserai, and see the extensive collection of artifacts from ancient Merv. Following lunch, transfer to the Mary airport for a short flight to Ashgabat, the modern capital city of Turkmenistan. Upon arrival, transfer to the Ak Alty Hotel and, later, gather with the group for dinner. Ak Alty Hotel (B, L, D)

June 15: Ashgabat Begin today with a city tour of Ashgabat, which holds the Guinness World Record for the highest concentration of white marble buildings (543) in a single city. Following lunch, visit the controversial Turkmenbashli Ruhy Mosque on the outskirts of the city. Built only in 2004 and commissioned by Turkmenistan’s first president-dictator, it is the largest mosque in Central Asia but seldom used as it is not recognized by many Muslims. Continue to the excavation site of Old Nisa, the ancient city that once served as the burial grounds of Parthian kings. Return to the city and have time to freshen up before dinner at a local restaurant. Ak Alty Hotel (B, L, D)

June 16: Ashgabat to Khiva Take a short morning flight from Ashgabat to the city of Dashoguz, near the Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan border. Upon arrival, see the well-preserved monuments of the Silk Road era at Kunya Urgench, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Following lunch, cross back into Uzbekistan and continue to Khiva, a major trading center along the Silk Road. Check into the Asia Khiva Hotel located in Khiva’s Old City and gather for dinner. Asia Khiva Hotel (B, L, D)

June 17: Khiva Today, explore Khiva, a treasury of remarkable monuments, mosques, madrasses, tombs, and neighborhoods. In the Ichan Kala (Inner Old City), see the Kunya Ark, a 17th-century citadel complex; the Mosque of Allakulli-khun, adorned with exquisite floral patterns; the Mausoleum of Makhmud Pakhlavan, Khiva’s most famous and national hero; Muhammad Amin-khan Madrasa; and the massive Minaret of Kalta-Minor, the most recognizable symbol of the city. Return to the hotel and gather for dinner. Asia Khiva Hotel (B, L, D)

June 18: Return to Tashkent The morning is at leisure to relax or return to the Ichan Kala for independent exploration. Following lunch at the hotel, transfer to the Urgench airport, take an afternoon flight back to Tashkent, and check back into the Lotte City Hotel Tashkent Palace. Gather this evening for a festive farewell dinner at a local restaurant. Lotte City Hotel Tashkent Palace (B, L, D)

June 19: Depart for the U.S. Transfer to the Tashkent airport for independent return flights to the United States.