



# Trekking the Planet

Discovering the Cultural and Natural Significance of the World



## Where are we now?

- Darren and Sandy are in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, located at 39° N and 66° E.
- We have traveled approximately 27,745 miles (44,651 kilometers) from our starting point in California.



## People and Culture

- Uzbekistan was a member of the former Soviet Union (USSR) from 1922 until 1991, when it gained its independence.
- Uzbeks, who make up 80% of Uzbekistan's population, descend from Turkic people and are rooted in the Sunni Muslim faith.
- More than 60% of the population lives in densely populated rural communities.
- The ancient oasis cities of Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara were all on the old Silk Road to China.
- Uzbekistan's economy is based on the export of petroleum and natural gas, as well as gold and cotton. Uzbekistan is now the world's second-largest cotton exporter.
- In traditional Uzbek families, marriages are often still arranged between families; in more cosmopolitan ones it is the bride and groom's choice. Either way, the match is subject to parental approval, with the mother, in practice, having the final word. Uzbek women usually marry by twenty-one with men not much later.



*Buzkashi is a popular game played in Central Asia that's similar to polo except that it uses a goat carcass instead of a ball.  
(source: [TheTravelWord.com](http://TheTravelWord.com))*

### Did you know?

Members of the former USSR are:

Russia		Georgia	
Ukraine		Moldova	
Belarus		Armenia	
Azerbaijan		Kazakhstan	
Uzbekistan		Turkmenistan	
Kyrgyzstan		Tajikistan	
Latvia		Estonia	
Lithuania			

source: [Wikipedia.org](http://Wikipedia.org)



*Registan Square, Samarkand  
(source: [Wikipedia.org](http://Wikipedia.org))*



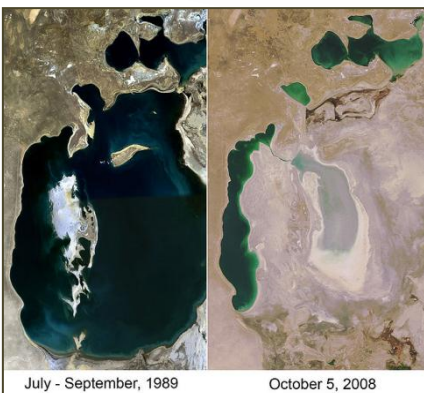


Camel in the Qizilqum desert  
(source: [Flickr.com/neilbanas](http://Flickr.com/neilbanas))

## Nuratau-Kyzylkum Biosphere Reserve

- The United Nations Development Program completed a seven-year project in 2007 that established the NKBR.
- The goal of the project was improved conservation and sustainable development.
- Over 300 bird species have been cataloged in this reserve.

sources: [UNDP.uz](http://UNDP.uz),  
[Nuratau.com](http://Nuratau.com)



Before and after Aral Sea photos  
(source: [Wikipedia.org](http://Wikipedia.org))

## Nature and Environment

- Uzbekistan is surrounded by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan. It is approximately the size of Spain or California.
- Uzbekistan is one of only two "doubly land-locked" countries – those completely surrounded by other landlocked countries. The other is Liechtenstein. In such a country, you would have to cross at least two international borders to reach the coastline.
- A very large portion of Uzbekistan is made up of the Qizilqum desert. Qizilqum is Turkic for "red sand". Qizilqum is also known as the *Kyzylkum* desert.
- The most fertile part of Uzbekistan, the Fergana Valley, is an area of about 8,280 square miles (21,440 square kilometers). It is east of the Qizilqum and surrounded by mountain ranges to the north, south and east.
- Much of Uzbekistan's capital city, Tashkent, was destroyed in a major earthquake in 1966. Other earthquakes have caused significant damage before and since. The mountain areas are especially prone to earthquakes.
- The Aral Sea, once the world's fourth largest body of inland water, has declined to 10% of its original size after the rivers that fed it were diverted for irrigation.

## Our Plans

- After completing our trek we arrived in Tashkent. Samarkand is our second stop in Uzbekistan.
- We plan to see the architectural wonders of Samarkand and Bukhara, and take part in a home stay.
- Thank you for your questions! We find them *so* interesting and enjoy reading them. We will post some more answers soon.

## More Uzbekistan Facts

- As of June 2012, there are 1,881 Uzbekistan Som (UZS) to a US Dollar. That means a mid-range hotel would cost about 94,000 UZS (\$50 US).
- The largest note in Uzbekistan is the 1,000 Som. So, at least 94 bills are needed to pay for your room!



source: [Advantour.com](http://Advantour.com)

## More Information

- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uzbekistan>
- <http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/countries/uzbekistan-facts/>
- <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Asia-and-Oceania/Uzbekistan.html>
- <http://worldinfozone.com/facts.php?country=Uzbekistan>
- <http://www.everyculture.com/To-Z/Uzbekistan.html>
- <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/uz.html>

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