

TRAVEL/REVIEWS/INFORMATION/

# OVERLAND

TRAVELLER

Issue 004 | SPRING 2014

TRAVEL /

## SILK ROAD

EXPLORING  
XIAN  
A Feast For Eyes and Taste

TRAVEL /

## SILK ROAD MEMORIES

Memories: the Northern Silk Road in the 21st Century

OFF THE BEATEN PATH /

## MARCO POLOS ROAD

A photo essay

# WELCOME

EDITION 004 | SPRING 2014



## Hello and welcome to the Overland Traveller Magazine Silk Road Issue!

Marco Polos travels are recorded in the *Marvels of the World*, a book which did much to introduce Europeans to Central Asia and China. In this issue we will explore most all of the sites he supposedly visited.

The Silk Road, or Silk Route, that he travelled on was a series of trade and cultural transmission routes that were central to cultural interaction through regions of the Asian continent connecting the West and East by linking traders, merchants, pilgrims, monks, soldiers, nomads and urban dwellers from China to the Mediterranean Sea during various periods of time.

Trade on the Silk Road was a significant factor in the development of the civilizations of China, the Indian subcontinent, Persia, Europe and Arabia. It opened long-distance, political and economic interactions between the civilizations.

Though silk was certainly the major trade item from China, many other goods were traded, and various technologies, religions and philosophies, as well as the bubonic plague (the "Black Death"), also travelled along the Silk Routes. In addition to economic trade, the Silk Road served as a ways of cultural trade between the networking civilizations.

Much has changed since Marco Polos times, but as I can tell you from my adventures along it.

Come and explore this amazing route with us... or go explore it for yourself!

Rolf Magener, Editor in Chief

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On the cover: Crescent Lake Temple, Douhuang, China by Rolf Magener

PHOTOS: ROLF MAGENER

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## TRAVEL GEAR/

## TOP GEAR

Travel Gear that every adventure traveller should be using...

Gear can make all the difference on your journey... Here is gear that we recommend ....

### Oru Kayak

Folding kayaks have traditionally been unwieldy and heavy, mainly because of the rib systems that are used to create the integrity of the boat. Which is why we've been eagerly watching the Oru, an elegant new portable kayak, come to life for the past year or so.

\$ 1,990 Available at <http://www.orukayak.com/>



### Spot Gen3 Satellite Messenger

Keep in touch in your back country travels. The SPOT Gen3 Satellite GPS Messenger keeps you connected and updates your progress. Using satellite technology, SPOT maintains communication almost anywhere on the globe. PRODUCT FEATURES: Check in with your professional and social networks, send custom text messages and let others track your real-time location via Google Maps. In an emergency, transmit an SOS with your exact location to GEOS Emergency Response Coordination Center to activate a rescue. Optional unlimited tracking lets you choose a capture rate that suits your needs.

\$ 149.50 Available at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) and [Rei.com](http://Rei.com)

### Basis Health Tracker

The most advanced health tracker in the world! Uses 4 sensors, including an Optical Blood Flow Sensor that captures continuous heart rate on your wrist 24/7, Resting Heart Rate during sleep and insights into Stress.

Powered by Body IQ technology, Basis automatically analyzes and displays Fitness Activities, like walking, running and biking with the right caloric burn credits. Also goes further than other trackers with Advanced Sleep Analysis of REM and Deep sleep.

Starting at \$ 150 Available at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) and [Rei.com](http://Rei.com)



## TRAVEL GEAR /

**BioLite Campstove Charger**

The BioLite Wood Burning CampStove combines the benefits of a lightweight backpacking stove and an off-grid power charger so you can cook a meal while charging your gadgets. The Campstove is the perfect solution for both the backcountry campsite and also Emergency Preparedness Kits.

**No Fuel to Buy or Carry:** Our stoves cook your meals with nothing but the twigs you collect on your journey or in your backyard, eliminating the need for heavy, expensive, polluting petroleum gas. Quick to light, fast to boil and easy to use.

**Charge your Gadgets:** By converting heat from the fire into usable electricity, our stoves will recharge your phones, lights and other gadgets while you cook dinner. Unlike solar, BioLite CampStove is a true on-demand source.

\$ 129 Available at Amazon.com

**Morphie Juice Pack**

This powerful 4000 mAh external battery can handle the battery needs of any iDevice including the power-hungry iPad, as well as wide-range of USB-enabled devices at super-fast speeds. It includes a special high-output battery that provides ultra-fast charging that's 4 times faster than traditional USB batteries! Additionally, improved conversion efficiency means more power actually makes it to your device.

\$ 79.99 Available at Amazon.com

**Otterbox for iPad Mini**

Otterbox engineers developed the Defender Series iPad mini case to create the most usable and protective solution possible. The inner shell of the case is made from impact resistant polycarbonate that protects the back of your iPad from scuffs and scrapes. A screen protector is built into the polycarbonate shell to protect against scratches without compromising sensitivity. The outer layer of the iPad.

\$ 29.99 Available at Amazon.com and eBags

PHOTO ESSAY/OFF THE BEATEN PATH/

# MARCO POLOS ROAD

A Photo Essay  
by Rolf Magener

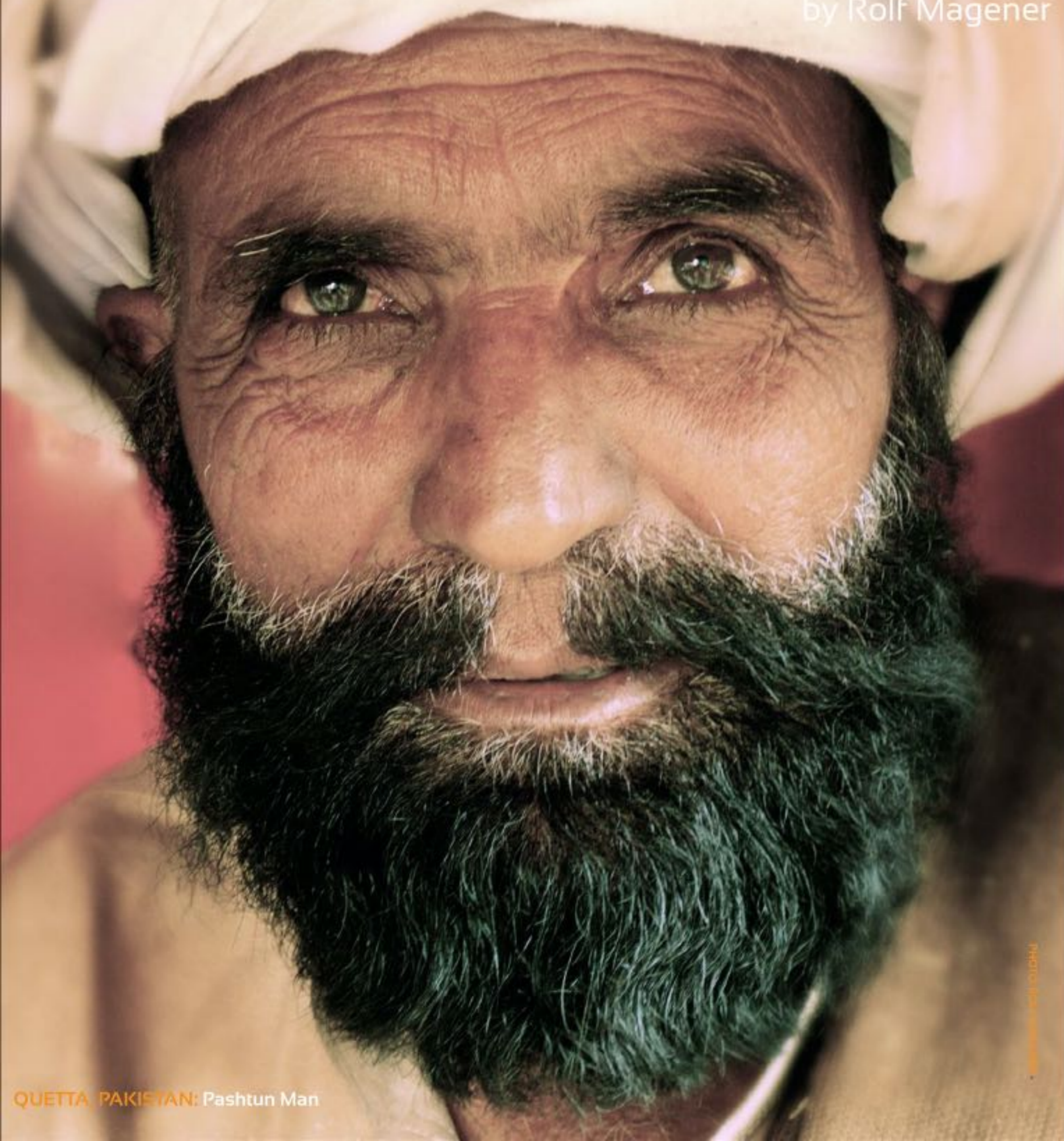


PHOTO: ROLF MAGENER

QUETTA, PAKISTAN: Pashtun Man

PHOTO ESSAY /



TURPAN, CHINA. Emin Minaret is the only Islamic tower among the hundred famous towers in China...

PHOTO: ROULF MADENER

PHOTO ESSAY /

BUKHARA - Uzbeki elder at home...





PHOTO ESSAY /



SAMARKANT, UZBEKISTAN. Registan walls adorned with some of the finest tile work in the world...

PHOTO: ROUJ MAGENER

PHOTO ESSAY /



PHOTO: ROLF MAGENER

**KASHGAR, CHINA.** The weekend livestock market is one of the oldest and largest in Asia ...

PHOTO ESSAY /

PHOTO: ANDY KACZNER



**KIVAAH, UZBEKISTAN.** One of the most romantic sites of the Silk Road ...

PHOTO ESSAY

CULTURE EXCHANGE Nuts and Spices, Raw Silk, Tea Bundles were all traded along the Silk Road.



Silk Road Facts.

The Silk Road, or Silk Route, is a series of trade and cultural transmission routes that were central to cultural interaction through regions of the Asian continent connecting the West and East by linking traders, merchants, pilgrims, monks, soldiers, nomads and urban dwellers from China to the Mediterranean Sea during various periods of time.

Extending 4,000 miles (6,437 kilometres), the Silk Road gets its name from the lucrative Chinese silk trade which was carried out along its length, and began during the Han Dynasty (206 BC – 220 AD). The Central Asian sections of the trade routes were expanded around 114 BC by the Han dynasty. They took great interest in the safety of their products being traded and extended the Great Wall to ensure the protection of the trade route.

Permit and Visa

- Georgia: EU citizens do not need a visa.
- Armenia: EU citizens do not need a visa
- Azerbaijan: Pick up in Batumi, Georgia
- Turkmenistan: All need visa
- Uzbekistan: All need visa
- Afghanistan: All need visa
- Tajikistan: Need visa and GBAO permit (for Pamirs)
- Kyrgyzstan: No visa needed for UK citizens
- Kazakhstan: All need visa
- China: All need visa



PHOTOS: ROLF MAGENER

TRAVEL /

# ARCHITECTURE OF THE SILK ROAD

by Lance Manion

Cities and urban centres grew up along the trade routes that passed through Central Asia between the seventh and fifteenth centuries. The transmission of cultures and ideas along with the passage of trading goods had a fundamental effect on the architecture and even the structure of cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara and Merv.

**THE CERAMICIST** One of the most amazing structures on the Silk Road

New rulers took control of the lands along the trade routes, such as the Arab conquests and later the Mongols. Their traces are left in the architectural legacy of religious buildings, bathhouses, caravanserais, palaces, as well as the brickwork, carving and ornamental designs of urban spaces throughout Central Asia. The original – pre-Islamic – nucleus of the settlement was transformed into an arg or kuhandiz (fortified citadel), next to which lay the actual town, the shahrista, which was also walled. Outside this wall lay the district of the tradesmen and craftsmen, the rabad (suburb). Some towns do actually follow this plan, but it is by no means in evidence everywhere and at all times. In Samarkand, for example, in addition to the arg and the shahrista (the site of Afrasiab), two other, adjoining, urban areas took shape, the shahr-i daru (inner town) and the shahr-i b (outer town), beyond which lay the rabad. Merv possessed an old shahrista (Gavur-Qalca) but a new one (Sultan-Qalca) was built, to which the main activities of urban life were transferred. A new fortified shahriya (town with a citadel) developed there. Immediately to the north and south lay two walled rabads, which extended beyond their enclosing walls. The towns in the northern regions of Central Asia, where the population was predominantly nomadic, were quite small, with an arg and a shahrista. The outer rabads were small and at times non-existent because of the danger of attacks by the nomads.

The shahrista of the medieval towns of Central Asia which were established at that time were strictly rectangular in shape (e.g. Sultan-Qalca at Merv), but where the town had developed in an uncontrolled fashion around an earlier settlement (Balkh, Samarkand) their outline was irregular. They had several gates, located on the main roads into the town. In Merv there were four, in Samarkand six and in Bukhara seven.

One of the principal concerns of town-planners at this time was defence. The towns were surrounded by ditches and enclosed by walls, sometimes by a double wall (Mashhad-i Misriyan, the earlier Dihistan). The walls were flanked by rounded towers from which radial fire could be directed. Particular importance was attached to the defensive capability of the gates: towers rose on either side of the gates and on top of the towers were military and surveillance platforms. Often, a drawbridge was erected to span the ditch.

There was practically nothing regular about the internal planning of the towns. To a certain extent, it was determined by the main streets, which ran from one gate to another, forming intersections at the town centre. They did not run in straight lines and there were sharp bends. These arteries determined the location of the town's focal points with small squares here and there and the main bazaars stretching along the streets, either uncovered or with light awnings, and sometimes with an extensive covering of vaulted and domed roofs. Between these main streets lay guzars (Persian, lanes) or mahalls (Arabic, quarters), criss-crossed by a tangled web of alleys, in which living accommodation, the local mosque, the maktab (elementary school) and the public water cistern were to be found and which preserved the communal life-style. The different trades and crafts had their own special quarters: those with harmful side-effects such as potteries and iron-foundries were located in the rabads whereas the 'clean' trades (sewing and embroidery, jewellery, etc.) were to be found inside the shahrista.

#### ARCHITECTURAL ORNAMENTATION

The development and refinement of various forms of architectural ornament continued from the ninth to the twelfth century. Decorative brickwork made of regular or shaped bricks, wood and ganch carving, passed down from pre-Islamic times but with different ornamental

motifs, carved terracotta and, from the twelfth century, the appearance of glazed brick and the use of glazes (pale blue, dark blue, white) to pick out decorative motifs on carved terracotta: such was the variety of decorative techniques which, in interiors, also included decorative painting. The decorative motifs were varied but girih (geometric designs forming a knot) predominated. Their development was linked to the spectacular advances made in mathematical science in the medieval East, which were the basis for Central Asian architects' and decorative craftsmen's use of applied geometry. Stylized plant decoration was co-ordinated with girih; and Arabic epigraphy also acquired a special significance, being used for Qur'anic texts and other inscriptions containing historical information relating to influential figures and to the period at which the building was constructed. These inscriptions, which were executed in the geometric Kufic or flowing, cursive nashk scripts, were an important decorative element in the design of the building.

The palaces of the rulers were distinguished by their large proportions and wealth of artistic decoration. In the Samanid palace in Samarkand (the site of Afrasiab), archaeologists have uncovered several halls in which the walls were decorated with carving in ganch. The motifs are large geometric figures enclosing fine plant decoration. The eleventh-twelfth-century palace in the shahriya-arg at Merv is on a square plan with a small interior courtyard surrounded by both large and small rooms, but only small decorative fragments have been found. The decoration is extremely rich, however, in the palace of the rulers of Termez at the same period. A courtyard is also the key to the organization of this palace's plan. There is a portal at the entrance to the courtyard, on both sides of which are a number of differentiated rooms. Along its axis runs a five-columned portico leading to an audience hall. Within the hall a central area was marked out, at the far end of which stood the throne. Surrounding the central area and separated from it by columns was an ambulatory. The roofs were vaulted. Walls, columns and vaults were covered in the most elaborate ganch carving in which girih, in all its various forms, has pride of place, although there are also heraldic motifs – a pair of lions facing each other with jaws locked together. Carved ganch was also used in many decorative forms to embellish the residences of the rich; outstanding examples were discovered during the excavation of such houses at Merv, Nishapur and Samarkand.

#### BATHHOUSES

Among works of civil architecture, mention should be made of the public bathhouses. The remains of eleventh-century baths have been discovered in Taraz (a town in the area of northern Turkistan) and in Nasa (Khurasan). Premises have been found there with cisterns for hot and cold water and a system of underground flues for heating the floors with hot air. It is noteworthy that there are traces of ornamental painting, employing special water-resistant paints, on the walls of both bathhouses.

#### CARAVANSERAI

Large market buildings were erected on the main streets in towns. The caravanserais formed a special category. They were to be found in towns, especially towns on the major caravan routes on which most of them were located. The builders' task was to construct a safe shelter for caravans which had been travelling for many days, providing protection from attack by robbers for the travellers and for the animals that had carried them and their wares, and pleasant conditions for their stay. Hence the solid defences of the caravanserais: high walls, reinforced entrance gates, corner watch-towers and, inside, a well-thought-out division of space to provide for sojourn and rest. Caravanserais were often also used as ribats (defence

TRAVEL /



**BUKHARA TOWER, UZBEKISTAN.** Once the tallest tower in the world, so impressive Ghenghis Kahn left it standing

PHOTO: ROLF MAGNER

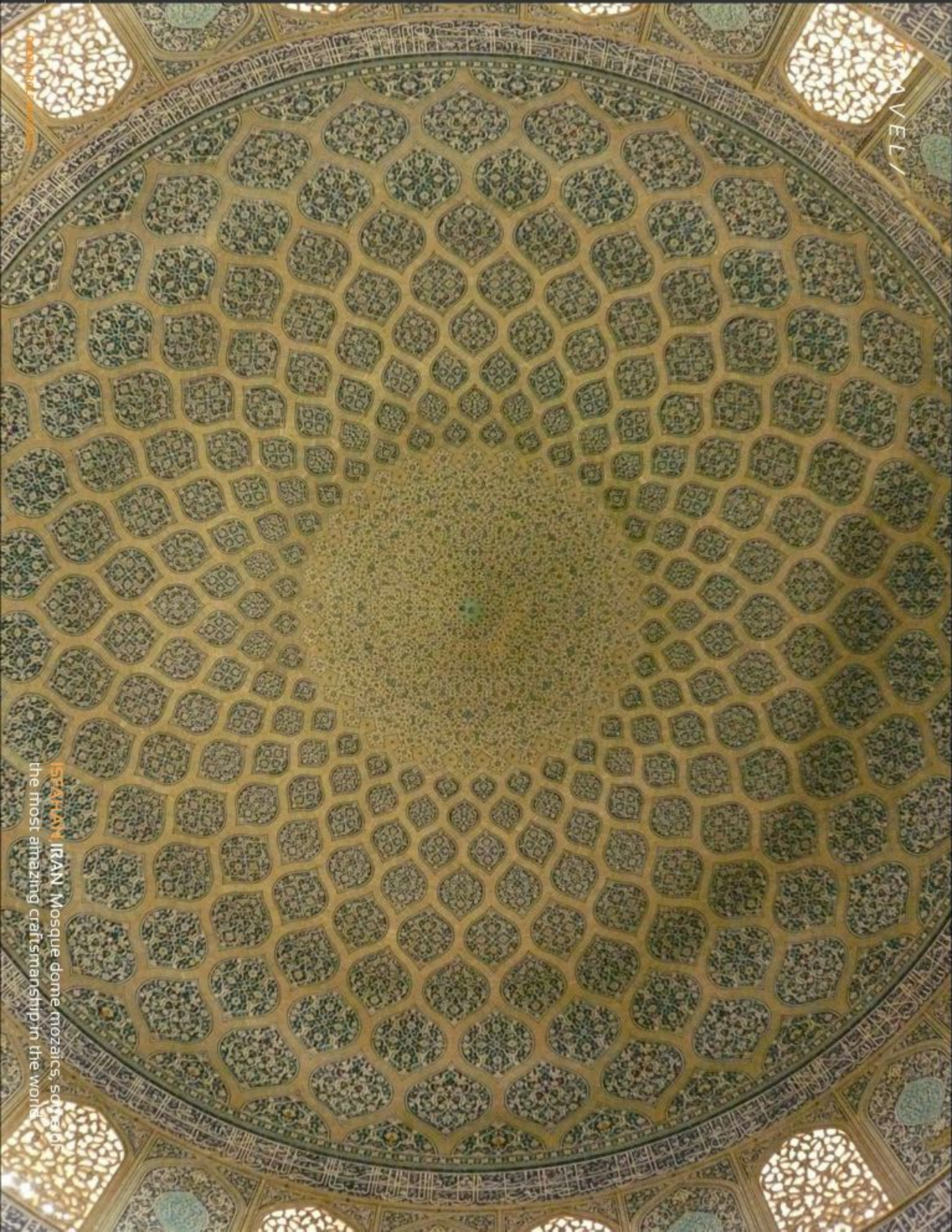
TRAVEL /



**MULTAN, PAKISTAN.** The ancient sites of Pakistan are some of the best of the Silk Road.

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TRAVELLER

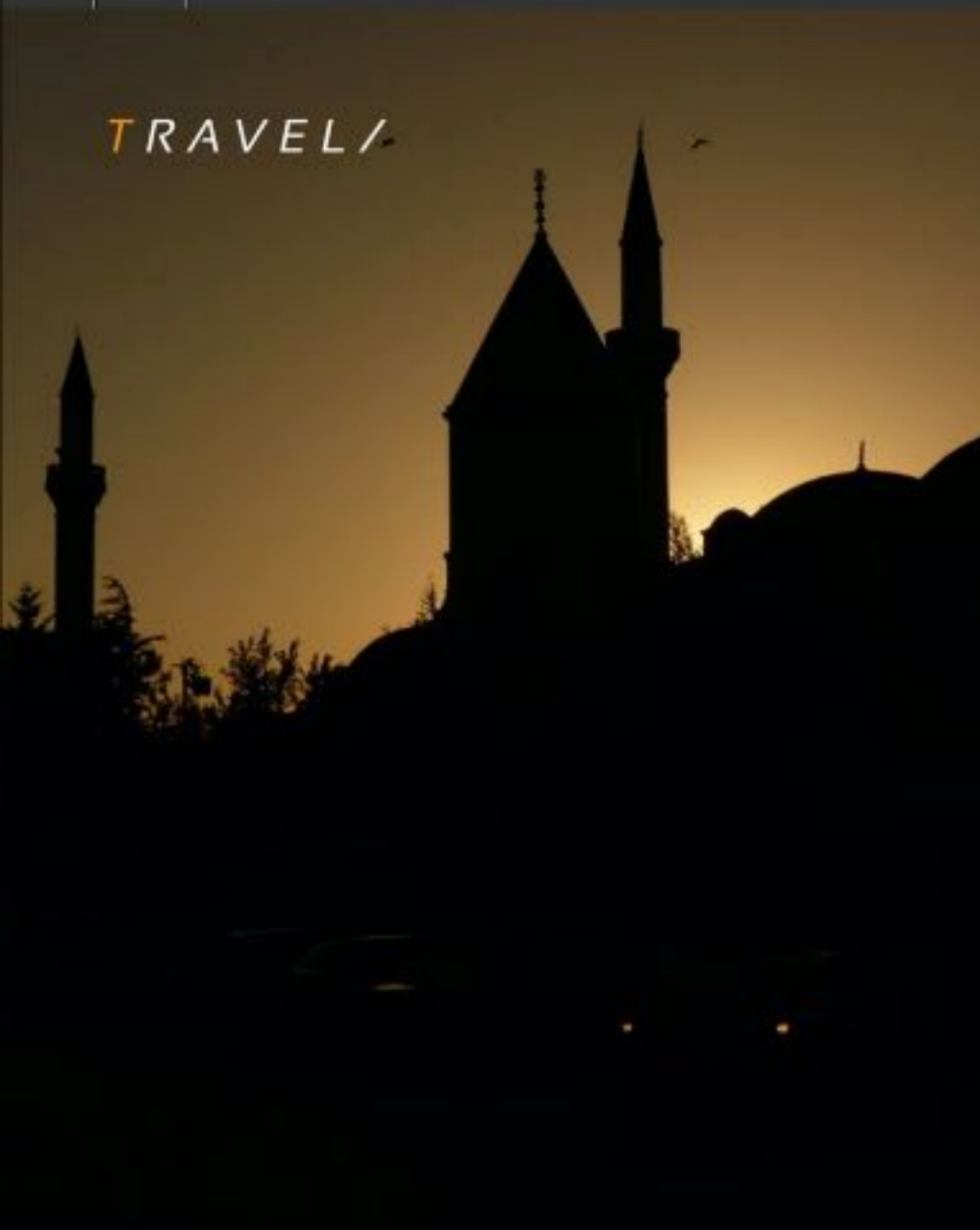
ISFAHAN, IRAN - Mosque dome mosaics, some of the most amazing craftsmanship in the world

TRAVELL /



**YAZED, IRAN.** Water Cooling Towers form the Yazed Skyline.

TRAVEL /



PHOTOS: ROLF MACENER

**NO TOURISTS:** Some amazing sites where you will see few tourists: Konya, Turkey. Esfahan, Iran. Multan, Pakistan. Shiraz, Iran

## TRAVEL /

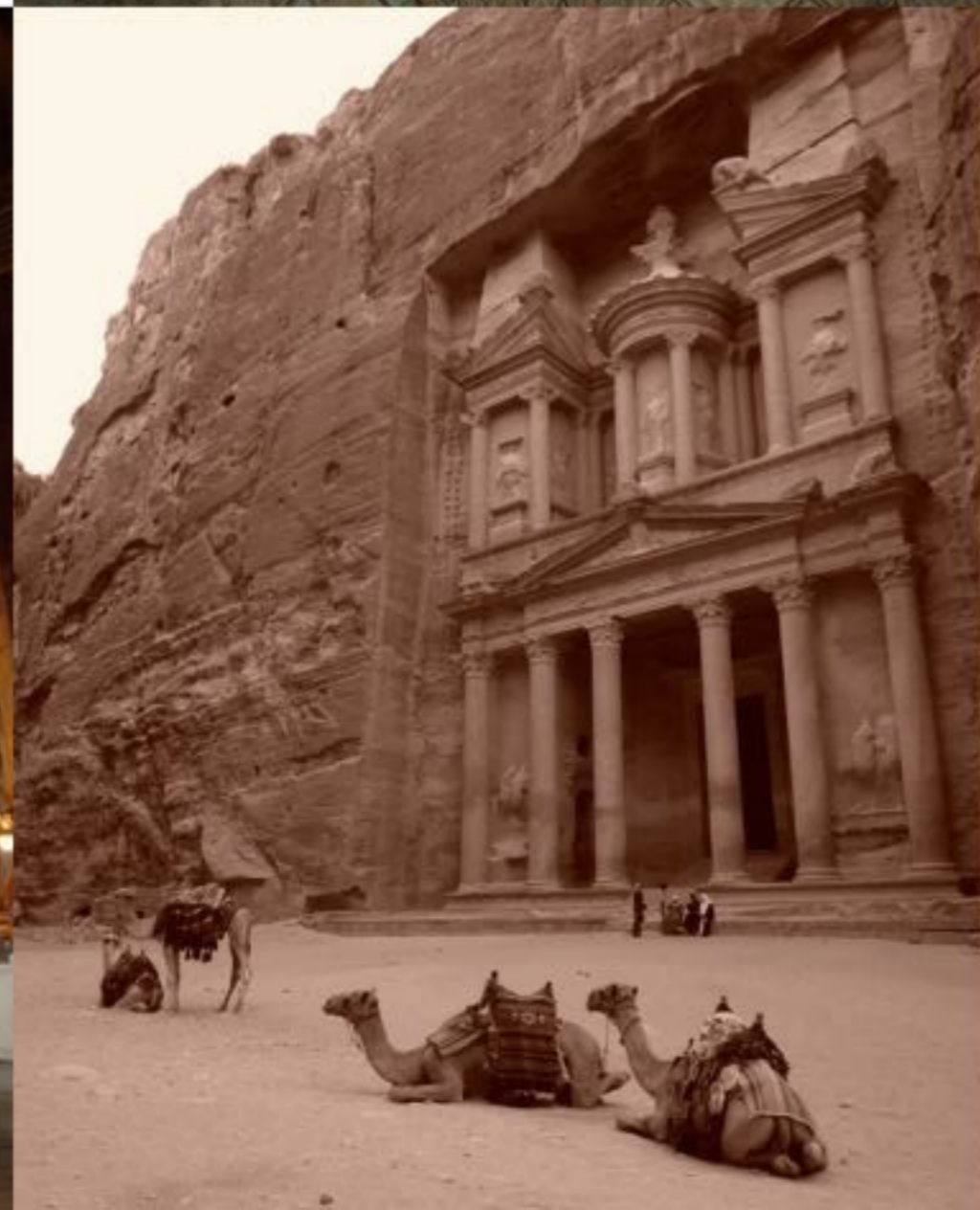
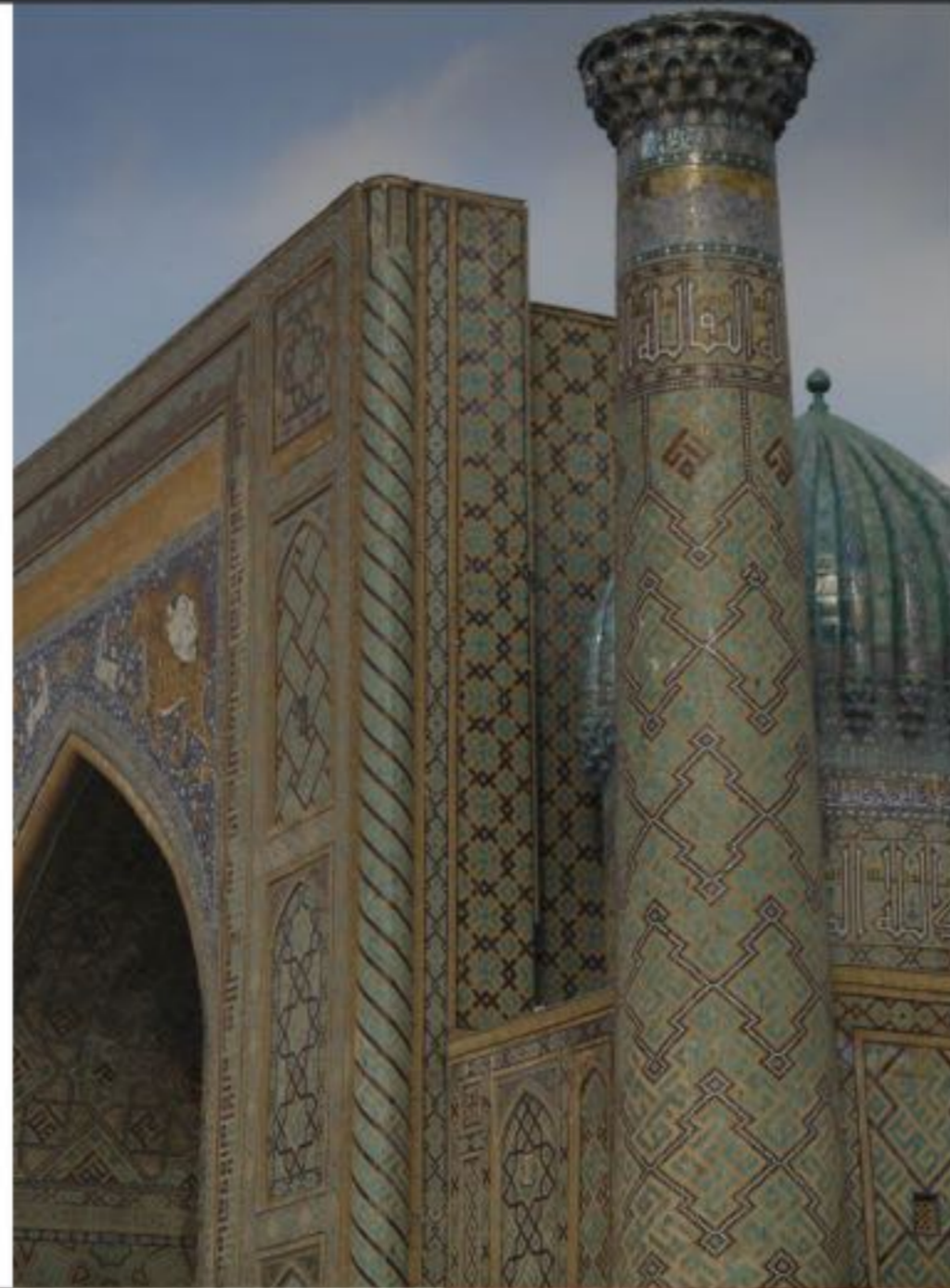
posts) for the billeting en route of the ruler's forces.

Surviving eleventh- to twelfth-century caravanserais illustrate the different versions of the single design plan. Sometimes there is a central courtyard enclosed by a covered area for the summer quartering of pack animals and galleries for the winter, with separate living quarters and utility rooms for travellers and refectories and areas for the performance.

## MADRASAS AND MAUSOLEUMS

The Islamic period in the Middle East saw the appearance of the madrasa (college for higher religious studies), in which theology and law were studied. Information has been preserved about the Farjiki madrasa in Samanid Bukhara, which was destroyed in a fire, an indication that it was constructed mainly of wood. But madrasas were built of durable materials as early as the eleventh and twelfth centuries. An example is provided by the ruins of the Nizamiyya madrasa at Khargird which reveal a square courtyard with four deep, arched aiwans positioned on its axes and a dars-khana (lecture room or hall); the hujras for the accommodation of the students were, naturally, located in the quarters between the aiwans. Excavations have uncovered the plan of the Khwaja-Mashhad madrasa in Sayad (a district of Qubadliyan), on which the courtyard is surrounded by hujras, with two spacious, domed mausoleums on the side opposite the entrance.

Samarkand is wonderful and fascinating with its beautiful architectural monuments, with striking harmonies of perfection between mausoleums, madrasahs, mosques, and city squares. The Registan was the heart of the ancient Samarkand. The name means "Sandy Place". The ensemble of three madrasahs is a unique example of town building art a remarkable pattern of the architectural planning of the main town square. 🌟



**LOTS OF TOURISTS** Some amazing sites where you will see many tourists but that are still worth visiting Samarkand, Uzbekistan, Petra, Jordan, Istanbul, Turkey.

DESTINATION/

# XIAN FEASTS FOR EYES AND PALATE

By: Perri Klass

On the "Muslim Street" in the Chinese city of Xian stands a bronze tableau in honor of street food. There, on a crowded lane packed with stalls selling Islamic-Chinese cuisine - lamb dumplings, mutton soup, pancakes and mung bean noodles - tourists can pose with statues of a soup seller and his customers. It's a photo opportunity that brings together Xian's two most famous

## DESTINATION /



tourist drawing cards: life-size human replicas and superb dumplings.

Each year, thousands of tour groups swing through Xian in the central part of the country, one of the four ancient capitals of China. The main draw is the site housing 8,000 buried terra-cotta warriors, the life-size standing figures that Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of unified China, ordered to be created and buried to guard his tomb and fight his battles in the imperial afterlife. It's perfectly possible to zoom in and out of Xian, stopping only to see the warriors in their open-air museum, and be served the characteristic "dumpling feast": a high-end celebration of local dumpling culture that can include dozens of morsels, savory and sweet; fried, steamed and boiled; some shaped like leaves, others like flowers and frogs.

But Xian, with its millenniums of Chinese history on display, is a remarkable place to spend more than a couple of days. Sights range from two splendid imperial tombs to the syncretic architecture of Chinese Islam at its finest, to an elegant Buddhist pagoda, all in the modern Chinese urban context of a city of about eight million people, replete with aggressive traffic, plentiful construction and bustling luxury shopping malls.

One cold winter evening, my husband, our teenage son and I took the overnight "soft sleeper" train from Beijing to Xian. Our aim was a trip that would build on the warriors - and the dumplings - and let us explore the past and present of the city. The tiny train compartment was cozy, with comforters and pillows, and grassy cups of hot tea brought to us in the morning, shortly before the train pulled into the Xian station right up against the largely intact 14th-century city walls.

We stayed at a residence hotel with small self-contained apartments in the historic center, near the Muslim quarter, and close to two famous 14th-century towers, the Bell

Tower and the Drum Tower, both of which were completely covered in scaffolding. We quickly discovered that though we were just a short walk away from the famous delicacies of the Muslim Street (its formal name is Beiyuanmen Street), we were even closer to the rich possibilities of another small food street across from the hotel, which we quickly came to regard as our own. This street, completely lacking in historic character - or statues - had street vendors with steamers full of dumplings stuffed with glutinous rice, a man who hacked huge grilled scallion-flecked flatbreads into squares, and barbecuers with small grills on which marinated shredded pork and chicken sizzled.

On the Muslim Street, we sampled Islamic Chinese food, which completely eschews pork and relies instead on lamb and mutton, as well as glutinous noodles made from mung bean flour. Women made scallion-filled pancakes to order on griddles (you could also get your pancake filled with yellow chives or with spiced ground meat). We stepped into a storefront to eat our first bowls of paomo, perhaps the most characteristic Xian dish of all: flatbread crumbled into a rich mutton soup.

Xian, the eastern end of the old Silk Road, has long been important for Muslims and Buddhists, emperors and traders. The Great Mosque of Xian was founded in 742, not so long after Islam took root in China. The mosque, rebuilt over the centuries, is notable for its Chinese architecture - a minaret that strongly resembles a pagoda, and pavilions decorated in bright ornamental ceramics. As we explored, afternoon prayers let out, and the courtyard filled with men in skullcaps.

Right off the Muslim Street lies the palace complex of a Ming dynasty nobleman, Gao Yue Song, who rose to greatness 400 years ago by placing second in the Confucian imperial examination; a wall plaque at the house celebrates his brilliance as a 12-year-old test taker. We wandered through the tranquil,

rambling house, presented as a "scholar's residence," with its succession of rooms and courtyards.

The next day, we had breakfast in the nameless food alley across from our hotel, where one particularly enterprising vendor with a grill built on to a bicycle cart made grilled chicken sandwiches topped with a fried egg and served on buns of puffy white Chinese bread slathered with two kinds of spicy bean sauce.

Then we went in search of an entrance that would take us up on the Xian city walls. Soon we found ourselves wandering through a part of the old city that is lined with stores and stalls selling calligraphy supplies: inks, ink pots, brushes and seals. On the walls, we walked along a piece of the old city circumference, from guardhouse to guardhouse, passing bicycle rental facilities, where more ambitious visitors can circumnavigate the eight-mile distance on two wheels.

Later, we took a taxi to the Big Wild Goose Pagoda, a Buddhist temple dating to A.D. 652. The pagoda is surrounded by pavilions with stone carvings, many of them celebrating the journeys of the scholar Xuanzang, a seventh-century Buddhist monk who traveled all over China and then on to India, in search of wisdom and sacred Buddhist texts, which the pagoda was originally built to house. We climbed the interior stairs, up the seven levels, and looked out over the modern city of Xian.

On our last day, we visited the Hanyangling tombs, another lavish imperial burial site, this one from the Han dynasty emperor Liu Qi, who reigned from 156 to 141 B.C., and his Empress Wang. This emperor was again buried with terra-cotta figurines - but they were very different, both in scale and in scope, from the infantry, archers, officers and charioteers who make up the more famous terra-cotta army. For one thing, the figures at the Hanyangling tombs are doll-size, and include serried ranks

## DESTINATION/



of miniature sheep and goats and cows and pigs, presumably sent into the afterlife as a food source. In the enormous underground museum, you peer into the dim tomb compartments at groups of human figures or alternatively, at underground herds of livestock.

The emperor's insistence on eating well underground (he was buried with figurines representing cooks and servants as well as all that meat on the hoof) is well reflected in the food offerings of Xian. We had dinner one night at Tong Sheng, a restaurant devoted to a higher-end version of paomo, and another night at the Xian Hotel, in a vast dining room of somewhat tattered elegance. But the most interesting food is bought - and eaten - outside. Skewers of highly spiced lamb; cold, sour liang ping noodles; ground meat sandwiches, sweet potato fritters; hand-pulled Xian noodles with chile sauce and cilantro; steamed sticky rice on skewers with sweet sauce and peanuts, mutton soup dumplings. There were also nuts and dried fruit; the Muslim Street, in particular, featured store after store with machines sorting walnuts by size, with arrays of dates arranged by value, and vivid orange persimmons available by the box.

On our last morning, when we went out to buy our breakfast sandwiches from the man with the grill on his bicycle cart, he handed me my sandwich and said, "Tomorrow?"

In fact, I could have wished for another couple of days in Xian; there was still so much more to explore in this city that deserves to be more fully seen and tasted.



PHOTO: SCOTT MARGENER

## DESTINATION/



## IF YOU GO

Our train travel was arranged for us by Yellow River Travel, [yellowrivertravel.com](http://yellowrivertravel.com).

We also found this website very useful in planning train travel in China, and figuring out the different kinds of trains and bookings: [seat61.com/China.htm#.UUwjA1f8nIU](http://seat61.com/China.htm#.UUwjA1f8nIU).

We stayed at the Citadines Hotel, [citadines.com/china/xian/central.html](http://citadines.com/china/xian/central.html), with studio and one-bedroom residences. Be aware that there are several Citadines around the city (and in other cities). The staff was very helpful and the hotel was comfortable and well situated. We paid about \$130 a night for a suite.

Tong Sheng restaurant, on the north side of Bell and Drum Tower Square, 86-29-8721-8711, specializes in paomo mutton soup, with unleavened bread crumbled into the bowl. Expect to pay less than 60 renminbi, about \$10 at 6 renminbi to the dollar, for dinner. 🍴

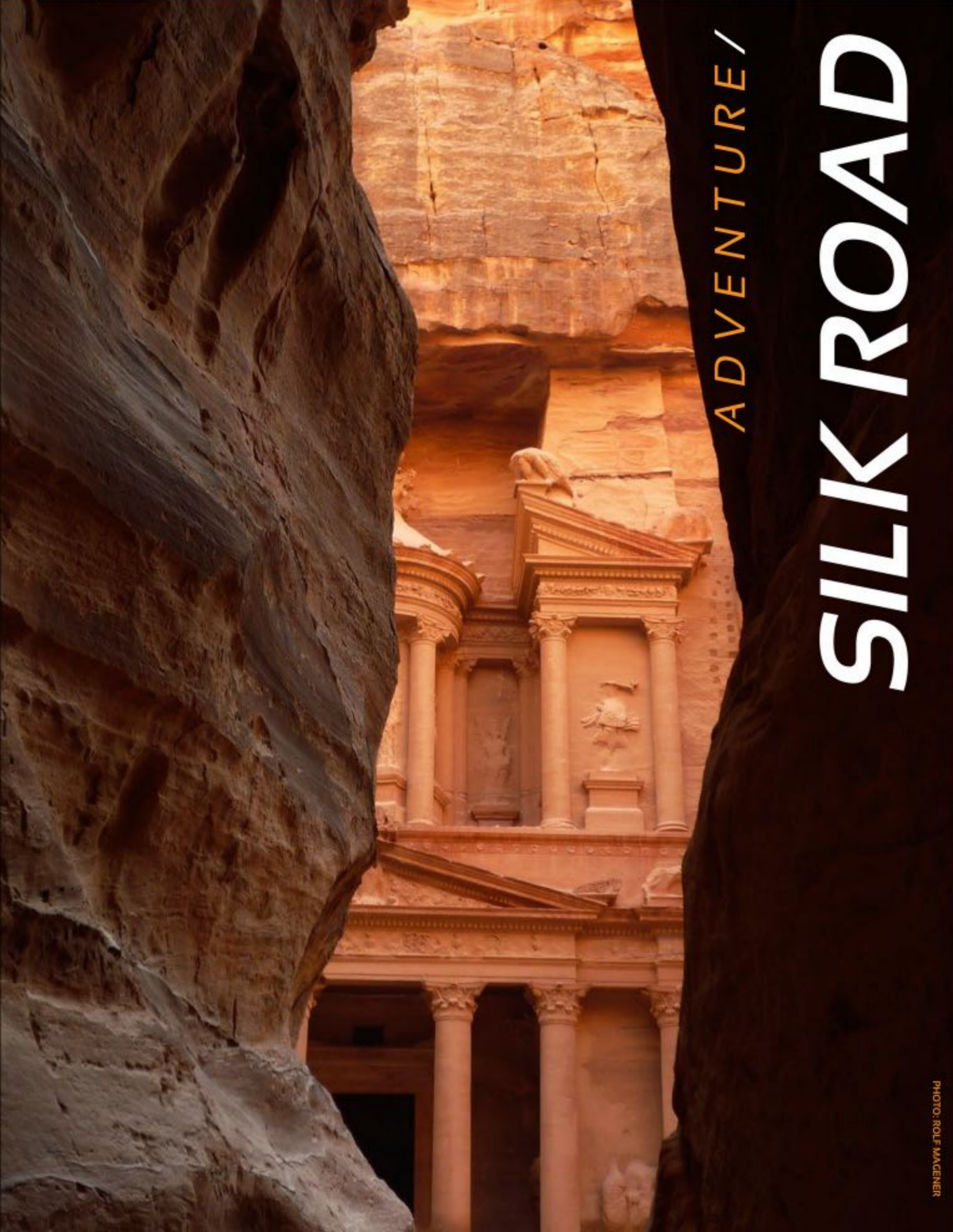
**Perri Glass** is Professor of Journalism and Pediatrics at New York University. Her short stories have won five O. Henry Awards, and in 2006, she was the recipient of the Women's National Book Association Award. She is a longtime member of the executive board of PEN New England, which she chaired from 2004 to 2006.



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Typical Xi'an: The Drum Tower, Terracotta Warriors, City Walls...





ADVENTURE/

# SILK ROAD

PHOTO: ROLF MACENER

TRAVEL/DESTINATIONS

# TOP TEN

SILK ROAD/



### Syria: Ancient City of Aleppo

Located at the crossroads of several trade routes from the 2nd millennium B.C., Aleppo was ruled successively by the Hittites, Assyrians, Arabs, Mongols, Mamelukes and Ottomans. The 13th-century citadel, 12th-century Great Mosque and various 17th-century madrasas, palaces, caravanserais and hammams all form part of the city's cohesive, unique urban fabric, now threatened by overpopulation.

PHOTO: ROLF MÄGNER

## TOP TEN / DESTINATIONS

**Iran:** Esfahan

Built by Shah Abbas I the Great at the beginning of the 17th century, and bordered on all sides by monumental buildings linked by a series of two-storeyed arcades, the site is known for the Royal Mosque, the Mosque of Sheykh Lotfollah, the magnificent Portico of Qaysariyyeh and the 15th-century Timurid palace. They are an impressive testimony to the level of social and cultural life in Persia during the Safavid era.

Best Time to Visit: July - August

**Turkey:** Historic Areas of Istanbul

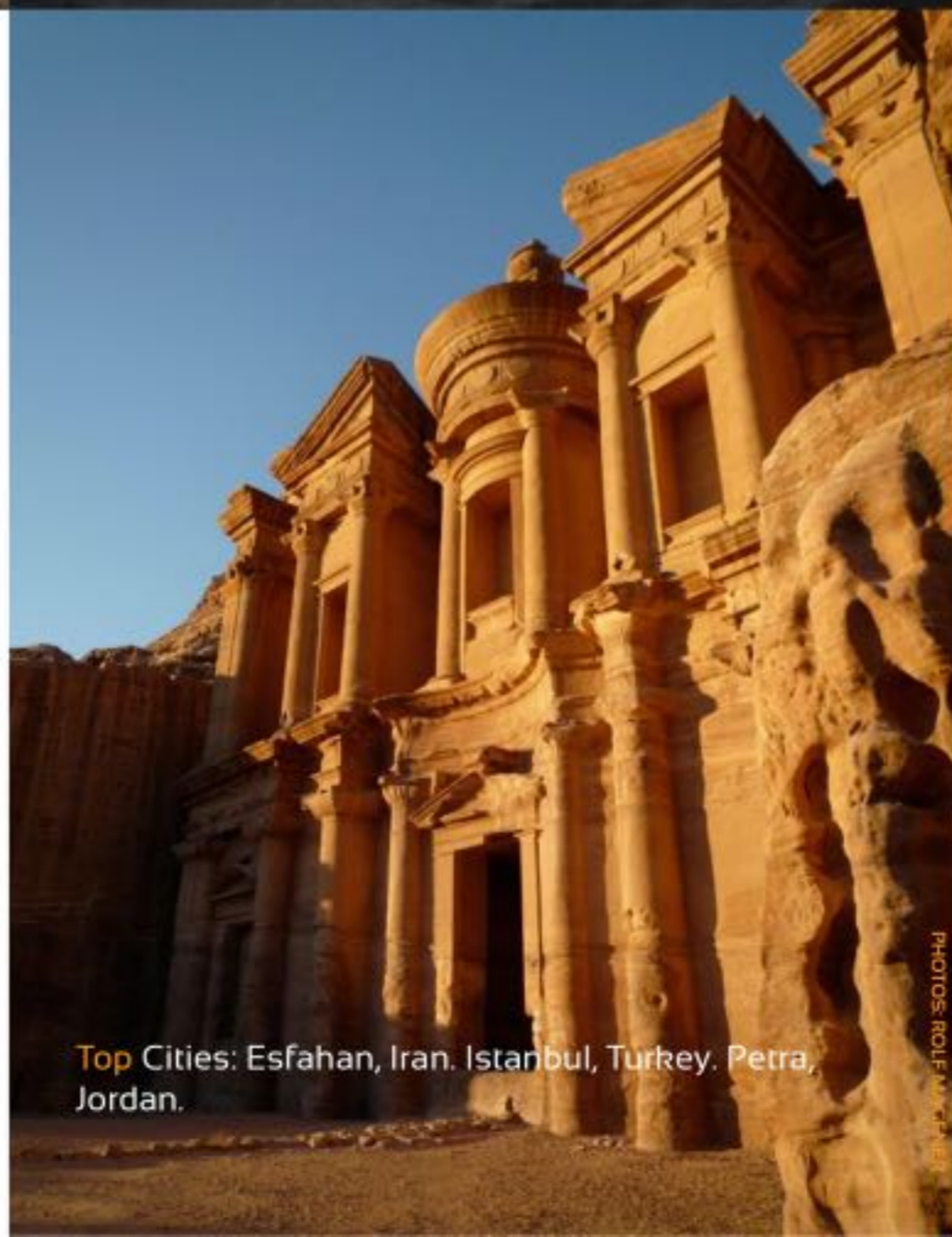
With its strategic location on the Bosphorus peninsula between the Balkans and Anatolia, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, Istanbul has been associated with major political, religious and artistic events for more than 2,000 years. Its masterpieces include the ancient Hippodrome of Constantine, the 6th-century Hagia Sophia and the 16th-century Süleymaniye Mosque, all now under threat from population pressure, industrial pollution and uncontrolled urbanization.

Best Time to Visit: June - October

**Jordan:** Petra

Inhabited since prehistoric times, this Nabataean caravan-city, situated between the Red Sea and the Dead Sea, was an important crossroads between Arabia, Egypt and Syria-Phoenicia. Petra is half-built, half-carved into the rock, and is surrounded by mountains riddled with passages and gorges. It is one of the world's most famous archaeological sites, where ancient Eastern traditions blend with Hellenistic architecture.

Best Time to Visit: July - October



**Top Cities:** Esfahan, Iran. Istanbul, Turkey. Petra, Jordan.

## TOP TEN/ DESTINATIONS

**Turkey:** Sites of Cappadocia

In a spectacular landscape, entirely sculpted by erosion, Göreme valley and its surroundings contain rock-hewn sanctuaries that provide unique evidence of Byzantine art in the post-Iconoclastic period. Dwellings, troglodyte villages and underground towns – the remains of a traditional human habitat dating back to the 4th century – can also be seen there. Best Time to Visit: December - April

**Turkey:** Nemrut Dağ

The mausoleum of Antiochus I (69–34 B.C.), who reigned over Commagene, a kingdom founded north of Syria and the Euphrates after the breakup of Alexander's empire, is one of the most ambitious constructions of the Hellenistic period. The syncretism of its pantheon, and the lineage of its kings, which can be traced back through two sets of legends, Greek and Persian, is evidence of the dual origin of this kingdom's culture.

Best Time to Visit: May - November

**Armenia:** Zvartnots Cathedral

The Zvartnots Cathedral was built at a time when much of Armenia was under Byzantine control or influence and during the early invasions of Armenia by the Muslim Arabs.

Best Time to Visit: July - October



Top 10: Goerome, Turkey. Gaziantep, Turkey. Nemut Dag, Turkey. Armenia: Zvartnots Cathedral

## TOP TEN / DESTINATIONS

**Iran:** Persopolis

Also known as Pasargadae, was the capital of the first great multicultural empire in Western Asia. Spanning the Eastern Mediterranean and Egypt to the Hindus River, it is considered to be the first empire that respected the cultural diversity of its different peoples. This was reflected in Achaemenid architecture, a synthetic representation of different cultures.

Best Time to Visit: May - August

**Syria:** Palmyra

An oasis in the Syrian desert, north-east of Damascus, Palmyra contains the monumental ruins of a great city that was one of the most important cultural centres of the ancient world. From the 1st to the 2nd century, the art and architecture of Palmyra, standing at the crossroads of several civilizations, married Graeco-Roman techniques with local traditions and Persian influences.

Best Time to Visit: June - October

**China:** Xian Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor

No doubt thousands of statues still remain to be unearthed at this archaeological site, which was not discovered until 1974. Qin (d. 210 B.C.), the first unifier of China, is buried, surrounded by the famous terracotta warriors, at the centre of a complex designed to mirror the urban plan of the capital, Xi'anyan. The small figures are all different; with their horses, chariots and weapons, they are masterpieces of realism and also of great historical interest.

Best Time to Visit: July - October



Top 10 Culture: Frescoes Persopolis, Ruins at sunset  
Palmyra, Terracotta Warriors at Xian...

DESTINATION/

# SILK ROAD MEMORIES

Memories: the Northern Silk Road in the 21st Century

By: **STEPHEN BODIO**



On the Silk Road today, ancient things mingle with modern ones; visibly, where a 600 mile mud and rut piece of the "road" follows a path through the center of Mongolia that dates to the Neolithic, under cliffs that hold Dinosaur eggs and

## DESTINATION/



Silk Road Transport: "Roads", Bactrian Camels of the Gobi.

the "Ice Queen" in Xinjiang, proto-Celtic red-haired Asian...

Those rock paintings show the earliest association of hunter, horse, dogs and trained eagle hunting, many times. And horses with horned headdresses. And shamanic spirals, sun-headed celestial creatures, and dancing, and fucking.

"In ancient days, we had woman kings!" said my young guide, indignant about some visiting Arab's demand that the locals veil women. Libby's term "Terrorist Hospitality", embodied in a retort to a worried host in Kazakhstan; "Don't worry-- don't you know? These are Steve and Libby-- you know, the ones who ate two sheep for lunch in Olgii five years ago!" We had, as close as one can eat two sheep, five years before and 600 miles to the east, with no connecting paved roads and IN ANOTHER COUNTRY. Central Asia is an enormous gossip small town, just like my home in rural New Mexico, and talk and story are currencies of the road. Another host, this one in Mongolia's western Moslem state of Olgii, after he served vodka without the customary "Bismillah": "Perhaps we should not ask Allah to bless our vodka?" Guide Canat: "I love Allah; I do not love Mullahs. We sent them back to Ah-rahbiaah!" Same, when asked whether the young native imam would approve of our going to a female Tuvan shaman "Not to worry; they drink together at the Red Door Bar." Another host, a few years later, bringing vodka: "Bismillah!"

Suleiman, old eagler: "I hate vegetables! They taste like dirt!" (He was the one who doubted blessing the vodka he served). Climber- photographer Oleg Belyalov "Almaty is only city where you can take public transportation to snow leopards."

Snow leopards may be more common here than elsewhere, but back in the early Twentieth century they were not ecological icons. In my first visit to UB in the winter of '97, when the city was a freezing black hole lit only by headlights despite the Aladdin's caves of sumptuous Asian households and new restaurants hidden inside Soviet era concrete shells; it was an unsophisticated town for a few years, though that didn't last. Lenin's giant bronze head still hung over the dining room of the Turkish restaurant because it was too big to move, and stores made from shipping containers lined the streets in front of established buildings. There were condoms in the heaped snowdrifts after 50 below nights, and Bactrian camels grazed in dumpsters. One idle day, I decided to visit the palace of the Bogd Khan, the last lama- king of Mongolia, who died in 1926, though it was not "open". I took a bottle of cheap American vodka as a possible door- opener, having found that Smirnoff, which in Mongolia cost more than Stolichnaya, was desirable as "exotic" and prized above rationality.

It worked. The vaguely Tibetan or south Chinese wooden palace, a marvel of hand-painted wood and carved design, was closed and boarded, dark and lightless. Five-fingered Imperial dragons (aristocrats only have four fingers), with newly gilded scales, barred entrance at every door. But a caretaker who seemed to want its

## DESTINATION /

American bottle almost more than its contents, took my gift and showed me what was only rumored to exist: the last Khan's ger, a nearly unbelievable embodiment of decadent luxury, lined inside and out with the pelts of an alleged 400 snow leopards, in a hall kept so dark he had to use a flashlight for me to find it. The Bogd Khan associated with foreign devils like the mad Balkan Baron von Ungern Sternberg; Buddhist un-holy man or not, he was not a nice man.

You will not likely see it; shortly after my glimpse, it was returned to its long exile, hidden away as an embarrassment. You WILL see Silk Road constants not worth mentioning in guide books: outdoor pool tables at every outdoor market; Russian motorcycles with sidecars, moving herds of sheep to winter pasture, with camels carrying ger poles; horse sausage (formed around 18 inches of curved rib bone in Kazakh country); whole frozen sheep folded in its innards, and turned into a neat package that looks vaguely like a frozen supermarket chicken, often carried on short-distance planes, at least in winter. Huge solid bricks of green tea and black, to make "milk tea", like a soup with salty butter and milk, to soak your mutton dumpling or tooth-breaking hard curd that rather resembles sour Parmesan. Fifteen years ago at least, every outdoor market had stacks of Lenin's collected works, to use as toilet paper.

Scads of new but battered expensive German cars thrive along both north and south routes. The young urbane men who tend to own these cars drive like madmen, like Italians or Russians, racing around roundabouts in cities, hand on the horn to warn everything to get out of the way, pulling into the left lane in a game of chicken, facing down camel and bus alike. On the other hand you will see middle aged housewives in the foothills of the Tian Shan filling the trunk of a BMW with chunks of firewood brought down from the hills by seasonal streams, or huge plastic sacks full of dried dung, for firewood to burn in city apartments. The well-paid young men who lust after such cars can nurse them along but have no backup or spare parts; to go into the country with one is an adventurous process, especially after a pre-dawn start with the "needs water" light on. They have been driven there from Germany by hired drivers, and sold for a bit above gasoline expenses. I doubt their original owners had sold them.

These same young men often wear Japanese T Shirts, in incomprehensible "English"—for example, "FCUK mean BE HAPPY!!" In Kazakhstan these kids were often born in Kazakh Mongolia, then bounced between the countries of the old northern Silk Road—Mongolia, Kazakh and Kyrgyz and Uzbek "Russian Turkestan"; or Xinjiang, "Chinese Turkestan", trading and learning languages ("I got good English- I even know Hip Hop and Basketball!" bragged a young guide I know, a Karate pro who has been a mountain guide in Kazakhstan, a student in Canada, and is now teaching Karate in Indonesia. They are the new Silk Road traders, heirs to travelers on one of our most ancient roads.

I look around me now, and see objects that have come to my high desert home down that road. They would have

been recognized in Marco Polo's time: textiles, a kilim from the western end; silk dresses and woolen herder's jackets for Libby from our Mercedes-driving friend; an Uzbek hand-stitched, beaded gun slip that fits an English Enfield rifle from the days of Empire; a used hood for the head of a wolf-hunting eagle from Olgii; the last ornate traditional falcon hood made by Xinjiang's oldest hoodmaker; pigeon whistles from Beijing's hutongs; skins of ermine and fox-skin hats; even my silken-eared hounds of ancient Silk Road breed, whose oldest images date to 4000 BC on the road. I stir my green tea, hear the two-stringed Kazakh dombra playing to the rhythm of a galloping horse; smell coal smoke and dung smoke, then the smell of shashlik on a charcoal grille. As long as we dream of travel and exotic things, the road will run. 🐾

### STEPHEN BODIO - WRITER



Born in Boston, has published nine books, editor and anthologist of more, as well as a frequent contributor to Atlantic Monthly, Smithsonian, Sports Illustrated, and the LA Times Magazine, and literary quarterlies.



Kashgar, China: Old Town Charm



TRAVEL TIPS /

# CELLPHONEOGRAPHY

A few practical tips to making the best photos with your cell phone.



For over 20 years as a professional photographer, I lugged heavy and expensive equipment with me where ever I would go.

Back in the old days when you shot film you had to wait to see the results till you got back home and you processed the film.

Digital changed everything... you can instantly see the results and do not have to wait till you get home to know if you have the shot or not.

Then came cell phone cameras, and once again everything has changed. While most phone cameras are not perfect they truly can be considered the best cameras, as you always have them with you, and you can instantly share the photos with the rest of the world.

Here are some tips to get the best out of your Smart Phone Camera:

#### Frist and foremost get close

Many cell phone cameras, especially the iPhone, really start to shine when you bring them in close to your subject. The small sensor provides a relatively wide depth of field so you can get entire objects in focus where cameras with bigger sensors and longer lenses would have trouble.

When getting close, you can also usually have more control over the lighting of your subject. Are bright patches in the background of your composition throwing off the camera's meter

## TRAVEL TIPS /

and making your subject dark? Get closer and block it out all together. Small detail shots can be quite effective if done right.



#### Crop, Don't Zoom

Many smartphone cameras offer a digital zoom function, but you're almost always best served by pretending it doesn't exist. Even in the liveview preview, you'll be able to see how noticeably your images degrade the second you start to "zoom." The camera is simply extrapolating what's already there and basically guessing what the image looks like. It gets ugly fast.

When you're cropping, however, you're actually just sampling pixel info that was actually recorded. Many smartphones have 8-megapixels of resolution and sometimes more. That means you can crop substantially and still have plenty of resolution left for display on the web. And the lack of gross upscaling artifacts will help mask the fact that it was taken with a phone.

#### Edit, Don't Filter

If you want your images to be unique, the last thing you should do is paint them with the same filters that literally millions of other people are using. For the record, I'm not anti-Instagram. I think the sharing element is fantastic, but the pre-determined "retro" washes are played out. And that goes for every other app slinging the same stuff.

I suggest getting a full-on image editing app like the excellent SnapSeed, Photoshop Express, or iPhoto. They'll let you make reasonable adjustments, like contrast, sharpness, and color temperature. Stuff you'd actually do with images from your big camera. It's also not crazy to dump your images into Lightroom or another piece of editing software if you don't feel the need to share them right away.



It's with this decision that you can actually begin to choose your own style, or even extend the style you've already developed outside of your smartphone. It's a heck of a lot more effective than picking your favorite Hipstamatic filter and slapping it on every photo.

#### Get a Better Camera App

This one applies more to iPhone users than Android users, but in any case, the goal is more control. There are a couple of standard choices in this category and any of them will treat you better than the stock camera app. I like Camera Awesome (made by SmugMug) because it allows you to shoot in bursts and separates the AF lock from the exposure lock. It's also free. Other apps like Camera+ have similar options for more controlled



shooting.

Whatever you pick, it's worth it to spend a little time really getting used to it. It seems silly to take out your phone and practice taking pictures, but you'll be glad you did it if you manage to catch a great shot while others are still flipping through pages of apps or trying to turn off their stupid flash.

#### Don't Use The Flash

The problem with many smartphone flashes is that they don't actually, well, flash. They're glorified LED flashlights, thrust into a duty they're not fully prepared for. They are bright, but the color temperature can be gross and they miss one of the primary duties of a strobe: freezing the action in the frame.

## TRAVEL TIPS /

The actual "flash" duration is much too long, so you end up with an image that's both blurry and terribly lit. Not to mention how close it is to the lens, which makes those horrible demon eyes almost a given.

So, what do you do in the dark, then? Unfortunately, even with



advances like Nokia's nifty PureView technology, only so far you can push a smartphone sensor in low-light. Often, your best bet is to seek out another light source. It likely won't be perfect or even flattering, but it can be interesting. In a dark bar? Look for a neon sign or a bright juke box. At a concert? Wait until one of the wacky swinging stage lights makes its way over to your area. Photography is about creativity after all.

If it comes right down to it, though, getting a bad flash picture can be better than getting no picture at all if you just want to remember a moment.

### Keep Your Lens Clean

Your pocket is not a clean place, and the grime that lives within, loves to glom onto your smartphone camera lens. The result are hazy, dark images that won't look good no matter how many retro filters you slap on them.

The lenses are now remarkably tough, so giving them a quick wipe with a soft cloth can't hurt (and your T-shirt will do OK in a pinch, but try not to make a habit of it). Once in a while, it's worth the effort to break out the lens cleaning solution and really get the grime off of it. It may not look dirty and you might not even notice it in your photos, but often a deep clean will make a difference.

### Watch The Lens Flare

Adding lens flare is another trend in mobile photography right now that's getting more overdone by the minute.

But, this one can actually work for you if you do it the natural way. The tiny lenses are often more prone to wacky light effects than their full-sized counterparts, so you can really play it up if you want to. A silhouette with a bright, flaring background can actually look very stylish.

If you want to control the flare in your shot, move the sun (or whatever bright light source is causing the refraction-based mayhem) around in the frame. As you get closer to the edge, you'll often see the flare spread out and become more prominent.

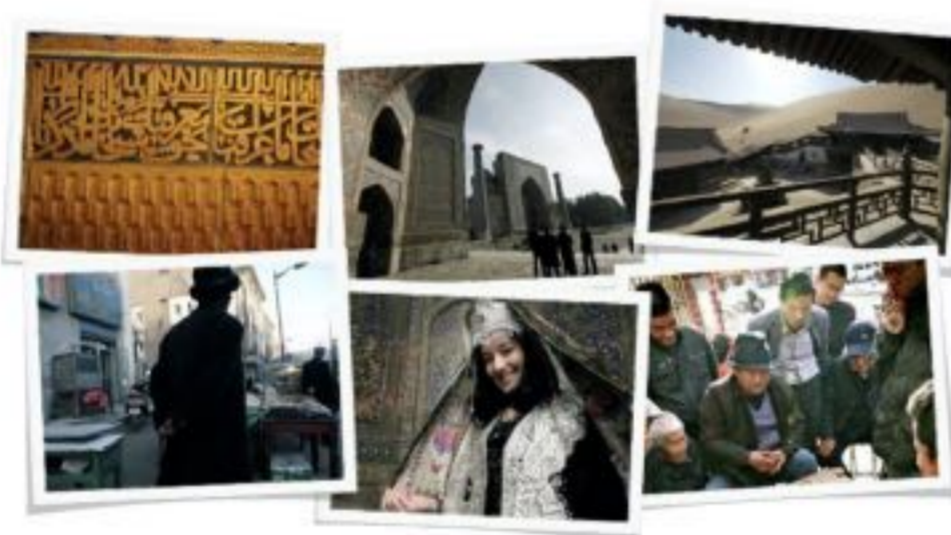
This is especially true with the new iPhone 5, which is also prone to image-ruining purple fringing that should be avoided if possible.



You can also cup your hand around the lens in order to make a DIY lens hood, which will cut down on the amount of flare if the light source happens to be out to the side of the frame. It may even be able to get rid of it all together.

### Make Prints

Many people barely make prints anymore, if at all. Putting photos to paper makes them tangible and takes away some of the assumptions people often make when looking at photos online. It sounds a bit crazy, I know, but I've found it to be true. Give it a try.



Chances are, if the photo is good, you'll get the whole "you took this with your phone?" reaction that you're looking for. 📱



**ROLF MAGENER** - PHOTOGRAPHER - EDITOR IN CHIEF

Born in South Africa, ex- Fashion Photographer has set foot on all 7 continents twice, and used every single conceivable form of transport.

TRAVEL TECH/

# PHOTO APPS

These 10 photo apps should be on your phone /tablet when you are traveling.

There's a large contingent of photo enthusiasts online who will dismiss a photo straight away if they find out it was taken with a smartphone. The rally cry of "get a real camera" can be heard. We think everyone should have a dedicated camera, but a good photo is a good photo, regardless of the gear used to take it. Camera phones have some inherent strengths and weaknesses, and by emphasizing the good and downplaying the bad, you can take silence naysayers before they can get to the enter key. Here are some things to keep in mind when firing up the photo app on your iPhone, Droid, Lumia or whatever phone you have.

## Instagram

Is a simple way to capture and share the world's moments on your iPhone. Customize your photos and videos with one of several gorgeous and custom built filter effects. Transform everyday moments into works of art you'll want to share with friends and family.

Follow what your friends post with the click of a single button. Every time you open up Instagram, you'll see new photos and videos from your closest friends, and creative people from around the world.

Available for iPhone and Android



[Click Here To Download Now!](#)

## SnapChat

Experience a totally new way to share today. Snap a photo or a video, add a caption, and send it to a friend (or maybe a few). They'll view it, laugh, and then the snap disappears from the screen - unless they take a screenshot! If you want to share a Snap with all of your friends, add it to your Snapchat Story, where each Snap lives for 24 hours until it disappears, making room for the new. It's about the moment, a connection between friends in the present, and not just a pretty picture.

Available for iPhone and Android



[Click Here To Download Now!](#)

## Tadaa

Now you can shoot SLR quality photos wherever you are!

Tadaa SLR brings you THE BEST depth-of-field and bokeh on the App Store.

Join the millions of photographers on the tadaa community!

Available for iPhone

[Click Here To Download Now!](#)



## InstaCollage Pro

InstaCollage helps you quickly combine multiple sized photos into one beautifully framed picture & unique collage with caption in seconds, then share your masterpiece to Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Flickr.

Available for iPhone and Android

[Click Here To Download Now!](#)



## TRAVEL TECH/

## PHOTO APPS

**Adobe PhotoShop Touch**

Photo editing was never so fun, fast, and easy. Touch your way to better-looking iPad pictures using slide bar adjustments, or let automatic one-touch fixes and filters do it for you. Print out your best ones at Walgreens, and share the rest with friends and family on Facebook or via text/email.

Available for iPad and Android



[Click Here To Download Now!](#)

**Camera +**

If the iPhone's standard camera is like a digital point-and-shoot, the Camera+ app is like a high-quality SLR lens.

Camera+ helps you use your iPhone to shoot the best photos you possibly can. Packed with several handy features that your standard camera app doesn't include, your pics will improve the instant you start using Camera+.

Available for iPhone and Android



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**InstaQuote**

Create beautiful text pictures for Instagram.

Have you ever wanted to add words to a photo? Or share your thoughts on Instagram? Then you'll LOVE InstaQuote!

Wikihood knows the answers to questions like these.

Available for iPhone



[Click Here To Download Now!](#)

**TimerCam**

TimerCam is the easiest way to take pictures with a self-timer with your iPhone.

Available for iPhone

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**Camera Awesome**

Camera Awesome takes your photos to the next level by shooting faasst and taking sharper, better-exposed shots. Make your memories come alive with stunning professional effects, and I-Tap sharing on the sites you love.

Available for iPhone

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**Private Photo Vault**

Tired of people snooping through photos and videos when you hand them your phone? Private Photo Vault allows you to import photos into the app and hide them behind a PIN or Pattern lock.

Available for iPhone

[Click Here To Download Now!](#)



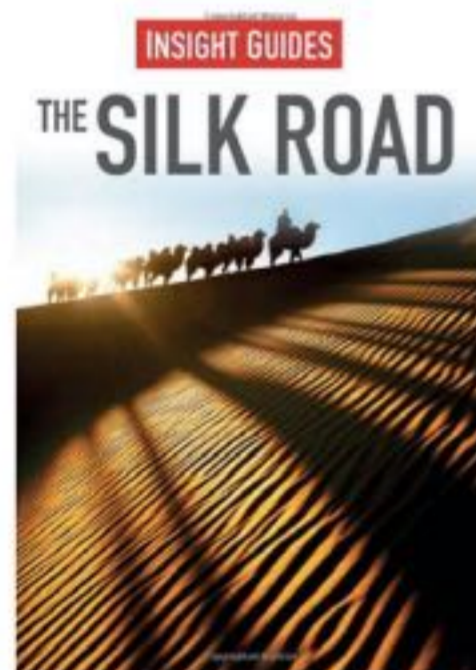
## BOOKS/AUDIO/VIDEO

## KEEP TRAVELING WHILE AT HOME

**PODCAST:** The Overland Podcast is a country / city travel guide podcast that has interviews and travel tips. From Armenia to Zimbabwe we will cover them all. This month the Podcast : The Silk Road Part I China to Uzbekistan



Click on the bar to play the Podcast >>>



**BOOK:** Insight Guide Silk Road is the complete illustrated guide to one of the world's ultimate travel adventures. Passing right through the heart of Asia, the ancient trade route traverses a quarter of the globe from the heart of China to the Mediterranean via a vast, inhospitable expanse of mountains and desert. The guide covers all the sights along the way across 13 countries and 6 time zones, with authoritative chapters on the Silk Road's history and culture to put it all into context.

The magic of the journey is brought to life through evocative photography, and is complemented by lavish Photo Features which offer a unique insight into various aspects of the route: these include details of silk production, the ancient treasures that have been discovered along the route, and the colourful bazaars - which are a reminder of the Silk Road caravanserais of the distant past.

It is available in as Paperback or Kindle download at Amazon.com

**DVD** IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MARCO POLO chronicles the journey of two ordinary guys Belliveau, at the time a wedding photographer, and O'Donnell, an artist and former Marine, as they set out to follow Polo's historic route. Equal parts travelogue, adventure, story, history trek and buddy movie, the 90-minute film weaves footage from the duo's often perilous voyage with Marco Polo's descriptions and experiences. Richly enhanced with Belliveau's award-winning photographs, the program details their highs and lows as they retrace Polo's path, trying to see what he saw and feel what he must have felt.

DVD is available at Amazon.com

