

A Week in Uzbekistan

in the Company of

Shaykh Abdul Raheem Limbada

Ḥafīzahullāh

Ebrahim Noor



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Introduction

Uzbekistan is a country in central Asia which acts as a bridge between the east and west. Over the centuries it has been ruled by many empires. The most recent being the Soviet empire from which it gained independence in 1991. It is a landlocked country, which means it has no sea border, and furthermore, it has borders with 5 more countries which are also landlocked.



Figure 1 - Map of Central Asia

Uzbekistan is the location of the famous ‘Silk Road’, the trade route used for centuries by merchants to transport goods from one side of the largest continent to the other.

The country also has a much greater significance to Muslims and the religion of Islām. It is a land in which Islām was studied and taught by thousands of its greatest Scholars. It is the land where great

Scholars such as Imām Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ and Abū ‘Īsā Muḥammad ibn ‘Īsā al-Tirmidhī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ lived and taught. It is the land in which some of the greatest compilations of Ḥadīth and Fiqh were compiled. It is the land in which Islamic Education flourished for many centuries.

In 2017, Uzbekistan opened its doors to travellers from other parts of the world, hence tourism is still relatively new to the country and many people go there without really knowing what the country is like and what to expect once you arrive. Personally, it was never a place which I expected to visit and when the opportunity arose, I really did not know what to expect at all.

Visiting a former Soviet Republic where Islām had been suppressed for generations, a country where the Masājid and Madāris had been closed for years, where people had to hide their Islām. What would it be like today? What would be the conditions of the many Islamic buildings and remnants of the great Islamic dynasties which once ruled this part of the world. What would the people be like? My expectations were not very high to say the least.

When I heard that my dear respected teacher Shaykh Abdul Raheem Ḥafīzahullāh was organizing another trip to the country, it piqued my interest. Going to a country which I had never been before, which had a rich Islamic history. Furthermore, going with one of our most senior Scholars who has taught me and guided me for many years. And going to a place where the authors of the books which I had

studied, were born, lived and held their great lessons of Ḥadīth. What more could one ask for?

Many people all over the world are familiar with Shaykh Abdul Raheem Ḥafīzahullāh.¹ He is a teacher with an amazing amount of knowledge in multiple fields, whether this is teaching the ‘Ālimiyyah and Iftā courses or delivering lessons in Qur’ān and Ḥadīth. He is the teacher of most graduates from Darul Uloom Bury where he taught from 1985 for over 30 years. Shaykh is also one of the few scholars who has completed lessons in Tafsīr which he started in 1990 and completed in December 2020.

Shaykh Abdul Raheem Ḥafīzahullāh is also the founder of Tafseer Raheemi and has authored many books. For myself, he taught me Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim as well as part of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī. He regularly visits us in Coventry delivering lessons and talks, most recently the Iftitah of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī which took place in September 2023. Shaykh has always been very supportive and is always on hand to advise. I had never travelled with him before, which is something I had always wanted to do, and now the opportunity had arrived.

Alḥamdulillāh, I have visited many parts of the world, but this was never really on my radar, maybe due to its previous inaccessibility or not really knowing about its strong connection to Islām. The trip was going to be taking place in October half term. I had enough annual

¹ [Biography of Shaykh Abdul Raheem Limbada Hafizahullāh](#)

leave left and with some (quite a lot actually!) encouragement from the family, I decided to make some enquiries about the trip. I spoke to Maulānā Asad Salloo Ṣāhib, a dear friend and son in law of Shaykh who was organizing this trip (and done an excellent job of it!) and without much persuasion, booked onto the trip.

After booking, I was pleasantly surprised that other people from Coventry were also coming, including Maulānā Anwar Shaykh, a dear friend who teaches at the Academy and taught me as well, along with his 2 brothers, Maulānā Taahir, a graduate of Darul Uloom Bury and Hafiz Yaseen who is in our Bukhārī class. Brother Liyakat who is also in our Bukhārī class was also coming with his family.

So, a trip with my teacher, a fellow teacher, scholars, students, and friends. Should be memorable to say the least. I initially had no plans to write a travelogue for this journey but seeing the trip was so special, I decided to pen some words which would help me remember the trip and benefit others Inshā Allāh as well.

This travelogue is a personal reflection of the journey. I have inserted links to some talks by Shaykh which took place on this trip so readers can listen and benefit from the advice given at those times. I pray that Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى accepts this small effort and the efforts of Shaykh Abdul Raheem Ḥafīzahullāh who works tirelessly around the clock benefitting the Ummah locally, nationally, and all around the world.

Ebrahim Noor 12th November 2023 (28th Rabī^c al-Thāni 1445AH)

Day 1 – Sunday 29th October – Birmingham to Samarkand

To make it easier for us to travel, we booked our flight from Birmingham Airport to Istanbul for the first leg of the journey. The main group was leaving from Manchester and would meet us in Istanbul. From there we would all travel together onto Samarkand which was our first stop in Uzbekistan.

Ustadji had asked me to get some copies of Mufti Muḥammad ibn Adam’s travelogue to Uzbekistan, ‘A Trip to the Land of Scholars and Saints’. These were to be distributed to the group so they could read about his journey and acquaint themselves with the country and what we were going to see. It was a fascinating read and I benefited greatly from the book myself. I gave a couple of copies to some of the group who were also travelling from Birmingham, so they could also read it on the journey.

Once we arrived at the airport, we checked in quite quickly and made our way through to security. Before long we boarded our flight. Our flight was scheduled for departure at 11am so we had to pray Ṣuḥr and ‘Aṣr on the plane.

We arrived in Istanbul just after 6:00pm local time and made our way to pray Maghrib. Alḥamdulillāh we are very blessed that many airports have Prayer facilities, so no excuses. We had a 4 hour wait in Istanbul and after praying our ‘Ishā Ṣalāh, made our way to the

gate once it was announced. The main group from Manchester had arrived later and met us at the gate.

It was wonderful seeing Ustadji in high spirits greeting the entire group. The group was geographically very diverse. There were people from Birmingham, Bolton, Preston, Batley, and Blackburn as well as a couple of former Darul Uloom students from Scotland. We were also accompanied by Mufti Ramzan and his family from Guyana who had previously come to Uzbekistan with Ustadji.

Whilst waiting at the gate, we started to meet some of the other people who were travelling with us. I gave the rest of the books to Maulānā Asad who distributed them among the group.

We boarded the plane and made our way to Samarkand, our first stop on this memorable journey.



Day 2 – Monday 30th October – Samarkand

We arrived in Samarkand on time and disembarked the aircraft. It was a small airport and spotlessly clean, with shining white tiles. We all made our way through to security. I thought this may get interesting, but Alḥamdulillāh, there were no issues, and we were all through very quickly. For UK residents, if you are staying less than 30 days in Uzbekistan, you can get a free visa on arrival.

Once through security, we collected our baggage and made our way out of the airport with lots of people asking us if we wanted a taxi. As we were in a group, transportation



had been arranged already and soon we were greeted by our guide Behroz who would be with us all the way throughout the journey. His English was excellent, and you could clearly see the mutual affection between him and Ustadji. On Ustadji's previous trip, he had been their guide and they had really connected. Behroz was accompanied by Shahram who had recently graduated in linguistics and was training to also become a guide.

It was around 5:30am and sunrise was not until after 7:00am. As the hotel was close by, it was decided we would read Fajr at the hotel. We loaded the luggage onto the coach and made our way to our hotel. Each time we would board the coach in the morning, Ustādji would recite the supplications for travel. This would then be followed by an explanation of the daily itinerary by Behruz.

The hotel was 10 miles away from the airport, around a 30-minute drive. We arrived at the Grand Hotel Sogdiana, and it was still very early morning so very quiet. We were allocated our rooms, so quickly freshened up and made our way downstairs.



The hotel had a dedicated room for Ṣalāh on the ground floor, which was very convenient. We got together and read our Fajr Ṣalāh. Ustādji allocated Imāmat responsibility to Mufti Ramzan from Guyana.

After Ṣalāh, Ustadji held our daily dhikr majlis. Even though we were travelling, every morning we would have a dhikr majlis. After completing our dhikr, Ustādji would conclude with a beautiful supplication remembering everyone, especially our brothers and sisters in Palestine. Everyone in the group was very sensitive due to

the ongoing situation in the blessed land therefore the emotional quotient was heightened, especially during Du‘ā.

After dhikr majlis, we went to have breakfast. There was a good selection of hot and cold food with lots of sweet cakes and local fruit. It had been a long day, and we all went to rest until midday.

After a much-needed break, we got back on the coach and made our way to a restaurant for lunch. Each day we would stop at different restaurants for both lunch and dinner. There were a couple of occasions where it got late, so food was brought back to the hotel.

Whilst going to the hotel, we got our first glimpse of Uzbekistan in the daytime. My first impression of Uzbekistan was that it was very clean with a good system of roads. All the cars seemed to be Chevrolets and people just went about their business. We arrived at the restaurant, and it was very busy and upmarket.

The food in Uzbekistan is very different to the South Asian palette. It is heavily influenced by Russian and Persian food, so lots of soups and kebabs! The meal always starts off with some local bread called ‘Non’.

The languages spoken in Uzbekistan are influenced by Fārsī, so many words were familiar. Non is a very dense doughnut shaped bread



cooked in a clay oven, often topped with sesame seeds. Caesar salad and yoghurts with herbs and cucumbers were also common for starters. The starters would also be normally followed by green tea before the main course. The meals would normally have 2 courses, the first being a soup followed by a main course. The most common meat eaten was beef. Lamb and chicken were available as well.

After eating a wholesome meal, we made our way to our first destination for the day which was the Imām Bukhārī رحمة الله Mausoleum. It was located approximately 12 miles north of Samarkand.



Figure 2 - Samarkand to Khartang

The journey was on very good roads, and we could see fields in all directions. Farming is one of the major industries in Uzbekistan and the most common animal in the fields were cows.

Name	Imām Bukhārī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ Mausoleum
Location	Khartang – present day Xo‘ja Ismoil
Historical Significance	Burial place of Imām Bukhārī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ
GPS Location	39.81568951464579, 66.94407055668555



We arrived at the Mausoleum and could see there was extensive work being done. A new Masjid was being built as well as a new building where the old Mausoleum had been.

Imām Bukhārī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ needs no introduction. He is the author of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, the most authentic book of Aḥādīth. He was born in Bukhārā but had passed away in Khartang. During this trip we would learn so much more about the life of Imām Bukhārī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ.

Due to the building work, access was very restricted. Furthermore, there were exams taking place for local Imāms, so the library area was also restricted. There are extensive grounds so we made our way as close as we could to the actual tomb of Imām Bukhārī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ.



Figure 3 - New Masjid at Imām Bukhārī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ complex

There was a large fence encircling the building area, so we were still quite far away from the actual tomb. We were so close, yet still so far. It would have been amazing to be able to stand next to the actual grave of Imām Bukhārī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ and pay our respects to the Amīr al-Mu'minīn of Ḥadīth, however we were very blessed to be able to come this close.

The entire group sat down on the newly trimmed lawn and Ustādji delivered an enlightening talk on Imām Bukhārī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ.

There was a total of 18 male and female scholars in the group as well as many Ḥuffāẓ Kirām and students in the final years of their ‘Ālim class. Ustādji then delivered a lesson on the Thulūthiāt of Imām Bukhārī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ. These are those narrations which have only 3 narrators between Imām Bukhārī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ and Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. Each of the ‘Ulamā recited one Ḥadīth and Ustādji provided commentary and explanation after each recital. To be part of a Ḥadīth lesson in this blessed place was very special.



Figure 4 - The tomb of Imām Bukhārī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ

After the lesson, we were now able to visit the library. It contained some interesting exhibits, including the one shown below which shows the journeys undertaken by Imām Bukhārī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ to collate Aḥādīth. This made us appreciate even more the momentous effort undertaken by the great Scholar.



Figure 5 - Exhibit showing journeys of Imām Bukhārī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ.

There were also many old manuscripts and copies of the Qur'ān. Beautiful manuscripts of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī were also on display. The group took their time trying to make out the text in the various books, appreciating the level of effort it must have taken to write all of these by hand. It was now quite late, and we still had one more place to visit, so it was time to leave this amazing place. I made the intention to Inshā Allāh come back and visit this place once again, once the renovation work is completed and I am sure many of the others had the same thought in their mind as well.



Figure 6 -Old manuscript of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī from 17th century

In Uzbekistan, the Imāms must undertake exams after completing their courses of study, and this is what was happening that day. We met many visitors who were very inquisitive about where we had come from and very welcoming. They would place their hands on their chest and give Salām, many times making way for our group and watching us all walk by. I think groups such as this are still few and far between so could be a strange sight for the locals!

We got back onto the coach and made our way to the Masjid close by to read ‘Aṣr Ṣalāh. The buildings in this part of Uzbekistan were mostly single story with metal roofs. The Masjid was also the same. It was very large, and we were welcomed inside. After completing our Ṣalāh, we made our way onto the coach to proceed to our next destination.

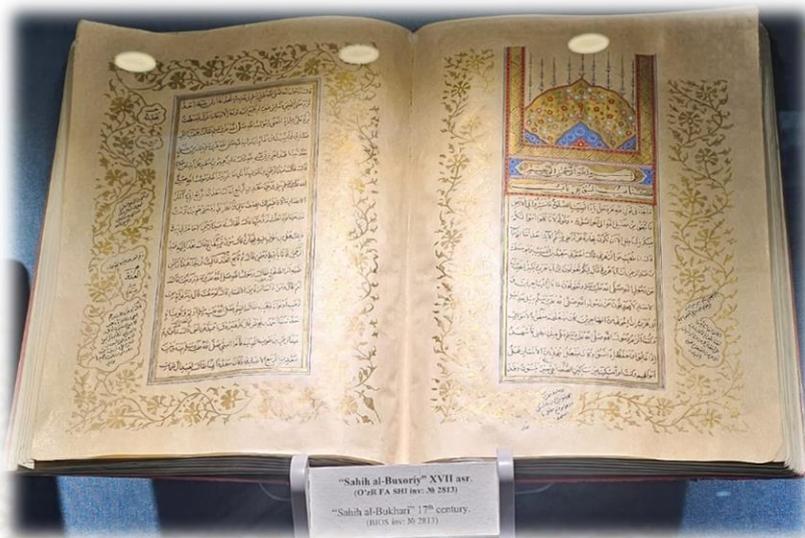


Figure 7 - Old manuscript of Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī from 17th century

Name	Imām Māturīdī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ Mausoleum
Location	Samarkand
Historical Significance	Burial place of Imām Māturīdī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ
GPS Location	39.654752627196814, 66.98631638177623



During the journey to the Mausoleum of Imām Māturīdī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ, Ustadji provided us with his biography. This was a common practice during this trip, where before reaching any place, important information would be given on the coach and additional information would be given once we arrived at the destination.

Maghrib time had arrived, and the coach was unable to park close to the Mausoleum, so we got off the coach to walk to it. The walk was quite steep in parts through the narrow streets of Samarkand with little or no lighting. It took us a while to get to the Mausoleum and when we arrived the gates were locked. However, a local Shaykh came and opened the gates and let us inside.

We entered through the pristine grounds and could see the Mausoleum lit up beautifully in front of us. We ascended the few steps and entered inside. In the middle was a tomb marking the location where Imām Māturīdī was buried.



Figure 8 - Grave of Imām Māturīdī رحمته الله

The actual name of Imām Māturīdī رحمته الله was Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd al-Ḥanafī al-Māturīdī al-

Samarqandī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ. He was a great scholar of the Ḥanafī school of thought and founder of the Māturīdī school of theology. Along with Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ, who followed the Shafī‘ school of thought, they are considered the two foremost scholars in Sunni Islām regarding Theology. Followers of both Imāms are known as Ashā’irah.

It had taken us a while to arrive so we first prayed Maghrib Ṣalāh. After Ṣalāh, Ustadji delivered a very enlightening talk about Imām Māturīdī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ and Islamic theology. How Imām Māturīdī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ and Imām Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ were instrumental in refuting the opinions of deviant sects which had emerged during that time like the Khawārij and Mu‘tazilah

Surrounding the grave of Imām Māturīdī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ were large black stones with Arabic inscriptions on them.



Figure 9 - Stones around the grave of Imām Māturīdī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ

Behroz informed us that these stones contained the names of other people who were also buried in the graveyard. In the 20th century when the Soviets were in power, the land had been taken away and given to local Jews. After independence, more than 35 stones were found during an excavation. An interesting fact was only people whose name was Muḥammad were allowed to be buried in this cemetery, so the names of the deceased were on these stones.

We left the Mausoleum and said our goodbyes to the Shaykh who had kindly opened the Mausoleum for us outside of opening hours. This would be a common theme during our visit where access would be granted to our group to the inner chambers of the Mausoleums and many requests were made for Ustadji to supplicate after Ṣalāh as well as individual supplications.

After another shorter walk, we boarded the coach once more to head off to another restaurant for dinner. The trip had been meticulously planned and each day we would visit different restaurants for both lunch and dinner, which were large enough to accommodate the group. As the group also had sisters, they would be seated in separate areas from the men. We finished the day after a hearty meal of soup and Shashlik Kebabs and then returned to the hotel to read out ‘Ishā Ṣalāh and rest after a long day.



Day 3 – Tuesday 31st October – Samarkand

It was now our second day in Samarkand. We got up, read Fajr Ṣalāh and once again Ustadji held a dhikr majlis in the prayer room at the hotel. Breakfast was ready by the time we had finished so many people headed straight to the restaurant for some much-needed fuel for the day.

The daily routine would be for the coach to arrive around 9:00am each morning so the group could set off. We had come downstairs early that day so me and Maulānā Anwar decided to venture out and see what the local area was like. The hotel was nestled in a residential area and there was a school nearby. We could see the children being taken to school by their parents as we walked towards the main road.



We walked along and stuck to the main roads in case we got lost. The area was full of apartments which were around 8 stories high. There were intricate mosaic designs on the sides of the blocks. The streets were lined with many shops, and we found the pavements were sheltered by trees. We were greeted by Salām along the way and lots

of inquisitive looks. We made our way back to the hotel and boarded the coach.

The first stop of the day was to the bank as many people wanted to exchange currency. The currency in Uzbekistan is called Som, and at the time the exchange rate was 14,000 Som to a pound. So, if you ever want to become a millionaire, this is the place to visit! The bank would not accept pounds so those people who had dollars and euros were able to exchange their currency. Behroz then made arrangements for those people who had pounds to get their currency exchanged as well.

The weather the previous day had been sunny and warm. The climate in Uzbekistan was very pleasant even for this time of the year. Today was slightly colder and wet, but still much warmer than the temperature in the UK this time of the year.

As we drove around Samarkand, we noticed it was a large city. It has a population of over 500,000 covering an area over 100km in total. We were dropped off next to the University Boulevard. A tree lined street, with a monument of Amir Temur on one side. When we got to the end of the road, we headed towards the Amir Temur Mausoleum also known as the Guri Amir Mausoleum.

Name	Guri Amir Temur Mausoleum
Location	Samarkand
Historical Significance	Grave of Timur, founder of the Timurid Dynasty
GPS Location	39.648560897628975, 66.9692512044577



Amir Temur was the first ruler of the Timurid dynasty whose empire spanned across Afghanistan, Iran, and Central Asia. He was probably the most powerful Muslim ruler of his time.

Throughout our trip, Behroz would inform us of the significance of the place and the relevant people. This Mausoleum also housed the

graves of members of Amir Temurs family including his sons and grandsons.



Figure 10 - Entrance to the Mausoleum of Amir Temur

Entrance to many of the monuments in Uzbekistan is not free. This was also the case with this Mausoleum. All entrance fees were also included within the trip so Behroz would ensure that all formalities were taken care of each time we arrived.

As we approached the Mausoleum, we could see the large arched doorway of the large domed building. There were also two towers on

either side. All, if not the vast majority of Mausoleums in Uzbekistan had a similar design as well as many of the ancient Masājīd.

We could also see what appeared to be the foundations of buildings which were no longer standing. These buildings were former Madrassas but had been destroyed.



Figure 11 - Remains of Madrassa buildings

We entered the chamber and were astonished with the interior, which was golden in colour. The intricate designs and level of detail were amazing.

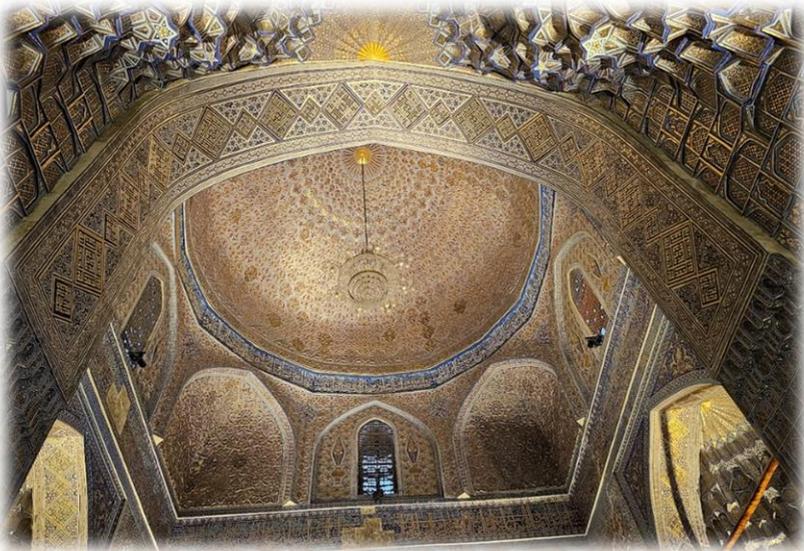


Figure 12 - Interior of Amir Temur Mausoleum

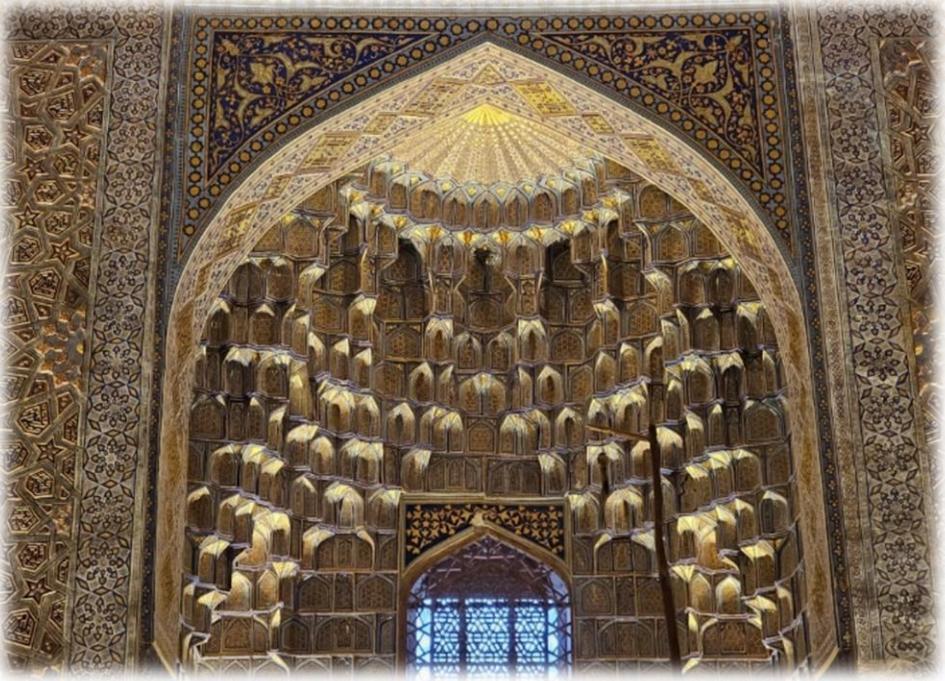
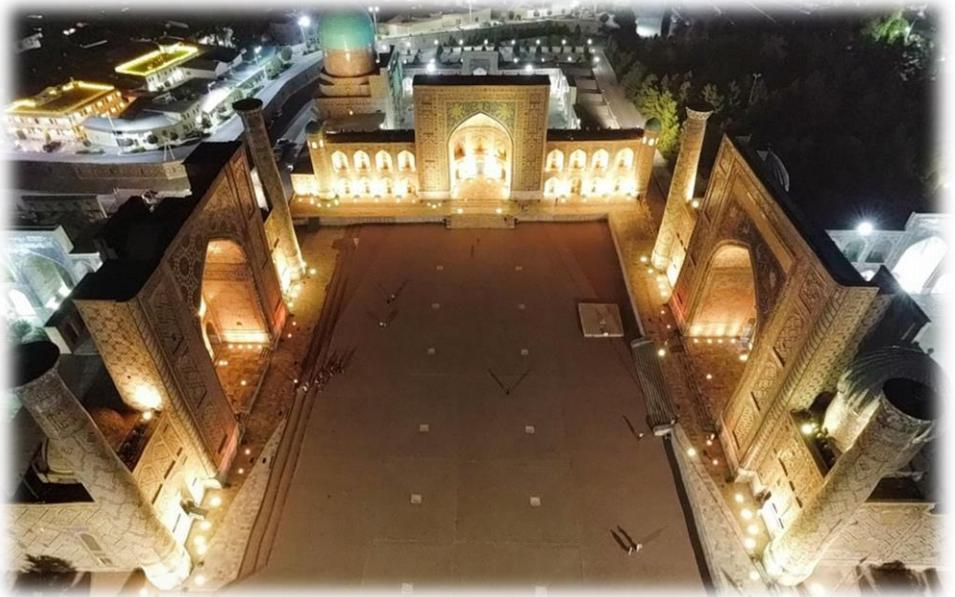


Figure 13 - Niches inside Mausoleum

There were beautiful niches on the four sides of the chamber with distinctive honeycomb designs. We paid our respects and completed our visit inside. We then made our way outside again to explore the other parts of the complex.

After spending a while in the grounds, we made our way back to the coach to move onto our next destination which was Registan Square.

Name	Registan Square
Location	Samarkand
Historical Significance	Location of 3 former Madrassas: Sherdor Madrassa Ulugh Begh Madrassa Tilla-Kari Madrassa
GPS Location	39.65477024991566, 66.97571293849387



We arrived at Registan Square which had three imposing structures on three sides. On the left-hand side was the Ulugh Begh Madrassa originally built in the 15th century. Directly opposite was the Sherdor Madrassa which was built in the 17th century. Nestled in between was

the Till-Kari Madrassa built 10 years after the Sherdor Madrassa. This also served as a Masjid during its time.

We were taken back by the sheer size of the square and the majestic buildings on all sides. Each of the buildings were very similar in design. Each had a grand arched doorway. The name given to the entrances to the buildings is 'Pishtaq'. They are normally higher than the rest of the buildings.



Figure 14 - Entrance to Ulugh Beg

Once we went through the door, we entered a large courtyard which had rooms on all sides over 2 floors. These were once Madrassa classrooms. Unfortunately, they are now all small shops and cafes. There was one room which had been recreated to show how the student accommodation looked like from the 19th century.



Figure 16 - Inner Courtyards

As we explored the vast complex, we found a small museum which had information about Ulugh Beg who was a mathematician as well as an astronomer. There were also some manuscripts which we found to be copies of the famous Ḥanafī Fiqh book, Hidāyah.



Figure 15 - Hidāyah

We then made our way to the Tilla-Kari Madrassa which had a Masjid inside. Again, the stunning golden and azure design was a sight worth beholding.



Figure 17 - Prayer niche in Tilla Kari

We continued making our way around and could see above the entrance arch of the Sherdor Madrassa, were two pictures of lions, hence the name ‘Sherdor’. This was a strange site considering it was a Madressa.

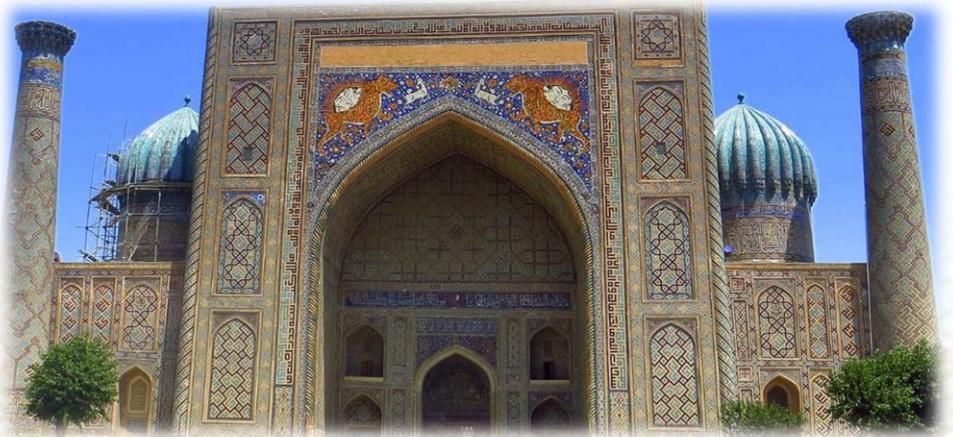


Figure 18 - Entrance to Sherdor Madrassa

As we were making our way out of the square, we passed by a small mausoleum on the right-hand side of the Sherdor Madrassa. Inside was buried Muḥammad ibn Ja‘far Ṣādiq رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ، who was one of the descendants of Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ through Ḥusayn رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ. We paid our respects and then made our way back to the coach.



Figure 19 - The grave of Muḥammad ibn Ja‘far Ṣādiq رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ،

It was now lunch time, so we made our way to another restaurant. A very common dish in Uzbekistan is ‘Plov’, which is rice mixed with sweet carrots and other vegetables, topped with meat. It also has a lot of oil. After another wholesome meal it was now time to move onto the Shahi Zinda Complex.

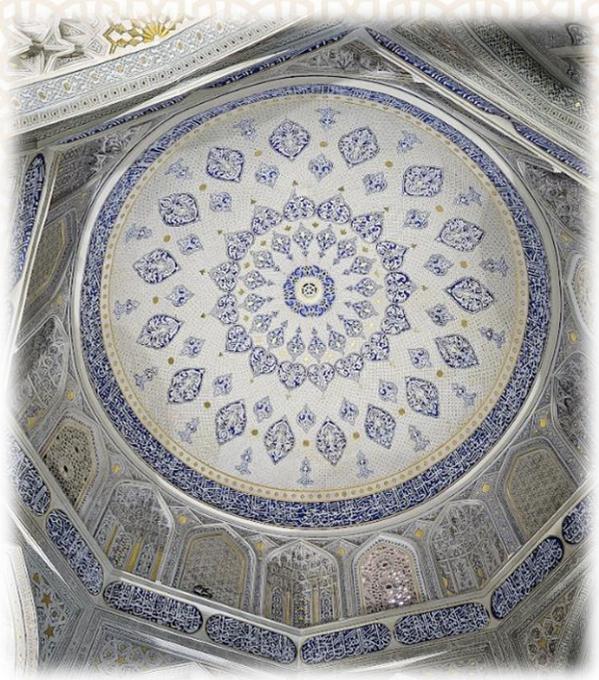


Name	Shahi Zinda Complex
Location	Samarkand
Historical Significance	Various graves including the cousin of Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, Qutham ibn ‘Abbās رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ.
GPS Location	39.662596395080826, 66.98794408240897



The Shahi Zinda complex comprises of many graves and a Masjid. As we passed through the entrance, we could see a series of steep steps going up. Before we entered one of the many structures, there was a viewing platform from which we could see the beautiful city of Samarkand.

The path was lined by many smaller tombs. Each with ornate designs and beautiful domes, with Arabic calligraphy. There was also a Masjid which we would visit later to perform our ‘Aṣr Ṣalāh.



We made our way up and up until we reached the resting place of Qutham ibn ‘Abbās رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, the cousin of Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. The tomb was set in another room behind a barrier so was not visible, however there was an adjoining room where everyone could sit. As we made our way inside, there were a few people already there. One thing we noticed throughout the trip was that the local people had a lot of respect. They would sit quietly without making any noise, head lowered and paying their respects in their own way. We also sat down on one of the benches and spent some time reciting the Qur’ān and sending Esāl al-thawāb to the cousin of Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.

The name of the complex has an interesting story behind it. Shahi Zinda means ‘living king’. Behroz explained there were a couple of

legends behind this name. Qutham ibn ‘Abbās رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ had been sent to this area to propagate Islām. As he was praying Ṣalāh, he was beheaded, but he did not die. He took his head and went into a well. There are also other versions of this legend, which also have no basis.

After leaving the tomb of Qutham ibn ‘Abbās رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, we made our way back down to the Masjid and read ‘Aṣr Ṣalāh. After Ṣalāh we were approached by a man with his young son and asked if we could do du‘ā for his son as he wanted him to study Islām. We spent some time together and supplicated for him and everyone else. We could see the desire and zeal for knowledge among many locals during this trip. We then made our way out of the complex and headed to the Bibi Khanum Masjid.



Figure 20 - View of Bibi Khanum Masjid from Shahi Zinda

Name	Bibi Khanum Masjid
Location	Samarkand
Historical Significance	Masjid named after Bibi Khanum, wife of Amir Temur
GPS Location	39.660885516621846, 66.98015750188574



We walked to the Masjid through a lawned path then over a bridge and up a slight hill. It was about a 15-minute walk from the Shahi Zinda Complex. We could see the magnificent Masjid as we approached it from the road. The Masjid is named after Bibi Khanum who was the wife of Amir Temur. The Masjid was once one of the largest and most magnificent in the world.



Figure 21 - The path from Shahi Zinda to Bibi Khanum Masjid

We walked in through the stunning 35-metre-high archway into a large courtyard. Right in the middle was a large imposing Qur'an stand made from marble.



Figure 22 - Qur'an stand

We walked around the large, beautiful complex and made our way to the front where the original Masjid was located. The large arch had beautiful calligraphy at the top with a smaller window.



Figure 23 - Calligraphy on arch

The doorway to the Masjid was closed off by an ornate wooden barrier. The doorway arch itself must have been close to 10 metres in height. We were able to look through the doorway and could see the ancient Masjid needed major renovation. The years of neglect and being closed had taken its toll on the place of worship.





Figure 24 - The inside of Bibi Khanum Masjid

We explored more of the sprawling courtyard and there were another 2 dome structures on either side. The Masjid itself had been severely damaged in an earthquake in 1897 and part of it restored. We left the Masjid and made our way to the market next door.



Figure 25 - Bibi Khanum Courtyard

Name	Siyob Bazar
Location	Samarkand
Historical Significance	Farmers Market
GPS Location	39.66203972537362, 66.97982363552624



There was a large market just to the left of the exit of the Masjid, it was called Siyob Bazar. Inside there were all kinds of foods. The group had some spare time so went around purchasing mainly dried fruits and nuts to take back home for our families. The dried fruit was very fresh, and the prices were cheap compared to the UK.



Figure 26 - Dried fruits & nuts

Name	Khidhr Masjid
Location	Samarkand
Historical Significance	First Masjid in Samarkand
GPS Location	39.66345803901972, 66.98328683478262



We walked down the hill back towards Shahi Zinda and to the left-hand side, located high up was the Hazrat Khidhr Masjid. It is said that this Masjid was built on the site of a Zoroastrian temple. Zoroastrians were fire worshippers, and you could still see many signs and symbols of this ancient religion throughout the country.

Many of the places we visited had local legends associated with them including this one. After Qutaybah ibn Muslim had captured the city

in 712, the Arabs tried to flood the city by blocking a canal with a dam. A huge bird came down from the sky and broke the dam. In memory of this event the Masjid was built. In the year 1220, it was destroyed during the Mongolian invasion in 1220.

We made our way up the stairs to the beautiful Masjid which had a veranda held up with tall wooden pillars. It was time for Maghrib Ṣalāh and we went inside. To our surprise, the Imām was the same person who had opened up Imām Māturīdīs Mausoleum the day before. He welcomed us inside and we made prayed Ṣalāh behind the Imām. After Ṣalāh, the Imām requested that Ustadji also do dua.

The inside of the Masjid was a lovely white with a beautifully decorated dome. We sat outside in the veranda for a short while and enjoyed the beautiful nighttime views of Samarkand, looking towards the Bibi Khanum Masjid to the south. Ustadji provided some lovely advice whilst we were here.²



Figure 27 - Dome inside Khidr Masjid

² [Majlis at Masjid Khidhr in Samarkand](#)



Figure 28 - Samarkand skyline with Bibi Khanum Masjid

It had got quite late, and the group had been travelling for a while. It was decided, rather than go to a restaurant, that food be brought back to the hotel. We got back on the coach and made our way back to the hotel where we prayed our ‘Ishā Ṣalāh.

That night we were treated to some nice traditional Indian food. Chicken biryani, chicken curry and dāl with roti.

It was our final night in Samarkand. We had spent two days in the city and visited many places. The sheer size and scale of the Masājīd and monuments had taken our breath away. The restoration projects had taken a lot of time and effort, and we could see the amount of effort it must have taken to build these magnificent structures in the first place. It was a shame to see many of the rooms in the former Madrassas being used as shops and we pray that Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى brings Islām back to this city in the way it was before.

Day 4 – Wednesday 1st November - Samarkand to Bukhārā

The next stop on our journey was the city of Bukhara which lies around 135 miles west of Samarkand. To save time on the journey, Behroz had organised for us to go there by train. The train was not until after 11am, however due to the possibility of road closures we were to leave early.



Figure 29 - Samarkand to Bukhara

The day began as usual with Fajr followed by dhikr majlis. We then went for breakfast and brought our bags down. We were a little early that day so decided to go for another walk around the area. It was a very sunny pleasant day, and we did another loop back to the hotel, with a couple of unintentional detours as we slightly lost our bearings whilst walking past the apartment blocks,

We loaded the luggage onto the coach. The plan was for the coach to meet us in Bukhara with our luggage, so we did not have to bring the

suitcases with us. We could travel light, which would make it a lot easier. We then boarded the coach and made our way to the railway station. The station was set back away from the road behind lawned gardens. We had arrived well in time so made our way into the



Figure 30 - Samarkand Railway Station

terminal. The station was spotless with ample seating and a couple of souvenir and coffee shops. The tickets had been purchased already so Behroz informed of

us our seat numbers. The train arrived and our group was spread over a few carriages. The train looked very similar to the high-speed trains used in some countries with a long nose.

We got onboard and the journey was more like one on a plane than on a train. The train began its journey through the lush countryside. Hot and cold drinks were available and there was also a screen showing the current speed. The train averaged 150km an hour and we arrived in Bukhara in around 2 hours.



Figure 31 - Bukhara Train Station

Name	Faizobod Masjid & Khanqah
Location	Bukhārā
Historical Significance	16 th Century Masjid built by the famous Sufi Mavlono (Maulānā) Poyanda-Muḥammad Ahsi Faizobodī
GPS Location	39.779573959777984, 64.4380164069417



We got off the train and made our way to another coach which would take us first to pray Ṣalāh. We stopped just outside a large Masjid with the now familiar arched doorway design.

This was Faizobod Masjid and Khanaqah. According to sources, this Masjid had 3 floors of rooms where at one time dervishes could stay and take rest.

We performed our Wuḍū in the ‘ToharatKhana’ which was the name given to the toilets\ablution places. These places would be detached from the actual Masājid. In Uzbekistan, to dry yourself after Wuḍū, they have different coloured smaller towels for the hands and face and feet. So, you dry your hands and face with a towel of one colour and your feet with another.

We entered the Masjid, and the interior was a stunning white. We prayed our Ḍuhr Ṣalāh and spent a little time looking around the beautiful Masjid admiring the architecture.

The Masjids in Uzbekistan were very peaceful. There would be pin drop silence in each Masjid we went to. There would be no people on phones, or people having casual conversations. Everyone would be sat respectfully, reading the Qur’ān on large stands, or doing dhikr or in contemplation. I thought this was something we could learn from.



Figure 32 - Interior of Faizobod Masjid



We now made our way to another restaurant to eat some Bukhara Plov. As this was Behroz’s hometown, he was much more comfortable and familiar with the local places.

Once more we boarded the coach, and the next stop was the hotel. As we drove into the old part of Bukhara, we could see many old buildings and Madrassas, all of a similar design. The large arched entrance portals leading into larger rectangular buildings with domes and minarets was a sight to behold.

Our hotel was in a pedestrian only area, so the luggage was taken off the coach and we walked to the hotel. We had to pass through some trading domes which had small stalls full of various goods. From ornaments to clothes, it reminded me a little of the markets in the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul.

The hotel we stayed in was called the Omar Khayyam hotel, named after the street, it was on. We entered and were allocated our rooms. We were lucky enough to have a balcony which opened into an internal space with a seating area on one side. It seemed like a nice place to relax if we had some time.

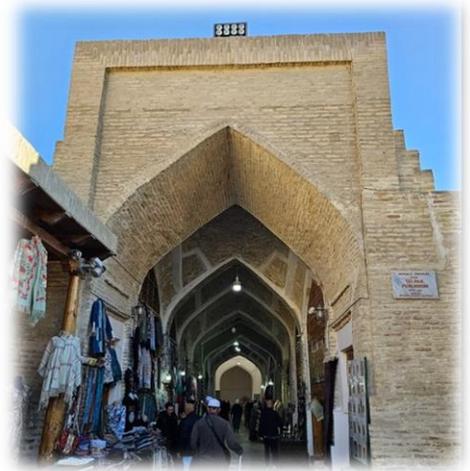


Figure 34 - Trading Domes



Figure 33 - Inner courtyard in Omar Khayyam Hotel

Name	Kalyon Masjid & Minaret
Location	Bukhārā
Historical Significance	48m high minaret built in 12 th century & 16 th Century Masjid
GPS Location	39.775715161278065, 64.41502653262384



The main sights in Bukhara were all within walking distance from the hotel so it was very convenient. We exited the hotel and very soon were in a sprawling open area with 2 large buildings on either side and a large brick-built minaret ahead of us.

Behroz provided us with a history of the area. There was the Kalyon Masjid to the right, the Miri-Arab Madrassa to the left and the Kalyon Minaret to the side of the Masjid. The Minaret had walls 2 metres thick and during the Russian attack, many efforts had been made to destroy it. The bricks had been laid in multiple ways creating a strong ornate structure.

It was time for ‘Aṣr Ṣalāh, so we made our way into the Kalyon Masjid. We went through the entrance down some steps into a beautiful courtyard.



Figure 35 - Courtyard of Kalyon Masjid

There was a fountain close to the Masjid entrance which was probably used for ablution at one time. The Masjid section, which is in currently used, is to the right side of the original Mihrāb. There

were large white pillars every few metres. It was reminiscent of the Marwānī Masjid in Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā’.

We read our Aṣr Ṣalāh and sat for a while in the peaceful setting. We came outside into the courtyard and then climbed the steps back into



Figure 36 - Miri-Arab Madrassah

the grand square. As we passed through the gate the stunning Miri-Arab Madrassa was in front of us. This was one of the only Madrassas we found, which was being used. Unfortunately, entrance is only allowed at specific times with prior permission and due to our limited time in Bukhara, we were unable to visit.

Behroz explained how the Madrassah was built by

Shaikh Abdullah Yamani of Yemen who was known as Miri-Arab, hence the name. Behroz further explained how each year 3,000 students apply to this Madrassah but there are only 60 places. It is currently run by the government. We left the square and started to move through the narrow streets onto our next destination.

Name	Shaykh Zainuddin Masjid
Location	Bukhārā
Historical Significance	Built in the area in which Imām Bukhārī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ used to live
GPS Location	39.77473518538755, 64.41210908067568



We arrived in an area where there was a large pit in the ground next to a small Masjid. The Masjid was held up by tall wooden pillars, like what we had seen before. As we gathered around Behroz there were some local brothers who were also present and very welcoming.

There was a very prominent pit next to the Masjid. A number of reasons were given as to the importance of this location. It could have been the location where Imām Bukhārī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ lived with his mother. Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى knows best as to where he was born and lived however, we were in the vicinity of where Imām Bukhārī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ lived and taught.



Figure 37 - Pit outside Shaykh Zainuddin Masjid

We now made our way inside the 16th century Masjid as it was Maghrib time. The interior was small but absolutely stunning. The Masjid measured around 10 metres in each direction with a high ceiling and beautiful dome. The prayer niche was in the process of being repaired or restored. The design on the dome was very intricate and the Masjid had a very special feeling.

Ustadji requested that Mufti Ramzan lead the Ṣalāh which he did. After finishing our Sunnah, we all sat down in the Masjid and the sisters who had prayed outside were also requested to come in.

We were in a very special place. We could sense the



Figure 38 - Prayer Niche

peace and tranquility inside the Masjid. We were in the same place where the greatest Muḥadith, Imām Bukhārī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ used to live and teach. I could not believe I was here, and I never even imagined I would come to this place. If it was not for our dear Ustadji who had organised this trip, maybe none of us would ever have come to this blessed place.

I had asked Ustadji if we could recite some Ḥadīth when we came to Bukhārā. No place had been fixed for this, but this appeared to be the perfect location for a lesson. Ustadji kindly obliged and delivered an excellent lesson explaining the importance of Ḥadīth and Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī.

For me and I am sure many other people in the group, this was a very special and emotional moment. I was with my teacher who had taught me part of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī in Darul Uloom Bury. I was also with my fellow teacher Maulānā Anwar who teaches at the Academy.

And furthermore, two of our students who are currently in the Bukhārī class were also on this trip, Hafiz Yaseen and Liyakat.

I had requested that I be able to recite the first Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī. When the time came Ustadji asked me to read it. I was overcome with emotion, happiness, thankfulness, thinking how blessed we were to be in this place at that moment in time. I read the Ḥadīth then Ustadji explained it. Maulānā Anwar then recited the final Ḥadīth and I am sure he was having similar emotions at the time. Ustadji then advised us all to regularly read the Tasbīḥ mentioned in the final Ḥadīth regularly.³

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ الْعَظِيمِ

Before the lesson concluded. Ustadji kindly gave Ijāzāh to all the ʿUlamā and ʿĀlimahs in the group. As there were students in the group, both brothers and a sister who were in the final year, were also given Ijāzah. What a blessed place to be granted such a special honour.

After the lesson concluded, Ustadji delivered a beautiful supplication. Some local brothers also sat during the lesson. They sat listening very attentively to Ustadji's words and one of them

³ [Lesson conducted at Shaykh Zainuddin Masjid of first and last Hadīth of Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī](#)

appeared to be the local Imām who wasn’t very well. During the supplication, he asked Ustadji to do du‘ā for the people in Gaza, which he did. This was something Ustadji would do in each du‘ā, whether it was after Dhikr Majlis or in the Masjid. After finishing the supplication, it was now time to leave this place.

Whilst we were still in the Masjid, we also got our Bukhārī class students to recite the first and last Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī. Another very special moment for us all. We wanted to stay longer but we still had places to go. We left and made our way through the streets to another large open pedestrianized area flanked by a large fortress.

Name	Bukhārā Ark Fortress
Location	Bukhārā
Historical Significance	5 th century fortress
GPS Location	39.77782988766544, 64.41079795275303



The Ark fortress was built in the 5th century and the enclosed area within the walls was nearly 10 acres. The walls of the fortress are up to 20 metres high.

We had arrived quite late, and it appeared to be closing, however Behroz managed to get us inside. The fortress has museums as well as a throne room and coronation room. The only place that was open was the throne room. We went inside and there was an empty throne perched on the far side. For tourists, there was a chance to dress up and sit on the throne if they wished.



Figure 39 - Thone room

We had a look around and then made our way back to the coach to take us to a restaurant for dinner. It was a large Indian restaurant and after reading our ‘Ishā Ṣalāh, we were treated to a meal of chicken and mutton curry, rice, rotis, a sweet dish and nice cup of masala chai to wash it down.

We arrived back at the hotel around 9pm and as we only had one



Figure 40 - Kalyon Minaret

night in Bukhara, a few of us decided to go for a walk. We made our way back to the Kalyon Minaret to admire it at night when it was all lit up. It was a stunning site and to think this was built hundreds of years ago without the aid of modern technology was amazing.

The Kalyon Masjid was closed so we walked around the square. I walked up the stairs of the Miri-Arab Madrassa and noticed the door was locked but slightly ajar. I went up to the door and could hear the distant sound of praying. We were going to leave early the next morning, so I tried my luck and knocked on the

door a few times. There was no answer. I walked back down the steps and suddenly someone appeared on the first-floor balcony. He could speak Arabic so we asked if we could go in. The answer was no but he did say we could come back the following day at 10am but that was too late as we were leaving early. Inshā Allāh will get an opportunity to visit on our next trip.



Figure 41 - The old city of Bukhara

We made our way past the hotel and through the trading domes. In front of us was a large pool called Lab-i Hauz. There were many such pools before in the city, but most had been filled in. This was one of the last remaining pools. On three sides it was surrounded by large Islamic buildings.



Figure 42 - Lab-i Hauz

The largest was the Nodir Devonbegi Madrassa. It appears that it had unfortunately been converted into a theatre. A place where once the

lessons of Qur'ān and Ḥadīth would take was now a place of music and dancing. May Allāh **سُبْحَانَہُ وَتَعَالَى** restore all such places back to how they were during the golden age of Islām.

We walked through some smaller streets past more buildings which were also Madrassas at one time. The beautiful doors and architecture lit up at night-time were lovely to look at. After a 2-mile walk, we went back to the hotel. As there was no prayer room in the hotel, Fajr was to be prayed at the Kalyon Masjid the following morning.



We rested for the night in comfortable beds after a day of much walking.

The following morning, we woke up well in time and decided to make our own way to the Masjid. We went to the main square, but the door was locked. A local brother saw us trying to get in, so he signaled towards us with his hands raised to his ears, asking if we wanted to pray. We went up to him and he led us along the side of the Masjid to a small door on the front side of the Masjid.

We entered through the door and then into the main prayer area. The Imām led Fajr Ṣalāh, and it appeared to be possibly the same person who had spoken to us from the Mir-i Arab Madrassa the night before. The recitation was beautiful and echoed in the pillared

chamber. After Ṣalāh we withdrew to the rear section of the Masjid and Ustadji led us in dhikr majlis. Once we had finished it was time for Ishrāk. Each day after dhikr majlis, Ustadji would also tell us to pray our Ishrāk Ṣalāh as it is very rewarding.

We completed our prayer and made our way back to the hotel past the main square. We went past the minaret and Madrassa one last time and back to the hotel.



Figure 43 - Mir-i Arab Madrassa

After breakfast it was now time to bring our luggage down and walk to the coach. The plan was to spend the morning in Bukhara and then make our way south to Termez, the home of Imām Tirmidhī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ.

Day 5 – Thursday 2nd November - Bukhārā to Termez

Once on the coach we made our way to the northwestern part of Bukhara where we would first visit another Mausoleum then a market where we could do some shopping.

Name	Ismail Samani Mausoleum
Location	Bukhara
Historical Significance	10 th century mausoleum which is the resting place of the Samanid dynasty
GPS Location	39.777185574605824, 64.4006581226743



The coach went past an old amusement park which was still in use but very quiet. We disembarked and made our way to the Ismail Samani Mausoleum. The tomb is supposed to hold 3 graves. One who is Ismail Samani, the founder of the Samanid dynasty who ruled over parts of Afghanistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan.

We paid our respects and walked towards the farmer's market. We went past canals which used to supply water to the city of Bukhara.

The market was bustling with activity with stalls selling



everything from meat to sweets. Behroz led us into the market to a couple of stalls which sold nuts and dried fruits.



After some much-needed retail therapy we made our way back to the coach.

Name	Abu Hafs al-Kabir Mausoleum
Location	Bukhara
Historical Significance	Resting place of Abū Ḥaḥṣ al-Kabīr رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ
GPS Location	39.78635759881397, 64.40965275609369



Our next stop was the Mausoleum of Imām Abū Ḥaḥṣ al-Kabīr رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ who was one of the teachers of Imām Bukhārī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ. He was born in the year 150AH in Bukhara. He went to Baghdad to study and one of his teachers was the great Ḥanafī scholar, Imām Muḥammad al-Shaybānī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ.

We got off the coach and made our way into the extremely large cemetery. There were graves on all sides. The Mausoleum itself was set in a corner and the entrance was closed by a small gate.

As normal, the gate was opened for us, and we entered inside. The sun was shining through the door and there was a very peaceful feeling inside. Other locals had also come to pay their respects, sometimes alone, and sometimes with others.



Figure 44 - Cemetery where Imām Abū Ḥaḥṣ al-Kabīr رَحْمَةُ اللهِ is buried

There were four graves inside. We paid our respects and then made our way outside onto a shaded seating area. Ustadji gave a talk on

Imām Abū Ḥaḥṣ al-Kabīr رَحْمَةُ اللهِ and his significance as a great Ḥanafī scholar and teacher of Imām Bukhārī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ.



Some of the group then went to pay respects to a brother from Preston who had passed away in Bukhara whilst visiting, who was buried in the same cemetery. It was now late morning and we still had one more stop to visit before our long journey to Termez.

Name	Bahauddin Nakshabandi Tarikat Complex
Location	Bukhara
Historical Significance	Resting place of Imām Bahā'uddīn Naqshbandi رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ
GPS Location	39.80119043003859, 64.53720196287068



Our next stop was Mausoleum of Imām Bahā'uddīn Naqshbandi رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ who is the founder of the Naqshbandi tarikat. On the way Ustadji provided us with a biography of Imām Bahā'uddīn رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ explaining where he had studied and how he had attained his lofty status. Behroz then filled us in with some extra information

We arrived at our destination and disembarked from the coach. We entered through the arched portal into a treelined path.

We walked on and entered a courtyard which was surrounded by a covered area on 3 sides held up by the traditional tall wooden pillars.



Figure 45 - Entrance to Imām Bahā'uddīn Naqshabandi Complex

On one side was the resting place of Imām Bahā'uddīn Naqshabandi رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ behind a walled area. There was a large stone at the front of the grave (in title) which mentioned his name, titles as well as the dates of his birth and demise

In the middle of the courtyard was a small pool and on the opposite side was a small seating area with 4 small domed towers at each corner.

We walked around the courtyard taking in the ambience of the location. It was very peaceful and there were a lot of people who had come to pay their respects. There are many people in our own community who also follow the Naqshabandi order, and I was remembering them as I walked around this place thinking how happy they would be if they could also visit. May Allāh سُبْحَانَہٗ وَتَعَالَى give them and us the ability to come again.



Figure 46 - Courtyard of Imām Bahā'uddīn Naqshabandi complex

The next stop was to pray our *Zuḥr Ṣalāh* in a local *Masjid* and then move onto a restaurant for some lunch.

We had the Uzbek 'smosa' as a starter which was a large pastry full of beef cooked inside a clay oven. This was followed by some nice

shashlikh kebabs which were cooked to perfection. It was now time to leave and make our way to Termez.

Termez was around 250 miles to the southwest of Bukhara. It was located in the part of Uzbekistan which shares a border with Afghanistan.



Figure 47 - Bukhara to Termez

The journey to Termez was very long and the roadworks did not help. We stopped off at a small service station where we prayed our ‘Aṣr Ṣalāh and then waited till Maghrib before praying once again. The shop sold camel milk and some of the group purchased and drank it

as well. The sister running the shop was very hospitable and opened her house for the sisters to pray.

Once Ṣalāh had been prayed we got back onto the coach for the rest of the long journey. We were hoping to see the beautiful mountain scenery but were unable to do so as it was now dark.

We finally arrived at the hotel around 10pm and were allocated our rooms. Many of us were lucky enough to be allocated single rooms. The hotel appeared to be built around the 1970's and the décor was very soviet style. The rooms were simple but functional. Once checked in, we made our way to the prayer room on the ground floor and prayed our 'Ishā Ṣalāh. We then made our way up to the restaurant where Behroz had organized two roasted lambs as dinner.

After dinner we retired to bed. It had been a long day journeying from one side of Uzbekistan to the other. Termez was also a much smaller town than Bukhara and Samarkand. Due to its proximity with Afghanistan, security did appear to be a little tighter.

The hotel itself had a large park opposite but we did not have a chance to visit as the following day we would be flying to Tashkent.

Day 6 –Friday 3rd November - Termez to Tashkent

The following morning was Jumu‘ah. Ustadji led Fajr Ṣalāh with Qunūt Nāzilah. Some local people who were also at the hotel joined in the congregation. After Ṣalāh, as normal we had dhikr majlis and then read Ishrāk Ṣalāh.

As we were flying to Tashkent later that day, we checked out of our hotel and loaded the luggage onto the coach. We now made our way to one of the most eagerly awaited destinations on our trip, the resting place of Imām Tirmidhī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ.

Name	Imām Tirmidhī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ Mausoleum
Location	Termez
Historical Significance	Resting place of Imām Tirmidhī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ the author of Jāmī‘ al-Tirmidhī
GPS Location	37.67576908495793, 67.07958816126657



Imām Tirmidhī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ needs no introduction. All students of the ‘Ālimiyyah course study his book Jāmī‘ al-Tirmidhī in the final year. The book holds a unique status in the Şihḥa Sitta and was compiled from a jurisprudence perspective with Imām Tirmidhī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ explaining the relative positions of the different schools of thought related to the chapters.

I had studied Tirmidhī by Mufti Shabbir Şāhib Ḥafīzahullāh in Darul Uloom Bury and was also teaching it now at our Academy using notes taken from my lessons. To be in the vicinity of one of the greatest scholars in Islām was a great blessing.

The entrance to the complex was through a large gate which then led onto a long path. On either side were beautiful lawns bordered by flowers. In the distance we could see 2 buildings, one which was a Mausoleum and the other which was a Masjid.



Figure 48 - Entrance to complex

We made our way first to the Mausoleum which was to the right-hand side. It was still a couple of hours to Jumu'ah, and some people went to get refreshed. Rather than waiting for the rest of the group I went inside the Mausoleum and positioned myself by the foot of the grave towards the Qiblah side.



Figure 49 = Path leading to Masjid and Mausoleum

Ustadji has told us that our dear teacher Shaykh Yusuf Motala رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ had told him this was the place to stand when visiting the deceased. The emotions at that point cannot really be explained. I could not believe where I was. If it was not for this scholar and many others, we would be lost today. How many people had Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى used to bring His religion of Islām to us today.

I had been reading the travelogue of Mufti Muḥammad ibn Adam Ḥafīzahullāh which he wrote following his visit to Uzbekistan where he accompanied Mufti Taqī Usmani Ḥafīzahullāh. He had asked the great scholar what he would pray when visiting the deceased. The

reply was Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, Sūrah Ikhhlās, Sūrah Mulk and if there was time, Sūrah Yāsīn. Throughout this trip I tried to follow this advice.

The rest of the group now came in, including Ustadji. He sat beside me and paid his respects. This was followed by a supplication which was very moving. At that moment in time, I was completely overwhelmed. I remember my mind feeling very clear at that point, there was no noise or other thoughts, just me in that moment.

A local Shaykh had also come and joined us. Ustadji asked permission to recite some Ḥadīth and the Shaikh asked us to come with him. We were led into the Masjid and to the right-hand side there was a large conference room which we entered.

Ustadji sat at the head of the room and the local Shaykh was also sat at the front. He had copies of Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhī as well as the Shamā’il in front of him. The Shaykh stood up and addressed our group. Shahram translated as the Shaykh spoke. Once he had concluded, Ustadji asked if we could now begin, and the Shaykh nodded his head in approval.



Figure 50 - Tomb of Imām Tirmidhī رحمه الله

Ustadji then began our last lesson. The plan was to ready the first and last Ḥadīth of both Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī and the Shamā'il.⁴

Maulānā Anwar Ṣāhib recited the first Ḥadīth and Ustadji explained his sanad of the great book as well. After the first Ḥadīth had been recited Ustadji explained the importance of cleanliness in Islām as the first chapter of the book was on Purity.

After this, I recited the final Ḥadīth. Ustadji once again explained the Ḥadīth. Mufi Ramzan then recited the first Ḥadīth of Shamāil Tirmidhi and the final Ḥadīth by Maulānā Anwar Ṣāhib.

Ustadji explained the meaning of Shamāil and explained the Ḥadīth which described the appearance of Rasūlullāh ﷺ. He also explained the final Ḥadīth about seeing Rasūlullāh ﷺ in a dream.

Ustadji then explained how we should be careful who we get our knowledge from. We should check who we use as teachers. The lesson concluded with the recitation of the single Thulūthiāt in Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī by Maulānā Anwar Ṣāhib. The Shaykh then led us all in supplication.

⁴ [Lesson at Imām Tirmidhī Masjid of first & last Ḥadīth of Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī and Shamā'il Tirmidhī](#)

It was now time for Jumu'ah Ṣalāh, so I went to refresh my Wuḍū. When I came back, we were escorted into the Maṣjid. It appeared that space in the first couple of lines had been reserved for our group.

I sat next to Behroz whilst the Imām was delivering his speech before Ṣalāh. Imām Ṣāhib was very passionate and talked for quite a



Figure 51 - The Masjid

while. I asked Behroz about what he was saying as I could only make out a few words of either Verses of the Qur'ān or Ḥadīth which were being discussed. As Behroz explained, I felt we were the only people who were making noise apart from the Imām, so I stopped asking questions.

After the talk finished, the Adhān was performed and the Khuṭbah was recited, followed by the Ṣalāh. The format of the Adhkār after the Ṣalāh was like Turkey where the Imām prompts the congregation to recite the various prayers after Ṣalāh. This is then followed by a supplication. Ustadji was requested to do du'ā. This was then followed by another du'ā by the Imām.

After the Ṣalāh finished, the Imām met all the menfolk from the group and embraced each one. One of the customs here was to hug each other 3 times.

Whilst the men had been in the Masjid for Jumu‘ah, the sisters had prayed in the space behind the tomb of Imām Tirmidhī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ. This



Figure 52 - Tomb of Imām Tirmidhī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ

gave them more time to pay their respects. After Ṣalāh we also went there to pay our respects one final time before we left.

A couple of days later when I was speaking to Ustadji, I asked him what the most memorable part of his trip was. He said when we went to visit Imām Tirmidhī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ as he had not been there before.

I had to agree that it was very special and to have been there with Ustadji made it even more special. Once again Maulānā Anwar Ṣāhib and I took the opportunity to listen to the first and last Ḥadīth from our 2 students Ḥāfiẓ Yasin and Liyakat in this blessed place.

As we made our way back to the main road, there were a couple of shops selling some religious items, including prayer beads, prayer mats, hats etc. We made a quick pit stop before heading back onto the coach. We now made our way back to the coach and went to a



local restaurant for a spot of lunch. Chicken was not very common in Uzbekistan and some of the group had asked for chicken and chips. Behroz took us to restaurant which served chicken and chips Uzbek style. It was very tasty, and we then made our way to a local Masjid to pray ‘Aṣr Ṣalāh.

As mentioned earlier, all the Masājid were spotlessly clean and had facilities for both men and women, including toilets and ablution. Once we had prayed, it was now time to go to our final destination in Termez, the Mausoleum of Ḥakīm Tirmidhi رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ.

Ustadji had delivered a talk on the coach while we were on our way to Termez giving us an overview of both Imām Tirmidhī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ and Ḥakīm Tirmidhī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ.

Name	Ḥakīm Tirmidhī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ Mausoleum
Location	Termez
Historical Significance	Resting place of
GPS Location	37.26612542230934, 67.18929109437492



The actual name of Ḥakīm Tirmidhī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ is Abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Bashīr al-Tirmidhī. He got his name Ḥakīm due to his wise nature and quotes.

Ḥakīm Tirmidhī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ was also a narrator of Ḥadīth as well as a great scholar of Jurisprudence. He had written over 100 books on a variety of subjects.

We got off the coach and made our way into the complex. There were many gardeners laying new flowers on the borders of the lawns. Great care was taken to ensure the gardens were kept in good condition. We made our way down the path and into the mausoleum which had a Masjid on one side and the tomb on the other.

The Imām was sitting with a group of people, and he was reciting the Qur'ān whilst they were listening respectfully. I made my way to the tomb which was raised and set behind a barrier in a domed chamber.

The design of the internal chamber as well as the Masjid was stunning.

The amount of detail and beauty of the calligraphy was truly amazing.



We paid our respects and then made our way to the courtyard. Termez is located very close to the

border of Uzbekistan with Afghanistan. There was a fenced gap in the wall from where you could see the Amu Darya, which is known as the river Oxus.



We could see Afghanistan on the other side of the river. The tourist police informed us that this was all a no go zone between the countries. The tourist police also wanted to have a group picture and told us to come back again and also bring our friends!

It was now time for Maghrib Ṣalāh so we went back to the Masjid and prayed. Once back on the coach, the next stop was Termez airport.



Our flight had been slightly delayed so we managed to checkin and then pray our ʿIshā Ṣalāh at the airport. I was expecting a small plane but when we boarded, it was a nice new plane with ample leg room.

The service on board the aircraft was pretty simple, a glass of water!

The flighttime to Tashkent was less than an hour. Once off the plane, we quickly passed through security and collected our luggage. We went outside the airport and Behroz went to find our coach.

The luggage was loaded once again and we made our way to our final hotel of the trip, Hotel Shoxjahon. It was now very late so food was delivered to the hotel. We were treated to some nice pizzas. The rooms were very comfortable and I quickly got to sleep after another long day.

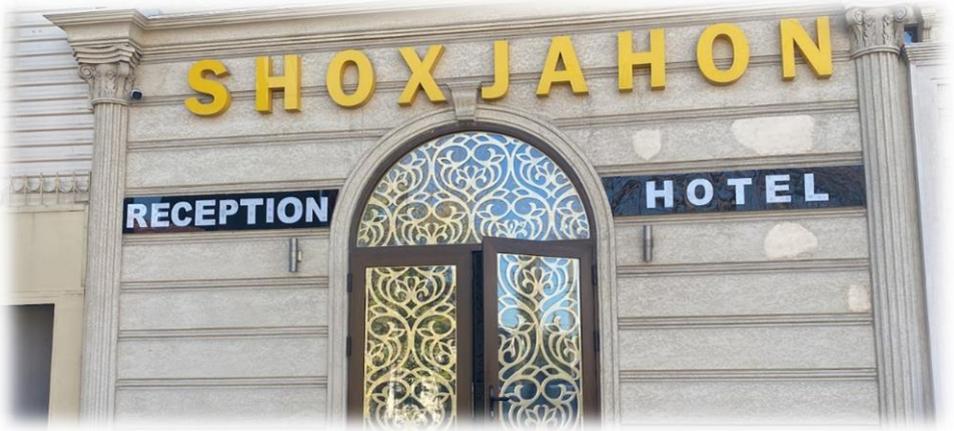


Figure 53 - Hotel Shoxjahon

There were no prayer rooms in the hotel so Ustadji spoke to one of the hotel staff who agreed to take us to a local Masjid for Fajr the following day.

Day 7 – Saturday 4th November – Tashkent

The men met in reception the following morning and it was still dark. The brother from the hotel said the Masjid was about 1km away, so we decided to walk. I was expecting to be going to a small local Masjid. Once again, just like what had happened many times before on this trip, I was in complete surprise.

Name	Rakat Masjid
Location	Tashkent
Historical Significance	New Masjid recently built
GPS Location	41.290344081293796, 69.24595654686657



We saw the towering minarets of the Masjid from a distance and some scaffolding was still up outside the main gate. We entered the

large foyer and then made our way into the main prayer area. I can honestly say, this was one of the most beautiful Masjids I have ever seen. The pictures cannot really do it any justice.



Figure 54 - Interior of Rakat Masjid

We walked around admiring the beautiful architecture and very soon the Masjid became quite busy. The Imām made his way in followed by a couple of more men in their traditional long gowns. They were light blue in colour with a fully buttoned front.

We prayed our Fajr Ṣalāh and the recitation was beautiful, amplified by the sound system in the Masjid. Once the Ṣalāh was over, the Imām prompted the dhikr and du‘ās, followed by some recitation from the Qur’ān.

Ustadji now told us to go to the rear of the Masjid for our dhikr majlis. We were told to keep our voices low so as not to disturb the other people who were sat in the Masjid after Ṣalāh. This was our final dhikr Majlis on the trip and as usual Ustadji



Figure 56 - The dome of Rakat Masjid

concluded by supplicating for everyone, including the local people and asking Allāh *سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى* to reward them greatly for their efforts to bring Islām back into their lives. We prayed our Ishrāk and left the Masjid. As it was now daytime, we were able to appreciate its size and beauty even more from the outside.

We now made our way back to the hotel for breakfast. We could see the streets being cleaned early in the morning with the piles of leaves left so they could be picked up later. The area appeared to be quite upmarket as many of the houses looked very modern.



Figure 55 - Rakat Masjid

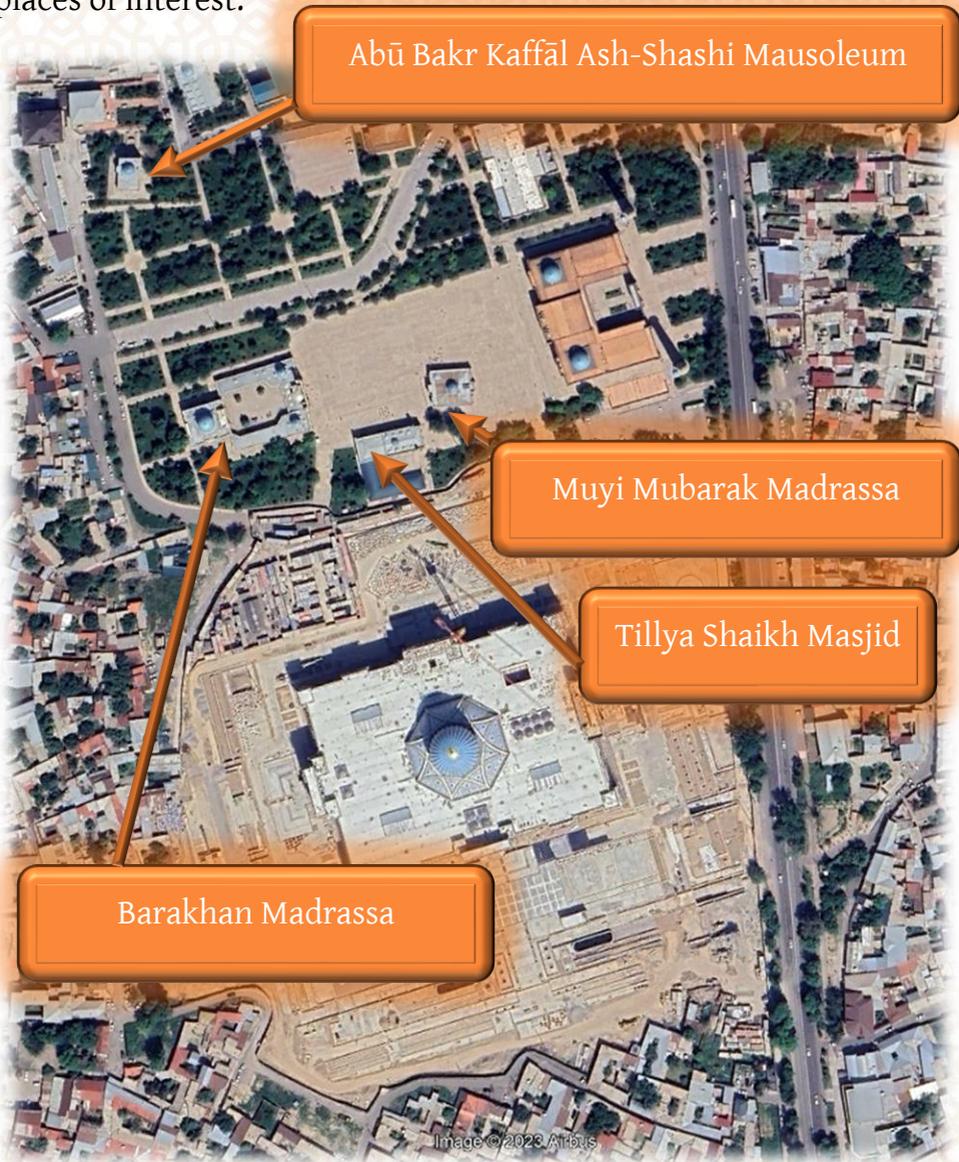
Our flight back to England was not till early the following morning, so we did not need to checkout till much later. We now got ready for our final day of visits.

The coach took us to the old part of Tashkent where we walked through the narrow streets and over the ancient water system and past the old houses. The houses had a unique design where wood was used over the brick foundation.



I recall Behroz talking about many earthquakes which have taken place in this city. In 1966 between 78,000 and 95,000 homes had been destroyed, leaving up to 300,000 people homeless. By 1970, 100,000 new homes had been constructed.

We now made our way towards a sprawling square with multiple places of interest.



Abū Bakr Kaffāl Ash-Shashi Mausoleum

Muiy Mubarak Madrassa

Tillya Shaikh Masjid

Barakhan Madrassa

Image © 2023 Airbus

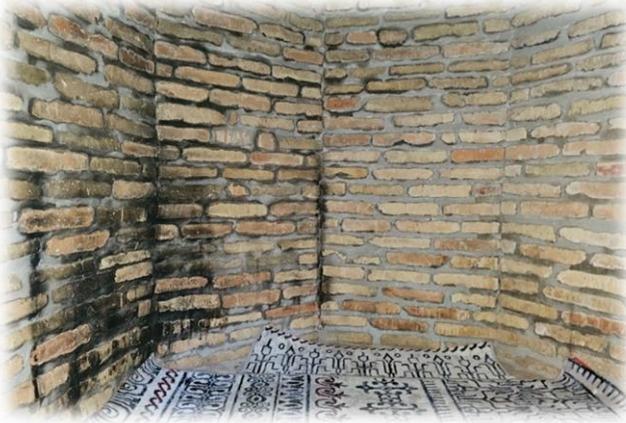
Name	Abu Bakr Kaffāl Ash-Shāshi رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ Mausoleum
Location	Tashkent
Historical Significance	Resting place of Abū Bakr Kaffāl رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ
GPS Location	41.33830846468536, 69.23822197658336



Our first stop was the Mausoleum of Abū Bakr Kaffāl Ash-Shāshi رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ. He was born in the year 291AH and was a senior scholar of the Shāfi'ī school of thought. He was also known as Hazrat Imām.

We made our way inside and it was very busy. We sat close to the tomb and paid our respects. Next to the tomb was a small opening which led into a small room. We were told that worshippers would

spend 40 days in this small space for self-rectification. There was another room inside the mausoleum with other tombs as well.



As we were making our way out, a group of school children in their early teens entered the small room at the front and sat down. One of the students then started reciting the

Qur'ān. There was complete silence and all the students sat down and listened attentively with their heads lowered. There was not a single word spoken or any conversation which we would normally see with children that age. We walked out and started to make our way past the main square.

We passed a bookshop and to our surprise it was full of books from the Ḥanafī Fiqh including I'ālā as-Sunan and works by Ḥakīm al-Ummah, Maulānā Ashraf Ali Thanvi رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ and Mufti Taqi Usmani Ḥafīzahullāh. This is a sign of acceptance from Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى that their works are being studied thousands of miles away in countries where Arabic and Urdu are not even spoken. May Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى spread their works and the works of our pious elders even further.

We now made our way into the Barakhan Madrassa which was built in the 15th and 16th centuries. Unfortunately, once inside, the rooms which were probably once classrooms were now small shops selling

souvenirs,
clothes,
and coffee.

It was
quite a sad
feeling, so

I just sat in

the courtyard taking in the beautiful building. We then moved back into the main square. In front of us was the Hazrat Imam Masjid, to the right, the Tillya Shaikh Masjid and in the middle the Muyi Mubarak Library.



Figure 57 - Barakhan Madrassa



Figure 58 - Hazrat Imam Masjid

Name	Muyi Mubarak Library
Location	Tashkent
Historical Significance	Holds one of the Muṣḥaf of ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ
GPS Location	41.336963862864444, 69.24031582744934



The Muyi Mubarak library holds one of the copies of the Qur’ān which was commissioned by ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ. During his Caliphate, ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ had seven copies of the Muṣḥaf written on the script of the Quraysh. The Sūrahs were arranged in order and once ready, they were sent to Makkah, Syria, Yemen, Baḥrayn, Basrah, Kūfā and one preserved in Madīnah. It was unclear which of these copies resided in this library.

To enter the library, there was a fee. Behroz arranged the entrance, and we waited outside until the crowds died down.

We entered the complex which was dimly lit. In the centre was a large glass cabinet which housed the blessed Muşhaf.



Figure 59 - Muşhaf^{Uthmāni}

It was very difficult to make out the words as there were no dots nor diacritics. There was also a replica in another part of the museum where we could spend more time trying to decipher the words.

The museum also had other exhibits which we saw. We now left and made our way back into the main square. There were so many places to visit in Tashkent, but we did not have enough time. In the distance we could see a huge Masjid being built. This was the new Islamic Civilization Centre.



Figure 60 - Replica of Muşhaf^{Uthmāni}

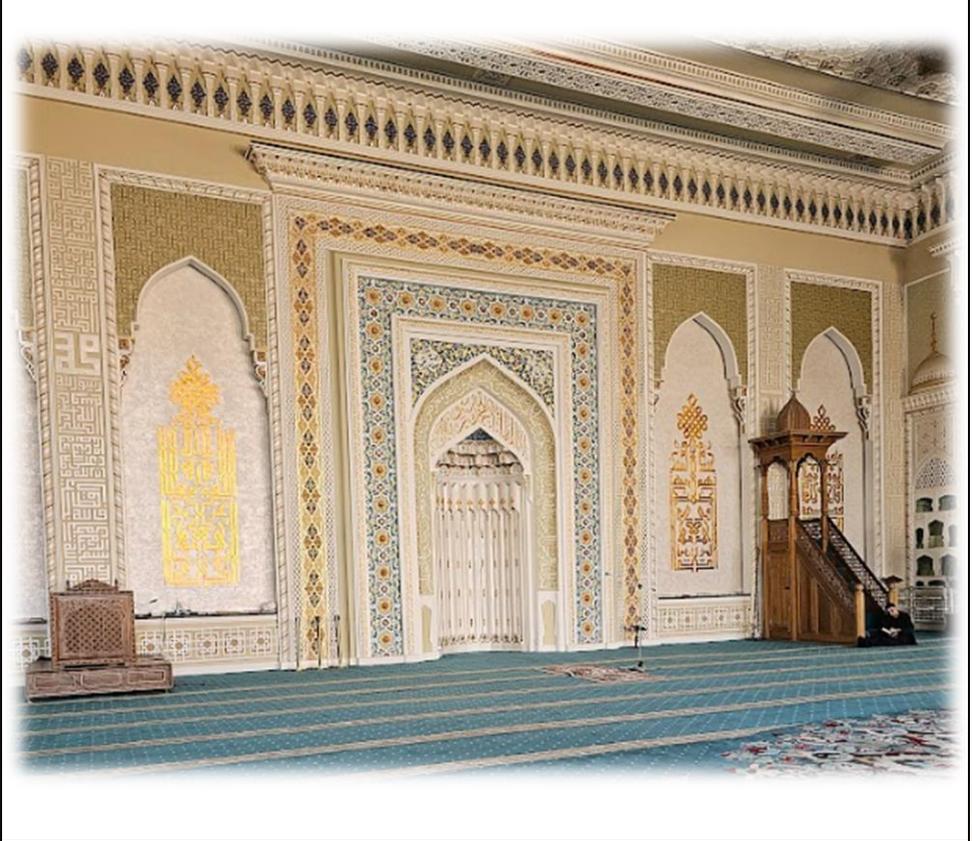


Figure 61 - Islamic Civilization Centre

We needed to pray our *Ẓuhr Ṣalāh* so made our way to the front of the huge square. A few of us used this opportunity to freshen up and made our way inside the beautiful *Masjid*.

In Uzbekistan, there is normally a charge for using the public toilets, however the *Masājid* ones were free and very clean. The vast majority of toilets were the Asian style, hole in the ground type. The *ToharotKhanas* would also have small shops as well selling Islamic goods such as hats and prayer beads.

Name	Hazrat Imam Masjid
Location	Tashkent
Historical Significance	Masjid named after Abū Bakr Ash-Shahi also known as Hazrat Imam.
GPS Location	41.337387291976455, 69.24095964961771



We entered the beautiful Masjid and could see that it had recently been renovated. It had many pillars and domes, with beautiful chandeliers suspended from the domes.

A Week in Uzbekistan

We prayed our Ṣalāh and walked around the beautiful Masjid taking in the view.



The Masjid had been named after Imām Abu Bakr Kaffāl رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ whose mausoleum we had just visited on the other

side of the square. He was from a family of locksmiths, and the word Kaffāl means lock, hence how he got his name.

The Masjid has two 53-metre-high minarets at the front. Originally the Masjid had been built in the 16th century but had been rebuilt in 2007 with the sandalwood columns coming from India and green marble from Turkey.

Once we had finished from our Ṣalāh, we left and got back into the coach to move onto our next destination.

Tashkent was a very busy city. It was the capital of the country, and the roads were full of cars. We could see tall buildings being built and the infrastructure was excellent.



Our next stop was to a restaurant for some fish and chips. It was not the traditional British fish and chips but still very tasty. Whilst in the restaurant one of Ustadji's friends originally from London but now working in Kazakhstan came all the way to meet him. It had been a few hours journey, but he had come all the way just to see and spend some time with our Ustadji.

This restaurant was quite different to the others. All the men wore hats, and the sisters were also all in Hijāb. It was simple but very popular as you could see a lot of locals there as well. On the way out, many of us purchased some fresh baklava to take home.



Once we had finished, It was now time to make our way to another Masjid for ‘Aṣr Ṣalāh and this was the Minor Masjid.

Name	White (Marble) Masjid
Location	Tashkent
Historical Significance	Masjid built in 2014 from white marble
GPS Location	41.33538624240415, 69.27504530621488



We entered through the beautiful portal into the courtyard. On all sides there was a sheltered area held up by the traditional wooden pillars. We then made our way into the Masjid for Ṣalāh. It was nearly time for ‘Aṣr Ṣalāh, so we waited with the other people in the Masjid taking in the beautiful views.

Once Ṣalāh had finished we made our way to the Chorsu Bazaar which was a very famous outdoor market. The group were given an hour or so to do some shopping and then meet back again so we could pray Maghrib at the Masjid nearby.

As we entered the market, the group split up. It was difficult to find our bearings, but Alḥamdulillāh we managed to do some shopping and met back at the meeting point.

We all now made our way to the Masjid for Maghrib. Outside the Masjid were small stalls selling Islamic goods. We noticed when it was Ṣalāh time, the owners would just leave the stalls and go to the Masjid! This sort of thing was common in Makkah and Madīnah in the days past but was unusual in this day and age. It filled us all with immense happiness that this sort of thing can happen in the present day.

After Maghrib Ṣalāh, it was now time to go back to the hotel for some much-needed rest and packing. We had said our goodbyes earlier to Mufti Ramzan and his family who were travelling the following day.

Our flight was early in the morning, and we left the hotel around 12:30am. The road outside the airport was standstill traffic. The coach ended up parking a slight way away from the main terminal and we unloaded our luggage and made our way to Departures.

After checking in, some of us who had not read our ‘Ishā Ṣalāh went to the lovely prayer room. The airport was very busy and the queues

just before boarding could have been managed better. We all boarded the plane and soon we were on our way to Istanbul.

We landed in Istanbul, and this is where many people from the group were going to be parting ways as we were flying to Birmingham whilst the rest of the group was going to Manchester. I am not one for saying goodbyes, especially saying goodbye to Ustadji. The group had really bonded well and got along with each other. I just quickly passed by Ustadji and said I was not going to say goodbye and made my way up the escalator.

The group from Coventry met up and went to the prayer room for Fajr Ṣalāh. It was a short wait and then we boarded the flight to Birmingham. With the mercy of Allāh **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى**, we landed on time and some of our students from the Bukhārī class came to collect us and took us safely home. It was the end of an amazing journey.

Reflections with Shaykh

On the plane home, I noted down some immediate thoughts and reflections from the journey. I didn't want the memories to fade away so quickly put some notes on my phone.

Everyone is familiar with our dear Ustadji, and I am sure every person in the group has their own connection with him. Whether he was their teacher, or Shaykh or even both. For myself it was very special travelling with him as I got to spend some quality time in his presence. Some key points I can take away from this journey are as follows:

Continuous Advice throughout the journey

I lost count of the many occasions where Ustadji would share valuable advice with the group. Whether this was related to the location we were visiting or general religious advice. Many times, people go on trips to Holy Places, and they hear information which is relevant. We were on a journey in a land, where there were so many places and people connected directly to our teachings. Ustadji would add so much more, whether this was in the coach on the way, at the location or even just sitting in the Masājīd.

Spiritual Journey

Ustadji would make sure each morning there would be a dhikr majlis followed by a supplication and Ishrāk Ṣalāh. As well as being a trip

where we got to see special places, it also allowed us to focus on our Tazkiyah, our self-rectification. Giving us time to reflect, introspect and assess our connection with the Almighty Allāh **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى**. Many times, people get busy in their lives, so do not get time to carry out their daily Mu‘amalāt. We were so busy on this trip, however we still comfortably found time to do it, so it shows with planning, it can be achieved.

Looking after the needs of the group

Along with Maulānā Asad, Ustadji kept a close eye on the group. He made sure everyone was looked after, in good spirits and spoke to everyone. If there were any issues with the rooms or food, they were quickly resolved. He was always in a good mood and kept us well informed with the plans for each day.

Ṣalāh & Du‘ā

Our days would be planned around our Ṣalāh, making sure there was no opportunity to miss any along the long journey. Through this we got to visit many Masājid, not just the famous one but also others where we got to see how the locals looked after their Masājid.

In Uzbekistan, after each Ṣalāh congregational du‘ā would take place. Sometimes more than once. On many occasions Ustadji was asked to supplicate which he did so willingly, supplicating for the local people as well as all the Muslims over the world including our Palestinian brothers and sisters. Du‘ā is something which is sometimes

neglected, where it is an effective tool to beseech the Mercy of Allāh **سُبْحَانَكَ وَتَعَالَى**. It was a personal lesson to be learnt to spend more time in supplication.

Ustadji also recited the Qunūt Nāzilah during Fajr Ṣalāh when were in Termez. Many senior ‘Ulamā have asked for this to be read and it is being read in many places. All Masājid should make an effort to also read it, in this much needed time.

Lessons

Ustadji is a teacher, in fact he is a teacher of teachers, having been blessed being a student of great scholars like Shaykh Yunus Jawnpuri **رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ**, Shaykh Yusuf Motala **رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ** and Shaykh Islamul Haqq **رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ**. He has taught for over 30 years and has been the principal of Darul Uloom Bury. Many of the ‘Ulamā we have today in the UK are his students.

Ustadji delivered three special lessons during our trip where he enlightened us with his special knowledge of Ḥadīth. Once in Khartang, next to the Mausoleum of Imām Bukhārī **رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ**. Once in Bukhara, next to the place where Imām Bukhārī **رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ** used to live. And finally, in Termez next to the Mausoleum of Imām Tirmidhī **رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ**. These lessons were full of useful information and explanation, especially for scholars and students of knowledge. Having these lessons delivered here by a scholar who has spent years teaching their books was truly special and beneficial.

Personal Reflections

A trip like this takes meticulous planning and thought. Uzbekistan is a country which holds a very special place in Islām. It is a place where many scholars were born, lived, and taught. The places which we visited were relevant and important, with lots to be learnt.

One of the most immediate observations was the different ethnicities which lived in Uzbekistan. These scholars were not Arab but from local non-Arab tribes. Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى truly takes work from wherever He wishes.

To be able to travel with my dear teacher as well as a fellow teacher and students was very special. Many times, we go to visit Ustadji, when he is delivering a talk locally in the Midlands or if there is a Programme at HLCE. This was an opportunity to spend an entire week with him without having to leave him!

My personal relationship with Ustadji started when I handed him my application form for entry into the final year at Darul Uloom Bury. I was called in for an interview a couple of days later and remember sitting in the office with him asking me what I wanted to do. I felt he was surprised that I wanted to board but Alḥamdulillāh was given the opportunity to join the class for which I will be eternally grateful. The trajectory of my life took a turn for the

positive and being in the company of some of our most senior and pious scholars will be a memory I will cherish for the rest of my life.

The company of our teachers is very important and beneficial for our own self rectification. Just sitting with them, listening to them, observing them are all lessons. The *Ṣuḥbah* of our *Shuyūkh* and teachers is necessary so we can stay levelheaded and seek advice when its needed. We do not know how long we or they have left in this temporary world, so each second is precious. If anything after this trip with Ustadji, I want to spend even more time with him as it helps me with my own journey.

I must also mention Behroz and Shahram who were excellent guides and quickly became part of the group. Without their hospitality, care and knowledge, the trip would not have been the same.

I would have to say my most special and memorable moment was reading *Ḥadīth* in Bukhara in the place close to where *Imām Bukhārī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ* used to live and teach. As I mentioned earlier, to be in a place where the author of the book used to reside, reciting *Ḥadīth* in front of my teacher who had taught me part of the special book and also to have a couple of our students in the congregation was very special. Everyone who was present there that day felt it was a very special, emotional, and spiritual occasion. The thought crossed my mind throughout the trip how blessed I was to be in these places with my dear teacher and I pray that *Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى* brings us back again together soon.

Conclusion

This trip was a lesson in many things for me and the other people in the group. There are too many to note down, but a few below come to mind.

There is Light after Darkness

Uzbekistan is a country which was at the forefront of Islamic knowledge. Once a country where the greatest books of Ḥadīth were written and taught. Genghiz Khan invaded the area in the 13th century sacking the cities of Samarkand, Bukhara and Termez. Thousands were killed during this time.

In the 20th century, the country came under Soviet rule until it gained independence in 1991. During this period, the Masjids and Madrassas were closed and Islām was greatly suppressed. Since the independence, we can see the signs of Islām are now coming back to life. Even after years of communism, they were not able to extinguish the light of Imān which is now burning brightly.

In the same way, where there are other places in the world where the Muslims are undergoing severe tests, like Palestine, there is hope that one day Allāh سُبْحَانَہُ وَتَعَالَى will bring these places back to how they were before. The unflinching Imān of those Muslims will Inshā Allāh be a means of freedom and rejuvenation.

Shukr – Thankfulness

Allāh **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** sent down many scholars all over the world who were experts in the various field of religion. If we look at the books we study and read, the authors are spread all over the Arab and central Asian countries as well as the Indian sub-continent. A sign of their acceptance is that hundreds of years later if not over a thousand years later, we are still readying, studying and benefitting from their books. If it was not for them, we would not be where we are today.

As a matter of thanks, we should regularly send Esāl al-thawāb to them and remember them in our du‘ās. We should continue to study and teach their books as this is also a great form of reward for both them and us. We should also be ever thankful to Allāh **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** who sent these precious souls to help and guide us and pray that He continues to send these shining lights to show us the way on the dark days.

Respect for Teachers

Throughout the journey we heard about the history of the great scholars and the country they were in. The trials and tribulations they went through during their time. Many of us are unfamiliar with their sacrifices. Take for example Imām Bukhārī **رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ**, who was expelled from Bukhara, the place of his birth after he refused to give private lessons which the governor of the city had requested.

He had to leave the town of his birth and move to Khartang where he spent the last of his days. During his final days he was even asked to return but never made the journey.

All our teachers have sacrificed many years in the pursuit of knowledge and teaching it. Spending more time with their students than with their own families. They always deserve our continued respect and du‘ās.

Life is Simple

Allāh **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** has made our lives very simple, prioritizing following His commands. We make our lives complicated and difficult by focusing more on materialistic gain which takes time away from fulfilling the obligations of Allāh **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى**. No matter how much wealth a person can amass, it can never be a source of happiness and peace of mind.

True happiness can only be found in following the commands of Allāh **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى**. The sweetness in Ṣalāh, the closeness to Allāh **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** when doing dhikr, the contentment when studying Islām cannot be replicated in the pursuit of any nonreligious goals.

Our lives are short, never knowing when they will end, so each moment should be spent positively, actively taking us closer to Allāh **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** and our eternal goal which is Paradise. To do this, we need to prioritize our Ṣalāh and the other obligations of Allāh **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى**

and our Religion. Spend time learning how to worship Allāh **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** and teaching other how to fulfill His commands as well.

We are One Ummah

Travelling to a country full of Muslims who do not look like us. The beauty of Islām is that it is the universal religion which spans the globe. People of all shapes, sizes, races and backgrounds are all united under the banner of Islām. The brotherhood which is automatically created after the saying of a simple sentence, the Salām cannot be explained. We are suddenly connected, suddenly together and at peace with each other.

The people of Uzbekistan surprised me with their manners and respect. Respect for people, for the place they live, for the Masājid, for the Qur'ān and for the religion of Islām. I have definitely learned a few lessons from them.

I pray that Allāh **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** guides them and creates more scholars from their current and coming generations. That they become teachers for the rest of the Ummah and gracious hosts for the many more Muslims visitors who will Inshā Allāh visit them in the years to come. And I pray that Allāh **سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى** makes me one of them once again.



A Week in Uzbekistan

in the Company of

Shaykh Abdul Raheem Limbada

Ḥafīzahullāh

