

UZBEKISTAN  
SAMARKAND



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**Geographical Location and Population**

Samarkand (from Sogdian: "Stone Fort" or "Rock Town"; Uzbek: Samarqand; Persian: سمرقند; Cyrillic/Russian: Самарканд), alternatively Samarqand or Samarcand, is one of the oldest inhabited cities in Central Asia, prospering from its location on the Silk Road between China and the Mediterranean. At times Samarkand has been one of the greatest cities of Central Asia; traditionally it is the capital of Samarqand Region, and is Uzbekistan's third largest city, after fast-growing Namangan in the Ferghana Valley. The city is noted for being an Islamic centre for scholarly study. In the 14th century it became the capital of the empire of Timur (Tamerlane) and is the site of his mausoleum (the Gur-e Amir). The Bibi-Khanym Mosque (a modern replica) remains one of the city's most notable landmarks. The Registan was the ancient center of the city. The city has carefully preserved the traditions of ancient crafts: embroidery, gold embroidery, silk weaving, engraving on copper, ceramics, carving and painting on wood.



## History

In 1500 the Uzbek nomadic warriors took control of Samarkand. The Shaybanids emerged as the Uzbek leaders at or about this time. In the second quarter of 16th century, the Shaybanids moved their capital to Bukhara and Samarkand went into decline. After an assault by Nader Shah the city was abandoned in the 18th century, about 1720 or a few years later.

From 1599 to 1756, Samarkand was ruled by the Ashtarkhanid dynasty of Bukhara.

From 1756 to 1868, Samarkand was ruled by the Manghyt emirs of Bukhara.

The city came under Russian rule after the citadel had been taken by a force under Colonel Konstantin Petrovich von Kaufman in 1868. Shortly thereafter the small Russian garrison of 500 men were themselves besieged. The assault, which was led by Abdul Malik Tura, the rebellious elder son of the Bukharan Emir, as well as Baba Beg of Shahrissabz and Jura Beg of Kitab, was repelled with heavy losses. Alexander Abramov became the first Governor of the Military Okrug, which the Russians established along the course of the Zeravshan River, with Samarkand as the administrative centre. The Russian section of the city was built after this point, largely to the west of the old city.

In 1886, the city became the capital of the newly formed Samarkand Oblast of Russian Turkestan and grew in importance still further when the Trans-Caspian railway reached the city in 1888. It became the capital of the Uzbek SSR in 1925 before being replaced by Tashkent in 1930.



## **Intangible Cultural Heritage**

### **Samarkand – Crossroad of Cultures**

The historic town of Samarkand, located in a large oasis in the valley of the Zerafshan River, in the north-eastern region of Uzbekistan, is considered the crossroads of world cultures with a history of over two and a half millennia. Evidence of settlements in the region goes back to 1500 BC, with Samarkand having its most significant development in the Timurid period, from the 14th to the 15th centuries, when it was capital of the powerful Timurid realm.

The historical part of Samarkand consists of three main sections. In the north-east there is the site of the ancient city of Afrosiab, founded in the 7th century BC and destroyed by Genghis Khan in the 13th century, which is preserved as an archaeological reserve. Archaeological excavations have revealed the ancient citadel and fortifications, the palace of the ruler (built in the 7th century displays important wall paintings), and residential and craft quarters. There are also remains of a large ancient mosque built from the 8th to 12th centuries.