Untravelled Silk Road of Southern Xinjiang

A photography tour of the Tarim River & Taklimakan Desert with the legendary city of Kashgar & beyond.....

16Oct – 28Oct 2019    13 days / 11 nights

This journey explores Southern Xinjiang, one of the most important parts of the Silk Road, from visiting the legendary city of Kashgar & Kuqa, two largest Uighur and Muslim community cities of Xinjiang, a drive into Taklamakan, China’s largest desert, the nearby Tianshan Mystic Grand Canyon, and most of all, the Tarim River Euphrates Poplar National Nature Reserve across Luntai county with the visit to simple yet spectacular oasis in autumn, a vivid scenery that you might have never imagined such place do exist on earth. Plus an opportunity to witness the traditional trading way for bargaining between seller and buyers at one of the only Animal Sunday markets and a scenic drive along the Karakoram highway located on the Pamir Plateau-Lake Karakul, this is the untravelled Silk Road of Southern Xinjiang, has always been on any traveller photographer’s list, let make it yours too.
The Untravelled Silk Road of Southern Xinjiang: 16Oct – 28Oct 2019

**DAY 01  Wednesday 16Oct Depart Kuala Lumpur for Kashgar (MOB)**
Go to the KLIA airport at night as we will have an early morning flight to Kashgar via Beijing on Air China. ETD 0010 (flight schedule is subjected to change)

**DAY 02  Thursday 17Oct ARRIVING KASHGAR (D)**
ETA 1525
Our local English Speaking Guide will meet & greet us upon arrival.
Have an early dinner and thereafter check into hotel for a good rest after a long flight
Overnight in Kashgar local 5* Hotel.

KASHGAR in China’s far west, is a legendary city with long history stretching over 2,000 years. Kashgar was a key city along the Silk Road, the network of trading routes that connected Asia to Europe for centuries. What makes it so fascinating today is that the atmosphere has hardly changed. Arriving in Kashgar is like emerging from a time machine.
Welcome to Kashgar, the most western city in China, about 200 kilometres from the borders of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

**DAY 03  FRIDAY 18OCT KASHGAR – KARAKUL LAKE – TASHKORGAN (B/L/D)**
After breakfast, drive to Tashkorgan, Tajik nationality county which is located on Pamir Plateau along the Karakoram highway.
Visit
(i) view the Gazi Gorge
(ii) White Sand Lake
(iii) Karakul Lake, with the background of the lake is MuztagAta Peak
(v) Sunset at Golden Grass Marshiand
Overnight in Tashkorgan local 4* hotel
Lake Karakul, Kashgar
Sparkling jewel at the foot of the Pamir Mountains

At the foot of the Pamir Mountains, surrounded by the three highest peaks there is azure Lake Karakul, a pure pearl among the harshest landscapes in the west of Xinjiang. The lake is located at an altitude of 3652 m above sea level and 200 km from Kashgar.

The area around the lake is quite remarkable. From one side there is a boundless stony desert, with sand dunes and small oases occasionally coming across, while from the other - the inaccessible Pamir Mountains with its slightly rugged beauty, beneficially fetching out Lake Karakul.

The excursions, arranged there, give you a possibility not only to enjoy the natural beauty of the area, but also to get to know better the life of the local people and their unique culture.
DAY 04  SATURDAY 19Oct  TASHKORGAN – KASHGAR (B/L/D)
Early morning, enjoy the sunrise on the Tashkorgan’s castle.
Enjoy a visit to a Tajik family house to learn of their unique culture and lifestyle.
Take a slow drive back to Kashgar and enjoy the reversed scenery along the way, stop by some little villages along the way.
Arrive late in Kashgar, dinner at a local restaurant.
Overnight in Kashgar local 5* hotel

DAY 05  SUNDAY 20Oct  KASHGAR (B/L/D)
After breakfast, we shall drive to the Eastern gate of the Old City to watch the gate opening ceremony, some things are unsettling — such as the big entrance gate that hosts an ‘opening ceremony’ each morning where actors dress up and have had a lively performance.
Thereafter we shall drive to visit the Animal Market where you can see the traditional trading way for bargaining between sellers and buyers. This Animal market only held on a Sunday.
Next, we return to the city center to visit the famous Bazaar and this is a commodity bazaar.
For centuries, the Kashgar Sunday Bazaar has been a meeting place for locals, merchants and travelers along the Silk Road. ... It used to be that the Silk Road Town of Kashgar had both a Sunday bazaar and livestock market that were located together on the eastern edge of town. As the city has grown and swallowed up the market grounds, however, the livestock were moved to a different location on account of their smell. The bazaar remains in the same location its been for the past couple centuries with views of Kashgar’s Old City nearby. Modernization has certainly caused changes in Kashgar but the bazaar (and the Kashgar livestock market, for that matter) are still a must-worth a visit as you might not be able of seeing another similar elsewhere.
After lunch, continue our exploration of this legendary Kashgar city by visiting the old city district, exploring the collection of narrow alleyways that zig-zag through mud-brick buildings. the streets including the handicraft street.

Overnight in Kashgar local 5* hotel

Day 06 Monday 21Oct KASHGAR (B/L/D)

After breakfast, we shall continue our exploration of this one of the end Silk road cities on the ground of China, the legendary city of KASHGAR.

i) ID Kah Mosque & the square which can house up to 20,000 worshipers.

ii) Tomb of Abakhja family – Abajo Khoja ( 5 km away from Kashgar city).

iii) Visit an Uygur family, where possible.

iv) the night – food market.

Overnight at Kashgar local 5* hotel

Perhaps the most famous landmark of Kashgar is the Mausoleum of Abajo Khoja well-known in the East. This is not only one of the major Sufi shrines in Central Asia, with several spiritual leaders of East Turkestan of the XVII-XVIII centuries buried there, but also the final resting place of one of the most famous women in Chinese history.....one of the most fatal women in Chinese history - Princess Syanfey or Uyghur Iparhan, who had been a favorite concubine of Emperor Qianlong from the Qing Dynasty for 28 years.

The mausoleum located 5 km from the center of the modern city of Kashgar was built in 1640.
DAY 07  TUESDAY  22Oct  KASHGAR – Artux – AKSU  (B/L/D)
After breakfast, we shall depart this legendary city of Kashgar and proceed to our first exploration of the amazing Euphratica trees. In late autumn, these trees will turns into golden yellow colour awaiting for winter to come by.
Heading to Bachu Red Lake Bay resort to enjoy this amazing trees.
Continue the road journey to Aksu, have a short stop over some farms where available like cotton farm and enjoy the setting sun along the way.
Overnight in AKSU local 5* hotel

Populus Euphratica in Xinjiang
Populus is an ancient member of poplar family. Statistics show that most of populus in the world live in China and more than 90 percent of populus in China can be found in Talim River region. Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, covering 1.6 million square kilometers, has the largest amount of natural populus diversifolia, which is resistant to saline-alkali soil and other hostile conditions in the northwest area, and is utilized to shelter villages and crops in desert or semi-desert areas.
Populus is considered to be Hero Tree in Desert because it protects animals and plants from sand storm.
DAY 08 WEDNESDAY 23Oct AKSU – XAYAR (Shaya) (B/L/D)
After breakfast, we shall today drive along the Tianshan mountain range where you can enjoy diversified landscapes along the way.
Enjoy the World Populus Euphratica trees park …… you will not have imagined that one can experience the enchanting golden autumn colour in an oasis. Well, a picture paints a thousand words.
In the evening we may visit the local bazaar and food courts which is also an interesting site.
Overnight in Shaya local 4*Hotel.
DAY 09 THURSDAY 24Oct  XAYAR - KUQA (B/L/D)
After breakfast, we will be heading to Sun Island to capture the populous euphratica trees reflection while strolling around the Euphratica lake.

In the late afternoon, we will arrive in Kuqa city. Lying in the northwestern part of Xinjiang, between the middle ranges of Tianshan Mountains and Tarim basin, Kuqa is an oasis surrounded by mountains and the Taklimakan Desert; an important hub on the ancient Silk Road.

Known by the name of Qiuci in ancient times, Kuqa is located at a juncture along the ancient Silk Road, linking China to the West. Late professor, Ji Xianlin, a master scholar of oriental studies, said that Qiuci was the only place in the world, where the civilizations of ancient India, Greece, Rome, Persian and China mixed with one another. As the meeting point of eastern and western cultures, Qiuci Kingdom progressed in terms of Buddhist architectures, sculpture, paintings, music and literature, and left profound influences on its neighboring countries and central China.

Overnight in Kuqa local 5* hotel
DAY 10 FRIDAY 25Oct  KUQA – TIANSHAN GRAND CANYON – SALT VALLEY – KUQA (B/L/D)
After breakfast, we shall explore the highlight of the mysterious Grand Canyon of Tianshan Mountain.
Besides the time-honored and brilliant Qiuci culture, Kuqa is also bestowed with magnificent and spectacular nature landscapes. One can find the magnificent landform of Yardang in this land, and the mysterious Tianshan Canyon, 5.5 kilometers long, which is praised as one of the most beautiful canyons of China.

We will visit the imposing Salt Water Valley along the way, parts of it was the prehistoric ocean floor, and parts of the Tianshan Mountain resembles Potala palace after wind erosion of millions years ago.
After lunch, we will visit the old city of Kuqa and it’s Grand Mosque.
When wandering around the **old town of Kuqa and its new district**, one must feel like the history and presence of this time-honored city is unfolding before their eyes. Architecture of the old town includes typical Uygur folk buildings, and it was recognized by the State Council, as well as enlisted into the catalogue of National Famous Towns of History and Culture. Together with Kashgar, Kuqa is praised as the living fossil for studying the cultures of ancient Western Regions of China.

**Overnite in KUQA local 5* Hotel**

**DAY 11 SATURDAY 26Oct LUNTAI - Tarim River - Taklimakan desert - Lunnan (B/L/D)**

After breakfast, we shall start our drive to the **Taklimakan Desert**, by crossing the desert, the second largest shift desert in the world, today we shall enjoy

(i) Starting point of the **Desert highway** – hopefully can meet some shepherd shepherding their animal across the trees and dust.

(ii) **Tarim River Bridge**

(iii) **Wild Populus national park** – the biggest in China – take a **train to the central** area of the forest to enjoy the view.....
(iv) **Taklimakan Desert** – reach the center of the desert, experience the endless desert landscape (SAND DUNE, can see some gas fields (BUT NO PHOTO here), the longest desert highway in Asia built for transport gas out, the road protected by grid bay, the method introduced from Israel.

(v) Enjoy the **setting sun across the desert and the populous forest** if time and weather permit.

Overnight in Lunnan Sanbao Grand Hotel local 4*

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**DAY 12 SUNDAY 27Oct  LUNNAN – KORLA - URUMQI ( B/L/D)**

After AN EARLY breakfast, we shall drive to Urumqi.

Today will be a long drive, enroute for lunch and expected to arrive URUMQI in the late evening. Along the way, you will be able to see the many windmill power stations, the Iron Gate Pass, the ancient pass connecting the south and north Xinjiang and you can enjoy another range landscape of the Tianshan mountain. Passing be Korla, the largest petroleum city in Xinjiang.

Dinner at a local restaurant near to the URUMQI bazaar where we can do some shopping before heading to our hotel.

Overnite in URUMQI local 5* hotel
DAY 13  MONDAY  28Oct  Depart URUMQI  (B)

Breakfast at the hotel.
Free and easy until transfer time to the airport for our departure flight @ 1015 and expected to arrive Kuala Lumpur by 2300 via *Beijing on Air China. (flight schedule subject to change)
*any one who like to make a few days stop-over in Beijing on your own may do so, end of Oct is also a good period to do a side-tour in Beijing to appreciate their autumn like the Gingko trees park.
The flow of itinerary may be subjected to change according to local conditions at the time of visit which is beyond our control. Weather is mild in the day time between 23C to 15C and drop after sunset (around 7.00pm) and before sunrise (around 8.00am) which is 10C to 5C (average – subject to change).

Washroom / toilet facilities
You may be concerned about the toilet along the way, kindly take note
a) There are new toilet along the highway.
b) Our coach will provide a mobile foldable tent-toilet which can be used where applicable. Want to experience, you will have to join us to find out 😊

More Information on Xinjiang

Xinjiang is situated in the northeastern border area of China. It borders Mongolia, Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, among others. In China, it adjoins Tibet, Qinghai, Gansu and other provinces. Its geographical position is at 73° 41' - 96° 18' east longitude and 34° 25' - 49° north latitude.
Xinjiang is a multi-ethnic populated area where there are a total of 47 ethnic compositions, including minorities of Han, Uygur, Kazak, Hui, Kirgiz, Mongolian, Tajik and Xibe, Manchu, Uzbek, Russians, Daur, Tatar and other native minorities of 13. Now there are the rest of the Dongxiang, Zhuang, Salar, Tibetan, Yi, Buyi, Korean and other 55 ethnic groups.
Xinjiang boasts rich and diverse tourist resources. Landscapes here are both unique and beautiful. If you come here, you will be attracted by wild landscapes and particular combination of natural sights. Here, you can see snow-capped mountains stand in very hot land, and deserts neighbor on oases.
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Costing based on min group size of 16 adults and max group size of 26 pax only)

a) Ground Arrangement Twin-sharing per person  @MYR 5,790.00*
b) Single supplement @MYR 1,800.00
c) International & Domestic Air ticket on Air China estimated  @MYR 3,690.00**
d) Optionals
   (i) China Visa Single entry @MYR 130.00
   (ii) Travel Insurance @MYR 86.00

Inclusive
a) Local 5* hotel accommodation in big cities like Kashgar/Aksu/Kuqa/Urumqi
   Local 4* hotel accommodation in smaller town Xayar / Lunnan
b) Daily breakfast/ lunch / dinner as per itinerary
c) Entrances fees & Green Shuttle buses tickets
d) Private tour air conditioned coach ( 38 seater for group of 16-20 / 48 seater for group size of 24-26 )
e) English speaking local guide
f) Tipping for driver and guide
g) Non-shopping stop tour
h) Bottled Drinking water during the tour
   i) **Econ air ticket from KUL to Kashgar // Urumqi – KUL including taxes & surcharges, however air ticket
c) rate quoted maybe subjected to change at the time of booking, it may be lesser/more than estimation.
d) *The ground arrangement tour fare is based on the exchange rate of 1USD : 4.15MYR and may be
subjected to change and charged accordingly upon final full balance of payment.

The above rate do not include (i) tipping to bell boys (ii) your personal expenses (iii) any item not mentioned
in the itinerary.

Booking
a) Deposit payment @MYR4,000.00 per person upon booking
b) Balance of Payment by end of Aug 2019 (TBA)

Enquiry & Booking  :  laura@elsoltravel.com