



MODERATISSEMENT

# Centrum

N°6 | Summer-Autumn 2025

Travel magazine

The Silk Road:  
Threads of Destiny

The Season's  
Must-Travel Routes

The Spices that  
Changed History

When a Pilot Met  
a Photographer...





## Tashkent City Mall: The Future of Retail in the Heart of Tashkent

Tashkent City Mall is located in the very heart of Tashkent, as part of the ambitious \$1.5 billion Tashkent City urban development project. It is exceptionally well connected to the city's infrastructure through major transportation hubs and is within close proximity to popular tourist attractions and residential neighborhoods. The mall also offers direct access to the "Paxtakor" metro station.





# BI GROUP. Where New Life Begins.

For over 30 years, we've been creating spaces you'll love to live in!



## 5 REASONS TO FALL IN LOVE WITH BI GROUP

### 1. 30 Years of International Trust

We don't just build homes – we create reliable investments and a secure future for our clients.

BI Group has delivered thousands of projects and is now actively developing in Tashkent, upholding the highest quality and safety standards.

The first complex – BI Botanik Sarayi – was completed ahead of schedule, proving our responsibility and commitment to deadlines.

### 2. Premium Architecture & Thoughtful Layouts

Our projects combine style, technology, and comfort.

Panoramic windows, ceilings up to 3.3 meters, energy-efficient materials, modern facades, high-quality finishes, and a variety of layouts – everything is designed for living, not just for show.

### 3. Safe & Comfortable Spaces

We create car-free courtyards, green areas, playgrounds, and well-lit sunny spaces.

Each complex is equipped with 24/7 CCTV, fire safety systems, and smart home features – so you feel calm, safe, and protected.

### 4. Owning Your Own Apartment is Within Reach

You can purchase property in installments of up to 16 months with no extra charges or take advantage of flexible mortgage terms.

A three-year warranty on every home – above the market standard – gives you confidence in your investment.

### 5. BI Group is a Lifestyle

We create not just square meters, but a complete environment: shops, services, infrastructure, green courtyards, and mobility for residents.

With the launch of new BI Group projects in Tashkent, your dream home is now closer than ever.

**BI Group – Live Happily!**





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## SET OFF ON A GASTRONOMIC JOURNEY

Through the restaurants of the culinary alliance  
Novikov Group & Family Garden in Tashkent



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**Lali**  
УЗБЕКСКАЯ КУХНЯ

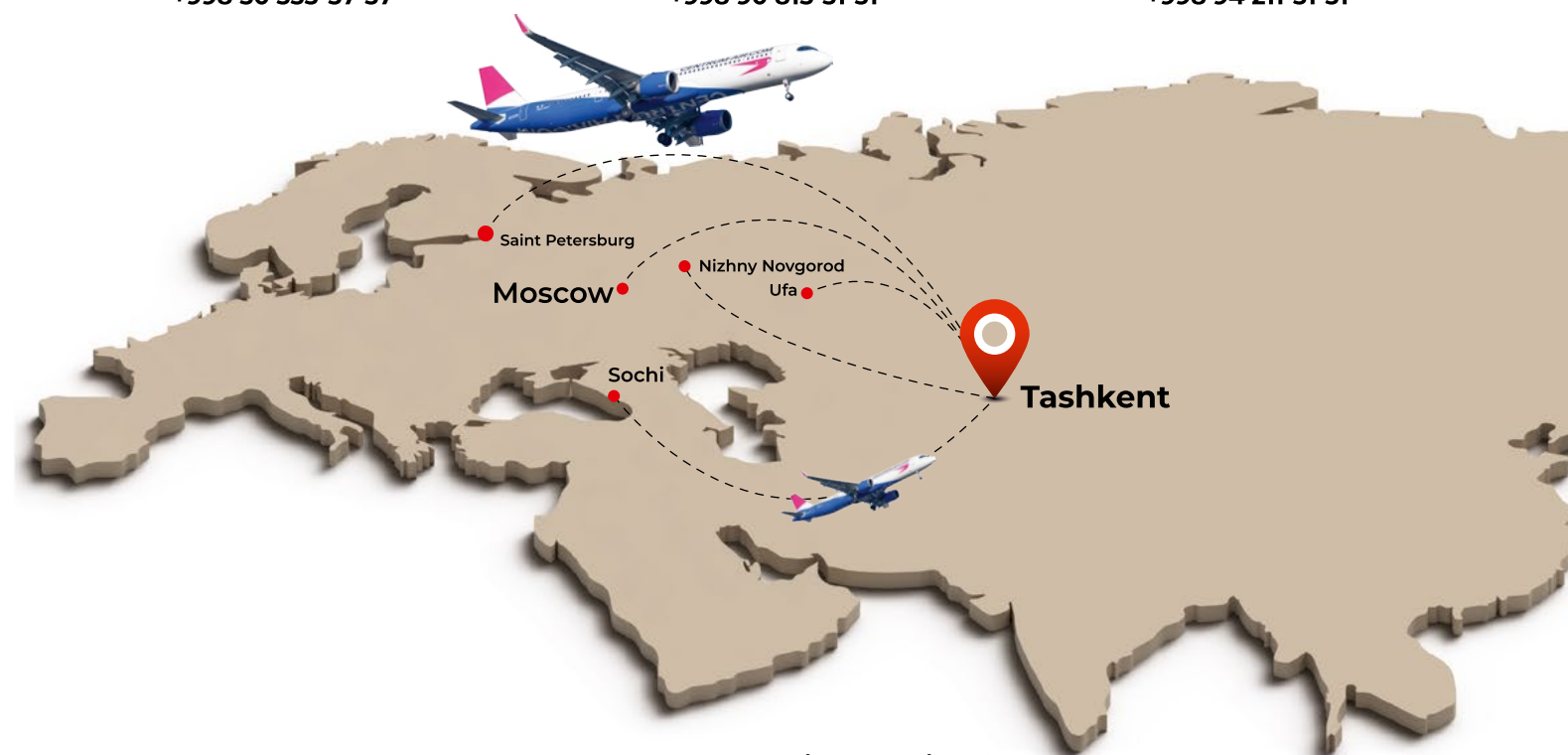
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Stay tuned in Uzbekistan:



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**ALL ROADS LEAD TO TASHKENT!**

Detailed information about the restaurants is available at [familygarden.su](http://familygarden.su)



# Hilton Tashkent City

We Are **HILTON** We are **HOSPITALITY**

**Rooms** 258 luxury rooms, including 50 Suites and 8 Presidential Suites designed in 4 unique styles

**Ballroom** 728 sq. m with an outdoor terrace

**Meeting rooms** 5 multifunctional meeting rooms for conferences and social events

**Restaurants & Bars** Shosh Restaurant, Tumbler Bar, Lobby Lounge, City 21 Pan Asian Restaurant & Lounge on the 21st floor

**Health center** swimming pool with hydromassage bath, Serenity Spa, steam and dry sauna, fitness centre



## Hilton Tashkent City – The Epitome of Style and Comfort

Located in the heart of the capital, Hilton Tashkent City has been recognized as Uzbekistan's Best Business Hotel by the World Travel Awards 2024. Here, elegance meets impeccable service, creating the perfect setting for both business trips and leisure stays.

The hotel offers 258 rooms, including a luxurious Presidential Suite. On the 21st floor, City21 restaurant delights guests with exquisite Pan-Asian cuisine and breathtaking city views, while Tumbler Bar serves signature cocktails and Mediterranean flavors. Spacious conference halls and a grand banquet venue cater to events of any scale, and Serenity Spa, featuring a pool, sauna, and indulgent treatments, ensures ultimate relaxation.

Hilton Tashkent City is more than just a hotel—it's a destination where unforgettable memories and exceptional experiences are made.





*“To the West, to the East”*

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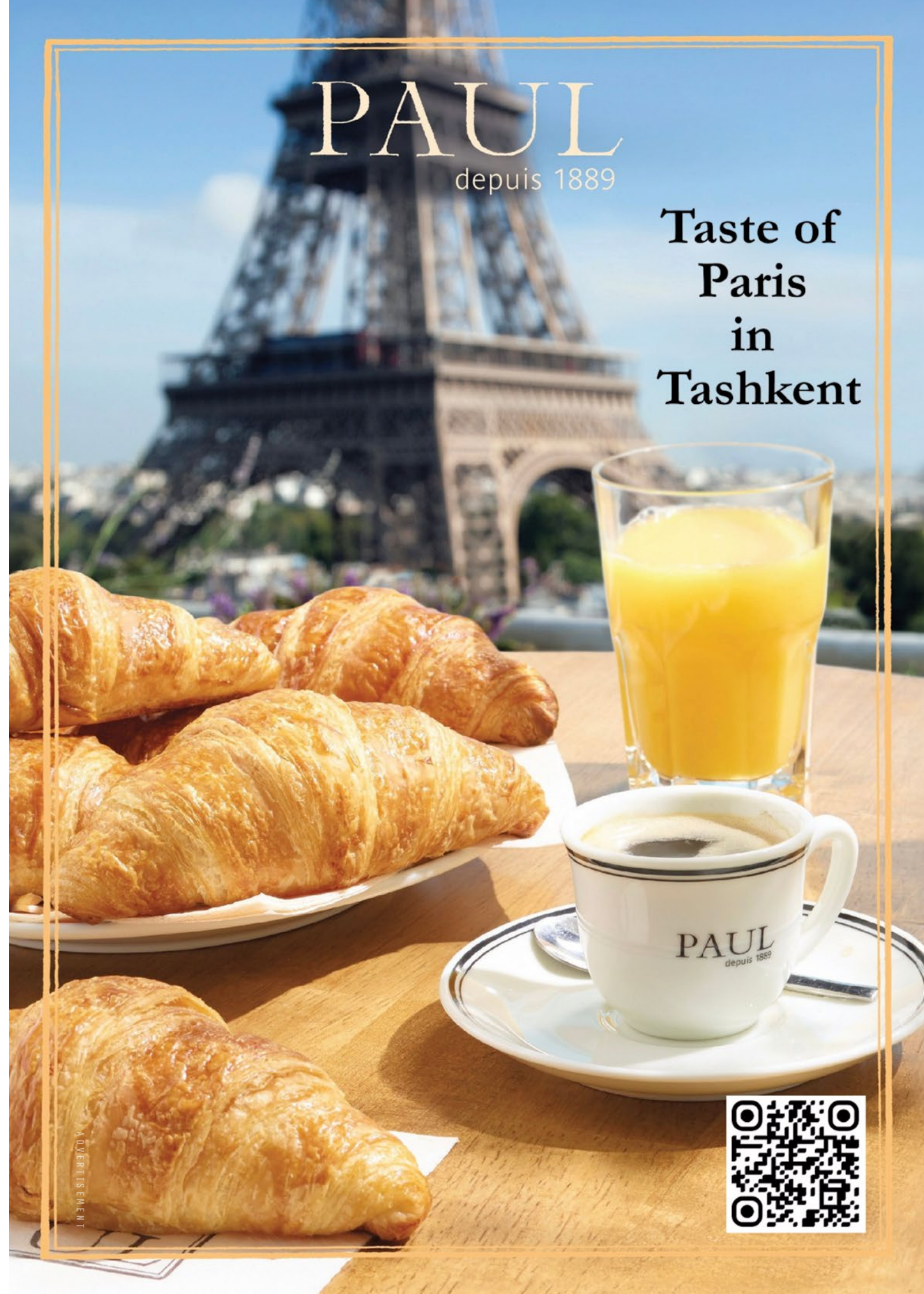
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# Centrum

Travel magazine

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# Chortoq

Chortoq Premium —  
artesian water filled  
with the power of nature





## DEAR FRIENDS,

**F**or centuries, the Great Silk Road was more than a trade route – it was a bridge between civilizations, a channel through which ideas, cultures, and values traveled freely. It connected East and West, fostering dialogue, trust, and co-operation across vast distances. These caravans carried more than just silk and spices – they propelled entire civilizations forward.

At Centrum Holding, we are honored to carry this legacy into the modern era. Today's Silk Road takes shape not in the desert sands, but in the skies and in the flow of global transport and logistics. As we expand our reach across continents, we strive to connect cities, regions, and people more swiftly and efficiently than ever before.

In a time of shifting global dynamics, we place our focus on innovation, resilience, and operational excellence. Our group continues to grow with confidence – modernizing systems, improving service quality, and developing forward-thinking solutions in both cargo and passenger aviation.

Guided by the spirit of the ancient Silk Road, we look ahead with ambition: to build stronger international partnerships, contribute to sustainable regional growth, and provide real value to our clients and communities.

We hope this issue will offer a glimpse into how history lives on in today's journeys – and into the vision that drives us forward.

*Respectfully,*  
*General Director of Centrum Holdings,*  
**Abdulaziz Abdurakhmanov**







Centrum Holding is a family of brands uniting companies in aviation, logistics, cargo transportation, and tourism. We are building an ecosystem that makes travel more accessible, logistics more efficient, and businesses more scalable.



Centrum Air offers affordable and convenient flights on modern aircraft. We are constantly expanding our route network and enhancing our services, with plans to grow our fleet to 14 aircraft and add 15 new destinations this year.



Centrum Holidays, officially recognized as a national tour operator since late 2024, specializes in comprehensive inbound and outbound tourism. We have developed 13 tour programs across the most picturesque locations, secured 500 direct contracts with hotels, engaged 350 professional guides, and established partnerships with 2,300 travel agencies. With Centrum Holidays, we are opening Uzbekistan to the world – and the world to you.

## MY FREIGHTER

My Freighter is the leading cargo airline in Central Asia, specializing in commercial freight transportation and handling over 60% of Uzbekistan's air cargo. Our primary goal is to ensure reliable deliveries, supporting businesses and trade connections worldwide. This year, we plan to expand our fleet to 13 aircraft, making freight transportation even faster and more efficient.



Centrum Logistics Group is a top-tier multimodal operator providing innovative logistics solutions. We transport thousands of tons of cargo in 7,000 containers, using 350 trailers and 500 railway platforms to ensure timely deliveries across the globe.



UzLogistic offers comprehensive logistics services, including warehousing, transportation, and multimodal freight solutions. We guarantee secure storage and fast cargo handling at state-of-the-art logistics hubs strategically located across key points in Uzbekistan.



Co-Founder of Centrum Holding  
**Khafizjon Gafurov**



# TOP-5

NEW DESTINATIONS



# Baku



Located on the shores of the Caspian Sea, Baku is a city where East meets West and ancient history blends with modern technology. Whether you're exploring historic streets, admiring breathtaking panoramas, diving into culinary discoveries, or strolling along the seaside promenade – Baku offers unforgettable experiences to every visitor. Come to breathe in the fresh sea air, wander through the historic Icherisheher, taste fragrant plov, and feel the vibrant pulse of this dynamic metropolis.

## To visit



↑ Visit the **Maiden Tower** — a mysterious 12th-century structure offering panoramic views of the city

↓ Stroll along the **Seaside Boulevard**, enjoying views of the Caspian Sea



↑ Admire the **Gobustan Petroglyphs**, over 40,000 years old

← Explore the **Palace of the Shirvanshahs** — a majestic 15th-century architectural complex







- ↑ Appreciate the futuristic design of the **Heydar Aliyev Center**, created by the renowned architect Zaha Hadid
- ← Soak up the atmosphere of **Icherisheher** — the Old City with narrow lanes and caravanserais



- ↑ Walk through **Fountain Square**, full of cozy cafés, shops, and street musicians
- ← Visit **Yanar Dag**, the burning mountain where natural gas flames rise straight from the ground
- ↓ Discover **Oil Rocks**, a unique floating town built on offshore oil platforms





## Taste

- 1 **Shah Plov** – the Azerbaijani take on plov: fragrant rice with meat, dried fruits, and spices
- 2 **Dolma** – grape leaves stuffed with meat and rice
- 3 **Shashlik** – tender meat grilled over charcoal
- 4 **Qutab** – thin flatbreads filled with meat, greens, or pumpkin
- 5 **Shekerbura** – sweet pastries with a nut filling
- 6 **Azerbaijani Tea** – strong tea served with jam and dried fruits
- 7 **Baklava** – sweet, flaky dessert with nuts and honey



## Be sure to bring back:

- 1 **Fragrant Azerbaijani tea** and a **traditional armud** (pear-shaped glass)
- 2 **Sherbet and baklava** – sweets with Eastern charm
- 3 **Handcrafted items and jewelry** featuring Azerbaijani national motifs
- 4 **Local spices** – cumin, saffron, sumac
- 5 Traditional **handmade carpets** with ancient patterns






# Istanbul



## To visit



- ↑ **Hagia Sophia** — a breathtaking fusion of Byzantine and Ottoman architecture
- ← **Topkapi Palace** — the opulent residence of Ottoman sultans, full of treasures and intrigue

 **CENTRUMAIR**

REGULAR FLIGHTS TO ISTANBUL

from \$159

**Tashkent**  
TAS

5 h 30 min

**Istanbul**  
IST

The only city in the world to straddle two continents, Istanbul is where cultures, eras, and traditions converge. Here, Eastern opulence meets European elegance, and ancient history lives side by side with vibrant modern life. Wander through time-worn streets, discover the majestic palaces of sultans, soak in panoramic views along the Bosphorus, and savor dishes steeped in the legacy of great civilizations.



TO THE WEST, TO THE EAST

→ **The Grand Bazaar** — a centuries-old maze of shops, spices, and colorful handicrafts



26 | AUGUST / 2025

↑ **Bosphorus Walk** — stroll along the shoreline and witness where Europe meets Asia

← **Blue Mosque** — the iconic six-minaret mosque with graceful domes



← **Dolmabahçe Palace** — an European-style marvel on the Bosphorus waterfront



↑ **Bosphorus Ferry Ride** — cross continents with a cup of tea and postcard-worthy views



↑ **Galata Tower** — panoramic views from one of Istanbul's oldest landmarks

→ **Istiklal Avenue** — a lively pedestrian street with cafés, shops, and a vintage tram



27





1



2



5



3



6



4

## Taste

- 1 **Kebab** – charcoal-grilled, juicy meats bursting with flavor
- 2 **Turkish coffee** – strong, thick, and rich in tradition
- 3 **Mercimek soup** – comforting lentil soup, a local favorite
- 4 **Simit** – crispy sesame-covered street bread
- 5 **Baklava** – flaky layers with nuts and sweet syrup
- 6 **Balık ekmek** – fresh fish sandwiches by the waterfront
- 7 **Imam bayıldı** – melt-in-your-mouth stuffed eggplants



7

## Be sure to bring back:

- 1 **Turkish delight & halva** – sweet souvenirs of Istanbul's culinary heritage
- 2 **Tea & coffee** – for cozy moments back home
- 3 **Shawls & scarves** with Ottoman patterns
- 4 **Ceramic plates & tiles** featuring classic designs
- 5 **Aromatic spices** like saffron, cumin, and turmeric



1



4

3



2



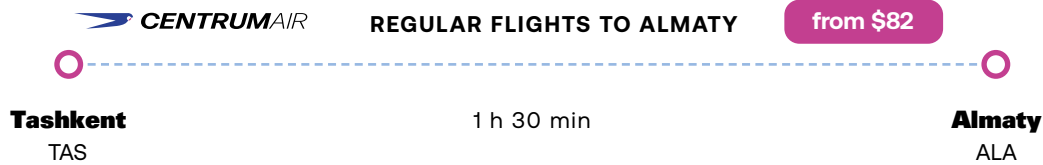
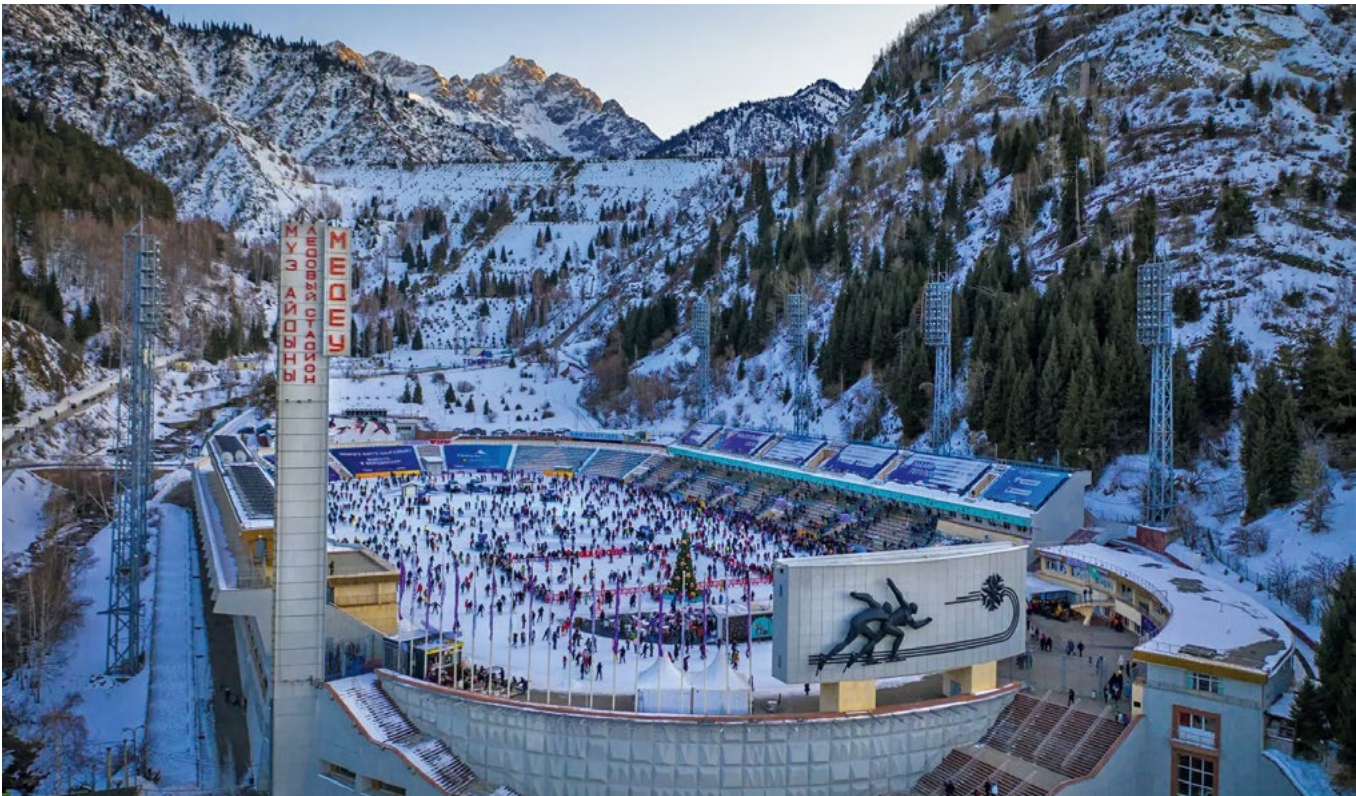
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# Almaty



## To visit



Nestled at the foot of the majestic Zailiyskiy Alatau mountains, Almaty is a city where nature and urban life blend into a unique rhythm. Eastern traditions meet modern trends here, and a rich cultural heritage harmonizes with the fast-paced energy of a metropolis. Almaty is about slow walks beneath poplar trees, the aroma of freshly brewed coffee in trendy cafés, the sound of skates on the legendary Medeu rink, and the warmth of Eastern hospitality. It's not a city to rush through — it's a place to feel deeply.

- ↖ Lace up your skates at Medeu, the world's highest skating rink, surrounded by mountain views
- ↑ Explore **Kasteyev Museum of Arts**, Kazakhstan's largest art museum
- ← Admire the all-wooden **Ascension Cathedral** — a true architectural gem





↑ Snap a photo at the **Viktor Tsoi monument**, a tribute to a cultural icon

→ Ride the cable car to **Kok-Tobe Hill** for sweeping views over Almaty and the snow-capped peaks

↓ Head to **Shymbulak ski resort** for clean alpine air and stunning landscapes



↑ Wander through the bustling **Green Bazaar** to sample and shop for local delicacies

↑ Visit the breathtaking **Big Almaty Lake**, surrounded by rocky ridges and evergreen forests

→ Stroll down the pedestrian-friendly **Panfilov Street**, lined with cafés, musicians, and charm







Taste

- 1 Beshbarmak — a national dish of meat and hand-cut noodles.
- 2 Chak-chak — sweet dough bites glazed with honey.
- 3 Nauryz kozhe — a festive soup made from seven symbolic ingredients.
- 4 Kazy — richly flavored horsemeat sausage.
- 5 Kuirdak — a hearty stir-fry of meat, potatoes, and onions.
- 6 Boursak — fluffy fried dough treats.
- 7 Kymyz — fermented mare's milk with a signature tang.



Be sure to bring back:

- 1 Kazakh chocolate and halva — sweet souvenirs from Almaty
- 2 Jewelry with national motifs — handcrafted earrings, bracelets, and pendants
- 3 Mountain herbal tea — a fragrant taste of Kazakhstan's wild meadows
- 4 Miniature yurts — traditional home replicas made for your shelf
- 5 Woolen goods made from camel and sheep wool — warm gifts from the steppe





# Bangkok



## To visit



- ↑ Visit the stunning **Wat Arun (Temple of Dawn)** on the banks of the Chao Phraya River
- ← Marvel at the enormous **Reclining Buddha** at Wat Pho

 **CENTRUMAIR**

REGULAR FLIGHTS TO BANGKOK

from \$241

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**Tashkent**  
TAS

7 h

**Bangkok**  
BKK

Bangkok is a city that never sleeps. Morning prayers in golden temples flow into the lively chaos of daytime markets, and after sunset, the streets ignite into a vibrant blend of lights, aromas, and music. The air is filled with the spicy scent of Thai cuisine, boats glide through the Chao Phraya canals, and the nightlife pulses through countless bars and neon-lit quarters. Discover dazzling palaces, zip through busy alleys in a tuk-tuk, and taste dishes that crown Bangkok as the culinary capital of Asia.





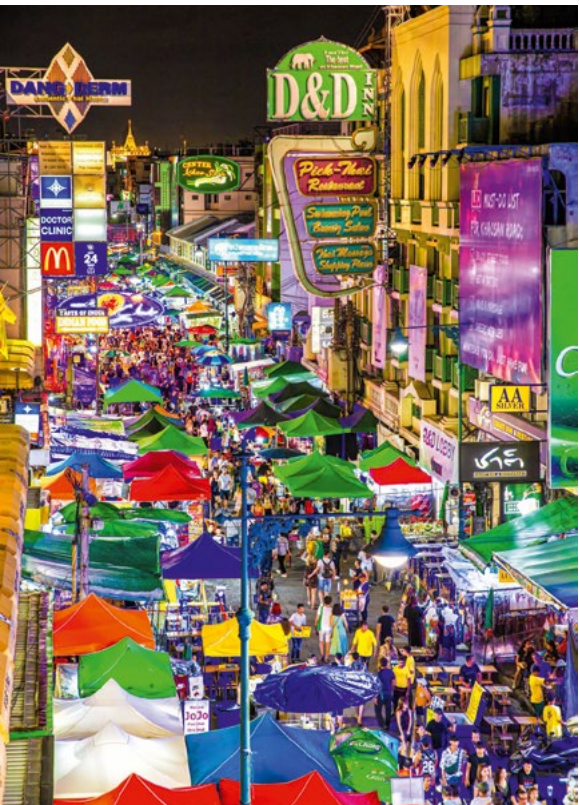
- ← Wander the **Grand Palace**, with its opulent halls and the sacred **Emerald Buddha**
- ↓ Feel the energy of **Chinatown**, a maze of street food, gold shops, and market stalls



- ↑ Take a peaceful stroll through **Lumphini Park**, Bangkok's green oasis
- ← Soar above the skyline at **Baiyoke Sky Tower** or the thrilling Mahanakhon Skywalk



- ← Visit a **floating market**, where vendors sell fruits and snacks straight from their boats
- ↓ Snap a photo with the **Giant Swing (Sao Ching Cha)** — a Bangkok icon



- ↑ Explore the buzzing Khao San Road, a legendary backpacker hub
- Cruise the **khlongs (canals)** by boat to see a different side of the city





# Taste

- 1 **Tom Yum** — a spicy, fragrant shrimp soup with lemongrass and lime
- 2 **Som Tam** — green papaya salad with a fiery kick and crushed peanuts
- 3 **Satay** — grilled meat skewers with creamy peanut sauce
- 4 **Thai tea** — a sweet, spiced milk tea served iced
- 5 **Pad Thai** — stir-fried noodles with shrimp, egg, and tamarind
- 6 **Durian** — the notorious “king of fruits” with a bold aroma and unique flavor
- 7 **Mango sticky rice** — a tropical dessert with coconut milk and sweet glutinous rice



## Be sure to bring back:

- 1 **Thai spices and curry pastes** — to recreate the flavors of Thailand at home
- 2 **Elephant souvenirs** — the symbol of good luck and wisdom
- 3 **Coconut oil and herbal Thai cosmetics** — natural beauty essentials
- 4 **Silk garments** — Thai silk is renowned for its rich texture and quality
- 5 **Herbal teas** — including vibrant butterfly pea flower tea (Anchan)






Seoul



To visit



**REGULAR FLIGHTS TO SEOUL**

from \$232

Tashkent  
TAS

6 h 30 min

Seoul  
ICN

Welcome to Seoul — the city where the future is already here. Life pulses 24/7: by day, it's a fast-paced hub of innovation; by night, it becomes a glowing neon universe filled with music, street food, and endless energy. This is the trend capital where fashion, tech, and pop culture collide to create a vibrant atmosphere you'll feel the moment you arrive. Get swept up in the buzz of bustling neighborhoods, snack your way through lively street stalls, ride the cable car up to N Seoul Tower, and take a breath by the tranquil banks of the Han River. Seoul is pure energy, flavor, and style — ready to be absorbed.

- ↖ Visit **Gyeongbokgung Palace**, the main royal palace of the Joseon dynasty, and watch the ceremonial guard changing
- ↑ Stroll through **Bukchon Hanok Village**, a charming historic district with traditional Korean houses
- ← Take in sweeping city views from **N Seoul Tower**, Seoul's iconic observation point





↑ Explore **Hongdae**, the heart of youth culture, street art, and hip cafés

→ Wander **Dongdaemun Design Plaza (DDP)** – Zaha Hadid’s futuristic masterpiece and the core of Korea’s fashion scene

↓ Enjoy countless impressions at **Lotte World Park**



← Be amazed by the grandeur of the **Starfield Library**



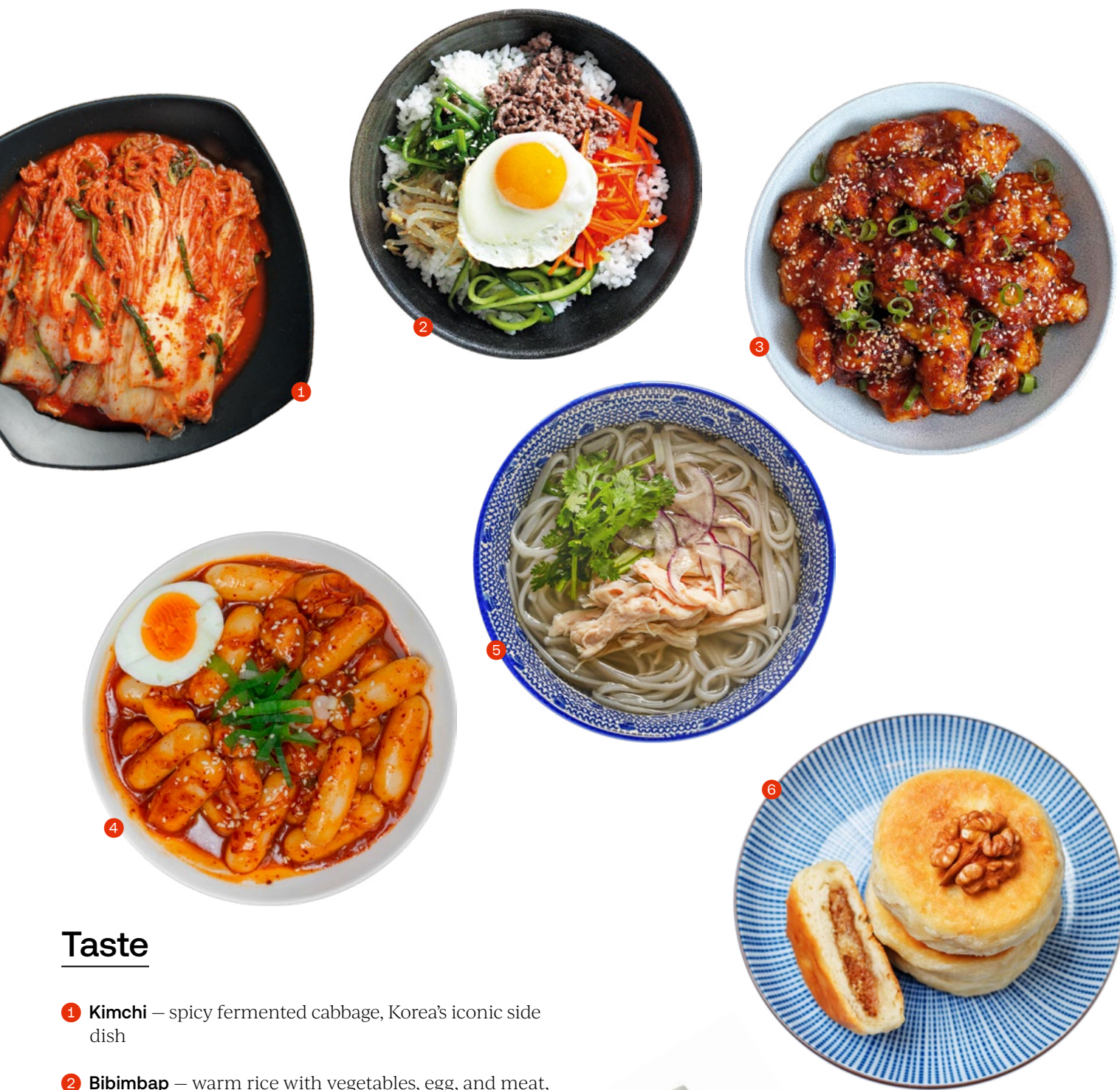
← Dive into an unforgettable shopping adventure in **Myeongdong**

↓ Visit **Jogyesa temple** – a buddhist sanctuary in the heart of the city, especially stunning during the lantern festival



↑ Unwind in **Hangang Park**, a riverside oasis with bike paths and picnic spots





## Taste

- 1 **Kimchi** — spicy fermented cabbage, Korea's iconic side dish
- 2 **Bibimbap** — warm rice with vegetables, egg, and meat, mixed with gochujang paste
- 3 **Chimaek** — the cult combo of crispy fried chicken and ice-cold beer
- 4 **Tteokbokki** — chewy rice cakes in spicy-sweet red sauce
- 5 **Myeongdong Kalguksu** — handmade noodles in rich chicken broth
- 6 **Hotteok** — warm pancakes stuffed with cinnamon, nuts, and brown sugar
- 7 **Makgeolli** — traditional creamy rice wine with a soft, tangy finish

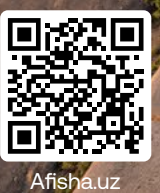


## Be sure to bring back:

- 1 **Traditional teas** — like yuzu citrus or ginseng blends
- 2 **K-Beauty essentials** — sheet masks, serums, and skincare favorites
- 3 **Snacks & sweets** — portable bites that make perfect souvenirs
- 4 **Red ginseng** — Korea's beloved superfood
- 5 **Hand-painted ceramics** — teapots, bowls, and cups with character
- 6 **Pop Mart's designer figures** — a surprise in every box!



# With your own eyes: events worth witnessing



Regular flights


**from \$53\***

sums at [centrum-air.com](https://centrum-air.com)



**Tashkent**  
TAS

↓ 1 h 25 min ↓

**Urgench**  
UGC





## MELON FESTIVAL “KOVUN SAYLI”

 **When:** August 8–10  
 **Where:** Khiva, Uzbekistan

At the height of summer, right in the heart of the Ichan-Kala fortress, one of Uzbekistan’s most vibrant celebrations takes place – the “Kovun sayli” Melon Festival. Over 120 varieties of juicy, fragrant melons, dozens of farmer pavilions, tastings straight from the stalls, tightrope walking performances, folklore shows, and a traditional crafts fair – all this creates the unique atmosphere of an oriental bazaar. Come see for yourself how the hotter the sun, the sweeter the melon.



## COMIC CON TASHKENT 2025

 **When:** August 10  
 **Where:** Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Comic Con Tashkent 2025 is a long-awaited gathering for lovers of movies, comics, gaming, and cosplay. One day, thousands of fans, iconic characters, fan zones, themed markets, and special guests from the world of pop culture. It’s more than a festival – it’s a place where dreams come true, and you become part of something legendary. Be there. Feel your universe come to life.

REGULAR FLIGHTS

**from \$44\***


NUKUS → 1 h 30 min → TASHKENT





**LIMP BIZKIT CONCERT**


 **When:** August 15


 **Where:** Almaty, Kazakhstan

The monsters of the global alt-rock scene are coming back to Kazakhstan with a massive solo show! Limp Bizkit brings explosive energy, bold sound, iconic style, and unforgettable performances. In 2021, the band made a loud comeback with their first studio album in a decade, instantly becoming a sensation in the heavy music world. Expect a real show in Almaty – loud, powerful, and legendary.



**AIRSHOW “BAISERKE SKY - 2025”**


 **When:** August 17


 **Where:** Almaty, Kazakhstan

Thousands of spectators, roaring engines, and skies filled with loops and aerobatics – “Baiserke Sky – 2025” is set to be the region’s biggest aviation event. It will bring together top pilots, skydivers, model aircraft enthusiasts, and everyone who can’t imagine life without the thrill of flight. Expect breathtaking aerial stunts, parachute jumps, a flying parade, live performances, and entertainment for the whole family.



**ANDREA BOCELLI**

 **When:** September 1


 **Where:** Samarkand

On the iconic Registan square, the legendary Italian tenor will perform beloved classical arias and timeless hits, accompanied by the National symphony orchestra of Uzbekistan and a choir. The evening will also feature special

guest Aida Garifullina. Set against the epic backdrop of a world-famous architectural ensemble, Bocelli’s majestic voice and the cultural resonance of the event promise a breathtaking fusion of global artistry and local spirit.

**PARK LIVE ALMATY FESTIVAL**

 **When:** September 4 — 7

 **Where:** Almaty, Kazakhstan

The leading music festival in Central Asia returns! Park Live Almaty is back for its second edition, bringing global music legends and tens of thousands of fans together for four unforgettable days of live music and cultural connection.

In 2025, headliners include the legendary Robbie Williams, rock icon Marilyn Manson, electronic magician Alan Walker, and the atmospheric Norwegian duo Röyksopp. Also on the lineup: Apashe with a full orchestra and Elderbrook, the voice of a new wave in electronic music.



REGULAR FLIGHTS

from \$82\*

TASHKENT

→ 1 h 30 min →


ALMATY








**INTERNATIONAL ART BIENNALE**

 **When:** September 5 — November 20

 **Where:** Bukhara, Uzbekistan

For the first time this fall, the ancient city of Bukhara will host the International Art Biennale — a large-scale cultural event curated by Diana Campbell (Samdani Art Foundation, Bangladesh). The debut biennale is themed "Recipes for Broken Hearts", a poetic reference inspired by the legend of Avicenna and his healing pilaf.

Over 70 artists from around the world — including Antony Gormley, Subodh Gupta, and the art collective Slavs and Tatars — will present their works in Bukhara's historic settings, from the Mir-i-Arab madrasa to the iconic Kalyan minaret. Guests can look forward to exhibitions, performances, culinary projects, and a completely new perspective on art as a means of healing.



**JONAS KAUFMANN IN CONCERT**

 **When:** September 15


 **Where:** Istanbul, Turkey


World-renowned tenor Jonas Kaufmann will give a solo performance at Zorlu PSM, a venue known for its perfect acoustics and refined atmosphere. The program will feature masterpieces of Italian, French, and German opera

— performed by the voice that has graced the stages of La Scala, the Metropolitan Opera, and Bayreuth. A rare chance to witness Kaufmann live — this evening promises a true celebration of classical music.




**MAX KORZH CONCERT**

 **When:** September 6

 **Where:** Almaty, Kazakhstan

The Central Stadium of Almaty will host a long-awaited show by Max Korzh, one of the most powerful performers of his generation. His concerts are known for their emotional energy, live sound, and thousands of voices singing in unison. Expect a mix of beloved hits and new tracks — an unforgettable night for all his fans.

**FORMULA 1 — AZERBAIJAN GRAND PRIX 2025**

 **When:** September 18 — 21

 **Where:** Baku, Azerbaijan

Imagine the roar of Formula 1 engines echoing through the ancient streets of a UNESCO-listed city on the shores of the Caspian Sea — once a vital port along the Great Silk Road. The Azerbaijan Grand Prix is known as one of the fastest street circuits on the calendar: 340 km/h on straight sections, with sharp turns along Baku's narrow alleys. It's not just a race — it's a spectacle of speed in a unique urban setting.



REGULAR FLIGHTS

from \$147\*

TASHKENT



→ 3 h 5 min →

BAKU







**BEL SUONO — PIANO TRIO CONCERT**

 **When:** October 10  
 **Where:** Tashkent, Uzbekistan

The Palace of Friendship of Peoples in Tashkent will host the dazzling performance of Bel Suono — a trio of virtuoso pianists whose "Three Grand Pianos Show" blends classical and contemporary music. Founded in 2011, the ensemble captivates audiences with creative arrangements and energetic stage presence, turning every concert into a musical feast.



**VIENNA STRAUSS PHILHARMONIE ORCHESTRA**



 **When:** October 16  
 **Where:** Baku, Azerbaijan

An enchanting evening of music awaits at the Baku Convention Center, where the Vienna Strauss Philharmonie Orchestra will perform works by Mozart, Brahms, Haydn, Albinoni, Bach, Kalman, and of course, the legendary Strauss family.

The orchestra features 27 virtuoso musicians from Austria, Hungary, Japan, Ukraine, Germany, Poland, Taiwan, Croatia, and Cyprus — specially selected for this international tour. Conducted by charismatic maestro András László Deák, the concert will be a true celebration of Viennese musical heritage.



**BALLET "THE NUTCRACKER"**



 **When:** October 11  
 **Where:** Baku, Azerbaijan

A cultural highlight awaits at the Heydar Aliyev Palace in Baku with the two-act ballet "The Nutcracker" performed by the Royal Classical Ballet. Known for full-length productions with rich sets, historical costumes, and

multimedia projections, the troupe brings a fresh and spectacular interpretation to this holiday classic. Other masterpieces of world ballet will also be staged at this venue during the season.



**OASIS LIVE '25**

 **When:** October 21  
 **Where:** Seoul, South Korea


This fall, Goyang Stadium will become the epicenter for thousands of British rock fans. Oasis — the band that became the symbol of 90s Britpop and inspired an entire generation — returns to the big stage with a powerful show and timeless hits.


Founded in Manchester, Oasis quickly became a cult band, defining the sound of an era. Their album "(What's the Story) Morning Glory?" sold millions of copies, and songs like Wonderwall, Don't Look Back in Anger, and Champagne Supernova still echo as anthems of youth. In 2025, their music is back on tour — loud, stylish, and with that signature British swagger.





**THE RASMUS**


 **When:** October 29


 **Where:** Tashkent, Uzbekistan

For the first time ever in Uzbekistan – the legendary The Rasmus! The Finnish rockers will perform in Tashkent with their greatest hits and tracks from their new album. “This album reflects

our new sound... it’s becoming the heaviest and darkest in our career so far,” says frontman Lauri Ylönen. A global tour, raw energy, and unforgettable music – don’t miss this powerful show!

**RED BULL TETRIS: NATIONAL FINAL**


 **When:** November 1

 **Where:** Tashkent, Uzbekistan

The game that conquered the world is leveling up! Uzbekistan’s top players will face off live on stage, testing their reflexes in a spectacular showdown. Expect a vibrant show, competitive thrill, and epic battles – all in the electrifying world of the iconic video game, powered by Red Bull energy. Want to be at the heart of it all? Come cheer on the finalists and dive into the game that never goes out of style.



**THE ROMANTIC ITALIAN TENORS**


 **When:** November 2


 **Where:** Baku, Azerbaijan

Italian tenors Gianluca Paganelli, Fabio Andreotti, and Mauro De Santis will perform in Baku with a program of global hits and operatic classics, accompanied by a symphony orchestra. Get ready for Granada, Besame Mucho, O Sole Mio, The Godfather, Cinema Paradiso, and the Russian favorite Dark Eyes. An evening of grand vocals and Italian passion you simply can’t miss!



**DEEP PURPLE LIVE IN CONCERT**

 **When:** November 16

 **Where:** Tbilisi, Georgia

This fall, a historic concert will take place at Tbilisi Sports Palace – Deep Purple takes the stage! The British rock legends will deliver the hits that have defined generations, along with the electrifying live energy that no studio recording can match. Smoke on the Water, Highway Star, and more timeless tracks will be performed as part of their world tour. A one-of-a-kind venue and flawless live sound – a night worth traveling to Tbilisi for.

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TBILISI







INTERNATIONAL JEEP SPRINT COMPETITION

When: November 20

Where: Tashkent Region, Uzbekistan

The Jeep Sprint in Parkent brings together off-road motorsport enthusiasts for a high-adrenaline international showdown. On the scenic tracks of the Parkent district, drivers compete in Light and Extreme classes, navigat-

ing tough terrain and showcasing serious driving skill. In addition to thrilling races, guests can enjoy a vibrant program of music, local food, exhibitions, and markets – the perfect mix of excitement and outdoor adventure.

TILL LINDEMANN: MEINE WELT TOUR 2025

When: December 6

Where: Istanbul, Turkey

Istanbul turns up the volume as Rammstein's frontman Till Lindemann takes the stage at Ulker Sports Arena with his solo "Meine Welt" tour.

Expect an explosive mix of new tracks and iconic hits, delivered with Lindemann's signature intensity and unmatched stage presence. With top-tier acoustics and a modern venue, this will be one of the most anticipated rock events of the year.



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# “It all began with spices...”

It's no coincidence that Stefan Zweig mentioned spices at the beginning of his story “Magellan the Conqueror of the Seas” — there's a grain of truth in those words. The spices we now take for granted were once more valuable than gold, and this is no metaphor — a sack of pepper could be used to pay for goods just as well as a sack of gold. Caravans, rulers, and alchemists all pursued these aromas, and today they live in small jars on our kitchen shelves.





The Great Silk Road was not just a caravan route stretching over 10,000 kilometers connecting East and West. It became an artery through which not only goods flowed, but also ideas, technology, culture, and diplomacy. The route was named after one of the greatest treasures of the time — silk — but other goods were just as precious, and spices held a special place among them. The very word “spices” comes from the Latin “species”, meaning “special goods,” which emphasized the exceptional value of these products.

In addition to overland caravans, spices were transported via a vast sea trade network — from the shores of Japan to Europe, covering more than 15,000 kilometers. Sometimes the route crossed the Arabian desert: caravans traveled over 1,800 kilometers, carrying with them the aromas of distant lands.



The spice route was not only long and dangerous — it was also surrounded by legends, often deliberately, to increase the price of what was already an expensive product. For example, the greek historian Herodotus described the harvesting of cinnamon and its tougher variety, cassia, as a feat worthy of an epic. According to him, cinnamon was guarded by fierce birds that built their nests on inaccessible cliffs. Harvesters would lure them with meat; when the birds flew off with the bait, the nests collapsed under the weight, and the spice could be gathered from the ground.

**WHEN SPICES MOVED THE WORLD**

One of the most renowned navigators in history, Christopher Columbus, once wrote: “I am doing everything I can to reach the lands where gold and spices are found.” These treasures were indeed sought across continents, fueling the growth of cities, the formation of trade alliances, and the redrawing of borders.

As early as 2000 BCE, spices like cinnamon from Sri-Lanka and cassia from China were transported along the Silk Road far to the west — reaching the Arabian peninsula and the Iranian plateau. Another of the oldest trading hubs emerged in what is now Oman: in the 4th century BCE, a fortified seaport called Sumhuram appeared in the south of the country, from which merchants traveled to Hadramaut, India, and the Eastern Mediterranean.



*Darius the Great*

Spices are also mentioned in biblical texts. The fertile Jordan Valley was home to herbs like thyme, mint, rosemary, oregano, sage, and sorrel. The territory of present-day Israel has long served as a key crossroads for the Silk Road trade. The south of the country was especially important: in the Negev Desert, archaeologists have uncovered the remains of ancient settlements that once thrived on the incense trade. From these lands, merchants carried frankincense and myrrh — precious aromatic resins valued as highly as gold — to Southern Arabia and the Mediterranean coasts. During the reign of King Solomon, the famous “Spice Route” passed through this region, via the port of Ezion-Geber — known today as Eilat.



*Christopher Columbus*



The importance of the spice trade was so great that Egypt repeatedly attempted to construct a waterway linking the Red Sea to the Mediterranean. This ambitious feat of engineering was pursued at different times by Queen Hatshepsut, Pharaohs Senusret III and Necho I, and even the Persian king Darius I. The resulting canal — later called the Canal of the Pharaohs — would serve as the ancient prototype for one of the most significant shipping routes in the modern world: the Suez Canal.

By the 1st century BCE, Alexandria had become one of the main hubs for the global spice trade. It was at this time that sailors mastered the use of monsoon winds, allowing maritime routes to flourish and enabling ships to transport spices from India not just overland, but directly by sea.



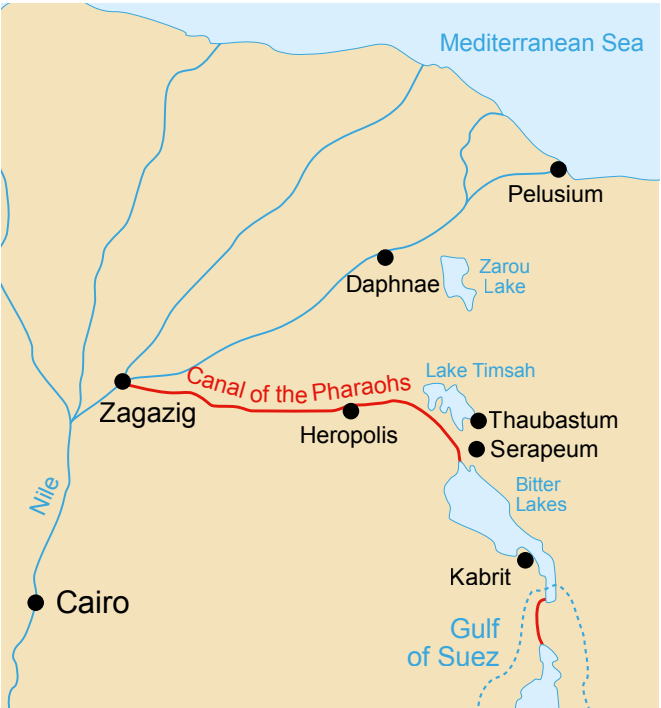
*Lighthouse of Alexandria*

Over time, control over spice routes shifted to Middle Eastern powers. This motivated European nations to seek alternative paths to the East — a fierce ambition that became one of the driving forces behind the Age of Discovery.

The Silk Road also wound its way through the lands of modern Georgia. For centuries, two great empires — Byzantium and Persia — vied for dominance in this strategically vital region. In the 6th century, Svaneti and Lazica were under Byzantine control, while Iberia fell to the Persians. Traders traveling east and west braved turbulent mountain rivers and the harsh passes of the Caucasus. One of the key junctions of these trade routes was the ancient city of Phasis — the capital of the legendary land of Colchis, and a vital commercial hub on this stretch of the Silk Road.

**FROM ROYAL GIFTS TO PLAGUE PROTECTION**

Offering spices to kings wasn't an exaggeration. And not just to kings — the wise men who followed the star from the East brought gifts of frankincense and myrrh to the newborn Jesus. These fragrant resins were revered long before Christianity: in Judaism, they were used in sacrificial rituals and anointing ceremonies.



*Canal of the Pharaohs*

As trade routes developed, spices became more than just items of exchange — they served as bridges between cultures. Along with the spices came knowledge, practices, and beliefs. In many traditions, spices took on sacred meanings. In Hinduism, for example, cardamom was considered a holy plant — it was offered to the gods in temples and used to attain mental clarity and inner harmony. Among Native American tribes, sage was burned to cleanse the home of evil spirits. Peppermint, familiar across many cultures, was used to soothe the mind and relieve anxiety. Like frankincense, many spices were burned in religious ceremonies, believed to carry prayers more swiftly to the heavens.



But the value of spices wasn't just spiritual. During the siege of Rome in 410 AD, Visigoth leader Alaric demanded not only 5,000 pounds of silver but also 3,000 pounds of black pepper as ransom — a clear sign that pepper was worth more than metal. In the dark times of epidemics, belief in the healing power of spices only grew. When the plague swept through Europe, saffron became more expensive than gold. It was seen as a mysterious yet powerful remedy thought to ward off disease.

In the Middle Ages, saffron was attributed with mystical properties. More than just medicine, it was believed to be the key to immortality. Alchemists used it in their attempts to create the legendary elixir of eternal life. Associated with purity, light, and vital energy, saffron seemed the perfect ingredient for a potion that could cheat death.

Another popular kind of elixir was, of course, the love potion. Surrounded by an air of mystery for centuries, spices were key ingredients in ancient recipes to stir passion or win someone's heart.

One such recipe looked something like this:

- 1 part damask rose petals;
- ½ part cinnamon;
- ½ part nutmeg;
- ¼ part clove;
- ¼ part ginger;
- a pinch of saffron;
- 1 teaspoon of honey.

Each of these components was believed to add its own note to the magical harmony of love: rose stood for love itself, cinnamon for warmth, saffron for strength, and honey for sweetness and attachment. All together, the mixture was said to create a potion that the heart and soul would never forget.

**Editor's note:** *This recipe is shared for historical and cultural insight only. When it comes to matters of the heart, we recommend honesty, respect, and truly listening to one another.*

**WHERE SPICES GO, PRESTIGE FOLLOWS**

When spices reached Europe, they didn't just diversify cuisine — they transformed attitudes toward food itself. Before their arrival, the table was meager: meals depended on the season, recipes were simple, and flavor rarely went beyond basic saltiness. Food was a necessity, not a pleasure. But during the Roman empire, spices were already held in high regard and used lavishly. Romans had a passion not only for food but for extravagant feasting. According to popular legend, to prolong their banquets, they would tickle their throats with peacock feathers, empty their stomachs, and return to the feast. The writer Macrobius helped spread this legend in the 4th century through his "Saturnalia". And while the peacock feathers were most likely a myth, the Romans' passion for repeated feasting is beyond doubt.



*Alaric I*

After the fall of the Roman Empire, spices seemed to vanish from Europe's horizon. Trade routes were disrupted, maps lost, and travel became rare. For several centuries, food once again became simple: in the early Middle ages, even the wealthy ate only slightly better than peasants — simply because they could afford more meat.

Salt remained accessible, so groceries were heavily salted — for both flavor and preservation, especially in the case of meat. It wasn't until the trade routes were reestablished and commerce resumed that spices reclaimed their place of honor at the table, becoming a symbol of wealth and status. At feasts, they were used lavishly: the sophistication of a dish was measured not by its main ingredients but by the number of spices it contained. A simple chicken soup, for example, might include almonds, cloves, cinnamon, pepper, spikenard leaves, galangal, saffron, and sugar — all at once.

From that time on, spices never left the European continent again. On the contrary, nations began competing to control their sources: trade companies were formed, colonies seized, wars waged. In this way, the scent of cinnamon and the bite of pepper became inseparable not only from cuisine — but from global politics.



# The Silk Road: Threads of Destiny



The Great Silk Road is more than just an ancient trade route. It is a path of knowledge, scents, ideas, inspiration, and human stories, intricately woven into the rich and resilient fabric of world culture. This article presents two heroines, two perspectives, two voices. Gulchehra-begim Mahmudova — an art historian, writer, and perfumer — and Kristina Kretova — a director and the creator of an inspiring film about the women of Uzbekistan — each offers her own unique interpretation of this journey. Each of them reimagines the Silk Road in her own way. Their stories echo one another, like the intertwining threads of ancient silk, forming a single tapestry in which the Silk Road is reborn — as a vibrant energy that unites and inspires.



GULCHEKHRA-BEGIM MAKHMUDOVA:

***“Amour, Bonté, Culture, Beaute  
(Love, Kindness, Culture, Beauty) —  
is my life’s credo.”***

“Scents do not recognize distance,” wrote Japanese author Ryoko Sekiguchi in her book “The aroma call”. Fragrances are a universal language, understood by people of all ages and cultures — a thread that connects centuries and continents. Alongside silk, perfumes and spices were among the first goods exported from China to Europe, bearing witness to the Silk Road’s significance in global history.

When we began planning our “Eastward, Westward” issue about the Silk Road, the first person who came to mind was Gulchehra-begim Makhmudova: a PhD in Art History, author of historical books and screenplays, founder of Parfum Gallery, and creator of Uzbekistan’s first fragrance line inspired by cultural heritage — Treasure Collection by Begim Perfumes.

**– Gulchehra-begim, thank you for meeting with us! What sparked your deep love for the Silk Road?**

– This theme has defined my entire life. I’ve expressed it through story-based perfumes, fairy tales, novels, and cultural projects. Even my dissertation focused on the exchange of values between Europe and Asia.

It all began with my very first school dictation. I wrote it so well that the teacher accused me of copying and reported it to my father. But the truth is, our family has always been full of readers. My parents, Matlyuba and Said Jalol, brought back books from their travels abroad — not jeans or T-shirts, but literature. My grandmother, Mahbuba Olimkhuja qizi, would tell me legends and folktales at night. It was from her that I inherited old French textbooks — can you imagine, in the Ferghana Valley of the 19th century! There was not a single evening in our home without reading or discussing a book. For my father — an orphan who rose to become Deputy Minister of Transport — knowledge was sacred.

To me, the Silk Road is the road of scents, knowledge, and cultural treasures. Without understanding history, we cannot live the present consciously or build a sustainable, inspired future. That’s reflected in the motto of our brand: “Amour, Bonté, Culture, Virtue.” Culture and education are the ultimate codes of development and messages to the future.

**– How did the idea for the Treasure Collection come about, particularly the Silk Road fragrance?**

– I’ve worked in international business for almost 40 years and know how important fragrance is — it accompanies millions of people every day. It’s not just a scent but a spiritual theme, nourishment for the astral body and the soul. We feed the physical body with food; fragrances nourish the soul. Whenever we turn to the God — whether in mosques or churches — there’s always scent: incense, oud, saffron. Fragrance opens the heart and inspires new ideas.

I was especially inspired by the scent of my grandmother. She had a tiny Guerlain bottle — a gift from her father, passed down from the Emir of Bukhara. I was around five when I accidentally broke it. She was upset, and I promised her that one day I would give her an entire cart full of perfume. I kept that promise — she was 100 years old when I did. She hugged me and said, “I always knew you would — my imported granddaughter.” That memory still gives me strength and inspiration.





– “Imported granddaughter” — what a lovely phrase!

– Yes, I represented Uzbekistan abroad as an art historian and cultural ambassador. In 1987, I met Yves Saint Laurent by chance in Morocco. By 1990, we had opened Begim Parfum Gallery. For over 30 years now, we’ve been the exclusive distributor of more than 150 luxury brands in Uzbekistan — from YSL and Chanel to Gucci and Dior.

Seven years ago, we launched Treasure Collection — story perfumes inspired by history, heritage, and the Silk Road. In collaboration with Swiss fragrance house Firmenich, we developed Samarkand Spirit, Bukhara Spirit, Ruby of Temur, Koh-i-Nur Diamond, and Silk Road. These perfumes are made at the same French factory where Yves Saint Laurent’s scents were produced — I had the honor of being his student. Each fragrance is rooted in deep research. Bukhara Spirit tells the story of sacred Bukhara — a city of legends, wisdom, and spices as precious as gold. There’s an old saying: while the rest of the world receives sunlight from above, in Bukhara the light rises from the earth itself. That’s why it’s called Bukhoro-i-Sharifa — the Sacred Bukhara. My father lived there his whole life, so this scent holds a special place in my heart.

Even the name Begim is a tribute to family. That’s what my father always called me — not “Gulchekhra” or “qizim” (daughter), but Begim. Our ancestors came from Iran, and Begim is a title traditionally used by female descendants of the Prophet Muhammad. My father used to say, “Begim, you are a descendant of the great Prophet — and one of those born with a mission.”

– What an incredible story! Your father was absolutely right. Shall we return to the fragrances in the Treasure Collection?

– Yes, of course. KohiNur Diamond — “Mountain of Light” — is a scent of strength and triumph, inspired by the ancient legend of the Amazon queen Tomyris, ruler of the Massagetae. To create it, we needed a particularly bold



kind of tonka bean — something soft and sweet, yet daringly intense. We found that aroma in the highlands of Machu Picchu, Peru — a place that feels close to the cosmos. I gifted this fragrance to Boris Johnson two weeks before his election victory. It became a bestseller in London and quickly spread across the globe: to Qatar, Kuwait, India, Saudi Arabia, and here in Uzbekistan.

– Now our readers know who helped Boris Johnson rise to power — and which perfume to wear to reach ambitious goals.

– Exactly. Let me also mention Samarkand Spirit, inspired by the turquoise domes of Samarkand — symbols of purity, power, and the legacy of Amir Temur. Ruby of Temur is dedicated to the legendary ruby engraved with the names of its great owners, starting with Temur himself — a scent of courage and authority. Silk Road represents movement, discovery, and the spirit of great exploration.

We’ve recently launched a new line — The Eternal Collection. It includes Magic Valley, inspired by the natural harmony of the Fergana Valley, and Universe of Love, a tribute to the strongest force in the universe — love.

Through scent, I strive to express our motto: Love, Kindness, Culture, Beauty. I believe if a child is raised in love, they will not bring harm to others. Only then is peace and a bright future possible.

– You’ve already published eight books — four for children and four for adults. What inspires your writing, especially considering the depth of historical material you include?

– My family’s story: the love of my parents, my grandmother’s legends, and the legacy of my ancestors. My first book, The Crystal Hookah Flask, was inspired by my grandmother’s herb-filled hookah and her mesmerizing stories. It tells of a quest to find the lost treasure of the last Emir of Bukhara — a dream my orphaned father carried in hopes of feeding his little sister.

The second book is about the ruby of Amir Temur and the love of Shah Jahan, who built the Taj Mahal. The third is about the Koh-i-Noor diamond, now part of the British Crown Jewels. The fourth has just been published — it’s called The Treasure of Ancient Khorasan. It follows the

adventure surrounding the world’s largest orange pearl, once owned by Caliph al-Ma’mun, ruler of Khorasan — a region that included Uzbekistan, Samarkand, Bukhara, parts of Iran, and several Arab countries. For children, I wrote a series called The Legend of the Spirit of Time. One book from this series, about the greatest route in the world, was turned into Uzbekistan’s first 3D animated film. It received the national “Oltin Humo” award. We’re now working with Uzbekfilm to adapt more stories. I write the scripts myself; during the pandemic, I took online courses from VGIIK, Russia’s renowned film institute.



– Tell us about your dream — Silk Road Land.

– Walt Disney started with cartoons and then built parks around them. It took him 21 years — I’ve been working on my dream for over five. I want to build an educational “Eastern Disneyland” in Uzbekistan, devoted to cultural exchange along the Silk Road. By sheer chance, the husband of one of our brand’s perfumers turned out to be a co-owner of Disneyland parks. Thanks to him, we now have a full feasibility study.

In my concept, children enter a magical world through Ulugh Beg’s observatory and journey with the characters from my books — Ajar-Zakhar, the witch Ajina, and the Spirit of Time, Zaman Bobo (meaning “time”, a word that sounds similar in many languages).

Guests will find Amir Temur’s arena with horse and camel battles, a sea voyage, an underwater descent, a capsule of eternal life, and something like KidZania — children can try out different professions. The park spans regions from Europe to Southeast Asia, covering caravan and sea routes. We’ve even scripted a night-time immersive drone show — complete with lights and the entire history of the Silk Road in 30 minutes.

– You’ve achieved so much across business, perfumery, art history, and literature. How do you manage it all? What’s your secret?

– Sometimes I wonder myself. But I believe it all comes

from above — from the Almighty, the universe, and my ancestors. My grandchildren often ask, “Grandma, is there eternal life? We want you to live forever.” I tell them, “Yes — eternal life exists in the universe.” In one of my fairy tales, I wrote about the Diamond Planet of Ancestors, where our loved ones reside. When inspiration strikes, it feels like a ray of light from that place — a kind of sign.

I truly believe we never disappear; we simply pass into a parallel realm, staying close to our loved ones. Our ancestors guide us — we just need to listen. And I’ve realized that time doesn’t really exist. This year, my brand Begim turns 35, I turn 70 — and I feel like I’m just getting started. There’s still so much to do! I travel a lot. On planes, when everyone else is asleep, I can’t fall asleep. It feels like I’m closer to my parents, to the sky. I listen, catch their thoughts and messages, and jot them down — once in notebooks, now on my phone. That’s how my books are born — as a continuation of memory, a dialogue with history.

I write about the past, great civilizations, and cultural treasures that belong to all humanity. By preserving them, we invest in the future. Perhaps that’s my real secret.

– Is there something you always take with you on a flight?

– Yes — a small book left to me by my mother: an interpretation of the Quran in Uzbek, Russian, and Arabic. I used to keep it closed, but now I read it. It always travels with me.

– As a travel magazine, we’re curious: which cities are closest to your heart, and what makes them special to you?

– Tashkent and Bukhara are closest to my heart. Also Dubai — it was my mother’s favorite, and I took her there often. Paris feels like a second home. My husband, Sabir Ruziev, is an Olympic medalist and three-time world champion in fencing — a sport rooted in French tradition. France became both a professional foundation and a part of our destiny.

– And your favorite places in Tashkent?

– Burchmulla. My grandmother and I used to go there to pick nettles. We treated everything with them — made tea, nose drops, decoctions. And of course, the Alisher Navoi State Academic Theater — my great-grandfather helped build it.

– What would you recommend to someone visiting Uzbekistan for the first time?

– Definitely visit Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and the Fergana Valley with its herbs and ecology. That’s where the soul of the country lies.

– What are your top three places to visit in a new city?

– The library, a museum, and the opera or ballet theater.

– As a perfumer, do you associate cities with scents?

– Always. For example, my beloved Paris smells like the Seine — yet every stretch of the river has its own fragrance, from swampy to fresh. I adore strolling along embankments and bridges — they hold memories for me, like living symbols of the past.







KRISTINA KRETOVA :

**"The Silk Road is far more than an ancient trade route — it is a timeless symbol of resilience and the profound worth of every human journey."**

For several months, we've dreamed of telling you about the film "Women and Roads: The Silk Road to Oneself. Uzbekistan" in the pages of our magazine. The theme of this issue, "Eastward, Westward," turned out to be the perfect opportunity. As fate would have it, the first heroine of our feature — Gulchehra-begim Mahmudova — also appears in the film, as if destiny had gracefully aligned the two stories.

"Women and Roads: The Silk Road to Oneself. Uzbekistan" was filmed in 2024 by the directing duo from Saint Petersburg — Kristina Kretova and Anna Kameneva. The film has already won numerous awards at prestigious festivals, including Cannes Arts Film Fest 2025, Los Angeles Independent Film Channel Festival 2024, Miami Women Film Festival 2024, Indo Dubai International Film Festival 2025, and many others.

During filming, the team traveled more than 1,800 kilometers across Uzbekistan — visiting Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, and other cities along the ancient route. They conducted dozens of interviews with inspiring women: the founder of an international women's foundation and one of Asia's Top 100 Most Influential Women, Saodat Tursunbaeva; the former director of the Savitsky State Museum of Art in Nukus, Marinika Babanazarova; singer Sayyora Musaeva; a cook from Chorsu Bazaar; a young Miss Universe; a cotton field owner; the art director of the "Eternal City" ethnographic park in Samarkand; a designer; a huntress — and many others. The directors, who also appear on screen, ask seemingly sim-

ple questions about family and work, prompting stories of challenges that became turning points. Through these, the women share their strength and inspiration.

Our conversation about the film and the Silk Road unfolds with one of its directors — Kristina Kretova — author of more than 25 books (many of them bestsellers translated into Arabic and English), speaker, traveler (she gave this interview while in Africa), the founder of a fashion brand.

**—When I first watched your film, my immediate reaction was: 'As many people as possible need to see this! It's incredibly inspiring — I wanted to quote every word your heroines said.'" But since the film isn't yet widely available due to festival regulations, when can we expect its official release?**

— The film is wrapping up its final festival rounds this summer, so from September 2025, it will be available on streaming platforms.

**— Kristina, what is the underlying message you wanted to share through your film?**

— If you look deeper into the narrative, we talk a lot about the fate of active women. Using the metaphor of the route itself, we show the strength of the individual — like silk, woven from countless threads of life's events and choices: soft, flowing, breathable... yet strong. Struggle and rivalry are pointless. True strength lies in balance — within ourselves and with others, in our families and beyond. Maybe, just maybe, from the balance within each of us, the balance of the universe might emerge. That's why we make films. That's what we hoped this one would express.

From the very beginning, one of our project's main goals was to inspire people to travel and retrace our route. We film not just to tell powerful stories, but to forge a deep emotional bond with the places we capture. We want to encourage viewers to embark on journeys — both outward and inward.



**"The film is meant to highlight that modern Uzbekistan is certainly not what you might imagine it to be, and that the Silk Road is not merely a route from the distant past, but a symbol of resilience and the profound value of every person's journey — those who lived here and those who live here now. And it's important for us to share this story with the world!"**

**— You've already released two films in the "Women and Roads" series — one about Lake Baikal and Uzbekistan. Why did you choose Uzbekistan?**

— My first visit to Uzbekistan was for work, and I was struck by the beauty and spirit of the people. The history of the Silk Road captivated me. The more I learned, the more I realized how little I knew. I suggested to my partner and co-director, Anna Kameneva, that we film the project here — from Tashkent to Mizzdakhan in Karakalpakstan, where legend says the first human, Adam, is buried. Anna agreed, we quickly found partners and sponsors, and production began.

**— The meaning behind the film was so powerful that after watching it, I was left thinking — what could possibly come next to match or surpass this intensity? And how does one carry on after witnessing something so profound?**

— Life itself is a joy, especially after making so many new friends. Uzbekistan has truly become my second home. And the strength of our films always comes from the strength of our heroines. That's why we can't stop. Each woman we meet teaches us something.



**— Tell us about your brand East&West, which, if I understand correctly, was born during the making of the film. What inspired you to create it?**

— We were deeply moved by the artisans of the Silk Road — like the seventh-generation male embroiderers, and the preserved traditions and technologies of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, and Kyrgyzstan. We wanted to share that through clothing and accessories.



**— You're releasing a new children's book soon. Will it be about Uzbekistan?**

— My book "The Adventures of Little Mouse Nedo and Baby Camel Omar on the Silk Road" is currently in the works. It will be published in Russian by "Piter" publishing in 2026, continuing the series about Nedo's travels — he's already visited Kaliningrad, Saint Petersburg, and Lake Ladoga. In this new story, he befriends a camel from my book about the UAE. I hope it inspires young readers to visit your beautiful country and retrace the ancient Silk Road. The illustrator is your fellow Uzbek native, Zilola Hamidova.

**— What's the next country in the "Women and Roads" series?**

— We've already finished a film about Azerbaijan and are launching it on the festival circuit. A film about the UAE is in post-production. And later this year, we plan to film on the island of Socotra (Yemen).

The Silk Road continues — in fragrances and films, women's voices and personal missions, ancestral memory and dreams of the future. The stories of Gulchehra-begim Makhmudova and Kristina Kretova show how new paths are traced along the delicate, almost invisible threads of fate — inner, cultural, creative. They remind us that the true journey isn't measured in kilometers. It begins with depth, awareness, and love — for history, for land, and for people.



# UZBEK FOOTBALL: A JOURNEY THROUGH GENERATIONS, CITIES, AND CROWDS



Football in Uzbekistan is confidently moving toward the status of a truly popular sport: the number of fans is growing, club ambitions are becoming more serious, and the national team is climbing the rankings — both in Asia and globally. We look back at how it all began, and how football became a part of life for millions of Uzbeks.

## THE BALL. SKOBELEV. THE BEGINNING.

The history of football in Uzbekistan began more than a century ago. The sport first appeared in 1906 in the city of Skobelev — the former name of what is now Fergana. It was brought by soldiers of the Russian Empire, who in their spare time played a crude, unregulated version of football — spontaneous and without clear rules. Soon, local residents picked up the interest as well. Using hand-made balls, they formed backyard teams and organized improvised matches. Eventually, the first football clubs began to emerge — including the “Skobelev Football Club.” Teams were often formed around professions — for example, workers from the same factory or plant.

Almost simultaneously with Fergana, football teams began appearing in other cities of the valley, such as Kokand and Andijan. The Kokand team stood out in particular — it was made up entirely of local players. They called themselves the “Muslim Team,” or simply “Muskomanda.” Among the players were brothers Ruzimat and Ismail Niyazov — owners of a shoemaking workshop and, later, the first producers of footballs and athletic shoes in the region.



“Muskomanda” actively played matches against other teams across the valley, and with each game, football became more and more popular — laying the foundation for the sport’s deep and lasting connection with the region.

By 1928, Uzbekistan had formed its own national football team. That same year, the team took part in the All-Union Spartakiad in Moscow and instantly gained attention. In one of the matches, the team defeated Switzerland with an impressive score of 8:4. The newspaper “Young Communist of the East” wrote that spectators, unable to find space in the stands, climbed rooftops and trees just to catch a glimpse of the game.

The next major event was the Spartakiad of the Red Sport International — another sign that football in Uzbekistan was rapidly gaining momentum.



## FROM THE MUSKOMANDA TEAM TO JEPAROV.

The first truly prominent figure in the history of Uzbek football was Musa Khodjaev — captain of the legendary Muskomanda, the team that marked the beginning of organized football in the country. Although Uzbekistan’s national team was eliminated in the quarterfinals of the 1931 Spartakiad, Khodjaev’s talent as a striker was undeniable: he was invited to join the national team of the USSR — a mark of recognition at the highest level.

Another major name was Berador Abduraimov — a striker who was called a legend during his lifetime. In 1968, he became the top scorer in the USSR, netting 22 goals in a single season. Over the course of his career, he scored more than 130 goals and played a record 358 matches for Tashkent’s Pakhtakor.



Birodar Abduraimov



The most decorated footballer in the country’s history remains Server Djeparov – an attacking midfielder, six-time champion of Uzbekistan, and the only Uzbek player to be named AFC Player of the Year twice. Djeparov was a model of excellence in his position and an inspiration for generations of players. He played for Pakhtakor, Bun-yodkor, and several other clubs. After ending his playing career in 2019, he began working as a coach.

With the country’s independence in 1991, the Uzbekistan Football Federation was founded, along with the launch of the national Super League. A major victory came just a few years later: a gold medal at the Asian Games. In the final, the Uzbekistan national team confidently defeated China with a score of 4:2. At the 2011 AFC Asian Cup, the team achieved a historic result by reaching the semifinals, after a 2:1 victory over Jordan in the quarterfinals.

Uzbekistan’s youth teams have been performing just as strongly. In both 2018 and 2023, the U-23 and U-20 squads won gold at the AFC Cup – one of the most prestigious tournaments in junior football.

Today, the primary goal of Uzbek football is to qualify for the World Cup, and with each passing year, the country’s young teams are taking greater strides toward that dream.



Server Djeparov



**A TEAM SUPPORTED WITH HEART AND SOUL.**

Football club “Andijan” was founded in 1964 – in the very heart of the Fergana Valley, where Uzbek football was born. Since then, it has become an integral part of city life and its symbol, as well as earning one of the most devoted and largest fan bases in the country.

The club’s home ground – “Babur” stadium – which holds over 18,000 spectators and is usually filled to the last seat.

The team regularly competes in the Super League – the top division of Uzbekistan’s national championship – and fights for regional dominance with rivals such as “Neftchi” from Fergana and “Navbahor” from Namangan. Matches between them are known as the “Valley Derby” – a rivalry where regional pride matters more than the position in the league table.

The fans of “Andijan” are a story of their own. The club’s nickname, Burgutlar – “Eagles” – fully reflects the spirit of its supporters: proud, free, and always ready to rise. For almost two decades, they’ve been backed by the fan club Burgut Ultras, known across the country for their spectacular performances. It’s more than just chanting – it’s full-scale theatrical shows with smoke effects, flags, vivid banners, and choreographed displays. One of the most memorable banners read: “Andijan is us!”, featuring scenes from everyday city life and a soaring eagle – the club’s symbol.



Elbek Samatov

According to FC Andijan’s general director, Elbek Samatov, the fans are a crucial part of the club’s success: *“In recent years, we’ve been actively working with our supporters, trying to get closer to them. Their support boosts interest in the team and creates a unique atmosphere at matches. We don’t just take fans’ opinions into account – we grow together with them.”*

Such vivid involvement doesn’t go unnoticed – the level of preparation by Burgut Ultras has already become a benchmark for other fan groups in the country. Many sports bloggers call Andijan’s performances the most impressive in the Uzbek league.





The club itself has big ambitions. Over the course of its history, Andijan changed names several times: it was once known as “Spartak”, and even “Textilshchik”. In 2004, the team won its first-ever Uzbekistan Cup. Growth has been especially noticeable over the past 4 – 5 years – since the club transitioned to private management. New training bases have been built, player development conditions upgraded, the youth academy and infrastructure are actively developing, bringing the club closer to international standards. An additional boost came from a partnership with Centrum Air, which became the general sponsor of FC Andijan. This support has opened new opportunities for the club – both in logistics and infrastructure, and in the pursuit of ambitious sporting goals.

Today, FC “Andijan” is striving to firmly establish itself in the Super League and is preparing for its next big goal – qualifying for the AFC Champions League



#### ARENAS OF GREAT FOOTBALL

Uzbekistan’s two most iconic stadiums – “Pakhtakor” and “Bunyodkor” – host both major national matches and large international tournaments. “Pakhtakor” stadium, built back in 1956, is considered a true legend of Uzbek football. With a capacity of 35,000 spectators, it remains the home ground of the national team. It regularly hosts international matches, including AFC tournaments, as well as cultural events such as concerts and public celebrations.

“Bunyodkor” stadium, opened in 2012 to mark the centenary of Uzbek football, stands shoulder to shoulder with it. This modern facility was designed in accordance with international FIFA and AFC standards. As part of the New Uzbekistan’s strategy to develop sports infrastructure, it has become a new focal point for football fans. The stadium is home to FC “Bunyodkor” and regularly hosts qualifying matches for the World Cup, the AFC Asian Cup, and other major competitions.



# In search of cool: top destinations to escape the summer heat



When Uzbekistan is gripped by chilla – that relentless summer heat with no breeze in sight – the idea of escaping somewhere cooler becomes especially tempting. Luckily, the world is full of places where you can breathe in crisp mountain air, feel the coastal wind, and take shelter from the scorching sun. From alpine trails and sea breezes to fantastical Chinese landscapes, these destinations offer a welcome break from the heat.



## Azerbaijan: The mountain breath of the Caucasus

Azerbaijan is more than just ancient Baku. Venture into the mountainous regions of Gabala and Sheki, where the climate stands in stark contrast to that of the capital. Here, the city's swelter gives way to gentle mountain breezes and lush green forests. Gabala is famous for its waterfalls and fresh air, while Sheki enchants visitors with its centuries-old palaces and fortresses tucked into the shadows of towering peaks. These regions are havens of tranquility, perfect for hiking, nature lovers, or anyone seeking peace far from the noise of the city.

**Regular flights**  
**from \$147\***  
centrum-air.com

**Tashkent**  
TAS

3 h 5 min

**Baku**  
GYD

 **CENTRUMAIR**





**Tours**


**from \$560\***

centrum-air.com

**Tashkent**  
TAS

4 h 5 min

**Trabzon**  
TZX

CENTRUMHOLIDAYS



## Turkey: beyond the beaches, a cool mountain escape

If you think Turkey is always hot, you've probably never been to Trabzon, wrapped in emerald-green mountains, offers a moist and refreshing climate unlike the Mediterranean. Stroll through misty villages, visit the awe-inspiring cliffside Sumela monastery, or sip local tea amid endless plantations. In the evenings, the air cools and a dense mist rolls across the peaks, cloaking the landscape in an enchanting blend of mystery and peaceful allure.



## Kazakhstan: a highland refuge near Almaty

For a true summer escape, head to Medeu – a legendary high-mountain skating rink near Almaty. Even on the hottest days, the cool mountain air refreshes your spirit. Flowing rivers and alpine meadows add to the charm. Climb even higher to Shymbulak for breathtaking views straight out of the Swiss Alps. Here, the air is invigorating and pure, perfect for adventure seekers and those longing for mountain serenity.



**Regular flights**


**from \$82\***

centrum-air.com

**Tashkent**  
TAS

1 h 30 min

**Almaty**  
ALA

CENTRUMAIR



# China: the Avatar mountains – realm of cool air and fantasy

If you're looking for a place that stuns with its otherworldly beauty, head to China's Zhangjiajie national forest park. This breathtaking natural wonder, which inspired the floating mountains in the film "Avatar", captivates with its towering peaks and mystical atmosphere. Cloud-capped sandstone pillars seem to levitate above the forest, while the cool, refreshing climate offers relief even on the hottest days. There's no stifling heat here – only crisp air and serene silence. As you walk across suspended bridges and explore narrow gorges, you'll feel truly immersed in nature. Wandering among these towering rock formations, each uniquely shaped by time, is like stepping straight into a fantasy world.



Regular flights

from \$225\*

[centrum-air.com](http://centrum-air.com)

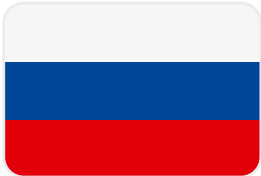
Tashkent

TAS

6 h 55 min

Guangzhou

CAN



# Russia: Novosibirsk – a refuge from the summer heat

When the summer heat becomes unbearable in other parts of the country, Novosibirsk offers a true oasis of cool. While it may not be known as a traditional resort destination, the city's unique location on the Siberian plains and its temperate climate make it especially appealing for those seeking a break from the sweltering sun. Both in the city and its surroundings, there are many scenic spots to escape the heat – like the famous Sosnovy Bor Park, perfect for peaceful walks and picnics in the shade of pine trees. Nearby lakes and rivers, including the mighty Ob, provide ideal settings for water-based activities.

For adventure seekers, the nearby Altai mountains open up a world of cool air and breathtaking nature. Whether hiking along forested trails or cycling through rugged terrain, visitors can enjoy the refreshing atmosphere and reconnect with the wild. Novosibirsk is not just a city – it's a gateway to Siberia, with its majestic landscapes and untouched nature offering a serene retreat far from urban hustle and scorching summer days.

Regular flights

from \$156\*

[centrum-air.com](http://centrum-air.com)

Tashkent



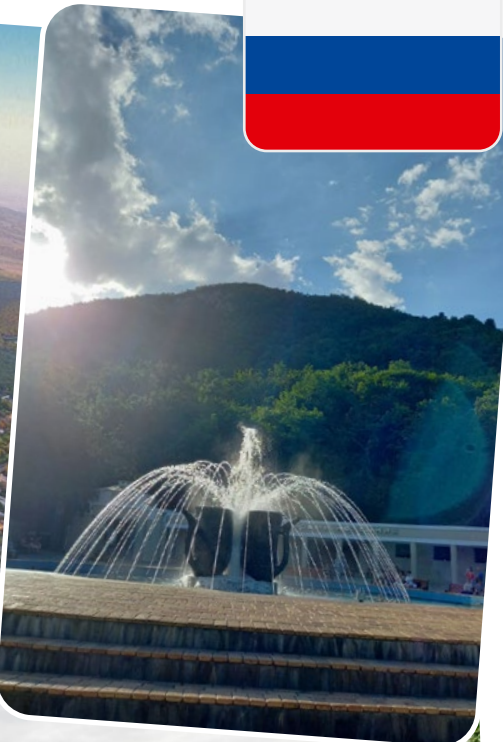

TAS

3 h 30 min

Novosibirsk

OVB






Regular flights  
**from \$149\***  
centrum-air.com

**Tashkent**  
TAS




3 h 50 min

**Mineralnye Vody**  
MRV



## Mineralnye Vody – a cool retreat at the foot of the Caucasus

If you're looking for a place to escape the heat and recharge your health, Mineralnye Vody is the perfect destination. This resort region in southern Russia is known for its mild climate, fresh air, and healing springs. Just a 30-minute drive away are the famous spa towns of Kislovodsk, Pyatigorsk, and Yessentuki, offering thermal baths, mud treatments, and peaceful walks through lush parks. And for those who prefer a more active holiday – there are scenic mountain trails, breathtaking views of the Caucasus, and the refreshing embrace of nature.



Regular flights  
**from \$232\***  
centrum-air.com

**Tashkent**  
TAS

6 h 30 min

**Seoul**  
ICN



## South Korea: Jeju Island – a volcanic oasis

This volcanic island, located just south of the Korean Peninsula, draws travelers with its mild temperatures and constant humid breezes. Jeju is a place where you can immerse yourself in extraordinary natural landscapes – from ancient lava tubes formed millions of years ago to the majestic Hallasan volcano, whose summit offers breathtaking panoramic views. The island blends lush green forests with endless ocean horizons, creating a unique atmosphere perfect for peaceful strolls and active outdoor adventures alike.

\*Prices may vary depending on availability. Limited seats at listed fares. Taxes and fees included.



# Modern Heroes of Uzbek Cinema: Cannes, Disney, “Avatar”, and Berlinale

In every issue, our aim is to discover new horizons — countries, cities, people, cultures. With this edition, we take another step toward meaningful journeys by launching an author’s column. Its very first contributor is someone who introduces Uzbekistan to the world — not through tourist brochures, but through a language understood across the globe: cinema.



**Eldar Yuldashev**

PhD in Art History, Academician  
of the Istanbul Film Academy

**Eldar Yuldashev** is Uzbekistan’s first PhD in film, an academician at the Istanbul film academy, the founder of the VGIK branch in Tashkent, director of the only Uzbek film dedicated to the 80th anniversary of Victory in World War II, and distributor of “Tamerlane”, screened at the 78th Cannes film festival. Eldar Sadykovich doesn’t just work with the biggest names — from the creators of “Avatar” and “Harry Potter” to “Boys’ Word” — he creates the conditions in which those names begin to speak with Uzbekistan as equals. And for us, it was only right that he should be the one to speak first.

Many people often feel nostalgic and look back on the golden era of national cinema — especially the so-called “golden years” of Uzbek dubbing. During that time, local versions sometimes surpassed the originals, like the beloved Uzbek voice of Georgy Miloslavsky. Phrases such as “Does your restaurant have a private room? Ah, Marvushenka, Marvusha, there’s no need for sorrow or grief.” became iconic and deeply embedded in popular culture. Films like “Afonya,” “Ivan Vasilievich Changes Profession,” “Where is the Nofelet?,” “The Irony of Fate, or Enjoy Your Bath!,” “Office Romance,” and “Kidnapping, Caucasian Style, or Shurik’s New Adventures” received a second, renewed life through the voices of Khamza Umarov, Tulkin Tadzhiyev, Obidzhon Yunusov, Abzal Rafikov, and Mukambar Rakhimova.

Such conversations often take place both at home with family and at the official level — but now about “our own” cinematic classics: the films “The Whole Mahalla Is Talking About This” (uzbek: Mahallada duv-duv gap), “Charmed by You,” “The Brides’ Rebellion” (uzbek: Kelinlar qo’zg’oloni), “I’ll Give You a City” (uzbek: To’ylar muborak), “Grandmother-General” (uzbek: Suyunchi), “Days Gone By” (uzbek: O’tgan kunlar), “You Are Not an Orphan” (uzbek: Sen Yolg’iz Emassan), “Where Are You, My Zulfiya?” (uzbek: Yor-yor), “The Rascal” (uzbek: Shum bola) — recalling the names of our cinematic masters: Shuhrat Abbosov, Damir Salimov, Yuldash Agzamov, Melis Abzalov, and Ali Khamrayev.

**To sum up:** while we respectfully preserve the warm memories of the past, we also want to introduce you to the new heroes of national cinema — those who have made bold, brilliant, and unexpected appearances on the international stage.





The **documentarian Ruslan Saliev** is an independent filmmaker producing high-quality documentaries backed by private investment. His film “Legends of Uzbek Dance”, which explores the origins and evolution of professional stage choreography in Uzbekistan, has rapidly earned an impressive number of accolades – and notably, at festivals where Uzbekistan had never previously been represented.



Another of his notable works – “The Dreamers”, a film about the history of the Jadid movement – also received widespread recognition. It won “Best Educational Film” at the World Film Festival in Cannes, standing out as the only entry from all of Central Asia. It was also named “Best Documentary” at both the ARFF International and Film Fest International. CinemaScene magazine included it in its list of the most impactful international films of the year. If this isn’t true international acclaim – what is?



**Animator Pavel Kim** is the creator of the animated film “Pomidor Do’ppi”. This project became a landmark in the history of Uzbek animation – it was the first to be released across 45 media platforms in China, a country known for its selective approach to foreign content. Today, “Pomidor Do’ppi” is the most recognizable animated character from Uzbekistan, with over 6 million viewers on YouTube. The cartoon is also available on more than 50 online platforms across the CIS, including major streaming services such as Kinopoisk, IVI, START, KION, Megogo, and iTV.



**Distributor Farrukh Tulyaganov** is the leading investor in Uzbekistan’s film distribution industry and the owner of the country’s largest cinema network: Mega Cinema, Riviera Cinema, Parus Cinema, Next Cinema, Family Cinema, and Anhor Cinema. He is also the first and only representative of Uzbekistan to become a member of the U.S.-based National Association of Theatre Owners (NATO, USA, LA). Tulyaganov is a regular participant at the world’s largest film markets, including CinemaCon and CineEurope, where he has held negotiations with global industry giants such as Warner Bros., Universal, Disney, Paramount, Lionsgate, and Crunchyroll. He also launched Uzbekistan’s very first children’s cinema – “Guncha”.







**Director Sabina Bakaeva** is one of the country’s most promising young filmmakers. In 2024, her debut short film “Nakedness” represented Uzbekistan at the 75th Berlin International Film Festival – one of the world’s most prestigious film forums. In the history of Uzbekistan’s participation, this marks only the third film to be selected for the Berlinale program.



**Film scholar Nigora Karimova** is the youngest and the only woman in Uzbekistan to hold a Doctor of Arts (DSc) degree. She is also the first and only representative of the country in the International Federation of Film Critics (FIPRESCI). Karimova was officially invited to join the jury of the Golden Globe Awards – a milestone, as Uzbekistan had never before been represented there. In 2019, she initiated and led a cinema-focused research project under UNESCO and currently heads the Department of Film and Television at the Institute of Art Studies under the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan – the country’s leading academic center for film research. Moreover, she is the author of around ten books, academic textbooks, and monographs, as well as over a hundred articles published in respected international journals.



**Film director Shakir Khalikov** is the creator of the debut feature film “Sunday”, which has garnered over 30 awards at prestigious international film festivals, including the Shanghai International Film Festival and the International Festival of Asian Cinema. The film was also selected by three of the world’s top-tier “Category A” festivals. According to renowned film critic Anton Dolin, “Sunday” ranks among the top five Central Asian films that are a must-watch.



**Film critic Eldjon Abbasov** is the co-author of “The Cinematic Art of Uzbekistan”, the first film encyclopedia in the country’s history. With the support of the Foundation for the Development of Culture and Art, he organized the participation of Uzbek films in Le Giornate del Cinema Muto – the most prestigious silent film festival in the world. In 2024, Uzbekistan was represented at this acclaimed forum for the first time ever – and became the only country from the CIS region to take part. Additionally, with backing from the same foundation, Abbasov joined the working group that helped include “Images of the Khorezm Oasis” by Khudaibergan Devanov (1879–1937) in UNESCO’s “Memory of the World Register”. This recognition ensures that the name of Uzbekistan’s first cinematographer is now permanently inscribed in the history of global culture.



IT IS PEOPLE LIKE THESE WHO ARE ENTRUSTED NOT ONLY WITH THE REVIVAL,  
BUT WITH THE BUILDING OF A NEW CINEMATIC ERA FOR THE NEW UZBEKISTAN.



# Along the horizon

What do a photographer and a pilot have in common? One chases the light, the other — the wind. One captures a fleeting moment, the other flies right through it. But the meeting between world-renowned photographer **George Kardava** and Centrum Air captain **Vasiliy Rodionov** is more than a conversation between two people from different walks of life. It's a dialogue about the sky, fears, rituals, the road, memory, and the human spirit. No posturing, no pomp — just honest words, gentle humor, and a deep respect for details. A conversation where takeoff and landing aren't just about airplanes.

**G.K.:** Before our meeting, I did a bit of research and found out that you have a full namesake — a Hero of the Soviet Union, a military fighter pilot. Did you know about this?

**V.R.:** That's the first I've heard of it. It's a fairly common last name, but for him to also be a pilot — that's definitely interesting.

**G.K.:** With that in mind, I'd love to go back a bit. Tell me — how did you come into aviation?

**V.R.:** I was born and raised in an ordinary family. Well... maybe not entirely ordinary. My father was a test-engineer who worked his whole life at an aircraft plant testing helicopters. That must have influenced me somehow.

After ninth grade, a local aeroclub opened in our town. A bunch of us guys went there just out of curiosity, passed a quick interview, and that was it — we started training. We studied there for a year and even got to fly the Yak-52, a small training aircraft.

The director of the aeroclub was a military pilot, and he kind of indoctrinated us — worked on our mindset, you know? So when it came time to finish school, I didn't hesitate much: I decided to apply to a military assault aviation school. It just felt like the natural next step. My dad had been in the military, and I wanted that too. But I didn't pass the medical — there were height restrictions...

**G.K.:** You didn't fit in the cockpit?

**V.R.:** If I just didn't fit in the cockpit, that would've been manageable. But according to the ejection seat standards, my height posed a risk — with that kind of force, I could've injured my spine. The surgeon looked at me and said flat out: "Not allowed."

It's kind of funny now, because that was literally the only thing that would've stopped me from flying a combat aircraft. My mom still keeps the medical record with that note: "Not fit for flight training."

After that, I rewrote my application — this time to a transport aviation school, where they don't use ejection seats. I passed the medical with no issues and got in. I graduated in 2000, and from 2000 to 2012, I served in the military.

**G.K.:** Did you ever have to drop anything from the aircraft? Paratroopers? Equipment?

**V.R.:** We did a lot of training flights — we practiced airdropping. But for the most part, we were transporting equipment, cargo, and troops.

**G.K.:** Do you remember your first solo flight?

**V.R.:** I remember it very well. It was on June 4, 1998. I was in my third year of training, and we were flying the B-410 aircraft. A solo flight means they put two cadets in the cockpit and send you off. I flew with my friend, Dmitry Lopatin. We're still in touch to this day — we meet up whenever I fly over there. It was an unforgettable flight, for sure. I don't think you can forget something like that.

**G.K.:** What made it unforgettable?

**V.R.:** The feeling itself. You're alone, no instructor. You take off, do a circuit, and land. The whole thing lasted maybe 12 minutes. On your first solo day, you have to complete two of these flights. And then, as tradition has it, you hand out signed cigarettes to your friends and instructors. That's been around long before our time.





**G.K.:** What did it feel like when no one senior was in the cockpit with you — just you and the plane?

**V.R.:** You know, I didn't really feel like: "What do I do, I'm all alone?" Sure, there's a little anxiety when you first get in, but then you start going through your checklist — switch this on, check that, request clearance... And before you know it, you're just in the flow. Honestly, I was more nervous that morning when I woke up. It was my first solo flight — plus, I was the first one from my class scheduled to go up that day. The uncertainty weighs on you a bit. But you know others flew before you, more will fly after, and now it's your turn. Once we got to the airfield, went through the preflight prep and briefing, the nerves started to settle. And having your buddy with you — that's huge support. You're in it together, and that gives you confidence.

**G.K.:** Your profession is often romanticized. My own love for aviation started with "The Little Prince" by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry — a man who flew planes and later became a writer. With that in mind, what's the least romantic part of your job?

**V.R.:** Romance in aviation begins the moment you sit in the cockpit, power up the systems, and take off. You have got a mission, a destination, a purpose. But the rest of the time, a pilot — like a doctor, a programmer, or a teacher — is constantly studying. Endless briefings, assessments, simulators. Sure, you're always learning something new, and that's great — but sometimes you sit there thinking, Why do I even need to know this? Those moments — the sometimes illogical grind — are probably the least romantic parts of the job.

ROMANCE IN  
AVIATION BEGINS THE  
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AND TAKE OFF. YOU  
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A DESTINATION, A  
PURPOSE.

**G.K.:** Is there a way to tell if someone is a good pilot without knowing their total flight hours?

**V.R.:** Honestly? Not really. These days, new pilots join our company all the time. I conduct training with them, get to know them. One of the first things I ask is how many hours they have on a specific aircraft type.

If they've logged thousands of hours on this exact model, it's easier to work with them — they're more confident in their actions. But if someone just graduated and flew light aircraft, and now they're transitioning to an Airbus — that's a different story. It takes more time, more guidance. So for me, flight time is an important indicator.

**G.K.:** How many hours have you logged?

**V.R.:** Approximately eleven and a half thousand.

**G.K.:** Have you ever felt fear in the air?

**V.R.:** No, I wouldn't say fear. Sure, there are moments — like when you have to reroute around a thunderstorm. You're staring at the radar, calculating the best way around it, because flying through it is both forbidden and... let's be honest, not appealing. But that's not fear. That's just decision-making. That's why we're up there — to make the calls.

**G.K.:** These days people say it's only a matter of time before we have one pilot in the cockpit — or even fully autonomous planes. What's your take on that?

**V.R.:** I don't think that's happening any time soon. There are still too many situations where only a human can make the right decision — not a computer. Sure, you can teach an AI to avoid thunderstorms, but if every autonomous aircraft starts rerouting differently on its own, you'll have chaos in the skies.

**G.K.:** By the way, my next question is about artificial intelligence. It's a hot topic in the media right now. AI is getting smarter, faster, sometimes even more efficient than humans — and, most importantly, cheaper. Do you think the switch to AI is inevitable?

**V.R.:** I believe we'll get there eventually, but definitely not in the near future. Airbus has already developed a passenger aircraft that can take off and land automatically, but it's still far from being widely adopted. The issue isn't even the technology — it's more about our mindset. People feel safer knowing there's a human being in the cockpit.

**G.K.:** Reminds me of those Instagram reels showing taxis with no drivers, where the steering wheel turns by itself.

**V.R.:** Yes, I saw one of those recently. On the one hand, it's impressive; on the other — it triggers a primal fear. There's so much news now about autonomous vehicles. It's definitely becoming a reality.



**G.K.:** Back to the previous topic — can you share the most extreme situation in flight that you're proud of handling?

**V.R.:** Well, I wouldn't call any of them truly extreme. You have to understand: an aircraft is still a machine, and machines fail. Especially modern airliners — they're packed with electronics. I'm not even sure how many computers are onboard... probably around 150 or more. But we're trained for that — we go through simulator sessions every six months. The simulators are nearly identical to real aircraft, so the experience feels very close. There's always an instructor sitting behind you — “the villain,” we call him — who triggers all sorts of malfunctions for us to handle. I believe the simulator training cycle is set up in a way that, over the course of three years, a pilot will practice handling every possible technical failure that could occur on their aircraft type. I've had such situations in real life too. Of course, it feels different — on the simulator you're on the ground, while in the air you've got 200 passengers behind you. But in the end, you follow your training. I always tell pilots: follow the checklist — don't improvise. These steps were created by smart people for a reason.

Failures do happen, but I wouldn't say they're something to boast about. Still... one case stands out. Once, I had a hydraulic fluid leak — in an Airbus, there are three independent hydraulic systems, and I lost one. We followed the procedures, managed the failure, and safely landed at our destination. A month or two later, there was an official investigation — as it was an aviation incident. And when the commission confirmed that the crew acted correctly, with no remarks — that's when I thought, “Yeah, I did a good job.”

**G.K.:** I often see lists online like “Top 10 Scariest Airports in the World”: some on cliff edges, others with runways only three meters wide. Do you have your own “red list” of airports where you'd never fly?

**V.R.:** No, I don't have a list like that. Over the years, I've flown into many airports. Sure, some are more challenging, but you just prepare more thoroughly for them. One example is Dushanbe. It's a mountainous airport with a pretty steep approach. And pilots, especially when it comes to safety, face strict requirements.

There's a concept called a “stabilized approach” — by 1,000 feet above the runway, the aircraft must be fully stabilized: proper speed, proper configuration, wings level, everything by the book. In Dushanbe, achieving that kind of approach isn't always easy. If you don't manage it — you're required to go around. And at night, in mountainous terrain, in a thunderstorm... well, that's not exactly a pleasant prospect. You're simply not allowed to continue the approach. So airports like that require extra preparation.

Another one is Tivat, in Montenegro. The approach is quite unusual — you fly through moun-

## THE AIRCRAFT IS THE BODY, THE CREW IS THE SOUL

tains, approach the runway at an angle, and then make a turn to land. Thankfully, we have access to all the aeronautical information we need, and we study it carefully beforehand.

In my previous airline, Dubai was considered a Category B airport. You'd think — desert, nothing to worry about. But it's challenging because of the heavy traffic — so many planes in the air at once, you have to be extra alert. Bangkok is often on that list too, for the same reason: very busy airspace.

There's no airport I'd say, “No way I'm flying there.” Every flight is unique. Weather, wind — they all affect your decisions. And every time, you think about how to get your passengers safely from point A to point B.

**G.K.:** One last thing — do pilots tend to be superstitious? Do you have any pre-flight rituals or habits you always follow to make sure the flight goes well?

**V.R.:** I think every pilot has their own. Picture this: an aircraft stands alone on the ramp. The crew arrives, boards the plane, and suddenly it comes alive — it hums and buzzes. It's like a living organism. The aircraft is the body, the crew is the soul. As for rituals... many pilots — and I'm no exception — have a tradition: to give the aircraft a little pat on the fuselage. I've seen female crew members gently touch the plane as they walk up the stairs. Some pilots always follow the exact same sequence before a flight, others just take a moment to focus. I personally never speak badly about an aircraft.

In my old company, we had a plane whose tail number ended with “BDA.” People nicknamed it “Beda” (which sounds like “Trouble” in Russian). I asked, “Why do you call it that?” They said, “Remember Captain Vrungel's yacht was called ‘Pobeda’ (‘Victory’), and when two letters fell off, it became ‘Beda’ (‘Trouble’).” And sure enough, something was always breaking on that plane — one system or another. I asked them to stop calling it that — and guess what, it stopped having issues.





## EVERY FLIGHT IS UNIQUE. WEATHER, WIND – THEY ALL AFFECT YOUR DECISIONS.

In the army, we had our own traditions too. For example, we always had to shave before a flight. One veteran noticed me unshaven once and said, “You know, even during the war, pilots would shave before flying. So the enemy wouldn’t get the chance to do it for them.” I never forgot that.

**G.K.:** I've heard that pilots often personify their aircraft. Is that true for you? Do you treat your aircraft like a living being?

**V.R.:** Well, as I've said before, we're like a single organism — we work as one: it won't fly without us, and we can't get anyone anywhere without it. I don't talk to the aircraft or anything, but now that you've asked, I do remember something... I was flying with a training captain. The aircraft was modern, full of electronics. Suddenly, we get a failure message on the screen. We tried fixing it ourselves — the error disappeared. Then, a little later — bam — it popped up again. We tried fixing it again.

We called the engineer, he went through his checklist, everything seemed fine. He left — and the same failure reappeared. So we tried again and managed to clear it. We just sat there staring at the screen, waiting to see if it would come back or not.

**G.K.:** Hypnotizing it...

**V.R.:** Exactly. And the instructor I was flying with, Dmitry Ivanovich, gently patted the aircraft and said, “Alright now, easy, easy.” And it listened! We asked, “Should we board the passengers?” We're not allowed to fly if there's an unresolved issue. But everything was fine, so we let them on board. We flew the round trip, and that error never came back. What happened? No idea. We just gave it a pat — and it calmed down.

**G.K.:** What about your relationship with the crew? You've mentioned that it depends a lot on who you're flying with. Do you feel a strong connection to the people?

**V.R.:** There's no big secret to it. You don't have to force anything. There's a clear structure in how the

flight crew and cabin crew interact, and everyone just sticks to their role. Like I said: no freelancing. Just do your job, and everything runs smoothly. The procedures we follow were developed over many years. In aviation, there's a saying — though I'm not a fan of the phrase — that regulations are “written in blood.” Because every one of them came from some real-life incident.

You might remember the incident with the German airline in the Austrian Alps? The captain left the cockpit to use the restroom, and the first officer locked the door and flew the plane into a mountain. Everyone on board died. That wasn't that long ago — maybe five years back. After that, a new rule was introduced: no one can be alone in the cockpit. If the captain or first officer needs to step out, a flight attendant must come in before the other leaves. That rule was introduced then — but in Russia, it's been standard for years.

**G.K.:** And what about informal relationships between pilots and flight attendants?

**V.R.:** That's easy — Centrum has a great atmosphere. When I joined two years ago, we were immediately sent on a long summer assignment in Kuwait. That really brought us closer as a team. Of course, new people come in all the time, but we still all know each other. Someone always knows someone who introduces you to someone else.

The relationship between pilots and flight attendants in our company is really great — I like it a lot. For example, if we're flying to Guangzhou, we'll be there for three or four days. So we arrive, and over dinner we say, “Alright guys, what do we want to see in Guangzhou?” We sit together and make a plan. It's a young company, and the team is mostly young too. So there are no issues. On board, we work strictly by the book, and off the plane — we just hang out like regular people.

**G.K.:** I'd like to talk a bit about the media side of your job. Specifically, that moment when you suddenly went viral on Instagram. How did that happen, and how do you feel about it? About your appearance, the attention from passengers — does it get in the way of your work?

**V.R.:** Not at all. I wouldn't say there was crazy attention or anything — no. Honestly, I don't even remember how it all started. One day someone called and invited me for a photo shoot on an aircraft. I happened to have a free day, no plans — so I went.

As for that video... I had just landed when I got a call about the shoot. They said, “Please don't leave the plane, wait for us.” So the first officer and I stayed behind while the crew left. I just turned on some music, and the moment took off. Honestly, I was really surprised that the video went viral — two million views! I thought, wow, I totally didn't expect that. *(Editor's note: the video was posted on the official Centrum Air Instagram page.)*



**G.K.:** Any idea how many countries you've been to? And where would you still like to go?

**V.R.:** Oh... I didn't bring my tablet! (laughs) I haven't really counted, but I do keep track of the places I've visited.

**G.K.:** I use TripAdvisor for that too — I've got a map of where I've been.

**V.R.:** I just drop pins in Maps.me. There are still so many places I'd love to visit. For example, South America. I can't name one specific country... well, actually, Brazil for sure. And the northern part of South America is really intriguing. After watching a film about Pablo Escobar, I really wanted to walk those streets.

**G.K.:** You mean Medellín, in Colombia?

**V.R.:** Yes, exactly. I've also never been to the U.S. Why not? I'd love to see how people live there. Telling you this now, I realize my travel dreams are pretty global. Like Australia, for example. But if we talk about the places I've already been — I absolutely loved Prague. I'm also a big fan of Barcelona. In general, there are lots of amazing places everywhere. Even in Saudi Arabia — I rented a car and drove off into the desert somewhere, and it was actually a great experience. Well... as long as the AC works! (laughs)

**G.K.:** What about transatlantic flights? What's that like from a technical or sensory standpoint?

**V.R.:** I've flown across the Atlantic only once, and that was as a passenger — to the Dominican Republic. It was insanely long and exhausting. Around twelve and a half hours in the air. The flight was early, around dawn. I purposely stayed up all night so I could sleep on the plane. In the end, I only slept about four hours. And there were still eight hours left to go! I just watched movies... that's how it went.

AVIATION TEACHES  
HUMILITY — EVERY  
TIME YOU THINK YOU  
HAVE MASTERED IT, IT  
SURPRISES YOU.

Some of my friends fly long-haul like that, on big aircraft with dual crews. Two pilots take off, do the first shift, then go rest while the other two take over. A little before landing, they switch again. It's all logical and well-organized — but it's still tough. Although I guess you get used to anything eventually.

Right now, we're flying to Guangzhou and Phu Quoc. Not 12 to 15 hours, of course — but 8 hours one way is still something. You want to stretch, walk around... but you can't really roam the cabin much.

**G.K.:** And how do you feel about flying as a passenger? Don't you ever feel the urge to hop into the cockpit?

**V.R.:** Honestly, I don't enjoy flying as a passenger. Not sure why — I just don't like it. And no, I don't feel the urge to jump into the cockpit, because I know there's a professional in there. If that pilot was trusted with the aircraft, it means they earned it, and there's no reason not to trust them. That's it.

**G.K.:** Have you ever had conflicts with another pilot?

**V.R.:** If you see that the other pilot is doing something wrong — not according to the protocol — your job as the captain is to point it out, guide them. If that doesn't work, the captain always has the right to take control. There's a standard phrase for it: "I have control."

In the cockpit, it's usually just the captain and the first officer. One of them flies a segment of the route, the other handles the radio and systems. On the return leg — they switch. But even if the other pilot is flying, if I see something going wrong, I have the right to step in. Safety comes first, so if needed — I take over.

**G.K.:** What did you learn about yourself after your 100th flight? Did you feel more confident — or more uncertain?

**V.R.:** Oh, that's a great question. Honestly, I don't remember whether it was my 100th flight or not — but in the end, that doesn't really matter. What I've noticed is this: a pilot flies as a first officer for a while, then eventually becomes a captain — which is a challenging path in itself. After going through all of that, they start operating flights as Pilot-in-Command. And then, about a year in, after logging close to a thousand flight hours, something starts to shift subconsciously. They begin to feel — not like a legend — but definitely like a pretty great pilot.

Confidence builds, and that's when mistakes start happening. Nothing major or dangerous, but still — little slip-ups. One or two, and then they get back to flying normally. I've made mistakes too — I won't deny it. But we're closely monitored. All aircraft have objective control systems, and every flight parameter is decoded. If there's even a small deviation, a red flag is raised, and you'll hear: "Hey guys, what happened here?" Even if it's not critical — it still gets reviewed.







**G.K.:** So what happens when a pilot makes a mistake?

**V.R.:** The flight data gets decoded, and then the instructor is obligated to go through the incident. The goal is to understand why it happened. Maybe the pilot had nothing to do with it. It's important to dig into the root cause. This kind of work is routine at every airline — it's just part of the process.

**G.K.:** Are there any public stereotypes about pilots that annoy you?

**V.R.:** There was one incident. I was in a taxi in Irkutsk. We'd flown in for a 24-hour layover: my crew went to the hotel, and I went to visit a friend from school. The next morning, I was heading to the airport in uniform. The driver asked, "You a pilot?" I said, "Yeah." He replied, "Why are you sober?" That actually rubbed me the wrong way.

I didn't even bother explaining. He already had a whole picture in his head — why argue? But it was unpleasant. For some reason, he assumed that if you're a pilot, you must be drunk. I don't know where that idea even comes from.

Another common misconception is that today's pilots just show up, push a couple of buttons, and the plane flies itself. That always makes me smile. Reality is quite different. The Airbus is a very complex machine — and I've got something to compare it with. I used to fly Soviet aircraft — like the An-24, An-26, An-18. Now I fly a modern Airbus, and it's on a completely different level. Yes, it's packed with automatic and electronic systems that definitely help — but to operate them correctly, you need to understand how they work. The whole retraining process for the Airbus wasn't easy for me.

And here's another myth I hear all the time — that almost all landings today are automatic. That's just not true. In 27 years of flying, and 13 years on the Airbus, I've done only three automatic landings. And even those were due to weather conditions — not by choice. The interview continued in a cozy restaurant on the banks of the Salar canal. Suddenly, a slight movement near the water's edge caught our eyes — it was a muskrat.

**G.K.:** Look, she's getting ready for a swim.

**V.R.:** Yep, looks like it. Actually, we have one pilot who works in our safety inspection department — he's about 59 years old now. A man I truly respect. My last name is Rodionov, and his first name is Rodion. Two years ago, when we were on assignment in Kuwait, we were chatting over breakfast and he said, "I'm flying to Istanbul for a couple of days." I replied, "But we had flights to Istanbul and never had a two-day layover." And he said, "No, I'm just going on my own." Turns out, he was going to take part in the international Bosphorus cross-continental swim. And he did it! In his age category, he didn't come in last — somewhere in the middle, maybe even closer to the top. That's impressive!

## I'VE NEVER MET A PILOT WHO DIDN'T SECRETLY TALK TO THEIR AIRCRAFT.

**G.K.:** Everyone seems to have a different opinion, but I just have to ask — is clapping after landing considered as a bad manners? And do you actually hear the applause?

**V.R.:** You know, I think I've heard it a couple of times — in Antalya, maybe somewhere else. But even if I didn't hear it myself, I come out of the cockpit after everyone's already left, and the flight attendant says, "Hey, they clapped for you." Well, that's nice, isn't it? I don't get why some people react so negatively to that. If someone wants to show their emotions — let them, for heaven's sake.

There was one time I heard it clearly, but it wasn't during landing — it was mid-flight. I think the Ice Hockey World Championship was on — maybe the semifinals or finals, I don't remember exactly. We were in the air, and I looked at the time and thought, "The game must be over by now." So I asked the air traffic controller, "What's the score?"

**G.K.:** Did you announce it?

**V.R.:** Yes, I announced the score right there during the flight. It was a night flight, and everyone just burst into applause!

**G.K.:** There are lots of examples online of flight attendants and pilots doing creative things — like reciting the safety briefing in verse or adding jokes. Have you ever done anything like that?

**V.R.:** No, I haven't. When we first started flying at Centrum Air, captains weren't required to make announcements — it was optional. But just a few days ago, a new regulation came out: we'll now be required to greet passengers, provide updates at cruising altitude, during descent, and after landing. If there's a delay — we'll need to announce that, too.

In my previous airline, I actually liked sharing information about what we were flying over — landmarks and all that. Why not?

I remember one time on the way to Barcelona, we were flying over the French Riviera — Nice, Cannes, all of it. I got a little carried away with my commentary, and we happened to hit a bit of light turbulence.



Nothing major — there's always a little turbulence during flights. Even so, later a passenger filed a complaint, saying the captain was "talking about seas and cities" instead of "holding the aircraft steady." My supervisors and I just smiled — kind of like we're smiling now.

**G.K.:** Aside from money, what keeps you in this profession?

**V.R.:** Oh! You know... it's not just about aviation — this applies to any profession. I simply love what I do. That's it. My sister is a school principal, and once she asked me to give a talk to her class about aviation. I told the kids: go study something you're truly passionate about. Become who you really want to be. Take you, for example. I only use my phone to take pictures, but you — I can tell you really know what you're doing, and you enjoy it. You studied it, figured it out, and now you're all in. Whether you're a doctor, a teacher, a pilot — it works the same way. You can't go into a job just for the money. You have to do something you truly love. That's how you become successful — and once you're successful, everything else naturally follows. I don't remember who said it, but there's a quote that stuck with me: "Set big goals — they're easier to hit."

**G.K.:** Yes, aim for the stars — you might land on the Moon. Vasily, I'd like to shift gears and ask a bit about sexism in your profession. Specifically, about female pilots. What's your take on it? How common is it these days? Is it still possible to meet your own Hanna Erhardt or Sabiha Gokcen?

**V.R.:** I'm very much in favor of it. In my previous company, we had female pilots. I personally trained one of them as an instructor. At first, I was cautious — purely from a professional standpoint. But after flying with her for a certain amount of time, I realized: there are absolutely no downsides. She's completely competent, knows her stuff, does her job well. Here at Centrum Air, there's also a young woman who recently joined. I've only flown one mission with her so far, so it's too early to judge. But during all the initial ground training, she proved herself to be no less capable than the guys. In general, there are more and more women pilots around the world now. Remember when cars first appeared? Only men were behind the wheel. Later, women were allowed too — and now many of them drive just as well as seasoned male drivers.

**G.K.:** What does it mean to you to be part of Centrum Air? And how is this airline different from others, from a pilot's point of view?

**V.R.:** I truly enjoy being part of this company. I joined almost at the very beginning, when it was just starting flight operations. It's been a pleasure watching Centrum grow. Of course, there have been challenges, but we're overcoming them.

Our route network is expanding fast, and we're based in Tashkent — a great international hub. It's where ancient trade routes and modern airways intersect. The Silk Road never disappeared; it just changed shape, and Centrum is an active part of it. We fly passengers, transport cargo — continuing the tradition of connecting East and West. That's inspiring.

Doing what you love, working for a dynamic company with a great team — what could be better? It really is a dream job, just like in the movies.

**G.K.:** Have there ever been moments when you wanted to quit flying? How did you talk yourself out of it? Do you remember the first time you felt burnt out?

**V.R.:** Fatigue comes regularly. Night flights get tougher with age. I'm 47 now, and I'll be honest — nights are no longer easy. But I've never seriously thought about quitting.

There was a break in my flying career after I left the military and was transitioning to civilian aviation. That break lasted about a year and seven months. I clearly remember the moment I stopped flying — standing on the ground, looking up at the sky, watching planes take off, and feeling this deep longing. I really wanted to fly again, but the opportunity just wasn't there. After about three or four months, the ache started to fade. But I knew that to return, I'd need retraining and certification. Becoming a civilian pilot is no small feat — and I didn't even speak English at the time.

As they say, the road is made by walking. I went through all the training, got accepted into civil aviation. Then I had to learn to fly an Airbus — I hadn't flown one before. And when that aircraft finally took off under my control, I thought, "How could I ever have stepped away from this?" Not that I wanted to leave — the desire had just faded a bit. But once I was back in the sky, I knew — there's no turning back. As long as I can fly, I will.

**G.K.:** That's beautiful... I think that's the perfect note to end on. Thank you for such a fascinating conversation. I hope it wasn't too exhausting?

**V.R.:** Not at all, talking with you was a real pleasure. Thank you.

PILOTS DON'T HAVE  
BAD WEATHER, ONLY  
DIFFERENT TYPES OF  
CHALLENGES.

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**G**io Kardava is a portrait photographer whose work is recognized for its attention to detail and distinctive atmosphere. Originally from Georgia, he began shooting in 2009, gradually turning his hobby into a profession. Over the years, Gio has created hundreds of portraits of actors, musicians, politicians, artists, and entrepreneurs, skillfully revealing character through the lens. His journey has taken him to shoots in different countries and for various international brands and magazines, as well as to conducting masterclasses where he shares his experience with young colleagues. Gio is the creator of the YouTube project “GZK”, in which he conducts friendly and deep conversations with well-known figures. For him, photography is not just an image, but a way to tell a person’s story. In his work, texture, natural light, and sincerity are essential, and in every frame there are always genuine emotions that stay with the viewer for a long time.





# CENTRUM AIR IS BROADENING ITS HORIZONS,

strengthening its service, and bringing the skies closer to people. We invest in the future through new routes, knowledge, comfort, and trust. That's why we...



## EXPANDING HORIZONS

In recent months, Centrum Air has significantly expanded its flight network. New routes have been launched to Baku, Almaty, Tel-Aviv, Bishkek, Issyk-Kul, Trabzon, Istanbul, and many other cities. Particular attention has been given to routes connecting cities across Uzbekistan with dozens of destinations throughout Russia — creating a more flexible and convenient travel experience.

At the same time, Centrum Air continues to develop Tashkent as a major transit hub, offering smooth connections and the ability to build smart multi-country itineraries via the capital of Uzbekistan. One of the key projects of this period is the “Silk Ring” initiative — a program connecting Uzbekistan's most iconic destinations by air, including Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, and Urgench. The goal is to boost domestic tourism and improve regional accessibility across the country.

## MAKING TRAVEL WARMER

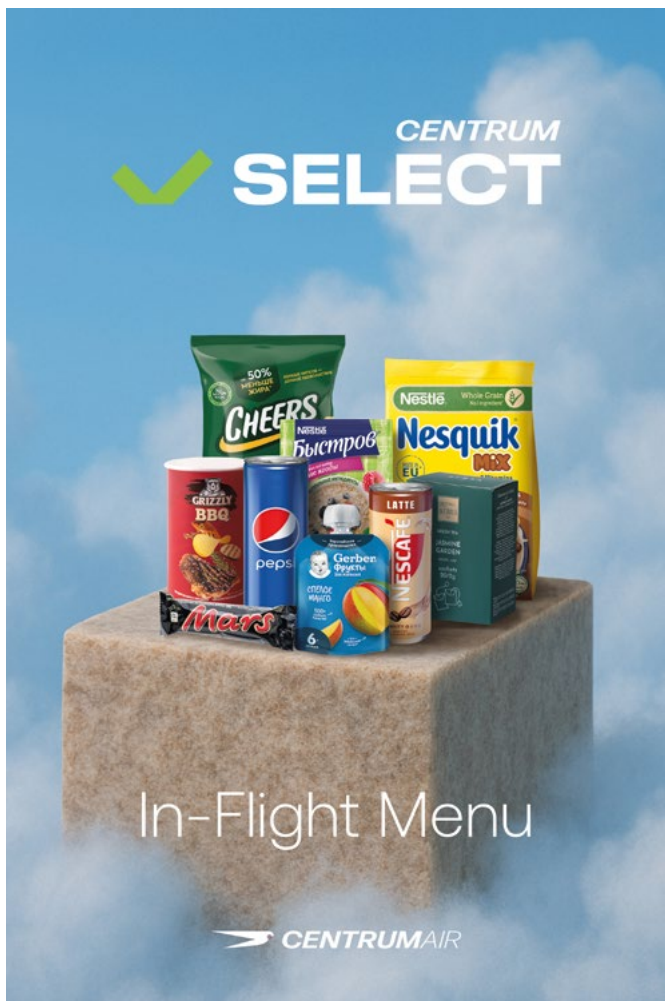
Centrum Air has launched a series of family-focused initiatives aimed at making flights more enjoyable for passengers traveling with children. Onboard, little travelers now receive special kids' packs that include crayons, coloring books, and their own in-flight magazine — Bulutcha. A cheerful symbol of curiosity and kindness, Bulutcha travels alongside young passengers, helps them explore the world of aviation, and makes every journey brighter and more memorable.

As part of our expanding family focus, Centrum Air has also launched partnerships with brands like Nestlé, Gerber, and Uzun. On the ground, we continue to host fun-filled events in popular city venues such as Central Park and “More” water complex in Tashkent.



## ENHANCING IN-FLIGHT COMFORT

To make your journey even smoother, Centrum Air has introduced a new in-flight service — the Centrum Select shop. From practical travel items and branded products to exclusive accessories and souvenirs, everything is available right on board. This service lets passengers enjoy a relaxed shopping experience at 10,000 meters — and take home a piece of the journey with them.



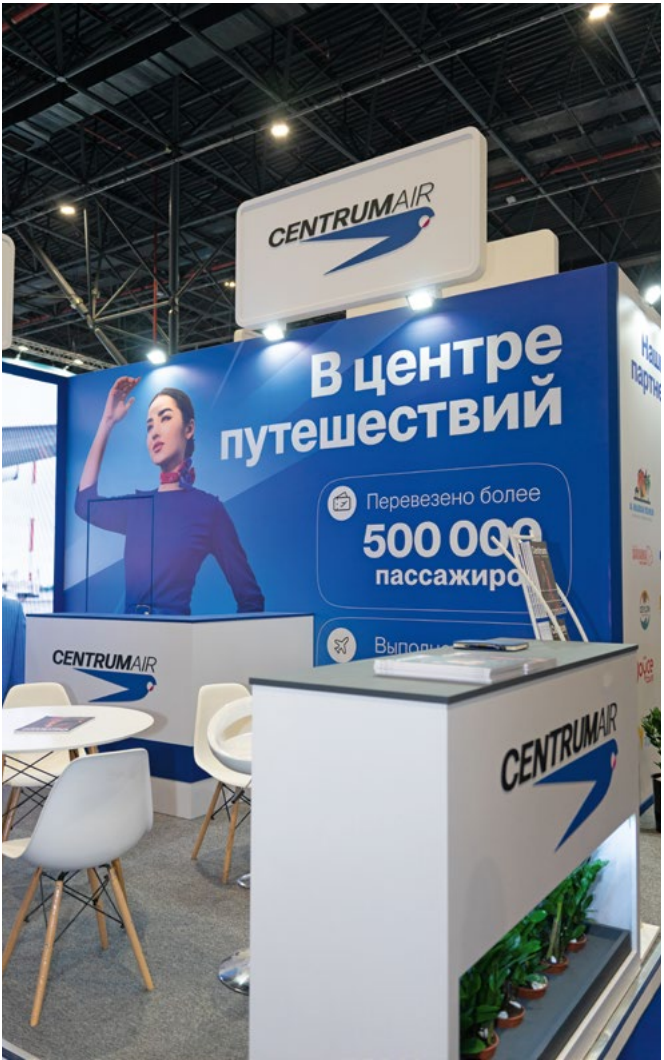




**NURTURING THE NEXT GENERATION**

In response to rapid growth and an expanding route network, Centrum Air launched Centrum Generation – a dedicated program for students and young professionals aspiring to build a career in aviation. The goal is to help young talents adapt to the industry’s demands, develop practical skills, and become part of our team.

In its very first intake in 2024, the program received over 1,000 applications, selected 10 interns, and offered jobs to four of them. For 2025, the goals are even more ambitious: double the number of participants, more hands-on experience, more opportunities – and more flights into the future.



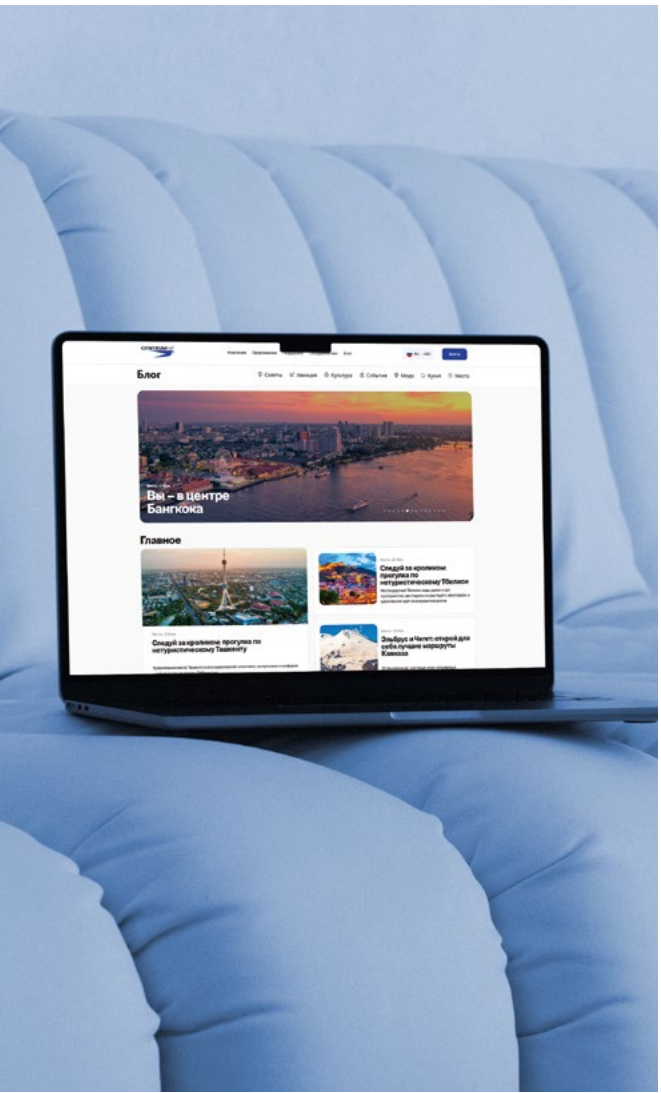
**EXPLORING THE WORLD**

The official Centrum Air website now features a travel blog – a new space where we share inspiring destinations, practical tips for travelers, and fascinating insights into aviation.

This project was created as a platform to connect with our audience, exchange ideas, discover new directions, and provide a deeper understanding of the world of air travel. Here, visitors can learn more about the countries we fly to, find answers to popular travel questions, and get a behind-the-scenes look at the aviation industry.

**SHAPING THE FUTURE**

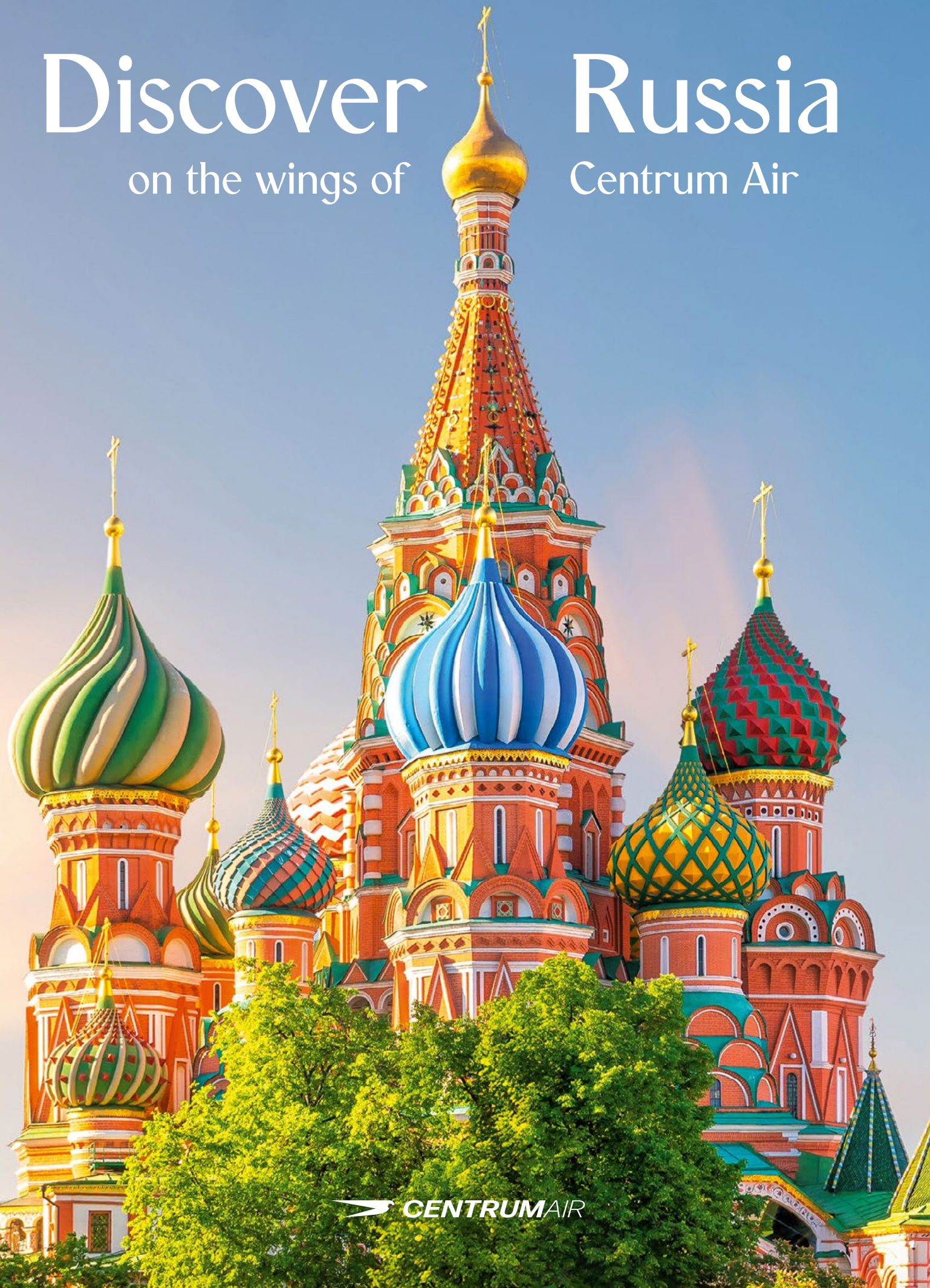
This year, Centrum Air took part in several key international exhibitions, representing the company on the global aviation and tourism stage. Our delegates spoke at events in Moscow, Dubai, Guangzhou, and Munich, where they discussed industry prospects, partnership initiatives, and route network expansion. By participating in major professional gatherings, Centrum Air strengthens its global presence, fosters international partnerships, and confidently positions itself as a forward-looking airline.





# Discover Russia

on the wings of Centrum Air



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Step into a world where the streets lead to adventure,  
the breeze smells of the sea, local flavors surprise and delight,  
and mountains rise to meet the clouds.



**Moscow**

from Tashkent, Urgench, Samarkand, and Namangan



**Saint Petersburg**

from Namangan, Urgench, and Samarkand



**Mineralnye Vody**

from Tashkent



**Kazan**

from Tashkent



**Sochi**

from Samarkand



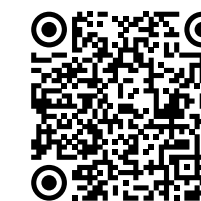
**Novosibirsk**

from Tashkent and Namangan



**Vladivostok**

from Samarkand



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# Our fleet



Boeing 767-300F

Quantity	8 → 10
Max. payload	50-55 t
Max flight range	6 025 km
Typical Cruise Speed	850 km/h



Boeing 757-200F

Quantity	1 → 2
Max. payload	23-31 t
Max flight range	7 220 km
Typical Cruise Speed	850 km/h



Airbus A320-200

Quantity	4 → 5
Max. payload	180
Max flight range	6 150 km
Typical Cruise Speed	840 km/h



Airbus A320neo

Quantity	2
Max. payload	186
Max flight range	6 300 km
Typical Cruise Speed	840 km/h



Airbus A321neo

Quantity	3
Max. payload	216-221
Max flight range	7 400 km
Typical Cruise Speed	840 km/h



Airbus A330-300

Quantity	2 → 4
Max. payload	347
Max flight range	11 750 km
Typical Cruise Speed	870 km/h



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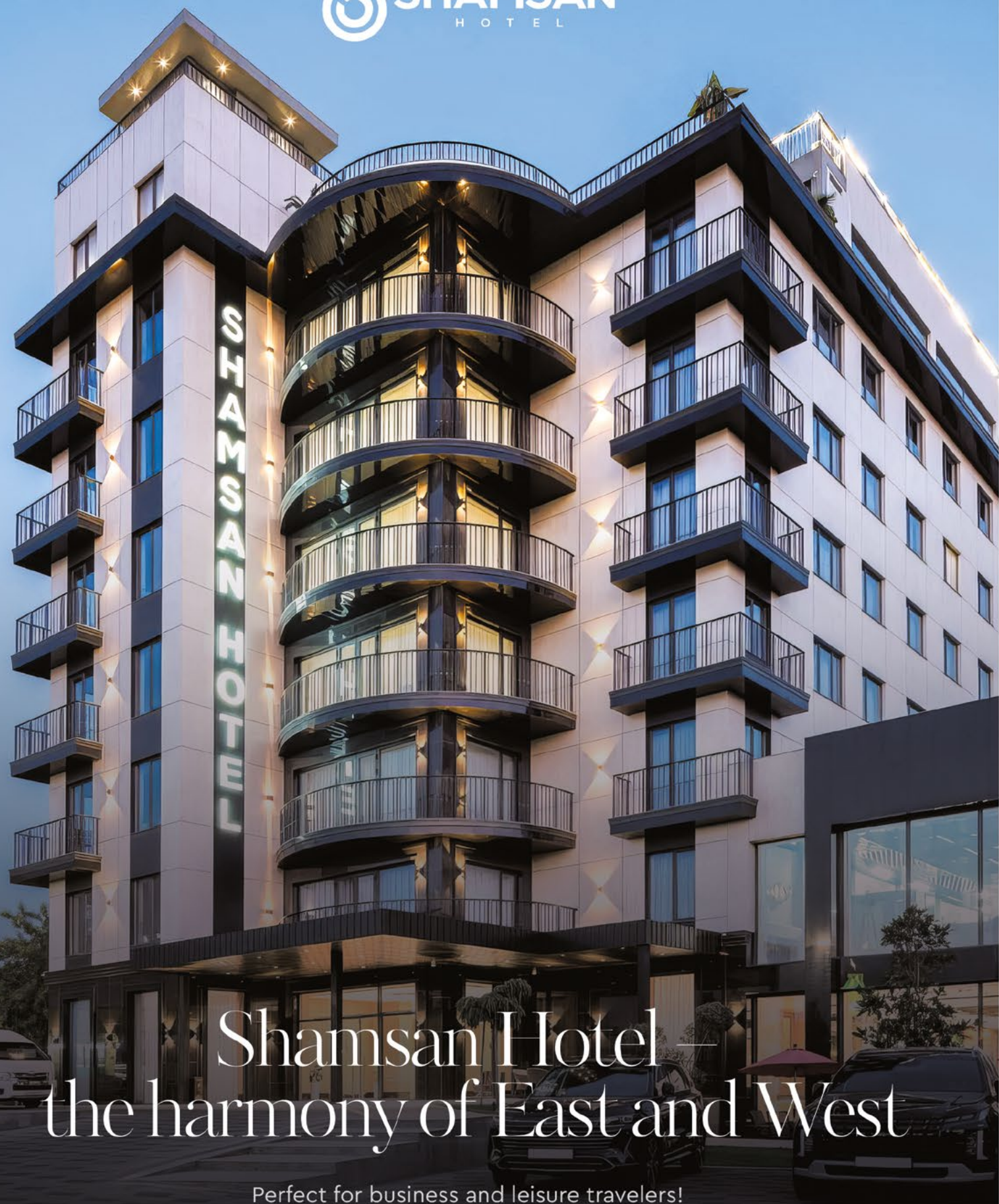
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