Dear ArchSoc members and friends, 23 January 2023

**ARCHSOC 2023 TOUR TO CENTRAL ASIA**

Finalising the itinerary and arrangements for the South African Archaeological Society tour to Central Asia covering **Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan** took longer than anticipated but all aspects have been finalised. The tour programme is enclosed. The tour now has a duration of 21 days and will depart from Johannesburg on **Tuesday 5 September**, returning onMonday 25 September 2023. It includes the most important historic places, many of them UNESCO World Heritage Sites, along the ancient Silk Route of Central Asia. It offers participants a wonderful mix of archaeology, ancient culture, history and scenery, especially grand mountain scenery.

The price of the tour is not as low as I would have liked it to be. International airfares, for one, have risen sharply since our last tour. The fully inclusive cost (except for lunch snacks) is R89 500 per person sharing plus US $200 payable en route. Visa and insurance costs must be added.

Starting in **Almaty in Kazakhstan**, we will visit the **Tamgaly petroglyph site** featuring rock art from the Bronze Age. In **Tashkent** in **Uzbekistan** we will tour important archaeological excavations with Zoroastrian heritage dating back to the 3rd century BC before travelling to the famous **Fergana Valley**. Next will be **Termez** on the Oxus River of historic fame to steep ourselves in Kushan, ancient Buddhist and Samanid history. From here we drive to **Dushanbe** in **Tajikistan** situated in the Pamir Mountains where we will visit the Museum of National Antiquities. Then we head off to see the ruins of **Penjakent**, a major Sogdian city, and the region’s first proto-historical agricultural society at Zarasm.

Returning to Uzbekistan, **Samarkand**, one of Central Asia’s oldest cities and the later feudal empire of Transoxiana awaits us. Its many fascinating sights include the **Ulugh Beg Observatory** and 7th century BC **Afrisayab** with its famous frescoes. A rail journey then brings us to the wonderful Persian city of **Bukhara,** acompact walled city we will discover on foot. From here we will visit the Sogdiana kingdom’s **Paykent** (4th century BC). Crossing the Kyzylkum Desert by rail, we reach the city of **Khiva** to discover many sights on foot. Later, on the way to **Nukus**, we will visit the Khorezm city of **Toprak Qala** (2nd century BC). A highlight in Nukus will be the Savitsky Karakalpakstan Art Museum the world’s second largest collection of Russian avant-garde art. Finally, we will see one of our planet’s worst environmental disaster areas, the **Aral Sea**, now renamed the **Aral Desert,** at Muynak.

The number of participants on this tour will be limited to 25. In the meantime, some 50 persons have indicated their interest in participating in the tour. Early booking is thus recommended. A **booking form** is attached, which needs to be returned accompanied by proof of a deposit payment of R15 000.

I look forward to receiving your confirmation of booking and welcoming you on a fascinating tour.

**Reinoud Boers** (082 566 6295)