Marco Polo Expedition

October 2 to 23, 2016

“...no other man, Christian or Saracen, Mongol or pagan, has explored so much of the world as Messer Marco, son of Messer Niccolo Polo, great and noble citizen of the city of Venice!”

– Marco Polo
Seldom do we build a Travel/Study program around one historical person. However, Marco Polo’s extraordinary adventures traveling the Silk Road from Venice to China for 24 years in the 13th century make for a larger-than-life story. He crossed mountains, deserts, rivers and seas on his long journey, and then wrote a book about his travels. We too will cover the vast distances as he did, meeting many peoples and viewing sumptuous palaces, early churches and dazzling mosques. But unlike Polo, who likely rode camels from Turkey to China, we’ll fly from place to place in comfort and visit in 22 days what he took three years to traverse. Come join us on this fabulous modern odyssey to ancient lands!
Faculty Leaders

Professor Scott Pearson, who has studied economic change in developing countries for four decades, taught economic development and international trade at the Food Research Institute at Stanford from 1968 to 2002. He has co-authored a dozen books, won several awards for his research and teaching, and advised governments on food and agricultural policy. He has also traveled and worked abroad in Africa, Asia and Europe. Scott has led more than 50 previous trips throughout the world for Travel/Study.

Using the stories about and by Marco Polo, he will discuss with us the importance of Polo's travels and the political and economic histories of the countries along the fabled Silk Road from ancient times to the present.

- Professor of agricultural economics, Stanford University, from 1968 until his retirement in 2002
- Director, Food Research Institute, Stanford University, 1991–1996
- Dean’s Award for Teaching, Stanford's School of Humanities and Sciences, 1978
- Regularly advised governments in Asia, Africa and southern Europe on food and agricultural policy
- MA, international relations, Johns Hopkins University
- PhD, economics, Harvard University

“Scott Pearson is what you hope for in a faculty leader. He was not only a great lecturer, but also a great fellow traveler...we would certainly like to travel with him again.”

— Walter Franz, ’62, Voyage from Singapore to India, 2011
Itinerary

Sunday & Monday, October 2 & 3
U.S. / Istanbul, Turkey
Depart the U.S. for an overnight flight to Istanbul. Upon arrival, transfer to our hotel in the Sultanahmet area of the city. Enjoy a light dinner this evening. Although our trip begins in Istanbul, it was here that Marco Polo ended his years-long journey after traveling some 8,000 miles along the Silk Road to areas unknown and at times hostile to Western travelers. ARMADA HOTEL (10/3: D)

Tuesday, October 4
Istanbul
Today we cruise the Bosphorus, a strait that extends from the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara, separating Europe and Asia. Visit the Sakip Sabanci Museum of fine calligraphy, furniture and decorative arts. After lunch, tour the Museum of Innocence, a modern, upper-class Westernized home. Join fellow travelers for a welcome reception and dinner at a rooftop restaurant with stunning views of the Hagia Sophia. ARMADA HOTEL (B,L,D)

Wednesday, October 5
Istanbul / Kars / Ani
Take a morning flight to Kars, in northeastern Turkey near the Armenian border. In Marco Polo’s time Kars was settled by Armenians, who were friends of the Venetians. Travel by coach to nearby Ani, the 10th-century C.E. capital of Armenia and known as “a city of 1001 churches.” Visit the typically Armenian church of St. Gregory and the 11th-century Grand Cathedral, the largest Armenian-style church in Turkey. The town was later destroyed by Tamerlane, but the cathedral survived. KARS KALE HOTEL (B,L,D)

Thursday, October 6
Doğubayazit
Drive south toward lofty Mount Ararat, revered by Christians, Jews and Muslims. Noah’s Ark is said to have come to rest on the mountain, the source of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. En route to Doğubayazit, visit the ancient fortresses of Kalecik and Toprakkale, then enjoy lunch and a performance of regional dances. Later tour the Ishak Pasha Palace and Mosque, with ornate stonework carved in the Iranian style of animals and flowers. The graves of Ishak Pasha and one of his wives lie beneath the mosque. BUTIK ERTUR HOTEL (B,L,D)

Friday, October 7
Doğubayazit / Tabriz, Iran
A spectacular drive takes us across the border of Iran to Tabriz. We arrive in the afternoon and go on a brief orientation tour of the city. Our hotel is on the Shah Goli Lake (Royal Lake) a man-made lake dating from the 18th century. The hotel’s terraces are backed by willows and poplars that form a pleasant background for our evening meal. PARS HOTEL (B,L,D)

Saturday, October 8
Tabriz / Kandovan
Tabriz, once the second-largest Iranian city and the capital of the Mongol Ilkhanate, Kublai Khan’s closest ally, was visited by Marco Polo on his way to China. This morning visit Howard Baskerville’s grave and continue to the Blue Mosque, a masterpiece of decorative tile work built during the reign of Jahan Shah. Finish the morning with a walk through the fabulous bazaar full of local goods, including carpets,
silverwork and jewelry. After lunch, drive to the troglodyte village of Kandovan. The people here have carved their houses in the rocks, living in them much as people did in ancient times. We return to Tabriz this evening. PARS HOTEL (B,L,D)

Sunday, October 9
Tabriz / Tehran
Take a morning flight to Tehran, Iran’s huge and modern capital city. Explore the treasures of the Archaeological Museum, among them a winged lion from Susa and a relief of Darius the Great from Persepolis. Continue to the Aaran Gallery for a look at the contemporary arts of Iran. Drive by the former U.S. Embassy to our hotel, where we dine in its lovely Persian restaurant. ESPINAS HOTEL (B,L,D)

Monday, October 10
Tehran / Isfahan (optional)
Today our first option is to explore northern Tehran. Begin by meeting with the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation, an organization whose goal is to safeguard Iran’s delicate and sacred natural environment and wildlife. Continue to the Golestan Palace; when Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar (1742–1797) became king he chose Tehran as the new capital and the Golestan Palace became the official residence of the royal family. The palace that stands on the site of the historic Arg (citadel) of Tehran is set in a walled park laced with canals of rushing water from the Tochal Mountains. This afternoon view the Iranian Crown Jewels, a spectacular collection of jewels stored in the basement vault of the Bank Milli Iran; spend time admiring the world’s largest uncut diamond and the Peacock Thorne. End the day at the Carpet Museum which has a small number of excellent Iranian carpets. Or we can opt to take a short flight this morning to Isfahan, Iran’s most beautiful city, replete with parks, mosques and monumental architecture, and the capital of Persia in the 17th century. Its immense Imam Square forms a rectangle framed by four double-storied arcades, housing the Royal Bazaar, the Lotfallah Mosque, the lavish Ali Qapu Palace and the portal of the Shah Mosque. After lunch, explore the city’s enormous bazaar. Return to Tehran by air in the late afternoon in time for dinner. ESPINAS HOTEL (B,L,D)

Tuesday, October 11
Tehran / Almaty, Kazakhstan
This morning, fly to Almaty, the largest city in Kazakhstan, formerly known as Alma Ata. Lying on the route of the Silk Road, it is a bustling city of wide streets, shady trees and views of glaciers in the distant mountains. Tour the pastel-painted Orthodox cathedral and the Museum of Kazakh National Instruments, housed in a building that’s a cross between Noah’s Ark and a Chinese pagoda. This afternoon visit the Zelyony Bazaar, full of both city and country people exchanging goods and socializing. RITZ-CARLTON HOTEL (B,L,D)

Wednesday, October 12
Almaty / Tashkent, Uzbekistan / Bukhara
Fly to Tashkent, then change planes for our flight to Bukhara. Marco Polo’s father and uncle lived and traded in Bukhara for three years at a time when it was an important city of the Chaghatai Khanate. Enjoy a festive evening with dinner and local musicians. ASIA BUKHARA HOTEL (B,L,D)

Thursday, October 13
Bukhara
Begin our exploration of UNESCO-listed Bukhara as we walk through the old streets lined with colorful spice bazaars on our way to the landmark Kalyan Mosque and Tower. Continue to the Mir-i-Rab Madrasa, the only functioning religious college left in Bukhara. This afternoon visit the Ark Citadel, a 1,000-year-old fortress that consists of palaces, mosques, harems and offices. Continue to the Ismail Samani mausoleum that’s unique in bearing traces of pre-Islamic, Sogdian culture, a culture that
pioneered architectural and decorative techniques that would be used for centuries to come. ASIA
BUKHARA HOTEL (B,L,D)

Friday, October 14
Bukhara / Tashkent / Urumqi, China
Take a morning flight to Tashkent, where we transfer to our flight to Urumqi, arriving in the evening. Urumqi, the capital of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China in northwest China, is a busy industrial city with a high concentration of Han Chinese, as well as minority groups that add to the city's allure. GRAND MERCURE HOTEL HUALING (B,L,D)

Saturday, October 15
Urumqi / Kashgar
This morning visit Urumqi's Xinjiang Regional Museum. The first part of the museum displays archaeological finds from the Silk Road; the second focuses on local minority cultures, as well as the famous "mummies" of Urumqi, preserved due to the region's dry climate. Later, browse in the markets along and near Jiefang Nan Street for carpets, hats and baked goods. After lunch, fly to Kashgar and transfer to our hotel. YUE XING JIN JIANG INTERNATIONAL HOTEL (B,L,D)

Sunday, October 16
Kashgar / Urumqi
Kashgar is strategically located at the junction of the Silk Road's two main branches. Marco Polo described the intense trading activity and prosperity of the city, as well as the region's agricultural wealth. Today Kashgar is the center of Islam in China; most of the population is Uighur. Sunday is market day, and its market is unrivaled. Spend the morning there admiring traditional arts and handicrafts, local foods, silks and livestock. This afternoon visit China's largest mosque, the Aidakh Mosque, the Old Mosque, the tomb of Abakh Khoja, and a religious school. Late this afternoon, fly back to Urumqi. GRAND MERCURE HOTEL HUALING (B,L)

Monday, October 17
Urumqi / Dunhuang
This morning fly to Dunhuang, an oasis city surrounded by yellow sands and a major crossroads along the Silk Road. From our hotel, walk to the city’s museum to view its display of Chinese and Tibetan scrolls, sacrificial objects and everyday objects from the Western Han period. In the late afternoon, mount a camel to watch the sunset from the high sand dunes, with an unforgettable view of desert and oasis. DUNHUANG SILK ROAD HOTEL (B,L,D)

Tuesday, October 18
Dunhuang
This morning drive to Dunhuang's biggest attraction, the nearby Mogao Caves, the largest Buddhist cave complex in China and a trove of Buddhist painting and statuary. There are nearly 500 caves, with murals, inscriptions and colored stucco sculptures. The "library cave" once contained more than 50,000 inscriptions and manuscripts, and although most of them are now in the British Museum and a museum in India, the caves give us a sense of the area's Buddhist history. Later stroll through the handicraft and folk arts markets of the city. DUNHUANG SILK ROAD HOTEL (B,L,D)

Wednesday, October 19
Dunhuang / Beijing / Zhenglanqi
This morning, fly to Beijing and, upon arrival, continue to the Xilinhot Grasslands. During the Qing dynasty, Taipusi was established in the area as a national horse breeding farm. After lunch at Grassland, continue by coach to Zhenglanqi. ZHENGLANQI SHANGDU SUMMER PALACE HOTEL (B,L,D)
Thursday, October 20
Zhenglanqi / Shangdu / Doulun
We drive to Shangdu (more famously know to Westerners as Xanadu), enjoying the magnificent landscapes of the grasslands en route. Travel by way of the Jinlianchuan Prairie to Shangdu, summer capital of Kublai Khan’s Yuan Dynasty, where Marco Polo first met the powerful emperor and which Samuel Coleridge immortalized in verse centuries later. DUOLUN HOTEL (B,L,D)

Friday, October 21
Doulun / Beijing
We drive southwest from Duolun County to the Xishan Bay Scenic Area. En route, make a stop at the Huizong Temple, built by the Kangxi emperor in 1711 and staffed by monks from Mongolia. After lunch, drive to our hotel in Beijing.  NEW WORLD BEIJING HOTEL (B,L)

Saturday, October 22
Beijing
We visit the “Forbidden City,” the Imperial Palace of omnipotent Chinese emperors. The remainder of the afternoon is at leisure for independent exploration. Celebrate the end of our fabulous “Marco Polo” journey with fellow travelers at a festive farewell dinner. NEW WORLD BEIJING HOTEL (B,D)

Sunday, October 23
Beijing / U.S
Transfer to the airport for our homeward bound flights (B)

Optional Extension

Hangzhou Post-trip Extension: October 23 to 25 (pricing will be sent to confirmed participants)

Sunday, October 23
Beijing / Hangzhou
Fly from Beijing to Hangzhou. A city famed for its beauty and called by Marco Polo “the most beautiful and magnificent city in the world,” Hangzhou is also China’s silk capital. Occupied by the Song imperial family in the 12th century, the city sits on the shores of West Lake, filled with pleasure boats sailing from island to island. The city gained fame when the Grand Canal linked it to Suzhou. Take a tour of Lingyin Si and the Temple of Soul’s Retreat, the most renowned of the city’s many temples. HYATT REGENCY HOTEL, HANGZHOU (B,L,D)

Monday, October 24
Hangzhou
Begin with a relaxing cruise on West Lake. After our cruise visit the nearby Seal Engravers’ Society and learn about the ancient art of carving the name seals (chops) that serve as personal signatures. This afternoon visit one of the most important cultural facilities of the capital of the Zhejiang province, the Hangzhou Grand Theater. Designed by the Uruguayan architect Carlos Ott, who first came to international attention with his Bastille Opera in Paris, the Hangzhou Theater has been conceived not as a building but as a sculpture—“a pearl in its oyster’s shell.” HYATT REGENCY HOTEL, HANGZHOU (B,L,D)

Tuesday, October 25
Hangzhou / Shanghai / U.S.
Take the high-speed train to Shanghai to connect with our international flights home. (B)
What to Expect

We consider this program to be moderately strenuous, due to the weak infrastructures outside of the capital cities of the countries we visit, which requires of us patience with local service standards. It is at times physically demanding and busy. Travelers may need to handle their own luggage at airport customs and border crossings where porters are not available. We expect that participants will be a self-selecting group whose interest in the places we visit outweighs the need for creature comforts. Daily excursions involve one to three miles of walking on city streets, which can be uneven or cobbled. At ancient sites, paths can be rocky and uneven. In museums and at sites, guided tours require climbing up and down several flights of stairs, which may not have handrails. Elevators are limited or unavailable. Drives can be long; the longest drives are up to 7 hours. Due to poor roads, travel may be slow at times. Medical treatment and care are not always up to U.S. standards. Participants must be physically fit, active and in good health. We welcome travelers 15 years of age and older on this program.

Past travelers report that Iranians are very curious about, and extremely welcoming of, American tourists. Travel in Iran does require an open mind and a sense of adventure, and all participants are expected to adhere to local customs and laws, details of which will be sent to registered travelers. Women in Iran must wear a headscarf and loose-fitting clothing that fully covers the arms and legs, and alcoholic beverages are strictly prohibited.

Information

Dates
October 2 to 23, 2016 (22 days)

Size
This program can accommodate 35 participants. Single accommodations are limited; please call for availability.

Cost*
$15,995 per person, double occupancy
$18,195 per person, single occupancy
*Association nonmembers add $300 per person

Included
• 20 nights of deluxe hotel accommodations
• 20 breakfasts, 18 lunches and 18 dinners
• Welcome and farewell cocktail receptions
• Gratuities to guides and drivers for all group activities
• Visa fees for Turkey, Iran, Uzbekistan and China
• All tours and internal plane flights as described in the itinerary
• Transfers and baggage handling on program arrival and departure days
• Minimal medical, accident and evacuation insurance
• Educational program with lecture series and pre-departure materials, including recommended reading list, a selected book and travel information
• Services of our professional tour manager to assist you throughout the program
Not Included
• International and U.S. domestic airfare
• Passport fees
• Immunization costs
• Meals and beverages other than those specified as included
• Independent and private transfers
• Trip-cancellation/interruption and baggage insurance
• Excess-baggage charges
• Personal items such as internet access, telephone and fax calls, laundry and gratuities for non-group services

Terms and Conditions

Deposit and Final Payment
A $1,000-per-person deposit is required to hold space on this program. An additional $200-per-person deposit is required for each optional extension. Sign up online at alumni.stanford.edu/trip?marcopolo2016 or call the Travel/Study office at (650) 725-1093. Final payment is due 120 days prior to departure. As a condition of participation, all confirmed participants are required to sign a Release of Liability.

Cancellations and Refunds
Deposits and any payments are refundable, less a $500-per-person cancellation fee, until 120 days prior to departure. After that date, refunds can be made only if the program is sold out and your place(s) can be resold, in which case a $1,000-per-person cancellation fee will apply.

Insurance
Stanford Travel/Study provides all travelers who are U.S. or Canadian citizens with minimal medical, accident and evacuation coverage under our group-travel insurance policy. Our group policy is intended to provide minimal levels of protection while you are traveling on this program. You may choose to subscribe to optional trip-cancellation and baggage insurance. Information offering such insurance will be provided to travelers with their welcome materials. The product offered includes special benefits if you purchase your policy within 14 days of written confirmation of your participation on the trip.

Eligibility
We encourage membership in the Alumni Association as the program cost for nonmembers is $300 more than the member’s price. Families and trip companions may travel on one membership. Call (650) 725-0692 or visit alumni.stanford.edu/goto/membership for more information or to purchase a membership.

Responsibility
The Stanford Alumni Association, Stanford University and our operators act only as agents for the passenger with respect to transportation and exercise every care possible in doing so. However, we can assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay or irregularity in connection with the service of any automobile, motorcoach, launch or any other conveyance used in carrying out this program or for the acts or defaults of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the program. We cannot accept any responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, force majeure or other causes beyond our control. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger as
tour rates provide arrangements only for the time stated. We reserve the right to make such alterations to this published itinerary as may be deemed necessary. The right is reserved to cancel any program prior to departure in which case the entire payment will be refunded without further obligation on our part. The right is also reserved to decline to accept or retain any person as a member of the program. No refund will be made for an unused portion of any tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. Baggage is carried at the owner’s risk entirely. The airlines concerned are not to be held responsible for any act, omission or event during the time passengers are not onboard their plane or conveyance. Neither the Alumni Association, Stanford University nor our operators accept liability for any carrier’s cancellation penalty incurred by the purchase of a non-refundable ticket connected with the tour. Program price is based on rates in effect in November 2015 and is subject to change without notice to reflect fluctuations in exchange rates, tariffs or fuel charges.

California Seller of Travel Program Registration #2048 523-50

Contact Information

Visit us online to reserve space: http://alumni.stanford.edu/trip?marcopolo2016

Questions? Call us at (650) 725-1093 or email us at travelstudy@alumni.stanford.edu

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