

**TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS OF UZBEKISTAN. CULTURAL EVENTS**

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**Annotation:** *Uzbekistan, a country with a rich history and diverse cultural heritage, is known for its vibrant traditions, customs, and cultural events. Uzbekistan is a country steeped in rich cultural traditions and customs, influenced by its history along the Silk Road and its diverse ethnic heritage. The culture of Uzbekistan has a wide mix of ethnic groups and cultures, with the Uzbeks being the majority group. In 1995, about 71.5% of Uzbekistan's population was Uzbek. The chief minority groups were Russians (8.4%), Tajiks (officially 5%, but believed to be much higher), Kazaks (4.1%), Tatars (2.4%), and Karakalpaks (2.1%), and other minority groups include Armenians and Koryo-saram.*

**Key words:** *Heritage, religion, education, traditions, cuisine, sport, custom, national holiday, history, culture, festivals.*

The expectation was that an Islamic country long denied freedom of religious practice would undergo a very rapid increase in the expression of its dominant faith. In 1994 about more than half of Uzbeks were said to belong to Islam, though

in an official survey few of that number had any real knowledge of the religion or knew how to practice it.

Uzbekistan has a high literacy rate with about 98% of adults above the age of 15 being able to read and write. However, with only 76% of the under 15 population currently enrolled in education this figure may drop in the future. Uzbekistan has encountered severe budgeting shortfalls in its education program. The education law of 1992 began the process of theoretical reform, but the physical base has deteriorated, and curriculum revision has been slow.

Uzbeks celebrate the New Year in a celebration called Yangi Yil. They decorate a New Year tree, they celebrate New Year's Eve, and give each other gifts. They sing and listen to traditional Uzbek music while having dinner, and after dinner, a man dressed as Santa and Father Time arrive and continue the celebration. At midnight, they sing the Uzbek National Anthem to welcome a new year, and continue celebrating. Moreover, the most popular holiday for Uzbeks is Nowruz, and it is deemed to be the most historical one. Colourful traditional costumes and variety of meals on the laid table take the main pattern of the holiday. However, the main course of the holiday is Sumalak, which should be boiled the whole night.

Uzbekistan's signature dish is palov (plov or osh), a main course typically made with rice, pieces of meat, and grated carrots and onions. Oshi Nahor, or Morning Plov, is served in the early morning (between 6 and 9 am) to large gatherings of guests, typically as part of an ongoing wedding celebration. Other notable national dishes include: shurpa (shurva or shorva), a soup made of large pieces of fatty meat (usually mutton) and vegetables; norin and lagman, noodle-based dishes that may be served as a soup or a main course; manti, chuchvara, and somsa, stuffed pockets of dough served as an appetizer or a main course; dimlama (a meat and vegetable stew) and various kebabs, usually served as a main course.

Uzbekistan is home to former racing cyclist Djamolidine Abdoujaparov. Abdoujaparov has won the points contest in the Tour de France three times, each

time winning the coveted green jersey. The green jersey is second only to the yellow jersey. Abdoujaparov was a specialist at winning stages in tours or one day races when the bunch or peloton would finish together.

Ruslan Chagaev is a professional boxer representing Uzbekistan in the WBA. He won the WBA champion title in 2007, after defeating Russian Nikolai Valuev. Chagaev defended his title twice before losing it to Wladimir Klitschko in 2009.

### **Navruz – Oriental New Year!**

One of the biggest Uzbek holidays is Navruz! The translation of “Navruz” is a “new day”. It is an Oriental New Year celebrated on the 21st March. According to historians, the holiday is more than 3000 years old. It is the symbol of nature’s awakening. Navruz is a family holiday; usually Uzbek people celebrate it together relatives and friends.

Local people get ready for Navruz in advance. In every “mahalla” (neighboring community) people do “khashars” (joint works). People, united by the common task of preparing for the holiday, bring the city or village into a proper festive look. On 21st March the festive fun begins. Ladies set festive tables in each “mahalla” (neighboring community)! The main festive dishes are pilaf/plov, shurpa, and samsa with the first spring herbs. Also, on the table should be a variety of snacks, sweets and fruits. But the highlight of the program on this day is a plate with sprouted wheat! This dish must be on every festive table. From the grains of sprouted wheat, the main holiday delicacy is prepared – sumalak. Sumalak preparation process is a real ritual in which only women take part. The cooking process takes a whole day. Women, replacing each other, slowly stir the sprouted grains of wheat in a huge cauldron, which, thanks to their efforts, gradually turn into a thick, viscous brown mass.

During the cooking process, women sing folk songs about spring and Navruz. They also make sacred wishes! When sumalak is ready, our people would love to distribute it to neighbors, friends, colleagues, relatives.

The most important national holiday is Independence Day, celebrated on September 1st. Every year on December 8 Constitution Day is celebrated to commemorate the adoption of the new Constitution of independent Uzbekistan in 1992. As in many other countries, 9 May is celebrated Memorial Day. Widely celebrated Holidays that associated with the end of fasting – Ramazan Khayit and Kurban Khayit. Kurban Khayit is one of the most important Muslim holidays. On this day, after rituals believers pay visits or receive guests at home, helping the sick, lonely, and show mercy to others. Lovely holiday “Ramadan Khayit” is a holiday of spiritual and moral purification. It begins at the end of 30 days of fasting, which according to Islamic law falls on the 9th month of the Muslim Hijri year. On this day traditionally people commemorate the dead, visit the sick, the elderly, engage in charity and other good works.

### ***Teachers and instructors' day (1st October)***

Teachers are deeply respected and recognised in Uzbekistan to the point that they have a day to honour them. The students appreciate their work, giving them gifts and flowers.

### ***Constitution Day (8th December)***

On 8th December 1992, Oliy Majlis signed the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan. It is composed of 6 sections, 26 chapters and 128 articles. This important day is a national holiday celebrated with different events throughout the country.

### ***Women's Day (8th March)***

This holiday is international and has also arrived in Uzbekistan. It is also known as "Mother's Day" and, as it coincides with the first days of spring, flowers

are the most common gift. Men treat their wives, mothers and daughters to flowers or other presents.

The country's unique blend of traditional customs, warm hospitality, and expressive artistic practices reflect its deep roots along the Silk Road and its Islamic heritage. Traditional dress and cuisine play significant roles in daily life, while hospitality and respect for elders are cornerstones of social interactions.

Cultural events like Navruz and the Silk and Spices Festival demonstrate Uzbekistan's ability to celebrate its heritage with joy and creativity. Music and dance, particularly forms like maqom and shashmaqom, showcase the nation's rich artistic legacy. At the same time, religious practices and historic sites offer insights into the spiritual and historical context of the Uzbek people.

In summary, Uzbekistan's traditions and customs create a cultural landscape that is both deeply rooted and dynamically evolving. The country's cultural events and practices encapsulate a sense of continuity while embracing the opportunities for celebration and community. Whether through traditional clothing, cuisine, music, or dance, Uzbekistan's culture remains a vibrant expression of its history and identity.

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