

TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS OF UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: *Uzbekistan is a country rich in traditions and customs that have been passed down through generations. One important tradition in Uzbek culture is hospitality. Guests are always warmly welcomed and treated with great respect, often being offered tea, bread, and sweets as a gesture of hospitality. Another important tradition in Uzbekistan is the celebration of holidays and festivals. These events are marked by colorful decorations, traditional music and dance performances, and delicious feasts. Some of the most popular holidays in Uzbekistan include Navruz (the Persian New Year), Independence Day, and Eid al-Fitr. Uzbekistan also has a strong tradition of craftsmanship, with artisans creating beautiful handmade textiles, ceramics, and woodcarvings. These traditional crafts are often passed down through families and communities, preserving the country's cultural heritage. The traditions and customs of Uzbekistan play a vital role in shaping the country's identity and fostering a sense of community among its people.*

Key words: *Hospitality, Silk Road, Pilaf, Ikats, Suzani textiles, Tea ceremonies, Traditional music and dance, Bazaars, Ceremonial bread (non), Navruz celebrations, Kupkari, Beshik tuyi, Sunnat tuyi, Fotikha tuyi, Hashar*

Uzbekistan is a country rich in culture and traditions, with a long history of customs that have been passed down through generations. Some of the key traditions and customs in Uzbekistan include:

1. Hospitality: Uzbek people are known for their warm hospitality and generosity towards guests. It is common for visitors to be greeted with tea, bread, and sweets when they arrive at someone's home.
2. Traditional clothing: The traditional clothing of Uzbekistan is colorful and elaborate, with women often wearing vibrant dresses and headscarves, while men wear long coats called "chapans" and skullcaps.
3. Music and dance: Music and dance are an important part of Uzbek culture, with traditional instruments like the dutar (a two-stringed long-necked lute) and the doira (a frame drum) being commonly used in performances.
4. Festivals and celebrations: There are several festivals celebrated in Uzbekistan throughout the year, including Navruz (the Persian New Year), Independence Day, and Eid al-Fitr. These festivals often involve music, dancing, feasting, and other cultural activities.
5. Handicrafts: Uzbekistan is known for its traditional handicrafts such as ceramics, embroidery, carpet weaving, and silk production. These crafts have been practiced for centuries and continue to be an important part of Uzbek culture.
6. Food: Uzbek cuisine is diverse and flavorful, with dishes like plov (a rice pilaf dish), shashlik (grilled kebabs), and lagman (a noodle soup) being popular staples. Meals are often shared with family and friends in a communal setting.
7. Respect for elders: In Uzbek culture, respect for elders is highly valued, with younger generations expected to show deference to their elders in all aspects of life.

Overall, the traditions and customs of Uzbekistan reflect a deep sense of pride in their cultural heritage and a strong sense of community spirit among its people. Uzbekistan, along with Uzbek customs and traditions, is very rich in various holidays, festivals, and events! Uzbek people love and know how to celebrate. They celebrate weddings, anniversaries, and national holidays – any festive event in Uzbekistan cheerfully, hospitably with an abundance of delicious national dishes to the sounds of national instruments and traditionally with incendiary dances.

The main public holiday is Independence Day – September 1. Two more significant holidays are the Constitution Day – December 8, and the Day of Remembrance and Honor – May 9. Some of the most significant Muslim holidays are Eid-Al-Fitr and Eid-Al-Adha.

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! How do Uzbek people celebrate Navruz nowadays? Navruz is a family holiday; usually Uzbek people celebrate it together relatives and friends. Due to this event, the folk plant different types of trees and flowers everywhere. 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)! There is such a sign – the richer the table will be, the richer the whole coming year will be! 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

Kupkari / Uloq / Buzkashi

It is one of the ancient fierce games have been played by strong and brave horse riders for many centuries in Central Asian countries. In the past local rulers used to arrange such games to pick up the strongest and most clever guys for their armies. Nowadays it is still quite popular in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Riders contend to grab a lifeless goat to deliver it to a designated spot. Usually, short but strong horses are chosen by riders because it is easier to pick up a goat from a ground. Riders mostly wear thick cotton jackets, trousers and headdresses with ear covering parts somehow to save themselves from the whips of other exited riders. An organizer puts expensive awards (ox, sheep, carpets, TV, car and etc.). The number riders will be minimum 20 and could reach to endless ... Despite the fact that riders have different professions, they do not play this game for earning or gaining awards, but they do just for passion (like a racer getting it by driving hyper cars!) Some travelers may mind the idea of riders' contending for the body of a lifeless goat; however, it is considered as an inseparable part of Central Asian nations' cultures. It is usually held in spring and autumn during special events: holidays, weddings, etc. Uzbekistan, once located on the crossroad of the Great Silk Road, attracts the world with its very colorful legends, ancient traditions, various beliefs, rich cultures and hospitable nation!

Beshik tuyi (Cradle ceremony)

And here is a joyous and important event – a new person has appeared! In the Uzbek family, the appearance of the baby is accompanied by the ancient ritual celebration “Besik Tuyi” – “Cradle ceremony”. This rite is usually performed on the seventh, ninth, eleventh, or fortieth day of the child's birth. On the day of the ceremony relatives of the wife bring a richly decorated cradle and necessary accessories for the child, as well as many different sweets, traditional Uzbek pies and baby toys, which wrap in table cloth. Sounds of black, trumpet and tambourine announce the beginning of the rite. The house gathers a large number of guests who spend at the festive table, which is made with a rich meal. And while the guests are enjoying themselves, enjoying the game of musicians,

celebrating and having fun, the elderly women in the nursery perform the rite of the first hugging of the baby and putting it in the cradle. At the end of the ceremony, the child's eyes are traditionally arranged. Guests enter the children's room, admire the toddler and sprinkle the cradle with candies like "parvardi", crystalized sugar – "navat" and other sweets. According to the rite, people do it so that the life of the child was joyful and safe.

Khatna / Sunnat tuyi

A child has grown up. Now he has to go through a very important ritual for him, the circumcision ceremony. It is very ancient, dedicated to Islam, the Uzbek ritual of circumcision. Boys aged three to nine years have to face it. Before the ceremony, the Koran is recited in the presence of the imam from the mosque, relatives, and dignitaries of "mahalla" (neighboring community). Afterwards the elders bless the boy and give him gifts. After that, the festive table is laid and the ceremony itself begins – a big "celebration". At the end of the ceremony, the guests congratulate the boy, showering him with money and sweets. And now the climax – a young stallion, adorned with elegant ribbons and rich harness, is brought into the center of the celebration. With the wishes to grow into a mighty and brave horseman, the boy seats on a horse. And at the end of the ritual, a holiday begins with abundant food, music, dancing.

Fotikha tuyi / Engagement

A son has grown up, matured, reached the age of majority – it's time to start his own family. Mostly by tradition, parents themselves choose a bride for their son, matchmakers help them in this. The choice of the bride is taken with all responsibility, asking in detail about her family, getting to know the girl's relatives. All! The day of the engagement is coming – "Fotikha tuyi" On this day, guests gather in the house of the betrothed girl, among who are venerable old people and the chairman of the community. Matchmakers set out the purpose of their visit, after which the ritual "non sindirish" / "bread breaking" takes place,

literally translated, this means “breaking the cake”. After completing this interesting ancient rite, the young are considered engaged, and they fix a wedding day. The relatives of the bride generously present the relatives of the groom and matchmakers – they give each a “dasturkhon” (tablecloth) with two cakes and sweets, and also give gifts to the groom and his parents. From the moment of engagement, preparations for the wedding begin.

Uzbek wedding

In Uzbek society weddings are extremely significant events. The wedding consists of sub-events. First of all, the wedding day begins with a morning pilaf/plov arranged in the houses of the bride and groom, and pilaf/plov for the bride’s house is prepared in the groom’s house. The marriage in the registry office takes place after the imam of the local mosque reads the wedding prayer and declares them husband and wife in front of God. The key event of the wedding is the ceremony of farewell to parents, which takes place before the bride, accompanied by her friends, leaves her father’s house and goes to the groom’s house. As soon as the bride crosses the threshold of the groom’s house, the wedding celebration begins. Numerous guests gather at the festive table. Four or even five hundred guests at a traditional Uzbek wedding is quite common. The celebration is fun, bright, and incendiary. At the end of the wedding, another ancient ceremony is held – the ransom of the bride, which takes place in a room specially designated for the young. The groom escorts the bride to the door of the room, where she is usually met by a close family friend – “yanga”. In the room, the bride changes clothes and hides behind a special “gushanga” curtain. Accompanied by friends, the groom enters the room, where he is offered to give a ransom for the bride. Bargaining begins, as a result of which the groom symbolically redeems the bride from the “yanga”. At the end of this ceremony, the bride and groom remain alone in the room for the whole night. The next morning, the ceremony “Kelin salom” / “Bride’s greeting” takes place. This ceremony means accepting the bride into a new family. Parents, relatives and

friends of the groom gather in the yard, present gifts to the bride and bless her. The bride, in turn, greets everyone by bowing low. From this moment, a new family life begins.

Hashar in Uzbekistan

In any mahalla there is a wonderful ancient tradition of mutual assistance – “hashar”. As they say, all over the world, the residents of the mahalla voluntarily and unselfishly help each other if necessary. You need to build a house, improve a street or district, organize a morning pilaf/plov – hashar always comes to help. During happy and sorrow days, the residents of the mahalla try to stick together. As a rule, when someone invites for hashar, no one refuses. People work together, having time to complete a large amount of necessary work in one calendar day. And then they also organize lunch or dinner together. A wonderful oriental tradition-symbol of unity and sympathy!

In conclusion the traditions and customs of Uzbekistan are deeply rooted in the country's rich history and diverse cultural heritage. These traditions reflect the values, beliefs, and way of life of the Uzbek people, and play a significant role in shaping their identity and sense of community. From traditional ceremonies and celebrations to everyday customs and rituals, Uzbekistan's cultural practices are a source of pride and connection for its people. By preserving and honoring these traditions, Uzbekistan is able to maintain a strong sense of cultural identity and tradition in a rapidly changing world. The traditions and customs of Uzbekistan play a significant role in shaping the cultural identity of the country. These traditions are deeply rooted in history, religion, and family values, and are passed down from generation to generation. They serve as a way for Uzbek people to connect with their heritage and maintain a sense of community and belonging. From hospitality to traditional clothing, music, dance, and cuisine, these customs are an integral part of daily life in Uzbekistan and contribute to the rich tapestry of its cultural landscape. It is important to preserve and celebrate these traditions as they are a vital aspect of Uzbekistan's cultural heritage. The traditions and

customs of Uzbekistan are deeply rooted in the country's rich history, culture, and religion. These traditions play a significant role in shaping the social fabric of Uzbek society and are passed down from generation to generation. From traditional clothing and cuisine to celebratory events and rituals, Uzbekistan's customs are a reflection of its diverse cultural heritage. By preserving and honoring these traditions, Uzbeks maintain a strong sense of identity and connection to their past while also embracing modern influences. Overall, the traditions and customs of Uzbekistan contribute to the country's unique charm and allure, making it a fascinating destination for travelers seeking an authentic cultural experience.

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