A Strategic Approach to Visa Facilitation in the Silk Road Countries

Silk Road Regional Programme (SRRP):
Capacity Building for Regional Cooperation and Development
A Strategic Approach to Visa Facilitation in the Silk Road Countries

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- The consuls and other representatives of Silk Road embassies in the United Kingdom.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the Silk Road

The ‘Silk Road’ has been travelled along for centuries by conquerors, traders, missionaries, geographers and, more recently, tourists. It served as a fundamental link between the East and West, exchanging cultures, crafts, ideas, technologies, beliefs and peoples. Since 1991, coinciding with the independence of five central Asian republics from the former Soviet Union, there has been a revival of interest in the Silk Road – for cultural exchange, trade and tourism.

Encouraged by this development, the World Tourism Organization (WTO) decided at its General Assembly in Indonesia in 1993 to create a long-term tourism project that would promote a special Silk Road tourism concept. As a historical landmark, the Samarkand Declaration on Silk Road Tourism was adopted in 1994 by 19 participating countries under the inspiration of the President of Uzbekistan and the then secretary-general of WTO. A special logo of the WTO Silk Road Tourism Project was subsequently adopted to unite all countries, organisations and the private sector under a common visual banner.

1.2 The Previous Study on Visa Facilitation in the Silk Road Countries

Ever since the Silk Road project was launched, a major area of concern, based on feedback received from the travel trade and consumers alike, has been tourist facilitation in some countries. Travel formalities (involving the imposition, processing and management of visas, border formalities and customs regulations) have the potential to become one of the highest-ranked and most significant impediments to the growth of travel and tourism along the Silk Road.

In order to explore this issue, WTO decided to undertake a study of visas in the region. It commissioned this study in October 1999. The findings were published in the report: ‘Study on Visa Facilitation in the Silk Road Countries’ (ISBN: 92-844-0422-3). The findings of the study were presented at the Fourth International Meeting of the Silk Road in Bukhara, Uzbekistan, on 26th to 29th October 2002. In this present study, ‘Study on Visa Facilitation in the Silk Road Countries’ is referred to as ‘the Previous Study’.

1.3 The Silk Road Regional Programme (SRRP)

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has launched an ambitious project aimed at establishing a framework for regional cooperation between China (Western China) and the Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The overall aim of SRRP is to facilitate capacity building for regional cooperation and development within the Silk Road area, through encouraging increased commitment to national ownership of project objectives. The framework for regional cooperation and development will focus on three areas: trade and transit, facilitation of investment and a regional plan for sustainable tourism development. The World
Tourism Organization (WTO) is the agency responsible for the tourism component of the project.

One aspect which will be addressed within the tourism component of the project is the establishment of a Silk Road multiple entry visa or other forms of visa facilitation, that would enable tourists to travel more conveniently through these participating countries. WTO commissioned a study to review and assess current visa procedures in the Silk Road countries, which would culminate in a Strategy Paper to advise on implementing measures for more effective visa facilitation in the five participating countries.

The WTO is of the opinion that travel formalities have the potential to become the most significant bottleneck to the growth of travel and tourism along the Silk Road. While some may see the issue of visas as a non-negotiable issue of security, the relaxation of certain visa issues can have very beneficial effects on the economy. The issue of visa facilitation is particularly relevant since one of the other project components is the development of multi-destination tourist itineraries. There is no doubt that visa facilitation procedures would provide a significant stimulus to Silk Road tourism in these countries.

1.4 **Objective of this Present Study**

The primary objective of this Present Study was to prepare a Strategy Paper and Action Plan (phased over several years: short, medium and long-term) for visa facilitation along the Silk Road, focusing on the five participating countries of the project.

The study would include an analysis of the existing visa procedures and other formalities in the Silk Road countries, based on the results of a survey of the corresponding embassies and consulates. The results of the survey would then allow for a comparative analysis to be developed of the various rules, regulations and procedures including the visa fees currently in force in the Silk Road countries.

Subsequently, the study would then make a value judgement on the entire facilitation process in the Silk Road countries, and compare and contrast that with the facilitation processes of other sub-regional groupings including, *inter alia*, ASEAN, Schengen, Caribbean and Mekong. It will also take into consideration the recent measures taken by individual states to eliminate all visa requirements to boost tourism arrivals.

Finally, the study would formulate a series of recommendations to streamline visa procedures in the Silk Road countries, bringing them in line with internationally acceptable procedures which would facilitate growth of tourism in the Silk Road countries. The procedures could include the phasing in of visas upon arrival for certain ‘safe’ destinations, introduction of multiple entry visas and group visas. If the recommendations were to include the elimination of visas, proposals would be made on how countries could compensate for loss of revenue. The recommendations would be further detailed in an Action Plan with indications of timings for certain procedures to be in place.
1.5 Methodology

The methodology for this study has included the following:

- Meetings with representatives of the London embassies of four of the five countries which are the subject of this study, as follows:
  - The Counsellor & Consul General at the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China
  - The Attache (Economic Affairs) at the Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan
  - The Second Secretary (Consul) at the Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic
  - The Consul at the Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan

  Tajikistan, does not have an Embassy or other representation in London.

- Review of visa application forms for China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and other documents.

- A review of the websites of the London embassies of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan; and of the websites of embassies in selected other countries for these four countries and for Tajikistan.

- Examination of data on visa requirements held on the database of the UK-based company: TLCS Global Visa Services.

- Examination of data on TIMATIC, a web-based source of information on visas, passports, health information and other border requirements from the International Air Transport Authority (IATA).

- Extensive research in the Internet; for a list of websites consulted, see Appendix I.

- Discussions with representatives of a number of visa agencies and tour operators specialising in Silk Road tours, including the following UK companies:
  - Silk Road and Beyond, specialising in silk road tours; and
  - Travcour (UK) Ltd, agency which arranges visas for Silk Road tours.

- Consultations amongst tourism specialists to identify anecdotal experiences related to visa regimes in other regions of the world.

- “Brainstorm” sessions involving members of the study team.
1.6 Special comments

The reader of this report should be aware of the following important considerations:

- Visas are devised to assist national governments to protect the security of their countries. Use of the visa system has been established for many years and is adopted by all countries of the world in some form or other. Requiring other nationals to hold a visa before granting access is a fundamental right of all governments, a right which is in no way brought into question by this report.

- Due to constant changes in national and international political circumstances, visa requirements, costs and application procedures are changing constantly, hence the need for continuous updating (daily) of databases such as IATA’s TIMATIC website and those maintained by TLCS Global Visa Services. Thus, the contents of the situation analysis provided in Section 4 and the Appendices of this report should be viewed only as a “snapshot” of the situation at the time our research was carried out in September and October 2005. The information contained therein is likely to have changed since then.

- The complexity of the visa system also results in many inaccuracies and inconsistencies, which is exacerbated by the availability of so much information on the Internet. Information about visa requirements can vary from website to website, irrespective of whether these are private sector websites or those managed by embassies and foreign offices. Inconsistencies also occur between embassy officials and on different days, to the extent that one specialist visa agent said that applying for visas was at times like “a lottery”. Some of these variations might be due to some embassies and officials being empowered to vary the regulations.

- For the purposes of this study, research has been carried out amongst embassies in the UK. The characteristics of visas and requirements for citizens of other countries can vary considerably from those for UK citizens.

- Prices quoted in this report are in Pounds Sterling (UK£) or United States (US) Dollars (US$) unless otherwise indicated.

- This report makes numerous reference to ‘the Previous Study’: throughout this document, this refers to ‘Study on Visa Facilitation in the Silk Road Countries’, published by WTO in 2001 (ISBN: 92-844-0422-3).
2. THE PREVIOUS SILK ROAD VISA STUDY

2.1 What the Previous Study encompassed

The Previous Study, “Study on Visa Facilitation in the Silk Road Countries”, encompassed the following:

- An introduction that provided the background to the Silk Road project and the study on visa facilitation, terms of reference and methodology, the report structure and special comments to be borne in mind by the reader of the report.

- A comprehensive review of visas, visa requirements and visa characteristics, including reasons for visas, reciprocity, application procedures, passports, charges, costs, health requirements, border controls and the impact of visas on tourism.

- An analysis of visa procedures and border controls for Silk Road countries

- A review of visa trends and developments in other regions.

- Conclusions and options for Silk Road countries.

- The Draft Declaration on Visa Facilitation and Border Controls in countries of the Silk Road.

- Visa profiles and recommendations specific to each of the 17 Silk Road countries individually.

The ‘Study on Visa Facilitation in the Silk Road Countries’ contains important background information for the present study.

2.2 Conclusions of the Previous Study

In brief, the following conclusions emanated from the research undertaken for the Visa Facilitation study:

Three trajectories of change emerged from the research in the use and deployment of visas. These are:

- technology is becoming a key driver of change in visa procedures and can be a more effective means of security, as well as greatly improving convenience for travellers.

- governments are working more in collaboration with other governments on information and visa-free areas;

- there is increasing involvement of the private sector in the processing and issuance of visas.
The Silk Road offers a unique, multi-cultural, multiple destination tourist experience with considerable development potential. This experience, in part or in whole, is very much in line with the type of cultural and adventure tourism that is increasingly popular amongst today’s main tourist generating markets.

The diversity of political and socio-cultural regimes amongst the Silk Road countries, whilst contributing to the strength of the region’s tourism potential, also contributes towards the great complexity of visa types and procedures. The traditional visa systems in use in many countries make all but the most cursory of travel plans prohibitive. Requirements for additional supporting documentation, letters of invitation, pre-booked or planned itineraries and clearance from relevant ministries were cited to us during our research as major complicating factors in the visa application process. Improving the ease of access to the Silk Road, in parts or in whole, would make a substantial contribution to realising the potential for tourism development.

2.3 Recommendations from the Previous Study

Some of the Silk Road countries have highly developed tourism industries and are examples of good practice in the deployment of visas. What is needed now is progress throughout the region as a whole, following the examples of good practice set within the region and elsewhere.

A total of 11 recommendations were put forward in the report. These recommendations were aimed at achieving a balance between easing access for bona fide tourists whilst maintaining the security and political needs of government.

The options put forward follow the three main trajectories of change set out above.

Furthermore, recognizing the different states of development of the Silk Road countries, our recommendations were categorized from “gradual” changes that could be implemented with relatively few political consequences and at relatively low cost, to “radical” changes requiring greater investment of political will, time and money.

The recommendations in the original report are set out in full in Appendix II of this report.
3. RELEVANT GLOBAL CHANGES 1999 - 2005

3.1 Introduction

This Section of this report contains a review of a number of changes that have occurred between the date of the research for the Previous Study (November/December 1999) and the present (October 2005). This review is not intended to be an exhaustive catalogue of change; rather, examples of events that have affected visa requirements.

3.2 The Internet

Although the Internet was already well established at the time of the Previous Study, it has grown exponentially since then. The expansion in the number of websites is vast and the quantity, if not the quality, of available information is huge. It is estimated that there are now 600 billion pages on the internet – 100 for every human on earth.

Also vastly increased since the time of the last study are opportunities for people in every country of the world to access the internet. The number of computers in circulation has multiplied many times and specialist internet ‘cafes’ and ‘shops’ have been set up for those who do not own their own computer. It is estimated that one-sixth of the world’s population is now online.

Internet search engines have become the prime means by which internet users can find information, where previously they might not have known where to look. An indication of the vastness of information on the internet can be gained by entering words into web-based search engines. Although the number of search results changes depending on factors such as the web browser used, an indication of the vastness of information available is evident from the following sample searches:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search words:</th>
<th>No of results:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>obtain visa</td>
<td>1,250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>silk road visa</td>
<td>77,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>obtain silk road visa</td>
<td>8,490</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from these examples, the internet makes it possible for information on visas to be obtained from a huge number of sources.
These sources include websites that have been established solely for the purpose of providing information to travellers on visa requirements of different countries. These include:

- Websites of embassies or foreign offices or trade departments of governments.
- Travel agents organising tours to the countries in question.
- Specialist passport and visa firms, which often charge a fee for providing information and/or obtaining visas on behalf of customers.
- Specialist information sources, some of which charge a fee, such as IATA’s TIMATIC, and others that are free, such as www.projectvisa.com.

The quality of information available from these sources varies considerably. Even government-owned sites have inaccuracies; for example, it is alleged that one embassy in the UK has an incorrect visa application form on its own website.

3.3 The growth in tourism

Tourism has been one of the most remarkable growth sectors. The number of international arrivals, according to WTO data, grew from 25 million in 1950 to an estimated 763 million in 2004, representing an average annual growth rate of 6.5 per cent.

Although the rate of growth has been declining, nevertheless tourism is growing each year and is forecast to continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

Of particular relevance to Silk Road tourism are the following points:

- the emergence of powerful new economies, particularly in China and India. This economic growth is generating strong inward business tourism to these countries, together with strong outward business and leisure tourism;

- for mature tourism consumers, there is a significant trend away from a focus on sand/sea/sun holidays towards those that provide a cultural and/or adventure experience; and

- the cost of travel has generally been falling, due in large part to increasing liberalisation of the skies. This has encouraged competition on liberalised routes, most noticeably in Europe and North America.

The economic benefits that can be derived from tourism have been actively recognised by the governments of some countries more than others. These countries have introduced initiatives aimed at encouraging tourist visits. Examples of such initiatives are tourism investment incentives, increased marketing budgets and favourable visa policies, such as:

- visa-free travel for citizens of certain countries;
- simplified visa application procedures; and
- lower or zero visa charges.
3.4 Terrorism

Terrorism is not a recent phenomenon but has taken on a new global dimension since the attack on the World Travel Centre in New York on 11 September 2001 (hereinafter referred to as 9/11). Following that event, and the subsequent so-called “war on terror”, the world has been in a heightened state of security awareness. This has been compounded by subsequent atrocities such as those in Bali, Mombasa, Istanbul, Moscow, Madrid and London, as well as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Understandably, these events have had an effect on visa issuance and border controls in certain countries. These effects have been most notable in the USA; evidence includes:

- Much publicised extra security checks at airports and consequent delays for passengers;
- The requirement that from 26 June 2005 all visitors to the USA from the 27 countries participating in the Visa Waiver Scheme must have a machine-readable passport or a valid visa;
- the US authorities subsequently announced that from 26 October 2005, visitors on the Visa Waiver Scheme would require biometric passports (implementation of this requirement has now been deferred to 26 October 2006).

Other countries where visa and border requirements have been significantly toughened are the UK and, for a brief period after the Madrid bombing on 11 March 2004, Spain.

It has become extremely difficult for the citizens of certain countries, which have been perceived as or alleged to be a source of terrorists and extremists, to obtain visas for travel. A notable example is Pakistan. Of course, the vast majority of the citizens of these countries are law-abiding people who have the same right to travel as everyone else. Furthermore, in our increasingly integrated and complex world, terrorists might well be citizens of any country in the world – the bomb attacks in London in July 2005, for example, were carried out by citizens of the UK.

3.5 The Commonwealth of Independent States

The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was created in December 1991. In the adopted declaration, the participants of the Commonwealth declared their interaction on the basis of sovereign equality. Four of the countries which are the subject of this study are members. At present the CIS unites: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine.

In September 1993, the heads of the CIS states signed an agreement to create an economic union to enable free movement of goods, services, labour and capital, and to coordinate monetary, tax, price, customs and external economic policy.
An agreement of further integration in economic and humanitarian matters was signed by Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia in 1995. Recognition of full customs union rights were extended to the Republic of Tajikistan in 1999.

Whilst in some respects, the member countries of the CIS have forged closer links since the dissolution of the former Soviet Union, some of these countries have, in other ways, diverged due to religious, economic or political differences.

In general, the CIS countries confer favourable visa requirements towards citizens of their fellow members. However, in some cases, these requirements are stricter than they were previously due to concerns about immigration, particularly between countries with widely differing economies. It has been suggested that Turkmenistan, and possibly Tajikistan, appear to be gradually withdrawing from the visa-free zone.
4. SITUATION ANALYSIS IN THE FIVE STUDY COUNTRIES

4.1 Introduction

In this section, an overview of visa requirements for the five subject countries is presented. This overview focuses particularly on changes that have occurred in the period since the Previous Study.

This section is based on meetings with consuls, discussions with tourism and visa industry professionals and an analysis of visa and other requirements on websites and databases. Appendix III contains information on visa requirements extracted from the websites of embassies of the five countries. Appendix IV contains information on passport, health, airport tax, customs and currency requirements from IATA’s TIMATIC Database.

Set out on the next page of this report is a matrix comparing a number of key requirements and other data in the five key countries.

4.2 China

China has relaxed its visa policies since the time of the Previous Study. The citizens of many countries now require only a form and passport with free pages, although if they can show their proposed itinerary, this will assist the application. For some countries, a financial guarantee is required, such as a return travel ticket or cash in hand.

The requirements for multiple entry visas, valid for one or two years, have also been relaxed.

China tends to be strictest towards countries that cause problems related to illegal working. Conversely, visitors from Brunei, Japan and Singapore can enter for 30 days without a visa.

One significant change since 1 August 2004 is that Chinese embassies no longer accept visa applications by post. This is because previous experience showed that a high percentage of postal applications had to be returned for minor inaccuracies, such as failure to include a cheque for payment. It is recognised that the rule might cause problems for people living far from the embassy; however, applications may be submitted by a travel agent or friend of the applicant. In the UK, there are consulates in Manchester and Edinburgh as well as London.

The Chinese visa process is generally recognised for its efficiency, especially given the high volume of applications processed. Visas can be issued the same day for a higher fee (subject to having a ticket for travel that day). This efficiency has been maintained despite big increases in the volume of applications. For example, at the embassy in London, the number of applications in the first six months of 2005 was 30 per cent higher than the corresponding period the previous year. Local staff were hired to help process the current volume of 600 to 800 applications per day. The process has also been helped by investment in technology.
# Matrix of Visa Requirements and other data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Kazakhstan</th>
<th>Kyrgyzstan</th>
<th>Tajikistan</th>
<th>Uzbekistan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General information:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Foreign embassies/consulates:</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>58</td>
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<tr>
<td>Application form on UK website:</td>
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<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visa application form:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of pages</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of questions</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General requirements for tourists:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passport validity</td>
<td>3 months on exit</td>
<td>3 months on exit</td>
<td>6 months on exit</td>
<td>3 months on exit</td>
<td>length of trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of clear pages in passport</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of passport photos</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Copies of application form</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invitation letter from destination</td>
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<td>no</td>
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<tr>
<td>Itinerary of trip</td>
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<td>Confirmation of hotel booking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Original travel tickets</td>
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<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Extra requirements for business visitors:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Kazakhstan</th>
<th>Kyrgyzstan</th>
<th>Tajikistan</th>
<th>Uzbekistan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Invitation letter from destination</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original UK business letter</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invitation from foreign ministry</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: TLCS Global Visa Services
China’s increasingly relaxed visa policy is reflected in the fact that some visitors are granted visas on arrival. However, this is not recommended.

It is thought that any future proposal for bilateral or multilateral visa arrangements would be considered on its merits, but that this might not be of interest unless anticipated volumes of tourists were high enough to make this worthwhile.

Visas can sometimes be issued for tour groups, usually of between five and thirty people. These must be arranged through a Chinese ground handler. They are sometimes problematic as all people in the group must enter and leave the country together, thus ruling out those who want to travel independently.

It is very difficult to arrange for visitors to drive independently in China. Thus most tourists travel in groups and/or on public transport.

In procedural terms, China is helpful in facilitating the visa application process. For example, whereas most countries still specify that application forms must be completed in black ink, the Chinese form states that red ink is the only colour that is not acceptable.

4.3 Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan has been going through considerable change, and the visa regime has been amended accordingly. The visa form has been simplified to a basic framework. Each embassy is at liberty to make changes to this.

In February 2004, Kazakhstan relaxed visa requirements for nationals of 28 countries who no longer require an official invitation with their visa application form. Citizens of Turkey do not need visas for Kazakhstan, and vice versa.

It is claimed that the relaxation for the invitation letter requirement is the main reason for an 80 per cent increase in visitors from the UK this year.

According to a recent Economists Intelligence Unit report, Kazakhstan is amongst the top ten countries in the world for economic growth. It is claimed that the country has the best banking system in the CIS. It is expected that Kazakhstan’s application to join the World Trade Organization will soon receive approval.

In an address to the nation in February 2005, President Nazarbayev identified tourism specifically as one of five to seven growth clusters. The importance of tourism is also indicated by the fact that responsibility for the sector has been placed in the Ministry for Industry and Trade.

Although the country’s strong economy has been the prime driver of growth in the number of visitors, tourist demand, which accounts for around one-third of visitors from the UK, has also increased. This has been partly due to promotion: for example, Kazakhstan’s stand space at World Travel Market, one of the world’s premier travel trade shows, has increased threefold in five years.
An even more significant cause of tourism growth has been the relaxation of visa requirements. Visitors formerly were required to register with the immigration authorities after entering Kazakhstan, which could necessitate standing in queues for hours. This process has been facilitated by making forms widely available and by allowing stamping of the form at the airport and other locations.

Kazakhstan suspended its former 72-hour transit rule by which travellers with other Commonwealth of Independent States’ visas could transit Kazakhstan. A new five-day transit visa has been introduced for visitors holding a valid visa for a neighbouring country. This visa can be obtained on arrival. It should assist multiple country Silk Road tours.

As with all other members of the former Soviet Union, Kazakhstan had no foreign embassies at the time of independence in 1990. It now has 58 and new embassies are being opened at a rate of three to five per year.

Visitors from countries which do not have a Kazakh embassy can obtain a visa upon arrival in the country, provided their visa has been applied for in advance. It is anticipated that visas upon arrival will be accepted for certain nationalities within a year of the date of this study.

It is claimed that the Kazakh borders have the best equipment and practices of the CIS countries. It is also suggested that Kazakhstan has a relatively open border with its neighbour, Kyrgyzstan, though this border has been closed at short notice in the past, possibly due to nationals of Kyrgyzstan seeking jobs in Kazakhstan. Discussions were being held on allowing nationals of each country to visit the other without visas, but these discussions were put on hold due to the political coup in Kyrgyzstan in March 2005.

In London, a new Kazakhstan Travel Centre has opened in Oxford Street, a busy shopping area. The visa application form is made available there.

4.4 Kyrgyzstan

The Government of Kyrgyzstan has been working towards a three stage plan of visa liberalisation. A significant step on 15 April 2003 was the relaxation of visa requirements for nationals of 28 countries, who no longer require a letter of invitation for stays of up to 30 days.

This major change has not been announced publicly by the government. Very limited information is provided by their embassies abroad and simply state that a letter of invitation is required for stays of over 30 days. According to their embassy in the United States, visa requirements and fees changed on 1 August 2005 and provide a list of the 28 countries that no longer require invitation letters for stays of up to 30 days.

However, it has been informed that citizens of the 28 countries can now obtain visas on arrival in the country, although this is not publicised. According to embassy officials, this information has not been publicised since local embassies need the income from issuing visas. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Consular Office in
Manas Airport can grant visas (US$ 60 for a 30 day tourist visa), but does not specify which nationalities may obtain visas here.

Five-day transit visas are available. To obtain a transit visa, applicants must submit a ticket for their onward travel and a visa for the country of destination, together with their application form.

Nationals of Tajikistan and Kazakhstan do not require visas. The border with Uzbekistan is not quite so open, mainly due to ethnic differences.

Fifty per cent of visa applications in the UK are received by post. The others are made in person.

Visitors staying over five days in Kyrgyzstan require a validation stamp. A new office is to be opened at the airport to make this easier.

4.5 Tajikistan

At the time of the Previous Study, it was possible to obtain visas for Tajikistan through the Russian Embassy in London, but this is no longer the case.

In 1999, it was very difficult to obtain information on visa requirements for Tajikistan. Now this is made easier with the availability of the internet. Entering the words ‘Tajikistan visa’ into one search engine produced 194,000 results. Many sites have information about visa requirements; some have links to Tajikistan embassies (for example, in Germany, Russian Federation or the USA); and some sites provide a visa application form for users to download. Some are websites of travel agents and specialist visa agents, which can arrange to obtain a visa on behalf of travellers for a fee.

However, using the internet can still lead to certain difficulties. For visa applications from citizens of member countries of the European Union, applicants are directed to the website of the Tajikistan Embassy in Germany. This site is only in German (which might be problematic for non-German speakers); although the application form could be downloaded, the form itself is only in Russian and English (which might be problematic for non-English speakers). Interestingly, Tajikistan has an embassy in Austria which has recently set up a website in English but not German. It would be useful if the embassies in Austria and Germany were to work together so that visitors could be offered a choice of languages and a more comprehensive service.

For people who are not computer literate, finding information can still be difficult. One specialist visa agency firm in London has a comprehensive database of visa information for 224 countries, but at the time of the initial research for this study, had no entry for Tajikistan. This has now been rectified.

IATA’s TIMATIC database of information on passport and visa requirements does not include Tajikistan because there are no international flights.

Tajikistan has not liberalised its visa requirements to the same extent as the other countries in this study. According to the Tajikistan Embassy in the United States, an
invitation letter or letter of request from a company or travel agency is required and other documents might also be requested. The number of photographs required is now one compared to three at the time of the Previous Study. The United States Embassy in Tajikistan helpfully refers travellers to Travel Document Systems, a private company (which charges a fee) for applicants requiring visas in a hurry.

4.6 Uzbekistan

Visa requirements were recently relaxed for citizens of ten countries whereby tourist and business visas for up to 30 days, multiple or single entry, can be obtained without an official letter of invitation. For stays of over 30 days, and for nationals of other countries, a letter of invitation is still required. Previously it was necessary to apply through a recognised travel agent or tour operator in Tashkent.

The ten countries are: Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, France, Japan, Spain, Switzerland, UK and USA.

It is believed that this visa relaxation is the primary reason for an increase in the number of tourists visiting Uzbekistan. The number of visas issued by the Uzbek embassy in London has doubled to 100 per day compared with 50 per day in the year 2000.

Another relaxation is that Uzbekistan formerly required all visitors to apply in person, whereas agents may now apply on behalf of the applicant.

From 1 January 2005, a new ‘administration fee’ or ‘processing fee’ was introduced to cover the cost of visa issuance. The charge is $20 for single entry, $60 for multiple and $10 for a transit visa. This is in addition to the visa fee. A group visa for up to ten persons is available; this costs $15 per person for the visa plus a single extra administrative fee of $20.

US citizens can apply for a multiple entry visa valid for four years. Citizens of the other nine countries listed above can apply for a multiple entry visa. According to the Uzbekistan Embassy, this visa is valid for up to one month; according to the United States Embassy, it states that the validities are one year for business visas and one month for tourist visas.

According to the United States Embassy in Uzbekistan, applicants from nine of the above-listed countries (excluding the USA) who require a tourist visa must still provide an itinerary. They will then be eligible for a multiple entry visa valid for one month which will cost $60, plus the administrative fee.

Visitors to friends and relatives (private visits) require an invitation letter (notification) issued by the Immigration Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan. According to the British Embassy in Uzbekistan, this appears to apply to all applicants.

Citizens of other countries still need to obtain an invitation letter through their embassy or an Uzbek travel agency, with clearance by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For some countries, such as certain Arab nations, approval is still a difficult process. However, it
is expected that other countries will be added to the list of those for whom the process has been simplified in the future.

For citizens of the ten countries listed above, the visa can be issued within two working days. For others, visa approval is likely to take ten working days.

Tour operators on official visits can travel on a special permit without a visa.

Visas are more expensive for US citizens than for citizens of other countries. Visa charges for neighbouring countries are lower than those for other nationalities. Visas are free for Japanese visitors, but the $20 administrative charge still applies.

Visitors whose stay in Uzbekistan exceeds three days are required to register with the Local Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs within three working days after arrival. For visitors staying in hotels, the hotel administration should take care of this automatically.

4.7 Reports from visa agencies

Here is a summary of comments made by specialist visa agencies interviewed during the course of research for this study:

- Generally considerable improvements have been made in the subject countries and it is now generally much easier to obtain visas;

- Processing times have been reduced; years ago it could take months to obtain a number of central Asian visas.

- The most significant change has been the relaxation of the requirement of invitations letters in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. However, some agents were not fully aware of which countries have introduced this change, and for which countries this applies.

- Some agents valued the availability of an express service, even if this costs extra, and would like all countries to provide this.

- The largest remaining contention for visa agents is that most of the subject countries still require visas to state dates of entry to and exit from the country concerned. It would be much easier for them, and for travellers, if all countries would issue visas valid for a set period from the date of issue (say three months) and valid for a set length of stay in the country (say 30 days), as the Chinese do.

- Comments were made about problems that occur at border points. These problems include: frequent delays at border points and requests for ‘coffee’ money and other inducements to speed the process; inconsistencies in the interpretation of regulations; and occasional border closures (for example, between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan).
The Chinese Embassy in London is highly regarded for its efficiency, although it is found not to be the most 'communicative'. Kyrgyzstan was praised for its ease to deal with and for its friendly approach to visa applications. Uzbekistan is now regarded as being much improved from its practice in previous years. Kazakhstan is still found to be problematic to deal with on occasions. There were few comments regarding Tajikistan due to little data available on the application for visas.

4.8 Visa charges, processing time and other changes

As reported in the Previous Study, it is complicated to compare prices of visas issued by different countries because of the variety of types and conditions involved.

However, an indication can be gained from the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UK Tourist Single</th>
<th>US Business Multiple</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>days</td>
<td>UK£</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: TLCS Global Visa Services

Notes: The visa charges for Uzbekistan exclude the $20 administration fee. The TLCS database is designed primarily for UK travellers, hence prices are in UK pounds (£ sterling). The Exchange rate at the time of this study is approximately UK£1 to US$ 1.8.

Individually, most of the prices are comparable. However, the cost for a traveller visiting several countries becomes very high. To visit all five countries, the total price for an individual tourist entering each country once will be at least £149 (US$ 268) – a figure that would increase if any countries are to be entered more than once or if the visa is required in a hurry. Two adults travelling together would pay £298 (US$ 536). This is a large sum to pay on top of the cost of the journey.

The charge for a tourist visa to China processed in three days is the same charge as reported in the Previous Study, but, at that time, the standard processing time was four days.

In Kazakhstan, the charge for a visa valid for seven days remains as it was at the time of the Previous Study; visas valid for longer are more expensive. Previously the standard processing time was seven to ten days, although a two-day express service was available.
A visa to Kyrgyzstan valid for one week cost £20 at the time of the Previous Study, for four weeks the charge was £35 and for more than one month, £66. Processing time varied from two to ten days.

At the time of the Previous Study, visas charges for Tajikistan were the same as those for the Russian Federation. A single entry tourist visa cost £20 and processing took from one to ten days.

In Uzbekistan, the charge for a seven day visa was £22 (15 days, £28; 30 days, £33) and processing time was the same as now – two days.

Some countries charge more for visas to nationals of certain countries. This is often because the other country charges higher prices for nationals of the first country. For example, China charges a higher visa fee to citizens of the UK than other nationalities because of the high cost of visas to the UK.

By way of comparison, here are a selection of fees for a tourism, single entry visa for a selection of countries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>UK£</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>UK£</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Korea (Republic)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All subject countries except Tajikistan have shortened the visa processing time. China and Kazakhstan are to be acknowledged for having held visa prices at the same rate as five years ago.

There has been a trend towards shorter visa application forms, which is to be welcomed. China, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have a one-page form, which looks more user-friendly than a form on more than one page. The number of questions ranges from 16 on the Uzbekistan form and 17 for Kyrgyzstan, to 24 on the China form.

China and Kazakhstan charge an airport departure tax for international passengers leaving the country by air. These charges are CNY 90 and US$ 10 respectively. There are no airport charges at Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan airports.
5. VISAS DEVELOPMENTS IN OTHER COUNTRIES AND REGIONS

5.1 Introduction

Section 4 of the Previous Study provided examples of visa regimes, trends and developments in other countries and regions. Set out below are updates of several of these case studies, together with a selection of further examples that have been identified in the course of research for this study.

5.2 Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)

The APEC Business Travel Card, which is the size of a credit card, makes business travel between participating APEC countries faster and more efficient. The card is designed for frequent business visitors and avoids the need for separate visa applications. The card is valid for three years and enables multiple entries to participating economies during this time. Other benefits of the APEC Business Travel Card Scheme include access to fast-track entry and exit through special APEC lanes at major airports.

The card was first introduced by Australia, Republic of Korea, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Japan joined subsequently, and the following countries have also joined since: Brunei Darussalam, Chile, Chinese Taipei (Taiwan, Province of China), Hong Kong (China), Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru and Vietnam.

5.3 ASEAN

Efforts have been made to promote the 12 ASEAN countries as a single destination. Initiatives include: a tourism website; the production of the ASEAN map in Chinese and English; a TV commercial; and a tourism marketing task force.

ASEAN has come a long way with respect to granting visa-free entry to each other’s citizens. The ASEAN Tourism Agreement targeted this year as the implementation date for the visa exemption arrangement for ASEAN nationals travelling within the region. Now, only Laos and Myanmar require visas from ASEAN visitors albeit with minimal requirements; eight of the ten member nations do not require visas for visits of less than 14 days.

5.4 Australia

The Previous Study reported on the Australian “Electronic Travel Authority” (ETA) or online visa.

The ETA is now available to nationals of 32 countries and is said to be covering 85 per cent of entrants to Australia. The fairly widespread view in the industry is that it is very effective. Since Australia is an island country with effectively only around eight
international entry points (all airports), it is easy to control borders and there is a consequent reluctance to go the visa free route.

The ETA enables Australia to achieve a higher level of control than almost any other country with minimal impact on visitors. The system’s success is dependent upon the ethical and managerial standards of the travel agencies and airlines who are authorised intermediaries for issue of the visas.

Whilst the visa itself is free, issuing agents are authorised to charge fees for their service. These fees can have an effect on demand. Seventy per cent of visitors from Taiwan (Province of China) to Australia are on package tours, a sector particularly sensitive to price. An agency in Taiwan (Province of China) arranges ETAs on behalf of Taiwanese travellers and charges $50 each. This can add $200 to the cost for a family of four people. The market for Taiwanese visitors to Australia fell by five per cent following the introduction of this charge.

5.5 Canada

Canada and the USA are introducing the “Nexus Pass” to simplify border crossings between the two countries. The pass is to be made available to passengers identified as “low risk”. Passengers will be invited to use dedicated lanes to speed their passage through border control and will not be subject to questioning. The Nexus Pass is being trialled at Vancouver Airport.

5.6 Europe and the Schengen Agreement

The Schengen Agreement was reported in some depth in the Previous Study (Section 4.3).

The number of European countries participating in the scheme was five when it began in 1985, ten at the time of the Previous Study, and is now 15. The members are: Germany, France, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Austria, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Denmark, Sweden, Finland (EU Countries) and Norway and Iceland (Non-EU Countries). The Republic of Ireland, Switzerland and the UK are not in the Schengen Agreement.

The Agreement provides for an external border with common immigration rules for all participating countries. However, each of the countries continues to give primary attention to visas issued for their country alone. In the case of Schengen visas, common immigration rules apply but each embassy has its own variations of these rules and requirements. This can lead to problems.

For single and multiple entry Schengen visas, applicants must apply for their visa at the embassy of the country where they expect to spend most time. If the applicant expects to spend a similar amount of time in more than one country, the application should be made to the country visited first. A single entry visa is normally given for the exact duration of the trip.
Using a Schengen visa incorrectly will result in difficulties and, in the worst case, refusal when next applying for a Schengen visa or refusal to enter a country at the border (although this is rare) or deportation.

Citizens of Schengen countries do not require passports for travel in other countries encompassed by the agreement.

The system is an excellent example of like-minded states working together to make travelling easier for nationals who require visas, and works well in many cases. However, the system would be considerably improved if all participating countries would apply the same criteria and requirements to Schengen visa applications.

5.7. Gulf Cooperation Council

Nationals of the Gulf Cooperation Council states (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the Sultanate of Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates) do not need entry visas for each other’s country. However, the countries do not accept visas of the other countries for visitors from outside the region.

5.8. India

India has increasingly recognised the value that visitors bring in terms of expenditure whilst in the country, and efforts have been made to improve the process.

In the Previous Study, India was quoted for its use of automation to facilitate visa processing. This has not always proved effective, with a new computer system introduced into the British embassy not working.

Now the Indian Embassy in the United Kingdom is exploring a new process involving the pre-loading of applicant data onto CD-ROMs by travel agents and specialist visa agencies.

Although the observers claim that Indian visa processes are not the most efficient, India is acknowledged for its efforts to improve the visa process, to innovate with technology, and to work with the private sector.

5.9. Indonesia

Indonesia is said to have the largest tourism industry in south east Asia and is the country’s third largest export earner. Recognising the sector’s importance, Indonesia has for some years had a liberal visa policy.

Although some restrictions were tightened following 9/11 and the Bali bombings in October 2002, these are now being relaxed again. Indonesia granted visa-free entry for tourist visits of up to 30 days to the nationals of 11 countries on 1 February 2004. On 1 August 2005, the nationals of a further 36 countries were granted visas on arrival.
Indonesia has received approved destination status from China. However financial pressures have resulted in staffing shortages in embassies and many Chinese travellers must go to Beijing to apply for a visa personally at the Indonesian Embassy, which has significantly limited the number of Chinese visitors to Indonesia.

5.10 Islamic Republic of Iran

An example of the impact of political changes on tourist visa regulations is evident in the Islamic Republic of Iran. It was announced in September 2004 by the former president that Iran plans to grant seven-day visas on arrival to all tourists arriving at five major international airports. Following a change of government, however, visas must still be obtained before travel and requirements remain stringent.

5.11 Mekong River Sub-region

The Greater Mekong Sub-region encompasses five countries and the Chinese province of Yunnan. The countries are Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.

The Mekong Tourism Forum provides a platform for stakeholders in the travel and tourism industry to discuss the development and promotion of travel and tourism to the region.

According to the official website for tourism to the region, it is possible to get a visa on arrival but only at certain locations and this is often difficult. If visitors are travelling overland, it is recommended that visas be obtained in advance from the appropriate embassies.

Visas can be obtained on arrival at the main international airports in Cambodia and Lao PDR. In Vietnam, it is possible to obtain a visa upon arrival if an invitation letter has been obtained in advance.

Myanmar provides an online visa. Applicants visiting the official government website can obtain a PIN code which allows the status of the visa application to be checked. An approval letter is normally received within a few days. The letter is presented together with the passport upon arrival at the airport.

The visa section of the website does not contain information for Thailand or Yunan. Visitors to the Yunnan section of the website are referred to the Chinese embassy.

5.12 Nordic Passport Union

Under this agreement, Nordic citizens can travel the Nordic countries crossing approved border districts without carrying and having their passport checked. Other citizens can also travel between the Nordic countries’ borders without having their passport checked, but these citizens have to carry a passport or another kind of approved travel identification document. The Nordic countries are Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Iceland.
5.13 Russian Federation

It is generally difficult for people to obtain visas to visit the Russian Federation, and for Russians to obtain visas to visit other countries. Research for this study has produced significant evidence that these difficulties remain.

Before their accession to the EU, Cyprus and Poland did not require visas from Russian citizens. As members of the EU, these countries now require visas from Russians. Both have seen a significant downturn in the number of Russian arrivals. In the case of Cyprus, this has been reported as 20 per cent.

Like some other countries, the Russian Federation often requires visa applicants to attend a personal interview. This can necessitate additional travel that can be very expensive.

Because of the length of the visa application process, Moscow and St Petersburg are unable to participate in the strong trend in Europe towards short city-breaks, as these are often booked at short notice.

This example demonstrates in some cases the barrier that visas pose to tourism.

5.14 Southern Africa Development Community (SADC)

Recognising the need to stimulate tourism, ministers and deputy ministers of eight SADC countries committed themselves in June 2005 to working towards a “uni-visa” for the region by 2010, which is the year that the World Soccer Cup will be held there. The countries represented were South Africa, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Lesotho, Botswana, Namibia and Mozambique.

In August 2005, work began on a study to explore how such a visa might work. It is proposed that such a visa would initially enable citizens of member countries within SADC to travel without visas, and that this would be extended to international visitors subsequently.

5.15 Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has recently introduced an electronic visa service on their website. The applicant fills in a form on the website and this transmits directly to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Jeddah. A response can sometimes be received within hours.

5.16 Turkey

Whereas some embassies have long queues of applicants outside their doors, the Turkish Embassy in London provides a system on their website whereby applicants can arrange a specific time for an interview at the embassy.
The website also talks about a ‘visa application kit’; this is a user-friendly approach to assisting visa applicants.

5.17 UK visas prices

With effect from 1 July 2005, UK visa rates were increased by an average of 21 per cent with some visas being increased by as much as 40 per cent. On average this is twice the cost of a Schengen Visa. The tourism industry in the UK believes that Britain’s tourism competitiveness will decrease compared to other European (and other) countries.

5.18 UK outsourced visa services

The British Embassy in Amman, Jordan, plans to outsource the visa process. An invitation to private companies to tender for the management of the service has been issued. At one point, it was announced that DHL, the international courier firm, had won the contract. However, the invitation to tender has subsequently been re-issued.

This is an interesting development in the area of public/private sector cooperation, but it is too early to comment on its effectiveness.

5.19 Ukraine

Major international events, in addition to the economic benefits of tourism, can help persuade governments to relax visa requirements.

In order to assist in the preparation and holding of the European Song Contest “Eurovision-2005”, as well as developing tourism, Ukraine implemented a temporary visa-free regime for stays of up to 90 days for citizens of the EU and Swiss Confederation, from 1 May to 1 September 2005.

These relaxed requirements were subsequently extended beyond 1 September 2005.

Visa-free entry to Ukraine was conferred on US citizens from 1 July 2005, and of Canada and Japan from 1 August 2005. It was extended to the EU countries, the Swiss Confederation and Liechtenstein on 1 September 2005.

5.20 USA: machine-readable and biometric passports

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 had a dramatic impact on the way foreign visitors are screened before entering the USA.

A study by the US General Accounting Office (GAO) found that at least 13 of the 15 hijackers were never interviewed by US consular officers before they were granted visas, and not one had filled in his application properly. Three hijackers obtained their documents through travel agents under a “visa express” programme that has since been abandoned. In response to such criticism, the State Department has introduced a series
of stringent new regulations. Visitors from all over the world have faced increased delays in entering the country and most nationals of Arab and Moslem countries have been subject to special registration procedures.

The USA operates a Visa Waiver Programme for nationals of 27 countries for business, tourist or transit purposes for stays up to 90 days (see the Previous Study, Section 4.5).

From 26 June 2005, all visitors entering the USA under the Visa Waiver Scheme must have a machine-readable passport. This requirement was introduced earlier for citizens of Belgium in a pilot scheme; soon after its introduction, a senior business executive was refused entry as his passport did not meet the new requirement.

From 26 October 2006, visitors on this scheme will only be permitted entry to the USA if they hold a biometric passport. A biometric passport is one which uses the most advanced technology to verify a person’s identity. Biometric identifiers include facial recognition, fingerprints and iris recognition. The biometric data can be scanned and matched against information stored on a chip in a passport or identity card.

These measures have placed a great workload on already overworked consular officers. Queues at embassies have at times been so long that some interviews were limited to only a few minutes. The American Chamber of Commerce in the Republic of Korea estimated that the added interviews would mean a wait of about six months for a visa appointment in Seoul. In London, the wait was reported to be about six weeks. Citizens of Colombia are warned that it takes approximately 13 months to obtain an appointment for a visa interview, and that this interview does not guarantee visa issuance. Planning a trip in these circumstances requires considerable forethought.

Visa applications for the USA cannot be lodged at the embassy – the applicant must visit the embassy in person. This has meant that, for example, a UK citizen working in Kazakhstan, requiring a US visa, would have to travel to London before going to the USA. It was suggested to us that no other country in the world could afford to treat potential visitors, particularly those on business, in this way.

The number of visitors to the USA dropped by 20 per cent in the two years following the introduction of these measures. Visa applications fell from 10.4 million in 2001 to 8.3 million in 2002; visa approvals fell from 7.5 million in 2001 to 5.7 million in 2002. Attendance at US English language summer classes is reported to have fallen by 30 per cent. International visitors arriving for specialist hospital treatment at the world famous Mayo Clinic fell by 23 per cent between 2001 and 2003. It has been estimated that there was a total drop of $15 billion in visitor spending and that more than 300,000 jobs in the travel industry were lost as a result of the decrease in international travel.

Federal officials say that protecting the nation from terrorists is more important than inconveniencing some foreign visitors. But others complain that the new security measures are damaging US business and tourism.
6. STUDY CONCLUSIONS

6.1 An overall perspective of visas since the Previous Study

A conclusion of the Previous Study was that the subject of visas is a highly complex one. The subject is certainly no less complex today.

There has been a lot of change in the period since the previous Study. Some countries have tightened their visa regimes, others have relaxed theirs. These changes have caused some confusion amongst those applying for visas, whether for themselves or on behalf of others.

However, this confusion has been alleviated by the greatly improved availability of information on the internet, and more efficient visa processing in some countries.

6.2 How the five study countries have progressed

Considerable progress has been made in the field of visa liberalisation by most of the study countries. Four of the five have been independent only since 1990; their achievements in such a short history are remarkable. The countries have very different characteristics and it is to be expected that their rate of progress in the development of tourism and liberalisation of visa regimes should progress at different rates.

China is of course by far the largest country and hugely populated compared to the others. As its borders open and the country becomes increasingly liberalised, it is not surprising that its rate of growth has been very rapid. It has matched the increasing demand for visas with more relaxed requirements and considerable efficiency in processing applications.

Kazakhstan is experiencing extraordinary economic growth and this has fuelled a considerable increase in the number of visitors. Its main response has been to remove the requirement for invitation letters for nationals of 28 countries. Problems with visa applications still occur, however.

Amongst the CIS members of the study countries, Kyrgyzstan has led the way in visa liberalisation, being the first to remove the invitation letter requirement for selected nationals and the only one to introduce visas on arrival (though not publicised). Uzbekistan has now also dropped the invitation letter requirement though for fewer countries. Instability within these countries, and a lack of promotion, have combined so that their considerable tourism potential is far from being realised.

In terms of tourism development and visa liberalisation, Tajikistan has progressed the least since the Previous Study. Nevertheless, considerable potential is ready to be untapped. With help from its neighbours, which can be provided through cooperation in the Silk Road Regional Programme, considerable growth will occur.

There has been a very encouraging and substantial increase in the number of tour operators and travel agents offering Silk road tours. The operators are to be found both
in the subject countries and in Europe and North America, and tours offered include some within one country and others that involve several countries.

6.3 Tourism economics and visas

Tourism is increasingly recognised as one of the world’s most significant economic growth sectors, particularly for countries with relatively few other opportunities.

Tourists, notably those travelling for leisure, have an extraordinary range of destinations to choose from. Tourism is therefore unusual in the extent to which it is internationally competitive and highly price sensitive. Destinations that are expensive, or perceived to be so, tend to lose out.

Similarly, tourists are easily deterred from a destination if other barriers are placed in their way, such as visas that are complicated or time-consuming to obtain or borders which have a reputation for delays and exhaustive bureaucracy. Applying for a visa is sometimes the first impression that tourists gain of a country, and their subsequent perceptions can be adversely affected if they encounter difficulties, delays, high costs or unfriendliness when applying for their visa.

Silk Road countries can take advantage of a strong trend towards tourism which is wholly or partly connected with cultural and social interest. Of course, other countries can also benefit from this trend, but those that will benefit the most will be those that make a visit to their country easier and/or cheaper. As regards visas, this means measures such as:

- abolishing visas for as many nationalities as possible; and/or
- making visas obtainable on arrival for as many nationalities as possible; and/or
- handling visa processing in a highly friendly and efficient manner; and
- making visas free or cheaper than those of competitor destinations.

There are many examples globally of how supportive measures such as these can lead to a growth in tourism, whereas visas that are expensive or complicated to obtain can deter tourism. Here are a few examples quoted elsewhere in this study:

- 30 per cent increase in visitors to China from the UK in one year.
- 80 per cent increase in visitors to Kazakhstan from the UK in one year.
- Double the number of UK visitors to Uzbekistan in five years.
- 5 per cent decrease in visitors from Taiwan (Province of China) to Australia after ETA service charges introduced.
- 20 per cent less Russian Federation visitors to Cyprus after visa requirement introduced.
- 20 per cent decrease in international visitors to the USA following new security measures imposed after 9/11.

Of course, visas were not the only factor that influenced growth or decline in tourism in these examples. However, in each case, visas are believed to have been a significant factor.
6.4 The Internet and technology

The internet has transformed the availability of information. Other technologies are facilitating improved procedures and processes in all walks of life.

The internet has been used successfully by all Silk Road countries to improve the availability of information and application forms. Further use is encouraged. Trends in other regions and countries should be monitored and copied where appropriate; for example, visas completed electronically online are likely to become more common.

Naturally some technologies are expensive and slow to adopt. Furthermore, technology can easily go wrong, especially when using relatively untested innovations. However, some improvements can be made at relatively low cost, using well-proven methods.

Machine-readable and biometric passports are likely to become more prevalent over the next decade. These will be valuable in facilitating travel for genuine business or tourist passengers who have chosen to, or been required to, subject themselves to identification scanning. Whilst delays might occur in the short term, in due course this will help speed the flow of passengers through immigration and border controls.

Biometric passports will help to ensure that the person holding the passport is the person identified on that passport. However, they will not guarantee that someone else’s identity has not been stolen, or that the person being identified is not intent on criminal activity.

6.5 Regional approaches

The trend towards regions working together to improve visa facilitations is continuing, albeit at a slow pace. Reasons for this slow progress include:

- national security concerns;
- political persuasions and differences;
- religious and ethnic differences;
- concerns over immigration;
- economic disparity between neighbours.

Of these factors, concern over illegal immigration from less developed countries to those with strongly growing economies was most often cited. In some cases, this concern caused a difficult balance where, politically, countries wish to show openness to their neighbours whilst at the same time restricting the inflow of immigrants seeking work.

These factors pose barriers to bilateral and multilateral cooperation, and progress in these areas is unlikely to accelerate significantly unless there is political will for change. In this regard, it is encouraging that some countries and regions have recognised the economic benefits that tourism brings and are exploring visa-free zones.
6.6 Tourism and terrorism

The world has been shocked by atrocities such as 9/11 and it is understandable that countries should seek to protect themselves from terrorist attacks.

Whilst pictures and stories in the media cause by far the biggest effect on demand, a further impact has been caused by tightened security, particularly at airports and on aeroplanes. On the one hand, such security measures might go some way towards reassuring travellers that security has been enhanced; conversely, they serve as reminders of what is perceived as an increasingly unstable world and unsafe environment in which to travel.

It is clear that, in our modern and complex and busy world, no amount of visa regulation nor border control can protect us from those intent on causing harm. Officials in London were aware that the city was a prime target, yet did not imagine that the anticipated atrocity (the bombings in July 2005), when it came, would be the work of British nationals. Visas are no defence against your own citizens. Therefore, visas as a means of preventing terrorism can only be partially effective.

The so-called “war on terrorism” will not be won by increasing the use of visas and strengthening border controls. Nor can the underlying causes of terrorism be identified and addressed by any individual country on its own. What is needed is increased international cooperation and, above all, greater understanding and tolerance.

Tourism has a vital role to play in helping bring people together and encouraging understanding of other people’s places and cultures.

Arguably, therefore, reducing barriers caused by visas, rather than increasing them, will in the long term be a more effective measure against terrorism. In this regard, it is to be greatly welcomed that most of the subject countries have made significant steps towards liberalising their visa procedures, notwithstanding heightened concern over global terrorism.

6.7 Involvement of the private sector

In the Previous Study, WTO identified ways in which the private sector is involved in the handling of visas, particularly in the provision of information and in offering services to assist in the application process. Notwithstanding the availability of information on the internet, the private sector is involved significantly as before.

For many travellers, especially those who do not travel frequently, applying for a visa can be a complicated process, and the proportion of applications that contain errors, or do not comply exactly with the requirements of the embassy concerned, is high. Typical errors include:

- Application forms not signed.
- Incorrect number of photographs enclosed.
- Certain documents not enclosed (often the passport is forgotten!).
- Dates on the application form not matching tickets or accompanying letters.
• Passport not valid for the required period beyond the application date.
• Insufficient blank pages in the passport for all visas required.
• Required business letter and invitations not enclosed.
• Itinerary not enclosed.
• Some fields left blank on the application form.
• Forms not completed in black ink where stated.
• The applicant’s signature not signed within the signature box on the application form.
• Payment not enclosed or cheque not signed.

It is due to the high number of applications that contained errors or missing documents that Chinese embassies have refused postal applications since 1 August 2004. Whilst this move is understandable, it can pose a significant time and/or cost barrier to people living a long way from an embassy.

Due to the complexity of the visa system internationally, many specialist visa agencies have been established to assist travellers with visa applications, in addition to the many tour operators and travel agents who provide this service.

As in any field, there are both reliable and unreliable agents. Nevertheless, many agents have both knowledge and experience and are trustworthy and professional, and can help to ensure that applications are complete and correct, thereby greatly assisting the work of consular officials. By diligence in this area, the UK company, TLCS Global Visa Services, claims to have reduced the rate of failed applications from 5% per cent to less than 0.1 per cent of all applications.

National governments will have concerns over maintaining security if the private sector is involved in the visa process. On the other hand, by working with carefully selected private sector operators who have been carefully pre-screened, security might in some cases be improved rather than worsened. This is not too dissimilar from the practice of recruiting non-governmental officials to help process the increased volume of applications as has happened at some embassies.

The proposed complete outsourcing of the visa handling procedure by the British Embassy in Jordan is an interesting extension of the private sector involvement in this process. Further developments of this kind are likely to emerge in future.

6.8 Malpractice and negligence

Internationally, the visa system can clearly lend itself to abuse. Examples were quoted of border security officers requesting bribes before accepting visas, or allowing entry to the country without visas in exchange for money.

Corruption is not confined to developing economies. A recent case has emerged in Denmark of ‘student’ visas being arranged for illegal Asian immigrants.

Technology and computerised systems can help to improve control and avoid abuse. But all systems require human intervention and all humans can be vulnerable, either to temptation or to threat. No matter how much effort a government puts into security
systems and procedures, their efforts will be undermined if there is misconduct by consular officials or border security guards.

Some simple ways in which opportunities for corruption might be reduced include:

- Centralising information gathering, nationally, regionally and internationally.
- Cooperation with neighbouring governments.
- Participating in international discussions on security.
- Judicious use of technology.
- Training, motivating, valuing and rewarding staff.

6.9 Visa processing time

In many countries, the average time that it takes to process a visa application has been shortened. This might be because:

- the process has been simplified, for example, as is the case with the countries in this study which have removed the requirement for invitation letters; or

- technology and the Internet have made it easier to obtain application forms and to obtain approvals from the appropriate authorities.

Conversely, in some countries the process now takes much longer than previously. This is usually due to an intensified screening process.

One of a number of ‘ironies’ identified during the research for this study is that it is often more developed countries, with considerable access to technology, finance and innovation, that have much longer, and sometimes less friendly, visa processing regimes.

The countries concerned in this study are to be acknowledged for generally maintaining or improving the time and efficiency of visa processing. It is, in very general terms, often a longer, harder and less friendly process for citizens of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to visit highly developed western nations, than it is for citizens of these western nations to visit the subject countries. One example cited were the long queues outside the British embassy in Tashkent and the requirement for Uzbek applicants to have proof of accommodation and financial standing as part of their application for a visa for the UK.
7. STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Work together to realise the potential of the Silk Road

The Silk Road is a historical, social and cultural phenomenon that has the potential for considerable appeal among tourists, which is demonstrated by the large increase in the number of tour operators specialising in Silk Road tours.

The Silk Road is a tourism asset that is collectively owned by the countries along its route. Collaboration and coordination are essential from the outset if the potential value of this asset is to be realised.

The five countries involved in this current study each have much to offer Silk Road tourists and this offer is richer if they work together. It is recommended therefore that they collaborate on the development of Silk Road tourism and on further improvements to the visa system. Given the wide disparity in the levels of economic development between them, it will be helpful for the more established countries to support those that are less developed.

7.2 Visa facilitation as part of a Silk Road tourism development strategy

The visa system is only one component of the Silk Road tourism ‘product’, from the perspective of a tourist, and should therefore be considered as part of an integrated tourism development strategy.

Preservation of sensitive social, cultural and natural environments is of paramount importance so that the long-term potential of Silk Road tourism is not jeopardised.

Whilst it is beyond the scope of this study to explore the components of such a strategy, one approach could be to identify key attractions or potential tourism ‘magnets’ along the route. Research could then be undertaken into tourism development requirements (infrastructure, organisational challenges, hotel accommodation etc, as well as any border issues) around these attractions and ways to link or ‘bridge’ them together could then be devised.

Participating countries are urged to work together on the formulation of such a plan if it does not already exist.
7.3 Set up a Working Group

It is recommended that a Silk Road Visa Working Group (hereinafter called ‘the Working Group’) be established.

There is an irony in that, at times, it seems as though the role of those in government responsible for security is to keep visitors out of the country, whereas the role of those in the tourism ministry is to bring visitors in to the country. The way to balance these two functions, which can sometimes appear to be in conflict, is to work together to ensure that “friendly” visitors are welcomed whilst protecting the interests and welfare of citizens.

Therefore, to be effective, the Working Group needs to combine representatives of:

- The national (or state) tourism ministry or equivalent; and
- The ministry of foreign affairs or equivalent; and possibly
- The ministry responsible for national security or equivalent.

It is recommended that one or more representatives of the private sector also be involved. Ideal participants would be an experienced visa agent and a Silk Road tour operator.

Membership could also usefully include representatives of WTO and, perhaps, IATA.

At its first meeting, or at a conference convened by it, the Working Group should agree objectives, a framework for its operations and a timescale. The meeting should also raise issues and challenges to be explored.

A second meeting or conference should be held to formulate an approach, suggest proposals and define what needs to be done and timing. These plans can then be taken back to each government for ratification.

It is recommended that the Working Group interact closely with a tourism development group – or that the Working Group expand its remit to include tourism development as well as visa facilitation.

Ideally, this Working Group will continue, meeting perhaps twice a year, until its objectives have been achieved.

7.4 Formulate vision and gain commitment

Because of the economic, social and political difficulties involved in regional cooperation, it is recommended that the Working Group formulate and agree a vision or common objective between the countries participating in the Silk Road Regional Programme.

The vision might include an aspiration for international recognition of the immense cultural and historic value of the Silk Road, not just as a tourism route but also for its
symbolic significance as a vector for the exchange of ideas, languages, shared learning and communication, linking and uniting far-flung and divergent regions of the world.

A Silk Road Visa might be part of this vision. Such a visa would allow entry to all participating countries, would be easy to obtain, would be issued by each country with identical requirements and would cost significantly less than the sum of the present individual visa charges. A good model could be the APEC Business Card – the size of a credit card, containing machine-readable information on pre-screened bona fide tourists, acceptable at all participating Silk Road countries. This could be a long-term goal.

7.5 Work at an optimum pace

Four of the five study countries have been independent only since 1990; their achievements in such a short history are remarkable. Also, four of the countries have made considerable progress in the field of visa facilitation. Therefore, it is appropriate simply to maintain momentum, rather than pushing too hard.

There are ethnic and cultural as well as economic differences between the countries. These can be accommodated if time is given for a position of mutual understanding and acceptance to be reached. As one Uzbek official told us, borders should unite and not divide.

7.6 Public-Private sector Partnerships

Public-private sector partnerships and cooperation can be very effective. It is recommended that opportunities to work with the private sector are explored, where this will bring benefit in terms of expertise, flexibility, entrepreneurial flair and finance.

An example might be to encourage visa applications through specialist visa agencies, travel agents and tour operators. If this approach were to be adopted, the Silk Road Visa Working Group could agree a set of parameters by which private sector agents should work. These would be standardised across the five countries. Agents would be briefed on the exact requirements of the Group, and a service level agreement entered into. Their compliance with these requirements should be monitored to ensure that they meet minimum levels of visa approvals (that is, applications without faults).

Thus, over time, the visa application process could be administered increasingly by private sector licensed agents rather than by embassy staff. The agents would receive applications, check them for accuracy, undertake a preliminary screening, and then submit them to the embassies for transmitting to the ministry of foreign affairs.

In the medium to long term, a central visa processing agency could be established (see below). This might be operated as a public-private sector partnership, or even by a fully private company under a licence agreement.
7.7 **Set up a Silk Road website**

The Working Group could work with WTO and/or other agencies and the private sector to establish a Silk Road website. Such a website could:

- Have information on visas for all participating countries.
- Have downloadable visa forms for all participating countries.
- Offer a simplified procedure for visa applications.
- Link with tour operators providing Silk Road Tours.
- Offer a visa processing service from licensed visa agents.
- Links to sources of information on the Silk Road.

7.8 **Share information and standardise requirements**

It is recommended that as much information is shared as possible with regard to the Silk Road project and visa applications. A good starting point would be to ensure that information is shared between embassies of the same country, followed by all embassies of all Silk Road countries.

It would be of considerable benefit if the subject countries were able to standardise requirements for visas. The differences between the application forms are relatively minor. If a single form were to be used, or different forms with the same questions, it would make information sharing easier. Then all five countries could share information provided by all applicants.

Over time, it is recommended that the Working Group explore possibilities for simplifying visa requirements and procedures. Examples for consideration include:

- Expanding the number of countries for which invitation letters are not required.
- Exploring visas on arrival for citizens of selected, ‘safe’ countries.
- Eliminating the requirement for specific entry and exit dates on visas.
- Harmonising visa validity.
- Eliminating the need for visitors to register during their stay, or providing simplified means by which this registration can take place.

7.9 **Special arrangements for genuine Silk Road tourists**

Whilst some of the options for liberalising visas might require some time before they are politically acceptable, one possibility in the short-term might be to allow special access for genuine Silk Road tourists.

There are various ways in which such a facility could be made to work. For example, tour operators who are organising Silk Road tours could be required to register with a central agency set up by the participating countries. Then, tourists who have booked tours with these companies could be granted special access in return for pre-registering personal details with the central agency. This might allow them visas on arrival, a single visa acceptable by all participating countries, or visa-free travel.
7.10 Favouring certain nationalities

All countries provide visa and entry requirements that are more favourable towards the citizens of some countries than others. Reasons for this are usually political and connected with the fact that certain nationalities are regarded as less likely to pose immigration or security concerns than others.

It is recommended that countries participating in the Silk Road project work together as much as possible to harmonise the countries whose citizens enjoy favourable visa requirements.

The following are examples of countries which might be regarded as “safe” by all participants in the Silk Road Regional Programme, and therefore eligible for favourable treatment: Australia, Canada, EU countries, Japan, Liechtenstein, Norway, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, USA. The list of such countries could be expanded over time.

Favourable treatment for selected nationalities could include:

- Elimination of invitation letter requirements (if not yet done).
- Visas on arrival.
- Visa waiver.

7.11 Training

Training is essential to help improve service culture and overcome any risk of misconduct and malpractice. The subject countries all have the advantage of a social and cultural tradition that is hospitable and work-orientated.

Training should be provided for everyone, especially all people who meet visitors, such as staff in visa processing units, people at border control points and those providing information. The training should encompass the following elements:

- Technical training.
- Customer service focus.
- Teamwork and team building.
- International tourism characteristics.
- Vision for providing an outstanding tourism experience to visitors.

7.12 Visa charges and economic implications

It is understandable that governments should seek to cover the administrative cost of issuing visas and to generate income from foreign visitors. However, high prices are a disincentive to travel, and visa charges are very visible as they must be paid before travellers can enter the country.

The income that a government receives from visa charges tends to be relatively small compared to the income that the government can make from foreign visitors staying in their country. This latter income includes tax on sales of goods and services (or value added tax if applicable), tax on the profits of companies operating in the tourism and
related sectors, and income tax from workers employed in the tourism and related industries (including handicrafts, excursions, buses and taxis, car rental, shops, hotels, restaurants, food supply etc).

It is therefore recommended that:

- Visa charges are lowered or removed;
- Service charges are lowered or removed;
- The cost of a Silk Road Visa, if introduced, costs significantly less than the cost of individual visas, and might even be issued without charge.

Naturally the question of compensating for the loss of income arises.

Tourism Satellite Accounting (TSA) is a system, developed by the WTO and others, which measures the full economic impact of tourism on the economy and jobs of a country or region. The experience of many countries that have prepared a TSA for their economy is that the value of tourism is far greater than previously thought, based on traditional accounting. Whilst the cost of implementing a comprehensive TSA system is very expensive, it is possible for much lower cost to simulate a TSA using sophisticated computer models. It is recommended that the Working Group explore the possibility of undertaking a simulated TSA for the Silk Road region.

The results of a TSA simulation are likely to show that, by reducing or eliminating visa charges, the subject countries will derive benefits from increased economic activity that far outweigh the income lost through visa charges.

It is recommended that the goal to aim for is a visa free of charge. A modest administration fee could still be applied, either by the embassy or by the private sector, depending on who is dealing with visa applications.

Of course, the tax income that is generated by tourists staying in the country is retained by national government. A portion of this centrally generated tax income needs to be distributed to embassies to fund their new additional role as cultural and tourism centres, as they will no longer be generating their own direct income from visa charges. Consequently, this approach, which will bring considerably greater economic benefits, will only work if the central government is fully committed to this strategy.

### 7.13 Central visa processing agency

One option that Silk Road countries could consider is the setting up of a central visa processing agency. The unit would receive applications, check them for accuracy, undertake a preliminary screening, and then submit them electronically to the appropriate embassy or directly to the ministry of foreign affairs of the relevant country.

As the technology becomes affordable, the central agency could provide the visa form on the website for completion on-line. When the applicant then sends the form, the agency would check it and forward it as appropriate.

The agency could be run by the public sector, or the private sector, or by a partnership between the two. This agency could administer the Silk Road visa website.
7.14 Enhancing the role of embassies as cultural and tourism centres

When visa forms are available on-line, applications could be sent directly to the foreign ministries of the relevant countries or to the central visa processing agency for pre-screening.

Transferring the visa administration process from consular staff to the ministries or to the central visa processing agency would free embassy staff to spend more time on cultural and tourism development. Embassies could, over time, develop combined cultural and tourism centres that interface with the public. These centres would help to create a more positive perception of the country concerned than the perception that is sometimes gained through the present visa application process.

A very small step in this direction has been taken by the Kazakhstan Embassy in London, which has a useful information board outside its front door.
8. SILK ROAD VISA STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

8.1 Introduction and timeframe

The Strategy and Action Plan set out below summarise the recommendations in Section 7 of this report (‘Strategic Recommendations’).

As required by the terms of reference for this study, the Strategy and Action Plan envisage a timeframe along the following lines:

- Short term  0 to 3 years
- Medium term  4 to 6 years
- Long term  7 to 10 years

This timeframe is intended only as a guide. In practice, some tasks will take longer and others could be achieved in a shorter time.

Furthermore, there are options that should be considered by the Working Group and not all actions need necessarily be adopted. For example, the Working Group could choose between the following:

- Focus on facilitating access for genuine Silk Road tourists who have chosen to subject themselves to a pre-screening process. These pre-screened tourists might then be eligible for a Silk Road Visa or pass, similar to the APEC Business Card, that would grant them access to all countries participating in the Silk Road Regional Programme; and/or

- Plan progressive liberalisation by moving steadily from visas, to visas on arrival, to visa-waiver schemes, at the same time steadily increasing the number of nationalities eligible under each scheme. This is what has been happening in the subject countries since the Previous Study; the main difference now would be that activities should be discussed and planned and coordinated by the Working Group, and would be harmonised for all participating countries.

These options are not mutually exclusive. Thus, the Working Group might propose to work on both options, either at the same time or prioritising one above the other.

Naturally these options will affect the Action Plan. Therefore the Action Plan set out below, and the Actions contained therein, should be taken only as a guide for consideration by the Working Group.

Given the considerable progress made by the five subject countries since the Previous Study, there is reason to believe that much can be achieved within a reasonable timeframe.
8.2 Strategic objective

The countries participating in this study are invited to adopt a strategy, incorporating the recommendations set out in this section of the report. The main elements of this strategy are:

- That the participating countries agree to work together to gradually and progressively liberalise visa regimes for genuine tourists wishing to travel the Silk Road in whole or in part.

- That the participating countries will establish the Silk Road Visa Working Group to determine which options are to be pursued and appropriate timescales.

This strategy involves an appropriate balance between the following, sometimes conflicting objectives:

- safeguarding the inherent right of each country to protect its national autonomy and interests;
- facilitating access to the Silk Road for genuine tourists through visa-free or liberal visa regimes;
- investing in appropriate and sensitive tourism infrastructure to enhance the tourist experience;
- managing the nature and amount of tourism to ensure preservation of social, cultural and natural assets;
- using part of the resultant income to ensure the long-term sustainability of Silk Road tourism.

The potential of Silk Road tourism is believed to be sufficiently strong to make this balance both achievable and a worthwhile goal.

8.3 Short term actions (0 to 3 years)

1. Agree to work together on the Silk Road project

Participants from the five study countries are invited at the forthcoming Silk Road Regional Programme meeting to agree to work together on the Silk Road tourism visa project.

2. Set up the Silk Road Visa Working Group

Establish the Working Group comprising representatives of the ministries of tourism and foreign affairs or equivalent of each participating country, together with one or more representatives of the private sector, supporting agencies such as WTO, and possibly IATA.
3. First meeting/conference of the Working Group

The first meeting or a conference should raise issues and challenges relating to visas and, for the Working Group itself, set objectives, a framework for operation and timescales.

4. Agree vision statement

The Working Group should formulate and agree the vision for Silk Road tourism and cultural exchange, with particular reference to visas.

5. Integrated tourism development plan

An early output of the Working Group must be a clear definition of how the issue of visas integrates with the tourism development plan for the Silk Road. If such a plan does not exist, it should be put into motion.

6. Second meeting of the Working Group

At the second meeting, responses to the challenges should be discussed and proposals put forward for actions and timing.

7. Seek government ratification

The Working Group should seek ratification for the vision and proposals at the highest level in government. This is essential so that appropriate budgetary measures can be put in place.

8. Set up Silk Road visa information website

A website should be developed by participating countries, together with WTO and/or other agencies and the private sector. The website should provide the following:

- information on visas for all participating countries.
- downloadable visa forms for all participating countries.
- a simplified procedure for visa applications.
- link with tour operators providing Silk Road Tours.
- a visa processing service from licensed visa agents.
- links to tourist information on the Silk Road.

9. Share information on visas and applicants between participating countries

All countries participating in the Silk Road Regional Programme should share information. This should include information on requirements, changes in regulations and details of visa applicants. This sharing of information lays the groundwork for joint initiatives.
10. **Standardise certain types of visa**

It would greatly assist coordination between the participating countries if visa types were standardised. Whilst it is recognised that some countries might require specific types of visa not required by other countries, it should be possible to standardise visa types typically required by Silk Road tourists, for example, tourist single, double, and multiple entry visas, as well as transit visas.

11. **Standardise and harmonise application requirements and forms**

The differences between the application forms are relatively minor. If a single form were to be used by participating countries, or different forms with the same questions, it would make information sharing easier. All five countries could share information provided by all applicants.

Whilst it is recognised that countries might wish to retain certain types of visa peculiar to their own circumstances, it should be possible to harmonise those types of visa typically used by Silk Road tourists.

12. **Remove the requirement for specific entry and exit dates on visas**

This requirement causes problems for visitors and agents and should be replaced with the granting of visas valid for 90 days from issue for set periods (for example, 30, 60 or 90 days) within the country; if necessary, this change could initially be introduced for nationalities regarded as ‘safe’. It would be helpful if this could be harmonised across all participating countries.

13. **Expand the number of nationalities not requiring letters of invitation**

Countries should build on the excellent progress made in removing the requirement for invitation letters for certain nationals. Further countries should be added to those for whom this is no longer a requirement.

14. **Grant visas on arrival to nationals from selected countries**

Visas should be issued on arrival to citizens of countries regarded as being “safe”. A limited number of countries could be included initially. Participating countries could work with the airlines to pre-check the authenticity of passengers, as happens in many countries of the world. IATA could be invited to assist in this process.

15. **Remove registration requirements**

Over time, the requirement to register during the stay within a country should be removed for “safe” nationalities. For those nationalities for whom this requirement is maintained, the means by which this registration can take place should be simplified.
16. Explore simulated TSA for the Silk Road region

Initial steps should be taken to measure or estimate the potential value of Silk Road tourism to each participating economy. The reasons for this are to demonstrate to governments the rationale for investing in tourism development and for foregoing visa income in return for higher income from taxes on sales, employment and company profits.

17. Freeze visa charges and administration charges

In line with the strategy that eventually visas to Silk Road countries should be free or of low cost, visa prices in the short-term should be frozen.

18. Begin training programmes

Efforts to benefit from the potential of Silk Road tourism can be undermined by poor service or by corruption at border points. As training must be an ongoing process over a sustained period, training should begin as soon as possible.

19. Ongoing meetings of the Working Group

It is recommended that the Working Group continues to meet at least twice a year until its objectives have been achieved.

8.4 Medium term actions (4 to 6 years)

20. Explore acceptance of visas issued by each of the participating countries

Once harmonised visa types and requirements have been achieved, countries could move towards acceptance of each other’s visas, particularly for bona fide Silk Road tourists. Thus, a tourist would only need to apply for one visa, which would then be accepted by all participating countries during the validity of the visa.

21. Special arrangements for genuine Silk Road tourists

Consideration should be given to providing special entry facilities to bona fide Silk Road tourists. There are various options that could be explored, for example:

- Silk Road tours, involving a number of countries and guaranteeing a certain level of expenditure, could be registered with a central visa processing agency;

- Reputable Silk Road tour operators could be licensed with the central visa agency;

- The central visa agency could issue its own special visas covering all participating countries.
22. Consider central processing agency

One of the options for the Working Group to consider is a centralised visa processing agency. This could be a joint venture between the participating countries and could be run by the public sector, by the private sector or by a partnership between the two. The agency would receive all visa applications, check these for accuracy, undertake any initial necessary verification, and submit these either to the appropriate embassy or directly to the ministry of foreign affairs for approval.

This unit could take over the website established in the short term to ensure consistency of information and services provided to tourists.

Over time, it might be appropriate to transfer the visa processing function from embassies to the central agency.

23. Expand the number of nationalities eligible for visas on arrival

If the Working Group has focussed primarily on visas on arrival, the number of eligible nationalities should be steadily increased.

24. Introduce visa waiver for selected nationalities

The Working Group might choose as its prime focus visa waiver for citizens of selected “safe” nationalities. If so, then the number of nationalities eligible for the visa waiver scheme should be steadily increased.

25. Undertake further work on economic measurement and monitoring

Given the importance of information to demonstrate the economic contribution derived from tourism development, further measurement or simulation should be undertaken. Ideally systems should be put in place to enable ongoing economic measurement and monitoring of tourism. An analysis should be prepared, possibly using Computable General Equilibrium (a sophisticated econometric modelling technique) to measure the economic benefit derived by reducing visa charges.

26. Reduce visa charges and harmonise between countries

The economic analysis or simulation undertaken will demonstrate to governments that income from taxes on sales, employment and company profits generated by a large number of tourists will outweigh income from visa charges from a small number of tourists. Countries should then be encouraged to reduce or remove visas charges and to harmonise these between countries. Lower visa charges and simplified application procedures will encourage more tourists to choose the Silk Road over other tourist destinations and experiences.

27. Develop training programmes

Training programmes should be repeated and extended to ensure that everyone involved in the tourism industry contributes positively towards providing an
excellent experience for tourists which, in turn, contributes towards enhanced financial benefits for everyone.

28. Participate in plan for converting part of embassies into cultural and tourism centres

If a central visa processing agency has been established, and the visa processing function transferred to it from embassies, then a plan could be formulated to strengthen the role of embassies as cultural and tourism centres, with funding from central government. These funds might be taken from income derived from tourism.

8.5 Long term actions (7 to 10 years)

29. Accept visa applications on-line and/or introduce electronic permit to travel

Whilst the technology to enable visa applications and processing on-line is already available, the cost of this technology might prohibit its adoption in the short term. However, long term, it is likely that processing visas in this way will be the most efficient and secure method.

Electronic processing might be combined with an electronic permit to travel, similar to the present Australian Electronic Travel Authority

30. Eliminate visa fees (retain capped administrative charge)

In the long term, it is likely that some countries, recognising the international competitiveness of tourism and the economic benefits that tourists bring, will eliminate visa charges. It is recommended that Silk Road countries be among the first to adopt this approach.

It might be appropriate to retain a visa processing administrative charge, capped at a fair rate, which might be received and retained by agents administering visas on behalf of participating governments.

31. Introduce biometric screening at borders, collaborating internationally

Silk Road countries should seek to adopt best practice approaches to biometric screening, as these approaches become technically proven, economically viable and internationally accepted.

32. Establish free or low-cost Silk Road Visa or electronic permit

If not achieved earlier, countries participating in the Silk Road Regional Programme should establish a free or low-price Silk Road Visa or electronic permit, possibly similar to the APEC Business Card, for as many nationalities as possible who are not eligible for visa waiver schemes.
APPENDICES
### APPENDIX I: WEBSITE SOURCES FOR THIS STUDY

Set out in this Appendix are websites from which information in this study has been collated. Each address, in full, should be preceded by http://www.

#### Embassies and consulates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>china-embassy.org</td>
<td>Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>chinese-embassy.org.uk</td>
<td>Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the UK</td>
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<td>fmprc.gov.cn</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China</td>
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<td>kazakhstanembassy.org.uk</td>
<td>Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the UK</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>kazakhembus.com</td>
<td>Embassy of Kazakhstan to the USA and Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kazconsul.ca</td>
<td>Consulate of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Toronto, Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mfa.kz</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>kyrgyzstan.org</td>
<td>Embassy of the Kyrgyzstan Republic in the USA</td>
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<td></td>
<td>kyrgyz-embassy.org.uk</td>
<td>Embassy of the Kyrgyzstan Republic in the UK</td>
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<td>mfa.kg</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic</td>
</tr>
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<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>botschaft-tadschikistan.de</td>
<td>Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan in Germany</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tajikembassy.org</td>
<td>Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan in Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tjus.org</td>
<td>Embassy of Tajikistan to the USA</td>
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<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>uzbekembassy.org</td>
<td>Embassy of Uzbekistan to the UK</td>
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<td>uzbekistan.org</td>
<td>Embassy of Uzbekistan to the USA</td>
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<td>Other embassies and national websites</td>
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<td></td>
<td>indianembassy.org</td>
<td>Embassy of India, Washington, USA</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hcilondon.net</td>
<td>High Commission of India, London, UK</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>indonesia.embassyhomepage.com</td>
<td>Indonesian Embassy in London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mofa.gov.sa</td>
<td>Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>turkishembassy.org</td>
<td>Republic of Turkey Embassy in Washington, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>turkishconsulate.org.uk</td>
<td>Consulate General for the Republic of Turkey in London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ukvisa.gov.uk</td>
<td>UK Home Office and Foreign &amp; Commonwealth Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ukremb.org.uk</td>
<td>The Embassy of the Ukraine in the UK</td>
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#### Specialist visa and passport services

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Service Provider</th>
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<tr>
<td>embassyworld.com</td>
<td>Embassy World</td>
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<tr>
<td>myvisaadviser.co.uk</td>
<td>VisitorLink Ltd (UK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>passportsandvisas.com</td>
<td>under construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>projectvisa.com</td>
<td>Project Visa (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>traveldocs.com</td>
<td>Travel Document Systems (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>visatouchina.co.uk</td>
<td>Russia Direct Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>visatorussia.com</td>
<td>IntelService Center/Russia Visa Online (USA and Russia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>visaworld.co.uk</td>
<td>Visa World Ltd (UK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>timaticweb.com</td>
<td>IATA’s TIMATIC database of visa and other information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>travcour.com</td>
<td>Travcour (UK) Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>world-visa.com</td>
<td>Travel The World Visas (US)</td>
</tr>
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</table>
## Travel agencies and tour operators

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>acs-almaty.kz</td>
<td>ACS Travel Agency, Kazakhstan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adventurecenter.com</td>
<td>Adventure Centre (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>centralasiatourism.com</td>
<td>Central Asia Tourism Corporation, Kazakhstan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explore.co.uk</td>
<td>Explore (Holidaybreak plc), adventure holidays, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hansrossel.com</td>
<td>Tour operator in Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hobotraveller.com</td>
<td>Budget travel guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imstravel.co.uk/ktc</td>
<td>Kazakhstan Travel Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>irantour.org</td>
<td>Iranian Society of Travel Agents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>itto.org</td>
<td>Iran Tourism &amp; Tourism Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kantengri.kz</td>
<td>Kan Tengri Ltd, Kazakhstan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>silkroadandbeyond.co.uk</td>
<td>Silk Road and Beyond, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>silkroute.cn</td>
<td>Silk road Adventures Co Ltd, Xinjiang, China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sokoltours.com</td>
<td>Sokol Tours (USA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>stantours.com</td>
<td>Central Asia travel Resources (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tajikistantourism.com</td>
<td>Travel Tajikistan, sister to the Great Game Travel Co</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transtourscentre.co.uk</td>
<td>Transtours Centre (UK)</td>
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<tr>
<td>travelchinaguide.com</td>
<td>Travel China Guide Web Site</td>
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<tr>
<td>traveltajikistan.com</td>
<td>Travel Tajikistan information website</td>
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<td>turanasia.kz</td>
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## General research

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<td>118.com</td>
<td>Telephone directory service (UK)</td>
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<tr>
<td>africa-ata.org</td>
<td>African Travel Magazine (Africa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atn.com</td>
<td>Australian Travel &amp; Tourism Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state.gov</td>
<td>US Department of State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eng.gateway.kg</td>
<td>Great Silk Railroad, Kyrgyzstan Development Gateway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>europa.eu.int</td>
<td>European Tourism Forum (EU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expresstravelandtourism.com</td>
<td>Express Travel &amp; Tourism (India)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gao.gov</td>
<td>US General Accounting Office (GAO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iaapppa.org</td>
<td>International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>restaurant.org</td>
<td>National Restaurant Association (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strategis.ic.cg.ca</td>
<td>International Market insight (Canada)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ttgasia.com</td>
<td>Travel Trade Gazette (Asia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>visit-mekong.com</td>
<td>Official website for tourism in the Greater Mekong Sub-region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>world-tourism.org</td>
<td>World Tourism Organization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX II:  
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS REPORT ON VISA FACILITATION IN THE SILK ROAD COUNTRIES

Public/Private Sector Partnership Recommendations - Gradual to Radical

Recommendation 1: Information provided by travel and visa agencies

A growing number of travel agencies and independent visa agencies have responded to visa processing and information needs. In return for a user fee, travel agents offer the same information provided by consulates worldwide. They can offer a more efficient information delivery system to applicants due to higher levels of human resources and funding for technology, such as central reservations systems (CRS).

We recommend that governments inform travel agencies of changes in visa regulations, allowing the private companies to communicate these rules and regulations to a wider catchment area than may be possible for the government concerned. It is important to note that the private sector is already providing these services without the assistance of the governments concerned – but by working in partnership, both the quality of information and the service provided can be enhanced.

This option would not cost the government any more than regular newsletter bulletins sent to the travel agents, and/or training days for the travel agents once a year, to explain the nature of documents required, and how best clients can prepare them to reduce the administrative work of the consulate.

Recommendation 2: Agreements with travel and visa agents to administer visas

This recommendation takes the use of the private sector as suppliers of correct up to date information one step further. A service level agreement is drawn up between the private sector supplier and the government body, detailing the format of visa applications required from the travel agent, and a target of accuracy, for example specifying a maximum of six errors each year. Travellers would then be offered the visa processing facility by the travel agent at the time of booking their tickets, offering information and assistance with the process itself. Potential tourists would therefore not need to visit the consulate at all, as the travel agent would administer the process on their behalf, for a fee. As the travel agents would charge clients for their service, the facility would not cost the governments of the Silk Road.

Recommendation 3: Visa waiver pilot schemes

Governments of the Silk Road could work towards agreements with airlines to replace the need for visas issued by government bodies in the tourist generating markets. This scheme forces responsibility onto airlines to screen passengers for security reasons before boarding, but there might be a need for financial compensation in some form. Tourist and/or business cards are issued by the airlines for completion by potential passengers, detailing the same demographic and security questions that appear on an application form. Designed to work with low risk nationalities only, the government can in effect transfer processing of a large volume of visas to the airlines concerned.
Recommendation 4: Visa issuing authority to private sector

This recommendation is the most costly option in this Chapter of the report and is therefore presented as a long-term change. This recommendation draws on the principles of the Australian ETA system, which transfers the processing facility of visas to the private sector through the use of computer systems.

Multi Lateral Agreement Recommendations - Gradual to Radical

Recommendation 5: Build on existing agreements

Multi-lateral agreements allowing tourists access through more than one country in the Silk Road region with only one visa have been defined in Chapter 3.3 of this report. This study recommends that these agreements are analysed, cemented and expanded wherever possible with other Silk Road countries. This will allow joint marketing facilities to various governments for specific route tours, enabling travel around more than one country with one common visa. This should be a simple programme to implement as many Silk Road governments share the same visa regulations.

Recommendation 6: Develop new agreements

This recommendation is designed to lead on from the expansion of multi-lateral agreements as defined above. There are many countries in the Silk Road who share common political, economic and cultural interests promoting possibilities for the design of joint country groupings and tours. All Silk Road countries are urged to consider the benefits shared by the governments with existing agreements.

Recommendation 7: Create a visa “Silk Road Agreement”

A long-term, challenging objective could be a “Silk Road Agreement” which would reflect the same principles of the Schengen Agreement. The Schengen agreement evolved from an agreement between three countries – the Benelux agreement involving Belgium, Luxembourg and Netherlands. There are similarities between the original Benelux agreement and the existing multilateral agreements in some countries of the Silk Road region, which perhaps suggest that in time, a larger number of Silk Road countries can come together towards a common agreement.

Recommendations for Technological Change – Gradual to Radical

Recommendation 8: Automated telephone information lines

Information lines are both an informative communication channel for tourists and, once up and running, a revenue generating option for governments. Recorded messages detailing visa regulations and offering a fax-back service for application forms can be administered for a relatively small cost. Each call costs the enquirer a set fee above the rate of the national telephone charge, which generates a revenue for the government.
Some Silk Road countries do offer such information lines in various countries worldwide. All Silk Road governments could adopt this option.

**Recommendation 9: Information on the WTO website**

All countries should provide access to up-to-date information for potential visitors on visa regulations and visa application forms over the Internet via a website. Many Silk Road countries do not currently have the resources to develop an individual site.

The WTO has a Silk Road website. We recommend that the WTO should explore the possibility of providing visa information on this website, working in partnership with existing visa information providers (such as American Express or TIM), as well as with national tourist offices of the Silk Road countries.

**Recommendation 10: Automated visa processing systems in consulates**

Many international software companies (e.g. Transputec International) are researching and providing new database packages to consulates (e.g. India) offering fast visa processing procedures. Links to scanners offer an even faster processing technique, as detailed earlier in this report. In the medium term, we recommend Silk Road governments establish automated visa processing systems in their main consulates worldwide. China and Iran have already started processing visas using electronic systems, in their UK consulates.

**Recommendation 11: Automated border clearance**

Fast Track and FAST GATE are both expensive options to pursue, and represent the most radical recommendation for change presented in this Chapter of the report. This study acknowledges that it may be some time before Silk Road governments are able to pursue automated border clearance procedures, but would urge governments to consider this as a long-term goal. Airport security is a large concern for many airport authorities. Automated clearance systems can help reduce congestion and thereby have a positive impact on the security levels at airports worldwide.
APPENDIX III:
ANALYSIS OF VISA INFORMATION ON EMBASSY WEBSITES

CHINA

A brief introduction to the Chinese visa (source: www.chinese-embassy.org.uk)

The Chinese visa is a permit issued to a foreigner by the Chinese visa authorities for entry into, exit from or transit through the Chinese territory. The Chinese visa authorities may issue a Diplomatic, Courtesy, Service or Ordinary Visa to a foreigner according to his identity, purpose of visit to China and passport type. The Ordinary Visa consists of eight sub-categories, which are respectively marked with Chinese phonetic letters F, L, X, C, J-1, J-2, G, and D:

- F Visa: Issued to an applicant who is invited to China for visit, research, lecture, business, scientific-technological and culture exchanges or short-term advanced studies or intern practice for a period of no more than six months.
- L Visa: Issued to an applicant who comes to China for tourist purposes, family visiting or other personal affairs.
- Z Visa: Issued to an applicant who is to take up a post or employment in China, and their accompanying family members.
- X Visa: Issued to an applicant who comes to China for the purpose of study, advanced studies or intern practice for a period of six months or above.
- C Visa: Issued to crewmembers on international aviation, navigation and land transportation missions and family members accompanying them.
- J-1 Visa: Issued to foreign resident correspondents in China.
- J-2 Visa: Issued to foreign correspondents on temporary interview mission in China.
- G Visa: Issued to those who transit through China.
- D Visa: Issued to applicant who is to reside permanently in China.

The Chinese visa authorities overseas include Chinese embassies, consulates, visa offices, and the consular department of the office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China. If a foreigner intends to enter into, exit from or transit through the Chinese territory, he shall apply to the above-mentioned Chinese visa authorities for a Chinese visa. For further information, please consult the nearest Chinese visa authorities.

Instructions on how to apply for a Chinese visa

From 1st August 2004 onwards, the post service will be no longer accepted by the visa section of the Chinese Embassy in London. All applications should be submitted in person or through a travel agent.

To apply for any type of Chinese visa, the following is required:

- one completed visa application form
- one recent passport sized photograph
- a valid original passport with blank pages

More documents are required if applying for:

- Tourist visa ----- L: the itinerary or flight booking.
- Work visa ------- Z: An employment permit from the Ministry of Labour or the State Bureau of Foreign Experts of China together with an invitation letter from the company authorized by the Chinese Government.
- Student visa----X: JW-201 or JW_202 form issued by the Ministry of Education of China and a letter of admission from a Chinese University / College.
- Transit Visa  --- G: A valid visa for the country of destination and the letter from the employer. Duration of transit visa is about 7 days. For British passport holder, the Chinese transit visa of 24-hour stop over in the airport is not required.
- Journalist Visa -- J-1 or J-2: A letter from relevant Department in China or the Foreign Affairs Office of Shanghai or Guangdong Municipal Government and a letter from the employer.
- Permanent Visa ----D: A Permit letter from a local government of China.

Visa validity
A single or double entries visa is usually valid for entry within 3 months from the date of issue. The multi-entry visa is divided into three categories, namely half a year/one year/two to five year’s visa.

Duration of stay / number of entries
Duration of stay of a visa may vary. It is possible to extend the duration of stay of a visa in China. Visa is always required wherever you enter the Chinese mainland even from Hong Kong or Macao.

Requirements towards passport
A. There must be at least one totally blank page in the passport. Pages for endorsements or amendments can not be used as a visa page.
B. Single or double entry visa requires a passport valid for at least 6 months. For multiple entry visa, a passport should be valid for at least 9 Months.

Accompanying person using the same passport
The photo of the accompanying person using the same passport should be affixed to the form. The full visa fee will apply.

Where to apply for a Chinese visa
Applicants should come in person or through a third party (e.g. travel agencies) to apply for the Chinese visa during office hours 9 -12 am in Chinese Embassy / Chinese Consulates-General in Manchester or Edinburgh.

Visa collection
Visa is ready for collection at the Visa Section during office hours (9 -12am) after 3 working days (72 hours) from the date when the application is accepted. Visa cannot be issued on the same day unless the same-day airline ticket or the itinerary is presented.

Hong Kong and Macao visa
For the purpose of tour and business visa is not required for the British passport holder. For more information, please look over HKSAR Web site: http://www.info.gov.hk/immd/, for Hong Kong visa and http://www.macau.gov.mo/index_cn.html for Macao visa.

Visa fees
Cash or postal order only (pay to the Chinese Embassy). Personal Cheque is not acceptable. Pay on collection. No refund if the visa is turned down or cancelled.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Double</th>
<th>Multiple Entry</th>
<th>Visa</th>
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<td>?45</td>
<td>?60 (half-year)</td>
<td>?90 (one year)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>?90 (2-5 Years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For American citizens</td>
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<td>All other Nationalities</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>?60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Same day service: extra ?20 per person.
Express Service (48 hour): extra ?15 per person.
Visa (or Entry Permit) fee for Hong Kong and Macao: ?30 per person.
Group visa fee: ?24 per person

(Note: These prices show currency as ‘?’ – it is not clear on the website whether this represents British pounds sterling.)

Group visa
A tourist group should comprise at least 5 members. We require:
1. Confirmation letter /Fax from an authorized Chinese travel agency or tourist bureau.
2. Photocopies of the passports of all group members.
3. Typed name list of the group in TRIPLICATE. If there is any blank on the last page of the name list, draw a straight line from the left corner down to the right corner.
4. A front page covering information about the group.
5. The serial number given to group members should be listed in order on the group visa form.
6. The group visa form can be obtained upon request. It takes 2 weeks to process a group visa.

NOTES
1. The application for a visa may be declined if the applicant fails to provide with true and complete information on the visa application form.
2. The applicant should check the issued visa upon collection and, if necessary raise any queries at the same. Once accepted, they should follow the content of the visa while visiting China. If there is no immediate inquiry relating to the issued visa, the applicant is held responsible under any circumstances thereafter.
3. The person holding X, Z, D, or J-I visa shall go through residential formalities in the local public security departments of China within 30 days of the date of entry.
4. The applicant should not engage in activities incompatible with his / her status when he/she enters China.
5. For foreign visitors employment in the territory of China is prohibited without approval.

Who needs a visa? (source: www.china-embassy.org)

Visas are not required of aliens, who hold final destination tickets and have booked seats on international airliners flying directly through China, and will stay in a transit city for less than 24 hours without leaving the airport.

Visas are not required of Citizens of the following countries, who transit through Pudong Airport or Hongqiao Airport of Shanghai, provided they hold valid passports, visas for the onward countries, final destination tickets and have booked seats, and stay in Shanghai for less than 48 hours: Republic of Korea, United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, France, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxemburg, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Austria, Greece.

No visa is required for ordinary passport holders from Singapore, Brunei and Japan to visit China for up to 15 days for business, sightseeing, visiting relatives and friends or transit.
Groups can travel on a single visa held by the group leader.

From November 15th 2000, aliens travelling to Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions (SAR) in tour groups organised by travel agencies registered in the above-mentioned SARs are exempted from visa requirements for a period not exceeding 6 days when entering into certain Chinese mainland cities. Travellers must be citizens of a country having diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China and carrying an ordinary passport.

**KAZAKHSTAN**

**Visa information (source: www.kazakhstanembassy.org.uk)**

Visa information for up to one month single entry visas for nationals of 28 countries:


Please note that those not possessing full passports of the countries above still need to obtain appropriate invitation letters from the hosting companies in Kazakhstan.

All applicants are strongly recommended to submit the applications for the visa at least 5 days prior to the departure date.

**Business Visas**

The issuance of business visas to Kazakhstan is based on the invitations from Kazakhstan legal entities (not required for up to one month single entry visas). The invitation must be registered by the Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kazakhstan. Having the invitation registered, the inviting party should send the same invitation with registration number to the person applying for a visa.

**Private Visas**

The invitation for a private visa is prepared by Kazakhstan national through the local office of Kazakhstan Interior Ministry as a special form (not required for up to one month visas). This original form must be sent to the invited to Kazakhstan person and is considered as a basis for applying for private visa to Kazakhstan Consulate in London. Foreign citizens born in Kazakhstan or relatives (spouses, children and parents) of Kazakhstan passport holders may apply for a 1 month visa without obtaining the invitation letter (maximum twice a year). *Note: Private visas can be only for single entry.*

**Tourist Visas**

The issuance of tourist visas is based on the invitations from Kazakhstan licensed tourist companies or hotels in Kazakhstan (not required for up to one month single entry visas, ask a list of Kazakhstan tourist companies).

**Transit Visas**

Transit visas can be issued on the basis of valid visas to a third country, air/rail tickets to a third country. The transit visas can be issued as a single entry for a period up to 5 days only.
Conditions Of Application (New Simplified Visa Requirements!)

From 15 February 2004, applicants-nationals of certain countries (see list above) applying for up to one month single entry visas are not required to obtain letter of invitation from Kazakhstan. All they need to present is a letter of introduction explaining the purpose of the visit. This new rule applies to diplomatic, service, business, tourist and private visa applications.

1. Letter of introduction explaining the purpose of the visit
2. Application form, fully completed and signed by the applicant
3. Valid passport with one full blank page to affix the visa (please note that the passport must be valid for at least three months after visas's expiration date)
4. One passport sized photograph
5. Self addressed and prepaid envelope, special delivery or registered post only (in case of the post sent from Norway, Sweden or Ireland, 9 international postal coupons should be attached. When it is not possible to obtain postal coupons 5J note could be sent instead in order to cover postage expenses).

Important notice: The Consular Officers reserve a right to require any additional documentation if papers presented are not to their fullest satisfaction.

(visa processing time takes 1-3 days)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VISA FEES</th>
<th>BUSINESS, INVESTORS, PRIVATE AND WORK VISAS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SINGLE ENTRY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>up to three months</td>
<td>33GBP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>visa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOUBLE ENTRY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>up to three months</td>
<td>43 GBP</td>
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<tr>
<td>visa</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>TRIPLE ENTRY</td>
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<td>up to three months</td>
<td>73 GBP</td>
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<tr>
<td>visa</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>MULTIPLE ENTRY</td>
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<tr>
<td>up to one year visa</td>
<td>133 GBP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>up to two years visa</td>
<td>263 GBP</td>
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TOURIST VISAS

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tr>
<td>single entry up to 30 days</td>
<td>23 GBP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>double entry up to 60 days</td>
<td>33 GBP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TRANSLIT VISAS

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>single entry for 72 hours</td>
<td>13 GBP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Entry Requirements for US Citizens (source: www.kazakhembus.com)

Under the new procedure of issuing visas of the Republic of Kazakhstan, from February 15, 2004, single entry business, tourist and private (up to one month) visas will be issued to citizens.
of 27 developed nations, including the United States of America, without invitations from Kazakhstan, on the basis of their personal or companies’ written statements submitted to the Consular Section of the Embassy of Kazakhstan in Washington, DC.

In order to apply for Kazakhstan single entry business, tourist and private visas, you will need to complete and send an application form (see attached) and supply all of the following documents in original form:

1. A written statement with a request to issue a visa (please, indicate your trip purpose).
2. A completed visa application form (one per person).
3. A valid passport (a photocopy not accepted) which should have at least one clear page for a visa. Your passport must be valid for at least 60 days longer than the validity of the requested visa.
4. One passport size photo of the applicant which should be stapled to the marked space in the upper right-hand corner of the application form.
5. A money order or company check payable to the Embassy of Kazakhstan for visa processing fee (no cash or personal checks).

NOTE: A tourist visa cannot be extended in Kazakhstan.

In addition, the following documents are required, depending on the type of visa applied for:

**Business Visas:**

1. If you apply for a multiple visa up to one year, a copy of invitation letter from a host organization in Kazakhstan is needed. This letter must be submitted by host organization in Kazakhstan to the Department of Consular Services of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In addition, a cover letter from the applicant’s company, briefly summarizing the purpose of the visit and including some information about the company or organization should be attached.
2. A completed visa application form (one per person).
3. A valid passport (a photocopy not accepted) which should have at least one clear page for a visa. Your passport must be valid for at least 60 days longer than the validity of the requested visa.
4. One passport size photo of the applicant which should be stapled to the marked space in the upper right-hand corner of the application form.
5. A money order or company check payable to the Embassy of Kazakhstan for visa processing fee (no cash or personal checks).

U.S. investors in the Kazakhstani economy who already have business projects in Kazakhstan may apply for multiple investor visas valid for 24 months. Investor visa holders are not required to be registered with the Immigration Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kazakhstan.

**Transit Visas:**

1. A visa to the country of destination and copies of your ticket and itinerary is required.
2. A completed visa application form (one per person).
3. A valid passport (a photocopy not accepted) which should have at least one clear page for a visa. Your passport must be valid for at least 60 days longer than the validity of the requested visa.

4. One passport size photo of the applicant which should be stapled to the marked space in the upper right-hand corner of the application form.

5. A money order or company check payable to the Embassy of Kazakhstan for visa processing fee (no cash or personal checks).

NOTE: Transit visa is valid only for three days (included).

NOTE: The visa processing can be expedited only when all the requirements are met. Processing time, requirements and fees are subject to change without notice. The average time for obtaining a Kazakhstan visa is one week (five working days). In urgent cases, a visa can be issued in three days.

If you apply by mail, you should enclose a stamped self-addressed Express Mail envelope. We do not accept FedEx, UPS and DHL. Please note that the only overnight mail accepted by the Embassy of Kazakhstan is Express Mail of the U.S. Post Office. When sending your documents to the Embassy, please, specify “Attention: Consular Section”.

If you apply personally or through a travel agency or a visa service, you or your representative should get a pick-up slip from a visa officer of the Embassy of Kazakhstan and present this slip to pick up your visa when it is ready.

Please do not call the Embassy of Kazakhstan, if you need application forms or information on visa requirements. We would ask you to fax at (202) 232-3541 your request with your full mailing address, phone/fax number. Phone calls considerably slow down processing of visa applications.

The visa processing fees are:

- Single entry visa (business, home stay) up to three months – 125 US dollars;
- Double entry visa up to three months – 155 US dollars;
- Triple entry visa up to three months – 170 US dollars;
- Multiple entry visa up to one year – 265 US dollars;
- Single entry tourist visa up to three months – 105 US dollars;
- Double entry tourist visa up to three months – 125 US dollars;
- Adoption visa – 125 US dollars;
- Transit visa – 95 US dollars.

NOTE: A money order or company check made payable to the Embassy of Kazakhstan (No cash and personal checks or credit cards). All foreign citizens must register at the local Office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kazakhstan or at the hotel within 72 hours upon arrival to Kazakhstan. Otherwise they will be fined by the Immigration Service on departure.

Extra visa notes (source: www.traveldocs.com)

- The Embassy of Kazakhstan ceased offering 24 hour rush issue service on Aug 01, 2003. Visa issue is 5 business days from the date of submission.

- If you are transiting through Kazakhstan, to other Newly Independent States, you must obtain a Kazakh transit visa. Fee $95 - valid for 72 hours transit - onward visa must appear in the passport. Apply using tourist visa instructions (excluding invitation).
• All foreign citizens must register at the local office of the Minister of Interior or at the hotel they are staying at within 72 hours upon arrival to Kazakhstan. Otherwise they will be fined by the immigration service.

• HIV test certificate for those applying for a visa for a duration of stay over 3 months.

• Tourist Visa issued only up to one month and as a single entry only.

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**KYRGYZSTAN**

**Source: kyrgyz-embassy.org.uk**

Consular Section

Documents required for a visa application are as follows:
- Valid passport (with one full blank page to affix the visa)
- Application form (fully completed and attached 1 passport size photo)
- Self addressed and prepaid Royal Mail Special delivery envelope
- Letter of support from the Kyrgyzstan (more than 1 month visa only)

Visa Fees Payment:
Payment for visas can be made in pound sterling by cheque or bank transfer. Bank transfer should quote your name and the reference “Visa” and should be made to your nearest Lloyds TSB branch
Account name: The Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic
Sort Code: 30-96-40
Account number: 01974582
Note:
Visa processing takes five working days but can be done in 24 hours for double the cost.
The Consular Section works from 9:30 to 12:30, Monday to Friday

Visa fees

TOURIST VISAS
Up to 7 days - £ 25
Up to 1 month - £ 45
More than 1 month or Double entry visas - £ 60

Transit Visas
Up to 5 days (120 Hours) - £ 20
Double entry - £ 35

Ordinary visas:
Single entry
Up to 1 month - £ 40
Up to 3 months - £ 60
Up to 6 months - £ 70
Up to 1 year - £ 90

Multiple entries
Up to 1 month - £ 60
Up to 3 months - £ 80
Up to 6 months - £ 110
Up to 1 year - £ 140

**Source: kyrgyzstan.org**
New Visa Application Requirements And Fees

Dear Visa Applicants,

As of August 1, 2005 Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic to the USA and Canada introduces new visa application requirements and fees.

Before applying for a visa please read carefully information below and follow the instructions. Should you have any questions or concerns please contact us directly by phone at 1 202 338 5141, Monday-Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Visa Application Documents:

1. Completed visa application form. Please type and provide answers to all questions.
2. One passport size color or black/white photo.
3. Passport original (not a photocopy).
4. Invitation Letter or Visa Support Letter:
   a) Citizens of the countries listed below intending to visit Kyrgyzstan up to 1 month do not need to present invitation letters or visa support independent of their travel purposes
      (1) Australia; (2) Austrian Republic; (3) Kingdom of Belgium; (4) United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; (5) Federative Republic of Germany; (6) Greek Republic; (7) Kingdom of Denmark; (8) State of Israel; (9) Ireland Republic; (10) Republic of Iceland; (11) Kingdom of Spain; (12) Italian Republic; (13) Canada; (14) Republic of Cyprus; (15) Republic of Korea; (16) Duchy of Liechtenstein; (17) Great Duchy of Luxembourg; (18) Republic of Malta; (19) Duchy of Monaco; (20) Kingdom of Netherlands; (21) Kingdom of Norway; (22) New Zealand; (23) Portugal Republic; (24) United States of America; (25) Finland Republic; (26) French Republic; (27) Swiss Confederation; (28) Kingdom of Sweden.
      b) All other foreign nationals of countries not listed above in section 4 (a) for the purposes of obtaining entry visa to Kyrgyzstan and foreign nationals of countries listed above in section 4 (a) but travelling for the period more than 1 month are required to present:
         - For business purposes - Visa Support Letter is necessary, i.e. special invitation letter obtained from the Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic in Bishkek (Please request your Kyrgyz partners, organizations to arrange for visa support by contacting the Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
         - For private/tourism purposes – Invitation Letter issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs upon request submitted by your local contact (family member, tourism agents e.t.c)

5. Diplomatic visa is issued to the holders of diplomatic passports on the basis of the requests of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the foreign countries and other state agencies and departments, international organizations and the foreign diplomatic missions with duly filled application form. U.S. citizens holding diplomatic passports of the USA traveling to Kyrgyzstan do not require visa.

6. Official visa is issued to the holders of official passports on the basis of the request from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of foreign countries and other state agencies and departments, international organizations and foreign diplomatic missions with duly filed application form.

7. Transit visa is issued for the period not exceeding 5 days. To obtain a transit visa, applicant must submit visa application form with enclosed transportation ticket with the visa of the country of destination, and visa application form.
Visa Fees

As of August 1, 2005 Consular Section of the Kyrgyz Embassy introduces new consular and visa fees.

1. Tourist Visas:
   - Single-entry 1 month visa: 50 USD
   - Double-entry 1 month visa: 70 USD
   - Single-entry 3 months visa: 90 USD
   - Double-entry 3 months visa: 110 USD

2. Business Visas:
   - Single-entry 1 month visa: 60 USD
   - Double-entry 1 month visa: 80 USD
   - Single-entry 3 months visa: 100 USD
   - Double-entry 3 months visa: 120 USD
   - Multi-entry 6 months visa: 160 USD
   - Multi-entry 1 year: 200 USD

3. Transit Visas
   - Single-entry transit visa: 25 USD
   - Double-entry transit visa: 35 USD

Applicants under the age of 16 and above 60 years old are not subject to consular and visa fees.

Visa Processing Time

Ordinarily upon receipt of the visa application form with required documents within 10 business days Consular Section will process and issue visas. Please note that necessity of additional procedural inquiries might take place in certain instances where processing time might take longer than 10 business days.

Therefore Consular Section strongly encourages visa applicants and their agents to apply as early as possible and provide complete application form with required documents as instructed.

Consular Section provides 3 day urgent visa processing. Consular fee for urgent services is equal to 100% of the original price of visa.

Diplomatic, Official and UN Laissez-Passer holders will be issued visas within 3 business days.

Mail-in applications and Mail Service Disclaimer

Dear Customers please note that Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic is not responsible for mail services. Customers must arrange on their own mail delivery and pick up of their documents including passports, legalized documents and other.

Embassy does not accept requests to change the mailing service type date or make a payment to expedite the services on behalf of the customers, even if the Customer is ready to pay for services.

Embassy strongly recommends to use larger postal service providers and apply in advance taking into consideration that there might be mail service delays.
We remind once again that we do not bear responsibility for mailing services at any point. If you have any questions, please contact the Embassy before mailing your documents.

Payment Type

For every type of service provided including visa processing Consular Section accepts exclusively:

- money order
- company checks
- cashier’s checks

All checks and money orders must be made to the order of the Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic. Consular Section does not accept payments in cash in any circumstances.

Please note that application forms and documents submitted in a manner different from that described above will not be accepted or the processing will be delayed.

Source: mfa.kz (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Consular Agency in “Manas” International Airport

Functions and Authorities

The Consular Agency within its competence extends necessary facilities to the nationals of the Kyrgyz Republic and performs the functions on processing the entry and departure documents to the foreign nationals and stateless individuals using "Manas" Airport.

The Agency facilitates government delegations led by the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic, and the Heads of both the Chambers of Jogorku Kenesh (Parliament) of the Kyrgyz Republic at time of their arrival/ departure at/from "Manas" Airport.

It looks after the issues related to the arrival and departure of foreign delegations and tourists.

The Consular Agency charges consular fees in accordance with the approved rates.

The rates of the Consular Services on account of issuance of visa to foreign nationals at the Consular Agency of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic at "Manas" Airport are given forth below:

Tourist Visa up to one month USD 60.00
Ordinary Visa up to one month USD 60.00
Transit Visa USD 55.00

In accordance with the Intergovernmental Agreement between the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Uzbekistan on Reciprocal Trips, following would be the charges applicable to the nationals of both the countries, holders of ordinary passports:

Up to one month USD 4.00
Up to 6 month USD 10.00
Up to one year USD 20.00
Requirements for European Visitors (source: www.tajikembassy.org)

The following documents should be submitted in order to obtain visa:
1. Filled visa application form (one per person)
2. One photo
3. Passport
4. A copy of Confirmation of Invitation issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan or a formal letter with request to issue visa from an applicant or sending organization/company.
5. Confirmation of visa payment (if it is paid via bank) or cash. Please, note that we do not accept company or personal checks, credit cards, etc. In case of bank transfer, an applicant must cover bank charges and fees for bank transaction, if any. Embassy Consular bank account: Wien, Botschaft der Republik Tadschikistan, Creditanstalt-Bankverein BLZ 11000 N 09554787301 ; International Bank account no./IBAN=AT51 1100 0095 54787301 / BIC=BKAUATWW
6. In case of applying by mail, applicants should cover return mail costs as well.

Visa can be issued within 3-4 working days.
You can download a Visa Application Form below:

Universitatsstr. 8/1a,
1090 Vienna, Austria
Telephone: (+43-1)-4098266
Fax: (+43-1)-409826614
Consular Office Hours: 9:00 - 18:00 (M, T, W, T, F)
Lunch Break 13:00 - 14:00

There are no visa prices on the Austrian Embassy website.

Requirements for US Visitors (source: www.tjus.org)

The following documents should be submitted in order to obtain visa:
1. Two fully completed visa application forms. Please, note that the answers to question No. 14 on the visa application will be reflected in the issued visa.
2. Two passport size photos.
3. Valid passport. Passport must be valid for at least 6 months from the date of departure.
4. Copy of invitation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan/ Ministry of Interior, or
5. Cover letter of request from your organization or travel agency. Embassy reserves the right to request for additional documents.
6. A money order or company check payable to the Embassy of Tajikistan for visa processing. Please, note that we do not accept cash.
7. In case of applying by mail, applicants should enclose a completely-addressed stamped return envelope or prepaid waybill, bearing the account number and showing themselves as both shipper and recipient regardless of delivery address.

Please note that issued visas are not refundable.

For assistance with urgent visa issuance please see http://www.traveldocs.com/tj/vr.htm

For any additional information about the visa procedure please contact us at:
Visa Fees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Fees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two weeks</td>
<td>80 $</td>
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<tr>
<td>One month</td>
<td>160 $</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two months (single)</td>
<td>230 $</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(multiple)</td>
<td>280 $</td>
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<tr>
<td>Three months (single)</td>
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<td>(multiple)</td>
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<td>Six months (single)</td>
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<td>(multiple)</td>
<td>480 $</td>
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<tr>
<td>One year (single)</td>
<td>320 $</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(multiple)</td>
<td>600 $</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Website has link to Traveldocs.com

Extra information for US Visitors (source: www.traveldocs.com)

Requirements For U.S. Citizens To Obtain Visa To Enter Tajikistan

Tourist Visa

- Submit valid U.S. Passport /must valid at least 6 months remaining validity and contain at least one blank visa page.
- 2 Tajikistan Visa Application Forms, fully completed and signed
- 2 Passport-type photographs required
- Cover letter addressed to the Embassy of Tajikistan requesting a tourist visa, or, visa support letter from Tajikistan confirmed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Completed Cover Page (print from browser)

Business Visa

- Submit valid U.S. Passport /must valid at least 6 months remaining validity and contain at least one blank visa page.
- 2 Tajikistan Visa Application Forms, fully completed and signed
• 2 Passport-type photographs required
• Completed Cover Page (print from browser)
• Visa support letter from Tajikistan confirmed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs -OR-
• A business letter of responsibility (sample) is required, to be typewritten on your company letterhead and addressed to:

Embassy of Tajikistan, Visa Section, Washington D.C.

The letter must explain all of the following
• The purpose and duration of visit
• The name of a reference in Tajikistan
• Company's guarantee financial responsibility for all travel expenses

Processing Instructions
Please forward the completed requirements detailed above to:

TRAVEL DOCUMENT SYSTEMS, INC.,
925 Fifteenth Street N.W. Suite 300
Washington D.C. 20005

Your application will be hand carried to the Embassy and is usually processed in ONE MONTH. The embassy will expedite urgent applications in approximately 72 hours and the consular fee is doubled.

Fees
• TDS Service Fee:
$45.00 Per visa
• Consular Fees:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>DURATION</th>
<th>NUMBER OF ENTRIES</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>$70.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Six months</td>
<td>$100.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>One year</td>
<td>$220.00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

• Include credit card authorization, a check or money order payable to "Travel Document Systems, Inc." for TDS handling fee per visa, plus Embassy Consular Fee per visa, and return FedEx.
Visa Requirements For Business Travellers

Before approaching the Consular Section with your application please make sure you have all documents required:

1. Copy of the letter of invitation from inviting partners in Uzbekistan (see below) (except for citizens of the UK, US, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, France, Japan, Spain and Switzerland).

2. Two copies of the visa application form duly completed and signed by the applicant, which can be obtained by visiting link on the left or at the Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in London.

3. Two photographs. Attach recent passport-sized photographs to your application forms.

4. Passport must have at least one blank page to affix the visa and be valid for the entire period of your stay in the country.

5. Fees. To be paid on collection only. (Please refer to the Fees section for more details).

6. Applying by mail: Before sending your documents please contact the consular section to assure that visa issuance confirmation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is in place (except for citizens of the UK, US, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, France, Japan, Spain and Switzerland). Please provide self-addressed pre-paid envelope to return your passport.

7. Incomplete visa applications are not accepted. A personal interview with an applicant may be required. In case any person is declined to obtain entry visa to Uzbekistan, the Consular Section of the Embassy reserves the right to provide no explanation.

8. For citizens of the UK, US, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, France, Japan, Spain and Switzerland visas are issued within two working days. For citizens of other countries processing of visa applications may take up to 10 working days (except for transit visas and those cases when visa support is already arranged and transmitted to the Embassy).

Please note that citizens of the UK, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, France, Japan, Spain and Switzerland can obtain a multiple entry visa for up to one year, while US citizens - up to 4 years.

If you travel on business (except for citizens of the UK, US, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, France, Japan, Spain and Switzerland): Your inviting partners from the Republic of Uzbekistan should submit Visa Support Letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Tashkent (or one of the departments of the Ministry located in Nukus, Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva). Business single and multiple entry visas are issued upon the confirmation received by the Embassy of Uzbekistan from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan. You can check the confirmation received by calling at 02072297679.

INFORMATION FOR TRAVELLERS

If your stay in Uzbekistan exceeds 3 days, you are required to register with the Local Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs within 3 working days after arrival. However if
you stay in a hotel, the hotel administration should take care of such registration on your behalf automatically.

The information contained herein may be subject to alteration without notice. No liability can be accepted by the Consulate for the consequences of any such alterations.

VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR TOURISTS

Before approaching the Consular Section with your application please make sure you have all documents required:

1. Copy of the letter of invitation from inviting partners in Uzbekistan (see below). (except for citizens of the UK, US, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, France, Japan, Spain and Switzerland).

2. Two copies of the visa application form duly completed and signed by the applicant, which can be obtained by visiting link on the left or at the Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in London.

3. Two photographs. Attach recent passport-sized photographs to your application forms.

4. Passport must have at least one blank page to affix the visa and be valid for the entire period of your stay in the country.

5. Fees. To be paid on collection only. (Please refer to the Fees section for more details).

6. Applying by mail: Before sending your documents please contact the consular section to assure that visa issuance confirmation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is in place. (except for citizens of the UK, US, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, France, Japan, Spain and Switzerland). Please provide self-addressed pre-paid envelope to return your passport.

7. Incomplete visa applications are not accepted. A personal interview with an applicant may be required. In case any person is declined to obtain entry visa to Uzbekistan, the Consular Section of the Embassy reserves the right to provide no explanation.

8. For citizens of the UK, US, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, France, Japan, Spain and Switzerland visas are issued within two working days. For citizens of other countries processing of visa applications may take up to 10 working days (except for transit visas and those cases when visa support is already arranged and transmitted to the Embassy).

Please note that citizens of the UK, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, France, Japan, Spain and Switzerland can obtain a multiple entry tourist visa for up to one month, while US citizens - up to 4 years.

If you are traveling on holiday/tourism (except for citizens of the UK, US, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, France, Japan, Spain and Switzerland): Most of the tour operators and travel agencies will apply for your visa on your behalf to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan (please contact your travel agent).

INFORMATION FOR TRAVELLERS

If your stay in Uzbekistan exceeds 3 days, you are required to register with the Local Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs within 3 working days after arrival. However if you stay in a hotel, the hotel administration should take care of such registration on your behalf automatically.
VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR BUSINESS TRAVELERS

Before approaching the Consular Section with your application please make sure you have all documents required:

1. Copy of the letter of invitation from inviting partners in Uzbekistan (see below) (except for citizens of the UK, US, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, France, Japan, Spain and Switzerland).

2. Two copies of the visa application form duly completed and signed by the applicant, which can be obtained by visiting link on the left or at the Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in London.

3. Two photographs. Attach recent passport-sized photographs to your application forms.

4. Passport must have at least one blank page to affix the visa and be valid for the entire period of your stay in the country.

5. Fees. To be paid on collection only. (Please refer to the Fees section for more details).

6. Applying by mail: Before sending your documents please contact the consular section to assure that visa issuance confirmation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is in place (except for citizens of the UK, US, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, France, Japan, Spain and Switzerland). Please provide self-addressed pre-paid envelope to return your passport.

7. Incomplete visa applications are not accepted. A personal interview with an applicant may be required. In case any person is declined to obtain entry visa to Uzbekistan, the Consular Section of the Embassy reserves the right to provide no explanation.

8. For citizens of the UK, US, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, France, Japan, Spain and Switzerland visas are issued within two working days. For citizens of other countries processing of visa applications may take up to 10 working days (except for transit visas and those cases when visa support is already arranged and transmitted to the Embassy).

Please note that citizens of the UK, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, France, Japan, Spain and Switzerland can obtain a multiple entry visa for up to one year, while US citizens - up to 4 years.

If you are travelling on business (except for citizens of the UK, US, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, France, Japan, Spain and Switzerland): Your inviting partners from the Republic of Uzbekistan should submit Visa Support Letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Tashkent (or one of the departments of the Ministry located in Nukus, Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva). Business single and multiple entry visas are issued upon the confirmation received by the Embassy of Uzbekistan from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan. You can check the confirmation received by calling at 02072297679.

INFORMATION FOR TRAVELLERS

If your stay in Uzbekistan exceeds 3 days, you are required to register with the Local Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs within 3 working days after arrival. However if you stay in a hotel, the hotel administration should take care of such registration on your behalf automatically.
VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR PRIVATE VISITORS

Before approaching the Consular Section with your application please make sure you have all documents required:

1. Copy of the letter of invitation from inviting partners in Uzbekistan (see below).
2. Two copies of the visa application form duly completed and signed by the applicant, which can be obtained by visiting link on the left or at the Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in London.
3. Two photographs. Attach recent passport-sized photographs to your application forms.
4. Passport must have at least one blank page to affix the visa and be valid for the entire period of your stay in the country.
5. Fees. To be paid on collection only. (Please refer to the Fees section for more details).
6. Applying by mail: Before sending your documents please contact the consular section to assure that visa issuance confirmation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is in place. Please provide self-addressed pre-paid envelope to return your passport.
7. Incomplete visa applications are not accepted. A personal interview with an applicant may be required. In case any person is declined to obtain entry visa to Uzbekistan, the Consular Section of the Embassy reserves the right to provide no explanation.

If you are visiting your friends or relatives (private visits): You should present an Invitation letter (Notification) issued by the Immigration Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The above instructions 1-7.

INFORMATION FOR TRAVELERS

If your stay in Uzbekistan exceeds 3 days, you are required to register with the Local Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs within 3 working days after arrival. However if you stay in a hotel, the hotel administration should take care of such registration on your behalf automatically.

The information contained herein may be subject to alteration without notice. No liability can be accepted by the Consulate for the consequences of any such alterations.

VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR VISITORS ON TRANSIT

Before approaching the Consular Section with your application please make sure you have all documents required:

1. Copy of the letter of invitation from inviting partners in Uzbekistan (see below).
2. Two copies of the visa application form duly completed and signed by the applicant, which can be obtained by visiting link on the left or at the Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in London.
3. Two photographs. Attach recent passport-sized photographs to your application forms.
4. Passport must have at least one blank page to affix the visa and be valid for the entire period of your stay in the country.

5. Fees. To be paid on collection only. (Please refer to the Fees section for more details).

6. Applying by mail: Before sending your documents please contact the consular section to assure that visa issuance confirmation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is in place. Please provide self-addressed pre-paid envelope to return your passport.

7. Incomplete visa applications are not accepted. A personal interview with an applicant may be required. In case any person is declined to obtain entry visa to Uzbekistan, the Consular Section of the Embassy reserves the right to provide no explanation.

If you are traveling through Uzbekistan to another country on transit, you need to have transit visa to Uzbekistan. As above follow guidelines 1-7 also visa and air ticket to your final destination are required.

INFORMATION FOR TRAVELLERS

If your stay in Uzbekistan exceeds 3 days, you are required to register with the Local Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs within 3 working days after arrival. However if you stay in a hotel, the hotel administration should take care of such registration on your behalf automatically.

The information contained herein may be subject to alteration without notice. No liability can be accepted by the Consulate for the consequences of any such alterations.

VISA FEES

SINGLE ENTRY VISA:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Fee (US) + Service Charge (US)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>up to 7 days</td>
<td>$40 + $20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>up to 15 days</td>
<td>$50 + $20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>up to 30 days</td>
<td>$60 + $20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>up to 3 months</td>
<td>$80 + $20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>up to 6 months</td>
<td>$120 + $20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>up to 1 year</td>
<td>$160 + $20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for each additional entry</td>
<td>$10 US</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MULTIPLE ENTRY VISA FEE (EXCEPT US CITIZENS):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Fee (US) + Service Charge (US)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>up to 1 month</td>
<td>$60 + $20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>up to 6 months</td>
<td>$150 + $20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>up to 1 year</td>
<td>$250 + $20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GROUP VISAS \ FOR TOURIST GROUPS OF 10 PERSONS OR MORE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Fee (US) per person + Service Charge (US) per group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>up to 15 days</td>
<td>$15 US + $20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>up to 30 days</td>
<td>$25 US + $20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TRANSIT VISAS FEES:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Fee (US) + Service Charge (US)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>up to 24 hours</td>
<td>$20 + $10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>up to 48 hours</td>
<td>$25 + $10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>up to 72 hours</td>
<td>$30 US + service charge $10 US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for double entry</td>
<td>$40 US + service charge $10 US</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FOR US CITIZENS: visas issued for a period of up to four years (multiple entries) $100 US, cost of transit visa - $25 US. All visa fees should be paid by a cheque only in pounds sterling as per exchange rate on the date of visa issue. Cheques should be made payable to the Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The information contained herein may be subject to alteration without notice. No liability can be accepted by the Consulate for the consequences of any such alterations.
APPENDIX IV:  
INFORMATION ON PASSPORT, HEALTH, AIRPORT TAX, CUSTOMS AND 
CURRENCY FROM IATA'S TIMATIC DATABASE

CHINA

PASSPORT

Required, except for holders of:
1. "Permit for returning country" or "Permit for Hong Kong and Macao residents entering into or leaving from mainland" issued to residents of Hong Kong or Macao being of Chinese Origin. Holders of above documents MUST follow the instructions written on it, regarding the entry/exit points. However, it is recommended to hold a Hong Kong (SAR China) or Macao (SAR China) passport in addition;
2. Macao (SAR China) Travel Permit;
3. ID card issued by GuangDong PSB;
4. PRC Travel Permit;
5. Nationals of Lithuania, Poland, Romania Russian Federation and Ukraine holding a Seaman Book or Seafarer's Identity document;
6. international travel document issued to nationals of Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova (Rep. of), Russian Fed. and Turkmenistan. Passengers must travel in a group organized by authorized travel agency of both countries;
7. documents issued by U.N. for stateless persons and refugees.

ADMISSION RESTRICTIONS: travel documents issued by Chinese Taipei to residents of Chinese Taipei are not recognised by China (People's Rep.). In order to enter China (People's Rep.), residents of Chinese Taipei are required to hold "Permit for Taiwan residents entering into and leaving from mainland".

MILITARY: same regulations as for passengers apply.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Passengers holding passports showing visa/entry stamps for Chinese Taipei have to comply with the normal entry regulations only.

HEALTH

SEE TIRULES/R3 FOR ADDITIONAL PROPHYLACTIC MEASURES.

Required - also for transit passengers not leaving the airport - vaccination against:
YELLOW FEVER, if arriving within 6 days after leaving or transiting (see note 31 below) countries with infected areas (see General Health Information).

WARNING:
1. Those arriving without a yellow fever vaccination certificate will be kept in quarantine.
2. Nationals of China (People's Rep.) having stayed outside China (People's Rep.) for 3 months or more, must hold a health certificate issued by country of residence, stating that neither Aids nor sexually transmitted diseases have been determined by blood test.

Recommended:
Malaria prophylaxis. Malaria risk - including the malignant (P. Falciparum) form - occurs in Hainan and Yunnan. Chloroquine and sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine resistant P. falciparum reported. Risk of P. Vivax malaria exists in Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi, Guizhou, Hainan, Sichuan, Xizang (only along the valley of the Zangbo river in the extreme south-east) and
Yunnan. There is generally very low malaria risk (P. vivax only) in Anhui, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Shandong, although within these provinces this risk may be higher in areas of focal outbreak. Where transmission exists, it occurs below 1500 m: from July to November north of latitude 33 degrees north, from May through December between 33 and 25 degrees north, and throughout the year south of 25 degrees north. (See Terms & Definitions). There is no malaria risk in the urban areas or densely populated plain areas. In general, tourists do not need to take malaria prophylaxis unless they plan to stay in remote rural areas in the provinces listed above. Recommended prevention in risk areas: II; in Hainan and Yunnan: IV

NOTES: *31 Not required for those not leaving the airport in the countries concerned.

AIRPORT TAX

Airport Tax is levied on all passengers departing on:
a. international flights: CNY 90.-;
b. domestic flights (exempt are children under 2 years): CNY 50.-.

PLACE OF PAYMENT: Airport of departure.

EXEMPT (for international flights) are:
1. transit passengers proceeding within 24 hours;
2. diplomats;
3. children under 12 years.

CUSTOMS

IMPORT: free import of
1. cigarettes 400 (see note 51 below) or 600 (see note 52 below);
2. two (see note 51 below) or four (see note 52 below) bottles of alcoholic beverages (each bottle not exceeding 75 centilitres);
3. a reasonable quantity of perfume for personal use during stay in China;
4. residents and non-residents with re-entry visa issued by any foreign country and carrying travel necessities not exceeding customs limitations: one video camera, one portable video recorder and one portable word processor.

PROHIBITED: arms and ammunition (see note 53 below), printed matter directed against the public order and the morality of China, radio transmitters, exposed but undeveloped films, etc. All fruits, tomatoes, egg plants and red peppers.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
1. China People's Rep. is member of the CITES (see Terms & Definitions).
2. antiques should be declared on arrival.

PETS: cats and dogs (only ONE pet per passenger) may be imported either as passenger's baggage or as cargo and must be accompanied by a veterinarian good health and rabies inoculation certificate, issued by government veterinary authority at point of origin/departure. Certificate is valid in case of not less than 1 month and not more than 12 months. Cats and dogs have to go into quarantine for 30 days upon arrival in China. Quarantine is under government supervision and at owner's expense. Pets are NOT permitted in hotels in China. Passenger should refer to transporting airline for their specific regulations.

PROHIBITED: Birds.

BAGGAGE CLEARANCE: baggage is cleared at the first airport of entry in China.

EXEMPT: baggage of passengers in transit via Beijing, provided it is labeled to a destination outside China and the onward flight is within 24 hours.

EXPORT: free export of four cartons of tobacco products for personal use.
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: antiques should carry an authorization seal or authorization letter by the department of Cultural Relics. A customs declaration obtained when entering China (People's Rep.) is required in case the items will be re-exported.

NOTES:
*51If staying less than six months.
*52If staying six months or longer.
*53Arms and ammunition for hunting purposes may be brought into the country provided prior approval has been obtained by the travel agency. The travel agent must meet the passenger on arrival and present the original copy of the approval document to customs. It is advisable for the passenger to hold a copy of the approval to present to the airline at check-in.

CURRENCY

IMPORT: allowed.
RESIDENTS
local currency (Chinese Ren Min Bi-CNY): up to max. CNY 6,000.- in cash;
foreign currencies: up to max. USD 1,000.- or equivalent in freely convertible currency in cash.
Any higher amount should be declared upon arrival;
NON-RESIDENTS
local currency (Chinese Ren Min Bi-CNY): up to max. CNY 6,000.- in cash;
foreign currencies: up to max. USD 5,000.- or equivalent in freely convertible currency in cash.
Any higher amount should be declared upon arrival;

EXPORT: allowed.
RESIDENTS and NON-RESIDENTS
local currency (Chinese Ren Min Bi-CNY): up to max. CNY 6,000.- in cash;
foreign currencies: up to the amounts declared upon arrival.
Any higher amount should be declared at departure.

KAZAKHSTAN

PASSPORT

Required, except for holders of:
1. Laissez-Passer issued by the United Nations and/or other countries, provided holding entry documents and confirmed tickets for a country outside Kazakhstan;
2. Seaman Book, provided travelling on duty;
3. documents issued to stateless persons and refugees, who can enter if holding a visa issued by embassy of Kazakhstan.

VALIDITY:
1. Passports of visitors must be valid at least for duration of stay.
2. Nationals of Kazakhstan who live abroad need passports which are valid at least six months beyond the date of entry. Passports issued by the former U.S.S.R. are no longer valid. Nationals of Kazakhstan can get a national passport from a representation in country of residence.

MILITARY: same regulations as for passengers apply.

HEALTH

Required - except for transit passengers not leaving the airport - vaccination against:
YELLOW FEVER, if arriving within 6 days after leaving or transiting (see note 31 below) countries with infected areas (see General Health Information). EXEMPT are children under 1 year.

NOTES: *31Not required for those not leaving the airport in the countries concerned.

WARNING: Visitors staying for more than 10 days have to be tested at the Aids Centre in Almaty or hold an aids certificate from their own country issued no longer than 6 months before entry Kazakhstan. The address of the Aids Centre in Almaty is:
7 Telgarskaya Street corner Makataevstreet. Tel.: 07-3272-306915/349413.
An aids certificate will cost around USD 10.- to be paid in Kazak Tenge.
EXEMPT: Nationals of C.I.S. countries (see Terms & Definitions) and nationals who are visa exempt according to 2."Visa".

AIRPORT TAX

No airport tax is levied on passengers upon embarkation at the airport (see Terms & Definitions).

CUSTOMS

IMPORT: free import by persons of 16 years and older
1. 1000 cigarettes or 1000 grammes of tobacco products;
2. 2 litres of alcoholic beverages or wine;
3. a reasonable quantity of perfume for personal use;
4. Residents: goods up to an amount of USD 1,000.- for personal use only and weighing less than 50kg. Non-residents: goods up to an amount of USD 500.-. Should value or weight allowances be exceeded by residents or foreign nationals, this should be reported to customs and the appropriate forms should be completed. Goods declared on this form must be taken back out of the country on departure by all visitors;
5. goods for personal use: clothing, toilet articles, personal jewellery, cameras, portable projection devices, video cameras, limited amount of films and accessories, portable music instruments, portable record players, portable recording and replaying equipment, portable radios, portable TV sets, portable typewriters, portable calculators, portable personal computers, binoculars, perambulators, wheelchairs, sports equipment, portable medical equipment and other goods obviously intended for personal use.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
1. import is permitted if goods are intended for personal use and the use of the goods is not connected with making profit in any form.
2. a customs declaration, which will be filled out on entry of Kazakhstan, or any other C.I.S. country must be kept carefully. When leaving Kazakhstan or any other C.I.S. country (see Terms & Definitions) on an international flight, this declaration has to be handed over. When travelling to other C.I.S. countries (except Turkmenistan) there will be no customs control. This will take place when leaving the other C.I.S. country on an international flight.
3. food products are allowed import provided veterinary and phytosanitary regulations are complied with.

PROHIBITED: Photographs and printed matter directed against Kazakhstan, live animals (subject to special permit), military arms and ammunition, narcotics (opium, hashish, etc.).

PETS: cats, dogs and birds (except pigeons) must be accompanied by veterinarian health certificate bearing seal of local Board of Health and not be issued over ten days prior to arrival. Pigeons are prohibited entry. Pets may enter as passenger's checked baggage, in the cabin or as cargo. Generally pets are not permitted in hotels.
BAGGAGE CLEARANCE: baggage is cleared at the first airport of entry in Kazakhstan.

EXPORT: free export of clothing, toilet articles, personal jewellery, cameras, portable projection devices, video cameras, limited amount of films and accessories, portable music instruments, portable record-players, portable recording and replaying equipment, portable radios, portable TV sets, portable typewriters, portable calculators, portable personal computers, binoculars, perambulators, wheelchairs, sports equipment, portable medical equipment and other goods obviously intended for personal use.

PROHIBITED: Arms, ammunition, precious metals, (gold, silver, etc.) and articles (see note 51 below) made thereof (also if containing precious stones and/or real pearls), antiques and art objects (subject to duty and special permit from the Ministry of Culture), furs. Carpets and jewellery items (see note 51 below)are prohibited unless accompanied by a document from the National Museum confirming that the articles are not antique.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: export is permitted if goods are intended for personal use and the use of the goods is not connected with making profit in any form.

NOTES: *51Except if such articles belong to the imported personal effects of the passenger (e.g. personal jewellery) and have been declared upon arrival.

CURRENCY

IMPORT: allowed.
NATIONALS OF KAZAKHSTAN:
local currency (Kazak Tenge-KZT): unlimited, provided declared on declaration form when leaving Kazakhstan; foreign currencies: amounts exceeding USD 3,000.- declaration to customs required;

ALL OTHER NATIONALS:
local currency (Kazak Tenge-KZT): allowed, provided declared on arrival; foreign currencies: declaration to customs is required for amounts exceeding USD 3,000.-.

EXPORT: allowed.
NATIONALS OF KAZAKHSTAN:
local currency (Kazak Tenge-KZT): unlimited, provided declaration is made; foreign currencies: declaration to customs is required for amounts exceeding USD 3,000.- to a max. of USD 10,000.-;
ALL OTHER NATIONALS:
local currency (Kazak Tenge-KZT): allowed, provided exported amount does not exceed imported amount declared on arrival (if export exceeds import, special bank permission is required); foreign currencies: declaration to customs is required for amounts exceeding USD 3,000.-.

KYRGYZSTAN

PASSPORT

Required, except for holders of: documents issued to stateless persons and refugees.

VALIDITY: Passport should be valid for period of intended stay.

MILITARY: passport not required for US military personnel travelling on duty, provided holding Military ID Card and travel order.
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: stateless persons and refugees must contact the Embassy or Consulate of Kyrgyzstan prior to arrival.

HEALTH

no vaccinations are required to enter Kyrgyzstan from any country. 

Recommended: Limited malaria risk - exclusively due to P. vivax – exists from June through October in some southern and western parts of the country, mainly in areas bordering Tajikistan and Uzbekistan - Batken, Osh and Jalal-Abad regions. The first case of autochtonous P. falciparum malaria was reported in 2004 in the southern part of the country, in an area bordering Uzbekistan. Recommended prevention: 1.

AIRPORT TAX

is levied on passengers embarking from Kyrgyzstan: USD 10.- or other convertible currency.

PLACE OF PAYMENT: airport of departure.

EXEMPT ARE:
1. transit passengers,
2. infants,
3. diplomats,
4. air crew members

CUSTOMS

IMPORT: free import by persons of 16 years and older
1. 1,000. cigarettes or 1,000. grammes of tobacco products;
2. 1 1/2 litres of alcoholic beverages and 2 litres of wine;
3. a reasonable quantity of perfume for personal use;
4. there is no limit to the import of consumer goods.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
1. no special permit is needed for the import of a video camera for personal use, provided declared on arrival and re-exported.
2. The Customs Declaration, which will be filled out on entry of Kyrgyzstan or any other C.I.S. country (see Terms & Definitions) must be kept carefully. When leaving Kyrgyzstan or any other C.I.S. country on an international flight, this declaration has to be handed over. When travelling to other C.I.S. countries (except Turkmenistan) there will be no customs control at both points. This will take place when leaving the other C.I.S. country on an international flight.

PROHIBITED: Photographs and printed matter directed against Kyrgyzstan, live animals (subject to special permit), military arms and ammunition (subject to special permit), narcotics (opium, hashish, etc.), fruit and vegetables.

PETS: cats, dogs and birds (except pigeons) must be accompanied by veterinarian health certificate bearing seal of local Board of Health and not be issued over ten days prior to arrival. Pigeons are prohibited entry. Generally pets are not permitted in hotels.

BAGGAGE CLEARANCE: baggage is cleared at the first airport of entry in Kyrgyzstan.

EXEMPT: Baggage of transit passengers with a destination outside the C.I.S. (see Terms & Definitions); See also 5. Customs - Additional information 2.

EXPORT: PROHIBITED: Arms and ammunition (subject to special permit), precious metals (gold, silver, etc.), and articles (see note 51 below) made thereof (also if containing precious
stones and/or real pearls), antiquities and art objects, (subject to duty and special permit from the Ministry of Culture), furs.

NOTES: *51Except if such articles belong to the personal effects of the passenger (e.g. personal jewellery) and have been declared upon arrival.

CURRENCY

IMPORT: allowed.
foreign currencies: unlimited, provided declaration is made.local currency (Kirgiz Som - KGS): allowed for residents of Kyrgyzstan, provided the amount has been declared on the customs declaration when leaving the country.

EXPORT: allowed.
Foreign currencies: up to the amount imported and declared. Local currency: unlimited for residents, provided declaration is made.

TAJIKISTAN

No information available.

UZBEKISTAN

PASSPORT

Required, except for holders of: documents issued to stateless persons and refugees.

VALIDITY: passports must be valid for the period of intended stay.

MILITARY: passport not required for U.S. military and U.S. Department of Defense civilian staff, provided holding military/government ID and a copy of their orders.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Stateless persons and refugees must contact an Uzbekistan embassy or consulate prior to arrival.

HEALTH

No vaccinations are required to enter Uzbekistan from any country.

Recommended: malaria prophylaxis. sporadic autochthonous cases of p.vivax malaria are reported in some locations of surkhandra-rinskaya region (see terms & definitions). recommended prevention: i.

AIRPORT TAX

No airport tax is levied on passengers upon embarkation at the airport (see Terms & Definitions).
CUSTOMS

IMPORT: free import by persons 16 years and older
1. 1,000. cigarettes or 1,000. grammes of tobacco products;
2. 1 1/2 litres of alcoholic beverages and 2 litres of wine;
3. reasonable quantity of perfume for personal use;
4. Residents: goods up to USD 10,000.- for personal use only;
5. Non-residents: goods up to USD 10,000.-.

EXEMPT: vehicles.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
1. no special permit is required for import of a video camera for personal use, provided declared on arrival and re-exported.
2. customs declaration: - must be completed when entering Uzbekistan or any other C.I.S country (see Terms & Definitions) and kept carefully with other travel documents; and
   - given to customs officers when leaving Uzbekistan or any other C.I.S. country on an international flight.

PROHIBITED: Photographs and printed matter directed against Uzbekistan, live animals (subject to special permit), military arms and ammunition, narcotics (opium, hashish, etc.), fruit and vegetables.

PETS: cats, dogs and birds (except pigeons) must be accompanied by veterinarian health certificate bearing seal of local Board of Health issued not more than ten days prior to arrival. Prohibited: pigeons. Generally pets are not permitted in hotels.

BAGGAGE CLEARANCE: baggage is cleared at first airport of entry in Uzbekistan.

EXEMPT:
Baggage of transit passengers with a destination outside the C.I.S. (see Terms & Definitions);
See also 5. Customs - Additional information 2.

EXPORT:
PROHIBITED: Arms, ammunition, precious metals, (gold, silver, etc.) and articles (see note 51 below) made thereof (also if containing precious stones and/or real pearls), antiquities and art objects (subject to duty and special permit from the Ministry of Culture), furs.

NOTES: *51Except if such articles belong to the imported personal effects of the passenger (e.g. personal jewelry) and declared upon arrival.

CURRENCY

IMPORT: allowed
RESIDENTS
a. local currency (Uzbek Som-UZS): unlimited;
b. foreign currencies: unlimited;
NON-RESIDENTS
a. local currency (Uzbek Som-UZS): unlimited;
b. foreign currencies: unlimited. A declaration form has to be filled out upon arrival. Passengers carrying more than USD 1,000.- may be checked physically.

EXPORT: allowed
RESIDENTS
a. local currency (Uzbek Som-UZS): unlimited
b. foreign currencies: up to the amount of USD 2,000.- or equivalent in freely convertible currency. Larger amounts can be exported with a special permit from the Central Bank.
NON-RESIDENTS

a. local currency (Uzbek Som-UZS): unlimited

b. foreign currencies: not exceeding amount declared upon arrival. Proof of lawful exchange into Uzbek Som is required from passengers spending more than USD 2,000.-. Passengers failing to submit this proof have to pay a fine of 30 percent of the amount imported.