

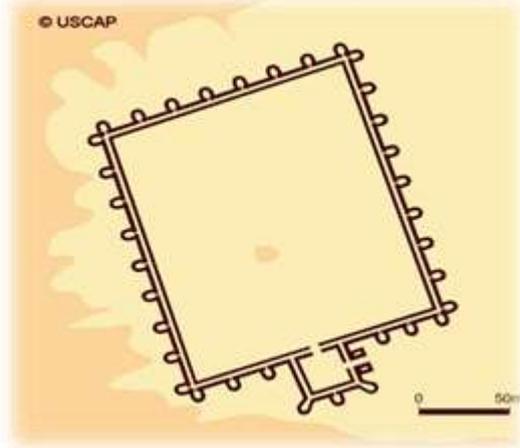
The Mystery of Ancient Fortresses

Duration: Day tour

Location: Khiva –Ellikqala - Khiva

Description: This day tour offers you the adventure of exploring the fortified castles of the ancient civilizations that existed from the fourth century B.C. till the seventh century A.D. as a means of protection from nomad invasions. You will see the mud-brick walls of the defensive fortresses in a desert, remains of the palaces and the traces of the local population in enclosed areas. For more than 1300 years the fortresses were buried under the sands of Kyzyl Kum Desert but thanks to the archaeologist S.P. Tolstov we have a chance to see, explore and be fascinated by these ancient constructions.

<p>Toprak Qala</p>	<p>The driver (guide optional) will pick you up from your hotel in Khiva. The first qala to reach is Toprak Qala which is 100 km from Khiva. Topraq qala means "Clay Fort" which standing over 20 m tall and is dated in the Kushan period, around 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. Some historians assume that it was a royal summer or winter residence but not capital. Toprak qala was used until the 6th century AD with short periods when it was abandoned. Afterward, it was occupied by squatters till the Mongol invasion.</p>	 <p>karakalpak.com © David Richardson 2008</p>
<p>Toprak Qala</p>	<p>The city is a rectangular shape around 500x350 meters and enclosed by a 9 m high wall which was reinforced by 63 towers and also had an outer defensive moat. The qala contained the craftsmen areas where had the workshops of ceramics, textile, bronze, and weapons. The northwest part of the fort was occupied by the citadel measuring 75x75 m and defended by walls and three towers and was set on the elevated platform 14 m of height. The palace had 102 rooms used mostly for the different purposes of the royal cult and a fire temple.</p>	 <p>karakalpak.com © David Richardson 2008</p>
<p>Qizil Qala Ayaz Qala</p>	<p>From Toprak qala we drive to Ayaz Qala but stop at Qizil qala on the way. Initially, archeologists assumed that it was a military barracks with troops but after discovering the opulent interior decoration it was clear that it belonged to an important Khorezmian official. Finally, we drive to Ayaz Qala which is located in a desert region of Ellikqala region. However, it was an oasis in the first millennium BC which was irrigated from the Akcha Darya river. Ayaz Qala consists of three forts:</p>	

<p>Ayaz Qala</p>	<p>Ayaz Qala 1 - a defensive fortress located on the hill built in the 4th century BC. It served as one of the defensive fortresses on the right bank from nomad attacks. Qizil qala which was on our way can be seen from Ayaz Qala 1. It is a rectangular fort measuring 180x150 m located not as high as other forts but provides far-reaching views. Two walls with the vaulted corridor had around 10m in height and 45 rectangular towers were supporting the outer walls. The only way to reach the inner part of the fort was thru the entrance labyrinth.</p>	
<p>Ayaz Qala</p> <p>Janbas Qala</p>	<p>Southwest of Ayaz Qala1 is located Ayaz Qala 2 a feudal fort dated 6-8th century BC built on a conical hill. The best view can be seen from the top of Ayaz Qala 1.</p> <p>Ayaz Qala 3 - a defensive garrison and fort dated 1-2nd centuries AD and is one of the largest in Karalpakstan measuring 260x190 meters. And most likely that this fort was used as a closer refuge for the local agricultural population.</p> <p>We take a break for lunch in Ayaz Qala yurt camp.</p> <p>We will head back to Khiva and on the way back visit the Janbas Qala and it is a "must-see" one. The word means side because the fort is built on the side of the hill and not on the high point which would be more strategic and it still puzzles the scientists. Built-in 4th century BC measuring 200x170 meters it has walls reaching almost 20m in height and relatively good shape. Another construction difference which was common during the Assyrians from the other forts is that it does not have any towers to defend its flanks. The inner part of the qala is filled with residential buildings accommodating around 2000 people in total. After the visit to Janbas Qala we go to Khiva and finish the tour.</p>	 

Price of the trip:

- 1 person in a group – 95\$ per person
- 2 persons in a group – 60\$ per person
- 3 persons in a group – 50\$ per person

Price includes:

- Entrance tickets.
- Air conditioned car during the journey.
- Lunch at Ayaz qala yurt camp/picnic depending on availability

Price does not include:

- Guide Service (optional \$60)

Please note that above trip suggestion can be tailored to your individual needs. To book " Mystery of Ancient Fortresses " please email us at jahongir.hotel@gmail.com