

Bukhara has a history that goes back millennia. The city is one of the oldest along the Silk Road and historically was part of the Persian empire. The city's center—which is the site of many mosques and 17th-century madrasas—is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Bukhara

Resting up in Uzbekistan

For the first time on this trip I stay in a hostel. Every day that I wasn't camping I'd booked a hotel or stayed in people's homes. I've survived the long trek through Turkmenistan and now enjoy some time off, meeting a lot of fellow travelers. They are mostly backpackers and an occasional tramp on a bike. Most people are on the road for a longer period: if you're visiting these countries, it's usually not for a weekend trip. It's nice to be in the social environment of a hostel again. I remember staying in hostels in New York, San Francisco, Chicago, London, and Berlin. Cheap, dirty rooms, often occupied by loud and drunk tourists. The past years I used sites like Couchsurfing and Airbnb a lot. I guess I was tired of sleeping in smelly dormitories with snoring people around me. The hostels here appear to be very nice. They also attract different types of travelers than the city backpackers in Europe and the U.S. It's not just those who are out to party.

After the 500 km "race" through Turkmenistan I am totally fed up with cycling. An ongoing saddle pain was torturing me so I'm taking seven days of rest in Bukhara, a small historic city in west Uzbekistan. Bekh runs the Rumi Hostel here, together with

his parents, and takes care of you like you're part of the family. Great breakfast, fresh fruit, coffee and tea served throughout the day. They've helped me to get a local SIM card and all kinds of other stuff. I can enjoy small luxuries like alcohol, good food, and uncensored internet. I can finally update my blog again. Things I normally take for granted but haven't had access to for two months. I visit the same restaurant every day. I try the whole menu and in the end they know what I like. Bukhara has a lot of touristy sights, but I don't feel like exploring the city that much. If you've been a tourist for five months, you don't feel the urge to explore all the time. I'm tired of being a tourist. Tired of cycling, tired of camping, tired of being on the road. I just want a place where I feel at home.

The weather gets colder, like a late summer's day in the Netherlands. The sun is less warm and the cold breeze that comes with the Jewish New Year in Uzbekistan has struck up. I stroll around the old city and kill time chatting with other travelers. Talking about getting visas for the next countries and staring at smartphones waiting for the slow internet to load my news feed. It's what people do in hostels and what I need right now.

