

Our Experience at Sheki, Azerbaijan

Our holiday in 2008 was facilitated by a birthday gift of my cousin Allan to his mother Florence Markin. She in turn, invited seven relatives to accompany her for a tour that started with a flight from Calgary to Baku Azerbaijan and then overland through Georgia and ending at Yerevan, Armenia for a total of seventeen (17) days.

The group participants were from left to right (relationship to Florence): Edna Dreger (friend), Jane (Fenya) Markin (granddaughter), Patricia Markin (daughter-in-law), Lloyd Morozoff (nephew), Florence Markin (birthday lady), Marilyn Verigin (Elmer's wife), Elmer Verigin (nephew), Doris Thesenvitz (neice).



These countries were part of the original 'Silk Road' from Europe to China. As quoted from Google:

"....The **Silk Road** was a network of ancient **trade** routes, formally established during the **Han Dynasty** of **China** in 130 BCE, which linked the regions of the ancient world in commerce between 130 BCE-1453 CE. The Silk Road was not a single route from east to west and so historians favor the name '**Silk Routes**', though 'Silk Road' is commonly used.

The European explorer **Marco Polo** (1.1254-1324 CE) traveled on these routes and described them in depth in his famous work but he is not credited with naming them. Both terms for this network of roads - Silk Road and Silk Routes - were coined by the German geographer and traveler, Ferdinand von Richthofen, in 1877 CE, who designated them 'Seidenstrasse' (silk road) or 'Seidenstrassen' (silk routes). Polo, and later von Richthofen, make mention of the goods which were transported back and forth on the Silk Road.



From West to East these goods included:

- Horses
- Saddles and Riding Tack
- The grapevine and grapes
- Dogs and other animals both exotic and domestic
- Animal furs and skins
- Honey
- Fruits
- Glassware
- Woolen blankets, rugs, carpets
- Textiles (such as curtains)
- **Gold** and **Silver**
- Camels
- Slaves
- Weapons and armor

From East to West the goods included:

- Silk
- Tea
- Dyes
- Precious Stones
- China (plates, bowls, cups, vases)
- Porcelain
- Spices (such as cinnamon and ginger)
- **Bronze** and gold artifacts
- **Medicine**
- Perfumes
- Ivory
- Rice
- Paper
- Gunpowder

The network was used regularly from 130 BCE, when the **Han** Dynasty (202 BCE - 220 CE) officially opened trade with the west, to 1453 CE, when the **Ottoman Empire** boycotted trade with the west and closed the routes. By this time, Europeans had become used to the goods from the east and, when the Silk Road closed, merchants needed to find new trade routes to meet the demand for these goods.....”

This reference will provide the Reader with an appreciation of the history which we enjoyed throughout the holiday.

The previous blog entry took place, in part, in Baku. Our group was transported by Tour Bus to Shekie where we were housed at an original Karvansaray Hotel that was used by Traders on the Silk Road.



Streets were cobbled and historic buildings located along the street that approached the Hotel. A very authentic Door still “guards” the compound entry.

The safety of the hotel compound welcomes us.

Excitement increases as the structure itself comes into view.





Here are the rooms. Since cousin Lloyd Morozoff and I were the only males in our groups, we were destined to stay together. The beds were not totally comfortable and the covers minimal at best. One of the American couples



We begin to wonder what the rooms would be like as we have already been warned that this not five (5) star occupancy and hot water is not always available in the showers.



complained about the accommodation. Our Tour Guide took him to another Hotel. The hallways were just over 5' clearance as originally designed for the middle East people that were quite short typically. Tourists in our group had to bow their head and after a drink or two, were prone to receive lumps on the foreheads.