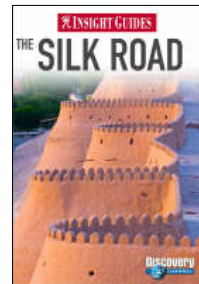


## NEWS RELEASE

### AT LONG LAST, ANCIENT SILK ROUTE GETS ITS OWN FULL COLOUR GUIDEBOOK

No highway in the world is as laden with romance and adventure as the Silk Road. As recently as the 1930s, travellers on the first stretch from Xi'an to Lanzhou would have to journey by pony, the original 'slow travel'. Although modes of transport have improved since then, only now do we see the introduction of the first ever full-colour guide to the entire 5,000-mile trading route, from China to the Mediterranean. With outstanding photography and illuminating text, **Insight Guides' *The Silk Road*** (£16.99, published Nov 08) is a must-have for those planning to follow some or all of the route, as well as being an inspiring background read. The Guide runs from east to west, the same direction as the silk trade, taking in 13 countries.

With its long history, the Silk Road, starting in the modern Chinese metropolis of Xi'an, refers to a series of ancient routes along which traders, merchants and pilgrims would travel, with silk being one of many luxuries traded. Along the route lie boundless deserts and spectacular peaks, as it passes through countries including western China, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and Syria. The route finally winds up in the mother of all markets, the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul.



Insight Guides are renowned for their photography, including stunning double-page spreads, and excellent cartography. Their new Guide to ***The Silk Road*** brings the route to life once more, escorting travellers to some incredible sights along the way, from the caves of Dunhuang and the sands of the Taklamakan, to the mountains of Kyrgyzstan. The names of ancient Silk Road cities resonate down the centuries, and the Guide reveals them in all their glory: the domes of Samarkand, the walls of Khiva, the ruins of Palmyra and Persepolis, and the marvels of Isfahan. From the markets of Kashgar to the bazaars of Aleppo and the teahouses of Bukhara, it's all here.

The Features section covers the fascinating history of the Road, from the early cultivation of silk in China to its spread west along the route. Read the *Story of Silk*, still the world's most expensive fabric, which has long had its imitators. Take in the rise and fall of empires, life on the road and in the bazaars, the travels of Marco Polo and the rediscovery of ancient treasures. It wasn't just goods that travelled along the Silk Road; ideas were on the move too. As communities came into contact with each other, culture, religious beliefs and technical developments were all soon passed on, creating what can be described as the world's first information superhighway.

Just as the Silk Road would have been split up into sections, so is the book, with the first section devoted to China, the second to Central Asia and the third to Western Asia. Within those sections are chapters covering the route through individual countries (or regions in the case of China), each including a handy panel on border crossings for the intrepid traveller.

Bursting with 60 pages of bang up to date practical information for travellers on the go, the Guide also highlights in the early pages the Best of The Silk Road, including the top attractions likely to take your breath away, the best landscapes and journeys, the recommended cities, the best bazaars, great buildings, the not to be missed festivals and some interesting places to stay.

#### SOME LITTLE KNOWN SILK ROAD FACTS

- A single silk cocoon produces a filament of raw silk up to 1,000 metres long
- Ancient Chang'an (Xi'an) had a population of about 2 million
- Alexander the Great founded around 70 cities on his conquests

- Marco Polo spent 17 years in China
- The ornate silk brocade, Damask, takes its name from the Syrian capital Damascus
- Apples originally come from Kazakhstan

**Insight Guides *The Silk Road*** (£16.99) (ISBN: 9789812588401, 416 pages) is available from bookshops and online at [www.insightguides.com](http://www.insightguides.com) .

The Guide was written by regional experts Andrew Forbes, Bradley Mayhew and Chris Bradley, among other contributors, and conceived and edited by Tony Halliday.

**ENDS –**

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