

Uzbekistan features at a u3a Summer School

I had never been to any u3a Summer School before and, therefore, had never been a Course Tutor. For me, 2025 was the year of the Summer School double whammy. I agreed to be a Course Tutor at the North West Region u3a Summer School in August at Manchester Metropolitan University.

The teaching facilities in the MMU Brooks Building were great ...



I chose 'Uzbekistan – heart of the Silk Road' as my course topic. I anticipated that around ten learners would find the topic interesting. How wrong could I be? Twenty-five learners enrolled on my course! I had a quick review of what information to share and how to share it – and to go back to the photocopier to increase the number of each of the course handouts.

Anyhow, the whole experience was great. The learners were so enthusiastic, kind and understanding to a first-time Tutor. The other Tutors were so interesting and expert in their chosen field. Oh dear! Meals and social events were a wonderful opportunity to meet and chat with learners from all over the country. Even if breakfast started at 7.30 am.



Registan Complex, Samarkand



Table-top display

As learners arrived for their first session, they were given a traditional Uzbek greeting – walnuts, golden raisins and folk music (on a CD, not played by family members!). With introductory YouTube features, lots of Uzbek crafts and a huge range of books, leaflets and postcards – each session concentrated on the four Silk Road cities – Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva.

There was a large collection of traditional Uzbek hats and clothes. Learners could not resist trying them on, with loads of hilarity. Selfies have found their way into a number of u3a newsletters, websites and social media.



Even the Third Age Trust CEO, Iain Cassidy, was encouraged by the learners to try on the traditional wedding coat - with gold and silver thread, hand-made by professionals in Bukhara.

Following a discussion with Cecilia Coulson, I plan to present a very mini version of this venture ("Introducing Uzbekistan") at the event at Ushaw Historic House, Chapel and Gardens on 12 May 2026 and look forward to seeing you there.

Kelvin Rushworth

Trust Volunteer (and one-time Summer School Course Tutor)