Bamiyan is a basin located in a long ravine which runs East to West. In the North there are the Koh-e KhwahaGhar mountains which are an offset of the Hindukush mountain range. In the South lie the Koh-e Baba mountains. The best season to visit Bamiyan is from April to October.

Various beautiful flowers are in bloom and a variety of alpine plant can be seen in June. The row of poplars turn yellow in October and the leaves start to fall in the following month.

The beginning of Winter starts in November when the snow falls in Bamiyan.

Bamiyan was an important ancient caravan city which flourished during the days of the Silk Road. Many caravans from the East and the West passed through the city of Bamiyan during their journey on the Silk Road. The road from Bamiyan leads to Balkh in the North, Ghazni and Kandahar in the South, Kabul and Jalalabad in the East and Herat in the West. The merchants in the days of Buddhism came to Bamiyan to worship and make offerings at the temples with prayers for the safety of their journey. Although the two Giant Buddhas of Bamiyan, which were a wonderful representation of the cultural heritage of the luxury and fortune of the ancient Buddhist period, they were tragically destroyed by the Taliban, which was the previous government in Afghanistan in 2001.

Bamiyan also has many other interesting places to explore, besides the Buddhist ruins. There are remains of Islamic, medieval period, and also the beautiful nature of the valleys including Lake Pand: Band-i-Amir.

Admission tickets are necessary to get into these three places: Bamiyan caves, Shahr-i-Zohak and Shahr-i-Gholgora. Tickets are available at the office near the West Giant Buddha. US$7(300Afs) for one day ticket is valid for all three places. If you want to visit on different days you have to purchase a ticket again.

Removal of land mines was nearly finished in Bamiyan in May 2011, but it is not recommended to walk around in the old mine field.

**Bamiyan Caves**

Bamiyan Caves consists of 750 caves dug into the hill 1300m in length from end to end, located on the North end of Bamiyan Valley. On the East and West end of these caves were located the two Giant Buddhas of Bamiyan which were destroyed by the Taliban in 2001. The West Buddha was 55 meters high and the East Buddha was 38m high. This place was appointed as a Cultural World Heritage Site in 2003 by UNESCO and named "The Cultural landscape and Archaeological Remains of the Bamiyan Valley". It is under restoration and preservation by UNESCO and other countries. There are still many new discoveries being unearthed everyday.

You can reach the caves from near both the Giant Buddhas. Many frescoes and murals in can be observed in the caves. You have to walk up and down at a height of 2500m. So please remember to wear comfortable shoes and use a back pack for carrying personal items.

**BAMYAN PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN**

Bamyan also referred to as the “Shining Light” and “Valley of Gods” is one of the oldest cities in central and South Asia. Inhabited since the third century BC, Bamyan is located in the central highlands, known as the peaceful Hazarajat, Afghanistan. Bamyan lies at the heart of ancient silk road, once connecting Chinese commerce with Europe and the broader Mediterranean region. It brought languages, believes and tradition together and home to world’s tallest standing Buddha statues, carved into the red rock cliffs on the north side of Bamyan town.

The ancient Buddha figures, along with thousands of man-made caves in the cliffs, surrounding the site, have made Bamyan one of the biggest and most ancient archeological sites in the region, historically and contemporarily. Bearing hardships and over-lasting different regimes and civil wars, the Buddha statues were destroyed by the Taliban in early 2001. UNESCO have included Buddha statues along with many other historical sites in Bamyan in its list of Cultural Heritage in 2003.

**BUDDHA STATUS: A UNESCO CULTURAL HERITAGE SITE**

The two Bamyan Buddha statues, each standing at 55 meters and 35 meters tall, once finished, were decorated with fine clay plaster and painted with oil, making them and their surrounding caves, where the monks settled, some of the oldest oil paintings in the history of human-kind. According to UNESCO, the cultural landscape and archaeological remains of the Bamiyan Valley represent the artistic and religious developments which from the 1st to the 13th centuries characterized ancient Bakhtria, integrating various cultural influences into the Gandhara school of Buddhist art. In several of the caves and niches, often linked by galleries, there are remains of wall paintings and seated Buddha figures. In the valleys of the Bamyan's tributaries are further groups of caves including the Kakrak Valley Caves, some 3km south-east of the Bamyan Cliffs where among the more than one hundred caves dating from the 6th to 13th centuries are fragments of a 10m tall standing Buddha figure and a sanctuary with painted decorations from the Sasanian period.

UNESCO noted the Bamiyan Valley is the most monumental expression of the western Buddhism. It was an important centre of pilgrimage over many centuries. Due to their symbolic values, the monuments have suffered at different times of their existence, including the deliberate destruction in 2001, which shook the whole world. The artistic and architectural remains of Bamyan Valley, an important Buddhist centre on the Silk Road, are an exceptional testimony to the interchange of Indian, Hellenistic, Roman and Sasanian influences as the basis for the development of a particular artistic expression in the Gandharan school. To this can be added the Islamic influence in a later period.

**BANDI AMIR LAKES:**

The natural aquamarine blue coloured lakes of Bandi Amir are located at 75 kilo meters west of Bamyan town. The area beside inhabiting hundreds of families in 14 villages around it, is the country’s first internationally known national park. Each summer, thousands of national and international tourists come and visit Bandi Amir and enjoy their time at a firmly welcoming touristic environment, packed with local foods and locally-made handicrafts. Bandi Amir has mostly two seasons, with cool weather starting from May to end of August, while the cold weather runs the entire times of the year, with frozen lakes capped with huge snow. It is said that Bandi Amir is one of its only seven kinds in the world, due to its sky-blue waters and naturally made thin-walls from live limestones that reserve the waters in 7 separate small bodies of water. The water for the lakes mainly originates from natural springs, located at an altitude of 3000 meters above sea level, mixing with rain-water and snow melts, finally pouring into the lakes that are at about 2600 meters above sea level, respectively.

General information about bamyan

Bamiyan valley, which sits in the lap of the towering Hindu Kush mountains, about 180km north-west of Kabul, is among the most breathtakingly beautiful areas in Afghanistan. It is also considered one of the most peaceful regions in the war-ridden country. Its history dates back more than 2,000 years, and its archaeological heritage is a confluence of Persian, Turkish, Greek and Chinese cultures.

In 2003, Unesco listed the “cultural landscape and archaeological remains of the Bamiyan valley" on its World Heritage List and the List of World Heritage in Danger, two years after the Taliban had blown up the sixth century Buddha sculptures that were Bamiyan’s biggest attraction. And in June, it was officially declared the first ever “Saarc capital of culture", for the year 2015-16—Saarc stands for South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. A series of cultural and sports events have been planned throughout the year; all the Saarc countries are taking part.