

Call for participants–PhD seminar with field trip to the Tarim region (April 1-14, 2026)

We invite PhD students Doctoral School of Philological and Cultural Studies to participate in a seminar in summer term 2026 that includes a **14-day field trip** to the Xinjiang region in Western China in order to gain first-hand familiarity with the ancient Silk Road sites of **Dunhuang**, the **Turfan Oasis**, and **Kucha**, as well as visiting the regional capital of **Urumqi** with its famous museum collection. Starting and ending the round trip in **Beijing**, we will also be able to visit two important collections of Eurasian heritage there.

This one-time opportunity to visit the hard-to-get sites of Silk Road cultures is organized by Melanie Malzahn and Hannes Fellner who especially invite members of the sections **Manuscript Cultures** and **Digital Humanities & Quantitative Methods** to participate. To be sure, members of other sections are likewise welcome.

In addition to members of our Doctoral School, the group will include PhD students and senior members of the **Cluster of Excellence “Eurasian Transformations”** to maximize region-specific expertise and enable networking across Austria in research fields related to ancient and modern Eastern Eurasia.

Since we will apply for **funding at the Doctoral School**, it is necessary to commit your interest in participating soon.

The total costs per person will amount to **approx. 3700,- Euro** including the international flight, domestic flights and train travel, accommodation and meals as well as entrance tickets. We hope that the Doctoral School will be able to cover most of these costs for DS members.

If you wish to participate, kindly submit a letter of intent to melanie.malzahn@univie.ac.at and hannes.fellner@univie.ac.at no later than **September 14, 2025**.

Students will be expected to write seminar papers related to the ancient sites or a cultural heritage aspect.

Time line and travel plan

- Q4 2025: Preparatory online meetings
- March 2026: Preparatory lectures (block)

01.04.26	Arrival at Beijing Visit of National Cultural palace
02.04.26	Beijing Visit of Forbidden City and National Museum
03.04.26	Beijing-Dunhuang
04.04.26	Dunhuang Visit Mogao Caves and Singing Sand Dunes
05.04.26	Dunhuang Yadan National Park and Yumen Pass (Jade Gate)

06.04.26	Dunhuang-Liuyuan-Turfan City Museum of Liuyuan und train journey to Turfan
07.04.26	Turfan Visit Bezeklik Caves, Astana tombs, Jiaohe Ancient City, Kariz Irrigation System
08.04.26	Turfan-Kucha Visit Sugong Pagode, train travel to Kucha
09.04.26	Kucha Visit Kizil Thousand Buddha Caves
10.04.	Kucha Visit Kumtura Thousand Buddha Caves and town museum
11.04.	Travel to Urumqi Visit of Museum
12.04.	Flight Urumqi-Beijing
13.04.	City Walk with Hutong tour, transfer to airport
14.04.	Departure in the early morning

- Post-expedition discussion (block) in May and / or June 2026