

Estonian team reaches Kashmir through Silk Route

Retracing the steps of travellers in the age of yore, a five-member team from Estonia arrived here Tuesday through the fabled Silk Route.

The team started from Siam in China 45 days ago and have been through parts of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, the first lot of travellers to use the historic route since 1947.

'Iraq was originally in our travel plan but because of the situation there, we bypassed it, moving through Turkey and Syria which also formed an integral part of the Silk Route,' said Aigar, a member of the group.

He added that the group could not travel through Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan and some parts of Afghanistan due to travel restrictions.

Realising the dream wasn't easy, said 42-year old Tina Jokinen, an Estonian national who led the travellers.

'It took us three years to get our travel documents, arrange cars and money for the trip.'

The team believes their adventure would inspire and attract others to undertake this fairytale journey and thereby help Kashmir revive its tourist glory in full.

'My country has a population of one-and-a-half million and we receive around four million tourists each year. Kashmir also has great tourist potential,' said another member of Tina's team.

The Silk Route linked [Europe](#) to Asia passing through cities like Kasgar, Samarkand, Yarkand, Bokhara, Tehran, Baghdad, Hamadan and Jerusalem.

It was not only the trade lifeline of Kashmir, but also routed all the religious, social and cultural influences that shaped the destiny of this land.

Buddhism came to Kashmir through the Silk Route and so did Sufi Islam.

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