What is Uyghur? Why Study It?

It’s the native language of over ten million people in Xinjiang and Central Asia. There are more Uyghurs than Swedes! Xinjiang, the Uyghur Autonomous Region (also known by some as Eastern Turkestan), occupies one sixth of China’s territory, nearly as large as Alaska.

Xinjiang was once called the “back of beyond.” Coming from Beijing or Shanghai to Xinjiang, you enter a different world. Ringing barren deserts are lush oasis towns, where in summer you can slake your thirst with the pick of delicious melons and grapes.

The neighborhoods thrum with a Middle Eastern beat. Mosques and minarets grace the skyline. Street vendors offer spices, nuts, and fruits, jeweled knives, richly embroidered caps, or seasoned kebabs and savory Central Asian pilaf.

Uyghur is the official language of Xinjiang, China’s Uyghur Autonomous Region

Uyghur is related to Turkish and other Central Asian languages like Uzbek and Kazakh. The Uyghurs use an improved version of the Arabic script to write their language, like this: ئۇيغۇر تەلەئن. It’s an alphabet, not Chinese characters! Uyghur grammar is logical and simpler than languages like Russian or Arabic, without all the confusing gender changes. Although Uyghur vocabulary is basically Turkic in origin, it has loan words from Arabic, Persian, Russian, and Chinese.

Want to learn more about Western China’s unique peoples? Study Uyghur!

IU is the only university in the U.S. that offers three levels of Uyghur. Small classes, individual attention, a friendly and fun atmosphere, interesting teaching materials, scholarship opportunities for future study and research abroad will help you to learn this unique language.

How can you use Uyghur?

Learning Uyghur is a gateway to the Turkic world and Central Asia. Non-profits, government, the military, and international companies are all interested in finding people who speak Uyghur. Many students learning Uyghur use the language to explore a region that is still little-known and mysterious to many, yet crucial to China and the region’s future development and stability.

IU is home to two institutions uniquely suited to assist in the learning of Turkic languages: the Turkish Flagship Program and the Center for Languages of the Central Asian Region (CeLCAR). They provide a wealth of extra information and help to interested students.

Learn Uyghur with CENTRAL EURASIAN STUDIES

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