



THE FIVE STANS OF THE SILK ROAD

21 day tour
from \$7720.00* per person twin share

Traverse mountains pocketed with turquoise alpine lakes, drive through lush fertile valleys and zip across dry and dusty desert plains by high-speed train. This is an all-encompassing, ever-changing journey through the 5 'Stans of Central Asia.

Includes:

20 nights' accommodation

- 16 nights comfortable hotel
- 1 night simple hotel
- 1 night guesthouse
- 1 night yurt
- 1 night tent

Meals: 20 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 5 dinners

All transport on tour by bus, plane and train

Tour leader, driver and local guides



Terms and Conditions: Land only cost based on departure of 04 May 2020. Other departure dates available, seasonal surcharges and single supplements apply. Single travellers have the option of being matched on tour with someone of the same sex. There is an option to pay a supplement for a room on your own, refer to the itinerary, which indicates where this is possible. Visas are required for some countries; check requirements with your consultant. This is a small group journey with a maximum of 18 passengers, average is 12 passengers. Price is subject to change until booked and deposited. Compulsory credit card fees apply. Other conditions apply, please check with your consultant.

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Travel & Cruise
Fundamentals

ITINERARY: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

DAY 1 Join trip in Bishkek and have an afternoon exploring the city

After a leisurely morning we head out on a sightseeing tour by bus and on foot. We learn about the main monuments and buildings of the city, and take a leisurely walk through Oak Park.

Accommodation: B Hotel Bishkek (or similar) - single room available

DAY 2 Morning visit to Osh Bazaar before driving out to Ala Archa National Park

(B, L)

This morning we explore the extensive Osh Bazaar, Bishkek's bustling centrepiece, purchasing the ingredients for a picnic lunch, before taking the short drive to Ala Archa National Park. Enjoy a scenic lunch, then set off on foot for a gentle walk through the fresh alpine scenery, before driving back.

Accommodation: B Hotel Bishkek (or similar) - single room available

DAY 3 Drive to Burana Tower and visit a stadium for horse games then on to Kochkor

(B, D)

This morning, we head to Burana Tower; a piece of Silk Road history that sits sequestered in the wide-open landscape. We continue on to Tokmok stadium, and witness a demonstration of Kok Boru, a local form of polo and Kyz-Kuumai, which literally translates to 'girl chasing'. After lunch continue onto Kochkor, where we visit a woman's cooperative specialising in making Shiyrdak, a colourful hand-woven felt carpet that is ubiquitous throughout the homes and yurts of Central Asia.

Accommodation: Nomad Lodge (or similar simple hotel)

DAY 4 Learn how to make Kyrgyz fried bread and onto Lake Issyk Kul.

(B, D)

Enjoy a master class learning how to make Boorsok, the national bread. Continue on our way to the iconic Lake Issyk Kul, and the village of Kyzyl Tuu, one of the centres for yurt production, where we learn more their construction. Our final stop of today's journey is in Bokonbeavo where we meet an Eagle Hunter for a falconry demonstration, then continue to Tosor, with time for a swim in the lake before dinner. Tonight's yurts will be twin-share with western style toilets and cold showers.

Accommodation: Tamga Yurt Camp (or similar)

DAY 5 Explore Jet Oguz gorge on foot and then drive onto Karakol for a city tour

(B, D)

After a leisurely breakfast, we drive onto Szaka or 'Fairytale Canyon' then continue on to the mountain valley of Jety-Oguz, and continue onto the town of Karakol. Our tour of the town takes us to the Dungan, the Russian Orthodox and the museum of the Russian explorer Przkevalski. A the short drive out of the city takes us to the village of Tepke, for a night in a farmer's guesthouse.

Accommodation: Reina Kench Guesthouse (or similar) - single room available

DAY 6 Cross the border into Kazakhstan, explore Charyn Canyon, continue to Almaty

(B, L)

This morning we set off for Kazakhstan via the tip of the eastern Tien Shen range, crossing the border at Kegen before descending down to the dry, dusty and hot Kazakh steppe. We stop at Charyn Canyon, and visit the 'Valley of Castles', descend from the rim down to the river for a picnic. We continue onto Almaty, arriving in the early evening.

Accommodation: Kazzhol Hotel (or similar), single room available

DAY 7 Tour the wide boulevards and green parks of Almaty

(B)

Today we some of the Almaty's major sites, including the Park of 28 Guards, the Ascension Cathedral and onto Green Market, make sure to try Kazzan (smoked horse sausage) and Kurt (salted cheese balls popular with beer). The rest of the day is at leisure.

Accommodation: Kazzhol Hotel (or similar), single room available

DAY 8 Morning flight to Dushanbe. Afternoon orientation tour of the city

(B)

A short two-hour flight takes us to Dushanbe, Tajikistan's enigmatic capital. This afternoon we will explore some of the city's main highlights: National Archaeological Museum of Tajikistan, statue of Ismail Samani and Rudaki Park. Tonight's dinner is in a local restaurant serving traditional Tajik cuisine

Accommodation: Hotel Atlas (or similar), single room available

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DAY 9 Explore Dushanbe including Navruz Palace and the market (B)
 Today we visit the strikingly beautiful Navruz Palace, and the Museum of Musical Instruments. This afternoon you are free to relax and enjoy the city at your leisure.
 Accommodation: Hotel Atlas (or similar), single room available

DAY 10 Fann Mountains, scenic picnic lunch, ion to Penjikent (B, L)
 An early departure this morning for a scenic drive into the mountains, stopping at Iskander Kul, at an altitude of 2,200 metres, nestled in the heart of the Fann Mountains. Take a bracing dip before lunch and a short walk to a nearby waterfall. We continue to Penjikent, aiming to arrive in the early evening.
 Accommodation: Hotel Rudaki (or similar), single room available

DAY 11 Explore the 'Seven Lakes' (B, L)
 We set off for a full day in the mountains today, exploring the region of the 'Seven Lakes'. Some are set deep in valleys, others wide and on an open plain. Enjoy a picnic lunch beside the fourth lake 'Nofin', and then drive to the sixth lake 'Marguzor', where we embark on an hour-long hike up to the seventh and highest lake, Hazorchashma. Alternately, relax on the shores of the sixth lake, before returning to Penjikent.
 Accommodation: Hotel Rudaki (or similar), single room available

DAY 12 Drive to historic Samarkand, discover Registan Square and Gur Emir Mausoleum (B)
 This morning we head west and make for Uzbekistan. We stop off at the UNESCO site of Sarazm, on our way to the border, where we cross on foot to our Uzbek bus and take the short drive to Samarkand. This afternoon, visit Registan Square, and the Gur Emir. This evening we are treated to a private fashion show at the workshop of designer Valentina Romanenko.
 Accommodation: Hotel Malika Classic (or similar), single room available

DAY 13 Explore Samarkand then the high speed train to Bokhara (B)
 A local guide and takes us to the Shah-i-Zinda, the Ulug-Beg Observatory and the Bibi-Khanym Mosque, once the largest in Central Asia; which was built by Tamerlane with loot from Indian campaigns and named after his favourite Mongolian wife. After dinner this evening take the high-speed train to Bokhara, a comfortable journey of just two hours travelling at over 250 kph.
 Accommodation: Hotel Sasha & Son (or similar), single room available

DAY 14 Bokhara's blue-tiled domes and minarets and city's history (B)
 A walking tour today includes the Lyab-i Hauz, the striking blue-tiled Abdul Khan madrasah and the 9th century Mghoki Arrar Mosque. We will also visit the Kalyan minaret and the trading domes that are the most famous symbol of Bokharan architecture. This afternoon, we will drive to The Ark - a massive citadel which t houses several small museums connected with Bokhara's history. Finally, we will take in the Char Minar Mosque and wander the backstreets of the old town.
 Accommodation: Hotel Sasha & Son (or similar), single room available

DAY 15 Explore Bokhara before taking the high-speed train to Khiva (B)
 After a morning at leisure, we board our second high-speed rail journey to Khiva on Uzbekistan's state-of-the art rail network, halving the journey that previously took 8-9 hours across dry and dusty desert plains.
 Accommodation: Orient Star Khiva (or similar), single room available

DAY 16 Wander the narrow streets of the 'Open Air Museum' of Khiva (B)
 On this morning's walking tour, we explore the majestic Old Citadel. It is worth climbing the steps of the Dzhuma Minaret for a panoramic view of the maze of streets below. The afternoon and evening has been left free to explore the mosques, tombs and palaces of this well-preserved city.
 Accommodation: Orient Star Khiva (or similar), single room available

DAY 17 Drive west to the outpost of Nukus, stopping at the Savitsky Museum en route (B, D)
 This morning we take a bumpy drive to Nukus, a journey of around four hours. Present-day Nukus has been half-deserted, hidden in this forgotten city is what is widely regarded as one of the best collections of Soviet art, housed in the Savitsky Museum. After lunch we spend some time appreciating the world's second-largest collection of Russian avant-garde art. This evening we dine in the house of a local family of musicians.
 Accommodation: Hotel Jipek Joli (or similar), single room available

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DAY 18 Cross into Turkmenistan and drive onto Darvaza to camp by the flaming crater (B, D)

This morning we cross into our fifth and final Stan - Turkmenistan, which may take a 1-2 hour wait and a thorough search of all bags. We wave goodbye to our Tour Leader, make our way by bus across no-man's land and join a local Turkmen leader for the rest of our trip before driving on to Kunya Urgench for lunch and to visit the mausoleums, mosques and minarets that are found here.

We continue on into the Karakum desert for a four-hour drive to the incredible Darvaza Crater, the so-called 'Door to Hell'. After a very apt barbecue dinner, we will have plenty of time to take in Darvaza's deep reds, oranges and crimsons as it burns brightly against the backdrop of the inky-black sky. We camp tonight aside the crater in two-man tents. The set-up is very simple, with temporary toilets and no access to showers. All mats and bedding will be provided.

Accommodation: Darvaza Camp (or similar), single room available

DAY 19 Continue onto Ashgabat, stopping via the Erbent Desert community (B)

Continuing south this morning, we stop at the very remote Erbent Desert community before continuing on to Ashgabat, arriving in time for lunch. This afternoon we explore the city, visiting Independence Park with the Independence Monument and the Turkmenistan National Museum of History

Accommodation: Grand Turkmen Hotel (or similar), single room available

DAY 20 Explore Ashgabat, visit Nisa Fortress and Gypjak Mosque (B)

This morning we drive out to the outskirts of the city to the once-mighty fortress of Nisa, continue on to explore the impressive Gypjak Mosque, or spiritual mosque, before returning to the city for an afternoon at leisure. After some time for exploration, we return back to the city, where the rest of this afternoon has been left free. Most return flights from Ashgabat leave in the early hours of the next morning, so a late-checkout has been arranged until we leave for the airport.

Accommodation: Grand Turkmen Hotel (or similar), single room available

DAY 21 - Trip ends in Ashgabat (B)

The trip ends in Ashgabat this morning with a transfer to airport.

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