

## 26 Days | 5 Stans Of The Silk Road | 2025 & 2026

Kyrgyzstan - Kazakhstan - Tajikistan - Uzbekistan - Turkmenistan

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From **\$7,399** Typically \$8,999 pp twin share

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Discover the wonders of Central Asia on this 5 nation adventure

Small group safari experience with a maximum of just 16 guests

Authentic local experiences in yurts and homestays

Combine natural wonders with bustling bazaars and cities

Secure your trip today with an ultra low deposit

## Description

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Embark on an unforgettable journey through the heart of Central Asia, where the rich cultures and breathtaking landscapes of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan await

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Want an adventure so far off the beaten track, that most of your friends won't even recognise the names of the destinations? The Central Asian countries of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan offer an enchanting blend of ancient history, stunning landscapes, and vibrant cultures, and offer an incredibly rewarding travel itinerary for those brave enough to venture there.

Kyrgyzstan, known as the "Switzerland of Central Asia," is famed for its dramatic mountain ranges, such as the Tien Shan, and vast alpine lakes like Issyk-Kul. The country's nomadic culture is still alive today, with yurts dotting the landscapes and traditional sports like horseback riding being a significant part of the culture. Travelers can trek through the untouched wilderness, visit the lively capital of Bishkek, and experience warm hospitality from locals.

Kazakhstan, the largest of the five, is a land of contrast. Its immense steppes stretch across much of the country, offering endless skies and horizons, while the modern, futuristic city of Nur-Sultan (formerly Astana) stands as a symbol of the nation's rapid development. Almaty, the former capital, is nestled at the foot of the snow-capped Alatau Mountains and offers an exciting mix of culture, nature, and nightlife. The country is also rich in history, home to the ancient Silk Road cities of Turkestan and Shymkent, which preserve the legacy of medieval trade and Islam's spread through Central Asia.

Tajikistan, often overlooked by travellers, is a gem for adventure enthusiasts. Its towering Pamir Mountains are among the highest in the world, providing awe-inspiring landscapes and challenging trekking routes. The Pamir Highway, one of the world's most remote and scenic drives, takes visitors through high-altitude passes, past ancient fortresses, and along the borders of Afghanistan and China. Tajikistan's history is deeply intertwined with Persian culture, and visitors can explore historical sites like the city of Khujand, with its vibrant markets and centuries-old mosques.

Uzbekistan is the cultural heart of Central Asia, with cities like Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva that boast stunning examples of Islamic architecture. These cities were once key stops on the Silk Road and are now UNESCO World Heritage Sites, famous for their majestic mosques, madrasas, and vibrant blue-tiled minarets. Samarkand's Registan Square is one of the world's most beautiful architectural ensembles, and Bukhara's Old Town transports visitors to the heart of medieval Islamic civilisation. Beyond its architectural wonders, Uzbekistan's cuisine, featuring hearty dishes like plov, is a highlight for travellers.

Turkmenistan, often regarded as the most mysterious of the five, is known for its surreal landscapes and peculiar attractions. The capital, Ashgabat, is a city of marble and gold, full of eccentric monuments and grandiose public buildings. However, it's the Darvaza Gas Crater, also known as the "Gates of Hell," that captures the imagination of many travellers. This flaming crater has been burning for decades in the middle of the Karakum Desert, offering a unique and otherworldly sight. Turkmenistan's ancient ruins, like those of Merv, one of the oldest cities in the world, offer a glimpse into the region's deep history.



## Itinerary

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### Day 1

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#### Bishkek

Welcome to Kyrgyzstan! Bishkek is this nation's artsy capital and cultural hub, situated at the base of the Tian Shan mountain range. There are no planned activities until the evening welcome meeting with your group and tour leader (usually between 5:00pm to 7:00pm), so don't hesitate to get out there and explore.

**Accommodation:** Grand Hotel Bishkek or similar

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### Day 2

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#### Bishkek Chong-Kemin Valley

After breakfast, embark on a city tour of Bishkek before travelling to the serenity of Chong-Kemin Valley, with a total drive time of 1.5 hours. Along the way, stop at one of Kyrgyzstan's oldest sights, the Burana Tower. A large minaret about 80 kilometres from Bishkek, Burana Tower is all that remains of the 9th century city of Balasagun, along with some grave markers and remnants of a castle and mausoleums. Learn about this ancient structure, rare in nomadic culture, before we continue on our journey by road. Tonight, stay in a cosy guest house run by Ashuu villagers. Soak in the stunning scenery while exploring the village, and savour a home-cooked traditional dinner.

**Accommodation:** Kemin Guesthouse or similar

**Meals Included:** Breakfast and Dinner

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### Day 3

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#### Chong-Kemin Valley Song Kul Lake

In the morning, opt for a hike to the nearby mountains or explore the famous gorges of Chong-Kemin. After lunch, enjoy the scenic drive along the Kalmak-Ashuu mountain pass to Song Kul Lake. Immerse yourself in traditional Kyrgyz culture with an overnight stay in a traditional felt yurt, and experience daily nomadic life and wander the breathtaking landscape. With an altitude of 3,016 meters above sea level, it's possible to get four seasons in one day! Indulge in delicious home-cooked cuisine for dinner, then get cosy in the yurt around the stove. Please note that weather related conditions may limit access to the Song Kul mountain pass in May and June. If the pass is closed, the group will instead overnight at a yurt stay near Issyk Kol Lake.

**Accommodation:** Song Kul Yurt Experience or similar

**Meals Included:** Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

## Day 4

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### Song Kul Lake Tamga

Spend the morning soaking in all the beauty of Song Kul Lake, before departing for Kochkor to learn the importance of felt-making to Kyrgyz culture and local artisans. Learn the craft during a hands-on workshop creating a small version of the traditional carpet known as ala-kiyiz, and enjoy lunch together. Afterwards, we head to Tamga village in the clutches of the Terskey Ala-Too and celestial Issyk-Kol Lake, where you'll spend the night at a village guesthouse and get to know the local community members. Surrounded by mountains and often used as a base for trekking, this village offers a touching glimpse into local Kyrgyz life. Tamga village was also once famous for its Soviet-era military sanatorium, where Soviet cosmonauts relaxed and recovered after space flights. The complex still exists in its original, untouched 1930s glory, with an atmosphere that would seem to bring you back in time.

**Accommodation:** Anyutaika Guesthouse or similar

**Meals Included:** Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

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## Day 5

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### Tamga Karakol

Enjoy a free morning getting to know this isolated village. Transfer to Ak-Orgo Workshop Centre to observe how traditional yurts are built, and learn about the importance of this Kyrgyz craft. After lunch at Ak Orgoo, drive to Kyrgyzstan's 4th largest city - Karakol. Stop for a visit at the Prejevalskiy Museum, dedicated to the famous Russian explorer Nikolai Przhevalsky and local flora and fauna, followed by a city tour. Stop by the Russian Orthodox Cathedral to admire the unique architecture. This beautiful wooden church was built in 1895, after the old structure was destroyed by an earthquake, and is still used for services on Sundays. Next, visit the colourful Dungan mosque originally built in 1910 that almost resembles a Buddhist temple. This is the only mosque in the area and definitely worth checking out.

**Accommodation:** Caravan Hotel Karakol or similar

**Meals Included:** Breakfast and Lunch

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## Day 6

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### Karakol

Take a short drive to Jety-Oguz Gorge, located in the footsteps of Terskey Ala-Too Mountains. This morning, we'll visit famous unique red rock formations called "Broken Heart" and "Seven Bulls", symbolic of the 35 km long wall of seven huge red-brown cliffs resembling bulls standing together. Next, we take a hike to a nearby valley of wildflowers and reach a stunning view point overlooking the flower-filled valley. Return to Karakol and have a free afternoon to explore, or enjoy some downtime. In the evening, we get to experience having dinner with local family.

**Accommodation:** Caravan Hotel Karakol or similar

**Meals Included:** Breakfast and Dinner

## Day 7

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### Karakol Saty Village & Kolsay Lakes National Park

Say farewell to Kyrgyzstan, and cross the border into Kazakhstan on the journey to Saty village, part of the Kolsay Lakes National Park. On arrival, we swap vehicles for 4WDs for the ride to Kaindy Lake, then embark on a trek to explore the sunken forest. Soak in the bright hues and marvel at the eerie sight of submerged trees, before we spend the night in a homestay and indulge in traditional local meals for a true Kazakh experience.

**Accommodation:** Saty Village Guesthouse or similar

**Meals Included:** Breakfast and Dinner

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## Day 8

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### Saty Village Almaty

Depart early this morning for Almaty, the former Kazakh capital, stopping along the way to marvel at Charyn Canyon. Boasting stunning shades of red, orange, and brown, the Charyn Canyon is a natural wonder comparable in beauty to the Grand Canyon. On arrival in Almaty, take a city tour visiting sights such as Independence Square, Zenkov Cathedral, Panfilov's Park, and the striking WWII memorial. Time permitting, opt to climb Green Hill for panoramic views, visit the local markets, or sip coffee in one of the plentiful cafés. We recommend stopping by Zelyony Bazaar. Also known as the "Green Bazaar", this was once a key trading centre in the city. Explore this traditional outdoor Kazakh market and roam around the varied stalls. Find anything from local spices and meats to souvenirs or furniture, stay for a meal or opt to sip on tea while watching the hustle and bustle of the market unfold.

**Accommodation:** Hotel KAZZHOL Almaty or similar

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

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## Day 9

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### Almaty Dushanbe

We hope you enjoyed your time in Kazakhstan, because today we fly to Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, located on the Varzob River. Upon arrival, visit the highlights of the capital city on a guided tour, seeing the Central Mosque and square, Ismail-i-Somoni Monument, the State Flag Pole, and Tajikistan Antiquities Museum. In the evening, we may have more travellers joining our group. You're welcome to attend an evening catch up to get to know them, or do your own thing and relax.

**Accommodation:** Atlas Hotel Dushanbe or similar

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

## Day 10

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Dushanbe 🚗 Kuli Iskandarkul 🚗 Gazza Village

Today we depart from Dushanbe, and enjoy a morning drive through the valleys and mountains to Kuli Iskandarkul, a mountain lake of glacial origin in Tajikistan's Sughd Province. The lake takes its name from Alexander the Great's passage in Tajikistan, as Iskander is the Persian pronunciation of Alexander. After lunch, continue the drive to our overnight stay at a community guest house in Gazza Village. Upon our arrival, take a short hike through the peaceful Fann Mountains to Iskander Darya waterfall, or Fann Niagra. This massive, majestic waterfall drops from a height of 38 metres, complete with a viewing platform at the top. This evening, enjoy dinner at a local family's home, and soak up the gorgeous landscape of the Fann Mountains.

**Accommodation:** Homestay Gazza Village or similar

**Meals Included:** Breakfast and Dinner

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## Day 11

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**Gazza Village**

After breakfast, embark on a hike alongside Voru River to visit Voru village, one of the old in the region of the Fann Mountains. After the village exploration, head back our guest house, where the afternoon is yours to spend at leisure. Opt to join a hike to picturesque Khushtarita Valley, or simply spend some time getting to know the locals before our last community dinner together.

**Accommodation:** Homestay Gazza Village or similar

**Meals Included:** Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

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## Day 12

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**Gazza Village 🚗 Khujand**

Continue on to Khujand, stopping first in Istaravshan to explore a local mosque and Mug Teppe, an ancient citadel fortress stormed by Alexander the Great in 329 BC. Enjoy an optional lunch in a local chaikhana (teahouse) before continuing the drive to Khujand. Wander the city in the afternoon, visiting the Historical Museum of Sughd, resembling a castle, and the Mausoleum of Sheik Muslekheddin.

**Accommodation:** Sugdiyon Hotel or similar

**Meals Included:** Breakfast and Dinner



## Day 13

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### Khujand Tashkent

This morning we visit the Khujand Market, the largest in Tajikistan and a great example of a typical Central Asian market. Enjoy browsing what's for sale and opt to sample a few of the local delicacies, before we continue on our adventure to cross the border into Uzbekistan. Our destination is the capital city of Tashkent, where modern skyscrapers mix with Soviet-era architecture and mosaic mausoleums. Enjoy a short orientation walk in the evening before an optional dinner.

**Accommodation:** Alpha Plaza Hotel & Spa or similar

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

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## Day 14

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### Tashkent

Today is a free day in Tashkent to do as much or as little as you like. If a resting isn't your thing whilst aboard, start your day at the Khast Imam Complex, home to beautiful Islamic architecture and the world-famous Quran of Caliph Uthman. From there, explore Chorsu Bazaar, a bustling market where you can experience local life and pick up traditional Uzbek handicrafts and spices. Next, head to Amir Timur Square, where a statue of the legendary conqueror overlooks the city's impressive buildings. For a dose of art and culture, visit the Tashkent Metro, known for its ornate, Soviet-era design, or the State Museum of History, which traces Uzbekistan's rich heritage. End your day with a stroll through the beautiful Independence Square, followed by dinner at a local restaurant to sample Uzbek dishes like plov and samsa.

**Accommodation:** Alpha Plaza Hotel & Spa or similar

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

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## Day 15

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### Tashkent Samarkand

Travel on to Samarkand, known for intricately beautiful mosques and mausoleums, situated on the Silk Road. Take an orientation walk and opt to visit the Amir Timur Mausoleum (entry is just \$3 USD). For history lovers, Amir Timur, known as Tamerlane, is an important figure to the city of Samarkand. He was a conqueror in the 14th century hoping to rebuild the empire of Genghis Khan, and is considered the last of the great conquerors of the Eurasian steppe.

**Accommodation:** Zarina Hotel or similar

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

## Day 16

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### Samarkand

Embark on a city tour of Samarkand, visiting Ulugbek Observatory, Shaki Zinda complex, Bibi Khanum, and Registan Square. With a free afternoon, continue exploring the Samarkand sights, have a cuppa in a local tea house, or wander around the bazaar. Opt to explore the Tomb of Prophet Daniel (entry fee just \$3 USD), famous for the Biblical story of Daniel and the lions - a local legend says that his body grows by half an inch every year!

**Accommodation:** Zarina Hotel or similar

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

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## Day 17

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### Samarkand Aydar Kul Camp

A different kind of adventure awaits us today, as we travel out into the desert to visit Chashma Complex. A pilgrimage site in the territory of Nurata, the landscape is dominated by ruins of Alexander the Great's fortress, Juma mosque, a bath-house, and the ancient Panjvakta mosque. All of this is said to be hiding a holy spring believed to heal diseases! After exploring the complex, head to Aidarkul Lake and opt for a swim, before continuing on for an overnight stay in a local yurt camp. Enjoy an authentic Uzbekistan dinner and an evening Kazakh singing show.

**Accommodation:** Yurt Camp Stay Aidarkul or similar

**Meals Included:** Breakfast and Dinner

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## Day 18

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### Aydar Kul Camp Bukhara

Travel to Bukhara, known as one of the most charming cities in Uzbekistan and locates on the Silk Road. As one of the best examples of well-preserved Islamic cities of Central Asia of the 10th to 17th centuries, get your bearings in Bukhara on an orientation walk. The afternoon is then free for you to explore at leisure. Opt to visit the old city bazaars, enjoy a traditional dinner cooked by a local family or visit a hammam (bathhouse). If a visit to a hamman intrigues you, budget for around \$20 USD per person, and be aware that they are often gender-specific - Hammam Kunjak for ladies, and Bozori Kord Hammam for gentlemen.

**Accommodation:** Hotel As-Salam or similar

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

## Day 19

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### Bukhara

Explore Bukhara on a half-day guided walking tour around the beautifully restored blue mosques, madrassas, and covered markets, or trading domes, that make up the Old City. A centre for pottery, cloth, and carpets, Bukhara is centred around Lyabi-Hauz, a delightful pool of water surrounded by ancient mulberry trees. Wander the artisan shops and narrow, twisting streets and alleyways, or sit at a café table and let the evening drift by. Opt to watch a local puppet show held in an old caravanserai, or indulge in a rejuvenating hammam bathhouse. Looking for further inspiration? We suggest the following optional activities.

#### **Carpet Museum** - \$1 USD per person

The Magok-i Attari Mosque (Museum of Carpets) offers information about the art of carpet making and some fine examples to boot. Perhaps more impressively, the building the museum is located in was once used for Jewish, Muslim, and Christian services, demonstrating the diversity and open-mindedness of this intriguing city.

#### **Jewish Area & Synagogue Visit** - Free (small donation encouraged)

Bukhara has a fascinating Jewish history, with Bukharan Jews speaking a Turkic-Persian dialect with a Hebrew script. The city once was home to 40,000 Jews and now has a community of about 25 to 30 families. The synagogue is well worth a visit, and houses a Torah that is roughly 1,000 years old. Please note that on Friday evenings and Saturday, the Synagogue is usually closed for Shabbat.

**Accommodation:** Hotel As-Salam or similar

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

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## Day 20

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### Bukhara 🚗 Khiva

Today we depart Bukhara, and enjoy a scenic drive through the desert on a full day's journey to reach UNESCO-listed Khiva. Get to know this peaceful, picturesque city on a late afternoon orientation walk, and pick your favourite spots to explore more in-depth tomorrow.

**Accommodation:** Hotel Muso To'ra or similar

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

## Day 21

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### Khiva

Before exploring this historic town on your own, enjoy a guided tour to learn about local life in Khiva and what makes this ancient museum city tick. With its well-preserved walls and ancient monuments, wander through the narrow labyrinth mudbrick alleyways of old town, before bargaining with locals at the bazaar. Admire the madrassas and blue mosaic domes, climb up towering minarets, and venture into the dark dungeons that Khiva was infamous for back in the 10th century. Explore the inner walls of Ichon-Qala, and enjoy spectacular sunset views of the sand-coloured mosques and homes.

**Accommodation:** Hotel Muso To'ra or similar

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

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## Day 22

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### Khiva Dashoguz

Spend the morning in Khiva, enjoying your last moments here to experience anything you couldn't squeeze in yesterday, or do some last minute shopping. After lunch, drive to the Uzbek-Turkmen border to enter Turkmenistan, and continue to Dashoguz. Take an orientation walk and opt for dinner in a local café, or explore the city and its Bai Market. For the curious traveller, learn more about the history, culture, and art of Turkmenistan at the Dashoguz Museum (entry USD \$10). From archaeological finds to ancient clothes, find the various moments of history captured and on display in this stunning landmark.

**Accommodation:** Hotel Dashoguz or similar

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

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## Day 23

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### Dashoguz Darvaza

Today we drive to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Kunya Urgench to visit the ancient capital of the Khorezmian Empire. This town was abandoned in the 1700s and has remained untouched ever since. Visit the series of monuments built between the 11th and 16th centuries including a mosque, the gates of a caravanserai, fortresses, mausoleums, and a 60-metre-high minaret. After lunch, continue to the Kara-Kum desert and witness the fiery Darvaza gas crater. Often referred to as the 'Gates of Hell', this gas crater was originally constructed to support a drilling rig but collapsed. As residents discovered the natural gas leak, it was set on fire to burn off over the course of several weeks. Decades later it continues to burn! This evening, enjoy a delicious barbeque dinner and spend the night camping under the stars at a yurt camp.

**Accommodation:** Darwaza Yurt Camp or similar

**Meals Included:** Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

## Day 24

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### Darvaza 🚗 Ashgabat

After breakfast, begin the journey to the capital of Turkmenistan - Ashgabat. On the way, stop near the community of Erbent and admire its golden sand dunes that stretch out to the horizon. On arrival in Ashgabat, spend the evening at leisure. Opt to visit the Turkmenbashi Ruhy Mosque, also known as Gypjak Mosque, and capture the sun setting on the symmetrical minarets and golden domes.

**Accommodation:** Ak Altyn Hotel or similar

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

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## Day 25

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### Ashgabat

Spend the day exploring bustling Ashgabat. Enjoy a tour of the city in the morning, visiting several city treasures such as the Monument of Independence and the National museum or Neutrality Arch. Afterwards, opt to venture to the Ashgabat Hippodrome with free entry. The largest hippodrome in the country, visitors can attend a horse race or just explore the grounds and view the markets, facilities, and playground. Not your thing? Another great free activity is a visit to the Ertugrul Gazi Mosque. With four minarets and a central dome, this mosque honours the founder of the Ottoman Empire, Osman I, and is complete with a lavish interior and stained-glass windows.

**Accommodation:** Ak Altyn Hotel or similar

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

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## Day 26

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### Ashgabat

All good things must come to an end, and sadly this marks the end of your tour. Guests are welcome to depart anytime, and for those heading to the airport, a departure transfer is included. Safe travels on the rest of your journey!

**Meals Included:** Breakfast

## Inclusions & Exclusions

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### Inclusions

- 25 nights accommodation including hotels (20 nights), yurts (3 nights, multishare up to 4 guests) and homestays (2 nights)
- 25 breakfasts, 5 lunches and 9 dinners (please allow between AUD \$700 - \$950 for meals not included)
- One way airfare from Almaty (Kazakhstan) to Dushanbe (Tajikistan)
- Dedicated trip leader and driver, plus local expert guides along the way
- Air conditioned touring vehicle between destinations
- Transportation including toll fees in air-conditioned vehicles
- Entrance fees as specified in the itinerary

### Experiences Included:

- Half-day city tour in Bishkek
- Burana Tower visit in Bishkek
- Przhevalsky Museum visit in Karakol
- Yurt building presentation in Kizil Tuu
- Saty village stay
- City tour in Almaty
- Charyn Canyon Visit
- City tour in Dushanbe
- Waterfall hike in Kuli Iskandarkul
- City tour in Khujand
- Mug Yepe visit in Istaravshan
- Market visit in Khujand
- City tour in Samarkand
- Walking tour in Bukhara
- Chashma Complex and Holy Spring visit in Nurata
- Fortress of Alexander the Great visit in Nurata
- City tour in Bukhara
- Khiva Ancient City tour
- City tour in Tashkent
- Felt-making workshop visit
- Hikes and picnic lunch
- Daravaz gas crater ("Door to Hell") visit
- Erbent visit
- City tour in Ashgabat

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### Exclusions

- Travel insurance (highly recommended)
- Any airfares not mentioned
- Meals and sightseeing not specified
- Entrance fees not specified
- Optional add-on tours
- Tipping or gratuities

- Items of a personal nature, such as drinks, snacks, laundry etc
- Any items or services not listed in the above inclusions

**Child Policy:** No children under 12 years of age permitted on this tour. Please contact us if you are after a family-friendly trip.

**Group Size:** This travel package has a maximum of 16 guests per tour, but the average is usually 14 guests.

**Travel Visas:** Please note that it is the responsibility of all guests to organise their own travel documents and visas required.

**Tour Availability:** Please note that this is an incredibly popular tour, and availability can fill up as far as 12 months in advance. If you're interested and want to learn more, don't delay.

**Health & Fitness:** This is not an overly physically demanding journey, but travelling can be difficult in remote regions. Some parts of this tour may include light hiking, biking, rafting, or kayaking in addition to walking. If you have any concerns if this trip is right for you or not, please contact us.

**Dress Code:** Though you can see lots of people in traditional clothes, Central Asia has adopted western style clothing as well. Don't hesitate to pack your usual travel clothes, such as shorts and t-shirts in the summer. We recommend not to bring tank tops, singlets or any types of clothes with bare shoulders and backs as our tour takes us to many religious sights, where dress code is very strict. We recommend women to have a headscarf in their day bags to cover up when going inside mosques.

**Single Supplement:** Travelling solo? The single supplement to have your own room is \$2000, and is available on check-out. Opting for this upgrade means that you will receive your own single accommodation for all night stops, with the following exceptions: Day 3, 10, 11, 17 and 23. If you don't mind sharing a room with a fellow solo traveller of the same gender, this tour provides the option of doing so at no extra charge.

**Travel Insurance:** We recommend Covermore travel insurance. To quote and book, please click [HERE](#).

**Optional Extras:** Want to add extra accommodation or airfares? Get in touch with us via [info@traveldream.com.au](mailto:info@traveldream.com.au), as we can help bring your dream holiday to life.