

22 days

Duration

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Tour Turkmenistan

Destinations: *Turkmenistan - Uzbekistan - Tajikistan - Kyrgyzstan - Kazakhstan*

Transport: Private air conditioned transport, economy class domestic flights and train tickets

Accommodations: All comfortable class accommodation with private facilities

Guides: English speaking escorting guides in TM, TJ, KZ, KG, UZB

Tour starting point: Ashgabat **Ends:** Almaty



"STANTRIPS" - TRAVEL COMPANY
Central Asian and Silk Road tours

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5STAN-TOUR

Day 1: Ashgabat

Arrival to Ashgabat by Turkish airlines. Transfer to the hotel. Rest time. We will begin our tour in Ashgabat. It is a capital and largest city of Turkmenistan. Within this tour you will visit Ruhyyet Palace, Wedding Palace, Arch of Neutrality, Monument and park of Independence and other beauty sights of Ashgabat. You will be also taken to grandiose Square of Revival (Galkynysh) – a new administrative, business and cultural center of Ashgabat. Have a stroll along Ylham (Inspiration) Park. Visit Anau – a medieval city situated 12 km from Ashgabat and the mosque. The main portal arch is decorated with the figures of mythical dragons. According to historians, the magic dragons were placed to guard "The House of Dzhemal" from evil spirits. Overnight at hotel.

Day 2: Ashgabat

Breakfast at the hotel. Drive to visit Kow-Ata underground lake, which is located 107 km from Ashgabat. The Turkmen name Kow-Ata means "father of caves". At first glance, this underground area appears like a magnificent auditorium: the overall length of the cave is 230 m, its height reaches 20 m, and its width is at some points 57 m. The bottom of the cave is covered with lumps of dissolved limestone (stalagmites), and its warm and gushing water is clear and emerald colored. The water has a constant temperature of 33-37°C. On the back way visit Gokdepe fortress and horse farm 45km from Ashgabat. Gokdepe fortress was attacked in December 1880 by Russians under General Mikhail Skobelev. The siege of Gokdepe lasted twenty-three days, after which the city was taken by storm. Gokdepe Mosque was built to commemorate the defeat and is noted for its mint-turquoise blue colored roof and white marble structure. At the horse farm you can see proud of Turkmens – Akhalteke horses. Overnight at hotel.

Day 3: Ashgabat – Derweze

Breakfast at the hotel. Drive to Nissa fortress – the Sanctuary of Parthian Kings. UNESCO declared fortress a World Heritage Site in 2007. Nissa described as one of the first capitals of the Parthians. It was founded by Arsaces I (reigned 250 BC – 211 BC), and reputedly the royal necropolis of the Parthian Kings, although it has neither been established that the fortress at Nissa was royal residence or mausoleum. The ruins of ancient settlement Nissa are located 18 km from Ashgabat at Bagyr village. Drive to visit the biggest Mosque in Central Asia – Saparmyrat Hajy Mosque. After lunch, drive to Gas Crater (268km) dubbed by locals as "The Door to Hell". The Derweze area is rich in natural gas. While drilling in 1971, Soviet geologists tapped into a cavern filled with natural gas. The ground beneath the drilling rig collapsed, leaving a large hole with a diameter of 70 metres. To avoid poisonous gas discharge, it was decided to burn it off. Geologists had hoped the fire would use all the fuel in a matter of days, but the gas is still burning today. En-route we cross Karakum desert, will make a stop at small nomad village and in the evening watch the spectacular and fascinating view of the gas crater. Dinner at Gas Crater. Overnight in a camp.

Ferris wheel



Wedding palace



underground lake



Nokhur



Yangikala



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Day 4: Derweze – Kunya Urgench – Dashoguz – Khiva

Picnic style breakfast. Drive to Kunya Urgench (UNESCO 2005) – ancient capital of Khorezm. Visit mausoleums of Il Arslan and Soltan Tekesh, Nejmeddin Kubra, Soltan Ali, Turabek-Khanum (12th c), minaret of Kutlug Timur, Mamun II. Drive to Dashoguz-Shavat border. Cross the border. Uzbek driver will meet you on Uzbek side and transfer to Khiva. Overnight at the hotel.

Day 5: Khiva

Breakfast in the hotel. City tour in Khiva – Ichan Kala (XIV-XX CC) with Muhamad Amin Khan Madrassah, Kalta Minor Minaret, Kunya Ark, Muhamad Rahim Khan Madrassah, Juma Mosque and Minaret, Tash Hauli Palace, Islam Khodja Mina-

Day 6: Khiva – Bukhara

Breakfast in the hotel. Drive to Bukhara city by Kizilkum desert (8-9 hours). Lunch at local café (mostly kebabs). Arrive Bukhara, hotel check-in, free time. Overnight in a hotel.

Day 7: Bukhara

Breakfast in the hotel. Sightseeing in Bukhara – one of the most important stops on the Silk Road. City tour with visits to the Ark Fortress (I-XX CC), Bolo Hauz Mosque (XVIII C), Samanids Mausoleum (IX-X CC), Chashma-Ayub Mausoleum (XII-XVI CC), Magoki Attori Mosque (XII C). Continue sightseeing: Poi-Kalyan complex with Kalyan Minaret (XII C) through orient bazaars with three trade domes of Toki Zargaron (XV C), Toki Sarrafon (XVI C), Toki Telpak Furushon (XVI C), Ulugbek Madrassah (XV C), Abdulazizkhan Madrassah (XVII C), Lyabi Hauz complex (XVI -XVII CC), surrounded by ancient mulberry trees, restaurants and cafes. Overnight in a hotel.

Day 8: Bukhara

Breakfast in the hotel. Visit to Chor-Minor (Four Minarets, XIX C), Sitorai Mokhi Khosa – summer residence of the last Emir of Bukhara, Baghautdin Nakhshbandi Complex – a center of Sufism. Drive to Samarkand. Overnight in Samarkand

Day 9: Samarkand

Breakfast in the hotel. We will start sightseeing from Registan Square (which means “desert” in Persian) and three madrassahs (religious study centers) surrounding the square: Ulughbek Madrassah (XV c), Sher-Dor Madrassah (XVII c), and Tillya-Kari Madrassah (XVII c) – covered with gold. Visit to Gur Emir Mausoleum (tomb of Tamerlane), Shakh Zinda Necropolis (XI-XX CC), Ulughbek Observatory, built in XV century by Timurid ruler and astronomer. Continue sightseeing with Bibi Khanym Mosque – built by Amir Timur (Tamerlane) in XV century and Siyab Bazaar. Overnight in Samarkand.

Awaza



Dashoguz



Nejmeddin Kubra



Darvaza Gas Crater



Merv historical site



Day 10: Samarkand – Tashkent

Breakfast in the hotel. Continue sightseeing in Samarkand: visit to Excavation of an ancient city and museum of Afrosiab, and Tombstone of Saint Daniyar. The prophet Daniyar (Daniel) is revered by three world religions: Christianity, Judaism and Islam, and mausoleum is still a pilgrimage place for the followers of all three Abrahamic religions. Transfer to the railway station for “Afrosiyob” train, departing at 17:00. Arrive Tashkent at 19:10, transfer to the hotel. Overnight in Tashkent.

Day 11: Tashkent

Breakfast in the hotel. City tour of Tashkent: Abdul Kasim Madrassah, Khast Imam Complex – a religious center of the city consisting of the Barakkhan Madrasah, Kaffal Shashi Mausoleum and the library of Islamic Literature with the Holy Koran Book of the VII century. Visiting modern part of Tashkent by metro: Amir Timur Square, Applied Art Museum, Earthquake Memorial, Independence Square. Overnight in Tashkent.

Day 12: Tashkent – Oybek – Iskanderkul

Transfer to Uzbek-Tajik border Oybek. Tajik guide will meet you on Tajikistan side and you will drive to high mountain lake – Iskanderkul (2 255 m. a. s. l.). It is situated in the famous Fann Mountains. This fabulous area is one of the best places of Central Asia. The road to the lakes goes over Anzob Pass (3 372 m) with amazing panorama views. After arrival to the lake you will go for a walk along its beaches. Also we will hike 40 minutes to see a waterfall. Tajikistan takes the second place among the CIS countries for volume of water resources: it has the highest water reserves of all Central Asian countries with more than 1 000 rivers, 2 000 lakes and 8000 glaciers. Overnight in a guesthouse.

Day 13: Iskanderkul – Khujand

Today you will drive to Khujand city. Khujand is the second largest city of Tajikistan. It is situated on Syr Darya River at the mouth of the Fergana Valley. The population of the city is 149,000. It is also the capital of the northernmost province of Tajikistan, now called Sughd. You will visit Cultural Palace of Khujand. Also we will go to see Central Mosque situated in the middle of the city. Overnight in a hotel.

Day 14: Khujand – Osh

In the morning is transfer to the Kyrgyz border and then drive to Osh city, which is usually referred as the Southern capital of Kyrgyzstan. In Osh city you will go for a walk and visit the most famous place – Suleiman Mountain. Suleiman Too (Solomon's Mountain) is situated in the center of the city and it is considered a pilgrimage place for local Muslims. According to the legend, biblical prophet Solomon (Suleiman in the Koran) was buried at the foot of it. Overnight in a hotel.

Tamerlane Monument



Amir Temur Monument



Anzob Pass



Fergana Valley



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Day 15: Osh – Kazarman

Today we will drive to Kazarman village. 93% of Kyrgyzstan is mountainous with nomadic life in remote places – real paradise for people in love with mountains and unusual cultures. The route takes you along roads that wind along incredible gorges. Today we will see some nomads that still live in this region. Dinner and overnight in a local home.

Day 16: Kazarman – Son Kul

After breakfast, we start our drive to the second largest lake in Kyrgyzstan – Son Kul. This lake is surrounded by mountains and it is the highest alpine lake in Kyrgyzstan, situated at an altitude of 3013 meters above sea level. Kyrgyz nomads started to come to this wonderful area with their families for rest and relaxation. Herders of the Naryn region come to the lake to use it as a pastureland. After our arrival, you will be free to explore and enjoy the virgin nature of the lake and its surroundings. Dinner and overnight is in nomadic collapsible dwellings - yurts. They are made of a wooden skeleton, covered with felt coverings.

Day 17: Son Kul – Kochkor – Bishkek

In the morning, you will be transferred to Kochkor village. The road will go along amazing gorge and you will drive today over Kalmak Ashu pass that is 3 225 meters high. In Kochkor village you will spend some time with a family that will show you the way national felt carpets are produced. Also you will visit a small handicraft museum there. Afterwards you will be transferred to the capital of Kyrgyzstan – Bishkek city. On the way visiting Burana Tower (an 11th century minaret) and an open air museum of Balbans (stone warriors). Overnight in a hotel.

Day 18: Bishkek – Almaty

The first half of the day is dedicated to a guided tour of Bishkek. It includes visiting Pobeda Square (Victory Square), Duboviy Park (Oak Park), Central Ala-Too Square, Old Square, National Philharmonic, and many others places of interest. In the afternoon we will drive to Almaty. The road takes 4-5 hours. Almaty was the capital of independent Kazakhstan from 1991 to 1997. In 1997, the capital moved to Astana; since then, Almaty has been referred to as the southern capital of Kazakhstan. Almaty remains the major commercial center of Kazakhstan. Overnight in a hotel.

Day 19: Almaty – Altyn Emel

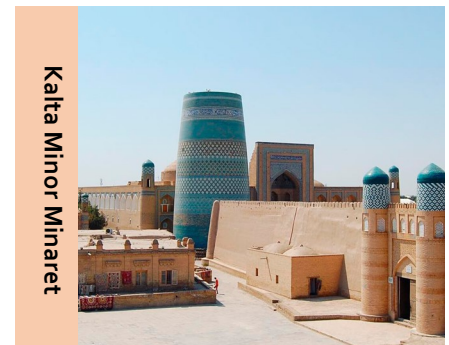
In the morning, you will drive to Altyn Emel National Park. You will see Kyzylauyz petroglyphs. Picnic at nature. Then sightseeing at Besshatyr burial mounds. Besshatyr burial mounds – is the main sightseeing of the Altyn Emel National Park. Besshatyr is translated as "five tents": probably because of the five biggest burial mounds on this territory, part of which has been excavated by the archaeologists in the middle of the past century. Besshatyr necropolis is considered to be the shrine of ancient Saks lived in the territory of modern Kazakhstan in the 6th century BC. Altogether 18 royal burial mounds, having diameter from 8 to 70 meters and height from 2 to 20 meters, are concentrated at the territory of 2 square km. Transfer to Altyn Emel hotel. Dinner. Overnight in a hotel.



Bishkek



Baiterek



Kalta Minor Minaret



Altyn Emel lake



5STAN-TOUR

Day 20: Altyn Emel

Singing Dune, reaching a height of 120 meters and a length of about 3 km is located in one of the corners of the Altyn-Emel National Park. This sandy hill consists of very fine pure sand, which starts to "sing" in windy weather and its sound reminds the organ music. Return to the hotel and lunch at 12:00 noon. Today you will have sightseeing tour to Katutau and Aktau mountains. Katutau Mountains (Harsh Mountains) are very ancient ruined mountains with preserved volcanic outputs. Aktau Mountains (White Mountains) are world-renowned paleontological field. In the layers of Paleogene lacustrine deposits well-preserved remains of ancient animals whose age is estimated at 25-30 million years have been found. Among the finds, there are the remains the giant rhinos, crocodiles, turtles. Huge conical mountains remind the Egyptian pyramids and are a magical scene of the variety of shapes and colors. Return to Altyn Emel hotel. Dinner and overnight in a hotel.



Day 21: Altyn Emel – Charyn Canyon – Almaty

In the morning is transfer to Ash-tree Grove on the Temerlik River. Sightseeing. Transfer to Charyn Canyon. Charyn Canyon is a natural complex, unique in its kind not only in Kazakhstan but also worldwide. It was formed during Paleogene and reminds the Grand Canyon of Colorado River in North America, although inferior to it in size. The height of the steep slopes of the canyon is up to 150-300 meters. Extraordinary dissection of the terrain is striking: the numerous ravines form a dense, chaotic network. The length of the valley is more than 2 km, width - 20-80 meters. For millions of years the nature has been creating a unique architecture, erecting magnificent castles carefully and slowly. You can spend hours walking among the strange towers and columns, being surprised by the wild imagination of the nature. Departure to Almaty. Overnight in a hotel.



Day 22: Almaty – Flight

Today you will have a sightseeing tour in Almaty. You will visit the Green Bazaar, Panfilov Park, the Memorial of Glory and Eternal Flame. After exploration of sport, cultural and business areas of the city you will go to Medeo Gorge, well known due to the highest mountain skating rink in the world and the dam. Next destination is the Kok-Tobe hill where the tallest TV tower in the world is located (counting from the sea level) and where you will get by the picturesque winding mountain road. In Kok-Tobe Park you can stroll along the winding paths of the park, admire the magnificent panorama of the city from the special observation deck and visit the shop of national souvenirs. The tour ends with the short ride from the top of the hill to the center of the city by the famous Almaty cableway. In the evening, you will have a flight to Urumqi.

