



## Journey Through Central Asia

### Go Beyond Tour | 28 Days | Physical Level 4

Dubai – Bishkek – Chon-Kemin – Bokonbaevo – Karakol – Almaty –  
Dushanbe – Khujand – Tashkent – Samarkand – Bukhara – Khiva – Ashgabat  
Mary – Dubai

Travel from Bishkek to Ashgabat on this 28 day 'Five Stan' cultural experience. This in-depth tour will see you visiting the Silk Road gems of Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva, the quirky Turkmenistan, colourful markets, fascinating villages and Swiss Alps type scenery. Retrace the footsteps of Marco Polo and Alexander the Great on this unforgettable Central Asian journey.

- Uncover the Silk Road's history
- Relax on Lake Issyk-Kul
- Witness fascinating Eagle Hunting
- Browse the colourful bazaars
- Explore the exotic Khiva
- Discover ancient Samarkand



## Journey Through Central Asia tour inclusions:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escort (if your group is 8 or more passengers) or local guides
- Visa fees for New Zealand passport holders
- Invitation letters for New Zealand passport holders
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants and product managers

*The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, customary tipping and early check in or late check out. These are all payable locally.*

## Go Beyond Tours:

Venture off the beaten track to explore fascinating destinations away from the tourist trail. You will discover the local culture in depth and see sights rarely witnessed by other travellers. These tours take you away from the comforts of home but will reward you with the experiences of a lifetime.

- Walking through classic sites
- Unique cultural experiences and encounters
- Off the beaten track destinations+
- More evenings at leisure for independent exploration

#### Physical Level 4:

All our tours feature a physical rating to help you select the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights.

‘Journey Through Central Asia’ is rated as a **physical level 4** tour. As a whole, this itinerary requires a high level of fitness involving hiking and travelling to remote areas where tourist facilities are less developed. This itinerary also drives through areas of high altitude. If you have an existing respiratory, vascular or coronary condition, we recommend checking with your doctor before undertaking this itinerary. Driving over the Moldo-Ashuu Pass you will reach the highest point of this tour at 3,346m. It is recommended to stay well hydrated and well rested in areas of high altitude.

- On some days driving distances are very long and it will take the whole day to reach your destination
- The 2 hikes will generally last around 1-2 hours at a time, sometimes on an incline and mostly on uneven ground
- There will be a few days of walking whilst sightseeing with 5 – 7 hours a day
- At Big Almaty Lake you will reach the highest point of this tour at 2,510m above sea level.
- In Kyrgyzstan you will stay overnight in a yurt camp. Yurts are the traditional home of nomads in Central Asia. They are made from a wooden frame and layers of felt and canvas erected on a wooden platform.

Of course, our National Escorts and local guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary. If you require any more information about the pace of the tours, please contact our reservations team who will be happy to answer your questions.

#### Region Profile: Central Asia

Central Asia is home to fabled cities, market bazaars and striking architecture. It conjures images of mystery and intrigue, and traditions that have remained unchanged for centuries. Travelling through Central Asia offers travellers an historic journey along sections of the Silk Road, a trading route dating back to ancient civilisation. See the spectacular alpine scenery of Kyrgyzstan, which contrasts to the breathtaking ancient cities and classic Islamic architecture of Uzbekistan.

#### Joining Your Tour

The tour is 28 days in duration including international flights. Please note due to flight schedules you may arrive on day 2 of the tour.

Travellers booked on ‘Land Only’, the price includes visa fees and your Dubai airport hotel and Dubai arrival/departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour. Please advise your international flight times to reservations. Join the tour on Day 1 in Dubai and end the tour on Day 27 in Ashgabat (or on Day 27 in Dubai for some New Zealand clients). Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

#### Itinerary Changes

It is our intention to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate. In these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements maintaining the integrity of your trip.

## Itinerary – Journey through Central Asia

### Days 1: Fly to Dubai and Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Fly to Dubai. Upon arrival a local Wendy Wu representative will meet and escort you to your transit hotel where you can freshen up and relax before your connecting flight to Bishkek late this evening.

Please note some New Zealand flight departures may depart the evening before the first day of the tour.

*It is recommended you bring a change of clothes and selected toiletries (within carry on fluid limits) in your carry on luggage so they are readily accessible for use in your hotel room for day use stay. Your main luggage will be checked in from New Zealand all the way to Bishkek.*

Travel overnight on your late evening flight to Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan.



### Day 2: Bishkek

Upon arrival in Bishkek early this morning you will be met and transferred to your hotel for early check-in. The remainder of the day is at your leisure before an afternoon lunch and welcome meeting.

In the late afternoon, you will take a short city tour that includes Manas Monument, Ala Too Square and Independ Monument.

*Some tour members may wish to stay in the hotel to rest for the day. Please notify your local National Escort if you wish to do this.*



#### Destination Information

**Ala Too Square** – Formerly known as Lenin Square, the square was built in 1984 to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the Soviet Era. Today the square serves as a site for state events. Its main centrepiece is a statue of Manas in celebration of the 20th anniversary of independence.

**Bishkek** - The capital of Kyrgyzstan has a population of 900,000. The city did not develop until 1825, when the Kokand Khanate enclosed the site as a fortress. By 1864, the Russians had captured the fortress and in 1878, founded the city of Bishkek. Bishkek is a city of wide boulevards and marble-facade public buildings combined with numerous Soviet-style apartment blocks. Most streets are flanked on both sides by narrow irrigation channels that water the innumerable trees, which provide shade during the hot summers.



### Day 3: Bishkek – Ala Archa National Park

This afternoon, you will drive 1 hour south to Ala Archa National Park where you will stop at the park's base camp. Within this time, you will rise from 750m to 2100m above sea level.

From here, you will have the opportunity to enjoy some free time in this Juniper covered region with its picturesque scenery, snow-capped mountains and freshwater rivers.

Return to Bishkek where you will enjoy an afternoon free at leisure.



#### Destination Information

**Ala Archa National Park** – Ala-Archa is an alpine national park in the Tian Shan Mountains. The name Ala Archa translates as 'Bright Juniper' from Kyrgyz as the whole gorge is covered with various trees including the main one – juniper.

### Day 4: Chon-Kemin

This morning depart for the peaceful village of Chon-Kemin, enjoying breath-taking views along the way. Enroute enjoy a stop at Burana Tower.

Upon arrival you can take in the daily life in Ashu Village, take a leisurely walk in the foothills of the surrounding magnificent mountains and fir tree forests, interact with some of the locals or take a participate in an optional horse-riding experience (paid locally).



*Please note: Accommodation in Chon-Kemin will be in a 40-room guesthouse. This is an opportunity to experience the lifestyle and hospitality of local people. All rooms are private ensuite.*

#### Destination Information

**Burana Tower** - This 11th century octagonal monument was once a taller minaret until earthquakes caused significant damage. Today the tower, castle foundations and grave markers are the ruins of the capital of the Karakhanids.

**Chon-Kemin Valley** – The spectacular Chon-Kemin Valley is almost 80km deep and is famous for its natural beauty, abundant wildlife and mountain lakes.

## Day 5: Chon-Kemin - Bokonbayevo

Today we drive to Kochkor Village, the centre of Kyrgyz national felt handicrafts.

Here you will be able to see how the traditional Kyrgyz wool carpets, called 'shyrdak', are made.

Continue driving to Bokonbayevo village and watch a demonstration of Eagle Hunting.

*Please note that your accommodation this evening will be in a traditional Kyrgyz yurt camp. There are no en-suite facilities in the yurt camp.*



### Destination Information

**Kochkor** - Kochkor is a large village with a population of 15,000. Most of the inhabitants are farmers and shepherds who live in yurts during the summer. Kochkor used to be a stop for Silk Road merchants travelling to and from Kashgar, on the other side of Torugart Pass in China. The pleasant, leafy town overlooked by snow-capped mountains is a base for excursions into the high country.

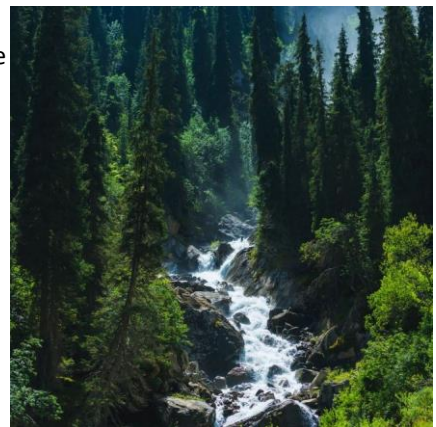
**Eagle Hunting** – See a demonstration of hunting with trained golden eagles, often using a sacrificial rabbit trapped for the purpose. This style depicts authentic hunting traditions: this is often how young eagles are trained.

**Bokonbaevo Village** - Bokonbaevo Village is a cosy and picturesque village on the southern shore of lake Issyk Kul, with green meadows and snow-capped mountains nearby. The surrounding area is sprinkled with yurts. The surrounding area is sprinkled with yurts. Most people here make a living by either farming or craftsmanship.

## Day 6: Karakol

This morning depart for Karakol. On the way you will stop at Barskoon Gorge to take a light hike to a waterfall named 'Tears of Leopard'. The gorge is considered to be one of the most beautiful in the Issyk Kul area. You will also visit Skazka Canyon, also known as Fairy Tale Canyon. This canyon was named so due to its bizarre rock formations, including depictions of snakes, dragons and hippopotamuses.

Following your tour, you will arrive in Karakol before checking into your hotel.



### Destination Information

**Skazka Canyon** - Skazka Canyon, known as Fairy Tale Canyon, was named so due to its bizarre rocky landscape, which for many years has been transformed by wind into fabulous sculptures and formations. Some formations have been named for their similarity to well-known objects, like one set of ridges named "The Chinese Wall".

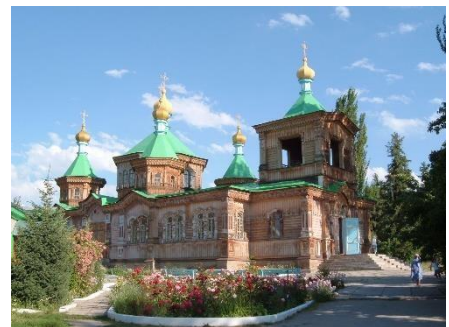
**Barskoon Gorge** – Barskoon Gorge is one of the most beautiful gorges on the southern shore of Issyk-Kul, famous for high waterfalls and dense spruce forests. The gorge is famous because it was visited by the first man who flew into space – Yuri Gagarin.

**Karakol** - Russian military outpost founded on 1 July 1869, Karakol grew in the 19th century after explorers came to map the peaks and valleys separating Kyrgyzstan from China. In the 1880s Karakol's population surged with an influx of Dungans, Chinese Muslims fleeing warfare in China.

### Day 7: Karakol

This morning you will visit the interesting Przhevalskii Museum and examine the region's diverse religious influences with visits to the striking Holy Trinity Orthodox Church and the Chinese mosque from the outside as visits inside are not always guaranteed. All touring this morning is at a comfortable pace.

In the afternoon, travel to the Valley of Flowers and Jety-Oguz Gorge where you can enjoy a light hike through the magnificent canyon of red sandstone. Sightseeing in the canyon involves 1 hour of leisurely walking on a bush track. Although this is a gentle hike, you will need to climb some hills and slopes and you will be walking over uneven ground at altitude. If you take part in this activity, you must be able to complete it independently.



### Destination Information

**Przhevalskii Museum** - Displays fascinating exhibits on the Issy Kul petroglyphs, Scythian bronze artefacts, and a short history of the geology and mineral exploitation in the region.

**Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral** - This wooden church was built in 1894 on the ruins of a brick church. It is said that during construction, no nails or metal fastenings were used.

**Chinese Mosque** - The mosque was constructed in 1907, in the style of a Chinese temple for the local Dungans yet was built in the Kyrgyz traditional wood feathering style instead of metal nail construction.

**Jety-Oguz Gorge** - A lush valley located 30km outside Karakol. The name translates to 'seven bulls' in the Kyrgyz language, referring to the red sandstone rock formations that resemble seven angry bulls. Famous for its hot springs and the beautiful scenery.

## Day 8: Karakol – Almaty, Kazakhstan

Rise early and travel to the outskirts of town for the unforgettable Karakol Sunday Animal Market, the largest and most colourful in Central Asia.

Continue onto the Kyrgyzstan/Kazakhstan border. Transfer across the border into Kazakhstan and onto the scenic Charyn Canyon and its Valley of the Castles, named due to the pillars and rock formations forming imposing, almost lookalike manmade structures. There will be an option to hike down towards the valley floor or observe the canyon rim from above. Your visit here will be 2 hours.

Following your visit to Charyn Canyon, you will continue to Almaty before checking into your hotel.



### Destination Information

**Sunday Animal Market** - Early on Sunday mornings Kyrgyzstan's biggest and most colourful animal markets takes place on the outskirts of Karakol. The Sunday market is the place to be in Kyrgyzstan if you want to buy or sell farm animals - cows, horses, sheep, and goats are the primary objects of trade. You will see some amazing characters present and the photos you take here will rank among the best on your trip.

**Charyn Canyon** - Over three million years ago both wind and water sculpted Charyn's red sandstone to form today's fantastical shapes and shadows. Measuring approximately 150 kilometres long and up to 300 metres deep in some areas, the Canyon's River Valley is fed by the local Tianshan Mountains.

**Almaty** - Situated beneath snow-capped peaks, and the capital of Kazakhstan until 1997, today Almaty is the country's largest metropolis and is still considered its cultural and trading hub.

## Day 9: Almaty

This morning take part in an orientation walk visiting Republic Square, Abai Opera Theatre, the Central Mosque, the Green Market and Zenkov Cathedral.

This afternoon visits the turquoise Big Almaty Gorge where, at an altitude of 2,510m above sea level is Big Almaty Lake. Nestled in the Tian Shan mountains, this turquoise oasis is one of the most picturesque attractions of Central Asia. Here will enjoy the day relaxing by the lake and the nearby mountain peaks covered in fir trees, aspen and juniper.





#### Destination Information

**Zenkov Cathedral** - Built between 1904 and 1907 and constructed entirely of wood, the Zenkov Cathedral showcases distinctive colourful hues and is once again a practicing Russian Orthodox Church having been used as a museum previously during the time of the Soviets.

**Tian Shan Mountains** - The Tian Shan also known as the Tengri Tagh, meaning the Mountains of Heaven or the Heavenly Mountain, is a large system of mountain ranges located in Central Asia. The highest peak in the Tian Shan is Jengish Chokusu located on the Kyrgyzstan–China border, at 7,439 metres.

**Big Almaty Lake** - This picturesque turquoise lake, 1.6km long, rests in a rocky bowl at 2500m altitude reflecting the Tian Shan mountains and the giant fir trees in its still depths.

#### Day 10: Dushanbe, Tajikistan

This morning in Almaty is yours at leisure. This afternoon, we will transfer to the airport for the evening flight to Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan.



#### Destination Information

**Dushanbe** - With Soviet era pastel buildings and public squares contrasted with the outer hinterlands of mountains and rural villages Dushanbe is one of the most charming capital cities in Central Asia. The name originated from the Tajik word Monday because of a once popular market that would be held each week on that specific day.

#### Day 11: Dushanbe

Today we see the highlights of exciting Dushanbe, starting with the Museum of National Antiquities; displaying countless artefacts from Tajikistan's Islamic and pre- Islamic history. Here you will see the famous 1,400-year-old statue of Buddha in Niravna. We then continue our city tour through the botanical gardens, Rudaki Park and the Ismoil Monument.

In the afternoon you will make your way to Hissor town to see the ancient fortress of Hissor, one of the most precious historical sites of Tajikistan. Visit Medrassah Kuhna (16th century) and Museum of Tajik Way of life there, a 19th century Madrassah and the Mausoleum of Sufi Saint Mahdumi Azam.



#### **Destination Information**

**Rudaki Park** - A scenic landscaped park with flower gardens, fountains and statues. Enjoy the peaceful setting and people watch with the locals.

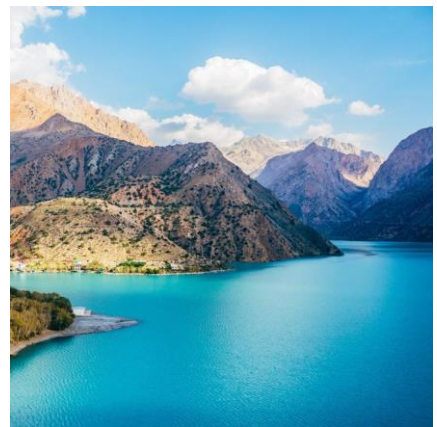
**Ismoili Somoni Monument** - Standing 25 meters high, this statue commemorates the founder of the Samanid dynasty from the 10th century.

**Hissor Fort - Fortress of Hissor** - As a strategic outpost, the Fortress of Hissor has been destroyed over 20 times throughout history by the likes of Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan and Timur. Each time it has been rebuilt and today there are remnants of architecture that remain mostly from the 18th Century.

#### **Day 12: Khujand**

Travel to the breathtaking Lake Iskander Kul with its stunning mountain backdrop. Spend time here taking in the memorable views. Following your stop here, continue to Khujand.

*Please note that you will be travelling for around 7 hours today.*



#### **Destination Information**

**Lake Iskanderkul** - Named after Alexander the Great, this lake is a popular attraction due to its glacier origin and vivid turquoise waters.

**Khujand** - One of Tajikistan's oldest cities dating back 2,500 years and founded by Alexander the Great as his eastern most settlement. Known as Leninabad during the USSR occupation it reverted to its original name in 1992.

#### **Day 13: Khujand – Tashkent**

In the morning you will enjoy a tour of Khujand, taking in the city highlights. Start by exploring Pushkin Square with Kamoli Khudjandi Square, Timur Malik's fortress and Sugd Museum, then continue to the Muslihiddin Memorial Complex and Panjshanbe Bazaar - offering a wide range of goods and services.

Later, travel approximately 2 hours to Tashkent, crossing the border into Uzbekistan on the way.



### Destination Information

**Pushkin Square** - Named in honour of the great Russian poet and surrounded by neo classical buildings and fountains.

**Panjshanbe Bazaar** - A colourful and vibrant bazaar, the name of which translates from the Persian word for Thursday.

**Tashkent** – Tashkent at 3 million people is the capital of Uzbekistan, as well as the most populated city in ex-Soviet Central Asia. Tashkent was influenced by Turkic cultures in its early history, before Islam in the 8th century AD. Genghis Khan destroyed the city in 1219, but the city was rebuilt and profited from the Silk Road. Between the 18th to 19th century, the city became an independent city-state, before being re-conquered by the Khanate of Kokand. In 1865, it fell to the Russian Empire, and became the capital of Russian Turkestan.

## Day 14: Tashkent

In the morning journey back in time exploring Tashkent's town sights: Barak Khan, Madrassah, Kukeldash Madrassah, and Tila Shaikh mosque and their archives – known for rare copies of the Koran. Stop at Chorsu Bazaar – the oldest in Tashkent.

In the afternoon you will be invited to the workshop of a famous family of ceramists in Uzbekistan - Akbar and Alisher Rakhimov. Here you will learn about their pastime.

Your last stop will be to the Tashkent Metro, with its opulently decorated marble, granite and chandeliers.



### Destination Information

**Barak Khan Madrassah** - Built in the 16th century with funds donated by the Tashkent ruler Navruz Akhmed. Today this is the oldest educational institution in Tashkent. Though this madrassah is no longer used for its original purpose, it attracts attention for its well-preserved architectural features.

**Kukeldash Madrassah** - One of the biggest and one of the most famous historical monuments in Tashkent. The 16th-century Islamic school is built of mud bricks decorated with majolica and painted ceramic tiles.

**Independence Square** - The main and most beautiful square in the heart of the city. Commemorating the country's freedom it has been a popular destination for both locals' and tourists because of its beautiful monuments and fountains.

**Amir Timur Maydoni** - Founded in 1882 and originally called Konstantinovsky Square. In 1994 it was renamed to honour the great Amir Timur who founded the Timurid Empire, which lasted for 200 years. A famous monument to the great leader stands in the squares centre.

## Day 15: Tashkent - Samarkand

In the morning you will drive to Samarkand, where on arrival you will check in at the hotel.

No name is so evocative of the Silk Road as Samarkand. It is one of the oldest existing cities in the world and the oldest of Central Asia. Built on the site of Afrosiab, which dated from the 3rd or 4th millennium B.C., Samarkand was known to the ancient Greeks as Marakanda, and ruins of the old settlement remain north of the present city.

You will have a half day tour of Samarkand to see the famous Registan Square which was for many centuries the heart of Samarkand. See the three beautiful madrassahs: the Ulug-Bek Madrasah built in the 15th century; the Tillya-Kori Madrasah built in the 17th century, and the Sher-Dor Madrasah, also built in the 17th century.



### Destination Information

**Samarkand** - When Alexander the Great first visited here, he declared "I heard that Samarkand was beautiful but never thought that it could be so beautiful and majestic". The finest builders, craftsmen, philosophers and scientists were invited to Samarkand and the reputation of its refined civilisation grew until Samarkand was a city of legend and wonder along the Silk Road

**Registan Square** - The Square is lined on three sides by sparkling turquoise tiled buildings of the Sher Dor and Tilla Qori madrassas. The interior and exterior facades of the madrassas are decorated with ornamental glazed brick, mosaics and carved marble. The square is considered an architectural gem representing the finest in Islamic Art and, most remarkably, a rare depiction of an animal's form. It was here that royal proclamations were read out and where justice was dispensed. The huge colourful bazaar is located nearby.

## Day 16: Samarkand

This morning we continue exploring Samarkand to see Gur Emir, the mausoleum of Tamerlane, the grandest structure of Amir Temur's times - the chief Friday Mosque called Bibi-Khanum - the Siab Bazaar and Shahi Zinda Necropolis.

In the afternoon, you will visit Ulugbek's observatory, constructed by Ulugbek (Grandson of the Great Amir Temur) in 1428-1429. Later see the ancient settlement of Afrosiab.





#### Destination Information

**Timur's Guri Amir Mausoleum** - The famous blue ribbed domed mausoleum that rises over the old city's rooftops. Tamerlane was laid under a massive slab of green jade, said to be the largest Jade stone in the world.

**Shah-I-Zinda Necropolis** - A mausoleum complex located northeast of the city, the names translates to 'Tomb of the Living King'. This refers to the important Muslim shrine in the region, the complex of quiet rooms around what is most likely the grave of Qusam ibn-Abbas, a cousin of the Prophet Mohammed who is thought to have brought Islam to this area in the 7th century.

**Bibi-Khanyam Mosque** - One of the most impressive historic mosques in Central Asia, construction on Bibi-Khanyam was started by Timur in 1399 and completed shortly before his death.

**Ulugh Beg Observatory** - Ulugh Beg was Tamerlane's grandson and a great astronomer. During his rule in the 15th century, he summoned the great minds of the Islamic world to Samarkand.

**Afrosiab** - This ancient settlement is situated on the spurs of Chupan-Ata hills to the north-east of present-day Samarkand. According to the legend, it was here, on the banks of the river Siab, that the Turanian king and hero Afrosiab, a character of the folk epic 'Shahnama', founded the town that became the capital of Sogdiana.

#### Day 17: Samarkand – Bukhara

Approximately 90km south of Samarkand is the town of Shakhrisabz; the birthplace of the Great Tamerlane and your destination today. Upon arrival you will explore the city site of the remnants of Ak-Sarai Palace, Dorus Tilavat Cemetery and Kok-Gumbas Mosque.

*Photo fees may be payable at most attractions you will visit in Samarkand, approximately 14USD in total.*

*Due to safety reasons, buses are not allowed on the mountain pass from Samarkand to Shakhrisabz, therefore you will travel in smaller vehicles for this leg of the journey before travelling by coach again from Shakhrisabz onwards.*



#### Destination Information

**Shakhrisabz** - Shakhrisabz is a 2700 years old city and has played a major role in the history of the Central Asian region, mostly due to Shakhrisabz being the birthplace of Amir Timur (or Tamerlane) in 1336. During the early years of the Timurid Dynasty, the city enjoyed his considerable patronage. Timur regarded the town as his "hometown" and planned it eventually to be the location of his tomb. The historic centre of Shakhrisabz was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2000

**Ak-Sarai Palace** - With its gigantic 65m gate-towers covered with blue, white and gold mosaics, Timur's summer palace is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The crumbling relic will give you some idea of how Samarkand's buildings would have looked centuries ago.

**Dorus Tilavat Cemetery** - The memorial complex was formed after the death of the eminent religious leader Shamsiddin Kulal, the spiritual mentor of Timur. His grave immediately became a place of reverence for his numerous disciples. The area was reconstructed numerous times and served as an educational institution.

**Kok-Gumbas Mosque** - Visible practically from any point of Shakhisabz, the Friday mosque gets its name from this 'Blue Dome' shimmering in the sun. The rich architectural structure was designed and constructed in 1435, 30 years after the death of Amir Timur.

#### Day 18: Bukhara

Today you have a full day exploring fabulous Bukhara. This incredible city, one of the most famous names of medieval Islam, is home to hundreds of registered monuments. On today's tour we visit some of the main highlights as well some lesser known sights along the way. Bring a fully charged camera battery.

Today's sightseeing includes Lab-i-khauz ensemble - modern centre of traditional Uzbekistan, Madrassah Nadirkhon Devanbegi, Khanaga and Mogaki Attari Mosques, Poi Kalon Minaret and Mosque, See Madrassahs Aziz Khan and Ulugbek Madrassah.



After lunch you will visit the Ark of Bukhara, Balakhauz Mosque and the Mausoleums of Ismail Samanid and Chashma Ayub.

We will also visit Hunarmand UNDP Assisted workshops near Lyabi-Hauz. We to see block printing, metal chasing, suzani embroidery, carving and gold embroidery.

Women should bring a scarf from home, as you are required to cover your head at some attractions today.

Photo fees may be payable at most attractions you will visit in Bukhara, approximately USD7 in total.

### Destination Information

**Bukhara** - A city which has a long history spanning 2,500 years and what was an integral part of the Persian Empire for centuries. Within the city, there are more than 350 mosques and 100 religious colleges. Bukhara was part of what came to be called the 'Golden Road', the meeting point of the northern and southern branches of the Silk Road, and hence a great centre for commerce, religion and culture. The city's most famous landmark is the 12<sup>th</sup> century Kalon Minaret. It is said that when Genghis Khan attacked and destroyed the rest of the city, he left the minaret standing, supposedly because he was struck by its beauty.

**Lyabi-Hauz (or Labi-Hauz)** – Lyabi-Hauz is a plaza built in 1620, constructed around a large pool. Derived from Persian and meaning 'ensemble near the pool', even today that custom continues as men gather to chat, play dominoes and drink endless pots of tea at the poolside chaykhana (tea house).

**Ark of Bukhara** - The fortified residence of the rulers of Bukhara but also housed palaces, temples, barracks, offices, the mint, warehouses, workshops, stables, an arsenal, a prison and nowadays a museum.

**Bolo Hauz Mosque** - Translated the name of the mosque means "The Mosque of the Bala Lake", which refers to the octagonal pool located in the public forecourt lined with stone steps. Built in 1712, the mosque is splendid and still functional – believers still visit to pray every day.

**Kalon Minaret** - One of the most prominent landmarks of the city, Kalon Minaret was constructed in 1127 by the Karakhanid ruler Arslan Khan. An amazing structure standing at 47m tall, there are 14 ornamental bands and 10m deep foundations.

**Ulugbek Madrassah** - Built in 1417 as a center for science and astronomy in conservative Bukhara. Its design incorporates astral designs into its decorative facades. The madrassah could seat up to 80 students, with many graduates becoming eminent scholars and poets.

### Day 19: Bukhara

Continue your sightseeing of Bukhara with an out-of-town excursion to visit the Sitora-i-Mokhikhosa, the summer residence of the former Emir of Bukhara where you can see unique mixture of traditional Russian style of architecture harmoniously mixed with local oriental traditions. The famous white hall decorated with carved alabaster resembles the halls of Peterhof Palace in the suburb of St Petersburg

Continue with an excursion to Bahauddin Naqshbandi Mausoleum, a famous Sufi spiritual leader of this region in the 14th century. Bahouddin Naqshband's cult was highly venerated among folks. The rulers, too, paid a considerable attention to this architectural ensemble.

You have the afternoon at leisure for your own exploration.

*Photo fees may be payable at most attractions you will visit in Bukhara, approximately US\$14 in total.*



### Destination Information

**Sitora-i-Mokhikhosa** – Dating back to the beginning of the 20th century, the summer residence of the Last Bukharan Emir is situated 4km outside the city. The main building of the palace consists of several reception halls and the emir's private chambers. Among them is the white hall, shining with dazzlingly white carved ganch covering the walls and ceilings.

### Day 20: Khiva

Set out for Khiva in the early morning across the famous Kyzyl Kum desert ("Red sands").

During this journey, watch in awe as the scenery changes from saksaul trees to the Amudarya riverbank. we will make several photo stops to see the desert flora and fauna. Upon arrival check into your hotel for a two-night stay.

*Please be aware that you will be travelling for around 7 hours today. There will be adequate time for toilet breaks and photo stops.*



### Destination Information

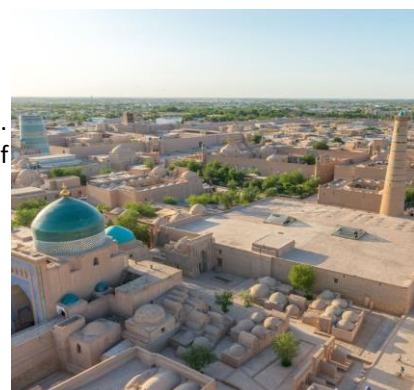
**Khiva** – This small town may have been founded up to 2,500 years ago and was said to have been discovered by Shem, the son of Noah. The town certainly existed by the 8th Century, as a minor fort and trading post on a Silk Road branch to the Caspian Sea and the Volga River.

**Amudarya River** - The Amudarya River flows out of the Pamir Mountains, which marks the border between Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. During the reign of Alexander the Great, this river frequently featured in his campaigns, however it was then known as the Oxus River, after its discovery by Herodotus, an ancient Greek geographer.

### Day 21: Khiva

Khiva is a town made for walking. It is compact, well maintained, lived in and basks in beautiful desert light.

Explore this ancient city today with leisurely sightseeing for 4-5 hours on foot. Visit Kukhna Ark Fortress, the turquoise-tiled Islom-Khodja, the mausoleum of Pakhlavan Makhmud. These are all located within the walled inner town called the Itchan Kala, which was the first site in Uzbekistan to achieve recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage listed site in 1990. Later visit Madrassah Rakhimkhon where studies in religion, astronomy, geography and mathematics took place, the Kalta Minor Minaret and the 9th century Tash Hauli Palace decorated in fine china blue tile work. In the afternoon visit the Friday Mosque and the 19th century Tash Hauli Palace including the harem.





### Destination Information

**Tashauli Palace** – Meaning “Stone House” this palace contains Khiva’s most sumptuous interior decoration, dense with blue ceramic tiles, carved wooden pillars and elaborate *ganch*. Completed in 1841, it’s said to have more than 150 rooms off nine courtyard, with high ceilings designed to catch the slightest desert breeze.

**Itchan Kala** - A well-persevered example of Muslim architecture in Central Asia at the beginning of the 19th century, Itchan Kala is the inner town of Khiva. The town is surrounded by brick city walls, with four gates at the cardinal points.

**Kukhna Ark Fortress** - Construction of the fort began in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, making it one of the oldest buildings in Khiva. There is written evidence that the ‘modern’ citadel was built in 1668, and the complex grew to hold an arsenal, warehouse, guardhouse, jail, a large kitchen, stable and official offices. Of the buildings that once stood, you can still view the official reception hall, the ornate mint, mosque and a harem.

## Day 22: Khiva – Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

A long day of traveling today as we journey from Uzbekistan to Turkmenistan. First, we transfer overland to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Kunya-Urgench - the once glorious capital of the medieval Khorezmshah Empire. We will visit the mausoleums of Turabek Hanum, Sultan Tekesh and Il-Arslan before continuing to, the minaret of Kutlug Timur and the fabled al-Mamun’s Academy of Sciences.

Later, we will transfer to Dashoguz to catch an evening flight to the Turkmen capital city of Ashgabat



### Destination Information

**Kunya-Urgench** – Also known as Old Gurganj, this fascinating Old Town contains a series of monuments from the 11th – 16th centuries that testify the outstanding achievements in craftsmanship and architecture of the time.

**Turabek Khanum Mausoleum** - Whilst there is no knowledge of who is buried inside, this mausoleum is one of the finest examples of Central Asian architecture.

**Il-Arslan Mausoleum** - The oldest standing monument in Kunya Urgench, this mausoleum is decorated with reliefs from carved terracotta, atop the mausoleum sits a 12-faced conical dome, a unique feature for a building of this kind.

**Kutlug Timur Minaret** - Originally constructed in the 11th – 12th century and is the tallest minaret in Central Asia.

**Ashgabat** – Translated in Arabic as ‘city of love’, Ashgabat was rebuilt after an earthquake in 1948 destroyed most of the city. With independence from Russia in the early 1990’s Ashgabat has transformed into a modern city.

## Day 23: Ashgabat

This morning will be at your leisure to get your bearings in this wonderful city.

Later, travel outside of Ashgabat to visit Arkadash stud farm and learn about the 'winged' Akhal Tekkes horses. Enroute back to Ashgabat stop at the Kipchak Complex where the largest mosque in Turkmenistan and the family Mausoleum of the country's first president is located. You Will also visit the National Museum of History and Ethnology before returning to your hotel.



### Destination Information

**Akhal Tekkes** – The national emblem of Turkmenistan and one of the oldest existing horse breeds in the world. One of the most distinct features is the metallic like sheen of their coats.

## Day 24: Ashgabat - Mary

Today is an early start as you transfer to the airport for our flight to Mary. On arrival, you will then head to the ancient and glorious city of Merv; a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the major archaeological sites of Central Asia.

After touring and time to explore here, you will return to Mary to visit the local History Museum and view the wide range of archaeological artefacts that are display here.



### Destination Information

**Merv** - One of the most important archaeological sites on the old Silk Road, Merv was founded by Cyrus the Great in the 6th century, the "Queen of the World" and was reputedly the largest city in the world. In the 12th century, the city had a population of 700,000 before a Mongol invasion ended her reign in the 13th century when the entire population (including refugees and people from nearby towns) of a million people were killed.

**Mary History Museum** – Providing a glimpse into the history of this diverse city, this impressive museum showcases archaeological finds from both Ancient Merv and the Bronze Age; dating back to the 3,000BC.

## Day 25: Darwaza Gas Crater

This morning you will catch a domestic flight back to Ashgabat to continue exploring this fascinating city. See the Monument and Park of Independence and the impressive Ertoghul Ghazi Mosque.

This afternoon you will drive north to Darvaza and its captivating Flaming Crater. Arriving at the border between the northern and southern regions of Turkmenistan, turn off the main road for an exciting 8 kilometre desert drive. On arrival, you will take a leisurely walk around the crater as the sun sets. Finish the day eating a delicious nomadic camp-side in the serene atmosphere of the night sky and the lights of the “eternal fire”. Return to Ashgabat later this evening.



### Destination Information

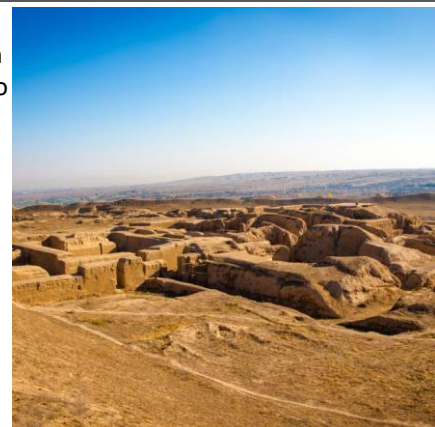
**Monument and Park of Independence** – A white-marble “Eiffel Tower”, commemorates the founding of Turkmenistan as an independent nation.

**Ertoghul Ghazi Mosque** – This prominent landmark in Ashgabat was built to honour Ertoghul Ghazi - the father of Osman I and founder of the Ottoman Empire.

**Darvaza Crater** - In 1971, in the former U.S.S.R. the Darvaza crater was created accidentally due to drilling in the region, which resulted in natural gases being omitted. The Russian authorities believed that lighting this gas was the safest and quickest option to eradicate the gas and was expected to burn for a few weeks. Over 45 years later it still burns and has been known around the world as the ‘Gates of Hell’.

## Day 25: Ashgabat

Today will be your final day in Ashgabat, so make the most of it. Visit the Old Nisa Fortress, the former residence of the Parthian Empire. After lunch you will continue the fun at the colourful Russian Bazaar. Later, continue to the National Carpet Museum that exhibits an interesting collection of hand-made Turkmen carpets and various carpet objects



#### Destination Information

**Old Nisa Fortress** – Residence of the former Parthian Empire from the 3rd century. Formed in an irregular pentagon shape these restored ruins comprise labyrinth walls and fortifications.

**Russian Bazaar** - Housing an array of foods and souvenir stalls, the bazaar is an ideal way to immerse yourself in everyday Turkmen life.

**National Carpet Museum** - This museum houses the largest collection of Turkmen handmade carpets dating back to the 18th century.

#### Day 27-28: Flight from Ashgabat to Dubai

Early in the morning transfer to the Ashgabat airport for your flight to Dubai and onto New Zealand.

On arrival in Dubai you will connect to your flight to New Zealand returning home on the following day.





## Journey Through Central Asia Travel Information

### Visas

Travel Entry visas are required by all visitors to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Wendy Wu Tours Visa Department can assist you with the process of obtaining a visa. We will supply you with all paperwork if applicable and submit the visa application on your behalf. Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it from the date of entry into Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

Please note the visa procedures and requirements may change at any time. These changes are often made by the relevant embassy or consulate; Wendy Wu Tours acts as a third party and has no influence on the process of a visa. Currently a visa is required for New Zealand Passport holders. Your travel consultant will inform you if any changes are applicable prior to your departure.

### Important Visas and Immigration Notes

As this is a multi-country 5 Stans trip, your National Escort will change in Almaty. Your Turkmen National Escort will meet you at the Ashgabat airport in Turkmenistan and guide you in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and in Tajikistan. He or she will check you at the Dushanbe, Tajikistan airport and wave you off for your flight to Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Upon arrival in Almaty, a Kazakh guide will meet and greet you and guide you in Kazakhstan and in Kyrgyzstan. He or she will check you at the Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan airport and wave you off for your flight home.

As Central Asian immigration and customs officials are notoriously strict, please make sure you keep all forms for when you exit the country. A lost customs or immigration form could result in a fine.

When entering Uzbekistan, you will need to complete a foreign currency declaration form when you arrive and keep a copy yourself. Failure to do so accurately or exiting the country with more currency than when you entered may result in delays, fines or the additional sums being confiscated.

Ensure you exchange any unspent local currency prior to departure as there is no generally no exchange offices at international airports in Dushanbe and Bishkek.

A number of medications containing tramadol, morphine, opiates or any other similar constituent component are banned in Turkmenistan and are considered narcotic drugs. Do not bring any medications containing these drugs into the country.

Some medications available over the counter or by prescription in other countries, such as sleeping tablets, may be illegal or restricted in Uzbekistan. You should declare all prescription medications and other restricted items on arrival in Uzbekistan and carry a copy of the prescription with you.

## Currency

The 5 countries of Central Asia are very much cash-only economies.

Please bring enough US Dollars in cash with you on your trip cash to cover your entire stay.

There are only a handful of ATM machines in Bishkek, Almaty, Dushanbe, Tashkent and Ashgabat although do not rely on these as they can be unreliable. There are no ATMs in smaller cities and rural areas.

Credit cards are only accepted in some hotels and in a limited number of shops, therefore make sure you bring a sufficient amount of USD cash of different denominations.

In smaller cities, you will find banking facilities less reliable and may encounter staff that refuse to deal with a currency they are unfamiliar with, for this reason bring US Dollars with you for easy exchange.

It is highly recommended when travelling to towns outside of the major cities that extra care is taken when exchanging money. You should only change money at officially authorised currency exchanges. We suggest exchanging your money before travelling to remote areas and smaller towns, as exchange facilities can be limited. Your National Escort will remind you to do this before departure.

Please bring only fresh, undamaged US Dollars with no blemishes, printed after 2001 as these notes will be accepted for exchange. Notes with any additional markings or notes that are faded are often refused even by official travel exchange offices.

Bring USD notes in mostly 20 and 50 denominations with a handful of 100 USD notes.

Ensure you exchange any unspent local currency prior to departure as there is no exchange office at the Dushanbe and Bishkek international airports.

## Insurance

We strongly encourage all customers to take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. These documents should be stored separately from the originals.

Wendy Wu Tours will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

## Eating in Central Asia

Central Asian cuisine is diverse and flavoursome with a legacy stretching back thousands of years. It is important to keep an open mind and be adventurous. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our fully inclusive Journey Through Central Asia group tours from the groups' arrival until the groups' day of departure. Please be aware that dishes selected for your meals reflect the cooking styles and signature dishes of the local area you are in.

In Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the cuisine is influenced by Middle Eastern and Turkic (or Mediterranean) dishes – yoghurts, dried fruit, legumes, fruit vinegars, or mild spices like cumin season the common dishes such as lagman (handmade noodles), shashlyk (kebabs), naan (flat bread) and plov (rice pilaf dish). Mutton and chicken are the only meats available in most areas and feature in most dishes. Local breakfast dishes include naan and airan (like sour cream), savoury noodles with vinegar and green tea. You may also be served a fried egg, jam, honey or toast. Black tea and coffee can usually be requested. Fresh cow's milk is not generally available.

Vegetarian only alternatives are not usually available in Kyrgyzstan, though Uzbekistani restaurants are more flexible. There are always plenty of salads, vegetables and bread offered at most meals. In remote areas, lunch may be prepared as 'picnic style' by the hotel that morning, or your guides may organise a simple meal at a local restaurant. Lunch is the main meal of the day, with dinner usually a lighter version of lunch. If you have any food allergies or any other preferences, please make them known to your guide/s at the start of your trip; they will do their best to ensure that your requirements are met, however, 'no guarantees can be made'. Long driving distances, road conditions or flight times may delay or alter your meal times, which could mean a dedicated meal is replaced by those supplied on the aircraft.

Despite the Muslim culture, drinking alcohol is acceptable and expected in this ex-Soviet region, Kyrgyzstan more so than Uzbekistan. Expect to be offered vodka (not included in your tour price) at every meal! The most popular mealtime drink is Chay (green tea) and is available at most meals, usually straight a large block of sugar crystal may be added to the pot, or even your glass. Black tea and coffee are not always served, however can usually be requested.

If you like, you can bring some supplements with you from home. Tea/coffee bags, instant soups or noodles, biscuits, energy bars, milk powder sachets, are all a good idea – consider your luggage weight though! There are numerous small supermarkets and shops in every town and village along the way where you can buy odd items e.g. instant noodles, muesli and chocolate bars, biscuits, drinks, chips, cakes and sweets.

## Accommodation

Your accommodation has been selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a standard hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town. In remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four star standards, please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between the New Zealand and Central Asia. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

You will be travelling through a rarely visited and undeveloped area of eastern Kyrgyzstan for a few days. This is a remote area with villages, nomadic settlements, very small towns and little in the way of tourist facilities. We have designed this itinerary to use the accommodation offered by the CBT home stay project, staying in local houses/guest houses for a few nights. The CBT 'Community Based Tourism' project started in Kochkor Village, offering income to local families and guides while providing tourists the opportunity to stay with a local family, in their simple homes, rather than in run-down Soviet era hotels. It is not essential to bring a sleeping bag; bed linen is provided at each type of accommodation and is adequate for the night temperatures. You could bring a 'sleep sheet' insert to use under the linen, just in case, though it is generally not required. Types of accommodation you may encounter on this tour include:

**Yurts:** Yurts are the traditional home of nomads in Central Asia. They are made from a wooden frame and layers of felt and canvas erected on a wooden platform. The interior is filled with warm fabrics as well as ornate wooden furniture. Nomads in Kyrgyzstan live in yurts in the months around summer. Staying in a yurt will allow you to experience the unique and intrinsic aspect of local life in Kyrgyzstan. Although they are not luxurious, they do offer comfortable accommodation in remote regions of the country.

**Guesthouse:** These provide basic yet comfortable rooms in a small guesthouse. Every couple/single person will have their own room, western toilets and showers are shared, similar to a hostel. Breakfast and dinner is served in the restaurant.

**Three and four star hotels:** You will be staying in hotels of three and four star standards for the remainder of the tour.

### Transport

**Coaches:** Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. Main and inner-city roads in Central Asia have a reputation for being very congested. For this reason, it may not always be possible to return to your hotel after sightseeing to freshen up before going to the restaurant for dinner. Roads in this region have generally improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road - not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the sections above are approximations only.

**Planes:** Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines. Pre-seat flight allocation is not available.

### Development in Central Asia

Although Central Asia is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities. Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in the AU. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in the AU; for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. All of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday, so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from your National Escort/Local Guides.

The former Soviet countries in Central Asia were isolated and less developed by western standards for decades and all levels of infrastructure remain affected today in some way. In the tourism sector, newly built and very good hotels may still have poorly trained staff with an abrupt manner, roads can be in poor condition and officials can be corrupt. The level of English spoken outside of hotels is minimal (except for the children) and the Cyrillic alphabet is used instead of the Latin one (though this is slowly changing in Uzbekistan), so you will find your guides indispensable. We have found that those customers who embark with a sense of humour and adventure, who accept that things can and sometimes do go wrong, are those who find their experience most rewarding.

Journey Through Central Asia is one of our most unique and adventurous group tours, tracing the ancient Silk Road, including the fabled city of Samarkand. We wish for you to embark on your journey through Central Asia with a level of tolerance and understanding. This region is remote, and conditions are not as developed as they are at home. It is essential that all customers recognise the demands of factors such as basic facilities, travelling at altitude and cultural differences. The rewards of seeing and experiencing these lands, so different from your own, are immeasurable and can only be enhanced by an adventurous spirit.



## Public holidays and Religious Festivals

Ramadan, the Islamic festival of sacrifice will fall from 12th April to the 11th May 2021. This festival is characterised by the faithful abstaining from consuming food and drink (including alcohol) between the hours of sunrise and sunset. After sunset, you will find the locals celebrating nightly with an iftar- a meal at sunset, which breaks the fast, followed by pre-dawn meal - Suhoor. Travellers are not expected to adhere to these customs, with food and drink available during daylight hours. Some businesses and tourist sites opening hours may be affected; though overall, there will be minimal disruption if your tour is travelling between these dates. Ramadan is an opportunity to travel through Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, witnessing this fascinating national holiday for yourself.

## Souvenirs

We want to be able to give you an opportunity to buy souvenirs so we include some stops at workshops or factories, which demonstrates a craft or product unique to that region with pieces available to buy. We understand that souvenir hunting is not for everyone so we aim to take you to places, which hold local interest. We trust you will enjoy these opportunities to learn about local arts and crafts and understand their historical and cultural importance.

## Group Size

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by both a National Escort and local guides. There will usually be no more than 18 travellers in each group although you may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so. For groups with fewer than 10 travellers, departures will operate with local guides only.

## Tipping Policy

Local tipping is customary in Asia. However, this can often lead to awkwardness in knowing when it is appropriate to tip and how much, as well as ensuring you have a suitable amount of change available at the time. For your convenience, with years of experiences in providing the best customer service, Wendy Wu Tours operates a kitty system on our Group Tours so your National Escort will look after this aspect of your trip for you. It also ensures that the amounts paid are reasonable for you but still fair for the local people. The amount is stated on each Group Tour page will be advised again on your final documentation. Tipping is in USD and will be collected by your National Escort on arrival and distributed throughout the tour on your behalf. Any additional tipping on any of our tours is welcomed at your discretion. Further guidance for tipping contributions will be outlined in your final documentation.

## Climate

Most of your touring in Kyrgyzstan is at an altitude between 2500 and 3300 metres above sea level so temperatures can get low during the day and very cold overnight between May and late September. Please ensure you have adequate warm clothing, including to sleep in during our yurt stays.

Temperatures for most of your time spent in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Almaty and Dushanbe will range from 23c to 35c between May and late September.

Modest clothing such as long lightweight pants and shirts that cover your shoulders for men and women is highly recommended. Headscarves for ladies are required for visits to mosques and madrassas throughout Central Asia. Your National Escort assist you with purchasing a headscarf at a market visit in Ashgabat on day 3 of the tour.

### Luggage

All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each; a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of five kilograms. It is essential that your luggage is lockable. Please note that authorities will only allow bottles onto the aircraft if they have been checked in as main baggage. Bottles in hand luggage may be confiscated.

### Personal Expenses & Optional Tours

**Personal Expense** - You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of AU\$300 per person, per week should be sufficient; however, for those that can't resist a bargain or may wish to participate in all of the optional excursions, consider allocating a higher amount.

**Optional Tours** – Optional tour may be offered in each city you visit during your tour. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits and if seats are available. Please ensure you have additional funds available if you feel you may wish to participate in any extra activities. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide, participation and tipping for optional excursions is completely at your discretion.

### Climbing Steps

Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps. These palaces were built to provide defense against potential invaders so nearly all of them stand on top of a hill, while the interiors have layers of narrow hallways and steps to slow down the advance of enemies once they were inside. The steps tend to be quite large, not level and sometimes without handrails. Mosques and Madrassas also tend to be built at an elevation, as this is the most auspicious position according to ancient beliefs. This means you sometimes need to walk from the bus park to the entrance, and/or need to climb some steps inside.

People with knee or hip injuries, who have poor balance or are otherwise unable to complete these activities independently should consider the suitability of this itinerary carefully.

### Vaccinations and Health

We recommend that you contact either your Doctor or Health Centre for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Holiday Health has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful at [www.holidayhealth.co.nz](http://www.holidayhealth.co.nz)



#### Before You Leave

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with [www.safetravel.govt.nz](http://www.safetravel.govt.nz) as in the event of an emergency, New Zealand Consular assistance will be more readily available. You can also access the New Zealand Government's travel advisory service for up to date information about your destination on the same website.

#### After Your booking

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice followed by deposit documentation, which includes a visa application form (if applicable). Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

**Updated November 2020**