



Why book this trip?

Join us on this true adventure along the iconic 'Pamir Highway' - 1250 kilometres of road (not all of it sealed!) that connects the ancient trading cities of Dushanbe and Osh. This is a journey of ever-changing scenery, high mountain passes, raging rivers, isolated villages and hardy peoples.

- **Wakhan Corridor** - Drive through the Wakhan Corridor and spot Afghan villages across the Panj River
- **Ak Baital Pass** - Cross the highest pass of former-USSR on the drive along the Pamir Highway
- **Song Kul Lake** - Walk through Kyrgyzstan's lush summer pastures and stay in a yurt on the shores of Song Kul Lake.



INCLUDED MEALS
Breakfast: 18
Lunch: 14
Dinner: 12



TRIP STAFF
Explore Tour
Leader
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



TRANSPORT
Bus
4WD



ACCOMMODATION
6 nights simple
guesthouse
2 nights simple
homestay
6 nights
comfortable hotel
1 nights simple
hotel
3 nights simple yurt



TRIP PACE:
Full on



GROUP SIZE:
10 - 16

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Trip starts in Dushanbe. Explore the Tajik capital on a walking tour of the city

Arrive in Dushanbe. Please note for anybody arriving on flights that arrive into Dushanbe in the early hours of this morning, early check-in will be provided for you. For anyone arriving before today please contact us to book additional nights accommodation.

The capital of Tajikistan shares little history with many of its great Silk Road counterparts, with most evidence pointing to the fact Dushanbe was a small village until the turn of the 20th century. The city gained prominence when Tajikistan became part of the USSR, with the Soviets establishing the city as a centre for textile production. It was then that the city began to grow, and more recently, it has reached the end of a 10-year intensive building programme bringing the city into the 21st century.

For those arriving on time today our Leader plans to meet you in the hotel reception at 11am for the welcome meeting and to take us on the Tajik Walking Tour. We start the tour with a visit to the National Archaeological Museum of Tajikistan, with its famous Buddha statue and rich collection of archaeological artefacts and collections of fine art. We then move onto the strikingly beautiful Navruz Palace. Hundreds of skilled artisans were appointed to work on the building, with it initially being planned to be built as the largest teahouse in the world. However, when its interior frescoes and mosaic walls turned out to be so impressive, it was instead turned into a palace. After lunch we continue onto the statue of Ismail Samani. This large monument commemorates the 1,100th anniversary of the Samanid State, which by many is considered to have been the heyday of the Tajik nation when science and arts flourished. From there we walk up to Rudaki Park, dedicated to the great Persian poet Rudaki, who also lived during Samanid time in the 9th century AD.

We end the day with dinner in a local restaurant serving traditional Tajik cuisine. A typical meal in Tajikistan would include vegetable salad starters, followed by a hearty soup similar to the Russian

borsch, and a main consists of a meat dish like shashlik or chicken served alongside freshly baked bread.

If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you'll need to arrive into Dushanbe International Airport (DYU), which is 10 minutes' from the hotel. For those arriving on flights in the early hours of this morning, we'll arrange for your hotel room to be available immediately upon your arrival. For anyone arriving before today please contact us to book additional nights accommodation.

Please note that if you wish to join the Tajik Walking Tour today, you must arrive at the hotel by 11am. If you are booking your own flights, we recommend giving yourself at least one hour to clear the airport. From the airport to the hotel is around 10 minutes' drive, so therefore the latest your flight can arrive is 9:30am. Should you miss the welcome meeting, your Leader will inform you of any essential information at 6:30pm this evening, or 7:45am the morning of day 2.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Atlas (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - Set off on the Pamir Highway in 4WDs. Spot Afghan villages across the Panj River

Leaving the city behind this morning, we set off on our journey to the Pamir Highway and across the Pamir mountains. We gradually gain altitude as we drive, with parts of the road remaining unsealed and rather rough in parts. Whilst we will be driving in specially adapted four-wheel drive minivans, we still expect some bumpy stretches. We break to stretch the legs and take in our first breaths of fresh mountain air at Norak Reservoir, before continuing onto the town of Kulob where we stop for lunch. After lunch the road turns up again and climbs up and over the Shuraba Pass at 2,267 metres, bringing us into the border region between Tajikistan and Afghanistan. These mountains have spawned countless adventures over the centuries, from Silk Road traders, adventurers, explorers and of course the region's role in the 'Great Game'. The Panj River forms a natural and geographical boundary between the two countries, and part of our drive today will skirt alongside the river. We hope to arrive into the town Kalai Khum by the late evening where we check-into our comfortable hotel with private, en-suite bathrooms.

Please note - for the purpose of the GBAO permits, today is the day we will be entering the GBAO





ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel Karon Palace (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 3 - Continue the drive alongside the Panj River to Khorog, the heart of the Pamiri region

We set off for today for another shaky but enjoyable scenic journey, most of which will follow the glacial Panj River. Looking across to the opposite banks of the river, we spot Afghan villages clinging to the hillsides and the pathways that traverse and snake their way through the rocky mountains.

Keeping within Tajik territory, we learn of the unique culture of the Pamiri people. Our guide will explain their traditions, language and religion which are all vastly different from the Tajik people found elsewhere in the country.

Later in the afternoon we reach Khorog, the biggest city and capital of the Pamir region of Tajikistan. We explore the city's bustling bazaar where we notice the characteristic features that distinguish the Pamari people- here, unlike many Tajiks, we find many people have blonde hair, fair skin and blue eyes. We continue onto the slightly-elevated botanical gardens which offer a good viewpoint over Khorog, before ending at the day at our hotel. This evening has been left free to explore.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel Zafar (or similar)



Grade: Simple Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 4 - Venture into the Wakhan Valley and take a dip in the Garmchashma hot springs

Leaving Khorog behind this morning we first drive to Garmchashma, the site of a natural hot spring in the

heart of the Pamirs. With its alpine-blue water and temperatures upwards of 40°C, the spring has been a popular site for centuries and for those that wish to take a dip, we have some time here this morning.

From here we cross into the Wakhan Valley proper, the shared region between Tajikistan and Afghanistan that was made famous in the 19th century when it was used as a buffer zone between the Russian and British empires during the so-called 'Great Game'. But the region had already been important for millennia before, acting as a natural valley for caravans, traders and nomads and the point where eastern and western Central Asia meets.

Our destination tonight is Ishkashim, the administrative centre of the Wakhan region and thus a town steeped in centuries of history. We have some free time this afternoon to explore the village and at dinner tonight we will be treated to a folklore show from a group of local Wakhi dancers and musicians.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hanis Guesthouse (or similar)



Grade: Simple Guesthouse



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 5 - Continue along the Wakhan Valley, visiting the impressive 3rd century Khahkha Fortress

We continue our journey along the Wakhan Valley today, with several places of interest to see along the way. We first make a small detour off the Pamir Highway to the village of Manadguti, where we find the Khahkha Fortress. Dating back to the 3rd century BC, this fortress is one of several still standing in the area, we will also visit Yamchun Fort which is easily the most impressive. Comprising of thick sandstone walls and high cylindrical watchtowers, the fort was originally erected as a defensive fortification but was later thought to play a key role controlling the traffic and policing the great caravans along the Silk Road.

We stop for a picnic lunch at Bibi Fatima Hot Springs, so-named after Prophet Mohammed's sister and where local legend reports that women taking to the waters will increase their chances of fertility.

Continuing on, we stop next at Vrang, home to a 4th century stupa that is a popular pilgrimage spot as it is believed to contain an imprint of Buddha's foot. Our journey today ends in Hissor, where we overnight in a warm and welcoming guesthouse for the next couple of nights. Rooms here are dormitory style and are basic but functional, with shared toilet and bathrooms.



ACCOMMODATION:

Davlathon Guesthouse (or similar)


Grade: Simple Guesthouse



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 6 - Free day in Hissor with the option for a walk up to petroglyphs and along Engels Meadow

We spend a day in Hissor today, an interesting area to explore and the additional night here serves as a welcome break after the past few days long and adventurous drives. Today can be spent relaxing by the guesthouse, taking in the mountain views and exploring the village on foot, visiting the village shrine or taking part in a bakery lesson.

Alternatively, there is a 16 km hike taking in a number of petroglyphs located above the nearby town of Langar. The walk takes in two petroglyphs before continuing the hike onto Engels Meadow. The trail takes us along remote shepherds trails and where crisp mountain scenery with white snow-capped peaks form a background against lush flat meadows below. The walk is also useful for acclimatisation, as it takes us high up above the town before returning to our lower sleeping altitude.

There will be options to cut the walk short after the first (1 km) and second petroglyphs (3 km and 500 metres elevation gain) for those not wanting a full day's walk.



ACCOMMODATION:
Davlaton Guesthouse (or similar)


Grade: Simple Guesthouse



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 7 - Climb higher into the Pamirs, crossing the Kargushi Pass and driving alongside mountain lakes

We turn back onto the Pamir Highway again this morning, leaving the lush valleys behind as we gradually gain in altitude and the landscape changes to a rockier, almost lunar environment. We cross the dramatic Kargushi Pass at an elevation of 4,300 metres above sea level before dropping back down slightly and onto the village of Alichur. En-route we pass the beautiful high-altitude mountain lakes of Yashikul and Bulunkul as well as making a short stop at one of the regions many impressive geysers. The Eastern Pamirs are part of Tajik territory but are more Kyrgyz in feel, mostly being inhabited by ethnic Kyrgyz. The majority of people in this region still live a semi-nomadic lifestyle, living permanently in a village during the harsh winter months, then moving down into the lush summer pastures and staying in yurts during the summer months where their cattle can graze. As we continue our journey we will start to spot yurts in the distance, along with great herds of sheep, horses and yaks as we close in on Murghab, our end point for today.



ACCOMMODATION:
Pamir Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Simple Homestay



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 8 - Drive across the high plateau and cross the highest pass in former USSR on the way to Karakul

We wake this morning in the town of Murghab, lying at the centre of the region it characterises the severity of living in such a harsh environment. Literally translated to 'roof of the world', Murghab sits on a desolate flat plateau surrounded by snow-capped peaks, most of which top over 6,000 metres. Life here is hard with short, cool summers followed by long, harsh winters marred by sub-zero temperatures and biting winds. We have some time after breakfast to explore this lunar-like town and having the chance to meet its hardy residents.

We then continue on to cross the highest pass of the Pamir Highway and in fact the highest of the entire area of the former USSR - Ak Baital Pass at 4,655 metres above sea level. From here we gratefully descend altitude down to the village of Karakul at 3,900 metres where we stay in a basic guesthouse with triple rooms and shared toilets.



ACCOMMODATION:
Erkin Guesthouse Karakul (or similar)



Grade: Simple Homestay



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 9 - Cross Kyzyl Art Pass, then descend to the Kyrgyz city of Osh

Driving north today, we cross Kyzyl Art Pass (4,280 metres) which marks the end of our time in Tajikistan as the pass straddles the border. After taking care of the border formalities and clearing customs, we pass into Kyrgyzstan and transfer to our Kyrgyz vehicles to continue the drive north. The road passes the range that contains the impressive 7,134 metre Lenin Peak. We then begin to dramatically lose altitude, driving out of the mountains and onto the plains of the Fergana Valley below. Today's route sees us travel from 4,280 metres to just 1,000 metres above sea level; it's likely we'll notice the difference in altitude with the air appearing immediately thicker and easier to breathe. We arrive in Osh in the late afternoon, where the rest of the day is free.



ACCOMMODATION:
Sunrise Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & LUNCH

DAY 10 - Explore this ancient trading city at the Kyrgyz end of the M-41 - the Pamir Highway

After the long journey over the mountains, today is a day spent firmly in one place, and that is the ancient trader's city of Osh. Thought to be the oldest city in Kyrgyzstan, its roots can be traced back 3,000 years, although it was firmly placed on the map when it was established as a centre of silk production in the 8th Century. Back then the city would welcome nomads from the mountains to sell their livestock, along with traders and caravans from the Far East and Europe selling their wares. This huge coming-together of cultures from far and wide spawned the biggest bazaar in Central Asia and is one that still exists today, aptly named the Great Silk Road Bazaar.

This morning we set out to explore this lively city, a place that still today is a melting pot of cultures, nationalities and ethnic tribes. We start at the bazaar with a walking tour along the great lines of stalls selling everything from sheepskin hats to meats, cheeses and exotic spices. Here is a perfect place to sample some of the national delicacies such as Kurat (dried yoghurt balls) or the popular beverage of Kymyz (a drink made from fermented mare's milk). We then move onto Suleiman-Too hill, which is located right in the centre of the city and a UNESCO World Heritage Site where the mosque atop is the focus of many pilgrims and worshippers. There is a pathway that snakes around the hill, and inside a cave that cuts into the hillside is a museum showcasing some of the rich history and archaeology associated with the region.

After this morning's tour we are dropped back to our hotel where the rest of the afternoon is free to relax, or to further explore the city.



ACCOMMODATION:
Sunrise Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 11 - Full day's drive through the wilds of Kyrgyzstan, passing Toktogul Reservoir to Suusamyr Valley

Leaving Osh early this morning, we continue our journey through central Kyrgyzstan with the scenery changing from the rugged, rocky mountainous terrain of the Pamirs to the lush meadows and pastures of central Kyrgyzstan. We stop for a picnic lunch overlooking the beautiful Toktogul Reservoir, the largest of its kind in Central Asia and a vital source for the area's irrigation and electricity.

Continuing east, passing nomad shepherds and flanked by high mountains on our left, we drive towards our accommodation in the Suusamyr Valley, aiming to arrive there in the early evening.



ACCOMMODATION:
Baytur Resort (or similar)

 Grade: Simple Guesthouse



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 12 - Two-day walk through the Kyrgyz meadows and summer pastures

The next few days provide us with the chance to stretch our legs as we ditch wheels for walking boots with a two-day hike to Song Kul Lake.

The morning starts with a short drive to Kyzart Village where we meet our trek support crew before setting off on our hike to Kilemche. The first part of our walk crosses the Kyzyl-Kiya Jailoo, an enormous sea of flat grass that Kyrgyz shepherds take advantage of for summer grazing. We continue on into Chaar-Archa Valley where we break for lunch beside the river, with the holy 4,440 m Baba-Ata Mountain our lunchtime backdrop.

After lunch we cross the river at a natural ford and follow the trail over the verdant hills to Kilemche Jailoo, where we spend the night in a traditional Kyrgyz yurt. Each yurt has room for four people, where all bedding and pillows are provided. A basic toilet is located a short distance from the yurts.

The total distance covered today will be around 14 km with around 500 metres of ascent, and will take around four hours to complete. Overnight luggage can be transported to our campsite by horses.

Please note that the walk can be opted out, anybody not wishing to participate can drive with the main luggage directly to Song Kul, with a free day to relax on the lake's shores.



ACCOMMODATION:

Avaz Yurt Camp Kilemche (or similar)

**Grade: Simple Yurt****MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER**

DAY 13 - Day two of the walk: cross Jalydyz Karagai Pass and hike down to the shores of Song Kul Lake

After a cosy night under traditional felt, we continue our walk this morning, ascending and crossing Jaldyz Karagai pass (around 700 metres of ascent) which takes us up and over the Song Kul range and into the lake's basin. The morning's climb affords wonderful views over the Kilemche Jailoo in one direction, whilst in the other we get our first glimpses of Song Kul Lake. As we descend the mountain slopes the lake looms larger and larger until we reach its shores and our campsite for the night. The yurt camp here is a more permanent affair, with the same twin-yurt set up but features fixed western-style toilets and even a hot water shower.

This afternoon has been left free to relax among our atmospheric surroundings; alternatively further walking is available or a horse riding lesson.

**ACCOMMODATION:**

Novinomad Yurt Camp Song Kul Lake (or similar)

**Grade: Simple Yurt****MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER**

DAY 14 - Drive to Lake Issy Kul and stay in a traditional yurt overlooking the lake

Back on the road today, we head for Lake Issy Kul, quite-rightly dubbed as the \ Pearl of Kyrgyzstan \ . En route we stop in the small town of Kochkor for a demonstration on the methods used to weave traditional felt carpets, a product that this area is highly regarded for. Shortly after Kochkor we arrive at Issy Kul and drive alongside its southern shores to the village of Kyzyl Tuu, one of the centres for yurt production. Here we learn more about how these fascinating structures work and why they have been the chosen dwellings for Central Asian nomads for centuries. Our final stop of today's journey is in Bokonbeavo where we meet an Eagle Hunter, giving us the chance to witness how this form of falconry has been practiced and perfected over centuries.

We arrive in Tosor, on the banks of Lake Issy Kul in the late afternoon, where there will be time for swimming in the lake before dinner. Tonight's yurts will be twin-share with western style toilets and cold showers available.



ACCOMMODATION:

Tosor Yurt Camp (or similar)



Grade: Simple Yurt



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 15 - Explore Fairytale Canyon on foot and walk into Jety-Oguz Valley. Stay in a farmer's guesthouse

After a leisurely breakfast overlooking the shores of Issy Kul, we drive onto Szaka or 'Fairytale Canyon', so-called due to the bizarre landscape of captivating rock formations.

From here we embark on an moderately-graded walk to Jety-Oguz. The walk takes us over the picturesque Jety-Oguz Pass (2,800 m) before dropping down and along the valley below. The rock formation in this area is a deep-red sandstone that rises out of the green valley below, offering quite a different landscape from that which we have seen so far. The walk in total is around 10 km, and we anticipate it taking approximately 4-5 hours. At the end of the walk we drive on to the village Tepke, where we spend the night in a farmer's guesthouse. The farmer here is a renowned horse breeder so we will have a chance to meet the horses and learn how to make 'Boorsok', a deep-fried bread typical to this region.



ACCOMMODATION:

Reina Kench Guesthouse (or similar)



Grade: Simple Guesthouse



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 16 - Visit the churches and mosques of Karakol before returning to the guesthouse for a folklore show

This morning we head for the city of Karakol, where we meet civilisation once again. Embarking on a tour of the city we discover some of its most interesting sights, including the Dungan Mosque which was built in 1904 without using single nail, and serving as a place of worship for the country's Chinese Muslims. The architecture is quite striking, foregoing minarets and opting instead for a wooden pagoda-style roof. We also see the Russian Orthodox Church that was constructed entirely of wood in 1869 and is still standing today. Finally, we visit the Museum of Russian Explorer Przhevalski after whom the town was named previously.

We return to our guesthouse in Tepke where we are treated to a horse and folklore show.



ACCOMMODATION:

Reina Kench Guesthouse (or similar)



Grade: Simple Guesthouse



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 17 - Cross the border into Kazakhstan walk the along the rim of Charyn Canyon

Bidding goodbye to our hosts this morning we set off for our third and final country, Kazakhstan. Our route takes us up into the tip of the eastern Tien Shen range when we cross the border at Kegen before descending down to the dry, dusty and hot Kazakh steppe. We stop at Charyn Canyon, often compared to the Grand Canyon albeit on a smaller scale. We visit a part of the canyon known as the \ Valley of Castles\ due to its unusual rock formations, and from here we descend 100 metres from the rim down to the river where we have a picnic. It's possible to take a dip in the slow-moving river for those that feel in need of a cool-down.

After returning to the road we continue onto Almaty where we aim to arrive in the early evening.

Almaty ceded capital status to Astana in 1997, but it still remains the cultural and financial centre, where Russians, nomadic Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Tartars and many other ethnic groups rub shoulders in its bustling markets. The city has an almost European feel, partly due to the earthquake in 1911 that flattened Almaty resulting in the complete re-planning and re-building of the city. Wide, leafy boulevards were constructed and lined with low-rise white-washed housing and offices, and the few period buildings that remained intact were restored to their former glory. The city enjoys an enviable position, nestled in the foothills of the Zailiysky Alatau mountains, with beautiful turquoise lakes, snow-capped mountains and chic ski resorts just a short drive away.



ACCOMMODATION:

Kazzhol Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & LUNCH

DAY 18 - Spend time discovering the cosmopolitan city of Almaty

Today we set out to explore some of the Almaty's major sites, starting in the Park of 28 Guards. The park is diverse, serving as popular meeting place for locals as well as housing a variety of important monuments and buildings. The park's focal point is the Ascension Cathedral, a beautiful Russian Orthodox style Cathedral and one of only two wooden buildings left in the city. Also found in the park are imposing Soviet statues remembering falling soldiers from campaigns such as WW2 and the Afghan War, where many Kazakh nationals fought to support the USSR's interests. We also visit the Museum of Musical Instruments, the other wooden-structure that would look more at home in Switzerland than in Central Asia. It showcases a wide-variety of folk instruments that are both native to Kazakhstan, or were brought by travellers from throughout Central Asia and Persia.

We then move onto Green Market, a fascinating meeting place for the city's locals to come for their daily shop. The market offers an eclectic range of produce brought by nomads as far flung as Korea, all the way through China and Central Asia. Here you can find exotic fruits, vegetables, an extensive butchery section with all types of meat and a wide variety of savoury foods. Make sure to try Kazzan (smoked horse sausage) and Kurt (salted cheese balls popular with beer).

This afternoon we take the short drive up to the Medeo ice rink, then travel by cable car to the top of the Shymbulak skiing area for superb views of the city and the surrounding mountains. The rest of the afternoon has been left free.



ACCOMMODATION:
Kazzhol Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 19 - Trip ends in Almaty

The trip ends after breakfast at our hotel in Almaty.

There are no activities planned today, so you are free to depart from Almaty at any time. If your flight is departing later in the day, luggage storage facilities are available at our hotel. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you'll need to depart from Almaty International Airport (ALA), which is 30-40 minutes\ from the hotel.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

Trip information

Country information

Kazakhstan

Climate

In summer the temperatures can reach more than 30 °C and in winter around -20 °C (-4.0 °F)

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion	Language
+6	2 Pin Round	Islam, Christianity	Kazakh, Russian

Kyrgyzstan

Climate

Summer day temperatures can reach a maximum of 32°C in the lower slopes of the Tien Shan in July and August, although, as with any mountain area, temperatures can vary greatly and you should be prepared for extremes of weather. Night temperatures drop dramatically, possibly reaching zero degrees at night.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion	Language
+5	2 Pin Round	Islam, Russian Orthodox.	Kyrgyz, Russian.

Tajikistan

Climate

Summer day temperatures can reach a maximum of 35°C in lower altitudes during July and August, although, as with any mountain area, temperatures can vary greatly and you should be prepared for extremes of weather. Night temperatures drop dramatically, possibly reaching zero degrees at night.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion	Language
+5	2 Pin Round	Islam, Russian Orthodox.	Tajik, Russian

Budgeting and packing

Clothing

Lightweight cottons are most suitable for the hot summers of Central Asia, with warmer clothing including a waterproof/windproof jacket needed for the time spent in the mountains. At any time of the year a good fleece or down jacket plus gloves and hat are recommended for yurt stays and nights spent at higher altitudes. A pair of thermals are good as an extra layer, or even for keeping you warm in bed. The region is traditionally Muslim so brief shorts and skirts, or clothes that are revealing or tight-fitting can offend local sensibilities. Women should bring a headscarf as this is necessary for some mosque visits. Finally, remember to pack swimming gear for the hot springs and refreshing lake dips.

Footwear

A pair of comfortable walking shoes or boots will be very useful during the walks as the trails can sometimes be uneven. Sandles will be useful for lakes and rivers, and comfortable trainers should suffice for everything else.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

Due to the variety of transport and terrain on this trip, soft-sided holdalls are recommended.

Equipment

Bring a small torch, a water bottle, insect repellent and a small travel towel as some of the yurt camps do not supply towels. Although the yurt camps do provide thick blankets you may wish to bring your own sleeping bag for additional warmth as it can become very cold at night. If using the local blankets then a sleeping bag liner or sheet should make your stay more comfortable. A portable powerbank will be useful to recharge phones and camera batteries as access to electricity will be intermittent.

In Tajikistan in particular there are not very many stalls or shops at the side of the road, so we recommend packing plenty of snacks for the long journeys.

Medical facilities in the GBAO in Tajikistan are limited and taking a small personal first aid kit with any over the counter medication's you might require is advisable.

Tipping

Explore leader

Tipping isn't compulsory, and we work hard to ensure that our leaders all receive a fair wage. However, you might want to recognise a leader that's done a great job or really added to your trip by giving them a tip. We're often asked about the recommended amount. It's a tricky one, and down to personal preference, but we'd recommend between £15 to £20 per person per week as a guideline

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, your leader may organise a group's tips kitty for included activities and meals and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Accordingly, you should allow £30 per person.

For all non-included services and meals on your trip please tip independently at your discretion.

Kazakhstan

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£10	£15	£2.5	£0.5

Foreign Exchange

Local currency	Recommended Currency For Exchange
Kazakhstani Tenge	US Dollars or Euros are recommended for exchange.

Where To Exchange

Banks, bureaux de change, airports, train stations, ports & large hotels

ATM Availability	Credit Card Acceptance
ATMs are widely available.	Most major credit cards are accepted in large hotels

Travellers Cheques

International traveller's cheques are not widely accepted, and therefore not recommended.

Kyrgyzstan

Food and drink

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Lunch price	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£3	£5	£1	£0.3

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Som.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Take your spending money in US\$ cash, as many bars and shops only accept hard currency (and often lack the facility to change travellers cheques). We recommend you take new (post 1990), good condition dollar bills. Large notes may attract a slightly higher exchange rate than small ones.

Where To Exchange

In major towns. Your tour leader will advise you.

ATM Availability

Very limited do not rely on this.

Credit Card Acceptance

Limited to major restaurants and stores in cities only.

Travellers Cheques

Not recommended for these tours.

Tajikistan

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£3	£5	£2	£0.5

Foreign Exchange**Local currency**

Somoni.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

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Where To Exchange

In major towns. Your tour leader will advise you.

ATM Availability

Very limited do not rely on this.

Credit Card Acceptance

Limited to major restaurants and stores in cities only.

Travellers Cheques

Not recommended for these tours.

Transport Information

Bus, 4WD

Accommodation notes

Accommodation standards in Tajikistan are lower than you might find in Western countries, and in most cases we have chosen the best options available in the area. In hotels, rooms will be basic but comfortable and based on twin-share beds with private en-suite facilities. Guesthouses will be more variable, they all offer twin-share accommodation but some will have attached bathrooms whereas others will be based on shared bathrooms with an Asian 'bucket' style shower. Accommodation in yurts are also on a twin-share basis, with all bedding and pillows provided and shared toilets are located several metres away from the yurt. There's a real mix of accommodation on this trip that we believe offers a very authentic experience and endless opportunities to strike up conversations with friendly locals

Essential Information

Government Travel Safety Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa and Passport Information

Tajikistan - Nationals of the UK, US, Australia, Canada and New Zealand will require a visa before travel. E-visa's can be applied for via www.evisa.tj You must ensure that you also apply for the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAO) permit as part of your e-visa application.

Kyrgyzstan: Nationals of the EU, Canada, Australia and the United States don't need a visa to enter and stay for a maximum of 60 days. Other nationalities may require a single entry visa and should consult the relevant consulate or www.kyrgyzvisa.com for more information.

Kazakhstan: Nationals of the UK, US, Australia, Canada and New Zealand can travel to Kazakhstan without a visa, provided your stay does not exceed 30 days. If you wish to stay longer than 30 days, you'll need a visa. You should contact your nearest Embassy of Kazakhstan for further information.

All visa related issues including information for other nationalities should be confirmed with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may be able to apply through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

Transfers

Find out more about [Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions](#) before you book.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers. If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full

terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them here.

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Altitude information

This trip goes to an altitude where there is a risk of being affected by Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS), a common and usually harmless condition caused by reduced air pressure and a lower concentration of oxygen. Whilst the itinerary has been specifically designed to allow your body to acclimatise gradually, the speed of onset and severity - as well as the height at which AMS develops can vary greatly between individuals; being physically fit affords no special protection. If symptoms occur while on tour you must let your tour leader know immediately. For further advice when travelling at altitude we recommend visiting the medical advice website of Medex and download their information booklet:

http://medex.org.uk/medex_book/english_version.php

Travellers with heart or lung conditions, anaemia, asthma, high blood pressure, or taking the contraceptive pill must seek the advice of their GP and specifically mention the maximum altitude the trip reaches (noted in the day to day text). Please take these to your medical appointment so that your doctor has the full details of your trip.

You must have adequate travel insurance for your trip. Please ensure that your insurance policy covers you to the maximum altitude indicated above. You should be aware that medical facilities in Tajikistan are limited especially in the GBAO region and in the event of serious illness aeromedical evacuation to a third country may be required, You should therefore make sure your insurance policy covers for such circumstances.

Kazakhstan

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis A. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on the need for and different prophylaxis available against malaria. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

Kyrgyzstan

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against tetanus, infectious hepatitis, typhoid and polio. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

Tajikistan

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against tetanus, infectious hepatitis, typhoid and polio. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

Additional Information



Why book this trip

To explore this remote and little-visited area requires a certain level of hardiness. There will long consecutive days on the road with plenty of lumps and bumps and a mix of accommodation that ranges from small hotels to basic guesthouses and yurts with very limited facilities. There will also be time spent at altitude, with the highest night on this trip spent at 3,900 metres above sea level. Although every effort has been made to acclimatise gradually and extra days have been built in to aid acclimatisation, it is likely that most will feel the effects of altitude and that altitude sickness could be a possibility. It is also worth noting that there will be parts of the trip where we will be far away from any hospitals or medical centres, although our Tour Leader will carry a Satellite phone in the event of an emergency. We therefore recommend that you are fit and in a good state of health when travelling on this trip.

With all that said, the reward for these challenging conditions is sharing some of the best scenery in the world with very few other tourists.

Reviews



**AWARD WINNING
EXPLORE LEADERS**



**PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE**



**AIRPORT
TRANSFERS**