

EXPLORE!



Why book this trip?

This overland adventure travels along parts of the ancient Silk Road through the wild mountain landscape of Kyrgyzstan and across the border and onto the dusty plains of Uzbekistan.

- **Suusamyr Valley** - Drive through remote mountain scenery and past lush alpine valleys passing nomadic families
- **Song Kul** - Stand on the shores of sublime alpine lakes and sleep in a traditional yurt
- **Arslanbob** - walk amongst ancient towering walnut forests and discover hidden waterfalls



INCLUDED MEALS
Breakfast: 14
Dinner: 6



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



TRANSPORT
Bus
4WD
Flight



ACCOMMODATION
6 nights simple
guesthouse
5 nights simple
hotel
2 nights
comfortable hotel
1 nights simple yurt



TRIP PACE:
Full on



GROUP SIZE:
12 - 18

Itinerary

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

DAY 1 - Join tour in Bishkek

Arrive in Bishkek and check-in at the hotel. Situated dramatically at the foot of the Tien Shan range, Bishkek is a pleasant city with tree lined streets, open squares, many museums and interesting markets afforded with comfortable summer temperatures.



ACCOMMODATION:
Tien-Shan Guesthouse (or similar)

Grade: Simple Guesthouse



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - In Bishkek; afternoon city sightseeing

Customers flying from London arrive in the very early hours of this morning. After a leisurely morning we head out on a sightseeing tour by bus and on foot. We learn about the main monuments and buildings of the city, and take a leisurely walk through Oak Park. A former Silk Road settlement, Kyrgyzstan's capital is a young city, starting life as a clay fort built by the Khan of Kokand in 1825 only to be destroyed by the

Russians 43 years later. It was rebuilt in 1878 and it is from this time that Bishkek evolved.



ACCOMMODATION:
Tien-Shan Guesthouse (or similar)



Grade: Simple Guesthouse



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 3 - Drive to Karakol via Burana Tower and Issyk Kul Lake

Leaving behind the city we head into the heart of this small nation. At its centre lies Issyk Kul Lake, surrounded by the Tien Shan Mountains. Along the way we visit the Burana Tower, all that remains of the ancient city of Balasagun. The tower is believed to be the oldest minaret in Central Asia with a detailed external pattern of relief work in brick.

We also see the petroglyphs in Cholpon-Ata where stones vary in size from 30cm to 3 metres. Ancient drawings on the stones date from the 7th century BC to the 3rd century AD, many of them figures of hunters, ibex, goat and reindeer. From here we are also afforded with views of Issyk Kul Lake. We then follow the shore along the north of the lake arriving in the evening in the city of Karakol. Strategically located this was once a Russian military outpost, and the gateway of expeditions into the Tien Shan and beyond. This evening we enjoy a meal cooked by a family from an ethnic minority group, either Dungan or Uygur; both groups are Muslim people of Chinese origin. We not only sample their hospitality but also learn about the traditions and lifestyle.



ACCOMMODATION:
Altamira Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Simple Guesthouse



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

DAY 4 - Explore Karakol; walk in Djety Oguz Gorge

The great Russian explorer Prjevalsky died in Karakol before an expedition to Tibet and the small museum dedicated to him gives a great insight into the 19th century Central Asian explorers. In the city we have the opportunity to see the Chinese influence at the Dungan mosque built in 1910 in the style of a Buddhist pagoda (it is made of wood without any nails) whilst the strong Russian influence is evident at the Orthodox Cathedral.

After sightseeing in the morning we drive to visit the Valley of Seven Bulls, at Djety-Oguz, where large red sandstone rock formations tower over the valley. During Soviet times this area become known as a health retreat, the sanatorium remains. It became famous when after his first flight in space Yuri Gagarin came here to decompress.



ACCOMMODATION:
Altamira Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Simple Guesthouse



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 5 - Drive to Kochkor; visit waterfalls en route

We continue along the southern shore of Issyk Kul Lake where we make a stop for the opportunity to take a bracing dip into the cold waters of the lake. Continuing on we stop again to view the waterfalls within the dramatic 10km long Barskaun Gorge, as well as having an opportunity to spot birds whilst we enjoy a river-side picnic. Our final destination is Kochkor, a typical Kyrgyz town where we spend the night in local guesthouses, a great way to get to know the locals. Depending upon size we may find the group split between guesthouses.



ACCOMMODATION:
Kochkor Family Guesthouse (or similar)



Grade: Simple Guesthouse



DAY 6 - Spend the night in a traditional yurt at Song Kul Lake

The women of the town are famous for felt-making and this morning we have the chance to see how 'shirdaks', traditional felt applique rugs, are made by hand.

We then set off along a dramatic mountain road via Kalmak-Ashu Pass at a lofty 3346m where we can drink in our epic surroundings as we journey to Song Kul. The lake itself is spectacular and the second largest in Kyrgyzstan, situated at an altitude of 3013m above sea level. Surrounded by dramatic snow-covered mountain peaks, it is hidden in a flat, plate-like 'jailoo' (the Kyrgyz word for mountain pasture) which is covered in Edelweiss flowers at certain times of the year. In the summer the shepherds drive the livestock (sheep and/or horses) up into the mountains for pasture and establish a camp for the season.

After settling into our yurts, we will have the opportunity to relax and unwind or perhaps go on a pleasant walk by the lake. Yurts are circular dwelling structures made from felt and insulated with sheepskins, traditionally made to be portable and accommodate 5-6 people. Basic long drop toilets are available in a separate building along with an outdoor basin for washing and are shared with the camp. The experience is very basic, however, gives a unique insight into how local nomads traditionally live and allow us to wake up the next morning in the middle of nowhere.



ACCOMMODATION:
Song Kul Lake Yurt Camp (or similar)

Grade: Simple Yurt



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

DAY 7 - Morning at Song Kul; return to Kochkor

This morning you may choose to relax by the lake, or depending on weather conditions, it may be possible to take a hike into the mountains surrounding the lake. Leaving the camp we walk along grassy, undulating slopes through the Moldo-Toor range. Song Kul Lake offers a spectacular backdrop to the north and we hope to meet locals along the way to get a further glimpse into this traditional lifestyle. The walk takes around 4 hours and reaches an altitude of 3300m. After lunch we leave our yurts and make our way to back to Kochkor for the night, this time taking a different route crossing the Teskey-Topok Pass, arriving in town in the late afternoon. This evening we head out to enjoy a musical Folklore ensemble performance with a wide repertoire of traditional ballads, love songs, work songs and lullabies, accompanied by Kyrgyz national instruments.



ACCOMMODATION:
Kochkor Family Guesthouse (or similar)

Grade: Simple Guesthouse



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

DAY 8 - Scenic drive through the mountains to Suusamyр Valley

We spend the day on the road driving through the wild mountain scenery of the inner Tien Shan Mountains as we make our way west. Our drive takes us along the stunning Suusamyр valley, which is situated at an altitude of 2000-3200m between the dramatic ridges of Kyrgyz and Talas Ala-Too and stretches for some 155km. During the summer alpine grasses cover the whole valley, whilst the winter months see it blanketed with snow. There will be plenty of stops for photo opportunities along the way as we make our 320km journey across the passes to Suusamyр Valley.



ACCOMMODATION:
Baytur Resort (or similar)

Grade: Simple Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

DAY 9 - Walking in Chichkan Gorge; afternoon drive to Toktogul Reservoir

After breakfast we set off on a scenic drive along the Ala-Bel pass (3175m) before following the course of the Chichkan River to the junction with its tributary, the It-Agar River. From here we start a mostly easy walk on an earth trail which is stony in some sections. The path follows the It-Agar River for about three kilometres uphill, before arriving at the small, but impressive and beautiful alpine Lake of Saz Kul. The walk is around two hours up and one hour down. After some time enjoying this picturesque place we drive along a winding road that follows the Naryn River all the way to the Toktogul Reservoir, the largest reservoir in all of Central Asia and our base for the night.



ACCOMMODATION:
Kok-Bel Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Simple Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

DAY 10 - Mountain drive to Djalal-Abad.

Today we leave Toktogul and again drive through the wild landscapes that make Kyrgyzstan such a memorable place to visit. Our destination is Djalal-Abad, located at the north-eastern end of the Fergana Valley and nestled in the foothills of the Baba Ata Mountains. The city is well-known for its spas and is responsible for producing several brands of mineral water sold across Central Asia. It is an also important agricultural hub, providing the majority of the fruit and vegetables for the region. Upon arrival, the rest of the afternoon is free to either explore or to relax after the day's drive.



ACCOMMODATION:
Rosa Park hotel (or similar)



Grade: Simple Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 11 - Discover Arslanbob, walk through walnut woodland, visit waterfall

We start the day travelling 90 kilometres north to the charming village of Arslanbob. Here we spend the day accompanied by a local guide, walking through the walnut groves of Arslanbob sometimes referred to as 'The Royal Woods of Kyrgyzstan'. The trees can reach 30 metres and grow wild on mountain slopes, and walking through the grove rewards us with spectacular views. We will also come across a beautiful 23 metre high waterfall nestled deep in the forest. The walk will take around three to four hours and is graded as easy, with no significant ascents or descents. Later in the afternoon we will make our way back to Djalal- Abad.





ACCOMMODATION:
Rosa Park hotel (or similar)



Grade: Simple Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 12 - Drive to Osh; cross border into Uzbekistan and drive to Fergana City

Leaving Djalal Abad behind we make our way into the expansive Fergana Valley and past the city of Osh, which according to legend was founded by either King Solomon or Alexander the Great! Although it dates back to the 5th century BC, very little remains to suggest its ancient past and today, it is Kyrgyzstan's second city and very much soviet in feel.

We then make our way to checkpoint 'Dostlik', on the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border, where we undergo immigration and customs formalities and bid farewell to our Kyrgyz leader as we are handed over to our tour leader from Uzbekistan. From the border we drive to our overnight stop in Fergana City.



ACCOMMODATION:
Club 777 (or similar)



Grade: Simple Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 13 - Drive via ceramic workshop in Rishtan to Tashkent

This morning we head out to start the final leg of our journey. We must travel by convoy of smaller vehicles as we cross over Kamchik Pass at 2300m. We make a stop at Rishtan town, famous for its ceramics, where we visit a workshop. The Silk Road introduced Chinese ceramics to Uzbekistan, and while craftsman initially emulated Chinese designs, they soon evolved their own, now traditional, Uzbek geometric style. Later we make a brief stop in Kokand town, the former residence of Kokand Khan, before

finally arriving in Tashkent.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Uzbekistan (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 14 - In Tashkent, city tour; free afternoon

This morning we head out with a local guide to explore Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, which has been on this site for over 2000 years. Although much of it was destroyed in the earthquake of 1966 it has been rebuilt as a modern model city, with spacious avenues and ever-present fountains to cool the air. Our sightseeing tour includes various points of interest around the city, like the Independence Square, Navoi Theatre, Old City, Abu Khasim Madrassah and the Earthquake Monument. We also take a ride for 2-3 stops on the Tashkent Metro, which boasts some flamboyantly decorated stations. The afternoon is free.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Uzbekistan (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 15 - Tour ends in Tashkent

Our tour ends after breakfast.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

Trip information

Country information

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.

Uzbekistan

Climate

Spring and autumn are the best times to visit, when the temperatures are mild and there is the chance of occasional rains. April can bring colourful blooms to the normally barren desert landscapes, whilst summer days in the cities and desert can be very hot, when the temperatures can reach as high as 50°.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion
+5	2 Pin Round	Islam, predominantly Sunni, Eastern Orthodox

Language

Uzbek, Russian, Tajik

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Chichkan Gorge - Afternoon forest walk (includes transportation and 2 hours guided walk) 10EUR per person (based on a minimum of 6 people)

Clothing

Light-weight cottons are most suitable for the hot summers of Central Asia with warmer clothing including waterproof/windproof jacket needed for 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. A pair of thermals is good as an extra layer, or for wearing in bed. The region is traditionally Muslim so brief shorts and skirts, or clothes that are revealing or tight offend local sensibilities. Women should bring a headscarf as this is necessary for some mosque visits. Bring swimming gear.

Footwear

Good quality, comfortable shoes/trainers and sandals.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a daypack will be needed as you will not have access to your main luggage during the overnight Yurt stay.

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.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised 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. Accordingly please allow approximately £20 for tips.

In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Kyrgyzstan

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	£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.

Uzbekistan

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.

Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£6.00 - 10.00	£1.4	£0.7

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Sum

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 in small denominations.

Where To Exchange

Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

ATM Availability

Very limited, do not rely upon this.

Credit Card Acceptance

Limited usually to larger outlets and restaurants.

Travellers Cheques

Not recommended.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals**Transport Information**

Bus, 4WD, Flight

Accommodation notes

Kyrgyzstan: Accommodation in Kyrgyzstan is very simple and the guesthouses we use may have shared bathrooms. We spend a night in traditional yurts with limited washing facilities. 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.

Uzbekistan: We've chosen our accommodation in Uzbekistan to reflect different aspects of the country; from its nomadic roots, through Islamic heritage to modern day Uzbekistan. Rooms throughout are en suite and the standard is generally simple. We have tried to choose smaller locally run hotels for most of the trip rather than the bigger tourist hotels in the hope that this will provide a more personal authentic experience. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be somewhat erratic however and although the welcome is always warm, service levels may be less efficient than you may be used to.

Essential Information**FCO 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

Visa and Passport Information

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.

Uzbekistan: Australian, Irish, Canadian and 'British citizen' passport holders can enter Uzbekistan as a visitor for stays of up to 30 days without a visa. Other nationalities including US nationals require a e-visa which can be obtained from www.e-visa.gov.uz

All visa related information 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.

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.

Uzbekistan

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.

Additional Information



Uzbekistan Extension

We have planned this trip to combine with our Golden Road to Samarkand trip, allowing for a comprehensive journey through Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, two countries so central to the ancient Silk Road. Please [click here](#) for more information.

Why book this trip

This tour is ideal for adventurous travellers who not only want to experience a destination's iconic sights but also enjoy wild desolate mountain scenery and want to get off the main tourist path. You can expect epic landscapes, ancient cities and traditional local experiences such as a yurt stay on the shores of Lake Song Kul and dining with an ethnic minority family.



**AWARD WINNING
EXPLORE LEADERS**



**PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE**



**AIRPORT
TRANSFERS**