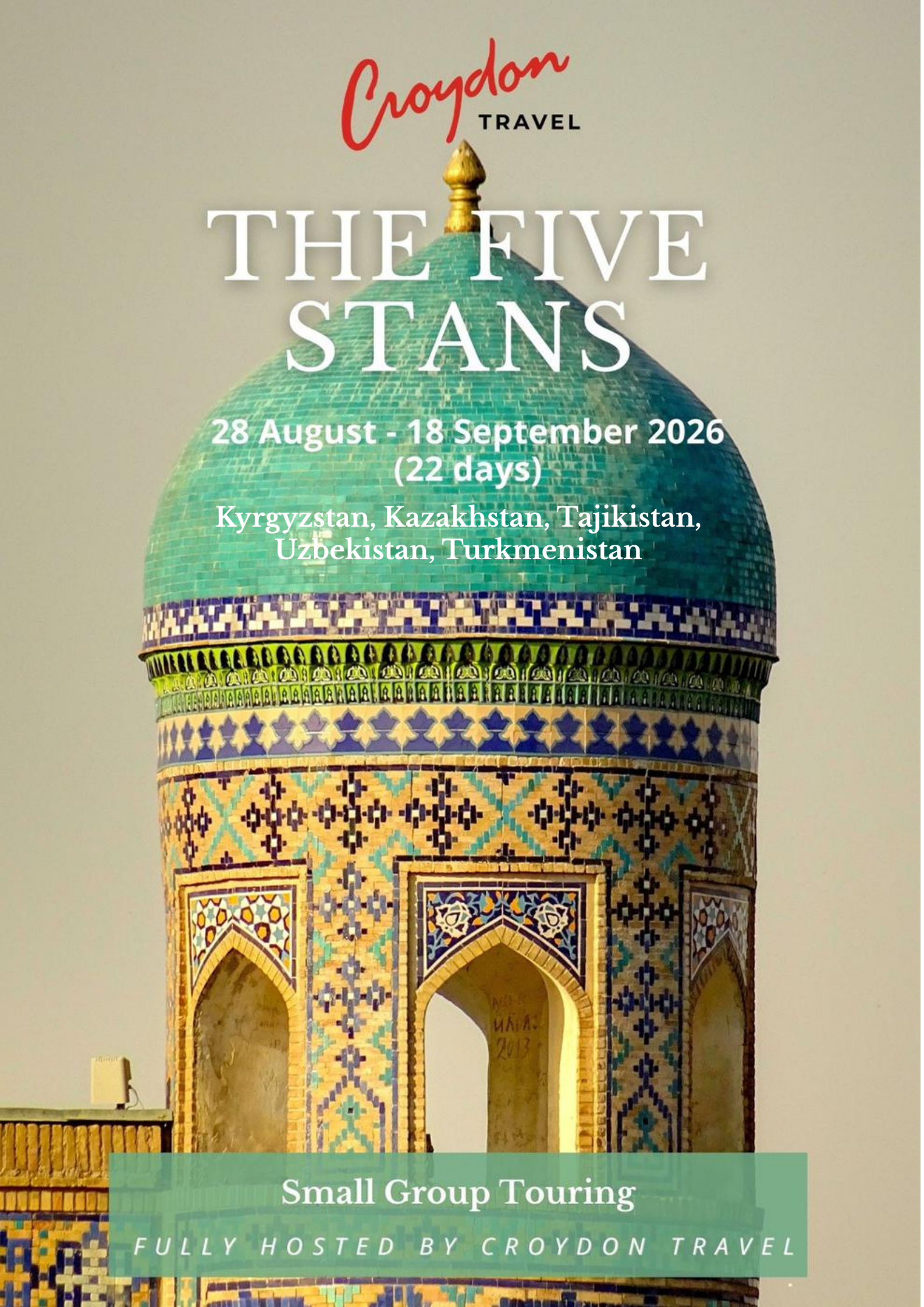




Croydon
TRAVEL

THE FIVE STANS

28 August - 18 September 2026
(22 days)

Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan,
Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan

Small Group Touring

FULLY HOSTED BY CROYDON TRAVEL



WELCOME

I'm thrilled to introduce our Fully Hosted Five Stans Journey – an itinerary that brings together five of the most intriguing and lesser-explored countries in the world: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan.

Travelling through Central Asia is unlike any other experience – it's a region rich in Silk Road history, breathtaking landscapes, and cultural diversity. But we also understand it can come with its own challenges – border crossings, different currencies, and navigating remote regions. That's why we've carefully curated this journey to take the stress and uncertainty out of travelling through the Five Stans.

You'll be in the capable hands of our experienced host, Joanne Taylor, who has travelled extensively through Central Asia and will accompany you every step of the way to ensure everything runs smoothly. With all the logistics taken care of, you can simply relax and enjoy the wonder of this unforgettable part of the world.

We look forward to welcoming you on this truly remarkable journey.

Warm regards,



Jamie Davison
Owner, Croydon Travel



The Five Stans Awaits Discover a world less travelled

Kyrgyzstan • Kazakhstan • Tajikistan Uzbekistan • Turkmenistan

Discover a world less travelled, where ancient trade routes, breathtaking landscapes, and warm hospitality converge to create one of the most fascinating journeys.

The Five Stans - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan offer a rare blend of cultural richness and natural wonder, still untouched by mass tourism. Each Stan has its own story, inviting you to step into history and experience the spirit of the Silk Road for yourself. Whether you're a lover of culture, a history enthusiast, or simply seeking a destination that's truly unique, this journey promises depth, discovery, and a travel experience that will stay with you long after you return home.

Meet Your Host



Jo Taylor

After 25 years in the NSW Police Force, I followed my passion into travel in 2007 and haven't looked back. Since then, I've led tours to over 80 countries and feel privileged to call the world my workplace.

I've worked alongside Jamie, Vikki and Angela for many years, both professionally and as close travel companions. The Five Stans hold a special place in my heart, I've hosted more than 13 tours through Central Asia and never tire of its colour, culture and incredible hospitality.

Croydon Travel has crafted this journey with care, and I look forward to sharing it with you — every step of the way.

Croydon Travel's Fully Hosted Five Stans Journey — Join the Road Less Travelled.

A photograph of a highly ornate, vaulted ceiling with intricate geometric and floral patterns in gold, blue, and white, typical of Central Asian architecture.

OUR INCLUSIONS

KEY FEATURES

- Services of English-speaking local guides in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan
- Hand-selected accommodation
- Guaranteed early check-in on Day 1
- Daily breakfast and 23 meals, a balanced mix of lunches and dinners tailored to each day's travel and sightseeing program.
- Economy class flight from Almaty (Kazakhstan) to Dushanbe (Tajikistan)
- Economy class flight from Dashoguz to Ashgabat (Turkmenistan)
- Comfortable air-conditioned coaches, never filled to capacity for your comfort
- High-speed train travel from Tashkent to Samarkand, and Samarkand to Bukhara with luggage transfer by road.
- All entrance fees to museums and sites as per the itinerary
- Traditional Golden Eagle hunting demonstration in Bokonbayevo
- Felt carpet-making demonstration in Kochkor

CROYDON TRAVEL BONUS INCLUSIONS

- An experienced Croydon Travel Host travelling with you for the entire land journey
- Welcome Dinner & Farewell Dinner including select beverages
- Optional evening walks
- Turkmenistan entry documents and visa issuance
- Tips and gratuities included (valued at AU\$500 per person)
- Croydon Travel signature special moments throughout the tour
- Home-to-airport return chauffeur transfers*
- Local currency pack valued at AU\$50

With Croydon Travel, all your travel necessities are included for a seamless journey!



Croydon Travel's Fully Hosted Five Stans Journey — Join the Road Less Travelled.

YOUR JOURNEY AT A GLANCE

22 Days – The Five Stans Journey Friday 28 August – Friday 18 September 2026 Bishkek to Ashgabat

Kyrgyzstan

Day 1 – Fri 28 Aug – Bishkek: Early check-in. City tour and Welcome Dinner.

Day 2 – Sat 29 Aug – Bishkek – Chon Kemin: Osh Bazaar, Burana Tower.

Day 3 – Sun 30 Aug – Chon Kemin – Bokonbayevo: Felt-making demonstration, yurt-building, and a visit to Shazka (Fairy Tale) Canyon; overnight in a private yurt.

Day 4 – Mon 31 Aug – Bokonbayevo – Karakol: Eagle-hunting demo, Jeti-Ögüz Gorge and Seven Bulls viewpoint.

Day 5 – Tue 1 Sep – Karakol: Holy Trinity Cathedral, Dungan Mosque, Przhevalskiy Museum.

Kazakhstan

Day 6 – Wed 2 Sep – Karakol – Almaty: Cross border; visit spectacular Charyn Canyon.

Day 7 – Thu 3 Sep – Almaty: Medeo Dam Lookout, Panfilov Park, Arbat Street, Rahat Chocolates.

Day 8 – Fri 4 Sep – Almaty – Dushanbe: Green Market, Gorky Park; optional Museum of Arts. Flight to Tajikistan.

Tajikistan

Day 9 – Sat 5 Sep – Dushanbe & Hisor: Hisor Fortress, Navruz Palace, National Museum, Green Bazaar, Rudaki Park.

Day 10 – Sun 6 Sep – Dushanbe – Khujand: Drive via Iskander-Kul Lake and Iranian Tunnel.



Croydon Travel's Fully Hosted Five Stans Journey - Join the Road Less Travelled

YOUR JOURNEY AT A GLANCE

Uzbekistan

Day 11 – Mon 7 Sep – Khujand – Tashkent: Explore Khujand and its bazaar before crossing into Uzbekistan.

Day 12 – Tue 8 Sep – Tashkent: Discover the Old Town, Chorsu Bazaar, ornate Metro, ceramics studio.

Day 13 – Wed 9 Sep – Samarkand: Fast train; Registan, Bibi-Khanum Mosque, Bazaar, Observatory.

Day 14 – Thu 10 Sep – Samarkand: Gur Emir, Shahi-Zinda, Afrosiab, Konigil Paper Mill.

Day 15 – Fri 11 Sep – Bukhara: Fast train; visit Registan Square, Bibi-Khanum Mosque and Ulugbek Observatory. Dinner in caravanserai.

Day 16 – Sat 12 Sep – Bukhara: Ark Fortress, Samanid Mausoleum, Summer Palace; free time.

Day 17 – Sun 13 Sep – Bukhara – Khiva: Cross Kyzylkum Desert with photo stops.

Day 18 – Mon 14 Sep – Khiva: Walking tour of Ichan-Kala old town, mosques, madrassahs and craft shops.

Turkmenistan

Day 19 – Tue 15 Sep – Khiva – Ashgabat: Cross via Kunya-Urgench; UNESCO ruins, fly to Ashgabat.

Day 20 – Wed 16 Sep – Ashgabat: Arkadash Stud Farm, Kipchak Mosque, Old Nisa, National Museum; Farewell Dinner.

Day 21 – Thu 17 Sep – Ashgabat: Tour Old Nisa, lively markets, Russian Bazaar and Monument of Independence.

Day 22 – Fri 18 Sep – Ashgabat: Early departure.

Optional extensions (extra cost): Mary & Merv or Darvaza Crater.



YOUR ACCOMMODATION

Here's a brief glimpse into some of the unique and carefully selected accommodations you'll enjoy throughout your journey.

From rustic charm to urban elegance, this journey offers a diverse range of hand-picked accommodations. In remote areas, enjoy clean, cosy lodgings rich in warmth and hospitality, while in major cities, unwind in modern hotels that reflect the spirit and personality of each destination.



Nestled on the tranquil southern shore of Issyk-Kul Lake, Nomad Lodge Tamga Yurt Camp combines tradition with comfort. Each guest has their own private yurt, offering an intimate experience rarely found in shared camp settings, with individual facilities just outside.



Ashu Guest House is a charming, family-run retreat nestled in the tranquil village of Kalmak-Ashuu, within Kyrgyzstan's picturesque Chon-Kemin Valley.

YOUR ACCOMMODATION



Here's a closer look at just a few of the modern and distinctive properties featured on this journey.

in major cities, unwind in modern hotels that capture the spirit and personality of each destination. Each has been carefully selected for its central location, comfort and facilities, offering the perfect base to relax after a day of discovery.



The Hilton Dushanbe offers modern comfort in the heart of Tajikistan's capital, just minutes from key landmarks and the airport. Spacious rooms, attentive service, and a rooftop bar with panoramic city views make it a relaxing base after a day of sightseeing. While it reflects an international style rather than local charm, its quality facilities and convenience ensure a comfortable stay.



The Orion Hotel Bishkek is one of the city's finest addresses, combining elegant European style with warm Kyrgyz hospitality. Its spacious rooms, polished service, and tranquil spa provide a welcome retreat after a day exploring the capital. Centrally located near leafy parks and local cafés, it's an ideal base for both comfort and convenience.

*Should unforeseen events arise, alternative accommodation of an equivalent quality will be provided

Croydon Travel's Fully Hosted Five Stars Journey — Join the Road Less Travelled.

KYRGYZSTAN

Day 1 - Arrive Bishkek

Arrive in Bishkek early this morning, and transfer to your centrally located hotel. Your room will be available for immediate check-in, giving you the chance to rest and refresh after your flight.

In the afternoon, set out on a guided sightseeing tour of Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan's relaxed and leafy capital. Begin at Philharmonic Square, where the statue of Manas, the national hero, stands proudly. Explore the fascinating State History Museum and enjoy a walking tour around Ala-Too Square. Witness the ceremonial Changing of the Guard and take in key landmarks including the Manas Monument, Soviet-era government buildings, and the iconic Lenin Statue in Old Square — the last of its kind still standing in Central Asia.

Stroll through the peaceful Oak Park, home to a unique open-air sculpture gallery, before concluding the city tour at Victory Square, dedicated to the heroes of World War II.

This evening, gather with your host and fellow travellers for our Welcome Dinner, the perfect opportunity to get to know each other and toast the start of your incredible Central Asian journey.



KYRGYZSTAN

Day 2 - Bishkek - Burana - Chon Kemin

After breakfast, depart Bishkek, stopping briefly at Osh Bazaar to experience the city's vibrant local life, before continuing your scenic drive towards the serene Chon-Kemin Valley.

En route, explore the ancient Burana Tower and its surrounding archaeological site. Dating back to the 9th–12th centuries, Burana was once part of the Silk Road city of Balasagyn, one of three capitals of the powerful Karakhanid Empire. Discover a fascinating collection of balbals, ancient Turkic stone grave markers offering insight into nomadic traditions and artistry.

Continue your journey through lush countryside to the peaceful Chon-Kemin Valley.

Nestled between majestic mountains and dense fir forests, Chon-Kemin is a tranquil haven of villages and farmland. Enjoy a leisurely afternoon: stroll through the village to experience rural Kyrgyz life, or walk into the foothills for sweeping views of the valley.



KYRGYZSTAN



Day 3 - Chon Kemin - Kochkor - Tamga/Bokonbayevo

We depart for the beautiful south shore of Issyk Kul Lake, known as the “Pearl of Central Asia” and the world’s second-largest alpine lake.

Our first stop is the village of Kochkor, reached via the scenic Boom Gorge, Kuvaky Pass (2,170m) and the Orto-Tokoy Reservoir. Here, we visit a local cooperative for a felt carpet-making demonstration, showcasing the intricate Kyrgyz traditions of Ala-kiyiz and Shyrdak, colourful textiles that remain central to nomadic culture.

Continuing along the lake’s picturesque southern shoreline, we stop in Kyzyl Tuu, a village renowned for its yurt craftsmanship, where more than 70% of the population is involved in this ancient art. Visit a local family’s open-air workshop and, if you wish, take part in the hands-on assembly of a traditional yurt, an authentic insight into the ingenuity of Kyrgyz nomadic life.

Later, explore Shazka Canyon, whose name means “Fairy Tale” in Russian, a fitting title for this surreal landscape. Shaped over millennia by wind, water and ice, its crimson rock formations evoke castles, animals and sculptures carved by nature itself.

This afternoon, settle into a traditional yurt camp, surrounded by sweeping mountain views.

Gather this evening for dinner and warm Kyrgyz hospitality.



KYRGYZSTAN

Day 4 - Tamga/Bokonabevo - Barskoon - Karakol

After breakfast and a restful night in your yurt near the canyon, we begin the day with a remarkable cultural encounter. Close to the canyon, you'll meet a local berkutchi (golden eagle hunter) and witness a fascinating demonstration of this ancient nomadic tradition. Once widely practiced, golden eagle hunting is now a rare cultural experience, and this encounter offers a rare insight into Kyrgyzstan's rich heritage.

Continue your journey along the southern shore of Issyk Kul Lake toward Karakol. Further west lies the spectacular Jeti-Ögüz Gorge, renowned for its towering red sandstone cliffs known as the Seven Bulls. Enjoy the panoramic views from a clifftop café, where the striking rock formations and alpine scenery make for an unforgettable photo stop.

Following today's sightseeing, travel onward to Karakol to check in and settle in for two nights.

This evening, share a traditional dinner hosted by a local Dungan or Uyghur family, offering an authentic taste of regional hospitality and cuisine.



KRYGYZSTAN - KAZAKHSTAN

Day 5 - Karakol

This morning, embark on a guided sightseeing tour of Karakol, a town rich in history and cultural diversity.

Begin with the striking Holy Trinity Cathedral, a 19th-century wooden Russian Orthodox Church, built without a single nail, framed for its craftsmanship and five graceful domes. Visit the Dungan Mosque, a remarkable structure built in 1910 by Chinese artisans for the Dungan people, echoing the style of a Buddhist temple. The day concludes with a visit to the Przhevalskiy Museum, with an optional stop at the region's soothing hot springs.



Day 6- Karakol - Charyn Canyon - Almaty

This morning, depart Karakol and travel toward the Kyrgyzstan-Kazakhstan border, where border formalities are completed. Cross into Kazakhstan and continue across the wide steppe to the spectacular Charyn Canyon, one of Central Asia's geological wonders.

After lunch at a local café near the canyon entrance, explore the Valley of the Castles, a dramatic landscape of crimson sandstone carved by centuries of wind and water.

For those who wish, a 2.5 km walk (approximately 70 minutes return) leads down to the Charyn River, shaded rest areas and photo stops are found along the way, or simply relax at the rim café and take in the breathtaking views.

Later this afternoon, continue your journey to Almaty, arriving early evening for hotel check-in and an evening at leisure.



Day 7 - Almaty

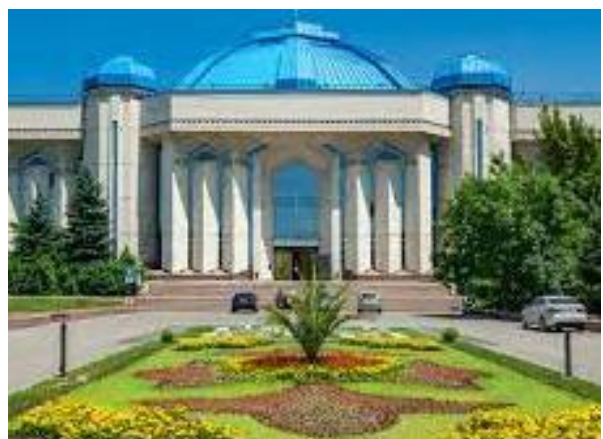
This morning, set out to explore Almaty, a vibrant city framed by snow-capped peaks and leafy boulevards.

Begin in the foothills at the Medeo Skating Rink, one of the highest in the world, before continuing by local cab to the nearby Dam Lookout for sweeping views of the Trans-Ili Alatau Mountains, a perfect photo stop.

Back in the city, visit two of Almaty's most interesting museums, each revealing a different aspect of the region's cultural and artistic heritage.

This afternoon, enjoy a leisurely walk through Panfilov Park, home to the colourful Ascension Cathedral and memorials dedicated to the 28 Panfilov Guards. Afterwards, stop at Rahat Chocolates, a local institution, and stroll along Arbat Street, a lively pedestrian precinct filled with cafés, artists, and boutique shops.

Optional: End the day with a visit to the Arasan Wellness Spa (additional cost), an architectural gem of marble halls and domed ceilings. Unwind in its thermal pools and saunas, a serene retreat after a day of discovery.



KAZAKHSTAN - TAJIKISTAN

Day 8 - Almaty - Dushanbe

This morning, begin with a visit to Almaty's Green Market, where locals shop for colourful produce, aromatic spices and handmade goods. Wander through its lively aisles for a glimpse of everyday Kazakh life before continuing to Gorky Park, one of the city's oldest and most loved recreational areas, named after Russian author Maxim Gorky.

Nearby, stop at Tatum Shopping Centre on Arbat Street, home to a wide selection of locally made souvenirs and handicrafts — prices are fair and light bartering is welcomed. You may also wish to browse the adjoining department store, which stocks high-quality Kazakh products and artisan keepsakes.

Optional: Visit the newly opened Almaty Museum of Arts (entry additional cost), a contemporary gallery showcasing Kazakhstan's evolving creativity and cultural expression.

Later today, we transfer to the airport for our flight to Dushanbe, the elegant capital of Tajikistan.





Day 9 - Dushanbe & Hisor

After breakfast, we travel west to explore the Hisor Fortress, a short drive from Dushanbe. Believed to date back over 2,000 years, this once mighty citadel served as the seat of local governors during the Bukhara Emirate. The twin towered gateway you see today is original, while much of the surrounding complex was carefully restored following Tajikistan's civil war.

We then return to Dushanbe, stopping at the magnificent Kokhi Navruz Palace for a guided tour. This extraordinary building showcases traditional Tajik artistry on an epic scale, with carved wood, hand painted ceilings and glittering chandeliers making it one of the city's most impressive landmarks. Continue to the National Museum.

In the afternoon, stroll through the Green Bazaar, a bustling local market brimming with colourful produce, spices and daily life, before checking in to your hotel and preparing for an evening walk.

Later, enjoy a gentle stroll through Rudaki Park, visiting the Ismoil Somoni Monument, Flag Pole Square and the Independence Tower, a grand finale to a day steeped in Tajik history and culture.



TAJIKISTAN

Day 10 - Dushanbe to Khujand

This morning, depart Dushanbe and journey north toward Khujand, one of Central Asia's oldest cities with over 2,500 years of continuous history. Founded by Alexander the Great and once known as Alexandria Eschate, meaning "Alexandria the Furthest", Khujand marks the most distant point of his empire's eastern reach. En route, travel through the scenic Anzob Pass, a winding mountain route that offers breathtaking views and an unforgettable glimpse into the rugged beauty of Tajikistan's highlands.

Along the way, stop at the stunning alpine Lake Iskander-Kul, named after Alexander himself. Surrounded by dramatic peaks of the Fann Mountains, this picturesque lake is a perfect spot to stretch your legs and soak in the fresh air and spectacular scenery.

Continue onward to Khujand. Join your host for a walk through the nearby boulevards or along the Syr Darya River. You may prefer an evening at leisure, preparing to explore the city's fascinating historical and cultural treasures tomorrow.



TAJIKISTAN - UZBEKISTAN



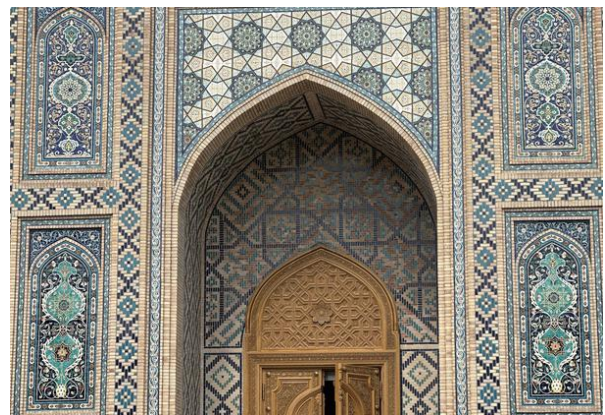
Day 11 - Khujand - Tashkent

Begin your morning exploring Khujand, Tajikistan's second-largest city and one of the oldest in Central Asia. Set along the Syr Darya River, Khujand has been continuously inhabited for over 2,500 years, dating back to the time of Alexander the Great. Your guided city tour includes visits to tranquil Pushkin Square and Kamoli Khujandi Square, both popular spots that reflect the city's vibrant culture and daily life.

Next, visit the historic Timur Malik's Fortress, once a strategic defensive stronghold on the river. Inside its walls, the Sughd Historical Museum provides fascinating insight into the region's importance as a Silk Road trading centre. You'll also stop at the Muslihiddin Memorial Complex, which honours a respected 12th-century poet and religious leader. The morning concludes with a stroll through Panjshanbe Bazaar, one of Central Asia's largest markets, alive with colour, local produce, and handcrafted wares.

After lunch at a local restaurant, depart Khujand and drive toward the Tajik-Uzbek border at Oibek. Following customs and immigration formalities, you'll meet your new Uzbek guide and continue through the Fergana Valley, a fertile region rich in agricultural heritage and traditional village life.

Arrive in Uzbekistan's capital, Tashkent, by late afternoon and check in to your hotel. Enjoy the evening at leisure to relax or take a short walk to begin soaking up the atmosphere of this dynamic city.



UZBEKISTAN

Day 12 - Tashkent

This morning, set out to explore Tashkent, Uzbekistan's vibrant capital where ancient tradition meets modern flair. Begin with a reflective walk from the Monument of Courage, honouring the victims of the 1966 earthquake, through Memorial Park and past the Grieving Mother Monument, before reaching Independence Square, the symbolic heart of the city. Continue to the Kaffal ash-Shoshi Mausoleum and Qur'an Complex, one of Tashkent's most revered religious sites, where an ancient manuscript attributed to Caliph Osman is carefully preserved.

A short drive brings us to the Rakhimov Ceramics Studio, a private family workshop renowned for its hand-painted ceramics and warm Uzbek hospitality. Enjoy tea and traditional sweets as you watch artisans at work.

Next, dive into the energy of Chorsu Market, a bustling domed bazaar filled with local produce, spices, and handicrafts. From here, experience a ride on the Tashkent Metro, one of the most beautiful in the world, where each station is a showcase of marble, mosaics, and chandeliers.

This afternoon, stroll through Amir Temur Square and along Sailgokh Street, Tashkent's lively promenade lined with boutiques and cafés. End the day with an optional visit inside the Navoi Theatre, an architectural masterpiece whose evening performances are a highlight for music lovers.



UZBEKISTAN



Day 13 - Tashkent to Samarkand (Fast Train)

This morning, transfer to the railway station for the Afrosiyob high-speed train to Samarkand, one of the most storied cities along the Silk Road. In less than two hours we cross the golden plains to a city that has dazzled travellers for more than two millennia. Your luggage is transported to your hotel by road.

On arrival, we begin our exploration at the magnificent Registan Square, the beating heart of Samarkand. Here, the three great madrasahs, Ulugbek, Sher-Dor and Tillya-Kori, stand like a living chronicle of empire and artistry, their turquoise domes and gilded mosaics glowing in the Central Asian sun. It was across this square that merchants once bartered silk and spices, poets debated philosophy, and astronomers mapped the heavens. As we wander through its grand courtyards and arched portals, it's easy to imagine the hum of caravans and scholars that once filled this dazzling crossroads of civilisation.

Our discovery continues with visits to the soaring Bibi-Khanum Mosque, built by Amir Temur in honour of his beloved wife, and to the nearby Siab Bazaar, where mountains of spices, dried fruits and hand-woven breads fill the air with colour and scent.

Enjoy lunch at a local teahouse before visiting the Ulugbek Observatory, an extraordinary 15th-century testament to Samarkand's age of science and learning.

Return to the hotel to refresh before dinner.



UZBEKISTAN

Day 14 - Samarkand

This morning, our journey through Samarkand's rich heritage continues with a visit to the striking Gur Emir Mausoleum, final resting place of Amir Temur. Beneath its brilliant blue dome lies the dynasty that shaped an empire, warriors, poets and scholars whose vision transformed Samarkand into one of the most splendid cities of the medieval world.

We then visit Shahi-Zinda, a breathtaking avenue of tiled mausoleums shimmering in shades of turquoise and sapphire. Each tomb tells its own story, honouring saints, rulers and artisans whose artistry still radiates spiritual beauty more than six centuries later.

A short drive away, the Afrosiab Museum reveals the city's even more ancient origins, with murals and relics from the lost settlement that pre-dates Samarkand itself.

Later, travel to the Konigil Meros Paper Mill, set beside the Siab River, to see the ancient tradition of silk paper-making brought vividly to life. Here we enjoy a leisurely lunch and watch this delicate craft, once prized by emperors, continue through generations. The afternoon is at leisure.

This evening, we dine at the Boulevard Restaurant, a short stroll from the hotel. Its leafy courtyard and warm Uzbek hospitality provide the perfect finale to our time in this legendary city.



UZBEKISTAN



Day 15 - Samarkand - Bukhara (Fast Train)

This morning, your luggage is transferred by road as we board the early Afrosiyob high-speed train to Bukhara, a journey of just under three hours across the golden steppe.

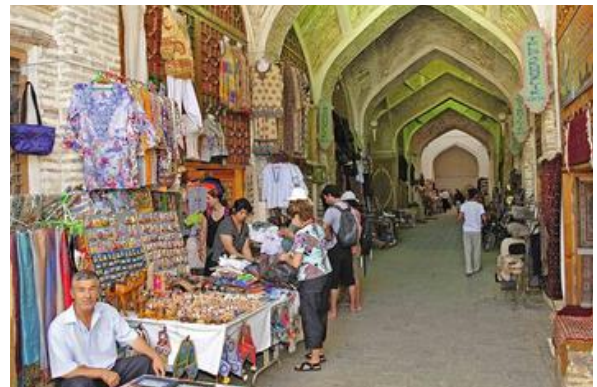
On arrival, enjoy a brief city orientation before setting out to explore the Old City, one of the Silk Road's most atmospheric trading centres.

Stroll through the Lab-i-Khauz ensemble, the Jewish Quarter and the domed bazaars, and admire the majestic Poi-Kalyan complex, whose soaring minaret once guided weary caravans to safety.

We pause for lunch at a local restaurant before checking in to our boutique courtyard hotel in the heart of the Old City.

Later this afternoon, you may wish to relax with a traditional Hammam experience, a centuries-old ritual of steam, scrub and massage. Wander the ancient streets and uncover the enduring art of Central Asia's traditional crafts.

This evening, dine at Joy Caravanserai Restaurant, where fine Uzbek cuisine is served beneath vaulted arches that once sheltered Silk Road merchants.



UZBEKISTAN



Day 16 - Bukhara

This morning, we continue exploring the treasures of Bukhara with a guided walk through the Old City. Visit the magnificent Poi-Kalyan Complex, admire the city views from the Ark Fortress, step inside the historic Zindon Prison, and stroll to the Juma Mosque, a peaceful place of worship dating back to the 10th century. We also visit the beautifully preserved Samanid Mausoleum in Samoni Park, one of the most important examples of early Islamic architecture in Central Asia.

Later, travel to Sitara-i-Mokhi-Khosa, the elegant summer residence of the former Emir of Bukhara. Blending Russian imperial style with rich Oriental design, this striking palace showcases a unique fusion of East and West. Don't miss the exquisite White Hall, often compared to the grandeur of Peterhof Palace near St Petersburg.

The afternoon is at leisure to explore Bukhara's charming laneways, shops and cafés, where artisans display intricate textiles, ceramics and jewellery. Take time to soak up the city's timeless atmosphere or simply relax in one of its shaded courtyards with a pot of traditional Uzbek tea.

This evening is free to enjoy one of Bukhara's many inviting local restaurants, all just a short stroll from our centrally located hotel.



UZBEKISTAN

Day 17 - Bukhara - Khiva

Today, let our experienced driver do all the hard work as we embark on an overland journey across the vast Kyzylkum Desert, its name meaning “Red Sands”, travelling from Bukhara to Khiva.

As we traverse Central Asia’s largest desert, you’ll witness the stark and haunting beauty of this arid landscape, punctuated by resilient saksaul trees and sparse desert flora. Keep an eye out for glimpses of wildlife adapted to these harsh conditions, such as desert foxes and wild hares, quietly thriving in the shifting sands.

Rolling dunes stretch to the horizon, broken only by pockets of steppe and occasional settlements that speak to the endurance of life in this remote region. This journey offers a striking contrast to the cities you’ve explored, revealing yet another layer of Central Asia’s extraordinary diversity.

This afternoon we arrive at the timeless walled city of Khiva and settle in to our hotel.



UZBEKISTAN

Day 18 - Khiva

Khiva is made for walking. Compact, beautifully preserved, and still very much lived in, it glows under the desert light.

This guided walking tour takes in the major landmarks of the Ichan Kala – the walled inner city and UNESCO World Heritage site.

While Khiva's skyline is defined by its minarets and madrassahs, it's the living culture within the walls that brings the city to life. Skilled woodcarvers, silk printers, and puppet makers continue traditions passed down through generations, offering a glimpse into Uzbekistan's rich artistic heritage. As you explore, you'll hear the gentle rhythms of local musicians, adding a soundtrack of authenticity to your journey through the cobbled streets.

Some of the sites today include the striking, unfinished Kalta Minor minaret, the Kunya Ark fortress, the Madrassah of Muhammad Rakhim Khan, the Mausoleum of Pakhlavan Makhmud, and the towering Islam Khodja minaret. Climb to the top for sweeping views across the old town and into the desert beyond.

Visit the ornately decorated Tashauli Palace, including the former harem; reminders of Khiva's grandeur and intrigue, both past and present.

We will sample the local flavours too; Traditional cuisine is hearty, aromatic, and best enjoyed shared.



UZBEKISTAN - TURKMENISTAN

Day 19- Khiva - Kunya Urgench - Ashgabat

This morning we travel to the Shavat border crossing between Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. After clearing formalities, we continue to the UNESCO-listed Kunya-Urgench, former capital of the Khorezmshah Empire and one of Central Asia's most historic cities.

Highlights include the 14th-century Mausoleum of Turabek Khanym, a masterpiece of Timurid architecture; the towering Kutlug Timur Minaret, once Central Asia's tallest; and the 12th-century Mausoleum of Sultan Tekesh, with its distinctive conical dome and eastern portal. We'll also see the Kyrk Molla mound, believed to be al-Mamun's Academy of Sciences, and the compact but unique Mausoleum of Il-Arslan with its pyramidal dome.

Later, return to Dashoguz for an evening flight to Ashgabat and transfer to your hotel.



Day 20 - Ashgabat

After breakfast, we head to the Arkadash Stud Farm near Geok Depe to meet the legendary Akhal-Tekke horses, famed for their speed, elegance, and beauty. Nearby lies the historic Geok Depe fortress, site of a fierce 19th-century battle for Russian control, now honoured by a grand mosque built in 1996. We then continue to Kipchak to see Turkmenistan's largest mosque and the mausoleum of its first president.

Returning toward Ashgabat, explore Old Nisa, a UNESCO-listed Parthian site, before ending the day at the National Museum of History and Ethnography.

This evening, enjoy our Farewell Dinner.



TURKMENISTAN

Day 21 - Ashgabat

After breakfast, continue discovering Ashgabat's graceful blend of modern architecture and rich cultural heritage.

Begin at Independence Park, home to the soaring Independence Monument, where gilded statues and manicured gardens reflect the city's national pride. Enjoy a panoramic drive through the city's striking skyline, passing the world's largest indoor Ferris wheel and the whimsical Vepaly Mascot, a local favourite for photos.

Take a relaxed drive through the Medical Quarter, noted for its futuristic domes and white-marble façades, then pause for coffee at a local café, a perfect opportunity to experience Ashgabat's slower rhythm and friendly hospitality.

Later, visit the Carpet Museum, where exquisite hand-woven masterpieces display the artistry and regional traditions that make Turkmen carpets among the finest in the world. Return to your hotel with time to rest and prepare for your departure tomorrow.

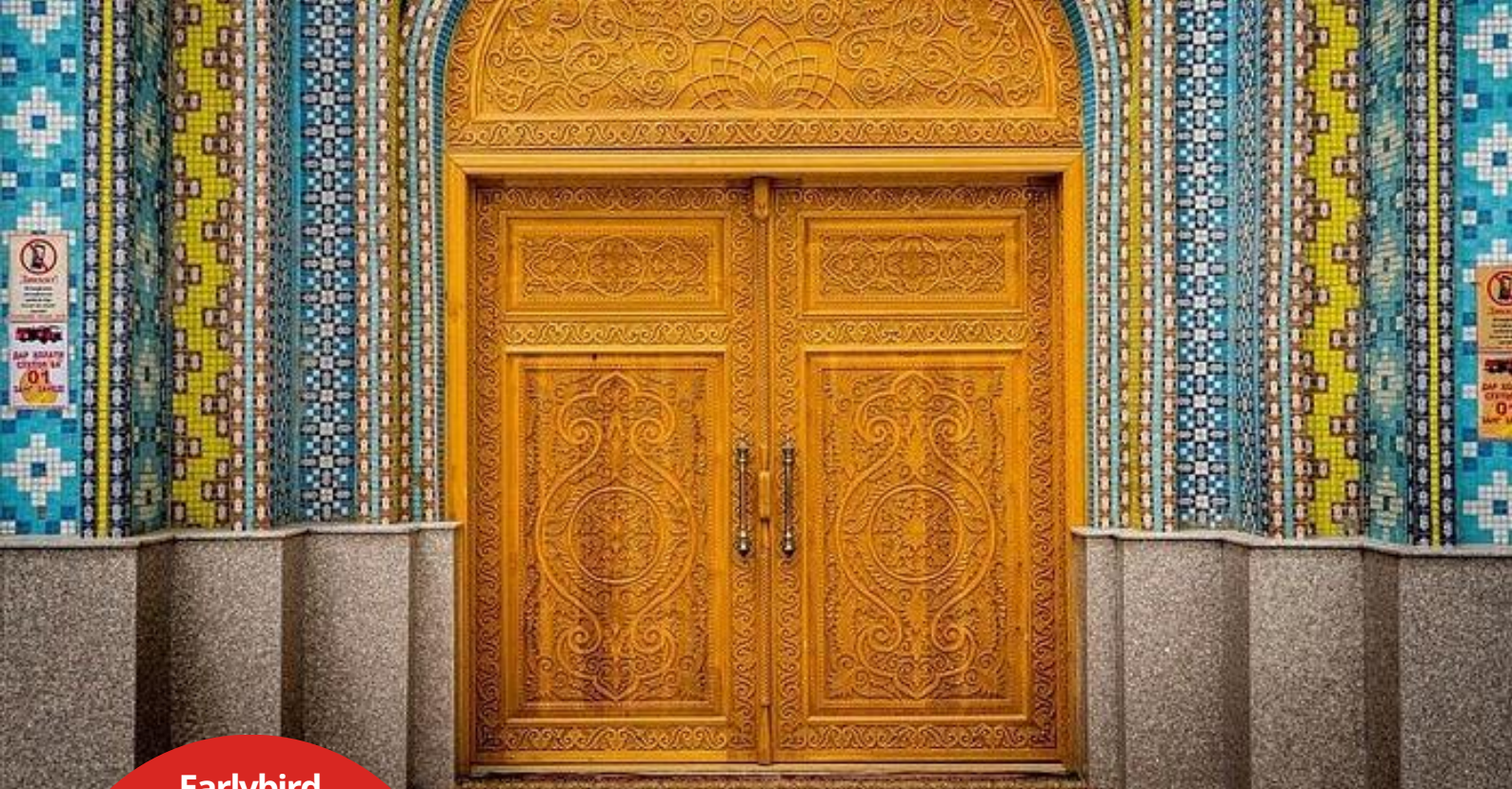


Day 22 - Ashgabat

Early this morning, transfer to the airport for your onward journey, carrying with you lasting memories of the Silk Road's enchanting Five Stans.

Optional extensions: Mary & Merv or Darvaza Gas Crater overnight (additional cost).





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