

Croydon
TRAVEL

THE FIVE STANS

28 August - 18 September 2026
(22 days)

Small Group Touring

FULLY HOSTED BY CROYDON TRAVEL



The Five Stans Awaits Discover a world less travelled

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. Wander through century old cities clad in turquoise tiles, stand beneath snow-capped peaks, and meet locals whose traditions are as enduring as the mountains that surround them. 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.



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

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

Meet Your Host



JOANNE TAYLOR

After 25 years in the NSW Police Force, I followed my passion and made the move into the travel industry in 2007. Since then, I've had the privilege of travelling to over 80 countries as a Tour Manager, and I absolutely love what I do.

I've worked alongside Jamie, Vikki and Angela for many years, both professionally and as trusted travel companions. What I truly enjoy is returning to the places I love, reconnecting with local guides and communities, many of whom I still keep in touch with long after our tours end.

The Five Stans hold a special place in my heart. I've led more than 13 tours through Central Asia, and it's a region that continues to amaze me. If I had to pick a favourite, it might be the vibrant colours of Uzbekistan, but what keeps me coming back are the warm, authentic people, their homestyle cooking, and the genuine hospitality that greets us at every turn.

Croydon Travel has carefully curated this very special itinerary, and I'll be with you every step of the way to help make it seamless, insightful, and truly unforgettable.

Join me on this incredible journey, I'd love to share it with you.



OUR INCLUSIONS

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Bishkek – Visit Ala-Archa Gorge, Ala-Too Square, Lenin Statue, Freedom Monument, and Manas Monument
- Burana – Explore the ruins of Balasagun and the historic Burana Tower
- Kochkor – Felt rug-making demonstration
- Bokonbayevo – Experience a traditional eagle hunting display
- Fairytale Canyon – Guided walk through Skazka's colourful rock formations
- Djety-Oguz Gorge – See the striking red cliffs and Seven Bulls formation
- Karakol – Visit the Dungan Mosque, Orthodox Cathedral, and Przhevalski Museum
- Charyn Canyon – Discover the Valley of the Castles rock formations
- Almaty – Ride the Kok Tobe cable car for city and mountain views
- Dushanbe – Visit the National Museum, botanical garden, and local bazaar
- Hissar – Explore Hissar Fortress and Madrasah Kukhna
- Khujand – Guided city tour of this ancient cultural centre
- Tashkent – See Independence Square and Amir Temur Square
- Samarkand – Visit Registan Square, Gur Emir Mausoleum, and Bibi-Khanum Mosque
- Bukhara – Guided tour and traditional plov cooking class
- Khiva – Walk the historic streets of this walled city
- Kunya-Urgench – Explore the UNESCO-listed Silk Road ruins
- Ashgabat – City tour and visit to Akhal-Teke horse stables

KEY FEATURES

- Services of English-speaking local guides in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan
- Hand-selected accommodation throughout, including daily breakfast and dinner
- Guaranteed early check-in on Day 1
- Lunches included on Days 5 and 17
- 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
- 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 beverages
- 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.



TOUR SUMMARY

THE FIVE STANS

28 August - 18 September 2026 (22 days)

Day 1: Bishkek - Early arrival, transfer to hotel. Afternoon city tour.

Welcome Dinner

Day 2: Bishkek - Chon Kemin - Visit Burana Tower en route to Chon Kemin Valley.

Day 3: Chon Kemin - Kochkor - Tamga - Bokonbayevo: Felt rug-making demonstration. Overnight in a yurt camp (share facilities)

Day 4: Bokonbayevo- Barskoon - Karakol - Visit Skazka Canyon and witness traditional eagle hunting demonstration. Continue to Karakol.

Day 5: Karakol - City tour and visit to Djety-Oguz Gorge.

Day 6: Karakol - Almaty - Cross into Kazakhstan. Visit Charyn Canyon en route to Almaty.

Day 7: Almaty - City tour including Panfilov Park and Kok Tobe cable car.

Day 8: Almaty - Dushanbe - Afternoon flight to Dushanbe.

Day 9: Dushanbe - City tour and visit to Hissor Fortress.

Day 10: Dushanbe - Khujand - Scenic drive via Lake IskanderKul.

Day 11: Khujand - Tashkent - Morning tour, then cross into Uzbekistan.

Day 12: Tashkent - City highlights, Chorsu Bazaar and Tashkent Metro.

Day 13: Tashkent - Samarkand (Fast Train) - City tour on arrival.

Day 14: Samarkand - Continue to explore major sites. Optional winery visit.

Day 15: Samarkand - Bukhara (Fast Train) - City tour on arrival

Day 16: Bukhara - Continue sightseeing. Optional plov cooking class.

Day 17: Bukhara - Khiva - Drive through Kyzyl Kum Desert

Day 18: Khiva - Walking tour of Ichan-Kala old town.

Day 19: Khiva - Ashgabat via Kunya-Urgench - Visit the UNESCO listed ruins, then fly to Ashgabat.

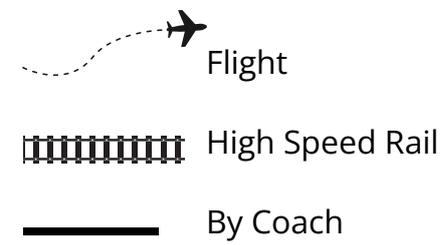
Day 20: Ashgabat - Full-day tour including Arkadash Stud Farm.

Farewell Dinner.

Day 21: Ashgabat - Optional tour to Old Nisa or time at Leisure.

Day 22: Ashgabat - Early morning transfer to the airport for your departure from Turkmenistan.

TOUR SUMMARY



Bishkek (1) night plus early check-in
Chon Kemin (1) night
Bokonbayevo (1) night
Karakol (2) nights
Almaty (2) nights
Dushanbe (2) nights
Khujand (1) night
Tashkent (2) nights
Samarkand (2) nights
Bukhara (2) nights
Khiva (2) nights
Ashgabat (2) nights

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 of Honour 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 a special 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 and begin 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. Upon arrival, enjoy a hearty lunch at a welcoming guesthouse.

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.

Optional Activity: Horse riding with a local guide can be arranged on the day (additional cost applies).



KYRGYZSTAN



Day 3 - Chon Kemin - Kochkor - Tamga/Bokonbayevo

After breakfast at the guesthouse, we depart for the beautiful south shore of Issyk Kul Lake, Central Asia's "pearl" and the second-largest mountain lake in the world.

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

We continue our drive along the picturesque southern shoreline of Issyk Kul Lake. Stop at Kyzyl Tuu village, where over 70% of the population is engaged in yurt craftsmanship. Here, you'll visit a local family's open-air workshop and can even participate in assembling a yurt, an insightful and hands-on experience into nomadic life.

This afternoon settle into a traditional yurt camp.

Enjoy some free time before gathering this evening for dinner and warm Kyrgyz hospitality.



KYRGYZSTAN

Day 4 - Tamga/Bokonabevo - Barskoon - Karakol

Begin your day with a visit to the dramatic Skazka Canyon, whose name means “Fairy Tale” in Russian, a fitting title for this surreal landscape. Shaped over thousands of years by wind, water, and ice erosion, the canyon offers an easy and scenic walk through vibrant red rock formations that resemble castles, animals, and sculptures crafted by nature itself.

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, pausing en route for a light hike in the picturesque Barskoon Gorge. Here, you’ll visit the ‘Tears of the Leopard’ waterfall, set amidst forested slopes and rugged mountain scenery—considered one of the region’s most scenic spots.

Following your visit, drive two hours to Karakol for check-in and overnight stay.





Day 5 - Karakol - Jeti Oguz - 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 wooden Russian Orthodox Church built without a single nail. Originally constructed in 1869 and rebuilt in 1895, its intricate woodwork and five domes remain a proud symbol of the city. Next, visit one of Karakol's most unique landmarks, the Dungan Mosque. Built in 1910 by Chinese artisans for the local Dungan community, the mosque resembles a Buddhist temple and was also constructed entirely without nails.

After lunch, travel to the scenic Jeti-Ögüz Gorge, 35 km west of Karakol. Known for its dramatic red sandstone formations, the gorge is steeped in legend and natural beauty.

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



Day 6 - Karakol - Charyn Canyon - Almaty

Rise early to visit the lively Karakol Sunday Animal Market, a local tradition.

We then drive to the Kyrgyzstan-Kazakhstan border, complete formalities, and continue to Charyn Canyon to explore the dramatic Valley of the Castles before arriving in Almaty for hotel check-in.





Day 7 - Almaty

Today, uncover the rich cultural tapestry of Almaty, Kazakhstan's most cosmopolitan city.

Begin your journey in the historical heart at the Park of 28 Panfilov Guardsmen, where tree-lined paths lead to war memorials, the Eternal Flame, and the stunning wooden Ascension Cathedral, an architectural gem that miraculously withstood a major earthquake without a single nail used in its construction.

Next, delve into the country's fascinating heritage at the Central State Museum, home to more than 120,000 artefacts spanning Kazakhstan's ancient nomadic roots to its modern independence.

Gain a deeper appreciation for the nation's creative spirit at the Folk Music Museum.

Indulge your sweet tooth with a tasting at one of Almaty's beloved chocolate factories, followed by a leisurely stroll through the vibrant Green Bazaar, a sensory feast of colourful spices, fresh produce, and local delicacies.



KAZAKHSTAN - TAJIKISTAN

Day 8 - Almaty - Dushanbe

After a leisurely breakfast, the day is yours to enjoy at your own pace.

Ride the scenic cable car to Kok Tobe Hill for sweeping views of Almaty framed by the majestic Tien Shan mountains.

You may wish to explore the nearby Ili Alatau mountains, visiting Medeo, home to the world's highest ice-skating rink and Shymbulak, a mountain resort nestled at 2,260 metres, offering panoramic alpine vistas.

For photography enthusiasts, an optional excursion to Big Almaty Lake, just an hour's drive from the city, reveals one of Central Asia's most striking alpine landscapes, where turquoise waters meet dramatic mountain scenery.

Alternatively, take time at leisure to explore Almaty's tree-lined boulevards and vibrant café culture at your own pace.

This evening, transfer to the airport for your flight to Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan.





Day 9 - Dushanbe & Hissor

Begin your day in Dushanbe with a visit to the renowned Museum of National Antiquities, home to an extraordinary 14-metre reclining Buddha in Nirvana—crafted over 1,400 years ago by the same Kushan civilisation that created the Bamiyan Buddhas.

Explore the grandeur of the Navruz Palace, then continue to the National Museum and Victory Park for a deeper understanding of Tajikistan's rich heritage.

Take a relaxing stroll through Dushanbe's serene Botanical Gardens and Rudaki Park, pausing at the impressive Ismoil Somoni monument, a tribute to the founder of the Samanid dynasty and a symbol of Tajik national pride.

In the afternoon, journey just outside the capital to the ancient fortress of Hissor, one of the nation's most prized historic sites. Walk in the footsteps of history as you visit the 16th-century Medrassah Kuhna, the Museum of Tajik Way of Life, and the nearby 19th-century medrassah and mausoleum of revered Sufi saint Mahdumi Azam.



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 Iskanderkul, 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, where upon arrival you'll check in to your hotel and enjoy 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

Tashkent, Uzbekistan's capital since 1930, is one of Central Asia's oldest and largest cities. A fascinating blend of ancient history and Soviet-era ambition, its skyline is dotted with grand architecture and leafy boulevards. This morning, delve into the city's historic heart with a visit to the Old Town, home to the Barak Khana Seminary and the Tila Shaikh Mosque, famed for its archives containing one of the world's oldest Qurans—an original manuscript attributed to Caliph Osman.

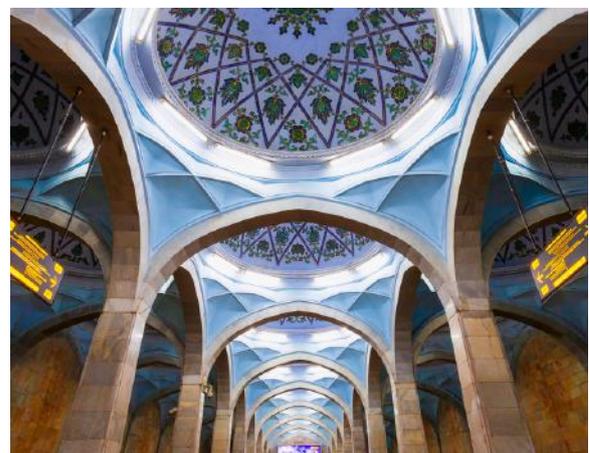
Continue on to the vibrant Chorsu Bazaar, a domed marketplace alive with colours, spices, and traditional crafts. Nearby stands the 16th-century Kukeldash Madrassah, one of the city's most important Islamic schools.

In the afternoon, explore Tashkent's modern landmarks including Independence Square, Amir Temur Square, and its iconic statue. For sweeping views, ascend the television tower and perhaps enjoy refreshments in its panoramic café.

An optional visit takes you to the private studio of renowned ceramists Akbar and Alisher Rakhimov, where you'll learn about Uzbekistan's ceramic traditions, admire their intricate artworks, and enjoy a tea ceremony with freshly baked pastries prepared especially for our group.

Round out the day with a visit to Tashkent Metro. Each station is uniquely designed with marble, granite, and ornate chandeliers.

The remainder of the evening is at leisure.



UZBEKISTAN



Day 13 - Tashkent to Samarkand (Fast Train)

This morning, transfer to the railway station for your journey by fast train to one of the most legendary cities along the Silk Road, Samarkand.

One of the world's oldest continually inhabited cities, Samarkand was once the dazzling capital of conquerors and scholars alike. Built on the foundations of Afrosiab, dating back to the 3rd or 4th millennium BC, the city was known to the Greeks as Marakanda, with remnants of the original settlement still visible today.

Upon arrival we visit Registan Square, the architectural heart of Samarkand and one of the most iconic ensembles in Central Asia. Once a bustling centre of trade, learning, and ceremony, the square is framed by three grand madrasahs:

Ulugbek Madrassah (15th century);
Tillya-Kori Madrassah (17th century); and Sher-Dor Madrassah (17th century).
Each is an exquisite example of Islamic art and Timurid design.

As you walk through the square, imagine the era when caravans from China, Persia, and Europe converged here, carrying silk, spices, and ideas that shaped civilisations.

The intricate tilework, towering minarets, and blue domes leave a lasting impression of Samarkand's historical and artistic legacy.

The remainder of the afternoon and evening is yours to explore at leisure.



Day 14 - Samarkand

Today continues your deep dive into the rich heritage of Samarkand, once the capital of the mighty Timurid Empire and a jewel of the Silk Road.

Begin with a visit to Gur Emir, the final resting place of the great conqueror Tamerlane (Amir Temur), crowned by a striking blue dome and reflecting the grandeur of his era.

Next, marvel at the imposing Bibi-Khanum Mosque, built by Temur in honour of his wife and once one of the largest in the Islamic world. Then wander through the lively Siab Bazaar, filled with colourful produce, spices, and sweets. Nearby, explore Shahi-Zinda, a stunning necropolis of tiled mausoleums and sacred tombs—an artistic and spiritual masterpiece.

In the afternoon, visit the Ulugbek Observatory, an astronomical wonder built in the 15th century by Temur's scholarly grandson. Then continue to the ancient settlement of Afrosiab, believed to be the birthplace of Samarkand, with fascinating ruins and legends tied to the mythical king of the same name.

Optional: Enjoy a visit to Bagizagan Winery for a relaxed tasting of regional wines. An excellent way to end the day immersed in local flavour.





Day 15 - Samarkand - Bukhara (Fast Train)

Transfer to the railway station for the fast train bound for Bukhara, one of the most historical cities of Central Asia and a true treasure trove of Islamic architecture. Bukhara is like an open-air museum. Today's touring will showcase some of its most iconic highlights alongside hidden gems.

Begin at the Lab-i Hauz ensemble, a lively plaza centred around a tranquil pond and framed by centuries-old madrassahs including Nadirkhon Devanbegi and Khanaga.

Visit the Mogaki Attari Mosque, built on the site of a former Zoroastrian temple, and marvel at the towering Poi Kalon complex, where the 12th-century Kalon Minaret rises above a beautiful mosque and twin madrassahs built by Aziz Khan and Ulugbek.

In the afternoon, continue to the Ark Fortress, the former royal residence, and visit the serene Bolo Hauz Mosque with its intricate painted ceilings.

Discover the exquisite 10th-century Samanid Mausoleum, a masterpiece of early Islamic architecture, and Chashma Ayub, the "Spring of Job," a site of pilgrimage and legend.

End the day with a visit to the Hunarmand artisan workshops near Lyab-i Hauz. Supported by the UNDP, these studios preserve traditional crafts including suzani embroidery, miniature painting, block printing, gold thread work, and metal chasing, perfect for discovering the skill behind Uzbekistan's famed craftsmanship.



UZBEKISTAN

Day 16 - Bukhara

Today, enjoy a fascinating out-of-town excursion as we continue our exploration of Bukhara.

First, we visit Sitora-i-Mokhi-Khosa, the elegant summer residence of the former Emir of Bukhara. This striking palace blends Russian imperial architecture with rich Oriental design, showcasing a unique fusion of East and West. Don't miss the famous White Hall—its intricate carved alabaster interior draws comparison to the opulent halls of Peterhof Palace near St. Petersburg.

Our journey continues to the Bahauddin Naqshbandi Mausoleum, a revered pilgrimage site and final resting place of the influential 14th-century Sufi spiritual leader. This peaceful complex remains a spiritual heart of the region, attracting visitors and devotees from around the world.

For lunch, you'll be welcomed into the private home of Rakhmon Toshev, one of Uzbekistan's finest suzani (tapestry) makers. Explore his workshop, admire his extraordinary collection of antique handmade suzani, and gain insight into this colourful textile tradition.

Your visit includes a special hands-on cooking experience: a masterclass in preparing plov—Uzbekistan's national dish. Made with rice, lamb or beef, fragrant spices, and sweet carrots, this hearty one-pot meal is more than food—it's a symbol of hospitality and celebration, steeped in cultural ritual and ancient tradition.



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.

A stop at the banks of the Amu Darya River along the way provides a chance to stretch your legs and take in the natural beauty that once sustained ancient Silk Road caravans.

This afternoon we arrive in 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.



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 a relaxing morning, we head to the Arkadash Stud Farm near Geok Depe to meet the legendary Akhal-Tekke horses, famous for their speed, elegance, and mythical beauty.

Nearby, we visit the site of the historic Geok Depe fortress, where a dramatic 19th-century battle for Russian control took place. A grand mosque built in 1996 now stands in tribute to the fallen defenders. We continue to Kipchak to see Turkmenistan's largest mosque and the mausoleum of the country's first president.

Returning to Ashgabat, we tour the National Museum of History and Ethnography. Its extensive collection of over 327,000 items includes remarkable finds from ancient cities such as Old Nisa and Merv, offering a fascinating insight into Turkmenistan's deep and diverse past.



TURKMENISTAN



Day 21 - Ashgabat

Ashgabat, known as the “White Marble City,” is a striking blend of bold architecture, sweeping boulevards, and cultural symbolism.

This morning begins with a tour of the city, including the Monument/Park of Independence a landmark reminiscent of a Turkmen “Eiffel Tower”.

We'll also visit the impressive Ertugrul Gazi Mosque, one of the city's most iconic sites.

In the afternoon, you may choose to explore the UNESCO-listed Old Nisa fortress, once the royal seat of the Parthian Empire (247 BC–253 AD), before returning to Ashgabat for more exploration.

Alternatively, experience a local perspective on a guided walk through Ashgabat's lively markets, ending at the vibrant Russian Bazaar – a great place to soak up the city's daily life.

Our Farewell Dinner is this evening.



Day 22 - Depart Ashgabat

Early this morning you are transferred to Ashgabat Airport for your onward International flight.



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.

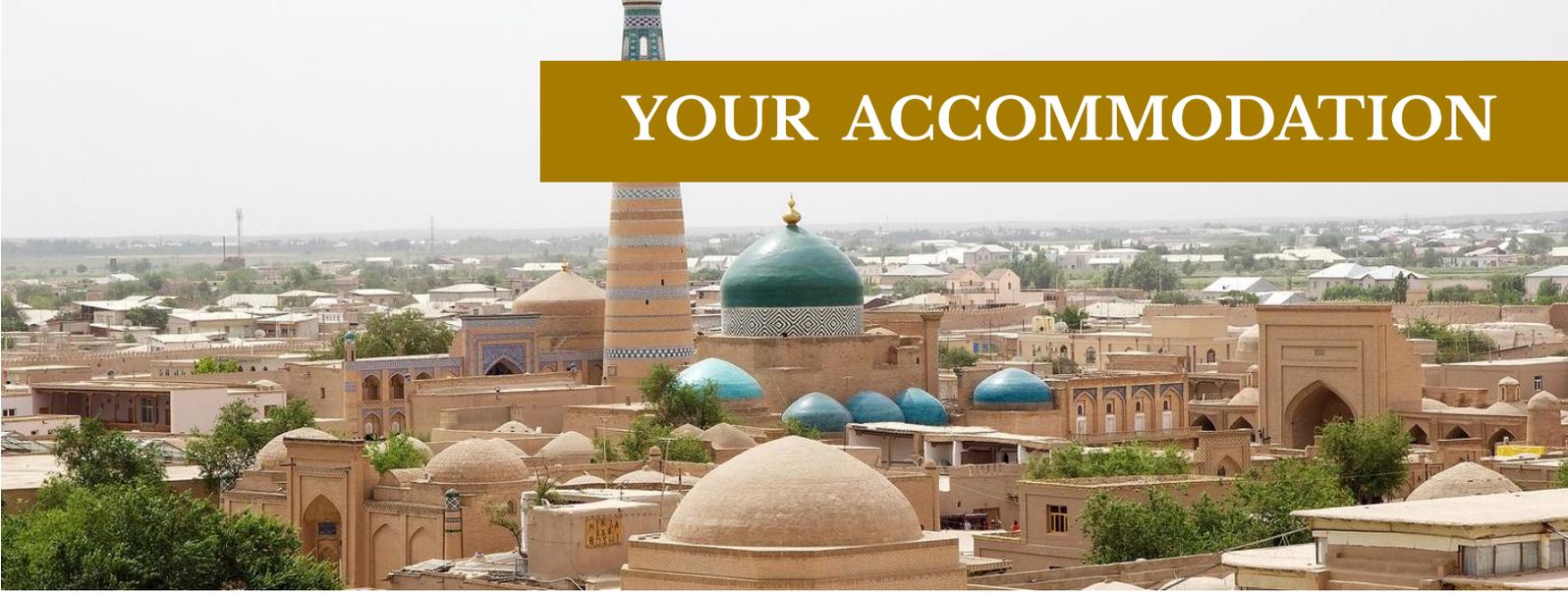


Nomad Lodge Tamga Yurt Camp offers a serene retreat on the southern shore of Issyk-Kul Lake. Enjoy a one-night stay in traditional Kyrgyz yurts, with two adults per yurt.



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

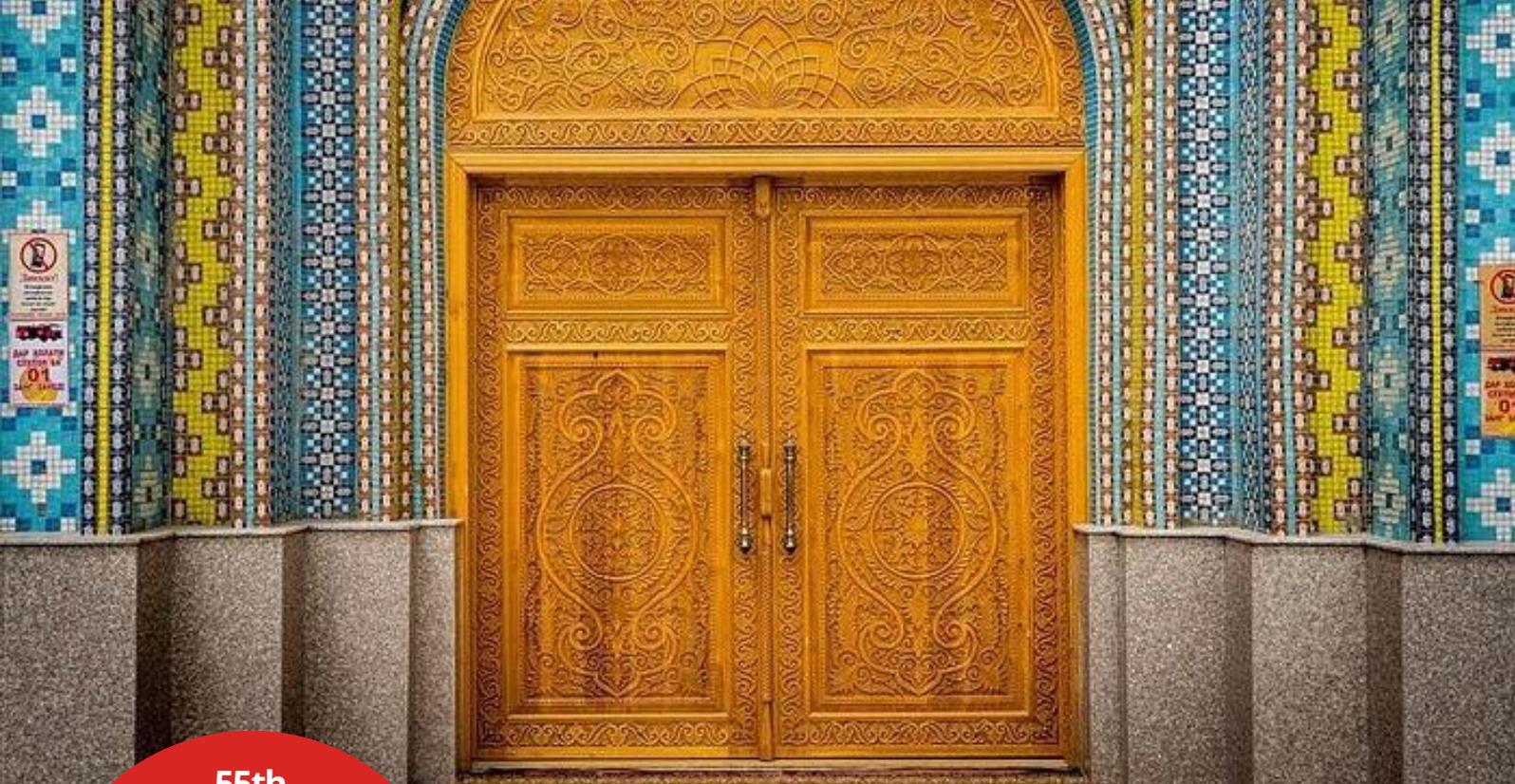
YOUR ACCOMMODATION



The Rumi Hotel & Residences in Dushanbe offers a blend of contemporary comfort and traditional Tajik hospitality. Situated in the city center, it's within walking distance of key attractions.



Zarafshon Parkside Hotel is a refined 5-star boutique property in the heart of Samarkand, blending neoclassical elegance with modern luxury. Originally built in 1959 and beautifully renovated in 2024, it overlooks Central Park and is within walking distance of the city's major historical sites.



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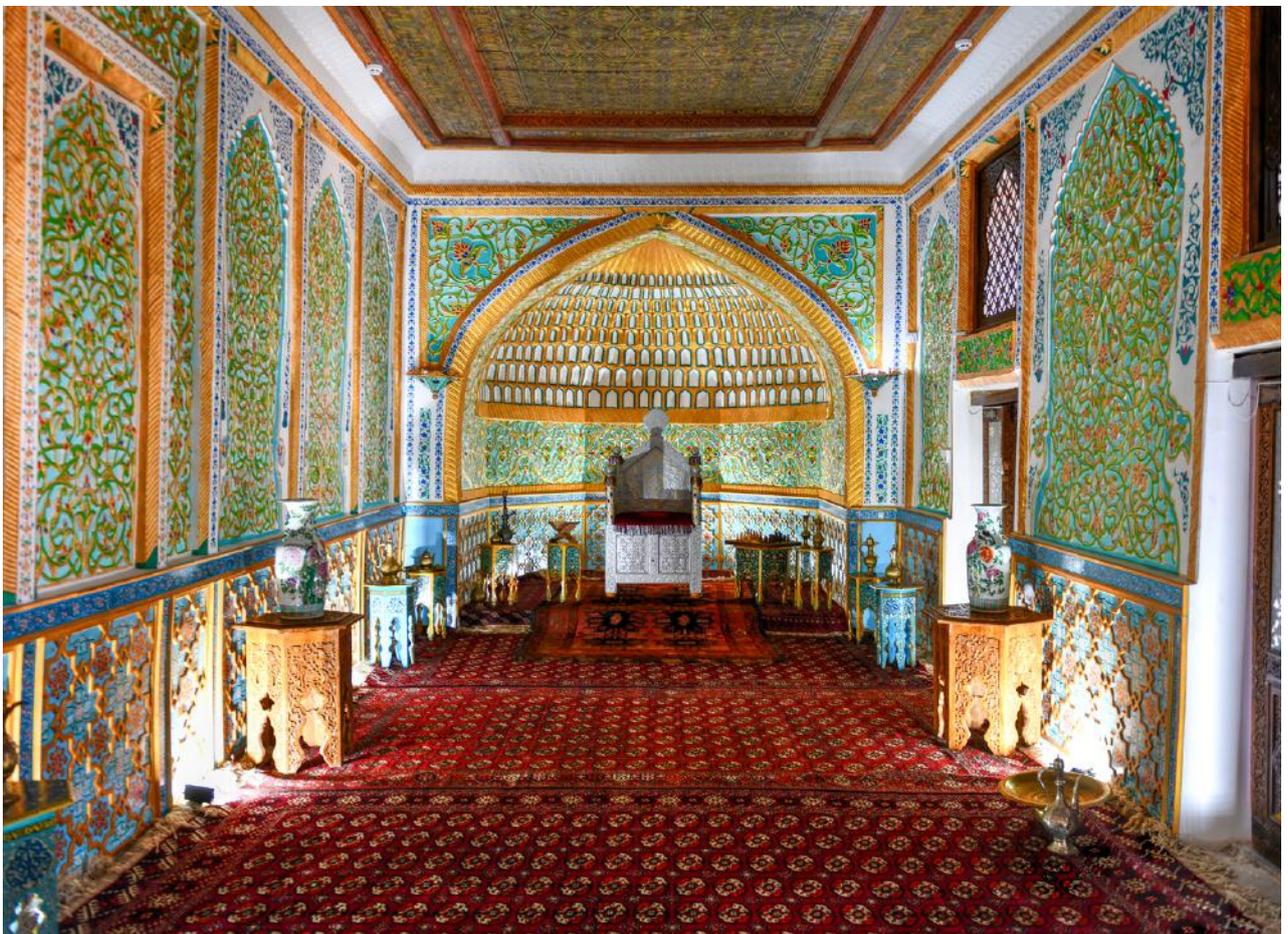


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