

# ***CENTRAL ASIA SILK ROAD TOUR***



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## **Five Stans of the Silk Road with Flights**

**Duration:** 26 days

**Departs:** 2023 & 2024

**Stay:** 21 nts hotels/guesthouses, 3 nts yurts, 1 nt homestay

**Travel style:** Escorted tour with flights from Australia

**Booking code:** FSTAN26M

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# 26 days Five Stans of the Silk Road Tour & Flights

## About the holiday

Embark on the legendary journey through Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan.

Start in Bishkek and end in Ashgabat. With the in-depth guided tour, The Five Stans of the Silk Road, you have a 26-day tour package taking you through Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan and 17 other destinations in Asia. Hike in Kolsay Lakes National Park, marvel at Amir Timur Mausoleum in Samarkand and wander through colourful bazaars.

Learn about nomadic life in Song Köl, explore natural landscapes like Kaindy Lake's sunken forest, and witness the hustle and bustle of capital cities and their cathedrals, and historical sites. Visit astounding museums, unique red rock formations and dine in family homes. This unforgettable adventure takes you off the regular tourist route for an immersive cultural experience.

The Five Stans of the Silk Road includes accommodation in hotels, traditional yurts and a homestay, as well as an expert guide, meals, transport, international flights from Australia and more.

## What you'll love about this tour...

- See all the 'stans' (well most of them) on a comprehensive Central Asia tour
- Discover underexplored destinations with expert guides by your side
- Includes must-see sights and flights from Australia!

## Travel dates

**Departs monthly from May to October in 2023 & 2024\***

*\*Departures are subject to confirmation at time of booking. Price may vary depending on your travel date, please see contact us for current details.*

*Please note: This tour is subject to travel between countries being unrestricted and border crossings being possible. Alternative routes may be necessary if restrictions apply.*



## Holiday Inclusions

### Escorted tour package includes:

- Return international economy airfares to Bishkek & from Ashgabat
  - Fly from Melbourne, including checked baggage (ask for other cities)
- 25 nights accommodation
  - 25 nights in standard hotels/guesthouses
  - 3 nights in yurts
  - 1 night homestay
- 25 Breakfasts, 5 lunches and 9 dinners
- Fully experienced tour guide
- Transport in private vehicles
- One-way flight from Almaty to Dushanbe
- Sightseeing and walking tours as per the itinerary

### Package excludes:

Visa fees

Meals & sightseeing not specified in the inclusions or itinerary

Optional sightseeing or activities (see additional services after the itinerary)

Personal items, such as drinks, snacks, laundry, WiFi etc.

Camera & video permits

Gratuities for tour manager & drivers

Travel insurance is essential

Prices are based on twin share, please contact us for single rates

***Subject to confirmation by airlines, tour company & local operators.***

***Cancellation fees & booking conditions apply.***

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## Itinerary:

### Day 1 Fly from Australia to Kyrgyzstan

### Day 2 Arrive Bishkek

Welcome to Kyrgyzstan's artsy capital and cultural hub, situated at the base of the Tian Shan mountain range. There are no planned activities until the evening welcome meeting, so get out there and explore!

Accommodation:

- Grand Hotel Bishkek (or similar).

Included Activities:

- Welcome Meeting - Meet Your CEO and Group

### Day 3 Bishkek/Chong-Kemin (1B, 1D)

After breakfast, embark on a city tour of Bishkek before travelling to the serenity of Chong-Kemin Valley. Along the way, stop at one of Kyrgyzstan's oldest sights, the Burana Tower and learn about this ancient structure, rare in nomadic culture.

Tonight, stay in a cozy guest house run by Ashuu villagers. Soak in the stunning scenery while exploring the village and savour a home-cooked traditional dinner.

Accommodation:

- Kemin Guesthouse (or similar).

Meals Included:

- Breakfast
- Dinner

Transport:

- Private Vehicle 01:30 - 02:00 Hr(s)

Included Activities:

- Burana Tower Visit
- City Tour

### Day 4 Chong-Kemin/Song Kul (1B, 1L, 1D)

In the morning, opt for a hike to the nearby mountains or explore the famous gorges of Chong-Kemin. After lunch, enjoy the scenic drive along the Kalmak-Ashuu mountain pass to Song Kul Lake. Immerse yourself in Kyrgyz culture with an overnight stay in a traditional yurt. Experience daily nomadic life and wander the breathtaking landscape. With an altitude of 3,016 meters above sea level, it's possible to experience four seasons in one day! Indulge in delicious home-cooked cuisine for dinner, then get cozy in the yurt around the stove.

**Accommodation:**

- Yurts Song Kul (or similar).

**Meals Included:**

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Dinner

**Transport:**

- Private Vehicle 04:00 Hr(s)

**Included Activities:**

- Overnight in a Yurt

**Day 5 Song Kul/Tamga (1B, 1L, 1D)**

Spend the morning soaking in all the beauty of Song Kul Lake before departing for Kochkor to learn the importance of felt-making to Kyrgyz culture and local artisans. Learn the craft during a hands-on workshop creating a small version of the traditional carpet known as ala-kiyiz, and enjoy lunch together. Afterward, head to Tamga village in the clutches of the Terskey Ala-Too and celestial Issyk-Kol' Lake, where you'll spend the night at a village guesthouse and get to know the local community members.

Tamga village was once famous for its Soviet-era military sanatorium, where Soviet cosmonauts relaxed and recovered after space flights. The complex still exists in its original, untouched 1930's glory, with an atmosphere that would seem to bring you back in time.

**Accommodation:**

- Anyutaika Guesthouse (or similar).

**Meals Included:**

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Dinner

**Transport:**

- Private Vehicle 04:30 Hr(s)

**Included Activities:**

- Felt Making Workshop
- Tamga Village Stay

### **Day 6 Tamga/Karakol (1B, 1L)**

Enjoy a free morning getting to know this isolated village. Transfer to Ak-Orgo Workshop Centre to observe how traditional yurts are built and learn about the importance of this Kyrgyz craft. After Lunch at Ak Orgoo, drive to Kyrgyzstan's 4th largest city - Karakol. Stop for a visit at the Prejevalskiy Museum, dedicated to the famous Russian explorer Nikolai Przhevalsky, followed by a city tour. See the Russian Holy Trinity Orthodox Church and pagoda-style Dungan Mosque, built by Chinese Muslims in the early 20th Century.

#### Accommodation:

- Caravan Hotel Karakol (or similar).

#### Meals Included:

- Breakfast
- Lunch

#### Transport:

- Private Vehicle 01:30 - 02:00 Hr(s)

#### Included Activities:

- Yurt Building Demonstration
- Przhevalsky Museum Visit
- Karakol City Tour

### **Day 7 Karakol (1B, 1D)**

After breakfast take a short drive to Jety-Oguz Gorge, located in the footsteps of Terskey Ala-Too Mountains, and visit famous unique red rock formations called "Broken Heart and "Seven Bulls". Then, hike to the valley of wildflowers and waterfall called "Girl's Braids". Return to Karakol and have a free afternoon to explore. In the evening enjoy dinner with local family

#### Accommodation:

- Caravan Hotel Karakol (or similar).

#### Meals Included:

- Breakfast
- Dinner

#### Included Activities:

- Jety-Oguz Gorge Visit & Hike

### **Day 8 Karakol/Saty Village (1B, 1D)**

Cross the border into Kazakhstan on the journey to Saty Village, part of the Kolsay Lakes National Park.

On arrival, jump in a Russian 4x4 for the ride to Kaindy Lake, then embark on a trek to explore the sunken forest. Soak in the bright hues and marvel at the eerie sight of submerged trees. Spend the night in a homestay and indulge in traditional Kazakh meals for a true Kazakh experience.

Accommodation:

- Saty Village Guesthouse (or similar).

Meals Included:

- Breakfast
- Dinner

Transport:

- Private Vehicle 04:30 Hr(s)

Included Activities:

- Saty Village Stay
- Border Crossing (Kazakhstan - Kyrgyzstan)

### **Day 9 Saty Village/Almaty (1B)**

Depart early this morning for Almaty, the former Kazakh capital, stopping along the way to marvel at Charyn Canyon. Boasting stunning shades of red, orange, and brown, the Charyn Canyon is a natural wonder comparable in beauty to the Grand Canyon. On arrive in Almaty, take a city tour visiting sights such as Independence Square, Zenkov Cathedral, Panfilov's Park, and the striking WWII memorial. Time permitting, opt to climb Green Hill for panoramic views, visit the local markets, or sip coffee in one of the plentiful cafés.

Accommodation:

- Hotel KAZZHOL Almaty (or similar).

Meals Included:

- Breakfast

Transport:

- Private Vehicle 04:00 Hr(s)

Included Activities:

- Charyn Canyon Visit
- City Tour

### **Day 10 Almaty/Dushanbe (1B)**

In the morning, transfer to Almaty airport and board a flight to Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, on the Varzob River.

Upon arrival enjoy a tour of Dushanbe, visiting the main monuments, museum, and mosque. There may be more travellers joining the group here. Opt to attend an evening welcome meeting to get to know them.

Accommodation:

- Atlas Hotel (or similar).

Meals Included:

- Breakfast

Transport:

- Plane 01:30 Hr(s)

Included Activities:

- City Tour

### **Day 11 Dushanbe/Kuli Iskandarkul/ Gazza Village (1B, 1D)**

Enjoy a morning drive through the valleys and mountains to Kuli Iskandarkul. Pass along Alexander the Great's lake and go on a short hike to Iskander Darya waterfall. After lunch continue the drive to our overnight stay at a Community Guest house in Gazza Village. Meet the local people and explore the gorgeous landscape of the Fann Mountains. Upon arrival to Gazza village the group will set out on a walk followed by dinner at local family's home.

Accommodation:

- Homestay Ghazza village (or similar).

Meals Included:

- Breakfast
- Dinner

Transport:

- Private Vehicle: Dushanbe to Kūli Iskandarkūl

Included Activities:

- Iskander Darya Waterfall
- Community Homestay

### **Day 12 Gazza Village (1B, 1L, 1D)**

After breakfast, embark on a hike alongside Voru River to visit Voru village (one of the old Villages of Fan Mountains). After the village exploration, head back to the Community guest house. Spend the afternoon at leisure. Opt to join a hike to picturesque Khushtarita valley. Have dinner in a community guest house with the group.



Accommodation:

- Homestay Ghazza village (or similar).

Meals Included:

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Dinner

Included Activities:

- Community Homestay

**Day 13 Gazza Village to Khujand (1B)**

Continue on to Khujand, stopping first in Istaravshan to explore a local mosque and Mug Teppe, an ancient citadel fortress stormed by Alexander the Great in 329 BC. Enjoy an optional lunch in a local chaikhana (teahouse) before continuing the drive to Khujand. Wander the city in the afternoon, visiting the Historical Museum of Sughd, resembling a castle, and the Mausoleum of Sheik Muslekheddin.

Accommodation:

- Sugdiyon Hotel (or similar).

Meals Included:

- Breakfast

Transport:

- Private Vehicle 03:30 Hr(s)

Included Activities:

- Mug Tepe Visit
- City Tour

**Day 14 Khujand/Tashkent (1B)**

Visit the Khujand market (largest in Tajikistan) before continuing on to the border. Cross into Uzbekistan and drive to the capital city of Tashkent, where modern skyscrapers mix with Soviet-era architecture and mosaic mausoleums. Enjoy a short orientation walk in the evening before an optional dinner. Some travellers will be joining the group here as they start their journey into Uzbekistan.

Accommodation:

- Alpha Plaza Hotel and SPA (or similar).

Meals Included:

- Breakfast

**Transport:**

- Private Vehicle 03:00 Hr(s)

**Included Activities:**

- Market Visit
- Orientation Walk
- Border Crossing (Tajikistan - Uzbekistan)

**Day 15 Tashkent (1B)**

Spend the day freely exploring this unique bustling city. Check out one of the many museums, wander the streets admiring the modern, Soviet-era architecture, venture up Tashkent Tower (which offers city views from its observation deck), or wander through the bazaar.

**Accommodation:**

- Alpha Plaza Hotel and SPA (or similar).

**Meals Included:**

- Breakfast

**Day 16 Tashkent/Samarkand (1B)**

Travel on to Samarkand, known for intricately beautiful mosques and mausoleums, situated on the Silk Road. Take an orientation walk and opt to visit the Amir Timur Mausoleum, dedicated to the famous conqueror who once hoped to rebuild the empire of Genghis Khan.

**Accommodation:**

- Zarina Hotel (or similar).

**Meals Included:**

- Breakfast

**Transport:**

- Private Vehicle 04:30 Hr(s)

**Included Activities:**

- Orientation Walk

**Day 17 Samarkand (1B)**

Embark on a city tour, visiting Ulugbek Observatory, Shaki Zinda complex, the bazaar, Bibi Khanum, and Registan Square. With a free afternoon, continue exploring the Samarkand sights, have a cuppa in a local tea house, or wander around the bazaar.

Opt to explore the Tomb of Prophet Daniel, famous for the Biblical story of Daniel and the lions.

Accommodation:

- Zarina Hotel (or similar).

Meals Included:

- Breakfast

Included Activities:

- Samarkand City Tour

### **Day 18 Samarkand/Aydar Kۆl Camp (1B, 1D)**

Travel out into the desert to visit Chashma Complex, a pilgrimage site in the territory of Nurata, dominated by ruins of Alexander the Great's fortress, Juma mosque, a bath-house, and the ancient Panjvakta mosque. All of this, hiding a holy spring believed to heal diseases. After exploring the complex, head to Aidarkul Lake and opt for a swim before continuing on for an overnight stay in a local yurt camp. Enjoy an authentic Uzbekistan dinner and an evening Kazakh singing show.

Accommodation:

- Yurt Camp Stay Aidarkul (or similar).

Meals Included:

- Breakfast

- Dinner

Transport:

- Private Vehicle: Samarkand to Aydar Kۆl Camp 04:30 Hr(s)

Included Activities:

- Chashma Complex and Holy Spring Visit

- Fortress of Alexander the Great Visit

- Overnight in a Yurt

### **Day 19 Aydar Kۆl Camp/Bukhara (1B)**

Travel to Bukhara, known as one of the most charming cities in the country, and get your bearings on an orientation walk. Opt to visit the old city bazaars, enjoy a traditional dinner cooked by a local family, visit a hammam (bathhouse), or just relax in the pleasant atmosphere of this Silk Road city.

Accommodation:

- Hotel As-Salam (or similar).

**Meals Included:**

- Breakfast

**Transport:**

- Private Vehicle: Aydar K l Camp to Bukhara 04:00 Hr(s)

**Day 20 Bukhara (1B)**

Explore Bukhara on a half-day guided walking tour around the beautifully restored mosques, madrassas, and covered markets, or trading domes, that make up the Old City. A centre for pottery, cloth, and carpets, Bukhara is centered around Lyabi-Hauz, a delightful pool of water surrounded by ancient mulberry trees. Wander the artisan shops and narrow twisting streets and alleyways, or sit at a caf  table and let the evening drift by. Opt to watch a local puppet show held in an old caravanserai, or indulge in a rejuvenating hammam bathhouse.

**Accommodation:**

- Hotel As-Salam (or similar).

**Meals Included:**

- Breakfast

**Included Activities:**

- Bukhara City Tour

**Day 21 Bukhara/Khiva (1B)**

Enjoy a scenic drive through the desert on a full day's journey to reach UNESCO-listed Khiva, well worth the arduous drive. Get to know this peaceful, picturesque city on a late afternoon orientation walk, and pick your favourite spots to explore more in-depth tomorrow.

**Accommodation:**

- Hotel Grand Vizir (or similar).

**Meals Included:**

- Breakfast

**Transport:**

- Private Vehicle: Bukhara to Khiva 06:00 - 07:00 Hr(s)

**Included Activities:**

- Orientation Walk

## **Day 22 Khiva (1B)**

Before exploring this historic town on your own, enjoy a guided tour to learn about local life here. Wander through the narrow labyrinth mudbrick alleyways of old town, bargain with locals at the bazaar, admire the madrassas and blue mosaic domes, climb up towering minarets, and venture into the dark dungeons Khiva was infamous for back in the 10th century. Explore the inner walls of Ichon-Qala, and enjoy spectacular sunset views of the sand-coloured mosques and homes.

### **Accommodation:**

- Hotel Grand Vizir (or similar).

### **Meals Included:**

- Breakfast

### **Included Activities:**

- Khiva Ancient City Tour

## **Day 23 Khiva/Dashoguz (1B)**

Spend the morning in Khiva, enjoying your last moments here to experience anything you couldn't squeeze in yesterday, or do some last minute shopping. After lunch, drive to the Uzbek-Turkmen border and continue to Dashoguz. Take an orientation walk and opt for dinner in local café, or explore the city and it's Bai Market.

### **Accommodation:**

- Hotel Dashoguz (or similar).

### **Meals Included:**

- Breakfast

### **Transport:**

- Private Vehicle 01:30 Hr(s)

### **Included Activities:**

- Border Crossing (Uzbekistan to Turkmenistan)

## **Day 24 Dashoguz/Darvaza (1B, 1L, 1D)**

Drive to the UNESCO World Heritage Site Kunya Urgench to visit the ancient capital of the Khorezmian Empire. After lunch, continue to the Kara-Kum desert and witness the fiery Darvaza gas crater, also known as the "Gates of Hell." This evening, enjoy a delicious barbeque dinner and spend the night camping under the stars at a yurt camp.

### **Accommodation:**

- Darwaza Camping (or similar).

**Meals Included:**

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Dinner

**Transport:**

- Private Vehicle 04:00 Hr(s)

**Included Activities:**

- Kunya-Urgench City Visit
- Darvaza Gas Crater Visit

**Day 25 Darvaza/Ashgabat (1B)**

After breakfast, begin the journey to the capital of Turkmenistan - Ashgabat. On the way, stop near the community of Erbent and admire its golden sand dunes that stretch out to the horizon. On arrival in Ashgabat, spend the evening at leisure. Opt to visit the Turkmenbashi Ruhy Mosque, also known as Gypjak Mosque, and capture the sun setting on the symmetrical minarets and golden domes.

**Meals Included:**

- Breakfast

**Transport:**

- Private Vehicle 03:30 Hr(s)

**Included Activities:**

- Erbent Sand Dunes

**Day 26 Ashgabat (1B)**

Spend the day exploring bustling Ashgabat. Enjoy a tour of the city in the morning, visiting several city treasures such as the Monument of Independence and the National museum or Neutrality Arch. Afterward, opt to venture to the ancient ruins of Nisa, or continue exploring Ashgabat.

**Meals Included:**

- Breakfast

**Included Activities:**

- Ashgabat city tour

**Day 27 Depart Ashgabat, Fly to Australia (1B)**

Check out of the hotel this morning and make your way to the airport.

**Please note: The day-by-day tour descriptions are intended as an indicative guide only. Travel by nature is unpredictable. Weather patterns, road conditions, public holidays, travel restrictions and a multitude of other factors may necessitate itinerary changes that are ultimately for the client's benefit. It is essential that clients are flexible and open minded in this regard.**

## **Additional Services:**

Optional activities and additional services are available on this tour. This list gives you an indication of local payments, though please be aware they are subject to change without notice.

### Song-Köl

- Hiking in Song Kül (Free)

### Kolsay Lakes National Park

- Hiking in Kolsay Lakes National Park (Free)

### Almaty

- Zelyony Bazaar (Free)
- Optional Welcome Meeting for Travellers on Combos

### Samarkand

- Amir Timur Mausoleum Visit (3USD per person)
- Tomb of the Old Testament Prophet Daniel Visit (3USD per person)

### Aydar Kül Camp

- Kazakh Singing (Free)

### Bukhara

- Bukhara Hammam Visit (20USD per person)
- Carpet Museum (1USD per person)
- Chor-Bakr Complex
- Jewish Area and Synagogue Visit (Free)

### Dashoguz

- Bai Bazaar (Free)
- Dashoguz Museum (10USD per person)

### Ashgabat

- Ashgabat Hippodrome (Free)
- Ertugrul Gazi Mosque (Free)

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### MY TRAVEL EXPERIENCE BOOKING CONDITIONS

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4. 90 days prior to departure you will be asked to make the balance payment for your trip (you will be notified if your supplier requires earlier payment).
5. 10 days prior to departure you will be sent your travel documents via email.



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