



JOIN ME

IN CENTRAL ASIA, 10TH MAY 2019

UZBEKISTAN, KAZAKHSTAN, KYRGYZSTAN & TURKMENISTAN



HEART OF THE SILK ROAD

**ALMATY, KARAKOL, ALTYN ARASHAN, TAMGA, JETY OGYZ,
LAKE ISSYK-KUL, BISHKEK, TASHKENT, SAMARKAND,
SHAKHRISABZ, BUKHARA, CHARDJOU, MERV, MARY, ASHGABAT,
KOV-ATA, TASHAUZ, DASHOGUZ, URGENCH & KHIVA**

FROM AU\$5650

PER PERSON SHARE TWIN LAND ONLY

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT AU\$1102





Before joining the team at My Travel Expert, I spent a good portion of the prior 15 years as a tour operator working in emerging destinations, the companies I worked for were amongst the first to go into China in the early 80's and Vietnam in the early 90's, and during the time I was with them were amongst the first doing regular touring into destinations like Myanmar, the DPRK, Libya, Uganda and many more.

One of those destinations that we were amongst the pioneering travel organisers into were the republics of Central Asian Republics after the break up of the USSR. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and more. As luck would have it, despite organising a number of groups to this region my own travels escorting groups often saw me off to other destinations like Egypt, Libya, Turkey and Myanmar

As a result I have been itching for some time to get up to Central Asia and see the wonders these incredible countries have on offer. From Registan Square, which inspired the tale of Scheherazade and 1001 Arabian nights, to the scenic beauty of places like Altyyn Arashan that rival the Rockies for their grandeur.

The Central Asian Republics sat astride the Ancient Silk Road and with influences converging from China and Mongolia to the East, India and Persia to the South and Russia and the European Continent from the West, these states shown an incredibly diverse cultural array reflected in their food, music, history and day to day lives.

Whether you are exploring the tombs of one of the ancient Shieks, eating pilaf in a remote mountain town, or enjoying the soviet-esque splendour of cities like Ashgabat, there is always an experience lurking in this region for people to discover.

Which is why in May 2019, I am finally headed there! Over the course of twenty days I will be exploring some of the most incredible sights and experiences available in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. All things running to plan I look to fly into Almaty with Asiana Airlines (which allow for a free night in Seoul), and out of Tashkent, taking in the best of what I can between .. From the walled city of Khiva to the ever burning "Hells' Gate".

More to the point, as I am doing this programme with people I know and have worked with on the ground for almost twenty years, the rates and inclusions are incredible, and I thought this is the perfect opportunity for me to show this area off to more people, which is why you are seeing this packet of information! I would love for you to join me as I discover the Central Asian Republics on this once in a lifetime experience!



*Regards Daniel Spierings
Senior Consultant - My Travel Expert*

DAY 1, 10TH MAY 2019 (FRIDAY) – SEOUL/ALMATY

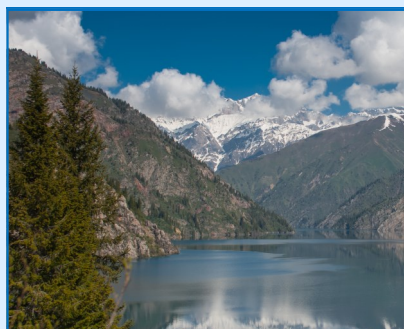
Arrival into ALMATY ex SEOUL via ASIANA Airlines flight OZ577 18:10-21:55. On arrival Almaty, the capital of Kazakhstan, meet and greet by the local guide after entry formalities and transfer to downtown hotel. Assistance with check-in and then time to retire for the evening. Overnight in Almaty.

DAY 2, 11TH MAY 2019 (SATURDAY) – ALMATY

Today we start our city sightseeing of Almaty - visit Panfilov Park, Zenkov wooden-constructed Cathedral, St.Nicholas Cathedral, National Musical Instruments Museum, National Archeological Museum, Central State Museum, Almaty's Green Bazaar. Lunch and dinner at local restaurant. Overnight at hotel in Almaty.

DAY 3, 12TH MAY 2019 (SUNDAY) – ALMATY/KARAKOL

Early start - drive to Karakol via Karkara from Almaty. Today we will cross the border and enter into Kyrgyzstan. After Customs and Immigration, drive ahead to Karakol, enjoy the magnificent landscapes on the way. Lunch enroute and dinner at local restaurant. Overnight at Guest House.



THE GOLDEN SPA

While the name conjures images of luxury, the true wealth in a visit to Altyn Arashan is in the majestic scenery as you pass through hidden valleys, over mountains and through streams as you head to these rural hot springs where—in the comfort of very basic amenities (and we do mean basic)—you will have the opportunity to soak and enjoy the wealth of the mountains.

DAY 4, 13TH MAY 2019 (MONDAY) – KARAKOL

Today we will travel in 4WD's and drive to Altyn Arashan (3014mt), one of the most beautiful gorges in Kyrgyzstan, full of fir trees and huge Alpine meadows. On arrival to the top of gorge you have time for free bath at hot springs, or easy hiking at the gorge then back to Karakol to start city sightseeing of Karakol, visit the Dungan Mosque, the Russian Orthodox Church (made without a single nail), and the local Bazaar. Dinner and overnight at Guest House.

DAY 5, 14TH MAY (TUESDAY) – KARAKOL/TAMGA

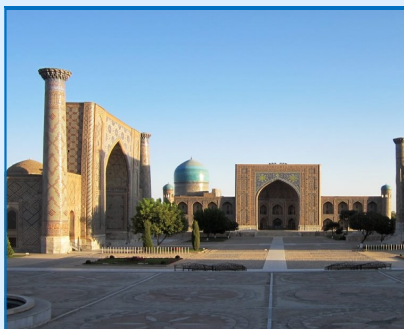
After breakfast get ready for drive to “Jety Ogyz”, the gorge of Broken Heart and the Gorge of “Seven Red Bulls”; as it appears from a distance. The gorge is full of fir trees, and Alpine meadows. Then drive ahead to Barskoon gorge, visit the waterfalls, then drive to Tamga for dinner and overnight at Guest House.

DAY 6, 15TH MAY (WEDNESDAY) – TAMGA/BISHKEK

Drive to Bishkek along the south shore of the lake Issyk-Kul (the world's second biggest mountain lake), enroute visit the Burana Tower XII BC, which was once the capital of Karakhanid's dynasty. See the Balbals here lying under the open sky with different faces. On arrival to Bishkek start city sightseeing of Bishkek, visit the Museum, the bazaar, the Park Panfilov, dinner at local restaurant. Overnight in Bishkek.

DAY 7, 16TH MAY (THURSDAY) – BISHKEK/TASHKENT

Morning transfer to airport for flight to Tashkent. Upon arrival and settlement at the hotel, city tour in Tashkent, old and modern sights. Dinner and overnight.



REGISTAN SQUARE

When you see the Registan Square it's not hard to see why the author of the 1001 Nights had Scheherazade spin her tales from a palace in Samarkand: the city was on the Silk Road, alive with people from different lands; it was a wonderland of Islamic architecture, and a great centre of learning. But no place in Samarkand represents all three aspects as well as the Registan does.

DAY 8, 17TH MAY (FRIDAY) – TASHKENT/SAMARKAND

Drive to Samarkand. After arrival, lunch. Check-in to the hotel. Visit Ulugbek Observatory, Afrosiyab. Overnight at the hotel.

DAY 9, 18TH MAY (SATURDAY) – SAMARKAND

The trip to the magnificent monuments of the Medieval Architecture of the Timurid's Epoch: The Registan Square, the Gur-Emir mausoleum, the Shakhi-Zinda Necropolis, the Bibi Khanum mosque. Overnight at the hotel.

DAY 10, 19TH MAY (SUNDAY) – SAMARKAND/SHAKHRISABZ/BUKHARA

Drive to Samarkand via Shakhrisabz (320 km, 4hrs). Tour of Shakhrisabz: Visit Ak-Saray Palace, Kuk- Gumbaz, Gumbazi Saidon, Khazrati Imam Mosque, Mausoleum of Jakhangir (Tamerlane's son). Lunch. Continue drive to Samarkand. Check-in to the hotel for overnight.

DAY 11, 20TH MAY (MONDAY) – BUKHARA

Full day in Bukhara: visit Kalyan Minaret and Poi Kalyan Mosque, Miri Arab madrassah, Toki Zargaron Dome, Ulugbek and Abdullazizkhan madrassah, Toki Telpak Furushon Dome, Magoki Attoy mosque, Toki Sarafon Dome, Lyabi Hauz complex. Continue sightseeing in Bukhara: Ark fortress including visit to Zindan (prison), Bolo House mosque, Ismail Samoni Mausoleum, Chashma Ayub Mausoleum and bazaar. Overnight.

DAY 12, 21ST MAY (TUESDAY) – BUKHARA/MARY (TURKMENISTAN)

Drive to Farab border. After border crossing formalities meet your Turkmen guide and driver; drive to Turkmenabad (formerly Chardjou; 45 km/about 1 hr) for lunch at local restaurants. Afterwards continue drive to Mary (ab.260 km). Couple of stops en-route to see the Karakum desert. Transfer to hotel on arrival. Accommodation at "Mary" hotel overnight.

DAY 13, 22ND MAY (WEDNESDAY) – MARY – MERV – MARY – ASHGABAT (FLIGHT)

After breakfast in hotel, drive to Merv (32 km/ab. 1 hr; UNESCO World Heritage site). Sightseeing on arrival, visiting the Erk Kala, Gyaur Kala, Sultan Kala, Bayram Khan Kala, Abdulla khan Kala, Sultan Sanjar and Ibn Zeid Mausoleums, Ruins of Muslim Mosque (Beni-Makhan), Buddhist Temple (subject to change, due to bad road conditions), Grand & Little Kyz Kalas. After sightseeing drive to Mary. Lunch at local restaurant. PM visit Mary History Museum (Regional United Museum), Mary City center, Russian Orthodox church (one of the oldest in Turkmenistan) and local Central bazaar (if open). In the evening, take a flight to Ashgabat (40 min with Boeing 737). Transfer to hotel on arrival. Overnight in hotel in Ashgabat.

DAY 14, 23RD MAY (THURSDAY) – ASHGABAT TOUR – DARVAZA – ASHGABAT

After breakfast at hotel, start City tour of Ashgabat visiting the Independence period parks and monuments; with stops at Independence Park, Neutrality square, Ertogrul Gazi Mosque and some others. Tour today also includes, visits to Old Nissa fortress (UNESCO World Heritage site; the residence of Parthian Kings, III century B C – III cent. AD) and Turkmenbashi Ruhy mosque in Kipchak (the largest mosque of Turkmenistan). PM drive to Darvaza fire crater, located in the center of Karakum desert, en-route stops to see two other gas craters one with water and other one with bubbling sulfur mud. On arrival to burning gas crater, we spend there 1.5-2 hrs. and then drive back to Ashgabat. Arrival time around midnight. Overnight in hotel.

**GATEWAY TO HELL.**

The famed "Gateway to Hell" located at Darvaza in Turkmenistan is an incredible experience—even if getting there does take a bit of effort. 3 to 4 hours from Ashgabat the Door to Hell was a natural gas field that collapsed in on itself and started leaking gas into the local environment. To prevent it doing harm to anyone the government set it alight in 1971, and it has been burning ever since!

DAY 15, 24TH MAY (FRIDAY) – ASHGABAT – TASHAUZ (FLIGHT)

In the morning drive to Geokdepe to visit local stud farm where we can see famous Akhalteke thoroughbred horses. En-route to the farm we will stop at Geokdepe mosque built in the middle of former Teke stronghold, where was the battle between Russians and Turkmens in 1881 - the largest resistance to the Russians in 19c in Central Asia. After visiting all sites, drive back to Ashgabat for lunch at local restaurant. PM visit National Museum of Turkmenistan

(closed on Tuesday!); the largest museum of Turkmenistan, where you can see unique findings from all historical and archeological sites of Turkmenistan, such as Ivory-Rhytons of Nissa, golden, silver artefacts of Merv and many others. In the late afternoon/evening, take a flight to Dashoguz. Transfer to local hotel on arrival. Dinner and overnight in hotel Dashoguz



WALLS OF KHIVA

The walls of Khiva are one of the most iconic images most people remember from a Central Asian Journey, their presence though is the most obvious of the 50 Historical Monuments, 250 ancient houses and other sites that made Khiva the first place in Central Asia to be listed as a World Heritage Listed Area. While many sights are younger than Samarkand & Bukhara they still impress!

DAY 16, 25TH MAY (SATURDAY) – DASHOGUZ– KUNYA–URGENCH – DASHOGUZ–KHIVA

After breakfast in hotel drive to Kunya-Urgench (100 km/2 hrs. one-way) for excursion; visiting the Kunya-Urgench – Capital of Khorezm: Mausoleums of Turabek Khanym, Il Arslan, Tekesh, Najmeddin Kubra, Sultan Ali Minaret of Kutluk Timur, also the remains of second minaret. Caravan Saray Kunya Urgench Museum (if time permits). Then drive to Dashoguz border (100 km/2 hrs). Lunch in local restaurant in Kunya Urgench or Dashoguz. Border crossing. Drive to Khiva. Hotel accommodation overnight.

DAY 17, 26TH MAY (SUNDAY) – KHIVA

Full day tour in Khiva: Ota Darvaza, Kalta Minor, Mukhammad Amin Khan Madrassah, Kunya Ark (with panoramic view of Khiva), Mukhammad Rahim Khan Madrassah, Pahlavan Makhmud Mausoleum, Islam Khodja Minaret and Madrassah, Juma Mosque, Tosh-Hovli (Harem). Overnight.

DAY 18, 27TH MAY (MONDAY) – KHIVA–NUKUS– KHIVA

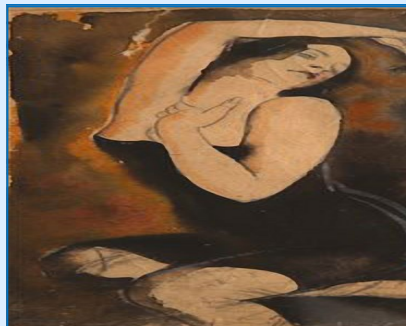
Breakfast in hotel. Today we take a day trip to the capital of Karakalpakstan, the autonomous Republic within Uzbekistan (approx. 200km/3hrs one-way). We are going to visit the museum of Russian avant- garde artist Igor Savitsky, who had spent big part of his life living and creating in the territory of Karakalpakstan. The museum exhibitions consist of the Ancient Art, the Applied Folk Arts of Karakalpak, the Uzbek and the Russian paintings of the 1920-1930s, as well as the contemporary art of Karakalpakstan. On the way back, we can view the monument of Karakalpak poet Berdakh, city view of Nukus, scattered across the desert ancient defense fortresses like Ayaz Qala and Tupraq Qala. Overnight in Khiva.

DAY 19, 28TH MAY (TUESDAY) – KHIVA – URGENCH – TASHKENT

Morning flight to according to time-schedule to Tashkent. Today we going to visit Amir Temur museum and Amir Temur square, visit Independence square, the Monument of Courage, Applied Arts museum and Abul Kasim Madrassa, the handicraft workshops of local artists. Overnight in Tashkent.

DAY 20, 29TH MAY (WEDNESDAY) – TASHKENT/SEOUL

Breakfast in morning. Free and easy till noon, check out from hotel and we continue exploring Tashkent. We visit Central Asian Palov center, to witness how the tradition of Palov cooking being followed nowadays. Visit the monument of repression, view Tashkent TV tower, visit Khasti Imam Complex, Kukeldash Madrasah and Chor-Su Bazar, the largest one in Tashkent. Time for dinner and transfer to airport at 19:30 for international flight on to Seoul, OZ574 22:20- 08:55+



THE SAVITSKY COLLECTION

The Karakalpakstan State Museum hosts the world's second largest collection of Russian avant garde art. It is also home to one of the largest collections of archeological objects and folk, applied and contemporary art originating from Central Asia. The Museum may be one of the few places in the world where Russian avant garde art hangs alongside that of Socialist Realism

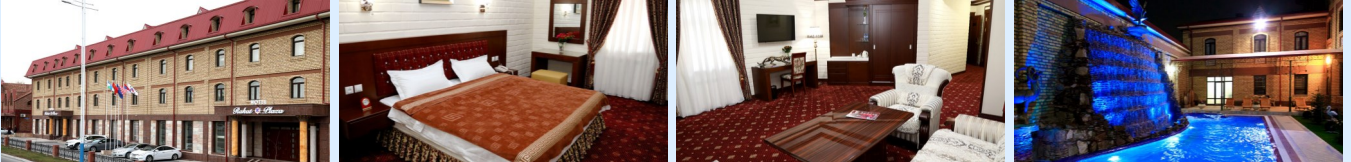
IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND YOUR TRIP AND VISIT ASTANA IN KAZAKHSTAN, DANSHUBE & TAJIKISTAN, CHINA & THE SILK ROAD OR SOUTH KOREA, PLEASE SPEAK TO DANIEL

ACCOMMODATION PREVIEW

Please note that : these hotels are the foreseen properties but are subject to change at the Tour Operators Discretion **Please note that :** these hotels cover a wide range of categories from local 5 star to guest houses, properties have been chosen to give the best overall experience on the tour

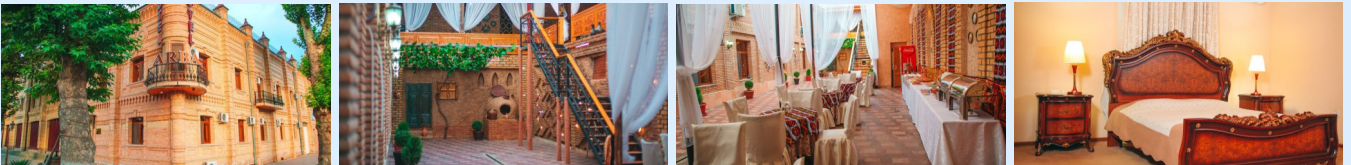
TASHKENT : RAKAT PLAZA****

The Rakat Plaza is a four star property located in Tashkent and will be visited a few times on our trip. Styled after western hotels the Rakat Plaza is a four star property. In a quiet area of Downtown this property mixes the traditions of Europe with Uzbeks soviet heritage.



SAMARKAND : ARBA HOTEL****

This four star property is located in Modern Samarkand, but is just a short walk from many of the historical sites. Modern, well equipped rooms contrast well with the traditional feel and flavour of the hotels outward design and public areas.



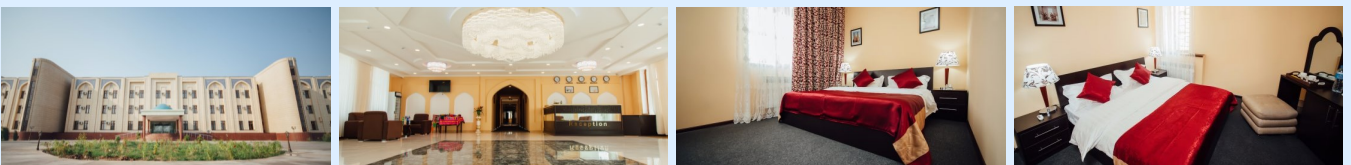
BUKHARA : KOMIL BOUTIQUE HOTEL**

Not technically a three star property the Komil hotel is a true Boutique Hotel, and while the rooms themselves are a little basic and not overly flash the hotel is built along lines that follow the traditions of a mixed heritage that is so openly visible in the stans, and the experience here is to be had in the public areas.



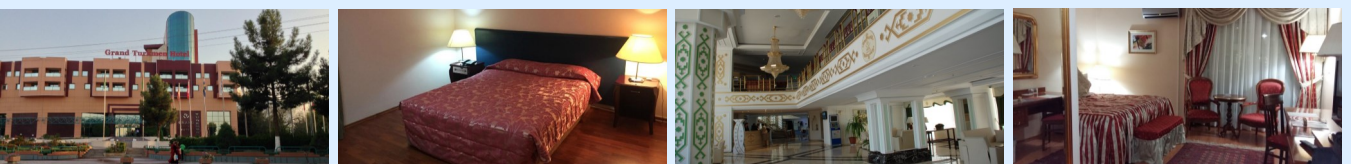
KHIVA : THE BEK***

Officially rated as 4 star the stark look and feel of the Bek, and the service is a throwback to Soviet days, and whilst the location is great and the hotel is comfortable, the choice of using this hotel is as much about location as anything else. Don't expect anything overly flash.



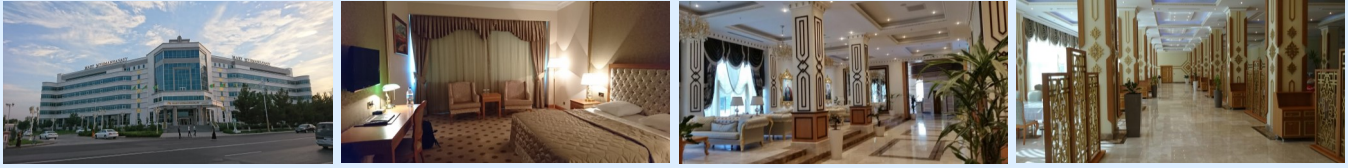
ASHGABAT : GRAND TURKMEN**

Locally rated as a four star, Australians would consider this a three at best. Well located by the markets and in the centre of town. Clean but nothing overly flash, the rooms and the hotel are starting to feel a bit dated and show their soviet origin, still one of the better choices out of limited options.



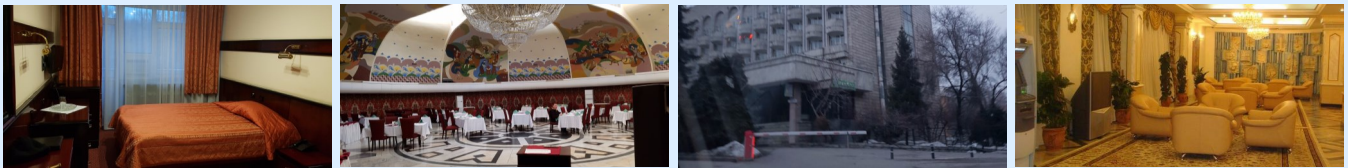
MARY : MARY HOTEL***

The Mary Hotel is typical of a lot of the 3 to 4 star hotels in the region, grandiose building, gilded interiors, large if slightly dated rooms and furnishing, and very basic restaurant options. Like most hotels in this region of the world in this range, it is a fine place to sleep but don't expect too much.



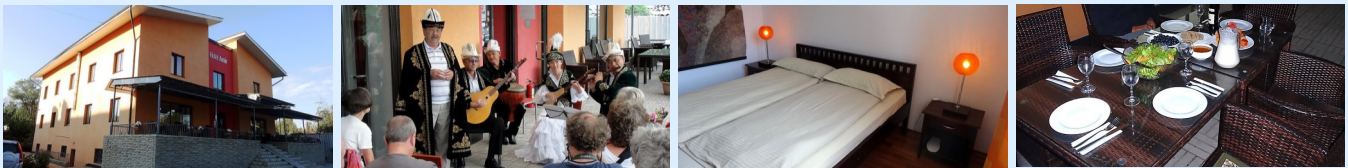
ALMATY : OTRAR HOTEL***

From reflectively modern to begging to age, the Otrar Hotel in Almaty is a comfortable hotel of its standard type in Almaty. Well located, clean and with friendly staff this is a great hotel for a short stay.



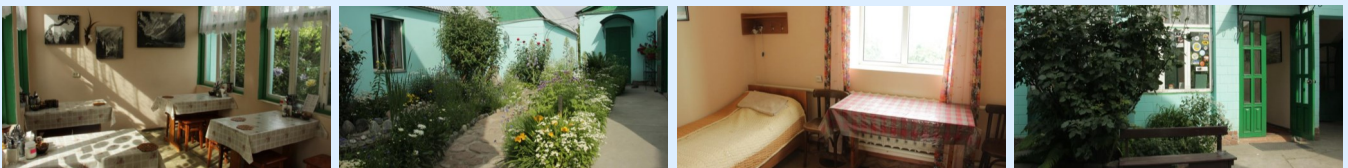
KARAKOL : AMIR HOTEL**

Although officially ranked as 2 star the Amir Hotel is probably about as well equipped and staffed as most properties on this journey. Built in the late 1990s the property is run locally and maintained by a Swiss company, providing good quality though not luxurious, accommodation for those visiting Karakol



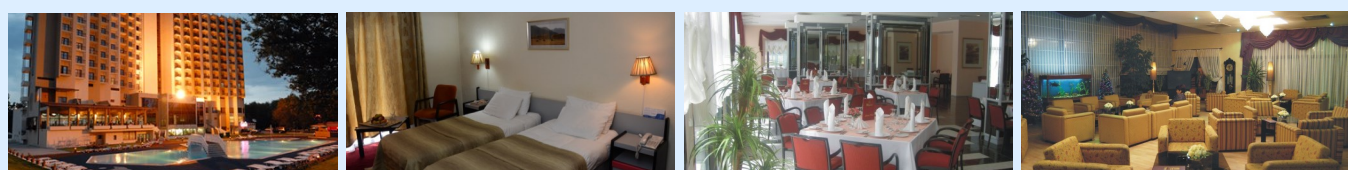
TAMGA : THE TAMGA GUESTHOUSE*

Technically the Tamga Guesthouse has no official rating, this homestay opened in the Tamga region to provide visitors the ability to stop somewhere that didn't require packing a tent whilst travelling through the region. Rustic, with basic amenities and a little rough, the Tamga Guesthouse is sure o charm those of an open mind, who don't always need the world's finest!



SHUMKAR : AK-KEME*

The Ak-Keme, is typical of locally run four star hotels in the region, with older soviet influences the property is clean, and well maintained, even if the décor is a bit dated and starting to show its age.



SEOUL : INCHEON AIRPORT HOTEL****

Seoul Royal Hotel, June Hotel or another property may be used. As this property is provided free of charge by Asiana airlines due to the delays between your arriving into Seoul and leaving for Tashkent the property of stay is at their discretion and often allocated at the time of arrival into Seoul.

HEART OF THE SILK ROAD

INCLUSIONS & EXCLUSIONS

Please note that : Hotels mentioned are the foreseen properties but are subject to change at the Tour Operators Discretion **Please note that :** these hotels cover a wide range of categories from local 5 star to guest houses, properties have been chosen to give the best overall experience on the tour

GENERAL INCLUSIONS:

- Accommodation in Twin or double rooms
- Air Conditioned Coach for duration of the programme
- All transfers to and from airports
- Excursions as per programme with Entrance tickets to sites and monuments
- GAZ-66 or Vahktova Transport for Alyn-Arashan Excursion (non air-conditioned former military vehicles)
- English Speaking Guide / Tour Escort
- Breakfast daily in hotels
- 1 litre mineral water per day
- Ecological fee in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan
- Regional Airfares (See notes)
- Visa Support Letters, Entry Travel Passes & Government Registrations

GENERAL EXCLUSIONS:

- International Airfares inclusive of taxes and surcharges
- Drinks including alcohol, soft drinks and juices
- Visas & Visa costs
- Any camera or video fees charged at sites
- Personal expenses for souvenirs, laundry, phone calls etc
- Tips & Gratuities

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- No early arrivals and late departures are included. Additional supplements could be offered depending to the international flight tourist used.
- If a place of visit is closed to visitors, it will be replaced with an alternative. During major events, accommodation may be changed and replaced with a similar category
- Sequence of itinerary and hotels given are subject to availability and change without prior notice.
- Hotel usage is subject to availability. No reservations made before confirmation received from client. If mentioned hotels are not available, we will substitute them with other hotels of same class.
- Domestic and regional flights if any flights, as well as train departures are subject to change in timing and availability. If mentioned flights and trains are not available, they will be changed to convenient one, depending on tour program
- Domestic flights have been priced on current airfares and include some loading but are subject to change
- This programme has been based on 2018 rates and is subject to change based on the release of 2019 rates.
- Domestic flights include Mary to Ashgabat, Ashgabat to Dashgouz and Urgench to Tashkent and may alter total cost at time tickets become available for ticketing

VISAS

- Australian Citizens entering Kyrgyzstan no longer need to acquire a visa
- Australian Citizens entering Kazakhstan no longer need to acquire a visa
- Australian Citizens entering Uzbekistan require a tourist visa, we will organise this as a group, cost TBA
- Australian Citizens entering Turkmenistan require a tourist visa (and Migration card), we will organise this as a group, cost TBA

HEART OF THE SILK ROAD

GETTING THERE & BACK AGAIN

At this stage the "plan" is to fly from Sydney to Almaty and back from Tashkent with Asiana Airlines, these are a 4 star airline run out of Seoul, that with their timetable we can take advantage of an STPC (Stopover at Carriers Expense) on the way to Almaty, and during the extended stay on the way home we can take advantage of the fact that at Incheon Airport in Seoul we can take a free city sightseeing tour due to the extended wait time before the flight from Seoul to Sydney

For now based on the days of operation for Asiana we are looking at a flight schedule similar to the following:

From: Kingsford Smith, Sydney, Australia - Terminal 1 International **To:** Incheon, Seoul, South Korea

Leaving: Thursday **Arriving:** Thursday

Airline: Asiana Airlines **Flight Number:** OZ0602 **Class:** Economy **Flying Time:** 10h 25m

From: Incheon, Seoul, South Korea **To:** Almaty, Kazakhstan

Leaving: Friday **Arriving:** Friday

Airline: Asiana Airlines **Flight Number:** OZ0577 **Class:** Economy **Flying Time:** 6h 45m

From: Tashkent, Uzbekistan - Terminal 2 **To:** Incheon, Seoul, South Korea

Leaving: Wednesday **Arriving:** Thursday

Airline: Asiana Airlines **Flight Number:** OZ0574 **Class:** Economy **Flying Time:** 6h 35m

From: Incheon, Seoul, South Korea **To:** Kingsford Smith, Sydney, Australia - Terminal 1 International

Leaving: Thursday **Arriving:** Friday

Airline: Asiana Airlines **Flight Number:** OZ0601 **Class:** Economy **Flying Time:** 10h 40m

Based on current rates this airfare is around AU\$1900 per person inclusive of all taxes, fees and surcharges. This is approximately \$900 cheaper than the alternatives using Chinese Based airlines that will take us there and back with an average of 2 or 3 stopovers in each direction.

Should you wish to extend to visit Tajikistan then you would be required to return to Tashkent or Almaty to fly home. If you elect to extend into China to do the Silk Road we can fly you out of the Central Asian Republics with a local carrier and then home from Beijing or Shanghai with Asiana.

My Travel Expert

& Shoalhaven Solo Sisters

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**KAZAKHSTAN ,
KYRGYZSTAN,
UZBEKISTAN
& TURKMENISTAN**

A QUICK GUIDE ON WHERE YOU ARE GOING



Almaty, Kazakhstan's largest metropolis, is set in the foothills of the Trans-Ili Alatau mountains. It served as the country's capital until 1997 and remains Kazakhstan's trading and cultural hub. Landmarks include the Central State Museum, displaying thousands of historic Kazakh artifacts. In the center is Panfilov Park, home to the bright-yellow towers of Zenkov Cathedral, a tsarist-era Russian Orthodox church. Cultural sites also include the Kazakh Museum of Folk Musical Instruments, which showcases traditional Kazakh harps, horns and bagpipes, as well as the A. Kastejev State Museum of Arts, which displays historic and contemporary works by Kazakh and Russian artists. Republic Square features the towering Independence Monument, topped with a statue of the Golden Man, an ancient Scythian warrior and national icon. The city's 371.5m-high television tower, known as Almaty Tower, sits on Kok-Tobe, a mountain and recreation area. Almaty is also a gateway to Shymbulak ski resort and Medeu, a high-altitude ice-skating rink.



Karakol, formerly Przhevalsk, is the fourth largest city in Kyrgyzstan, near the eastern tip of Lake Issyk-Kul in Kyrgyzstan, about 150 kilometres from the Kyrgyzstan-China border and 380 kilometres from the capital Bishkek. It is the administrative capital of Issyk-Kul Region. Its area is 44 square kilometres, and its resident population was 66,294 in 2009. To the north, on highway A363, is Tyup and to the southwest Jeti-Ögüz resort.



Not far from the shores of Lake Issyk-Kul the incredibly small village of Tamga is little more than a small collection of buildings and local farms. This crossroads town is typical of small villages in Kyrgyzstan and makes for a unique one night stay in the course of your travels



Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, borders Central Asia's Tian Shan range. It's a gateway to the Kyrgyz Ala-Too mountains and Ala Archa National Park, with glaciers and wildlife trails. The city's arts scene encompasses the monumental State Museum of Fine Arts and the colonnaded Opera and Ballet Theater. The vast, central Ala-Too Square features the Manas monument, honoring the hero of the Kyrgyz Epic of Manas. The Soviet-era State History Museum, next to the presidential White House, explores the country's history and ethnic groups. Dubovy Park is known for its oak trees and sculptures, while the nearby M. V. Frunze Museum preserves the birthplace of Mikhail Vasilievich Frunze, a prominent Soviet military leader who was born in the city. West of here, sprawling Osh Bazaar features traditional costumes and Kyrgyz produce. East of Bishkek, the intricately carved Burana Tower and its adjacent ruins mark the site of the 9th-century city of Balasagun.



Tashkent is the capital city of Uzbekistan. It's known for its many museums and its mix of modern and Soviet-era architecture. The Amir Timur Museum houses manuscripts, weapons and other relics from the Timurid dynasty. Nearby, the huge State Museum of History of Uzbekistan has centuries-old Buddhist artifacts. The city's skyline is distinguished by Tashkent Tower, which offers city views from its observation deck. The Khazrati Imam Architectural Complex includes several mosques and madrasas, as well as the Muvi Muborak Madrasah Library, containing an ancient copy of the Quran. Underneath a distinctive blue-green dome is the Chorsu Bazaar, a massive farmer's market. The State Museum of Arts displays regional artworks, from embroidered silk hangings to Soviet-era paintings. Near Mustakillik Square (Independence Square) is the WWII Monument, a statue of a woman in front of an eternal flame that honors the hundreds of thousands of Uzbek soldiers killed in World War II.



Samarkand is a city in Uzbekistan known for its mosques and mausoleums. It's on the Silk Road, the ancient trade route linking China to the Mediterranean. Prominent landmarks include the Registan, a plaza bordered by 3 ornate, majolica-covered madrasas dating to the 15th and 17th centuries, and Gur-e-Amir, the towering tomb of Timur (Tamerlane), founder of the Timurid Empire. Shah-i-Zinda is a street lined with lavishly decorated mausoleums that are Muslim pilgrimage sites. The massive 15th-century Bibi-Khanym Mosque, completely rebuilt since the 1970s, stands next to the city's large outdoor market, the Siyob (or Siab) Bazaar. Outside the city center, the ruins of the hill fort of Afrasiyab date back to the 7th century B.C. and are known for rare Sogdian wall murals. The Ulugh Beg Observatory and museum sheds light on the scientific achievements of the city's 15th-century astronomers.



Shakhrisabz, is a city in Qashqadaryo Region in southern Uzbekistan located approximately 80 km south of Samarkand with a population of 100,300. It is located at an altitude of 622 m. Once a major city of Central Asia, it is primarily known today as the birthplace of 14th-century Turco-Mongol conqueror Timur.



Bukhara is an ancient city in the central Asian country of Uzbekistan. It was a prominent stop on the Silk Road trade route between the East and the West, and a major medieval center for Islamic theology and culture. It still contains hundreds of well-preserved mosques, madrasas, bazaars and caravanserais, dating largely from the 9th to the 17th centuries. The Ark, a 5th-century fortress and royal citadel at Bukhara's heart, was damaged by the Russian army in the 1920s. Surviving buildings house museums of city history, decorative arts, wood carving and carpets. The 11th-century Kalyan Minaret was spared by Genghis Khan in the 13th century, and has far-reaching city views. The adjacent 16th-century Kalyan Mosque once held 10,000 worshippers. Ismail Samani's 10th-century tomb has elaborate terra-cotta brickwork. Lyabi-Hauz is a shady plaza set around a pond. Nearby, stalls in the renovated domed bazaars sell jewelry, textiles, metalwork and ceramics.



Khiva is a city of approximately 50,000 people located in Xorazm Region, Uzbekistan. According to archaeological data, the city was established in the beginning of the Christian era. It is the former capital of Khwarezmia and the Khanate of Khiva. Itchan Kala in Khiva was the first site in Uzbekistan to be inscribed in the World Heritage List.



Urgench is a city in western Uzbekistan. The population of Urgench on April 24, 2014 was approximately 150,110, an increase from 139,100 in 1999. It is the capital of the Khorezm Region, on the Amu Darya River and the Shavat canal. The city is situated 450 km west of Bukhara across the Kyzylkum Desert. The history of the city goes back to the second half of the 19th century. The city should not be confused with the similarly-named city of Konya-Urgench in Turkmenistan. The city of Old Urgench was left after the Amu Darya river changed its course in the 16th century, leaving the old town high and dry and without water. New Urgench was founded by Russians in the second half of the 19th century at the site of a little trade station of the Khanate of Khiva. Modern Urgench is a Soviet-style city with cotton motifs adorning many objects, from street lights to apartment houses. Of note is a monument to the twenty Komsomol members killed by Tekke basmachi on the banks of the Syr Darya in 1922, and a large statue to Muhammad al-Khwarizmi, the 9th century local mathematician who revolutionised algebra, outside the Hotel Urgench.



Nukus is the sixth-largest city in Uzbekistan, and the capital of the autonomous Karakalpakstan Republic. It has a population of 271,400. The population of Nukus as of April 24, 2014 was approximately 230,006. The Amu Darya river passes west of the town. The city is best known for its world-class Nukus Museum of Art.



MARY

TURKMENISTAN

Mary, formerly named Merv, Meru and Margiana, is a city on an oasis in the Karakum Desert, located on the Murghab river. It is the capital city of Mary Province, Turkmenistan. In 2009, Mary had a population of 123,000, up from 92,000 in the 1989 census. In Kerait tradition, Mary, mother of Jesus, was buried here



ASHGABAT

TURKMENISTAN

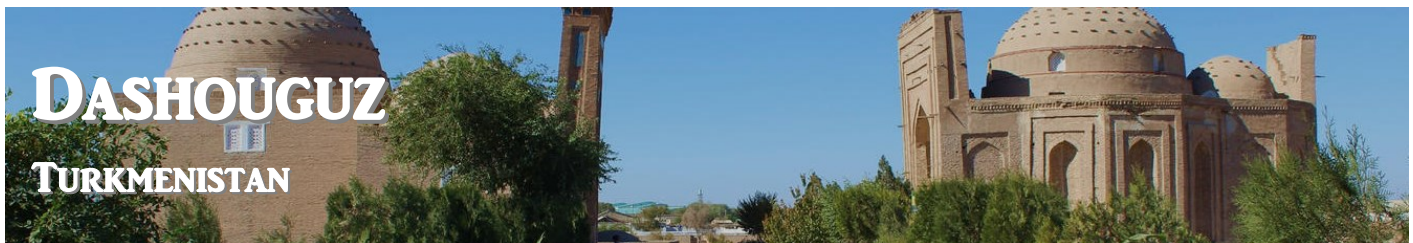
Ashgabat is the capital of Turkmenistan. It's known for its white marble buildings and grandiose national monuments. To the northwest, the sprawling Ruhya Mosque has a vast gilt dome. The central Artogrud Gazi Mosque is modeled on Istanbul's Blue Mosque. Examples of traditional weaving are displayed at Turkmen Carpet Museum. The Wedding Palace is a series of star-shaped tiers topped by a giant golden globe. To the south, Independence Park is home to the Independence Monument, a soaring gilded column surrounded by statues of prominent national heroes. Southwest of the center, there are panoramic views from the observation deck atop the tripod-shaped Neutrality Monument. Alem Cultural and Entertainment Center is crowned by a massive enclosed Ferris wheel. Rising against a backdrop of the Kopet Dag mountains, Turkmenistan Tower is built into a giant blue star. The Walk of Health is a concrete trail of steps leading into the foothills. A nearby cable car runs up the mountains, almost to the border with neighboring Iran.



DERWEZE

TURKMENISTAN

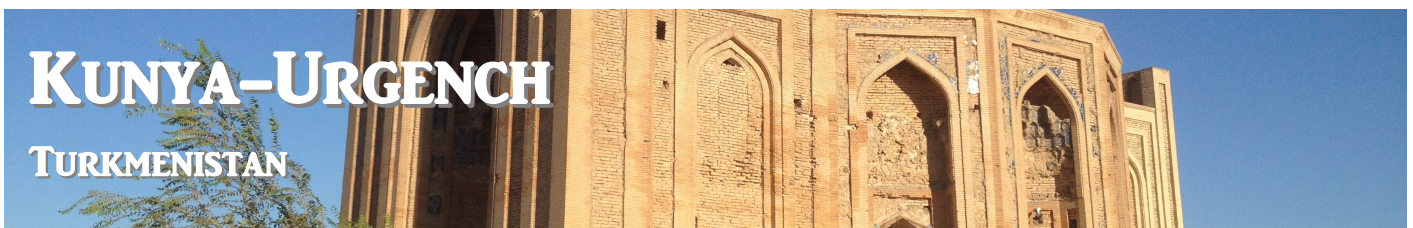
Derweze is a village in Turkmenistan of about 350 inhabitants, located in the middle of the Karakum Desert, about 260 km north from Ashgabat. Darvaza inhabitants are mostly Turkmen of the Teke tribe, preserving a semi-nomadic lifestyle. In 2004 the village was disbanded following the order of the President of Turkmenistan, Saparmurat Niyazov, because "it was an unpleasant sight for tourists



DASHOUGUZ

TURKMENISTAN

Daşoguz, formerly known as Tashauz and Dashkhovuz, is a city in northern Turkmenistan and the capital of Daşoguz Province.



KUNYA-URGENCH

TURKMENISTAN

Konya-Urgench, also known as Kunya-Urgench, Old Urgench or Urganj, is a municipality of about 30,000 inhabitants in north Turkmenistan, just south from its border with Uzbekistan. It is the site of the ancient town of Ürgenç, which contains the ruins of the capital of Khwarezm, a part of the Achaemenid Empire. Its inhabitants deserted the town in the 1700s in order to develop a new settlement, and Kunya-Urgench has remained undisturbed ever since. In 2005, the ruins of Old Urgench were inscribed on the UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites.