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Level 3 - Moderate to Challenging
Activity

The Stans Small Group Tour: Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan



May 26 2024 to Jun 21 2024

The Stans Small Group Tour | Visit Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan

This fully escorted small group educational tour to Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan, or “Odyssey to the Stans,” is designed for the adventurous traveller. Be prepared for a range of

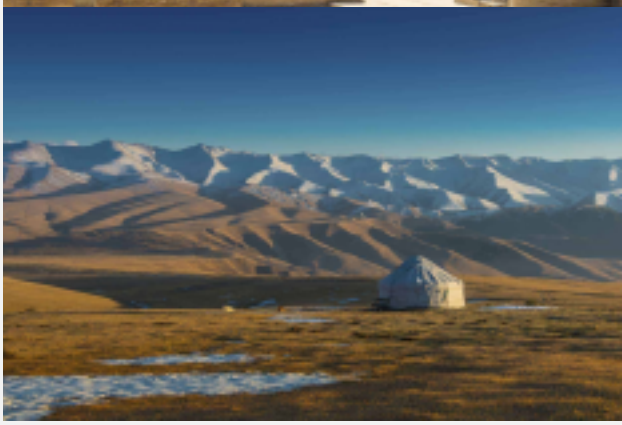
accommodation styles and for reasonably rigorous walking excursions. During the tour, you can also expect some long travel days while exploring these four Central Asian countries.

But the rewards will be incredible. Our small group educational program visits places off the regular travel itinerary. As such, it combines spectacular scenery, destinations on the UNESCO World Heritage list, and encounters with both ancient cities and modern history. This sightseeing tour and walking tour also features a lunch or dinner with a local family or at a local restaurant. Local guides introduce us to lifestyles and cultures that may differ dramatically from our own. Our Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan small group tour is thus for those who remain curious and are seeking an adventure.

Our guided tour of the Stans is packed with history. Across our journey, we listen to local stories and wonder in awe at the power and control once exerted by bygone rulers. In addition, we travel along ancient trade routes that were once part of the Silk Road. Each city and place visited enables us to learn more about its role in contemporary society.







The Stans Tour Itinerary

Uzbekistan

Our tour of Uzbekistan begins in the capital, Tashkent with a visit to the traditional Chorsu Bazaar. We then go on to explore the cities of the ancient silk road. In Samarkand we marvel at the grand Timurid architecture (i.e. built by Timur, better known in the west as Tamerlane) of Registan Square. We then explore the old town of Bukhara, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and take in the 18th century Bolo Hauz Mosque. We also visit the walled city of Khiva, another important trading city on the great Silk Road. Khiva is home to the Kalta Minor Minaret and the Kunya fortress – with an administrative centre, law courts, and a historic mosque. Our tours to Uzbekistan also include a night camping in the atmospheric desert surrounding the Aral Sea.

Turkmenistan

Following Uzbekistan, we then head to Turkmenistan. Highlights of our tour of Turkmenistan include a visit to the peculiar white marble city of Ashgabat, packed with monuments both to Soviet and contemporary dictators. We also make a trip to Merv, once one of the most significant cities in the Persian Empire. Destroyed by Mongol forces in 1221, Merv is today a fascinating archaeological site.



Kazakhstan

We then travel to Kazakhstan. We begin our tour here in Almaty. The Soviet impact remains in this city of Almaty and is on display in many forms. The capital of Kazakhstan until 1997, Almaty is a leafy city with a contemporary vibe. Outside Almaty, we take in Kazakhstan's striking natural beauty: the Charyn Canyon (often called the 'little brother' of America's Grand Canyon), and the pristine blue lakes of the Kolsai Lake System.



Kyrgyzstan

In Kyrgyzstan we make the most of the natural beauty of this remote country, over 80% of which is covered by mountain ranges. Near beautiful Son-Kul Lake, we stay for the night in a traditional yurt. The yurt is a testament to the nomadic past of the Kyrgyz people. Our trip also takes in the remnants of ancient civilisations at the town of Balasagun and the Petroglyphs Gallery of Cholpon-Ata. Finally, our tour of Kyrgyzstan ends in Bishkek, where we take a city tour and visit local markets.



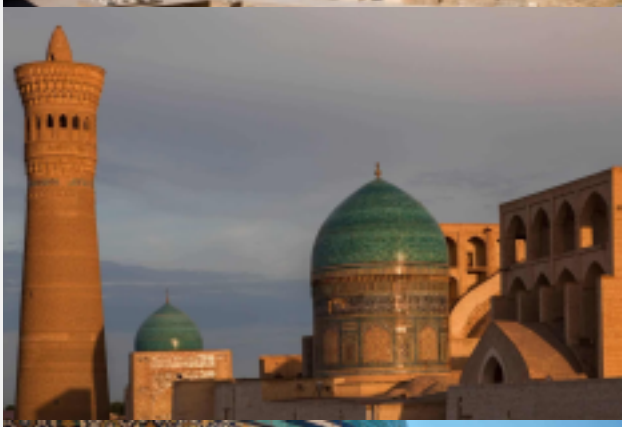
In addition, we are offering an optional 7-day extension to Tajikistan, the last of the former Soviet Block countries. Though rarely visited by travellers, Tajikistan has a lot to offer, including beautiful mountain scenery, alpine lakes and the generous hospitality of the Tajik people.

This fully escorted educational tour is perfect for the active single traveller or couple with an enquiring mind. It will deepen our understanding and appreciation of the history and culture of these

ancient lands and their modern incarnation.

You can find more information of each country visited with our country profiles: Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan. For more details on this tour, click the ‘Top 5’ or ‘Itinerary’ buttons above! If you’re keen to experience this tour, please call or send an email. Or, to book, simply fill in the form on the right hand side of this page.







Tour Notes

- Group size is limited to a maximum of 16 participants.

Highlights

1. In Kyrgyzstan visit Son Kul and experience traditional life on the high grasslands.
2. Travel in Central Asia westward from the Tien Shan to the Karakum Desert.
3. In Turkmenistan visit the ancient cities of Khonye Urgench and Merv with time in and around the modernised capital, Ashgabat.
4. Spend a night on the shore of the Aral Sea and explore the ancient monuments of Kiva, Bukhara and Samarkand in Uzbekistan.
5. In Kazakhstan vistit Almaty and the natural beauty of the Kolsai Lakes.

Itinerary

Day 1

Locations: Tashkent (Uzbekistan)

Overview:

Upon arrival we will come to the hotel individually. The first group meeting and tour introduction will be at 18:00 pm in the hotel lobby and this will be followed by dinner.

Accommodation:

2 nights at City Palace Hotel or similar.

Day 2

Locations: Tashkent

Overview:

After breakfast, we start our our sightseeing tour of the city. Our first stop will be the Museum of History. This is the newest museum, opened in 2003, and it is the biggest history museum in the republic, containing departments of Ancient History (with 2 expositions of Buddha), Middle Ages, Islam in Uzbekistan, New History (19-20c), and Modern Uzbekistan. We will also visit Mustakillik Square (formerly “Red Squire”), which is the main squire of the Tashkent with a monument to victims of WWII. We will see Navoi Theatre, a building which has its own personality. Planning and construction began in 1940 and Japanese prisoners of war completed construction in 1947.

We stop for lunch at a local restaurant and later continue with our tour. We will visit Chorsu bazaar, the main oriental market in Tashkent, then make our way to Kukeldash Madrassah (XVI c) which has a domed courtyard. Now the building is returned to service as an Islamic school. Beside it is the tiny 15th c. Juma mosque. Our next stop will be Tashkent Metro stations. Construction began in 1972 and 5 years later the first train rolled out. Some people say that Tashkent metro is one of the beautiful metro stations. Our tour will end with a visit to Amir Temur Square, the central park with a statue of Amir Temur on horseback, also known as “Broadway.” Dinner will be at our hotel this evening.

Accommodation:

City Palace Hotel or similar.

Day 3

Locations: Tashkent - Samarkand

Overview:

After an early breakfast at the hotel we will transfer to the station to board the high speed train “Afrosiab” to Samarkand, home of World Heritage listed monuments and archaeological sites. We begin our viewing of these with the excavated quadrant of Ulugbek Observatory, then visit Afrasiab Hill, a hill-fort named after legendary king of Turan. In Afrasiab Museum we will see each hall of the museum containing exhibits of certain periods in the history of the location.

After lunch at a local restaurant we continue to see 4 other sites, including Bibi Khanum mosque (9thC), where architects, craftsmen, and painters were involved in a 5 year build. We travel on to Shahi Zinda mausoleum, a most interesting set of 20 buildings from the 9thC to the 15thC, followed by a visit to Siab Bazaar, the main bazaar of Samarkand on the crossroad of ancient trading routes. Dinner will be at a local restaurant.

Accommodation:

5 nights at Asia Hotel or similar.

Day 4

Locations: Samarkand

Overview:

After breakfast at the hotel we continue our sightseeing of Samarkand visiting Gur Amir mausoleum, a Timurids dynastic burial vault, culminating with the Grand Registan visit, a square which is lined on 3 sides by the Madrassah of Ulugbek, Sher Dor, and Tillya Kari.

Lunch will be at a local restaurant. Later we visit “Konigil Meros” Water Mill and Paper Factory, which still produces handmade Samarkand Paper using the ancient recipe from mulberry tree bark. We can watch the process of production and have a hands-on trial. We will also visit a silk carpet factory “Hudjum.” Dinner tonight will be at national house with

Plov preparation master class.

Accommodation:

Asia Hotel or similar.

Day 5

Locations: Samarkand - Bukhara

Overview:

Today we depart Samarkand and journey to Bukhara (300km – 5 hours travel). On arrival we will check in to our hotel and have lunch.

In the afternoon we start our sightseeing, most of which is in the inner city of Bukhara, a declared World Heritage Site. Visits include Samanid's mausoleum, a 9th-10th C building – the first in Central Asia to be built from baked bricks. We will also visit Chashma Ayub Mausoleum and the Bolo Khauz Mosque, set up in 1712. We will explore the Ark Fortress (6thC–19thC) which is like a town completed with the emirs house, mosques, mint, government institutes, store rooms, etc. Again we have dinner at local restaurant and return to our hotel.

Accommodation:

Asia Hotel or similar.

Day 6

Locations: Bukhara

Overview:

Today we have a full morning planned with visits including the Poikalon ensemble in the center of old Bukhara, which includes the central mosque Masjidi Kalon, Miri Arab madrassah, and the most impressive Kalyan minaret. We then visit the Trading Domes, Magoki Attori, and the Nodir Devon Begi madrassah.

Lunch will be a at a local restaurant, and the afternoon is at leisure to rest or explore the city on your own. The group meets again for dinner at

local restaurant.

Accommodation:

Asia Hotel or similar.

Day 7

Locations: Bukhara - Khiva

Overview:

Today we depart from Bukhara and travel to Khiva (450km – 7 hours travel). Lunch will be at a café en route (box lunch). On arrival in Khiva we check in and have dinner at our hotel.

Khiva is on the Amu-Darya, the longest of the 2 rivers that run east to west across Central Asia, and so has a long history of agriculture in an otherwise arid environment. It was also a trading post and on a minor branch of the Silk Road trading route. Following Tamerlane's (Timur) plundering and destructive campaigns of the late 1300s, Khiva became capital of Korozem khanate. Its inner city is packed with many religious buildings and buildings from past rulers.

Accommodation:

Asia Hotel or similar.

Day 8

Locations: Khiva - Nukus

Overview:

In the morning we visit the sights of Khiva including Kalta Minor Minaret, the Kunya ark fortress with administrative buildings, gunpowder works, law courts, mosque, the Pakhlavan Makhmud complex, the most remarkable architecture memorial complex in Khiva with unique tiles, and Ak-Sheikh Baba Observation platform.

We will have lunch at national house with a traditional Khorezmian meal. In the afternoon we drive to Nukus (180 km – 4 hours travel). On arrival

we check in at our hotel and have dinner.

Accommodation:

1 night at Jipek Jolly or similar.

Day 9

Locations: Nukus - Aral Sea

Overview:

We have an early breakfast with a 7:00 am start on the 500 kilometre drive to the shores of the Aral Sea, with stops at Kungrad city and across Plato Ustyurt. Kungrad was the gate town of ancient Khorezm. It was inhabited by Sako-Massaget tribes and today the city is within an independent republic of Uzbekistan, Karakalpakstan. Plato Ustyurt is a stony desert plain with an elevation average of 150 metres above sea level, west of the Amu Darya delta. It is rich in archaeological sites from the Neolithic period, and contains remains from the Scythians, the Mongols, and other ancient nations. Locally there was an ancient town Sharh-i-Wazir, a caravanserai of Beleuli and the Allan fortress, and it served as a stopping place for caravans between Khiva and the Volga. Nowadays it is possible to see grave sites and a number of ancient necropolis scattered about this plain.

We have a boxed lunch with a planned sea side arrival early evening. The Aral Sea is the second biggest “lake” in Asia, receiving water from 2 long rivers, the Amu Darya and Syr Darya, that originate in the mountains of eastern Central Asia. Today the Aral Sea is much smaller than what was before the poorly-planned Soviet-initiated irrigation projects began, but this location is still considered by many the most beautiful and mysterious place in the whole of Asia. Tonight we have dinner outside and sleep overnight in tents.

Accommodation:

1 night in tents.

Day 10

Locations: Aral Sea - Muynak - Nukus

Overview:

Our return journey begins at 10:00 am and we drive for about 1.5 hours to Muynak. Muynak is the city that once supplied all Central Asia with fish products and was located on the shore of the Aral Sea. Now it is deserted with the Aral Sea shores 150 kilometres away, and we see the “Cemetery of ships,” reminding us that Muynak was one of the biggest ports in Uzbekistan and that people traveled to and from here by river. We have lunch in Muynak before continuing our drive to Nukus.

Dinner will be at the hotel this evening.

Accommodation:

1 night at Jipek Joly hotel or similar.

Day 11

Locations: Nukus-Hojeyli/Koneurgench Border Pass - Ashgabat (Turkmenistan)

Overview:

Today we drive to the border between Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan and cross it via Hojeyli/Koneurgench Border Pass. After border formalities we take a short drive to visit Koneurgench, the capital of Khorezmshahs, a World Heritage listed site.

Sightseeing in Old Urgench includes the Portal of a 9thC to 14th C caravanserai, Mamun Minaret, Il Arslan Mausoleum, Sultan Tekesh Mausoleum from the 8th C, Academy of Horezm active from the 3rdC to the 8thC, Kutlug Timur Minaret -one of the tallest minarets in Central Asia, and the mausoleums of Turabek Hanum, Najm Ed Din, and Soltan Ali. We then plan to visit the local Museum of History located at Dash Metjit/Medrese and drive back to Dashoguz for a 19:50 pm flight to Ashgabat (flight times subject to change), arriving there at 20:40 pm for transfer to our hotel. Lunch and dinner today will be provided in local restaurants.

Accommodation:

2 nights at Ak-Altyn Hotel or similar.

Day 12

Locations: Ashgabat

Overview:

We spend the day today exploring Ashgabat, one of the most beautiful cities of the world which was recently included into the Book of Guinness as the Most-White Marble City in the World. Our visits include “Turkmenbashynyn Ruhy Metjidi” which is the biggest in Central Asia, and the Mausoleum Complex of the tombs of Turkmenbashy. We will also explore Old Nissa, The Sanctuary of Parhian Kings. We then proceed with SS of Monuments of Archabil Shayoly (Berzengi) to have a close impression of the new part of Ashgabat with its modern buildings, monuments, and parks.

Lunch will be at local restaurant. We then continue with our tour around the city visiting the Monument of Turkmen Horses, Gulistan Bazar (also known as “Russian Bazaar”), Monument of Lenin which was erected in 1927 and which survived the earthquake of 1948, Monument “My White City: Ashgabat” & Park “Ashgabat,” Ertogrul Gazy Mosque – a present from Turkey to Turkmenistan built in 1998, and Local Stable of Turkmen Horses, also known as Akhalteke Horses, where there will be an introduction/excursion to familiarize ourselves with horses kept there. Dinner this evening will be at local restaurant.

Accommodation:

Ak-Altyn Hotel or similar.

Day 13

Locations: Ashgabat - Mary

Overview:

In the morning we transfer to the airport for our 40 minutes flight to Mary, departing at 8:00 am (flight times subject to change). On arrival we start our full day touring, starting at the World Heritage listed site of Old Mary (Merv), followed by time back in Mary where we will spend the night.

Merv was a most significant ancient capital in the Persian Empire, but the population was decimated by Mongol forces in 1221. It has seen many changes in its dominant population over time, and we can thank

the Russian, Turkish, and British archaeologists for the excavations we see today. Merv, which has an honour title of Mary Shahu Jahan (King of the World), was for about 300 years the biggest city in Central Asia. For 8 years it was capital of the World Islamic Khalifat. The listed sites of monuments we see include Gyz Gala & Oglan Gala from the 6th and 7th C, the Complex of Askhabs 8th to 14th C, Gyaur Gala 4th C BC, Buddist Stupa & Monastery 4th to 6th C, Beni Makhan Mosque- first Mosque build in Central Asia during the 7th C, Erk Gala 6th C BC, Soltan Gala 11th C, and Soltan Sanjar Mausoleum and Ibn Zeid Mausoleum, both from 12th C. We then drive back to Mary and check in to our hotel, followed by lunch at a local restaurant.

In the afternoon we visit the Local United Museum of History and Ethnography, and see the Flora & Fauna of Mary and the Regional Orthodox Church built by Russians at the end of 9th C. We will take a walking tour within the central part of Mary City, which has The Regional Mosque of Mary Providence, The Central Theater of Mary, The Convention & Conference Center “Ruhiyet Koshgi,” Central Park, and the Monument of Mollanepes, the National Classic Poet who lived in Mary in the 18th C. We will enjoy dinner at a local restaurant tonight.

Accommodation:

1 night at Mary Hotel or similar.

Day 14

Locations: Mary - Ashgabat

Overview:

After breakfast we transfer for our flight back to Ashgabat, departing at 9:40 am (flight times subject to change). On arrival we continue with our visits of the city, including the Museum of Turkmen Carpets, which houses the largest collection of Turkmen carpets and has a rich collection, from medieval through to the 20th C. Here we will also see one of the biggest handmade carpets in the world with the Guinness Book Certificate. Later we transfer to our hotel with some time to freshen up before lunch at a local restaurant.

In the afternoon we visit the Cable Way lifted Mountain Observing Center known as “Asma Ýoly,” located close to Ashgabat on Kopetdag Mountains. We will also see the Monument of Constitution. Opened in

May 2011, it is the tallest building in Turkmenistan. We will visit “Alem” Culture & Recreation Center, which has the biggest indoor Ferris Wheel in the Guinness Book, as well as the Arch of Neutrality, a famous rocket and tripod-style built building symbolizing neutral status of Turkmenistan, which was rebuilt and opened late in 2011. We will also see Monuments of Independency located in the Park of Independency along the hundreds of fountains and statues.

Dinner will be at a local restaurant and afterwards we will enjoy a drive around the city’s main avenues, including a stop near Palace of Happiness to have look around its colourful views in night lights.

Accommodation:

1 night at Ak-Altyn Hotel or similar.

Day 15

Locations: Ashgabat - Almaty (Kazakhstan)

Overview:

In the morning we will have some time to rest or walk around the city before heading to a local restaurant for lunch.

After lunch we visit the National Museum of History, one of the largest in Central Asia. Later in the afternoon we transfer to the airport for our flight to Almaty, departing at 18:20 pm, arriving at 20:05 pm. On arrival we will be met and transferred to our hotel.

Accommodation:

2 nights at Otrar Hotel or similar.

Day 16

Locations: Almaty

Overview:

Today we have a full day of visits in Almaty, including the 28 Panfilov’s guardsmen park, the Cathedral church of St. Nicholas, the Museum of National Musical Instruments, and the National Museum and Republic

Square.

Lunch will be in Almaty before we drive up and out of the city to Medeo skating rink. This is the largest rink in the world and is set in a picturesque gorge some 15 kilometres from Almaty. We will enjoy dinner in a restaurant with a traditional Kazakh menu before returning to our hotel.

Accommodation:

Otrar Hotel or similar.

Day 17

Locations: Almaty - Altyn-Emel

Overview:

After breakfast we transfer over to Altyn-Emel National Park via Kapchagay and Chengeldy village. The park is on the north bank of the Ili River and was created in 1996. The name “Altyn Emel” has a Mongolian origin, meaning “a gold saddle.” The park is a unique desert-mountain complex located on a branch of the ancient Silk Road. In the park we will see Bronze Age petroglyphs representing hunting, wild animals and pets, rituals, and deities with sun faces.

After lunch we visit the stone column “Oshaktas” that are situated nearby the Kalkan Mountains. We also visit Singing Barchans, crescent-shaped sand dunes that “sing” with the wind. En route we stop near the sacred place of The Spring of Chokmor Valihanov. In the evening we will head to our guest house. Depending on the size of our group we’ll be split between 2 places near each other. Dinner will be at our accommodation.

Accommodation:

1 night at Altyn-Emel Guesthouse and Chygan Guesthouse.

Day 18

Locations: Altyn-Emel Park - Kolsai Lakes

Overview:

After breakfast we transfer to Charyn Canyon and on the way visit the 700-year-old tree Aulie-Agash, a magic tree in settlement of Kieli-Agash. Charyn Canyon, often referred to as the little brother of the Grand Canyon, is being carved by the rapidly flowing Charyn River into a flat and barren steppe. Through the passage of time it has weathered all sorts of wonderful and colourful rock formations. After the canyon we continue our way to Kolsai Lakes (150 km) for dinner and accommodation in cottages.

Accommodation:

2 nights at Cottage accommodation.

Day 19

Locations: Kolsai Lakes

Overview:

Following breakfast we have a half day walking excursion along part of the Kolsai Lake system. The Kolsai lakes are located among amazing mountain ridges with naturally blue water and fir trees that are growing in the water. These lakes are named the pearls of the North Tian-Shan and the lowest lake, at 1,818 metres, stretches for 1 kilometre. The middle Kolsai Lake (2,252 m), the largest and the most beautiful, is 5 kilometres from the first lake. The highest lake, Kolsai (inaccessible for our tour), is 4 kilometres further and 600 metres higher up.

After lunch we will enjoy some free time.

Accommodation:

Cottage accommodation.

Day 20

Locations: Kolsai Lakes - Almaty

Overview:

Today we have some free time before our transfer back to Almaty.

Accommodation:

1 night at Otrar Hotel or similar.

Day 21

Locations: Almaty - Issyk-Kul (Kyrgyzstan)

Overview:

Today we cross into Kyrgysztan via the Korday-Akajol border. We will visit the Burana tower-museum, which is located in what was the centre of the ancient town of Balasagun. Near the tower is a museum with artefacts inside and out covering an area of 36 hectares. There are stone statue gravestones of nomadic Turkic people of the 6th to 10th centuries, petroglyphs from the 2nd century B.C. to the 10th century A.D., stone agricultural implements, and other monuments to be found outside. Lunch will be with a Kyrgyz family living near Burana Tower.

In the afternoon we continue by road toward Issyk-Kul lake via Boom Pass (250 km). Boom canyon is very beautiful place, full of high mountains, green pines, and a sparkling river. Issyk-Kul lake occupies the central part of the valley created by a circle of the Terskey and Kungey Ala-Too mountain ranges. Issyk-Kul lake is the largest in the Tien-Shan mountains and is unique in that dozens of rivers and streams flow into it, yet none flow out. Accommodation and dinner will be in comfortable Issyk-Kul resort.

Accommodation:

1 night at Raduga Hotel or similar.

Day 22

Locations: Cholpon-Ata - Karakol - Tamga

Overview:

On our journey around the northern and eastern sides of the lake to Karakol we stop to see an open air museum, the Petroglyphs Gallery of Cholpon-Ata, with rock figures created by ancient artists in the 4th C BC. The scenes vary with images of animals, especially of mountain goats with curved spiraling horns. All the figures were engraved in profile and there are grounds for thinking that these images are some kind of an open cult temple, a place where ancient nomadic people worshiped.

Lunch will be in a local café in Karakol town with time after lunch allocated for a sightseeing tour in Karakol to see a Chinese built mosque that looks like a Buddhist temple, but was built in 1907 for the Dungan (Muslim people of Chinese origin). We also visit the local Cathedral for Orthodox worshipers, a church showing the past presence of Russians in the community, and finally a memorial complex of grave, museum, and apple garden for Nikolai Przewalski, a mid 1800s Russian explorer/geographer and the first westerner to observe the Przewalski horse.

We then drive to Tamga village on the mid-southern shore of Issyk Kol for dinner and overnight in a family type guest house.

Accommodation:

1 night at Tamga Guest House.

Day 23

Locations: Tamga - Son-Kul

Overview:

After breakfast we transfer to the beautiful valley of Son-Kul lake and have lunch in Kochkor village, a hub for the surrounding Kochkor valley. The local Kyrgyz are hospitable and affable people working in agriculture and traditional Kyrgyz crafts. Here we will visit a felt carpet making display and handicrafts shop along with an excursion to see local needlewoman. We then continue to Son-Kul (also spelled Song Kol) lake. The scene that greets you in Son-Kul is surprising. The wide,

brilliant, steel- coloured expanse of the water appears majestic, quiet, and transparent.

We have a traditional nomad dinner and tonight we are accommodated in yurts at the bank of the lake. A yurt is more sophisticated than a tent, but still relatively basic accommodation. The yurt camps do not have shower facilities, but will have access to water and a private area for washing. The toilets are “outhouse” style, at a distance from the yurts – please ensure you bring a torch for night-time visits (head-torches are particularly useful!). Single and twin share travelers will need to share for the following 2 nights as yurts are limited and take 3 to 4 people each.

Accommodation:

2 night at Son-Kul Yurt Camp (3 to 4 people per yurt).

Day 24

Locations: Son-Kul

Overview:

We will be greeted by the wide, brilliant, steel-coloured expanse of the lake, majestic and peaceful, then enjoy a visit to the shepherds’ yurts before ascending to one of nearby hills to see a beautiful panoramic view of the lake, described as being one of the loveliest spots in central Kyrgyzstan. We will also have the opportunity for some horse riding.

Accommodation:

Son-Kul Yurt Camp.

Day 25

Locations: Son-Kul - Bishkek

Overview:

After breakfast we transfer to Bishkek via Suusamyr valley within a high steppe plateau 2,200 metres above sea level. Although we will be only about 160 kilometres from Bishkek this is also one of the more remote and rarely visited regions of Kyrgyzstan. Locally there are signs of early settlement here dating back to between the 9th C and 11th C. In Soviet times this was one of the major sheep breeding areas in the country and

today there are some 4 million sheep driven up over the mountain passes in spring to graze on the luscious grasses of the steppe. This place is the motherland of legend Kyrgyz Hero, Kogomkul.

Accommodation:

2 nights at Ak-Keme Hotel or similar.

Day 26

Locations: Bishkek

Overview:

Bishkek is a relatively young city with quite a checkered history that started as a garrison town and was only given its Kyrgyz name in 1991. It has quite beautiful gardens and tree plantings, including 2 century-old oak trees near the National Museum, one of the places visited in our morning schedule. We also visit the White House, a palace made of white marble housing the Kyrgyz government, the president's office and the republic parliament. Behind the White House is Panfilov Park with nice walkways and water features. We then visit Freedom Avenue before lunch in a local cafe.

After lunch we visit a traditional Asian Bazaar with some free time to enjoy the markets and shop for local crafts if you wish. Dinner will be at a local café.

Accommodation:

Ak-Keme Hotel or similar.

Day 27

Locations: Bishkek

Overview:

The tour ends today after breakfast.

Clients taking the extension into Tajikistan will be transferred to the airport in the afternoon for a flight to Dushanbe. Flight departs at 3:00 pm.

Inclusions / Exclusions

What's included in our Tour

- 26 nights of accommodation.
- Services of an Odyssey Tour Leader.
- Full board while on tour (starting with Dinner on Day 1)
- Transport and field trips as indicated.
- All internal flights and taxes.
- Applicable entry fees and services of local guides.
- Service charges and gratuities.
- Detailed tour information booklet.

What's not included in our Tour

- Comprehensive travel insurance.
- International return airfares including taxes.
- Items of a personal nature.
- Visas for entry, if required.

Level 3 - Moderate to Challenging

Participants must be in excellent health, extremely mobile and live an active lifestyle. Program activities may include up to 6 hours of continuous strenuous, moderate to fast paced activity per day over varied terrain.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any requests for further information about this tour or any others offered by Odyssey Travel.