Home & Afar Travel

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INSPIRING VACATIONS



25 DAY TIMELESS FIVE STANS PREMIUM SMALL GROUP TOUR

ALMATY
KARAKOL
TAMGA
NARYN
BISHKEK
TASHKENT
KHŬJAND
DUSHANBE
PANJAKENT
SAMARKAND
BUKHARA
KHIVA
ASHGABAT

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Travel with the experts for a carefully curated, value-packed discovery of the most iconic destinations. Our tours are bursting with must-see sights, rich experiences, and quality inclusions, all at an unbeatable price. Tick off bucket list dreams on these all-encompassing journeys.

Book Now

TOUR ITINERARY



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Itinerary

DAY 1

Destination	Almaty
Meals included	Breakfast
Hotel	4 ★ Renion City Hotel, or similar

Welcome to Almaty, Kazakhstan's largest city, set against the backdrop of the Tien Shan Mountains. You will be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel. Depending on when you arrive the rest of the day is yours to relax after your journey.

Tonight, you will meet your local tour guide for a pre-tour briefing, providing a complete overview of the trip ahead, followed by the option of joining the group for an informal dinner.

Special Information

Arrival airport transfers are included as part of your package. You will be met upon arrival at the airport and transferred to your hotel.

If Inspiring Vacations has not provided your international airfares, please ensure you provide your flight details via your Traveller Hub portal no later than 90 days prior to travel so that your transfers can be confirmed.

If you are arriving early and have made your own arrangements prior to your tour commencing, airport transfers will not be included. However, if you are purchasing pre-nights accommodation as part of your Inspiring Vacations package, airport transfers will still be provided to the starting hotel.

Pre-tour accommodation:

Most flights arrive between 1am and 3am on Day 1 of your tour. Because of this, your included accommodation actually starts from 2pm the day before Day 1, so your room is ready when you land.

You will only need a pre-tour accommodation night if you're arriving earlier than 2pm the day before your tour starts. For example, if Day 1 of your tour is the 15th, your included accommodation starts at 2pm on the 14th. If you land early on the 14th and haven't booked pre-tour accommodation, your room won't be ready until 2pm that day. Booking 1 night of pre-tour accommodation covers this gap, letting you check in from 2pm on the 13th instead. If you arrive from 2pm on the 14th onwards, no extra night is needed.

If you're arriving early, for example at 8am, and don't wish to purchase an extra night, that's fine too. Your room simply won't be ready until 2pm.

Please note that any pre-trip accommodation must be booked through Inspiring Vacations rather than independently. This is required for Turkmenistan's Letter of Invitation and visa process, and booking outside of this will void your letter.

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DAY 2

Destination	Almaty
Meals included	Breakfast
Hotel	4 ★ Renion City Hotel, or similar

Our day begins with a tour to the stunning mountain settings just outside the city. We drive to Medeo, the world's highest ice rink, and continue to the Shymbulak Mountain Resort, where we will take a scenic cable car to an elevation of 3,200 metres for amazing views.

In the afternoon, we return to Almaty and drive to the vibrant Green Bazaar. Here you have the chance to wander around and chat to the locals. We will then enjoy a leisurely stroll through Panfilov Park, where you will see the beautifully painted Zenkov Cathedral and the Memorial of Glory with its Eternal Flame. We will then head to Kok-Tobe Hill to view the world's tallest TV tower and enjoy a scenic cableway ride back down to the city centre.

Tonight is at your leisure to continue to explore the city.

Inspiring Highlights

- Medeo Ice Rink
- Shymbulak Mountain Resort
- Green Bazaar
- Zenkov Cathedral
- Kok-Tobe Hill

DAY 3

Destination	Almaty 🚌 Charyn Canyon 🚌 Karakol
Meals included	Breakfast, Lunch
Hotel	3 ★ Karagat Hotel, or similar

After breakfast, we head to Charyn Canyon, often nicknamed the ‘Little Brother’ to the Grand Canyon. You will have the opportunity to take a walk through this impressive canyon, where erosion by the Charyn River has created dramatic and colourful landscapes.

We will enjoy lunch at the riverside before continuing our drive into Kyrgyzstan. Upon arrival in Karakol, we check into our hotel where you have the evening at your leisure, or you can join the group for an optional dinner this evening.

Inspiring Highlights

- Charyn Canyon

Special Information

Your travel time today is approximately 8 hours

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DAY 4

Destination	Karakol 🚌 Tamga
Meals included	Breakfast, Dinner
Hotel	Oimo Tash Yurt Camp, or similar

We begin the day after breakfast with a tour of Karakol. We will visit the Prejevalskiy Museum, dedicated to the famous Russian explorer. We will also see the intricately designed Russian Orthodox Church and the unique architecture of the Dungan Mosque.

After our tour we will depart for Tamga and the "Ak Orgo" Community Workshop in Barskoon Village for a truly authentic experience. Here, you will learn about the process of making Yurts and participate in a yurt building activity.

We will then make our way to check into our traditional Yurt Camp to settle in for the night and dinner.

Inspiring Highlights

- Prejevalskiy Museum
- Russian Orthodox Church
- Dungan Mosque

Special Information

Your travel time today is approximately 2 hours

Yurt accommodation is shared on a twin basis (2 people per Yurt) with private facilities. Single occupancy is not available - solo travellers will share with another traveller of the same gender. Yurt accommodation comes with simple amenities and electricity that may not always be reliable. Travellers requiring a constant power supply should contact us to discuss their needs.

DAY 5

Destination	Tamga 🚌 Naryn
Meals included	Breakfast, Lunch
Hotel	4 ⭐ Grand Khan Tengri - Naryn, or similar

This morning after breakfast, we will visit Fairytale canyon (or Canyon Skazka) , a gorge formed of colourful hardened clay that naturally resembles fairytale castles.

After time to explore we start our journey to Naryn. We will make a stop at Bokonbayevo Village, renowned for its tradition of breeding wild predator birds. We have time to meet with the locals, learn about their ancient craft, and witness a demonstration of a hunting bird. We will enjoy lunch with a local family in the village before continuing our drive to Naryn.

Naryn is situated in a valley so the surroundings you will find yourself in are quite spectacular: the Tien Shan mountain peaks, alpine meadows, and scenic rivers. After arrival we will check into the hotel and you have the rest of the night at your leisure.

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Inspiring Highlights

- Fairy Tale (Skazka) Canyon
- Hunting bird demonstration

Special Information

Your travel time today is approximately 6 hours

DAY 6

Destination	Naryn 🚌 Tash-Rabat 🚌 Naryn
Meals included	Breakfast, Lunch
Hotel	4 ⭐ Grand Khan Tengri - Naryn, or similar

Today, after breakfast, we will embark on a spectacular day trip to Tash-Rabat, a 15th-century stone caravanserai located on the Great Silk Road (approx. 220-kilometre drive each way). This remote and unique roadside inn is nestled in a beautiful valley and offers a tangible connection to the ancient trade routes. We will spend time exploring this historic structure and its surroundings.

After arriving back in Naryn the rest of the evening is at your leisure.

Inspiring Highlights

- Tash-Rabat inn

Special Information

Your travel time today is approximately 6 hours, including driving on bumpy and unpaved roads

DAY 7

Destination	Naryn 🚌 Kochkor 🚌 Burana Tower 🚌 Bishkek
Meals included	Breakfast, Lunch
Hotel	4 ⭐ Ambassador Hotel Bishkek, or similar

After breakfast, we make our way to Kochkor Village, the centre of felt production in Kyrgyzstan. We will also take part in a masterclass in making traditional felt rugs. Local artisans produce beautiful felt carpets, called shirdak, and felt-covered yurts.

After lunch we stop to visit the mediaeval Balasagyn city and famous Burana Tower, an ancient minaret in the Chuy Valley in northern Kyrgyzstan. The 24-metre-high tower with funerary monuments, earthworks, remains of a castle and three mausoleums was founded by Karakhanids at the end of the 9th-century.

In the afternoon we continue our day to Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, nestled at the foot of the Tian Shan mountains. It's also known as the greenest city in Central Asia due to its leafy streets and green spaces.

After checking into the hotel the night is yours to relax.

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Inspiring Highlights

- Balasagyn city and the Burana Tower
- Kochkor Village felt masterclass

Special Information

Your travel time today will be approximately 7 hours

DAY 8

Destination	Bishkek
Meals included	Breakfast
Hotel	4 ★ Ambassador Hotel Bishkek, or similar

After breakfast at the hotel, we will travel 45-km to see our first amazing attraction, Ala-Archa Gorge. The gorge lies within the national park on a spur of the Tien Shan mountain range. It is a magical place for hiking, enjoying fresh air, and the scenery is just breathtaking.

Afterward, we will return to Bishkek and visit the main sights. Our first stop is the heart of the city, Ala-Too Square, the main city space used for political demonstrations, festivals and events. Formally known as Lenin Square until 1991, there is also a military monument with an hourly changing of guards. You will see the large statue of Lenin here. We will also see the Monument to Manas the Great, which stands in front of the National History Museum on the square.

We will then return to the hotel where the rest of the day can be spent as you wish.

Inspiring Highlights

- Ala-Archa Gorge Hike
- Ala-Too Square

DAY 9

Destination	Bishkek ✈ Tashkent
Meals included	Breakfast
Hotel	4 ★ Lotte City Hotel Tashkent Palace, or similar

After breakfast, we will visit the Monument to Manas the Great, which stands in front of the National History Museum on the square. You will have some free time to explore the bustling Osh Market for some last minute souvenir shopping.

This afternoon, we will drive to the airport for our flight to Tashkent. Tashkent, is the capital of Uzbekistan and is a vibrant and historically rich city, with a history spanning over two millennia.

We will be met at the airport by our tour leader where we will proceed to the hotel to check in and rest up for the next day or exploring.

Inspiring Highlights

- National History Museum

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- Osh Market

Special Information

Your travel time today will be approximately 6 hours. Your internal flight for this day is arranged by our local partner. Specific flight details will be provided by your Tour Leader upon arrival and cannot be provided in advance.

Please note - check in luggage allowance is 23 kg (not larger than 158 cm) and carry on is 8 kg (55 см x 35 см x 25). Devices with lithium batteries like cell phones and tablets must be packed in your carry on baggage. If you have spare lithium batteries and power banks also must be carried in hand luggage.

These are group flights and cannot be upgraded, amended, or checked in online. Your Tour Leader will manage the check-in process for the group.

On your departure from Bishkek you will say goodbye to your tour guide, and your group will be met by a tour leader in Tashkent.

DAY 10

Destination	Tashkent
Meals included	Breakfast
Hotel	4 ★ Lotte City Hotel Tashkent Palace, or similar

After breakfast at the hotel, our city tour begins with a visit to the old part of the city and the religious complex of Khasti Imam. Here, you'll see Kaffal Shashi Mausoleum, Barak Khan Madrassah, Muay-Mubarak Mosque, which is also home to the Koran of Khalif Osman and gold hair of prophet Muhammad. The Dzhuma-mosque of Khodja Akhrar Vali and Kukeldash Madrassah will also be visited this morning.

Our last stop of the day is at the Chorsu Oriental Bazaar, a true feast for the senses, where you will visit a local bread bakery, explore the street food market, and have the opportunity to try local Kebab or Khanum (steamed dough dumplings). Don't forget to look up - the most stunning feature of the bazaar is its huge blue dome.

The rest of the afternoon and evening is yours to enjoy. If you like you can join the tour leader to visit Tashkent's famous TV Tower for panoramic views, followed by a tour of the city's beautiful metro stations and key Soviet-era monuments.

Inspiring Highlights

- Tashkent Old City tour
- Chorsu Oriental Bazaar

DAY 11

Destination	Tashkent 🚌 Khujand
Meals included	Breakfast, Lunch
Hotel	4 ★ Khujand Deluxe Hotel, or similar

After breakfast, we will head to the border of Tajikistan where you'll meet your new leader and driver and continue the journey to Khujand, a city in the Fergana Valley. Located on the Great Silk Road and the only city built on the bank of the Syr-Darya River, in 1986, the city celebrated its 2,500th anniversary.

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On arrival that afternoon we will check into our hotel and start exploring the city. We will visit the Republican Historical-Ethnographic Museum, one of Tajikistan's most important cultural institutions, the Timur-Malik Fortress, also known as Khujand Fortress; Timur Malik was a statesman, and the emperor of Khujand. Archaeological Museum, the Mosque and Madrasah of Sheikh Muslihiddin, a complex consisting of the cathedral mosque, a 19th-century minaret and the Mausoleum of Sheikh Muslihiddin.

Finally, we will stop by the Payshanba Bazaar, which is situated in front of Khujand Mosque. The bustling marketplace building itself is an architectural marvel; its central building a striking example of Soviet-era architecture blended with traditional Central Asian design elements.

The evening is yours to relax your leisure.

Inspiring Highlights

- Mausoleum of Sheikh Muslihiddin
- Payshanba Bazaar

Special Information:
Your travel time today will be approximately 5 hours

DAY 12

Destination	Khujand 🚌 Dushanbe
Meals included	Breakfast
Hotel	4 ⭐ Rumi Hotel Dushanbe, or similar

After an early breakfast we will head to the capital, Dushanbe. On our way we will stop at Istravshan to visit the monumental concrete bust of Lenin. This is one of the largest in the world, standing around 20 meters high and accessible after climbing over 300 steps. It is a prominent Soviet-era monument.

Our journey continues after lunch through two significant mountain passes, the Anzob Pass and the Shakhristan Pass, offering incredible picturesque sights (have your camera handy!).

After checking into our hotel tonight is at your leisure.

Inspiring Highlights

- The Anzob and Shakhristan pass

Special Information:
Your travel time today will be approximately 7 hours

DAY 13

Destination	Dushanbe
Meals included	Breakfast
Hotel	4 ⭐ Rumi Hotel Dushanbe, or similar

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After breakfast at the hotel, we'll stop at our first site of the day, the Tajikistan United Museum, one of the most significant cultural institutions and a great place to start your introduction to the history and culture of the country. The Buddha in Nirvana is one of the most iconic exhibits and dates back to the 7th century.

Afterwards, we will make a stop at the Botanical Garden, a tranquil space that showcases a wide variety of plants from Tajikistan and other parts of the world.

Followed by a visit to the Oriental Bazaar, always a favourite, and also known as the Green Bazaar. It really is an exciting cultural experience to have and get a glimpse into everyday life in Tajikistan. Purchase nuts and spices, dried fruit and traditional Tajik bread, known as non.

After lunch, we will head to the beautiful Hissar Fortress more than 2,500 years old, and opposite, the Madrasah Kukhna (Old madrasah). Built in the 17th century, the madrasah had up to 150 pupils learning the Koran, the khadises (Prophet's sayings), the history of Islam and more.

We will then return to Dushanbe where the rest of the evening will be spent as you wish.

Inspiring Highlights

- Tajikistan United Museum, botanical garden and oriental bazaar
- Oriental Bazaar
- Hissar town, the Hissar Fortress and Madrasah Kukhna

DAY 14

Destination	Dushanbe 🚌 Iskanderkul Lake 🚌 Panjakent
Meals included	Breakfast, Lunch
Hotel	3 ★ Penjakent Plaza Hotel, or similar

After an early breakfast we will head to the once ancient town of Panjakent. The drive is a picturesque one so make sure you have your camera handy! We will travel via Anzob mountain pass and the Anzob Tunnel (or Istiqlol Tunnel), a 5,040 metre long tunnel which took several years to construct. En route we will stop at beautiful Iskanderkul, a glacial lake and spend some time walking along the shore and taking in the scenery.

On arrival in Panjakent, you will check into the hotel and spend the rest of the day as you wish.

Inspiring Highlights

- Anzob Tunnel
- Iskanderkul Lake

Special Information:
Your travel time today will be approximately 8 hours

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DAY 15

Destination	Panjakent 🚌 Samarkand
Meals included	Breakfast, Lunch
Hotel	Kosh Havuz Boutique Hotel, or similar

This morning, after breakfast, we will visit the ruins of the ancient settlement of Sarazm. Meaning 'where the land begins', this UNESCO site bears testimony to the development of human settlements in Central Asia (from the 4th millennium BCE to the end of the 3rd millennium BCE).

We will proceed to the land border to Uzbekistan where you will meet your new guide and driver who will continue our trip to Samarkand, among the oldest continuously inhabited cities in Central Asia.

Once in town we will enjoy lunch at a local restaurant before checking into our hotel.

That afternoon, we will begin our sightseeing tour with a visit to the Gūr-i Amīr Complex, the impressive mausoleum of the 14th-century conqueror Timur. We continue to the most iconic public squares in Central Asian, Registan Square. One of the most beautiful sites on the Silk Road. You'll see intricate tile work and vibrant colours displayed - all different perspectives depending on the time of day visited.

Tonight is at your leisure to continue exploring the city or relaxing back at the hotel.

Inspiring Highlights

- Sarazm Ancient Settlement
- Gūr-i Amīr Complex
- Registan Square

Special Information:
Your travel time today will be approximately 4 hours

DAY 16

Destination	Samarkand
Meals included	Breakfast
Hotel	Kosh Havuz Boutique Hotel, or similar

After breakfast, we continue exploring Samarkand's treasures. We start the day by visiting the Ulugh Beg Observatory, built in the 1420s by the Timurid astronomer. We visit Khodja Doniyor (St Daniel) Mausoleum before continuing to The Shah-i-Zinda Ensemble, a collection of mausoleums and ritual buildings dating from the 11th to 19th centuries.

After lunch, we will visit some more Samarkand icons, Bibi-Khanym Mosque, the largest mosque in Samarkand, with its three domed rooms, covered galleries and open courtyard. We finish the day with time to explore the vibrant old town market, Siyob Bazaar.

We return to the hotel to relax as tonight is at your leisure.

Inspiring Highlights

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- Ulugh Beg Observatory
- Shah-i-Zinda Ensemble
- Bibi-Khanym Mosque

DAY 17

Destination	Samarkand 🚆 Bukhara
Meals included	Breakfast
Hotel	4 ★ Paradise Plaza Luxury Hotel, or similar

After breakfast we will bid farewell to Samarkand and board the train to Bukhara, a UNESCO World Heritage city, known for its well-preserved medieval architecture and rich history.

Upon arrival we will check into our hotel before starting our afternoon tour.

This afternoon we start at Ismail Samani Mausoleum, recognised as an architectural masterpiece due to its geometric forms. We continue to Chashma Ayub Mausoleum, located in an ancient cemetery and currently under UNESCO review, before finishing at the Ark Citadel, the oldest structure in Bukhara.

Tonight is yours to relax.

Inspiring Highlights

- Ismail Samani Mausoleum
- Chashma Ayub Mausoleum
- Ark Citadel

Special Information:
Your travel time today will be approximately 3 hours.

DAY 18

Destination	Bukhara
Meals included	Breakfast
Hotel	4 ★ Paradise Plaza Luxury Hotel, or similar

After breakfast, we set off for a comprehensive sightseeing tour of Bukhara. We explore the central Lyab-i Hauz Architectural Ensemble, which includes the Kukeldash Madrasah and the Nadir Divan-Begi Madrasah.

We continue to the spectacular Po-i-Kalyan Complex, often considered the symbol of Bukhara, featuring the towering Kalyan Minaret.

Finally, we visit the historical Ulugbek Madrasah, renowned for being the oldest surviving madrasah in Central Asia and a model for later structures. We finish the day at Abdulaziz-Khan Madrasah, known for its ornate tilework and grandeur.

Tonight is at your leisure.

Inspiring Highlights

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- Po-i-Kalyan Complex
- Lyab-i Hauz Architectural Ensemble
- Ulugbek Madrasah

DAY 19

Destination	Bukhara
Meals included	Breakfast
Hotel	4 ★ Paradise Plaza Luxury Hotel, or similar

Today is a free day to explore the historic city of Bukhara at your own pace.

You might choose to wander the covered trading domes, famous for their spice and textile shops, visit the unique Chor Minor mosque with its distinctive four minarets, or simply relax at a traditional teahouse beside the peaceful Lyab-i Hauz pond.

DAY 20

Destination	Bukhara 🚌 Khiva
Meals included	Breakfast
Hotel	4 ★ Kamil Palace Hotel, or similar

After breakfast we will travel to Khiva, across the Kyzyl-Kum Desert, one of Central Asia's largest deserts, and along the Amu Darya River. The Amu Darya is one of the longest rivers in Central Asia, around 2,540 kilometres long and was a vital part of the Silk Road.

Once we check in, the rest of the day is yours to enjoy.

Inspiring Highlights:

- Kyzyl-Kum Desert

Special Information:
Your travel time today will be approximately 7 hours.

DAY 21

Destination	Khiva
Meals included	Breakfast, Dinner
Hotel	4 ★ Kamil Palace Hotel, or similar

After breakfast at the hotel, we will depart for an enjoyable day taking in the sites of Khiva. The historical Ichan Kala, Pahlavan Mahmud Complex, built in 1664, Kunya-Ark Fortress, Islam Hajj Madrasah and Minaret.

After a leisurely lunch together, we'll continue onto the Tash-Khauli Palace which was built in 1830 and is a perfect example of the Khorezm architectural grandeur of those times.

A visit to Juma Mosque, Muhammad Amin Khan Minaret & Madrasah and Avesta Museum, a museum dedicated to the sacred book, will follow in the afternoon.

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We will then return to the hotel and freshen up before heading out to enjoy dinner at a traditional restaurant with a folklore show - plenty of music and dancing!

Inspiring Highlights

- Khiva Sightseeing tour
- Tash-Khauli Palace
- Traditional dinner and folklore show

DAY 22

Destination	Khiva 🚌 Dashoguz 🚌 Darvaza Yurt Camp
Meals included	Breakfast, Dinner
Hotel	Darvaza Traditional Yurt Camp, or similar

Today begins with an early morning check out as we prepare to cross from Uzbekistan into Turkmenistan. We take a bus drive to the border crossing point, where we complete the necessary formalities.

After crossing, we travel to Dashoguz and visit the highlights of the City Square and the local Bazaar where you will have time to visit the local vendors and have lunch.

In the afternoon, we will drive to the Darvaza gas crater, stopping off to visit mud and water craters along the way. The crater is nicknamed 'Door to Hell' or 'Gates of Hell' and has been burning since the 1980s.
We will arrive in Darvaza before sunset and enjoy a BBQ dinner together. We will spend the night in our 2-person yurts.

Inspiring Highlights

- Dashoguz City Square & Bazaar
- Darvaza Gas Crater

Special Information

Your travel time today will be approximately 10 hours.

Please note that the roads will be very bumpy today, and you will travel by 4WD for your trip into Darvaza.

As yurt accommodation is on a Twin share basis (2 people per Yurt) private rooms are not provided. This applies to solo travellers. Toilet and shower facilities are outside of the yurts. Yurt accommodation comes with simpler amenities than hotels, featuring communal bathrooms located 100–150 metres from the yurts. Electricity that may not always be reliable; travellers requiring a constant power supply should contact us to discuss their needs.

DAY 23

Destination	Darvaza Yurt Camp 🚌 Ashgabat
Meals included	Breakfast
Hotel	4 ⭐ Archabil hotel, or similar

After breakfast, we will drive to the city of Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan. We will check into our hotel before having some time to relax before our afternoon of sightseeing.

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Our first stop is Parthian Fortresses of Nisa, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the Turkmenbashi Ruhy Mosque. Our tour continues as we explore the modern monuments of Ashgabat, including Independence Park, the Ruhnama Monument, the Neutrality Arch, and the panoramic viewpoint at the Wedding Palace. We will also visit Halk Hakydasy Memorial Complex.

Tonight is yours to relax at your leisure.

Inspiring Highlights

- Parthian Fortresses of Nisa (UNESCO Site)
- Turkmenbashi Ruhy Mosque
- Independence Park
- Neutrality Arch
- Halk Hakydasy Memorial Complex

Special Information

Your travel time today will be approximately 5 hours.

DAY 24

Destination	Ashgabat
Meals included	Breakfast
Hotel	4 ★ Archabil hotel, or similar

After breakfast we continue our sightseeing with a visit to the National Museum of Turkmenistan, offering insight into the nation's history and culture. We will then head to horse stables to see the very special Akhal Teke horses, a breed that is more than three thousand years old.

Lastly, we will head to the beautiful Ertuğrul Gazi Mosque, with four minarets and a central dome. Make sure to check out the beautiful interior and fine stained glass windows.

The afternoon and evening is yours to explore or relax at your leisure.

Inspiring Highlights

- National Museum of Turkmenistan
- Akhal Teke Horse Stables
- Ertuğrul Gazi Mosque

DAY 25

Destination	Ashgabat
Meals included	Breakfast
Accommodation	N/A

Today marks the end of your incredible tour through the Timeless Five Stans, thank you for travelling with Inspiring Vacations. We hope you had a memorable experience.

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To comply with Turkmenistan's letter of invitation requirements, any post-trip accommodation must be booked through Inspiring Vacations.

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Inclusions

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Explore the famous Five Stans of Central Asia: Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan
- 22 nights in 3 & 4 star hotels and 2 nights in a traditional Yurt Camp
- Airport transfers included on the first and last day
- Breakfast Daily, 7 Lunches and 3 Dinners
- Fully escorted by a dedicated local guide in each region
- Internal flights, rail and dedicated coach transportation
- 7 day cooling-off period

SIGHTSEEING HIGHLIGHTS

- Khiva - Sightseeing tour
- Bukhara - Guided day tour
- Samarkand - Registan Square, Gur Emir Mausoleum, and Bibi Khanum Mosque Iskanderkul Lake
- Panjakent - Anzob pass and the Istiklol tunnel
- Dushanbe - Tajikistan United Museum, botanical garden and oriental bazaar
- Dushanbe - Hissar town, the Hissar Fortress and Madrasah Kukhna
- Khujand - City tour
- Bishkek - Ala-Archa Gorge , the central Ala-Too Square, statue of Lenin and Freedom Monument, Monument to Manas the Great
- Burana - Balasagun city and the ancient Burana Tower
- Kochkor Village - Felt rug making lesson
- Tash-Rabat - Tash-Rabat
- Bokonbayevo Village - Falconry
- Fairytale Canyon - Guided tour
- Karakol - The Dungan Mosque, Orthodox Cathedral, and Przhevalski Museum
- Charyn Canyon - Charyn Canyon.
- Almaty - Kok Tobe cable car
- Darvaza - Darvaza Gas Crater
- Ashgabad - National Museum of Turkmenistan
- Ashgabat - Akhal Teke Horse Stables
- Ashgabat - Ertuğrul Gazi Mosque

ADD-ONS, UPGRADES AND ROOM CONFIGURATION

You can enhance your holiday by arriving or departing before or after the tour. On this tour you can choose from the following options:

Pre Tour Accommodation

- $313.00 per room, per night for double and twin share
- $286.00 per room, per night for solo travellers

Post Tour Accommodation

- $530.00 per room, per night for double and twin share
- $398.00 per room, per night for solo travellers

Please note: due to local regulations in Turkmenistan, arranging your own accommodation is prohibited, you must have all arrangements booked with Inspiring Vacations to avoid denied entry.

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Please select the number of extra nights required in the 'Additional Nights Accommodation' field when making your purchase. The additional cost for these arrangements will be added to your final payment invoice and are subject to availability.

Please note: All add-ons, including upgrades, pre/post accommodation, and optional tours, are subject to availability until confirmed by our operators. We recommend waiting for final confirmation of all itinerary components before making irreversible bookings like flights.

Upgrades

Not available

Airport Transfers

Some of our packages will include airport transfers in either one or both directions when arriving or departing from your destination. To know if transfers are included please view the 'inclusions' section of your selected package. If airport transfers are stated, transfers will be included as advised.

If transfers are not included, we also offer the option to book your airport transfers using our online portal. Access to this portal is available through your Traveller Hub once your booking is confirmed. Transfers are readily available and do not need to be booked until your final hotel list has been confirmed. Once you have made a transfer booking, please refer to your confirmation email for all transfer details including a local contact number for the transfer company.

If you book pre and/or post-tour accommodation on your arrangement, and the tour includes transfers, note that these will be forfeited. The transfers are only provided in line with the tour dates and pre and/or post-tour accommodation purchased through Inspiring Vacations when available.

Bedding Configuration

Bedding configurations (double or twin) are requests only. All efforts will be made to meet your preferences, but we can not guarantee your request will be available at all properties.

Single travellers

When booking this tour, solo travellers will be presented with two/three options:

1 - Single Supplement

By paying an additional $2,350.00 per person, in addition to the twin-share price, you guarantee the privacy of your room throughout the entire tour.

Please note when choosing Single Supplement for this tour, your room will generally consist of a double or semi-double bed. Occasionally there may be a hotel that will provide a single bedded room for single travellers.

2- Shared Room with a known friend



If travelling together with a friend, you can opt to share your room with them and avoid paying a single supplement.

You and your friend can create a unique booking each. Creating a unique booking, gives each of you the flexibility of making different travel arrangements (such as adding extra accommodation, flights, etc), making separate payments and having individual access to our Traveller Hub

During the purchase path, you will need to provide your friend's booking ID (if known) or at a minimum, your friend's full name.

3- Shared Room with a fellow traveller
In this tour you can opt to share a room with a fellow traveller of the same gender – as specified in your passport - and avoid paying a single supplement.

If you believe you may prevent your travelling companion from enjoying a peaceful night's rest, please refrain from selecting this option.

You will meet your rooming companion at the beginning of your tour.

Should you wish to change from a shared room to a solo room, this would be at the cost of the traveller who has requested to change the room type. Changes to room configuration during the tour must be organised by travellers directly with the hotel, subject to availability and additional charges.

This option is not available on additional accommodation booked before or after

Triple Share

Not available

Child policy

Children must be 5 years old or above and share a room with parents at all times. Children are charged the same price as adults.

Fine Print

BOOKING & PAYMENT TERMS

Payment Information
Secure your trip with a $99.00 deposit per person.
Once we receive your deposit, we will send you an invoice with your remaining balance and payment options.

Instalment Schedule:

1. At the time of booking pay a $99.00 deposit per person.
2. Pay a 1st installment of $3,449.00 per person within 7 days.
3. Pay a 2nd installment of $6,208.00 per person within 60 days.
4. You will then be invoiced for final payment 120 days prior to departure.

Cooling Off Period
A refund will be available within the 7-day cooling-off period unless otherwise restricted by the purchased product.

Where 'last minute' bookings are available within 71 days of departure, the cooling-off period does not apply and bookings are immediately non-refundable.

Terms and conditions
Please review our terms and conditions here:
https://www.inspiringvacations.com/au/page/terms-and-conditions

VISA AND LETTER OF INVITATION INFORMATION

Visa & Entry Requirements

Obtaining a visa for Turkmenistan requires a mandatory Letter of Invitation (LOI), and we are here to assist you with this specific part of the process. Crucially, access to the Letter of Invitation form will be provided within your dedicated Traveller Hub account immediately after your booking is confirmed.

Once logged into your Traveller Hub, you will find a detailed Letter of Invitation form. It is absolutely essential that you carefully read and provide a complete response to every single question within this form. To help you provide the necessary information accurately, we have included guidance notes within the form explaining what each question is asking for. Providing incomplete or inaccurate information will inevitably lead to significant delays in the processing of your Letter of Invitation.

Please be aware that our assistance is strictly limited to facilitating the Letter of Invitation. Ensuring you meet all other Turkmenistan entry requirements, including but not limited to passport validity, any other potential visa requirements based on your nationality, and adhering to all customs and immigration regulations, remains your sole responsibility. You must ensure your passport is valid for at least six (6) months beyond your intended stay in Turkmenistan and research any other visa obligations that may apply to you.

To allow sufficient time for the complex and time-consuming Letter of Invitation process, we require you to upload the following documents and complete the online form within your Traveler Hub no later than 90 days prior to your scheduled departure date:

- A clear, color photocopy of your passport, showing your full name and passport number clearly and the data identification strip at the bottom of your passport.

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- The fully completed Letter of Invitation form with accurate responses to all questions.
- A separate, standard passport-sized photograph. This should be an actual passport style photo - see below the specific requirements. See an example photo HERE.

Passport Photo Requirements:

- Good quality colour prints, less than six months old.
- Selfies cannot be accepted.
- No retouching of any kind (including removal of background, moles, wrinkles, or scars).
- Clear, focused image with no marks or 'red eye'.
- Plain white or light grey background that contrasts with your face.
- Uniform lighting (no shadows or reflections), with appropriate brightness and contrast to show natural skin tone.
- Face centred and looking at the camera straight on; not tilted in any direction.
- Eyes open, mouth closed.
- Neutral expression (not smiling, laughing, or frowning).
- Photo size: 35mm to 40mm wide and 45mm to 50mm high.
- Face size: from chin to crown, a maximum of 36mm, with a minimum of 32mm.
- Glasses are not allowed in passport photos.
- If glasses cannot be removed for medical reasons:
    - The frames cannot obscure your eyes.
    - There cannot be any reflection from the lenses.
    - Vision impairment alone is not an acceptable reason to wear glasses
- If you usually wear hearing aids, you can wear them in your passport photo.

Some time after booking, you will receive an email from Inspiring Vacations requesting copies of your passport and a passport photo.

Failure to provide all required information in the correct format and by the specified deadline (90 days prior to departure) will likely result in delays to your Letter of Invitation and documentation, and will involve a $250AUD per person late fee.

Due to unpredictable turnaround times for the Letters of Invitation, you may receive this within 7 days of departure. We will work hard to ensure you receive this as soon as possible before your departure, however, the timelines are sometimes beyond our control given that these are issued locally. Your letter of invitation will be issued within your Traveller Hub and you will be notified once it is available. You must print a copy of your Letter of Invitation to present to immigration officials upon arrival at the Shavat Land Border

Upon arrival at the Turkmenistan side of the Shavat Land Border, you will present your Letter of Invitation, and your Turkmenistan tourist visa will be issued. Please ensure you have sufficient US Dollars in cash to pay for the visa fee, which is approximately USD 100-120 per person. Additionally, a payment for a mandatory Covid 19 (RAT))test upon arrival (or potentially pre-departure, depending on current regulations) is required, costing approximately USD 42 per person.

Please note: only good condition USD cash is accepted (USD notes must be new, issued after 2009, must be clean, crisp, undamaged) to pay for your PCR test and visa.

The information provided in this document is subject to change and may be affected by unforeseen events outside the control of Inspiring Vacations. Where changes to your itinerary or bookings occur, appropriate advice or instructions will be sent to your email address.

Visa policies and entry requirements can change. It is your ongoing responsibility to monitor the latest information from the official government sources of Turkmenistan and to regularly check our visa information page for any updates:

https://inspiringvacations-8357211.hs-sites.com/visa-information

By proceeding with your booking, you acknowledge your understanding of these visa and entry requirements and your responsibility to comply with them.

Please Note: *Failure to provide all required information in the correct format and by the specified deadline (90 days prior to departure) will likely result in delays to your Letter of Invitation and documentation, and will involve a $250AUD per person or equivalent late fee.*

What to Expect While Navigating Immigration at Shavat Land Border Crossing

To ensure we provide you with the most accurate and helpful information, we have set out the arrival process based on firsthand knowledge. This allows us to set the right expectations and help you navigate your entry into Turkmenistan smoothly. Please be aware that the process can sometimes take between 1.5 to 2 h hours, so we kindly ask for your patience.

Here's a breakdown of what you can expect at The Shavat Land Border Crossing (Uzbekistan to Turkmenistan) comprising three sections.

Uzbekistan post (building) and gate:
Upon arrival at the border you will proceed off the bus and walk with your tour leader to the first border check point where your passports will be checked, bags x-rayed and exit stamps provided for Uzbekistan. After you have cleared customs you will walk to the Uzbekistan Border exit gate, show your passport and proceed to the neutral zone.

Neutral Zone:
The neutral zone extends for approximately 1.5 kilometers between the two posts on a tarmac. You will wait at the shuttle pick up point that is easily located after entering the neutral zone and you will likely see other travelers waiting.

A non air conditioned minis bus (approximately 15 – 20 passengers) will transit you between the posts. Due to the limited availability of shuttle transport, there may be delays in transferring through the neutral zone. Once on the shuttle bus this will take approximately 10 minutes

Turkmenistan post (building) and gate:
Upon arrival at the Turkmenistan border post your passports will be checked once again and you will be directed inside the customs building for passport and visa control, customs procedures and your luggage check.

COVID-19 (RAT) test & Turkmenistan Visa obtaining process :

1. **COVID-19 (RAT) Testing:** Once you enter the border building you will be taken for a COVID-19 (RAT) test. Before your nasal swab, you will be asked to verbally provide your name and date of birth for registration. There is no additional documentation required at this stage, and you will not receive any paperwork

related to the test. While the on-arrival COVID test may appear unnecessary or primarily a money-making exercise, it remains a mandatory government requirement and must still be completed.

2. **Visa obtaining process & Immigration** : Once your COVID-19 test is taken, your tour leader will collect all of the group's passports and take them to the counter where the receipts for the Visa and Covid test payment will be issued. Your tour leader will call you one by one to pay the fees and process your passport with a visa sticker.

   Once you have your visa sticker you will proceed to the Immigration counter to get your entry stamp. Passport and visa processing requires access to an electronic database and you may experience delays in the event of a power outage. An air-conditioned waiting area is available, although seating may be limited. We ask for your patience as all visas for the group are processesd.

3. **Customs process:** After getting your passport stamped, proceed to customs where your bags will be scanned and checked for prohibited items (they may ask you to open your bags to be checked). After clearing customs you will exit to the border gate, board the bus waiting and continue on your trip.

Please Note: At the Shavat Land Border Crossing smoking is prohibited and there are no facilities to purchase drinks (including water) or snacks. The toilet facilities are basic and are not Western style so please be prepared before arrival. There are no currency exchanges available and you can only pay in USD notes cash.

Important Note: This process can change at any time without advance notice. We endeavor to keep this information as up to date as possible.

As mentioned, the entire process can take between 1.5 to 2 hours. We appreciate your understanding and patience as the local authorities complete these necessary procedures. Your tour leader will be with you and ready to assist you through the process at the land border crossing.

Border crossings can be slow, especially when travelling in a group, so patience is important. Visa processing and formalities may take over an hour, and procedures can sometimes feel a little unstructured or unpredictable.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE DETAILS

Starting Point

Your starting hotel may differ from the original itinerary. Please refer to your final documentation which will be provided approximately 14-30 days before departure for your confirmed hotel list. If you need to book pre-tour accommodation independently, we suggest you do this only once you have received your final hotel list for your tour. If you would like to book something sooner, we recommend that you book using a flexible rate that can be cancelled through your chosen third-party provider without penalty.

Travellers will arrive at various times throughout the day depending on flights booked. If arriving before standard check-in time, which is generally 3pm, you are welcome to leave your luggage at hotel reception and explore your surroundings until check-in becomes available. The hotel may grant early check-in, however this is strictly subject to availability and at the hotel's discretion.

Arrival Details

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Airport transfers are included as part of your package, so long as you are arriving as per the purchased itinerary. An arrival airport transfer is included, even if you book a pre-tour night with us. You will be met upon arrival at the airport and transferred to your hotel.

Where the service remains included, on arrival look out for a representative holding an “Inspiring Vacations” sign after you have collected your baggage and exited customs. If you cannot find them, try to avoid wandering around and instead stay in one place and call the emergency contact number on your documentation.

If you're having any problems finding the hotel, please ring the hotel directly or you can phone our customer support team for on-tour assistance.

Arrival Pre-Tour Accommodation

Most flights arrive between 1am and 3am on Day 1 of your tour. Because of this, your included accommodation actually starts from 2pm the day before Day 1, so your room is ready when you land.

You will only need a pre-tour accommodation night if you're arriving earlier than 2pm the day before your tour starts. For example, if Day 1 of your tour is the 15th, your included accommodation starts at 2pm on the 14th. If you land early on the 14th and haven't booked pre-tour accommodation, your room won't be ready until 2pm that day. Booking 1 night of pre-tour accommodation covers this gap, letting you check in from 2pm on the 13th instead. If you arrive from 2pm on the 14th onwards, no extra night is needed.

If you're arriving early, for example at 8am, and don't wish to purchase an extra night, that's fine too. Your room simply won't be ready until 2pm.

Please note that any pre-trip accommodation must be booked through Inspiring Vacations rather than independently. This is required for Turkmenistan's Letter of Invitation and visa process, and booking outside of this will void your letter.

Welcome Meeting Instructions

At 6pm on Day 1, your tour leader will meet your group at the hotel for a pre tour briefing followed by an optional group dinner.

In Case of Emergency

Although we strive to deliver exceptional holiday experiences, unforeseen circumstances can occasionally arise during travel. If any issues arise during your tour, it's essential to promptly communicate them to your tour leader or local representative. This ensures they can take immediate action to address the problem and mitigate any negative impact on the remainder of your journey.

We understand that there may be instances where your tour leader or local representative is unable to resolve a situation to your satisfaction. In such cases, we encourage you to request that the tour leader or local representative escalate the matter to their direct manager for further assistance.

You also have the option to share details in your online feedback after the tour. However, please keep in mind that it's challenging for us to offer practical assistance once the tour is

completed. Therefore, notifying us while still travelling allows us the chance to address the issue in real-time and provide a timely resolution.

For general contact details please visit the Contact Us page on our website.

When your final tour documentation is released, this will include an emergency contact for our local travel partner while you are on tour. If this is not included in your documentation, you will receive this on arrival during your welcome meeting.

Finishing Point

Your finishing hotel may differ from the original itinerary. Please refer to your final documentation which will be provided approximately 14-30 days before departure for your confirmed hotel list. Please be aware that due to local regulations in Turkmenistan, all post-tour arrangements, including accommodation and transfers, must be booked through our local partner. This is because travelers cannot travel unescorted. **Arranging your own accommodation is prohibited; you must have all arrangements booked with Inspiring Vacations to avoid denied entry.**

Travellers will depart at various times throughout the day depending on flights booked. Check-out time is generally from 10am-12pm. You are welcome to leave your luggage at the hotel reception and spend your final moments of free time exploring the area or please speak with hotel staff if you would like to extend your check-out time. This service is subject to availability and will likely come at an additional cost payable directly.

Departure Details

You are free to check out any time on the final day of your tour. Departure transfers are included as part of your package. You will be collected from your hotel at the appropriate time and transferred to the airport to meet your flight.

If Inspiring Vacations has not provided your international airfares, please ensure you provide your flight details via your Traveller Hub portal no later than 90 days prior to travel so that your transfers can be confirmed.

TOUR & DESTINATION INFORMATION

Tour Suitability

- Arranging your own accommodation in Turkmenistan is prohibited, you must have all arrangements booked with Inspiring Vacations.
- On this journey we are able to use smaller vehicles. Smaller vehicles are better suited to the region's variable road conditions and we can travel more efficiently, reducing travel times and increasing time spent exploring the places that matter most. In saying that, this journey involves some longer travel days by private coach, and roads on this tour can be bumpy. These long drives can be uncomfortable and there can be unexpected delays in traffic, however the spectacular scenery and unique sights make the journey well worth it.
- Timeless Stans operates with a maximum of 16 travellers. In Central Asia, smaller groups make a meaningful difference with border crossings and logistical stops becoming more efficient, allowing us to maximise time at the destinations rather than on the road. The experience feels more flexible, personal, and immersive throughout the journey.
- Travelling through Central Asia exposes you to a wide range of temperatures —

from sub-zero nights in the mountains to scorching days above 40°C in the deserts and steppes. You'll need to be prepared for walking tours and outdoor activities in potentially extreme heat. While we will do our best to adapt the itinerary to account for high temperatures, it's important that you come well-equipped for the conditions and take care to stay hydrated throughout your journey.

- Accommodation in our yurt camp in Darvaza offers an authentic experience, however it comes with simpler amenities than hotels, featuring communal bathrooms located 100–150 metres from the yurts. The yurt camp in Tamga provides a private ensuite bathroom.
- Electricity in the yurts may not always be reliable; travellers requiring a constant power supply should contact us to discuss their needs. As yurt accommodation is on a twin share basis (2 people per yurt) private rooms are not provided. This applies to both twin share and solo travellers. Rooming configuration will vary from group to group and genders are likely to be mixed.
- Squat toilets are commonly used outside hotels, and as they can be challenging for those with limited mobility, we recommend being prepared for this style of toilet in some areas.
- Border crossings can be slow, especially when travelling in a group, so patience is important. Visa processing and formalities may take over an hour, and procedures can sometimes feel a little unstructured or unpredictable.
- Turkmenistan closely regulates tourism, requiring travellers to secure a Letter of Invitation before applying for a visa, which is then issued upon arrival.
- Additional on tour fees will apply, such as a $2USD Turkmenistan hotel fee, a possible $1USD border fee to use transport between borders, and also a photography tax at some locations.

Border Crossings

Crossing borders between the countries of Central Asia is a unique experience. While we strive to provide you with the most accurate information regarding border procedures, it's important to be aware that the process on the ground can sometimes be fluid and may differ from what you might expect. Occasionally, there may be variations in fees or procedures that are not always communicated in advance or consistently applied. During border crossings, there will be a period when you are unescorted, as your local guide will not be crossing borders with you. Our tour guides will give you as much guidance as possible, and stay with the group for as long as they can.

If you feel unsure, are asked for unexpected fees, or have any concerns during a border crossing, please do not hesitate to speak with your tour leader if possible. We appreciate your understanding and flexibility as we explore this incredible part of the world together. We are committed to providing you with a safe and memorable journey.

Medications

It is each traveller's responsibility to confirm what medications they can legally carry into every country on this itinerary. Across the Five Stans, substances including tramadol, morphine, opiates and similar narcotics are prohibited and classified as illegal narcotics. Some medications available over-the-counter or by prescription at home, such as sleeping pills, may also be illegal or restricted. Penalties can include arrest or detention.

Before you travel, check your government's travel advisory along with the relevant embassy or consulate for each country on your itinerary. Carry a copy of all prescriptions and a letter from your doctor, and be prepared to declare any prescription medication at customs.

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Pace

This tour category is **Lively**:

Our **lively** tours are faster paced typically including full sightseeing days, some early starts, longer driving days and a number of 1 night hotel stays - perfect for those eager to maximise each moment and cover more ground.

Activity and Mobility

This tour is categorized as: **4 out of 5 - Active**

Our **Active** tours involve regular, longer periods of movement and are best suited to travellers with good fitness and mobility. Expect sustained walking on varied terrain including cobblestones, gravel and uneven ground, with noticeable inclines and occasional light hikes.

Activity snapshot

- Activity: Moderate, guided walking tours totalling around 10,000–15,000 steps per day, with extended periods on foot (often up to six hours including stops and breaks).
- Typical walking distances: 3–8 km on sightseeing days, varying by city and site.
- Key walks:
    - Old towns across each country:2–5 km each, often on cobblestones and uneven stone paths
    - Darvaza Gas Crater, Fairytale Canyon, Charyn Canyon and open-air archaeological sites: rocky dirt paths
    - Border crossings: up to 1–1.5 km in full sun while managing luggage.
- Touring style: Travel by private coach and occasional 4WD vehicles across mixed road conditions. Some days involve long drives (up to 8 hours), and some drives will have extremely bumpy or rough roads. Coaches will not have onboard toilets, but will have regular comfort stops .

Mobility requirements

- Mobility: Best suited to travellers comfortable with moderate, stop-start walking, long days on foot, and some uneven terrain.
- Walking surfaces: Cobblestones, stone pavements, dirt and gravel paths, loose rock, and unpaved roads.
- Luggage: Passengers must manage their own bags during hotel check-ins, airport procedures, and particularly at land border crossings where walking distances can exceed 1 km in hot conditions.
- Accessibility: Not all hotels have lifts; occasional stairs and uneven surfaces are common. Border crossings and heritage sites may lack shade, ramps, or paved paths. Yurt Camp beds may be lower to the ground than what you would expect in a hotel.
- Climate considerations: Conditions can vary dramatically—expect desert heat exceeding 40°C (sometimes up to 45°C) on certain days, contrasted with cool or even cold temperatures in mountainous areas. Sun protection, hydration, and layered clothing are essential.

Terrain & environment

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- Cities and towns (Khiva, Bukhara, Samarkand, Almaty etc): Primarily cobblestone and paved walking, with uneven steps and limited shade.
- Nature and rural areas (Darvaza Desert, mountain valleys, archaeological ruins): Dirt and rocky trails, occasional loose gravel or sand, and exposure to direct sun.
- Driving conditions: Roads in parts of Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan can be extremely rough and uneven. While vehicles are comfortable and air-conditioned, the ride can be jarring for extended periods.

Embracing the Heat

The landscapes of Central Asia are often characterised by warm and sunny conditions, particularly during the peak travel seasons. Please be aware that temperatures may exceed 40°C in some regions. High temperatures are a natural part of the climate in these countries and are something we cannot control.

Many of our walking tours and activities take place outdoors, so it's important to come prepared for the heat. We strongly encourage you to adopt common-sense health and safety practices throughout your journey. While we will do our best to tailor the itinerary to account for extreme temperatures, your preparation and awareness are essential to staying comfortable and safe.

Group Size

- Minimum: 4 people
- Maximum: 16 people

Escorted Style

This tour is fully escorted by multiple dedicated tour leaders who will accompany you throughout the tour. You will be met by a new tour leader in each country and any internal flights included will be unescorted. Your tour leaders will coordinate with each other to ensure a seamless transition.

Tour Type

Our expertly crafted Small Group Tours take you to iconic landmarks and hidden treasures, ensuring a rich blend of must-see sights. Unwind in premium accommodations after each day filled with sightseeing alongside your dedicated tour leader, leaving you free to explore at your own pace during designated free time. Benefit from smaller group sizes, creating a truly unforgettable travel experience.

Exclusions

- International airfares
- Visas
- Travel insurance
- Tipping
- Optional activities
- Personal expenses
- Border Crossing Transport Fees
- Photography Tax

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Getting Around

While touring the 5 Stans, you will be travelling by private coaches, planes, and trains. Central Asia is a very large region, and to see all that it has to offer then there will be some long travel journeys on the coach. Roads, especially out of the capital cities, can be very bumpy, and there can often be unexpected delays due to traffic, but rest assured there will be comfort stops along the way where you can freshen up, stretch your legs, use the bathroom and often, purchase refreshments. Generally, lunch stops will be taken at rest stops as they can easily accommodate our large groups.

Hotel Ratings

Star ratings can differ between countries, reflecting diverse standards and amenities. To give you the most accurate picture possible, we don't just rely on a single source for hotel ratings. We go beyond by researching various trusted travel websites like Tripadvisor and Booking.com. This allows us to analyse a wider range of genuine customer reviews and experiences, giving you a well-rounded understanding of the hotel's typical star rating.

This means you can book with confidence, knowing the hotel has a strong track record of satisfied guests.

Accommodation Details

This tour uses 3 and 4-star premium hotels, offering a higher standard in the region. Most hotels feature enhanced comfort, better amenities and more central locations, enhancing your stay after each day of exploration. That said, it's important to be transparent about a few destinations where accommodation options are limited:

Karakol, Kyrgyzstan – Accommodation here is limited to approximately 3-star standard, and more rustic with their features.

Hotel standards can vary across the country. In capital and major cities, you can generally expect a higher level of comfort and amenities than in smaller towns. Rest assured, we always do our best to select quality accommodation for your stay.

We also stay two incredible nights in a traditional Yurt Camp. As yurt accommodation is an essential part of experiencing the region. The Yurt stays are on a twin shared basis (2 people per Yurt) private rooms are not provided. This applies to both twin share and solo travellers. Rooming configuration will vary from group to group and genders are likely to be mixed. In Tamga (Yurt Stay) we will have a simple ensuite facility. In Darvaza (Yurt Stay), toilet and shower facilities are outside of the yurts.

Packing Essentials

We recommend you pack as lightly as possible, ensuring that you can carry and lift your luggage, and walk with it for short distances or up or down a flight of stairs.

A lockable suitcase with wheels is ideal for this tour. This tour includes an internal flight, which has luggage weight restrictions, and it is recommended that you keep your main luggage weight no more than 23kg. A small or medium-sized backpack (45-50 litres) is another good option. You'll also need a day pack/bag to carry water, a camera, a jacket, and your essentials while touring during the day.

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- Day pack: For carrying essentials such as water, camera, snacks, a jacket, and other necessities while exploring.
- Lightweight clothing: Pack a mix of breathable, lightweight clothing with some warmer layers (season-dependent). It's best to check the local weather and seasonal information before travelling. Additionally, bring clothing that covers the arms and pants/skirts that go past the knee for entry to religious sites. Female travellers may also want a light scarf to cover shoulders and arms.
- Comfortable shoes for all-day walking/trekking: Closed-in shoes offer protection from cuts, scratches, and, in rare cases, bites or stings when walking through cities and natural areas.
- Wind and waterproof jacket
- Sun protection: Bring a hat, sunscreen, sunglasses, and lip balm.
- Electrical travel adapter plug
- Money belt
- Torch or flashlight
- Hand sanitizer
- Earplugs: Helpful for blocking out street noise or snoring.
- Entertainment for long journeys: Consider bringing a book, journal, or music player for train rides and extended drives.

Whenever possible, avoid bringing valuables. Use your hotel safe, and we recommend photocopying important documents like tickets, passport, and vaccination certificates, keeping the copies separate from the originals. Though not official, copies make it easier to obtain replacements if needed.

Climate

Central Asia experiences a continental climate, with hot, dry summers and cold, dry winters. The best time to visit is typically during the shoulder seasons of spring (April–May) and autumn (September–October), when temperatures are generally more pleasant and crowds are smaller — but it can be visited year-round. That said, travellers should be aware that temperatures can exceed 40°C (104°F), even as early as May, particularly in lowland and desert regions.

Uzbekistan
May to August are warm to hot, with average temperatures ranging from 25°C to 35°C (77–95°F), but spikes above 40°C (104°F) can occur, especially in desert regions.

September and October are ideal for sightseeing, with temperatures around 20–25°C (68–77°F).

Tajikistan
May to August are warm in lower elevations, with temperatures typically around 25–30°C (77–86°F), but higher in southern regions. Mountainous areas remain cooler.

September and October offer pleasant conditions, ideal for trekking and exploring alpine landscapes.

Kyrgyzstan
May to August are warm in the valleys, with temperatures ranging from 20°C to 30°C (68–86°F). The higher elevations remain much cooler, making summer the best time for mountain activities.

Autumn brings milder temperatures and beautiful landscapes.

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Kazakhstan
Kazakhstan's vast size means climate conditions vary, but in the southern regions (such as Almaty and Turkistan), May to August can see temperatures from 30°C to over 40°C (86–104°F), especially in arid areas.

Northern and central areas are slightly cooler but still experience hot, dry summers.

September and October bring cooler, more comfortable conditions across the country, with temperatures between 15–25°C (59–77°F), depending on the region.

Turkmenistan
May to August are the hottest months, with average temperatures often reaching 40°C (104°F) or higher in desert areas — and it's not uncommon for these extremes to begin in May.

September and October offer milder conditions, with daytime temperatures around 25–30°C (77–86°F), making it a more comfortable time to explore.

Currency and ATMs

We recommend bringing enough US dollars with you for your arrival into Turkmenistan, as you'll need them to pay for your visa and PCR test.

Your tour leader in each country will be able to help with advice on how to exchange USD. Some hotels may also offer exchange services, although rates can be less favourable. Currency can often be exchanged outside hotels as well, but rates and additional fees can vary significantly, so it's best to consult your tour leader before proceeding. Please note that AUD or other currencies may not be accepted, and USD is the best option for currency exchange.

ATMs are generally available and usable in major cities, though access may be limited in remote areas. Where possible, using ATMs is usually more straightforward and offers better rates than currency exchange services, and is our recommended method for accessing local currency.

Uzbekistan:
Currency: Uzbek So'm

ATM Availability: ATMs are widely available in major cities and tourist areas. Visa and Mastercard are accepted at some ATMs and larger establishments.

Tajikistan:
Currency: Tajik Somoni

ATM Availability: ATMs are available in major cities and tourist areas. Visa and Mastercard are accepted at some ATMs, but it's best to have some cash on hand.

Kyrgyzstan:
Currency: Kyrgyz Som

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ATM Availability: ATMs are widely available in major cities and tourist areas. Visa and Mastercard are accepted at many ATMs.

Kazakhstan:
Currency: Kazakh Tenge

ATM Availability: ATMs are widely available in major cities and tourist areas. Visa and Mastercard are accepted at many ATMs.

Turkmenistan:
Currency: Turkmen Manat

ATM Availability: Limited. ATMs are primarily found in major cities like Ashgabat, however the exchange rate is quite unfavourable.

General Tips:

- Exchange Currency: It's recommended to exchange currency at authorized exchange offices or banks to get the best rates.
- Carry Small Denominations: Having smaller denominations of local currency can be helpful for smaller purchases.
- Check ATM Fees: Be aware of potential ATM fees, especially for foreign cards. Emergency Cash: It's wise to carry some emergency cash in US dollars, as they are widely accepted in some places.
- Consult Your Bank: Before your trip, inform your bank about your travel plans to avoid any issues with your card.
- By being prepared with the right currency and understanding the ATM availability, you can enjoy a smooth travel experience in Central Asia.

Food and Allergies

While travelling with Inspiring Vacations you'll enjoy iconic sightseeing, as well as experience the vast array of local cuisines. While many meals will be eaten together with your group, not all meals are included in your tour which gives you maximum flexibility in deciding where, what and with whom to eat.

If you have dietary requirements and/or food allergies, please let our Customer Support Team know before departure. Your Inspiring Vacations tour leader or local guide will also be able to give suggestions on which restaurants to try during your tour.

Central Asian cuisine is a delightful blend of flavours and influences, offering a unique gastronomic experience for travellers. From the hearty pilafs and grilled meats to the fermented dairy drinks and pastries, there's something to satisfy every palate. Don't miss the opportunity to try local delicacies from street vendors or explore bustling bazaars for fresh produce and spices. While the culinary scene in major cities is becoming more diverse, traditional Central Asian cuisine is generally not accommodating to specific dietary needs, especially vegan, vegetarian, or gluten-free diets. It's always a good idea to communicate your dietary restrictions clearly to avoid any misunderstandings.

Local Customs

Central Asia offers a unique cultural experience for travellers. The region is home to diverse

ethnic groups, each with its own customs and traditions. While many locals are welcoming and hospitable, it's important to be respectful of local customs, particularly in rural areas. Dress modestly, especially when visiting religious sites or conservative communities. Learning a few basic phrases in the local language can go a long way in building rapport and showing respect. Remember, patience and understanding are key when interacting with locals, as cultural norms and communication styles may differ from what you're accustomed to.

Same-sex couples can stay in the same hotel room and reserve a double room. However, some hotels might change the room to a twin.

As per many other Muslim countries, same-sex couples are recommended to avoid affectionate displays in public.

Dress Code

While Central Asia is becoming increasingly modern, it's still important to dress modestly, especially when visiting religious sites or rural areas. Women should avoid revealing clothing, such as short skirts, tank tops, and shorts. It's advisable to cover shoulders and knees, particularly when entering mosques or other sacred places. Men should also dress modestly, avoiding shorts and sleeveless shirts. By dressing respectfully, you can show consideration for local customs and traditions.

At some religious sites both men and women may be provided with a scarf or covering to wear. However, you might prefer to bring your own scarf or light cover-up for comfort and convenience.

Responsible Dining

When dining in Central Asia, it's important to be mindful of ethical and sustainable practices. Opt for locally sourced ingredients and support small, family-run businesses. By choosing dishes made with fresh, seasonal produce, you can contribute to the local economy and reduce your environmental impact. Additionally, consider the ethical implications of meat consumption, particularly horse meat, which is a delicacy in some regions. If you have concerns about animal welfare, you may want to choose vegetarian or vegan options. By making informed choices, you can enjoy the delicious cuisine of Central Asia while minimizing your negative impact.

Tipping

A friendly reminder that tipping is not included in your package. Tipping is not compulsory on your trip, but it is part of the culture in Central Asia, and they can make a big difference to locals employed in the tourism industry. If you feel that your guide and driver have done an impeccable job, you can choose to give a gratuity, but this is entirely your decision.

If you are happy with the services provided, we recommend tipping $3-5 USD per day per person for your drivers and $5-7 USD per day per person for your local guides.

It is also common practice to leave a tip of around 10% at restaurants, particularly in more tourist-friendly or higher-end establishments, as a gesture of appreciation for good service.

Peak Travel Times

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The peak travel season in Central Asia generally falls between May and September when the weather is warm and dry. However, specific peak times can vary depending on the country and region. For instance, in countries like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the summer months are ideal for hiking and trekking in the mountains. Uzbekistan on the other hand, can be quite hot during the peak summer months, so spring (April-May) and autumn (September-October) are often considered the best times to visit. By understanding the peak travel seasons, you can plan your trip to avoid crowds and potentially higher prices.

Safety and Security

Most national governments provide regularly updated foreign travel advice on safety issues involved with international travel. We recommend that you check your own government's advice for the most up-to-date travel information before departure and ensure that your travel insurance covers you for all destinations and activities on your tour.

Your Inspiring Vacations Tour Leader or local representative will accompany you on all included activities listed on the itinerary, however, you'll have some free time to explore on your own. While your Inspiring Vacations tour leader or local guide will assist you as best they can with your requests and the options available outside your itinerary, please note Inspiring Vacations makes no representations about the safety of the activity or the standard of the operators running the activity. Please use your judgement when selecting an activity in your free time.

Please also note that your Inspiring Vacations tour leader or local guide has the authority to amend or cancel any part of the itinerary if it's deemed necessary due to safety concerns.

While Central Asia offers a unique and rewarding travel experience, it's essential to prioritise safety. It's advisable to stay informed about the latest travel advisories and security alerts issued by your government. Exercise caution, particularly in crowded areas and during political demonstrations. Avoid travelling alone at night and be mindful of your surroundings.

Apps to Download

Some useful apps you may want to consider downloading before your tour include Google Translate, the lens function is especially useful when wanting to read product labels, signs, and menus. Google Maps with offline maps downloaded is great for easy navigation without being reliant on wifi.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Itinerary Changes

Sometimes, unexpected things can happen, like unpredictable weather or higher-than-usual crowds at attractions. In these situations, your tour leader might need to adjust the itinerary slightly to improve your overall experience.

This flexibility ensures you get the most out of your trip! Your tour leader will always keep you informed of any changes and explain the reasoning behind them. Remember, when travelling with a group, sometimes going with the flow can lead to even more amazing experiences.

Travel Insurance

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Travel insurance is strongly recommended on all our trips. We require that at a minimum you are covered for medical expenses including emergency repatriation. It is also important to consider forced pre-trip cancellations and how your chosen insurance policy may cover such circumstances, so please keep this in mind when choosing your provider.

We strongly recommend all travellers have a policy that also covers personal liability, cancellation, curtailment and loss of luggage or personal effects. For international trips, you will be asked by your tour leader for your travel insurance details if they were not already added to your Traveller Hub account pre-departure.

If you have credit card insurance your Inspiring Vacations tour leader or local guide may require details of the participating insurer/underwriter, the level of coverage, policy number, and emergency contact number rather than the bank's name and your credit card details. Please contact your bank for these details before arriving in-country.

Before you depart, you will be asked to submit your Travel Insurance details through the booking holder's Traveller Hub account through the Inspiring Vacations website. This is to ensure that we have this information readily available should we ever need it.

Health, Wellness & Fitness Requirements

All travellers need to be in good physical health to participate fully on this trip. For the safety and wellbeing of yourself and others, if you are unwell before travelling, please stay at home and contact us to make alternative arrangements.

When selecting your trip please make sure you have read through the itinerary carefully to assess your ability to manage and enjoy our style of travel. If we find that you are unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to yourself and/or the rest of the group, we reserve the right to exclude them from all or part of a trip without refund.

You should consult your doctor for up-to-date medical travel information or any necessary vaccinations before departure. We recommend that you carry a first aid kit as well as any personal medical requirements in their original packaging as they may not easily be obtained while travelling. If you are carrying medication, ensure you check your government's foreign travel advice for any local restrictions or requirements. For the safety and wellbeing of yourself and others, if you are unwell before travelling, please stay at home and contact us to make alternative arrangements and we would be more than happy to assist you.

Important Information for Customers with Mobility Limitations

We want to ensure everyone has a fantastic and inclusive experience on our tours. If you require the use of a mobility aid, such as a cane, walker, or wheelchair, please disclose this information **at the time of booking.**

To ensure a smooth and enjoyable experience for the entire group, our tours are designed with a specific itinerary in mind. This may involve moderate walking, uneven terrain, or stairs. While some itinerary adjustments may not be possible, we'll do our best to find alternative solutions within the planned activities whenever possible.

Open communication helps us ensure your trip is a perfect fit and it allows your local guide or tour leader to assist you where possible.

Information for CPAP Users

If you use a CPAP machine, please let us know at the time of booking. Some portions of our itinerary, like overnight cruises or camping trips, may have limited access to power outlets. In such cases, we recommend travelling with portable battery packs.

Certain activities, like overnight journeys on board smaller vessels, may not be suitable for CPAP use due to space limitations or noise concerns. We can discuss these potential limitations upfront and help you make informed decisions about your trip.

Documentation

Tour documentation is typically emailed to the lead passenger or your travel agent between 14-30 days before your scheduled departure. This will include your final hotel list.

Official Travel Advice

To ensure a smooth and enjoyable journey, we recommend referring to the official travel advisory website of your home country for the latest updates on your chosen destination. These websites provide valuable information on:

- **Safety and Security:** Current risks and precautions for the country you'll be visiting.
- **Visa Requirements:** Ensure you have all the necessary documentation for entry.
- **Entry and Exit:** Up-to-date border regulations and health requirements.

Here are some helpful links to get you started:

- Australia: https://www.smartraveller.gov.au/destinations
- New Zealand: https://www.safetravel.govt.nz/
- America: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel.html
- Canada: https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories
- India: https://www.mea.gov.in/travel-advisories.htm

In the unlikely event of a situation that could potentially disrupt your tour, we want to assure you of the following:

- **Local Expertise:** We maintain regular communication with our trusted travel partners in your destination.
- **Constant Monitoring:** We continuously monitor official travel advisories from relevant government websites.
- **Flexibility and Safety:** Should it become necessary, we will make appropriate adjustments to your itinerary to prioritise your health and safety.

By staying informed and working together, we can ensure a fantastic travel experience for you. We will post our own travel updates to our website here.

Connect with fellow travellers on Facebook

During your booking journey, you might have received an email inviting you to join a

special Facebook group dedicated to your chosen destination. These vibrant online communities are exclusively for Inspiring Vacations travellers headed to the same incredible place. Joining this group unlocks a wealth of information and connections. Swap travel tips, share packing insights, or even see if anyone's interested in travelling together.

We also regularly host insightful webinars featuring travel experts who share their tips and tricks for navigating your destination and maximizing your itinerary. Don't miss out on this amazing opportunity to connect, learn, and get even more excited about your upcoming trip!

Travelling in a Group

Travelling in a group means you will experience both the pleasures and perhaps at times, some of the frustrations of travelling with people you don't know. The good news is you all have at least one thing in common: a love of travel and exploration. Your fellow travellers will probably come from different parts of the world, and fall into different age groups. We ask you to be understanding of the various needs and preferences of your group—patience with your fellow travellers is sometimes required for the overall benefit of the group. If you are requested to be at a place at a certain time, please ensure that you respect this request from your tour leader or local guide. Due to privacy reasons, we are unable to provide you with contact details and any personal information about your fellow travellers booked on your trip before departure.

Community Guidelines

Inspiring Vacations does not tolerate any kind of violence, harassment (whether physical, verbal or sexual), or disrespect toward fellow travelers, our teams (Inspiring Vacations Tour Leaders and local expert guides) or local communities.

Any behavior that prevents your Inspiring Vacations Tour Leader from continuing the itinerary as planned, breaks local laws or opposes any of these guidelines, may result in Inspiring Vacations removing you from the tour.

If something concerns you during your travels, please speak to your Inspiring Vacations Tour Leader immediately. Alternatively, when you are on-tour and require immediate support you can contact our Customer Support team and select the "On-Tour" option when listening to the options.

Inspiring Vacations Tour Leader vs Guide

While both tour leaders and local guides enrich your travel experience, their roles differ. Tour leaders, who often accompany you for the entire trip, handle logistics, ensure smooth sailing of the itinerary, and act as your point of contact for any concerns. They might provide general information about destinations, but in-depth historical or cultural knowledge often comes from local guides. Local guides, frequently native to the area, lead tours at specific sites or attractions, offering a deeper understanding of the local history, art, or way of life.

Coach Transportation

The size of your coach will comfortably accommodate your group. There's usually room for some extra seats, ensuring a relaxing journey. Your luggage will be safely stored either underneath the coach or in a dedicated trailer.

While the exact coach style may vary depending on the departure, all our coaches offer comfortable seating. Keep in mind that Wi-Fi and charging outlets might not always be available. To stay connected and avoid dead batteries, we recommend fully charging your devices beforehand or bringing a portable charger.

For longer journeys, we'll make sure to include ample restroom breaks along the way, so you can freshen up and recharge at your convenience, as facilities are not on-board the coach.

Staying Connected

If you want to stay connected and access reliable internet while on tour, there are a few options available. It is possible to purchase a virtual sim and we recommend contacting your mobile phone provider for assistance in doing so. You can add a roaming data plan to your existing phone contract is another option, albeit an expensive one. You will need to arrange this before departure. Purchasing a local SIM may be possible as a final option.

We also recommend downloading WhatsApp and using this to communicate with other group members while on tour, and of course, after the tour if you'd like to stay in touch. Our tour leaders may also use this as a means of communicating essential trip information with you, as well as if you choose to add-on transfers to your booking, as your driver may use this to confirm arrangements with you.

Post-Tour Feedback

Once your booking is confirmed, you will receive a link to a post-purchase survey, which is your opportunity to share your feedback with us on your booking experience and interactions with our Sales and Customer Success teams. This feedback is invaluable to ensure that we are servicing our customers to the best of our ability.

Furthermore, towards the end of your travels and while you are in your destination, you will receive an email from us with a link to an in-depth trip survey. It is very important to us that we hear from our customers to ensure that we continue to meet and exceed customers' expectations, so this will be your opportunity to let us know how your trip has been, what has worked well and potentially what could be improved.

FLIGHT INFORMATION

This is a **land-only** package.

This package does not include international airfares. If you would like to add airfares to your booking our flight portal will be available via your Traveller Hub. The flight portal will allow you to search for all available airfares to your destination. The function works like most general flight search engines allowing you to select your preferred airline, book different cabin classes (eg. Business class) and view flight durations and transit times to your destination.

The flight portal will be available via your Traveller Hub once the following criteria has been met:

- Your booking is confirmed
- Your departure date is within 11 months
- You have completed your passenger detail form

Visit our Flight Hub for more information on terms and conditions, amending your flights and information on luggage allowances.

Home & Afar Travel
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