ICON ADVENTURES
BESPOKE TOURS & TRAVEL

THE FIVE STANS

CULTURAL TOUR

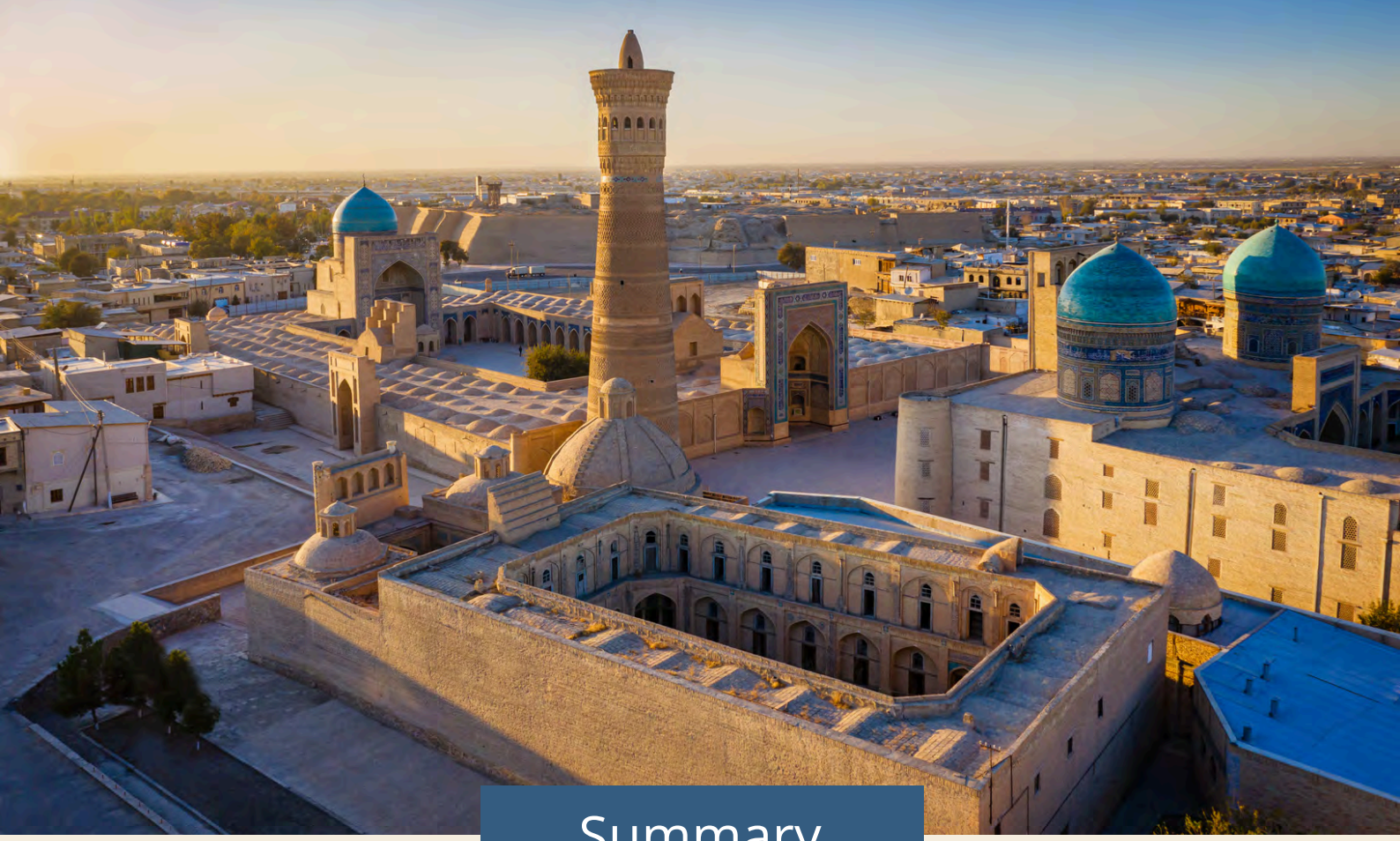


23 Days/22 Nights

8-30 September 2027

Tour Highlights...

Kyrgyzstan | Kazakhstan | Tajikistan | Uzbekistan | Turkmenistan



Summary

Journey deep into the heart of Central Asia on an extraordinary adventure through five fascinating nations - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

Following the ancient Silk Road, this remarkable journey reveals a region where legendary history, dramatic landscapes and enduring traditions come together. Discover the spectacular mountain scenery of Kyrgyzstan, where alpine valleys, crystal-clear lakes and centuries-old nomadic traditions offer a glimpse into a way of life shape shaped by the land Stay in traditional yurt camps, experience warm local hospitality and explore landscapes that remain beautifully untouched.

Continue to Uzbekistan and step into the legendary Silk Road cities of Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva. Wander through atmospheric old towns, marvel at Islamic architecture and uncover stories of traders, scholars and empires that shaped this crossroads of civilisation.

Travel through the remote beauty of Tajikistan's mountains before venturing into Turkmenistan, one of Central Asia's most intriguing destinations. Explore its striking capital, desert landscapes and the unforgettable Darvaza Gas Crater glowing beneath the night sky.

From vibrant bazaars and ancient fortresses to soaring mountains and endless deserts, the Five Stans of the Silk Road offers a rare opportunity to explore a fascinating corner of the world where tradition, culture and history remain deeply woven into everyday life.



Day 1 Meet and Greet - Welcome to Kyrgyzstan (D)

Arrive in Bishkek, the leafy capital of Kyrgyzstan, and enjoy a relaxed start to your Central Asian adventure. Take time to settle in, rest after your journey, and perhaps wander the city's parks and wide boulevards before a simple local meal and an early night.
O/N 2 nts Bishkek, Plaza Hotel (or similar)

Day 2 (B) Bishkek

Today the adventure truly begins as you meet your guide and fellow travellers before setting out to discover Bishkek. Wander through leafy parks, open squares and grand Soviet-era monuments, gaining your first glimpse into the relaxed rhythm of daily life in Kyrgyzstan's capital. This evening, come together for a welcome dinner in a traditional restaurant to sample classic Kyrgyz dishes. It's a warm introduction to the hospitality, flavours and culture to shape the journey ahead.

Day 3 (B,L) Burana Tower & Issyk Kul Lake

Leaving Bishkek behind, journey into the Chuy Valley to discover Burana Tower, a lone minaret rising from the remains of an ancient Silk Road city offering a glimpse into the centuries of trade that once passed through this region. Continue to Iskra village for a memorable lunch with a Dungan family, where stories, traditions and home-cooked flavours reveal the rich cultural tapestry of Central Asia. Later, arrive at the shores of Issyk Kul, Kyrgyzstan's spectacular mountain lake. Visit the fascinating petroglyph museum before enjoying time to relax beside its crystal-clear waters.
O/N 1 nt, Cholpon-Ata, Kapriz Resort (or similar)

Day 4 (B,L) Karakol

Today we venture into the spectacular mountain landscapes surrounding Issyk Kul, exploring the Grigoriev and Semienov gorges. Wander through pine forests, beside rushing streams and across peaceful alpine meadows. Continue to Karakol, a charming town where Kyrgyz, Russian and Dungan influences come together. Discover the colourful Dungan mosque and the beautifully crafted Russian Orthodox cathedral. Settle into Karakol's relaxed atmosphere this evening, with time to enjoy a local meal.
O/N 1 nt Karakol, Hotel 78 (or similar)

Day 5 (B,D) Jeti Oguz & Yurt Camp

Leave Karakol behind and journey into the dramatic landscapes of Jeti Oguz Gorge, where towering red cliffs and the legendary Broken Heart rock formation create one of Kyrgyzstan's most iconic scenes. Enjoy a gentle walk through this beautiful valley. Continue to Barskoon Gorge, known for its waterfalls, legends and the enchanting Tears of the Snow Leopard cascade. Along the way, discover unexpected reminders of Kyrgyzstan's fascinating history. Tonight, experience traditional hospitality and a taste of the nomadic life at a yurt camp, staying in comfortable yurt-style accommodation.
O/N 1 nt, Royal Gate Yurt Camp



Day 6 (B,L,D) Kochkor

Travel along the southern shores of Issyk Kul to Skazka Canyon, the enchanting 'fairy tale' landscape where wind and time have sculpted the rocks into a maze of towers, ridges and curious formations. Wander through this otherworldly scenery where every turn reveals a new perspective. Continue your journey into Kyrgyzstan's nomadic traditions meeting with an eagle hunter, discovering the ancient art and deep connection between hunter and bird. Later, visit Kyzyl Tuu to learn the craftsmanship behind traditional yurt-making before arriving in Kochkor for a warm welcome and home-style meal.
O/N Kocher, Traveller Guest House (or similar)

Day 7 (B,L,D) Son Kul Lake & Yurt Camp

Journey through sweeping mountain landscapes to Kalmak Ashu Pass at 3,447 metres, where Son Kul Lake reveals itself in the distance - a brilliant splash of turquoise surrounded by endless alpine pasture. Arrive at your second yurt camp beside the lake and experience the timeless rhythm of Kyrgyz nomadic life. Watch horses graze across the grasslands, breathe in the mountain air and embrace the peaceful silence of this remote setting. As evening falls, enjoy dinner beneath a spectacular canopy of stars - a magical moment far from the lights of the modern world.
O/N 1 nt Son Kul Lake, Yurt Camp

Day 8 (B,L,D) Chon Kemin Valley

Enjoy a peaceful morning at Son Kul, where the vast alpine landscape invites you to slow down and appreciate the simple pleasures - a gentle lakeside walk, the sound of wind across the grasslands, and the quiet beauty of this remote corner of Kyrgyzstan. Later, travel towards the Chon Kemin Valley, stopping in Kochkor for a hands-on felt-making workshop. Discover the importance of this traditional craft in Kyrgyz nomadic culture and create your own keepsake before continuing to your mountain retreat for a relaxing evening surrounded by nature.
O/N 1 nt Chon Kemin Valley, Kemin Guesthouse (or similar)

Day 9 (B) Cross into Kazakhstan

Cross the Kyrgyz-Kazakh border and continue to Almaty, Kazakhstan's former capital and vibrant cultural heart. Set against the backdrop of the snow-capped Tien Shan Mountains, Almaty offers a refreshing change of pace with its leafy streets, elegant parks, café culture and relaxed city atmosphere. Explore the city's highlights, including Independence Square, Panfilov Park and the colourful Zenkov Cathedral, while discovering how Central Asia's landscapes and lifestyles shift from remote mountain valleys to a cosmopolitan city with its own unique character.
O/N 3 nts Almaty, Kazzhol Park Hotel (or similar)



Day 10 (B) Almaty's Mountain Escapes

Today, discover the spectacular mountain setting that makes Almaty so unique. Travel to Medeo Gorge, home to the world's highest ice skating rink, before taking the cable car to Kok Tobe for breathtaking views across the city and towards the snow-capped Tien Shan Mountains. Enjoy time to wander, take photos and soak up the fresh mountain air before returning to the city. It's the perfect blend of nature and urban exploration, revealing why Almaty is considered one of Central Asia's most beautiful and liveable cities.

Day 11 (B) Charyn Canyon

Today, discover Charyn Canyon, a spectacular landscape shaped over millions of years into dramatic cliffs, towering rock formations and winding corridors. Often compared to the Grand Canyon, it has a rugged beauty and atmosphere all its own. Walk through the Valley of the Castles, exploring its stone labyrinth as the colours shift from golden orange to deep rust in the changing light. Return to Alamaty in the evening.

Day 12 (B) Fly into Tajikistan

Fly to Dushanbe, the elegant capital of Tajikistan, where towering mountains, ancient traditions and poetry shape everyday life. Explore the city's highlights, including grand monuments, leafy parks, the National Museum and the impressive 165-metre flagpole - a symbol of modern Tajik identity. Visit Hissar Fortress and its museum to uncover stories of the past, before returning to Dushanbe to experience the central mosque and lively markets where local life unfolds.
O/N 1 nt Dunshanbe, Rumi Hotel (or similar)

Day 13 (B) Mountain Passes to Khujand via Istaravshan

Leave Dushanbe behind and journey north through spectacular mountain scenery, winding through Varzob Gorge and across high passes where the road itself becomes part of the adventure. Explore Istaravshan, one of Central Asia's oldest settlements, with its historic old town, medrese, fortress and lively bazaar. Discover traditional craft workshops where artisans continue the centuries-old art of hand-making blades and tools before continuing to Khujand for the evening.
O/N 2 nts, Khujand, Sogdiyon Hotel (or similar)

Day 14 (B) Khujand and the Tajik North

Spend the day exploring Khujand, Tajikistan's second city and a place with deep Silk Road roots. Discover the city's monuments, museums and the banks of the Syr Darya River, uncovering stories that span centuries of history and culture. Experience the vibrant Panjshanbe Bazaar, where colourful stalls and local traders bring the city to life, before visiting Khujand Fortress, Arbob Palace and the Kairakkum water reserve - a vast blue expanse known as the Tajik Sea.



Day 15 (B) Cross into Uzbekistan

Cross into Uzbekistan and arrive in Tashkent, a city where modern glass towers sit alongside Soviet architecture and centuries-old Islamic heritage. After settling into your hotel, enjoy free time to begin exploring at your own pace.
An evening orientation walk offers your first taste of Uzbekistan's capital, with the option to enjoy dinner together as you slowly begin your journey into this fascinating Silk Road country.
O/N 1 nt Tashkent, Mirzo Boutique Hotel (or similar)

Day 16 (B) Tashkent & Samarkand

Explore the highlights of Tashkent, beginning with the magnificent Khast Imam Complex and Barak Khan Madrasah before wandering through the colourful Chorsu Bazaar, filled with the aromas of spices, dried fruits and freshly baked breads. Discover the city's famous metro stations and grand squares, including Amir Temur and Independence Square. This evening, board the train to Samarkand. Arriving after dark adds a touch of mystery and excitement as you enter one of the Silk Road's most legendary cities.
O/N 2 nts Samarkand, Altair Boutique Hotel (or similar)

Day 17 (B) Samarkand

Discover the timeless beauty of Samarkand, beginning with Gur-e Amir, the ornate mausoleum of legendary ruler Amir Timur. Continue to the magnificent Registan Square, where three grand madrasahs, intricate tilework and sweeping courtyards reveal the incredible artistry of the Silk Road era. Later, visit the impressive Bibi Khanum Mosque, explore the lively Siab Bazaar and finish at Shahi Zinda, a breathtaking avenue of decorated mausoleums where history, architecture and spirituality come together.

Day 18 (B,L) Mitan Village, Bukhara

Travel to Bukhara via Mitan village, a wonderful example of responsible tourism and community hospitality. Share a traditional lunch in a local home and, if you wish, try your hand at preparing plov and baked pastries and gain a genuine insight into Uzbek life. Continue to Gijduvan, visit the ceramics museum and meet skilled artisans preserving techniques passed down through generations. Arrive in Bukhara, one of Central Asia's most captivating cities, for the evening.
O/N 2 nts Bukhara, Al Hayat Hotel (or similar)

Day 19 (B) Bukhara

Bukhara feels like a city where history lives around every corner. Explore its ancient heart, from the Ismail Samani Mausoleum and Chashma Ayub to Bolo Hauz Mosque, before discovering the mighty Ark Fortress and the magnificent Poi-Kalyan complex. Wander through historic trading domes and madrasahs that once welcomed merchants, scholars and travellers from across the Silk Road.



Day 20 (B) Cross into Turkmenistan and fly to Ashgabat

Cross the border into Turkmenistan, one of Central Asia's most mysterious and least-visited countries. Meet your local guide and spend time in Turkmenabad before continuing to the airport for your evening flight to Ashgabat. From the moment you arrive, Ashgabat feels unlike anywhere else - a city of grand scale, gleaming white marble and striking architecture, where even the drive to your hotel feels like stepping into another world.
O/N 1 nt Ashgabat, Sport Hotel (or similar)

Day 21 (B,D) Ashgabat and Darvaza Gas Crater

Spend the morning exploring Ashgabat's distinctive landmarks, including the Constitution Monument, Arch of Neutrality, parks and mosques, while gaining insight into the city's fascinating history and modern identity. In the afternoon, leave the city behind and journey deep into the Karakum Desert to Darvaza, home to the legendary 'Door to Hell' gas crater. As night falls, watch the flames glow against the desert horizon and enjoy a barbecue dinner before settling into a yurt camp for a beneath a spectacular star-filled sky.
O/N Davarza, Yurt Camp

Day 22 (B,D)

Return to Ashgabat and explore one of the city's vibrant bazaars, where colourful textiles, carpets, jewellery and everyday life offer a glimpse into local traditions. If open, Altyn Asyr is a spectacular showcase of Turkmen craftsmanship, while Gulistan Market provides a more authentic local atmosphere. Continue to meet the renowned Akhal-Teke horses, a treasured symbol of Turkmen heritage, before visiting the UNESCO-listed Nissa Fortress, once the stronghold of the powerful Parthian kings. Enjoy your final night in Central Asia with dinner and reflections on the incredible landscapes, cultures and connections of this unforgettable journey.
O/N Ashgabat, Sports Hotel (or similar)

Day 23 (B)

Enjoy a relaxed final breakfast before checking out and departing at your leisure. Take home a collage of memories of a remarkable journey through Central Asia - from mountain lakes and desert landscapes to tiled cities, warm hospitality and stories that have travelled through generations.



The Details

PRICE INCLUDES:

- Small-Group Escorted Tour - Min 8 - Max 14
- ICON host, professional guides & drivers
- Group airport transfers
- 19 nights accomm 3-4 star hotels & guesthouses with 3 nights Yurt Camp*
- Meals as per itinerary 22B, 5L & 7D
- Internal flight, train and private coach
- Entrance fees and sightseeing as per itinerary

*Yurt camps offer 4 share accom, with shared facilities or ensuited.

PRICE EXCLUDES:

- Flights from Australia
- Turkmenistan - visa approx. USD$80-110pp and mandatory PCR test approx. USD$40pp
- Travel Insurance (compulsory)
- Tipping for guides & drivers (approx US$180-$220pp total) to be paid in each country
- Meals not mentioned
- All expenses of a personal nature

LET US HELP YOU WITH:

- Booking flights
- Travel insurance
- Visa
- Pre or post tour travel

COST PER PERSON:

- Twin or double share: $10,350/person
- Single supp: $1,500/person (own room)
- Solo Twin share: availability subject to room mate match

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