

## ETIQUETTE & CUSTOMS

Your Local Guide will brief you on etiquette so feel free to ask them during your tour. Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are predominantly Sunni Muslim, with Shia, Russian Orthodox and Jewish minorities. The laws, regulations and behaviour are affected by this colourful mix and we ask you to respect them by following some simple rules:

- Both men and women should dress appropriately** - The older locals dress conservatively) but the younger generation dress like westerners. Brief shorts or skirts can be still be offensive. For men, full length cotton trousers are preferable; while shorts that cover the knees are acceptable. For women, skirts or pants that reach below the knee are ideal, worn with tops that cover shoulders & upper arms. In western China and Central Asia, the majority of the population is Muslim. Female passengers should wear modest clothes that cover knees and shoulders. It is also a good idea to bring along a 'modesty shawl' very useful – either a large shawl or sarong.
- Always ask permission before taking anyone's photograph** and respect their decision if they say no. Cameras are not allowed in some sightseeing spots, particularly temples and pagodas.
- Remove your shoes when entering houses, pagodas, temples or mosques. You can usually leave your socks on.
- Public displays of affection are generally not acceptable.
- Never offer or accept anything with the left hand, use the right or both hands.

## TRANSPORT

Our groups use air-conditioned coaches that are comfortable but are not necessarily the latest models. Local transport includes pony carts and taxis in smaller towns, and a tram and underground rail system in Tashkent. After crossing the border at Torugart Pass you travel in a mini bus until Naryn due to the poor road conditions in this region. The luggage will follow in a separate mini bus.

## ENTRANCE FEES / CAMERA FEES

Your tour includes single entry fees to all sites in your itinerary and any additional sites will be at an additional cost. Your entrance ticket is valid for one visit or one day depending on the attraction. In Uzbekistan, particularly in Khiva, Bukhara and Samarkand, camera fees are charged at all historic monuments. These fees range from 500 Sum to 3000 Sum at each location/entrance.

## SHOPPING

Whilst shopping can be fun and entertaining, Wendy Wu Tours, our staff, Local Guide/s are not qualified nor permitted to guarantee the quality or value of any goods purchased during your holiday. All passengers who make purchases during their holiday must accept responsibility for their decision regarding the goods' value, as well as the risks involved with processing of the credit card purchase or shipping. **Unfortunately, we cannot assist in returning or refunding goods once you have left the country where you purchased the good/s.** In keeping with most people's interest whilst on holiday, your

tour will include a reasonable number of opportunities to shop for local goods and souvenirs but this may vary depending on local conditions.

## ACCOMMODATION

All levels of hotels can sometimes suffer from minor problems and technical difficulties. If you are travelling as a couple, please note that we cannot guarantee the availability of double beds. Occasionally hotel rooms in this area receive phone calls from 'ladies of the night' trying to procure business; usually targeting local businessmen. A sense of humour is the best way to handle this, but if they persist, contact Reception staff or your Local Guide. If you have a problem with your room please advise your Local Guide. Refer to the [Tour Dossier](#) for **Road to Samarkand** for types of accommodation used on this tour.

## PHARMACEUTICAL GOODS

It is recommended that you take any pharmaceutical products that you may require on your tour. For any prescribed medication, it is recommended you take a letter from your doctor.

## LUGGAGE & INCIDENTAL ITEMS

On all tours, passengers are limited to 1 suitcase per person, weighing no more than 20kg and 1 piece of hand luggage under 7kg – both should have a lock. On the **Road to Samarkand** tour – you may need to carry your own luggage for a distance (approximately 100m) between the Chinese-Kyrgyz border and into and out of home stays and some hotels where there are no porters. Please also refer to your [Suggested Packing List](#) for an outline of what to pack and type of bag to take.

## CLIMATE

Central Asia has a continental climate, with four seasons. Winter (from NOV to MAR) is extremely cold in the desert and mountain areas, while summer (mid-JUN to mid-SEP) has very hot temperatures in the same areas. Spring (APR to mid-JUN) and autumn (mid-SEP to OCT) are the ideal time to visit. It is recommended that you also check recent weather conditions before you depart.

## DUTY FREE / CUSTOMS / VISA

1000 cigarettes or 1kg of tobacco products; 1.5L of alcoholic beverages and 2L of wine; a reasonable quantity of perfume for personal use; other goods for personal use up to a value of US\$10,000. Items more than 100 years old and those of special cultural importance require special permission for export. When buying items that may be more than 100 years old, ask for a certificate stating the age of the item/s. A visa is required for all three countries and it will be constantly checked throughout your tour so always carry your passport with you.

**China** – Arrival/Departure Cards are filled out prior to landing with the Arrival Card being handed in at Beijing Airport. The Departure Card is handed in at customs check point on the way to Torugart Pass. Ensure you have a departure stamp before you leave.

**Kyrgyzstan** – Fill in one arrival form upon arrival at the customs check point located 30 minutes after crossing the border from China. Ensure

you have an arrival stamp before leaving. Upon departing Kyrgyzstan ensure your visa is again stamped.

**Uzbekistan** - Upon arrival in Tashkent airport, you will need to fill in 2 arrival forms exactly the same, detailing all the foreign currency you are carrying with you. One form will be kept by immigration officials and the other given back to you to hand in upon departure. Upon departure you need to fill in another form again detailing how much local and foreign currency you now have and hand this in with the one you received back at arrival. The differences in the currencies will be checked before clearance is given to leave.

## INSURANCE & HEALTH

**Comprehensive Travel Insurance** is highly recommended. If you have chosen to decline the insurance offered by your agent or Wendy Wu Tours please ensure you have arranged the appropriate cover for your holiday, as overseas medical costs are expensive and Medicare and Australian private health insurance will not cover you outside of Australia. If you are taking out travel insurance with your **credit card company**, you need to investigate the policy's inclusions and conditions fully. You should receive a policy number, an international access phone number to contact them in an emergency and a copy of full conditions. If you are concerned, please call our office to ensure that you are receiving the coverage needed.

**Health:** We strongly advise that you consult your doctor or contact the Travellers Medical and Vaccination Centre in your capital city as multiple inoculations may be required at least 6 weeks prior to departure. We strongly encourage all passengers to take necessary measures to avoid insect bites, including using insect repellent at all times. Water-borne, food-borne, parasitic and other infectious diseases (including typhoid and hepatitis) are also prevalent. You should also check the latest Travel Advice and Health Alerts for all the countries being visited at [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au) for up to the minute information. Wendy Wu Tours' staff are not qualified to make any sort of recommendations in this regard.

## SAFETY & SECURITY

All travellers should maintain a high level of personal security. Central Asia is considered relatively safe for travellers, but please keep in mind that cash or wallets in pockets, obvious jewellery, swinging handbags, revealing clothing, etc may attract unwanted attention. Make sure your valuables and cash are secure & inconspicuous. Do not leave any valuables unattended in your hotel room. There are safe deposit boxes available at Reception to lock valuables away as most hotels will not have in-room safes. Bring a lock for your main luggage. While sightseeing or travelling between cities, you must carry these valuables with you. Wearing a money belt under your clothing is strongly recommended. We advise you **not to bring** valuable jewellery or equipment with you. Always be aware of pickpockets in local markets and crowds.

## TRAVEL HEALTH

Public Toilets are disgusting by Australian standards and generally do not have toilet paper. While driving, most stops will be at 'bush toilets' so it's a good idea to carry your own toilet paper and disinfectant hand wash or wipes.

**Water and other drinks** - All water should be regarded as being potentially contaminated. Water used for drinking, brushing teeth or making ice should be bottled water. Some hotels provide free bottled water in your room. Bottled drinking water, soft drinks and beer are widely available and cheap.

**Food** – The cost of all meals are included in the group tour cost. If you have **food allergies or any other preferences** please make them known to your Local Guide at the start of your trip; they will do their best to ensure that your requirements are met. Long driving distances, road conditions or flight times, for example, may delay/alter your mealtime meaning a meal may actually be an airline meal on a plane. Please refer to your [Tour Dossier](#) for further information about altitude and the food in Central Asia.

## ELECTRICITY

There is an electricity supply of 220 volts and 240-volt appliances will work safely with this supply and an adapter. In Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, they generally use the round two-pin (Europe) plug.

## TIME DIFFERENCE

China is GMT + 8hrs, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are GMT + 5hrs.

## MONEY

	Chinese Yuan	Kyrgyz Som	Uzbek Sum
AU\$1	¥ 4	Cannot change	Cannot change
US\$1	¥ 6	40 Som	1,470 Sum

It is recommended that you have access to more than one source of money while travelling—a combination of cash, as well as a credit card, will give you the most security and flexibility. Cash should be in US currency. Change your excess Yuan into Kyrgyzstan Som at the Chinese customs check point prior to driving to Torugart Pass, otherwise you will not be able to change it. Exchange rates here are close to the real deal, as long as you keep your wits about you.

**Counterfeit cash** is a problem in this region so shop owners and clerks at banks or exchange desks are very cautious and can refuse to accept notes in bad condition. When purchasing USD cash in Australia OR when exchanging during your holiday – it is a good idea to stand at the desk to count and check the condition of each note. Don't accept any notes which were issued before 1990, are torn, very faded, a different shade, have ink stamps or any writing on them. If you accept the notes and sign the exchange receipt, then notice a problem later, you will not be able to exchange them.

**LOCAL CURRENCY** - In Kyrgyzstan the local currency is the Som which is divided into the units tyin, where 1Som = 100Tyin. In Uzbekistan the local currency is the Sum which is divided into the units tyin, where

1Sum = 100Tyin. In Uzbekistan the 1000Sum note is the highest denomination issued and the fluctuating exchange rates mean that just US\$50 can leave you with an enormous wad of notes to carry around. Exchange small amounts more often. You will need to present your passport to exchange any currency.

**EXCHANGING MONEY** - Most hotel exchange desks can change USD cash at the official rate. Black market changers offer higher rates but this is illegal and you won't get those precious receipts and could be cheated. To change money back to USD you must present your original change receipt. Therefore you will need to keep the **entry currency declaration form**, as well as any money exchange/ purchase/ withdrawal **receipts** you are given in each country. Although the exchange and customs rules have relaxed, these documents are still officially required when exiting and not having them could cause you a lot of hassle.

**CREDIT CARDS & ATMS** - Taking a credit card is recommended in case of emergency and may be used for large purchases in upmarket hotels or souvenir stores. You will not be able to use a credit card for most purchases unless in tourist shops in larger towns. ATMs are available in major cities but we do not recommend you rely on this as a source of money.

## KEEPING IN TOUCH

**PHONE** - Central Asia's landline phone system is decades behind the rest of Asia; international calls must still be booked, dialled through an operator and are relatively expensive. If you plan to use any sort of **phone card** (bought in Australia or overseas) always check the costs and procedure with hotel or post office staff beforehand. If they enforce a call charge, you are unable to refute it after making your call.

**In Kyrgyzstan** – some hotels offer IDD international direct calls from the rooms costing from US\$6/minute to Australia, other hotels will require you to book a call at Reception which will be placed by the operator – check with hotel staff for procedures and all associated costs. The international access code is also 00. Kyrgyzstan's country code is 996.

**In Uzbekistan** - some hotels offer IDD international direct calls from the rooms costing from US\$6/minute to Australia, other hotels will require you to book a call at Reception which will be placed by the operator – check with hotel staff for procedures and all associated call costs. Call costs are higher outside Tashkent. To place an international dial 8 wait for dial tone then dial 10. Uzbekistan's country code is 998.

**MOBILE PHONES** - You will find high quality coverage in China. In Central Asia it will depend upon your carrier. Please check with your mobile supplier about roaming agreements and all associated costs.

**INTERNET** - There are Internet Cafes found in a growing number of cities and small towns alike, where you can access your email or place an internet phone call. Most hotel Business Centres have internet access at significantly higher rates (up to 10x the cafe rate). Speed however is an issue outside of the capital cities with most connections being only dialup speed.

# Central Asia

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO



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Our local Operators:

**International Caravan Travel Service:**

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